

Introduction

Mapping the Field of Media History

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ABSTRACT

Media history is an emerging field. Ambiguities about its object of study and modes of explanation make it difficult to define the boundaries of media history. It is possible to sketch out some existing formations of scholarly work in the area. This introduction offers some suggestions for mapping the field while it introduces the structure and contents of the handbook. It also addresses the received history of the field of media studies. It challenges the likelihood of the emergence of accepted grand narratives about either media history or the foundations of media studies, but proposes that the resulting anarchy is a sign of intellectual robustness.

Media history is an emerging field. Scholars across the full range of the social sciences and humanities now encounter the media as a phenomenon. As they work to comprehend the media, they often turn to historical work as a mode of explanation. There they are discovering a large and overlapping set of theories, problems, and texts. Working sometimes in dialogue with but as often mostly unaware of or unconcerned with each other, they are nevertheless beginning to generate the intellectual and institutional apparatus of an interdisciplinary field. No one knows whether the field will cohere or enjoy only a moment of dynamism before disappearing.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Ten years ago I addressed this emerging field in an essay in Blackwell's *Companion to Media Studies* (Nerone, 2003). Remarking on the various disciplinary sources of media history, I argued that there was a fundamental incoherence springing from a lack of recognition of what exactly was meant by the term "media," and that in fact there were two different notions of media in play in the field: one notion referring to technologies, and another referring to institutions. For many scholars, media are the tools of communication, like the telegraph, while for others, media are the organizations that produce and distribute news and entertainment, like the BBC. I did not at the time suggest a definitive resolution of this division, though I did point to areas in which scholarly formations seemed to be bringing together work across the divide. Revisiting this question a few years later (Nerone, 2006), I outlined three formations that seemed to promise coherence, or at least meaningful dialogue, among the many genres of media history: the history of technology, reconceived under the general principle of the social construction of technologies; the "history of the book," as a well-institutionalized meeting ground of disparate scholars with modest theoretical investments; and the history of the public sphere, migrating from Habermas's formulation into a more catholic notion of public spaces and practices. I did not predict success for any of these. Rather, I offered my own preference for continued anarchy.

James Curran offered another take on the fundamental diversity of media history in his book *Media and Power* (2002; see also Curran, 2009). Curran identifies a number of competing narratives of British media history: the dominant "liberal" narrative, and challenging "feminist," "populist," "libertarian," "anthropological," "radical," and "technological determinist" narratives. Each narrative in Curran's scheme brings certain moments and actors into visibility while obscuring others in a way that might seem incommensurable. Curran holds out hope for a coherent integrated narrative of media history, at least in Britain, emerging from a dialogue among metanarratives. It is a modest hope, but one that I do not share.

There are good reasons why there are so many narratives of media history. In addition to the disagreement over who is the protagonist (technologies or institutions), there are also disagreements over what supporting characters are most involved (markets, governments, individuals, gendered power structures), where the story is set (homes, communities, nations, virtual spaces, the globe), and what the story means. Is it a comedy or a tragedy? One might hope for settling these questions through a scholarly conversation. The most likely result of that is a shifting set of groups of like-minded scholars: sphericules. Or one might hope that the welter of specific narratives might harmonize on a deeper level, where a larger narrative fits them together by making them part of the same big story. But as you appeal continually to larger and larger narratives, you find that each one of them has competitors framed around different selections of character, setting, plot, and theme. Alas, it's turtles all the way down.¹ If order is to emerge from this chaos, it won't be brought by tellers of a grand narrative.

That's too bad for me, because I would have preferred to have composed a book that moved in a steady narrative line. And of course I have such a book in mind, as

I think every media historian does. But the task of this book is to represent the field, not to present an author's master narrative. This handbook offers a map of this still anarchic field. Each essay presents a relatively coherent assessment of a particular approach or problem or moment. A critic might contend that the essays add up to less than the sum of their parts. There are, by design, dissonant voices in this collection, and the intent is to have them work together to indicate the shape of the field.

In this introduction, I will try to spell out the contribution of the collection as a whole, and argue for the usefulness of thinking of media history as a field, in spite of the fact that it is hardly a coherent field.

Approaches

Media history is an interdiscipline that brings historical research into dialogue with the unruly tribe of communication theories. Historical research in this formulation can be of two sorts. One is the historical work of historians with degrees in history working in departments of history, and I'll refer to this in shorthand as history from now on. The other is historical work done by scholars in many other disciplines, and I'll refer to this as historical studies. History remains relatively non-theoretical. A sophisticated engagement with theory (or any substitute term, like interpretation or methodology) is not a requirement for a piece of work being determined good or valuable by historians. Good historical work is defined not so much by theoretical or methodological correctness but by two more pragmatic standards: whether the author has made a good-faith effort to look at everything relevant to the subject matter and whether the author has sufficiently addressed one's work to the ongoing conversations of other historians. Historians have paid attention over the past few decades to the theoretical underpinnings of historical narrative (White, 1973) and have also thought some about the stuff they draw on, the archive, and how it's been shaped and selected and preserved (Burton, 2003; Robertson, 2011; Smith, 1998). But attention to these discussions is a hood ornament of a history, not part of the engine or drive train.

Historical studies tend to be more engaged with theory and methodology. Historical sociology or anthropology or economics, for instance, often sets out to test a theory, or tries to clear the same methodological threshold as other research in the same discipline. Media historians often look like historical sociologists in this regard.

Media histories differ from other historical studies, though, in that they tend not to have a body of theory that they call their own. Media theory is an ad hoc assemblage of theories drawn from other fields and disciplines and then (sometimes) modified by being addressed to processes of mediation. At this moment, there is no standard version of media theory. Nor is there a standard list of communication theories. Communication scholars have been playing with schemata of media

approaches and theories for quite some time (Berelson, 1959; Craig, 1999), and may have moved closer to a standard taxonomy, but there are damned few theories that every media scholar is expected to know, and those don't seem to add up to either a worldview or a toolkit. Even if media studies is moving in the direction of coherence (an arguable proposition), other social sciences and humanities seem to be moving in the opposite direction, decreasing the likelihood that media studies will ever arrive at a moment of stabilization.

So when I say that media history mediates between historical work and communication theories, I'm not talking about a dialectic between two stable entities. Instead, both partners in this negotiation contain multitudes. As a result, the boundaries of media history are very difficult to describe. Those boundaries change not just in the present but in the past. Work that was written in previous decades gets hailed into media history in a process of irredentism² (Peters, 1986). Just as dead people may find themselves baptized into Mormonism, Elizabeth Eisenstein awoke one day to discover that she was a media historian.

Because of the ad hoc way in which media history has grown, this book takes a multidimensional approach to mapping it as a field. The first dimension, Part 1 of the book, consists of approaches, and represents the theoretical domain of media history. A critical reader will notice a hard core of dead white men at the top of this section – Marx, Innis, McLuhan, Foucault. Essays centered around figures like these are coupled with essays about approaches like race/ethnicity and gender. Those essays may seem to a critical reader to be compensatory, but they are not add-ons. Scholars of gender insist that every history has an element of gender to it, even if unacknowledged, in the same way that Marx says every history has an element of political economy to it. Each of these chapters is meant to take on a body of notions that can and should play in every work of media history. Any monograph in media history ought to acknowledge questions of class and economics, technology and culture, identity and discourse. These questions are not unique to media history or media studies, but they are fundamentally constitutive of any account of the media.

These chapters also begin to nominate entries to a canon. Media historians do tend to have read the same basic books. Some of these really belong to media scholarship. Harold Adams Innis, for instance, is read a little bit by economists and geographers, but is primarily taken seriously by media scholars. McLuhan has readers across the humanities, but is an exotic there, often invoked only as a straw man. Most of the authors of the foundational approaches had no investment in media scholarship so called. Marx, Foucault, and Habermas speak to the full range of the social sciences and humanities. Each of them inspired a next generation, also frequently cited here: McLuhan and Innis begat Walter Ong, James Carey, and Neil Postman (Marvin in this volume); Marx's work (Mosco in this volume) oriented Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and Herb Schiller; numerous scholars of the history of sexuality, the history of science, and the study of governmentality continue the legacy of Foucault (Packer in this volume); Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner offered

contrapuntal voices to Habermas's. This second generation, too, did not have an investment in media studies as a field.

Also canonical is a range of historical work that sometimes tracks the theoretical work. The other Marx, Leo (Mosco in this volume), is an example, as is Eisenstein and a series of other scholars – Robert Darnton, Roger Chartier, Natalie Zemon Davis, Adrian Johns – who are identified with the formation that calls itself “the history of the book” (Zboray & Zboray in this volume). Benedict Anderson has had a tremendous impact among media historians, although often through a superficial appropriation of his concept of imagined communities. Scholars who study identity in media history (Soderlund and Squires in this volume) usually have read W. E. B. DuBois, Omi and Winant, and Joan Scott, who do not define themselves as media scholars, as well as Stuart Hall, who does. A pair of social histories from the last decade are more directly aimed at media history: Asa Briggs and Peter Burke's *Social History of the Media* (2005) and Paul Starr's *Creation of the Media* (2004). Briggs and Burke are historians by training, and Starr is a sociologist; their books were written with an awareness of their impact on media history but without an investment in an identity as media studies scholarship.

This canon-in-the-making outlines a common set of problems around which media histories orbit. These problems are not specific to media history, however, and are broadly shared across the social sciences and humanities. The problem of empire is the gravitational center of studies of writing and communication in the ancient world. The problem of the circuit of meaning is the central motif in histories of print culture, which tend to dwell on how ideas were disseminated through the production, distribution, and consumption of texts. The problem of the public gives urgency to journalism history and the history of freedom of expression and communication policy. The problem of the local and the global informs the study of the movement of messages through space and across borders, expressed in frames ranging from cultural imperialism to hybridity to modernization. The problem of representation is one of the more powerful drivers of the analysis of media content. The problem of capitalism appears in accounts of media commercialization, media ownership, consumerism, and advertising support. The problem of the modern and postmodern invites studies of how media forms hail people into configurations as readers or as audience members or as hybrid producer/consumers, and how media institutions and media professionals won and then lost the ability to stabilize meanings. Astride all of them is the problem of democracy.

Moments

The heart of this book is a set of chapters devoted to specific moments. The list of moments is non-exclusive and sometimes overlapping; some specific texts and authors appear in more than one of these chapters. One could easily imagine other

chapters and other organizations. Much of this particular list orients around communication technologies, like writing or the telegraph. Others deal with grand historical moments like the Enlightenment. The logic behind this selection is to follow the scholarship: to focus on objects around which work from various fields coalesces. There is an emphasis on English-language scholarship in this selection, but at least it's an ethnocentrism with a guilty conscience.

A number of topics appear recurrently in these chapters. These topics may come to be the ground on which broader media histories emerge. Among these topics are journalism, the public sphere, technology, markets, and policy; lurking as yet unrecognized is work. These topics are thoroughly entangled with each other, with the public sphere coming up repeatedly in conjunction with several others, and markets and policy continually making cameo appearances.

Journalism is a particularly well-represented topic. Journalism history is one of the oldest and most firmly institutionalized modes of media history, claiming its own scholarly organizations and journals. For all that, it is not a deeply thought-through field. Even now, as journalism as a normative practice, as a viable occupation, and as a social institution is experiencing disruptions that commentators label a crisis, journalism historians are slow to recognize the stakes (Nerone, 2011; for two remarkable exceptions, see McChesney & Nichols, 2011; Zelizer, 2010). But the emergence of a recognition of the transnational dimension of journalism's history is one of the more promising developments.

Four essays in Part 2 specifically address journalism, and they are broken down geographically. In addition, a fifth deals with the international wire services, the infrastructure of a global news system that has had powerful influence on national developments. The geographical chapters deal with Europe (primarily Germany, France, and Britain), North America (primarily the United States), South Korea, and China. These are mostly narrative in structure.

Differences in the style and tone of these pieces reflect regional differences in both scholarship and news systems. The European history (Wilke in this volume) takes primacy in time; the Europeans invented the term, and inaugurated what became a global practice. The European invention of journalism is characterized by fragmentation along national lines and by strong interaction with states, which entailed an emphasis on centers of power and especially capital cities.

Modern journalism grew from both the struggle to free the press from state control and the rise of new, more market-oriented business models. The first was framed in the West by a notion of the public sphere; it is a matter of debate whether its development resembled the Habermasian model. In North America, and particularly in the United States (Kaplan in this volume), a set of normative ideas about how the press was supposed to facilitate the public deliberation of citizens exerted a gravitational force on public policy, especially the construction of a postal system as an infrastructure for the press (John, 1995; see also Chapter 13, this volume). Coupled with artisanal production by printer-editors, the North American system took on a fundamentally different cast than the European one that had seeded it. It also provided a resource for an emerging system of mass popular politics.

In the mid-nineteenth century, a combination of a market revolution (Sellers, 1994) and the emergence of a telegraph–railroad infrastructure transformed the news system (see John in this volume). A more commercialized press began to produce a news culture distinguished by event-oriented and eventually neutral or objective items that acquired commodity value through the labor of reporters and through distribution as saleable items through the wires (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Chalaby, 2000). When news organizations industrialized – became big businesses among other big businesses – they repurposed elements of the norms of the public sphere into an ideology of professionalism and social responsibility that could explain and justify the power they were recognized to hold. They encouraged the growth of journalism degree programs in colleges and universities. They began to export this ideology to the rest of the world. The Western wire services created a global news system in the second half of the nineteenth century (see Rantanen in this volume), forming a material base for the transmission of Western journalism as a news style.

The Asian chapters are again quite different, reflecting both the remarkable transformations of the countries they cover and the challenges of present-day journalism and journalism education in those countries (Kim and Chen & Wang in this volume). The histories they tell share a series of themes: a prehistory of “indigenous” journalism in the court papers of Confucian monarchs, an encounter with Western colonialism, an initial encounter with Western forms of journalism, the interaction of journalism with a struggle for national liberation, the transformative impact of World War II and its aftermath the continuing negotiation with state power, and the extraordinary recent experience with digital technology.

The journalism history chapters are more concretely institutional than the rest of the book. They can tell the story of a recognized formation of practices and ideas embodied in organizations that have left archives and that interact with other agencies like states, universities, and advertisers who also generate archives. They can work from a significant body of previous scholarship on specific news organizations, journalists, legal controversies, and national press systems. There is a global history of Western hegemonic journalism. At the same time, the boundaries of this history are not settled. This is most clear in the Asian case studies, in which hegemonic Western journalism has only somewhat colonized the news system, while other journalisms, ranging from Confucian admonition and Maoist self-criticism to citizen journalism, offer counter-histories. The act of writing journalism history, in such a fluid situation, can contribute to a redefinition of journalism’s identity.

The chapters on technologies are more abstract. Most trace the assembling of elements into familiar forms – instruments or assemblages – that have some built-in affordances that in turn provide some agency in historical processes. Historical work on communication technologies has settled in to a middle ground between the sort of muscular technological determinism argued by Innis and McLuhan and a contrary argument from social determinism that can be found everywhere from Milton’s *Areopagitica* to the limited effects model of media influence. In this middle ground, there is a soft determinism that comes from the way technologies are socially constructed.

The history of the printing revolution provides a convenient parable of the interplay of these positions. From the Renaissance to the scholarship of Innis and McLuhan, the printing press was celebrated as the tool that enabled Western civilization. A large body of scholarship based partly on careful research into the invention and dissemination of print technology in fifteenth-century Europe (mostly ignoring its invention in other places) and a formalist analysis of the abstract technology saw powerful effects generated more or less automatically. The most hyperbolic version of this position is McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy*, which attributes to printing not just Western rationality but also the discovery of depth in perspective, a side effect of a reorganization of the sensorium. An initial rejoinder to this hard technological determinism came from Elizabeth Eisenstein's epic work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1980). As its title suggests, Eisenstein's book also sees powerful effects, but they come about because printing reorganized the environment of European intellectuals through the mass reproduction of standardized texts. Still, Eisenstein settled on a feature of the technology as the prime mover of this agency and called it "typographical fixity." A generation later, Adrian Johns (1998) introduced another dimension of social construction, arguing that fixity itself was a characteristic that had to be built into printing, and that initially printing had introduced heightened uncertainty into intellectual life by spawning uncontrollable flows of forgeries and piracies.

The chapters on technology in this volume deal with a broad range of objects: writing (Peters), printing (Kittler), the telegraph and telephone (Rantanen, John), sound technologies (Rothenbuhler), photography (Robertson), motion pictures (Wasson, Wasser), broadcasting and television (Ouellette), computing (Grier), and mobile telephony and other digital technologies (Andrejevic). These chapters too are quite diverse. John Durham Peters explores a vast history and a large spectrum of scholarship on various writing systems, while David Alan Grier offers a minute examination of a string of applications of computing technology to newspaper production. In spite of this diversity, several common themes emerge.

Each of these technologies is presented as socially constructed at some level. Usually the construction involves the interplay of different types of actors. In the industrial era and after, the interplay generally assumes similar forms across culture industries (see Wasser in this volume), which constitute a kind of braiding of four histories: of science, of entrepreneurs, of regulators, and of publics or audiences. The history of theatrical film is a good case in point. There is a scientific history stretching from the camera obscura through the development of photography and the magic lantern to different apparatuses for film exhibition; this trajectory can be captured in shorthand form by narrating innovators in a sequence: Daguerre, then Muybridge, then Edison, more or less. Then there are the various attempts to monetize these innovations through first a "cinema of attractions" (Gunning, 1990), then through a variety of projection venues, culminating by the 1920s in the classic studio system in the United States, with parallel histories in some other countries. As entrepreneurs competed for market control, they engaged with the state on several levels: as regulators of exhibition spaces, as censors of film content, as enforcers of antitrust

law, and perhaps most importantly as enforcers of patent and copyright law, which became the key tools by which some measure of industrial control was maintained. Throughout this history, ordinary people inflected developments continually: as consumers, as fans, as crowds, as voters, and arguably as cultural citizens in a cinematic public sphere (Hansen, 1991). So the social construction of theatrical film involved a complex negotiation among many different actors, with the decisive role being played sometimes by entrepreneurs, sometimes by policymakers, sometimes by audiences, and sometimes by technicians. Similar stories are told about many technologies in this volume.

One narrative arc that reappears often in these pages is mobile privatization. Initially coined by Raymond Williams (1971) to describe the vector behind the social construction of television, mobile privatization denotes the deep drive in modern capitalist societies to reconfigure practices so that people can engage in them as private individuals or nuclear families moving freely through social and geographical space. Mobile privatization offers a shared trajectory uniting disparate objects and systems that moved activities from public to private ownership and control in the course of the rise of mass consumer societies: the automobile, moving transportation from trams and railways to the suburban garage; the refrigerator, moving food storage from the public market to the family kitchen (Hartley, 1999); the telephone, moving social interaction from the public street corner to the private parlor; and, of course, radio and television, moving entertainment from the public theater to the living room (Hay, 2006). Media technologies help people move more quickly and smoothly through shared spaces too, providing a kind of capsule (de Cauter, 2004): think of the way a newspaper can be held up as a kind of shield, preventing unwanted interaction on a bus or subway; or the way people submerge their gaze into a smartphone, effacing their surroundings and immersing themselves in an extralocal environment. Common sense tells us that mobile privatization sums up much of the work of the developing digital media system, intensifying the capsule of privacy by detaching it from the defined space of the home and the car. But even within this very convincing narrative there are contrary positions to hold, one in which the tools of mobile privatization are “technologies of freedom” (Pool, 1984), and another in which they are “technologies of oppression” (Howard, 2010, pp. 13–14).

The “technology of oppression” version of mobile privatization runs along two tracks, which we might call Foucault and Marx. The Foucault track sees the mobile private individual as the ideal subject of neoliberal governmentality, deploying the tools of digital communication to render oneself visible to surveillance and at the same time better self-disciplined. In the Marx track, mobile privatization accelerates the expropriation and accumulation of wealth, in large part by capturing unpaid labor that people misrecognize as play or leisure. The latter is Smythe’s (1994) argument in his famous “Blindspot” essay. It is also the argument of numerous critics of Facebook.

Late capitalism is another overarching topic in the essays on technologies. Repeatedly we see firms and corporations competing for monopoly control of industries. In turn, we see industries that are prone to concentration because of either

economies of scale associated with production technologies (see, for instance, the essays by Kaplan and Stole) or apparent instances of “natural monopoly” (see John and Rantanen). Media technologies tend to produce bottlenecks in distribution, either because of aspects of the technologies involved or because of the collusion of policymakers in reinforcing the market control of specific interests, for instance in spectrum allocation (McChesney, 1993) or in intellectual property law (Lessig, 1999). Yet monopoly is consistently seen as a problem. The media system is supposedly one of the infrastructures of democracy, so it follows that, if there are pools of monopoly in the media system, the media power generated will distort the conduct of public deliberation. A liberal could argue that the public sphere itself must be a monopoly. Even counterpublics cannot operate effectively in the absence of a hegemonic mainstream public sphere. How else can a coherent public opinion emerge? And if the public sphere must somehow exercise a monopoly, wouldn’t the media that serve it eventually, if only for efficiency’s sake, have to share some monopoly characteristics? Still, even conceding that, wouldn’t we want that monopoly power to be publicly held?

Work is a topic that is the direct subject of only one essay (Barnhurst) but that figures in a few others as well (Wasser, and also the essays on journalism). Media work usually has been thought of as white collar work, and the most familiar media occupations have either sought to professionalize or to control the labor market through unionization. These workers’ movements have had varying success, depending on where and when you look; for the most part, “technical” occupations have organized more successfully than “creative” ones (including journalism as a creative occupation). Where media workers have won some measure of autonomy, there has often been a gender component; autonomous work is gendered male, historically. Women have often had to fight a war on two fronts in media workplaces – one against simple exclusion, and the other against a masculine workplace culture.

Implicit in the scholarship on these moments, as in much communication scholarship generally, is the unspoken presence of democracy as the master problem. Democracy appears in its political guise in the essays on journalism and in invocations of the public sphere; it appears in its cultural guise in the essays on media technologies. In either arena, democracy is supposed to involve dispersed and shared power, freedom from coercion, and an ability to engage in meaningful action in part through communication. For most of the scholars represented in this collection, and in this section in particular, the history of the media has not been a story of steady progress toward democracy. At the same time, it is hard for these and other media scholars to imagine democracy without the media.

The Foundations of Media Studies

The question of democracy also runs through the history of media studies. Part 3 features a series of essays on key moments in the history of media studies. A critic

might say that this part of the book is linked to the first two only by the accidental appearance of the word “history.” On the contrary, the history of the study of the media is in fact a modeling of the history of the media themselves. The rhythm of the life course of the field reflects a negotiation between the history of the media system and the history of the academic organizations and institutions that have housed its study and their own negotiations with the political forces that shape them.

There are three major moments in this history. The first extends from nineteenth-century arguments about the breakup of traditional communities in the process of industrialization and modernization, to World War I-era anxieties about the power of propaganda. The second moment overlaps with the first, examining the influence of media messages and media forms on public opinion in modern democracies, with the conflagration of World War II and the settlement achieved in Western countries afterward as pivotal. The third moment stretches from the critique of liberal versions of the influence of the media in democracies to the collapse of mass communication as a business model and the rise of networked digital communication in the past few years. Each moment engages with a specific dominant version of the media. The first moment engages mostly with “the press,” the second with “mass communications,” and the third with “media.”

The first moment (the subject of essays by Hardt, Collins, and Wahl-Jorgensen in this volume) began with the question of the impact of democracy and free markets on culture and politics. Key nineteenth-century statements of the question were de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, Mill’s *On Liberty*, and Le Bon’s *The Crowd*. In Germany, whose universities produced the founders of graduate programs in US universities, sociologists took on the study of the press as an institution, framing its social importance in terms of the shift from community to society. One product of German university education was Robert Ezra Park, who became a key figure in the Chicago School of sociology.

Park’s career offers a neat container for many of the influences of this early period of media studies. As an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, he studied with John Dewey (who later moved to Chicago and then to Columbia University, both key locations for the gestation of media studies). Upon graduation, Park went to work as a journalist. Then he took an MA in philosophy at Harvard, where he studied with William James. He then did postgraduate work in Germany, studying with Georg Simmel at Berlin and then Wilhelm Windelband in Heidelberg, where he took his PhD in philosophy. He returned to the United States and taught briefly at Harvard before going to work with Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee. In 1914, he joined the sociology department at the University of Chicago.

Park’s combination of US pragmatist philosophy and German sociology was characteristic of media studies in the early decades of the twentieth century. Media had been called forth to fill a vacuum in meaning making for populations uprooted by industrialization and urbanization. Chicago was a particularly interesting laboratory for studying such media. The population of Chicago included large pools of recent immigrants, divided by language, nationality, religion, and political

persuasion, segregated by neighborhood and exploited by employers and purveyors of goods and entertainment. Assuming the posture of progressive reformers, sociologists surveyed this population to find out how media took over the role of cultural authority left vacant by immigration and social transformation, processes which had eclipsed the authority of parents, community, churches, and schools. Chicago sociologists and their fellow travelers, like George Herbert Mead and John Dewey, hoped that the media system would replace the meaningful culture produced by interaction with local communities by allowing people to form an equally meaningful culture rooted in a "Great Community" (Dewey, 1927), and that this culture would allow democracy to flourish in what Wallas had called the Great Society.

The press assumed great responsibility for constructing the great community. For Dewey and many others, the press had underperformed. Early media scholarship drew on a generation of populist criticism of the press as a big business, seeing it as in thrall to the "money power," as muckrakers called concentrated wealth at the beginning of the twentieth century. The climax of this moment of press criticism, and of this moment of media studies, came in the response to World War I. The Great War had given scholars a chance to see the power of propaganda when directed by central governments and deployed through the press. The disillusionment expressed in Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) is understandable, considering Lippmann's participation in the Wilson Administration's efforts to make the war make the world safe for democracy. Lippmann linked his critique of press performance to an indictment of market forces, on the one hand, and of the flawed cognitive machinery of ordinary people on the other. Both parts of that critique yielded research agendas for communication scholars.

The second moment, the moment of mass communications, overlapped with the first. For scholars of Park, Dewey, and Lippmann's generation, the question of the media also involved a fear of cultural anarchy springing from the strangeness of new urban populations. Eastern and Southern Europeans mixing with older immigrant populations from Germany and Ireland and occupying neighborhoods next to growing African American ghettos seemed defenseless against the material that appeared in their newspapers and, beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, on their movie screens. The influence of the movies became a major topic of concern. An audience that included many young people as well as many immigrants seemed especially vulnerable to the obvious emotional and sensual power of the motion picture. And this power was wielded by shady entrepreneurs employing stars of questionable morality. It was this set of anxieties that produced the first massive funded study of media effects, the Payne Fund studies of motion picture influences. It also informed the early studies supported by Rockefeller Foundation funding, like Robert and Helen Lynd's *Middletown*. In a more radical vein, an anxiety about the way the media system might mimic fascism marked the work of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, and others of the Frankfurt School (see Kellner in this volume).

Meanwhile, other researchers undertook studies funded by sources more interested in applications for profitable media operation. Advertising agencies wanted to be able to tell their clients scientifically what worked to convince consumers; broadcasters wanted to be able to tell their advertisers scientifically what sorts of people watched which programs; political groups wanted to know scientifically how public opinion stood on matters of relevance to elections. This sort of “administrative” research did not fear the power of the media but wished to harness it.

All of these strains came together at a few key institutions. Chief among them was Columbia University, where Paul Lazarsfeld headed the Bureau of Applied Social Research. Lazarsfeld unsuccessfully courted scholars like Adorno and C. Wright Mills, while forming more harmonious partnerships with Frank Stanton, the head of CBS, and Robert K. Merton. Yale University was another key center, housing social psychologists studying media influence like Carl Hovland and political scientists like Harold Lasswell, who wrote formative volumes on propaganda.

As World War II approached, many of these scholars were recruited by the Rockefeller Foundation into a communication seminar that met regularly to try to formulate some covering procedures and terminology for what looked to be an emerging social science discipline. Wilbur Schramm, a product of Harvard and the University of Iowa who would later found PhD programs at Illinois and Stanford, was also a member of this group. When the United States entered the war, most of this group played a role in the war effort, working with the Office of War Information.

World War II produced a settlement among the competing schools of studying media effects. The compromise consisted of an identification of the problem with the so-called “5w” model of communication processes – who says what to whom through which channel with what effect. Media effects would thus take the form of changes in individuals’ attitudes, and would be measurable through survey research and experimental study. And a rough set of parameters for findings also appeared at that point in what later came to be called the “limited effects” model (Simonson in this volume). In the limited effects model, media content changes attitudes only under specific circumstances and only with the help of opinion leaders or support from a primary group. The major function of the media in this model was reinforcement. Institutionalized by Lazarsfeld and his students, especially Bernard Berelson and Elihu Katz, this model remains very influential.

Left out of the postwar settlement in media studies were radicals of the left and cultural critics of the right. These continued to voice criticism of “mass culture” and “mass society,” seeing the “mass media” as a central element. On the left, the strongest statement of this position came in the book *The Power Elite*, by Lazarsfeld’s estranged protégé C. Wright Mills (1956).

Through the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, academic work tended to confirm the limited effects model. In the 1970s, a number of approaches appeared, proposing stronger media effects but remaining within the limited effects paradigm and applying the same methods. Among the more vital are agenda-setting, spiral of

silence, and uses and gratifications. It is notable that the first two deal primarily with news media. In the 1980s and 1990s, studies of news media influence would also embrace priming effects, framing effects, and indexing, all indicating that the news system could function as an extension of power.

Intimations of media power really blossomed in the Western academy after 1980. By that time, numerous forces outside the academy had already argued the case for media power. In the United States, the civil rights and antiwar movements found a media voice only after a long struggle. On the global scene, a movement for a New World Information and Communication Order had appeared, sponsored in UNESCO by members of the Non-Aligned Movement (see Nordenstreng in this volume).

The rise of critical approaches to media studies can be looked upon as a shift in object of study from “mass communications” to “the media.” To some, the media meant the media system, and was understood as a subsystem of industrial capitalism (see McChesney in this volume, on the political economy of communication). To others, it meant the multiform cultural environment of industrial societies (see McCarthy and Logue in this volume, on cultural studies). Both of these strands drew inspiration from the Marxist tradition, with the political economists crediting Smythe, Schiller, and Garnham and cultural studies scholars crediting Williams, Thompson, and Hall. A broad area of agreement was often obscured in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States and United Kingdom – mostly in the United States – by eruptions of pointed disagreement.

Conclusion

The history of the field in this volume trails off in the 1990s, before the advent of digital media. It is likely that the field will reconfigure itself as the impact of the digital environment becomes clear. The rise of network media will oblige some of us to rethink what we have meant by media, and when we do that we may also have to rethink media history.

The useful lessons of history usually begin with a negative. “Never forget” is the prime example. In media history and in the history of media studies, the obvious lesson might be stated this way: “Don’t assume that the term ‘media’ has a stable meaning.” The word itself is relatively recent in coinage, at least as a term applied to communication. In the nineteenth century it was applied to people who communicated with the spirits of the dead. But before that it referred in art, physics, and chemistry to the material that a work or a process used. Air was a medium for sound. Canvas was a medium for painting. Gelatin was a medium for growing bacteria. In the 1920s in the United States it came to be used in advertising agencies to refer to anything that could carry an ad, replacing the term “space,” which had been made archaic by the advent of commercial radio. Only in the second half of the 1930s did that usage become more commonly seen in scholarly and popular writing. In fact, the word was novel enough in the 1960s that many thought McLuhan had invented

it. In the 1930s, media referred to radio, magazines, newspapers, and motion pictures; in the 1960s, television was the dominant referent. Now “new” media, or network media or social media, are displacing television and the press in both popular and scholarly conversations. So the meaning of the word “media” has changed several times in the lifespan of the older living media historians.

Therefore, to return to the theme I struck at the beginning of this introduction, we can expect continuing anarchy, both in media studies and more specifically in media history. There are neither the intellectual nor the institutional resources to stabilize either of them as a discipline. But again I think this is a good thing. There is a persisting illusion that knowledge, and especially historical knowledge, works best when it is authoritatively known. Granted, we want to be able to work with a vast array of solid facts or information; nothing is more useless than a debate in which everyone gets to make up their own facts. But historical knowledge is not *per se* factual; rather, it is interpretive. And if everyone agrees on the interpretive level, then the production of new histories becomes a tedious antiquarian enterprise. It is the interplay of master narratives that makes media history so appealing as a field. One could say that there is too much anarchy; exercises like this book are meant to offer some kind of order. They can try to bring researchers in the field into conversation with each other, and to make them more aware of their compatibilities and dissonances. They cannot, however, make this field into a discipline.

NOTES

- 1 One version of this saying comes from Geertz (1973, p. 27): “There is an Indian story – at least I heard it as an Indian story – about an Englishman who, having been told that the world rested on a platform which rested on the back of an elephant which rested in turn on the back of a turtle, asked (perhaps he was an ethnographer; it is the way they behave), what did the turtle rest on? Another turtle. And that turtle? ‘Ah, Sahib, after that it is turtles all the way down.’”
- 2 Irredentism refers to attempts to “redeem” lands ruled by another country on the basis of claims about ethnic solidarity or historical possession.

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Media Studies

The Interdiscipline of the Present and the Future

Angharad N. Valdivia

Media studies is a rapidly growing, widely relevant, and evolving field – an interdiscipline (Valdivia, 2003). While some scholars have bemoaned the loss of focus on process and effects, especially on milestone studies (DeFleur, 1998), others find the breadth and porous contours to be conducive to a worthwhile intellectual pursuit (Sterne, 2005). To be sure, between 1998 and the present, there has been a huge growth in interpretive and critical approaches, which have nonetheless flourished in the margins as the effects paradigm – the stuff of milestones – has firmly retained its central place in the field, at least in the United States and the Netherlands. Indeed, efforts to map out the diversity of the field of communication (Craig, 1999, 2001), which we might call the broader umbrella for media studies, yield a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping and other times mutually exclusive approaches. The terrain of contemporary media studies acknowledges that most of us live in intensely mediated environments, so that Livingstone (2009) writes on the mediation of everything, and Hay (2000) writes of refrigerator studies. The former expands on how media and communication are “ever more crucial in today’s world” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 13), and the latter asks us – as a field over a decade ago, while continuing to encourage us (Hay, 2010, 2011) – to consider the broader web of networks to which other technologies, such as refrigerators and toasters, contribute in terms of routines and practices that serve to mediate the world for us. The latter line of questioning has proven immensely prescient as many of us live in highly networked webs of media and communication, where not only can our location be pinpointed at any given moment thanks to elements in our mobile technology, but also, if we chose to, we can broadcast a narrative of our location and other audiovisual bits of information constantly to many – such as our hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter or Tumblr followers.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Nonetheless, whether we are talking of old media technologies or institutions (see Nerone, Volume 1, *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), we are witnessing the constitution of new audiences and a shift in traditional audiences (see Parameswaran, Volume 4, *Audience and Interpretation*) through the invitation offered by seductive content in a dynamically converging and synergized media environment (see Mazzarella, Volume 3, *Content and Representation*). The effects of these technologies and content continue to be measured and studied (see Scharrer, Volume 5, *Media Effects/Media Psychology*). While media platforms and patterns of production are converging, enduring tendencies toward concentration of ownership and control of media industries coexist with the emergence of new patterns of labor, practices, and updated forms of exploitation (see Mayer, Volume 2, *Media Production*, as well as some chapters in Gates, Volume 6, *Media Studies Futures*). This is not surprising given the rapidly expanding new media and communications technologies, many of whose functions replicate previous technologies while other uses (and abuses) bring new possibilities, utopian and dystopian, to the fore (see Gates, Volume 6). Unexpected global locations of nodes of influences result in previously unsuspected transnational alliances and networks (Castells, 2009).

As an early caveat to this triumphal celebration of media, I must remind readers that most of the above sentiment refers to a media-rich group that luxuriates in a wealth of networks and technologies. Yet we must not forget that even as I write this introduction at the very end of 2011, fully 50% of the global population have intermittent access to electricity. Mobile telephony may be widely spread, but the radio remains the most reliable global medium (see the *Journal of Radio Studies*). Beyond the fact that it is cheap, it neither relies on nor requires electricity or literacy, in English or any language. Furthermore, despite our current fixation with digital, wireless, and mobile media technologies, in times of crisis – whether natural such as a huge earthquake or in wartime – when the electric networks are down and we are thrown back into old school forms of media and communication, radio returns to its central location as a reliable and essential medium. So before you continue reading this introduction, or continue to read any of the absolutely outstanding volumes of this encyclopedia project, go out and buy yourself a radio – one that is both electric and battery powered. You might never need it, but if you do, you will be very relieved to have it.

The fact is that media are everywhere, and nearly everyone shares lifelong experience with and expertise on particular forms of media. Dating back to the 1920s – as identified both in Nerone, Volume 1 and Mazzarella, Volume 3, the study of media has been multi-modal and heterogeneous. Theoretical and methodological complexity has grown since the Payne Fund Studies. International, transnational, and global perspectives have become absolutely essential. Not that they ever were not, but now that media are produced, consumed, and circulated transnationally, media studies has to take this into account. Inclusivity of the heterogeneous components of the population in regard to the media has also grown. Scholarship that was once nationally bound and focused on White middle-class males has expanded to take into consideration gender, nation, region, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and class.

Furthermore, as both Downing (2003) and Castells (2010) remind us, we must not forget the importance of religion in the contemporary world, as many armed conflicts revolve around religion, and media content, production, audiences, and effects are interlaced with religious impulses.

Media studies is an interdiscipline. As such it draws on and benefits from a number of contributing fields such as history, philosophy, psychology, political science, education, literature, and sociology. Yet even as it draws on those many fields, it is its own area of studies. Too often other fields, whose interdisciplinarity takes them into media studies, see this interdiscipline as new – as in, “oh look, we just discovered that we ought to look at media.” Our field becomes the direct object of other scholars’ deployment of the myth of discovery. Just like Columbus discovered “America,”¹ scholars from other fields continue to “discover” media and media studies. A century’s worth of theories and research disappears in the process, and many of us often find ourselves in other disciplines’ conferences listening to presentations that implicitly suggest direct effects, transparency, mimetic images, and so on. Transparency, when media content, industries, audiences, and practices are treated as if they spoke for themselves, as if there were no mediation, is often the tactic taken by scholars outside our discipline. What we as a field contribute to the understanding of culture and society is, at the very least, that mediation is complex and that understanding mediation helps us to uncover patterns of power, distribution, and potential justice. Media studies is about unearthing and maximizing the democratic potential of practices, institutions, technologies, and audiences that pervade our contemporary life.

Nonetheless, as Gates reminds us in her introduction to Volume 6, one central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: What counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated media” capture a general sense of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the complex dimensions and issues that these terms encompass? By paying careful attention to issues of history and context, this encyclopedia seeks to trouble the usage of these terms even as they are used rather carelessly in popular culture and public policy.

The six separate volumes of this encyclopedia were present as six separate sections in *A Companion to Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2003), the volume that provides the model for this encyclopedia and that was, in turn, modeled after McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*. The editors of the individual volumes put together a stellar cast of authors who in turn produced original chapters. All volume editors were asked, indeed implored, to compose a table of contents that was inclusive in many ways. First, inclusivity in terms of global topics was paramount, and we strived for inclusivity in terms of authors and global regions as well. This, as I have discussed elsewhere (Valdivia, 2011b), is not as easy as it sounds. Differential access to the latest

research, culturally different approaches to writing and developing an argument, resources that might enable a given scholar or team to develop a project and get it ready for publication, and so on, are all variables that effectively discriminate in favor of those of us in well-funded research universities in wealthy countries. We recruited some scholars whose work we translated into English, and all editors worked assiduously to cast as global a network as possible.

Another element of inclusivity was paradigm diversity. Schooled at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) at the University of Illinois, I am the recipient of an educational tradition that highly values paradigm inclusivity. Insofar as it was possible, we included scholars using quantitative and qualitative approaches, sometimes both of them at the same time. Obviously the *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume focused solely on the social scientific tradition, while both the *Content and Representation* and *Audience and Interpretation* volumes included scholarship using both approaches. A third element of inclusivity was gender, race, and sexuality diversity. Cutting across as a focus that can be conducted in the research included in any of the six volumes of this project is the work of transnational feminism and globalizing gender studies (Hegde, 2006). Editors sought scholarship that would include these vectors of difference, as media studies really makes no sense without their consideration. Yet even within each of these categories we encounter new gaps that merit more research. For example, as Mazzarella mentions in the introduction to Volume 3: “the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008).” The rise of masculinity studies follows feminist studies as a logical move once we realize that femininity is socially constructed. Indeed, this is a process that this collection of volumes entices us to accomplish: a greater degree of preciseness to this complex concept of media studies, which all of us who work within the interdiscipline intellectually seek to explicate.

As a final note about process, these volumes have been peer reviewed in an innovative manner for an edited collection. First, each table of contents was submitted to the peer review of a senior scholar within that area of the field and edited accordingly. Then, as the chapters came in, within each volume authors reviewed other chapters. Ideally, each chapter was reviewed by two other authors as well as by its editors. As the overall editor of the project, I carefully reviewed all volume editor introductory chapters. Now the review process is turned over to you, the reader.

Media Studies Today

As an organizing principle for this book, I have followed since 2003 the structure provided by many different editions of Denis McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*:

An Introduction. Dating back to the first edition in 1983 and up to the sixth edition in 2010, whose name has changed, appropriately enough, to McQuail's *Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail provided a manageable way of dividing up the field into components that, while overlapping – as they had to be since these components were teased out more for scholarly inquiry than because they are discrete and differentiated – provided a useful way to look at the breadth of study of the media. We all experience media as an integrated experience. Media inherit values and histories that are in turn explicitly or implicitly incorporated into their production; then we either consume and/or interpret media in relation to regimes of representation, with particular audiences and interpretive tactics in mind, with some desired effects over which we have little control, and contributing to a future that – like effects – we wish we could influence but really cannot. Still for the purposes of research, we tease out the media experience into a number of areas.

The volumes of this encyclopedia match the sections of the *Companion*, which used McQuail's schema and added the "futures" section. Thus we have history, production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, and futures. We will later add a "methods" volume to complete the encyclopedia. While these areas are teased out for the purposes of research, there is great cross-pollination by scholars in media studies. We find that some scholars use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or at least rely on both. We also find that many scholars write about two or more of the six areas mentioned above. For example, a scholar such as Francombe (2010) combines the study of representation with attention to issues of labor. Durham (2004) combines analysis representation with exploration of audience and interpretation. These are just two of the recent pieces of scholarship that I mention in this introduction, and there are many more such overlaps within the volumes of the encyclopedia.

In fact, many of the major trends in current research encompass holistic media studies approaches. Among these contemporarily salient research projects are network analysis (e.g., Castells, 2009, 2010; Chan, 2007, 2011, forthcoming; Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010); girl studies (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Durham, 2004; Projansky, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Valdivia, 2008, 2009, 2011a); transnational feminism (Hegde, 2006; Molina Guzmán, 2010; Valdivia, 2011b); and neoliberalism as an undergirding framework of analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Hay, 2000, 2010, 2011; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monge, 2009). McCarthy (2011) expands the focus of neoliberalism in media to the educational system and the efforts of many cities, such as Chicago, to become a cosmopolitan, globally vibrant center of economic activity, thus linking media studies to educational policy studies.

Many of these recent research tendencies converge in the critical examination of the "posts." Scholars develop amazing analyses demonstrating the potential of an intersectional approach that uses race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and class all at once, for people experience these elements in an integrated manner. Roopali Mukherjee's *The Racial Order of Things* (2006) set the bar for intersectional analysis of the "post-soul" era. Tasker and Negra (2007) provide a comprehensive introduction to the political implications of postfeminist culture, while Molina Guzmán and

Valdivia (2004) apply the intersectional approach to the study of celebrity Latinas. Joseph (2010), in her provocatively entitled “Tyra Banks is Fat!” (a title that, to be fair, comes straight out of tabloid magazines and television coverage), explores the implicit racism and sexism of the postracial and postfeminist veneer of reality television in general, and Tyra Banks’s brand in particular. Molina Guzmán (2010) explores the transnational deployment and commodification of the Latina body, both spectacular and everyday. The politics of the post appears in all elements of media studies as these scholars foreground media studies even as they situate their work within a broader context of geopolitics and the dynamically changing mediascapes. While it may be fashionable to suggest the end of media studies, just as others have previously declared the end of history or of ideology, what this encyclopedia convincingly illustrates is the field’s ability to expand as new practices, technologies, and institutions arise. As many of the editors and contributors will document, “new media” is a misnomer as neither the technology nor the uses or assemblages are so new (see Morley, 2006). What at first may seem to be epochal breaks are revealed by many of the contributors to be far more continuous elements in relation to history, culture, and media.

Editors and Volumes

We begin with normative theories and history. **John Nerone**, author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in US History* (1994), co-author, with Kevin Barnhurst, of *The Form of News: A History* (2001), and co-author and editor of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), as well as author of many other journal articles and book chapters, is the perfect historian to lead us through this fertile terrain of scholarship. Volume 1 on history underscores that while all media have long histories, historians agree neither on the definitive tale of origin nor on the particular historical approach. Moreover, Nerone, the careful historian, alerts us to the fact that even our use of the word media in relation to communications is quite recent.

Nerone’s volume includes normative and historical approaches. Both of these overlapping areas of study continue to inform the interdisciplinary, and my singling out of a few representative recent pieces of scholarship below is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative of the ongoing work. For example, Christians (2010) continues his leadership in the field of media ethics as he strives to expand scholars’ framework from a Western individualist universalism toward a communitarian model that takes into account a broader number of regions and countries. Similarly, Hartley (2007) takes us to China’s *Super Voice Girl*, its version of *American Idol* that is the US version of the British *Pop Idol*, to chart the global expansion of reality television. Plebiscitary industries and the loose equation of reactive entertainment votes with civic participation in a democratic process are issues at the core of contemporary discussions, or rather, popular celebrations, of the democratizing

influence of market-driven free labor from constructed audiences. In particular Hartley singles out China, wherein the political regime continues a very hands-on approach to issues of popular discussions even as media are becoming increasingly commercialized and adapting Western genres. Indeed, the entire deployment of reality television overlaps with discourses of neoliberalism as it shifts responsibility from the state and the collective to the moral labor of individuals (Hay, 2010, 2011; McCarthy et al., 2009; see also Bailey, 2011; Banet-Weiser, 2011), though this is an intrinsically contradictory position in places such as China where the state insists on making decisions, especially regarding media content regulation, even as it shifts moral and economic responsibility to individuals.

Historical research, drawing on normative frameworks or not, continues to offer media studies scholars great insight and tools with which to understand contemporary media. Furthermore, there is great diversity within historical approaches to media studies. At this point studies of memory continue to provide a welcome contribution to the work of media studies. Not surprisingly, Brockus (2004) examines the location of Disney in the US collective cultural memory and national identity. Disney studies is one way of charting US media industries, content, and audiences, especially in terms of media convergence and synergy at a global level. Another topic, special effects, something nearly all Hollywood blockbusters rely on, has received nearly no historical attention from media scholars. To the rescue comes Turnock (2009, 2010), who develops a history of special effects dating back to the production of *Star Wars* and the Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) studio that became the standard for special effects even to this day.

Beyond cultural memory and special effects as components of media history, we are also witnessing an explosion of careful work that revisits the archive, data, and documentation. For instance, Gitelman (2006) takes a fresh approach to the study of history, pointing out that even the archives are already mediated, linking them to the so-called “new” media. While there is much talk about new media, a well-versed media scholar, whose training includes a historical overview, will remember Marvin’s (1988) brilliant admonition that old media were once new, and so will our contemporary media be tomorrow’s old stuff. In addition to Gitelman, Robertson (2009) and Kafka (2009) take us back to technologies that we might not even think of as such, to address issues that are absolutely elemental in the contemporary setting of surveillance, global (im)mobility, and access to and record of any information. Robertson (2009, 2010) instructs us on the pedagogy and deployment of identity technologies, as the passport becomes a document that vouches for our national identity and indeed our very existence. Furthermore, the passport charts the evolution of border crossings, exclusive national belonging, and record keeping of national populations as central tasks of the modern nation-state. Hadlaw (2011) takes a decidedly old school look at early twentieth-century ads for AT&T telephones that literally instructed readers not only how to use the new technology, but also why speed and time had to be reconceptualized as tied to the marketplace, capital accumulation, and surplus value. This careful historical work helps us transition into the production

volume as telephone consumers had to be taught to prioritize elements of daily life that were previously seen as natural and noncommodifiable. Similarly, Kafka (2009) brilliantly studies that most elemental component of media – paper. It seems like such a simple task: how do we study the construction and use of paper, the “bureau” in bureaucratization, the work of scribes? Kafka concludes that: “As scholars continue to research the history of paperwork, we need to keep in mind that we are defending not only the ‘historical record,’ but the political one” (2009, p. 352). Indeed, these are the perfect words to keep in mind as we read the volume on history so elegantly crafted by John Nerone.

Volume 2, *Media Production*, is composed by **Vicki Mayer**. Among the many publications by Mayer, we can list *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (2011), *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and Mass Media* (2003), and *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (co-edited with M. J. Banks and M. T. Caldwell, 2009). Mayer begins her volume by reminding us that “[M]edia production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how.” We expect to find, and we are not disappointed, a combination of keen attention paid to the sociological approach to our field, something about which McQuail had previously written in *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), and the more critical analysis of neo-Marxist political economy now accompanied by a focus on labor issues in the global setting. Moreover, as explicitly stated in one of her book titles, Mayer paradigmatically maintains a dialogue between political economy and cultural studies, an approach that resonates with globally used approaches in our field. The tension between structure and agency pervades this fine volume. Mayer remarks that “[I]f the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers.” So the new production studies is global by necessity as transnational ownership and production of media industries cannot be denied; blends political economy and cultural studies; foregrounds issues of labor, both above and below the line; and takes up issues of networks, intellectual property, and subjectivity as producers are constructed in terms of categories of identity.

Production is a wide-ranging area of studies. A few examples of the state of the art in production studies follow. Chan takes up the challenge laid down by Castells and many other network scholars, and pursues a couple of case studies in Peru. The first one explores software networks (Chan, 2007) and the latter investigates ceramic production and regimes of intellectual property in relation to efforts to market that traditional craft globally (Chan 2011, forthcoming). Intellectual property is an important component of any discussion of production and global circulation of media or of any form of cultural products, as Boateng (2011) has demonstrated in relation to textile production in Ghana. As both Boateng and Chan have shown, unequal power

between the global North and South have widespread implications in terms of how Western-originated notions of intellectual property are deployed over global regions whose own traditions do not necessarily match individualist and market-driven definitions.

Looking at a very different type of media and group of media consumers and producers, yet resonating with many of the production issues brought out by Boateng and Chan, Banet-Weiser (2011) connects girls' YouTube video productions with neoliberal tendencies of marketing the self within heteronormative, market-driven forms of representation. The labor investment implicit in these forms of digital interventions is also discussed in some chapters of Volume 6 on futures. Additionally, the Banet-Weiser project combines production with representation research, and provides an ideal transition into discussing Volume 3 on content and representation.

Sharon Mazzarella, a prolific scholar of issues of youth and the media, leads us through the wide world of "content and representation." Author or editor of books including *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2010), *20 Questions about Youth and Media* (2007), *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2005), and *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (2001), Mazzarella is a rigorously trained social scientist who also pursues qualitative research. As such she is the ideal editor for this volume, which is respectful of both of those methodological approaches. Indeed, for many a budding media studies scholar, content and representation provide the first point of entry, as these are the aspects of media that we experience most directly. Although, of course, all media have normative implications, histories, and a complex web of production, most people focus on the finished product: the television show, the movie, the blog, the social media website, the song, the newspaper, the advertisement, the catalogue. Content analysis is alluring yet amazingly difficult to carry out. Representational analysis also bears the sophistication of a range of theories. Neither is an easy task, and quantitative approaches complement interpretive studies. Mazzarella presents a persuasive argument as to why content/representational analysis remains an essential component of media studies and why projects that are well carried out tell us much about the world and the circuit of culture.

To be expected, this area of research continues to be plentiful. The few research projects I mention speak to some of the pressing issues discussed in contemporary life, including the ones mentioned earlier, especially girl studies, neoliberal critique, and the politics of the post. A major theme is the neoliberal global regime that contours the parameters for so much of what is discussed in popular media, sometimes discursively enabling a witch-hunt of anyone who dares mention that systemic issues might be at play. For instance, Bailey (2011) examines how actor Isaiah Washington, formerly of *Grey's Anatomy*, is made to pay for his neoliberal *faux pas* when he dared to say that racism was at work in the public incident that constructed him as homophobic. Given the moral economy of neoliberalism, the individual has to assume responsibility for any "sin" and follow a path of therapeutic care of the self.

Washington's assertion that some of the controversy had something to do with racism attempted to shift the analysis to a structural and systemic issue, a move that is not supported within neoliberalism. Thus Washington was coded as the nonrepentant, faulty neoliberal subject. Bailey's representational analysis foregrounds the construction of masculinity vis-à-vis discourses of sexuality and race, and another major area of studies explores the battleground over the construction of the sign of "girls." Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2004) reflect on the moral panic construction of contemporary girlhood, which is constructed as either bad or mean. Neither option provides a progressive possibility for this demographic category. As the ongoing brilliant scholarship of Projansky (2007a, 2007b, 2010) details, girls studies is neither new nor homogeneous, nor does it even refer to an age-specific category as the term "girl" is still loosely used in a sexist culture. Chess (2010) illustrates the gendered deployment of contemporary gaming, including advertising that positions boys/men as producers and girls as consumers, and returns us to the elements of the implicitly heteronormative family. Similarly Lindenfeld (2007), through analysis of representations of food, reveals the articulation of discourses of race and ethnicity to family and nation. Given the explosion of food pornography² now available to us through cable channels, magazines, websites, and within movies (not just Hollywood film), foodways scholars draw our attention to the manner in which food continues to be a primary signifier of identity and belonging.

As useful transitions from content and representation research into audience and interpretation, we consider Hoerl and Kelly (2010), Francombe (2010), and Durham (2004). Exploring the normative elements of the discursive construction of the ideal neoliberal girl who is interpellated into the Wii game "We cheer," Francombe (2010) and Chess (2010) provide a welcome respite from the focus on boys and gaming by studying girls' representations and audience positions in regard to this most popular type of media (see also the extensive work of Nakamura, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, and Volume 6). A follow-up class assignment to these readings, encouraging students to play any Wii game they could access,³ proved to be quite instructive as nearly all games implicitly constructed the player as male. Students took note of the implicit division of labor that this situation generated: boys/men playing digital games and women in their households performing domestic labor around the Thanksgiving holiday.

Similarly, Durham (2004) takes girls' media studies globally and diasporically by studying the relation between media and sexuality in the lives of South Asian immigrant girls. Hoerl and Kelly (2010) take up the postfeminist discourse that is part of the neoliberal regime of representation, wherein we are interpellated into a subjectivity of agency and choice when the latter is constructed *a priori*, already ruling out some of the options for which feminists have fought. In their case study of three very popular Hollywood romantic comedies – *Juno* (2007), *Knocked Up* (2007), and *Waitress* (2007) – Hoerl and Kelly explore the representation of unmarried pregnancy and the resolutions that highlight the do-it-yourself, White spunky women will triumph over all obstacles narrative that ignores issues of power, the economy, and, of course, race and class. Given that the analysis of "We cheer!," media consumed by South Asian

girls, and contemporary Hollywood film segues between representation and interpretation, it provides a useful transition from the former to the latter.

Radhika Parameswaran edits Volume 4 on audience and interpretation. Parameswaran's research includes two long articles in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, "Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India" (2009, co-authored with K. Cardoza) and "Global Media Events in India: Contests Over Beauty, Gender, and Nation" (2001). Her work has focused on the intersection of feminist cultural studies, gender and media globalization, South Asia, and postcolonial studies with a particular emphasis on issues of audience and interpretation. As such she constructs a volume worthy of her areas of expertise, with plenty of chapters illustrating global and gender issues. This volume also bears the traces of an interdisciplinary field that includes social scientific paradigms such as uses and gratifications as well as more humanist approaches that now include global and online ethnographies. Parameswaran remarks that "audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception." "Populist tendencies" refers to the "discovery" of the audience around every corner, as it were, without proper attention to issues of power and structure. In the contemporary moment, audience studies is vibrant and innovative. Whether we look at fans or online digital communities, to mention just two of the many possibilities, the construction and potential agency of the audience are major issues that continue to guide the production of media and subjectivities. Illustrative of the many philosophical quandaries undergirding the location of the audience within media studies is Jack Bratich's chapter in Volume 6, as audience analysis is part of the present and future of the field. In addition, audience connects with issues of production as it undeniably takes labor to be part of any audience.

Illustrating one of the many possibilities within audience studies, Buchmann, Moore, and Fisher (2010) take up the issue of Hollywood film-induced tourism. Their case study examines the Tolkien trilogy (*The Lord of the Rings* movies that were filmed in New Zealand) and the tourism to that location that the movies have generated. This is a project that can fit in both audience and effect, for how can one argue that traveling to a real faraway country – as New Zealand is from the United States – for a very hefty sum of money to attempt to relive the books and the movies that feature a fantastic story is not a very strong and immediate effect partly induced by particular forms of very persuasive media? Given that tourism composes a growing percentage of many countries' GDP and that much of it is induced through mass media, it is not surprising that a journal such as the *Annals of Tourism Research* includes articles that could squarely fit within a media studies journal, including this one on film-induced tourism.

Erica Scharrer guides us through the fifth core component of media studies, media effects and media psychology, the dominant paradigm in the United States as well as in other global settings such as the Netherlands, and the paradigm that reaps

the most funding in a positivist framework that values scientific demonstration of impact. Scharrer has co-authored, with G. Comstock, *Television: What's On, Who's Watching, and What it Means* (1999), *The Psychology of Media and Politics* (2005), and *Media and the American Child* (2007), and, with L. Weidman and K. Bissell, a long article in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, "Pointing the Finger of Blame: News Media Coverage of Popular-Culture Culpability" (2003). Scharrer brings to the volume on media effects/media psychology a long-standing engagement with the social scientific paradigm in our field. A well-carried-out effects study tells us much about the influence of media on individuals, groups, and societies. The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before. Thus Scharrer asks: "Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending time with media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and conditions help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses?" These questions require complex methodological and theoretical expertise to answer. Many of us were schooled in a critique of the "hypodermic needle" model, though we have since learned that the media sometimes have or generate direct effects. Why else does a multibillion dollar advertising industry exist in the United States? However, we continue to marvel at the long-term cumulative effects that are far more complex than we originally anticipated. Furthermore, effects scholars, such as many of those contributing to Scharrer's volume, seek to explore how to effect positive change as well as how to avert more nefarious outcomes.

Finally for now,⁴ the encyclopedia concludes with Volume 6 on "media studies futures" edited by **Kelly Gates**. Gates's own research is the veritable embodiment of a focus on futures. Author of *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance* (2011) as well as co-editor with Shoshana Magnet of *The New Media of Surveillance* (2009), Gates studies the discursive formation of the wishful deployment of recognition technology with an "almost gleeful futurism" that suggests "if only" the systems were in place, before 9/11, for instance, our present and future would be different, better, and so on.⁵ Futures is, by definition, a transient category, as within 10 years the content of this volume will be the stuff of the present, or maybe even the recent past. As Raymond Williams has written, we cannot anticipate what will be an emergent media form until it is *post facto*. The futures volume takes up some of the issues around Internet, gaming, social media, mobile telephone in a converged media form, biopolitics, and digitalization technologies such as biometric body scans. Gates asserts that media studies needs to take seriously the possibility that *radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media are and where they are headed. All of the chapters in this

volume could be retrofitted into the other five volumes. Yet together they compose a vision of the field as it moves forward, taking up issues that date back centuries, engaging them with theories and modes of media that only apparently represent new terrain.

Emblematic of the future of media studies research, in her ongoing and not just influential but paradigm-shifting body of work, Nakamura reveals the fallacy behind claims that the Internet and digital gaming left behind the body and its racialized, gendered, and ability components (Nakamura, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). Nakamura takes us into the world of digital media and the many types of labor that they absorb – from our racialized player labor to the labor that it takes to produce the virtual and material gaming infrastructure. While gaming is not new, the ways that it becomes its own subfield due to the sheer magnitude of the industry, its widespread everyday deployment, and the millions of people daily engaged in its production and consumption, make it a focal point of our field. Similarly, Meddaugh (2010) highlights the relevance of new forms of delivering news to an audience that no longer watches traditional media or reads legacy media. Comedians such as Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert replace the prime-time news of yesterday as a source of information, and deliver their message through alternative cultural genres such as humor to get at a deeper truth than the “objective” news. Also a new twist on an old tactic, in a hyper-capitalist age, it seems almost impossible to imagine a space or time when not everything is bought and sold in the transnational marketplace. Boycotts seem so last century to our students. Buycotts (Pezzulo, 2011), on the other hand, provide consumers with a positive tactic – to buy products that confirm consumers’ demands. This strategy works within the system to secure gains such as environmental practices. Environmental and green issues come up often in Volume 6 as many of the contributors, especially Maxwell and Miller, remind us of the massive amounts of disposable hardware, not to mention the huge carbon footprint, it takes to produce the so-called “new media” that many of us are constantly buying to replace the previous disposable model.

Jessica Retis-Rivas’s (2011) work on flows of immigrant media from Latin America via Spain and Europe to the United States complements the work on contraflows by international communications scholars highlighted by Daya Kishan Thussu (2006) in his overview of the field. For example, the work of news flows then is taken in the field of international communications as “contraflow” – the fact that the one-way flow from the West to the rest sometimes backs up and is thrown right back at the empire. Today the ongoing work by Jessica Retis-Rivas tracks the flow of Latina/os and Latina/o media as populations move around the globe in reaction to economic crises. Thus she charts the original flow from countries like Peru or Colombia to Spain as Latin American economies tanked. In Spain the economy is now in rapid decline and the political situation quickly veering to the right – with the election of conservative Rajoy replacing the left-of-center Zapatero indicative of the popular frustration with a global crisis that cannot be contained at a national level. Latina/o populations, many of whom have gained Spanish citizenship, are flowing once more

to England in general and London in particular, and many more are planning yet another trans-Atlantic crossing to the United States where they will enter as European/Spanish immigrants. They bring with them their media businesses and practices. The contraflow that was originally discussed in terms of media is now embodied by globally roaming populations, who of course take their media and culture with them and continue the millennial hybridization of both.

This is the state of the art of media studies. It is a field where we know better than to use the term “new” media – for all media are somewhat new but also very old in many of their aspects. Scholars in this encyclopedia take us back to the production of paper even as they bring us up to the latest technologies, assemblages, and institutions that arise to mediate our world. Contributors to this encyclopedia share the belief not only that media studies is an academic exercise, but also that by engaging in this important area of studies we are somehow contributing to a more just vision of the world. As the separate volumes build on each other, whether we are engaged in media at any of their analytical nodes (production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology), we are simultaneously linked to its history and its future. As a diverse heterogeneous field that is global, interdisciplinary, intersectional, multi-methodological, I cannot imagine a more exciting and potentially liberatory academic enterprise to be involved with.

NOTES

- 1 In this introduction and whenever possible, this encyclopedia uses “America” to refer to a continent and “US” or “United States” to refer to the country, unless we are quoting from scholarship that uses “America” otherwise.
- 2 Food pornography refers to the deployment of codes of pornography – such as repetition, extreme closeups, and lingering camera shots – in the coverage of food and food preparation in so much of today’s multichannel media.
- 3 Students often have gaming equipment in their place of residence. If not, both libraries and athletic facilities on campus have entire rooms dedicated to gaming as well as providing an opportunity to check out gaming equipment.
- 4 A *Methods* volume is projected to be released at a later date, edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.
- 5 Few people know that Gates submitted her dissertation proposal the day before 9/11. What to the committee seemed like futuristic queries became the very real present within a period of 24 hours.

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Left Behind

End Times for a Media History Paradigm

Carolyn Marvin

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the work of the media “structuralists” of the so-called Canadian or Toronto school of media studies: Harold Adams Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and Walter J. Ong, especially. Their work is placed within its historical context, both in terms of scholarly ancestry and in terms of its reception in North American universities and especially in schools of journalism. A critical assessment of the work of these scholars as media history is offered, recognizing its shortcomings as historical narrative but also its appeal as a way of understanding the influence of media forms.

What makes us who we are? Class struggle? The disenchantment of the world? Do we owe our ways of being in the world to the family romance, the wheeling zodiac? How about the selfish gene, birth order, guns, germs and steel, patriarchy, the internal combustion engine, original sin, the scientific method? Is it the particular way that media technologies frame the social environment and organize our relationships to one another? Anyone inclined toward this last idea will recall a line of argument from the 1960s Marshall McLuhan for a while hijacked what might be called thinking popular culture with a high-concept take on the generational explosion of the 1960s – its energy, its music, its civil rights, its sexual openness, its advertising, its counter-culture, its antiwar volume.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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The ore McLuhan proposed to mine to uncover society's deep structure was television, rabbit ears cocked to the cultural sun and overdue for a vision more arresting and certainly more entertaining than the wasteland talk of establishment discourse. Behind television's ephemeral, culture-clucking content, McLuhan discerned a perceptual world in transition to sensuous plenitude. He argued that mental habits deformed and impoverished by the phonetic alphabet and typography were in an expansive process of reconnecting to an electric shared cornucopia of bodily sensation, especially the acoustic sense (McLuhan, 1964). While popularly admired as a possible master key to the cultural id or, at the very least, a provocative commentary on postwar society, the powerful message McLuhan assigned to the medium also had a scholarly life, primarily as the stalking horse for a paradigm I describe here as media structuralism. Though McLuhan was its public face, it was elaborated and developed by an interdisciplinary group of twentieth-century scholars collectively persuaded that the historical appearance of alphabetic inscription, especially its printed form, was a phase change in human civilization. Generally speaking, they agreed on the rough outlines of that change.

This essay is a critical examination, here and there a ferociously critical examination, of the intellectual usefulness of that paradigm for representing the history of media. Media structuralism took the history of inscription as a seed model for understanding the cultural impact of twentieth-century electronic media, especially television. Though inscription in all its forms was always implicated in the logic of media structuralism, alphabetic inscription in particular was examined as an instrument that, in rendering language abstract and detached from direct human encounter, had set human society down a historical path of no return.

The engine of the argument was the hoary old notion of technological determinism, a clumsy moniker for what turned out to be an equally clumsy claim. Everywhere the alphabet went, in this narrative, an irresistible logic of form went as well. Alphabetic literacy as a cultural formation was said to have restructured authority and trust, public and ceremonial life, the social and cultural organization of knowledge, forms of collective representation – even, in some versions, personality and perception. Its effect was not only on the forms of collective life, but the shape of the social values these forms were said to embody. For communication studies, media structuralism offered something else as well: an attractive apparatus of grand distinctions for fashioning a disciplinary imperative.

In media structuralism alphabetic inscription was ground zero for looking backwards at the past and forward to the future. It offered a way to frame a collection of troubling discontents associated with modernity, and experienced as anxiety about the attenuation of grounded spatial experience, the inscrutability of technocratic systems of knowledge and power, the incoherence of a diffuse public sphere of imagination, the felt loss of shared moral sensibilities, and an uneasiness that immediate objects and distant demands were too insistent and evolving too quickly for the world to be a comfortable human place. Media structuralists differed among themselves about the degree to which different inscriptive forms had moved this process

forward, and the exact processes by which literate effects were translated into the lived particulars of past and present existence. They agreed that whatever these transformative mechanisms were, they were both cumulative and accelerating. In pursuit of their convictions, these disagreements were more ignored than addressed, often in the expectation that deeper scholarship would sort them out in time. Meanwhile, visionaries could grasp the essential historical pattern.

The most influential twentieth-century structuralists did not work under the institutional aegis of communication, a postwar academic invention constructed from a patchwork of intellectual and practical interests traditionally divided between speech communication and journalism instruction. The postwar period saw the gradual assimilation by communications programs of questions about journalism and media addressed from the perspectives of social science. This was mass communication effects research, which soon began to assert itself as a powerful disciplinary paradigm. Recent work chronicles the origin of that tradition in the migration of World War II psychological warfare research and the networks of social scientists developed around it. The new approach was policy oriented, statistically savvy, and staffed by social scientists with the quantitative and organizational skills to secure funding and academic prestige. It entered a postwar educational landscape where major US universities competed for generous funding from a government that valued scientific expertise as an engine of measureable social progress (Haney, 2008).

The imparting of craft knowledge of journalism had no grounding in systematic research. It responded more to professional press associations than invisible colleges of scholars (Carey, 2000). From the beginning, the trainers of journalists and the social scientists did not fit very comfortably together. Though both were focused on media, the uneasiness of their coexistence has been noted, if not much explored. Meanwhile, communication and journalism programs were swept up in the postwar higher education project of constructing more rigorous academic standards across all disciplines, standardizing the curriculum and promoting their field in the wider public sphere. In the absence of long-standing theoretical or methodological traditions with which to leverage funding or prestige, mid-century journalism programs seemed unable to formulate a disciplinary image legible to the larger research university (Carey, 1978). The rhetoric they chose to defend themselves was proffered largely in civic and moral terms. Its message was that good journalists are key to producing an informed citizenry capable of shaping a wider public sphere. Journalism faculty with more academic ambitions positioned themselves as ethical arbiters, critics and moderators of a public debate among citizens, press, and government. Meanwhile, the mantra of journalism instruction – the impossibility of democracy without newspapers – was overshadowed by television in the popular imaginary, and in the imagination of students. With its unapologetic glitz, mid-century's most popular mass medium seemed to have little in common with the heroic world of journalistic ideals that were the heart of journalistic self-presentation in the academy.

At this moment of professional vulnerability, media structuralism offered some humanities-oriented communication and journalism scholars a distinctive set of

questions and a clear object of inquiry. The attribution of powerful inscriptive effects to whole cultures across the sweep of human history seemed to challenge the media effects tradition at its very own game. More subtly, media structuralism offered a moral framework. It laid out a broken world that legitimated disciplinary anxieties in the academic workplace by linking them to a more encompassing cultural narrative. In the academy's growing embrace of theoretical abstraction and scientific specialism, some communications and journalism faculty discerned an abandonment of that institution's vital responsibility to foster dialogue and debate about the great moral questions concerning the civic and academic realities that had come to pass in the postwar moment. It also explained why journalism faculty had not been welcomed as equal participants to the academic table. In these circles the narrative of literate deformation was received both as a well-timed commentary on political tensions within the academy, and as a place from which to reflect on the increasing takeover of the larger culture by the market and the state. Problematically, it failed to offer what its followers needed most. It did not provide a vision of institutional expertise, a methodologically coherent research strategy for training students, or a topical research agenda that could stabilize and consolidate the position of those communication scholars who were not part of the tradition of media effects.

McLuhan had none of this in mind when he laid out the mechanism of television as a perverse kind of modernism in which function followed form. Form was the pixelated screen. Function was the perceptual experience it assembled. McLuhan's pseudo-mathematical "ratio of the senses," a kind of updated medieval system of bodily humors, was meant to reveal a once seamlessly integrated human sensorium that had been fractured by alphabetic literacy and printing (McLuhan, 1962). What print had torn asunder, television would reconnect. The television screen was far more than an agent of shallowness and distraction. It presaged the repair of the psychic dissolution that had long burdened industrial man. This coming transformation was discernible in the new electronic technologies of knowledge and experience. A globally dispersed shared consciousness needed only to recognize itself to claim its utopian reward: unity instead of alienation, simultaneity instead of fragmentation.

Though the spectacle of an erudite literature professor ceding the future of culture to television, the medium of the commonplace and anti-intellectual, was thrilling, McLuhan's koan-like, aphoristic disdain for the conventional apparatus of scholarship denied him a serious academic hearing. A few weak efforts by supporters to translate his claims into something like identifiable social science hypotheses came to nothing. The culture moved on. Still, where technology had once seemed opaque and irrelevant, a side story to larger dramas of politics and society, McLuhan made it problematic, revelatory, and playful. His environmental conviction that everything in culture is a medium in disguise that lends itself to communicative theorizing hung on. He installed the idea that media do not end with their surfaces but resonate and connect with deeper cultural structures. Most of all, he succeeded in linking the profane order of technology to a powerful, even mystical, sense of cultural illumination. He remained an animating presence at the University of Toronto, which holds

his papers. His ideas were also significant in the work of the media ecology program at New York University originated by Neil Postman. Elsewhere his influence was manifest at the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign in the work of James W. Carey (1967, 1998), who paid less attention to McLuhan himself than to the claims of the media structuralists on whose ideas he had built.

The High Modernism of Alphabetic Literacy: Walter J. Ong

One of the driving premises of the cultural analysis of modern media is the idea that there is a relationship between forms of media and forms of life. This formulation had no disciplinary identity in US universities before McLuhan. While his ideas were synthesized from an eclectic mix of influences, the strand that is relevant here was his quixotic refashioning of work by a loosely connected group of anthropologists, linguists, classicists, and one political economist. Several of these scholars had published in the 1920s and 1930s. Most were contemporaries of McLuhan himself. Like him, several were at different times in residence at the University of Toronto. A fair number were Catholic. Though variably aware of one another's work in the 1960s and 1970s, they were less a self-identified research community than attached to a common object of inquiry, namely, the history-altering effects of alphabetic writing on human society. They embraced the view, contrarian for the time, that literate achievement was not an unqualified intellectual advance. A few believed that the price of alphabetic literacy had been a profound loss of cultural innocence. Working from various sources of evidence, they offered idiosyncratic and sometimes controversial readings of the historical record, and observations of isolated tribal and rural communities conceived as placeholders for earlier stages of civilizational development.

The work of Albert B. Lord and Milman Parry on the oral-formulaic techniques of Serbo-Croatian singers was foundational to their shared enterprise (Lord, 1960). Eric Havelock (1963, 1981) advanced a disputed thesis that the *Iliad* was the frozen snapshot of an apparatus of classical oral memory captured at the moment when the alphabet's unique power (the linguistic wisdom of the time) to transcribe spoken language had revolutionized intellectual storage. Jack Goody and Ian Watt at Cambridge energetically challenged the crude binary classification that divided men into savage or civilized, arguing that these categories misunderstood what forms of social organization were necessary to literate and non-literate societies (Goody & Watt, 1968; Goody, 1977).

On the basis of their own studies of inscriptive technologies and the social practices connected to them, two in this group made broad claims that the impact of alphabetic writing had large-scale diffuse effects that were discoverable, universal,

and profoundly problematic. They were Walter J. Ong, SJ, a onetime student of McLuhan's at St. Louis University, and Harold Adams Innis, McLuhan's older colleague at the University of Toronto. Ong discerned these effects in a somewhat manichean struggle between the ear and the eye for sensory dominance (Ong, 1967, 1979). For him the structure of consciousness flowed from repeated encounters with messages available to each perceptual sense. Though the historical ear captured human communication in the form it was meant to be, the historical eye was overwhelmed by corrupted messages that swamped the natural faculty of the ear. Innis argued that the physical properties of messages themselves, rather than the sensory modalities that captured them, were reflected in the mechanisms of societal stability and control. The struggle he discerned was between bureaucratic expansion fostered by messages that could move efficiently across space without distortion, and spiritual traditions of memory in which messages could persist across time with little distortion (Innis, 1991, 2007; for a useful retrospective consideration of Innis's work, see Acland & Buxton, 1999).

For both Ong and Innis, what appeared to be an analysis of the empirical conditions of communication became an unproveable claim that a fundamental moral tendency was associated with different technological forms. Each employed a wholly modernist impulse to strip down human experience to what he perceived as its essential properties. Each also embraced a surprisingly anachronistic framing device: the old culture-stage theory of civilizations, even then a discredited tradition for asserting radical and universalized shifts in human affairs over time. The arguments of both theorists shared three anchoring postulates: (1) At any given historical moment, a "dominant" medium controls the moral, intellectual, and social character of the society in which it exists. (2) The origin of a proper kind of human morality lies in acoustic speech. So does the possibility of its renewal. (3) Acoustic speech is weak against alphabetic writing (and its handmaiden, electronic media).

That writing dominates speech was so obvious to Ong as to need no serious demonstration of its validity as a fact. He repeatedly argued that the habits of acoustic speech were no match for the sheer plenitude and irresistible power of written language. On the plenitude side, writing was said simply to have crowded out meaningful speech and taken up social real estate previously occupied by talk. He might have sought to establish clinching, systematic evidence in the experience of contemporary man – the most accessible and presumably unambiguous example of this historical dynamic at work. In fact, this would not have been easy evidence to assemble. Would one compare time occupied with written media to time spent in conversation? Would a better measure be the number of words individually channeled through each medium, whatever the time spent? Should one consider the social importance of messages in each mode? How to make sense of striking differences in literate and conversational practices across social groups? Which groups? Might individual measures be the wrong ones? Should the focus be on institutional communication? Which institutions? Above all, how could one disentangle the lived reality that writing is thoroughly intertwined with talk, and always has been? To

draw only the most obvious conclusion, people engage in more talk because they read and write, and read and write more because they talk.

Alternatively, Ong argued that the brute psychological power of written language colonizes and transforms the fragile spirit of spoken language, whatever its plenitude might be. This is the idea, approximately, that speech in societies dominated by writing isn't the true, natural speech of original face-to-face encounter. Ong offers many anecdotal examples. They include dictionary-referenced educated speech that in time renders socially inferior the dialect of the neighborhood. The emblematic modern oral speaker is a broadcaster or politician who works from a script. Novelistic dialogue is an artificial facsimile of natural speech. The inevitable logic of his argument is to reduce all contemporary spoken language to a degraded simulation of authentic conversation. Even speech learned at a literate mother's knee cannot be orally pristine when spoken language is demoted to a pale echo of writing. Ong skirts the implication of his argument and also does not refute it.

The justificatory theology of Ong's framework sheds some light on its structure. In *The Presence of the Word* (1967) he argues that men at the origin of human history communicated freely with God. This archetypal encounter created a foundational model for men's relationships to one another. The spiritual necessity of voice and presence was, teleologically speaking, the final cause of the evolution of speech. Writing imposed a disabling artificiality on what men were evolutionarily destined to be. The Fall was effectively a historical event in which inscription shattered the world and estranged men from God. Language that naturally exists in a dialogical condition of acoustical fullness was abstracted and placed on the page. It became a lifeless object separable from the human beings who generated and perceived it. Thus was set in motion a cascade of ever more inventive ways for men to separate themselves from one another while concealing from themselves what they had done. In Ong's view the inscriptive abstraction that fractured the core of human encounter still lies at the beating heart of media, insidiously working against the healing and communion of loving mutuality that a broken world requires. If the spatial abstraction of language by alphabetic inscription so irrevocably split apart something in human consciousness, exactly when did it take hold? Ong never names the decisive moment of psychological transformation after which men became hobbled in their understanding of their essential humanity. Here we pause for emphasis. If the psychological shift away from the wholeness of experience cannot be anchored with historical specificity, if such a moment cannot be unambiguously located for any particular group of people, perhaps the psychological consequences of literacy are neither definitive nor universal but utterly ambiguous, various, and contradictory for all human persons, individually and collectively – much like all human experience.

Ong's most thorough attempt to demonstrate empirically how alphabetic literacy has shaped the structure of human knowledge appears in *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (1983). Based on his doctoral dissertation, it is a study of a pedagogical method invented and popularized by the sixteenth-century French rhetorician and educational reformer, Peter Ramus. Ong explores the Ramist strategy of

visualizing knowledge as a discrete object in space to be efficiently compartmentalized, dissected, juxtaposed, and compared to similar discrete objects. This simplification and flattening out of the learned tradition repudiates a person-centered epistemology of rhetorically layered and sifted judgment. Ong finds evidence in Ramism of an underlying psychological shift away from the traditional acoustic sensibility of the rhetorical art with its appreciation of the dramatic, the creative, and the poetic, and toward the cultivation of new mental habits associated with the monologic, the diagrammatic, and the quantifiable. Ong also argues that the visual cast of the Ramian prose style reflects the psychological experience of a learned man of his day. In this Ong may have been a victim of the fallacy he attributes to literate man. He is perhaps too ready to take what is on the page for a complete reality.

It wasn't just the moral force of language that was weakened by alphabetic literacy in Ong's view. He argued that the triumph of the visual over the acoustic affects human perception of even the phenomenal world. He contrasts the imagined psychological integrity of pre-literate aural experience with the fragmented perception of the post-literate world. He frames this distinction with a physiological proof. In his acoustic cosmology, sound bathed pre-literate hearers non-directionally. Men felt themselves to be immersed in the womb of the world (Ong, 1979). This is a peculiar basis on which to claim distinctions in historical states of human experience. It is hard to believe that any living person exists in a world that is not phenomenologically perceived as immersive. An acute perception of aural directionality is also a vital mode of perceptual discrimination at least some of the time for everyone, and not only for modern navigators of urban streets. Skilled hunter-gatherers would have depended heavily on it. The point of Ong's contrast is to argue that visual experience puts viewers at a perceptual and, therefore, psychological distance from what they behold. This claim must puzzle anyone who has ever been lost in the face of the beloved, or utterly absorbed in a stunningly beautiful landscape, a traumatic scene, a good book.

Pre-literate hearing man was seeing man as well. Some fancy footwork is necessary, then, to explain away the obvious delight in visual experience we may attribute to the creators of the skilled and beautiful designs of material artifacts left to us from ancient and traditional cultures. Acute vision must always have been critical both to the survival and the aesthetic pleasures of the human species. Though different perceptual skills may be honed for the needs of different historical times and places, there are no grounds to believe that hearing was the premier perceptual sense of people in settlements without writing (or that it makes any sense to compare the modalities of ear and eye hierarchically). It is obvious that the visual objects men attend to vary by time and place, but Ong's claim that the most typical visual experience of literate worlds is inscriptive is difficult to credit.

If alphabetic literacy dominates modern visual experience, and modern visual experience dominates all other sensory modalities, then it must dominate touch itself, which accompanies our ever-present situatedness in the world. Ong contrasts what he believes is the relatively more impoverished visual experience of alphabetic

cultures with the presumed perceptual richness of pre-literate existence. Did he mean there is less visual variety in modern life, or that we ignore extant visual variety in order to read? Did he find cities to be less visually variegated than natural landscapes? Here the point at issue cannot be writing as such. It is a claim about the poverty of even the most elaborate human artifactual creations stacked up against nature's fecundity. If human worlds are full to the brim with visual experience in all historical conditions, what can it mean for the ratio of the senses to shift historically? For the perceptual "load" to be different from one culture to another? What is the proper ratio of sensory experience for human beings? What best suits the forest? The savannah? The tundra?

And yet Ong also allows that writing has been necessary to the full development of human consciousness. This concession seems to give the game away. If evolutionary orality may flourish only at the cost of intellectual development, it can hardly be a totalizing ideal for communication among men living in time. In light of this admission, Ong (1982) undertakes to reframe his analytical goal as simply laying out the affordances and tendencies of the range of available communicative modes. Just as there is a natural balance of the senses, he proposes the possibility of a cultural balance between writing and speech. It is hard to imagine what this might be, given his previous arguments. It is curious that while writing has been able to historically amplify and elaborate its power, speech has lacked this capacity. It is more threatened than ever by what he labels the secondary orality of electronic media with its deceptive illusion of intimacy and dependence on literate technology to exist at all. Since speech remains impotent, literate psychology remains unredeemed.

Particularly problematic is Ong's claim that some groups living among literates in the twentieth century have maintained living contact with pristine orality. To explain the persistent failure of minority students in the United States to achieve parity in educational achievement with their majority-group peers, Ong (1979) invokes the "highly oral culture of our black urban ghettos" (p. 4). He diagnoses an educational disparity as a clash of "residual" orality with the literate world of schooling. More than a century after the end of the slave trade, he seems to propose that African Americans are psychologically wedded to the tribal orality of their ancestors, impervious to the contemporary literate blanket surrounding them. Leaving aside the faulty assumption of a unified "African" oral tradition, and the failure to account for this striking survival of this oral sensibility in spite of the disappearance of so many other features of a pre-literate African heritage, the underlying point is worth our notice. There are pockets of escape from literacy after all. "Nor is orality ever completely eradicable; reading a text oralizes it" (Ong, 1982). If print is oralizeable, what possible grounds are left for driving a psychological wedge between writing and speech?

Indeed, Ong never seriously addressed how the orally pristine might sustain themselves, or how contemporary communities might develop their own oral traditions in a larger typographic milieu. The point allows us to consider how literacy itself is diffused. Must literate skill be individually acquired to work its

consciousness-transforming effects? Is living in a world of literate conventions – time stamps and train schedules, driver’s licenses, tax forms and street signs – enough to inculcate a so-called literate psychology? Is literate-mindedness, whatever this may be, wholly transmitted by social imitation and not at all by the visual abstractions of language and sensory specialization? Does the achievement of cultural literate-mindedness require the attainment of reading and writing skills by some critical mass of the population? Do adults with poor literacy skills really have habits of thinking that differ fundamentally from those of their literate fellows? Or do they lack access to specific social networks and timely information?

The End of the Great Divide

To summarize: The text of Ongian structuralism is a mechanism that evacuates from spoken language an acoustically conveyed morality that is the essence of spoken language. This loss of dialogic mutuality estranges literates from the phenomenal world and other men. We may think of this brief statement as the kernel of the tragic narrative of the so-called Great Divide hypothesis. Once prevalent in educational and cognitive psychology circles, the Great Divide proposes in its most basic form that literacy is the signal cognitive acquisition that makes higher-order abstract thought possible. In addition to the tragic vision of media structuralism, there is an ameliorative version of the Great Divide as well. Literacy acquisition is the condition of sophisticated technological progress, and the essential tool of an informed democracy.

To assess the root claim of the claim that literacy is an essential prerequisite for abstract thought, the social psychologists Sylvia Scribner and David Cole (1981) undertook a seven-year ethnographic and experimental study of literates and non-literates in a small area of Liberia in the 1970s. They chose their field site for the fortuitous fact that three different scripts were locally taught using distinctive pedagogies. Arabic script was the medium of instruction in Qur’anic schools. Romanized script was taught in English schools. A locally invented Vai script was taught informally by some adults to other adults. Most students typically learned only one kind of script. This meant that Scribner and Cole were able to measure and compare the cognitive skills of each group of script literates. They also measured the cognitive skills of literates and non-literates across a range of cognitive domains. These included abstract thinking, taxonomic categorization, memory, logical reasoning, and reflective knowledge about language. These data were supplemented by ethnographic observation and extended surveys of family and occupational histories, and of attitudes associated with modernity. Unglamorously but importantly, they learned that different styles of literate instruction cultivate different cognitive skills. The tasks that students excelled at were exactly the cognitive tasks they were trained for. These cognitive tasks were related to the practical functions each kind of script performed

in Vai society. There was also no Great Divide. That is, there were no statistically significant differences in the capacities of literates and non-literates to succeed at abstract thinking tasks. The belief that oral man is captured within a shell of concreteness he cannot peck his way out of to some higher-order level of thinking was heartily disproved.

There was one weak effect that is richly ironic in this context. Literates were a little better than non-literates at *talking* about the structure of language and literacy. In addition, schooled English literacy affected some social relationships among its practitioners, in ways that schooled Qur'anic and non-schooled Vai literacy did not, by offering access to bodies of knowledge outside those locally circulated. This was so even though the amount of time all groups had spent in urban areas was not significantly different. Since girls did not attend school, gender was the single attribute, decidedly a non-cognitive one, reliably associated with the possession of literate skill. The point was that the sources of intellectual achievement are found in cultural and social circumstances, and not in cognitive capacities transformatively tied to literacy acquisition. So where are we? If it is the case that shifts in communication technology do not kick new psychological processes into gear through a process of inculcating literate-mindedness, perhaps these technologies steer social processes in powerful ways. This was the argument Harold A. Innis developed, and to whose work we now turn.

Media Structuralism in its Laocoön (Mannerist) Phase: Innis

Commenting on Innis's account of communication technology as a shaping force in human history for a special issue of the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, his biographer A. John Watson (1977) points to an iconicized, technologically determinist Innis (pp. 45–46). This was the Innis whose bold theoretical claims about societal character anchored in the physical properties of message decay made him a key figure within a certain strain of media studies. This media structuralist Innis is often contrasted with a second persona. This was the political economist whose scholarship about the Canadian fur trade and cod fisheries produced a much admired theory of economic relations between metropole and hinterland. The iconicized, structuralist Innis had a more sweeping point of view. He laid out a world-scale drama of technological contenders in a continuing confrontation between the spiritual tenacity of inward-looking religious tradition and the present-mindedness of secular expansion across territory. He pitted the comparatively effortless movement of messages across distance by media like paper, papyrus, and radio against less mobile forms like parchment, stone, and oral tradition. He believed their durability made them rich in their power to conserve memory. (A small point: Parchment is sturdier than paper, but not much heavier to move. Nomadic oral cultures traveling across space were hardly

unusual. Countless pre-literate groups that stayed put proved rather more fragile than Innis's schema suggests.)

It would be reassuring to conclude that the formulized Innis sketched above was a caricature of the real thing, but it is hard to do with much conviction. *Empire and Communications* (2007) and *The Bias of Communication* (1991) together present the basic framework. In them, Innis wraps up Western history and a little more in less than 300 pages. *Empire* starts with early writing and proceeds through Egypt, Greece, Rome, medieval Europe, Islam, and the printing press. *Bias* repeats parts of that narrative and lays out nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglophone publishing with a glancing take on radio and telegraphy. In so compressed an itinerary, even Innis's most sympathetic readers have little to fall back on but the highly abstract engine of space-time oscillation in which "biases" toward present-mindedness or tradition-mindedness swing back and forth in history. These arise from the physical portability or durability of whatever media instantiate and so "dominate" a given society's prevailing systems of knowledge and authority. Sooner or later a challenger with the contrary bias rises up and displaces its dominant predecessor in processes that Innis never deeply details. He created no conceptual architecture at all to mediate between his abstract matrix and the slightly mad chronicle of unsorted facts he offered to shore it up. A series of breathless historical assertions and propositions unrolls in the texts of *Empire* and *Bias*, their connecting inferences frequently incomplete or elided. Their author disposes of vast time scales in a few sentences. Great clumps of political and historical complexity are rendered in abbreviated narratives with little discussion. He is contradictory. His inattention to underlying social processes makes it difficult to follow, much less evaluate, his conclusions. In the absence of a conceptual language to order his staccato breviary of fact, his claims are at once too abstract and too particular. His work offers none of the rich expansiveness of articulation that is fundamental to historical explanation. This is probably why both books were scarcely reviewed in economic and history journals at publication and received only a handful of notices in political economy journals, even in Canada where Innis remains an intellectual national hero.

The opacity of Innis's prose is legendary. It is hard to pick an excerpt that illustrates this in a short space; the following sample may suffice. It references the United States during the Great Depression, a topic that most readers will find more familiar than the ancient civilizations that mostly occupied his concern. Its relative abundance of detail is atypical since Innis was wont to summarize the character of whole societies in a phrase. Of the 1930s United States he writes:

The highly sensitive economy built up in relation to newsprint and its monopoly position in relation to advertising hastened an emphasis on a new medium, notably the radio, which in turn contributed to a large-scale depression. The radio was accompanied by political change in the return of the Democratic party to power and the election of F. D. Roosevelt who claimed that "nothing would help him more than to have the newspapers against him." Localization of metropolitan newspapers in the United States

was accompanied by weeklies and digests which provided a common denominator from a national rather than a metropolitan point of view. Illustrated papers and the radio responded to the demands of advertising for national coverage. The radio emphasized a lowest common denominator with profound effects on music. The significance of mechanization in print, photographs including the cinema, phonographs including the talkies, and radio has been evident in literature, art, and music. The pressure of mechanization on words has been reflected in simplified spelling and an interest in semantics. The limitations of words have led to resort to architecture and the rise of skyscrapers as an advertising medium. In North America, in contrast with Great Britain and Europe, the book was subordinated to the newspaper. Mechanization involved an emphasis on best-sellers and the creation of a gap of unintelligibility of more artistic literary works. . . . If civilization may be measured by the tolerance of unintelligibility, its capacities are weakened by monopolies of knowledge built up in the same political area using the same language. (Innis, 2007, pp. 162–163)

For this paragraph (from which several sentences addressing the history of publication are removed) Innis cites the following anecdotal sources: H. L. Mencken, *The American Language* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1936); Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932); L. L. Schucking, *The Sociology of Literary Taste* (London: K. Paul, Trench, 1944); D. L. Cohn, *The Good Old Days* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1940); E. Haldeman Julius, *The First Hundred Million* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1928).

Without clearly committing himself, Innis suggests that the collapse of newspaper advertising was a serious factor in the Great Depression. He makes no effort to compare it to more significant collapses in farm commodity prices, automobile sales, steel purchases, or housing. Did newspapers really elect FDR, his well-known quip notwithstanding, or did voters respond to the brutal immediacy of their circumstances? Reliable estimates of how many advertising dollars would have gone to newspapers in the absence of radio are notoriously difficult to establish. He fails to elaborate on what it means if radio content was driven by national advertising, or what content this was. He attributes a “national” point of view to media and their audiences without supporting detail while gesturing vaguely in the direction of its significance. The “profound” effects of radio on music remain unstated. Architecture as advertising invites questions about whether steel and concrete, like stone, count as time-biased media relative to “words.”

Cultural decline seems a less helpful explanation for why US newspaper readers outnumbered book readers than the cheaper price of newspapers and the modest literacy skills of an expanding immigrant population. What we should conclude about a rising rate of newspaper consumption (at a time when rates of mass market book sales were also increasing, if not so spectacularly), he doesn’t say. We are forced to guess what he means (probably nothing good) by claiming the books were “subordinated” to newspapers. Does the popularity of bestsellers really explain resistance to “more artistic literary works?” His final sentence seems to attribute intellectual and cultural openness to multilingual societies, though we cannot be sure. The troubling

proposition that “civilization” is weakened by monolingualism follows from a premise barely elaborated. Nor does he pick up and expand on this comment elsewhere in the chapter in which it appears. The point is not to throw stones at Innis’s style so much as to demonstrate his pattern of leaving key assertions and arguments undeveloped in relation both to specific historical information and whatever larger cultural conclusions he hoped to draw.

We should be troubled by his methodological rigor. Innis never tells us how it is that whole cultures can be properly described as having a single “bias.” Did he work backward from independently observed attributes in each society of interest to discover that its major (by what criterion?) media were those with exactly the biases associated with those attributes? On what grounds did he dismiss (or examine) the relative effects of other-biased media existing in the same time-space? Is his definition of media inclusive enough? His argument is disappointingly circular. He asserts that the materiality of durability and portability in selected media may be understood as proof of societal dispositions toward conservation or expansion.

What if, over time, previously durable and portable media acquire capacities they may not have had before? In her history of the impact of printing, Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979) argues that paper and printing together created new and powerful cultural memory. What we call the quattrocento Renaissance, she says, was a cultural flowering we know about mostly because it was preserved on printed paper. Previously, the memory of cultural achievements had been relatively more ephemeral, subject to decimation and erasure by epidemics, wars, and other disasters. Their successors struggled to recover, or were unaware of, the ground that had been lost. Printing reversed this process. Duplication in large quantities made unprecedented levels of written content effectively permanent even in the face of social catastrophe. Earlier content had no comparable hope of survival. Parchment, though sturdier, could not be produced in quantity. This made it altogether more fragile and less time-binding than printed paper, Innis’s argument to the contrary notwithstanding. Printed paper was both a premier medium for extending messages in space, and the default medium for modern memory as well.

Digital communication, our contemporary medium of transmission *par excellence*, has a similarly impressive history of elaborating and transforming its spatial bias. We know its earliest electrical forms as telegraphy, telephony, and radio, all memory-less modes by Innis’s lights. Over a century and a half these have morphed into a startling profusion of capacities and forms. Its development of unprecedentedly expanded reservoirs of memory poses challenges as dramatic and destabilizing, and opportunities as remarkable, as those from rapidly expanding multi-channel transmission across space. The conceptual point is that the applications, affordances, and obstacles posed by media are unpredictable and never fixed, even in their earliest manifestations. Their engagement with the cultures that produce them is never rigidly fixed.

Can we really believe that time-biased societies usually have no driving interest in present goings-on, the very definition of spatial bias? How do we know that the authority structures of so-called memory-minded societies are actually decentral-

ized? Among societies with little history of territorial expansion, we may be reluctant to concur that this has more to do with the nature of their media systems than with a lack of technological or economic capacity for aggressiveness; or, conversely, to a fortunate command of natural and economic resources satisfying to a domestic population, or, further, to political calculations and arrangements that make aggression unthinkable and costly. To soften the rigidity of his time-space matrix, Innis offers a compromise position for anomalies that are too obvious to ignore. Empire and political stability are said to be markers of a balance (the criterion is unclear) between time-binding and space-binding media in some societies. (On other occasions the term "empire" refers to a civilization-destroying, unrestrained spatial bias working its will.) There is a whiff in this confusion of a self-referential logic entangled in its own concepts and unmanageably arbitrary in its application to historical details.

Though technology has often been conceived as an instrument for progressively rendering space ever weaker in its ability to influence communicative exchange, the cosmology of media structuralism invested space with an aggressive and sinister vitality. In the abstract, compressed space of the page, Ong saw depersonalization and the shattering of human relations. In the leap of messages across distance, Innis saw bureaucratic centralism, the implementation of force, and the crushing of tradition. If space is a villain and memory a virtue, and the history of the West is mostly an obsession with space and a disrespect for time, as Innis argues, there is a paradox in his prescription for the West to pay attention to its past. What past would he recuperate? Surely nostalgia must be reckoned a vice as great as distance in the media structuralist cosmos. That human flourishing is often choked by tradition is plain, just as there are liberating, even ennobling possibilities in hopping across territory. The equation of spatiality with the tyranny of imperialism is no more defensible than the equation of temporality with the tyranny of revelation. Structurally speaking, remote, non-accountable control of distant territory is no more obviously inhumane than the sedimented brutality of racism or the oppression of women, forms of cultivated memory both.

Give Innis credit. He had a global sense of human history and a deep intuition of the perils of spreading technocratic systems. He saw that entities on the scale of nations and civilizations are complex assemblages of material and expressive elements, though this Deleuzian mode of analysis was not available to him for conceptualizing large, interactive agglomerations coalescing and dissolving across space, and producing, in time, other entities altogether. No genuinely emergent properties unfold in the just-so stories that constitute Innis's narrative. There is only the hydraulic opposition of tradition to the tireless advance of the market and industrialism, the whole too abstract to capture the deeper complexities of social change. One imagines Innis stacking fact upon alleged fact pulled from a patchwork of secondary sources of varying quality in a great Baconian pile of statements from which, added up, the truth of societal change would somehow emerge.

Though he positioned historical change as at the level of society and not psyche, Innis was very much in synch with the psychological structuralists. His monopolies

of knowledge and their associated biases run parallel to notions about literate dominance. He, too, invests dialogue with singular virtue. He, too, sees history as a narrative of the advancing spatialization of language and thought. He looks back nostalgically on human societies centuries removed (Athens and Byzantium for him; pre-literate humanity for Ong) and proclaims their lifeworlds to have been morally balanced. Of the complex morphologies of war and peace and politics, of natural resources and social classes, of countless other factors critical for assessing the “implications of the media of communication for the character of knowledge,” he had too little to say (Innis, 1991, p. 3).

What was his aim? In *Bias* he called for the revival of “effective vital discussion” and a recognition “on the part of the universities that teachers and students are still living and human” (1991, p. 32). He believed that universities with their ancient traditions of dialogue and philosophical inquiry had become extensions of the market and the state. He hoped to explain the long tale of history that had brought the West to such a state by exploring how its forms of media reflected its forms of life. This was a visionary question in the 1950s, unacknowledged in conventional historiography. The ambition of his undertaking and the inadequacy of the conceptual tools he invented should be viewed against that background. Still, we can fairly ask how his efforts to render the instrumentalities of thought visible as objects for investigation and concern stacked up against the received historical explanations he hoped to show were radically incomplete. Did he transform any established narratives or points of view? In fact, he took on no traditional periodizations, disputed no mid-range historical theories, clarified no ambiguous historical facts. He resolved no existing historical debates. At best, he mounted a parallel narrative that, lacking in significant historical depth, failed to demonstrate the essential connection, if it was there, between the intellectual and political cultures of the societies that interested him and their forms of media.

Still, he anticipated what is today a thoroughly self-conscious preoccupation of social theory. This is the problem of how to construct theoretical models able to describe the shifting and overlapping relationships of the global and the local manifest in large, technological systems running through the resilient complexity and creativity of realized life. That his schema should have failed is not surprising. Both the scale of the attempt and the lack of available data for exploring the questions that interested him made a genuinely illuminating account of how media are embedded in the shape of the world impossible to produce.

One thinks of remarkable examples of recent historical work he would have loved that are far closer to the spirit of his inquiry than his fatally simplified space-time matrix. Among them is Michael Clanchy’s (1979) discussion of the adoption of writing by the court administrators of Norman England from the eleventh century forward, their uncertain groping toward bureaucratic record keeping and retrieval, the clash with orally based proofs of real property, and the struggle of new literate conventions of law with older legal forms of social trust. Or Carlo Ginzburg’s (1980) study of a stubborn sixteenth-century French miller who confounded local authori-

ties by making cunning use of his new literate skills and limited formal knowledge. Or Gerald Strauss's (1978) account of an ill-fated experiment by sixteenth-century Lutheran reformers to indoctrinate the young in the catechism and other religious texts with an extensive regimen of oral and literate protocols and an elaborate system of evaluation that showed them the failure of their efforts. Or James C. Scott's (1998) account of how in nineteenth-century Germany the axe and the surveying text were welded into a powerful system to transform the forest into a machine for producing tax revenue, which collapsed from this catastrophic simplification of its ecosystem a century later. More recently, he would have been interested in the debate between Elizabeth Eisenstein and Adrian Johns on whether printing had a determinative role in the early modern rise of science, or whether it was only a palimpsest on which cultural habits and constructions were played out (Eisenstein, 2002a, 2002b; Johns, 1998, 2002).

Innis's grand narrative of communication history did not turn out to be of great interest to subsequent generations of historians or political economists. This reflected its shortcomings as well as a more general retreat from grand theory in the social sciences and humanities, the rise of a more fine-grained interpretive turn, and new fashions of conceptualizing power. Some of the most fruitful recent work in social theory has pursued what is now called the spatial turn as the old grand theories have morphed into new paradigms: network theory, globalization theory, assemblage theory. These worry about connectivity and messiness in space, not its determinist depersonalized footprint.

What was the Structuralist Appeal?

Where Innis's historical narrative of communication technology did have purchase was in the field of communication studies, though he may have been more often invoked than closely read. The most persuasive incarnation of his space-time schema is arguably James W. Carey's well-known essay "A Cultural Approach to Communication" (1975). As generations of students know, it contrasts a "ritual view" of communication concerned with the maintenance of society in time with a "transmission view" associated with the extension of knowledge and control across territory. Innis's spirit shows up in other work as well. It includes Josh Meyrowitz's *No Sense of Place* (1985), on how media foster a contemporary sense of rootlessness, and Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985), a cautionary tale about the baneful influence of television.

In the 1980s a flood of new work by historians on early modern Europe began to examine that era's multiple cultures of literate and oral practices in rich detail and with considerable conceptual inventiveness and complexity. Never favored in professional historical circles, media structuralism found itself thoroughly eclipsed. We now return to a consideration of why communication scholars dreamed of locating

its lasting development within the field of media studies. That significant hopes were invested in it as a paradigmatic alternative to research on media effects can be seen in James W. Carey's (1992) estimation of the work of Harold Innis as the "great achievement of communications on this continent" that had "rescued communications from a branch of social psychology and freed it from a reliance on natural science models" (p. 142). This hopeful prediction was offered as an imagined corrective to the field's relentless present-mindedness. If McLuhan had made the cultural framing of media effects thinkable, he had offered no useable mode of analysis. Still, he drew attention to a body of work that did seem to offer a suitably weighty, ready-made historical foundation hatched in academically reliable ways whose authors urged its relevance to the unfolding media moment.

Evidence for the claims of media structuralism was drawn from societies that existed long before the nineteenth century in places other than North America, and from scattered field investigations. Such work had no precedent and could have no future in communications programs. Lacking specialist training in both the relevant historical background and primary source materials that constituted the evidential bedrock of media structuralism, communication scholars found themselves in no position to substantively refine, amplify, or critically review its claims – that is, to conduct the hard intellectual work that keeps scholarly knowledge vital and productive. This did not stop them from using it to authorize their own perspectives on the state of contemporary media and society. As it turned out, the one-variable, two-variable logic of media structuralism was not so different at its core from the effects tradition from which it claimed to depart. It may have felt familiar to its followers, immersed in the intellectual atmosphere and logic of media effect. Nor can the wielding of a shiny intellectual instrument, suggestive without being wholly clear, bolstered by erudite reference, be altogether discounted. What were taken to be the canonic texts of media structuralism were gathered into a useable past, an argument from authority.

Media structuralism answered to a deeply felt disciplinary imperative to construct a qualitative, non-experimental account of the power of media to shape not attitudes and perceptions, but whole cultures, even eras. In the context of communication studies, its root metaphor was especially apt. Technology as the privileged conceptual form of media favored in this approach seemed as solid as Dr. Johnson's table. The link from technology to moral and social meaning may have seemed equally unambiguous. Even the categories by which communications programs divided themselves up – speech, press, radio, television – authorized its aura of empirical substantiality as an antidote to the squishy impressionism of qualitative studies in the competitive politics of academic life.

Beyond their hopes of establishing a paradigm that might usefully serve a new vision of the field of communication, the followers of media structuralism aimed to enrich the intellectual resources of that field, and broaden, in the best liberal arts tradition, the range of important questions it could weigh in on. Its contributions might have been more lasting if those to whom media structuralism appealed with

the greatest force had been more thoughtful, even in the absence of specialist knowledge, about its animating premises, both its clumsy and rigid notion of media dominance and its mystified phenomenology of sensory experience. These and other premises went virtually uncriticized. Media structuralism inhabited a moment when a strategic search for disciplinary identity was resolved by substituting a deeply felt moral agenda for the work of scholarly investigation that could have made that agenda a better fit and allowed it to speak more usefully to a larger scholarly and public audience. It did stretch the imagination of the field, introduced new and searching questions about how to think about the role of communication in contemporary society, and laid sympathetic ground for the time when what is now broadly called cultural studies was able to more successfully broaden the field beyond the quantitative project of media studies. In retrospect, it stands as the unclaimed freight of communication theory, now a musty box of curiosities, witness to a lost way of looking at the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful appreciation is extended to Sharon Black, Derek Blackwell, and Chris Cimaglio for assistance in the preparation of the manuscript.

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The Two Marxes

Bridging the Political Economy/Technology and Culture Divide

Vincent Mosco

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how political economy and the cultural study of technology inform media analysis and history. It addresses the divide between these two perspectives on media history as a debate between Karl Marx and Leo Marx. Political economy primarily grew from the materialist conception of Karl Marx which viewed technology as dynamic but banal. Karl's work gave rise to a materialist or political economic tradition in media studies that took up the role of communication technology in class domination, exploitation, contradiction, struggle, and resistance. Leo Marx developed an approach that focused on the sublime nature of technology. In doing so, he demonstrated how technology drew people to visions of transcending the banalities of everyday life. Leo viewed the sublime as a genuine experience of meaningful transcendence and not what materialists concluded was false consciousness. Whereas Karl provided structural explanations that drew from a philosophical anthropology based in praxis, Leo offered cultural explanations based on a vocabulary rooted in aesthetics. The chapter focuses on specific tendencies and strengths within each and suggests how to draw them together.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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This chapter addresses how two approaches, political economy and the cultural study of technology, inform media analysis and history. The purpose is to explore the divide between these two distinct perspectives on media history, which is in essence a debate between two Marxes – Karl and Leo. Political economy grew primarily from the materialist conception of Karl Marx which concentrated on the dynamic but banal nature of technology. This gave rise to a materialist or political economic tradition in media studies that took up the role of communication technology in the processes of class domination, exploitation, contradiction, struggle, and resistance. On the other hand, Leo Marx established a tradition that centered on the sublime nature of technology, demonstrating how it drew people to visions of transcending the banalities of everyday life. What Karl would consider false consciousness (the sublime as socially constructed ideology), Leo would view as a genuine experience of meaningful transcendence. The former provided structural explanations that drew from a philosophical anthropology based in praxis, while the latter offered cultural explanations based on the use of a vocabulary rooted in aesthetics. The chapter focuses on specific tendencies and strengths within each and suggests how to draw together these distinctive but overlapping traditions in media scholarship.

The Marxian Tradition

Karl Marx built on several different strands in classical political economy. He accepted its focus on labor as the chief source of value, although he systematically recast it to account for differences between the use value and the exchange value of labor. This departure laid the groundwork for Marx's theory of exploitation in which he focused on the difference between the value and price of labor. He called this difference the *surplus value* that accrued to capital as a result of increasing the workday (absolute exploitation) or of intensifying the labor process during the workday (relative exploitation).

Marx's critique of political economy turned, in part, on a thorough attempt to historicize the perspective and, particularly, its conception of labor. For Marx, capitalism was a system of unprecedented dynamism, continuously revolutionizing its productive processes with new technologies and new forms of organizing the labor process. Capitalist development created a continuous maelstrom of conflict and struggle. No custom, ritual, or value could block the development of the market, the production of commodities, including labor, and the growth of surplus value. The capitalist tendency to continuous revolution, what Schumpeter (1942) dubbed "creative destruction," could only be undone by forces that capitalism alone was able to release, primarily the working class, defined as those who are made to sell their labor power for a wage and thereby give up control over the means of production.

Classical political economy identified the forces propelling capitalism but tended to view them as natural. Marx sought to situate capitalism within the dialectical flow

of history, but with a materialist vision that broke with established tendencies in historiography as epitomized in the work of Hegel, who valued the history of ideas, beliefs, and the rule of law. In addition to building on much of the Hegelian tradition, particularly Hegel's concept of the dialectic and his goal of a practical philosophy (meant to fuse theory and practice), Marx took up the challenge of revolutionizing it. He would do so by showing how people make history and themselves, albeit not under conditions of their own making. For Marx, history meant, above all, how people make themselves through labor.

The Marxian critique of political economy developed an equally radical social conception of capitalism. Capitalism is a material system, not because of what it appears to be, i.e., a system of things (of machinery, workplaces, products, etc.), but because it contains a historically unique set of *social relations*. The appearance of naturalism masked the reorganization of social life principally along social class lines. Marx (1867/1976) begins *Capital*, arguably his most mature work, with a chapter on "The Commodity." But as the first sentence makes clear, although the commodity is ubiquitous, it is nevertheless a ubiquity of appearances: "The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an immense collection of commodities" (Marx, 1976, p. 125). Peel back the layers of appearance and we find a set of social relations, specifically "all commodities are merely definite quantities of *congealed labor-time*" (Marx, 1976, p. 130).

More generally, the social relations of capitalism embody a mass of producers who do not own the means of production but have to sell their labor power to a class of owners organized in separate firms that compete in various commodity, labor, raw material, and capital markets. Competition drives these different firms to maximize surplus value by exploiting labor in order to increase capital accumulation. The Marxian literature is filled with the debate over the precise definition and consequences of the capital-labor relationship. Nevertheless, the tendency in the traditional Marxian view is to argue that the system built on the capital-wage-labor relationship leads to the growing mechanization of labor, the concentration and centralization of capital, and periodic crises, of which the tendency to overproduction is probably the most pronounced (Mandel in Marx, 1976, p. 82). One can certainly find the seeds of this view in some classical political economy, particularly in the work of Ricardo and some of his followers. Nevertheless, until Marx, no one ventured an analysis of capitalism that so thoroughly sought to strip away the power of its apparent features that define a natural, taken-for-granted world, to reveal a set of socially dynamic, but fundamentally contradictory and, therefore unstable, social practices and social class relations.

Among the numerous critiques of the traditional Marxian view, one is particularly important to media studies: Marx did not carry the social analysis of capitalism far enough. This does not refer to the widespread, but generally mistaken, view that Marx missed the rise of today's managerial capitalism and service economy. For sympathetic critics like Baudrillard (1981), Smythe (1981), and Williams (1977), these are far less consequential than what results from an essentialist and narrow view of

labor. The traditional Marxian analysis places a great deal of weight on the concept of labor. In his early work, as well as in the *Grundrisse* (which connects the early Marx to the Marx of *Capital*), Marx envisions labor as a broad category encompassing all social activity by which people constitute themselves and history. Nevertheless, even here, the emphasis is on the instrumental and productive nature of labor rather than on its expressive and constitutive qualities. *Capital* takes an even more productivist view of labor, largely, according to Marx's defenders, because it is a critique of capitalism, one of whose central features is the narrowing of labor into the instrumental-productivist wage relationship, turning human beings into objects or mere factors of production. However, one consequence of a formulation that identifies labor as the essential material activity, but squeezes its meaning into the wage system, is that other material practices of working people are diminished. This is especially true of those practices we identify with communication, including culture, language, social reproduction, reception, and consumption. These are rendered non-material, dependent on, and in extreme formulations superstructural reflections of a material base defined by labor. According to Haraway (1991, p. 132), although Marx recognized that labor encompassed the production of human beings themselves, he gave greatest weight to the production of the means of existence providing little more than a starting point for theories of, for example, the sex/gender division of labor. For Dallas Smythe (1981), communication scholars need to expand on Marx by developing a theory of *audience labor*, what scholars today call prosumption or acts of productive consumption such as contributing to advertiser-sponsored celebrity websites.

One of the primary tasks of a political economy of media that aims to build on a critical encounter with traditional Marxian analysis is to demonstrate how communication and culture are material practices, how labor and language are mutually constituted, and how communication and information are dialectical instances of the same social activity, the social construction of meaning. Situating these tasks within a larger framework of understanding power and resistance places communication directly into the flow of a Marxian tradition that remains alive and relevant today (Potts, 2005; Saad-Filho, 2002). The next section demonstrates how the political economy of communication has carried out this task.

Political Economy

Two definitions of political economy help to capture the range of specific and general approaches to the discipline (Mosco, 2009). In the narrow sense, political economy is the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources. This formulation has a certain practical value because it calls attention to how the communication business operates; for example, how communications products move through a chain of producers, e.g., a Hollywood

film company, to wholesalers, retailers, and, finally to consumers, whose purchases, rentals, downloads, and attention are fed back into new processes of production. However, there is sufficient ambiguity about what constitutes a producer, distributor, or consumer that one needs to be cautious about using it.

A more general and admittedly ambitious definition of political economy is the study of control and survival in social life. Control refers specifically to the internal organization of social group members and the process of adapting to change. Survival means how people produce what is needed for social reproduction and continuity. In this reading, control processes are broadly political, in that they constitute the social organization of relationships within a community and survival processes are mainly economic, because they concern production and reproduction. The strength of this definition is that it provides political economy with the breadth to encompass at least all human activity and, arguably, all living processes (Foster, 2002). The primary shortcoming is that it can lead one to overlook what distinguishes human political economy, principally our consciousness or awareness, from general processes of survival and control in nature.

Another way to think about political economy is to broaden its meaning beyond what is typically considered in definitions, by focusing on a set of central characteristics. To start, political economy has consistently placed in the foreground the goal of understanding social change and historical transformation. For classical political economists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill, this meant comprehending the great capitalist revolution, the social upheaval that transformed societies based primarily on agricultural labor into commercial, manufacturing, and, eventually, industrial societies. For Karl Marx, it meant examining the dynamic forces within capitalism and the relationship between capitalism and other forms of political economic organization, in order to understand the processes of social change that would lead from capitalism to socialism. Orthodox economics, which began to coalesce against political economy in the late nineteenth century, tended to set aside this concern for the dynamics of history and social change, in order to transform political economy into the science of economics, which, like the science of physics, would provide general, if static, explanations. According to this view, economics would be able to explain precisely how buyers and sellers come together to set prices in the marketplace, but would not address those broad processes of social and economic change that create the conditions for setting prices. Contemporary political economists, occupying various heterodox positions distinct from what has become the economic mainstream, continue the tradition of classical political economy to take up social change and transformation, focusing now on such areas as the transition from an industrial to an information economy. The study of the mass media and communication technology plays an important role in this research because the industries encompassed by these fields of study are major forces in the creation of today's economy.

Political economy also concentrates on the social whole, or the totality of social relations that make up the economic, political, social, and cultural areas of life. From

the time of Adam Smith whose interest in understanding social life was not constrained by the disciplinary boundaries that mark academic life today, through Karl Marx, and on to contemporary institutional, conservative, and neo-Marxian theorists, political economy has consistently aimed to build on the unity of the political and the economic by accounting for their mutual influence and for their relationship to wider social and symbolic spheres of activity. How are power and wealth related? How do these influence the mass media, information, and entertainment?

Political economy is also noted for its commitment to moral philosophy, understood as an interest in the values that help to create social behavior and in those moral principles that ought to guide efforts to change it. For Adam Smith (1976), as evidenced in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a book he favored more than the popular *Wealth of Nations* (1937), this meant understanding values like self-interest, materialism, and individual freedom which were contributing to the rise of commercial capitalism. Whereas for Karl Marx (1973, 1976), moral philosophy meant the ongoing struggle between the drive to realize individual and social value in human labor and the push to reduce labor to a marketable commodity. Contemporary political economy tends to favor moral philosophical standpoints that promote democracy in all aspects of social life. This goes beyond the political realm, which guarantees rights to participate in government, to the economic, social, and cultural domains where supporters of democracy call for income equality, access to education, full public participation in cultural production, and a guaranteed right to communicate freely.

Finally, social praxis, or the unity of thinking and doing, also occupies a central place in political economy. Specifically, against traditional academic positions which separate the sphere of research from that of social intervention, political economists, in a tradition tracing its roots to ancient practices of providing advice and counsel to leaders, have consistently viewed intellectual life as a form of social action and social intervention as a form of knowledge. Although they differ fundamentally on what should characterize intervention – from Thomas Malthus, who supported open sewers as a form of population control, to Marx, who called on labor to realize itself in revolution – political economists agree that the division between research and action is artificial and should be overturned.

Several schools of thought in political economy guarantee a significant variety of viewpoints and vigorous internal debate. Arguably the most important divide emerged in responses to the classical political economy of Adam Smith and his followers. One set, which eventually established contemporary economics, focused on the individual as the primary unit of analysis, the market as the principal structure, and their interaction through the individual's decision to register wants or demands in the marketplace. This approach progressively eliminated classical political economy's concerns for history, the social totality, moral philosophy, and praxis. In doing so, it transformed political economy into the science of economics founded on empirical investigation of marketplace behavior conceptualized in the language of mathematics. Broadly understood as neoclassical economics or simply, in recognition of its dominant position as today's orthodoxy, economics, it is a perspective which

reduces labor to just one among the factors of production. Along with raw material, land, and capital, labor is valued solely for its productivity, or the ability to enhance the market value of a final product (Marshall, 1961; Jevons, 1965).

A second group of responses to the classic political economy of Adam Smith found it more important to retain a concern for history, the social whole, moral philosophy, and praxis. This set constitutes the wide variety of approaches to political economy. A first wave was led by a number of groups including conservative thinkers who sought to replace marketplace individualism with the collective authority of tradition (Carlyle, 1984), by Utopian Socialists who accepted the classical faith in social intervention but urged putting community ahead of the market (Owen, 1851), and by Marxian thinkers who returned labor and the struggle between social classes to the center of political economy. Subsequent formulations built on these perspectives to create a wide range of contemporary formulations.

Although economics occupies the center and center-right of the academic political spectrum, a neoconservative political economy thrives in the work of George J. Stigler (1988), James M. Buchanan (1999), and Ronald Coase (1968; Coase & Barrett, 1991), all recipients of the Nobel Prize in economics, who apply the categories of neoclassical economics to all social behavior with the aim of expanding individual freedom. Institutional political economy occupies a slightly left of center view, arguing, for example, in the work of Galbraith (1985, 2004), who drew principally on Veblen (1934, 1932), that institutional and technological constraints shape markets to the advantage of those corporations and governments big and powerful enough to control them. Institutionalists created the framework for studies documenting how large media companies control the production and distribution of mass media products and restrict content diversity, particularly by limiting views that challenge business. Neo-Marxian approaches, including those of the French Regulation School (Lipietz, 1988; Robles, 1994), world systems theory (Wallerstein, 2004), and others engaged in the debate over globalization (Sassen, 1998; Veltmeyer, 2004), continue to place social class at the center of analysis, and are principally responsible for debates on the relationship between monopoly capitalism, the automation and deskilling of work, and the growth of an international division of labor. Finally, social movements have spawned their own schools of political economy, notably feminist political economy which addresses the persistence of patriarchy and the dearth of attention to household labor (Huws, 2003), environmental political economy which concentrates on the links between social behavior and the wider organic environment (Foster, 2002), and a political economy that brings together the analysis of social movements with the Italian autonomous Marxist theoretical tradition. Dyer-Witheford (1999) has made the most productive use of this tradition in communication studies.

Communication studies has drawn on the various schools of political economic analysis. North American research has been extensively influenced by the contributions of two founding figures, Dallas Smythe and Herbert Schiller. Smythe taught the first course in the political economy of communication at the University of

Illinois and is the first of five generations of scholars linked together in this research tradition. Schiller, who followed Smythe at the University of Illinois, has a similar influence. Their approach to communication studies drew on both the institutional and Marxian traditions. A concern about the growing size and power of transnational communication businesses places their work squarely in the institutional school, but their interest in social class and in media imperialism gives their work a Marxian focus. Their research, and that of others in North America, is shaped by a sense of injustice that the communication industry has become an integral part of a wider corporate order which is both exploitative and undemocratic. Although Smythe, a Canadian, and Schiller, a US citizen, were concerned with media power within their respective national bases, they both developed a research program that charted the growth in power and influence of transnational media companies throughout the world (Smythe, 1981; Schiller, 1989, 1992, 1996, 2000; Maxwell, 2003).

North American research has produced a large literature on industry and class-specific manifestations of transnational corporate and state power, distinguished by its concern to participate in ongoing social movements and oppositional struggles to change the dominant media and to create alternatives (McChesney, 1999; Mosco, 2009; Schiller, 1999; Wasko, 2003). A major objective of this work is to advance public interest concerns before government regulatory and policy agencies. This includes support for those movements that have taken an active role before international organizations, in defense of transforming the prevailing international economic, information, and communication order (Costanza-Chock, 2003; Mosco & Schiller, 2001).

European research has taken two principal directions. The first, most prominent in the work of Garnham (1990, 2000) and in that of Golding and Murdock (Murdock, 2000; Murdock and Golding, 2000), has emphasized class power. Building on the Frankfurt School's critical theory tradition, as well as on the work of Raymond Williams (1975), it documents the integration of communication institutions, mainly business and state policy authorities, within the wider capitalist order, and the resistance of subaltern social classes and movements reflected mainly in opposition to neoconservative state practices promoting the liberalization, commercialization, and privatization of the communication industries.

Another research stream foregrounds class struggle and is most prominent in the writings of Armand Mattelart (1983, 1992, 2000). Mattelart has drawn from dependency theory, Western Marxism, and the worldwide experience of national liberation movements to understand communication as one among the principal sources of resistance to power. His work has demonstrated how poor nations, particularly in Latin America where Mattelart was an advisor to the government of Chile before it was overthrown in a 1973 military coup backed by the US government, used the mass media to oppose Western control and to create indigenous news and entertainment media.

While it is the case that scholars from developing societies are still concerned about issues of media imperialism, as evidenced by their involvement in the World Summit

on the Information Society (WSIS), there is just as much evidence that scholarship in the former Third World has taken a strong interest in political economic theory (Chakravartty & Zhao, 2008; Liu, 2006; Qiu, 2009; *Review of African Political Economy*, 2004). The process of globalizing political economy research is proceeding rapidly. Some of this results from the sheer movement of scholars, a development that has increased over the last two decades. For example, the Canadian political economist Robin Mansell established a base for institutional political economy at the London School of Economics. Yuezhi Zhao, who has provided the foundation for a political economy of China's media and telecommunications system, left China for the United States and from there moved to Canada to establish important connections among scholars in all three countries. One of her students, A. J. M. Shafiu Alam Bhuiyan, came to Canada from Bangladesh and has produced important work on political economy from the perspective of a postcolonial subject (Bhuiyan 2008). The Korean political economist Dal Yong Jin moved to the University of Illinois, Urbana and worked with Dan Schiller to complete a dissertation on the political economy of telecommunications in South Korea. He has since joined Yuezhi Zhao and Robert Hackett to continue the historically strong presence of a political economy perspective at Simon Fraser University in Canada.

Universities with a strong political economy orientation have established an institutional base concentrating on international research. For example, the University of Westminster, where Nicholas Garnham helped to found the political economy perspective, has established, under the leadership of political economist Colin Sparks, a global research program with particular strength in the study of communication systems in the Middle East and in China. His colleague Daya Thussu, a scholar from India, has established a program to examine Indian media. Similarly, the political economist John Downing, who was once based in the United Kingdom, established the Global Media Research Center at Southern Illinois University.

At a more formal level, scholarly associations have been active in their support of global research. The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) was founded in 1957 and, for many years, served as the only global academic society to support political economy research. The organization continues to advance political economic research with an international orientation. Under the leadership of its recent president Robin Mansell and through the hard work of political economy sections heads, including Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, the IAMCR provides a genuine home to political economists worldwide. The establishment of the Herbert Schiller and Dallas Smythe awards to recognize the work of young scholars offers recognition and incentive for continuing the political economy tradition.

The general growth of academic journals has advanced the process of globalizing political economy but specific examples have been especially helpful to the approach. Founded in 2002 by the political economist Yahya Kamalipour of Purdue University in the United States, *Global Media Journal* has featured critical, especially political economic, research. By 2011, the journal appeared in 18 different editions: African,

American, Arabic, Australian, Brazilian, Canadian, Chinese, German, Indian, Malaysian, Mediterranean, Mexican, Pakistani, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Turkish. In addition to content from practically everywhere in the world, the linguistic range demonstrates a genuinely global character. Additionally, the Union for Democratic Communication, a US-based organization of critical scholars and media practitioners, has established *Democratic Communiqué*, a journal that strongly supports political economic research.

This process of global expansion has made a difference for what political economists have to say. Specifically, current research is deeply concerned with the integration of the global political economy and its media systems. Heretofore the focus was on how one (the United States) or just a handful (the United States plus the European Union) of nation-states and their own corporations dominated weaker states and their nascent economies. The result was deepening dependency and underdevelopment. Today the emphasis is on the integration of corporations, states, and classes across national, regional, and even developmental divides (Mosco & Schiller, 2001). In the view of Chakravartty & Zhao (2008), this involves the creation of a “transcultural political economy,” which they document in a book containing contributions from primarily non-Western scholars.

Corporations, including those in the communication industry, were once based in one country and moved through the world as an external force. Today they are embedded in the fabric of several societies to the point where it is often difficult to determine their national identity. Because corporations now operate as owners, partners, and in strategic alliances with companies based in the host country, political economists have shifted from focusing on the power of multinational corporations to addressing the rise of a worldwide transnational economy. Many of these companies originate in the West but the growth of other economies, notably those of China and India, render simplistic many of the standard models of Western domination. India, for example, which has traditionally been portrayed, quite accurately, as a casualty of British and then general Western imperialism, now contains its own transnational firms that have integrated into Western economies. The companies Tata, Infosys, WiPro, and ICICI have strong bases in North America, employing large numbers of workers, many of whom are eventually dismissed because, after training their own replacements, their jobs are outsourced back to India. These companies also train North American students as interns and operate their own outsourcing ventures throughout Latin America (Mosco & McKercher, 2008).

One result of these changes is a new international division of labor with the communication industry in the forefront. By creating global labor markets and by making extensive use of communication technologies to carry out the restructuring process, transnational business gains the flexibility to make the most profitable use of labor.

The global integration of corporate, government, and social class structures is fraught with risks, tensions, and contradictions. There is also considerable opposition, evidenced in the rise of social movements that have protested this development at meetings of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and

other international bodies like the World Summit on the Information Society. Political economists have not only examined these developments, they have also taken praxis seriously and participated at the political and policy levels. In doing so, they recognize the need to create transnational democracy and a genuine cosmopolitan citizenship.

Communication History in Political Economy

True to a central characteristic of the general theory of political economy, communication research making use of this perspective has always been sensitive to history. For example, beginning in the 1980s, historical research on the political economy of electronic media focused on the relationship between centers of political power and centers of media power. This included Herbert Schiller's (1981, 1992) research on the development of a global and heavily militarized electronic media system and Smythe's (1981) work on the history of Canadian media dependency across publishing, broadcasting, and telecommunications. Subsequent generations of scholars further developed and reworked several of these themes, emphasizing the relationship between government and corporate power. These include studies of US broadcasting (Kellner, 1990; Winston, 1986) and telecommunications (McChesney, 1993; Mosco, 1982; Schiller, 1982) as well as their counterparts in Canadian broadcasting (Raboy, 1990) and telecommunications (Babe, 1990; Martin, 1991) history. Dan Schiller's work is particularly important because it identified the growth of well-organized, large business users of telecommunications services and demonstrated how their emergence signaled a significant shift in the industry power structure. Raboy's book challenged the idea that public broadcasting necessarily contributes to political democracy by documenting how state control of the public system silenced the voices of community and civil society groups.

Research from the mid-1990s to the present has departed substantially from more traditional forms of historical analysis in communication studies which emphasized personalities, such as media moguls like Rupert Murdoch who, it is often maintained, drive the development of media. More sophisticated approaches to media history focused on the arc of technological development, equating communication history with the history of a specific medium like radio or television. However, this approach tends to reify technology, giving it a life of its own out of proportion to the ways social and political forces shape the development of technology. When traditional historical research turned to the social and political, it tended to carry out top-down studies of the policies and politics crafted by elites in government and business. Such a perspective is more useful than one that enshrines either a media mogul or a specific technology and, at its best, provides insights into the clashes between elites who share a general political inclination (Hills, 2007; Winseck & Pike, 2007). But it generally neglects to account for resistance outside of elite circles and specifically how

communication history is a more widely contested terrain. Such a recognition characterizes today's historical analyses that adopt a political economy perspective. Specifically, they demonstrate that media systems are the result of a contested history, involving not just dueling capitalists and their allies in government, but also labor unions, citizens' groups, consumer cooperatives, religious enthusiasts, and social justice organizations of all stripes.

Robert McChesney (1993) firmly established the importance of this approach in his analysis of the battle for control over radio in the United States. Neither above politics, nor the privileged policy domain of a handful of elites, radio broadcasting was recognized early on as vital to democracy and numerous social movement organizations used what power they had to democratize radio. They did so by creating broadcasting stations that trade unions, local communities, and public interest organizations of all types could control for themselves. They fought for citizen access to the airwaves to counter the dominant corporate control of radio. They also worked to democratize the policy process by making the case for popular control over regulations that gave and took away licenses, that assigned spectrum to services, and that established rules for the fair use of the medium. In essence, the struggle for radio was the struggle for democracy. More than the instrument of a handful of pioneers, radio was embedded in the most significant political battles of the twentieth century, pitting supporters of the New Deal against the dominant conservative forces which held the upper hand in US politics.

Radio broadcasting was a central instrument of what Michael Denning (1996) has called "the cultural front," a movement extending from the late 1920s to the early 1950s in the United States which provided the cultural energy for attempts to establish alternatives to America's traditional power structure led by big business. Communication scholars writing history today from a political-economic perspective are telling the detailed story of the media's role, including that of radio, in the cultural front. For example, Nathan Godfried (1997) has examined the history of a Chicago radio station created and operated by a labor federation representing unions in that city. Providing a voice for labor in a sea of commercial broadcasting was not easy, particularly since many of the unions, whose members were also fans of commercial stations, struggled to define a labor alternative. In the face of enormous commercial and business pressures, WCFL (for Chicago Federation of Labor) was able to retain its unique character through the 1940s, providing both news and entertainment from a labor standpoint. Returning to WCFL, Elizabeth Fones-Wolf (2006) takes up the role of radio in the drive to build a democratic Left in twentieth-century America. In telling the story of alternatives to commercial radio, Fones-Wolf describes the political battles that pitted labor and its allies against business in some of the central policy debates of the time. These included decisions about granting and renewing broadcast licenses, setting limits on station ownership, establishing rules about acceptable content, and defining the responsibility to air diverse perspectives (see also Fones-Wolf & Fones-Wolf, 2007).

Political economy has addressed the historical trajectories of resistance and opposition in other media, especially print journalism. For example, Tracy (2006) has written about the crucial role of the International Typographical Workers Union (ITU) in battles to control the labor process and the introduction of new technologies in the printing industry. The ITU's activism culminated in a 1964 strike that shut down the newspaper business in New York City for four months. Drawing on interviews with the leader of the labor action, Tracy documents labor's once powerful voice in the media industry. He also describes how hanging on to a narrow craft ideology ultimately contributed to muting that voice. Recent research extends this view by telling the story of the battles between craft and class among communication workers throughout the history of American media (Mosco & McKercher, 2008).

Political economy scholars have also addressed the history of resistance in the telecommunications and computer industries. Countering the traditional great inventor, technician, and pro-corporate readings of AT&T's story, Venus Green (2001) examines the crucial interplay of race, gender, and class in the company's development. Dan Schiller (2007) recounts those struggles in the workplace and in policymaking circles that challenged business efforts to control the postal and telephone system. Pellow and Park (2002) take the analysis into Silicon Valley by telling the story of the struggles first of indigenous people, then of agricultural workers, and now those of immigrant women who do the dangerous hardware work and of more privileged, but often exploited, young software workers.

It is one of the truisms in countries with a national broadcaster like the BBC or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) that such institutions provide a public defense against commercialism. But in her groundbreaking research on media history in Canada, Patricia Mazepa (2003, 2007) demonstrates that the story is significantly more complex and important enough to make a difference for how one thinks about public media. Drawing on archival sources, Mazepa shows that the CBC developed not only to defend against commercial broadcasting crossing the border from the United States, as most scholarship on the subject has concluded. It also fiercely protected itself from alternative definitions of "public" embodied in media produced by immigrant, socialist, and labor organizations. In Canada, public broadcasting came to be associated with white settler media, mainly English, and an elite French version based principally in the province of Quebec. Mazepa demonstrates how the Canadian state used its policy powers to undermine media emerging from outside the mainstream. Her work not only uncovers the largely ignored story of media production and resistance from below. It also calls on scholars, especially those involved in the process of making broadcasting policy, to question the meaning of "public" in public broadcasting.

Writing about the history of journalism in Canada, McKercher (2002) charts the conflicts that erupted over control of the labor process, the use of technology, and the shape of the news. These were not simply established by those who owned the

presses, nor imposed by the changing technologies in the workplace. They arose from strikes and other labor actions as well. Several of these opened spaces for workers and for those who wanted or needed a more diverse press. Many of them fell far short of success. But her historical work, like those of other political economists described in this section, offers a genuine alternative to the standard stories and, in doing so, gives back agency to social activists and workers.

The “Other” Marx

Another Marx helped to inspire an alternative to the political economy perspective. Leo Marx influenced scholars across several generations and a wide range of disciplines including history, literature, American studies, communication, and cultural studies. Marx has been a professor at MIT since 1976 where he contributed to the formation of a program in science, technology, and society. The author of numerous books on the relationship of technology and culture in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American society, Marx’s most influential work was his first book, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, which was published in 1964 and reissued in 1999 with a new afterword by the author.

Leo Marx examined discourses, including the archival and literary record, to describe how technology was constituted from the sublime. Specifically, he reported on the manifold ways technology drew people to visions that transcended the banalities of everyday life. What Karl Marx concluded to be socially constructed ideology or false consciousness, Leo maintained was meaningful transcendence. Karl offered structural explanations that drew from a philosophical anthropology based in praxis. For him, analysis is rooted in political economy with the goal of transforming society. For Leo Marx, analysis is rooted in culture, and specifically aesthetics, with the goal of understanding the meanings that socially construct technology and living cultures. In *The Machine in the Garden* he described the struggle to create a US culture based on the dialectical relationship between conceptions of wilderness and of the built environment. Although both the unspoiled landscape and new technologies were invested with sublime characteristics, the American response settled, however uncomfortably, on a middle ground, the secure yet dynamic garden. For Leo Marx, the garden embodied the sublime experience in the United States until technology, beginning with the railroad, began to overtake it as the dominant cultural icon.

While it is useful to distinguish the political-economic and cultural orientations, it is also vital to resist simplistic dichotomies. Political economy has also addressed the cultural significance of new technologies. For one leading representative of the school, almost every wave of new technology, including information and communication media, contains a powerful rhetoric, “the ideology of redemption through networks” (Mattelart, 2000). Moreover, cultural scholars do not back off from political considerations. *The Machine in the Garden* begins with an assessment of the

pastoral ideal, not simply as a romantic vision or myth but as a means of preserving a way of life that was under attack from powerful elites who sought to appropriate land for their own purposes. Whether the enemy is Roman aristocrats as featured in Virgil's *Eclogues* or the leaders of the British enclosure movement, there is no shortage of political forces and conflicts in Leo Marx's cultural analysis. One of his central concepts, the sublime, is drawn from aesthetics but embodies these power relations. As he describes it, "the rhetoric of the technological sublime" involves hymns to progress that rise "like froth on a tide of exuberant self-regard sweeping over all misgivings, problems, and contradictions" (Marx, 1964, p. 207).

Just as it would be impossible for one essay to do justice to the fullness of a political economy perspective, it is necessary to focus this description of a cultural view on a few key themes. For cultural theorists influenced by Leo Marx, technologies travel a road from the sublime to the banal, from the transcendent mythic spectacle that Edmund Burke wrote about 250 years ago, to what he called the "stale, unaffection familiarity" of the banal (Burke, 1998, p. 79). For Leo Marx's student David Nye (1990, 1994), the sublime is a literal eruption of feeling that briefly overwhelms reason only to be recontained by it. Moreover, technologies enact their own mythologies and these are intimately connected to wider myths about time, space, and social relations. Finally, myths, understood not just as false statements, but as living, transcendent stories that help one to cope with life's contradictions, have significant social consequences.

Expansion of a Cultural Approach

Marx provided an opening to cultural history that others vigorously pursued. A key exemplar is one of Marx's protégés, Rosalind Williams, who built on Marx's work in *Notes on the Underground*, a book which was reissued in 2008 with a new afterword to the 1990 edition. *Notes* demonstrates that the foundation for producing social and cultural understandings of the world, including science and technology, is built on ideas and concepts drawn from aesthetics. Williams's extraordinary book starts with an enormous question: "What are the consequences when human beings dwell in an environment that is predominantly built rather than given?" (Williams, 2008, p. 1). Science, she describes, has provided some answers, but these are at best partial because each term in the question both reduces to and vehemently resists quantification and other tools of traditional science. After all, as Mircea Eliade, Leo Marx, and other cultural historians have described, the vast shift from a pastoral to an agricultural society, which constituted a new stage in built environments, certainly produced measurable increases in human material capabilities but also social, cultural, and spiritual upheavals that resist scientific tools of analysis. Understanding the shift to the technologically built environment requires not a reduction to science but an expansion of our imaginative capacity that includes ideas drawn from culture, the arts, and from aesthetics.

Starting from this premise, Williams takes us into the modern history of the mine, a story that embodies the concrete practice of science, digging to find resources, but also reflects the spirit of science, one that Francis Bacon captured in his then radical vision that “truth is to be sought in the deepest mines of nature” (Williams, 2008, p. 46). This leads Williams to examine first mines then railroads to understand the mutual constitution of their material and cultural dimensions. But a genuine understanding does not arrive until she deploys a foundation built on aesthetic notions of sublimity, fantasy, magic, and terror, which, along with other concepts, create an “underground aesthetics” to comprehend the construction and the descent into a new built environment. A cultural analysis is necessary because science and its attendant materialisms are limited: “The web of relationships between human beings and the earth that involve values, memories, symbolic representations, meanings, histories, anticipations, social organizations, and cultural connections – all these critical relationships cannot be framed within the normal procedures of science, and so they are often not framed at all” (Williams, 2008, p. 260).

James Carey (1992) followed this train of thinking with his research on the “electrical sublime,” a perspective that influenced my research on the “digital sublime” (Mosco, 2004) and that of other cultural scholars (Czitrom, 1982). Much of the discussion of the technological sublime draws on the classic work of Edmund Burke (1998), who remarked that the sublime so fills the mind with its object that it cannot entertain any other nor apply reason to it. Why? Because the sublime emerges from “whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, [. . .] whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror” (p. 86). Unlike beauty and love, which, according to Burke, transcend the banal through pleasure and identification, the sublime achieves transcendence through astonishment, awe, terror, and psychic distance.

The sublime was originally associated with natural wonders including, as David Nye (1994) has examined, such US icons as the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the Natural Bridge, or Yosemite. Indeed, it is this version of the sublime to which Burke directed his attention. As he remarked, “It comes upon us in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros” (Burke, 1998, p. 109). Later, when the natural gave way to the technological, the sublime came to be associated with the human-constructed world, including, but not limited to, modes of transportation like the railroad and airplane and awe-inspiring projects like the Hoover and Glenn Canyon dams (Steinberg, 1993). In the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf brilliantly captures the sublime image of mechanized flight and foreshadows the inevitable banality of the airplane as she describes one soaring in the skies over London shortly after World War I. The vision is seemingly magical until it is discovered to be advertising a popular candy.

One of the central contributions of Leo Marx and the cultural school of thought has been to demonstrate that history is filled with myth-making about technology and has much to say about how we invent myths whenever we invent technology. People want to believe that their era is unique in transforming the world as we have known

it. The end is preferred to more of the same; the transcendent to the routine; the sublime to the banal. So we not only view our age as revolutionary. We forget that others looked at earlier technologies in the same way.

Scholars such as James Carey (1993), Susan Douglas (1986), Carolyn Marvin (1988), and Tom Standage (1999) have documented this tendency for the telegraph. In *The Victorian Internet* Standage writes that in the minds of many, time and space began their transformation when in December 1868 a room full of banquet guests enjoying the feast at Delmonico's restaurant in New York raised their glasses to Samuel F. B. Morse whose new invention, their toastmaster proclaimed, "annihilated both space and time in the transmission of intelligence" (Standage, 1999, p. 90). Or perhaps the transformation began even earlier in 1858, when the British Ambassador rose to toast another contributor to the success of the transatlantic telegraph, Edward Thornton, whose invention the diplomat enthusiastically called "the nerve of international life, transmitting knowledge of events, removing causes of misunderstanding, and promoting peace and harmony throughout the world" (Standage, 1999, pp. 90–91). One magazine exclaimed that "our whole human existence is being transformed" and another envisioned telegraphy creating its own "ghostland." And according to another, "Wars are to cease; the kingdom of peace will be set up" (Douglas, 1986, p. 40). And, as Marvin (1988) describes, if not the kingdom of peace, then the kingdom of God. An early prophet of transoceanic telegraphic communication, Alonzo Jackman, offered a vision of the salvation of the world through instantaneous long-distance communication in a "new era" of evangelism and proclaimed: "Heathenism would be entombed, and the whole earth would be illuminated with the glorious light of Christianity" (Marvin, 1988, p. 192).

Leo Marx's student David Nye and communication scholar Carolyn Marvin document the importance of reflecting on how, shortly after the telegraph made its triumphant entrance, electricity burst into spectacle. Here is how one turn-of-the-century magazine described its magical power:

Look from a distance at night, upon the broad space it fills, and the majestic sweep of the searching lights, and it is as if the earth and sky were transformed by the immeasurable wands of colossal magicians and the superb dome of the structure that is the central jewel of the display is glowing as if bound with wreaths of stars. It is electricity! (Nye, 1990, p. 38)

As historical research on the telegraph and electricity show, today's world of new media is not the first to be christened with magical powers to transcend the present and institute a new order. But they also demonstrate that transcendence is not easy to sustain. For Nye, the sublime eventually fades into the banality of everyday life. Just as the telegraph disappeared into the woodwork of routine commerce, electricity lost its compelling allure. Nye notes: "Electrical novelties faded quickly and became 'natural.' In 1880 one arc light in a store window drew a crowd; in 1885 a lighted mansion still impressed the multitude; in the 1890s came the first electric signs. Each in turn became normal and hardly worth a glance" (Nye, 1990, p. 57).

Michelle Martin (1991) picks up the pieces of this story with her analysis of the telephone. If the telegraph's lightning wires made up the Victorian Internet then the telephone's pairs of twisted copper made it the Internet of the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties. Martin shows how early promotion of the telephone described the characteristics of "a new social order" that the telephone would bring about. It would be both a "business savior" by permitting distant shopping and a liberator of "women slaves" since telephone shopping would lighten the load of homemakers. It would guard against "nervous strain," provide "safety for your family," reduce "household fatigue," and make writing an anachronism. In short, it was the device that could "save the Nation" and so the decision to purchase a phone was considered more than a voluntary consumer choice but "a moral obligation for a considerate husband and a good citizen" (Martin, 1991, p. 37). Marvin echoes this view, noting that "perhaps more than any other communications invention, contemporaries considered the telephone the bellwether of a new age." She cites the magazine *Electrical World's* enthusiasm for the telephone as "the voice crying in the wilderness" (Marvin, 1988, p. 209).

For Martin, Marvin, Claude Fischer, and others, the telephone became one of the central icons of modernity, the medium that marked the turn of the twentieth century. But once again they demonstrate how the sublime aura wears thin. Fischer (1992) documents this for the telephone in interviews with generations of early telephone users. The older interviewees, people who began to see telephones in use in the 1890s, "described the telephone in tones suggesting awe," demonstrably moved by the act of hearing a distant voice and responding to it immediately. But this did not last for long, as those who took up the phone after the turn of the century attest. Statements like "Seems like we always had a telephone" and "Telephones were no big deal. It wasn't like you never saw a telephone" are common among those born just a few years later. For US citizens, the awe and the aura of the telephone disappeared after 1910 (Fischer, 1992, p. 243).

But once again, as Susan Douglas, Clayton R. Koppes, Thomas Lappin, and Eric Barnouw describe, the banality of one technology is matched by the emergence of a new sublime. The magic of messages transmitted through the air with no evidence of their passage was more than just the work of God, it was the medium of God's work. In 1922, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, a man ordinarily not prone to hyperbole, remarked on the wonder of "wireless fever" which had to be "one of the most astounding things that [has] come under my observation of American life" (Douglas, 1987, p. 303). Admittedly self-interested, the president of the Radio Corporation of America, General James G. Harbord, captured the history-making and history-ending power of radio with this analogy to the invention of printing that sounds more like a prayer than an observation:

Radio broadcasting, I devoutly believe, is the greatest force yet developed by man in his march down the slopes of time. Since Gutenberg devised his crude wooden type and made printing possible, nearly five centuries ago, there has been no single invention which so closely touches human interest and human welfare as this miracle of the age. (Koppes, 1969, p. 365)

Many of the same promises made about the telegraph, electricity, and the telephone were applied to this latest “miracle of the ages.” Like the others, it would serve as a potent force for social cohesion and world peace. One can understand that the president of the General Electric Company would see radio “as a means for general and perpetual peace on earth.” After all, GE owned RCA and had a huge stake in the development of broadcasting. One can also understand that Marconi, the widely described “father of wireless,” would see radio as “the only force to which we can look with any degree of hope for the ultimate establishment of permanent world peace.” But even those without a commercial stake in the technology weighed in with their utopian visions. The Episcopal bishop of Washington, DC gave his blessing to the new medium with the exclamation that “I believe the radio will be a potent factor in making the twentieth century the age of the brotherhood of man. More and more I have come to feel that this growing feeling of brotherhood may result from the intimacy and fellowship created through the medium of the air” (Koppes, 1969, p. 365).

More significantly, Koppes stresses, observers felt that radio would promote an epochal transformation in political life, the growth of direct democracy. In arguments that are strikingly like those we hear today about the Internet, radio would allow the listening audience direct contact with those in power. *The New Republic* magazine praised radio because “It has found a way to dispense with political middlemen. In a fashion, it has restored the demos upon which republican government is founded. No one will capture the radio vote unless he faces the microphones squarely and speaks his mind fully, candidly, and in extenso” (Koppes, 1969, p. 366).

Radio was also predicted to strengthen the quality of political oratory: “There is no doubt whatever that radio broadcasting will tend to improve the quality of speeches delivered at the average political meeting.” Why? Because “personality will count for nothing as far as the radio audience is concerned. Ill-built sentences expressing weak ideas cannot succeed without the aid of forensic gesticulation. The flowery nonsense and wild rhetorical excursions of the soap box spellbinder are probably a thing of the past if a microphone is being used” (Lappin, 1995, p. 218). Furthermore, as Lappin demonstrates, contemporary proponents of “virtual education” would find many of their arguments foreshadowed in radio’s early years. The first radio courses in the early 1920s prompted *Radio Broadcast* magazine to forecast “the advent of the ‘University of the Air.’” One enthusiast declared: “The lid of the classroom has been blown off, and the walls have been set on the circumference of the globe.” Thanks to radio, “every home has the potentiality of becoming an extension of Carnegie Hall or Harvard University” (Lappin, 1995, pp. 366–367).

But once again, just as the garden paradise in Leo Marx’s early United States turned into the banality of suburbia, it would not be long before the forces of banality would undermine the magic of radio. Douglas sees bad omens by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century as first military and then large corporate interests began to recognize the value of the new medium and lobbied to push off the air the young amateurs and educators who envisioned a utopian future for and with radio. The arrival of advertising and big business, with their interest in transforming the high-minded University of the Air into a medium to sell products with popular

entertainment, led serious writers of the late 1920s to question whether radio would succeed. In 1927, as Lappin describes, *The New Republic* magazine, which had predicted that radio would create a new democratic age, now complained that “It turns to propaganda as easily as the aeroplane turns to bombing; it sows its seeds with a wider throw” (Lappin, 1995, p. 369). By 1930, the magazine could only conclude that “broadly speaking, the radio in America is going to waste” (Lappin, 1995, p. 374). Media historian Eric Barnouw describes how Lee de Forest, one of radio’s founding inventors, concluded that radio had become “a stench in the nostrils of the gods of the ionosphere” (Barnouw, 1968, p. 234). Once very optimistic about the technology he helped to create, de Forest complained bitterly in a letter to the 1946 meeting of the National Association of Broadcasting. Attacking the proponents of commercial radio, he demands to know:

What have you done with my child? You have sent him out in the streets in rags of ragtime, tatters of jive and boogie woogie, to collect money from all and sundry for hubba hubba and audio jitterbug. You have made of him a laughing stock to intelligence [. . .] you have cut time into tiny segments called spots (more rightly stains) wherewith the occasional fine program is periodically smeared with impudent insistence to buy and try. (Barnouw, 1968, p. 234)

Nevertheless, as cultural analysts of television describe, his hopes rose again with the latest new medium.

As radio joined other communication technologies that promised but failed to transform time, space, and social relations, another powerful device, television, captured the popular imagination and attracted the sublimity that earlier technologies lost. As Kisselof (1995) and the Fishers (1996) demonstrate, television’s first encounter with “end of everything” promises began with broadcast television, which spread widely beginning in the early 1950s. Its second arrived with cable television, which inspired dreams of a “wired nation” in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first period of television’s promise viewed the medium in terms familiar to anyone who heard about how radio would realize democracy, world peace, social harmony, and the transformation of mass education. As David Sarnoff, the founder of RCA, boasted at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, television would provide “a torch of hope in a troubled world” (Kisselof, 1995, p. 51). It would do so by guaranteeing “a finer and broader understanding among all the people’s [*sic*] of the world” (Fisher & Fisher, 1996, p. 350). Few people’s expectations rose higher (or ultimately sank deeper) than those again of Lee de Forest, inventor of the vacuum tube. In 1928 he expounded on the medium he was helping to create by gushing over:

What thrilling lectures on solar physics will such pictures permit! [. . .] What could be a more fitting theme for a weekly half-hour of television than a quiet parade through some famous art gallery, pausing a moment before each masterpiece while the gifted commentator dwells briefly upon its characteristics, explains its meaning, recounts the story of its creation, its creator? [. . .] Can we imagine a more potent means for teaching the public the art of careful driving safety upon our highways than a weekly talk

by some earnest police traffic officer, illustrated with diagrams and photographs? (Fisher and Fisher, 1996, p. 91)

Television held out a promise not experienced since the arrival of the electric light and the automobile, and all three are mythologized in Dunlap's early work on television, which declared: "The advent of the television era can be compared in importance with the arrival of the electric light that dimmed the glory of candle and kerosene lamp; with the arrival of the automobile that relieved the horse, sped up travel and introduced good roads that linked the farm with the city" (Dunlap, 1932, p. 224). In short, television "is the wizardry of the age" (Dunlap, 1932, p. 258).

The enthusiasm grew with the promise of cable television. In fact, as Ralph Lee Smith (1972) documented, there was arguably a greater sense that cable would bring an epochal transformation in communication. Broadcast television held out great promise but it was hard to argue with those who saw it as largely a video extension of radio. But cable television was something completely different because it had the potential to link every home and workplace in an interconnected system. It is no wonder that one of the period's more popular books on the subject was called *The Wired Nation – Cable TV: The Electronic Communications Highway*. In fact, cable television was constructed with a similar sublimity as has been the case with the Internet. Indeed Smith put it in language now familiar to even the casual Internet observer: "In the 1960s, the nation provided large federal subsidies for a new interstate highway system to facilitate and modernize the flow of automotive traffic in the United States. In the 1970s it should make a similar national commitment for an electronic highway system, to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas" (Smith, 1972, p. 83). But anticipating the banality to come, he feared that "short-term commercial considerations [would] dictate the form of the network" (Smith, 1972, p. 83).

Computer communication is the latest version of Leo Marx's technological sublime, at once both the banal infrastructure for globalization and the sublime vision of a universal intelligence celebrated in the breezy optimism of *Wired* magazine as well as in the disturbing visions of the theologian Teilhard de Chardin (1959, 1964), who imagined the "noosphere," a literal atmosphere of thought mounting in pressure upon a globe whose linked intelligence prepares the way for an evolutionary leap. Digital communication renews what was once promised by the telegraph, telephone, radio, and television by offering the literal connection, the missing link that will bring about transformation to time, space, and social relations. The remainder of this chapter situates my own research on computer communication in this stream of cultural analysis (Mosco, 2004).

The Culture of the Digital Sublime

Today's communication technology embodies the sublime and with it anoints the world with a near-apocalyptic quality – the end of history. The world experiences,

in the work of Frances Fukuyama (1992), Nicholas Negroponte (1995), and Ray Kurzweil (1999), to name just some of the leading thinkers, a radical disjunction in time, opening the way to a new epoch no longer bound by the economic, technological, or even biological limitations that characterize every historical period. For Fukuyama (1992), new media and liberal democracy mark the end point in an evolutionary process that has taken people through stages of development (e.g., hunting and gathering, agriculture), modes of thinking (mythic, religious, philosophic), and forms of governance (tribal, feudal, communist, fascist). For the founding director of MIT's Media Lab, Nicholas Negroponte (1995), the end of history comes with the end of an analog world and the arrival of a digital one to which we must accommodate. In matter-of-fact prose, he provides a modern-day prophet's call to say goodbye to the world of atoms, with its coarse, confining, materiality, and welcomes the digital world, with its infinitely malleable electrons able to transcend spatial, temporal, and material constraints. The world of atoms is ending, he says; we must learn to be digital. Ray Kurzweil (1999) brings the ballast of strong technological credentials to a bestselling book that casts the end of history in biological terms. The radical disjunction means the end of death as we know it because we are rapidly refining the ability to preserve our intelligence in software so that "life expectancy is no longer a viable term in relation to intelligent beings" (Kurzweil, 1999, p. 280). For Kurzweil, one of history's fundamental problems is that we have been dependent on the "longevity of our *hardware*," that physical self which he laments through Yeats as "but a paltry thing, a tattered coat upon a stick" (Kurzweil, 1999, pp. 128–129). History as we know it ends as we "cross the divide" and "instantiate ourselves into our computational technology" (Kurzweil, 1999, pp. 128–129).

In addition to crossing the divide in time, cyberspace helps to cross the spatial divide, putting an end to geography as we know it. For Frances Cairncross (1997), this means the "death of distance," as cyberspace, unlike material space, permits us to experience what it means to be anywhere at any time we choose. Accepting this view, Kenichi Ohmae (1990) celebrates a "borderless world" where any attempt to create boundaries is doomed to failure or what William Mitchell (1995, 1999) calls an "e-topia" of near boundless choices for where and how we live and work. For him, computer communication does not just extend geometry: "The Net negates geometry [. . .] it is fundamentally and profoundly *antispacial*. The Net is ambient-nowhere in particular and everywhere at once" (Mitchell, 1995, p. 8). Even those like Margeret Wertheim (1999) who take a less triumphalist view still see cyberspace as spatially disjunctive, exploding the singularity of the Enlightenment's vision of one empirical space and introducing an experience dimly reminiscent of the medieval era where existential space is inherently dual – composed then of secular and spiritual space, today of material and cyberspace.

Finally, cyberspace promises to end politics as we know it by undermining bureaucratic constraints on building networked democracies and by sweeping away age-old strategic thinking (Mosco & Foster, 2001). In the work of the Tofflers (1995), George Gilder (1989, 1994, 2000), and others, the end of politics means more than just using

computer communication to create electronic democracy. It also redefines politics by grounding power in networks rather than in institutions. New economic power rests in looser structures, systems with nodal points whose power derives not from their geographical supremacy but from networked interdependence and flexibility. Real-time and 24-hour networks of information flows transcend the physical city and the nation-state too, creating new laws with which politics must comply or be threatened with extinction. Proponents go as far as to envision a quantum politics whose indeterminacy mirrors that of the subatomic world. The end of politics also means the end of fear, particularly the age-old fear of military attack because computer communications enables a defense against it. The need for offensive weapons and strategies of mutually assured destruction disappears as ballistic missile defense systems lift a protective umbrella that shields the world. From the time that Ronald Reagan first called for such a defense, telling Gorbachev that he saw the “hand of providence” in it, to George W. Bush’s reinvention of these systems and their stubborn persistence today, we hear the language of a new dawn in global security, of world peace, driven by a kind of *machina ex deo* that will transform politics as we have known it throughout history.

Cultural studies scholars help one to understand how stories about communication technology envision a radical transformation in temporal, spatial, and social relations. They maintain that while computer communication may not bring about the end of history, of geography, and of politics, there is a lot to be gained from research that addresses why it is not and why people believe that it is. Specifically, one of the reasons why variations on “the end of” stories are so popular is because people collectively forget that technology is constructed with and through the sublime. New media gurus encourage thinking about the end of history, the end of geography, and the end of politics. Everything has changed. So one can apply the mute button to whatever has come before. After all, history has nothing to say to us because it knows nothing of new media. But quite to the contrary, cultural analysts insist that history is filled with stories about technological sublime and research needs to engage this point directly.

Then why do people so willingly acquiesce, indeed actively affirm, stories about the end? It is not just the mechanisms of political economy, including the power of gurus, the mass media looking for a good story, politicians wanting to be identified with the next new thing, and advertisers eager to market the latest promise to transform life as we know it. These are undoubtedly important forces in compelling belief and action. But there is more to it than this. Cultural theorists and historians remind us that active affirmation does not just come from external pressure. There is something powerfully attractive about the culture communication networks, not just the Internet that formed the basis of my book *The Digital Sublime* but the ensemble of new social media that Eran Fisher (2010) examines in *Media and New Capitalism in the Digital Age: The Spirit of Networks*. Nevertheless, as these and other cultural analyses that build upon the work of Leo Marx describe, this magnetic power extends back in time to earlier examples of the electrical sublime and further back to the technological

and the natural sublime. Consequently, we need to understand political-economic pressures within the cultural context of meaningful narratives that lift us out of the day-to-day and designate us as a special, perhaps even a chosen, people. Put simply, people want to believe that their era is unique in transforming the world. The end is preferred to more of the same; the transcendent to the routine, the sublime to the banal. So people not only view their age as revolutionary. They forget that others looked at earlier technologies in much the same way. It is only when we see today's media as mutually constituted out of a culture that creates sublime meanings and a political economy that empowers it that we can fully understand why it is that over and over again, people have encountered and believed in a genuinely living end.

For the followers of Leo Marx, history, geography, and politics ended in the 1850s when the telegraph was introduced. They ended again a few decades later when electrification lit up cities, but the stories were largely forgotten when electricity literally withdrew into the woodwork. The end came once more when the telephone brought about a renewal of these narratives. In the 1920s the arrival of radio brought along its own cast of storytellers who saw it marking a radical change in time, space, and social relations. In the 1950s television changed the world and then changed it again in the 1960s with the multi-channel world of cable television and again with today's new media. As one cultural theorist has concluded in what amounts to an understatement: "The structure of the history of technology itself is such as to encourage particular philosophical attitudes. Most commonly the particular philosophy involved is an optimistic, not to say triumphalist view of both the history of technology and the nature of man" (Mitcham, 1973, p. 169).

Bridging the Divide

The cultural history advanced by Leo Marx and his followers is part of a broad-based intellectual movement that focuses on the constitution of meaning in texts, including all forms of social communication. The approach contains numerous currents and fissures that provide for considerable ferment from within. Nevertheless, it can contribute to the understanding of political economy in several ways. Cultural studies has been open to a broad-based critique of positivism (the view that sensory observation is the only source of knowledge). Moreover, it has defended a more open philosophical approach that concentrates on subjectivity or how people interpret their world, as well as on the social creation of knowledge. Cultural studies has also expanded the meaning of cultural analysis by starting from the premise that culture is ordinary, produced by all social actors rather than primarily by a privileged elite, and that the social is organized around gender and nationality divisions and identities as much as by social class.

Although the political economy approach derived from Karl Marx can learn from these departures, it can also contribute equally to enrich the cultural approach. Even

as it takes on a philosophical approach that is open to subjectivity and is more broadly inclusive, political economy insists on a realist epistemology that maintains the value of material historical research, of thinking in terms of concrete social totalities, with a well-grounded moral philosophy, and a commitment to overcome the distinction between social research and social practice.

Whatever the divisions between the two Marxes, the process of research should bring together, not separate, intellectuals and cultural producers. It ought to build a common understanding and common political purpose that can advance the democratization of social life. In making this call, critics, including political economists, must remind themselves of their own wider purpose, which includes forging intellectual and political links across disciplinary boundaries. There is much to be gained by continuing the conversation between the legacies of the two Marxes.

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The Conditions of Media's Possibility

A Foucauldian Approach to Media History

Jeremy Packer

ABSTRACT

This chapter integrates Michel Foucault's historiographic approach with media history. After describing how Foucault's work has traditionally been used and understood by media historians, four areas of work are used as examples for establishing a more holistic account of the value of Foucault's archaeological and genealogical methods of historical enquiry. They are (1) the work of German media theorist Friedrich Kittler, (2) the Stanford School of the philosophy of science, (3) cultural studies work in governmentality studies, and (4) Giorgio Agamben's application of the Foucauldian concept apparatus. After providing eight questions for orienting Foucauldian historical investigation, the chapter explains how this leads to understanding the interrelated dimensions of power, knowledge, and subjectification as they intersect with the historical establishment of media forms, institutions, and technologies.

Michel Foucault was not a media historian. This statement is neither surprising, nor likely to meet with much resistance. While clearly the books and texts forming the archives of Foucault's investigations are media, their explicit materiality as technologies for overcoming time and distance, reducing noise, or maintaining culture, was very rarely if ever the focus of his historical investigations.¹ Yet, numerous scholars

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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have drawn upon Foucault's work in their historical investigations of media. An obvious question might then be, "How does one do Foucauldian media history?" In a schematic and overly generalized fashion, a simple answer is that there are two clearly distinct ways of bringing Foucault's thought to bear on media history. First, Foucauldian concepts, such as disciplinarity, the confessional, or panopticism, could be applied to the historical dimensions of media forms and technologies. This approach might be called the Foucauldian toolbox approach. Though it will not be developed herein, Foucault himself was certainly not dismissive of such application of his work as he suggested his own books might make up "a kind of tool-box others can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they wish in their own area [. . .] I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers" (Foucault, 1994). While keeping Foucault's consideration in mind, I would like to suggest a more robust form of Foucauldian media history.

This second approach would entail combining Foucault's two primary historiographic methods, archaeology and genealogy. Using them to investigate the historical processes of mediation, the creation and use of media technologies, and/or the rise and fall of media institutions could bear ripe fruit. Archaeology is Foucault's practice of investigating the historical constitution of a specific field of knowledge and can be seen most readily in his early work on psychology (Foucault, 1988), medicine (Foucault, 1994), and the human sciences of economics, biology, and linguistics (Foucault, 2002). Foucault's description of this method is most fully elaborated in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1982a). Genealogical investigation asks how power has been historically constituted and resisted through governmental rationalities, forms of knowledge, and practices of the self. Foucault (1977) specifically addressed power in groundbreaking ways in its productive capacities, as opposed to merely its working as a mechanism of oppression (Foucault, 1978). Further, he elaborated an understanding of rationalities for rule that organized power according to three variably arranged modes; sovereignty, disciplinarity, and security. Bringing archaeology and genealogy together provides a more "Foucauldian" form of historical investigation than the toolbox mode (not necessarily validating in and of itself). More importantly it allows for an analysis that can systematically focus upon three interlocked concerns (1) the production of knowledge, (2) relationships of power, and (3) modes of subjection. These three arenas serve as a kind of Foucauldian triumvirate that he and others suggested ruled over all of his work.² The toolbox approach is most common in media studies generally and to some degree in media history as well. However, there have also been archaeologies of thought regarding communication, if not precisely media. Armand Mattelart's *The Invention of Communication* (1996) stands out as an exemplary Foucauldian account of this form. While not explicitly Foucauldian, one could read John Durham Peters's *Speaking Into the Air* (1999) in a similar light. Mattelart focused primarily upon France while Peters was more concerned with the development of thought in the United States.

This chapter will first situate some of this work within the field of media history, leaning heavily upon John Nerone's (2003) schematic of the field while

acknowledging that recent work such as the collected volume *Media Archaeology* (Huhtamo & Parikka, 2011) presents other interesting means for following up on some of Foucault's archaeological concerns. It will then proceed to describe work that develops Foucauldian approaches for doing archaeology and genealogy that are particularly well suited to an analysis of media history. These models will come from four sources: (1) Friedrich Kittler's discourse-analytical approach to media history; (2) the so-called Stanford School of the philosophy of science, paying particular attention to their understanding of scientific instruments; (3) key work in cultural studies that builds upon Foucault's concept of governmentality; and (4) Giorgio Agamben's recently translated essays on method (Agamben, 2010) and the apparatus (Agamben, 2009). Each of these key historiographic and theoretical considerations will be developed to help us build a model of media history that avoids some of the criticisms directed at previous Foucauldian work in the field.

What results may allow for a directive to address the interconnections between power, knowledge and subjectification. These three problematics were taken up as the organizing principle for Gilles Deleuze's book-length explanation of Foucault's work, simply titled *Foucault* (1988). In it he explained how they form the backbone of Foucault's epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations. I will ultimately suggest that a thoroughly Foucauldian media history should attend to the intermixing of these three elements as they elaborate an apparatus. Starting with such a conception and by asking questions related to media processes, we can see how genealogical and archaeological investigation can be put to good use for understanding how subjects come into being through mediation, entwined within technological and governmental relations of power, whose existence depends upon scientific and vernacular knowledge productive of and produced by media technologies, institutions, and forms. Such an approach would take Foucault's definition of technology as a starting point.

In an insightful interview in 1982 Michel Foucault was asked a series of questions that were meant by the interviewer, Paul Rabinow, to clarify Foucault's understanding of the relationship between architecture and politics. In an interesting redirection, one of Foucault's defining strategies, he explains that when it comes to understanding space and power, architects have since the nineteenth century taken a back seat to engineers and technicians devoted to the three great variables "territory, communication, and speed."³ He argues that the political imaginary was no longer dominated by an idealized notion of the city whereby the state was imagined as if it were an extended city. Rather, with the advent of railroads and "a network of communication" the nature of the social and how one must govern were differently problematized. As a result, new behaviors and new forms of resistance radically transformed the population and a new political imaginary emerged which recognized the centrality of the media necessary to create and maintain greater and quicker communication.

Foucault ends the interview with a discussion of how he would approach the history of a specific field of practice and thought that bridged the divide between the technical and the aesthetic, in that instance architecture, though I will argue the

same could hold for media. Foucault would focus on *tekhne*, “a practical rationality governed by a conscious goal” (Foucault, 2000, 364). Recognizing the possible conflation with the term “technology” understood too narrowly in his view as “hard technology, the technology of wood, of fire, of electricity,” Foucault asserts we also should broaden our understanding of “technology.” He claimed for instance that “government is also a function of technology: the government of individuals, the government of souls, the government of the self by the self, the government of families, the government of children, and so on.” Thus the historical study of a specific *tekhne* would demand situating it within the broader sense of the word to understand how it functions in terms of a practical rationality and a means to govern specific practices and peoples. Such an approach could lead us to ask, “Why and in what ways have media been imagined as an arena of analysis and application that could accomplish such practical goals?”

I invoke this interview not because it is one of the few places Foucault actually addresses communications or media in relation to technology, nor because it is the only possible directive for imagining what Foucauldian media history might look like.⁴ As I will argue below, there are numerous routes leading toward such an enterprise, none of which necessarily need cross paths with these few passages. However, the interview does point us in a few interesting directions that will be taken up later. First, Foucault’s broad understanding of technology will help us get out of a division in the field of media history that John Nerone (2003) has expressed in terms of media/technology versus media/institution. Second, Foucault’s assessment of the centrality of communication technologies in the reformulation of governance might be seen as a defining feature of media history. This was due in large part to the changed scale and tempo of the governmental imaginary that follows from the increased speed and reach of media, configured here as both communication and transport, following from some lines of thought more thoroughly elaborated by such figures as Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Lewis Mumford, and James Carey.

Foucault’s Legacy and Media History

The work of Michel Foucault continues to have a more profound effect upon the humanities and social sciences in English-speaking countries than any other intellectual figure to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century or the early years of the twenty-first. While such a claim may seem contentious, if quantitative measures count for anything, a study by *The Times Higher Education* in 2009 showed that Foucault was the most cited author in the humanities. Further, Foucault has been the most cited figure in the Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences Citation Index every year since 1985, the year following his death (Nealon, 2009). In the midst of such evidential significance, having to defend against the question “Why Foucault?”

would seem a bit tedious in any field. However, there are contextually specific reasons for explaining “Why Foucault for media history?”

Within the humanities no field may have been as simultaneously vexed and enchanted by Foucault’s work than history. While it is not within the scope of this essay to consider the decades-long debates that Foucault’s work has inspired, John Nerone has nicely summed up this tantalizing yet uncomfortable affair:

Certainly we don’t read Foucault’s histories of sexuality to learn how the Greeks screwed; rather, they are exercises in the philosophy of the self, and therefore relatively impervious to falsification from the archives. The same might be said to be true of histories in the mode of media/technology generally, which have a durability that more prosaic histories lack. We will be reading McLuhan, like Foucault, long after diligent scholars have disproven or complexified all of his factual conjectures. (Nerone, 2003, p. 99)

Nerone’s description provides a transition to our more immediate topic, media history.

Several prominent scholars have pointed out that the field of media history still suffers from growing pains and as of yet has nothing resembling an official cannon (Nerone, 2003, 2008; Peters, 2008a; Zelizer, 2008). Given these circumstances, claiming that Foucault’s work is worthy of inclusion could be taken as contentious for a number of reasons. It is eminently clear Foucault was not a media historian. In fact, a cursory glance at his seminal books, lectures, and essays shows that he never directly turned his gaze upon media technologies or institutions. Nor did Foucault spend considerable time analyzing the past 150 years⁵ – the bread-and-butter period for most media historians, as it saw the rise of modern mass media forms, technologies, and institutions.

However, at least one strain of media history, devoted to media/technology (as opposed to the more prevalent take media/institution), has partially emerged from a Foucauldian inclination (Nerone, 2003). Some contextualization is in order. Nerone argues that two common approaches to media history coalesce around distinct understandings of what media are. One approach, most clearly exemplified by the Canadian Medium Theory School figures Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan, focuses upon the grand sweep of historical change resulting from the implementation of different media technologies. Nerone suggests media/technology as a descriptor for this approach. The other common strain in media history, media/institution, is the more parochial and involves histories of mass media institutions and their content. This vein mostly produces histories of journalism practices and news organizations, industry-level alterations in the policy and economics of television and radio, the rise and fall of film studios, and the ever-growing importance of advertising. While the media/technology strain is often said to be infected by “technological determinism,” the media/institution wing is filled with the whiggish remnants of a time when great men (*sic*) lorded over history’s conscience and were thought to man (*sic*) the great levers of time’s passage. Nerone sees manageable maneuvers for

escaping technological simplifications via micro histories of specific technologies that dwell upon immediate media environments. Huhtamo and Parikka (2011) suggest that such specificity of historical investigation is what is needed for media archaeology. Further, it denies not only technological determinism, but “construct(s) alternate histories of suppressed, neglected, and forgotten media that do not point teleologically to the present media–cultural condition as their ‘perfection’” (Huhtamo & Parikka, 2011, p. 3). In sum, it is suggested by Nerone as well as Huhtamo and Parikka that we may need micro histories that are careful not to (1) allow media or communication to encompass everything, (2) simply verify in new historical context what Foucault has already “discovered,” or (3) fall back into the grand-narrative trap set by teleology. Who needs to go to the archive if we already know history’s carriage only stops at the doorstep of Foucault’s house of disciplinary order?

Two other concerns regarding Foucauldian historical analysis need to be addressed. One has to do with periodization and the second has to do with the periods in which Foucault’s work was first encountered in English. Treating Foucault as a historian rather than a philosopher or a methodologist leads both to “better” histories that prove him “wrong,” as mentioned, and also the problem of his historical accounts being misread as being teleological and programmatic. Such a misreading can lead to work in media history that simply extends the workings of a particular Foucauldian concept into a new historical period (by necessity a period following those dealt with by Foucault) or applying it to new media technologies with little attention paid to historical and contextual differences. To make matters worse, Foucault describes the emergence of different forms of power (sovereignty, disciplinarity, and governmentality/security/pastoralism) that often are taken to correspond to consecutive historical epochs. Deleuze (1995a, 1995b) further confuses the situation by adding the notion of “control society” as a form. Without belaboring the point, Foucault is quite explicit that no such epochal transformation has been afoot. “We need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty–discipline–government [. . .] which constitute from the eighteenth century onwards a solid series, one which even today has assuredly not been dissolved” (Foucault, 1991, p. 102). Deleuze’s description is looser and he describes “old sovereign societies,” “disciplinary societies,” and “control societies,” each with its attendant, and possibly defining, technologies. For Deleuze (1995b), writing at the beginning of the 1990s, the “key thing is that we’re at the beginning of something new” (p. 182). This “new” may see “older means of control, borrowed from the old sovereign societies” (p. 182), brought back into the fold. The degree to which Deleuze’s account is a break with Foucault or an extension depends largely upon whether (a) “control society” is akin to Foucault’s work on security (see especially the first three lectures in Foucault, 2004) and (b) whether a borrowing of the old forms is an example of Foucault’s “solid series” and “triangle.” In either event, applications of a misconceived sequential logic do exist even though it’s quite clear that was not Foucault’s intent.

A second way in which Foucault's work has been dismissed as being insufficient and/or teleological stems in part from the fact that the most prominent glosses of Foucault in English were written well before whole arenas of his work, most particularly his lectures from the College de France, began to appear in print and/or in English. In its worst incarnation we get a Foucault forever relegated to a set of fixed positions that tell us more about the concerns of scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom reeling from the various "posts" starting around 1980 and continuing into the early 1990s than about Foucault the philosopher/methodologist. Such concerns left all sorts of Foucaults (many for dead): a Foucault to forget (Baudrillard, 1977; Virilio, 1986), Foucault without an analysis of the state (Hall, 1980), Foucault the unbeknownst Marxist claiming to be anti-Marxist (Poulantzas, 1979), Foucault the Enlightenment crypto-normativist (Habermas, 1986), Foucault the anti-humanist nihilist (Waltzer, 1983), Foucault the unethical (Miller, 1990), Foucault who forgot feminism (Heckman, 1996), Foucault the postmodernist (Paglia, 1991), and Foucault the modernist (Bruns, 1994). Foucault rather enjoyed such divergent responses to his thought.⁶ Rather than fixing Foucault as a process of recuperation or setting him in his place, it may prove far more beneficial to look at how Foucault's thought animates a range of historical investigations central to the broad definition of media and technology outlined above. Below, four such animations are described. Taken together, they might be considered foundations for constructing Foucauldian media histories.

Friedrich Kittler and Media's Brute Facticity

One scholar who has most fervently pushed the boundaries of a poststructural media history is Friedrich Kittler. His three major works translated into English, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (1990), *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999), and *Optical Media* (2010), can be approached as the first full-fledged attempt to bring Foucauldian poststructural analysis to the historical study of media. The uptake of Kittler in English-language media history has been to this point rather sparsely scattered, a point several scholars have commented upon and tried to explain (Peters, 2008b, 2010; Winthrop Young & Lutz, 1999). In some ways it is rather obvious. Kittler's view of human-technological interaction feels cold and unflinchingly harsh (Wellerby, 1990). Much of the material he worked with was firmly situated in the roots of a German intellectual and literary tradition that is not easily penetrated by those unfamiliar with it (Peters, 2010). Further, Kittler draws not only from Foucault, but also quite heavily from Marshall McLuhan and the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Ensuring it is even less palatable upon first review, Kittler's fundamental theory of communication is borrowed from Shannon and Weaver's classic "transmission model" which has in the United States been situated as an adversary to critical and cultural approaches following James Carey's 1975 article, "A Cultural Approach to Communication"

(1989). Finally, Kittler's historical teleology may seem problematic. All media technologies are viewed in terms of their perceived similarities with digital media and/or what technological, mathematical, economic, or theoretical elements they added to help "media history culminate(s) in the digital computer" (Peters, 2010, p. 7). Stone tablets, ink quills, and typewriters are necessary, though ultimately failed, attempts to reduce the noise that kept humans from hearing the sirens' call for a digitized world.

Kittler often acknowledges that he borrows heavily from Foucault for his method of historical analysis. It follows then that a discourse network is composed of "the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data" (Kittler, 1990, p. 369) and that an "archaeology of the present must also take into account data storage, transmission, and calculation in technological media" (p. 369). The "also" here refers to the fact that Foucault's discursive formations "did not progress beyond 1850" and hence paid no attention to the second industrial revolution and "its automation of the streams of information" (p. 369). Thus Kittler seeks to historicize not the processes of meaning making, ideological struggle, or cultural reproduction; rather, it

follows the Foucauldian lead in that it seeks to delineate the apparatuses of power, storage, transmission, training, reproduction, and so forth that make up the conditions of factual discursive occurrences. The object of study is not what is said or written but the fact – the brute and often brutal fact – that it is said, that this and not rather something else is inscribed. (Wellberry, 1990, p. xii)

This poststructural, post-hermeneutic approach to media history appeared as a corrective to the prevailing assumptions and concerns of literary studies, Kittler's initial academic home. The key here for Kittler is not meaning production, the play of ideology, or idealized discourse communities and publics. His maneuver out of the hermeneutic tradition depended upon a decentering of human agency and meaning production via a turn toward Foucauldian discourse analysis and Shannon's model of communication.

A further ingredient for Kittler isn't so much methodological, but rather his dependence upon Canadian medium theory. Combining Innis's concern with space-time bias with McLuhan's "extensions of man," Kittler looks historically upon the specific means by which time shifting and spatial transmission works to extend the sensory, memory, and logical capacities of the human. Whether this be by book, telegraph, television, typewriter, or computer, the brute fact of mediation according to Kittler is best characterized by Shannon's classic mathematical model (much misused and maligned in the US context of its inception) by which messages (or statements) are encoded by a sender, are transmitted through a medium, reach a receiver, and are decoded. Shannon's theory in the hands of Kittler elaborates the processes by which noise is overcome in order that data can be stored, transmitted, and processed. Thus, Kittler's Foucauldian media history, most succinctly presented

in *Optical Media*, is the history of technological achievements in which the camera obscura and lanterna magica are not merely devices that predated photography and film, but rather elements in discourse networks that reshaped how optical data were collected, moved about, stored, and processed. Such media technologies reorient power/knowledge formations as they create new means for knowing and acting upon the world. For instance, the camera obscura functioned mimetically as a means for an understanding of human optics, perspective, and even ballistic predictability. Further, from such a vantage, media are certainly “extensions of man,” but only insofar as the “man” in question was never an *a priori*, but rather an always-already extended product of discourse and technology. Thus, McLuhan’s humanistic sensibility gets reworked.

There are several more specific takeaways from Kittler’s work for thinking about Foucault and media history. First, the study of discourse as it relates to media looks very different from what Kittler (2010) derides as a “trivial, content-based approach to media” (p. 31). Rather, discourse relates to the networks of associated technologies and statements which organize what can be said (data-knowledge), where and to whom it is said (transmission-power), and what can be made with such statements (processing-power/knowledge). The importance of media technologies is that they changed such dynamics. It made the visual and auditory realms mechanically capturable, storable, searchable, transmittable, and processable. It combined the time shifting of memory or print with analog data capturing that did not have to pass directly through human observation, but rather through mechanical means of production and processing. Cameras may have first depended upon human hands to be made operable, but once freed from such constraints they are capable of capturing data regardless of intentionality, human agency, or the constraints of meaning making. Much meaning will be made and humans will enact agency via the camera for all sorts of intent, but the pivotal issue for Kittler is how it transforms the capturing of data. This is one aspect of the facticity of Kittler’s media analysis. The world was being newly inscribed, not by human hands writing, chiseling, or making marks on papyrus, paper, or some other surface (what Kittler refers to as the artisanal stage of media production), but rather through apparatuses that combined chemistry, mechanics, and optics.

Kramer suggests that Kittler’s media history is fundamentally about both technologies and institutions:

it is necessary to note that there are not always data, on the one hand, and then, on the other hand, the media that are concerned with the data. It is far more the case that media are the production sites of data. These production sites are discourse systems, the networks of techniques and institutions that preprocess what will even be considered data in a given epoch. (Kramer, 2006, p. 98)

Here we have one of the possible means for overcoming the divide that John Nerone sees in the field of media history between examining technologies and institutions. We will return in the section on governmentality to how a Foucauldian media history

could be used to bridge such a division. For now, however, because Kittler's historical accounts are so attentive to the inner workings of technological development, we are given a view into the institutional laboratories from which they are formed. From such a vantage, specific techno-mechanical, biological, chemical, electrical, and human assemblages are the actors, while institutional demands and physical limitations are the well-lit stage.

Most central to a Foucauldian media history may be the question of knowledge production and the games of truth that are increasingly played out via media. Media are fundamental to knowledge production; from how data are collected, how they are made visible, their form, the life of their existence, their degree of malleability, the extent to which they can be translated from machine to machine to machine, and ultimately how they can be processed to make things happen. In the end, for Kittler, the digitalization of data, of the world, of knowledge, makes all media "the same." From such a vantage, the effects on the continuing production of knowledge have clearly not fully come to be understood. In terms of a Foucauldian media history, the project of making sense of how media have altered the production of knowledge that organizes how the world is known, processed, and acted upon has barely begun. Yet what is needed isn't merely the Foucauldian project of archaeology, of discourse, but rather of genealogy.

Kittler's Foucault needs to be complicated by power relations to counter what Peters (2010) calls his "disdain for people, or more specifically, for the category of experience" (p. 5). In particular, I would like to imagine that many of Kittler's insights would not lead to categorizing humans into what emerges in his work as (1) the geniuses of scientific invention and philosophic understanding or (2) the great masses of unnecessary and powerless "so-called humans" who fail to populate his histories.⁷ Rather, a Foucauldian media history might focus not only upon the early Foucault of knowledge production and discourse networks with their attendant ruptures, but more so on Foucault's later work on power and subjectification. Our understanding of the relationship between subject formation and media would become richer and more complex, not flatter and reductive. This would involve not only focusing upon Kittler's favored loci of struggle, nationalist scientific competition, and war, but rather the messiness of struggle over epistemology and invention that take place in local contexts of lived experience. The give and take between from-on-high and down-low has been a difficult relationship to chart. The archive favors the memory, and hence the perceived power, of those who could write their thoughts, file their notes, and mail in their patent formulas. At the very least we know that the creative power of "the people" to create their own discourse networks has been alive and well for a very long time. Foucault summed up the two approaches in his 1977–1978 lecture series *Society Must be Defended*: "To put it in a nutshell: Archaeology is the method specific to the analysis of local discursivities, and genealogy is the tactic which, once it has described these local discursivities, brings into play the desubjugated knowledges that have been released from them" (Foucault, 2004, pp. 10–11). So where might we find such release? We can start up high, before moving below.

Philosophy of Science and Instrumentality

In part, a poststructural Foucauldian media history would investigate, if we follow the lead of Friedrich Kittler, the specific formation that allows particular statements to be made. I want to work this terrain by looking toward the so-called Stanford School in the philosophy of science for insight into two interrelated concerns. First, as part of their work in the history of science, they have often foregrounded the apparatuses of investigation, scientific instruments. Such histories provide useful insights for media history not simply because these instruments look an awful lot like what are often thought to be media technologies. Take, for instance, the X-ray machine that takes photos of an invisible interior or better yet various forms of radar developed to “see at a distance.” Radar combines radio-wave transmitters and receivers, data processors and amplifiers, and cathode tubes with a projection screen similar to that of early television. Second, far more than media historians, philosophers of science tend to be interested in epistemological and ontological concerns. The scholars whose work I will be referencing most frequently, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, to lesser and greater degree profess a debt to Foucault’s work and often follow his methodological lead in their historical analysis. Their insights regarding scientific instruments in their historical and epistemological dimension, I will argue, are widely applicable to developing a uniquely Foucauldian media history.

Before beginning in earnest, it is useful to note that there is a rarely stated assumption that media studies, even those that focus on technology, should focus on *mass media* technology. Hence, studies of instruments, rather than “media,” which accomplish similar goals (McLuhan’s [1964] “extensions of man”), but aren’t viewed in terms of consumption, but rather in terms of production, tend to be overlooked. Yet, even from the comfort of my desk chair (a place of production and consumption), I see numerous such media/instruments: an electronic meat thermometer used for “feeling at a distance” (impaled into the untouchable interior of the roast in the oven), binoculars and spectacles for “seeing at a distance,” whether it be birds perched atop a distant cell-tower or the small print in John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* (1973), and the remote control for “manipulating at a distance” the volume of my stereo to reduce the noise that keeps me from completing my thought. Are other instruments, the piano and saxophone, media technologies? I can’t see the speakers around the corner that seem to be transmitting sound waves that result from the transistor tube-magnification of electrical signals produced by the interface of the vinyl LP *A Love Supreme* (Coltrane, 1965) and the turntable/tonerarm/cartridge apparatus. Would it matter if it were instead a real person interfacing with molded brass to convert breath and finger strokes into similar sound waves? Would the definition be further complicated if the range of my ears were extended by an electronic hearing aid? The issue for media history is not simply the replacement of old forms (oral, print, mechanical) for new (electronic, digital), but also determining the cut-off point used to define media from something else. For Marshall McLuhan (1964), clothes and cars are media.

Peter Galison may be best known for his book *Einstein's Clocks, Poincare's Maps: Empires of Time* (2003), which outside of John Peters's reworking of Carey's classic essay "Technology and Ideology" and Chris Russill's (2009) work on weather and television, doesn't seem to have had much effect on media history. Yet, in his work, Galison provides a clearly stated and thoroughly Foucauldian-inspired model for doing media history. I'll let a summary passage of his speak to this:

On one side lay the vast modern technological infrastructure of trains, shipping, and telegraphs that joined under the signs of clocks and maps. On the other a new sense of the mission of knowledge was emerging, one that would define time by pragmatism and conventionality, not by eternal truths and theological sanction. Technological time, metaphysical time, and philosophical time crossed in Einstein's and Poincare's electrically synchronized clocks. Time coordination stood, unequalled, at that intersection: the modern junction of knowledge and power. (Galison, 2003, p. 47)

It is evident that Galison's concern here is with the control of time over vast distances, a fundamental concern of media history. He presents it here in terms of the institutional, economic, and epistemological demands placed upon the production of knowledge that are implicated in the relations of power that were newly organizing the world.

While Galison's commitment to unearthing power/knowledge relationships are clear, insights from other work help fill in how media might play a part in understanding the power/knowledge/subjectification process. First, Galison provides a vocabulary for attending to the "Conditions of Instrumentality" of what I'm calling media instruments. Second, in his work with Lorraine Daston, *Objectivity* (Daston & Galison, 2007), a model for investigating the co-production of instruments and ethical forms of subjectification is developed via a genealogy of the scientific invention of objectivity. Taken together, these insights provide a means for media historians to heighten their sense of the epistemological centrality of media. There are huge perceptual and cognitive effects resulting from our forms of mediation. Peters (2008a) cleverly points out that our media determine our very perception of the past, our sense of history and our ability to create it, and Lisa Park's (2005) investigation of how satellite imaging technology created new means for studying ancient Alexandria proves the case. As such any media history is itself dependent upon the media available for accessing, retaining, processing, and representing the past. But this is merely one of myriad ways in which academic, professional, institutional, and vernacular forms of knowing are hugely dependent upon and altered by the media forms through which we experience and interact with the world. Mediation is the process by which we come to know the world. Further attention to epistemological concerns would demand investigating how instruments that mediate our engagement with the world are often devised to overcome a perceived epistemological limit or delve into an arena of methodological darkness. They are created to overcome the limits of human perception, representational acuity, and processability. These two broad epistemological concerns, as effect and as prime mover, move us toward a consideration of Foucault's

concern with the historically contingent possibilities for knowledge production. Thinking of media “instrumentally” furthers such a project.

Galison (1997) extends Foucault’s notion of the “conditions of possibility” into the realm of scientific instruments in his account of “conditions of instrumentality.” In the *Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault attempted to describe how certain statements came to be used as opposed to others. He asked what conditions needed to be in place to make it possible to describe the world in a particular way and be able to claim the description was true and accurate. Galison extends this sensibility by focusing attention upon a similar co-dependent process. These conditions address (1) how specific instruments (media) need to be present to make particular statements or discursive utterances possible and (2) that only under certain conditions can particular instruments come into being and/or seem necessary in the first place. Simply, “what can and should be made representable?” In large part the criteria determining the use of instruments accord with the degree to which such forms of instrumentality produce or reduce “noise.” Thus a communications sensibility orients the “conditions of instrumentality.” In a recent article on imaging technology in dentistry it is argued that Foucault’s assessment of a “unified discourse” in medicine is up-ended by the sophistication of these new instruments and by the distributed care given by a host of medical practitioners (Bleakley & Bligh, 2009). I would suggest that attending to these changes according to their “conditions of instrumentality” and the attendant forms of distributed subjectification is precisely the sort of analysis needed. The necessary fidelity of an instrument is of course historical and flexible, but a statement about its fidelity is determinative of what sorts of discourse are recorded, verified, processed, and disseminated. In other words, there is no overarching schema for determining the acceptability of an instrument’s clarity, but a concern with clarity conditions such use and helps configure who uses such instruments. Jonathan Sterne’s *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (2003) is a significant investigation into such “instrumentality” providing for example an analysis of “a new medical semiotics” (p. 128) in which “doctors could hear what they could not see” (p. 127).

Galison wants to move beyond Kuhn’s model of wholesale paradigmatic change to a model that is more complex, more nuanced, and pays attention to both the work of translation (a linguistic communicative problem) and decontextualization (how do things get translated *and* newly “instrumentalized”). As Agamben (2010) also notes, Foucault desires in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* to move away from the language of the paradigm to the episteme; precisely the move that Galison wants to make. So what can we take from this that is “multifold” for the study of media history from a Foucauldian perspective? First, that in experimental (as well as the theoretical) sciences, the production of discourse is dependent upon the “possibilities of instrumentality.” The mediating technologies that respond to and produce observable representations of physical phenomena are integral to an understanding of media, as are the technologies of reproduction and dissemination. (Kittler’s camera obscura and lanterna magica, for instance.) In other words, all knowledge is dependent upon forms of technologically mediated discourse. Whether this runs through the eye

(observation) and the hand (a picto-drawing or lab notes) or digital representations resulting from sound waves (3D ultrasound), the process of mediating experience into discourse (statements that make a claim on the world) is a technological process. So any study of discourse needs to attend to what Galison calls “possibilities of instrumentation.” I might further suggest that any study of media history should also. The kinds of statements that could be inscribed at any given moment depended upon the forms and types of instruments present, available, and in use. The world has become representable and knowable through media technologies.

Part of the etymology of the term “instrument” is that which is used as an agent in a performance. The reason the term “media instrument” holds such potential value as opposed to “media technology” is that “instrument” already implies some effect, some agency, over the very possibilities for representing and processing the world into data. Instruments are not merely facilitators or tools used at the behest of human agency. Further, we might take up the relationship developed by Galison (2002) and Daston and Galison (2007) between science, instrumentality, and subjectification. Gallison (2002) looks to the contingency of authorship in physics. There he begins to develop an analysis for the examination of “technologies of a scientific self.” Distributed authorship is one technological aspect to a collective form of scientific subjectivity, different from other sciences and practices of authorship. Physics projects modes of subjectification.

More fundamentally, Daston and Galison (2007) argue that the formation of what has come to be understood as scientific objectivity is largely the result of how new instruments for producing and representing data are intertwined with what they call “epistemic virtues.” They work through three differing forms of such virtue: truth-to-nature, objectivity, and trained judgment. What they all share is a belief that instruments and discursive rules exist which when properly used can overcome subjectivity, with all of its misperceptions and perspectival limitations. Scientific atlases, filled with hand-drawn or mechanically produced images, charts, x-rays, echocardiograms, and the like, have all been used to teach the proper means for seeing and thus knowing the world. “Once internalized by a scientific collective, these various ways of seeing were lodged deeper than evidence; they defined what evidence was” (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 369). Hence, an ink-fed needle marking a continuous line that jumped vertically up and down across a series of predetermined horizontal lines became the means for objectively representing and hence knowing the relative health of the cardiovascular system. Yet, a trained reader, ethically committed to an epistemological framework, needed to be simultaneously produced to integrate these markings into an institutional network that could fix this heart so it could later produce a healthy chiaroscuro of markings that fell within the limits of the norm. This co-dependent relationship between technology and subjectification determines what technological forms get developed for use while simultaneously legitimating an understanding of the world that is fundamentally mediated by those same technologies. In *Histories of Scientific Observation* (2011), Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck provide a summary of how such processes work together.

“Observation educates the senses, calibrates judgment, picks out objects of scientific inquiry, and forges ‘thought collectives’” (p. 1). It has increasingly done so by way of technological instruments. What we might call media.

Cultural Studies and Media Governmentality

In the early 1990s Foucault’s work on governmentality first began to appear in English.⁸ One area of scholarship to quickly struggle with the importance of this work was cultural studies. Most fundamentally, Tony Bennett (1992) argued that culture, the foundational concept of the field, must be newly theorized. No longer was culture only to be understood through two prominent modes: (1) the anthropological sense of a “whole way of life” and (2) Matthew Arnold’s sense of culture as the best and brightest products of humanity or its opposite, the lowbrow “popular” forms. Rather, culture was also to be understood as an arena for the shaping of conduct. Understanding in this form derives from *agriculture* and acknowledges that the same sort of attention, care, and cultivation that farmers invest in their crops is akin to how through cultural forms and processes the conduct of individuals and populations alike could be shaped and groomed by governing institutions and agents. Such a redirection demanded new methods and new political commitments. The focus was no longer to be so text oriented and hence cultural politics couldn’t be played out merely via ideology critique.

While it was not explicitly stated as a directive to conduct historical research, much of this work in cultural studies has nonetheless been guided by historical investigation. In fact, Bennett’s first full-scale project in this vein was suggestively titled *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995). At the crux of Bennett’s historical analysis is the argument that cultural institutions, public museums for instance, developed out of a commitment to reshape an unruly mass into a better-mannered and productive population. For Bennett, the British Museum is a political technology of governance, culture its primary tool. Others have taken up this work on the museum in other national contexts, for instance Mary Coffey (2012) examined the formation of the modern twentieth-century state museums in Mexico as a mechanism for the creation and distillation of an explicitly modernist Mexican citizenry built upon a manufactured sense of shared culture and history. Miranda Brady’s (2007) investigation of the National Museum of the American Indian looks to how museums are increasingly infused and integrated with media as a mechanism for extending and updating their governmental logic. What this and other relevant work shares is a historical examination of institutionally embedded uses of communicative, cultural, and media practices to shape conduct and create ethical subjects.

For instance, in *Culture and Governance: The Emergence of Literary Education* (1988), Ian Hunter examines not the book as technology *per se*, but rather the teaching of literature as an example of a technology of governance that uses culture, literary

education, as a primary tool. This sort of historical specificity moves beyond the tracing of circulation as a measure of a medium's effectivity. Rather, it acknowledges media or culture as technologies of governance, and not simply as a text or product imbued with meaning, and acknowledges that institutions try to accomplish goals through the use of media as technologies for governance. This is not a return to "uses and gratifications" models, as the purposes are often institutionally inscribed and defined. Hunter argues that the primary reason for the ascendancy of teaching literature in the nineteenth century was to transform a particular class of reading subjects. The extensive use of the novel in the humanities was due to its imagined role as an ideal means for working upon the intellectual and ethical dimensions of a developing professional middle class. Literary books became a technology for what Nicolas Rose (1999) has termed governing souls.

Similarly, Greene and Hicks's (2005) Cold War-era genealogy of the practice of switch-side debating worked to develop an idealized form of ethical citizenship through the circulation of specific forms of speech practices that articulated democratic decision-making to the ability to rationally take the position of "both sides." Greene and Hicks suggest that these idealized protocols for communication informed wide-scale acceptance of liberal citizenship. Hence, teaching debate and organizing contests were said to not only provide a set of skills for speaking in public, but a set of criteria for judging good arguments from bad and faulty reasoning from sound. Further, debating both sides was imbued with a personal ethic that idealized a liberal market model of citizenship as a means of countering state socialism. More broadly, Greene (1998) has argued that the field of rhetoric, often housed along with media studies in communication programs, needs to examine how the practices and norms which it proposes are attentive to the sorts of citizen/subjects that it has historically worked to create. We can easily view these examples as genealogies of communicative, if not always media, practices in their functioning as institutionally specific technologies of governance.

While I do not want to conflate cultural studies with media studies or communication with culture, there are good reasons for looking to these areas for guidance. Much historical research on media as technologies of governance has begun to appear over the last few years. I turn again to the work of Greene (2005), in this case a study of the use of film by the YMCA from the late 1910s to the 1930s. Greene sees his work as a means for investigating the "relationship between communication technologies and the logics of social welfare" (Greene, 2005, p. 21). Further, he is invested in doing historical analysis that bridges the technology-institutional divide: "unlike institutional approaches that foreground the political economy of film and critical traditions that focus on the film text as an object of ideological representation, this paper locates the YMCA's film program within a cultural problematic of liberal governance: namely, how communication technologies shape conduct" (p. 21). Greene describes how the YMCA built a vast network for distributing and exhibiting film that worked in conjunction with viewing guides, discussion sessions, and educational programs to help shape the conduct of industrial workers, many of whom were newly

arrived to the United States. Such an approach articulates not only how media technologies can function as part of a technology of governance, but that technology works only insofar as it is situated in and by institutions. Kalen Churcher's (2008) scholarship on the history of inmate-produced media specifically attends to how media production, as opposed to reception, can also function as a technology of institutionally specific governance with the aim of providing new modes of prisoner reform.

James Hay has provided several examples for how to historicize the role of television in more generalized modes of governance, in particular those related to mobility and the home (Hay, 2001, 2003, 2004) and as part of a means for configuring media as necessary elements in the history of urban renewal plans (Hay, 2012). Laurie Ouellette in her own work (2002) and along with Hay (Ouellette & Hay, 2008) has also provided historical detail to television as a tool of governance. Ouellette's work on PBS specifies how television has been imagined and struggled over as a mechanism of governing through a unique blending of private and state initiatives regarding good taste, educational programming, and cultural uplift. While Hay and Ouellette's more recent work is not a historical account *per se*, as it looks at the recent formation of reality TV, the historical trajectory they chart situates television across "three historical conjunctures." Each conjuncture describes television as a changing technology in a particular governmental arrangement. In its early broadcast period, television was situated in a series of ongoing debates about how to best serve the "public interest" through the perceived freedom of private industry in contradistinction to Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Further, "radio and television mattered as technologies of territorial/global expansion, mass suburbanization, market growth, and mobility" (Ouellette & Hay, 2008, p. 25). The second conjuncture is best understood in terms of a discourse on diversity that would mitigate the "great wasteland" of private television product. It saw the role of government as regulating an idealized balance between corporate management's ability to create popular programming, but directed toward sensibilities of cultural uplift and good citizenship. Out of such debates eventually arose the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and PBS. The third conjuncture witnesses a reinvention of television through cable and niche marketing as a means for lifestyle programming and networks that reorient the role of television as a technology of self-actualization. Hay and Ouellette's work on the history of television provides a model for rethinking the history of media in terms of the interrelated potentiality of technology and institutions (government, private, and otherwise) to be used for the governance of populations in ways that move beyond beliefs, attitudes, and effects. Their work has recently inspired other genealogies of television such as Shayne Pepper's (2011) history of HBO as a pseudo-replacement for PBS, particularly in its role in governing the AIDS crisis.

One criticism of work in governmentality is that it tends to be overly institutional insofar as the governmental goals of institutions are treated as if they automatically produce their desired and intended effects (Bennett, 2003). In part this is to say that the workings of culture, from below, are not taken into account, thereby ignoring all the findings of subcultural analysis and audience studies that began in the 1970s

and continues to this day. It is in essence to ask about the people, about the public. Don't they have some agency to resist, co-opt, or opt-out of such governmental arrangements? One confounding conceptual point here is that for Foucault there is an epistemological shift in which people, the masses, or a state's or king's subjects began to be newly understood as a "population" during the nineteenth century; something which can be studied, experimented upon, and prodded toward new directions of conduct. The point isn't merely semantic. One provision of these histories is that they are first and foremost histories of governmental rationality. They are generally not histories from below. The status of the audience or the public is being reanimated in interesting ways by two other Foucauldian approaches.

The necessity of the field as currently constituted through concerns over the public, ideology critique of representation, ownership, audience studies, and many other key concepts looks very different when viewed through the Foucauldian post-structural lens; different even than the merely disciplinary Foucault. In fact, much work has been done to upset the taken-for-granted nature of the field's key terms. Further, this work is often historical in nature. Specifically poststructural Foucauldian work in these areas weakens the always-alreadyness of such terms as the public or the audience. As Russill (2008a) shows, publics result from specific problematizations. They are manifested through truth claims (knowledge) that invoke the capacities of peoples (power) to be affected by some phenomena. "Problematization" is a term Foucault coined to exemplify the process by which something comes to be thought of in terms of a problem to be solved through analysis and which is caught up within contested claims of truth and falsity. Similarly, audiences are neither publics, nor even a group of people who share a common discursive experience; rather, they are an effect of knowledge claims about the affectivity of mediation upon groups of people (Bratich, 2005). Or to put it differently, the term "audience," within the field of media studies, for media institutions, and for political agents, invokes a whole set of beliefs and assumptions about how people respond individually and collectively to mediated communication (scientifically informed and otherwise). Such assumptions set in motion how media industries are organized and what sorts of content and hardware are produced to elicit the desired effect upon or through an audience. Various iterations of the audience, often simultaneously at play, result from epistemological assumptions regarding cognition, social action, affect, consumption habits, and so forth. Audiences are not merely studied; they are both figuratively and actively produced via analysis and experimentation. This does not assume that such prodding, dissecting, organizing, and directing produces the desired effects. It does mean that the ontological, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings that guide academic, economic, governmental, and technological organization of media practice have effects.

Historical research that simply looks at the rise of disciplinarity or surveillance would not necessarily approach the public or the audience in poststructural terms. Rather such work tends to approach audiences as a fixed entity that are increasingly locked into or made participative members of networked surveillance practices. The

public may more broadly be conceived in such terms, or it may be looked at in terms of its relative acceptance or rejection of surveillance practices. In either event, the conceptual nature of audience or publics (or even “the subject”) may very well be left outside analysis. This is just the sort of analysis that Nerone sees as being overly deterministic.

Agamben and the Apparatus⁹

This final section draws upon Foucault’s description of the apparatus and Giorgio Agamben’s extended discussion of the term. The concept of the apparatus can help unite a number of the themes developed in previous sections. It provides another means for bridging the divide between media technology and media institution, as it involves the interdependent relations between power, knowledge, and subjectification to which I have been gesturing in much of this chapter. By necessity such an approach will involve looking to how various competing and overlapping institutions work to develop, organize, dominate, control, and disseminate the uses of various media technologies. Further, as we saw in the histories of scientific instruments, the possibilities of instrumentality also necessitate the formation of specific technological subjectivities. Agamben suggests a similar form of subjectification results from more traditionally recognized media technologies. In terms then of media and instruments, we can investigate the necessarily historical production of “subjectivities” coinciding with the use of specific technologies *and* we can look to how users become “objectified” through the accumulation and generation of data/knowledge facilitated by such technologies. This double articulation is central to Foucault’s theories of the subject and power, as will be elaborated below.

In *What is an Apparatus?* (2009) Agamben untangles how the concept “apparatus” works to tie together a number of interrelated concepts in Foucault’s thought. More profoundly, Agamben extends the notion of apparatus to encompass all such activities and institutions intended to alter (or, in more Deleuzian terms, capture) human behavior and thought. He even provides two “media” examples of apparatuses, the cellular telephone and the television, which prove fruitful for our concern here with media history. Foucault described the key elements of the apparatus (*dispositif* in the original French) in an interview from 1977, from which Agamben draws heavily:

What I’m trying to single out with this term is, first and foremost, a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is a network that can be established between these elements [. . . and] has as its major function the response to an urgency [. . . it is] precisely this: a set of strategies of the relations of forces supporting, and supported by, certain types of knowledge. (Foucault in Agamben, 2009, p. 2)

Here we see a few key elements of the apparatus. It is strategically organized to address a perceived problem or urgency. It works as a network of interested and associated forms of knowledge that are directed toward creating strategic administrative and technological “solutions.”¹⁰

What does Agamben add to Foucault’s understanding? Agamben proclaims:

I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and – why not – language itself. (Agamben, 2009, p. 14)

For Agamben, then, the range of apparatuses is vast and he might draw fire for being so broad as to not provide any useful specificity for analytic application. However, a second necessary element in these compositions is that “Apparatus, then, is first of all a machine that produces subjectifications, and only as such is it also a machine of governance” (Agamben, 2009, p. 20). Thus we can see that cigarettes, for instance, are the result of a complex of forces and materials that have for a very long time been at work creating the subject position “smoker.” This is both a means of capturing one’s time, resources, and desires as well as a biopolitical attempt to objectify the smoker, turn them into data, in order to know them, reform them, and make them “unsmoke.” Agamben’s qualification that subjectification is central to the apparatus goes a good way in narrowing and clarifying it as a useful concept. As media scholars we still may question why cellular telephones or pens should be considered an apparatus. We don’t speak of the “cellular subject” or “cell phoners.” Do we need a more nuanced means for thinking about the apparatus as it relates to media history?

Foucault (1982b) provides some insight into how communication forms an integral part of an apparatus when answering the question “How is power exercised?”

No doubt communicating is always a certain way of acting upon another person or persons. But the production and circulation of elements of meaning can have as their objective or as their consequence certain results in the realm of power; the latter are not simply an aspect of power. Whether or not they pass through systems of communication, power relations have a specific nature. Power relations, relationships of communication, objective capacities should not therefore be confused. This is not to say that there is a question of three separate domains [. . .] It is a question of three types of relationships which in fact always overlap one another, support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually as means to an end. (Foucault, 1982b, pp. 217–218)

How then does communication and mediation work in terms of power? And wouldn’t nearly all dimensions of social activity be subsumed under the banner of the apparatus if even language (as Agamben suggests) is an apparatus? Brief rumination upon

Agamben's examples and Foucault's description of power and communication would lead us to see that media apparatuses are immediately composed of signs, signifiers, and technologies of inscription, collection, and processing (following from Kittler). Further, we would need to provide insight into the power relations enacted through media and media that are structured by power relations.

We could think of a "Stop" sign or a book in such terms. They are signifiers or sets of signifiers as well as technological elements created within vast infrastructures used to guide and direct thought and action. They produce meaning and are the product of labor: creative, affective, manual, and technical. They are technologies each with their own histories and institutional embeddedness. In the same way that Foucault (1977) read Bentham's diagrams and descriptions for the panopticon and "read" the panoptic prison itself, we might imagine reading the history of infrastructure and architecture of media technologies for their power effects, for an understanding of how the movement and mobility of signs, products, and people work to uphold power relations, to see how they form and deform subjects. If we took Agamben's (2009) example of television, we would need to look beyond the content of television – as Raymond Williams (1974) so ably demonstrated and Hay (2003) extended – to understand how a specific formation and organization of television functions as one element in a larger apparatus that he calls "mobile privatization." As Hay explained: "Williams described television as a technology whose utility and effectivity can only be understood with considerable difficulty as part of a widespread 'social investment'" (Hay, 2003, p. 169). Similarly, understanding the cell phone as an element in a widespread social investment would entail more than Agamben's (2009) suggestive assessment that "gestures and behaviors of individuals have been reshaped from top to toe by the cellular telephone" (p. 16). Further, "He who lets himself get captured by the 'cellular telephone' apparatus – whatever the intensity of the desire that has driven him – cannot acquire a new subjectivity, but only a number through which he can, eventually, be controlled" (p. 21). For historians of media, Agamben's analysis can only seem hasty and any significant account of how one is "captured" would need to be much more nuanced than Agamben lets on. For instance, the cellular telephone is far more intricately entwined in a much longer history regarding the governance of mobile media. Further, the cellular telephone, as such, is itself something of a historical anachronism. It is unclear whether one can even purchase a device singularly devoted to making telephone calls, as Henry Jenkins noted in his 2005 book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Rather than taking aim at Agamben directly, I prefer to use his outline of the apparatus as suggestive of the general direction one might take when setting one's sights on media history. In this spirit, a brief rumination upon an earlier form of mobile media, citizens band radio, will be used as a more extended example than provided so far in this chapter.

When I began historical research on citizens band radio several years ago the first major hurdle was figuring out what it was that I was actually researching. What was my archive? Given that there was no commercial content and that conversations were fleeting – mandated by FCC regulation to last a maximum of five minutes – the

historiographic issues were obviously troubling. Such obstacles could also be used to explain the very limited number of academic studies that had been done at the time of CB's peak of popularity from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s (I was never able to locate more than a half dozen), when as many as 20 million CBs were said to be in use. In part this was because the assumed objects of study were the utterances and lingo that marked the use of CB. Yet, without extensive recording technologies and the technological ability to eavesdrop on a nearly limitless set of conversations and commands in mostly moving vehicles, there were virtually no collections of any of these conversations from which to begin a historical investigation.

Modeling an approach built on the notion of the apparatus would suggest recognizing the non-centrality of media as the specific object of historical investigation, while recognizing media as central to holding together nearly any given apparatus. They are never the entire answer – nor thereby their content the whole archive. But they are always part of the answer. Thinking in terms of the apparatus keeps this tension in sharp focus. Further, the focus upon the role of media in the construction and maintenance of various apparatuses is not necessarily merely ideological or “cultural,” if we think of the cultural as the realm of meaning making. Rather, taking a well-understood division in the field, it would entail studying media history in terms of both transport and culture (Grossberg & Carey, 2006). It would recognize that the historical importance of media (as in mediate, “to bring together”) is manifest in both realms. It works to maintain culture over time (cultural) and to maintain the networks and infrastructures that facilitate the movement of people, goods, and cultural artifacts across space throughout time (transport).

Thinking in terms of CB as part of an apparatus of “mobile privatization” or “disciplined mobility”¹¹ allows for different sets of questions to be asked by which the content of CB conversations, though important in terms of their general uses, is not central. Let me clarify. Rather than look to the specifics of any given conversation, we might begin with the rules for conversations (the brute facticity of what can be said) in general and CB's imagined use as first outlined by the FCC. It also would mean recognizing that such determinations changed over time and were struggled over by numerous invested parties. In terms of the apparatus we would need to examine which experts were able to make truth claims as to how the population could conduct itself with the aid of CB and enable the conduct of others through the proper use of this technology.

A key element in such an investigation entails the official debates over who was granted jurisdiction and how such a determination was made. It also involves understanding how their knowledge claims are legitimated and hence used to organize formations of the apparatus. For instance, CB was initially seen as a useful business tool for the dissemination of important information, particularly in the form of urgent messages. As such it was most often used in the management of fleet mobility by businesses or as part of rapid response strategies of governmental agencies such as the Coast Guard. Its range of use was relatively short, but in the case of managing

a fleet of taxis or local deliveries it was eminently useful in monitoring and managing the movement of labor and product.

The FCC is not the be-all and end-all for such considerations, but it is the policy-making body with jurisdiction over CB in the United States. However, this does not mean treating it merely as the police or policy arm of government. It means to take seriously its ability to make truth claims about a specific realm of activity. When Mark Fowler famously compared televisions with toasters, TV became a different technology. Literally. It became part of a different apparatus. It was now governed and expected to be understood – known – through a different rubric. As such the set of social and material relations in which it was a part were reset, rearticulated. CB went through such a transformation as well, though not because of a proactive change on the part of the FCC, but as the result of new cultural uses – aided by technological and economic changes – which could not have been imagined by the FCC. Within the power/knowledge relations, the FCC became the relevant institution that determined how CB should be understood (knowledge) in part as the result of the ongoing collection of data related to its popular use *and* because it was the governing body that licensed and monitored specific cases of CB's use. The FCC also determined the fine structure for infractions and assessed them. Thus it set the stage for the proper use and surveillance of CB and organized its use into a rubric of penalties-based governance.

As those who study technology (media in particular) know, the original intentions for how a technology is to be used rarely play out as hoped. In particular, the state's use of such technologies for policing and military advantage, as well as the specific applications for advancing business interests, are often eclipsed by other uses. This was exactly the case with CB. Military forces, policing agencies, and rapid response civil services such as fire departments and ambulance services initially and most extensively used two-way radio, of which CB is a subset, as it developed for land use. This state appropriation of two-way radio's potentiality was eventually spread out into the realm of business, as with the fleet management already mentioned, and finally into the public via the *citizens* band. Yet even there it was envisioned as a measure to extend its commercial uses and an extension of the state's ability to surveil the road system and promote motorized safety. (For a lengthier history of CB, see Packer, 2008, Ch. 4.) It was never seen as a carrier of culture. The content of CB was to be free from "idle chit-chat." However, this changed radically beginning in 1973 when truckers began to use CB as their communications tool for organizing political protest and building community.

While it is not my intention to retell this historical shift in CB use, I do want to suggest a few ways of thinking about CB as an element in two apparatuses, mobile privatization and disciplined mobility. Thinking about CB in terms of mobile privatization would mean asking how CB alters the key triumvirate in Williams's account of the primary public and private spaces that are traversed in a car-oriented suburban lifestyle: the home, the automobile, and the workspace. For Williams the automobile functions as a private space that extends the possibility for an increasingly private

domestic life. It bridges, or brings into possibility, the domestic sphere of the home and the public sphere of labor. Television similarly bridges the public and private by bringing the outside world into the home. It links the home to the local community, the nation, and the world. Similarly, the transistor radio brought the outside world into the relative privacy of the automobile, making the car a rolling version of the living room. When CB entered the private sphere of millions of automobiles in the mid-to-late 1970s, this equation came under attack. Suddenly, in-car radios were no longer only mass media, but rather a two-way form of broadcast. Conversations could be struck up, debates were had, and information was freely and collectively shared. New forms of culture and community were nurtured and the possibility for a non-commercial form of amassed media emerged. In other words, the private sphere of the automobile became a public sphere that could be and was used to initiate political protest and to foster non-commercial forms of (mass) communication.

CB also emerged as a force within the disciplined mobility apparatus. In its simplest terms, disciplined mobility can be understood as the orchestration and governance of technologies of autonomous motorized transport (primarily automobiles and motorcycles) according to the seemingly competing logics of freedom and safety into a well-disciplined machine for the efficient and productive movement of peoples and goods. While disciplined mobility depends heavily upon proper forms of training and the panoptic presence of police surveillance, CB was used to provide heroic tales of danger and the means to produce a counter-surveillance machine. While two-way radio on the road had historically been monopolized by the state and commerce, the public use of CB allowed for new games of truth to commence and for new relations of power to manifest.

One such power dynamic featured a struggle between the CB citizenry and state policing. A whole host of low-budget films and popular songs told just such stories. They depicted how automobile drivers are situated in a struggle over the validity of motorized safety and what role they played within a vast surveillance apparatus. Should drivers extend the state's ability to monitor motorized behavior by using CB to snitch on errant drivers or should they work together to inform each other of police whereabouts, thus blunting the element of surprise necessary for the working of panopticism? Such tales of popular struggle clearly articulated a vision of populism resonant with the perceived potentiality of CB as a force to thwart state surveillance and commercial control of the media.

In terms of CB's "conditions of instrumentality," we would need to examine the historical potentialities at work that cohered to normalize or instrumentalize CB use; to make certain forms of conduct standard. What technological, economic, and social potentials united to create a new media instrument? More specifically, what role was played by changes in electronics manufacturing and design as transistors replaced tubes? What new social capacities emerged as prices for electronics were driven down by economies of scale and the exploitation of postwar Japanese labor? How did the co-constitutive infrastructures of highways and gasoline distribution get reoriented through the OPEC-induced oil-crisis? How did the range

of CB transmissions make possible or hinder community building, cultural interaction, and networked knowledge production? Such material conditions, constraints, and consistencies are the backbone of the apparatus. This is not a technological determinism, but rather an understanding of the apparatus as the outcome of intentionally focused actors wrestling with material, economic, and epistemological constraints.

There was clearly also the creation of a specific form of CB subjectivity. As a technology of the self, CB promoted a self-broadcast, recoded, renamed, and multi-channelled (literally) communicative subject that was open to constant interruption, noise, and squelch. As a population, the CB citizenry were pulled by the forces of state surveillance, a populist counter-surveillance mechanism, and a form of media collectivity that created its own programming and was free from the political-economic machinery that organized other widely used media. CB subjects and populations were mobile in spatial and linguistic terms, yet situated in a struggle over the proper use of a media technology, by those competing institutions that wanted to capture the potential of CB and its users. These modes of subjectivity were widely discussed and represented in film as well as in CB user guides and manuals, of which millions were sold. Such manuals existed in part because the FCC mandated that a copy of its rules must be present with all CB transmitters and receivers. As such, each CB guide included the rules, thus making them a complementary element in the legal ownership and use of CB. Beyond the presence of the official discourse, these guides most often opened with a variation on the general CB manifesto that outlined the democratic potentiality of CB to replace mass media and bring the power of communications to the masses. The guides also provided updated glossaries of the ever-changing lingo necessary for successful CB communication. Most generally, these guides provided the tools and ethos, both official and resistant, for becoming a member of what was being called the “CB Citizenry.” It provided the rules and modes of conduct appropriate to “proper” CB use. For instance, while the inclusion of the FCC rules was a necessary element, for the most part the manifestos and glossaries provided resistant vocabularies in which the FCC and the police were recognized as “the enemy.” Yet, “proper” use was still understood to be that of conversation and not singing for others’ entertainment. Discussions were imagined to be about the location of police, not recitations on poetics.

Questions for the Apparatus

In an earlier essay (Packer, 2010a) that attempted to answer the question “What is an archive?” from a Foucauldian perspective, I proposed five sets of questions or realms of enquiry from which one might begin the process of doing a Foucauldian media history. Borrowing from the four arenas considered above, I now propose to expand my set to eight.

(1) *Look to organizations, institutions, or credentialized experts whom we might call the determinators.* These are groups or individuals (not at all mutually exclusive) who have been given, granted, or taken the authority to make truth claims regarding specific phenomena. (Though often these realms can bleed over into seemingly unrelated areas.) They articulate desires and plans to alter institutions and individuals. A first question to ask is who has jurisdiction to make truth claims. The process that determines who is “in the true” and who can be an adversary in the games of truth is of particular interest. A further consideration is how particular venues of deliberation and institutions – media and otherwise – grant such authority. These often have substantial documents and holdings for investigations into their workings and to determine the mechanisms they use to create truths that can be “legitimately” acted upon to reform and alter behavior. So to begin to understand how an apparatus works would necessitate examining the discourse of those with plans to alter others’ behavior – as with, say, Jeremy Bentham in the case of Foucault’s scholarship in *Discipline and Punish*, the FCC in the case of CB, or at the YMCA in Ronald Greene’s scholarship on film.

(2) *Look to the statements that come to be “free-floating legitimators.”*¹² These are the statements that are used across numerous discursive sites of contestation to reanimate and legitimate claims and assumptions that organize numerous apparatuses. For instance, the terms “safety” and “freedom” worked to accommodate a wide range of goals, alterations, and reorganizations of institutions and people as they relate to the automobility system. We could ask what are the free-floating legitimators for an apparatus of disciplined mobility or mobile privatization? What are the overarching claims and goals that legitimate the movement to the suburbs or the organization of television as a one-to-many form of broadcasting? How has a term like “safety” been used to justify a whole host of military, governmental, commercial, and even familial initiatives? How have claims of “objectivity” been invoked not only by journalists, but in regard to scientific instruments?

(3) *Locate the competing and sometimes resistant forces and knowledge claims.* Although the “search for resistance” has at times led scholarship down the slippery slope of inconsequence, it is nonetheless the case that force acts on force. Which is to say that the creation of knowledge is always an act of violence against competing knowledge claims and those institutions, disciplines, and individuals who are their promoters. It must also be said that the victors in such struggles are not to be universally despised, nor are the proponents of subjugated forms of knowledge – who may have passed into obscurity – to be lauded for merely having struggled. With such caveats in place, it is essential that media history be composed not merely of the statements of victors or victims, but the full complement of competing discourses in their combative play of force. It is precisely through an understanding of how such force was exerted, thwarted, and redirected that a finer, more nuanced view of power/knowledge comes into focus. It may be just as likely that such analysis leads to a realistic understanding of the solidity of a particular power relation as it is to discover a latent resistance. In either case, if we acknowledge that the apparatus is the result of

strategies for the alteration of behaviors, we must then proceed by first understanding how such strategies won out. Yet, strategies are enacted against an adversary. Understand one's adversary.

(4) *Look to how media technologies work in terms of the material functioning of the apparatus.* They are the articulators of apparatuses. They work to bind things together. They are connectors – as in infrastructure. That is, they provide the mechanisms and processes that maintain the necessary movement and flows to keep an apparatus working smoothly. In this sense CB is a fairly obvious example. It allowed for the organization of fleet mobility, while also creating a mechanism by which important travel information could be shared amongst those using the road, most notably truckers and the police. We could say that one role of cellular telephones is to do precisely the same thing. It allows for the exchange of information necessary for orchestrating the movements of bodies and things in a highly mobile and fluid social environment. It links people into networks and provides a real-time response mechanism to adapt and alter trajectories in coordination with others. Because of the complex of forces exerted via the cellular phone, it is too simple to call the cellular telephone itself an apparatus in the way Agamben suggests.

(5) *Look for the processes of subjectification that are co-constitutive of the apparatus.* As Agamben suggests, this is the elementary process in the establishment of an apparatus. Subjectification works upon life itself, what it means, how it should be lived, and who can manage it (biopower). Beyond the obvious institutional realms of public health, medicine, and psychiatry, numerous guides for living articulate a vision of the good life or more specifically, how to organize the self and others via media. Lynn Spigel's *Make Room for TV* (1992) is an exemplary account of how television was imagined as a new means for remaking women's selves. As Spigel explained, there are often narratives, fictional and otherwise, which provide templates for imagining such new forms of subjectification. In relation to disciplined mobility, drivers' education manuals, guides for successful hitchhiking, and CB users' manuals provide practical advice *and* articulate a vision of a changed subject and an ethos said to be fused with such practices. Becoming a hitchhiker according to such guides is to reorient oneself to all sorts of spiritual and experiential dimensions (knowledge) unknown to the non-hitchhiker. It is also to place oneself into new economies of exchange (sharing of automobile resources) and new obligations to fellow hitchhikers (power). One obvious place to begin such investigation is to look for cases in which a subject is turned into an object. By what process and according to whom does a person become a patient, a child become a delinquent, a woman become a hysteric, a driver become a road-rager, a viewer become a couch-potato, or Facebook user become a friend?

(6) *What are the conditions of instrumentality and attendant epistemological stakes?* This is not so much a question of how struggles over meaning and truth take place. Rather, such a historical approach would look to the realms of phenomena that became differently experienceable, presentable, or knowable due to the emergence of a particular media apparatus. Underwriting such a process will be a particular "will to knowledge."¹³ Through what keyholes and into what new realms do

media instruments peer? How do cosmic and microscopic become spectralized? Which murmurs are made audible and what cacophonous squelching is modulated into perceptibility? Through what sinister synesthesia are smells visualized, tastes given voice, and light weaponized? The simple is made complex, the complex simple, but most importantly all is translated into processable data. This is one miracle of our media instruments.

(7) *What is the brute facticity of a media discourse network?* Following from Kittler, any Foucauldian media history would need to investigate how discursive networks are newly arranged by the introduction of new technologies by specific institutions. New kinds of markings, statements, utterances, sounds, and visions become possible, leave their traces, extend the life and reach of transmission, are differently processable, and distinctively networked and translated. Yet, the world is not merely made knowable, but actionable. Networks arise through the binding demands of data transfer. The bundling of instruments, people, and institutions results from the need to move people, data, and product from place to place in order to actuate effects. The content of CB speech is of much less significance than the potentiality to alter the trajectories and speeds of bodies and vehicles. But CB's fleeting data trail is also useful for our thinking. The impermanence of each CB transmission and the limited reach of its broadcast organize the extension of the network, the fidelity of messages (both in terms of "squelch" or noise and in terms of it only existing "in memory" to be passed along after translation by another CB citizen), and its limited capability to "impart culture" as opposed to its ability to "make culture" through conversation and dialogue.

(8) *How is the apparatus organized as a technology of governance?* Wrapping back to Foucault's explanation of *tekhne* demands that we think of media apparatuses as institutionally situated technologies used within specific governmental rationalities. These may be technologies that have worked to govern the self, captured the latent creative force of an audience, or created a public through problematizations. A historical investigation of a media apparatus draws attention to how it co-emerges with governmental formulations and modes of subjectification. New technological arrangements and scientific applications constitute power/knowledge relationships that are worked out in a context of epistemological, economic, political, and societal problems. The Japanese electronics industry, truckers, state troopers, rationed fuel, radar guns, automotive speed limits, C. W. McCall, and rapidly mutating linguistic codes emerge as part of the CB apparatus. CB does not bring them into being. CB is, however, thrown into the noisy fray and emerges as a conductor of disparate instruments, forming a new marching alignment. Media apparatuses hold together governmental formations, just as they are held together by multiple invested parties and institutions.

Conclusion

Foucault suggested he did not write histories of the past, nor was he interested in being a historian of philosophy. Rather he alternatively claimed to write fictions,

experiments with the real, and histories of the present. When it was suggested that “You know very well that what you say is really just fiction,” Foucault would always reply, “Of course there’s no question of it being anything else but fiction [. . . M]y problem is not to satisfy professional historians; [I] invite others to share an experience of what we are, not only our past but also our present, an experience of our modernity in such a way that we might come out of it transformed” (Foucault, 2000, p. 242).

In terms of transforming our present, I have suggested four arenas of scholarship that provide compelling examples of a Foucauldian-inspired media history. The work of Friedrich Kittler demands that we take into account how media alter the brute facticity of what is said, what is stored, and what is processed. He builds on Foucault’s archaeological approach by adding media to the mix. The Stanford School of the philosophy of science has been investigating the interrelationships of scientific instruments, epistemology, and the formation of scientific subjectivity for the past two decades. By opening up what counts as media to nominally include, if not centralize, such instruments, media historians can more thoroughly situate media as the centerpiece in how we come to know the world; how media are central to the production of knowledge. This means more than seeing media as purveyors of ideology or agenda setting, but rather as bearers of epistemological potentiality to the point of establishing the beginning of perception itself. This is what Deleuze, following on from Foucault, calls perspicuity. This quality of being perspicuous or noticeable is one of the oft-overlooked elements of Foucault’s description of panopticism. Third, historical and theoretical work in cultural studies, oriented by Foucault’s understanding of governmentality, can be built upon. Just as this work approaches culture as a realm for the shaping of conduct, media need to be situated in the broad array of technologies of governance. This centralizes power as a realm of relationships in which media are imagined, implemented, and used as solutions for the shaping of conduct. Media are mechanisms by which governance takes place. Lastly, Giorgio Agamben has championed the notion of apparatus as a means for examining a wide range of activities and technologies, including media. By treating the notion of the apparatus with greater precision and historical specificity, the history of media becomes a history of interconnections (of power, of knowledge, of subjectifications). Media apparatuses do not simply connect ethereally. Rather they are more akin to gravity; a force that holds things in place, sets the rules for space and time, and conditions material and technological possibility.

NOTES

- 1 The closest Foucault comes to treating the book as a media technology is in “What is an Author” wherein he addresses how the material form of books and other written media have differing effects on how the notion of an author functions.
- 2 Foucault first proposed such a schema in his introduction to *The Use of Pleasure* (1990).

- 3 Though it had earlier appeared in 1982 in *Skyline* and again in the *Foucault Reader* in 1984 as "Space, Knowledge, and Power," it also was mistakenly attributed to Stephen Riggins and misnamed "An Ethics of Pleasure" in the 1989 collection *Foucault Live*. More importantly, the interview follows up on themes that Foucault had not formally written about, but had most fully developed in his 1978–1979 lecture series *Security, Territory, Population* (2004).
- 4 As Clare O'Farrell (2005) is quick to point out, "studies of media" are one of the areas which Foucault "scarcely alluded to" but their practitioners have still "borrowed his ideas."
- 5 Though to be fair, one of his more powerful and recently published lecture series, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), dwells upon the development of neoliberal economic models for governance in post-World War II Germany and the United States.
- 6 Shortly before his death in 1984 Foucault addressed the bewildering variety of characterizations used to describe him:

It's true that I prefer not to identify myself, and I'm amused by the diversity of the ways I've been judged and classified. Something tells me that by now a more or less approximate place should have been found for me, after so many efforts in such various directions; and since I obviously can't suspect the competence of the people who are getting muddled up in their divergent judgments, since it isn't possible to challenge their inattention or their prejudices, I have to be convinced that their inability to situate me has something to do with me. (Foucault 1997)

- 7 Peters (2010, p. 6) points out this tired joke, which is not only telling of Kittler's sense of humor, but more prominently his elitist political convictions.
- 8 *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991) is clearly the book that first generated wide-scale interest in this period of Foucault's work, in part as it was the first place the 1978 lecture "Governmentality" was published in English.
- 9 Some portions of the following section appear in Packer (2010a, 2010b).
- 10 This notion can be summed up by the Foucauldian use of the term "problematization." Such an approach in communications history and *scholarship* has to some degree been advanced in such articles as Russill (2008b), Bratich (2005), and Packer (2006).
- 11 This is a term I have used (Packer, 2003) to make sense of how the vastly increased freedom of movement enabled by automobility throughout the twentieth century came to be organized and implemented.
- 12 While obviously borrowing from Derrida here, there is a clear difference between what I'm implying by the use of this term. Derrida (1976) claims that all signifiers can be freely associated with different signifieds. Or more precisely that the play of signifiers, only ever referring to the general grammar of a given language, has no necessary correspondence to its referents. What I'm suggesting is that particular terms come to take on such significance that they can be used to justify nearly any truth claim across numerous discourses in order to justify a vast array of initiatives, plans, responses, and resistances.
- 13 Foucault describes the different forms of a "will to knowledge" that for each of which is "sketched out a schema of possible, observable, measurable and classifiable objects; a will to knowledge which imposed upon the knowing subject – in some ways taking precedence over all experience – a certain position, a certain viewpoint, and a certain function" (Foucault, 1982b, p. 218).

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Race/Ethnicity in Media History

Catherine Squires

ABSTRACT

Media historians and scholars who utilize historical comparison in their work have drawn upon critical race theory to guide their interrogations of the past, and have structured important, complex renderings of media histories that debunk simple timeline and “great individual” approaches to historical inquiry. Attending to race/ethnicity in historical inquiry enriches scholarship, regardless of whether the subject is explicitly recognized as part of a marginalized racial/ethnic group or its cultural expressions. Unpacking the large and subtle ways race/ethnicity have shaped our media systems, production, and reception serves to both complicate and complete our view of the past.

This chapter maps studies of race/ethnicity and media history in four sections: (1) “Rediscovering Roots” illustrates how scholars have unearthed and preserved contributions of people of color overlooked by prior historians; (2) “Documenting Discrimination” reviews work that excavates histories of structural barriers, stereotype production, and other institutional exclusions in media history; (3) “Multiculturalisms and National Identit(ies)” explores scholarship that has acknowledged that our current era is not the first “multicultural” one to emerge; (4) “Public Memory, Race and Media” looks at the ways in which media scholars have turned to the role of media’s influence in public commemoration of historical events and figures, and how media figure into the representation of what our history and national identity mean in the face of different interpretations of and additions to dominant historical events.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Race/ethnicity, like gender/sexuality, provides scholars with lenses through which to understand histories of media industries, media representations, and media technologies. Taking race/ethnicity into account compels us to broaden the topics and approaches used in media history. Relatedly, attention to the ways in which race/ethnicity have shaped not only media systems, but also scholarly institutions, makes reconstructing histories of early media an urgent and often frustrating endeavor, as the works and contributions of people of color are not always as well preserved or maintained as those created by Whites. This essay provides an overview of some key works that address these issues. I draw from scholarship produced in fields such as communication studies, American studies, and history, and incorporate contributions by documentary filmmakers and archivists. These interdisciplinary endeavors have enriched historical explorations of race/ethnicity in media and model how we might apply what Houston Baker Jr. (1994) calls “critical memory” to the practice of preserving and telling stories not only of people of color who have been excluded from prior scholarship, but also to reconsider how we pursue any subject within the field of media history.

Why “Race/Ethnicity”?

Like most scholars, I consider race and ethnicity to be social constructions, not biological or otherwise essential characteristics of individuals or groups. I recognize the work of geneticists and anthropologists who conclude that “race” is not a “real” category of human differentiation. However, race/ethnicity does continue to “matter,” and its everyday use and impact really has nothing to do with scientific data or theory. Race is a powerful social construction, and however changeable or based in falsehoods, has impact on how we view the world and categorize its peoples. As Omi and Winant (1994) helpfully explain, race is a “dimension of human representation.” Omi and Winant describe “racial formation” as the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are constructed, reformed, and destroyed as groups contest the meaning of race and concomitant stratification. Media have historically played a huge role in racial formation, structuring and normalizing dominant understandings of our society’s racial/ethnic dimensions. Critical cultural scholars view media as institutions of ideological production, wherein racial projects – “interpretation[s], representation[s], or explanation[s] of racial dynamics” – are formed, challenged, and/or reinforced.

I choose to utilize “race/ethnicity” throughout this chapter to reflect the shifting, unstable definitions of these terms. Critical race theorists and historians have demonstrated how groups we now see as “ethnic” were referred to in racial terms in the not-so-distant past. Exemplary in this body of work are historical analyses by Roediger (1999), Ignatiev (1996), and Sacks (1994), who examined how Eastern European, Irish, and Jewish Americans were considered members of lesser races in the nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries. Likewise, scholars have deconstructed the ways in which “Asian American” and “Hispanic” are used to racially distinguish people even though the terms refer to region/geography rather than phenotype/biology (e.g., Chavez, 2001; Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Park, 2004; Perez-Torres, 2006). This is evident in how the US government, through its census categories and other official record keeping, continues to arrange groups by race and ethnicity in peculiar ways. “Hispanic” is considered an “ethnicity” while “Asian” and “Alaska Native” are considered racial categories. Moreover, the terms “race” and “ethnicity” are joined by the fact that everyone is assumed to have both: White Americans have ties to European ethnic groups; Asian Americans have roots in the ethnic and linguistic groups of the vast Asian continent; Latina/os Americans have ties to a variety of (Black) African, (White) European, and (brown) Native American populations; and so on. Given the ways in which race/ethnicity have been applied to groups over the last two centuries, media historians who investigate these social constructions must take care to understand how and why groups we think of today as “ethnic” may have been considered a “race” in past media representations.

Theoretical Inspirations for Histories of Media and Race/Ethnicity

The study of the role of social identities and social stratification provides the inspiration for including race/ethnicity in studies of media history. Racial/ethnic groups that have been marginalized have long been invested in reforming dominant media representations as part of liberation movements and tactics. Early attempts to combat stereotypes are seen in the eighteenth-century Black press, the NAACP’s protests against *Birth of A Nation*, and Jewish protests against “Shylock” plays and anti-Semitic characters in early Hollywood films. However, mainstream scholarship has not consistently tracked or addressed these issues. Indeed, not until after the breakthroughs of mid-twentieth-century social justice campaigns did the establishment of ethnic studies departments provide stable spaces for researchers to examine the role of race/ethnicity in media, both in terms of representations and in how racial and ethnic stratification have influenced the structure and workings of mass media industries.

Sociologists as far back as W. E. B. Du Bois have looked at media both as an area of inquiry into the production and role of stereotypes and as a tool to combat racial/ethnic discrimination. As more universities began to recognize the need for creating ethnic studies departments, more work on media emerged. Scholars of the 1970s and 1980s looked to cinema to examine how racial representations established central stereotypes and, in so doing, justified and reinforced regimes of White supremacy. Books such as Donald Bogle’s *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (2001) and Jack Shaheen’s *The TV Arab* (1984) unearthed the ways in which Hollywood film and mainstream television codified

racial/ethnic stereotypes, and inspired new generations of scholars to look at US media through a critical historical lens.

Importantly, forays into explorations of race/ethnicity in media coincided with scholars' return to Marxist and Frankfurt School interests in ideology and hegemony. In the 1970s and 1980s the work of Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School revitalized interest in political economies of media, and social constructions of national identity and belonging that take place, in part, through media representations. Stuart Hall's (1996, 1997) work, as well as that of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) and other volumes influenced scholars to deepen their look at media's role in forming national and racial identities. Hall's "encoding/decoding" model, along with rejuvenated interest in ethnographic methods, inspired a flurry of audience studies that attended to the role of race/ethnicity, class, and gender in audience responses to media texts. Key works include David Morley's *Nationwide* (1980), Henry Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* (1992), Janice Radaway's *Reading the Romance* (1984), Jacqueline Bobo's *Black Women as Cultural Readers* (1995), and Jhally and Lewis's *Enlightened Racism* (1992).

Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* (1994) has provided crucial frameworks for understanding how media representations are part and parcel of social stratification systems, and how these representations may change in response to – or as part of – racial projects of the state, social movements, or other entities. Thus, media historians and scholars who utilize historical comparison in their work have drawn upon the aforementioned bodies of work to guide their interrogations of the past, and have structured important, complex renderings of media histories that debunk simple timeline and "great individual" approaches to historical inquiry. Moreover, their work often complicates earlier histories, and confronts issues that remain controversial as we continue to wrestle with the consequences of legal regimes of racial/ethnic stratification.

Postcolonial critiques, intersectional feminist theory, and deconstructionist approaches to race/ethnicity were instrumental in bringing concerns about racial and ethnic identity into the work of media scholars. Patricia Hill Collins's landmark work *Black Feminist Thought* (1992) included analysis of popular representations of Black womanhood, underscoring the necessity of combining race, gender, and class in media research. Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994) similarly took on the ways Western assumptions and frames depict people of color worldwide, engendering a need to deconstruct the hegemonic modes of representation that dominate global corporate media. Their analysis underscores how our ways of looking are shaped by the sociopolitical environments structured by colonialism and apartheid-like systems.

The growing influence of cultural studies, critical race theory, and feminism alongside the emergence of "middle range" theories of media influence – such as agenda setting, framing, and cultivation theory – in the United States provided social scientists with language and tools to examine the continuing impact of racial formations on media output and public opinion. Robert Entman's work was on news frames and "modern racism" (1990) and Gamson and Modigliani (1987) delineated how

frames for affirmative action shifted over a decade of discursive and legal battles in the public sphere.

Attending to race/ethnicity in historical inquiry enriches scholarship, regardless of whether the subject is explicitly recognized as part of a marginalized racial/ethnic group or its cultural expressions. Unpacking the large and subtle ways race/ethnicity have shaped our media systems, production, and reception serves to both complicate and complete our view of the past and its relationship to present-day media and imaginations of the future. Approaching media history from the standpoint that race/ethnicity always matter, in some way, to the development of communication around the globe also opens up vistas to the ways in which our media have long been global and involved with projects of identity and identification, even though these terms have become more prevalent in media scholarship since the 1980s.

In the sections that follow, I map studies of race/ethnicity and media history into four areas:

- 1 *Rediscovering Roots*: This section explores how scholars have unearthed and preserved contributions of people of color overlooked by prior historians.
- 2 *Documenting Discrimination*: This section reviews work that excavates histories of structural barriers, stereotype production, and other institutional exclusions in media history.
- 3 *Multiculturalisms and National Identit(ies)*: This section explores scholarship that has acknowledged that our current era is not the first “multicultural” one to emerge. These works mine media history to reveal the complex interactions and power dynamics between racial/ethnic groups facilitated by media over the past two centuries.
- 4 *Public Memory, Race and Media*: This section looks at the ways in which media scholars have turned to the role of media’s influence in public commemoration of historical events and figures, and how media figure into the representation of what our history and national identity mean in the face of different interpretations of and additions to dominant historical events.

Readers will note that many of the examples used to illustrate these themes in media history come from scholarship on African Americans. This is due to three factors. First, my own research and writings have been largely focused on Black Americans, thus I am more familiar with the literature concerning Blacks and media. Second, because of the dominance of the Black–White divide in discussions and investigations of race relations, and the specific, peculiar role of slavery and colonialism in structuring the transatlantic racial hierarchy, more scholars have addressed Black experiences with media in their studies than other groups. Paul Gilroy’s generative text *The Black Atlantic* (1993) has been instrumental in fostering African diasporic studies in communication and other fields.

Third, in addition to the unique (albeit necessitated by Jim Crow) system of Black colleges (HBCUs), many Black/Africana studies departments were established at historically White colleges and universities (HWCUs) before the establishment of Latina/o and Asian American and Native American studies (Colon, 2003; La Bell &

Ward, 1996; Sumida, 1998), so there is a greater store of work on African Americans in the United States than other racialized groups. This imbalance in scholarship, however, is quickly changing, as new generations of scholars in American studies, ethnic studies, postcolonial studies, and other disciplines delve into the histories of groups once obscured by attention to the Black–White dichotomy, and as critical race scholars provide more sophisticated theoretical apparatuses that reveal how this dichotomy contributes to the structure of other racialized identities in the United States and abroad. Concepts such as diaspora, hybridity, global flows, and mediascapes, showcased in the influential work of Arjun Appadurai, will continue to impact the field as scholars revisit past media formations and campaigns.

Rediscovering Roots

One major task for media historians of race/ethnicity is excavating the work and struggles of people of color who engaged in media production and protest. The race/ethnicity power dynamics of past centuries, however, make this task difficult, since people of color had access to fewer archival and economic resources to preserve their media heritage, and because White-dominated organizations set up to preserve and celebrate media contributions did not recognize the accomplishments of non-Whites. It is a cliché to say that the victors write history; the records and deeds of the oppressed often do not survive. Moreover, historians often consult the writings of journalists to understand the agendas and interests of the public and the powerful. Thus, the journalistic accounts created by and for people of color, whether of mundane events or social upheaval, help us understand and center the experiences of those excluded from the news of the day in so-called mainstream papers. In this section, I draw upon the extensive body of work on the African American press, which attests to the importance of discovering and preserving records of how people of color have created and deployed media. Study of these news pioneers and journalistic output also allows scholars to explore different ways of doing journalism, and complicates dominant narratives of journalism history that track a straight line from the eighteenth-century partisan press to twentieth-century newspaper barons who ushered in objectivity.

Press Pioneers

Historians Roland Wolseley (1990) and Armistead Pride and Clint Wilson III (1997) have provided broad accounts of the early pioneers of the Black press. These books give readers a sense of the long-running dual goals of Black newspapers to provide a public sphere for African Americans, and to create viable business models for publishing regular accounts of Black communities and political interests. Henry Suggs's (1996) collection of historical essays, *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865–1985*, importantly demonstrates the geographic diversity of Black communities, undermining historical narratives that segment Black life into North vs. South. Likewise, the documentary film

The Black Press in America: Soldiers Without Swords (Nelson, 1998) is a lively account of the popularity of Black newspapers and the influence of Black editors and writers within and outside their communities. These works show us how important Black periodicals have been, from a very early time in the nation's history, and how they continued to support a wide range of Black interests over two centuries.

In addition to broad surveys of the Black press, scholars have provided in-depth cultural and political studies of crucial individuals and eras in the development of the Black press and its interactions with both White and Black publics (e.g., Vogel, 2001). Jane Rhodes's (1998) biography of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, for example, takes readers into the heart of the free Black populations of Canada and New England, chronicling the intensity of the abolitionist movement and stark realities of the fugitive slave laws through the lens of Shadd Cary's pioneering journalism. The book usefully demonstrates the intersections of race and gender, illustrated through Shadd Cary's travels and writings, as well as the discrimination she faced as a Black woman working in a male-dominated field and movement. Melba Boyd documented the life of Broadside Press founder and poet Dudley Randall, on film (1996) and in a book (2003). Her work provides a detailed portrait of Black Arts Movement activity in Michigan, and its links to labor activism. Importantly, it documents the importance of Broadside to Black poets who were able to publish there before African American writers were sufficiently in vogue to gain entrée to White publishing houses.

Other writers have taken in-depth looks at how the Black press fostered talent in photography (Stange, 2001) and film criticism (Everett, 1996), and covered the Negro leagues and other Black athletic achievements (Wiggins, 1997). These works provide us with a three-dimensional portrait of past Black communities, reminding us that the Black press, like any other, supported and reflected not only the political interests of its readers, but also their entertainment and leisure activities. Because legal segregation and not-so-benign neglect meant the events and interests of people of color were rarely (if ever) seen in dominant newspapers, these works give us a sense of the breadth of activities going on in Black communities, businesses, and political organizations. Indeed, records in the Black press have been invaluable to historians looking to document events that are not recorded in "papers of record" and live only in fading memories of the participants – and, if they are lucky, on yards of microfilm. Penny Von Eschen's *Race Against Empire* (1997), for example, is essential reading for anyone interested in exploring how writers and editors of the Black press interacted across the Atlantic, connecting readers and thinkers in the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe long before "diaspora" became a buzzword in academia.

Diversifying the Archives: Preserving and Maintaining Records for Historical Research

In addition to telling the stories of early pioneers, historians and archivists have set their shoulders to the task of making early Black newspapers accessible and

searchable to the public. These efforts have emerged in book form and, more recently, through digitization. Annotated bibliographies, such as Charlene B. Regester's multivolume *Black Entertainers in African American Newspaper Articles* (2002), allow curious readers to browse content to get a sense of the range of people and places covered by popular Black papers. Likewise, Donald Jacobs's *Antebellum Black Newspapers* (1976) indexed three early anti-slavery papers, including the first known Black-owned paper, *Freedom's Journal*. *Voices of a Black Nation*, Theodore Vincent's (1990) compilation of articles from various Black periodicals produced during the Harlem Renaissance, gives readers an immersion in the wide variety of political and cultural ideologies circulating in the Black public sphere. These books, available in research and some public libraries, are important starting points for researchers who need to familiarize themselves with the Black press, and laypersons who may stumble across references to Black newspapers or editors in other accounts of history.

Happily, digital archives of the early Black press have come online. It is imperative for the archives of periodicals created by and for people of color to keep pace with the digitization of better-known titles so that scholars are able to get equal access to multiple viewpoints on events in the past. Digitization also ensures that as technologies shift, periodicals made by people of color will not be lost or relegated to old technologies that may or may not be as easy to search or use as Internet-based archives. James Danky's *African American Newspapers, 1827–1998* project is available through Readex; the *International Index to Black Periodicals* covers a range of African diaspora newspapers and magazines that launched in the twentieth century. ProQuest Historical Newspapers' database has included African American papers such as the *Los Angeles Sentinel* alongside its mainstream counterpart *Los Angeles Times*, but does not yet have a full range of Black titles covered prior to 1910. The Ethnic Newswatch: Historical database, also available through ProQuest, archives abstracts and full text articles from African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American newspapers, from 1959 to 1989. Importantly, the database includes Spanish-language titles as well as English-language periodicals. Its companion database, Ethnic Newswatch, archives articles from 1990 to the present. For research on the mid-to-late twentieth century, and for scholars doing comparative research on news coverage of important events and political issues of the twenty-first century, this growing database will be very useful.

Rediscovering Roots in Other Media: Examples from Electronic Media

Of course, journalism is not the only area in which historians have worked to rediscover and preserve accounts and accomplishments of people of color in media. Work on film pioneers such as Oscar Micheaux has been done in earnest; most of the film reels from his early twentieth-century career have been lost. Revising the history of

film to shift the focus from Hollywood to figures that have tried to work within or outside the dominant studio system has brought the accomplishments of Native American filmmakers into focus in books such as *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens* (Singer, 2001) and Randolph Lewis's (2006) biography of director Alanis Obomsawin. Jeff Adachie's documentary *Slanted Screen* (2006) allows us to sample the artistry of actor Sessue Hayakawa, whose career is detailed in Daisuke Miyao's (2007) biography. This Japanese American was an acclaimed leading man in silent films before the infamous Production Code and anti-Asian sentiment closed off opportunities for other Asian actors to follow in his footsteps. Similarly, books on Latinos in Hollywood, such as Clara Rodriguez's *Heroes, Lovers, and Others* (2008) and Rubie and Reyes's *Hispanics in Hollywood: An Encyclopedia of Film and Television* (1994) lay out the stories of Latinos and Latinas who worked in film from the silent era to recent times. Such histories remind us that exclusion of people of color was never 100% complete, and that the color lines drawn by dominant media institutions were simultaneously permeable and dangerously rigid.

Historians of radio and recorded music have also recovered the contributions of early DJs and musicians whose stories were rarely told. William Barlow's *Voice Over* (1999) and Mark Newman's *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride* (1988) showcase the efforts of early African American radio hosts, such as Jack Cooper, and civil rights-era DJs like Martha Jean "The Queen" and Nat D. Williams who used their limited airwave access to communicate important events and counter-discourses to Black audiences. Maureen Mahon's *Right to Rock* (2004) and Rebee Garofalo's *Rockin' Out* (2008) recenter the experiences of Black musicians and producers, thereby demonstrating how conventions for classifying and marketing popular music genres and performers were profoundly shaped by racism within the industry and expectations of the audience's racial understandings. This body of work retells the story of blues and rock "n" roll, revealing how racism in the music industry obscured the contributions of African Americans and embedded the stereotype that Whites play rock "n" roll and Blacks play rhythm & blues. Revisiting the roots of media industries, cultural styles, and related practices has transformed traditional media histories from a mono-racial narrative to one that views media production as a multiracial, if often segregated, enterprise.

Although the Internet is still considered a new medium, scholars have already staked out territory to write its history in an inclusive fashion, and to use the relatively low-cost World Wide Web to preserve and maintain older media. Anna Everett (2002) acknowledges the severity of the digital divide, but cautions us to recognize Black and Hispanic "early adopters" who went online in the early 1990s. This kind of recognition makes it more likely that people of color will be remembered in the history of digital communications, and resists the stereotype that positions Blacks and Latinos (as well as women of all colors) as technologically inferior. In a parallel project of memorializing people of color online, amateur and professional archivists have leveraged the Internet's multimedia flexibility to create sites to house "lost" images and texts. The Black Media Archive (<http://thebma.blogspot.com/>) has assembled webpages, pod-

casting, and hyperlinks to capture newsreels, radio interviews, photographs, and television clips that many people may have thought lost. Likewise, Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project website (www.densho.org) hosts a digital archive of over 8,000 recorded interviews and more than 10,000 documents, photos, and news reports about the World War II internment of Japanese Americans. Included in the collection are digitized copies of newspapers produced in the internment camps, a crucial resource for scholars and teachers who want to center the experiences of Japanese Americans during the war.

When writing the history of the Internet, historians will have to include both narratives of the digital divide – which replicates and extends prior inequalities in media production and access – and stories of people of color who leveraged computer-mediated communication at an early stage in the World Wide Web’s development. Balancing concerns about equality with the task of recognizing early accomplishments and innovation by people of color will prepare future historians of the Internet to avoid the problems of documentation and visibility that have hampered accounts of film, radio, and print media. And, utilizing new digital tools to facilitate preservation of documentary evidence of people of color in the media is quickly becoming an important part of media history endeavors that seek to make traditional media histories more inclusive and insightful.

Documenting Discrimination

Boxed Out: The Economics of Race/Ethnicity in Media Production

A large portion of the work in race/ethnicity in media documents the practices of legal and social discrimination, as well as violence, against people of color in the media industries. Histories of newspapers created by people of color remind us of how White control of the mainstream press meant aspiring journalists of color had little, if any, reason to believe their bylines would make it into the dominant papers. Relatedly, people of color could not trust mainstream news to give their communities regular or “fair and balanced” coverage. Parallel presses emerged in Latina/o, Asian, and Black American communities to tell the stories the White press refused to tell, or exaggerated into ugly stereotype. Patrick Washburn’s *A Question of Sedition: The Black Press During World War II* (1986) diligently documents the ways in which the Black press negotiated its way through World War II, a time when the government was all too willing to silence “seditious” publications. For some – including FBI head J. Edgar Hoover – any protests against racism in the armed forces or other Jim Crow policies were “sedition” and linked to communist insurgency. Washburn’s detailed illustration of government surveillance of and interference in the Black press during World War II is a sobering reminder of how assumptions about the First Amendment

and the “free press” overlook the ways in which racial and ethnic groups have had their speech rights truncated through harassment and legal action.

In the past 40 years, scholarship on news produced by and for people of color has provided ample and detailed evidence of the resistance racial/ethnic minorities faced as they tried to create alternative public discourses through the vehicle of the press. The long history of Latina/o bilingual, English, and Spanish-language periodicals reveals the international scope of barriers Hispanic editors and writers had to overcome to produce news and opinion in the United States. As borders and international power relationships shifted between the Spanish–American War and the Mexican–American War, Latina/os in the Americas found that their journalistic freedoms ebbed and flowed with the politics of the times (Kanellos, 2000). Similarly, accounts of early pioneers of the Black press note how dangerous their work could be; Black editors and White abolitionist editors were often targeted for violence by pro-slavery Whites (Hutton, 1993; Ripley, 1993). This violence continued and escalated during and after the Civil War.

While today journalists lament the public’s decreased trust in their profession, the lives of journalists of color illustrate greater dangers of being out of favor with the dominant public. Exemplifying the dangerous position of Black writers who dared speak out against lynching and other crimes against Blacks is the story of Ida B. Wells, whose paper, *Free Speech*, was destroyed at the hands of a White mob. She received many death threats throughout her life, and regularly carried a pistol (Duster, 1991; Wells & Duster, 1972). As Wells and her male colleagues, most famously Robert S. Abbott, editor of the *Chicago Defender*, urged Blacks to move North, Southern legislators sought to stem the tide of their cheap labor force by banning Black papers.

Beyond government interference and violence, subtler means of suppressing the voices of people of color continued after the civil rights movement spurred initiatives to integrate the media industries. Pamela Newkirk’s *Within the Veil* (2000) documents the travails of the first generation of Black journalists who joined the ranks of the mainstream press in the 1970s and 1980s. Her book, along with Clint Wilson III’s *Black Journalists in Paradox* (1991), provide us with a sobering history of the first attempts at integrating the White-dominated press, and the failures of policies that focused too much on numbers and not enough on transforming racist journalistic practices and assumptions.

The mix of legal and social barriers to people of color is also found in histories of other media industries. Myriad books have engaged these issues in the arena of film. Hollywood’s infamous Production Code banned positive representations of interracial relationships. Moreover, Jim Crow hiring practices restricted the roles and spaces for people of color to appear in films, let alone make their own. Books by Peter Feng (2002), Robert G. Lee (1999), and Ono and Pham (2009) illustrate how Hollywood directors regularly used “yellowface” makeup on White actors rather than hire Japanese- or Chinese American actors for lead roles. For those actors of color who were given screen time the road was never easy, even with steady work.

Biographies of Hattie McDaniel (Watts, 2007) and Dorothy Dandridge (Bogle, 1997), for example, provide ample anecdotes of how directors, producers, and casting agents pigeonholed even popular actors of color into servants and sirens, stereotypes reaffirming dominant racial ideologies. These and other actors made compromises as they negotiated Hollywood, and often faced harsh criticism from communities of color for their alleged participation in stereotype production.

Given the barriers to complex representations of racial/ethnic Others, many people of color tried to create alternative films, just as they had created their own periodicals. But film and television production opportunities were not a realistic option for people of color. The dominance of the Hollywood studios – all White owned – and the Jim Crow practices of craft unions that provided the labor for behind the scenes and on-camera jobs meant few places were available to people of color looking to make an impact. Thus, it was highly improbable for someone of color to rise through the ranks from within. Likewise, barriers to entrepreneurship kept people of color from establishing independent television stations or film studios. Scholars have documented how the FCC notoriously denied broadcasting licenses to African American and Jewish applicants until the courts forced their hand (Barlow, 1999; Honig, 2006; Savage, 1999). And, as Jesse Rhines summarizes in *Black Film/White Money* (1996), even when pioneering Black filmmakers such as the Noble brothers were able to raise money to make a film, getting distribution was quite another thing. Then and now, White domination of all aspects of the film industry made getting films into theaters nearly impossible for people of color. While Oscar Micheaux was able to become the one and only Black filmmaker of his time to regularly exhibit films in theaters – mainly in Black neighborhoods such as Harlem in New York, and Bronzeville in Chicago – the unrelenting financial pressures and lack of alternative distribution networks proved too much for even this maverick (McGilligan, 2008).

Stereotypes, Silence, and Sensationalism: Representational Trends in Mass Media

Institutional racism, unsurprisingly, was reinforced by racist representations in film. Jack Shaheen's *Reel Bad Arabs* (2001) presents a content analysis of 1,000 feature films, finding a mere 12 contained positive images of Arabs; over 900 presented caricatures of harems, sheiks, and crazy fundamentalists. Writers such as Robert Berkhofer (1979), Jacquelyn Kilpatrick (1999), and Beverly Singer (2001) demonstrate how cowboy films and other fantasies of the "Old West" cemented visions of "savages," "noble warriors," and "Indian princesses" populating the continent. As Kilpatrick (1999) explains, these images of Native Americans are built upon literature and lore produced during the European conquest of North America and the Caribbean, reminding us of the links between politics, ideology, and representational practices. Indeed, it is notable how Hollywood capitalized on the early literature of the frontier,

making films of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) and other novels that crystallized the stereotypes of the noble and ignoble savage during US western expansion. These representations positioned Native Americans (noble or not) as anachronistic beings, doomed to die out and unable to adjust to the modern world brought into being by new technologies and Euro-American cultural practices. These narratives justified broken treaties and genocidal policies of forced removal. Remade later as films in the 1950s and 1960s, these tales reassured White audiences that Manifest Destiny was both right and inevitable.

Some of the most compelling work on discriminatory media practices is contained in documentary films. Marlon Riggs's *Ethnic Notions* (1987) provides viewers with a sobering account of the ways in which slavery and Jim Crow shaped the most popular images of African Americans, from illustrations in nineteenth-century newspapers to early twentieth-century film. The follow-up, *Color Adjustment* (1991), continues the story into television, tracking the inclusion of African Americans from *Beulah* to *The Cosby Show*. Similarly, Deborah Gee's *Slaying the Dragon* (1988) and Jeff Adichie's *The Slanted Screen* (2006) demonstrate how fears of an Asian "yellow peril" and other Orientalist approaches cast Asians and Asian Americans into a handful of stereotypical roles in Hollywood and on television. Likewise, Philip Rodriguez's documentary, *Brown is the New Green* (2007), intersperses discussions of mainstream media's recent "discovery" of the Latina/o market with recollections and samples of Hispanic stereotypes that dominated US media throughout the twentieth century.

All of these films contain interviews with actors, actresses, and directors of color who describe their experiences navigating a media industry dominated by Whites and the limited range of choices they negotiate to remain working in their fields. *Slaying the Dragon* contains many segments where Asian American actresses such as Nobu McCarthy recount their frustration with casting agents and directors who wanted to see "lotus blossoms" and "dragon ladies" populate their films and shows. These interviews are paralleled with commentary from young Asian American women, who relay experiences with Whites who expect them to exhibit the characteristics of Madame Butterfly or Suzie Wong, illustrating how one-dimensional media portraits have an effect on audiences' perceptions of women of Asian descent.

Not surprisingly, the aforementioned films are leavened by the appearance and comments of many media and cultural historians. In *Ethnic Notions*, for instance, viewers are introduced to Patricia Turner, whose groundbreaking book *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies* (1994) chronicles how common and widespread were images of African Americans as pickaninnies, grinning Sambos, and helpful mammies well into the twentieth century. Likewise, *Slanted Screen* uses testimony from Dr. Darrell Hamamoto, author of *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation* (1994), to provide historical and sociological context for the stream of images presented in the film. Jackie Salloum's Sundance Award-winning short film *Planet of the Arabs* (2003) was inspired by scholar Jack Shaheen's work on televised and film portrayals of Arabs. The film itself delivers rapid-fire clips from many of the movies and shows analyzed in Shaheen's books.

These films play multiple roles in advancing the cause of media histories of race/ethnicity. First, the documentaries themselves contain oral histories of people of color in the media industries via the interviews with actors, actresses, writers, and producers. Their voices may never have been collected by other documentarians of Hollywood or television, making the films valuable for future generations of researchers and laypersons who have interest in these topics. Second, the films introduce viewers to academic researchers whose work informs the film, potentially broadening the audience for in-depth work on the subject of race/ethnicity in media. Finally, the images of media representations that are arrayed in these films trace timelines of representational politics in the United States. While the aforementioned scholarly works similarly provide a clear accounting of how representations of racial/ethnic groups have changed over time, the films have the added benefit of allowing the audience to visually experience these changes and alterations.

Multiculturalisms and National Identit(ies)

Historical investigations of media and race/ethnicity remind us of how contemporary discourses of multiculturalism and “post-racial” national identities are not so new. Moreover, these works show us how long the state and media have been interconnected in projects to form and reform social identities for various nation-building projects, as well as in response to direct challenges to racial inequalities. Importantly, these histories reveal assimilation projects and balkanized visions of “separate but equal,” as well as more cosmopolitan formulations for including (or exhibiting) marginalized groups in media.

Reinforcing Identity Boundaries Through Historical Narratives of Assimilable and Unassimilable Others

Many scholars have quoted an early short film by Thomas Edison that depicted the various “races” of Europe (complete with costume and stereotypical behaviors) being forged into “Americans” through assimilation. The media’s role in assimilating racial/ethnic others – and demarcating those groups that should not be assimilated – has been an object of scholarly scrutiny at least since the publication of Robert Park’s *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (1922). Park’s work explored whether the foreign-language presses would hinder or assist assimilation into American culture, and how those presses maintained and nourished ties with the home countries and customs. Since that time, other scholars have examined the issue from the vantage point of dominant media: how do mainstream media portray “typical” American culture, and how do their portrayals gauge possibilities for racial/ethnic Others to become American. Media have subtly and blatantly reinforced and amplified notions

of Otherness in conjunction with racial projects that impacted legal definitions of citizenship and social understandings of who belongs in the United States.

The history of Native American representations in popular culture strongly illustrates how media have been integral to projects of assimilability and national identity. Even as US Americans violently displaced Native American tribes and broke legal treaties, “playing Indian” remained a favorite pastime for “real Americans.” Philip J. Deloria’s *Playing Indian* (1999) explores long-standing practices of Whites appropriating Indianness as a symbol of American authenticity while simultaneously denying the rights of actual Native Americans. This inherent and violent contradiction set the stage for White-dominated media culture to use Native American/Indian identities to rewrite the trauma of colonial domination as kinder, gentler cultural interactions. In her deconstruction of pioneer films that feature romantic tensions between White men and Native American women, Joanna Hearne (2003) notes how the bodies of the women were sacrificed – literally and figuratively – to allow safe passage for White settlers who took ownership of the Great Plains. In movies such as *Maya*, *Just an Indian*, Hollywood filmmakers affirmed anti-miscegenation codes that doomed interracial relationships and used the drama of Native women’s “willing” sacrifice to justify White takeover of Native lands. Indeed, these films and scores of other Westerns regularly positioned Whites as rightful inheritors of the land, reinforcing the Manifest Destiny ideology that positioned Native Americans as aboriginal, but not worthy of full citizenship in their own land. Notably, these movies are set in the nineteenth century, reinforcing the notion that Indians are only a part of the past, not the present, United States (Singer, 2001, p. 10).

Cross-racial romance has functioned as a recurrent trope in American media culture, and has mostly been deployed to reinforce a sense of White innocence and justify White appropriation of cultural and economic resources. Ono and Buescher (2001) take these issues into account in their analysis of the Disney cartoon retelling of the Pocahontas–John Smith legend. The authors excavate how Disney’s ahistorical and mythological scripting of Pocahontas and her tribe creates a cipher into which American consumer culture can recycle the myth as a positive origin story, erase the devastation of the Powhatan tribe in the wake of English colonialism, and ignore its heroine’s true end: death in England, far from the verdant landscapes of Disney’s “virgin” America.

Although the “sacrifice” of the “tragic mulatto” or “half-breed” is often visible in media narratives of Black–White and Asian–White romance, it serves the same goals: reinforcing the color line and justifying White hegemony. Work by Cynthia Nakashima (2001) and Suzanne Bost (2002), and collections by Beltran and Fojas (2008), track how popular-culture images of mixed-race individuals and couples simultaneously broke and reinforced racial taboos. Likewise, Jacqueline Stewart’s (2005) study of early silent films demonstrates how filmmakers’ comedic shorts of race “mix-ups” – such as a White woman accidentally picking up a Black baby on a crowded, confusing city street – reflected anxieties about the Great Black Migration’s impact on urban life, and animated for audiences the presumed horrors that could be unleashed if Blacks and Whites lived in close proximity.

Other work in this area has focused on disjunctures between official discourses of national identity or unity and the realities of racial discrimination on the ground. Yeidi Rivero's *Tuning Out Blackness* (2005), for example, shows how Puerto Rico's formal acknowledgments of African roots rarely resulted in televisual embrace of Blackness in the 1970s. Eschen's *Satchmo Blows Up The World* (2006) explores how the US State Department's Cold War-era attempts to use jazz musicians as ambassadors of American freedom in the midst of struggles for civil rights at home unleashed tensions between the cultural exports and their government, sometimes resulting in unexpected leverage in race relations policies.

Testing the Waters: Media and Narratives of Racial/Ethnic Tolerance

Recent histories of World War II and postwar media highlight the ways in which the federal government as well as private media firms attempted to promote interracial/ethnic tolerance. Some of these projects were clearly strategic: Barbara Savage's *Broadcasting Freedom* (1999) brings to life the Office of War Information's investments in radio programming aimed at quelling racial and ethnic tensions. Fearful that Axis propaganda would turn African Americans against the war, and wary of labor organizers who advocated interracial solidarity in the name of socialist brotherhood, the government turned to radio to assure Blacks that they were valued members of the public. Programs like *Freedom's People* joined *Americans All* in articulating an ethnically pluralist America, joined by a dedication to the American Dream. While these efforts were chiefly created to alleviate dissent, Savage shows how well-placed individuals in the government and radio programming units used the popularity of these shows to bring more discussions of race/ethnicity to the airwaves after the war, and extend the discussions beyond the Horatio Alger-style narratives of hard work and tolerance that dominated the government programs.

In the midst of the Red Scare and in the wake of Hitler's genocide, some studio heads in Hollywood saw a need for socially conscious films to address race/ethnicity. Gayle Wald's *Crossing the Line* (2000) studies how "message" films, such as Elia Kazan's *Pinky* (1949), were framed as tools in the war against intolerance. Many of these films, like *Pinky*, featured "passing" characters and interracial tensions. While the films tried to articulate positive characterizations of their main characters, people of color who populated the fringes of the story remained one-dimensional stereotypes. Similarly, Ed Guerrero (1993) and others have commented on the emergence of Sidney Poitier as the leading Black actor in the 1950s. Poitier was positioned as an "exceptional Negro" in all of his early films, and was rarely on screen with other African Americans or involved in racial tensions. The films *In the Heat of the Night* (1967) and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) broke this unspoken rule of race avoidance. However, as analysts of these films note, Poitiers' characters remain beholden to White characters, who must provide him with either safe passage (*Heat of the Night*) or permission to

marry their daughter (*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*). These observations do not take away from the achievements of Mr. Poitier; rather, scholars point out that Hollywood's conservatism in racial matters results in representations that lag well behind contemporary events and, sometimes, public opinion and behaviors.

Another body of work explores genuine (and disingenuous) attempts to cross racial/ethnic divides to "understand" the Other via media or performance. Lutz and Collins's *Reading National Geographic* (1993) takes readers through the history of the venerable magazine, and exposes how its roots in colonial and imperialist projects shaped its narratives of "civilized" and "natural" societies. The paternalistic and voyeuristic relationship with the developing world that emerged not only framed racial/ethnic others as "primitives" or "exotic," but also reinforced racial binaries that supported a vision of White, Western peoples as "sophisticated" and "civilized." The authors track how visual techniques codified in the magazine have influenced travel photography and tourism advertising as well, such that the presentation of "natural" and "exotic" racial/ethnic others sets the tone for airline and cruise travel to locations in the Pacific Islands and other spaces. Importantly, the research includes reader-response studies with contemporary subscribers as well as textual analysis of photos and historical analysis of *National Geographic's* origins. Through this multifaceted look at an influential mass-market magazine, Lutz and Collins show the great impact media can have in shaping reader sensibilities about racial/ethnic Others, and how narrative and visual conventions reinforce troubling assumptions about the place of people of color in modernity.

In the realm of popular culture studies, three authors have staked out the role and impact of blackface entertainment in American media and ethnic/race relations. Eric Lott's *Love and Theft* (1992), Lhamon's *Raising Cain* (2000), and Melvin Ely's *The Adventures of Amos "n" Andy* (1992) delve into the psychological and social intricacies that emerged from the practices of minstrelsy. These authors argue that blackface should be considered one of America's earliest forms of mass entertainment, and chronicle the longevity of the practice and its many controversial facets. These books demonstrate how powerful racial imagery and mimicry have been in American culture, and how hard it can be to untangle the racist elements from the sometimes innovative, liberating creative moments of blackface entertainment that Lhamon argues are deeply embedded in contemporary dance, music, and visual arts. Blackface was and continues to be terrain for experimentation with racial identity and expression, even as it troubles us with its racist origins and assumptions of embodied difference. These histories are crucial texts for us to revisit, especially as we continue to see eruptions of blackface/voice and yellowface/voice in mainstream media, as well as under the radar on the Internet. On-air gaffes by Rosie O'Donnell, who mimicked Chinese vocalizations, and Don Imus and Rush Limbaugh's sidekicks, who brought us blackvoice mimicry about the Rutgers University women's basketball team and "Barack the Magic Negro," reveal the continued use and abuse of minstrel and yellowface humor, a form that continues to titillate and shock audiences. Students and scholars can better appreciate these contemporary controversies with the complex historical visions offered by these texts.

Public Memory, Race and Media

Because of the racial/ethnic power dynamics of the United States, historians have long “been engaged in a struggle over what to say about America’s past and how to say it” (Fabre & O’Meally, 1994, p. 3). This struggle has influenced media scholars’ accounts of the origins and outputs of our media systems – specifically for media historians, the ways media contribute to public and personal memories – authorized and unauthorized narratives – of our nation’s identity, key events, and esteemed individuals. Struggles over how the story is told and who can do the telling are intimately linked to questions of racial stratification. As Barbie Zelizer demonstrated in her generative book *Covering the Body* (1992), journalists and other media practitioners not only lay claim to “writing the first draft of history” but also participate in choosing and framing which individuals and issues merit continued memorializing well past the initial events that made phenomena “newsworthy.”

Following Pierre Nora, media manufacture and provide *lieux de memoire*. Newsreels, television retrospectives, articles, interviews in the archives, and other fictional and documentary materials mark where and how “certain landmarks of the past” are selected and invested “with symbolic political significance” (Fabre & O’Meally, 1994, p. 7). Therefore media, as much as formal history texts and museums, provide the public with frameworks and touchstones for thinking about our racial past, setting the stage for contrast with the present and speculation about the road to the future. These dynamics are well illustrated in contests over media representations of slavery, the civil rights movement, and the ways Black music culture became interwoven with “American” culture in the twentieth century. As Susan Willis and others note, the late twentieth century witnessed an explosion of Black cultural presence in mainstream mass media (Willis, 1994, pp. 178–179). How the experiences, memories, and stories of a people forcibly segregated from media production and inhibited from telling their experiences in public are represented by the same media systems that participated in segregation, stereotyping, and silencing presents complex, troubling questions for media scholars.

Kelly Madison’s (1999) dissection of 1980s and 1990s Hollywood films about Black freedom movements is particularly instructive. She delineates how White characters were centered in films that were ostensibly about the struggles of African Americans to gain equal rights. However, in order to position Whites as heroes, Black leaders and laypersons were relegated to the sidelines. Madison suggests that the centering of White subjects at the expense of Black subjects reiterated the need to reclaim a sense of White racial innocence that was damaged by the challenges of the civil rights movement and shown to be a lie. Likewise, Ed Guerrero’s (1993) examination of 1930s and 1940s films finds a fascination and fetishization of the antebellum South, most notably in *Gone With the Wind* (1939). These films present a fantasy of a genteel South with a peculiar, but benevolent, institution of slavery, where devoted slaves were happy in servitude. Thus, Hollywood served up a myth of racial harmony under White supremacy at a time when race relations were strained between North

and South in the wake of the Great Black Migration, new immigration from Europe, and labor activism that alternately called for solidarity across racial lines or deployed racial animus to leverage economic and social gains. In both cases, Hollywood's depiction of the racial past served a need in the present and distorted the past.

Acts of Appropriation and Forgetting

Scholars who have incorporated Whiteness studies into their work on media history similarly find that representations of Asian cultures often center White experiences (Ono & Pham, 2009). From David Carradine's role in the 1970s TV show *Kung Fu* to Tom Cruise's star turn in *The Last Samurai* (2003), mainstream media reinforce the sense that Asians are "forever foreigners" and that Whites may be better able to inhabit and protect the most worthy Asian traditions. For example, Sean Tierney shows how, in *Last Samurai*, Cruise's character somehow is able to master the arts of samurai swordsmanship and honor codes in six short months; he kills Japanese men who have studied the forms their entire life, and becomes fluent in Japanese as well. He becomes the "true" inheritor of samurai tradition, displacing the other masters in the movie. This pattern of displacement occurs in many other films that feature White characters who learn martial arts in Asia or from Asians (Tierney, 2006). Like Leatherstocking in *Last of the Mohicans*, White men are portrayed as "supraethnic" as they absorb the "best" aspects of a "foreign" culture (Tierney, 2006, pp. 610–611). This exchange is one-sided: Whites absorb Others' traditions, and then the Other culture recedes – or is destroyed – as Western "civilization" advances.

These displacements replicate distorted and one-sided depictions of eras of inter-group contact and conflict. This is exemplified in Hollywood and pop fiction tales of the Whites and Native Americans interacting in the colonial era and during western expansion. Beginning with the multiple retellings of the Pocahontas–John Smith affair, to *Dances with Wolves* (1990), the 1992 remake of *The Last of the Mohicans*, and steamy romance novels, dominant media have invented fantasies of environmentally correct gentle natives, Manifest Destiny, an ever-receding frontier, and the inevitable extinction of Native American ways of life. As S. E. Bird (1999) puts it, even though the "noble" images have become more prevalent in contemporary film and television, the characters remain "either rooted in the past or in a conception of American Indians as traditional and primitive" (p. 78).

War and the Other: Revisiting and Rewriting Battles

Media accounts of past wars involve sensitive issues of national identity and purpose, and deserve special mention given the ways in which enemy construction is racialized (Merskin, 2006). Essays in *From Hanoi to Hollywood* (Dittmar & Michaud, 1990) evaluate the range of revisionist strategies for telling the story of the Vietnam War. From

Rambo's "win" over stereotypically evil Vietnamese villains to *Platoon's* (1986) troubling depiction of White officer – African American troop relationships, the essays in the collection speak to "the power to make images that may displace, distort, and destroy knowledge of the history in which [others] participated" (Dittmar & Michaud, 1990, p.1). Thus, even though many films about the Vietnam War are progressive in that they incorporate anti-war messages, they simultaneously recycle disturbing stereotypes. For instance, Asian women appear either as helpless victims or hyper-sexed party girls searching for White GIs. And, because these films frame the story from the vantage point of White male main characters (mostly US soldiers), the Vietnamese remain a mass, and the Vietnamese soldier a savage, faceless enemy.

How soldiers themselves are represented is also problematic, as films often look back and incorporate contemporary desires for multicultural inclusion. These desires, while well intentioned, distort the actual racial dynamics of the armed forces during and before Vietnam. Leo Cawley's essay on war films shows how Hollywood portrays the infantry platoon "as a basket of antagonistic ethnicities that is transformed and elevated by American democracy when it forgets its differences and dedicates itself to defending that democracy" (Cawley, in Dittmar & Michaud, 1990, p. 73). Unfortunately, the price of this American interracial cohesion is usually dehumanizing racial/ethnic Others on the enemy side of the line. The soldiers bond as they "kill the Jap/Gook/Hun (fill in the blank)." *The Dirty Dozen* (1967) is exemplary of this formula, where the motley crew of White ethnics and one Black soldier take down the Nazis. This multicultural vision of the infantry as a crucible of the melting pot also comes at a cost of forgetting the very real racism and ethnocentrism Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian American soldiers experienced and continue to experience in the armed forces. More recently, the reboot of Captain America engages in a post-racial reimagining of World War II, where the Army includes Black soldiers in the elite unit led by Captain America, whereas in reality, Black soldiers were segregated until President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 in 1948. The contemporary impulse to "integrate" the silver screen simultaneously undermines our understanding of history, whitewashing the ugliness that preceded the integration of the US Armed Forces, including the abuse and lynchings of multiple Black servicemen between and after the world wars.

Commemorating "Progress" and Forgetting Opposition: Martin Luther King, Jr., Obama, and Media

One can easily see the intertwining of media, public memory, and race/ethnicity in the explosion of "commemorative editions," coffee-table books, televised specials, and deluxe DVD sets generated in the wake of President Barack Obama's election in 2008. These trinkets blare a common theme: that with the election of a biracial Black man, the United States has proven that the racist past has truly passed. Multiple commentators in the press and members of the press have opined that we have,

indeed, entered a post-racial era (see critiques by McKissack, 2008; Peterson, 2008; Wade, 2008). At the same time that media represent the election of Obama as the culmination of Martin Luther King's "dream" of American racial equality, many scholars have applied critical memory both to the construction of King's dream, and to the media's self-serving myopia in racial matters.

As Houston Baker Jr. (1994) argues so eloquently, dominant narratives of King's life paint him as an always-already revered man of peace; as an advocate of "color-blindness." One needs only to look at the exhaustive analysis of news about King in Lentz's *Symbols, the News Magazines, and Martin Luther King* (1990) to see how far from true this picture of universal admiration is. Bostdorff and Goldzwig (2005) mapped out how President Ronald Reagan appropriated King's rhetoric, twisting the commitment to social justice into a belief in individual responsibility. Similarly, Ronald Turner (1996) charts the dangers of "distorting and deviating" from King's "color aware" approach to tackling racial injustice. He notes that conservative attempts to take on King's mantle deliberately leave out his commitment to anticolonial and antiwar movements, and his endorsement of affirmative actions to dismantle the apparatuses and effects of racial segregation. Other scholars have examined how neoconservative reappropriation of the "I Have A Dream" speech has followed Reagan's lead, actively rewriting King's legacy to advocate against the legislation and court decisions that dismantled Jim Crow (Brown et al., 2004; Hall, 2004).

Relatedly, in two special issues of the *Black Scholar* (2007, 2010), commentators and scholars have noted how Obama has been distanced from the more radical aspects of King's legacy, aspects that are already obscured in contemporary celebrations of King as a color-blind icon. Indeed, many comment on how much the campaign stayed away from issues of racial justice until forced to address race head-on in the wake of the Rev. Wright–YouTube scandal. Others have explored how memorials of King become terrain for Black and White political elites to contest the meaning of the civil rights movement (Polletta, 1998). Black political elites, as "insider/outside" in the federal government, have more at stake as they negotiate how to keep alive the more radical aspects of King's career and oppositional politics, while their White colleagues tend to emphasize King as a conciliatory figure who will help us "overcome" the racial past rather than insist upon confronting the meaning of institutional racism.

Harry Reed (1999) noted in the *Journal of Negro History* that public celebrations – including thousands of re-broadcast excerpts of the titular lines from the March on Washington speech – meditate on the "dream" more so than the critiques King launched against the US government, our class-segmented society, and the military-industrial complex. In his many, many other speeches, King spoke about *public policy* and justice, not *dreams*. Thus, concerns about media representations of the "dream" are simultaneously concerns about how we frame racial policy in the present and the future. That is, if dominant media discourse heralds Obama as the achievement of what conservatives see as King's dream of a "color-blind" nation, then counter-memories of King are necessary to mount opposition to not only the policy prescrip-

tions that extend from the color-blind representation of racial equality but also the distortion of our collective memory.

Remembering Race/Ethnicity

Our media system was built, in part, on practices of *forgetting* acts of violent oppression against people of color within and outside of the borders of the United States. Part of that forgetting has been amplified by structural racism that limited the opportunities for people of color to record and transmit their own stories through media. Thus, it will continue to be a challenge for historians to give voice to those silenced by those acts, and to chart the sometimes hard to trace legacies of people of color in media, whether in dominant venues or alternative ones. Media histories that attend to the complexities of race/ethnicity also urge us to guard against engaging in simplistic desires for a post-racial era in media, or to see the evidence of progress in representation as part of a simple upward trajectory toward a color-blind world. Rather, we must be diligent in our contemporary research to be inclusive of axes of difference so as not to replicate the mistakes and oversights of past media research.

The end of Jim Crow segregation law does not mean an end to the influence of race/ethnicity in media and historical accounts. Rather, as depictions of the events of 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and 2011's shocking terrorist bombing and shooting rampage in Norway have illuminated, our racial/ethnic identities continue to matter in how the media mark historical events and map out their significance for our future. In *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, Vivian Sobchak writes that today, "history seems to happen right now – is transmitted, reflected upon, shown play-by-play [. . . T]here seems to be a sense in which we believe we can go right out and "be" in history: hence the people who flocked to the sides of the freeway to watch – and be in – the "historic" parade led by O. J. [Simpson]" (Sobchak, 1996, p. 5). Media events (Dayan & Katz, 1992) make us feel as though we are "witnesses to history" and, at least, vicarious participants in history. But our "witness" is framed carefully and orchestrated by editorial choices, camera angles, and narrators who walk us through events and aftermaths. When one racial group continues to have disproportionate decision-making power in media, then the question must be raised about how their assumptions shape our sense of history in the making, and possibly exclude important views and experiences as they pick and choose which events and individuals to record for posterity.

To close, media historians must continue to examine the past and our present research projects to ask whether *de jure* or *de facto* racial/ethnic exclusion has shaped our data or approaches. The answer to this question may require us to work harder to access archival materials or other sources that can illuminate if and whether those exclusions will change the nature of the inquiry. On the institutional level, we need to monitor whether our libraries have databases and other resources to support

research on people of color in the media, and ask ourselves how to remedy imbalances. Likewise, as media scholars frame historical questions that involve race/ethnicity, we must guard against anachronistic uses of racial/ethnic terminology; that is, we must recognize that contemporary labels and approaches may not yield results when investigating the past, when nomenclature and attitudes allowed for a different range of discourse about race/ethnicity. Finally, as we continue to explore the past, we should endeavor to articulate what, if any, lessons our explorations hold for the present and future. Certainly today, as people experiment with the term “post-racial” to describe an immanent, better future, we should be bold in clarifying how race/ethnicity has shaped our media’s past and present, and offer cautions for the future.

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Approaches to Gender and Sexuality in Media History

Gretchen Soderlund

ABSTRACT

This chapter surveys scholarship that lies at the intersection of media history, gender history, and the history of sexuality. Work that cuts across these three areas serves as a necessary corrective to the masculine bias found within conventional media histories. However, much of the scholarship surveyed focuses narrowly on “women” as a biological category, ignoring the critical role commercial and social-movement media have played in producing, reinforcing, and challenging historical understandings of gender and sexuality. Much work remains to be done in this important field. In particular, there is a paucity of works within media history that consider the cultural production of gender, race, and sexuality in relation to one another and within fields of power.

Like historical scholarship more broadly, the overwhelming majority of studies tracing the history of media are written with a decidedly male bias: the considerable involvement of women in all facets of media production is often downplayed, diminished, or outright ignored. Take, for instance, two lengthy histories of media since 1600, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* by Michael Emery, Edwin Emery, and Nancy Roberts (2000) and *The Creation of the Media:*

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Political Origins of Modern Communication by Paul Starr (2004). Their very titles portend to offer a comprehensive history of the social actors and debates that made the mass media what they are today. Indeed, both works are richly detailed and offer informative accounts of major developments in news industries over several centuries. Starr's work, in particular, seeks to demonstrate how open debate about media-related policy helped to shape the development of the media from the eighteenth century onward. Yet these works, written from a grand history perspective, have little to say about women's role in the development of the print and telecommunications media (let alone the role media have historically played in producing, reinforcing, and challenging gender and sexual identities).

Indeed, over the last two decades the subfield of media history has arguably lagged behind the discipline of history in recognizing gender and sexuality as conceptually important, let alone analytically central, to its object of inquiry. Feminist media historians thus face what Maria DiCenzo (2004) calls the dual challenge of "filling the gaps of more conventional histories of the press, as well as situating women's social movements in larger social, political, and economic historical contexts" (p. 45). Despite the magnitude of the task at hand, each decade since the 1980s has seen an increase in the number of works chronicling the involvement of women in media or demonstrating the significance of media to the historical construction of gender/sex.

Drawing on material from journalism and communications, media studies, history, and English, this chapter provides an overview and analysis of studies that lie at the intersection of media history, women's and gender history, and the history of sexuality. Much of this work falls within four broad categories: (1) accounts of women in mainstream print or broadcast journalism and other media trades, including advertising, public relations, and entertainment industries; (2) examinations of women's and LGBTQ social activist media; (3) analyses of gender- and sexuality-related media content; and (4) research on gendered reading, listening, or viewing audiences and the rise of the woman consumer. We can draw further distinctions between studies that treat media as technological forms, those that understand media as political and social institutions or commercial industries, and those that conceive of media as instruments of publicity (i.e., work on the public sphere). The works considered in this overview serve as important correctives to the conventional media histories. Taken as a whole, however, they display their own biases and omissions. The existing English-language historical scholarship on media/gender/sex betrays a Western bias: the majority of studies center on Britain, the United States, and English-speaking Canada. These studies are also temporally limited in that they focus on the last two centuries of media use. Gender and sexuality in the media histories of non-Western societies and within longer histories of media use are fruitful and important sites for further investigation.

In this chapter I will focus on histories of print and telecommunications media. Since Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," feminist and queer film theory has produced a rich body of work theorizing

the relationships among film, gender, and sexuality. This work shares an affinity with feminist and queer literary theory and has emphasized psychoanalytic and poststructural/queer theories of gender identification and the construction of heteronormative desire. Studies of gender in other media, by contrast, have taken a more empirical, sociological, or populist/Marxist bent and have often paid more attention to the audience as a sociological entity than has film studies. With a few notable exceptions, studies of the history of gender/sex in journalism and telecommunications have neither lent themselves to densely theoretical analyses nor attempted to link various media platforms or media content to the production of sexual desire itself.

Gender, Sexuality, and Media

Like the term “media,” gender, sex, and sexuality are far from straightforward concepts. Within second-wave feminist theory, sex and gender were presented as a dyad with sex denoting raw biological markers of sexual difference and gender signifying the meanings, roles, and statuses that society attaches to differently “sexed” bodies. Thus what it means to be a “woman,” according to this logic, is culturally and socially constructed, and therefore changeable, even if being “female” is largely an immutable biological fact. This critical distinction between sex and gender led feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1997) to suggest that every society has its own sex/gender system, which she defines as “the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed needs are realized” (p. 28). Formulations like the sex/gender system were important for feminists because they demonstrated that what was represented as the most “natural” form of difference, that of sex, which served to justify women’s status as the “second, inferior sex,” was actually the product of a given social order (Beauvoir, 2010).

Some later feminist theorists charge that second-wave feminism endowed biological sex with a materiality that it did not deserve. Butler (1993), for instance, questions whether our scientific and popular understandings of biological sex can exist outside of cultural systems of signification. She argues that it is only through the repetition of cultural performances of gender that biological sex is given its status as immutable substance. Further, feminist biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) critiques the notion that biology itself gives us only two options, male and female. Using examples of “intersexed” people whose chromosomal traits and reproductive organs do not fit neatly into the dominant biological framework, she argues that the two-sexed model obscures at least three additional sex categories.

Some of the historical scholarship surveyed in this chapter recognizes the feminist distinction between gender and sex and is attentive to the significant role media have played in naturalizing gender difference. A large portion of it, however, tells a

straightforward “women’s history” that treats gender as a synonym for women and understands women as all people biologically female. One work within gender/sexuality/media history that productively engages the idea that gender *and* sex are actively constructed through media is Margaret Beetham’s *A Magazine of Her Own?* (1996). This study of such Victorian-era domestic magazines as *Woman at Home* and the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* shows how these texts “brought into being the woman it addressed as gendered, sexual and embodied.” Taking a performative perspective, it argues that the “naturalness” of the forms of femininity promoted in these magazines “had to be insisted upon again and again precisely because [they were] so slippery.” Beetham goes on to suggest that the “magazine which comes out regularly weekly or monthly over time is the ideal form” for the repetition of these complex identities (Beetham, 1996, p. 4). Indeed, through her close readings of articles on grooming and childrearing and of lavish instructions in the etiquette of how to behave like a proper middle-class Englishwoman (not to mention the advertisements for corsets and other products for physically transforming the body into a feminine form), Beetham demonstrates that there was nothing remotely natural about the Victorian female body.

Within the discipline of history, Joan W. Scott (1999) offers an expansive definition of gender that allows us to see the relevance of this concept to even seemingly ungendered domains. For Scott, “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” She goes on to suggest that “changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way” (Scott, 1999, pp. 42–43). Scott identifies gender as a central organizing concept in history that should be present in even the most “analytically cast account of the workings or unfoldings of large-scale processes of social change” (p. 17). Thus historians of the press like Starr who make only passing mention of women because their focus is on the “masculine” political or military realm ignore the ways in which gender informs and even structures these arenas as well. The application of Scott’s understanding to media history would show that the media are always richly social and have historically included topics pertaining to gender and sexuality as well as heavily gendered viewpoints, ideologies, and analysis.

Indeed, in her study of radio in Weimar and Nazi Germany Kate Lacey (1997) concludes that “the history of radio cannot properly be understood if gender is absent as a category of analysis” (p. 221). Her analysis considers women as audiences for German radio programming but also the ways in which a subtly gendered language of media discourses framed policy discussions and determined the social and political functions of radio during this period. In general, histories of radio and television have been quicker to foreground gender than histories of the press, in part because the programming these media offered often centered around the domestic sphere where many middle-class women labored. Consequently women were recognized as an important audience for these media shortly after their inception. For

instance, much of the early television programming centered on the home, that medium's central locus of consumption (Spigel, 1992).

In contrast, while women did run early printing houses and wrote for newspapers and political journals, men were often at the forefront of print media production and use. The fact that men were recognized as the primary practitioners of and audiences for news in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has, in part, contributed to the gender-blind approach in histories of print media. However, scholars like Christopher Wilson (1985) have convincingly demonstrated that movements within journalism including muckraking were linked to particular understandings of masculinity. In particular Wilson shows that writers like Jack London and Upton Sinclair conceived of their work as fact-based yet actively engaged with the social world and strove to embody the Rooseveltian ideal of the strenuous life and the man of action. Thus gender operates within journalism as a coding of its primary forms as either masculine or feminine. If early twentieth-century muckraking appealed to a particular form of masculinity, stunt reporting in which journalists disguised themselves in order to turn up secrets about closed institutions like mental asylums (as Nellie Bly did in her reports for the *New York World* in the late 1880s) was a predominantly feminized news-gathering mode.

It is important, then, for media historians to think more rigorously about the importance of gender to media history. Within the history of technology it may be difficult to see how gender might figure in accounts of technologies along the lines of Marshall McLuhan (1964) or Friedrich Kittler (1999), theorists whose broad strokes leave little room for social actors. Yet against such technological determinism are studies that show how deeply embodied and engaged in the production of identities technologies are. Ruth Schwartz Cowan's *More Work for Mother* (1983) demonstrates that the supposedly efficiency-enhancing domestic technologies of the industrial period in fact created more work for women, ensconcing them further in the domestic sphere. Carolyn Marvin's *When Old Technologies were New* (1988) shows that communication technologies are always connected to bodies that are themselves traversed by gender, race, and class. As Lacey (1997) puts it, "gender issues are always critical to and implicit in the relationship between the technological potential and the social application of a new medium" (p. 245).

Women as Media Producers

A major area of inquiry within the history of media/gender/sex is that of women as mainstream media producers. Much of the work that falls within this area is recuperative. That is, it seeks to recover the unwritten, forgotten, or marginalized history of women's participation in the media field as active practitioners within mainstream journalism industries. Attempting to remedy accounts like Emery et al.'s history of the American press that focuses primarily on the accomplishments

of male printers, editors, and reporters, many of these studies recreate the history of news from the perspective of *her-story* (Scott, 1999). They seek to correct what is perceived as a male bias not only within media industries, but within the enterprise of writing history itself. In her study of nineteenth-century British women reporters and editors, Barbara Onslow (2000) suggests that “outside the cohort of specialist scholars, women’s collective contribution to journalism has largely gone unregarded” (p. 1). Onslow and others offer a corrective in the form of women’s history, seeking to render the involvement of such writers, reviewers, and editors visible.

Works like Patricia Bradley’s *Women and the Press: The Struggle for Equality* (2005) foreground the accomplishments and experiences of American women journalists and editors like Cornelia Walter and Margaret Fuller while chronicling the discriminatory practices and private sphere ideology that kept most women out of newsrooms until the 1970s. Bradley connects the workplace struggles of women journalists to contemporaneous nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movements for women’s suffrage and, later in the book, to late twentieth-century activism around women’s liberation and equal rights. Similarly, Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons’s *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism* (1993), first published in 1977 as *Women in Media: A Documentary Source Book*, credits the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s for unveiling many of the sexist attitudes held by male publishers and editors about newswomen (e.g., that they were too emotional to write “hard news” or would inevitably quit when they got married) and documenting widespread discrimination and gender disparities within the nation’s major media organizations. Emboldened by women’s liberation, in the 1970s women in print and broadcast journalism filed protests with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and launched class-action sex discrimination complaints against such media outlets as the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Washington Post*, Associated Press, NBC, and *Reader’s Digest* (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993, p. 26). *Taking Their Place* offers excerpts of women’s reportage from the colonial era to the present, with prefaces describing the conditions of women printers and reporters in each era.

Studies that fall within the her-story framework also include Sharon Harris and Ellen Gruber Garvey’s *Blue Pencils and Hidden Hands* (2004), a fascinating collection of articles highlighting the work and accomplishments of women editors in both advocacy and general-interest periodicals between 1830 and 1910. The book includes chapters on pioneering women like Frances Wright of the *Free Enquirer*, Pauline Hopkins of the *Colored American Magazine*, and Mariana Burgess of the *Indian Helper*. Along the same lines, Janice Fiamengo’s *The Woman’s Page: Journalism and Rhetoric in Early Canada* (2008) analyzes the work of six prominent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women writers and reformers in English-speaking Canada, including Agnes Maule Machar, Sara Jeanette Duncan, and Nellie McClung. As a literary scholar, Fiamengo looks closely at these women’s work and asks “how each of them created a public voice.” Fiamengo’s book emerges from the literary and rhetorical

tradition, as she is concerned with questions about each writer's "sense of purpose, relationship to their audience, and self-presentation," in addition to their use of analogy, metaphor, and persuasive techniques (Fiamengo, 2008, pp. 6–7).

Authors that offer a more focused look at women in television news include David Hosley and Gayle Yamada (1987) and Marlene Sanders and Marcia Rock (1988). Donna Halper's *Invisible Stars: A Social History of Women in Broadcasting* (2001) utilizes newspapers and magazine stories as well as interviews with relatives to reconstruct the lives of the many forgotten women who helped to shape radio and television starting in the 1920s. Halper's two fixed sites are broadcasting and women, but she casts her social history widely. Thus she considers not only women who had an on-air presence, but also the production and marketing of radios and television sets for women, the participation of women in radio electronics, the appointment of Frieda Hennock as Federal Communications Commission commissioner, and the rise of Bertha Brainard at NBC, while connecting women's changing roles in broadcasting to broader historical contexts.

All of these studies provide a necessary remedy for the male-centric understanding of press history, which ignores the critical contributions made by women. However, many of these recuperative narratives of women in the media do not approach gender as a social and cultural construction and instead interpret the category "women" quite literally as not only a sociological but also a biological reality. A notable exception is Jean Marie Lute's *Front-Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880–1930* (2006). While not as broad a chronicle of the achievements of women journalists as some of the works discussed above (the book focuses on only a handful of the most famous women journalists, like Nellie Bly and Ida B. Wells), it offers an important cultural analysis of specifically feminized reportorial forms like stunt reporting and so-called sob sister journalism. Lutes argues that the women who were allowed access to the male sphere of journalism were often forced to use their bodies as instruments of sensationalism in order to draw readers' attention to their stories. While their stories were rendered orthographically, these reporters' bodies became an integral part of their work and the publicity surrounding it (in fact, the epithet "sob sister journalism," often used to describe women reporters in the early twentieth century, draws attention to the supposedly intrinsic emotionality not only of the topics they wrote about but of the women writers themselves). Bly, for instance, found commercial success and fame by adopting the persona of a working-class immigrant woman and feigning mental illness in order to gain access to Blackwell's Island women's insane asylum. Her body was central to the story she told about this experience, which was serialized in the *World* and prompted other city papers to hire their own "girl stunt reporters."

Lutes is also attentive to the role of racial difference in the treatment and reception of nineteenth-century women reporters. She argues that underlying stunt reporting was a "drama of endangered whiteness" that African American journalists like Wells could not imitate and actively "wrote against." Because of her status as both a woman and an African American living in a violently racist society, it was incumbent upon

Wells to personify her “race’s intelligence, virtue, and promise” and cultivate a style that emphasized rational argumentation devoid of sensationalism (Lute, 2006, p. 40).

Advocacy and Activist Media

While a majority of the histories of women as media producers have focused on women’s involvement in the mainstream commercial media, a handful of important studies of women-produced periodicals have been published in recent years, many of them focusing on the suffrage press in Britain (DiCenzo, Delap, & Ryan, 2011; DiCenzo & Ryan, 2007; Tusan, 2005) and the United States (Solomon, 1991). In *Feminist Media History: Suffrage, Periodicals, and the Public Sphere*, Maria DiCenzo, Lucy Delap, and Leila Ryan distinguish what they call “feminist media” from the domestic content and advertising that filled women’s magazines, and point out that the former has been a surprisingly neglected area in the study of late-Victorian and Edwardian periodicals (DiCenzo et al., 2011, p. 3). However, as Michelle Tusan argues, the label “feminist media,” while perhaps an apt description of suffrage periodicals, does not capture the entire range of women’s nineteenth- and early twentieth-century activist publications:

although a good deal of overlap is evident, the women’s press was not necessarily synonymous with what historians such as Philippa Levine have called the “feminist press.” The voices of the women’s press, despite declarations that each promoted women’s interests broadly defined, included many groups that were disassociated from a feminist or protofeminist agenda. Religious organizations, advocates of temperance, sexual restraint, and moral reform all had their own women-run printed mediums. (Tusan, 2005, p. 5)

Because of the diversity of women’s activist publicity in both Britain and the United States, it is a misnomer to consider the range of advocacy periodicals feminist media. Harris and Garvey (2004), for instance, consider a wide range of nineteenth-century women-produced religious and multicultural media that were activist, but not feminist, in orientation.

Scholarship on women’s activist media draws heavily on feminist iterations of Jürgen Habermas’s (1991) theory of the public sphere as a site that exists between the state and the private sphere. Habermas argues that the press was a key component of an emerging eighteenth-century liberal public sphere. For Habermas, this public sphere of uncoerced critical rational debate flourished through the Western European and American revolutions but was corrupted by an increasingly commercialized mid-nineteenth-century press and, in the twentieth century, by the rise of an institutionalized welfare democracy. In an ideal public sphere, the press is an overtly political site where diverse people come together as equals to debate pressing matters.

Because reason triumphs over other means of establishing authority (like wealth and status) in the public sphere, individuals are judged solely by the quality of their arguments.

Feminists like Mary Ryan (1992) and Nancy Fraser (1992) argue that the concept of the public sphere is a useful way to designate processes of deliberation and political action that bear upon but occur outside of official state apparatuses. However, they point out that Habermas's initial formulation (which he has since revised) imagined diversity where there was in fact homogeneity: debates occurring in the liberal public sphere were discussions among elite White men who actively sought to exclude the participation of women and racial/ethnic minorities. As Ryan (1992) puts it, "women were patently excluded from the public sphere [...] and were even read out of the fiction of the public by virtue of their ideological consignment to a separate realm called the private" (p. 260).

To correct this bias within Habermas's original formulation and to make the public sphere concept match the actual historical record, Fraser (1992) posits a multiple public sphere model. The existence of eighteenth-century alternative social movements that operated alongside or in opposition to the liberal public sphere has been documented by the revisionist historiography of Ryan and other social historians. Fraser (1992) argues that these movements created counterpublics that have taken the form of "nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, and working-class publics" (p. 114). Historians of media/gender/sex have found Fraser's formulation useful because concepts of the public sphere offer a role for the press and the notion of counterpublics brings the efforts of oppositional movements, like feminism, into relief. Oppositional media play a two-step role within this literature. First, they provide a focal point for the creation of new forms of political consciousness and community. Second, they become tools of publicity that carry the counterpublic's agenda to broader audiences.

Scholarship on women's suffrage and advocacy media has shown how the alternative publications these social movements produced helped create a modern political consciousness among women (DiCenzo et al., 2011; Tusan, 2005). Likewise, in her discussion of African American newspaperwomen, Lutes (2006) suggests that journalists like Wells "acted as conduits for and representatives of a black counterpublic that was being nurtured by an abundance of black newspapers in the late nineteenth century" (p. 43). Recent work on the rise of LGBTQ weeklies, magazines, and radio programs like Rodger Streitmatter's *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (1995) and Phylis Johnson and Michael Keith's *Queer Airwaves: The Story of Gay and Lesbian Broadcasting* (2001) do not explicitly deploy Habermasian formulations, but nonetheless demonstrate the critical role alternative media have played in articulating LGBTQ identities and fostering alternative political communities.

Some scholars have critiqued Habermas and Fraser from the perspective of feminist media studies. Lacey (1997), for instance, suggests that in appealing to reason, Habermas offers a limited model of truth-bearing practices. He "falls back on universal principles in the contention that all particularized motives and interests are

bracketed out in order for this discussion to take place, reproducing the dichotomy between reason and sentiment or interest, reinforced by the emphasis on verbal discourse to the exclusion of physical or emotional expression, rhetoric or gesture” (p. 225). Lisa McLaughlin (1993) fears that analyses of oppositional enclaves suggested by the notion of counterpublics will overshadow a sustained analysis of the ways the mainstream media complicate the ability to attain oppositional identities. She argues that in much feminist work on the public sphere the media are given short shrift in that they are viewed only as tools of publicity. Within feminist media studies the oppositional may become overly valorized while the mainstream, which wields ever more power, gets lost in the analysis.

Indeed, the concept of the public sphere is at its best when chronicling media produced by alternative movements and these groups’ attempts to bring critical political issues to the attention of broader national audiences. The notion of publics or counterpublics has been less useful for analyzing the material and ideological effects of mainstream media content that utilizes gender, race, and sexuality as its “raw material.”

I would add to the above critiques that approaches that both draw on and critique Habermas presume that debates and discussions that occur in mainstream or countermedia take a similar form and are shaped by similar forces as conversations that occur between individuals in primary publics. That is, the question of who is being represented and what is being said is determined solely by who is speaking and how much power they have. This begs the question of how media function as institutions, and how these institutions are embedded within and interact with political groups, economic and financial institutions, and social movements. Thus these arguments run the risk of reducing the complexity of social conflict, and of the relationship between power and knowledge. To further understand how discourses are shot through with power, one must turn to the relationship between media institutions and representations.

Gender and Sexuality as Media Content

Feminists have been concerned with representations of women in the mainstream media since at least the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (2001). While the vast majority of feminist scholarship in this area focuses on contemporary media texts, media historians have also shown an interest in this topic. Works that analyze representations of women and women’s issues in the media from a historical perspective include Katherine Adams, Michael Keene, and Melanie McKay’s *Controlling Representations* (2009), which looks at 50 years of the *New York Herald* (later the *Herald Tribune*) to see how women were depicted in that newspaper. The authors find that in each decade studied the paper put forth shifting and often contradictory representations of the ideal woman. Barbara Freeman’s *The Satellite*

Sex (2001) analyzes media coverage of women's issues between 1966 and 1971 in the English Canadian media covered. The author demonstrates that even in this seminal five-year period in Canadian history, the press favored domestic-minded women as sources and authoritative voices and sought to discredit the views of activist women.

Works that critique dominant representations of women provide useful fodder for anti-sexist struggles, but they tend to appeal to a kind of identity politics that ignores the experiences (and media representations) of women of color. There a germinal but fruitful field of media history promises to expand our understanding of the role gender, sexuality, and race (as mutually imbricated categories) have played in both the rise of social institutions like journalism, medicine, and law enforcement and also in the production of marginalized and policed identities. This work draws, implicitly or explicitly, on the understanding of intersectionality advanced by critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, who noted that anti-sexist and anti-racist (and we could add class) struggles treat gender and race (and class) as separate categories. Crenshaw (1991) points out that the "intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (p. 1244).

An anthropological study that considers race and gender in mass media that could in these terms be classified as intersectional is Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins's *Reading National Geographic* (1993). Through a detailed content analysis and analysis of visual forms found in *National Geographic*, the authors find that though the magazine purports to broaden viewers' understanding of non-Western peoples and cultures, its content and imagery are predominantly presented from the perspective of the White male gaze. In a similar vein, Ella Shohat and Robert Stamm's (1994) voluminous interrogation of the history of Hollywood films reveals that the history of filmmaking is rife with ethnocentric and orientalist imagery. In particular they look at sexualized tropes in which gender and race are combined through exoticism.

The project of theorizing the ways in which press narratives of gender, race, and sexuality are constitutive can even be seen in the 1890s in the work of Ida B. Wells (1997), whose crusading anti-lynching journalism indicted trumped-up narratives of White women's sexual victimization at the hands of Black men, which were used by White newspapers to justify vigilante attacks on Black men. The lynching of Blacks by White mobs was a way to punish those Blacks who dared resist the Jim Crow laws that had sprung up across the South in the 1890s, yet White men rationalized their violence through an appeal to the preservation of White womanhood. Wells not only demonstrated how the mainstream Southern press was a vehicle for promoting a White male vantage point as universal, but she also critiqued anti-miscegenation laws that posited that mutually desiring relationships between Black men and White women were unnatural and therefore criminal. Wells documented cases in which White men who sexually assaulted Black women (and young girls) were rarely charged with a crime and those who were tended to be acquitted by juries composed of White men.

More recently, intersectional approaches in media history scholarship have provided fertile ground for understanding how mainstream media have historically produced narratives that weave together race, gender, and sexuality in ways that promote elite male interests. Lisa Duggan's *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (2000) considers the sensationalistic serialized 1892 newspaper coverage of the trial of Alice Mitchell, who killed her lover Freda Ward in Memphis (not coincidentally, Duggan argues, the same year Wells was run out of that city for distributing her anti-lynching work). She argues that the overlapping of the "lynching narrative" and the "lesbian love murder story" revealed "a threatened white masculinity concerned to reconfigure political, economic, and domestic order in the face of change and challenge in race and gender relations." While she does not argue that these stories were in any way commensurable, given the overwhelming violence the lynching narrative incited, Duggan does suggest that as these narratives proliferated in US mass culture, they shifted the ground of debate over same-sex desire and lynching "away from the grounds of politics and citizenship and [toward] those of morality and normality" (Duggan, 2000, p. 155). The stories the Mitchell affair and the lynching narrative generated helped to delineate the boundaries of citizenship in the 1890s through the production of sexual and racial deviants who stood as outsiders to the public sphere.

Carol Stabile's *White Victims, Black Villains: Gender, Race, and Crime News in US Culture* (2006) looks at the central role crime coverage has played in constructing the Black villain as a salient political category. Her analysis of newspapers from the 1840s to the 1990s demonstrates that if crime reporting cast Blacks as perpetrators of crime, it simultaneously constructed victimhood as a status that could only be held by Whites, particularly White women. Throughout her analysis gender and race are culturally produced in relation to one another and within fields of power. Stabile (2006) writes that "race and gender are among the most important sites for struggles over the historical meanings assigned to deviance. Indeed, the powerful efforts on the part of social orders to strictly police the boundaries of these categories [...] speak to the strenuous ideological and cultural work required to construct categories of gender and race and manage their meanings" (p. 5). This work demonstrates that current understandings of gender and race are always the product of historical residues.

Helen Benedict's *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes* (1992) also considers the production of worthy and unworthy victims by the media. After a chapter chronicling the depiction of rape in the press from the nineteenth century through 1970, Benedict offers detailed analysis of four high-profile rape cases occurring in the 1970s and 1980s. She finds that in all of these cases the press effectively put the female victims on trial, either deeming them worthy as victims through an appeal to their innocent, virginal status, or incriminating them by prying into their lives and asserting their prior sexual promiscuity. In the view of the press, the promiscuous "vamp" cannot be raped. Benedict's book constitutes not only an analysis of past and present coverage but also an argument for how journalists should cover sex crimes. The

author proposes that “rather than feeding fears, myths, and misconceptions” reporters should create balanced news coverage that places individual cases in the context of statistics about rape and explanations of why the crime of rape occurs from “researchers, literature, and other victims” (261). Further, reporters, often harried by deadlines, should not resort to exploiting “the victims or their families by . . . including prurient, irrelevant, or unattributed facts about their family lives” (Benedict, 1992, p. 162).

The Gendered Audience and Consumer

Within the literature on women as audience members and consumers, there are a number of significant studies about the rise of a mass consumer culture at the turn of the last century. Kathy Peiss’s *Cheap Amusements* (1986) focuses on how the rise of commercialized leisure establishments in New York City altered the social landscape for first- and second-generation working-class immigrant women. Peiss argues the rise of affordable, heterosocial amusements like dancehalls, theaters, and amusement parks reconfigured public space and carved out a space of autonomy for working-class urban women that they did not possess before. A number of works consider the construction of women readers or viewers (Beetham, 1996; Butsch, 2000; Flint, 1993; Garvey, 1996; Harp, 2007; Lacey, 1997; Mehaffy, 1997). Ellen Gruber Garvey’s *The Adman in the Parlor* (1996) proposes that late nineteenth-century women readers had to be “trained” by reduced-cost mass-circulation literary magazines to pay attention to their advertisements. Her fascinating study looks at consumer–advertiser interactions in order to understand the “complex interplay between fictional narrative and advertising” (Garvey, 1996, p. 184). One chapter examines women’s scrapbooks, many of which contained clippings of advertisements from magazines, as a window into how advertisements were read and interpreted in the 1880s. Another chapter considers the dual use of “advertising contests” in the 1890s, which were intended to both capture women magazine readers’ interests and also serve as proof by magazines that women were actually reading the back-page ads placed in literary magazines.

Dustin Harp’s *Desperately Seeking Women Readers* (2007) traces the ways in which the US newspaper industry has sought to court readers from the 1890s to the present. In particular it looks at the rise of the woman’s pages, sections in newspapers devoted specifically to “women’s content” – news of fashion, gossip, and tips on childrearing and household management. Originally intended to capture a new readership in the 1890s, by the 1970s debates were underway about whether these pages in fact marginalized women and prevented this important demographic from identifying with the paper in its entirety. Beginning in the 1970s, feminists began arguing that the women’s pages were demeaning to women, confining them to a largely household role that did not mirror women’s actually expanding opportunities in public and

political life. As a result of their agitations, but also as a strategy for drawing more women in as readers, newspapers abandoned the women's sections. Harp notes that these women's news sections reemerged in the 1990s in papers like the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and the *Chicago Tribune*. Ultimately, Harp (2007) argues for integration as opposed to segregation of women's news, arguing that the redirection of some news items out of general-interest sections and into special women's sections "reinforces age-old stereotypes about gender and a gendered public/private dichotomy" (p. 109).

Susan Douglas's cultural history, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (1994), focuses on the effects of media on women audiences. Douglas contends that popular culture, described in much of the literature in this chapter as a site for the production of deviance and reactionary or apolitical social actors, and particularly as an anti-feminist force, in the 1950s and 1960s actually contained the seeds of the women's liberation movement. Without the films, television programs, and pop music of the 1950s and early 1960s, Douglas contends, the second wave of feminism would never have occurred. She claims, "the war that has been raging in media is not a simple war against women but a complex struggle between feminism and antifeminism that has reflected, reinforced, and exaggerated our culture's ambivalence about women's roles for over thirty-five years" (Douglas, 1994, pp. 12–13). While Douglas points to the anti-feminist news clips about bra-burning feminists and the valorization of housewives' voices over activist ones, she argues that the terrain of popular culture is more contested and reflective of social life and the everyday challenges women face. While the mainstream media may not have created the oppositional publics of the 1960s and 1970s, Douglas argued that they played a role in promoting them.

Though it is not explicit on this score, Douglas's work suggests that there is an interdependent, but at the same time oppositional and productive relationship between mainstream and social-movement media. Indeed, there is often a reciprocal relationship between social movements, the media they produce, and the mainstream media in which the two seek not only to defy one another but to court one another. Thus mainstream media target feminist social movements as potential mass audiences, while social movements target mass media alternately as villains, sites of activism, and nodal points for the promulgation of their points of view (Soderlund, 2012).

Conclusion

What are the critical elements of a media history that is responsible to gender and sexuality? First, gender should be central to all histories. It cannot be a separate and marginalized topic because, as Scott has shown, even traditionally masculine discourses are shot through with gendered imagery, concepts, and assumptions. There

needs to be an increased awareness among all historians that the process of signification through which narratives are constructed is heavily gendered. Second, more work needs to be done on histories of the media and sexual identity. The paucity of historical works on LGBTQ media suggests that this is the most serious deficit in the subfield. Third, there is a need for work on the history of feminist, women's, and other social movements and their relationship to mainstream and "alternative" media. Specifically, this work should consider the interplay between these two competing media as oppositional but also synergistic entities. The kinds of messages that are produced should not be treated in isolation, but in relation to media institutions and broader political and legal events.

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The History of the Book

Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray

ABSTRACT

Since most media historians have yet to engage fully the history of the book (HOB), this essay provides a critical introduction to the approach. It discusses the approach's problematical object of study and characterizes its current practice as a postmodern performance of liberal "cultural poetics" rejecting grand narratives, whether the radical history of capitalism's emergence or the conservative history of ideas. We explain HOB's dynamics in terms of its emergence in the 1980s, which coincided with that of the history of the American book (HOAB). Both HOB and, particularly, HOAB were part of a "cultural turn" deployed by displaced intellectual historians against the New Social History (NSH), associated with quantitative or even systematic inquiry present in other national HOB traditions, especially in France's *Annales* School. Adopting the cultural history spirit of that tradition while replacing its research techniques with almost exclusively qualitative interpretation, HOAB also occluded a range of North American antecedents in journalism and literary studies, including bibliography, but in a way that put the latter to the service of cultural ends. As the new millennium approached, the HOB landscape shifted with the rise of reader-and-reception studies that reset the approach's course from books themselves to what books meant to specific end-users as evidenced in their literary practices. The essay concludes with an overview of approaches to print production (especially publishing and authorship), distribution, and consumption, in light of HOB's move from a producer to a reader orientation, as well as indications of – and recommendations for – the future direction of the approach.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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The history of the book (HOB) has much to offer media historians. The book, after all, was arguably the first long-format mass medium; it set precedents for later non-book media developments. Books, too, have been seen as culturally germinal worldwide, especially in Europe and East Asia (Brokaw, 2005; Eisenstein, 1979; Kornicki, 1998; Son, 1982). The book heralded the transition from orality to literacy wherever it went (Easterling, 1985). Books, moreover, have variably facilitated community building, (in)formed publics, fueled revolutions, forwarded technologies, and, in general, fired imaginations, but they also have fostered ignorance and intolerance. All said, the book, for its long-standing originary power as a form of mediated communication, deserves special regard by media historians. (For an introduction to the approach, see Zboray & Zboray, 2000.)

HOB as an approach, however, has not been widely embraced by them.¹ This essay aims to remedy that by sketching out what HOB entails, albeit with a critical perspective to make it useful for media historians, who may find it off-putting for its argot and, to them, too obvious findings (like the medium influences the message). One book historian even waggishly dubbed HOB the “new boredom” (Kastan, 1999, p. 18). Because of its ungainly fit with media studies, the discussion below goes beyond merely describing the approach to situating it in its scholarly context as a practice. The concluding sections selectively present approaches to print production, distribution, and consumption, which media historians may find useful.

HOB is founded on a duality it shares with studies of other forms of media, for its object of study is at once economic and cultural as a material conveyancer of textual (and visual) meaning (Gilmore-Lehne, 1989, p. 255). “The book,” as fundamentally a material artifact, required work to produce, wherewithal to circulate, and willingness to consume. It is thus heuristically amenable to analysis, like any other commodity, in its sequence of production, distribution, and consumption or in some other form of schematic representation of circuitry.² Culturally, however, a term like “consumption” becomes metaphorical, not literal; reading, for example, is not exactly like eating or other types of consumption (Price, 2009, pp. 122–123; Radway, 1986). Moreover, culturally considered, book production, distribution, and consumption overlap to the point at which distinctions among them fade.³ To wit:

- Every author is inevitably a reader (Darnton, 2009, p. 180).
- Editors not only produce but “consume” and distribute (Harris & Garvey, 2004).
- The pattern of circulation helps produce the book’s received meaning (Ogborn & Withers, 2010).
- Publishers’ advertisements can precondition reception (Wigelsworth, 2010).
- Non-literate people can participate aurally and orally in book culture (Fox, 2000).
- Purchasing, owning, borrowing, shelving, and reading books are distinct practices – irreducible beneath a single consumption rubric, yet also partaking of distribution – that can coincide in the same family or individual (Colclough, 2000; Gilmore-Lehne, 1989, pp. 255–269).
- And readers, as they discuss the text, reproduce their version of it, becoming virtual co-authors (Long, 1993).

Books can be paratextually iconic (Bornstein & Tinkle, 1998), auratic (Brandes, 1998; Rodger, 2008), or totemic (Cressy, 1986), aside from anyone reading them. Books received as gifts can become tokens of the giver and valued and beloved more for their associations than for their texts (Davis, 1983; Zboray & Zboray, 1996). Ideas nested in books can take wings far beyond the covers, diminishing the salience of book sales or production data (Raven, 1998, pp. 276–278; Zboray & Zboray, 2006).

HOB distinguishes itself from earlier print culture approaches by self-consciously embracing the cultural aspects of its object of study, without jettisoning the material realities underpinning its production, distribution, and consumption. True, the approach's materialism elides political economy (exceptions include Frankel, 2006; Jackson, 2008; St. Clair, 2005; Whalen, 1999; Zboray, 1993; Zboray & Zboray, 2005). HOB's resistance to structural analysis of socioeconomic power relations supports its postmodern cachet sometimes at odds with its almost premodernist print triumphalism (Basbanes, 2005; Piper, 2009, p. 5). For practitioners, the book is key to unlocking the cultural history of a given time and place, and that provides the main rationale for studying it.

Problematical Definitions

But what is HOB's object of study? It may seem obvious, but the answer is far from certain (Hench, 1994, p. 15). One problem is that the book antedates printing (Diringer, 1982). The manuscript book remained vital well after Johannes Gutenberg's Bible of the 1450s (Johns, 1998) and Korea's development of metal movable type perhaps two centuries earlier (Son, 1982). Manuscript books not only circulated as single unique copies, but, rather, scribal duplication in scriptoria could yield multiple handwritten copies (Love, 1993). The manuscript production system was initially near-equivalent to print in productive capacity and textual accuracy (Crick & Walsham, 2004; Johns, 2003).⁴ The book's genealogy in the West goes back much further to ancient Roman codices (ca. first century CE), but long-format works in its media predecessor, the scroll (ca. 2,400 BCE, Egypt), also were called books (Roberts & Skeat, 1983). Books could be subdivisions of longer texts, too (Haran, 1993, p. 61). To complicate matters, the first printed book that can be firmly dated, to 868 CE in China, *The Diamond Sutra*, was produced on a scroll (Wood & Barnard, 2010). Thus, a long lineage of prior media forms converged into the modern book.

Historically, then, "the book" is a floating signifier unmoored to any specific type of artifact *per se*. Instead, it has transcended its differing contingent manifestations to become, across time and space, a cultural trait of cognitive expectations and related information-organizing behavior, with a variable material print or scribal referent, that can make meaningful large, detailed, and complex fields of text and other visual matter presented on the page.⁵ HOB has thus moved beyond an initial object-centered orientation toward a recent focus on reading and other forms of reception – from

what books have been, to what they have meant (Chartier, 1994; Zboray & Zboray, 2000, pp. 5–8, 79).

Yet HOB encompasses more than books. Included in its scope are just about all print artifacts (e.g., newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, posters, broadsides) and, increasingly, those of a non-typographic scribal nature, as well (West, 1998).⁶ Of course, the information field of single-sided broadsides or posters may not be large, detailed, or complex, but it would be perceived through its similarity to more extensive formats (Twyman, 2008). Indeed, it is difficult to separate any particular item conceptually – because of its commoditization within the “world of goods” (Kopytoff, 1986; Zboray & Zboray, 1996) and intertextual relationships to other books (Orr, 2004) – from the expansive universe of print and scribal production, dissemination, and reception it participates in. Any single book is both a synecdoche of this bibliographical intertexture and a unique conversational node within it. In short, as long as the object of study is rooted in a material artifact conveying textual (and visual) meaning on pages receptive to ink, it has fallen within HOB’s scope.⁷

Obviously that is an almost incomprehensibly vast base of objects for study. It at least begins to answer the “what” question in HOB’s definition. Widening that definition even more, HOB also examines not just the object, but also the processes of producing, distributing, and consuming it (e.g., the “sociology of texts”; McKenzie, 1999). “How” the book is studied narrows the definition: a contextualism that materializes *and* culturalizes the book amid the processes leading to its appearance and continuing presence within a particular media ecology.

Navigating between cultural materialism (Prendergast, 1995) and a traditional history of ideas (Lovejoy, 1936) has made HOB, for many practitioners, an exercise in liberal cultural poetics, avoiding both grounded radicalism and ideational conservatism.⁸ Consequently, the approach has a postmodernist performative dimension, often expressed as a recoil from master narratives (Lyotard, 1984) and a corresponding penchant for anecdotal storytelling (*le petit récit*), in a conspicuous display of scholarly-ness. The writer summons broad interdisciplinary literatures in a scholarship-saturated performance of “interpretative freedom” (Howard, 2007). Book history, in resisting determinations by larger socioeconomic structures, invites a reception mode of imagined historical possibility that might otherwise have been foreclosed. Such symbolic reassertion of aesthetic–historicist scholarly values (Jacoby, 1992, p. 408) laudably contradicted the mounting anti-intellectualism (Ross, 1989) and conformist corporatism (Molina & Rhodes, 2002) of the twentieth century’s last few decades. However, it neither challenged the period’s regnant neoliberalism nor absorbed the afterglow of the post-1968 New Left (Elbaum, 2002), either or both of which might have given the field greater theoretical depth. This deliberate “depthlessness” (Jameson, 1991, p. 12) is but part of HOB’s postmodern performance aesthetic.

Such poetics, for example, shape Robert Darnton’s (1984) swirling scholarly arabesque on a retrospective printed account written by a journeyman-artisan about a great cat massacre in a 1730s Parisian printing shop. The essay’s setting and attention to the everyday work of printers (with little bibliographical analysis of the

reminiscence as a printed artifact) is all that marks it out as HOB. In the essay, Darnton thematizes “workers revolt” as an amusing narrative framing device, not a serious engagement with the history of class struggle that the felinicide signified (Mah, 1991). Thus, poetics trump rhetoric; his essay does not really argue anything. Instead, it aims, according to Darnton’s peroration, to “recapture [. . .] laughter, sheer laughter, the thigh-slapping, rib-cracking Rabelaisian kind, rather than the Voltairian smirk with which we are familiar” (Darnton, 1984, p. 101). Darnton, echoing William Blake’s poem “Mock on, Mock on Voltaire, Rousseau” (1982, p. 177), thus deploys his anecdotal conceit to de-rationalize and de-philosophize France’s pre-Revolutionary era. At the same time, like most other scholars in the field, Darnton does not reflect upon the paradox of *writing a book* about book history – he leaves no reflexive opening for his book to be understood within its own peculiar system of production, distribution, and reception. That legerdemain aside, his poetics cut a middle ground between what could be a plausible workplace class-conflict analysis (Gutman, 1977; Thompson, 1963) and a situationally transcendent Lovejovian history of ideas.⁹

Obviously, not all HOB scholars do such dual-pole dancing, but many share with Darnton a descent from intellectual history and an aversion to left social history, which together create the academic performance space for their work. The blur between the intellectual and cultural, and the tension between the cultural/intellectual and the social may, on the surface, seem mystifying to all but cognoscenti, but it is rooted in the approach’s genesis in American academe, as discussed in the next section.

In other countries, different tendencies appear. British book historians, for example, remain closer to both conventional bibliography and social history than their American counterparts. The French combine quantitative analysis techniques with a more grounded than symbolic sense of culture than Americans. The distinction led one leading French book historian, Roger Chartier (1985), to criticize Darnton’s treatment of the cat massacre and later posit his own theory of “Frenchness in the History of the Book” (Chartier, 1988; cf. Smith, 1998). Ironically, the coming of print putatively enabled nationalism (Eisenstein 1979, vol. 1, pp. 117–118; McLuhan 1995, p. 243), so it seems to continue with print historians: these various national groups of scholars scarcely intersect and rarely cite one another’s work. Thus, generalizing about HOB risks reproducing the approach’s national boundaries. Yet because lococentrism shapes the approach, it cannot be ignored, either.

Origins in the United States

The approach’s disciplinary formation in the United States dates to a June 1980 landmark preconference of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) meeting in Boston. The venue is significant, for the ACRL membership had a special need to connect with academic

units on their campuses. It was felt peculiarly by RBMS members, for they had a narrower campus clientage, but also looked to national and international communities of scholars, while keeping close to book collectors and dealers. Simply put, the 275 preconference attendees wanted to hear of rare books' importance across disciplines. They would not be disappointed. For the first time in RBMS preconference history, the program brimmed with professors from academic departments outside of libraries, archives, and rare books (Nelson, 2009, pp. 42–44).

At the preconference, prominent book history scholars, including Darnton (he gave a version of his cat massacre paper there), Elizabeth Eisenstein, and Henri-Jean Martin, signed "The Boston Statement on the History of the Book," drafted by West German literary scholar Paul Raabe (Carpenter, 1983, pp. xi–xii). Both Darnton's *Business of Enlightenment* (1979) and Eisenstein's *Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) had appeared the previous year. Martin was the *doyenne* of the French School, for which he named his *Histoire du livre* (1964); his co-authored *L'Apparition du livre* (Febvre & Martin, 1958) had appeared in English translation only four years earlier. Also contributing was G. Thomas Tanselle, representing the older tradition of bibliography (Gaskell, 1972). The Boston Statement claimed that the "historical study of society" (p. xi) was inseparable from book production and distribution (readers' reception was tucked inconspicuously into a dependent clause). It conflated society and culture (cf. Williams, 1958), however, calling "the book [. . .] by its nature a cultural force." Encompassing history, culture, and society, the Statement applied for the first time the term "history of the book" to this formation (Copeland, 2006, p. 128) with such insistence and prominence that it stuck permanently. Although the Statement leaves the book's relationship to ideas only implicit, most of the papers presented underscored that intellectual history as much as sociocultural history was at stake (Carpenter, 1983).

The preconference's injection of sociocultural considerations involved in the circulation of ideas represented a decisive departure from the field of bibliography (Spadoni, 2007; Tanselle, 1988). That field had found a home principally in library schools, but also in departments of English willing to tolerate the very historical detail-grubbers the New Critics reacted against in interpreting texts regardless of systems of production and even authorial intent (Greetham, 1996). Bibliography licensed reverse-engineering from typography and other features in the make-up of a specific book to the processes producing them; its intensive descriptiveness yielded a welter of details centripetal to the artifactual book. By contrast, this group of HOB founders was dominated by neither bibliographically minded librarians nor English-department footnoters, but by practicing historians of the generalizing, centrifugal ilk. Hence, this newly expansive bibliographically tinged HOB promised a more rigorous and comprehensive understanding of the sociocultural past. The Statement argued that it thus merited a correspondingly new set of institutions supported by government and foundation funding around the world.

The Statement's pervasive internationalism is often overlooked (e.g., Jenisch, 2003, p. 230; Shevlin & Lindquist, 2010, p. 60; cf. Gross, 1998, pp. 9–10). If the book is by

nature “a cultural force,” it is one “that transcends national boundaries.” Hence, “the design and compilation of basic tools require international cooperation” (Carpenter, 1983, p. xi). That, for HOB, would be a road less traveled (Suarez, 2003, pp. 147–149). Nationalism, not only of focus but approach, appeared during the preconference in the opposition, noted in the subsequently published proceedings by convener Kenneth Carpenter (1983), “between the Anglo American bibliographical approach and French *histoire du livre*” (p. vii). Indeed, the bristly, almost admonitory, volume introduction by Tanselle (1983) tries to rein in, with his bibliocentrism, the more expansive French approach instantiated in Darnton’s replacement essay for the cat-killing one, “What is the History of Books?” “For book history,” Tanselle (1983) insists, “the book is central, both as a physical object and as a conveyer of ideas” (p. xx). Darnton rejoins with his very different definition: “the social and cultural history of communication by print” (1982b, p. 65). The interchange signals a transitional moment from the old bibliography to the new HOB. The American HOB would become aligned with Darnton’s communication vision, though restrained and tempered by Tanselle’s bibliography – ideas nexus.

But what of the history of the *American* book (HOAB)? For that, the scene shifts to Worcester’s American Antiquarian Society (AAS), whose Dartonian plans in the 1980s for a “History of the Book in American Culture” would issue by the turn of the millennium in the five-volume, collaborative *History of the Book in America* (Hall, 1990, 2000–2010; Hensch, 1994)¹⁰ – thanks to the persistence of the project’s bibliographical advocates, “culture” would eventually become, as suggested by its disappearance from the title, less a topic subject and more of a referent effect. Before that denouement, however, the cultural approach, with bibliography as its handmaiden, accented with intellectual history, prevailed at the AAS. In fact, in the October following the RBMS preconference, the AAS hosted “Printing and Society in Early America,” a conference that would produce an eponymous volume of proceedings (Joyce, Hall, Brown, & Hensch, 1983). The book’s appearance coincided with the AAS launching its Program for the History of the Book in American Culture, under whose auspices the multivolume book project advanced, thanks to assistance from the National Endowment for the Humanities (Hensch, 2011).¹¹ That first conference volume and an ensuing one (Hall & Hensch, 1987) set the stage for the future HOAB.

The volumes’ highly eclectic set of essays spanned the range of what HOAB *could* be. Like Darnton’s cat massacre piece, it results overall in an impressive scholarly display with little argumentation. The research made clear one point: that the HOB was essential for understanding culture and society in early America. But this was a specific vision of what culture, society, and America was. Hence, the two volumes spoke for what HOAB *should* be, and that meant a certain partiality for a cultural history not far from the old intellectual history of the consensus-school sort. It would be a print history of a place (“America”), and not, as Darnton (1982b) had it, of a process: communication. Tellingly, the one paper presented at the 1980 conference that had the most to say to media and communication scholars, that of William Gilmore-Lehne (1980), did not make it into the conference volumes. In it,

he considered, foreshadowing Alasuutari's (1999) "third phase" of reception studies, the evolving popular meta-discourse of "speed, accuracy, and precision" concerning innovations in print production and distribution. Its view of changing print media's effects as discursively constructed stood opposed to that of one editor's published essay, based on autobiographies taken as fact, not discourse, which cast print instrumentalism as part of a "cultural style" (Hall, 1983; cf. Hoggart, 1957, p. 16).

Since 1980, then, *national* institutions like the AAS did indeed do their work as the RBMS's "Boston Statement" called for: multivolume projects were launched (Bell, Finkelstein, & McCleery, 2007; Fleming, Gallichan, & Lamonde, 2004–2007; Hall 2000–2010; Lyons & Arnold, 2001; Martin & Chartier, 1982; Maslen, 1993), fellowships and study grant money flowed (e.g., William Reese Company, 2008), and scholarly societies, conferences, and refereed journals emerged (see Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing, 2010). HOB, by these outward signs, seemed to be a thriving interdiscipline, but there were residual limitations upon its influence from each national founding. The American case treated below is not alone in this, but it suggests, perhaps more clearly than any other, why the immense promise of the approach remains, in many disciplines, unrealized.

American Academic Politics and Founding Motives

HOB's and HOAB's emergence around 1980 coincided with the succession from the New Social History (NSH) to the New Cultural History (Cook, Glickman, & O'Malley, 2008) that took place from the late 1970s through the 1980s. The timing allowed book historians to participate in the so-called cultural turn (Bonnell & Hunt, 1999) to help justify their enterprise, albeit without fully embracing it – a half-turn. NSH came in several flavors, one of which was seeing history from the bottom up (Lemisch, 1967), in keeping with the movement's New Left roots. To recapture the lives and experiences of the putatively inarticulate working class, new social historians were unafraid to employ quantitative social science techniques (Wiener, 1989).¹² These historians challenged the earlier consensus view of US history, shared among leading intellectual historians in the 1950s, that diminished evidence of social conflict in the past (Bernstein, 1967; Higham, 1962). NSH also demonstrated that rags-to-riches upward mobility was far from universally true (Thernstrom, 1964). NSH, to some displaced intellectual historians gravitating to HOB, countered an affirmative myth of long-term national synthesis (Higham, 1989). Moreover, the myth-keepers, the consensus historians, were part of an influential establishment rooted in the expansive postwar US university.

Many HOB scholars, like intellectual historians, would define themselves against the NSH. Some in HOAB emerging from the history of ideas gestured toward materialism strategically to support superstructure over base (cf. Williams, 1973): ideas matter, but they have material means of circulation worthy of tracing. A material

history of ideas, like HOB, afforded intellectual historians cover from NSH charges of methodological imprecision (Gilbert, 1971, pp. 92–94).

A key event in this move was the 1977 Wingspread Conference of high-powered US intellectual historians in Racine, Wisconsin (Higham & Conkin, 1979).¹³ Among them was David D. Hall, who gave a paper on print culture in Puritan New England (Hall, 1979); he would become a HOAB driving force as general editor of the AAS's multivolume history, inflecting it with Wingspread's NSH reaction. After the conference proceedings appeared as a book, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1980) damned it with faint praise: "a useful report that reflected the malaise that afflicted American Intellectual History in the 1970s" (p. 888). He also noted, along with the absence of citations to Eisenstein and but a single dismissive one to McLuhan, that "the indifference to Marxism is striking" (p. 890) – NSH was being sidestepped.

Intellectual history would find salvation in the emergence of the New Cultural History during the 1980s, as part of the "linguistic turn" (Miller, 1997, pp. 364–367), easily bringing HOB under its aegis, as witnessed in the rise of Robert Darnton. The same year that Eisenstein's book and the Wingspread essays appeared, his definitive publishing history of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1979) took European historiography by storm. Darnton followed with a string of volumes (1982a, 1984, 1990, 1995), all of which highlighted HOB. As a measure of his success, he would in 1999 head the American Historical Association – his presidential address concerned eighteenth-century Parisian media and news (2000) – and in 2007 he became the Director of Harvard University Libraries. He frequently speaks out on the necessity of preserving the book in the digital age (2009). Perhaps because of his national topic of study, however, he did not shy away from the quantitative-history "Frenchness" that Chartier (1988) had identified in his own book tradition, and that would very much set Darnton apart from most HOAB scholars (but see Gilmore-Lehne, 1989; Pawley, 2001; Winans, 1983; Zboray, 1993; Zboray & Zboray, 1997a, 1997c). At the same time, they would eschew both long-standing US scholarly precedents and, as Schlesinger (1980) perceptively discerned among the 1977 Wingspreaders, the McLuhan–Eisenstein spectrum that set the stage for their emergence.

French Origins, US Antecedents, and McLuhan–Eisenstein Precedents

Darnton naturally owes a great debt in his book history research to the *Annales* School, associated with the phrase "total history" (*histoire totale histoire événementielle*) that had its genesis under Marc Bloch in the 1930s. Under Ferdinand Braudel in the 1950s the school had moved to macro analysis of the *longue durée*, trends unfolding over centuries (Burguière, 2009). Book study became part of the *long durée* in Febvre and Martin's (1958) work on the book's fifteenth-century arrival, and a welter of subsequent studies followed from *Annalistes*. The group's approach to book history

could involve marshaling massive detail and undertaking quantitative analysis of book production and circulation, and that methodological rigor was expressed in the four-volume *Histoire de l'édition française* (1982–), edited by Martin and Chartier among others, which became the gold standard of national HOB projects, from the United Kingdom to New Zealand (and, of course, the US) wanting to tell *their* national story (Suarez, 2003).

Martin, Chartier, and Darnton, among other historians of the French book, benefited from this legacy of methodological rigor. Their work was based on multitudinous smaller yet intensive studies that had accumulated over decades, so the *Histoire* effectively synthesized highly systematic prior research, much of it quantitative in nature and, if not, still resulting from qualitative inquiry into vast data fields. HOAB simply did not have these traditions, but perhaps more crucial was that it was developed by a group reacting against the NSH that was itself distantly related to the *Annales* School (Fox-Genovese & Genovese, 1976).

As for local traditions, there certainly were prior historians of print culture for Americans to look to, beginning with Isaiah Thomas (1810), basically a collective biography. McMurtrie in the 1930s tried to generate interest in American book history through his publications and radio talks (e.g., McMurtrie, 1936), and that decade also saw the monumental *Book in America* (Lehmann-Haupt, Wroth, & Granniss, 1939), the product of bibliophile librarians. Coming from outside academe, this work was marginalized by the later HOB. One beleaguered group consisted of literary historians in US departments of English. The most prominent of these was William Charvat; from the 1930s until his death in 1966 he sought, in a series of articles and a slender monograph (1959), to establish a literary history grounded in authorship, publishing, distribution, book-reviewing and criticism, and to a limited degree, reading (1968). His work predicted the way literature scholars would adopt HOB in their work a half century later (e.g., Gilmore, 1999). Nevertheless, his map of literary history little fazed the later HOB (e.g., Winship, 1995, pp. 2–3).

From a very different disciplinary base came Frank Luther Mott, whose multivolume survey of American magazines (1930–1968) took nearly four decades to complete, and John Tebbel, who produced an equally gargantuan history of book publishing (1972–1981), polishing off the last volume around the time of the Boston Statement. Both were heavily immersed in journalism and mass communication education, at least in the last decades of their careers, and, thus, unlike the McMurtrie generation, were firmly ensconced in academe. So, it would have been natural for HOAB to encompass Mott and Tebbel followers and students in journalism history. But this, apart from a few exceptions, would not be the case.

Perhaps one reason was that the Mott–Tebbel tradition was systematic insofar as both tried for as complete coverage as possible of magazines and book publishing firms, respectively. Given the anti-NSH temper of HOAB originators, that seemed too much like the systematic inquiry they were acting against.¹⁴ Moreover, Mott and Tebbel were associated with social history and, as journalism historians, were not averse to seeing conflict as a perennial factor in US sociocultural life and press history

(Sloan, 1990, pp. 91–98). Such journalism historians, were, like later NSH scholars but in a different way, the wrong type for the new HOB.

Finally, HOB eschewed the spectrum of interest in print culture spanning from McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) to Eisenstein's *Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979). It may seem odd to pair them. Eisenstein's book, after all, was a self-avowed reaction (pp. x–xii) to McLuhan's supposedly imprudent celebration of the emerging electronic global village and the end of Typographic Man in his *Gutenberg Galaxy*. Both scholars, however, were epic visionaries open to the charge of technological determinism. So, although Eisenstein was present at the 1980 RBMS preconference and remained in the HOB fold, she became increasingly sidelined and, with Johns's (2003) attack on her presumed determinism, pilloried. American HOB scholars little tolerated any determinations limiting their poetics.

Indeed, their self-styling as the “history of the book” itself deliberately demarcates them from previous print culture investigators. Because the term is a literal English translation of *histoire du livre*, it redirects HOB's genealogy transatlantically away from conceivable North American forebears. But the term conveys more the redirection than it describes actual HOB practices, which have been selective, at best, in reflecting European scholarship. The genealogy the term signifies, instead, is the approach's descent from the peculiar form of intellectual history that, distinguishing itself from NSH, migrated to the New Cultural History during the 1980s as discussed above. Little wonder, that when a more open-minded and NHS-like group of University of Wisconsin scholars institutionalized in 1992, they dubbed their unit the “Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America” (Pawley, 2008). The term “print culture” (McLuhan, 1960, pp. 75–79; Eisenstein, 1980) has become an antidote against the “history of the book” that has promulgated its own approaches to production, distribution, and consumption.

Approaches to Production

From its beginnings as a practice of study, HOB developed techniques for investigating production through two related foci: the author and the publisher. Some of these techniques were adapted from bibliography. For example, enumerative bibliography was summoned to establish not only the fullest recoverable range of titles by specific authors or publishers, but to map larger universes of print that gave material evidence of the distribution of intellectual activity. This allowed for more grounded generalizations about what types of books were available in any given time and place (e.g., Darnton, 1995), and how that universe expanded or contracted over time or changed in nature. Analytical bibliography's aforementioned “reverse engineering” that traditionally simply tracked imprint variants has been applied forensically to reveal production processes no longer recoverable by other means. For example, typography in Gutenberg's Bible, when subjected to computational analysis, suggests that the

movable type used was technologically evolving as the edition proceeded through the press (Agüera y Arcas, 2003). Textual bibliography, usually involved in comparing a text close to the author's hand to one further from it in pursuit of establishing authorial intent, has been employed by book historians to explore the cultural negotiations between authors and editors over perceived readerships instantiated in a specific edition (e.g., Thorne-Murphy, 2010).

HOB authorship studies were enriched from a different direction, that of literary biography (West, 1994). The conventional details about writing and placing manuscripts, shepherding them through the press, and engaging in book promotion, moved from out of the background in this research. An early example was Mary Kelley (1984), who delved into the personal papers of mid-nineteenth-century "literary domestics," popular "sentimental" female authors, to ponder the conundrum of private women performing on a public stage of publication. Shortly after, Anesko (1986) applied archival work to recast a canonical author, Henry James, from otherworldly to market-conscious. Such probing through archives and rare books repositories was soon applied to subliterate figures (Reynolds, 1988), even to convicted criminals having their say in print (Cohen, 1993). These efforts were joined by a few generalizing works based on author-archival materials on writing for the market (Newbury, 1997; West, 1988; Wilson, 1985), followed by wider-ranging considerations of authorship in a larger market culture (Ingrassia, 1998; Jackson, 2008; Zboray & Zboray, 2005). These have yielded some interest in "social authorship," that is, writers eschewing print but addressing, through manuscript production, known coterie of reader/authors (Ezell, 1999).

Similar archivalism has influenced studies of publishing, taking it far from previous anecdotal histories of publishers and their houses. Though only a few such records have survived proportionally to the number of houses that existed, those remnants have been intensively and systematically scrutinized, as Darnton (1979) did for the Société typographique de Neuchâtel, to pose the aristocratic origins of revolutionary ideas. Alexis Weedon (2003) pooled together vast internal business documentation to portray Victorian publishers adjusting production techniques to deal with mass market fluctuations. Publishers' archives can reveal author-publisher correspondence, accounts with printers, book distributors, or advertising agents, and cost accounting data suggesting the profitability of any given title, author, and genre.

Approaches to Distribution

Much of the material HOB researchers have called upon to investigate production touches also on distribution (Hackenberg, 1987). For example, records about where publishers advertised can suggest where they thought their books might sell, probably with good reason (Zboray, 1993, pp. 59–68) and such material also contains evidence of direct marketing, through salespeople (Thomas, 1998; Zboray & Zboray,

2005, pp. 131–139). Yet publishers' records scarcely identify end-users, but rather a host of middlemen, like wholesalers (Schurman, 1996) or bookstores (Wolf, 1988). Among these intermediaries are libraries, which although they purchase books like individual consumers, provide a service to readers, making patrons the end-users. No wonder that library history converged easily into HOB (Augst & Wiegand, 2001), as seen in the venerable *Journal of Library History* being renamed in 1988 *Libraries and Culture* (Wiegand, 1990). Some concerns, like nineteenth-century tract and Bible societies, pioneered systematic corporate recordkeeping for their distribution (Howsam, 1991; Nord, 2004, pp. 89–112). Distribution studies extend beyond individual houses to entire national literatures: Fabian (1976), for example, analyzed imprint checklists to establish the distribution of English-authored texts in eighteenth-century Germany.

Distribution is only one term applied to what happens to print matter between publisher and reader. Brown (1989) summoned diaries and newsclips to time the increasing reach and velocity of “contagious diffusion” of signal news stories from the American Revolution's start to the Lincoln assassination (pp. 245–267). “Circulation” is applied, of course, to periodicals and library items regularly in conventional parlance, but for HOB scholars, to books mostly in the preindustrial era; estate inventories have been scrutinized, for example, to suggest the extent of European titles in colonial Peru (González Sánchez, 1999). Such end-user-based evidence for print circulation also appears in Leonard's (1995) discussion of Depression-era Farm Security Administration photographs that reveal “elite” magazine covers on the walls of sharecropper shacks (p. 112) – one cannot read actual distribution from the seeming population a periodical addresses textually. A final term is “dissemination.” It owes to the history-of-ideas genealogy of book history, which is why the term turns up in science studies (e.g., De Renzi, 2000), but it has recently been applied to encompass after-market activities of readers or other users who might give quotes, clips, or entire books and periodicals to other people in their circles (Zboray & Zboray, 2006, pp. 71–147). “Dissemination” also acknowledges a book's “seeding” potential to influence minds, hence it gestures more than the other terms to reception.

Approaches to Consumption

Perhaps because “consumers” as a term evokes the cash nexus too much and suggests passivity, HOB scholars prefer “readers” to stand for all types of end-users. The move weakens the conceptual articulation between users and the system of production and distribution they engage, and so discourages economic analyses. To be sure, the printed book was imbricated in capitalist development: some measure of profit from selling to consumers has kept the publishing system going (Raven, 2009). The commodity aspects of books involve not just mass-market generated profits, but

issues of consumers' status and cultural distinction (Benton, 2000; Joshi, 1998), as well as circulation in local systems of para-market exchange (Zboray & Zboray, 1996, 2006).

The rise of the reader in HOB reoriented the approach shortly after it was launched. No wonder: to justify its approach, HOB's first generation had relied upon largely circumstantial evidence that books were important to society and culture. Harder evidence would be required, and that would come better in the form of thickly descriptive case studies of specific individuals and smaller groups than through relative abstractions like "the public" – interpretative ideationalism (Keesing, 1974) exerted influence on HOB through anthropologist Clifford Geertz's centrality in the New Cultural History (Miller, 1997, p. 365). Quickening the move was an alliance with theories of subject-identity construction, often with feminist underpinnings, and a practice of grounded inquiry. Radway (1984), for example, interviewed book club women about their reception of romance novels that exposed a multiplicity of responses challenging producer-centricism, i.e., meaning imposed from above instead of generated below. Davidson (1986) delved into the archives to discover, even by examining readers' marginalia, the meanings of the early American novel for women and men; she subsequently edited a journal issue that led to a landmark book of essays on reading and social history (Davidson, 1989).

The move toward readers was pushed by larger currents, too. Notable was the widening impact of German reception studies in two flavors: one textual, *rezeptionsästhetik* (Iser, 1972), leading to a search for readers in the text, and the other contextual, *rezeptionsgeschichte* (Jauss, 1970), as instantiated in readers' "horizon of expectations" (set by similar works previously encountered) when engaging a text (pp. 12–14). It was but a short step from theories of readers' meaning-making from texts, to research addressing how books impacted readers. Rarely acknowledged support for this step came from audience research in media studies (Allington & Swan, 2009) that underscored "audience sovereignty" (Butsch, 2000, pp. 3–12) and the "active audience" (Fiske, 1987, pp. 223–224). This meshed well with HOB's performance practice of interpretative freedom. Darnton (1982b, pp. 78–79) at one point even argued that reading might always remain an unsolvable mystery, perhaps to shore up the producer-centric early HOB.

A generation of scholarship that attempted to demystify reading soon came to the fore. Patterns in library charge records were discerned to link "readers" and genres (Pawley, 2001; Zboray, 1993, pp. 156–179) or specific authors (Todd, 1999). Some scholars connected specific authors with readers through archives of fan letters (Blair, 2008; Williams, 1990); others shifted to the text, using readers' letters responding to specific items, like pulp magazine stories about unwed women's pregnancy (Kunzel, 1995). Rose (2001) deployed working-class British autobiographies to argue the pervasive influence of mainstream canonical authors, rather than class-situated ones, upon laborers; E. Smith (2000) reconstructed working-class readers from advertisements targeting them; and Nord (1988) availed himself of subscription lists containing artisans' names. Records of book clubs and other reading groups have proved

particularly rich, especially for recovering African American readerships (McHenry, 2002). Readers' diaries and letters provide the most complete contextualizations of not only a universe of reading but how it plays into everyday life. Research began at the individual or family level (e.g., Colclough, 2000; Sharpe, 2000; Zboray & Zboray, 1997c), but has been moving toward encompassing larger groups, such as seminary-schooled early American women (Kelley, 2006) and partisan-minded ones of an overlapping later period (Zboray & Zboray, 2010). To date, the most extensive study has ethnographically surveyed reading practices of 931 informants leaving testimony in nearly 4,000 diaries and letters from a single region over three decades (Zboray & Zboray, 2006). Even larger-scale collective projects are afoot to pool together data, but these still await suitable analytical procedures for making sense of the resulting vast data fields (Halsey, 2008). After all, readers' diaries and letters are themselves texts that require perhaps even greater contextualization than the printed texts produced by the publishing industry, to which those readers refer.

The Future HOB

HOB's pursuit of what books have meant culturally in different societies over time has advanced immeasurably since 1980, thanks to the turn to the reader, which has pioneered essential methods for exploring that meaning. Much spadework remains to be done for varying times and places, especially beyond Britain, France, and the United States, before firm generalizations can be developed or cross-cultural comparisons can take place. Transnational work is already underway on modern technical and scientific translations (Rupke, 2000), and, particularly through them, the problematic of bridging the highly divergent, virtually incommensurable, and equally ancient book cultures in Europe and China (Fu, 2011). Although HOB nationalism will eventually need to be overcome beyond these rare analyses of translations, the language-based nature of reading and reception studies makes this unlikely in the short run, except perhaps in the former empires of Spain and Great Britain, whose colonies shared a common tongue of governance. Even within each national HOB, a fuller integration of the reading-based research accomplished so far into production and distribution awaits (for an early attempt, see St. Clair, 2005). For example, one can compare how publishers and authors perceived their market with how the consumer/reader self-reports received their printed products. Whether political economy will play a role in the future HOB is an open question: certainly, with reader/consumer testimony at hand, a re-evaluation of the book as hegemonic is in order to see how large-scale power structures express themselves in seemingly benign consumer choice and self-culture. Investigating those expressions on the physical page (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001), and plumbing readers' reception of them, promises to align the often antagonistic bibliographical and cultural history traditions in HOB. Finally, HOB will need to explore further the impact on readers of explicit

regulation by governments and tacit shaping of print culture by its industries to effect social silencing and agenda setting.

So, as a culturally interpretative approach, HOB should add greater analysis and deeper criticism to its practice of scholarly performance and contextual description. Ironically, the very success of HOB in raising bibliographical awareness across disciplines has led some non-specialists to do just this (e.g., Feener, 2007, pp. 269–271; Hoeflich, 1997; Hofmeyr, 2004): to make these scholars rethink the highly mediated nature of print and scribal evidence they too often take for granted. Rather, these scholars have learned from HOB that such evidence results from specific systems of production, distribution, and consumption that together may affect that evidence's sociocultural meaning. Ultimately, then, HOB's greatest contribution may turn out to be a broadly shared, new "print-culture imaginary" in the minds of media historians and other scholars and students.

NOTES

- 1 Nerone (2006) points to the history of the book as one of three "interdisciplinary scholarly formations" (p. 254) that promised to bridge communication history's heretofore divided mind between the cosmically interpretive (e.g., the New York and Toronto schools) and the concretely descriptive (e.g., histories and biographies emerging from journalism schools). See also Nerone (2003). Zboray and Zboray (2011) provide quantitative substantiation of communication studies' disregard of the history of the book.
- 2 Media scholars familiar with the Weaver–Shannon (1963) model of communication will recognize the similarity to book historian Robert Darnton's "Communication Circuit" (1982b, p. 68). Even in the narrow economic sense, the relationship between production, distribution, and consumption is murky, as Marx (1973, pp. 83–100) points out.
- 3 Recognizing the overlap, Zboray and Zboray (2006) apply the triadic scheme ethnographically to a specific group of "real" readers or consumers, putting production and dissemination in their hands as much as reception. For an early discussion of the "real reader" concept in English, see Schmidt (1979, pp. 160–161; cf. Radway, 1984; Zboray & Zboray, 1997b).
- 4 To encompass scribal production, Adams and Barker (1993) advocate denominating the object of study as the "bibliographical document." An alternative label is "material text" (Moylan & Stiles, 1996), but this hazards occluding non-textually based meanings and practices. "Print culture" is, of course, yet another alternative that was early on jocularly derided by HOB-founder Hugh Amory's (1984) reference to his contemporary "xerox culture" (p. 345): "'print culture' is what men and women thought of printing or did with printing, and it has no clear relation to" bibliography and, by extension, the history of the book.
- 5 On cognition and HOB, see Enenkel and Neuber (2005); and on the related book-inspired imaginary, Piper (2009).
- 6 The web page of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (2010), the main international HOB association, captures this expansiveness: "Research addresses the composition, mediation, reception, survival, and transformation of written

- communication in material forms including marks on stone, script on parchment, printed books and periodicals, and new media.” Tanselle (1971) advances the term “imprint” (pp. xii–xvi), which can account for non-book materials, but not scribal ones.
- 7 HOB has been moving from an exclusive focus on the paper page toward encompassing electronic communication, like web pages, that employ traditional bibliographical formats and typography (Erickson, 2003; Hillesund, 2007).
 - 8 See White’s (1975, pp. 52–55) historiographical gloss on Roman Jakobson’s thoughts regarding linguistics and poetics. On materialism versus ideationalism, see Tang (2011, pp. 217–220). “Cultural poetics” is the preferred phrase of Greenblatt (1988, p. 5) over the more widespread “New Historicism” associated with him. “Conservative” here refers to the nineteenth-century origins of the history of ideas in Hegelian idealism (D. Kelley, 1990).
 - 9 Darnton (1999; 1990, pp. 254–256) addressed his distinctions from Marxist history, and the history of ideas (Darnton, 1971).
 - 10 We were invited to contribute to volumes 2 and 3 (we declined), and one of us participated in a planning meeting for the project.
 - 11 The Library of Congress’s Center for the Book antedated the AAS’s program by six years (Shevlin & Lindquist, 2010). Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin (1978) explicitly linked its founding to the history of ideas and their future: “The Book is the reservoir of the ideas we have forgotten, and will be the reservoir for all ideas still unborn” (p. 182).
 - 12 The quantitative element in the New Social History has been exaggerated, testifying to the success of its opponents’ charges of positivism and unreadability. Many new social historians either did not use quantification (e.g., especially those who tried to recapture voices of African Americans and White women, like Blassingame, 1972; or Cott, 1977), or did as part of a broader methodological arsenal that included qualitative approaches (Dublin, 1979; Gutman, 1977).
 - 13 A corresponding event took place for Europeanists in 1980 (Miller, 1997, p. 362).
 - 14 Hench (1994) quickly dispatches Mott with a brief quote cribbed from the AAS’s NEH grant proposal of building on his work for a “history of literary cultures” (p. 12).

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The Enlightenment and the Bourgeois Public Sphere (Through the Eyes of a London Merchant-Writer)

Juraj Kittler

ABSTRACT

Conventional histories of the twentieth century had a propensity to idealize the seminal role played by the Enlightenment in ushering in modernity. Their impact on communication scholarship was reflected in Habermas's seminal work, which equated the main achievements of the English Enlightenment and the rise of the public sphere, defined as a venue fostering public opinion by means of rational debate. Yet, the same eighteenth-century London coffeehouses that were idealized by Habermas as prototypes of democratic civic institutions are described by historical sources also as places of scandal and depravity, infested with deception and the manipulation of information. Daniel Defoe – merchant, journalist, and author of countless political pamphlets and literary novels – is one such exclusively positioned observer whose writings and personal life fully expose the ubiquitous dialectic tension between forces emphasizing the democratic potential of the emerging public sphere in London, and relentless efforts for its commodification. Indeed, Defoe's testimony challenges the very notion of its bourgeois nature. In conclusion, this essay attempts to demonstrate that the key concepts of the public sphere such as public opinion, consensus, and deliberative process predate the Enlightenment era. They had already been discussed in Renaissance Venice, albeit within a strikingly opposite normative framework. As a normative ideal, they became definitely adopted by mainstream society in mid-seventeenth-century England.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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In his famous 1784 answer to the question *What is Enlightenment?*, Immanuel Kant (1959) described it as “the freedom to make public use of one’s reason at every point” (p. 87). Yet, added the philosopher, if someone had to ask him whether the Western world was already living in an “enlightened age,” his answer would have been a categorical “no” (p. 90). Kant understood the Enlightenment as a historical process through which humankind can prove to itself that it is capable of creating a society demystified, stripped of all irrationality, relying on the sole power of its own reason (p. 85).

About a century-and-a-half later two other German philosophers assessed the heritage of the Enlightenment era. Adorno and Horkheimer in their 1947 *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* came to the disquieting conclusion that the entire Enlightenment project was at the very best a missed opportunity, at the worst it resulted in a *disaster triumphant*, a new type of barbarism. They claimed that the Kantian *sapere aude* – the audacity of knowing – backfired on humanity which, instead of achieving liberation through knowledge, had now to bear the even more powerful yoke of self-imposed tyranny in the form of rationalism void of morality (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972, pp. xi, 3).

It was paradoxically Adorno and Horkheimer’s own apprentice, Jürgen Habermas (1989), who, in the early 1960s, attempted to rehabilitate the centerpiece of the entire idea of Western modernity – the Enlightenment project. Habermas’s thesis *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* stood out “for its unflinching defense of enlightenment rationality” and was widely received as a critical response to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, especially in regards to the political pessimism permeating Adorno’s writings in the postwar period (Honneth, McCarthy, Offe, & Wellmer, 1992, p. ix; Hohendahl, 1992, p. 99). While most of those who studied the Enlightenment before him focused on the revolution of ideas and lofty philosophical disputations which it produced, Habermas was able to construct a tangible sociohistorical argument directly addressing the communicative practices which were at the core of Western democracy and in one great stroke of genius explained its past, present, and potentially even the future (Kors & Korshin, 1987, p. 2). It would be a futile attempt to reconstruct the entire dynamics of the academic debate which erupted chiefly after Habermas’s thesis was translated and published in English in 1989. At first it inspired mainly Habermas’s supporters, but as time went by and some of the pillars on which the original thesis stood started to shake under the pressure of revisionist scholarship, it rallied mainly the camp of the opponents. The author himself finally admitted that his original design of a *grand theory* of the public sphere was beyond salvation (Habermas, 1992, p. 421).

Yet Habermas’s idea was paradoxically one of those rare contributions to social knowledge which, thanks to the relentless efforts of its critics, continues to drive an enormous amount of new research. With the hindsight of almost half a century one may say that the ultimate historical importance of his contribution to social analysis dwells in the creation of a new ontological category of the *public sphere*. The author defined it very vaguely as something which “comes to being in every conversation

in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.” Its ultimate goal is to produce *public opinion*, which Habermas described as “the task of criticism and control which a public body of citizens,” leaving behind their private interests, “practices *vis-à-vis* the ruling structure organized in the form of the state” (Habermas, 1980, p. 198). In formulating the category of the public sphere, Habermas met the terms of the methodological imperative formulated by Marx (1973, p. 100) that any kind of social inquiry should start from the *simplest determinations* – general and abstract relations, or the smallest common denominators, characteristic of the systems of complex social structures and relations. His broadly delineated public sphere is, from the outset, ingenious in the way that it spills across the boundaries of artificially created disciplinary divisions within the social sciences, arts, and humanities. It brings together scholars investigating practically any aspect of social life, and as such it may be a perfect answer to Braudel’s (1980, p. 25) quest for a complex and contextualized social history. At the same time, the notion of *structural transformation*, which the author used in the title, implies the need to see social change through the prism of an ever-evolving process. Or even better, as a set of mutually constitutive abstract processes – mainly those which are traditionally attributed to the advent of modernity such as individuation, commodification, rationalization, spatiation, abstraction, or alienation – all acting upon one another in various stages of formation, resulting in unpredictable mutual synergies (Mosco, 1996, p. 8; Ogborn, 1998, pp. 20–21; Ollman, 2003, pp. 13–14). Such processes imply deep structural changes which are slow by definition. To capture them the scholar needs to step back in order to get the feeling of what Braudel (1980, pp. 27–31) saw as the dynamics of the *longue durée*.

Paying due tribute to Habermas, it is time to point out that the ultimate flaw of his thesis was in his epistemological approach. Its whole argument was not guided by empirical findings relying strictly on primary sources. Instead, it was driven by an *ex ante* formulated hypothesis supported by secondary academic literature (Downie, 2003, p. 2; Zaret, 2000, pp. 4–5). Carried astray by this methodological handicap, his study discovered what it was aimed at discovering from the outset: it echoed the (at the time) dominant paradigm with its strong emphasis on the central role of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment period in ushering in modernity (Calhoun, 1992, p. 4; Friedman, 1981, p. 111). The central role of the bourgeoisie in this process may have paradoxically reflected Horkheimer and Adorno’s (1972) own nostalgia for “the great bourgeois art” which, as they claimed, “as a separate sphere was always possible only in the bourgeois society” (pp. 126, 156).

Why the Focus on London?

Habermas selected Great Britain as a “model case” for his study. London coffee-houses serve as the backdrop for private individuals who assemble in the public body

which almost immediately laid claim on the early periodical press, only recently freed of censorship (Habermas, 1989, pp. 57–61). Yet in answering the question “How useful to the eighteenth-century English studies is the paradigm of the ‘bourgeois public sphere’?”, Downie (2003) comes to a conclusion which is rather dismissive of the entire Habermasian model. He argues that the author twisted important historical developments to support his thesis. The very notion of the public sphere which was *bourgeois* in its nature is completely misplaced because English society continued to be dominated by the aristocracy up until the late 1700s (Downie, 2003, p. 1). But eighteenth-century London, as a key to our understanding of the advent of modernity, continues to be the research focus of even those who took harsh revisionist positions against the original Habermasian thesis (Zaret, 2000, pp. 6–7; cf. Downie, 2003; Melton, 2001; Ogborn, 1998).

In the ensuing paragraphs, I would like to make my own justification for the study of the public sphere in eighteenth-century London. Consequently, I would like to offer the reader an opportunity to peek into Habermasian coffeehouses and observe the dynamics of London social life, mainly through the writings of Daniel Defoe. I further argue that to interpret the empirical material collected in London, one needs to see English society from a holistic perspective – not just in the sense of looking inwards at different alternative publics and counterpublics as many of Habermas’s critics do, but even more importantly in the context of the social experiences of other important commercial and political centers of the Western world (Zaret, 2000, p. 11).

It was Braudel (1982–1984, vol. 3, pp. 27–34), in his monumental study of Western civilization and capitalism, who devised the classic sequence of dominant cities – i.e., Bruges, Venice, Antwerp, Genoa, Amsterdam, London, and beyond. We can reasonably assert that such places held, for a limited period and in mutual succession, a hegemonic power-grip over the entire supranational Western civilization and as such “refer to the system as a whole at different stages of its development” (Arrighi, 1994, p. xi). If we follow this advice we may discover that the key subcategory of the public sphere – public opinion – was as a concept already discussed in Renaissance Italy – mainly at the level of reflexive practice, but implicitly also as a philosophical category. Yet, as Pirenne (1909, 1915, 1956) suggested, the real roots of Western democracy must be searched for in the experience of the High Medieval period with its rediscovery of Aristotelian rational argumentation and dialectic, its merchant urban communities with their bodies of civic government and independent judiciary systems. These were, according to Pirenne, the real training grounds of modern democracies.

The era of London’s hegemony over Western thought roughly corresponds with what historians labeled the *long eighteenth century*, a term which is often used interchangeably with the English Enlightenment (Clark, 2000, p. x; Porter, 2000, p. xvii). It was the period in which English society enjoyed an indisputable economic, political, cultural, and military supremacy in the West. Merchants, artists, and philosophers were coming to London to study the peculiarities of the English system in order to discover the secrets of its success, trying to “borrow” some of the know-how and implement it at home (Voltaire, 1947, p. 54). In 1711, Joseph Addison confessed in a

London coffeehouse newsletter that there was no place in the town which he so much loved to frequent as the Royal Exchange. "It gives me a secret satisfaction, and in some measure, gratifies my vanity, as I am an Englishman, to see so rich an assembly of countrymen and foreigners consulting together upon the private business of mankind, and making this metropolis a kind of Emporium for the whole earth" (Addison & Steele, 1852, p. 82).

Daniel Defoe, London Merchant and Writer

Daniel Defoe (ca. 1659–1731) was one of the key protagonists of London's public life whose lifespan corresponds with the early period of the English Enlightenment. Defoe was a poster child of Marx's man who "makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth" (2007, p. 13). His complex personality is riddled with internal contradictions. His all but straightforward life-journey makes him an almost perfect metaphor for the ambiguity and confusion on whose wave modernity rode. And his humble pedigree can help us to shed more light on those who became the protagonists of the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere (Downie, 2003, pp. 11–12).

Born as Daniel Foe in a poor neighborhood outside of London's Cripplegate, the aspiring merchant, failed brick manufacturer, and later in life a famous writer and secret government spy gradually changed his name first to the more reverent De Foe and finally to Defoe (Defoe, 1955, p. 17; cf. Bastian, 1981). As a merchant and early industrialist, Defoe was a failure, yet he was very proud of the role that tradesmen, this nascent class of urban aristocracy, played in English society. "This being the case in England, and our trade being so vastly great, it is no wonder that the tradesmen in England fill the lists of our nobility and gentry," he claimed. And the comparison to aristocracy was not just a metaphor. Defoe observed the prosperous English tradesmen "coming every day to the herald's office, to search for the coats-of-arms of their ancestors, in order to paint them upon their coaches, and engrave them upon their plate, embroider them upon their furniture, or carve them upon the pediments of their new houses." Contrary to the customs prevailing at that time in most of the other European feudal countries where the traditional landed aristocracy did not mingle with the merchant class, in England "the gentlemen of the best families marry tradesmen's daughters, and put their younger sons as apprentices to tradesmen" (Defoe, 1726, vol. 1, pp. 310–311; cf. De Saussure, 1995, p. 133). Just as the new ruling classes in post-communist Europe are a blend of old apparatchiks, former secret spies, and some new blood which was ready to seize the window of opportunity to slip among the elites, the emerging London bourgeoisie was from the beginning an amalgamation of the old aristocratic establishment and new social elements. "Marchauntes, they becoime lordes and lordes bleth, marchaundyte," an anonymous London poet observed already in 1550 (Anonymous, 1550, p. 4).

The Habermasian Utopia

The periodical press in England started booming shortly after the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695 and was not renewed. "We had no such thing as printed newspapers in those days, to spread rumors and reports of things," wrote Defoe in the opening paragraphs of his memoirs of the plague year of 1665. "But such things as those were gathered from the letters of merchants and others who corresponded abroad, and from them were handed about by word of mouth only" (Defoe, 1722, pp. 1–2). A typical Englishman, regardless of class, was known for an insatiable appetite for news. According to Ward (1703), he was "a great news monger, and all public reports must occur to his knowledge, for his business lies most in coffee houses, and the greatest of his diversion is in reading the newspapers" (p. 186). Consequently, a typical coffeehouse boasted foreign and domestic journals covering a wide array of international issues important to merchants, but also "papers of morality and party disputes" (Macky, 1714, p. 109). Even groups of poor London shoeblacks would be customarily seen to purchase a farthing paper together and one or two of them who were literate would read the news out loud to their fellows gathered around the table in a coffeehouse (De Saussure, 1995, p. 101). Defoe's own journal, *A Weekly Review of the Affairs of France*, was reportedly read by many cobblers and porters (Downie, 1979, p. 6). The author himself claimed that "you will find very few coffee-houses in this opulent City, without an illiterate mechanic, commenting upon the most material occurrences, and judging the actions of the greatest councils of Europe" (Defoe, 1951, p. 17). An amused Swiss visitor to London conferred that he could indeed often see an Englishman "taking a treaty of peace more to heart than he does his own affairs" (De Saussure, 1995, p. 101).

In 1711 two of the most prominent early British journalists, Addison and Steele, founded *The Spectator*, a special coffeehouse journal whose mission was to imitate Socrates who "brought philosophy down from heaven, to inhabit among men." Addison claimed that similarly their ambition was to bring philosophy "out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables, and in coffee-houses" (Addison & Steele, 1852, p. 15). Steele in one of his editorials explained in detail the daily rhythm of the coffeehouse with its changing clientele. From six in the morning when the men "who rise early for no other purpose but to publish their laziness" started to read their newspapers and discuss politics, through quarter of eight at which time they were interrupted by the students of law dressed for Westminster, then the first well-to-do customers appeared "in their night-gowns to saunter away their time." When the day drew on, they gave place to men of business. Their entertainments, emphasized the author, are "derived rather from reason than imagination." A typical coffeehouse was open till midnight and as such became "the place of rendezvous to all that live near it." Steele concluded that, London coffeehouses became "little communities which we express by the word neighborhood" (pp. 58–59).

The earliest known coffeehouses were licensed in London in the 1650s and in 1714 Macky counted “by modest computation” about 8,000 of them (p. 30). This was surely an inflated number but it reflected their ubiquity in the city’s urban texture (Ellis, 2004; Hatton, 1708, p. 30). Foreigners often noted that it was the peculiar institution of a coffeehouse which made London so different from any other European city. Those who wished to find a gentleman commonly asked not whether he lived in Fleet Street or Chancery Lane, but whether he frequented the Grecian or the Rainbow (Macaulay, 2006, p. 361).

The Less Utopian Reality of the London Coffeehouse

From the empirical evidence gathered above the reader may indeed get an idea that there once was an ideal universe of London coffeehouses in which everybody had access to public debates centered around rational arguments, where nothing was immune to criticism and every participant had free access to information unadulterated either by political or by commercial interest. Yet there is a much less flattering image of this world captured in the writings of Defoe. “The tea-table among the ladies, and the coffee-house among the men, seem to be places of new invention for a depravation of our manners and morals, places devoted to scandal,” cautioned the writer (Defoe, 1726, vol. 1, p. 188). What made Defoe so hostile toward an institution which Habermas saw as one of the catalysts of modern democracy? Well, even during their “golden age” between 1680 and 1730 (Habermas, 1989, pp. 32), coffeehouses were not utopian islands but *genuine* social worlds susceptible to all human propensities and pitfalls. Those who met in their precincts were *real* people who were not able to leave behind their private interests when participating in public debate. And finally those who mediated such discussion through early London newspapers customarily had their own fish to fry. Overall, London coffeehouses and their newspapers were everything but the ideal image painted by Habermas in his seminal opus. Yet to understand Defoe’s scorn, we need to first know more about the author himself.

Shortly after his marriage in 1684, Defoe opened a small trading business next to Lythe’s coffeehouse in Freeman’s Yard adjacent to the Royal Exchange. His own experience transpired later in the portrait of an ideal merchant who could have sat as a model to Max Weber for *The Protestant Ethic* (1958). Defoe’s merchant was a global citizen, who, sitting in his counting house, could have at once conversed with the whole world through business correspondence and private intelligence letters. “This and travel make a true-bred merchant the most intelligent man in the world, and consequently the most capable, when urged by necessity, to contrive new ways to live” (Defoe, 1702, pp. 7–8). The universe of Defoe’s merchants revolved around their counting houses, the Royal Exchange, and company halls, all places which offer “suitable occasions to discourse

with their fellow tradesmen, meeting them in the way of their business, and improving their spare hours together" (Defoe, 1727, vol. 1, p. 45).

Yet Defoe, the old-world commodity trader, saw a new form of trade arise right in front of his eyes based on the exchange of abstract values, and with it also a new type of merchant. "The face of trade has its new turns in the heads of the people to such a degree, that it is worth our reflection," argued the author (Defoe, 1727, vol. 2, part 2, p. 161). The late seventeenth-century commercial boom in London gave birth to what he called *projects* – intricate financial schemes involving any kind of commercial activity from international exchange schemes to technical innovations, but increasingly also wagering and lotteries. Defoe traced the origin of the "projecting humor that now reigns no farther back than the year 1680, dating its birth as a monster then." He acknowledged that many of the projects, such as London's waterworks, resulted in practical innovations which significantly improved the life of his city (Defoe, 1702, p. 24). But others, such as the famous South Sea bubble which burst in 1720, ruined many credulous people (pp. 12–13). Indeed, the South Sea folly had all the symptoms of the irrational exuberance of Greenspan's era (Ward, 1720, p. 1). Defoe (1728) argued that the entire South Sea bubble was "a scheme trully infernal, in which the Devil was as certainly the principal operator" (p. 262). At the same time, the author nostalgically recalled "the good old days of trade, which our fore-fathers plodded on in, and got estates too at, there were no bubbles, no stock-jobbing, no South-Sea infatuations, no lotteries, no funds, no antiquities, no buying of navy bills, and publick securities, no circulating Exchequer bills." Instinctively, he knew that something important in the very nature of his world was changing. And he described this change through a simple metaphor without using fancy terms like *abstraction* or *alienation*. In his youth, Defoe (1727) argued, "trade was a vast great river, and all the money in the Kingdom ran down its mighty stream; the whole wealth of the Nation kept in its channel." But with the advent of stockmarket speculations, the flow of this mighty river was artificially distorted by private interest, there are suddenly "new channels or side-drains laid open to abate its waters, to divert its current, and to carry its stream off from the ordinary course" (vol. 2, part 2, pp. 7–8).

Among such new turns of the trade was also the one which he called "by a new name, stock-jobbing." At first, it was only an occasional "transferring of interest and shares from one to another, as persons alienated their estates." But as the brokers realized that there was money to be made on speculations with stocks, they "got the business into their hands and turned it into a regular trade, managed with the greatest intrigue, artifice, and trick, that ever anything that appeared with a face of honesty" (Defoe, 1702, p. 29). In the 1690s, merchants who dealt with stocks got their first own *walk* among the other commodity traders in the Royal Exchange. Their business increased but by the end of the decade they were expelled for rowdiness and moved into the adjacent coffeehouses in Exchange Alley where "the brokers, those vermin of trade, got hold of it" (Defoe, 1702, p. 173; London Stock Exchange, 2010). This was the dark side of the metropolis's bourgeois public sphere which Habermas's thesis-driven research completely ignored. In 1719 Defoe famously noted

that “the center of the jobbing is in the kingdom of the Exchange-Alley, and its adjacencies” (p. 35), which was a cluster of 20 or so coffeehouses squeezed in narrow passages connecting the Royal Exchange with the main Post Office.

Despite his open disdain for coffeehouses, Defoe himself couldn’t avoid frequenting them either. During the time when he worked as a spy and hired pen for Robert Harley, the future lord treasurer and prime minister in all but name, Defoe was reportedly seen “frequently, but privately at a coffee-house in St. James’s.” It was one of the upscale establishments near Westminster frequented by Whig politicians where they could privately discuss their party affairs (Peterson, 1979, p. 316). He must have been a known entity also at Jones’s coffeehouse in Finch Lane near the Royal Exchange, whose personnel mediated the writer’s correspondence with Harley during his clandestine service (Defoe, 1955, p. 13).

With the ascent of the role of Parliament in the English constitutional system throughout the seventeenth century, leaders of political factions and their followers naturally gravitated to taverns and coffeehouses. Many of such semi-public spaces, open originally to everyone, were gradually turned into more-or-less private social and political clubs (Allen, 1933, p. 15). In 1711, after a failed assassination attempt on his political patron Robert Harley, Defoe (1711, pp. 82–99) anonymously published a pamphlet against the members of a secretive group of Tory radicals who met at Bell Tavern in Westminster and became known as the October Club (Downie, 1979, pp. 126, 135). Indeed, by the early 1700s London had several coffeehouses famous for attracting either Whigs or Tories where an opponent was not always welcomed. As a Whig “you may talk politics at the Smyrna and St. James’s [. . .] but a Whig will no more go to the Cocoa Tree or Ofinda’s, than a Tory will be seen at the coffee house of St. James’s,” advised his reader John Macky (1714, p. 108).

London coffeehouses were significantly polarized especially in the aftermath of the Triennial Act of 1694 that turned English politics practically into a state of permanent electioneering (Downie, 1979, p. 1). Many propagandistic tricks, perfected previously by stock-jobbers, were suddenly adopted also by those who ran for political offices. Defoe strongly denounced the fixing of elections and the selling and buying of votes in Parliament as “a new trade of parliament-jobbing” and linked it directly to powerful financial interest groups and stock-jobbing combinations. “Thus let them job, trick, and cheat one another,” warned the author, “but for God’s sake, gentleman, do not let the important affairs of the state come under their wicked clutches” (Defoe, 1701b, p. 22). Because, he added elsewhere, “when statesmen turn jobbers, the state may be jobbed” (Defoe, 1719, p. 42).

What “Bourgeois” Public Sphere?

Indications that Defoe himself was early-on involved in some schemes and speculations may further illustrate his complex character (Bastian, 1981, pp. 187–189). It

could have been an initial failure or his strict Protestant upbringing which discouraged him to pursue this form of business further. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the new group of traders was certainly a very bizarre stock. Addison portrayed a typical projector as someone who could be easily recognized by “shabbiness of his dress, the extravagance of his conceptions, and the hurry of his speech” (Addison & Steele, 1852, p. 70). Macky (1714) compared stock-jobbers at Jonathan’s to the “set of sharp faces” he previously experienced at Little Mann’s coffeehouse, a notorious gathering place of petty criminals and gamblers (pp. 108–113).

This new group of aspiring “bourgeoisie” consisted usually of men of little means with a sense for adventure, who saw in this murky business a unique opportunity to escape their social predicament. A typical stock-jobber was “led on by the mighty hopes of advancing himself to a coach and horses, that he may lord it over his neighboring mechanics” (Ward, 1703, p. 391). Many were Jewish refugees escaping the Spanish Inquisition. They were generally tolerated in London, but their rights were curtailed and they were always suspect, if not openly hated by many Londoners. Exchange-Alley in Defoe’s writings “throungs [*sic*] with Jews, jobbers and brokers, their names are needless, their characters dirty as their employments” (Defoe, 1719, p. 41). Yet from the hundreds who tried to walk the path of the stock brokerage, only a few lucky ones were able to advance themselves materially and socially. Those who made it became part of the emerging group of British bourgeoisie, the *nouveaux riches* of the Enlightenment era.

Habermas has been justly criticized for the fact that his idealized public sphere in London coffeehouses did not include other social categories such as class and gender in the overall analysis (Fraser, 1992). The author himself admits the parallel existence of – for example – a *plebeian public sphere*, yet he claims that even such alternative publics remained “oriented toward the intentions of the bourgeois public sphere” which, from the very beginning, enjoyed almost absolute social and cultural hegemony (Habermas, 1989, p. xviii). While the images of petty gamblers trying to imitate the life of those who were well off, or the workers immersed in passionate coffeehouse discussion while taking the problems of royalty closer to their hearts than their own, may partially justify such a claim, the social body of the English metropolis undeniably contained alternative publics and counterpublics whose goals and identities were clearly differentiated from the aspiration of the nascent bourgeoisie.

Defoe gives us a glimpse into the world of one of these alternative publics in his pamphlet *Every-body’s business, is no-body’s business* (1725), in which he strongly condemned the strike of London women-servants. “Thus have these wenches, by their continual plotting and cabals, united themselves into a formidable body, and got the whip-hand of their betters; they make their own terms with us,” wrote the outraged author, revealing his own social bias. From his words it is clear that the maids were organized and quite conscious of their social position. Furthermore, as women, they became the driving force of social protest in London. “They set an ill example to our children, our apprentices, our covenant-servants, and other dependents,” lamented

Defoe. "The great height to which women servants have brought their wages, makes a mutiny among man-servants, and puts them upon raising their wages too" (pp. 12–13).

The Not-So-Ideal World of the Early London Press

The spread of intrigue and false rumors around coffeehouses was among the most prominent tools the stock-jobbers used to lure their potential customers into fatal investments. In *The Anatomy of Exchange-Alley*, published just a year before the South Sea Company bubble crashed in 1720, Defoe (1719, p. 4) explained the exact mechanism by which the combinations of stock-jobbers manipulated the markets through false information. Originally, they relied only on word of mouth. But with the proliferation of the uncensored press in the early 1700s, stock-jobbers quickly figured out that the "free press" was their important ally. As Defoe (1719, p. 9) explained, "the putting false news upon us" became business as usual among the skillful managers of the university of Exchange-Alley who now worked with a combination of sham reports disseminated by word of mouth, false news planted in the newspapers, and phony letters of intelligence. The press gave such speculators the unique power "to spread rumors and reports of things, and to improve them by the invention of men" (Defoe, 1722, pp. 1–2).

In the early 1700s some of the most powerful coffeehouse brokers were able to build entire international networks of informers which were sometimes superior to the diplomatic service of the states. They became sources of the incessant flow of intelligence from Holland, Flanders, Germany, and Ireland, which gave their patrons the power to know results of "battles fought, victories won, towns taken, etc. before the swiftest expresses of the king's own servants and generals, could arrive." England was in permanent conflict with France about the Protestant succession and entire fortunes of stocks in Exchange Alley depended on the results of such events. Any broker was well versed in how to "run down true news as if it had been false, and run up false news as if it had been true by the force of his foreign intelligencers." To illustrate his point, Defoe (1719) analyzed several examples of "exquisite frauds" which were "executed in such manner as to cheat not the town only, but all Europe" (pp. 10, 16). Consequently, the author complained that manipulation of the news practiced by stock-jobbers left "so little regard to intrinsic value, or the circumstances of the company, that when the company has a loss, stock shall rise; when a great sale, or rich ship arrived, it shall fall" (Defoe, 1719, p. 53). But in the meantime, the price of stocks became a universal "rule by which we are to guide our judgment in public affairs." Thus the destiny of the entire kingdom was in the hands of a few hundred speculators, which led Defoe (1719) to conclude that the coffeehouse clientele in Exchange Alley became "as dangerous to the public safety, as a magazine of gun powder is to a populous city" (pp. 57–59).

Planting false news in London newspapers did not require too much money or ingenuity. Each London paper had one or two “investigative journalists” on its payroll, whose role was “to haunt coffee-houses, and thrust themselves into companies where they are not known; or plant themselves at a convenient distance, to overhear what is said in order to pick up the matter for the papers.” Some of such hack writers could have been bought, others were tricked. An outraged coffeehouse patron claimed that such “sons of Mercury” took down discriminately all the gossip they overheard in public places and consequently “the greatest falsehoods and the idlest fictions are often published for matters of fact” (Anonymous, 1728, pp. 5–7).

London’s Grub Street near Moorfields was the place where writers of this stripe traditionally lived and worked, and as such, the place became the earliest metaphor for British journalism. The men from Grub Street were stereotyped in literature as feckless drunkards who were scribbling furiously in their garrets by rush-light to earn enough money for a bottle of gin or to bail their belongings out of the pawnshops (Clarke, 2004, p. 6). In 1698, Ward compared the life of a typical hack writer to a strumpet: “And if the reason be required, why we betake ourselves to so scandalous a profession as whoring or pamphleteering, the same answer will serve us both, viz. that the unhappy circumstances of narrow fortune, hath forced us to do that for our subsistence, which we are much ashamed of” (Ward, 1698, p. 3). Browne’s literary character, a news-writer named Harlem, admitted that “I do not mean that I never reported in my paper anything that was false, but that I never confirmed anything to be true, that I knew in reality to be a lie.” Harlem’s character proudly boasted that despite the dubious reputation of Grub Street, “news is a great advantage to trade; an improvement of means of knowledge; a diversion to the publick; and the most vendible commodity in the whole kingdom” (Browne, 1715, pp. 230).

But the practices of deception were not limited to cheap hack writers from Grub Street. As a hired pen in the service of Robert Harley, Defoe himself arduously promoted the English union with Scotland through articles planted in the London and Edinburgh newspapers (Downie, 1979; Graves, 1934; McKim, 2006). It was an errand “far from being unfit for a sovereign to direct, or an honest man to perform,” as Defoe later defended his role. According to Downie, it was Robert Harley who for the first time proved that government can survive even under the conditions of the free press. Instead of overtly censoring or fighting the newspapers, Harley used prominent writers like Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift (1704) to create the first viable government public relations machinery in the modern sense of the term (Downie, 1979, pp. 2–3). Inspired by Milton’s *Areopagitica* (1644), Defoe (1951) himself pragmatically argued that while “getting money is the chief business of the world,” so the writers and printers “should be permitted the liberty of writing and printing of either side for bread, free from ignominy” (pp. 4, 21). Yet it was the same Defoe who just a few years earlier openly protested against the fact that London newspapers were full of fabricated stories attributed to dubious sources, an episode that only underscored his conflicted personality (Defoe, 1701a, p. 3).

For an author or publisher of Defoe’s reputation, it was not easy to survive in early modern London without compromising what we would call today professional

integrity. A publisher “having found a declension in the sale of his newspaper” was often forced to fabricate scandals in order to make sure that his paper would sell sufficiently “to make us amends for our trouble” (Anonymous, 1735, pp. 25–27). From the beginning, London newspapers relied heavily on advertisements. They were filled with amusing announcements of ladies who “offer five guineas reward for a little lost dog worth five pence,” or messages of angry husbands warning merchants not to extend credit to their wives (De Saussure, 1995, p. 102). The alternative was to ally the newspaper with a strong political or business interest which would assure its financial viability. This was clearly the case of Defoe’s own *Review*, which almost fully depended on financial support through Harley (Downie, 1979, p. 12).

The experience of Defoe’s London clearly indicates that political spin and manipulation of public opinion through canned stories intentionally “leaked” or directly planted in the media was far from a twentieth-century invention. The English dictionary published in 1735 by Defoe’s son Benjamin Norton noted that one of the meanings of the term *spin out* is also “to make the most of a thing,” though it is not sure whether the term was used also in the context of political manipulation. A 1717 anonymous London pamphlet already challenged the concept of public opinion that by this time became a yardstick by which important social and political forces measured the legitimacy of their actions. Its author claimed that a mere opinion, private or public, doesn’t have the power to change reality and produce truth. “The truth will be truth, whatever the opinions of men concerning it may be,” argued the writer. Quite the contrary, the pamphlet concluded, “perhaps what becomes the public opinion, is often owing, only to the power, ambitions and subtle management of the one single man. Or what if it be two or three craft-makers, who knew how to get their own opinions stamp’d with the public seal?” (Anonymous, 1717, p. 8).

Public Opinion and the Policies of Renaissance Venice

It is obvious that Habermas’s grand theory of the rise of the public sphere during the Enlightenment era cannot hold ground against the pressure of empirical evidence. Indeed, in order to expose what Lippmann (1927) called the “phantom public” we may need to go back to Plato and his quest for a face-to-face society in which “people may fraternize with one another [. . .] and gain knowledge and intimacy.” For Plato, only a society limited in numbers can guarantee that any form of spin and deception can be kept to a minimum simply because the players cannot “conceal their ways one from another in darkness rather than light” (*Laws*, 5.737d–e). Aristotle importantly added that this requires total exclusion of commercial interests from the public sphere. Indeed, he suggests that his ideal *polis* has two agoras, one reserved solely for public life and one for commercial activities (*Politics*, 3.1278a; 7.1331a–b).

It was first the Florentine humanists and then the Venetians who – mainly through their commercial contacts with Byzantium – gradually rediscovered Plato’s and Aristotle’s work. Such rediscovery ushered in what became the Renaissance, not only in the artistic sense but also in the rebirth of classical social and political thought. In a unique social experiment, the Republic of Venice actually implemented most of the classical republican ideals in its constitution. In his 1454 dedication of Plato’s *Laws*, George of Trebizond (1997) called the Venetian constitutional system far better than “Plato himself had ever imagined for his own republic” (p. 129). Indeed, Venice was organized around two main squares, San Marco and Rialto. In San Marco, the little section called Piazzetta or Broglio was traditionally reserved for civic functions, while the commercial activities of the city were concentrated in the Rialto (Sanudo, 1992, pp. 8–11). It was in Broglio where about 2,000–3,000 Venetian nobles, who enjoyed the status of full-fledged citizens, were encouraged to fraternize in a purely Platonic way (Foscarini, 1843, p. 301; cf. Chambers & Pullan, 1992, p. 49). Yet, when they all met once a week in the Great Council to cast their votes for important matters of state, any form of personal contact, even a congratulatory handshake after a successful vote or election, was considered suspicious (Sanudo, 1879–1903, vol. 40, pp. 664–666; cf. Finlay, 1980, p. 271). Before casting their votes, noble citizens sat quietly in long rows back to back to each other, listening to factual reports of different committee members or dispatches of their foreign ambassadors which were supposed to give them all factual information needed to adopt a responsible position on a debated issue and subsequently to cast their vote. Technical rules made sure that any potential for spin or partisan persuasion was kept to the minimum (Finlay, 1980, pp. 201, 229; de Vivo, 2007, pp. 25–26).

Empirical evidence shows very clearly that the Venetian constitutional system was far from perfect. The Broglio itself later became synonymous with corruption and electioneering (Finlay, 1980, p. 197). But if there ever was a Western society which came close to rationalizing the process of decision-making, this was it. James Harrington, who visited Venice and later strongly contrasted his model of deliberative democracy in *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) with the constitutional principles of Venice, was openly puzzled by such mechanized democracy. Watching Venetian noble citizens casting their votes, Harrington noted that “it is for a dumb show the goodliest that I ever beheld with my eyes [. . .] for a council, and not a word spoken in it, is a contradiction” (p. 27). Indeed, this was the same democratic process which Jean-Jacques Rousseau observed in Venice as secretary to the French ambassador and – contrary to Harrington – later recommended in *The Social Contract* (1762). It has been described as democratic participation without public deliberation. Rousseau called it the *general will*, a rational sum of individually informed judgments. Translated into modern terms, Rousseau was talking about a society in which every voter receives only objective, factual information void of spin through communication in both personal discussion and mediated form. In other words, Rousseau was willing to sacrifice public discussion – in which participants may have an opportunity to shape their own arguments and understanding of public issues – to deprive skilled

manipulators of the opportunity to abuse the deliberative mechanism by deploying their persuasive strategies.

Reflecting on Plato's claims that orators often use their skill for personal aggrandizement (*Phaedrus*, 258a–b), and the sole purpose of rhetoric is to produce consensus devoid of any ethical standards with little regard for truth (*Gorgias*, 255a), Venetians detested public opinion, the *opinione vulgare* as they called it. Their constitutional philosophy saw personal ambition and public opinion as two things that were “very dangerous in governing the state or republic.” They saw passionate public deliberations as a crack through which partisan agendas or hidden personal interests can creep into the decision-making mechanism. After the infamous military debacle at Agnadello in 1509 that definitively derailed Venice from its path of greatness, diarist Priuli (1912–1938, vol. 4, p. 246) blamed the gradual erosion of Venetian hegemony on the irresponsible policies of populist leaders. He argued that they lost the long-term interest of the state from their sight; instead, their decisions were driven more and more by *opinione vulgare* generated through discussions in Venetian piazzas, loggias, churches, barber shops, and taverns.

Zaret's *Origins of Democratic Culture* (2000) fills the important gap between Venetian classical republican political philosophy with its negative attitudes toward public opinion, and Habermasian eighteenth-century London where public opinion is already generally recognized, even celebrated as a central feature of political legitimation. Zaret claims that this important shift took place in England before any similar comparable initiatives in other Western societies. The author locates this gradual change in the period of English Revolution (ca. 1640–1660), and derives his claim from the analysis of communicative actions of a wide group of speakers, writers, printers, petitioners, publishers, and readers. The subsequent seminal works of Milton, Locke, and Harrington further corroborate this assertion. While English history is seen by Zaret (pp. 6–7) as the “model case” for this development, such ideas subsequently spilled over to the Continent, were infused with other social and cultural norms, and resulted in similar, yet slightly different normative models of the public sphere in France and in the German lands (Darnton, 2000; Melton, 2001). But, concluding with Zaret, it was mid-seventeenth-century England that ushered in a new paradigm of communicative action based on the importance of consent, open debate, and the authority of opinion in politics that mainstream scholarship nevertheless still continues to attribute to the intellectual discoveries of the Enlightenment. Or shall we, as Robert Darnton (1971) already suggested years ago, simply redefine—eventually relocate in terms of historical periodization—the very term Enlightenment?

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Journalism History: North America

Richard Kaplan

ABSTRACT

Newspapers emerged in colonial British North America in the early 1700s. By the time the first muskets were fired in the American revolt against King George III in 1775, a powerful new cultural imagining of the press's central role in the public debates of citizens and the functioning of modern democracy defined journalism. Newspapers were seen as essential to liberty, spreading information and opinion among "free-born citizens." Indeed, across three centuries this notion of the press's service to a broad deliberating public has permanently informed and justified the press's public mission, its political rhetoric, and its claims to special authority in the contentions of the democratic public sphere. From partisan journals to independent, professional dailies, from small struggling print shops to giant media conglomerates, from a few pages of cotton rag to today's electronic websites, a public ethic of service to democracy has informed the North American press's proudest moments and rationalized its worst practices.

Newspapers emerged in colonial British North America in the early 1700s. By the time muskets were first fired in the North American revolt against King George III in 1775, a powerful new cultural imagining of the press's central role in the public debates of citizens and the functioning of modern democracy defined journalism. Newspapers were seen as essential to liberty, spreading information and opinion

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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among “free-born citizens.” Indeed, in a republic that spread across an immense physical territory, the democratic deliberations and meetings of the mass citizenry could only be virtual. The new nation was necessarily an “imagined community,” one where citizens came together only in the pages of the press.

Journalism was essential to US democracy, and this notion of the press’s service to a broad deliberating public would come to permanently inform and justify its public mission, its political rhetoric, and its claims to special authority (Kaplan, 2003; Schudson, 2002; Warner, 1990). Through all its permutations across three centuries – from partisan journals to independent, professional dailies, from small struggling print shops to giant media conglomerates, from a few pages of cotton rag to today’s electronic websites – a public ethic of service to democracy has informed the North American press’s proudest moments and rationalized its worst practices.

The first papers of British North America were modeled on the press in England, reflecting the colonies’ close cultural affiliation with the mother country. Journals copied the format and indeed their months-old news from journals transported across the ocean. They offered highly abbreviated summaries of events in England and the European continent. They were published by small artisanal print shops seeking to gain additional revenues to prop up their businesses.

Colonial newspapers shared not only their form and content with journals of the mother country but also their overarching cultural understandings of the nature of public life. Traditionally, under the British monarchy, “public” meant the presentation of the king and the nobles before the populace. In these ritual ceremonies, the overwhelming power and majesty of the king was reiterated before an observing, deferential, silent audience (Peters, 1995, pp. 7–8). The general populace supposedly lacked the reasoning capabilities, much less the authority, to participate in political decisions. Information, it was believed, should not be distributed to the citizenry or else the king’s proper rule would be disrupted. Newspapers in the early eighteenth century, thus, were understood as the official sanctioned voice of the English monarchy or colonial government and were still licensed. Journalism was often a compilation of official decrees, while the deliberations of parliament and the monarchy were by law secret. The right to publish was seen as a privilege that had to be controlled and licensed at the benevolent generosity of the royal government (Clark, 2007, p. 375).

The early efforts at journalism in Britain and the colonies were modeled on private correspondence known as “intelligences.” Dating back to the twelfth century, intelligences were handwritten newsletters addressed to elite individuals, not as citizens, but in their private capacities. The letter transmitted information on commercial, political, or diplomatic affairs that might serve their interests (Clark, 2007, p. 348). A second forerunner of the colonial press were the polemical political pamphlets that emerged out of the English Civil War and the early Restoration starting in the 1640s. These pamphlets implicitly and sometimes explicitly stressed the right of the public, or at least the aristocracy, to engage in governmental affairs and public deliberation (Clark, 1994).

The *Boston News-Letter* was the first continuously published paper, issued starting in 1704. The second, the *Boston Gazette*, began in 1719. The *News-Letter* never printed more than 300 copies of any edition and struggled to get advertisers and subscribers to pay their bills. Reflecting the monarchical conception of controlled publicity, both journals were licensed, both were officially sponsored and subsidized, and the publishers of both were brought before colonial legislatures to account for errors. This journalism made no pretense of being “free” (Modey, 2008, p. 305; Starr, 2004, p. 61).

Benjamin Franklin (1987, p. 15) details in his autobiography how his brother James, publisher of the *New England Courant*, confronted this controlled, privileged system of publicity. When he printed an article displeasing to the Massachusetts Assembly in 1723, “he was taken up censur’d and imprison’d for a month by the speaker’s warrant.” Upon release, James was banned from publishing his paper.

During 1720–1723, however, British radicals John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, writing under the pseudonym of Cato, articulated an ideal of a free press as necessary for a free citizenry, one that possessed the right to political participation and needed information to hold the government accountable (Clark, 2007, pp. 349–350). Their 15th published letter boldly began, “Without Freedom of Thought, there can be no such Thing as Wisdom; and no such Thing as Public Liberty, without Freedom of Speech: Which is the Right of every Man, as far as by it he does not hurt and control the Right of another; and this is the only Check which it ought to suffer, the only Bounds which it ought to know.” Trenchard and Gordon advocated ideas of elite political representation in parliament and were informed by cultural traditions of republicanism. Such strands of political philosophy increasingly infused American thinking in the eighteenth century (Bailyn, 1967, pp. 35–36, 43–44; Brown, 2000, pp. 42–43).

The Cato letters were widely reprinted in British North America and cited in the 1735 trial of printer John Peter Zenger. In that court case, the governor of New York tried to suppress Zenger’s paper on the grounds of seditious libel. Zenger’s lawyer drew on the Cato letters, arguing that printing the truth could not be a libel, and that colonial Americans properly possessed “a right to liberty of both exposing and opposing arbitrary power (in these parts of the world at least) by speaking and writing truth” (Bailyn, 1967, pp. 43, 52). The Zenger case bolstered appreciation of a free press as an indispensable weapon against arbitrary rulers (Clark, 2007, p. 375).

North American exposure to Cato’s letters occurred during 1700–1750, an era in which the colonial assemblies themselves gained strength due to Britain’s “salutary neglect” (Henretta, Brody, & Ware, 1997, pp. 74, 86–87). With the 1765 Stamp Act, a new politics emerged in which conflicts in parliamentary assemblies and among local elites expanded beyond the confines of elite circles. As Richard Brown (2000, pp. 43–45) notes, “Opposition leaders in [. . .] the colonies turned to the people for support and sought to mobilize them with newspapers and pamphlets [. . .] The idea of an informed citizenry took on radical, even revolutionary, implications.”

This expanding realm and ideal of a free public and a free press reflected a peculiar constellation of power; government had only limited ability to control print addressed

to a public beyond the confines of the bureaucracy. In British North America, as well as in Britain and Europe, “fragmentation among political élites and competition in the market contributed together to breaking up the monopoly of the court gazette and opening up public political debate” (Starr, 2004, p. 59).

The new politics was also guided by the positive political ideal of republicanism. As Sean Wilentz (1997, p. 71; Nerone, 1993) details, republicanism offered a powerful vision of politics to the North American colonists in revolt against England and the king. More than a liberal philosophy of the right to pursue private individual happiness, republicanism focused on politics as a properly collective concern of citizens with the common good realized through the active participation of independent, equal virtuous citizens in reasoned public debate. A drive for new profits, or what Benedict Anderson (1983) called “print capitalism,” guided by republican political ideals without the restrictions of normal governmental repression, enabled the nascent free press and public to flourish.

As local political contentions moved into the public sphere and into print, printers elaborated a conception of press freedom. Their notion, as Stephen Botein (1975) argues, emphasized neutrality and openness to all strands of opinion. Already in 1731, that notion of printer neutrality was manifest in Franklin’s witty “Apology for Printers,” where he invoked a notion of printers serving as conduits for a broad array of opinion with which they did not necessarily agree, but which they left to the public to judge and filter. Franklin (1987) wrote:

Printers are educated in the Belief, that when Men differ in Opinion, both Sides ought equally to have the Advantage of being heard by the Publick; and that when Truth and Error have fair Play, the former is always an overmatch for the latter: Hence they cheerfully serve all contending Writers that pay them well, without regarding on which side they are of the Question in Dispute.

This posture of the press as open to a variety of opinions with very limited gatekeeping or interpretation by the journalists was challenged during the revolution and again later with the emergence of a competitive party system. American newspapers moved from what John Nerone (2007) terms a “liberal” public sphere to a “mass partisan” one. The press shifted from functioning as a neutral, open forum for a pluralistic array of political opinion to an active, one-sided political advocate. Indeed, from the passage of the Stamp Act by the British Parliament in 1765 through the founding of the new nation, the colonies were riven by an angry spirit of rebellion then revolution. Amid the contentions and often violent pressures, printers found it difficult to maintain their neutrality and thus became in Botein’s (1975) expression “reluctant partisans.”

With the revolt victorious, the new republic’s media policy was guided by a strong belief in the press’s fundamental role in democracy. Newspapers were not merely private commercial goods, but also recognized as public institutions crucial to the commonweal (John, 2000). Furthermore, communication was seen as necessary to

bind North Americans, who were culturally divided and geographically dispersed, into a united nation (Howe, 2007, pp. 222–229). In addition to a democratic desire for a vibrant press transmitted into every nook and cranny of the nation, political parties were interested in legislation to support journalism. The early US “free press” was subsidized by government through reduced postal rates and the delivery of a postal service to all small towns and hamlets across the country.

Beyond a policy of “internal improvements,” America had been transfixed since before the revolution by the potential threat of corrupt, tyrannical government to the rights of citizens. The selections on the news imposed by commercial considerations and market trends toward concentration, along with the inequalities of class economic power, were not yet visible as threats to an open, participatory public sphere of free, equal citizens. Only in the late nineteenth century with the rise of the telegraph and the Associated Press news service, and then again in the Progressive Era and the 1930s’ New Deal, would the United States reflect on the dangers that concentrated economic power posed for an independent and vigilant press.

Penny Press

Historians often describe the arrival of the “penny press” in the 1830s as a turning point in the early American press. These new cheap dailies expanded the topics considered newsworthy, embraced a new economic model for increasing revenues, and incorporated more Americans into the reading public. In many ways, this shift in the definition of the newspaper paralleled ongoing transformations of US society. In Michael Schudson’s (1978) analysis, cheap mass newspapers emerged in tandem with a new “democratic market society,” that is, a novel egalitarian urban society, detached from political battles over the commonweal, pushed by a booming market economy and very much interested in narratives of violation of social norms along with “human interest” stories.

There is much to dispute in Schudson’s classic account. The penny press, however, did reflect three revolutions in US society – a political revolution with the rise of mass democratic parties, an economic one with an expanding market, and a reading revolution as accelerating literacy along with pent-up social demand for reading material combined to fuel a market for news.

A reading revolution? Prior to the early nineteenth century, books and printed material of all sorts were “relatively scarce, literacy was uneven, and the circulation of information was slow.” At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, common schools expanded and, in turn, literacy rates skyrocketed, while the number of books and the speed of communication rose dramatically. Commerce, Carl Kaestle (1991, p. 52) says, was at the “root of the takeoff.” Literacy rates in colonial America had already surpassed most of northeastern Europe, reflecting a relatively egalitarian, individualistic Protestant society that emphasized reading and schooling as the path

to the Bible and faith. Literacy continued to rise throughout the nineteenth century, incorporating women too (Kaestle 1991, p. 19; Burrows & Wallace, 1999, p. 522).

The United States evolved from a society of scarcity of reading material to one of abundance during the early 1800s (Hall, 1996, intro; Howe, 2007, pp. 231–235; Nord, 2004). In the process, the very notion of how to read and its social significance changed. Journalism and the penny press were marked by this transformation. The daily paper, by nature, seems a product of an age of reading abundance where each print product is nothing to be treasured and closely read for the wisdom contained within. Instead the paper furnishes only the most topical of information with little lasting social significance. Already out of date by the next day, news by nature seems to be a compilation of facts without any tradition, rituals, or even narrative tying it to the community, or so James Carey (1997, Ch. 9) and Walter Benjamin (1969, pp. 155–200) have argued.

Before the 1820s and 1830s, high cost and low availability frustrated a great American desire for reading material (Brown, 1983, p. 302). Journalism's audience, too, was limited by price and content to the commercial and political elite. At six cents a copy and sold only on a subscription basis, the existing daily papers were unaffordable to the general urban population. Furthermore, their stories focused on such economic information as the markets and ship departures and the circumscribed polemics of the politicians, while ignoring "the events of daily city life that might interest the general urban population" (Burrows & Wallace, 1999, p. 522). The populace reciprocated the six-cent papers' disdain. Circulation remained under 2,000 on average, with the leading New York paper, the *Courier and Express*, pulling in only 4,000 subscribers.

Already in the 1820s, printers were seeking new readers and proposing a different economic model. It was first the labor press, motivated by the political contentions of the urban working class, which probed whether lower- and middle-class readers could sustain another model of journalism. The new labor press proved ephemeral, but Benjamin Day, one of its prime movers, recognized the new potential market. Launching the *New York Sun* in 1833, he initiated a wave of one-penny papers. Just like the cheap evening press that began in the 1880s, the 1830s penny press radically reduced the cost of a newspaper to a single cent and slashed production costs just as severely. In contrast to the traditional expensive "blanket" papers, penny papers typically were much smaller at $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches (Burrows & Wallace, 1999, p. 523; Saxton, 1991, pp. 96–97).

Unlike the six-cent papers, Day's *New York Sun* avoided expensive, long, and tedious news stories on world affairs or from the capitol. Instead, it focused on local news that would attract urban artisans (Burrows & Wallace, 1999, p. 524). Historians offer contrasting interpretations of this new form of the news. Certainly, all see the new daily penny press as introducing a more popular content focused on everyday life, reflecting a "democratization" of society and politics, although the press prior to the cheap dailies had also avidly sought the news and scoops.

The penny press, however, featured crime news. Early on, with the mysterious and grisly murder of New York prostitute Helen Jewett in 1836, it discovered new

talents of in-depth investigation and titillating storytelling. Reporters stationed at the courts found a ready supply of news they could mold into gripping narratives. The populace pondered the subtle significance of Jewett's death for the social order and so have historians ever since.

The news, suggest such historians as Schudson (1978), Karen Halttunen (1998), and Dan Schiller (1981), refracted the new importance of everyday life, the vernacular or the "social." In Schudson's accounting, politics lost pride of place in the journals' pages. For Schiller, in contrast, the penny press's news featured a sharp articulation of social tensions and fears. It attracted interest precisely from how it told the tale of society gone wrong. Crime and its subsequent probing in a court of law oft represented a story of social decay and elite corruption. In fact, nineteenth-century journalism in many ways adopted a quasi-judicial attitude. The news story presents an array of contending facts for the final arbitration and verdict of the reading public—jury (DeLombard, 2007).

Certainly since its origins, journalism has always functioned as an articulation of the "social." Along with reporting the explicit conflicts and opposed perspectives of politics, the press reiterates the shared moral codes of society. Journalism takes up select, seemingly non-political daily events and weaves them into a narrative of shared social rules – a story aghast at the violation of those rules and applauding the machinery of justice that reestablishes social order.

Fact-centered narratives of topical events, argues Jean Chalaby (1996), increasingly defined US and British (in contrast to European) journalism in the last half of the nineteenth century. In this interpretation, US journalism, unlike European, was peculiarly detached from the closely related fields of political competition and literary production. In contrast, in France journalists were oriented by the values of partisan politics and also seeking to establish themselves as prominent literary personalities; unadorned fact-driven narratives fell into the background, displaced by advocacy and commentary filled with ornate language and personal judgments.

While Chalaby's interpretation provides illuminating insights into the rising value of news in the United States and the distance between news production and the weak US literary field, he is clearly mistaken about partisan journalism. Political parties continued to command the loyalties of the US populace throughout the nineteenth century, and in turn, party competition dominated the reporting and interpretive understandings of the US press.

A. J. Liebling (1960) once quipped that "freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one." But during the 1830s, the cost to enter the field of publishing was relatively low. Dozens of penny papers were launched in Eastern US cities (Burrows & Wallace, 1999, p. 525). Indeed, the 1830s represented a brief ideal moment, when the public sphere possessed a degree of openness, argues Saxton (1991, Ch. 4). Newspapers' prices were dropping, yet publishers did not require extensive capital to reach and hold a readership.

Recalling the early days of his penny paper, publisher Day remarked, "Capital! Bless you, I had not any capital" (Hall, 1996). Although the steam press had been

invented along with Koenig rotary cylindrical presses in the 1810s, US newspapers had yet to deploy these technologies, in part because their circulations remained local and small (Nord, 2004, p. 68). Indeed, Day's journal, the *Sun*, was first issued on a hand-cranked flatbed press that could print 200 papers in an hour. After the 1830s, "technology, spurred by mass circulation, then escalated cost of entry" into the market (Saxton, 1991, p. 105). In John Nerone and Kevin Barnhurst's (2001) analysis, the 1830s represented a turning point in newspapers' "mode of production." Journals shifted from an artisan-printer form of ownership and control to an industrialized economic model that relied on extensive capital investment and a strict division of labor between printers, editorial staff, and publisher-editor.

Partisan Press

The penny press spoke about its independence from parties and partly shifted its focus from the political to the social and even to the private and sensational. The first wave of cheap papers, however, largely participated in the Democratic Party's uprising against the earlier elite party journals. The new cheap papers at first disavowed political connections but such independence soon faded.

A "second wave" of more overtly political cheap dailies followed the first. They functioned in part as a Whig Party reply to the dominant Democratic alignments of the penny papers (Saxton, 1991, p. 102). In fact, the emergence of a mass press in the 1830s and 1840s was part and parcel of the democratization of the US political system. Newspapers were "the single most important connection between voters and party" (Baldasty, 1992, p. 14). The press supported the growth of the Whigs and the Democrats as they battled over the ideals and the spoils of US government, embroiling citizens in the passion of their conflicts. Throughout the nineteenth century, the vast majority of daily journals were firmly, publicly, emotionally aligned with one party or its opponent.

The demands of partisanship decisively affected journalism's economics, professional ethics, and news selections. As a loyal party organ, the newspaper accomplished a variety of political duties that demonstrated its commitment to the party (Kaplan, 2002, Ch. 1). First and foremost, a partisan journal must endorse the party's "men and measures" without expressing any doubts. When the party announced its slate of candidates, the journal naturally printed and endorsed the nominees. This published list, however, appeared not just once, but day in and day out for the entire election season.

Reporting too was colored by political preferences. The papers privileged the views and voices of the favored party while neglecting the plurality of views in civil society. Furthermore they reported events that supported the policy positions of their party while suppressing news of those that might weaken their party's electoral prospects. Journalism thus departed from such traditional ideals of the public sphere

as equal and open access, reasoned debate, and the unbiased reporting of all relevant information.

The editorial page typically operated with a simple, enthusiastic categorization of friends and foes. For the education of the readers, it published extended defenses of party policy. For their entertainment, the paper jeered the missteps of its political opponent. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority of US newspaper editorials, in election season and out, pleaded the party's cause and defended its policies (Kaplan, 1997).

The daily paper was far from being an independent producer of information. Instead, the partisan paper was part of a public political community. Rather than operating as neutral transmitters of information, journals labored to build a shared partisan identity, either through democratic communication or through expressive rites of group loyalty (McGerr, 1986, pp. 14–22).

Given the partisan press's emphatic, evaluative voice, the news of the Gilded Age appeared irredeemably particular, plural, and personal. It emerged from a specific political community and stood opposed to the news of its political foes. Under the partisan direction of the publisher-editor, it appeared to possess a strongly unified, emotional voice. Indeed, the journal seemed to be crafted by the force of the editor's personality. In nostalgic accounts of the era, this was the last flowering of a personal journalism, before the arrival of complex bureaucracies and commercialized news corporations (e.g., Leupp, 1918; Watterson, 1918). In reality, nineteenth-century news was a mass-produced affair, contrived under multiple constraints, most notably that of party interests.

Nineteenth-century American political culture with its emphatic ideal of partisanship offered little support for an independent, impartial journalism. The parties' need to have a voice in every town and hamlet pushed expansion in newspapers, supporting journals that were economically floundering and inundating the market. Partisan papers were organized into networks and hierarchies within each state and nationally. Newspapers that were located in the state capitol or major cities and spoke for the major factions typically provided the dominant interpretations to other party organs in the hinterlands. Articles were reprinted, excerpted, and quoted, thus producing a weave of news and interpretation that united the party across the land. National party battles and capillary networks of news distribution helped cement a national culture, beyond all regional and social divisions.

Other political voices were consequently neglected or derided. Papers suppressed issues that conflicted with the party's agenda or potentially divided its electoral base. In the late nineteenth century, Republican journals refused to publicize the views of alcohol prohibition; both parties ignored or co-opted labor's demands (Folkerts, 1985; Goodwyn, 1978). In fact, when a series of railroad strikes and riots erupted across the nation in 1877, papers and party elites closed ranks. Newspapers – tied to parties, owned by the wealthy, and with a circulation limited to the upper third of the population – tended to disregard the interests of the mass of workers, poor, and immigrants. The press uniformly reacted to the strikes with hysteria and calls for

their violent suppression (Baehr, 1972, pp. 179–182; Kaplan, 1995; Nord, 1984; Slotkin, 1985, pp. 478–484). Until the arrival of Hearst, Pulitzer, and the cheap evening journals in the 1880s, the press was closed to the interests of the working classes.

As the century progressed, and party issues often faded into worn-out rhetoric, the press moderated its devotion to the affairs of parties. Newspapers juggled stories of a political character with those that were social or “human interest.” Politics, according to one measure, fell to 20% as a share of the leading stories (Baldasty, 1992, pp. 153–157; Rubin, 1981, pp. 58, 82). Even at century’s end, however, the majority of daily papers maintained an ongoing formal affiliation, a fixed public identity as party advocates (McGerr, 1986, p. 120).

In the end and despite their pretensions, the dominant English-language daily partisan press could never fully monopolize democracy’s public arena. A myriad of weeklies and monthlies, more or less ephemeral, publicized the concerns of African Americans, Native Americans, newly arriving immigrants, trade unions, women, and all shades and manner of protest movements. These journals stood as a constant reminder and rebuke to what was left out and ignored by the dailies.

Democratization of the Daily Press

Newspaper circulation into the 1870s hovered between three to four copies for every ten households. The press was purchased by a minority, read by the well-to-do, and largely directed toward the elite. In the waning years of the century, however, the press underwent a twofold revolution: first economic, then political. From 1870 to 1910, the daily press rapidly expanded to incorporate most US citizens into its audience. Journalism realized its long-cherished dream of circulating crucial political information to all citizens, encompassing everyone in a “republic of letters” (Leonard, 1995). Advertising and profits drove this media growth. By 1910, newspapers were full-scale incorporated companies, earning and expending thousands, even millions, paying dividends to stockholders, and just commencing their conglomeration into extended media chains (Smythe, 1993). Starting in the 1880s, cheap evening newspapers proliferated. These dailies targeted the urban working class and incorporated the mass of the population into the newspaper public.

The chief problem for any popular press, as publishing magnate Edward Scripps observed, was price. In the 1870s, Scripps noted, most newspapers still cost four or five cents, a hefty share of a worker’s average wages of a dollar a day. “Newspapers were luxury items,” Scripps noted (Britt, 1960, pp. 29, 61; Scripps, 1966, pp. 316–317). A number of media scholars have described the dynamic media economics that supposedly overcame this barrier to newspaper expansion and profits in the late nineteenth century. Harry Baehr (1972, p. 234), for example, writes that the new journalism of Pulitzer and Hearst “was founded on cheap, mass circulation with advertising footing the bill.” Richard Ohmann (1980; Norris, 1990, pp. 31, 35–37)

provides further details of this dynamic expansion in reference to the analogous 1893 revolution in magazine publishing. Three interlinked processes, Ohmann says, explain the explosive growth in the mass market for periodicals in the 1890s. First, lower magazine prices stimulated a growing readership. This burgeoning circulation, in turn, produced expanded advertising revenue. Magazines then employed the newly generated funds (along with a reduction of per unit costs of magazine production) to cut subscription prices further, which once again sparked a rise in circulation.

But in the 1870s and early 1880s, newspapers were blocked from adopting such a “dynamic” economic program by the high cost of newsprint paper and the relatively weak advertising market. According to James E. Scripps (1875), publisher of the *Detroit Evening News*, advertising demand “fell far short of the capacities of the papers to accommodate it.” Plenty of available newspaper space, but limited demand, resulted in a “demoralized” advertising market, where advertisers could dictate the terms of trade.

These obstacles were first circumvented, not by the giants of the New York publishing industry, but by small entrepreneurs in the Midwest. Publishers such as James E. Scripps and later his brother Edward Scripps proposed an all-around cutting of production costs. By implementing strict economies, publishers across the Midwest would launch a wave of cheap afternoon dailies and revolutionize the urban news market.

In 1873, Scripps launched the *Detroit Evening News* at two cents. Within three years, the *News* achieved financial success, and its circulation, although a mere 17,000 copies daily, overshadowed the circulation of all other Detroit journals. With its profitability assured, Scripps followed his Detroit venture with papers in Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Buffalo. Meanwhile, other publishers such as Victor Lawson in Chicago and William Nelson in Kansas City established their own cheap afternoon sheets. In each case, the journal was a short, scrappy bulletin paper, supplying an abbreviated but complete news report, and distributed to the urban working populations. The wave of newspaper growth across the United States in 1880–1910 largely rested on the expansion in number and circulation of these afternoon publications. Between 1870 and 1910 (the high-water mark for US dailies), the number of sheets published jumped almost fourfold, from 574 to 2,600. By 1910, evening journals constituted 74% of the dailies and between 1880 and 1910 they made up 79% of the gain in papers (Lee, 1937; Smith, 1964, pp. 341–343).

In the largest US cities, circulation surged from about five copies per ten inhabitants to slightly more than one for every resident in 1910 (Lee, 1937). By the early twentieth century, taking the paper was a daily habit among workers. In the early 1920s, Robert and Helen Lynd (1959, p. 514) surveyed the consumption expenditures of blue-collar households in Middletown: 100% subscribed to a daily journal. Indeed, other studies in that decade report that “newspapers were by far the most common reading matter of young workers, followed by fiction magazines, the ‘pulp’” (Denning, 1987, pp. 220–221).

In the 1880s, newspaper economics were shaken once more by changes that rendered the penny-pinching ascetic model of the cheap dailies outmoded. Rocketing

demand for advertising space and collapsing prices for paper stock compelled a reconstruction of the urban evening paper. These market conditions reflected more general transformations in the US economy, as it moved toward a mass-market, corporate-organized consumer society. Journalism acceded to a commercial logic of audience-maximizing and market concentration. Newspapers turned dynamic as they aggressively pursued advertising and audience with new contents, especially sensationalism. These economic shifts created essential preconditions, if not sufficient motive, for newspapers' later departure from their avid partisanship of the nineteenth century.

Advertising revenue at Scripps's *News* rose as a share of the paper's profits, rocketing from 38% of the gross profits in 1886 to 58% in 1889. US census data indicates that advertising as a proportion of both newspaper and magazine income mounted from 44% in 1879 to 49.6% in 1889 and continued in a steady upswing to 54.5% in 1899 and 60% in 1909 (Baker, 1994, pp. 14–16; Kaplan, 1995; Lee, 1937, pp. 748–749; Ohmann, 1980, p. 90). In the early twentieth century, journals across the nation reported a sudden influx of advertising revenue. Even country dailies in the heart of Kansas, such as William Allen White's *Emporia Gazette*, shared in the riches, as local merchants turned to advertising in their efforts to fend off the appeals of big-city retailers and mail-order catalogues (Griffith, 1989, pp. 78–91; White, 1946, pp. 377, 401). Throughout the twentieth century, advertising continued to make up 60–70% of all newspaper revenues.

This increase in ad lineage rested on a massive rise in “display” advertising. Department stores in the 1880s, following the lead of Wanamakers in Philadelphia, began to use full-page ads to entice customers into their stores in large numbers. They strove to attract customers from throughout the streetcar city, creating high-volume sales (cf. Leach, 1993, Ch. 1, pp. 61–62, 123). Henceforth advertising copy should be changed daily and large enough to draw notice. In the 1890s, Ohmann (1980; Chandler, 1980) explains, this tactic of the retail trade was followed by a push for publicity by national brands. In fact, the United States was shifting from an era of family firms serving local markets with a highly segmented demand to an era of corporate mass production for mass national consumption. Corporations invested ever increasing amounts of capital in fixed productive facilities, capable of high-volume manufacturing cheap goods. In order to make a profit from these investments, firms needed to stabilize consumer demand and construct national markets. The advertising boom enriching newspapers emerged as a key part of their strategy.

In place of the cheap, self-sufficient bulletin sheets that aimed at a limited market niche, there flourished a new dynamic, expanding newspaper – hunting for ever more news, readers, and above all advertising. This burgeoning appetite for readers led to keen competition among journals and eventually a saturated market.

A surfeit of advertising not only enriched the daily paper, but induced a reconstruction of the reigning practices of journalism. Newspapers, in Scripps's words, needed to be “fashioned for advertisers.” Increasingly, the demands of commercial publicity infiltrated the press; the daily paper was transformed into a vehicle for the organization and administration of consumer markets. Newspapers packaged subscribers as

much as they packaged news. In the process, the reader was no longer addressed only as citizen or engaged partisan, but also as a customer, consumer, and passive spectator (Given, 1912, p. 41; Seitz, 1916, p. 93).

First, advertising promoted an expanded, more variegated newspaper. Journals appended page after page in their hunt for customers and to clothe their added girth in paid publicity. In the course of the 1880s, Pulitzer's *New York World* jumped from four to eight to 14 pages, reaching 16 in the 1890s. More elite papers, for instance the *New York Post* and the *New York Tribune*, doubled their pages to eight just when they reduced their price to three cents in the early 1880s (Lee, 1937, pp. 322–326; Smith, 1964, pp. 342–343, 345). Following Pulitzer's lead, the press added sections that catered to an array of advertising interests and customers, most notably: sports, comics, and a woman's page (Baldasty, 1992, pp. 121–127; Griffith, 1989, pp. 215–216;). In 1927, as researchers catalogued the reading habits of passengers on New York subways, commuters seemed to prefer "sports, comics, photographs, and sensational stories of personal violence" (Gray & Munroe, 1930, pp. 43–44, 150, 179–180).

The needs of advertisers helped split big city journalism. In his popular 1904 manual, Walter Scott (1904, p. 382; Given, 1912) advised advertisers: "If [an advertiser] wanted to reach the better classes, he would use the morning papers; if he wanted to reach the laboring class, he would employ the evening papers." In addition, advertising shifted the very size and definition of the audience to which a journal was responsive. With advertising's growth, readers' pennies no longer directly counted. The individual paper stopped emphasizing a core community of readers especially interested in the news or tied to a shared public identity. Instead, with their prices falling, "the media began to focus on the marginal customer, who, despite little interest in the news and little willingness to pay for it, was the building block of the ever-bigger audience sought – and paid for – by advertisers" (Weaver, 1994, p. 46). The increasingly disparate content helped free the journal from the political demands of its readers. If the daily offended a reader because of a divisive political position, then there existed other, perhaps more important, bases of subscriber loyalty.

The economic transformation of the daily paper – from a (class or partisan) niche publication to one aiming at a mass, general market – certainly influenced the press's partisanship. Baldasty (1992; Smith, 1977), among others, has argued that the press fundamentally shifted its political identity and rhetoric during the second half of the nineteenth century. Newspapers, no longer dependent upon party subsidies but instead driven by the profits to be gained from large circulations and advertising, supposedly avoided divisive content. Baldasty contends they dropped the partisanship that was sure to offend some readers and instead embraced political independence, even objectivity. Papers ceased to address their audience in political terms – neither as citizens, nor as fellow partisans – but instead as consumers.

In all, however, the economic shifts in the 1880s and 1890s constituted a series of forces weakening, not eliminating, the newspaper's public, formal links with parties. A transformation in US political institutions and political culture would be necessary before journalism could break free from the sway of partisan readers and partisan interpretations of the daily events. In the waning years of the century, journals still

maintained a public party affiliation. US dailies, whether the elite *New York Times* or the popular *New York World*, found that their partisan identity continued to be economically advantageous. And to this day, even market-driven news continues to address its readers as citizens who are united and indeed captivated by stories of the nation in triumph and in tragedy.

Some historians contend that the growth of news transmitted by the telegraph along with syndicated content and the news wire services, most notably the Associated Press, undermined the partisan nature of the news, providing alternative models and inducements for impartial independent reporting (Carey, 1997; Chapman, 2005). A growing commercial news market required cheap sources of information and thus standardized content. This uniform news delivered by syndicated and wire news services, most notably the Associated Press (AP), supposedly weakened the plural partisan forms of political news. First known as the New York Associated Press, the AP dates back to 1848. It drew on member newspapers for its copy and its mission was to supply factual, non-controversial information at cheaper prices, ensuring that member papers could save money and avoid the risk of being scooped by rival papers.

From the start, the AP was mired in controversy. Begun by a coterie of New York papers, the news service was said to favor their interests. AP licenses were limited, and member papers used their control to excluded rivals, placing new publications at a disadvantage as they entered the market (Nerone, 2007; Starr, 2004, pp. 184–185). Further, in a sharply partisan political culture, charges of bias were inevitable, and indeed, the AP had notable links to the Republican Party. Such chargers found meat in the fallout over the controversial, contested 1876 presidential election (Nerone, 2007, p. 246; Starr, 2004, pp. 186–187). As a consequence, worries over concentrated economic power in the public sphere and control of public communication were first voiced in debates over the AP and the Western Union telegraph company. The two companies signed exclusive contracts in 1855, forming a mutually strengthening effort at monopoly control (Chapman, 2005, p. 62; Starr, 2004).

The political news from the Associated Press followed the journalistic conventions of the era. They provided long accounts of political events: meetings, marches, and speeches. The reports largely presented the words and chronology of the political event without interpretation and without partisan judgments or evaluation. In this sense, the wire reports were indeed neutral, but they also enabled the partisan press to persist with its traditional political biases. Each journal was free to publish the news reports that focused on the words and deeds of their favored party, while ignoring the wire reports that covered the opposed party.

Declarations of Press Independence

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the power of parties to dominate the US public sphere sharply declined. Two key episodes marked this toppling of parties: the critical

election of 1896 and the anti-partisan reforms of the Progressive Era, 1904–1919. Against this political backdrop, newspapers broke from all party ties and reformulated their role in US public life. Early twentieth-century newspapers relinquished their long political heritage as noisy, argumentative, biased party organs. The US press declared itself independent of all political attachments. In this transformation, the news evolved from plural, politicized, competing perspectives to an impersonal, unified discourse. Modern journalism proclaimed it would supply an impartial, even “objective,” authoritative account of the United States’ daily victories and defeats, and it would impartially arbitrate democracy’s public debates. In this manner, supposedly standing outside of all politics, the twentieth-century press strove to enhance democracy’s deliberations.

At first, the presidential campaign of 1896 seemed to signal an upsurge in partisan fervor. William Jennings Bryan and the Populist Party captured the Democratic presidential nomination and ushered new contentious issues into the political arena. Under the candidacy of Bryan, the Democratic Party emerged as the voice of protest and reform. However, the specific protest issues were quickly overwhelmed by widespread hysteria. *The Nation* declared, “Probably no man in civil life has succeeded in inspiring so much terror without taking life as Bryan.” Democratic papers deserted the party en masse. Conservative elite Democratic dailies like the *New York Times* and the *Detroit Free Press* issued “declarations of independence.” Even liberal, sensationalist journals such as Pulitzer’s *World* and Scripps’s *Cincinnati Post* dumped the party. In New York City, only the heretical Hearst trumpeted Bryan’s candidacy.

The press’s flight from the Democrats was reinforced by the fallout from the election. The emotional issues of the campaign fundamentally reshuffled the social coalitions underlying the two parties and, thus, disrupted long-standing ties of party loyalty. The election so weakened the Democrats that at both the national level and in the North and West they were demoted to a minority party. Elections became uncompetitive. Deprived of a significant choice, voter participation dropped from 84% in 1896 until it reached its nadir in 1920 at 53% (Burnham, 1970). From all-absorbing public drama, the fights and furies of the parties on Capitol Hill and in the pages of the press turned drab and unappealing.

In the early twentieth century, this explicit newspaper partisanship came to a permanent end. As party competition and polemics turned into an extraneous sideshow, the Progressive movement rose up to attack parties and their public legitimacy. In addition to vociferous criticisms of “corrupt party machines,” Progressives initiated reforms that undermined parties’ central role in political life: primary elections, direct election of senators, non-partisan ballots, and civil service reform (Burnham, 1970, Ch. 4).

In this context of fading party power and an anti-partisan ideology purveyed by a movement of the middle classes (along with attenuated economic ties), newspapers severed their links to the Democrats and Republicans. Historians have long noted the ties between press and the Progressive movement (Gans, 1979; Nord, 1995). Publishers and editors drew upon the political rationales of Progressive reformers to

reconstruct journalism's public role. Notions of "public service" and professional expertise became the rhetorical mainstay of journalism's occupational ideals and a defense against all external criticisms and pressures (Tuchman, 1972). In the American Society of Newspaper Editors' 1923 "Code of Ethics," the key words were factuality, independence, impartiality, and public service (American Society of Newspaper Editors 1960). In the face of widespread fears over monopolies, the idea of public service denied that such concentrations of power advanced private interests (Leach, 1993, Ch. 5).

The press asserted that its control over extensive powers of publicity was not employed for private goals or partisan ends. Rather, journalism was purportedly devoted to the general community and earned its rewards only for serving that public good. Progressive Era publishers asserted that professional technical expertise would direct their news choices and interpretations, instead of personal judgments and political evaluations (Kaplan, 2002, Ch. 5). Gradually, the press developed a claim to be above the wrangling of the public-political sphere (Alexander, 1981, pp. 23–39).

In its new public impartiality, the press supposedly did not operate as a platform for one dominant public voice, but rather as a "channel" for a variety of speakers. Ideally, new voices could gain access to the press, and enter into democracy's public discussion. More often, guided by their technocratic ethic, the dailies did not so much expand their coverage of civil society's diverse opinions as continue to publicize the policies and pronouncements of "important," legitimate speakers from formal political institutions. In contrast to the past, however, journals now balanced their coverage between the two legitimate parties. They no longer exhibited a preference for one party over the other. Wire service and hometown papers typically paired the statements of one party official with those of his opposite number (Kaplan, 1997).

Far from eliminating the influence of particular, class interests in politics and publicity, journalism's technocratic ideals took for granted the established hierarchy of power. Governmental and corporate power-holders were taken as the embodiment of modern industrial society's functional rationality. Their pronouncements should be reported, their decisions respected, not probed, much less challenged (Haber, 1964). In their 1920s study of Muncie, Indiana, the Lynds (1959, pp. 476–477) remarked, "It is usually safe to predict that in any given controversy the two leading papers may be expected to support the United States in any case, the business class rather than the working class, the Republican party against any other, but especially against any 'radical party.'"

Consolidation

Throughout the twentieth century, newspapers underwent significant economic transformations. Consolidation and closure of papers marched forward at a steady pace. By the 1970s, most cities functioned with just one journal. Concentration was

driven, in part, by the growth of newspaper chains, which bought up and consolidated rival papers in order to benefit from increased economies of scale and diminished competition. At the same time commencing in the 1950s, new rival media and alternative pastimes stole advertising and readers from the press. Journalism lost its central leading role in the average citizen's consumption of information and entertainment but continued to generate respectable profits.

By century's end, most newspapers were no longer family owned but instead publicly owned and traded on the stock exchange. Increasingly they were just one venture in a larger portfolio of media properties, while the parent company focused on recycling content among its synergistic "information platforms." These media companies often were committed to the traditional ideals of journalism only insofar as they strengthened their brand name.

By the 1890s, the newspaper industry had entered a "mature stage," where the growth in readership was accompanied, not by the founding of new journals, but by rising circulation in existing papers. Publishers confronted heightened barriers to the founding of new journals. On one hand, the requisite start-up costs and capital investment skyrocketed. Increased competition for news entailed a multitude of expenditures: a larger editorial staff to cover local news and sports, and the purchase of wire services and syndicate features. Soaring circulation necessitated the purchase of the newly invented typesetting machines and the latest model of Hoe cylindrical printing press (Curl, 1980, pp. 91–92, 141; Salcetti, 1995, pp. 51, 53). With such large sums of capital potentially at risk, newspapers had to be treated as a serious business in their own right; a charity, a platform, a public service only secondarily. Market imperatives and the concerns of business managers for profit weighed ever more heavily on the conduct of journalism. On the other hand, the number of readers needed to break even at competitive prices increased. New publishers needed to battle against the entrenched position of established papers before they could secure a large enough share of the market to return a profit (Caves, 1977, pp. 24–28; Seymour-Ure, 1968, pp. 105–108, 114–115).

In the early twentieth century, papers faced heightened competition and rising production costs. They often struggled and failed but more typically were bought out by rival papers. Indeed, consolidation made increased economic sense once market barriers insured that the elimination of any individual paper would not spur the entrance of new ones. Between 1879 and 1909, the absolute number of US dailies continued its impressive climb to 2,600. But thereafter, newspapers dwindled to 2,441 dailies in 1919 and 2,080 by 1932. In the early 1900s, select metropolitan markets already saw a frenzy of consolidation, frequently initiated by cold-blooded businessmen. One of the most famous, Frank Munsey, had already accumulated a fortune in magazine publishing when in 1912 he "embarked on his career of cannibalizing the financially weaker New York newspapers" (O'Connor, 1975, p. 66). One after another, Munsey purchased then merged or folded the *New York Herald*, the *Evening Telegram*, the *Morning* and the *Evening Sun*, and the *Globe and Commercial Advertiser*.

Economic conditions disproportionately favored the leading paper in each marketplace. Advertisers time and again patronized the leader. Consolidation meant that production costs could be spread across a greater number of consumers. By the 1940s, in “the typical mid-size city publishers no longer had a competitor or a prospect of one [. . .] Big cities usually had two or more dailies, an evening and a morning rag, with publishers able to carve the market by class” (Baughman, 1992, p. 11). The survivors of this national bloodbath – that is, the leading papers in each city or town – were rewarded with a relatively secure market position and a steady, even rich, stream of profits. Not even the onslaught of television would disturb the press’s financial complacency.

Until century’s end, reasonably run papers in “small or midsize markets could achieve profit margins well in excess of 30%. In major metropolitan markets, even with higher labor and associated costs, on the one hand, and a variety of free or targeted local niche competitors, on the other, profit margins were comfortably and consistently above 20%” (Knee, Greenwald, & Seave, 2009, pp. 174–176, 87, 91). In their economic security, newspapers were content to speak as the voice of the mainstream. Their editorials and news supported a politics of growth that assumed a harmony of interests among business’s desire for unimpeded commercial development, the paper’s greed for rising advertising revenues, and the public good of the community (Booth, 1910; Kaniss, 1991, pp. 52–9).

Group ownership helped drive the decline in newspaper numbers. Large chains with ready investment cash to expand and consolidate gobbled up papers. At the beginning of the twentieth century, eight groups controlled just 27 journals. Led by Hearst and Edward Scripps that number climbed to 63 groups owning 328 papers by 1935. In the final decade of the century, 135 chains controlled 1,228 journals (Pfaff, 2005, p. 65).

Chain ownership, for example, entered into St. Louis’s two-paper competition of morning and afternoon daily when Samuel Newhouse purchased the morning *Globe Democrat* in 1955. Newhouse had the financial weight and publishing skills to give the *Globe Democrat* a boost along with a reputation for turning financially distressed papers around and resuscitating them (Pfaff, 2005, p. 65). Instead of reinvigorated competition, the city’s two papers secretly signed one of the first joint operating agreements (JOA). The agreement restricted competition and combined production to save on costs, with the *Post-Dispatch* taking over the printing of the *Globe Democrat*. For the next three decades, the newspapers remained in close, semi-secret alliance (Pfaff, 2005, pp. 121, 123). JOAs became an increasingly common business practice in the 1960s. Faced by rising costs and mutually disadvantageous competition, such papers as Detroit’s *Evening News* and *Free Press* and San Francisco’s *Chronicle* and *Examiner* merged production operations, limited competition, and split profits, while remaining ostensibly independent editorially.

St. Louis publisher Joseph Pulitzer III declared the JOA was simply “a sensible business arrangement which in no way injures the public” (Pfaff, 2005, p. 125). And in authorizing the St. Louis JOA, the Justice Department agreed, saying the two

papers “could not exist separately.” Nor, apparently, could they survive together. By 1983, the *Globe Democrat*’s publisher remarked, “impending increases in costs of newsprint and the impending increases in labor and the other cost factors associated with the paper, the fact that we had priced ourselves to the maximum acceptable to the advertiser [. . . All these factors] indicated that for us, not too far in the future, it would be uneconomic for two papers here.” The *Globe Democrat* was sold in 1983 then permanently shuttered in 1986 after continued financial stress (Pfaff, 2005, p. 129).

Newspaper publishing costs remained high despite wage freezes, automation, and cuts in staff. US publishers sought to rein in the costs of the skilled union labor of typographers and printers by utilizing new technologies, but printers still controlled the physical production of the paper. The conflict frequently led to strikes with production being interrupted for days, even months. Already in the 1960s, farsighted analysts recognized that the computer was going to revolutionize the industry by eliminating the need for typesetters and changing the way pages were laid out and stories edited (Solomon, 1995).

Cascading developments were thus weakening newspapers. The press was defined by its ability to capture both audience and advertising. Gradually, both streams were sheared off by new media outlets and rival print forms with more cost-effective, specialized advertising. Although a cause for concern, they did not challenge the continued existence of papers until the 1990s.

Paper closures disproportionately hit evening dailies and their working-class, immigrant audiences, just as in Europe newspaper closings most often struck social democratic papers (Hoyer, Hadenius, & Weibull 1975). Daily papers in the United States have always been, by and large, local affairs. Their economic well-being, Kaniss (1991, pp. 22–28) says, has been tightly tied to the health and growth of a specific locale, and the news is correspondingly often focused on the dramas and issues that unite a metropolitan audience. In fact, “newspapers needed to produce local identity as much as they produced news.” But in the immediate postwar era, families were moving from the densely populated cities to the suburbs. In the 1950s, the 20 largest US cities saw close to zero growth, but the suburbs surrounding those centers jumped by 45% (Baughman, 1992, pp. 61–62; Pfaff, 2005, p. 327). As the suburban communities bloomed and workers no longer made the commute to the city center, those urban identities faded and evening newspapers lost circulation.

However, it was not circulation declines, Kaniss (1991, p. 35) argues, that weakened the evening papers, but the relative unattractiveness of their blue-collar readers to suburban advertisers. Furthermore, big department stores that featured full-page display ads in the paper also departed to the suburbs. Suburban dailies fit better the new social identities and advertising needs.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, readers remained faithful to their daily paper, notwithstanding the challenges of radio. In the 1950s, the share of the population purchasing a paper stood at 91%. But thereafter, readership commenced a long-term, persistent decline, falling to 57.6% in 1972. Kaestle (1991) partly

explains, “The spreading influence of electronic media indeed reduced the public’s use of newspapers” (p. 163). The decline was most severe among the younger and less wealthy population.

During the 1950s, advertising devoted to direct mail and television increased rapidly to equal that spent on papers, at the same time as the amount corporations spent on advertising in general skyrocketed (Auletta, 2003, p. 107; Schramm, 1960, p. 292). Having raised ads rates to a maximum through their tight control of the market, papers now saw new forms of advertising at a lower cost per thousand (cpm). Television was an important rival to newspapers in grabbing national advertising. In 1950, newspapers captured 25% of national consumer goods advertising, but by 1978, TV had become the dominant medium for national commercials, knocking papers down to 14% (Kaniss, 1991, p. 30).

The number of rival media for advertising escalated during the 1960s–1980s, including print and broadcasting. Some of those competitors, such as 31 free distribution suburban weeklies in the St. Louis metropolitan region, rivaled the average circulation of the daily urban press. When he shut down the *Los Angeles Evening Mirror* in 1963, *Times* publisher Norman Chandler testified before Congress that his papers had hemorrhaged advertising dollars to the accelerating competition of radio stations, television, and suburban newspapers along with community weeklies (Kaniss, 1991, pp. 31–32; Pfaff, 2005, Ch. 9, pp. 127, 260).

Media Corporations

Increasingly, newspaper corporations invested in a variety of media properties. The excellence of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, declared Pulitzer, was supported by the company’s investments in diverse media properties. “We went deliberately into television and radio and bought the *Arizona Daily Star* to enlarge and diversify this company so that it would have sinews and the ability in event of a crisis to maintain the central structure” (Pfaff, 2005, p. 132). Indeed, Pulitzer estimated that large urban papers could persist and indeed prosper only with an array of more profitable investments.

The *Chicago Tribune* too pursued a diversification policy in the 1980s, aggressively expanding into the direct mail advertising and buying television properties, while establishing zoned suburban supplements to their paper and tightening the bottom line. The Tribune Company soon metamorphosed into a broad content company with its newspapers no longer at the center of attention or revenue. Frequently this diversifying strategy meant the flagship journal gave the brand prestige, while a perambula of media properties with lower journalistic standards fed off the reputation and content of the brand carrier and brought in advertising and circulation (Auletta, 2003, pp. 103, 106–108; Pfaff, 2005, p. 260).

Decline in family ownership also played a role in the shifting orientation of the late twentieth-century US press. As the years passed, subsequent generations of family ownership frequently turned to squabbling over profits and control. “It is

common,” writes Daniel Pffaf (2005, p. 156; Auletta, 2003, p. 108; Baughman, 1992, p. 13), “after the third generation or so, for family members to choose other pursuits.” Typically, some heirs were given undivided control with others receiving just dividends. Quality newspaper management often meant lower dividends.

Inevitably, the development of diversified business strategies and the decline of the original family ownership, along with the paper’s integration into a broader media company, weakened the firm’s commitment to professional journalistic standards as well as the hunt for news. In their pursuit of investment and profits, family-owned papers often went public (Auletta, 2003, p. 104; Wendt, 1979). Increasingly newspapers responded to the demands of the stock market for high rates of return. Public ownership was concerned with dividends not quality journalism. The newspapers that most embraced this approach adopted innovations that challenged journalism’s traditional ideals, especially as circulation and revenues weakened. The economics of all papers, however, forced a reworking of the standard model. Papers frequently experimented with reducing editorial costs and staff. Cutbacks meant fewer reporters to track down stories, but most especially cutbacks in national and foreign bureaus and increased reliance on syndicated material. The Tribune Company’s non-Chicago journals gathered almost all of their national and international stories from the wire (Auletta, 2003, p. 79). Former *Chicago Tribune* editor James Squire bemoaned the takeover of “bean counters” at his paper: “What the *Tribune* is today is what every big newspaper is to its owners – a franchise. It’s viewed differently than newspapers used to be viewed. We used to think of it as a quasi public service to inform people about what they need to know [. . .] Today the owners view it as an information franchise whose job it is to make money” (Auletta, 2003, p. 97).

The arrival of the Internet challenged the fortunes and prestige of the daily press like no medium had before. The Web threatened journalism’s revenues, its audience, and even the press’s traditional role as independent authoritative interpreter of the day’s important events. The Web delivered a steady stream of news specialized to any interests or political viewpoint. It could even cover local news, the traditional competitive advantage of the local newspaper. From bloggers to such news aggregator sites as Yahoo, online outlets were usually parasitic off the print media’s production of reports yet they offered advertisers more specialized audiences at a lower cpm. Adding injury to injury, the Web too grabbed local advertising in the form of classifieds, most notably with Craigslist. Newspaper revenue from classified ads plummeted from a high of \$19.6 billion in 2000 to about half, taking in \$9.9 billion in 2008 (Jones, 2009; Knee, Greenwald, & Seave, 2009, pp. 87–89).

The Republican Century

In the early twentieth century, newspapers were independent, but their editorials overwhelmingly endorsed Republican candidates. The electoral realignment in the election of 1896 had weakened the Democratic Party, regionalizing it to a power in

the South but weak elsewhere. Newspaper publishers generally joined the upper class in its migration into the Republican Party.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt won the presidency in a Democratic Party avalanche in 1932, propelled by popular anger over the Depression, parties divided along class lines. Newspapers soon turned against the president, stridently raising their voices against Roosevelt's economic stabilization and social welfare measures. If one only read the pages of the daily papers in the run up to the 1936 election, then the entire country seemed to be in revolt against the president (Starr, 2004, p. 375; Wendt, 1979, Ch. 23).

To most everyone's surprise, however, Roosevelt won 60.8% of the vote in 1936, exposing how out of touch the papers were with public sentiment. Nevertheless angry reaction to FDR's social democratic policies continued to infuse parts of the country and newspapers in general. Such papers as the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the Hearst chain were especially outspoken (Wendt, 1979, Ch. 23). Republicans, it seemed, owned the daily press, and in turn, Democratic voters listened to the radio airwaves to get their information (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1960, pp. 521–523). Then as now, "partisans ascribed impartiality and veracity to the media which presented views similar to their own" (Lazarsfeld et al., 1960, p. 522). In 1939, 70% of the populace relied on radio for news, which 58% deemed more accurate. Only with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the advent of global war did hostilities temporarily cease between press and presidency. World War II, notes James Baughman (1992, p. 1), boosted the interest in and sale of news, and at the same time, the press and other instruments of mass culture became "voluntary propagandists" for the government.

World War II also was a turning point for radio news and reinforced the public's reliance on radio, which in many ways forged the institutional patterns for television news. Radio as a mass medium first took off in the 1920s, but emphasized entertainment – music, sports, comedy, and serial dramas (Green, 1992). Appearing to offer little challenge to the daily press, radio's initial news broadcasts were a short recounting of the top headlines. In 1933, radio networks agreed to end a roiling conflict with daily papers by restricting broadcasts to two five-minute news segments each day and only reporting stories that were over 24 hours old. Instead, news commentators had a unique, national prominence (Fones-Wolf, 2006; Starr, 2004, p. 377).

The escalating military tensions in Europe during 1938–1939 captured the public's attention and gave radio news a distinctive opportunity. Offering interviews with European leaders or on-the-spot reports from the battlefield, such luminary reporters as H. V. Kaltenborn and Edward R. Murrow gave a powerful immediacy to the news in a direct personal voice. Their seemingly forthright speech, with its edge of urgency and danger, made the news more concrete and visceral than the daily press with its impersonal gray tones and gray type (Douglas, 2004). Statistics reveal the surging prominence of the airwaves as a source of information. By 1940, over 80% of the population owned at least one radio receiver, and US citizens increasingly said they trusted and preferred radio news to print (Starr, 2004, p. 377).

Despite the wartime reconciliation of press and Democratic Party, newspaper editorials overwhelmingly endorsed the Republican Party and its candidates until the 1980s, while news reports were usually even-handed between the parties, as “objective” journalists effaced their own viewpoints (Ansolabehere, Lessem, & Snyder, 2004). Shifts in newspaper ownership over time from family to public and the gradual acceptance of most of the achievements of Roosevelt’s New Deal, along with a liberalization in the 1960s and the debacle of the Vietnam War, altered this alignment of press editorials and Republican Party. By century’s end, dailies split their endorsements between the two parties. The *Chicago Tribune*, for example, had since the 1850s aggressively pushed a conservative Republican line. In the 1970s, with an increasingly professional management, the *Tribune* adopted a less partisan outlook, in line with other corporate journals (Auletta, 2003, p. 104; Wendt, 1979).

In general, twentieth-century journalism’s embrace of objectivity weakened its capacity to interject its interpretations and perspective into news narratives. And, if ever the press stepped outside of the nation’s two-party consensus, it faced accusations of bias (Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986, p. 10; Kaplan, 2002). Throughout the century, the US press typically adopted the perspective of political elites, while slighting the views of those who were marginal or dissenters. In war after war, the *Washington Post* confessed, the press “inevitably” functioned as the “mouthpiece” for the presidential administration (Kurtz, 2004), if only because the administration possessed a near monopoly of information and was buttressed by public belief in the rightness of the national security state.

In this sense, the US news agenda is not the product of newswriters. Rather the selection the news and its framing typically reflected broader constellations of public authority and political culture. More specifically, in Todd Gitlin’s accounting (1981, p. 271; Baughman, 1992, p. 112), the US press generally expresses the dominant hegemony, which in the twentieth century comprised the legitimacy of the national security state in the face of threatening enemies, the rightness of the market economy with its vastly unequal distribution of monetary rewards, the values of “free” individualism, consumerism, and private families as the foundation of the social order, and the ability of technical and managerial elites to manage social conflicts and make the necessary reforms.

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Journalism History

Europe

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ABSTRACT

Europe is the cradle of journalism. This does not only apply to the term, but also to the matter itself. The national and cultural diversity of the continent makes it difficult to generalize about its journalism history, but the rough outline of a common history is possible to recount. The earliest printed newspapers presented a correspondent's journalism. These were followed in most countries by journals of opinion. Commercialization in the nineteenth century produced a more popular journalism. Professionalization began in the nineteenth century also. The development of journalism in Europe in the twentieth century was above all influenced by two groups of factors. On the one hand, there were restraints resulting from the political conditions of this century. On the other hand, there were technical innovations which produced new mass media. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, journalism in Europe (as in other parts of the world) is again in a process of extensive change.

Europe is the cradle of journalism. This does not only apply to the term, but also to the matter itself. The term has a French origin, deriving from the French word for "day" (*jour*). It came into use as a result of the French Revolution in 1789 when the printed press became a forum for opinion-making (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2009, p. 19). In the nineteenth century, the concept also established itself in other European

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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countries. However, the job title “journalist” had already been used earlier, at first probably for the staff of the *Journal des Sçavans*, the first scientific magazine that had been launched in Paris in 1665. Only at the end of the eighteenth century did “journalist” receive its more general significance and slowly substituted older terms, e.g., the German word *Zeitungsschreiber* (“newspaper writer”). In many European languages, “journalism” and “journalist” became popular, not only in French and English, but also in German (*Journalismus*), in Italian (*giornalismo*), in Portuguese (*jornalismo*), and in Czech (*žurnalismus*). Spanish is an exception, focusing on the regularity of the function as the core of the term (*periodismo*).

It depends on the definition of the term when and where the history of journalism starts. Chalaby (1998), who defines it as a “field of discursive production” (p. 334) with its own norms such as objectivity and neutrality, spoke of journalism as an “Anglo-American invention” and dated it back to the nineteenth century. But this would ignore the fact that well-directed efforts to obtain and to distribute news are much older. If journalism is actually defined more generally, namely according to Barnhurst and Owens (2008) as a “constellation of practices that have required special status within the longer domain of communication through a long history that separated out news sharing from its origins in interpersonal communication” (p. 2557), its history goes further back.

Europe is a continent with numerous countries and languages. Today, there are approximately 50. The modern political order has developed since the Middle Ages and has been changed again and again by wars and power–political arguments. Some countries were able to keep their identity for a long time, e.g., Great Britain, France, and Spain. In general, these were centralized states. In other countries, e.g., in the German Empire, federal structures existed. Germany and Italy only became nation-states in the nineteenth century, other countries only in the twentieth (e.g., Czechoslovakia) or after the political change in 1989 (e.g., Slovenia, Croatia). The changes in European history naturally influenced journalism in Europe in a variety of ways.

Europe also has a multitude of languages. In principle, this results in obstacles to communication. Besides several Indo-Germanic languages, which also include the Roman and the Slavic languages, there are Uralic languages (e.g., Finnish and Hungarian).

The cultural variety of Europe makes it difficult to describe the history of journalism on this continent coherently. As a result of political and language barriers, this field of activity developed respectively mainly in the national context. This also applies to its scientific exploration, which moreover has mainly concentrated on the history of the press (and other media) and less on the history of journalism as professional practice. Thus there are primarily national presentations of press history available, for England (Andrews, 1968; Aspinall, 1973; Boyce, Curran, & Wingate, 1978), France (Bellanger, Godechot, Guiral, & Terrou, 1969–1972), Germany (Stöber, 2005; Wilke, 2007, 2008), Italy (Murialdi, 1995, 1996), and Spain (Barrera, 1999; Fuentes & Sebastià, 1997). Only a few exceptions are comparative and transnational (Dooley & Baron, 2001; Mompart & Otto, 1999; Smith, 1979; Welke & Wilke, 2008).

Despite these national differences, the history of journalism in Europe also has commonalities and similar developmental courses. Besides influences between European countries there were also extra-European – particularly US – influences. These influences varied, however, over time and had differing dynamics.

Prehistory of Journalism

If journalism is thus generally defined that its basis is news, i.e., not private news, but news satisfying public interest, this job already existed before technical means of distribution were available. Thus it is possible to speak of a prehistory of journalism (Baumert, 1928; Barnhurst & Nerone, 2009). The human interest in news is given by nature and motivated by society. It was satisfied in the Middle Ages by persons such as singers and gleemen who moved from place to place and informed people about events they had heard of. In Germany, these gleemen were later called *wandernde Journalisten* (“wandering journalists”; Scherer, 1920). In England, the presenters of ballads and commemorative poems fulfilled a similar function. From the eighth century, events were laid down in written form in the “Anglo-Saxon Chronicles”. They may thus be regarded as a “precursor of the press” (Giffard, 1982).

The need for news grew in early modern times due to expeditions, discoveries, and the expansion of trade relations. Large trading companies fostered an extensive correspondence with their branches. In Europe, real information exchange networks developed; their basis was the extension of the post lines (Raymond, 2006). In this context a real trade with written news developed. In the early seventeenth century, Philipp Hainhofer ran an office in the South German city of Augsburg where news was copied and delivered to interested persons – mostly sovereigns (Schmolke, 1962). Benedetto Dei had done something similar a century earlier in Venice. There, hand-written *avvisi* developed out of traders’ letters (Infelise, 2002, 2007). In France, *nouvelles à la main* also circulated, and indeed still later, as they remained outside the supervision of the authorities (Bellanger et al. 1969–1972, vol. 1; Moureau, 1999).

The Corresponding Journalism of the Early Press

The decisive precondition for the development of journalism in Europe was the invention of printing technology by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz in the middle of the fifteenth century. With this, it became possible to produce and to distribute writings and messages quickly and in large numbers. First, this technology was above all used for clerical and religious purposes. But soon it was also used to copy news. As printing shops soon also developed in other places in Europe, such prints were produced in many countries. They had different names, but were widely similar with

respect to content and form (Dooley & Baron, 2001). In Germany they were called *Neue Zeytungen*, in the Netherlands *Couranten*, in France *Canards*, in England “Corantos,” “Diurnalls,” or “Newsbooks,” in Spain *Relaciones*, and in Portugal *Relações*. In Venice, they got the name *Gazette*. These individual prints mostly described political, military, and social events, but also disasters and sensations.

The printers received this news from correspondents who were in places where important events happened or where much information from other places passed through. These correspondents thus fulfilled a journalistic function. This justifies the concept of a “corresponding journalism” (*korrespondierender Journalismus*; Baumert, 1928). In general – as was the case for written newspapers – three groups of correspondents came to the fore (Wilke, 2008): (1) civil servants and legates residing in sovereign courts or on diplomatic missions; (2) representatives who were based in other trading towns for their companies; (3) educated correspondents, members of universities and monasteries. These three groups were able to deliver news of different kinds, i.e., political, economic, and cultural news.

Over a century elapsed before *Neue Zeytungen*, *Corantos*, *Newsbooks*, *Diurnalls*, etc., became the periodic newspaper, the first mass medium of modern times published regularly with specific publication intervals. As far as we know, this occurred for the first time in Strasbourg in 1605 after several intermediate stages. The printer Johann Carolus started to print written news and to turn them into a weekly newspaper (*Relation*). The first complete volume dates back to 1609. In the same year, a second newspaper in Germany (*Aviso*) was published. This “business model” was so successful that soon newspapers in other places followed.

Germany led the way in the development of the newspaper; in the seventeenth century, there existed more newspapers in Germany than in all other European countries put together. In other European countries it took years or decades before they were ready (Dooley & Baron, 2001; Welke & Wilke, 2008). The first followers were the Netherlands. In 1618, the first newspaper was published in Amsterdam, followed by Antwerp in 1620. In France, Théophraste Renaudot introduced the first weekly newspapers to the market in 1631 (*Gazette*). The *Oxford Gazette* (1665) is considered the oldest periodic newspaper in England and was preceded by numerous newsbooks (Raymond, 1993, 1996). In 1666, it changed its name to *London Gazette*. In Spain, the earliest known newspaper was in Barcelona in 1641 (*Gaceta Barcelona*); 20 years later, the *Gaceta Nueva* in Madrid followed. In 1643, the first Italian newspaper was published regularly, two years later the first one in Swedish (*Ordinarie Post Tijdender*). Newspapers in Polish followed in 1661 (*Merkuriusz Polski*) and in Danish in 1672 (*Extraordinaire Relation*). The first Russian newspaper was published in 1703.

The newspapers of the seventeenth century (and the majority of those of the eighteenth century) were very similar to each other (Wilke, 1987b). They were in quarto or octavo and consisted of four to eight pages. They mostly offered sober written accounts of political and military events from different parts of Europe, provided by the correspondents on location. Thus it was still “corresponding journalism.” More journalistic functions were not yet necessary. News selection was not

needed as the news flow was still limited and all available information was printed if possible. A layout with headlines and captions was abandoned. The accounts were merely supplied with the name of the location and the date of their origin. They mainly came from other countries, meaning that there was a dominance of foreign correspondence. In England, this declined very early on (Wilke, 1987a, 2010).

To begin with, printers did their work without journalists, and a newsroom was not necessary. We know only of a few cases where news in the seventeenth century was edited and (linguistically) processed by a person whose particular responsibility this was. The news flow increased in the eighteenth century in such a way that someone had to assume the task of selection and preparation for printing. But only large newspapers which attached importance to original accounts and which did not want simply to reprint other papers (which frequently happened) could afford this.

Articles expressing opinions were also almost completely absent from early newspapers. Correspondents did not wish to tell readers their personal views, but inform them so that they could form their own opinions. Their perception of their role, so to speak, was to be neutral, objective correspondents. This conception was also due to press control. In the decades after the invention of printing technology, censorship and other controlling measures had been introduced in all European countries (Siebert, 1965). The periodical press was also subject to these measures. The publication of undesired news and opinions would thus have been inhibited. The newspapers mainly addressed an educated readership; knowledge for understanding the coverage could be assumed. Circulation was still limited and amounted to hardly more than a few hundred copies.

The Development of Opinion Journalism

In the eighteenth century, the role of journalism in Europe started to change. This first happened in England, for several reasons. When the British parliament did not renew the Licensing Act in 1695, there was in practice press freedom (Siebert, 1965). Henceforth there was no pre-censorship of printed material. Although there were other prohibitive measures, be it with the help of charges at court or as a consequence of the tax on printing paper (stamp tax), newspapers could now become organs of public debate – the more so as England had a long-established parliament in which controversial debates were conducted. However, parliamentary reporting remained regulated even after 1695 and has only been tolerated since 1772.

As early as the sixteenth century, special print media had developed to publicly multiply opinions and convictions. They were called *Flugschriften* in Germany (Wilke, 2008) and “pamphlets” in England (Raymond, 2003). During the Reformation and the subsequent religious conflicts, they achieved a huge circulation. They were mostly written by the spokesmen of religious and social movements themselves and

thus were not actually journalistic products. In the Catholic countries of Europe, there were fewer of them and they did not flourish.

The abolition of the Licensing Act in England not only led to a rapid increase in the number of newspapers. Strong competition also developed, so that papers now and then shut down very quickly. The *Daily Universal Register* was one of the longer-lived papers. It appeared for the first time in 1785; three years later it was renamed *The Times*, the newspaper which was to become the flagship of independent British journalism. In this phase, newspapers in the United Kingdom began to differ from those on the Continent. They could take greater liberties both with regard to content and style. Journalists neither wanted nor were forced to restrict themselves to sober information, but could also express their opinions. It was advantageous that with the Whigs and the Tories, a bipolar party system already existed in England. However, this journalism was often non-autonomous, as many papers were financially supported by the government, the parties, or other social groups (Aspinall, 1973).

In other European countries, opinion journalism developed later than in England. In France, freedom of opinion and press was introduced in 1789 by the Revolution. Until then, control in this centralized state had been particularly strict. Basically, there was only one single newspaper: the *Gazette*, founded in 1631. It appeared in Paris, but was reprinted in provincial towns. Criticism could be found at most in the philosophic magazines of the Enlightenment (Censer, 1994). However, information which could not be published in the French kingdom could be printed in the exile press, which was represented by several titles (above all in Holland and on the Lower Rhine). Forbidden prints were produced clandestinely and smuggled over the border.

In 1789, the outbreak of the French Revolution led to an explosion of the press in Paris; above all, it now published opinions. Within a short time, the number of press organs rose to hundreds (Bellanger et al., 1969, pp. 443–461; Popkin, 1990). Several prominent and radical revolutionaries worked as journalists, among them Camille Desmoulins, Jean-Paul Marat, and Jacques René Hébert. At first, press freedom made it possible for ideologically and politically competing organs to coexist, even those supporting the monarchy. However, this changed when the king was arrested and executed in 1791, after which all necessary measures were taken to silence the supporters of the old system.

Evidence for a new understanding of the journalistic role also arose in Germany in the late eighteenth century where, again, it was primarily writers who spoke out for the Enlightenment. One of them was Wilhelm Ludwig Wekhrlin. His ideal was the journalist as *Spion des Publikums* (“spy of the readers”), who not only conveyed news, but also warned readers against false ideas (Wilke, 1993). He also called the journalist a *Sittenrichter* (“judge of public morals”) and an *Advokat der Menschheit* (“advocate of humanity”), and thus anticipated modern concepts of the role. In practice, this understanding of the role could hardly be realized. Although there had actually been a certain relaxation of press control in the German Empire in the eighteenth century, the French Revolution led to a further tightening of control when German sovereigns felt threatened by the spread of revolutionary ideals.

Starting in the eighteenth century and increasing in the early nineteenth century in most European countries, writers and poets tried to work as journalists. This has led to the characterization of “literary journalism” (Baumert, 1928). Famous authors like Balzac, Dumas, and Hugo in France, Heine and Fontane in Germany, and many less renowned writers earned their living at least temporarily by working as a journalist. For others, journalism was a starting point or transition stage in their striving for a political career. This has shaped the image of journalism in these countries for a long time (O’Boyle, 1967/1968).

It has been claimed that since its beginning, the press was a male domain. However, this does not mean that women were insignificant. They were already active in the English newsbooks of the Puritan Revolution (Nevitt, 2006). In Germany, women were frequently owners of print shops as early as the seventeenth century if their husbands died and they continued their work. Here, however, female journalists appeared for the first time in the eighteenth century as editors of magazines addressing a female readership (Madland, 1988). In the political press, female journalists were admitted only later. In Germany, Louise Otto published the *Frauen-Zeitung* (“Women’s Newspaper”) after the 1848 Revolution, promoting women’s interests and needs. In Victorian England a women’s press movement started and formed a women’s political press (Tusan, 2005).

Commercialization in the Nineteenth Century

As late as the early nineteenth century – in some countries even much later – journalism in Europe suffered from official control or dependence on financial support. Further suppression at the beginning of the century can be attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte, who strictly regimented the press. He used it as a political means of power, reduced the number of titles, and decreed that only *Moniteur*, the state newspaper, could be reprinted. In 1811, he re-established censorship in France. His influence also led to a disciplining of the press in other countries. The press was impoverished, but also released opposing forces in Prussia and Spain. When Napoleon had to abdicate in 1815, a glorious new era for the press and journalism seemed to dawn, but this did not last long. In the German Confederation, strict censorship was again decreed in 1819 for three decades, and even in France the return of the Bourbon monarchy led to restoration of censorship. The July Revolution of 1830 brought an increase in oppositional organs which could no longer be suppressed despite new attempts to limit their liberties.

However, the scope of the press was also limited commercially. The political newspapers had to finance themselves mainly via their sale price. In the eighteenth century, advertisements could be published more or less only in special prints: “Advertisers” in England, *Intelligenzblätter* in Germany, and *Affiches* in France. Only after liberalization of the state advertising monopoly (in Prussia in 1850) and the

abolition of the advertisement tax (in England in 1855, in Germany in 1874), could commercialization of the press begin in these countries. In the United States, this development had already commenced in the 1830s, when publishers there created the popular mass newspaper, the penny press, which offered completely different content than the previously dominant party press. This example was first followed in France. In 1836, two newspapers of the *presse à bon marché*, as it was called there, were published: Emile de Girardin's *La Presse* and Armand Dutacq's *Le Siècle*. Both made advertisements their essential support and financial source. Thus the sales price could be lowered and mass circulation could be achieved. Formation of political opinion, however, was not yet relinquished. To catch the interest of more readership groups, the cultural part (*feuilleton*) of the newspaper was created. At the end of 1836, *La Presse* had a circulation of 10,000 copies; ten years later it was 20,000 copies; during the Revolution of 1848, it was allegedly sometimes even 70,000.

In the nineteenth century, *Le Petit Journal* became the most successful newspaper in France (from 1862). It was cheap; its price was only half as much as that of *La Presse*. The content consisted mainly of the mediation of practical knowledge and news from daily life, especially miscellaneous news (so-called *faits divers*), as well as novels "below the line." After two years, 260,000 copies of the newspaper were being printed; in 1887, it was 1 million. Palmer (1983) considers *Le Petit Journal* as "la naissance du journalisme moderne" ("the birth of modern journalism") in France. This also included reportage and interviews as new journalistic forms of presentation. The names of *grands reporters* became famed (Martin, 2005).

Starting in the 1850s, the popular daily press also became established in Great Britain (Engel, 1996). The trigger had been the abolition of the stamp tax in 1855. The opener was the *Daily Telegraph and Courier* in the same year; it would increase its circulation to 250,000 copies by 1880. Several further cheap mass newspapers were launched around the turn of the century: *Daily Mail* (1896), *Daily Express* (1900), and *Daily Mirror* (1903).

In Germany, the commercialization of the press started later than in Britain. Opinion and party press had only come into existence after the 1848 Revolution, and it only gained ground when the German Empire was founded in 1871 and a national parliament existed. The beginnings of the mass newspaper date back to that time. The special newspaper type which developed was called *General-Anzeiger*. It was also mainly financed by advertisements and tried to win a broad readership, above all with the help of local coverage and renunciation of political and religious controversies. Entertainment was also given much space. *General-Anzeiger* were published in Berlin and other large cities and achieved a circulation which until then had not existed in Germany.

In the nineteenth century, the exemplary function of US journalism took root in many places in Europe, above all in Great Britain. Thus it became common to talk of the Anglo-American model. Later, US customs in journalism also swept through other European countries (Høyer & Pöttker, 2005; Broersma, 2007). But the key word "Americanization" also frequently had a negative overtone. The phenomenon

described by this was considered a threat to indigenous (journalistic) culture and was therefore rejected. In Germany, at least, one must speak of the “belated modernization” of journalism. The US author Mark Twain stated this satirically at the beginning of the 1880s. After providing a formidably long list of what he felt was missing from German papers – humorous columns, police court reports, prize fights and dog fights, horse races and other sporting events, banquet speeches, curious oddities, etc. – he addressed the question of what such papers actually did contain:

It is easily answered: A child’s handful of telegrams, mainly about European national and international political movements; letter-correspondence about the same things; market reports: There you have it. That is what a German daily is made of. A German daily is the slowest and saddest and dreariest of the inventions of man. Our own dailies infuriate the reader pretty often; the German daily only stupefies him. (Twain, 1880, pp. 281–282)

A movement like the early twentieth-century muckrakers in the United States did not emerge, although social reports developed in Germany and Austria. However, they were generally published not in the independent press but primarily in the party press and low-circulation magazines of the Left (Requate, 2004).

The Professionalization of Journalism

During the course of the nineteenth century, a professionalization of journalism started in Europe. The need for journalists increased because the press expanded in several respects. Above all, innovations in printing technology contributed to this expansion. The number of newspapers increased considerably, formats became larger, and the number of pages grew. Content also became more varied, which led to a differentiation into different sections. In the middle of the nineteenth century, newspaper readers had 30–60 times as much to read as those two centuries before (Wilke, 1987b).

Before 1848, the number of journalists in Germany was estimated at around 400; at the end of the century there were probably 2,500 (Requate, 1995). However, this would still not be enough. The London *Times* had considerably more foreign correspondents at its disposal than did French newspapers (Chalaby, 1996). The increase in personnel was accompanied by an extension of editorial departments (Wilke, 2003).

Contrary to popular assumptions, journalists in the nineteenth century were highly educated. The profession attracted intellectuals and literate persons who did not have any other job opportunities in society or were refused due to political reasons. The development of professional unions also underlined advancing professionalization. Between the 1880s and World War I, such organizations were founded in all the largest European countries (Kutsch, 2008, p. 325).

Between Political Instrumentalization and Technical Innovation: Journalism in the Twentieth Century

The development of journalism in Europe in the twentieth century was above all influenced by two groups of factors. On the one hand, there were the restraints resulting from political conditions. On the other hand, there were technical innovations which produced new mass media. These mass media again constituted new challenges for journalism and forced it to adjust to changing demands.

Historically, the twentieth century was above all characterized by totalitarian regimes and two world wars. These circumstances more or less restricted the autonomy of journalists in many countries and even destroyed it. In Russia, where the liberalization of the press after the death of Czar Nicholas I in 1855 had started comparatively late, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 led to the establishment of a totalitarian communist system. Following the guidelines of V. I. Lenin, journalism had to fulfill three tasks: propaganda, agitation, and organization. With this, journalists were again degraded to servants of political rulers. As a consequence, journalism in the Soviet Union was called the “antithesis of the Anglo-American news paradigm” (Lauk, 2005).

It was not very different in the fascist dictatorships established in Italy in the 1920s and in Germany after 1933. Journalists were to serve the ruling ideology and to support the goals of the government. For this, the Nazi regime in particular erected an ingenious system of media control. Besides legal regulations and organizational means, it consisted of detailed instructions to the correspondents of German newspapers during official press conferences in Berlin (Wilke, 2005). Importance was also attached to journalistic formation aligned with the purposes of party and government. Although Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels did not wish to have a uniform press as this would have aroused suspicion among the population, newspapers were to express the same things with different voices.

Journalists were under particularly intense pressure during the two world wars (1914–1918, 1939–1945). As a general rule, censorship was again introduced in all the countries involved and there were attempts to turn the press into a means of propaganda. This even applied to countries which had retained their democratic order, such as Great Britain. Here, official authorities were also instructed to influence journalists, who were to represent the interests of their countries to the outside world and to strengthen the war morale of the indigenous population.

After World War II, this open or hidden instrumentalization of journalism generally came to an end in the democratic countries. Europe was now divided into two blocs: the West closely linked to the United States, and the Eastern bloc to which the Soviet Union extended its power. The Eastern bloc consisted of the Baltic countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, as well as Yugoslavia, which strived for a certain autonomy. The German Democratic Republic that had been established

on the territory of the Soviet occupation zone in Germany in 1949 was also among the Soviet satellite states. In all these countries, the Soviet model of journalism was introduced and imposed with state instruments of power. In the authoritarian regimes of Europe still existing after 1945 (Spain, Portugal), journalism also remained under state influence, although this was less strictly exerted than in the communist countries (Fuentes & Sebastià, 1997, pp. 253–276, 293–316).

Development in Western Europe was different. With the restoration of democracy, the environment for journalism also changed. In the Western occupation zones of Germany, the Allied powers strived to create the conditions for a free and independent journalism. Above all the Americans tried to ensure that their journalistic models were adopted by the Germans. In the early postwar years, they tried to do this by means of strict control and direct instructions (Wilke, 2003). One of the central norms was the separation of news and opinion in order to overcome the opinion journalism that had been cultivated in Germany since the end of the nineteenth century and which had been taken to extremes under the Third Reich. One of the guiding principles of the US “re-education” of German journalists was: “It is the duty of a non-partisan press to serve the public impartially with unbiased presentation of the news” (cited by Wilke, 2003, p. 68). Intentions to restructure the newsrooms of German daily newspapers according to the Anglo-American model failed, however, to be realized.

Undoubtedly, there was an “Americanization” of journalism in (West) Germany after 1945. One example is the acceptance of the “inverted pyramid” news form with “lead” and “body.” Previously, this had hardly been used in German journalism. On the other hand, “Americanization” was also opposed. The chances for a continuation of German traditions increased when the Federal Republic of Germany became sovereign in 1949 and press freedom was introduced. Skepticism regarding a thorough Anglo-American influence on German journalism has been confirmed by the findings of scientific studies since the 1970s. They revealed the wish to criticize grievances and champion values and ideas as the primary professional motivation of German journalists, ahead of neutral information brokerage. A comparison of German and British journalists can be summarized by the alternatives “missionary” and “bloodhound” (Köcher, 1986). Another study showed that US journalists wanted to advocate ideas and values considerably less than did their German and Italian counterparts (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004).

Another difference between British and German (and continental) journalism is the organization of the newsroom and the editorial departments (Esser, 1998). Journalistic work in Great Britain is based on the division of labor; different tasks, from the research of information to the layout of the newspapers, are performed by different persons (the principle of editorial control). In Germany, on the other hand, the holistic organization still dominates; all tasks are or can be completed by one journalist, i.e., a journalist both reports and comments (the principle of journalistic autonomy).

These differences are also based on different press systems. The newspaper market in Great Britain is the most strongly commercialized market in Europe. In this

market, the London tabloid newspapers dominate; they have to be sold in the street every day and thus try to attract readers with revelations, sensations, “sex and crime,” etc. Even *The Times* adjusted to this trend. In Germany, the regional and local press are still dominant; they are delivered to subscribers and do not have to convince their readers to buy them again each day. The sensation press is only represented by one title, *Bild*, although with a high circulation.

After 1945, a new beginning and the continuation of traditions also came together in Italian journalism. After restoration of press freedom, new newspapers were launched (Murialdi, 1995, 1996). The party system was fragmented. The parties needed their own outlets, which led to a revival of the opinion and party press. “Political parallelism” is reflected in this. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), this is characteristic of the “Mediterranean and polarized pluralist model” of media organization. Italy (as well as other Southern European countries) is a prototype for this. Journalism has political and literary roots. A mass circulation press never fully emerged. “The style of journalism tends to give substantial emphasis to commentary. Newspapers tend to represent distinct political tendencies” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 98). Polarized pluralism is produced by many distinct parties, ranging over a wide political spectrum. In contrast, there is the “North/Central European or democratic corporatist model”. The Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, and Germany adhere to this model, with typical forms of social regulation and with three coexistences: between political parallelism, a mass circulation press, and a high level of journalistic professionalization. Great Britain (and the USA) is assigned to the third model, the “North Atlantic or liberal model.” Commercial newspapers developed rather early, with little state involvement, marginalizing media with distinct ideological viewpoints. “In each, an informational style of journalism has become dominant and traditions of political neutrality tend to be strong – though with very important exceptions in the British press” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 198). A scandal shocked the public when the British tabloid *News of the World*, owned by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, was closed in July 2011 due to allegations of phone hacking and corruption.

The development of journalism in Europe (as in other parts of the world) in the twentieth century was furthermore influenced by technological innovations. The discovery of wireless telegraphy resulted in the development of the radio as an auditory mass medium. All European countries introduced this new medium in the 1920s. Radio was mostly organized by the state or had close links to the state, except in Great Britain: here, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) adopted the character of a public service company in 1927 with a Royal Charter. The Italian fascists also introduced this model. The nature of audio and the organizational structures had consequences for journalism in broadcasting. The medium itself was often used for education and entertainment, but informational broadcasts were also included. Journalistic formats were first determined by the example of the press; over time they were supplemented by specific presentational forms such as reportages and interviews.

After World War II, another mass medium arose: television. Although its beginnings date back to well before the war, its distribution had been interrupted and

delayed by hostilities. Thus television started more or less at the same time in the 1950s in most European countries (Bignell & Fickers, 2008) and rapidly established itself within a decade. In some countries (e.g., France) its organization remained close to the state; in the Eastern bloc it belonged completely to the state (as did radio). The majority of Western European countries followed the BBC model and offered TV in different variations as “public service” – in the Scandinavian countries, in Germany, in Austria, in Switzerland, and at first also in Italy. Journalism now also meant moving pictures and conveying information visually. In turn, new formats had to be created. This process can be divided into four periods (Bourdon, 2000).

At its beginnings TV news followed the radio model and used film reports like the newsreels. “First of all, mastering technology came before discovering news content” (Bourdon, 2000, p. 63). After overcoming marginality and uncertainty, TV news gained political value. The 1960s “were the golden age of current affairs programs” (Bourdon, 2000, p. 68). Only later, from the 1970s onward, did TV news become a specific genre, more or less presented by an “anchor,” adapted from the US example. Despite corporate control, journalists in public service TV were largely independent and relatively free from the pressure of audience ratings and viewers’ preferences. Newscasts and magazine programs had a serious character and expressed criticism that was not welcomed within the world of politics. This changed in the 1980s when private broadcasting was permitted in Western Europe due to new transmission technologies such as cable and satellite. Many new broadcasting stations financed themselves exclusively with the help of commercials. Their radio and TV programs have to follow audience preferences. This also applied to journalism. The consequences were more “infotainment” and an increasing visual tabloidization of TV news. Bourdon (2000) suggests that this was a “triumph of deregulated television over journalism” (p. 76). Kevin Williams (2005) argues: “The development of European journalism in the twentieth century is portrayed as the gradual demise of the literary and the political form. The Anglo-American model is increasingly dominant in the European media systems, eroding the differences which characterized journalism in these societies” (p. 68).

Although this description may in principle be correct, national journalistic cultures did not simply dissolve everywhere. In some places they still maintain their individual character, e.g., in Greece (Papathanassopoulos, 2001). That is why Williams (2005) also states: “However, there are still sufficient differences to distinguish journalism in Europe” (p. 79; cf. Deuze 2002).

Prospects: Journalism in the Twenty-First Century

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, journalism in Europe (as in other parts of the world) is again undergoing extensive change. Politically, German reunification and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990–1991 meant that in Eastern Europe

formerly federated states became independent, and in general (re)democratization began. This also led to the reform of journalism in those countries (Aumente, Gross, Hiebert, Johnson, & Mills, 1999). Innovations and existing traditions combined in various ways. Publishing houses and broadcasting stations were acquired by Western media enterprises. However, they depend on domestic journalists who must be well informed about their respective countries.

The majority of the former Eastern bloc states have meanwhile become members of the European Union. Today, 27 countries belong to the EU. In this process of European unification, journalism has also acquired new responsibilities. Many expect it to contribute to the development of a European public sphere so that it becomes more than just an agglomeration of national publics.

As well as political causes, technological innovations have also changed journalism over the last two decades. Since the mid-1990s, the Internet has provided a new field of activity for journalists. "Old" media are present in the World Wide Web today. In addition, there are multimedia presentational forms that enable interactive communication. By means of Web 2.0, passive recipients have become active producers of user-generated content. Professional journalism has entered into competition with citizen journalists, especially with bloggers, etc.

Thus, today, European journalism is in a state of flux. Technological developments and innovations in the production and distribution of news have not only changed the profession but are "threatening the privileged status if not the survival of the old professional sort" (Preston, 2008, p. 1).

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Journalism History

Korea

Sae-Eun Kim

ABSTRACT

Journalism in Korea has ancient roots in Confucian political ideas. Its modern version is tied to the Japanese colonial period and the US occupation in the mid-twentieth century. In post-independence South Korea, journalism's development has been influenced by its place within the military government and the limitations on freedom of the press that followed. In recent years, a handful of news organizations have dominated mainstream journalism. But strong political and social movements, along with the emergence of digital media and the Internet, have destabilized the journalism system. Korea's journalism is at a crossroads. Despite Korea's particular situation of national division and the authoritarianism of the government, it can be overcome by being faithful to journalistic norms and principles.

Journalism in Korea has ancient roots. Its modern version is tied to the Japanese colonial period and the US occupation in the mid-twentieth century. In post-independence South Korea, journalism's development has been influenced by its place within the military government and the limitations on freedom of the press that followed. In recent years, a handful of news organizations have dominated mainstream journalism. But strong political and social movements, along with the emergence of digital media and the Internet, have destabilized the journalism system.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Genealogy of Korean Journalism

Confucian political ideas in the Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) described public opinion as the vitality of a nation, although common people had little input. Public opinion was regarded as a critical factor in the management of the nation, and common people were said to be represented by the privileged class *yangban*, or Confucian literati. Local communities of *yangban* were supposed to form public opinion and deliver it to the king; this system might be called the “local public sphere.”

Organs of “expostulation,” or advice to one’s superiors, were also established. I would call this system the “Royal Court public sphere.” Officers in the Royal Court discussed policies and administration and prompted disciplinary measures. These officers for expostulation played the leading role of shaping public opinion in order to check the abuse of the king’s power. Criticism was delivered through three governmental organs: *Saheonbu* (office of discipline, responsible for news coverage of oversight of government officials), *Saganwon* (office of expostulations, responsible for news of ordinary politics), and *Hongmungwan* (office of academy and publicity, responsible for record keeping and providing expert advice to the king). These officials were in principle free from any influence from the king, although this principle was often violated. Modern newspapers can be said to have inherited this spirit of criticism of Confucian literati of the Joseon dynasty.

The Birth of the Daily Newspaper: *Chobo*

If the core function of journalism is to transmit news to the public, *Chobo* (literally, “morning paper”) was definitely an early form of newspaper in the Joseon dynasty. It was the official gazette transcribed by hand at the office in charge of royal commands every morning. It was published in two forms: one for the public in the capital, the other for the provinces. The readers of both were mainly of the *yangban* class. Most of the content was royal decrees. *Chobo* also delivered Confucian lessons, the ruling ideology of the dynasty, news of natural disasters, foreign relations, and extraordinary events, very similar to the content of modern newspapers.

In August 1577, the Royal Court allowed civilians to copy *Chobo* every day to sell to the public. The civilian *Chobo*, printed in type, was distributed to people without access to the official *Chobo* for a subscription fee. When the king was informed a few months later, he prohibited it out of fear of leaking national information to foreign countries. The officials involved in permitting the publication were condemned to exile. Some claim that *Chobo* was the first printed newspaper in the world, as it came before seventeenth-century European journals and 56 years before the 1633 Chinese *Gazette*. *Chobo* changed its title to *Kwanbo* (“official paper”) in 1894.

Origins of the Modern Newspaper

The first modern newspaper in Korea was the *Hanseong Sunbo* in 1883. Initially it was issued every ten days in Chinese characters only; later it came out weekly in a mix of Chinese characters and Korean alphabetic text, or *Hangeul*.¹ In 1896, *Dongnip Shinmun* (*The Independent*), virtually the first private newspaper in Korea, in its inaugural editorial, announced that “we will not discriminate against people according to their social status [. . .] We will not serve only those living in Seoul but all Koreans living in Korea.” This statement aimed at the disintegration of the feudal and closed public sphere of the *yangban* class and heralded the birth of an open and democratic public sphere. With a view to supporting such a public sphere, *Dongnip Shinmun* was issued only in Korean characters so that it could reach more people, regardless of gender and social status. It also published an English-language edition. Several other newspapers followed suit. These newspapers played a significant role in the transition from Confucian traditions to Westernized modernization.

The Long Road to Press Freedom: State Intervention in Journalism

Political power has historically been the most significant influence in the history of journalism in Korea. I shall first trace government policies on journalism and discuss the process of democratization; then I will describe the development of the media as a business or industry in which the Korean government has continued to play an enormously important role.

The development of the press took place within the context of political history. Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) replaced the Joseon dynasty, ending a period in which foreign powers – including Russia, China, the United States, England, France, Germany, and the Netherlands – had competed for influence. Japanese colonialism tried to eradicate Korean identity. The Korean language was strictly prohibited and even names had to be changed into the Japanese style. The US military government ended Japanese rule and governed Korea for three years. The US occupation banned periodicals supporting the Soviet Union or North Korea.

In 1948, the first government of the Republic of Korea was launched under President Rhee Syngman. Becoming increasingly authoritarian during and after the Korean War (1950–1953), President Rhee Syngman hung on to political power until forced to resign by popular mass demonstrations in 1960. Launched with a cabinet system instead of the presidential system, the second republic (1960–1961) allowed a considerable amount of freedom in politics as well as in the press, but failed to steward the economy and fell to a coup led by General Park Chung-Hee in 1961.

Table 11.1 Modern political history of the Republic of Korea

1910–1945	Japanese occupation
1945–1960	Independence, division, Korean War, and the establishment of the first republic
1960	4.19 (April 19) revolution and overthrow of Rhee Syngman's dictatorship; the second republic under Prime Minister Chang Myoun
1961	5.16 (May 16) military coup d'état and establishment of military regime by Park Chung-Hee
1961–1978	The third and fourth republic of Korea under Park Chung-Hee; people's rights and press freedom extremely limited during dictatorship and industrialization
1979–1980	Assassination of Park, subsequent coup by Chun Doo-Hwan, nationwide resistance against military control and Kwangju Peoples' Uprising
1980–1987	The fifth republic of Korea under Chun Doo-Hwan, the president's term in office amended to seven years and re-election prohibited
1987	10 June Popular Struggle and direct presidential election system
1988–1992	The sixth republic of Korea under Roh Tae-Woo, the president's term in office amended to five years
1991	The three-party merger of one ruling and two opposition parties; Kim Young-Sam, opposition leader for 30 years, becomes leader of the ruling party after the merger
1993–1997	The "Civilian Government," the first elected civilian government under Kim Young-Sam
1998–2002	The "People's Government," the first elected opposition government of Kim Dae-Jung, 32 years' opposition leader in a keen rivalry with Kim Young-Sam
2003–2007	The "Participatory Government"; President Roh Moo-Hyun, successor to the previous president, Kim Dae-Jung
2008–	The "Lee Myung-Bak Government" or "Practical Government"; President Lee Myung-Bak, a conservative politician, former mayor of Seoul

Park held the presidency until he was assassinated in 1979. Chun Doo-Hwan (1980–1988), another military general, took political power by coup; his successor Roh Tae-Woo (1988–1993) was a co-conspirator.

The year 1987 is regarded as a turning point in Korea's political history. Popular mass demonstrations in June forced a constitutional amendment to direct election of the presidency. Korea entered a stage of democratization, even though there was still a long way to go, especially regarding press freedom.

The constitutions of all the republics in Korea, including the most repressive fourth and fifth republics, have endorsed press freedom in principle, if not in practice. Article 21 of the Korean Constitution protects press freedom as a right of citizens: "All citizens shall enjoy freedom of speech and the press, and freedom of assembly and association" (Article 21, Clause 1). It also prohibits press censorship, providing that "Licensing or censorship of speech and the press, and licensing of assembly and association shall not be recognized" (Clause 2). Further, the Constitution stipulates legislation governing the facilities of news services and broadcast media (Clause 3).

Balancing freedom of speech and the press with individual rights to reputation, it states: "Neither speech nor the press shall violate the honor or rights of other persons nor undermine public morals or social ethics. Should speech or the press violate the honor or rights of other persons, claims may be made for the damage resulting therefrom" (Clause 4). However, there is often a gulf between these constitutional guarantees and lived reality. The dictatorships did not allow the people or the press to enjoy freedom of speech.

The first republic (1948–1960) forbade seven news-related behaviors in September 1948: violating the national policies of the Republic of Korea; plotting against the government; approving and/or supporting the Communist Party and the so-called puppet government of North Korea; artificial fabrication and agitating others; obstructing diplomatic relations with friendly nations and damaging national prestige; exerting a bad influence upon public sentiment, not to speak of disturbing and exciting it; leaking the nation's secret information (Song, 1990, pp. 78–79).

The National Security Law promulgated in 1948 was used effectively to regulate the press. The government forced three newspaper companies to discontinue immediately and arrested a large number of journalists, continuing the behavior of the US occupation (Song, 1990, p. 80). Over time, control over the progressive press extended to the conservative press. *Dong-a Ilbo* was discontinued in 1955 and *Kyunghyang Shinmun* cancelled in 1959 (Song, 1990, pp. 118–119). The press was harassed in other ways as well.

The second republic (1960–1962) relaxed the licensing system in the Registration Law of Newspapers and Political Parties in July 1960. A great number of new magazines and news agencies besides newspapers cropped up competitively throughout the country. The number of dailies rose from 41 to 112; weeklies and magazines doubled or tripled (Song, 1990, p. 127).

The military government that followed (1962–1971) immediately proclaimed martial law and began inspecting all publications. It canceled the registration of newspapers and news agencies that had no facilities of their own in the name of "the purification of quasi-journalists and journalistic organs," and announced that no additional licenses would be authorized. The Ministry of Public Information issued standards that resulted in the revoking of licenses for 91% of periodicals and even restricted the number of newspaper pages to 36 per week (Kim, H.-S., 1994, p. 130).

Even as it suppressed press criticism, the government promoted industrialization for media companies and enabled them to accumulate large capital. Policy included material improvement of newspapers, newsprint allocation, frequency allocation, and all sorts of licensing systems and preferential loans to lure newspaper owners. Korean media began their transition to capitalist enterprises by colluding with the political regime, as the dictator needed the media to secure his legitimacy.

In October 1972, the Revitalizing Reform began. The proclamation of emergency martial law included censorship. The Revitalizing Reform Constitution included protections of free speech, press, assembly, and petition in Article 18. However,

Articles 32 and 54 (clause 2) allowed laws to restrict the people's rights and freedoms in the interests of national security and the maintenance of social/national order (Kim, H.-S., 1994, p. 608). Government control was reinforced and criticism in the media was strictly prohibited, but commercial expansion continued. The difference in treatment between owners and reporters rendered Korean journalism obedient to the regime.

The media policy of the fifth republic (1980–1987) was the typical carrot-and-stick: strong intervention in management as well as in reports combined with support for commercialism. The new military government established the Basic Law of the Media, dismissed around 1,000 media workers, restructured media companies, and tightened censorship. The media companies that survived prospered throughout the 1980s. Media workers were exempted from income tax and enjoyed overseas study and training.

Media Policies After Democratization

Press freedom was regarded as an urgent prerequisite for democracy in Korea, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Struggles for press freedom were the driving force for democratization together with the student movement. But the established press was tame to the point of functioning as propaganda. Reporters who did not agree to play that role experienced hardships and punishments such as dismissal and imprisonment.

Even after democratization, every government and president tried to control the press. Kim Young-Sam (1993–1997) and Kim Dae-Jung (1998–2002) preferred to control the press by conducting tax audits on selected “unfavorable” news media. Roh Moo-Hyun (2003–2007), a former human rights lawyer, encouraged prosecutions to the point where critics called it a war against the conservative press. The number of journalists – reporters and anchors – entering politics increased steadily. The intervention of the government in the appointment of the chair of KBS, MBC, and YTN became increasingly visible. Journalists' self-censorship remained. Freedom of the press in Korea continued to be threatened

However, after 1987 media policy embraced “deregulation.” President Roh Tae-Woo tried to present himself as a “normal (not elitist) and legal (duly elected)” president, different from previous presidents. Meanwhile, strong foreign pressure to open the doors of the domestic media industry promoted the idea of the free market (Kim, N.-S., 1994, pp. 176–178). Media grew rapidly in numbers and profitability during this period, taking advantage of monopolistic or oligopolistic status. Many *chaebol* launched into the media industry (*chaebol-media*), and the other media enterprises developed into large business groups just like *chaebol* (*media-chaebol*). Broadcasting shifted from a public system to a public–private system with the establishment of a new broadcasting company, the Seoul Broadcasting Station, in 1990.

Owing to deregulation, the capitalist market has become another powerful element in Korean media. Movements both within media by media workers and outside the media by civil organizations became essential to keep the media as a public sphere from the influence of the capitalist market, as well as political power, in this new media environment.

The Media Policy of Kim Young-Sam (1993–1997)

Kim Young-Sam's government embraced media reform immediately after his inauguration, emphasizing the social responsibility of the media. The national tax service inspected several media companies and, for the first time, the Fair Trade Commission (FTC) investigated the unfair transactions within the newspaper market (Chu, Kim, & Park, 1997, pp. 278–279). Keen competition in the newspaper market, nurtured by Roh Tae-Woo's government, now entered a new phase. Kim Young-Sam also tried to introduce the Audit Bureau of Circulations system, public disclosure of personal assets of chief executives of major newspapers, the abolition of tax exemptions for media companies' value-added tax and tax benefits to journalists, and restructuring broadcasting companies through the revision of broadcasting law. These reforms were ineffective (Joo-Eon Kim, 2008, pp. 531–532). The tax audit is the most doubtful point. The national tax service inspected several newspaper companies and KBS and MBC, but the results of these audits were not made public, leading people to criticize them as attempts to intimidate journalism (Lee, 1998). Regulation designed to protect small newspapers and promote competition, as well as letting the FTC, the nation's antitrust agency, penalize the newspaper companies, was also controversial. Critics accused the government of trying to suppress the media.

The government also exerted influence through a growing apparatus of public information officers and through intervention in the selection of the leadership of news organizations. It also filed defamation suits against media reports, a clever and intricate strategy of media control (Chung, 1998, pp. 91–94).

The most important agency of press control was the market. The labor movement in the media industries was defeated by competition among media enterprises and journalists' individualism and devotion to press freedom. Meanwhile, the civic media movement began to promote government support, as private media reached the limits of manpower and financial resources (Chung, 2001, pp. 176–178).

Beginning in February 1998, just after the financial crisis in December 1997, Kim Dae-Jung wanted to differentiate his government from previous ones with the title of "People's Government," born out of long struggles for democratization. Despite public hostility toward commercialization in the media, Kim Dae-Jung emphasized the role of the press as "critic with friendship rather than friend without criticism" in his address at the ceremony of "press day" on April 1, 1998, just two months after his inauguration. Making clear that there would be no trial of media control, he

carried out his campaign promise to abolish the Bureau of Public Information. But in May 1999 he revived the Bureau under the name of the Government Information Agency and launched a tax probe of media companies. He also revived the newspaper regulation introduced in 1996 under the Kim Young-Sam government, which had been abolished since it was claimed to be against free market principles. In 2001, tax investigations culminated in the arrests of some newspaper owners, along with fines of about \$4.9 million on 23 media companies. The largest fines were imposed on *Chosun Ilbo*, *Joong-ang Ilbo*, and *Dong-a Ilbo*, the leading conservative dailies, which comprised more than half of the total.

Kim Dae-Jung's media policy in later days was regarded as rather authoritative compared to that of earlier days when he stressed the autonomy of the media. He revised the Broadcasting Law so as to appoint the chairman of KBS (Joo-Eon Kim, 2008, p. 538), which led to controversies and serious conflicts over the appointment that continue to this day.

Setting up the relationship with the press to be a "sound and healthy tension," the "participatory government" of Roh Moo-Hyun tried to break the traditional collusion between politics and the media. The government introduced an open briefing system and revised newspaper regulation to give more support for minor newspapers. Until then, report rooms, from *Cheongwadae*, the Blue House, to local police stations, were exclusively for registered major media companies (most of which were conservative). Minor newspapers and newly launched online media (most of which were progressive), therefore, could not attend briefings. These measures brought about the furious resistance of major media.

The conflict between the government and conservative press was obvious in Roh's presidency. Roh Moo-Hyun paid his first visit to *Hankyoreh* after the presidential election and expressed thanks for supporting him during the election. He also gave the first interview with the online site *OhmyNews*, which was very unusual. He even excluded *Chosun Ilbo* from the list of presidential interviews, the biggest and most powerful conservative newspaper. He considered *Chosun Ilbo* a symbol of the *ancien régime* of Korean society and "a representative anti-democratic privileged group" (Rhyu, 2002, p. 95). Roh's declaration of war with *Chosun Ilbo* was followed by an "anti-*Chosun* movement" of various civil organizations, which soon developed into a nationwide boycott among Roh's supporters.

Diversity of public opinion was the core theme for President Roh Moo-Hyun's media reform. For this, a Special Act on Supporting the Local Press was enacted in 2004 to boost local papers² and the Newspaper Act in 2005 to reform the structure of the newspaper market. According to the Act, the circulation of the top three newspapers must not exceed 60% of market share and the Newspapers Distribution Center was established to provide a nationwide joint distribution system for minor newspapers. The aim of these acts was to lessen the social and political influence of the top three conservative newspapers. However, it was controversial and lapsed with the change of administration.

Commercialization of Journalism

The history of Korean media as a capitalist enterprise goes back to the 1960s under the third republic. With the resumption of Korea–Japan diplomacy in 1965, the government allowed media to use Japanese capital as credit to enlarge their operations with more personnel and new facilities, and their own buildings, and to invest in transportation, which accelerated their development. In 1965, *Joong-ang Ilbo*, by Samsung (the first business group, *chaebol*, in Korea), launched, which meant that newspaper enterprises met the conditions for capitalist development even without direct government subsidy. Advertising in the late 1960s and 1970s became the main source of profit for Korean media.

In the 1980s, media enterprises enhanced their capitalist character as a subsystem of the political system that still lacked legitimacy and therefore needed media to maintain it. Media restructuring in 1980 resulted in monopolistic tendencies and the continued growth of advertising revenue. Media enterprises could modernize their facilities thanks to governmental assistance and increased profits. They launched more varied magazines, and expanded their business fields as cultural enterprises to diversify the sources of profit. Korean media became regimented and aimed to defend and promote the prevailing political powers and policies as well as to pursue the maximization of profits. Their gross sales also increased dramatically. The vigorous advance into the magazine and periodical market in the search for more profits using existing facilities showed the typical attribute of capitalist enterprises. The media enterprises turned out to be a highly profitable business in the 1980s thanks to the various policies of the fifth republic. During the fifth republic from 1980 to 1987, the gross sales of the five major national daily newspaper enterprises increased 3.4 times.³

The revenue composition of the newspaper enterprises has changed drastically during the period under consideration. The percentage ratio of advertisement revenue increased to 60.2% in the 1980s. The non-competitive structure of the media controlled by political power allowed media enterprises to achieve stunning growth in advertising revenue (Kim, 1996, p. 248). Broadcasting and newspapers both grew faster than other manufacturing industries.

Newspaper enterprises owed much of their commercial success to the cartel on subscription fees maintained since the 1960s with the government's connivance. Journalists, too, enjoyed many privileges. The salary level of newspaper reporters, however, was considerably lower compared to the large business enterprises. More than 70% of newspaper reporters received less than the minimum living wage. Some of them had to supplement their salary with support from their news sources in business, public institutes, and politics. News sources volunteered to give money, called *chonji*, to reporters when asking them to conceal their mistakes or to report in favor of them. If these "voluntary offerings" were not sufficient, some reporters

threatened to report their faults or mistakes, something which has been considered as one of the most serious pathologies in Korean society.

Journalists began to organize vigorously in the 1970s. A commitment to democratization of the media and society has been substituted for individualism and loyalty to their own companies. Newspapers increased the number of pages competitively and needed more sensational and entertaining items to attract more readers. When the commercial broadcaster SBS commenced in 1993, all broadcasters competed with more enjoyable and exciting programs to win audiences. Excessive competition for circulation and ratings necessarily resulted in deterioration of news/program quality.

Changing Journalists, Changing Audience

Reporters, struggling in the 1970s for freedom from both government and media ownership, turned to the labor union movement. Conflicts between publishers and reporters were getting as serious as those between the government and the media. In 1974, *Dong-a Ilbo* reporters organized a labor union for the first time among media organizations; ownership responded with mass dismissals of more than 100 participants under the guise of the “rationalization of management.” Reporters at *Chosun Ilbo* protested against the paper’s support of the dictatorship in 1975 and the publisher dismissed the active participants. The dismissed journalists organized protest committees and played a significant role in the free press movement that followed. One of the most important outcomes of their effort was the foundation of *Hankyoreh* (literally, “Korean people,” “one nation,” or “one race”) in 1988, the first legal opposition newspaper in Korea since *Minjok Ilbo*, which shut down after its publisher was executed under martial law in 1961.

Hankyoreh aimed to promote a free and responsible journalism for the restoration of democratic order and reunification. At the advent of *Hankyoreh*, Korean news media were clearly split into conservative and progressive groups. As a progressive newspaper, the reports and opinions of *Hankyoreh* were more critical of political and economic power groups and more protective of social minorities. *Hankyoreh* had a large base among intellectuals and university students, although its circulation was small.

Kim Dae-Jung, elected as president in December 2001, had a long relationship with *Hankyoreh*. Along with the shift in power, conflicts among the media became more complicated and more intertwined with regional conflict between Kyoongsang province and Cholla province, the seedbeds of conservative and progressive political groups, respectively.⁴ The media then became embroiled in partisanship and even factionalism. Alliances among political forces and the media were made and these alliances affected journalism. The top three dailies, *Chosun Ilbo*, *Joong-ang Ilbo*, and *Dong-a Ilbo*, have been organs for the conservative Grand National Party, while *Hankyoreh* and two public broadcasters, KBS and MBC, have been agents for the progressive Democratic Party.

Conflict between public broadcasters and the giant newspapers emerged noticeably in Roh Moo-Hyun's administration. Contention between giant papers and two public broadcasters and between the giant papers and the progressive newspaper *Hankyoreh* helped lead to the impeachment of President Roh in 2004. Korean journalism has lost public trust by fighting a proxy war for politicians. As a result the public sphere fails to operate properly by seeking a consensus on issues and balancing contradictory opinions.

Demystification of Watchdog Journalism: Journalists Running for Political Power

In the era of media politics, journalists have become more influential. Political parties eagerly recruit journalists in election seasons. The term applied to these "politician/journalists" is *polinalist*. In a literal sense, the first president, Rhee Syngman, was also the first polinalist. During the Japanese occupation, many journalists supported the independence movement, and might also be called polinalists.

The mobilization of journalists for publicity began in the military government. To help promote the legitimacy of the government, many journalists were granted the status of National Assembly members and ministers. But it was the "civilian government" of Kim Young-Sam in the early 1990s that brought this practice to its highest level. During his rule, 71 National Assembly members (60 in the ruling party and 11 in the opposition parties), 23 ministers, 5 vice-ministers, and 35 Presidential Officers were former journalists. Since then, the percentages of former journalists in National Assemblies have remained around 10–15%. During the presidential election in 2007, more than 40 journalists joined the election campaign of Lee Myung-Bak⁵ and another 40 applied for nomination by the Grand National Party for the National Assembly.

One could ask whether polinalists could have ever worked fairly and impartially as journalists before running for office. If the answer is no, the profession of journalism for them might be nothing but a stepping stone to political power. Regardless of whether that is true or not, Koreans have come to think of journalists as power-seekers and distrust the media as a result.

Changes of Audience: Decline of Newspaper Readership and Evaluation

Newspaper readership is eroding. The nationwide survey of media audiences in 2010 (KPF, 2010b) revealed a critical situation. Only 52.6% of respondents read newspapers

once or more in a week and the time spent reading newspapers had dropped to 16.1 minutes from 24 minutes in 2008.⁶ Only 29.0% subscribed to newspapers.⁷ The top three newspapers claimed 65.8% of all subscribers: *Chosun Ilbo* 30%, *Joong-ang Ilbo* 20%, and *Dong-a Ilbo* 15.8%.

A steady erosion of trust suggests that newspaper journalism has failed to meet its audience's needs and expectations in a changing environment. The most urgent problems to be corrected in journalism, according to one survey, were collusion with political power (54.3%), irresponsible reporting (44.2%), reporting for the company's own interest (34.3%), and protective reporting for advertisers (25.7%) (KPF, 2010b, p. 28).

Journalism in Digitization: Where to Go?

The power of Internet media became clear when *OhmyNews*, one of the most popular and influential Internet media in Korea, influenced the 2002 presidential election. Launched in 1999 with the slogan "every citizen is a reporter," it invited "all news guerrillas to join us in this grand experiment in globalization." Its news selection and interpretation were completely different from conventional media. "Citizen reporters" with occupations from homeless to professor covered news in their everyday lives not dealt with by conventional journalism, without objectivity and impartiality, but full of factuality and sincerity. Ordinary people challenged collusive journalists through *OhmyNews*, pushed different political agendas, and helped elect Roh Moo-Hyun. As a token of gratitude, Roh Moo-Hyun had his first official interview as president with *OhmyNews*. Low-cost, interactive Internet media have come to compete with conventional journalism media.

The dominance of news services via Internet portals is unique to Korea. Internet portals such as *Naver*, *Daum*, and *Nate* became giants in distribution of news and information, even though they started their news services only in 2003. Portals passed conventional newspapers in trustworthiness in a nationwide audience survey in 2008, with *Naver* and *Daum* ranked at third and fourth as most influential, after only KBS and MBC (KPF, 2008). However, these portals clearly do not perform the same role in the public sphere as legacy media. They do not discriminate among news sources, and much of their content comes from other news organizations; readers selecting an item are portaled into the originating organization's site. Internet news also encourages sensational headlines to grab reader attention.

The new Newspaper Act, passed by the ruling party in July 2009, includes Internet portals as news services. It also abolishes restrictions on cross-ownership and cross-operation of different media, making it easier for a *chaebol* to own and control news organizations (KPF, 2010a, pp. 99–100). The new Act has been divisive, especially in relaxing cross-ownership and cross-operation regulation. Those in favor argued that deregulation was needed for news organizations to survive globalization and

digitization; those opposed thought that it would increase the influence of the conservative newspapers at the expense of diversity of public opinion. Around the same time, the Korean Communications Committee (KCC) picked four consortia, led respectively by *Chosun Ilbo*, *Joong-ang Ilbo*, *Dong-a Ilbo*, and *Maeil Kyungje* (the largest economic daily in Korea), all leading pro-government conservative newspapers, to the strong criticism of the opposition.

History of Journalism Studies in Korea

The Joseon Institute for Journalism Education opened in 1947, two years after the liberation from Japanese colonial rule. The institutionalization of communication studies in Korea began when Hongik University became the first Korean university to open a communication department in 1954. It merged in 1962 with the second communication department in Chung-ang University (founded in 1958) (Yang, 2009b, p. 71). Communication departments and research institutes mushroomed in the 1960s. Seoul National University founded its Institute of Journalism Research in 1963 and opened a Graduate School of Journalism. Journalism, and especially print journalism, dominated Korea's communication research (Yang, 2009b, p. 71).

As the new generation of professors who studied in the United States began to teach at Korean universities from the late 1960s onward, the emphasis shifted from normative journalism studies to communication research as a social science. In 1973, 67% of the professors teaching in communication departments had studied in the United States, and most of them accepted the empirical paradigm. In top universities the figure was 89% (Yang, 2005). Communication studies spread to major provincial universities in the 1980s. Growth continued in the 1990s, as the number of departments increased from 15 in the early 1980s to 126 in 2009 (Yang, 2009b, p. 72). This number is second only to the United States.

Academic societies and journals also appeared. The Korean Society for Journalism Studies (KSJS) was established in 1959. KSJS aimed to "promote researches on journalism, collaboration and friendship among the members," and added "mass communication" to its name in 1969. Finally, it changed "mass communication" to "communication" in 1977. A host of more specialized societies appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. The number of KSJCS members grew from 30 in 1959 to more than 1,000 at present (Yang, 2009b, p. 73) and KSJCS has 20 research divisions including journalism.

KSJS published its official journal, the *Korean Journal of Journalism Studies*, in 1960 (though it didn't publish its second issue until 1969). It changed its title to the *Korean Journal of Journalism and Communication Studies* in 1992 and has steadily increased its publication frequency to six issues per year (Cha & Lee, 2009, pp. 321, 322, 328). In quantity, Korean journalism studies rivals those of other countries; in quality, it has successfully followed the path established by the United States (Yang, 2009b; Im, 2009, p. 437).

US-trained scholars imported the style of communication studies into journalism schools, especially empirical methods (Yang, 2009b; Im, 2009, p. 438). Content analysis was the most popular research method in Korea's early journalism studies. Nearly half of MA theses at Seoul National University in the 1970s used content analysis. A few others used survey, experimental, or Q methodologies on news audience and news production. But there was little methodological reflection or innovation in these studies, and there were hardly any mid-scale or large-scale theories (Im, 2009, pp. 437–441).

The advent of critical communication studies in Korea was directly related to the political situation of the 1980s. After the June Uprisings in 1987, radical ideologies and social movements spread and affected journalism studies. The basic idea of the critical macroscopic approach in that period came from the recognition that journalism as a social institution is deeply intertwined with other social systems. Critical studies and its challenge to functionalism reflected the anti-US sentiment which swept the universities in the 1980s. Im (2009, pp. 444–445) points to reflective research into the relation between news and reality, critical normative studies, and the deployment of concepts like ideology, representation, myth, discourse, and articulation. More attention was paid to the political character of news and its role in maintaining the status quo. Under the influence of political economy and British cultural studies, the political purpose and ideological effect of news were discussed in Korea's historical and social context. In the late 1980s, a fierce theoretical and ideological confrontation between empirical mainstream research and critical studies in Korea's communication circles produced what Yang (2009b, p. 76) calls a "paradigm dialogue" marking the birth of diversity or pluralism in the field. However, as Im (2009) regretfully acknowledges, critical journalism studies can be criticized for lacking theoretical precision and arbitrary use of terms. But, I argue, the most important problem of critical journalism studies since the 1980s is its alignment with factional journalism, whether conservative or progressive.

Pluralism is the key word to describe journalism studies since the 1990s (Yang, 2009a; Im, 2009). New and old research tendencies coexisted, competed, and developed with various research issues, approaches, and methodologies. Im (2009, p. 446) describes those changes as follows: content analysis and audience research were still major areas in journalism studies; news production research was augmented with qualitative methodologies such as participant observation; traditional empirical approaches were also enlarged from content analysis and survey to advanced statistics such as network analysis; qualitative methodologies such as discourse analysis, participant observation, and semiology became frequently used in journalism studies.

The number of journal articles increased steadily thanks to the evaluation system of the universities focusing simply on the quantity of publication. Nonetheless, Korean journalism studies is still struggling for its identity. Systematic theoretical work remains a weak point (Im, 2009, pp. 447–449). Yang's (2009b, p. 77) content analysis of the research paradigms of articles published in three major journals shows the number of critical studies increasing significantly in the 1990s, but still well behind the empirical paradigm (see also Yang, 2009a, p. 1031).

Key Issues in Journalism Studies in the 2000s

On March 12, 2004, the opposition-led National Assembly passed the impeachment of President Roh Moo-Hyun to suspend his presidency. The impeachment of President Roh, who was thought of as progressive, was a shocking event to almost every Korean, and was the focus of news coverage across the political spectrum. Controversy arose over the impartiality of coverage by the broadcast networks, and pressure was brought to bear on them by the conservative opposition. In response, the KCC turned to the academy for an assessment, asking the Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies to study the matter. They assembled a team of six professors, who did a multi-method content analysis using empirical content analysis, frame analysis, and discourse analysis (KSJCS, 2004, p. 7). They found that “The entire frame (of the programs) was formed by portraying the forces opposing the impeachment as the weaker group and those supporting the impeachment as the stronger and unjust ones” and concluded that “those programs can hardly be seen as fair and impartial, no matter how loosely principles are applied” (KSJCS, 2004, p. 166). This conclusion, in turn, provoked another sharp dispute on the “fairness” of the KSJCS report itself. Conservative media and scholars welcomed the report, while progressive media and scholars criticized the report, the research team, and the executives of the KSJCS. The KSJCS remains divided on this issue.

The sociology of news remains underdeveloped in Korea, partly due to the resistance of the tight-knit circle of Korean journalists. They do not welcome researchers, on the pretext of being busy. They express an authoritarian elitism with deep roots in the Confucian tradition. Indeed, the examination for journalists to work for major newspapers and broadcasters is getting so difficult to pass that it is compared to the bar exam. Aspiring journalists normally have to spend several years after graduation passing these exams. Fear of disclosure of errors and wrongdoing to the public is also an obstacle for researchers. Therefore, any issues related to journalists’ professionalism and ethics remain difficult to explore.

Rethinking Press Freedom in Korea

According to KPF’s biennial survey, Korean journalists have evaluated the degree of freedom in selecting and writing news as “somewhat free,” except for 1995 when President Kim Young-Sam pushed the tax probe investigation (KPF, 2009, p. 198). For the last ten years, the most frequent answer for the factor most limiting press freedom was advertiser pressure. The perceived influence of publishers and of editors has also increased. From 1999 to 2003, governmental/political power was next to advertisers and publishers. However, the influence of editors passed governmental/political

power in 2003. In 2009 governmental/political power surpassed the editorial office and the owner/publisher (KPF, 2009, pp. 199–200).

Similarly, Korea's press freedom seen from outside Korea is decreasing. The Reporters Sans Frontières' annual Press Freedom Index (PFI: <http://en.rsf.org/>) shows that the situation has been getting worse since 2007, the last year of Roh Moo-Hyun's administration, and into Lee Myung-Bak's government. Freedom House downgraded Korea from "free" to "partly free," ranking it 70th among 196 countries (<http://freedomhouse.org/images/File/fop/2011/FOTP2011GlobalRegionalTables.pdf/>). Increased censorship and attempts to exert official influence over the management of broadcast outlets led to a decline (Karlekar, 2011, p. 2).

Korea's journalism is at a crossroads. Some say that it is unavoidable because of Korea's particular situation of national division. However, I would argue that it springs from the Confucian tradition embedded in the authoritarianism of the government. It can be overcome by being faithful to journalistic norms and principles.

NOTES

Some parts of this chapter are based on the author's PhD thesis, *Communication, Culture and the Korean Public Sphere* (2001, University of Sussex, UK).

- 1 Through the newspaper, *Hangeul*, which had been used mainly in private letters exchanged between women and in storybooks read by women in their inner rooms, was used to treat important public affairs of the nation for the first time since the fifteenth century. Newspapers as modern commercial media were critical agents of social change.
- 2 The Korean newspaper market is dominated by national dailies, especially by the top three dailies. The newspaper market share in 2010 was: national dailies 63.5%, local dailies 9.9%, and financial dailies 20.6%. The combined share of the top three national dailies is 43%: 16.7% (*Chosun Ilbo*), 13.6% (*Joong-ang Ilbo*), and 12.7% (*Dong-a Ilbo*), respectively. Source: <http://www.media21.or.kr/solution/bbs/smBoard.asp?bGroup=2&bid=da01&mode=view&idx=157>
- 3 The circulation income of *Chosun Ilbo* in 1979 was less than 10,000 million Won, which increased to 52,600 million Won in 1986. Capitalization of *Dong-a Ilbo*, *Hankook Ilbo*, and *Seoul Shinmun* increased nearly seven times from 1980 to 1987, whilst the capital of manufacturing industry increased by 38.2% in the same period (*Media Oneul*, February 7, 1996).
- 4 All the presidents since the 1960s, Park Chung-Hee, Chun Doo-Hwan, Roh Tae-Woo, and Kim Young-Sam, were from Kyoungsang province, while Kim Dae-Jung was from Cholla province.
- 5 These polinalists were appointed after the election as the chairmen of media companies under governmental influence and media-related institutions.
- 6 The daily amount of time for using news and current affairs was 86.9 minutes, including television (41.2 mins.), radio (5.4 mins.), and the Internet (13.9 mins.), which was 28.8% of total media use (301.4 mins.) (KPF, 2010b, p. 15).
- 7 Newspaper subscription rates have dropped continuously: 36.8% in 2008, 40% in 2006, 48.3% in 2004, 52.9% in 2002, 59.8% in 2000, 64.5% in 1998, and 69.3% in 1996 (KPF, 2010b, p. 19).

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Journalism History

China

Shihua Chen and Qian Wang

ABSTRACT

China has a long history but a relatively short journalism history. Before the nineteenth century, most ancient information media only circulated within bureaucracies in order to maintain the ruling class. Modern journalism started in the early nineteenth century. The first Chinese newspapers and magazines were set up by missionaries to preach religion, mainly in the Southeast. From the middle of the nineteenth century, Chinese media established by Chinese intellectuals emerged and advanced the reforms of the Ch'ing dynasty and social modernization, finally leading to the collapse of the old regime. In the first half of the twentieth century, journalism was used by different political forces. Media became party organs to facilitate revolution and seize power in the conflict between the KMT and the CCP. After the foundation of the PRC, journalism was mainly the mouthpiece of the CCP; no commercial media existed until the 1980s. Afterward, journalism shifted emphasis from propaganda to economic reporting; commercial media emerged and succeeded in the market economy; and newspaper groups, broadcasting groups, and the Internet developed quickly. But party control still exists. Journalism in China still has to fight to survive under the double pressure of market and party.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Prehistory of Journalism in Ancient China

China is a very ancient country and has experienced a different kind of media history compared to other nations. Its earliest newspaper can be traced back to the Tang dynasty. Before that, there were no special news media; news was communicated mingled with other information.

The first newspapers, named *Zhuangbao* or *Dibao*, were about court news; they were first produced spontaneously by *Jinzouyuan*, a governmental agency set up in Chang'an where the emperor lived, and served the *Jiedushi*, provincial governors in charge of civil and military affairs. Such newspapers were government organs aimed at magistrates and officials, produced and circulated only among the bureaucracy (Bin, 1999).

Called variously *Jinzouyuanzhuang*, *Baozhuang*, *Chaobao*, or *Dibao* in ancient China, today people refer to all of them by the name *Dibao*. These ancient newspapers differed dramatically from modern newspapers. First, the content is quite different: *Dibao* are all about the emperor's orders, officials' memorials to the throne, and announcements of official promotions, demotions, rewards, and punishment. Second, the form is quite different: the *Dibao* was full of information without any fixed form. Handwritten on silk or paper or printed on paper, it didn't have any columns, headlines, or divisions of information. Third, the circulation and distribution were very different. Instead of being published and circulated by a newspaper office, the *Dibao* was issued by the court and government and distributed through the post. There was no independent profession of journalism.

This was true of the Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and Early-mid Ch'ing dynasties. During the Song dynasty, the *Dibao* became a centrally managed organ, strictly supervised by authority, which limited its content and weakened its timeliness. These limitations left an opening for the development of the *Xiaobao*, unofficial and uncensored newspapers whose news was chosen and disseminated according to the needs of the communicators. Though banned by the government, *Xiaobao*'s timeliness and news appeal allowed it to survive. *Dibao* grew more abundant in content during the Ming dynasty, and began to report news about agriculture, the climate, and society (Yungong, 1990).

With the development of the economy and society, non-governmental newspaper houses in Beijing publicly issued *Jingbao* in the Ch'ing dynasty. News in those newspapers also came from the court; they reported news that the *Dibao* neglected. The *Jingbao* were full-fledged newspapers, aiming to satisfy people's need for news at that time.

The Nineteenth-Century Rise of a Modern Press in Late Ch'ing China

Limited by the feudal economy, China's ancient *Dibao* developed very slowly in both form and content. Things changed with the outbreak of the Opium Wars

(1840–1842), which brought an end to China's closed-door policy. The 1,200-year history of the ancient newspapers also ended; they gradually disappeared, replaced by modern newspapers.

The Western capitalist powers, especially Britain, were busy enlarging commercial markets and accelerating colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. Aiming to grab the huge market in China, groups of businessmen, missionaries, politicians, and adventurers came, bringing opium as well as other varieties of goods, like Western-style hospitals, schools, and newspapers.

The old agrarian–bureaucratic imperial China was no match for the expanding British and other empires of international trade and gunboats. Thus the Opium Wars became a watershed of Chinese history which rapidly caused the unified feudal empire to evolve into a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state. The development of foreign newspapers in China was divided into two phases by the period of the Opium Wars.

Before the Opium Wars, Western religion and newspapers were strictly forbidden by the Ch'ing government. Covert publications appeared in the coastal areas, however. These included the *Chinese Monthly Magazine* (*chashisu meiyue tongji zhuan*) and the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* (*dongxi yangkao meiyue tongji zhuan*). There were six Chinese-language newspapers and 11 foreign-language newspapers, including the Portuguese *A Abelha da China* (*mifeng huabao*) and English *Canton Register* (*guangzhou jilubao*). Foreign missionaries published Chinese-language newspapers for Chinese readers. Foreign-language newspapers' readers were foreigners, and most of their content was news and business reports.

The first Chinese-language newspaper was the *Chinese Monthly Magazine* (1815–1821), which was printed using carved woodblocks and published monthly by the British missionary Robert Morrison and William Milne at Malacca, which is very near China. This newspaper's fundamental task was the elucidation of Christian doctrines; it also tried to propagate ethics and morals and offer information about other countries and knowledge of astronomy and geography. And it published some poetry and fables. Morrison and Milne were attentive to their craft. To make their message more effective, they chose easily accepted Chinese traditional forms and worked hard to make their articles short and popular.

The *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* (1833–1838) was another foreign religious Chinese-language newspaper. Published in Guangdong, it was the first modern Chinese-language newspaper produced in mainland China. It focused on current affairs, business, and politics. At the same time, foreign businessmen and politicians published the first group of foreign-language newspapers, which also saw themselves as protecting the rights of foreign businessmen and adventurers. The earliest published English newspaper was the *Canton Register* in Guangzhou.

After the Chinese defeat in the Opium Wars, the Ch'ing government was forced to open its borders to Western powers and grant missionaries the right to proselytize openly throughout China (Twitchett & Fairband, 1978). Foreign newspapers expanded, spreading from Hong Kong, Guangdong, and Macao to many other areas of China. A web of foreign newspapers appeared, about 300 in all, and more than

200 of them published after the Wars. Important newspapers included the *Shanghai Serial* (1857), the *Chinese Globe Magazine* (1868), *Shenbao* (1872), and the *North China Daily News* (1882).

The foreign newspapers had significant influence on the development of modern society in China. First, they reinforced cultural colonialism. Second, they promoted communication between China and the West. Third, the practice of foreign-owned newspapers contributed to the development of Chinese publishing experience, skills, and printing techniques. Chinese journalists like Wangtao and Chen Aiting were employed at foreign-owned newspapers and then became leaders of a new generation of Chinese journalists.

After contact with a Western newspaper, Chinese people became familiar with it and began to use it. Two groups, officials and businessmen, gathered information from it to learn the trends in politics, military affairs, and business. Others, like Chen Aiting, worked for Western newspapers writing articles for the Chinese; they went on to edit Chinese-language newspapers. The Chinese didn't publish their own modern newspapers until social innovation from inner China came into contact with foreigners in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and elsewhere in the 1870s. *Xunhuan Ribao* (1874), one of the most successful Chinese-owned newspapers, was also one of the earliest newspapers openly advocating political reform. It was founded and its first editorial was written by Wangtao, an early bourgeois reformist thinker. His columns were terse and forceful and took clear-cut stands. Filled with feeling, they explained profound theories in simple language; their style greatly influenced writers at that time and continued to inspire reformers afterward.

The tempo of foreign invasion steadily accelerated. The Opium Wars of 1840–1842 were followed within 15 years by the Anglo-French invasion of 1857–1860, then within another decade or so by Russia's occupation of Yili in 1871 and Japan's takeover of Liu-ch'iu in 1874, and the next decade by the Sino-French War of 1883–1885. Nine years later in 1894–1895 came the crushing Japanese victory over China (Twitchett & Fairband, 1978). China was forced to sign unfair treaties and to surrender sovereign rights under humiliating terms. Then the Reform movement, launched by Chinese bourgeois reformists, swept across China in the mid-1890s, encouraging Chinese-owned newspapers to develop rapidly. About 80% of 120 Chinese-language newspapers were Chinese owned, among which the bourgeois reformists and their related non-governmental bodies engaged the most and with the greatest influence. Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yanfu, and their newspapers played positive roles during this period.

During the Reform movement, newspapers aimed to reach the upper ruling class and gain their sympathy and support. In the period from August 1895 to August 1896, *Zhongwai jiwen* and *Qiangxue bao* were representative. The newspaper became a vital tool to organize, lead, and guide the campaign during August 1896–August 1898. *Shiwu bao* (*China Progress*) in Shanghai, *Guowen bao* (*National News*) in Tianjin, and *Xiangxuebao* and *Xiangbao* in Changsha all played significant roles during the campaign. Liang Qichao deserves special attention.

Liang Qichao (1873–1929) has been widely recognized as the most prominent journalist in the late Qing period. His involvement in journalism lasted altogether 27 years: he was editor in chief of ten newspapers and associated with at least another 19 newspapers throughout his life. Liang created a new journalism style which revolutionized the Chinese press. Liang's effort in establishing normative press theory is also well known. From 1895 to 1911, he published about a dozen essays in *Shiwu bao*, *Qingyi bao* (*China Discussion*), *Xinmin congbao* (*New Citizen Journal*), and other newspapers, writing at length on the importance of modern journalism. His works have been widely quoted and celebrated by Chinese journalists and historians of journalism as a breakthrough in modern Chinese journalism. Liang established a theory of the public and public opinion. He suggested a normative model of journalism as political at heart and public in character and placed the press in a central position in the development of civil society and modern political discourse. He mainly envisioned journalism as part of a middle realm between the common people below and the officials above, thus serving as a contemporary political authority replacing the old imperial court (Zhang Volz, 2009).

Following the upsurge of reform newspapers, a new style of government organ came into being, published by the Ch'ing dynasty in an attempt to save the decaying regime. A network of over 100 newspapers throughout the country formed a system that included both central and local organs. This news network seems to have temporarily delayed the collapse of the Ch'ing dynasty.

1900–1949: Journalism for Revolution

The Chinese political situation changed dramatically after the Hundred Days Reform in 1898. The national bourgeois class divided into two different factions, bourgeois reformists and bourgeois revolutionaries. They launched the Reform movement and the Revolution movement, respectively. The former was represented by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who promoted moderate reform aimed at a constitutional monarchy; they vehemently opposed the bourgeois revolutionary goal of democratic revolution. Sun Yat-Sen led the revolutionaries, whose strength grew after 1900. They hoped to violently overthrow the feudal system and the Ch'ing dynasty. During the Revolution of 1911, they published numerous newspapers and periodicals to propagate and serve the revolution. Both sides published partisan newspapers.

Reformist newspapers went on to develop in China and abroad after the Xinyou Coup. *Qingyi bao* and *Xinmin Congbao* were influential newspapers published in Japan. *Shibao* was the most famous newspaper after 1903, when the bourgeois reformist newspaper revived in China. Some bourgeois reformists were radicalized after the Eight-Power Allied Forces invaded Beijing and the Boxer Rebellion failed.

As the revolutionaries developed, their party's newspapers and periodicals grew briskly. The activities of the bourgeois revolutionary newspaper can be divided into

three phases. The first phase was from 1900 to 1904, during which the bourgeois revolutionary newspaper was published by students abroad and exiles in Japan. *Zhongguo ribao* (1900), the first revolutionary organ in Hong Kong, and *Subao*, the earliest newspaper controlled by revolutionaries in China, were representative. The Chinese Education Society, the Patriotic Society, the Restoration Society, the Society for the Revival of China, etc., had published a group of revolutionary newspapers in China, which included *Guomin ribao*, *Jingzhong ribao*, and *Zhongguo baihuaba*. The second phase was from 1905 to 1907, during which *Minbao* (1905), the official organ of the United League, the bourgeois revolutionary united party, was representative. *Minbao* propagated the ideas and theory of the revolution. On the other hand, it debated with the Royalist Council newspapers to good effect. The third phase was from 1908 to 1911, during which a group of revolutionary newspapers referred to collectively as Vertical Sanmin appeared and developed significantly – *Minhu ribao*, *Minyu ribao*, *Minlibao*, and *Dajiangbao* published by Yu Youren were representative. According to the needs of the revolution, the newspapers' propaganda focus changed from abroad to back home and performed an indispensable function in the final struggle of overthrowing the feudal rulers.

Journalism took off after the Ch'ing dynasty eliminated newspaper censorship in 1901. News reporting was the main content: political, economic, and social news became prevalent, often in-depth, supplemented by photographs and other design features, and often put together by specially appointed and accredited journalists. As the political situation developed and the influence of Western newspapers increased, the forms of news also increased – editorials, review comments, editors' notes, and so forth were adopted. Some newspapers were divided into serious and satirical sections, and literary supplements grew in importance. Advertisements became more important, and more attention was paid to design. Newspapers became more differentiated from periodicals, evolving into their present forms.

Sun Yat-Sen instituted a system of freedom of the press immediately after the Provisional Government of the Republic of China was set up in 1912. This provided a huge impulse for the development of journalism in China. The following six months came to be called the Golden Age of the Press; newspapers around the country surged from 100 to 500, with a total circulation of 42 million (Tingjun, 2008, p. 131). Among the newly published newspapers, most were political party newspapers. More than 300 political parties appeared after the government was set up, but they quickly combined and divided into two grand party coalitions, the United League–Kuomintang (KMT) and the Republican Party–Progressive Party. The various parties founded organs to promote their election campaigns and to counter their opponents' newspapers.

Soon, though, Yuan Shih-kai gained control of press regulation and put an end to this period. His centralized authority targeted the press, closed down newspaper houses, and arrested, expelled, and killed newspapermen. Newspapers decreased to 139 from 500 in the course of 1912, in a moment that came to be known as the Guichou Disaster. After Yuan Shih-kai died in 1919, the political situation

degenerated into turbulent chaos under the rule of the Northern Warlords (1912–1927). Journalism changed in complex ways, with notable innovations like the popular Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School art supplements, and controversies over “yellow” tabloids.

Some encouraging developments occurred during this frustrating time. Because political comment was forbidden by the government, newspapers paid more attention to news reporting. The emphasis on news in newspapers became larger than ever, and many newspaper houses spared no expense to employ talented, experienced journalists; they even sent their journalists abroad to report the international news. The other important phenomenon in the early Republic of China was the development of news agencies, set up with the support of bureaucrats and businessmen. Most prominent among them was Shao Piaoping, who set up the successful Tokyo agency.

A number of elite journalists, distinguished by education, experience, and a reputation for high standards of journalism, appeared at this time, including Huang Yuansheng, Shao Piaoping, Liu Shaoshao, Lin Baishui, Hu Zhengzhi, and others. Huang Yuansheng was the preeminent journalist, credited with shaping the style of the news report (Wu, 1994). He published and edited the weekly *Shaonian Zhoukan* (*Youth Weekly*), then worked as a special correspondent stationed at Beijing for *Shibao*, *Shenbao*, and *Dongfang Ribao*, and often wrote for many other leading newspapers. Shao Piaoping, another well-known journalist, was famous for his skill at interviewing. These elite journalists enhanced the social standing of the profession.

Reacting against Yuan Shih-kai's autocratic reign and the sense of danger of national subjugation, radical intellectuals led by Chen Tu-hsiu and Li Dazhao promoted Citizenship Reform, arguing that, in order to realize democratic politics, it was necessary to use bourgeois–democratic ideology to arouse the people. The magazine *New Youth* (*Xin Qingnian*) was founded in Shanghai under the editorship of Chen Tu-hsiu in September 1915. It drew together ideas which formed a third stage of the reform movement that began in the 1890s. *New Youth* did not begin in 1915 with a straightforward affirmation of this optimistic philosophy of progress. Rather, at first, it was a vehicle for radical intellectuals anxious to counteract what they saw as retrogressive forces in politics and culture which were growing stronger as the experiment in republicanism faltered under the presidency of Yuan Shih-kai, and then fell hostage to contending militarists after his death. By 1920 Chen Tu-hsiu and his close collaborator on *New Youth*, Li Dazhao, announced their conversion to Marxism and turned the magazine into a vehicle for the new Chinese communist movement. During the May Fourth movement, which followed China's betrayal at the Versailles peace conference, many newspapers' supplements abandoned their previous commercial strategies to embrace new ideas, new knowledge, and new art. Some of them turned to Marxism. Newspapers were also buoyed by more and better advertisements during that time. And journalism education and research began, with Xu

Baohuang and Shao Piaoping contributing much to that project. Some universities established the curriculum of journalism in the 1920s.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1921. The CCP produced newspapers and periodicals for workers, peasants, women, youth, and the army; they inaugurated what became the party newspaper network. Meanwhile, progressive newspapers and revolutionary journalists were suppressed in the areas controlled by the northern warlords. Prominent newspapermen Shao Piaoping and Lin Baishui were murdered by minions of the northern warlords in Beijing, to the shock of the country. As a whole, the news media's social influence grew, spreading beyond the circle of politics and academics into the general public and playing a positive role in the workers' movement, peasant movement, united patriotic movement, and the Northern Expedition.

After a period of cooperation, the right wing of the Kuomintang (KMT)/National Party turned against the CCP, boycotting the revolutionary newspapers. The counter-revolutionary coup launched by Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei in 1927 seriously weakened left-wing journalism.

The ten-year civil war between the KMT and CCP that followed (1927–1937) was also a war between competing camps of journalism. The KMT led by Chiang Kai-shek established the *Central News Agency*, which anchored a large news communication network that included the *Zhongyang Ribao* (*Central Daily*) and *Saodang Bao* (*Sweeping Daily*) and a broadcasting network revolving around *Central Broadcasting*. The KMT also controlled many privately owned news organizations. The KMT regulated the press and targeted CCP media in particular. In the KMT-controlled areas, the CCP published newspapers secretly, with the active center still in Shanghai, where Lu Xun was the best-known journalist. The CCP and its Red Army controlled the Revolutionary Base Areas, and there operated a competing newspaper and communication network, which was instrumental in the building of the regime, and included the *Red China News Agency*, the *Red China* newspaper, and the *Red Star Newspaper*.

After the September 18 Incident, in which Japan engineered an explosion near a Japanese-owned railroad to justify an invasion of Manchuria, CCP media proclaimed a goal of national salvation. Most prominent among the journalists was Shi Liangcai. A dramatic change also occurred in the newspaper *Shen Bao* (*Shun Pao*), which switched from ineffectual mild comment to full-throated criticism. *Shen Bao*'s progressive articles had a great social impact. Shi Liangcai, who had become recognized as the voice of independent public opinion, was assassinated by a KMT spy in 1934. Zou Taofen, another outstanding activist journalist, published *Shenghuo* (*Life Weekly*); his work still greatly influences journalism today. Fan Changjiang's book-length report, *The Northwest Corner of China*, became a bestseller, and American journalist Edgar Parks Snow's *Red Star Over China* also told the story of the Red Army. The former was the first timely objective report of the Long March and its influence, the latter was an earlier book which publicly introduced the CCP revolution and its

leaders. Snow's book had tremendous impact worldwide and gained understanding and support for the Chinese struggle. Meanwhile, in the field of journalism research, Ge Gongzhen's *History of the Chinese Newspaper* (1927) laid a solid foundation for Chinese journalism history.

When the Marco Polo Bridge incident on July 7, 1937, led to full-scale war between China and Japan, it also unleashed a crescendo of journalistic activities. An unprecedented unity in the face of Japanese aggression replaced the factionalism of the early 1930s. Journalists were national patriots. Following its political headquarters, the center of KMT journalism moved from Shanghai to Wuhan and then to Chongqing. A Chongqing-centered journalism network was established and developed well despite the moves and disruption, so that the total number of newspapers actually increased during the war. But as the war developed into stalemate, KMT newspapers lessened their anti-Japanese passion and strengthened their anti-CCP activity. As the CCP's revolutionary base area enlarged, its central organ, *Liberation Daily*, expanded in influence. At the same time the CCP created a group of legal news organizations in districts under KMT control, among which *Xinhua Daily* and *Mass Weekly* had the broadest reach. Most of the privately owned newspapers dedicated themselves to national integrity, a good example being *Dagong Bao* (*Takung Pao*). From November 1937 to December 1942, Shanghai was a concession of Britain, the United States, and France, and was surrounded by Japanese-occupied zones. A number of privately owned anti-Japanese newspapers published there, the most famous being *Wen Hui Daily*. In the Japanese occupied areas, a small group of progressive anti-Japanese newspapers were published at great risk.

After eight years of war, Japan unconditionally surrendered and withdrew from China in August 1945. The force of the CCP army grew, entering a full-scale civil war with the KMT. The journalism of the two parties can be divided into three phases as the military situation developed.

From September 1945 to June 1946, before the full-scale civil war broke out, the two parties' journalism competed fiercely; both established newspapers in the liberated areas. From June 1946 to July 1947, the CCP was on the defensive, and their news operations struggled, while KMT journalism developed to its peak. In the last phase, as the CCP succeeded militarily, KMT journalism collapsed in mainland China. The center of the CCP media system moved from the countryside to the cities. Privately owned newspapers changed their stand gradually to align with the CCP. Hence journalism developed into an entirely new pattern in China.

1949–1978: Journalism as the Party's Mouthpiece

Within a few years of the founding of the People's Republic of China, reforms of the press system turned privately owned journalism into publicly owned journalism. The PRC constructed a newspaper system led by the CCP's *People's Daily*, the

Xinhua News Agency, and China National Radio. Photojournalism, newsreels, and journalism education continued to develop. The General Administration of Press and Publication was set up in 1949; it led and managed the whole country's news system. During the seven-year "socialist transformation," economic news was the major content of the press. The press also dedicated itself to demonstrating the new image of China. Reports on the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea were also major political news. In cultural reporting, the media also achieved success, although some serious problems emerged. The CCP and Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) used the techniques of partisan journalism to launch a much-expanded discussion and critique of cultural academics. The imitation of the dogmatism of the Soviet Union's journalism also presented a problem. The press became divorced from Chinese reality, which limited its supervisory function. Under the cultural development policy of the "Double Hundred," the Chinese press learned from these lessons and carried out a socialist reform which began from the revision of *China Daily*, then expanded to other media in 1956, producing rapid improvement.

However, during the painstaking exploration of building socialism from 1957 to the first half of 1966, the media inflicted one tragedy after another in responding to Left political movements. Trying to cater to the needs of the movements, it lost its capacity for independent thinking and judgment, promoting ideas that harmed both the party and the people on a huge scale; journalism itself suffered in the process. The years from 1958 to 1965 were a period of major transition in the Chinese revolution. The press became a tool in the anti-Right struggle, and many newspapermen were also identified as belonging to the Right in 1957. During the Great Leap Forward in 1958, journalism did not report objectively, but conveyed arbitrary and impracticable directions on social construction. The press lost its sense of social responsibility. Then, from the second half of 1960 to the first half of 1962, the press adjusted itself, drew lessons from the past, and performed according to journalistic values. Two years later, the press was forced by the top leader to report the class struggle and anti-revisionism as the Chinese revolution entered a new stage in 1966.

Today it is acknowledged that the top leader, Mao Zedong, wrongly evaluated the Chinese situation. In Mao's competition with inner-party leaders, Liu Shao-chi and some other party leaders became the key initial targets of the Cultural Revolution. Groups of workers and students joined in, believing in the need to struggle against any bourgeois enemy. Many innocent people were persecuted. The movement launched China into a decade of tumult, during which the press became a tool of the counter-revolutionary groups. Media controlled the representation of public opinion, and all the media reported the same content. Journalists left their jobs in droves, and the quality and quantity of formal newspapers declined, while a rapidly increasing tabloid press flooded the nation (Hanqi, 1999). Journalism research and education during that time was also in a state of paralysis. The entire journalism system lost the trust of the people. China woke up from the terrible nightmare when the Gang of Four fell in 1976.

After 1978: Journalism Between Partisanism and Commercialism

The CCP took three years to revise its guiding ideology and establish the “Emancipating the Mind and Seeking Truth from Facts” ideology. The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Party, held in 1978, shifted the emphasis to modernization. On May 11, 1978, an article titled “Practice is the Sole Criterion for Testing Truth” was published in *Guangming Daily*. This article elaborated the notion of truth in Marxism, claiming that social practice should verify whether a theory was in accord with reality (Hanqi, 1999, p. 429), and that practice is the only criterion to test truth. The article was reprinted in the *People’s Daily*, *Red Flag* magazine (both organs of the CCP), *PLA* [People’s Liberation Army] *Daily*, and other media nationwide. At that time, “Emancipating the Mind” became the main social ethos; this was interpreted as meaning the breaking down of conventions and subjectivism to study new situations and solve new problems. “Practice is Truth” was established as the normative journalism ideology in the post-Cultural Revolution era. After this discussion, many of the newspapers and magazines that closed during the Cultural Revolution reopened. Media reform began, and reporting on economic construction became the focus. The years from 1982 to 1991 saw a wide-scale shift in media ecology. In 1989 the number of newspapers reached 1,618 (from 186 in 1978), and party newspapers yielded the vanguard of press development to evening, business, cultural, lifestyle, youth, and women’s publications. Broadcast television stations developed rapidly, and cable television spread even into rural areas (Ganlin, 2008, p. 367). Newspapers commercialized, paying more attention to advertising and circulation. The degree of open reporting increased so that the National People’s Congress was reported live by both Chinese and foreign journalists. Influenced by Western journalism, in-depth and investigative reports appeared and became more common. Journalism education and research also developed, and journalism degree programs and departments were set up in many universities. Techniques of news interviewing, editing, and broadcasting advanced. The use of laser typesetters, document-processing terminal equipment, automatic picture transmission systems, and international telecommunication satellites by the media greatly improved timeliness and effectiveness.

After the Fourteenth National People’s Congress in 1992, the “Socialist Market System” was proposed and established, gradually pushing Chinese journalism into commercialization. The scale of the mass media expanded rapidly, newspapers were enlarged, and TV channels increased. Groups of urban newspapers appeared and were very popular in the mid-1990s. *Huaxi City Daily* began in 1995 and *Nanfang City Daily* was established in 1997; these were among the first urban dailies with strong commercial features, with advertising income as their major economic source rather than party subsidy. *Nanfang Weekly* (*Nan Fang zhou Mo*) is a key newspaper featuring

“watchdog” reports criticizing politics and society. *Beijing News*, a daily established by *Guangming Daily* and *Nanfang Daily* in 2003, is the first newspaper co-managed by two media groups, indicating a new era of regional and national commercial newspapering. In 2000, Chengdu Boray Investment Holding Group, owner of *Chengdu Business Daily*, became the first publicly traded company in China’s media industry. *Titan Weekly*, featuring sports news, is a successful example of professional media in the market economy. *Titan* began in 1988 with a circulation of 800. In 2005, the circulation rose to 1.6 million daily or over 5 million weekly, accounting for 60% of the market for sports newspapers. *Titan* now has the largest circulation in China.

Competition among the media was very fierce, especially among advertising companies and news groups. At the end of 2009, there was a total of 49 newspaper groups distributing nationally. The influence of TV surpassed the newspapers, and television advertising rates were higher than for newspapers. Chinese journalism reached out to the world with the English-language channel CCTV-9 broadcast from September 2000, and Great Wall Satellite TV available in the United States from October 2004.

Another change in journalism in the post-1992 era was the transformation of the image of women and female journalists. In Confucian China, women were discriminated against, and throughout the nineteenth century women were kept in a box. Not until the Reform movement of 1898 did the first generation of female journalists appear, but in the first half of the twentieth century the situation again deteriorated. In the first Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, approved in 1954, women’s rights were guaranteed, but the slogan of Gender Equality concealed continuing inequality, especially in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Prominent women in the news were treated as outlandish and called “Iron Lady” or “Forceful Woman.” At the beginning of the 1980s, China gradually joined the rest of the world, and gender inequality truly started to diminish in the construction of a market economy. Women play significant roles in journalism, in the development of city newspapers and commercial TV channels, and more and more outstanding female journalists and TV anchors are emerging, but a deep Confucian culture of male superiority persists.

With the development of information and communication technology, new media – via the Internet, mobile phones, digital TV, mobile TV, IP TV (Internet TV) – came on the scene and enjoyed a great success. Mass media convergence became a major new trend. Numerous media established websites from 1995. According to statistics, network media were the fourth-largest media, and by the end of 2010 there were 457 million “netizens” in China, among which mobile phone netizens numbered 303 million. On the Internet ordinary people could release news, so that the media could more effectively perform the function of social supervision and service. The news published on the Internet also seemed somewhat inauthentic to the mass of people.

New problems appeared in journalism education. Since 2000, journalism majors have increased too fast, and demand for journalism education has produced a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate funding, and employment difficulties for graduates.

Although the media have developed fast, party control remains. Yuezhi Zhao, an outstanding scholar of Chinese media, has argued that, if China boasts one of the fastest-growing economies since the 1990s, it also has one of the most oppressive regimes in using coercive state power to control public communication (Zhao, 2008, p. 20). Lee Chin-Chuan (2000) has also affirmed that media freedom in China ranks low globally, and that the media system has changed from totalitarianism to authoritarianism even with the national embrace of the capitalist market. Politics and economics are neither friendly nor aloof with one another, and the market is simultaneously interlinked with and trying to divorce itself from state power; the contradiction between them creates the space for the development of media. Media can be the beneficiary of the market, while also the mouthpieces of the party-state. The tension between media and the party-state creates a demand for negative liberty, or freedom from state control and censorship (Berlin, 1969). In order to capture audiences, media compete with each other in innovating new styles and market strategies, but they are dependent on the state because of their enslavement to political direction (Zhongdang, 2000). Media try everything to satisfy media markets in their news style and content, but they always try their best to avoid stepping on the mine of ideology. He Zhou (2000) described the market-oriented party-state media as a capitalist body with a socialist face. The media transformed from the mouthpiece of the party-state to the party's public relations consultant; their mission is not brainwashing, but maintaining the party's positive image and legitimacy. With the development of commercial media and supervisory newspapers, journalism manifests itself increasingly as an important force to facilitate democracy in China.

In a word, journalism in China is full of uncertainty. Reviewing the whole history of journalism in China, journalism's periodic rise and fall moves in rhythm with politics, and the development of media relies heavily on politics and ideology. There is still a long way to go before Chinese journalism catches up with Western journalism.

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Communications Networks in the United States

From Chappe to Marconi

Richard R. John

ABSTRACT

The history of communications in the United States is a relatively uncultivated field. Generalizations abound yet conceptual frameworks are few. This essay contends that the history of the country's dominant communications networks can be understood as a chapter in the history of government–business relations, or what contemporaries would have called political economy. In the long nineteenth century that began in 1788 and ended in 1914, the three most important communications networks – that is, the mail, the telegraph, and the telephone – were shaped not only, or even primarily, by technological imperatives and economic incentives, but also by the regulatory regimes in which they were embedded.

The history of communications in the United States is a relatively uncultivated field. Generalizations abound yet conceptual frameworks are few. This essay contends that the history of the country's dominant communications networks can be understood as a chapter in the history of government–business relations, or what contemporaries would have called political economy. In the long nineteenth century that began in 1788 and ended in 1914, the three most important communications networks – that is, the mail, the telegraph, and the telephone – were shaped not only, or even primarily,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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by technological imperatives and economic incentives, but also by the regulatory regimes in which they were embedded.¹

The adoption of the federal Constitution in 1788 marked the beginning of a new epoch in US public life. The federal Constitution transformed the United States into a representative republic in which the creation of an informed citizenry became a civic ideal.² This new civic mandate for political communications was institutionalized with the Post Office Act of 1792, a landmark in US communications policy and one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation to be enacted in the early republic.

The year 1914 is a logical end point for the epoch that began in 1788. This year marked the start of World War I, an event destined to have major consequences for US communications. In addition, and no less significantly, it witnessed the apogee of the long campaign, mostly forgotten today, to transfer the ownership and operation of the telegraph and telephone from private corporations to a public agency.

The heyday of the government ownership campaign was brief. Following the takeover by the federal government of the telegraph and telephone in 1917, government ownership became the target of a withering critique. This critique popularized the still-controversial idea that communications networks were best owned and operated by corporations rather than the state. The normalization of the oft-contested idea coincided with the commercialization of radio as a broadcast medium, a circumstance that would have major implications for US communications in the decades to come.

Historians of communications have long characterized the commercialization of the electric telegraph in the 1840s as a turning point in world history. In so doing, they follow a convention that dates back at least as far as 1907, when historian Henry Adams ventured this claim in his celebrated autobiographical memoir, *The Education of Henry Adams*. Among the many social scientists to endorse this convention have been the geographer Allan Pred (1973, 1980) and the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1987).³ Among historians of communications, it has been an article of faith since 1973, when James W. Carey (1989) explored its implications in a much-cited essay on "The Telegraph and Ideology."⁴ Carey's thesis was elaborated on by his student Richard A. Schwartzlose (1989, 1990) in the first volume of his two-volume survey of the nineteenth-century newsbrokerage business, as well as by Menahem Blondheim (1994) in his monograph on the rise of the New York Associated Press.⁵ This convention would reach a wide popular audience in the 1990s through a long-running exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution on the "Information Age" (Tenner, 1992).⁶

The bifurcation of the history of US communications into two epochs – pre-electrical and post-electrical – is rendered intuitively plausible by the related presumption that, in the pre-electrical epoch, long-distance communications were primitive, irregular, and slow. This presumption is a lecture hall perennial. Had transatlantic communications not been so limited, or so it is often observed, the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 would never have been fought, since the protagonists would have known that the Treaty of Ghent ending the war had already been signed.⁷ While this

presumption is superficially plausible, it is contradicted by much of what we know about long-distance communications in the decades between 1788 and 1840. Much depends on the frame of reference. If one compares the 1788–1840 period with the years that preceded it, rather than with the years that it preceded, it no longer appears quite so backward (John, 1994). The transformation of the informational environment in the early republic was so dramatic that Pulitzer Prize winning historian Daniel Walker Howe (2007) has contended, drawing on a raft of specialized studies, that it constituted a “communications revolution.” (For a survey of historical writing on the “communications revolution” concept, see Behringer, 2006; John, 1994).

In no realm was access to high-speed, long-distance communications more valued than in trade. For merchants dealing in agricultural staples, access to up-to-date information on market trends, known colloquially as “fresh news,” had long been a priority. The most highly coveted commercial information was the price of cotton and wheat in Liverpool, Le Havre, and the other leading commercial entrepôts of Europe (Albion, 1932, 1939; John, 1994). High-speed long-distance communications were so highly valued that, in 1825, a government administrator (Postmaster General John McLean) committed the government to outpacing any non-governmental carrier in the conveyance of information on market trends (John, 1995).

Political information was also in high demand, especially in times of great uncertainty. During the nullification controversy in South Carolina in 1832–1833, for example, the editors of a prominent New York City-based commercial newspaper – the *Journal of Commerce* – invested heavily in a Washington, DC–New York City horse express in the expectation that the information it yielded would enable them to outpace their rivals in the publication of dispatches originating at the seat of power (Blondheim, 1994, p. 19).

The electric telegraph is sometimes lauded as the first medium to divorce transportation from communications. Here, too, however, the reality is more complicated. The differentiation of transportation from communications had been a central element of postal policy in the United States ever since the establishment of the first mail distribution centers around 1800 and would be a defining feature of the optical telegraphs established shortly thereafter in Boston and New York City (John, 1995, Ch. 2; 2010a, Ch. 1).

The most elaborate optical telegraph of the age was invented in 1792 in France. It was the brainchild of Claude Chappe, a government functionary who had been enlisted by the revolutionary regime to centralize the circulation of information in Paris. The hub-and-spoke network that Chappe established was far more elaborate than any optical telegraph in the United States (Holzmann & Pehrson, 1995; Headrick, 2000, Ch. 6). In fact, the US-based optical telegraphs that Chappe’s innovation helped inspire are best characterized as lines rather than networks, since they had not been designed to unite the country, like their French predecessor, but, rather, to link the North Atlantic sea lanes with an Atlantic seaport. Despite these limitations, the US optical telegraphs were a hallmark of the informational environ-

ment in the pre-1840 period. Many newspapers from these years, for example, carried the word “telegraph” on their masthead, a reminder of the extent to which the existence of the optical telegraph was common knowledge long before the coming of the electric telegraph. (For a related discussion, see Crain, 2003; John, 2010a, Ch. 1.) The optical telegraph was unquestionably one of the “greatest improvements of modern times,” declared linguist John Pickering in 1833 in a public lecture before the Boston Marine Society: “no means of conveying intelligence can ever be devised that shall exceed or even equal [its] rapidity [. . .] for with the exception of the scarcely perceptible relay at each station, its rapidity may be compared with that of light itself.” Unfortunately, Pickering lamented, many of the technical features of this remarkable medium remained little-known: “Every one of us hears and reads of news by the [optical] telegraph, from day to day, without ever considering, much less understanding any thing of the principles of this mode of communicating intelligence” (cited in John, 2010a, pp. 14–15).

The most important high-speed, long-distance communications medium in the United States in the pre-1840 period was not the optical telegraph but the mail. The enactment of the Post Office Act of 1792 created what one might call a republican regulatory regime for the circulation of information on public affairs. For the founders of the republic, the creation of an informed citizenry was far too important to be left to the vagaries of the marketplace. Instead, they entrusted this task to a government agency: the Post Office or what would soon become known as the Post Office Department. The mail became a “system” not only or even primarily because of the federal government’s organizational capabilities, but also, and more fundamentally, because lawmakers had invested a government agency with a civic mandate to facilitate the low-cost conveyance of information on public affairs (John, 1995).⁸ To institutionalize this civic mandate, the Post Office Act of 1792 permitted certain kinds of publications – including, in particular, newspapers – to circulate in the mail at rates far below the cost of their conveyance. In addition, and no less remarkably, this law permitted publishers to enter their publications into the mail at any post office in the country, creating a polycentric informational environment that set the United States apart from the nation-states of Europe (Brown, 1989; John, 1995; Kielbowicz, 1989; Starr, 2004).

James W. Carey (1989) has perceptively characterized communications policy in the United States as favoring the “transmission” of information over vast distances. Carey aptly identified one of the defining features of US communications, yet left unspecified the mechanism by which this policy was translated into practice. The most important of these mechanisms in the early republic was the clause of the Post Office Act of 1792 that transferred control over the designation of new post routes from the executive to the legislature. Ordinary citizens craved access to postal facilities and lawmakers were quick to oblige. (For a reconstruction of the postal petitioning process, see John & Young, 2002). By 1828, the year in which Andrew Jackson defeated John Quincy Adams to become the sixth president of the United States – an event often hailed as a landmark in the democratization of US electoral politics –

postal administrators had established hundreds of post offices and post routes that could not possibly cover their cost.⁹

The civic mandate of the Post Office Department had well-defined boundaries. Though the federal Constitution authorized Congress to “establish” post roads, this mandate was confined, at least in the states, to the designation of thoroughfares but not their construction. The road-building ban helps explain why stagecoach passengers in the early republic complained so often about the bumpiness of their ride. The Post Office Department had the authority to subsidize the operation of stagecoaches, but not the thoroughfares over which they ran (Holmes & Rohrbach, 1983; Jaffe, 2010; John, 1995, Ch. 2). In the territories, in contrast, the federal government’s road-building mandate was more expansive; in fact, the construction of roads was sometimes justified, at least in part, as necessary for the conveyance of the mail (Hudson, 2010; Southerland & Brown, 1989).

The primary limitation on postal policy in the early republic was fiscal. Lawmakers by 1800 had abandoned the presumption that the Post Office Department should return a surplus to the general treasury. In Great Britain, in contrast, fiscal considerations would remain important throughout the nineteenth century. The celebrated 1840 rate reductions known as “penny postage,” for example, would be justified in large part as a revenue-generating measure. US lawmakers had abandoned revenue generation by 1800. Yet not until after 1851 would they give up on the related idea that the Post Office Department should break even (Fuller, 1972, Chs. 2, 5). To balance revenue and expenditures without stifling network expansion, postal administrators became increasingly bold at asserting that the Post Office Department enjoyed a legally enforceable monopoly. The scope of this monopoly, in their view, embraced the conveyance on a regular schedule of certain kinds of information, including, in particular, personal correspondence. Though the precise definition of this monopoly remained contested, few lawmakers challenged its constitutionality, and the courts mostly acquiesced (John, 2004).

The most expansive feature of the Post Office Department’s civic mandate concerned the kinds of information that it had an obligation to convey at a cost that was sufficiently low so that this information would be accessible to the entire population. The most favored kind of information concerned public affairs, a preference – or in the language of media scholar Harold A. Innis, a “bias” – that spawned huge postal subsidies for newspapers, government documents, magazines, and the correspondence of lawmakers.

The Post Office Act of 1792 said nothing about the speed with which information was to be conveyed. Information on public affairs, after all, only slowly went stale. Commercial information, however, was a different matter. Here speed was often all-important, a circumstance that Postmaster General John McLean acknowledged in 1825 when he committed the Post Office Department to outpacing non-government carriers in the conveyance of information on market trends (John, 1995, Ch. 2).

McLean’s gospel of speed furnished the rationale for the failed campaign of electric telegraph inventor Samuel F. B. Morse to graft his invention onto the Post Office

Department. Congress demurred and the telegraph was commercialized as a private enterprise, decisively severing the link between the government and the high-speed conveyance of information (John, 2010a, Ch. 1). Rapid delivery would remain a desideratum for postal administrators – and postal users – for decades to come. Yet never again could postal administrators boast that the mail was the *sine qua non* of speed.

The next major expansion in the civic mandate of the Post Office Department came in 1845. Goaded by irate users, and challenged by non-government carriers – the so-called “private expresses” – Congress significantly lowered the basic letter rate, an innovation that had the effect, as was its intention, of expanding the mandate for the low-cost conveyance of the mail to embrace information on personal affairs (Henkin, 2006; John, 2010a, Ch. 1).¹⁰ In Great Britain, postal administrators rationalized the low-cost conveyance of information on personal affairs (“penny postage”) as a fiscal measure that would increase the revenue that its post office returned to the Crown. In the United States, in contrast, this policy (“cheap postage”) was justified more broadly as a public good.¹¹

The electric telegraph would be commercialized in a regulatory regime quite different from the regulatory regime in which the mail had evolved. Yet this was by no means obvious to the first generation of telegraph promoters. These promoters, led by Morse’s business agent, Amos Kendall, envisioned the new medium as a creature of the state. And, in particular, Kendall presumed that the telegraph, like the mail, should be operated by the Post Office Department under centralized control. To bring this about, Kendall lobbied Congress to buy out Morse’s patent rights, which he construed as a federally guaranteed quasi-monopoly grant. When Congress demurred, Kendall transformed Morse’s patent rights into franchises that he licensed on a geographical basis (John, 2010a, Ch. 3).

The “supervening necessity” for the establishment of a telegraph network in the 1840s was not the railroad – as it had been in Great Britain, according to media scholar Brian Winston (1998, Ch. 1) – but, rather, merchant demand for commercial information on market trends.¹² The commercial information that Kendall presumed to be the most valuable concerned the market price in Europe for cotton and wheat, the same kind of information whose conveyance Kendall had tried to facilitate a decade earlier as postmaster general under Andrew Jackson (John, 2010a, Ch. 3).

The electric telegraph is sometimes called the “Victorian Internet” (Standage, 1998). This characterization is superficially apt, since the electric telegraph and the Internet each utilized electricity as a motive power and each relied for their operation on a cadre of highly skilled “online” technicians.¹³ Yet it is both anachronistic and misleading. In reality, the electric telegraph and the Internet have remarkably little in common. Though the telegraph network was, in theory, open to anyone, in practice, telegraph rates were sufficiently high, and telegraphic facilities sufficiently limited, that it remained restricted to an exclusive clientele. Surprisingly little would change in the period between the opening of the first telegraph office in 1845 and the restructuring of the telegraph network in 1910. To the extent that a “Victorian

Internet” existed in the nineteenth century – that is, a medium designed to provide the entire population with the necessary facilities to circulate point-to-point information over long distances and at high speed – it was not the electric telegraph, but the mail.

Kendall’s patent-rights-oriented business strategy sparked a concerted opposition that doomed it to collapse. Rival promoters ridiculed Kendall’s plan to make Morse’s patent rights the cornerstone of a legally sanctioned monopoly, newspaper editors warned about the implications of the new medium for commerce, and lawmakers concurred (John, 2010a, Ch. 3).

Among Morse’s most pointed critics were the proprietors of the principal daily newspapers in New York City. Troubled by the potential implications of the electric telegraph for the newspaper business, they banded together to form a news brokerage called the New York Associated Press (NYAP). Contrary to what seems to be a common impression among historians of communications, the beginnings of the NYAP predated the Mexican–American War. A primary catalyst was the challenge to the New York City newspaper press posed by Samuel Colt, a Morse licensee who, in 1845, established the first electric telegraph line in New York City. Colt’s electric telegraph, like the optical telegraph that it supplanted, linked the North Atlantic sea lanes to the city’s merchant elite. It was designed, or so Colt boasted in a promotional broadside that he issued explaining its rationale, to supersede the New York City newspaper press by transmitting information directly from the sea lanes to the country’s major commercial centers, rendering the city’s newspapers irrelevant as a purveyor of up-to-date news (John, 2010a, Ch. 3).

The civic ideals that shaped the regulatory regime in which Morse’s critics emerged owed less to the republicanism of the lawmakers who founded the republic than to the antimonopolism of merchants, rival telegraph promoters, and the newspaper press. Each of these groups had by 1848 grown suspicious of the special privileges that lawmakers lavished on Morse and were determined to create a political economy in which market competition could flourish. Antimonopoly hastened the enactment of the New York Telegraph Act of 1848, a law intended to facilitate the entry into the telegraph business of insurgent promoters to compete against Morse. Similar antimonopoly laws would be enacted in the following few years in almost every state.

The regulatory regime that lawmakers established to coordinate the electric telegraph was not intended, like the regulatory regime it supplanted, to be coordinated by a single organization that was ultimately accountable to Congress. Rather, it relied on competition to ensure that no single company dominated the informational environment. So long as it was possible for new entrants to enter the business, or so lawmakers reasoned, no other legislation was necessary to protect the public good.

Among the beneficiaries of antimonopoly were the promoters who established Western Union, of whom the most successful was Hiram Sibley. Unlike Morse and Kendall, Sibley did not count on federally guaranteed patent rights to protect him against rival promoters. Rather, Sibley relied on the right-of-way privileges that state lawmakers had granted railroads under state law. By negotiating exclusive right-of-

way agreements with strategically located railroads, Sibley devised a business strategy that circumvented Morse's patent rights. Sibley's business strategy would lead eventually to the emergence of Western Union as the country's dominant telegraph company, an event that occurred in 1866.

The antimonopoly regulatory regime in which Western Union flourished presupposed the existence of rivals that would keep rates down and performance standards high. For this reason, the emergence of Western Union as the dominant network provider in 1866 was for many lawmakers a cause for concern. Among these lawmakers was Congressman John Sherman of Ohio. To check Western Union's power, Sherman sponsored a major piece of legislation that would come to be known as the National Telegraph Act (1866). Neither Sherman nor anyone else in 1866 regarded Western Union as a "natural monopoly" that owed its dominant position in the telegraph business to technological imperatives and economic incentives. This is worth underscoring, since in the twentieth century this anachronistic characterization of the post-1866 telegraph business would become the conventional wisdom among business historians. The "natural monopoly" hypothesis, for example, figures prominently not only in Robert Luther Thompson's *Wiring a Continent* (1947) but also in Alfred D. Chandler, Jr.'s *Visible Hand* (1977).¹⁴

The National Telegraph Act was the federal counterpart to the many state telegraph acts that had been modeled on the New York Telegraph Act of 1848. Compliance was voluntary. No telegraph company was obliged to sign the law; several, including Western Union, briefly held out. Every telegraph company that did sign on was guaranteed certain privileges. In return, these telegraph companies agreed to permit Congress to buy them out at a mutually agreed-upon price and to convey information for federal government agencies at rates to be determined by the postmaster general (John, 2010a, Ch. 4).

The initial refusal of Western Union to assent to the National Telegraph Act is not surprising. After all, the primary rationale for the law was to open up the telegraph business to new entrants. Harder to explain was the willingness of Hiram Sibley in 1867 to abide by its provisions. Though Sibley had by this time stepped down as Western Union's president, no company official ever questioned the legality of his decision. Why Sibley signed on is a matter of conjecture. It is conceivable that he assumed that the law would prove advantageous to the company's shareholders, since it included a provision that protected their rights. It is also possible that Sibley feared that, if Western Union did not acquiesce, the US army might not defend its assets in the former Confederate states (John, 2010a, Ch. 4).

The primary benefit of the National Telegraph Act for telegraph companies was access to rights-of-way. In theory, assenting telegraph companies would henceforth have the right to string telegraph wires along any routes in the country that had been designated a post route. Had the courts construed the right-of-way clause broadly, Western Union would have been highly vulnerable to insurgent network providers, since the company relied heavily on exclusive right-of-way contracts to block would-be rivals from contesting key markets. With one exception, however,

the courts construed this privilege quite narrowly. The exception occurred in the late 1870s when, in a succession of right-of-way cases, the courts ruled against Western Union and in favor of financier Jay Gould, who was then an insurgent telegraph promoter, facilitating Gould's ultimately successful raid on Western Union. Following Gould's takeover of Western Union in 1881, jurists reverted to the narrow construction of the right-of-way clause that had prevailed prior to Gould's raid (John, 2010a, Ch. 4).

The primary benefit of the National Telegraph Act for the government was rate-setting. In keeping with the anti-interventionist logic of the antimonopoly regulatory regime, telegraph companies had the right to charge whatever rates they pleased. (Postal rates, in contrast, continued to be set by Congress; telephone rates would also be highly regulated, at first primarily by city councils.) One exception to this anti-interventionist logic was the federally funded telegraph line that contractors built in conjunction with the Pacific Railroad.

A second exception was the rate-setting clause of the National Telegraph Act. Every telegraph company that assented to this law was henceforth obliged to transmit telegraphic dispatches for federal government agencies at rates to be determined by the postmaster general. This might seem like a minor matter. In fact, a government-mandated rate cap made it economically feasible, for the first time, to forecast weather patterns with a fair degree of precision. Weather forecasting in the post-1866 period was a specialty of the US Signal Service, the government agency that had provided logistical support for the army during the Civil War. Now that the war had ended, the signal service cast about for something to do. The government-mandated rate cap made it possible for the signal service not only to collect the vast amount of weather-related data necessary to forecast the weather but also to circulate this information throughout the country, a major boon for commerce.¹⁵

The congressional buy-out clause in the National Telegraph Act had a far-reaching influence on the operations of the telegraph network. Everyone conversant with the business understood that all of the major network providers – including Western Union – had consented to permit Congress to purchase their assets at any point five years after its enactment. The purchase price was to be agreed upon by five commissioners – two of whom were selected by the government, two by the company, and the fifth by the other four.

Congress never exercised the buy-out option. Even so, the fact that by 1867 every major telegraph company in the country had assented to a congressional buy-out would have major implications for the policy debate over the telegraph network. Most obviously, the buy-out clause insured that this debate would revolve primarily around practical matters, such as the relative merits of government administration and corporate management, rather than the broader, more ideologically fraught issue of the proper relationship of capitalism, socialism, and democracy. Interestingly, few critics derided a congressional buy-out of the telegraph network as un-American or unconstitutional, a charge that critics would almost certainly have voiced had lawmakers attempted anything comparable after World War I.

The buy-out clause also shaped the market for telegraph securities. Telegraph investors understood that, if Congress bought them out, they were certain to net a handsome profit. Not surprisingly, it was widely rumored in the press that major Western Union investors, including the prominent railroad and steamship magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, had secretly endorsed the buy-out and were lobbying behind-the-scenes to bring it about (John, 2010a, Ch. 4).

The consequences of the buy-out clause were by no means confined to telegraph investors. So long as a buy-out remained even a remote possibility, speculators in telegraph securities could boost the price of Western Union shares by floating credible rumors that Congress was about to act. It was equally easy to depress the price of Western Union shares. All a speculator had to do was to float a credible rumor that Congress intended to back a rival network provider (John, 2010a, Ch. 5).

No one proved more adept at manipulating the price of Western Union shares than Jay Gould. To roil the markets, Gould relied not only on the business press, which was easily influenced, but also on lawmakers, whom he had little trouble recruiting, and the courts, which proved equally malleable. To enhance his credibility, Gould invested in rival telegraph companies and in telegraph-related patent rights. For a brief period in the mid-1870s, a full-scale bidding war erupted between Gould and Western Union president William Orton over the patent rights to inventions that might conceivably prove useful in the telegraph business. The resulting entrepreneurial hothouse – a byproduct of the antimonopoly political economy in which Gould flourished – generated, in short order, four of the most notable inventions of the century: namely, the broadband telegraph; the telephone; the phonograph; and the electric power station (John, 2010a, Ch. 4).

Gould's takeover of Western Union in 1881 transformed the competitive landscape. Astonishingly, the country's most outspoken antimonopolist had suddenly emerged as the largest shareholder in the country's dominant telegraph network provider. Gould's sudden emergence as a communications magnate troubled citizens from all across the political spectrum. In no sense was it a partisan issue. Democrats were outraged and so too were Republicans. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Gould's ascendancy proved especially unsettling to the small yet influential cohort of big-city merchants, bankers, and wholesalers who sent telegrams and invested in corporate securities.

Congress would not enact a major piece of telegraph legislation until 1910. In that year, it decreed for the first time that the telegraph and telephone were common carriers, a legal term of art that carried with it the strong presumption that, like railroads and package carriers, they would be subject to permanent regulatory oversight to ensure that the interests of their investors were aligned with the public good. Yet the die had been cast with Gould's takeover of Western Union in 1881. No longer was it plausible to contend, as it has been during the heyday of the antimonopoly era between 1848 and 1881, that the only regulatory mechanism necessary to align the telegraph business with the public good was the enactment of legislation to encourage new entrants to challenge incumbents. To underscore this subtle yet

momentous intellectual sea-change, the political economist Richard T. Ely popularized a new concept. The telegraph business, Ely contended in 1888, was a “natural monopoly” that, as a result of its history, was impervious to competition. Ely did not popularize this concept to bolster the case that the telegraph was best coordinated as a managerial corporation, anticipating, as it were, the twentieth-century business historian Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. Rather, he floated it to strengthen the case for government ownership (John, 2010a, Ch. 5).

Politics had artifacts, to invert the well-known formulation of political philosopher Langdon Winner. Telegraph companies like Western Union flourished in an antimonopoly regulatory regime in which lawmakers looked to competition to regulate business behavior. As a consequence, telegraph managers confined themselves to the most lucrative markets and rarely invested in facilities that could not be expected to generate a steady return. Western Union managers were particularly loath to presume that the telegraph, like the mail, might one day become a genuinely popular medium. Western Union’s position was reiterated by its president, Norvin Green, as late as 1890. Fewer than 10% of US citizens would prefer the telegraph to “letter communication,” Green predicted, even if the cost were identical (cited in John, 2010a, p. 7).

In the telephone business, as in the telegraph business, political structure shaped business strategy.¹⁶ In the telegraph business, lawmakers repeatedly enacted legislation to encourage would-be network providers. This legislation created a regulatory regime in which, or so it was long assumed, rate regulation was superfluous and performance standards best left to market demand. The telephone business, in contrast, emerged in a regulatory regime that was in a dual sense progressive. The regulatory regime was progressive not only in the sense that lawmakers presumed innovation to be more-or-less continuous and unending, but also in the sense that they rejected competition as the primary regulatory mechanism. From the outset, telephone operating companies held municipal franchises that limited entry and mandated rate caps and performance standards. At no point in the early history of the telephone business – and not even during the so-called “competitive” period that followed the expiration of the original telephone patent rights in 1894 – was open entry the norm.¹⁷ On the contrary, lawmakers regarded access to the network for new users to be a superior measure of network performance to access to the network for would-be network providers.¹⁸ The progressive regulatory regime obliged telephone companies to meet performance standards far stricter than the performance standards that the antimonopoly regulatory regime had required of telegraph companies. In return, it promised a more stable operating environment that proved in practice to be highly conducive to technical advance.

The commercial potential of the telephone had been established by 1878. Not surprisingly, given the widespread recognition that the new business was likely to prove lucrative, a brief competitive struggle ensued between Western Union and a group of promoters whose most valuable asset was the patent rights that the federal government has assigned to telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell. The two

rivals cut a deal in the following year, and Western Union bowed out. For over 100 years – that is, from 1879 until 1984 – the dominant telephone network provider in the United States traced its origins to the investor consortium that coalesced around Bell's patent rights.

The telephone business was more variegated than the telegraph business. Of the various institutions spawned by Bell investors, three were of special importance. These were the Bell-associated holding company that controlled the portfolio of patent rights around which the business evolved; the long-distance Bell-associated operating company, which was, early on, a money loser; and the local Bell-associated operating companies, which were for many decades at the center of the network. Much confusion has been caused by the mistaken presumption that the telephone business in its formative era was centrally controlled by the Bell-associated holding company, which, after 1900, would be known as the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and which would eventually come to be known by its acronym, AT&T. In fact, the most consequential innovations in the pre-1914 period occurred in the Bell-associated operating companies, of which the most important were located in New York City and Chicago (John, 2010a, Ch. 8; Maguire, 2000; Weiman, 2004).¹⁹

The second competitive interlude in the telephone business occurred in the years that immediately followed the expiration of Bell's original patent rights in 1894. Like the first competitive interlude, it was rapid, consequential, and short-lived. In particular, it witnessed the emergence of a rival, non-Bell consortium of telephone operating companies that would become known as the "independents." The independents had their own equipment manufacturers, trade association, and trade press. They surged around 1900, peaked in 1907, and were rescued by lawmakers in 1913, victims, like so many similar ventures in US business history, of a fatal combination of promotional overconfidence and speculative finance.

The rise of the independents underscored the pent-up demand for telephone service that the Bell-associated operating companies had failed to meet during the previous 15 years. Independent promoters were emboldened not only by the existence of this demand, but also by a sympathetic legal environment. Had the courts been so inclined, they could have defined broadly the many patent rights that the Bell holding company retained. In addition, they might have banned the exclusive market-segmenting interconnection agreements that independents entered into with each other to strengthen their competitive position. Yet the courts did not. In so doing, they segmented the market for telephone service and created the highly contrived competitive conditions in which the independents emerged.

The rapid expansion of the telephone business in the post-1894 period is of great significance for students of US communications. The telephone was the first electrical communication medium to be reconfigured to become accessible not only to an exclusive clientele – like, for example, the telegraph – but also to the entire population. In the United States, this reconfiguration began in the late 1890s and was mostly complete by 1907 (John, 2010a, Ch. 8).

The popularization of the telephone was a byproduct of two related yet distinct developments. The first was the rise of the independents. Thousands of citizens made their first telephone call on an independent telephone, partly because the independents were quick to cover the field, and partly because they ordinarily offered lower rates than their Bell rivals (Mueller, 1993, 1994).

The second and even more consequential development was the re-engineering of the big-city telephone exchange. Expansion posed an unusual problem for telephone managers that differentiated the telephone business from most other businesses with which it might be compared. If a manufacturer doubled his output, it was taken for granted that he could find ways to reduce his unit costs. In the telephone business, however, the situation was very different. Telephone switching was expensive and, in this period, every Bell-associated telephone exchange was operator-assisted. That is, it required the intervention of a telephone company employee – almost always a young woman – to complete the connection. If the size of the exchange doubled, the number of connections increased fourfold, obliging the telephone company to increase the size of its staff, and, in certain cases, upgrade its switching equipment (Mueller, 1989). To make matters even more complicated, telephone rates in the largest operating companies, including New York City and Chicago, were set not by the company, but by the government agency that had jurisdiction over the territory in which it operated. In New York City, the government agency was the state legislature; in Chicago, the city council.

Had big-city operating companies charged by the call, increased revenue would have offset at least part of the costs of expansion. Unfortunately for the companies, with a few minor exceptions, they did not. In large part, this was because, early on, users preferred a fixed (or “flat rate”) calling plan that provided them with an unlimited number of calls inside a particular territory (John, 2010a, Chs. 6–7).

Flat rates were a good deal for heavy users, the vast majority of whom were businessmen. But they were too high to appeal to non-business users, a potentially huge market that at this time remained untapped. By championing flat rates, big users defended a rate structure that slowed, and in some instances blocked, telephone popularization. Big-user preferences also exerted a subtle influence on the writing of telephone history by fostering the mistaken presumption that ordinary people opposed measured service (Fischer, 1992; Lipartito, 1995).²⁰

Under the circumstances, telephone operating company managers had good reason to keep their exchanges small. Why, then, did they expand? In New York City and Chicago, two reasons loomed uppermost. First, managers feared government regulation and regarded network expansion as a counterweight. If the user base expanded, a larger percentage of the electorate would have an interest in telephone service. Second, they recognized that it might be possible to increase revenue if they could recruit new users willing to experiment with novel calling plans that linked usage with cost. These calling plans – which, collectively, were termed measured service – offered users a variety of options that greatly increased the attractiveness

of the medium for users who would never have considered paying a single high fixed rate (John, 2010a, Ch. 8).

The outcome of network expansion was dramatic. The New York City telephone exchange had 9,627 telephones in 1895 and 361,302 in 1910; the Chicago exchange had 11,680 in 1895 and 239,083 in 1910. Much of this expansion occurred in residential districts, a sector that telephone managers had not much cultivated prior to this time. Almost all of the new users signed up not for flat-rate service but for some kind of measured service. In this way, the telephone companies were able to recoup some of the costs of network expansion (John, 2010a, Ch. 8).

The fact that no comparable expansion occurred in this period in Toronto, Canada is revealing. In Canada, the national government prevented municipal or provincial authorities from regulating telephone rates. As a consequence, company managers had less of an incentive to expand.²¹

Network expansion blunted political pressure for potentially ruinous rate caps. Yet it had its own risks. What if a new medium emerged that provided users with point-to-point real-time communication, but which did not require the enormous investment in a wire network? This risk troubled the managers of the holding company that had invested in the Bell-associated operating companies and led them in the early 1900s to embark on an ambitious research-and-development program. The goal of this program was to obtain patent rights to a new medium called wireless telegraphy that was being rapidly commercialized in the United States by the Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi.

Wireless telegraphy evolved into radio, a medium long regarded primarily as a form of broadcasting. In the early 1900s, however, it seemed far more likely that radio would be commercialized as a point-to-point medium in direct competition with the telephone. Researchers funded by Bell's holding company worked assiduously to parry this challenge, fearful that, if they did not, their huge investment in a wired telephone network would become worthless.

For technical, economic, and political reasons, these fears proved unwarranted. Bell's research agenda would, however, have unanticipated consequences that did shape its business strategy. Research on wireless telegraphy led Bell engineers to invent a device that could amplify an electrical signal, an invention that historians of technology hail as the advent of electronics. This device – the three-element vacuum tube – enabled Bell engineers to link New York City and San Francisco in a single transcontinental telephone network, a feat they achieved in 1915.

The significance of transcontinental telephony is easily misconstrued. Bell public relations announcements trumpeted it as a public good with momentous economic, cultural, and political implications.²² A multitude of AT&T-centric Bell staffers, historians, and social scientists have followed their lead (Auw, 1983; Boettinger, 1983; Galambos, 1992; Latour, 1987; Pool, 1983; Pool, Decker, Dizard, Israel, Rubin, & Weinstein, 1977; Smith, 1985). In fact, the primary significance of transcontinental telephony in its early years was promotional. By linking Bell with technical advance,

it blunted the oft-voiced critique that Bell was technically backward. This public relations benefit more than offset the cost of maintaining the long-distance network, which was considerable.

Transcontinental telephony played little role in the contest between Bell and its independent rivals. This contest peaked in 1907, long before the line was completed. Two events in 1907 proved especially critical in dooming the independents' challenge. The first was the collapse of a major independent-backed combine, the United States Independent Telephone Company of Rochester, New York. This collapse made it virtually impossible for other independents to raise revenue in the financial markets, a crippling blow. The second was the rechartering of the Chicago Telephone Company by the Chicago city council, an event that signaled the demise of antimonopoly as a solution to the problems that economic consolidation posed (John, 2010a, Ch. 9).

The collapse of United States Independent and the rechartering of Chicago Telephone preceded the return to Bell of Theodore N. Vail, the telephone executive who would serve as president of American Telephone Company from 1907 until his death in 1920. Beginning in 1878, Vail had held various posts at a number of Bell-associated operating companies, before leaving the telephone business in 1889. In 1907 Vail returned. The timing of Vail's return is worth underscoring, since many AT&T-centric historians credit Vail with inventing the business strategy that would lead to the emergence by 1913 of the telephone business as a regulated monopoly in which Bell enjoyed a dominant position, an outcome that would stabilize the telephone business for the next 70 years. In fact, Vail would not re-enter the telephone business until after telephone service had been popularized, an event that occurred between 1894 and 1907, when he was out of the business. The irrelevance of Vail to the popularization of the telephone has been deliberately underplayed by AT&T-sponsored corporate hagiography and the scholarship that has given it academic legitimacy, both of which invested Vail with almost divine powers as the savior of the telephone network over which he would preside for 13 years.

The events of 1907 posed a major dilemma for independent promoters, investors, and equipment manufacturers. Henceforth, it would prove very difficult for them to obtain the necessary venture capital to remain viable rivals to Bell. How, then, might they protect their own investment in a fixed-wire telephone network? Two options suggested themselves. First, they might sell out to Bell. This solution was economically attractive, yet politically problematic. Pro-independent lawmakers might disallow the merger as anticompetitive, while the remaining independents would warn that the sale to Bell of any independent property would weaken their own investment, since, at this time, the interconnection of Bell and independent telephone networks remained a matter of contestation.

The second option was to mobilize the state to insulate the independents from the market. This option appealed to a small but influential cohort of uncompromising independents, most of which were relatively modest in size, that refused to negotiate with Bell, the preferred strategy for the large independents. To protect themselves from market pressure, the uncompromising independents convinced the

federal justice department to reopen a lawsuit charging Bell with anticompetitive behavior. This lawsuit led in 1913 to a settlement between Bell and the federal government that had been brokered by Attorney General James C. McReynolds. The McReynolds settlement is sometimes misleadingly known as the “Kingsbury Commitment,” after a Bell vice president, a convention that obscures the extent to which it was an independent victory and a Bell defeat. It had three main provisions. First, it established an orderly process to facilitate the interconnection of Bell and independent telephone exchanges that minimized the likelihood that, if Bell purchased the assets of a one-time rival, it would find itself slapped with a lawsuit charging it with engaging in anticompetitive behavior. Second, it obliged Bell to divest Western Union, frustrating Vail’s plan to unite the telegraph and telephone in a single interlinked network, a plan that had hastened the popularization of telegraph service for the first time in 1910. And, third, and, for the independents, most critically, it put the imprimatur of the federal justice department behind the Bell-independent segmentation of the telephone market, making it far easier for the many independents that remained to obtain the necessary funding to upgrade their facilities (Hochfelder, 2002; John, 2010a, Ch. 10; for a different perspective, see Schiller, 1998).

World War I marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of US communications. Though the United States would not enter the war until 1917, the outbreak of hostilities in Europe affected US communications in two ways. First, it underscored the enormous importance of communications as a weapon of war. The United States in 1914 remained a minor player in international communications. The British government controlled much of the world’s international telegraph network and a British company – Marconi – dominated radio research (Aitken, 1985; Headrick, 1991; Hugill, 1999). Federal lawmakers regarded this situation as unacceptable and took steps to hasten US government control over both radio and international telegraphy. The Navy appropriated Marconi’s patents in 1917; in the following year, the Post Office Department assumed control of all international telegraph lines that had been landed on the US coast. The US radio business grew directly out of these wartime actions. The Radio Corporation of America (RCA), for many decades a leading manufacturer of radio equipment, traced its origins to the patent pool that the US Navy established, in conjunction with several other interested parties, including Bell, in 1919. The first commercial radio broadcasts occurred in the following year (Douglas, 1987).

World War I also witnessed a major shift in popular assumptions regarding the relative merits of government administration and corporate management. Popular support for a congressional buy-out of the telegraph and telephone network was high in 1914. It was, in fact, for this reason that Bell publicists took such care to boost the transcontinental telephone. By demonstrating that Bell could promote technical advance, they rebutted one of the major arguments for a government takeover. The federal government would, in fact, take over the telephone and telegraph in 1917 (John, 2010a, Ch. 11). Government administration, however, proved highly unpopular, dooming government ownership as a realistic policy option. This failed experiment hastened the legitimation of the managerial corporation as an

organizational form, an outcome that cast a long shadow not only on US communications, but also on the US political economy (Vietor, 1994).

In the period between 1788 and 1914 the mail, the telegraph, and the telephone evolved in relationship not only to technological imperatives and economic incentives, but also to governmental institutions and civic ideals. The mail was reshaped beginning in 1792 by a republican regulatory regime that presumed that the citizenry had a right to convenient access to information on public affairs. By 1825, this presumption had expanded to embrace information on market trends; by 1845, to information on personal matters. The telegraph was commercialized in a political economy in which republicanism was rapidly being supplanted by antimonopoly. In the antimonopoly regulatory regime, lawmakers presumed that the public good would be best promoted by legislation that encouraged new entrants to challenge incumbents. Equal access became associated less with citizens – as it had been, for example, in the republican regulatory regime – than with would-be network providers and their expectant clients. The telephone emerged in a political economy in which antimonopoly made little sense as a regulatory mechanism. In its place, lawmakers created a progressive regulatory regime. The fruits of technical advance, they assumed, should be accessible not only or even primarily to would-be network providers and their clients, but also, and in particular, to end users, whom they conceptualized not as citizens but as consumers. The progressive regulatory regime remained largely uncontested until the 1970s, when it would be challenged by a revival of antimonopoly – the intellectual rationale for the break-up of the Bell System in 1984 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Antimonopoly has not gone uncontested. Yet it remains, to a far greater degree than republicanism or progressivism, the hallmark of the political economy of communications in the United States today.

NOTES

- 1 For a more general discussion of nineteenth-century “regulatory regimes” and their potential as an organizing theme for historians of the nineteenth-century United States, including historians of communications, see John (2006) and Beckert (2012, esp. pp. 322, 334–335).
- 2 Historians of communications in the early US republic have long been intrigued by the role of communications media in creating and sustaining an informed citizenry. On the concept of an informed citizenry, see Brown (1996). On the influence of communications media on civic identity, see John (1995), Schudson (1998), and Starr (2004). For a complementary approach to the relationship between communications and civics that focuses on ideas rather than institutions, see Wood (2006).
- 3 Especially influential, at least among social scientists, has been Giddens’s sweeping claims regarding the epochal significance of the electric telegraph in transforming conventional assumptions concerning time, space, and speed. For a related discussion, with additional citations, see Behringer (2006).
- 4 One oft-remarked feature of Carey’s essay on the electric telegraph was the extent to which his deployment of vivid metaphors to underscore the world-historical significance

- of the new medium rendered his essay vulnerable to his own well-known critique of the “rhetoric of the electrical sublime.” For a related discussion, see Marvin (1988).
- 5 Schwarzlose focused primarily on the electric telegraph as a technology; Blondheim on its role in fostering novel organizational forms. My own approach shifts the focus from the electric telegraph to the political economy in which it was embedded. For a related discussion, see Nerone (2008).
 - 6 The Smithsonian exhibit ignored the mail entirely, at least in part because its history was featured in another gallery of the museum.
 - 7 One diplomatic historian (Nickles, 2003) has gone so far as to make the counterfactual claim that the existence of a cable link between Great Britain and the United States might have diminished the likelihood that the United States would have declared war on Great Britain in 1812.
 - 8 The phrase “postal system,” while not unknown at this time, would not become common until mid-century.
 - 9 The Post Office Department influenced electoral politics in the early republic in two distinct ways. First, it created an informational environment that facilitated the nationwide circulation of campaign literature. Second, it provided party leaders with the material incentives – in the form of lucrative offices and contracts – to reward party workers should their candidate prevail. See John (1995, Ch. 6; 2003).
 - 10 The letter-rate reductions mandated by the Post Office Acts of 1845 and 1851 built on, and extended, the highly advantageous newspaper rate structure established by the Post Office Act of 1792. The mid-century postal reform acts hastened a *second* communications revolution; the *first* communications revolution dated from the 1790s.
 - 11 Though the civic rationale for communications regulation in the United States was more expansive than the fiscal rationale for communications regulation in Great Britain, the history of postal reform in Great Britain is far better documented (John, 2010b).
 - 12 The relative unimportance of the railroad to the electric telegraph in the United States in the pre-Civil War era has been recently underscored in an exemplary dissertation by Benjamin Schwantes (2008).
 - 13 Both networks were also dependent on large numbers of semi-skilled workers, a fact that is too often overlooked (Downey, 2002).
 - 14 The characterization of Western Union as a “natural monopoly” provided Thompson with a convenient bookend for his monograph on the early telegraph business. For Chandler, in contrast, the natural monopoly hypothesis enabled him to elide the thorny interpretative issues raised by the continuing competitive challenge that Western Union would in the post-1866 period confront. On the limitations of Chandler’s argument, see DuBoff and Herman (1980). The post-1866 competitive challenge was analyzed by Grodinsky (1957) and underplayed by Klein (1986).
 - 15 The economic benefits of weather reporting can be measured by comparing the number of shipwrecks on the Great Lakes that occurred in periods during which the government’s weather-reporting service was in operation with the number of shipwrecks that occurred in periods during which the service had been suspended (Craft, 1998).
 - 16 The related yet distinct and in some ways antithetical contention that the business strategy of corporate managers shaped the organizational structure of the modern corporation was popularized in the 1960s by business historian Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. Chandler’s contention had the effect, as was its intention, of depoliticizing managerial decision-making. The contention that political structure shaped business strategy, on the

- contrary, highlights the centrality for the history of communications not only of politics, but also of the state. For a related discussion, see John (2008).
- 17 The importance of the competitive period (1894–1907) in hastening the popularization of the telephone has been emphasized by a number of telephone-history revisionists, beginning with R. Gabel (1969), and continuing with Lipartito (1989, 1994, 1997), Mueller (1993, 1997), and D. Gabel (1994). The achievement of these scholars – and, in particular, of Mueller and Lipartito – in directing our attention to this oft-neglected moment in telephone history is undeniable. Yet it is one thing to recognize the significance of this competitive interlude in hastening the popularization of the telephone, and another to discount the influence on telephone popularization of other factors, including, in particular, the investment strategy of big-city Bell operating companies and the political contests over municipal franchises in which these operating companies became embroiled, contests in which rival operating companies almost never posed a major competitive challenge.
 - 18 The best introduction to rate-and-entry regulation in the late nineteenth-century telephone business remains Horwitz (1989). See also Armstrong and Nelles (1986), D. Gabel (1995), and Maguire (2000).
 - 19 The continuing significance of metropolitan networks in communications history is a theme of Graham and Marvin (2001).
 - 20 The mistaken presumption that ordinary citizens preferred flat rates to measured service has been subtly reinforced by the popularity of flat-rate pricing schemes for the users of Internet service providers.
 - 21 The United States–Canada comparison is developed systematically in McDougall (2004). See also Armstrong and Nelles (1986). The Canadian political economy was significantly different from the US political economy and so too were the business strategies of US and Canadian telephone operating companies. For this reason, it is risky to generalize about telephone service in US cities by using evidence drawn from Canadian cities. In *America Calling*, for example, Claude Fischer (1992, pp. 54–56, Ch. 3) relied in part on a recent monograph on Canadian telephone service to generalize about telephone usage patterns in the United States. In so doing, he underestimated the innovativeness of big-city telephone operating companies and exaggerated the agency of female telephone users. A further problem with Fischer’s analysis stemmed from his reliance on American Telephone and Telegraph institutional public service announcements as a proxy for corporate opinion. Unlike the sales-oriented advertisements sponsored by big-city Bell operating companies, these public service announcements were intended neither to expand the market for telephone service, nor to reach the ordinary telephone users who made the vast majority of telephone calls and generated the bulk of Bell’s revenue.
 - 22 The Bell public relations campaign is described in John (2010a, Ch. 11) and Marchand (1998, Ch. 2).

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“Quickening Urgency”¹

The Telegraph and Wire Services in 1846–1893

Terhi Rantanen

ABSTRACT

This chapter argues that the history of wire services cannot only be written in a national context. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the origins of wire services and telegraph and submarine cables in any country, we need to include their relationships with their counterparts in other countries. Wire services, by their very nature, were interwoven with one another through the technology they used and across national boundaries. The chapter explores the early stages of development of the telegraph and wire services in the United States and Europe that led to monopolies that were all interconnected: the New York Associated Press’s monopoly on the domestic news market, Western Union’s hegemony on the US market, the European news cartel’s monopoly on the world’s news market, and the cable monopoly over the Atlantic submarine cable.

Pray give some news for New York; they are mad for news.

(Telegram from Newfoundland to Valentia,
August 25, 1856; in Prescott, 1866, p. 198)

Journalism histories are mostly written using a national framework. As Schlesinger (1995) argues, media histories in general and the history of journalism in particular “have an overarching interest in showing how media institutions have contributed to

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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the shaping of *nationalist* culture, economics and policy” (pp. 5–6, my emphasis). The writing of nationalized journalism histories is closely related to recent discussions on the problems arising from methodological nationalism in the social sciences, where nation-states are taken as *the* most important starting point for any research. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002, p. 307) call this a container model, “in which societies are *imagined* in terms of an isomorphism of culture, polity, economy, territory, and a bounded social group” (Robins, 2006, p. 22, my emphasis).

Journalism historians have accepted their own role as often voluntary and sometimes even eager contributors to the construction of naturalized national media and/or journalism histories, presenting their work as, for example, “US,” “British,” or “Finnish.” This is, of course, important, especially when it is crucial to constructing a democratic narrative of a nation that can present its own unique history against those of other nations. Media and journalism play an important role in this narrative. Carey (1974, pp. 3–4) famously wrote that journalism history has been dominated by a Whig paradigm that reviews it as the history of a slow, steady expansion of freedom, from the political press to the commercial press. Further, as Nerone (1990, p. 16) observes, there is a fairly standard list of complaints that journalism history overemphasizes metropolitan daily newspapers and neglects women, minorities, labor, alternative media, religion, and other groups and topics in order to contribute to a Whig narrative. However, while critical in other respects, both these views take for granted that this narrative is always a national one.

The histories of all wire services are also nationalized, but especially the history of the Associated Press (AP), the oldest cooperative news agency, which still has a dominant position in the US market. For example, Schwarzlose’s (1989, 1990) title is *Nation’s Newsbrokers* and Menahem Blondheim ends his acclaimed book on the early history of the AP by writing:

The Associated Press monopolized telegraphic news gathering and news distribution in *America* in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its structure as a *national* institution – impersonal, non-local, unselfconscious, and hidden – gave wire service news, however partisan, the appearance of objectivity. The Associated Press helped *Americans* accommodate to a common information environment. By giving news that impressed on the minds of *Americans* a *national* orientation, it fostered the integration of *American* society. (Blondheim, 1994, p. 195, my emphasis)

Carey and Nerone’s criticism of this Whig history can also be extended to wire services, where historical writing tends to concentrate on major national institutions that still dominate the market, such as the AP. There is also a tendency to celebrate cooperative ownership as the most democratic form of ownership and morally superior to other forms (e.g., Cooper, 1942). The early history of wire services in the United States is also often written as a narrative, beginning with the New York Associated Press (NYAP) and inevitably leading to the present-day AP. Other services are often ignored or cast as threats to the NYAP and competition is often described in military

terms such as a “war.” Competing services which were soon founded, for example United Press (1882), and which were privately owned, have received much less scholarly attention. This happened in spite of the fact that many of AP’s competitors were in many ways more innovative and radical than AP (Rantanen 1992, 1994, 1998).

While fully acknowledging the value of Blondheim’s (1994) work and that of others (e.g., Gramling, 1969; Rosewater, 1930; Schwarzlose, 1989, 1990), I argue that the history of wire services cannot only be written in a national context. Even their names – wire services in the United States, telegraph (news) agencies in Europe – suggest that their birth was closely related to the invention and use of the telegraph and submarine cables, the first *international* electronic communications technology. Headrick (1990, p. 4) writes that, whereas railroads and electronic power reached their optimum efficiency on a regional scale, telegraph services quickly became national and, in the case of submarine cables, intercontinental and even global. I have elsewhere argued (Rantanen, 2009, pp. 22–23) that internationalization of communication started in the nineteenth century and was preceded by cosmopolitanization of communication in Europe, at a time when news was primarily exchanged within and between cities. With the use of the telegraph, wire services promoted not only the nationalization, but also the internationalization of news – defined as a kind of multiplied nationalization, as the term “international” (between nations) indicates (Rantanen, 2010, p. 27).

The international and the national are not such closed categories as is often thought. As Jill Hills has argued, the very terms “international” and “national” suggest that borders are determinant of policy:

They suggest that one thing happens inside and another outside these borders. But the basis of the current study is that there is no such easy division in the telecommunications field. The international telecommunications market is made up of networks, and networks can and do breach borders. Domestic networks can expand into the international, and the international can expand into the domestic. (Hills, 2007, p. 10)

The two inventions, wire services and the telegraph, are closely interconnected and together challenge the celebration of the progress achieved by exclusively national media. Although it is important to acknowledge that there are factors that can be analyzed as primarily national and thus differing from country to country, it is as important to acknowledge that there are factors that are similar across national borders. Very few communication technologies and institutions have been “founded” only in one country; rather, they have rapidly spread after their invention from one city to the next across national boundaries. This is, of course, what happened with the printing press and newspapers: following the invention of the Gutenbergian press in 1450, 236 towns in Europe had Gutenberg-style presses by 1500 (McNeill & McNeill, 2003, p. 180).

The uniqueness of each of the national wire services has been celebrated many times in company histories and media histories (Blondheim, 1994; Frédérrix, 1959;

Read, 1999; Schwarzlose, 1989, 1990; Storey, 1951). Much has also been written about the significance of telegraph and submarine cables (Ahvenainen, 1981, 1996, 2004; Carey, 1989; Griset, 1996; Headrick, 1990; Headrick & Griset, 2001; Hugill, 1999; Nickles, 2003; Peters, 2006; Standage, 1998; Winseck & Pike, 2007). However, what has not received enough attention is the combination of the four: the *mariage à quatre* between the telegraph and the wire services, domestic and foreign, and their mutual relationships.

In this chapter, I argue that, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the origins of wire services and telegraph and submarine cables in any country, we need to include their relationships with their counterparts in other countries. Wire services, by their very nature, were interwoven with one another through the technology they used and across national boundaries. Earlier research has pointed out that AP's monopoly in the US news market was based on the monopoly shared by Western Union and AP (Blondheim, 1994; Czitrom, 1982; Thompson, 1947). I further argue that we should explore the early stages of development that led to monopolies that were all interconnected: the NYAP's monopoly on the domestic news market, Western Union's hegemony in the US market, the European news cartel's monopoly in the world's news market, and the cable monopoly over the Atlantic submarine cable. However, it is important to note that gaining a monopoly was not easy. The first 50 years of wire services in the United States were ones of constant struggle, of the gaining, maintaining, and losing of monopolies.

Early Pre-Wire and Wire News Services

The fact that media and communications are by nature *transnational* is easily forgotten when constructing their national histories. In a similar way to printing presses and newspapers, news agencies were “invented” almost simultaneously in several cities around the world: Bureau Havas in Paris in 1832, Daniel H. Craig's news service in Halifax (later in Boston) in 1837, Telegraphisches Korrespondenz-Büro B. Wolff in Berlin in 1849, S. Josaphat and Co.'s Continental Telegraph in London in 1851 (from 1865, Reuters' Telegram Company) (Blondheim, 1994, p. 55; Fuchs, 1919, p. 74; Read, 1999, pp. 7–12; Schwarzlose, 1989, p. 22). To give a precise starting year for these organizations is often dubious: in the pre-telegraph era many of them experimented with different forms of transportation and transmission (from pigeons to news boats) in various locations and it is difficult to point to an exact date, name, or even a location. Charles Havas began translating items from domestic and foreign newspapers and was soon delivering news to its clients in European cities. Daniel H. Craig had a regular news reporting service by means of carrier pigeons from Halifax, Nova Scotia (a first stop for British vessels) to Boston (Rosewater, 1930, p. 3), from which New York papers used special trains to bring European news (Gross, 1977, p. 36). Both Julius Reuter and Bernard Wolff worked with Havas, and later they too

founded their own privately owned agencies. Craig was aware of his European counterparts and their use of pigeons for transmitting messages (Gramling, 1969, p. 12). In this way, the operations of all these services were also, from their earliest beginnings, transnational.

Unlike early European wire services, which were either in private or government ownership, many, but not all, wire services in the United States were cooperative. Among the early cooperative organizations was the New York State Associated Press, founded in 1846 by newspapers in Albany, Troy, Syracuse, Auburn, Rochester, Buffalo, and Utica. It installed agents in Albany and New York to transmit news from these cities (Gross, 1977, p. 42, Schwarzlose, 1980, p. 54). The Harbor News Association was also founded in 1846, when New York City newspapers formed an alliance to share the cost of collecting news by means of “news boats” which met incoming ships from Europe. Another early enterprise was organized, again by New York papers and also in 1846, to deliver news of the Mexican war by pony express from Mobile to Montgomery, Alabama. All these associations have been seen as early forms of what was later called the Associated Press, although it is not entirely certain when the New York association started using this name. What we do know is that in 1848 six New York newspapers combined their news-gathering operations under the name of the New York Associated Press and proposed to a telegraph company a permanent set of schemes and rates (Blondheim, 1994, pp. 49–50; Knights, 1967, p. 9; Schwarzlose, 1989, pp. 94, 101). It is important to note that no paper outside New York was included in any of these arrangements (Thompson, 1947, p. 225).

These pioneer ventures were primarily attempts to organize foreign news transmission. From its early days the NYAP was connected to Reuters’ agency in London. Even before the first Atlantic cable became operational, the NYAP had established a steamer news exchange arrangement with Reuters in 1857 (Desmond, 1978, p. 162) and the two concluded a formal agreement in 1861.² Through this contract with Reuters, the NYAP established its first contract with Havas and Wolff. In 1866, the NYAP opened its bureau in London and news from Havas and Wolff began to be transmitted through London (Basse, 1991, p. 38).

Despite their different ownership forms and locations, all wire services around the world came to share one similarity: they soon started to use the latest communications technology, the telegraph and submarine cables. In the most general terms, with the availability and use of the telegraph, former news agencies became wire services/telegraph agencies that could be defined as companies using the telegraph to collect and transmit news. They combined news, an earlier invention, with the telegraph and thus invented something new, telegraph news. However, even if they used the same technology, the control and ownership of the telegraph varied significantly between Europe and the United States. While in Europe the telegraph was owned by the state, in the United States it was in private ownership (Du Boff, 1984, p. 63). Apart from Reuter and Craig, most wire service owners did not own or invest in transmission technology, but instead rented lines or negotiated special fees for the transmission of their news telegrams.

The Inland Telegraph and Wire Services

The establishment of wire services was closely connected with the establishment of the telegraph. Their mutual dependency cannot be ignored in understanding their growth. In short, without the spread of the telegraph, wire services could not expand their operations. This is why it is important to explore their interconnectedness and show how it affected their business models even if their businesses remained in most cases separate.

Early telegraph companies in the United States were small and were run mainly on local and regional lines. The first telegraph line was built in the spring of 1844 between Washington and Baltimore and was rapidly extended to other cities. Newspapers published in towns and cities located along the new lines soon began to use the telegraph. The first telegraph news appeared in the New York City papers in early May 1846, before the city was even fully wired to the cities from which the dispatches originated (Schwarzlose, 1990, pp. 38–39, 57). By the summer of 1846, the telegraph lines stretched from Washington, south from Buffalo, and west from Boston and connected in New York, and were thus transformed into a network. However, because of the large number of local companies, a single message from Halifax to New York had to pass over the wires of five different companies, each employing different procedures, separate accounts, and varying policies (Blondheim, 1994, p. 55).

Although the NYAP itself considered buying a telegraph line, it was decided that this was outside the association's business (Schwarzlose, 1990, 194). However, Craig invested in several telegraph lines, including the New York, Newfoundland, and London Telegraph Line Company, between New York and Cape Race, Newfoundland, which was later used by the NYAP (Knights, 1997, p. 10). One of the first contracts of the New York Associated Press was with the New York and Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company, which changed its name in 1856 to Western Union (Schwarzlose, 1990, pp. 188–189). The NYAP also used the New York–Cape Race, Newfoundland line to receive dispatches from Europe once these had arrived by steamer in Canadian ports (Knights, 1967, p. 10).

As Czitrom (Czitrom, 1982, p. 17) observes, disconnected and uncoordinated lines, the great expense of early telegraphy, inadequate facilities, inexperienced operators, and fierce competition for the use of the few existing wires made the period from 1846 to 1849 a chaotic one for both press and telegraph companies. At the beginning of 1851 there were still more than 50 separate telegraph organizations in the United States (Du Boff, 1984, p. 7). Du Boff remarks that the early years of the telegraph were fiercely competitive and the newly founded companies soon started creating their own “telegraph empires” and trying to penetrate each other's territories (p. 54), the model wire services adopted from them.

In a similar way to the telegraph, wire services started locally. Owens (1927, p. 385) argues that before the early 1890s the AP was not an incorporated body, but

merely a combination of newspapers and small news associations loosely held together by a written agreement for the exchange of news. There was the New York State Associated Press (1846), which preceded New York City activity by at least two months (Schwarzlose, 1980, p. 562) and was founded in 1846. Other similar associations elsewhere followed: Boston Associated Press was established in April 1848 (Schwarzlose, 1990, p. 106), Western Associated Press (1862), and the New England Associated Press, the Kansas and Missouri Associated Press, the Southern Associated Press (Gross, 1977, p. 44; Thompson, 1947, p. 225; UNESCO, 1953, p. 12), but there is much less research available on these organizations.

The “authorized history,”³ the web version of the AP company history, starts from the year 1846, when *The New York Sun* established an arrangement whereby Mexican war reports arriving by boat at Mobile, Alabama, were rushed by special pony express to Montgomery, then 700 miles by US mail stagecoach to the southern terminus of the telegraph near Richmond, Virginia. That express gave the *Sun* an edge of 24 hours or more on papers using the regular mail. Four more New York papers were invited to join in the arrangement: *The Journal of Commerce*, *The Courier and Enquirer*, *The Herald*, and *The Express*. In May 1846, the offer to share news from the US war with Mexico was extended to rival newspapers. The resulting agreement formed the basis for cooperative news gathering by telegraph, just as the telegraph began a swift expansion throughout the country, linking New York to other telegraph nodes (Pyle, 2006).

Another agreement dates from 1848, when five New York papers, *The Journal of Commerce*, *The Courier and Enquirer*, *The New York Sun*, *The Herald* and *The Express*, formed the Harbor News Association in order to operate a small fleet of news boats to get foreign news from arriving ships. The Naushon (or Newsboy) steamship would meet the ships at Sandy Hook. Later a second Harbor News Association was re-chartered to include *The New York Tribune* and a more formal framework for cooperation.⁴ Its management rotated among the partners, with each newspaper in turn assuming responsibility for one month. In the early stages of telegraphic news gathering, responsibility for procuring foreign news also apparently rotated among the members of an association (Blondheim, 1994, pp. 103–4). The New York Associated Press was formalized in 1851, when seven New York papers signed an agreement for the joint telegraphic transmission of news.⁵ By 1866, daily newspaper editors were receiving national and international news primarily by telegraph. Most of them bought it directly or indirectly from NYAP (Blondheim, 1994, pp. 145–146).

Monopolies in Technology and News

The cooperative form of ownership, while celebrating its democratic, non-profit nature, is simultaneously based on a principle of exclusivity whereby membership is strictly limited and the exchange of news can only take place between members. The Association’s formal regulations from 1856 stated:

All telegraphic news, with certain stated exceptions, was to be available to all members. No new members were to be admitted without unanimous consent. News obtained by the members or their agents might be sold to other parties for the general benefit of the Association. (Rosewater, 1930, p. 381)

Another exclusive agreement was made between the NYAP and a telegraph company. By 1860, the American Telegraph Company had obtained an exclusive right to transmit NYAP news (Knights, 1967, p. 10). In 1861 its competitor, Western Union, completed the first transcontinental telegraph line, connecting New York and Sacramento, California, through St. Joseph, Missouri. According to Blondheim (1994, p. 145), Western Union was now well positioned for the increased importance of cross-country communication and strengthened the Chicago-centered, East–West-oriented system. As Du Boff (1984) observes, it was completion of the transcontinental telegraph in 1861 and the prospect of a successful Atlantic cable that touched off renewed rivalry between Western Union and the American Telegraph Company. A new company, the United States Telegraph Company, financed by a group of New York City businessmen, started in 1864. After an intensive period of competition, Western Union swallowed up its last two rivals and became a national monopoly by late June, 1866 (Knights, 1967, p. 7). By 1866 the Western Union monopoly controlled 90% of the telegraph traffic in the United States.⁶

After Western Union became the NYAP's exclusive partner, the latter started occupying space in the Western Union building at 145 and later at 195 Broadway in New York, where it remained until 1914 (except for a brief period in the 1890s; Schwarzlose, 1990, p. 223). The NYAP's close relationship with Western Union contributed to what Blondheim (1994, p. 143) calls a double-headed monopoly. Both companies would establish this monopoly in their respective but tightly linked markets, and it persisted for another 15 years. It was a combined news–telegraph monopoly and supplied most of the United States with its telegraphic news (Blondheim, 1994, p. 131).

The Atlantic Cable and News

Between 1850 and 1870 submarine cable technology grew from infancy to maturity (Headrick, 1990, p. 24). However, although inland telegraph and submarine cables diverged in terms of their ownership and organization, they had to be connected to each other. Hills (2007) calls one of the arrangements a “Western Union model” (pp. 25–28), whereby international networks owned by foreign companies are stopped at borders, while those owned by domestic companies penetrate the borders. Inland telegraph companies in Europe were owned by the state, while in the United States they were private and cable companies were mostly private, with the exception of two “imperial” British transatlantic cables (Brown, 1927, p. 122). However, all these different systems had to find ways to compete against and collaborate with each other.

Western Union's competitor, the American Telegraph Company, had invested heavily in the first Atlantic cable, which stopped working a couple of weeks after it was opened in 1858 (Prescott, 1866, pp. 205–206). After several unsuccessful attempts, another company, the Anglo-American Telegraph Company, finally laid an Atlantic cable that started working in July 1866 between Valencia Bay (Ireland) and Newfoundland. Although not itself involved with the cable, Western Union was well positioned for the increased importance of cross-country communication. Whereas the Atlantic cable, the great hope of the American Telegraph Company, was put on hold during the war years, Western Union's pet project, the overland telegraph to the West coast, had been completed in 1861 (Blondheim, 1994, p. 145).

Another factor that further strengthened the position of the US telegraph companies, although they did not own the first transatlantic cables, was that for the most part they came under the control of Western Union and the Commercial Cable Company (co-funded by Gordon Bennett of *The New York Herald*). These two companies, both of New York, also owned, directly or through affiliated companies, the land telegraph system of the United States and in part of Canada (Brown, 1927, p. 9). Two British cable companies, which had laid and operated a number of Anglo-American cables, had to depend on their US competitors for the provision of facilities for the collection and delivery of their traffic throughout the United States. As a result, the British companies' position became so difficult that they were eventually driven to lease their cables for a period of 99 years to Western Union (Mance, 1943, p. 63).

Wire service owners bought the services from telegraph companies, but rarely invested in them. However, there was one notable exception: Julius Reuter, who in 1866 had organized a cable from Lowestoft in the UK to Norderney in Germany,⁷ teamed up with the French financier Baron Emile Erlanger to establish the Société du Câble Transatlantique Français, which laid a cable from Brest to Duxbury, Massachusetts, via the island of St. Pierre (Parkinson, 1870, p. 25). In 1871 they joined the Anglo-American Telegraph Company in a *joint purse* or cartel, by which they agreed to charge the same rate and divide the income in proportion to their traffic. This gave the partners in the cartel the security to protect their interests but deprived them of the possibility of attracting customers by lowering their rates (Headrick & Grisct, 2001, pp. 554–555). Interestingly, the *joint purse* term was also used in 1869 when Reuter and Havas signed an agreement between themselves which stipulated that profits from all sources would be divided equally between them (Rantanen, 1990, p. 41). After two years the Société du Câble Transatlantique Français was sold to the Anglo-American Telegraph Company. As Headrick (1990, p. 25) points out, the new cable route, which began as a monopoly, turned into a cartel.

Newspapers were early, but not the only, users of the telegraph. In the beginning, long-distance telegraph rates were staggeringly high. In 1866, the charges for the transmission of messages were described "as beyond the reach of all but the most wealthy capitalists or combinations."⁸ The charge for 20 words was £20 sterling – a sum equivalent to US \$150 today, or two months' wages at that time for an industrial worker (Headrick, 1990, p. 4). However, when the second Atlantic cable successfully

began operating in 1866, newspapers used it almost immediately. The “ordinary” telegram traffic was always the most important source of revenue for the cable and wireless companies, but at an early stage a separate price category was introduced for press telegrams. These, usually of considerable length, were sent in plain language and were less costly for cable companies to deal with than ordinary commercial telegrams. Moreover, the companies usually reserved the right to send them when the lines were clear of other traffic (Brown, 1927, pp. 132–133). However, due to the cost of cable transmission, foreign news was the most expensive to gather, and its supply was an important source of the NYAP’s dominance in the collation of press associations (Blondheim, 1994, p. 159).

European News Agencies

By the time the first Atlantic cable started operating in 1866 and connected the NYAP with European telegraph agencies, Havas in Paris, Wolff in Berlin, and Reuter in London had already started to expand their activities across national borders. They had three strategies in expanding their activities: (1) founding branch offices; (2) funding or buying agencies outside their home countries; (3) selling their news to other news agencies, newspapers, and other clients.

In the early days, the agencies operated freely across borders. Havas, for example, founded offices in Augsburg, Wurtzburg, and Stuttgart (Frédérrix, 1959, p. 77; Storey, 1951, pp. 39–42). Reuter tried to buy other private agencies, for example Stefani in Rome and Ritzau in Copenhagen (Read, 1999, p. 54). Wolff and Reuter both tried to establish contacts in St. Petersburg and Moscow (Rantanen, 1990, pp. 82–83). In 1866 Reuters was still competing against Wolff in its home market: Reuter founded *Telegraphenbüro für Norddeutschland*, with branch offices in Berlin, Hamburg, and other German cities (Fuchs, 1919, p. 83). Wolff also “helped” to get new telegraph agencies started: Ritzau in Copenhagen in 1866, *Svenska telegrambyrå* in Stockholm in 1867, and *Norsk Telegrambureau* in Kristiania in 1867 (Berg, 1952, pp. 25–29; Fuchs, 1919, p. 86).

Gradually the three agencies started to make contracts to collaborate, but also to achieve territorial monopolies through exclusive agreements. The first contract was between Havas and Reuter in 1856 and only concerned commercial news, but the first agreement between Havas, Reuter, and Wolff was concluded in 1859. According to this latter agreement, Havas was to transmit to Wolff – as it already did to Reuter – its telegrams from France, Spain, Italy, and the Levant. Wolff, for his part, undertook to deliver telegrams from Germany, Russia, the Slavic countries, and Scandinavia. The agreement was a cost-free exchange of news among the concluding parties, in the same way as in cooperative wire services. It was also exclusive: the parties agreed not to deliver to agencies that were not signatories to the agreement (Rantanen, 1990, p. 39). In 1865, Reuter signed an agreement with Wolff in which he undertook

to provide Wolff with news from New York (Rantanen, 1990, p. 40). Reuter could only provide news from New York because of his agreement with the New York Associated Press, concluded in 1861/1862.⁹

The European News Cartel and Wire Services in the United States

The NYAP agreement with Reuter became an issue in the so-called US press war of 1866–1867 (Blondheim, 1994; Knights, 1967; Rosewater, 1930; Schwarzlose, 1990). After a period of competition between Wolff and Reuters elsewhere, it was in the US market that they again competed against each other. By 1866, the NYAP was the only wire service serving the whole country (Knights, 1967, p. 1). With its exclusive contract with Reuters and Western Union, it was geographically placed such that it could establish a linkage with the Atlantic cable and serve as the terminal point for overland telegraph communications (Swindler, 1946, p. 44). This soon became apparent to Western Associated Press (WAP). Forced to buy all its news from the NYAP, it had to cover two-thirds of the expenses; the NYAP papers paid only one-third, while the WAP and the other two groups, New England, Philadelphia, and Baltimore and the South, paid the remaining two-thirds (Knights, 1967, p. 17; Swindler, 1946, p. 44; Western Associated Press, 1870, p. 15). WAP complained that the news was not only overpriced, but also did not even fulfil its members' requirements. They complained that "fully one-third of these European telegrams are devoted to announcing the arrival and departure of New York steamers, and disasters to New York mercantile sail and steam vessels in all the waters of the old world, being items of special interest to the shipping interests of the port of New York, but of inferior value to the public outside of New York" (Knights, 1967, p. 22).

In an attempt to cut their costs, the NYAP had turned down Reuters' offer of an agreement as too expensive. Craig, in an attempt to become the "Reuter of America," had founded a private company, the United States and European News Association, in 1866 (Knights, 1967, p. 19). Through this, WAP temporarily achieved an exclusive agreement with Reuters. This probably formed the backdrop for the NYAP to make its agreement with Wolff, which was also eager to get a foothold in the US market. Wolff had bitterly resented Reuters' incursion into German territory through the Norderney Cable Company and now refused to join the Reuter–Havas–NYAP agreement of 1867 (Desmond, 1937, pp. 221–222; Fuchs, 1919, p. 82; Read, 1999, p. 56; Williams, 1953, p. 23). After a period of intensive domestic competition, the Reuters agreement was shifted back to the New York Associated Press (Schwarzlose, 1990, p. 50).¹⁰

The Reuters agreement with the NYAP was significant in two ways. First, it restored the NYAP's predominance as the sole agency empowered to deliver foreign news to the other AP members¹¹. NYAP's contract with Reuters was exclusive, i.e., no other wire service in the United States could receive news from Reuters. Second,

with this agreement with the NYAP, Reuters became the exclusive partner with NYAP in its agreement with Havas and Wolff in 1870. Although North America was formally divided between Havas, Wolff, and Reuter, it was Reuters that delivered news from two other agencies to the NYAP. Existing scholarship does not cite an extant copy of the 1867 agreement between the NYAP and Reuters, but its year matches the expiration prescribed by the 1861 contract and it is mentioned in Reuters' Minute Book of 1867.¹²

Not until 1870 did the three European agencies sign a collective agreement with AP, which recognized North America as a common territory for Havas, Reuters and Wolff.¹³ This agreement explicitly annulled the contract between Wolff and NYAP. The financial terms of the agreement were very different from the 1861/1862 contract with Reuters: both sides were now to pay all transmission expenses. Since the number of telegrams was much higher from Reuters, Wolff, and Havas, the NYAP had to deliver far higher cable tolls. In addition the NYAP had to pay an annual commission (£2,400). The agreement was exclusive and the contracting parties were not allowed to deliver their news to any other persons or newspapers (Rantanen, 1990, pp. 48–49).

The NYAP monopoly did not last very long. By the late 1870s the NYAP, WAP, and Western Union were again dissatisfied (Blondheim, 1994, pp. 150–151, 163). The rise of a new telegraph company, the Postal Telegraph Company, made competition possible again. The United Press (UP), a private wire service, was founded in 1882. UP, however, could only obtain foreign news from agencies outside the European news cartel. Thus it signed an agreement with the Central News Agency, a minor competitor of Reuters in London. UP and WAP now negotiated over ways to divide the US news market between themselves (Rosewater, 1930, p. 200). According to this agreement, UP was in undisputed control of all the territory east of the Alleghany Mountains and north of Virginia, while the Western territory was controlled by WAP. In addition, no newspapers served by AP news reports were to traffic with any rival association (Associated Press, 1893; Swindler, 1946, pp. 52–53) and then sign a joint agreement with Reuters. But these negotiations collapsed in 1892. Simultaneously, a new organization, the Associated Press (of Illinois), was founded, with Melville Stone as its general manager. At first, both agencies attempted to sever the other's access to foreign news by seeking exclusive rights to cartel news; both sent representatives to Reuters to negotiate an exclusive contract. To quote Frédérrix (1959, p. 190), the result was total chaos in New York, Chicago, London, and Paris.

Although both UP and AP claimed to have “won” the race for exclusive rights, it was actually the AP of Illinois that gained the final agreement with the European news cartel. But the price was high: it had to pay £3,500 annually (originally planned as the commission from two agencies) – the highest sum ever. Still, this contract dealt a decisive blow to UP: by 1899, after AP had spent a million dollars, it had succeeded in driving UP out of business. Baron Herbert Reuter telegraphed congratulations to AP on having established a monopoly in the United States (Fenby, 1985, p. 39).¹⁴

It is no accident that the subsequent cartel agreement of 1898 for the first time mentions AP as their counterpart in the United States. Scholars have therefore been correct in concluding that in 1893 AP bought exclusive rights from the cartel for foreign news in the United States. It is *not* correct, however, to assume that AP also acquired exclusive rights to its home country, which, *de jure*, still belonged to the European news cartel. In fact, AP was able to maintain a domestic monopoly only until 1907, when a new competitor, the United Press Association, was founded.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the telegraph fundamentally changed the transmission of news. The telegraph created first a local, then a national, and finally an international electronic network for the exchange of news. The wires often followed established roads or railways, but the cables also created new routes connecting continents separated by seas. The telegraph created a new electronic space that could be used not only for private, but also for public communication. The first wire services, telegraph agencies, followed the expansion of telegraph lines and cables by using them for the transmission of electronic news that could be multiplied by sending the same item simultaneously to several places. The wire services established their offices in the proximity of major telegraph stations and/or stock exchanges, which were the first users of the telegraph. They sold news items to customers including newspapers, which edited and published their news, and other clients.

The wire services were established in cities with multiple connections that later became electronic news hubs. The concentration of printed media, the telegraph, the stock exchanges, and the new wire services contributed to changing these hubs into electronic news capitals. They were often, but not always, capitals of their respective nation-states or harbor cities. Some of them even became global news capitals that gradually were more connected to other global news capitals than to other places in their own respective nation-states.

In this chapter I have argued that we cannot study the early history of any wire service without taking into account its domestic and foreign relations. These relations include both the relation to technology providers, foreign and domestic telegraph companies, and other domestic and foreign wire services. The very essence of wire operations was to provide content (news) to customers (newspapers and other agencies) using the latest technology of the time: the telegraph and submarine cables.

I have shown that, both in technology and in the electronic news industry, there was an attempt to achieve a spatial monopoly. Western Union achieved a monopoly over inland telegraph lines; British and US cable companies achieved a monopoly over Atlantic cables; the European electronic news cartel, and especially Reuters, achieved a monopoly on the US and subsequently on the world news market; Associated Press

achieved a monopoly on the US market. These monopolies were interconnected and dependent on each other. Their formation was complex and complicated. They faced internal and external competition and did not last indefinitely. But when the monopolies were all in force at the same time they were difficult to break.

Western Union's domestic monopoly would not have been possible without the Atlantic cable. The AP monopoly would not have been possible without its contract with Western Union and Reuters. The European news cartel's monopoly (and especially Reuters') on the world market would not have been possible without its contract with AP and with cable companies. The Atlantic cable companies would not have had their monopoly without their arrangements with inland telegraph companies that were also monopolistic.

As Innis (1964) has pointed out, monopolies are created over both time and space. The telegraph and submarine cables created a new market, where getting the news first became a crucial factor in competing against other newspapers. However, as with every new technology, the price of using it in its early days was high. To achieve a spatial monopoly, newspapers made agreements with each other to share the costs. It was New York and the East coast of the United States that had a spatial monopoly over electronic news. This happened primarily because of their strategic position as a news gateway to Europe based on harbor cities and cable landings. There was also continuity and even overlapping between transportation and transmission, ships and cables, trains and telegraph poles.

The fact that the AP domestic monopoly was only achieved in 1893 shows how difficult achieving and maintaining a monopoly is. Even that monopoly did not last long: when the United Press Association was founded in 1907 it soon started challenging the AP monopoly. The availability and increase in the use of wireless telegraph and radio challenged the power of the European news cartel, which was technologically based on the control of the telegraph by the respective nation-states. Among the agencies that rose to resist the cartel were the Associated Press and United Press, who used the wireless and formed alliances with other agencies subordinated to the cartel.

Eventually, after World War I, the telegraph monopoly was brought down by the wireless, and by 1934 the European news cartel monopoly had been broken by AP and the UPI in collaboration with other agencies. By that time, old news monopolies had served their purpose and gave way to "free" competition that was laid on the inherited structures of the former. As a result, after World War II, London, Paris, and New York became the leading global news capitals of the world.

NOTES

1 MacGill Hughes (1940, p. 58).

2 R 1/8714755, Reuters' archive, London.

3 Retrieved July 30, 2010, from http://www.ap.org/pages/about/history/history_first.html

- 4 Retrieved May 14, 2010, from http://www.ap.org/pages/about/history/history_first.html
- 5 Retrieved July 30, 2010, from http://www.ap.org/pages/about/history/history_first.html
- 6 Retrieved May 14, 2010, from www.corporate.westernunion.com/history.html; www.ieeeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/western_Union
- 7 A list of telegraph companies owning submarine telegraph cables, all of which are paying dividends (printed 1868, source unknown). DOC//46/2, Cable and Wireless archive, Porthcurno.
- 8 "America," *Daily Telegraph*, August 2, 1866. DOC//13/135. Cable and Wireless archive, Porthcurno.
- 9 R 1/8714755. Reuters' archive, London.
- 10 "Reuters' Telegrams," *Chicago Tribune*, December 12, 1866.
- 11 "Reuters' Telegrams," p. 20; Reuters' Minute Book, December 20, 1867, p. 172. R 1/883501. Reuters' archive, London.
- 12 Reuters' Minute Book, December 12, 1866, p. 172; April 24, 1867, p. 203; May 8, 1867, p. 209; July 3, 1867, p. 244. R 1/883501 and *The New York Times*, January 11 (1867). Reuters' archive, London.
- 13 Signed July 1, 1870. R 1/880234. Reuters' archive, London.
- 14 Reuters' Minute Book of February 1895, p. 98, refers to it: "The Managing Director reported the complete collapse of the UP of the US and submitted congratulatory telegrams exchanged with the AP in reference to the overthrow of their rivals. The Board expressed great satisfaction at this issue of the struggle between the Company's allies, the AP, and the UP, and authorized the Managing Director to stay the proceedings pending against the UP for breach of contract as soon as he might deem expedient." R 1/883507. Reuters' archive, London.

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Photography

Craig Robertson

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of the contested emergence of photography in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the field of media studies, photography is often positioned to provide a critique of historically specific modes of understanding and representation. Viewed as a medium, photography and its early development offers important insights into various debates about evidence, truth, and authenticity, and more generally modernity. The chapter reviews examples of photography's contested emergence in the United States from the world of portraiture, the courtroom, immigration enforcement, and journalism. In most of these cases photographs provided an initial challenge to the authority of the word (both spoken and written). The examples also illustrate that whether it is linked to understandings of personal identity, citizenship, national identity and democracy, or capitalism, consumption, and mass culture, the complicated set of practices associated with photography provides important examples of how the present of the nineteenth century was imagined and interrogated as new.

While it is often stated that photography was invented in 1839 it is more accurate to posit that photography emerged in the nineteenth century. Invoking 1839 refers to the year that Daguerre made his photographic process public. He sold his invention to the French government, which led to the spread and development of daguerreotypes. These were images that could not be reproduced and initially

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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required more than 30-minute exposures, although, within a few years, this was reduced to less than a minute. Not only were there clear precursors to this, but, contemporary with it, William Henry Fox Talbot invented the forerunner to photographic prints. In 1841, he patented the calotype, later called the Talbotype. This was a negative/positive process with 5-minute exposure time that allowed for multiple reproductions of an image. Over the next half-century significant technical developments occurred: dry plates, flexible film, faster lenses, and handheld cameras. The result was that by the time of the launch of the first Kodak camera in 1888 practices we could recognize today as photography had come into existence. At the same time the halftone process was invented, which allowed for the reproduction of photographs in printed publications.

There are numerous ways to think about photography: as image, a history of techniques, the work of certain practitioners, and as sociohistorical evidence. In media history the somewhat limited attention to photography has tended to favor the analysis of its social use over a formalist critique of images or its technological development. The focus in media history on the practice or function of photography owes a debt to the social history of photography that emerged in the 1970s, notably in the early Marxist work of Allan Sekula (1984, 2002) and in John Tagg's (1988) Foucauldian iteration. In this approach photography as an articulation of institutional practices and power structures becomes the primary field of study.

The relationship between journalism and photography has dominated the analysis of photography in US media history and contemporary media analysis. This is best represented in Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt's landmark collection *Picturing the Past* (1999). The essays in this volume question the status of photographs as journalistic documentation. The focus of the book skews toward photography and the "documentary" understanding both in terms of collective memory and historical evidence. Cumulatively the book draws from the social history of photography and the general critique of representation as a historically contingent construction. For Brennen and Hardt (1999), "it is not the production of the photograph but the context of social relations, with its practices of making meaning and rendering interpretations, that becomes the appropriate terrain for contemporary observers" (p. 10). This leads them to frame the analysis of photographs in terms of photography as "material culture" or a "regime of truth."

More broadly the analysis of the development of photography as a medium in the nineteenth century is usually articulated to debates over modernity, not modernism. This is the modernity that transformed the economy through new forms of production, expanded industrialization, and encompassed the growth of cities. It was the context that saw the emergence and rapid expansion of democracy, nationalism, capitalism, and consumerism.

Emerging in this era of change many believed that photography gave reassurance that the world could still be known and understood. Dominant popular tropes that introduced photography were that of the "mirror" and "nature." The early photographic pioneers insisted that photography "originated in nature and was disclosed

by nature” (Marien, 1997, p. 3). This idea was continued in claims that photography was “discovered,” a natural phenomenon not a process invented by humans. As Mary Warner Marien (1997) notes, “photography as natural vision was easily transmuted into photography as neutral vision” (p. 5). Along with the analogy of the “mirror,” the invocation of nature drew from parallels with sight to convey the idea that photography had a consistent, accurate relationship to the world it recorded. However, the knowledge that it revealed was not always automatically accepted. Photography as the “mirror with a memory” encountered preexisting visual techniques and practices and also the argument that the photographer and the conditions of production he or she worked in produced photographs that were not quite a copy or an actuality. In this sense photography is often analyzed through denotation and connotation. In the former photography is critiqued in terms of its “indexicality,” its power to capture reality as “it is,” representation that operates “at least in the first instance [...] before any convention or rules” (Batchen, 1997, p. 195; Zelizer, 2006, pp. 4–5). Connotation suggests that the meaning of an image draws not only from what is depicted (photographic realism) but also from broader symbolic systems.

Viewed as a medium, photography and its early development offers important insights into various debates about evidence, truth, and authenticity. Focusing on the tension between photography as mirror or artifice, this chapter offers examples of photography’s contested emergence in the United States from the courtroom, immigration enforcement, and journalism; therefore it has a bias toward photographic images of people. In all these cases photographs provided an initial challenge to the authority of the word (both spoken and written). Photography also called into question existing attitudes about the role of images as relevant forms of representation. The contested authority granted to the visual representation of knowledge, its truth claims, provides an important framework for the analysis of photography’s arrival. Photographic realism was rarely completely rejected, even after practical problems led to a questioning of the idea that a single, consistent point of view existed. In contrast with other technologies used to describe and record, photographs still produced results that were relatively more exact and seen to be, if not accurate, at least somewhat successful approximations of reality.

Photography emerged in an era of burgeoning claims to scientific objectivity. Despite questions about the nature of photography as an unmediated depiction of reality it offered a useful articulation of positivism. In this specific articulation of modernity, claims to realistic representation became the championing of positivism and empiricism. Progress was increasingly seen to be dependent on “facts” collected through the scientific method, in an ordered manner; a well-known and ordered society would be a more equal society. Photography, particularly its perceived fusion of technology and nature, came to play an important role in making manifest the possibility of objective truth.

While positivism provides an important support for claims to photographic accuracy, as media scholar Barbie Zelizer (2006) reminds us, photographic “images work differently in the contexts that put them to work. They adopt and adapt to the

attributes of the domain into which they are imported, and they do so by putting indexicality into the service of the different aims and meanings that are relevant to each domain” (p. 5). The utility of photographs as a standard to assess truth was not consistently agreed upon in the nineteenth century. Positivism was arguably a regular contributor to the constitution of photographs as an object of meaning. However, indexicality was disputed at local levels, often in pragmatic ways with limited resolutions. Photographs were granted meaning in different ways. Their articulation to the material, institutional, ideological, and discursive constitutes photographic practice. While journalism and various forms of the nineteenth-century state define the “local” for three of the following examples, the chapter begins where most people initially came upon photography – the practices of portraiture.

Portraits

In the United States people tended to first encounter photographic portraits through the phenomenally successful daguerreotype. It produced a unique picture directly onto a polished silver-coated plate. As a positive image without a negative the daguerreotype was extremely fragile. It was protected in a case like a piece of jewelry. In the 1840s it became the most successful commercial concern in the United States, with citizens spending \$8–12 million a year on daguerreotypes; by the mid-1850s, with the phenomenon lagging a little, an estimated 3 million daguerreotypes were still produced, selling at two for 25c (Tagg, 1988, pp. 42–43). When paper prints could be produced from glass negatives the *carte-de-visite* became another way in which people obtained portraits. This was a photographic visiting card 2 × 4 inches.

The popularity of daguerreotypes and *cartes-de-visite* extended the possibility of possessing a portrait beyond the art world of an elite group. This was celebrated as a democratization of representation in which photography, imbued with ideas of educational uplift, functioned as a proxy for democracy (Marien, 1997, pp. 72–73). However, in its various guises, the social history of photography has tempered this celebration. Historians have located the daguerreotype, in particular, in aspects of modernity other than democracy. Articulating this argument, cultural historian Alan Trachtenberg (2008) contends that it is important to acknowledge that photography emerged “as a representational practice within a culture undergoing unsettling change toward market-centered urban industrial capitalism” (p. 49). For him the daguerrean portrait quickly emerged as a “habitual commodity” (Trachtenberg, 1992, p. 186). Rather than a challenge to art as an indicator of social status, photography is positioned as introducing the visual as a form of mass consumption.

While people accessed photographic portraits as a commodity, this should not take away the excitement and uncertainty associated with the novelty of the relatively instant conversion of experience into image, into an object. The nature of the daguerreotype accentuated this novelty. The image could only be seen at a certain

angle, producing the oft-commented on “flickering mirror effect.” The response, at least in published commentary, was a “mixed discourse of science, technique, art, and magic” (Trachtenberg, 2008, p. 172). This mechanically produced material image was frequently described as something closer to the materialization of someone, a manifestation more than a copy. Photography as a fusion of nature and technology became “an important proxy” (Marien, 1997, pp. 72–73) for the effects of science and technology on social life. Some early critics read the perceived accuracy of a mechanically produced image through an early iteration of a critique of mass culture. The portraits by camera, along with landscapes, were viewed as blunting creativity, as separating people from direct experience with nature.

Many of those who produced daguerreotypes entered the debate about the status of photography by trying to move it away from something primarily associated with the marketplace (or for that matter science). By the 1850s a “profession” emerged with national journals, associations, competitions, and awards. This existed both to try and marginalize those “quacks” with limited ability and to identify skilled practitioners as artists. It was in the creation of portraits that early photographers primarily came to think of themselves as artists, invoking in part the history of portraiture (Trachtenberg, 2008, p. 73).

While daguerreotypes and cartes-de-visite greatly increased the number of people who had access to portraits, they did not offer a significant challenge to preexisting portrait traditions. In fact, despite the claim that photography offered an unmediated depiction of reality, the accuracy of early photographic portraits depended on an understanding of “likeness” borrowed from a long tradition of painted portraits. To be seen as real, to be seen as indexical, photographs had to follow a set of protocols. Trachtenberg (1992) argues that the portrait as a camera image was made to “resemble a resemblance, to give an effect of likeness” (p. 187). This was achieved “only under controls (focus, framing, lighting) derived from a formula of likeness” (p. 187) taken from an adjacent formal system of representation in portraiture. Posture and expression were critical to the construction of this resemblance.

Numerous guides existed for daguerreotype portraits. It was assumed that photographic portraits could reveal the true character of the sitter if the photographer paid attention to position and pose. The guides drew from the popular pseudo-sciences of physiognomy and phrenology. Physiognomy sought to establish a person’s character through external appearance, particularly the face and profile. More popular in the United States was phrenology, which argued that the personality traits of a person could be derived from the shape of their skull. As Trachtenberg (2008) contends “the popular ideology assumed (or desired) a transparent relation between face and character, between expression and truth” (p. 67).

Visual rhetorician Cara Finnegan’s (2005) analysis of letters to *McClure’s* in response to its publication in 1895 of an early photograph of Abraham Lincoln illustrates the unquestioned assumption that a person’s face revealed their character. Popular understandings of physiognomy and phrenology constituted an “image vernacular” – a specific yet implicit way to talk about photographs that had solidified by the time photography became reproducible on a mass scale barely half a century after its first

appearance as a unique image (Finnegan, 2005, p. 34). In the words of one reader, the image of Lincoln provided “valuable evidence as to his natural traits” (p. 40). His eyes signaled a “great heart”; his expression revealed “just purposes” and “unflinching determination” (p. 46). Summarizing one detailed letter, Finnegan writes Lincoln at a young age was “recognized” as a “man who can be relied upon to make the right decisions, a man who is thoughtful, determined, kind” (p. 46).

In this manner it has been argued that through physiognomy and phrenology photography fostered bourgeois notions of the self, which were frequently articulated to ideas of “American” identity. A regularly cited example of this is Mathew Brady’s large daguerreotypes on display in his galleries, many of which were subsequently published as *Gallery of Illustrious Americans*. Images such as these have been positioned by historians as something for the public to emulate, “a space for viewing men in the guise of republican virtue: gravitas, dignitas, fides” (Trachtenberg, 1989, p. 48). As photography emerged, the portrait tradition that it drew from came to function as “citizenship training of a sort, offering a democratic space for viewing a democratic art that paradoxically perpetuated elitist definitions of virtue” (Finnegan, 2005, p. 42). These elitist definitions were primarily manifest in the “cultivated asymmetries of aristocratic posture” (Tagg, 1988, p. 36) in which “pose is a function of leisure, and frontality signifies its lack” (Lalvani, 1998, p. 449). Through photographic portraiture “in the course of the nineteenth century, the burden of frontality was passed on down the social hierarchy, as the middle class secured their cultural hegemony” (Tagg, 1988, p. 36).

While “honorific” portrait photography in the form of a relatively cheap commodity that borrowed the signifiers of aristocratic portraiture arguably represented the rise of the middle class, another form of portrait photography emerged to represent a different segment of the population. As with “honorific” portraits, these “repressive” portraits drew on phrenology and physiognomy. However, because of the status of its subjects (e.g., the criminal, the insane) the latter was organized around a frontal image of head and shoulders. The ideal form of the repressive portrait became what we now know as the “mug shot.” French police used daguerreotypes to produce an early version of the mug shot in 1841. In the United States the San Francisco police department began to use photographs in 1854. Within two decades police departments in New York, Chicago, and Cleveland had joined it. These collections of photographs became known as “rogues’ galleries.” In most situations these were actual gallery spaces open to the public. It has been argued that these functioned to cultivate a public perception of a criminal type that was manifest in appearance, particularly the face. Their popularity was such that P. T. Barnum added a rogues’ gallery to his New York museum (Gunning, 1995, p. 24; Hall, 2009, pp. 65–69).

Identity Documents

Photography was established as a reliable source of empirical evidence in official identification practices in the second half of the nineteenth century. To reveal the

“true” identity of the subject demanded a frontal pose with no facial expression, a sharp image with no exaggerated effects; the initial slow speed of early cameras enabled one short-lived act of resistance – the distortion of facial expressions (Gunning, 1995, pp. 25–27). Art historian John Tagg (2009) argues that the use of photographs in identification practices also depended on significant change in representation practices; “it was no longer a sign of power and prestige to be recorded but a sign of subjection and subordination” (p. 54). This iteration of the critique of portraits as a vehicle for democratization draws from Michel Foucault’s (1977) argument about modernity and disciplinarity. Representation practices centered on documents and photographs produced an “individual” that became critical to the governing practices of the modern state.

Foucault’s work has provided the framework for much of the historical analysis of photography and identification documents (Robertson, 2010; Sekula, 1986; Tagg, 1988). The literature on the emergence of identification photographs tends to approach its object in two ways. It addresses the photographic image through the modern project of classification, specifically phrenology and physiognomy. Second, it isolates the record-keeping practices necessary for photographs to be useful to official identification practices.

As with honorific portraits, the various forms of identity photographs drew from phrenology and physiognomy. In photography critic Alan Sekula’s (1986) influential borrowing from Foucault he argues the development of photographic portraits produced a “shadow archive” (p. 15). The knowledge and position assigned to photographic images of the criminal body was a relative one. The recognition of a criminal type as “other” (repressive portrait) was associated with the representation of its opposite, a law-abiding bourgeois subject (honorific portrait). In both instances photography was understood to illustrate character “types”; “the ‘natural’ order of social structure and stratification was thought to be readily available in the evidence of the human body” (Green, 1984, p. 6).

The use of photography to illustrate racial, social, and class types reached its extreme in Francis Galton’s “composite” photographs. Rather than identify a specific individual, in these images he sought to extract the typical physiognomic features of a given group from multiple photographs of individuals. For Galton these composite photographs, carrying with them the “truth” of photographic realism, were important as he attempted to give credibility to his theory of eugenics (Green, 1984; Sekula, 1986, pp. 40–55).

Photography was considered useful to identification because of its indexicality and iconic accuracy. This understanding made photography an ideal way to articulate a unique identity to a specific body, but as cultural historian Tom Gunning (1995) notes, “the photograph remains too individual, too specific, to be processed as thoroughly as rapid modes of information circulation demanded” (p. 31). Or as Sekula (1986, p. 16) argues, debates about “optical realism” detract from the critical object in the emergence of “instrumental photography” – the filing cabinet not the camera. The key example in these arguments is the system Alphonse Bertillon created to

police recidivism in France in the late nineteenth century. Bertillon created a card-system that produced an identity created to facilitate the retrieval of files. Multiple measurements were taken from a prisoner's body. These were recorded on cards with a photograph attached. The cards were divided into successive subdivisions based on the collected measurements, each division organized into predetermined categories of below-average, average, and above-average. If done correctly this could break a collection of 100,000 cards into groups of no more than a dozen (Sekula, 1986).

Anna Pegler-Gordon's (2009) innovative research on the late-nineteenth-century use of identity photographs in the policing of Chinese immigration provides an important example of the contested emergence of identification photographs. She argues that the photographs on certificates issued to Chinese blurred the distinction between honorific and repressive portraits, which led to officials questioning their confidence in the objectivity of the camera.

In 1893 the US Congress approved the introduction of photographic identification documents for Chinese seeking exemption from the Chinese Exclusion Act. The novelty of the Chinese photographic documents in the 1890s speaks to a general acceptance of written descriptions of physical appearance in official identification; photographs did not appear on passports until World War 1 (Robertson, 2010, pp. 80–91).

The regulations introducing these documents made manifest the faith in the accuracy of the camera. The initial regulations regarding photographs were brief, indicating a trust in the essential accuracy and reliability of a photograph as evidence of identity. The Immigration Bureau required that photographs not be retouched or mounted and that they provide an accurate representation of the face.

The majority of photographs provided were simple frontal portraits focused on an individual's face. However, not all were. These exceptions challenged the blind faith in photography. Chinese used studio photographers and made use of many of the poses and props that photography had borrowed from the portrait tradition. Subjects stood, sat, faced the camera, or looked to the side. While most wore Chinese clothes, some men presented themselves with the markers of Western masculine respectability: suits, ties, and even facial hair. Others adopted a very traditional Chinese cultural appearance. The majority of these images were rectangular vertical portraits, but some had trimmed corners and others were in the shape of arches or ovals. The position of Chinese relative to the categories of exclusion tended to determine the style, content, and form of photographs. Native-born US citizens made use of Western conventions in an attempt to emphasize their Americanness. Women filled their identity photographs with evidence of their class status and home life to try to avoid being identified as prostitutes (Pegler-Gordon, 2009, pp. 42–61).

Beyond playing with photographic conventions, Chinese also deliberately manipulated actual photographs (Pegler-Gordon, 2009, pp. 70–76). This strategy further challenged official trust in the automatic reliability of photography. Chinese attempted to break the link between document and person by substituting photographs on documents and exploiting the "vulnerabilities in the image" (Pegler-Gordon, 2009,

p. 71). In the latter case, the image was intentionally altered or retouched. Sometimes even this was not necessary due to the poor quality of the photograph. A blurry image could produce sufficient ambiguity to enable someone to use a document issued in the name of another person.

Officials responded to these actions with regulations that collectively amounted to the realization that a photograph of a person did not guarantee accurate identification. New regulations and the actions of officials seemed to acknowledge that the conditions in which photographs and documents were produced had important consequences for the success of a photographic image as a mode of official identification.

In an attempt to curb the substitution of photographs an official stamp was placed over part of the photograph when it was attached to the exemption certificate. A new regulation specified that the three photographs submitted should be identical photographs, produced from the same negative. Applicants had often sent in different images, a practice that prevented officials using the application form to determine whether a photograph on a certificate had been substituted (Pegler-Gordon, 2009, pp. 74–75).

The Immigration Bureau began to photograph Chinese as they arrived in one more effort to more effectively use photographs to secure identity. Standing outside, immigrants held a small chalkboard with their name and other details. Including the name in the actual image was intended to more securely link the image to a name and hence a file. In privileging another identification technology (the name) officials potentially compromised the photograph as a mode of identification. An official photographed arrivals at Angel Island outside in sunlight. These pictures frequently had shadows that distorted the individual's face (Pegler-Gordon, 2009, pp. 62–63).

By 1914 most photographs had a fairly consistent appearance with people facing the camera hatless. Faces were similar sizes and the photographs were cut to a uniform size with consistent exposure and background; regional variations continued until the mid-1920s. In practice standardization meant the reduction of acceptable images and, therefore, an active attempt to prevent subjects from having any control over their self-presentation. Collectively they constituted these photographs as reliable by solidifying the links between observation, description, representation, and record, and hence “truth” and “knowledge” (Tagg, 1988, p. 78).

Legal Evidence

The status of photographs as evidence also emerged in a contested fashion in US legal culture during the second half of the nineteenth century. As with identity photographs, the initial debates sought to establish the nature of the distinction between the evidence a photograph could provide and written and spoken evidence. However,

this quickly became clouded by differences between photographs and other images that could potentially be used as evidence.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, legal evidence usually consisted of words, both spoken and written. The few images sanctioned in a courtroom tended to be either maps and surveys in land disputes or drawings and diagrams in patent cases. As a result of this limited use, visual representation was not a well-developed category of evidence. Legal historian Jennifer Mnookin (1998) argues the attempts to provide a legal doctrine to allow photographs enhanced and challenged the idea that images constituted a category of evidence distinct from words.

Photographs began to be used in US courtrooms in the second half of the nineteenth century. Daguerreotypes appear not to have been used. Paper photographs were admitted in courtrooms but usually only in two types of cases: disputed handwriting cases or to “describe” terrain or buildings in land dispute cases (Mnookin, 1998, pp. 10–11). It was only during the 1870s that photographs occasionally began to be used to verify personal identity.

The contested attempt to bring photographs into the courtroom led to the establishment of a legal doctrine that sought to explain the function of images more broadly. According to the doctrine that formalized their arrival, photographs, like all images, were thought to be identical to witness testimony in verbal form. However, Mnookin (1998) contends that this doctrine was “a formal rule that coexisted with a reality that contradicted it” (p. 50). As a “legal fiction” the photograph in the courtroom made visible two contested understandings that ushered photography into nineteenth-century culture: photographs as unmediated replication and photographs as artifice.

Adhering to the idea that they were constructed objects, photographs were formally admitted to the courtroom as illustrations identical in function to diagrams and maps. A photograph was considered to be a product of technical limitations and skill, be it the focal length of lenses or the complexities of lighting. This judicial critique of photographic realism in terms of human agency meant a photograph was thought of as another form of human testimony and, therefore, something that may or may not be true. At the level of doctrine it was accepted that a photograph could not prove something independent from the words of an individual. The credibility of a photograph depended on the credibility of another witness. As an explanatory aid a photograph needed a witness who could attest that it was a correct representation. A majority of judges, therefore, understood a photograph as something constructed to give visual support to someone’s point of view.

In the 1880s the regular use of staged photographs provided an example of the doctrine of illustrative evidence in practice. These photographs often posed people where parties claimed to have been to recreate scenes of accidents or crimes; in other examples witnesses made marks on photographs to signify their position at the scene. However, the reluctance of some judges to admit posed recreations speaks to an understanding of photography that saw it as distinct from maps and diagrams. For these judges the indexical authority of the photograph created the possibility that as

evidence it could do more than merely illustrate. Viewed through the popular assumption that photography could replicate reality in an objective manner, some in the courtroom recognized that a photograph could persuade a jury independent of the words of witnesses. The unmediated depiction attributed to photographs had the potential to create images that could be seen as a form of proof independent from a witness and, therefore, not open to cross-examination. At its extreme a belief in photographic realism “threatened to make the fact-finding portion of a trial redundant by providing facts in an uncontestable form” (Mnookin, 1998, p. 6); for some judges the attempt to link photographs to the doctrine of illustrative evidence was constructed in full recognition of this difference between photographs and other visual representations.

The belief that photography was produced by nature and science supported the confidence of those who believed that photography had the authority to be an independent witness. Therefore, contrary to the intention of illustrative evidence, in 1882 a Georgia Supreme Court judge wrote, “We cannot conceive of a more impartial and truthful witness than the sun, as its light stamps and seals the similitude of the wound on the photograph put before the jury; it would be more accurate than the memory of witnesses, as the object of all evidence is to show the truth, why should not this dumb witness show it?” (Mnookin, 1998, p. 18). This perspective turned a photograph into a replication not a representation, and into an independent trustworthy witness. In contrast to the narrow understanding of photographic meaning created through its identification with maps and diagrams, in practice photographs could in fact persuade a judge and jury.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the attempt to tame photographs through identification with preexisting visual images had failed. Although photography had been formally admitted into courtrooms with the understanding photographs were artifice, once admitted they were frequently understood as unmediated replications. The prevalence of the latter resulted in the increased use of visual representations beyond the photograph. The indexical quality associated with photography created a larger space for visual images. Mnookin (1998) argues the attempt to give photography a legal history in fact dramatically expanded the category of illustrative evidence, if not actually invented it. As photographs pushed visual representations closer to being evidence not mere illustration, other representational forms came to be understood in these terms.

Print Media

An even more direct engagement between the developing authority of photographs and the existing authority of words occurred in the world of journalism. As with portraits and courtroom evidence, negotiation over the status of photography occurred within preexisting visual practices. The emergence of photographs

in newspapers is attributed to the technological advance of the halftone, which enabled newspapers to publish photographs with relative ease. Photographs began to appear occasionally in newspapers after 1880. However, it was not until 1897 that the *New York Tribune* became the first newspaper to print photographs daily, making use of halftone reproduction that emerged in the 1880s. By this time a new genre of advertising-driven periodicals targeting the middle class had arrived that made extensive use of halftones. However, rather than a triumph of technology, the emergence of photographs in print media can be seen as contemporaneous with changes in the form and meaning of news.

Despite the cultural impact of the daguerreotype and paper photography, in the mid-nineteenth century there was little sense that photography would become an important part of news (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 112). Technologies such as woodcuts and wood engraving, various forms of metal engravings, and lithography provided the images considered necessary to print media prior to the emergence of the halftone. The illustrations that appeared in weeklies and newspapers adhered to a distinct visual regime. Historian Joshua Brown situates the images in the illustrated press within the social context of the Gilded Age. He contends that the illustrations helped people master the radical social, political, and economic changes of the period. Brown (2002) argues, “rendering figures whose features and physiques were imbued with the rules of physiognomy, the illustrations in the pictorial press constructed an orderly, detectable, moral map for what seemed so hidden and chaotic in mid-nineteenth century America” (p. 80).

In terms of the specific practices of narrative-driven print media, pre-halftone illustrations were created within a set of practices that “underscored the author, dedicated itself to storytelling and observation, [and] promised vicarious experience to its readers” (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 18). In this sense illustration did not transcend the world of words. Prior to photographs illustrations existed in a definition of news that privileged narrative; they functioned to capture the “decisive moment” (Craig, 1999, p. 48) that required emphasis within the particular account.

To successfully contribute to the narrative it was common for illustrators to recreate crucial events in a composite image. *Leslie’s* illustration of President Garfield’s assassination covered what would have been at least a minute of events. The image included the look of surprise on Garfield’s face as well as the apprehension of the assailant. In contrast, two decades later *Leslie’s* coverage of President McKinley’s assassination included dozens of photographs of McKinley and other figures but there was no illustration of the shooting itself (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 126).

The halftone came into use between these two presidential assassinations but the difference between illustrations and photographs represented a change in attitude to news reporting and news images. Media historians Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone (2001) argue photographs became the primary form of illustration only after the art of storytelling was downplayed in news in favor of a commitment to a more “modern” form of realism and objectivity. The “realist ethos” associated with photography did not fit into the authenticity sought through newspaper illustrations. The art of

storytelling in illustrated news depended on a belief in authenticity that privileged the authority of the author and the artist. In this context press photography could only make sense if the “real” was separated from the idea of art and the significance of authorship was downplayed.

In journalism the realist ethos was articulated as objectivity. For Dan Schiller (1981), the integration of photography into journalism was related to the rise of positivism. Photography understood by means of science provided a way in which people came to grasp the idea of an objective world. Although newspapers rarely used daguerreotypes, the cultural understanding of early photography provided newspapers with a metaphorical comparison through which to articulate the idea of objectivity in news (Schiller, 1981, pp. 88–89). Photography bolstered the increasingly dominant cultural belief that truth and accuracy required the absence of human intervention, or rather that the accurate representation of truth required that the role of human mediation be obscured. While there is a debate over the timing and nature of the appearance of “objectivity” in news, one agreed-upon consequence of its emergence is that photographs came to be defined as “factual” in contrast to the “bias” of illustration.

In the larger cultural realignment of the real with the technical, photography and reporting both came to be understood through the erasure of authorship. Photographers came to be seen as witnesses, not responsible for their images in the way a sketch artist who gathered images from people at the scene had been. The photographs they took acquired “news values” such as immediacy, conflict, and prominence. Further, in the modern newspaper formation many of the tasks previously assigned to words – dramaturgy, depictions of demeanor, and the description of visual detail – became the task of photographs (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001).

Brown (2002) argues that the understanding of photo-realist conventions as objective did not alter preexisting representational strategies, and therefore they did not challenge understandings of national identity and ideals of citizenship. A portrait tradition continued and with it the use of racial and ethnic typing in images; in fact photographs in print media enhanced the authority of these images as accurate representations. The objectivity of photo-realist methods was articulated to the objectivity of scientific theories about racial and class hierarchies; in the social and cultural context at the beginning of the twentieth century the “halftone effect” (Harris, 1990, pp. 304–317) did not mark a distinct “epistemological or representational break from earlier practices” (Brown, 2002, pp. 241–242).

However, Barnhurst and Nerone (2001) argue the emergence of photographic realism did alter other aspects of citizenship. In the world of print journalism the arrival of photographic realism saw the emergence of a greater passivity on the part of readers as citizens. The use of illustrations in a narrative mode had brought the viewer or reader into the world and implied a republican model of citizenship. In exchanging temporal narrative for immediacy and emotional impact, realist press photography offered a new model of citizenship. This was citizenship that in the name of a realism derived from objectivity divided the reader or viewer from the

world. This is evident in the “photojournalist.” Understood as a witness, he or she made manifest that “journalistic realism projects an audience that can neither blame journalists nor take effective action in the public sphere” (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 138). Photographic images were published with a commitment to “realism” and a commercially driven populism, but not with any sense of civic responsibility.

This new relationship between reader and print media is even more evident in the phenomenally successful “ten cent magazines” that emerged following the advent of the halftone. These instantiated a distinct break in the relationship between readers and the publications they purchased; advertisers, not subscribers, funded the magazines such as *Munsey’s*, *McClure’s*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

The perception that photographs were more realistic than illustrations attracted advertisers. However, this was a “realism” in which the importance of artistic enhancement was recognized. Explaining the use of a staged photograph in an advertisement, one of the pioneers in commercial art theory wrote, “it is a real picture but drawn with a camera” (Phillips, 1996, p. 148). Realism in the context of advertising was the “art of making dull reality interesting” (Phillips, 1996, p. 140).

Photography was once again dragged into debates about the democratization of culture and more directly the rise of national commercial culture. The linking of art and industry through the medium of the halftone was a frequent subject for discussion in photographic and advertising industry trade journals at the turn of the century. For proponents, photographic images in advertising offered the potential to expose more of the population to high culture. For critics, this form of advertising cheapened people’s aesthetic sensibilities. It was argued this would likely lead to a rise of superficiality and mediocrity (Phillips, 1996, p. 152).

Conclusion

In the field of media studies, photography is often positioned to provide a critique of historically specific modes of understanding and representation. The photographic image is not ignored, but it is rarely viewed in terms of the actions of an individual or to explain or advance aesthetic debates. John Tagg (2009) argues photography is not something that is simply given, “it has to be constituted and it has to be instituted” (p. 14). For Tagg this makes the analysis of photography a Foucauldian project to examine the unstable and contested discursive conditions in which different “photographies” are constituted. However, for many scholars within media studies, the historical analysis of photography is not a Foucauldian project, but one that identifies social contexts *external* to photography in which photographic technologies were mobilized and instrumentalized.

However, regardless of the approach within media studies, the analysis of the emergence of photography is articulated to “modernity.” The analysis of photography grants important specificity to modernity; it becomes a historically specific

object of study not a largely bibliographic frame of reference used to advance theoretical arguments (Morris, 1998, p. 2). This is not to suggest that when linked photography and modernity don't encourage the contemplation of large-scale historical debates. However, the preceding examples are intended to illustrate that be it linked to understandings of personal identity, citizenship, national identity and democracy, or capitalism, consumption, and mass culture, the complicated set of practices associated with photography provide important instances of how the present of the nineteenth century was imagined and interrogated as new.

Within the particular context of media studies it is important to note that nineteenth-century modernity saw "unprecedented transformation in the conditions of human contact, along two axes in particular: transmission and recording" (Peters, 1999, p. 138). Photography has long been positioned as an important way to comprehend this transformation. The preceding examples emphasized this through the tension between the authority of the written word and the photographic image. Implicit in these specific examples is that nineteenth-century photography suggests a new form of inscription ("-graphy"). As Lisa Gitelman (2000) has argued, new inscriptions "regulated modern experience, making life more legible in complicated, public ways" (p. 11). To that end photography illustrates that "inscription is a form of intervention" (p. 3).

In the distinct local spaces of the living room, the courtroom, and the border, photographic images articulated to other visual practices challenged understandings of truth and memory. Here transformations in recording and transmission come to be understood in terms of an unsettled modernity structured through new relations of circulation; whether it be the circulation of identities, evidence, or commodities, and therefore a modern conception of information centered on exchange value. Historian Matt K. Matsuda (1996) writes of the "memory of the modern" where memory is an activity, an act of *coordination* (pp. 6–8). In the example of the state, it remembers, it acts through documents, practices, and institutions that constitute the memory of the state. In a similar vein Gunning uses "circulation" to locate one critical aspect of photography within modernity. Beyond the indexical and iconic he argues the "detachable nature" of a photograph "allows it to refer to an absent object separated from it in space and time" (Gunning, 1995, p. 20).

The intention of this chapter is to push media studies beyond a focus on photography in terms of news or print media to look at other sites in the dispersed and complicated emergence of photography. However, it has admittedly done so without challenging the dominant framework that grants pride of place to analyzing the information that is identified and legitimated through the emergence of a range of photographic practices. Barbie Zelizer's recent book makes the specificity of this approach apparent.

In *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* (2010) Zelizer uses imagination, emotion, and contingency to frame her analysis of photography, specifically an examination of "about-to-die" images. Her project is not about the negotiation of authority in terms of objectivity. Instead, Zelizer (2010) explores the idea that

“photographs facilitate making sense of the world in a way that is not necessarily rational, evidentiary or reasoned” (p. 13). Her analysis still privileges the relationship between photography and memory, but it is the role of memory and photography in securing “more affective and extrarational engagement” (p. 314). This is something Zelizer argues runs counter to the idea of journalism as an “information relay” in the present. Her book is a challenge to the uncritical acceptance of journalism as a project of modernity and, therefore, the acceptance of journalism as a rational project in which images will always be secondary to words.

In the context of the current chapter what is most provocative about *About to Die* is its ability to say something new about journalism and photography. Zelizer is able to do this because she challenges the way “modernity” has been used to articulate photography and journalism. Even if not conceived as such her project speaks to the broader “affective turn” in recent cultural analysis.

While *About to Die* is largely a critique of contemporary practices it provides another example that photography is not a technology with a single meaning or a single history that plays the same regardless of context. Photography remains a productive site for critical thinking within media studies. This chapter has highlighted some of the social contexts and discursive conditions which an analysis of photography can foreground. However, from the perspective of media history the contested emergence of photography in a period of significant social change makes its early history an important, and still largely unexplored, object for analysis within media studies.

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Moving Images

Portable Histories of Film Exhibition

Haidee Wasson

ABSTRACT

This chapter surveys the ways in which the history of film exhibition has been conceptualized and elaborated by film historians, with special attention paid to the possibilities of an expanded current historiographical approach that includes small film technologies, in particular, portable film projectors. Like theatrical exhibition, the portable projector exemplifies the nineteenth-century marriage of mechanical movement, chemistry, and projected light. Yet, the portable projector is a distinct iteration of these technological foundations, leaving behind the theatrical armature of the movie house and emulating more the other small, audiovisual technologies that together reshaped cultural life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Charting a neglected area of film and media history, this chapter considers the dynamics of portability for a history of seeing movies, concluding with some larger research questions posed as directions for future work.

From the perspective of the film historian, cinema's past is far less certain than its future. This familiar if slightly amended aphorism takes on particular meaning in our contemporary context wherein death knells for cinema (or at least celluloid) are common. To be sure, mobile screens, digital cameras, and YouTube indicate the technological conditions for a moving-image culture currently undergoing rapid

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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change. The formal qualities of moving images are being transformed by tiny displays and low resolution. The surfaces of cinema seem to be multiplying, from one's lap to the exteriors of decayed industrial complexes. Digital technologies have globalized the production of single films, with US blockbusters conceivably shot in China, edited in London, and post-production effects completed in Montreal. But far from presuming cinema's celluloid past to be quaint and unsophisticated by comparison, changes in the contemporary moment are directing and enlivening the questions being brought to bear on film's historical landscape.

Take, for instance, a seemingly simple question: Where and how have people seen movies? The conventional answer has long been movie theaters. Yet, recent scholarship is showing that a range of technologies and venues provide an expanded scenario for the presentation and performance of film. Far beyond the picture palace or main-street's marquee, educational movie vans, county fair film tents, product display screens in department stores, classroom AV carts, and YMCA film nights have all proven themselves to be recognizable aspects of US film culture by mid-century. In other words, the more that is being learned about cinema's past, the more some of our deeply held assumptions about how cinema has long been seen – as a rich image projected in a dark purpose-built large space – are inadequate for a full understanding of the power and place of film in our cultural histories.

This chapter surveys the ways in which the history of film exhibition has been conceptualized and elaborated by film historians, with special attention paid to the possibilities that an expanded historiographical approach – which includes portable film technologies – holds for future scholarship. Recent work on the showing and viewing of movies has included a wider selection of film types, locations, and technologies, multiplying our ideas about where and when cinema happens. This scholarship assumes the significance of the movie theater as an enduring film institution and a dominant iteration of film display. Yet, this work also takes a broad and non-normative view of film performance, expanding the conditions in which cinema became a commonsense element of our past and present media ecologies. This chapter argues that while the movie theater is an enduring and constitutive aspect of seeing movies, there is much to gain from examining the full range of technologies and institutions that have long made use of films. This entails a notable increase of the films deemed significant for inclusion in film history (industrial, educational, governmental, amateur), a broader set of salient sociocultural dynamics beyond art and entertainment toward what some have termed “useful cinema” (citizenship, worker productivity, corporate communications, piety, efficient learning), and a more nuanced and complex understanding of the many technologies that in fact have made spaces and screens into contexts of cinematic display (small gauges, public address systems, portable screens) (Acland, 2009; Acland & Wasson, 2011; Greene, 2005; Griffiths, 2008; Hediger & Vonderau, 2009; Lester, 2008; Orgeron, Orgeron, & Streible, 2011; Smoodin, 2011; Wasson, 2005).¹ Like theatrical exhibition, the portable projector exemplifies the nineteenth-century marriage of mechanical movement, chemistry, and projected light. Yet, the portable projector is a distinct iteration of

these technological foundations, leaving behind the theatrical armature of the movie house and emulating more the other small, audiovisual technologies that together reshaped cultural life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Charting this tendency in film history, this chapter considers the dynamics of portability for a history of seeing movies, concluding with some larger research questions, posed as directions for future work.

While the field of film studies has long been largely focused on understanding the languages of cinema, there is a small but important body of work that has assessed the peculiar institutions of film display that are foundational to cinema's aesthetic, social, and cultural significance. Scholars of film exhibition presume several essential things about cinema and its history. Movies don't just appear, they are presented and made visible by a particular kind of display logic, one often predicated on sizable, seated, and repeat audiences that rent, among other things, a line of sight to the screen. The magic of the movies does indeed rely on magicians. But among the filmmakers, stars, and effects wizards are also a host of architects and designers, theatrical technicians, electrical engineers, ambitious entrepreneurs, masters of publicity, and event-planners who have long conspired to shape the experience of watching movies. Some are earnest programmers of the artistic or obscure, and others spokespeople for centralized global entertainment. Together, and with a host of other players, they create what we might call the backstage drama, the "behind the screen" dynamics of film presentation. These dramas and the situations they yield constitute the primary interface between films and the large and small publics upon which cinema's fortunes have long rested. These interfaces provide the sites wherein our experience of films and other spectators unfolds and the social, embodied dynamics of seeing play out. Scholars of film exhibition assert that cinema does not primarily happen on a celluloid strip, in front of a camera, or in a film can, but on a screen. This screen is where minute chemical and optical inscriptions become legible through projected light and amplified sounds, framed by geometries of display and theatrical architecture alike. Many scholars of film presentation understand that showing movies implicates the institutions of cinema in a range of technologies. Even taking movie theaters among the many moving image platforms, such theaters themselves have never been simply boxes made of celluloid but hybrid venues where a range of technical innovations contribute to the darkness, the comfort, the spectacle, and the other attractions of the theater (amplified sound, conditioned air, cavernous lobbies). Yet, the multi-mediated movie house retains a special place in thinking about cinema's specificity as a modern medium and mode of expression.

The touchstone for work on film exhibition remains Douglas Gomery's (1992) survey text *Shared Pleasures*, which examines the history of movie presentation – largely but not exclusively – focusing on the movie theater, considering both the business of the film show as well as the popular and specialized or niche manifestations of the theatrical enterprise (from populist movie palaces to small ethnic and arthouse cinemas). Subsequent work has been more focused, providing rigorous histories of exhibition in particular locations and in particular types of theaters

(Allen, 1996; Belton, 1992; Fuller-Seely, 2008; Jones, 2003; Singer, 1996; Waller, 1995; Willinsky, 2001). More recently, scholars have examined exhibition in a radically changing technological and industrial context, where theaters are less stand-alone outposts for singular film events and more like monitors networked to global entertainment flows (Acland, 2003). Collectively, such work has yielded excellent assessments of the place of movie theaters in the business of film. This literature has also investigated the industrial and social regulation of cinema, the dynamics of public leisure, and cinema's links to other public modes of entertainment and leisure. Blending social and cultural histories, incorporating considerations of class, race, and gender, this work assures us that there is nothing simple about going to the movies (Grieveson, 2004; Hansen, 1991; Maltby, Stokes, & Allen, 2007; Stamp, 2000). While a good deal of this work has concentrated on movie theaters before the rise of television, there is also important research documenting and theorizing the place of other technologies for transforming the conditions in which films are seen, and the stylistic conventions of films affected. The rise of video and then digital playback devices such as DVD in the 1980s and 1990s, which proved to be paradigmatic for how films were made, marketed, and eventually seen, definitively poses a challenge to the singular dominance of the movie house for thinking about film presentation and film viewing (Klinger, 2006; Wasser, 2001). Building on this work, what follows presumes these interdependencies of film presentation, with a range of visual and audio technologies, to be continuous throughout its history, long before the rise of video but also before and alongside television.

So, what do we know about film exhibition before home video? We know that movie theaters and indeed film exhibition more generally changed considerably during cinema's first 60 or so years. From the first storefront theaters, which emerged around 1905, to the picture palaces of the teens, 1920s, and early 1930s, from single-screen sites of mainstreet congregation to the panoramic screens of Cinerama, the appeal and power of the darkened, audience-filled theater have proved resilient. In the United States, the showing of films grew from peep shows and penny arcades, as well as fairgrounds, itinerant showmen, and traveling lecturers. Early on, films were small parts of other live multi-format entertainments, prominent among them vaudeville (Allen, 1991). In a sense, moving pictures grew as but one element of the rising leisure industries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, finding their own specific business mode a decade or so after their initial appearance.

Nickelodeons or what Gomery (1992) has called "movie-only theaters" (p. 17) emerged in the United States around 1905, and quickly became a prominent part of the amusement economy. Nickelodeons were often converted retail sites, with hand-painted signs indicating the day's fare. But, in truth, nickelodeons were not "movie-only theaters." As Gomery himself and many others have documented since, nickelodeons were lively, variety based sites. They often included a mix of live and recorded performances, a mix of sound devices (recorded, mediated, instrumental, and live) and varied modes of patron address, including sidewalk barkers, painted posters, and automated announcements. The "movie-only" theater was not so much

exclusively dedicated to movies, but organized itself around a business model that had movies at its core, and was fully dependent on a wide range of other media and presentational modes to round-out a theater's offerings, making "the movies" into a distinct kind of mediated, entertainment event. Scholars of early and silent cinema have dutifully reminded us that conventions of viewing films long included the rituals of other popular public entertainments, including audience participation, a mix of recorded and live presentations, and the less seemly politics of segregated seating and regulated behavioral codes (Abel & Altman, 2001; Lastra, 2000). Indeed, movie theaters have long been highly codified and controlled spaces. Religious groups, civic reformers, and a motley assortment of moral crusaders have persistently espoused the dangers of theaters, films, or both.

As these theaters proliferated, they helped to establish a recognizable genre of public entertainment, and the retail face of the US film industry, providing a reliable sales window for film product. Stabilizing the theater as the point-of-sale for movies allowed the industry to establish market share in a growing entertainment industry. Theaters ensured an outlet for their products and provided a predictable and appealing site for repeat visitors. Nickelodeons and the large purpose-built theaters and regional and national chains that followed were key to the US film business transforming into the powerful conglomerates we name with the umbrella term "Hollywood."

The story of the movie theater's growth parallels the consolidation of the film industry more generally. By the mid-teens, filmmakers had established the basic model for its primary and most profitable product: the feature-length, narrative fiction film. Many other film types were made and seen, including a variety of short film genres (sing-along films, animated, newsreel, comic, travel, and novelty films). Yet, the feature-length narrative became the centerpiece for these other products. During this same decade, purpose-built movie theaters appeared, seating 500 and 1,000 patrons rather than the 200 or less of the nickelodeon. The trend toward larger theaters did not eliminate other models for theatrical film presentation, but resituated them as residual within a rapidly expanding industry.

Urban environments hosted a range of differently sized theaters. Smaller towns found ways to adapt extant spaces (opera houses, town halls) to accommodate cinema screens. Yet, the larger and larger theater was clearly understood by the rising industrial power as the most profitable and therefore appealing path. Throughout the 1920s, theaters in general became inextricably linked to a vertically integrating industry. More and more film producers bought up distribution and exhibition venues; more and more theater owners merged or bought up distribution and production interests. By the early 1920s, the film industry resembled a complicated hybrid: nineteenth-century presentation models of live theater and the national retail model established by grocery and department store chains designed to efficiently, reliably, and regularly deliver standardized products (Abel, 1999; Gomery, 1992). Trends toward vertical and horizontal integration became more pronounced as the decade moved on; innovations in sound and amplification technologies led to

corporate partnerships between film industry, cognate entertainment industries such as recorded music, and the large electrical conglomerates (Crafton, 1997).

As the movie theater evolved, its foundational appeal was further augmented partly by reconceiving of it as a high-tech, architecturally grand and glamorous site for an evening out. By the mid-1920s, what were previously small theaters with 10–12 feet screens grew to gargantuan proportions. At their biggest, theaters such as the Roxy and Radio City Music Hall built in the early 1930s, even as the Depression took hold, sat 6,000 people. While their 25–30 feet screens must have been somewhat dwarfed by their cavernous halls and grand proscenium arches, the exotic palaces served as opulent symbols of the global juggernaut cinema had become. The larger-and-larger paying audience – its very size constituting part of the appeal of the movies – became the industry ideal. Service was high yet the populist rhetoric of even the most grand palaces was supported by a common consumerist ethos: luxury that anybody could afford (Melnick, 2005).

Recent scholarship has emphasized the modernity of cinema, examining its formal capacities for compressing and refiguring space and time as well as its corollary capacities for distributing and displaying those images efficiently from one side of the earth to another. As a global system for spreading words and images at rapid speeds and great distances, cinema – at one level – was a formidable modern machine. Yet, the palace was an interesting outpost for these typically modern proclivities. William Leach (1993) notes that like picture palaces, department stores during this period often used deeply historical and exotic tropes in their architecture and displays while simultaneously averring the virtues of the modern through their products and merchandising practices. Leach suggests that the exoticism of the department stores served in a way to soften and sanction the arrival of machines and their systems. Similarly, while palaces often invoked the historical and exotic in their Egyptian, Romanesque, and Greek stylings, they also featured the most up-to-date technologies of sound and image throughout. Air conditioning, theater-wide sound amplification, public address systems, live radio broadcasts, elaborate electrical lighting, and significant ballyhoo all helped to make the movie theater into a kind of modern masthead for the industry's imperial and technologically sophisticated ambitions (Melnick, 2005; Thompson, 2002; Wurtzler, 2007).

Yet the emphasis on the movie theater and the ways in which it was a highly technologized and mediated space, connecting the theater by recorded sound, radio, and sometimes television to all manner of ethereal and actual spaces, fails to remind us that palaces were gargantuan, immobile, and permanent. Cinema was a mass medium in the sense that it enabled an industry that made products for the many. It fostered a distribution system that facilitated the efficient circulation of its goods to retail sites (theaters) and was predicated on a consistent flow of new, largely standardized product. But this product was designed to be rented, first by the theaters who would temporarily show the film, and by viewers who temporarily rented a seat in order to gain a line of sight. Movies were not typical commodities in that they were not owned by theaters or by the great growing mass of consumers. Following this

logic, the theater's screen becomes both the showpiece for cinema's circulatory ambitions, and the endpoint for the same. The movement and circulation of films in a sense stopped at the theater's screen. Yes, things cinematic existed beyond the films themselves and moved more nimbly. Film merchandising, fan magazines, endless talk about films in newspapers, all allowed for a kind of extra-theatrical life to moving images, implicating cinema in dispersed networks of media technologies and institutions. Nonetheless, the theater acted as a kind of bulwark to the possessive impulses and physical intimacies being accorded to cinema that we readily associate with novels, phonographs, and even living-room television sets.

The movie theater remains a rather curious institution, an unlikely outpost for a cultural form heralded as defiantly mobile, malleable, reproducible, and accessible. Plainly, the basic idea of a theater long predates cinema, pulling forward the significance of dedicated or specially demarcated spaces for traditions and practices of live drama, performed music, public oration, and even the circus barker, the side-show magician, or middlebrow occultist. Theaters frame sites of performative possibility, marking off a pedestrian or prosaic sound or gesture from the potentially profound. Theaters generally depend on people performing for other people who gather to watch, listen, and possibly respond to or interact with the show. Building on the appeal of events and temporary gatherings, the permanence of the movie theater has long been further assured by its technological complexity, making it difficult to precisely reproduce its attractions in ad hoc or impromptu fashion. In part, this has long served as a barrier to entry into the business of film.

Yet, isn't it odd that a medium heralded as powerful in part because of its basic reproducibility – its ability to be copied, to multiply and thus refigure previous limits on circulation and performance, a mobile show-in-a-can – could for so long be so constrained by the comparatively immobile, bricks-'n'-mortar, professionalized apparatus of the theater? Books had long before demonstrated the power of cheap reproductions, small formats, and widespread circulation. Music had been turned into small, reproducible, commodity forms in the case of wax cylinders and vinyl phonographs, turning music into a private, automated device. Lithography liberated the original artwork and photography created a world of small, inexpensive, hand-held images widely circulated and seen. But films themselves resisted – for a time anyhow – the impulse of a media form whose content and playback devices were fully accommodated to consumerism and a constant physical intimacy with the consumer.

For film scholars, the movie theater has rarely been seen as an impediment to cinema. Quite to the contrary, the movie theater has long been the privileged and often idealized site for understanding the specificities of cinema, whether conceived as a mass medium, a popular commercial form, or a modernist art (Andrew, 2002; Barthes, 1979). The significance of the movie theater undergirds histories of a growing and powerful industry, changing leisure patterns, and enduring theories of cinema that seek to assess the specific language of film and its relationships to subjectivity, identity, and experience, many of which often presuppose the theatrical

display of film. To be sure, its place is rightfully central in film and media studies, as the movie theater has provided a powerful and dominant stage for the encounter between moving images and those who watch them, between an industry and its paying customers, between artists and their interlocutors. Yet, the theater seems less odd, its dominance less puzzling, when one accepts recent challenges to the idea of its singular hold on the history of film. In other words, it is becoming clearer that the movie theater is but one iteration of film presentation throughout the twentieth century. This insight is being catalyzed in part by bringing film history into dialogue with media history. An archaeology of small film technologies demonstrates that celluloid, projectors, and screens share long and enduring parallels with other consumer media technologies, providing an alternative history to film performance than that suggested by the movie theater and its core ideal of large audiences, controlled performance, and standardized projection.

Non-Theatrical: The Other History of Showing and Seeing Films

This chapter now turns to consider another way of thinking about a history of film performance by examining the dynamics of portable projectors. In contrast to the movie theater, this other history is characterized less by majestic spaces, large audiences, or the special event and more by the technological transformation of everyday spaces and activities, small audiences, and a panoply of consumer gadgets. The history of portable film projectors offers a quick view to another kind of cinema, providing insights into an enduring technological infrastructure for a distinct mode of moving image circulation and display, one that challenges the singularity of the movie theater in our received histories of film. The history of portable projectors includes large but mostly small technologies of cinema. It requires charting and assessing not just the expanded technologies of cinema (projectors, screen, microphones, turntables, amplifiers) but the expanded spaces or sites of cinema. In what remains of this essay, I will focus on several prominent aspects of the discussion about portable film projection technology during the 1920s and 1930s. As the purpose-built movie theater secured its place in the dominant business model of the US film industry throughout the teens, punctuated in many ways by its resolutely oversized iteration in the form of the “picture palace,” another kind of cinema was also emergent. In the shadow of a resolutely big and physically enduring idea of the movie theater, there was a parallel and equally determined movement toward a small, nimble, self-operated cinema of the most portable, temporary type.

In our current media environment saturated with the language of *mobility*, the concept of *portability* sounds both familiar but also rather quaint. In the context of film history, the concept of portability holds particular meaning. It indexes a particular kind of movement, one less tied to invisible networks, unlimited content, and

instantaneous, omnivorous connectivity, and one more linked to the physicality of bodies, things, and places. To be sure, portability was a foundational characteristic from cinema's earliest days, as Charlie Musser and others have shown. Yet, as the film industry developed, itinerant showmen and traveling lecturers gradually decreased in significance as movie theaters rose to the fore of the rationalizing film business. The purpose-built, permanent movie theater quickly became linked to the dominant and anti-competitive behaviors of film production and distribution interests. Part of this control was through film technology itself; through the highly flammable, 35 mm nitrate-based film standard. The high heat of projection bulbs, exacerbated by their enclosure in the metal housings of the projector, ensured that film projection was a risky business. Movie theaters were heavily regulated spaces, requiring formidable safety codes (fire-proof booths, proper ventilation, flame resistant materials) and licensed projector operators. All of these factors forged a regulatory environment influencing who could and could not show movies. The development of a sustained network of self-operated portable projectors took an identifiable turn in 1918, when technology manufacturers began actively lobbying the Society for Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE) – the primary organization for establishing technological standards and directing innovation in the US motion picture industry – to formalize a definition of and therefore expressly give license to the portable projector, one that would be free of the strictures associated with the movie house (Jenkins, 1918).²

At this time, portability in film culture entailed an idea about lightness of weight and sufficient image size. But, for the growing industry, parts of which were invested in securing an expanded circuit for cinema technologies, non-flammability was a primary concern. A non-flammable projection set-up would in theory release projectors and projectionists from some of the heavy regulations imposed on film shows by the insurance industry, municipal fire codes, public safety regulators, and labor unions which collectively shaped the politics of theatrical film culture. The impediments to widespread portability were indeed numerous, but they were easily crystallized in the figure of the simple and brute physicality of the fire-proof projection booth. In 1918 when Alexander Victor, head of the Victor Animatograph Company, implored the SMPE to formalize the conditions in which portability would thrive, he joked: "No user could consistently arrive at the place of entertainment, carrying in one hand a truly portable projector, weighing about 25 pounds; but in the other hand, a fire-proof booth, weighing 550 pounds" (Alexander, 1918). Looking at the history of cinema, then, the concept of portability was irretrievably tethered to flammability, and the desirability of a projection machine that would not cause celluloid to ignite upon use.³

Technicians worked to design cooling systems, improve air ventilation, and reduce bulb heat in projectors to diminish the chances of both igniting and also damaging film. But, those little machines ran hot. And, the smaller they became, the more difficult a cooling system was, as hot air tended to get trapped inside the projector's various compartments. Focus on adapting celluloid to withstand the heat of the

projector was one obvious element of any step toward portability. Standardizing a non-flammable film gauge served to focus the technological innovation of portable projectors as it helped to consolidate the development and creation of a market. While the first official non-flammable gauge was forwarded by Pathe (28 mm – widely used since 1912) the history of portable projection took a notable turn in 1923 when Eastman Kodak introduced a 16 mm system, which soon thereafter became the dominant North American – though not the only – standard, non-flammable, portable gauge.⁴

Concurrent to the standardization of the small 16 mm film, camera, and projector, the ideal of the purpose-built movie theater had taken on grand, fantastical, and even epic proportions. It was only months before Kodak's announcement that Sam Rothafel presented a paper to the SMPE which outlined his vision of the movie theater of the future, transferring the wonders of the screen to the whole of the gargantuan, technologically sophisticated, atmospheric theater – a place, he declared, of saturated color, deep and dynamic feeling, and all-encompassing reflective surfaces where thousands would sit to be both entertained and enlightened (Rothafel, 1922). As picture palaces became the crown jewels of the growing film industry, the calls for a small, adaptable cinema only became more pronounced. Following Rothafel's futuristic, atmospheric theaters, a chorus of other showmen, engineers, and technology manufacturers chimed in on the importance of a simple-to-operate, highly adaptable apparatus, freed from the constraints of the increasingly expensive, professionalized, complicated, and formidable theater.

The emergence of a sustainable “small screen” movement, based on simple operation, takes on its fullest meaning with the majestic palace as backdrop. The “small theater,” the “little theater,” “midget cinema”: each of these terms can be seen throughout industry literature of the period. These terms described specialized theaters with limited seating capacity, as well as motion picture projection beyond the theater proper. Partly this vocabulary was linked to a call for a different kind of motion picture dominance than we usually think of as endemic to this period. In addition to gaining a hold on the world's theatrical film screens, all manner of industry pundit called for motion pictures to take their rightful place, serving an ambitious field of functions then performed by other media: newspapers, magazines, books, photographs, canvas (Smith, 1932). The call for a small cinema, then, was also linked to a kind of resistance to the limits of the entertainment model for celluloid promulgated by Hollywood. So, for instance, the call for portable projectors was also a form of advocacy for small audiences. This includes those invested in cinema as erotica, as art (as erotic art), as news, as personal and familial hobby, as industrial and retail aid, as fair spectacle, and mid-way barker, as well as the small audiences that would constitute the first determined to *study* cinema, which we know emerged only a few years later (Grieveson & Wasson, 2008; Polan, 2007).

What could these little machines do? With the picture palace as backdrop, the portable projector announced a form of cinema that was do-it-yourself and bare-bones by comparison. It fit in a box and could be carried like a brief case, easily

handed off from one person to another. Portable projectors were consistently sold with claims that they were “light in weight” and compatible with people on the move. These small projectors took on names like the “Envoy” or the “Lite-Weight” and “The Escort.” In truth, early 16 mm portable projectors ranged in weight. The first 16 mm Kodascope weighed 20 lbs (Mees, 1923). Bell and Howell’s Filmo weighed 9 lbs (McNabb, 1924). Some projectors were said to be as light as 6 lbs (de Tartas, 1923).⁵ One report indicated that as early as 1926 a French inventor had announced a projector no bigger than a cigarette case which, it was reported, could “project pictures as large and clear as ordinary ones!” (Report of Progress Committee 1926–27, 1927).

In these cases, adding the term “portable” to the term “projector” meant that the theater was not the *de facto* point of articulation or source for moving image display, but rather the individual human body instead. The projector’s capacity to be moved from one location to another, one room to another, was consistently linked in advertising, but also design and engineering discourses, to the scale of the human body and its capacity to bear weight, to move, and to master things. The projector was a machine that could be carried with you, in a suitcase, by a handle; it could be operated by leaning over or into it, staring closely at it to thread the film or turn a focus knob. Or, you could – or so the advertising promised – simply stand nearby as it worked its automatic magic.

This ideal of human mastery of the little motion picture machine served multiple functions, including an industrial, business, and sales force constantly in search of new efficiencies and modes of persuasion. For instance, in the late 1920s, Kodak marketed the Business Kodascope, designed to be carried by the hand of a traveling salesman. The Business Kodascope turned any desk or small table into a site of moving image display. Many projectors marketed during the 1930s and 1940s were designed so that the projector and carrying case were indistinguishable, designed not just to look good in operation but also when not in operation. Some cases were designed in streamlined metal, accentuating efficiency. Others were leather bound to look good sitting on a living-room sidetable or a book shelf. Cases also served additional functional purposes. Some could be removed and turned upside down, transformed into projector stands; others served the effort to mask the mechanical sounds these projectors persistently emitted. Lastly, signaling not only portability but also adaptability, many cases coordinated to match other compatible components such as encased amplifiers, turntables and even film cans.⁶

Portability did lead naturally to the need for adaptability. What good would a portable projector be if the places you were carrying it to could not be turned into adequate sites for projector performance? Multiple lenses and different bulb wattages allowed for use in bigger or smaller rooms, and also allowed for some degree of flexibility in projector placement, closer and further away from the screen, deeper into the audience or further away from it. Stronger or weaker light throw designed for differently sized rooms and audiences also entailed a surprising range of screen sizes, in part building on screen practices linked to earlier optical devices. Screens could be placed on table tops and free-standing tripods or mounted on walls, and

hung from ceilings. They could be more permanent and concealed by tapestries or they could be collapsible, rolled up and stored away discretely in a closet. Some screens could be retracted and housed by furniture. These portable screens ranged in size from less than 12 inches to as large as 12 feet. One Chicago-based company called Da-Lite Screen Company, still in operation, marketed 15 distinct and separate models in the “portable screen family.” They claimed 50 standard sizes as early as 1934 (*Educational Screen*, 1934, p. 89).⁷ Screens were selected according to the room they were to occupy, the power of the projector used, the shape of the seating area likely occupied by the audience, and sometimes by storage requirements. In other words, screen size was determined by the needs of the whole display system, scaled for context and contour.⁸

Wurtzler (2007) shows us that the basic technological innovations of electro-mechanical inscription and amplification were the same across the film, radio, and recorded music industries during the 1920s, linking these industries and forms to a common technical base. The result for cinema, as is well documented, is a rather complex shift from so-called silent to so-called sound cinema. And, by the early 1930s, the majority of movie theaters had converted to recorded film sound and amplification systems suited to large spaces (Crafton, 1997). The close connections among the technologies of cinema and other media of this period are further illustrated by our look at 16 mm projectors. The transition of the portable projector to sound happened concurrently with the better-known theatrical transition. Like the theatrical shift, several systems operated in parallel, including sound-on-disk and sound-on-film systems. Eventually, the sound-on-film system predominated. But, there is another story to tell here that complicates the simple idea of a synchronized sound dynamic, as is often told of film’s technological past.

Aspects of the small projector’s relationship to sound can be productively understood by resort to the machine’s basic incorporation of principles of adaptability. A simple example illustrates this. In 1939, the Victor Animatograph Company announced a new projector called the Victor 40, also known as the “Add-a-Unit.” The machine was designed with modularity at its core; a prospective buyer could build the whole system he or she required piece by piece. By the late 1930s, projectors increasingly came with a series of plugs, dials, and buttons so that a user could select desired accessories, in part to accommodate variations in use. The Victor 40 literalized this multi-use concept. The Victor 40 was sold with a choice of compatible devices such as a range of lenses, but also a series of sound playback and amplification devices: a record player, a radio, a microphone, a sound recording unit, multiple speakers, and an auxiliary amplifying unit. When it comes to the portable projector, sound was a dynamic option. It could be live and amplified in the sense of a simultaneous voice-over. It could be pre-recorded and then played alongside a projected image. It could be recorded for another purpose but repurposed as part of a multimedia film show. It could be recorded as the film played, and then used again at a later date. With the Add-a-Unit the possibilities are numerous and extend far beyond the idea of cinema as a simple playback device for prearranged images and synchronized sound.

The addition of sound components is worth some consideration in the context of the small projector. The Add-a-Unit invited users to create their own soundtrack. It invited them to turn up the sound or to make the image bigger, or conversely to make the image smaller and quieter. From a design perspective, these add-on sound units alleviated some of the challenges of synchronized sound. With all of the possible component parts (microphones, phonographs), mechanical and amplified sound reproduction could operate independently of film speed, bulb brightness, and screen reflectivity, lending a high degree of performativity to what we think of as film projection. Moreover, the user could control the speed of the image, to the point of stopping it, exercising a significant amount of control over all vectors of viewing – size, speed, and volume.

Furthering the idea of adaptability to different performance needs, the Add-a-Unit projector, like numerous prewar units, had the ability to play at different speeds and to be stilled, or stopped, in order to project a single film frame in suspended form. Clearly, the Victor 40 and projectors like it enable a distinct kind of film show, one that at the most simple technical level embraces a relationship to other portable devices, themselves with their own life as distinct and separate commodities, themselves undergoing significant innovation, particularly when it comes to lightweight and portable sound amplification. Lastly, it is worth underscoring a simple poetic fact of the Add-a-Unit. The film projector was sold as a unit that was incomplete unto itself. In other words, automatic, simple operation of a celluloid projection machine was seen as only one small part of an immanent ideal of modular entertainment, illustration, performance, and presentational devices.

So, what larger lessons can be drawn for future scholarship from this brief discussion of the small film projector? First, an obvious question: How significant was the portable or small projector? Was it truly paradigmatic, indicative of a wholly different kind of cinema? Or, was it simply a technological oddity, a stutter toward what we now understand as the age of self-operation, digital fluidity, and consumer control? How can we understand its significance in relation to theatrical and other large-screen display formats for the development of film language, business, and art? Some of these questions can't be answered by resort to numbers. But, here are a few.

We know that the number of movie theaters in the United States gradually increased throughout the 1920s, decreased during the Depression of the 1930s, increased to a peak in 1945, and then rapidly reduced by almost 50% in the 20 years that followed. They numbered 19,096 in 1945 and fell to the lows of the 1960s (9,150 in 1963). So, we have received wisdom that at mid-century cinema declines as a public form and television ascends. And ascend it did. Yet, so too did this other kind of small cinema. Sales of small-gauge portable equipment roughly tripled during the decade of the 1950s (Wolfman, 1960).⁹ To take just one year (1959), the SMPE estimated a total of 4,195,000 portable projectors in use and 11,335 movie theaters in operation. This equates to a per capita projector ratio of 1 : 42. Compare this to the per capita theater ratio of 1 : 15,703. In raw, crude figures, portable projectors outnumbered movie theaters by a factor of 370.

There are many ways in which we could complicate these figures. I have not included drive-ins. Movie theaters were in regular, predictable operation with multiple screenings daily. Portable projectors were likely not. Some viewing contexts would use two small projectors to allow continuous projection onto a single screen, thus indicating that two or more projectors might actually only constitute a single viewing venue. But, the basic and indisputable fact remains: small cinema built on the technological infrastructure of the portable projector must be seen as resolutely ascendant throughout mid-century, complementary to a range of other consumer technologies, and a basic element of an everyday media culture, a culture in which film technologies had a recognizable, commonsense role. The small projector proliferates *along with* television and *despite* the decline of its cognate theatrical forms. The common presence of the projector also gives us a clearer picture of the everyday context in which we might think more fully about the emergence of activist, alternative, and experimental viewing which required a qualitatively different viewing network to thrive. We might also think differently about the pre-text for paracinema and avant gardist expanded cinema in the 1960s,¹⁰ as well as earlier collecting cultures, cinephilia, and the growth of film as a mode of university-level study. Certainly, it is the portable projector which speeds along the institutional uses of cinema in libraries, schools, YMCAs, and in business, providing the technical means for a very particular use of moving pictures, or what has been called the technical grounds for making cinema “useful” to a variety of cultural, industrial, and civic authorities.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, portable and miniaturized cinema was a sizable rebuke to industry largesse and professed permanence. Rather than build spaces around an atmospheric and transcendental idea of cinema, engineers and technology manufacturers advocated for a projector that adapted to extant, usually nondescript, even banal spaces: homes, offices, classrooms (rather than manufacturing spaces that adapted to it). Different from today’s trend toward miniaturization and personalization of portable moving technologies, the projector and its cognate devices were geared toward the small audience, to be distinguished on the one hand from the audience of one and from the mass audience so crucial to how we think of radio, film, and television audiences more generally.

In the context of film culture even before World War II, one can see that portability was a highly spatialized concept. On the one hand it was defined by a negative space: portability meant *not* in movie theaters. But, it was also spatial in the sense that the portable projector and screen were two parts of a technology that were especially sensitive to the size, shape, and illumination of a given space. As Anne Friedberg reminds us in her book *The Virtual Window* (2006), screens are resolutely architectural, transforming our sense of space and our experience of the built environment, harnessing a dialectic of light to enact a particular drama of attention and movement. Extending this basic insight to the portable projector, we can begin to see a whole range of possibilities for thinking about portability and everyday spaces, well beyond movie theaters. We can also begin to break apart the seeming uniformity of cinema. Long before the VCR and the digital, cinema technologies espoused the ability to

arrest motion, to reform spaces, and to either appropriate or utterly disregard the powers of professionalized, industrialized, standardized film performance, challenging steadfast ideas about the coherence of the cinematic apparatus, and augmenting our ideas about technological portability.

The question of how one writes the history of film's public life, its sites of presentation and interfaces with audiences, viewers, customers, and citizens, will continue to benefit from scholars seeking to understand film as part of a family of technologies with deep mutually constitutive relations with other media forms. Breaking apart the long-assumed coherence of "cinema" allows us as scholars to more critically engage with the ways in which cinema itself has long depended on a very partial rendering as magical, seductive, and pure – and heroically resistant to change. But, it also allows us to better understand the many ways that film historians are best served by considering media history, as cognate, parallel, or comparative grist for the historiographic mill. Working with ideas basic to media history (transformations to public and private life, consumerism, and commodity culture; the cultures of automation and gadgetry; contests over cultural authority and control over cultural forms), one can see the way that the sites of film performance have a complex and varied relationship to these dynamics, relationships that we must continue to explore. A history of portable film projectors also writes cinema into media history, a place it rightly occupies.

NOTES

- 1 For touchstones on non-theatrical films, see Streible, Roepke, & Mebold, (2007).
- 2 The SMPE was founded in 1916 with its explicit aim to provide "unselfish service to the Industry." Any person engaged in designing, developing, or manufacturing materials, mechanisms, or processes used in the motion picture or allied arts could become a member and was eligible for invitation. For more on the founding, see Jenkins (1918). Jenkins announced that the setting of standards for the industry was of primary importance, in part to ensure not just a national but an international hold on motion picture technology.
- 3 The Bureau of Fire Prevention of the City of New York (1915) issued a pamphlet stipulating the safety requirements for "Private or Non-Professional Exhibitions of Motion Pictures." These regulations applied to shows that did or did not charge admission, that were educational, religious in nature, and that were held in private homes or clubs. These regulations did not apply to projectors using "slow-burning" film or to "a size or perforations differing from the standard as used in theatrical machines." These guidelines effectively understood "portable" as any showing beyond a movie theater of 35 mm nitrate film, requiring either a permanent fire-proof booth or a portable fire-proof booth. The portable fire-proof booth had to be at least 6 feet high and the floor area at least 20 square feet, say 4 × 5 ft. The guidelines were detailed and elaborate, and entailed clear requirements pertaining to the material used to frame the booth, to cover it (completely in metal or asbestos!), to affix all coverings, and minimal openings for the projector's light and the projectionist's air supply.

- 4 Coincident with the introduction of 16 mm, Pathe introduced an even smaller non-flammable gauge (9.5 mm).
- 5 De Tartas (1923, p. 244) announced a 6 lb camera and projector unit, which also had full capability for still projection without fear of overheating.
- 6 One of these was a new beaded screen fabric “in beautiful leatherette covered, fine wood case with nickel trimmings and solid leather carrying handle” (1934 advertisement, *Educational Screen*, 14, 80).
- 7 See also “a time-saving screen!” Screens promised “amazing sharpness, depth and brilliance to movies and still. Light in weight, the Challenger may be carried easily from room to room.” The Challenger line comes in six sizes, from 30 × 40 inches up to 70 × 94 inches. It is one of a complete line of Da-Lite portable screens (1935 Da-Lite advertisement, *Educational Screen*, 14, 243).
- 8 I have shown elsewhere the significance of the home for early iterations of the 16 mm projector (Wasson, 2009). This idea of 16 mm’s early domestic articulations is also linked to the then relatively recent success of 28 mm. Both Kodak and Victor Animatograph initially described 16 mm as precisely a solution to the demand for home use. See, for instance, Victor (1923). At this same meeting wherein 16 mm is introduced, Willard B. Cook of Pathe also delivered a paper on the 28 mm Pathescope projector. There was no real sense at this moment that 16 mm would overtake or replace 28 mm. See Cook (1923).
- 9 All numbers are from the US Department of Commerce, reprinted in Wolfman (1960). In 1958 the Department of Commerce calculated that the value of 8 mm and 16 mm equipment shipped in the United States totaled \$132,116,000, whereas 35 mm equipment was pegged at \$15,164,000, a differential of 8.
- 10 For a poetic and impassioned discussion of these expanded practices, see Eros (2005).

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Sound Histories

Communication, Technology, Media, and Fidelity

Eric W. Rothenbuhler

ABSTRACT

The interdisciplinary study of sound and sound technologies received a burst of new attention in the 1990s, much of it historical inquiry. Given the ubiquity of sound in human experience and the centrality of audio to modern media, this promised an intriguing horizontal slice across fields and disciplines of study. The literature has evolved, though, toward a set of relatively distinct areas of study, including film sound, recording and music history, radio history, and telephone studies. Among these, studies of the social shaping of sound technologies into communication media, institutional practices, and industries continue in the interdisciplinary vein. This issue of social shaping is crucial for communication scholars and media historians in particular, who need an analytic vocabulary for distinguishing and examining the relations among the potentials of technologies and their actual uses and outcomes as media of communication. The issue of fidelity is central to professional and public discourses of audio, and has become a point of critique for scholars. Understood as the accuracy or truth of a reproduction compared to its original, fidelity would appear to be impossible in the current practices of sound media industries. It is proposed here that its enduring utility can be explained by seeing reproduction as a problem of communication rather than engineering or logic.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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The study of sound and sound technologies received a burst of new attention in the 1990s from scholars otherwise primarily associated with art, history, literature, media, music, or technology studies (e.g., Altman, 1992; Chanan, 1995; Kahn & Whitehead, 1992; Keightley, 1996; Kenney, 1999; Millard, 1995; Morris, 1997; O'Connell, 1992; Rothenbuhler & Peters, 1997; Siefert, 1994, 1995; Thompson, 1995; Weiss, 1995, 1996). Practicing professionals (e.g., Ondaatje, 2004) and trade book authors also made notable contributions (e.g., Eisenberg, 1987; Lanza, 1994; Schafer, 1994), as items from the engineering literature reached a broader readership as well (e.g., Pohlmann, 2005; Strawn, 1985; White, 1991). "Sound studies" has continued as a strikingly interdisciplinary and heterogeneous topic area, within which each scholar tends to forge his or her own approach.

A history of sound and sound technology is necessarily constructed of disparate elements, and not only because it is not a standard genre of professional history. All histories of media are divergent, as Schudson (1991) pointed out, because the same medium is used in different contexts in divergent ways with divergent outcomes. Beyond that, sound history is organized by reference to a modality of human experience, rather than a medium of communication, cultural form, or institution. So while radio history, film history, and television history are recognized categories of scholarly work, sound history could include attention to all three and to music and the telephone as well. Indeed, a history of sound might consider modes of communication, media of communication, cultural forms, and institutions ranging from public speech to sexual intimacy, the telephone to the radio, ham radio to network radio dramas to formatted music radio to satellite radio, film sound to Internet sound, the recorded music industry, the performance music industry, and the music education industry. The subtopic of audio recording and playback alone might include everything from the phonograph to the digital studio, the 78 to the mp3, the luxury goods of high fidelity to the ring tone, and popular music to audio books to business dictation. Even confining ourselves to one national culture, attention would be drawn everywhere and it might take a book-length treatment just to give brief mention of every possibility.

So sound history is necessarily a selective and heterogeneous collection, defined by arbitrary boundaries and populated by arguable choices; yet scholars must make some reasoned way through it. This discussion will focus on conceptual orientations and methods for making those choices. Discussion starts with the need to define a field of concern and prioritize within it. This is a problem for any student of sound, though here the emphasis is the study of sound technologies as media of communication and culture. The second issue is to establish points of reference for analyzing the social construction of technology, and here there are special problems and solutions for the student of media. The third issue is a potential topic of interest whenever sound technologies are discussed, but becomes especially important and vexing for students of communication. That issue is fidelity.

Fields of Concern

Anyone approaching the study of sound and sound technologies must make choices of orientation, emphasis, and boundaries of concern in two dimensions. In addition

to the usual problems of periodization in historical work are choices of topic and focus within the breadth and heterogeneity of uses, roles, and forms of sound and sound media in communication and culture. These two dimensions are not independent, of course, and we will show how they interact in examples below.

Sound studies, as a topical specialization of its own, invites a kind of horizontal slice across what are otherwise seen as disparate fields of study, creating a new field of concern that is both broader and more specialized than those other fields from which it draws. Some influential edited books from the 1990s, for example, included essays on such otherwise heterogeneous topics as network radio dramas, the microphone, experimental radio, the telephone, music, the phonograph, television sound, and more (e.g., Altman, 1992; Kahn & Whitehead, 1992; Morris, 1997; Weiss, 1996). This approach has not been sustained, though, because no individual scholar can maintain expertise in such a range of phenomena. Individual projects must have a topical point of emphasis within that territory; individual scholars, too, will develop their specializations. The wide interdisciplinary promise of sound studies, then, has tended to result in several different versions of sound studies as a specialty within its various home disciplines. Rather than scholars who study sound in all media, we have film scholars who specialize on sound, music scholars who specialize on sound, those who study the telephone but pay little attention to other media, and so on. The partial exception is a handful of scholars who organize their work by reference to the technologies of sound, whose work then crosses media as related technologies are applied in different fields.

One common choice is to emphasize recording and music, giving little or no attention to radio, sound in film or television, the telephone, or other media. For example, Chanan (1995), Day (2000), Katz (2004), Millard (1995), and Morton (2004) examine the history of recording technologies as an influence on musical history. Within that emphasis there is also room, of course, to examine the influence of recording and playback technologies on the development of audiences, industries, markets, and in turn, their influences back on musical culture and on larger social and cultural trends, as Millard (1995) and others show. Kenney (1999) puts his emphasis there, focusing on recording and its roles in American life, more than its influence on music as such. This is a rich literature; communication and media scholars would profit from giving it more attention.

The changes wrought in musical culture by the advent and growth of recording technology and the recording industry provide valuable case studies of the historical impact of communication media. This is a type of media effect seldom considered in the media and communication literature but well documented elsewhere. Space limits preclude more than a few quick examples. When music is recorded and recordings reproduced and distributed, music enters the social world as a thing rather than a process, an object rather than an event. That difference was the central concern of Eisenberg's (1987) influential book and ontological questions have continued throughout the literature (e.g., Rothenbuhler & Peters, 1997; Sterne, 2003). Philosophical concerns aside, the record travels the world, finds its audience, and registers its social effects differently than does the musical performance. Record collecting and listening

at home, for example, became the dominant activities of music lovers in the twentieth century, and this is a very different mode of musical engagement than is attending musical performances. With this change in the communicative structure of the music audience experience came a series of cultural implications and consequences, ranging from shifts in musical performance style to the development of musical celebrities and new markets for manufactured goods (Suisman, 2009). Attention to the social consequences of the physical properties of the medium has proved useful in the work of multiple authors. Katz (2004), for example, builds a convincing case that the way in which the recording medium renders the performer and audience invisible to each other gave impetus to the shift in classical violin technique between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from an emphasis on the bow and a steady tone to an emphasis on the left hand and vibrato as the key to artistic expression.

It is widely accepted in the literature that the influence on blues music of recording and the record business from the 1920s on was to narrow the range of stylistic variation, emphasizing a few standard song forms and narrowing the range of lyrical themes. Any of the performers from the 1920s and 1930s had a broader range of styles in their performance repertoire than in their recorded, several of them told stories of record producers wanting only certain kinds of songs, and the variation of performance styles of blues music on record narrows across those same and subsequent years (Calt, 1994; Hamilton, 2008; Rothenbuhler, 2007; Wardlow, 1998). By contrast, over those same years it can be shown that the evolution of stylistic change in jazz music increased in both speed and range (Kennedy, 1994). How can both be explained as “effects” of recording?

Here we have an example of what a statistician or logician might call a contingent effect, what Pool (1977) called a dual effect in regard to the social impact of the telephone, or what Mumford (1934) pointed out about communication technologies in general, that they multiply other tendencies. Pool pointed out that the telephone was a great power, changing our relations to space and time, but that power and its consequences were shaped by other social purposes. As a market for blues records grew it was shaped by ideas of authenticity and tradition, so the genre narrowed and hardened; only certain musical forms were accepted as authentically representing the tradition. On the other hand, jazz players and audiences alike value innovation and change, so as records allowed players to study each other’s work and audiences to grow familiar with new styles more quickly, the pace and breadth of change accelerated.

These are only a few examples of a whole literature of evidence of the social and cultural consequences of recorded music and the recording industry. For all the years of scholarship devoted to media effects, nearly no one in the communication literature has paid attention to these already documented cases.

Alongside recorded music history, another common topical orientation within the sound studies territory is film sound, sometimes with additional attention to television sound. Historical questions around “the coming of sound” have been a major issue in film studies, as have more general concerns with the role of sound in what

is conventionally defined as a visual medium (Altman, 1992; Bandy, 1989; Gomery, 2005; Lastra, 2000). Sound has come to be recognized as a specialist area within film studies, and the resulting literature defies brief review. The historical questions include the invention and development of sound on film technologies and other systems for sync-sound; competition between technologies and businesses of sound; the conversion to sound film in technology, business, and culture; the forms of sound accompaniment for silent films; and the development of technical and artistic conventions for sound film. Film scholars have also examined the roles of diegetic and non-diegetic sound and music, and the relations of dialogue, sound, and music in film practice, artistic expression, and audience experience. Of course, film scholars tend to give less attention to recording, radio, and the telephone. So, like the focus on recorded music, this choice of topical emphasis produces one type of sound studies within the wide, horizontal sweep of multi-topic, cross-disciplinary possibilities.

The tendency to focus on one medium rather than the broad sweep of sound phenomena is greatest in regard to radio. Radio history, of course, has a huge literature of its own. There is relatively little attention in that literature, though, to radio's specific status as a sound medium. Most historical work has focused on the institutions of radio, addressing issues of business, industry, markets, law, policy, and politics. Radio programming provides another focus for historical work, but here too, until the 1990s, little of the work addressed the specific contingencies and processes of audio art and expression or of the audio listening experience of the audience.

Important exceptions to these characterizations of the radio history literature began to appear in the 1990s. Douglas's (1999) *Listening In* gave systematic attention to the listening experience of audience members within a broad overview of twentieth-century US radio history. By necessity this was speculative and theoretical work, for the audience experience leaves little in the way of historical evidence. Scannell (1996) used the archival materials of the BBC and a phenomenological theoretical frame to examine how audio events were constructed in order to function as communication for the dispersed audiences of radio broadcast. This innovative work was based in part on the close analysis of strips of broadcast talk (cf. Scannell, 1991) – something on which the sociologist Erving Goffman (1981) had also focused. Talk is a form of sound for which we can fairly confidently say there are communicative purposes and implications. McCracken (1999) provides an example of close analysis of the extra-linguistic elements of radio sound for their communicative and cultural implications. She and others have shown how the singing style of crooning, produced by microphone technique, yielded a different listening audience experience, that supported a different sense of relationship with the performer, and helped produce different kinds of celebrity. Of course, like Douglas's *Listening In*, this case too depends on inference where evidence does not exist. We know what crooning sounds like and we know it was associated with the rise of a new kind of star who received new forms of audience attention. If that intimate, close-miked sound

produced feelings of close relationship with its distant and dispersed audience members, that would explain the audience behavior and connect the sound to the resulting behaviors through the communicative experience.

Radio, film, television, recorded music – each has its own literature within which sound can be a focus; the telephone too has its own literature, though it is a small one and the topic deserves more attention. The telephone companies appear in media histories as dominant players in the early research on electrical sound technologies and their uses, the development of industries, and attendant legal issues. Standard histories of broadcasting, for example, discuss the telephone companies in early chapters, and then move on to other concerns. Western Electric, for example, is treated as an important engineering firm, but once the inventions have been patented and implemented, the company drops out of the story.

More recent work focusing on the development of sound technologies as such have treated the telephone companies as having longer range, more subtle consequences than that. Part of Sterne's (2003) argument, for example, could be simplified this way. When tubes and amplifiers designed to boost voice signals in long-distance telephone wires became, or at least influenced, the standard model amplifier for radio, cinema, and electrical recording, a solution for a problem of communication in one realm became an unnoticed influence on culture in other realms. Telephone design was shaped by the goal of voice audibility and the midrange focus of the circuits they designed served that purpose. Since the huge capital of the telephone companies allowed them to dominate technological research, later companies and other media were built on this foundation, and radio and music recording of the 1920s and 1930s, for example, both ended up with the same midrange emphasis of the telephone circuits. What is even more interesting, to the extent it can be shown to have happened, is when the sound the technology affords feeds into the culture and becomes a value standard as well. This kind of attention to the deeper historical influences of the telephone technology and system has become more common in sound technology studies.

The social uses of the telephone as a sound medium, though, tend not to receive much attention in literature on recording, radio, and film. These latter became mass media and producers of public culture while the telephone became a point-to-point system for talk. But the telephone system could have developed in a different way – there were experiments with using it to deliver music to the home, for example, and telephone lines were used to deliver Muzak services and radio programming as well – and studies of its social development have proved quite rich. Pool (1977, 1983) helped bring the paucity of research on the telephone to the attention of others interested in technology, communication, and social change. Fischer (1992) provided a social history of the telephone, couching his work as a study of the role of a communication technology in the development of modern societies. Rakow (1992) illustrates another approach to the social study of the telephone, examining gender roles and networks in the processes of community life. Such issues of technology-enabled communication networks and social relations are at the heart of much recent

work on the cell telephone (e.g., Ito, Okabe, & Matsuda, 2005; Wallis, in press). Ling's (2008) work in particular makes a fascinating case for the reshaping of social orders and processes via the ubiquitous use of mobile telephones, systems that allow portable personal networks rather than geographical ones, shifting again our relations to time and space.

Music recording, film and television sound, radio history, and the telephone provide media-centric foci for sound studies. Another approach grows out of interest in communication technologies as such. Interest in sound technologies can derive from theories of the social consequences of differences among media as forms of technology. Innis (1951, 1972) and McLuhan (1964) are well-known sources here; Adorno (2002) and others too have provided a range of ideas about such differences. Those who emphasize the way that recording makes music a thing, discussed above, are working with a similar logic, focusing on the consequences of the technology as such. Such approaches can be criticized for treating the technical form as too autonomous an object, too independent a force in history; the most important alternative is to analyze the development of technology as itself a product of social activity, shaped by the work of people and institutions with their own purposes and interests. Williams's (1974) *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* is an oft-cited source for this point, while the field of science and technology studies is also widely influential (e.g., Bijker, Hughes, & Pinch, 1987; MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999).

The science and technology studies approach emphasizes the social dynamics of invention, development, and use of technologies in general, inviting scholars to see one medium as comparable to others in this regard, and all media as comparable to any other technology. That comparative interest produces a reshuffling of the categories conventional to media studies, as in studies of the influence of telephone technology on radio, recording, and film sound (discussed above), in Gitelman's (1999) study of the phonograph as a writing machine, or Sterne's (2003) argument for the influence of the nineteenth-century stethoscope on twentieth-century ideals of fidelity.

Any one study can only do so much and attention to sound media as technologies widely comparable to other technologies has tended to reduce attention to the specifics of each medium and to its cultural and communicative content, uses, and consequences – and vice versa. The scholarship devoted to the history of music recording, like that devoted to radio history, holds many lessons for the interested reader, but the focus on a chosen medium and cultural content that produces those results, reduces the opportunity to view the medium in broader, comparative perspective. Such work can be informed by science and technology studies, though. Wurtzler (2007) began his work with a media-centric focus on the development of sound film. Following the social development of the technology, though, led him to broader study of electrical sound media, examining the commonalities and differences as the same technologies were deployed for different purposes in the different media and institutions of radio, records, and film.

Wurtzler's (2007) book also provides a good example of how choices about topical focus and analytic emphasis interact with issues of periodization. If a project on "the

coming of sound” to the cinema is centered on the sound-on-film technology that eventually prevailed, then the nineteenth-century development of the phonograph may be irrelevant – but perhaps not if the work examines the sound-on-disk systems that were competing alternatives. Similarly, if the telephone is considered a fundamentally different medium with a different history, then the years of its development and adoption can be set aside as outside the period of concern for the study of cinema sound. But as Wurtzler found, the technology and social practices of audio, and even the controlling institutional structures, shared much across the different media of recording, radio, and film – and each made extensive use of technologies originally developed for the telephone. In that case, a history of film sound can quickly turn into a history of all forms of sound technology, and become too sprawling a work for author or reader alike. Wurtzler’s decision was to distinguish the electrical sound technologies from the acoustic ones. This allowed him to devote most of his attention to the 1920s and 1930s when the use of microphones, sound studios, amplifiers, and speakers defined major commonalities across recording, radio, and film. Similarly Millard (1995) characterizes public communication, culture, and entertainment in the 1930s and 1940s as dominated by “empires of sound.” He emphasizes that not only the technologies of sound were shared across media and industries, but also corporate ownership and everything from engineers and producers to major stars and hit products moved across the media and markets of radio, records, and film. Both examples show how examination of the media and institutions can identify a network of relations and lead to a periodization unique to the study of sound media; boundaries can be drawn in historical chronology in quite different places for the purposes of explicating different topics.

Sterne (2003) takes a very different cut at history than does Wurtzler, or most other historians of sound media. His argument is that the history of the development of new listening practices is essential to understanding the history of sound technologies and their uses. Tracing out that history he finds key points of commonality and an important series of precedents from the microphone–amplifier–speaker based systems of the 1920s and later, back through the telephone, the acoustic phonograph, and various predecessors right on to the stethoscope. Each technology required, and so presumed as he emphasizes, the development of a technique of listening, and those techniques of listening have more in common than we usually think the technologies do. So his different observations of the same historical materials yielded a different logic for identifying and prioritizing the connections among events in the historical record (or vice versa), thus a different choice of topical and analytic focus, which required in turn a different periodization.

The connection of topical and analytic focus with periodization is obvious enough in the case of any individual study, as illustrated by these examples. For the field as a whole, though, it means that many books that appear to address the same or similar topics cover quite different topics and periods. More than an interdisciplinary field of sound studies, it appears we are developing several different quasi-disciplinary versions of sound studies.

Points of Reference: Analytic Terms for Socio-Technical Systems

A major contribution of the science and technology studies literature is the idea that the history of technology is not only about hardware but must also be a history of technique, social uses, discourse, and institutions. We would be better off to think of the study of socio-technical systems than of technologies as such, and this is especially important for the study of communication and media. While the technology as such may be necessary to communication and interesting to study, our primary disciplinary focus must be communicative forms and processes, media institutions, and the social and cultural implications of the communicative uses of the technology. These are socio-technical systems and in the case of communication technologies, the dynamic relation of technology, technique, and social outcomes is especially complicated.

The history of the telephone is an illustrative case. The technology could not achieve widespread adoption until the development of new social norms for its use. From the engineering point of view the telephone was a device for transmitting voice signals over a switched network. From the social point of view, it was a kind of machine in the parlor; it rang alarmingly and without polite warning; it thrust disembodied and uninvited voices into the home, and intimately into the ear; it paid no regard to age, sex, or class distinctions. It was a device for communication that did not follow any of the existing rules and expectations for communication and allowed forms of communication no one had asked for or thought they needed. The development of technique for the telephone, such as norms for greeting, leaving, and turn taking without eye contact, expectations for the proper conduct of business and personal relations by telephone – these were developments of new forms and processes of communication, necessary to, but independent of, any changes in the physical technology. Similar processes of learning how to use new communication technologies, when, where, and for what – including the technique of capitalizing on the technology and its uses, building industries to serve them – have been necessary to the development of each communication medium. What we see here is that technique transforms technologies with communicative capacities into communication media.

One conceptual frame designed to handle these issues is the “social shaping of technology” (Bijker, Hughes, & Pinch, 1987; MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). These scholars emphasize the process by which technologies are fitted into social orders and processes. The technical capacities of a device define a range of possibilities, within which social groups make choices, pursue some options and ignore others, are troubled by some limitations and never notice others. The physical properties of the device are “affordances” and the enacted technology of any given group can be a rather different thing. There can be a sort of redesigning of the technology in uses shaped by the values and interests of the group. This process can be seen in the social adoption of all technologies, from the steel-tipped plow to the cell phone.

While no technology can succeed as a communication medium without uses that individuals find compelling and without fitting into the communicative norms and relations of everyday life, neither have any of our communication industries resulted from accidental evolutionary processes. Regarding television, as Williams (1974) argued, we cannot understand the shape it eventually took nor its consequences for society without understanding that it was developed by businesses for business of a certain broadcasting kind. Television did have to find a normatively settled place in the US living room and network of family relations, and that process was consciously aided by the industry that profited from it too (Spigel, 1992). Similarly the efforts of the telephone companies to promulgate the communicative norms that would make their device acceptable in the home are well documented (Fischer, 1992). In studies of religious communities' adaptations of new communicative technologies, Campbell (2010) shows how other institutions can have their own ongoing influence, producing kosher cell phones and Islamic web portals for example.

Analogous to the processes of social shaping for the telephone, many possible uses of the phonograph were imagined and tried in the decades before the Victor company developed the business plan and marketing concept to build an industry of recorded music for playback in the home (Siefert, 1994, 1995; Suisman, 2009; Thompson, 1995). Today we see that industry being reshaped not by a new technology directly, but by new social uses of the technologies of digital compression, file sharing, the Internet, and portable digital music players. Here we see that the range of affordances of technologies for recorded music can have social results at odds with the industry-preferred ones.

The range of communicative possibilities for any given technology is such that historical developments of a medium and its social uses can be independent of the underlying technology. The US radio industry, in competition with television in the 1950s and adapting to the growth of car radios and transistor radios, went through a transformation of its programming, advertising strategies, and audience appeals, resulting in a very different audience composition, listening experience, and cultural role. Radio came to fit into US life in a different way, serving different cultural processes and communicative interests (Rothenbuhler & McCourt, 2002). The radio of local DJs and popular music hit-lines in the early 1960s was a very different medium from that of network serial dramas of the 1930s and 1940s. But the underlying technology of transmission and reception had not changed a bit.

These historical processes are interesting and worthwhile dynamics for any student of communication. They also present a set of challenges to anyone studying the history of sound technologies as media of communication and culture. Any such studies need an analytic system for sorting these complications, or run the risk of confusion. Wurtzler (2007), for example, distinguishes between a

Technological *apparatus* (an organized system of applied scientific principles and hardware) and the various technological *applications* through which it is deployed (in commodity forms that address real, perceived, or created consumer needs). While the synchronous-sound film, the radio, and the phonograph are quite distinct media – that is, they involved specific

technological *applications* – in terms of sound technology each is the selective arrangement of the same basic apparatus. (Wurtzler, 2007, p. 3, original emphasis)

Lastra (2000) distinguishes among devices, discourse, practices, and institutions. Sterne (2003) devotes a chapter to the processes by which “technologies [were] articulated to institutions and practices to be made media” (p. 25). Alternatives are clearly available and no claim will be made here about the right set of terms. The important point is that scholars working on sound technology need to give attention to selecting and using an analytic vocabulary that distinguishes phenomena and points of reference in the complex socio-technical systems of communication media, for the analysis of the process by which technologies with communicative capacities are developed into communication media.

It is worthwhile to look at some examples of tight fit between choices of analytic vocabulary and larger theoretical purposes. The attention Sterne (2003) devotes to the historical activities by which already existing institutions – businesses, industries, and capital interests – shaped technologies into media becomes a platform for his critique of the discourse about those media. Arguments about the cultural value of music in the home or the fidelity of phonograph playback, for example, whether in the Victor company’s advertisements or in magazine editorial copy, in his view disguised profit interests behind an attractive but impossible theory of communication. Wurtzler’s (2007) terms, apparatus and application, are well chosen for his interest in “sound technology as a transmedia phenomenon” (p. 9) and draw attention to his argument that we may have given too much attention to the social shaping and not enough to the material realities of devices as such.

To look at a different sort of example, Katz (2004) has nearly no interest in the social process of shaping a medium. His concern is with the consequences of recording technologies for musical culture, which only begin to be registered *after* recording technology is used as a medium of musical culture. While such authors as Lastra, Sterne, and Wurtzler ask how technologies came to be used the way they are, and how a medium came to be such as it is, Katz asks what difference it makes for the culture that the medium is so used. He needs an elaborate vocabulary to handle the differences of recorded and performed music and the consequences of recorded music cultures and industries, but not so much for distinguishing technology, medium, and institution. On the other hand, readers of Katz could well profit from having such distinctions in mind. For while much of his discussion is couched in terms of the effects of technology, we can recognize that in our terms he is discussing the cultural consequences of media.

Fidelity

The issue of fidelity in sound media could appear to be a concern for engineers primarily, and relatively unimportant socially or culturally. If equipment is designed

and operated to work accurately, to produce outputs that sound like their inputs, or otherwise as they were intended to sound, then it is said to have fidelity. That could be more or less the end of the story. Students of communication and culture, however, cannot fail to notice the prominent presence of “fidelity” in the discourse of audio – among professionals, in advertising and magazine articles, among consumers and hobbyists. If the phenomenon were so simple, why would it need to be talked about so much?

Indeed, studies have documented a great variety of social uses and implications of discourses of fidelity: sales strategies and advertising (Thompson, 1995), an ideological construction (Sterne, 2003), a means of expressing gender codes (Keightley, 1996, 2003), class position and aspirations (Keightley, 2004, 2008), an example of the social construction of technology and the establishment and defense of an interpretive community (Downes, 2010; O’Connell, 1992; Perlman, 2004), and the development of conventions of film sound, used by producers and audiences alike (Lastra, 2000; Wurtzler, 2007).

As another example of unintended and mostly unrecognized social and cultural implications, there is an argument to be made that the pursuit of high fidelity equipment for the home playback of recorded music in the 1950s through the 1970s nurtured also the growing social importance of recorded music as popular culture and leisure activity (Anderson, 2006; Keightley, 1996; Millard, 1995; O’Connell, 1992). The pursuit of portability, convenience, and lower cost in audio in the last couple of decades operationalized different values and has promoted other uses of music (Sterne, 2006a, 2006b). That shift of orientation is also at least correlated if not more strongly associated with declining public interest and the shifting cultural status of recorded music (Rothenbuhler, *in press*).

So fidelity is not only a matter for engineers, not just a question of accuracy in signal recording and transmission, but has larger and more remote cultural implications of a potentially diverse range, but how to analyze it? We gain traction on the problem by focusing on audio as a communication phenomenon: sound made and presented by one to another, for the other, sound intended to be heard as something. I will elaborate on this below, but first let’s examine what appears to be the simplest possible approach to fidelity in communication, and see how quickly it gets complicated, how quickly the reasons for the critique of fidelity emerge.

As a first approach we can conceive of the social importance of fidelity as primarily a question of accuracy, a social or cultural reflection of the same concerns the engineers have for the equipment. The social importance of fidelity in a business telephone call, for example, is pretty well exhausted by issues of intelligibility and accuracy. In most social settings and for most cultural uses this aspect of fidelity is necessary but it tends to fall into the taken-for-granted background of social life. Fidelity becomes more loaded and more fraught in social life, and more interesting to scholars, when it is about something more than “can you hear me now?” – to quote the slogan of a US cell phone advertisement. But even the simple case is more complicated than it appears.

The business telephone call appears amenable to a simple model of fidelity because it is a transmission system with obvious inputs and outputs, as well as, we imagine, relatively unambiguous intentions and responses. The telephone is not really a high fidelity system, but a good-enough fidelity system. Good enough on average, that is, as most anyone can attest, after misidentifying the sound of a friend's voice or trying to conduct a difficult conversation over a poor connection. So lower fidelity can interfere with social purposes and higher fidelity is not always easily set aside as a matter of mere aesthetics.

In regard to the social uses of most recording and many transmission situations, even the idea of an input or original to which an output, reproduction, or response could be compared is open to question. Since the use of multi-track tape and post-performance editing and mixing became widespread in the 1960s, popular music recordings have been constructed artifacts of musical sound rather than records of a musical performance. They are built up layer on layer for a finished product that can be received as if it were a performance, but they are not copies of the sound of a performance. One of Sterne's (2003, 2006b) primary themes is that what we see here is not just that the recording is not a copy of a performance, but that the performance is *for* the recording. It has no independent status, which introduces logical problems for a test of fidelity (truth or knowledge) that depends on comparing a result with that original. The same is true, we can add, of apparently simpler transmission situations like the way we listen to the radio signal of the DJ talking into a microphone and playing records, or for that matter, the person talking on the telephone: There again we see that there is no original that is independent of our social uses of the medium. So the question of fidelity cannot be quite so simple as testing the accuracy of the system by comparing independent inputs and outputs, autonomous originals and reproductions.

The reception end is complicated too, because of the phenomenon Altman (1992) called the material heterogeneity of sound. Sound, being a physical phenomenon of vibrations in objects and air, is always affected by the position and space of performance, the position and space of recording, the position and space of playback, and the position and space of hearing. The sound of an oboe will be different if it is played in a large or small room, a resonant or dry room, and played in one or another end, the middle, or a corner of any of those rooms. Instruments that make more harmonically complex sounds, like a piano, will be more affected. Different recorded sounds will result from using different microphones or placing them differently or in any of those different spaces. Similarly, a recording played back through equipment that is positioned in different ways or in different rooms will sound different – even leaving out the phenomenon we all know, that the same recording can sound startlingly different on different home stereos, or an office computer, or different headphones or portable players.

Finally, the placement of the listening audience member in that room matters as well, with different sound resulting from sitting in the middle, against a wall, near a corner, etc., as well as sitting in resonant or absorptive, large or small rooms. The

result is that no two sounds are the same; they are, in Altman's terms, materially heterogeneous. In sum, reproduction and reception is always a singular event, each case unique, and so "the" fidelity of any given system depends on the moment of its use and the attention of its users.

These observations give rise to a prominent critique of fidelity. If recorded music, film sound, radio programs, and so on are not copies of an original, but unique, constructed artifacts, and then not independent of the recording, transmission, reproduction, and response, but tied to them in a single social system, and on top of that each moment of reproduction and reception is its own unique event as well, then how does "fidelity" apply? To what "original" can we compare which instance of reproduction? And if fidelity in the sense we appear to use the word is not possible, maybe not even logical, what does it mean that it continues to enjoy such prominent use? Why is fidelity still used to organize professional work, to sell products, in consumer literature, and by audience members? This line of thinking leads to three positions in the literature, presented as alternatives though not entirely mutually exclusive.

One position is a critique of fidelity as an ideological construction; it is an impossible concept and misapplied to media. It serves to distract audiences from the actual profit and power relations of the consumer goods and culture industries through the invocation of an attractive but false theory of communication. This is Sterne's (2003) well-known critique and it is widely accepted in the literature. While the historical record of the industrial exploitation of the concept of fidelity is clear, and deserving of critique, this position has the classic weakness of ideological explanations. Other than an abstract reference to power and distraction, it offers no explanation for how the false concept endures.

A second position views fidelity as a social construction and focuses analysis on how it is used in different settings for varying social purposes. Lastra (2000) and Wurtzler (2007), for example, focus on professional debates among film sound engineers and show how recording practitioners constructed a professional practice of sonic manipulation for producing recordings with sound that (a) counts as fidelity in professional circles, and (b) follows conventions that audiences can decode. Doyle (2005), Gracyk (1996), and others have shown similar processes at work in record production.

Another use of the social constructionist approach examines fidelity in what we might call domestic practice. Keightley (1996, 2003, 2004, 2008) has provided a series of studies documenting the gender and class coding of household technologies, the television versus the hi-fi, for example, and the use of hi-fi to claim domestic space for masculine pursuits. Keightley is not alone in focusing on hi-fi hobbyists and he and other scholars (Downes, 2010; O'Connell, 1992; Perlman, 2004) have shown two interconnected processes among these audio fans. One is the social construction of technology, by which a social group adapts, redeploys, or even redevelops a technology to its own uses and values. Some CD players, for example, are received as and used for higher fidelity than others, thus requiring that they be deployed and used

differently. The related process is the development and defense of a discourse community or interpretive community, so that a network of high fidelity enthusiasts, in touch with each other through magazines, stores, social events, and the Internet, can share a vocabulary, set of interpretations, values, even epistemologies and knowledge claims. These analyses of the social construction of fidelity provide explanations for its endurance, by showing its social utility to those who engage in the discourse.

Most of these studies of the social construction of fidelity still arise, like the ideological critique, from a hermeneutics of suspicion and retain the implications that fidelity, because constructed, is false and its uses likely to be invidious. Both may be true in any given situation, but they do not have the logical foundation to stand as *a priori* truths; as implicit presumptions they too often steer our analyses toward the foregone critique. One cannot help noticing, for example, that while fans of high fidelity equipment and recordings offer a fascinating case study, the literature on them is almost hostile. Where studies of fans in most other domains are entirely accepting, even celebrating their creative engagements with media and culture, audiophiles seem to inspire dismissal and ridicule from academics.

In order to solve these problems I have advocated a third position on fidelity which accepts the analyses of the social construction of fidelity, and Sterne's critique of the industrial exploitation of the concept, but not the implication that fidelity is therefore false and wrong. This position takes fidelity as a social reality, recognizing the reality of socially constructed phenomena (Peters & Rothenbuhler, 1989). Evidence that a concept is socially constructed is not evidence that it is false, ideological, or somehow less true than other concepts that are purportedly not also socially constructed – indeed, all concepts are, including those used in the critique. The analyst's job is to step inside the logical circle and understand the world constructed there, as it is there. This approach explains the widespread use of the concept by its usefulness, seeing fidelity as a term for organizing and evaluating communication.

Indeed, to the extent there is a culture of audio, hence a culturing of audio, fidelity is a key term. Reference to the ideal of fidelity is one of the ways that some sounds are distinguished from others, signal from noise, and hence registered *as* audio. Audio, as a selection from the world of sound, is defined in relation to a listener; it is sound that operates as a sign of something for someone. In this sense audio is *for* the listener, hence a phenomenon of communication and never simply a matter of physics or engineering. Fidelity, as part of the culture of audio, is a key term for evaluating the relations implied by listening to something in order to connect communicatively with another experience recorded or transmitted elsewhere.

In this view the fact that the recording is a constructed artifact for an audience and not a record of a performance is not only not a problem, it is the key to the solution. For Sterne and others, recognizing the record as a constructed artifact shows that there is no original and thus "fidelity" to an original is a logical impossibility; anyone, then, who claims fidelity either does not understand it or is up to mischief. For the communication perspective advocated here, recognizing that the record is a constructed artifact designed to be played, shows it to be a communicative

performance, for an audience. As Hymes (1975) defined the breakthrough into performance, the acceptance of responsibility for the display of communicative competence, all that Sterne's critique of "no original" does is displace the original and reassign the responsibility, from the artifact to the communicator.

Conclusion

By way of brief conclusion let me restate a short series of points given passing mention above.

Whether sound studies is or should be a singular field remains an open question (Hilmes, 2005). On the basis of this review it would appear to be trending away from that possibility, from a wide-open interdisciplinary territory to geography marked off by several different quasi-disciplinary fields. Sound studies not only have different topical orientations, they are conducted somewhat differently, too, by those who focus on film, music, radio, telephone, or technology as such. Too much missing is communication as such.

Our disciplinary focus should be communication and the sound studies literature would benefit from more sustained attention to audio technologies as communication media. A few of the questions that could follow have already come up here. We need to examine the processes by which technologies *become* media; these are rich, complex, worthy of study in their own right, and illuminating to other problems of communication and cultural theory. Focusing on technologies in use *as* media provides an analytic lever as well as a disciplinary anchor. The question of fidelity, for example, is rendered answerable by shifting to a communication-centered analysis. In studying the *consequences* of sound technologies in use as media communication scholars may make important contributions to the sound studies literature and bring rich, new materials into the study of media effects in the communication literature as well. These are only a few important issues in what remains an intellectual territory rich in possibilities.

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Television

Laurie Ouellette

ABSTRACT

This chapter traces the history of television in the United States in relation to broader societal conditions and changes. Rejecting the assumption that technological advances are inevitable or necessarily progressive, it situates evolving “stages” of television as complex responses to the shifting demands and contradictions of advanced liberal capitalist democracies. Events and ruptures in television’s development as a cultural form are discussed in the context of three conjunctures – *mass* television, *niche* television, and *post* television. At a moment of dizzying technological change, the chapter emphasizes the importance of history and the need to look beyond the shiny surface of the new, to consider how the transformation of broadcasting intersects with a broader reconfiguration of the “social forms” (work, family, geography, market, government) in which we live.

Television is a medium in transition. The era when a few major networks beamed the same programs into everyone’s homes has given way to hundreds of specialized cable channels, digital video recorders, programming “on demand,” new distribution and viewing platforms (DVDs, websites, mobile phones), and more opportunities for viewer interaction, from voting on talent competitions to posting clips on YouTube.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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In light of current developments, the history of television as a mass medium can seem increasingly distant, and perhaps irrelevant. The assumption of cultural progress encourages this view, evoking the past as a barometer against which dazzling improvements in consumer choice, interactivity, and gadgetry can be measured. While television has changed substantially, the tendency to celebrate the “new and improved” can be shortsighted and unhelpful. After all, our ability to historicize the present may be our greatest resource for thinking critically about the future. As the cultural theorist Raymond Williams observed some time ago, media technologies do not emerge or “evolve” spontaneously: they are shaped by the *social formations* in which they operate. Taking a cue from Williams, this chapter traces the genealogy of television in relation to broader societal conditions and changes. Rejecting the assumption that technological advances are inevitable or necessarily progressive, it situates the evolving “stages” of television as complex responses to the shifting demands and contradictions of advanced liberal capitalist democracies.

What follows is not a comprehensive history of television, but a mapping of events and ruptures in television’s development as a cultural form (particularly in the United States). These are grouped into three conjunctures: *mass* television (1940s–1970s), *niche* television (1970s–1990s), and *post* television (2000s–present).¹ While there is a chronology to this map, the conjunctures are also densely layered, and elements of mass television coexist with the move toward increased specialization, flexibility, and innovation. What matters is the dynamic relationship between television, history, and society. At a moment of dizzying technological change, it is important to look beyond the shiny surface of the new, and consider how the cultural transformation of broadcasting intersects with the broader reconfiguration of the “social forms” (work, family, geography, market, government) in which we live. As Williams indicated, this will require a very different way of thinking about a medium in transition.

Mass Television

In his 1974 book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Raymond Williams considered why television emerged in the West in the cultural form it did. While experiments in public reception and two-way transmission occurred, the model that prevailed in Europe and the United States coupled centralized production with wide distribution to individual homes. The “economic incentive” to develop broadcasting certainly favored such an arrangement, as profitability hinged on the mass manufacture and consumption of domestic receivers and, in the United States, the sale of advertising. On a broader scale, Williams saw broadcasting as the quintessential cultural technology of industrial capitalism itself. From the domestication of radio in the 1920s to the saturation of television in the 1950s, broadcasting was uniquely synchronized to social tendencies and tensions set into motion by the industrial

factory system. These include migration, urbanization, the decline of extended kinship networks, the expanding distance between centers of public activity (such as government and paid work) and domestic life, and the rising importance of the autonomous and “self sufficient” single family home. While radio paved the way, television, more than any medium, complemented a paradoxical “new way of life” characterized by increased mobility on one hand and privatization and isolation on the other. Bringing the outside world into the home, television relieved some of the “contradictory pressures” of *mobile privatization* and structured everyday domestic life around its own temporal and spatial flows (Williams, 1992, p. 20). This was not a matter of television possessing essential attributes or creating “new social conditions,” which implies that technology drives historical change. For Williams, television’s formative conjuncture was the cultural outcome of a host of new “needs and possibilities” generated by the emergence of industrial capitalism and its complex social forms (p. 13).

While the development of broadcasting on a broader global scale evidenced cultural tendencies identified by Williams (particularly the model of centralized distribution to private homes), there were crucial differences. In the United States, broadcasting was developed and operated by private corporations, with minimal government oversight. In Europe, on the other hand, broadcasting was developed by state agencies (such as post offices) and eventually managed by tax-funded, public broadcasting bureaucracies. Until the 1950s, commercial television channels were not allowed in the United Kingdom and many other European countries. National broadcasting systems funded through taxes and/or state resources also dominated in India, Latin America, and Asia until the proliferation of satellite technologies and the push toward market liberalization in the 1980s changed the television landscape on a global scale. Today, commercial operators who are generally multinational in scope compete with non-profit national broadcasting systems in most parts of the world except the United States, where all broadcasting (even the modest quasi-public channel, which accepts advertising) is arguably commercial. Each national context presents a unique set of social conditions to the study of television history. Some of these national differences involve alternatives to mobile privatization, from the practice of communal television viewing in rural India and the use of broadcasting during public rallies in Nazi Germany. However, central dissemination (whether by public bureaucracy or private corporation) and private reception took hold across geographical sites, and in no place were the broader social tendencies and contradictions associated with this *particular* and *prevalent* (but not inevitable) model of broadcasting more acute than in the United States.

The best historical scholarship on US television shares Williams’s concern with broader societal contexts. Whereas Williams identified television’s pivotal relationship to mobile privatization, other historians have specified how the medium’s development coalesced with the sexual division of labor, the rise of suburbs, racial and class hierarchies, the expansion of consumer culture, and the tensions of a particular stage of liberal democracy. In so doing, they have shown how the basic characteristics

of mass television – centralized distribution, ritualized domestic viewing, regional and national networks, programming addressed to a broad audience, and a “scarcity” of channels – emerged in relation to the aims and contradictions of postwar capitalist societies. In *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (1992), Lynn Spigel traces how the “social construction” of television as a mass medium coalesced with assumptions about women’s work inside the home. Television’s flow into the home punctuated everyday life in synchronicity with prevailing ideologies of gender and leisure. Daytime television was geared to women who were assumed to perform domestic chores such as cleaning, cooking, and household planning while they watched, followed by afternoon programming for children. While primetime was presented as the family hour, advertisements showed fathers relaxing in easy chairs, while mothers combined casual television viewing with the ongoing labor of homemaking and caretaking. These representations reinforced gender roles while also teaching women (as the presumed guardians of family life) how to incorporate television into its existing practices and routines. The gendering of bifurcated public and private spheres since the Victorian era also shaped television’s cultural priorities, says Spigel. Promoted as an alternative to public recreations, television invited men as well as women to access the historically male-coded “outside world” from the comfort and privacy of one’s home. Tellingly, anxieties about the medium’s feminizing effects on people circulated in cartoons and other popular media depictions of emasculated male viewers. While the jokes reinforced sexist ideologies, television was a feminized medium – not because of any innate attributes or technological biases, but because its cultural form and address were so closely connected to feminized domestic spaces and routines. Designed to be watched for hours on end in a semi-“state of distraction,” all television was synchronized, in some sense, to the assumed habits and dispositions of multi-tasking housewives who were also the imagined consumers of the goods it advertised.

Television’s mutually constitutive relationship to suburbanization and postwar consumer culture is further explored by several important studies. In “Sitcoms and Suburbs” (1989), Mary Beth Haralovich situates an enduring television genre – the family sitcom – within a broader assemblage of technologies for shaping and managing social life. In constituting white middle-class suburban families as the “normal” achievement to which everyone was supposed to aspire, television also provided a national cultural platform for showcasing the latest home appliances, furnishings, and consumer goods. Behind the scenes, television functioned as an informal testing ground for the emerging science of marketing and product design. Providing a “picture window” into the idealized consumer lifestyle of the suburban family, sitcoms supported aggressive campaigns by government and private industry to return women to domesticity after their recruitment to the workforce during World War II (interestingly, while fictional housewives decked out in pearls and heels learned to embrace their “natural” domestic role to various degrees, they were never shown actually doing housework). As Haralovich points out, television’s cultural output complemented federal housing policies that encouraged white middle-class suburban

settlement and, through “red-lining” policies, discriminated against African Americans. In this respect, television was more than the ritualized flow of information and entertainment into the home. Sitcoms simultaneously modeled and mobilized the objectives of a dispersed range of public and private institutions, including population migration, racial segregation, the formation of nuclear families, and a lifestyle predicated on the consumption of goods.

In “The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs” (1986), George Lipsitz examines the collaborative efforts of US government officials and business leaders to increase consumer spending in the wake of the Great Depression and World War II. Mass consumption was encouraged as a stimulus to economic growth, and as a way to temper the working-class radicalism and labor unrest of the 1930s and 1940s. Television’s officially sanctioned positioning as privately operated, nationally networked, advertising-sponsored entertainment medium encouraged people to purchase the proliferating products of industrial capitalism, and seek gratification from consumption rather than political organizing or work. The informal “lessons” about the emergent consumer lifestyle that infused so much television programming of the 1950s complemented television’s institutional relationship to the growth of consumer capitalism. Lipsitz analyzes the short-lived urban ethnic working-class comedies of the postwar period as an example of television’s participation in the moralization of consumer values. In these sitcoms, characters marked by immigrant status, extended ethnic social networks, and the lived experience of scarcity and rationing learned to “let go of the past” and consume without anxiety (often on installment plans) as a sign of modernization and Americanization. While the programs negotiated residual understandings of increased spending as hedonistic and unwise, they ultimately nudged even the most unlikely and resistant individuals toward a new ethic of consumption. Through this implicitly white and middle-class ethic, these comedies also exemplify what Herman Gray calls television’s constitution of an “imaginary middle.”

In *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness* (1995), Gray traces mass television’s historical investment in racist ideologies and practices. This manifested in representation of Black people as inferior, dangerous, and subordinate “others,” and in the medium’s address to a broad audience imagined as white, educated, and middle class. During the period when only three networks competed for the largest audience share possible and specialized cable channels didn’t exist, racial difference was relegated to the margins of television programming or avoided altogether. A similar appeal to a “naturally” white imagined center characterized much consumer culture during the Fordist stage of capitalist production, named for the emphasis on the mass production of goods for an undifferentiated market. In the documentary film *Color Adjustment* (1992), Marlon Riggs shows how mass market logic and racism coalesced in the few representations of African Americans on broadcast television from the 1950s to the early 1980s. Even as the civil rights movement opened the door to cultural reform, “positive” images were typically conceived from a white middle-class perspective and designed to flatter the sensibilities of the imaginary middle. The

proliferation of *niche* television (including programs and channels pitched to African Americans) since the making of *Color Adjustment* speaks to the segmentation of the mass market, the development of cable as a vehicle for niche programming, and the realization that diversity can be profitable. As will be discussed in more detail in the following section, the transition to a more flexible post-Fordist mode of production, and the “posting” of movements for social equality, have also brought a new set of struggles to racial representation.

The TV Problem

While *mass* television complemented the broader social dynamics of the postwar era, it was also problematized from the outset. The same attributes – centralized production, broad dissemination, mass consumption, ritualized domestic reception – that made television so “functional,” also magnified the contradictions of consumer capitalism and triggered anxieties about the medium’s relationship to liberal democracy. As Graham Murdock (2005) points out, the term *broadcasting* originally stemmed from the agricultural practice of a farmer scattering seeds, “throwing them out in a broad arc, in an effort to spread them as widely and evenly as possible” (pp. 174–175). The farm metaphor took on increasingly negative connotations as television became closely associated not only with wide distribution, but with the presumed attributes (low taste, homogeneity, passivity, unruliness) of so-called masses as a social grouping. As Williams argued, television’s problematic affiliation with mass culture and the mass audience was steeped in assumptions about the working-class “mob,” despite the fact that it (unlike cinema and other urban recreations) did not assemble a physical massing of people. By bringing a ritualized flow of entertainment into the home and fostering privatized domesticity and consumption, television discouraged the coming together of populations in public. Nonetheless, the TV Problem, as it was known in the United States, characterized television as a serious threat to cultural standards as well as “enlightened” citizenship. The terms of this problematization can be traced to the “irresolvable” contradictions that Michele Hilmes observes at the heart of US broadcasting. In *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting 1922–1952* (1997), Hilmes points out that the private corporations that controlled radio were held accountable to an ethic of public service interpreted as the transmission of legitimated knowledge and culture. On the other hand, broadcasting was a business that profited from the sale of advertising, and therefore the ritualized listening of as many potential consumers as possible. When popular entertainment became the leading conveyor for the movement of merchandise, broadcasting became the target of intellectual contempt, as well as grave concerns about its poisonous impact on democracy. When television emerged at the center of postwar culture and society, the residual tension between high expectations of public service and the commercial drive to manufacture popularity resurfaced with a vengeance.

The consumer boom was partly responsible for this escalating tension, to the extent that it freed up intellectuals (including critics, academics, policy advisors, and professional thinkers) to ponder new pressing problems that coalesced around the quality and homogenizing effects of mass culture. In "A Matter of Taste: Corporate Cultural Hegemony in a Mass Consumption Society" (1989), Jackson Lears proposes that the growth of public universities and the expansion of the white-collar professional middle class, composed of college-educated people who increasingly worked with knowledge instead of "making things," made it easier to displace "questions of power" onto cultural symptoms. Intellectuals of various political stripes took the level of mass culture as demonstrable proof that the upwardly mobile people needed (and perhaps secretly wanted) the "guidance of a cultural elite." Vance Packard summed up this sentiment in his journalistic account of *The Status Seekers: An Exploration of Class Behavior in America* (1959). "In modern America, where especially at the consuming level the masses have to a large extent become the dictators of taste, we have to endure the horrors of our roadside architecture and billboards; our endless TV gun-slinging; our raw, unkempt, blatantly commercialized cities; our mass merchandising of pornographic magazines; our faceless suburban slums-to-be; our ever-maudlin soap operas," Packard wrote. "Voices have been crying out for the restoration of some kind of elite that can set standards and make them stick" (pp. 327–328).

Similar thinking prompted the 1960 President's Commission on National Goals to declare that US mass culture was in a state of emergency. The report included a scathing assessment of "The Quality of American Culture" by August Heckscher, the president of the 20th Century Fund, a prominent New York City philanthropy. Heckscher chided the media for abandoning their public interest obligations by pandering to an "audience eager for fourth-rate material" (1960, p. 128). He further worried that rising postwar affluence had not spawned higher levels of cultural sophistication in the mass public. On the contrary, US citizens had become a "great mass prepared to listen long hours to the worst of TV or radio." Paradoxically, if the hoi polloi were setting the sights for broadcasting, the mass market was simultaneously "virtually abolishing" class distinctions, making the United States a little too close to communism for this Cold War critic (p. 131). Indeed, the TV Problem, as Michael Curtin argues in *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics* (1995), emerged just as social scientists and cultural critics were embracing the United States' commitment to liberal pluralism as the "distinguishing difference between free societies and totalitarian ones." Mass culture – especially primetime television – was not easy to reconcile with this theory. Yet, burgeoning anxieties about the medium's homogeneity had nothing to do with television's presentation of prosperous white middle-class suburban families as the national norm, to the exclusion of everyone else. Tellingly, Heckscher's (1960) dismay at seeing everyone offered the "same culture" on their television sets was rivaled only by his alarm that "women at different levels of income dress indistinguishably" and that the "most luxurious housing units boast the same dish washing machine available in almost any

worker's home" (p. 131). This defensive response spoke to a perceived blurring of class differences and, more broadly, to the social authority they bestowed on "tasteful" people like well-educated foundation presidents.

To be sure, some institutions tried to harness television as an instrument for enlightening the public, raising the level of taste, and creating the "right kind of citizens." Championed by social scientists, universities, and private foundations, a smattering of (deeply marginalized) educational radio and television stations had emphasized edification since the 1920s. Higher profile initiatives were also pursued. In *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America* (2010), Anna McCarthy traces some of the earliest "public interest" objectives carried out by the major broadcast networks in partnership with sponsors and major philanthropies such as the Ford Foundation. Their approach to the public interest as a matter of corporate social responsibility exemplifies the broader regulatory framework in which broadcasting developed. In *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States* (1996), Thomas Streeter shows how "corporate liberalism," a system of governing in which state intervention in social life is downplayed and corporations are rationalized as the neutral arbiters of diverse interests, underscores broadcast policy, particularly in the United States. In Europe, most nations created centralized, tax-funded, non-profit public broadcasting bureaucracies to operate as mass cultural technologies of education and citizenship. The United States, on the other hand, equated "freedom" so closely with the market that any state involvement in the operation of broadcasting (except to orchestrate private control and make suggestions) was suspect. Commercial broadcasters alone were licensed to handle the day-to-day operations of serving the "public interest, convenience and necessity." Both the European and the US system presumed the near-universal distribution of signals to individual homes, and both were top down to the extent that regulatory policies and programming decisions were made *for* the people, not *by* them. The difference was that broadcasting in the United States was expected to fulfill the needs of postwar liberal democracy, while also turning a profit. When it became clear that these priorities could not be reconciled, the impetus for reform gained urgency.

Chronicling this impetus in *Viewers Like You? How Public Television Failed the People* (Ouellette, 2002), I show how intensifying anxieties about mass culture in the United States shaped blueprints for "better" television. In a famous 1961 speech to the National Association of Broadcasters, Newton Minow called television a "vast wasteland," coining the instrumental metaphor for the medium's reform. The speech spoke to the widening social and cultural contradictions of postwar capitalism but did not address their messy origins. For example, Minow did not question private ownership, treating television's "screaming, cajoling and offending" ads less as structural determinants than as cultural offenses. His critique of "assembly line entertainment" geared to a mass audience spoke to television's redundancy and lack of innovation – but it also evoked critical sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) assertion that the ranking of culture is always related to the ranking of people in capitalist democracies. When Minow (1961) told broadcasters they must present a "wider

range of choices, more diversity, more alternatives,” he evoked pluralist ideals, but took for granted that diversity meant *upgraded* programs imbued with legitimacy, such as live plays and panel discussions. Minow overlooked television’s failure to serve every minority except one: (implicitly) white college-educated people with respectable tastes. Because the mass audience was characterized as unsophisticated and hedonistic compared to professional middle-class “opinion leaders,” the TV Problem took on political connotations as well, as Edward Murrow, host of the acclaimed (but cancelled) news program *See it Now*, implied when he claimed that the majority desire for mass amusement jeopardized “the virtue of the republic if not the security of Western democracy” (cited in Baughman, 1985, p. 30). As James Baughman (1985) has shown, anxieties about the decline of television journalism signaled a widening “crack” in the liberal corporate faith that broadcasters could be free marketeers *and* serve the public interest as interpreted by reformers. Television and its audience were implicated in what Toby Miller (1993) calls the conflicting demands of the consumer economy (selfishness, pleasure, indulgence) and the political order (ethics, discipline, civic duty). This logic, in turn, further alienated the “people” from the presumed requirements of democracy. As one reformer put it:

We are in trouble as we unconsciously confuse the interests (tastes) of the public with the public interest, which is what broadcasting, under law, is charged to serve. For the public interest has little to do with our appetites and desires, however widely shared. It has everything to do with our needs, as human beings and citizens of this democracy. In both realms our whims and appetites must be subordinate to our needs and duties. (Siepmann, 1964, p. 4)

As the TV Problem escalated, philanthropies flush with the surplus of industrial capitalism – especially the Ford and Carnegie Foundations, which were funded by the estates of moguls Henry Ford and Andrew Carnegie – mobilized for an alternative program service, providing the stimulus and seed money for what eventually became the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). The interventionist approach to social welfare that emerged with the Great Society programs of the 1960s also made it possible to rethink television as a technology of public education and citizenship formation more broadly. Federal investment in public education, health, and welfare rose dramatically during the 1960s in response to the demands of the emerging information economy, the Cold War, the “discovery” of poverty, civil rights organizing, and percolating social unrest. Subsidies to the arts expanded as well, reflecting a national commitment to a New Frontier of aesthetic and cultural values deemed unachievable through existing market mechanisms. The Great Society era’s concern with raising the quality of life in the United States, equalizing educational opportunities, and improving people’s capacities also placed a new premium on broadcasting as an instrument for maximizing human capital and instilling higher standards of excellence. Commercial television’s refusal – or inability – to allocate resources to these goals prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson and eventually the US Congress

to support the idea of a non-commercial public broadcasting system (Ouellette, 2002). With a broader national mission than “educational” television, US public television would disseminate what Graham Murdock calls “cultural resources for citizenship” – informal education, civic training, cultural enlightenment, opportunities for self-improvement – in tandem with the expanding social and educational services provided by the US government during the Great Society period (Murdock, 2005, p. 186).

Slotted as the “oasis” of the wasteland, its creators expected PBS to pursue a different mission entirely. Since the commercial networks were criticized for pandering to mass appeal, PBS was called upon to bring “excellence and diversity” to the airwaves, while also recasting the worrisome mass audience as a fragmented array of specialized interest and taste groups. PBS was regarded as a natural home for well-educated populations with advanced cultural tastes and opinion-leading capacities – the “minorities” deemed least served by the mass approach to television operating across commercial channels. Predating the arrival of cable television, it developed as the original niche channel, a home for “quality” television with an educational twist, synchronized to professional upscale lifestyle clusters. Yet, because PBS relied in part on tax funding, it was also expected to uplift disadvantaged populations and facilitate more enlightening and purposeful uses of television among all US citizens. Expected to protect a small slice of television from the ravages of commercial mass culture, provide programming for sophisticated viewers, and improve the public as a whole, PBS operated as a distinguished and redemptive – but deeply marginalized – niche channel rather than a major broadcaster such as the BBC and other European broadcasters. (Likewise, the problematization of mass television worked differently in the United Kingdom. Criticisms focused on the paternal cultural authority of the BBC, and pleas for diversity often hinged on the development of commercial channels offering popular alternatives, including some US imports, to what the national public broadcaster offered.)

While the passage of the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act signaled a reinterpretation of the state’s role as financial partner in the mobilization of television as a social and cultural force, a mixed system of funding sources – including Congressional appropriations, viewer donations, philanthropy, and corporate sponsorship – tempered the “socialistic” tendencies ascribed to European public broadcasting and authorized PBS’s pioneering role in bringing upscale niche marketing to television. To avoid the centralized power ascribed to state-operated broadcasting as well as the US broadcast corporations, public television itself was also fragmented to the greatest degree possible, composed of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, hundreds of stations, and PBS operating as a new national program service rather than a traditional broadcast network. Because PBS was developed as a corrective to commercial television and its imagined audience, its relationship to the people it claims to represent always has been contradictory. On one hand, PBS introduced programming not tied to the imperatives of advertising, a more diversified system of cultural production (with content suppliers outside the entrenched Hollywood system), and early experiments

in public outreach and interactivity (from the distribution of educational resources to the staging of mail-in votes on political debates). Yet, PBS has also been positioned outside popularity, with the exception of its children's programs, culturally tied to "influential" viewers' disproportionately high incomes and education levels. Indeed, because of this association, PBS has been vulnerable to campaigns to downscale the "welfare program for the rich" that began almost immediately, with politically motivated Republicans at the helm. Since the 1990s, the rationales for public television have lost import across partisan lines. As the number of broadcast and cable channels has proliferated, the notion that PBS requires public subsidy to correct market deficiencies has been difficult to sustain, and the US government's retreat from the 1960s has thrown the Great Society's uplifting aspirations for PBS into flux as well.

Niche Television

Diagnoses of the TV Problem shared an aversion to mass culture rooted in the contradictions of postwar capitalism. Broadcasters' quest to maximize profits was sanctioned by free enterprise – yet spawned cultural products that mocked the nation's claim to pluralism and ignored the taste and authority of the white, educated, male bourgeoisie. Commercial television was perfectly in sync with the "fun morality" noted by sociologists of the day, and thus helped circulate the values (enjoy! indulge! spend!) of the consumer economy. Yet, its perceived association with hedonism, passivity, and mental escape also clashed with ideals of enlightened citizenship, the competitive image of a world superpower, and the ethic of hard work and self-improvement long associated with the American Dream. While commercial television was encouraged and valued as the engine of the consumer economy, its cultural output was increasingly deemed at odds with the core liberal attributes – individualism, pluralism, self-governance, robust civil society – ascribed to liberal democracy in the West. Television's standardization, homogeneity, and association with a mass audience also triggered anxieties rooted in Cold War ideology, despite the medium's presumed centrality to the privacy and "freedom" of the imagined white middle class.

In the United States, the solution – public broadcasting – was marginalized and unable to challenge commercial network hegemony. However, PBS anticipated the rise of more and more *commercial* niche channels geared to specialized audiences. By the early 1970s, the same broadcast networks that once defended the "vast wasteland" began counting more than just eyeballs, partly to appease commercial sponsors. At a time when young, urban, upscale professionals were assumed to be dropping out of a mass audience coded as elderly, lower-income, unsophisticated, and rural, the quest for more precise knowledge about viewer demographics emerged. Broadcast television's experiments in "quality" and "relevance" were closely connected to its attempt to attract the "right" consumers sought by advertisers. As Jane Feuer points

out in *MTM: Quality Television* (1985), the emphasis on improving commercial television's quality (exemplified by the *Mary Tyler Moore* show and its spin offs) brought reflexivity, character development, and a nod to the feminist movement of the 1970s into the sitcom format, while Norman Lear's production company dealt more "realistically" with racism, poverty, and the women's movement in a number of socially relevant comedies including *All in the Family*, *Good Times*, and *Maude*. Both strands of programming enabled network television to reach the youthful "class" audience sought by advertisers, as well as the broad viewership historically associated with television. By the end of the decade, however, commercial cable and satellite technologies were being positioned to reorganize television and "break up" (Turow, 1998) the mass audience much more decisively.

Why did this break up occur when it did? Why were choice and diversity characterized as cable television's "natural" properties, when for years the technology had been used to bring broadcast signals to remote areas? Why were satellites adopted for domestic as well as international television transmission and reception? Following Williams, we might characterize a second conjuncture – niche television – as a cultural response to tensions and transformations in the capitalist societies of the West. These include the segmentation of the mass market, increased individualization, the reconfiguration of women's work, the marketization of social life, the commodification of identity-based movements, and the rising currency of consumer and lifestyle based forms of citizenship. Globalization, deregulation, and the expanding markets/territories of Western media conglomerates are crucial factors as well. Television's relationship to these intersecting and sometimes contradictory developments is brought into focus by a number of important historical studies.

In *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (2003), Lizabeth Cohen situates the impetus for narrowcasting within the expansion of postwar consumer capitalism. The quest for profit maximization led to a search for new markets that included other nations as well as untapped populations and lifestyle clusters within the United States. Just as consumer goods were customized for increasingly differentiated markets, so too was television. Within a context of capitalist expansion and growth, the masses were reconceived as an infinite array of consumer "niches" that could be known through more and more refined market research. Marginalized groups (including African Americans) were more fully embraced as distinct markets and emergent social identities (such as the independent woman) made possible by the social movements of the era were sold back to consumers as specialized consumer choices. As information, culture, and brands became the leading "immaterial" commodities produced by capitalism in the West, what sociologists call individualization, or the further decline of traditional social networks and the rising imperative to "choose" and express one's own lifestyle and social identity, intensified. Not surprisingly, as Lynn Spigel demonstrates in *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (2001), portable television technology also appeared, promising each family member the "freedom" to customize his or her own viewing rather than watching together in the family circle.

With the fragmentation of consumer culture in general, proliferating brands of television became another resource for differentiating and defining identity and lifestyle. At this stage, the problems of quality and diversity that had plagued US broadcasting were deemed “solved” through a deregulated media economy. The expansion of the broadcast and cable market was encouraged as a means to viewing flexibility and increased consumer choice. While many alternative organizations (including community and countercultural activists) endorsed the development of cable, the logic of reform through increased competition and choice anticipated the Federal Communications Commission’s wholesale embrace of free market policies in the 1980s under the leadership of Ronald Reagan appointee Mark Fowler, who famously rejected any notion of television as a public cultural resource and approached the medium as a business like any other – a “toaster with pictures.” As James Hay and I point out in our analysis of stages of media regulation in the United States (Ouellette & Hay, 2008), this logic disrupted the fraught legacy of the mass audience by enabling network and cable brands to become the basis for viewers’ investment in more narrow forms of association and membership. At the same time, ideals of liberal education and uplift through unprofitable public interest broadcasting gave way to the profitable *empowerment* of collectivities conceptualized as taste and lifestyle clusters and to shaping citizens through these consumer technologies. The identity politics of the 1960s, which had partly informed Great Society social welfare programs, became a basis for *liberalizing* broadcasting through private cable and satellite technologies and for marketing and *commodifying* identity as a matter of personal lifestyle. The proliferation of new channels also encouraged more refined technologies of consumer choice and self-fashioning, such as the remote control, the time-shifting VCR, and the DVR, all of which made television compatible with lived experiences of individualization and niche-based consumer culture.

While the lifestyle clusters embraced by cable are seemingly infinite – there are now channels for pet owners, military buffs, and even environmentally conscious individuals – niche marketing is governed by the logic of profitability, and this ensures that only those consumer groups with money to spend will be recognized. As John McMurria (2007) argues, cable television was initially pitched as a means of class identification and cultural status. Many of the earliest cable channels for news aficionados, history buffs, the arts, and other culturally legitimated leisure pursuits addressed the professional middle-class “minorities” previously claimed by public broadcasting. As Andrew Goodwin demonstrates in *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture* (1992), the mass audience was also fragmented from the outset on the basis of age. Teenagers were encouraged to see MTV as an integral aspect of their unique identities and lifestyle, and to “fight” for their right to consume differently under the marketing slogan “I Want My MTV.” Now a globally successful cultural brand, MTV has been particularly adept at translating Western youth culture into a locally customized cultural resource for lifestyle and identity formation across virtually all parts of the world. Exemplifying the expanded mobility facilitated by the globalization of capitalism, MTV has become a focal point

for scholarly debates over the refinement of cultural imperialism and the possibilities of increasingly “glocal” and hybrid identifications and memberships.

Cable channels aimed at women and people of color have also developed, bringing new promises – and tensions – to the historically charged politics of representation. In “Once in a Lifetime: Constructing ‘The Working Woman’ through Cable Narrowcasting” (1994–1995), Jackie Byars and Eileen Meehan analyze the Lifetime Cable network, launched in 1984 as the first cable channel marketed explicitly to women. Lifetime offered female viewers an opportunity to identify as a distinct cultural collectivity beyond the gendered terrain of daytime soap operas and homemaking programs. The channel addressed women as empowered consumers worthy of their own channel, and in so doing reflected the mainstreaming of liberal feminist discourse. By the 1980s, women had secured some access to the professions, and all women were increasingly expected to be breadwinners for families while also performing a “second shift” of domestic labor at home. In a changing social context, working women were targeted by advertisers not only as consumers of household items but of more expensive goods such as automobiles as well. Lifetime presented the first venue for reaching those upscale, “independent” female television viewers who could afford a cable subscription. The channel built its brand identity around original movies that combined melodrama with socially conscious women’s issues as a way of signaling relevance to this audience. Yet, according to Byars and Meehan, Lifetime equated female empowerment with consumption (including the consumption of Lifetime) and perpetuated ideologies of female subordination to men, and in this sense did more to commercialize and undermine feminism than expand its reach. As Amanda Lotz points out in *Redesigning Women: Television After the Network Era* (2006), more recent cable channels aimed specifically at women – including Oxygen, WE, and the OWN network, headed by Oprah Winfrey – constitute slightly different “brands” of female television, but all maintain the implicitly white, middle-class orientation prioritized by Lifetime, and all equate female empowerment with the consumption of a niche brand. Given cable’s historical connection to the expansion of consumer capitalism, these limitations are not surprising.

Baretta Smith-Shomade’s study *Pimpin Ain’t Easy: Selling Black Entertainment Television* (2008) is a sobering case study of how cable television conceives and markets racial difference within a commercial framework. Focusing on Black Entertainment Television (BET), one of the few cable channels explicitly geared to people of color, Smith-Shomade shows how black entrepreneurs promised to combat network television’s racism and whitewashing. Drawing from the earlier history of Black-owned businesses, executives pitched BET as a means of recognition and empowerment, but relied on limited – and highly stereotypical – constructions of Black identity and culture to attract young audiences. Within the advanced capitalist logic of branding, “blackness” is neither natural nor empowering, she contends. Rather, racial authenticity is commodified and sold back to television viewers as a cultural product to be “consumed” rather than engaged with politically. Other scholars have shown how the “posting” of civil rights activism and legislation has

contributed to this process of racial commodification across proliferating cable channels. In *Kids Rule! Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship* (2007), Sarah Banet-Weiser shows how racial difference stripped of any historical or ethnic specificity is incorporated into children's television to mark cable networks such as Nickelodeon as multicultural and cool. Race in this context becomes little more than an identity or "flavor" to be consumed like any other mass customized product. Because Nickelodeon claims to "empower" children (similar to MTV) by constituting a consumer space just for them, pan-ethnic representation is also articulated to new ways of thinking about democracy and citizenship. Consumer citizenship, rather than traditional forms of electoral politics or political organizing, is heralded as the means of inclusion and participation in civic life, for children and other underrepresented groups. As Banet-Weiser shows, this shift speaks to the intensified marketization of social life in advanced capitalist societies, and plays out on television as the equation of brand membership with meaningful forms of representation and "rights."

My own study with James Hay, *Better Living through Reality TV: Television and Post-Welfare Citizenship* (Ouellette & Hay, 2008), focuses on television's relationship to the broader "reinvention" of government in the 1980s and beyond. On one hand, broadcasting was deregulated under the reasoning that the free market is the best way to ensure something called the public interest. Deregulation paved the way for the conglomeration of broadcast and cable networks (many of which are owned by the same parent companies), and it also ushered in a different way of thinking about what television can and should contribute to advanced liberal (or neoliberal) democracy. We show how the logic of consumer empowerment made possible by the expansion of cable overlapped with intensified requirements of self-actualization and self-help as an intensifying requirement of "good" citizenship, as evidenced by the proliferation of broadcast and cable channels offering lifestyle instruction on cooking, financial management, parenting, health and fitness, and similar topics. This development inserts television into the increased marketization of the social, and makes brands of television more integral to a definition of citizenship based more on personal responsibility and self-enterprise than on collective "entitlements" or universal connections to a national welfare state. The reform of Great Society programs and the commercialization of public services is the backdrop against which reality entertainment proliferated on television. While not associated with traditional news or "boring" public interest genres, reality entertainment is often marketed as a civic good, to the extent that it provides "lessons" on proper self-care and strategic self-management in a competitive and privatized social world. Such fare is also attractive to corporate and non-profit "sponsors" seeking to insert themselves into television's articulations of citizenship, volunteerism, and the public good. Significantly, "reality" experiments appear on broadcast channels as well as cable ventures, where they are specifically adapted to specialized demographics and lifestyle clusters.

Mass and niche television are useful to the contemporary reinvention of government. Serialization, we contend, is what makes television suitable to operate as part of a daily regimen of self-actualization, while the lifestyle clustering associated with

cable networks allowed television to become a technology for self-actualization (i.e., for being young, or a woman, or Black). The dramatic increase of makeover television programs that seek to transform the unattractive, the unemployed, the unhealthy, the unsuccessful, and the unruly into self-actualizing and self-regulating citizens speaks to the convergence of television watching, lifestyle clustering, and self-help in the context of neoliberalism. Likewise, the convergence of television with other media, particularly digital technologies such as the web, builds on trends of individualization and self-responsibilization by inserting television into an endless loop of consumer resources for work on the self (Ouellette & Hay, 2008). The point is that television has become less relevant to earlier public interest ideals and more integral to the requirements of managing and improving one's life through a set of cultural resources that can be applied to particular lifestyle problems. Tellingly, we have witnessed a surge of cable networks entirely devoted to popular lifestyle instruction, including the Home and Garden Network, Planet Green, Food Channel, Fit TV, the Learning Channel, and the Do-it-Yourself Network, and cable networks not specifically devoted to lifestyle instruction have also increasingly incorporated "how-to" and instructional elements into their schedules. The call for citizens as well as governments to be more entrepreneurial inflects these intersecting developments with new assumptions about television's relationship to citizenship and democracy.

It is worth noting the uncertainty of public broadcasting in the wake of niche television and new technologies. Across Western capitalist democracies, Georgina Born explains in "Digitising Democracy" (2006, p. 102), the "conditions – technological, economic, political, social and cultural" that once fostered public broadcasting have undergone "such a radical transformation that the concept and practice [...] demand to be reconceived." Born cites the decline of national cultures, increasing individualization, and the flux introduced by digitalization and public sector reform initiatives as factors in the ongoing transformation of European public broadcasting. Interestingly, many European public broadcasters have expanded the definition of public service to include popular reality entertainment focused on lifestyle instruction and makeover formats circulate globally. While the pressures on public broadcasting are also evident in the United States, the situation facing PBS is more complex *vis-à-vis* the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and other national systems. As we have seen, public television arrived late in the United States, as a corrective but structurally marginalized supplement to the commercial model of broadcasting dominant since the 1920s. Created during the expansion of social welfare programs in the 1960s to fill cultural gaps in an over-the-air broadcast schedule dominated by ABC, CBS, and NBC, it has lost much of its footing as the television marketplace has expanded and the broader sociopolitical climate of the United States has changed. The old PBS provided a bridge between the commercial network era of broadcasting and the triumphant declaration of choice, freedom, and empowerment surrounding both the post-television landscape and the concomitant transition to a post-welfare society. Not surprisingly, both the BBC and PBS are now struggling to reinvent themselves as a business, a brand and a resource for a new epoch of mass customization and personal responsibility.

Post-Television?

In *The Television Will be Revolutionized* (2007), Amanda Lotz argues that we are moving into a post-network era, in which the very foundations of television are being transformed by a more flexible mode of production, a changing business model, the decline of the traditional networks, the proliferation of new media technologies, and the further fragmentation of the audience. The surge of reality television, which relies on non-unionized production crews and the unpaid labor of ordinary people, integrates advertising into content, can be produced on short notice, and encourages viewer participation via the web and mobile phones, is a high-profile example of the industrial trends she documents. Of course, as Lotz acknowledges, elements of mass television – including its ritualistic flow into the home – remain fully in place for many people, including those who cannot afford broadband access or cable subscriptions. Moreover, as John Caldwell demonstrates in *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (2008), the corporate conglomerates that own the major broadcast networks have developed an arsenal of strategies for ensuring the centrality of television – and television networks – in a context of high anxiety triggered by industrial and technological change. In addition to ratings stunts and intensified flow techniques designed to discourage channel switching, these moves include repurposing content across corporate holdings (such as a broadcast network and cable stations), re-branding campaigns, and promotional activities to educate viewers and affiliates about the “benefits of national network affiliation.”

However much mass television adapts to a changing industrial and technological landscape, the broader logics that have supported narrowcasting have intensified in recent decades. Specialized niche channels aimed at lifestyle clusters continue to proliferate, signaling advancements in consumer choice. What’s more, the emergence of digital viewing platforms such as iTunes and Hulu are presented as flexible and personalized alternatives to the flow established by broadcasters, intensifying the “freedom” and self-actualization associated with VCRs and portable television sets in earlier years. Television has also become integrated into a burgeoning “convergence culture” that encompasses digital games, mobile phones, the web, and film. Many television programs now have offshoots in other old and new media, and interactivity and a general intensity of engagement are the norm for “users” of cross-platform media experiences. Whether the majority of television viewers have adopted these practices is debatable. Still, scholars recognize that change is underway and are scrambling to bring scholarship up to speed, as evidenced by the appearance of anthologies like *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Spigel & Olsson, 2004) and *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era* (Turner & Tay, 2009).

While studies of what appears to be the medium’s third conjuncture – *post television* – are incomplete, the tendency so far has been to focus rather narrowly on

technological and industrial change. Raymond Williams once again provides a model for expanding our questions and recognizing the contexts in which the evolution of something called “television” operates.

If mass broadcasting has given way to a more personalized “anywhere, anytime” television experience, this has as much (or more) to do with changing societal conditions as technical mastery. There are models of the contextual approach I am advocating: In *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (2003), Mark Andrejevic situates the transformation of television within broader economic developments. He situates the “promise” of viewer interactivity within the ongoing shift from industrial capitalism to a post-Fordist economy that equates freedom with the ability to “customize” the products of our labor. Andrejevic suggests that the invitation to interact with television using our cell phones and computers is connected to the dispersion and “offloading” of marketing in the new economy. By filling out a survey or joining a forum, we are doing the work of the companies who tabulate information about our preferences and sell them back to us as unique consumer choices. In *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism and Television in a Neoliberal Age* (2006), Toby Miller situates the politics of contemporary television within social and political developments, including the decline of industrial jobs, increased militarization, and US foreign policy. For Miller, technological change is less important than television’s enduring relationship to uneven power dynamics, and for this reason he pays little attention to new gizmos like cell phones and tie-in websites. Yet, we could extend his critique to the phenomenon of synergistic media industries partnering with military and corporate sponsors and enlisting consumer involvement in governmental agendas via synergistic broadcast and digital technologies, from websites to computer games.

We need more scholarship that extends Williams’s crucial insights about technology to our current social and technological formations. How does the apparent “posting” of television speak to the politics of gender and leisure, the marketing of difference, the acceleration of branding, or the operationalization of what currently counts as democracy and citizenship? What contradictory capitalist developments, akin to the mobile privatization identified by Williams, might be served or soothed by convergence culture? How is technology shaping and helping to shape the contemporary social forms in which we live? Television scholars need to expand our engagement with the new, and address these issues.

NOTE

- 1 My argument here is indebted to numerous scholars who have identified roughly similar periodizations. In *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (2012), Sarah Banet-Weiser characterizes the shift from mass, to niche, to digital media and culture as the historical context for the transformation of advertising and the emergence of brand culture in neoliberal times. In her introduction to *Beyond Primetime: Television Programming*

in the *Post-Network Era* (2009), Amanda Lotz locates a similar trajectory within the US television industry, using the terminology “network era,” “multi-channel transition,” and “post-television” to describe historical shifts in the industrial, marketing, and programmatic dimensions of television culture. In *Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post-Welfare Citizenship* (Ouellette & Hay, 2008), James Hay and I map this history onto three regulatory periods and the citizenship ideals they emphasize, showing how mass television, niche television, and interactive television intersect with changing political rationalities and strategies of governing.

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The Culture Industries

Frederick Wasser

ABSTRACT

The genealogy of the term “culture industry” is traced through Horkheimer and Adorno to Marx. It was coined to describe the relations of production and consumption of media culture in the mid-twentieth century, in an age of mass produced texts consumed by middle-class and working-class audiences. Since the 1980s, there have been two revolutions in the culture industries: a technological revolution, featuring the emergence of digital media, and an audience revolution, featuring fragmentation, participatory formats, and mobility. The result is a post-Fordist system of cultural production and consumption, best exemplified by gaming. The key insights of the “culture industry” argument remain relevant.

Introduction

Culture industries analyses expose to critical view the workings of culture in mass complex societies. The “culture industry” was a term coined by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1987). Its subsequent pluralization to culture industries is merely the first indication that this topic has deepened and has multiplied its meanings since the two exiled Germans wrote their essay in the United States, during the last phase of World War II. The marriage of culture and industry into a topic of

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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critical analysis is overtly Marxist. The topic retains its Marxist overtones even as it has attracted broad interest in the last seven decades. This is because the topic is deliberately holistic – linking economics with other life spheres. Even if Karl Marx believed in the single causal direction of economic relationships determining and fully explaining the cultural expressions of society,¹ there is now a strong tradition of seeing economics and culture as mutually determining. Once culture became industrialized, the contours of everyday lives became visibly structured in these industries. The linkage between the two is elusive, but Horkheimer and Adorno's essay (along with other writings of their intellectual circle such as Siegfried Kracauer [1995], Walter Benjamin [1969], etc.) challenges us to understand how the culture industries operate at the intersection of rationalized production and meaning making.

A primary way to uncover this relationship is to follow it through history. We can divide the production of culture into periods, starting from the traditional pre-industrial phase of "patronage," yielding to the early industrial dominance of entrepreneurs, succeeded by "market professionals" metamorphosing into "corporate professionals." Market professionals seek direct profits from sales of cultural goods, while the corporate professionals, working for large corporations that are often transnational,² work for compensation derived from a combination of direct sales, selling of audiences to advertisers, and even government subsidies, as well as political influence.

In each period there is a mix of motivations for the producing class to support the culture makers. Patronage is relatively easy to understand as an activity motivated by the need of an aristocratic order to visibly display power. That reason continued into the nineteenth century, although this was the period when market professionals learned to make culture in order to make money. The opportunity to make money came about because the middle class now had enough disposable income and leisure to buy art reproductions, print, theater, and subsequently music sheets and movies to yield substantial profits. By the end of that century cultural products such as magazines and newspapers became a medium for advertising. With the advent of broadcasting in the first half of the twentieth century, culture became the driving force in promoting a consumer economy. Broadcasting encouraged the rise of corporate professionals. Advertising-supported culture was actively encouraged by US governments, while European and Asian polities with older patronage traditions were initially skeptical. But even in these countries the culture industries were recruited for political propaganda even if they were not primarily advertising vehicles. The distinction between capitalist advertising and state propaganda was a superficial one for Marxists.

The above periodization is primarily from the point of view of cultural producers. Culture is, also, a relationship between producers and audiences and we can do a parallel history of different periods based on the audience. This perspective has been pioneered by those who wish to describe formations of working-class culture. The founding father is E. P. Thompson (1966, 1967) with his seminal works on class and labor discipline. While his writings take the long view starting with the feudal age,

and are not particularly oriented to the age of the culture industries, there are histories focusing on recent evolutions of mass audiences.

For example, we can look at the audience histories that Richard Butsch has written from a media studies perspective. He begins his history of the US audience at the dawn of the mass media age in the 1830s (Butsch, 2000). These audiences became socially visible phenomena in the United States in various theater districts in New York, Philadelphia, and other emerging cities. They were mostly male and of mixed classes (the only women present in the audiences were presumed to be “working”). The theater was very active, as audience members shouted out their responses to the show and to each other, continuing the traditions of “conversations across the footlights.” For example, it was customary for the audience to demand that favorite sections of the show (typically a fairly eclectic mix of songs, sketches, and even Shakespeare) be repeated even before the play had ended. After the Civil War there was increasing middle-class affluence and a concurrent domestication of the audience for legitimate theater. People now were expected to be silent during the performance. The “civilized” middle class were now imposing a sense of decorum and deferred gratification upon the working class in the theater. This sense of restraint was extended to vaudeville and the music hall. This transition is a visible trace of the changing class relationships at this time.

The early movie theaters replicated this evolution from rowdy audiences to quiet passive ones. This paralleled and was controlled by film producers as they shifted their productions from short films of various attractions to long-form narratives and even further as synchronized sound films became the industry standard after 1927. Roy Rosenzweig (1983) adds a more explicit note to the taming effect of mass media. His study of the working class in Worcester, Massachusetts at the turn of the twentieth century demonstrates that the early movie theaters competed with and eroded the saloon culture that had been working men’s primary leisure activity. Film is an early example of a mass entertainment medium that initially fits in with everyday life and then changes it. We can find similar patterns in newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting.

Beyond Passive and Active to a Revolutionary Paradigm Shift

These and other studies set up the perennial concern of culture industry analysts to evaluate the *passive* versus the *active* role of the people. In the twentieth century, mass media became the dominant form of cultural transmission, which led to renewed concerns about the capacity for the culture industries to indoctrinate passive audiences. Advertisers were willing to spend huge amounts of money to take advantage of the audience’s presumed passive reception and media critics were willing to assume advertisers were right. The 1950s were the historical moment when many

mandarins bemoaned the audience's passive reception of media. Horkheimer and Adorno's critique was the most radical lament. It was inspired by Max Weber's thesis that Enlightenment reason was not leading to greater emancipation but toward an instrumentalization of human life. Horkheimer and Adorno easily traced how the industrialization of US popular culture had the function of reconciling people to their "iron cages" of rational bureaucratic existence. Adorno would go on in the final phase of his career to explore the difference between authentic art with its possibility of emancipation and the industrialized pastiche of art that eliminated this possibility.

The Horkheimer/Adorno thesis came out of a direct examination of the culture industry's products and ignored the actual response of people to those products. Another way of understanding the culture industry's audiences emerged rather slowly, throughout the 1960s. This approach, promoted by functionalists, did look at actual responses and emphasized the ability of the audience to reinterpret media messages in order to resist passive acceptance of intended messages. This emphasis on *active* audience reinterpretation was used by academics identified with the uses and gratifications approach and with British cultural studies.

As these studies gained in influence, some challenged whether such autonomous audience meaning making changed industrial practices. Executives in the culture industries continued to produce and distribute as if they believed audiences were relatively passive recipients of media content. Advertising increased in its support of television, radio, and print throughout the 1980s. Other culture industries supported by direct consumer spending, such as film and recorded music, had flirted with business models based on alternative audiences in the 1950s and 1960s (for example, independent "exploitation" productions combined with US imports of European art films, and in music the quest for a "counterculture" market). Briefly it seemed that a dichotomy had been set up between advertising supporting mass passive audience cultures in contrast to direct purchase business models constructing niched active audiences. But then in the 1970s and 1980s film and music lapsed back into oligopolistic organization with top-down production and distribution practices. There was a renewed presumption of passive mainstream audiences in every business plan of all the culture industries.

Since the 1980s there has been a profound upheaval that can be visibly measured but still resists understanding. Two revolutions have occurred. The more accepted one is the *Technological Revolution*. This refers to the proliferation of new media and, in particular, to digital technology supplanting previous recording methods in the production, distribution, and exhibition of culture. The other is the *Audience Revolution*. This revolution is the fragmentation of the formerly massed broadcast audience and the general rise in participatory and experiential content for audiences, ranging from the explosive growth in computer and video gaming to the rise in long-form "quality" TV shows that demand more involvement, such as *Lost* (ABC, 2004–2010).

This revolution in particular and both revolutions together suggest that an active audience has finally overtly changed the industries. The most recent and perhaps

conclusive trend has been toward increased direct consumer spending on media products. An eye-opening quote from a prominent communication investment research report (a genre that usually favors sober trend-spotting) supports the epochal change: "In a related trend that indicates a seminal shift in audience from ad-supported to consumer-controlled media, time spent with consumer-supported media surpassed ad-supported in 2008 for the first time, a culmination of two decades of secular shift" (Veronis Suhler Stevenson, 2009, 2) The change is driven by the rise in the category of subscription TV, which includes not only cable but also set-top, DVR, and other computer-driven subscriptions. This category only measured 6% of US end-user spending on media in 1976, while in 2008 it hovered around 45%. There has been a less dramatic increase in spending on the combination of home video (DVD and VCR) and film box office, alongside severe decreases in spending on recorded music and newspapers.

Raymond Williams's (1974) critique of Marshall McLuhan's technological determinism helps frame the relationship between the technological and audience revolutions. This is because Williams constructs a model of mutual determination between culture and technology by describing a structure of feeling he calls "mobile privatization." Williams sees its forerunner in the domestic plays of Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov. More to the point, at the time of his writing, Williams was understanding the living room radio and television as primary technologies of privatization. Transistor radios and the Walkman made these technologies mobile even in the analogue age, before the digital breakthrough. Subsequent to Williams's lifetime, mobile privatization has been accelerated by wired products such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and the iPod. In the 1990s the entire technology of media communications was transformed to add Internet connectiveness to Williams's original description of mobile privatization. His ability to be so prescient in 1977 was not based on his intimate knowledge of emerging personal computing, but his ability to describe preexisting cultural patterns. These patterns shaped the uses to which digital technology would be applied.

For example, social networking has very recently become a phenomenon that is the latest embodiment of mobile privatization. This describes electronic sites that allow Internet users to create communities of "friends" who can share text messages, images, and sounds. Platforms for these sites have been shifting rapidly, such as the sudden rise in 2006 of MySpace, which suffered an equally precipitous fall when Facebook and Twitter became ubiquitous two years later. They were created by small companies and yet have attracted the interest of political parties and large industries interested in the ability of social networks to bring together audiences and citizenries. Some actions have been premature, such as News Corporation's 2005 purchase of MySpace, while others have still to mature, such as Microsoft's partnership with Facebook. What can already be concluded is that these electronic spaces will play pivotal roles in the future age of cultural convergence across media and across geographical boundaries. Viral marketing is the electronic version of the old fashioned word of mouth and already has been used to support TV shows, movies, and various

music products. The culture industries are responding to the twin revolutions in a constantly evolving outflanking maneuver. This results in a dialectical logic, as when people use technological revolutions to create new communities which in turn are made into audiences by culture industries using the conglomerating strategy to contain the new technologies.

This is a paradigm shift and creates exciting times in the analysis of culture industries. Something is happening. Because people are spending more directly on media, analysts hypothesize that people are using media in new ways in their culture. Shifts in revenue streams take advantage of both the Audience and Technological Revolutions. The earlier frames of market versus corporate producers and passive versus active audiences obscure the complexities of the twenty-first century, where there has been fragmentation and consolidation, engagement and docility, and the interpenetration of work and leisure time.³ Market triumph has been followed by the general market collapse of the last few years, while the horizontally integrated media conglomerates seem relatively secure. Digital technology has increased opportunities for do-it-yourself production and distribution (DIY), although to be sure the available products continue to be dominated by the output of a few big corporations. On the audience side, the activities of consuming, playing, and otherwise interacting can be judged as active or passive or as a hybrid. The only clear conclusion is that previous categories have become blurred.

Therefore, analysis of the culture industries needs to take a new look at the relationship between post-Fordist blends of work and leisure and the structures of the culture industries themselves. I therefore have sequenced the rest of this chapter as follows:

- Democratic diversity and industrial formations.
- Convergence and fragmentation of media forms.
- The active audience as cultural reflections of the shift to post-Fordist labor practices.

Democratic Diversity and Industrial Formations

“Authenticity” inspired the original cultural theorists to look at cultural industrialization. This is still operative although contemporary industry analysts tend to shy away from such an interpretative category. Instead, many are motivated to examine the culture industries to see if these industries can provide the necessary diversity for democracies. This is certainly a vital goal in the mass representative democracies that have become the model for many nation-states. The diversity-of-voices concern was raised by James Madison in the earliest moments of the United States when the country was both rural and fragmented, and was an inspiration for the freedom of speech clause in the first amendment of the US Constitution. However, the US

experience has not proven that mere freedom of speech will safeguard the ability of diverse views to reach everyone. Therefore, several other countries have mandated that broadcast industries provide diverse content. These results have also been questionable for true Madisonian diversity and many US citizens view such mandates as subverting freedom of speech.

Instead, early twentieth-century US citizens relied on various antitrust laws to break up culture industry monopolies. These laws were designed more to safeguard economic competition and development and less to ensure a democratic plurality of voices in mass media, and plurality remained an elusive goal. As a consequence, in the final third of the last century, the government largely abandoned applying anti-trust laws to media, accepting the argument that the proliferation of new media has guaranteed a diversity of voices. New media have provided better outlets for suppressed voices in some countries. Yet their effectiveness is questioned and in older democracies they have not reinvigorated a public sphere of debate. The charge is that cable TV and other dominant media have led to substituting the theatrics of political debate for the actual benefits of diversity. There continues to be the perennial investigation of whether communication industries are actually serving the needs of democracy (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Such an investigation combines issues of globalization and the growth of the culture industries.

Globalization and Media Conglomerates

The continuing trend of technological improvements since the earliest forms of mechanical reproduction has been a globalization of culture. This was first noticed with the 1920s export of Hollywood films, and has of course only accelerated with the latest technological innovations. In the very first instance, right-wing political leaders worried about the international spread of democratic ideals subverting traditional loyalties to the state. Subsequent to World War II, left wingers theorized that the globalization of culture, dominated by US film and information exports, was leading to media imperialism and the spread of neoliberal market values. This model fell somewhat out of favor by the late 1980s since after the initial dominance of US exports there has been a growth in the export of television products from other countries. In addition some scholars have argued that audiences read cultural content in ways that thwart the dominant ideologies and that this is especially true in the reception of foreign cultural products (Liebes & Katz, 1993).

However, there is an acknowledged correlation between the rise of global media conglomerates and the ideology of neoliberal economics (Carey, 1999). Global media conglomerates now dominate the culture industries and their very premise of operation seems to defy national regulation of cultural marketplaces. Many conglomerates hire pundits to explain marketplace wisdom and to denounce government regulations, while these same firms benefit from the erosion of a single nation's

ability to limit their activities and size. Therefore critical concern finds that it is a seamless effort to go from analyzing global monoculturalism to examining cross-media domination (Miller, Govil, McMurrin, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005; Wasko, 1995). The rise of new (predominantly digital) media has enhanced opportunities for cross-media marketing, which threatens diversity by recycling the same content across film, television, video games, and more. The new media of cable and home video inspired a particularly relentless consolidation of media industries across media in the mid-1980s. This oligopoly was already in place when digital methods of distribution started appearing in the 1990s and was able to maintain its control of DVD technology, but seems less certain as to what to do in the age of Internet downloads. The news industry has been upended and the music industry has been changed by such downloads, while the film and television industries are still experimenting with the Internet.

A brief summation of the historical transition from vertical integration to horizontal integration will aid understanding of the current pattern of market control. In the first half of the twentieth century, Hollywood and broadcasting pursued a classic model of vertical integration. This is when a culture industry company creates divisions that handle production, distribution, and exhibition within just one medium. The classic factory model of Hollywood studios was to produce films, distribute them, and own many of the theaters in which these films were shown. Even as this system developed the government used antitrust laws to break it up. This culminated in the Paramount consent decree of 1948 that forced Hollywood studios to divest their theaters. In broadcasting, networks tried to produce and distribute shows and own as many stations as possible. The federal regulator pushed back by imposing limits on the number of stations one broadcasting network could own (encoded in a variety of laws going as far back as the Communications Act of 1934 and continuing in a much weaker fashion after Congress passed a law limiting ownership to 39% of the national audience in 2004) and with the finance-syndication rules that separated television production from television distribution and was enforced by the Federal Communications Commission from 1971 until 1995.

The strategy to dominate shifted in the 1980s. Culture industry companies became very interested in horizontal integration. This is when one company owns divisions in several different media such as film, broadcast television, cable television, and more. Nowadays a media company is not worth its salt unless it owns major divisions in at least half a dozen media. There had always been some attempts to do this, such as in the 1920s when US newspapers moved into radio, radio moved into film and recorded music, etc. In other countries with smaller audiences than the United States there had been horizontal integration on a national scale, such as between television and film production in many European countries. Then in the 1980s in the United States there was accelerated pursuit of horizontal integration to create truly “transnational” media companies. In addition, News Corporation – an Australian company – became a nominal US company in order to solidify its transnational status. Sony is the biggest non-US media corporation, although its Japanese orientation has dramatically eroded since the appointment of Howard Stringer as its CEO.

What follows is a brief history of the contemporary wave of media conglomerate building. The strongest precedent was Walt Disney's visionary use of film and television to promote theme parks and merchandise in the suburban age. His innovations in the 1950s remained somewhat dormant until the cable and video revolution. Ted Turner is the 1980s business executive of the same visionary caliber as Walt Disney in his ability to respond to new media technologies with new business plans. He had already married broadcast, cable, and satellite technologies to kick-start the Turner Broadcasting System (organized from previous companies in 1979). He understood the need to sustain a media conglomerate with a deep library of material and so bought the famous film studio MGM in 1986. Although he was unable to finance the purchase and had to resell it within two years, his action began the wave of culture industry consolidation in response to new technologies. A year previously, News Corporation had taken over Twentieth Century Fox. This seemed merely opportunistic until News Corporation created Fox Broadcasting a year later, amplifying Turner's strategy to use various media platforms to aggressively sell content. Fox was the first new US television network to emerge and survive since the demise of Dumont three decades previously.

In 1985–1986, all three traditional US broadcasting networks switched ownership. One of the new owners, General Electric (which bought NBC) was an example of an electronic company buying an entertainment distributor. An international event in this trend was the Japanese manufacturer Sony buying Columbia Records in 1988 and then acquiring Columbia Pictures in 1989. Matsushita tried a similar strategy of merging hardware and content divisions when it bought MCA/Universal in 1991. Unlike Sony it gave up on this strategy and sold Universal in 1995. Ultimately General Electric acquired Universal to form NBC–Universal in 2004. In January 2011 General Electric sold 51% of NBC–Universal to the cable operator Comcast.

Other noteworthy expansions occurred when Warner Communications merged with the publishing and cable giant Time-Life in 1989 to form Time–Warner. It acquired Turner Broadcasting in 1995. The 1993 takeover of Paramount film studios by Viacom (previously a television distributor) was significantly financed by the video store chain Blockbuster. The Walt Disney Company had been building itself up internally until it went on an acquisition spree with the purchase of the boutique movie distributor Miramax in 1993 and then buying the mammoth TV network ABC in 1995 (ABC brought many major cable networks into the Disney group). Viacom went on to acquire the CBS network in a 1999 stock swap. The trend continued with the 2000 purchase of Time–Warner by America Online (AOL).

This last-mentioned purchase was the crest of the wave. Time–Warner spun off AOL in 2009. At this point we can generalize that major film, music, and network and cable television operations have been merged by and large into big media companies: Walt Disney Company, Time–Warner, Viacom, News Corporation, Sony, and Comcast. This trend is paralleled in Europe and Latin America with such major media companies as Vivendi (primarily French), Bertelsmann (primarily German), Organizações Globo (primarily Brazilian), and Televisa (primarily Mexican). There

are a few emerging culture industries where distributors remain autonomous (electronic games and e-commerce), but horizontal integration is dominant.

Deregulation and Neoliberalism

This wave of building media conglomerates occurred in a very favorable political environment in the United States and, subsequently, in Europe and Asia. As the economic boom of the immediate postwar period, cultivated by a mix of private and public planning and often financed by governments, became self-sustaining, a political philosophy of neoliberalism gained credence in industrialized countries. This philosophy held that markets were creative and self-correcting to a much greater extent than public regulations and government actions. As neoliberal politicians gained power, they implemented this philosophy with policies that were labeled *deregulation*. In the United States, this consisted of lifting laws and policies that had placed limits on ownership and business practices, culminating in the Telecommunications Act of 1996. In Europe and Asia this neoliberalism was expressed by allowing private investors to create commercial alternatives to public broadcasting monopolies.

Neoliberal policy tries to enhance competition between media companies by loosening various rules. The result has been debated. A relatively unanticipated and ironic result occurred in US radio when Clear Channel, a billboard advertising company located in San Antonio, Texas, went on a spending spree so that at one point it owned almost 25% of radio stations. The company continues to monopolize radio with detrimental results for public uses of broadcasting (Klinenberg, 2007).

Political Timidity, Rudeness, and Partisanship

Thus deregulation – which supposedly got the government out of the media business – inspired media conglomerates to return the favor by promoting political agendas, particularly those of the government. For instance, Clear Channel became notorious for orchestrating a campaign against musicians who opposed the US government's war policy in 2003. In general, deregulated media conglomerates give their governments' viewpoints as often as public broadcasters. Although in the UK it was the publicly owned British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) that expressed skepticism about government statements concerning the Iraqi threat, it paid the price when the British government used the 2003 Hutton inquiry to force the BBC into a more submissive tone, which continues to prevail. Whenever the British government favors commercial competition with the BBC, it has the overtone of intimidating political coverage. Recently it has been revealed that British politicians sought favorable treatment from the commercial News Corporation to scandalous degrees, as deregulation allowed the

company to gain bigger parts of the British audience. In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi took advantage of deregulation to build up Mediaset as a broadcasting rival to public system RAI. After he used his resulting influence to become prime minister, critics charged that he was not at all reluctant to use both Mediaset and RAI to control the political agenda. Thus deregulation historically (despite neoliberal claims) does not foster media independence from politics as much as it engenders political favoritism.

In the era of horizontal integration such political concerns spill over from news operations onto entertainment divisions. US examples abound in the tense situation of the Iraq invasion: Viacom allowed pro-government pressure groups to force it to delete a biopic of Ronald Reagan from its CBS schedule. The Walt Disney Company decided not to distribute *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Time–Warner refused to release David O. Russell’s documentary on the first Gulf War.⁴ In all these cases, media conglomerates had already financed production. It was fairly obvious that horizontally integrated companies feared retribution from the government against their far-flung enterprises.

These kinds of incidents are in keeping with the expectation that as entertainment companies acquired broadcasting networks, they would also acquire the traditional broadcaster’s political timidity. Networks had historically achieved this by maintaining “objective” coverage of news and avoiding controversies in entertainment. The technological revolution has subverted this “objective” consensus. The clearest example is News Corporation extending the overt right-wing “populism” of its British and US newspapers into its cable (and to a lesser extent broadcasting) news operations in the United States. Its overt partisanship is not timid consensus but brazen narrowcasting. This turn toward broadcast partisanship can be traced back to post-television radio, which was losing its broad audience. Talk radio started in the 1960s and hosts and callers turned increasingly to partisan political topics until its political force became noticeable in the 1980s and 1990s.

Fox and other cable programmers learned from talk radio to reach profitable niche audiences with tabloid news shows such as *A Current Affair* (WNYW, 1986–1996) and *Hard Copy* (Paramount Television, 1989–1999). Specifically, when News Corporation moved into US television with its 1986 creation of Fox TV, its CEO, Rupert Murdoch, decided that the new network would compete with the established three networks by pursuing a niche audience rather than the entire audience. Their entertainment programming featured dysfunctional protagonists and rude dialogue. This was noticeable in their two influential hits, *Married with Children* (Fox, 1987–1997) and *The Simpsons* (Fox, 1989–current). This rudeness became a general feature of Fox programming. Talk radio already linked rudeness and partisan politics. Cable pundits were increasingly using this formula when News Corporation launched the Fox News Channel (FNC) in 1996. FNC gave its news and opinion shows a shrill right-wing slant. While this strategy carried favor with politicians (mostly Republicans), a deeper motivation is to pursue profitable angry conservative audience segments even at the risk of alienating other significant parts of the broad mainstream. Media vulgarity is a global trend. It fragments the audience and has been linked to a general trend against consensus building in contemporary democracies.⁵

The Active Audience as Cultural Reflection of the Shift to Post-Fordist Labor Practices

From the perspective of the audience revolution, partisanship and fragmentation are part of a general cultural drive. They appeal to “activated” audiences, which are somewhat distinct from active audiences. This inspires culture industries research into the shifting balance between work and leisure. When Adorno and Horkheimer wrote their essay, labor and therefore leisure were organized according to the Fordist model. This presumed first and foremost that home and the workplace were two separate locations and that labor time was quite different than leisure time. The Fordist model was named after Henry Ford and the practices he used in creating his huge automobile company. His company had broken down the work process into simple and efficient steps, which is known as Taylorism.⁶ Taylorism also included the idea that work time and output were quite predictable. After a long fight with organized labor the typical work shift was reduced to eight hours (optimally from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m.). The Fordist model presupposed that most work was associated with manufacturing, the prevalence of high manufacturing wages, the decline in the number of people working two jobs, and that only one parent in a family would actually go to work. This also led to predictable leisure habits. Therefore, culture industries could produce and market mass audiences to advertisers (Smythe, 1994).

However, these things have declined to the point where we now speak of a “post-Fordist” era of work. The great changes already underway in the United States in the 1960s became globally apparent by the 1970s and therefore roughly anticipate the revolutions in the culture industries. The three most measurable changes were the return of women to salaried work after their departure from such jobs in the immediate aftermath of World War II; the shift of work in advanced countries from manufacturing to service (in the broad sense of the word) industries; and increasing affluence due to a variety of factors. In some countries wages continued to rise even through the 1990s. The US experience was that real wages did not increase much after the 1970s, but the increase in the number of people working in two- and multiple-income families, together with lower costs of borrowing and lower taxes, also led to the spread of affluent lifestyles. US families led the global consumerist expansion of the final decades of the twentieth century. This rise in post-Fordist labor and middle-class lifestyles was duplicated elsewhere.

Thus we have three trends to consider: the expansion of the work sphere (including women); the shift of work from the well-defined time and space of manufacturing to the relatively more fluid requirements of service (which often involves at-home preparation and shifting time commitments to meet clients’ needs); and the spread of middle-class values and consumerist aspirations.

Technologies are successful in as far as they fit into or facilitate these trends. Quite often technologies blur the boundaries between work and leisure as developers seek to streamline work. Post-Fordist labor valorizes the concept of multi-tasking and

flexible scheduling. This is exemplified by the personal computer (PC), which does many things at once for a single user. In the 1950s and 1960s, individual visionaries such as Vannevar Bush, J. C. R. Licklider, and Douglas Engelbart foresaw and pushed the hybridity of the computer. The switch to a graphic user interface and the development of the mouse eventually made the personal computer a medium of multiple human sign systems, ranging from music to pictures to photographs to text. This therefore encourages the multiple functions of work, entertainment, and information gathering.

Even before the PC was widespread, post-Fordist labor practices were pressuring the temporal schedule of everyday life. The nine-to-five schedule had become a fossil in the service economy. These pressures explain the adoption of pre-digital media technologies that allowed flexible cultural distribution. Not everyone can be home at 8:30 p.m. to watch *The Cosby Show* (NBC, 1984–1992). However, technologies that had facilitated flexible work time could also deliver flexible leisure. An early example of this culture industrial strategy was the marketing of Sony's VCR – Betamax – for the purpose of *time-shifting*: recording TV programs at home, to view later. The VCR became the phenomenal media success story of the mid-1970s.

As more people bought the VCR to record TV shows in order to watch at more convenient times, they improvised other uses of the VCR. Exchanges of pornographic video cassettes developed into the video rental market.⁷ At this point people were using the VCR to rent mainstream movies and this in turn inspired the development of multiplex movie theaters, which also allowed people greater control of when to see a movie. The dialectic continued as the culture industries moved from the cassette to the DVD in 1996. Time-shifting could largely be accomplished through digital apparatuses (DVRs) and flexible programming, while the enhanced capacity of digital storage devices offered additional features, giving viewers the feeling of more participation.

The PC first reached a mass market because of spreadsheet programs and other time-saving devices. In turn its popularity supported the revitalization of computer games, which in turn supported the universal adoption of color monitors and audio-visual software. At the same time the growth of electronic mail and the Internet reached enough of a mass to motivate dramatically increased adoption of PC use for communication and for telecommuting and other forms of working at home. Email and Internet usage blurred the distinction between work and leisure. Eventually, the PC emerged as a primary training tool for work, but since it is located in the home, such training takes the form of entertainment. This is most apparent in gaming. A study conducted at Harvard Business School established that online gamers develop the ability to interact with strangers via their computers and that this leads to unique work skills for the contemporary work space (Beck & Wade, 2004).

Digital computing has affected the production, distribution, and reception of culture. But its ability to do many things at once often conflates and confuses analysis of the audience revolution.

The culture industries became adept at offering consumers a dialectic between a culture of convenience and a culture of involvement and participation. Involvement and participation are not a response to work pressures on time usage but a reaction to another type of post-Fordist work pressure. The shift to service jobs changes the general social psychology of the worker. These jobs are premised on working well with clients, therefore motivating a rise in “emotional labor,” a term used by Hochschild (1983) to describe the increasing demand on workers to control and use their emotions in order to give value to the client. This is a new work discipline constraint that motivates the desire for compensatory leisure practices. In other words there is an intuitive connection between the rise in emotional labor and the audiences’ desire for mass media simulations of new experiences and engaged emotions. People now pursue experience by playing games and buying DVDs with added features, paying additional sums to watch 3D movies, “quality” television, and more.

The growth of video games is the most dramatic development in the culture of pursuing experience. US consumer spending on video games topped \$64 billion in 2004, accounting for approximately 8% of total media spending (Veronis Suhler Stevenson). There are comparable statistics in most affluent nations. Its growth is a counter-trend to time-shifting and multi-tasking since video games in all forms (console, computer, online, and arcade) squander time, at least from the work ethos perspective of late capitalism. The greatest attention grabbers are games such as *Grand Theft Auto*, which takes a minimum of ten hours to play through. These games are evidence that post-Fordist labor has changed what mass culture audiences want – from passive acceptance of linear narratives to active participation in simulations of experience.

Active engagement and time control explains the shift from advertiser-supported media to media directly paid for by the audience. Audiences are motivated to buy a console game or take out a subscription to premium cable rather than just accept the sitcom that a broadcast network is offering on “free” television.⁸ They will spend billions of dollars not only on the software and hardware of gaming but also for the virtual assets of online gaming (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009, Ch. 5).

Return to Industry

The culture industries are continually both shaping and adapting to everyday life. The circumstances of post-Fordist labor have motivated people to pay more for culture than previously. The global populace now pays more directly for mass media even while consuming as much advertising as before.⁹ Traditionally, the culture industries relied heavily on one payment method per industry, both direct and indirect. Indirect payment is defined by payment from sources other than the audience, such as advertisers (including corporate sponsors), governments (subsidies and grants; collection of obligatory license fees), and donations from patrons (a re-feudalization of culture?).

Direct payment includes those who pay per view (PPV), those who pay per product (direct purchase of records, DVDs, etc.), and those who pay by subscription (typical of Internet, cable, and satellite users). Of course, individuals are also responsible for indirect payments either through taxes or increased prices on advertised consumer goods.

Now, every corporation seeks multiple payment methods. For example, public broadcasters in most nations accept advertising, while commercial Internet providers and cablecasters charge for both subscriptions and advertisements. The increases are most prominent in visual media such as films and television. The very latest manifestation of this is that studios obtain increased payment for 3D movies as well as for Internet delivery of films and television shows. The audio (radio and music) and print industries have also been experimenting in seeking multiple revenue streams from the Internet and satellites.

The conglomerate structure of most entertainment industries has allowed them to weather the volatility of new delivery systems. Internet file sharing around the world has been an unprecedented challenge for the culture industries. The companies have not been complacent. They have obtained government protection in monitoring and shutting down file sharing and other computing threats. On the positive side media companies are constantly experimenting with strategies to capture the profitable potential of Internet marketing and distribution.¹⁰ Meanwhile, cultural labor has had to struggle to get these companies to share their new Internet revenues. In general, digital technology has not been friendly to organized labor; most notably, video game labor has had a hard time organizing.

While things are still in flux, the corporate power of the culture industries has not diminished, which brings us back to the issues of authenticity and diversity. For both of these reasons many hope that the radical potential of digital production and distribution may still emerge. The concept of “long tail” marketing is one of the more recent influential concepts inspiring this hope. This model states that without the physical bottlenecks of limited shelf space, Internet distributors can offer vastly expanded inventory and that consumers are responding by buying more low-volume niche items instead of blockbuster top-ten items (Anderson, 2006). More filmmakers are exploring self-distribution, just as more of their compatriots are exploring self-distribution in music and fiction publishing. To date few careers or new companies have actually been sustained by self-distribution and micro sales, but no one can deny the potential for grassroots cultural production to be an entry point for new cultural producers (for a particularly hopeful analysis of film, see Tryon, 2009). For now we must explain the continuation of existing patterns of power in the culture industries and can only wait on whether digital distributions will upset these patterns.

The analysis as well as the state of the culture industries are much more in flux than when Adorno and Horkheimer wrote. We are in the middle of parallel technological revolutions – an audience revolution and the transformation of basic divisions of labor and leisure.

NOTES

- 1 Raymond Williams (2010) has shown that both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were not as mono-deterministic as many have assumed.
- 2 I like the distinction between global or international companies and transnational ones. The former are traditional national companies who happen to do much if not most of their business in foreign countries. In contrast, transnational companies have a less certain allegiance to one country since internal power and assets are distributed in many different centers.
- 3 An exciting fresh approach to the interpenetration of leisure and work is provided by Roberto Igarza (2009), the title of whose book translates as “Bubbles of Leisure: New Forms of Consumer Culture.”
- 4 Time–Warner had only a minor role as a broadcasting network since its only terrestrial network at the time was the relatively small Warner Bros. Nonetheless its overall size, its importance as a producer for other US networks, and its extensive cable operations easily account for the company’s sensitivity to political pressures.
- 5 There have been some historical media offerings in which everyone participated and which took on the nature of “media events.” Dayan and Katz (1992) explain that these were often broadcasts of nation-building rituals such as funerals, sports, and state visits by important leaders. Participation consisted of audiences actively suspending normal behavior in order to witness these broadcasts. More recently, Katz and Liebes (2007) have noticed the post-1980s relative demise of such media events and link the demise to audience fragmentation.
- 6 Frederick Taylor (1856–1915) had used time and motion studies to simplify work and management in various industries. His techniques were adopted worldwide.
- 7 There was a format competition between Betamax and Matsushita’s VHS at the time. They could have coexisted if people had continued to buy the VCR for time-shifting. However, when they started to buy VCRs in order to rent videos and distributors resisted carrying two different tape formats for rented videos, VHS had too much “external” advantage and Sony withdrew Betamax from the consumer market.
- 8 In the US context, “free” broadcasting refers to broadcasting that is paid for by advertising rather than by the consumer directly. Even in these cases the consumer has spent the money it takes to buy the equipment for such “free” content.
- 9 In the nineteenth century, newspaper publisher Charles Scripps observed that people invariably spend the same amount of their disposable income on mass media. Scholars have measured this hunch and found that it was roughly true from the turn of the last century until the 1970s. Since then, media spending as a percentage of disposable income has been rising significantly.
- 10 Brian Winston (1996) has theorized that corporate suppression of the radical potential of new technologies is practically a historical constant.

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Advertising and Consumer Culture

A Historical Review

Inger L. Stole

ABSTRACT

This chapter argues that the proliferation of advertising has been key to the creation and expansion of a modern consumer society. It explores literature on the growth of advertising with an emphasis on developments in the early part of the twentieth century. Using an institutional approach, it discusses the impact of advertising on discourses surrounding the emerging culture of consumption. Throughout the twentieth century, advertising and the consumer society it commanded were challenged, testing the political powers of marketing forces and their supporting institutions in both the cultural and political arenas. Commercial forces won most of these battles but were unable to eliminate a general uneasiness with commercialization.

Introduction

Since the late nineteenth century, consumer culture has become a defining element of what the United States embodies. Central to this development has been the rise of national advertising. Since the end of the Civil War, advertising has morphed from relative obscurity into a \$280 billion industry leaving few of our social, political, cultural, and even educational institutions unaffected.¹

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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During the past few decades, advertising and consumer issues have attracted an increased amount of scholarly interest, giving impetus to an interdisciplinary and rapidly expanding field of academic study. The task of capturing the complete history is complex, demanding a wide range of methodological and conceptual frameworks and approaches.

This chapter employs an institutional approach, locating the proliferation of advertising as the key component in the creation and expansion of a modern consumer society. Drawing upon published works in the field, I explore the growth of advertising with an emphasis on developments in the early part of the twentieth century, and discuss their impact on discourses surrounding the culture of consumption that emerged in tandem. This did not mean that these developments were automatically accepted. Throughout the twentieth century, advertising and the consumer society it commanded were challenged, even condemned, testing the political powers of marketing forces and their supporting institutions. Although commercial forces won most of these battles, a general uneasiness continued to linger throughout the twentieth century and occasionally flared up, although always in new ways that reflected the ongoing changes caused by commercialization.²

This chapter delineates how, periodically throughout the twentieth century, organized consumer complaints would emerge, leaving commercial forces in search of political defense. The first organized consumer protest emerged during the Progressive era when activists decried deplorable industry practices and pressed for legislative reform. The second occurred in response to the proliferation of advertising after World War I when a feisty 1930s consumer movement demanded corporate accountability and more reliable information about products. The 1960s witnessed the rise of yet another consumer movement. This time, advocates demanded better consumer protection laws, increased product safety, and increased government oversight of corporate conduct. I end my essay with a brief description of the fourth wave of consumer activism that emerged toward the end of the twentieth century. It encompassed concerns and unsolved issues from each of the three previous consumer movements but this time in a global context.

The Rise of National Advertising and a Modern Consumer Culture

Technological innovations combined with a massive influx of immigrant workers to the United States' burgeoning industrial centers contributed to a record production of goods in the years immediately following the Civil War. Companies grew larger, often dominating their field and producing far beyond what their local markets could absorb. Limited outlets hampered the distribution of goods and this, in turn, threatened capital investment in machinery, labor, and products. Recognizing the need to seek larger markets, manufacturers turned to national advertising.

Advertising must be understood, first and foremost, as a business expense. But this is far from sufficient; the United States has had a private-enterprise economy throughout its history but national advertising emerged as a dominant institution only in the twentieth century. Advertising was in use before, of course, but most ads were akin to what today is called classified advertising, that is, dry factual reports informing customers about products and their availability. A merchant might place a notice in the local paper informing customers about a new shipment of lace, calico, or French milled soaps, for example. Following the Civil War, advertising began its climb to prominence. (For a discussion of advertising's role in creating national markets, see Pope, 1983, Ch. 2; Strasser, 1989; Tedlow, 1990.) By the early 1900s firms such as the California Fruit Canners Association, Royal Baking Powder, National Biscuits, and National Candy dominated 40–70% of their individual industries, while American Can, Du Pont, and Eastman Kodak controlled over 70% of the markets in their categories (Lamoreaux, 1985, p. 3).

As industries became more concentrated, often with one firm dominating more than half of the output, it became increasingly difficult for new actors to enter the market. Each of the large firms in what is commonly referred to as oligopolistic markets was large enough to survive a price war. But to engage in price competition would only reduce the total revenue going into a given industry. Thus, they gravitated toward a pricing structure that maximized the total revenue going into the industry. Understood this way, advertising becomes a mandatory business expense for all firms in an oligopolistic market to protect their market shares from attack. To large corporations advertising represents a competitive weapon superior to cutthroat price competition in the battle to expand and protect market shares. Thus, in the early twentieth century advertising became not merely an adjunct to the “real business” of manufacturing; it became as vital as the steel, the workers, and the machinery because it created its own byproduct: the loyal consumer. Instead of representing a competitive selling of goods and services, advertising came to represent the competitive creation of consumer habits – and of consumers.

Because the products offered by these oligopolistic firms tended to vary little in terms of price and quality – one soap, shaving cream, or toothpaste was pretty much like another – they did not necessarily “sell themselves.” Merely stating a product's physical attributes and price did not provide a potential consumer with a reason to purchase a particular product over its competitors. Advertising copywriters, therefore, had to come up with ways to make consumers prefer one brand over another. This led to advertising strategies that attempted to capture and exploit consumers' emotions. (The classic statements remain Veblen, 1927, 1938, 1954; see also Baran & Sweezy, 1966; Curti, 1967; Jhally, 1990.) The role of advertising, then, was twofold. First, it served to establish an aura of prestige or desirability around a given product or service, thereby making it less susceptible to price competition. Second, advertising permitted firms to increase their sales without cutting prices, thereby maintaining healthy profit margins.

Advertising as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) rose in direct proportion to the increase in giant corporations operating in oligopolistic markets.

It went from less than .3% in 1865 to more than 3% of GDP by 1920 (Fox, 1997, p. 39). Between 1880 and 1900, for example, the annual amount spent on advertising ballooned from \$200 million to \$542 million and helped lay the foundation for the growth and success of well-known companies such as Coca-Cola, Campbell Soup, Carnation, Quaker Oats, Heinz, Pillsbury, Colgate-Palmolive, Libby, and Procter & Gamble (Fox, 1997, pp. 38–39; Sivulka, 1998, p. 47). Since the 1920s advertising expenditures as a percentage of GDP have remained in the range of 2–3%. By 1930, advertising expenditures rose to \$2.6 billion annually (Pope, 1983, p. 23; Roa, 1998, p. 926; for a discussion of business expenditures on advertising between 1880 and 1942, see Olney, 1991, Ch. 5).

Contributing to, and profiting mightily from, the growth in national advertising was an increasingly commercial mass media. Fundamental changes within the newspaper and magazine industries at the turn of the twentieth century helped develop a media system that simultaneously served publishers' need for revenues and advertisers' desire to reach a broader public. In contrast to the pre-Civil War era when most newspapers functioned as partisan organs to gain support for a political viewpoint, many postwar owners ran their papers as business enterprises. As start-up costs and daily expenses increased, publishers no longer viewed their primary mission as that of rousing readers to support political causes. Their new objective was to offer advertisers a large audience at low cost and still turn huge profits. By the early twentieth century this had become the dominant model as an increasing number of newspapers accepted or actively sought advertising revenues to offset their production costs and came to view their readers as a commodity that could be exchanged for advertising patronage (Baldasty, 1992, pp. 59–60; see also McChesney, 1997, pp. 9–17). In 1880, for example, 44% of all newspaper revenue came from advertising. Ten years later the figure approached 50%, and by 1919 US newspapers depended on advertising for two-thirds of their income (Baldasty, 1992, p. 59; Pope, 1983, p. 30).

No medium was more affected by advertising than the magazine industry. In the late nineteenth century publishers produced a flood of national magazines for popular consumption. While differing in their editorial approach, *McClure's*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Munsey's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Century*, *Delineator*, and *Scribner's* quickly gained favor with middle-class and mainly female readers, a group that advertisers were eager to reach. Unlike most newspapers, which tended to reach people in a limited geographical area, the new generation of magazines offered individual copies for sale at newsstands and therefore found a national market. (For a discussion of the rise of a national magazine industry, see Filler, 1993; Ohman, 1998, Ch. 2; Schneirov, 1994.) Between 1882 and 1885 the average October issue of *Harper's* devoted seven pages to product advertising. Ten years later the average had climbed to an astonishing 85 pages. And whereas the November 1880 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* carried only 13 pages of advertising, the December 1904 issue boasted 121 advertising pages. Other magazines could point to similar changes. By the turn of the twentieth century magazine publishers were increasingly relying on brand-name advertising for their income (Ohman, 1998, pp. 83–85; Pope, 1983, pp. 43–45; Sivulka, 1998, pp. 82–83; Strasser, 1989, p. 91).

As the twentieth century progressed people relied increasingly on mass production to fill their product needs, and US citizens began to think of themselves as consumers. Although many products had become cheap and readily available, they represented a trade-off. Consumers, who only a generation earlier had been able to monitor the raw materials' quality and the conditions under which the final products were made, increasingly found themselves at the manufacturers' mercy. Household routines involved fewer homemade items and consumption, as opposed to production, took on a central role (Strasser, 1989, p. 255; see also Ewen, 1976, p. 115; Ewen & Ewen, 1982, pp. 57–63). While some mourned a rapidly diminishing way of life, others welcomed the changes. Mass production of products that previously had required hours of work by skilled artisans enabled many people, including the poor and recent immigrants, to dress nicely and buy objects that only a few decades earlier had been reserved for the well-to-do. Writing in the early twentieth century, economist Simon N. Patten (1968) celebrated the liberatory aspects of consumer culture; a theory supported by several modern-day scholars. Kathy Peiss (1986), for example, argues that participation in consumer culture provided a coveted ticket to social acceptance and freedom from patriarchal dominance for immigrant women. Andrew Heinze (1990) claims that turn-of-the century Jewish immigrants valued consumer products as a means for achieving social assimilation and acceptance.

Although new and better merchandise could improve the material aspect of people's lives, it was less suited to fulfill other functions. Consumer society, because it emphasized individual solutions to collective problems, helped articulate a new form of citizen sovereignty. A frequent theme in early twentieth-century advertisements was egalitarianism through consumption. Advertising historian Roland Marchand (1985, pp. 217–222) has described the ways in which advertisers stressed the notion that thanks to mass production, rich and poor alike were bathing with the same soaps, eating the same packaged cereals, and smoking the same brands of cigarettes. Consumer society, because it emphasized individual solutions to collective problems, helped articulate a new form of citizen sovereignty. Gradually winning acceptance was the view that it was in the marketplace, and not at the polls, where the public should cast its vote. Within this new society, argues Charles McGovern, consumption was becoming a cornerstone, and this new version of democracy equated, even replaced, participation in civic life with spending dollars in the marketplace: "Consumption was the foundation of a distinctly American way of life; this was the new order of the ages" (McGovern, 1998, p. 50; 2006). In this setup, advertising had become the dominant lingo.

Unlike earlier forms of advertising, the brand-name variety tended to avoid copy that provided consumers with information, statistics, and the ability to comparison shop. This trend became even more pronounced after World War I. Many advertising executives learned from the successful use of wartime propaganda that powerful images and slogans provided a key to controlling the public's actions, including their consumer choices (Ewen, 1996, p. 127). Trademarks or brand names helped serve this purpose, as did advertisements that stressed glossy illustrations over information.

The emotional attributes associated with a trademark, and the corollary idea that the consumer could best be reached by an appeal to irrational thinking and unconscious desire, fit manufacturers' purpose perfectly. That scientific opinion buttressed this view legitimized, even justified, the intensified focus of business and industry on the "irrational" consumer (Curti, 1967, pp. 334–357). Marchand has shown how advertisers, playing a dual role as both coach and confidant, "guided" consumers through the task of choosing the "right" products and played on their fears and insecurities. Consumer citizenship might be easily obtained but consequences for opting out were severe. People were told that bad breath, old-fashioned furnishings, and the wrong cigarette brands could hinder professional and social success and that failure to use certain products for health, hygiene, or attire might prevent their ability to keep up with modern society, much less get ahead (Curti, 1967, p. 336).

Early Consumer Reactions

Even at its most ardent, corporate enthusiasm and a growing abundance of goods were not sufficient to mask some of the structural problems associated with a rapidly growing, and largely unregulated, consumer market. As early as the 1880s, a group of concerned citizens led by Dr. Harvey W. Wiley had begun a crusade to secure unadulterated foods. Much to their frustration, and in spite of several exposés showing the dangerous ingredients in patent medicines and the ills they could cause, Wiley and his supporters were unable to get legislation passed. The big change came with the publication of *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair in 1906. Sinclair's bestseller exposed the unsafe and exploitative labor conditions that meat packing plants employed in order to maximize profit. The pressure put on workers combined with lax sanitary standards resulted in rotten and contaminated meat on (middle-class) consumers' tables. While much of Sinclair's call for labor reform fell on deaf ears, his plea for regulation of meat plants gained massive support. In the months following Sinclair's exposé, the sale of meat dropped drastically and President Roosevelt threw his support behind the passage of a meat inspection bill which was written into law in 1906. The momentum created by the meat inspection bill, in turn, helped the passage of a much needed Pure Food and Drugs law that same year (Nadel, 1997; Young, 1992).

The National Consumers' League (NCL) provides another example of consumer activism during this period. Formed in 1899, the NCL devoted itself to factory conditions and worked relentlessly to improve conditions for workers. Only garments produced in facilities that refused to employ children, paid its workers fair wages, and treated workers well were allowed to display the NCL's "white label." Operating in many states, the group conducted regular factory inspections and worked diligently to pass local and federal laws to improve conditions. By presenting themselves as consumers and framing their demands accordingly, activists helped forefront the

new and dynamic relationship between producers and consumers of goods (Sklar, 1998, 25; see also Sklar, 1995, pp. 309–311; Wolfe, 1975). As such, the 1906 passage of the Food and Drug Act was a great victory for the recognition of consumers' rights; a clear departure from the existing practice of viewing political issues solely from the standpoint of producers. It showed that the public, and consequently Congress, had become more conscious of the need for consumer protection. The momentum that was created inspired the creation of numerous committees, clubs, and leagues, and organizations working to further consumers' causes (Gaedeke, 1972, p. 58).

In 1927, Stuart Chase and F. J. Schlink published *Your Money's Worth: A Study in the Waste of the Consumer's Dollars*, a book that became the start of an active consumer movement in the decade that followed (Morse, 1993, p. 19). The authors exposed frauds and manipulations by US manufacturers and argued that advertising failed to provide consumers with sufficient product information. This, in turn, led people to waste money. Inefficiency in buying, the authors contended, thrived in inverse proportion to consumers' knowledge. Whereas industrial and government buyers bought efficiently because they possessed the necessary knowledge to deflate and disregard advertising, consumers were forced to rely on advertising propaganda that provided them with almost no factual information. Urging consumers to educate themselves against the perils of such marketing devices, the authors called for structural reform. Soon after the book was published, Schlink started a small newsletter called *Consumers' Club Commodity List* which rated various brand products based on laboratory tastings. By 1929, a massive public interest in the book and newsletter had spurred an organization called Consumers Research (CR). CR employed technical experts and had its own laboratory for testing consumer products. By 1932, Schlink's newsletter was renamed *Consumers' Research General Bulletin* (and later yet simply the *Consumers' Research Bulletin*) and boasted an impressive 42,000 subscribers (Mayer, 1989, p. 21; Silber, 1983, p. 18; see also Ayres, 1934, pp. 158–165). CR attracted a group of prolific authors who wrote articles and bestselling books on consumer-related issues and received support from a range of professional organizations, including the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the American Home Economics Association, and the National League of Women Voters. Also very important were the many politically connected individuals who shared the organizations' call for federal regulation of advertising.

The Struggle Over Federal Regulation of Advertising in the 1930s

The Federal Trade Commission Act of 1914 had given the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) jurisdiction over advertising. This power, however, was limited to cases where one business used advertising to gain unfair advantage over another. Thus, the FTC

lacked the jurisdiction to intervene on consumers' behalf when they were wronged, even harmed, by false and misleading advertising (Tedlow, 1981). Thus, considerable momentum for stricter advertising regulation existed by the time of Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933. In June of that year, a bill to amend the 1906 Food and Drug Act was introduced in Congress. The measure, which had been truly whetted by CR, proposed new labeling laws and mandatory grading of goods as a means to guiding consumers in the marketplace. It also sought to empower the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prohibit false advertising of any food, drug, or cosmetic. Catching advertisers' immediate attention was a stipulation in the bill that defined an advertisement as false if it used "ambiguity or inference" to create a misleading impression (Pease, 1958; Young, 1992). Few, if any, major manufacturers objected to a ban on false advertising but their reaction to the proposed ban on "ambiguity and inference" was strong and adverse. It was exactly the use of clever advertising to create enough ambiguity for consumers to infer the desirability of one product over another, even if none existed, that drove most of the consumer industry and, thus, much of capitalism at large. But business was fully aware that this rationale for advertising might sound hollow, especially to consumers affected by a severe economic depression, so they tried their best to avert direct discussions of this issue. If anything, the industry argued, consumers should be grateful because advertising had brought them conveniences and cheap mass produced products. The same business interests also objected to the bill's demand for grading of consumer goods, arguing not only that it was impossible to establish uniform quality standards but that they were unnecessary because they already provided consumers with sufficient product information. Consumer activists were just as unhappy with the bill. Their complaint, however, was that the bill did not go far enough in terms of providing consumer protection (Stole, 2006).

This set the stage for a five-year legislative battle with congressional hearings over several revised versions of the bill. Helping the advertising industry's cause was a set of well-developed public relations and lobbying strategies and considerable influence over the commercial mass media. Few among the general public were fully informed of the issues at stake. With each new version of the bill, industry concerns took the front seat and the issue of consumer protection, which had first spurred the bill, gradually faded from the agenda. Despite demands from consumer groups, New Dealers, and government regulatory agencies, advertisers survived the battle with surprising ease. When the Wheeler-Lea Amendment to the Federal Trade Commission Act was passed in 1938, it reflected five years of legal wrangling and extensive public relations efforts to render such protection painless for business interests.

The practical application of the new law proved that consumer advocates had been right in fearing that the new law would fail to provide consumers with any substantial protection. The major shortcoming was the law's failure to encourage advertisers to provide more factual information in their ads. The immediate and somewhat ironic effect of the Wheeler-Lea Amendment to the Federal Trade Commission Act was a

tendency toward increasing glamour and indirect assertion. Because it was relatively easy to check the truthfulness of explicit written claims, advertisements increasingly relied on the use of pictures and illustrations to get around the law. Most advertising agencies were inspired to design copy that complied with the law yet served the purpose of techniques that the amended version of the Federal Trade Commission Act rendered illegal (Pease, 1958).

In sum, the Wheeler–Lea Amendment and the regulation it spawned were crowning achievements for the advertising industry. Nevertheless, the industry knew it could never take the lax regulation by the FTC for granted. As an industry it was always susceptible to public criticism for its sometimes controversial operations, which might lead to increased FTC regulation, or even to Congress reopening the matter of advertising regulation for further consideration. Recognizing that further advertising regulation was favored by a substantial segment of the population, the industry keeps a close ear to the ground, hoping to protect the status quo and nip new challenges in the bud (Stole, 2006).

Advertising in World War II

As important as the 1930s were, the battle over the role of advertising in the nation's political economy that began in the 1920s ended not in 1938, but during World War II. The war elevated the seeming contradictions of advertising and allowed the consumer movement one final opportunity to corral and regulate this institution. Thus, it was the war experience, even more than the legislative battles of the 1930s, that defined the role of advertising in the postwar political economy and cultural firmament.

During the two-year period leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, war-related production required an increasing and disproportionate share of the nation's labor and raw materials. Production for the consumer market was constrained as a result, and concerns about inflation led the government to consider price controls. Advertisers worried that encouraging people to consume during a period when raw materials and consumer products were scarce and almost no new products were being launched might lend credence to the argument that advertising was wasteful, if not downright unpatriotic (Stole, 2001a). Adding to the industry's concerns were the government's proposals to eliminate advertising's tax-deductible status (a system that had been on the books since right after World War I) in order to pay for defense-related expenses.

Getting on the good side of government was a high priority among advertisers, and industry leaders were quite excited when within days of the fateful attack on Pearl Harbor, the director of priorities in the government's Office of Price Administration (OPA) approached the advertising community to request promotional assistance. The result was the creation of the (War) Advertising Council, an

industry-wide effort that urged, coached, and assisted individual advertisers in incorporating the government's home-front messages into their regular product advertising.

Madison Avenue was particularly fortunate to have a strong supporter in Treasury Secretary Morgenthau, who was one of the first government officials to seek help from the Advertising Council. By 1942, the Treasury Department relied almost entirely on the council's help in promoting war bonds and stamps to the US public. The sale of these securities allowed the government to borrow money for the war effort from its citizens, and this relieved some of the pressure for new tax revenues. The importance of this connection was not lost on the Advertising Council, which addressed the task with great urgency. It designed an elaborate campaign plan and instructed individual advertisers to incorporate the war bond pleas into their product advertising. Much to the advertising industry's relief, the Treasury quickly acknowledged that a pending law to prohibit, or severely restrict, advertisers' ability to deduct advertising expenses from their income taxes would translate into less publicity for the Treasury's own campaigns. Consequently, it ruled in the advertising industry's favor, allowing "reasonable and normal advertising" as a deductible business expense for the war's duration. Encouraged manufacturers utilized their advertising to tell the US people about their "patriotic" contributions to the war effort while the real winner was the advertising industry itself (Fox, 1975; Stole, 2001b).

Consumers Union (CU), which by the 1940s had replaced Consumers Research as the major consumer advocacy group, responded to the war emergency with the addition of a new publication to its existing *Consumers Union Reports* (which changed its name to *Consumer Reports* in 1942). First published in February 1941, *Bread and Butter* was designed to "help consumers protect their living standards by providing them with up-to-date reliable information about what is happening to the prices and quality of consumer goods" (Consumers Union, 1941). While most advertisers showed only a modicum of interest in the task of informing war consumers about pricing and product attributes in their advertising, the CU publications explained the practical changes brought about by the war emergency. It discussed issues such as how to plan and grow victory gardens, how to care for products and make them last, and how to save money on home canning of fruits and vegetables. Now more than ever, CU considered advertisers' established practice of stressing emotional satisfaction over product information as an obstacle, rather than constructive assistance, for consumers. It urged consumers to organize and put pressure on the government to make sure their interests were represented while promising to exert its own "united pressure towards the job of maintaining a healthy, strong, alert America to win the war – building a greater, more prosperous America after the war has been won" (Consumers Union, 1941). And while advertising might instill in consumers a certain desire for goods that were no longer readily available, *Bread and Butter* and *Consumer Reports* stressed the unpatriotic aspects of buying products on the black market.

The activist cause was further complicated by the interdependent relationship between advertisers and the commercial mass media. At the same time as the

industry's contributions were elevated to patriotic levels, critics were allowed few chances to be heard. Journalists and editors were hardly encouraged to pursue stories critical of an industry of which the news media were, in effect, a key part. Whatever benefits the newly emerging professional journalism may have offered with respect to protecting editorial content from the influence of media owners and advertisers, they did not extend to providing for ample and balanced coverage of advertising policy debates in this period.

While the industry's contribution was elevated to patriotic levels, those with critical views on the advertising industry's prerogatives were given few chances at a large audience. It should hardly come as a surprise, then, that an industry sponsored survey in the summer of 1943 found a full 84% of the respondents believing that advertising contributed to the US war effort (Advertising at work, 1943; ANA finds public appreciates war advertising, 1943). Even allowing for a survey designed to flatter the industry and ignore or distort criticism of the consumer movement, the results suggest that the battle for public opinion may have swung to the advertisers. Most citizens, it seems safe to say, did not know that there was any alternative.

The end of World War II found the advertising industry in an enviable position. Through its wartime services to the government, the Advertising Council had fulfilled an important public relations function. Its immediate objective had been to protect advertisers' right to advertise throughout the war, despite major shortages that logically suggested that advertising might stimulate demand, spur inflation, and prove counterproductive to the war effort. An important secondary goal had been to secure the status of advertising as a tax-deductible business expense by defending its privileged wartime position, by claiming that it was playing an indispensable patriotic role. The unstated but overarching goal was to have the US public internalize a view of the advertising industry as a democratic institution that had been instrumental in winning the fight against the Axis Powers. The purpose of the Advertising Council, as Frank W. Fox (1975, Ch. 5) argues, was to promote "the ad behind the ad," that is, to use advertising to sell not only products but also the institution of advertising itself, as well as the corporate system behind the products.

The Postwar Era

By the end of the war in 1945 the advertising industry found itself in a quite favorable position and faced the postwar era with renewed enthusiasm. Due in part to the Advertising Council's work, the industry enjoyed an increasingly congenial working relationship with government leaders, something that sociologist C. Wright Mills (1956) and others so aptly identify. Upon recognizing the Advertising Council's PR value, the industry decided to make it a permanent postwar fixture. No longer affiliated with the government, the postwar Advertising Council was free to chart its own course. Whereas the council's wartime campaigns had asked people to plant vegetables

and buy war bonds to express their patriotism, its postwar campaigns commercialized this noble sentiment. Patriotism was now tied to the unconditional acceptance of free enterprise, which some now termed "People's Capitalism."³ The Advertising Council's new intent, observes the historian Robert Griffith (1983), was to "promote an image of advertising as a responsible and civic-spirited industry, of the US economy as a uniquely productive system of free enterprise, and of America as a dynamic, classless, and benignly consensual society" (p. 388).⁴ Its postwar campaigns and unconditional declaration of "true Americanism" helped to stifle and mute advertising criticism (Grabner, 1987; Lipsitz, 1990; May, 1990; Miller & Novak, 1977; Pells, 1989; Whitfeld, 1992). If in the 1930s advertising had been a controversial, even scorned, undertaking in the minds of many US citizens, it was now, 20 years later, presented as a fixture of the "good life" and the "American Dream."

The impact and proliferation of advertising were evident in other contexts as well. In 1942, the Supreme Court had ruled unanimously against First Amendment protection for advertisers. But gradually, and as many social institutions became increasingly beholden to advertisers, commercial speech won a series of important judicial victories. At the same time, and as shopping malls replaced Main Street as the central site for commerce and congregation, mall owners fought several successful legal battles to prevent political opinions and politically controversial ideas from entering the new public spheres. Such ideas, it was believed, might interfere with the mall visitors' shopping experience and ability to express their freedom (of choice) as consumers (Cohen, 2003, pp. 274–278).⁵

The sudden popularity of television put people in even closer proximity to advertising, and, as Lawrence R. Samuel and other scholars argue, the seamless merging of entertainment and commercial values in this new medium helped fan the flames of consumerism and spending in the postwar United States (Lipsitz, 1990, Ch. 1; Samuel, 2001, Intro.).⁶ In sharp contrast to the discourse surrounding the introduction of radio a couple of decades earlier, television faced no serious challenges to its purely commercial nature.⁷ Convinced that increased levels of advertising would boost consumption, combat economic sluggishness, and raise the standard of living, the federal government supported television's commercialization (Lipsitz, 1990, pp. 44–46).

Television was only one example of government policies that directly and indirectly supported the growth and proliferation of postwar consumer society. In addition, and as historian Lizabeth Cohen (2003, pp. 274–278) has shown, postwar laws, regulations, and zoning practices helped foster this culture by providing the infrastructure for a large (white) middle-class exodus to the many suburban areas of large cities.⁸ Pressures to consume and conform were part of the suburban experience, where "Keeping up with the Joneses" was considered essential in order to be accepted in the community (Chafe, 1972; Ewen & Ewen, 1982; Hartman, 1982; May, 1990; Miller & Nowak, 1977; Nowak, 1975). Between 1946 and 1950, US citizens purchased 21.4 million automobiles, more than 20 million refrigerators, 5.5 million electric stoves, and 11.6 million television sets (Hartman, 1982, p. 8).

The emphasis on private consumption represented a perfect merger of two political objectives: the need for corporate profits and the use of private consumption as an anti-communist definer. In 1959 when Vice-President Richard Nixon visited Moscow, Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev got entangled, not in discussion over disarmament or nuclear power, but over which country could produce the best home appliances. According to Nixon, what made the United States so great was the nuclear family. Nixon insisted that US superiority in the Cold War rested not on weapons, but on the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes. Consumerism was not an end in itself; it was the means for achieving individuality, leisure, and upward mobility. At the very center of success was the nuclear family with its working-class, happy kids and a full-time homemaker who cooked, cleaned, and shopped for the family (May, 1990).

This does not mean that advertising as a cultural phenomenon was no longer controversial. The postwar decades were rife with satire and criticism of the asininity of advertising, ranging from novels and films like *The Hucksters* and satire such as *Mad Magazine* to exposés like Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (1958). What had changed was that while advertising could be lampooned, and specific ads or advertising practices criticized, its institutional role had become off-limits for fundamental debate. The caliber of criticism that had been routine in the 1930s and early 1940s was pushed to the far margins of acceptable commentary. It seemed implausible that there could be a good society without advertising as we had come to know it.

Decreased consumer militancy coupled with new consumption patterns also affected CU. Many consumers became interested in learning as much as possible about products before they purchased them, and the circulation of *Consumer Reports* skyrocketed. In March 1944 the magazine had a circulation of only 55,000, but by June 1949 the number had increased to 275,000. Despite the fivefold increase in circulation, the magazine's leaders were frustrated in their efforts to reach a socioeconomic cross-section of US consumers and continued to appeal primarily to professional middle- and upper-middle-income individuals. By the mid-1950s, largely due to a series of unsubstantiated accusations of communist activity, CU downplayed its activism component (Katz, 1977).

The general absence of public objection to commercialism during this period did not necessarily mean that such sentiments did not exist or that everyone welcomed the changes. An increasing number of scholars contend that most histories of the postwar United States fail to account for the psychological complexity of those years, including the vitality and variety of subordinate cultures that flourished. "If consensus did indeed characterize America's national culture in the 1950s," Robert Griffith (1983) remarks, "it was perhaps to a degree we have not fully appreciated, a consensus manufactured by America's corporate leaders, packaged by the advertising industry, and merchandized through the channels of mass communication" (p. 412; see also Jackson Lears, 1989; Koontz, 1992; Susman, 1989).

It was not until the 1960s that the United States would experience yet another intense wave of politically organized consumers. Throughout the 1960s and early

1970s consumer organizations witnessed steady support for their demands, and a variety of national consumer groups, each with specialized interests and some with charismatic leaders, emerged.

Consumer Resistance in the 1960s, 1970s, and Beyond

The postwar consumer momentum continued into the 1960s but it did not take long before the illusion of consensus about advertising and the corporate culture it supported came under severe criticism. Back in the early 1950s, critics like David Riesman (1953) had received attention but little support for the opinion that the US obsession with consumption and material abundance had led people away from a tradition of self-reliance and toward a habit of defining themselves as a function of other people's lives and (consumer) habits. Neither did works by C. Wright Mills (1956) and David Potter (1962) cause people to reject the consumer ethos, and John Kenneth Galbraith (1958) gained little public traction for his claim that advertising artificially created high rates of consumption to support high rates of production and that it artificially created high rates of production to support high rates of consumption.

By the early part of the 1960s, however, an increasing number of people started to question aspects of consumer society and some even rejected it altogether. Issues such as advertising's power to define female beauty and its tendency to depict women in stereotypical ways became a great concern during this period, which also witnessed an intense but largely unsuccessful effort to regulate children's exposure to advertising. In his book on the 1960s advertising industry, historian Thomas Frank (1997) discusses ways in which advertising copywriters co-opted this criticism, using it to create new market segments in order to sell products to the increasingly cynical consumer.

The most influential person in what would be known as the third wave of consumer activism in the 1960s and 1970s was without doubt Ralph Nader. In 1963 the young lawyer published *Unsafe at Any Speed*, a highly acclaimed and widely discussed exposé of the auto industry and its utter disregard for consumer safety (Nader, 1973). Later, Nader transformed his interest in consumer issues into a movement that could effectively counter the power held by business in the marketplace. With the help of associates he uncovered abuses against individual consumers, and in 1968 he recruited a task force of students to investigate the FTC, an agency so manipulated by business that it was unable to fulfill its mandate. Hoping to invigorate the citizenry to fight corporate power and make businesses accountable to the people, Nader experimented with new strategies for action. His efforts had a strong impact, and in the period between 1967 and 1973 Congress enacted more than 25 laws to regulate corporate conduct in consumer and environmental fields (Pertschuk, 1982).

A watershed in the third era of consumer activity was the 1978 defeat of legislation to create a consumer advocacy agency. The idea of a Department of the Consumer to parallel the Departments of Commerce and Labor had first been introduced back in the early 1930s. In the 1970s and under the leadership of Nader, however, attention shifted from the creation of an agency without regulatory powers to one entrusted with monitoring the activities of other government agencies and, if necessary, the authority to intervene in their regulatory decision-making on consumers' behalf. In spite of massive support from consumer advocates including the Consumer Federation of America and a newly invigorated CU, the plans were thwarted by commercial interests. Arguing that the proposed agency would create a new bureaucracy, increase the complexity of regulatory hearings, and force the disclosure of trade secrets, business interests used their powerful lobbying arms to help defeat the plan (Herrman & Mayer, 1997). Organized consumer efforts to expand the FTC's regulatory powers and regulate the commercial targeting of children faced a similar fate. By the late 1970s, most of the gains that had been made in the early part of the decade were lost (Pertschuk, 1982).

Some of the activist momentum survived into the 1980s but quickly lost ground amid the neoliberal policies that came into full force during the Reagan presidency. Deregulation of the telecom industries provided advertisers with new and expanded venues. In the competitive environment that followed, mass media became increasingly reluctant to discuss issues that might put their commercial benefactors in a negative light (McChesney, 1999, 2004).

It was not until the 1990s that consumers again rose in unison and this time on a global scale. Consumer activism had been part of the European landscape since the 1930s and by the 1970s and 1980s concerns about increased commercialism had spread to Asian countries. Due to different degrees of commercialization and variations in each country's consumer protection laws, consumer protest took different forms although international cooperation on issues of common interest did happen. Although important in its own right, this work was rarely grassroots driven. (See entries for individual countries in Brobeck, 1997; Chadwick, 1997; Frith, 1996; Gao, 2005; Samiee & Ryans, 1982.)

This changed in the late 1990s with the rise of a new wave of consumer activism, this time with a global scope. The frequent reference to this as the "anti-globalization movement" did not mean that its proponents were xenophobic or nationalistic; they simply found a common ground in opposing globalization that serves investors and corporate interests, not globalization *per se* (Klein, 2000; Korten, 2001).

Sweatshop conditions, child labor, environmental regulation, food safety (genetically engineered foods), corporate power (the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank), and over-commercialization were among its major focuses. Its heterogeneity hearkened back to the first wave of consumer activists in the Progressive Era and its emphasis on labor conditions and public health across all classes, but now from a global perspective. Likewise, in comparison to their 1930s US counterpart, the globally oriented activists questioned the impact of commercialism, but now

in a broader context. Not only were workers in poor countries being exploited, the fruit of their labor was destroying the social and cultural fabric across the globe (Barber, 2008).⁹ The call, as in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, was for increased corporate accountability. But ironically enough, given that we live in the so-called information age, corporate conduct, including its commercial strategies, is more difficult to monitor than ever. Because commercial values have become entrenched in our everyday life and commercial speech is gaining increased First Amendment protection, consumer advocates and citizens face a harder challenge in gaining a critical perspective on commercialism.¹⁰

Conclusion

At this time there are strong indications that the most recent wave of consumer activism has lost ground or is, at best, refocusing. Capitalist culture, on the other hand, is not showing any signs of slowing down, leaving consumer activists to fight an uphill battle.

During the last two decades, advertising and consumer culture have been subjected to a great deal of scholarly interest both in the United States and abroad. Still, in order to map the economic forces that dictate the increasing levels of commercialization across the globe, we need more scholarship to focus on these issues. Not only is it mandatory to keep track of contemporary developments and how they shape the changing concept of consumer culture, it is also important to trace these events to the past. Although far from answering all questions, historical inquiries into advertising and the shaping of consumer culture may provide some explanation for our present-day situation. Knowledge of the political decisions that form the basis of our present-day consumer society would not only fill a gap in our understanding of twentieth-century history, it might also inspire consumer activists, providing them with a better foundation for the fight against corporate hegemony.

NOTES

- 1 The total amount spent on advertising in the United States during 2007 was \$279,612 million, which represented 2% of total GDP. Retrieved January, 25, 2011, from <http://www.galbithink.org/ad-spending.htm>.
- 2 Space limitations prevent me from covering all aspects of twentieth-century consumer resistance, including the use of consumer boycotts. For a discussion of the topic, see Cohen (2003), Frank (1994), Friedman (1999), Glickman (2009), and Jacobs (2005).
- 3 Eric Johnston (1944, Ch. 8), the president of the US Chamber of Commerce, coined the term "people's capitalism" in the 1940s.
- 4 For an interesting discussion of the Advertising Council's agenda in the postwar era, see Ziegler (2003).

- 5 *Valentine v. Chrestensen* 316 US 52 (1942).
- 6 For an excellent treatment of television's early years, see Baughman (1992, Ch. 3); see also Boddy (1990); Spigel (1992).
- 7 For the public's reaction to commercial radio, see Boddy (1990, p. 22); Marchand (1985, pp. 88–94).
- 8 Cohen also discusses how various forms of discrimination prevented African Americans from partaking in the postwar consumer society.
- 9 For a discussion of advertisers' influence on the educational system, see Molnar (1996).
- 10 The recent US Supreme Court ruling to let corporations and unions sponsor political campaign ads has opened the floodgates for those with the most money to influence federal elections and government decisions. *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 US 08-205 (2010).

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The Rise of the Professional Communicator

Kevin G. Barnhurst

ABSTRACT

Professionalism became an ideal for organizing work in the nineteenth-century United States and reached communication occupations by century's end. Its rise continued an early modern tradition that embodied knowledge in specialists engaged at universities and in practical projects. A sociology of professions emerged by the twentieth century to describe their characteristics, a useful template for professionalism in communication and applied to newswork as a case prominent for its claim to serve democracy. Arguments over whether journalists have professional traits may discount their importance as workers involved in power-as-knowledge, with consequences for workers in the twenty-first century as US professionalism spreads abroad.

The rise of the professional communicator is part of an ongoing story about the elevation of craftwork to a higher plane as knowledge work. The story can trace a main branch of its lineage to medieval Europe and the ideas that set in motion what became the modern world. The term *profession* has roots in the Middle Ages, when divinity, medicine, and law emerged as primary occupations for gentlemen of the era to pursue. The three learned professions owe their deep foundations, as “true” professions and the measure of other occupations, to their early start in Western history.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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But the organization of professions in the sense understood today is a product of the nineteenth century. Sociologists have considered “professions” either a bundle of traits that characterize certain occupations or a way of organizing occupations that tends to enhance their power. Workers today in the communication industries are professionals in the more recent sense of the term. The distinctions among professions (and ongoing arguments about who qualifies as a professional) are perhaps trivial in light of the fundamental quality of all groups claiming professional standing.

That quality is the relationship of professional workers to knowledge. A profession is a social organization that establishes itself through knowledge practices. Communication workers acquire professional status by establishing work patterns and output norms, educational programs, associations, and other activities typical for their line of work. The norms and structures of the group may seem to make them professional, but the force underlying professional activity is ideas. Professions depend on a relationship with knowledge that colors their relations with the state, institutions, other groups, and individuals in society. In social communication, newswork is a central case in the history of professionalism, especially in the United States, where communication work took part in a national faith in professionalism.

Organizing media work along professional lines has had consequences for power relations in the workplace and in conceptions of and relations with the public. In turn, the project of making communication work professional has larger implications for conditions of knowledge affecting the other knowing professions. In recent decades communication professionals have struggled and lost some status through the reorganization of knowledge into digital forms, and the fate of the professional hangs in the balance.

Establishing the Early Professions

In the emergence of professions one can see a relationship between power and knowledge and a pattern of extending that relationship as professions acquired their earliest trappings. In medieval Europe, knowledge centered on truth and recognizing God behind all truth (McKeon, 1930), and so power traced its roots to religion, which gave legitimacy even to kings. What everyday folk knew about objects in the world belonged not to knowledge but to a lower order of knowing (Markus, 1970). Augustine, like Plato, assumed that human observation could not reach true knowledge (Copleston, 1950). The rise of universities set up independent and, within their limited sphere, democratic locations of knowledge. The religious orders were quick to claim chairs of theology that established their place in universities. Theology and philosophy were sciences, and theologians and philosophers possessed knowledge (Copleston, 1953), even though those in authority, in the commonplace of the era, had “a nose of wax” that the powerful could bend toward their own ends (Armstrong,

1970; Hyman & Walsh, 1967). But universities were important for asserting knowledge as an autonomous, somewhat self-governing seat of power alongside the church, setting the pattern for professions to push for recognition within universities.

Growing out of a foundation in universities, one pillar of professions became access to knowledge independent of God's truth. Some Renaissance thinkers emphasized how knowledge could bear practical fruit, and the scientific movement of that period led to a separation from philosophy and toward the main thesis of empiricists: that factual knowledge depended on the observer's direct acquaintance with events. (The corollary was to separate humans from nature and facilitate an extractive view of the natural world.) In the fourteenth century, the English philosopher William of Ockham argued that observing regular sequences was the only way to discover the causes of phenomena (Copleston, 1953). Ockham's thesis stands behind subsequent notions of communication, and journalism began as an activity to produce useful goods by extracting stories and facts from social life.

By the seventeenth century Francis Bacon (1863) suggested in an essay on heresies that God's knowledge is power (*scientia potestas est*), a phrase that came to justify the pursuit of knowledge for its practical utility. Printing was a key example of how practical invention "changed the face of things and the state of the world" (Copleston 1953, p. 104). For Bacon (1851) human knowledge and human power amounted to the same thing, and as a new sense of "science" emerged, theologians and philosophers lost power. They no longer held the center of knowledge; others, especially scientists, did. In the modern sense, science follows Bacon's (1908) axiom, "for knowledge itself is power" (p. 96). The axiom also underpins much of the activity and sense of purpose behind occupational groups involved in communication, especially journalists.

Another core value in communication practice goes back to Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when truth was a quality of gentility. European society divided between gentle and non-gentle persons, and little about life had the substance, consequence, or divisiveness in society as the project of marking where and how to draw the line between the two (Shapin, 1994). The only distinction of greater cultural significance was the separation of Christians from heathens. *Gentlemen* were capable agents for sensing, and could reliably report on, nature and society. The system still considered women as well as the poor and lower classes unreliable, even before the law. The status of women has improved, but communication practice and especially journalism accept a genteel perspective on the obligation to inform those with less access to the powerful. That service mission helps support a claim to professionalism.

A pillar of professional standing is expertise. From among the gentle, specialists in knowledge emerged: not only men of learning (*docti*) or letters (*literati*), but also learned laymen, usually either physicians or lawyers (Burke, 2000). Expertise grew more important during the Enlightenment project to amass knowledge (Heyer, 1988). In the Enlightenment, encyclopedists divided knowledge into fields that a handful of accomplished experts dominated (Darnton, 1979). Knowledge became

specialized and its operation professionalized, following an order derived from the data of the senses and from rationality that grew out of experience. As the division of labor became stronger in intellectual activities, public communication became more important. Without it elites could lock up knowledge “to the detriment of all” (Yeo, 2001, p. 246). Much later journalism developed part of its special status from that same democratic urge to disseminate knowledge widely. But in the Enlightenment era, the work of encyclopedists and the division of knowledge work gave rise to the charge, familiar to journalists today, of spreading only superficial knowledge.

Professional Organization of Knowledge

New professions grew out of a relationship among the ideal of science, the urge to solve practical problems, and the growth of social organization to apply the knowledge resulting from scientific inquiry. The age of science as systematic thought about the physical world was in full swing by the early seventeenth century but existed in something of a vacuum as “pure science” for more than a century (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933). Practical thinkers and inventors from outside of learned communities were more likely to apply ideas from science when confronting concrete problems, and so for instance, military engineers along with scientists gave rise to the profession of civil engineering. A propitious combination of practical problems and scientific solutions depended in turn on the rise of bureaucratic organization. Large-scale engineering projects required new kinds of organization for industry, which depended in turn on ways of accounting, financing, and insuring projects. The sites around them reorganized as well, giving rise to new local government offices along with expert handlers of property, such as surveyors. National laws created new conditions for transport, such as the merchant marine, and for materials extraction such as mining. Unlike the original learned professions, the newer knowledge workers emerged not from the sacred zones of religion or universities but from the profane zones of war, commerce, and government.

The then-new professions claimed technical competence but also moral standing (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933). They established examinations or other methods of selecting their members to assure standards of competence, and they imposed discipline on their members largely through peer pressure and respect for tradition, although harsher measures could exclude a member from the professional ranks (Hughes, 1958). Periods of apprenticeship integrated both aspects of the profession, so that the training merged practice and attitude of mind not unlike preparation for a religious vocation. Stages in the development of professionals became a predictable career not unlike the journey in medieval craft guilds from apprentice through journeyman to master of the trade. But among professions the economic conditions usually ride in the background. New professions emerged only by controlling access to specialist knowledge through the high costs involved in securing qualifications.

And training came not only dear but also associated with markers of status from the sources of patronage or sponsorship (Elliott, 1972). The market was one of the main conditions surrounding the rise of professions (Larson, 1977), along with an identified problem, scientific solution, bureaucratic order, and industrial organization, but always on a background of moral order. The resulting kinds of knowledge become ingrained in the professional's actions and character, like the sense journalists have for a practical "nose for news" along with their zeal to serve the public good in twentieth-century communication practice.

Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a process developed for emerging professions, along with an attendant sociology of professions. Sociologists identified typical activities: occupational grouping, training, building a formal association, seeking external recognition, and ethical code writing (Moore 1970; Wilensky 1964). Full-time workers could move toward professionalism only if their occupation involved "brain work" along with the manual labor necessary to put the group's knowledge into action. An element of status was part of the first activity, which accompanied non-manual work but could depend on whether the occupation grew out of an existing profession as at first a subspecialty or the new professionals served a high-status clientele. The first generation in a new knowledge area tended to be older experienced workers (Elliott, 1972), who then devised ways to select others for the occupation, usually through training in its arcane knowledge. In the third activity workers organized into an association and created organs that gave it institutional form, such as publications, a library, or perhaps meetings (Hughes, 1958). The new profession would then go public in the fourth activity, seeking recognition of its standards and conditions for entry, sometimes through licensing or other legal requirements. Establishing a code of ethics marked the fifth activity and the entry of the profession into maturity. Ethical codes reassured a public suspicious of specialty knowledge but also assured the occupation enough freedom and autonomy to carry out its mission of public service. Occupational groups doing manual labor with no claim to "brain work" could not gain a foothold in professionalism, but mature professions had in common all or most of the same traits, the functional qualities distinguishing learned professions from common labor.

The functions involved in establishing new professions in general did not apply to all occupational groups entering the processes of professionalism, giving rise to disagreements over kinds of professions, whether some were "true" based on their characteristics and trajectory in acquiring traits. It is clear that the foundations of professionalism were in place in the later nineteenth century. Their root was philosophical, emerging from widespread ideas about work and society. They depended on an economic groundwork that grew out of industrial conditions and involved organizational shifts that emerged earlier with bureaucracy but led into "scientific" management thinking like Taylorism in the early twentieth century.

Workers in "the media," a term first applied to the press and radio of the 1920s (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2012), did not all move at the same pace, go through the same activities, follow them in the same order, or reach the fullness of professionalism

with codes of ethics and an elaborated sense of public service, because conditions differed for each industry in what became known as “mass communication” in the 1930s. Trades connected to advertising agencies such as commercial artists, for instance, developed courses and textbooks early in the twentieth century along with some organizational structures. But serving commercial clients was not seen as a disinterested mission, and graphic artists did not acquire a professional level of social conscience until decades later, when they began to see an instrumental role for themselves informing the public and a public-service role protecting the environment in the design of material products and creating conditions for democracy with cogent, accurate information.

Communication Work Becomes Professional

However, news work developed all of the traits of professionalism by fairly early in the twentieth century and came to be weighed as a form of knowledge (Park, 1940). Populist notions about serving everyday readers supplied a ready-made mission to serve the public. Newspaper businesses were manufacturers that had already adopted industrial organization in the later nineteenth century, and the long history of newspaper involvement first with political parties and then with political movements such as Abolition placed the press alongside government as a watchdog protecting the public estate. Newspaper publishers had moved easily between high positions in the press and government in the nineteenth century (Pasley, 2001) and in the twentieth were aware of their position of power as political knowledge brokers subject to public suspicion. Industrial developments encouraged professionalism not for publishers but for the newswriters they employed. Allowing news reporters, writers, and editors to claim professional status and allowing their occupation as “journalists” to acquire professional traits would reassure the public of the service newspapers provided for democracy.

The new occupational structure for journalists emerged quickly in the Progressive Era. The press had already transformed itself from party to general-interest organs, and the labor of newswork reorganized (Hardt & Brennen, 1995). Newspapers had long depended on correspondents, literary men (for the most part) who traveled abroad or moved through the urban world as observers in a style not unlike that of early modern gentlemen. In the nineteenth century John L. Given, who wrote for the *New York Evening Sun*, remembers the day when a writer could stroll or stand “idle at a street corner waiting for something to happen.” There was “no rush or jostle about newspaper establishments,” said Colonel A. K. McClure, editor of the *Philadelphia Times*. John Addison Porter of the *Hartford Post* recalled that the newspaper office valued “literary skill and book knowledge.” The prime example of the literary newsman was Charles A. Dana, editor and publisher of the *New York Sun*, whose adage for success was, “Never do anything in a hurry” (quotations from

Wilson, 1985, pp. 26–28). Education, taste, and access to society and power made correspondents desirable and worldly witnesses, and their affluence or literary aspirations made remuneration a lesser concern. But industrial newspapers required a constant flow of material to fill the columns, especially as display advertising emerged and newspapers grew in size with larger formats and, late in the nineteenth century, with more pages to fill.

In the early phases of becoming industrial, newspaper offices employed a second kind of worker, news gatherers in factory style who combed the city for occurrences that would grab editors' and public attention. Editors like William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer "narrowed the distance between the news event and its deadline, intensified the pace of office work," and turned news into a perishable product that lost value if "not harvested, processed, and delivered in a matter of hours" (Wilson, 1985, p. 26). Unlike correspondents involved in literary work, newshounds competed for the stories and stunts that would sell copies on the streets and worked under time pressure. John Given recalls a worker could get fired for being "a little slow getting to a telephone" (quoted in Wilson, 1985, p. 31). The typical young worker spent long hours for little pay and typically left the job after a few years (Smythe, 2003). Lincoln Steffens called news reporters of the era *machines* (quoted in Matheson, 2000, p. 565). By turning occurrences into stories quickly, newshounds processed the stuff of everyday life into texts that paid them by the column inch, filling the insatiable maw of the industrial press.

Making newswork professional involved a merger of the correspondent and the scavenger into the "journalist" (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2002). The process began in the nineteenth century and launched one basic activity typical of professionalism. Publishers and editors appear to be the first to have claimed journalism as an "editorial" profession (Banning, 1998), but a new occupational grouping took decades to solidify at the street level. Newsgathering required the physical labor of going to sites of potential occurrences and the manual labor of composing at the typewriter (Salcetti, 1995), an invention that had come into common use for business correspondence in the mid-nineteenth century. But the fusion of corporal with literary labor gave journalism the "brain work" dimension of professionals. Whether (and which) editors remain "journalists" has come to depend on contract terms and conditions in newsrooms, but the higher status of correspondents contributed to the growth of professionalism, as did the relationships journalists could develop with persons of status. Members of high society engaged in charities, debutante balls, business openings, and the like at least tolerated (or by the twentieth century sought) attention from the press.

Newspaper publishers supported the second activity typical of professionalism, establishing a system of training. Publisher Horace Greeley in 1860 said that he "would not hire a college graduate" (May, 1986, p. 20), but General Robert E. Lee gets credit for the earliest effort to establish journalism education at Washington College (Banning, 1998). Publishers later pushed individually or through press associations for university journalism classes, programs, and schools and funded the

effort. As early as the 1870s, classes in journalism ran for some years at Cornell and the University of Missouri (Mott, 1962). Certificate programs and curricula emerged by the end of the nineteenth century, and schools of journalism appeared in the first decade of the twentieth century. The universities of Missouri and Illinois established degree programs, and Joseph Pulitzer proposed to endow a school at Columbia University.

Founding associations, another activity typical of professionalism, began in the nineteenth century. Editors and publishers organized first, founding press associations in Illinois in 1865, Missouri in 1867 (Banning 1998), and other large states in the 1880s. Regional associations followed, such as the Inland Press Association in 1885, and the American Newspaper Publishers Association began in 1887. Workers in the emerging journalism occupation also founded associations. The National Editorial Association began in the 1880s (Winship, 1904), and a group of “newspapermen” formed the National Press Club in Washington, DC, in 1908 as a private society for those in the “vocation” to meet but also to foster their development as a profession. A year later Sigma Delta Chi, a journalism fraternity, began at DePauw University in Indiana (Glenn, 1949). The society spread to other universities but did not become the Society of Professional Journalists until much later. Editors of major newspapers organized separately in 1922, meeting in New York to found the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Mott, 1962). Because professions tend to stand on expertise and have considerable financial autonomy, they generally avoid affiliation with organized labor, but in the Depression era journalists formed a labor union, the American Newspaper Guild, in 1933.

Publications and meetings are common forms among all professional groups as an aspect of giving associations an institutional presence. Groups of publishers and key editors met and founded a “trade press,” the term for specialty periodicals serving an industry by region or sector of the national economy. Trade publications illustrate the emerging debate over professionalism in newswork (Cronin, 1993; Plaisance, 2005). A magazine called *The Journalist* began in 1884 with a staff drawn largely from the New York Press Club. Although the pages of the magazine called for newswork professionalism, its main campaign was to increase pay. Newspaper publishers in 1892 founded *Newspaperdom*, a trade journal for the industry. But professional aims filled the monthly magazine *Editor and Publisher* from its founding in 1901 and may have led to its success in a period of professional aspiration among newswriters. It absorbed its main competitors (including a third trade magazine, *The Fourth Estate*) beginning in 1907. For journalists the Sigma Delta Chi fraternity began *The Quill* in 1912, and teachers founded *Journalism Quarterly* as a scholarly journal in 1924. Not all meetings led to publications. The University of Wisconsin held a newspaper conference in 1912 and the University of Kansas in 1914 to discuss the problems of journalism, for instance. But publishing tended to grow out of meetings and intertwined with the other activities typical of professionalism in newswork.

Resistance to government regulation has long been a tenet of the press (Bleyer, 1918), but journalism has received external recognition growing out of protections

for the press. The ideal of “freedom of the press” emerged by the eighteenth century in England, acquiring a limited meaning: the “freedom from licensing and nothing more” (Siebert, 1952, p. 364), which became the main definition in the North American colonies. The commercial and industrial conditions surrounding newswork seemed to threaten those ideals by the end of the nineteenth century (Salcetti, 1995). Despite their growing role in informing the public, journalists could not reap the financial rewards that other professionals could command, because newswork retained aspects of manual or factory labor and did not provide direct services to the public. Publishers mainly benefited from customs and laws growing out of the First Amendment to the US Constitution protecting freedom of speech. For practitioners the main marker of public recognition was the published byline. *The Journalist* magazine crusaded for bylines in the late nineteenth century as a way to win higher pay and status for newswork.

The other typical activity of professionalism involved the creation of a code of ethics. The Missouri Press Association developed an ethical code in the nineteenth century (Mindich, 1998; Williams, 1929), and a general discussion of ethical standards for journalism appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* and other magazines early in the twentieth century (Bleyer, 1918; Connolly, 1902), as well as in the trade press and industry associations (Rosewater, 1903; Winship, 1904), largely in response to the yellow journalism of the era. With the urging of President Warren G. Harding the American Society of Newspaper Editors adopted a code in 1923 at its first annual meeting (Mott, 1962). Some of the norms for professional work in journalism that emerged by the early twentieth century are factual accuracy, neutrality, and objectivity. Originally defined in contrast to partisanism (Carey, 1986), objectivity is perhaps the most contested standard for professionalism in newswork (Kaplan, 2002; Mindich, 1998).

Professional norms emerged in dialogue and conflict with the relations of journalism to its sponsoring business enterprise and to its stance toward the public as an audience, although the two interrelate. Publishers like Hearst and Pulitzer were key advocates for other elements of professionalism but also pursued audiences and financial success through sensationalism, the focus on events most shocking, captivating, and perhaps base rather than on serious occurrences and political issues. H. L. Mencken was one of the few to make a virtue of the journalist’s service to publishers’ financial ends:

The newspaper must adapt its pleading to its clients’ moral limitations, just as the trial lawyer must adapt his pleading to the jury’s limitations. Neither may like the job, but both must face it to gain a larger end. And that end, I believe, is a worthy one in the newspaper’s case quite as often as in the lawyer’s, and perhaps far oftener. The art of leading the vulgar, in itself, does no discredit to its practitioner. (Mencken, 1918, p. 65)

As journalists pursued occupational independence, getting readers and making money were one side of the bargain. From the other side they could claim

professional status because of personal qualities, such as self-discipline, neutrality, and expertise as observers instead of their earlier role as partisan advocates.

The public service mission of journalism harks back to eighteenth-century arguments on whether to allow the press to cover legislative bodies. The notion of “estates of the realm” was a product of the medieval world, when the social orders divided into three realms, clergy, nobility, and commoners. The idea of newspapers as the fourth estate of the realm emerged in British parliamentary debate in 1787, attributed to Edmund Burke (Schultz, 1998). The journalist as a watchdog on the public estates may have emerged as metaphor for its public mission in the Progressive Era, when muckrakers engaged in advocacy for the reform of government and end to business wrongdoing (Bennett & Serrin, 2005). Later the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947) proposed a broader mission, the social responsibility to inform the public, but so broad an ideal was slow to gain acceptance among journalists. Investigative journalism of the 1960s embraced the metaphors of the fourth estate and watchdog (Osiel, 1986) and met with notable success in the Watergate era, and the ideas also spread to Latin America (Waisbord, 2000).

Consequences of Professionalism

Professional norms and role expectations are not unique to the United States (Donsbach, 1981), and critiques of journalism in countries that follow a literary tradition sometimes urge journalists to adopt the objective and denotative tradition from the US press (Broersma, 2010). But the US case matters because the peculiar combination of private media ownership and the counterbalance of newswork occupations made professionalism a central element in the media system early on, to say nothing of its influences decades later on other media systems. The US case also provides a kind of fable for what other systems might avoid (Starck & Sudhaker, 1979).

Although the learned professions acquired autonomy through their mastery of knowledge, control over who could practice, direct personal contact with clients, and other typical activities, journalists through the end of the twentieth century had more tenuous circumstances. They could not usually claim exclusive access to arcane knowledge, and most depended on news companies for employment (with notable exceptions). From early in the twentieth century their organizations claimed a vital influence on public life, but the indirect contact of individual journalists with a reading clientele gave them no easy access to independent sources of income. After more than a century of US enthusiasm for and cultural organization around professionalism (Bledstein, 1978), a debate about whether journalists are, can, or should be professional continued. The structures of work and workplace seemed to limit journalists’ professional aspirations. Once journalists accepted unions, their relationship with management embodied a labor model of occupational organization. But other groups aspiring to professionalism such as government workers formed unions at

about the same time. The industrialization of healthcare has led medicine into a similar complex overlay of expectations rooted in manual labor and “brain work.”

The practice of journalism sets up similar complexities. The structure of beat reporting follows something more akin to industry and puts journalists into direct intercourse not with the public they aim to serve but with authority figures and experts, raising suspicion about their service mission. Insider status for journalists may make them beholden to official sources, as well as making their stories reliant first on government and industry. The embedding of reporters in combat units, unlike the medical corps tradition within military branches, aims to protect reporters rather than to provide personal services to clients. The distinction highlights service but also expert knowledge, both weak components of professionalism in journalism.

Relations to audiences may also have suffered as journalism pursued professional status. As the project of professionalism advanced in the twentieth century, journalists moved further from the working classes and became more likely to hold college degrees. Their higher education and class differentiation gave them more status, an aim and byproduct of professionalism, but attenuated claims to the broadest avenues of public service. The models of *pro bono* and charity service available to the original professions even while they served primarily elites could not apply to an occupation without a general client base. The public service claims of journalism depended on appeals to advancing democracy, which lost their broad base as newswriters themselves changed. And concepts of audience were also changing, primarily from the general public of mass society to the variegated consumer markets of the late twentieth century.

In the early twentieth century, Francis E. Leupp, a long-time Washington correspondent for the *New York Evening Post*, wrote an essay for the *Atlantic Monthly* explaining the causes of “The Waning Power of the Press”: industry consolidation, the rise of cheaper outlets, specialized segmentation of knowledge, competition within the news industry, organizational imbalance between business and editorial operations, the “universal mania of hurry,” aggregating events at the expense of interpreting them, the vulnerability of news stories to the politics of owners, the exploitation of sensation and scandal, and the lack of time for journalists to read widely to inform themselves (republished in Bleyer, 1918, pp. 30–51). Each cause has its reflection in one or more aspects of professionalism. Besides the contradictions emerging from contact and conflict with competitive markets and audience tastes (or vulnerabilities), professionalism was then and is now in conflict with journalism as knowledge work in the public service. Segmented expertise gives rise to professionalism but conflicts with journalism, its hybrid bundle of tasks – the physical labor of gathering and transcribing events alongside the mental labor of interpreting patterns of events – and its social responsibility to make events intelligible to the citizenry. Leupp’s diagnosis could describe conditions facing US journalism a century later, when the easy explanation for malaise in journalism is in competitive conditions involving economics and technology for producers and audiences. But the chief issue

involves the regime of knowledge, concepts of time and space (which shifted in both eras; Kern, 2003), and the status of work.

As news media migrated to digital formats, access to publication and bylines attenuated. Anyone could publish a website or write a blog, and so journalists' status depended more on other sources, particularly their employment by a name-brand news outlet, but at the same time their employment became less secure. As audiences shrank for the media publishing in legacy formats such as newspapers and newscasts, the authority of publication alone came into question even as online publication faced skepticism. Instead of enhancing the expertise of journalists, the shift to networked computer platforms meant a deskilling of newswork along with attaching greater status to digital skills that news organizations were slow to develop themselves, leaving an opening for other kinds of knowledge workers to advance. The shifts reflect changes in conditions of knowledge under late or post modernism.

Industrial journalism brought to fruition and general circulation the early modern empiricism of Bacon, coupled with printing from moveable type and clockworks to schedule the hours of work. But it also corralled the elements Michel Foucault excavated in "disciplinary institutions": hierarchical observation and surveillance, judgment of the abnormal from the norm, pedagogy for the well-rounded citizen (of whom the journalist was an exemplar), and so forth (Foucault, 1977, p. 173). By the turn of the twenty-first century, the relation of power to knowledge had inverted, and the practices of journalism in relation to other persons, groups, institutions, and the state, especially official sources and audiences, illustrate that power is knowledge. The rise of professionalism brought communication work into conflict with other cultures around the world and with other cultural values in the United States, such as diversity (Glasser, 1992), but mostly into conflict with itself, with consequences for its fate in the twenty-first century.

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The New World Information and Communication Order

An Idea That Refuses to Die

Kaarle Nordenstreng

ABSTRACT

This essay recounts the history of the movement for a new world information and communication order (NWICO) as it emerged in international arenas and particularly in UNESCO. An expression of the global movement for decolonization spearheaded by the Non-Aligned Movement, NWICO encountered strong opposition from Reagan's United States and Thatcher's Great Britain, and failed to achieve its immediate goals. It had a formative impact on the field of international communication research, and, although it has yielded to topics such as media globalization, its concerns continue to echo in the field.

This topic leads us to a particular chapter in media history, dealing with international politics as much as media studies. The concept of a “new world information and communication order,” known as NWICO, became a leading theme in global media policy debates from the 1970s until the 1990s, covering the period from heights of decolonization to the collapse of communism. The debates started in diplomatic forums of the developing countries, particularly the *Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)*,¹ and extended to professional and academic circles so that in the 1980s NWICO was part and parcel of the discourse on the media's role in society and the world at large. By the new millennium, however, it disappeared from the agenda, to be replaced by

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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concepts such as media globalization. In the 2010s, NWICO already belongs to the history of the field – a history that keeps re-emerging under a different aegis.

NWICO is quite a hot chapter in the history of the field. It connects the media, and the study of the media, to the geopolitical struggles between the US-led capitalist “West” and the Soviet-led socialist “East,” on the one hand, and the industrialized “North” and the developing “South,” on the other. NWICO became the buzzword for media controversies in the final period of the Cold War and in the transition to a post-Cold War world. However, NWICO did not only serve as a political context to media and their policies at the time; it was also a catalyst for paradigmatic shifts in international communication studies. The present author even compared NWICO and a critical variant of communication research as two tracks of the same movement (Nordenstreng, 1993).

In brief, the concept was born in an aggressive wave of decolonization spearheaded by NAM in the first part of the 1970s; it was consolidated during an information war, with a counterattack by the Western powers in the mid-1970s, followed by a diplomatic truce in the late 1970s; then it was shunned by another Western corporate offensive in the 1980s, and finally frozen in the turmoil of the 1990s. Yet its idea carried over to the new millennium, no longer as a pervasive concept but embedded in a number of key issues in global media policy and study.

Birth in a Decolonization Offensive

By the early 1970s, the developing countries had accumulated a great deal of political power and economic potential, with the support of such organizations as NAM and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). All this created a new relation of forces in the world arena, already under pressure from the socialist part of the world, leading to such manifestations as the oil crisis and the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO)² – all of which worked against the vested interests of the Western countries. Another corollary to this offensive against the West was a polarization of the Arab–Israeli conflict, reflected not only in a war between the parties, but also in the UN resolution by which the majority of the international community determined Zionism as a form of racism.³

In this situation, it appeared that a new chapter in world history was in the making, and it was not by chance that the phrase “new order” became popular. After all, it implies a radical analysis of the world; the concept of order points at a global structure not far from Lenin’s theory of imperialism. It suggested a radical program to change the world, which was still dominated by Western imperialism; the notion of “new” implying a call for war against the “old order.” Consequently, the basic pattern was that the West was on the defensive and the developing countries, supported by the socialist countries, were on the offensive.

Under these conditions the idea of decolonization was well established as a political program and an intellectual concept. But before 1973, it was not applied to the sphere of information and culture. This occurred systematically in NAM platforms during 1976: first in a symposium on information in Tunis, then in a conference of information ministers in New Delhi, and finally in the summit in Colombo.

The first event to articulate media and communication in terms of an international order was the NAM Symposium on Information in Tunis (Tunisia) in March 1976. The resolution of this symposium includes the following paragraph:

Since information in the world shows a disequilibrium favoring some and ignoring others, it is the duty of the non-aligned countries and the other developing countries to change this situation and obtain the decolonization of information and initiate a new international order in information. (Quoted in Nordenstreng, 1984a, p. 10)

The paragraph before this speaks about emancipation of the developing countries from “structures of imperialist power,” which should be seen in the general context of what was expressed already by the 4th NAM Summit in Algiers (Algeria) in 1973: “the activities of imperialism are not confined solely to the political and economic fields, but also cover the cultural and social fields,” demanding NAM to take “concerted action in the field of mass communication” (quoted in Nordenstreng, 1984a, p. 9).

The placing of mass communication within the structures of “imperialism” was also quite common at the time among critical scholars and development activists in the United States and Europe. Even the President of Finland – a capitalist country pursuing a neutral foreign policy between East and West – used the term when drawing attention to the structural inequalities in the media field, nationally and internationally: “Just as within Finland there is a situation in the press described as a bourgeois hegemony, on the international arena there is a state of affairs called communication imperialism” (Kekkonen, 1974, p. 44).⁴

Yet the prime mover of the NWICO concept was NAM, which followed up the Tunis symposium in July 1976 when the NAM Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi (India) established the “Press Agencies Pool of the Non-Aligned Countries” and adopted a landmark “New Delhi Declaration.” It serves as a textbook presentation of the reasoning behind NWICO:

- 1 The present global information flows are marked by a serious inadequacy and imbalance. The means of communication of information are concentrated in a few countries. The great majority of countries are reduced to being passive recipients of information which is disseminated from a few countries.
- 2 This situation perpetuates the colonial era of dependence and domination. It confines judgments and decisions on what should be known, and how it should be made known, into the hands of a few.
- 3 The dissemination of information rests at present in the hands of a few agencies located in a few developed countries, and the rest of the peoples of the world

are forced to see each other, and even themselves, through the medium of these agencies.

- 4 Just as political and economic dependence are legacies of the era of colonialism, so is the case of dependence in the field of information, which in turn retards the achievement of political and economic growth.
- 5 In a situation where the means of information are dominated and monopolized by a few, freedom of information really comes to mean freedom of these few to propagate information in the manner of their choosing and the virtual denial to the rest of the right to inform and be informed objectively and accurately.
- 6 Non-Aligned countries have, in particular, been the victims of this phenomenon. Their endeavors, individual and collective, for world peace, justice, and for the establishment of an equitable international economic order, have been underplayed or misrepresented by international news media. Their unity has sought to be eroded. Their efforts to safeguard their political and economic independence and stability have been denigrated. (Quoted in Nordenstreng, 1984a, pp. 10–11)

As pointed out by the present author (Nordenstreng, 1984b, p. 29), this declaration presents a fundamental challenge to the traditional libertarian theory of the press in three respects. First, it implies that laissez-faire will lead to monopolization and create neocolonial dependence. Second, it shows how insufficient is an abstract right to information without ensuring the material means to put that right into practice. Third, the information in the media is given explicit content qualifications: it should be objective and accurate.

The New Delhi Declaration was endorsed a month later by the 5th NAM Summit in Colombo (Sri Lanka), where 87 members of the movement – over half of the UN membership – resolved: “A new international order in the fields of information and mass communications is as vital as a new international economic order” (Nordenstreng, 1984a, p. 11). Linking NWICO with NIEO further galvanized the concept, turning it into a highly political issue in the global arena. The linkage also highlighted a powerful common denominator: the idea of collective self-reliance (Pavlic & Hamelink, 1985).⁵

The political history of decolonization would not be complete without noting that the socialist bloc of the East, although formally a separate third party of the power game, was a kind of “natural ally” of NAM as they both were directed against the West and its capitalist interests in the world. This became particularly clear in the media field, where in the early 1970s the Soviet Union had initiated a project to establish regulatory relations between international media such as news agencies and foreign broadcasts, on the one hand, to the principles of international law and professional ethics, on the other. A flagship of this project was the *Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO* which was drafted at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) between 1970 and 1978, with NAM and the Soviet-led East sharing the same strategic interests against the corporate-dominated West (Nordenstreng, 1984a).⁶

As far as the history of ideas is concerned, a central intellectual ingredient in the rise of NWICO was the concept of freedom – how the value-loaded idea of press freedom was suddenly brought under a critical light. Powerful input to a critical look came from Herbert Schiller's (1976) account of the genesis of the US free-flow doctrine as an instrument of cultural domination. A sharp look at the same issue from the South was provided by a veteran journalist in India, D. R. Mankekar, in books with telling titles such as *One-Way Free Flow* (1978) and *Whose Freedom? Whose Order?* (1981). A Western position was articulated by a British journalist, Rosemary Righter, in her *Whose News? Politics, the Press and the Third World* (1978). (For an overview of the free-flow doctrine in global media policy, see Nordenstreng, 2011a.)

Parallel to questioning the traditional bourgeois notion of freedom, a new concept was introduced by a liberal French media expert, Jean D'Arcy: *The Right to Communicate* (Fisher & Harms, 1983). This was an attempt to meet the intellectual and political challenge of the time, with a Western human rights bias. However, it only obtained a lukewarm reception in Western political circles, except in countries such as Sweden, which introduced the Right to Communicate into UNESCO's program in 1974. It was welcomed in the developing world as a new collective right defending cultural sovereignty. In fact, for some time it was a serious candidate for the leading intellectual idea in global media debate, but it never succeeded in achieving the same momentum as NWICO.

Consolidation in an Information War⁷

The mounting media-related activities of NAM, the UN, and UNESCO in the early 1970s gave rise to opposition in the West, particularly among private media circles. Accordingly, US newspaper publishers established the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC)⁸ “to wage an eventually successful global struggle in and around intergovernmental organizations to beat back authoritarian proposals for a restrictive ‘new world information and communication order.’” The WPFC's first battle against UNESCO was waged at the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in San José (Costa Rica) in 1976. Although the moment was favorable to UNESCO's pursuit of a modestly “anti-imperialist” line, the WPFC succeeded in making the concept of a national communication policy controversial, thus impairing the momentum of this program of UNESCO.

The next battleground was UNESCO's General Conference in Nairobi in 1976, convened for the first time in Africa. The developing countries came there with the freshly articulated NAM position, and the socialist countries were prepared to push through the Mass Media Declaration as drafted by an intergovernmental meeting which failed to reach a consensus and instead voted with an East–South majority, leaving the West in a defeated minority. The Western countries and media

proprietors were most concerned in this draft about a reference to the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism and about an article suggesting that states are responsible for the activities in the international sphere of all mass media under their jurisdiction (as determined by international law).

Consequently, Nairobi became the scene of unprecedented diplomatic and non-governmental lobbying. In order to understand the events at UNESCO it is important to recall that at the same time, in 1976–1977, the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations prepared special reports and organized hearings on global media policies, and these activities were no longer typical manifestations of the counterattack waged by lobbies such as WPFC. While certainly motivated by the same Western pro-business interests, they advocated a more flexible approach – a strategy of selective accommodation to, and active partnership with, the forces confronting the West. The mood of the day was: “Whether we like it or not, there will be a ‘New World Information Order.’”⁹

Accordingly, the information war proceeded to a new stage, after the NAM offensive and the Western counterattack – a truce. In fact, before and during Nairobi 1976 – while the Western press and private broadcasting interests kept campaigning against UNESCO – Western diplomats were busy suggesting deals to the developing countries. The political purpose was to play down the draft Mass Media Declaration, which by that time had become a symbol for the principles and contents of the mass media within an anti-Western context. By and large, the new strategy followed the old formula: If you can’t beat them, join them!

It was this situation of conflicting political strategies that led to the compromise whereby the Mass Media Declaration was shelved for another two years and the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems was established – to be headed by Sean MacBride (MacBride et al., 1980). It was a clever tactical move by UNESCO’s Director-General Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow to set up a “reflexion group of wise men” as a way to avoid a political crisis, which had accumulated at UNESCO due to increasing disagreements about the organization’s competence to determine normative standards for the media.

The conflicting strategies of Nairobi 1976 were further elaborated by the time of the next UNESCO General Conference in Paris in 1978. An outspoken statement was given by the head of the US delegation, Ambassador John E. Reinhardt (an African American representing Jimmy Carter’s administration), who in his address contrasted “restrictive declarations” against “positive cooperation” and made a call for “American assistance, both public and private, to suitably identified regional centers of professional education and training in broadcasting and journalism in the developing world,” as well as “a major effort to apply the benefits of advanced communications technology, specifically communications satellites, to economic and social needs in the rural areas of developing nations.” There was little new in this program, but its launching at UNESCO as a kind of political demonstration gave rise to the concept of a “Marshall Plan of Telecommunications,” mooted by those developing-world representatives who were not quite convinced of the sincerity of US intentions. In

fact, this led two years later to the establishment of the *International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC)*.

Obviously the US “carrot” was designed to play down – even to bury – the Mass Media Declaration and other manifestations of the new order. However, the fact that the Declaration was finally adopted, only three weeks after launching the “Marshall Plan,” shows that the Western strategy did not quite succeed. It did not stop the developing countries, supported by the socialist countries, from pushing “restrictive declarations.” It helped the Western side only as leverage in the bargaining process over the formulations of the Declaration. At this period of accommodation, the United States did not deploy its “stick” – for example, by threatening to withdraw from UNESCO.

Another compromise on the same US–developing countries basis was a resolution, adopted by consensus at the 1978 General Conference, concerning the MacBride Commission. This resolution appreciated the interim report which the Commission had prepared for the General Conference, and invited, among other things, the members of the Commission “to address themselves, in the course of preparing their final report, to the analysis and proposal of concrete and practical measures leading to the establishment of a more just and effective world information order.” Although this resolution did not contain explicit “free flow” references, it obviously met the Western interest in luring the developing countries to turn attention away from fundamental principles and content considerations (such as the Draft Declaration) to practical cooperation (such as the “Marshall Plan”).

Consequently, Nairobi 1976 and Paris 1978 showed that the Western counteroffensive was effective by stopping the South and East from continuing with their automatic majority. On the other hand, the developing countries and the socialist countries also obtained their part of the compromise. The Mass Media Declaration was finally adopted by consensus in November 1978.¹⁰ And the MacBride Commission was mandated to examine the problems of communication in order to get “towards a new, more just and more efficient world information and communication order,” as the subtitle of the Commission’s Report was formulated (MacBride et al. 1980). These were clearly compromises between the capitalist West, socialist East, and the Non-Aligned South of the time. There was room for compromise – a truce in an information war – in the late 1970s, largely due to the East–West détente and the oil crisis, which supported those Western strategists who preferred carrot to stick.

The next UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade in 1980 was historic, not only because it formally established the IPDC, but also because it brought together all aspects of the great debate of the 1970s, including its most controversial elements concerning the conceptual and political substance of NWICO. This took place around a resolution on the MacBride Report, delivered on that occasion. Patient and painful negotiations between and within various geopolitical groupings led to a consensus on Resolution 4/19, articulating the most elaborate definition of NWICO ever achieved in the UN system:

The General Conference considers that

- (a) this new world information and communication order could be based, among other considerations, on:
 - (i) elimination of the imbalances and inequalities which characterize the present situation;
 - (ii) elimination of the negative effects of certain monopolies, public or private, and excessive concentrations;
 - (iii) removal of the internal and external obstacles to a free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and ideas;
 - (iv) plurality of sources and channels of information;
 - (v) freedom of the press and information;
 - (vi) the freedom of journalists and all professionals in the communication media, a freedom inseparable from responsibility;
 - (vii) the capacity of developing countries to achieve improvement of their own situations, notably by providing their own equipment, by training their personnel, by improving their infrastructures and by making their information and communications media suitable to their needs and aspirations;
 - (viii) the sincere will of developed countries to help them attain these objectives;
 - (ix) respect for each people's cultural identity and the right of each nation to inform the world public about its interests, its aspirations and its social and cultural values;
 - (x) respect for the right of all peoples to participate in international exchanges of information on the basis of equality, justice and mutual benefit;
 - (xi) respect for the right of the public, of ethnic and social groups and of individuals to have access to information sources and to participate actively in the communication process;
- (b) this new world information and communication order should be based on the fundamental principles of international law as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (c) diverse solutions to information and communication problems are required because social, political, cultural and economic problems differ from one country to another and, within a given country, from one group to another.

It is not difficult to see that, under paragraph (a), a great deal of diplomatic trading had resulted in favoring the Western "free flow" position. However, all of these 11 points are merely among other considerations on which the new order *could* be based. Paragraph (b), on the other hand, provides a brief but crucial statement on what the new order *should* be based. The latter endorses the general position that international law constitutes the basis for all international relations, including those in the field of journalism and mass communication. Accordingly, not only did all the member states (including the United States at the time) approve the idea of defining the new order, but its overall orientation was fixed to the UN principles of international relations. This may not appear, at first sight, as a particularly significant position, but on closer examination it is the most essential element of the whole

resolution. Paragraph (c) finally highlights that this field should respect diversity rather than uniformity – a concession to Western interests.

Accordingly, the core of NWICO is that it places the mass media within the framework of international law, as clearly pointed out by its early advocates (Masmoudi, 1979; Osolnik, 1980). In point of fact, this is not something new but rather an endorsement of a long-standing principle. Likewise, the very concept of an international order is already to be found in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes not only the celebrated Article 19 on the right to freedom of opinion and expression but also Article 28: “Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.”

Therefore, an essential part of the NWICO substance is composed of existing instruments of international law. The first inventory of international law relating to the mass media – both their freedoms and responsibilities – was made by Hilding Eek (1979), a Swedish emeritus professor of international law. It appeared in a reader with other chapters by respected US authorities showing that the media and their freedom are indeed governed by a well-established framework of international law. It was typical, then, that there was need for inventories of relevant international instruments (Nordenstreng, Manet, & Kleinwächter, 1986; Ploman, 1982), followed by textbooks with the same approach (Hamelink, 1994).

Decline in a Corporate Offensive

The Belgrade consensus of 1980 was not long lasting. The truce in the information war of 1977–1980 was broken when the leading Western powers shifted toward a neoconservative approach. A penetrating analysis from the latter point of view was offered soon after Belgrade by Rosemary Righter (1980; quoted extensively in Nordenstreng, 1984a, pp. 57–58):

Increased state intervention in the gathering and dissemination of news will be a reality of the 1980s. A larger role for governments is implicit in the concept of a “new world information order,” already accepted in principle by all Unesco states. That role will be further developed through the formulation of government policies mobilizing the media in the service of national unity, cultural sovereignty, and political goals. News-as-instrument is coming of age.

Righter regretted the strategy of accommodation, which had placed Western countries “on the defensive, again trying to buy time.” But she saw signs that “the events at Belgrade, in the aftermath, may finally provoke Western realization that it must stop this slow erosion of the freedom of the press and of the flow of news and ideas.” And she was right, as indicated for example by *The New York Times* (May 24, 1981)

noting that “Western news organizations will no longer be perceived as fighting alone in the name of press freedom and democracy” but “they will be allied with powerful business whose interests in maintaining the status quo are unabashedly materialistic.” Moreover,

The West had failed to understand fully that the demands were part of a broad drive to increase the developing countries’ share of all resources. They seek a new economic order that would rewrite the rules of international trade and finance in their favor, the West fears. “It’s not about information. It’s about politics, high politics,” said Peter Blaker, the British Minister for United Nations affairs.

Such reactions soon escalated into a new campaign where “gloves come off in the struggle with Unesco,” as the title of *The New York Times* article reads. And this time it was a fundamental change in the Western strategy – from accommodation back to confrontation. It was a historical reappraisal, because ever since Nairobi 1976 the official Western approach, as recorded at UNESCO and the UN, remained fairly consistent until the end of 1980. This approach had been an integral part of the foreign policy of the Carter administration.

The fact that Reagan took over from Carter at this stage obviously gave encouragement to a radical change in strategy – from a flexible liberal line to a hard conservative one. A visible demonstration of the new line was in spring 1981 when 63 delegates from 21 countries gathered at the “Voices of Freedom Conference of Independent News Media” in Talloires (France), convened by the WPFC with Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. As put by Rosemary Righter in *The Sunday Times* (May 24, 1981), “after 10 years of losing ground in this long-simmering controversy, Western governments are at last formulating a common strategy to reverse the trend towards state interference in the exchange of news and information and its content.” This meant, first, to turn attention away from a normative consideration of the content of communication and the sociopolitical objectives which the media are supposed to serve and, second, to invite the media of the developing countries to cooperate with the private sector of the industrialized West in setting up, training, and maintaining their media infrastructure and personnel. In other words, “trading ideology against cooperation,” as Righter fittingly put it.

Thus Talloires was not a frontal attack against everything put forward by the new order movement. Rather, it was an updated version of the “Marshall Plan” approach which the Western powers employed at UNESCO from 1976 to 1980. It was logical, therefore, that among the Talloires participants there were some coming from the developing countries (notably such moderates as Jamaica, Egypt, and Malaysia).

By and large, the notion of press freedom in the Talloires doctrine is virtually identical with the classic notion of free enterprise. It is natural, then, that the participants were “leaders of independent news media” – mostly owners or managers of private media enterprises and leading journalists working for them, i.e., representatives of proprietors’ interests, rather than professional journalists’ interests. This is exposed in

the Talloires Declaration, which ends: "Press freedom is a basic human right." In reality, it is the individual ("everyone") and not the media ("press") that is under international law the subject and "owner" of the "right to freedom of opinion and expression." Freedom is granted to citizens and not to institutions such as press enterprises.

The next steps in an escalating confrontation were taken within the US. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1981. There the Assistant Secretary of State, Elliot Abrams, had this to say:

We oppose interpretations of a New World Information Order which seek to make governments the arbiters of media content. We oppose interpretations which seek to place blame for current communications imbalances on the policies of Western governments and media. We oppose interpretations which seek to translate biases against the free market and free press into restrictions on Western news agencies, advertisers and journalists. Attempts to justify such restrictions as a necessary adjunct of the development process are spurious. The potential can be achieved only with freedom of choice in the information field. We reject any linkage of a New World Information Order with the New International Economic Order and the radical restructuring of the international economic system which it includes.

The NWICO displayed here is an extreme "enemy image," far removed from the original NAM aspirations and the UNESCO consensus reached less than a year before. Nevertheless, the House of Representatives went along and adopted a resolution to the effect of withdrawing the US contribution to UNESCO's budget (about 25% of the total) "if that organization implements any policy or procedure the effects of which is to license journalists or their publications, to censor or otherwise restrict the free flow of information within or among countries, or to impose mandatory codes of journalistic practice or ethics." This "Beard amendment" received an unusually high level of support from the President of the United States. In a letter dated September 17, 1981, addressed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, President Ronald Reagan wrote:

We recognize the concerns of certain developing countries regarding imbalances in the present international flow of information and ideas. But we believe that the way to resolve these concerns does not lie in silencing voices nor restricting access to the means of communication, but in encouraging a broad and rich diversity of opinion. Efforts to impose restrictions on the activities of journalists in the name of issuing licenses to "protect" them, and other restrictions of this sort that have been proposed by certain members of Unesco, are unacceptable to the United States. We strongly support – and commend to the attention of all nations – the declaration issued by independent media leaders of 21 nations at the Voices of Freedom Conference, which met at Talloires, France, in May of this year. We do not feel we can continue to support a Unesco that turns its back on the high purposes this organization was originally intended to serve.

The new Western offensive was met by the advocates of NWICO with less spectacular presentations but without any notable compromising. The NAM Intergovernmental Council for the Coordination of Information expressed "its full

support for the activities of UNESCO concerning the promotion of the New International Information Order” and by the same token, “rejected the simultaneous campaign of destabilization launched by Transnational Power Centers against the International Organization since the end of 1980, in the understanding that these global attacks by the big news agencies and corporate enterprises are truly aimed at preventing the implementation of the New International Information Order and its fundamental principles.”

The socialist countries of Eastern Europe were equally vocal in denouncing Talloires and expressing support to UNESCO. A Yugoslavian comment in *Review of International Affairs* (No. 760, 1981) called the Declaration of Talloires “at best surprising and an anachronism for these times [...] openly for the first time against the new international information order being sought by the non-aligned and developing countries and the immense majority of mankind they encompass.” Soviet reactions displayed a more dramatic picture of the “information war” declared in Talloires – with its originators “often been caught red-handed in collaboration with the CIA,” as *Moscow News* (No. 28, 1981) put it.

But it was not only the official position of NAM and the socialist countries that maintained an uncompromised view about NWICO. In addition to governments and states there were a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as academic and professional institutions advocating NWICO. Accordingly, the Consultative Club of International and Regional Organizations of Journalists, representing hundreds of thousands of journalists from all parts of the world, also made it known that they would render broad support to NWICO. At their meeting in Baghdad in early 1982 the international and regional organizations of professional journalists stressed that, while the new order was based on respect for international law and the UN Charter, it does not mean the establishment of “government censorship” or “licensing of journalists,” as alleged by the Western campaign. A year later the Consultative Club articulated its position in a historical document, *International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalists*.¹¹

At this stage, in 1983, UNESCO’s General Conference in Paris requested the director-general to give special attention among other activities to those “which will facilitate an in-depth analysis of the concept of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, so as to strengthen the bases upon which such an order conducive to a free flow and better balanced dissemination of information might be established.”

This compromise formulation, adopted by a consensus that included the United States, invited conceptual analysis and thus confirmed that the concept is worth pushing. On the other hand, reference to “an evolving and continuous process” implied that what was at issue is no fixed order with definite parameters but rather an overall course of development – not real action but rather reflection. In this compromise spirit a new platform was opened: the UN-UNESCO Round Table on NWICO, first convened in Igls (Austria) in September 1983 and then in Copenhagen in April 1986. It was a forum for expert discussions on the issues involved, without

high ambitions to achieve concrete results. They were quite business-like events, helping to demystify the political tensions and dogmatic positions that had accumulated around the topic. However, a third UN–UNESCO Round Table never took place as scheduled in 1987: UNESCO’s Director-General M’Bow was replaced by Federico Mayor and it became obvious that under his direction UNESCO would make a U-turn in matters of communication. Suddenly UNESCO, the earlier facilitator of NWICO debate, lost its interest in the idea and even began to suppress the debate – resorting instead to the old “free flow” approach.

The UNESCO General Conference in Sofia in 1985 no longer had the United States among the member states since it had withdrawn at the end of 1984. The US withdrawal could not be justified on the basis of the above-quoted “Beard amendment,” because there was no evidence of UNESCO restricting the free flow of information – a prelude to what happened with the weapons of mass destruction before the war in Iraq in 2003. The departure from UNESCO in 1984 was a political decision following a new strategy, as shown in the Congress hearings, and a turn away from multilateralism, i.e., from the UN platforms which followed the principle of one state, one vote. The United States simply did not care to be voted down by a majority, and its departure from UNESCO was a warning signal to the international community that it may do the same in more vital bodies of the UN.

In Sofia, a hard diplomatic struggle took place around these issues as the Western side tried to stop not only the elaboration of principles but even all studies and reflection concerning NWICO and related topics. Finally a consensus was reached (including the United Kingdom, which soon thereafter left UNESCO) which essentially preserved the line followed throughout the 1980s. Thus UNESCO would continue the “collection and analysis of information dealing with the development of the concept of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process,” while “broadening the study base when necessary.” One of such activities was a symposium to review the effect of the 1978 Mass Media Declaration – an exercise coordinated by the present author between 1986 and 1988. This symposium served as a demonstration of how the tide was turning against NWICO and how the corporate offensive was getting more and more intense (Gerbner, Mowlana, & Nordenstreng, 1993, pp. 99–107).

In summary, the balance of global forces changed drastically soon after the MacBride Report was issued in 1980. Ronald Reagan’s advent as President in early 1981 turned the United States from multilateralism to a unilateral employment of power politics, with a relative weakening of the USSR and the NAM. The truce of the 1970s was followed by a new Western offensive in the 1980s. At this stage all the elements of compromise which were earlier regarded as valuable and honorable suddenly went out of fashion and even turned into liability risks. Thus M’Bow lost his job and NWICO and MacBride became taboo at UNESCO.

In a broader context of Western politics, UNESCO was regarded as a burden, whereby the Reagan administration decided that the United States would leave the organization, followed by Thatcher’s United Kingdom. Here it is important to

realize that the US and British departures from UNESCO were not caused primarily by NWICO, MacBride, or M'Bow. The true reason was a strategic shift away from multilateralism – a warning to the international community that leading Western powers would not be outvoted by the majority of the world's nations. As expressed by a former Assistant Secretary of the State of the Carter administration, UNESCO was “the Grenada of the United Nations” – referring to the US invasion of that tiny island to overthrow its Marxist government, a relatively small target to demonstrate what can be done on a larger scale if the interests of the big power are not respected.

The corporate offensive dominated the whole decade of the 1980s, but next to that were the uncompromising positions of NWICO advocates. While the concept of NWICO led its life within NAM as well as among many representative NGOs, its destiny in the intergovernmental UN forums was more compromised. Throughout the 1980s, it came under increasingly heavy pressure from Western governments, led by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations. Yet despite all the maneuvering and blackmail – including the United States and United Kingdom withdrawing from UNESCO – the concept survived until the end of the 1980s.

For Western corporate forces, NWICO was a “bad idea that refuses to die,” as the media lobbies used to say.

Freeze in Globalization and Civil Society

A new stage of the global media debate emerged in the 1990s when NWICO, including references to the MacBride Report, began to wane from intergovernmental platforms. In UNESCO, NWICO became almost a taboo, and the UN General Assembly just recognized “the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process” (Gerbner, Mowlana, & Nordenstreng, 1993, p. xii). NAM, for its part, lost a good deal of steam when one of its central members, Yugoslavia, disintegrated and the collapse of communism brought a fundamental change to the bipolar world where NAM had entered as the third force. Nevertheless, NAM continued as an organization.

Moreover, a completely new version of the new order was introduced by President George Bush as a vision for the US strategy in the post-Cold War world and particularly in the Persian Gulf War against Iraq in early 1991. Suddenly the United States was promoting the concept of a New World Order – including an information order dominated by CNN – and the United States was not at all concerned about its “politicization” or poor definition. Even before this, Schiller and others had sarcastically observed that a new information order has in fact been established – by the transnational corporations. Indeed, we can say that by the early 1990s NWICO “came about – in reverse” (Gerbner, Mowlana, & Nordenstreng, 1993, p. xi). Cees Hamelink offers a gloomy update on this development:

The enemies of the egalitarian democratic ideal are those forces that actively shape the new world order that is currently emerging – largely in response to the collapse of Communism. The new world order poses a serious threat to the project of an egalitarian democracy since it exacerbates existing inequalities and results in a deep erosion of people's liberty to achieve self-empowerment. Since the new world order is not welcome everywhere, it also provokes a fierce opposition in forms of national, ethnic and religious fundamentalism that – ironically – equally threaten the prospect of an egalitarian democratic arrangement of world communication. (Hamelink, 1995, p. 31)

Not only did the new world order come about in reverse but also the collapse of communism caused a drastic shift: the radical as well as the reformist forces behind NWICO were overridden by emerging new corporate interests. Globalization was the universal buzzword for this stage in development of the world as well as in media debates. Globalization was a complex and controversial concept, offering media people the prospect of both threat and opportunity. (For an overview of the media and globalization debate, see Ampuja, 2012.)

In this situation some wondered whether it was time to say farewell to NWICO (Sparks & Roach, 1990), while others believed that after its rise and fall it was time for renewal (Gerbner, Mowlana, & Nordenstreng, 1993). No doubt NWICO fell down the political and academic agendas, but it was not lost. While the political context had drastically changed, the issues involved remained more or less the same. For example, the prospects opened up by a global information society and its challenge to national sovereignty did not bury but rather reinvigorated the NWICO idea. However, it was no longer called NWICO; the terminology and rhetoric were changing, but the substance mostly remained and was only complemented by new elements of technological and social development.

An important chapter in the history of NWICO was the MacBride Round Table on Communication established by a number of journalism and media related NGOs. The first Round Table was held in Harare (Zimbabwe) in October 1989 – just before the Berlin Wall fell. This was a strategic move to carry on the NWICO tradition, in the ecumenical spirit of the MacBride Commission, as a coalition of professional and academic supporters of the idea without political pressures from governments or intergovernmental organizations. The MacBride Round Table met annually throughout the decade, helping to keep NWICO on the professional and academic agenda. (For a full account of the annual MacBride Round Tables, see Vincent, Nordenstreng, & Traber, 1999.)

The MacBride Round Table was established to overcome the discontinuation of the UN–UNESCO Round Table – to ensure that the NWICO debate would be carried on – but it was also inspired by a more general idea of creating an NGO coalition as an expression of the grassroots voice and as a mobilizer of professional and citizen interests in support of NWICO. As put by the present author in the early 1990s:

In general terms, NWICO should be seen not just as high politics by governments but first and foremost as a project of what is called the citizens' organizations. Media scholars and professionals have their natural place in these constituents of civil society – more natural than among politicians and government bureaucrats.

Parallel to a shift from governments to citizens there is a new emphasis in looking at NWICO as a matter of national rather than international concern. In the beginning – in the 1970s – the causes and remedies were mostly spotted outside the Third World, typically among the Western imperialists. This global view, while still valid to a point, tends to overlook the role of national collaborators in maintaining the undesired structures. As a matter of fact, blaming imperialists is often a politically convenient way to preserve the status quo – not to do anything at home even if a lot could be done, and thus actually to work against NWICO. (Nordenstreng, 1992, pp. 40–41)

In hindsight it is obvious that there was a general trend away from governments and official political actors toward what is known as “civil society.” Sean MacBride used to point this out during his commission’s work by referring to “a change in the gravity of power” about factors influencing public opinion: from official state to unofficial civil society. By the 1990s the civil society framework was even extended to international relations – next to globalization – and the concept of global civil society emerged as a framework for studies in international communication (Nordenstreng & Schiller, 1993, p. 463).

These developments were in conformity with the idea of NWICO, but civil society was a poor party to struggle against the corporate-driven Western offensive. For example, the MacBride Round Table was hardly known among academic and professional communities, whereas the WPFC and other Western media lobbies went on with their visible campaigns – often supported by UNESCO. Moreover, the legacy of NWICO had naturally a strong element of governmental influence from NAM and the former socialist countries, reducing its intellectual attraction under the new conditions.

The subtitle above suggests that NWICO was frozen in the 1990s. Actually this is an exaggeration, and the concept did survive, especially in the academic world, as demonstrated by readers such as Golding and Harris (1997), and Bailie and Winseck (1997). However, toward the end of the decade it had a much lower profile than before – largely because it was no longer the target of such an intense political struggle. One could have expected quite the contrary – a flourishing debate once the political heat had gone. In any case it is fair to say that NWICO was offset by two winds of the 1990s: globalization and civil society. All this makes the narrative of the NWICO debate quite paradoxical.

In conclusion, we may quote Claudia Padovani’s (2008) entry on NWICO in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*:

NWICO debates underlined the centrality of information and communication developments to societal transformation as the twenty-first century approached. Yet the global shift toward a purely market logic, the interplay between Eastern and Western superpowers, the lack of political will to address unequal information structures concretely, and the incapacity to engage a wider public in discussions, did not allow this global debate to live up to the many expectations it had raised.

Yet international communication issues have again been discussed in world forums fostered by the UN-promoted World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005). Nonetheless a major historic silence was evident: no mention was made of previous international efforts (from the MacBride Report to the 1985 Maitland report on telecommunication policies and development priorities, promoted by the International Telecommunication Union). According to some observers (Padovani & Nordenstreng, 2005), this lack of historical depth in facing contemporary global communication challenges reflects a problematic tendency to understand them as complete novelties, thereby fostering superficial policy approaches. Much was learned through the NWICO experience that is of great relevance to contemporary world communication realities (Padovani, 2008).

Reflections and Lessons

The preceding review of the NWICO history is based on the work of the present author (see note 7) and his experiences as an actor in the process (Nordenstreng, 2011b). The narrative is largely the same in other reviews, notably that by Ulla Carlsson (2003). The overall picture of NWICO remains the same in a leading textbook on international communication (Thussu, 2006). Another textbook on global communication (McPhail, 2006) includes several passages on NWICO, but covers the topic with a Western bias as a scheme for government control – a reminder of the controversial nature of the topic.

Even if no longer actively pursued, NWICO remains an indispensable chapter in media history in general and the history of international media policy in particular. For example, in their study on media policy and globalization, Paula Chakravartty and Katharine Sarikakis (2006) name the call for NWICO history as “the most significant struggle over international communication policy in the Fordist era” (p. 30), while its demands for redistribution of communications resources and cultural sovereignty were swept aside in the post-Fordist era by “a kind of ‘reregulation’ of neoliberal governance” (p. 36). A more cynical view of NWICO is presented by Colin Sparks (2007) in his synthesizing work on globalization, development, and the mass media, where NWICO and the MacBride Commission appear in a chapter on “the failure of the imperialism paradigm” (pp. 105–125). Admittedly, Sparks has a point in placing NWICO in the second cycle of intellectual history of the field: the dominant paradigm of propagating modernity was followed by the paradigm on cultural and media imperialism as well as the paradigm of participation; after these followed the globalization paradigm. But he misses that NWICO also included elements of the participatory paradigm as part of the civil society orientation.

Several lessons can be learned from the NWICO history.

First, *NWICO was not really about media and communication but basically about “high politics.”* The determining factors boosting the concept into such a high status were

socioeconomic and geopolitical forces rather than intellectual and moral arguments. In other words, *power rather than reason* set the rules of debate. However impressive your facts, and however persuasive your arguments, you will not gain recognition in the arena of global debate unless you are backed by significant forces – and respectively opposed by significant forces. The rise of NWICO in the 1970s was facilitated by a combined force of the Second and Third World; its fall in the 1990s was likewise a consequence of their disintegration. This said, however, we have to admit that intellectual reflection does influence the course of political events. Yet, in the final instance, it is the political that determines the global agenda.

The anti-NWICO campaign itself serves as an instructive case of Orwellian double-talk: NWICO was attacked as a curb on media freedom, whereas the concept was designed to widen and deepen the freedom of information by increasing its balance and diversity on a global scale. In reality, NWICO was an idealistic instrument of diplomacy, and Third World dictators did not need it as an excuse for suppressing media. The anti-NWICO campaign was an ideologically apologetic exercise by private media proprietors, and it became effective only because of the unforeseen power with which it was waged. In this sense it is justified to call the campaign a “Big Lie.”

The second main lesson is in fact inspired by a critical assessment of the anti-NWICO campaign and its effects: *a global idea is the more durable, the more articulate its substance in public discourse*. In other words, *conceptual clarity fuels resistance* to changing political winds. It is essential, then, that a progressive idea should be articulated not only as a political slogan but as a resolution, law, or even as a scientific theory. A poorly conceptualized idea can be easily suppressed once the political forces behind it decline, whereas an idea which is grounded in in-depth analysis and is widely known to the general public is quite resilient. For example, environmental issues would have been removed long ago from the public agenda by the strong forces of finance and commerce, were it not that environmentalism was such a well-articulated field (thanks to Greenpeace, etc.).

True, these two main lessons are somewhat contradictory: One stresses politics over the intellectual, the other vice versa. Nonetheless, this is the complex and sometimes paradoxical nature of the history of important ideas. Exemplifying this, the NWICO debate provides us with a particularly paradoxical case, simultaneously containing conceptual clarity and poor intellectual elaboration. The MacBride Report itself is typical in this regard, containing at one and the same time a wealth of factually accurate description and analytically incisive distinctions of the world’s communication conditions, but also conceptually mediocre and poorly defined accounts of media reality.

The third lesson here is that NWICO’s significance lies in the debate and its lessons rather than in the actual phenomena of communication and related global structures. The whole history of NWICO offers little in terms of changing media structures and flows – except, perhaps, “in reverse” with increasing concentration, imbalance, etc. – whereas it offers a lot in terms of conceptual thinking and awareness about the role of the media and their relation to global forces.

To be sure, some media realities have changed toward the NWICO objectives. For example, alternative news and feature agencies have emerged and survived; regional and subregional centers have somewhat diversified the global patterns of one-way flow; and journalists in the North have been sensitized to appreciate foreign cultures. Or is this really so? Aren't there countertrends with ever greater ethnocentrism in "fortress Europe" and other new regional blocs? Obviously there are conflicting trends, including paradoxical developments, and hence it is hard to generalize and to be dogmatic.

Yet it is safe to say that the issues raised by the NWICO debate by and large remain valid in the contemporary world. Take the very title of the 1978 Mass Media Declaration: "concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War." All aspects, except apartheid, are still relevant. In point of fact, the question of racism and xenophobia in the media is much more topical today than two decades ago – the Council of Europe and the European Union passing declarations with a less liberal tone than provided by the UNESCO compromise. Ethnic and religious "hate speech" as well as war propaganda are not just words in political resolutions but bitter realities around the world – not only in pockets of war and terrorism but also in the centers of the North.

Likewise, the issue of information sovereignty is far from resolved or obsolete. The difference is only that it is no longer a simple confrontation of the West with the East and the South, but today it is also a West–West confrontation, notably between the United States and Europe over TV program quotas. In general, the prospects of the "information superhighway" in the West, combined with developments in the newly liberalized East, raise pretty much the same old questions, although mostly with a new rhetoric.

NOTES

- 1 The movement of non-aligned countries started in an Asian–African conference in Bandung in 1955 and was consolidated in the first NAM summit in Belgrade in 1961, with a key role played by Presidents Sukarno of Indonesia, Nehru of India, Nkrumah of Ghana, Nasser of Egypt, and Tito of Yugoslavia. After the collapse of communism, Yugoslavia has ceased to exist, while South Africa entered as a new member, hosting the 12th summit in 1998, followed by summits in Malesia 2003 and in Cuba 2006. The 15th summit was held in Egypt 2009. See <http://www.namegypt.org/en/Pages/default.aspx>
- 2 See <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/071/94/IMG/NR007194.pdf?OpenElement>
- 3 See <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/000/92/IMG/NR000092.pdf?OpenElement>
- 4 Finland's President Urho Kekkonen addressed a symposium on the international flow of television programs held at the University of Tampere in May 1973. The materials of this symposium were used by the Tunisian hosts when preparing the NAM

symposium on information in 1996. Finland had the status of “invited guest” at NAM and thus attended the Tunis symposium as an observer, represented by the present author.

- 5 Regarding terminology, the NAM resolutions refer to “international order” whereas the UN and UNESCO resolutions later call it “world order.” Evidently, this difference does not represent a significant strategic move. However, the theory of international relations and established diplomatic phraseology suggest the word “international” although “world” may sound more elegant. Moreover, the phrase “world order” may be used as a device to dissociate the concept of new international information order from the concept of new international economic order (Nordenstreng, 1979). As to “information” and “communication,” the original NAM resolutions use the term “information,” sometimes accompanied by “mass media” or “mass communications.” Similarly, the language of international diplomacy favors “information” as a generic term referring to all kinds of media and all types of content. On the other hand, there are those – especially from the Spanish-speaking hemisphere – who consider “information” to be too limited and opposed to the democratic idea of participatory, two-way communication. Therefore the solution was to use both terms: “new international information and communication order” or, as in the 5th NAM summit document, “new international order in the fields of information and mass communications.”
- 6 This book contains a detailed account of the preparation of the declaration, including its various drafts and related debates at UNESCO. The present author had an insight into the process as a member of the Finnish delegation in an intergovernmental meeting in 1975 and as a member of a three-person negotiation group appointed by UNESCO’s director-general to prepare a compromise draft in 1977.
- 7 This and the following section are based on chapter 1 of Nordenstreng (1984a: 3–77). Versions of it appeared also in Nordenstreng (1995, 2010), and Vincent, Nordenstreng and Traber (1999). Detailed source references can be found in these publications. A short and concise version of the NWICO debate until the early 1980s is provided by MacBride and Roach (1989). For a more recent review, linking NWICO to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), see Mansell & Nordenstreng (2006).
- 8 See <http://www.wpfc.org/index.php?q=node/10>. The WPFC initiators were US newspaper publishers with the support of their international affiliates the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA), the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers (FIEJ; later the World Association of Newspapers, WAN), and respective commercial broadcasting associations (NABA, IAB). The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) dissociated itself from the Committee.
- 9 This was the opening statement of a prominent report to the Senate Committee (by Kroloff and Cohen, November 1977). Another central reference of the day was a major study called “The United States and the Debate on the World ‘Information Order’” (by Gunter, August 1978), prepared by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) for the US International Communication Agency (USICA). A manifestation of the topic entering the scholarly world was the Spring 1979 issue of *Journal of Communication* devoted to “International Information: A New Order? Third World News and Views.”
- 10 “Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights, and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.” Retrieved from

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13176&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

- 11 Retrieved from http://ethicnet.uta.fi/international/international_principles_of_professional_ethics_in_journalism

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Text, Translation, and the End of the Unified Press

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ABSTRACT

Few industries were as thoroughly transformed by computerization as the newspaper business. Computer composition and computer typesetting restructured the basic organization of the newspaper, refactored control, and encouraged the flourishing newspaper chains of the 1970s and early 1980s. However, electronic distribution radically changed the relationship between advertiser and publisher, and thereby started a decline of the traditional regional paper. As publishers adopted computer systems to manage the flow of information, they generally saw the new technology not as something that would expand the scale or scope of their work but as tools that would translate information from one form into another.

Introduction

The early computer designers, Neumann, Eckert, Mauchly, Attanasoff, Aiken, and Zuse, gave suggestion that their ideas would have application to the production and dissemination of news. During the period that marked the foundational work on computing machines, which began roughly in 1936 and extended until about 1948, they described their machines as computing devices. Konrad Zuse, who worked in

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Germany at the start of World War II, was typical of the group when he wrote that his machine “serves the purpose of automatic execution by a computer of frequently recurring computations” (Zuse, 1982, p. 163). Even John von Neumann, who probably had the best grasp of the universal nature of computing, still described, in the earliest documents, computing systems that “can carry out instructions to perform calculations of considerable order of complexity” (Neumann, 1945).

All of these pioneers were building machines to solve specific scientific problems that required substantial numerical computation: the design of vacuum tubes, shock wave propagation, ballistics tables, systems of linear equations. They had little reason to speculate about potential applications of their technology beyond science and engineering. At the same time, the foundational news-gathering institution, the newspaper, was firmly identified with different technology. It was known as the Press. That title was enshrined in the US Constitution, which guaranteed the right to publish as “freedom of the press.” The newspaper had been identified with the technology of the printing press since the English Civil War of the seventeenth century, when partisans condemned their opponents for destroying printing machines. As Alexander Brome (1620–1666) wrote in the poem “June 1, 1643,” “And carefully muzzled the mouth of the press, / lest the truth should peep through their juggling dress. / For they knew a cessation would work them more harms, / Than Essex could do the cavaliers with his arms” (in Chalmers, 1810, p. 667).

When asked to assess the new computing technology, newspaper editors accepted the ideas that were offered to them by engineers and scientists. They concluded that computers were tools of national security and could be applied only to mathematical calculations. These machines, according to an early *New York Times* report, were destined for universities, military laboratories, and other organizations that might serve as “a consultation center for the research laboratories of science and industry” (Special to the *New York Times*, 1944).

As we have learned in subsequent years, computers were flexible and powerful devices that had much to offer newsgathering organizations. Step by step, they were adapted to activities that were of value to newspapers, activities that included not only the tasks of financial accounting and other numeric activities required by active businesses, but also the work of gathering, editing, printing, and distributing the stories that described the news. This process of adaptation largely involved the preparation of software that could manipulate text. To create this software, computer scientists had to develop a substantial body of knowledge that dealt with the mechanical nature of text and language. This body of knowledge was not developed in isolation. The needs of publishers informed the theories of the computer scientists just as much as the work of the computer scientists altered the operation of the newsroom.

Ultimately, computers became central features of newspapers, not replacing printing presses but changing their role in a news organization. Computers first appeared in the business offices of newspapers with software that could handle general ledgers, accounts payable, and subscription lists. They quickly advanced into

typesetting, as programmers came to appreciate the mechanical nature of the work. From there, they moved to the editorial offices with word processing systems, the library with information systems, and finally the printing room with systems that controlled presses. Ultimately, newspapers learned to use software to distribute the news and track its consumption.

In each of these different roles, software took the role of translator, transforming information from one language (or representation) into another. In this role, the software systems of news operation moved beyond the original vision of computers as automatic machines that would provide an answer that matched a given set of instructions. Instead, they became a technology to transform a human organization by isolating the tasks that transformed information and mechanizing them.

Connection to Computing History

The history of newspaper computerization inverts the commonly told story of the computer. It emphasizes the impact of certain technical developments that changed the organizational structure and operation of media companies. Those technical developments, while important to a number of industries, are only small parts of the major themes of computing history. Traditionally, the story of computation is told by the commodification of computing hardware (Ceruzzi & ebrary, 2003) and the rising complexity of software (Campbell-Kelly, 2003).

In these stories, the computer begins as a specialized tool with the construction of the ENIAC at the University of Pennsylvania in 1946. From that point, the history moves through five stages that mark the increasing complexity and standardization of computer hardware. The first of these stages, in which each computer is a unique, handcrafted instrument, lasts until roughly 1954. In the next stage, commercial manufacturers produce fixed models of computers that are generally incompatible with each other. The third stage of hardware, which marks the start of common families of computers, begins in 1964 with the announcement of the IBM 360 family of machines. This period also marks the rise of the smaller, less expensive mini computer that brought the technology to a wider audience of businesses, schools, and other applications. The fourth stage, which begins in roughly 1974, is that of the microcomputer. This era is notable less for the size and cost of computing equipment, though both shrank rapidly during this period, than for the fact that these machines were all based on a family of Intel processor chips that had a fixed instruction set and hence were capable of running common software. The fifth stage, which begins in 1992, is the age of connectivity, in which computers operate more and more in concert, sharing both data and programs.

The story of software properly starts before the invention of the computer, as it draws heavily from the ideas of production management, but it started to be the dominant story in computation after the rise of common families of computers, such

as the IBM 360, which built an environment that would encourage the commoditization of software.

Behind the growth of the software industry is another story of commoditization and standardization. It is generally seen as a response to the tight market for computer programmers that developed in the mid-1960s, an event that is often called the “programming crisis.” This market left many organizations without sufficient staff to create the software that would be necessary to support basic business tasks. The software industry addressed this crisis by allowing businesses and other organizations to purchase developed programs and hence operate with only a small programming staff. The start of this industry is generally dated to 1968, when NATO held a conference on software engineering and when IBM announced that they would no longer provide their customers with programming products without charge.

These histories of hardware and software only describe the framework of the computing age. Though these technologies brought common ideas and capabilities to the industrial landscape, they have different impacts on different organizations and for different modes of production. These changes often mirror the growth and commoditization of the underlying technology, but they are often marked by crises that occur when computing technology is sufficiently advanced and sufficiently inexpensive to be adopted by an entire industry, such as the newspaper industry.

Translating Information

For the purposes of analyzing the role of digital technology in news organizations, the computer age began in the summer of 1945, as World War II came to an end. This date falls about six months before the US government released the news of the computing machines that it developed during the war and a full year before the Moore School Lectures at the University of Pennsylvania, the summer seminars that first described the design and operation of the stored program computer (Campbell-Kelly & Williams, 1985).

During the summer of 1945, the nation’s most prominent scientist described a machine that might have some value to the nation’s newspapers. Writing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Vannevar Bush described a machine that could store, organize, and retrieve information. Bush had led the Office of Scientific Research and Development during the war and had followed the development of electronic technology. He had designed a computing machine in the late 1920s to solve differential equations, a class of problems that were central to many fields of engineering (Bush, 1931). As the war came to an end, he started to speculate about the value of computing machines to other fields of endeavor.

“Consider a future device for individual use,” he wrote, “which is a sort of mechanized private file and library.” He viewed this machine as an “enlarged intimate supplement” to individual intelligence. It would be “a device in which an individual

stores all his books, records, and communications, and which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility" (Bush, 1945). He suggested that his machine, which he called the Memex, could be built from microfilm readers, electronic circuitry, photoelectric tubes, and electric motors.

The Memex excited readers as it seemed to embody the best of scientific research. "Like Emerson's famous address of 1837 on 'The American Scholar,'" proclaimed the editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, "this paper by Dr. Bush calls for a new relationship between thinking man and the sum of our knowledge" (Bush, 1945).

In fact, the technology to build a Memex lay 40 to 50 years in the future (Simpson, Mylonas, & van Dam, 1996). More importantly, a practical Memex would require a new conception of the device. Bush conceived it as a monolithic tool like a printing press, a single machine that would dominate an organization. In that role, it came to embody the hopes and fears that the age held for computing technology. Fictionalized in the 1955 play *Desk Set* by William Marchant, it was the device that did intellectual labor and threatened to replace a staff of librarians in a mythical broadcasting network.

Academic researchers gave the Memex the more scholarly name of "Information System" and conceived of it as a repository. Though this new conception helped fit Bush's ideas into the growing field of computer science it also illustrated the limitations of the basic concept. "Strange as it may seem," wrote one researcher, "the greatest bottleneck is likely to remain for a while the initial generation, typing, and keypunching (where needed) of the incoming information" (Salton, 1966).

As a group, newspaper owners were less interested in developing new technologies for repositories than in finding tools that reduced the costs of operation or expanded the scope of their audience. The publishers of 1945 knew that the social and economic standing of their profession had been declining over the prior two decades. Advertising revenue had declined 40% during the Great Depression. Some of the advertisers had gone bankrupt in the weak economy. Others had started promoting their wares on radio stations.

Radio had expanded during the 1930s. Radio could cover a larger area than most newspapers and did not see an increase in costs when their readership expanded. Furthermore, radio could distribute breaking news quickly without all the expense of stopping the presses, rewriting and resetting the front page, and distributing a special issue (Allen, 1942).

The decline in revenue was accompanied by a decline in influence and status. In 1920, newspapers were at the height of power and influence in the United States. That year, both the Democratic and Republican parties nominated presidential candidates who were newspaper publishers: Warren G. Harding (1865–1923) of the *Marion Daily Star* and James Cox (1870–1957) of the *Dayton Daily News*. In 1945, newspapers could no longer provide for that kind of public career.

Turning to the new technologies that were being developed for the war, publishers tested devices that would improve the operations of their organizations. "Throughout the newspaper profession and the printing industry," explained one editor of the time,

“there is an alert lookout for inventions that will reduce the mechanical costs of producing and distributing newspapers” (Garnett, 1942). Over the prior decade, many papers had adopted the simple invention of a network of boys who carried papers directly to readers’ homes. “Newsstand circulation is still important in a few large cities,” explained one editor, “but even in these it is far less so than ten years ago, since the majority of today’s newspapers are delivered direct to the family doorstep” (Robb, 1942).

In general, publishers found it easier to adopt small technological improvements than to invest in a major change to their operations. For three or four years, a number of US papers had been testing a telegraph technology that allowed reporters to typeset their copy from distant locations. Since it removed the need to retype the copy in at newspaper office, it was, according to one editor, a “very important economy in both time and money” (Harrison, 1940).

Even though telegraphic typesetting appeared to give reporters direct access to the typesetting machinery, it was actually a translation technology. A small machine in the newspaper office would take the text and a few codes and prepare a line of type. It replaced a human worker who would have taken the text from the telegraph and retyped it in the house style. It simplified the process so that reporters could translate their information without knowing all the details of typesetting or even seeing the finished product. After “a very short training,” argued an editor, “they make very good telegraphic-typesetting operators” (Harrison, 1940).

The telegraphic technology was not general enough to handle all kinds of text. It was generally employed only on financial reports. However, it identified the kind of tools that would be valued by a newspaper. It required only a small investment. It replaced a skilled worker. It transformed material from one form to another. It generated a substantial return. By some accounts, it reduced costs by 70% (Harrison, 1940).

A Theory of Language

The telegraphic typesetting devices were very modest machines that accomplished their tasks with a few levers and electrical actuators. To build more sophisticated machines, especially machines that could deal with the problems of preparing and editing text, computer scientists needed to better understand textual data. “A machine for scanning and selecting printed documents would have to be able to perform a series of functions,” explained a team of researchers. “First, it would have to recognize words, phrases,” and other structure in the text. It would need the ability to identify relationships among the textual data and modify the data. “The heart of the problem is how to define tasks to be performed by the digital equipment so that the mechanized searching and selecting system will provide optimum advantages” (Perry, Berry, Luehrs, & Kent, 1954).

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, computer scientists had only vague ideas about how they could program a machine to recognize words or search a text document

or select some aspect of it. The basic theories behind this kind of work began to emerge in about 1955 as researchers began to work on the mechanical translation of one language into another. In the United States the government generously supported work to write a program that would translate Russian documents into English (Greibach, 1981).

The foundation of the new theory of translation was Noam Chomsky's analysis of the structure of language and his hierarchy of grammars. This hierarchy described a set of increasingly complex languages and showed how each set could be recognized by a certain kind of computer program. "We have seen certain indications that this approach may enable us to reduce the immense complexity of actual language to manageable proportions," he explained. It might also "provide considerable insight into the actual use and understanding of language" (Chomsky, 1956).

Chomsky's hierarchy and the other ideas of formal language became the basis not only for the translation of one human language into another but also one computer language into another. Computer scientists found this work more amenable to the theory as they could design a language to fit Chomsky's ideas rather than try to adopt Chomsky's categories to an existing human language. Many computer problems fit a formal scheme of translation, including the translation of commercial transactions into an accounting format, the translation of one database format into another, or the translation of a computer program from a language that a human could understand into one that a machine could handle.

Though the ideas of formal language theory brought new power to these problems, they did not yet replace the heuristic tools that engineers would bring to a problem. In 1957, IBM researcher John Backus largely ignored formal methods as he developed the programming language FORTRAN and the program that would translate FORTRAN into machine instructions. We "simply made up the language as we went along," he admitted (Backus, 1979).

The early computer programs for typesetting reflected more of John Backus's approach to programming than the formal theories of Chomsky. In the 1960s and 1970s, many of these programs would have to be redeveloped with more formal tools. However, the products of the 1950s proved to be useful to computer scientists as they developed the technology of editing and typesetting.

In 1963, MIT researchers worked to develop a FORTRAN program that would translate text from an IBM 709 computer to a form that would be recognized by a Photon optical typesetting machine to an IBM 709 computer. The Photon is often described as a computerized typesetter but that overstates its abilities. It was not truly programmable but used digital circuits to control an optical device that could project letters on photosensitive paper. The text for the Photon came from an operator typing at an electric keyboard. It was developed in the early 1950s and was first installed at the *Patriot Ledger* in Quincy, Massachusetts in 1956. By 1963, at least seven other newspapers used the device to set type (Neiva, 1996).

The Photon was already beginning to put pressure on newspaper organizations. Since it could be operated by a relatively unskilled typist it removed the need for

traditional typesetters, who worked with machines that cast the letters into hot lead. Ultimately, the Photon and similar machines would virtually eliminate the old typesetting jobs. (The period was 1969–1976, during which union linecasting jobs in the United States dropped from 11,557 to 1,877; Cortada, 2006, vol. 2, p. 318.) At MIT, the researchers wanted to use the device “to photocompose conventional computer results of a numerical nature,” primarily numerical tables and reports. They also saw the possibility that the Photon would allow them “to use the computer to organize verbal and other material in routine ways, for subsequent photocomposition” (Barnett, Moss, Luce, & Kelley, 1963).

In many ways, the problem of connecting the two machines was straightforward, but it provided a new insight into the nature of language and translation. Instead of translating a paragraph from Russian into English or a computer program from FORTRAN into IBM 709 machine code, this project took text that would have been destined to a computer line printer and translated it into the language that the Photon could process by adding codes for layout, font styles, and typesizes – codes that a skilled operator would normally enter at the machine’s keyboard. The MIT researchers noted that such problems “involve a mixing of data and ‘program’ in a fashion that is not so common in high speed computing.” They added that “Analogies can be sought for this mixing in other fields – stage instructions in a play, style comments and key changes in a musical score, control codes that set selectors in punched-card accounting – but very few in high speed computing” (Barnett et al., 1963).

The idea that programs contained both data and instructions was nothing new. The original documents that described stored program computers made the point that data and instructions could be indistinguishable and both could be modified by other programs (Neumann, 1945). Yet, in the early 1960s, programmers were just starting to understand the full ramifications of this idea. From this work came the idea that data did not really exist as static entities but were always connected to a program that could manipulate them.

During this period, several laboratories began to think about organizing objects that were both programs and data. The idea emerged at several different laboratories at roughly the same time. It is often connected to a group of Norwegian researchers who were trying to write programs that would simulate the actions of physical and social systems. It also appeared at a computer graphics laboratory at the University of Utah. It would eventually move to text processing. In organizing text, the actual characters and words would form the data (Kay, 1993; Holmevik, 1994). The codes that described the format would be the program.

Theory Into Practice

By the middle of the 1960s, computer scientists had developed much of the theory that they needed in order to manipulate text on a computer. Inside the computer, text was

represented as numbers but those numbers could be manipulated like the letters and words that they represented. Bell Labs had been particularly active in developing methods for manipulating text. They created a computer language, called SNOBOL, expressly for this purpose. It allowed individuals to search for text, replace it, delete it, and do other operations that are now common (Farber, Griswold, & Polonsky, 1964).

Yet, SNOBOL was a language. It was not a system that could be easily used to prepare an article, much less a full newspaper. Among the problems that it did not address was the process of translating thoughts into words, of processing the ideas of the writer. At this point, most systems accepted input only from punched cards, paper tape, or magnetic tape. IBM offered a program, called Text/360, that took input from punched cards. This method, explained the developers, “has proven to be fast, tolerant of late inputs and reliable” (Ziegler, 1969). The program took the text from cards, formatted the words to fit on a specified size of paper, and allowed the user to add commands that manipulated the original words. In general, Text/360 instructions can cause the following operations to be performed: text deleted, replaced, or inserted; text copied from one location to another; a word or phrase replaced wherever it appears (Ziegler, 1969).

Bell Labs researchers had recognized that a well-designed program for textual manipulation would interact with people in familiar ways. It would have “a typewriter as good and as simple as an ordinary secretary’s machine” that could be “located in the office of the user” (Mathews & Miller, 1965). Bell did not have that kind of facility in the mid-1960s. It required either a computer that could be devoted to a single user or a time-shared system, a large computer that serviced many people who used devices that resembled typewriters.

By 1967, text-processing programs could be found on the time-shared systems of both MIT and the University of California. “Such a program is called an editor,” explained a pair of Berkeley researchers, “and presupposes a reasonably large and powerful machine equipped with disk or drum storage” (Deutsch & Lampson, 1967). These editors worked on a teletype terminal, a keyboard that printed text on a roll of paper rather than some kind of electronic screen. They required writers to have a great deal of patience, discipline, and imagination. They had to keep a detailed picture of their text in their minds as they worked, as the program only allowed them to view small sections at a time (Kaiman, 1968). Still, such editors proved to be powerful and popular tools. They provided “more convenience than even the most elaborate keypunch can provide,” claimed the Berkeley computer scientists (Deutsch & Lampson, 1967).

During the final years of the 1960s, these editors were primarily used by computer scientists to create programs, but they were being adopted for use as publication tools. Typically, an editor would add formatting commands to the text and then feed the completed file into a program which operated much like the MIT Photon system and translated the file into a form that would produce text on the local printer. Several such systems appeared in 1967 and 1968, with MIT’s Script system being the most prominent of the group (Madnick & Moulton, 1968).

By 1968, computer scientists had been able to encapsulate that formatting skill within a program and hence free the writer from the problems of transforming words into the appropriate form. "A specialist builds a layout file for use by others," explained one developer, "and assigns to each convention a simple abbreviated notation to be inserted in the text." The system even allowed complex documents to be assembled from collections of simple texts (Kaiman, 1968).

Over the next two years, researchers moved one step further and recognized that the structure of the document was more important than its format. A number in a script font might or might not be a reference to a footnote, where as the converse, a reference to a footnote, should always be a superscript number, provided that was the style for the document. Beginning in 1969, three researchers at IBM began work on a language that would describe the structure of a document. They viewed their work as a means of organizing textual material so that it could be searched and retrieved, as it might be in an information system like Bush's Memex. "The usefulness of a retrieval program can be affected by its ability to identify the structure and purpose of the parts of text," explained the group leader. "A typesetting command language could convey such information, but present languages deal with the appearance of the text, with the purpose which motivated it" (Goldfarb, Mosher, & Peterson, 1970).

The result of their work was an idea called the Generalized Markup Language or GML. Using this language, a writer could identify sections of a document such as the title, the drop header, the author, the introduction, the conclusion, or anything similar. A database could translate this code into a form that made it easier to search through documents, a printing program could translate them into typesetting commands, and an editor could use them to modify the document.

Systems for Editing

The editorial and typesetting systems that appeared at the end of the 1960s made only limited use of the theoretical developments in textual manipulation, yet they radically changed the operation of many newspapers. Between 1969 and 1976, the industry lost 90% of its skilled typesetting workforce (Cortada, 2006, p. 318). This transformation of the workforce laid the groundwork for more sophisticated systems that would follow in subsequent decades.

Some sociologists, such as Wallace and Kalleberg (1982), have argued that the decline was not caused by the introduction of technology but by the "strongly entrenched system of job property rights in the printing industry [that] limited capitalist jurisdiction in the workplace." While an inflexible labor structure certainly contributed to the transformation of newspaper production, it was clearly a predisposing rather than an exciting cause. When publishers announced their design to replace hot metal typesetters with new phototypesetters, the unions fought the

changes and were willing to force publishers out of business rather than settle the issue on anything but their terms (Raskin, 1974). These confrontations brought strikes and labor disruptions at major newspapers, including the *Washington Post* and *New York Daily News* (News Union Warns Members Working at *Washington Post*, 1975).

For the most part, the new typesetting systems of this era were closer to the original Photon typesetter of the 1950s than the computer systems of Berkeley and MIT of the 1960s. Reporters would prepare their stories on a typewriter or elementary computer editor, they would have it punched onto paper tape, and the tape would be fed into the typesetter. By mid-decade, the most sophisticated of these machines operated like a sophisticated word processor. It would consist of a computer, a disk memory, and a keyboard that could be used for entering or editing text (Marcus & Trimble, 2006).

The individual typesetting machines of the late 1960s were soon replaced by larger, unified systems that managed the full editorial process that began with the reporter's notes and ended with a page of typeset text. These systems were built around a mini-computer, the term that the age used for a small machine that could support 10–40 users, rather than the single user serviced by an optical typesetter.

The *New York Daily News* was one of the first papers to invest in a unified system. To build the system, it contracted with the Mergenthaler Company, which was shutting its production facility for hot metal Linotype typesetters and was expanding its digital product line. Lacking much of the necessary expertise to create such a system, Mergenthaler subcontracted the task to a pair of independent computer contractors (Marcus & Trimble, 2006).

The Mergenthaler system combined the formal language theory of academic computer science in a practical system that was designed to run a newspaper. The system was divided into a set of subsystems that mimicked the traditional structure of the newsroom. Each of these subsystems kept the basic data of the newspaper in a formal description. One system kept notes and stories. Another handled classified ads. A third kept display ads. A central database handled financial information. A production system prepared pages for the printing press. Each unit could translate information from one form to another as it moved through the production process (Marcus & Trimble, 2006).

By the early 1980s, such systems were common. Many commentators remarked on how such systems changed the look of the newsroom by replacing old typewriters with cathode ray tubes. More importantly, they altered the operation of the newspaper by replacing skilled workers who helped prepare the final paper. They ended the careers of typesetters, editorial assistants, press controllers, and even copyboys, the apprentices who controlled the flow of information through the editorial office (Snyder, 1995).

By standardizing and systematizing the flow of information, these systems made it easier to disperse editorial and production activities. Writers no longer needed to work in close proximity to their editors. Printing could be moved to the suburbs,

where land was cheaper and access easier (Bergin, 2006). The *New York Times* was one of the first papers to move production out of its editorial offices. “While the *New York Times* is oriented to this great city,” explained the publisher, “we do it no service hauling 5,000 tons of newsprint a week into and out of the heart of Manhattan” (Kihss, 1975).

First Attempts at Electronic Distribution

The systems of the late 1970s and early 1980s were not yet unified systems that controlled every step of newspaper production. Most papers still relied on a skilled staff to produce a page layout and, of course, they relied on a physical network of trucks, bicycles, and delivery personnel to get the paper to the reader. However, many publishers believed that the technology of teletext might replace that delivery system. Teletext carried information on modified television signals to home receivers. A viewer could read the evening news as it scrolled up on their television (Griss, 1979).

“Skyrocketing growth in the market for new electronic systems in the home and the development of an electronic publishing industry will threaten the future growth of newspapers,” argued one trade journal in early 1980. The author saw such promise in the new technology that he predicted the closing of “some marginal newspapers,” and a decline in the number of pages in other papers. “At the very least,” he added, “the strong growth trend in newsprint demand will be brought to a halt, with the consequential grave effect on newsprint producers” (Teletext threat to newspapers, 1980).

Any enthusiasm for teletext was tempered by the fact that it was not quite a full system that would extend the production of the newsroom. It needed one more piece of software that would extract news stories from edited text, add the appropriate formatting commands for teletext, convert it to an analog signal, and send to the television transmitter. A second piece of software at the television receiver would decode the text and control the output. “We are only waiting the arrival of an economical set top teletext adaptor and an entrepreneurial type news service that wants to bring this new information medium to the American public” (Griss, 1979). The technology attracted some substantial investment, including funds from the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain for a trial of the technology in South Florida (Sterling, 2006).

Ultimately, teletext failed to gain a market and quickly vanished after the middle of the decade. Chris Sterling, a historian of communications technology, argued that the failure was initiated when the US government declined to set a single teletext standard for the country. “The result was a gridlock of rapidly declining interest,” he explained. No “sector – manufacturers, content providers, or television broadcasters – was willing (or, under American antitrust laws, able) to take the lead in coordinating choice of a national standard” (Sterling, 2006).

Digital Layout and Digital Distribution

Behind the failure to establish a standard for teletext lay a number of other problems – technical, social, and political – that no single newspaper or chain of papers was prepared to solve. Sterling (2006) identifies the traditional US rejection for government control of communication technology, the conservative strategies of the Reagan administration, and the recession that slowed the US economy in the early years of the decade. Furthermore, no US newspaper was really prepared to deal with the full consequences of electronic distribution.

If teletext had actually forced a decline in newspaper subscriptions and attracted new readers, it would have ended the primacy of the newspaper press in the media. No longer bound by that moment when the press began operation and words turned into ink, publishers would have been forced to conceive their firms as continuously gathering and producing information, a step that had yet to be taken by television news, an institution that had technology much more amenable to continuous production. Had publishers been able to deal with this issue at this time, they might have been able to make a gradual and informed transition into a new kind of news organization. When the technologies of electronic distribution matured a decade later, it was combined with the tools for electronic layout. Together, the two destroyed the unity of the newspaper.

The technology of electronic layout came first. It developed out of the idea of software objects, the idea that each of the elements of the paper – the stories, the pictures, the advertisements – could be conceived as little digital collections that contained both data and instructions. This concept became more important because of the laser printer, a device built out of the technology of the electrostatic copier. Electrostatic copiers offered the promise of a flexible printing device that would eliminate the need for the physical layout of a newspaper page. That flexibility came from the technology within the copier. These machines used a wide plastic belt to duplicate documents. The image of the document was reflected onto the belt by a bright light, a light that would destroy part of the charge and leave an electrical imprint of the original item. The machine then moved the belt through carbon dust (or toner) which would stick to the charged parts of the belt. Finally, the copier pressed the belt against a blank sheet of paper and fused the carbon to the paper with heat.

The laser printer used the same technology, except that it replaced the reflected image of a document with a laser beam that was controlled by a micro computer. That computer would take strings of text, much like the phototypesetters read paper tapes of text, turn that text into instructions for the laser, and then guide the laser to create the text on the electrostatic belt, which would eventually be transferred to paper.

This new technology of the laser printer quickly proved to be impracticable if it was used in the obvious, naïve way, the way in which the MIT researchers connected

the Photon typesetter to the IBM 709 two decades before. If a central computer would transmit a document by beginning at the upper left-hand corner and ending at the lower right, the new printers simply could not handle the flow of data and ceased to function. The solution came in the form of a new language, called PostScript, that was developed by John Warnock and Charles Geschke, who were researchers at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center in California. The two of them adopted the idea of the programming object, the self-program that would incorporate both data and instructions, both text and the codes that would explain how the letters and words would be presented (Perry, 1988).

Warnock, who did most of the original development of PostScript, followed the pattern that had become well established in computer science. He designed his solution as an intermediate and ephemeral step of translation, as a technology that took edited text, temporarily converted it into the new language called PostScript, and transmitted it to a printer, which transformed the PostScript code into a printed document. However, in an early demonstration of this language, he was forced by circumstances to retain PostScript code and feed it to a printer at a time when the main computer was not able to operate. In the process, he recognized that by storing the PostScript code in file, he had created a translation of the document that could be processed by any computer that had his translation software. He named this version the portable document file or pdf (Grier, 2009).

PostScript, released in 1984, and pdf files, released seven years later, became key elements of an activity known as desktop publishing.¹ Though initial applications of desktop publishing concentrated on small-run publications that could be printed on laser printers or high-speed copy machines, it did nothing to displace the role of the printing press. Indeed the technology was quickly adopted by business firms for commercial purposes (Janes & Snyder, 1986). Instead, it added a key step to the electronic chain of production that began with assembling notes and ideas, moved through the writing and editing of an article, and ended with typesetting, page layout, and the printing of the final document.

Desktop publishing did not address electronic distribution, the final step that had yet to be addressed by electronic technology. This step was connected, of course, to the rise of electronic networks and involved one final step of translation. Digital works, of course, had a long history in computing technology. In 1940, Bell Labs built an electric calculator in New York City that could be operated at a distance using a special keyboard and standard telephone lines. It was demonstrated in September of that year to a meeting of the Mathematical Association of America in Hanover, New Hampshire (Andrews, 1982). In the 1950s, the US Air Force built a computer system, called SAGE, that used telephone lines to gather radar data (Ceruzzi, 1998, p. 51).

None of these early systems, nor much of the subsequent technology, provided a workable means for distributing documents electronically. Part of the reason for this, like the reason for the failure of Teletext, was the lack of a common standard for network technology. However, an equally pressing problem was the lack of a system

that would translate documents into a form that made best use of the network technology.

Standard network technology came from work done for the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the US Department of Defense (Abbate, 1999). This work, which was first demonstrated in 1969, developed the ideas of packet switching and the Internet Protocol, ideas which formed the basis for the modern Internet. The technology that would map documents into the technology of networks came from the European Research Lab CERN in 1990 and borrowed heavily from Vannevar Bush's Memex machine and the information systems of the 1950s.

"We should work toward a universal linked information system," wrote CERN scientist Tim Berners-Lee in the spring of 1990. "The aim would be to allow a place to be found for any information or reference which one felt was important, and a way of finding it afterwards." Rather than attempting to build this information system as a single machine, he designed it to be a computer network because the ideas themselves were linked like a network (Berners-Lee, 1989).

In designing this system, which became known as the World Wide Web, Berners-Lee faced one more translation problem. He would translate documents into a new language, based on the General Markup Language, that would identify the document, describe how it should be displayed, and link that document with related documents in other parts of the system. A program called a server would respond to requests by sending the appropriate document across the network. One final piece of software, called the browser, would translate the document into a form that would be properly displayed on the final computer (Berners-Lee & Connolly, 1993).

Berners-Lee did not necessarily see his creation as a general tool that could be used for commercial news as well as research documents. The debates about this technology "have sometimes tackled the problem of copyright enforcement and data security," he wrote. "These are of secondary importance at CERN, where information exchange is still more important than secrecy" (Berners-Lee, 1989). Still, his ideas quickly gained an audience beyond CERN and soon displaced competing technologies that were unable to translate documents into forms that used networks efficiently (Frana, 2004; Khare, 1999; Obraczka, Danzig, & Li, 1993).

The Consequences of Completing the Chain

Unlike the desktop publishing technology, the tools of the World Wide Web were profoundly unsettling to newspaper publishers. "What's the difference between 1990, when newspapers seemed on the verge of getting their electronic act together," asked one columnist for *Editor and Publisher*, "and 1995, when the world seems to be skittering ahead with or without them?" (Conniff, 1995). He claimed that the answer was simple: the World Wide Web. The new technology did not easily protect

copyrights. It allowed competition to enter the market with minimal capital investment. It did not support a simple subscription service.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the software systems that managed the production of news, from the reporter's notes to the completed web document, undermined the unity of the newspaper. The same software that bundled the program and data that presented the news allowed the different elements of the paper to break away from the common core and seek their fortune as independent entities.

For most of its history, the newspaper had presented itself as a unified reflection of the community it served. It would have something for everyone even though few would read the entire paper. "Today's press is a composite, omnibus vehicle carrying a variety of loads," observed one editor at the start of the computer era (Poynter, 1942). Some of those loads were more important to the journal than others. The critic Marshall McLuhan noted that the "classified ads and stock-market quotations are the bedrock of the press. Should an alternative source of easy access to such diverse daily information be found, the press will fold" (McLuhan, 1994, p. 207).

To classified ads and stock reports could be added sports news and weather reports. These elements of the newspapers attracted paying readers. They were also elements that could be isolated from the old omnibus paper and published individually provided that the cost of publication was sufficiently low. "This unbundled deployment of the multiple media that make up the guts of a newspaper is a profound development," argued *Editor and Publisher*. "For the first time, using the Web/Mosaic combination, newspapers have the chance to make universally available all the variegated pieces that go into the making of information." By the summer of 1995, at least one individual, Craig Newmark, recognized this possibility and was offering a classified ads service on the Web that he called Craigslist.

Newspapers responded to the new technology in a variety of ways. Some embraced it uncritically. Some utilized it in part. Some exerted great effort to maintain the unifying power of the printing press. Perhaps the *Washington Post* invested the greatest amount of resources in its attempt to retain control over its publication process. It decided to shun the World Wide Web technology and instead purchased a different kind of technology, called Interchange, from AT&T. Interchange was designed to be a point of entry to the Internet. Subscribers would connect to the service using a traditional phone line. At the Interchange, they would have complete access to the Internet as well as to the news of the *Post*. They called this product Digital Ink (Webb, 1995). The new service attempted to retain the unified communal presence of the newspaper. "Digital Ink aims to be the 'one-stop place to come for information,'" explained *Editor and Publisher*. "The service seems well positioned to take advantage of its promotional and advertising potential and integrates advertising with editorial, just like a newspaper" (Webb, 1995).

Digital Ink did not survive a full year of operation. Once readers had access to the World Wide Web, they had little interest in getting all of their information from a single source. They looked for services that provided more information about a narrower subject: Weather reports from a source that specialized in global weather,

classified ads from an institution that offered goods from anywhere in North America, sports stories from an organization that tracked every player on every team.

Digital Ink accepted the first customers in July 1995 and disconnected the last of them by June the following year. Over the intervening 12 months, no more than 11,000 individuals accessed the paper. In the first days of a new service, Washingtonpost.com, which was built with World Wide Web technology, a million people looked at the new site. "It's easy to condemn it and we all do. But everyone else made a lot of the same mistakes," explained one of the managers of Digital Ink. "The Web happened. And messed up a lot of people" (Mark Potts, quoted in Jenkins, 1996).

The Transformed Newspaper

In his study *The Digital Hand*, historian Jim Cortada (2006) argues that digital technology "came initially to newspapers for the same reason as to so many other industries: to drive down the costs of labor and thereby improve productivity" (p. 315). His approach helps us understand the pattern the US industry followed when it adopted computer production technology and the development of that technology itself, but it does not quite illustrate the role of the production process within newspapers, nor does it explain the central role of the printing press in the dissemination of newspapers.

In 1995, just as the *Washington Post* and other papers were developing their web pages, the head of the MIT media laboratory, Nicholas Negroponte, argued that the "medium is not the message in a digital world." He dismissed the famous phrase of Marshall McLuhan by arguing that messages were now freely translatable from one format to another, that a "message might have several embodiments automatically derivable from the same data" and hence are not trapped in a single media (Negroponte, 1995, p. 71).

Yet McLuhan's point remains valid without undermining the claim of Negroponte. The kind of printing press that one needed to publish a daily paper influenced the nature of the production process and, ultimately, the messages carried by the product. A press is an expensive capital good that needs to be kept in operation and yet be connected to the daily cycle of life in a community. The "dateline is the only organizing principle of the newspaper image of the community," McLuhan argued. "Take off the dateline and one day's paper is the same as the next" (McLuhan, 1994, p. 212).

While the printing press was central to the production of a daily paper, it was not replaced in a moment. Indeed, newspaper publishers introduced technology to improve the process rather than make a major change. Digital systems appeared, step by step, as technologies of translation, programs that would take a message from one form and change it into another. Beginning with telegraphic typesetting, these systems translated text from one form to another and, step by step, it built a chain of production that prepared and developed the news.

In 1996, following the demise of Digital Ink, the newspaper technology began to move beyond the printing press. That summer, the trade publication *Editor and Publisher* surveyed the nation's newspapers and concluded that well over 90% of them had established a presence on the World Wide Web (Jenkins, 1996). Unlike previous efforts to introduce digital technology into the production of news, this last step was not driven by a desire to reduce costs but rather by concerns to establish a place in the growing market that was supported by the networks. "Most online newspapers have yet to turn a profit," explained a US government report that year, "but they remain committed to the Internet" (Margherio, 1998, pp. A4–5).

"While there is some concern over the acceptability of the newspaper in electronic versus paper form, the electronic form appears to be inevitable," argued researchers who were studying the methods of disseminating printing in the middle of the 1990s. "However, the newspaper metaphor is likely to be only the initial interface as the paradigm continues to evolve" (Burkowski, Shepherd, & Watters, 1994).

The metaphor of the newspaper, the idea of a news organization that was rooted in the community, centered on an expensive printing press, and driven by the daily cycles of life has been surprisingly slow to evolve. Long after computer software collapsed the news cycle into instantaneous postings and stretched their community to embrace the globe, they still clung to policies that were developed for an organization that evolved into new forms. Most news organizations require reporters to use the byline of their physical location, even though that location may have nothing to do with the story that they are writing.

One news organization required a reporter to spend the night of January 19, 2009 in a rented apartment so that he could use a Washington, DC byline for his story on the inauguration of Barack Obama. He had no way to see the inauguration except on television, no way to gather information except by telephone and email, no way to file except over the Internet. His relationship to the processes that created the news and those that produced the paper were unaffected by his physical location. This news organization had completely abandoned its newspaper press and cast its lot with digital publication. Its organization was no longer driven by deadlines imposed by a physical press but by a system that gathered information from around the globe, translated it from one form to another, combined its stories with advertising, and distributed the final product to all who wanted it. This system was built upon four decades of research into the best methods of manipulating text and graphics. Yet, this system had failed to transform the basic assumption that reporters can only write about the countries, the cities, the neighborhoods in which they actually reside (Grier, 2009).

NOTE

- 1 Desktop publishing is usually dated to a string of articles that appeared in business magazines in the spring of 1986. For example, *PC World* ran a series of articles on the subject that spring. See Desktop publishing (1986).

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Media and Mobility

Mark Andrejevic

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the changing relationship of mobility to media technology, considering the ways in which we think about, engage in, and exploit the mobility of people and devices, goods and services, in a world in which mobility serves as an increasingly important type of information and information goes increasingly mobile. The chapter rethinks the ways in which information mobility and physical mobility interact with one another in the transition from industrial era shifts to digital era developments. If mobility has, at times, claimed for itself the attributes of a certain kind of freedom, this chapter considers the way in which this freedom can be put to work. The conquest of space, in the digital era, refers to the creation of a ubiquitous electromagnetic atmosphere – not merely extension across space, but also a “filling-in” of space, so that wherever one goes, the network can be accessed, information can be retrieved, and feedback generated. Information is generated not simply about the movement of objects, but about the movement of messages, and, recursively, the tracking of the movement of messages. Mobility, in this sense, participates in a productive spiral.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Writing in the waning years of the Space Race, James Carey (1992) located the rise of the electronic computer in a sequential chain of relationships between media and transportation: “As printing went with seagoing navigation and the telegraph with the railway, electronic and computer-based communication go with the space ship” (p. 171). Despite its element of truth – space ships rely on a variety of computerized systems – the observation is of a piece with its historical period, a more ballistic time when space travel and rockets captured the technological imaginary.¹ Space has since given way to other final frontiers and the contemporary technological imagination is less caught up in the *Popular Science*, sci-fi imagery of *The Jetsons*, *Star Trek*, and other space odysseys than in the *Wired* techno-futurism of the information revolution. In this regard the attempt to make a grand equation between a new communication technology and a new form of transportation falls short. Electronic communication has arguably advanced much further than space travel in the intervening years. It is perhaps telling that, as of this writing, NASA’s budget has dropped to about one-half of 1% of the US federal budget from a high of more than 5% of the budget in the mid-1960s: a decline of one order of magnitude. The agency’s budget remains a fraction of the annual revenues of any one of a number of major information and communication technology companies, including Apple, Google, and AT&T, and only a tiny fraction of the whole sector. Space travel itself remains on the budgetary back burner, with occasional fleeting flare-ups about possible expeditions to Mars. Given the role it plays in satellite communication, space – or at least the orbital realm – has become more infrastructure than frontier.

Perhaps this is because space travel, unlike both of the earlier transportation technologies invoked by Carey – shipping and the railway – has not yet become integrally tied to the development of commerce. Despite the efforts of various entrepreneurs, transportation and exploration via “space ship” remain the province of mostly state-funded research and have yet to play a crucial role in the provision and sale of goods and services. The shift in the technological imaginary from the realm of rockets and jetpacks to that of Blackberries and iPads, however, does not undermine Carey’s deeper insight of the connection between technologies of communication and transportation. At the most basic level, the very notion of a medium implies the movement of a message through space and time, and, as a corollary, the spatial relations between communicators and messages. Thus, as Carey famously notes, for much of human history transportation and communication were identified with one another because messages traveled alongside people and things. The history of communication and that of human mobility, whether in the form of exploration, migration, or colonization, is tied up with that of communication. This connection is, as Carey notes, central to the pioneering work of Canadian communication scholar Harold Innis, for whom “communication, when considered in terms of the medium that facilitated it, might be seen as the basic staple in the growth of empire” (Carey, 1992, p. 157). To situate communication at the heart of empire is to foreground the relationship between mobility and control. Beniger (1986) further develops this connection in his study of the role played by communication technolo-

gies, broadly construed, in managing the “crises” of control associated with industrialization and the development of more rapid forms of production and distribution in the modern nation-state:

Although transportation and telecommunications infrastructures have also played crucial roles in the control of large territories since the Roman Empire, it is difficult to imagine consolidation of the modern nation state, over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, without the cultural integration made possible by parallel development of the first truly mass media: lithographic reproduction (1820s), photography and power printing (1830s), cheaper wood pulp publications (1850s), transatlantic telegraphic news reporting (1860s), illustrated daily newspapers and mass mailing (1870s), halftone photoreproduction (1880s), and finally broadcasting (1900s). (Beniger, 1986, p. 301)

Similarly, for Anderson (1983), communication and mobility have a combined role to play in the formation of the nation as an imagined community – a spatially dispersed, but shared notion of national community traveling, as it were, through time. Mass circulation media contributed to this shared sense of community, not least because people reading a daily newspaper could imagine themselves as part of a national audience they could not see in its entirety, but whose traces were discernable in daily life: “At the same time the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbors, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life” (Anderson, 1983, p. 35).

The Relevance of Geography

These accounts share a preoccupation with the logic of control – an interest in the way communication helps reproduce social processes over time and space: “So central is communication to the process of control that the two have become the joint subject of the modern science of cybernetics, defined by one of its founders as ‘the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal’” (Beniger, 1986, p. 22; the reference is to Wiener, 1948, p. 11). Two of the main challenges posed to control – and thus to communication – are those of speed and distance: the ability to keep up with the expansion of social systems across territory and to monitor and manage social activity as it unfolds in time. The development of electronic communication technologies, which as Carey (1986) famously noted, break the identity of transportation and communication, addresses both of these challenges. Thanks to the speed of electromagnetic signals, these technologies allow for the coordination of distant activities – for the expansion of a societal “body” across space. As Carey (1986) put it, the communication technology functioned as, “in the favorite metaphor of the day [. . .] a thoroughly encephalated social nervous

system in which signaling was divorced from musculature” (p. 215). Electronic communication technologies developed as a means of managing the “crisis of control” brought about by the acceleration of production and transport in the industrial era: the threat that the “musculature” might outstrip the systems for managing and controlling it: “Never before had the processing of material flows threatened to exceed, in both volume and speed, the capacity of technology to contain them” (p. 12). If information was going to help coordinate such processes, it would have to travel faster than the objects being controlled.

Thus, as Carey (1986) puts it, “The great theoretical significance” of the telegraph, “lay not merely in the separation [of transportation from communication] but also in the use of the telegraph as both a model of and a mechanism for control of the physical movement of things, specifically for the railroad [. . .] not only can information move independently of and faster than physical entities, but it also can be a simulation of and control mechanism for what has been left behind” (p. 215). The result, Carey argues, is the evening out of geographical difference – the differences that used to take *time* to cover. Geography made a difference that appeared in the register of time (at least for the purposes of market signaling that Carey discusses). A technology that allowed messages to cover time almost instantaneously had the effect of obliterating these spatiotemporal differences. Thanks to the development of electronic communication technologies, dispatchers could keep track of trains remotely just as stock traders across the country could track market prices in New York City. Geographic distance no longer mattered in the same way: “The telegraph puts everyone in the same place for purposes of trade; it makes geography irrelevant” (Carey, 1986, p. 217).

The newly achieved irrelevance of geography, Carey argues, opened up the speculative frontier of the future: space-based arbitrage (capitalizing on the difference between the prices of commodities in different locations) was replaced by futures trading. If time no longer served as a proxy for the differences associated with distance it could still project difference into the future. The notion of frontiers other than the spatial – than (outer) space itself – seems a more productive alternative to the chain of associations in which the telegraph gives us the coordinated rail system and the computer yields space travel. Carey himself provides an alternative to this formulation with the following observation (drawing on Melbin, 1987): “The notion of night as frontier, a new frontier of time that opens once space is filled is a metaphor, but it is more than that” (Carey, 1986, p. 228). He is referring here to the colonization of new times by commercial broadcasting: the long march of programming into the night. Since the time of his writing, we might expand this notion of new frontiers to include the colonization of new spatial “frontiers” by advertising and commercial media, whether these be the roofs of taxi cabs, the walls of elevators or health clubs, or the Web pages that we visit to access our email and search the Internet. Developments in the expansion of these new frontiers, both spatial and temporal, complement one another: increasing the time of exposure to commercially supported content and advertising requires reaching people in new locations. Exploiting new times means capturing new spaces.

If the telegraph signaled the moment when the identity between communication and transportation was broken, networked computing marks a form of reconciliation: communication can take place wherever we go.

From the perspective of commerce, this development marks a recovered relevance for geography. The goal of so-called contextual advertising on mobile devices including laptops and mobile phones, for example, is to be able to deliver marketing appeals in real time with geographic salience. To paraphrase Carey, the network puts everyone in their own place for purposes of consumption. If the telegraph separated communication from transportation in order to allow the former to manage the latter, the network, in a sense, makes communication reflexive: it provides information about where and when communication is taking place, and in so doing reintroduces the commercial relevance of geography. If Carey (1986) notes the impact of the telegraph as a homogenizing one that facilitates the “spread of a uniform price system throughout space so that for the purposes of trade everyone is in the same place” (p. 222), networked computing envisions the customization of pricing so that, for example, someone purchasing a Coke on a hot day from a vending machine in Arizona might have to pay a higher price than someone using a similar machine on a chilly day in Maine (Boyes & Melvin, 2009, p. 89). The mobility of information piggybacks on the movement of people in a productive spiral.

Biased Media

To speak of mobility within the context of media technologies and practices is to consider the circulation and control of both people and information, populations and messages. To return, once again, to the example of space travel, all of these concerns are embedded in Carey’s (1992) observation that “the delays in space exploration did not derive from deficiencies of rocket thrust. The real delay was the development of a system of communication that would allow space travel to be controlled from earth” (p. 171). The issue is not whether humans can be launched into space, but whether that can be done in a way that allows a society or culture to advance into this same space: that is, to maintain contact with the space travelers, to enfold them (even at a distance) within the embrace of the society that sent them off, and, finally, to incorporate the fruits of exploration into this society that originated it. By the same token, according to Carey (1992), “It was print and navigation that allowed European nations to burst the bonds of geography and spread into a ‘new world’” (p. 158). Mobility and communication go hand-in-hand to reproduce cultural and economic systems across space. The development of technologies for transportation and production goes hand-in-hand with that of communication technologies and practices: “Each new technological innovation extends the processes that sustain life, thereby increasing the need for control and hence for improved control technology” (Beniger, 2007, p. 310).

Control, in this context, need not refer to a particular type of top-down or authoritarian power, but rather to the effective management of social relations and, consequently, the process of social reproduction. Innis (1950, 1951) argued that communication systems can be characterized according to their varying abilities to manage culture across space and over time. His analysis invites us to think about the material characteristics of media technologies: are they “light” and portable enough to allow standardized transmission across space? Are they durable and compelling enough to reproduce their messages over time? Imperial expansion relies upon communication practices that allow for accurate accounting for and management of far-flung bureaucratic systems; its durability depends upon practices that foster a commitment to the reproduction of social relations over time. For Innis, the rhythm of the rise and fall of empires and spheres of influence corresponds to various shifts in the warp and woof of time and space management: the ability to convey control across space and to reproduce social relations and the systems of knowledge and practice that sustain them over time. Thus, for example, his account of Egypt’s middle kingdom traces shifts that undermine control over space:

A decline of centralized bureaucratic power and a shift from an emphasis on control over space reflected in the pyramid to a decentralized bureaucratic power with an emphasis on continuity and religion to be seen in the spread of writing and the use of papyrus, the extension of magical formulae from the hieroglyphic of the pyramids to that of papyrus, from the king to the people weakened control over space [. . .] (Innis, 1950, p. 95).

The interplay of control over space and time corresponds, for Innis, to the interplay of media technologies and their abilities to facilitate one form of control or the other: “Concentration on a medium of communication implies a bias in the cultural development of the civilization concerned either toward an emphasis on space and political organization or toward an emphasis on time and religious organization. Introduction of a second medium tends to check the bias of the first and to create conditions suited to the growth of empire” (Innis, 1950, p. 216). The balance is disturbed when the dominant tendency of a particular medium goes unchecked – as in the case of the bias of electronic media toward instrumental reason, abstraction, and bureaucratic administration. For Innis, the character of a society is, to an important extent, shaped by the characteristics of the dominant media practices and technologies. As Carey (1986) puts it, “In propositional form, then, structures of consciousness parallel structures of communication” (p. 161).

But Innis’s account is also a critical one: an emphasis on the binding of space via the high-speed transmission of messages across long distances, and the consequent development of technical communication associated with the management of economic relations at a distance, tilt the balance toward the political and bureaucratic. There is a narrative of decline embedded in Innis’s description of the eclipse of concerns of time by those of space: “Innis characterized modern Western

history as beginning with temporal organization and ending with spatial organization. It is the history of the evaporation of an oral and manuscript tradition and the concerns of community, morals, and metaphysics and their replacement by print and electronics supporting a bias toward space" (Carey, 1992, p. 160). There is a familiar critique of mobility at work in this narrative of decline: not just a loss of rootedness or grounding, but a concern with the homogenization and instrumentalization of space that has come to characterize contemporary critiques of capitalist globalization. Accounts of the culmination of what Marx (writing in the era of the telegraph) described as "the annihilation of space by time" invoke a sense of loss: not only of the distinctness of geographic difference, but of the time for reflection associated with difference. As Paul Virilio puts it, "We're heading towards a situation in which every city will be in the same place in time. There will be a kind of coexistence, and probably not a very peaceful one, between these cities which have kept their distance in space, but which will be telescoped in time" (as quoted in Armitage, 2000, p. 11).

The ambiguity in these accounts – is it space that is annihilated (and temporal distance preserved) or time that is telescoped (while distance is maintained) – is structural: the goal of instant communication across space is the elimination of temporal difference and delay. The rapid transit of messaging across space is associated with a collapse of the future into the present: a process of simulation incorporates the anticipation of future markets into current transactions. Consider, for example, the spread of futures markets or so-called decision markets from the realm of finance to those of politics, medicine, national defense, and even meteorology. There is nothing new about speculation *per se*, but the migration of so-called decision markets into the realm of policymaking marks an attempt to telescope time – to translate the future into the present for the purpose of governance. In this regard, the so-called War on Terror with its goal of comprehensive, *preemptive* monitoring of the flows of people, capital, and information, marks the logic of warfare in an era of so-called "time-space compression" (Massey, 1994, p. 22). Victory in such a war cannot be defined after the fact, as in the case of the movement of troops on a battlefield, but only in terms of comprehensive preemption.

In each of these spheres, standardization and interoperability render the control and signaling process effective and comprehensive. As Douglas (1997) puts it, "The importance of not only predicting the future, but attempting to shape it, necessitates a greater form of synchronicity between the levels of society, institution, or firm" (p. 167). Globalization, to continue along the tracks of Carey's train of thought, is attendant upon the development of a communication system that allows for the comprehensive management of global mobility: of messages, people, things, and capital that not only move through coordinated interactive networks, but generate information about themselves as they go. This redoubling of mobility is at the heart of the productivity of the information society and contributes to a de-differentiation of communication and transportation: mobility becomes a form of communication; motion, as it were, expresses itself.

Rhythms of Mobility

Mobility is not necessarily always aligned with productivity. What Beniger (1986) describes as the “Neolithic revolution,” which was characterized by the first permanent settlements, countered the mobility of nomadic life with the productivity of animal husbandry and agriculture. Fixed settlements coincided with production technologies that could generate a surplus thanks to “the refinement of stone tools and the domestication of plants and animals” (Beniger, 2007, p. 302). If such settlements relied on the time-binding character of the oral tradition, over time this was supplemented by forms of representation and communication of the “heavy and durable” type Innis (1950) associates with the bias of time: clay and stone tablets, architecture, the pyramids, and so on. As forms of fixed settlement prosper, they tend to expand. Prosperity combined with the development of transportation technology ranging from the construction of roads to the development of navigation techniques come to underwrite trade and cultural expansion and hence the need for portable, “lighter” forms of communication. Lightness does not simply refer to weight, but to ease of transport and accessibility. In the end the operative distinction for Innis is not simply a material one between, say, heavy clay tablets on the one hand and portable forms of papyrus on the other, but also a sensory one between the ear and the eye: between those forms of communication that rely upon and are conducive to rituals of personal communion and those that facilitate abstracted forms of long-distance management and control. Thus radio – what Ong (1988) describes as a form of secondary orality – finds itself on the side of the technocracy, not necessarily because it is fleeting and evanescent, but because, like the printing press, it addresses “the world instead of the individual” (Innis, 1950, p. 190).² Innis’s own bias was toward the oral and the ecclesiastical, with their role in the development and enrichment of culture over time: “The oral discussion inherently involves personal contact and a consideration for the feelings of others, and it is in sharp contrast with the cruelty of mechanized communication and the tendencies which we have come to note in the modern world” (Innis, 1950, p. 191).

It seems fair to say that if the history prior to the arrival of the printing press in Europe is characterized by an ongoing tension between media of space and media of time, between the expansion of empire and the durability of the ecclesiastical, the advent of print capitalism creates the fundamental imbalance that leads to Innis’s indictment of Western civilization. Developments in navigation and shipping associated with “The Commercial Revolution, following exploration of Africa, Asia, and the New World” (Beniger, 2007, p. 303) combined with the emergence of a medium for the mass production of print to set the stage for a shift to productivity of mobility and the management of space. For Innis (1950), “The discovery of printing in the middle of the fifteenth century implied the beginning of a return to a type of civilization dominated by the eye rather than the ear” (p. 138).

With the rise of mercantile capitalism and eventually industrialization, the circulation of people and goods came both to depend on and to facilitate the circulation of information enabled by technological developments in transportation and manufacture: “The Industrial Revolution followed the printing industry and in turn in the nineteenth century, with the use of steam power in the manufacture of paper and of printed material, supported rapid expansion of the printing industry” (Innis, 1950, p. 139). Douglas (1997) notes that Mumford traces the emergence of a “new era of generalized mobility” back to the sixteenth century: “The ‘new spirit of society,’ he argues, ‘was on the side of rapid transportation [. . . t]he hastening of movement and the conquest of space [. . .] Mass, velocity, and time were categories of social effort before Newton’s law was formulated’” (p. 168). For Mumford, capital, in the form of money, can be firmly located on the side of “lightness”:

as the emphasis upon money grew in part out of the increasing mobility of late medieval society, with its international trade, so did the resulting money economy promote more trade: landed wealth, humanized wealth, houses, paintings, sculptures, books, even gold itself were all relatively difficult to transport, whereas money could be transported after pronouncing the proper abracadabra by a simple algebraic operation on one side or another of the ledger. (Mumford, 1963, p. 24)

Capitalism in its various forms relied not just on improved technologies for the transport of raw materials and finished products but also on mobility of people associated with colonization and internal and external migration. For Innis (1950), the result was a kind of permanent if productive imbalance: “Constant changes in technology particularly as they affect communication [. . .] increase the difficulties of recognizing balance let alone achieving it” (p. 140). For Beniger (1986), the result was a series of crises of control that helped drive the development of increasingly efficient forms of communication and feedback-based management. Whereas Beniger (1986) paints a portrait of a rhythm of crisis and control, Innis’s picture of constant imbalance is perhaps more compelling: new technology facilitates increased speeds of production, circulation, and consumption leading to perpetual crisis and breathless acceleration. Computers not only monitor the movements of people, commodities, and capital, but also facilitate their increasingly rapid circulation. As Douglas (1997) notes, control of movement gives way to speed – and acceleration: “The difference is but one of degree: in *late* modernity the ‘problem of movement’ is substituted for what Paul Virilio has termed the ‘movement of movement’ (speed)” (p. 170) and hence, the capture and monitoring of movement.

Mocio-Economics

If the logical endpoint of acceleration is instantaneity, this is not quite the same thing as stasis or the obliteration of location and the consequent irrelevance of geography.

Once upon a time, the vision of stasis was a wired fantasy of the futurists: that the network could virtualize mobility, rendering its physical counterpart a matter of choice. Taken to its limit, telecommuting would be subsumed to so-called “virtual workspaces” (Pruitt & Barrett, 1991) – virtual reality suits that would allow us to roam the world and interact with others without leaving the privacy of home. This was seen as a “green” development: pollution and costs could both be reduced by replacing physical transportation with virtual mobility: commuting would be replaced by telecommuting, conferencing by tele-conferencing, education by distance learning, and so on.

The disappearance of personal contact (at least in its face-to-face version) associated by Innis with space-biased media is taken to an extreme. Aside from the somewhat alienating vision of a world in which mobility is virtualized, the prospect of a trade-off between virtual and physical mobility runs counter to the productive logic of mobility. The compression of space enabled by new transportation and communication technologies corresponded to dramatic increases in its consumption as travel became a consumer good. At the start of the twenty-first century the US National Academy of Engineering praised the dramatic increase in the mobility of the nation’s population as one of the greatest achievements of the previous century: “In 1900 the average American traveled about 1,200 miles in a lifetime, mostly on foot, and mostly within his or her own village or town. By the end of the century, the typical American adult would travel some 12,000 miles by automobile alone, in just one year” (National Academy of Engineering, 2000).

This dramatic increase reflected a feat of production engineering – of highway building and automobile making, of designing and constructing the infrastructure for suburban sprawl and shopping malls – but it also represented a crucial spatial component of the dramatic increase in levels of consumption and production associated with twentieth-century consumer society. What Lefebvre (1991) described as the “productive consumption” of space associated with increased mobility helped to stimulate a productive spiral: suburbanization and its associated technologies of mobile and static privatization increased demand through spatial dispersion. Each household served as the repository for a private set of appliances that displaced or replaced forms of collective consumption: the automobile displaced the trolley, the radio the concert hall, the TV set the downtown movie theater, and so on. Eventually these personalized media would go mobile, in the form of the transistor radio, the car VCR, and eventually, the mobile phone, the laptop computer, the iPad, and so on. The disaggregation and individualization of consumption, communication, and transport helped to absorb the goods produced by an increasingly rationalized and efficient industrial sector. The close connection between individualized media devices and transport is indicative: communication technologies piggyback on the productive spiral of the consumption of space. As mobility becomes coupled with communication, the combination of portability and functionality generates a proliferation of media commodities and devices: LPs give way to cassettes and then to CDs, mini-disks, and eventually MP3 players (at which point the commodity

becomes so mobile that its status as a commodity is threatened). This progression is paralleled by the development of car radios, 8-track tape players, cassette decks, and iPod ports.

The sheer number of devices – many of them portable and individualized – associated with media consumption in the new millennium dwarfs the technological range of devices available only a generation earlier. Whereas a middle-class family a few decades ago might have kept the same phone for 15 or 20 years, these days the half-life of a mobile phone is only a matter of a few months. The same household may have had only one or two extensions for the whole family, rather than one (or more) mobile phones per person. The same might be said of computers, which are typically upgraded every few years and are becoming increasingly individualized as they become more compact and portable. The advent of so-called cloud computing means that laptops are becoming tethered by the Internet to ever-evolving applications that require constant updates and hardware upgrades. Our relation to what once might have been considered consumer “durables” takes on the character of a flow: an accelerated rhythm of upgrading, consuming, and discarding.

The multiplication of personal devices enlists the industrial-era promise of individuation as redress from (and ruse for) rationalization. Suburbanization offered an escape from urban congestion as surely as it served as a form of sorting, exclusion, and differentiation. Similarly, the interstate highway system mobilized the myth of the freedom of the road while simultaneously channeling movement through certain areas and around others. As Deleuze put it, “People can drive infinitely and ‘freely’ without being confined yet while still being perfectly controlled” (quoted in Allon, 2001, p. 20). From the very inception of mass society, the promise of differentiation, of freedom – in short, of an escape from its own stultifying homogeneity – has served as one of its guiding marketing strategies (Marchand, 1986).

As media critics have argued (including Barney, 2000; Robins & Webster, 1999), the so-called revolutionary promise of new interactive media represents not a radical departure from this strategy but an extension of its logic. The development of so-called “m-commerce” continues the strategy of mobility based differentiation, specification, and customization. Short for “mobile commerce,” the term has been championed by the publicists of the wireless Internet, and the range of mobile, interactive, networked devices it enables. The prospect of data-driven mass customization based on continuous, real-time monitoring of consumers continues to be held out as one of the potential killer applications of wireless, portable media and is being pursued by m-commerce entrepreneurs and social networking sites. The metaphor align left cyberspace has, in this regard, come full circle. Thanks to portable, interactive devices, one can leave one’s home without leaving the flexible, interactive, and customized world of cyberspace. To the extent that the elastic boundaries of cyberspace stretch beyond the confines of the home or office to contain the physical motion of the mobile consumer, this motion becomes the real-world, physical analogue of “surfing the Web.” The promise of wireless networked technology, from the standpoint of m-commerce, is thus to inscribe the productive spiral of spatial

dispersion into the interactive economy: not to minimize mobility but to redouble it in virtual form.

Consumers' motions through space open up new informational dimensions that can be used to further facilitate the consumption of space and the spatialization of consumption. Murdock (2006) has described new forms of "mobile consumerism" in which the solution to fostering new forms of marketing in an era of information glut "is to release commercial promotion into the environment integrating it into a range of cultural forms and employing interactivity to increase consumer engagement" (p. 27). Networked mobility enabled by the spread of wireless networks contributes to the productive spiral of mobility with a proliferation of portable individualized devices that enable the increasing specification and differentiation of consumers. Because these devices are portable, they become attached to particular individuals rather than fixed addresses (as in the case of desktop computers or terrestrial phones). Because they are interactive, they render geography both irrelevant in some respects and increasingly relevant in others: any space with access to a network can become a site for communication and information access, production, and sharing. The result is the de-differentiation of sites of labor, recreation, and domesticity: one can work from home, a café, the airport, a commuter train, or a public park. By the same token, workers can multi-task in the work place, conducting aspects of their social and family lives via mobile phones and email – where this is permitted or where restrictions are not effectively enforced. Different realms of social life come to rely on the same tools: mobile phones and laptops are used for both professional and personal purposes. Because these can accompany their users throughout the course of the day they are no longer location or task specific.

At the same time, for the purposes of commerce and consumption, location becomes an increasingly important demographic variable. Contextual advertising can target users based on the time-space paths they take through the course of the day in combination with other behavioral and demographic information. The advent of mobile commerce via interactive devices has spawned the neologisms "mocio-economics" to describe the "effects of mobile phone usage on human behavior, society and lifestyle in the twenty-first century" and "mobilology to refer to the study of the use of mobile phones" (Mobilium, 2010). Even as these technologies contribute to the rationalization of consumption described by Beniger, they are promoted for their contributions to personal expression and convenience: "Mobilology addresses the ways consumers personalize their wireless and mobile lifestyles, how they use their mobile technology to innovate their self-expression, and how they use their mobile phones and devices to facilitate increasingly mobile lifestyles" (Mobilium, 2010).

Similar technologies facilitate strategies for flexible and mobile production, keeping track of products, raw materials, and employees as they move through the supply chain. The advent of interactive forms of production helps blur distinctions between production and consumption: consumers can participate in creating customized

goods and services that they then pay a premium to consume. The recursive character of interactive forms of mobility allows consumers to generate information about their own movements and actions: they communicate information about their communication practices and behaviors. Spatial customization thereby serves as an incitement to the consumption of space as a form of productive subjectification. In contrast to the bourgeois interiority associated with the location of authentic subjectivity in the intimate realm of the home, subjective expression is projected outward through the consumption of space. The invitation of m-commerce is to specify one's individuality through motion.

It should be noted in advance that the consumption of space as a means of individuation is, in general, a form of consumption limited to affluent groups (as is the promise of individuation through the consumption of customized goods and services). As Morley (2000), quoting Doreen Massey, observed, the mobility of affluent classes is "quite different from the mobility of the international refugee or the unemployed migrant as a social experience" (p. 200) – not to mention the immobility of groups of people unable to relocate from regions of poverty, famine, and warfare. Nine-to-five clock punchers are replaced by a flexible, temporary workforce. At the bottom end of the economic scale, this implies the ability of capital to seek out low-wage workers around the world and to draw on the labor of low-paid immigrants (many of whom, despite predictions of postindustrialism and the demise of disciplinary society, continue to work in "old-fashioned" sweatshops). At the high end, it refers to "always-on-call" professionals who carry their work with them as they travel the globe and who move from company to company with an increasing degree of frequency: "Work anywhere anytime is the new paradigm [. . .] It amounts to a massive disaggregation of work, spinning outside the walls and confines of the traditional office" (Hamilton, 1996, p. 106).

Echoing Foucault (1978), it is tempting to observe that the bourgeoisie have endowed themselves with a "garrulous mobility" – one that permeates the ads for cell phones, cruise lines, and SUVs – and that just as there is a bourgeois form of monitored mobility, there are also class mobilities (subject to rather different forms of surveillance). The intersection of spatiotemporal paths can be used as hieroglyphic representations of particular kinds of social interactions. In keeping with the logic of convergence, these hieroglyphs, inscribed not in stone, but in space, serve double duty as feedback for the rationalization of production and policing. There is not a complementary balancing of time and space, but rather a collapsing of one extreme into the other. The lightest of media, electromagnetic, wireless forms of communication rely upon ponderous "server farms": buildings the size of several football fields filled with the infrastructure for cyberspace. The most ephemeral of actions, a passing interest, an impromptu detour through the city, are captured by and live on in the database, retrievable via algorithm for years – perhaps indefinitely as the cost of storage decreases in proportion to the exponential growth of processing power. The proliferation of forms of neo-orality including voice messaging and text messaging do not necessarily counter but perhaps coincide with the "cruelty of

mechanized communication” (Innis, 1951, p. 191). Increasingly, the conventions of personal communication are incorporated into forms of personal broadcasting on blogs, social networking sites, and text-messaging feeds that, like radio, “address the world instead of the individual” (Innis, 1951, p. 191). The conquest of space, in this context, refers to the creation of a ubiquitous electromagnetic atmosphere – not merely extension across space, but also a “filling-in” of space, so that wherever one goes, the network can be accessed and information can be retrieved, and feedback generated. Information is generated not simply about the movement of objects, but about the movement of messages, and, potentially, the tracking of the movement of messages. The interactive information generated by interactivity within this electromagnetic medium is without horizon: it echoes the bad infinity of capitalism itself: production for production’s sake.

NOTES

- 1 Although the essay in which the quote appears was originally published in 1989 (based in part on a 1981 tribute to Harold Innis), the quote itself, unsurprisingly, dates back to an earlier essay, “Canadian Communication Theory” (Carey, 1975), published in the last year of the Space Race (the year of the Apollo–Soyuz Test Project).
- 2 However it is worth pointing out that, in *Empire and Communications*, published a year earlier than *The Bias of Communication*, Innis pits radio against print: “The bias of paper towards an emphasis on space and its monopolies of knowledge has been checked by the development of a new medium, the radio” (1950, pp. 216–217).

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Communication and Democracy

The Roots of Media Studies

Hanno Hardt

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the contribution of social and economic thought to media studies in the United States. It details the migration of ideas from Germany and their creative application regarding the press to social and political conditions unique to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. An evolving mass medium warranted theorizing its role and function in a democratic society and produced a critical literature of its performance. This chapter proposes that US media studies are partially the result of a realization in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social thought that communication is an essential, binding force in a democratic society and partially the result of a turn to communication research void of larger philosophical concerns that had characterized the Chicago School in its consideration of communication and US democracy.

Media studies in the United States evolved with the rise of modern communication technologies, which had provided opportunities for creating cultural and political homogeneity and demonstrated their potential as instruments of social control. This chapter suggests that media studies are an outgrowth of developing social theories emerging in the nineteenth century, when an increasingly literate European civil society began to think freely about the necessary conditions of a modern world while

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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a new social dynamic materialized in technologies of communication that would help define the experience of relatedness that constitutes society and that would prove to be essential for conceptualizing democracy.

The history of US media studies, more specifically, is rooted in the dominant sociological preoccupation with communication as a measurable process, manifest in communication research and the earlier work of the Chicago School before it embraced an alternative understanding of communication as symbolic interaction and meaning-making. Thus, contemporary media studies emanate in the twentieth century from earlier academic undertakings (e.g., journalism, speech and communication studies, or mass communication research) as a field of inquiry reflecting the epistemological turns of social theory, and sociology in particular, with the rediscovery of ideology and the empowerment of the individual in the process of communication. The field had its beginnings, however, in various nineteenth-century attempts to analyze and understand the role and function of the press as a modern institution whose production and dissemination of information would shape and reinforce the development of society (for more detailed discussions, see Hardt, 1992, 2001). Meanwhile, the English-language literature regarding liberty of the press and democracy offers an exhaustive account of the social and political developments in the United Kingdom and the United States, but it lacks a major effort to include various political or philosophical considerations of communication and democracy pursued elsewhere on the European continent. This includes the migration of formative ideas from Germany that reached the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. These formative ideas are particularly important for understanding the fundamental arguments, for instance, regarding society and the role of communication that appeared in the early works of US social scientists.

Specific questions about the social and political power of the press and its potential in the realm of culture have been raised almost since the beginning of public communication, yet their formal study resumed much later mostly in the disciplinary context of a political economy of social forces before the introduction of sociology as a distinct discipline in the US academic context of the late 1880s. Its acceptance rapidly spread with the need for acquainting students with the social problems of a rising urban-industrial society as well as with the microcosm of human interaction in an era of major social changes featuring discrimination and causing alienation. Above all, sociology was conceived of as a practical science whose orientation embraced action and reform to place itself at the service of those committed to create a more just and virtuous society. According to Albion Woodbury Small (1854–1926), “Sociology in its largest scope and on its methodological side is merely a moral philosophy conscious of its task” (1907, p. 22). Thus, US sociology developed an interest in an analysis of social processes and their dynamics in a changing social and cultural environment with the ultimate goal of improving the conditions of society and thereby strengthening democratic practices.

The intellectual roots of US sociology and its interest in the role and function of media (or the press, more specifically) are found in nineteenth-century scholarship

in Germany, in particular, when US students sought a world-class education abroad before returning to the United States to settle in academic careers. According to Herbst (1965), “soon after 1870 American students of the liberal arts and the social sciences began going to Germany in large numbers [. . .] As the nation became industrialized, there was a need for specialists, scholars, and teachers trained in economics and statistics, and in allied areas of the social sciences and humanities” (p. 8). It was the rise of the professional class that accompanied industrialization in the United States. In the meantime, major social, cultural, and political shifts in Germany had begun to signal a new age. Mann (1968) described this period succinctly when he wrote, “From the stagecoach to the railway, the steamship, and the telegraph, from the faith of an earlier generation to unconcealed atheism and materialism, from Goethe to Heine, from Hegel to Marx, from Faust to the *Communist Manifesto* – this is the story of tremendous social and intellectual upheaval” (p. 52).

More specifically, the US students experienced the German press of the nineteenth century as an instrument of political authority, identified with Bismarck and Wilhelm II, before it changed into the hands of special interests and political parties; it was also curbed by censorship and stamp taxes. Thus, state or commercial interests interfered with the development of the press into an independent provider of information. They also learned that throughout this period German intellectuals, including academics, had realized the importance of the press for building a democratic society, and German scholarship had probed the social structure, the flow of communication, and the presence of newspapers. These were central topics in efforts to define and understand social and political change in Germany. This approach also characterized the work of several German teachers of US students, among them economists such as Karl Knies (1821–1898), whose academic pursuit confirmed the centrality of communication in a theory of society. Having studied the economics of transportation and telegraphy, Knies concluded that communication and the press belonged in a general framework of historical inquiry that was aimed at explaining the need for improving social relations.

Knies stressed the interdependence of the economic and cultural spheres of society, such as in his discussion of news. He suggested, for instance, that if “news is a commodity, it must have a certain value, an intrinsic value. But the intrinsic value alone is not inherent in the object itself, it can only be there if and as long as a human need exists for the news” (Knies, 1857, p. 67). Moreover, Knies acknowledged that the transmission of news had become a significant private business and thus increased the potential for manipulation and influence on society. In fact, Knies outlined the development of communication, from interpersonal contacts, when information passed directly from source to intended receiver, to the more advanced system of transmitting news and information with the aid of messengers, whose oral presentations replaced the intimacy of the dialogical relationship and increased the possibility of misuse. The upcoming primitive technologies of optical and aural systems of communication constituted a significant change with faster speeds and the coverage of greater distances. Moreover, news now could be received

indiscriminately by different individuals within the reach of the signal, replacing the need for personal contact. The process of news communication had become more impersonal. With the introduction of printing techniques, resulting in a tremendous growth of form, frequency, and quantity of messages, transportation became an important issue and led to the rise of occupational roles, such as news carriers, as postal services combined with the construction of railway lines across vast regions.

Knies (1857) also addressed non-economic considerations affecting the spread of news communication, such as physical mobility and alienation as a result of increasing rates of communication when improved means of communication brought people into contact with distant places and reinforced feelings of living in a changing and perhaps uncertain environment. However, the development of communication technologies, including the telegraph, supported the need of individuals to remain in communication, and news became a specific form in which people expressed their relationships. Knies (1857) defined news as the "communication of an event that occurs away from the location of the recipient" (p. 44). This definition focused on spatial rather than temporal elements of social communication, but he also acknowledged the fact that news is typically short-lived and thus of limited commercial value.

In this context, Knies (1857) acknowledged the commercial interests of the press, including questions of advertising, by concentrating on the idea of knowledge and information as expressions of power. He concluded that "knowledge is sales [. . .] and knowledge is production" (p. 49). For Knies, advertising remained a cultural document of society; it offered valuable information about the life of communities, and he proposed that it be used as evidence not only by social or cultural historians but also by politicians in their quest for learning more about the conditions of their localities or constituencies. At the same time, he asserted that the dissemination of advertisements and news and their potential effects on readers also challenged the moral responsibility of those in charge of these communication processes. Misuse in either case is easy but always at the expense of the trust and loyalty of readers. According to Knies, the economic basis of social communication systems, such as the commercial press, discriminated against the full participation by the illiterate and the poor in society. Also, any maturation of the social organism could only occur with improving the social communication systems, which would develop organizational and occupational roles for the collection and dissemination of information.

Throughout his work, Knies (1857) realized the centrality of communication in society; his discussion of the role of communication in the evolution of modernity frequently anticipated late twentieth-century social scientific concerns and findings regarding media and the state of the community. He emphasized the interdependence of economic and cultural spheres of society and thus promoted interdisciplinary analyses by using methodological perspectives that reflected a contemporary approach to qualitative media research.

Among the US students in Germany was Simon N. Patten (1852–1922), whose references to the teachings of the German historical school suggest that he, too, believed economic theory must be built on historical foundations, that economics

should be studied through an examination of the processes of culture, and that an understanding of civilization ultimately leads to an understanding of the economic system. Social reform and planned change in the US context also involved an analysis of communication, which implied not only a potential atmosphere of cooperation, but it also provided a basis for generating understanding.

According to Patten (1899), social control ultimately rests on opinion and thus involves the media. Indeed, the cultural milieu and the conditions under which people exist are determinants of media effects, and he illustrated his idea with a specific example of press coverage and its varied reception in different cultures. For instance, he wrote:

Newspapers of Europe in describing the American massacres used substantially the same facts and words, and thus created the same sensory impressions in all their readers. Yet the effect of these dispatches in the different countries differed widely, because the motor reactions created by the same news differed in the various countries, one nationality was indifferent, another merely grieved, while a third was angry and wished to interfere. (Patten, 1899, p. 3)

Patten's social concerns and the expressed need for decreasing social and economic differences through communication and cooperation resulted in a bill of economic rights, which included the right to publicity and to decisions by public opinion. They reflected his priorities in the struggle for progress and created new forms of social control by individuals who enjoyed freedom of thought and movement.

Patten's work is also reminiscent of Henry George (1829–1897), who had campaigned against the control of transportation and communication by private corporations, advocating nationalization for the public good. Patten's influence was widely acknowledged with his cultural perspective and his concerns for public welfare and economic and social reform. He supported the role of sociologists in the social change movement, and he was among nine social scientists who established the American Sociological Society at Johns Hopkins University in 1905.

A shared understanding of the importance of communication and the function of the press in society beyond specific cultural or political differences existed between German and US social scientists at the time, resulting from earlier contacts and the subsequent adoption of ideas by US scholars related to the workings of the social organism. For instance, Knies referred to his contemporary Albert Schäffle (1831–1903), whose work would feature prominently at Chicago several years later. Schäffle's organismic theory of society was based on the process of social communication as a binding force in society. He argued that progress and "the development of cultural community [. . .] of moral community [. . .] depends upon the development of a symbolizing technique and upon the adequate supply of steadily improving symbolic goods, upon the development of all forms of communication for intellectual intercourse involving knowledge, appreciations and decisions" (Schäffle, 1873, p. 6).

Understandably, the press played a major role in Schäffle's discussion of the commercial and intellectual life of society. Schäffle (1881) warned that the social sciences

would be mistaken to ignore or neglect the study of the public, the public sphere, public opinion, and the press; they form a homogeneous system. And he asked:

What else is the much debated public sphere, but an intellectual openness for social knowledge, appreciation and decision to be mediated symbolically through words, writing, and printing to the masses [. . .] What else is the public but a social mass, open, receptive, and reactive to the organs of social and intellectual activity [. . .] What else is public opinion but the expression of opinion, value and disposition of a general or special public? And finally the press – is it not the real transmitter in the intellectual exchange between the leading organs of society and the public? (Schäffle, 1881, p. 444)

More specifically, Schäffle's major theoretical work, *Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers* (four volumes, 1875–1879), as well as an earlier article, “Über die volkswirtschaftliche Natur der Güter der Darstellung und Mittheilung” (1873), firmly suggested that any discussion of economic and political affairs cannot advance without an understanding of communication, although he did not offer a unified theory of communication. In this context he described the creation and internalization of symbol systems and the need for transmission of the resulting messages. For Schäffle, the printed word constituted a record of observation and reflection of the modern world where the press and literature become an organ of criticism and a technology of unification. Newspapers serve as an example of media as carriers of a variety of symbols reproduced for the benefit of their readers; they frame issues of reproduction in terms of useful consumption, reflecting the goals of an industry that tries to organize the reproduction of symbols in an economically feasible and profitable manner while advancing the needs of society for the reproduction and circulation of original news among the general public.

Schäffle's considerations of media and the economic consequences of industrializing the reproduction of communication necessarily lead to issues of influence and control in mass society. Because the press and the public are of universal importance to the intellectual life of society, Schäffle assigned responsibilities for a systematic treatment of communication and media to the social sciences. He offered a meaningful rationale for their study and analysis with an implicit indication of media studies as a legitimate academic concern. For Schäffle, the public sphere emerged as a site for the exchange of personal and material symbols, based on openness, and would always remain the battleground for the ideas and ideologies of an active and participatory community. Indeed, any removal of the public sphere would have to be considered a mutilation of the social body, not unlike removing its nervous system.

Schäffle recognized the public as individuals participating in an intellectual exchange, such as with the press, and he recognized the existence of many publics at any given time being connected through the press. The public as a basically passive and receptive social entity, therefore, constituted an object available to outside stimulation rather than to being considered an aggressive force. An exception is found in the rise of public opinion, which is extremely important for the discussion of social action, according to Schäffle. In this context the press constitutes a primary cultural

mechanism for channeling the flow of ideas and opinions. Indeed, the press becomes the most powerful means of influencing public opinion; it is a superpower, far superior to other means of communication, such as books or even conversations. Schäffle warned against underestimating public opinion in the service of promoting ideas or attitudes; it becomes the backdrop in the social drama set against those representing the dominant power in society.

Schäffle considered the daily press – as a constitutive element in the conceptualization of the social system – the most powerful institution for the exchange of ideas between people and their leaders; the press is a conductor or condensator of intellectual currents and typically seeks the company of government, political parties, and social or economic organizations. He also recognized that newspapers often suffer from a loss of credibility and need feedback to gain some measure of their editorial position. In their various manifestations, ranging from special-interest publications to the local press, these media represent a large and interconnected system for collecting and transmitting ideas. As such, they serve as an organ of public opinion. Consequently, the press becomes a desirable property and is targeted by a variety of social, political, religious, or financial interests either for purposes of propaganda or for mere speculation. It became obvious to Schäffle that both good and evil forces in society are compelled to use the press for persuasion, which could result in corruption and falsification.

Schäffle identified two major sources of corruption that affected the health of society: the centralization of government and the exploitation of the press by financial interests. Yet he suggested that because society as a whole is responsible for the quality of its media, over time it will acquire the media it deserves. His plans for reforming the press became part of an economic reform by which the press would be freed from financial speculation and advertising control. They were based on the need for protecting individual and collective freedoms of expression, which can only be guaranteed when the production and dissemination of ideas remain absolutely free and undisturbed by capitalist or bureaucratic efforts to organize the activities of the press for financial gain or political control. Although Schäffle recognized the corruption of the contemporary press because of the economic organization of German society, he still believed that the press remained the most pervasive instrument of social communication. Schäffle blamed these unfavorable conditions also on the social sciences, which had been unable to provide necessary insights into the manipulation by government, journalists, and publishers. Echoing Comte's hope that progress in the social sciences would end the corruption of the public spirit, he also projected sentiments found in the early writings of US social sciences, notably sociologists.

Karl Bücher (1847–1930) represents yet another contributor who emphasized the cultural–historical approach to communication and economic development, citing the need for media systems in economies based on the exchange of goods and services, the problems of journalism in industrial societies, and the overriding commercial interests of the press. Influenced by Schäffle, Bücher provided by far the most

extensive discussion of the press among German economists, whose ideas were known by Robert Park, for instance.

Knies's and Schäffle's thoughts also are reflected in the early writings of Karl Marx, who saw the press as a pivotal institution in modern society, realized its potential as a means of persuasion, and considered it an indispensable weapon against political authority and for the rule of democratic ideas (Hardt, 2001, p. 39). These ideas resurfaced – including a Spencerian theory of society, not unlike Schäffle's conceptualization of society – several years later, particularly in the work of Albion Small (1854–1926), whose goal for sociology was the development of a comprehensive theory of society. According to Matthews (1977), Small's career influenced the development of American sociology both practically and theoretically. Small built the largest and most influential department in the United States and founded the *American Journal of Sociology* (1895). Based on the works of an Austrian sociologist (Gustav Ratzenhofer) and US pragmatists (John Dewey, William James) as well as on the insights of the German Historical School, Small concluded that sociology was best suited for a detailed and reform-oriented analysis of particular phases of the social process rather than for the discovery of an absolute social system.

To understand the work of US social scientists during the later part of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to recall that it occurred at a time when immigration and urbanization had introduced new challenges to the organization and control of social life. An understanding of the city as a new social and cultural environment, accentuated by the influx of a non-English-speaking population, raised a number of social issues related to the survival and growth of democratic practices under hitherto unknown conditions. More specifically, US social scientists and the sociologists at the University of Chicago, in particular, responded to the practical challenges posed by social and economic changes and the workings of US capitalism. Their position in relation to the dominant political ideology and the interests of the ruling class was marked by the desire to reinforce social control through an objective analysis of the political process in an effort to secure consensus, encourage cooperation, and strengthen social justice.

Their work is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of social phenomena with history, philosophy, political economy, and social psychology contributing to insights into the nature of society and confirming the importance of culture as the site of explanation. Academic training in a number of disciplines allowed the mind to operate in a wider berth of knowledge. Thus, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship benefited from a broader intellectual perspective regarding issues of communication and society, in particular, than a later trend toward specialization would offer. In this context, Small's work signaled the beginning of a sustained and intensive interest of members of the sociology department at the University of Chicago (the Chicago School) in notions of communication, public opinion, and media (the press) based on their work on social control, urbanization, and democratic institutions. In fact, the significance of the various means of communication, including telegraph, railroads, highways, and rivers as means of

transportation, and the spread of schools and newspapers as institutional sources of knowledge, also provide some of the historical background for discussions about the place of communication in modern society. Finally, the emerging concerns about communication also reflect the focus of pragmatic philosophical thought regarding language, understanding, and the search for consensus in a democracy.

An expert on developments in Germany, Small offered a detailed presentation of the German social sciences and their impact on US sociology between 1800 and 1900 in his *Origins of Sociology* (1924), in which he discussed, among others, the work of Knies and Schäffle, including a sociological approach to economics. At the same time, Small remained aware of the elementary and unsubtle nature of the social sciences, based on rationalization rather than on an investigation of social phenomena.

Given his theoretical orientation, Small followed Schäffle's emphasis on communication as a necessary condition for the development of society with language becoming the privileged medium for passing on traditions. Small also identified with Schäffle's definition of sociology, which would change over time but still showed Schäffle's influence. He suggested that sociology is a basic social science, part of a unified and cooperative process, open to insights from other social sciences regarding techniques, for instance, that may help arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the material conditions of a social existence. Small relied on his knowledge of economics, political science, and history for his sociological quest and for his pursuit of social justice. His analysis of the social environment concentrated on the notion of human interests and their social control.

Not unlike Schäffle, Small described an organismic theory of society in which the media of communication (the press) feature prominently. This idea was expressed first in his *Introduction to the Study of Society* (1894, with George M. Vincent), in which he recounted the evolution of society, using organic analogies to analyze social structures and functions. Accordingly, communication is part of a regulatory system that penetrates the social organism and operates "as the nerve fibers to the coordinating and controlling centers in the animal organism" (Small & Vincent, 1894, p. 215). Communication in society consists of a combination of psychic and physical changes that bring about the successful transmission of messages. Thus, "every social communication is effected between individuals, and every individual is part of many different channels in the social nervous system" (Small & Vincent, 1894, p. 216). This model implies that individuals are not only mediators but also terminal cells in the process of communication.

Following Schäffle's elaboration regarding symbols and communication, Small and Vincent (1894) listed among those symbols "oral, written, and printed language, vocal and instrumental music, gestures, drawing, photographs, paintings, statutes, theatrical and operatic representations" (p. 219). The preservation of ideas and the coordination of communication through postal services or telegraph companies suggest a structure that could provide technical devices to accommodate the presentation of symbols over space and time. The success of social communication, however, hinges upon the presence of interwoven channels such as the press, as well

as commercial, educational, ecclesiastical, and government systems of communication. Small and Vincent (1894) saw the press, for instance, as “incorporated in nearly every division of the psycho-physical communication apparatus and is almost as general in its scope as the post office itself” (p. 223). The communication network, as described by Small and Vincent, is composed of general and special-interest newspapers as well as national and international news agencies and press syndicates, which disseminate identical messages throughout the social system with the aid of agencies responsible for the transportation of printed materials. To illustrate the operations of such a communication system, they explored the working arrangements of a telegraph editor, who connects the newspaper with the outside world, involving selection and follow-up on news items.

Increasing industrialization and the growth of an urban population contributed to the rise of opinion leaders and an increase in the power of newspapers as social institutions beyond their immediate environments. Small and Vincent (1894) described the rise of experts as opinion leaders, who enhance social knowledge and direct sentiments. Not unlike Schäffle’s discussion of newspaper practices in Germany, the press became the most important instrument for the communication of ideas between authorities and their adherents. In addition, Small and Vincent commented on the social and cultural role of the press and its widespread use among those who seek to impress their fellow citizens in matters of public interest. They were convinced that advanced studies of society would yield more evidence to show the immense influence of the press, and at the same time realized that different interests may well use the press for purposes of manipulation, such as the coercion of authorities through the use of letters to the editor. Because of their conclusions, the authors advocated a close examination of the press enterprise and practices, and encouraged commentaries on the duties and responsibilities of newspapers. They lamented the lack of factual reporting, carelessness, inefficiency of news coverage, and sensationalism combined with self-interest. Likewise, they critiqued the economic dependence of the press, following Schäffle, realizing that subscription and advertising were the major determinants of the commercial well-being of newspapers, which must also cater to reader interests and, thus, must remain adaptive. On the other hand, Small and Vincent understood that the press cannot be held responsible for the general problems of society. They insisted that responsibility must be shared throughout the social system, suggesting public participation in controlling press behavior.

Throughout, Small’s work reflects a strong and lasting influence of Schäffle’s social theories and writings on society that privilege communication as a social process; the latter remains at the center of sociological inquiry with a focus on the press, which serves as the collector and disseminator of information in a system of public communication. Small also moved beyond these claims by addressing the gatekeeping functions of editors, indicating the two-step flow of communication and thus identifying a future topic and concern of media studies.

His contemporary, William Graham Sumner (1840–1910), who taught at Yale, showed great interest in economics and social problems and had concluded that the

press, torn between public responsibilities in a democracy and its potential in the commercial world, is “on one side, an institution of indispensable social utility, and on the other side a foul nuisance. It exerts a tyranny which no one dare brave,” suggesting that “what priestcraft was for the fourteenth century, presscraft is to the twentieth” (Sumner, Keller, & Davie, 1927, pp. 233–234). Given the development of the prosperous yellow press, Sumner recognized there was little reason to believe that the quality press would become more successful. Consequently, he doubted the usefulness of public discussions or the presentation of complicated issues as long as the number of subscribers remained more important than reflection or debate. Yet Sumner saw the power of language, communication, and public opinion as elementary forces in society.

Among Small’s colleagues in Chicago, George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) offered by far the most extensive discussion of the role of language and communication in the making of the self as well as in the creation of community. Mead (1969) insisted not only that symbolic interaction features in the creation of the self, but also that media such as the press “report situations through which one can enter into the attitude and experience of other persons” because society cannot be built “out of elements that lie outside of the individual’s life-processes” (p. 257). Mead concluded that communication is the organizing process of the community and that the ideal human society is one that “so fully develops the necessary system of communication that the individuals who exercise their own peculiar functions can take the attitude of those whom they affect” (p. 327). The media of communication, including novels or plays, assume a pivotal role in this process, which includes a receptive and active self and demands for its analysis by the application of scientific methodology.

These conclusions found their practical application in Mead’s democratic convictions and his awareness of social inequality in US society, which called for political engagement. Mead’s notions of a democratic life were related to the work of John Dewey (1859–1952) and his appreciation of communication, which must play a major role in the formation of community as an active and intelligent force. Not unlike Mead’s insistence on the importance of media such as the press, Dewey (1925) also paid attention to this ideal mechanism for the transmission of ideas. But he also realized the dangers of public communication because the ongoing centralization and concentration of the means of production affected the press and, thus, created problems for a democratic society. More specifically, he addressed systems of communication that had been created outside the community and hence would neither respond nor be responsible to the community. For Dewey, communication established the individual in a system of mutual relationships and common purposes and offered opportunities for shared experiences, discourse, and reflexive thinking. Dewey (1925) concluded that “of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful” (p. 166), and it is also “uniquely instrumental and uniquely final” (p. 204), providing choices and solidifying meanings in a community setting.

During the next generation, considerations of communication and media in the United States continued with the work of Robert Park (1864–1944), who had studied

with John Dewey and William James and who had been educated in Germany under the tutelage of Wilhelm Windelbandt at the University of Heidelberg before he joined the sociology department at the University of Chicago. Park was more interested in the practical consequences of communication and the press specifically as an aspect of social control, such as in his *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (1922). He was an observer, trained as a newspaper reporter in Minneapolis and New York City, interested in facts, and throughout his later academic career conscious of the effects of communication and its divisive potential, including the role of the press. Park's interest in the function of the press is also reflected in his use of Bücher's (1921) remarks on the "Extension of Communication by Human Invention," which focused on the effects of new communication technologies on society, which Park published in the student edition of his *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Park & Burgess, 1921).

Finally, it may be worthwhile to mention the contributions of Louis Wirth (1897–1952) and Morris Janowitz (1919–1988) at Chicago. Both addressed issues of communication and media in the tradition of the Chicago School. Wirth had been Park's student and had studied with Small, William I. Thomas (1863–1947), Ernest W. Burgess (1886–1966), and Mead for a doctorate that he received in 1925. Wirth was a major urban sociologist with an interest in city life, minorities, and media. His address to the American Sociological Society in 1947 on "Consensus and Mass Communication," in which he outlined the role of urban media in consensus building, was published in the *American Sociological Review* a year later (Wirth, 1948).

Janowitz had graduated with a doctorate in sociology in 1948. Interested in the organization and regulation of society, Janowitz (1952) analyzed the community press, representing the symbolic dimension of the urban space that "acts as a mechanism to maintain local consensus through the emphasis on common values" (p. 11). In this context he also provided a discussion of the role and function of the immigrant press in the works of Park, Thomas, and Florian Znaniecki (1882–1958). Later Janowitz co-edited (with Bernard Berelson) one of the first compilations of relevant articles in the *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (1950); the editors concluded in their introduction to the second edition (Berelson & Janowitz, 1966) that "the hope is no longer prevalent that democratic institutions are automatically strengthened with the growth of the mass media, the development of literacy, and the extension of the popular franchise" (p. 1). Their remarks left readers wondering about the consequences of these insights regarding media studies and their place in defense of democratic ideals, which had moved the work of the Chicago School into the twentieth century.

The scholarship of the leading members of the Chicago School since the nineteenth century was consistently united in its determination to help perfect the cause of democracy in the United States by offering a critique of capitalism while embracing the fundamental political ideas of the country. Notions of communication in its individual or institutional form played a central role in conceptualizing and applying a model of democratic life as a participatory and responsible community of individuals empowered

by knowledge, materialized in public opinion, and disseminated through conversation and media such as the press. These considerations of public communication were typically accompanied by noting the ethical dimension of communication in a commercial system, not unlike observations revealed in the earlier German scholarship of Knies and Schäffle. In fact, a more general belief among German academics that cultural subjects were unique and could not be validated by scientific methods but warranted historical explanations typically contained an ethical mandate.

More specifically for these US authors, the process of public communication demonstrated the relationship of communication, privilege, and responsibility in an increasingly secularized society with an extended reliance on expert knowledge for reaching consensus and advancing democracy as a participatory experience, as indicated by Small and Dewey. Mead also emphasized the importance of the moral self as a participant in the process of democracy, a view shared by Park, for whom the moral order installed conscience, a sense of obligation. Indeed, self-interest must give way to higher moral principles in the political arena, according to Small, and Janowitz (1978, p. 3), and public communication constituted the necessary means of this process. For those members of the Chicago School who had proposed a communication- and media-centered definition of society, there were ethical concerns inherent in the relations between truth and understanding or community and communication that played a major role in conceptualizing democracy.

While Small represented the first generation of sociologists who were prepared to apply their knowledge and social scientific interest to the improvement of a democratic existence, his contemporaries Mead and Dewey shared visions of democracy that were based on the power of communication and the workings of an active community. Neither was this appreciation of communication and media as central social processes lost on the following generations, from Park to Wirth and Janowitz, whose academic pursuits reflect a continuing concern regarding the importance of media, their quality, and their service to their respective communities.

The critique of capitalism, however, in the writings of these members of the Chicago School remained within the realm of pragmatic considerations that were aimed at balancing instead of eradicating the negative forces in US life, thus fixing the limits of potential change while steeped in the predominance of Protestantism, which was well suited to sustain a belief in an evolutionary model of society. Their concomitant reflections on the moral responsibilities of those engaged in producing media contents and directing the public discourse indicate the beginnings of a moral philosophy of public communication.

Consequently, the history of media studies in the United States builds on the tradition of the Chicago School, but unlike the sociological imagination of the Chicago School, rarely included issues of communication in the broader context of serving the need to remedy existing social and political conditions and of securing the American Dream. The fact that notions of communication and democratic practice – as articulated by the Chicago School – found their way into the vocabulary of US media studies, together with an acknowledgment of the work of individual scholars

like Dewey, rather provided a legitimating argument for intellectual proximity and historical tradition.

The Chicago School, on the other hand, had offered a sociological perspective on matters of communication in society that placed the importance of media at the core of a working democratic system while raising questions about the impact of social change on the notion of community and on the form and function of participation, cooperation, and consensus in a system of coexistence. Implicit in an emerging liberal critique of capitalism was the inescapable condition of change and the constant need for readjustment.

Since then, the twentieth-century rendition of media studies has been shaped by the field of mass communication research, which had responded in large measure to the demands of government and industry since the 1940s for objective, quantifiable observations of specified social and political phenomena. Consequently, the dominant version of media studies has left a gap between broader philosophical or theoretical considerations and the priorities of empirical research.

During the post-World War II era, any critique within media studies of capitalism as an ideological foundation of media practices has remained marginalized. When critique arose, it belonged to the literature of social criticism. However, a British reaction against an “Americanized,” effects-centered study of mass communication has resulted in the return of ideology (Hall, 1980) and addressed issues of empowerment; it ushered in a period of critical communication research in the United States. These developments helped late twentieth-century media studies launch its pursuit of a progressive, communication-centered, cultural vision of democracy and rekindled the emancipatory, interdisciplinary spirit of the earlier sociological scholarship of the Chicago School.

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The Chicago School of Sociology and Mass Communication Research

Rise, Rejection, Incorporation, and Rediscovery

Karin Wahl-Jorgensen

ABSTRACT

While the Chicago School has subtly but profoundly shaped and influenced the direction of scholarship on mass media, the history of its engagement with mass communication researchers is also a history of missed connections and opportunities. At least two different stories can be told in tracing the legacies of the Chicago School on work in media studies. One is a tale of triumph: The Chicago School has had a significant impact on scholarship in the field, in its normative assessment of the media's role in society and its empirical work in understanding it. Another is a tale of loss and marginalization, witnessed by the decline of the socially engaged and often qualitative approach of the school and its diminishing presence within the collective conscience of the discipline today. Both of these stories are true. The Chicago School arose out of a particular moment, with its companion preoccupations and anxieties, but its contributions subsequently fell to the wayside in the face of profound epistemological shifts. The Chicago School gave voice to the idea that media and communication have a central role to play in shaping individual and collective lives, and in cementing identities and communities. This idea has helped to justify and solidify the notion that we cannot understand society without understanding how we communicate with each other and how the media shape our social bonds and social worlds.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Introduction: Situating the Chicago School of Sociology

The Chicago School of Sociology is perhaps best known as a home-grown US attempt at understanding the relationship between individuals, communities, and societies. In charting its importance for mass communication research, this chapter grapples with a seemingly paradoxical question: Why is it that the Chicago School is so frequently invoked as an ancestor for our field when its methodological approaches and substantive concerns have so little in common with most of what counts as mass communication research today?

The chapter argues that while the Chicago School has subtly but profoundly shaped and influenced the direction of scholarship on mass media, the history of its engagement with mass communication researchers is also a history of missed connections and opportunities. On the basis of these complexities, at least two different stories can be told in tracing the legacies of the Chicago School on work in media studies. One is a tale of triumph: The Chicago School has had a significant impact on scholarship in the field, in its normative assessment of the media's role in society and its empirical work in understanding it. Another is a tale of loss and marginalization, witnessed by the decline of the socially engaged and often qualitative approach of the school and its diminishing presence within the collective conscience of the discipline today. Both of these stories are true and witness to the difficulty of making totalizing claims about history. Either way, it is the case that the Chicago School arose out of a particular moment, with its companion preoccupations and anxieties, but that its contributions subsequently fell to the wayside in the face of profound epistemological shifts. These conditions notwithstanding, the Chicago School gave voice to the idea that media and communication have a central role to play in shaping individual and collective lives, and in cementing identities and communities. This idea has helped to justify and solidify the notion that we cannot understand society without understanding how we communicate with each other and how the media shape our social bonds and social worlds.

The chapter first examines the interests of the Chicago School and its intersections with the study of mass communication, and then looks at how mass communication scholarship has since evolved in ways that have both drawn on and departed from the Chicago School. In particular, the chapter examines different strategies of the field, describing these in terms of incorporation, rejection, and rediscovery. First, it touches on the well-known reasons for the *rejection* of the methods, insights, and ontology of the school among the communication scholars who institutionalized the discipline. Secondly, it examines in detail the little-discussed *incorporation* of the Chicago School into the work on propaganda and public communications during and following World War II. Thirdly and finally, it briefly discusses the *rediscovery* of the work by several prominent critical and cultural studies scholars, demonstrating how it has sustained its influence in the subfield of journalism studies.

These strategies of rejection, incorporation, and rediscovery have been shaped by a variety of factors, including the influence of political, social, and economic circumstances, the vagaries of institutional support or indifference, and the initiatives of particular individuals. The chapter ultimately argues that the Chicago School, despite its limited influence on the field today, has nevertheless been claimed as an ancestor and an inspiration. In fields of scientific inquiry characterized by ever-increasing specialization and fragmentation, the fate of the Chicago School therefore has much to tell us about disciplinary politics and development.

The chapter assumes that any historical account is essentially a metanarrative that reveals as much about the storyteller as it does about the story. The tales we tell about ourselves as scholars dramatize our disciplinary anxieties and self-understandings; by including some traditions, individuals, and theoretical and methodological approaches and excluding others we make heroes and villains out of scholars and schools as a way of designing an institutionally and normatively desirable image of a discipline (Dervin, Grossberg, O’Keefe, & Wartella, 1989; Park & Pooley, 2008). As Carey (1997) put it in his own account of the Chicago School, the history of mass communication research is a

self-conscious creation (and now an endless recreation) that sifts, sorts, and rearranges the accumulated literary debris into a coherent narrative. The narrative that emerges serves ultimately a variety of purposes: principally to focus, justify and legitimize a twentieth-century invention, the mass media, and to give direction and intellectual status to professional teaching and research concerning these same institutions. But it is hardly an innocent history, for it was invented with a political purpose: an attempt to cast loyalties, resolve disputes, guide public policy, confuse opposition, and legitimize institutions. (Carey, 1997, p. 14)

Disciplinary histories play a central role in the maintenance and production of knowledge: They both hail disciples and enforce disciplinarity. More than anything, disciplinary histories provide the leverage for particular understandings of rationality, or of what we understand as valid approaches to scholarly work (cf. Aronowitz, 1988, p. 8). Lofland (1983) insightfully remarked that “the ‘Chicago School’ is a kind of projective device; descriptions of it seem to reveal as much about those doing the describing as about the phenomenon itself” (p. 491). For those who have embraced the Chicago School as central to the myth of disciplinary origins, such an understanding has enabled the grounding of a cultural studies approach to mass communication in the US experience (Pauly, 1997).

The History of the Chicago School

The University of Chicago, founded in 1892, prided itself on belonging to a new breed of US universities, modeled on the German tradition of excellence in higher

education that emphasized research and graduate training (Bulmer, 1984, pp. 14–15; Rogers, 1994, p. 38). What is commonly described as the “Chicago School” refers to scholars representing a number of disciplines, most prominently sociology and philosophy, who left a lasting imprint on the social sciences and humanities in highlighting the centrality of interaction and communication – between people and through mass media. Here, I will provide a brief and necessarily partial history of the Chicago School, with particular attention to its roots in urban sociology, analyzing how this context defined its engagement with media and communication. My story pays particular attention to Robert Ezra Park, the figure most commonly associated with the Chicago School among communication scholars, as someone who more than anyone demonstrated the relationship between the philosophy of pragmatism and the fascination with social interaction, mass media, and communication.

The Rise of the Chicago School

The Chicago School of Sociology was founded in 1892 by Albion Small, who has consistently been described as a discipline-builder and administrator rather than a strikingly original thinker in his own right (Bulmer, 1984; Smith, 1988). He not only established Chicago as the most important center for sociological study in the United States but also founded the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1895, edited the journal until his retirement in 1925, and was a prolific contributor to its pages (Smith, 1988, p. 76). From the beginning, Small and his colleagues envisioned sociology as a social science engaged with tangible problems of urban life – and were determined to make a difference (Bulmer, 1984, p. 23). As the University of Chicago emerged as a major center for scholarship in the emerging discipline of sociology, it began to attract core scholars who have since been associated with the Chicago School. Known as the birthplace of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, the Chicago School has been seen as the dominant force in shaping the institutionalization of sociology, particularly in the period from 1915 to 1930 (Bulmer, 1984), even if at its outset it “served as something of a refuge for outcasts, radicals, and misfits who wanted to ask critical questions about the nature of modern society” (Peters & Simonson, 2004, p. 16).

The key figures usually associated with the school include Park, W. I. Thomas, Charles Burgess, and George Herbert Mead, but other scholars who moved through or influenced those working at the school are frequently linked to it. Among these were Charles Horton Cooley, who taught Mead, and John Dewey, who taught Park and spent a number of years at the University of Chicago, though outside the sociology department and associated more closely with the fields of education, psychology, and philosophy (Rogers, 1994, pp. 150–163).

As this chapter later discusses in more detail, the school also encompassed prominent scholars whose work has strongly influenced the course of research on mass communication but who have not been associated with either a pragmatist philosophy or symbolic interactionism. Sociology was a new kid on the scientific block when

the Chicago School began the work it is known for today. As vividly described by Matthews (1977):

In 1913, the growing academic field of sociology was a partly institutionalized alliance of three separate activities: formal speculation about the nature of society, Christian philanthropy and exhortation, and descriptive studies designed to display the magnitude of social problems to an educated and morally homogenous citizenry. (Matthews, 1977, pp. 1–2)

This new field was viewed with suspicion and disdain by more established disciplines (Smith, 1988), and while the Chicago School was influenced by these established sociological activities, it also did much to cement the recognition of sociology as a legitimate and rigorous discipline.

Albion Small made no small contribution in this regard. He was a productive scholar who set out to introduce the work of German scholars such as Knies and Schäffle to US audiences (see Chapter 25, this volume) and worked conscientiously to define the field of sociology in organic and interactionist terms representative of the Chicago School. As Small (1912) wrote:

We now say that human experience is chiefly an affair of associatings between persons, in their copings with the physical and psychical conditions to which they are subject. That is, presupposing the physical factors, and also the consciousness of factors into which personality may be resolved (both of which groups of factors are in the first instance problems not of general sociology at all but of other disciplines), “experience,” which presents the problems of sociology, is the phenomena of the lives of persons in the course of developing and using their endowment as sentient beings. Experience then is never strictly solipsistic. It is always social. (Small, 1912, p. 209)

Small’s discussion here is by no means unique, but rather characteristic of the strain of thought associated with the Chicago School. It is given expression in the work of Cooley, who is often credited as the father of symbolic interactionism. Cooley spent his entire career at the University of Michigan but taught Mead and was a student of Dewey (Czitrom, 1982, pp. 91–92). Introducing the idea of the “looking-glass self,” Cooley suggested that the “self” can only come into being through interaction and communication with others (Czitrom, 1982, p. 98).

Nevertheless, in the work of Small and other Chicago scholars, this emerging preoccupation with social interaction as the foundation of self and community was tailored to the circumstances of its conception. The Chicago School was born in a unique, complex, and compelling environment: a city home to a bewildering variety of ethnic and national diversities. Between 1840 and 1890, the city’s population soared from 4,500 to more than a million (Bulmer 1984, p. 13), and by 1900, it was estimated that half of its 1.7 million inhabitants were foreign-born, with a particularly significant influx of Europeans compelled to cross the Atlantic by poverty, unemployment, and war in their home countries. Such a diverse and rapidly growing

population gave rise to anxiety, exhilaration, and, in the case of the Chicago School, inspiration. Lincoln Steffens famously described Chicago as “first in violence, deepest in dirt; loud, lawless, unlovely, ill-smelling, new; an overgrown gawk of a village, the teeming tough among cities” (cited in Bulmer, 1984, p. 13). To the Chicago sociologists, the city became, in Park’s words, a “social laboratory” for scholars interested in diversity.

Park has been seen by many observers as the anchor of the Chicago School of Sociology throughout its glory years (Pooley, 2006, pp. 64–66). His view of the city as his laboratory, and his interest in the role of media within it, were hugely influential to his colleagues and students but also representative of the worldview underpinning the Chicago School as a whole. Before arriving at Chicago in 1913, not long before his 50th birthday (Smith, 1988, p. 112), Park had worked as a newspaper reporter throughout the country and as a publicist for African American leader Booker T. Washington, among an eclectic variety of professions. In an autobiographical note, Park (1950) traced his interest in sociology to his reading of Goethe’s *Faust*: “Faust was tired of books and wanted to see the world – the world of men” (p. v). His interest in newspapers was premised on “the discovery that a reporter who had the facts was a more effective reformer than an editorial writer who had merely thundered from his pulpit, no matter how eloquently” (p. vi). To Park, the sociologist was a “super-reporter” who could improve conditions by understanding and communicating the actual lived realities of social life (p. vii). As Lindner (1996) put it, much of Park’s work before his entry into sociology seems “to act like the conveying of systematic knowledge for the purpose of acquiring knowledge from experience” (p. 37). These reflections revealed Park’s positivist, progressive, and pragmatist orientation, expressing the conviction of practice as the foundation of human knowledge, of the intimate relationship between knowing and doing (Smith, 1988, p. 60).

In an early essay on the city, which set out an ambitious research program that occupied him and his students for the next generation, Park (1916) opened with this spirited mission statement:

The city, from the point of view of this paper, is something more than a congeries of individual men and of social conveniences [. . .] something more [. . .] than a mere constellation of institutions and administrative devices [. . .] The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitude and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it; it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature. (Park, 1916, p. 577)

Park, Small, and other Chicago sociologists were heavily inspired by organic conceptions of sociology, such as those evident in the work of Herbert Spencer and Georg Simmel, and took much inspiration from ecology. In Park’s case, such a view also chimed with his romantic self-understanding, derived from his upbringing in the rural Midwest. Despite long years as a newspaper reporter, during which he “covered

more ground, tramping around in cities in different parts of the world, than any other living man,” Park proclaimed his love of “the common things, earth, air – the song of the robin and the great herds of common people, simple and natural as cows” (cited in Matthews, 1977, p. 11). Park valorized “the natural” and his research practice reflected this.

At the heart of the Chicago sociologists’ preoccupations, however, was a distinctly normative and often moralistic project that was aimed not merely at understanding and describing difference but also at taking an active role in ensuring social cohesion and the upholding of moral values. Such a direct engagement was not out of place in the Progressive Era, characterized by a desire for social reform and the belief in the ability of science to deliver it. The sociologists’ engagement with social problems was based on the view that the social science researcher can both objectively observe and describe events and phenomena through the use of scientific methods (Park, 1922, p. 15) and actively participate in the improvement of society. Key members of the Chicago School such as Small, Park, and Burgess participated in local civic organizations and charities designed to help the underprivileged, and work in the department was closely tied to Jane Addams’s Hull House, a tenement house for European immigrants that drew on sociological ideas to advance social cohesion (Peters & Simonson, 2004, p. 25). Chicago scholars practiced the sociology of the underdog, the misfits, and the marginalized – what Park (1928) called the “marginal man.” They took from progressives and investigative reporters such as Upton Sinclair an interest in uncovering the life of seemingly marginalized groups in the city – youth gangs, marijuana users, hoboes, and taxi dancers – who nevertheless displayed their own complex forms of social organization (cf. Galliher, 1995).

Perhaps the most famous product of the Chicago School was Thomas and Znaniecki’s epic account of the experience of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, published between 1918 and 1920. One of five volumes looked at the role of popular Polish papers based on the assumption that “through the paper the individual as well as the community enters into relation with the external world” (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1958, p. 150). The centrality of newspapers was representative of the sense of communication as the cement of social life. As Park and Burgess (2004) wrote in the *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, which became a foundational text in the discipline and was referred to by students as the *Green Bible*:

History has been variously conceived in terms of great events, epoch making personalities, social movements, and cultural changes. From the point of view of sociology social evolution might profitably be studied in its relation to the development and perfection of the means and technique of communication. (Park & Burgess, 2004, p. 34)

To Park, Burgess, and their colleagues at Chicago, questions about how to improve newspapers and other media were central to this process as they went about studying how the ethnic groups that shared Chicago sought to make sense of and survive there. Park was interested in questions of communication throughout his career.

Rogers (1994) suggested that he chose sociology because “the scholarly study of communication was not available at universities” (p. 176). However, it could also be argued that Park (1936) viewed media and communication as integral to the functioning of society viewed in organic terms but as necessarily part of a larger set of questions around cultural and social processes.

One well-known example illustrates how Park’s views of the media were tied to issues of social integration. Before joining the University of Chicago, between 1889 and 1892, Park famously collaborated with journalist Franklin Ford and John Dewey on a much-discussed (but ultimately failed) experiment to launch an experimental newspaper, *Thought News* (Carey, 1989; Peters, 1989). The idea behind *Thought News* was that it would be a monthly, subscription-based newspaper based on reporting the findings of sociological research for the betterment of society – or newspaper reporting on “thought” (Pinter, 2003):

[It] shall treat questions of science, letters, state, school and church as parts of the one moving life of man and hence of common interest, and not relegate them to departments of merely technical interest; which shall report new investigations and discoveries in their net outcome instead of in their overloaded gross bulk; which shall note new contributions to thought, whether by book or magazine, from the standpoint of the news in them, and not from that of patron or censor. (Cited in Czizrom, 1982, p. 107)

This mission statement, co-written by Ford and Dewey, revealed the holistic and organic view of communication and the authors’ implicit critique of shortfalls in conventional news reporting. *Thought News*’s conception was based on the founders’ dissatisfaction with the ability of existing newspapers to create community bonds in the rapidly growing urban environments of their time. To those associated with the pragmatist tradition, there was a strong belief in conveying not merely the “facts” but also the “meaning about the facts” (Dewey, 1954, p. 3) based on the premise that truthful and contextualized information could cure social ills by allowing intelligent individuals to make sense of the world around them. As Peters (1997) compellingly put it, *Thought News* was grounded in the belief that “what society lacks (a sense of community or spiritual unity) new forms of communication will supply. They thought the losses in face-to-face communication in the great society could be compensated by new mechanisms of distance communication” (p. 10).

The project failed; it proved to be simply too expensive and administratively complex to be a commercially viable proposition. But it profoundly shaped the thought of Dewey and Park. Dewey, another figure closely linked to the Chicago School, was already well known for his ideas around the need for the press to play an active role in the creation of community life – ideas that were resonant with contemporary European thinkers (Peters, 1989). These ideas reflected anxieties around the consequences of urbanization and, in Tönnies’s terminology, the consequent victory of the *Gesellschaft* over the *Gemeinschaft*, or of impersonal, distant contractual relations over closely knit community bonds based on sociality.

Dewey's concerns for the health of public life later gave rise to his debate with Walter Lippmann over a perceived crisis of public communication and citizenship.¹ In his book *The Public and its Problems*, first published in 1927, Dewey once again expressed his faith in the ability of information to create communal ties, noting that "unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself" (1954, p. 216). He argued for the primacy of face-to-face communication because to him "the winged words of conversation in immediate intercourse have a vital import lacking in the fixed and frozen words of written speech [. . .] But it and its results are but tools after all" (p. 218). Dewey nevertheless emphasized the importance of studying the media of mass communications with an effort to improve them because of their importance in complex and urbanized mass societies.

Park proceeded with this project. To him, the *Thought News* incident provided "much of the fundamental theoretical framework through which he came to observe and interpret the flux of events" (Matthews, 1977, p. 23). The experiment spurred him on in the pursuit of his interest in public life and social organization, and after the failure of the *Thought News* project he went to Germany to study with some of the most prominent sociological thinkers of the era, including Georg Simmel (Park, 1972, p. 3). His doctoral thesis, *The Crowd and the Public* (1972) – originally titled *Masse und Publikum* – was submitted in 1904 to the University of Heidelberg and written under the supervision of Wilhelm Windelband. It was a theoretical treatise that sought to understand the formation of "The General Will." Through it, Park distinguished between the crowd and the public as forms of collectivities. To Park, the public is driven by rationality and reason, the crowd by emotion and impulse (p. 80). He thus argued that only "in the crowd does anarchy in its purest form exist. As members of a public, people are at least controlled by the norms of logic" (p. 81). Park's discussion was influenced by prevailing German social thought but also contributed to an understanding of social organization in the context of the formation of public opinion. Park (1941) returned to these themes in a more concrete form toward the end of his career when, in an essay on "News and the power of the press," he highlighted the importance of shared meaning to the creation of public opinion. Drawing on the language of pragmatism, he wrote that "there can be no public opinion, except where there is some fundamental agreement and understanding as to what events, as they happen, are likely to mean, and events have meaning only as one knows what to do about them" (p. 1).

After taking up his appointment at the University of Chicago in 1915, Park wrote a series of articles on race relations and urban sociology, but in all of this work, communication was central. In setting out his research agenda for work on the city, Park (1916) singled out the role of advertising and publicity as forms of social control that could secure efficiency and good government, anticipating research agendas that were later to become so central to mass communication scholars. Park's major work on the newspaper, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (1922), advanced, on the basis of empirical research into the widely varied immigrant newspapers in Chicago, the

thesis that the reading of papers in their native languages allows new arrivals to adjust to life in the United States and therefore ultimately operated as a means of integration. Park found evidence to support editors' claims that "their press is not merely a medium for the communication of news, thus initiating the immigrant into American environment, but is likewise a means of translating and transmitting to him American ways and American ideals" (p. 87).

In a later essay on the "Natural History of the Newspaper," Park (1923) spelled out his vision of the newspaper's role in community creation:

The motive, conscious or unconscious, of the writers and of the press in all this is to reproduce, as far as possible, in the city the conditions of life in the village. In the village everyone knew everyone else. Everyone called everyone by his first name. The village was democratic. We are a nation of villagers. Our institutions are fundamentally village institutions. In the village, gossip and public opinion were the main sources of social control. (Park, 1923, p. 277)

Like other Chicago scholars, Park's fascination with urban life was married with a deep-seated nostalgia for small-scale, pre-urban rural communities. To Park and Dewey, in particular, the celebration of such communities – where knowledge was transparent and cultural meanings shared – informed attempts at making sense of rapid social change.

The Chicago School, Mass Communication Research, and Disciplinary Narratives

Park's concern with the media's role in structuring social relations was shared by other Chicago scholars and informed their participation in the famous Payne Fund Studies, which sought to assess the effects of motion pictures on young people at a time of great concern about the vulnerability of audiences and the alarming potential for moral corruption represented by the emerging medium that began to attract significant audiences among the young during the 1920s. It was consistent with the group's interest in using "social science as a weapon" (Jowett, Jarvie, & Fuller, 1996) in outlining and problematizing the central role of motion pictures in US society. The Payne Fund Studies involved Chicago scholars such as Herbert Blumer, Philip Hauser, and L. L. Thurstone. The studies resulted in ten books on the basis of their findings, which were based on surveying thousands of children and youth from 1929 to 1932 (Rogers, 1994, p. 191). Blumer's contribution was particularly influential in highlighting the perceived dangers of movies. As Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller (1996) point out, "Blumer felt that since Hollywood films were produced outside the circle of the child's moral guardians (home, school, church) [. . .] they held far more potential for bad influence than for good" (p. 79). More than anything, in drawing on scholars from a variety of social scientific backgrounds, the Payne Fund initiative

signaled an emerging methodological and epistemological tension between those, such as Chicago School scholars, who were committed to qualitative modes of inquiry and drew on interviews and life histories and others, most notably psychologists such as Thurstone and Stoddard, who drew on statistical data collection (Jowett, Jarvie, & Fuller, 1996). To Rogers (1994), the Payne Fund research, though heavily involving Chicago scholars known for their qualitative research and symbolic interactionist perspectives, heralded a new age of media effects research based on a more rigorous conception of the social sciences.

However, for the Chicago sociologists, mass media were just part of a complex set of social institutions that shaped human interactions. As Pooley and Katz (2008) put it: "Admittedly scattered, the Chicago School's reflections on communication were fundamental to its broader reflections on social order" (p. 768). Indeed, the relatively broad interests and approaches of the Chicago School are often neglected in accounts focused on identifying it as the ancestral home of symbolic interactionism and ethnographic methodology (Buxton, 2008; Platt, 1995). Here, disciplinary traditions of storytelling have left their imprint on our myths of origins. The diversity of the Chicago School's interests and approaches has often been underplayed because of a neglect of the work of scholars such as Burgess, Ogburn, Thurstone, and Stouffer, as well as the more quantitative strains in the work of key figures such as Park and Burgess. As Bulmer (1984) writes, among quantitative scholars there has been

less desire to examine the roots of the subject and a marked tendency to dismiss the relevance of the history of such methods for present practice. The antihistorical orientation of quantitative methodologies, coupled with the fragmentation of the history of methodology between different disciplines, results in major lacunae. (Bulmer, 1984, p. xv)

Among mass communication scholars, by contrast, much of the impetus in creating disciplinary histories, genealogies, and myths of origin has come from scholars representing the quantitative tradition. Chaffee and Rogers were central to this disciplinary storytelling, basing their accounts largely on biographical approaches, celebrating the work of key individuals who cemented communication as an empirical, quantitative social science. At the same time, such accounts have been inclusive in embracing the Chicago School of Sociology as an influence on the trajectory of the field (Chaffee & Rogers, 1997; Rogers, 1994; Rogers & Chaffee, 1994).

Nevertheless, the Chicago School's "multimethod" approach, combining ethnographic and life history methods with large-scale quantitatively oriented ecological mapping projects to achieve a holistic picture of complex social relations, is gaining increasing recognition (Buxton, 2008; Rogers, 1994, p. 182). In their celebration of the community and their study of the citizens and city institutions that made them, Chicago School sociologists' interests were in the macro-level questions of social organization or *disorganization*. They studied the nitty-gritty textures of urban life,

from the personal letters of Polish peasants to the life histories of taxi dancers, but their ultimate aim was to understand what makes society work. In this focus on larger questions of social cohesion, conflict, and control, they were well equipped for a Progressive Era of reform-minded social science, but their tools were of much less use in tapping into emerging agendas of propaganda and psychological warfare.

Rejection

The rise of a positivist, empiricist approach to the study of mass communication and other social sciences has been widely documented among historians. In the field of sociology, the empirically rigorous, quantitative, and more narrowly focused research projects of the Columbia School of Sociology won a victory over the socially conscious, often qualitative, and normatively inflected approaches of Chicago. As Gusfield (1996) memorably put it, by the postwar years of the late 1940s and early 1950s, "Chicago was an aging giant, only beginning to be conscious that the eastern barbarians had surmounted the gates of their once impregnable midwestern fortress" (pp. ix–x).

This transformation was driven by a range of factors, some of which have been traced by what Pooley (2006) refers to as the "new historians" of mass communication research, among them Glander (2000) and Simpson (1994). Simpson and Glander make similar arguments: In the political climate of the Cold War, the economics of research were increasingly influenced by the largesse of foundations and government agencies with distinctively ideological agendas. As Simpson (1994) argued, the psychological warfare effort of the US government during World War II and beyond shaped the communication research community and determined "which of the competing scientific paradigms of communication would be funded, elaborated, and encouraged to prosper" (p. 3).

After World War II such efforts gradually solidified into funded research projects aiming at perfecting propaganda techniques to win the Cold War (Pooley, 2006, p. 48). Simpson (1994) suggested:

At least half of all the important centers of US communication research depended for their survival on a handful of national security agencies. Their reliance on psychological warfare money was so extensive as to suggest that the crystallization of mass communication studies into a distinct scholar field might not have come about during the 1950s without substantial military CIA and US Information Agency intervention. (Simpson, 1994, p. 53)

While the accounts of Simpson and other "new historians" have been criticized for their often conspiratorial and, particularly in the case of Simpson, openly politically inflected tones (Pooley 2006), they nevertheless provide clear evidence that the political economy of mass communication research had shifted toward encouraging

what Lazarsfeld (1941) referred to as “administrative research” designed to solve particular practical problems in the aid of interested funders. This meant that research on mass communication irreversibly diverged from the normative theorizing of the German scholars who first carved out a path for researching media (see Chapter 25, this volume), as well as from the socially engaged and methodologically eclectic social science of the Chicago School. Pooley and Katz (2008), perhaps somewhat harshly, observed about the emerging dominant field of research on public opinion that “the first and most obvious distinguishing trait was its intellectual fixation on method and technique to the effective exclusion of any overriding substantive concerns” (p. 770). Nevertheless, the Chicago School itself contributed to the “scientization” of the field of sociology and mass communication research more specifically and trained many of the scholars who became defining proponents of the new paradigm (Rogers, 1994, pp. 192–193).

Closely related to and intertwined with this political economic explanation, another version of the eclipse of the Chicago School relates to the rise of communication research as a distinctive and institutionalized discipline. This development was in large part driven by the energetic institutionalizing efforts of Wilbur Schramm. Schramm, who started his career as a journalist and writer, began his discipline-building work at the University of Iowa where, in addition to starting the now legendary creative writing program, he became the chair of the journalism department, founded the first PhD program in communication in 1943, and opened a research center in the area (Rogers, 2004, p. 8). Subsequently, he moved on from Iowa but continued his efforts at opening research-oriented communication programs within already existing journalism schools at prominent universities. First, he started the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois in 1947, then moved in 1955 to Stanford University, where he took charge of the Institute for Communication Research (Rogers & Chaffee, 1994, p. 5). Through the efforts of Schramm and emerging colleagues in the burgeoning field, by the 1960s communication studies had been thoroughly institutionalized as a discipline in its own right, and young scholars interested in mass media (Rogers, 2004, p. 8) now routinely pursued doctorates in communication rather than sociology or other disciplines for which media were a secondary interest.

Incorporation²

Where the received narrative of mass communication research thus tells the tale of an increasing dominance of the Columbia Bureau of Social Research over the Chicago School in the post-World War II era in the discipline of sociology and a growing institutionalization of communication studies in its own right, this is not the only way to describe the shifting power relations and preoccupations of scholars interested in communication.

A little-known episode demonstrates that the preoccupations of some of the remaining figures of the Chicago School of Sociology – Harold Lasswell, Bernard Berelson, Herbert Blumer, Morris Janowitz, Samuel Stouffer, and Louis Wirth – who jumped on board the propaganda ship, following prevailing trends in the field and the ever-shifting political economy of the academy. Starting in 1942, the University of Chicago became home to the first degree-granting program in communication inspired by these concerns. The foundation of the program was spurred by interest in wartime propaganda and spearheaded by a figure who is little known to most communication scholars but central to this story: Douglas Waples, a professor in Chicago's Graduate Library School. In an obituary, Berelson (1979) credited Waples with "the birth of the academic field of mass communications" (p. 1). From the moment he arrived at Chicago in 1928, Waples launched an ambitious program of mass communication research, mostly focused on reading studies but also branching out into radio and film. Waples's expertise in areas relevant to the propaganda effort earned him the job of consultant to the Office of War Information during World War II (Richardson, 1982, pp. 52–54). Under the auspices of this office, Waples participated in the Rockefeller Foundation seminars and worked alongside other key figures in the field, including Lasswell and Schramm. Waples's commitment to the propaganda efforts of the US government before, during, and after World War II existed alongside his belief in the importance of democratic media. His career embodied the dynamic that gave birth to the field of mass communication research. As Berelson (1979) put it, Waples was a "man of peace who spent years of his life in a military uniform" (p. 2).

In late 1941, Waples submitted a proposal to University of Chicago Chancellor Robert Maynard Hutchins for a permanent communication research institute – an institute tied to government propaganda and public relations activities, yet one that could span a range of research areas and disciplines and would be focused on the "clarification of values imputed to typical communications for designated social groups" (Waples, 1941). While Waples's proposal for a full-fledged communication institute failed to gain purchase, Hutchins approved a *committee* on communications and public opinion. The committee was formed immediately for the purpose of providing training and research in the field and was probably the first degree-granting unit in the field of communication.

Beginning in the summer of 1942, the University of Chicago offered courses through the Committee on Public Opinion and Communication to "qualify for professional service a student holding an approved Master's degree in political science, sociology, economics, or other social science" (University of Chicago, 1942, p. 2). The activities of the committee were geared toward the war effort in an attempt to address the government's needs for communication during "different phases of national emergency" (Waples, 1941). However, the committee's schedule of instruction reflected an interest in defining communication research as broadly as possible. The courses ranged from the study of semantics and rhetoric to journalism, law, political theory, urban studies, and the statistical techniques that constituted the

know-how of social science research methods. The committee drew on the courses of scholars who were famous for their methodological knowledge and became closely involved in the World War II propaganda effort, including Herbert Blumer, Louis Wirth, L. L. Thurstone, and Samuel Stouffer.

All courses could be reconciled with the patriotic impulse to educate communication administrators and propagandists. The program of instruction was “intended to train men and women for professional activities in the field, and especially for service with federal and other agencies now undertaking to unite public opinion in full support of the war” (University of Chicago, 1942, p. 1). The committee, designed as a temporary effort, appears to have ended its work at the close of World War II. Waples, however, articulated a vision for a future for the committee that demanded a more sustained commitment to communication research from the university. He suggested that the services of a community of communication scholars would be most useful “if and when the end of hostilities permits formulation of more democratic policies for the administration of press, radio, and film than the monopolistic corporations have thus far been forced to accept” (Waples, 1941, p. 2). Waples thus foresaw a future for communication study closely aligned to questions of democratic media operation but grounded in the problems of persuasion that were so fundamental to the field as he saw it.

Waples remained true to his word and immediately after the end of the war, in September 1945, he wrote Hutchins, suggesting that he would “like to talk over the chance of cross-fertilization between your Freedom of the Press Commission and the sort of research set-up in the public communications and public-opinion field when the war broke it up” (Waples, 1945). Waples recast the activities of the terminated committee in terms of “public communications and public-opinion,” downplaying the close link between the committee and the propaganda work of World War II and setting the scene for a more lasting inquiry into questions of media and mass persuasion.

The Committee on Communication, 1947–1960

Though the membership of the second communication committee overlapped with the first, its ambitions and activities were entirely different. The Committee on Communication was formed in late 1947 with a mission to study problems of mass communication in modern society from an academic and critical perspective and a special emphasis on public communication and international communication. Starting in 1948, the committee offered a two-year master’s program through the Division of Social Science but also initiated a range of research and publishing projects.

The committee attracted a range of individuals who would become prominent in the field. Among those who started their careers in the committee were Elihu Katz,

whose first faculty position was at Chicago, and Morris Janowitz, who was finishing his PhD, teaching on the committee, and conducting research there. Michael Gurevitch and Herbert Gans gained their master's from the committee, which was run by scholars including Waples, Bernard Berelson, David Riesman, and Kenneth Adler. It represented one of the first institutionalized programs focused on mass communication research, and its approach to the study of media was distinctive. In its pursuit of interdisciplinarity, the committee cast its net as widely as possible. It drew on methods ranging from ethnography and textual analysis to survey research and content analysis.

The Chicago scholars interested in communication research concentrated their efforts on understanding the place of media in democratic societies. In 1948, committee member and sociologist Louis Wirth wrote, in tones reminiscent of the Chicago School, that in "mass communications we have unlocked a new social force of as yet incalculable magnitude" that "has the power to build loyalties, to undermine them, and thus by furthering or hindering consensus to affect all other sources of power" (cited in Hardt, 1992, p. 81). As a logical consequence of the committee's antecedents, its emphasis was on long-term research programs to understand the relationship between mass media, power, and social life – a set of interests whose roots could be traced to both the Chicago sociologists and to the wartime propaganda research tradition. At the same time, the committee remained firmly grounded in the approaches that had shaped the wartime research. The committee continued to work on topics of propaganda and mass persuasion in the context of creating a consensus around government policies. For example, Berelson was hired by the Graduate Library School in 1946 on the promise of conducting research on "communications and public opinion on the [atomic] bomb and related issues" (Richardson, 1982, pp. 52–54). The committee received considerable funding from the State Department and the Department of the Army to do research in intelligence and psychological warfare matters (Glander, 2000, p. 164; Janowitz, 1949).

Although the committee was in most respects a product of its times, it also enabled experimentation and innovation in the methods and problems of research. The committee flourished at a time that has been characterized by other historians of mass communication research as the heyday of the quantitative social science paradigm (Hardt, 1992, p. 86). This approach was not, however, shared by the scholars of the committee on communication. For instance, David Riesman, the author of such influential books as *The Lonely Crowd* and one of the first scholars to combine interests in popular culture and psychology, was a key figure on the committee, both as a teacher and as an administrator. He taught the required course on popular culture and is also remembered by students as a mentor for qualitative research projects. However, most students have pointed to Berelson as the anchor of the committee, and it was he who was responsible for what was perhaps the most lasting contribution of the Committee on Communication. Berelson and Janowitz co-edited the committee's *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (1950), which became highly influential in defining an emerging field. The majority of this reader consists of work

by University of Chicago communication and Columbia Bureau of Social Research scholars, hinting at the links between the two schools, as well as their prominence in the newborn field. The editors' interest in mass communication research, we learn, was based on "conditions of modern life" such as secularization, industrialization, urbanization, and democratization (Berelson & Janowitz, 1950, p. ix), research questions akin to those asked by Chicago School sociologists (cf. Hardt, 1992, p. 94). As Hardt (1992) pointed out, the Berelson and Janowitz reader

represents an attempt to create intellectual conditions for dealing with public opinion and communication with its bias toward the need to understand theoretical developments, its inclusion of a variety of cultural or historical considerations, and its appreciation of communication not just as a process, but as a necessary condition for the existence and survival of a democratic society. (Hardt, 1992, p. 94)

The central preoccupation with the media's role in democracy was representative of the broadening of interest from the first committee to the second. As the course bulletin for the Committee on Communication proclaimed:

in all its phases communication exerts a crucial effect upon public and private information and insight, upon the capacity for rational decision and action, upon public taste and aesthetic standards, upon moral judgment, upon group loyalty and group disintegration, upon personality development, upon initiation of and adaptation to social change. (University of Chicago, 1950, p. 19)

These diverse interests, which reflected a growing desire to situate communication in its social context, also are evident in another major contribution of the committee. The journal *Studies in Public Communication*, the first volume of which came out in 1957, was founded to publish Committee on Communication seminar papers by faculty and promising graduate students. It offered itself as a publication for cutting-edge research. It was in this journal that Katz first introduced the "uses and gratifications" paradigm as a way of making sense of the relationship between mass media and popular culture (Katz, 1959). As one of the first journals to have the word "communication" in its title, *Studies in Public Communication* represented a much-needed outlet for scholars in the field. It remained inclusive in its interdisciplinary and multimethodological approach. The preface to the third volume introduces the journal as presenting "diverse approaches, both social scientific and humanistic, to the study of the media of public communication [. . .] Among its concerns are studies of popular culture and the mass media, the social structures and the sociological and psychological processes governing media impact, and the political and economic framework within which the media function" (*Studies in Public Communication*, 3, p. i). More than anything, the committee reflected the dynamism and the relative lack of definition of the young field.

At the same time, the University of Chicago School of Sociology continued its investigation in matters of communication, albeit in a broader context. In the

post-World War II era, what Gary Alan Fine (1995) and others have characterized as the “Second Chicago School” gave rise to the symbolic interactionist tradition, often associated with figures such as Everett Hughes, Erving Goffman, Herbert Blumer, and Louis Wirth. Some of these scholars, while not necessarily studying mass communication in their own right, continue to be widely read in the discipline. For example, Blumer’s (1948) essay critiquing the construction of public opinion through polling methods remains a standard reference among political communication scholars today. He called attention to the problems of “sampling with its implicit imagery and logic in the study of a matter which, like the process of public opinion, functions as a moving organization of interconnected parts” (Blumer, 1948, p. 545), recalling the organic conceptions of society underpinning the philosophy of symbolic interactionism. The lasting engagement with Blumer’s critique witnesses a forceful intellectual continuity between the interests of the Chicago School and the preoccupations of those who take a critical approach to conditions of mass democracy. The “rediscovery” of the Chicago School among mass communication scholars has been driven by this continuity and reflects the lasting importance of the ideas that were first articulated around the turn of the twentieth century.

Rediscovery

Indeed, the Chicago School is often central to disciplinary histories, and its work is celebrated as canonical and foundational to mass communication research. For example, its work is included in Katz and his co-editors’ collection of canonic texts in media research (Katz, Peter, Liebes, & Orloff, 2003), where they are identified as one of five foundational “schools” defining the field. Much of the credit for the centering of the Chicago School in disciplinary narratives, however, should probably go to James Carey (Carey, 1992; Munson & Warren, 1997). Carey drew extensively on the work of the pragmatist strand of the Chicago School, reclaiming their work on the role of media in engendering community cohesion as well as the underlying ontology of symbolic interactionism. Carey sums up the importance of the pragmatists in celebrating their

expansive view of an actual social process, an intense interest in its phenomenology, and a historical understanding of how the media of communication enter a ceaseless temporal process of change (rather than a static snapshot of having or not having an effect) is the important but forgotten episode in the standard history of mass communication research. (Carey, 1997, p. 32)

Carey’s much-reproduced definition of communication cast it as the “actual social process wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended and used” (1992, p. 30). On the basis of his affinities with this pragmatist view, Carey has

suggested that we may more helpfully view communication as a ritual. This entails seeing that news “is not information but drama. It does not describe the world but portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and it invites our participation on the basis of our assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it” (1992, p. 21).

Carey’s work has reverberated throughout the ranks of mass communication research, and his ritual view of communication has empowered US cultural studies researchers to take up new research agendas. His work has been taken up in particular by the emerging field of journalism studies. There is an easy affinity and confluence between the work of scholars who take news media seriously – whether in the contexts of production, texts, or reception – and the Chicago sociologists who viewed news, if sometimes overly romantically, as a means of community creation.

More broadly, the Chicago School’s brand of constructionism and symbolic constructionism has reverberated around the world. The tradition of British cultural studies has been profoundly influenced by its theoretical and methodological approach and has contributed to a broader scholarly restitution and popularization of its insights. As Hall and Jefferson (1993) recognized, work by Mead and other Chicago School sociologists influenced the emerging cultural studies approach in its focus on questions of meaning and its emphasis on the experience and agency of social actors.

This tradition included a range of work: symbolic interactionist studies, influenced by G. H. Mead, which attempted to recover the subjective or “symbolic meaning” of action for actors; well-focused, closely observed ethnographic case studies [. . .] and the related methods of participant observation borrowed from social anthropology, which used informants and active participation by the researcher as a means of delineating cultural worlds from the “inside.” (Hall & Jefferson, 1993, p. x)

More broadly, the idea of “representation,” as described by Hall (1997) and others working in the cultural studies tradition, entails the understanding that we construct what we ostensibly describe through processes of representation and that this social construction of meaning has profound ideological consequences. This approach to symbols and their use in the media is so central as to be an implicit and invisible assumption of much work done on media today, absorbed into the language of scholarship.

Mead’s pragmatist approach also has left an imprint on another strain of hugely influential thought in communication in shaping Jürgen Habermas’s theory of communicative action and his development of a discourse ethics (Habermas, 1984, 1987, 1995). Habermas’s project – that of recovering rationality in the structures of intersubjective communication as a normatively desirable framework for social organization – is grounded in Mead’s understanding of symbolically mediated interaction (Habermas, 1987, p. 4). In setting out his discourse ethics, Habermas draws centrally on Mead’s notion of “ideal role taking,” the process by which an individual is able to see a situation from the viewpoint of the “generalized other” and thus is able to

achieve a universalized insight central to the justification of norms (Habermas, 1995, p. 65). The Chicago School, then, has contributed the irreversible understanding that communication matters profoundly and shapes who we are and how we live.

Conclusion

The Chicago School is central to most accounts of the history of mass communication research. But that does not necessarily mean that it has had a profound structuring influence on the work done by most scholars in the field today. Rather, there is a great deal of sympathy for its preoccupations, coupled by a relative neglect of its actual work and methods. Disciplinary histories are weapons of epistemological policing and warfare, determining the way things should be based on the way they have been and are. Mass communication research is like a Rorschach test: It is whatever you see in it and make of it. The disciplinary boundaries of mass communication research are so poorly defined that the choices we make about what disciplinary territory to annex are profoundly normative. Here, I have traced the interconnections between mass communication research and the Chicago School of Sociology, placing the account in the context of prevailing historical narratives. What I have suggested is that although communication was central to the Chicago scholars' theory of society – foundational, as it was, to the symbolic interactionists – the study of media, though a substantial strand of their research, was just one of many avenues for understanding society. In their holistic and often exhaustive and exhausting research projects, Chicago sociologists sought to view communities as living, breathing, and complex organisms that cannot be reduced to their parts and components.

Such a view stood in sharp contrast to the scholarly paradigm that subsequently structured mass communication research, in part a product of wartime and Cold War propaganda efforts and in part the result of the victory of quantitative, positivist social science – a development to which the Chicago scholars themselves contributed. Nevertheless, after 1930, Chicago came to play second fiddle to the Columbia Bureau of Social Research in the disciplinary hierarchy of the sociological discipline. Columbia took a much narrower view of communication, focusing on its effects through quantitative measurement techniques and shaping the subsequent development of sociological research in the United States. At the same time, the institutionalization of communication studies as a discipline in its own right contributed to the eclipse of Chicago as a center for scholarly endeavors focused on the social role of mass media.

Here, however, I have argued that while the dominant narratives of mass communication research convincingly describe the rejection of the Chicago School's concerns and methods, another story that could be told is a more complex one that also involves the incorporation of the Chicago School into the propaganda work of the World War II and Cold War eras and the rediscovery of the school by mass

communication scholars eager to connect with normative and substantive agendas around the role of media and communication in the making of communities and societies.

NOTES

- 1 Though note that Sue Curry Jansen (2009) has suggested that the widely reproduced and received account of a conflict between Lippmann and Dewey is the product of historical reconstruction from the 1980s onward and that, in fact, they represented closely aligned schools of thought.
- 2 This section draws extensively on Wahl-Jorgensen (2004), which provides more details on archival and interview sources used.

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Propaganda Studies

The US Interwar Years

Sue Collins

ABSTRACT

The interim between World War I (1914–1918) and the onset of World War II (1941–1945) illustrates the discursive struggle over evolving conceptions of propaganda. Propaganda meant different things to different observers, but for the most part, everyone agreed that its conditions were worth debating, and most people believed that, left unchecked, it posed some kind of threat to democracy. In intellectual, political, and social senses, propaganda became the subject of protracted study and deliberation concerning how best to understand its various incarnations in relation to democratic capitalism. Discourses generating stringent critiques of propaganda's dangers to democracy gradually shifted toward a new focus on mass persuasion and social influence informed by scientific behavioralism and quantitative methodology in relation to media effects. As the field of communication took hold, propaganda's political significance was overshadowed by more apolitical projects, such as public opinion and marketing research, which contributed to the distinction between political propaganda and social influence and the eventual subsumption of propaganda to mass persuasion.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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No interim period other than the one between World War I (1914–1918) and the onset of World War II (1941–1945) more critically illustrates the discursive struggle over evolving conceptions of propaganda in the modern age. The word “propaganda” derives from a relatively benign designation in its Latin root, *propagare*, “to propagate,” as in to germinate, or to spread the seeds of the Catholic faith by proclamation of the *Congregatio de propaganda fide* (Office for the Propagation of the Faith) in the seventeenth century. The practice of propaganda as a political concept is much older, of course, than the word used to describe it, dating back to techniques of persuasion characterized by ancient Greece and the beginnings of mass communication systems employed by the Roman Empire (Taylor, 1990). The “idea” of propaganda, as opposed to the actual workings of the phenomenon itself, is the primary focus of this chapter during the interwar years when critics, scholars, practitioners, and ordinary people alike considered what this ostensibly new form of mass persuasion meant for US capitalism, democracy, and world peace. Propaganda as a political tool or technique predates World War I, but what matters about this context is that people became aware of it in a new light for the first time during the war and, more saliently, during the interwar years. In other words, propaganda itself was not new, but public awareness of its ostensible impacts was.¹

In the postwar context, propaganda meant different things to different observers, but for the most part, everyone agreed that its conditions were worth debating, and most people believed that, left unchecked, it posed some kind of threat to democracy’s health. In intellectual, political, and social senses, propaganda became the subject of protracted study and deliberation concerning how best to understand its various incarnations in relation to relative conceptions of democratic capitalism. This question came under fire at the end of World War I when progressive intellectuals deeply troubled by the apparent manipulability of public opinion by special interests confronted competing perspectives about what propaganda’s utility was and what its impacts were or could be in relation to a host of positions: practitioners of free enterprise, positivist social scientists, government bureaucrats, and advocates for a pragmatics of better and ethical communication. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, the common connotation of the word “propaganda” was pejorative, and the idea of propaganda generally was considered disturbing, even as it was subject to dissections of its *modus operandi*. However, discourses generating stringent critiques of propaganda’s dangers to democracy gradually shifted toward a new focus on mass persuasion and social influence informed by scientific behavioralism and quantitative methodology in relation to media effects (Sproule 1987, 1997). In some ways, as the field of communication took hold, propaganda’s political significance was overshadowed by more apolitical projects, such as public opinion and marketing research, which contributed to a distinction between political propaganda and social influence and the eventual subsumption of propaganda to mass persuasion. The objective in this chapter is not to uncover some “true” or definitive definition of the word “propaganda” but rather to highlight the historically specific struggle that ensued over claims about what propaganda was and how it operated and, more

significantly, assertions over what should have been both the popular and the policy response to propaganda in the interwar years. But to understand the ideological import of propaganda during this time, we must make a brief foray to the critical prewar years and World War I.

Progressivism, Publicity, and the Committee on Public Information

The stakes over the uses of propaganda became especially clear in the immediate postwar context when its *raison d'être* was subject to intense scrutiny and debate. The critical paradigm, as Sproule (1987) refers to it, began when the progressive faith in the faculties of the intellect to resist human folly was displaced by widespread disillusionment over world war and the possibility of rationality acting as an antidote to stop it. But the roots of propaganda's postwar angst lay in the social and political critiques of the muckrakers and the Progressive movement; the intellectual currents of crowd psychology and Freudian theory; and the appropriation of the Progressives' beloved concept of publicity, first by industry, then by the US government's campaign to wage support for war.

From the late nineteenth century and through the great reforms of the early twentieth century, urban liberal reformers made productive use of *publicity*, a mechanism that could hold up the inequities and injustices of a chaotic and unstable industrializing nation to shameful illumination. The idea of publicity, Ewen (1996) points out, held a historically specific connotation, "understood as a crystalline light by which an unraveling society and its toxic contradictions might be illuminated and brought to order" (p. 48). Relying on the idea that an enlightened bourgeois public would be activated given verifiable material facts, muckraking journalists thus put to task their investigative and narrative skills in great national exposés of social documentation to incite what they hoped would be a reform-minded response worthy of a great democracy. Progressives held faith in the rational individual, whose actions were dictated less by impetuousness than by reasoned argument facilitated by knowledge carried on the wings of publicity. One only needed to make the facts widely known to effect social change on behalf of the poor and working class. This aggregate of individuals and beneficiaries of the paternal bourgeois public was conceptually positioned between the poles of a potentially dangerous crowd prone to mob-like incitement and a fragmented mass susceptible to social persuasion. In this light, publicity, along with a new-found conviction in the powers of social engineering, compelled several intellectuals, social scientists, and reform workers to "indulge the illusion of progressive fulfillment" as they valorized the new bureaucratic structure in search of a means for social control and order (Wiebe, 1967, p. 222).

This thinking became tenuous as the rise of mass communications challenged the progressive project with an increasingly commercial agenda and as progressives

re-evaluated social class and human behavior in light of competing formulations of crowd psychology. On the one hand, the power of publicity as a muckraking tool used to galvanize a national public around vital social issues was immense. In the process, the new journalism gave rise to propaganda analysis, which Carey (1995) describes as “the unmasking of attempts by interests groups to control and manipulate the press [. . .] aimed at provoking public action rather than theoretical reflection” (p. 388). On the other hand, the public became the problem of the mass, defined “increasingly by its vulnerable condition of isolation and spectatorship” produced by the new mass media, which put it at risk of ideological manipulation (Ewen, 1996, p. 56). The public, then more broadly defined, seemed potentially unruly under the strain and uncertainties of modernity, yet it could be rendered passive by its fragmentation and diffusion. Social institutions of communication such as the burgeoning professions of public relations and advertising recognized that strategies for managing Le Bon’s irrational crowd, Trotter’s herd, or Freud’s unconscious desire were needed to rationalize public opinion, which, so it seemed, could also be put to work to “make the world safe for democracy.”

When the European powers entered into the Great War in 1914, the idea of propaganda had not yet been linked with these seemingly benign civilian professions. Rather, propaganda had been the political currency of government. But as publicity could be deployed to make known the horrors and abuses of modern living under the dominance of the trusts, so too could individuals sympathetic to the needs of big business appropriate its vigor to amplify their cases. Increasingly, publicity became an institutionally organized apparatus defending the interests of the powerful in the tug for public opinion. Upon entrance into world war, belligerent governments were not remiss in seeing the advantages of having well-organized information bureaus to disseminate their propaganda, but initially, at least, clear distinctions between publicity and propaganda were not pronounced. Propaganda as a form of “geopolitical name-calling” came during and after the war when for the first time people became aware of and alarmed by its efficacy in the service of state power (Gary, 1999, p. 9). In the US public mind’s eye during the war, however, propaganda was primarily associated with Germany and German violence because British and US propagandists made it so.

Mark’s (1957) work, for example, shows how a negative perception of propaganda came to be associated with underhanded activities by Germany to win US public opinion during US neutrality. Early in the European war, US journalists vociferously countered the propaganda of German–US alliances and worked to link the activities of such groups to US neutrality law violations by the German government. The release of the so-called “Albert letters” contributed in no small measure to the intensity with which the public became interested in propaganda and would summarily adopt its negative connotation. Having fallen into the hands of a US agent, these papers were published in the *New York World* with sensational headlines promising to expose the extent of “German propaganda,” which readers undoubtedly found shocking. Marks (1957, pp. 5–8) argues that alleged German offenses such as buying

newspapers to control news, agitating for strikes in munitions plants, lobbying for arms embargos, and setting bombs on ships and destroying canals surely contributed to war propaganda hysteria and successfully linked German propaganda with conspiracy, espionage, and violent sabotage in the public's mind for the duration of the war and long after. Moreover, anti-German US writers and political elites actively infused the public with the idea that German propaganda was not only insidious but covertly invasive, having targeted US citizens before the war through the "psychology of suggestion" (Marks, 1957, p. 10). Thus, the association of propaganda with Germany alone and the linking of the term with acts of criminal violence as well as the attempt to influence public opinion "were both reasons for not liking Germany and for not liking propaganda" (Marks, 1957, p. 15).

Britain, of course, was also competing over winning US public opinion at the start of the Great War in Europe. The British, however, were largely successful because they had targeted and won the support of US opinion leaders well before the United States entered the war (Lavine & Wechsler, 1940). The Wellington House War Propaganda Bureau intended its propaganda campaign to reach foreign elites not through the overt and mass methods characteristic of the German propaganda ministry but through a disguised and indirect campaign that targeted important people in positions to influence others. The British policymaking elite was accustomed to the personal appeal in British diplomacy with foreign elites and generally was not familiar with or skilled at the business of manipulating mass popular opinion. It also was assumed that political elites would resent the efforts of any foreign government in trying to sway the thoughts and behavior of its populace without its sanction. For the first three years of the war, the British strategy cautiously avoided overt propaganda in its overseas campaigns,² which "was not simply a device to prevent clean hands from getting dirty but the product of a genuine belief in the value of disguised and indirect propaganda" (Sanders & Taylor, 1982, pp. 101–102). Pamphlets and articles written by famous British writers, for instance, were attractive to US publishers and were less likely to be traced back to the British government as its source.

In the United States, the extensive use of propaganda as an instrument and strategy of state power is explained, in part, by the marshaling of the liberal thinkers who had conceived of publicity as a progressive tool (Vaughn, 1980). When President Wilson was faced with the task of persuading a reluctant public to support an interventionist war, progressive intellectuals wrote him about the need for an infrastructure to mobilize public opinion on a widespread scale. In 1917, Arthur Bullard wrote a treatise arguing that the United States should avoid the errors of the European nations' decision to censor war propaganda. Rather, the United States needed to provide an open statement as to why isolationism was to be abandoned and an infrastructure for mobilizing public opinion in the government's favor should be instituted. What was needed was a publicity campaign that would make the call to arms "definite and explicit" and would serve as "a ringing inspiration" to the average US citizen asking, "What can I do?" (Bullard, 1917, p. 35). In this appeal to Wilson, Bullard suggested setting up a non-partisan publicity bureau. Relying on the benevo-

lence of publicity, the idea would be to relentlessly publicize the needs of the nation and the activities proffered by US citizens serving their country by requisitioning space on the front page of the newspapers, thus calling to service a “draft” of trained writers to feed “army stories” to the public and to enlist a corps of press agents, poets, and publicists at home and abroad to aid the campaign (pp. 42–43). It was imperative to stimulate robust public opinion, Walter Lippmann also argued, by controlling deceit while also not suppressing truth. War could achieve the objectives of peace if done so properly, which was to say that the question of censorship should be handled not by the military but by civilians whose democratic proclivities would have the insight to disseminate information wisely (Vaughn, 1980, pp. 5–6). In March 1917, Lippmann submitted a memorandum to presidential advisor Col. Edward House offering a rationale for abandoning neutrality and a set of ideas for how to mobilize public opinion.³

On the heels of advice from progressive intellectuals and his war secretaries, Wilson instituted the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in April 1917, one week after Congress declared war on Germany. He appointed former muckraking journalist George Creel to head the bureau (which also came to be known as the Creel Committee). Despite its improvisational start,⁴ the scope of the CPI rendered it into an unprecedented ministry of propaganda to sell war, “a gargantuan advertising agency the like of which the country had never known,” comprising an array of activities unparalleled “until the rise of totalitarian dictatorships after the war” (Mock & Larson, 1939, p. 4). Despite what became the CPI’s questionable means to an end, it was able to attract leading progressives who sincerely felt that the European war threatened democracy; thus, they aligned themselves with the state publicity bureau while holding a “naïve faith in the integrity of the American government and its leaders and in the power of ideas to transform men and society” (Vaughn, 1980, p. xii). It was also the case, Vaughn points out, that “propaganda” did not yet have the negative connotation that it earned from the fervor with which the CPI did its work, nor did the intelligentsia of the time witness the abuses of later propagandists. As well, Kennedy (2004) notes, a number of nationally known socialist intellectuals may have anticipated the setbacks pro-war sentiments would afflict on the party⁵ and so they “sought refuge in the Wilson administration’s welcoming embrace,” hoping they might also “use the war emergency to further the socialist cause” (p. 27). Yet, by condoning the paradox of what became his administration’s legacy in the manipulation of public opinion, Wilson adopted policies that would enforce loyalty through repressive measures on the one hand and would enact state censorship without seeming to do so on the other.

In charging Creel with the task of galvanizing public support for war, Wilson put his faith in Creel’s determination to implement policy in which censorship and publicity could coexist in such a way that the former would be “voluntary” and the latter would, as Mock and Larson (1939) put it, choke all channels of communication with officially approved information, “leaving little freeway for rumor or disloyal reports” (p. 11). Creel believed that some policy of censorship would be needed, but he

resolved it could be attained without the heavy price of formal law; rather the bureau would rely on the “aroused patriotism” of his professional colleagues (Creel, 1920, p. 16). In his unabashed postwar memoir of CPI history, Creel (1920) called the committee’s mission “the world’s greatest adventure in advertising” (p. 4) as he praised the stockpile of notable contributors: renowned scholars, journalists, writers, and novelists for writing pamphlets, news articles, and stories; famous artists and cartoonists for designing posters and other artwork; film professionals for their work with the Signal Corps, the CPI film division, and the commercial industry; prominent national figures in politics, the military, and foreign relations for their speaking contributions; and an army of some 75,000 Four Minute Men speakers for saturating local communities nationwide with upwards of a quarter of a million patriotic speeches.⁶ These materials, Creel (1920) wrote, “became an arsenal from which speakers and newspapers drew whole batteries of speeches and editorials and special articles,” filling the pages of “privately published patriotic collections” and “widely used text-books in history and civics” (p. 109).

Linking the CPI with publicity and the German campaign with an increasingly vile perception of propaganda – that is, the domain of lies and deceit, but especially violent misdeeds – crystallized the distinctions among white, black, and gray propaganda that were well recognized by the time of World War II.⁷ Writing in the *Scientific American* in April 1918, Creel (1918a) devoted an article to the German “campaign of lies.” Three months later, in *The Annals of the American Academy*, Creel (1918b) explicitly distinguished the US approach from its adversary by positioning US propaganda as if it were a form of public diplomacy (on the basis of its openness) rather than psychological warfare:

Much has been said in praise of German propaganda, but from the first our policy has been to find out what the Germans were doing, and then not to do it. Rottenness and corruption and deceit and trickery may win for awhile, but in the long run it always brings about its own inevitable reaction. What we are doing in foreign countries is being done openly. What we are trying to do is to bring home to them the meaning of American life, the purposes of America, our hopes and our ambitions. (Creel, 1918b, p. 190)

In sharp contrast to the transparent magnanimity of the CPI’s foreign and domestic campaign, Creel alleged that Germany and Austria promised imprisonment and execution for their citizens if caught in possession of CPI literature that had been smuggled across enemy lines (Creel, 1918b, p. 185). On the home front, Creel insisted, the CPI’s efforts relied on direct presentation of educational and informative facts. This strategy, Creel boasted, worked to fight intolerance, indifference, and ignorance without concealment or repression. It relied on inspirational appeals to the intellect that would move people “through their minds, rather than their emotions” and with “unanswerable arguments that would make every man and woman know that the war was a war of self-defense that had to be waged if free institutions were not to perish” (Creel, 1920, p. 100).

Notwithstanding Creel's imagined sense of the CPI's mission, the repressive impacts of the committee's patriotic zealousness spread far and wide, and it was dogged with controversy throughout its tenure, prompting Henderson (1969) to call the CPI the "true progenitor of the USIA" (pp. 23–24). The patriotic fervor with which the CPI instituted its objectives worked to squelch dissenting opinions through emotional appeals designed to foster a climate of fear and hatred. Opponents of war, voices of conscientious objection, and pacifists became subject to the severe local harassment of vigilante groups or more formal punitive measures ensured by the Espionage and Sedition Acts. US citizens who openly objected to war or those who did not vigorously support the war were subject to intense scrutiny and made to prove their loyalty. Some cases of vigilantism were state-sanctioned, such as the unruly surveillance activities of the American Protective League, whose members, with the tacit approval of Attorney General Thomas Gregory, conducted "slacker raids" involving physical assaults on people deemed to be dissenters. To speak up for the rights of immigrants and labor in this atmosphere of patriotic fervor was "to risk being persecuted for disloyalty" and "to criticize the course of the war, or to question American or Allied peace aims, was to risk outright prosecution for treason" (Vaughn, 1980, pp. 88–89). The committee's view toward labor, Ross (1996) argues, was the catalyst to "an exploding national intolerance of political dissent" that left an indelible mark on the Cold War sentiment starting in 1918, not 1945" (p. 23). Combined with the "loose" interpretation of the Espionage Act, the labor movement was conveniently crushed and domestic dissent was subsumed by a jingoistic national mood. The "majority's acquiescence to the draft and the war," Zinn (2005) argues, "was achieved by shrewd public relations and by intimidation – an effort organized with all the power of the federal government and the money of big business behind it" (p. 368).

In the wartime climate of fear and recklessness, the US Justice Department actively complied to keep dissenting opinions out of the public sphere. In retrospect, Gary (1999) notes, this had to do with the emerging recognition of propaganda as invasively dangerous to democracy, requiring some measure of inoculation. People, it seemed, needed to be protected from German propaganda or any speech that could be conveniently deemed "un-American" during a time of national crisis. By the war's end, the Justice Department successfully convicted about 900 prosecutions out of the 1,956 cases brought before it. Almost all of the convictions rested on evidence that treated opinions about the war as statements of facts that were condemned as false because, as First Amendment scholar Zechariah Chafee noted, "they differed from the President's speech or the resolution of Congress declaring war" (Gary, 1999, p. 186). Hostile discussion to the idea of war was hence unprotected by the Constitution. In trying to explain the climate of excess during the Great War when looking back on the eve of the next one, Chafee, along with other postwar scholars and intellectuals, blamed "propaganda as the chief culprit" (Gary, 1999, p. 186).

Postwar Discourses: From Critique to Application

The idea of propaganda decidedly shifted in the postwar public imaginary. Although the CPI and the British propaganda apparatuses had successfully convinced a nation of US citizens that Germany and the Central Powers had committed war crimes, the discovery that the US public had been the target of British propaganda – and that all the combatants had used and abused propaganda to suit their interests – forced the purview on propaganda to change; it was now popularly conceptualized as “all lies.” Postwar publications such as Will Irwin’s *An Age of Lies* (1919) reassessed the distorted arguments leading to war, Sir Campbell Stuart’s *Secrets of Crewe House* (1920) detailed the scope of British propaganda operations, and Charles Hunter Hamlin’s *Propaganda and Myth in Time of War* (1927) revealed the entangled financial relationships among US bankers, industry, and Allied governments. Hamlin’s indictment of the CPI was unequivocal, calling it “the greatest fraud ever sold to the public in the name of patriotism and religion” (Hamlin, 1973a, p. 92). Similarly, Arthur Ponsonby’s *Falsehood in Wartime* (1928) exposed such widely circulated atrocity stories as the German “corpse factories” and the “Belgium babies” of the British Bryce Report as either patently false or simply unsubstantiated in any credible way. Even the German U-boat sinking of the passenger ship *Lusitania*, which was used in part to justify the US entrance into the war, turned out to be an armed ship carrying munitions and other contraband. Indeed, the atrocity story “became a piece of evidence in the belief that ‘propaganda’ was synonymous with ‘lie,’ a further evidence that the American public had been terribly deceived, as well as the explanation of how and why Allied propaganda had been so shockingly effective” (Marks, 1957, p. 44). The discovery of British and other Allied propaganda consequently focused the spotlight on US propaganda. But, Marks (1957) argues, the issue was much less about the casualty of truth than it was the “shock” that hit when “it became clear that propaganda was a force capable of *conquering the learned* with as much ease as it conquered the average man” (p. 45). To be sure, war hysteria left few educators⁸ outside its path (Angoff, 1927; Grattan, 1927; Hamlin, 1973b). Consequently, propaganda was perceived as a new kind of omnipotent and insidious force.

Critical suppositions about propaganda’s effects in the war’s immediate aftermath attached themselves to a new perception of the public as a modern mass incapable of discerning rational argument, or at least rendered defenseless when victimized by nefarious machinations of propaganda. “The cruelest damage,” Kennedy (1980) argues in relation to the progressives’ postwar change of attitude, “was visited on their very social philosophy, their most cherished assumption about the reasonableness of mankind, the malleability of society, and the value of education and publicity as the tools of progress” (p. 90). The irrationality once ascribed to the working class, to Le Bon’s irrational crowd at the turn of the century, appeared to be “the habitual filter through which human nature, in its most general terms, was understood” (Ewen, 1996, p. 144). This formulation, as Ewen (1996) shows, involved multiple

renditions. Gabriel Tarde, for example, had suggested that the crowd, when dispersed through the mechanisms of modern communication, lost the contagion that made it unruly and thus could be controlled. The association of people in mobs and the “herd instinct” that governed them was inevitable, claimed Wilfred Trotter, making people susceptible to leadership. Following Le Bon’s understanding of the crowd as a productive part of the cyclical rise and decline of civilizations, US sociologist Robert Ezra Park argued that the crowd was a necessary phase in the evolution of institutions and in the birth of social movements, in particular (Leach, 1986). The crowd also held out the promise of its manageability *because* it lacked culture and a stable social structure (p. 105). The public was theorized as dispersed and anonymous, united not by physical proximity or interaction but by an imagined sense of community, which made it interesting from the perspectives of both psychology and business marketing.

As collective behavior underwent conceptual transformations (involving crowd, mass, market, and public), so too did viewpoints on the best way to understand propaganda. In the 1920s, the progressive critique dominated the discourses on propaganda, which characterized it writ large as a menace to society. However, social scientists who took an interest in the study of social influence and public opinion formation more broadly construed began to shift the emphasis of inquiry from humanistic critique to scientific analysis. All the while, the problem of whether the public could protect itself from the authority of propaganda remained at the forefront of concern.

For Walter Lippmann, the answer to this question was, categorically, no. Having been disturbed by the successes of war propaganda and by his role in the “engineering” of public opinion during the war, Lippmann decried propaganda’s abuses in a democratic state. For Lippmann (1920), propaganda was an “increasingly disserviceable mechanism” with few virtues, which had been separated out and given another name such as “advertisement” or “advocacy” (pp. 49–50). The focus for Lippmann, however, was on what he identified as the problem of democracy and its relation to public opinion in the modern age of communication. This had to do, in large part, with the unreliability of the press to inform the public, particularly when the stakes for winning public opinion had become critical to institutional power. Lippmann made this case in three essays published in *Liberty and the News* (1920).⁹ The project of liberty in a democracy required the uninhibited flow of information. In the first place, the news functioned to ensure the veracity of information, but it was also necessary to make it comprehensible to people because most people live in the “pseudo-environment of reports, rumors, and guesses,” what Lippmann (1920) considered the detritus of second-, third-, and even fourth-hand information, preying off comfortable “prepossessions” in the face of unmanageable complexities of “assertion and propaganda” (p. 55). Taking up the question of propaganda directly, Lippmann argued that because journalists had turned to their consciences to decide what to publish during the war, news had consequently become confused with propaganda. Lippmann conceived of liberty, in contradistinction to propaganda, as

a robust environment conducive to inquiry and judgment, optimally in service to society. "Without protection against propaganda," Lippmann (1920) insisted, "without standards of evidence, without certain criteria of emphasis, the living substance of all popular decision is exposed to every prejudice and to infinite exploitation" (p. 63). Thus, "there can be no liberty for a community which lacks the information by which to detect lies" (p. 64).

The press, however, was only part of a bigger problem. In his influential book *Public Opinion*, Lippmann (1922) framed the issue epistemologically: people, including journalists, know the world not as it is but as the "pictures in our heads" represent it. In the struggle to make sense of reality, imagination precedes experience. The inescapable human propensity to stereotype combines with a store of cultural preconceptions and prejudices, intentional censorship, and the compression of complex information to digestible messages, to limit access to the facts of the world outside the pseudo-environment. The intentions of self-interested parties complicate this relationship to the point of risking representative government, given the public's perceptual cognitive deficit in deciphering politically motivated distortions. In short, the public was too easily incapacitated by propaganda's quotidian exploits, and thus susceptible to the "manufacture of consent" (Lippmann, 1949, p. 248). In effect, Lippmann debunked the very premise of the omniscient citizen central to a functioning democracy and called for the institution of an expert class – equipped with specialized knowledge to operate on behalf of the public – to wade through and clean up the muck obscuring perception and access to facts.

Herein lay the solution to propaganda's threat to democracy: "the 'technic' employed by scientifically trained and disciplined policy experts" (Gary, 1999, p. 31). Only it wasn't so clear, as Gary (1999, pp. 31, 33) suggests, whether Lippmann thought the technocratic elite itself would be exempt from propaganda's mesmerizing effects. In any case, Lippmann's instrumentalist theory of expert-driven democracy lent legitimacy and credence to the imminent paradigm shift to positivist social science, despite what Jansen (2008) refers to as Lippmann's "cosmopolitanism" and his deep commitment to the ideals of his mentor, Graham Wallas, and his "Great Society."¹⁰

Propaganda was a threat to rationality, the prerequisite to a functional democracy, but it also had utility as an instrument of manipulation expedient to government, especially when the managing of consent was construed as necessary, as in crisis: "The necessity is often imagined, the peril manufactured. But when quick results are imperative," Lippmann (1922) proposed, "the manipulation of the masses through symbols may be the only quick way of having a critical thing done" (p. 236). Propaganda warranted study to dissect its mechanisms so that it could be made to work for society. Underscoring its radicalness, Gary (1999) notes that Lippmann's position was "a powerful and profoundly elitist idea, one that argued for expert-driven politics, a politics of manipulation, a politics of empty symbols, a politics bereft of an active and self-interested public" (p. 33). Similarly, Carey (1995) argues that Lippmann's expert-centered policymaking apparatus "took the public out of

politics and politics out of public life, depoliticizing the public sphere” (p. 390).¹¹ Indeed, by the time he wrote *The Phantom Public* in 1925, Lippmann’s estimation of the public diminished to the point of referring it to as a “mere phantom,” that is, to an abstraction residing outside political activity as bystander or spectator, unable to anticipate or comprehend the critical issues of a democratic state.

Lippmann’s instrumentalist prescription for salvaging democracy in the age of modern communications prompted John Dewey to challenge his indictment of the public. “It is not that there is no public,” Dewey wrote in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), but that the public was “too diffused and scattered,” easily distracted by rival interests, and disposed to habits of thought that were conditioned by culture and society (pp. 137, 158). Although Dewey agreed that propaganda was problematic for democracy, he argued that the problem was less the fact of propaganda than the “emotional habituations and intellectual habitudes on the part of the mass of men [that create] the conditions of which the exploiters of sentiment and opinion only take advantage” (p. 169). The state of mass society warranted concern because the public was kept scattered by the diversions of mass entertainment and consumerism, fodder for the ad men and public relations specialists. Indeed, he agreed that hired hands for publicity in the service of government was antithetical to democracy, but the solution was not expert paternalism; rather, it was “the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion” (p. 208). Dewey thought Lippmann’s expert class could not be counted on in lieu of the public; what was needed was for intellectuals to bring the public back into the project of democracy. The best way to do this involved better communication through education and inquiry, combined with unfettered flows of ethical uses of publicity. Thus, for Lippmann, “democracy rose and fell with the intelligence of the masses,” while Dewey insisted that “the widespread debunking of popular intellectual capacities by democratic realists was not a conclusive sign of the innate incompetence of the masses but a failure to achieve meaningful forms of public participation” (Peters, 1989, p. 212). Lippmann treated postwar publicity and propaganda as companion adjuncts to political power, but Dewey held on to publicity as the early progressives imagined it – as the free flow of expression and information, which, if employed at the local level of community, could be part of the solution to propaganda.

The flipside of the progressive critique belonged to the public relations professionals, who forwarded arguments in defense of the field in the wake of the Great War. One such apostle was former CPI official Edward Bernays, who in 1923 published *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, a practitioner’s perspective on the growing profession of public relations and management of public opinion. Influenced by Trotter’s ideas on the malleable crowd and Lippmann’s thoughts on managing public opinion, Bernays’s exposition was a clear attempt to neutralize the profession’s association with “that vaguely defined evil, ‘propaganda’” (Bernays, 1923, p. 12). Recalling the prewar progressive enunciation of publicity, Bernays resituated the publicity man as the “public relations counsel” whose talent included honed intuition and the application of a

wide range of psychological measures to assess the public mind. In short, the public relations consultant was an indispensable service to US capitalism and democracy, “ideally a constructive force in the community” whose work was derived out of responsibility to the public of individuals and institutions (p. 57).

Bernays (1923) agreed with the progressive critique insofar as he thought mass society posed new challenges to social organization requiring social engineering by experts. Propaganda was necessary to combat the predispositions of the common mind. Ideas did not exist in isolation but were formed by “precedent authority, habit, and all the other human motivations” (p. 97). Stereotypes could be reinforced or contested, or new ones could be created as a means to desirable ends. Moreover, people were subject to the herd mentality, so propaganda used effectively worked to overcome “the censorship of the group mind and herd reaction” (p. 122). On this point, Bernays took issue with Lippmann’s assertion that propaganda relied on censorship by equivocating on the term. Bernays claimed that from his professional perspective the opposite was true. Propaganda was a purposeful attempt to get the individuals to surpass the censorship of their own minds – their “logic-proof compartments” that precluded them from “seeing in terms of experience and thought rather than in terms of group reaction” (p. 122). The PR counsel’s important function was to “understand and analyze obscure tendencies of the public’s mind” and to create the symbols that appeal to “instinct and universal desires,” which will bring about the desired response (p. 173). Thus, knowledge of individual and group psychology was imperative to the business of public relations.

Bernays (1923) declared propaganda a neutral mechanism by reducing the question of whether it was good or bad to a dependency on the merit of the cause and the accuracy of the information used to further it. One person’s notion of the public conscience was another’s ascription of sinister propaganda, depending upon whether one’s disposition was in or out of “sympathy with the accepted point of view” (p. 70). “The only difference between ‘propaganda’ and ‘education,’ really is the point of view,” Bernays claimed. “The advocacy of what we believe in is education. The advocacy of what we don’t believe in is propaganda.” (p. 212) Nothing prevented propaganda from serving the demagogue’s intent on pulling the wool over the public’s eyes. But, if the industry held itself up to the moral standards proposed by Bernays, if the public relations counsel scrutinized his actions, if he premised his actions with truthfulness and accuracy, then he would avoid propagating harmful or “unsocial” ideas (p. 215).¹²

Many of the assertions made in *Crystallizing Public Opinion* are repeated in *Propaganda* (1928), but here Bernays took on the word “propaganda” directly in an attempt to normalize the concept in the public’s mind and to win approbation of its routine use. As Miller (2005) points out, “*Propaganda* is primarily a sales pitch, not an exercise in social theory” (p. 17); consequently, its goal was to reach potential corporate clientele. In this volume, Bernays distanced “the new propaganda” from wartime propaganda gone awry and justified its employment as a natural technique amenable to the development of peace.¹³ An apologist for capitalism, Bernays detailed

propaganda's wonders when put to work servicing business, but he also included sections on political leadership, women's activities, education, social service, and art and science.¹⁴

Neutralizing the Menace: Social Science and the Behavioral Approach

Bernays's supposition declaring propaganda's neutrality was famously reiterated by social scientist Harold Lasswell, who at one point compared the morality (or immorality) of propaganda to a "pump handle" (Lasswell, 1928). His first book, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927a), decidedly sharpened the focus of propaganda with a social scientific lens, and his name became most notably associated with propaganda as an object of study within political science, although his background with the Chicago School of sociology reflected broader interests. Having been influenced during his doctoral work by political scientist and former CPI official Charles Merriam, Lasswell wrote his dissertation on the content and techniques employed by the major belligerents of the Great War, which "seemed to place him at the driving center of the social and intellectual movement to study mass persuasion" (Sproule, 1997, p. 49). Lasswell's book may have seemed in some ways like an addendum to the progressive critique because he was critical of the abuses of propaganda to serve self-interest from all sides, but his larger treatment is framed more as a disinterested, if not prescriptive, account of the necessity of propaganda in modern large-scale warfare. In fact, Gary (1999) argues, the most distinctive aspect of Lasswell's work was his "insistent distancing of his objective analysis from the war generation's moral outrage about propaganda" (p. 61).

In the first place, Lasswell (1927a) showed how all the belligerents used propaganda in ways that would mobilize their civilian populations to their own ends, most egregiously using atrocity stories to instill hatred for the enemy and outright lies to demoralize the enemy. But he also rejected the predominant contemporary critique of propaganda. He argued that propaganda was not inherently mysterious, cunning, or noxious. Rather, when considered systematically, which he did, propaganda could be shown to be a rational and expedient endeavor in the measurement and formation of public opinion, which during wartime "calls forth the most strenuous exertions" (p. 8). Defined as the "direct manipulation of social suggestion" using "significant symbols" such as "stories, rumors, reports, pictures and other social communication" (p. 9), Lasswell maintained that propaganda's success depended on mobilizing the civilian population with particular uses of propaganda which, in turn, depended on the extent to which the propagandist understood the limits of the targets' predispositions in perception and behavior. Although he did not use the term, later communication scholars associated Lasswell's attribution of propaganda's power with the so-called "hypodermic needle" model of direct media effects (Chaffee & Hochheimer,

1985; Lubken, 2008), against which “limited effects” experimental research would take shape (see Chapter 29, this volume). Lasswell’s (1927a) comment that “propaganda is one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world” (p. 220) overshadowed his attention to the social forces circumscribing its success given the large body of critical and empirical work on propaganda to which Lasswell contributed and the uncertain implications of the new media environment dominated by mass media.¹⁵

Pushing conceptions of its hazards aside, Lasswell (1927a) positioned propaganda as but one of three critical elements to be used by any country interested in winning a war, alongside the coercive pressure of the military and the economic pressure of access to war resources. Illusion, however, was better than coercion and this could be accomplished most efficaciously through social manipulation, so great were the “psychological resistances to war in modern nations” (p. 47). As a technique of warfare, propaganda held no privileged purview; it could be used to lie and all historians and “seekers of truth” wrote respective histories blaming the enemy (p. 53). Accordingly, Lasswell refused to blame the medium for the ends to which propaganda might be put. Rather, his treatment justified its various uses (and abuses) as unavoidable or inevitable and with a certain agency of its own: “the wolf of propaganda does not hesitate to masquerade in the sheepskin. All the voluble men of the day – writers, reporters, editors, preachers, lecturers, teachers, politicians – are drawn into the service of propaganda to amplify a master voice” (p. 221).

This argument was equally if not more salient with respect to peacetime. In an article for the *American Political Science Review*, Lasswell (1927b) defended propaganda as a necessary adjunct to the Faustian bargain of democracy: “Most of that which formerly could be done by violence and intimidation must now be done by argument and persuasion. Democracy has proclaimed the dictatorship of palaver, and the technique of dictating to the dictator is named propaganda” (p. 631). Selectively borrowing from Lippmann, Lasswell considered the manipulation of symbols as imperative to social control and the inhibition of violence. Expanding on this idea in “The Function of the Propagandist,” written for the *International Journal of Ethics* a year later (this also appeared in *Democracy Through Public Opinion* in 1941), Lasswell (1928) proposed that the need in a democratic society for propaganda was structural and that this could be reconciled within a system of ethics. The propagandist was better thought of as a “species of advocate” whose work, if vigorously pursued from all sides, would keep people interested in public affairs and bring social harmony to society in lieu of violence. It was “possible to make out a case for the idea that the long-run interests of society may be served by adjudicators and propagandists at the sacrifice of conformity between private and public convictions on their part” (p. 263). Propaganda was the weapon by which social scientists and ruling elites could also peacefully win stability.

For better or for worse, propaganda was here to stay, and with such conviction Lasswell heralded an intensification of propaganda analysis and the broader enterprise of public opinion research from the social scientific standpoint. Lasswell’s interest in

psychoanalysis and politics landed him a fellowship with the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 1928, which marked the beginnings of a long-standing relationship with institutional funding. From 1930 to 1934, Lasswell's service on the SSRC's Committee on Pressure Groups and Propaganda resulted in a bibliographic project that included annotative references to works that spanned the terrain from cultural critiques to experimental and quantitative approaches (Lasswell, Casey, & Smith, 1935). In the introductory essay to the project, Lasswell (1935) summarized his case:

Not bombs nor bread, but words, pictures, songs, parades, and many similar devices are the typical means of making propaganda. Not the purpose but the method distinguishes propaganda from the management of men by violence, boycott, bribery, and similar means of social control. (Lasswell, 1935, p. 3)

He reiterates the symbolic significance of propaganda as part of a "politics of prevention" (Lasswell, 1930). Distinguishing propaganda from a slew of words muddling its scope – education, pedagogy, information, news, publicity, public relations, and advertising – Lasswell (1935) introduced the idea of *process* and clarified the process of propaganda as "the transmission of attitudes that are recognized as *controversial* within a given community" (p. 3). Lasswell's accent on controversy is noteworthy because it reflected his interest in the management of political power by elites in world politics, which continued to separate out his understanding of propaganda *qua* politics from other analyses associated with social influence and behavioralism more broadly construed.¹⁶

The less politically charged language of empiricism characterized the behavioral approach, which would become the dominant paradigm for propaganda analysis and communications research in the United States for the next 50 years. Psychologists and sociologists had already begun to examine propaganda systemically, to classify it and identify its working mechanisms within the context of crowd psychology or the mass society thesis, but for some the dividing line between science and critique was not so clear-cut. For example, in his 1925 book *Means of Social Control*, Frederick Lumley devoted a chapter to propaganda alongside persuasion and advertising, noting its neutral Latin etymology and its modern-day analogous relation to dishonest publicity. Refusing the predominant public classification as "all lies," Lumley suggested that while propaganda might sometimes be truthful, an important feature defining it is its *de facto* flight from the very label "propaganda" (p. 188). In an article for *Sociology and Social Research*, Lumley (1929) more emphatically stated his standpoint: propaganda is "almost wholly bad" because it is "inimical to intellectual development" (p. 324). In *The Propaganda Menace*, Lumley (1933) noted in the preface that he had been remiss in his earlier "superficial" treatment of propaganda and that "Professor Dewey's estimate of the dangers involved in propaganda was not exaggerated" (p. vii). In social scientific fashion, Lumley analyzed propaganda in terms of its content, its method (mechanical, literary, artistic), its affiliations, and its results and limitations, in order to detect it but also, in turn, to condemn it.

The progressive critique did not go ignored, but others such as Leonard Doob and Edward Robinson problematized propaganda's utility in light of the turn to scientific inquiry. In particular, they argued for a clear distinction between the value of scientific study and the "naïve" view of propaganda dominated by critique that identified it as "false, unwholesome, or subversive" (Doob & Robinson, 1935, p. 88). The disinterested or neutral analysis of the social scientist warranted defending, given contemporary pressures to condemn the practice of propaganda. Doob and Robinson agreed with Lasswell: Propaganda was "neither invariably better nor worse than 'rational' discourse" (Doob & Robinson, 1935, p. 89). These were relative ideas. What mattered was the end to which an appeal was put, whether it was intentional or unintentional, and how propaganda actually worked on people's perceptions and attitudes toward specific actions, which depended on the psychological predisposition of the targets, the nature of the suggestion, and the setting within which the propagandist worked. Important for Doob (1935) was to highlight both the unpredictability of success for the propagandist and the possibility and implications for propaganda as an unintentional endeavor, a point which he criticized Lumley for neglecting. In *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique* (1935), Doob laid out the mechanisms underlying the "principles of propaganda," which he illustrated with contemporary examples and through communications media such as the press, radio, motion pictures, stage, art, and other printed materials. The idea was to provide readers with an understanding and ability to recognize any and all propaganda, in all its manifestations, whether good or bad. Underlying Doob's project was the hope that people will "puncture the lies in the 'truths' which they accept, and appreciate the truths in the 'lies' which they reject" (p. 412). Only this way, Doob insisted, would people choose leaders wisely and inoculate themselves from fascism.

Propaganda and Media Effects

Consistent with broader trends in the social sciences, the inchoate body of scholarship soon to be identified as communication research lent itself to more pointed questions about the empirical effects of mediated messages in the 1930s and 1940s. The idea of the neutral observer informed by an array of quantitative tools (e.g., sampling, content analysis, survey questionnaires, interviews, measures and rating scales, experimental methods) began to push to the forefront of widely respectable (and more amply funded) inquiry and investigation. Propaganda critique did not entirely evaporate, but the appearance of positivist social science on the scene reshaped attention to Lasswell's definition of propaganda – the manipulation of significant symbols to influence collective attitudes – in the direction of an apolitical interest in the behavioral science of attitude change and media effects. Whereas Lasswell continued to think about propaganda as a political construct, intending to

counter anti-democratic propaganda, other social scientists relegated propaganda to empirical study as uncontroversial mass persuasion.

One area of study still oscillating between critique and media effects, however, concerned the possible impacts of movie-going on early audiences of motion pictures, particularly children and adolescents. The motion picture, like all other facets of communication, had been enlisted to serve the war effort, which called attention to its possible illusion-generating properties, socializing influences, and insidious effects as a mechanism of propaganda (Jacobs, 1939; Johnston, 1939; Peet, 1936). Even before US entrance into the war, the moving picture as a new medium of communication was scrutinized for how its visual grammar might influence emotion, cognition, and the imagination (Lindsay, 1915; Münsterberg, 1916). In addition, the motion picture was vulnerable to attack on a morality front because it was feared that its content could contribute to delinquent, criminal, or immoral behavior of youth. Despite attempts to identify direct effects between the movies and crime in the 1920s, the research yielded inconclusive results, suggesting that wider social experiences of movie-going were important factors in shaping behavior. Yet discourses on the motion picture industry were controversial, and in a sense, they contributed to a shift of attention from the reputed harmful effects of propaganda to the idea that reform-minded counterpropaganda was itself a kind of propaganda.

In the late 1920s, an unprecedented nationwide effort was launched by what would become the Motion Picture Research Council – under the auspices of the Payne Fund – to study the influence of motion pictures on children and adults. Initially, the impetus for the studies was split between reformist impulses emanating from the Rev. William Short, who had secured the funding in order to substantiate his calls for policy reform, and W. W. Charters, head of the Bureau of Educational Research at Ohio State University, who as director of the research team had intended an objective account of the motion picture underwritten by the protocols of social scientific methodology (Jowett, 1999, pp. 217–223). Short's intention was to compile a stockpile of scientifically based evidence detailing the offenses of movies and the movie industry, and then to launch, in his own words, a “program of propaganda and action” (Jowett, 1999, p. 217).

Over a four-year period (1929–1933), the council released an extensive series of self-contained studies, the significant results of which were published in *Motion Pictures and Youth* (Charters, 1933). The Payne research did not expressly query the effects of propaganda *vis-à-vis* motion pictures on audiences. Rather, the studies concentrated more broadly on the effects of motion pictures on emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and conduct, in addition to measuring frequency of attendance and taste preferences. Most notably, the Payne studies indicated that movies exerted quantitatively measurable influences, but “individual differences,” such as age, sex, experience, and cultural background, were critical factors contributing to how children responded to motion pictures, as well as frequency of attendance (Jowett, 1976, pp. 222–223; Jowett, Jarvie, & Fuller, 1996, pp. 83, 91). Moreover, consistent with Lasswell's suppositions on propaganda, the studies suggested that movies tended to reinforce already existing prejudices, attitudes, and

behaviors rather than change them. Of the most controversial of the findings was Blumer's (1933) study on motion pictures and conduct, in part because it drifted from the quantitative methodology that dominated the bulk of the research and because Blumer's findings tended to support the criticisms that had been dogging the industry for a decade, or at least they could be interpreted that way.

Despite the Payne Studies' conscious attempts to present the interpretations as objectively as possible, the studies indicated "an underlying but subtle hostility toward the immense socializing influences of the movies" (Jowett, 1976, p. 225). The publication of Henry James Forman's *Our Movie Made Children* (1933), a popularized version of the study, represented an unabashed indictment of the industry backed by cherry-picked evidence from the Payne research. Forman had been employed to write the book with the express purpose of winning public officials' support for the establishment of a film censorship board. The Payne researchers defended their work in the face of Forman's efforts to link the studies' findings with a propaganda campaign. The internal controversy that ensued worked to obscure the importance of the studies' findings, which Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller (1996) argue had to do with a methodological paradigm shift that would influence future communications research (pp. 120–121). According to Lowery and DeFleur (1995), the pioneering efforts of Payne Fund studies reinforced "the *legacy of fear* that had been kept alive by strident denunciations of the evils of propaganda" while they also shifted concern from propaganda criticism toward the establishment of "the field of media research within the perspectives of science" (pp. 41–42).

A body of scholars increasingly coalesced around an emerging interdisciplinary field in the 1930s, making use of quantifiable data and funding awarded by foundations and the media industries to research attitude and behavioral change. The "agencies of mass impression," as the 1933 President's Research Committee on Recent Social Trends called them, involved the one-to-many modes of communication that in the 1940s would be referred to as "mass media": newspapers, magazines, motion pictures, and radio broadcasting (Czitrom, 1982, p. 126). In addition to propaganda analysis, research under other names began to define the nascent field of communications such as public opinion research, social psychology, and the emerging field of marketing research. The advertising field in the 1920s had already enlisted the behavioral science of psychology to assist in the influencing of consumer choices. Radio broadcasting's commercialization led the charge of integrating marketing with communication research. Broadcasters and advertisers alike stood to gain from measurements of their programming and advertising effectiveness. More than any other figure, social scientist Paul Lazarsfeld promoted this integration while establishing "the theoretical relevance of communication research based on applied problems" (Delia, 1987, p. 51). Lazarsfeld's establishment of an Austrian research center in 1925 that combined market research (and its funding opportunities) with social scientific inquiry was the template from which he would work institutionally in the United States (Morrison, 2008). In this way, Lazarsfeld's work shaped the direction of communication research for the next decade.

Lazarsfeld believed that marketing research could provide sound strategy and methodology in applied research for both predicting and controlling consumer behavior and, at the same time, the data by which psychologists could mine theory “to illuminate the subtleties of psychological processes, particularly in the area of motivation” (Czitrom, 1982, p. 128). In 1937, Lazarsfeld was appointed director of a new project, the Princeton Office of Radio Research (ORR), the full name of which was *The Essential Value of Radio to All Types of Listeners* (Rogers, 1994, p. 265). According to Buxton (2003), the Rockefeller Foundation initially supported the project because officials hoped it could yield insight into how commercial broadcasting might integrate educational, artistic, and public interest programming into its mandate. Radio, it was thought by the foundation’s humanities division, “could be used as a vehicle for enhancing the cultural levels of the mass public” (Buxton, 2003, p. 301). However, under Lazarsfeld’s direction, the project shifted away from the possible reconciliation between broadcasters and educators and instead moved toward methodological concerns in answering effects-related questions about radio listening.

A central focus of the work became the generation of hypotheses about measurable effects of persuasion, such as attitude changes in getting people to buy something. Despite its shift in focus, Lazarsfeld’s radio research was enormously productive. In collaboration with Hadley Cantril, Herta Herzog, and CBS executive Frank Stanton, the radio project published four books and more than 40 articles (Lazarsfeld, 1940; Lazarsfeld, Cantril, & Stanton, 1939; Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1941, 1979). The project pushed beyond the laboratory or experimental approach to radio taken by Cantril and Allport (1935) by using survey research, polling data, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and content analysis in examining all sorts of radio programming, such as daytime soap operas and popular music, as well as the panicked reaction to Orson Welles’s broadcast, *Invasion from Mars* (Cantril, Wells, Koch, Gaudet, & Herzog, 1940).¹⁷ In 1939, Lazarsfeld and his project moved to Columbia University where he became a professor of sociology, and his radio research was administered through the newly developed Bureau of Applied Social Research, of which he appointed himself the director. Having made use of market research funding to pursue his larger research agenda,¹⁸ Lazarsfeld’s scholarship would eventually crystallize around behavioral communications research and be linked most notably to a body of empirical work subsequently described as media effects, or “the limited effects model” (see Chapter 29, this volume).

Lasswell also was moving in this direction, but he remained true to his focus on propaganda as a means to exert and maintain political control, which he thought could be best achieved by integrating political propaganda with all other forms of social control. The late 1930s raised new concerns that would provide opportunities for scholars at the forefront of communications research. The question of what to do about propaganda in relation to the public held its ground, but the arrival of “antidemocratic propaganda” (Gary, 1999) onto the scene propelled Lasswell’s expertise to the apex of policy work on communication and national security.

Propaganda, Education, and Policy

Two main strands of thought concerning the public's ability to protect itself against propaganda dominated the 1930s. Progressives and social scientists alike agreed that the public was psychologically vulnerable to the irrational, that it could be fooled at least some of the time, and that some measures were needed to counteract propaganda, or at minimum, to militate against mass persuasion directed at questionable ends. One response was to promote education as a defense against propaganda; the other was to counter propaganda with expert-directed propaganda. The former was the approach taken by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis. The latter included the policy work sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. The roots of the tension over how to best protect the public lay in Dewey and Lippmann's respective stances on public and participatory democracy.

Dewey's thinking had stimulated others to consider propaganda more directly in relation to education. But the suggestion that education was the antidote to propaganda was not without its Lippmann-inspired skeptics. As several progressive critics had pointed out, educators seemed too easily swept away with the tide of war propaganda during the CPI campaign. New concerns included the infiltration of propaganda into school curricula during peacetime, and more alarming, the idea that educators and researchers themselves could be persuaded to lend their expertise to pseudo- or quasi-scientific projects sponsored and funded by private interests for commercial gain.¹⁹ At lower levels of education, fears of propaganda's dangers in everyday life resonated, prompting the National Education Association in 1929 to caution educators through an informational campaign against the possibility of propaganda infiltrating the school curriculum. In 1937, the National Council for Social Studies put out a yearbook entitled *Education Against Propaganda* that advocated for teachers to learn about public opinion research in order to aid their students in recognizing propaganda "disguised as information or entertainment" (Ellis, 1937, p. iii). Journalists, educators, and social scientists (including Lasswell and Hadley Cantril) wrote its articles.

One main culprit in the battle for clarity and rationality in knowledge over propaganda was the problem of language. If thinking could be understood scientifically, and if better thinking could be taught as Dewey maintained, then language was not to be neglected in the arsenal of double-sided weapons. The field of general semantics saw itself as the solution to obfuscation in language. People could be taught to think about language scientifically, they could be shown that language was distinct from reality (e.g., as in Hayakawa's [1941] map/territory distinction), and that it could be used to manipulate how one thinks. The way to protect oneself from loaded abstractions and vacant meaning was to deconstruct the machinations of language. In this way, semanticists such as Alfred Korzybski, I. A. Richards, S. I. Hayakawa, and Stuart Chase argued that general semantics could inoculate people from the illogic and abuses inherent in word play on which propagandists depended. This line of

thinking buttressed the call for education as a practical but imperative endeavor, which was taken up by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), an initiative for adult education started in 1937 by faculty and anti-propaganda progressives associated with Columbia University Teacher's College. The rationale underpinning the need for the IPA was the contention that propaganda worked because people failed to see it when it was in operation. Word play and logical fallacies were the grist for propaganda's emotional and irrational appeals, so the way to combat it was to teach people to detect its devices.

At the start, the IPA operated like a movement interested in advancing the propaganda critique, even as it called itself a non-partisan organization conducting objective research guided by scientific method. Its mission had two prongs: first, to formulate an anti-propaganda praxis that could provide adults with a model to analyze propaganda, and, second, to expose case studies or examples of propaganda by which an analysis could be walked through with lay readers using the model. The institute was successful on the first count, enough so to attract sufficient attention and funding to keep it going for another four years after the first publication of its volume, *Propaganda Analysis: A Bulletin to Help the Intelligent Citizen Detect and Analyze Propaganda*, in 1937. The second bulletin, "How to Detect Propaganda," introduced to the general public a framework of strategies developed by Columbia University professor Clyde Miller, which he entitled, "Seven Propaganda Devices."²⁰ As Sproule (1997) argues, neat "gimmicks" such as this and the "ABCs of Propaganda Analysis" gained widespread popularity because they satisfied a material need to do something for the public's benefit about the problem of propaganda. Book treatments such as *Group Leader's Guide to Propaganda Analysis* (Edwards, 1938), for example, offered a kind of hands-on practicum for educators to adopt. But the institute soon ran into trouble when the novelty of its atheoretical framework wore out and when it could not sustain the second part of its self-mandate in a timely fashion – to provide actual analyses of propaganda, especially contemporary examples. The institute's reliance on generalities and naïve analysis began to wear thin as its subscribers demanded more substantive research on actual controversies. More to the point for Sproule (1997), the culminating predicament for the IPA involved an untenable balancing act between foreign and domestic anti-propaganda at the crossroads of international crisis.

With nativist anti-Semitic propaganda on the rise in the United States and the likelihood of another world war around the corner, the stakes around the IPA's utility changed. The IPA's objective was to teach the layperson to identify propaganda content across an array of mediated formats, whether print journalism, photojournalism, radio, or motion pictures. The IPA bulletin topics ranged from domestic case studies in politics and industry to foreign war propaganda. Given that the institute tried to situate itself as a neutral enterprise, any and all propaganda was fodder for analysis, whether fascist, communist, corporate, or New Deal.²¹ An effort such as *The Fine Art of Propaganda* (Lee & Lee, 1939), a book-length study of Father Coughlin's incendiary radio rhetoric, provided a much-needed exposé on domestic anti-Semitism

that garnered more support for the IPA in the short term. But the decision to publish *War Propaganda and the United States* (Lavine & Wechsler, 1940) pitted the institute against the pro-intervention movement because it treated all propaganda more or less as worthy of dissection and condemnation. US opinion leaders began to grumble that anti-propaganda was anti-democratic, and the institute's work came under increased scrutiny. Sproule (1997) explains the IPA's eventual demise in late 1940 as chiefly a conflict in theory versus praxis.

Paradoxically, the IPA found that it could not preserve its scientific reputation by maintaining a relative neutrality of treatment when the opposed propagandas happened to be those of Britain versus Germany. In this case, equal treatment of propaganda rendered the IPA vulnerable to criticism that its approach was fundamentally defective for being unable to distinguish the relative moral qualities of democratic and fascist propaganda. Here, evenhanded criticism worked to eviscerate the institute's reputation as a contributor to progressive praxis. (Sproule, 1997, p. 156)

The IPA was never able to win the support of grantors interested in underwriting the kind of scientific research that could be wedded with policy concerns such as the work conducted by Lazarsfeld and Lasswell. The growing fascist movement in the United States, in combination with a consensus among political opinion leaders that Nazi propaganda was formidably extensive and demanded immediate response, brought new opportunities for communications research, particularly with respect to Lasswell's expertise. Lasswell's proposition that propaganda was a necessary instrument of modern warfare set up an argument for what should be the policy response to the Nazi menace. The question of whether democracy could endure anti-democratic propaganda had been raised by political scientist George E. Gordon Catlin in 1936. Catlin argued that the problem for a democratic government was not propaganda *per se* but rather a monopoly over expression. A democracy needed to use propaganda to promote its interests, but it must also permit the existence of competing propagandas. "This dilemma of tolerating but not being vulnerable to anti-democratic ideas," Gary (1999) notes, "was *the* problem of propaganda for late 1930s liberals" (pp. 75–76). In effect, propaganda had to be met with better, more successful propaganda. Against this backdrop, Lasswell would be a central figure in a normative approach to communication policy and national security.

In 1939, John Marshall organized a "communications group" to begin a series of seminars with the intention of forwarding Lazarsfeld's research but "along more systematic lines" (Buxton, 2003, p. 308). The group was to undertake the study of "mass communication."²² Having funded projects concerning educational uses of media, including Cantril's and Lazarsfeld's radio research, under Marshall's lead the Rockefeller Foundation recognized the utility in working with educators, broadcasters, related non-profits, and government agencies to forward the agenda of its humanities division. Marshall intended that the Communication Group bring theoretical and empirical coherency to bear on the rather disparate and insufficient state

of communication research. From this seminar transpired the general framework that would become the dominant paradigm for several decades of communication research – who said what to whom with what effect?²³ The four-question scheme provided researchers with a model for analysis that could coordinate specific questions with appropriate research strategies, and that would underscore the empirical validity of effects. Although the framework was enormously valuable for its heuristic property, as Czitrom (1982) and other communication historians have noted, the omission of the “why” question in combination with the framework’s reliance on behavioral science and empiricism effectively narrowed the scope of communication research and its explanation to “a process of persuasion” (p. 132). The broader questions of media power and long-standing rhetorical critique were pushed out of the picture at the same time that the view of propaganda as a neutral mechanism of mass influence began to crystallize under the group’s influence.

Hitler’s invasion of Poland and the threat of war, particularly the critical lack of preparation by the United States in relation to the problem of managing public opinion in the event of war, preoccupied the group at its onset. This at once produced consensus over the importance of a line of inquiry concerning propaganda analysis, but it also affirmed the group’s incongruence over the instrumental use of counter-propaganda in service to national security and over what should be their role as intellectuals in preserving the democracy on the eve of crisis. Nevertheless, under Lasswell’s guidance and Marshall’s support, the group nearly immediately aligned its research program with the security needs of the state through the creation of what Gary (1999) calls a “propaganda prophylaxis” that would involve “both offensive and defensive propaganda intelligence work” (pp. 89–91).

The piercingly anti-democratic implications of the prophylaxis was not lost on the group but was for the most part overridden by several factors. The idea of propaganda in association with the state and warfare recalled bad memories in the public imaginary, as it did for some of the group members themselves, and its negative connotations undoubtedly fueled the isolationist platform in Congress that inhibited Roosevelt. Because the government was not yet supporting the communications research deemed by the group as necessary to national security, the foundation provided sanction for the group to robustly hash out any controversial questions framing its inquiry. The July 1940 seminar report, “Research in Mass Communications,” was in Gary’s (1999) words “a crucial document in the intellectual history of communications research, in part because it was an ideological manifesto, intended to move scholars into the trenches of propaganda warfare” (p. 102) by justification of the imperative to control public opinion to save democracy.

A series of related and supporting assumptions about social scientists and what they could do were implicit: they could help leaders understand the public mind and its prejudices; they could help change troublesome prejudices; they could assuage the public’s fears in the crisis; they could effectively mediate between the public and its leaders; and finally, because democracy depends on the consent of the governed, social

scientists could contribute to more effective democratic processes because they could help leaders obtain consent more easily. (Gary, 1999, p. 103)²⁴

Ironically, skepticism among social scientists over propaganda's omnipotence – which explained the group's insistence that effects be empiricized – also coincided with genuine fears over the government's unpreparedness in the increasingly pervasive face of effective Nazi propaganda. Thus, as Gary (1999) shows, by the time the US Justice Department signaled its formation of a "propaganda defense unit" in spring 1940, the foundation's humanities division "had already erected an extensive, coordinated network of propaganda research projects, and listening posts to monitor, document, and analyze the international traffic in propaganda, especially the Fascist variety" (p. 109). To be sure, Lasswell's expertise proved expedient to the government's wartime needs, as it would also solidify his stature as a "founding father" (Schramm, 1954) of the field of communication research.

Conclusion

By the eve of World War II, the idea of propaganda could not be relegated to the enemy alone. At the start of the Great War, progressive thinkers could make the case that the benign publicity apparatus they had in mind would achieve peace in democratic stride. But the atmosphere of intolerance generated from abuses of propagandists during the CPI's tenure at home and abroad overwhelmed attempts to bifurcate propaganda by national associations. During the interwar years, the idea of propaganda and the public's capacity to critically engage it underwent new-found scrutiny. If propaganda and publicity had been equivocal notions before the war, the postwar environment sharpened distinctions. At best, propaganda promoted the economic growth and stability of commercial enterprise as it managed public opinion accordingly. At worst, propaganda was the hangman's noose strangling the free flow of information vital to a functioning democracy. Despite the efforts of public relations practitioners to neutralize propaganda's vigor, the progressive critique held ground, visible through adult education initiatives and the civic-minded work of the IPA, until giving way to the administrative research agenda dominated by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues. As Wahl-Jorgensen explains in Chapter 26 of this volume, although the normative project of the Chicago School was well suited to address the wider socio-cultural questions concerning cohesion, conflict, and control, "their tools were much less use in tapping into emerging agendas of propaganda and psychological warfare." In the late 1930s when another war loomed, intellectuals, acutely aware of propaganda's viral-like propensity, worried over how to direct its potency toward democratic ends while also shielding the public from the possibility of contamination from foreign propaganda. For those scholars at the forefront of communication research

as it intersected with national security policy, the solution could only be “democratic propaganda” as they, the experts, would engineer it.

NOTES

- 1 I am indebted to Barry Marks (1957), whose unpublished dissertation is central to this chapter's argument.
- 2 Brownlow (1978) claims that the secrecy of the British campaign stems from the fact that they found the need for propaganda “somewhat embarrassing” (p. 6.).
- 3 Vaughn (1980) suggests that Lippmann had a hand in setting up what became the Committee on Public Information (CPI), although former muckraking journalist George Creel was appointed to head it. Lippmann, who criticized Creel during the war's tenure, served in Europe as a military officer in an intelligence unit whose function was to disseminate propaganda across enemy lines. Vaughn (1980, p. 336, n. 9) notes that although the unit was separate from the CPI, its efforts were often coordinated with the committee's. See also Weingast (1949) and Cary (1967).
- 4 According to Mock and Larson (1939), the CPI was initially established for the purpose of managing the problem of censorship with the dissemination of war news.
- 5 At the same time, many pacifist progressives and the American Socialist Party were deeply cynical of the motives for US participation in the war. Increasingly, a rift grew on the left between those who deemed the war opportunism for US imperialism and expansion of capitalist domination and those who imagined that the war might provide an opportunity to pursue progressive policies.
- 6 Also see *The Creel Report: Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information* (United States Committee on Public Information, 1972) for a detailed account of the strategies used to reach the nation and international community.
- 7 The origins of these distinctions is not decisively known, but all three terms were in use in the 1940s, especially black propaganda, which was associated with the Nazis, although all belligerent governments employ black propaganda. The distinction among them refers primarily to sourcing: white is known, gray is unknown or ambiguous, and black is hidden, distorted, or misattributed. See Cull, Culbert, and Welch (2003).
- 8 For a more complex account of the context in which academics worked, see Gruber (1975). In the context of public intellectuals, see Dewey (1917) and Bourne (1917).
- 9 Two of the essays, “What Modern Liberty Means” and “Liberty and the News,” were originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1919.
- 10 Revisiting dominant interpretations of Lippmann, Jansen (2008) argues that the causal linking of Lippmann's “non-positivist understanding of the nature and limits of scientific inquiry” to the effects traditions of mass communication is an “epistemological incongruity,” or misreading of Lippmann's corpus of work (p. 83).
- 11 Jansen strongly disputes this reading of Lippmann, arguing that Carey neglects to give recognition to the full weight of Lippmann's philosophical position, which would complicate Lippmann's understanding of how to activate democracy in a large-scale complex society. Jansen charges Carey with the most responsibility in framing the debate between Lippmann and Dewey as dichotomous, which has had the effect of subsequent scholarship largely overlooking their philosophical commonality.

- 12 In kindred spirit to defend publicity work, public relations man Ivy Lee (1925) insisted that propaganda, as opposed to publicity, was bad only insofar as it failed to disclose the source behind it. As far as Lee was concerned, this was the chief distinction between propaganda and publicity, the latter being desirable as a strategy of "getting out the facts" because it could be held accountable.
- 13 A short time later, Lee (1934) addressed the uses of propaganda in an international context, forwarding the idea, in quick step with Bernays, that "legitimate international propaganda" could be used to win and keep the peace.
- 14 Notably, Bernays was among the first to attend to the idea of the group leader along the lines of opinion leadership, a concept that was examined academically some 20 years later. Bernays (1923) had touched on the subject in *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, suggesting that the leader held sway according to the judgment of the herd but that such potential power need not be associated with the leader's initial qualifications for leadership (p. 159). In *Propaganda*, Bernays (2005) expands on the idea, attributing his inspiration for its use as a PR technique to the CPI's successful enlistment of "key men" whose "mere words carried authority to hundreds or thousands or hundreds of thousands of followers" (p. 54).
- 15 Sproule (1997) situates the hypodermic needle model's history within the problematic of a paradigm shift in which the spokespeople for the new paradigm "misremember the preceding research tradition and its contributions" (p. 234). The emerging communication scientists erroneously charged the progressive critics of propaganda with assuming media effects rather than recognizing that their critique emphasized the relationship of propaganda to the larger sociocultural environment, which could resist propaganda and invite participatory democracy given the appropriate tools for exposing propaganda to the public. Lasswell's introduction to later editions of *Propaganda Technique*, written in 1970, more clearly couches his analysis in a wider sociocultural frame.
- 16 In the updated volume of *Propaganda and Promotional Activities*, entitled *Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion* (Smith, Lasswell, & Casey, 1946), the authors suggested that "the usefulness of the present volume will be greatest if special attention is directed toward the structure of the emerging science of communication" (p. 3), which reflected the fragmentation of propaganda analysis from wider processes that included the progressive critique. Sproule (1997) argues that the original project conceptualized as a heterogeneous amalgam of cultural critique, disinterested experimentation, and case studies only "proved tenable" because the imminent split between the humanities and social sciences was still "relatively unobtrusive in 1931 when the project was initiated" (p. 51). In 1937, *Public Opinion Quarterly* was founded in the spirit of continuing the annotative bibliographic project.
- 17 The significance of the radio research would have an important impact on securing the funding for Robert King Merton and his team's study of singer Kate Smith's radio bond drive during World War II (Merton, Lowenthal, & Curtis, 1946).
- 18 Referring to David Morrison's early work on Lazarsfeld, Rogers (1994) writes that Lazarsfeld's interest was not mass communication per se but rather methodology. Rogers argues Lazarsfeld was a "diffident pioneer in studying the effects of mass communication. He saw himself as a methodologist, and communication was just a convenient bathtub in which to float his research boats" (p. 270).
- 19 In 1927, for example, it was discovered that the National Electric Light Association had sponsored academic research on electric power and commissioned educators to write textbooks in support of industry privatization (Gruening, 1931).

- 20 The seven propaganda devices identified were name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card stacking, and bandwagon.
- 21 Because the institute had devoted much attention to fascist and pro-business propaganda, however, it opened itself up to the criticism that it was left wing, pro-New Deal, pro-communist, or anti-business, which it tried to address directly (Institute for Propaganda Analysis, 1939, p. 106).
- 22 According to Rogers (1994, p. 222, footnote), Marshall's correspondence suggests he may have been the first to use the term *mass communication* in 1939.
- 23 Gary (1999, p. 88) contends that the original four-question scheme, widely attributed only to Lasswell, was actually the result of months of exchanges among the members of the seminar. The group's 1940 paper, "Research in Mass Communication," identified the first question as who said what "with what intention" (p. 100). When Lasswell published the scheme, it became: "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?" (Lasswell 1948). Buxton (2003) claims that the initial formulation of the "charting" of the questions belongs to Marshall.
- 24 One important outcome of the Communications Group driven by the historical moment was University of Chicago professor Douglas Waples's proposal to create a permanent institute for communications research that would train individuals to work as administrators and propagandists. What resulted was a two-year degree-bearing master's program to study communications, public opinion, and mass persuasion more broadly construed (see Chapter 26, this volume).

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Frankfurt School, Media, and the Culture Industry

Douglas Kellner

ABSTRACT

The Frankfurt School theorists were among the first theorists to examine the fundamental roles of the media in shaping thought and behavior, influencing politics, and managing consumer demand in the twentieth century. Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of the "culture industry" presented a model of media as instruments of power and social control developed by Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, and Jürgen Habermas, who gave the Horkheimer and Adorno culture industry analysis a historical grounding. The Frankfurt School also studied the effects of mass culture and the rise of the consumer society on the working classes that were to be the instrument of revolution in the classical Marxian scenario. They also analyzed how the culture industries and consumer society were stabilizing contemporary capitalism and thus were among the first to see the expanding roles of mass media and communication in politics, socialization and social life, culture and the constructions of subjectivities. In this chapter, I examine the contributions to media and social theory developed by the Frankfurt School and their limitations and blind spots.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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The term “Frankfurt School” refers to the work of members of the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research), which was established in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1923 as the first Marxist-oriented research center affiliated with a major German university. Under its director, Carl Grünberg, the institute’s work in the 1920s tended to be empirical, historical, and oriented toward problems of the European working-class movement. Max Horkheimer became director of the institute in 1930 and gathered around him many talented theorists, including Erich Fromm, Franz Neumann, Herbert Marcuse, and T. W. Adorno. Under Horkheimer, the institute sought to develop an interdisciplinary social theory that could serve as an instrument of social transformation. The work of this era was a synthesis of philosophy and social theory, combining sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and political economy. (On the Frankfurt School, see the readers edited by Arato & Gebhardt, 1982; Bronner & Kellner, 1989. On critical studies, see Jay, 1973; Kellner, 1989; Wiggershaus, 1994.)

The first major institute project in the Horkheimer period was a systematic study of authority, an investigation into individuals who submitted to irrational authority in authoritarian regimes. This culminated in a two-volume work, *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (1936), and a series of studies of fascism. (For the Frankfurt School on fascism, see Neumann, 1966; Kellner, 1989; Marcuse, 1998.) Most members of the Frankfurt School were both Jews and Marxist radicals and were forced to flee Germany after Hitler’s ascendancy to power. The majority emigrated to the United States, and the institute became affiliated with Columbia University from 1931 until 1949, when it returned to Frankfurt. Since 1936, the institute has referred to its work as the “critical theory of society.” For many years, “critical theory” stood as a code for the institute’s Marxism and was distinguished by its attempt to found a radical interdisciplinary social theory rooted in Hegelian–Marxian dialectics, historical materialism, and the critique of political economy and theory of revolution. Members argued that Marx’s concepts of the commodity, money, value, exchange, and fetishism characterize not only the capitalist economy but also social relations under capitalism, where human relations and all forms of life are governed by commodity and exchange relations and values.

In a key article, “Traditional and Critical Theory,” Horkheimer (1937) argued that “traditional theory,” which included modern philosophy and science since Descartes, tended to be overly abstract, objectivistic, and cut off from social practice. “Critical theory,” by contrast, was grounded in social theory and (Marxian) political economy, carried out a systematic critique of existing society, and allied with efforts to produce alternatives to capitalism and bourgeois society (then in its fascist stage in much of Europe). Horkheimer (1972) wrote that critical theory’s “content consists of changing the concepts that thoroughly dominate the economy into their opposites: fair exchange into a deepening of social injustice; a free economy into monopolistic domination; productive labor into the strengthening of relations that inhibit production; the maintenance of society’s life into the impoverishment of the people” (p. 247). The goal of critical theory is to transform these social conditions and provide

a theory of “the historical movement of the period which is now approaching its end” (p. 247).

Critical theory produced theoretical analysis of the transformation of competitive capitalism into monopoly capitalism and fascism and hoped to be part of a historical process through which capitalism would be replaced by socialism. Horkheimer (1972) claimed that “the categories which have arisen under its influence criticize the present. The Marxist categories of class, exploitation, surplus value, profit, impoverishment, and collapse are moments of a conceptual whole whose meaning is to be sought, not in the reproduction of the present society, but in its transformation to a correct society” (p. 218). Critical theory is thus motivated by an interest in emancipation and is a philosophy of social practice engaged in “the struggle for the future.” Critical theory must remain loyal to the “idea of a future society as the community of free human beings, insofar as such a society is possible, given the present technical means” (p. 230).

In a series of studies carried out in the 1930s, the Institute for Social Research developed theories of monopoly capitalism, the new industrial state; the role of technology and giant corporations in monopoly capitalism; the key roles of mass culture and communication in reproducing contemporary societies; and the decline of democracy and the individual. Critical theory drew alike on Hegelian dialectics, Marxian theory, Nietzsche, Freud, Max Weber, and other trends of contemporary thought. It articulated theories that were to occupy the center of social theory for the next several decades. Rarely, if ever, has such a talented group of interdisciplinary intellectuals come together under the auspices of one institute. They managed to keep alive radical social theory during a difficult historical era and provided aspects of a neo-Marxian theory of the changed social reality and new historical situation in the transition from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism.

The Culture Industry and Debates over Mass Culture

The Frankfurt School coined the term “culture industry” in the 1930s to signify the process of the industrialization of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperatives that constructed it (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972). The critical theorists analyzed all mass-mediated cultural artifacts within the context of industrial production, where the commodities of the culture industries exhibited the same features as other products of mass production: commodification, standardization, and massification. The culture industries had the specific function, however, of providing ideological legitimation of the existing capitalist societies and of integrating individuals into its way of life.

For the Frankfurt School, mass culture and communications therefore stand at the center of leisure activity, are important agents of socialization, are mediators of political reality, and should thus be seen as major institutions of contemporary societies

with a variety of economic, political, cultural, and social effects. Furthermore, the critical theorists investigated the cultural industries politically as a form of the integration of the working class into capitalist societies. The Frankfurt School theorists were among the first neo-Marxian groups to examine the effects of mass culture and the rise of the consumer society on the working classes that were to be the instrument of revolution in the classical Marxian scenario. They also analyzed how the culture industries and consumer society were stabilizing contemporary capitalism and accordingly sought new strategies for political change, agencies of political transformation, and models for political emancipation that could serve as norms of social critique and goals for political struggle.

The positions of Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, and other members of the inner circle of the Institute for Social Research were contested by Walter Benjamin, an idiosyncratic theorist loosely affiliated with the institute. Benjamin, writing in Paris during the 1930s, discerned progressive aspects in new technologies of cultural production such as photography, film, and radio. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin (1969) noted how new mass media were supplanting older forms of culture. In this context, the mass reproduction of photography, film, recordings, and publications replaced the emphasis on the originality and "aura" of the work of art in an earlier era. Freed from the mystification of high culture, Benjamin believed that mass culture could cultivate more critical individuals able to judge and analyze their culture, just as sports fans could dissect and evaluate athletic activities. In addition, Benjamin asserted that processing the rush of images of cinema helped to create subjectivities better able to parry the flux and turbulence of experience in industrialized, urbanized societies.

Benjamin worked with the prolific German artist Bertolt Brecht on films, created radio plays, and attempted to use the media as organs of social progress. In the 1934 essay "The Artist as Producer," Benjamin (1999) argued that radical cultural creators should "refunction" the apparatus of cultural production, turning theater and film, for instance, into a forum of political enlightenment and discussion rather than a medium of "culinary" audience pleasure. Both Brecht and Benjamin wrote radio plays and were interested in film as an instrument of progressive social change. In an essay on radio theory, Brecht anticipated the Internet in his call for reconstructing the apparatus of broadcasting from one-way transmission to a more interactive form of two-way, or multiple, communication (Silberman, 2000) – a form first realized in citizens band radio and then the Internet and new media.

Moreover, Benjamin wished to promote a radical cultural and media politics concerned with the creation of alternative oppositional cultures. Yet he recognized that media such as film could have conservative effects. While he thought it was progressive that mass produced works were losing their "aura," their magical force, and were opening cultural artifacts for more critical and political discussion, Benjamin recognized that film could create a new kind of ideological magic through the cult of celebrity and techniques such as the close-up that fetishized certain stars or images via cinematic technology. Benjamin was thus one of the first radical cultural critics

to look carefully at the form and technology of media culture in appraising its complex nature and effects. Benjamin also developed a unique approach to cultural history that is one of his most enduring legacies. In a micrological history of Paris in the eighteenth century, Benjamin used careful study of particulars and singular events to elucidate the more general contours of the epoch. This uncompleted project contains a wealth of material for study and reflection (see Benjamin, 2000, and the studies in Buck-Morss, 1977, 1989) and illustrates his obsession with both intensely focusing on particulars and creating constellations of categories that provide more comprehensive theoretical and historical vision and understanding.

Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) answered Benjamin's optimism concerning the mass media in a highly influential analysis of the culture industry published in their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which first appeared in 1948 and was translated into English in 1972. They argued that the system of cultural production dominated by film, radio broadcasting, newspapers, and magazines was controlled by advertising and commercial imperatives and served to create subservience to the system of consumer capitalism. While later critics pronounced their approach too manipulative, reductive, and elitist, it provides an important corrective to more populist approaches to media culture that downplay how media industries exert power over audiences and help produce thought and behavior that conforms to the existing society (see Kellner, 1989, 1995).

The analyses by members of the institute of the functions of culture, ideology, and the mass media in contemporary societies constitute one of its most valuable legacies. The critical theorists excelled as critics of both so-called "high culture" and "mass culture" while producing many important texts in these areas. Their work is distinguished by the close connection between social theory and cultural critique and by their ability to contextualize culture within social environments and struggles. In particular, their theory of culture was bound up with analysis of the dialectic of enlightenment. Culture – once a refuge of beauty and truth – was falling prey, they believed, to tendencies toward rationalization, standardization, and conformity that they saw as a consequence of the triumph of the instrumental rationality that was coming to pervade and structure ever more aspects of life. Thus, while culture once cultivated individuality, it was now promoting conformity and was a crucial part of "the totally administered society" that was producing "the end of the individual" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972).

Their analysis of the fate of culture in modernity was part and parcel of the Frankfurt School's pessimism concerning the rise of the totally administered society in its fascist, democratic state capitalist, and state communist forms. Yet the group continued to privilege culture as an important, and often overlooked, source of social knowledge, as well as a potential form of social criticism and opposition. As Adorno (1967) once wrote:

[T]he task of [cultural] criticism must be not so much to search for the particular interest-groups to which cultural phenomena are to be assigned, but rather to decipher

the general social tendencies which are expressed in these phenomena and through which the most powerful interests realize themselves. Cultural criticism must become social physiognomy. The more the whole divests itself of all spontaneous elements, is socially mediated and filtered, is “consciousness,” the more it becomes “culture.” (Adorno, 1967, p. 30)

This passage points both to the Frankfurt School’s position that administered culture was coming to play ever more fundamental roles in social production and reproduction and to the position that analysis of culture can provide crucial insights into social processes. Critical theory thus assigned a central role to cultural criticism and ideology critique precisely because of the key functions of culture and ideology within contemporary capitalist societies. This focus, which corresponded to some of the institute members’ deepest interests, took the form of a systematic inquiry into the different types, forms, and effects of culture and ideology in contemporary capitalist societies. These ranged from theoretical reflections on the dialectics of culture, which are the ways in which culture could be both a force of social conformity and opposition, to critiques of mass culture and aesthetic reflections on the emancipatory potential of high art.

Adorno (1978) began the institute critique of mass culture in his 1932 article “On the Social Situation of Music” and continued it in a series of studies of popular music and other forms of mass culture over the next decades (see Buck-Morss, 1977). Adorno (1978, 1982) initially criticized popular music production for its commodification, rationalization, fetishism, and reification of musical materials – thus applying the key neo-Marxist social categories to culture – as well as the “regression” in hearing produced by popular music. The framework for his critique was thus the institute theory of the spread of rationalization and reification into every aspect of social life and the resultant decline of the individual.

Hence, while the origins of the institute’s approach to mass culture and communication are visible in Adorno’s early writings on music, the Frankfurt group did not really develop the theory of the culture industry until their emigration to the United States in the 1930s. During their exile period from the mid-1930s through the 1940s, members of the group witnessed the proliferation of mass communications and culture and the rise of the consumer society, experiencing first-hand the advent to cultural power of the commercial broadcasting systems, President Roosevelt’s remarkable use of radio for political persuasion, and the ever-growing popularity of cinema when 85 million to 110 million US citizens paid to see “the movies” each week. Further, they experienced the widespread popularity of magazines, comic books, cheap fiction, and the other flora and fauna of the new mass produced culture.

From their vantage point in California during the 1940s – where many of their exiled compatriots from Germany worked in the film industry – Adorno and Horkheimer were able to experience how business interests dominated mass culture and could observe the fascination the entertainment industries exerted within the emerging media and consumer society. Marcuse, Lowenthal, and others, who worked

in Washington during this period for the Office of War Information and the US intelligence services, were able to observe government use of mass communications as instruments of political propaganda (Marcuse, 1998). The critical theorists thus came to see what they called the “culture industry” as a central part of a new configuration of capitalist modernity that used culture, advertising, mass communications, and new forms of social control to induce consent to and reproduce the new forms of capitalist society. The production and transmission of media spectacles that transmit ideology and consumerism through the means of allegedly “popular entertainment” and information were, they believed, a central mechanism through which contemporary society came to dominate the individual.

Adorno and Horkheimer adopted the term “culture industry,” as opposed to concepts such as “popular culture” or “mass culture,” because they wanted to resist notions that products of the culture industry emanated from the masses (that is, from the people). They saw the culture industry as being an administered culture, imposed from above, as instruments of indoctrination and social control. The term culture industry thus contains a dialectical irony typical of the style of Frankfurt School critical theory: culture, as traditionally valorized, is supposed to be opposed to industry and expressive of individual creativity while providing a repository of humanizing values. In the culture industry, however, culture has come to function as a mode of ideological domination and social control rather than of humanization or emancipation.

The culture industry was perceived as the culmination of a historical process in which technology and scientific organization and administration came to dominate thought and experience. Although Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) carry out a radical questioning of Marxism and the development of an alternative philosophy of history and theory of society in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, their theory of the culture industry provides a neo-Marxian account of mass media and culture that helps explain both how the culture industry reproduces capitalist societies and why socialist revolutions fail to take place in these societies. In this sense, the institute theory of “culture industry as mass deception” provides a rebuttal both to Lukács’s theory of revolution and “class consciousness,” and to Brecht’s and Benjamin’s belief (Silberman, 2000) that the new forces of mass communication – especially radio and film – could serve as instruments of technological progress and social enlightenment that could be turned against the capitalist relations of production and could be used as instruments of political mobilization and struggle (Kellner, 1989).

For Horkheimer and Adorno, by contrast, these new technologies were used as instruments of ideological mystification and class domination. Against Lukács (1972) and others who argued that capitalist society necessarily radicalized the working class and produced class consciousness, Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the culture industry inhibits the development of class consciousness by providing the ruling political and economic forces with a powerful instrument of social control. The conception of the culture industry therefore provides a model of a technically

advanced capitalist society that mobilizes support for its institutions, practices, and values *from below*, making class consciousness more difficult to attain than before. Using Gramsci's (1971) terminology, the culture industry reproduces capitalist hegemony over the working class by engineering *consent* to the existing society and thus establishing a socio-psychological basis for social integration. Whereas fascism destroyed civil society (or the "public sphere") through politicizing mediated institutions, or using force to suppress all dissent, the culture industry coaxes individuals into the privacy of their own home or the movie theater, producing consumers-spectators of media events and escapist entertainment who are being subtly indoctrinated into dominant ideologies.

For the Frankfurt School, mass culture and communications therefore stand in the center of leisure activity, are important agents of socialization and mediators of political reality, and should thus be seen as major institutions of contemporary societies with a variety of economic, political, cultural, and social effects. Furthermore, the critical theorists investigated the cultural industry politically as a form of integration of the working class into capitalist societies. The Frankfurt School theorists were among the first neo-Marxian groups to examine the effects of mass culture and the rise of the consumer society on the working classes, which were to be the instrument of revolution in the classical Marxian scenario. They also analyzed the ways that the culture industry and consumer society were stabilizing contemporary capitalism and accordingly sought new strategies for political change, agencies of political transformation, and models for political emancipation that could serve as norms of social critique and goals for political struggle. The analysis of the culture industry stands, therefore, in a quite ambivalent relationship to classical Marxism. On one hand, the theory is part of the foundation for the critical theory of society, replacing the critique of political economy that had been the foundation for social theories in the Marxian tradition. It also served as an important part of the explanation of why the institute's critical theorists no longer placed faith in the revolutionary vocation of the proletariat. Yet in other ways, the analysis of the culture industry employs Marxian arguments through stressing capitalist control of culture, the commodification and reification of culture, its ideological functions, and the ways that it integrates individuals into capitalist society.

Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) use a model that pits the individual against its "adversary – the absolute power of capitalism" (p. 120) and describe the tendencies toward conformity, standardization, and deception in the culture industry by means of its control by monopoly corporations that themselves are central to the capitalist system. The very processes of production in the culture industry are modeled on factory production where everything is standardized, streamlined, coordinated, and planned down to the last detail. Indeed, Horkheimer and Adorno use their analysis of the culture industry to call attention to what they perceive as the fundamental traits of the administered society and to carry out a radical critique of capitalism. They suggest that reflection on the culture industries illuminates the processes

toward standardization, homogenization, and conformity that characterize social life under what they call “totalitarian capitalism.” The tendencies toward manipulation and domination in the culture industry illuminate similar trends throughout capitalist society.

The “mass deception” present in the culture industries is similar to the deception, false promises, and manipulation in the capitalist economic, political, and social spheres. In this conception, one of the main trends of contemporary capitalist societies is the synthesis of advertising, culture, information, politics, and manipulation that characterizes the culture industries. This dialectical focus on the relationships between the culture industry and capitalism points to a basic methodological position within the institute’s critical theory of society that in turn marks its affinity to Marxian dialectics. For critical theory, every social phenomenon must be interpreted in terms of a theory of society that itself is part of a theory of capitalism. The theory of the relationships between society and the economy illuminates phenomena such as the culture industry, and its analysis in turn sheds light on the economy and society. Consequently, critical theory operates with a dialectic between its topics of analysis (the culture industry, anti-Semitism, or other themes) and its theory of society. In this dialectic, the theory of society illuminates the topic under investigation, which in turn illuminates the fundamental social trends (i.e., commodification, reification, etc.) described in the social theory.

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) describe the style of culture industry products and the formulas, conventions, and stereotypes that constitute it, as well as several of the strategies used to indoctrinate its consumers into acceptance of the existing society. “Entertainment,” they claim, accustoms the audiences to accept existing society as natural by endlessly repeating and reproducing similar views of the world that present the existing way of life as the way of the world. The eternal recurrence of the same in the culture industry changes, they suggest, the very nature of ideology:

Accordingly, ideology has been made vague and noncommittal, and thus neither clearer nor weaker. Its very vagueness, its almost scientific aversion from committing itself to anything which cannot be verified, acts as an instrument of domination. It becomes a vigorous and prearranged promulgation of the status quo. The culture industry tends to make itself the embodiment of authoritative pronouncements, and thus the irrefutable prophet of the prevailing order. It skillfully steers a winding course between the cliffs of demonstrable misinformation and manifest truth, faithfully reproducing the phenomenon whose opaqueness blocks any insight and installs the ubiquitous and intact phenomenon as ideal. Ideology is split into the photograph of stubborn life and the naked lie about its meaning – which is not expressed but suggested and yet drummed in. To demonstrate its divine nature, reality is always repeated in a purely cynical way. Such a photological proof is of course not stringent, but it is overpowering [. . .] The new ideology has as its objects the world as such. It makes use of the worship of facts by no more than elevating a disagreeable existence into the world of facts in representing it meticulously. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972, pp. 147–148)

The culture industry thus tries to induce the individual to identify with society's typical figures and models:

Pseudo individuality is rife: from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality. What is individual is no more than the generality's power to stamp the accidental detail so firmly that it is accepted as such. The defiant reserve or elegant appearance of the individual on show is mass-produced like Yale locks, whose only difference can be measured in fractions of millimeters. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972, p. 154)

The culture industry thus serves as a powerful instrument of social control that induces individuals to accept their fate and conform to existing society. Advertising progressively fuses in style and technique with the entertainment of the culture industry (pp. 156–167), which in turn can be read as advertisements for the existing society and established way of life.

From World War II to the Postwar Epoch

During World War II, the institute split up because of pressures of the war. Horkheimer and Adorno moved to California, while Lowenthal, Marcuse, Neumann, and others worked for the US government as their contribution in the fight against fascism. Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) worked on the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which sketched out a vision of history from the Greeks to the present that discussed how reason and enlightenment became their opposite, transforming what promised to be instruments of truth and liberation into tools of domination. Under the pressure of societal systems of domination, reason became instrumental, reducing human beings to things and objects and nature to numbers. While such modes of abstraction enabled science and technology to develop apace, it also produced societal reification and domination, culminating in the concentration camps that generated an instrumentalization of death. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, reason thus turned instrumental, where science and technology had created horrific tools of destruction and death, culture was commodified into products of a mass produced culture industry, and democracy terminated in fascism in which masses chose despotic and demagogic rulers. Moreover, in their extremely pessimistic vision, individuals were oppressing their own bodies and renouncing their own desires as they assimilated and allowed themselves to be instruments of labor and war. Sharply criticizing enlightenment scientism and rationalism, as well as systems of social domination, Horkheimer and Adorno implicitly implicated Marxism within the “dialectic of enlightenment” because it too affirmed the primacy of labor, instrumentalized reason in its scientism and celebration of “socialist production,” and shared in Western modernity and the domination of nature. After World War II, Adorno,

Horkheimer, and Pollock returned to Frankfurt to re-establish the Institute for Social Research, while Lowenthal, Marcuse, and others remained in the United States.

In Germany, Adorno, Horkheimer, and their associates published a series of books and became a dominant intellectual current. At this time, the term “Frankfurt School” became widespread as a characterization of their version of interdisciplinary social research and of the particular social theory developed by Adorno, Horkheimer, and their associates (Wiggershaus, 1994). They engaged in frequent methodological and substantive debates with other social theories, most notably the “positivism dispute,” where they criticized more empirical and quantitative approaches to social theory and defended their more speculative and critical brand of social theory. The German group around Adorno and Horkheimer was also increasingly hostile toward orthodox Marxism and was in turn criticized by a variety of types of “Marxism-Leninism” and “scientific Marxists” for their alleged surrender of revolutionary and scientific Marxian perspectives.

The Frankfurt School eventually became best known for its theories of “the totally administered society” or “one-dimensional society,” which analyzed the increasing power of capitalism over all aspects of social life and the development of new forms of social control. During the 1950s, however, there were divergences between the work of the institute relocated in Frankfurt and the developing theories of Fromm, Lowenthal, Marcuse, and others who did not return to Germany. They often were at odds with both the current and earlier work of Adorno and Horkheimer. Thus it is misleading to consider the work of various critical theorists during the postwar period as members of a monolithic Frankfurt School. Whereas there was both a shared sense of purpose and collective work on interdisciplinary social theory from 1930 to the early 1940s, thereafter critical theorists frequently diverged, and during the 1950s and 1960s the term “Frankfurt School” can really be applied only to the work of the institute in Germany.

Following the lead of Horkheimer and Adorno, other critical theorists such as Fromm, Marcuse, and Habermas also attributed a fundamental role to the media and culture industries in their critical social theories. Their books helped lead many social theorists to perceive the importance of mass culture and communication in social reproduction. Fromm’s first book published in the United States, *Escape from Freedom* (1941), applied the culture industry model to a critique of advertising, mass culture, and political manipulation. After discussing some of the techniques of modern advertising, Fromm notes:

All these methods are essentially irrational; they have nothing to do with the qualities of the merchandise, and they smother and kill the critical capacities of the customer like an opiate or outright hypnosis. They give him a certain satisfaction by their day-dreaming qualities just as the movies do, but at the same time they increase his feeling of smallness and powerlessness. (Fromm, 1941, p. 128)

Fromm then calls attention to how mass communications dull capacity for critical thinking and contribute to the decline of the individual (p. 128), painting a picture of the style of the period:

Vastness of cities in which the individual is lost, buildings that are as high as mountains, constant acoustic bombardment by the radio, big headlines changing three times a day and leaving one no choice to decide what is important, shows in which one hundred girls demonstrate their ability with clocklike precision to eliminate the individual and act like a powerful though smooth machine, the beating rhythm of jazz – these and many other details are expressions of a constellation in which the individual is confronted by uncontrollable dimensions in comparison with which he is a small particle. All he can do is to fall in step like a marching soldier or a worker on the endless belt. He can act; but the sense of independence, significance, has gone. (Fromm, 1941, pp. 131–132)

Fromm (1941) also analyzes how public opinion is shaped by news media and how socialization patterns contribute to the decline of the individual. In 1955, the institute critique of the culture industries plays a central role in both Fromm's *The Sane Society* (1955) and Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955). Using Freudian and Marxian categories, Marcuse described the process through which sexual and aggressive instincts are tamed and channeled into socially necessary, but unpleasant, labor. Following the institute analysis of changes in the nature of socialization, Marcuse notes the decline of the family as the dominant agent of socialization and the rise of the mass media.

The repressive organization of the instincts seems to be *collective*, and the ego seems to be prematurely socialized by a whole system of extra-familial agents and agencies. As early as the pre-school level, gangs, radio, and television set the pattern for conformity and rebellion; deviations from the pattern are punished not so much in the family as outside and against the family. The experts of the mass media transmit the required values; they offer the perfect training in efficiency, toughness, personality, dream, and romance. With this education, the family can no longer compete. (Marcuse, 1955, p. 97)

In general, the characteristic themes of Marcuse's post-World War II writings build on the Frankfurt School's analyses of the role of technology and technological rationality; administration and bureaucracy; the capitalist state; mass media and consumerism; and new modes of social control, which institute scholars saw as producing both a decline in the revolutionary potential of the working class and a decline of individuality, freedom, and democracy. In Marcuse's view, the mass media were becoming dominant agents of socialization that were displacing the primacy of the family – its role in both Freudian and many US social science theories. The result is the decline of individual autonomy and manipulation of mind and instincts by mass communications:

With the decline in consciousness, with the control of information, with the absorption of individuals into mass communication, knowledge is administered and confined. The individual does not really know what is going on; the overpowering machine of education and entertainment unites him with all the others in a state of anesthesia from which all detrimental ideas tend to be excluded. (Marcuse, 1955, p. 104)

Marcuse continued to stress the manipulative effects of the culture industries in his major works and contributed to the widespread adoption of the so-called “manipulation theory” of the media by the New Left and others in the 1960s.

In *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Marcuse provides an analysis of the synthesis of business, the state, the media, and other cultural institutions under the hegemony of corporate capital, which he argues characterizes the US economy and polity in the era of “advanced industrial society.” Marcuse claims that the inanities of commercial radio and television confirm his analyses of the decline of the individual and the demise of authentic culture and oppositional thought in “advanced industrial society.” Throughout the book, Marcuse assigns an important role to the media as “new forms of social control” that engender “false needs” and “one-dimensional” thought and behavior necessary for the smooth reproduction of advanced capitalism. Marcuse’s analyses were influential on the New Left that was criticizing and rebelling against a conservative capitalism and imperialism in the 1960s, but with the rise of global revolutionary movements, Marcuse revised his theory of “one-dimensional society” to articulate the new social antagonisms, struggles, and possibilities for change (Kellner, 1984; Marcuse, 2005).

Habermas, the Public Sphere, and the Media

In the 1950s, Jürgen Habermas was strongly influenced by Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which he first read in 1955. Habermas resolved to work with Horkheimer and Adorno because he believed they were establishing a dialectical and critical theory of society within a creative and innovative Marxist tradition. He thus went to Frankfurt and continued his studies in the Institute for Social Research and published his first major book, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1962), which analyzed the rise of the culture industries and decline of the public sphere within liberal democracy. Combining historical and empirical research with the theoretical framework of critical theory, Habermas traced the historical rise and decline of what he called the “bourgeois public sphere” and its replacement by the mass media, technocratic administration, and societal depoliticization.

Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was published in 1962 and contrasted various forms of an active, participatory bourgeois public sphere in the heroic era of liberal democracy with the more privatized forms of spectator politics in a bureaucratic industrial society in which the media and elites control the public sphere. The two major themes of the book include analysis of the historical genesis of the bourgeois public sphere, followed by an account of the structural change of the public sphere in the contemporary era with the rise of state capitalism, the culture industries, and the increasingly powerful positions of economic corporations and big business in public life. On this account, big economic and governmental

organizations took over the public sphere while citizens became content to become primarily consumers of goods, services, political administration, and spectacle.

Generalizing from developments in Britain, France, and Germany in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Habermas first sketched out a model of what he called the “bourgeois public sphere” and then analyzed its degeneration in the twentieth century. As Habermas (1989) puts it in the preface to the book, “our investigation presents a stylized picture of the liberal elements of the bourgeois public sphere and of their transformation in the social-welfare state” (p. xix). The project draws on a variety of disciplines including philosophy, social theory, economics, and history, and thus instantiates the Institute for Social Research mode of a supradisciplinary social theory. Its historical optic grounds it in the institute project of developing a critical theory of the contemporary era and its political aspirations position it as critique of the decline of democracy in the present age and a call for its renewal – themes that would remain central to Habermas’s thought.

After delineating the idea of the bourgeois public sphere, public opinion, and publicity (*Öffentlichkeit*), Habermas analyzes the social structures, political functions, and concept and ideology of the public sphere before depicting the social–structural transformation of the public sphere, changes in its public functions, and shifts in the concept of public opinion in the concluding three chapters. The text is marked by the conceptual rigor and fertility of ideas characteristic of Habermas’s writing but contains more substantive historical grounding than much of his work and in retrospect discloses the matrix out of which his later work emerges.

The bourgeois public sphere, which Habermas argues began around 1700, was to mediate between the demands and concerns of social and public life and the private concerns of individuals in their familial, economic, and social life. This involved mediation of the contradiction between *bourgeois* and *citoyen*, to use terms developed by Hegel and the early Marx, overcoming private interests and opinions to discover common interests and to reach societal consensus. The public sphere consisted of organs of information and political debate such as newspapers and journals, as well as institutions of political discussion such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls, and other public spaces where sociopolitical discussion took place. For the first time in history, individuals and groups could shape public opinion, giving direct expression to their needs and interests while influencing political practice. The bourgeois public sphere made it possible to form a realm of public opinion that opposed state power and the powerful interests that were coming to shape bourgeois society.

Habermas’s concept of the public sphere thus described a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power. The public sphere thus mediates between the domains of the family and the workplace – where private interests prevail – and the state, which often exerts arbitrary forms of power and domination. What Habermas called the “bourgeois public sphere” consisted of social spaces where individuals gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary and oppressive forms of

social and public power. The principles of the public sphere involved an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation was employed to ascertain general interests and the public good. The public sphere thus presupposed freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making. After the democratic revolutions, Habermas suggested, the bourgeois public sphere was institutionalized in constitutional orders that guaranteed a wide range of political rights and established a judicial system that was to mediate between claims between various individuals or groups, or between individuals and groups and the state.

Many defenders and critics of Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public sphere fail to note that the thrust of his study is precisely that of transformation, of the mutations of the public sphere from a space of rational discussion, debate, and consensus to a realm of mass cultural consumption and administration by corporations and dominant elites. This analysis assumes and builds on the Frankfurt School model of the transition from market capitalism and liberal democracy in the nineteenth century to the stage of state and monopoly capitalism evident in European fascism and the welfare-state liberalism of the New Deal in the United States in the 1930s. For the institute, this constituted a new stage of history, marked by fusion between the economic and political spheres, a manipulative culture industry, and an administered society, all characterized by a decline of democracy, individuality, and freedom. Habermas added historical grounding to the institute theory, arguing that a "refeudalization" of the public sphere began in the late nineteenth century. The transformation involved private interests assuming direct political functions as powerful corporations came to control and manipulate the media and state. On the other hand, the state began to play a more fundamental role in the private realm and everyday life, thus eroding the difference between state and civil society, between the public and private sphere. As the public sphere declined, citizens became consumers, dedicating themselves more to passive consumption and private concerns than to issues of the common good and democratic participation.

While in the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas argued, public opinion was formed by political debate and consensus, in the debased public sphere of welfare-state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic, and media elites who manage public opinion as part of systems management and social control. Thus, while in an earlier stage of bourgeois development, public opinion was formed in open political debate concerning interests of common concern that attempted to forge a consensus in regard to general interests, in the contemporary stage of capitalism, public opinion was formed by dominant elites and thus represented for the most part their particular private interests. Instead of a pursuit for a rational consensus among individuals and groups in the interest of the common good, contemporary politics is characterized by a struggle among groups to advance their private interests.

Hence, Habermas describes a transition from the liberal public sphere that originated in the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions to a media-dominated public sphere in the current era of what he calls "welfare-state capitalism

and mass democracy.” This historical transformation is grounded, as noted, in Horkheimer and Adorno’s analysis of the culture industry in which giant corporations have taken over the public sphere and transformed it from a sphere of rational debate into one of manipulative consumption and passivity. In this transformation, “public opinion” shifts from rational consensus emerging from debate, discussion, and reflection to the manufactured opinion of polls or media experts. Rational debate and consensus have thus been replaced by managed discussion and manipulation by the machinations of advertising and political consulting agencies where, Habermas (1989) argues, “publicity loses its critical function in favor of a staged display; even arguments are transmuted into symbols to which again one cannot respond by arguing but only by identifying with them” (p. 206).

For Habermas, the function of the media has thus been transformed from facilitating rational discourse and debate within the public sphere into shaping, constructing, and limiting public discourse to those themes validated and approved by media corporations. Hence, the interconnection between a sphere of public debate and individual participation has been fractured and transmuted into that of a realm of political information and spectacle in which citizen–consumers passively ingest and absorb entertainment and information. “Citizens” thus become spectators of media presentations and discourse that mold public opinion, reducing consumer/citizens to objects of news, information, and public affairs. Habermas (1989) argues that “inasmuch as the mass media today strip away the literary husks from the kind of bourgeois self-interpretation and utilize them as marketable forms for the public services provided in a culture of consumers, the original meaning is reversed” (p. 171).

Habermas (1989) offered tentative proposals to revitalize the public sphere by setting “in motion a *critical* process of public communication through the very organizations that mediatize it” (p. 232). He concluded with the suggestion that “a critical publicity brought to life within intraorganizational public spheres” (p. 232) might lead to democratization of the major institutions of civil society, though he did not provide concrete examples, propose any strategies, or sketch out the features of an oppositional or postbourgeois public sphere. Still, Horkheimer found Habermas’s works to be too left wing, in effect rejecting the study of the public sphere as a *Habilitation*s dissertation, and he refused to publish it in the institute monograph series (Wiggershaus, 1994, p. 555). It was published, however, in 1962 and received both an enthusiastic and critical reception in Germany; when translated into English in 1989, it promoted yet more discussion of Habermas and the public sphere, and lively debates continue today (Calhoun, 1993).

Critique and Contemporary Relevance

Like every theoretical conception, the notion of the culture industry was a product of its historical period and its insights and limitations result primarily from the fact

that it theorized features of a particular historical conjuncture. The institute's conception of the role of mass culture and communication was first shaped in the period of Nazi Germany where they witnessed Hitler's extraordinary use of mass communications and fascist spectacles. Obviously, the experience of fascism shaped the critical theorists' views of the rise of a behemoth state and cultural apparatus combined with an eclipse of democracy, individuality, and what they saw as authentic art. And in exile in the United States, they observed President Roosevelt's impressive use of the media and the propagandistic uses of the mass media during World War II. Consequently, political use and control of the media during conditions of warfare, with an enlarged wartime state and subordinate wartime economy, coupled with capitalist control of the entertainment industries, provided the historical roots of the institute model of the culture industry as instruments of social control. Indeed, under this type of militarized social system and war conditions, the media – whether liberal-democratic, fascist, or state socialist – tend to be rather one dimensional and propagandistic. Moreover, the Frankfurt School model of the media and society also rather accurately described certain dominant trends and effects during the Cold War when the media were enlisted in the anti-communist crusade and when media content was subject to tight control and censorship – a situation signaled by Horkheimer and Adorno's allusions to “purges” (1972, p. 123).

The culture industry theory was thus developed in the United States during the heyday of the press, radio, and cinema as dominant cultural forms; it was published just before the introduction of television, whose importance Adorno and Horkheimer, and other members of their group, anticipated. Not only did the Frankfurt School scholars provide an early model of critical communications research, but they were also among the first to see the importance of mass communications and culture for social theory and influenced some of the early attempts to incorporate such themes into critical social theory, influencing C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, and other social theorists to see the multiple functions of the media and mass communications in contemporary culture (Kellner, 1989).

The critique of the culture industry was thus one of the most influential aspects of Frankfurt School critical theory, and its impact on social theory and on theories and critiques of mass communication and culture accounts in part for the continuing interest in the Frankfurt School today. Yet from the beginning, critics of the institute's theory of mass culture stressed the similarity of the critical theory analysis to conservative critics of mass culture and condemned them for their cultural elitism (see Kellner, 1989, 1995). In retrospect, despite their many virtues, there are serious flaws in the original analysis of the culture industry. Overcoming the limitations of the classical model would include: more concrete and empirical analysis of the political economy of the media and the processes of the production of culture; more empirical and historical research into the construction of media industries and their interaction with other social institutions; more empirical studies of audience reception and media effects; and the incorporation of new cultural theories and methods into a reconstructed critical theory of culture and the media. Cumulatively, such a

reconstruction of the classical Frankfurt School project would update the critical theory of society and its activity of cultural criticism by incorporating contemporary developments in social and cultural theory into the enterprise of critical theory.

In addition, the Frankfurt School dichotomy between high culture and low culture is problematical and should be superseded for a more unified model that takes culture as a spectrum and applies similar critical methods to all cultural artifacts ranging from opera to popular music, from modernist literature to soap operas. In particular, the Frankfurt School model of a monolithic mass culture contrasted with an ideal of "authentic art," which limits critical, subversive, and emancipatory moments to certain privileged artifacts of high culture, is highly problematic. The Frankfurt School position that all mass culture is ideological and debased, having the effects of duping a passive mass of consumers, is also objectionable. Instead, one should see critical and ideological moments in the full range of culture and not limit critical moments to high culture and identify all of low culture as ideological (see Bloch, 1986; Jameson, 1979; Kellner, 1995). One also should allow for the possibility that critical and subversive moments could be found in the artifacts of the cultural industries as well as the canonized classics of high modernist culture that the Frankfurt School seemed to privilege as the site of artistic opposition and emancipation. One should also distinguish between the encoding and decoding of media artifacts and recognize that an active audience often produces its own meanings and uses for products of the cultural industries, an argument made by British cultural studies (Hall, 1980; Hall, Hobson, Lowe, & Willis, 1991).

In contrast to the mode of condemnatory criticism associated with Frankfurt School critical theory, many forms of radical cultural criticism today have been developing more complex strategies and attempts to develop more multidimensional approaches to mass culture. Rather than seeing its artifacts simply as expressions of hegemonic ideology and ruling-class interests, it is more useful to see popular entertainment as complex products that contain contradictory moments of desire and its displacement, articulations of hopes and their repression. In this view, popular culture provides access to a society's dreams and nightmares and contains both ideological celebrations of the status quo and utopian moments of transcendence, moments of opposition and rebellion, and its attempted containment. Recent studies of popular culture also perceive how social struggles and conflicts enter into works of popular entertainment and see culture as a contested terrain rather than a field of one-dimensional manipulation and illusion (Kellner, 1995, 2010; Kellner & Ryan, 1988). For example, Kellner (1995) argues that contemporary media culture reproduces social struggles about politics and ideology, gender, race, class, sexuality, and other key issues and has oppositional and critical potential in addition to reproducing dominant ideologies.

Contemporary critical theories of culture and communication must therefore be able to develop more complex methods of cultural interpretation and criticism that pay attention to and conceptualize the contradictions, articulations of social conflicts, oppositional moments, subversive tendencies, and the projection of utopian images

and scenes of happiness and freedom that appear within mainstream commercial culture. The classical critical theory approach, especially Adorno's work, generally limits itself, however, to attacking the ideology and purely retrogressive effects of radio, popular music, films, television, and so on. Moreover, there is a tendency to postulate a passive audience that is the object of ideological domination, resisted, however, by theorists such as Benjamin discussed above.

British cultural studies, by contrast, postulates an active audience that can produce its own meanings and uses for media culture (Hall et al., 1991). Contemporary cultural studies also has expanded the critique of ideology to include gender, race, sexuality, and other dimensions of media texts (Hammer & Kellner, 2009). By contrast, Horkheimer and Adorno's (1972) model of the culture industry does not allow for the heterogeneity of popular culture and contradictory effects, instead straitjacketing popular culture in the form of reification and commodification as signs of the total triumph of capital and the total reification of experience. To be sure, much popular culture (such as Top 40 music and certain Hollywood blockbuster films) lend themselves precisely to Adorno's categories and critique, though, as suggested, certain forms of oppositional music, film, and television resist his categories and require a more complex approach to cultural interpretation and critique.

Contemporary critical approaches to media culture should thus not simply limit themselves to denouncing bourgeois ideologies and escapist functions. Even conservative media culture often provides insights into forms of dominant ideologies and sometimes unwittingly provides images of social conflict and opposition. Studies of Hollywood films, for instance, reveal that this form of commercial culture exhibits a conflict of representations between competing social ideologies over the last several decades (Kellner, 2010; Kellner & Ryan, 1988). Particularly, since about 1967, a variety of competing ideological standpoints have appeared in mainstream Hollywood films. Consequently, there is no one monolithic, dominant ideology that the culture industry promotes, and indeed the conflicting ideologies in contemporary culture industry artifacts point to continuing and intensifying social conflict within capitalist societies.

However, precisely the critical focus on media culture from the point of view of commodification, industrialization, reification, ideology, and domination provides a perspective useful as a corrective to more populist and uncritical approaches to media culture that surrender critical perspectives, arguments made by Gunster (2004) and Steinert (2003). In contrast to approaches that displace concepts of ideology and domination by emphasizing audience pleasure and the construction of meaning, the Frankfurt School is valuable for inaugurating systematic and sustained critiques of ideology and domination within the culture industry, indicating that it is not an innocent "creative industry," as certain contemporary idioms would have it. The notion promoted by Hartley (2003) and other proponents of the "creative industries" model provides an ideological gloss of positivity on media industries. Such perspectives suggest media are inherently bastions of enlightenment, creativity, and abundance, and in opposition to this conception, one might prefer the Horkheimer and Adorno notion of "culture industry" that is more descriptive and critical.

Moreover, on the level of metatheory, the Frankfurt School work preceded the bifurcation of the field of media and communication studies into specialized sub-areas with competing models and methods. For the Frankfurt School, the study of communication and culture was integrated within critical social theory and became an important part of a theory of contemporary society in which culture and communication were playing ever more significant roles. Hence, despite its limitations, the Frankfurt School theory of the culture industry contains several novel features and makes many important contributions to the study of mass communications and culture. Critical theory conceptualizes culture and communications as part of society and focuses on how socioeconomic imperatives helped constitute the nature, function, and effects of mass communication and culture. By conceptualizing these important cultural and social forces as part of socioeconomic processes, critical theory integrates the study of culture and communication with the study of the economy and society. By adopting a critical approach to the study of all social phenomena, critical theory is able to conceptualize how the culture industry serves as an instrument of social control and thus serves the interests of social domination.

On the whole, later critical approaches to the media and culture within the contemporary academic division of labor tended to separate communications research from the study of mass culture, thus failing to provide a unified account of cultural production, distribution, and reception (see Hammer & Kellner, 2009). Consequently, critical theory is more than a piece of history because it contains a unified and critical approach to the study of culture and communication within the context of critical social theory that engages the political economy of culture and communication, analysis of texts, and the study of audience reception. Likewise, its mode of cultural criticism situates artifacts of analysis within the context of their social environment and uses social theory to help interpret cultural artifacts while using culture to help decipher social trends and processes. The institute's use of psychoanalytic theory leads them to decipher cultural works as exhibiting traits of individual and social psychology as well as sociohistorical content. However, despite its contributions, there are serious limitations to the Frankfurt School model, for much of their criticism of popular culture limits itself to denunciation of its ideological features. Yet because much in popular culture deserves and demands severe condemnation, critical theory ideology critique provides some useful tools for cultural criticism, although it also suffers the limitations mentioned above.

Finally, in an era of media concentration in which giant corporations own media empires that are dedicated to profit and advance the interests of media corporations (McChesney, 2007), the Frankfurt School theory and critique of the culture industry continues to be relevant. Yet Frankfurt School ideology critique tended to focus on the dominant capitalist-bourgeois ideology, and ideology critique today should be expanded to encompass gender, race, sexuality, religion, and other determinants of identities that are often produced in media culture (Kellner, 1995, 2010). Thus while the Frankfurt School critique of the culture industry needs to be expanded and reconstructed, it is still relevant in societies dominated by corporate media and consumer society.

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The Rise and Fall of the Limited Effects Model

Peter Simonson

ABSTRACT

This chapter revisits the history of the so-called “limited effects model” of mass communication, associated with Paul Lazarsfeld and Columbia University’s Bureau of Applied Social Research. It argues that the model was in part a rhetorical invention of its critics in the 1970s and 1980s, when critical and cultural approaches to media studies were gaining widespread traction and a new generation of objectivist social scientists were carving out alternatives to inherited understandings. Pivoting from that moment of invention, it returns to Columbia research of the 1940s and 1950s, traces the rise and alternate understandings of the model, and contextualizes it in relation to competing approaches to media at Columbia frequently occluded in collective memories of the field.

Something named the “limited effects model” of mass communication did not emerge before the 1970s, at the very moment it was being called into question. Indeed, “limited effects” seems to have been a locution favored, if not invented, by its critics, who sometimes mischaracterized it and exaggerated its dominance as a paradigm governing media research in the previous decades. The story of its rise, fall, and continued life extends from the 1940s to the present and provides a window into broader stories about the intellectual and institutional development of media

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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studies in the second half of the twentieth century. It is a story about the perceived mainstream of social scientific media studies in the postwar era, which intersects with a number of the other foundations, moments, and approaches discussed in this volume. It grew up in an assemblage centered upon Columbia University, whose sociology program in the 1940s would come to rival – and eventually surpass – the University of Chicago's. The assemblage centered around Paul Lazarsfeld (1900–1976) and the Bureau of Applied Social Research (known as the Office of Radio Research before 1945), heirs like the University of Chicago to Enlightenment projects of scientifically oriented knowledge production and ideologically committed to pluralistic liberalism and social democracy. They would develop their so-called limited effects model through empirical studies of decision-making behavior related to the media of the early 1940s – radio, newspapers, magazines, and motion pictures. Emerging from studies funded by commercial and government agencies, the model articulated with a distinct political economy of research and thinking. Built upon the intellectual labor of women and ethnic outsiders, the model trails a distinctive and mostly unacknowledged social history. Named and taken to task in the 1970s by Marxian critical and cultural scholars (as well as critics from within the ranks of objectivist social science), the limited effects model reveals some of the main fault lines and boundary disputes of media studies since then. Revisiting it allows us to check and correct our collective memories of the field and also to reflect on elements of classic Columbia research that have been revived and extended in our own time.

First a word about definitions. The notion of “limited” media effects indexes several overlapping but analytically distinct ideas, frameworks, and propositions which are not always distinguished in discussions of the model. On the one hand, “limited” can mean minimal, as in the idea that “the media are not very important in the formation of public opinion,” as Todd Gitlin (1978, p. 207) put it in his carefully documented and very influential critique. “Limited” in this sense could be contrasted with “powerful” effects, a meaning Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1973) operated with implicitly when she introduced her alternative paradigm for understanding media, soon to be called the “spiral of silence” theory. Alternatively, “limited” can refer to an absence of direct effects, meaning that media influence on audiences is generally limited by social and psychological filtering mechanisms – “[s]elective attention, selective perception, selective retention, selective recall,” for instance, in addition to membership in groups whose beliefs and cultural stereotypes condition response to mass media (Bauer, 1973, pp. 143, 148). These mediating devices, often captured under the headings of selectivity and interpersonal relations, are said to limit the kind and amount of influence that media might exercise on individuals. More precisely, selectivity and interpersonal relations are said to limit the ability of the media to *change* people's attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. In both inflections, “limited effects” has typically been linked to the two-step flow model of communication – the idea that media campaigns and information flow to local opinion leaders who in turn pass them on to others via face-to-face talk. In its classic formulations in the 1940s and 1950s, the two-step flow model was linked with research data that

indicated that interpersonal influence exercised a stronger force than mass media on the opinion formation and decision-making of individuals. In comparison with people around us, then, media were said to have relatively limited effects. Critics would jump on that conclusion, the research methods that fed it, and the broader view of media, power, and society that underwrote it.

In this chapter, I will sketch the rise, fall, and recent revivals of components of the limited effects model. I'll launch the tale in the 1970s, when Gitlin and others named and historically amplified its significance as they advanced their own alternative understandings and theoretical approaches. From there, I will turn back to the emergence, consolidation, and diffusion of the two-step flow and limited effects ideas at Columbia and elsewhere from the 1940s through the 1960s. Among other points, I will show how it was built on an empirical base of women's talk, took initial shape as one model among several at Columbia, and rose to a position of rhetorical power – though not, I argue, clear or overwhelming dominance. I'll then go on to trace developments and criticisms of the semi-independent two-step flow and limited effects ideas in the 1960s and early 1970s, before Gitlin and other paradigm-shifting critics weighed in. From there, I consider ways that the “limited effects model” came into symbolic focus and did historical and rhetorical work in the 1980s and after, in addition to reflecting on ways that some of its core insights have reappeared in ways we have come to think about audiences, communicative flows, and networks today.

“Limited Effects”: Birth in Death

Before 1975, the term “limited effects” was rarely, if ever, used to name a model or paradigm for understanding media. It entered academic parlance over the next several years, and within a decade it had become a commonplace in media studies. It gained that status through work done by critics, some of whom marshaled the label explicitly, others who energetically questioned the findings, focus, and overarching framework it pointed to. Among the earliest adopters of the term was Steven Chaffee, the Wilbur Schramm-trained student of mass communication and politics whom one observer called “the outstanding communication research scholar of his generation” (Alexander, 2001).¹ Operating from the horizons of positivist, objectivist social science, Chaffee took a shot at the model in the ground-clearing introduction to his edited 1975 volume, *Political Communication*. “This book has been produced by social scientists who are willing to assume, in some degree or another, that the study of political communication needs to be approached from fresh intellectual perspectives, and with new tools,” he announced (p. 15), before moving on to specify his intellectual target:

At least since the publication in 1960 of [Joseph] Klapper's major synthesis of the Columbia University findings of only limited political effects of the mass media, it has been typical in academic circles to assume that communication campaigns can make

only minor dents in the political edifice. Citizens' processing of media information has been thought to be highly selective, conditioned by partisan predispositions, and subordinate to interpersonal influences (the "two-step flow"). Almost any message received, so it seemed, would stand a good chance of having at most the net effect of reinforcing the person's existing cognitive state. This limited effects model is simply not believed by the authors of the chapters that follow. The possibility that media effects on politics are only minor remains, but it is not *assumed* in this book. Instead many of these chapters are devoted to an analysis of the narrow range of studies from which limited effects have been inferred – and to proposing alternate directions for research that might demonstrate how limited the limited-effects model is. (Chaffee, 1975, p. 19)

Chaffee had been investigating the media's role in political socialization of the young for several years at that point, and had come to recognize the part it played in increasing political knowledge for those who paid attention to it (e.g. Chaffee, Ward, Scott, & Tipton, 1970). Now he was naming his foe, not yet sure whether to hyphenate the phrase "limited effects," but about to push forward with a series of criticisms of the model's deficiencies in understanding the fuller range of relations among media and politics, culminating in a thoroughgoing critique-cum-historical reconstruction of the model under the rubric of "the beginnings of political communication research in the United States" (Chaffee, 1977, 1978; Chaffee & Choe, 1980; Chaffee & Hochheimer, 1985; Chaffee & Wilson, 1977).

While Chaffee criticized "limited effects" as a model for political communication, the young critical media sociologist Todd Gitlin would cast it in broader relief – as the dominant model for media research writ large – in his thoroughgoing and influential critique, "Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm" (1978). Gitlin didn't use the new "limited effects" label, but his eloquent opening salvo made clear what his target would be: "Since the Second World War, as mass media in the United States have become more concentrated in ownership, more centralized in operations, more national in reach, more pervasive in presence, sociological study of the media has been dominated by the theme of the relative powerlessness of the broadcasters" (p. 205). Shortly thereafter, Gitlin made a powerful identifying assertion: "The dominant paradigm in the field since World War II has been, clearly, the cluster of ideas, methods, and findings associated with Paul F. Lazarsfeld and his school: the search for specific, measurable, short-term, individual, attitudinal and behavioral 'effects' of media content, and the conclusion that media are not very important in the formation of public opinion. Within the whole configuration," he went on, "the most influential single theory has been, most likely, 'the two-step flow of communications'" (p. 207).

Gitlin proceeded to unleash a devastating critique of Lazarsfeld, the dominant paradigm, and the field that was shaped by them, which he traced from *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), the classic Columbia study of the 1940 presidential election campaign, through Klapper's "definitive compilation of the field's early stages" in *The Effects of Mass Communication* (1960). He devoted most of his attention however to Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld's *Personal Influence* (2005), based

upon a 1945 study in Decatur, Illinois. Gitlin (1978) called it “the founding document of an entire field of inquiry” (p. 208), codifying the two-step flow model, its attention to short-run changes in individual attitudes and behavior, and its conclusion that media power was limited in comparison to interpersonal influence. Gitlin traced the model back to its origins in marketing research and its self-proclaimed advance over what he called an “earlier ‘hypodermic’ theory” in which society is conceived as a “mass society, and mass communications ‘inject’ ideas, attitudes, and dispositions toward behavior into passive, atomized, extremely vulnerable individuals” (p. 210). He critiqued its “administrative” mentality attuned to the needs of marketers and political campaigners and directing its narrow, positivist attention to influences on individual decisions to buy soap or vote for a candidate, and he argued that its conclusions about limited media power were unsupported by the facts marshaled for it. More broadly, he claimed that the view had the effect of deflecting attention from media as they operated at the macro level – e.g., in defining shared reality, establishing and undercutting the legitimacy of institutions and movements, and shaping political agendas and public images. The paradigm reflected an “abstracted empiricism [. . .] concretely founded on the prevailing political and commercial culture” (p. 240), and indirectly doing “its share to consolidate and legitimize the cornucopian regime of mid-century capitalism” (p. 245).

Gitlin’s critique flew at the dawning of a new moment in media studies, and what he called “the beginning of the decomposition of the going paradigm itself” (p. 206). As evidence, he cited Chaffee’s *Political Communication* (1975), Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw’s “Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media” (1972), and “in England, the alternative approach of cultural studies,” mentioning Stuart Hall’s work among others (Gitlin, 1978, p. 246, n.2; compare Gouldner, 1976, pp. 149–150). Hall would weigh in with his own influential critique of Lazarsfeld a few years later, pivoting from it to announcing “the rediscovery of the ideological dimension” by “the critical paradigm in media studies” then being revived by cultural studies (Hall, 1982, p. 65). Gitlin might have drawn evidence for the decomposition of the paradigm from other sources as well, including the right-leaning German public opinion researcher and theorist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1973), who had advocated a “return to the concept of powerful mass media.” Drawing on openings provided by the British sociologists Jeremy Tunstall (1970) and Halloran, Elliot, and Murdoch (1970), Noelle-Neumann asked if researchers were asking the right questions about media, and sought (like Gitlin and others would) to broaden the frame to consider macro-level issues. Observing the news media’s ability to create a climate of public opinion and macro-level cumulative effects, she called into question the idea of audience selectivity, and argued that the media had the power to initiate what she would soon call a “spiral of silence” whereby those who perceived themselves to hold minority positions not favored in journalistic coverage would remain quiet about them, and the supposedly dominant views would grow in support and relative standing. Her critique meant that the limited effects model was attacked from left, right, and center; and from both within and beyond the borders of objectivist social science.

As it emerged from critiques and characterizations in the 1970s and early 1980s, the “limited effects” model was given a history. It was said to have arisen in the 1940s, marking the end of a more speculative period of propaganda research that tended to inflate media power (sometimes captured by the “hypodermic” image), and the beginning of a new era of methodologically sophisticated empirical social scientific study. It was associated with Paul Lazarsfeld (nearly always the central character in the story), Columbia University, and the Bureau for Applied Social Research. It came into focus across three books – *The People’s Choice* (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944), *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2005), and *The Effects of Mass Communication* (Klapper, 1960), the first introducing the two-step flow model, and the second two consolidating it into the limited effects paradigm. It was said to have dominated the field – either of media studies writ large, or political communication more specifically. And it was widely considered to be inadequate as a theory – insufficiently supported by its own evidence, narrowly focused on short-term individual-level effects brought about by purposive media campaigns, and blind to broader collective and institutional dimensions of media in modern societies. While there was truth in the history and characterizations of the model, there were overstated, misleading, and strategically selective elements as well. To get a clearer sense of the origins and development of the model, I’d like to turn back to the 1940s and 1950s and sketch pieces of the social, intellectual, and rhetorical history of its central texts and key components.

Birth of the “Two-Step Flow”: *The People’s Choice* and Its Columbian Rivals

In the summer of 1940, a dozen or so women living in Erie County, Ohio laid the groundwork for what others would call the “dominant paradigm.” They were working with Elmo Wilson and Hazel Gaudet, who had taken up residence in Sandusky and were overseeing a major study conducted by Lazarsfeld’s Office of Radio Research (ORR), which had just moved from Newark to Columbia. Also collaborating was Elmo Roper, the pioneering marketing and public opinion survey researcher who at the time headed the *Fortune Survey*. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and money Lazarsfeld drew from marketing and consulting work done at the ORR, the Erie County study was an ambitious effort at tracking the interplay of political propaganda, public opinion, and voting behavior over the course of the 1940 presidential election campaign.

Between May and November, the specially trained local women knocked on the door of every fourth house in Sandusky and the rural towns of the county, recruited 3,000 local citizens, and interviewed each one multiple times during the unfolding presidential campaign. They gathered a wealth of information about each respondent, recorded their political preferences and communicative involvement in the campaign, and followed up with open-ended questions when someone reported changing

their vote intention in any way. War raged in Europe, France fell to the Nazis, and President Roosevelt campaigned for an unprecedented third term in office against the Midwestern Republican businessman Wendell Wilkie. The Erie County women made use of a still-new method of public opinion research recently codified by Lazarsfeld and Marjorie Fiske (1938), the “panel technique,” which utilized multiple interviews of the same respondents over time. In contrast with polling data, panels had the advantage of being able to track changes in opinion as they unfolded during a political campaign. The research team hoped to correlate changes with “exposure to campaign propaganda in all the media of communication – the press, radio, personal contacts, and others” (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944, p. 5).

Published four years later, *The People’s Choice* offered a snapshot of how campaign propaganda and informal face-to-face communication intersected with opinion formation and voting in a real-world setting. Scattering quotes from respondents with statistical charts of survey data (designed by the advertising agency McCann Erickson) and larger-bore narratives about the geographical setting and historical context for the campaign, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) charted among other things the ideological differences (their term) between the parties, the appeal of class-based argument, and the gendered ecology of attention and social influence during the campaign season. The book became a classic work in voting studies and public opinion research.

While change in voter intentions particularly interested them, they identified and discussed at least three major categories of effects brought about by what they called “the speeches, the events, the writings, the discussions, the total propaganda output” (p. 101). “The campaign activated the indifferent, reinforced the partisan, and converted the doubtful” (p. 101), in addition to creating a “bandwagon effect” (which sounds something like Noelle-Neumann’s spiral of silence) (pp. 107–109). Reinforcement was the main effect (occurring in 53% of the panel members), but more than 30% of the effects fell into categories that don’t fall comfortably within the limited effects model – conversion and activation (p. 103).

Beyond a study of voting behavior and opinion formation, *The People’s Choice* is a book about “propaganda,” as it reminds us from start to finish. The book’s two lasting ideas – opinion leaders and the two-step flow – emerge out of that problematic. In that regard, the book indexes a transition moment between two paradigms and overarching signs – *propaganda* and *communication* (on which, see Sproule, 1997, pp. 217–223; Collins, Chapter 27, this volume). That transition would continue through most of the 1940s, with Columbia’s work straddling both worlds – the civically engaged and publicly critical model of propaganda research, and the more removed or disengaged model of objectivist social science (compare Sproule, who puts Columbia firmly on the latter side). The book revolves around propaganda, as propagated through both mass media and face-to-face life. Through the 1940s, social democratic intellectual engagement vied with professionalized liberal objectivism as orienting ideologies governing communications and media research at Columbia (Simonson, 2010, pp. 141–161; Simonson & Weimann, 2003).

“Opinion leaders” straddled both worlds – more exposed to campaign propaganda in the media, and more engaged in talking about it with others. The concept was applied to anyone who answered yes to one of two questions raised by the interviewers: “Have you tried to convince anyone of your political ideas recently?” or “Has anyone asked your advice on a political question recently?” (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944, p. 50). (Twenty-one percent of their sample were designated “opinion leaders.”) They played a key role in “the two-step flow of communications” (plural in this first iteration), which named the way that “ideas often flow *from* radio and print *to* the opinion leaders and *from* them to the less active sections of the population” (p. 151). When local citizens reported that they changed their minds about something, they often made reference to interpersonal conversation, the authors found. The two-step flow helped explain that specific finding: “The person-to-person influence reaches the ones who are more susceptible to change, and serves as a bridge over which formal media of communications extend their influence” (p. 152).

The opinion leader and two-step flow ideas took shape within a book that functioned in the propaganda debate as a kind of democratic apologetic. Opinion leaders, the text announced (and Lazarsfeld consequently amplified), were “found in all occupational groups” (p. 50). Never mind that the chart they produced showed enormous differences among occupations in the prevalence of designated “opinion leaders” (44% of salesmen as opposed to 13% of housewives and 15% of the unemployed, for instance), the official rhetoric of opinion leadership suggested a democratic otherwise. The two-step flow played a similar function, suggesting that propaganda from the mass media might be refracted through the good sense of locals who pass it on to their friends. The moral of the story was clear in the book’s upbeat, democratic close: “In the last analysis, more than anything else people can move other people. From an ethical point of view this is a hopeful aspect in the serious social problem of propaganda. The side which has the more enthusiastic supporters and which can mobilize grass-root support in an expert way has a great chance of success” (p. 158). Limited media effects, in other words, were coupled with a vision of the power of grassroots organizing, and the hope that democratically supported propagandas might win the day.

When it came out in 1944, *The People’s Choice* was far from the most notable study of media produced by Columbia. That title belonged to *Radio Research 1942–1943* (Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1944), which gave a varied and compelling picture of a field the editors saw on its way to merging “with the study of magazines, newspapers, films, and television into one broader discipline of communications research” (p. vii). Articles by Herta Herzog, Frankfurt School émigré-in-residence Leo Lowenthal, and others addressed everything from the characters and “listening gratifications” of soap operas to the popular music industry and the historical and cultural meaning of biographies in popular magazines, in addition to a series of articles about methodological issues and applications of the so-called Lazarsfeld–Stanton Program Analyzer, a kind of primitive polygraph machine that allowed researchers to determine when members of small test audiences liked or disliked parts of a radio broadcast or film.

With its range of media, topics, methodologies, and conceptual orientations, *Radio Research 1942–1943* ushered in modern media studies. Meanwhile, when *Radio Research* emerged from the presses, Lazarsfeld's colleague and longtime collaborator Robert K. Merton was in the midst of a study of a series of all-day radio marathons conducted by the patriotic icon and celebrity Kate Smith, which would yoke in-depth qualitative interviews with middle-range and larger-bore sociological theory and symbolic and ideological analysis (on middle-range theory, see Boudon, 1991). The result, *Mass Persuasion* (Merton, Fiske, & Curtis, 1946), signaled the birth of a cultural sociology of media, manifest with restrained critical civic impulses that channeled both Marx and Dewey. Neither *Radio Research* nor *Mass Persuasion* worked with the two-step flow / opinion leader ideas, nor did either feed straightforwardly into the limited effects paradigm.

Through the 1940s, media study at Columbia was a rich and internally diverse project – committed not just to “effects” studies, but also to probing qualitative inquiry into audiences’ social and psychological “gratifications” as well as the “functions and dysfunctions” of mass communication. “Effects” was Lazarsfeld’s preferred idiom, reflecting long-standing interest in determinants of individual action, his statistical acumen in investigating them, and a theoretical sensibility that blended European positivism and US pragmatism and rallied around the ideal of objectivist science as a potentially meliorative social force. In focusing on effects, he aligned himself with both the University of Chicago’s Douglas Waples and the polymath political scientist Harold Lasswell (1948), who generated the architectonic scheme for communication as a study of “who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect?” While campaign research like *The People’s Choice* tended to focus on short-term media effects, Lazarsfeld actually aspired to address long-term and institutional effects as well (Katz, 2001; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948). Merton was less apt to write about “effects,” as was Herta Herzog (who left the ORR in 1943 to head the research department at McCann Erickson, where she disseminated media research techniques into advertising and marketing [see Gladwell, 1999]). Besides the Kate Smith study, Merton’s functionalist analysis is best exemplified in his superb 1948 essay with Lazarsfeld, which posits three middle-range concepts to describe ongoing media processes – enforcing social norms, conferring public status, and narcotizing citizens (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948; see Simonson & Weimann, 2003). Herta Herzog (1940, 1941, 1944), meanwhile, pioneered the study of audience gratifications, which she worked out through a deep understanding of psychology as understood by Karl and Charlotte Buhler, Hadley Cantril, and Freud. Bernard Berelson (1949) would move the gratification paradigm in more social dimensions in his classic study of a 1945 newspaper strike. Through the 1940s, then, the limited effects paradigm wasn’t even dominant at Columbia, much less the rest of the overlapping fields of propaganda, public opinion, and mass communications research.

There was diversity at Columbia, but also a family resemblance across research projects which distinguished them from other approaches represented in this volume and from earlier versions of social research at Columbia. Lazarsfeld and Merton set

the tone for an objectivist, scientifically guided style that blended sophisticated methodology, carefully articulated middle-range concepts, and a blend of qualitative and quantitative empirical research guided by them. It was both more professionalized and more advanced methodologically and theoretically than the publicly oriented work of the man who helped hire them, Robert S. Lynd, co-author with his wife Helen of the landmark *Middletown* studies of the 1920s and 1930s that presented US citizens with a social portrait of themselves. Lazarsfeld and Merton operated in a different intellectual style, also well distinct from that practiced by the Frankfurt School's Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who took up residence at Columbia for a time in the early 1940s in one of those meetings-of-the-paradigms that has become canonical in historical tales of media research (e.g., Morrison, 1978; see also Wheatland, 2009). Lazarsfeld (1941) himself tried to mediate the differences between what he termed "critical" and "administrative" media research, and both Merton and the Frankfurt School's Leo Lowenthal made efforts to do some of the same (on which, see Merton, 1968, pp. 493–509). In contrast with the Frankfurt group, the Columbians were less historical in their writings on media (though Merton's work typically cast mass communication in some historical perspective), less apt to situate media within a larger social order, more empirically positivist, and more attuned to audiences than industries (for a fascinating exception from Columbia, see Smith, 1945). Marxian and Freudian insights are scattered across classic Columbia writings from the 1940s, but as trace elements among an eclectic array of theoretical influences that also include Durkheim, Gabriel Tarde, Adolphe Quetelet, Talcott Parsons, and the pragmatists. It is worth remembering, too, that whereas Horkheimer's Institute for Social Research had a rich endowment that supported it, Lazarsfeld's Bureau needed to support itself in an era when foundations and funding agencies were just beginning to provide grants to the social sciences. This need would affect the kind of research the group did. *The People's Choice* was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, which was broadly concerned with US culture and civic life; by *Life* magazine, which was interested in the influence of its publications; and by income generated by commercial marketing research done by the Bureau. A large subsequent study in Decatur, Illinois – about which more in a moment – was in turn funded largely by the magazine publisher Macfadden Publications, financially driven by the marketability of the two-step flow model to commercial funders (Morrison, 2006).

Beyond its differences from the Frankfurt group, Columbia differed from Chicago in several ways, too. For one thing, Columbia conducted far more funded research than its Midwestern rival, organizing larger-scale research-team projects of the sort represented by their community based voting and social influence studies. (The most famous team-based media project at Chicago in the postwar era – Kurt and Gladys Lang's [1968] classic study of the live-crowd vs. televisual experience of the MacArthur Day parade – was conducted by graduate student volunteers who set themselves up around the parade route.) Besides their differing political economies, Chicago-style research tended to work in a broadly symbolic interactionist tradition, attending to

cultural meanings, dramatic enactments, and community formations related to media and communication. Merton's Kate Smith study and Herzog's early work on soap opera listeners certainly attended to meaning-making and related cultural issues, but the mainstream of empirical research at Columbia attended more to flows of influence and behavioral effects brought on through mass media. Beyond the specific details and fault lines at Columbia that I have been charting, it is important to keep an eye on the bigger picture as well.

Personal Influence and Two-Step Flows in the 1950s

In the summer of 1945, women in Decatur, Illinois performed the communicative labor that led a decade later to the publication of Katz and Lazarsfeld's *Personal Influence*, which more than any other text narrowed the conceptual landscape of Columbia media research and established the limited effects model. The study was funded by Macfadden Publications, publisher of, among other periodicals, the popular lowbrow women's magazine *True Story* and the general interest *Liberty* magazine, on whose editorial pages Bernarr Macfadden had once boasted that he had "more influence politically on the masses than any one individual in the United States" quoted in Simonson, 2006, p. 12). *True Story* had commercial interest in the two-step flow idea, along with the finding that opinion leaders operated in all social strata – both of which served as fodder to persuade advertisers that there were valuable multiplier effects to running ads with them. *Time* magazine had funded a similar study a year earlier, searching out what Merton would re-name "influentials" in his administrative and scholarly write-ups of his field study in Dover, New Jersey (Merton, 1943, 1949).

In January 1945, Lazarsfeld and Merton hired a young C. Wright Mills to oversee field research in Decatur (Summers, 2006, pp. 28–29). He would work with Helen Dinerman and Thelma Ehrlich, two researchers at the newly renamed Bureau of Applied Social Research, trained in the panel technique by Jeannette Green. They would recruit some 15 local women to conduct repeated interviews with 800 Decatur women to determine how they made up their minds about marketing and political decisions (Douglas, 2006). It was the first time Mills had overseen a large empirical study, and it would be the wedge that drove him and Lazarsfeld apart, setting in motion one of the defining intellectual breaks in postwar sociology (Summers, 2006). Among their differences, Mills found the structure of opinion leadership and interpersonal influence to be less democratic than Lazarsfeld had been trumpeting since *The People's Choice*.

After more than a decade of travails following the field study in Decatur, *Personal Influence* was published. Through rhetorically compelling narratives that served to magnify its own significance, *Personal Influence* invented one of the most persistent – and inaccurate – accounts of the history of media research, and helped convince

a number of readers that mass media were not in themselves important social forces. Though it nowhere uses the term “limited effects,” *Personal Influence* laid out a problematic and tropes that – amplified by Katz, Klapper, and other former Columbia graduate students – settled into the limited effects model. It was really two books in one. Part I, “The Part Played by People: A New Focus for the Study of Mass Media Effects,” was a revision of Katz’s dissertation, which was in turn an extension of a report he wrote for a major but unpublished study of US television funded (and later killed) by the Ford Foundation (Katz, 1953; Morrison, 2000; see also Buxton, 2009). It presented a tale of discovering “intervening variables” in effects of mass communication, including the variable of interpersonal relations and opinion leaders, and consolidated Columbia research on the topic, including their second community based voting study (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954). It also included a highly influential history of the field, which purportedly grew from an era when the audience was conceived as “an atomistic mass of millions of readers, listeners, and movie goers prepared to receive the Message,” and “every Message [was seen] as a direct and powerful stimulus to action which would illicit immediate response” (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2005, p. 16). This image would later be associated with the “hypodermic model” Gitlin referenced, though it was essentially a straw man that referenced no actual earlier work. As Jefferson Pooley (2006) and Debora Lubken (2008) have convincingly shown, *Personal Influence* invented a flawed “other” to which it claimed superiority. Something analogous would happen in the 1970s when the “limited effects model” was rhetorically mobilized by its critics.

Meanwhile, the second part of *Personal Influence*, “The Flow of Everyday Influence in a Midwestern Community,” presented and interpreted the decade-old data from Decatur in a manner that has been roundly criticized by social scientists and critics since. Relying on self-reports of the Decatur women, it concluded that interpersonal influence was more important than mass media in decisions made about shopping, movie-going, fashion, and public affairs. It analyzed opinion leadership in those four realms, and concluded with consideration of the two-step flow and interpersonal influence. Like *The People’s Choice*, *Personal Influence* fits nicely into a liberal pluralist worldview and presented a reassuring picture to mid-century US citizens – opinion leaders came from all social strata and through face-to-face conversation helped limit the force of mass media; the book functioned as a democratic apologetic in the face of fears of a mass society (McCormack, 2006; Scannell, 2006). Some reviewers criticized the evidence advanced as support for the two-step flow theory, but most accepted the book’s claim that interpersonal outweighed media influence in individual decision-making. Kurt and Gladys Lang (2006) have argued that the book “heralded a clear shift in the rhetoric” of sociologists and political scientists surrounding the importance of mass communication and toward a “‘minimalist’ view of media effects” that pushed out alternative conceptions (pp. 165, 167). These included the broadly symbolic interactionist perspectives developed by the Langs and others at the University of Chicago, which mapped alternative paradigms of media sociology (Lang & Lang, 1961, 1968).

Though the minimalist view of media power shifted the academic rhetoric, the model actually contained two overlapping ideas, one of which could also support theories of more robust media power. On the one hand, the claim that selectivity and group norms limited the direct influence of mass media fed a conclusion supported across Columbia research, captured in a statement from a summary article of 1957: "Mass communication does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences [. . . which] typically render mass communication a contributory agent, but not the sole cause, in a process of reinforcing of existing conditions" (Klapper, 1957, p. 458). "Reinforcing existing conditions" could be taken as the start of a theory of media and ideological hegemony, a direction Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) feinted toward a decade earlier (Simonson & Weimann, 2003). But *Personal Influence* dialed the resolution of the viewing frame down to the individual, short-term, and decision-making level, occluding the bigger picture, and downplaying the relative significance of mass media as a social force.

The two-step flow idea could be put to other uses, however. Beyond suggesting the interpersonal mediation and therefore limits of media power, it also pointed toward diffusion, larger-scale communicative flows, and social mechanisms of enhancing media effectivity. In this iteration of the two-step flow, media campaigns combined with word-of-mouth diffusion to cascade through social networks. Running alongside rhetoric of comparatively limited media influence, then, Columbia researchers also lay down a vision of communication in a networked society. In this regard, the Columbia paradigm merged with diffusion studies conducted by rural sociologists, with work in international development, and with psychological warfare efforts coordinated by the US government in collaboration with communication researchers (Simpson, 1994), all of whom looked at conversations as potential multipliers of media influence.

The opinion leader, interpersonal influence, and flow-of-communication ideas had entered the state-sponsored Cold War arsenal of psychological warfare by the late 1940s. Frankfurt School émigré and former Bureau affiliate Leo Lowenthal had become research director of the Voice of America, which funded opinion leadership and audience studies in Norway, Sweden, and other European and Latin American countries in 1948–1949, explicitly understood as a contribution to "psychological warfare" (Klapper & Lowenthal, 1951). Two years later, the Voice of America funded similar survey work in the strategic Near East countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iran, collecting information about media behavior and seeking out opinion leaders in towns and cities. At the same time, the Bureau prepared a survey research manual, *Are We Hitting Our Target?*, for an immediate predecessor of the US Information Agency, whose mission was to influence foreign publics in the US national interest; it guided opinion leader studies in the Philippines and elsewhere (Simpson, 1994, p. 73). The Near East study would be published as Daniel Lerner's (1958) *Passing of Traditional Society*, an infamous articulation of modernization theory as well as a fascinating historical portrait of communication, politics, and society in

those six still-important countries. Snapshots of opinion leadership are captured throughout (e.g., pp. 26–28, 185–196, 245–246, 333–338).

In the meantime, University of Washington sociologist Stuart Dodd and graduate students like Melvin DeFleur advanced the mass communication and interpersonal flow model through studies of airplane leaflet drops for the US Air Force and covertly funded by the CIA. Their Project Revere study (1951–1953) was a rather remarkable series of field studies of mass leaflet drops in the Pacific Northwest, which built off and considerably extended the general idea of communicative flows laid out in *The People's Choice*. Dodd and his students meticulously charted geographical diffusion pathways, as well as maximally efficient ratios of leaflets dropped to reception of the message (DeFleur & Larsen, 1987, pp. vii–xxxiv; Dodd, 1952; Lowery & DeFleur, 1995, pp. 213–237). Their work gave rise to a series of additional studies and publications that advanced the mediated-and-interpersonal diffusion model of mass communication, with specific attention to news stories (e.g., Danielson, 1956; Deutschmann & Danielson, 1956; Larsen & Hill, 1954;) and rumor (e.g., DeFleur, 1962). Meanwhile, rural sociologists at Iowa State University studying the adoption of modern farming practices developed their own pictures of the roles played by mass media and face-to-face contacts in the diffusion of information (Beal & Bohlen, 1957; Rogers, 1962; Rogers & Beal, 1958; see also Valente & Rogers, 1995). Through the 1960s, the model of flows contributed to what Everett Rogers (1978) would call the dominant paradigm of development research, partly organized around the idea that “mass communication was [. . .] a very powerful and direct force for development.”

Columbia sociologists rarely cited the Washington group's work, however, nor much from Chicago, choosing instead to solidify their own lineage as it passed from Lazarsfeld and Merton to their favorably placed and influential network of former students through what Terry Nichols Clark (1998) has called the “Columbia sociology machine.” Even then, however, Columbia media studies varied, with some more favorably placed and better amplified by the machine than others. A number of excellent studies lay clearly outside the realm of Lazarsfeldian effects or two-step flow studies – including Leila Susmann's (1956) study of mail to the president, Warren Breed's (1955, 1958) critical functionalist accounts of news, and Charles Wright's (1959) synthetic introduction to a functionalist sociology of mass communication. Katz and others consolidated the two-step flow and diffusion ideas, however, and underscored the argument from *Personal Influence* that media power to bring about change was relatively limited (Coleman, Katz, & Menzel, 1957; Katz, 1957, 1960). This line of second-generation Columbia thinking would eventually rise to symbolic dominance.

Consolidation and Challenge in the 1960s

Joseph Klapper's *Effects of Mass Communication* came out in 1960, consolidating the conceptual vocabulary of “effects” by surveying a wide but also limited body of social

scientific research on mass media. A broader and more subtle book than typically portrayed in the collective memory of media studies, Klapper's volume charted a range of effects of persuasive communication, from reinforcement (most prevalent) to the creation of opinion on new issues as well as conversion, along with specific consideration of portrayals of crime and violence, "escapist media," child audiences, and media-induced passivity. Klapper, who had taken his doctorate at Columbia and then gone to work in the research departments of CBS and General Electric, wrote as a skeptical social scientist surveying certifiable knowledge on the topic. His easy-to-read introduction summarized findings that provided fodder for a limited-effects understanding, including the much-repeated line, "Mass communication *ordinarily* does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences" (Klapper, 1960, p. 8). The book's conclusion would warn against "the danger [. . .] to go overboard in blindly minimizing the effects and potentialities of mass communications" (p. 252), identify ways that media can exercise "extensive social effects" by operating through elites (p. 253), and call for more attention to "the probable but unmapped interplay between the mass media and cultural values" (p. 255). As Roger Brown (1970) observed, the book's claims about limited media power received much more attention than its feints toward more powerful effects, an interpretation and uptake which in turn served the interests of CBS and other broadcasters faced with criticism about their offerings and accusations of their deleterious social consequences. In this respect, the paradigm did indeed deflect criticism from powerful media industries, as Gitlin and other critics would argue.

Klapper's book was widely cited, though its real influence is harder to discern. The Columbia two-step flow and effects models were both extended and criticized in the 1960s. Raymond Bauer (1964) condensed the limited effects hypothesis into the image of the "obstinate audience," which he flatly declared "a defense [. . .] of advertising and mass media" (p. 327), admitting a charge that critical researchers would later make of the paradigm. Lazarsfeld and Menzel (1963) posited a "multi-step flow of communications," while others distinguished relay and reinforcement functions of opinion leaders (Deutschmann & Danielson, 1960), drew attention to differences between diffusing information and persuading when it came to two-step flows (Troidahl, 1963), or refined the theory by adding categories like "opinion avoiders" and "opinion sharing" (Troidahl & Van Dam, 1965; Wright & Cantor, 1967). Other research called the two-step flow model into question, though, including studies of news diffusion for major events like the Kennedy assassination (Greenberg, 1964; Mendelsohn, 1964; Spitzer, 1964–1965). Agricultural diffusion researchers found the two-step flow model to be overly simplified and misleading, and found that both opinion leaders and followers were directly influenced by media sources, though at different stages of the adoption process (van den Ban, 1964). Others argued that the two-step flow model had never been adequately confirmed empirically (Arndt, 1968). From the perspective of Chicago sociology, Kurt and Gladys Lang (1968) offered a more culturalist alternative, building on a decade and a half of

pioneering work definitively outside the Columbia orbit. Interestingly, in the definitive compilation of media effects research of the era, the two-step flow model received very little attention (Schramm & Roberts, 1971).

By the early 1970s, it was clear to empirical researchers that “the two-step hypothesis appears to explain very few communication situations and is likely too simplified a concept for great utility in explaining the process of communication” (Bostian, 1973). Katz himself had turned away from short-term effects and diffusion to revive Herzog’s gratifications paradigm (Blumler & Katz, 1974; see also Katz, 1968), and Noelle-Neumann (1973) had called for a return to the concept of powerful mass media. From England, Jeremy Tunstall’s (1970) *Media Sociology* collection pivoted away from the US effect and flow models (p. 5) and toward two dozen essays that cast media in broad social and institutional terms. From the international New Left, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was about to enter its most creative and influential phase in Birmingham, while Latin Americans were working out their own Marxian-inspired theories of dependency, domination, and resistance. In the United States, as left-leaning US sociologists invented and attacked “mainstream sociology” (Calhoun & VanAntwerpen, 2007), a new generation of media sociologists led by Gaye Tuchman (1978) cast broad attention to the institutional power, “symbolic annihilations,” and ideological dimensions of the media, at the same time that James W. Carey (1975) was laying the groundwork for US-style cultural studies. By the time Gitlin (1978) weighed in with his influential critique, the limited effects model was clearly on its down slope, with critics both within and outside objectivist social science.

Limited Effects Since the 1980s

By the mid-1980s, the “limited effects model” had become a rhetorical commonplace in mass communication and media studies, used to talk about, separate, normatively rank, and (de)legitimate competing theories and orientations. The “limited effects” locution was given a phantom history, with references to Klapper and other sources where it didn’t occur (e.g., Moschis & Moore, 1982). It would take its place in a mythic historical narrative of the field anchored on the far end by the “hypodermic” model of direct media injections into the masses, to which “limited effects” was a supposed response (Lubken, 2008). As these misrememberings were occurring, Elihu Katz (1980, 1987) substantively responded to and dialectically incorporated Columbia’s critics into the effects tradition, extending the idea from *Personal Influence* that all studies of media in some sense concern themselves with effects. Working with an expansive theoretical tent, he distinguished theories of limited and powerful effects, charted a history of their development, and defended Lazarsfeldian-style communications research as it had developed after the classic work of the 1940s and 1950s.

Adding further counterweight, former Columbia Yale social psychologist and persuasion researcher William McGuire (1986) savaged the claims and empirical evidence in dismantling what he called the “myth of massive media impact” and defending the idea of limited effects (cf. Zaller, 1996).

Katz and McGuire were responding to the fact that the limited effects model had come to serve as a discredited alternative against which some alternate approach was framed as superior – be it cultural studies (Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott, 1982; Hall, 1982), political economy (Schiller, 1989), humanistic rhetorical studies (Gronbeck, 1984), or competing social scientific theories like agenda setting (McCombs, 1981), political socialization (Chaffee & Hochheimer, 1985; Moschis & Moore, 1982), or information processing (Entman, 1989). In short, in the 1980s, “limited effects” came to serve as a symbolic boundary marker with considerable rhetorical power in teaching, textbooks, and research about media.

The opinion leader and two-step flow components of the model have in the meantime taken on new life in network theory and studies of Internet-related diffusion. Heinz Eulau (1980) and Katz’s student Gabriel Weimann (1982, 1994) joined Columbia ideas to a new generation of network analysis techniques. Others incorporated part of the classic model into increasingly sophisticated network models that tracked diffusion (Valente, 1996), social capital (Burt, 1999), and marketing and social epidemics (Watts, 2007; Watts & Dorrs, 2007). Featured as the Number One “Breakthrough Idea” of 2007 in the *Harvard Business Review*, Duncan Watts’s notion of the “accidental influentials” shifted attention from influential individuals to network structures that allow influence to cascade widely. Campaign researchers continue to find variations on the two-step flow idea useful (e.g., Hornik, 2006; Southwell & Yzer, 2007). It has provided a tool for mapping Internet-related diffusion and influence patterns related to medicine, politics, and climate change campaigns, among other topics (Case, Johnson, Andrews, Allard, & Kelly, 2009; Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009; Norris & Curtice, 2008). The Columbia flow paradigm lives on, and helps to explain one family of mediated social processes. More recently, it has been joined by a revival of the idea of limited effects within political communication and persuasion research; reflecting on “the continued detachment of individuals from group-based society, and the increasing capacity of consumers to choose from a multitude of media channels,” Lance Bennett and Shanto Iyengar (2008), for instance, have argued that we are entering “a new era of minimal consequences” (pp. 708, 725; see also Bennett & Iyengar, 2010; Holbert, Garrette, & Gleason, 2010).

Conclusion

The rise and fall of the limited effects model turns out to be a more complex and interesting story than might be suggested by its place in the collective imagination

of contemporary media studies. Let me end by summarizing and reflecting on what I take to be some of the lessons of this historical episode. I have traced some of the intellectual, institutional, and rhetorical origins and fault lines of the model and shown how these developed over time. It grew out of Columbia's Office of Radio Research in the early 1940s, mediated through women interviewers in three small provincial cities, and taking shape through the objectivist language and middle-range theory of Columbia sociology. The "two-step flow of communications" was one of those middle-range theoretical concepts, linked in its development to the conceptual problematics of propaganda and public opinion, the new research method of the panel interview, and funded investigations that served the purposes of media organizations and commercial marketing as well as progressive tolerance campaigns and the social scientific pursuit of new knowledge. The two-step flow came to be linked to a view of the mass communication process that posited a number of intervening psychological and social mechanisms limiting the ability of purposive media campaigns to change people's attitudes and behaviors. This finding led to the conclusion that most of the time media play a reinforcement role. Together, these semi-independent elements came together into what its critics named the limited effects model.

Since the 1950s, the flow, limiting mechanisms, and reinforcement ideas have all found places in a range of research and thinking. This traverses work done both within the Columbia lineage and by critics of it. The "discovery" of people as intermediaries and disseminators fed into both research and practice in diffusion, development, marketing, and psychological warfare. It is one of the birth points for understanding communication networks and flows. The idea that audiences can be "obstinate," resisting the efforts and messages that come to them through mass media, has in turn fed images of the active audience in uses and gratifications research. Since the 1970s, active audiences have also been a staple in cultural studies, though rarely with positive acknowledgment of the Columbia tradition that preceded it. Audiences who resist or put media to active work in their social environments have been heroes across wide swaths of media studies, which from a grander historical vantage point complexifies and disperses core insights of 1940s Columbia work. Reinforcement, meanwhile, is itself a core concept in Marxian and other critical media studies, worked out through Althusserian, Gramscian, Foucauldian, and other theoretical idioms. The Columbians came to their conclusion from very different political and intellectual horizons, but their baseline conclusions about media's power to reinforce dominant attitudes, public opinions, and behaviors clearly pointed in complementary directions (Katz, 1980, p. 134). That they rarely drew that conclusion – Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) being an exception – is of course significant, and supports their critics' charge that their middle-range theory was sociologically myopic and obfuscating. Still, as Katz (1987, 2005) has skillfully shown, a good number of contemporary research programs can be cast as extensions of early Columbia insights. Though the limited effects model was itself rather limited, it still flows through our histories and contemporary work.

NOTE

- 1 Rothschild (1978) cites a 1973 Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ) conference paper by Jay Blumler and J. M. McLeon, "Communication and Voter Turnout in Britain," that uses the term "limited effects."

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The Political Economy of Communication

An Idiosyncratic Presentation of an Emerging Subfield

Robert W. McChesney

ABSTRACT

The political economy of communication has three main components. First, it addresses *in a critical manner* how the media system interacts with and affects the overall disposition of power in society. Second, it examines how market structures, advertising support, labor relations, profit motivation, technologies, and government policies shape media industries, journalistic practices, occupational sociology, and the nature and content of the news and entertainment. The detailed examination of the policymaking process is the third core component. Political economic analysis suggests that media development has been inflected most strongly at critical junctures, moments when media technologies, political power, and economic structures simultaneously undergo stress and change. The present moment suggests the potential for political economic study of the media to have real impact.

What follows is an idiosyncratic presentation of the area of research called the “political economy of communication” or the “political economy of media.” I justify this approach because the subfield is small and has only a loosely recognized canon at this point. My aim is to contribute to the process of developing our understanding of this field of research, its history, the great influences upon its development, and its immense potential and importance going forward.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Political economy of communication has three main components. First, it addresses *in a critical manner* how the media system interacts with and affects the overall disposition of power in society. Do the media, on balance, serve as a progressive force to draw people into political debate as informed and effective participants, or does the media system as a whole tend to reinforce elite rule and inequalitarian social relations? This is a topic of concern for more than political economists – in fact it drives much of communication research, especially cultural studies – but it is always central to the political economic tradition. It requires a certain command of history and political theory. Simultaneously, and of necessity, this requires looking at how the media and communication systems were integrated into the economy. This requires some facility with economics.

Now what I meant by “in a critical manner” gets to the nub of the matter. There are many different measures one could use, and over time the one I emphasize rests upon the provision of journalism, or, more broadly, the information necessary for self-government and effective freedom. In my view, the media system, with particular emphasis upon journalism, needs to provide several services to meet the communication requirements of a free and self-governing people. The media system needs to keep a ruthless check on people who are in power or who wish to be in power, whether in the public or private sector. The media system has to be a watchdog. It has to be capable of ferreting out truth from lies, so liars cannot prevaricate endlessly, shamelessly, and without consequence. And the media system has to provide a range of informed opinion on the crucial social and political issues of the day, as well as be the advance scout to locate problems on the horizon.

Not all media have to do all of these things, but in combination a healthy media system makes these services available to the great bulk of the citizenry, and does not discriminate against people based on race, class, or gender. If it fulfills these criteria, the media system would be a democratic force in society. Now if one looks at the list closely, these are all classical liberal criteria; when applied to other nations or to history, they are not especially controversial. But when such criteria are applied to the United States, or the US role in the world, without pulling punches, the results are generally unflattering, and the critique is regarded as radical. And it is radical, because the logic of the critique suggests that structural reform of the media system and society is necessary if we are serious about democracy.

In addition, what this first area of the political economy of communication suggests is that the relationship of media to society is not a one-way flow. Not only does democracy require viable media and journalism to prosper; so, too, do media and journalism require healthy democracy and strong popular politics to survive and be effective as progressive institutions. It is a close and symbiotic relationship.

The second area in the political economy of communication tradition is largely its exclusive domain: an evaluation of how market structures, advertising support, labor relations, profit motivation, technologies, and government policies shape media industries, journalistic practices, occupational sociology, and the nature and content of the news and entertainment. This requires a certain mastery of microeconomics,

history, journalism, and policy studies at a minimum. While some legal scholars, political scientists, and economists are interested in these questions too, they rarely are interested in the critical implications for society as a whole. They are content to accept the status quo as an unalterable given. And when one accepts the status quo as an unalterable given, it doesn't take long before it starts to seem benevolent. Political economy by definition is a critical enterprise (Gandy, 1992).

The detailed examination of the policymaking process is the third core component of political economy of communication. When one examines the policymaking process, one can see what the real options are and have been, and why a system later regarded as "natural" got put in place as it did. Policymaking is becoming a new area of intense research in communication. The research places particular emphasis upon what I term "critical junctures," the moments in policymaking history when the range of debate is relatively broad and society can go in any number of directions with its media policies and subsidies. Much of this research has a strong historical component.

The notion of critical junctures explains how social change works; there have been relatively rare and brief periods in which dramatic changes were debated and enacted drawing from a broad palette of options, followed by long periods in which structural or institutional change was slow and difficult (Collier & Collier, 2002). During a critical juncture, which usually lasts no more than one or two decades, the range of options for society is much greater than it is otherwise. The decisions made during such a period establish institutions and rules that likely put us on a course that will be difficult to change in any fundamental sense for decades or generations.

This notion of critical junctures is increasingly accepted in history and the social sciences. It has proven valuable for thinking broadly about society-wide fundamental social change, and also as a way to understand fundamental change within a specific sector, like media and communication. The two types of critical junctures are distinct, yet very closely related. Most of our major institutions in media are the result of such critical junctures, periods when policies could have gone in other directions, and, had they done so, put media and society on a different path.

As a result of my research, I have concluded that critical junctures in media and communication tend to occur when at least two if not all three of the following conditions hold:

- There is a revolutionary new communication technology that undermines the existing system.
- The content of the media system, especially the journalism, is increasingly discredited or seen as illegitimate.
- There is a major political crisis – severe social disequilibrium – in which the existing order is no longer working and there are major movements for social reform.

In the past century, critical junctures in media and communication occurred three times: in the Progressive Era, when journalism was in deep crisis and the overall

political system was in turmoil; in the 1930s, when the emergence of radio broadcasting combined with public antipathy to commercialism against the backdrop of the Depression; and in the 1960s and early 1970s, when popular social movements in the United States provoked radical critiques of the media as part of a broader social and political critique.

The result of the critical juncture in the Progressive Era was the emergence of professional journalism. The result of the critical juncture in the 1930s was the model of loosely regulated commercial broadcasting, which provided the model for subsequent electronic media technologies like FM radio, terrestrial television, and cable and satellite television. The result of the 1960s and 1970s critical juncture is less tangible for communication. In many respects the issues raised then were never resolved and they were buried by the neoliberal epoch that followed.

Today, we are in the midst of a profound critical juncture for communication. All three conditions for a critical juncture are already in place, the first *trifecta* in at least 80 years in the United States: the digital revolution is overturning all existing media industries and business models; and journalism is at its lowest ebb since the Progressive Era. The third condition – the overall stability of the political and social system – is the most important and the great unknown. Our overall political system is awash in institutionalized corruption and appalling inequality. The economy is mired in the worst stage of secular stagnation since the 1930s and it appears likely that we are entering a period of structural transformation to points unknown. The entire public sector of pensions, education, and healthcare is under sustained and relentless attack. US global military dominance is wobbling with the disaster of the various Asian wars, and the combination of empire and republic is difficult to maintain.¹ In January 2007 the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* moved its symbolic doomsday clock to five minutes to midnight. For the first time ever, the editors stressed the role of not just nuclear weapons but of global climate change in the impending catastrophes facing humankind. This is becoming a political and social crisis of major proportions.²

In 2011 the other shoe fell that demonstrates that we are indeed entering mostly uncharted historical waters, at least by recent standards. The battle was joined, first on the snowy streets of Wisconsin and then, by the end of the year, in hundreds of “Occupy” protests across the nation. The system is failing and millions of US citizens stood up to say “We choose to live.” Even more impressive uprisings have occurred across the world, and have overturned governments in the Middle East. Given the structural crisis of capitalism, there is every reason to believe this is the start of something big. It is this precise moment that makes the work of critical scholars in general suddenly relevant and no longer “academic.” It is especially true for those working in the political economy of communication, because media issues are central to the upheavals.

It is worth noting that the study of the political economy of communication first emerged and thrived as a response to critical junctures. It is then that the types of questions political economists of communication ask seem especially pertinent, and connect to social movements off-campus. In quiescent periods, in contrast, political

economy of communication tends to stagnate and appear irrelevant to the “real world.”

As just noted, this should be the moment in the sun for political economy of communication at US universities. Indeed, in the not too distant past, that was what seemed to be on the horizon. It certainly had a roaring start coming out of the last critical juncture in the late 1960s and 1970s. “I have no doubt that many communication scholars can hardly believe their luck,” the political economist Nicholas Garnham (1983) wrote in the *Journal of Communication*. “After years on the margins of intellectual concern and academic power, we suddenly find ourselves center stage, with the spotlight of social relevance full upon us.” Political economy of communication even had a *de facto* professional organization, the Union for Democratic Communications. Nearly one-third of the articles in the special edition on the future of the field in the George Gerbner-edited *Journal of Communication* in 1983 grew out of the political economic tradition.

In the early 1980s, the foundations of the political economy of communication, such as they are, were in place. Dallas Smythe and Herbert I. Schiller unquestionably were the dominant senior figures associated with the subfield in North America.³ Smythe was a native of Canada who earned his PhD in economics at Berkeley and went on to become the first chief economist at the US Federal Communications Commission in the 1940s. While at the FCC, Smythe was the primary author of the “Blue Book,” the public interest standard for commercial broadcasters that was arguably the most progressive regulation in US broadcasting history (Meyer, 1962a, 1962b; Pickard, 2006; Socolow, 2002). In 1948, he joined the faculty in the newly formed Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois. Smythe immediately launched the first formal classes in the political economy of communication – not only in the United States, but possibly the world – and gave the field a toehold in the United States. Before returning to Canada in the 1960s, where he had considerable influence over Canadian political economy of communication, Smythe established himself as one of the foremost figures in US media studies and plowed a wide path for others to follow behind.

During his 15 years at Illinois, Smythe wrote papers on a broad range of topics, including how commercialism is the defining feature of US television; how US broadcast regulation and policy debates were distorted to serve corporate interests; the commercialization of the electoral process; and the elements of propaganda in the US media system. He wrote reports or testified on policy debates surrounding the development of public broadcasting, pay television, satellite communication, and the telephone monopoly of AT&T (Smythe, 1994).⁴ His landmark work from this era addressed telecommunications economics and policymaking, and here too, Smythe was decades ahead of his time in recognizing the need to fuse telecommunications with media in communication research (Smythe, 1957).

After returning to Canada, Smythe remained highly influential. In the 1970s and 1980s he redefined the study of commercial media, challenging the mainstream perspective that the primary relationship within media was that between media and

the audience. Smythe argued that the core relationship, at least for broadcast media, was between the broadcaster and the advertiser. The product of value that was being produced, therefore, was in fact the audience, which was then sold to advertisers. Smythe then argued that the audience was in fact being exploited as it labored on behalf of the media company. His pacesetting work on the “audience commodity” has become central to the political economic tradition and debates in the United States.⁵

Herbert Schiller was a trained economist, too, who became Smythe’s colleague at Illinois before moving to the University of California at San Diego in 1970. He is the single person most commonly identified with the political economy of communication, and in his long and storied career his work covered a broad range of issues. (For an excellent overview of Schiller’s intellectual history, see Maxwell, 2003.) Like Smythe, Schiller looked at communication as an important component of corporate power. His first book, *Mass Communications and American Empire*, argued that communication and culture were an indispensable and growing part of the US global economic, political, and military agenda. It became the work that defined the debate on media or cultural imperialism for the next generation. To provide some sense of what a departure this was from thinking at the time, Schiller could find no publisher for the book among university or commercial presses, and had to rely upon a small publishing house that specialized in out-of-print economics classics, and was managed by an old friend (Schiller, 1992).⁶ Schiller wrote several more books in his career. His greatest work, in my opinion, was 1989’s *Culture, Inc.*, published just before his 70th birthday, in which Schiller made a compelling argument about the excessive commercialization of culture and everyday life in the United States and its anti-democratic implications. The book includes, among other things, a superb analysis of the commercialization of the First Amendment, one of the best critiques of the “audience has all the power” argument, and a discussion of the privatization and commercialization of information and data services and how this pertains to communication (Schiller, 1989).⁷

Together, Smythe and Schiller made the crucial and original argument that communication was becoming a central component of capitalist accumulation, with significant and striking implications for both communication and capitalism. They viewed communication and information – journalism, entertainment, libraries, museums, telecommunication – as a totality. Smythe and Schiller were making a historically specific argument about contemporary capitalism, one that had strong implications for politics. In many respects, these can be regarded as the founding observations upon which the political economy of communication is based. It was an argument made not just to communication scholars, but to political and social theorists and scholars in general, whom they believed undervalued the importance and role of communication. (The classic piece in this regard is Smythe, 1977.)

Smythe and Schiller were products of the great critical juncture of the 1930s and 1940s. They waded through the dark years of the 1950s and then dove headfirst into the tumult of the 1960s and 1970s. Although Smythe left for Canada in the early

1960s, he had helped lay the groundwork by participating actively in political discussions in Congress and in as many public forums as possible about satellite communication and other policy issues. By the late 1960s, Schiller began to forge contacts with the progressive FCC commissioner Nicholas Johnson and with media reformers connected with the civil rights and antiwar movements. Smythe and Schiller's influence can be seen on a whole range of progressive reforms that emerged in that period: policies encouraging minority employment in the telecommunication and broadcasting industries; issues around concentration of ownership and cross-ownership (from blocking the ITT/ABC merger to pushing the "FinSyn" rules that prevented vertical integration in the television industry); and of course extending the earlier tradition of concern with the rights of viewers. Schiller is best known for his active role in publicizing and supporting efforts for a New World Information & Communication Order through UNESCO in the 1970s and 1980s.⁸

Finally, Smythe and Schiller both worked tirelessly to spawn a new generation of communication scholars working in the political economy tradition. Most of the next generation of scholars, which came of age in the 1970s and 1980s, had relationships with one or both of them. I was at the end of that generation and both of them embraced me and my research with open arms. They set the bar very high for those who followed.

Although Smythe and Schiller can be regarded as the founders of the field, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky played every bit as large a role for me and for many others who studied the political economy of communication. Herman was an economist who taught at the Wharton School of Finance at Penn, and he occasionally taught media courses at the university's Annenberg School. He was well aware of the field and close to Schiller. Chomsky was a linguist at MIT. Although I believe that linguistics belongs in the broader domain of communication studies, there wasn't much overlap between Chomsky's revolutionary research in linguistics and his prodigious analysis of media and politics.

Herman has made foundational contributions to the political economy of communication. He employed public good theory and microeconomic analysis to provide the basis for a critical assessment of media markets, one that did not presuppose profit-seeking media as inexorably "giving the people what they want" (Herman, 1993). Herman's work gave me increased respect for how the liberal tradition in mainstream economics could be used to great effect in understanding media industries.

Most important, along with Chomsky, Herman developed the "propaganda model" to explain the pro-elite and anti-democratic bias built into US news media coverage of public affairs. The propaganda model uses five filters – media ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and anti-communist ideology – to explain how very similar stories get radically different press treatment depending on their relationship to US elite interests. Stories that serve elite interests, like the Soviet downing of Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983, receive extensive coverage and the treatment is full of outrage and sympathy for the victims; stories that go against US elite interests, like the US-allied death squads that murdered tens of thousands of civilians in Central

America in the 1980s, barely rate a mention. The US role is downplayed, and the victims are regarded with suspicion (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The system works not through any form of conspiracy; it is a “guided market” system where core values are internalized so that the story selection process seems natural and proper. Herman (1998) updated the propaganda model in the 1990s to account for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The propaganda model remains a useful reference point for critical assessments of the news media, and, as I discuss at the end of this chapter, is one of the signal contributions of the political economy of communication.

Herman earned his PhD in economics at the University of California at Berkeley, which was a locus for critical and institutional approaches to economics during the middle decades of the twentieth century. The most important figure at Berkeley was Robert A. Brady, who in the 1930s conducted pacesetting research on the relationship of business to policymaking. Brady (1937, 1943) compared the situation in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy with the United States, and saw parallels in the use of media, public relations, and advertising to control public opinion. In this sense his work dovetails the outer limits of what communication scholars like Paul Lazarsfeld were broaching at the same time. As Dan Schiller (1999) demonstrates, Brady’s work was influential on Smythe and Herbert Schiller.

Noam Chomsky is the scholar who revolutionized the study of linguistics and ranks among the most prominent US intellectuals of the past hundred years. Beginning in the 1960s Chomsky began a parallel career as a social critic and activist, and soon he was arguably the best-known and respected radical critic of US foreign policy in the world. In the course of developing his criticism of international politics, Chomsky began to critique US news media coverage of foreign affairs, which he found highly propagandistic on behalf of elite interests. It was this work that led to his collaboration with Herman and the development of the propaganda model in the late 1980s. Chomsky’s contributions to the political economy of communication go beyond his collaboration with Herman. His own writings in the 1980s, most notably 1989’s *Necessary Illusions*, developed a rich media critique that pursued the tension between capitalist and democratic societies. Chomsky, more than any other figure, argued that the United States was far from being a genuine democracy, and that the media system played a major role in cementing inequalitarian class relations. His work drew from a critical reading of mainstream scholarship and a rich understanding of the classical and Anglo-American democratic traditions.

Chomsky’s courage in forcefully critiquing communist countries while refusing to budge from his democratic, egalitarian, and radical principles influenced me a great deal. His commitment to rationalism, to evidence, to clear thinking, and his refusal to hold any sacred cows was intoxicating. Chomsky also, for the power and the principled nature of his critique, was remarkably open-minded and pragmatic about the process of making social change. His work with Herman became the prism through which my critique of news media, and much else, would be developed.

I also began to devour the work of Brits like Garnham (Garnham, 1979, 1985, 1983; Garnham & Bakewell, 1978; Garnham, Collins, & Locksley, 1988;), James

Curran (Curran, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1986; Curran, Smith, & Wingate, 1987), Peter Golding (Golding, 1974a, 1974b; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Golding & Murdock, 1978; Golding, Murdock, & Schlesinger, 1986; Sills, Taylor & Golding, 1988), and Graham Murdock (Halloran, Elliott, & Murdock, 1970; Murdock, 1978, 1989a, 1989b; Murdock & Golding, 1989; Murdock & Janus, 1984; Murdock & Phelps, 1973; Schlesinger, Murdock, & Elliott, 1983). This was the gold standard; the four of them and their British cohort staked out the parameters for political economic analysis of communication. Golding and Murdock often wrote together, and their seminal 1973 essay in the *Socialist Review* effectively introduced the notion of the political economy of communication to the world at large (Murdock & Golding, 1974). I examined the emerging US tradition, too, reading the younger generation of scholars like Vinny Mosco, Dan Schiller, Oscar Gandy, Eileen Meehan, Manjunath Pendakur, Stuart Ewen, Eileen Mahoney, Sut Jhally, and Janet Wasko.⁹ One of the truly important works of the political economy tradition was a path-breaking and underrecognized collection called *The Political Economy of Information* edited by Mosco and Wasko (1988).

As impressive as this tradition was, even in its most dynamic phase there were only a relatively small number of scholars working in the area, and many important areas were unaddressed. The political economy of communication seemed like a great idea, but it was an idea still crystallizing. Therefore, I read widely in a number of other disciplines. In time, by the early 1990s, I cobbled together my own vision of what the political economy of communication entailed. When I read Vinny Mosco's admirable *The Political Economy of Communication* upon its publication in 1996 – arguably the first systematic effort to define the subfield – I realized there really was no consensus about the core issues and readings; everyone was cobbling just like I was.

In addition to the work being done inside the subfield, my understanding of the political economy of communication drew from a handful of intellectual traditions, only a little of which was found within the field of communication. In just about everything I taught, and in the formation of all my arguments in all of my research, these traditions have played a foundational role. They include:

- 1 The *Monthly Review* political economy of Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, and Harry Magdoff.
- 2 The political sociology of C. Wright Mills and Jürgen Habermas.
- 3 The work on technology and communication of Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and Neil Postman.

In each of these traditions there were a number of scholars who influenced me, but I will mention the signature figures herein.

First, there was the *Monthly Review* political economy of Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, and Harry Magdoff, which highlighted the nature and importance of monopoly and corporations in modern capitalism. Sweezy, arguably the most original and brilliant

US Marxist economist of the twentieth century, expanded upon Thorstein Veblen's work, and also drew from Marx and the left Keynesian tradition to produce the definitive treatment of modern corporate or "monopoly" capitalism.¹⁰ He also studied under Harold Laski and Joseph Schumpeter. This school of work is called the *Monthly Review* tradition after the magazine Sweezy founded in 1949 with Leo Huberman, and later co-edited with Harry Magdoff.¹¹

The centerpiece of the *Monthly Review* tradition has been its critique of contemporary capitalism, or what Baran and Sweezy term monopoly capitalism, because it is dominated by large corporations working in oligopolistic markets. This historically specific understanding of modern capitalism provided me with a framework to understand the broad pressure behind the critical junctures of the Progressive Era and the 1930s and 1940s. The *Monthly Review* tradition never tried to show how existing capitalism conforms to predictions made by Marx in 1867 or Lenin in 1914. Rather, the object is to understand how contemporary capitalism works based on its actual behavior using tools provided by Marx, Veblen, Keynes, Steindl (e.g., 1976), Kalecki, and Hansen, among others. Unlike too many mainstream economists, the *Monthly Review* tradition does not assume that the market is neutral or benevolent, that class inequality is natural, and that capitalism is ahistorical. And unlike too much of both Marxist and mainstream economics, the *Monthly Review* analysis includes a refreshing integration of the actual real-world capitalism of finance and corporate behavior into its theory. It is an empirically driven analysis, which I found complemented much of my neoclassical education in economics.

Baran and Sweezy's core argument is that monopoly capitalism has a strong tendency toward economic stagnation. Unlike neoclassical theory, which argues that the system tends toward full employment if the market is left to its own devices, Baran and Sweezy argue that the system tends toward crisis and depression. They laid this out in a book titled *Monopoly Capital* (Baran & Sweezy, 1966). In fact, while there is a good deal of debate over the merits of the *Monthly Review* position, their fundamental argument has proven valuable and provides a superior context for understanding economic policymaking in our times.

The second tradition that influenced me was the work of C. Wright Mills and Jürgen Habermas, which I found closely related. Mills's work drew attention to the importance of the public sphere and provided a searing critique of the problem of depoliticization in the United States. (For a superb recent overview of Mills, see Aronowitz, 2003.) When I entered graduate school in 1983, I considered this the single most important issue for social scientists to address in the United States; it remains almost as important to me today. Like Mills, I found the fingerprints of the media all over the deplorable state of our political culture. I found Mills's *The Power Elite* (1956) to be one of the most extraordinary books I had ever read. Although written in the 1950s, its critique resonated with what I saw in the United States of the 1980s, and what I see today.

In some ways Mills pointed to the issues that Habermas would later trigger with the translation of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, and I consider Habermas to be making a similar argument. Habermas paralleled Mills's critique of

modern Western liberal democracies. His argument made communication a central component of democracy, the structural/institutional basis for communication of paramount importance, and regarded both business and government domination of media as problematic for democracy (Habermas, 1991). A central problem in the political economy of communication had been the matter of determining a more democratic media system than that provided by the market. The problem has been that much more vexing because the “really existing alternative” to capitalism and commercial media for much of the twentieth century – the communist systems in Eastern Europe and Asia – were singularly unattractive from a democratic perspective (Sparks, 1997, 2001; Zhao, 1998). Habermas’s notion of the public sphere, a place where citizens interact that is controlled by neither business nor the state, has provided an operating principle for democratic media. Following this logic, the policy trajectory of much political economic research in communication, certainly my own, has been to establish a well-funded non-profit, non-commercial, heterogeneous communication sector that is decentralized and controlled in a democratic fashion. Habermas’s formulation was absolutely crucial in moving the debate in media studies away from the dominant notion that there were two – and only two – ways to organize media: the free, private media of democracy or the state-controlled media of authoritarian societies.¹²

Third, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and Neil Postman each provided provocative critiques of society oriented around media technology.¹³ The Canadian economist Innis (1946, 1950, 1951) wrote long studies on the importance of communication systems and technologies in the course of human history. His approach was historical and sociological, locating communication in relation to social and political development. Innis argued that communication technologies were of paramount importance in understanding human development, and that they had profound biases. His work went far beyond traditional political economy and was influential most notably on James Carey, one of the founders of US cultural studies. (For a terrific interview with Carey where he discusses his intellectual antecedents, see Packer and Robertson, 2006.) Marshall McLuhan was also an acolyte of Innis, though this Canadian English professor altered Innis’s arguments and disseminated them widely. He is best known for his notion that the “medium is the message,” that media are changing the very way we think and that human societies operate (McLuhan, 1962, 1999; McLuhan & Fiore, 1967; McLuhan & Zingrone, 1995). His work was very influential on innumerable thinkers, including Postman. Innis and McLuhan both, perhaps due to their nation of origin, did not share the embrace of US mainstream academic satisfaction with the commercial media status quo, and they were more than willing to greet the imperial claims of US scholars with skepticism. Their work opened the door for far more critical takes on communication, technology, and society. Postman’s work, especially *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1986), had the same effect (see also Postman, 1971, 1976, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000; Postman & Powers, 1992; Postman & Weingartner, 1969). It created space for critical work.

Since media and communication sectors were generally defined by a specific technology – e.g., press, telegraph, film, radio, TV, cable, and so on – I found that this

work provided an important entrée to the issues that concerned me, like depoliticization. I was immediately hostile to anything that smacked of technological determinism, but I was also convinced that media technologies did have significant impact, what Marxists liked to call “relative autonomy.” Fundamental media technologies, which often emerged in a critical juncture, tended to be “path dependent,” meaning that once society opted for them, it was very difficult to switch to a different technology, even if that new technology was superior. Media technologies had unintended consequences. Today, it strikes me as quite plausible that the electronic media avalanche that people, especially children, are experiencing is having considerable effects upon them, arguably for worse.¹⁴ These effects are so closely intertwined with the commercialism that drives media in the United States that it is not always possible to disentangle the technological effect, but that does not mean there isn’t one. A great deal more research is needed.

The inability of the political economy of communication to gain traction, to command the respect of its adversaries, during the critical juncture of the late 1960s and early 1970s put it in a precarious position by the 1980s. Political economists of communication saw our work as part of a broader intellectual and political movement for social justice and peace. When social activism outside the academy was strong, it energized the research and gave it meaning. The politics in society as a whole provoked important and pressing research questions. There was an implicit understanding that the research could contribute to social change. There was always a legitimate concern that research could turn into cheerleading, but healthy debate, rigorous standards, and the actual events taking place on the ground would serve to keep the research credible, original, and focused.

The problem for the political economy of communication (and critical work more broadly) came in the 1980s, when it was clear that the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s had collapsed. Instead of having an army of supporters off-campus, critical scholars were all alone and very lonely. Political economists of communication appeared to unsympathetic observers as absurdly out of touch with reality, and the research was increasingly stigmatized as more of an ideological exercise than a branch of scholarship. The dynamism in the official culture was all on the right, and anyone on a college campus in the mid-1980s could not help but be aware of the changes. The prospects for progressive social change could not have been much bleaker, and all hands were on deck simply trying to maintain the status quo from further right-wing attacks. In this context all critical work, especially political economy of communication research, began to lose its moorings. If social change for the better was unlikely or impossible, what exactly were we trying to accomplish with our work? The work then turned to providing a critique of the status quo with a vague goal of eventually down the road contributing to an enlightening of students and citizens who will rise up in rage against the machine. Even the most brilliant work of the late 1980s, say Herman and Chomsky’s *Manufacturing Consent*, allowed little hope that changing the media system or the society as a whole was a plausible goal. We were simply learning how the system worked for intellectual self-defense. We

were speaking truth to power, but we had no illusions that we were in any position to contest that power.

At any rate, political economy had lost its “mojo,” and the dynamism that marked the field into the 1980s was a thing of the past. When Gerbner’s *Journal of Communication* published its follow-up special edition on the state of the field in 1993, a mere three of the 20 essays were by political economists, and only a couple more by critical scholars sympathetic to political economy. And the *JOC* was edited by George Gerbner, who had been the mentor and benefactor of scholars working in the political economic tradition. A mainstream journal edited by any other prominent member of the field might have excised political economy altogether.

Starved of resources, with precious little institutional support, and in a hostile political environment, the political economy of communication produced a surprising amount of important and high-quality research. Although Smythe died at the beginning of the 1990s and Schiller left us at the beginning of the next decade, Mattelart (Mattelart, 1994, 2000, 2003; Mattelart & Mattelart, 1992, 1998) and the four Brits – Garnham (1990, 2000), Curran (Curran, 1995, 2000, 2002; Curran & Couldry, 2003; Curran, Ecclestone, Oakley, & Richardson, 1986; Curran, Gaber, & Petley, 2005; Curran & Gurevitch, 2000, 2005; Curran & Morley, 2005; Curran & Seaton, 2003), Golding (Bondebjerg & Golding, 2004; Deacon & Golding, 1994; Ferguson & Golding, 1997; Golding & Harris, 1997; Golding & Murdock, 1997; McQuail, Golding, & Bens, 2005), and Murdock (Wieten, Murdock, & Dahlgren, 2000) – have remained productive, and the situation in Britain was arguably no better for political economy of communication by then than in the United States. The second generation of US scholars who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s proved highly productive and have done original work in a broad range of areas.¹⁵ The real crisis facing the field is that because of the enormous constraints it did not spawn a significant “third generation” of self-identified political economists of communication who were pushing the project forward and breaking substantial new ground.

Fortunately, that has all changed dramatically in the past decade.

By the early 2000s, signs of the beginning stages of a critical juncture were all around us. Of the three criteria that set the stage for a critical juncture, one was clearly in place, another looked to be in place, and the third factor loomed distinctly on the horizon (McChesney, 2003). The digital revolution was undermining much of the existing media industries’ business models, journalism was in freefall collapse, and the broader political economy ended the decade mired in crisis. To top it off, a media reform movement emerged under the guidance of Free Press that mobilized millions of US citizens around issues that had once been the private preserve of industry lobbyists.

In this context the political economy of communication has returned with a vengeance. Journals are publishing the research; universities are hiring in the area; and, most important, there is a large interest in the work among the general public. I will close this chapter by outlining what I regard as the key areas of research going forward. I count at least eight areas of “basic research” that require extensive work.¹⁶

- 1 A study of the policymaking process, with an emphasis upon history.
- 2 A detailed examination of the relationship of communication and information to the evolving global system of capitalism.
- 3 A critique of the market *per se* and a critique of media markets specifically.
- 4 A critique and study of advertising and the relationship of communication to marketing.
- 5 An integration of media and communication into democratic theory, with a rigorous study of journalism in this light.
- 6 A political economy of the Internet – looking at a myriad of issues that will determine the control and structure of the digital communication system, in particular telecommunications, spectrum, copyright, and privacy.
- 7 A study of different institutional structures for media enterprises and policies that have promoted different types of structures.
- 8 A study of global communication that takes up all these issues in a comparative and transnational sense, and that examines issues unique to the global communication system.

First, we need a much richer understanding of the policymaking process. We need a detailed empirical and possibly ethnographic examination of the policymaking process today. We have to better understand contemporary practices. We need to develop theoretical understanding of policymaking, and we need hard empirical analysis of how people influence policymaking. We also need historical case studies; as Susan Douglas argues, we need to convey the truth about our history to undermine the argument that what exists today is “inevitable.”

Second, it is often stated that capitalism is undergoing a dramatic transformation – most significantly, “globalization” – and that these fundamental structural changes owe in large part to developments with communication and information technologies. Often there are elaborate claims about increasing competition and innovation, with considerable effects upon productivity and economic growth. But we get far more pieties than we do hard research on these claims, and we lack detailed examinations on how the “new economy” works compared to the old one, and what the precise role of communication may be. In view of the centrality of communication to the economy, it is a travesty that scholars and policymakers are working with an understanding of the global transformation of capitalism that is based more on clichés than research. What is happening to the economy, in the final analysis, may be at the epicenter of the critical juncture. Communication scholars have an important role to play, alongside economists, in generating this research.

Third, the application of the simplistic notion of the “free market” to media needs a rigorous examination, even by political economists of communication (for a provocative discussion of this, see Perelman, 2006). If the second point addressed capitalism as a “macro” system, here I turn to microeconomics, or market and firm structure. Too often the “free market” has been accepted uncritically as the ideal structure for media industries, with little evidence to support the assumption. We

increasingly understand that the conventional model of free market economics has severe limitations in its applicability to any real-world economic situations. Some of the most important breakthroughs in economics in the past decade – e.g., the Nobel Prize-winning research of Joseph Stiglitz – have called into question the basic assumptions of the legitimacy of “free markets” as necessarily rational, efficient, and just regulators of human activity (Stiglitz, 1986, 1988, 1989; Stiglitz & Greenwald, 2003; see also Camerer & Fehr, 2006).¹⁷ There is important work along these lines in the work termed the “new Keynesian economics,” which has questioned the assumptions and claims of neoliberalism (Akerlof & Yellen, 1985; Gordon, 1990; Greenwald & Stiglitz, 1993; Mankiw, 1990, 1992; Summers, 1988; Tobin, 1993; Yellen, 1984).

That concern is doubly true for media markets, which tend to be much closer to non-rivalrous public goods, rather than traditional markets where the price tends to gravitate toward the marginal cost of the product. Some excellent economic analysis of media markets has been done, but nowhere near enough (Anderson & Coate, 2005; George & Waldfogel, 2006; Hamilton, 2004; Shapiro & Varian, 1998; Waldfogel, 2003). We also need a much harder examination of how media corporations actually operate, rather than assume that these complex bureaucracies follow the same pattern as the owner-operator small firm of the Adam Smith era. And we need a thorough examination of the notion that media firms, due to market pressures, “give the people what they want” (Meehan, 2005; McChesney, 2004, discusses this point at some length). This canard has been left unchallenged all too long, even by critical scholars. It is ironic that intellectuals have accepted this premise while the “masses,” in repeated public hearings over the past four years, have suggested that they do not feel the existing market accurately reflects their values or preferences.

Fourth, we need a systematic and comprehensive examination of the crucial role advertising plays, as it is the thread that connects communication to capitalism. Advertising is a fundamental aspect of commercial media markets, and has significant influence over media content, yet the amount of research examining it is paltry by almost any standard. All indications are that this commercial carpet bombing has a considerable effect upon our culture, and one is hard pressed to locate much on the positive side of the ledger.¹⁸ Inger Stole’s (2004) research indicates that advertising is evolving with the times, merging with public relations, and is even becoming a presence in the world of philanthropy, with dubious social implications. Even if we go to a digital communication system, there is no reason to believe that advertising and marketing will go away. Quite the contrary. We need to conduct hard research on the role, nature, and effects of commercialism in the digital media world. If the communication revolution, in the final analysis, merely provides a way for Madison Avenue to get into the DNA of our social nervous system, we may rue the day the computer was invented.¹⁹ In particular, the commercial indoctrination of children, as documented by Juliet Schor (2004), is largely unexamined and, as far as I can see, indefensible. Jeff Chester (2007), too, has done yeoman’s work to uncover what marketers are up to online.

Fifth, there is an enormous disconnect between political theory and communication studies, particularly journalism. Both suffer as a result. We need to integrate the two and make strong arguments about the role of communication in a self-governing society, and the sorts of institutions and values that must guide them. This theoretical inquiry must be informed by history and empirical research. There are many good reasons for this avenue of research to be pursued, but let me provide you with the most pressing one. Invariably what occurs in a critical juncture will be reviewed by the Supreme Court, and its constitutionality will be measured. What the First Amendment means for freedom of the press is likely to be determined in the coming generation, and scholars need to start preparing for it now. There has been tremendous pressure to make the First Amendment into a piece of protective legislation for media corporations and commercial values, although the courts have not gone all the way in that direction.

Specifically, Supreme Court rulings have defended the principle that the First Amendment belongs to the public, and not media owners, on the basis that spectrum scarcity permits the government to intervene on behalf of the citizenry. This is a very thin reed to hang such an important principle on, and it is unlikely to empirically survive the digital era. Our challenge is to answer this call, working with what has been left to us by Jefferson, Madison, Black, and Stewart to generate a democratic vision of freedom of the press as a necessity for all citizens and for self-governance – not just a privilege for investors and companies that happen to have holdings in the media sector. As cases work their way through the system in the coming generation, we need to have hard empirical research as well as thoughtful treatises on the relationship of a free press to self-governance and what this means for the First Amendment. It is still to be determined. The important point is that this is not a legalistic matter to be left to the lawyers; it is the most fundamental of policies that requires the active participation of communication scholars and engaged citizens. The simplistic interpretation of the First Amendment proffered by many communication scholars at present is insufficient to the task at hand.

The next two areas of “basic” research are somewhat more substantial and require greater explanation. Sixth, we have to think broadly about the Internet and what type of digital communication world we wish to build. What we need is a political economy of the Internet. The best work along these lines by far has been done by a handful of legal scholars (Benkler, 2006; Goldsmith & Wu, 2006; Lessig, 1999, 2001, 2004). Such a political economy entails a multitude of issues. On the one hand, it requires some big-picture analysis of the relationship of the Internet to global capitalism and to democratic institutions. On the other hand, it includes a handful of specific areas that all boil down to crucial policy debates that loom on the horizon. This means that telecommunication research must be more closely integrated into media studies. Convergence is obliterating the distinction.²⁰

A number of other research and policy issues surround the Internet. Digital communication is radically overturning most media industries. Music is already on the chopping block (for a good review of trends in the music industry, see Parks, 2007);

terrestrial broadcasting, daily newspapers and film are in the on-deck circle. All the other media industries are in line behind them, waiting their turn. We need to rethink copyright and intellectual property laws so that creative workers can receive just compensation for their labor without letting corporations put up barbed wire all over cyberspace, destroying the public domain and handcuffing creativity. Some new and pathbreaking communication research has developed the social and political implications of copyright (Bettig, 1996; Bettig & Hall, 2003; McLeod, 2005; Perelman, 2002; Vaidhyanathan, 2003, 2004). In many respects, the commercial media system as it has developed is a very bad fit for digital technology. Copyright has become, to some extent, a policy to protect out-of-date industries from change that would benefit everyone else, rather than a progressive policy and subsidy to promote creativity and culture. Similarly, we need to conduct research on privacy, surveillance, and data mining. How can we best protect privacy from governments and commercial interests? We need much more sustained research that leads to coherent policy proposals.

Seventh, even if we have a ubiquitous and affordable Internet, Net Neutrality, strict privacy protection, less restrictive copyright laws, and appropriate curbs on commercialism, all will not be settled in the digital media universe. Every bit as important, we have to use our intellects, imaginations, and research skills to develop alternative models for media organizations. Perhaps the most important lesson we have learned in the past decade has been that doing good media, even in the digital era, requires resources and institutional support. The Internet does many things, but it does not wave a magic wand over media bank accounts.

To do great media requires resources and compensated labor, and as a society we are going to have to generate policies, not unlike those created by the Founders, to spawn a vibrant media in the digital era. This is true across the board, but the crisis is most striking in the case of journalism, where the Internet not only doesn't fatten the bankroll, it doesn't offer protection when powerful government or business figures come after you. And good journalism will invariably antagonize someone in power. We need research that examines the institutional structures most conducive to vibrant journalism, as well as research that clarifies what factors produce the most negative effects. If one thing is clear, simply mixing the profit motive with digital technologies does not solve the problem.

Finally, we need to expand all of the above research to a global basis and internationalize our research. If the premises for US communication are disintegrating in a critical juncture, so must the assumptions of US scholars as we look at the world. We must work sympathetically with scholars and citizens in other lands facing situations similar to our own; they probably have more to teach us than we have to teach them (Morris & Waisbord, 2001; Price, 2002). This means doing hard comparative analysis of communication policies and systems in other nations. And we need to be more critical – in the intellectual sense of the term – toward the US government and commercial activities abroad; if we learn nothing else from the disastrous invasion and occupation of Iraq, it is that the assumption that the United States is a benevolent

force for good in the world needs to be established with evidence. A good starting point would be to regard the intentions and motives of the US government and corporations with the same skepticism – i.e., demand the same evidence for claims – we use in assessing the motives of other governments, especially those not on friendly terms with the US government. The double standard has never been defensible, but in a critical juncture it becomes pure propaganda.

Most important, while crucial policy decisions guiding the communication revolution are significantly national – and that is what I have emphasized herein – the global arena is growing in importance, and in an increasing number of cases it will override national policymaking. Moreover, these issues are closely tied to how the global political economy will develop, and how nations might improve the conditions for the mass of impoverished peoples. Already the question of whether media policies should be connected to global trade agreements has emerged; if they are so subsumed, that would override national policies (Geradin & Luff, 2004; Grant & Wood, 2004). Currently there are major debates globally over intellectual property and control and regulation of the Internet (Drahos & Braithwaite, 2002). There are serious questions concerning advertising and the disposition of the spectrum. There are also important questions about global economic development using the new communication technologies.

In sum, the political economy of communication provides a basis for research that goes to the heart of social and intellectual concerns today. The subfield cannot alone come close to providing comprehensive answers to all the great questions before us, but it can make a necessary and valuable contribution to all research on these matters.

NOTES

- 1 This was an obsession of James Madison, and likewise explains his obsession with having a viable independent press that would keep the government from becoming an empire. One scholar who has drawn the connection between US empire and domestic crisis that resonate well with a critical juncture analysis is Chalmers Johnson (2007).
- 2 <http://www.thebulletin.org/>
- 3 Profiles of Smythe and Schiller can be found in Lent (1995).
- 4 This includes much of his most important work.
- 5 Political economy of communication was anything but a monolithic enterprise in this period. Smythe's arguments provoked considerable and spirited debate. See, for example, Murdock (1978).
- 6 After initial success, Beacon Press bought the rights to the book, and a second edition was published in 1992 by Westview.
- 7 Schiller's final book was a fine restatement of his core positions and showed that he was keenly aware of global developments. See Schiller (1996).
- 8 I want to thank Dan Schiller specifically for much of the material in this paragraph.
- 9 Some of the work from the political economy tradition that caught my attention (and not mentioned elsewhere in this chapter) in the 1980s included: Ewen (1977); Gandy

- (1982); Jhally (1990); Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1986); Mosco (1979, 1989); Schiller (1982); Turow (1984, 1989); Wasko (1982).
- 10 Sweezy (1970) also wrote arguably the finest introduction to Marxist political economy in the English language.
 - 11 I had the privilege of co-editing *Monthly Review* with John Bellamy Foster, Harry Magdoff, and Paul Sweezy from 2000 to 2004. I left MR when my work with Free Press took off, although I continue on its board of directors.
 - 12 The classic statement of this position ironically located four theories, but really came down to “us versus them.” See Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956).
 - 13 Several people whom I respect followed the technological path to Jacques Ellul. That was never my trajectory, but for those interested, see Ellul (1965, 1980, 1990).
 - 14 I am not close-minded on this issue. See Shaffer (2006). For a provocative discussion about how our romanticization of the benefits of a print-dominated culture may obscure our ability to understand the benefits of the coming digital communications era, see Stephens (1998).
 - 15 This is some of the more impressive research generated by the political economy of communication tradition since the 1990s through to today, that is not mentioned elsewhere in the chapter: Gandy (1993, 1998); Hagen and Wasko (2000); Jhally and Lewis (1992); Mosco (2004); Pendakur (2003); Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2001); Splichal and Wasko (1993); Sussman (1991, 1997, 2005); Sussman and Lent (1998); Turow (1992, 1997); Turow and Kavanaugh (2003); Wasko (1992, 1994, 2001, 2003, 2005); Wasko and Mosco (1992); Wasko, Phillips, and Meehan (2001).
 - 16 Interestingly, these are areas that get far more attention as a rule in communication departments outside the United States. As ICA president Sonia Livingstone, a professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science, wrote to me upon reading this section of my manuscript: “I am less sure about ongoing US research, but I am clear that this is, exactly, the research agenda for many of us in Europe. Indeed, it reads like a run down of what’s going on in my department right now.” Sonia Livingstone email to the author, February 23, 2007.
 - 17 There are classic texts that make these points as well, and they are well worth reading: Bator (1960); Kapp (1950); Mishan (1968, 1971, 1973a, 1973b, 1973c, 1982, 1986); Scitovsky (1971).
 - 18 See, for example, Associated Press (2007, p. A5). I take up this point below in my discussion of the Internet.
 - 19 I am reminded of the comments of *New Republic* editor Bruce Bliven in the 1930s. He found broadcast advertising so “obnoxious” that he wished “the radio had never been invented” (cited in McChesney, 1994, p. 105).
 - 20 One very important scholar of telecommunications who has addressed the Internet directly is Milton Mueller (1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2004).

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Unmasking Class and Tradition

Questioning Recuperative History and Affiliation in Cultural Studies

Cameron McCarthy and Jennifer Logue

ABSTRACT

Drawing on examples of cinematic and literary production, this chapter calls attention to the limitations of British cultural studies regarding topics on which the theorization of proponents has been long thought to be fundamentally secure. These topics are class and tradition. The chapter further maintains that the field-bound, ethnographic, and center-periphery paradigm that has fueled the subcultural studies approach to the working class of cultural studies has been overtaken by events associated with globalization in which culture is being separated from place and the long-held stable social identities associated with the working class are being disembedded. Now, identities have become more hybrid, and more coordinated across a plurality of styles, tastes, needs, interests, and organizational capacities. Working-class actors increasingly recuperate their identities in the domain of hyperconsumption rather than production. This is the era of the working class without work. Understanding this requires greater attention to the international division of labor and transnational and postcolonial perspectives.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume I: *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*. Edited by John Nerone.

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Introduction

COMBO: Milk, I have got one question to ask you. Do you consider yourself English or Jamaican?

MILKY: [long pause] . . . English!

COMBO: That's what we need. That's what this nation has been built on. Proud men. Proud f. . .ing warriors. Two thousand years this little tiny f. . .ing island has been raped and pillaged by people who have come here and wanted a piece of it. Two f. . .ing world wars, men have laid down their lives for this. And for what? So we can stick our f. . .ing flag in the ground and say: Yes, this is England . . . and this is England . . . and this is England!

(From Shane Meadows's *This is England*)

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it as "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger [. . .] In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from conformism that is about to overpower it.

(Benjamin, 1968, p. 255)

Some Preliminary Points

In a brilliant detour from his central project at hand – an assessment of the significance of the life and work of the great German art collector, caricaturist, and historian Edward Fuchs – Walter Benjamin pointed to an inescapable contradiction that cuts through all modern forms of cultural assertion, affiliation, and intellectual paradigms: “There is no document of culture,” noted Benjamin (2008), “which is not at the same time a document of barbarism” (p. 124). There is, as he went on to argue, no proper historical accounting of this kind of opposition. Each intellectual tradition struggles with this tension of bearing forth insight into the stratified world that it tries to apprehend and disclose and the weight of its own blind spots and narrowed parameters of vision. The stream of recuperative history of any intellectual tradition or movement – be it the Frankfurt School or cultural studies, or otherwise – when treated as a cultural artifact is not as Edward Said maintained a “palimpsest” (1985, p. 165), but is instead a fractured parchment revealing tensions, contradictions, unmoored orientations, and lines of flight. This methodological stance is particularly useful when one considers any exemplar of the revisionist neo-Marxist radical traditions. Here, our focus is on British cultural studies viewed from the perspective of postcolonial and transnational critique. Like Benjamin, we are interested in the way cultural studies addresses the past in light of the fractured present. For based upon even the most cursory consideration of the guiding assumptions of proponents, British cultural studies can be challenged in two areas in which this body of scholarship has

been always thought to be secure: the topics of class and tradition. These areas of cultural studies thought contain elements of the blind spots that Benjamin alluded to. We maintain, for instance, that British cultural studies proceeds from a repression or disavowal of the contradictions of tradition, affirming a class-conflicted modernity and a transhistorical universalism against a primordial past. British cultural studies proponents textually construct the working class as defined by an unyielding Britishness. Britishness becomes the organizing principle of class identity. The British working class stands in as proxy for the universal working class, enfolding the periphery in the center of the world. This is a formulation on class that is profoundly nation-bound and, more importantly, is written – as Anoop Nayak (2003) points out – aggressively against postcolonial subjects who enter the waning British scene of labor as immigrants from the colonies; as the metonymic “Pakis” or “Jamaicans” of Paul Willis’s *Learning to Labor* (1981).

In what follows, we address the turbulent relationship that British cultural studies scholars have with the concepts of “class” and “tradition” and the problematic social epistemological status of these key terms within the cultural studies literature. We maintain, in part, that these concepts have been deployed within a center–periphery thesis and a field-bound ethnographic framework by cultural studies scholars pursuing a subcultural studies approach. Within this framework, “Britishness” has been the silent organizing principle defining metropolitan working-class traditions and forms of cultural resistance. British cultural studies proponents have therefore pursued the study of class and culture as a localized, nation-bound set of interests. This has placed cultural studies in tension with postcolonial subjectivities often reduced, as they have been in the classic works of Paul Willis’s *Learning to Labor* (1981) and Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), to the metonymic “Pakis” and “Jamaicans.” We write against the grain of the textual production of the working class within cultural studies scholarship, insisting that recent films – such as *This Is England* (2007), *The Full Monty* (1997), *Billy Elliot*, (2000), and *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) – and the literary works of George Orwell, George Lamming, Jeanette Winterson, and Kazuo Ishiguro, offer a more complex story of class identities in the age of globalization and transnationalism.

Further, we address these concerns ultimately pointing to the specter of globalization and the way it challenges the relevance and insightfulness of the postwar cultural Marxism of British cultural studies. We first grapple theoretically with the serviceable tradition that cultural studies draws on to authenticate and center the metropolitan working class in the discussion of class relations, understood transhistorically and universally. We point to the incommensurability of this approach in relation to the contextual reality of present-day postindustrial society and the profoundly limiting framework of nationalism which undergirds the British cultural studies subcultural approach to class. We argue further that this ethnocentric approach to class in British cultural studies scholarship cuts at right angles to the postcolonial subjectivities and the presence of the third world in the metropolitan working class. We then go on to call sharp attention to the nation-bound language and claims that attend the

discussion of the working class specifically in the writings of the great postwar cultural Marxists such as E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Paul Willis, among others. We then examine examples culled from popular film culture to show the complexity of the characterization of the working class that is found in contemporary film and paradoxically absent in the sociological writing of cultural studies. Complementing this we draw as well on the literature of George Orwell, particularly his essay "Shooting an Elephant" (1981). In this essay, Orwell offers a complex portrayal of a British working-class police officer operating on secondment overseas in the then colony of Burma. We conclude by drawing the outlines of the new global context that has precipitated a crisis of language in the neo-Marxist scholarly efforts to grasp the central dynamics of contemporary societies. The latter has led to a depreciation of the value and insightfulness of neo-Marxist analysis in our time. Old metaphors associated with class, economy, and state ("production," "reproduction," "resistance," "the labor-capital contradiction") are now all worn down by the transformations of the past decades in which the saturation of economic and political practices in aesthetic mediations has proceeded full scale (Klein, 2001, 2007).

Let us first consider the problem of class and tradition as they are conjoined in cultural studies.

Reading the British Tradition in Cultural Studies

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants.

(Ishiguro, 1989, p. 43)

Is it surprising that British writing on the industrial working class (or agrarian working class as Ishiguro alludes to above) asserts and proceeds by marking out an assiduously achieved Britishness, a sense of distinctiveness of the English in the mission even of class revolt? And, from this refusal of asceticism and the wanton affirmation of Britishness can cultural studies proponents and scholars be perceived as lumbering too far behind? This chapter is written to interrogate and to interdict cultural studies on the plane of its own discourse of historical recuperation, the recuperation of texts and textualism – the terrain of its recuperation of the selective radical tradition of the British working class and its deployment of "what counts" for cultural relevance in the consideration of change. We want to challenge the grounds of this presumptive deification of the metropolitan working-class cultural form and the elaborated scenario of transhistorical, neo-Marxist universalism in which Paul Willis's "lads" and their contemporaries overwhelmingly occupy the attention of neo-Marxist cultural studies scholars and stand in for the subject/object of history. This deification operates to the detriment of the third world subject either vanquished to the vast wastes of the colony and empire or displaced by globalization to the metropole.

We want to argue that British cultural studies, which has in the past few decades generated such emulation in the United States and elsewhere as an unconstrained critical program of analysis is, to the contrary, a deeply localist, particularistic, introspective, nativist, defensive project that from Leavis to Willis and beyond has been engaged in the invention of a national British radical tradition – fighting off the fog of disillusionment with Marxist orthodoxy on the one hand and resisting the ever-persistent deterritorialization of Britishness and British content in the cultural form of the susceptible British working class by US popular culture on the other. We want to argue, in part, that the birthing of the metropolitan working class as *flaneurs* of the modern is achieved at the point of petrification of the postcolonial subaltern. These are the “other Victorians” – working-class Asians and West Indians and so forth – who are measured at that xenophobic historical moment in Willis’s *Learning* and Hebdige’s *Subculture* in which they are metonymically produced as “Pakis” and “Jamaicans,” the blunt, butt end of the laughing fodder of the lads.

This neo-Marxist cultural studies ethnographic text in its documentary practice is indeed the product of a sensationalist media age and the impact of the cinematic and the culture of the visual on writing and enunciation. Marxist realism is a class realism. But, it is a realism no less. It achieves verisimilitude through the mimetic organization of the world in the text. Herein, the neo-Marxist text becomes socially extended and stratified like the world outside, with ruling and subaltern energies. Here, then, the effect is to use the text against those whom it would abandon. Those voiceless in the world are voiceless in text. The text is the incubator of British traditions. The world is set down according to a hierarchy of discourses and a bureaucratic deployment of subjectivity that Ian Watt and others have noticed in the rise of the nineteenth-century novel (Harris, 1967; Watt, 1957). The third world subject appears immersed on the wrong side of that fatal couplet text/experience – speechless, spoken for, drowning in the concatenation of events that makes experience and squirming before the steely eyes of the lads. Stripped of their texts, their organized meanings, their interpretations, they are without tradition, the hapless witnesses to the shock of the text – reduced to a form of helpless spectatorship. One remembers here the natives of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* who are allowed barely four words in the entire novel: “Mistah Kurtz – he dead” (Conrad, 1990, p. 240).

It is not surprising, then, that when Willis (2005) revisits the lads in some of his latest writings, the story of the lads is recounted without a mention of the children of the urban paradise lost – the West Indians jamming to reggae, the Asians desperate to join the “earholes.” We are reminded of that swiftly vanishing scene at the end of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Here the unknowable box-headed monster is let go into the mist – a sublime end after a miserable and mundane tour of duty: “He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance” (Shelley, 1993). The natives counter-posed to the lads come to a mercurial end in the modernizing project of the neo-Marxists.

But our quarrel is not with Willis’s book *per se*. Its critical and utopian dimensions can be securely upheld, if not too overly celebrated, in the fields of humanities and

social sciences now punished as they are in the current neoliberal climate of the university by overwhelming paradigms and frames of reference of instrumental research and policy expectations. It should be rightly extolled. That *Learning to Labor* is both an imperialist as well as a postcolonial text is also difficult to ignore. *Learning to Labor* announces the arrival of the third world subject on the waning scene of British labor. A fundamentally buried theme in this book is the fact of the dynamic relationship between the working classes across the divide of the third world and the first in the reorganization of capital – the movement of images, bodies, and economic and cultural capital that we now call globalization. The whole disembeddedness of modernization that places the native prostrate at the feet of Albion – a marginal topic that now, in hindsight after *The Full Monty*, seems to be so deeply prophetic. (“Those are the pearls that were their eyes. Look!” [Eliot, 1954].) And, urban England would become a beachhead for Caribbean and Asian migrant labor. This dynamic would announce the post-Fordist logic that we find acknowledged more readily in films such as *This is England* (2007), *The Full Monty* (1997), *Billy Elliot* (2000), and *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002). There is a way in which the fates of immigrant labor and the lads and their dads are inextricably connected. It is this fate that is recognized in the work of Wilson Harris’s *Carnival* (1985), in the character of Everyman Masters who leaves the South American country of Guyana to join the British industrial working class some time in the 1960s. It is there in Samuel Selvon’s *Lonely Londoners* (1956), of the Barbadians, the Trinidadians and Jamaicans trying to eke out an existence in the coldness of London that would be their new post-national home. It is there in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981). It is there too, of course, in George Lamming’s *The Emigrants* (1994) in the mass exodus of cooks, maids, carpenters, transportation workers, poets, and novelists traveling to England, leaving behind their folding little nations of the Caribbean Sea. It is with this movement or moveable tableau of the diaspora that the postcolonial subjects find in London an agonizing and antagonistic landing and precarious settlement.

To summarize, then, one of the ironic and unexamined effects of the emergence of the neo-Marxist and neo-Gramscian cultural studies text has been the founding of the metropolitan working-class subject, and the elaboration of the full interiority of its collective subjectivity, entirely at the expense, and with the corresponding deflation, of the postcolonial and subaltern identities in the urban context. This third-world, periphery subjectivity is constructed at the extremes of the semiotic space which the lads inhabit as a point of reference. Third world subjects are constructed outside the working class as petrified spectators. There, they stand beholding a scene not of their own making but much undone by it. And yet, they answer back, as the first stanzas of a high school student’s poem entitled “Mixed” will attest:

A marble cake describes my ethnicity
The two combined is unique
It’s beautiful while others disagree
They’re blinded by racism and can’t see

This is my identity
It was meant to be

I'm not ashamed to be a half breed.

(Bishop, 2006, p. 1)

Let us examine the status of the lads and the fate of their postcolonial other in the elevated discourses of British cultural studies more specifically. Specifically, we look at the status of the concept of tradition as it is textually mediated within British cultural studies and the way in which tradition impoverishes our understanding of the relations of the working classes across the divide of metropole and the periphery. We believe that contemporary film and literature point us more adroitly to the dilemmas of modern working-class subjectivity disembedded and impacted by globalization and multiplicity.

Re-Narrating Class and Cultural Studies

UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: Ooooh, did you make these?
 ZAINAB: Yes. I made it.
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: Oohh, how much?
 ZAINAB: Which one?
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: Mmmmm, this one.
 ZAINAB: That's thirty-five dollars.
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: Will you take thirty?
 ZAINAB: No. Thirty-five.
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: Okay. My daughter will think this is very cool. *She hands Zainab money.* Where are you from?
 ZAINAB: Senegal.
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: Ooh I was in Capetown two summers ago. It is SO beautiful!
 ZAINAB: Thank you very much.
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: What's your name?
 ZAINAB: Uh, Zainab.
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: Oooh, Zaaynob, so pretty!
 ZAINAB: Your change.
 UPPER EASTSIDE WOMAN: *Shrugs nonchalantly, grabs her forgotten change and walks away.*
 ZEV: How far is Senegal from Capetown?
 ZAINAB: About 8,000 kilometers.

(*The Visitor*, 2007)

The question is not what goal is envisaged for the time being by this or that member of the proletariat, or even by the proletariat as a whole. The question is what is the proletariat and what course of action will it be forced historically to take in conformity with its own nature.

(Marx, quoted in Lukács, 1972, p. 46)

The stratification of the problems and economic interests within the proletariat is, unfortunately, almost wholly unexplored, but research would undoubtedly lead to discoveries of the very first importance.

(Lukács, 1972, p. 79)

Marx's chief work, Lukács told us almost 100 years ago, changes direction just when he was about to sketch out a definition of class. And we are still in need of a conception that captures the fluidity, the fissures, and the complexity of the subjectivities that can be said to belong in this class or that. We claim that we are in need of a complete overhaul of our perceptual, conceptual, and linguistic apparatus if we are to provide insight into the basis on which to imagine and build networks of affiliation across national, local, and global divides and lines of race, class, and gender. We argue further that placing aspects of contemporary popular culture in conversation with the scholarly discourses of cultural Marxism can help us to do just that.

In the scene depicted above (from Thomas McCarthy's film, *The Visitor*), we see how the experiences of Zainab and Zev, illegal immigrants in New York City, barely register on the radar of White, Upper-Eastsiders, for whom the world is understood from their own solipsistic perspective alone. In much the same way as we see how the gaze and the discourse of the wealthy white woman is critiqued by Zainab and Zev, we subject the analytic apparatus of cultural Marxism to scrutiny. Reading it contrapuntally (Logue, 2005) through the lenses of cinematic and literary representation we begin to see how the units of analysis in the discourse of cultural/historical materialist revolution are incapable of encapsulating the dynamics of power at work in past and present relations of power. Juxtaposing analysis of the nostalgic and unified nationalist structure of feeling with which the neo-Marxist discourse in postwar Britain is silently aligned to the problematization of tradition we see in cinematic and literary representation provides an opportunity to (re)examine the conceptual tensions and categorical contradictions that exist within this discourse of resistance, the terms of which, as commonly deployed, seem to undermine the possibility of adequately diagnosing the (new but reminiscent of old) dynamics of power and resistance with which it claims to grapple.

Disavowing particularity (at once universalizing and pathologizing it) is an age-old strategy of domination. We see this tendency at work in the way that terms such as "tradition," "culture," "class," "power," "privilege," etc. are commonly deployed as though they weren't (each of them) riddled with complexity, contradiction, and antagonistic genealogical formation. The persistent assignment of particularism and atavism to the vast wastes of the third world begins with Karl Marx himself, as well as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, in their particular staged-model of historical evolution of human societies. It continues in contemporary thinking in the attribution of the same scarlet letter to the new social movements and the rejection of identity politics in the writings of Marxist scholars such as Todd Gitlin (1995). This chapter restores a corrective valence to the whole enterprise of the analysis of culture. We read all of this against the troubling of tradition and the past in recent

films on the working-class subject, as well as George Orwell's (1981) discourse on tradition, power, and privilege. In the latter, the "ear-holed" working-class subject now operates on colonial secondment overseas. In reading back and forth between Birmingham and Burma a new light is shed on recombinant particularism (*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack!*) that the analytic framework of cultural Marxism seems to have foreclosed. For to understand British cultural studies is in part to understand that Mathew Arnold's project still survives in the hearts and minds of men and women at home, and even overseas in the empire, as C. L. R. James argues in *Beyond a Boundary* (1983).

In examining the status of tradition and the past within cultural Marxism as a way of clearing a path to the future, looking particularly at the work of historical recuperation within Marxist cultural humanism and its tendencies toward the universalization of the particular, a sharp light of attention is focused on British cultural studies, its anxiety of influence, and its graven desire for plenitude and fullness of understanding of the socially and materially constructed demarcations of the modern world. One is reminded here of the definition of culture and cultural studies advanced by John Fiske (1987): "Cultural Studies is concerned with the generation and circulation of meanings in industrial societies (*the study of non-industrial societies may require a different theoretical base* [. . .])" (p. 254). Cultural studies' search for the vanishing point, the origins of consciousness and general mythologization and valorization of the industrial working-class subject, is nestled within a peculiar narrative and play of national endowment, affiliation, and ethnic and localist distinctiveness in its founding arguments and concerns. Of course, similar arguments could be made about the nationalist canalization of tradition and the localist focus of the urban sociological ethnographies coming out of the Chicago School inspired by Robert Park and his students, right down to Howard Becker and the deviance research that influenced cultural studies proponents' pathbreaking ethnographies, as Michael Burawoy has argued (Burawoy et al., 2000).

This valorization of the traditions of the industrial working class has had several consequences (beyond the mistaking of spitballs for revolution) not always adequately accessed or diagnosed to date – one being the disavowal of particularism no different in structure and tone than what could be found in the patterned variables and structural functionalism over all in the work of mainstream social scientists such as Talcott Parsons. Of course, an integral feature of the reverence for working-class traditions is the methodological overlay of field-bound ethnographic rules and the visual culture documentary impulses that flow from Bronislaw Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe Brown, and Margaret Meade, and monumentalist classical anthropology into the critical sciences in media studies and elsewhere, paralleling the rise of visual culture as a whole in silent and sound film, television and radio broadcasting, and the like. As an aside, it is to be remembered that in the 1920s and 1930s it was naturalistic ethnographic research – not quantitative survey analysis – that was the dominant research paradigm in the social sciences. The dominance of survey and market research would come later when Paul Lazarsfeld crossed the open

seas of the Atlantic from Austria and joined Robert Merton at Columbia University in New York. But that is a matter for another time.

Interrogating the foundational assumptions and technical terms deployed in the discourses of cultural Marxism, we foreground the epistemological, ethical, and political implications of not investigating what it is these conceptual tools enable us to open up and what it is they foreclose. Does the concept of “class,” for example, as deployed within cultural studies research properly capture the contradictions experienced by category members in their everyday, lived existence and their class trajectories as they intersect with the new social subjects of the modern world – the diasporic “Pakis” and “West Indians” of British urban ethnographic lore (carriers of class histories of a different order)? How are the class affiliation and performative practices of Willis’s “earholes” to be understood within this paradigm, particularly when these putative class members no longer seek to align themselves with the traditions which theorists of the working class describe? Is the working-class concept equipped to theorize the collective formation of agents with shared interests as members of interpretive communities composed of individuals and fractions that may or may not share the same relation to the means of production? Should it be? And what happens to sex/gender/sexuality when class becomes the primary category of analysis? What follows is a critical conversation between foundational texts of cultural Marxism and forms of popular culture to illuminate some of these complexities captured on the big screen and in the ill-fated peregrinations of the working-class subject in modern literature (our example, here, George Orwell’s tale of an “uneducated” colonial police officer’s fateful encounter with the “native” agro-proletariat in the Burmese context as British imperial rule there waits to exhale). An effort at (re)historicizing the “tradition” of cultural Marxism, uncovering its inherent ethnocentrism, provides the framework for a brief discourse analysis of the deployment of terms like “class,” “power,” and “privilege” held together by notions of culture and tradition that are problematically monolingual and monotoned. Reading these discourses, texts, and conceptual tools contrapuntally through the lenses of cinematic and literary representation magnifies the need to reconfigure language, perception, and desire so that the conversation and transnational hybridity that is culture can take place and be grappled with collectively.

Deconstructing Demystification

A central task of this chapter, then, is to demystify the demystifiers on the problem of tradition and particularism which the classical sociologists had assured us would diminish with the advance of capitalism. The tendency to shunt particularism off to the periphery is therefore consistent with this core form of thinking. The ethnographic impulse that underlies cultural Marxism fuses action and interpretation, experience and text, worlding the world from the metropolitan center into its visible

hierarchies of class and culture. Standing at the center of this panopticon, the whole social field spreads out before the Marxist observer like a vast unscrolling map. This cartographer of the modern world measures and weighs its social distinctions with the finality of a puritan and with the fervor of what Rey Chow (2002) calls “the protestant ethnic.” In the cultural Marxist’s elective epiphany, the third world subject would virtually perish. But in this disavowal, particularism returned like a plague of innocence. Read on its own terms as a quest for scientificity, cultural Marxism divines class from the entrails of the social present and past, and ethnicity disappears. Read against the grain as a reluctant form of autobiography, the root book of cultural Marxism reveals its protagonist dressed in his solipsistic bright suit of ethnic privilege. And here, by this strategy, ethnic particularism appears. It is this deep-bodied ethnocentrism, paradoxically attached to the generalizations and transhistorical statements about the industrial working class and human societies associated with the theorizing of critical social scientists, that Horace Miner satirizes in his classic essay “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” (Nacirema spelled backwards, of course, is “American”). Here, Miner talks about the mouth rites of the Nacirema, in the process exposing the classic norms underlying the cultural description that constituted the leitmotif of culturalist scholars writing about others:

The daily body ritual performed by everyone includes a mouth rite. Despite the fact that these people are so punctilious about the care of the mouth, this rite involves a practice which strikes the uninitiated stranger as revolting. It was reported to me that the ritual consists of inserting a small bundle of hog hairs into the mouth, along with certain magical powders, and then moving the bundle in a highly formalized series of gestures. (Miner, 1956, p. 503)

The everyday practice of brushing the teeth is elevated to the realm of magic. The magician, the social observer and his besotted humanism, are defamiliarized here. And, the anthropological gaze of the West upon the third world subject is turned back on power for an evanescent moment full of illumination.

When we look, too, at the writings and founding motives of cultural studies, we find a similar hidden subject within the text that attaches itself to the working class and hides its own anxieties and its professional updraft. When we look at the work of Richard Hoggart, or Raymond Williams or E. P. Thompson, or later Paul Willis and Dick Hebdige, we find an ethnographic Marxism alloyed to a visceral nationalism, an ethnic particularism and wish fulfillment which it denies. How else can we read the intellectual history of Williams’s *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (1966) but as a formidable and unrelenting recuperation of the Leavisian moral sensibility and purpose of British cultural form – the dream of the whole way of life as the encoding and decoding of national ethos in the British industrial novel and literary works? Burke, Cobbett, Southey, Owen, Bentham, Coleridge, Carlyle, Gaskell, Disraeli, Dickens, Arnold, Ruskin, Richards, Leavis, Orwell! If ever there was an assertion of a national canon, a court of appeal, the breaking

out of particular cultural sensibility linked to national distinctiveness, this was one. How else is one to read Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) with its characteristic mourning of the lost of the English working-class way of life (Morley & Robins, 1995) – its rampant nostalgia for a translucent past then in imminent dissolution? How else are we to read the brilliant E. P. Thompson, who at the end of *The Making of the English Working Class* (1980) makes the disclaimer that he was not competent to speak for any other working class than the English . . . not even the Scots or the Welsh? How else are we to read Paul Willis and his lads of Hammertown Boys who reduce the postcolonial other to the metonymic “Pakis” and “Jamaicans?” This great cauterizing reflex, this severe backward glance, was born in fact in the context of a general crisis of the relevance or irrelevance (depending on your ideological persuasion) of Western Marxism as the Soviets marched into Hungary in the 1950s and then into Czechoslovakia in the 1960s (Dworkin, 1997; Taubman, 2004). In this rude awakening from methodological slumber, British Marxist historians would disconnect from the work of international socialism, the Communist Party, and found their own distinctive theories of the origin of the British working class in the revival of working-class radical traditions (Dworkin, 1997; Hall, 1980). This working-class construct, for the subcultural theorists of resistance at Birmingham, was defined around a militancy of style, distinctive accoutrements and dress, argot and the like. This characteristically muscular construct, as Angela McRobbie (1997) would note, folded the working class into a singular, homogenous structure, powerful against its class adversaries, its semiotic chora set against the “earholes” and contemptuous and disdainful of the periphery. The power within this framework operated like a blunt instrument that was applied to the working classes and applied, in turn, like the clubbed foot of an elephant, by the working class against its ethnic rivals and latecomers from the third world; Sisyphus pushing against his enemies, all costermongers pushing rotten apples, as V. S. Naipaul would say of the donned dwellers of Oxbridge. Geoff Pearson's assessment of “Paki-bashing” in the northern English town of Lancashire underscored the vigorous tendency within cultural studies to subordinate ethnicity and race to class. Indeed, Pearson (1976) maintains “only if we enter into the heart of working-class life can we understand these beliefs and actions. ‘Paki-bashing’ is a primitive form of political and economic struggle. It is an inarticulate and finally potent attempt to act directly on the conditions of the market – whether the exchange value which is contested concerns housing, labor power or girls” (p. 69).

In its radical ethnocentrism, cultural Marxism closed off the White working class from its racially minoritized other, orientalizing the latter whether they were from Asia or the Caribbean as metonymic attachments – the “Pakis” or the “Jamaicans.” A deadly consequence of this is that the working-class subject and the nature of power were not presented in a sufficiently complex or nuanced way. Indeed, it would be left to the filmic culture and the literary culture to present more complicated views of class power and class subjects. The texts we discuss here effectively articulate complex accounts of the enlacement of class with ethnicity in a world transforming

into hyper-globalization and transnationalism. But before we turn to the filmic and literary culture for insight, let us try and spell out a little more thoroughly the nature of the conceptual tensions that stem from this radical ethnocentrism.

Revisiting the Operationalization of the Category of Class

The lack of unity and the fluidity found within different lived realities within nations and around the globe are not and cannot be contained in the concepts we have used to articulate them – concepts such as *the* working class, which have been the animating and organizing categories deployed in much contemporary “neo-Marxist” analysis. Crucial aspects of what it means to be a socio/discursively constructed subject differentially positioned in a nebulous network of power relations are overlooked when definitions of culture, class, and power involve a nationalist monologue at the expense of intercultural dialogue and exchange. Language, here, is of primary importance, for not only does it serve to articulate and delimit a set of criteria for establishing whether or not one belongs to a given tradition, or rather, where they belong in relation to it, but also it often seems to reinforce the very social structures it is invoked to subvert.

Historicizing the concept of class, for example, reveals not only that common contemporary usage of the term too often fails to adequately absorb and embrace crucial distinctions and complex variations found with in “it.” It is also the case that “class” is then disembedded from its proclaimed tradition, thereby eliding paradoxical implications of forms of resistance achieved by revolutionary discourses past and present. How, for example, is the Marxian distinction between *Klasse en sich* (class in itself) and *Klasse fuer sich* (class for itself) placed within the work of cultural Marxism? Marx theorized *class in itself* to signify those who share a common location with regard to their relations to the means of production, while *class for itself* pertained to members of a group who consciously recognize their shared predicament and common interests, actualizing their needs and desires through networks of communication and resistance by organizing around their shared conflict with the opposing class. The two contending classes here, for contemporary Marxism, included the proletariat, destined to become *class for itself*, and the bourgeoisie, incapable of formulating class consciousness beyond the pursuit of individual self-interest. What was less spelled out, however, were the dynamics, shifts, and conflicts found within *class in itself*. For when one tries to work out how factors of race, gender, and sexuality figure into the operationalization of the definition of the proletariat/“working class” *in itself*, one may be inclined to suggest that there were numerous formations and reformations of *class for itself* within the “working class” and that these variations on the theme were of less urgency for Marx (and later neo-Marxists) to articulate. Continuing in this vein, early postwar cultural studies theorists failed to track the

dynamic patterns of migration, dislocation, and rearticulation that had begun to feed into the class experience of working-class subjects in England and that brought new elements, new potential conscripts, to membership within the industrial working class. They had failed to adequately assess the changing map of spatial relations and the interior realities of British urban life itself as part of a broad-scale set of effects brought on by late capitalism – effects that were now stalking modern industrial societies. It seems that, here, the seeds of an under-theorized dynamic involving the mis(sed)diagnosis of the impact of networks of global communication, movement and migration of economic and cultural capital, and the amplification of representations and images had been effectively sown. What was nurtured instead was an ethnic and nationalist myopia planted firmly in the soil of an agrarian England transcoded onto the urban setting. The nurturing work of much of the historical recuperation of British radical traditions such as that of E. P. Thompson or Raymond Williams always, then, had a backward glance – an eternalist sense of *le temps perdu*, *los pasos perdidos*. Time and space essentially stood still. And, for instance, Willis would find in the Hammertown Boys School in *Learning to Labor* (1981) that the progeny of the working class grew from seedlings that were planted by their fathers on the shop floor. This backward glance – a nostalgia for the past, a nostalgia perplexed by the present – rendered problematic the entire analytical apparatus of the cultural studies discourse on class and change. In affirming the class essence of the industrial proletariat, this nostalgia had a particular methodological effect concerning class analysis as deployed within cultural studies: a tendency to gloss over contradiction, variation, and multiplicity.

Is this affirmation of traditional essence and the latent but virile proposition of the indivisibility of the working class, in a sense, what Hebdige (1979) accomplishes by writing of reggae and punk as seemingly equivalent subcultures? Rather than emphasizing these formations and modes of resistance as mutually constitutive, reggae figures in as an expression that culminates in the response of the punks. Neither is reggae considered countercultural or as more than an articulation of style, despite the fact that Hebdige cites it as having created its own language, religion, and vision of the future. Are we to understand the white and black factions described herein as manifestations of *class for itself* contained within the “*working class*?” How are the lived realities and cultural achievements of the diaspora/Black Britain subsumed by this move? Does it contribute to the idea that tradition and culture can be claimed as the moorings of an ethnically invisible yet distinctive group that remains forever threatened by that which it codes as deviant?

And what happens if we take seriously Michel Foucault’s (2002) assertion that the concept of class struggle evolved out of (was extracted/de-historicized from) the discourse of race war/race struggle? Foucault’s genealogy of the discourse of history reveals that racism is imbricated in revolutionary thought coming from the moment when the discourse of race struggle was being transformed into revolutionary discourse, where the state functions no longer as an instrument that one group uses against another: the state becomes the protector of the integrity, the superiority, and

the purity of the race. Foucault reminds us that the concept of class struggle is found first in the discourse of the French historians – in the works of Augustin Thierry, Guizot, John Wade, and others. Thierry is defined as the father of the “class struggle,” used to replace the notion of “race struggle.” The effort to recode race struggle into class struggle is read as a manifestation of the shift in focus on race as existing whenever one writes the history of two groups that do not have the same language, to the term “race” becoming pinned to a biological meaning. This shift in race as linguistic difference to race as biological is what will become actual racism. This racism, according to Foucault, takes over and reconverts the form and function of the discourse of history, which was hitherto a discourse on race struggle/race war. Racism is born then of the shift in historical discourse, once reporting on the theme of historical war with its battles, invasions, victories, and defeats, to the recording of history with a new post-evolutionist theme of the struggle for existence by that of a society that is biologically monist, but which is (needs to be) threatened by a certain number of heterogeneous elements it deems not essential to it. Racism, then, at its inception, becomes manifest in the idea that foreigners have infiltrated society, which is to be safeguarded from deviants, who serve to foreground class conflict by being coded as factors which complicate it.

Foreclosing examination of its own origins, disembedding the discourse of class conflict from the discourse of race struggle impairs analysis of the complex organization of hierarchical social relations and resistance to them. Not only does the term “class” commonly function as though it were a static, impermeable category with an invisible ethnically particular tradition, but it fails to connote the actual strategies through which social subjects forge collective oppositional identities from the grounded pragmatics of cultural hybridities. Rather than attending to the centrality of sexual orientation, gender, and ethnic affiliation in cultural formations and transformations, in creating networks of communication and association, these categories are too often treated as complications contained within the already established organized relations to the means of production. And while the insights and methodological breakthroughs of cultural Marxism are important, like the emphasis on the popular imaginary, style, and other forms of often-overlooked resistance, might the struggles and forms of active resistance of what cultural Marxism lauds as the “working class” be better described as strategies developed by those differentially positioned in a complex web of power relations? It seems as though some of these overlooked dynamics of power and resistance are better captured in the very popular culture that cultural Marxism sought to interpret. But, while cultural Marxism begins to analyze popular culture, does it really converse with it?

It is both in *The Full Monty* and *Billy Elliot* that we see the working class, the “foot soldiers of modernity” as Willis (2005, p. 461) calls them, metamorphosing in the transitional light of globalization, and the tragic programs of deindustrialization and post-Fordism that radically transform the labor market and labor process from hard to soft, from materiality to immateriality, from the decaying manufacture of the metropole to the export processing zones overseas in Asia, Latin America, and

the Caribbean, from hard industry to flexible information, from the working class cast in the center of history to the mass appearance of the proletarianized, temp. working cognitariat (Jencks, 1996; Klein, 2001). Do the terms of the cultural studies working-class discourse on resistance traditions capture such complexity? And, how are these complexities of tradition, class, and power addressed in the filmic and literary culture?

New Frames of Reference and Affiliation in Cinematic and Literary Production

And for what? . . . For what now? . . . What for? So we can just open the flood gates and let all come in and say: "Yeah, come on! Come in! Get off your ship! Did you have a safe journey? Was it hard, was it? Hey, here is a corner. Why don't you build a shop? Better still, why don't you build a shop and a church? Follow your own f. . .ing religions. Do what you want. . . . When there are single f. . .ing parents out there who can't get a f. . .ing flat and they are being given to these . . . and I am going to say it . . . I am going to say it people . . . because you are going to have to hear it . . . We are giving these flats to these f. . .ing Pakis, right? . . . who have got 50 and 60 in a f. . .ing flat on their own. Right?

(From *This is England*)

BILLY'S DAD: Ballet?
 BILLY: What's wrong with ballet?
 BILLY'S DAD: What's wrong with BALLET?
 BILLY: It is perfectly normal . . .
 BILLY'S DAD: Perfectly NORMAL? . . . For girls, not for lads, Billy . . . Lads do football, or boxing or wrestling . . . not frigging ballet!
 BILLY: What lads do? . . . Wrestling? . . . I don't see what's wrong with . . .
 BILLY'S DAD: Yes you do!
 BILLY: No, I don't!
 BILLY'S DAD: Yes you bloody do! . . . Who do you think I am?
 BILLY: What are you trying to say dad . . .

(From *Billy Elliot*)

Contemporary filmic representations often offer complex and nuanced accounts of the transforming circumstances of working-class lived and commodified existence, revealing fault lines of contradiction and multiplicity. Indeed, the vaunted traditions and the folkways of the past so celebrated in the cultural studies ethnographic portrayal of the proletariat from Hoggart to Willis and Hebdige now hang like proverbial dead weights upon the new working-class subject. What the British White working class reluctantly has to face is the late-modern context of postindustrialization and the collapse of the material basis of White working-class identities that were grounded

in shipbuilding, auto manufacture, and coal mining. Many of these industries moved overseas as England was perhaps the first developed country to feel the full brunt of the reorganization of capitalism and the neoliberal reorientation of its government, under Margaret Thatcher (Nayak, 2003; Willis 2005). Thatcher brutally disrupted working-class organizational collectivities and set in train a social and spatial landscape in which the visible markers of working-class identity situated in the factory would be forever uprooted. This is the world of Shane Meadows's provocative film *This is England* (2007), about a group of skinheads who are trying to make sense of the postindustrial world of immigrants, chronic unemployment, and constrained futures. England – as the principal skinhead character, Combo (Stephen Graham), notes above – has changed.

Billy (Jamie Bell) of the film *Billy Elliot* (2000) is also sharply aware of a new, postindustrial world coming into being. For him, the shop floor and the coal mines belong to a distant past and now exist as straitjackets constraining the desires of youth. Billy, instead, chooses a future in the Royal Ballet, in dance, rather than in the Victorian role of male provider of the coal mines and the deunionizing labor of north Durham, England. And in the end, when his latecomer dad attends his performance, he gets to see his son leap and soar, literally and metaphorically, out of the terms of existence that fashioned his life. There is no possibility of return to the past, just the flatlining of traditions and ephemeral revision of hierarchy of cultural distance.

And while Billy's doing ballet demonstrates the falling and collapsing (the ephemerality) of tradition – as well as the ability and desire to leap out of it with passion and grace into creative self-transformation – what does our youthful subject have in common with that weary and worn-out working-class subject featured in the spotlight of much media in the mainstream as well as within the scholarly and political discourses of the radical left? These portray the young White (presumably straight?) “working-class” male as triumphant; the battle scars, struggles, and defeats of the racially and reproductively marginalized others (always present even in their absence) are subsumed in the spotlight of his victory over those forces that constrain and oppress *him*. We can see here how the construct of the working class constricts those who find themselves in it and casts out those who provide the other side of the boundary line. For it is not just the capitalists that constrain him and over whom he seeks to triumph – there are so many more lines drawn in the sand.

Providing for Billy an unnamed but central aspect of his co-authored identity, Debbie Wilkinson (Nicola Blackwell), the daughter of his dance teacher, his potential friend (or rather girlfriend), could have had a voice and purpose in life beyond becoming his worshipping subject seeking to possess him for herself at all costs. This one visible female counterpart is vanquished in the representation. Rather than being portrayed as a potential ally with agency, she is pitted against Billy, so they remain alienated from each other as well as the structures that define and code them. Moreover, the way Whiteness functions (for anyone possessing it) as property, providing a special but spectacularly hidden ethnic particularity, cultural capital, and symbolic power that translate into material profit, remains unexplored. But the depiction

of the “traditional” masculinist working-class subject united against an identifiable enemy with similarly positioned others is indeed challenged here, opening the door for analysis of the underground economies of national identity, sexual orientation, and ethnic affiliation.

In a somewhat different way, but with a similar intensity in the uprooting of the past and tradition, Gurinder Chadha’s *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) is a refreshing depiction of the flatlining of tradition, but this time the star of the show is a young Asian girl, Jesminder. Jess is the youngest daughter in a rather orthodox Sikh family living in Britain who struggles to participate in family tradition while at the same time pursuing her dream to “bend it like Beckham.” She is an agile, wily football (soccer) player who feels that she may be destined only to kick the ball around in parks when no one is looking. She nevertheless manages to be spotted by Hounslow Harriers women’s team, where she soon becomes a star – until her parents find out and ban her from playing. Her mother scolds her: “Who’d want a girl who plays football all day but can’t make chapattis?” Willing to gender bend on some level (but oblivious to the ways in which her sexual orientation has been questioned by her best friend’s mother), her father eventually comes around, preferring his daughter’s happiness to the confines of “tradition,” and we are presented with wonderful depictions of his daughter’s ability to participate with agency in seemingly separate traditions laid out side by side.

Complications of sex/gender/sexuality collide in Deepa Mehta’s *Fire* (1996), where same-sex desire overrides the dictates of tradition for two Indian housewives whose “trial by fire” signals the purity of their new-found love that dares to but cannot speak its name, for “there is no word to describe what we are to each other in our language,” utters Sita (Nandita Das), the more rebellious of the two.

Again we see notions of the past and the “tradition” of the “working class” challenged when the six unemployed steel workers of *The Full Monty* (1997) form a male striptease act, literally defrocking and leaving nothing but their Poulantzian number plates on their backs. The Full Monties of Sheffield literally search for, and then abandon, their iron-mongering past in the decayed industrial rubble of the once-thriving, manufacturing city of Sheffield – shelving their overalls and dungarees for the regular beat as male strippers.

Going further back in filmic representation, we must not forget the telling sentiment: “We’re not English, we’re Londoners.” This is expressed by Sammy in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) after numerous depictions of what might have made Hoggart turn in his grave: Sammy is depicted doing seven different things simultaneously – eating fast food, watching the news, listening to the radio, flipping through a porno magazine, sipping beer, and snorting a line or two of cocaine while conversing with his father, trying to unwind. We have here a depiction of the shifting and fragmented nature of co-authored identities and the processes of disidentification with the ethnic particularity of the “Nation.” It is articulated as a refusal of cultural heritage even as Sammy vigorously indulges in what it has to offer. An alternative representation of desire, romantic/domestic partnerships are pursued here, as well as the building

of an alliance across class (as conceived or portrayed in its strictly material sense) lines. The confines of compulsory heterosexuality and notions of ethnic purity and distinction are subverted as alliances and love affairs transpire between members who are differentially placed within the categories of race, class, and sexuality. Depictions of interracial and homoerotic desires are indeed a sight for sore eyes in this film and in the depictions of love and desire outside the confines of heteronormativity in *My Beautiful Launderette*, which is – we can't forget – the space owned by the “Pakis” who are the employers and lovers of White working-class Johnny.

And with an eye to the under-theorized pathologies of imperial domination, we get a glimpse in these films also of the perils of privilege lived out by its perpetrators. Ravi, for example, Sammy's father, whose involvement in British imperialism leads him to commit suicide after he finds that relocating to Britain fails to drive the brutal memories from his mind of how perhaps his own involvement in maintaining his notion of tradition contributed to his complicity with colonial abuse. Notably, the wealth and riches he received from his affiliation with the colonizers provided neither luxury nor peace of mind, alienating him from his family. They cried, but did they mourn his death? The very privilege promised by tradition seems to have driven him to take his own life, not celebrate it. But where is the guilt or the consciousness of the White colonialist? Though not depicted here, the film helps to demonstrate that thinking of class merely in terms of one's relationship to the mode of production does not allow for the building of alliances outside shared relationships to the means of material production (often more a product of the abstract “in itself” formulations of neo-Marxists scholars). *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* thus offers an excellent example of what networks of affiliation and interpretive communities could look like.

Oppositely privileged individuals both of whom are alienated from their assigned class/social function are portrayed in film, demonstrating once again the way in which crucial aspects of lived social relations form and reform with those that may or may not share the same relationship to the means of production. As Paulo Freire would be inclined to point out, both “oppressor/oppressed” are alienated, dehumanized in relations that prize hierarchy and cultural/traditional superiority. We see this in the lives of White working-class Rita and her professor (Frank), her fleeting mentor, in *Educating Rita* (1983). Both are disillusioned by the promises of becoming offered in dominant ideologies – aspiring to cross over the confines of their class distinctions. We get a sense of the ways in which identity is not a finished product one is bestowed with at birth, but a project always in process, an ongoing ever-changing conversation and exchange with others.

Filmic representations such as these depict the world of change driven by consumer durables. The logic of mobile privatization that made Hoggart so uncomfortable has followed a relentless line to the disembedding of the lads (all that is left is resentment, as Lois Weis [1990] and Michelle Fine and Weis [1998] so effectively underscore). And, the incursions and the blowback of Empire, cell phones and mobiles, smart TVs and remotes, and the musical language of hip hop or Banghra or dance hall now course through and mark the new constantly disembedding

territory of the Hammertown boys, the “lads” – a flower, an orchid, a rhizome blooms viscosely in defiance of the grim reaper of urban space.

Narrating Class and Tradition in the Literary Imagination

Then he said, “On my travels I visited an Indian tribe known as the Hopi. I could not understand them, but in their company they had an old European man, Spanish, I think, though he spoke English to us. He said he had been captured by the tribe and now lived as one of them. I offered him passage home but he laughed in my face. I asked if their language had some similarity to Spanish and he laughed again and said, fantastically, that their language has no grammar in the way we recognize it. Most bizarre of all, they have no tenses for past, present and future. They do not sense time in that way. For them, time is one.” The old man said it was impossible to learn their language without learning their world. I asked him how long it had taken him and he said that question had no meaning. After this we continued in silence.

(Winterson, 1989, p. 154)

Like cinematic representations, the literary imagination troubles notions of tradition, power, and privilege, revealing those dynamics of power and privilege that seem to be foreclosed in scholarly discourses of working-class resistance. Here again, as Benjamin (2006a, 2006b) argues, the critical challenge of the subaltern scholar is to read aesthetic form back into the social relations of material production and the fractured nature of contemporary social life. Orwell, for example, presents the working-class “earhole” or lower-middle-class actor “divided to the vein,” conflicted to the bone (a point that Derek Walcott makes in his famous poem “Far Cry from Africa” [1986, p. 17]). As Uma Kothari (2005) has told us, many of the colonial bureaucrats who went out to the colonies were often of working-class or “earholed” backgrounds, sponsored up to the public school – Eton or Harrow or whatever – and deployed to the imperial periphery with all their hang ups. Read against this phalanx of national assertion, George Orwell (1981) presents a picture of the lower-middle-class subject operating overseas, confronting the periphery inhabitant on his native soil, in a different light – more internally divided, more complexly linked to England and Empire, more uncertain about self and role in the elaboration of Britishness. The ethnographic lens now puts the Western actor under the microscope. Orwell portrays the everyday negotiation of class and power in the imperial outpost of Burma through the mediation of modernizing energies and subaltern subversions (“weapons of the weak”), the anticipation of the waning of Empire and the dubiousness of civilizing missions abroad.

Orwell’s story draws on his experience as a colonial officer. It concerns the angst of an environmentally conscious, uncertain British police officer who, egged on by a crowd of natives to shoot a rogue elephant, compromises his own agency and his

hegemonic subjectivity. The narrator/police officer does not want to shoot the elephant, but he feels compelled by the Burmese agro-proletarians and peasants, before whom he does not wish to appear indecisive or cowardly. The situation and events that Orwell describes underscore the hostility between the administrators of the British Empire and their "native" subjects. However, at another level, it is a deep examination of power. It also foregrounds what the anthropologist James Scott calls the "weapons of the weak" (Scott, 1985). Here the native is not the butt of Paki jokes for the lads or the source of a Black cultural economy of symbols for the Punks.

Orwell problematizes power and the agency of so-called dominant subjects, carefully depicting the colonial situation as one in which the "subjection of the ruled also involves the subjugation of the ruler," showing us how "subjects of colonies controlled rulers as much as they were controlled by them" (Nandy, 1983, p. 39). Plagued by divided consciousness, unable to act in accordance with his own intuition, the protagonist is tormented by guilt, hatred, and fear, and forced to suffer the felt contradictions of his precarious position "in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East" (Orwell, 1981, pp. 148–149). Having decided long ago that "imperialism is an evil thing," this colonial official claims to be on the side of the Burmese population but feels "stuck between the hatred of the empire" and "rage against" the villagers who try to make his job so utterly impossible. One part of the official, we are told, views British rule as "an unbreakable tyranny" clamping him down, while the other part of him feels that the "greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts" (Orwell, 1981, p. 149). These feelings, we are told, are the "normal byproducts of imperialism" (p. 149). And, while it is certain that the torment and suffering of those on the other side of the foul-smelling "lock-ups" could never be equivocated, the dominant subject in Orwell's narration is clearly not enjoying the promise his "privilege" provides.

Challenging simplistic notions of the ways in which power operates and who creates and belongs to the "British" tradition, on the most telling event of the day in question we learn that the colonial official is far from being decisive, all-powerful, fully authoritarian, or in control. Rather, he feels like an "absurd puppet," a "hollow posing dummy" unable to do that which he most desires. Having been ordered to find a work elephant that was wreaking havoc about the town in which he was posted, he follows his orders, armed and ready to serve and protect. He sets off in pursuit of the rogue elephant but is met with sly resistance from the villagers, who claim neither to have seen the elephant nor even to have heard of its havoc, though clearly standing right there in its midst. This non-cooperation on the part of the "helpless," unarmed Burmese population was yet another "normal" element of daily life one counted on as a colonial official, he adds. After almost giving up on his search, thinking the whole thing to be "a pack of lies" (p. 150), the narrator finally stumbles upon the large beast's most recent victim. The official spots the elephant in the distance and halts momentarily: "As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him" (p. 151). "Moreover," he adds, "I did not in the least want to shoot him" (p. 152). He decides that the best thing to do is to keep

an eye out for a while to ensure the elephant does not turn savage again, then go home for the day. But then he sees the crowd:

I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes – faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd – seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is *his own freedom that he destroys*. He becomes a sort of *hollow, posing dummy*, the *conventionalized figure* of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that *he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives,"* and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. *He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it.* I had got to shoot the elephant. (Orwell, 1981, p. 152, emphasis added)

This is no simple matter for the official, who repeatedly insists, "I did not want to shoot the elephant" (p. 153). Knowing with perfect certainty what he *ought* to do, he looks again at the crowd and he reflects that there "was only one alternative" (p. 154). He loads the cartridges into the rifle and fires. A slow and agonizing death tortures the struggling, gasping elephant. The official is tormented by the sight and the need to keep shooting, continually failing to put the beautiful living being out of the misery he has inflicted upon it.

The privileged subject here cast is condemned to conform to a tightly scripted code of conduct which he does not fully understand. Three metaphors from the story – the gun, the gaze, and the mask (Logue, 2004) – serve as useful devices with which to depict what Aimé Césaire (1972) termed the "boomerang effects of domination." The gun symbolizes the moment of usurpation as one in which the police officer's imposed superiority coerces him to be what he has forced the other to see him as. Paradoxically, the instrument through which he performs his fantasy of superiority becomes the vehicle through which he suffers his own agentic demise. Unable to affirm his freedom, the dominant subject finds himself sentenced to an unending struggle for status and justification symbolized through the inescapable look of the Other. This gaze represents the instability and precariousness of his usurpation, his becoming a victim of his own unconscious – riddled with guilt, internal fears, and anxieties. In the desperate attempt to shield against this hideous onslaught of unruly emotion and external threat, he projects them onto the other, who now constitutes that which he most needs to defend himself against. The mask signifies the onset of his own dehumanization, for in wearing it, he can only reach for the gun. A self-destructive vicious circle is begun. The "posture of absolute

domination" (Theweleit, 1989) adopted by Orwell's (1981) "hollow, posing dummy" (p. 152) and the processes through which he brings about his own destruction, help to illuminate the way in which culture is a conversation and not the final property of an ethnically superior tradition. How are these tensions grappled with in neo-Marxist cultural analysis?

What do the imminent deaths of the elephant, Sammy's father (*Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*), and the hopes "traditional" parents (*Billy Elliot*) have for their children signify? Could it be that with the death of the subject lies the death of tradition, an imperial tradition on the wane? And isn't it the case that Billy Elliot's Alzheimer's grandma stands in her dream-like silence as the scrambled riddle of past attachments, past associations and feeling? Do our perceptual and linguistic apparatuses allow for the articulation of the complexities of lived social relations and networks of affiliation?

Conclusion: The New Imperatives of Globalization and the Predicament of Cultural Studies

Social science categories are becoming zombie categories, empty terms in the Kantian meaning. Zombie categories are living dead categories, which blind the social sciences to the rapidly changing realities inside the nation-state containers and outside as well.

(Beck, 2002, p. 24)

As a consequence of the new driving logics of globalization and the information age articulated most profoundly in the workings of "flexible capitalism" (Bauman, 2008; Hortiguera & Rocha, 2007; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monje, 2009; Nayak, 2003; Schiller, 2003, 2010; Sennett, 2006, 2008), all late-modern institutions, all late-modern forms of association and affiliation are coming under the banner of new identities. These dynamics associated with globalization (the rapid and constant dispersal of cultural and economic capital across national boundaries, the intensification and rapidity of movement and migration of people across borders, the amplification of electronic mediation and the work of the imagination of the great masses of the people) reveal themselves in what Zygmunt Bauman and Richard Sennett describe as a general lightness of being or liquidity of all social relations and social arrangements of late modernity. Whether one is talking about the general trend of multinational corporations such as Addidas, Nike, Rebok, and Microsoft toward what Naomi Klein (2001, 2007) calls "immateriality," as advertising, branding, and R&D displace the emphasis on inventories of products as the primary orientation of these juggernaut commercial institutions; whether we are talking about the new international division of labor in which the production, distribution, and circulation of goods and services are being coordinated over enormous distances, numerous nations and markets; whether we are considering the new terms of circumscription of the role of the state redefined by the new expansive encroachments of supranational

organizations such as the World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, and the barrage of accountability instruments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment now bearing down on national systems across the world; whether we are talking about new synchronicities of culture, the disembedding of forms of life and meanings of style from one setting and their transplantation into another; whether we are talking about the decline of theodicy, meaning, and the control over craft in all forms of late-modern labor processes (intellectual labor and the organization of knowledge not excepted) – the relentless logic of the recasting of the modern world is proceeding and accelerating at a blinding pace.

It is these developments that have thrown social science research off its collective bearings as contemporary scholars struggle to make sense of the rapid changes fueled by transnationalism and globalization (Beck, 2008). In this respect, the emergent field of cultural studies is also decentered. Cultural studies analysis in its treatment of class and tradition has been overtaken by events. It seems the perceptual/conceptual/linguistic apparatus of sociocultural analysis on the whole is now unable to diagnose the global predicament we are in, seemingly reinforcing the very structures we seek to subvert. Our entire perceptual, conceptual, and linguistic apparatus is in need of overhaul as we come to recognize the rise of networked societies in which traditions, affiliations, “cultures” (subcultural or not) are now cast off from the moorings of the final property of any group. There has been a flattening out of cultures and traditions, as these are now more integrated into the global expansion of markets and flexible models of production of capital pursuing new sites of value in ever-increasing alienated contexts.

We have reached a stage in this new millennium where the old “conflict” versus “consensus” metaphors, “your traditions versus mine” do not seem to apply. Instead of models based on conflict and resistance, increasingly, social groups are being defined by overwhelming patterns of transnational hybridities; new forms of association and affiliation that seem to flash on the surface of life rather than to plunge deeper into some kind of neo-Marxist substructure. This new model of power could now be called “integration.” It does not have a negative pole. It is what Foucault describes as a “productive” not “repressive” model of power. It articulates difference into ever-more extensive systems of association, flatlining the edges of culture into a pastiche of marketable identities, tastes, neuroses, and needs processed through the universalization of the enterprise ethic. It lays traditions down side by side, layering them in ever new ephemeral patterns and intensities – whole elements and associations given in one place can be now instantaneously found in another. Paul Willis’s nationally and geographically inscribed “lads” are now being replaced by Jenny Kelly’s (2004) Afro-Canadian youth who are patching together their identities from the surfeit of signs and symbols crossing the border in the electronic relays of US television, popular music, and cyber culture. Post-apartheid South African youth now assign more value to markers of taste – Levi’s and Gap jeans, Nikes or Adidas, rap or rave – than ancestry and place in their elaboration of the new criteria of ethnic affiliation (Dolby, 2001).

All these developments are turning the old materialism versus idealism debate on its head. It is the frenetic application of forms of existence, forms of life, the dynamic circulation and strategic deployment of style, the application of social aesthetics that now govern political rationalities and corporate mobilization in our times. The new representational technologies are the new centers of public instruction providing the forum for the work of the imagination of the great masses of the people to order their pasts and present and plot their futures. They are creating instant traditions and nostalgias of the present in which our pasts are disembedded and separated out as abstract value into new semiotic systems and techniques of persuasion, new forms of ecumenical clothing that quote Che, Mao, Fidel, and Marx, and "revolution" in the banality of commodified life – the publicity of one brand of dish-washing liquid as having "revolutionary" effects is just one good example of the brazen rearticulation of terms and traditions in the brave new world in which we live. Who now owns the terms that define the authentic traditions of radicalism that inform our works? Who now has final purchase on the terms "resistance," "revolution," "democracy," "participation," and "empowerment?" The massive work of textual production is blooming in a crucible of opposites – socially extended projects producing the cultural citizen in the new international division of labor, in which the state may not be a first or the final referent.

Naomi Klein (2001) reminds us ultimately of this radical disembedding. Spadina Avenue, the garment district of Toronto in the 1930s, is now in postindustrial limbo and a center of a masquerading consumerist heaven. Its transformation to its new millennial identity of stylish high consumption owes its genesis to the cruel juxtaposition with Jakarta and the flight of its garment industry to Indonesia. And while there is not much need for overcoats on the equator, "increasingly," according to Klein (2001), "Canadians get through their cold winters not with clothing manufactured by the tenacious seamstresses on Spadina Avenue but by young Asian women working in hot climates [. . . making] anoraks and ski jackets from Indonesia" (p. xvi).

The outlines of this new global context have precipitated a crisis of language in neo-Marxist scholarly efforts to grasp the central dynamics of contemporary societies, bearing on the question of "tradition" and the centering term "class." The latter developments have led to a depreciation of the value and insightfulness of neo-Marxist analysis in our time – old metaphors associated with class, economy, and state ("production," "reproduction," "resistance," "the labor–capital contradiction") are all worn down by the transformations of the past decades in which the saturation of economic and political practices in aesthetic mediations has proceeded full scale (Klein, 2001). The scale and referent for almost all of these organizing terms of analysis had been set and bounded at the nation, defined in the localist anthropological/ethnographic terms of "tradition," "ritual," and "culture" understood on the localizing plain of community, ethnic group, society, and so forth. The new circumstances associated with post-Fordist capital – the new international division of labor, movement and migration, and the amplification of images and the work of the imagination of the great masses of the people, the great masses of our times, driven forward

by computerization, the Internet, popular culture, etc. – have cut open particular traditions, spilling their entrails around the world.

These logics have unsettled the processes of the social integration of modern subjects into late-modern institutions. The modern working-class subject is being remade and reproduced in a context in which the relations between government, society, the individual, and market forces have undergone profound transformations and reorganization on a global scale. What is working class in itself and for itself in the new millennium is now splintered across a wide global arena of export processing zones in the third world and the temp. working and the chronically unemployed in the soft sectors of the postindustrial service economies in the metropolitan centers. A wide framework of “graduated sovereignty” (Ong, 2006, p. 7) therefore defines this new condition of the international division of labor, demanding new terms of analysis that require cultural studies proponents to grasp the rise of transnational circumstances in the new postindustrial condition of alienated labor, hyperconsumption, and prosumerism.

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Making Media Production Visible

Vicki Mayer

ABSTRACT

This introduction looks at the history of media production research, seeks axes for the interdisciplinary theorizing of media production, and offers a discussion of the current conjuncture for research on media production. From there I outline the rationale for the volume, its organizing themes and sections.

Media production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with the media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how. The reader who is scanning my words now probably has not considered the creation of the text – the formation of the argument, the production of the book, the reproduction of the book in print and digital formats – much less the politically liberal context for my authorial voice, the economic drives of the academic publishing industry, the continuing culture of individual authorship in the humanities, the ethics of mental labor, and so on. This volume attempts to foreground some of these issues in the study of media.

Even in the annals of scholarship on the media, production and producers frequently take a backseat to other, more primary concerns about the effects of technologies or contents, consumer preferences and user access, or the functionality of the media for democratic or cultural spheres. Although many canonical critiques of mass media addressed production in their criticisms of propaganda (Lippmann,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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1922), mass consumerism (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972), gender (Mulvey, 1989), or racial representations (Du Bois, 1926), subsequent generations have distilled only select fragments about content and consumption from these holistic arguments. At the same time, production mattered to early scholars of media. Some thought about the role of media producers in democratic governance, advocating for media production policies and rules that would foster an informed and educated public (Cooley, 1918; Dewey, 1927; Follett, 1924). Others aimed to understand production processes in order to hone them for efficiency and effectiveness (Lasswell, 1927; Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1979; Schramm, 1964). Still others (Habermas, 1991; Schiller, 1969; Thompson, 1994) considered the mode of production itself as indicative of changes in the popularization and industrialization of culture – the long revolution, according to Raymond Williams (1961). What the authors of the following chapters share is the effort to foreground media production as central to answering questions about political governance, economic processes, and cultural transformations.

In this introduction I offer structure and agency as axes for the interdisciplinary theorizing of media production. I do not pose these as exclusive categories. There have been a good many debates over what media production research is based on: false dichotomies between administrative and critical research in the 1970s and 1980s (Lazarsfeld, 1941; Smythe & Van Dinh, 1983); political economy and cultural studies in the 1980s and 1990s (Garnham, 1995; Peck, 2006); as well as current comparisons of what has been called media industry studies and production studies (Havens, Lotz, & Tinic, 2009; Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009). Indeed sophisticated media production research draws on all of these traditions. This section is followed by discussion of the current conjuncture for research on media production. From there, I outline the rationale for the book through a more detailed investigation of its organizing themes and sections.

As with any collection that claims to represent the world from the armchair of the editor, there are undoubtedly numerous lacunae in the following pages. Although the chapters presented here span a range of political economies, industries, countries, and peoples, this volume does not claim to cover all the topics that could be germane to the study of media production. The digital age, for example, has transformed our phones, cars, appliances, and even our clothes into media that communicate with us, with the world, and with each other. Nor does this volume cover every possible method. In particular, some forms of economic and statistical sociological analysis have been omitted from the present book, not only because of the specialized languages of these fields, but because they are not representative of a scholarship engaged with the questions of politics, culture, and society that define media studies.¹

Structure and Agency in Media Production Research

The word “production” infers both a basic human quality and a social process. The history of media production charts the ways humans have transformed their abilities

to produce and to mediate their thoughts, as well as the ways these are embedded in larger societal transformations. Students of media production, by and large, have emphasized the relationship between human agency and social structures in the making of media contents, whether this is creating news, recording a song, generating a commercial genre, or marketing media technologies.

By “social structures” I am referring to patterns developed in modern societies – such as the bureaucratic state and industrial capitalism. These structures frame media production within markets and nation-states. In many societies, media production has been structured by a bureaucratic state that manages people and their institutions in order to accumulate capital, organize citizens and workers, and maintain a monopoly over the use of force and violence. Modern social structures for media production thus are steeped in histories of colonialism and imperialism (Mattelart, 1978; Schiller, 1969; Tunstall, 1977). At least since the nineteenth century, writers have focused on the ways media production may help or hinder nation-states in accomplishing their goals. The sociology of the production of culture, consolidated by the late 1970s, systematized the study of media production through six facets: technology, law and regulation, industry structure, organization structure, occupational career, and market (Peterson & Anand, 2004, p. 313). Structural critiques of the production of media technologies, the commercialization of culture, the disfranchisement of media labor, and the routinization of production have implicated the roles of the state and market in what is called the military industrial complex for media production (Schiller & Phillips, 1970). The emphasis on structural frameworks for media production has tended to assume that industrialization is the singular starting and ending point for understanding media production, its organization and operations, and producers’ roles, activities, and motives.

As a result, in accordance with a generalized critique of capitalism, scholarship on media production has tended to focus on the media with the greatest reach – for instance film and television – from the most centralized production locations – such as Hollywood or London – and with the most concentrated labor forces; and on professionals such as journalists. This is a feature of media studies in general. As communication historian John Nerone (2003, p. 102) notes: “If any media technology is proto-industrial, the age of industrialization marks the key moment for the formations of the organizations we now think of as the mass media.” The overwhelming tendency to focus on mass media production, for example, has resulted in fragmentary accounts of amateur media production such as scrapbooks (Tucker, Ott, & Buckler, 2006), home movies (Zimmermann, 1995), community media production, for instance indigenous media making (Wilson & Stewart, 2008) or, more recently, zines (Duncombe, 2008). While these types of media production are not outside of industrialization, they highlight the need to examine the social structures that do not always conform with the processes inferred by industrialization, for example through their embedding in domestic life, their collective ownership, or their participatory rules for producers and consumers. Indeed these structures have become more important to the understanding of forms of media

production not sponsored by the military industrial complex (see Spigel, 2009; Turner, 2008).

If the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates them in the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers. The invention of different forms of media professionals, from the advertising professional (Lears, 1994) to the professional jazz musician (Becker, 1951), is a prime example of the modern subjectivities associated with media production institutions and practices. A good deal of scholarship on media production has examined the ways people interact to create these institutional sectors of the labor force, systematically developing routines for creating, distributing, marketing, interpreting, and instructing their practices (Ettema & Whitney, 1982; Hirsch, 1969; Turow, 1984; see also Ryfe in this volume). Although this work can be descriptive or critical in nature, the focus on the joint actions of people within media production and with roles in it stands in contrast with a set of texts that focus on the agency of singular individuals involved in production. Quasi-biographical if not autobiographical, the earliest accounts of media production were frequently offered by people involved with media production as journalists (Park, 1923; Steffens, 1931), screenwriters (Rosten, 1941), or musicians (Becker, 1951, 1953). Although some of the texts that focus on particular media producers, such as film auteurs (Jacobs, 1969) or “quality” television producers (Newcomb & Alley, 1983), have overemphasized the genius or unique characteristics of particular individuals, the orientation toward producers’ agency foregrounds people’s creative abilities within the constraints imposed by organizations, markets, and regulatory environments.

The study of the people who produce media seems to be rooted in the desire to understand producers’ relationship to ideology, or the commonsensical ways we understand and communicate the world inside our heads. Observers of media production most frequently have expressed these concerns through inquiries into authorship, control, and autonomy. As a result, studies of media production have tended to focus on the people most directly involved in the production of media content, who are often located at the top of production hierarchies. The consolidation of media industries, for example, led many to question the power of corporate media owners to censor media contents (Bagdikian, 1983; Herman, 1981; Thomas & Nain, 2004), particularly news. Studies of gatekeepers – editors, publishers, directors, showrunners, and music and television producers – outpace studies of other kinds of workers, such as the numerous kinds of agents and publicists involved in production. Recently scholars have investigated the activities of those who are involved in other stages and aspects of media production, such as technology creation and production (Mayer, 2009b; McLaughlin, 2007), the manual or technical labor of production (Banks, 2007; Caldwell, 2008), and the marketing of media products (Acosta-Alzuru and Vanstrom in this volume), though more can be done to understand agency in the seemingly invisible processes of media production – such as programming for Amazon’s

mechanical Turk or gold farming for videogame virtual markets (see Striphas, 2009; Nakamura, 2009).

Though there have been many debates as to whether *other* scholars privilege structure or agency in the study of media production, all seem to agree on the need to understand and balance the relationship between the two (Golding & Murdoch, 1991; Grossberg, 2010; Miller, 2006). Each of the authors in the following chapters integrates questions of structure and agency into his or her discussion, though their research questions and thesis statements may be oriented more toward one axis or another. In doing so, they pay a large debt to those who have preceded them, while managing to move the study of media production toward ever more nuanced considerations of geography and temporality, human agency, structural conditions, and their contexts.

The Zeitgeist for Media Production

The chapters collected here reflect various changes in the production of media over the past century, and these changes have entered media production scholarship under a series of hefty, overlapping descriptions, such as “flexible accumulation” (Harvey, 1991); “network society” (Castells, 2000); and “digital capitalism” (Schiller, 2000). Rooted in critical political economy and social theory, these concepts grappled with the transformations in capitalism since the mid-1970s, each one being, in turn, catalyzed and affected by policies broadly construed as neoliberalism. Each of these phrases multiplied as these transformations could be seen in cultural formations. With neologisms such as “convergence culture” (Jenkins, 2006), “network culture” (Terranova, 2004), and the “flexible personality” (Holmes, 2001), scholars observed how structural changes impact media producers and workers, from the blurring of traditional spatial and temporal boundaries for media production to the generation of a new workforce, which gives private information to media industries both freely and without compensation.

The visibility of these issues is of critical importance today, as media production regimes adapt to the changes elicited by crises in the global political economy. Following the downturns precipitated by Fordist modes of production in the 1970s, media production scholars are looking at the recent past of economic bubbles and meltdowns with trepidation for the future. On one hand, the press seems unable to resist the new formation – whether because of its own shifts in priorities for news production or because of its own complicities with what C. Wright Mills (1956) once damned the “power elite.” At the same time, new resistive sites seem evident. Harkening back to the Great Depression instructs that downturns in one media market have led to growth in other industries (McAllister, 2010). New rents and markets accompany new methods of seeking control over the flows of commodities, the valuation of workers, and the commercialization of everything.

It is important to note, however, that these trends become articulated differently across different times and spaces. As Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier (2004, p. 4) have argued through their use of the phrase “global assemblages,” the broad and often abstract transformations associated with globalization need to be located somewhere, among real people in their material, collective, and discursive relations. The case studies offered in this volume present the multiple manifestations of globalization as it affects the structures, technologies, and people involved in media production. Hence the meanings of neoliberalism or citizenship resonate differently across the chapters. For some, the privatization of national media industries and the liberalization of media markets opened the public sphere to democratic communication and to a cosmopolitan consumerism. For others, private media industries have crowded out democratic communication, which would allow public media or alternative forms of media production. These standpoints reflect not only national contexts formed through colonial histories and contemporary imperialisms, but also the disciplinary agendas of studying media production.

The sections that follow in this book highlight a series of concerns that have developed historically in the study of media production. Their interdisciplinary roots reinforce that, despite differences in the authors’ influence and case studies, there have been shared attempts to look at media production regimes and infrastructures; industries and organizations; product flows and counterflows; the nature of production work, workers, and cultures; and the ethical need to consider all of the above. While each chapter presents its own approach to a specific manifestation of the global assemblage, as parts of a section they enter a broader dialogue about the ways to understand media production and to engage in its study.

Production Regimes and Infrastructures

Government, the formal set of institutions for the enactment of laws, establishes the framework for the ways we think about media products, their production, and their producers. In other words, it is the role of governments to determine whether and how media products are resources or commodities, whether and how media production is a public trust or is market-based, and whether and how media producers are laborers or consumers. Infrastructures, according to the anthropologist Brian Larkin (2008, p. 5) are “the institutionalized networks that facilitate the flow of goods in a wider cultural as well as physical sense.” Whereas regimes set the rules and norms for governmental operations, infrastructures connect regimes to people via technical and cultural networks, from fan-based file-sharing groups to underground immigrant economies. Infrastructures thus extend beyond national boundaries, while still reflecting the regional characteristics that give rise to regimes.

The long march toward the transnationalization of media production began in the 1970s, through small steps toward a market-oriented regime that would consider

increasing numbers of goods as commodities and laborers as consumers. Scholars have taken these steps, from international trade policy reforms to national judicial rulings favoring convergence, as a whole in order to mark the path from a liberal regime for media as a public service to a neoliberal regime for media as a commodity.² The chapters presented in Part 1 take this paradigm shift as the starting point for asking questions about how governments structure media production through formal systems of policy and regulation and through informal infrastructures of technical and cultural networks.

To start this part, Katharine Sarikakis and Patrick Burkart and Lucas Logan look at the regime shifts happening on the watches of policymakers in the European Union. Taking bird's-eye views on the international dimensions of these shifts, the authors show how changes in Europe need to be read in light of global convergences in the regulation of media production and information trade. As stated by Sandra Braman (2006, p. 94), economic competition, and not the freedom of speech or the public interest, is the "most important explanatory variable" in justifying this encroaching legal globalization. At the same time, economic competition has been a buzzword to justify the removal of authorship rights, the weakening of labor unions, and the institutionalization of casualized work-for-hire laws (Stahl, 2009). Focusing on how the new regime merges legal definitions around media producers and consumers, Sarikakis reveals that, even if anyone can be a producer in the digital age, not all the producers are equal under the law. Despite the rhetoric that claims to empower media consumers as digital producers, she shows how copyright laws strip these *prosumers* of their rights over the music and videos they download, remix, repost, and exchange. Moving from the national struggles over the legal regime to monetize, own, and control culture to the infrastructure of amateurs who work within these regimes, Sarikakis reveals the ways policy structures affect one's agency over media production. For Burkart and Logan, it will take the mobilization of civil society groups to force the return of media, monopolized as it is by corporations in the "celestial jukebox," back to media producers.

In the struggles over the global governance of media production, communication and media production scholars have not always been aware of the role that governments play in sponsoring media production. Military investment in media technologies has a long record of boosting the competitive advantage of US media companies in broadcast (Meehan, 2005; Smulyan, 1994) and web-based media (Abbate, 1999; Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009). In his chapter on the most recent articulation of military power, Jonathan Burston looks at "militainment" as key to a government strategy of winning consumers' hearts and minds through popular culture. For example, he argues that the US military's investment in videogame technologies with hawkish war-game themes operates on two levels, as a form of "soft power" (Nye, 2004) in international relations. First, the financing of new technologies assists in the competition for property creation. Second, the contents for these new technologies support the ideological extension of the US empire. The federal investment in the production of media and media technologies – as also discussed by Mari Castañeda

(in this volume) – could be read simultaneously as market domination and as ideological domination.

Despite these mechanisms, in which regimes try to dominate media markets through production, the chapters in Part 1 also present sites of infrastructural opposition. Whether it be through the formation of international movements to press for labor reforms (Mosco & McKercher, 2008) or through the constitution of alternative internet commons to fight digital enclosures (Benkler, 2006), the hegemony of neoliberal reforms across policy spheres has met with networks of resistance. In their chapter, Burkart and Logan point to the rebellious tactics of the “pirate party” – clusters of Internet activists – to subvert European property law. In her chapter, Castañeda refers to the potential power of women of color, who have militated for environmental safety and healthier working conditions in the production of media technologies everywhere. Grounded in social bonds of labor and class and articulated through shared cultural identities of gender and race, these infrastructures present the resources to challenge regimes from margins to core.

The notion of struggle is crucial to the evaluation of governmental regimes and of the infrastructures that cut across them. In the final chapter of Part 1, John McMurria’s comprehensive review of media ownership policy in the United States reminds us that governments are not just in the business of serving citizens; they also set the frameworks through which citizens are defined. Through a comparison of the discursive lenses for arguments about media ownership regulation, McMurria shows how each discourse implicitly undergirds a vision of the citizen in a democratic polity. Superseding the simple binary liberal/conservative, so commonly misused in discussing American politics, McMurria’s analysis encourages us to place policy arguments in the historical contexts of their authorship.

To this end, readers might ask what has caused the problems that plague the current political economy of media production. Are these regulatory problems, for which governments can set a new policy agenda? Conversely, are these systemic problems inherent to capitalism, and thus beyond a fix without a regime change? These questions would likely bring contradictory answers (Fuchs, Schafranek, Hakken, & Breen, 2010, pp. 195–197), but they are of central importance for media studies to understand how we might emerge from the crises that mark the present conjuncture.

The Cultural Industries and the Organization of Production

Following the changes that have pushed production regimes, the chapters in Part 2 implore us to consider the continuities and modifications in the organization of production roles and resources across diverse media industries. From the book publisher to the music distributor to the film exhibitor, the key roles for media production

have shifted, in response to the conglomeration, liberalization, and globalization of media markets as well as to the availability of digital technologies and to the convergence of their contents, delivery, and production. These shifts accompany the perennial struggles in media industries around labor, notably about the discipline of a skilled but cheap workforce, and about the ability to control the production of new commodities, especially data about audiences and consumers. As the chapters in this section demonstrate, the transformations in production regimes have not erased organizational hierarchies and goals so much as spread these hierarchies centrifugally, to encompass ever more people in a web of profit motives.

It was not so long ago that media production scholarship envisioned the organization of media industries as being unique to these industries' specific goods and contents. Sociology and communication scholars took a leading role in distinguishing between various kinds of industrial structures for the effective organization of production. From them, students of media production inherited both the terms to describe production roles and the relations of power that governed their interactions with each other. By the 1980s, these "power roles" (Turow, 1992) seemed fairly stable within national industries. Scholars observed the progressive development of a professionalized workforce in each industry that could balance the tensions between commerce and art within a political framework for managed economic competition. Critical scholars added to this corpus by noting the tendencies toward market monopolization, which were in fact natural to capitalism but also accelerated through the liberalization of media markets. While much maligned for its generalizing assertions, the notion of a "culture industry" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972) was in fact a useful tool in mobilizing the humanities to consider the philosophical implications of the organization of production in the study of commercial cultural objects. As increasing numbers of freelance writers and artists, information managers and data miners, amateurs and fans become key players in the organization of plural yet overlapping "cultural industries" (Hesmondhalgh, 2007), the authors of these chapters ask what kind of power different people have in these far-flung production chains.

Ethno-musicologist Timothy D. Taylor begins this inquiry with an introduction to the transformation that took place in music industries under the broad umbrella of the "new capitalism." Pointing to specific landmarks on the path to a global capitalist order, Taylor focuses on "world music" as a genre that captures the impacts on the organization of musical production. The rising centrality of the figure of the music supervisor, national music industries, independent record labels, and the spread of marketing roles throughout production chains have exerted downward pressures on musicians and composers to do more and to serve multiple masters. Meanwhile the imposition of commercial aims over artistic production has surfaced in industry-wide debates over race and authenticity in the construction of a genre that infers, at once, a global everywhere and a "non-Western" space for cool middle-class consumption. This colonial dynamic in search of a consumable "Other" makes the new capitalism not so new after all.

The mantra that the more things change, the more they stay the same seems to resonate in the book industry as well. Laura Miller charts the advent of the electronic book industry as the latest articulation of entrepreneurialism in publishing industries. The ability of authors to circumvent agents, printers, retailers, not to mention out-source editorial functions, has put new pressures on publishers to maintain their professional standing as legitimate gatekeepers of many forms of knowledge production and cultural authority. The result, she argues, is “a two-tiered system in which the truly popular books and the authors committed to traditional standards go with professionals, and large numbers of amateur publishers see their books produced but not widely read” (p. 187). Maintained through an expansive notion of copyright, professional publishers may wield more control in a winnowed market of publishing giants by chasing falling numbers of book buyers and at once by disciplining would-be self-publishers through new technologies, such as ePub and Ipub.

In adopting the perspective of the television producer in the overcrowded attention economy, Shimpach presents his own approach to studying the television industry in the form of four “Ts” (travel, translation, tethering, and tantalization) that describe programmers’ motivations in a multimedia universe. These strategies simultaneously push programs globally while aggregating audiences together for sale to advertisers, media distributors, and ancillary content providers. Shimpach’s organizational model is most germane for explaining the rise of global fan franchises, which tie television to films, illustrated books, music, clothing, and branded places through still other social networking media and games. As Shimpach and others in this volume relate, the global organization of production reflects hegemonic struggles over the creative process and has led to the proliferation across media contents of what Justin Wyatt (1994) called “high concept” in film in the 1990s. Aimed at younger and predominantly male middle-class audiences, these media contents feature more special effects and less dialogue, in worlds filled with other brand products.

Push strategies also have contradictory pulls on workers and consumers. Whereas Miller and Shimpach are more sanguine about industrial transformations that potentially empower labor and consumers as active artists and as collaborative participants, Joseph Turow reminds readers of the political implications of media producers’ commercial imperatives. Focusing on media buying as an intermediary industry between clients looking to target consumers and media industries aiming to sell advertising space, Turow notes a disturbing trend and an offense to citizens’ privacy rights in a democratic society. Behind the promise of individual freedoms and personal choices offered in cyberspace lurks an economic infrastructure dedicated to tracking, marketing, and predicting individuals’ consumer behaviors. Through an eerie echo of a Fordist economy in which industries saw employees as their own consumer base and as part of the profit cycle, many of those same companies now trade their employees’ personal consumer data to tailor better websites selling to them. As this marks the dissolution of boundaries between workers and consumers, it perhaps needs little imagination to understand how the Italian theorist Maurizio Lazzarato implicates media industries in making a “social factory” (cited in Wright, 2002).

Product and Content Flows

Whereas studies of the organization of media industries have centered, typically, on corporate operations in a few select metropolises worldwide, studies of media flows have focused, historically, on the distribution and exhibition of these industries' products. The concern over media flows has a geopolitics that coincides with widespread discussions of decolonization in the twentieth century. In those discussions, critics claimed that the distribution, if not the wholesale dumping, of media products from the Northern hemisphere to the Southern hemisphere and from Western countries to those in the East echoed imperialistic and militaristic tendencies of the industries' base countries. They further drew parallels between the imposition of foreign goods, together with their production infrastructures, and the recolonization of peoples in countries that are developing their own national identities and cultural industries. In a series of international forums organized through the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), officials in developing countries throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia asserted the need for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) that would be supported through national media industries and regional alliances, particularly for news distribution. Although the global political discourse around imperialistic media flows has declined since the early 1980s – no doubt with the assistance of US and UK budget cuts to UNESCO (McPhail, 2009) – the debate over the need for a NWICO continues to frame international media production scholarship (Chakravartty & Sarikakis, 2006) and to animate international political movements such as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the non-governmental organization (NGO)-sponsored Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign.

The first two chapters of Part 3 continue these discussions of media flows, starting in many respects from their historical precedents. Dal Yong Jin presents both those who have articulated a thesis of cultural imperialism in communication research and those who have subsequently called for its abandonment. In evaluating these positions, Jin brings together a wide range of empirical data on Asian media industries to demonstrate that, while Japan, Korea, and China develop their own film industries and media exports, the balance sheet for cultural imports is still tipped in favor of transnational media industries based in the US and, in the case of Sky-TV, in Australia. The development of national music television (MTV) networks across Asian countries emphasizes the ways in which foreign multinationals extend their reach through global economies of scale. In the following chapter, Tamara Falicov illuminates possible reasons for the continuities of such foreign interdependencies. Focusing exclusively on national film industries in Latin America, Falicov delves into recent trends in cinematic co-production and co-distribution, which complicate national legislative initiatives to fund indigenous film production or to establish exhibition quotas. Her exposition asks the million-dollar question (p. 265) that pervades debates about media flow inequalities and imperialisms: "Do countries such as Mexico and Argentina

thrive, or do they get exploited under these conditions?" The emergence of Mexican and Argentinian film auteurs at the expense of cheaper production labor in those countries suggests that some people thrive through the global media economy at the peril of others (as illustrated in Castañeda's chapter in this volume).

It should be remembered in studies of media production that the keyword *glocalization* derived from Japanese marketing strategies in the 1980s (Robertson, 1994). These strategies stress the ability of producers to adjust media products so as to import and export locations as both an economic and a cultural imperative. To wit, Lothar Mikos and Marta Perrota, in their chapter, address the television format trade as a study of "glocal" media production. The international licensing of formats requires that producers adapt the concept and premises for television contents to the local sites of reception. While this process seems relatively simple in the reproduction of licensed game shows and reality programs, the global transport of narrative-based television programs has been less common historically, which became one of the primary grounds in the refutation of cultural imperialism claims (Straubhaar, 1991). The transnational market for the telenovela (soap opera) has, however, introduced the possibility of glocal media flows, which are based around universal melodramatic themes and adaptable narratives. In their comparative study of several national productions of *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (*Ugly Betty*), Mikos and Perrota illustrate the strategies that television producers use in order to adapt the story paying heed to consumers' cultural differences. Their research conceives of media flows in terms of the cultural interconnections between producers and audiences across national boundaries.

Perhaps these disparate interconnections demand new approaches to media flows. Grounded in an anthropological approach, Katrien Pype urges scholars to frame the local and the global flows of media in terms of key scenarios – that is, the ways in which texts employ symbolic meanings toward a shared narrative of culture. Drawing on her fieldwork in the city of Kinshasa, Congo, Pype traces the common religious and political meanings that circulate through popular film and television programs in spite of their differences in origin, creation, distribution, and reception. Whereas Mikos and Perrota's work reflects how we might understand cultural differences through the production of a shared narrative, Pype's work urges scholars to understand the ways shared key scenarios follow the migratory flows of various media, their producers, and their audiences.

This section also illustrates the degree to which entertainment and audiovisual industries have displaced news and print industries in academic research on media flows and cultural trade. Beyond questions of technology and form, there are many possible reasons for the shift in attention related to news production: the overall economic decline of print and newspaper industries, together with the expansion and conglomeration of television and film industries; the expansion of viral citizen journalism outlets – and so on (Shirky, 2008; Zelizer, 2009). While these trends suggest that traditional news flows have perhaps been diverted to other media, it remains important that scholars understand how production and distribution trends impact the flows of cultural meanings and information that citizens need for demo-

cratic deliberation and participation. In the post-news era, what are the media industries responsible for creating a global class of “cultural citizens” who, aside from consuming media, also use media toward political ends?³ Who are their producers? Where are the centers and peripheries for their production practices, goods, and audiences? These questions are of vital importance for interpreting not only the formation of collective memories across borders but also the instigation of global social movements in the future.

Production Work and Practices

Scholarship on the routine work of producing media sets itself apart from the numerous quasi-journalistic accounts of particularly successful workers whose names have emerged from media industries into the public sphere. Whereas popular accounts have portrayed the creative process through celebrity biography, sociological, economic, and communication researchers in the mid-twentieth century undertook the tasks of understanding the organization of media production, the roles of media workers in the organization, and the routines of the creative process that led to familiar genres and largely predictable outcomes in market terms. It’s no small coincidence that the growth of interest in production work after World War II accompanies the standardization of media production within industrial modes, as well as to the growth of schools for the professionalization of media production.

Today the integration of ordinary people into media industries is what Graeme Turner (2010) calls the “demotic turn,” and it has widespread implications across media types and labor markets. From the news blogosphere and its attendant citizen journalists to YouTube and its home-taught video producers, digital media and an army of “do-it-yourselfers” (DIY) have transformed media production work. On one hand, they seem to dispel the notion of the media professional as constituting an elite faction with a monopoly on creative skills, resources, and talent. On the other hand, they raise questions about the credibility and legitimacy of all media production work. The political, economic, and organizational changes discussed in the previous sections have caused crises not only among government policymakers, business industrialists, and media executives, but also among media workers themselves. The chapters in Part 4 put changes in media workplaces into context, both for the workers in those sites and for media researchers concerned with long-standing issues about authority and control in media production.

David Ryfe provokes us to look at continuities in the production of news, despite the challenges of digital DIY news. Ryfe recalls classic studies of news sociologists in the 1970s, who found that professional journalism relied on the successful internalization of production routines that helped workers negotiate the complexities of their workaday worlds. At the same time he builds a definition of routine that emphasizes both its commonsense appearance and its flexibility. This definition builds on

the relationship between the routine and the normative, showing that socialization, far from being just a process of rote learning, involves an intersubjective sharing of ideals about what journalism is. As Espen Ytreberg shows (also in this volume), media professionals train to embody this social knowledge through performances, so that even the most seemingly spontaneous chatting between news anchors follows highly managed schemata.

Ytreberg's work on the production of realism across a wide variety of media genres – including talk radio, broadcast news, sporting events, and reality programs – shows how linguistic, temporal, and spatial conventions function as ways of providing order and control over media performers. Drawing on a body of literature often associated with the presentation of the self in everyday life *à la* Erving Goffman (1959), Ytreberg adds Michel Foucault's (1977) insight that self-regulation serves a disciplinary function in society. From this readers may ask to what extent production work lives up to its promises of creativity, autonomy, or self-realization.

In an attempt to operationalize the ways production workers experience the creative process and its workplace constraints, Carolina Acosta-Alzuru offers a longitudinal study of the making of a telenovela in Venezuela during – and despite – national political unrest and economic turmoil. On the basis of Richard Johnson's (1986/7) model for a "circuit of cultural production," Acosta-Alzuru demonstrates the multiple pressures that production staffers faced every day – from network ratings wars to tabloid columnists – in addition to the threat of military invasion and censorship. Her account avoids reducing the production process to a mimetic reflection of the political scenario, while showing how the political polarization of Venezuela could be represented through popular entertainment. At the heart of her study, Leonardo Padrón remains the program's author and creator. Reminiscent of the auteurist tradition in literary and film studies, Acosta-Alzuru is mindful of Horace Newcomb's (1974) definition of television as a popular art, and thus as a legitimate site for evaluating the producer both as an artist and as a production manager.

If Acosta-Alzuru's case study stresses the creativity of the auteur in media production, the research conducted by John Caldwell and his co-authors shows the ways creativity is distributed throughout production chains in film and television. Focusing on a bevy of workers who are invisible to most consumers but essential to the production of entertainment media, this group of researchers demonstrates the unequal burdens carried by workers who earn less, work under shorter and more time-intensive contracts, and receive virtually no credit for their inputs. These invisible laborers and their assembly line-like tasks emulate the "degradation of work" (Braverman, 1975) in what researchers have called the "creative economy" (Hartley, 2005) or the "new television economy" (Mayer, 2011) in the twenty-first century.

Adding to the host of constraints on media producers, Alexandra Juhasz closes Part 4 by examining the production medium itself. Juhasz's brilliant experiment in teaching media production via YouTube not only counters popular notions of artistic freedom and self-expression in the digital age; it also demonstrates the inbuilt limits

of the technologies for work and play (Wajcman, 2004). Her method of study, which follows in the footsteps of a liberatory praxis (Freire, 1970), demonstrates how her students – and, by extension, her readers – may gain critical consciousness by testing the limits of a supposedly democratic web-authoring site. Her rules for how to produce on YouTube and for its impositions on producers may well be read as the rules of engagement for the web 2.0 generation.

Participant observation as a method has been central to the constitution of scholarly knowledge about production work (Alvarado & Buscombe, 1978; Cantor, 1980; Dornfeld, 1998; Grindstaff, 2002; Johnston, 1982). Whether joining the newsroom for a time, like a beat reporter such as Ryfe, or drawing on years of experience, like a Hollywood assistant such as Hill, the authors in this section recognize the importance of practice to the formulation of theory. Acosta-Alzuru and Ytreberg get unprecedented access to production practices and texts generally kept confidential – namely the making of a politically charged telenovela in authoritarian Venezuela and the production “bible” for the wildly popular reality television program *Big Brother* in Norway. From their vantage points, participant observers not only gain access to people and places but also can empathize with the time-crunch principles and resource roadblocks that drive media production and creative decisions. Their looks behind the scenes into trade practices usually kept from public view, whether to avoid competition or censorship, militate against the industry’s adage that in television “nobody knows.”⁴ At the same time the focus on workers as laborers, performers, and creative artists frequently implicates the authors themselves in these roles, raising questions not just about the complicated nature of research on human subjects, but also about the boundaries of media production work itself. In what ways are academic work and media production work similar? How do their routines inspire or constrict knowledge creation and creative action? Might these similarities lead to solidarity or dissent in the future politics of labor?

Production Cultures

Delving deeper into the politics of production work, Part 5 is dedicated to the cultural construction of media producers. If studies of media production have diligently documented the political and economic structures that frame the organization, flows, and practices of production work, it is not always apparent how media production intersects and reflects the structures of feeling that the social theorist Raymond Williams (1977) located in ordinary everyday life. For, at the same time as they produce cultural objects and texts, media industries also produce the communities of people known as “producers.” Each with its own rituals, traditions, and ways of seeing, these communities generate “production cultures.” Part 5 offers various modes for understanding structures of feeling within work-specific production cultures, from the ways in which group members form their work identities and locate

themselves within intercultural hierarchies of gender, race, and nation to the affective politics of production work.

Hortense Powdermaker's (1950) decision to observe Hollywood and its denizens in the same ways she approached her subjects in Papua New Guinea (1933) marked a disciplinary turn for anthropologists – a turn to examining cultural “islands” in their own society. Looking at the personal networks of people living and working on this “island,” which is defined by big capital and by egos larger than life, researchers (Caldwell, 2008; Gitlin, 1983) have understood the creative process as essentially conservative and as based on the preservation of social hierarchies and individual reputations more than on the exaltation of revolutionary change or singular genius. “It’s not what you know but who you know,” the cliché resounds throughout production cultures – though in Hollywood the opaque functioning of a success also gives rise to the adage that “nobody knows,” as discussed earlier. Even as Hollywood has become the location of global investment, labor, and capital, its culture has worked historically to promote select cadres of individuals – individuals who tend to be white, male, and educated in a select grouping of schools – for employment positions associated with the creative direction of US film and television production. While these cultural dynamics are by no means universal across media industries and media capitals (Ganti, 2012; Streeter, 2010), the study of the politics of inclusion and visibility within the work settings for making media reveals in this section how media makers preserve an identity amidst the global media flows that threaten fragmentation.

Beginning with the question of queer invisibility, television historian Quinn Miller asks us to understand how Hollywood’s production culture operated and what its limits were in terms of labor and representational politics. Although it has been long understood that Hollywood attracted large numbers of Jewish, gay, and lesbian workers who saw this enclave as a safe space for employment (Gabler, 1988; Gross, 2001; Hoberman & Shandler, 2003), scholars have interpreted the lack of the representation of these identities in media contents as evidence of the culture’s homogenizing effects. In other words, the labor market and its outputs seemed to operate according to different logics of identity; whereas Jews and gays socialized openly in the studios, their identities never appeared on screens, except in the most stereotypical ways. Historians of media production and reception have altered this perception, pointing out the subtle and yet persistent ways in which ethnic and sexual identities can be read into media contents aimed at mass audiences (Bial, 2005; Hansen, 1991; May, 1980). Arguing that producers relied on the knowledge of insider communities to identify the queer performance, Miller aggregates a wealth of early US television performances that could be interpreted through dual lenses. Using a combination of trade materials and biographical accounts, Miller alters our perception of a production culture that excluded others, making us see instead one that allowed for a range of playful tactics within the still amorphous boundaries of the early medium. This account shows that, even as Hollywood could consolidate disciplinary control over its workforce through unfair contracts, intellectual property regimes, and blacklists,

it could also allow a flexible range of creative activities that would be impossible in other spheres and industries.

The word “flexibility” resonates differently for those who study media production regimes and for those who study the producers within their cultures. For the former group of scholars, flexible production points to the changing means through which managers control their workforce, offering shorter contracts, fewer benefits, and less stable employment to satisfy the just-in-time nature of manufacturing for global markets. For the latter group of scholars, however, flexibility can be simply a way of life. Working in the post-Fordist fishbowl, media workers today hardly know the ways media executives co-opted the ideologies of freedom and authenticity from revolutionary social movements into their own precarious workplaces (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). These contradictions are central to production cultures globally, as Serra Tinic and Sylvia Martin demonstrate in their respective investigations of Canadian and Hong Kong film and television workforces. Further illustrating the need to see the local dimensions of global assemblages, Martin and Tinic excavate very different subjective responses to the transformations evoked by flexible production regimes.

For Tinic, the ebbs and flows involved in the runaway film production economy in Vancouver, British Columbia, have re-emphasized producers’ feelings toward their identities as Canadians. Reflecting a physical geography that pretends to stand in for anywhere in the world, the cultural geography of film production is one in which producers connect and identify with local, national, and international production cultures. While some might suppose that these connections alienate producers, who become handmaidens to stories located elsewhere, Tinic reveals that they can also be used as a cultural strategy, to straddle both sides of the border. Highlighting the oeuvre of a successful showrunner, Tinic demonstrates how Canadian producers may wager their success in “Hollywood North” to launch innovative projects in the US. Understanding these production ecologies, Tinic argues, may be important for building a Canadian creative labor force, though the ecologies would inevitably focus our attention on a few exceptional workers at the top of labor hierarchies.

Through a thick description of people located in the Hong Kong film industry and of its diasporic workforce, Martin sheds light on the anxieties threaded through production cultures. As she shows, making a living has not been easy within an industry suffering a series of economic and political crises. In response, workers have developed their own cultural narratives in order to explain and defend the unique value of their industry and their contributions to it. In this precarious environment workers are quick to promote their adaptability, their hard work ethics, and their ability to do more for less as values organic to the cultural community, even if this means self-exploitation or it replicates colonial associations with the pliant Asian laborer. Caught between traditional cultural norms and international market pressures, Martin’s layered account of Hong Kong’s production culture reveals how workers’ gender and class identities are shaped in relation to national and foreign discourses about the industry and the respectability of its laborers. These kinds of

ethnographic insights are important for understanding the ways production cultures reproduce social hierarchies even as they respond to a shifting political economy (Gill, 2007a; Mayer, 2011).

These social hierarchies are also at stake in production cultures that form themselves in resistance to mainstream media production spheres. Situated in the educational spheres of media literacy, youth media production, and a praxis-based pedagogy, Lora Taub-Pervizpour reflects on the challenges involved in creating a production culture that foregrounds the creative impulses of low-income young people of color. Raised within a scholastic environment that demanded complicity, the young producers who participated in a community video project began to question authority through the production process. At the same time, Taub-Pervizpour recognizes that, in the process of giving young people a public voice through media production skills, adults must also take responsibility to assist, protect, and even defend this vulnerable voice, for the “processes that attempt to value the voice of the youth will be threatening to those who hold traditional forms of power over them – the very power that functions by denying them an effective voice in their community” (p. 522). Ultimately she contends that, in order to sustain an egalitarian production culture, adult and youth participants alike must critically reflect on the means of inclusion and exclusion in the processes that surround not only the production, but also the distribution and exhibition of their resulting projects. Taub-Pervizpour’s concerns with the diversity of voices in production cultures could easily extend to all production cultures that continue to be unequally accessible to their potential members.

The Ethics of Production

The final set of chapters in this collection concern the moral dilemmas that surround media production, from the orientation of policy regimes to production work and to the study of media production itself. Whereas in much of the world governments have enforced media production rules, codes, and standards through formal public service obligations, professional credentialing, and censorship regulations, at least two global changes have impacted the implementation of media production ethics. First, the privatization of national media industries and the liberalization of national media markets have weakened industrial codes of conduct in the face of market competition. Second, the explosion in distribution venues for amateur-produced or user-generated media has hindered governmental efforts to establish or enforce ethical guidelines, especially across national boundaries. Nevertheless, public pressures for media production ethics have hardly dissipated, as is evidenced by outcries over the public dissemination of government documents related to war and diplomacy via the website WikiLeaks. Whereas the public call for media production ethics has been largely motivated by moral panics and cynicism (see Balio, 1985; Bracci,

2003; Murray, 2007), the authors in this final Part 6 maintain a sense of optimism in foregrounding the ethical considerations that need to be considered in media production scholarship.

Dafna Lemish, to begin, investigates definitions of quality among children's television producers in order to improve the genre, not to eliminate it. Her interviews with producers show their attempts to negotiate cultural distances between globally circulating television representations and locally situated young audiences. These negotiations involve ethical concerns in establishing the distance between the self and the other, or the familiar and the foreign, which forms the basis for tolerant understandings of humanity (Silverstone, 2007). In the process, her cross-cultural and transnational study interrogates normative definitions of childhood and vulnerability, as well as perceptions of gender differences and cultural imperialism in production values and programming practices. Overall, the concurrence among producers that children's television should feature strong, complex, and diverse characters in ways that support local cultures and tolerance speaks well of television professionals, who are frequently maligned as aiming for the lowest common denominator in society (Berger, 2003, pp. 89–100).

By the same token, Ellie Rennie implores us to question the need to celebrate community media production as inherently more progressive, participatory, or meaningful to its local producers or audiences. Taking a variety of case studies of youth-oriented media production as examples, Rennie illustrates that the “community” of community media can be just as exclusionary as mainstream media, and that neither of these media sectors is free of the political limits of the nation-state or of the economic constraints of global capitalism. In advocating a more practical approach to community media, Rennie looks to policy options for stabilizing non-profit and non-governmental media production as a third sector of the communications landscape. In doing so, she follows in the footsteps of a long tradition of media scholars who have acted as either policy advocates or policymakers (Bennett, 2006; Braman, 2003; Cunningham, 2009). Her suggestion of an independent labeling system for community media, akin to fair trade labels, not only shifts ethical questions from media production to media consumption, but also echoes those in community media who see media literacy and consumer education as vital to creating alternatives to purely profit-driven media systems (see Goodman, 2003; Howley, 2010).

The commodification of the self, the erasure of limits between work and leisure, and the endless anxiety discussed by so many of the authors in this volume as characteristics of commercial media systems and of creative industry work raise ethical questions for David Hesmondalgh and Anna Zoellner. After all, if work is exploitative, jobs unstable, futures uncertain, what is good work any more? This question looms for critical media scholars to explain why so many aspirants line up, indeed compete, to become media producers. In evaluating the ethical issues inherent to judging good work, the authors make the case for recognizing the elements of “autonomy, interest and involvement, sociality, self-esteem, self-realization, work–life

balance, and security” that comprise good work as philosophically un-alienated labor (p. 570). These elements were prominent in the authors’ interviews with practitioners in British and German television documentary projects, and they form the basis of a grounded politics of media labor that would account both for the pains and for the pleasures involved in media production. These dualities of experience thus overcome the polarities of techno-utopianism and the precariat’s pessimism in thinking about media work ethics (Gill, 2007b); they also demonstrate the need to continually re-theorize social theories of alienation in the context of contemporary media work realities (Mayer, 2009a).

The need to revisit social theories of production is also explicit in Rick Maxwell and Toby Miller’s project of bringing in the environment as a central theme in media production research. Warning against the implicit celebratory tone that frequently accompanies discussions of media users’ mobilities and flexibilities, the authors remind readers that every technology is the product of a Faustian bargain with the environment that must be labored, mutated, and spoiled for modern conveniences. In doing so, they underscore Nick Couldry’s (2006) call to “decentralize” representation as a primary focus in media ethics in order to look more closely at the differences that the media make in the material conditions of everyday life. These differences, they argue, affect most dramatically and unethically those media producers and receivers who lack the political voices through which they could defend themselves – namely the millions of workers who serve multinational information and communications technology (ICT) corporations through mining, factory assembly, and salvage recycling. Maxwell and Miller’s urging to consider the environmental impact of these activities is part and parcel of an emerging field of communication ethics that recognizes “the principle of ecological reciprocity, our obligation to support the ecosystem that supports us” (Mackin, 1997, p. 2).

Each of the chapters in this section perceives the social impacts of media production research – although, taken as a whole, the contributors in this section present an interesting dilemma on the subject of how to conduct that research. On the one hand, they stress the importance of listening to media practitioners in order to understand media harm or exploitation – whether to young audiences for children’s television in Lemish’s study or to the contracted employees of independent documentary productions in Hesmondalgh and Zoellner’s research. On the other hand, they promote a critical understanding of media production that stresses the ethical need to question received assumptions, for example about definitions of community, participation, and progressive politics (in the case of Rennie), or even about the primacy of texts and contents in media studies (in the case of Maxwell and Miller). The balance between ethical listening and ethical critique is a challenge for all the students of media production, and indeed for all responsible citizens. They further illustrate that, beyond media industries and their practitioners, ethical considerations of media production implicate all of us – producers, consumers, workers, and researchers.

Producing the Field

The chapters that follow here share the conviction that researching production is an essential element in media studies. As such, they illuminate the people, processes, and institutional structures that have tended to be invisible to media users and consumers. As the political economic forces and cultural articulations of the digital age construct these users and consumers as producers and prosumers, it is vitally important that media studies continue to explore production through the trajectories offered in this book. For, while there will always be newer technologies and corporate entities, realignments in the geopolitics of regulation, and shifts in the organization of work and in the definitions of media workers, the categories for the analysis of these developments and of their historical concerns remain. If anything, this volume shows that the concerns over commodification and authenticity, control and autonomy, capitalism and its alternatives have become more pressing.⁵ Knowing the diverse approaches to studying media production will hopefully help generations of researchers and students, producers, and activists not only to understand the changes in light of these concerns, but also to formulate strategies for action.

NOTES

- 1 This definition of media studies runs throughout the 2009 special issue of *Television and New Media* entitled *My Media Studies*.
- 2 Even in the United States, where corporate forms of capitalism first took hold over media production, the commonsense point of departure for production was grounded in the notion that government worked on behalf of the public good to manage markets. Discussions of the liberal state's role in US media production abound; they include McChesney (2008), Braman (2006), and Grossberg (2005).
- 3 I recognize the ambiguity both of the phrase "cultural citizen" and of the kinds of politics that may be attributed to citizens' activities in the sphere of media consumption (Hartley, 1999; Hermes, 2005; Miller, 2006).
- 4 The phrase "nobody knows" has typically been used to express the uncontrollability of television markets due to the high level of uncertainty over the success of the economic product – that is, uncertainty as to whether a program will recover its sunk costs (see Caves, 2000 for a discussion of this economic logic). Participant observation of media production shows, on the contrary, how much media practitioners *do* know and can ensure the economic viability of a program.
- 5 Returning to the seemingly invisible process of creating this text, one of the very concerns over media commodification and control is embedded in the text via an editorial decision to use the uppercase "I" in the term "Internet," a spelling that media scholars increasingly see as connoting branding and ownership of a public good (Schwartz, 2002).

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Media Studies

The Interdiscipline of the Present and the Future

Angharad N. Valdivia

Media studies is a rapidly growing, widely relevant, and evolving field – an interdiscipline (Valdivia, 2003). While some scholars have bemoaned the loss of focus on process and effects, especially on milestone studies (DeFleur, 1998), others find the breadth and porous contours to be conducive to a worthwhile intellectual pursuit (Sterne, 2005). To be sure, between 1998 and the present, there has been a huge growth in interpretive and critical approaches, which have nonetheless flourished in the margins as the effects paradigm – the stuff of milestones – has firmly retained its central place in the field, at least in the United States and the Netherlands. Indeed, efforts to map out the diversity of the field of communication (Craig, 1999, 2001), which we might call the broader umbrella for media studies, yield a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping and other times mutually exclusive approaches. The terrain of contemporary media studies acknowledges that most of us live in intensely mediated environments, so that Livingstone (2009) writes on the mediation of everything, and Hay (2000) writes of refrigerator studies. The former expands on how media and communication are “ever more crucial in today’s world” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 13), and the latter asks us – as a field over a decade ago, while continuing to encourage us (Hay, 2010, 2011) – to consider the broader web of networks to which other technologies, such as refrigerators and toasters, contribute in terms of routines and practices that serve to mediate the world for us. The latter line of questioning has proven immensely prescient as many of us live in highly networked webs of media and communication, where not only can our location be pinpointed at any given moment thanks to elements in our mobile technology, but also, if we chose to, we can broadcast a narrative of our location and other audiovisual bits of information constantly to many – such as our hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter or Tumblr followers.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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Nonetheless, whether we are talking of old media technologies or institutions (see Nerone, Volume 1, *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), we are witnessing the constitution of new audiences and a shift in traditional audiences (see Parameswaran, Volume 4, *Audience and Interpretation*) through the invitation offered by seductive content in a dynamically converging and synergized media environment (see Mazzarella, Volume 3, *Content and Representation*). The effects of these technologies and content continue to be measured and studied (see Scharrer, Volume 5, *Media Effects/Media Psychology*). While media platforms and patterns of production are converging, enduring tendencies toward concentration of ownership and control of media industries coexist with the emergence of new patterns of labor, practices, and updated forms of exploitation (see Mayer, Volume 2, *Media Production*, as well as some chapters in Gates, Volume 6, *Media Studies Futures*). This is not surprising given the rapidly expanding new media and communications technologies, many of whose functions replicate previous technologies while other uses (and abuses) bring new possibilities, utopian and dystopian, to the fore (see Gates, Volume 6). Unexpected global locations of nodes of influences result in previously unsuspected transnational alliances and networks (Castells, 2009).

As an early caveat to this triumphal celebration of media, I must remind readers that most of the above sentiment refers to a media-rich group that luxuriates in a wealth of networks and technologies. Yet we must not forget that even as I write this introduction at the very end of 2011, fully 50% of the global population have intermittent access to electricity. Mobile telephony may be widely spread, but the radio remains the most reliable global medium (see the *Journal of Radio Studies*). Beyond the fact that it is cheap, it neither relies on nor requires electricity or literacy, in English or any language. Furthermore, despite our current fixation with digital, wireless, and mobile media technologies, in times of crisis – whether natural such as a huge earthquake or in wartime – when the electric networks are down and we are thrown back into old school forms of media and communication, radio returns to its central location as a reliable and essential medium. So before you continue reading this introduction, or continue to read any of the absolutely outstanding volumes of this encyclopedia project, go out and buy yourself a radio – one that is both electric and battery powered. You might never need it, but if you do, you will be very relieved to have it.

The fact is that media are everywhere, and nearly everyone shares lifelong experience with and expertise on particular forms of media. Dating back to the 1920s – as identified both in Nerone, Volume 1 and Mazzarella, Volume 3, the study of media has been multi-modal and heterogeneous. Theoretical and methodological complexity has grown since the Payne Fund Studies. International, transnational, and global perspectives have become absolutely essential. Not that they ever were not, but now that media are produced, consumed, and circulated transnationally, media studies has to take this into account. Inclusivity of the heterogeneous components of the population in regard to the media has also grown. Scholarship that was once nationally bound and focused on White middle-class males has expanded to take into consideration gender, nation, region, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and class.

Furthermore, as both Downing (2003) and Castells (2010) remind us, we must not forget the importance of religion in the contemporary world, as many armed conflicts revolve around religion, and media content, production, audiences, and effects are interlaced with religious impulses.

Media studies is an interdiscipline. As such it draws on and benefits from a number of contributing fields such as history, philosophy, psychology, political science, education, literature, and sociology. Yet even as it draws on those many fields, it is its own area of studies. Too often other fields, whose interdisciplinarity takes them into media studies, see this interdiscipline as new – as in, “oh look, we just discovered that we ought to look at media.” Our field becomes the direct object of other scholars’ deployment of the myth of discovery. Just like Columbus discovered “America,”¹ scholars from other fields continue to “discover” media and media studies. A century’s worth of theories and research disappears in the process, and many of us often find ourselves in other disciplines’ conferences listening to presentations that implicitly suggest direct effects, transparency, mimetic images, and so on. Transparency, when media content, industries, audiences, and practices are treated as if they spoke for themselves, as if there were no mediation, is often the tactic taken by scholars outside our discipline. What we as a field contribute to the understanding of culture and society is, at the very least, that mediation is complex and that understanding mediation helps us to uncover patterns of power, distribution, and potential justice. Media studies is about unearthing and maximizing the democratic potential of practices, institutions, technologies, and audiences that pervade our contemporary life.

Nonetheless, as Gates reminds us in her introduction to Volume 6, one central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: What counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated media” capture a general sense of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the complex dimensions and issues that these terms encompass? By paying careful attention to issues of history and context, this encyclopedia seeks to trouble the usage of these terms even as they are used rather carelessly in popular culture and public policy.

The six separate volumes of this encyclopedia were present as six separate sections in *A Companion to Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2003), the volume that provides the model for this encyclopedia and that was, in turn, modeled after McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*. The editors of the individual volumes put together a stellar cast of authors who in turn produced original chapters. All volume editors were asked, indeed implored, to compose a table of contents that was inclusive in many ways. First, inclusivity in terms of global topics was paramount, and we strived for inclusivity in terms of authors and global regions as well. This, as I have discussed elsewhere (Valdivia, 2011b), is not as easy as it sounds. Differential access to the latest

research, culturally different approaches to writing and developing an argument, resources that might enable a given scholar or team to develop a project and get it ready for publication, and so on, are all variables that effectively discriminate in favor of those of us in well-funded research universities in wealthy countries. We recruited some scholars whose work we translated into English, and all editors worked assiduously to cast as global a network as possible.

Another element of inclusivity was paradigm diversity. Schooled at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) at the University of Illinois, I am the recipient of an educational tradition that highly values paradigm inclusivity. Insofar as it was possible, we included scholars using quantitative and qualitative approaches, sometimes both of them at the same time. Obviously the *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume focused solely on the social scientific tradition, while both the *Content and Representation* and *Audience and Interpretation* volumes included scholarship using both approaches. A third element of inclusivity was gender, race, and sexuality diversity. Cutting across as a focus that can be conducted in the research included in any of the six volumes of this project is the work of transnational feminism and globalizing gender studies (Hegde, 2006). Editors sought scholarship that would include these vectors of difference, as media studies really makes no sense without their consideration. Yet even within each of these categories we encounter new gaps that merit more research. For example, as Mazzarella mentions in the introduction to Volume 3: “the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008).” The rise of masculinity studies follows feminist studies as a logical move once we realize that femininity is socially constructed. Indeed, this is a process that this collection of volumes entices us to accomplish: a greater degree of preciseness to this complex concept of media studies, which all of us who work within the interdiscipline intellectually seek to explicate.

As a final note about process, these volumes have been peer reviewed in an innovative manner for an edited collection. First, each table of contents was submitted to the peer review of a senior scholar within that area of the field and edited accordingly. Then, as the chapters came in, within each volume authors reviewed other chapters. Ideally, each chapter was reviewed by two other authors as well as by its editors. As the overall editor of the project, I carefully reviewed all volume editor introductory chapters. Now the review process is turned over to you, the reader.

Media Studies Today

As an organizing principle for this book, I have followed since 2003 the structure provided by many different editions of Denis McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*:

An Introduction. Dating back to the first edition in 1983 and up to the sixth edition in 2010, whose name has changed, appropriately enough, to *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail provided a manageable way of dividing up the field into components that, while overlapping – as they had to be since these components were teased out more for scholarly inquiry than because they are discrete and differentiated – provided a useful way to look at the breadth of study of the media. We all experience media as an integrated experience. Media inherit values and histories that are in turn explicitly or implicitly incorporated into their production; then we either consume and/or interpret media in relation to regimes of representation, with particular audiences and interpretive tactics in mind, with some desired effects over which we have little control, and contributing to a future that – like effects – we wish we could influence but really cannot. Still for the purposes of research, we tease out the media experience into a number of areas.

The volumes of this encyclopedia match the sections of the *Companion*, which used McQuail's schema and added the “futures” section. Thus we have history, production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, and futures. We will later add a “methods” volume to complete the encyclopedia. While these areas are teased out for the purposes of research, there is great cross-pollination by scholars in media studies. We find that some scholars use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or at least rely on both. We also find that many scholars write about two or more of the six areas mentioned above. In fact, many of the major trends in current research encompass holistic media studies approaches. Among these contemporarily salient research projects are network analysis (e.g., Castells, 2009, 2010; Chan, 2007, 2011, forthcoming; Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010); girl studies (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Durham, 2004; Projansky, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Valdivia, 2008, 2009, 2011a); transnational feminism (Hegde, 2006; Molina Guzmán, 2010; Valdivia, 2011b); and neoliberalism as an undergirding framework of analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Hay, 2000, 2010, 2011; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monge, 2009). McCarthy (2011) expands the focus of neoliberalism in media to the educational system and the efforts of many cities, such as Chicago, to become a cosmopolitan, globally vibrant center of economic activity, thus linking media studies to educational policy studies.

Many of these recent research tendencies converge in the critical examination of the “posts.” Scholars develop amazing analyses demonstrating the potential of an intersectional approach that uses race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and class all at once, for people experience these elements in an integrated manner. Roopali Mukherjee's *The Racial Order of Things* (2006) set the bar for intersectional analysis of the “post-soul” era. Tasker and Negra (2007) provide a comprehensive introduction to the political implications of postfeminist culture, while Molina Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) apply the intersectional approach to the study of celebrity Latinas. Joseph (2010), in her provocatively entitled “Tyra Banks is Fat!” (a title that, to be fair, comes straight out of tabloid magazines and television coverage), explores the implicit racism and sexism of the postracial and postfeminist veneer of reality television in general, and Tyra Banks's brand in particular. Molina Guzmán (2010) explores

the transnational deployment and commodification of the Latina body, both spectacular and everyday. The politics of the post appears in all elements of media studies as these scholars foreground media studies even as they situate their work within a broader context of geopolitics and the dynamically changing mediascapes. While it may be fashionable to suggest the end of media studies, just as others have previously declared the end of history or of ideology, what this encyclopedia convincingly illustrates is the field's ability to expand as new practices, technologies, and institutions arise. As many of the editors and contributors will document, "new media" is a misnomer as neither the technology nor the uses or assemblages are so new (see Morley, 2006). What at first may seem to be epochal breaks are revealed by many of the contributors to be far more continuous elements in relation to history, culture, and media.

Editors and Volumes

We begin with normative theories and history. **John Nerone**, author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in US History* (1994), co-author, with Kevin Barnhurst, of *The Form of News: A History* (2001), and co-author and editor of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), as well as author of many other journal articles and book chapters, is the perfect historian to lead us through this fertile terrain of scholarship. Volume 1 on history underscores that while all media have long histories, historians agree neither on the definitive tale of origin nor on the particular historical approach. Moreover, Nerone, the careful historian, alerts us to the fact that even our use of the word media in relation to communications is quite recent.

Nerone's volume includes normative and historical approaches. Historical research, drawing on normative frameworks or not, continues to offer media studies scholars great insight and tools with which to understand contemporary media. Furthermore, there is great diversity within historical approaches to media studies. Beyond cultural memory and special effects as components of media history, we are also witnessing an explosion of careful work that revisits the archive, data, and documentation. Kafka (2009) brilliantly studies that most elemental component of media – paper. It seems like such a simple task: how do we study the construction and use of paper, the "bureau" in bureaucratization, the work of scribes? Kafka concludes that: "As scholars continue to research the history of paperwork, we need to keep in mind that we are defending not only the 'historical record,' but the political one" (2009, p. 352). Indeed, these are the perfect words to keep in mind as we read the volume on history so elegantly crafted by John Nerone.

Volume 2, *Media Production*, is composed by **Vicki Mayer**. Among the many publications by Mayer, we can list *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (2011), *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and Mass Media* (2003), and *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*

(co-edited with M. J. Banks and M. T. Caldwell, 2009). Mayer begins her volume by reminding us that “[M]edia production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how.” We expect to find, and we are not disappointed, a combination of keen attention paid to the sociological approach to our field, something about which McQuail had previously written in *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), and the more critical analysis of neo-Marxist political economy now accompanied by a focus on labor issues in the global setting. Moreover, as explicitly stated in one of her book titles, Mayer paradigmatically maintains a dialogue between political economy and cultural studies, an approach that resonates with globally used approaches in our field. The tension between structure and agency pervades this fine volume. Mayer remarks that “[I]f the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers.” So the new production studies is global by necessity as transnational ownership and production of media industries cannot be denied; blends political economy and cultural studies; foregrounds issues of labor, both above and below the line; and takes up issues of networks, intellectual property, and subjectivity as producers are constructed in terms of categories of identity.

Sharon Mazzarella, a prolific scholar of issues of youth and the media, leads us through the wide world of “content and representation.” Author or editor of books including *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2010), *20 Questions about Youth and Media* (2007), *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2005), and *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (2001), Mazzarella is a rigorously trained social scientist who also pursues qualitative research. As such she is the ideal editor for this volume, which is respectful of both of those methodological approaches. Indeed, for many a budding media studies scholar, content and representation provide the first point of entry, as these are the aspects of media that we experience most directly. Although, of course, all media have normative implications, histories, and a complex web of production, most people focus on the finished product: the television show, the movie, the blog, the social media website, the song, the newspaper, the advertisement, the catalogue. Content analysis is alluring yet amazingly difficult to carry out. Representational analysis also bears the sophistication of a range of theories. Neither is an easy task, and quantitative approaches complement interpretive studies. Mazzarella presents a persuasive argument as to why content/representational analysis remains an essential component of media studies and why projects that are well carried out tell us much about the world and the circuit of culture. Unsurprisingly, this area of research continues to be plentiful.

Radhika Parameswaran edits Volume 4 on audience and interpretation. Parameswaran’s research includes two long articles in *Journalism and Communication*

Monographs, “Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India” (2009, co-authored with K. Cardoza) and “Global Media Events in India: Contests Over Beauty, Gender, and Nation” (2001). Her work has focused on the intersection of feminist cultural studies, gender and media globalization, South Asia, and postcolonial studies with a particular emphasis on issues of audience and interpretation. As such she constructs a volume worthy of her areas of expertise, with plenty of chapters illustrating global and gender issues. This volume also bears the traces of an interdisciplinary field that includes social scientific paradigms such as uses and gratifications as well as more humanist approaches that now include global and online ethnographies. Parameswaran remarks that “audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception.” “Populist tendencies” refers to the “discovery” of the audience around every corner, as it were, without proper attention to issues of power and structure. In the contemporary moment, audience studies is vibrant and innovative. Whether we look at fans or online digital communities, to mention just two of the many possibilities, the construction and potential agency of the audience are major issues that continue to guide the production of media and subjectivities. Illustrative of the many philosophical quandaries undergirding the location of the audience within media studies is Jack Bratich’s chapter in Volume 6, as audience analysis is part of the present and future of the field. In addition, audience connects with issues of production as it undeniably takes labor to be part of any audience.

Erica Scharrer guides us through the fifth core component of media studies, media effects and media psychology, the dominant paradigm in the United States as well as in other global settings such as the Netherlands, and the paradigm that reaps the most funding in a positivist framework that values scientific demonstration of impact. Scharrer has co-authored, with G. Comstock, *Television: What’s On, Who’s Watching, and What it Means* (1999), *The Psychology of Media and Politics* (2005), and *Media and the American Child* (2007), and, with L. Weidman and K. Bissell, a long article in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, “Pointing the Finger of Blame: News Media Coverage of Popular-Culture Culpability” (2003). Scharrer brings to the volume on media effects/media psychology a long-standing engagement with the social scientific paradigm in our field. A well-carried-out effects study tells us much about the influence of media on individuals, groups, and societies. The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before. Thus Scharrer asks: “Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending time with

media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and conditions help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses?" These questions require complex methodological and theoretical expertise to answer. Many of us were schooled in a critique of the "hypodermic needle" model, though we have since learned that the media sometimes have or generate direct effects. Why else does a multibillion dollar advertising industry exist in the United States? However, we continue to marvel at the long-term cumulative effects that are far more complex than we originally anticipated. Furthermore, effects scholars, such as many of those contributing to Scharrer's volume, seek to explore how to effect positive change as well as how to avert more nefarious outcomes.

Finally for now,² the encyclopedia concludes with Volume 6 on media studies futures edited by **Kelly Gates**. Gates's own research is the veritable embodiment of a focus on futures. Author of *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance* (2011) as well as co-editor with Shoshana Magnet of *The New Media of Surveillance* (2009), Gates studies the discursive formation of the wishful deployment of recognition technology with an "almost gleeful futurism" that suggests "if only" the systems were in place, before 9/11, for instance, our present and future would be different, better, and so on.³ Futures is, by definition, a transient category, as within 10 years the content of this volume will be the stuff of the present, or maybe even the recent past. As Raymond Williams has written, we cannot anticipate what will be an emergent media form until it is *post facto*. The futures volume takes up some of the issues around Internet, gaming, social media, mobile telephone in a converged media form, biopolitics, and digitalization technologies such as biometric body scans. Gates asserts that media studies needs to take seriously the possibility that *radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media are and where they are headed. All of the chapters in this volume could be retrofitted into the other five volumes. Yet together they compose a vision of the field as it moves forward, taking up issues that date back centuries, engaging them with theories and modes of media that only apparently represent new terrain.

This is the state of the art of media studies. It is a field where we know better than to use the term "new" media – for all media are somewhat new but also very old in many of their aspects. Scholars in this encyclopedia take us back to the production of paper even as they bring us up to the latest technologies, assemblages, and institutions that arise to mediate our world. Contributors to this encyclopedia share the belief not only that media studies is an academic exercise, but also that by engaging in this important area of studies we are somehow contributing to a more just vision of the world. As the separate volumes build on each other, whether we are engaged in media at any of their analytical nodes (production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology), we are simultaneously linked to its history and its future. As a diverse heterogeneous field that is global, interdisciplinary, intersectional, multi-methodological, I cannot imagine a more exciting and potentially liberatory academic enterprise to be involved with.

NOTES

- 1 In this introduction and whenever possible, this encyclopedia uses “America” to refer to a continent and “US” or “United States” to refer to the country, unless we are quoting from scholarship that uses “America” otherwise.
- 2 A *Methods* volume is projected to be released at a later date, edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.
- 3 Few people know that Gates submitted her dissertation proposal the day before 9/11. What to the committee seemed like futuristic queries became the very real present within a period of 24 hours.

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The Governance of Communication and Culture

Regularizing the Regimes of Production and Consumption

Katharine Sarikakis

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the role of communication and cultural policy in regularizing changes in the regime of accumulation and in the processes of production and consumption of cultural goods. It explores the emergence of new geographies of power in decision-making and the people in production and consumption who define the ways in which the circulation and accumulation of cultural goods and profits is developing. Working with definitions of cultural policy and the European experience as a geography of political and political-economic power for decision-making, the chapter places Europe in the continuum of global production/consumption in the digital age.

Introduction: The Changing Landscape of Media and Culture

A careful look at everyday life in the twenty-first century reveals the centrality of media and communication as forces facilitating democratic processes and participation, cultural expression and exchange, or economic activity – at local and national levels as well as globally. The governance of these institutions has increasingly

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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become a matter of interest not only for policymakers in the field of culture and media, but also for various industries that, until recently, were only very loosely associated with this field – such as electronics, or even transportation. Behind today's world of multiplatform media usage and attention to cultural–civic experience stands a complex web of industrial and political interdependencies organized around the understanding – and conscious position – that media and culture industries constitute the source of new market activity and profit.

In particular, “culture” has gained ground as a legitimate area of political activity and decision-making in the past 20 years, invariably echoing economic arguments about lifting the economies of postindustrial, service-based Western societies. The European Union (EU), arguably a micrography of globalization processes on a specific, territorial terrain, accepted “culture” as a legitimate area of the polity's jurisdiction, largely because the economic–financial potential of cultural activity could be incorporated in the agenda of market liberalization on the continent. Within this framework, media and communications are inextricably linked to the broader culture industries, with media technologies occupying a central place in the governance of culture. This should perhaps come as no surprise, as media technologies are not only the drivers of many forms of popular culture, but they are increasingly integrated and embedded in practices of high culture and the arts, often making the boundaries between “popular” and “high” culture less visible, as the arts are being reconstituted as economic forces and as avenues for the regeneration of cities (Massey, 2010; Sarikakis, 2012; Sassen, 2002). Therefore populism and high art – historical rivals – have become more interlocked through the use of media technologies to the purpose of enhancing the audience experience (theaters and opera) or of producing works of art that incorporate the media themselves or art that is the medium, such as self-made nonprofessional anime videos – especially in the era of “remix” culture (Lessig, 2008).

Moreover, in the new millennium, culture becomes part of the information sector in all major economies, which are led by the US and by the EU. Certainly, the renewed interest in cultural products does not mean that cultural policy did not exist before the days of neoliberal governance – the so-called “information age.” But the discourses and the public presence of policy debates attained a different emphasis, one that is ideologically based on the function of culture as a generator of capital accumulation. Beyond economic aims, however, parallel debates on cultural governance seek to highlight culture's pivotal role in knowledge creation and sharing, in democratic participation, and in human emancipation. This global-level international policy debate developed among civil society organizations and international organizations such as UNESCO (Frau-Meigs, 2011). The debate has aimed to bring back the role of culture in the lives of communities, societies, and individuals – namely its role in promoting social cohesion and integration, well-being, and expression; indeed it has aimed to revisit culture-related rights as human rights. Consequently (or subsequently), cultural policy has become a distinct area of interest for policymakers as well as for culture industries themselves – a phrase that, in the context of this discussion, refers predominantly to the media industries in their established and

newer technologies. The discussion that follows explores the ways in which culture, cultural production, and cultural consumption have become subjects of intense regulatory change, and it maps these changes.

Global Regulatory Shifts: Priorities and Tensions

The governance of media and of culture has known an unprecedented shift, in particular in relation to the technological means of information and expression. The landscape of global media and that of communication have changed dramatically in the past two decades, having impacted upon and having been in return stabilized by the disintegration of market and financial borders, by the integration of markets, by global regulatory steering mechanisms, and finally by often unexpected or unintended uses of media technologies. These changes are both structural and systemic – in that they determine the shape and organization of media, communication, and culture industries. They are also changes at a symbolic and formative level – such as can be found in the character of governance of media and culture, and even in the ideological, normative *raison d'être* of their forms, as in the case of public service media. Consequently, the current environment of media and culture production is determined by changes in regulatory priorities, philosophies, and practices that took place across the world in the past two decades.

In principle and under the form of directions to be followed and applied according to local, national, and other regional contexts, a media and communication policy shift has taken place globally. Regulation came to establish – in a normative and legislative, hence in a legal way – changes in the practice of media operations, a continuous process that started in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In particular, the shift cemented new business models and transnational operations organized around the introduction of satellite technology and around the development of the electronics industry; it also cemented the first steps toward the popularization of Internet technology, by allowing flexible connections across time/space.

These shifts belong in the broader context of neoliberal governance. As cultural geographer David Harvey argues:

The corporatization and privatization of hitherto public assets (such as universities), to say nothing of the wave of privatization (of water and public utilities of all kinds) that has swept the world, indicate a new wave of “enclosing the commons” [. . .] The reversion of common property rights won through years of hard class struggle [. . .] to the private domain has been one of the most egregious of all policies of dispossession pursued in the name of neoliberal orthodoxy. (Harvey, 2003, p. 148)

Neoliberalism as a political philosophy for the organization of social life on the principles of the free market was revived in the US and in the UK around the same time,

in the early 1980s, influencing the politics of international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), but also the political steering of many countries. In the process of furthering the possibilities for capital accumulation, the media and culture sector offered a great terrain, only partly exploited. Supported, among others, by large transnational corporations of communication technology – which were active not only in the arena of public communication, but also in that of military communication – neoliberal economists and politicians pursued the structural alteration of the organization of the market. For that process to take place, it was required that the state change from its Keynesian role in economy to one of minimum intervention in the market, and that this change be implemented by administratively removing the mechanisms of control over the daily operations of transnational capital. Overall, systems of self-regulation and co-regulation that are largely dependent on industries' own terms of reference replace central regulatory frameworks.¹ Harvey (2010, p. 54) writes, characteristically, that the “state–finance nexus” has long functioned as the “central nervous system” for capital accumulation.

The major paradigm shift consisted of the following changes:

(a) The media landscape was transformed structurally so as to limit the reach of public service broadcasters (PSB) in the audience “market” – and not only for countries where PSB were a monopoly, but also for countries with a dual system of media that included private broadcasters, such as the ITV in the UK. The media landscape became a volatile market whose major actors were the ones who could derive financial resources from other operations, as the case of the UK has shown (Freedman, 2008). It was during this period that Europe's symbolic and cultural centers were shifting; this was due to the development of the London media hub, where the seat of media corporations spiralled with the attachment of media-related businesses. The development of new markets was achieved.

(b) The airwaves – which were part of the “commons” and hence a vital communication resource, until then considered public property – were privatized with the introduction of commercial broadcasting channels. Telecommunications followed the same pattern, with the “auctioning” of the spectrum to the highest bidders (Crow, Longford, & Sawchuk, 2008; Streeter, 1996).

(c) The citizens, who formed the public, were referred to as consumers and audiences of media products. This way the relation between the public on the one hand, the media and culture on the other is treated differently in policy decisions about access, universality, or other related rights to cultural goods. The predominant logic is one that defines this relation as a commercial, transactional one.

(d) Furthermore, processes of technological convergence have been dealt with as largely technological ones. Sociocultural concerns are limited to certain “moments” of end-use of media technology (such as access to computer terminals and the Internet) as well as literacy in the basic usage of communications. These are “instances” that are not always contextualized within the broader conditions of

cultural values and capital, economic resources, or other social disparities. It is argued that the policies of the information society treat citizens according to their purchasing power, in other words they regard the public as customers in the purchase of electronic items. Hence citizens are categorized according to their ability to participate in the digital market (Chakravartty & Sarikakis, 2006; Murdock & Golding, 2004).

These profound changes have taken place not only in the immediate environments where we experience media and cultural products – which are in rather localized and specific contexts even when we are on the move, for instance at home, at our computer, or in the street, on our mobile phone, in an Internet café, or in a media art installation exhibition. They have also taken place in ways that reveal the construction of new political and economic geographies that transcend our localities and that are global in reach, as cultural and media artifacts are to distant and multiple publics. Media and communications have transnational dimensions in relation to their users and audiences, as the latter form bonds across borders in the form of diasporic connections or other sociopolitical networks. Finally, while the cultural and political-economic dynamics of the media are located in global, transnational, and local dimensions, their governance has increasingly shifted toward supranational terrains – such as the EU, which is one of the most developed multi-actor policy regime – and has become integral to international policy regimes – for example summits and trade agreements.

International policy regimes are those interrelations between states, private actors, and third-sector actors that can include any kind of combination among these actors. The theory of hegemonic international regimes derives from the discipline of international relations. Among international relations scholars, critical realists like Grieco (2002) believe that international regimes are based on the hegemonic power of certain actors and rely on it for their establishment and continuation. So far as our discussion of media and cultural policy is concerned, the US would be a hegemonic power in a position to steer policy within regimes of international cooperation. The US is followed closely in certain domains by the EU and by certain transnational corporations. According to this theory, media giants like Microsoft, General Electric, or News Corporation would be central in maintaining specific policy priorities at a global level. International policy regimes also refer to the constellation of policy-designing powers like the G7/8 or of organizations like the International Telecommunications Union and the World Intellectual Property Organization.²

Initially, international regimes consisted predominantly of states; but this, too, has changed in the era of multi-stakeholder organization of policymaking. The World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) (2002–2004) – the only summit on media after the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) initiative taken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – was part of such a policy regime (Chakravartty & Sarikakis, 2006). Despite the fact that the summit was not designed to make policy but to

debate priorities for the development of the information society,³ it did result in the establishment of another global policy debate forum. The Internet Governance Forum, which derived from the WSIS, was an international forum aimed to debate contemporary policy questions about the Internet – but, again, “not to make policy” (see Internet Governance Forum, 2012). The trajectory of the governance of the information society therefore seems to be based on the combination of actions (not always or necessarily in a consistent or permanent formation) and principles set in a series of meetings of a selections of states. This starts with the Brussels meeting of 1995, which set the policy principles for the information society and its US counterpart, information superhighway; the series of meeting continued with the G8 meeting in Okinawa in 1998 and with the WSIS process. It is interesting to note that the global alliance for electronic commerce, a powerful private-sector global lobby actor, has been systematically present across these series of meetings and liaised with participating governments over the kinds of policy directions that an international Internet policy regime would be expected to follow. Therefore the process of policymaking, until then largely a national state-led affair, was reformed to include various “multi-stakeholders,” as decision-making expanded gradually to international levels.

Furthermore, the changes emerging at the global level concern the *types* of regulatory models promoted with regard to media and culture, as these are not simply the sum or amalgamation of national policies, but rather (and to a great extent) models valid on the international scene beyond the nation-state. These models set the principles of regulatory directions and the background against which media and culture are governed in national or regional settings. Moreover, these changes reveal that the reconfiguration of the role and function of media – and of culture overall – constitutes a core element in a large-scale reorganization of the form of capitalism.

To scholars of international regulatory change, the political economy of the markets is a determining factor in the development of policies in two major ways. First, markets regularize and normalize in a normative manner the changes that have already taken place prior to law. Second, markets determine future policy – not necessarily as a matter of prescribing it exactly, but by limiting the range of options that it can derive from. For example, through the involvement of private global corporations in policy design, priority has been given to policy choices that favor a neoliberal, privatized form of media ownership, while community and public service media have effectively been treated as “add-ons” to a predominantly private media system.

In communications, culture, and the media the transformation of governance has three identifiable phases:

(a) A phase of *devaluation* of previous paradigms through economy-framed and political discourses, accompanied by the formulation of a set of “principles” and guidelines for policy direction in international forums like the G8, as well as in subject-specific summits and other international constellations. These principles are adapted according to geopolitical, historical, and other dimensions of localized regulatory systems. For example, European and American jurisprudence are different,

and so are historically set ways of politics. It is important to note that only certain countries and their states are in a position to lead this process.

(b) A phase of *de- and re-regulation* follows (not in strict chronological order) the set principles that are supported normatively, on the one hand on the grounds of the crisis of the welfare state and of Keynesian economics, and, on the other hand, through a discourse of technological inevitability. Both phases are considered phases of change and crisis for the existing regulatory framework.

(c) *The stabilization and normalization* of the new status quo in its regulatory cementing achieves an ideological/normative justification that lends legitimacy to these changes and confers predictability to the political and legal situation, which is necessary for capitalization on previously not owned assets. This is the longest of the three phases, because it functions not only as a reevaluation process for the new commodities (media and culture products), whose financial beneficiaries exclude the public. It also functions as the new regulatory (and regularizing) establishment, which leads to further processes of commercialization and marketization of the emergent media and cultural phenomena.

It is important for media production scholars to concern themselves with policy relations and with the processes and outputs of media production. In particular, attention should be focused on the core characteristics of communication and media policies as sites for struggle among competing and conflicting interests, but also as processes that themselves constitute cultural products inasmuch they express dominant ideas, values, and understandings.

Hegemonies of Cultural Policy

The shifted frame of culture and media governance entails all those processes and actors involved in the shaping of the conditions under which the production and consumption of culture takes place. These include dominant understandings about a legitimate agenda for debate, the definition of the policy problem, structural arrangements that impede or encourage pluralistic expressions in cultural production, and decision-making processes. Cultural and communication governance can be mapped across three axes that capture its relation to citizens, and their relationship with the state and communication organizations.

The following factors are catalysts of transformation for the relationship between the act of public speech – as something that cultural production may be understood in its broader sense – and the citizens:

- 1 Intensified globalization is directly dependent on speedy, internationally integrated communication systems and on media systems that are firmly operational in required localities.

- 2 Globalization accelerates the transformation of the state, through the emergence of a world political order, albeit in problematic terms with regards to access to and participation in the processes of decision-making.
- 3 Information and knowledge in postindustrial societies are increasingly treated as commodities and subject to proprietary legal frameworks – in particular that of intellectual property and copyright.

As policies represent the dominance of hegemonic discourse and ideas in particular historical moments and contexts, they also reflect tensions – they express conflicts and visions, political histories and styles of governance, democratization, and commercialization.

“Culture” as a distinct policy object of the neoliberal agenda gained prominence in Europe in the 1980s, as part of the efforts for urban regeneration, and at an EU level with the establishment of the European City of Culture in Athens in 1985 (Sassatelli, 2009). For the US, cultural products have always been part and parcel of its foreign policy, not always in a systematic manner, but certainly as means to persistently open barriers for its products, especially where the US government had influence in the domestic politics of other countries. Katya Johanson (2008), discussing Australia’s cultural policy experience, argues that it existed well before the rise in interest in culture as industry. Hence there was continuity in bringing cultural industry discourses in line with industry policy discourse in the 1990s, which included support for the arts as an industry and for the rejuvenation of depressed urban centers. Characteristically, as Johanson states, in the postwar era the tertiary sector had increasingly occupied 40% of the labor force. As early in the life of the EU as the 1960s, culture was considered part of its international diplomacy – among its member states and in its relations to the outside world. US production policies were directed toward re-establishing and maintaining a dominant position in capturing European audience shares through international negotiations to open their markets, lower production costs (taxes, operational, and administrative costs), and to standardize regulatory frameworks.

At the same time culture has been a point of contestation and struggle for hegemony vis-à-vis the “American influence” and its role in the making of postwar nations. Not dissimilarly, Europe’s nemesis placed a lot of attention on the economic and diplomatic significance of European culture industries. American cultural exports of film and of popular culture were understood to represent favorable aspects of US politics. In a discussion of the historical role of the American film industry in Europe, Ian Jarvie (1992) shows the pressures the US industry put on its government to promote free-trade zones, fewer barriers, and wider distribution through its negotiations with foreign nations. The European nations were a particularly important market – as they are today. They, too, were designing cultural policies that included various systems of quotas, tariffs, and import taxes on foreign films. For example, France, Britain, and the Dutch governments were in favor of protectionist measures, even of systems of state monopoly purchase to control the outflow of exchange

currency, which at the time was an important resource in cash-stripped Europe. In response, the American movie industry lobby employed a new rhetoric to re-establish its legitimacy and therefore to recover lost profits and the dominance it enjoyed in prewar Europe (*ibid.*).

Culture was the cornerstone for cultural understanding among the continents as well as the vehicle for the development of cultural affiliation with American ideologies (and hence the dominance over communism). The issue of quotas appears in the negotiations for the International Trade Organization (ITO) and for the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) very early on, as an integral part of Europe's cultural policy and international relations. However, culture operates within the context of capitalist economy. To pursue favorable conditions for entry into the European market, the American movie industry lobby, in one pre-emptive strike, raised the issues of contingents, visas, exchange controls, and bilateral agreements in the negotiations over the ITO and the GATT throughout 1946 and 1947 (*ibid.*). The industry was opposed to such measures, favoring borderless arrangements that would allow it easier entry to European markets. Quotas as a policy measure for the protection of European film production became points of reference for conflicting interests, even among European countries, France being the strongest advocate and Britain the weakest. But this was not always the case. The British Cinematograph Films Act abandoned the policy of protectionism for their film industry in exchange for the US' commitment to purchase British products (*ibid.*, p. 281).

The aim of GATT has been free trade, approached as a phased process of tariff reductions. Its European project was to create an integrated market for American cultural products. To do this, one of its priorities was to "internationalize" Hollywood business by contracting local employees – indigenous talent and émigrés – and by shooting in foreign production locations. Another priority was to push distribution and exhibition agreements. It became easier to push toward specific policies that facilitated the distribution and consumption of US films in the countries that "owed" to the US due to the Marshall Plan. This was particularly vital for the US economy, as 40% of the US movie industry revenue depended on overseas sales (*ibid.*). In terms of theater ownership, US production companies had already solidified their connections before the war, changing little even 50 years later. These dual-policy aims show that production goes hand in hand with distribution and ownership of the theaters. These economic and social interests continue even today in international negotiations with the audiovisual culture industries and with the EU. Quotas, as a primary policy tool, extended to include television and other audiovisual media. Although large media corporations have solidified their control over these markets today (McChesney, 2004), there is a wider diffusion of production networks. This may give the appearance of political flexibility, pluralism, and a diversity of interests in the negotiations.

Still, the policies presume ownership concentration as a dominant form of the organization of media and culture industries. This presumption has specific effects on the quality of media programming and content in terms of their quality of

production, their reliance on “tested” format and storylines, the ways in which the stories change in order to appeal to mass audiences, and so on (Baltruchat, 2010). Ownership concentration in the media not only leads to the homogenization of content and to production of content of the lowest common denominator, but also contributes to the marginalization of unprofitable styles, languages, themes, ideas. In the EU, the problem of ownership concentration is an unresolved policy issue. For over a quarter of a century, attempts to formulate policy at a European level have failed, despite repeated initiatives from the European Parliament as well as from professional and civil society organizations (Doyle, 2007). The subject is not closed yet, but there does not seem to be any substantive change of course. Instead “monitoring” committees and “special” mentions are offered as symbolic gestures toward pluralism in the media. The resulting media economic landscape is, clearly, an oligopoly, the most dramatic examples being present in Italy and in Eastern Europe.

In connection with media ownership discussions, the EU has turned its attention to deeper dimensions of culture in policy, including linguistic pluralism, cultural citizenship and cultural expression, media diversity, and the relation of ethnic minorities to the media (Doyle, 2007; Sassatelli, 2002, 2007; Tsaliki, 2007; Zabaleta, Xamardo, Urrutia, Gutierrez, & Mendizabal Etxabe, 2004). These policy areas are important in that they raise questions about the strength and degree of commitment and political will, in contemporary Europe, to protect alternative forms of cultural expression. They also reveal assumptions about what constitutes Europe. Cultural policy in the EU became certainly more sophisticated in these respects through funding provisions for the development of production, training, collaborations, and recently distribution of “European works” through the programme MEDIA (see European Commission, 2012). This programme was established together with the introduction of the Television Without Frontiers, the main audiovisual common policy of the EU, which applied the single-market principles in the cross-border movement of cultural services and products. Now in its third reincarnation, the EU Audiovisual Services Directive reflects the tensions in supporting the mediation of cultural expression on the one hand, and the corporatization and privatization of cultural products as trade goods on the other (Sarikakis, 2004).

Despite its neoliberal and predominantly market-focused direction, cultural policy has also played another role in contemporary Europe. It is seen as the vehicle to reconstruct the new Europe. Its importance in political thinking and political integration has been identified early on, in parliamentary debates in which culture is viewed not only as a profit-making machine, but as a unique form for an “industry.” This duality is one of the major sources of conflict, in the media and in cultural policy in the EU, between those who think that cultural products require special measures and provisions and those who prefer a strictly market-based approach (Sarikakis, 2004; 2007a, 2007b). “Culture,” and hence cultural policy, gained legitimacy and legality as an EU jurisdiction with the Maastricht Treaty. There is, to a great extent, a common understanding that neoliberal approaches to the construction of Europe are detri-

mental to its cultural identities and to their survival. In these terms, the protection of cultural goods and services that derive from diverse national and cultural contexts becomes politically important, as cultural expression becomes inextricably connected to citizenship (Germann, 2005, 2006). For any society, cultural goods produced under neoliberal conditions are not conducive to an autonomous and genuine negotiation in the construction of identity. This question is in turn related to sociocultural dimensions of citizenship along cultural mediations of difference and sameness. The EU's cultural policy has failed in many ways to fulfil the need for an anthropological understanding of culture that would also include a proactive pursuit of social cohesion and recognition (Sarikakis, 2005, 2007a, 2007b). Article 151 of the Maastricht Treaty of the EU recognized culture not only as factor of diversity as *experienced* among "legitimate" European publics, but also as a critical junction for migratory populations and for populations of a minority status. Cultural policy as such has fostered particular visions of "a" European identity (Sassatelli, 2009).

Furthermore, the role of cultural policy extends beyond the borders of the EU, as it affects nonmember states through policy adjustment for those countries that want to become members, and through indirect policy reform for those that are at the receiving end of development, collaborative, and other funds released by the policy (De Smaele, 2007). Expansion of the EU brings the expansion of regulatory regimes to accession countries that are shaped by neoliberal strategies for the exploitation of untapped markets, a process that makes visible its impact on the privatization of media and culture industries, structures, and technologies. An integral element in the strategy of privatization of public cultural assets has been the withdrawal of support from PSB systems and a systematic process of administrative scrutiny that is disproportionate to that enforced on private corporations. Through the application of competition mandates, unfavorable conditions for PSBs are mixed with rhetorical support of their importance for democracy and social cohesion (Humphreys, 2007; Munoz Saldana, 2008). Controls over media development plans derive largely from the expectation that states cease to support PSBs. In the EU, repeated attempts to interrogate and interpret the Treaty of Amsterdam, amending the establishing treaties of the EU as an economic Magna Carta for European media, have resulted in a system whereby PSBs are tested for their public service obligations against the competition market. PSBs are placed in disproportionate scrutiny in relation to commercial broadcasters for the quality of their programmes; but, most importantly, the costs of such tests are carried by the PSBs themselves, and ultimately by the public. These costs can be very prohibitive for small nations. Private media are not obliged to prove their corporate social responsibility or to provide transparency with regard to their accounts and chain of management.

Although accountability for the spending of public money should be integral to the operations of a public service corporation, it is important that this process does not hinder the development and future survival of this corporation. In the UK, the proposal to slice the license fee of the BBC gained momentum within the context of undermining the normative support for the BBC. As soon as the conservative-liberal

coalition took over in 2010, it was able to impose sudden and drastic cuts on the BBC as part of its “austerity package.”

The significance of PSBs around the world continues to reside in their role in bridging cultural differences and class divides by bringing access to information and education to the masses. Across all continents and for over 40 years, their role in supporting democracies and cultures despite the public broadcasting system’s shortcomings has been well documented. In areas of the world where the process of democratization continues, PSBs are cornerstones of culture in the production and distribution of universally accessible material. Today their innovative production approaches, their mission toward creating genuinely original, diverse, and domestic programming, and their support for independent culture-making can be seen in a series of declarations setting the international standards for PSBs (Sarikakis, 2010). Superlative expressions of neoliberal policy, which are based on the control of the media and culture markets through private ownership, are at odds with these aims.

Noncommercial, Nonprofessional Culture and New Policy Regimes

The private ownership of media and cultural production has new dimensions in the digital era, which transform the regulatory protection for certain kinds of ownership while raising important questions with regard to the impact of these changes. The postindustrial *qua* “informational” era of capitalism is characterized by a culture and media policy that is heavily oriented toward the control of copyright in digital environments. Both the internationalization of media and culture industries and the technological convergence of the media are posing further challenges to the regulation of the sector. In terms of intellectual property and control over copyright, new regimes are emerging whereby digital or digitized content is subject to different rules from those that govern the conventional (analogue) content. This is compounded with the technical capability to control the range and frequency of uses of digital content.

The configuration of copyright regimes in the digital marketplace is designed to derive profit from existing and new cultural activities/products through the management of the consumer and by changing the dynamics of the production and consumption of cultural goods. The importance of culture in creating a new market and in sustaining the information society cannot be overstated. In his book *Exploring the Sociology of Europe*, Maurice Roche refers to Europe’s “cultural capitalism”:

The continuing ICT revolution gives a massive new and dynamic role to what are essentially cultural phenomena, namely information and knowledge, and essentially cultural processes, namely communication, in all dimensions of society, including the economy [. . .] [cultural industries] represent major and growing sources of GDP and employment in contemporary advanced economies, both across Europe and around the world. (Roche, 2010, p. 175)

For early Internet adopters such as the members of academic and librarian communities and for those users who “grew up” with it, the Internet appears to be the domain of freedom: freedom to express oneself, to exchange ideas, to explore culture, to make culture, to develop social network, to organize civic action. For copyright holders of cultural and informational products, however, the Internet represents a threat to the viability of established business models. This is different from a threat to business generally, despite the industry’s claims about losses. The rights holders’ problem seems to be that unlicensed Internet download of popular culture products such as songs, films, or electronic books antagonizes sales of physical items, which decline. Whether this is exactly the case is debatable, as the industry itself recognizes that there are new models of business being developed and new ways to monetize users’ developing relation with new media (ELIAMEP, 2009).

The more pressing question here is to what extent copyright regimes should be applied in the online environment. Is it time for the coexistence of provisions that allow a freer circulation of content without punishing – or, worse, criminalizing – the consumer? In many ways, the power struggle over “illegal” downloading, to use the industry’s framing, is odd. Most cultural products can be found “recycled” (used/like-new) through individual sellers in online “marketplaces,” for example Amazon or E-bay, for as little as £0.01. These sales generate income for E-bay and Amazon, not for rights holders. The point is that the life of a cultural product can be very long, but also very unprofitable. Peer-to-peer exchanges and other forms of downloading function to disseminate cultural products as a way of reconnaissance with newer cultural forms, with lower economic risk.

At the same time, the change in the consumers’ relation to the cultural products they consume (even if “unauthorized”) is linked to the profound changes that are taking place in the making of nonprofessional and noncommercial culture. Cultural producers are now encountering severe restrictions in their work. In the analogue world, copyright was not something users of information and culture had to think about; it was rather the concern of music publishers, librarians, and Hollywood lawyers (Lessig, 2008). In youth cultures of yore, for example, “mix tapes” were considered a thoughtful and special present to give someone. Now, mixed media infringe copyright. While the practice of making a mix tape was not necessarily ever in line with copyright laws, Lawrence Lessig (2008) asserts that the difference between then and now lies in the fact that the practice could not be monitored or policed. It did not make sense to go after consumers in this way. Besides, it was also a creative process; no two mixed tapes were the same, unless they were copies of each other. The process expressed emotions by was of putting together selected songs; it was a word-of-mouth promotion of songs and bands and a practical way to arrange one’s collection in a mobile format, to use it when on the move.

Today this very same act, in different media, is subject to monitoring, policing, and an increased frenzy among multinational organizations intending to “fend off” threats to their intellectual property. The art of remixing – or collage – and even the art of satire are under threat. Every single use of material is subject to explicit permission unless the copyright period has expired, which varies in duration according

to form. Musical copyright expires in Europe earlier than in the US. Book copyright expires later than music copyright, and so on. In the hyperbolic new media environment, digitalized material or material directly produced in digital form can easily be traced if it is used in derivative works such as collage, video clips, or short films. What was previously practically possible, permissible, and legal with “lesser” technologies is now criminalized, if it is created through new technologies.

At the time when technologies have seemingly democratized creativity and cultural production, the structural frameworks of law and the market seek to criminalize this technological democratization. Extreme stories of overzealous copyright holders have been well publicized, for instance the capers of those pursuing royalties from the Girl Scouts for singing songs around campfires. In another case, a group of Swathmore College students were prosecuted because they published 15,000 emails and memos that leaked from Diebold Election Systems (DES). DES runs the electronic voting machines used in the 2000 US presidential elections, which resulted in the electoral victory of former President George W. Bush. The stunt exposed the flaws and problems in the company’s software and security, but it was also deemed to infringe the company’s copyright according to the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998. The decision resulted in the college taking down the messages and effectively silencing the students without even a court procedure (Boynton, 2004). The effect of these cases has been chilling for all the citizens who make and distribute “culture.”

The advent of all kinds of communication technologies, and in particular of those with the capacity for converged, digital communication, generated the reproduction of existing goods while dictating the possible production of future goods. New digital media allow the download and storage of – theoretically – an infinite amount of material. Some critics say that any act of using content is an act of copying. Other critics say that, given the technological superiority of our times, “copying” as a practice has lost its meaning. In any case, these critics are worried about what they see as the progressive silencing of cultural producers and of their public speech. Lessig and Siva Vaidhyanathan characteristically argue that cultural remixing has been historically free of regulation, whether through the adaptation of original works or the retelling of stories in order to emphasize different people’s perspectives.

One such modern form of nonprofessional, noncommercial creativity is music videos that are made by fans of anime. The Anime Music Videos website (see <http://www.animemusicvideos.org>) counts several hundred thousand members who create video clips from remixing cartoons and songs to make new themes and videos that tell a story. Factual information can be mixed with fictional imagery through the use of sophisticated animation software. Fans typically create their own stories on the basis of their favorite anime characters, but they can create powerful political commentaries too. The amateur context within which these videos are produced means that they are clearly defined as personal creations, not for profit. The productions demonstrate skills and knowledge, as well as the depth of the producers’ “fandom” in showcasing their abilities. The music used in these video clips is taken without any regard for copyright, at least until recently.

In 2005, the recording company Wind-Up sent Anime Music Videos a cease and desist note, meaning that it wanted all videos using work of its artists to be withdrawn from the site. At the time, this amounted to almost 3,000 videos and translated into thousands of additional hours of creative labor by people who love anime and creative production. As one fan noted: “The corporate cycle is consuming the ‘creative’ cycle – [ergo] all is right with the world” (Otohiko, 2005).

In the digital age, consumers are a locus for creative production. Fans, as a subgroup of consumers, depend on the use of preexisting works under the control of copyright holders – in most cases, large and powerful publishers. There are legal protections for “transformative” work, meaning work that differs significantly from the originals it uses and/or provides new creative material. Challenges posed through cease and desist letters, however, place the onus of responsibility largely on the creators to prove their work to be transformative – a definition that is often found elusive. The patenting of ideas and knowledge as a form of property right and intellectual property is raising doubts about the usefulness of such protection for the public good and for the development of new ideas and technology in the short and the long term. The impact of cease and desist letters can be chilling for users and societies across the world – with potentially profound consequences.

The Future of Culture

The quality of the governance of media and culture is located on the interface of two levels of governance. First there is a macro-level of information and communications policy that regulates private and public actors, such as the communications and cultural industries. Second, there is a micro-level of control of cultural and communicative expression, manifest in the regulation of individual behavior. In both arenas, the delimitation of boundaries and conditions of activity for corporations and people takes place in fundamentally different ways. On a global scale, there is light governance of transnational industrial activities, whether through policy processes, in their actual media production processes, or through their interactions with consumers. Private actors’ actions also have a regulatory character, one that is *normalizing* the cultural and media sector’s *public* activity, especially when this brings changes to, and challenges, existing legal frameworks. Examples include the liberalization of commercial media, the light-touch regulation of production processes, the transnational trafficking of private data for e-commerce, the international trading allowances, and the concentration of ownership (Artz & Kamalipour, 2003; Braman, 2004; Chakravartty & Sarikakis, 2006; Mosco & McKercher, 2007; Sarikakis, 2010). On a national scale, the state governs people by focusing on *private* behavior, for instance individual wrongdoings, and it does so through intellectual property and copyright policies, privacy, censorship, and the monitoring of Internet usage (Bonetti, 2003; Sarikakis, 2004; Sidak, 2004; Zittrain, 2005).

A new set of legal principles adds to the oddity of this already complex set of conflicting interests in governing digital media. The principles of private initiative that lead in the sphere of digital media and information policy conflict with traditional notions of freedom of expression, creativity, and public access. Similarly, the notions of Internet freedom and accessibility are not compatible with the motivations of those promoting the private ownership of symbolic and material resources. Structural transformations have colonized the digital spectrum from the public and increasingly stand in opposition to public access and to the free flow of information through intellectual property law and copyright. The emergence of new geographies of power in decision-making over production and consumption defines the ways in which the circulation of cultural goods and the accumulation of profits coexist and concur.

The future of the freedom and substance of culture depends on the choices we make today. Transformative culture and investigative media require an active protection of and responsibility for the materiality of communicative and cultural expression and its constitutive elements. Communication and cultural policies play an important role in regularizing changes in the regime of accumulation that consists of the processes of production and consumption of cultural goods.

NOTES

- 1 Also see the shock doctrine of Naomi Klein on the global liberalization-cum-privatization "project."
- 2 At a national level, media and communication industries have helped construct and have been shaped by the reorganization of symbolic and technological markets. Media and culture products address localized cultures and operate within reformed, largely regulatory frameworks. Media production is therefore still shaped by the dynamics and regulatory frameworks of local or national markets.
- 3 The phrase *information society* (IS) came to include all aspects of media and communication technologies in everyday social, business, cultural, and political life. Some main aspects of IS policy concern the development of infrastructure, access to communication technologies, and skills.

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Media Production and Information Policy

Growth Through Replication

Patrick Burkart and Lucas Logan

ABSTRACT

This chapter uses a stakeholder analysis to examine the legal regime governing intellectual property rights in cyberspace and those who try to shape current policies. Celebrating what they call “the Celestial Jukebox,” information policymakers in the European Union (EU) have adopted copyright maximalist standards, which follow a model dictated by Hollywood for the United States. This chapter explores the legal initiatives and mechanisms required for this transformation, the political resistance and opposition to these reforms, and the changing relationships between media producers and consumers that the reforms seek to legitimate.

In the United States, a legal “change of state” (Braman, 2007) from industrial to informational occurred in the north at the end of the twentieth century, as the digitization of telecommunications networks was completed and the Internet subsumed other forms of communication. Five media conglomerates and a handful of powerful software and telecommunications companies demanded the legal guarantees for this structural transformation in the early 1990s, and the legislative work was completed around 1998. The European “change of state” is still occurring, and so it is instructive to observe – and somewhat surprising to discover – that *most* important aspects of the restructuring resemble the US model.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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Basic conflicts among private interests pervade the legal reforms that have defined the products and services of our information age. Struggles to influence information policy disclose the structures of the information society (Braman, 2007). Our “informational” social systems – especially the media and telecommunication companies, consumer goods industries, standards-setting bodies, financial systems, and legal systems – have reworked the power relationships of consumer societies from their industrial-era formats. We analyze the EU information policy reforms in order to discern sites of social struggle and as a way to track the reconfiguration of media production and consumption. Although conspicuous consumption and domestic markets for retail flourish globally, the US provides a legal template for the replication of consumer society, an ideology of consumption, and organizational repertoires for franchising global brands. We explore some economic and political implications of the adoption of this template by European countries – which, facing large trade deficits once the US is in the media and communication markets, are “harmonizing” their national information policies to conform to EU and World Trade Organization (WTO) standards. These standards are set largely on the model of the US–Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998, even though in certain cases the replicas exceed their model’s specifications.

In a white paper for *Wired* magazine, Pamela Samuelson (1996) described the excessive advantages sought by “copyright maximalists” when the deregulatory framework for telecommunications and digital media production was implemented through the US Telecommunications Act of 1996. The political agenda was even more explicit then than it has become today. It included the following points:

- 1 Give copyright owners control over every use of copyrighted works in digital form by interpreting existing law as being violated whenever users make even temporary reproductions of works in the random access memory of their computers.
- 2 Give copyright owners control over every transmission of works in digital form by amending the copyright statute so that digital transmissions will be regarded as distributions of copies to the public.
- 3 Eliminate fair-use rights whenever a use might be licensed.
- 4 Deprive the public of the “first-sale” rights, which it has long enjoyed in the print world (these are the rights that permit you to redistribute your own copy of a work after the publisher’s first sale of it to you).
- 5 Attach copyright management information to digital copies of a work, ensuring that publishers can track every use made of digital copies and trace where each copy resides on the network and what is being done with it at any time.
- 6 Protect every digital copy of every work technologically (by encryption, for example) and make illegal any attempt to circumvent that protection.
- 7 Force online service providers to become copyright police, charged with implementing pay-per-use rules. (These providers will be responsible not only for cutting off service to scofflaws, but also for reporting copyright crime to the criminal-justice authorities.)
- 8 Teach the new copyright rules of the road to children throughout their years at school.

We argue that the information policies to be adopted in the EU reiterate the “maximalist” standard for copyright, but not without opposition. EU governments assigned their information policy legislation and research to the Information Society Commission. In its search for a common regulatory framework for electronic communications and in its work toward a single market in creative content online (EC, 2010c), the Commission has confronted a counterdiscourse opposed to copyright maximalism and an overly expansive patent-protection policy. The counter discourse has become a “pirate” political agenda. Founded in 2006, the Pirate Party of Sweden has not only articulated this counterdiscourse for the first time; it has also given rise to the Pirate Parties International (PPI) social movement throughout Europe. This chapter examines the negotiations over maximalist copyright policy in the EU and the ways in which the Pirate Party has influenced the debates.

Methodologically, we adopt the general approaches used in the critical study of the international political economy of communication in order to identify more basic conflicts than those that appear in legal proceedings, legislative hearings, and journalistic commentary on policymaking. This path, informed principally by Dan Schiller (2003), Vincent Mosco (2009), and Sandra Braman (2007), considers the processes of media market-making and commodification as underlying the interest-group dynamics that drive political processes of reform. In our analyses of completed or pending reforms we utilize a stakeholder analysis, which allows us to conceptually map economic and political interests to identifiable groups and to conflicts and alliances between them.

To do this, we first present the basic rationale of an information policy – by which we mean the legal regime governing intellectual property rights in cyberspace, telecommunications, and electronic commerce. Information policy in the EU is torn between the need to promote European production in media and communication sectors and the need to support the nondiscrimination principles of the WTO. Then we propose that the failure to balance intellectual property rights (IPRs) with economic, cultural, and social needs for balance and equity in the US is being replicated in the new information policies of the EU. These include the failure to protect private communication online, the failure to preserve an intellectual commons comprised partly by fair use and by the public domain, and the failure to protect innovative technologies as forms of free speech. We conclude by presenting the significance of political opposition to the new information regulations, including the opposition of the International Pirate Party – a social movement organized against copyright maximalism and online surveillance. These protest movements visibly disclose the ideological basis of the new legal protections for media production, which otherwise are mystified and obscured by bureaucracy.

We conceptualize these structural transformations by considering them as part of the continuing deployment of the Celestial Jukebox in new markets (Burkart & McCourt, 2006). The Celestial Jukebox is the set of technologies for production and distribution of commercial media that adhere to the copyright maximalist standards. The promotion of the “pay-per” model for digital production and distribution in Europe is not predicated on the consent of artists, fans, private citizens, workers,

students, or even media industry functionaries. Its information policy discloses some ways by which “the *regulation* of social relations assumes a *legal character*” (Pashukanis, 1989, p. 79). In other words, information policy dictates only the apparent basis for the structures and processes of communication (Braman, 2007, pp. 1, 19–20; Mosco, 2009, p. 19). The social conflicts spilling out from the reform process demonstrate observably the political resistance and opposition to regime change, as well as the changing relationships between media producers and consumers that the reforms seek to legitimate.

Ideological Aspects of Information Policy

Information age policymakers tend to emphasize the aspect of information as a commodity and to minimize other aspects (Braman, 2007, p. 13), including its “public goods” characteristics.¹ Promoting the noncommercial value of information production and of the consumption of information has been left largely to protest groups. The most powerful stakeholders in the information society are part of an elite sector of transnational and multinational corporations with close ties to the state (Mosco, 2009). These stakeholders tend to lobby, successfully, for policies that are beneficial to specific and immediate economic interests (Braman, 2007, p. 23), and they express the unflagging impetus to commodify culture.

Information policy stakeholders are many, but among the most powerful are the corporations that represent major movie studios and music labels, large technology and software companies, and pharmaceutical companies (Love, 2009). For example, the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) is comprised of the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the Business Software Alliance (BSA), and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), and it lobbies the United States Trade Representative (USTR) on Special 301 concerns and watch-lists (USTR, 2010; see below). Since these corporate institutions have the greatest influence in the debate over information policy, they are able to promote their specific economic interests and tend to do so at the expense of society’s other stakeholders (Braman, 2007, p. 24). Long-term control of information policy gives corporations considerable power to regulate how information technologies are allowed to evolve (*ibid.*, p. 19). This arrangement can have negative consequences for innovation and competition. The ability to control the terms of the debate over information policy is perhaps even more problematic, especially when incumbent interests can demand and win control over the creation and use of information (Benkler, 2006; Braman, 2007).

Although the “public goods” characteristics of digital information make it inherently difficult to commodify information, the legal system functions for this purpose. Creating markets for information depends in large part upon establishing restrictive policies that can diminish individual agency, for example by criminalizing peer-to-

peer file sharing. Overly restrictive sharing policies are state-sanctioned methods for creating information scarcity (Mosco, 2009, p. 191) and for making new markets for digital products where none previously existed. For example, the business logic of copy-protecting music, software, e-books, streaming video, and video games is to minimize the number of non-payers who consume these goods. As there is no market remedy for the unpaid file sharing of commercial media, media owners have appealed to the world's legal systems to create harms claims in every instance of illicit sharing. Free-trade agreements that favor industrial claims to intellectual property over social and cultural claims to a public sphere are other examples of the use of the law for rearranging social relations so as to benefit investors and their commercial interests, for instance IPRs (*ibid.*, p. 182). Very often the protection of these interests comes at the expense of noncommercial interests. Indeed, information policy has grown so lopsided in favor of intellectual-property-rights owners that, for example, ordinary Internet users are often considered guilty of infringement until proven innocent and their online interactions are policed by corporations or private institutions (Braman, 2007, pp. 179–180). Such was the case of Jammie Thomas, a Native American mother of four who was sent a cease and desist order and settlement offer from the RIAA in 2005, for allegedly sharing 24 songs through the Kazaa file-sharing network. Thomas appealed to a US District Court, where she pleaded not guilty and claimed to have had neither Kazaa nor the purported music files on her computer's hard drive. The first jury to have ever tried a file-sharing copyright infringement lawsuit found, on the basis of observations made by the RIAA's cyber-surveillance system called MediaSentry, that Thomas had "made available" the files, even though she had not distributed them. On an appeal and retrial Thomas was found guilty of willful copyright infringement, and she was ordered to pay the plaintiffs \$1.92 million – or \$80,000 per song. The judge in the case called these damages "monstrous and shocking."²

The criminalization of online IPR infringement expands through international law and trade agreements (FIPR, 2005). Criminalization is supported by transnational and multinational media corporations and by some software corporations (*ibid.*, §1, para. 4). These corporations claim that maximally strict IPR enforcement is needed to offset the economic problems caused by counterfeiting and infringement (European Commission Directorate-General for Trade, 2010, para. 2). In the next section, we examine the structural role of information policy on media production and international trade.

Information Policy and the Balance of Trade

The dominance of state-owned enterprises in both East and West Europe lasted through the 1980s. After the breakup of the USSR and the so-called "velvet revolutions" in the Eastern Bloc countries, television, radio, and telephone company

privatizations accompanied structural reforms on Western, market-based models, as subsidies were dropped for film and other national media. By the 1990s, Western European countries were privatizing their telcos, deregulating their state-owned media and telecommunications firms, and developing “dual” public and private markets for broadcasters and cablecasters. Late privatizations of state-owned media firms, multiple language markets, political battles to protect national audiovisual markets from foreign imports (principally, US film and television), and public subsidies are factors keeping European markets fragmented, but also partially shielded from Hollywood imports. The centralizing initiatives of the European common market and the European Union seek strategies for mitigating and reversing the fragmentation. Facing continuing trade deficits in media and communications with the US of six to eight billion dollars annually (EC, 2005a; EC, 2010b), the 27 principal countries of the EU have responded with new information policies, principally in intellectual property rights law.³ Trade liberalization in all “electronic communications” and markets for telecommunications services was designed largely to promote investment in the communication sector. “The new regulatory framework adopted at EU level at the beginning of 2002 lays down clear and stable rules that should create certainty for investors” seeking access to the common market (EC, 2005a).

The US-based firms pressed the EC for, and largely won, standardized digital copy protections, copyright terms, and criminal-court remedies for broader categories of infringers abroad.⁴ The history of global IPR reforms to date discloses a replication of the US model for enhanced property rights and penalties through US foreign-policy objectives. Hadl and Hintz (2009) describe the reformatting of international legal and industrial systems to conform to the US and the WTO model of copyright as something akin to a “Washington Consensus” for intellectual property, especially copyright. Whereas the Washington Consensus in the 1980s and 1990s specified what fiscal reforms, structural reforms, free-trade measures, and austerity measures would be prerequisites for countries with privileged access to US consumers and markets for credit, the US copyright lobby can now be said to dictate the terms of copyright, trademark, and patent-law reforms from petitioning countries.

The propagation of US-style copyright regimes has become an explicit foreign-policy goal of the US and exerts influence through ongoing pressure from trade groups representing the content industries – principally the RIAA (Recording Artists Industry Association), the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America), and the Business Software Alliance; through the operation of the US Trade Representative’s office; and through the generation of regular “Special 301” reviews and official black-lists of US trading partners.⁵ Most recently, “Internet piracy specifically [. . .] was labeled a ‘significant concern’ in Brazil, Canada, China, India, Italy, Russia, Spain and Ukraine” in 2010 (USTR, 2010).

The global IP standardization project we describe takes key pieces from the US–Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) (non-circumvention), from the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act (copyright term extension), and from the joint policy initiatives of the US and EU in the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement

(ACTA) (three-strikes provisions).⁶ These three policymaking zones constitute the legal umbrella for the “copyright maximalist” agenda that Samuelson describes (1996). The DMCA provides criminal penalties for the circumvention of copy protections (Herman & Gandy, 2006); the copyright-term extensions extend the copyrights for protected works by three generations; and the ACTA would standardize a system whereby purported infringers could be banned by law from ever accessing the Internet again in their lifetime. The project is still unfinished, as of this writing; the ACTA’s final implementation has been delayed by protests in Europe and Canada over the unbalanced force it calls to bear on purported copyright infringers and over its nontransparent and nonparticipatory procedures, which have been negotiated in secret, by an executive branch.⁷ Using the asymmetrical power advantage enjoyed by US exporters and importers, the copyright lobby (principally the RIAA, the MPAA, and the BSA) tie any friendly trade and foreign relations with the US to the precondition that foreign countries adopt the US model of copyright reform and demonstrate a willingness to enforce the new provisions.

Creating an information policy that protects the interests of the key producers and distributors of the digital economy is an important basis for projecting what Sassen (1999) calls “network power” and what J. S. Nye (2004) calls symbolic “soft power” globally. “Soft power” means the power to influence foreign governments through noncoercive, cultural and political means, and it can also be said to include influence in world markets. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 lifted the media cross-ownership provisions that had separated content and carriage companies and encouraged the integrated telecoms to join the IPR owners and to unite around the DMCA. The DMCA, beside creating millions of new liability claims for the entertainment industry and the prospect of a revenue model based on collecting penalties from file-sharers, also implemented the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Copyright and Performances and the Phonograms Treaties Implementation Act. This Act harmonized US copyright law with the law of countries that signed previous copyright conventions and treaties. The 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act further extended the terms of most copyrighted works beyond the natural life span of humans.⁸ The Prioritizing Resources and Organization for Intellectual Property Act (2008; the PRO-IP Act) heightened penalties on copyright and trademark infringements and created the Office of the United States Intellectual Property Enforcement Representative (USIPER) in the executive branch. These contributed to existing frameworks for promoting e-commerce⁹ and “cybernetic commodification” (Mosco, 1996, 2009) – including sales-tax exemptions for online shopping, encryption standards for secure electronic payments, and penalties for online fraud.

Through these reforms of US information policy the legal system came to protect the interests of the largest incumbent producers of intangible goods and services – especially the media, telecoms, and software companies. It also strengthened their hand vis-à-vis other stakeholders. In return, the integrated conglomerates have devised the Celestial Jukebox model, wherein consumers must pay on-demand rates to licensed distributors for exclusive or near-exclusive access to digital media (Lehman,

1995, pp. 221–222). Its basis in the legal system is the existing legal realist tradition in the US, which defines information operationally, as a resource similar to physical resources that can be owned and stolen (Braman, 2007, p. 12). Information, by this definition, becomes part of an information environment, and the allocation of information resources to state agents, individuals, and the private sector becomes a primary source of struggle over power in the information society (ibid., pp. 12–13).

The Replication of the Celestial Jukebox

The replication of the legal structure that enabled the Celestial Jukebox to emerge in the US is occurring in the EU. Apart from exercising strong market power (owing to vertical integration of ownership and to exclusivity arrangements), the firms and other institutions operating the Celestial Jukebox also exert “network power,” which works through access controls and proprietary standards for hardware, software, and networking in markets for information and telecommunications services. When network power accrues disproportionately to media exporters with strong influence over US trade policy, it might be argued that the replication of the Celestial Jukebox in Europe stands to exert “soft power” there as well. Over the course of two strong up-and-down business cycles, Hollywood conglomerates have mostly incorporated the technology and business practices of the new media and their legal, technical, and financial support network, and they have mastered the contrivances needed for producing information scarcity. Media “convergence” has occurred both technologically and in the ownership and organization of conglomerates.

Whereas marketing and public relations discourse promote both convergence and new markets for the content industries as consumer bonanzas, the production and maintenance of conditions of information scarcity has become the critical function of integrated mass media and new media conglomerates. As Daniel Schiller relates:

Information scarcity, rather than information abundance, in many cases best serves the process of profit making. But information scarcity is not a natural condition; it has to be worked at, indeed, *contrived*. And so it is. Restricting access to information requires deployment of legal, technological, and other coercions. (2003, p. 150)

The Celestial Jukebox, being the set of contrivances that tested the newly converged media business models, has been poised for export from the US. It is becoming available now to European countries whose legal systems previously resisted it, and this is happening through regulated markets for foreign media, consumer privacy protections, and unharmonized information policy.

As previously mentioned, the Celestial Jukebox’s replication has required legal initiatives and mechanisms to transform Europe’s legal system on the model dictated by Hollywood for the US. Specifically, the adoption and implementation of the

European Union's Directive for the Enforcement of Intellectual Property Laws (IPRED) and of the ACTA have been US-based initiatives designed to propagate US-style information policy to the major trading partners of the largest media, telecoms, and financial companies. The IPRED and the ACTA are multilateral agreements that harmonize the legal systems of EU member states and provide legal cover for the exportation of the pay-per-use business models of the Celestial Jukebox.

Opponents of harsher IPR policies – including civil libertarian groups, information policy reform organizations, and many workers in the software and telecommunications industry – argue that criminalization stifles online innovations and the communicative freedom needed to create new intellectual property (FIPR, 2005; McLeod, 2005; Doctorow, 2010; EFF, 2010b). Opponents also argue that forcing Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to track customers and report possible infringement to IPR holders or to the state, a common practice in enforcing criminalization, creates a chilling effect for users and forces ISPs to act as police (FIPR, 2005, §2, paras. 6–10). The minimum specifications and technical requirements for an “Alternative Jukebox,” which prioritizes privacy, accessibility, and free speech rights for online culture sharing, have been elaborated elsewhere (Burkart, 2010; Burkart & McCourt, 2006).

These criticisms of aggressive, hegemonic moves to control intellectual property have emerged from an information commons movement (Braman, 2007, p. 183). This movement is made up of an array of individuals and organizations whose views range from fundamentally changing intellectual property laws through abolishing them to incrementally changing them by easing restrictions to access (*ibid.*). As a practical matter, intellectual commons groups, as weaker stakeholders in the information society, are more likely to succeed at enforcing incremental or partial change than fundamental change (Majchrzak, 1984, p. 71). For instance, a non-governmental, multilateral organization called the Foundation for a Free Information Infrastructure (FFII), which is supported by open-source software developers, by independent music labels, by consumer rights groups, and by cyberliberties activists, has been active in challenging the industry-backed IPRED and, with help from other civil society and business groups, it has managed to strip the legislation of harsh, over-reaching new patent laws (EFF, 2010b). Information commons groups play a central role in the formation of intellectual property policy by mobilizing power and resources tactically.

Alternative Tentacles: The Rollout of European Access Controls

The following sections analyze the key stakeholders of IPRED, IPRED 2, and ACTA. These three initiatives galvanized support among elite members of the European Parliament and also coalesced a weaker, much more diverse and diffuse set of opponents in civil society and in the private sector. The enumeration of competing stakeholder groups supports our broader claim that social conflicts drive the reform

process; it will also facilitate a more thorough analysis of the stakeholder structure in future research.

IPRED and IPRED 2

The European Union initially adopted IPRED in 2004 (EC, 2004). IPRED harmonized counterfeiting and copyright penalties and remedies among EU Member States in order to reduce uncertainty and risk for IPR holders within the European Internal Market (*Official Journal of the European Union*, 2004). IPRED gave IPR owners the ability to order ISPs to turn in the names of users suspected of heavy trafficking (Hinze, 2004). The directive also enables search and seizure orders, injunctions, and the freezing bank accounts linked to those *accused* of infringing intellectual property. The directive assumes guilt until innocence is proven, since the mere charge of infringement triggers the IPRED provisions. Opponents of IPRED argue that the directive harms consumer privacy and places unfair burdens on ISPs and on small businesses that are forced by the state to police Internet usage. Despite the increased enforcement capabilities that IPRED gave to rights holders, small-scale copyright and patent infringement is still a matter of civil litigation (FIPR, 2005).

Under IPRED 2, however, copyright and patent infringement became a criminal activity, along with inciting or abetting infringement (EC, 2006). While IPRED 2 was being debated by the European Parliament in 2006, civil liberties groups and several European member states objected to provisions that overstep the abilities of the European Commission to regulate member states (FFII, 2006). Critics also objected to the IPRED 2's failure to distinguish between different magnitudes of copyright and patent infringement (EC, 2006; FFII, 2006). For instance, it links counterfeiting and piracy with organized crime and the drug trade, but it never clarifies a distinction between an online infringer violating copyright for home use and the types of counterfeiters who engage in organized crime. The proposal brands all infringers as criminal, without appropriate regard for the scale of infringement.

According to an analysis made by the Foundation for Information Policy Research (FIPR; see FIPR, 2005), industrial stakeholders were divided about the passing of IPRED and IPRED 2. The music industry – which has close ties to the US government (Kravets, 2009) – large consumer-products companies, pharmaceutical companies, and auto makers favored the legislation (FIPR, 2005). Additionally, the European Commission supported the passage of IPRED, giving supportive stakeholders an edge in asserting the specifics of the directive (FIPR, 2005). Opposition to IPRED included ISPs, auto-parts makers, makers of generic drugs, and civil society groups ranging from open-software groups to librarians (FIPR, 2005). The opposition groups did have the resources to make some significant revisions to IPRED, but they were not able to create enough effective mobilization to overturn the directive altogether (EFF, 2010b).

The IPRED's revisions focused on patent law, where non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the FFII were able to convince policymakers that strict patent laws are harmful to innovation and could put the European Union further behind the US in terms of FIPR technological innovation (EFF 2010b; FIPR, 2005). Opposition groups focused on the harm that patent restrictions could do to the open-source community and pointed to potential economic damage (FFII, 2006). The FFII noted, for instance, that Microsoft lobbied for more severe software patent restrictions in the EU but lobbied for the opposite in the US, which suggested that Microsoft wanted to create an unfair competitive edge over its European rivals (FIPR, 2005, para. 3). The organizations opposed to patent revisions also benefited from strong support from open-source software groups and from Sun Microsystems (FIPR, 2005, para. 3).

That the opposition groups for patent provisions were more successful than the opposition groups for copyright provisions is a statement to the former's superior lobbying and messaging to members of the European Parliament. The claims that harsh patent laws could damper economic growth and harm technological innovation in the EU won out over the claims that stricter copyright provisions would harm European society. Specifically, the FIPR's response to IPRED 2 argues that new patent restrictions could raise the price of auto parts; eliminate the generic drug industry; hurt small business; force the European gaming industry to pay royalties to foreign companies like Microsoft and Sony; and discourage the use of open-source operating systems created by Europeans (FIPR, 2005). These arguments are firmly rooted in economic data, and information industries such as software are portrayed as firms whose products risk devaluation.

As for arguments against harsher copyright infringement, FIPR points to chilling effects on librarians; the criminalization of universities for aiding and abetting infringement when academics accidentally share work online that is copyrighted in a journal, or when students share music files; the criminalization of security research; the criminalization of street music; and the undermining of privacy through increased online surveillance (FIPR, 2005). These lines of argument portray criminalization of copyright infringement as something that will damage information as a shared resource, as opposed to information as a privately owned commodity. Proponents of criminalizing infringement spoke purely in terms of the economic dangers posed by online copyright infringement, and they were successful at pressing their agenda on decision-makers (EC, 2006).

Overall, the corporations supporting IPRED had more influence on rulemaking bodies than their opponents had, but the winner of particular policy debates was the side that best articulated the trade and investment benefits accruing to "Europe." The social and cultural implications of policy are classified as secondary, and the primary obstacle in the way of passing IPRED 2 consists largely in legal questions over the power of the European Commission, and not in fears of the harm that the directive could cause in the EU (EFF, 2010b).

ACTA

ACTA was initially proposed by USTR to curb global counterfeiting and piracy (USTR, 2010). Governments currently represented in the negotiations include those of Canada, the EU, the United States, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, and Singapore (EC, 2010a). The end goal is to create a much larger global coalition to engage in the trade agreement, as proponents of ACTA argue that the WIPO and the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) do not police counterfeiting and piracy sufficiently. The intention behind certain aspects of ACTA is similar to the intention detectable behind IPRED 2: to strengthen copyright, patent, and trademark laws through criminalization measures and to give IPR holders more control over the work at the expense of consumer controls over the work.

ACTA is still in the negotiation phase and may not survive a sustained debate, but the manner in which this trade agreement was initially negotiated highlights the way in which transnational corporations and governments work together to create trade agreements that support specific economic interests at the expense of the greater culture and society (Geist, 2010a; Mosco, 2009). Civil liberties organizations as well as digital-rights groups and activists have intensely protested against ACTA's secret negotiations and provisions for IPR holders (Announcement, 2008). Opponents of ACTA argue that the public and the civil society groups are locked out of these negotiations (Hinze, 2004). Indeed, initial requests for access to ACTA were blocked when US President Barack Obama claimed state-secrets privilege over the negotiations, though pressure from the European Parliament did eventually spur the public release of an early ACTA draft (European Parliament, 2009; Love, 2009). The primary concern of opponents is the provision in ACTA for a graduated-response or three-strikes law, which would force ISPs to ban the Internet use of those accused of infringing intellectual property (FFII, 2010).

The "three-strikes" plan specifies a graduated-response strategy for the purported infringers – a strategy whereby ISPs, after being informed of a potential copyright violation by a third-party copyright holder, can send warning letters to users accused of copyright infringement (Ryan & Heintz, 2010, p. 3). After two of these letters, if the alleged infringer is accused again, he or she is in some capacity banned from using the Internet (*ibid.*). The need for, and the extent of, judicial review is a primary part of the debate over three-strikes laws (FFII, 2010). In its harshest form, a three-strikes law could ban someone from using the Internet over mere accusations of copyright infringement with no judicial oversight – which, again, pushes the legal supposition that individuals sharing information online are guilty until proven innocent of theft (Braman, 2007, pp. 179–180; FFII, 2010).

The entertainment industry disposes of the concerns of civil liberties groups and activists by claiming that strong intellectual property laws are needed in order to protect profits and artists in the global information economy. The entertainment

industry is a powerful stakeholder in the ACTA negotiations thus far, as is evidenced by a list of those consulted by the USTR. The list was given to Knowledge Ecology International (KEI) in response to a Freedom of Information Act request and it included representatives of Sony Pictures, Time Warner, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) (Love, 2009). Additionally, organizations like the International Intellectual Property Alliance, which are heavily invested in stronger intellectual property laws, were consulted (*ibid.*). As direct consultants to the USTR in the ACTA negotiations, these key stakeholders have a position of greater power to negotiate from than the civil society groups that oppose ACTA have (Majchrzak, 1984). The list given to KEI only included one representative organization that supports intellectual commons ideal: Public Knowledge (Love, 2009).

The most powerful opponents of ACTA may not be civil society groups. India, China, and other developing nations have voiced their opposition to the secret ACTA negotiations, claiming that the provisions violate TRIPS and impose unfair standards on the developing world, for instance by forcing those nations to devote to protecting intellectual property resources that would be better spent on infrastructure and public health (Geist, 2010b). Such objections illustrate the conflict between global capitalism and cultural imperialism (the latter being often imputed to the former) – a conflict in which transnational corporations and governments demand the protection of commercial media over developmental priorities (Mosco, 2009, p. 73). The coalition of nations and corporations invested in ACTA has no power or leverage to order China or India to comply with this trade agreement (Geist, 2010b). These countries may prove to be less compliant negotiators than the European countries, in part because they can better afford to exercise their sovereignty due to their large internal markets.

Meanwhile, laws in France and in the United Kingdom have laid the groundwork for graduated-response laws such as those encouraged in recent drafts of ACTA. The provisions of the French HADOPI, like those of the British Digital Economy Act, exceed the specifications of the US template, and thereby they divulge new forms of copyright maximalism. By Samuelson's (1996) measures, HADOPI and the British Digital Economy Act of 2010 seem to be, if anything, examples of copyright super-maximalism in their call for additional legal protections for corporations, and even for higher legal penalties for alleged infringers.

Case Studies: HADOPI and the Digital Economy Act of 2010

HADOPI, France

The law (*loi*) or bill known as *Création et Internet* is France's answer to a graduated-response system designed to deal with intellectual property infringement (Ryan &

Heinl, 2010). It is commonly referred to as the HADOPI law, a formula incorporating the acronym of the legislative body created by this law: the Higher Authority for the Distribution of Works and for the Protection of Copyright on the Internet (*Haute autorité pour la diffusion des œuvres et la protection des droits sur Internet*). The law represents the culmination of talks carried by the entertainment industry and ISPs with the French government to create new protections for intellectual property (Senate of France, 2009). The new law gives HADOPI the authority to oversee complaints from copyright holders over infringement. HADOPI is given the authority to suspend individuals' use of the Internet by up to one year for copyright infringement, and it can enforce software-blocking measures at institutions where infringement is found to be committed (*ibid.*). Initially HADOPI was to be given the authority to punish infringers on its own; but, due to legal complications, the law was rewritten so as to include judicial review (Ryan & Heinl, 2010).

Under the current draft, HADOPI turns in infringers to the courts after three warnings, and, in addition to cutting off their Internet access, it may fine them up to €300,000 and make them face up to two years in prison (*ibid.*). Currently, a private investigative company has been hired by the copyright industry to track down infringers in France and turn them in to HADOPI. This arrangement essentially allows private industry in France to police alleged copyright infringers and then to have them punished through the courts, a situation that showcases the corporate–governmental ties that govern information policy in an information economy (Braman, 2007).

The influence of powerful corporate stakeholders on French law affects democratic institutions also beyond the legal system. The HADOPI bill contains specific statutes that regulate the societal and cultural direction of the information society in France by modifying the education system (Senate of France, 2009). Article 15 of the law amends the education code for students in mandatory grade school and in college music and art classes, asking for it to be “informed of the dangers of downloading and of illicitly making available works or objects protected by a right of authorship or a related right for artistic creation” (*ibid.*). Additionally, the law mandates that secondary-education classes dealing with informatics and Internet certification are taught by teachers with specialized backgrounds in intellectual property law (*ibid.*, Article 16). These classes are then to be used to inform students of the dangers of illicit downloading and counterfeiting and of the ownership rights of authors and creators.¹⁰ The modifications made here affect, potentially, the social upbringing of the French youth as a whole by giving it an understanding of intellectual property that is firmly in line with the hegemonic capitalist views of the most powerful stakeholders in the HADOPI debates. Changes to the educational system of France, no matter how slight, are clear examples of the constitutive power of information policy (Braman, 2007, p. 19)

Digital Economy Act of 2010, UK

The United Kingdom's Digital Economy Act does not fully introduce a three-strikes system, but it does establish a foundation for one by giving the Office of

Communications (Ofcom), UK's communications regulator, the ability to instate such a rule eventually, if the measures that the Act introduces are ineffective (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2010). The current version of the Act requires ISPs to track suspected copyright infringers and to keep a record of how many times infringement has been committed. Copyright holders can at any time apply for a court order to get the names and addresses of these alleged infringers and to take legal action. Then copyright holders would send a cease and desist letter to the alleged infringer (Ryan & Heintz, 2010). Should this measure fail, copyright holders can take the accused infringers to court, for criminal litigation. The ISPs in the UK have one year from the enactment of the law (enacted in April, 2010) to devise methods for tracking copyright infringement. Additionally, ISPs are legally obligated to police users by slowing down connection speeds, by banning particular content from individuals outright, and by suspending service or in some other way limiting Internet access if they suspect copyright infringement (Digital Economy Act, 2010, §9). The Act was fiercely debated in the UK, where civil liberties activists claimed that the negotiations were unfairly influenced by the British entertainment industry and by Hollywood studios at the expense of numerous civil liberties groups and tens of thousands of individuals who protested the bill ("Call for 'Fuller' Debate, 2010; Doctorow, 2010). The success of corporate-governmental coalitions in promoting the new Washington Consensus highlights Mosco's (2009, p. 180) claims that the narrow economic interests of a select class of corporations control information policy.

Corporate control of the debate over information-age media policy is evident in the exclusion of the public and of information commons stakeholders in the terms of the ACTA debate (Love, 2009); in the proposal for IPRED 2, where copyright infringers of all types are treated as organized criminals and drug-trade kingpins (EC, 2006, p. 1); and in the HADOPI law, according to which the French government educates young people in the virtues of the policy of blocking Internet access for life (Senate of France, 2009, Articles 15 and 16). These policies create and try to impose an ideal of citizens as consumers who must be restricted in their access to information, but who must also use information policy as a constitutive force in order to alter social, economic, and cultural norms through education programs and through the labeling of sharing as criminal (Braman, 2007). Fortunately opposition has found some success – for instance the shelving of patent-law reforms in IPRED and the release of an early ACTA draft to the public (EC, 2010a; EFF, 2007). The arguments of opposition groups are also enhanced by the fact that these policies are, from the point of view of a stakeholder analysis, largely inefficient on an economic scale (Majchrzak, 1984).

Developing Alternative Models for Information Policy

Laws that limit the ability of noncorporate, non-state actors to engage in information sharing and cultural production in electronic networks also extinguish many of the potential welfare benefits of the networked information economy, which depends

upon self-publication, collaboration, and a continual repurposing of cultural objects (Benkler, 2006, pp. 3–4). Benkler and Braman present the historical paradox that conflicts between the interests of industrial-age enterprises were solved and the parties were politically “reconciled” through laws that rapidly became either ineffective or draconian when applied to the private individuals (Braman, 2007 p. 63). As young people in particular have become technologically enabled “prosumers” or culturally productive consumers, the restrictions placed on their ability to share, remix, and play with copyrighted digital cultural objects has increased dramatically. While articulated clearly in the popular press (Doctorow, 2010; Klein, 2010), in media scholarship (Burkart 2010; Rodriguez, Kidd, & Stein, 2009), and in activism (PPI, 2012), the views of those calling for a networked, nonindustrial information economy have not yet found formal representation in any legal system. Leaving aside the implications for civil liberties and for the open society, failed information policy in an information society can also damage the structures and processes of communication and stifle the ability for future economic growth (Benkler, 2006, p. 135).

Successful lobbying for information policy reform must take practical economic considerations into account. Groups lobbying against the IPRED patent-law reforms had to consider that the software and software-based service industry in the EU generates approximately \$240 billion per year in revenue (Pierre Audoin Consultants = PAC, 2009, p. 9). Likewise, proponents of progressive copyright reform have competed with representatives of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) who claimed that piracy directly cost the European music industry a loss of \$3.4 billion, or 36% of its total revenue (IFPI, 2010, p. 5). Benkler argues that, more than being able just to contribute to a global information economy, sharing and creating content is the only way for such an economy to succeed. The challenge, for progressive reformers, is not to convince policymakers to reject the notion of information as a commodity, but to emphasize the intrinsic benefits of information as a *shared* resource (Benkler, 2006). For instance, free software may be said to strengthen small business; and the chilling effects of the criminalization of copyright infringement may be said to endanger directly Europe’s \$25 billion content-creation sector (PAC, 2009, p. 117) by stifling innovation (FIPR, 2005, §1, para. 4).

While economic considerations and arguments are vital in changing information policy, individuals, NGOs, and various activist groups have built networks in defense of the right to be allowed in the debate over the future of the information economy. After all, there is no way to join the debate without a seat at the table. The networking that led to the rise of public awareness of the new ACTA commitments is a blueprint for how the intellectual commons movement should coordinate itself in policy debates (European Parliament, 2009). Political conflict over European information policy, emerging as it did from popular protest groups advocating stronger cyberliberties protections (for privacy, access, and free speech), has the potential to spill over into broader policy arenas than the media; these include software, “nonlinear” and video-on-demand (VOD) digital cable, and Internet Protocol television (IPTV). Networked activism promoting a new policy demands accountability from

the information policies that are already set in favor of the economic interests of Hollywood content industries and other incumbent rights holders (Braman, 2007).

The election of two Pirate Party candidates from Sweden to the European Parliament has demonstrated the concept of networked activism in opposition to the new Washington Consensus; in particular, the work of Pirate MEP Christian Engström on the European Parliament's Committee of Legal Affairs has been instrumental in moderating the worst abuses of cyberliberties that were lurking in the draft legislation (Vandystadt, 2009). Although the political history of the Pirate Party is still young and the group itself springs from ongoing conflicts with the Pirate Bay (the Swedish search engine for file-sharing), the Pirate Party can be said to have already exerted a moderating influence over the implementation of the new Washington Consensus in Europe. MEP Engström has, for instance, disclosed the existence of an Internet Protocol observatory (an "IP observatory") for online surveillance (Masnick, 2010). Engström has also crafted the language for Amendment 138 of the EU telecoms package, which would require judicial scrutiny for any invocation of three-strikes provisions throughout the EU (Vandystadt, 2009). The Pirate Party has a variety of cultural politics espoused by young people under 30 and organized in opposition to "normal" party politics, and also a variety of "anti-political politics," to use Václav Havel's (1991) apt expression. "We are very strong among those under 30. They are the ones who understand the new world the best, and they have now signaled they don't like how the big parties deal with these issues" (Engström, quoted in Wood, 2009).

Conclusion

The international political economy of communication focuses on the ownership and control of the culture industries by the key players in the corporate world, in the public sector, and in civil society. We have used this approach to emphasize the mobilization of resources (power and money) that the private sector brings to bear on shaping information policy and to contrast the power of the private sector with the power of civil society groups, which operate in opposition and with greater difficulty, having fewer resources.

For young European adults "born digital" and for older Europeans who have learned practices of do-it-yourself media production and of culture sharing in digital formats, the foisting of a new set of prohibitions against copyright infringement, while debated as a legal matter, is something very personal and politically motivating. In the midst of ongoing economic and legal integration in the EU and EC, an environmentalism for the Internet is emerging. The oppositional politics of the Pirate Party has demonstrated that debating the online environment as a quality-of-life issue is now possible, and that information policy should be debatable and decidable through democratic processes.

What we have called the new Washington Consensus, while intending to promote the European common market, may actually conflict with existing trade policies for audiovisual media. On the one hand, in trade programs promoting “media pluralism” – such as the Media Plus Program (2001–2005), the eContent Program (2001–2004), and the ongoing Television Without Frontiers – the EU has reinforced structural advantages for vertically integrated European media companies and for strong national champions. These programs create non-tariff barriers for US media exporters, including new media content providers, and they make it harder for competitors to break into the European markets. Yet, on the other hand, by implementing copyright reforms on the US model, the European countries seem to create openings for the greater access of US-based content industries to commercial online channels.

We look at the case of Europe because, from Hollywood’s perspective, the information policy governing Europeans has lagged behind that of the US. In the process of “catching up” and interlocking with legal norms and structures shared by the US and by WTO member states, European leaders hope to become competitive with the US as media exporters, and they grow national markets for media, software, and services. The incipient tension between old and new regulatory regimes for European media, together with new, social movement-style opposition to information policy reforms, suggests that the informatization of policy has not been seamless or automatic – even as its template replicates.

NOTES

- 1 Whereas “the consumption of private goods uses up scarce resources and therefore needs to be rationed (usually by the market and by prices), [. . .] public goods do not comply with this logic. The initial cost involved in establishing a public good may be high but then the marginal costs associated with supplying an extra unit of it are next to zero” (Doyle, 2002, p. 13).
- 2 A legal archive on this case is kept at http://www.ask.com/wiki/Capitol_v._Thomas.
- 3 We acknowledge (but set aside for now) the significant contributions to consumer data protection that EU legislation has codified – including anti-spam, opt-in, and restrictions on the use of cookies. These differences from US information policy have created trade friction, and EC regulators slowed down the expansion of many firms that sell access to online content and databases. We also recognize that, while the consumer role is over-emphasized in EC regulations to the detriment of the citizen role (Gollmitzer, 2008), community media and grassroots media advocates carve out noncommercial spaces for media producers (Jiménez & Scifo, 2009).
- 4 In the US the ownership and control of the “Celestial Jukebox” – the aggregate of commercial on-demand media services – was consolidated through coercive measures that required the subordination of private and non-commercial speech and other forms of cultural sharing to markets for commercial media (Burkart & McCourt, 2003).
- 5 The “decentralization” of US trade policy moved trade policy from the exclusive control of the executive branch to corporate interest groups in the mid-1970s (“Foreign affairs,” 2009).

- 6 "In October 2007 the United States, the European Community, Switzerland and Japan simultaneously announced that they would negotiate a new intellectual property enforcement treaty, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). Australia, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Mexico, Jordan, Morocco, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Canada have joined the negotiations" (EFF, 2010a).
- 7 Public debate over the ACTA has been possible solely as a result of leaks of its various drafts.
- 8 For works created by individual authors, the Act extends copyright to the life of the author, followed by 70 years. Works of corporate authors are protected for 120 years after creation or for 95 years after publication, whichever comes first.
- 9 Unsuccessful attempts to accelerate reforms have fallen short in the US Congress; these include including the the Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act (UCITA), the Piracy Deterrence and Education Act (PDEA), and the Inducing Infringement of Copyright Act (INDUCE).
- 10 The following paragraph is added to a section of the education code mandating that students receive education in technology and computers via Article 16 of the bill *Création et Internet*: "Within this framework, in particular when preparing secondary students for the certificate in informatics and Internet, they receive from teachers previously sensitized in this subject information on the risks associated with using public on line communication services, on the dangers of downloading and illicitly making available works and objects protected by a right of authorship or a related right for artistic creation, as well as the sanctions for violating the obligation defined in article L. 336-3 of the intellectual property code and the crime of counterfeiting. This information also covers the existence of legal offerings of works and objects protected by a right of authorship or a related right on public on line communication services" (La Quadrature du net, 2012).

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The Slippery Slopes of “Soft Power”

Production Studies, International Relations, and the Military Industrial Media Complex

Jonathan Burston

ABSTRACT

The nexus conjoining sites within American entertainment, media, and communications industries to the US military has been called many names. This chapter deploys the phrase “military industrial media complex” (MIM-plex) to describe this burgeoning political-economic formation, and it argues that, despite existing work, larger questions on the MIM-plex remain unasked and unanswered about how studies of media production might matter to other disciplines, to the wider world, and to the field of international relations (IR) in particular. Using the Hollywood–army think tank – the Institute for Creative Technologies – as an example of how media studies and IR might communicate, this chapter also suggests that participants in such a dialogue pay careful attention to the influence of dominant masculinist discourses inside both IR and media studies. These discourses often posit “hard” working concepts against “soft” ones – an increasingly questionable practice that has often diluted both the significance of entertainment and the role of entertainment labor inside discussions of media power.

The MIM-plex, Media Studies and the Academy

Since the time it was first identified in the late 1960s, the nexus conjoining various sites within American entertainment, media, and communications industries to sites inside the US military has been called by many names. Among them are *the military industrial communications complex* (Schiller, 1969), *the military information society* (Levidow & Robins, 1989), and *the military entertainment complex* (Lenoir, 2000). In an attempt to shorten what is perhaps the most commendably comprehensive designator for an entity that, in actuality, ties together many different economic sectors – namely *the military industrial media entertainment network* or *MIME-NET* (Der Derian, 2001) – alternatives have recently been volleyed such as *the military industrial media complex* or *MIM-plex* (Burston, 2003), and, even more simply, *the Complex* (Turse, 2008). Different appellations direct readers to different precincts inside this large and amorphous social, political, economic, and martial formation while simultaneously conveying its size, its complexity, and its growing power and influence. Insofar as its power and influence were indeed works in progress, the earliest of these analyses of the MIM-plex's tentacular reach and prowess could sometimes feel, alternately, overstated or undertheorized. Herbert Schiller's pioneering (1969) study explained in detail, for the first time, the significant linkages existing between the American communications sector and both the civilian and the martial branches of Eisenhower's famously named "military industrial complex"; but the conclusions drawn in this otherwise important work suggested, perhaps in too deterministic a manner, connections between American communications' might and "successful" imperial outcomes. Levidow and Robins' (1989) farsighted analysis of the emerging "military information society" chose an appellation for that society that rendered invisible its ludic dimensions even as such dimensions figured into their own analysis. Nevertheless, these preliminary portraits provided valuable frameworks within which media scholars have been able to discern many of militarized, mediatized capitalism's future advances.

And those advances have been profuse. Today, journalists "embedded" within the armed forces of various nations have become unremarkable; and equally so have hit prime-time TV dramas glamorizing contemporary military life (in the US, *JAG* and *NCIS*) or simply militarized life (Canada's *The Border* and *Flashpoint*). The Pentagon's media office, widely regarded as the best public relations (PR) house inside the US government, provides aircraft carriers to blockbuster film projects it deems suitably on message (Robb, 2004; Boggs & Pollard, 2007). Movie studios collaborate with the military in formulating battle simulation exercises, so that the Pentagon may benefit from Hollywood's superior ability "to understand formulas and how to play with them, to think outside the box, against the grain and backwards from completion," thus gaining "a much deeper and more subtle grasp" of the new, volatile possibilities inherent in global asymmetrical warfare (Stockwell & Muir, 2003). Video games glamorizing war eclipse Hollywood blockbusters in their sights, sounds, and fury.

They are made by entities such as the army-funded research center, the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) at the University of Southern California (USC), which develops and markets video games such as Full Spectrum Warrior while creating additional immersive digital tools and military training platforms that are regularly leveraged into entertainment markets (ICT, 2010; Korris, 2010). Arms manufacturers invest in Hollywood and Hollywood in arms manufacturers (Hozic, 2001, pp. 135–168). Indeed, the extent of cross-ownership between Hollywood, arms manufacturers, Silicon Valley, bio-tech, and the wider quotidian economy of white goods, widgets, and Wonder Bread is unprecedented (Turse, 2008). Those of us who are fortunate enough to be members of pension funds or players on the stock market tend to follow the example set by such corporate cross-investment. Meanwhile, more than half of American federal discretionary spending regularly goes to the procurement of military goods and services (Hedges, 2009, p. 153), while any hopes that an Obama administration might be able to slow down the machinations of “the permanent war economy” (Melman, 1974) are fading under the hot, harsh light of the twenty-first century’s own emergent *realpolitik*, assisted in no small measure by a Republican Congress. Previous reports of the MIM-plex’s growing influence now hardly seem exaggerated.

Yet, despite this state of affairs, significant gaps in media research on the MIM-plex remain. With a few notable exceptions (Berland & Fitzpatrick, 2010; Der Derian, 2001; Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009; Hozic, 2001),¹ extant work, taken as a set, is a little recursive in its analytical remit, focusing primarily on military–media cross-ownership and concentration (Turse, 2008), its myriad technological outcomes and their implications (King, 2010; Winseck, 2008), and the ongoing spectacularization of war (Compton, 2004; Giroux, 2006; Power, 2009; Retort, 2006). This body of writing is extremely valuable nonetheless, and it provides the necessary foundation for a wider body of work, still to be written, which aims to understand an even greater number of the broad social, political, and cultural implications of the MIM-plex in its manifold incarnations. To be sure, as a large, amorphous, tentacular, transnational macro-political formation whose various names all aim to describe its sobering ubiquity, the MIM-plex can be a daunting object of analysis. But scholarship already suggests that the MIM-plex (and many of its namesakes) constitutes something more than a new name for hyper-capitalism or a new short-hand for left-leaning polemicists (often bent on a pessimistic determinism). It is, rather, a potentially efficacious way to characterize the global socioeconomic frame inside of which most goods and services are now produced. It is therefore a potentially useful heuristic device, which we can deploy in order to better illuminate the structures inside of which we work and live; inside of which media producers both enable and resist the imperatives of an ever increasingly militarized global capitalism.

Given this increasingly militarized constitution of contemporary global capitalism, and given the increasingly prominent position that the media industries inhabit within it, studies of media work that deploy the heuristic device of the MIM-plex – on blockbusters celebrating imperial firepower, on television news programs creating

and re-creating new castes of global enemies, on massive multiplayer online war games – ought to matter now more than ever. Yet, when it comes to thinking about the MIM-plex, the research trajectories of production studies, like those in other media studies neighborhoods, seem to stop somewhat short, and somewhat automatically. Production studies rarely situates its sites of inquiry with the analytical frame of the MIM-plex at the ready, and a more wide-ranging approach to our objects of study may now be in order. Undertaking such an approach ought to do us, as media production scholars and as media scholars more generally, a great deal of good. For thinking more regularly with the MIM-plex might likewise require us to amend an assortment of assumptions about how media studies matters – or ought to matter – to others in the wider world of academic, policy, and activist research. Consider, for example: Within an international political economy cracking under the weight of worldwide wars conventional and non-conventional, braking at the precipice of planetary environmental catastrophe, and balking at real recovery from global financial meltdown, how might our particular expertise in mediated meaning-making matter to a field that, in general, finds itself more frequently called upon by governments for its own particular expertise? How might media studies matter, for instance, to international relations?

According to a multiplicity of its own practitioners, the field of international relations has been enduring a prolonged methodological crisis for some time now.² Erected in a less problematically mediatized moment of the last century,³ IR's dominant "realist" theoretical frame was constructed using the grid-like certainties of the nation-state, military force, and pre-digital economies of innovation. Mainstream IR has been less swift to embrace the late twentieth century's cultural turn than many other neighborhoods in the academic world. This likely has a great deal to do with the perpetually chaotic conditions attached to its object of study. At a first glance, realist IR, prioritizing as it does analyses of competitive individuals, sovereign states, and the international system to the exclusion of much else – including most matters of central concern to media and cultural studies – would appear to have every reason to command its own ascendance within the field. After all, even after the cultural turn, international relations do appear to continue to run largely by state- and quasi-state-led logics, which pertain in no small order to monopolies of violence and in which, as a consequence, "culture" may often take on "an aura of frivolity" (Walker, 1990). As such, it is all too frequently theorized as "that residual realm left over after all forms of observable human behavior have been removed" (Stephanson, 1994, p. 110) – in other words as merely the icing on the cake of global politics.

But, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, realist IR scholars have been engaging with poststructuralists, constructivists, feminists, and others who share a certain minoritarian status within their own discipline, in the hope of theorizing a planet increasingly characterized by postnational, postindustrial, posthuman, post-everything uncertainty and risk – a planet that, often now, seems nearly untheorizable within conventional IR frameworks. Inside this newer conversation, the matter of culture has figured quite centrally. Taking place largely to one side of those debates on glo-

balization and culture that are familiar to media and cultural studies practitioners (see, for example, Thussu, 2009, 2010), this somewhat more specialized debate on the place of culture in the international system has been halting and productive in turns. Despite the long-standing efforts of non-realist IR scholars, and indeed despite the efforts of media scholars in international communications studies, with whom many IR specialists are already in regular dialogue (see, for instance, Sarikakis and Shade, 2008a), the long-term influence of culture on conventional IR theorizing remains unclear. Still, in IR neighborhoods with growing populations and influence, a wider awareness of the blind spots built into the field's traditional approaches has lately begun to emerge.⁴ No longer merely an afterthought (after statecraft, after warcraft, after the economy), culture is beginning to appear to many as a more significant and efficacious analytical tool than IR has conventionally assumed. Despite a collective uncertainty as to where the dialogue may ultimately lead, culture, especially as it is produced and conveyed through mass media and through various information and communications technologies, is gaining a new and notable traction inside IR.

The fields of IR and that of media and cultural studies have talked before. But, although notable interventions have already laid important ground for a dialogue between IR and media and cultural studies (Comor, 2001; Gillespie, 2006; Hoskins, 2006; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010), mainstream scholarship in each academic neighborhood is only beginning to realize fully the utility of such an initiative. I want to propose in this chapter that researchers in media and cultural studies ought to rejoin at once the recent dialogues on the place of culture within IR theory and practice. Media studies practitioners, I wish to argue, ought to play a more central part in revealing, to a field still largely immersed in the exigencies of *realpolitik*, how political and economic power are made operational within mass and cyber-mediated representations. As Aida Hozic has argued so cogently in relation to "Hollywood" and the "Digital Coalition" (descriptors of the MIM-plex coined by herself), "power is nothing but the ability to organize fantasies," and for this reason the American film industry is properly understood as "political":

not only because it is related to the well-known loci of power – state, presidency, war machine, or because it is capable of presenting first-rate propaganda, but because it is itself sitting on the fence of real and fantastic, because it is itself capable of producing alternate spaces and histories, and because it is itself nothing but the organized public fantasy. (Hozic, 2001, 13)

Hollywood's capacity to sit "on the fence of real and fantastic," according to Hozic, produces other notable capacities as well. Not least among them is the capacity to obfuscate "the distinctions between public and private, politics and economics, work and leisure that have long been regarded as the foundation of modern capitalism" (and, one might add, as the foundation of realist logics inside IR) (*ibid.*, p. 159). As we shall see, other precincts of the MIM-plex share such capacities: most importantly

perhaps, distinctions between military and civilian are becoming increasingly blurred. Given media studies' familiarity with arguments such as Hozic's (herself an IR scholar) on the power of representation, the fact that conversations between media studies (including production studies) and IR have not deepened and broadened seems a lost opportunity.

I also want to propose, however, that media studies has a lot to gain from enjoining our colleagues in other disciplines such as IR, and for reasons that extend beyond charity or proselytism. Certainly our own perspectives on the myriad relationships that exist between power and representation provide ample reason for us to engage more frequently with those of our IR colleagues who are now asking questions about these same relationships. But IR's recent turn to various precincts outside its conventional purview in search of answers to its own disciplinary dilemmas (Diplomatic History, 1994; Millennium, 2003; Security Dialogue, 2007) has had a salutary effect on the field as a whole – something that many scholars inside media studies are now trying to provoke as well. I want to join recent calls for a wider dialogue between media studies and other disciplines (Couldry, 2006; Hesmondhalgh, 2011; Hesmondhalgh & Toynbee, 2008) by suggesting that we would now do well to follow IR's example in this regard.

IR's new focus outward has been salutary in no small part because of theoretical and methodological lacunae inside the discipline that have been revealed and attended to as a consequence. Media studies ought to use new opportunities for a dialogue with IR as a means of re-examining one of its own abiding theoretical–methodological difficulties: work inside an ostensibly progressive media studies is often just as guilty of treating feminist analysis as a kind of secondary analytical tool as is the ostensibly more conservative field of IR. Despite some laudable exceptions (Huws, 2003; Mayer, 2005, 2011; McKercher & Mosco, 2007), studies of media production are no less culpable in this regard (on which see McLaughlin, 2008). Moreover, notwithstanding our expertise on the subject, an abiding, excessively binaristic approach to the matter of representation is often directly linked to media studies' often less than holistic integration of feminist analysis. Such an approach, as we shall see, generally sets matters of “representation” against matters of “action” and then manages to slide down an entire hill of suspect pairings, landing rather too easily at an epistemic bottom where women are somehow native to the domestic sphere, while men happily inhabit the public one (on this, see also Elshtain, 1981; Fraser, 1992; McGuigan, 1998). In undertaking further dialogue with scholars, policymakers, and activists outside their own field, then, media studies researchers need to pay careful attention to the influence of a pervasive masculinism from inside of it – a masculinism that has often diluted both the significance of entertainment and the role of entertainment labor within discussions of media power.

IR scholars sympathetic to the study of culture might in turn consider the dubious gender politics attached to one of IR's more widespread synonyms for culture: “soft power.” I shall expand upon this idea below, and with no small degree of humility, given the blind alleys (both epistemic and strategic) that media scholars have them-

selves encountered when undertaking their own analyses of relations between a problematically feminized "culture" and a purportedly masculine "global public sphere." A brief look at one small corner of the MIM-plex, USC's Institute of Creative Technologies, gives us a chance to see how dangerous such gendered and sexualized assumptions are to cogent research in both media studies and international relations. For it turns out that there is very little that is "soft" about the power that entertainment labor produces at institutions like the dubiously named institute. Indeed, when one considers matters of power and representation within the analytical frame of the MIM-plex, it turns out that, quite often, there is very little that is soft about soft power at all.

A few words on method and the MIM-plex are warranted, however, in advance of our visit to the ICT.

Thinking with the MIM-plex

In June 2009, international entertainment capitalism's paper of record, *Weekly Variety*, touted a notable banner headline: "TANKS A LOT, UNCLE SAM," it shouted, while the sub-headline below explained the pun: "Pic biz, military coordinate battle plans for mutual benefit." In the article that followed, Peter Debruge described how closely the producers of that summer's top blockbuster, *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*, cooperated and collaborated with four of the five branches of the US military. "Only the Coast Guard sits this one out," Debruge noted with a mixture of dread and admiration. He also noted that each branch of the US military "maintains a satellite office in Los Angeles to liaise with the entertainment industry, on everything from giant-robot action movies to documentaries to series such as 'NCIS' or 'Army Wives.'" The army, Debruge went on to point out, "even lent a hand when a soldier appeared on 'America's Got Talent'" (Debruge, 2009, pp. 1, 9).

With all due respect to *Variety*, this is not necessarily banner news. In fact, the Academy Awards' first winner for Best Picture was the spectacular *Wings* (1927), which served as a military recruiting vehicle for many subsequent years, and which had heavy backing from the War Department. Collaboration between the Pentagon and Hollywood, then, is nearly as old as the American film industry itself (Boggs & Pollard, 2007). However, as I have suggested elsewhere and as *Variety*'s own reporting on the *Transformers* sequel also suggests, what now warrants our careful consideration is the ubiquity, sophistication, and complexity that have lately come to characterize such collaborative nodes (Burston, 2003). The fact that the computer games industry, which now regularly dwarfs Hollywood in various sales-related statistics, is thoroughly saturated with such arrangements likewise repays our attention. Indeed, the reach of the MIM-plex extends much further even than this. Since 9/11, American propaganda operations have expanded well beyond their traditional locations in state-funded bodies like Voice of America or the Arabic-language Radio Sawa, extending

their reach far into the corporate sector, including PR firms and mass media. Such expansions are doctrinal rather than accidental. One recent compilation, originally conceived by former instructors at the Joint Command, Control, and Information Warfare School of the US Joint Forces Staff College, calls for “horizontal as well as vertical integration and cooperation, [including not only US Government] agents and departments, but also non-governmental units and private industry as well,” so that information operations (IO) may “become the true force multiplier that it has the potential to be” in twenty-first-century battlespace (Armistead, 2004, p. 47; also see Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1997). As a result, observes Dwayne Winseck, “the lines between public affairs and media relations, on the one hand, and propaganda and psychological warfare, on the other, have blurred beyond recognition” (Winseck, 2008, p. 425). Instances of this kind of blurring abound everywhere, even when neither the hand of the state nor that of its corporate proxies are obviously in evidence. So, for example, Michael Butterworth and Stormi Moskal (2009) describe “an unprecedented overlap between military and sporting discourses” since the end of the Cold War and the advent of the “war on terror” (Butterworth & Moskal, 2009, p. 415). They go on to write that, “[i]n the wake of 9/11, the blurring of sports and war has found additional strength. The past several years have brought near constant reminders of the American military through baseball stadium rituals,” “NFL ‘kickoff’ ceremonies,” “NASCAR (auto racing) displays of belligerent patriotism, and an almost endless list of military appreciation events at college football games” (ibid., p. 416).⁵ Perhaps most importantly, the blurring of boundaries between the social and the martial is not simply limited to spectacle and propaganda. As the popular historian Nick Turse properly reminds us, “[t]he high level of military–civilian interpenetration in a heavily consumer-driven society means that almost every American (aside, perhaps, from a few determined anarcho-primitivists) is, at least passively, supporting the Complex every time he or she shops for groceries, sends a package, drives a car, or watches TV” (Turse, 2008, p. 18).

A daunting heuristic device indeed, this military industrial media complex. What, then, can we say about it if we are to turn the term into something useful, into something more than a phrase that, in its propensity to reify, obscures more than it reveals? What can we say about the MIM-plex that actually illuminates our current condition and provides us with a map for future production research?

To start with, we must repeat and ultimately embrace its inevitable complexity. For in its complexity, and to borrow, *mutatis mutandis*, from Hesmondhalgh’s landmark work on the cultural industries, the MIM-plex is also a place of great ambivalence and contestation (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Second, because of the complexity of this vast formation, we must acknowledge that it will require different methods with which to study the various practices, objectives, and outcomes of its various actors. An approach as catholic as this can remind production studies researchers that the MIM-plex is not so much a thing to be studied as it is an aggregation of forms, relations, and sites inside an increasingly militarized global capitalism, where cultural workers – sometimes willingly, sometimes otherwise – engage in its perpetual and

widespread reproduction. Needless to say, research objectives need not work to reify the MIM-plex by attempting to define, for example, its formidably expansive parameters. Such initiatives risk the promotion of an inherently defeatist *telos*.⁶ Research objectives, rather, might best locate and theorize discrete instances of MIM-plex production – ultimately, one hopes, toward its incremental transformation (the old saying that the best way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time is probably quite apt in this instance). Our own discrete instance of MIM-plex production here is the Institute for Creative Technologies.⁷

A Powerful Question: Culture, Power, and the Institute for Creative Technologies

ICT was established in 1999 with a multi-year contract from the US Army to explore a powerful question: What would happen if leading technologists in artificial intelligence, graphics, and immersion joined forces with the creative talents of Hollywood and the game industry? (ICT, 2010)

Born in 1996, the ICT is the result of a grant from the US military and is affiliated with the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. At the ICT, technologies of the digital spectacular are being developed simultaneously as entertainment technology and as cutting-edge military technology. Its mission statement reads:

The mission of the ICT is to build a partnership among the entertainment industry, army, and academia with the goal of creating synthetic experiences so compelling that the participants react as if they are real. The result is engaging, new, immersive technologies for learning, training, and operational environments. (<http://www.ict.usc.edu>)

The ICT is housed in Marina Del Rey offices planned by *Star Trek* production designer Herman Zimmerman, and Hollywood management there has included former senior executives from the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), Paramount, and Disney. They work hand in hand with the military and with designers from the digital effects houses of Silicon Valley, who are otherwise busy transforming movies, videogames, and amusement park rides as we know them.

Hollywood and Pentagon representatives at the ICT have collaborated in the development of military training platforms that double as commercially available video games – such as C-Force, Full Spectrum Warrior, and others. The ICT has sponsored brainstorming events with Hollywood creatives in the service of future US-sponsored counterterrorism efforts. Last but certainly not least, the ICT also develops immersive environments exclusively for training use by the military, all of which are instantly evocative of *The Matrix* and feature digital actors equipped with state-of-the-art artificial intelligence. The monstrous moral implications of this kind

of “virtual war” have already been well expostulated by James Der Derian. On the battlefield, the enemy soldier has become nothing more than an avatar in a videogame, “an electronically signified ‘target of opportunity’”; one whom we may eradicate with greater psychic ease than we can eradicate his carbon-based ancestor; one who is thus “much easier to ‘disappear,’” both in the symbolic and in the material register (Der Derian, 2001, p. 120).

If we think for a moment about how the activities of the ICT work, on the one hand to aestheticize politics by turning war into a game, and on the other to politicize aesthetics by transforming games into killing machines, we begin to see how new forms of “militainment” do a pretty good job of tearing apart a whole series of conventional assumptions about what “culture” is and what its relative importance might be to matters of global peace and security. Where does cultural commodity end and military technology begin, for instance, when it comes to commercially released video games like *Full Spectrum Warrior*, which double as training platforms for the marines?⁸ Despite the obvious ways in which both fields could work to illuminate the transformative dynamics inherent in production sites such as this one, this particular conjunction between entertainment and military power remains, to my mind, undertheorized both in media studies and in international relations.⁹ One significant reason why this is so is that, despite the presence of outstanding feminist scholarship in both fields, blind spots on matters of gender interfere with both IR and media studies thinking questions of power and representation together. We need to turn to this problem now.

Hard Power, Soft Power, and the ICT

Most media studies scholars have little difficulty identifying the fundamental links that exist between the free, diverse, and equitable flow of cultural expressions and the cause of global peace and security. Communications policy functions, for instance, as “a major determinant of the context in which other sectors (such as healthcare, education and job training) will develop in the current phase of globalization” (Raboy, 2002, p. 114). As such, Marc Raboy rightly suggests, communications policy needs to be understood “as a profoundly political issue, as part of the struggle for the democratization of the new global governance system” (ibid.). Indeed, this understanding of communication and culture as always already political forms the basis of our own field of study. But, for the great majority of IR-influenced policymakers who attend to matters of global security, cultural power, in the words of IR eminence Joseph Nye (2004), is soft power. Soft power, according to mainstream policy, is important, but only secondarily: after we’ve attended to failing states, global warming, arms buildups, and so on. Soft power has become a popular phrase inside IR – as it has in less specialized, mass media discussions of global politics. Both China and India have adopted soft power as a formal component of their foreign policy platforms; Hillary

Clinton deploys the phrase frequently; and IR literature debates its merits on an ongoing basis.¹⁰

Media studies ought to argue against mainstream assumptions such as these.¹¹ We ought to be demonstrating how the expression "soft power" obfuscates as much as it clarifies. We need to show our IR colleagues how, in its semantic downgrading of cultural and communicative practices, a concept endowed with the freighted gender politics of "soft power" can in fact reproduce relations of power that arguably help aggravate the prospects for global peace and security.

What precisely is the phrase "soft power" meant to convey? At its most innocuous, "soft power" is meant to describe "the ability to use politics and culture" rather than weaponry, in order "to pursue [. . .] strategic interests (Lowe & Spencer, 2006, p. 9). So, according to Nye (2004), whereas "hard" power, military and economic, uses coercion, soft power uses attraction. Whereas hard power promotes the government use of war as means to a given end, soft power suggests diplomacy – coupled with the power and influence that comes, in America's case, with the real estate that headquarters the world's most important media and entertainment corporations. Whereas threats and force are military power's primary currency and payments or sanctions are the currency of economic power, soft power deploys "culture." In the high-cultural realm, this deployment might take the form of artistic exchanges or of Fulbright programs. In the realm of popular culture, movies and television are often understood as the most prominent soft-power vehicles (Nye, 2004), though the Internet needs to join that list too. Indeed, Nye speaks of the need for "information power" to be coupled with soft power and influence.

The problem with such suggestions is this: Despite binaristic formulations that posit hard military power on one side of the social equation and soft cultural power on the other, it is no longer always productive to think about cultural power and military power separately. One need only spend a little time at the ICT website before choosing quickly to stop thinking about the X-Box or *Full Spectrum Warrior* as Silicon Valley's key *cultural* export. Instead, one comes to think of it as Hollywood's primary military export. With the advent of militainment, the intricate relationships between popular cultural forms and military technology have all become rather difficult and confused, but this much is certain: Very little can be said to be "soft" about the kind of cultural power the self-proclaimed Institute for Creative Technologies administers. That this statement is so obviously true, and yet so counterintuitive at the same time (the ICT, after all, promotes itself as a think tank for the entertainment industry), suggests that an even deeper problem lies at the heart of the hard power/soft power binary – a problem embedded in the dynamics of binaristic thinking itself.

We think a great deal with binaristic constructions like hard power/soft power, but binaries do not always produce good thinking. Very often, they function as little more than a simplistic short-hand that leads us toward inauspicious generalization. There also exists a suspicious dimension of domination, a questionable "relation of power between the poles of a binary opposition" in which one term is implicitly valorized at the expense of the other (Hall, 1997, p. 235). Binaries such as "hard/

Table 3.1 Implications of the hard power/soft power binary

Hard power	Soft power
Military power	Cultural power
World of action	World of representation
The Pentagon	Hollywood
Martial sphere	Civilian sphere
(Legitimate) masculine pursuits	(Suspect) feminine pleasures
Public sphere	Domestic sphere

soft,” for instance, or “hard power/soft power” are closely connected in discourse to others such as “military power/cultural power,” “The Pentagon/Hollywood,” and “action/representation.” These in turn are frequently linked in discourse to binaries such as “public sphere/domestic sphere,” and, last but certainly not least, “masculine pursuits/feminine pleasures.” The implications of such thematic linkages are perhaps more easily viewed when these binaries are laid out in a table (see Table 3.1).

We may begin to see how the problematic politics of gender is often lurking just below the surface of a great deal of IR policy work. But two larger points need making here.

The first is that policy that thinks binaristically – that thinks “politics” on the one hand and “culture” on the other, or “hard” power now and “soft” power later – prevents us from fully understanding the realities that lie before us all in the task of building a peaceful planet in the twenty-first century. Forward-thinking IR scholars have already suggested some of the dead ends one encounters when pursuing (often tacitly) masculinist policy goals, and they are hardly rooted in problems of “mere” semantics. Questions of language, after all, often point us to deeper questions, such as how structures of gender inequality are reproduced in discourse. So, for instance, as IR scholar J. Ann Tickner (1996, p. 156) has argued, “the unequal roles of protector and protected, assigned to men and women respectively” through policy and in everyday language, not only render women second-class citizens everywhere. They also “reinforce national identities that prioritize war and conflict. These masculinized, militarized identities,” Tickner continues, “which depend on their relationship to devalued characteristics associated with femininity, have been important for states in legitimating their foreign policies.” Therefore to say that state-to-state (or state-to-quasi-state) conflicts are not problems embedded in cultural conditions is really to ignore a rather large elephant in the room.

In this light, then, it is not so much that culture is an object of politics as that politics is an object of culture. Amy Kaplan (1994, p. 99) unpacks the argument further: “Culture,” she writes, “has been excluded from foreign policy on grounds traditionally associated with the ‘feminine.’ [. . .] In this formulation, politics is to culture as man is to woman.” As a result, she continues, “[t]he discursive field of diplomatic history seems to be organized in part around the exclusion of both culture and gender, which are subordinated to the realm of the domestic, a sphere associated with the home and

women." It is for reasons such as this, Kaplan suggests, that "both sides of the inaugurating debate of diplomatic history defined the 'realism' of foreign policy as a realm of rational calculation, cordoned off from the exigencies of the cultural."

The second point that needs making is that avoiding such blind spots now becomes an increasingly important charge for media studies, too, insofar as the machinations of the MIM-plex are very much our own concern, and also insofar as media and cultural studies have always understood themselves as fields of study dedicated to changing the world and not merely to describing it. It appears, however, that this is more easily said than done. By and large, media studies scholarship also falls far too frequently into the gender-binary trap – to the extent that our own capacity to make sense of the hows and whys of the military industrial media complex, for instance, is dangerously compromised as a result. As I have argued previously (Burston, 2003), for media studies, comprehending the politics of entertainment programming still seems generally to matter more as a buttress to the theoretical needs of media scholarship on news-gathering. Inquiries into the dynamics of entertainment capitalism are understood to be useful only when they shed light on the octopcean nature of media capitalism more broadly, or when they reveal emerging nuances in the realm of ideology. The information/entertainment binary is as stickily hegemonic as it is because entertainment, as a category of production, reception, or analysis has conventionally been understood as more oriented toward the private, domestic, "feminine" sphere. Still the source of a powerful wariness for far too many of us in the field, the world of fictional representations and of their suspect pleasures is best left to savor in times of quiet reflection, preferably in the private space of one's own home. Wiser, thinks media studies as a rule, to leave the public realm available for "the real thing": for mobilization, for engagement, for politics traditionally defined (and, of course, for reporting the "hard news" on all of the above). I've said it before, but it bears repeating: Clearly, real men don't work in Hollywood (and they don't write about it much, either). This kind of binaristic logic prevents otherwise perfectly good thinkers in each field from thinking clearly about how "soft" cultural power, and "hard" economic and military power all combine inside the MIM-plex. Media studies may need to do a little theoretical house cleaning of its own, then, before it can effectively explain to a large and "establishmentarian" cohort of foreign-affairs policymakers why separating the realms of culture and politics is dangerously misguided; why the realms of culture and politics must instead be understood as profoundly intertwined.

Disciplinary Dialogue, Global Security, and the Purview of Production Studies

The activities underway inside Hollywood's new martial precincts reveal how carefully we now need to think about cultural workers whose professional circumstances

are increasingly tied up with things other than culture – at least as conventionally defined. The ICT and many other similar nodes of collaboration between Hollywood, Silicon Valley, and the military suggest that we clearly need to examine the ways in which cultural workers are deeply invested in the MIM-plex and the particular ways in which they necessarily constitute an integral element of global security politics as a result. Production studies now needs to consider those cultural workers whose professional circumstances have a new and disturbing specificity, which we have yet to fully acknowledge.

Cognate work outside the field of production studies has begun to do precisely this. Elizabeth Losh (2009) and Nina Huntemann (2010) have each deployed some measure of on-site research in order to unpack the production politics of the ICT and the computer game-cum-recruiting vehicle, America's army, respectively. But work that explicitly undertakes production ethnographies has the best potential to reveal how the politics of making representations and the connotational politics of the representations themselves are ultimately so intertwined as to be inseparable. This is where we come in. Media ethnographers ought to uncover the regimes of control and the spaces for agency that form militainment workers' work practices, professional subjectivities, sense of duty, and sense of options. This is not as difficult an assignment as it may first appear. Despite the presence of some very large "no-go" zones inside the military entertainment establishment, there remain numerous small, "flexible," or independent operations – subcontracted digital animation companies, for instance, which are likely open to enquiry in ways in which suburban Virginia has never been (and never will be). In any event and whatever the circumstances, fieldwork in the trenches of Siliwood is now absolutely essential if we are ever to make any sense of the many complicated sites of struggle on the new terrain of twenty-first-century popular warfare culture.

More broadly, in choosing to think with the MIM-plex in production research, we may assist media studies as a whole in accomplishing a very important task. As the ICT's example ought to make clear, it is now necessary for matters cultural to be visible outside of the same old "soft" policy precincts where, traditionally at least, few of the really big decisions on matters of global peace and security are made. Media studies scholars ought seriously to consider taking up the task of intervening in policy debates – most especially in policy debates taking place outside the carefully policed boundaries of a largely feminized (and consequently subordinate) cultural-policy ghetto. If we do not, then we risk perpetuating the gendered split inside global policy production that has long kept cultural policy so marginalized in international fora (on which see Beale, 2008). In an era where an institute for "creative" technology can reasonably represent itself as such, this status quo cannot – must not – hold any longer.¹²

Some readers who are new to debates regarding the parameters and purpose of media studies may find calls like the one I am making here a little surprising. How is it, they may ask, that, in a field that aims to understand the forms and functions of the Fourth Estate, matters of policy are considered to be largely off limits? Why have media researchers who are not directly engaged in the fields of political or

international communication largely eschewed – at times even disdained – the study of the intersections of media practice with the politics of state power? Nick Couldry (2006, p. 5) furnishes us with the beginning of an explanation when he writes:

[T]he edifice of classical thinking about democracy and ethics evolved well before the full emergence of modern media institutions. Media don't integrate well into either political theory or ethics because, historically, they were not intended to. As a result, while the consequences of mediated access to the political process should be a central consideration within political theory, they are surprisingly marginal.

Media scholars have had reasons of their own for this state of affairs and for the delegation of such concerns to particular subfields within the wider discipline. Many have been more interested in establishing their own specific criteria for the selection of objects of study in what still remains a relatively new academic field. This may be especially true of media production studies, which, having emerged as a distinct subfield even more recently than most, has concerned itself, quite properly, with charting its own borders. These are borders that, understandably enough, largely limit the range of our inquiry to the conditions and experiences of labor in the media and in the cultural industries and to their adequate theorization (Beck, 2003; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009). Other reasons pertain more directly to questions regarding the actual utility of examining state power. Some media studies researchers, for instance, still labor under the misapprehension that the state is being subsumed (rather than transformed) by transnational corporate power and that studies of media practice and reception are, accordingly, better fitted to the transnational register. And scholars with feminist sympathies tired long ago of the many phallogentric assumptions attached to older notions of what properly constitutes the political, looking first to the (once) new social movements, and then to affective communities and other social formations for cues on how best to study the transformational potential of cultural practices.

Happily, over the course of the last three decades our engagement with newer political precincts such as these has finally brought media studies kicking and screaming into maturity. Indeed, whatever fullness and variation we can attribute to the wider field of media and cultural studies, it owes a certain debt of gratitude to the "Thirty Years' War" between media political economy and cultural studies. But, even as those battle lines begin to fade, the ambiguous legacy of a somewhat tense peace remains. It often takes the form of a broadly consensual understanding formed among media studies scholars who work outside the subfields of international and political communication – an understanding along the lines that, really, state power (subsumed, transformed, or otherwise) is someone else's academic business, not ours. In effect: there are few practical or theoretical vectors joining media studies to the study of global struggles for power, conventionally defined, and few concepts or practices linking the districts of media studies to those of international relations (among others).

Properly focused examinations of the now myriad articulations of the MIM-plex can and do reveal how, at this historical juncture, such assumptions may be more than merely misguided; they may be dangerous. Media scholarship can no longer ignore the role that global politics plays in innumerable instantiations of media practice – not any more than international relations, political sociology, and political science can ignore the role that media practice plays in the production of global politics. This is especially true given the degree to which mediated representations of violent cyber-patriotism and cyber-sectarianism are now located precisely at the center of mainstream popular culture – not only in the global North, but in the global South as well (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009; Stahl, 2010). Scholars seeking to understand the dynamics of work inside sites such as the ICT, which produce the physical and virtual goods of militarized entertainment capitalism, are especially well positioned to advance such arguments. Moreover, continued research into different precincts of the MIM-plex will likely have the salutary effect of focusing the production studies lens on a still underexamined neighborhood of media production, even as it begins to tease out larger questions that production studies scholars now need to ask of their research, such as: For whom, precisely, are the subjects of our ethnographies working? And does this work contribute to the social good?

Previously, such questions were often eschewed by production studies researchers, as they could (and did) often link up to a set of high-cultural aesthetic assumptions that could blindside a progressive politics of pleasure and emancipation. But in the era of the ICT the stakes have clearly changed. In their own recent examination of the video-game industry, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter argue that, inside a militarized global capitalism, games such as the ICT's *Full Spectrum Warrior* (FSW) generate "subjectivities that tend to war" – not merely by eliciting in their millions of players a desire for extralucid depictions of atrocity, but by promoting, hand in hand with multiple other media outlets, war's most sinister *banalization* in addition. "FSW contributes to the broader banalization of war," Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2009, p. 118) observe,

by promoting uncritical identification with imperial troops; by rotely celebrating the virtue of their cause and the justice of their activities; by routinizing the extermination of the enemy; by diminishing the horrors of battle and exalting its spectacle; by forming subjects of, and for, armed surveillance; by investing pleasurable affect in military tactics and strategy; and by making players material partners in, and beneficiaries of, military-technoculture.

Adding insult to virtual injury, FSW does this even as it deploys fictional story lines rooted in contemporary events in Iraq and Afghanistan. In such a manner does the "[v]irtual involvement of civilian populations in actual imperial war [make] military games a homefront component of full-spectrum dominance" (2009, p. 118).

These linkages between virtual representation and actual military power, I wish to suggest once again, are best explained to scholars from other fields by way of a dialogue with media studies scholars. But such a reinvestment in media studies' tentative dia-

logue with international relations will do more than assist other scholars in expanding their own purviews and methodologies. It will also serve to remind us, media studies practitioners (including those of us engaged in production research), that ours is a field of fundamental importance to many others – a reality that we have often forgotten while undertaking the (often) somewhat monastic task of defining ourselves. In remembering this, however, we will be in a position (to borrow from Couldry again) to bring “to an important interdisciplinary question (the preconditions of democratic politics)” media and cultural studies’ pronounced and abiding interest “in agency and voice and the forces that constrain them” (2006, p. 75).

Inhabiting a similarly commendable ethical register, David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker have recently written of the need to consider “how positive and emancipatory aspects of labor – including creative labor in the cultural industries – might be made more prevalent, and how negative aspects of work might be contained, controlled or even eliminated.” Underlying this question, they maintain, “is a deeper one: which political projects may best enhance human well-being and social justice with regard to work?” (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 222). They rightly suggest that, within what is now a burgeoning literature on creative work, these are fundamental issues that have yet to be thought through in their entirety. Now it may be that we will never all concur on the relative merits of various types of entertainment programming, but surely we can all agree that, ultimately, neither the banalization of war (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009) nor the increasing ease with which we may now banish enemy combatants from our consciences (Der Derian, 2001) contributes much to the cause of social justice or to the planet’s health in general. The field of production studies has a major role to play in remedying the situation Hesmondhalgh and Baker describe, and production research on the MIM-plex in particular provides an especially compelling set of research objects toward that end.

Here, however, production studies scholars should not lose sight of the role that a more fully integrated feminist analysis must necessarily play in such an undertaking. The gender binaries that appear so regularly to interrupt the progress of a more holistic set of trajectories in international relations have everything to do with the regular promotion of “public man” on the one hand and with a concurrent demotion of symbolic representation by virtue of its often unstated, but nonetheless powerful association with “private woman” on the other (Elshtain, 1981). This is the relationship of “hard power” to “soft power”; of how, as Amy Kaplan explained above, “politics is to culture as man is to woman.” This state of affairs is only too familiar to media studies practitioners. A tradition of feminist media research that is arguably longer than its IR counterpart has somehow failed to prevent a similarly binaristic way of thinking from rendering problematic a great deal of our own work. Endeavoring to change this state of affairs is also part of the ethical project that is now required of media and production studies. Charting new forms and relations that emerge from inside the MIM-plex provides us with one important way forward, insofar as a number of its most emblematic precincts appear to confound the already dubious distinctions between hard and soft power once and for all.

NOTES

- 1 While both Hozic and Der Derian hail from international relations, it is precisely the commendable holism in their work that permits the latter to be read and understood by media scholars as “media research.” As I argue below, their dialogical example warrants the emulation of media studies scholars seeking to expand their own purview. My thanks to Keir Keightley for talking me, over several helpful conversations, through some of the ideas developed in this chapter.
- 2 See Lapid and Kratochwil (1996), Smith, Booth, and Zalewski (1996), Brecher and Harvey (2002).
- 3 After Auslander (1999), I loosely follow Baudrillard’s (1981) deployment of the term “media-tization” insofar as it describes the media “as instrumental in a larger, sociopolitical process of bringing all discourses under the dominance of a single code” (Auslander 1999, p. 5). I do this, again, following Auslander, even as I eschew Baudrillard’s fatalism more generally.
- 4 See Booth (1996), Lapid (1996), Walker (1990), and Lawson (2006). For feminist interventions from inside IR, see Enloe (1996), Zalewski (1996), and Sylvester (2002).
- 5 Also see Stahl (2010), and especially Burstyn (1999), which provides a superb elucidation of the “sport nexus” and of the “sport-media complex”: these work together to promote and maintain a pervasive, hyper-masculine militarism in the US and abroad.
- 6 On which see Pick (1993, p. 11). Also see Hardt and Negri (2004, p. 40).
- 7 Some of what follows derives originally from Burston (2003).
- 8 *America’s Army* provides another famous example. See Nichols (2010) and Huntemann (2010). Various other activities of the ICT similarly suggest a number of ways in which cultural production and the production of global insecurity are indeed rather formidably intertwined. See Burston (2003), Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2009), and Huntemann and Payne (2010).
- 9 This, despite a slowly emerging body of research on the ICT (see previous footnote).
- 10 A sampling of these debates is available in Berenskoetter and Williams (2007), where Steven Lukes counts himself among the detractors of the term, declaring it “a blunt instrument” (Lukes, 2007, p. 95). Most of us in media studies ought to be able to come to the same conclusion (though possibly for different reasons).
- 11 And in making this argument I am building on arguments already put forward by constructivist, postpositivist, and feminist scholars in IR and by a number of thinkers in media and cultural studies who are supportive of IR’s “Third Debate” on such matters. For a useful overview of this debate, see the items cited in footnote 4. For a useful recent contribution from media and cultural studies, see Van Zoonen (2005).
- 12 The recent call for “a more synergetic and collaborative approach” to the study of communication “among scholars from different traditions and backgrounds” and to the centrally important task of participating in global policymaking, a call launched by Sarikakis and Shade (2008b, p. 14), commands my vigorous assent.

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Television-Set Production in the Era of Digital TV

Mari Castañeda

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the transcultural political economy of television-set production as the US and other countries made the transition to the digital television platform. The complexity of technical standards for digital television, the proliferation of free-trade policies, and the globalization of production have reconstituted the context of consumer electronics manufacturing and thus have deeply impacted the making and consumption of TV sets. The chapter will focus on the emerging “Silicon Border” along the US–Mexico divide and on the ways in which labor, trade, and new technologies continue to intersect with the material conditions of race, gender, and immigration in the digital era.

This chapter examines the transcultural political economy of television-set production as the US (and other countries) made the transition to a digital television (DTV) platform. There was a time in the US when multiple stakeholders looked to digital-television production both as a problem and as a solution. In 1989 the US Congress began discussing the emergence of advanced television technologies. At stake, according to congressional leaders, were the national security and the gross national product (GNP), and both were at great risk if the US did not take a lead in the emerging era of digital communications (United States Congress, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c).

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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During the same period there was a scare, especially among over-the-air broadcasters, that the days of television viewing were numbered. Despite the fact that millions of viewers around the globe still rely on television broadcasts for news, entertainment, and information, industry analysts in the late 1980s predicted that television–Internet convergence, Web–video productions, and consumers spending more time online through computers and mobile devices would kill the television industry. Finally, there was a debate among those in the US consumer electronics industry, which at that point was radically reduced by the influx of foreign manufacturers who were producing their technologies abroad and importing them below the market cost. Given the shifting communications landscape, what could be done to ensure that TV sets would not become extinct in the new era of global information and multimedia platforms?

Congress and the electronics industry answered this question through action. They asserted that consumers would still need accessible electronic devices to stay connected to the airwaves and to steer onto the information superhighway. For elected officials on Capitol Hill, advanced television (which later became known as “high definition television” and, eventually, as DTV) was a solution to how the US was going to maintain and expand its role as a global superpower in an age when high technologies were rapidly transforming political, economic, and cultural landscapes (Castañeda Paredes, 2000, p. 4). At a 1989 Senate hearing on the prospects for the development of a US advanced television industry, both policymakers and corporate owners agreed that

electronics is the infrastructure. It is going to underpin and shape the world’s economy, and potentially its political organizations, in the twenty-first century. It is not just an industrial segment; it is our belief, after much study[,] that [advanced] technologies – not just television – will be at the hub of the information age’s infrastructure. (Castañeda Paredes, 2000, p. 27)

These political statements made it clear that digital television was perceived as a powerful tool that needed to be subjected to state policy, in an effort to exert some level of economic and political influence over its production and dissemination.

Additionally, former *New York Times* reporter Joel Brinkley (1997) suggested that the changeover to DTV would permanently change the way the US and the world utilize television and information technologies. If this was true, then the shift would be historically significant, since TV is, without a doubt, the world’s preeminent leisure-time cultural activity. Some 98% of the American population owns television sets, and over 900 million units are in use around the world (Johnson, 1998). In order for viewers to receive the digital-based broadcast programming, audiences have either to buy new digital television sets (which currently cost between \$250 to \$5,000 and range from low-end to high-end) or to buy converter boxes, which cost from \$40 to over \$80 and deliver a lower grade of services. Despite the seemingly low cost for equipment that is now available, the electronics market for digital television is valued at \$76 billion in the US and at \$335 worldwide (Consumer Electronics Association,

2007–2008). The growing sales point indeed to the huge market restructuring that is currently underway within television equipment, programming, and advertising markets. Furthermore, the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which reduced tariffs by an additional 50%, set the stage for the movement of capital into Mexico's borderlands, where cheaper labor could be utilized as a competitive tool for reducing production costs and for bolstering profit margins, especially for high-tech electronics (United States Congress, 1962).

Nearly 20 years after these initial fears and predictions, we see that the pervasive use of social networking technologies, of wireless handheld devices, and of digital television clearly points to the power of new information technologies. It confirms, as Dan Schiller (1999) points out, a "new epoch of [. . .] digital capitalism" (p. xiv). The electronics infrastructure of the twenty-first century is not merely a system of technological hardware, but a global network of networks, upon which "the social and cultural range of the capitalist economy" is far more reaching through digital media than ever before (Schiller, 1999, p. xiv). Moreover, Schiller (2009) argues that, despite the pervasiveness of the media, "the existing information society is deeply divided [. . .] marked by increasing economic inequality [. . .] [and shaking the] limited but substantial democratic features and practices" of information provision to their core (p. 147). Thus the sector of communications-based consumer electronics is an important entry point into the digital infrastructure of high-speed telecommunications. This sector is increasingly vital for workers' and citizens' participation in the global economy, but it is often available unequally and undemocratically, as Schiller argues. Given the importance of television within the broader landscape of consumer electronics, this chapter will examine how the complexity of technical standards for DTV, the increase of free-trade policies, and the globalization of production have reconstituted television-set manufacturing. It will also focus on the emerging "Silicon Border" along the US–Mexico divide and the ways in which labor, trade, and new technologies continue to intersect with the material conditions of race, gender, and immigration in the digital era. Ultimately, the chapter aims to demonstrate that digital television-set production is not simply about the making and consumption of TV sets, but, more importantly, about the making of a "new, ruthless economy," which threatens to deepen information and social inequalities (Schiller, 1999, p. 207). It is critical to study this area of media production, since it is a microcosm of the tensions that are unfolding within national and global communications.

In an effort to present such a study, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses how the historical debates over television technical standards affected the technological development of digital television in the United States. More importantly, the section demonstrates how the process of standards setting and property creation is not simply about adopting the best technology, but about bolstering the political and economic interests of key players. This section is followed by a discussion about the role of free-trade policies and globalization in generating digital-television properties and market demand over the concerns and organized resistance of labor. The third section examines the role of the *maquiladora* system along the

US–Mexico border in the manufacture of digital television and its enduring importance as a global trade platform. Finally, the chapter investigates the ramifications of high-tech manufacturing for workers – especially for young Mexican women, who constitute the majority of the labor force in consumer electronics factories located south of the border. Ultimately, the chapter aims to demonstrate how television-set production in the era of DTV entails more than simply producing digitized audiovisual equipment: the manufacturing of high technology requires an intense political and economic effort, which has real implications for people and culture.

Setting the Standard for Digital Television

In 1996, after a decade of congressional hearings and industry analyses, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted the broadcast Advanced Television System Committee’s “digital television standards” and consequently unleashed a new era of television in the US. The road to broadcast DTV, however, was not easy. In fact it was fraught with competing notions of what the future of high-tech television should be based upon. At the core of the debate was the ideological shift toward expanding market and consumer-driven approaches not only to telecommunication policies, but to social, educational, and healthcare policies as well. The FCC’s decision to adopt a dual scanning mode in the new broadcast standard and thus to do away with analog transmissions set the stage for members of the National Association of Broadcasters and of station affiliates (who preferred the interlaced scanning of traditional TV sets) and for representatives of computer interests (who preferred the progressive scanning of computer monitors) to compete in the marketplace – where consumers, not government, would select the best model for receiving DTV signals.

Such competition, argued high-tech companies like Apple, IBM, and Microsoft, in fact helped create a thriving retail computer industry in the US. This preference for a “market-driven selection” also corresponded with the FCC’s decision to exclude technical stipulations for video-receiver resolution. That is, the market, rather than the Commission, would determine whether high definition, standard definition, or a hybrid TV model would succeed as the dominant format in receiver equipment. Presently, consumer dollars have largely been spent on high-definition PC hybrid widescreen models that include either interlaced or progressive scanning; but, as media reports have noted, there is still much confusion from consumers as to what the extra cash spent on hybridity is really buying (Deame, 2001).

To understand the process for establishing DTV standards in the 1990s, it is important to examine, first, the agenda for setting color-TV standards in the 1950s. Although this earlier battle occurred on the global stage, the two political processes shared the logic by which technical standards should drive the consumer TV market (Crane, 1979, p. 11). At that time three main global competitors were seeking approval from the FCC for their color TV standard: NTSC, PAL, and SECAM.¹ Citing public and

corporate investments, the FCC selected the NTSC standard for color TV, even though engineers regarded that standard as somewhat inferior (Kittross, 1979, p. 265). After some hemming and hawing, the FCC claimed that it wanted to keep the standard within the US framework in order not to disrupt the well-established broadcast television infrastructure (Armstrong, 2007, p. 133). With this decision, color TV materialized. Over time black-and-white television sets were phased out, as the market demand for color-based equipment grew.

In many ways, the same logic was utilized in DTV because it was assumed that market demand would select the best TV electronics. The difference lies in the fact that there were only three global standards to select from in early television, whereas in digital television there were six major technical standards in the US alone. The rise in advanced communication technologies and the venues for accessing convergent information thus shifted the paradigm toward the adoption of multiple standards for digital television. This was an important issue for the various players involved in the development of DTV standards. The tensions regarding the future of broadcast media were evidenced by the background of the invited members of the Advisory Committee on Advanced Television System, the organization responsible for developing what would eventually become the ATSC (Advanced Television Systems Committee) standards for digital television. This committee was dominated by interests in telecommunications, satellite broadcasting, cable television, consumer electronics, and content programming, and it largely included technical experts in multimedia and computers (Wu, Hirakawa, Reimers, & Whitaker, 2006, p. 15).

Ultimately, after years of government hearings, technical studies, and industry debates, concessions were made between broadcast and computer interests. Larry Irving, former assistant secretary of the National Information and Telecommunications Administration, summed it best: at stake here were more than concerns over broadcast television – it was the “future American economy in terms of manufacturing, trade, technological development, job growth and international investment” – fields that were increasingly intertwined with the future of telecommunications and new media (National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 1996, p. 1). In the communications area of consumer electronics, the promotion of a competitive marketplace was therefore viewed as paramount – and viewed so to a higher degree than supporting a limited standardized system for broadcast equipment was, since the former also underpins local, national, and international communications and economic transactions. In some ways, there was a notion that adopting the broadest set of technical standards would allow the state and market to “adapt to the realities of informational power,” which would certainly emerge in the future, although they were unidentifiable at the time (Braman, 2004, p. 161).

The technical DTV broadcast statutes adopted by the FCC were recognized as the starting point for impacting related sectors such as equipment manufacturing, the retail and mass marketing of receiver sets, and the logical commercial development of the new system. The billions of dollars poured into the transition indeed demonstrate that the standards-setting process, with its risks, conflicts, cooperation, and

accommodation, constituted a central component of “wealth creation”; and, as the world achieved greater economic and cultural connectivity, standards have gained greater significance (David & Steinmueller, 1996, p. 820). “Technical standards clearly do not flow ‘neutrally’ from some fountain of best engineering practice, but, rather, they reflect the full range of strategic behaviours that are seen in other economic activities affecting technology and market formation” (ibid., p. 829).

Yet the rise of the computer industry and its looming convergence not only with television equipment but also with television content and business practices made it necessary to adopt DTV standards that would be flexible and adaptable to the shifting political-economic context of new media equipment. As Schiller (1999) noted in *Digital Capitalism: Networking the Global Market System*, “at stake in this unprecedented transition to neoliberal or market-driven telecommunications is nothing less than the production base and the control structure of an emerging digital capitalism” (p. 37). In other words, this historical moment demonstrates an even greater affinity of media policymakers with the unbridled economic approach to global information infrastructure. Yet it is also important to note that the market orientation toward the emerging media technologies is not occurring in a regulatory vacuum, devoid of government intervention. In fact, as in previous media histories, the property creation of new communication industries is rooted in “designing government policy for business that encourages marketplace competition” (Streeter, 1996, p. 167). Some level of state arbitration was necessary in order to provide nominal order toward the property creation of DTV. Permitting a full-fledged, unfettered marketplace of standards would have created too many unknowns and conditions that may have impacted national security and the communications industries negatively.

I have noted in an earlier article (Castañeda, 2007) that the adoption of multiple technical standards greatly stifled the manufacturers’ ability to produce an economy of scale for television receiver sets, since the economies of scope for digital television varied too widely among multiple standards (p. 92). It was not until most recently that the TV manufacturing industry adopted an integrated-standards approach, which allowed consumers to purchase a television set that included both interlaced and progressive scanning with 720 or 1080 pixel lines, rather than separate TV consoles with discrete standards. Hence manufacturers have made peace with the fact the FCC approved multiple standards by reaching a point in the creation of DTV in which television sets simply include all or most of the standards. Despite this shift, there is still much confusion from consumers (and from some retail sales associates) over the availability of multiple DTV formats – which include varieties between plasma, flat screen, and Internet-ready options. This state of things has induced, in consumers, a permanent cautiousness and an unwillingness to purchase a new television set unless it’s absolutely necessary to do so (W. Santos, personal communication, July 15, 2008). The ripple effect caused by the lackluster consumer appetite for DTV equipment as well as by the broadcasters’ protracted installment of new digital, high-definition production technologies has tempered the “initial” excitement over DTV,

thus creating a context in which the official DTV transition deadline has had to be pushed back several times (García Leiva & Starks, 2009). It has taken over a decade for consumers to endorse the switchover to digital television, largely because the complexity and confusion over different standards stifled the ability to build consumer confidence in the new media product (W. Santos, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

The gradual start of DTV demonstrates that the importance of technical standards cannot be underestimated, since they set the technological context through which the manufacturing, distribution, and consumption of equipment can take place. According to Roy Rada (1993), standards are the language of success through which business can communicate with a certain degree of certainty. With a variety of standards, there was concern that it would be difficult to discern which DTV formats would be successful and which would not. As the section above demonstrates, the current era of digital capitalism is not merely the result of technical ingenuity, but also of specific policymaking aimed at media property creation; standards-setting was one area of such policymaking. Free-trade policies constituted another area, which the next section discusses.

Creating the Market for DTV while Taming Production Labor

The emergence of digital (high-definition) television in the mid-1990s was perceived by some US trade officials as an opportunity for the US to regain its position as a global powerhouse in consumer electronics. After nearly 50 years of television set production, the US had lost its dominance as a lead producer. As early as 1966, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) responded to the competitive threat of foreign consumer electronics companies by moving television production to Mexico, thus taking advantage of the Mexican government's implementation of a border-based manufacturing program the previous year (Cowie, 1999, p. 71). The large labor force readily available in Mexico, the onslaught of foreign television commodities from Asia, and the fomenting anti-union sentiment in the US led to the migration of most American TV manufacturers by the late 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, in the post-Fordist transition, manufacturers relocated all or large parts of their manufacturing to developing countries, in a quest for cheap labor and in an attempt to circumvent the negative effects of "overproduction, price erosion and fierce competition" (Cowie, 1999, p. 148).² Some believed that the emerging DTV market could potentially reverse this downward spiral of off-shore production, which had begun decades earlier. They were wrong.

As shown in the previous section, the ideology of free trade and open markets was an integral part of the discussion about the development and transition to DTV since its beginnings. This new technology embodied a pivotal change, which started

70 years earlier, toward the transnationalization of communications market relations, the expansion of US trade interests, and electronics corporations' growing stake in overseas markets. Information policy expert William J. Drake notes:

Global liberalization over the past decade has radically increased the number and diversity of stakeholders, as new service suppliers, manufacturers, and corporate users vie to interwork a multitude of components and networks into a heterogeneous information fabric that is increasingly geared toward the demands of transnational corporations. (Drake, 1993, p. 271)

Indeed, as noted by former US Secretary of State Warren Christopher during a 1995 hearing with the Senate Foreign Operations Subcommittee, communication systems are critical for regional and international trade, since they create a context for open societies, and thus for open markets and for positive geopolitical relations.

Aside from and prior to this political equation between free trade and open societies, it was the US interest in "open markets" via multilateral trade policies in the 1960s/1970s that was equally responsible for the shrinking market share of US consumer electronics and for the successful implementation of off-shore manufacturing. US tariff laws such as the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 assisted the migration of companies, because they stipulated that products processed or assembled with exported US materials would only be taxed on the value added abroad once the finished products were imported back to the US. This meant that TV manufacturers would be taxed solely for labor costs (the value added), but not for the exported materials that were initially used to build the TV sets. Thus the reduction of tariffs on electronics manufacturing helped create the context that later envisioned digital television as the redeemer of US technology industries.

In the early 1970s electronics unions foresaw the impact that open market regulation would have on employment opportunities and on the potential domination of foreign countries through "product dumping" (Helleiner, 1977, p. 109). As a result, unions aimed to demonstrate the shortsightedness of multilateral free-trade agreements by petitioning against them and by using scare tactics regarding national security. According to an article by Victor Canto (1983/4) in the libertarian *Cato Journal*, the workers' calls for a protectionist policy came in response to the growing fear that US products were losing their international competitiveness in the wake of open markets. Yet such markets were encouraged by government trade officials, who at the time viewed restrictions as potentially "counterproductive, impoverishing domestic and foreign producers and consumers alike" (Canto, 1983/4, p. 683). Ultimately this trade scenario did not take pay heed to workers; but they did not go away quietly.

The 1971 tariff petition filed for instance by the International Union of Electrical Radio and Machine Workers in the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) claims that the RCA plant in Memphis, Tennessee shut down because of "concessions granted" to RCA by the Trade Expansion Act of

1962 – a federal legislative act that promoted reduced tariffs for bi-national and cross-border manufacturing (United States Tariff Commission, 1971a, p. 1). The petitions from former workers at RCA – as well as at Emerson Television and Radio Company in New Jersey, at Zenith Corporation in Illinois, and at Television Manufacturers of America Company in Illinois – to the FCC were attempts to link the expansion of open trade policies with falling rates of employment in US television electronics manufacturing (United States Tariff Commission, 1971b, 1971c, 1971d, 1971e). They charged that the government was not creating policy in the best interest of American workers.

The state sided with business interests. In response to all four petitions, the FCC ruled “no finding” within its final report of November 1971 and maintained that the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 did not “cause, or threaten to cause, the unemployment, or underemployment, of a significant number or proportion of the workers” at television-related plants (United States Tariff Commission, 1971f, p. 3). The American Electronics Associations (AEA) concurred with the FCC, and it also argued that US trade policies were not the problem. According to AEA, the downturn of US consumer electronics was in part the result of Japan’s lack of reciprocity for an “open” television market; this was best illustrated by the government’s high import tariffs, which prohibited non-Japanese consumer electronic corporations from entering Japan’s domestic television equipment market (United States Congress, 1989b). Although this was not entirely explicit, there was also a level of Asian xenophobia that influenced the negatively perceived presence of Japanese products and manufacturers (Hiraoka, 1989; Nelson, 2005).

The 20 years of free-trade policies and legislation that encouraged off-shore manufacturing in consumer electronics produced the landscape in which the US was no longer competitive in high technology manufacturing. According to Jeffery Hart in his book *The Politics of HDTV in the United States*,

[the] relative decline of US competitiveness in world trade [. . .] came as a shock to the United States. The heightened dependence on the imports from Japan of electronic components for both civilian and military production figured in a major debate inside the Department of Defense [by] the mid-1980s and later in the Congress about how to reduce dependence or to counter its possible effects. (Hart, 1992, pp. 1–2)

It was the fear of foreign dependence in an increasingly high-tech world and the prospect of reigniting the US consumer electronics industry that spurred Congress into action to support the development of DTV, despite the fact that the US government had created this difficult situation in the first place.

Nearly two decades after the electronic unions warned the FCC and the Congress against the negative effects that unfettered trade expansion would have on consumer electronics, at a 1989 hearing, the American Electronics Association requested that Congress support and jump-start a program that would foster “the beginnings of a US [advanced television] industry” (United States Congress, p. 46). Democratic Party

senators at the time, such as John Glenn and Albert Gore, Jr., responded to the perceived threat of electronics multinationals from overseas with battle cries for federal-government intervention and for the active conservation of “the nation’s future balance of trade” (ibid., p. 3). In a separate hearing in 1989, Senator Glenn further argued: “This debate is absolutely critical [. . .] I am very concerned about the role of our electronics industry in developing HDTV, which means to me more than just household television sets” (ibid., p. 3). Given the significance of high-volume components in the aggregate-electronics market, the industrial control over the design and manufacture of these underlying technologies became the crux of advanced television-policy agendas around the globe.

The belief in the centrality of communications in the global economy was still evident two decades later, at the May 2009 Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) Washington Forum, where the main focus of the event continued to be the role of free trade and of technology policy in the transition to digital television. Republican US Representative Roy Blunt from Missouri was especially fêted for his impassioned advocacy of digital television and free trade. During the Washington, DC forum, the president of CEA, Gary Shapiro, remarked: “We honor Rep. Blunt for reaching across the aisle to build bi-partisan support for the Columbia Free Trade Agreement and for his leadership on DTV” (Consumer Electronics Association, 2009, p. 1). Fifteen years after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and after FCC’s support of advanced television standards, the CEA still touts all free-trade agreements as key components for the future success of digital consumer electronics. This is not surprising, since the CEA is the US representative to the global consumer electronics industry, and one of the tenets of its mission is to ensure the prominence of US electronics in worldwide trade. At the start of 2009, the CEA noted that its four main foci for the next few years were going to be green technologies, free trade, broadband access, and the changeover to digital television (ibid.). This emphasis is logical, given the convergence between digital electronics, the expansion of the Internet as a site of economic production, and the \$1.4 trillion produced each year by the US consumer electronics industry (Gross, 2008; Park & Roome, 2002). The proliferation of free-trade policies has thus recast DTV: it is not only about television sets, it encompasses the future market expansion of the communications–information sector on a global scale.

Indeed all the mania of living in an information society is impacting the production of electronic equipment that is needed in order for the millions of informational terabytes to be accessible in the digital age. Since technology must be built at a faster rate and lower cost in order to justify the investments made in advanced systems, the production of digital technologies is largely taking place outside the US. Although this is not new, the digitalization of consumer electronics has intensified the globalization of production. Concurrently, the global economic crisis has forced corporations to rethink their off-shore production strategies, and the manufacturing processes available just south of the US border, through the *maquiladora* system, continue to be a prime framework for accessible, low-cost production in a transborder environ-

ment with favorable trade conditions. Similar manufacturing arrangements (production of the *maquila* type) are also emerging across Latin America; but, more importantly, what the *maquiladora* system offers to “US, European and Asian capital [are] the advantages of free entry into several South American countries due to [their] bilateral trade agreements (Gerber & San Diego Dialogue Program, 1999, p. 7). At a moment when markets across the Americas are in need of millions of advanced television sets for the ongoing transition to DTV, the manufacturing of TV equipment along the US–Mexico border provides a cheap and expedient production of electronic goods, as well as trade access. It is important to examine at whose expense and under what conditions the production of digital television sets is taking place. The next section will explore this issue further.

DTV Set Production at the US–Mexico Border

There is a long history of mass media and television-set production at the US–Mexico border (Fox, 1999). Foreign outsourcing proved to be an effective method of countering the onslaught of competition, which was inadvertently brought about by international patent licensing. Sales of television sets made in the US began to decline as intense foreign competition chipped away at market share, which set in motion a historical transformation of the US television industry – from national production to a transnational, border-based export platform model. The *maquiladora* model, used originally for automobile and textile commodities, created a context in which similar transborder manufacturing methods were utilized for communication technologies such as television and radio sets, as well as for silicon-based high-end technologies such as computers.

In explaining how the political economy of set production was unique to Mexico, Nichola Lowe and Martin Kenney (1999) compare their platform model with that of Taiwan, which was also developing in East Asia about the same time. In Taiwan, Japanese investors developed joint manufacturing and communications efforts in the country’s free-trade zones, and, as a result, they improved their “access to the highly protected Taiwanese consumer [and components] market” (Lowe & Kenney 1999, pp. 1428–1429). In Mexico, on the other hand, the *maquiladora* system was simply regarded as an advantageous tool for exploiting lower labor costs, and “foreign investors had little interest in growing consumer base in Mexico. Rather, they were focused on the single goal of surviving in the US market” (ibid., p. 1435). Lowe and Kenney argue that the different approaches and perceptions of foreign investors essentially solidified Mexico’s failure to develop an “indigenous” and self-sustaining consumer electronics industry, while the island of Taiwan experienced a successful “expansion of foreign exchange, employment and development of assembler–supplier relations” (Lowe & Kenney, 2000, p. 49). In the Mexican-border context, trade policies and investor preferences for specific market share created a different

manufacturing industry in Mexico, and by extension in Latin America, from the one they created in Taiwan, and by extension in Asia. The outcome of those differences is more striking today, as Asia recovers more quickly than Latin America from the global economic crisis of 2008–2009.³

As Silicon Valley in Northern California became the epitome of industrial design and of high-tech ingenuity, the Silicon Border became its mirror image for industrial manufacturing. Located just over the US–Mexico border, in Mexicali (which lies opposite Calexico in California), the manufacturing complex known as “Silicon Border, Science Park of the Americas” embodies fast and cheap production in the digital age (Dickerson, 2008). Officially announced in 2004, the “Silicon Border” park was intended to become the premier site for semiconductor production in North America. Since all media and information technologies, large and small, are dependent on silicon chips for their operation, the investors in the 10,000-acre industrial complex believed that the development would produce jobs and less dependence on foreign companies, especially Asian. According to the chairman of Silicon Border D. J. Hill, not only will the industrial park provide 100,000 jobs to Mexicans and US workers located at the Mexicali–Calexico border, but, more importantly, national security will be protected for both countries. Hill stated: “By making a place in North America, we have from a security standpoint an alternative place for manufacturing [. . .] because if Taiwan unifies with China, the advanced manufacturing will be controlled by a communist country” (Pisor, 2005). The mounting concern over dependency and the rising costs of the overseas supply chains instigated the need to rethink the importation of high-tech goods from Asia.

The digitalization of television production has not only led to the demise of traditional TV sets, which used cathode-ray tubes; it has also influenced factory production methods. Although initially consumers were lukewarm toward DTV, the firm 2010 congressional deadline for the digital switchover finally spurred the consumer demand for flat-screen, computer-friendly TV sets. Not surprisingly, the high demand has also caused price wars and a rapid fall in the prices of multi-standard flat-screen panel TV sets (Taub, 2006). This market situation caused manufacturers to rethink their production and inventory strategies. For instance TCL-Thomson Electronics, the world’s largest TV maker, noted that it takes 90 days to manufacture and ship a conventional TV set to the US, but that, in order to remain competitively viable, the company wants to shorten the production time to less than 30 days, and also to shorten the travel time to the US (*Economist*, 2006). Historically, it has taken 20 days for a TV-sized consumer electronic product to cross the Pacific Ocean. A TCL-Thomson Electronics manufacturing plant located at the Silicon Border, however, cuts those production and travel phases in half or less. Sony Electronics Corporation actually employed this model for years, through its design and manufacturing centers in San Diego, Tijuana, and Mexicali (Castañeda Paredes, 2003). Consequently, the current global economic crisis has reinvigorated Mexican high-tech centers like the Silicon Border as economically efficient manufacturing sites, especially for North American markets. The recent adoption of green technology in the industrial

park has also transformed the Silicon Border into a prime site for advanced manufacturing. According to Dickerson (2008), the greening of transborder production offers a number of advantages, such as lower operating costs, tax preferences under NAFTA, and closer proximity to potential customers in the US and in its global trading partners.

It is important to note that Silicon Border is not working in isolation but is part of a larger landscape of industrial parks that exist along the US–Mexico border and the Mexican Gulf Coast, all of which serve the continent’s digital electronics market. Such a vast market also necessitates an extensive labor force. The next section will therefore discuss the issues that arise when racialized labor, uneven trade flows, and new technologies intersect at the point of production in the digital era.

The Ramifications of High-Tech Manufacturing

The current drive for the mass production of high-tech electronics is creating an array of outcomes for workers, the two most important areas where this happens being health and environment. In the last five years, various film and online documentaries have portrayed and given voice to the uneven consequences of environmental and labor practices within the broader field of consumer electronics production and to the emotional toll of the geopolitics between the US and Mexico.⁴ In *Maquilapolis: City of Factories* (2006), filmmakers Vicky Funari and Sergio de la Torre tell the stories of *maquila* workers, particularly Carmen Duran and Lourdes Lujan, two women who work for Sanyo Electric Co., one of the largest television-set producers in the world. The film traces the harsh effects that the *maquiladora* industry has on its workers, as well as these women’s families and communities. The documentary follows Duran and Lujan: they earn between \$6 to \$11 a day, which is higher than the typical \$3–\$5 factory wages, but they are exposed to deplorable working conditions, managerial intimidation, and taxing health problems caused by environmental toxins. The documentary ends with Duran and Lujan winning a legal battle in which Sanyo is forced to pay severance monies to its workers, and Sanyo decides to relocate its Tijuana-based manufacturing unit to East Asia – specifically, to Taiwan.

Just as postcolonial models continue to exist in relation to transborder manufacturing, the material conditions of race, gender, and immigration in the digital era are present. In fact these issues are becoming more important than ever, as women from historically exploited ethnic and class backgrounds continue to constitute an important workforce in the electronics industry not only in Latin America, but in Asia as well.⁵ For instance, in Mexico, women largely between the ages of 18 and 30 constitute more than half of the *maquila* workforce (Comité Fronterizos de Obreros, 2007; Vásquez Ruiz, 2007). This proportion actually represents a drop in the number of female *maquiladora* workers, since the notion of “cheap, docile, and female” is not necessarily a given: more women organize around labor issues (Peña, 1993). Despite

such organizing, and despite the fact that factories were hiring more men in the 1990s, the “maquila-grade female” was still the aspired standard worker (Salzinger, 2004, p. 56). The physical, emotional, and social toll of factory work on these women cannot be underestimated.

In a report to the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), Schatan and Castilleja (2005) argued that, because the electronics assembly industry in Mexico was established under vulnerable environmental conditions, both the workers’ and the community’s health were affected by electronics-based *maquiladoras*’ use of toxic substances and by their noncompliance with environmental standards for high-tech manufacturing. The study also demonstrated that the push for unfettered production and trade was deeply impacting the weakest sector of the labor force, which consisted largely of young women. According to journalist Elizabeth Grossman (2006), women and men who work in *maquiladoras* are exposed to a daunting amount of air- and water-borne pollutants, as well as to a plethora of chemicals that can cause severe health issues, such as kidney failure. Lead, for example, is utilized in the production of television and computer screens, yet it is highly toxic for the nervous system and especially dangerous for children. The often substandard working conditions of *maquila* assembly lines fail to protect workers and their families and increase the chances that they will suffer from a slew of health complaints such as chest pain, upper airway irritation, sore throats, excessive mucus, rashes, headaches, dizziness, memory loss, depression, and hair loss. Breast cancer has been on the rise from exposure to and inadequate disposal of hazardous materials. Individuals working on the *maquila* production floors have increased chances that their children will suffer major “birth defects [. . .] ranging from limb deformities to anencephaly” (Kourous, 1998, p. 2). Add to this the outbreaks in food poisoning that workers at both Philips and RCA television *maquila* plants in Tijuana suffered, and one would conclude that *maquiladoras* are not safe environments.

Furthermore, the repetitive work exerts its own tolls. Informatics-based labor produces eye, wrist, and back aches. The work conditions are no different from “swift sewing in garment factories,” in that high-tech surveillance, which is in place in this context, “docks workers for slowness and typos, and pushes them to faster and more punctilious work” (Nathan, 2000). Despite the belief that advanced technologies have the potential to level the playing field, the digital era has not eradicated social inequities, but in fact has exacerbated the negative dynamics that maintain the status quo.

The impact of *maquiladoras* is transnational, a fact that most US consumers rarely consider. The City of Industry in California, for instance, boasts the largest array of *maquiladora* twin-sister plants, located just 150 miles north of the US–Mexico border. These plants are the final processing centers for *maquiladora*-produced electronics and other commodities certified as “made in the USA.” A brief interview-based study of the workers, which I conducted with City of Industry workers from 2005 to 2007, showed that 70% of the workers in my sample were largely Mexican immigrants and

nearly 80% were women. Although the final processing plants were in the US, the treatment of workers was still problematic, even if it was better than in the sister *maquiladora* plants in Mexico. Women workers reported indirect pressures on the job, such as passive-aggressive “jokes” about their employment future, and low-grade health difficulties that they soothed by drinking alcoholic beverages after work.

In fact, Sarah Hill (2001) argues that neoliberal policies have often produced a discursive legitimacy toward the physical hardships experienced by people working in environmentally poor conditions. As Hill notes, “First World anxiety about rainforest depletion has not always worked in the service of the indigenous people who live there” (p. 158). Environmental health effects, nevertheless, are uneven between the producing and the receiving countries. The level of impact of hazardous waste on workers varies according to where they are located on the production divide. Manufacturing countries like Mexico will continue to experience the negative consequences of high-tech manufacturing, by comparison with consuming countries like the US. Digital technologies and Internet access may increasingly be viewed as the great equalizers; but, when one examines the global manufacturing marketplace, it is apparent that long-standing imbalances of structural power continue to exist. In this sense, the digitalization of television is not only changing the rates and kinds of human impacts, but also exacerbating the differences between countries.

Although the film *Maquilaopolis* (*City of Factories*) reaches the conclusion that US *maquilas* will leave Mexico, Sanyo kept a border presence via its corporate partnerships with other telecommunications and electronics producers, which sold approximately one million liquid-crystal display (LCD) TVs in North America alone (Nikkei Weekly, 2008). The cyclical flows of operating expenses – such as rising material, transportation and labor costs in Asia, and the largess of the Americas’ continental market – are critical reasons why corporations like Sanyo did not fully abandon the *maquila* manufacturing system. For instance, Sanyo plans to triple its North American sales of “electronic products,” including digital television sets, by the end of the fiscal year 2011, even if the production of more electronics also generates more electronic waste and toxins (Kane, 2008, p. B6). At the same time, these women may be the source of resistance in the future. According to Betty Robles from the Mexican Maquila Women Workers Network:

We can’t pretend that women and men are the same. It’s the women who get up at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. to get the food prepared. It’s the women who are forced to show their soiled sanitary pad to prove they aren’t pregnant. It’s the women who have to fight off sexual advances. It’s the women who have to keep the family together and are leading the fight for healthy communities. (Maquiladora Solidarity Network, 1995, “Creating a New Workforce,” para. 1)

This is clearly demonstrated by the increased participation of women in Latin American social movements and in transnational organizations such as the Coalition

for Justice in the Maquiladoras, which aim to support workers' rights and community struggles, but especially to "place special emphasis on defending the rights of women who suffer discrimination, humiliation, and sexual harassment in the workplace" (Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, 2008, para. 1).

Conclusion

Television-set production in the digital era (and consumer electronics more generally) is an elaborate tale of how political, economic, and cultural forces have transformed (albeit unevenly) the communications industry into a prime site for digital capitalism. Although the switch to digital is often discussed as merely existing at the level of policymakers and consumers, it is irresponsible to not understand how the DTV transition will impact television-set production and workers at the forefront of those assembly lines. The movement to digital television and to information technology convergence has only just begun, and it is safe to forecast that the issues discussed in this chapter will not be resolved any time soon. However, as consumers of new technologies and as global citizens interested in social progress, it is imperative that we understand the production origins and the workforce context of the high-tech consumer equipment we consume everyday. Perhaps this will foster the recognition that the United States does not operate in a vacuum and that the anti-Latino immigrant-policy actions (which regard especially those of Mexican descent) are a performance that aims to suppress the reality of the enormous dependence of the US on Latin American and Latino labor, even now in the digital era.

Mayer's (2009, p. 16) analysis of digital television-set manufacturing in Manaus, Brazil, for instance, uncovers another site where global production, communication policy, and flexible labor "will likely accelerate the pre-existing trends that promote inequalities in industrial manufacturing zones, including increased stratification between the upper and lower ends of the social hierarchy as well as the isolation of managerial and technical classes in the zone from other elites." She concludes: "Without a policy process that considers social inequalities in production locales, digital television instead may mean just another technology on the assembly line."

Ironically, the transition to DTV is perplexing and causes anxiety to many consumers because the technology is such a deep financial investment on a personal scale. Yet there is a broader political-economic landscape, which is shaping that investment in ways that consumers, policymakers, or even the TV-set makers themselves cannot even begin to imagine (Galperin, 1999). The re-tooling of audiovisual industries already underway has made many aspects of the production process unpredictable, and yet the location of these processes in Latin America, and in Mexico in particular, seems certain to continue (Galperin, 2006). The global production of television sets and of consumer electronics has been characterized by intensified scales and by geographic dispersals, particularly to China and other Asian countries. While China

may now be the leading producer of manufactured goods, and Asia as a whole may be the economists' "bright star" on the road to recovery from the recent 2008–2009 recession, the North American continent continues to look to Latin America for low-cost labor in order to satisfy its consumer markets (Burgess, 2010; National Intelligence Council, 2007).⁶ According to the US National Intelligence Council (2007), low labor costs, especially along the manufacturing zones at the border, sustain a context that, for all practical purposes, has integrated the northern states of Mexico into the US economy. In other words Mexico, and Latin America more generally, will remain strategic partners in the US and media industries' future economic growth. This chapter's historical analysis of the policy, economic, and employment practices of television manufacturing at the US–Mexico border demonstrates that the regional logic of *maquiladoras* will continue to be relevant in the new era of digital media, because *maquiladoras* provide the nuts and bolts of cheap labor, accessible transborder pathways, and a trade regime that benefits foreign investors. How exactly this future will be reconciled with the other ongoing border problems, such as unhealthy and exploitative labor conditions, political corruption, immigration flows, and narcotics-related violence, remains to be seen.

NOTES

- 1 NTSC (National Television System Committee) is used in North America and Japan. PAL (Phase Alternation by Line) is used in Western Europe. SECAM (Séquentiel couleur à mémoire) is used in France, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East (Crane, 1979, p. 11).
- 2 Jefferson Cowie's (1999) study of RCA's (Radio Corporation of America) manufacturing relocations from Camden, New Jersey to Bloomington, Indiana, then to Memphis, Tennessee, and ultimately to Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico makes evident that the sad state of consumer electronics in the US was the result of a 70-year quest to escalate profits while lowering production costs – at all costs.
- 3 The global economic crisis of 2008–2009 is described by Cao et al. (2010) as the period in which the near collapse of the global financial systems is the largest economic shock to occur in 80 years (p. 12).
- 4 Border Film Project (2010) and Ojeda (2006) are two noteworthy examples of how activists utilize media outlets to show the inequities of the global manufacturing marketplace.
- 5 Safa (1981) and Sassen-Koob (1984) were some of the first to critically examine the links, especially in developing countries, between transnational production, labor, and women and to historicize the use of female workers as cheap labor. Since then, feminist scholarship has continued to investigate those links (see Fernández-Kelly, 2008; Fussell, 2000; McLaughlin & Johnson, 2007; Ong, 1991; Rios, 1990).
- 6 At last tally, Mexico continues to have the lowest hourly compensation costs at \$3.91 an hour, compared to Canada's and United States' average of over \$30 an hour (Manning & Butera, 2000, p. 194).

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Citizenship and Media Ownership

John McMurria

ABSTRACT

For the practice and study of media production, ownership matters. This chapter considers three orientations to media ownership in the US, with attention to how each invokes particular rationales for citizenship. The first orientation considers the critique of media conglomeration that emerged in the 1980s and the anti-corporate populist expressions of citizenship that have informed recent campaigns to reduce corporate media power. The second considers positions that perceive a potential for new interactive digital technologies to free individuals from corporate and government power. The third assesses the movement, since the 1970s, to increase minority ownership of media. Here access to media ownership is framed within conceptions of citizenship informed by past and present conditions of racial discrimination. In each of these orientations, consideration is given to how ideas about the transformative power of media in democratic societies engage with political and cultural struggles over rationales of citizenship.

A common concern in the vast literature on media ownership is whether media facilitate democratic deliberation and promote diverse viewpoints and cultural expressions (Rice, 2008). Some have argued that the growth of large media conglomerates has decreased competition and delimited diversity, while others have suggested that this is not the case, because a proliferation of new media outlets through cable

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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television and the Internet has decentralized distribution. Often democratic deliberation is understood as a normative goal, and positions on ownership differ according to how diversity is defined and measured.¹ Recent critical work on media and cultural citizenship understands ideas about democratic deliberation to be dynamic and constituted through broader economic, social, and cultural relations.² From this latter perspective, the study of media ownership is not restricted to measuring the impact of media ownership on content diversity. Rather, deliberations on media ownership are considered as sites of contestation over the contours of citizenship more broadly.

This essay assesses three orientations to media ownership in the US with attention to how each invokes particular rationales for citizenship. The first orientation is the critique of media conglomeration that emerged in the 1980s and the anti-corporate populist expressions of citizenship that have informed recent campaigns to reduce the power of corporate media. The second is toward perceptions that new interactive digital technologies have the potential to free individuals from corporate and government power. Though varied and ranging from libertarian to “commons” approaches, these Internet-centered perspectives share expressions of citizenship focused on eighteenth-century concepts of individual liberty. Lastly I consider the movement, since the 1970s, to increase minority ownership of media. Here access to media ownership is framed within conceptions of citizenship informed by past and present conditions of racial discrimination. In each of these orientations consideration is given to how ideas about the transformative power of media in democratic societies engage with political and cultural struggles over rationales for citizenship.

The concept of citizenship has gained renewed interest as a contested terrain for defining boundaries of inclusion and exclusion across the social and cultural registers of class, gender, sexuality, race, and nation (Miller, 1998; Singh, 2004; Lister, 2003). Citizenship specifies the rights and obligations that formally define a person’s legal status as member of a democratic community (Turner, 2001). The parameters of rights have been understood as ranging from eighteenth-century conceptions of “civil rights” that prioritize individual liberty from state power, including the rights to speech, thought, faith, property, and due process, to the more expansive “social rights” of the twentieth-century social welfare state, which include the rights to economic security, health, education, and cultural recognition. Eighteenth-century concepts of civil rights are founded on classical liberal ideas of the individual as autonomous and self-actualizing, and they define freedom in negative terms, as the individual’s freedom from government interference or coercion. Twentieth-century concepts of social rights derive from understandings that economic, social, and cultural relations create unequal conditions for full democratic participation, conditions that require positive action through the redistributive authority of the state (Marshall, 1950).

Citizen rights are tied to certain obligations, which define particular moral and cultural rationales for proper conduct (Lister, 2003, pp. 13–42). Critical approaches to these rationales for conduct consider the ways in which they discriminate or exclude across registers of cultural difference (Miller, 1993). Recent historical

transformations have given the concept of citizenship exigency. A neoliberal political movement has narrowed the scope of social rights since the 1970s by promoting free-market ideologies, dismantling the social welfare state, and promoting personal responsibility and volunteerism in order to solve social problems (Duggan, 2003; Harvey, 2005). Also, an increasing transnational integration of national economies and of frequent movements of peoples across borders has prompted contestations over citizenship and new cultural parameters for belonging and exclusion (Benhabib, 2004; Lister, 2003, pp. 1–3).

In considering the three orientations to media ownership in the US, attention is placed on how conceptions of citizenship in each orientation articulate with the neoliberal movement and with the politics of recognizing cultural difference. Regarding anti-corporate populist critiques of media conglomeration, I consider the writings of Ben Bagdikian and Robert McChesney as political protests against the ideologies of neoliberal policies, which they consider to have widened social and economic disparities. But, in their populist expressions, they subordinate the cultural politics of difference to a broader critique of corporate power and, in McChesney's case, they obfuscate our understandings of how cultural politics has informed past and present media reform movements. In the case of Internet-centered approaches to media ownership, I consider how commitments to eighteenth-century notions of individual liberty have animated sentiments to protect an open Internet from government and corporate power. Yet these concepts of individual liberty invoke a narrow range of rights, which diminish the redistributive scope of government – which has, historically, secured social rights – even as “commons” approaches have constructed collective conceptions of intellectual property and have challenged corporate power. Further, Internet-centered articulations of citizenship as individual liberty emphasize a classical liberal conception of the individual that elides the cultural politics of difference across social formations of class, race, gender, and nation. Conversely, advocates of minority media ownership invoke broader social rights in tying a cultural politics of difference to economic opportunity. Lastly, I assess the commonalities and differences of the three orientations to media ownership in conflicts that emerged over the issue of network neutrality. The chapter concludes with thoughts on how conceptions of media ownership articulate with the broader prevailing discourses of neoliberal citizenship.

Anti-Corporate Populism and Media Ownership

As media deregulations in the 1970s accelerated corporate mergers and the growth of media conglomerates, the issue of “media monopoly” or “corporate media power” became a focus for media ownership critiques. The two most prominent critics of “big media” are Ben Bagdikian, who from 1983 to 2000 published six editions of his widely read *The Media Monopoly* and in 2004 an extensively revised and

augmented edition, titled *The New Media Monopoly*; and Robert McChesney, who since the first publication of his *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* in 1999 (McChesney, 2000) has written several books and dozens of newspaper articles critiquing corporate media. Bagdikian offers a perspective from his experience as a journalist, *Washington Post* editor, and professor of journalism and dean at the University of California, Berkeley (Bagdikian 1995). McChesney found himself alienated in a mass communication discipline oriented toward quantitative and qualitative social sciences and turned toward Marxism, the critical political economy of Herbert Schiller and Noam Chomsky, and the public-oriented writing style of Bagdikian (McChesney, 2007, pp. 92–97).

Bagdikian's central thesis is that "[m]odern technology and American economics have quietly created a new kind of central authority over information – the national and multinational corporation" (1983, p. xv). This authority was evident in 1981, when "forty-six corporations controlled most of the business in daily newspapers, magazines, television, books, and motion pictures" – a power that had extended to just six corporations by 2000 (2000, pp. x, 21). For Bagdikian, corporate media power reduced investigative journalism, prompted journalists to avoid stories that are critical of their commercial employers, and proliferated lifestyle and celebrity material. McChesney concurs with him on these points and writes that corporate media have increased "public ignorance and apathy about the political system" while "inequality has mushroomed" (2004, p. 125). McChesney adds that advertising and profit motives promote a "hyper-commercialism" that has "carpet-bombed every corner of the nation" through content that supports advertising pitches, targets affluent consumers, incorporates product placements, and pitches junk food to children (pp. 138–173).

Such expressions of corporate power over a defenseless public can be understood as anti-corporate populism. Albertazzi and McDonnell define populism as "an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice" (2008, p. 3). Bagdikian and McChesney each depict the corporate media as the dangerous other to a broadly defined and victimized people, referred to as the "body politic," "the audience," or "the population." Bagdikian exemplifies this populist language by stating:

The news media – diluted of real meaning by apolitical and sterile context, homogenized with the growth of monopoly, overwhelmingly more of a service to merchants than to the audience and filled with frivolous material – are a threat to their own future but also to the body politic. (Bagdikian, 1983, p. 208)

Because the corporate media do not relate "political and social events to real forces in society," the people are helpless to challenge this corporate power: "[a] population unable to select alternative patterns of power sustains the status quo" (ibid.). Similarly, McChesney argues the corporate media produce "content that will not be difficult for audiences to grasp, will not be too expensive to produce, yet will capture people's

attention" (2004, p. 195). The "people," for McChesney, are mostly passive and do not necessarily know what they really want, but they require a different media system to "cultivate" their interests. In reference to the decline of foreign-language films in theaters, of classical music in radio, and of documentary film on television, McChesney argues that "there is little incentive over the long term for commercial media to cultivate tastes or develop interests in new material" (pp. 201–202).

In his study of populist movements, Taggart found that "populism is concerned with returning people to their natural and spontaneous condition to which they belonged before having been subject to some sort of spiritual collapse" (2000, 16). This is evident in Bagdikian's work, when he laments that "modern technology and social organization have intensified the problems of centralized control of information" because they have replaced small-town life, where "citizen talked to citizen about public policies that affected them" (1983, p. xv). With reference to Disney, Bagdikian states that "power is so concentrated, ubiquitous, and artful that, to a degree unmatched in former mixtures of entertainment, it dilutes influences from family, schooling, and other sources that are grounded in real-life experience, weakening their ability to guide growing generations" (2000, xx). McChesney (1993), too, exemplifies this tendency to reference a past less dominated by corporate power by probing historical moments when radical critiques of commercial media, as he argues, had the potential to create noncommercial alternatives.

According to Taggart, these references to better times, which precede the emergence of an overwhelming power, are linked to "fundamental dilemmas that make [populism] self-limiting" – including a general hostility to the institutions of representative government (2000, p. 2). Bagdikian and McChesney exemplify this deep pessimism by viewing the institutions of representative government as hopelessly corrupted by corporate power. Though Bagdikian proposes policy reforms such as banning multiple broadcast station ownership, taxing advertising, and subsidizing postal rates for newspapers, he remains doubtful that the corporate media would allow a full debate over such policies, because "nothing truly significant will change while there is a fundamental imbalance of power in society at large" (1983, pp. 229–237). For McChesney, the current regulatory structures have been "corrupted" by commercial interests, and alternatives must come from grassroots campaigns that support noncommercial and public-funded alternatives (2004, p. 11).

Concerned about structural inequalities in society, and in particular about class inequalities, this anti-corporate populism promotes a concept of citizenship that is concerned with the diminishing of social rights under neoliberalism. However, by representing the "people" as an undifferentiated whole and by championing noncommercial or public-funded media as the only real alternative to the fundamental dilemma of commercial media power, the populist orientation of Bagdikian and McChesney obfuscates issues that pertain to the cultural politics of difference. In their analysis, considerations of race and gender are subordinated to the broader critique of commercialism, and value judgments that seek to elevate tastes elide the class hierarchies that inform such judgments (Bourdieu, 1984). Work in critical cul-

tural studies has engaged these issues, but McChesney has found these perspectives soft on capitalism, heavy in jargon, and less interested in media policy reform (McChesney, 2007, pp. 58–60). One way to bridge these differences is to assess McChesney's use of the concept of *critical junctures*, which he adapts from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci – a seminal figure for work focused on political economy and on cultural studies.

McChesney understands critical junctures as historical moments when “important new media technologies emerge, when the existing media system enters a crisis, or when the political climate changes sufficiently to call accepted policies into question or to demand new ones” (2004, p. 24). McChesney considers the broadcast reform movement of the 1930s to be an example of a critical juncture, when anti-commercial activism mounted a radical critique of advertising-sponsored radio and advocated non-profit or publicly funded alternatives. However, McChesney's anti-commercial fundamentalism on the media is at odds with Gramsci's framework for understanding class, ideology, and historical transformation. By revising classical Marxism, which invested the ruling class with an authority to assert understandings of the world that solidified their power, Gramsci theorized a more complex notion of relation of forces, one that saw them diffused across a range of class strata. The displacement of a hegemonic order required the emergence of an aligned block of class interests that could win the consent of a broad societal base through the institutions of civil society, including the media (Bennett, Mercer, & Woollacott, 1986, pp. xv–xvi). But the broadcast reform movement of the 1930s did not constitute an aligned block of class interests that won broad societal support. Rather it was limited mostly to Protestant reform-minded educators and to a professional class of critics whose cultural preferences were at some distance from those represented through popular commercial broadcasting.

McChesney argues that, between the 1927 Radio Act and the 1934 Communications Act, a “feisty broadcast reform movement composed of displaced educational broadcasters, religious groups, organized labor, farmers, women's groups, journalists, and civil libertarians like the ACLU” thought advertising-sponsored broadcasting constituted a form of “private censorship” and produced “seemingly trivial and silly programs” (1993, p. 240). The movement ultimately failed, McChesney explains, because commercial broadcasters launched an “elaborate public relations campaign to promote commercial broadcasting as an inherently democratic and American system” (pp. 40–41). Often the reformers expressed a cultural distaste for commercial radio, calling it a “moronic drivel and oral garbage” that catered to “the vulgar horde, who lack good taste and intelligence and ambition for culture. . .” (pp. 94–96). Although recognizing the cultural elitism of such language, McChesney downplays its relevance. But these cultural sensibilities are not just moments of expressed elitism among a principally anti-commercial, pro-democracy movement; they are rather structurally linked to particular class formations that emerged in the transition to advanced capitalism in the early twentieth century. Barbara and John Ehrenreich (1979) argue that, in the wake of anti-corporate populist unrest and against the

growing power of Gilded-Age profiteers in the late nineteenth century, there emerged a growing class of professionally trained managers and experts who played a mediating role between labor and capital, as administrators of increasingly complex economic structures of monopoly capitalism. Facilitated by the rapid expansion of higher education and funded by the industrialists' surplus capital, these professionals ran institutions of public health, charity, and education that "represented a politically motivated penetration of working-class community life: Schools imparted industrial discipline and 'American' values; charity agencies and domestic scientists imposed their ideas of 'right living'; public health officials literally policed immigrant ghettos, etc." (1979, p. 15).

These professional-class sensibilities were closely linked to what historians have called a "Protestant hegemony" in media reform at the time (Jowett, Jarvie, & Fuller, 1996). When jazz recordings led the record sales in the early 1920s, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, whose predominantly White Protestant members shared anti-pluralist Victorian values (Lichtman, 2008, p. 22), organized so as to "annihilate" this new music, which they believed was created by "barbaric people to stimulate brutality and sensuality" (Hilmes, 1997, p. 47). Protestant reformers thought that popular amusements lured working-class immigrants, many of whom were Jews and Catholics, away from an ethic of austere work and moral rectitude (Nasaw, 1993, pp. 174–185). Protestant reformers funded extensive social-science research projects to study the effects of popular commercial culture – including the Payne Fund, established in 1927 by Standard Oil heiress Frances Payne Bolton, which was primarily designed to find empirical proof that the movies encouraged immoral behavior (Jowett et al., 1996, pp. 1–122).

The Payne Fund awarded broadcast reformers a \$250,000 contribution, without which, according to McChesney, "there would not have been much of a broadcast reform movement, if there would have been one at all" (1993, p. 62). In praising the Fund for making the reform movement possible, McChesney is inattentive to the elitist cultural politics of the Fund and of the reformers it supported. For example, McChesney considers the efforts of the National Committee on Education by Radio to represent a defense of "the foundations of a democratic society" (1993, pp. 48–49). But the Committee was less interested in giving voice to those who lacked access to commercial radio than in inviting educators to use "radio as a cultural agency" in order to combat the negative effects of popular commercial radio, including the prevalence of "jazz of a debased sort with 'crooning'" (Tyler, 1934, p. 99; Ouellette, 2002, p. 71). The reformers' opposition to jazz and their disregard for its popularity were revealing of race and class privilege more than establishing a precedent for democratic media reform (Smulyan, 1994, pp. 93–111). Since Gramsci considered critical junctures of historical transformation to work through proximities to popular lived experience, the broadcast reform movement of 1930s was hardly a critical juncture.³

Understanding such proximities to popular cultural currents is equally relevant to considering media citizenship in recent times. The more fundamental anti-

commercialism of McChesney's critiques misses the ways in which oppositional politics and popular commercial culture have converged, for instance through the 2010 political marches on Washington convened by commercial media icons Glen Beck, Jon Stewart, and Stephen Colbert.⁴ And the anti-corporate populist tendency to subordinate the politics of cultural difference to championing the cause of "the people" fails to engage critical citizenship struggles over racial exclusion (Alexander, 2010) and immigration (Chavez, 2008).

Though subordinating issues of gender and racial exclusion to a populist class politics, anti-corporate populist-oriented media reform has created a rallying ground for a range of constituencies to voice dissatisfaction with corporate media, be they constituencies of professional journalists frustrated at working within profit-oriented news organizations, of religious conservatives offended by indecent programs, or of the thousands who petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to tighten media ownership rules in 2002 (Blevins & Brown, 2006). To harbor these anti-corporate sentiments, in 2002 McChesney co-founded the media reform organization Free Press, to hold media reform conferences and to lobby government agencies and lawmakers (2007, pp. 153–221). The organization's increasing prominence in media policy circles is testament to the political valiancy of anti-corporate populist sentiments.

The Internet and Citizenship as Individual Liberty

While anti-corporate populist orientations to media ownership target media corporations for restricting democratic deliberation and for accentuating economic inequalities, another orientation to media ownership perceives the Internet as centrally transformative of social relations in spite of corporate power. This orientation traverses a range of positions, from libertarian to "commons" approaches, which advocate conceptions of citizenship anchored in the eighteenth-century ideals of individual liberty.

An early advocate of a libertarian approach to media ownership, Ithiel de Sola Pool published *Technologies of Freedom: On Free Speech in an Electronic Age* (1983) in the same year in which Bagdikian released his first edition of *The Media Monopoly*. Founder of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Department of Political Science and participant in Cold War psychological warfare research at the Center for International Studies, de Sola Pool was not concerned with commercial power but with government encroachments on individual liberty. His influential work argued for "reduc[ing] the public control" of broadcast, cable, and telecommunications media through an extension of the First Amendment freedoms of the printed press to all media in the "electronic era." He found the existing "regulations on cross-ownership of electronic media" among newspapers, broadcasters, and cablecasters to be "striking testimony to the extraordinary pervasiveness of government regulation"

(1983, pp. 8, 52–53). Sola Pool, however, was not guided by a long-term ideological commitment to such libertarianism. In 1959 he argued that “real free enterprise is impossible” in broadcasting and that “it is a proper responsibility of government vigorously to assure that this facility is used for the public good,” including for the “raising of public knowledge and taste” (Sola Pool, 1960, pp. 19–20). Two decades later, Sola Pool believed that the potential for the “convergence” of print and electronic media would negate such need for government intervention. But the potential for technological convergence prompted Sola Pool to achieve more than just an adjustment to technological developments: it made him revise his position on broadcast regulations since the 1920s. In libertarian fashion, his new position was that the government should never have been allotted such regulatory authority over broadcasting (1983, pp. 23–54, 138–139).

Whereas Cold War ideologies and enthusiasm for media convergence prompted Sola Pool to support a libertarian position on media ownership, Fred Turner (2006) traces the way in which a digital utopianism sprang from the New Communalist Movement of the late 1960s, which fused communitarian and libertarian values. Unlike some counterculturalists who protested the Vietnam War and racism in the 1960s, the New Communalists rejected urban-centered political activism and fled instead to “frontier” rural areas, to find psychic wholeness through self-sufficient communal living. Inspired by the cybernetics vision of Norbert Wiener, Stuart Brand created in 1968 the *Whole Earth Catalog*, which fused practical tips for communal living with the technocentric theories of Marshall McLuhan and others. As the communes waned, Brand and the New Communalists found interest in the nascent networked computer developments in Silicon Valley, which envisioned the potential for a new “electronic frontier” (Turner, 2006, p. 6). The New Communalists’ aspirations for a decentralized and egalitarian society fused with free-market and libertarian evangelism in the pages of *Wired* magazine, begun in 1993 by former *Whole Earth Catalog* editor Kevin Kelly. Here digital technology visionaries such as Esther Dyson, John Perry Barlow, and George Gilder joined high-tech stock analysts and right-wing politicians who sought individual liberty from government control through the promotion of free markets as the best means to realize the promise of the so-called “digital revolution.” But the New Communalists’ vision of a libertarian model of citizenship and media ownership that could create psychic well-being and nonhierarchical harmony by dismantling bureaucratic government and corporate structures was, in practice, highly exclusionary. The patriarchal back-to-the-land communes were almost exclusively White and relegated women to subservient roles. The early electronic networks, including the Whole Earth ’Lectronic Link and the Global Business Network, existed as exclusive clubs of White men, mostly affluent, in an immaterial “cyberspace” (pp. 100–101, 255–261).

A more recent articulation of individual liberty as a citizenship priority in media ownership is found in the work of Lawrence Lessig (1999), professor of constitutional law. Lessig was skeptical of the libertarian fundamentalism of many digital utopians, but he shared their priority to preserve individual liberty in cyberspace. Lessig

expressed concern about the increasing role of government and commercial regulations over the Internet in the 1990s. These regulations included laws that expanded telephone wiretapping, criminalized copyright-circumventing software, and allowed television content-filtering technologies (1999, pp. 30–60). They also included commercial Internet providers restricting chat-room sizes, implanting “cookies” on computers to trace user activities, and requiring authenticating mechanisms for e-commerce (pp. 66–71). For Lessig, these new modes of encroachment on personal liberties were made possible by a new form of regulation, which he calls “code” (the software that runs the Internet), and which operates “more pervasively over time than any other regulator in our life” – even in our “social and political lives,” or in our “ordinary lives” (p. 233). Lessig argued that we need to think about regulating software in the same ways in which the eighteenth-century founding fathers thought about placing limits on government, namely through constitutional checks and balances and through protections of free speech, privacy, and due process. These constitutional values, applied to the Internet, require free or open software, because “the lack of ownership, the absence of property, the inability to direct how ideas will be used – in a word, the presence of a commons – is key to limiting, or checking, certain forms of governmental control” (p. 7).

In his subsequent work, Lessig (2001) extended this advocacy for a software commons to a commons approach for the physical infrastructures of telephone and wireless communication. He embraced the universal interconnection legacy of telephone regulation and opposed the government licensing requirements for broadcasting, citing a few postwar economists who argued that a more efficient use of the broadcast spectrum rendered government licensing unnecessary. For Lessig, a commons in spectrum would be better realized through free markets, with the stipulation the spectrum be used efficiently (2001, pp. 74–77). Also, Lessig advocated the creation of a commons in media content by promoting less restrictive copyright laws to facilitate the right of the public to appropriate creative works. Lessig (2004) has promoted a Creative Commons copyright license that allows creators to choose from a variety of protections, less restrictive than those in existence under current copyright laws – including no restrictions on copying with simple attribution to the original author.

Lessig’s arguments for a commons approach to media ownership have informed recent campaigns to limit corporate control over copyright and to preserve the principle of network neutrality, in order to ensure that content sent over the Internet is treated uniformly. Unlike the digital utopians, who preach a free-market fundamentalism, Lessig promotes a role for federal regulations in ensuring that forms of communications software and hardware are treated as resources held in common. Yet, by elevating the significance of open Internet software, hardware, and content as instruments central to the promotion of eighteenth-century concepts of individual liberty over any other regulatory issues in our “social or political lives,” this Internet-centric articulation of citizenship either assumes that an open Internet will diminish the need for state redistributive functions to address social rights (equal access to education,

health, and a living wage), or it subordinates concern for social rights to the goal of freedom through an open Internet. Unlike anti-corporate populism, which seeks to address the inequities of a capitalist society through media ownership reform, Lessig's Internet commons approach is explicitly not a critique of capitalist forces. Revelatory in this respect is Lessig's response to the bi-partisan coalition that opposed the FCC's loosening of broadcast-ownership restrictions in 2002. Though pleasantly surprised about the scope of this opposition, Lessig wrote that "the movement misses an important piece of the puzzle," because "freedom is not threatened just because some become very rich, or because there are only a handful of big players." Rather, it is the corporations' ability to enclose the domain of intellectual property laws, and therefore to restrict how others might remake commercial culture, that makes them "bad" (Lessig, 2004, p. 269). Also, Lessig's reliance on eighteenth-century conceptions of freedom as individual liberty, conceived of universally, in spite of the historical legacies of race, class, and gender exclusion, renders insignificant the cultural politics of difference in his advocacy for a commons-centered framework for citizenship.

Legal scholar Yochai Benkler also has found the legal enclosures that threaten an open Internet to be seminal to media ownership concerns. While Lessig's position is more narrowly focused on attaining a commons in information property, with the implied notion that this commons is essential in enabling individual liberty and prosperity in all life, Benkler has offered a more comprehensive, idealized vision of society – one based on the revolutionary promises of a "networked information economy" (Benkler, 2006, p. 2). According to Benkler, if unconstrained by big government and corporate power, the networked information economy "holds great practical promise: as a dimension of individual freedom; as a platform for better democratic participation; as a medium to foster a more critical and self-reflective culture; and, in an increasingly information-dependent global economy, as a mechanism to achieve improvements in human development everywhere" (ibid.). Benkler believes that government regulations during the "industrial information economy" preserved the power of Hollywood, of the recording industry, and of broadcasters to shape opinion and to "program toward the inane and soothing, rather than that which will be politically engaging" (p. 11). While this articulates with the cultural sensibilities of anti-corporate populists who dismiss the existence of political negotiations in popular commercial culture, Benkler does not call for more government regulations of corporate media. Rather, government regulations in the "networked information economy" should be minimized, to allow "non-market" and private voluntary modes of "social production" to bloom – for example the 50,000 volunteers who monitor the collaboratively authored Wikipedia (pp. 16–28, 70–74). Further, "because the outputs of the networked information economy are usually nonproprietary, it provides free access to a set of basic instrumentalities of economic opportunity and the basic outputs of the information economy" (p. 13). But can voluntary modes of participation through the Internet really provide "a set of basic instrumentalities of economic opportunity?"

Ellen Seiter (2008) has questioned these assumptions in Benkler's theories through reference to Pierre Bourdieu's work on how the interrelations between social, cultural, and economic capital create impediments to realizing opportunities in the information

economy. For Bourdieu (1984), social capital comprises the set of resources that are available to an individual or group by way of their affiliation with particular social, familial, and institutional relationships and networks. In her work on digital education, Seiter found that a “lack of social capital screens out working-class youth from employment in the highest income and most challenging jobs in the digital realm,” and that “good jobs in new media are jobs for the young, the well connected, and those with enough family capital to float them through lengthy education, and long periods of employment-seeking in expensive housing markets” (Seiter, 2008, pp. 40–42). Technocentric conceptions of citizenship such as Benkler’s subordinate these dynamics of social and economic capital to the emancipating promises of networked computing. In doing so Benkler offers a more libertarian conception of citizenship, which places individual autonomy and volunteer social production above consideration for social rights and for the redistributive functions of the state in addressing unequal access to education, housing, and work. By evoking classical liberal notions of individual autonomy, Benkler’s conception of citizenship, much like Lessig’s, eclipses consideration for the cultural politics of difference (*ibid.*, pp. 133–175).

To sum up, the Internet-centered orientations to media ownership considered above include Sola Pool’s advocacy for extending print standards of free speech to electronic media, a New Communalist-inspired digital utopianism, Lessig’s commons approach, and Benkler’s network information economy. Each case favors a form of citizenship that, in turn, prioritizes eighteenth-century conceptions of individual liberty from government and from corporate authority. For Sola Pool and the digital utopians, freedom is the lack of government encroachment. For Lessig, an information commons creates the freedom to innovate and create without surveillance. For Benkler, the information economy promises all of these and has the potential for a more equitable distribution of resources and economic opportunities worldwide. In prioritizing individual liberty over an open Internet as the foundational means to achieve equality of opportunity in society, each of these Internet-centered approaches articulates a concept of citizenship that no longer requires the redistributive authority of the state to secure social rights. Built as it is upon a foundation of an eighteenth-century liberal conception of the universal, autonomous, liberal individual, each of these Internet-centered conceptions of citizenship and media ownership fails to recognize class, gender, race, or national privilege as impediments to liberty, to democratic participation, or to equal opportunity. Such dismissals of our need for the state to redistribute economic and cultural resources are challenged by those who are concerned with racial minorities’ lack of opportunities to own media.

Minority Media Ownership and the Cultural Politics of Social Citizenship

In 1973 the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia required the FCC to consider race as a factor in granting broadcast licenses. The ruling involved a case in

which the FCC awarded a television license to a business organization comprised of people who were all white and residents of the station's service area over a business organization comprised of African Americans who were not all local residents. The FCC assumed that the "Communications Act, like the Constitution, is color blind" and that "service to the public in programming" was the sole criterion for consideration – "not the race, color or creed of an applicant" (*TV 9, Inc. v. FCC*, 1973, p. 936).⁵ Disregarding race as a factor, the FCC followed its long-stated goals to facilitate localism in broadcasting and prioritized the applicant with station owners who were all local residents.⁶ The appellate court faulted this color-blind logic and argued that the "public interest" is "a broad concept, to be given realistic content," which cannot be interpreted through constitutional law alone. Further, the court argued that, "when minority ownership is likely to increase diversity of content, especially of opinion and viewpoint, merit should be awarded" (*ibid.*, pp. 936, 938).

The court's decision prompted civil rights leaders to organize media advocacy groups in order to expand minority media ownership and enforce the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws that Congress adopted in 1968. However, these efforts were frustrated by a recalcitrant FCC. The National Black Media Coalition (NBMC) submitted 61 minority ownership and EEO proposals to the FCC, but all were rejected. The first African American FCC commissioner, Benjamin Hooks, dissented on 30 of these rejected proposals (Honig, 1984). The FCC crafted vague and variable guidelines and worked within a "zone of reasonableness" that largely evaded enforcement, even though minorities owned just one half of 1% of all broadcast licenses (Fife, 1987, p. 494). Continued advocacy prompted the FCC in 1978 to adopt two proposals: a Tax Certificate Policy, which gave tax relief to broadcasters who sold their properties to minorities; and the Distress Sale Policy, which allowed broadcasters whose licenses were threatened with revocation to sell to minority buyers at 75% or less of fair market value. However, between 1976 and 1984 the FCC held no hearings on EEO violations, despite receiving hundreds of complaints (Honig, 1984).

In the 1990s Congress and the courts became more resistant to government provisions to assist minority media ownership. In 1995, in a partisan political maneuver, the Republican-controlled Congress repealed the Tax Certificate Policy (Ofori and Lloyd, 1999). That same year the Supreme Court revised the minority-ownership reasoning of the 1973 appellate court decision by requiring a higher level of evidence for identifying and addressing racial discrimination. This meant that the Supreme Court was less likely to recognize the constitutionality of government programs tailored to assisting minority media ownership than it would race-neutral remedies such as aid to small businesses (Horwitz, 2005; Williams, 1995). In 2007 the FCC adapted 12 new rules to assist small media businesses that had some benefit for small minority-owned media businesses. Civil rights organizations lobbied to include provisions for "socially and economically disadvantaged business," to no avail (Honig, 2007).

Though Congress, the courts and federal administrators have moved away from recognizing a causal relationship between minority-owned media and the expression

of cultural difference as a compelling government interest, research on minority-owned media has demonstrated such a relationship. In a 1999 study, researchers conducted interviews with staff at Black-owned commercial radio and television stations and found that minority-owned broadcasters delivered “a wider variety of news and public affairs programming and more ethnic and racial diversity in on-air talent” than stations not owned by minorities (Bachen, Hammond, Mason, & Craft, 1999). Another study found that, in mid-2009, 73% of the 815 minority-owned radio stations aired “minority-oriented formats” – including “Spanish, Urban, Urban News, Asian, Ethnic and Minority-oriented Religious formats such as Gospel and Spanish-Christian” (Sandoval, 2009, pp. 19–20). In her study of the Black-owned Chicago commercial talk radio station WVON and its listening audience, Squires found that Black station-owners and staff produced programming that addressed race-conscious issues and frameworks that created a space for challenging racial discrimination through forms of political action and organization. Listeners felt strongly about supporting Black-owned media because they felt that “White-owned and mainstream media sources continue to misconstrue the Black community” (Squires, 2000, p. 83). Of course, correlations between diverse ownership and diverse content are complex within particular commercial dynamics. The Black-owned station group Radio One changed the format of its Louisville, Kentucky station from urban to country in 2004, and that of its Augusta, Georgia station from blues to modern rock in 2003, though most of its stations air gospel, urban and jazz music formats (Reed-Huff, 2006). Even so, these examples offer evidence for a compelling relationship between minority ownership and expressions of cultural difference, and how these expressions have facilitated dialogue and action to address past and present forms of discrimination.

Campaigns designed to promote minority media ownership share anti-corporate populist orientations in their general impetus to challenge the leveraged power of media conglomerates and to support more decentralized media ownership. But anti-corporate populist critiques make no reference to the specificities of racial discrimination in relation to media ownership, implying that a broader normative critique of commercial economic structures and advocacy for nonprofit or noncommercial media will address racial discrimination. This position ignores historical struggles against racial discrimination that recognize the relationships between racial and economic disparities. For example, Singh traces how the civil rights movement from the 1930s through to the 1960s articulated a form of social-democratic citizenship that never reduced racial inequity to the inequities of capitalism but also insisted that racial discrimination demanded affirmative measures for addressing structures of economic inequality. As he put it, “the symbolic struggles for black rights and recognition within the nation-state could not be separated from the material struggles over distribution” (Singh, 2004, p. 214). Advocates of minority media ownership have made such connections in prioritizing economic access to a communication industry invested with representational authority.

The anti-corporate populist language of decentralization or “localism” also fails to address racial discrimination. As the above FCC case regarding television allocation

and race reveals, the FCC used the concept of localism to validate “color-blind” reasoning in assessing public interests. Cautioning against “mindlessly jumping on the anti-consolidation pro-localism bandwagon,” legal scholar La Vonda Reed-Huff (2006, p. 103) argues that racial discrimination requires more than access to local expressive outlets. Rather it requires deliberation on a national scale, for instance through the widely syndicated radio talk shows of Tom Joyner and Tavis Smiley, who have faced racial barriers in seeking nation-wide syndication (pp. 131–134). Also, anti-corporate populist scholars who assert that commercial media and democracy are incompatible ignore the historical precedents for how Black commercial media have helped to constitute a national Black identity and culture. For example, Adam Green traces how African American participation in commercial music in Chicago in the 1940s and early 1950s promoted a national “sense of racial distinction” where “[t]he market played a catalyzing, rather than diluting or compromising role in these arts’ developments” (2007, pp. 13–14).

Recent ownership debates regarding the Internet have revealed conflicting priorities across the three approaches to media ownership considered here. Anti-corporate populist and Internet commons approaches to Internet ownership have prioritized maintaining the network neutrality principle, which prevents Internet access providers from discriminating against users regarding the flow of content, applications, and services over the Internet. Lessig and McChesney (2006) co-authored an opinion editorial in the *Washington Post* that combined anti-corporate populist and market libertarian sensibilities:

Most of the great innovators in the history of the Internet started out in their garages with great ideas and little capital. This is no accident. Network neutrality protections minimized control by the network owners, maximized competition and invited outsiders in to innovate. Net neutrality guaranteed a free and competitive market for Internet content. (Lessig & McChesney, 2006, n.p.)

In contrast, the Minority Media & Telecommunications Council (MMTC), representing dozens of civil rights organizations and minority media advocates, has not made network neutrality an Internet policy priority. Rather, MMTC’s broadband Internet advocacy has focused on extending user access to “low-income, minority and multicultural communities” by way of subsidies, literacy programs, teacher training and provisions to aid minority business owners in bidding for spectrum (Honig, Lazarre, Miller, & James, 2009, p. iii). The MMTC’s policy on network neutrality supported the concept of an open Internet, but it also expressed concern about how network neutrality rules might inadvertently raise user rates, particularly on wireless broadband, which African Americans and Latinos use more than White Americans. Also, the MMTC was concerned that network neutrality could restrict broadband service providers from charging heavy corporate users more and from using these additional revenues to keep consumer rates low, to invest in extending service, or to facilitate minority participation. To ensure that such additional profits would get

channeled to low-income and minority businesses, the MMTC recommended a program modeled on the Community Reinvestment Act. This law was based on the concept that lending institutions have an affirmative obligation to meet the credit needs of local communities. The MMTC proposed to extend such affirmative efforts to broadband Internet providers; and this, in turn, might include extending services to low-income areas, funding digital literacy programs, or providing technology support for new business entrants. The MMTC also recommended considering extending network neutrality discussions to Internet platforms and search engines to ensure that Google and other dominant providers do not unfairly favor established brands or businesses in ordering search results, a concept that would likely disturb libertarian proponents of network neutrality (Honig & Lancaster, 2010).

The reluctance to fully support network neutrality in the civil rights community ignited consternation among some supporters of network neutrality legislation. Sixteen civil rights organizations, including the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and the League of United Latin American Citizens, officially supported the MMTC's position on network neutrality. Eighteen members of the congressional Black caucus signed a letter of caution regarding the potential negative consequences of network neutrality for communities of color. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) was neutral on the issue. When a spokesperson for the advocacy group Public Knowledge insinuated that "minority groups" opposed net neutrality because of their financial ties to telecommunications companies or because of their ignorance of the issue, the NAACP and the Hispanic Technology and Telecommunications Partnership found these charges "astoundingly offensive" (Aguilera, 2009, n.p.). But other minority interest groups supported network neutrality; these included the National Hispanic Media Coalition and the Center for Media Justice, as well as online journalism sites focused on issues of importance to African Americans, for example colorofchange.org and [Black Agenda Report](http://BlackAgendaReport.com). Ensuing debates within African American communities were inflected with intergenerational conflicts when younger activists faulted veteran civil rights organizations for their ties to big corporations and for their ignorance of the potential benefits of an open Internet (Dixon, 2010, n.p.).

Despite having different priorities for network neutrality, these communities of color reconciled their priorities by recognizing that network neutrality alone would not broaden access and opportunities for low-income and minority communities. Addressing broader structural barriers to opportunity, as Center for Media Justice Executive Director Malkia Cyril put it, requires taking on

the choke-hold influence of corporate investment in communities of color and poor communities that has led to the massive privatization of all public infrastructure – including our hospitals, our schools, and now, with the recent Supreme Court decision to lift limits on corporate political spending – our government. (Cyril, 2010, n.p.)

This insistence on coupling network neutrality with broader structural reforms was absent in Lessig, and McChesney's claiming network neutrality created "free and competitive market for Internet content" that required little capital for new entrants. Similarly, the anti-corporate populist-oriented Free Press characterized network neutrality as creating a "level playing field" for all, using an image of an African American boy to illustrate its universal benefits (Perlman, 2010, n.p.). Anti-corporate populist and commons orientations to network neutrality ultimately subordinated issues of structural racism by severing the relationship between economic opportunity and structures of racial discrimination. As discourses of citizenship, these positions invoked the neoliberal promise that market competition over an open Internet would create equality to a seemingly full range of life opportunities, regardless of one's social, economic, or cultural location in society. Such Internet-centric orientations to economic opportunity diminish the scope of social rights that, otherwise, call for redistributive programs to address structural forces of inequality – from the race-conscious broadband initiatives promoted by MMTC to the broader defense of social rights such as affordable healthcare, quality education, economic security, and cultural recognition.

Conclusion

Media ownership debates and research have focused on whether or not commercial media ownership structures facilitate diverse viewpoints for democratic deliberation, and on how to measure media content diversity accurately enough to assess this. Rather, this chapter draws from critical work in media and cultural citizenship, in order to consider media ownership debates as sites for constituting and contesting conceptions of citizenship that have significance beyond debates over media ownership regulation. To do so, it has considered the articulations of citizenship that informed three orientations to media ownership: anti-corporate populist, Internet-centric, and minority ownership. Emphasis was placed on the historical contexts of each orientation's emergence, on the rights and values that each prioritized, and on their broader significance to the status of social rights and cultural politics in neoliberal times.

Anti-corporate populist critics of media ownership defended a victimized "people" against the commercial power of ever-expanding media conglomerates. According to this view, these profit-oriented media conglomerates fed apolitical information and frivolous culture to a mass audience, creating ignorance and apathy in the body politic. Only when this corporate media stronghold is broken can a more democratic challenge to moneyed interests take place. Anti-corporate populism has resonated as a common framework for media ownership reform, including support for public-funded media alternatives. However, in championing the cause of "the people" as a homogeneous whole, anti-corporate populism obfuscates the ways in which

economic disenfranchisement has been interrelated with race and gender exclusion. Also, anti-corporate populism's tendency to equate commercial media culture with corporate domination loses sight of how oppositional struggles have worked through popular, lived experience via popular commercial culture, and how noncommercial media movements have been bound to class, race, and gender privilege.

Internet-centered orientations to media ownership, from those of digital utopians to commons approaches, emerged out of perceptions that networked computing has fundamentally restructured the economic, social, and cultural conditions for democratic society. While anti-corporate populism promotes the redistributive authority of the state in order to secure social rights, a political goal that is impeded by corporate media control, Internet-centric approaches call upon the state only minimally, to secure a commons in intellectual property and an open Internet. According to this perspective, with the democratizing power of an open Internet to spur innovation, creativity, and citizen participation, corporate power throughout society will dissipate, as well as the need for the state to redistribute economic and cultural resources. Rather than articulate citizenship through twentieth-century conceptions of social rights and of the welfare state, Internet-centric approaches draw from eighteenth-century conceptions of citizenship that prioritized individual liberty from state power. While the twentieth-century movements to expand social rights recognized class, gender, and race privilege as barriers to equal opportunity and freedom, eighteenth-century expressions of citizenship emerged from a more abstract, universal conception of the individual in society, which subordinated consideration of class, race, and gender privilege. Inspired by this universal ideal of individual liberty, Internet-centered conceptions of citizenship and media ownership consider the liberating potential of an open Internet to transcend class, gender, race, or national privilege.

For civil rights organizations and minority media advocates, conceptions of citizenship have been less media-centric, reduced neither to populist critiques of media conglomerates nor to the sole opportunity-creating power of an open Internet. For disempowered communities of color, gaining access to media ownership was but one among broader ongoing struggles to gain access and opportunity across all societal institutions. Addressing these broader forms of racial exclusion in society required the redistributive authority of the state, including provisions to increase minority media ownership. For minority media advocates, media ownership was both an avenue for economic opportunity and a means to engage in the symbolic struggle over cultural recognition. In conceptualizing the interrelationship between economic opportunity and the cultural politics of cultural recognition, civil rights organizations and other advocates for minority media ownership clashed with anti-corporate populist and Internet-centric orientations to media ownership over the issue of network neutrality. Rather than claiming that network neutrality was a means to level the playing field of economic opportunity for everyone, as did those from anti-corporate populist and Internet-centric positions, minority media advocates insisted on connecting support for network neutrality with advocacy for broader

structural reforms to address racial inequality, including affirmative obligations by state and market actors to make economic and cultural resources available to disenfranchised groups.

While the three orientations to media ownership share the goal of expanding viewpoint diversity in media and find that corporate power would impede this goal, the conceptions of citizenship invoked through anti-corporate populist and Internet-centric approaches to media ownership reform inhibit their capacity to consider the ways in which race and gender privilege operates within corporate media and throughout society at large. If widening economic and cultural opportunities is a goal of these media ownership reform movements, it seems imperative to consider the rationales for citizenship that emerge in minority media ownership debates not only for addressing complex issues of media ownership, but also for conceiving of a more inclusive and expansive notion of citizenship more broadly.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks Mari Castañeda and Vicki Mayer for their insightful comments and suggestions.

NOTES

- 1 For a positive assessment of competition and diversity in media from an economic perspective, see Compaine and Gomery (2000). For negative assessments from normative legal perspectives, see Baker (2007) and Cooper (2003). For proponents of matrices to measure media diversity, see Noam (2009) and Napoli (2007). For a social-theory approach to the cultural industries that includes more contradictory findings, see Hesmondalgh (2007).
- 2 See, for example, Banet-Weiser (2007); Hartley (1999); Hermes (2005); McCarthy (2010); Lewis and Toby (2003); Miller (1993, 1998, 2007); Ouellette (2002); Zoonen (2005).
- 3 The importance of cultural proximity to popular, lived experience in hegemonic struggles comes from Gramsci's observations of the Catholic church at the time he was writing (Hall, 1988, p. 432). For applications of Gramsci's framework to understanding how the emergence of neoliberalism worked through proximities to working-class cultural sensibilities, see Hall (1996) and Harvey (2005, pp. 49–50).
- 4 For more on the convergence of politics and commercial entertainment, see van Zoonen (2005), Gray (2008), and Jones (2005).
- 5 For prior activism that won African Americans legal recognition as interested parties in FCC broadcast licensing hearings, see Classen (2004).
- 6 For a discussion of the vague and often "fictional" ideal of localism in FCC policymaking, see Horwitz (1989, pp. 192–194).

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Music in the New Capitalism

Timothy D. Taylor

ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to reinstate capitalism as the transcendent category of analysis for music production. This new capitalism is marked by the ascendancy of the new petite bourgeoisie. This class promulgates an ideology of the hip and the cool and has an outsized role in the production of culture, since most musicians today are forced to permit their music to be used in commercials. The new class is comprised of new kinds of cultural workers, who can deploy their taste as music supervisors, choosing music for film and broadcasting in an era when more music is more easily available. Another aspect of the new capitalism is that workers can be compensated less, or not at all. In the realm of advertising composition is increasingly outsourced, as it simple to upload video to servers around the world. Users enter data on songs in online databases and their search habits are recorded and used to sell more products, all without compensation.

Introduction

Much of my work has been concerned with attempting to apprehend the present moment – a moment that has been characterized in many ways in the couple of decades to which I paid attention: postmodern, late capitalist, a network society, an

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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information age, an era of globalization, neoliberalism – and many more things. It has long seemed to me, however, that the primary category ought to have something to do with capitalism, not in a vulgar Marxist sense of the economic base “determining” a (cultural) “superstructure,” but in the sense of capitalism as a social form that profoundly shapes people’s relationships to each other.

I am thus advocating that we attend both to capitalism and to culture and that we see how one inflects and influences the other. This is by now a rather familiar combination of Marxist and Weberian perspectives; but it is, unfortunately, remarkable that neither component has had much impact on the study of music, which remains overly wedded to positivistic, and thus ahistorical and acultural, modes of analysis. There are, however, some exceptions – for instance the work of Steven Feld, Charles Keil, and Anthony Seeger, all of whom, I should note, were not trained as ethnomusicologists but as anthropologists (for some of the few explicitly Marxist books in music studies, see Keil & Feld, 1994; Qureshi, 2002; Seeger, 2004).

What I want to do in this chapter is to attempt to bring together some of the themes I have been exploring for many years, but under the rubric of the study of capitalism: new capitalism, which was facilitated by neoliberal ideologies and by new communications technologies, and which has a global effect. Undue focus on these (or other) elements as aspects of the new capitalism has tended to obscure the long-term workings of capitalism as a historical economic system and as a social form.

Thus it is my goal here to attempt to reinstate capitalism as a transcendent category of analysis; and I propose to do this by way of understanding what was going on in the recent past (and carried over into the present) as part of long-term processes, which are rooted in the economic and in the social and are not unique either to the present or to the recent past, as so many studies seem to assume. What follows is, in part, a rehearsal of some of the issues I have written about in the past, but also an attempt to bring them together under this broader framework, which was not always present in some of my earlier publications.

The New Capitalism

I borrow the phrase “new capitalism” from Richard Sennett, who has analyzed the social and cultural effects of this phenomenon in a couple of recent books (Sennett, 1998, 2006). Sennett is concerned with the cultural effects of the new capitalism, but I will begin here with a discussion of historical, economic, and political factors.

While there has generally been a dearth of writings focusing on capitalism in recent years, it must be acknowledged that scholars writing from Marxian perspectives have continued to study it. Probably the first major salvo in attempting to understand the new capitalism was Ernest Mandel’s often cited (though, I suspect, little read) book from 1972, *Late Capitalism* (Mandel, 1978). For many readers, this book was brought to attention by Fredric Jameson in his influential “Postmodernism,

or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” (Jameson, 1984). References to Mandel were few, but Jameson’s endorsement mattered. Nonetheless Mandel’s writing, given its technical nature and its engagement with a long history of Marxist arguments about capitalism, was ultimately less influential than Jameson’s article.

Yet there are aspects of Mandel’s book that continue to be useful. Such is his periodization of capitalism into three historical phases: “competitive capitalism,” from the onset of the Industrial Revolution until about 1880; “imperialism,” which lasted until the end of World War II; and what he called “late capitalism.” This current phase is marked by the declining importance of the state; the monopolistic and oligopolistic pursuit of massive profits and its global growth; the increased concentration of capital in huge corporations; the defeat or decline of labor and other kinds of oppositional movements; the globalization of financial capital; the rise of new, transformative technologies such as the personal computer; an economy increasingly dependent on the defense industry; the growth of debt; new forms of colonialism; an increasing polarization of wealth; heightened consumption – and still more, at least according to some scholars.

But Mandel’s book proved to be less influential than it might have been without the author’s engagement with sometimes arcane aspects of Marxist theory. Other books appeared in the 1980s and early 1990s that continued to wrestle with what was widely perceived as the changing nature of Western capitalism, in particular those of Scott Lash and John Urry (1994) and of David Harvey (1989). Lash and Urry noted the rise of global corporations with an international division of labor; the separation of finance from industry; the growth of industry in small communities and rural areas; the transmission of information and knowledge electronically rather than through print; in the social sphere, a movement out of the cities and toward the suburbs; the pursuit of increasingly narrowly defined interests; and new kinds of social groups, such as the new bourgeoisie (see also Bourdieu, 1984). Harvey, for his part, made much of the “flexible accumulation” – a post-Fordist type of industrial production, of which he says that it is “marked by a direct confrontation with the rigidities of Fordism,” resting as it does on “flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption” (Harvey, 1989, p. 147).

Some authors have argued that new capitalism relies heavily on the production of culture. Lash and Urry, early articulators of this position, noted in 1994 how “economic and symbolic processes are more than ever interlaced and interarticulated; that is, that the economy is increasingly culturally inflected and that culture is more and more economically inflected” (Lash & Urry, 1994, p. 64). Subsequent authors have pursued much the same line (e.g., Scott, 2008). Additionally, as the production of culture has changed, so has the culture of production (see Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). The production of culture is driven also by an ideology of the hip and the cool, as I will discuss below. This ideology is related to the facts captured by Richard Sennett when he argues that the new capitalism is marked by pervasive ageism, which is driven by more than economic factors: younger workers might already have technical knowledge that older workers would acquire only if they were

retrained; younger workers cost less; and so on. Sennett also discusses the increased importance of the notion of “talent” (or, as my own research has revealed, “creativity”: Taylor, 2012).

I think that part of the reason why capitalism fell off the radar screen is the increasing “humanitization” of the softer social sciences, which came in with the cultural studies boom of the 1980s. It was striking to see how Jameson’s influence was filtered into subsequent publications, with all the Mandel-derived thinking excised from it and with postmodernism reduced to a list of traits or characteristics such as “depthlessness,” “waning of affect,” or “pastiche.” The predictable effect was a seemingly ever-expanding number of lists with an equally expanding number of terms, as I have written elsewhere (Taylor, 2002). Postmodern culture registered the effects of late capitalism, which was largely ignored by many scholars, unanalyzed.

Writings that did place capitalism at the center of their analyses have slowed to a trickle in the last couple of decades. Many recent books have been concerned much more with other phenomena of the present or of the recent past – such as the advent of new digital technologies, which made people increasingly interconnected, in a “network society” (as Manuel Castells, 1996 calls it); or, as we have seen, globalization and neoliberalism. But in these writings capitalism tended to take a backseat to the new technologies or to their effects: capitalism was simply assumed to be, or interpreted as, an effect more than a cause. In what follows I will address the questions of globalization, networks, and neoliberalism not as singular developments, but as salient characteristics of the new capitalism.

Music in a Neoliberal World

Let me start with the question of neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies predate what we have come to think of as “globalization” and the interconnected world, though this world couldn’t begin to be as fully realized as it has been recently until the rise of new communications technologies, which I will consider in the next section.

Even though “in a general way,” as Pierre Bourdieu writes (1998, p. 34), “neoliberalism is a very smart and very modern repackaging of the oldest ideas of the oldest capitalists,” it is important to remember that one cannot understand capitalism simply in terms of the “economic logic of capital and its accumulation” (Foucault, 2008, p. 164). Capitalism must instead be understood by examining specific economic–institutional formations, which vary historically and geographically. Neoliberalism is a particular economic–institutional formation of the so-called developed countries, and its US form is particularly virulent (see Klein, 2008).

By “neoliberalism” I mean to refer to the body of ideologies that originated in the 1950s and really gained traction in the 1980s, being facilitated by the rise of new communications technologies.¹ These ideologies advocated deregulation, privatization, the withdrawal of the state from many of its former responsibilities to its

citizens, and, in general, “the insertion of the ideologies of enterprise and competition into all aspects of economic and social management” (Flew, 2009, p. 6). Neoliberalism advocates the working of the private sector over the public and relies on the wisdom of the markets; it emphasizes a kind of hyperindividualism by wielding ideologies of consumer choice and by fostering what has become known as the “care of the self.”

Foucault observes that neoliberalism in the US is not “just an economic and political choice formed and formulated by those who govern and within the governmental milieu” (Foucault, 2008, p. 218). It is, rather, “a whole way of being and thinking. It is a type of relation between the governors and the governed much more than a technique of governors with regard to the governed” (*ibid.*).

Neoliberal policies and practices have dramatically altered the landscape of the production of music in the US. Record labels and other entities that produce music, such as advertising agencies and music production companies, were bought and sold at unprecedented rates; the legendary adman Bill Backer told me that advertising agencies became “pawns in a Wall Street game of mergers and acquisitions” (Backer, 2004). Many of the people I interviewed for my project on music and advertising (Taylor, *in press*) spoke negatively of the changes that came to their industry in the 1980s, when budgets were reduced, music was increasingly tested on focus groups, and the bottom line became all important.

The increased interest in profit has meant that the music industry – and the culture industries more generally – have sought to find the next blockbuster rather than nurturing a number of artists or projects, in the hopes that one or two might become successful, and using that success to subsidize the other artists or projects. With the rise of new technologies that increased the cost of production, it became much more efficient to produce one blockbuster than a series of recordings by various musicians, in the hopes that one might make it big.

Newer technologies have also made it possible for musicians to produce high-quality recordings of their own music in their own studios. The difficult part for them has come to be not so much the production of their own music or its distribution, which can be easily accomplished online now, but getting the word out, marketing. The major record labels have become increasingly more marketing than recording companies, since this is the one remaining function that is beyond the capabilities of musicians. A band can erect a website, but this is not the same thing as spending thousands – or millions, in the case of major releases and of many films today – on marketing (see Lash & Urry, 1994).

Probably the most significant policy shift in the last couple of decades has been the passage of the Communications Act of 1996, which allowed a single entity to own more than one radio station in the same city and in the same market. The result has been an utterly predictable trend toward monopolization. Only a decade after the passage of the law, the top four radio station owners broadcast to almost a half of all listeners, and the top ten owners broadcast to almost two thirds of the listeners (DiCola, 2006). As a result, playlists have been streamlined, since it is cheaper and

more efficient to play the same songs repeatedly at every station owned by a single company than to attempt to locate a broader spectrum of songs to air, or to permit disc jockeys (DJs) to select them.

One profound effect of this situation has been to break down – remarkably quickly – many musicians’ resistance to permitting their music to be used in commercials. For decades, musicians desiring to preserve the appearance of independence from commercial processes refused to allow commercial uses of their music; but this position began to weaken, especially for younger musicians, when it became increasingly difficult to achieve radio airplay.

And, as the culture industries (in which I include not just the traditional industries of film, television, music, and so on, but also advertising and marketing) increasingly target youth and increasingly seek to discover – or create – what is the hippest, coolest product around (until the next one, tomorrow or the day after), these industries have become increasingly ageist, as many have written (see Nixon, 2003; Sennett, 1998), signaling a more general destabilization for many workers more generally. Barbara Ehrenreich’s “fear of falling” (Ehrenreich, 1989) – the fear of losing middle-class status – is increasingly becoming the fear of falling and never rising again, or even of never rising at all, as the polarization of wealth that began in the 1980s escalates. Douglas Coupland has coined a new phrase to describe this phenomenon: “blank-collar workers,” “formerly middle-class workers who will never be middle class again and who will never come to terms with that” (Coupland, 2010, §A, p. 29).

Another aspect of the world of neoliberal capitalism is that labor has become cheaper or, in some cases, free; cheaper in the sense that, in some areas of the culture industries, people have been terminated and rehired on a freelance basis, which means that they receive no benefits. (In a country such as the US, which is increasingly changing into a Third World state with a massive gap between rich and poor and in which social programs lag far behind those in Europe, the absence of a good healthcare plan or retirement plan is an extremely serious issue.)

Free labor is made possible by companies’ reliance on the World Wide Web to gather information on consumers’ tastes and purchasing habits. Many years ago, Dallas Smythe wrote a provocative article about what constituted the commodity in broadcasting and concluded that it was the audience (Smythe, 1977). This article received some attention at the time of its publication, but it hasn’t been much considered since (see, however, Newman, 2004; Taylor, *in press*). Yet Smythe’s main point is still worthy of consideration. Advertisers and advertising agencies guarantee the attention of a certain demographic group of viewers at certain times and in certain places, to advertisers who seek to purchase that attention. Therefore, Smythe concluded, the commodity in broadcasting is not the program, nor the goods advertised on it, but the audience itself.

This seems straightforward enough, and most US viewers know it already: a favorite program could be cancelled, since the viewership wasn’t large enough to permit charging sufficient fees to make airing the program profitable. But if we fast-

forward to the present and to the World Wide Web, we find the surfers' time being harnessed in new ways, and not simply by being spent on websites that are supported by advertisements. If one patronizes a commercial website such as amazon.com, which garners information about consumer tastes in order to target these consumers and others with similar tastes more efficiently, then can we not consider these consumers' time to be uncompensated labor?

Or take another example: websites such as Netflix collect viewers' film-rental habits in order to make recommendations to future patrons. Uncompensated labor, too.

Or, if one purchases a new compact disc (CD) – a dwindling number of people, admittedly – and one happens to be the first to play that disc in iTunes, one can enter information on the compact disc that will then be made available, via a central database, to anyone who inserts the same recording. More unpaid labor. In fact, it seems to be a point of pride for some that they were the first to enter the information for a particular recording.

Perhaps this is all a form of generalized exchange à la Lévi-Strauss (1969), since any individual user can benefit from another's labor. But this is generalized exchange with strangers on a massive, global scale, strangers in separate commodity cultures networked around the world. Relying on informationalized and databased consumer tastes is one thing. With the rise of new communications and other technologies that made the proliferation of musics from around the world common – or perhaps I should say musics from around the world more common in the West, since the West's musics had been recorded and distributed almost since the beginning of recording in the late nineteenth century – new positions emerged that helped viewers, listeners, and others navigate their way through this plenitude of music.

Awareness of the necessity of such guides emerged with the massive success of the film *The Big Chill* in 1983 and its accompanying soundtrack. People in the music industry realized not only that marketing with music to baby boomers could be lucrative, but that the people who choose music for such albums – music supervisors – could be treated as important advisors. In broadcasting and advertising, the rise of the music supervisor has been an important recent development.

The music supervisor is a kind of cultural intermediary who has emerged in this economy: the person who is good at sniffing things out. It is the music supervisor's job to seek pre-recorded music for use in film and in broadcasting. This practice has become so common now that many US television programs conclude with a few minutes of a song, without dialogue. Television-program websites list songs played for curious listeners; CD compilations of songs from television programs can (or could) sell hundreds of thousands of copies. Music supervisors have largely replaced radio DJs as the humans choosing the music they hear (to the extent that radio stations with DJs who choose their own music tout the fact that the station plays "hand-picked music," as a local station here in Los Angeles claims).

According to one music supervisor,

What will work for me and my film will also work for those artists in their careers. Obtaining a film placement or a television placement is a very valuable and positive step in a live musician's career. It's kind of like what getting on the radio meant in 1955. [. . .]

[A] lot of [television] shows are music driven. A huge percentage of the people who are of record-buying age buy their music based on what they've seen on television. The people who are selecting music for television shows are trusted; their taste is trusted by the watchers of those shows. So in a weird twist of fate, I am able to function in much the same way that, say, Wolfman Jack did back in 1970 – by finding songs and helping people discover new music. (Levine, 2007, p. 80; see Taylor, 2012)

Workers in the advertising industry perform similar roles today. Their constant seeking of the hip and the cool in popular music in order to employ it in commercials has made them in some sense even more important than music supervisors, since advertising drives broadcasting in the US.

These new cultural intermediaries are part of what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) called the new petite bourgeoisie: people with generally high cultural and/or educational capital from relatively privileged backgrounds, but who have opted out of the professions in order to work in the culture industries (see also Featherstone, 2007). I have not interviewed music supervisors to see if they fit this profile, but those in the advertising industry whom I have interviewed generally do (see Taylor, 2012). While Bourdieu's new petite bourgeoisie mediated between high culture and the masses, in today's world the ideology of the hip and the cool has become so dominant that it is coming to displace the role of high art (or what Bourdieu called "legitimate culture"); so what is mediated is no longer high culture as much as it is the hip and the cool (see Taylor, 2009). The hip and the cool is closely linked to youth culture, and I would thus link its importance to the ideology that values youth over age and experience, discussed by Sennett (1998).

The ideology of the hip and the cool, to which the advertising industry is particularly sensitive, has allowed this industry to become extremely influential in the production of culture – so influential that, as I concluded (Taylor, 2012), to make a distinction between "advertising music" and "music" is today essentially meaningless.

Music in a Networked World

Most readers over the age of 30 probably have a memory of how Things Had Really Become Different with the advent of digital technologies, but perhaps especially of the Internet. For me, the year was 1996. I was in the throes of writing my book *Global Pop* (Taylor, 1997) when a magazine chronicling the life and culture of the Himalayas arrived in the mail. There was an article about a popular song that had taken Pakistan and other parts of South Asia by storm. I was quickly able to hear it thanks to a tinny

RealAudio link. That was striking enough. Then I went to my local Indian music store, where I heard the music coming over the shop's speakers as I walked in – cassettes had just arrived. The song – “Billo De Ghar,” by Abrar-ul-Haq – was originally released in 1995. An exceptionally catchy tune, even for listeners who don't understand Punjabi and Urdu, it eventually went on to sell over 16 million copies.

It was, of course, new technologies that made music from around the world so easily available to Western musicians. It was thus no accident that the rise of the category of “world music” (to be discussed in the next section) occurred around the same time as the development of digital technologies and the compact disc. Digitization of music made it extremely simple for musicians not only to hear musics from other places, but also to incorporate recorded sounds of non-Western music into their own. Computer software was developed that made the incorporation of previously recorded music into one's own a simple matter, as easy as cutting and pasting in a word-processing application. A musician could sit at her computer and simply pop in a CD and extract what sounds she wanted, or, with a synthesizer, create “any sound you can imagine” (Théberge, 1997).

Sampling (this cutting and pasting of pre-existing music) has become so ubiquitous in the production of virtually all popular musics in the 1990s that libraries of sampled recordings began to emerge that would allow musicians to access vast collections of music to plug into their own if they wanted to give a sense of local color or some other signifier of the exotic. Whereas popular musicians once grappled with questions of genre or style, or with this sound or that, today's musicians increasingly think in extremely specific terms-digitized, atomized, cut-and-paste terms. For example, one electronic popular musician said that he stockpiles recordings to use as potential samples, “and when I'm working on a tune if I need a male Arabic vocal to fit a section I'll see if I have anything which would be suitable” (Marks, n.d.).²

But sampling is only one aspect of the massive and drastic changes that digitization has wrought into the production of music. Live musicians are increasingly unemployed, as digitized recordings or synthesizers replace them. Nowhere is this clearer than in the realm of the production of commercial music, which I have been studying extensively for over a decade. It is clear that, before the rise of digital technologies in the 1980s, musicians' roles in the commercial music realm were fairly confined, and therefore stable: one was a film music composer, a television music composer, a commercial composer (in a descending order of prestige that exists to this day), or an instrumentalist or singer, who could traverse these boundaries a little more freely. Most of these musicians would have had some classical training, or at least could read and write music and play an acoustic instrument. But the introduction of digital music technologies in the 1980s changed all that, for it was young musicians in popular music who were quickest to learn these new technologies and who were able to gain a foothold in the production of popular musics. Steve Karmen, one of the most successful commercial music composers in the 1970s and 1980s, writes of how a client inquired about the synthesizer he used, then told him that his 12-year-old son used the same machine. “When a twelve-year-old kid can produce the same

sounds as a twenty-five year pro,” Karmen writes, “it’s a sign” (2005, p. 178). Karmen left the business soon afterwards. Those who remain in the music industry have become much more flexible, in contrast to their immediate pre-digital forbears: they might play in a band, produce albums, engineer albums, make music for commercials, and more.

Many of the people I interviewed (for Taylor, 2012) said that what they missed most about the old days of advertising were the live recording sessions with musicians, most of whom are gone now, as so much can be accomplished by a single musician with digital equipment; and the same is true of the production of popular musics more generally. The sociability and synergy that composers, arrangers, and other musicians once encountered in recording sessions is absent. Nick Di Minno, someone long in the industry, recounted to me with some poignancy his attendance at a musician’s funeral and seeing other musicians with whom he once had daily contact in the studio, but whom hadn’t seen for years (Di Minno, 2009). Many musicians I spoke to said much the same thing, usually with palpable regret and nostalgia.

Musicians whom I interviewed also noted that a kind of sameness has crept into the sound. Some, like Tom McFaul, an important advertising composer, attribute this in part to the decline of live recording sessions – a decline that made the kind of synergy among live musicians impossible.

Using samples and synths also brought about a kind of sameness to the sound of ad music as it has done to pop music. With live dates, the exciting thing was that the personalities of the great players available always made the work distinctive. If our work was not about art, it was at least about craft and musicianship. (McFaul, 2009)

Yet another repercussion concerned, as always, money. Using synthesizers could be cheaper than live musicians. Spencer Michlin, a leading advertising composer in the 1980s, explains it very clearly:

Technology had made it possible for individuals to compete by recording music on synthesizers in their homes. This gave these writers a built-in economic advantage. Let’s say that a jingle needed a rhythm section and horns (piano, bass, drums, percussion, two guitars, three trumpets, and two trombones). Add in the union-mandated double scale for leader, plus a contractor and arranger at double scale and a copyist at scale, and that’s 18 units on the AFM [American Federation of Musicians] contract [. . .] Unless the composer was a complete pig [. . .] he or she could leverage that advantage by charging the equivalent of, say, nine units and cut the musicians’ budget in half money while keeping more of it. (Michlin, 2009)

Also, Michlin said that younger musicians probably weren’t union members (*ibid.*).

The digital music technologies, and the Internet too, as many people told me, made it possible for people outside of the major metropolitan centers to compete, and also made it possible for music production companies in New York and elsewhere

to hire musicians at a distance. Outsourcing, what some have described as an important aspect of the new capitalism, is affecting the culture industries as well.

Music in a Globalized World: The Rise of “World Music”

Let me now address the question of globalization in the new capitalism, paying particular attention to the rise of what has come to be known as “world music.” While many of the musics included in the “world music” category have been around for as long as people have made music, the emergence of this label in the late 1980s registered the increasing globalization and interconnectedness of cultures and economies around the world. Since the seventeenth century, the world had been interconnected (Wallerstein, 1974) through colonialism, trade, and other means, and, due to the widespread domination of much of the world by the West, many kinds of music from the West traveled around the world far more frequently than non-Western musics traveled to Western metropolises. But this began to change in the 1980s, as more and more countries around the world developed recording industries (Wallis & Malm, 1984), and as digital technologies made the dissemination of music much faster and easier. Record stores in Europe and the US were increasingly receiving shipments of recordings of music from beyond their borders; but it wasn’t the familiar traditional music that retailers had become accustomed to. It was music that sounded like Euro-American popular music but was different: different languages, different sounds.

Shelving this music – from Africa, India, South America, and elsewhere – in the old section labeled “International,” which was populated mainly by recordings of German polkas and ethnographic field recordings of African drumming or Javanese gamelan, made no sense to these retailers. So, in the summer of 1988, a group of English retailers and journalists gathered to debate a new term for labeling this music, and they settled on “world music” (see Denselow, 2004; Taylor, 1997). For a time, the more rock- and pop-oriented music was referred to as “world beat,” but this description proved to be less durable than the more general “world music,” which persists to this day.

Just as ideologies of the new capitalism infiltrated the world of cultural production, with the new importance of “creativity,” the hip and the cool, ageism, and more, new ideas about consumption also emerged. In a world suffused with goods, as Jean Baudrillard writes, ideologies of authenticity become more prevalent (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 170). In the early days of world music there was a good deal of discussion, in the critical press and among fans, about what was considered to be “authentic,” even though all or much of the music placed in this category was recognizably popular music of some form, which non-Western musicians had been hearing for decades through imports of recordings, cassette copies of them, and radio broadcasts.

Nonetheless, early on, the critical response to world music was to celebrate whatever was thought to be authentic and to condemn music thought to be overly influenced by Euro-American popular music.

In Taylor (1997) I identified three forms of authenticity that were common in the marketing and representation of world music of that era: authenticities of positionality, of emotionality, and of primality. These were interrelated ideologies that colored how Western listeners tended to hear music. The first was an ideology that expected non-Western musicians to be truly from the Brazilian *favela* or Indian slum or Australian outback or African bush; musicians with more than a modicum of educational and financial capital were seen to be not authentic enough in various ways, to the exasperation of many a musician. As the Beninoise singer Angélique Kidjo said:

There is a kind of cultural racism going on where people think that African musicians have to make a certain kind of music. No one asks Paul Simon, 'Why did you use black African musicians? Why don't you use Americans? Why don't you make your music?' What is the music that Paul Simon is supposed to do?' (Burr, 1994, §H, p. 28)

Elsewhere she said:

I won't do my music different to please some people who want to see something very traditional. The music I write is me. It's how I feel. If you want to see traditional music and exoticism, take a plane to Africa. They play that music on the streets. I'm not going to play traditional drums and dress like bush people. I'm not going to show my ass for any fucking white man. If they want to see it, they can go outside. I'm not here for that. I don't ask Americans to play country music. (Wentz, 1993, p. 43)³

The second type, what I called "authenticity of emotionality," refers to the kind of unfettered emotions that non-Western musicians are supposed to possess and to articulate in their music, as opposed to the overproduced and commercial orientation of music that is characteristic of Western popular music.

Lastly, authenticity of primality refers to expectations that non-Western musicians are closer to nature, to the earth, than Westerners – an ideology that goes back at least to the "discovery" of the New World. This belief was registered in the names of many an independent record label that sprung up in the 1980s and 1990s to offer world music such as EarthBeat!, Earthworks, GlobeStyle, Original Music, Real World, Redwood Cultural Work, Roots Records, Soundings of the Planet, and, in German, Erdenklang ("Earthsound").

These authenticities – or, more appropriately, these ideologies – are not confined to the realm of world music but circulate in Western culture more generally, though they found a particular valence in the realm of world music. Take the authenticity of positionality, for example: many readers will recognize how this particular ideology has surfaced with respect to the marketing and representation of hip hop musicians, whose street credibility is frequently part of their image; or concerns at

the height of Bruce Springsteen's fame about whether or not he was truly of the working class.

Interestingly, however, these concerns about authenticity didn't last long, and critics soon began celebrating the clever stylistic hybrid, often characterizing a non-Western/pop hybrid as "authentic" in much the same terms that had once been reserved for describing music thought to be truly authentic (Taylor, 2007). This is perhaps because ethnographic recordings proved to be not so popular with listeners, and also because aesthetic distinctions came to be more important: was the music good or not?

A striking example of the shift in the authenticity discourse of primality combining with ideologies of the hybrid remains *Welenga*, a 1997 collaborative album between Wes Madiko (a Cameroonian who goes by his first name only) and Michel Sanchez, one of the two musicians behind the highly successful "band" Deep Forest. This album is accompanied by extravagant prose that contains some of the long-standing underlying ideologies about non-Western musicians:

Having written his first traditional album (which only appeared in the USA), Wes was wary of facile and over-artificial associations, a form of white-gloved slavery that is at the heart of too many fashionable cross-cultural projects. He was, however, reassured by the sincere passion of Michel Sanchez, who for three years gave Wes his time and his know-how. The combination of the two spirits, the irrational Wes and the virtuoso Michel, was a fusion of fire and water, the meeting of a wild but fertile root and the gifted loving caretaker of a musical garden where Wes could flourish. (Liner notes to *Welenga*, 1997)⁴

The use of language that sounds politically correct, juxtaposed with old and familiar colonialist tropes – of African people represented as "irrational" and "wild," as well as of the largesse of the European musician – is striking here (for more on this, see Taylor, 2007, pp. 141–143).

Popularization of world music was aided immeasurably by the popular and critical success of Paul Simon's *Graceland* from 1986, which won a Grammy award for Best Album in 1987. Simon's work with Ladysmith Black Mambazo (a male chorus from the township of Soweto that had already garnered significant international attention), as well as with other African musicians, helped introduce non-Western popular musics to mainstream audiences, and it also helped Ladysmith Black Mambazo achieve the international audience it had been seeking.

Simon's rhetoric and practices around this recording were, and remain, emblematic of the kinds of maneuvers that famous Euro-American musicians have employed to justify their work with other musicians. Their discourses frequently employ a mixture of tropes of discovery and connoisseurship, statements of affection for the music, an aesthetics in the spirit of "art for art's sake," assumptions that non-Western music needed to be refined in some way, the importance of finding a local guide, and, sometimes, discourses of artistic rejuvenation.

Simon's many statements on the genesis of the album and its reception touch on most of these themes, forming almost a Rosetta Stone of the ideologies surrounding the perception of world music. In a documentary entitled *Paul Simon: Born at the Right Time*, Simon relates how he became interested in this music when he was at a low point, both in his public and in his private life.

When you have a career crisis and when you have a personal crisis, you can get thrown into a tailspin. And that's what happened then. And I began to come out of it when I began to get interested in South African music. I had this tape called *Gumboots: Accordion Jive Hits* which I was playing in my car for months.⁵ It's just an instrumental album. Then I noticed that I was singing whenever the album was playing. I was singing over it. (*Paul Simon: Born at the Right Time*, 1992)

Simon says that to be at a low ebb in his career was liberating, for it allowed him to do whatever he wanted. So he decided to go to South Africa to look for the music he had been listening to. He was forthright about his desire to jump-start his career: "People said 'Oh, he went to revitalize his career by using African rhythms.' I mean, nobody thought that was a good idea" (ibid.). After about a week into his first trip to South Africa in 1985, Simon met Ray Phiri, leader of the band Stimela, and says: "He was the key. Because he could lead me where I wanted to go. *Graceland* never could have been done without Ray" (ibid.). Referring to South African musics, Simon also says: "Culture flows like water. It isn't something that can just be cut off" (quoted by Herbstein, 1987, p. 35). Later, when speaking of the album that followed *Graceland* – his *The Rhythm of the Saints* – Simon says: "The act of discovery becomes what the work is about" (*Paul Simon: Born at the Right Time*, 1992).⁶

While Simon's discourses about *Graceland* and *The Rhythm of the Saints* provide particularly rich sites for unearthing underlying ideologies surrounding the appropriation of world music by Euro-American musicians, many musicians employed these tropes in various ways. Album art would include photos of intrepid musicians "discovering" world music (a verbal trope employed by Simon), or "primitive" musicians juxtaposed with pieces of Western technology such as headphones or microphones; or they would depict these musicians in recording studios. Some construed local musicians as "guides," as did Paul Simon vis-à-vis Ray Phiri. And non-Western musics were always naturalized, as in Simon's comment about culture flowing like water.

Once world music became a recognized part of the market (however small – it doesn't rate separate sales figures in the annual tally by the Recording Industry Association of America, which keeps track of such things), a process began – as it must under capitalism – of defining, delimiting, and demarcating it. In today's consumer culture there are tremendous pressures for standardization. Everyone is familiar with this when the product is an automobile or a fast food burger; but in the realm of cultural production the question becomes more complicated. Even though new genres of music always seem to proliferate – demonstrating a seeming fecundity

of production – the music industry is constantly seeking ways to clarify and simplify: it is always necessary to know where to shelve the recording, when to program what music on the radio and on what kind of station, where to organize the music online, and the like. Genericization occurred not as the result of racism or xenophobia, and not even of ignorance, but because the Western music industry sought to turn this vast collection of the world’s musics – from Indian ragas through Persian songs to the most recent popular music from Africa or India – into a manageable “genre,” within which certain “styles” could be codified.

Another reason for this genericization was the rise of the music supervisor in the 1980s, discussed above: this was part of the growing use of preexisting music in film and broadcasting. Various tools sprung up to help music supervisors and others in the music industry to find music suitable for such usages. One such tool was Sonymusicfinder, which allowed users to search for music by genre, style, and mood (mood being an all-important feature of music in film and broadcasting, as it underlies the story and images; see Taylor, 2012). World music was listed as a “genre”; the list of “styles” that appears in the pulldown menu contained, first, geographical regions (excluding North America), and then “styles” (see Table 6.1).

Many of these more obscure (or unusual) “styles” had few recordings associated with them. For example, searching for “Avant-Garde” without inputting a mood resulted in only Tan Dun’s homage to Peking opera: *Bitter Love* (1998). Searching in a similar way for the “style” called “classical” resulted only in *A Nordic Festival* (1991),

Table 6.1 List of world music styles from Sonymusicfinder.com

Central Asia	Country-Rock	Orchestral Pop
Eastern Europe	Dance-Pop	Progressive Bluegrass
Far East	Ethnic Fusion	Qawwali
Mediterranean	Euro-pop	Rock & Roll
South Asia	Flamenco	Rock en Español
Western Europe	Folk Songs	Salsa
Worldbeat	Foreign Language Rock	Samba
Afro-Cuban	French Pop	Tango
Andean Folk	Hip-Hop	Tejano
Avant-Garde	Indian Pop	Tex-Mex
Bachata	Italian Folk	Third Wave Ska Revival
Big Band	Klezmer	Traditional Chinese
Bolero	Latin Folk	Tropical
CCM (Contemporary Christian Music)	Latin Jazz	Vocal Pop
Cha-Cha	Latin Pop	World Fusion
Charanga	Mariachi	Worldbeat
Christmas	Merengue	Zouk
Classical	Norteño	
Country-Pop	Opera	

Source: <http://www.sonymusicfinder.com> (this URL is no longer active).

with Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra as it performed compositions by well-known and not so well-known Scandinavian composers. “Country Pop” resulted in a handful of songs sung by singers such as Willie Nelson, George Jones, and others – hardly world music; “Country Rock” yielded a single album, *Poco* (1970), by Poco (this discussion is from Taylor, 2007, pp. 191–194). Interestingly, however, these sorts of tools were underused; professionals in music and broadcasting prefer to hire music supervisors than to search for music themselves, and music supervisors usually use iTunes and YouTube to find music.

With the rise and subsequent genericization of world music, people with new skill sets have sprung up. The demands, in the 1980s and early 1990s, for “authenticity” in world music have given way to a market that rewards the individual singer who can mimic any sound – that is simply cheaper and more efficient than finding an actual practitioner of a particular musical tradition. I have talked to singers who specialize in singing vocal parts in films, in television shows, and in commercials, who speak of the importance of knowing how to sound like whatever the producer wants. One told me that, when she is emulating an African American singer, she is frequently directed to sound “a little more white”; when she imitates a singer, she might be told to sound “three years older” (Steingold, 2009). When representing a non-Western style, she could be told to sound “less ethnic.” Another singer told me he has a vast personal library of recordings that he references when he is asked to sing in an unfamiliar style (Crenshaw, 2009).

One of the things that the rise of world music made clear is that old assumptions about the nature of the middle class and its tastes began to shift. World music is associated with a certain portion of the middle class: Bourdieu’s (1984) “dominated dominant” group – in other words, people with high amounts of educational and cultural capital but not with financial capital. Demographic data compiled by record labels revealed that world music customers were highly educated and probably multilingual (see Taylor, 2007). This is perhaps not surprising. Surprising is the realization, in the last couple of decades, that dominant groups’ tastes in music have shifted, in part because of the looming presence of baby boomers in the overall population – a demographic that has tended to remain faithful to the music of its youth rather than ageing away from it (thanks in part to advertisers’ relentless targeting of this demographic group; see Peterson, 1992, 1997; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Taylor, 2009).

Unlike some (e.g., Sklair, 2001), I have been reluctant to argue that there is a new social class in the new capitalism. I remain enough of a Marxist to think that capitalism produces its forms of dominant and subordinate groups, in a structure that has proved to be quite durable – it is rather the nature of these groups that has changed over time, changing also with the new capitalism. And, as we learned from Bourdieu (1984), with changes in the social structure, peoples’ tastes change. Particularly in this capitalism, which is more culturalized than in earlier moments of its history, the makers and shapers of culture – in this case, the new petite bourgeoisie – can promote their tastes

over the culture, through broadcasting and filmmaking, thus influencing consumption. Indeed the oversized role that the advertising industry plays in cultural production today, and its long infatuation with youth, the hip, and the cool (see Frank, 1997), have meant that long-standing cultural hierarchies are shifting. Cultural capital in Bourdieu's sense accrues less and less to those with knowledge of the fine arts and increasingly to those with knowledge of the hip and the cool (Taylor, 2009).

Conclusions

Writing about the present time and the recent past, as I have done in most of my work, makes it difficult to resist thinking about the future. It is not easy to be optimistic. The plethora of musics available means that finding a way through them will continue to be important, both for consumers (including music supervisors and advertising agency workers) and, of course, for musicians. But the predictions implicit in the early songs of praise about the Internet and its implications for musicians have, by and large, not come to pass. It is true that musicians can more easily distribute their music than they could in the past – but distribute it to whom? Identifying and exploiting markets is, increasingly, the main enterprise of the music business, or what remains of it. In any event, it is still out of the reach of virtually all the musicians who simply want to make a living by making music.

And, as great as my debt to Marxian studies of capitalism is, and as helpful as periodizations of capitalism are in attempting to come to grips with its multifarious and ever-adaptable nature, it is difficult today to imagine writing of its final phase, its obituary. Anthony Giddens once wrote of modernity as a juggernaut (Giddens, 1990), but it is capitalism that is in the driver's seat. All we can do is hang on and hope to find some good tunes on the radio along the way.

NOTES

- 1 For an overview, see Harvey (1985); for trenchant critiques, see Ferguson (2002) and Klein (2008).
- 2 For more on this ideology of sampling, see Taylor (2001).
- 3 At the same time, as Louise Meintjes (2003) has shown, some non-Western musicians such as those South Africans she studied increasingly make music aimed at an international audience.
- 4 I would like to thank Harriet Whitehead for introducing me to this album.
- 5 Ray Phiri, one of the main South African musicians on the album, said that Simon's copy was a bootleg version from London and that Simon had no idea about what the music was or where it was from, and he solicited the aid of his record company, Warner Bros., to track down the source (Mgxashe, 1987, pp. 31).

- 6 Despite the recording's popularity and critical acclaim, the album was nonetheless controversial, for Simon violated a United Nations boycott against South Africa and, in addition, many listeners both in and out of South Africa heard the album as yet another instance of White appropriation of Black music, or of European/American exploitation of Africa. Simon's statements on this controversy continue the rhetoric he had employed throughout the project: that he was helping the musicians get their music known, that the South African music is nothing but good tunes, and that musicians themselves do not employ criticisms based on politics (see Moerer, 1991).

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Whither the Professional Book Publisher in an Era of Distribution on Demand

Laura J. Miller

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines changing organizational, economic, and cultural practices of book production by analyzing the breakdown of several once firm distinctions in the book industry: between production and distribution; between professional publishing and self-publishing; and between amateur and commercial authorship. The development of online storefronts that sell physical books, electronic devices that make it possible to read digital books, and a focus on content as intellectual property that can be detached from form have made it easier than in the past to bypass professional publishers and their traditional roles as gatekeepers, editors, and coordinators of the book production process. The result has been a huge increase in self-publishing, a phenomenon facilitated by for-profit companies that provide a mechanism for distributing these books. The argument is made that the growth of self-publishing reinforces a shift in power relations within the book industry, from publishers to distributors, and helps to make authorship into a recreational choice that can be purchased.

Prophesying the end of the book, a perennial pastime ever since the advent of television, has intensified in recent years. For decades, observers had warned that young people do not choose to read, being too distracted by other, primarily electronic, diversions that eat into what little unscheduled time they have left. But now we are hearing that adults, too, are giving up on books, at least of the print variety (Birkerts, 1994; National Endowment for the Arts, 2004, 2007, 2009; Scholastic & Harrison Group, 2010). Along with the continued demise of bookstores, the explosion of devices that allow book-related content to be read in digital form, from dedicated e-readers to smart phone apps, seems to signal that the nearly six-century reign of the printed book form as a dominant medium of communication is coming to a rapid end (Gomez, 2008; Siegler, 2010; Weeks, 2000).

Despite some very real changes in book-consumption habits, pronouncements about the death of the printed book are highly overdrawn. After all, by the middle of 2011, only approximately 14% of books sold in the United States were electronic books (Milliot, 2011). And, as is frequently noted, the printed book, as a piece of technology, has many advantages. It does not need electricity. You can drop it or dirty it without impairing its functionality. Entry costs are low. One can flip back and forth rapidly between pages. And, once purchased, it is fungible in ways that most e-books presently are not. But, more than simply being a piece of hyperbole, attention to the health of print diverts us from equally (if not more) important changes taking place in the world of books. Instead of a single-minded focus on technological form, we should also be looking at what is happening to the process of production. That is, in what ways are the organizational, economic, and cultural practices associated with book production changing? We may not be seeing the end of the book, but are we witnessing the death of the publisher?

This chapter approaches the two questions formulated above by examining the breakdown of several once firm distinctions in the book industry: between production and distribution, between professional publishing and self-publishing, and between amateur and commercial authorship. From the nineteenth century right up until the early twenty-first century, the typical structure in the book industry included a division of labor whereby the publisher acted as the master coordinator, acquiring manuscripts from authors, arranging for them to be manufactured by printers, and determining availability to booksellers, who then sold books to the public. As such, publishers not only acted as gatekeepers who decided what works would get published and what would remain locked away in a would-be author's drawer, but publishers were also responsible for editing, design, publicity, and pricing. The costs of such basic tasks as typesetting and warehousing books, and the sheer complexity involved in navigating a system where, by the middle of the twentieth century, hundreds of thousands of unique titles competed for the attention of geographically scattered book retailers and the reading public, meant that professional publishers were best equipped to oversee and finance the publication process, though not without a considerable degree of inefficiency.

However, the development of different mechanisms for producing, distributing, and receiving books has destabilized this publisher-centered system. Many of these

developments are not entirely new. Desktop publishing, which arrived in the 1980s (Henry, 2009), allowed anyone with a computer and widely available software programs to do attractive book design, and it helped to fuel a vibrant small press movement. Starting in the 1960s, the growth of major bookstore chains and bookselling mass merchandisers created powerful retailers, who came to exercise considerable influence over their publisher suppliers (Miller, 2006). And, for decades, freelancers made available a wide variety of editorial, marketing, and production services, especially useful for small publishing outfits that could not afford to keep a full complement of specialists in the house (Dessauer, 1974, p. 166; Mogel, 1996, pp. 21–23). But, more recently, online storefronts that sell physical books and electronic devices that make it possible to read digital books have made it easier than in the past to bypass traditional publishers altogether. One result has been a huge increase in self-publishing, which is no longer denigrated as vanity publishing – a phenomenon facilitated by for-profit companies that provide a mechanism for distributing these books.

These developments call into question the role that publishers play: they appear to be rearranging the power dynamics in the book industry. In a rapidly expanding marketplace – where, in 2009, 288,355 new titles and editions from traditional publishers were released in the United States, while over twice as many came from non-traditional sources (primarily print on demand and self-publishing) (“Big Gains for New Players,” 2010) – there are fewer cues for distinguishing the edited from the unedited book, the anointed from the self-appointed. While some see all this as a populist triumph whereby any writer can transition to the status of published author without the permission of established publisher authorities, I want to argue that other for-profit players – some new, some veteran – are consolidating their positions of influence in the competition for readers’ attention and dollars. For, at the same time as we see a lessening of regard for what professional publishers do and heightened cultural approbation for the status of the amateur author, those authors are becoming dependent on professional distributors who act behind the scenes to make works available in an increasingly crowded book arena. Book authorship comes to look similar to book readership, in that both are recreational choices that one can purchase from commercial entrepreneurs. The weakened position of professional publishing may thus transform the way in which the public thinks about books as much as technological developments do.

Publisher Organizations and Responsibilities: Twentieth-Century Shifts

At least until the twenty-first century, the would-be author who produced a manuscript faced a daunting task in getting his book into print. Already established authors whose futures appeared promising might well receive advance payments on little more than an idea pitched to an editor. For the unknown writer, on the other hand, not only were fat advances unlikely, but so was the very possibility of being published.

In 1981 it was estimated that the odds against the publication of novels submitted unsolicited or without the benefit of an agent were 29,998 to 2 (Coser, Kadushin, & Powell, 1985, 132). In their classic study of the American publishing industry, on the basis of research conducted in the 1970s, Coser and his team found that an individual editor received between 1,000 and 5,000 unsolicited submissions each year (p. 129). When measured against the amount of labor it took to go through the “slush pile,” the likelihood of finding something worthwhile was considered so low that most unsolicited manuscripts were never even looked at (Dystel, 1985, p. 335). This still remains the case today.

Instead, during the second half of the twentieth century, the editor came increasingly to rely on literary agents to screen writers for her and to bring to her attention books that fit her press’ profile. Today the majority of published books first come to an editor’s attention via an agent, though securing an agent’s services does not guarantee publication. Augmenting their more obvious duties as dealmakers, agents also gradually took on functions that were once the editor’s exclusive prerogative: advising an author on book ideas and writing style, on the kind of audience to target, and on the progression of a writer’s career. In part, the agent engages in these activities because writers cannot necessarily count on an editor’s long-term guidance. Editors change jobs with great frequency, so that an author not uncommonly finds that an editor who enthusiastically accepted his manuscript for publication does not stay long enough at the publishing house to see the project through to its completion. With such great uncertainty clouding the author–editor relationship, the agent often becomes a welcome and stable mentor. On the flip side, the author–publisher relationship became more formal and contractual over the twentieth century (Berman, 1983; Squires, 2007, pp. 34–35).

In addition to the ways in which editors interact with their authors, there have been other changes to the organization of publishing that undermined the centrality of the editorial function. A key development was the transformation, during the second half of the twentieth century, of the largest publishers from family-owned firms to investor-controlled corporations, which were usually public and often part of diversified conglomerates. Several waves of merger and acquisition activity produced over time a handful of companies that were based primarily in Europe and North America and controlled hundreds of the best known publisher imprints (Greco, Rodríguez, & Wharton, 2007; Luey, 2009; Miller, 2006, 2011; see Table 7.1 for examples of different permutations in publisher ownership). Complaints about commercialization in the book world have been a staple as long as the modern book industry has existed, but they took on an intensified tone in reaction to corporatization. Critics charged that publisher consolidation was leading to an aversion to risk-taking and to a homogenization of book output. Additionally, critics said, publishers overemphasized the promotion of popular blockbusters, with the result that most other books were set up for market failure (Miller, 1997; Schiffrin, 1995; Solotaroff, 1984). For many who worked in publishing, the introduction of more rationalized techniques for managing the business turned what was once a quirky and inefficient

Table 7.1 Ownership of selected publishing companies, 1980–2010

1980		
Publisher		Parent Company
Academic Press		Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich		–
Harper & Row		–
Little, Brown		Time Inc.
Macmillan Ltd.		–
Penguin		Pearson
Random House		RCA
Simon & Schuster		Gulf + Western
South-Western		Scott, Foresman
1990		
Publisher		Parent Company
Academic Press		Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich		–
HarperCollins		News Corp.
Little, Brown		Time Warner
Macmillan Ltd.		–
Penguin		Pearson
Random House		Newhouse
Simon & Schuster		Paramount Communications
South-Western		Thomson
2000		
Publisher		Parent Company
Academic Press		Harcourt Inc.
Harcourt Inc.		General Cinema
HarperCollins		News Corp.
Little, Brown		AOL Time Warner
Macmillan Ltd.		Georg von Holtzbrinck
Penguin		Pearson
Random House		Bertelsmann
Simon & Schuster		Viacom
South-Western		Thomson
2010		
Publisher	Parent Company	Parent Company's 2009 International Rank by Book Sales ("Pearson Leads the Pack," 2010)
Academic Press	Reed Elsevier	2
HarperCollins	News Corp.	19
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	Education Media and Publishing Group	14
Little, Brown	Lagardère	6
Macmillan Ltd.	Georg von Holtzbrinck	10
Penguin	Pearson	1
Random House	Bertelsmann	5
Simon & Schuster	CBS	27
South-Western	Cengage Learning (Apax Partners/OMERS)	11

but fulfilling line of work into something more modern, but also less enjoyable (Howard, 1989; Schiffin, 2000).

The 1980s in particular were marked by tremendous discussion and concern about the increased importance, in publishing houses, of marketing and subsidiary rights, some of this debate being prompted by the publication of Thomas Whiteside's *The Blockbuster Complex* in 1981 (Donaldson, 1981; Whiteside, 1981; Woodcock, 1981).¹ Pushed by their corporate parents to pay more systematic attention to revenue streams, publishers appeared to be elevating once secondary departments to equal status with that of editorial divisions. Along with their obvious responsibilities of selling, promotion, and publicity, sales and marketing members of staff are now often consulted on the sales prospects for a book, even when an editor is deciding whether or not to acquire a manuscript. Marketing considerations are also critical in determining the number of copies to be printed, the choice of a title for the book, the quality of art-work to be commissioned, the jacket design, the scheduling of a book's publication, and the setting of the book's price. Thus marketing matters are intimately connected to editorial and production decisions at almost every stage in the book's development. For critics, this has meant that those books and authors with media appeal or with an obvious promotional hook are favored over books that are not so easily marketed. While there is considerable truth to this claim, it does not really address the thornier question of just how publishers should make decisions about the amount of marketing to put into any single title. In a bookselling landscape where there are now over three million books in print in the US alone (R. R. Bowker, LLC, 2011, p. viii), marketing is both essential to helping a book find its audience and self-defeating – in that the cacophony of promotional messages soon overwhelms even the most receptive reader.

Similar concerns about how publishers evaluate and treat manuscripts differentially have been associated with the issue of subsidiary rights. For much of the twentieth century, the typical model in publishing was for manuscripts to be published first in hardcover form. The right to transform the book into another form is considered a subsidiary right and is usually licensed by the original publisher to a different organization. Paperback reprint, book club, foreign and territorial, translation, magazine serialization, film, television, and stage adaptation, audio, and electronic rights have been among the most common kinds of rights. As the value of these rights grew over time, publishers increasingly considered a book's prospects for rights-generated income when doing the original hardcover publication. This not only prompted critics to claim that books without much potential for subsidiary rights were being unpublished or left to languish with no promotional attention, but it also led to a dismantling of the traditional sequence of events, whereby hardcover books are published first, and any other form is subsequent or subsidiary. As it became clear that a paperback original did not need the cachet of a hardcover preceding it, or that a successful children's book series could be created out of a television series, the once automatic association between a book and a standalone hardcover was being dissolved. Content was becoming detached from form.

These various changes were, if not altogether caused, at least facilitated by the connections between publishing and major media conglomerates. However, what is often glossed over in accounts of publisher consolidation is that the various waves of publisher acquisitions were interspersed with periods of divestment, as corporations whose primary purpose was not in book products realized that book publishing both was a low-profit endeavor and operated according to very different traditions from those of their core activities. Indeed, the era of book publishers as subsidiaries of massive media conglomerates seemed to come to an end in the 2000s: Vivendi Universal sold Houghton Mifflin to an investment group consortium in 2002, Time Warner sold the Time Warner Book Group to Groupe Lagadère Media in 2006, and Viacom split off CBS (initially, Columbia Broadcasting System, owner of Simon & Schuster Book Group) also in 2006 (Miller, 2011). These signs of disenchantment with publishing properties were perhaps a foreshadowing of the general value that the market could come to place on traditional publishing.

The Rise of Self-Publishing

Whereas the publishing industry appeared to be in a perpetual state of turmoil in the twentieth century, it has faced new challenges in the current century. Most recent studies have framed their analyses of the future of publishing and reading in terms of the digital age and its features, which include the competition and opportunities presented by electronic information and entertainment delivery systems (Cope & Phillips, 2006; Darnton, 2009; Epstein, 2001; Kovač, 2008; Striphās, 2009; Thompson, 2005). I wish to examine these challenges, not by ignoring new technologies – which, as I will discuss, definitely affect all stages, from production to reception – but by considering them alongside two other tendencies: the focus on content as intellectual property that can be detached from form; and the rise of a number of powerful distributors. These tendencies are not unique to the book industry. Fluid interrelationships between technology, distribution, and intellectual property have affected all communication industries, from recorded music to television to film to newspapers (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Gillespie, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). But, because of different cultural traditions in the production and reception of these various media, the ways in which they have been impacted by recent developments are not uniform.

The specific case I use to discuss these developments is the extraordinary growth and cultural legitimization of self-publishing. Not so long ago, self-publishing was generally called vanity publishing: a telling name, in that the notion of paying for one's writings to be published, regardless of their merit, was seen as an act of pure vanity. In recognition of the social stigma that accompanied vanity publishing, most firms that made it possible operated with discretion, giving a book all the trappings of having been acquired by what was considered truly legitimate publishers. Of course, well before the current era, the line between legitimate and vanity publishing was

never perfectly clear. For instance, the not uncommon practice of scholarly publishers favoring a subvention – a subsidy that an author, or an author’s institution, brings to defray the costs of production – has meant that those authors with access to such funds could have an edge in getting published, though books still have to go through the usual channels of evaluation before a contract is offered (Horowitz, 1991, p. 170; Powell, 1985, pp. 185, 230). Similarly, many a small press has successfully begun with a publisher–author’s own book as the centerpiece of the new list. In other cases religious, political, and voluntary bodies simply found it easier to self-publish works that were primarily meant for their own constituents’ consumption than to find a separate press, which was willing to work with them on their terms. All such cases cast doubt on the somewhat sanctimonious ideal of an objective publisher, who dispassionately evaluates the merits of a manuscript and who profits only when an independent book-buying audience endorses his or her judgment about a book’s worthiness. Nonetheless, despite the dubious proposition that regular publishing was synonymous with a meritocracy, those other publishers who accepted any and all comers for a price and those authors who availed themselves of this opportunity were recognized by both the book industry and the reading public as different and as subject to disdain.

What kept this distinction between regular publishing and self-publishing vital was a combination of two things. First there were ideas about the legitimacy of cultural authorities in the form of professional publishers, who were granted the exclusive right to make determinations about the quality (in terms of both literary and commercial values) of manuscripts. And second there was a considerable consensus about the indicators of being a certified published author. This not only entailed the physical properties of a properly printed and bound book, but it also included the ability for readers to purchase the book. And, for that, it was almost essential to engage with a professional publisher, someone who knew how to “announce” the book, for instance by securing an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) or by sending catalogs to key intermediaries who could publicize a title to the book-buying public. It was the professional publisher who could convince booksellers – whose limited bookshelf space required them to exclude most available books – to carry a given title.

Today, however, these conventions regarding the designation of a published book are breaking down, as the options for manufacturing, publicizing, and distributing books have grown more numerous. Such conventions have been loosened in a number of ways. The physical form of a book is no longer synonymous with a printed and bound codex of a standard length. Content that was created for other purposes – for instance a blog, a wiki, the back story of a video game – can now be readily transferred into book form. Moreover, individuals and organizations other than traditional publishers may control and coordinate those steps taken to make a book available to the public. An important catalyst for undermining consensus on what constitutes a published book has been a number of new technologies that affect each stage in the process of getting a book from author to reader.

Among the more significant changes in manufacturing is print on demand (POD), developed in the 1990s, which replaces offset printing with digital printing technolo-

gies. In offset lithography, printing is done from plates, which hold the image that is to be printed onto sheets of paper. This process produces consistently high-quality printing, but it is also expensive to prepare and make the plates. For that reason, the higher the print run, the more units there are across which costs can be distributed (Henry, 2009). Very small print runs are simply not cost efficient. But when one prints directly from a digital file, as POD does, it is feasible to print even a single copy – hence the phrase *print on demand*. Printing only when a copy is requested by a buyer can also save producers money, because there is no excess stock to be housed in expensive warehouse space for years on end. As the quality of digital printing has improved dramatically, book readers are less likely as much as to notice its difference from offset printing.

While POD can be used for short-run jobs of traditionally published new books, in practice it has primarily been used in three ways. First, publishers will reprint a small number of an out-of-stock book for which they do not anticipate sufficient demand to justify a full reprinting. The second use is to publish inexpensively small runs of books in the public domain – a way for POD companies to sell directly to consumers without becoming full-fledged publishers who acquire and edit new material. And, third, POD is a boon to self-publishing, as authors do not have to pay for an extremely expensive printing job to produce books that may be distributed no further than one's small circle of friends and family.

With each of these uses, the impact of POD has also been to make traditional publishers less central to the publication process. Some of the earliest ventures to commercialize POD services were started by the major wholesalers in the book industry, Baker & Taylor and Ingram. Unlike publishers of the time, these wholesalers invested in the equipment that produces POD books and that could convert older titles to a digital format (“Update on Printing-on-Demand,” 1998). The advantage, for both publishers and booksellers, of working with Ingram or with Baker & Taylor was that these already had in place systems for ordering delivery of books from the wholesalers. POD services became even more decentralized with various “book machines” – the name given to POD devices that can print, bind, and trim books and that, theoretically, can be set up anywhere. While at one time there was speculation that these devices could become as mundane as a vending machine, the expense of purchase and the difficulty of maintaining them in working order have limited their spread. Nonetheless, some bookstores have acquired one such machine, which makes it possible for a bookstore to be a center of book production as well as of book consumption. Booksellers have found that much of the customer demand for these machines comes from writers who print their own manuscripts (Mayersohn, 2011; Rosen, 2006).

While some bookstores have experimented with this kind of book manufacturing, the very definition of bookselling has been complicated in other ways by digital distributors. In the mid-1990s, entrepreneurs, some with no previous bookselling experience, began selling books online. The major player, of course, was Amazon.com, which became a significant presence in bookselling markets around the globe.

However, anyone with a website, packing materials, and access to books to sell can set oneself up as an online bookseller, utilizing the postal service or a private delivery company to get physical books into the hands of readers who purchase them. Although there is indeed a multitude of very small operators trying to sell books – especially used ones – out of their own homes, more developed online businesses rely heavily on wholesalers to warehouse books and fill orders. Amazon is an exception to this; because of the volume of its sales, it maintains its own set of warehouses.

The effects of online bookselling in the field have been multifaceted, but a few in particular bear mentioning here. To begin with, the growth of Amazon contributed to the decline of independent bookstores and to the concentration of clout around a small number of businesses involved in bookselling. In addition to Amazon, this group included Barnes & Noble, Borders (which went out of business in 2011), and Wal-Mart in the US; Waterstone's, Tesco, and Asda in the UK; DBH and Thalia in Germany; and Fnac in France and elsewhere in Europe. Because they are responsible for such a large portion of book sales, these retailers have been able to wield considerable influence over publishers, which is manifest in everything – from the terms according to which publishers sell books to them to marketing plans for a given title. Even when publishers feel taken advantage of, they can rarely afford to alienate their biggest customers. Thus publishers' relative power in the industry has diminished as that of the major retailers and distributors have grown.

Second, online bookselling makes it theoretically possible to sell an unlimited number of titles, since what browsing customers see is a listing of books, not the actual books themselves. It should not be forgotten that the capability to purchase any book in print was available before the Internet came on the scene, as booksellers kept copies of the reference works that listed all books in print available in the store for their own and their customers' use. Many bookshops would order for a customer any book that they do not already carry (most still do this). However, consumers have not always been aware of this service, and the ability to instantly call up titles on one's home computer screen, without a human bookseller acting as an intermediary, contributes to the sense of plenitude that online bookselling brings. It can make the physical limitations of bookstores seem like an unnecessary impediment to consumer choice.

Finally, and connected to this, without the scarcity issue presented by the simple impossibility of a physical bookstore housing all the available titles, self-published books that formerly would never have had a chance of being displayed in a bookshop can easily be included in an online bookseller's database. This makes it at least possible for such books to reach a wide audience. But doing away with limitations on the number of titles that an online bookseller "carries" does not do away with limitations on consumers' patience for sorting through the massive quantity of books vying for their attention. Nor does online shopping do away with the fact that Internet booksellers with large databases still make choices about which titles will feature in prominent ways on their web pages and which titles will come to a reader's

attention only if she conducts the exact right search (Miller, 1999). As a consequence, booksellers like Amazon have realized that there are revenue streams to be tapped by allowing publishers to purchase advantageous placements on the website.

Along with changing manufacturing and retailing, digital technology has also provided new options for book reception. The first attempt to find a mass audience for electronic books emerged in the late 1990s, when several dedicated e-book reading devices started to come on the market, and numerous new companies and subsidiaries of existing companies tried to provide a means for making content available. However, while greatly hyped in the early days, most of these ventures did not last for long. Readers showed little interest – not only in paying for e-books, but in reading them at all. This was underscored by one of the most highly publicized early efforts to encourage e-book reading: the exclusive electronic publication, in 2000, of popular horror writer Stephen King's novella *Riding the Bullet*. Hundreds of thousands of people did download it, but there was quite an incentive to do so, since the e-book was initially available free of charge (Scott, 2000). On the other hand, it was estimated that only 20% of the downloaders actually read the book ("E-Books: Not Ready for Prime Time?" 2000). King ended up discontinuing his second experiment with e-books, *The Plant*, which bypassed regular publishers and was instead released in serialized installments on King's own website. By the fifth installment, downloads were down to one third of the number of the first installment, and fewer than half of those readers were making the voluntary one-dollar payment that King had requested for each download (Kirkpatrick, 2000; Reid, 2000). The aborted experiment suggested that even the most popular authors needed the marketing assistance of professional publishers, and that authors used to being paid handsomely for their work were not going to sit by passively and watch downloaders become freeloaders.

By 2001 e-books looked to be on their way out. In response to poor sales, e-book companies shut down, publishers discontinued e-book imprints, and booksellers stopped selling them (Milliot & Reid, 2002; Reid & Holt, 2003). As digitization was proceeding in other parts of the book business, though, research on electronic reader technology continued as well. By 2005 there were signs of an e-book revival, though its future still appeared tentative until 2007; that year Amazon introduced the Kindle, which provided a reading experience much improved over that of the previous generation of e-book devices. Other companies soon followed with their own e-book readers, and Sony, Barnes & Noble, and Apple joined Amazon as market leaders. At the same time, e-books that could be read on a regular computer or on a smart phone were also being made available. The result was a confusing landscape of businesses, some selling e-books in various formats, some selling e-book readers, and some selling both, while publishers who held the rights to previously published content that could be digitized needed to make individual deals with each company that used a proprietary e-book format. As it appeared that e-books would finally enter the mainstream, publishers also found themselves in disputes with authors and authors' agents about control over electronic rights.

Thus e-books hold out the promise of new sources of revenue to publishers, but they also threaten publishers' standing in the book industry. A major problem that publishers face has to do with the pricing of books. Amazon originally discounted its e-books to a price below the cost of acquiring them from publishers, as it was willing to take a loss in the hopes of convincing more readers to purchase a Kindle and of gaining market share; customers quickly came to see the discounted price as the "real" cost of a book. For consumers, the almost magical ease of digital reproduction contributes to the notion that "information wants to be free" – a phrase originally uttered by Stewart Brand when he described the paradoxical situation whereby information can be expensive because it is so valuable, but also cheap because the costs of dissemination keep declining (Turner, 2006, p. 136). The consequence of focusing solely on the lowered (though hardly absent) costs of distribution is that the costs of production are largely overlooked. Book publishers are now faced with a consuming public suspicious about the price of print and electronic books alike, and less confident that publishers actually do much to justify the prices they charge, especially for hardcover books. The e-book phenomenon, on the other hand, has benefited self-publishing. Not only can self-published authors avoid the costs of printing and shipping physical books, but the efforts of professional publishers look increasingly superfluous to writers and readers alike.

Professional Facilitators of Amateur Publishers

The development of digital technologies, the ease with which content can travel across various forms, and the decentering of professional publishers in the industry have all therefore aided the growth of self-publishing. But authors are not truly getting books out all by themselves. A number of companies that offer self-publishing services have been established to facilitate this process. The world's largest such company is Author Solutions, which owns AuthorHouse, iUniverse, Xlibris, Trafford Publishing, and Wordclay. Other major players include Lulu and Amazon's CreateSpace. As well as offering an Internet storefront for selling books, these companies present authors with a smorgasbord of services, from line editing, formatting, cover design, and illustration selection, to marketing campaigns and book-signing assistance, to ghostwriting. Authors can choose between electronic and print formats for publication. The mix-and-match nature of these services means that authors can spend as little or as much as they like. In 1982, fees for vanity press publishing in the US ranged between \$3,000 and \$20,000 (McDowell, 1982). In 2010, authors were paying self-publishing companies much less: an average of \$1,000 to \$5,000 (Byle, 2010, p. S8) – though more expensive packages were available. Indeed, it was possible to spend as little as \$100 if an author needed just a single service. Some Internet sites even allowed authors to upload an already prepared e-book for no charge, and then they would simply take a large share of the revenues if copies were sold. As this

indicates, it is possible for authors to do much or all of the production work themselves. But where authors are still in a position of dependence is in the area of distribution and sales.

Of course, the ease with which one can now publish a book does not mean that such books will sell. In 2009, Author Solutions estimated that its published titles sold on average 150 copies (Rich, 2009). For many authors, achieving significant sales is not the point of their endeavors. They may want to make copies available just to friends, family, or business associates, or they may want nothing more than the tangible product of their writing labors that publishing brings. But, for other authors, the hope is that their works will indeed find a larger audience and make the author some money in the process. Recognizing this market of ambitious self-publishers, established booksellers have begun to sell opportunities for exposure, as well as some services similar to those that the self-publishing companies offer. For instance, in 2009, retailer Barnes & Noble acquired Tikatok, an Internet site that, for a price, assists parents and children in publishing their own books ("College Stores, E-Commerce Boost B&N," 2009). The following year Barnes & Noble launched PubIt!, which allows self-published e-books to be sold through Barnes & Noble's Internet store ("B&N to Launch PubIt!" 2010). The program makes one of the largest online booksellers in the world accessible to authors who previously could never have hoped to sell their books there. The catch was that Barnes & Noble would retain 35–60% of the listed price of books sold. This ensured that Barnes & Noble, while doing almost none of the work involved in publishing a book, would profit from those few authors who made real money from their books. Similarly, both Borders and Amazon created programs that offered self-publishing services, marketing support for self-published works, or simply a place on their websites where self-published books could be sold. In this way these booksellers allow for distribution on demand.

The proliferation of commercial services for self-publishing has been accompanied by a remarkably rapid change in the social status of such books. Relatively few of those books are actually being read by people outside of the author's circle of acquaintances. Whether publication is a private affair or something done in the hope of achieving commercial success, self-publishing is more likely to be applauded as a legitimate act of self-expression and less likely to be denigrated as a foolish act of hubris than it was in the past. Signs of changing attitudes can be found even in more traditional sectors of the book industry. Agents are now looking for self-published works that can be transitioned to the professionally published market. Booksellers are changing their policies too. Previously, physical bookstores would rarely consider carrying self-published works, both because of the time and extra labor involved in handling non-traditional publishers and because such works had not been vetted according to traditional standards. But in 2007 Colorado's Boulder Book Store began charging self-published authors a \$25 handling fee to stock a book, and additional fees for other promotional opportunities. The program was considered successful both for the store and for authors, and other independent bookstores began to imitate

it (Rosen, 2010). This represented not only a change in regard for self-published books, but a greater willingness to sell display space in stores to publishers, an issue that has long been a source of debate in the industry.

Even *Publishers Weekly*, the venerable American trade journal of the book industry, has changed its stance towards self-publishing. In 2010 the magazine announced that it would begin issuing a quarterly supplement of self-published titles. Authors could pay a \$149 processing fee to have their titles listed in the supplement. The magazine also said it would review at least 25 of the listed titles in each supplement, promising the chosen authors the kind of exposure that might possibly lift them out of obscurity. On the one hand, this meant a new revenue source (and maybe even new readership) for *Publishers Weekly*. But it also signalled an acknowledgement on the part of the industry establishment that self-published books could actually deserve such exposure.

The book world and the cultural tendencies that support it have come a long way from the time when the amateur seemed ominous rather than admirable. The mass culture tradition of social criticism, with its concerns about centralized authority and the standardization of thought, has frequently resonated with those in the book industry and affiliated institutions.² In some strands of this tradition, the triumph of the amateur adds to the cultural crisis of modern society. José Ortega y Gasset (1993), writing in 1930, claimed that the mass no longer recognizes that it takes people with qualifications, and who feel a duty to a higher calling, to participate in intellectual and artistic affairs. The mass now believes instead that anyone can participate in these areas, and that all the ideas, all the opinions, all the efforts are equally valid. For Ortega y Gasset, the result is that mass man becomes smug about his own power; he looks to his own self for answers and thinks it unnecessary to submit to anyone else for judgment (p. 97). But, without standards, Ortega y Gasset says, anything goes; there is no real culture, and barbarism becomes conceivable.

Without adopting Ortega y Gasset's confidence in the superiority of a cultural elite and its standards, one can nevertheless consider critically the social changes that have furthered the sense that professional gatekeepers, who employ their own criteria for selection and in doing so promote an artificial scarcity of creative works, are impeding cultural innovation. In the American book industry, ambivalence about acting as a cultural authority has been present since the middle of the twentieth century; and it was reinforced by a variety of factors, including the influence of corporations interested in vanquishing an image of stuffy elitism, and the entry into the industry of a generation genuinely enthusiastic about popular culture (Miller, 2006, pp. 59–66). The book industry has also been affected by more general cultural forces, which celebrate a democratic access to political power, economic opportunities, and communication media.

However, what we are seeing in the media sector is not the end of an elite, but rather the substitution of the technical expert for the cultural authority. On the one hand, the "information society" is understood to require a technocracy that has the high-level skills not only to produce advances in information technology and in its

applications, but also to assist the rest of the population, which is rendered helpless when machines or systems malfunction. On the other hand, this dependence on a technocracy is accompanied by a reverence for the plucky amateur, who utilizes this technology, sometimes in illicit ways, as a means to practice creativity and mastery. This attitude includes admiration for hackers, who crack the computer codes that professionals created in order to keep unauthorized users out, as well as for self-taught video-makers, who load their creations on YouTube. Henry Jenkins (2008, pp. 2–3) has argued that we are seeing a convergence culture, where content flows across different media platforms, which helps give rise to a participatory culture where media consumers, far from being passive spectators, actively participate in the convergence process (see also Deuze, 2007). Others speak of the “prosumer,” someone who produces new media content through consuming existing material and the tools made available by digital technologies (Collins, 2010). In each of these models, the lines between producer and consumer, and between different forms of media, are blurred.

The field of self-publishing can certainly be seen as an example of this joining together of production and consumption, and of print and digital media. But the growth of self-publishing is about more than just providing a creative outlet for writers. In contrast to how things are in film, television, or even music, the technical requirements for producing a few copies of a manuscript that could be easily read, even if they did not look very elegant, have been within reach of amateurs for decades. In contrast, the self-publishing *industry* is premised on the desire of the amateur to reach a potentially large audience and to profit through one’s writings. In this way it differs from, for instance, the DIY (do-it-yourself) philosophy of punk, which is about the celebration of an amateur aesthetics and of a principled lack of interest in reaching a mass audience (e.g., Green & Taormino, 1997). Whereas DIY turns on its head the usual hierarchy of professional over amateur, the self-publishing industry collapses the professional–amateur distinction, on the promise that one no longer needs the insider knowledge and skills of the professional to be a commercial success. Of course, aside from a tiny fraction of writers, the only ones making any profit in this arena are the commercial services themselves.

The Persisting Professional Publisher

The self-publishing phenomenon raises questions about whether the tasks performed by professional publishers are economically sustainable, or even necessary. Writers and readers bewildered by the length of the time it takes for a manuscript to go through the regular publishing process, and angered by the rising prices of such books, harbor doubts about the value of professional publishers. It is not only the burgeoning self-publishing movement that has caused this loss of esteem for publishers. The spate of scandals involving author deceptions – from James Frey’s not-so-true

life memoir to Kaavya Viswanathan's inclusion in her novel of passages from other authors' works, to Charles Pellegrino's use of erroneous facts in his nonfiction, to Greg Mortenson's misrepresentation of his life and charitable works – have undermined the public's faith that publishers provide a crucial mediating role.³ All of these deceptive authors were heavily promoted by major publishing houses. If such publishers cannot fact-check, recognize plagiarism, or investigate an author's suspicious identity claims, then readers wonder what exactly they are doing.

In actuality, publishers do engage in at least some fact-checking and flag possible problems in an author's work. Publishing houses still work with authors to craft a book so that it meets prevailing literary standards, though these standards may vary depending on what audience an author and her editor have in mind. As one publisher notes:

Wherever ideas originate, they are often simply the starting point on the long road to a finished book, which typically includes extended conversations and conceptual discussions between author and editor about how the material might best be structured, the project's ideal parameters (knowing what to leave out is often an editor's key contribution), how much background is necessary for lay readers to grasp an argument, and so forth. Manuscripts that arrived in "finished" form typically require at least a line edit and a copy edit to maximize the impact of the underlying ideas, to make them coherent and a pleasure to read. (Wachtell, 2010, p. B11)

In other words, professional publishers help authors to communicate. They act as the "support personnel" that belie the image of an individual artist who creates and communicates in isolation (Becker, 1982, 77).

As an alternative to professional publishing, self-publishing is indeed a cheap and widely accessible way for authors to produce books. But it generally comes at the cost of minimal editing and proofreading, the absence of an index and guide to sources, and probably no fact-checking at all. For some readers, this may not matter. But, for others, in a society where so many sources of information and entertainment vie with books for people's time, such qualities may matter more than ever. Moreover, self-publishing does not do away with support personnel altogether. At a minimum, it involves the assistance of skilled distributors.

Indeed, pushing aside professional publishers as gatekeepers does not eliminate the gates themselves. There are millions of potential books available, and readers, by necessity, have to find some way of figuring out which ones to pay attention to. That task is not so straightforward when the gates that determine which manuscripts have a chance of reaching an audience are more inclusive than ever. For instance, readers have been confounded by organizations such as VDM Publishing Group (originally, Verlag Dr. Müller) and its Alphascript, Betascript, and Fastbook imprints. This group has published tens of thousands of books, many of which are simply brief reproductions of Wikipedia material, sold at hefty prices on Amazon and other sites offering self-published books. Internet discussion lists have been filled with stories of dismayed buyers (including at least one university library) who discovered

that the book that had such an impressive title was little more than a snapshot of a web page. As this shows, the ability to simply present a title in an authoritative way can attract buyers. Readers do employ other criteria when selecting books. Word of mouth matters considerably. And there are many industrious volunteers who read everything they can, and then post reviews and recommendations; some of these amateur reviewers gain a real following. But it is still those authors who pay for the assistance of professional marketers and distributors who get the best results. In this way self-publishing does not look that different from vanity publishing.

What has also not changed is that reading is still an activity regularly practiced by a relatively small number of people. As Griswold (2008) notes, a large reading class flourished for only a brief period of time in parts of Europe, North America, and Japan. She argues that, while we are not likely to return to a situation where the majority of a population reads extensively for pleasure, a small elite will continue to do so and will retain a disproportionate cultural influence. Self-publishing does not change this; it is not the case that the existence of more reading options automatically leads to more reading. Rather, time-use studies suggest that reading in general, and especially reading by men, has not increased in recent years (Eurostat, 2004; Sweden Statistics, 2010; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, annual).

In answer to my original question, professional publishers are not going away, despite their fading dominance in the book world. Instead, what we may be seeing is the emergence of a two-tiered system in which the truly popular books and the authors committed to traditional standards go with professionals, and large numbers of amateur publishers see their books produced but not widely read. As an industry journalist noted: "Self-publishing is not considered a particularly attractive option for bestselling authors used to large advances and the marketing, promotion, and distribution provided by publishers" (Deahl, 2010, p. 7). Nor is it so appealing to authors who rely on the editorial assistance and stamp of approval of professionals in order to gain critical recognition. In many ways self-publishing is a positive development, as writers who do not have the savvy or the audience appeal to attract a professional publisher can now maybe reach those readers who are actually interested in what they have to say. But self-publishing also makes a readership largely irrelevant. One can produce a published book whether or not anyone cares about its contents. In this way our understanding of what a book is all about – of its very purpose, and not just of its technological form – becomes something up for grabs.

NOTES

- 1 Thomas Whiteside's *The Blockbuster Complex: Conglomerates, Show Business, and Book Publishing*, which originally appeared in 1980 as a series of articles in *The New Yorker*, castigated the trend toward bigness in the book industry. Whiteside argued that, since the 1960s, corporate consolidations produced ever larger publishing houses that focused on creating mega-selling blockbusters, on giving huge advances to star authors, and on

promoting books through movie and television tie-ins. *The Blockbuster Complex* was widely reviewed, both in the trade and in the popular press.

- 2 The mass culture perspective is related to mass society theory (e.g., Arendt, 1973), which posits a set of social transformations that occurs when people no longer live in traditional communities, but instead become part of an undifferentiated mass with no meaningful common interests and with no obligations or commitment toward any particular group. In mass society people become vulnerable to manipulation by authoritarian leaders and impersonal institutions. The mass culture perspective has been associated with a range of thinkers, including F. R. Leavis (1930), Dwight Macdonald (1960), and members of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1989) or Leo Lowenthal (1961). In this view, culture is increasingly produced and disseminated by rationalized businesses, which are out primarily to make a profit. Despite surface differences, mass culture is seen as essentially standardized and formulaic; it lacks authenticity, depth, or originality; it affirms the existing organization of society and social relations; and it acts like a narcotic that saps the sense of autonomy in the audience, together with any capacity for serious thinking. In the end mass culture absorbs and diffuses resistance in society.
- 3 In 2003 James Frey published *A Million Little Pieces*, which was, supposedly, an account of his often harrowing experiences with addiction. The book, initially published by Doubleday, was a tremendous bestseller and had a notable endorsement by Oprah Winfrey. In 2006 it was exposed as having a considerable number of fabricated incidents. In that same year Kaavya Viswanathan published *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life*, a novel she had penned while still in high school. Viswanathan had worked with the book packager, Alloy Entertainment, which began as a marketing company, helping advertisers reach youth. The novel received great attention, partly because of Viswanathan's age and status as a Harvard University student. After publication, the book was found to have multiple plagiarized passages from a number of different writers, including Megan McCafferty. Charles Pellegrino published a number of books of history from the 1980s through to the 2000s. After publication, sales of his 2010 book *The Last Train from Hiroshima* were halted by his publisher, Henry Holt, after it was found that the book contained numerous errors and that Pellegrino had relied on a fraudulent source for key claims. In 2006 Viking published Greg Mortenson's *Three Cups of Tea*, a bestselling account of how he was inspired to build numerous schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 2011 the television program *60 Minutes* charged Mortenson with misrepresenting his personal story and accomplishments and raised the possibility of financial irregularities in his charitable work.

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“This Is What I Need, This Is What Will Travel”

Television Programs in the Era of Transition

Shawn Shimpach

ABSTRACT

Until recently, broadcast television in the US was premised on profits arising from expanding space (national distribution, national and international syndication) and from limiting time (the imposed scarcity of access). Technological and regulatory changes have meant that television producers have had (reluctantly) to acquiesce in basic changes to this formula. This chapter looks at four ways these changes have affected the production of television programming. Specifically, program producers are compelled to create programs designed to *travel* over borders and through time, to *translate* to different cultures as well as to media, to *tether* to new viewing and new sponsorship practices, and, throughout all these conditions, to continue to *tantalize* viewers, attracting and holding the attention of industry and audience alike, at all these different sites.

Although long referred to in casual industry parlance as “development” or “property,” television programs have recently seen a subtle but significant shift in the way the industry perceives and values them. This new value on individual programs is emerging during a period of rapid institutional and technological change, characterized by the fragmentation and dispersal of what was once imagined to be a mass audience for television. As this audience disperses through space and time and across multiple media, television programs that are produced with specific characteristics designed

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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in essence to pursue this dispersing audience are growing in value. This value, moreover, is different from the way television programs have been valued in the past. It used to be the case that a program's value was strictly a function of the eyeballs it attracted to the channel and/or network on which it aired, and for which it therefore dictated advertising rates. Recently, however, the value of programs has begun to shift perceptibly, as they become increasingly understood to be properties in and of themselves, with their own value to be marketed and developed by their owners – as distinct from the particular channels or networks that might show them. This transformation can be traced in large part to an institutional environment characterized by uncertainty, which arises from a series of recent regulatory, institutional, and technological changes that have altered the dynamics of television. Thus, even as ownership and institutional relations are changing, the space and time of the viewing experience of television is changing as well. This chapter is therefore about an approach toward new production considerations and imperatives amidst these tidal changes rather than about the specific individuals behind the production of the programming. These production imperatives are intended to accommodate, even capitalize upon, these changing spatial and temporal relations and the transforming televisual economy.

As products of a robust and professional culture industry, television programs result from particular conditions and specific (if perhaps overdetermined) decisions. Such a statement is not, however, an argument for a simple reflectionism, where the meaning of a program invariably mirrors the conditions (and much less the specific practices) of its production, but it does suggest the theoretical impoverishment of watching or “reading” media texts such as television programs without attempting to account in some ways for their conditions of reception, circulation, and production. The study of production, no less than other analyses of media and media institutions, stands to benefit from an integration of methodological approaches too often kept apart. If one is accounting for both the institutional conditions and the textual characteristics of media production, media such as television programs can be understood (1) for the way in which institutional policy and global economics impact the circulation and meaning of these texts, even as (2) they circulate as culturally significant sites of (multiple, contested) meanings and identification (including dis- and counter-identification). Such an approach to the peculiar biography of a television program involves apprehending the television text precisely at the point where economics and meaning encounter each other, tracking significant moments in the lives (and afterlives) of distinct television programs, and treating the commodity sign of the television program – its spatial and temporal travel as well as its common significations – through a conjunctural practice of analysis, allying socioeconomic with narrative and representational approaches (Miller, 2006, 2008; Murdoch, 1995). From Raymond Williams' early articulation of “flow” right through to John Caldwell's concept of “televisuality,” the televisual form has been demonstrated to be inextricable from the industrial infrastructure of media production and distribution. This chapter focuses mostly on US television as an example in considering the stakes for the study of production when the arbitrary critical divides between

production, distribution, and viewing are instead blended, the program being ultimately the object that all three share in common. The concerns and imperatives of television production – during certain transitional moments such as this – can be particularly revealing of the priorities of institutional relations as well as of the significance of textual markers.

Television Program and Changing Value

Through aggressive policy lobbying and a large and comparatively wealthy domestic market, the US television industry makes for a fascinating and dominant force in global television production and distribution. Moreover, because of its relatively unique arrangements for financing big-budget individual television productions – deficit financing, in which initial license fees fall short of production costs – the mergers of production companies with distribution companies (like networks) have dramatically remapped the interests of intellectual property holders. In the US the financial interest and syndication (Fin-Syn) regulations, which severely restricted the ownership and prohibited the syndication interests that a broadcast network could have in the programming it aired, relaxed in the early 1990s, until the 1996 Telecommunications Act repealed the rules altogether. Repeal meant that television broadcast networks could now also be television producers and intellectual property owners. A series of corporate mergers immediately followed, which saw independent television production companies being bought up by larger media corporations and Hollywood studios being merged with national television networks. Soon ABC American Broadcasting Company and Disney were part of the same company, as were CBS (formerly Columbia Broadcasting System) and Paramount Studios for a time, and then NBC (National Broadcasting Company), Telemundo, Universal Studios, and, later, Comcast, all joining Fox and 20th Century Fox.¹ During the early years of this deregulation, so significant was the integration of production and network distribution that Time-Warner launched the WB, to pair it with Warner Bros. Television, and Paramount helped launch UPN (United Paramount Network) for Paramount Television; thus two new national networks were created. The move was largely undertaken with the intent to avoid having television productions leveraged into shared ownership by other companies, which had merged with already existing national networks² (Shimpach, 2010, pp. 21–2). Now production studios, television networks, and cable channels (even cable system operators) were all together, in vertically integrated corporations that controlled production, distribution, and delivery. Moreover, these corporations were part of larger, horizontally integrated media conglomerates that also included print publishers (magazines, newspapers, comics, books), video game companies, movie studios, and other media companies. The initial showing of a program on television – whether on broadcast network or cable – has been, ever since, only the first part of its usefulness as a piece

of property to be leveraged across corporate divisions, potentially for years to come. As media corporations have merged into vertically (production, distribution, exhibition) and horizontally (multiple media) integrated conglomerates, network, station, and even cable programming feature only as a part of much larger corporate agendas. A new value has been placed on individual programs as properties that can travel and transcend corporate divisions, making their ownership a significant factor in broadcasting and distribution decisions.

This means that television programs are looked at differently now. They are increasingly valued as *properties* in themselves, not simply there to win an audience for a station or a network, but to be sold and resold, as distinct commodity productions. This new significance is not only a function of corporate conglomeration (the prospect of syndication rights has loomed for years, after all), but, in combination with new ownership structures, it is also a result of distribution and consumer technologies that have allowed the traditionally imagined television mass audience to disperse across time, place, and multiple media. For much of the history of television, programming strategies have sought to attract viewers to a particular channel and to encourage them to “flow through” from one show to another, spending extended time tuned to that channel. While individual episodes were temporally limited, requiring viewers to tune in at a certain time for a specific duration or to miss the ephemeral airing, such episodes were part of a continuous and non-stop sequence of programming content, constantly airing without a break. From a programmer’s perspective, this was the best strategy for keeping a national mass audience tuned to a single channel for as long as possible; offering a steady, uninterrupted diet of what former NBC executive Paul Klein famously called “least objectionable programming.” If there was no particularly compelling reason to change the channel, it was thought that viewers would surrender to inertia and simply keep watching the programming on offer, flowing through one program after another, rather than making the effort to change channels (Schiesel, 1998). From the viewer’s perspective, this onslaught of programming content – constantly interrupted by commercials, promos, announcements, and newsbreaks, but never pausing or relenting – could also be experienced, in Raymond Williams’ (1990) canonical term, as “flow”: one long, continuous, objectively incoherent televisual text.

To a large extent, programming practices premised on this model continue, and it is still possible to simply “watch TV,” allowing whatever is being shown to appear on screen when and for how long the station decrees. However, as both space- and time-shifting consumer technologies proliferate, the experience of programming flow has become only one option for the television viewer. Individual television programs are increasingly more likely to be available in more places, effectively *expanding the possible time and space* available for viewing a single episode (or an entire season) of a program. Not so long ago you either saw an episode when it “aired,” or perhaps you happened upon the rerun months later or encountered it in syndication, years after that. Today that same episode might be shown one night, “repurposed” on cable later that same week, made “streamable” on network and other

websites the next day, offered on demand by a cable provider later that week, downloadable from iTunes the next week, purchasable and rentable on digital versatile disc (DVD) later in the year, and then available in syndication after that. At the same time, viewers were offered rapidly proliferating means to access individual programs for themselves, outside of the scheduled programming flow. A series of consumer electronic devices and services have encouraged the practice of "time-shifting" the program-viewing experience. Starting with the video cassette recorder (VCR), which extended to the personal video recorder (PVR) or to the digital video recorder (DVR) and was joined by services like downloadable compressed video sites, streaming video sites, and peer-to-peer file-sharing protocols (like BitTorrent), as well as by cable services such as pay per view and video on demand, consumers and viewers have been able to extract individual programs from the television programming flow and to watch them at a time of their own choosing. Consumer devices such as portable video game players, portable DVD players, and portable media players (like the iPad) as well as applications that allow an individual to encode and stream television broadcasts (such as Slingbox) have complemented consumer time-shifting with the additional ability to space- or place-shift the viewing experience as well.

One result of these changes has been that television programs are increasingly designed and produced to attract viewer attention and investment amidst these multiple and growing options. This process began with producers' and programmers' growing self-consciousness about the look of television, producing what John Caldwell (1995) has termed "televisuality," a "stylistic exhibitionism" in which programs elicit interest through an emphasis on the visual aesthetics of individual television programs. Whether aping the lush, saturated look of cinematic production values or flittering the "videographic" look of live newsfeed, the actual look of television programs began to grow in significance as a production consideration. As programs developed distinct looks and styles in order to attract attention amidst so many viewer alternatives, they began to alter the kind of value they offered to networks. If the ascension of stylistic exhibitionism signaled a new focus on the individual program amidst the growing clutter of television programming's relentless flow and was encouraged by changing viewing practices, then the outcomes of subsequent technological and regulatory transformations have placed even greater pressure on the integrity – while increasing the value – of individual programs as distinct from programming flows. As the growth of competing technologies has developed, production practices have exceeded mere stylistic enhancements and new strategies have developed to adapt the television program to digital technologies across various media platforms. The autonomous television program, viewed on a television channel, is likely to be part of a larger possible experience, which may also include multiple related websites, short tangential episodes for internet and mobile device viewing, associated publications of periodicals, books, and documentaries and DVD "extras," not to mention the growing opportunities for social engagement with the program, from blogs and Twitter feeds to fan fiction and video sites, to discussion rooms and social media sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Google+).

While franchising and merchandising have long been important ancillary practices for media industries (Johnson, 2009), including television, this kind of cross-media expansion differs from what happened in earlier eras. First, it involves more programming, and much sooner. Even before audiences have seen a program, cross-media proliferation begins, as part of the launch strategy of wooing target audiences, of generating anticipation for the program, or of beginning to develop fans of the franchise. Cross-media expansion targets the young, affluent market that is so desired by advertisers and yet is migrating from television to other media forms as their primary entertainment medium. Second, as Brooker (2001), Jenkins (2006), and others have detailed, cross-media expansion frequently involves the elaboration of an increasingly expansive, elaborately interrelated narrative world in which various media pieces might function autonomously, but almost certainly they contribute to a larger understanding of the narrative. Third, more often and more explicitly (if not exactly intentionally) it involves unscripted viewer production and investment in creative, time-intensive, often social engagement with the program franchise.

These trends have been broadly described in a process that Jenkins has termed “transmedia storytelling.” As he explains, “a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (2006, pp. 95–96). Each contribution tends to be self-contained, so that consumers can make sense of it without necessary reference to another contribution, but each should also contribute something unique to the overall transmedia experience. As Jenkins observes, from an institutional vantage, “reading across the media sustains a depth of experience that motivates more consumption.” This, of course, serves the interests of intellectual property holders much more than television channels or stations, and it does so by “offering new levels of insight and experience[, which] refreshes the franchise and sustains consumer loyalty” to a particular program rather than to a channel’s overall flow (p. 96).

Such a strategy not only acknowledges and leverages the dispersion of television audiences across multiple media, but it does so in ways that utilize the horizontal integration of media conglomerates, encouraging audiences to flow now in-between television channels, internet portals, paper publications, and video game franchises, each one often owned or sponsored by the same corporate entity and ostensibly produced in complex coordination with the others. It also heightens the significance of individual programs, even above and beyond the particular network or channel on which they might be first encountered, so that a program can act as the connective tissue binding these various media sites, providing a kind of continuity for the audience experience of different media. Beyond these scrupulously scripted encounters, opportunities abound for less predictable and more social, intersubjective considerations of the program, ranging from snarky plot summaries (e.g., televisionwithoutpity.com) to deeply affectionate fan-produced fiction and websites, to re-edited footage on video-sharing sites, and to the latest individual micro-blog feed.

Producers and networks, however, hardly ignore these institutionally unscripted elaborations of their programs. Showrunners (or their staff) lurk on fan-produced

digital media sites, using them as free, instant focus groups to gauge responses to plot and character developments (Shimpach, 2005, pp. 352–353). Beyond treating the Internet as uncompensated market research, networks have attempted to lure viewers to their programs through various efforts at digital media integration. The Fox network, for example, began airing “tweet-peat” episodes of its programs *Fringe* (2008 to the present) and *Glee* (2009 to the present) in the fall of 2009, allowing viewers who watched certain episodes on television simultaneously to follow a running commentary by cast and crew members through the micro-blogger service Twitter (Kohn, 2009). The ABC network tried a similar strategy with its struggling new program *No Ordinary Family* (2010–2011) in the next year. Other shows, meanwhile, are now designed to encourage YouTube-able moments, promoting themselves through “viral” videos circulated by interested viewers to friends, co-workers, and online contacts. Such moments strive for the global popularity of clips such as that of surprising, erstwhile lay crooner Susan Boyle performing *Les Misérables’* song “I Dreamed a Dream” from a 2009 episode of the television program *Britain’s Got Talent* (2007 to the present). It was several years earlier, after all, that NBC’s senior vice-president for alternative programming (i.e. “reality” shows) noted of *Talent’s* creator and on-screen judge, Simon Cowell: “He cracked that nut in how to do a variety show with a YouTube feel” (quoted in Schneider, 2006). These reproduced and redistributed Internet moments range from humiliating auditions for apparently (but, alas, not singularly) talent-less *American Idol* wannabes (2002 to the present) to memorable skits from *Saturday Night Live* (1975 to the present) and bits from *The Daily Show* (1996 to the present), to David Letterman admitting backstage affairs (Carter & Stelter, 2009), and to *faux* music videos introduced within the diegesis of sitcoms, like *Modern Family* (2009 to the present) and *How I Met Your Mother* (2005 to the present)³ – all almost immediately available for complete and repeated viewing online.

All of this has led to changes – both subtle and significant – in what eventually reaches viewers’ screens, whether these screens remain in the living room, on computers, or in the viewer’s pocket. If, after years of supposedly watching television together, as a mass, audiences are now dispersing to multiple channels and multiple media, new and extra value will accrue to those television programs designed and produced to *pursue* the audience. The value of a television program, therefore, is increasingly a function of its ability to appear to audiences everywhere, all the time. Thus, as NBC Universal’s chief digital officer announced recently, signaling the new strategies of television programming: “We believe in ubiquity distribution” (Littleton, 2007).

This context suggests, above all, two things. First, individual programs now function as – and are, probably increasingly, best understood to be – semi-autonomous properties with their own unique biographies and circulation, for which individual agendas may be developed. As Michael Curtin has summarized:

In this environment, media producers find that the branding of products is often more important than futile attempts to control the mode of distribution. Unlike the network era when the control of a few national channels was the key to profitability, neo-network television firms focus on marketing, promotion, and the control of intellectual property. (Curtin, 2004, p. 281)

As a result, programming has changed, so that individual programs can draw attention from within a crowded environment, sustaining interest over time and across media and traveling across temporal, technological, and national borders. Second, despite being semi-autonomous, these programs are properties of vertically and horizontally integrated media corporations with complex and not always efficient agendas for expanding markets and growing revenue.

In order to fully understand how this era of transition has impacted the production expectations and ultimately the programming generated, it is necessary to approach the television program both in its materiality and in its immaterial value. The television program is a product of the context of production conditions, which are situated within changing institutional imperatives, while at the same time it produces its own cultural value as a ubiquitous property to be mobilized across space and time. The economy of scarcity that gave value to a program sold to advertisers is being replaced by an economy of abundance in which a wide range of industries, their producers and consumers, capitalize upon the program's value as a property.

A Taxonomy of Imperatives

What this means on the ground is that program producers are now compelled to create programs specifically designed as individual properties with extensive lives and afterlives that travel across geographic, technological, and temporal borders. The task of the media scholar becomes one of understanding these developments, as they function together to change both the economic value and the semiotic value of the television program. This task might be achieved by considering the production imperatives that guide and drive television today. We might usefully group these imperatives together into the four Ts of TV. Given this new economy of television production, program producers are now compelled to create programs specifically designed to *travel* over borders and through time, *translate* to different cultures as well as to media, *tether* to new viewing and new sponsorship practices, and, throughout all these conditions, continue to *tantalize* viewers, attracting and holding attention of industry and audience alike at all these different sites.

Travel

We can sit down together and say, "This is what I need, this is what will travel."

Roma Khanna⁴

Programming is now designed to travel, both spatially and temporally, as never before. US-produced television programming has always circulated internationally. However, where once a program would establish itself and gain popularity on a US

network, become profitable in US syndication sales, and then be offered abroad at inexpensive (but by now nonetheless profitable) rates, now international distribution figures as part of the initial program pitch, the program's global circulation being a production consideration from the start.

Thus now even modest programs with short-lived or failed production and network runs find international distribution. For example, the sitcom about a small-town family, which, through a misunderstanding, takes in a Muslim exchange student from Pakistan, *Aliens in America* (2007–2008), aired for only one season in the US, having produced just 18 episodes for the CW Television Network. Yet this program sold in more than 20 other national markets, from Turkey to India, from South Africa to Israel (albeit in non-prime-time timeslots). This travel to screens around the world, moreover, was only the latest leg in this program's global voyage. The US-based production, for example, was filmed in British Columbia, Canada and featured 24-year-old Adhir Kalyan, a South African actor, in the role of Pakistani teenage high school exchange student Raja Musharaff.⁵ Similarly, the science-fiction mystery drama *FlashForward* (2009–2010) sold in more than 100 worldwide markets in 2009, including in Africa via M-Net, in the Middle East via Orbit Showtime, and in markets in Sweden, Russia, and Japan. This was done months before a single episode had shown anywhere (Hopewell & Keslassy, 2009). Signaling the thinking behind this approach to television programming, *FlashForward*'s global distributor, Disney–ABC Worldwide Television's president of global distribution, Ben Pyne, announced that "we believe this type of release helps to spread the buzz around the world" (quoted in Hopewell & Keslassy, 2009, p. 7). This effort to generate a global "buzz" about the program has to do with more than piracy concerns and signals a corporate imperative that exceeds simple market expansion.

It is not news that US television programs are played globally; this has been the case since the earliest days of television, when program copyright holders discovered how lucrative a syndication market exceeding the US borders could be. For years, however, this model of distribution still relied on a successful US network run to produce a market for the program over the three to four years it took to produce the nearly 100 or so episodes needed for an off-network syndication market to "strip" the show across a weekday schedule. With the advent of Fin-Syn in the 1970s, the syndication market became crucial to independent television producers, who were increasingly forced to deficit finance their network productions and could only recoup costs on programs that were successful in the syndication market. International syndication, as a next step, then added to the profit margin of these successful programs, while implicitly helping to pay for those that failed to reach syndication.

What these recent examples demonstrate is that (1) a global market is now regularly being considered as part of a program's initial run; and (2) the purpose of this initial run is, at least in part, to create "buzz" about the particular program. Buzz in this sense suggests an informal familiarity with aspects of the program that might build it into a "brand" that can be sold and leveraged in the future. Branding is corporate jargon for a process of adding commercial, "iconic" value to intellectual

property above and beyond any single iteration of that property (Blumenthal & Goodenough, 2006, p. 160). Brand equity is a corporate phrase used to describe the current and future value of the commercial and cultural aura of a property being “buzzed” about (Moran & Malbon, 2006, p. 108). Thus the simultaneous international distribution of television programming is not only about accessing global markets, though studios do want their programs to reach markets before pirated copies are available. Studios also want to build future value for an individual program globally, through practices of ubiquitous distribution. This practice demonstrates the extent to which it is increasingly believed that the value of a program grows as that program travels.

Programs are produced to travel in order to generate value in the form of brand equity against future uses of the property. Such programs are therefore necessarily also produced to travel through time. Thus the television programming produced to travel geographically must also be durable, sustaining interest and gathering more audience members over time, rather than merely for one or two ephemeral airings. As the indomitable US industry trade journal *Variety* frequently reminds its readers: “What must also be considered though, is playability for a show beyond the immediate ratings. Keeping a series on the air despite questionable numbers, execs look to see how the show plays overseas and what the DVD prospects are – monies that help offset ever-rising production costs” (Levine, 2009). Temporal travel is required to turn transient and ephemeral programs into durable properties. This means that such programming is increasingly produced not only with its life on television in mind, but also with the growing significance on the value of the program’s “afterlife” in mind as well – its continued circulation, repackaging, and repurposing beyond its initial iteration. *Aliens in America*’s mere 18 episodes can still be purchased on iTunes. *FlashForward* was available as video on demand weeks after its television debut in many of the national markets in which it was shown. In the US it was available on the video-streaming consortium site, hulu.com, run by NBC Universal, Fox Entertainment, and ABC. That entire series was soon officially available on iTunes and DVD, unofficially on YouTube. And *Aliens in America* and *FlashForward* were two programs that failed, that were cancelled in their first season!

Indeed, by commercial television industry’s own standards, the vast majority of new prime-time programs fail to garner ratings of the size and kind deemed necessary by their networks to keep them in production past their initial year. Yet these shows continue to live on in some form, being available to be purchased and viewed. They traveled geographically in their short lives, and they continue to travel temporally both in institutionally scripted and in unforeseen ways through their afterlives – quite a scope and span for failures! Imagine the potential for commercially successful programs.

It might be noted that both of these particular examples thematized the new cosmopolitan dynamics of geographic and temporal travel in their own storylines. *Aliens in America* satirized intercultural misunderstanding, parochial ignorance, and the tensions of transnational exchange. *FlashForward* offered globalized mystery and

conspiracy – it was happening simultaneously to all of us, around the world – amid the mass experience of nonlinear temporality. While such strategies clearly do not guarantee long-term success, they nevertheless help to offset production costs and to build a global brand, prompting some kind of sustained afterlife.

Meanwhile, very successful programming trends emerged that would appear to offer counterexamples to the geographic and temporal travel imperatives governing television production today (see, for example, Raphael, 2004). Live sports events as well as reality contest programs seem designed to draw viewers into their "liveness," offering up television's unique ability to bring what is happening elsewhere right now to you, in your home, as it is happening. Such liveness has long been considered central to television's appeal and influence, while it privileges certain forms of access to reality (Feuer, 1983), thus organizing social reality (Couldry, 2004) and negotiating experiences of both immediacy and spatiality in the viewing experience (White, 2004). Such considerations clearly inform not only the cultural impact, but also the institutional strategies involved in programming "reality" television formats. So-called unscripted "reality" programming seems designed specifically to counter changing viewing habits and ubiquity distribution practices by offering explicit incentives to viewers to watch the programming when it is initially shown. This genre has found less success overall when rerun and is less often offered on DVD or as a download. A program like *American Idol* (2002 to the present), a reality competition focusing on the national audition process for a young new pop singer, for example, has drawn large enough prime-time audiences to be the top rated program in the US for several years. The draw of the program is in part derived from an "interactive" component in which the contestants are eliminated from the show by viewers who either telephone or use the short message service (SMS) to send in their "votes" as text message. The final results and the new season's winners, moreover, are announced during a "live" television event. None of these textual strategies can be effectively sustained into time-shifted viewing, which thus elevates the "live" ratings of each episode. Not only does time-shifting negate "liveness" and eliminate the possibility of text-message participation, but the internet is filled with commentary about the program within minutes of the winner's announcement. The results are discussed at work and at school the very next day. While such appointment television stands somewhat apart from traditional programming flow, nonetheless it provides multiple incentives to watch the show when and as it is first offered, "live."

Yet such programming *does* travel, both geographically and temporally. *American Idol*, despite its title, actually traveled to the US. A franchise of the British talent contest originally called *Pop Idol* (later reconceived as *The X-Factor*), the program is co-owned by 19 Entertainment (founded by Simon Fuller, formerly of Spice Girls fame) and FreemantleMedia. It has travelled globally as one of the most successfully franchised program formats in the world (Adalian, 2002). The over 40 officially licensed versions include *Australian Idol*, *Idols West Africa*, *India Idol*, *Indonesian Idol*, *Nouvelle Star* (France), *Pinoy Idol* (in the Philippines), *Superstar* (shown across the Arab States), as well as versions from Sweden to South Africa, from Singapore to Greece,

and from Malaysia to Bulgaria. Meanwhile unlicensed versions of the program are shown in locations from China (*Super Voice Girls*) to Afghanistan (*Afghan Star*). Temporal travel consists of clips packages later available on television, continuously on the Internet, and eventually on DVD. These tend to feature “favorite” performances and memorable “moments,” “best and worst of” montages, and season-finale performances and highlight recaps. The continuing careers of winning contestants (and even of popular non-winning contestants, all of whom sign extensive contracts with an affiliated entertainment company) extend the afterlife of the program. Thus even the programming most aggressively encouraging viewers to enter into television’s traditional viewing practices in the end subscribes to the new imperative to travel through space and time.

Translate

There is no point in trying to sell a program that is parochial or culturally exclusive to one territory.

Donna Wiffen⁶

Intimately bound to travel, television program production’s second imperative is to translate – that is, not only to travel globally, but also constantly to find local amenability. Such translation is not limited to new national and cultural settings; it extends to new media platforms as well. The production of television programming must now consider and actively include possibilities for translation across languages, localities, and cultures as well as translation across screen size, distribution platforms, and indeed media. As the trade journal *Variety* reminded its entertainment industry readership, so far as international co-producers and distributors are concerned, “before the accountants and lawyers get down to work, the script must be able to transcend national boundaries” (Clarke, 2009). In other words it is one thing to distribute a program around the world, in an effort to expand the program’s market and to create international “buzz” for the program’s brand potential, but it is another thing to imagine (and then attempt to capitalize upon) the ways in which that program might find local resonance and amenability in a wide variety of local sites of television viewing around the world. Similarly, while it is a relatively straightforward (if, until recently, novel) practice to distribute a program over the Internet, onto portable media devices and mobile phones, in DVD collections, and through other outlets, it is perhaps less clear how that program’s transmedia coordination and expanding narrative will actually play on so many different devices, screen sizes, and over extended periods of time. Thus, while translation is intimately bound to travel, it nonetheless offers the opportunity to focus upon those textual features of a production that are intended to facilitate not only travel, but also specific, various, and often unpredictable moments of accommodation across cultures and media.

Programming translates, for example, as the licensing of program formats for reality programming. Program formats are sold around the world by intellectual property rights holders, while local broadcasters tailor details of a program to local practices and tastes (Esser, 2010; McMillin, 2007; Moran & Malbon, 2006; Straubhaar, 2007). Such financial and production partnerships assure that reality programs are produced "with an in-depth knowledge of the local market" (Remy Blumenfield, ITV director of global formats, quoted in Clarke, 2009). Thus the Indian version of *I'm a Celebrity . . . Get Me Out of Here!* (*Iss Jungle Se Mujhe Bachao*) saw licensing and production arrangements negotiated three ways between ITV Studios, Sony TV India, and the local Indian production company MidiTech (Clarke, 2009). The British program *Weakest Link*, meanwhile, could air in more than 40 countries, but it could feature local references and be hosted by local or regional celebrities in each iteration. For the third season of *Gran Hermano* – the Argentine version of the initially Dutch and now internationally recognizable *Big Brother* – the increasingly familiar program was kept fresh by offering a contestant exchange with Spain's version of the same program (Johnson & Newbery, 2002). Program formats that failed in one national market (e.g., *Power of 10*, hosted by Drew Carey on CBS in the US, 2007–2008) could prove popular and successful in another (e.g., *Dus Ka Dum*, hosted by Salman Khan on Sony TV in India, 2008–2010: see Hasan, 2008). Such renewable success in so many different locations, with seemingly so many different versions of a show's idea, is the result of detailed and extensive production practices designed to translate a program's success around the world while growing its value as a property with a commodity brand.

Recall the example of the global success of *Pop Idol*. This program's textual characteristics allow every version of the show, in so many different cultural and national locations around the world, to appear on television as locally produced. Each iteration of the program is carefully translated for its local market, with regional celebrity hosts and local musicians/celebrity on-screen judges. Each version of the program has local contestants compete by singing music familiar to and popular with local audiences. Finally, crucial to this program's success has been the participation of the local audience: viewers telephone or text-message their preference for a winner, and the tabulation of those votes results directly in determining the winner (Lisotta, 2006). To facilitate adaptations, the production distributor Freemantle does not conclude its involvement at the signing of the license agreement. Instead the company "has an arm of 'fliers,' executive producers and other experts who travel the world" (Brown, 2003, p. 6) – to guide, inform, and train national and regional production partners in the "secrets" of the program's success. Fremantle's president of worldwide entertainment at the time, Alan Boyd, argued:

We send our executives, tell them the tricks, for example, how to choose judges. There are only a few places, such as Iceland or Kazakhstan, where they are allowed to make it themselves. In all-important markets we're there. It's like going into hospital. You don't want a doctor to operate on you who's never done it before. It is not a simple job. If a show is made badly, it devalues the format. We basically give a warranty to the channel. They are buying past experience. (Quoted in Brown, 2003, p. 6)

Beyond the question of Iceland's importance (or medical care), these life-or-death metaphors suggest the extent to which such advice and supervision demonstrate the intellectual property holder's commitment not only to successfully implemented versions of the program, but also to its maintenance of the property's global value, even through multiple translations.

Scripted narrative programming can also "translate" through similar format licensing agreements, though it tends to do so less often. Even as the US suburban melodrama *Desperate Housewives* (2004–2012) was shown with Spanish subtitles on Sony Entertainment Television in Argentina, Canal 13 there debuted *Amas de casa desesperadas* (2006–2007), an officially licensed, Spanish-language adaptation of the Disney-owned property (Kunz, 2010, p. 309). US television schedules meanwhile have seen *faux* documentary sitcoms like *The Office*, licensed by NBC from Great Britain, serial dramedies like *Ugly Betty* (2006–2010), licensed by ABC from Columbia, and psychological dramas like *In Treatment* (2008 to the present), licensed by HBO (Home Box Office) from Israel. Each has its premise and format translated into successful US productions. That is, while the premise and format of the program is licensed from elsewhere, the cast, references, language, and in many cases the very tone of the program can be localized for a new television market. As an NBC executive suggested about changes made to *The Office* for US audiences, "I think Americans need a little more hope than the British" (Kunz, 2010, p. 321).

Narrative programming, the value of which is derived from specific stories and characters (and often actors), has, however, more often been sold as produced. Such programs frequently rely upon spectacular visuals and special effects, visceral action sequences, and graphic violence and sexuality to assure interest and basic translation across national, cultural, and linguistic barriers. Certain textual and narrative elements have long been thought by television producers to be more "accessible" to viewers across linguistic and cultural difference. Program qualities thought to offer "a high degree of cross-cultural translatability" include rapidly paced narratives that rely more on action than on dialogue, visceral spectacle and visuals, as well as "ostentatious consumption, provocative sexuality, breathtaking stunts, stylized violence and (increasingly) sensational special effects" (Osgerby & Gough-Yates, 2001, p. 28). These textual markers have been characterized by program producers and by television scholars alike as qualities that can be "easily recognized, understood and assimilated in a diversity of contexts and markets" (p. 28). Some programming, in other words, is produced ready to translate. Thus recent years have seen the growth of internationally successful, visually stunning forensic crime dramas like the *CSI* franchise (*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, 2000 to the present; *CSI: Miami*, 2002 to the present; *CSI: New York*, 2005 to the present), as well as action-hero dramas, from *Smallville* (2001–2011) to *24* (2001–2010), *Chuck* (2007–2012), and *Human Target* (2010–2011). Programs such as these tend to travel globally as they are produced (rather than in locally produced format licensing form), relying on their compelling visuals of special effect, action, violence, and high-end production values to aid in translations.

The need to translate across multiple media platforms internationally also impacts the programs' look and stories. Television programming, in its expected travels, is increasingly designed to translate to differently sized screens, from giant plasma screens in the living room to small cell-phone screens on the go. These different distribution and exhibition platforms imply new viewing situations, from that of the casually glancing couch potatoes to that of the actively engaged web surfers, from that of detail-focused, invested fans to that of distracted multitaskers. A single program must “translate” so that casual viewers are not impeded from simply watching television as they presumably always have, even while the avid viewer is meant to perceive this cross-platform convergence as significantly heightening the possibilities of narrative engagement with the program. In fact, this appeal is meant to be amplified through interactive web designs encouraging the investment of both time and emotion in exploring minutiae related to the production or the diegesis (or both) of a specific program. As television program narratives have been produced to follow their audiences through space and time across multiple platforms, convergence has favored production strategies aimed at digitally literate viewers with access to high-speed Internet – that is, particularly at younger audiences with (access to) both financial and cultural capital. Thus, while the aesthetics of such programming strives for visual attention amidst the clutter of other programming, the form and the narrative might be designed to reward motivated pursuit across multiple websites and intersubjective viewing practices fostered by social networks, blogs, and discussions concurrent with Internet exploration, and to bolster efforts at getting fragmenting audiences to converge upon their branded intellectual property.

Television's expansion into “new media” realms has gradually resulted in texts intentionally designed to be experienced in multiple ways. Narrative material showing snippets of back story, the exploits of minor characters, video diaries of recurring characters, and other narrative enhancements effectively translate what was once a single narrative, on the one hand, to each medium and, on the other hand, to this new environment of dispersed audiences, and they do so through a strategy of semi-autonomous textual dispersal. Yet the work of translation across media is done at the expense of the industry's labor force, as networks and studios insist to guilds that the creative work of digital media does not fall under the “television” work for which they have been contracted and for which payments are made. Even as an enormous amount of labor is necessary for vast expansion into multiple media realms, the creators of ideas, narratives, and characters are frequently left out of the expansion, elaboration, and residual recompense of their very creations (Banks, 2010).

Programs, from *Smallville* to *Lost* to *FlashForward*, have made exhaustive diegetic use of the Internet as part of their characters' activities within the program. *Smallville*'s main character Chloe accesses in each episode multiple encrypted websites, many of which are available online for fans to investigate themselves. Similarly, *Lost* supplied viewers with an actual website for booking tickets on the fictional Oceanic Airlines while they scout for clues about the narrative and learn about the program. More overtly, *FlashForward*'s FBI agents quickly assembled the online “Mosaic,”

which is designed to aid in their investigation and to offer episodes of a fictional public television documentary series, *Stories from the Mosaic*. Promotional efforts on behalf of *FlashForward*, meanwhile, extended the text to the Internet site, which encouraged viewers to pretend that the premise of the show was real and to contribute their own visions of the future. These efforts also included early experiments in “augmented reality,” with magazine ads (which in this case were to be scanned by a computer’s webcam, which led to a “10-minute experience” of promotional video: see Schneider, 2009). Much of this translation was created and enacted outside the usual labor pool.

Tether

This combination of travel and translation puts considerable strain on the integrity of the television text, pulling it in multiple directions, asking of it multiple results, demanding the television text to tie together a wide variety of not necessarily compatible imperatives. Thus television production must now consider a text’s ability to tether these demands together into a coherent text, even as that text is often further asked to tether fragmenting, diverse, and dispersed viewers together, into a collective “audience,” *and* to tether programming elements together with advertising elements. Tethering allows us to understand the suturing role of the individual television program within the broad economy of commercial television programming, in which individual programs bear the work of uniting dispersed audiences with commercial content.

Television tethering now involves two simultaneous tasks. A program that travels and translates, in search of television’s dispersed audience, is valued for characteristics that allow it to bring together multiple audience constituencies into one larger audience for the program. In addition to traveling to audiences and translating for the benefit of various local encounters with the program, the program often seeks to attract multiple and distinct constituencies. Second, as programs disperse and translate in order to amass audiences beyond television’s traditional flow, they must tie textual features with commercial sponsors through a variety of techniques, from cooperative productions to “product integration” and corporate tie-ins. In short, producers value a single program for the way it tethers textual appeals to dispersing audiences that can be tethered back together into *an* audience to be sold to commercial sponsors.

With increased competition for advertising dollars and with the ability for viewers to “zip,” “zap,” and otherwise avoid commercial breaks, programs that can tether the sponsor’s message to the program’s text are highly valued. Television programming increasingly incorporates advertising products within its text, the paid placement of consumer commodities occupying screen and narrative space. Programs also incorporate incentives for viewers to seek out media spaces more fully controlled by individual sponsors. The program *Heroes* (2006–2010), for example, worked closely

with auto maker Nissan in designing a narrative environment for multiple and sustained product integration. Product placement subsidized the show's budget and marketed the show through ongoing experiments with customized content touting both program and sponsor. As NBC Universal's president of sales and marketing put it, the network's effort was to "enhance the effectiveness of using our content for advertisers to deliver their messages" (Steinberg, 2007). Nissan sought a "TV property the automaker could own with audiences through multiple media channels" (Halliday, 2007). Before its pilot had debuted, "Nissan's product placement planner [. . .] worked closely with the show's producers to place vehicles in 10 episodes" of the first season (Graser, 2007). Nissan was effectively tethered to both the program's text and the program's online *Heroes* comic book, which, in turn, linked to Nissan's own website (Halliday, 2007).

The same consumer technologies that facilitate these complex schemes to tether product to program capitalize upon audiences dispersing across multiple channels and multiple media. Therefore a second tethering imperative for program production is to tie these audience fragments together to the show, in effect reimagining the mass audience that has driven commercial television sales since the 1950s. It is not uncommon for individual programs to mix multiple, simultaneous genres in a program. *Supernatural* (2005 to the present), for example, is a family melodrama, a buddy action show, and a fantasy horror program, all in any given episode and each intended to appeal to different audience groups, simultaneously. *Lost* (2004–2010) was an ensemble psychological drama, a tropical adventure story, and an eerie science-fiction program. *Desperate Housewives* was a domestic melodrama, an ironic comedy, and a suburban mystery show. *FlashForward* offered science-fiction, domestic drama, police procedural, and mystery, all within most episodes. Action shows are also domestic dramas, with an occasional comedy or fantasy episode to be expected. Each of the genres in these and many other programs are thought to appeal to different segments of the fractured, dispersed audience.

Similarly, in an effort to attract the casual viewer while sustaining the interest of more committed audience members, programming form now regularly tethers episodic with serial attributes. While individual episodes tell complete stories and end conclusively within a single airing, the serial structures allow for certain narrative elements – such as central enigmas, villainous plots, budding romance, or character development – to continue over multiple episodes, and even over multiple television seasons. Hence the crime of the week might be solved by the hero of a police procedural, and the bad guy might be captured. In the same episode, however, the romance between the heroine and her attractive lieutenant remains tantalizingly ambiguous, and one more piece of a recurring character's mysterious past has been revealed, all to entice more invested viewers. Programming tethers multigenre, multiform, product-placed textual attributes together in one program. Awareness of the imperatives of tethering allows us to look at production techniques designed to recombine a program, an audience, and advertising in new ways beyond programming flow, as the audience disperses and the program travels and translates.

Tantalize

Verb: to torment with, or as if with, the sight of something desired but out of reach; tease by arousing expectations that are repeatedly disappointed.

Dictionary.com

To travel, translate, and tether in this fashion, a program must continue to tantalize, attracting and holding the attention of industry and audience alike, in all these different locations of travel and translation and amidst all these multiple tethering strategies. Commercial television has always been produced to attract the right kind of audience (that is, those whom advertisers would like to reach), and it has often done this by providing aspirational characters and settings. However, as television programs travel and translate in an environment with ever more competition for audience time and attention, they are now produced specifically to ask for *more* and *different* kinds of attention, rather than simply fitting into the programming flow, unobjectionably. As Michael Curtin has argued – and industry wisdom appears to agree – “given a greater range of choices, audiences are drawn to the products by textual elements – characters, story lines, special effects – rather than by the technological and regulatory constraints formerly imposed on the delivery system” (Curtin, 2004, p. 281). The relentless sequencing of Raymond Williams’ “planned flow” (1990, p. 86) is increasingly understood as being less persuasive than the qualities of individual texts in attracting audiences within twenty-first-century media clutter.

Certainly some such qualities emerge from the growing ubiquity of the aesthetically arresting “stylistic exhibitionism” of Caldwells’ (1995) “televisuality.” Disparate textual elements with aggressively visceral aesthetics and graphic effects are central to generating interest in programs. From *CSI*’s graphically animated and rapid zooms (now clichéd) into gaping bodily wounds to *The Office*’s increasingly familiar *faux* documentary shooting style or to the explosive barrage of sound and graphic effects that introduce and interrupt prime-time sports, all are designed to tantalize viewers.

Program narratives organized around singularly intriguing and/or suspenseful concepts are also meant to tantalize by intriguing viewers with hints of future developments. Online speculation, exegesis, and intersubjective and social viewing practices meanwhile expand the brand. Dramas, from *Lost* to *24* to *FlashForward* to *The Event* (2010–2011), offered central enigmas and high-concept premises combined with serial narratives, all designed to sustain viewer interest. Indeed, even while translation strategies devalue creative labor in television production, tantalizing strategies presuppose increased efforts for showrunners, writers, and other workers who keep track of complex narratives within stylistically heightened visual presentations.

Tantalizing viewers across geographic and temporal travel and translation and amidst multiple tethering practices also extends, in production practices, to populating programs with characters that elicit strong emotional responses (affection,

attraction, hatred, etc.), and with characters presumed to look like the primary audience demographics being sought. Thus melodrama, with its exaggeration of Manichean contrasts between good and evil characters, remains a popular genre in much television programming (including unscripted reality shows), even while the growing trend of populating program casts with multi-aged, multi-ethnic, even multinational ensembles is intended to signal *entrée* for viewers of corresponding demographic groups. Further experiments in tantalizing audiences through interactive options – to vote characters off the program, to exchange Internet messages with fictional (or reality) characters, or even to customize character identities for future episodes – suggest the extent to which subjective identification with television characters factors into efforts to tantalize into viewing specific television programming.

Conclusion

What these four Ts of TV mean for the study of media production is that, as the “property” of programming is distributed into ubiquity, the same activities and options that motivate television convergence practices, the circumvention of temporal scarcity, and the fragmentation of the audience are also the cause and the result of the remarkable growth in the transformation of production practices. Amidst this period of transition from scarcity to abundance of viewer access to individual programs, the function, and indeed the very definition of television programming, has been transformed. Conceived of within the industry as intellectual property with brand potential, programming is no longer simply the content of broadcasting, but instead has become best understood as being itself a valuable commodity in textual form, disseminated across a multiplicity of viewing and institutional practices. Any given television channel has become just one means of encountering (a part of) the program on offer. Any given program is increasingly conceived of and produced so as to be experienced in multiple places and over an extended period of time. Servicing a television network’s broadcast schedule and ad sales is now imagined as only the first step in a program’s sustained and expanding life as a valuable property. Ultimately, the expanding spatial reach of a temporally limited program is being replaced, as an institutional strategy, by another, which emphasizes the spatial and temporal ubiquity of access to that program. Mitigating against the increasing uncertainty of a fragmenting audience is only one component in this new attention to television programs.

This is a broad transformation in television production, which could not be adequately accounted for and described without considering both political-economic influences on institutional practices and the textual analysis of programming in circulation. Television now requires specific, integrated strategies for viewing and analysis if we are to understand and adequately engage with all that we see. The four Ts

offer a way of imagining the work necessary for us to know, together, the labor and the leisure, the making and the meaning, of the television programs with which we have been invited to spend our time.

NOTES

- 1 Fox had largely eluded Fin-Syn enforcement in its first decade as a network through special considerations in the name of competition and by not broadcasting a full prime-time schedule.
- 2 In the event, a series of mergers and divestments involving CBS, AOL, and station group owners, combined with continuing demand for Warner Bros. and Paramount, produced programming on other networks; the changing fortunes of broadcast television in general and the difficulty of launching even one, much less two new networks combined so that The WB Television Network and UPN (United Paramount Network) merged into The CW Television Network in 2006.
- 3 See, for example, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66TqUyjqM40> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF1b1pf9DRY> (not available in some countries).
- 4 Head of NBCUniversal Media's international networks and digital businesses, quoted in Pfanner (2007).
- 5 Taking full advantage of the end of Fin-Syn, the program was produced by the CBS Corporation's production division, CBS Paramount Network Television (subsequently to become, in 2009, simply CBS Television Studios). It aired on the CW Network, which is half-owned by the CBS Corporation.
- 6 Vice-president of production and networks for worldwide drama at international media distributor FremantleMedia (quoted in Clarke, 2009).

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A Critical Analysis of Cultural Imperialism

From the Asian Frontlines

Dal Yong Jin

ABSTRACT

Asian cultural industries have produced and exported domestic television programs and films on a large scale since the mid-1990s, challenging scholars' theories of cultural imperialism. The process remains complex, however, because the US still dominates the Asian cultural market and has expanded its influence through massive capital investments. This chapter analyzes the nature of transnationalization for Asian cultural industries in order to establish whether cultural imperialism is phased out in Asia. It explores the flows of Asian cultural products and examines the import and export of these goods in recent years. It then challenges the assertions made by scholars who formulate a reverse cultural imperialism thesis, and it questions whether cultural imperialism is still useful in explaining the Asian cultural market.

Over the last decade the production of Asian popular culture has increased: its creations have entered Western as well as Asian markets. From Korean dramas to Chinese films and from Bollywood movies to Japanese animation and console games, Asian cultural products have become globally popular. Despite the increasing scholarship that examines the role of Asian cultural products or of their industries, there is no consensus on Asia's role in the global cultural markets. In particular, the rapid growth of Asian cultural products has raised the question whether cultural imperialism is a

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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reliable characterization of contemporary Asian cultural markets. In fact some media scholars have already sounded the death knell for cultural imperialism as a useful concept in media production studies.

Asian countries have different languages, economies, and political situations; therefore it is not an easy task to consider them as a whole, in an attempt to evidence cultural imperialism or its alternatives. It is also difficult to confirm that Asian popular culture has irrefutably earned dominance in the global market, due to the limited period of its transnational circulation. In other words, it is premature to conclude that the current boom of Asian popular culture is a transitory phenomenon or that it will last longer. Beyond this, however, the present chapter argues that US influence has never decreased; instead it has rapidly increased, through a new transnational guise and amidst market liberalization in several Asian countries.

The chapter discusses the recent development of Asian cultural industries, in particular film and broadcast industries, to demonstrate the increasing role of Asian popular culture in the global market. It is not meant to examine the causes behind the increase in Asian cultural exports. It investigates instead whether the recent growth of regional cultural industries justifies a shift away from the norm of the cultural imperialism thesis. Historically, three major critiques were adduced to this thesis. Although the three are not mutually exclusive, each critique applies to case studies based in Asia. The chapter rehearses them in order to show the relationship between cultural imperialism, its critique, and emerging Asian cultural markets. This analysis helps to establish that cultural imperialism is still a useful heuristic for explaining both the emerging Asian cultural market and the changing nature of Asian cultural industries.

Early Theses on Cultural Imperialism

Since the late 1960s media researchers all over the world have discussed the unequal flows of television programs and motion pictures from Western to developing countries in terms of cultural imperialism. Imperialism involves an extension of power or authority over others, with a view to domination, and it results in the political, military, or economic dominance of one country over another (Wasko, 2008). Cultural imperialism extends this definition to incorporate the cultural imbalances and inequalities between rich and poor nations that result from economic and technological gaps between them (UNESCO, 1980). An early theorist of cultural imperialism, Herbert Schiller, argued that the economic dominance of the US and a few European nations over the global flow of media products had cultural impacts:

The concept of cultural imperialism describes the sum of processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressures, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominant centre of the system. (Schiller, 1976, pp. 9–10)

Schiller's thesis focused on the conjunction of US entertainment, communication, and information (ECI) industries, and it was further developed by a range of communication scholars worldwide, who found empirical evidence of imbalanced cultural flows in the specific areas of news, television, film, and other forms of entertainment (Beltran, 1978; Dorfman & Mattelart, 1991; Guback, 1984; Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974; Tunstall, 1977; Varis, 1974). For example, through a survey of the buying and selling of TV programs in 50 countries, Tapio Varis (1974) concluded that the flow of information, television dramas, and news items is one-sided between Western and non-Western countries. Nordenstreng and Varis (1974, p. 52) also pointed out that, "globally speaking, television traffic does flow between nations according to the one way street principle: the streams of heavy traffic flow one way only." Armed with data demonstrating the one-way flow of cultural goods from Western to non-Western countries and from Northern to Southern countries, scholars of cultural imperialism in the 1970s and 1980s implied that non-Western and Southern countries were victims of parallel imperialisms, which helped the Western and the Northern countries maintain commercial, political, and military superiority. Grounded in the nation-state, US media corporations were the most notorious in these studies, not only for the power they exerted over cultural economies elsewhere, but also for the threat they posed to indigenous and local cultures internationally. Despite these grand statements, Asian countries were nearly absent from research agendas until the mid-1990s, when the consumer market for popular culture emerged as a national, and then as a global force.

Challenges to Theses of Cultural Imperialism

Since the early 1990s cultural imperialism theses have come under increasing scrutiny, in light of the growth of cultural industries in those Eastern and Southern countries supposedly dominated, respectively, by the West and the North. In particular, several Asian countries have rapidly developed their own cultural industries, which have infiltrated markets in other parts of the world. The growth of film industries in Asia – for example, the "Korean Wave," which symbolized the wave of Korean dramas and films across Asian markets, and "Bollywood," the Hindi-language film industry based in India – have challenged theses on cultural imperialism under three rubrics: (1) the development of local cultural industries; (2) peripheral vision; and (3) active audiences. Together, these rubrics have contributed to the formation of what might be called globalization theory.

The Development of Local Cultural Industries

Tracy (1988) states that Third World media producers strengthened their national cultural industries to compete with once dominant US and European cultural industries.

Table 10.1 Sales in the Korean television market

	1995–1996	2000–2001	Change
Imports	69.3	20.4	29.4%
Exports	5.5	28.8	524%

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Korea, 2002; Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2003.

As a result, cultural imperialism no longer exists. Proponents of this critique (see also Straubhaar, 1991 and Reeves, 1993) point to the rise of media conglomerates, such as Televisa in Mexico and Globo in Brazil, which not only defend their own national cultures, but also export these cultural messages to neighboring countries. In the Asian context, the Korean Wave provides a ready example of the ways local cultural production may counter cultural imperialism. Although Korea seemed completely captured by foreign film and television companies by the late 1980s, investment from both the government and private sectors in cultural industries in the late 1990s seemed to reverse one-way flows between Korea and the West.

In the television market alone, Korea's imports dropped by a factor of three and increased fivefold as Korean-made television programs appeared in China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Japan (see Table 10.1). Although these figures would reverse once again by 2007 – a fact to be discussed in more detail later – they indicate that the growth of local cultural industries may reduce the possibility of cultural imperialism.

Peripheral Markets

A second critique of cultural imperialism emphasizes how countries located on the peripheries of world capitalism, namely those that used to be the dumping grounds for US and European cultural products, have become economically interdependent in recent years. Drawing implicitly on Wallerstein's (1974) distinctions between core industrialized and peripheral markets, these scholars (see Chan, 1996; Pendakur, 2003; Shome & Hedge, 2002; Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996) provide ample evidence of Western markets that import cultural products from peripheral countries. Chinese films and co-productions, such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, have become major box-office successes in mainstream US movie theaters. Bollywood films screen in movie theaters across major US cities with large Indian American populations. There are even theatres that exclusively show Bollywood films in Vancouver, Canada. While Wallerstein considered China and India "semi-peripheral" countries due to their rapid industrialization, their cultural presence in Western markets at the very least destabilizes strict notions of cultural imperialism as a one-way flow of goods from the West to the East. It is also interesting to note that many

countries that neighbor China or India, for example Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Cambodia, fear the encroaching imperialism of these “semi-peripheral” countries due to the shortage of resources, skills, and technologies in their own domestic cultural markets. Although core–periphery is a relational concept, periphery-vision proponents have adapted the existing core–periphery model to a more complex and global cultural economy.

Active Audiences

Another main line of attack on the cultural imperialism thesis focuses on the third weak link: its underestimation of local resistance to Western dominance (Curran & Park, 2000, p. 6); it cites how local audiences modify, hybridize, indigenize or transform the meaning of foreign media products through their own local frameworks for understanding. These critics of cultural imperialism emphasize consumers’ active appropriation and selectiveness in their choices of media contents, showing that audiences often prefer culturally proximate contents over imported programs (Straubhaar, 1991). Supporters of active audiences have also analyzed the diverse responses of audiences outside of the US to Western media, thus debunking the supposed cultural effects of cultural imperialism. Liebes and Katz (1990) conducted seminal studies of the comparative reception of the US television program *Dallas* in the 1980s. They found that viewers’ interpretations of the program varied according to their nationality, religion, generation, and values. These studies tempered earlier work, which considered the program a prime example of American cultural imperialism (White, 2001). In other words, they point out that cultural imperialism theses have not adequately acknowledged audience members’ abilities to process information and to interpret messages in different ways, on the basis of their individual backgrounds. Primarily due to these cases, Mirrlees (2008, p. 177) bluntly claims that cultural imperialism theses failed to address the complexity of local audience reception practices.

Critiques of Cultural Imperialism and Globalization Theory

By the late 1990s studies of globalization took the place of studies of cultural imperialism as the key issue in the study of media production outside of the US and Europe. Combining the three rubrics for critiquing cultural imperialism theses, theorists of globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Robertson, 1992; Tomlinson, 1991) have focused primarily on cultural issues instead of the political economy of media production. They dismissed the notion of cultural imperialism for its vague language of

domination, colonialism, coercion, and imposition. Arguing that cultures and societies could no longer be analyzed in the framework of the nation-state, globalization theorists emphasized cultural pluralism and diversity over national politics or economic domination.

Media scholars have taken up globalization theory in relation to Asia most prominently through case studies of Japanese popular culture. Referencing media franchises such as Pokémon and Sailor Moon, as well as animation and manga genres, Iwabuchi (2008), Consalvo (2006), and Thussu (2007) implicitly claim that cultural imperialism is dead in Japan. Indeed, Japanese cultural exports have increased rapidly in the time period since Schiller's articulation of cultural imperialism. Japanese film production increased from 289 films in 1995 to 418 films in 2008, making Japan the third largest production market, behind the US and India (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in Japan, 2010, p. 746). No longer confined to Samurai movies, Japan has produced several films that were successful as Hollywood remakes, such as *The Ring* (2002) and *Shall We Dance* (2004), *The Grudge* (2003), and *Dark Water* (2005). The success of Japanese console video games throughout the world has been even more striking. The worldwide game market is expected to increase from \$27.1 billion in 2005 to \$46 billion in 2010 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2006, p. 368). Japan dominates this market through its dedicated consoles, which are produced primarily by two Japanese-based electronics companies: Sony and Nintendo.

Japanese media contents have found receptive homes in Asian countries. Regionally, Fung (2007a) writes that culturally proximate countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan see Japanese contents as easy to adopt and symbolically more Western than those from North America and Europe. This is because, although Japan has made its own unique cultural products, Japanese popular culture adopts the production skills, formats, and styles of Western culture, a phenomenon that makes Japanese media part of Western culture (Jin, 2009). Meanwhile, Japan deliberately markets its television dramas, comics, and cartoons within Asia by erasing its "cultural odor," or the association of a country of origin with a cultural product (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 95). This was necessary in order to erase the historical legacy of the Japanese as imperial oppressors in the region (Lee, 2004). Through this strategy, Iwabuchi (2008, pp. 145–146) asserts that Japan has escaped from American cultural dominance.

The dominance of Japan in global popular culture markets has led the cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall to conclude that Japan is actually closer to the West than to the East:

These days, technologically speaking, Japan is Western, though on our mental map it is about as far East as you can get. By comparison, much of Latin America, which is in the Western hemisphere, belongs economically to the Third World, which is struggling – not very successfully – to catch up with the West. (Hall, 1996, p. 185)

Hall's point echoes those of others, who have considered Japan as part of the semi-periphery (cf. Schiller, 1976; Wallerstein 1974) – neither part of the dominant core

in the West nor part of the victimized periphery in the East – when evaluating its media production. Even Iwabuchi's contention that Japan escaped cultural imperialism only by indigenizing American influences suggests that scholars take another look at what cultural imperialism means in a globalized media economy.

A New Look at Cultural Imperialism

Contrary to the opinion of critics of the cultural imperialism thesis, Western dominance in the Asian market has not decreased at all. Western, and predominantly US-based or -owned, cultural industries continue to dominate cultural products and media capital. Using both formal policies and informal negotiations, the global media giants have taken advantage of the rise of Asian cable and satellite – as well as terrestrial – television channels to target Asian countries, whose populations by the mid-1990s had the largest number of television sets in the world.

The US has increased its global exports of film and television programs exponentially worldwide, and to Asia in particular. According to the US Department of Commerce (2008, p. 50), US exports increased as many as 15 times between 1985 and 2007 (see Table 10.2). US imports of film and television programs increased during this same period as well, from \$76 million in 1992 to \$1,440 million in 2007, leaving a net imbalance of \$13.6 billion in 2007 (US Department of Commerce, 2008). While Japan has been the largest US trading partner in Asia, Korea, Hong Kong, India, and China have risen in prominence in recent years.

As Table 10.3 illustrates, China has rapidly increased its import of American cultural products, from only \$2 million in 1992 to \$169 million in 2007, while India has

Table 10.2 US film and TV exports, 1985–2007 (in billions US\$)

1985	1
1990	2
2001	8.57
2007	15

Table 10.3 Imports and exports of cultural products (in millions US\$)

	Imports from US in 1992	Imports from US in 2007	Exports to US in 2007
Korea	0.5	265	0.5
Hong Kong	0.5	77	7
India	0.5	58	2
China	2	169	1

increased from less than \$1million in 1992 to \$58 million in 2007. While Korea imported \$265 worth of television programs and films from the US in 2007, it exported less than \$500,000 worth of television programs and films to the US during the same year (Table 10.3; US Department of Commerce, 2008, pp. 50–51). As previously explained, the direct flow of cultural products from the US to Korea had decreased for a while; however, the import of foreign television programs and films, in particular from the US, again increased to 63.8% between 2005 and 2007, mainly due to the reduction of the screen quota system, which has resulted in the surge of Hollywood films. The market share of domestic films indeed decreased from around 62% in 2006 to 48% in 2008, when Hollywood films dominated the Korean film market (Korean Film Council, 2009, p. 4).

As such, Asian countries have provided new profitable markets for the US cultural industries. Market liberalization measures, which began in the early 1990s, increased cultural imports across the board, but did not have a significant effect on exports of cultural products to the US. These figures reflect the lobbies of US media giants such as Walt Disney, Time-Warner, and News Corporations, in alliance with the US government, which demanded that Asian countries, as well as Latin American countries, open their markets to US capital (Sparks, 2007, p. 138; Wasko, 2003, p. 213).

Asian countries used a variety of gatekeeping policies, ranging from outright bans and censorship to import quotas and the financing of domestic cultural productions, to restrict the influx of foreign media industries and content (Chadha & Kavoori, 2000, p. 428). The Chinese Propaganda Department took a series of steps to limit foreign television content as well as foreign ownership (p. 419). Korean regulations limited their television program imports to one fifth of the total, while asking domestic cinemas to screen films produced domestically up to a certain number of days per year. In Taiwan, at least 70% of the programming on terrestrial television stations and at least 25% of the programming on cable channels had to be locally produced (Chan, 1996, p. 134). It is hardly surprising that the strictest regulations have come in postcolonial Asian countries, where nation-building continues to be a critical issue (Sinclair et. al. 1996). Still, the result of these efforts has not turned the tide of US imports.

Some key examples emphasize the continuing dominance of global media industries in Asia. In Korea:

- Capital International (US) invested \$50 million in the Korean cable company On Media, which became its second largest stockholder (21.7%) in 2000 (Cho, 2002, p. 114).
- MTV (Music Television), a Viacom affiliate, established MTV-Korea as a joint venture with On Media in 2001 (Hau, 2001, p. 60).
- In 2007 Electronic Arts, the largest video and computer game company worldwide, invested \$105 million in the Korean game company Neowiz (Cho, 2007).

These examples of foreign influence, blatant in Korea, have been more subtle in China, where authoritarian politicians continue to open markets to capitalism. In 2000 China's

leaders formally declared that it would partially open its communication market toward international communication, as part of China's admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Khan, 2001). However, in the decade leading up to this public admission, foreign-media power privately grew. Foreign companies could own up to 49% of Chinese video and audio distribution companies and up to 49% of companies that build, own, and run movie cinemas. Star-TV owner Rupert Murdoch, who has changed his nationality from Australian to US, and Liu Changle, a former officer in the People's Liberation Army, thus launched Phoenix as a 45/55 joint venture that would complement the Star-TV platform. While the latter continued to beam English-language sports and entertainment channels to the mainland, Phoenix had exclusive rights to air Mandarin-language movie and general entertainment channels. Phoenix, perhaps not coincidentally, emphasized news and information programming amidst China's liberalization process in 1996 (Curtin, 2005, pp. 164–165). These examples show that the Asian cultural market is not safe from Western media giants.

Global trade agreements also function to penetrate Asian markets. Whereas the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has long represented US interests in opening Third World markets (Schiller, 1999), bilateral agreements have been the weapon of choice in US trade policy. Korea, which had a 64% share of its own film market in 2006 (Korean Film Council, 2009, p. 4), lowered its own domestic exhibition quotas from 146 days to 73 days a year, in anticipation of trade talks with the US. Negotiators apparently made the cuts a precondition for a US–Korea free-trade agreement. Since the rollback, the market share of Korean domestic films fell to 42% in 2008 (*ibid.*).

How to interpret the globalization process is critical. Unlike the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, when the US strategized to dominate world media flows, US media giants in recent years have made use of local cultural resources in promoting their own products. Influenced less by a regard for national cultures than by market forces, these companies' executives realize that people prefer to watch programs in their own languages (Thussu, 2000, p. 184). Indeed, "think globally, act locally" is the business motto of Viacom, suggesting a localized business strategy in other parts of the world. Viacom's holding company MTV is a case in point.

MTV seized the opportunity to extend its power into Asia in the 1990s, by working with national broadcasters. MTV personnel cooperated with China's state broadcaster, China Central Television (CCTV), to produce the CCTV-MTV Music Awards in Beijing in 2001. Later on they worked with the Shanghai Media Group (SMG) to create the Style Awards in Shanghai (Fung, 2007b, pp. 72–73). Expressed in the localization strategy "local people, local programs," MTV sells syndicated programs made in China to stations in different Chinese cities and inserts advertising between program slots. In Indonesia, MTV localized its global product by incorporating local audience tastes:

With videos played on MTV, shows may be all or mostly of Western groups, but they are selected for (and sometimes by) Asian audiences. The list often consists entirely of Western artists. Yet there are numerous shows that offer either a mix of Indonesian and foreign artists or exclusively Indonesian artists. (Sutton, 2003, p. 324)

Together, MTV's moves have made for a profitable business model. From a critical perspective, MTV's influence can be found in media contents around the world, where scholars have associated it with rank sexuality, brutish pride, and vulgarity (see Rao, 2007).

In sum, critiques of cultural imperialism, which have identified several emerging markets as evidence of the weaknesses of the cultural imperialism thesis, could not explain the case of Asian cultural markets. Asia has developed its own cultural products and exported them regionally, but it does not overtake the dominant position of the US in media production flows. Rather, Western cultural hegemony may have decreased, while Western media industries' profitability remains healthy, if not stronger. This leaves the question of long-term and cumulative effects on the audience as an open one. As Lee (2006, p. 895) has concluded:

Local reception may render the domination of Hollywood movies around the world somewhat less ominous [in the Asian context]. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that local reception does not make cultural imperialism a non-issue, because the end result of increasing Hollywood dominance would still raise concerns about the increasing lack of local voices and cultural resources available to the local audience.

Perhaps, as Anthony Fung (2007b, p. 84) argues, "it is unrealistic to assume that any nation-state can maintain itself as a fortress against new and accelerated global capital flows." Transnational capital establishes no territorial center of power and does not limit itself with fixed boundaries or barriers. It progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, embracing, and expanding frontiers (Hardt & Negri, 2001, p. xii). The fact that Western corporations, supported by Western governments and international agencies, dominate the flows of cultural production is not a new phenomenon. Schiller even reframed his own argument to fit this new and expansive transnational reality:

The early formulation in the late 1960s of the cultural domination thesis occurred in a specific historical era. Although that period is over, this by no means indicates that cultural domination no longer exists. The difference is that national (largely American) media-cultural power has been largely (though not fully) subordinated to transnational corporate authority. (Schiller, 1991, p. 13)

Schiller's revision has been extended through case studies that point to the cultural dimensions of transitional corporate authority (cf. Boyd-Barrett & Xie, 2008; Chadha & Kavoori, 2000; Jin, 2007). For one, Sreberny-Mohammadi (1997, p. 51) argues:

Cultural imperialism is not maintaining its rule merely through the export of cultural products, but through institutionalization of Western ways of life, organizational structures, values and interpersonal relations, language. Cultural imperialism should be considered a multi-faceted cultural process.

Examples of these Western ways include: the introduction of commercial media systems; the systematic violation of sovereignty with supranational communication technologies; the mass distribution of false or systematically distorted images of poor nations for global audiences; and the schooling of foreign students to US or US-style media practices (Schiller, 1996, p. 102). Though the arc of US power is waning, US culture remains influential in countries, not only in terms of explicit contents, but implicitly in the ways in which contents are framed.

Indeed, the nature of the transnationalization of the cultural industries has significantly shifted. Western cultural industries have changed their strategies to adjust to the changing global environment. Instead of solely focusing on exporting their cultural goods, they have invested in cultural industries in developing countries. Through this strategy they are still able to dominate the world cultural market, and they can still penetrate the commercial ideologies of Western countries. Although some countries have developed their own unique cultural strategies and have avoided cultural homogenization through globalization strategies, one needs to understand that globalization is another form of Western dominance. Cultural producers in Asia have tried to cooperate with Western cultural capital and cultural content, but they hardly escape from Western influence.

Conclusion

The discourse about cultural imperialism has shifted markedly over the course of the last several decades. Both proponents and opponents of cultural imperialism have offered several important approaches, which may grow one day into a new theory of cultural flows and impacts. As the globalization of media continues, Wasko (2008) predicts that the debates about the consequences of cultural flows will inevitably continue as well. Nevertheless, one should be cautious in using any one of the critiques of cultural imperialism to dismiss this phenomenon wholesale, or to replace it with a cultural theory of globalization.

It is true that Asia has become an emerging market for media production and that many Asian-based national industries successfully compete against dominant US films and TV programs. This does not mean that the inequality and imbalance in the audiovisual service sector between Western countries and Asian countries decreases significantly. While Asia plays a key role in the regional cultural market, the dominance of the US has increased even more rapidly. The few instances in which Asian popular culture has entered Western countries only reinforce the continuing power of US culture as the rule (see Maxwell, 2003). Cultural imperialism theory maintains its rule in developing countries not only through the increasing number of Western cultural products, but also through the capital investment made in local cultural industries by Western-based transnational corporations (Jin, 2007). The US dominance of cultural industries operates not only at the level of contents but also at the

level of structures, techniques, and resources. In this light, Schiller (1991, pp. 14–15) pointed out:

American cultural imperialism is not dead. Rather, the older form of cultural imperialism no longer adequately describes the global cultural condition. Today it is more useful to view transnational corporate culture as the central force, with a continuing heavy flavor of US media know-how, derived from long experience with marketing and entertainment skills and practices.

Asia presents relatively little evidence of the demise of cultural imperialism. On the contrary, we have yet to see how cultural imperialism will manifest itself, if not intensify, through Western-based corporations operating under the guise of globalization.

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Hollywood's Presence in Latin America

Production Participation to Distribution Dominance

Tamara L. Falicov

ABSTRACT

This chapter will examine contemporary film industries in Latin America more generally, to demonstrate what these industries share in common: dependence on state support to survive, and a relationship of subordination to Hollywood film, which dominates in exhibition, distribution, and, with more commercial fare, in production as well. Data concerning both production and various alliances between Hollywood studios and Latin American film industries – as reflected for instance in the history of runaway production in the region – will be juxtaposed to screen quota legislation passed in Argentina a decade later. These issues raise perennially thorny questions regarding Hollywood's history of hegemony in Latin America.

Contemporary Latin American film production has a constraining, yet sometimes enabling relationship with the Hollywood film industry. Although industries of the so-called “Trinity” (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico) flourished autonomously at various times – for example between the 1930s and the 1950s, when a robust studio system thrived in those countries – there has always been some degree of Hollywood influence or some tangible competition at economic, political, and cultural levels. The present chapter will focus on this relationship between two Latin American countries

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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that Hollywood has penetrated both as a viable export market and as a place where it can produce films offshore. Mexico and Argentina, which have developed film industries, will be profiled in terms of their differing finance models and of their sometimes strained, sometimes accommodating relationship with the Hollywood industry.

Historical Overview

In the film business, the relationship between Latin America and the United States begins as far back as the 1920s, when Hollywood looked to sell its motion pictures there and generated between 80 and 90% of box-office receipts in parts of Latin America (Armes, 1987: 47). Today that relationship continues. Data from 2001 show that overall grosses outside the US account for 55% of the total Hollywood studio box-office earnings and that Latin America has accounted for between 12 and 15% of foreign theatrical revenue (Toumarkine, 2001).

When European markets – historically, the largest buyers of Hollywood films – collapsed during World Wars I and II, Hollywood turned to Latin America to sell its product (see Schnitman, 1984). In 1927–1928 Latin America created more revenue for early sound features from Hollywood than Canada, Asia, and Europe combined – about 31.5% of the \$7.5 million that comprised the annual total foreign return (Usabel, 1982, p. 80).

During World War II, Mexico's film industry was aided and invested into by the Hollywood studios – the most involved one was Radio–Keith–Orpheum (RKO); and Hollywood helped train technical crew and actors in Mexico. Mexican actors such as Dolores del Río, Ramón Navarro, and Lupe Vélez crossed the Rio Grande to the US before World War II, but then they returned to Mexico in the 1930s and 1940s. They became transnational stars – stars both in the US and in Mexico – and helped popularize what has been dubbed the “golden age” of Mexican cinema, the period from 1938 to 1953. That was also an age of transnational collaboration between the two industries in the fight against communism: the Mexican B-film *Dicen que soy comunista* (*They Say I'm a Communist*) (Alejandro Galindo, 1951, Mexico), among others, perpetuated Cold War propaganda (Fein, 2000, p. 93).

Argentina, by contrast, paid heavily for its neutrality during World War II. Amidst allegations that the Argentine film industry was producing pro-Axis propaganda, the US government banned the shipping of raw film stock to Argentina. Although one studio, Argentina Sono Film, did produce pro-Fascist newsreels, most of the film industry, which at that time was the most industrialized and successful of its kind in Latin America, was democratic and supported the Allies (see Falicov, 2007). The US government, heavily influenced by Hollywood, found a strategic way to distribute US films in the region by severely weakening the Argentine film industry, which had the most developed studio system among Spanish-speaking countries at the time (Getino, 2005, p. 28).

Since the 1950s both Argentina and Mexico struggled with the loss of an industrial film studio system and had to rely increasingly on the assistance of the state to support cultural production in the face of Hollywood's dominance. During the 1960s and 1970s Argentina and Mexico produced some commercial cinema, but the landmark was a cinematic movement on the continent, dubbed the "New Latin American Cinema Movement": this was a highly politicized, anti-imperialist, low-budget cinema that arose as a reaction to the dominant Hollywood cinematic style, form, and purpose. Filmmakers during this period were experimenting with a different film language; their hope was to create a cinema of "underdevelopment" and to use it in order to raise the consciousness of the nation, rather than merely to entertain. Beginning in the 1980s and until the present day, cinema in Argentina and Mexico (as well as in most parts of the region) aimed to make fewer films, but films with higher production values, and the intention was to circulate them at home as well as abroad, in international film festivals. The films were less overtly political, and B. Ruby Rich describes Argentine cinema from that era as a shift from the "revolutionary to the revelatory" (1991, p. 14).

In 1994 the Argentine government approved legislation intended to protect the national cinema as an entity that forms part of the cultural patrimony, and also as an infant industry in need of protectionist policies. Among other measures, a 10% tax on movie tickets was instituted, to further investment in national cinema. A decade after production funds were secured, a new law was passed that was designed to strengthen national exhibition in Argentina, in response to Hollywood's long-standing film-exhibition hegemony. Historically, national films faced discrimination in theater exhibitions, where Hollywood movies would supplant national ones due to exhibitor preference. Moreover, to this day, the Latin American film market continues to be dominated by Hollywood films, which show, on average, on between 80% (current figures in Argentina) and 98% (current figures in Central American countries) of theater screens. For these reasons, in 2004 the Argentine congress enacted a screen quota measure to insure legally that national films would gain equitable screening space. Mexico passed a screen quota, designating 10% as the proportion of theater space to be dedicated to national cinema (Article 9 of the 1999 law modified from 1992); but the quota is rarely, if ever, enforced (see Ugalde, 2004).

Although Argentina has attempted corrective measures to wrestle some screen time away from Hollywood, another trend – perhaps as a response to the screen quota – has emerged from Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil, where the Hollywood majors have invested in co-production and distribution deals with Latin American film producers. Rather than relying solely on state funding or on co-production funding from Europe (usually Spain), there is currently more collaboration taking place between the Hollywood studios, represented by the Motion Picture Association (MPA) – which is the overseas arm of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) – and Latin American producers. While Johnson (2005) has looked at the MPA's relationship to Brazil, this chapter will explore the Mexican and Argentine

cases. Moreover, a general overview of runaway productions will further explain Hollywood's drive for ever cheaper locations to film and post-produce in.

The History and Impact of Runaway Productions in Latin America

In addition to marketing their films throughout Latin America, "the majors" have found ways of cheaply filming runaway productions there. According to a 1999 study commissioned by the Directors Guild of America (DGA) and by the Screen Actors Guild (SGA), "runaways" (or offshore productions) increased from 14% of total US film and television productions in 1990 to 27% in 1998 (Klein, 2004). The trend continued when the number of domestic theatrical releases shot outside the country increased from 35% in 1998 to 51% in 2005, the greatest shift occurring in productions with budgets greater than \$50 million (CEIDR 2006, quoted in Davis & Kaye, 2010, p. 61).

In their edited volume dedicated to the study of runaway productions, Greg Elmer and Mike Gasher (2005, p. 2) caution researchers that studying outsourced productions needs to be tackled in a polyvalent way: "Understanding it requires consideration, at the macro scale, of economic globalization, screen aesthetics, narrative forms, and reception practices, as well as, at the micro scale, specific production communities, individual films and television programs and particular audiences." Although it exceeds the scope of this study to encompass all the facets of studying runaway productions, it is important, in this discussion of mobility in production, to understand how new technologies have enabled companies to produce and post-produce films and television abroad in an efficient manner. New technologies, such as the rise of digital cameras and affordable editing systems, have allowed companies to shoot rushes abroad and then to send them via email as file transfer protocols (FTPs), thus enabling people to shoot and edit in varying parts of the world. As long as costs are low and labor is skilled enough for the work at hand, production crews are increasingly mobile.

Runaway productions are not a new phenomenon in Hollywood's history. Historians pin the period of consistent production when US film studios opened satellite branches abroad (such as Paramount's Joinville Studios in France in 1930), where low-budget, multiple-language versions of the same film were produced in order to cater for foreign audiences at 33% below the cost of the original film produced in Hollywood (see Shurlock, 1931, p. 22, as summarized in Nornes, 2007, p. 262 n58). A decade later, Hollywood studios teamed up with the US government to promote what was known as "the good neighbor policy," through an orchestrated effort of creating Hollywood films with positive images of Latin America; these were designed to persuade Latin American nations to join forces with the Allies in World War II, and they were orchestrated through the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-

American Affairs. Examples include cartoons blended with live action films, such as Walt Disney's *Saludos Amigos* (1943) and *The Three Caballeros* (1945). These productions were filmed partly in Latin American countries, and during the period 1939–1947 roughly 84 films with Latin themes were produced (although the majority were filmed at home; see López, 1993). The actual phrase *runaway production* appears in the 1950s (Davis & Kaye, 2010), after the famous Paramount Case (or Hollywood Antitrust Case) of 1948, when the US Supreme Court ruling mandated movie studios to divest themselves from their exhibition houses (lest they continue to be monopolies). This in turn remolded the studios, which started to produce films through subcontractors abroad. During the period of the 1950s independent studios in Europe were hired in order to regain the repatriation of profits lost from European quotas and other constraints on US film exhibition there (Davis & Kaye, 2010, p. 59).

The current debates on US runaway productions focus predominantly on the Canadian case, as Canada offers the most enticing tax incentives to Hollywood producers. Moreover, compared to Latin American countries and to other non-English-speaking nations, Canada has closer cultural and linguistic ties with the US (indeed, it is not for nothing that New Zealand and Australia are key places for Hollywood crews to film in, despite the enormous geographic distance). Nevertheless, in the quest for ever cheaper labor and exotic locales, Latin America has continued to be on US film producers' radars, and it has done so by marketing its low-cost and touristic locations. Their visibility is increased through tax incentives and legislation, as has recently occurred in Mexico; through the creation of national and regional film commissions, which is being championed by both Mexican and Argentine regional governments; through presence in location conferences (such as the annual Locations Trade Show in Santa Monica, CA); and through ad placement in trade publications. For example, in the most recent Locations Trade Show, the following film commissions were present: Buenos Aires Film Commission, Durango, Mexico Film Commission, and the Mexican Locations Commission.¹

The Mexican Film Industry from the Late 1990s to the Present

Mexican cinema has struggled to survive from the 1990s to the present. Unlike other Latin American film industries, especially those of Brazil and Argentina, the industry in Mexico has not been able to push its government to create a strong funding mechanism to work as an incentive for production. Since 1997, production figures have been low (see Table 11.1).

Although state support exists under the auspices of the Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía (IMCINE; the Mexican Film Institute), increased attention has been paid to private film companies, which, without government funding, have produced both critically acclaimed films and box-office hits. From 1997 to 2004, between one

Table 11.1 Number of Mexican films produced, 1997–2009

Production year	Films
1997	15
1998	11
1999	19
2000	32
2001	18
2002	14
2003	29
2004	36
2005	53
2006	64
2007	70
2008	70
2009	66

Source: Vargas (2003); Cazares (2006a); IMCINE (2012).

half and one third of all the films produced in any given year were financed through 100% private monies. It is these film companies, most of them funded by wealthy entrepreneurs, that are now waking up the nearly moribund film industry. For example, the Mexican conglomerate Interamerican Entertainment Corporation (CIE) has partnered the venture-capital arm of the Grupo Financiero Inbursa (owned by billionaire Carlos Slim Helú) to create Alta Vista Films (Morales, 2001). Another company, Anhelo, is funded by chief executive officer (CEO) Carlos Vergara, who made his fortune through Omnilife, a herbal supplement company (Smith, 2003, p. 395). These production companies worked with film directors such as Alfonso Cuarón and Guillermo del Toro, who made films in Mexico, then became successful in Hollywood, but later returned to their home country to make quality films that are more personal. Currently del Toro and Cuarón are based in the US. Alejandro González Iñárritu has followed the opposite trajectory by making a hit film in Mexico, then directing in Hollywood. *Y tu mamá también* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001, Mexico), produced by Anhelo, *El espinazo del Diablo* (*The Devil's Backbone*; Guillermo del Toro, 2001, Mexico), also produced by Anhelo, and *Amores perros* (*Love's a Bitch*; Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000, Mexico), produced by Altavista, are small, artistic films that gained critical acclaim in arthouse circles abroad and were equally successful at the domestic box office. For the most part, lower-budget films such as these get limited US distribution, if any. In Cuarón's case, however, the independent US film distribution company Independent Films Channel (IFC) distributed *Y tu mamá también*, which became the most widely distributed foreign-language film in recent US history (Plasencia, 2004).

The three directors of these films are friends and have remarked in interviews that they feel ostracized from the traditional film community for going to Hollywood (Puig, 2002, p. 14D). They do not lament the loss of state funding for films: according

to del Toro, private funding signals that “that whole fossilized approach has now been overturned, thank God,” and Cuarón states his preference for private-investor finance over what he deems “corrupt Latin American governments” – by which he refers to the old-guard ruling-party politics of the once dominant PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) of the 1990s (quoted in Brooks, 2002). This reformist stance is partly a reflection of the so-called “new” (conservative) government party or National Action Party (PAN), which swept to power in 2000; but it is also these directors’ defense against criticisms that people in the film establishment have leveled against them. In the Mexican press, *Y tu mamá también* was jokingly renamed “Hombre, Where’s My Car?” or “Latin American Pie,” which implicitly likened it to recent Hollywood teen movies. Clearly some members of the established film community do not approve of national filmmakers having close ties to Hollywood. Cuarón stated: “Of course, I’m not going to defend America’s attitude toward Mexico. Historically it is a very tense relationship. But you have to be pragmatic. Why should I turn down American distribution?” (quoted in Brooks, 2002). These newer directors share similarities with the transnational figures that helped fortify the golden age of Mexican cinema, such as directors Roberto Gavaldón and – notably – Emilio “El Indio” Fernández, who spent time in Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s and learned their trade there (García Riera, as presented in Tierney, 2003, p. 227). There is therefore no lack of irony when those in the film establishment criticize the newer directors for working in Hollywood, while they themselves wax nostalgic over the bygone days of a more “authentic” Mexican cinema. These current directors represent a new, more youth-oriented film culture that, while not without its controversies, has helped revive Mexico’s ailing industry.

The MPA in Mexico

Mexico is the number one market for the US audiovisual industry in Latin America, and it is ranked tenth by MPA member companies among all foreign markets (MPAA, 2005). The MPA has played an important role in producing and distributing commercial films made in large part by “industrial *auteurs*.” These directors work with multinational, corporate-owned production companies and produce television commercials in addition to film. Among the reasons for this involvement, apart from the desire to diversify the Hollywood portfolio, is the need to respond to nations that demanded cultural exceptionalism during the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA) agreements. As a way of appeasing this sector and as an attempt to make a profit at the same time, the MPA began to collaborate in cultural production with the three most developed film industries in Latin America – Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil – to demonstrate how “the production and distribution decisions of MPA member countries also reflect this commitment to cultural diversity” (MPA, 2003).

In the case of Mexico, the MPA, via studios such as Disney, Warner Bros., Fox Universal, and Columbia TriStar, has produced, co-produced, and distributed film

and TV programs throughout the Americas. The films co-produced with Hollywood studio money generally have very low budgets by Hollywood standards (typically between \$1 million and \$2 million dollars). Most Mexican films that receive co-production funding from Hollywood studios are relatively expensive by Latin American standards and they tend to be, not “quality” productions, but rather popular movies that appeal to younger, upwardly mobile, upper-middle-class audiences – the sort of audiences that enjoy comedies and trendy urban youth culture (described below). It is these very films that make money at the box office, but that are not being exported to film festivals for world recognition.

Mexican co-producers stand to gain from Hollywood involvement; in addition to the money invested, they also receive greater exposure from the wider distribution that the Hollywood studios command. For example, Miravista, the company co-created by Walt Disney Latin America and the Spanish telephone company Admira, signed the Argentine director Gabriela Tagliavini to direct its first Mexican co-production, *Ladies’ Night* (2003, Mexico) along with Mexican producers Televisa Mexico and Argos Communication. This film, produced to the tune of \$1.6 million, is a comedy about a woman who runs away with a male stripper on the eve of her wedding. According to *Variety* magazine, *Ladies’ Night* reached number one at the box office in 2004 and was the second largest box-office hit in Mexican film history despite receiving little critical acclaim (O’Boyle, 2005). According to Mexican film statistics, the film was the eighth largest box-office hit from 1999 to 2004, with 2.2 million viewers (Cazares, 2006b).

Hollywood studios have been willing to distribute films after the latter have demonstrated success in their home territory. For example, Mexico’s largest box-office hit of all time, *El crimen del Padre Amaro* (*The Crime of Father Amaro*; Carlos Carrera, 2002, Mexico), claimed 5.2 million viewers before being picked up by Sony Pictures Entertainment. This film outdid the previous record, held by *Sexo, pudor y lágrimas* (*Sex, Shame and Tears*; Antonio Serrano, 1999, Mexico), a film distributed by Fox studios (MPA, 2003). In 2009, the top six Mexican box-office hits were distributed by the US companies Universal, Fox, Warner Brothers, Disney, and Sony, selling a total of more than 11.4 million tickets domestically (Young, 2009). The smash hit that year, *Rudo y Cursi* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2008, Mexico) was distributed by Universal and became the third biggest box-office hit of all time, with 3 million viewers (CANACINE, 2012).

Mexico as Hollywood’s Backlot

Despite the fact that government subsidies and incentives for film industry investment have not materialized in Mexico (to the same extent as they have for the private sector in Brazil, for example), there has been an attempt to encourage multinational investment by legislators. In 2004, Mexico created a 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) rebate on local film production services, on condition that they contract with a Mexican production service or a local producer (De la Fuente, 2004, p. 18), but by

September 2005, despite approval from Congress, the government still had not issued the operating regulations for this tax incentive to draw Mexico's industrial wealth into filmmaking (O'Boyle, 2005). Anna Marie De la Fuente has argued that international producers have long been trying to convince Mexico to offer filmmaking incentives. They believe that Mexico, despite its proximity to the United States, has lagged behind Canada, and even behind New Zealand, because it offered nothing, fiscally, to producers. However, in recent years, there have been a handful of Hollywood films shot in Mexico, due to its lower cost options for higher budget blockbuster movies. Some of these US film studios have financed runaway productions such as the famous mega-blockbuster *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997, US). More recently, in an attempt to lure Hollywood producers back to the country after a rash of drug gang violence in 2008–2009, an initiative was announced in March 2010, when President Felipe Calderón's administration rolled out a new policy of cash rebates. The initial funding pool of \$20 million offers 17.5% rebates on Mexican shoots, in a combination of cash rebates and sales tax refunds (Hopewell, 2010). This policy also came out as a way of competing with other Latin American countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, and Puerto Rico, which are currently offering deep cash rebates and highly competitive pay scales to foreign producers (Young, 2010).

The contemporary history of Hollywood filming in Mexico purportedly began when *Night of the Iguana* (John Huston, 1964, US) was filmed in the once sleepy town of Puerto Vallarta. The transformation of the town into a tacky commercial and tourist destination has been attributed to the film's fame. Restaurants and bars with the film's name cash in on the tourist market, and in 1999 the set of the film was resurrected into two theme restaurants based on the film (Koehne, 1999). During an earlier period, Hollywood westerns such as John Ford's *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948) were partially filmed in Mexico, on account of the landscape (which was faithful to the western genre) and of geographic proximity to Hollywood. Beginning in 1954, over 100 Hollywood films were shot in the northern Mexican city of Durango. In that year a film commission was founded at Durango, and films such as *White Feather* (1954), *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and *True Grit* (1969) were filmed there.

Big-budget productions of summer blockbusters didn't return to Mexico until the mid-1990s, when *Titanic*, the most expensive film in history (\$200 million), was filmed at a huge custom-built studio in Rosarito, Baja California Norte (Hawley, 2004). Director James Cameron built a 775-foot replica of the ship, 10% smaller than the real one, and a 17-million gallon tank to sink it in, within a 40-acre complex that Fox set up in Rosarito (Masters, 1997). According to the Mexican government, the film injected \$85 million into the local economy. The facility, now dubbed the Fox Studios Baja, has since produced *Master and Commander* (Peter Weir, 2003, US), *Pearl Harbor* (Michael Bay, 2001, US), and other special effects spectacles. More recent films include the comedy hit in both the US and Mexico, *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* (Raja Gosnell, 2008, US).

What are the advantages for Hollywood studios? Wages for Mexican film crews are about one quarter of those of their US counterparts, according to Hugo Alonso

Reyes Mejilla, secretary for technicians in the Union of Cinema Production Workers (Hawley, 2004). Labor costs for the Hollywood studios are cut by one third (Tegel, 2002). The Mexican government benefits from a potential influx of money, including tourism dollars generated by having images of the Mexican landscape projected globally. In addition, the presence of Fox Studios Baja has helped develop a theme park element to the studio (following the production of *Titanic*), which has promoted tourism. As Ben Goldsmith and Tom O'Regan note:

Fox Studio Baja, for example, has clear synergies with efforts to build on the tourism potential of the Baja California region, which is acknowledged in the development of the "Foxploration" studio tour. The Rosarito site was chosen primarily for its geographic location – close to the Southern California epicenter of English-language audiovisual production – but also perhaps to take best advantage of incentives and advantages to locate in Mexico under North American trade rules. (Goldsmith & O'Regan, 2005, p. 26)

Still, not all was successful in the field of labor relations within Fox Studio Baja during the filming of *Titanic*. For example, the shooting schedule ballooned from 138 days to 160, and crew members complained about long hours and difficult working conditions. This was punctuated by a food-poisoning incident with phencyclidine (PCP)-laced chowder that sent cast and crew members (including Cameron) to hospital (Graham, 1997, p. N1). Union leaders in Los Angeles labeled the Fox studio production nothing more than a *maquiladora* and lamented that, "in exchange for NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)-sanctioned subsidies from Canada and elsewhere, the studios have turned their backs on their own community and have engaged in the wholesale destruction of the Hollywood jobs base" (Bacon, 1999). In 2007 Fox sold the studio in Baja to Baja Acquisitions, a group of private investors; then it was dubbed Baja Studios, a film studio and tourist destination, not unlike its earlier incarnation.

In an age of mobility and when many countries are competing for lucrative Hollywood productions to come and film, having a low paid but skilled workforce might prove to be a competitive advantage, paving the way for more specialized local technicians to work on future projects. Goldsmith and O'Regan discuss this fierce competition among various countries that build state-of-the-art facilities with the aim of giving competitive bids to foreign countries:

Studios and places are now competing against each other on the basis of their ability to provide a range of generic skills, services, and expertise to individual films, augmented by what are claimed to be unique or compelling local advantages – the availability of state-of-the-art studio infrastructure, particular creative individuals or firms, and the proximity to specific locations. (Goldsmith & O'Regan, 2005, p. xii)

One reason why these nations have created policy initiatives and have coordinated with subnational (e.g., regional and municipal) governments to provide such com-

petitive bids for what Canada calls “foreign service production” (Elmer & Gasher, 2005, p. 5) is to obtain financial investment, which is the bottom line. It is projected that nearly 20% of all out-of-state production budgets are spent within the local economy. More specifically, the following businesses are hired when a foreign shoot comes into town: labor, transportation, lodging, car and truck rental, motor fuel and service stations, food and beverage companies – to name only a few (Gnuschke, 2005).

On the downside, Davis and Kaye (2010, p. 58) state succinctly that there are three risks that host countries need to be concerned about if runaway productions are the main avenue by which indigenous production can be developed: opportunity costs; integration with Hollywood; and the race to the bottom. Moreover, there may be power dynamics between the foreign and the local crew that reflect hierarchies in the global world system. This happened for example when Roger Corman’s production company worked in Argentina during the 1980s to make nine low-budget films of varying genres. Argentina was chosen at a time when the economy was faltering and costs were extremely low. According to production designer María Julia Bertotto, during the filming of a sword and sorcery film, Corman’s above-the-line crew acted offensively toward the Argentine crew. She recalled that some members of the US crew felt uncomfortable working with the locals, despite the fact that many of the latter spoke English. She remembered that Corman’s people “essentially gave orders and refused to hear our suggestions. It was as though they had preconceived notions of Argentina and thought we were ‘Indians with feathers on our heads’” (Bertotto, interviewed in Falicov, 2004, p. 33). Another problem stemmed from the plan to market the film for the anglophone market. In *Wizards of the Lost Kingdom* (*La Guerra de los magos*, directed by Héctor Olivera, 1985), the credits for the film had the Argentine names changed to anglicized pseudonyms; this was suppose to give the film a better chance of selling in the English-language market (for example, Américo Ortiz de Zarate’s name was changed to Andrew Sargent; *ibid.*, p. 34).

This power dynamic raises the following questions: Do countries such as Mexico and Argentina thrive, or do they get exploited under these conditions? In the example of the unskilled crew working on *Titanic*, most crew members were overworked and underpaid. In other situations, however, having an international crew composed of specialized technicians may provide an opportunity for locals to learn new skill sets; hence it may promote technology transfer. As a counterexample to the one above, using Corman as a test case, there were some positive outcomes: Film critic Diego Curubeto recounts from interviews how Argentine visual effects technician Alex Mathius and makeup artist Jorge Bruno never had the opportunity to work in the fantasy genre of film until Roger Corman came to Argentina in the 1980s to make films such as *Deathstalker* (1983). They gained valuable expertise by learning the craft from veteran special effects makeup artist John Carl Buecheler (whose credits include numerous B movies and horror films such as *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, 1995; Curubeto, 1993, p. 155). Therefore it is not a simple equation of costs and benefits when a foreign film crew goes to another country to make a film. Each case

may vary; some local industries will benefit, and some workers will be exploited. Others may gain valuable technology transfer skills. Taking a cue from the Canadian case, where there has been a longer track record, Charles Davis and Janice Kaye conclude that one must distinguish between two different kinds of home-grown production: one is production capabilities, such as below-the-line crew positions, and the other is the higher order film and television “business and creative capabilities.” The authors argue that both are needed for a local film industry to thrive, but in the case of runaway productions there is a strengthening of the crew training and economic stability of the former, although there isn’t so much advantage for local production houses or firms (Davis & Kaye, 2010, p. 58). In the two aforementioned Corman cases, there were winners and losers in the same runaway production scenario. In a nutshell, the benefits of runaway production help a host country if there are enough resources (cash that stays in the country, being spent on salaries and services) and skill sets honed in to allow for improved technical training of the local crew; and, over time, this might help the local film infrastructure to be invigorated in terms of new studios, post-production facilities, and so on, as a form of investment with potential for local films to be produced *in situ*.

The Argentine Film Industry from the Late 1990s to the Present

Argentina’s film industry, which had very low production figures in the early 1990s, saw a revival in production after the passage of the 1994 Ley de Cine 24.377 (Film Law 24.377), which entitled the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales (INCAA; National Institute of Film and Audiovisual Arts) to additional sources of film-production funding (see Table 11.2). Despite the 2001 economic crisis, the biggest to beset Argentina in decades (it was the largest default on an International Monetary Fund loan in world history), the film industry did not falter. This was in part due to the creativity of newer directors (many of them recent graduates of film schools), who made films on a shoestring that have gained worldwide festival accolades (see Falicov, 2003a). Fifty-one films were produced in 2004, the highest number in decades. Over the second weekend of October 2005, three national films – a police comedy, *Tiempo de valientes* (*On Probation*; Damian Szifron, 2005, Argentina), a Falkland Islands award-winning drama, *Iluminados por el fuego* (*Blessed by Fire*; Tristan Bauer, 2005, Argentina), and the old-age romantic comedy *Elsa and Fred* (Marcos Carnevale, 2005, Argentina) – took nearly 45% of the 370,000 total admissions, compared to an average 10–15% share of the market for the same time period the previous year (Newbery, 2005b). By 2009, the top grossing film that year, *El secreto de sus ojos* (*The Secret in Their Eyes*; Juan José Campanella), brought in 2.4 million viewers, drawing in an astonishing 45% of all the audience members who went to see Argentine cinema that year (Russo, 2010). This film was highly popular before it won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film (it was the second Latin American film to ever win in the history of the Oscars), but

Table 11.2 Number of Argentinean films released, 1997–2009

Production year	Films
1997	28
1998	36
1999	38
2000	45
2001	45
2002	37
2003	46
2004	51
2005	65
2006	58
2007	68
2008	71
2009	85

Source: Getino (2005); DEISICA informe (2011); Cinenacional.com (2012).

winning this prestigious accolade probably helped garner such a high number of viewers. The film beat out the Hollywood hits for that year, *Ice Age 3* (1.9 million viewers) and *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince* (1 million).

Argentina's film output ranges from low-budget independent films to glossier, more commercial films with budgets of \$1.5 million to \$2 million. These more mainstream films are produced by industrial auteurs who work with multinationally owned production companies such as Pol-Ka and Patagonik. Both these companies are partially owned by Buena Vista International, the distribution arm of Disney (Patagonik also receives investment funds from Telefónica Media, a massive Spanish telecom company). Pol-Ka produced a popular action film, *Comodines* (*Cops*; Jorge Nisco, 1997, Argentina), which was billed as "the first Hollywood blockbuster spoken in Spanish" (*Clarín*, 1997). It utilized television stars, special effects, product placement, and the buddy movie genre; and it drew record numbers of filmgoers. It irked some to know that this film received state subsidies despite being produced by a production company owned by a multimedia conglomerate (see Falicov, 2003b). Buena Vista International/Disney has actively co-produced and distributed films that have commercial potential, such as famed director Marcelo Piñeyro's *Kamchatka* (2002, Argentina/Spain), or the comedy *Cohen vs. Rosi* (Daniel Barone, 1998, Argentina). Two animated films for children were highly successful, and both were distributed by a Hollywood "major": *Patoruzito* (José Luis Massa, 2004, Argentina) was distributed by Buena Vista International; and Columbia pictures distributed *Manuelita* (Manuel García Ferré, 1999, Argentina).

Argentina has witnessed worldwide acclaim with films such as *Nueve reinas* (*Nine Queens*; Fabián Bielinsky, 2000, Argentina) and *El hijo de la novia* (*Son of the Bride*; Juan

José Campanella, 2001, Argentina), both of which were picked up for US distribution by Sony Pictures Classics. Dylan Leiner, senior vice-president of acquisitions and productions, stated that *Nueve reinas* appealed to Sony because it broke the stereotype of traditional Latin American cinema. "It was very smart and fast-paced. The broader comedies in Latin America don't usually work as well because they feature local television stars or address regional issues. We look for stories that have universal appeal and are easy to understand" (O'Brien & Ibars, 2004, p. 42). *Nueve reinas* was remade by Hollywood as the mediocre *Criminal* (2004, USA), directed by Gregory Jacobs for Warner Independent Pictures.

Although the economy faltered in 2001, causing the Argentine peso's value to plummet, this outcome, paradoxically, brought new opportunities for filmmakers and for television and commercial production companies. The shift from the Menem era, when the peso was pegged to the dollar (1:1 ratio), to a depression-era situation where the ratio was 4:1 (and it is currently 3:1) has meant that US and European producers found the prices to be extremely competitive. For example, in 2003 a television commercial company in Miami that caters to the US Hispanic market saved more on costs by hiring a local crew in Buenos Aires to shoot and post-produce a *Pollo Loco* commercial. Because the day-rates were very reasonable and the level of skill was very high (especially that of the Argentine directors), the company simply flew in its executive producers and the client (that is, a total of seven people), and the rest was done in Buenos Aires. This was more advantageous than to film in Mexico, although the latter was a much closer neighbor to the south (personal interview with Jaes, 2007). Although the commercial advertising sector differs from film and television companies, it is an industry that has had close ties to Argentine filmmaking in Argentina since the 1960s. It has had an international reputation for highly skilled labor, and it has often served as a training ground for successful feature-film directors. Another advantage to filming in Argentina is the reversal of seasons from those of countries in the North – a "vital scheduling plus" (*Variety*, 2008).

Instead of national tax incentives for foreign companies to come and film in Argentina, there were outcroppings of regional initiatives in the mid-2000s; they were made in the hopes of attracting companies to various provinces, in the wake of the horrendous financial crisis. However, while the economic situation stabilized in Buenos Aires by 2005, it was clear that citizens in large metropolises had access to greater resources than their counterparts in the provinces. In 2001 the province of San Luis fashioned itself as an outpost for production, which *Variety* characterizes as having "pretensions to become the Hollywood of Argentina" (Newbery, 2005b). By 2004 the state had passed its own regional film law, to help provide additional incentives for filming. However, not all citizens of the province supported the use of public funds to draw film production from the outside to the region. A flashpoint that brought this disparity to the fore occurred in May 2005, when arsonists in the province of San Luis, an area already established for national video editing and production, burned down a set of the telenovela *Salvame Maria*.

This was one in a number of violent protests that occurred against the province's film program that week. San Luis was under fire because the provincial legislature approved a 10-million-dollar allocation toward film-sector development to the governor Alberto Rodríguez Saa and his brother Adolfo, better known as one of the short-lived presidents during the 2001 crisis (Newbery, 2005a). The province, dubbed "Hollyluis," has granted credits, co-production money, tax, and technical assistance to 14 films (*ibid.*). While business is booming for the film industry in San Luis and the main impetus is to create jobs, many opponents accused the Rodríguez Saa brothers of masking a poor administration under the guise of a new project of economic development. Many dissenters demanded the money to go instead to education, public health, infrastructure, and to increasing salaries for teachers and state workers (*ibid.*). Other provincial cities such as Mendoza and Rio Negro claim to be revamping their film commissions so as to attract film pesos from the capital as well as currency from abroad, but the results have yet to be seen (Minghetti, 2005, para. 9).

SOS (Save Our Screens): Enacting the Screen Quota in Argentina

In June 2004, due in part to the left-leaning atmosphere created by President Néstor Kirchner's administration, INCAA spearheaded the passage of new screen quota legislation to counter Hollywood's hegemony. It stated that movie theaters were obligated to show one national film per screen per quarter: so, for example, a 16-screen multiplex must screen 64 Argentine films per year. Another law, called the "continuity average," obligated film exhibitors to continue screening national films if these domestic productions garnered an audience attendance of between 6 and 25% per theater in a given week. This act ensured that exhibitors could not arbitrarily drop national films in mid-week, or change screening times in mid-week (Newbery, 2004). By and large, Argentine film producers do not have the funds to market their films. A Hollywood blockbuster relies on high-priced "blitz" campaigns for an opening weekend for a film, but an Argentine film usually gains momentum through word of mouth. In 2009 the law was modified to give Argentine films a minimum of two weeks in a movie theater as time to build an audience. The earlier version of the law only guaranteed one week, unless the film was a national one, with less than five copies available for screening. The justification for this – according to Mario Miranda, an INCAA account manager – was the following:

We noticed that there was a type of discrimination going on. In 2008 there were 68 films released, of which more than half – 37 – were relegated to the "alternative circuit." On top of that, of the 31 local films that did reach commercial theatres, 30 percent were taken off the marquee after the first week. (García, 2009)

Other measures enacted by the INCAA include subsidizing theaters whose national films who do not garner enough attendance to reach the continuity average mentioned above (thus allowing films to continue to be screened), and offering a cash prize every trimester to the movie theater that sells the most tickets to an Argentine film; the prize is to be reinvested in the theater itself (*Clarín*, 2009).

The screen quota issue, which was not passed into law without debate in the film community, has also been utilized in recent years by the South Korean film industry – as well as by France, Italy, and other countries, mainly European. The case of South Korea is the most famous one because of South Korean film industry's huge strides in producing popular films at the box office after the screen quota system was enforced in 1993. Korean film production rose to nearly 70% of the box office in 2004, up from 35% in 2000. This policy requires cinemas to screen domestically produced films 146 days a year and 40% of exhibition time (Lee, 2004). In 2006 the Korean government decided to heed the United States' call to delimit, or, better still, to abolish the screen quota as part of the Korea–US Bilateral Investment Treaty talks (BIT). Rather than doing away completely with the quota system, the number of days in which Korean films were required to be screened fell from 146 days to 73. This meant that only 20% of the local theaters' schedule would be set aside for homemade films (Jin, 2008). Clearly the United States, as represented by the MPAA, heavily pressured South Korea, arguing that the motion picture industry is a business and that the quota system was against the principles of free trade (Lee, 2004). The South Korean government very much wanted to resolve this issue, as Washington had urged it since 2003 to reduce the quota before the two sides met at the negotiation table for the BIT signing in 2007 (*ibid.*). Christopher Hill, the US Ambassador to Korea, warned that Korea could not have the screen quota and a free trade agreement at the same time (quoted in Jin, 2008). At stake here is whether the state has the license to regulate culture by adopting protectionist measures, a phrase that has become pejorative and stigmatized. Hence a new term has been embraced by those who support a screen quota: "exceptionism." The exceptionists are appropriating it from the rhetoric of "cultural exceptionalism," which was successfully championed by France and Canada during the 1993 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) against the United States. While the expression "cultural exceptionalism" has given way to the concept of "cultural diversity" (Frau-Meigs, 2003; Moisés, 2002), currently even organizations greatly influenced by the United States, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), have supported the declaration of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to protect the diversity of cultures against globalizing forces.

Jorge Coscia concludes his essay "The Screen Quota, a Fundamental Step Forward" with the following statement:

The screen quota is not a flag by itself; the real flag is the defense of our interests, our culture, our jobs, and our cinema, constantly cornered in our own market [. . .] Hence policies are tools, they are not the ends but the means. The screen quota is a funda-

mental issue, because culture is essential to a country's project. But it is also relevant because debates and discussions continue to establish new means of development, sovereignty, and growth. (Coscia, 2004)

While the screen quota may function to the best of its ability at this juncture, it may soon become ineffective – according to Harvey Feigenbaum, who argues that cultural policy tools may be undercut by changes in technology to the point where direct satellite broadcasting, data-casting, near video on demand, digital compression, video on demand and distribution via Internet streaming may create more porous borders, may allow the floodgates of Hollywood's film and television in, and – in his words – may permit to “undermine the state's effort to protect national culture” (Feigenbaum, 2004, p. 256). This author recommends different kinds of subsidies (in addition to individual subventions in production, an emphasis on distribution and marketing, and in infrastructure such as production facilities and training as the antidote for preserving the health of a small national film industry: pp. 260–261).

Another strategy for filmmakers to continue producing films with less cash on hand has been the perennial quest for co-production funding, mainly from European sources, but sometimes from other Latin American countries – and occasionally from the United States, too. Co-production funding has occurred in the region, if not in all the film-producing countries, since the very inception of cinema in the 1920s.

Co-Production Between Argentina and Spanish Autonomous Communities, Catalonia and Galicia

A novel co-production treaty between Argentina and two autonomous communities in Spain – namely between the INCAA and various cultural entities of Galicia and Catalonia – was announced in January 2005. Named Fondo Raíces de Cine (the Roots of Cinema Fund), it was the brainchild of Argentina's INCAA president, Jorge Coscia. In an interview he stated that the project arose “out of necessity, that our country and these regions create alliances to confront a film industry such as the United States, which floods the movie screens of the world.” But, as if to answer any critics who might accuse him of setting up possibly problematic barriers to Hollywood (such as the ill-fated import quota set by Perón, which effectively shut down the exhibition sector due to a lack of screen product to show), he noted: “But let us clarify that no one wants to expulse Hollywood, but rather, Hollywood has expulsed us” (Coscia, 2005a). The fund totals \$600,000 dollars, toward which each partner contributes equally. There are maximum four grants to be given out annually, and each grantee is awarded funding according to the needs of his or her film project. One of the criteria is that the projects should have the potential to be commercially viable and successful in their respective markets.

Thus far two films have come out of the Raíces de Cine fund: *No sos vos, soy yo* (*It's Not You, It's Me*; 2005), an Argentine–Catalan co-production directed by Juan Taratuto,

and *Cama Adentro* (*Live-In Maid*; 2004), by Jorge Gaggaro. Both films have performed well at the box office, but *No sos vos* has defied expectations by playing in Madrid to packed houses for two months and thus earning the status of one of the top ten films most seen in Spain this year; it had almost 350,000 spectators and box-office receipts totaling 2 million euros. It has won the distinction of being the first Argentine film in the top ten most seen films for seven straight weeks (“No sos vos,” 2005).

Coscia has stated that the impetus to initiate the Argentine–Spanish regional agreement was two-fold: (1) the economic situation has made production in the country more favorable to those companies from abroad; and (2) the box office is like a cut of Argentine beef that is “less juicy” (*menos jugosa*) than in previous years, and thus “we have to find outside business that will compensate for this” (Coscia, 2005b).

Conclusion

Since their inception, both Mexico’s and Argentina’s film industries have struggled to create a space for themselves in the shadow of Hollywood. In its current configuration, Mexico has continued to support filmmaking through IMCINE funds, but it has also seen a proportion of films being made purely through the private sector – the approach that most closely resembles Hollywood. Moreover, with the emergence of transnational film directors such as González Iñárritu, del Toro, and Cuarón, the transition to a private model has been a format that directors themselves find more efficient and less politically fraught.

Argentina’s film-industry model has differed from Mexico’s in that the state has been relatively successful at distributing grants both to small producers/directors and to production houses owned by multimedia conglomerates (including Disney and other transnational companies). Argentina has created film legislation that has strengthened the nation’s film development fund, and more recently it has passed a screen quota that seems to be functioning well at the time of writing. Argentina’s film industry is modeled more closely on European film production than on the US model. However, both Argentina and Mexico are gaining access to markets and funds through new collaborations with MPA member companies. Hollywood studios have proven thus far to be friendly to both countries’ film industries; but it remains to be seen what kind of effect this may have in the long run (for example, one can imagine the effects on the screen quota if eventually most of the funding comes from the majors). Regardless of these changes, Hollywood continues to maintain a strong foothold in Latin America.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This chapter is an expanded and modified version of “Hollywood in Latin America: How Mexico and Argentina Cope and Cooperate with the Behemoth of the North,”

in Janet Wasko and Paul McDonald (Eds.), *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2008). Many thanks to Manuel Pérez Tejada for his invaluable research assistance and feedback on the Mexico portion of this chapter.

NOTE

- 1 See, for example, the Comisión Mexicana de Filmaciones, 2012.

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Global *Ugly Betty*

International Format Trade and the Production of National Adaptations

Lothar Mikos and Marta Perrotta

ABSTRACT

The global television landscape in the first decade of the twenty-first century is a complex terrain of contradictory developments and trends. On the one hand, there are globally successful formats and series. On the other hand, each national TV landscape presents its own adaptations of successful programs from other countries. From 2002, the Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (*I Am Betty, the Ugly One*) has traveled around the world in dubbed and adapted versions. This chapter deals with the comparative study of the original format and of four adaptations (in Germany, Russia, Spain, USA), focusing on licensing, production, and how these conditions have impacted the narrative, dramaturgical, and aesthetic structure of these different national adaptations. The global franchise of scripted and non-scripted formats as a complex network of flows and counterflows frames the chapter.

The global television landscape in the first decade of the twenty-first century is a complex terrain of contradictory developments and trends. On the one hand, there are globally successful formats and series like *Big Brother*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* – or *Sex and the City* and *Lost*. On the other hand, each national TV landscape presents its own national adaptations of successful programs from other countries. The same

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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audiences that are fascinated by such international programs are often looking for local adaptations of the same shows.

Within the global television market, international trade in television formats has become an important part of the business (Havens, 2006; Moran & Malbon, 2006). The “global media flow” is mainly dominated by American products (Straubhaar, 2007; Thussu, 2007). Europe is the largest export market for US films and television formats. American television programs are broadcast in more than 125 countries (Thussu, 2007, p. 15). In recent years, however, the dominant position of the American film and television industry has been somewhat undermined. “While US-based companies remain undisputed leaders in selling TV programs around the world (accounting for more than 70 per cent of all sales), Britain leads the world in the export of television formats” (p. 18). Furthermore, there are a few other film and television genres that enjoy worldwide distribution: Japanese anime, Indian Bollywood films and Latin American telenovelas (ibid.; Straubhaar, 2007; Waisbord, 2004). In the early twenty-first century, what was once a one-directional flow of films and television formats from the US toward the rest of the world has become a complex field of “multi-directional flows” (Thussu, 2007, p. 12; Bicket, 2005).

Since 2002 the Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty, la fea* made its way around the world (De la Fuente, 2006). *Yo soy Betty, la fea* is a telenovela written by Fernando Gaitán, produced and broadcast in Colombia by RCN Televisión (Radio Cadena Nacional, a Colombian private television network) between 1999 and 2001. It tells the story of Betty, an unattractive and unpopular but effective and professional assistant at a fashion design company, who falls in love with her charming boss. While airing in Colombia, Telemundo –one of the biggest Spanish-language American television networks, owned by National Broadcasting Company (NBC) Universal since 2002 – also broadcast the serial, which thus achieved new highs of popularity among Latino/a audiences.

The global success of this telenovela could be attributed not only to the worldwide screening of the original Colombian format, but also – and even more – to the selling of the license rights for national adaptations. The first season of the original, which was composed of 165 48-minute episodes, showed in Spain and in all Latin American countries, where it was so popular that the cast went on tour to meet fans throughout the two continents. Moreover, the Colombian *Betty* has been dubbed and broadcast in several countries in Western and Eastern Europe – Italy, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Lithuania – as well as in Central and Eastern Asia – Turkey, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, China and Japan. RCN sold *Yo soy Betty, la fea*, as a scripted format, to several producers and distributors around the world, for local adaptations. The case of *Ugly Betty* can serve as an example of the multidirectional flow of formats in the global TV market.

This chapter deals with the comparative study of the original format and of four adaptations: those in Germany, Russia, Spain, and the US. The analysis focuses on issues of licensing and production and will investigate how these conditions have impacted the narrative, the dramaturgical, and the aesthetic structure of these dif-

ferent national adaptations. The rise of an international program market with the growth of the international format trade has changed audiovisual production cultures globally. The adaptation of formats minimizes the risk of program innovation and allows big production companies to install local subsidiaries. The formatting of TV shows made it possible to localize globally traded shows. In addition, the global television market has to face, nationally, media-literate audiences that have knowledge of different genre conventions because they grew up with television. Therefore the developments in formatting and in international format trade have a huge impact on economic and cultural practices in the national cultures in which television is produced.

The International Format Trade

The international exchange of television programming began in the 1950s, growing into a global television market characterized by intense competition for the few globally profitable programs. For, as television channels have multiplied, the market share of individual networks and their programming formats have declined. Popular formats such as *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* are commodities in high demand in the fight for national and global market shares. National television channels throughout much of the world have never relied on their own productions alone, but have always bought programs from other countries. Since the 1990s, however, the format trade market has taken on a new momentum, as many countries shift from public to private broadcasting systems.

The term “format” for television programs was not established until the 1990s. Albert Moran defines it thus: “The total body of knowledge systematically and consciously assembled to facilitate the future adaptation under license of the programme” (Moran & Malbon, 2006, p. 7). There is a so-called “bible” for every TV format, which covers all the information – from ratings and scheduling information to instructions for lighting, camera positions, and title sequences for the adaptation of the format.¹ Latin American telenovelas as a specific narrative form evolved from Cuban adaptations of American radio soap operas of the 1930s, whereas television soaps in the US continued the original tradition from American radio. Other genres specific to television crystallized in the 1950s. These included game shows, quiz shows, talk shows, music shows, and the like – not only in the US and Latin America, but also in Europe and Asia (see Straubhaar, 2007, pp. 157ff.). Programs that followed the conventions of these genres were distributed around the world, both licensed and in unlicensed forms.

In the mid-1980s the deregulation of television markets and the introduction of new, privately owned networks around the world created a new growth in formats, which was followed by the digitalization craze in the mid-1990s. This second wave of globalization drastically changed the international television market, more formats than ever being traded at the television sales fairs (Havens, 2006). Rising revenues

also brought changes in the power structures of the industry. As the demand for programs boomed, the number of domestically produced shows also grew in many countries. As a result, the share of US productions in almost all national television markets declined from 1972 to 2001 (Straubhaar, 2007, pp. 162–163). Reality TV flourished at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Local adaptations of shows such as *Big Brother* took the place of imported shows in network programming. The new shows were specified as a framework that consisted of an idea and its stylistic and dramaturgical realization yet left room for local adaptation. Latin American media scholar Silvio Waisbord (2004, p. 378) stated: “Format television shows ‘globalization’ at work – that is, the merits of a business ‘multicultural’ strategy that is ‘sensitive’ to cultural diversity.”

The Global Licensing and Production of *Yo soy Betty, la fea*

There were four main players in the licensing and selling of *Yo soy Betty, la fea*: RCN, which produced the original Colombian telenovela; the Mexican conglomerate Televisa; Sony Entertainment; and FremantleMedia. Whereas Sony produced and licensed the Indian and Russian adaptations, FremantleMedia sold the license to Belgium, Bosnia/Croatia/Serbia, Germany, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands. It also licensed the German adaptation to Hungary and the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian adaptation to Poland (*BrzydUla*). This example makes clear that every scripted adaptation of another scripted format is a series in its own rights. The rights of every single local adaptation of *Yo soy Betty, la fea* could be sold and licensed for adaptation to other territories. Televisa was involved not only in the production of the Mexican adaptation, but also in the productions made in Brazil (*Bela, a feia*), in China (*Chou nū Wu Di*), and in the Philippines (*I heart Betty la fea*). The Chinese adaptation was produced in cooperation with local producers and with RCN. The Colombian broadcaster and producer also sold the license to the Czech Republic (*Ošklivka Katka*), Vietnam (*Cô gái xấu xí*), and Turkey (*Sensiz olmuyor*).

The success of the original telenovela has pushed some producers to create their own versions of *Betty*, but without buying the rights. TV Azteca in Mexico first produced a telenovela entitled *El amor no es como lo pintan* (*Love Is Not as They Depict It*), followed by the Venezuelan version *Mi gorda bella* (*My Sweet Fat Girl*). These *Betty*-inspired versions saw local adaptations as well. The Portuguese *Tudo por amor* (*All for Love*) and the Israeli *Esti Ha'mechoret* (*Ugly Esti*) were adaptations of *El amor no es como lo pintan*, and the Malaysian adaptation, *Emil Emilda*, is based both on the Mexican TV Azteca version and on the Venezuelan one. In total, the Colombian original saw 12 licensed adaptations, 1 cancelled adaptation in Italy, and 5 unlicensed remakes.

Televisa first bought *Yo soy Betty, la fea*, which it reproduced under a slightly different title, *La fea más bella* (*The Most Beautiful Ugly Girl*). Meanwhile, Sony was the first corporation to buy the license to adapt *Yo soy Betty, la fea*. The company took advantage of the fact that RCN was not aware of the serial's potential as a scripted format.

RCN had not even developed a “bible.” Sony produced the series in India (*Jassi jaisi koi nahin* = *There Is No One Like Jassi*, 2002) and in Russia (*Ne rodis' krasivoy* = *Be Not Born Beautiful*, 2005). Both these versions successfully “garnered prime-time audience shares ranging between 35 and 40 percent” (Alvarado, 2006). In 2005, FremantleMedia bought the adaptation rights for the European market. The first adaptation was *Verliebt in Berlin* (*In Love in Berlin*, 2005–2007), in Germany.² FremantleMedia has sold rights for versions of this adaptation. A dubbed copy sold under the title *Lisa csak egy van* (*There's Only One Lisa*) to Hungary, where it aired in 2006. The same version was dubbed in French. Entitled *Le Destin de Lisa* (*Lisa's Destiny*), it was broadcast on TF1, on the Belgian RTL-TVI, and on the Télévision Suisse Romande. In Slovakia, the series aired under its original title, *Verliebt in Berlin*, on TV JOJ. Finally, Grundy has started new productions of the format in The Netherlands (*Lotte*), Belgium (*Sara de Roose*), Greece (*Maria, i aschimi* = *Maria, the Ugly One*), Bosnia/Croatia/Serbia (*Ne daj se, Nina* = *Don't Give Up, Nina*), and Spain (*Yo soy Bea* = *I am Betty*). An Italian adaptation (*Betty, la cozza* = *Betty, the Ugly*), to be distributed by FremantleMedia, was cancelled before its broadcast.

The Russian and Indian versions of *Betty* demonstrated that adapting a Latin American script goes beyond simply translating it into a different language. Steve Kent, senior executive vice-president of international production at Sony Pictures Television International (SPTI), explained the methodology used for the Russian adaptation of *Betty*:

SPTI brought together a group of TV professionals from Russia with Colombian and American writers. The Colombian writers knew what the novela was about and worked with the rest of the team to assure that the essence of each scene was captured, but with a Russian flavor. That was the real trick and it was hard work. (Alvarado, 2006)

The German adaptation won the Rose d'Or award in 2006 for showing a different method of reworking the story. “While the Russian version remained true to the comic ingredients of *Betty la fea*, the German version [. . .] was completely different. *Verliebt in Berlin's* near-feature-film production values and dramatic storytelling resulted in a huge hit for the commercial broadcaster Sat1” (ibid.).

In the meantime, Sony tried to translate the *Betty* format for American audiences. In the fall of 2001 NBC, together with Sony Pictures TV and with writer Alexa Junge (former executive producer of *Friends* and *Sex and the City*), developed a half-hour sitcom based on the telenovela (Adalian & Sutter, 2001). Despite NBC's ambitions to produce a new hit – a prime-time comedy, perhaps with dramatic elements – the project was cancelled. Yet, “during the same 2001–02 development season, ABC and Touchstone TV developed the comedy *Less Than Perfect* [. . .], which bears some similarities to the premise of *Betty*” (Andreeva, 2004). Four years later, a joint venture between the NBC format vendor Reveille Productions, Salma Hayek's production company Ventanarosa, and Touchstone Television resulted in *Ugly Betty*, a 60-minute program series for the ABC network and for a general mass viewership. Following

the show's strong ratings in the US –16.3 million viewers tuned into the season premiere, on Thursday 28 September 2006 (WorldScreen.com, 2007) – Disney–ABC International Television licensed it to several territories. *Ugly Betty* launched in the UK (Channel 4), in New Zealand (TVNZ's TV2), and in Australia (Seven Network), making its Asia–Pacific debut; in the Asia–Pacific it was the most highly rated new series in 2007.³ Through the cable channel Sony Entertainment Television, *Ugly Betty* has also returned to the same Latin America countries where *La fea* was launched.

The story of Betty is rooted in that of *The Ugly Duckling*, a fairy tale written by the Danish poet Hans Christian Andersen and originally published in Copenhagen in 1843. It has also generated youth-oriented spin-offs, such as an animated series *Betty Toons*, which was created by Conexión Creativa and was aired on the Latin American version of Cartoon Network since 2004. The series focused on the school adventures of a young Betty, her friend Nicolás, and the whole set of characters from the original telenovela – as children. In Russia, a web-only animated parody of the telenovela, called *Umanetto* (a name that recalled the company name Zimaletto in *Ne rodis' krasivoy*), targeted an audience of young adults as well.

The Logistics of Format Marketing

Against this background, format adaptations are a way to transform both fictional and non-fictional television productions into domestic ones, and thus to improve their chances of success significantly.

However, in the fragmented markets of the early twenty-first century, this is true only for some milieus and target groups, and not in general. The concept of cultural proximity also refers to linguistic regions. That is, films and television formats are easier to distribute in countries where the same language is spoken. Films from other linguistic regions are adapted by dubbing or subtitling. The introduction of digital versatile discs (DVDs) has made it possible to watch the same film in different language versions. DVDs often include subtitles in a choice of many languages. This is one way in which films can be adapted for other cultures.

There are three varieties of format marketing in the global television market (Mikos, 2002, pp. 442–447):

(1) One marketing variant entails selling *broadcast rights* for fully produced series or, more commonly, for individual seasons. These series then compete under their titles as brand names for the television networks of foreign countries. The buyer acquires the broadcast rights to a finished product and performs no modification except subtitling or dubbing. The salability of the product depends on the dominance of its format and on the openness of the narrative to interpretation. Furthermore, the narrative openness of a television series is formally rooted in the structure of its patterns. The 1980s series *Dallas* is perhaps the best known example of the sale of rights to a fully produced format. More recent examples include drama and sitcom

series such as *Ally McBeal*, *CSI: Miami*, *Emergency Room*, *Friends*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Gray's Anatomy*, *Heroes*, *Lost*, *My Name Is Earl*, and *Sex and the City*.

(2) Another type of format marketing involves selling the *rights to a series concept and a format outline*. In this variant no finished content is sold. Instead each buyer produces the series, adapting it to local conditions within the limits of the agreed outline. For example, the German daily soap opera *Gute Zeiten, Schlechte Zeiten* (1992–) is an adaptation of a Dutch adaptation of an Australian serial titled *The Restless Years* (1977–1981) (Moran, 1998, p. 109; O'Donnell, 1999, pp. 56–57). *Ugly Betty*, with its various international adaptations, is a more contemporary example.

(3) The third marketing variant is the licensing of *rights to quiz shows, game shows, and reality shows*. In this case individual programs are international brands. Well-known examples are *Big Brother*, *Next Top Model*, *The Swan*, *Idol*, and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. These shows have a brand that is used uniformly throughout the world, and their presentations, from dramaturgy to character constellations to design, follow uniform rules across all adaptations. Only the contestants, the games, and the quiz questions adapt to local conditions. The uniform dramaturgical and aesthetic elements are specified in a format “bible.” The shows are then produced to the same specifications by different production companies in the various local markets.

In the global television market, series and shows are marketed worldwide. The formatting makes it easier to buy and sell new programs with a minimum of risk. Only large television markets like the US, the UK, or Germany generate revenues that cover the production costs for developing a format. Program creators located in smaller television markets must thus depend on international marketing. The advantages of format business for the television networks are self-evident. The networks save development costs, and at the same time they acquire a product that has been proven successful in one or more other national television markets. Furthermore, when networks buy a license for a television format, they acquire the corresponding expertise of the original production. Thus the purpose of acquiring format licenses is not only to obtain a product or an idea, but also to obtain the benefit of the experience gained in the production and broadcasting of the format in other local television markets.

The format trade allows a global networking of the market participants, including the television broadcasters, media conglomerates, license and format traders, and production companies. For example, the quiz show format *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* was invented by the British production company Celador and owned by the Dutch license trader 2waytraffic, which is a subsidiary of Sony Pictures International. Endemol produces the show in Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Poland; Synergy in India; Ma'agalot Productions in Israel; Valleycrest Productions in the US and in the Philippines; Artea in Argentina; RTL Klub Televisie in Hungary; and Danish Metronome Productions in Denmark. Metronome itself is a subsidiary of the British Shine Group, which also owned the US production company Reveille,

producer of *Ugly Betty* in the United States. The result is a global net of production companies, TV channels, license traders, and media conglomerates that are involved in the worldwide production of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*.

Although the licensing market is dominated by a few large companies, there is room for independent producers. Still, the producers with the largest international revenues in the television format market, such as Endemol, FreemantleMedia, Granada, Sony Entertainment, the BBC, and Strix, are also the ones who invent and bring the largest number of new formats to market (Moran & Malbon, 2006, p. 86). Producers in this group have also become the largest distributors of formats that were invented in other local television markets, formats such as *Yo soy Betty, la fea*.

Of course, there are limitations on the free transnational flow of programming. Television regulatory policy is the prerogative of nation-states, which then influence programming; as do national television industries and production infrastructures. If a given country has few domestic production companies, then television networks in that country more likely depend on imported formats. Glocalization may localize a global format, as the word implies, but it can also have drawbacks. While licensed formats may minimize the risk of a market launch, they do not offer absolute protection against flops. A format that is successful in one country may fail to address local and national differences in viewers' cultures, identities, and television-viewing habits.

Cultural Proximity and the Production of Global Formats

Joseph D. Straubhaar (1991) coined the phrase "cultural proximity" to describe the way in which countries and cultures tend to prefer their own local and national films and television formats. He developed the concept from research on cultural flows conducted in the mid-1980s (see Antola & Rogers, 1984; Hoskins & Mirus, 1988), by theorizing that audiences in local markets tend to reject films and television programs that have too little to do with their own cultural realities. He later wrote:

Cultural proximity theory argued that countries and cultures would tend to prefer their own local or national production first, due to factors such as the appeal of local stars, the local knowledge required to understand much television humor, the appeal of local themes and issues, the appeal of similar looking ethnic faces, and the familiarity of local styles and locales. (Straubhaar, 2007, p. 91)

Although his conception of culture originally referred primarily to geo-linguistically bounded entities, Straubhaar has since extended this theory to account for other differences. In modern societies, he writes, audiences have multilayered identities (p. 221), influenced not only by sociological features such as social class, age, ethnicity, and gender, but also by their milieus or lifestyles. Media consumers belong to differ-

ent communities, including “imagined” communities (Anderson, 1983), aesthetic and reflexive communities (Lash, 1994), proto-communities (Willis, 1990), subcultures (Jenks, 2005; Muggleton, 2000), and fan cultures (Hills, 2002; Sandvoss, 2005). People’s media preferences depend, among other factors, on their position in these social fields – which is influenced in turn by the specific economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals they have acquired over the course of their lives (Bourdieu, 1984). All of this would affect what shows television viewers prefer.

Studies that apply cultural proximity theory have yielded uneven results. Some studies (Mikos & Töpper, 2006; Straubhaar, 2007) have found that better educated and economically situated audiences prefer American television series over national ones, which led scholars to postulate that there are multiple cultural proximities between television contents and audiences (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005; Straubhaar, 2007). Straubhaar, for example, distinguishes between genre proximity, value proximity, and thematic proximity (2007, p. 197). Another study comparing television series preferences in eight countries found, however, comparatively few cultural differences between audiences on the basis of a number of intercultural communication dimensions, such as the individualism or collectivism of narrative themes or the masculinity or femininity of lead characters (Trepte, 2008). The study did find that audiences’ past experience with American fiction programs influenced perceptions, including whether the American series was broadcast in the original language with subtitles or was dubbed. What do these divergent findings signify for the theory of cultural proximity?

Even though the concept of cultural proximity has been refined to include various typological distinctions, it remains limited. Since viewers are not simply embedded in a general culture that is locally or nationally determined, it makes no sense to speak of “the audience” as a monolithic whole. Similarly, even with distinctions among types of representations, cultural proximity theory needs to account for different people’s experiences with different kinds of media and with their own media literacies. People in all parts of the world can interpret media codes and are familiar with media conventions. Through their visual experiences they have gained knowledge of media forms, genres, and styles. Audiences’ media knowledge also includes knowledge about specific narrative patterns and specific production elements such as camera movements, montage editing, lighting, shot framing, and more. Viewers in large parts of the world know, for example, generic patterns of soap operas, such as the heavy use of close-ups to express character emotion, and shot–reverse-shot sequences to show character dialogue. These generic visual styles must be integrated into the concept of cultural proximity.

This discussion of cultural proximity is relevant to the international television trade and local format adaptations, because they require television producers to juggle both familiar and unfamiliar elements for diverse sets of audiences. Reality shows such as *Big Brother*, *Survivor*, and *The Farm* have a common core theme, but they are dramatized in different ways in the various countries that adapt them (Mathijs & Jones, 2004; Mikos, Haible, Töpper, & Verspohl, 2001; Perrotta, 2007). Adaptations of television programs

are “(re-)interpretations and (re-)creations,” meaning there is a wide range of possible variations to retell or reproduce the spin-offs (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 172). Transcultural adaptations frequently create hybrid formats that mix together the conventions and vocabularies of different genres. Conventions and stylistic elements are not simply added, but are integrated. The integrated mode of hybridization “is exemplified by those formats where a more thoroughgoing amalgamation of styles and approaches has taken place” (Kilborn, 2003, p. 12). The local adaptations of *Yo soy Betty, la fea* are examples of integrated hybrid formats. For this reason, in our comparison of the German, Russian, Spanish, and American adaptations of this Colombian telenovela, our analysis focuses on the narrative and dramaturgical structures and on the use of visual stylistic conventions.

Method

To compare adaptations, we needed to analyze the Colombian prototype. Then, we chose two countries that seemed to be culturally distant from the Colombian telenovela, namely Russia and Germany, and two countries that seemed culturally proximate on grounds of language, namely Spain and the US, which has a large Latino population. The US also has a history of program exchange with Latin American countries, though the exchange goes mostly from the North to the South. Then, in order to compare five countries’ productions of the television series – *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (Colombia), *Yo soy Bea* (Spain), *Ne rodis’ krasivoy* (Russia), *Ugly Betty* (US), and *Verliebt in Berlin* (Germany) – we analyzed the first episode of each of the five adaptations. This approach seemed promising, because the beginning of a series must include an introduction to plot and characters. The fundamental conflicts that drive the drama are laid down in the initial episode. We also took a brief look at the second episode of each adaptation, to see whether the conflicts introduced were pursued and whether new major characters were introduced.⁴

Our analysis centered not only on aspects of representation such as the meaning of ugliness, gender, or fashion, but also on the aesthetic and dramaturgical style in which the story is presented, because we think that we will be able to identify local production styles. Our analytical orientation draws on neoformalist film analysis (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993), structural and functional film and television analysis (Casetti, 1998; Mikos, 2008), and the methods of comparative media research (Mikos & Töpfer, 2007). The focus of our analysis is always on how the stylistic elements of these TV shows function culturally. These elements include both conventions of visual aesthetics and narrative conventions that are basic elements in a production. We examined how the conflicts and the relationships between the characters are dramatized and what path the heroine follows in her development. At a first glance, the *Betty* adaptations are a classic coming-of-age story in which the heroine undergoes a metamorphosis from an ugly duckling into a beautiful swan. In

our analysis we investigated, first, how the main characters are constructed and what their relationships are to one another. Second, we studied the aesthetic–dramaturgical means by which the story is narrated at the audiovisual level used in order to get closer to local production styles.

Study Findings

All the adaptations of *Betty* around the world differed in the number of episodes in their series. They also differed in the length of their program episodes, which varied from 22 to 48 minutes. Even if there were similarities in the various local adaptations, the latter nevertheless differed primarily in three respects: (1) their staging of the main character; (2) their blending of comedy in the telenovela genre; and (3) their dramaturgy and aesthetic styles.

The name chosen for the protagonist in the various adaptations of our analysis is not always the same as the one given in the original telenovela. Spain and the US prefer to replace the Colombian Beatriz Pinzón Solano, also known as Betty, with two other protagonists: Beatriz Pérez Pinzón, also known as Bea, and Betty Suarez. In the Russian and German adaptations the names are completely different: Katya Pushkaryova and Lisa Plenske, respectively. Presumably the localization of names was necessary in order to avoid uncommon names in each of the countries.⁵

Without getting into the details of each adaptation, we can give a brief cumulative synopsis of the pilots in our sample. In all of them, Betty (Bea/Katya/Lisa) searches for work and contacts companies where she will try to get a job over the course of the episode. Her search concludes either at a fashion design company in Colombia, Russia, and Germany or at a fashion magazine in the US and Spain. The fundamental themes of each of the pilots are organized into a narrative structure that follows two storylines: (1) Betty's relations with her family; and (2) the power relations involved in the management of the company where Betty finds work. The latter, on occasion, is presented over the course of a public event (a party, or a showcase), and it is often accompanied by scrutiny from the mass media (newspapers or television services). The main event and nodal point of the plot in each first episode is the job interview; it occurs in all the adaptations except the American series, in which the protagonist is denied a job interview.

Staging of the Main Character

Whereas the Colombian and Russian adaptations introduce Betty (Katya) in very similar ways, the German, the Spanish, and the US adaptations have different introductions of the main character. In the original version, the opening is shot subjectively, through Betty's eyes. Betty's voice appears nondiegetically from outside

the screen, expressing the personality of the protagonist in an emotional way and contributing to the anticipation of the plot. When Betty finally enters the camera frame, the telenovela's heroine-to-be is finally disclosed. Her physicality thus satisfies the viewers' curiosity – is she truly as ugly as we imagined? – and produces a kaleidoscope of emotional responses. Some aspects of Betty's physical appearance jump to the eye immediately: rectangular red glasses that are a little bit too big for her face, braces on her teeth, a fringe of hair that covers her forehead in an unnatural manner, and her unquestionably old-fashioned clothes. Together, the costuming and the props make her seem much older than her 20 years.

In the Russian version, *Ne rodís' krasivoy*, the first encounter with Katya is similar to the one with Betty. Katya speaks in a slight and uncertain voice, indicating that she does not know how to behave in the present situation. When she finally comes into view, she appears to have the same startling characteristics: thick, round glasses, dental braces, messy hair, and unfashionable clothes. The head of human resources concludes aloud that she is ugly and that she dresses worse than his grandmother.

The setup and the staging of the opening minutes were slightly different in the other two adaptations. For instance, the Spanish and the German versions also open with a voice-over spoken by the protagonist, who shares her feelings about the experience she will have. However, in the Spanish adaptation Bea is immediately visible, through a close-up of her image reflected in a computer monitor. Posting a message on her blog, she addresses her readers as *queridas feo-nautas* ("darling ugly-nauts," instead of "astronauts"). Bea writes that she is tired of being watched while she walks down her street. This monologue is intercut with photographs, on the screen, of models in bathing suits and underwear, and with a quick cut of Bea. The reverse shot of her facial details (eyes and glasses, the mouth full of braces) illuminates the gaps between what is seen, what is heard, what is felt, and what is understood when Bea writes that she is *muy fea* (very ugly). At the keyboard, Bea admits how much she wants to overcome people's rooted prejudices and at least find a job as a secretary. Snapshots illustrating the most important events of her life follow. In all these scenes Bea appears to be discriminated against – not only for her looks, but also for being a little bit of a geek.

Lisa, the heroine of the German version, is also introduced, visually, through a juxtaposition that takes place during the first seconds of the episode. She is walking down the streets of Berlin behind another person of her age, but prettier. Lisa's voice is heard as she speaks of a job interview. Viewers associate the voice with the pretty character, but soon there is no doubt that the voice emanates from the ugly one in the background. The ambiguity of the first camera shot that frames them together enhances the impact of Lisa's clumsiness. Like the other Betties, Lisa wears braces, big glasses and pronounced bangs. She dresses in too large, out-of-style clothes, which look as if they do not even belong to her.

The voice-over in the later pilots cyclically return to re-emphasize the narrative through Lisa's inner thoughts and through Bea's blog, giving the Spanish and German episodes a sense of melancholy and self-reflexivity that is missing from the Colombian

and Russian telenovelas. The abrupt jump from subjective to objective narrative style in those two versions represents, through contrast, the comic yet ironic way in which the main character is created. The characters of Bea and Lisa seem to swerve into a covertly tragic register, in which the sadness of loss, the awareness of an impalpable condition of social discrimination, and the conflicts with an excessively protective family all play a fundamental role in defining the heroine.

The American protagonist Betty Suarez is a hybrid resulted from these two different characterizations of the main character. A close-up of her opens the pilot. She is overweight, donning red glasses, bushy eyebrows, and a large, sweet smile of metal braces. “Old-fashioned” would be a euphemism for her cheap and colorful wardrobe. There is no subjective camerawork; there is no voice-over. An objective narration, conducted through dialogue and action, presents Betty instead. She is shown as a gaudy curiosity; but also as a self-confident person, determined to get a job in the field of her study. Some of the themes that will be developed throughout the whole series – like the opposition of socially diverse worlds – are also shown here, but not through her subjective narration. Betty is characterized as a slightly unconventional heroine, who fights against disparities that exploit the tragic potential of her comic character.

Each of the five adaptations shows differences that are strongly related to national production cultures. Whereas the US adaptation introduces Betty’s central conflict very quickly, the original and the three other adaptations spend more time on this presentation. The similarities in the staging of Betty in the Colombian and Russian versions can be explained by the historical success of Latin American telenovelas in the Russian television market; Russian audiences knew the telenovela’s conventions. Whereas these two adaptations highlight the comic elements of Betty’s physical appearance by showing the strange reactions of people who meet her, the German adaptation introduces viewers into the more serious space of the inner world of the heroine.

The Blending of Comedy and the Telenovela Genre

It is necessary to underline that Betty’s character is construed in different ways because it is related to divergent local narrative traditions. In the Colombian version Betty is neither a victim nor a protector, neither a fool nor a villain. Although these types appear among the main characters, Betty only displays some of their characteristics – especially those of the victim and of the fool. As we have already highlighted in the previous section, the Colombian *Fea* is built in a comic register. This breaks with the genre, giving the whole series a “comic climate” that is uncommon in a traditional telenovela, because it trivializes matters of life and death (Mast, 1979, p. 9). Our aim in this section is to probe even further the signs that point to Betty’s world being a comic one, because these show the unique ways in which each of the adaptations broke with the generic narrative of the telenovela. In sum, these signs let viewers know generally that, despite Betty’s misfortunes, “the action is taking

place in a comic world, that it will be ‘fun’ (even if at some moments it will not be), that we are to enjoy and not to worry” (ibid.).

Despite her weird looks, the Colombian Betty is witty, self-ironic, self-reflexive, and deeply conscious of her being an “ugly duckling.” Instead of focusing on herself and on her problems in finding a job, she seems to feel at ease. She is Betty *la fiera* (the proud), even though she is overtly discriminated against (Collazos, 2000). In addition, nonverbal, slapstick moments based on Betty’s basic clumsiness emphasize the ridiculousness of otherwise serious situations. Her awkwardness and her ugliness – which is actually a collection of ugly details in an ordinary girl – make her audiences laugh.

In the Russian adaptation, Katya is a kind of enigmatic clown who wears bizarre clothes and has a fragile and melancholic appearance. Yet she is often comic in her gestures and expressions, especially when she is involved in recurring gags at the hands of her work colleagues. Katya is characterized by slapstick actions more than by the self-irony portrayed by the Colombian Betty.

The German telenovela portrays Lisa as a sort of alien immigrant; her main problem is how to survive in the fashion world of the big city. Bea, the Spanish heroine, is a typical geek who is teased for being an “A” student; she is unpopular with teachers and pupils alike, but she also looks the part, especially through her Groucho-esque eyebrows and thick glasses. Betty Suarez of the US version, the girl of Mexican origin from Queens, is the only overweight Betty. Clumsy and gaudily dressed, she is willing to submit to self-humiliating tests in order to be accepted in the Manhattan lifestyle environment of *Mode* magazine. The slapstick performances and clown-like pantomime of these unsophisticated but good-natured heroines fill the screen with additional visual information, which makes the narratives more meaningful. At the same time, the real-life problems of being ugly, unemployed, and repressed by the family are handled as if they were not problems.

The telenovela has its roots in a dramatic structure based on tragedy, but it seems to us that the various Betties infuse a comic climate into their telenovelas. Four out of the five adaptations (all but the US version) had a defined number of episodes leading to the happy endings, which formally classified them as telenovelas. Yet the journey to the happy ending happened through a comedic heroine, thus satisfying some audience expectations – but not all. The *Yo soy Betty, la fea* and its epigones keep progressing toward the climax of the story by planting a series of comic signs that function as plot points and predict radical changes, without becoming inscribed in a fairytale-style narrative. As a result, these adaptations of telenovelas display a more innovative style than others; they introduce highly unconventional characters and stereotype-breaking formulas in the evolution of the story. These hybridizations make the programs attractive to a wide range of audiences in their locations.

The American drama *Ugly Betty* is neither a telenovela nor a soap opera, but its genre status as a “dramedy” shares themes and plot developments with both. Romantic love stories are always at the heart of telenovelas and soap operas. The future couple has

to overcome many dramatic obstacles before it reaches the happy ending. This is also the story of *Ugly Betty*, which features melodrama combined with situation comedy elements. This combination of different genre conventions can address multiple mass audiences: telenovela viewers, soap viewers, and sitcom viewers.

Dramaturgy and Aesthetic Styles

In the four adaptations and in the original version, the tragicomic heroines are introduced in different ways, which are linked to national and local traditions of dramaturgy and aesthetics. In the visual introduction of the main character, however, there are strong similarities between the Colombian and Russian adaptations on the one hand, and between the American and Spanish versions on the other. In the Colombian and Russian adaptations, she is invisible in the opening; a subjective camera and point-of-view shots are used instead. This illustrates that these latter versions try to characterize the heroine through other people's reactions to her.

We see reactions to Betty's appearance on the faces of passers-by, security personnel, employees of the fashion company, and other applicants for the secretarial job at the company. In the Russian adaptation pedestrians comment on Katya's appearance too, although she is invisible to the viewer. In fact it is not before they are four and a half minutes into the episode that the viewers first see Betty or Katya on screen. The first shot of her occurs during her job interview, where her "beautiful" rival (Patrizia in Colombia and Viktoria in Russia) is also present. In both cases the main character appears for the first time in a medium shot, in parallel with medium shots and close-ups of the competing applicants. As the interview continues, the camera closes in on the Betties, calling attention to the features that underscore her ugliness.

In the Spanish and American adaptations, the viewer's attention is immediately drawn to Betty's appearance through close-ups of her face. After just 30 seconds, the Spanish viewers see Bea's glasses and braces, shown in an extreme close-up. In the American adaptation, the point-of-view technique is used only later in the first episode; until then, the camera favors medium shots and close-ups of the main character. The German adaptation begins with an establishing shot of Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, straight after the title sequence. The next shot shows an exit of the train station there, where the main character Lisa is one in the crowd streaming towards the escalator. Only gradually does the camera pick her out.

Sound, in the form of Betty's voice-over narration, also functions to reveal the lead character's "mental subjectivity" by giving "internal commentary reporting the character's thoughts" (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p. 78). The voice-over narration is a common feature in the German and Spanish adaptations. Viewers hear Lisa's voice-over narration of her arrival in Berlin and of her application for an executive assistant job at Kerima Moda. The Spanish adaptation also uses voice-over in the

opening sequence. Only the US adaptation does not present the character's subjective point of view. The US viewers, who come visually very close to the character, still remain in the position of an observer, watching the action from outside. In the opening sequences, dialogue is used to portray Betty's family relationships. Whether through an internal voice-over or through an objective gaze, the conventions in *Betty* programs guarantee viewers a focus on the main character's personality.

The Russian adaptation adheres closely to the Colombian original in its chronological sequence of events and in the way they are presented. In both versions, viewers are provided with the same initial knowledge as the protagonist about the interpersonal relationships at the workplace. As the episode continues, however, viewers soon come to know more than the heroine does, by observing other characters' actions. The Spanish adaptation even presents Bea's unconscious knowledge of the future, offering a dream sequence in which she kisses her future boss. Information about the relationships between people who work at the fashion magazine is conveyed in scenes set at the office. Flashbacks are often used in the Spanish version; this is something that the US and German adaptations avoid. The latter convey only the necessary knowledge, and they do so in the course of a linear plot. Viewers attain knowledge external to the heroine through alternating and parallel storylines.

As for nondiegetic sounds, the Russian adaptation uses them for scene transitions, instead of a music soundtrack – which is common to the other versions. Thus a similarity between all adaptations and the original is that scene transitions are announced audibly. *Ne rodis' krasivoy* avoids using music, while *Ugly Betty* and *Verliebt in Berlin* use music a lot – especially to underscore the heroine's mood, or to reinforce romantic or comic situations. Not all the music in these series is expressly composed for the series; there are also popular recordings by stars such as Kylie Minogue and Robbie Williams. All five versions have a catchy title melody.

Whereas in the Colombian original and in the Spanish adaptations visual effects are of little importance, the Russian version includes two scenes that use fast motion to identify slapstick actions. Fast motion also occurs in *Verliebt in Berlin*, where a rapidly emptying waiting room indicates that fewer applicants are waiting to be interviewed for Lisa's job opening. The episode also includes shots in slow motion, intended to heighten the drama of a tragic scene. It is also apparent, through the use of colors and light design, that the US and German adaptations are visually richer and more dynamic: the first episode is warmer in the US adaptation and glossier in the German one.

These two versions also feature a greater variety of shot lengths than the others. The German version, for example, has the camera moving through the middle of the action, whereas the Russian adaptation keeps the camera at a distance during scenes that take place in the fashion firm. One reason for this distance is that Katya is not present in the Russian firm during the events presented; she is only reading about them in the magazine, and she is pictured as being literally far away from the world of fashion. Lisa in the German adaptation is, however, present at the event,

where she serves champagne as part of a catering service. She is still outside the fashion world, as her clumsy actions make evident; but she is physically in the middle of it. The editing styles of the US and German adaptations are also more dynamic; individual scenes use more varied shots than the original or the Spanish and Russian adaptations. In *Ugly Betty* and in *Verliebt in Berlin* the visual presentation of the setting is also important, involving the prominent use of establishing shots of the New York skyline and of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. The other versions also use establishing shots, but only to set workplace scenes, or scenes at the protagonist's home.

Concluding Thoughts on Hybrid Formats and Media Production

A thorough discussion of all the audiovisual stylistic elements – title sequences, setting, editing style, camera style, visual effects, the visual presentation of dialogue, and the soundtrack – is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, a look at a few of the differences and similarities between the adaptations and the original is informative. Genres incorporate conventions that are familiar to audiences. Telenovelas narrate complete melodramatic stories (Lopez, 1995; Martín-Barbero, 1995). Unlike daily soap operas, which are based on endless story lines (Bielby & Harrington, 2005; Cantor & Pingree, 1983), most telenovelas are oriented towards a happily-ever-after in 100 to 300 episodes.

As closed narrative texts, [there is] a very definite beginning, middle, and end to every Mexican telenovela; what happens on the way through these states in terms of narrative involves a style and treatment of subject matter designed to make sure audiences are “hooked” enough to want to tune in every day to watch the heroes and heroines go through disaster after disaster, before somehow arriving at a happy ending. (Pearson, 2005, p. 401)

Although there are local differences between telenovelas from Brazil, Mexico, and other Latin American countries, the melodramatic tone is shared among them. This makes the stories seem serious, even though a comic subgenre of the telenovela developed, primarily in Brazil, since the late 1970s (Tufte, 2000, p. 112): since then, comedy has become an established component of telenovelas.

Yo soy Betty, la fea marks the introduction of a tragicomic protagonist whose story follows the original conventions of the melodramatic telenovela, but whose character belongs to the comic structures and to the comic climate of comedy series.

The different adaptations show different ways of mixing the elements of telenovelas and comedy. While the Spanish adaptation gives greater weight to the telenovela aspects, the German one remains close to the original Colombian in terms of proportions between telenovela and comedy components. In contrast, the US and

Russian adaptations allow the comedy elements to predominate. Kim Akass and Janet McCabe (2007) go so far as to characterize *Ugly Betty* as a “stylish US hit comedy.”

In countries where serial genres have a long tradition, it is important for local adaptations to remain true to their respective genres. The fact that the Russian adaptation follows closely the Colombian original may have to do with the fact that telenovelas have enjoyed wide popularity in Russia since the 1990s (Baldwin, 1995). By the same token, the telenovela-ization of US prime-time programs aims to capture both the Latino population of the US, which exhibits close affinity to telenovelas, and the Anglo population, which is familiar with the conventions of soap operas as well as with those of drama and comedy series.

As maintained by Antonio Savorelli (2008, p. 174): “The comic coating *Ugly Betty* gives telenovela highlights even further the exasperation of some of this genre’s features, without necessarily devaluing its ability to represent the real.” *Yo soy Betty, la fea* and its local adaptations show hybrid formats inasmuch as they integrate elements of different genres in the basic telenovela structure, including a genre shift toward the “telenovela-ization of US soap operas” in *Ugly Betty* (Bielby & Harrington, 2005). The format thus meets the requirements of the global television market, since its various elements can be mixed differently in each local adaptation without excessively altering the basic structure of the original brand. Our research shows evidence that there is a complex web of similarities and differences between local adaptations of the same format. Even a traditional telenovela like *Yo soy Betty, la fea* draws from different genres – like drama series and situation comedy, slapstick and fairy tale, soap opera and reality TV – with regard to dramaturgy, narration, and audiovisual styles. “The significant dynamic of the present era in television is adaptation, transfer, and recycling of content” (Keane, Fung, & Moran, 2007, p. 75). The various *Betty* adaptations show that it is also possible to recycle single stylistic elements from different genres and combine them in unique ways. Therefore, the more hybrid a format is, the more flexible it is to the dynamics of local adaptation and the more able it is to attract diverse audiences all over the world. Genre proximity is no longer necessary in order to ensure international success, since the format mixes conventions that are well known by audiences all over the world, as long as they have an experience of the diversity of television and film genres.

The driving force behind the hybridization of television formats can be found less in television producers’ creativity in the market than in the variety of audiences, each with its knowledge of narration and visual styles. Knowledge of genre conventions is part of the media literacy of audiences that grew up with television in their everyday life. Local adaptations have to be aware of the complexities of flows and counterflows in traveling styles. This doesn’t mean that economics are unimportant. Global media licensors like Sony Entertainment and Fremantle Media, or regional producers like Televisa are in the front line of picking up, distributing, and sometimes producing successful local formats. Therefore it is not only cultural proximity, in a broad sense, that enables and limits the adaptation of formats, but also the economic

strength of the global networks, combined with the know-how of local, regional, and global production companies. To the global flows and counterflows, we would add the “multiple flows” that are based on these cultural and economic conditions for the production of global television formats.

NOTES

- 1 A format “bible” is “the project to implement the development of the basic descriptive structure, including all elements required to execute the programme, such as the running order, the profile of the main characters (host, competitors and/or guests), a description of the set design required for the story, considerations regarding direction techniques if necessary, and any other elements required for the format’s television transposition and its optimised production” (Fusco & Perrotta, 2008, p. 92).
- 2 The German producer Grundy UFA has bought original Colombian scripts from RCN, even if FremantleMedia owns the rights for the adaptation and Grundy UFA is a subsidiary of FremantleMedia.
- 3 Other strong performances include those on Norway’s TVNorge, Malaysia’s 8TV, Singapore’s Channel 5, Hong Kong’s TVB Pearl, and Sweden’s Kanal 5, not to mention Spain’s Cuatro and Italy’s Italia1 (WorldScreen.com, 2007).
- 4 Originally we also planned to analyze the Italian adaptation *Betty la cozza*, but its production was stopped without notice.
- 5 In accordance with the theory of cultural proximity, the choice of the names for the heroines has to be close to the cultural history of the country where the adaptation takes place. Hence there were Leticia in Mexico, Jasmeed in India, Maria in Grecia, Lotte in the Netherlands, Sara in Belgium, Esti in Israel, Nina in Bosnia/Serbia/Croatia, Gönül in Turkey, Wu Di in China, Katerina (Katka) in the Czech Republic.

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The Comings and Goings of Key Scenarios

TV Fiction, Culture, and Transnational Flows in Postcolonial Kinshasa

Katrien Pype

ABSTRACT

On the basis of ethnographic fieldwork with Kinshasa's evangelizing television actors, this chapter describes the shifting production and circulation of religious media in terms of key scenarios for understanding quotidian life in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). It examines how and when local TV serials changed from producing a nationalist narrative toward Pentecostal interpretations of life, death, and the occult. This is related, first, to the generally increased popularity of Pentecostal churches all over sub-Saharan Africa and, second, to the South–South migration of sub-Saharan Africans. Pentecostal leaders occupy prominent positions in the production and circulation of local media. Pastors and other spiritual leaders become patrons, sponsors, and religious protectors for theater groups that produce television. The mobility of religion and of peoples has led to the spread of Nollywood films and to changing media aesthetics in Kinshasa's media world.

On the basis of ethnographic fieldwork with producers of TV serials in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (where such serials are also called *maboke*, *théâtre populaire*, and *télédramatiques*), this chapter aims at introducing one particular anthropological perspective on TV fiction: I will show how television fiction can be studied as an important site of cultural production. Central to my analysis is the concept of

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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“key scenario,” one of a culture’s most vital symbols (Ortner, 2002). Until now, no anthropological research on Kinshasa’s visual media has been produced. As a relatively recent topic, the social and symbolic space of media has been researched only in the context of a limited set of other African societies. Anthropological research on visual media is especially focused on West Africa, often engaging the relationship of films and videos with religion (Hackett, 1998; Launay, 1997; Lyons, 1990; Lyons & Lyons, 1987; Meyer, 2003, 2004, 2006; Witte, 2005, 2008), with politics and the market (Lawuyi, 1997), or with the construction of local modernities (Armbrust, 1996; Larkin, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2008; Shipley, 2004; Werner, 2006).

My studies of the cultural production of TV fiction in Kinshasa have been made possible by two epistemological changes within the discipline of anthropology. First, contemporary anthropologists began to approach “culture” as something that is historical and constructed; and, second, anthropologists began to consider global flows of signs, symbols, and narratives as significant sites of analysis. These changes foreground the “anthropological turn toward the screen” that I present in the first section. This will be followed by an exploration of the concept of “key scenarios” and by a diachronic analysis of the various key scenarios that have been promoted in and through Kinshasa’s TV series since their inception. These “key scenarios” are the outcome of a fascinating interplay of local and global flows of power, people, and beliefs. Therefore the final part of this chapter offers a theoretical exploration of anthropological analyses of global media flows.

Anthropologists Turning to the Screen

For far too long, anthropologists were blind to the presence of modern media technologies in the field – technologies often brought to the field by the researchers themselves.¹ A cultural pessimism, so well expressed in the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer, is often given as an explanation for the fact that these technologies were radically absent from earlier ethnographic and anthropological accounts. Because of their implicit compliance with cultural imperialism, television, radio, and other mass media remained taboo for a long time. Media anthropology only really took off as a subdiscipline in the 1990s, when an open concept of culture was adopted (see below). At the same time, the fear of globalization made way for curiosity about the local experiences of modernity (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Ginsburg, 1994; Wright, 1998).

That is not to say, however, that anthropologists were not engaging with media before. An important example is Ruth Benedict’s research on Japanese culture, published as *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946). This research was undertaken in the mid-1940s and deliberately deployed media texts, such as cinema and documentary films, as primary sites of information on Japanese society. The reason why Benedict engaged with these media texts was the impossibility of doing “traditional” fieldwork in Japan due to World War II. Others followed her example, and, based on

novels and media texts, scholars such as Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson studied national cultures of France, Romania, England, and others. Their research practices differed very much from current media anthropology in that participant observation and long-term fieldwork were not part of their methodology, as the name of their project indicated: *Anthropology at a Distance*.²

More significant is the research of Hortense Powdermaker (1950), who studied the production of Hollywood films while focusing on the social impact of motion pictures. Her research in Hollywood gave a rather dark image of the culture industry, paralleling the cultural pessimism of the Frankfurt School. According to a later observer, Powdermaker understood the Hollywood factory as a “brutal industry thinly disguised as art that used its technological advantage to objectify viewers and impose on them politically numbing cultural formulae” (Askew, 2002, p. 5, commenting on Powdermaker). After this research, Powdermaker left for Rhodesia (the Zambian Copperbelt) to study the reception of American films among white and black communities in the mining region (Powdermaker, 1962). Along with the economic changes that she would identify as “modernization,” she took seriously the emergence of a leisure culture that evolved around radio, movies, social clubs, dance halls, and football. Powdermaker argued that participation in these activities symbolized a desire to enter into new social worlds and served as a mediator between the old and the new (in Peterson, 2005, p. 41). Her research in Zambia was set within a paradigm that studied how societies changed from one form to another. The entrance of the “new world” through media was a phase in the creation of a new society. Hence Powdermaker did not take the complexity and the concurrence of multiple modernities as her main focus, as most anthropologists do now. But, despite this dated theoretical approach, Powdermaker’s research cannot be ignored by current media anthropologists. What visual media did and still do, in the Copperbelt and elsewhere, is to offer alternative worldviews – *possibilities*, as Arjun Appadurai (1996) calls them – that is, alternatives to local experiences. Media thus introduce the problem of social and cultural difference, create new “Others,” and enlarge the imaginary sources for the construction of identities and subjectivities.

In 1999 Lila Abu-Lughod writes:

Many of the studies of popular culture, and especially television, that I have come across are disappointing. They do not seem to be trying to offer profound insights into the human condition, or even into the social, cultural, and political dynamics of particular communities – goals anthropology has always, perhaps with hubris, set for itself. (Abu-Lughod, 1999, p. 111)

A decade later, numerous ethnographic works on media production and reception have been produced. Since the start of my research in 2002, five important readers in media anthropology have been published (Askew & Wilk, 2002; Coman, 2003; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin, 2002; Peterson, 2005; Rothenbuhler & Coman, 2005). In 2004 the European Association of Social Anthropology (EASA) also created

a media anthropology network in order to group anthropologists working on written, aural, and visual mass media. The institutionalization of this subdiscipline is ongoing. Prolonged discussions on the most important themes, the most apt methodologies and the weight given to the technology itself reveal that, even today, the boundaries of the subdiscipline are still to be defined.

The major theoretical anthropological approaches toward visual media have two main strands. A first line of interest in media products follows the reflexive turn within anthropology and analyzes the “representation of the Other” in films, documentaries and other visual products. Second, research focuses on the social lives of media products (production, reception, and their social itineraries) in divergent localities. The main topics of these analyses are cultural activism, the construction of collective identities (national, ethnic, religious), and the role of the media in transnational contexts (see Ginsburg et al., 2002, pp. 11–18). I intend to contribute to this second line: the emphasis on religion, politics, and media will reveal the role of visual media in the construction of communities, and how visual texts relate to shifting power configurations in a central African capital city.

In their much cited article “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference,” Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992, p. 19) write that “mass media pose the clearest challenge to orthodox notions of culture.” The existence of a transnational public sphere emphasizes the fictitious character of the boundaries that enclose culture. Gupta and Ferguson point out that the concept of “culture” has been a difficult one for anthropologists ever since the early 1980s (p. 2). So, rather soon after the cultural turn – which began in the early 1970s with Clifford Geertz’s influential monograph on *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) (among other things), and which imposed a “reading” of cultures – several anthropologists began to search for the “writers” of the cultural texts, as well as for the “writing conditions.” Visual texts and regimes emerged as important contributors to the creation and distribution of cultural meanings and symbols. As Faye D. Ginsburg, a pioneer of the anthropology of media, notes: “It was evident to me that we could no longer ignore the impact of [. . .] visual media on the production of culture and of collective memory, both inside and outside of the official channels” (Ginsburg, 1994, p. 8).

These studies are in line with recent anthropological approaches that understand “culture” as a constructed concept, historical, and dependent on various power relationships. It is now acknowledged that “culture” is a concept that is continuously being redefined by those who use it, and its boundaries are continuously renegotiated (see Bayart, 2005). In an interesting article published in 1998 in *Anthropology Today*, Susan Wright analyzes how the notion of “culture” shifted over time and how it was politicized. She discerns two sets of ideas about “culture” in anthropology: an older one, which equates “a culture” with “a people” that can be delineated through a boundary and a checklist of characteristics; and new meanings of “culture,” as not a “thing” but a political process of contestation over the power to define key concepts – including that of “culture” itself. Anthropologists, too, have been actively engaged

in the “production of culture,” as Wright shows. They have drawn rigid boundaries between different groups to which they ascribed distinct cultures. These “cultures” were often perceived as being fixed and ahistorical, shared by a group of people and inspiring a coherent way of life.

Several authors (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Marcus & Fischer, 1986) have taken the critique of the “culture” concept a step further, and some have even proposed to dispose of it. Aware of the politicized use of the “culture” notion and disappointed in the homogenizing work it accomplishes, Abu-Lughod (1991), for example, prefers to “write against culture.” Only in that way can she do justice to “the complexity, the uncertainty, and contestations of everyday life and to the individuality of its members” (Abu-Lughod, 1999, pp. 13–14).

Furthermore, Abu-Lughod’s research on the production and reception of television in both urban and rural Egypt has inspired her to think “about ‘culture’ not so much as a system of meaning or even a way of life but as something whose elements are produced, censored, paid for and broadcast across a nation, even across national boundaries” (p. 122). Consequently, she prefers to pay more attention to the particular configurations of power and to the social fields that are affected by certain hegemonies and produce “culture” and discourse about “culture.” Most media anthropologists agree that an analysis of the production of media texts can shed light on the production and transformation of “culture” itself (Mahon, 2000, p. 469). Or, as Ginsburg writes (1994, p. 14), “[w]e [. . .] are challenged to comprehend the multiple ways that media operate as a site where culture is produced, contested, mediated, and continually re-imagined.”

These discussions about the definition of “culture” and how it is constructed belong to the current direction that social analysis is taking, what Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (1999) have called “beyond the cultural turn.” It is, however, questionable how far social analysts who embrace a practice-related and constructive understanding of the concept of “culture” have really moved away from the so-called cultural turn. Awareness of the epistemological and ontological complexities in the discourse about “culture” or “cultures” does not keep most researchers from subscribing to Geertz’ classic definition of “culture” as the webs of meaning within which people live (1973, p. 5). Indeed, complemented by the acknowledgement of the plurality of symbolic systems, of meaning makers, and of issues of power and domination, the concept of “culture” has still an important part in anthropological research (see Ortner, 1999, p. 4). As Sherry Ortner writes:

“Culture,” if it is to continue to be understood as a vital part of the social process, must be located and examined in very different ways: as the clash of meanings in borderlands; as public culture that has its own textual coherence but is always locally interpreted; as fragile webs of story and meaning woven by vulnerable actors in nightmarish situations; as the grounds of agency and internationality in ongoing social practice. All of these issues continue to assume, however, a fundamentally Geertzian view of human social life: meaning-laden, meaning-making, intense, and real. (Ibid., p. 11)

Evolving Key Scenarios in Kinois Media

Within interpretative anthropology, “culture” is constituted of symbols that can be manifest in local TV production. I argue that a diachronic symbolic study of Kinshasa’s TV production unravels the various ideas of “culture” that have emerged throughout Zairian/Congolese history. In particular, I have found Ortner’s study of a culture’s key symbols (published in 1973 and reprinted in 2002) extremely helpful for situating local TV production within the larger political and social Congolese context.

In Ortner’s (2002) analysis of “key symbols,” symbols of the kind she calls “elaborating” sort out complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas and make them comprehensible to the individual, communicable to others, and translatable into orderly action (p. 161). For example, they are well organized and logical, and therefore they occupy a central status in a culture. Ortner identified two kinds of “elaborating symbols”: “root metaphors” and “key scenarios.” For our discussion, only the “key scenario” is important. She formulates the American key scenario – best known as “the American dream” – like this: A poor boy of low status, but with total faith in the American system, works very hard and ultimately becomes rich and powerful (p. 162). This key scenario offers a clear-cut mode of action, which is appropriate for a correct and successful living in America. More abstract key scenarios formulate local definitions of the good life and of social success and key cultural strategies to attain them.

In the course of Kinshasa’s media history,³ Congolese dramatic artists have increasingly appropriated Western aesthetics and communication systems to broadcast distinctive ideologies and key scenarios. The kind of media imperialism associated with the colonial encounter changed during the reign of former President Mobutu Sese Seko (1965–1997). In 1989, for example, Mobutu allowed two local television channels to broadcast alongside national channels. In 1996, he further liberalized media spaces, creating an opening for commercial and religious media. Pentecostal–Charismatic Christianity, already popular in Kinshasa soon after independence (1960), came to conquer both the city and the mass media. Religious dramas that had been performed in missionary-run schools and youth groups and produced through colonial radio and films now moved to the postcolonial sphere of TV fiction (Pype, 2009b, pp. 134–139). Indigenous youth who once produced the sketches now began to write screenplays and to appear in local productions. As converted and schooled subjects, they regarded themselves as *les évolués*, literally “the advanced ones.”

These political and religious transformations heavily impacted the design of local television serials, demonstrating not only the continuous interweaving of national and Western cultural values, but also the multiple forms and meanings that media imperialism can take. Kinshasa’s mass-mediatized dramas have promoted different “key scenarios” and models for Kinshasa’s people in the postcolonial period – people such as its *citizens* and its class of *évolués*.⁴ Importantly, not only did these model characters stage social ideals, but their producers belonged in their categories, too.

Citizens in TV Fiction and Nationalism

The first national television station RTNC1 (Radio–Télévision Nationale du Congo) began in 1965. It explicitly addressed its viewers as citizens freed from colonial rule. In 1967, Mobutu nationalized the press and the Catholic television channel (Téléstar). The latter belonged to the Belgian Catholic missionaries (the Scheut Fathers). It broadcast cultural and educational programs, mainly from the Belgian metropolis, although locally produced programs also started gradually to be screened. Téléstar showed films produced by fellow missionaries in particular. As had already been the case for cinema, television served as a handmaiden in the missionaries' civilizing and Christianizing endeavors. The imagined viewing audience consisted of the white missionaries who used the station to communicate with other missionaries, and also of the Congolese population as potential converts. Téléstar's name changed to RTNC2. In 1971 the national broadcasting system was called La Voix du Zaïre (The Voice of Zaire), and the name changed again in 1981 to Office Zaïrois de Radiodiffusion et Télévision (OZRT).

In this unified system, Mobutu's regime favored the production of television serials that would support his nationalization efforts.⁵ Local dramatic performers (actors, musicians, and dancers) were commissioned to screen folkloric dance spectacles and theater plays based on Congo's cultural richness. These were part of the *animation culturelle* (cultural animation, propaganda) that characterized Mobutu's early politics. In 1972, following their leader's will, the program directors of RTNC1 copied the format and title of a French television show (*Au théâtre ce soir*) that had showed in Kinshasa. In the latter program, the Frenchman Pierre Sabbagh hosted and aired images of plays staged in Parisian theaters. Interviewees who remembered the program told me that the viewers perceived the realities in those European plays as too far removed from their own lives. Yet, they said, Kinshasa's intellectual elite (the *évolués*) was eager to view these plays.⁶ To shorten the cultural distance between the Western-based plays and local television viewers, RTNC1 followed a state-inspired initiative to make a Zairian copy of the French program.

The new format was named "Theater from here" ("Théâtre de chez nous") and broadcast "local" plays. The name emphasized the embedding of the narratives in local realities. Tshitenge Tsana, who coordinated this show, invited actors to interpret plays written by Congolese dramaturges such as Guy Menga and other African writers, in particular Léopold Sédar Senghor. These plays were performed in a studio, in one setting that imitated the illusion of the theater stage. Performances of the Zairian National Theater were also aired in the same program. Zairian actors now performed classical plays like *Mundele Ndombe* (based on Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*), *Les Fiançailles tragiques* (Ernest Daudet), and *Le Cid* (Corneille) for the television screen. The latter performances were local adaptations of European classic plays; some remained rather close to the original while others translated it to an African context, still evoking foreign imaginary settings, unknown characters, and

Western tragic experiences. In the early days of Mobutu, classic plays showing a Western notion of the Enlightenment aired side by side on television with indigenous writers' presentations of an African world. Even if these stories appeared in different narratives and evoked different worlds, they still did not reflect the totality of Kinshasa's urban experience.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that *nous* ("we") in the program's name, "Théâtre de chez nous," suggested national unity, but it also hinted at the "African" identity of the plays in contrast to the foreign culture of the former colonizer. The origin of the screened dramas thus flirted with pan-Africanism. The initial shows portrayed an "African culture," only to narrow it, a few years later, to a national Zairian identity. Gradually, theater became domesticated, brought closer to the lived realities of Kinshasa's population.

Televised theater became fully adapted to the local urban context when the producer and writer Tshitenge Tsana faced difficulties in broadcasting a new play each week. In 1974 he gathered together local actors, several of them from the group Artistes Africains Associés, and created the drama company Groupe Salongo. The group became a national sensation. Many Kinois (inhabitants of Kinshasa) remember that streets in town were deserted as people gathered in front of television sets on Thursday evenings to see the Salongo shows.⁷ It is said that these evenings were the only times when "the town was silent." For a long time the Salongo group monopolized televised drama, facing some competition in the 1980s from two other troupes: Troupe Nzoi and Ngadiadia. Between 1985 and 1990 about 85% of Kinshasa's inhabitants followed the Salongo serials (Convents, 2006, p. 306). These programs created national stars like Ebale Mondial, Kwedy, Mopepe, Bomengo, and Masumu Debrindet. The group still exists today, although the artists have changed and some of the original actors started their own troupes.

The group's name, "Salongo," derived from the first play that the troupe staged, and it could best be translated as "collective work," which became a key concept in Mobutu's nationalizing campaign. Although the concept preceded the postcolonial period,⁸ its exact origins remain a mystery. Gustaaf Hulstaert (1971, pp. 205–206), a Belgian missionary who worked with the Mongo people, writes that the word derives from "*Is'a longo*," meaning "father of the hoe." He notes that, in the equatorial province of Botoko, between 1927 and 1933, pupils sang: "*Is'a longo, mondele maso alingi mosala, na nsima akomi biso kolangola hé hé*" ("The father of the hoe, the white man, the mason, he likes [us to] work, and afterwards, he will chase us away"). The lyrics refer to a particular colonial officer who used to be a mason but punished his prisoners with a hoe. During Mobutu's regime, the term *salongo* evoked the unity of the Zairian nation and the need to work collectively for the country's progress.

Two program directors of the national television channels during the 1970s recalled the origins of Groupe Salongo in the following way, in a personal interview from the fieldwork:

After a visit to China, Mobutu brought back the documentary film *Esprit de Yukung* and broadcast it on La Voix du Zaïre.⁹ The film shows how Chinese transformed mountains

and rocks into fertile rice fields that fed the population over three times a day. Mobutu proposed the Congolese population to follow the Chinese example, so that they could eat three times a day. (Mwana Mboyo & Pasi Samba, 2004)

According to the two former program directors, Mobutu ordered the film to be shown on national television and asked Tsana to write a play on the same topic. He created a regular theater play, which was broadcast on television and was called *Esprit de Salongo* (*The Spirit of Salongo*). Using the slogan that would become a maxim of Mobutu's labor policy, "*Salongo, Congo elingi mosala*" ("Salongo, Congo likes to work"), the ruler and the actors tried to convince the Congolese population to cooperate in the national development. After the Salongo play, Tsana wrote several other scripts that were inscribed in Mobutu's nationalist project. They portrayed a modern version of the subject: the individual citizen immersed in a national community headed by Mobutu.

The program *Mwana Nsoso* marked a turning point for Groupe Salongo, which then began producing teleserials. During the first seven years, Groupe Salongo produced dramatic stories weekly in its studio. In 1981 the producers left the studio confines to shoot outside, and they stretched the new story over several episodes. Entitled *Small Chicken* (*Mwana Nsoso*), this story was the first real serial in Congo. It dealt with the love affair between a married woman and a younger man – a phenomenon called *mario*, meaning "gigolo." This theme has recurred in popular culture and is present in the current discourses of sexuality (Pype, 2012). Focused on kinship, sociability in the work space, and gendered encounters in the urban setting, Salongo's teleserials tried to enlighten people about their (mis)behaviors. For example, the serial *The Difficulties of Finding Work* (*Pasi ya Kozwa Mosala*) portrayed a young man who, after various misfortunes, becomes an accountant at a prominent company. The main message of the story was that, through virtue, honesty, and hard work, individuals earn not only wealth, but also dignity. Such dignity, the story implies, contributes to the nation's prosperity.

The serials produced during the Mobutu era reveal a total absence of reference to divine intervention. Rather, the Salongo protagonists were represented either as cunning people or as victims of other citizens. The endings confirmed that good and bad behavior would be rewarded or punished, but not by invisible agents like God or the devil. They stressed morality in a social world where human rationality and the social effects of one's deeds should precede action. The agency of an invisible power on this world was not denied, but it was not depicted as determining all the actions and experiences either. This, however, changed drastically by the end of the millennium and in the post-Mobutu period (1997–2006), when Pentecostal–Charismatic churches became prominent players in the construction of communities and increasingly central to the process of making sense of urban life.

Born-Again Christianity and TV Fiction

The liberalization of the media system in Kinshasa accompanied the growing popularity of Pentecostal religion, and this prompted a new key scenario in media

production. In the mid-1990s Mobutu's power had declined. Kinshasa citizens began to listen to born-again Christian leaders, both in public spaces and through radio and television. These new leaders started to attack the hedonistic leisure for which Kinshasa was well known, offering conversion and exorcism as a new route to the attainment of wealth, health, and social success. The new Christian churches became a refuge for many, because they seemed to offer scripts for the future that appealed to many Kinshasans. At the same time, Kinshasa's media opened radically to a privately run system, which led to a boom in indigenous media. Today it takes only USD \$25,000 and permission from the authorities to create a private television channel in Kinshasa.

As a result, Kinshasa's local media world is a highly dynamic terrain. Wealthy families and commercial entrepreneurs operate stations (RAGA-TV and TROPICANA-TV respectively). Others are owned by political leaders for propaganda. Several channels are explicitly linked to a prophet or a church group. New local and international channels are added regularly, though the government may suspend or withdraw licenses to channel owners. International channels like TV5 (French) and DRTV (Congo-Brazzaville) also air in the city. Some of the programming comes from diasporic Congolese communities in Brussels, Paris, and Johannesburg. Several channels have permanent or semi-permanent technical staff and hosts sojourning in the diasporic communities; they report weekly about activities among the Congolese abroad, frequently showing successful Kinshasans and Kinshasa cultures abroad. In 2003 the city's population could watch 25 television channels, of which 22 were locally based. In 2010 the number of available television stations had increased to 48, of which 39 were local. These figures are significant by comparison with the total number of television channels in Congo: researchers for the Parisian Panos Institute counted 52 television channels in 2004.¹⁰

The most popular programs on all TV channels air Congolese music, local television serials, and shows featuring music and serial stars. Religious stations feature biblical stories and Christian music. Both religious and commercial channels broadcast Nigerian and Ivorian serials and talk shows in which former witches and "pagans" testify about their faith. All of Kinshasa's television channels screen American films both from Hollywood and from Christian production companies; soap operas such as *Top Models*; series like *Friends*; Chinese martial arts films; and Walloon talk shows such as *Ça va se savoir* (a Belgian show inspired by *Jerry Springer*). Liberalization sparked the production of local teleserials, designed to serve the sudden demand for content. Many established dramatic artists set up their own theater production companies. In their wake, young people created their own drama groups and introduced themselves to television channels. Now all local TV stations have several theater companies working with them. Each company produces one episode of a serial each week.

Independently of whether the sponsoring channel is government-run or private, commercial or religious, all teleserials are framed within a Pentecostalist ideology. Some theater companies have an explicit evangelizing profile; such are the Cinarc Troupe, Les Évangélistes, La Trompette, and Les Lévites. The other kind of groups,

the so-called *troupes ya mokili* (secular theater), also tend toward Christian themes. The proliferation of Pentecostal–Charismatic churches in the city during the 1990s changed the design of teleserials. Morality in the TV serials became increasingly a religious matter. Even if the serials’ producers remained committed to national progress (Pype, 2009a), the main difference introduced by teleserials stems from the proposal of a new moral order, which is inscribed in an apocalyptic postcolonial experience, as some of the titles suggest: *Le Quartier maudit* (*The Cursed Township*), *Le Tombeau ouvert* (*The Open Tomb*), *Le Cartel de l’obscurité* (*The Alliance of Darkness*), *Kinshasa ou sodomie 18* (*Kinshasa or Sodomy 18*). Although the Salongo serials had used special effects to visualize witchcraft, occult and invisible forces came to the fore in the second half of the 1990s, becoming part and parcel of almost every serial (Pype, 2012). Stock characters in the dramas include *le pasteur* (the pastor), the witch, and the fool. In the finales, the witch either confesses his or her “bad” deeds, accepting Jesus and being “saved,” or stubbornly refuses the power of the Christian God, which result in his or her death. Most of Kinshasa’s drama groups are counseled by one or more spiritual advisors. In each of their programs, they thank *Jésus de Nazareth*, a range of spiritual advisors, and their affiliated church and they give the names of the leaders of the troupe and the church. Often the actors also invite their audience to their prayer gatherings.

Kinshasa’s teleserials profess a Christian key scenario, which could be summarized as follows. Life in Kinshasa is hazardous because of the workings of the devil and his demons. They invade the domestic sphere with the help of witches. They threaten collective and individual health physically and socially. Through prayer, however, and by listening closely to the advice of pastors Christians can arm themselves against evil. Conversion to Pentecostal Christianity, confessions, and deliverance rituals are identified as important turning points in the unfolding of the plot. Christian rituals are represented as effective means of purifying society and promoting Jesus’ path. This key scenario offers success and inspires individuals to be good. Significantly, it is also expressed in the churches and in other evangelization practices (*ibid.*).

Transnational Flows

Kinshasa’s television serials are the outcome of transnational flows of beliefs, technologies, and people. Kinshasa’s media has, from its earliest days, connected the local to the global and vice versa, although in varying manners. During the colonial regime, when French television programs were broadcast in the colonies, the West was represented before local realities could be “imagined” through the imagination or the screen image. During Mobutu’s reign, the ruler ordered program directors to broadcast Chinese film reflecting his political aversion for the West and his leanings toward other Third World countries. The national adjustment of imported theater and Western communication technologies fits well in the cultural extraversion of

Kinshasa's society as a whole. Jean-François Bayart (2005, p. 71) defines "cultural extraversion" as "espousing foreign cultural elements and putting them in the service of autochthonous objectives." Apart from the Western and Asian influences discussed above, West African films have also impacted local TV serials. For a decade now, while a Pentecostal-inspired Christianity has gradually monopolized the city's public culture and social life, Nigerian witchcraft films have dominated television screens. Their influence even altered the design of locally produced television serials.

Nigerian Witchcraft Films

Nigerian witchcraft films constitute a subgenre of Nigerian films; they were shown in Kinshasa's new churches beginning in 1998 and broadcast on Kinshasa television soon after. Nigerian witchcraft films have become an essential part of the viewing experiences of Kinshasa's population, although they are only one among the various "foreign" serial and film narratives that make up Kinshasa's television programming. Most of these films emphasize the workings of the occult in daily life. They are notorious for their staging of "demonic rituals" of human sacrifices (see Okwori, 2003).

Nigeria's witchcraft films inspire serials producers in Kinshasa to the extent that local actors translate Nigerian scripts into Kinois terms. In 2005, for example, during the weeks preceding the annual Mwana Mboka Trophées (Child of the Nation Awards), when sports figures, politicians, charitable organizations, musicians, and theater groups receive awards, people asked whether the Muyombe Gauche theater group would be disqualified or not, since its latest teleserial was a copy of a Nigerian film. In addition, the only film that the Cinarc troupe has produced thus far is called *Kalaonga*, a title that resembles very much that of the most popular Nigerian film in Kinshasa, *Karichika*.

The arrival of the *films du Nigéria* is linked to the Congolese imaginary about Nigeria and to the male migration to this country, which has become increasingly important since the 1990s. Appadurai (1996, p. 3) has already remarked that media and migratory flows are interconnected. The influence of the Nigerian video films on Kinshasa's teleserials concretely depicts how mass-mediatized imaginary landscapes are not always rooted in Western hegemonic image systems, but sometimes also in alternative transnational circuits (see Larkin, 1997). Since the 1990s, the film industry in Lagos¹¹ has boomed and spread films all over sub-Saharan Africa. More importantly, Nigeria occupies an important place in the Kinois imagination, although only a small number of Kinois have actually visited the West African country. On the basis of Nigerian films and of the stories of returned migrants, Kinois perceive Nigeria as a nation of plenty, where access to commodities is easier than in their hometown. Young men consider Nigeria to be an attractive place for economic trade. Christianity, and especially evangelization, is also an important attraction, though religious and economic reasons frequently comeingle.

These intertwined issues are reflected in witchcraft films produced in Nigeria but popularized in Congo. According to many Kinois, Nigeria is the front line of a spiritual battle between God and the devil. One of my informants, Nene, told me that her aunt, who had stayed some time in Lagos, was surprised to observe people there saying incantations on beaches or in parks. She found it equally strange that magical objects could easily be purchased in markets. Conversely, many Kinois appreciate Nigerian Christian leaders for their ardent battle against the devil. Nigerian prophets are often invited to Kinshasa to perform healing sessions, and many of Kinshasa's spiritual leaders are eager to learn from Nigerian prophets. Often, when Congolese spiritual leaders return from Nigeria, they represent themselves as *des prophètes nigériens* ("Nigerian prophets"). As a result, the attribute "Nigerian" has become a quality label that guarantees strong spiritual powers and capacities. These narratives of Nigeria as a nation with "God" and with "much evil" are confirmed when Kinois watch Nigerian witchcraft films.

Though these films are spoken in English, people watch them nonetheless.¹² Understanding the dialogues is not necessary, as the actors' body language and the special effects used speak for themselves. When these films are broadcast on Kinshasa's TV channels, they are dubbed into Kinois through their own translators. Translators are always male; they interpret all the roles – of men and women, children and adults – they explain the dramatic events, and they comment on them so as to bring these "foreign" narratives closer to Kinshasa's reality. Franck Baku Fuita and Godefroid Bwiti Lumisa (2005, p. 112), two Congolese journalists, noted that these interpreters are even granted the status of spiritual leaders who not only instruct but also heal the viewers. They describe how viewers, mostly women, contacted a translator, José de Jésus, asking him to cure their sterility and other illnesses of "mysterious" origins. They write: "One woman whom we met when visiting José de Jésus confirms to have been cured of her sterility thanks to an operation undoing the *désenvoûtement* [bewitchment] [sc. – an operation performed] by the famous television host whom she came to know through the Nigerian films" (author's translation, p. 112). This suggests, again, that, for Kinois, a close connection with the Nigerian Christian world is perceived as increasing one's spiritual power.

Nigerian films travel to Congo through migratory flows – both religious and economic. Local Pentecostal preachers are important cultural brokers of Nigerian films. *Pasteur* Kutinho, leader of the revival church L'Armée de Victoire (The Victory Army), screened *Karichika* on his own TV channel (de Boeck, 2004a, p. 186). It tells the story of a young girl (Karichika) who is sent by Lucifer to the world in order to destroy humanity. She uses her beauty as a weapon to sow death and despair, and she brings disorder into households. At the end of the film, the "real" Christians are saved thanks to their strong faith, while the sinners die, and Karichika returns to the world of the devil. Today the word *karichika* designates in Kinshasa this genre of West African films that depict the spiritual combat between God and the devil.

Nigerian films also found their way to Kinshasa through many commercial activities of the Kinois abroad. Young men who migrate between the Republic of Congo,

South Africa, Angola, and Nigeria bring back home all kinds of commodities: soap, mattresses, radios, and clothes. At the age of 24, the president of the TV actors group Cinarc Bienvenu Toukebana was sent abroad by his mother. First he went to Angola for two years. Then he spent three years in South Africa, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria. In 1998 he returned to Kinshasa with a pile of Nigerian videos. With the help of his maternal cousin he sold the films in Kinshasa's streets and churches, as well as in his mother's hometown Matadi, in Lower Congo. Cassettes, video compact discs (VCDs), and digital versatile discs (DVDs) are still sold in the streets today by *bashayeurs* – boys aged between 15 and 18, who also sell local media and music. Nigerian tapes and DVDs circulate in compounds¹³ and among relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Aside from informal circuits, Nigerian video films are shown on Kinshasa's privately owned television stations. Through constant repetition, the films have become part of the town's cultural memory. Their aesthetics influence the way in which Kinois decorate their homes. According to a journalist, for example, "Kinois increasingly construct pillars and vaults in their houses as well as small gardens. The compound walls are more and more painted in orange, yellow, dark brown, and all kinds of red; thus these colors are replacing the 'traditional' ones of blue, white and color of *pierre de France*" (the "French stone," in other words red brick) (Ne Kongo, 2007, author's translation, p. 4). In the domestic sphere, conversations often deal with the contents and characters of these films; several nicknames derive from fictional characters in the Nigerian films; and domestic chores are postponed when these films are broadcast.

Nigerian witchcraft films have attracted state attention, becoming the center of a vivid and passionate public debate over the merits of broadcasting them in relation to the country's development. In my four years of fieldwork (2002–2006) the national government outlawed the films twice, through the Haute autorité des médias (the governmental censorship board). Kinois actors, the Nigerian embassy, and the Congolese state fueled the protest against this immensely popular genre. Local actors felt threatened by the success of these films. The Nigerian ambassador requested banning the films, as he feared that they gave Nigeria a bad image. Furthermore, people blamed the films for the spreading phenomenon of witch hunt, which targeted child witches in particular (see de Boeck, 2004b). Other opponents articulated concerns about the role of the visual media in the construction of national identities. They discussed the threat that foreign media products posed to the preservation of local culture, and the need to regulate the educational value of television programs. State censors, however, did not put an end to the broadcasting of Nigerian films. By the end of 2006 several new television channels began, and their program schedules were almost exclusively dominated by Nigerian films.

Studying the Flows

In their introduction to *Media Worlds*, Ginsburg and colleagues (2002, p. 14) contend that "the dominant frameworks for thinking about media's transnational reach have

been either globalization or cultural imperialism, which tend to privilege media originating from or dominant in the West, with less attention to other circuits.” The influence of Nigerian films on Kinshasa’s public culture and media production concretely depicts how imaginary landscapes are not always rooted in Western hegemonic image systems, but sometimes also in alternative transnational circuits. The role of Nigerian films and the particular history of their arrival in Kinshasa therefore create a very interesting case for the scholar who wants to study the way in which moving images reconfigure public spheres and contribute to the circulation of alternative global master narratives.

Investigation into the meaning of Nigerian films and into their impact on Kinshasa’s public culture is thus situated in a global world where people and media images move jointly. With the flow of consumer goods, money, and bodies, media aesthetics also travels. The social trajectories of the film tapes and DVDs, the sources of the identity formation processes that are at stake, the dynamics of signification that these films provoke, and the legitimization and social control that the circulation of Nigerian films in Kinshasa induce are all properties of the framework of African media reception practices – which are themselves aspects of more encompassing economic and political flows. Of course, a South–South circulation of aesthetics is not a new phenomenon. What is new, however, is the revolution in communication and information technologies and its effect of reducing distance and of accelerating the flows. Indeed, the model of interconnectivity that is proposed by a globalization narrative represents only one phase in a global aesthetic system, in which for many centuries narratives and symbols have been circulating by means of imitation and of which the Nigerian film is only one example.¹⁴

Much research has documented the interaction between media and migration in Africa. On the basis of long-term participatory fieldwork, Minou Fuglesang (1994) and Brian Larkin (1997) have studied how Hindu films guide young people – Lamu in Kenya and Hausa in Nigeria – in the construction of their individual identities, direct their aspirations toward their future spouses, or fashion gender relations among them. This research furthers Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding paradigm, which emphasizes the meaning-making of visual texts at its reception. In their attention to the social “effects” of the Hindu films, Fuglesang and Larkin demonstrate how the images, narratives, and even fictive characters resignify, at an abstract and imaginative level, the lives of the recipients and, more importantly, how these virtual realities are embodied in the young viewers’ lives. The mass media signs and codes introduce into the private and public spheres a transformation that, as the authors succinctly point out, is much awaited and longed for by the Lamu and the Hausa youth. In Kinshasa, Didier Gondola (1997, pp. 307–317) and Filip de Boeck (2004a, pp. 36–39) have studied how Hollywood westerns and Hindi movies shown in colonial Léopoldville (Kinshasa’s former name) shaped a colonial youth subculture that has received the name “Billism” – after Buffalo Bill and Pecos Bill, two protagonists in westerns. “Bills” or “Billies” imitated the clothing style and body language of American film heroes. They formed youth gangs endowed with their own hierarchy (e.g., “sheriffs”), initiation rituals, and language. These movements inspired a whole

street culture, called *le style des Yankees*, and the yankee figure occupies a prominent place in the city's complex construction of masculinities (see Pype, 2007). These findings show that much of the literature on media and migration remains at the levels of media reception, the production of minority media, and their impact on the production of identities in diasporic publics.

Yet there are still several aspects of the interactions between media and migration that need careful analysis and theoretical elaboration in light of recent reflections on cultural globalization – such as those of Arjun Appadurai (1996), Jonathan Friedman (1994), and Ulf Hannerz (1992). First, the study of migration and media should not be limited to the social contexts in which media products are watched and consumed; it should also take into account the circulation of print magazines, audiotapes, and DVDs in various communities. This is not only because distributors occupy particular nodes in the chains of production, but also because social groups, entrepreneurs, and other individuals often commission the production, acquisition, and distribution of prints and broadcasts. It is important to understand how the dissemination of images and sounds runs along flows of money and other forms of capital. Only when we reconstruct the “social biographies” (to use a concept from Kopytoff, 1986) of the visual media can we begin to understand how the media impinge on identities. To illustrate this idea, I will mention that the spread of Nigerian films in Kinshasa is not controlled by the Nigerian traders (about 4,000, mostly Igbo) who reside in the city. Kinois people themselves, who move to Nigeria, return with these films and offer them to local TV patrons, sell them to the music and video shops in town, or give them to *bashayeurs* to sell them in the streets. This means that the local circulation and reception of Nigerian films are embedded in the migration practices of Kinois themselves, and thus cannot be credited to the presence of Nigerians in the city or to the merits of their skilled traders.

Second, anthropologists also need to look at how these media products are framed within larger narratives and audiences. As argued by Katz and Liebes (1991), local considerations determine the interpretations of televised narratives and images. Nigerian films' recuperation and integration into the new media landscape, as a constitutive aspect of adaptation and globalization, was only possible because of political and cultural changes in Kinshasa. From what I have discussed, it appears that the success of the Nigerian films does not reside in the mere specialization of a so-called genuine African film industry that can “speak back” to the metropole and counter the cultural imperialism brought forward via film. It is more the establishment of an African Christianity that accounts for the popularity of Nigerian films among Kinshasa's spectators. Three categories of media brokers can be identified in this cultural circuit: the petty trader, the Christian pastor, and the dubber. It should be emphasized that these three categories are not strictly separated. Pastors also engage in petty trade, while traders also become dubbers; and dubbers at times also acquire the same charismatic capital as pastors (Pype, in press).

The arrival of Nigerian films in Kinshasa is largely shaped by a religious network, which acts above all to structure the product's meaning. Nigerian films are integrated

and taken up in a set of transformational units that orchestrate its reframing within the context of local meanings. Nigerian films are part of Pentecostalist evangelizing practices, and they are culturally assimilated by its brokers – and also by its spectators. We could well argue that, for the current Kinois context, the imported Nigerian films have become embedded objects of charismatic Christianity. Such insertion in local viewing cultures is informed by local cultures of authority and power, in particular, by the new position of authority of charismatic pastors. Most of these new Christian leaders have received their new power position both from the appeal of charismatic Christianity and from their proximity to Nigerian Christian culture.

A final aspect that needs to be discussed is the blending of transnational narratives and signs with local symbols and values. “Foreign” stories and plotlines are constantly interwoven with locally rooted characters and scenarios. In the field of media anthropology, the confrontation, rejection, and/or embracement of transnational narratives and characters in local storylines can offer an interesting vantage point for a fuller comprehension of the production of key scenarios. In the context of post-Mobutu television serials, it is important to identify traces of “ethnic narratives” that have become resignified through new values and belief systems, which have come to dominate the public culture.

For example, the traditional figure of MoniMambu from folklore and oral stories has become resignified through the theater troupes for teleserials. MoniMambu (whose name is Kikongo for “Seer of troubles”) is one of Kongo’s many trickster figures,¹⁵ known to Kinois primarily through their elders and artists (Janzen, 1992, p. 258). Nowadays MoniMambu can be found in new cultural performances, including a theater company called Moni-Mambu, which broadcasts its serials on the privately owned channel NzondoTV. A temporary theater company called LesMdu Congo produced a serial entitled *MoniMambu*, which starred some of Kinshasa’s most important actors. In addition, the names of some of the fictional characters in Cinarc’s serials resonate with the name MoniMambu: Mambweni (“The things that I have seen”) and Mayimona (“The things that one sees”). Although few of the young Cinarc actors or other young informants seemed to be aware of the specific cultural significance of characters such as MoniMambu, one finds common ground between the “traditional” narratives and the urban teleserials. Both genres visualize social and spiritual transgression. Of utmost interest here is that the Pentecostal popular culture, itself the outcome of globalization, has resignified the protagonists of local ethnic stories while maintaining their fundamental meanings (Pype, 2010).

Conclusion: TV Serials and Palimpsests of Culture

The anthropological turn toward “the production of culture” and “the broadcasting of culture” enables us to trace, through a diachronic and synchronic study of local TV fiction, the various power configurations that have shaped Kinshasa’s public

culture. It also helps us to explore the various kinds of social success and the most appropriate means to achieve it that have been represented in the space of TV fiction. “Key scenarios” and ideas of “culture” are not static; rather they change over time. The coming and going of “key scenarios” on local screens reflects and partakes in the political and social transformations that societies experience.

The anthropological perspective, which entails a constant move between content analysis and the social space in which these dominant narratives were/are produced, and also takes into account the appropriation of transnational signs and narratives and their confrontation with local values and protagonists, is extremely helpful in unraveling the various ways in which culture is produced. “Culture” is not something that “exists” beyond human beings. Rather, ideas about “culture” are produced, visualized, reflected upon, contested, watched at, enacted, and broadcast. And TV fiction does not stand outside this project of “making culture”; rather, as has been shown in the analysis of Congolese TV drama, media producers grant it a very central position within the imagination of selves, others, and society as a whole.

Given the different “foreign” influences that have shaped the design of the Congolese postcolonial teleserials, from Belgian colonial stimuli to Chinese film and Nigerian witchcraft films, it is questionable how far we can describe these visual texts as “local products.” Karin Barber (1997, pp. 358–359), reflecting on aesthetic genres and audiences in Africa, argues that the distinction between “local” and “imported” cultural forms becomes more and more dubious as a result of the hybrid nature of African cultures. The analysis has also shown that a society’s key symbols are configurations of local and transnational narratives, protagonists, and motives. The postcolonial “key scenarios” that have been promoted via Kinshasa’s TV screens have always been local products of “foreign” and Congolese/Zairian ideas and images, thus confirming that “cultures” are not closed systems; rather they continuously change, incorporating new signs and mixing them with more familiar themes. For an anthropologist, TV fiction is a palimpsestic space where the different layers of meaning-making and culture production can be explored.

NOTES

- 1 Askew (2002, p. 7) contends that it was not until the late 1980s, in the wake of the “crisis of representation” in the discipline, that the uses of technology in ethnographic research have begun to be questioned.
- 2 See Mead and Métraux (2000) for a discussion about the research motivations, methodologies, and publications of the project.
- 3 This overview is limited to the audiovisual media. The printed press constitutes another important sector of Congo’s media landscape, with its own political imagination. Furthermore, other Congolese cities have, of course, their own local media history.
- 4 The *évolués* were a category created and set apart by colonial officers among the indigenous population. They received Western schooling, lived according to Western housing

styles, accepted Christian faith and its codes of conduct, and were employed in the colonial economy. In his public and private life, an *évolué* had to display assimilation with Western style and values, with “civilization,” while “tradition” had to be abandoned. The ideal colonial subject was thus a converted, educated, and working man, an African bourgeois character. This category has a long and complex history. On the education of the *évolué* in Kinshasa, see Tshimanga (2001, pp. 133–146).

- 5 The following overview is largely based on a series of interviews with Hemediy Mwana Mboyo and Gabriel Pasi Samba, former program directors of the Zairian state television, and with Ndungi Mambimbi (screen name “Massumu Debrinder”), Kwedi Mayimputu (“Kwedi,” “Diallo”) and Mathieu Matondo (“Sans Soucis”), all important dramatic artists since the early years of Kinshasa’s television serials.
- 6 A historical ethnography of the reception of these plays is needed in order to nuance present-day dismissals of these programs as meaningless.
- 7 There were 111,811 television sets for about 3,000,000 inhabitants in 1975 (Otten, 1984, p. 69). Informants told me that people would watch in their neighbours’ houses if they did not own a TV set.
- 8 Ndaywel è Nziem (1998, p. 484) mentions that these lyrics had become very popular in the earliest urban music produced in Kinshasa in the 1950s.
- 9 I was unable to retrace the exact title of the documentary. According to Mwana Mboyo and Pasi Samba (2004), the Chinese word *yukung* means “collective work.” The content of the film, as they summarized it, recalls a well-known allegorical tale of “traditional China” used in Maoist propaganda. The tale “Old Fool Moves Mountains” was Mao’s preferred fable and occurred in his “Little Red Book,” officially known as *Quotations of Chairman Mao Zedong*. This book explained Mao’s ideology and was distributed among the Chinese population during the cultural revolution (1966–1976). Convents’ account (which is based on Otten, 1984) of the origins of the serial *The Spirit of Salongo* is somewhat different. He writes that Mobutu had visited a Chinese village called Yu Kong. “In order to build the village, the inhabitants had to move mountains. The Chinese film *How Yu Kong Moved a Mountain* narrates this event” (Convents, 2006, p. 298; my translation).
- 10 See Malu and DRIM (2004).
- 11 Also called *Nollywood*, although I have never heard this name used in Kinshasa.
- 12 The main languages in Kinshasa are Lingala, Kikongo, and, to a lesser extent, French.
- 13 A compound refers to a plot of land on which one or more houses are built. Usually, within one compound three to four families cohabit, each of them living in one house. The number of people living in one compound can reach up to 40.
- 14 One can think of the circulation of the water spirit Mami Wata as another example (Drewal, 2008).
- 15 Kongo refers here to the ethnic group of the Bakongo, who live in the province Lower Congo.

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Why Has News Production in the United States Remained Stable at a Time of Great Change?

David Michael Ryfe

ABSTRACT

This chapter canvases the literature in the sociology of news production for explanations as to why, in the face of great change around them, American newspapers have failed to innovate. It finds three sorts of explanations in this literature: journalists are anchored to habits; they have deep investments in traditional practices and values; and they routinely re-enact long-standing definitions of what journalism is and of what it is for. Each explanation is elucidated through examples taken from the author's recent ethnographic work in several newsrooms.

According to many observers, journalism in the United States is undergoing a profound transformation. The argument rests principally on the new possibilities for cultural production brought on by the Internet. The Internet opens the doors into the field of journalism to many new entrants, thereby displacing journalists from their traditional role as gatekeepers of public conversation. As a multimedia networked medium, for example, the Internet creates the possibility of nonlinear – in other words non-authorial – storytelling (Pavlik, 2001). It allows “people formerly known as the audience” to produce their own news (Gillmor, 2004). It gives political

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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actors an opportunity to reach their constituencies without the mediation of journalists (Bimber, 2003). It changes the way in which knowledge in public life is produced, aggregated, and brought to bear on governmental policymaking (Noveck, 2009). And it transforms the business model of journalism, which hinges on journalism's ability to serve as a funnel between advertisers and consumers (Anderson, 2009; Jarvis, 2009; Tapscott & Williams, 2006). The upshot is that the Internet has ushered in an age of "mass amateurization," as Clay Shirky (2008, p. 71) puts it, a time when "anyone can be publisher [. . .] [ergo] anyone can be a journalist."

Yet, despite this great upheaval, most descriptions of the practice of news-gathering and reporting find that it is stubbornly unchanged. Journalists still rely on the same sources, especially government agencies, as principal sources of news (see content analyses by Chung, 2007; Paterson, 2007; Quandt, 2008). Their definitions of news and newsworthiness, for instance through immediacy, impact, uniqueness, human interest, and the like – which have been taught in introduction to journalism classes for decades – remain essentially in place (see Leetaru, 2009). Conceptions of the journalist's role still revolve around long-standing values like objectivity, factuality, balance, and neutrality (see O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Paterson & Domingo, 2008). This is true even for "citizen journalists," who see themselves and their work mostly in traditional terms (see Ryfe & Mensing, 2010). The presentation of news is changing a bit more. News-writing today is more informal and conversational than in the past, and more likely to incorporate multimedia elements. But these are changes of style rather than of substance. Despite the challenges posed by the Internet, the evidence indicates that journalists continue to act as if they were gatekeepers of the public conversation.

We are presented, then, with a puzzle. Why, when the challenge to journalism is so great, does the practice of news production in the US remain comparatively stable – even among individuals and groups located outside of mainstream news organizations, and indeed outside of the profession?¹

In what follows I entertain three explanations of this puzzle, from the perspective of the *sociology of news* production. Each of these explanations highlights the role of news practices, but it perceives these practices as doing different sorts of work. The first explanation views news practices as something akin to habits. Journalists have been socialized to adopt particular practices and to perceive them as natural and inevitable. The unreflective manner in which journalists approach news practices, this argument goes, makes them difficult to dislodge. A second perspective notes that practices are not simply rules that journalists habitually follow. Rather, they are more like institutions – practices that contain both rules *and* resources (e.g., money or status). It is possible for journalists to develop investments in news practices, regarded as resource-laden activities. This means that change may be inhibited not because journalists are unreflective, but because they make strategic calculations about the costs and benefits of reordering these investments. Finally, a third approach observes that news practices are constitutive, in the sense that they enact a basic definition of what journalism is (see Ryfe, 2006). This definition acts as a kind of gravitational force, pulling journalists and others to engage one another in traditional ways, and

setting boundaries beyond which it becomes difficult to recognize activities as journalism. To the extent that journalistic practice enacts constitutive rules, this argument suggests, old practices will tend to persist and new practices will tend to reproduce old meanings.

These explanations roughly correspond to three “waves” of research (Cottle, 2009) in the sociology of news tradition. The earliest, largest, and most powerful wave occurred in the decade from 1970 to 1980, when, by my count, no fewer than 15 studies written by 21 scholars were published (see, in chronological order, Tunstall, 1971; Cohen & Young, 1973; Sigal, 1973; Sigelman, 1973; Epstein, 1973; Argyris, 1974; Roshco, 1975; Altheide & Rasmussen, 1976; Chibnall, 1977; Tuchman, 1978; Schlesinger, 1978; Gans, 1979; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Bantz, McCorkle, & Baade, 1980). This literature, which focused mostly on Anglo-American news media, came to a remarkably uniform conclusion about news production: news was homogeneous across news outlets, in large part because it was strongly shaped by organizational habits, routines, norms, and values adopted in much the same way by almost every news organization. By the early 1980s, this emphasis on the power of professional routines was conventional wisdom among those who studied the news. A second wave of research, smaller and less powerful than the first, arose to challenge this view (see Cottle, 2003; Eliasoph, 1988; Jacobs, 1996; Pedelty, 1995). In this wave, scholars stressed the themes of variability, heterogeneity, contingency, and conflict in the production of news. They argued, with Ronald Jacobs (1996, p. 375), that, while professional routines ensured a degree of uniformity in the news, “both within and between news [. . .] organizations, there is a significant degree of contestation and heterogeneity.” Beyond contradicting conventional wisdom, however, this wave of research developed no compelling alternative theory of news production, until Timothy Cook (1998) and Bartholomew Sparrow (1999) introduced an institutional theory of news in the late 1990s. This theory accounts for the interplay of uniformity and variability in news production through appeal to a language of interests, investments, strategies, and calculations. Finally, a last, incipient third wave of research is, I must admit, really one of my own making. I take my cue from recent work in the sociology of culture on “anchoring practices” in cultural production (see Archer, 1996; Emirbayer, 1997; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Joas, 1993; Swidler, 2006). On this view, culture may work not by forming habits or prompting investments, but by defining what things, at bottom, *are* in social interactions. I say more about this notion below, but I believe the intuition explains a curious fact: practices may persist even when the individuals participating in them expressly desire to change.

It is tempting to frame these waves of research in terms of a story of progress, each wave improving on the last. But this would be a mistake. The history of the sociology of news has been less one of progress than one of addition. Each wave has added new concepts and ways of thinking that allow scholars to grapple with new situations and to address new questions. When it comes to the question of change, or rather of the lack of change, each tradition offers an important perspective, and indeed in most newsrooms the dynamics they refer to probably compound one another.

It is also the case, I think, that these traditions are not equally valuable at every moment. The first two explanations describe journalists as resisting, in various ways, the transformation of their profession. My own investigations of American metropolitan daily newspapers, which began in 2004, indicate that this resistance was more apparent in earlier stages of the transformation. Until about 2005 journalism remained a relatively settled profession, and many journalists acted as if the Internet was merely a hindrance to their practice. In contrast, today almost every working journalist recognizes that the Internet has dramatically altered the landscape of news, and that the profession must change in response to its new environment. I meet very few journalists these days who simply resist the idea of change. Yet, despite this growing awareness, news production remains as stable as ever. The constitutive quality of news practices better captures this fact: that news production remains unchanged even against the expressed wishes of journalists. My broad point here is that the transformation of news is a moving target. This means, in part, that the acuity of the lenses necessarily varies with changes in circumstances.

In what follows I outline the three approaches, drawing, where appropriate, on the relevant theoretical and empirical literature. Throughout I illustrate each perspective with examples from my own ethnographic investigations.² Taken together, these perspectives explain why, in the midst of great turmoil, news production in the US remains remarkably stable.

Habits

The first of the approaches is the most long-standing and the easiest one to explain. It was deployed first by the early wave of newsroom ethnographies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s. To a person, the researchers who conducted these studies were struck by the highly routine and bureaucratic nature of news production. Here is Mark Fishman (1980, p. 14): “the routine work methods of journalists are capable of explaining the distinct character of media news.” And Phillip Schlesinger (1978, p. 106): “Broadcast news is the outcome of standardized production routines [. . .].” And Leon Sigal (1973, p. 4): newsmaking and gathering “is routine behavior: a good deal of the news is a product of the coupling of two information processing machines: one, the news organization; the other, government.” And Edward Epstein (1973, p. 8): “the outputs of network news are not simply the arbitrary choices of a few men; they result from a process.” The news, in short, is an outcome of bureaucratic rules, or, as so many of these studies put it, it is “manufactured” according to standard routines.

The language of routine implies that news practices are akin to habits: unconscious, unreflective, and utterly naturalized recipes for action. This is certainly the sense conveyed by the early studies. Leon Sigal (1973, p. 101) reports that news routines “take on a life of their own [. . .] Learned during apprenticeship, reinforced in daily experience on the job, they become ‘the way things are done.’” Gaye Tuchman

(1978, p. 186) argues that reporters adopt a “natural attitude” toward their work, relying on largely implicit, everyday understandings to guide their activities. Herbert Gans (1979, p. 82) likens news decisions to “quick intuitive judgments, which some ascribe to a ‘feel.’” Throughout, these studies portray journalists as unselfconsciously reproducing the routines embedded in their practices.

The key dynamic in this process of news-gathering is socialization. Journalists, the argument goes, learn habits through immersion in newsrooms. Warren Breed’s (1955, p. 328) analysis of how newspaper policy is conveyed to journalists is a classic statement of this position. He finds that each journalist learns his/her jobs as if “by osmosis [. . .] [staffers] become socialized and ‘learn the ropes’ [. . .] [by] [. . .] discover[ing] and internaliz[ing] the rights and obligations of his status and its norms and values.” Others have found much the same thing. Lee Sigelman (1973, p. 137) observes that reporters learn how to produce news in a “highly diffuse and extremely informal” manner, mostly by observing more veteran reporters as they go about their business. John Johnstone (1976) describes more formal mechanisms, like the role of the assignment editor in socializing reporters. Some of this socialization, of course, takes place outside the newsroom – in journalism school, for instance. But most journalists “learn the ropes” of the profession by working in the newsroom.

As an example, during my research I worked for six months in 2006 as a novice at a newspaper. Because I was a novice – and everyone in the newsroom knew it – the city editor often led me through a series of steps for completing a story: go to this place; ask to speak to this person; ask these questions; get these documents; call me with what you find – and so on. Reporting on each of these stories followed a script, and after long experience my editor could recite each script by heart. On one occasion, I returned to the newsroom to write a typical 10-inch story on a press conference at which the local district attorney announced a big drug bust. I sat at my computer, struggling to decide how to frame the information I had gathered. Counting on this story for the next day’s newspaper and sensing my difficulty, my editor walked over and asked how things were going. After explaining my dilemma, he told me that there were really only seven different stories I could write about any drug bust. My job was to figure out which of these formulas applied best to the information at hand. At the end of my six-month stint I was socialized into the newsroom well enough not to have any longer to vocalize, or even think about, many of the steps necessary for gathering and reporting the news. Like my editor, I had begun to take them for granted, understanding them as the natural and appropriate things to do in the performance of my job.

The taken-for-grantedness of news practices is important to our story because, as the saying goes, habits are hard to break. This is so for two reasons. In the first instance, their very implicitness makes them difficult to uproot. Even today, after so much of conventional wisdom about journalism has been dispelled, many reporters describe standard news routines as simply the “way that news is produced.” This “natural attitude” prevents them from considering how they might respond in new ways to the new environment that surrounds their profession. In the second instance,

breaking old habits requires time, attention, and reflection – scarce commodities in the contemporary newsroom. Time and again, journalists have told me they wished they had the luxury of thinking during the course of their day. But they simply do not have the time. Every day they must get the newspaper out; and, to accomplish this feat, they must rely on standard routines. In recent years the task has only become more difficult, as journalists have been forced to do less with more, that is, to fill not only newspapers but websites, blogs, twitter feeds, and the like – and all this happened with fewer of them in the newsroom. On several occasions, reporters have used the same metaphor to describe the difficulty. It is, they have told me, like building an airplane while it is in flight.

One explanation, then, for the persistence of standard practices in the midst of transformation has to do with the way in which journalists are socialized to follow tacit rules of news production. In criticisms of journalism, this idea is most often packaged as an indictment of the organizational culture of newsrooms. In a confidential email, one journalist told me: “Our challenge is [that] we can’t break free of the cultural shackles and move the proverbial ship fast enough.” Paraphrasing another journalist, Peter Preston (2008, p. 318) presents the problem thus: journalists “treat every change, every innovation, with suspicion and something akin to fear.” Stuck in their routines and in their received wisdom, journalists simply are unwilling to change, or cannot change fast enough to match the speed of the transformation underway in their profession. In the academic literature, the criticism is often framed as a “cultural clash” between old and new journalists (Hermida & Thurman, 2008). To the extent that “old” journalists remain mired in old habits, their unwillingness or inability to change has prevented the profession from becoming more innovative (see also Bardoel & Deuze, 2001).

This argument is intuitively sensible, and it is visible in newsrooms. In the three newsrooms I have visited, I have met experienced journalists who are set in their ways; they refuse to carry cameras and take photos (as the new, multitasking, mobile journalist does); they make their editors add the graphics, boxes, and sidebars that accompany their stories; they fail to respond to readers’ comments online; they are adamantly opposed to blogging and, if given a blog, they refuse to post to it. A typical example of this “natural attitude” happened during a meeting at one of the newsrooms I visited. The editor formed a committee of veteran journalists to work on a proposal for how newsroom practices might change in response to a perceived need for the newsroom to become more multiplatform – specifically, web-focused. The committee’s recommendations were to be circulated throughout the newsroom. At their first meeting, committee members launched into a harangue about all that is wrong with the web: it destroys good writing; it takes reporters off the street; it is a “black hole” that sucks time and does not generate quality content. Said one member: “We have forgotten that we are the only news-gathering operation in this city. We are trying to be radio [. . .] the web. Let’s be the newspaper.” Ironically, though not surprisingly, at the end of several meetings the committee recommended that the newsroom reallocate resources back to the newspaper.

The sentiment “let’s be the newspaper” is a nice illustration of how the “natural attitude” of traditional reporters can inhibit change. But a focus on the taken-for-grantedness of traditional newsroom culture has limitations. Most obviously, as a second wave of research has argued, it leaves little room for journalistic agency – that is, for the possibility that journalists may actively interpret their routines rather than reproduce them as if by rote (Cottle, 2003; Eliasoph, 1988; Jacobs, 1996; Pedelty, 1995). Charles Bantz (1985), for example, observes that journalists do not always agree with news routines, or enact them in any simple way. Rather, reporters engage in constant conflict and negotiation with one another and with their managers. Nina Eliasoph (1988, p. 315) asserts that routines “accomplish different things in different contexts.” And Mark Pedelty (1995, p. 7) shows that news production looks less like a monotonous return of the same than like an endless management of contradiction.

A focus on habits has little to say about these variations in routines, or about the role of conflict in the reproduction of standard practices. Moreover, it does not explain why individuals working outside of mainstream newsrooms, such as online journalists, and even outside the profession, like citizen journalists, often seem as intent on reproducing old practices as the traditional journalists. Nor does this focus account for the fact that, after several years of dramatic upheaval, during which many unthinkable events have happened, there is little that is taken for granted in newsrooms today. Thus, while it is true that much of news production is indeed routine and is practiced in an unreflective manner, this insight cannot fully explain the stability of news production as a general rule, let alone during a time of great transformation.

Investments

If the second wave of research successfully pointed out that journalists produce the news in significantly different ways across news outlets, it did less well in crafting a theory that made sense of this variation or explained how and why it coexisted with the routines observed by the first wave of studies. Such a theory began to emerge, ironically enough, in a body of work intent on explaining the homogeneity of news production. Researchers began to note that, while first-wave scholars successfully highlighted the importance of news routines, they did less well in explaining the origins of these routines. As Simon Cottle (2003, p. 17) observes, most of this literature applies a kind of “organizational functionalism” to this question: the genesis of every routine is found in a perceived need on the part of news organizations. It is easy to identify the basic flaw in this explanation. If routines arise in order to satisfy organizational needs, and different organizations have different needs, then one would expect different organizations to adopt different routines. Empirically, this is not the case. Instead, as Timothy Cook (1998, p. 64) notes, every daily news outlet

seems to be organized in much the same way and to abide by the same routines. To explain this uniformity, a number of scholars have turned to institutional and field theories of society (see Benson 2004, 2006; Benson & Neveu, 2005; Cook, 1998; Ryfe, 2006; Sparrow, 1999). On their account, news routines arise less from organizational need than from historical and institutional circumstance. Take, for example, the practice of deploying journalists at government agencies. This practice originated in the late nineteenth century. At the time, the practice was adopted in order to satisfy an organizational need, namely the need to get timely information. However, once adopted, the practice was propelled forward by the dynamics of path dependence. As explained by Paul Pierson (2000, p. 252), path dependence means that, as social actors take steps down a particular path, “the relative benefits” of continuing down the path “compared with other possible options increase over time.” The choice of placing reporters at government agencies set an important precedent. Over time, the cost of adopting and maintaining this practice gradually lowered in relation to the benefits of reproducing it, and so the practice eventually took hold across the field of journalism.

The crucial insight of this approach is that news routines are not simply sets of abstract rules that journalists learn. Rather they are constellations, to borrow from Anthony Giddens (1979, pp. 62–64), of “rules *and* resources” (*italics mine*). Again, consider the practice of stationing reporters at government agencies. It is true that the practice of “covering a beat” consists of abstract schemata or rules. Every reporter knows that covering a beat requires periodic chats with public information officers, attendance at agency meetings, collection and review of publicly available documents, and so on. But the practice only becomes effective when it accrues material and symbolic resources. Material resources include such things as office space, rolodexes, websites, and staff dedicated to answering reporters’ questions. Symbolic resources include such things as friendship between agency staff and reporters, role conceptions, know-how, status, and recognition. Over time, these kinds of resources pooled around the practice of covering beats, such that the two – rules and resources – tended to implicate and reproduce each other. William Sewell (1992, p. 13) makes this general point when he writes: “schemas [or rules] are the effects of resources, just as resources are the effects of schemas [rules].” Applied to the practice of beat coverage, this means that the rules governing the practice naturally reproduce resources, just as the accumulation of resources around these practices tends to reproduce the rules. This dynamic makes the structure of news production difficult to circumvent.

A concrete example will illustrate the point. During my visit to one newsroom, reporters and editors were making a substantial effort to upgrade content on the newspaper’s website. In the past, the website had received scant attention. One or two individuals were responsible for posting content, and most of the content they posted was repackaged from the newspaper. Moving forward, the site was to receive new attention and resources. As they tracked traffic on the site, editors learned that their largest audience visited at 8 a.m., then in slightly smaller numbers at noon and

at 5 p.m., at which time traffic essentially disappeared until the next morning. These data led them to focus their efforts on posting as much fresh content as possible at 8 a.m. A problem arose, however, when editors realized that almost every reporter was assigned to a specific beat, that most of these beats covered government agencies, and that government agencies offered little new information between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. For decades, the newspaper had invested resources in these beats, in forms as varied as interpersonal relationships, rolodexes, office space, and really simple syndication (RSS) feeds. These resources made changing the beat structure of reporting a costly proposition. It might have meant, for instance, dedicating more staff specifically to the website (and less to manning government beats), or requiring reporters to hold content for the web, or training reporters to do entirely different things, like interact with their audiences rather than with government sources. These costs might even have included not producing enough content to fill the next day's newspaper. Given that the newspaper still brought in over 90% of the organization's revenue and the website less than 5%, this was an easy calculation for the editors to make: they would innovate up to the point at which the cost of change outweighed the benefits of the status quo. In this case, the editors assigned two reporters to the website and asked them to start work at 5 a.m. But they made no other changes to the beat structure that governed most production in the newsroom, or to the way in which reporters covered beats. Thus conventional news practices persisted because the cost of inventing new ones was much higher than the benefits obtainable from their reproduction.

Individual journalists make the same sorts of calculations, and for much the same reasons. Unlike the first wave approach, which describes reporters as learning news rules and, once they have learned them, following them as if by rote, this second wave perspective portrays journalists as strategic calculators of self-interest. In other words, the schemata that organize social action confront journalists less as rules than as strategies for action. As a general matter, this change in language is designed to avoid the conclusion that social actors (like journalists) merely follow rules as if by rote. "In order to escape this danger," Pierre Bourdieu (1986, p. 111) says in an interview, "one needs to bring into the theory the real principle of strategies, that is, a practical sense of things [. . .] what athletes call a feel for the game." In the context of news production, this means understanding the schemata that organize practices less as sets of rules to be followed than as resources for problem solving.

In this way a theory that began with an effort to explain uniformity opens a way to understand the nature of variability in news production. It becomes apparent that, if viewed as problem-solving resources, multiple solutions to the same problem exist, in other words that journalists may arrange, order, mix, or combine the rules of news production in diverse ways. Consider again my six-month stint as a cub reporter. By the end of that time, it is true that I had been socialized into the newsroom well enough not to have to vocalize the rules any longer. But this is not to say that I always reproduced the practices in an unreflective, unconscious way. As a routine matter, this was not possible. Sometimes it was difficult to know which steps were the most

appropriate ones in a given situation: should I call this or that person, ask these or those questions? At other times I disagreed with the city editor about the newsworthiness of a story, and I had to invent a strategy to persuade him that I was right. And sometimes, in pursuing a story, I hit a roadblock and did not know how to go on. On these occasions I sought advice from others, retraced my steps, and pursued alternative paths. Throughout, I actively interpreted the rules of practice so as to solve the problem at hand.

This activity illuminates the performative and improvisational dimension of news production. Different journalists may apply different practices to the same situation, and the same journalist may apply different practices to the same situation at different times – just as the second wave of ethnographic work insists. Strategies of action are not so extensive as to account for the particulars of every situation. They are not so cohesive that it is impossible to combine them in different ways. People also are differently positioned vis-à-vis one another and vis-à-vis the situation at hand. What looks appropriate to do from one vantage point may seem inappropriate from another. Finally, people have in their possession many different strategies, any number of which may be brought to bear on a given situation. Practices, then, do not determine precisely how they will be practiced. As Alan Warde (2005, p. 134) writes of the practice of consumption, a “pattern of activity can be filled out by a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice [. . .].”

The language of strategy also illuminates the fact that rules present opportunities as well as constraints to social actors. Journalists who are more creative and more skilled at using these opportunities (manipulating available strategies) will naturally accumulate more resources (e.g., money, status, autonomy) in relation to other journalists. This means that the practice of news production is not only improvisational; it is also, by definition, political. As journalists adapt news rules to local circumstances, a pecking order develops. A few journalists become “stars” and accumulate great resources, which they may then leverage into new opportunities. Others obtain fewer resources and have more limited options. The same dynamic, by the way, applies to news organizations: Different organizations will accrue differential amounts of resources available in the field of journalism, and so they will find themselves placed in a pecking order as well.

This becomes important for the prospects of change because, as with news organizations, the resources that journalists accumulate as they adopt conventional practices represent *investments* in the status quo. Consider the case of Dan Manning, a veteran reporter who worked the health beat at a newspaper I visited in the summer of 2008. Manning was in his early forties and had spent the last two decades working his way up the pecking order of news organizations. He started out at a very small community newspaper and, after stops at four other papers, he finally landed a job at the biggest newspaper in the region, covering healthcare – a premier beat in the newsroom. From Manning’s perspective, the time, energy, and focus it took to master the practice of journalism represent an investment that he is, quite understandably, reluctant to relinquish. When contemplating changes to his practice, like blogging

or multimedia storytelling, his instinct is to protect and defend. As he told me in a conversation: “We need to preserve the core mission of the newsroom. If we don’t do anything else we need to do that [because] if we’re not doing that [then] what are we doing?” In other words, Manning wished to protect the practices in which he had invested so much of his professional life. His conservative posture toward change arose not from a mindless embrace of tradition, but from a strategic calculation.

A view of news practices as rules and resources adds essential pieces to our puzzle as to why news production has remained stable in a time of great change. Most importantly, this view restores a sense of history and a concern for agency that are lost in a strict focus on organizational habits. However, like the first wave emphasis on habits, the conception of news practices as strategic investments has limits. Since 2007, the once slow and gradual decline of newspapers has greatly accelerated. Revenues have fallen precipitously, layoffs have accelerated – nearly a quarter of daily journalists lost their jobs in 2008–2009 alone – and entire news organizations, like the Rocky Mountain News, have folded. As Doug Smith, director of the Punch Sulzberger News Media Executive Leadership Program at Columbia University, recently put it: “It’s chaos out there, and there’s definitely a sense of terror” (Folkenflik, 2009). This collective “terror” implies that the costs of maintaining the status quo have, in recent years, grown greatly in relation to the benefits. Yet, even today, I know of no initiative in a daily newsroom to change fundamentally the standard practices of news production. This suggests that something beyond investments, path dependence, and strategic calculation is at work in maintaining the status quo.

Definitions

In order to explain the persistence of conventional news practices, I have found myself searching for new tools. I have mostly discovered these tools in recent work in the sociology of culture; but I begin with Clifford Geertz’s (1973) famous distinction between culture as “models of” and “models for.” Cultural practices like the routines of journalism are “models for” in the sense that they serve as instructions for how to do the job. They are the rules that journalists follow to produce the news. But, as “models of” journalism, news routines also enact constitutive rules for what counts as journalism. The notion of a “constitutive rule” comes from John Searle (1969), who argues that practices like marriage, a trial, or indeed journalism have, embedded in them, rules that take the form “X counts as Y in context C” (quoted in D’Andrade 1984, p. 91). Such rules bring into being the very reality they name, and they do so by determining what counts as what in their particular social domain (for an application to journalism, see Ryfe, 2006).

Take, for instance, a reporter’s notebook. We can think of the notebook as a resource attached to the practice of gathering information. Of course, there are rules for performing this activity: what kinds of information to collect, in what form, and

so on. In this sense, the notebook has, embedded in it, a “model for” doing journalism, a recipe for how to perform the activity. However, the notebook also contains a “model of” journalism. It presupposes, for example, that a journalist is someone who gathers information (hence the need for a notebook). It assumes that a journalist must collect information from a source (most often, someone who possesses newsworthy information) and deliver it to a consumer (someone who might find the information useful, but would not learn of it without the efforts of the journalist). In this sense, the reporter’s notebook enacts a definition of what journalism is: it is the act of filtering information obtained from one group and disseminated to another (or, in conventional terms, it is the action of a gatekeeper of information).³ This constitutive rule serves as a background context, which lends meaning to the reporter’s notebook. To feel this rule at work, simply attend a city council meeting with and without a reporter’s notebook and compare the difference in the way others respond to your presence.

The question is: What makes constitutive rules (like the notion of journalism as a filter) so resilient? Traditionally, the answer to this question has been something that comes down to the idea that constitutive rules are embedded habits. One strain of this argument suggests that habits run very deep. Built up through a process of accretion, such rules serve as an inner core for social fields, a background that creates the possibility of action. As such, the rules may simply be so implicit that they lie out of the reach of social actors like journalists and cannot be changed by them. Another strain has it that the habits are broadly apparent. Perhaps rules like “journalism is a filter” remain vital because they inform a great variety of news practices. The very number and breadth of these practices make the rules resilient. These arguments contain a kernel of truth, which is why the first wave of research in the sociology of news remains vital. It notes that the rules constituting journalism may be so tacit and difficult to formulate that they are beyond the reach of explicit efforts to change them. And it observes that the rules are embedded in so many practices that inertia sets in even if technological change alters some of them.

While sensible and certainly capable of explaining some of the dynamics of transformation in journalism, these arguments do not, however, capture all of the evidence. For instance, journalists have attacked and defended the conception of journalism as a filter of public information, an indication that the rule is not beyond their ability to formulate it in explicit terms. Moreover, the argument for breadth fails to explain why, in many cases, journalists are using new technologies less in order to invent new practices than in order to sustain old ones. From this perspective, it is especially puzzling that non-journalists, like bloggers and citizen journalists – who have not been socialized into the conventional practices of news-gathering and reporting and therefore have no investment in these practices – have used the new technologies more to reinforce than to challenge the standard conception of journalism (Ryfe & Mensing, 2010).

As a way around these dilemmas, I turn to sociologists, who note that the immediate experience of actors in a social situation is with one another, not with abstract

rules or structures (see Archer, 1996; Emirbayer, 1997; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Joas, 1993). On the ground, actors do not experience social structures so much as they experience *interpretations* of those structures (Wiley, 1994). This insight leads Ann Swidler (2006, p. 85) to argue that practices anchor constitutive rules in a social domain by serving as an “infrastructure of repeated interactional patterns. [Constitutive rules] remain stable not only because habit ingrains standard ways of doing things, but because the need to engage one another forces people to return to common structures.” In other words, constitutive rules persist not (or not only) because they are deeply and broadly embedded, but because they coordinate routine interactions between social actors. So long as the practices are followed, the interactions persist, and therefore so do the constitutive rules guiding those interactions. This result will follow even when the rules are no longer deeply or widely embedded.

Consider the following example. At the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* – one of the newsrooms I have visited – the CEO of the company, Chuck Peters, has led reporters through several presentations that describe a revolution in journalism.⁴ Peters argues that, in an online environment, journalism must and will become interactive, transparent, and collaborative. No longer a primary gatekeeper to public conversation, journalism must reinvent itself as a facilitator of and catalyst for community interaction. By this he means that journalists must come to see themselves as one voice among others in a community conversation. Over the past year, Peters’ ideas have sparked an entire reorganization of the newsroom. The discussions about change in this newsroom have been so incessant that one group of reporters has made the topic into a drinking game: during meetings, they take a drink of water every time someone uses the word “fundamental” to describe the impending changes.

But, while *Gazette* reporters and editors have become comfortable talking about and imagining a new journalism, they are much less able to imagine *doing* journalism differently. Charlie Adams is a nice illustration of this point. Adams, who is in his mid-twenties, started as an intern at the *Gazette* three years ago and today is a city politics reporter. In a conversation, Adams expressed a willingness to change his practices. He likes blogging and is active on Twitter. When I asked about Peters’ idea of a journalism that is more collaborative and interactive, Adams did not flinch. He expressed support for it and said, in agreement with Peters, that something like this kind of journalism was inevitable. In fact, when I entered the newsroom, the editor of the newspaper, Steve Buttry, held up Adams as someone who “gets it” and is readily adopting the new mind-set.

Despite his expressed interest in change, however, Adams finds himself doing journalism mostly in conventional ways. In large part, this is so because the filtering conception of the practice lies at the heart of his daily interactions with others. On his beat, almost every day, Adams does the following operations: he scans the meeting agendas of various government institutions; he interacts via email with individuals in and around government who might have newsworthy information; he contacts officials and experts to obtain quotes and to verify facts he would like to include in

his stories; and, when time permits, he attends government meetings. In each of these interactions, Adams and his sources act on the assumption that he is a filter (or gatekeeper) into the newspaper, and therefore into the public conversation. This assumption informs everything, from Adam's skeptical attitude to the types of question he asks, to the snap judgments he makes about the information conveyed by sources. In other words, throughout these interactions, Adams' posture toward others is imbued with the filtering conception of journalism. This conception also informs the attitudes and actions of his sources, who work hard to manage how their information and views are portrayed in his stories. Adams' interactions in the newsrooms also reproduce the status quo. Every day his editors ask Adams to vouch for his work, to show, for example, that he has asked the right people the right sorts of questions, that he has verified information and correctly quoted sources, and that, most importantly, he has gotten his stories done on deadline. Thus, even as Adam grows more comfortable talking about change, his interactions with others ritually enact a traditional constitutive rule of journalism.

From this perspective, the principal impediment to change lies not in what journalists believe, prefer, or say, but in what they do. Their daily practices place them in relationships with others that, like a gravitational force, push and pull them to reproduce the established reality of what journalism is. Put another way, the key inhibition to change is not socialization, as in the first approach, or strategic calculation, as in the second, but recognition: the ability of journalists, sources, and even consumers of news to recognize new practices as journalism (and various individuals as journalists when they engage in these practices). Take, for instance, the practice of blogging. It is one of the most common new practices in journalism. Yet, in my conversations with journalists, most have described blogging as something that their editor has asked them to do in addition to their journalism. Typical is the comment of this reporter: "I don't mind blogging, but sometimes it gets in the way of my work." Here the impediment to adopting the new practice is not normative – "we shouldn't do X" – or epistemological – "I don't know how to do X" – but ontological: "why would I do X?" This journalist did not resist blogging so much as fail to recognize it as a form of journalism. Given this fact, is it any wonder that reporters commonly use blogs as opportunities to empty their notebooks of the stories that, for reasons of space, they can no longer get in the newspaper?

The importance of recognition also helps to explain why online journalists and non-journalists often reinforce the values of traditional journalism. In newsrooms, online journalists must interact with others in terms of the filtering conception, or they risk being perceived as non-journalists (Paterson & Domingo, 2008). To establish their credibility, bloggers often work harder to hold journalists accountable to conventional practices than to invent new ones (Graves, 2007; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Reese, Rutigliano, Hyun, & Jeon, 2007; Tremayne, 2007). And citizen journalists often act more out of a fear of losing traditional journalism than out of a desire to innovate (Ryfe & Mensing, 2010). In each instance, new entrants into the journalistic field are pulled toward conventional meanings via a process of recognition: individu-

als tend to orient their energies around practices that can be readily recognized and justified to others, in social interaction, as journalism.

Conclusion

It has been 15 years since the Internet first made its way into newsrooms, and it has been 10 years since observers recognized the medium's potential to disrupt conventional news practices. Yet, today, news production remains relatively untouched by this disruptive force. This fact represents one of the most compelling puzzles facing sociologists of news today. The solution to this puzzle illuminates crucial dynamics within journalism. Since journalism is one kind of cultural production among others, perhaps the solution has insights for the study of media production more generally.

In this chapter I have reviewed three potential explanations. All three focus on news practices, but they frame them in different ways. According to a first approach, news practices are habits: tacit rules that journalists have been socialized to reproduce in a relatively unreflective, unconscious way. On this view, news production remains stable because these practices have been naturalized. In a second approach, news practices are more like institutions, or like constellations of rules and resources. It is the fact that journalists have investments in the resources of standard practices that explains their persistence. A final approach views news practices as constitutive, in the sense that they enact a basic understanding of what counts as an instance of journalism. They are difficult to dislodge not because they are habitual or costly to change, but because they place journalists in social interactions that reproduce a shared understanding of what journalism is.

Each of these explanations roughly corresponds to "waves" of research in the sociology of news. It is tempting to embrace one of these waves over the others. But this would be a mistake. The dynamics illuminated by each wave of research are operative in most newsrooms. In fact, they likely compound one another, making change especially difficult. I also think that the dynamics uncovered by each wave of research are not at work to the same extent at every moment. In the early phases of the transformation underway in journalism (roughly, in the early to late 1990s), the first approach was probably a more accurate reflection of the state of things in newsrooms. At that time most daily journalists viewed the Internet as an intrusion. They were comfortable in their habits and saw their practices as simply the "way journalism is done." This led them to resist efforts to align their practices more closely with opportunities afforded by the web. In a second phase of the transformation (late 1990s to early 2000s), it became apparent that the Internet presented more than a minor or transient challenge to conventional news practices. Yet, as journalists moved to develop more forceful responses, they realized that changing news practices entailed significant costs. In particular, over several decades, newsrooms had

made significant investments in core news beats that they were loathe to give up. It did not help that these choices were made at a time when the industry began to experience significant losses in revenue and profits; or that the Internet offers so few new inducements: compared to the past, there is little profit to be made – either materially or symbolically – in online news. Since this calculation remains as true today as it was several years ago, the institutional argument still explains a great deal about the stagnancy of news production.

It does not, however, explain everything. Today, reporters and editors in many newsrooms are willing to bear the costs of change because they recognize that online news is the future of journalism. Yet even these individuals continue to reproduce standard practices. Moreover, I have witnessed non-journalists, from government officials to bloggers and citizen journalists (who ostensibly have few investments in traditional practices) work to resuscitate traditional journalism rather than to invent new practices. As I watch this process unfold, I see less resistance (“I won’t do that”) and more of a simple lack of recognition of potentially new paths as journalism (“why would I do that?”).

A theory of news practices as constitutive explains these dynamics better. According to this perspective, news practices enact rules for what counts as journalism, like the notion that journalism is a practice of filtering information. These rules organize interactions in and out of newsrooms in such a way that it becomes difficult to recognize new practices as journalism unless they are put in traditional terms. The stumbling block here is more a lack of imagination: an ability to visualize what it would look and feel like to do journalism in a way that did not involve reporters acting as a filter of information from a source to a consumer. Even in a climate of “terror,” this sense of what journalism is still serves as the gravitational center of the field.

NOTES

The argument in this chapter is expanded and further developed in my book, *Will Journalism Survive? An Inside Look into American Newsrooms* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012).

- 1 In this chapter I focus on the situation in US journalism, mostly because it is the context I know best, but also because a comparison with other regions – such as Europe, Latin America, or Asia – is beyond the scope of the chapter. It is also the case that the sociology of news literature has emerged mostly in the United States and Great Britain. In a chapter designed to outline this literature, an appeal to the US context seems therefore sensible. That being said, economic, technological, and political pressures are forcing changes to media systems worldwide. These changes are, of course, inflected by local conditions, but the perspective of the sociology of news is useful for capturing at least some of these dynamics. For recent efforts in this regard, see the following introductions to special issues dedicated to the topic: Boyer and Hannerz (2006), Klinenberg and Benzecry (2005), Ryfe and Blach-Ørsten (2011).

- 2 Over the past five years I have spent nearly one third of my time in the newsrooms of three US mid-sized metropolitan daily newspapers. This work involved attending news meetings, following reporters on their beats, observing news practices, and having informal and formal conversations with almost every reporter and editor in the room. As a condition of access, I have agreed to keep the names of two of these newspapers and of their news workers anonymous. However, in accordance with the wishes of Chuck Peters, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Gazette Communications, and of Steve Buttry, then editor of the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, I have agreed to use these three real names – of the *Rapids Gazette* and of Peters and Buttry – but to keep those of everyone else in the newsroom anonymous. Also by agreement, I did not audiotape conversations in any of these newsrooms, but I compiled instead notes in nine ringed binders. Scenes from this research included in the present essay come from these binders.
- 3 For a discussion of the way in which online collaboration is challenging this constitutive rule of journalism, see Bruns (2005).
- 4 Peters' presentations can be found at <http://chuckpeters.iowa.com/>

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The Production of Mediated Performance

Espen Ytreberg

ABSTRACT

This chapter overviews and discusses scholarly contributions to how media production can be understood as an act of thinking about and planning communicative performances in the media. The core features of large-scale media production – advanced technology, complex organization, extensive divisions of labor – can be understood in terms of how they enable and shape performances for absent, multiple, and mass audiences. This chapter draws a rough framework of forms and levels of planning performances within media production; it also looks at some concrete examples in the production of news, talk shows, and reality programs. Finally, the relationship between performance, identity, and society is addressed via discussions of the concepts of “discipline” and the “persona.”

Today it has become commonplace in the humanities and social sciences to hold that the communicative actions of humans in social settings can be likened to performances. Theories of performance call our attention to the fact that performing is a basic aspect of social life, insinuating itself even into the ostensibly most real and authentic behaviors. Performance is, in effect, endemic to human communication. If we allow this for communication in general, it should be warranted to say the

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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same of communication through the media, since media performance could be seen as a subset, a particular species of communicative performance. The performances of hosts, interviewers, reporters, and stars have clear similarities to the performances we all get up to in everyday settings that do not involve media. One might say of both that they are “formal,” “informal,” or “intimate,” for instance. At the same time, it also seems plausible to say that communicating through the media makes a difference to communicative performance. We cannot all perform the ways in which talk-show hosts can; and the ways in which talk-show hosts perform, say, “being informal” may not be the same as the ways in which we perform it. After all, media performances come about in circumstances that are quite different from those of everyday communicative performances. The latter are typically spontaneous products of a relatively nonhierarchical setting, whereas the former are, as a rule, comprehensively planned and hierarchically organized.

Combining media production studies with insights from the study of performance is the subject of this chapter; and I mean possible insights as well as real ones, since there is no such thing as an established area of research into the production of media performance. What we have, roughly speaking, is a number of instances within the tradition of media production studies in which researchers have incorporated ideas and observations about performance. This work of incorporation can be placed within a wider agenda of media studies: an agenda that pays heed to the drive for an integrated approach to media production and media texts. The next section, on research strands, starts by accounting for this drive, looking into why and how production studies researchers turned their attention first to texts and then to media performances. Then research on media performances is considered in greater depth; such research is conducted within news production studies and influenced by perspectives from the humanities. Next to it comes a strand of research into media production that has combined sociology and linguistics. Here particular attention is paid to the formative influence of Erving Goffman’s late work on the production of performances inside and outside the media. Goffman is also important to the present chapter for his seminal argument for a generalized use of the concept of “performance.”¹ All situations of co-presence with others, writes Goffman, require us to adjust our behaviors. And this goes not only for “theatrical” situations and for planned forms of behavior; even daily situations of an informal, ordinary, or intimate nature require us to take on certain roles and to stick to them as the social scenario implicit in them requires. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman famously argued that performance includes “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (Goffman, 1990, p. 32).

After the review of research strands that have developed from roughly the late 1980s until today, the section on four fields of inquiry introduces and exemplifies some key fields of research. This section draws mainly on the author’s own research on non-fictional television and other forms of broadcasting over the last 20 years (Ytreberg 1999, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008). A conceptual framework is used that builds on the basic premise that media production can be seen as a set of particularly com-

prehensive plannings of communicative performance, by means of modern forms of technology and organization. Here media performances are seen as the combined result of planning techniques (for instance through various scripts and logistical procedures) and performance techniques (for instance through various body and memory practices). The chapter offers analytical illustrations that focus on the nuts and bolts of how performances in media production concretely come about.

The concluding section discusses how the production of media performance relates to wider issues of society and personhood. Here the focus shifts back from a predominantly empirical level to a predominantly conceptual one. A basic fact about the great majority of media performances is that strong forces lie behind them that have demands on and stakes in the performer. There is the editorial team above the line, the technological operators below the line, and the management team in the media organization. At a more general level, there are forces of society that define what one might call a communicative climate of dominant and preferred behaviors. These all wield power over the performer. They contribute to shaping performances and – in time – to shaping the performing individuals as well.

Production of Mediated Performance: Research Strands

Media studies has become established as a loose federation of subdisciplines that have come to pursue research agendas relatively independent of each other.² Media production studies have largely concentrated on issues intrinsic to production teams and organizations – such as journalist–owner relationships, professionalization, gate-keeping, and questions of creativity versus constraint. These issues are, of course, important and valid; but, even if media production processes are worth studying in their own right, it makes limited sense to divorce them from one of their core purposes, namely that of generating communications that are able to capture an audience.

This state of affairs changed roughly from the early 1990s on, as media production studies incorporated a broader range of insights from the humanities. There was a particular interest in the way media production crucially involves understanding and putting to use conventions of mediatized representation. The insight that media production importantly involves knowing how to construct and tell a story led to production research that was sociological but also drew on narrative theories and analyses (e.g., Bird & Dardenne, 1988; Jacobs, 1996; Schudson, 1995). Media production could also be said to involve a construction of genres (e.g., Bruun, 2010; Ekström, 2002), of aesthetics (e.g., Born, 1993; Caldwell, 1995), and of formats (e.g., Ytreberg, 2004). Common to all of these research contributions is a view of production as vitally involving meaning-making and communicative conventions. Producing media is seen as centrally a matter of understanding the requirements of such conventions

and of putting them to use in production, in the process conforming to them, adjusting them, and occasionally also challenging them.

A key aspect of this development in media production studies – and one that this chapter will develop – is the growing acknowledgment, among media researchers, that much of media production could be seen as a production of performances. Analyses relying on a notion of communicative output as “text” tended to work with notions of textual structure that did not leave much room for considering people’s bodily appearance and actions. Also, the importation of the notion of “text” from literary studies into media studies contributed to an emphasis on language and to a corresponding lack of attention to auditive and visual aspects of communication in media. The result was a tendency toward disembodiment in analysis. Insofar as actual persons and bodies were considered, they were routinely subordinated, as “functions” of some narrative or generic sets of requirements. As a consequence, not much was made of the myriad movements, looks, postures, gestures, and comportments that fill our screens.

Performing Journalistic Authority

An important early move toward performance in media production studies was provided by Barbie Zelizer from within the tradition of journalism research. As part of a “humanistic inquiry into journalism” (Zelizer, 1993), she proposed looking into the established research area of journalistic power by using other tools than those traditionally offered to journalism studies by mainstream social science traditions. Power is not just a matter of one person intentionally producing effects on other persons, Zelizer argued, but also a matter of providing the basic frameworks for action and representation. Following the work of performance theorists such as Victor Turner and Richard Schechner, Zelizer proposed to deal with the communicative actions of journalists via a “performance frame”: “When seen as performance, news is understood as a situationally variant process [. . .] this frame may turn out to be particularly useful for considering journalism” (ibid., p. 82).³

In several publications from the early 1990s (Zelizer 1990a, 1990b, 1993), Zelizer explored issues of power and performance via the case of journalistic authority. Clearly, the authority of journalism is communicated through the personal authority of journalists’ performances. Equally clearly, this authority is not, primarily, a product of the individual journalists but of larger, collective entities – such as the institution of journalism and broadcasting organizations. Somehow the authority of, for instance, a BBC news bulletin rests both on its being recognizably a work of professional journalism and on that public service broadcaster’s output. Here the performers must carry a heavy load, embodying and acting out key virtues such as credibility, objectivity, and authority.

Such performances require effective and seamless sets of conventions. The authority structures of broadcast news had been analyzed before Zelizer’s work. Charlotte

Brunsdon and David Morley (1978), for example, noted a clear and uniform hierarchy of authority in studio-based news broadcasts, the anchorperson being at the apex. From the desk in the studio, the anchorperson connects the viewer to the world and connects the persons in the news to the world and to each other. Various combinations of conventions – direct camera address, logo superpositions, set phrases such as “here is the evening news with NN” – combine to establish the anchorperson’s authority. At regular intervals, the authority of the anchorperson is delegated to reporters on location or to experts – but only in part, and only for the duration of one news item. A further hierarchy of authority is established between reporters and the people who are in the news either because they are personally affected or because they witnessed the events covered. These people do not come to address the news audience; they only address reporters, and they do so only by way of answering questions. Broadcast journalism’s conventions are set up so as to make sure that the journalistic authority always intercedes between the people in the news and the people in the audience.

This positioning requires that journalists assume personal responsibility for finding and telling the story. Zelizer is interested in – and she looks at – how such a personal assumption of authorship and authority is concretely achieved. For a number of reasons, the journalist may not be as close to the news event as the assumption of authorship and authority suggests. Journalists routinely rely on satellite relays, wire services, and different types of second-hand reports of a news event. Zelizer argues that journalistic authority rests on a set of routinized journalistic conventions for asserting proximity or for creating the impression of being personally close to the news, regardless of whether the journalist actually is close or not. Journalistic proximity “emerges as much from organizational practices which lend an illusion of proximity as from the actual nearness of a journalist to an event” (Zelizer, 1990b, p. 38). Zelizer pursues this illusion of proximity in qualitative analyses of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) evening newscasts that focus particularly on the role of anchorpersons. She finds a set of “presentational practices” that are used throughout to assert proximity between the news event, the journalist, and the broadcast. The so-called “slugs,” or identifications, do much of this work. A formulaic slug such as “Bill Plante. CBS News. The White House” manages to unite the three parties symbolically in a matter of seconds (1990b, p. 41). The effect is particularly interesting in cases where the journalist is physically far removed from the news event. Zelizer discussed the case of a report introduced through the name of the reporter, but without identification of place. The report then introduces the scene of the news event – Boston – but omits information on the location of the reporter who narrates in voice-over. A sense of connection between reporter and place is thus established indirectly. Only after the report is the reporter’s location disclosed – for example, “Lesley Stahl. CBS. Washington.” Thus a performance of symbolic proximity, in the absence of physical proximity, works to establish journalistic authority.

Production and Participation Frameworks

By focusing on how production is shaped by the requirements of texts and performances, Zelizer and other sociologists of media production have been able to demonstrate the importance of collective interpretations and representational practices to media production. They have been less concerned with how the production of performance can be related to roles and functions in the production process. This has been done in a strand of work that originates with the sociologist Erving Goffman and has been taken up primarily by researchers with a strong interest in the interface between sociology and linguistics.

Goffman's work on what he called the "production format" of performative utterances was formulated in terms of a general theory of communication. It is worth noting that Goffman's prime example was that of broadcast communication.⁴ In several late works (1974; 1981a; 1981b), Goffman proposed to divide the production roles according to the share that different parties have in the performance. He suggested that a production format is the result of a certain constellation of "originating," "authoring," and "animating" an utterance. The "animator" is the visible and audible body in performance, which brings scripts and plans to life in a communicative act. The "author" puts together the words and other concrete features of the performance. The "originator" is the entity whose views and positions are represented in the performance. In everyday interactions outside of the media, one individual will typically take care of all these roles. For example, the person who utters "Hi Judy, nice day" upon meeting a friend is also the person who composes the words and whose point of view is being expressed.

Media production systematically splits these roles among a number of people by means of organizational hierarchies and divisions of labor. Management originates, scriptwriters author, and performers animate. In traditional high-prestige newscasts, formality and a certain de-individualization signal the fact that an author of considerable prestige is "speaking through" the animator. Talk shows, on the other hand, feature hosts who seem to come up with what is said by virtue of their innate verbal prowess, then and there. Not only animating, but also authoring and originating seem to emanate from them. In broadcast communication, this embodiment is a simulation and an illusion, writes Goffman (1981b), albeit a successful one.

Research building on Goffman's concepts has tried to expand and supplement his list of roles in order to match more closely the issue of responsibility for the performance with the professions and organizational structures of media production. Writing on the production of news language, Allan Bell has proposed a number of subroles in order to flesh out Goffman's original three. An example is his suggestion that the role of editor should be distinguished from that of the author, because the latter formulates a draft text for performance, while the former modifies it (Bell, 1991, pp. 36ff; see also Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Levinson, 1988).

Goffman makes connections with production formats and actual performances both conceptually and in the analyses of concrete media performances. Conceptually, he emphasizes how the production format is closely matched with what he calls the “participant framework” of the output. It is axiomatic for Goffman that the broadcast performances of hosts and anchorpersons take place in a social situation and for various participants in the process of communication. Some participant roles involve direct participation, as when guests interact with hosts on talk shows and interviewees interact with interviewers on newscasts. In broadcast communication there are also “ratified parties” with whom communication is more indirect, primarily studio- and home-audiences. As for concrete analysis, both Goffman himself (1981b) and other researchers building on him (Brunvatne & Tolson, 2001; Clayman, 1992; Hutchby, 2006) have analyzed the ways in which performers take on the roles of animator, author, and originator. Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt (1994) have looked at the case of audience discussion programmes on TV. They point out how the psychological profession acts as a collective originator behind the utterances of expert psychologists in therapeutic talk shows. This brings to the programme a participation status that is superior in several respects to that of the lay participants. The latter participants get to report their experiences and feelings, while representatives of the profession are authorized to pass certain kinds of judgment on them. On the other hand, the lay participants gain an authenticity that is not available to experts by speaking on their own behalf and in a manner that conflates the animator, author, and originator (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994, pp. 128ff).

Research on production and participation frameworks has also looked at the often complex and subtle ways in which shifts in one framework (in what Goffman calls “footing”) are connected to shifts in another. For instance, newscasters routinely go from delivering a monologue to the home audience through direct address to camera, into a being an interviewer in a studio interview segment. The address to camera is typically scripted and places the newscaster in a formal mode that clearly signals the presence of an originator distinct from the animating newscaster. Here the newscaster’s utterances will typically be characterized by high “modality,” which refers, in linguists’ parlance, to the features of texts that “express speakers’ and writers’ attitudes toward themselves, towards their interlocutors, and towards their subject-matter” (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979, p. 200). When the newscaster shifts to interviewer mode, the performance routinely takes on a less manuscripted character. There is a subtle shift in alignment as the newscaster seems to move toward taking some share in the origination of her or his utterance questions. At the same time a subtle shift in modality takes place (as discussed in Montgomery, 2007, p. 30). The reporter is, typically, somewhat noncommittal toward the propositional content of what is being discussed, demanding a stand on the issue from the interviewee, but not taking one for her- or himself. These are fine nuances, which speak to the accomplishment of human communication and to the ways in which media have introduced yet more layers to that accomplishment. At the same time, the nuances are

far from being innocent ones. The duties and entitlements of various performers in the participation framework of broadcast communication tend to be unequally distributed, an array of communicative privileges being granted to those performers who represent roles in the production framework.

Production of Mediatized Performance: Four Fields of Inquiry

The existing research on the production of media performances has been developed in fits and starts within different research environments; hence it is necessarily patchy. Important areas of study are underexplored or virtually unexplored. The following sections outline and develop four such areas of study. Three of them foreground an interest in the stages of production that are closest to the performances themselves and provide the most direct influence on them. Other common threads are the management of bodies via media technology and various kinds of scripts. A key and underlying issue is that of how media performances are, for the most part, very comprehensively planned, even if they may seem spontaneous and “fresh.” The analysis of the performance itself is not foregrounded, since the research outlined above is relatively rich in this respect.

Direction for Performances

As a rule, the planning of performances that goes on in large-scale media organizations involves media production teams both above the line (e.g., producers, writers, floor managers) and below the line (e.g., camera operators, costume designers, makeup artists). Indirectly, they also involve editorial and management levels of the organization. In various ways and to varying degrees, all these people have a stake and a hand in the performances. Thus the planning of mediatized performance routinely becomes comprehensive throughout the organization. Planning runs the whole gamut, from very concrete instructions and proddings before and during the performances themselves, to policy and strategy work that establishes underlying premises for performances.

Closest to the performance itself in terms of spatio-temporal proximity is “cueing,” or directions given to performers during and immediately adjacently to the performance. Cueing is an important part of setting up the occasion of a performance. A main long-term tendency in current non-fiction broadcast programming has been to try and avoid “staginess.” A feel for the informal, the intimate, or the authentic seems to require the avoidance of overt signs that the performer is being told how to perform. This poses at once a practical problem, since extemporized performance is

Table 15.1 *Par-i-bol*, NRK1, August 28, 1992. A word table has been used here to provide an approximation of the script's layout

OPPSTART DISKUSJON/VB	DISCUSSION KICKOFF/VIDEO TAPE
Vovet	Daring
— Hadde ikkje gått heime sjå'ss!	— Wouldn't have worked round our place!
— Er de JA eller NEI til EF	— Are they for or against the EU
— Et ledd i dagens NEI til EF-feiring?	— A part of today's NO to EU celebration?
— VB/Sengehalmen	— Video tape/ Bedside
... ljk avslutter: Da må jeg avbryte. Det er tid for nyheter. KLOKKEN ER 22!	... ljk rounds off: I'll have to break you off there. Time for the news. IT'S ALMOST 22 O'CLOCK!

Source: *Par-i-bol*, NRK1, August 28, 1992.

harder to control. For instance, a verbatim manuscript can be timed quite accurately in advance, whereas the time of extemporaneous performance must be kept by the performer while performing.

Aside from cues, giving kernel information is another way to provide direction in order to control extemporaneous performance. Kernels are items of condensed information on what to say or do in a particular section of the performance. Kernels often feature in scripts, but they can take the form of memorized sentences or phrases that can be incorporated into an otherwise extemporaneous stream of talk.

Table 15.1 provides an example from a Norwegian popular journalism news and current events TV program from the early 1990s called *Par-i-bol*. The script was handwritten collaboratively between the two main hosts, Lottelise Folge and Lars-Jacob Krogh (*ljk* in the script); it was made in order to sort out their turns at talk in a segment. The sequence involved introductory information for a debate sequence on European Union membership, to be shown after a news bulletin. This particular script employs several forms of kernels for the talk, from a one-word condensation of what is to be said in turn ("Daring") to condensed questions and statements. The bottom of the script illustrates another key means of directing the specifics of personal performances: what could be termed "turn scripting." Turn scripting indicates who gets to talk and when. It is in use in scripting the coordinated performances of more than one person. The more detailed variants indicate each speaker's turn to talk in a sequence; this is necessary if the production is live, as well as technologically and logistically complex. However, short-hand versions seem to be more common. Some turn scripts only indicate who starts the sequence and who closes it. The framing and nomination of ratified participants involves names, titles, and other

credentials, which such turn scripts are made to help the performer remember. The *Par-i-bol* example in Table 15.1, which covers the signing-off part of the sequence, shows both kernel and turn scripting at work. There is a nice twist in the way this “outro” (I mean, this opposite of an “intro”) actually scripts the turn to happen as an interruption from a ratified participant, with the words “I’ll have to break you off there”).

The need for an extemporaneous and ongoing assembly of the performance, what Goffman (1981b, p. 227) calls “freshness,” makes it potentially awkward for the TV performer to carry around a clearly visible script during performance. The choice is either to hide it or at least to make it look inconspicuous, marginal to what is “really” going on in the performance. So a number of script-hiding devices are in use for “fresh” performances. The most technology-specific device is perhaps the teleprompter; but there are more prosaic ones, such as checking the script during off-camera breaks in the performance. A much used alternative is the helper in the stage wings of production, who cues the performer. During performance, the producer will generate reminders, for instance of time limits, and s/he may suggest lines for the performers, for instance appropriate interview questions. Most major live formats, where the logistics of performance are extremely complex and relatively unpredictable, depend heavily on this technique. Cues are made either visually, through gesticulation, or aurally, through (often wireless) microphone systems. Various conventions exist to make this effective. The producer countdown to the host during performance is one commonly employed verbal convention (“20 seconds [. . .] 10 seconds [. . .] cut now!”). The gesturing equivalent, sometimes used by producers who have eye contact with the performer, is a cut-throat hand slash. This illustrates a more general point: the professional performer is effectively communicating not just to absent audiences, but also to members of the production personnel, who are hidden in the stage wings. Broadcast communication to the audience has to be managed jointly with collusive communication back toward the production staff. Performers must be able to do this in sometimes very taxing circumstances, such as by talking to audiences while simultaneously listening to producer directions through earphones or earbuds.

Direction immediately before or during performance may be seen as the last stage in a process of teaching and learning, directly and indirectly, which starts when the performer first encounters the production team. In the case of professional performers, this process may take a number of years and is correspondingly hard for researchers to follow. A major work in this area is Laura Grindstaff’s production study of daytime talk shows, *The Money Shot* (2002), which describes in some detail how talk-show participants are made ready for performance. The process is quite elaborate and involves a number of stages. First, contact is usually made in pre-interviews over the phone, during which production team members ask questions in order to find out not only what the prospective participants have to say, but also what their storytelling skills are and whether they have the requisite emotional appeal. Follow-up conversations give more background information and also provide a chance to do

what Grindstaff calls “maintenance work” on the person’s willingness to comply and perform. When participants arrive backstage before taping, there is “prepping and coaching,” reminding participants the order of events’ and the format’s performance requirements, as well as putting them in the right frame of mind. For daytime talk shows, this typically means encouraging participants not to hold back on emotions, to “cut loose,” and to “let it all out.” All of this direction involves a risk of producing an unwanted artifice in the performance. As Grindstaff shows, a constant conflict is involved between the need for control and the demands of a performance that has to look spontaneous and fresh:

The mandate for spontaneity [. . .] exists in tension with another equally important one: getting guests to condense their stories and speak concisely, homing in on the important elements first – in other words, getting guests to tell their stories in sound bites, following the conventional pyramid structure employed by journalists. (Ibid., p. 100)

This type of “prepping and coaching” is primarily a matter of spoken communication between guests and production team members. Still, the production of broadcast performances relies on extensive forms of written materials, particularly scripts.

Scripting Performances Outside of Talk

The word “scripting” is used in bewilderingly diverse ways in a number of traditions of academic research. This section focuses on an extended sense of the word, often used in professional literature on the media. On the one hand, it is used more or less synonymously with “manuscript” and refers to documents detailing what the performers say (for instance the kernel script described in the previous section). It follows from this use of the word that performances that do not use such manuscripts can be called “unscripted.” A different and more extensive use can be found in the literature of screenwriting manuals. Here a “script” outlines the talk of a performance, both its sequential order and its spatial settings. In this sense, a script coordinates not just the performance but also its mediatized context and time sequencing – not just the talk, but also the sounds and images (Ytreberg, 2006).⁵

Following this wider use, one can say that a script is a document, in paper or data file form, sometimes handwritten or typed, but nowadays usually computer-generated. It contains information in verbal, visual, and/or graphic form on key aspects of media performances, coordinating the work of those involved in, or affiliated with the production of, media performances. A script is prescriptive in the sense that it is basically geared toward giving direction on how future productions should be carried out. However, the registers of scripts themselves are most often matter of fact and descriptive. Perhaps most vital to media production is the main script – a standard feature in film, in broadcasting, and in the production of multimedia applications.

There are of course innumerable variations across media and genres, from shooting scripts and storyboards in film to the teleplays of television and the so-called flow charts of interactive applications. Still, most of them incorporate a timed overview of the output sequences (e.g., film scenes or news bulletins), information on what goes into every sequence (e.g., words/talk, video/audio sources), and information on handling the requisite technology (e.g., camera choices, cues). Main scripts thus contain vital information on performances, technology, and logistics; in a sense, they serve as a meeting point between the three. Manuscripts for verbal performance are usually auxiliary in relation to the main script, and they are sometimes inserted into it. Such auxiliary scripts are made to serve the specific needs and requirements of various professions involved in production. As the performer has his or her manuscript, the designer has a floor plan and the cameramen have camera shooting scripts. Only some of these scripts are used by the performers themselves; but all of them affect the performance. A main script sets the basic pace of the performance by blocking and timing a program's sequences – including its conversations, monologues, and segues. For instance, the pace and sequencing set by an evening news programme requires compressed delivery and highly formulaic segues between elements.

Scripting, then, is about far more than spoken lines; it is used to plan basic spatial and temporal parameters for the performance. This section will elaborate on one important type of script for shaping the space and the social setting of a studio: the floor plan. Figure 15.1 shows an example taken from the production of *Wiese*, a Norwegian prime-time soft journalism program studied in the early 1990s. This floor plan lays out a standard studio-based, multi-camera setup for cameras and their movements, pre-setting certain camera coverage options. In doing so, the floor plan also sets up the performance in a number of very concrete ways. Studio walls and passageways indicate quite precisely the space the performer has to stand in and move through (as indicated in Figure 15.1 as “café 1” and “artist scene”). These sorts of studio sets are constructed so that the performer can always be in the unobstructed, well-framed view of the camera and clearly audible via mikes, although the live broadcast involves a number of sequences in different studio subsettings. Typically sets will be constructed for the performer to move from camera to camera, sometimes by using markers on the floor, because these movements have to end up in specific places. An example to the above right of the *Wiese* studio plan is the “alleyway” (*smuget*), where the host is framed and set up to move forward, toward and along a set of static and dynamic camera options. The setup ensures continuous address to the camera and at the same time makes the performer frontally available to the viewer. When the host moves in the studio, this means that he or she will have to address one camera first and then another, with no lapse in between. The real-time address shift between cameras has become a standard device for dynamism and variation. In real-time multi-camera studio settings, such shifts between cameras frequently have to be done while the performer is moving physically. This usually requires studio rehearsals in which the performer memorizes movements and camera address shifts to a point reminiscent of the internalization used by dancers and actors.

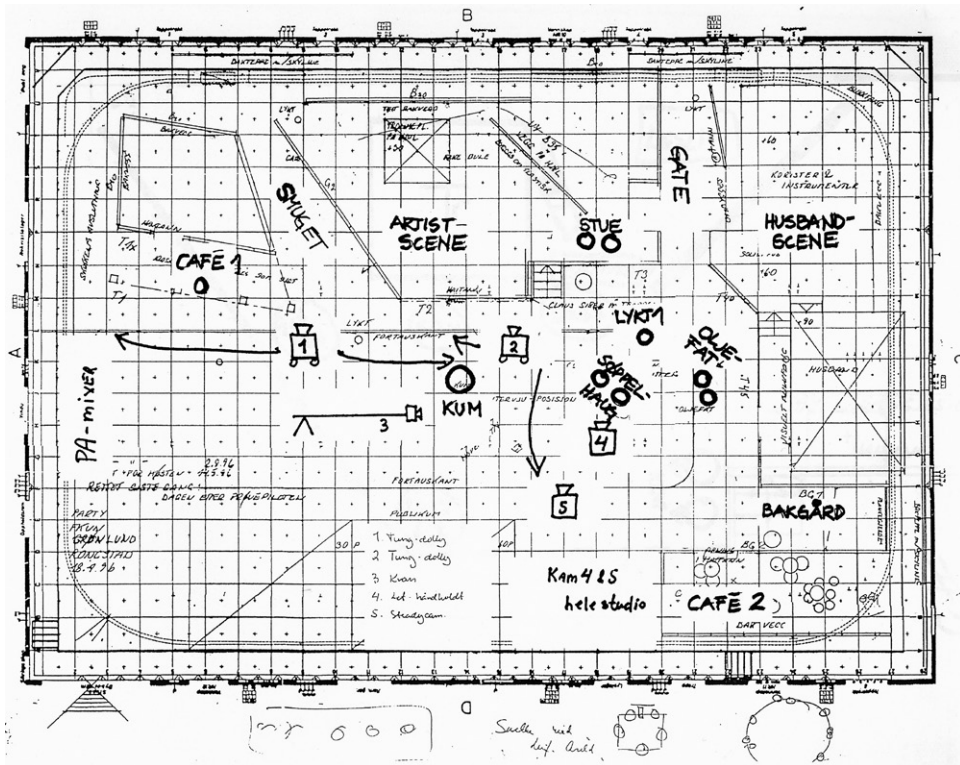


Figure 15.1 Floor plan, Wiese, NRK1, 1992. Source: Wiese, NRK1, 1992.

In recent television production, the traditional division between constructing a social setting in the studio and registering what happens in a preexisting (“location”) setting has become increasingly blurred. The production of a live major event tends to take place in a setting that is so media-saturated that it comes to resemble a studio-type situation, even if its rationale is still tied to the ongoings of an outside world. This is the case, for example, with major sports events, in which the stadium or arena is increasingly occupied by sound and camera equipment, and in which the event spaces themselves are lined up, angled, and proportioned for this coverage. There are also ancillary spaces specifically for the mediation of the event, such as the setting of the post-race soundbyte, or the studio-in-the-stands, where hosts, experts, and athletes meet up to preview and review the event itself.

The reality show *Big Brother*, an internationally successful format generated from the first Dutch version in 1999, also famously extends this tendency in sometimes drastic ways. It is an extreme, hence instructive, case of how comprehensively current television can set up performances by scripting social settings. Television in this case builds from scratch a social setting that contains the performer’s whole life, at least for a number of weeks. Audiences know that this type of reality program may include

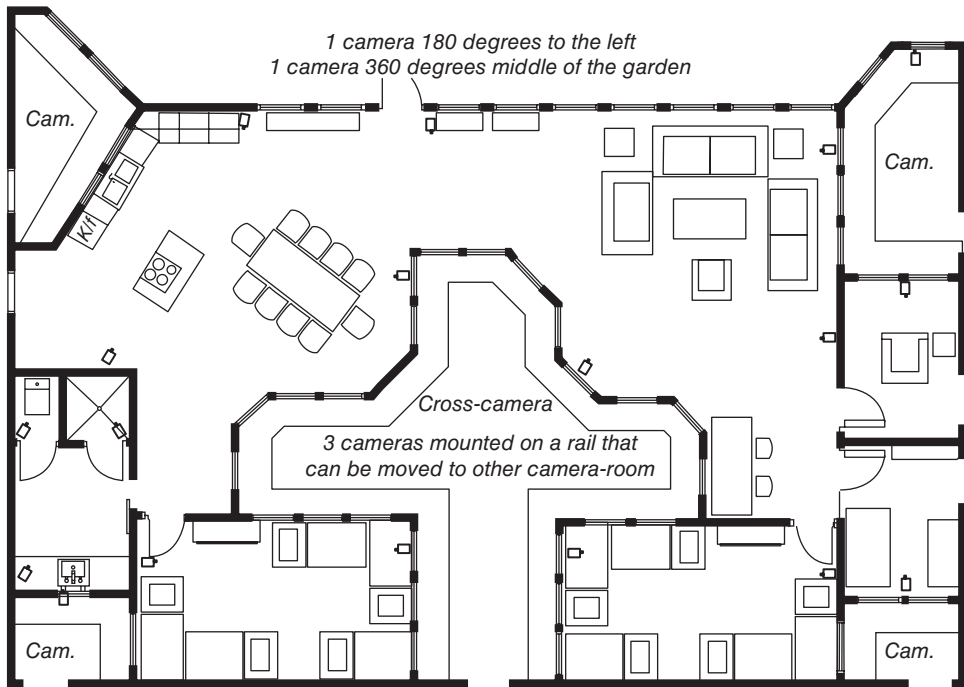


Figure 15.2 Floor plan with camera setup, Norwegian *Big Brother*, TVNorge, 2001. Source: Norwegian *Big Brother*, TVNorge, 2001.

even the most private parts of everyday life (e.g., slander, sex, drunkenness). Yet few people know how the scripting of ordinary people's lives is actually managed. Several important forms of scripting for the production of *Big Brother* provide interesting leads. One is the "technical plan." All versions of this format build from scratch a "Big Brother bunker" where the participants are locked in for the duration of the competition.

The combined building layout and camera plan shown in Figure 15.2, as well as other information on Norwegian *Big Brother*'s production, are taken from Anders Lindstad's master thesis on the 2001 series of Norwegian *Big Brother* (Lindstad, 2003). In practical terms, the *Big Brother* social setting is a container built to house the apartment and multi-camera production facilities. Following a sort of reverse panopticon principle, the participants' living area is surveilled by a ring of cameras and microphones (which supplement the participants' body microphones). As indicated on the *Big Brother* technical plan, the camera setup combines automatic surveillance-type roof cameras and cameras hidden behind one-way mirrors (shown in separate rooms marked "Kam" in Figure 15.2). There are also mini-cameras, for instance one in the bathroom (shown in the lower left on the plan), which is mounted on the shower head. Not indicated on the plan are a number of roof-mounted microphones designed to supplement each participant's body microphone.

Figure 15.2 shows a comprehensive and professionally challenging production setup: the production team needs not just to expose rudimentarily what is going on, but also to disentangle the specifics of who is saying and doing what to whom, in a room that is often crowded with participants. Basic production techniques like the match-on-action shot and the foregrounding of relevant sound sources become quite difficult when there is no script to dictate these ensemble performances.

The scripting of *Big Brother's* social setting attempts to contain the uncertainties over what participants will say and do by making possible an extensive ritualization of domestic life. The bunker living area more or less has a typical apartment room layout, with spaces for social interaction: the sofa sectionals, the dinner table, the kitchen bench and table, the backyard. However, these are also the spaces for a series of ritualized actions imposed by the production team; voting ceremonies, contests, and various assignments are introduced to keep the participants active and the social interaction going. The sofa arrangement doubles as a setting for the regular voting out of participants. The backyard doubles as the site for assignments of a more physical nature. This, then, is a private house setting, the traditional arena for relaxation, layered over with competitions and ceremonies that are anything but relaxing. The private home is a prime site for authentic communication, since it is conventionally associated with individualized and “fresh” performances. Still, the scripting of *Big Brother's* social setting makes it possible to overlay the home setting with a steady stream of competitive rituals. This has the effect of making even an amateur performance without a manuscript into something that is still scripted and, hence, considerably more controlled and predictable.

Policies for Performances

The scripting of talk and of the spatio-temporal parameters of performance impacts the performer in very direct and concrete ways. Some aspects of production have a more indirect impact, which is still important. “Policy” in this section refers to overall guidelines for outputs that are provided or overseen by a media organization’s management. Policies seldom focus on specific performances. Still, a number of policy decisions and documents are salient to performance. The connection is perhaps most evident in formats that are built around individuals. Here the whole realization of a production hinges on managing to sign “talent,” someone around whose performance track record the format will be built. One may also include in the policy category certain documents that provide overall guidelines for performances and their mediation. Examples of such guidelines in television include the format “bible,” which is a reference document used to plan and standardize key features of a television series. The bible is an important part of the buying and selling of format rights, which is usually a policy-level decision (see also Chapter 12, this volume). This section examines how policy-related documents guide performances in broadcasting organizations.

Reality TV format bibles are interesting for the quite extensive ways in which they plan performances. They offer a kind of main script, in that they convert the inherent time structures of certain rituals (a voting, a competition) into chronologically timed and sequentially blocked units. Format bibles in reality TV are hard for the researcher to come by, but they seem to be strongly focused around temporal unfolding, explaining it in considerable detail. There are good reasons for this; not only the time structure of the programme series, but also the logistic and technological challenges of its production follow largely from the basic ritualizations that the format requires.

Figure 15.3 is an excerpt from the format bible to the American reality programme *No Boundaries* (2002), a contest involving trekking-type challenges and a voting out procedure designed to eliminate gradually everyone but the winner. Excerpted is page 7 of a 61-page bible that is structured almost in its entirety as a chronological



Overnight: Kennedy Lake

It's the night before the very first removal. Even though they've only been together for two full days, nothing brings out the best and worst in people like shared experience – especially when the experience has been challenging, taking each contestant out of their comfort zone and pushing them to their physical and mental limits.

Tonight, as they set up camp and sit around the fire chatting and resting, the contestants will all need to be jockeying for the leader's favor because tomorrow the leader bids farewell to the first contestant removed from NO BOUNDARIES.



As the sun sets on the night before the removal, the Leader will have to go to sleep thinking about the important decision he or she must make the next morning.

Figure 15.3 Format bible excerpt, *No Boundaries*, Outdoor Life Network, 2002. Source: *No Boundaries*, Outdoor Life Network, 2002.

run-through of the competition's stages and various rituals. The excerpt shows how the bible outlines not just the basic rituals of the competition itself, but also attendant rituals, such as the evening campfire get-together. It indicates some key features of the performances, as well as key modes of participant behavior (such as "resting," "jockeying," and being "out of the comfort zone"). Given that the reality genre imposes a taboo on manuscripts, it is presumably difficult to plan just how much jockeying will happen. Cameramen will have to go with the flow of what happens, and this is difficult. Hence the tendency, in these types of format, to stage events and actions that the cameras would not capture the first time around. However, it counts for a lot in terms of practical production that jockeying will happen – or that something will happen that can be interpreted as jockeying. The cameramen will be in the right place, set up and ready to capture what is, ostensibly, about to occur naturally.

The "personalities" of the main performers are basic to the appeal of many genres in the electronic media. Therefore they are dealt with on an overall policy level. Some quite extensive examples are found in fictional genres such as the soap opera and popular drama series. Here it has been a common (although variable) practice for the main scriptwriter to write up the basic characteristics and the biography of key characters. A team of scriptwriters then turns these basic characteristics into actions and lines in individual episodes. In comparison, non-fiction scripting seems on the whole to be less comprehensive. Bibles and format handbooks will often contain a description of the ideal characteristics of hosts and other participants, but rarely in very concrete or detailed terms. Still, the production of many non-fiction formats involves the formulation and deployment of a policy for cultivating performers' personality characteristics. This typically goes on in seminar-type settings, when production teams break off from the daily schedule to take stock. Seminars will often involve the producers writing memos to be distributed subsequently. The memos provide a more or less authorized view of how the format and its performances need to be reformulated or adjusted.

These memos may provide a sort of ideal description of the format's key personalities. Table 15.2 is an excerpt from such a memo, providing something of a recipe for a certain type of host's performance. It was written by the heads of the production team, when they made the youth radio current affairs program *Mamarazzi*. An observation study of the production of *Mamarazzi* (Ytreberg, 2002, 2004) observed that this memo did matter to production staff, although it was not referred to on a daily basis. The memo did not seem to function like a recipe or a checklist; rather it provided a background reminder and a fleshing-out of what the basic premises for production were. The production team's allegiance to the basic values described above, such as genuineness and realness, was a more or less unanimous and taken-for-granted thing. The memo's function was to remind performers of key considerations that were already ingrained in consciousness. It reminded the members, in the last instance, of how to be when they were in performance mode: genuine, personal, critical, and so on. One might say the memo was ultimately concerned with

Table 15.2 Memo, *Mamarazzi*, P3, 2000. A word table has been used here to provide an approximation of the script’s layout

PROGRAMLEDERNE I MAMARAZZI:	THE MAMARAZZI HOSTS:
• Skal være ekte, men ikke selvhøytidelige • Skal være personlige, men ikke pinlig private • Skal være kritiske, men ikke ondskapsfulle • Skal være fandenivoldske, men sympatiske • Skal være hovedpersoner, men ikke på bekostning av gjestene • Skal være underholdende, men ikke flåsete	• Should be genuine, but not full of themselves • Should be personal, but not embarrassingly private • Should be critical, but not mean-spirited • Should be gung-ho but sympathetic • Should play a main part, but not at the guests’ expense • Should be entertaining, but not flippant
GJESTENE I MAMARAZZI:	THE MAMARAZZI GUESTS:
• Skal være virkelige De er ikke rollefigurer – de skal ikke late som om de er noen andre enn det de er. Lytterne skal tro på dem. • Skal være midtpunktet under samtalen Selv om programmet er programleder-sentrert, er inviterte gjester midtpunktet i studio og i lytternes ører. [. . .]	• Should be real They are not actors – they should not pretend to be someone they are not. The listener must believe in them. • Should be the center of attention during conversations Even though the programme is host-centered, invited guests are the center of attention in the studio and in the listeners’ ears. [. . .]

Source: *Mamarazzi*, P3, 2000.

cultivating a certain kind of performer, maybe even a certain kind of person. The formation of a professional performer is a time-consuming thing, however. It is obviously not something that can be accomplished via one script or via one instance of media production. A longer process of training is involved.

Training for Performance

Media performances require various forms of performer competence. One such competence is the ability to commit elements of the performance to memory; another is the facility to produce a stream of reliable talk under demanding conditions. Manuscripts can take care of some of this, but not all of it. Performances such as those of disc jockeys (DJs), of talk-show hosts, and of sports commentators simply contain too much talk, and they need to sound fresh and spontaneous. Hence performers tend to rely on internalized formulae. Researchers have noticed interesting similarities between media broadcast performances and the performances of oral

poetry and other premodern forms. They are all highly dependent on various types of formulas, set phrases, and expressions learned by heart and with the aid of rhythm and music. A formula is “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea,” according to the oral tradition scholar Milman Parry (cited in Lord, 1960, p. 30).

Paddy Scannell and Graham Brand (1991) have pointed out that broadcast performances also routinely require that a repertoire of set phrases and other formulas for talk are built up so as to be available on instant call. In the case of radio DJs, extemporaneous speech must be kept up in stretches of several hours. But the introduction of new technologies of communication also changes performance; this general point is emphasized by the communication historian Walter Ong (1971, 1988), for whom changes in media technology are the watershed between the oral and the literate world. The introduction of writing means that instructions can be written down, codified, and made more permanent. In this way the formula can be imposed on the performer through an external trigger. Thus writing enables a more intense scrutiny of performers and a more comprehensive manipulation of them. In modern large-scale media, this routinely happens through elaborate forms of training for performance – by way of dedicated courses and various other kinds of training.

Training for the purpose of seeming informal on the screen produces a performance that resembles, but is not the same as, everyday informality. To use Ong’s vocabulary from his seminal *Orality and Literacy* (1988), the orality afforded by electronic media is “secondary,” in the sense that it is based on writing practices in production. It deals, paradoxically, with the “planning of unplanned events” (Ong, 1971, p. 285). Extemporaneous performances in the media, then, may have a fresh feel to them, but this will be the result of a very different process from everyday informal talk. Among other things, quite extensive training goes into handling the technology and the scripts so as to make it possible to extemporize in circumstances that are likely to make the untrained fall silent. Further, there is always a need for editors and management to ensure that performers are reliable. Hence the formalization and professionalization of performance training has become common in modern large-scale media. There are even some formal educational programs for becoming a host or a news presenter; these are available both in media organizations and in universities.

The practices of training for professional performances have not yet been much studied, but should present a rich area of inquiry for those interested in how media performances are produced. Again, a possible starting point is Goffman’s (1981b) analysis of how the “freshness” of the professionally trained broadcaster differs from everyday behaviors in non-mediatized settings. The broadcast performance is more correct and more fluent than everyday performances, Goffman argues, but it secures a “fresh” feel by using a repertoire of set phrases. When slips and falterings occur, professional performers have the ability to regain control and fluency in a way others do not. Broadcast performers, as a rule, stick to the requirements of format and genre. Whereas performers in informal interpersonal communication enjoy a lot of leeway to segue

loosely from the informal to the formal and back, a talk-show host must stick reliably to informality. As Goffman puts it in the case of station announcers who seek to combine their scripted and informal performances:

Competent announcers with the permission of their stations editorially elaborate on their copy extemporaneously in the course of reading it, thus appreciably strengthening the impression of fresh talk overall. [. . .] Yet when one examines how this editorial elaboration is accomplished, it appears that a relatively small number of formulaic sentences and tag phrases is all that is needed. Providing that any one use of a particular remark does not follow another use of the same remark, the illusion of spontaneous, creative, novel flow is engendered. (Ibid., p. 324)

The process of training for these competences is a process of adjusting one's personal communicative repertoire. Becoming a news presenter means that one must suppress the effervescent traits of one's personality and boost the restrained traits. Becoming a reality TV participant often requires the opposite adjustment. Whatever the ratio between suppression and boosting, there is clearly an augmentation of an individual's communicative repertoire for the purposes of media performance. Such augmentation of individuality has been described quite succinctly by one broadcaster interviewed by researchers Andrew Tolson and Catherine Roberts:

The performance that good presenters give is of themselves. But a little more so. If offering advice I'd say "be yourself," but with both the colour and the contrast knobs turned up a notch. You have to break through the screen, not by raising your voice but by raising your personality a touch. (In Tolson, 2001, p. 447)

Not surprisingly, such boosting of oneself is emphasized in television production but the need for self-suppression is not, since the latter is harder to square with ideals of authenticity. Ostensibly it is one's "true self" that gets augmented in this way. As Tolson (2001) has argued, however, appeals to such true selves become problematic in media settings that seem to impose their own frameworks for defining what that self actually is.

Performance, Identity, and Society

So far, performances have been looked at from the standpoint of production. Much has been made of the ways in which mediatized performances are extensively marked by the processes of planning, logistics, and technology management that lie behind them. Still, a focus placed exclusively on these specifics of media production will not explain performance fully. At least two further factors should be brought in: individuality, and society. The individual clearly brings to media production something that

matters: an already developed communicative repertoire and an already formed sense of self. The trajectory of training and adaptation to production then seems to make some marked differences to that performer, extending perhaps to his or her very sense of self. As for society, it has been pointed out above, in some detail, how media production involves considerable forces that stand behind the performer, so to speak, and act on performance. These forces are a feature not only of individual media institutions, but also of the institutional structure of contemporary society. So the power wielded over the media performances that was discussed in this chapter could be seen as a particular instance of how power is wielded over performances in society more generally.

The close monitoring and extensive planning of performances is by no means specific to today's media institutions. A number of important research contributions from the social and human sciences suggest that, on the contrary, this is a widespread feature of institutional communication in contemporary Western society. It seems particularly prominent in the service sector. Deborah Cameron (2000) has documented the extensive monitorings and disciplinings that call center operators are subjected to. Arlie Hochschild (1983) has investigated how air hostesses are trained by their employer organizations to internalize and discipline certain forms of emotion in performance. Speaking more broadly of postwar Western culture, the performance theorist Jon McKenzie (2001, p. 55) has observed that we routinely speak of organizations' abilities to "perform." He sees in this an expansion of the performance concept whereby it comes to be associated with management, with demands of review and of efficiency. Following Michel Foucault (1977), one might say that the power exerted over media performance is an instance of more general processes of surveillance in modern societies whereby organizations exert power over bodies and over individuality. Although Foucault's preferred example is the prison, he investigates some much more general organizational procedures. Modern organizations are about systematic and exhaustive training, about "meticulously controlling the operations of the body," as Foucault (1977, p. 137) puts it. Discipline here does not imply particular kinds of restrained or formal behavior. The discipline of a talk-show host, for instance, is evidenced in an ability to be reliably and consistently informal, jokey, and effusive. It does mean that a very extensive regime of training is imposed on the individual by an organization. In media, this is the training designed to make one cope with technology, with the logistics of plans and scripts, with format and genre requirements.

Society and individuality are inextricably linked in Foucault's work. Over time, he argues, the systematic and pervasive character of training in modern organizations heavily involves the individuality of the disciplined person. "Other-discipline" is imposed by the organization, and comes to work in concert with "self-disciplining" processes, through which individuals strive to become what is expected of them. According to Foucault, these disciplining processes quite simply come to constitute individuality:

Through this micro-economy of a perpetual penalty operates a differentiation that is not one of acts, but of individuals themselves, of their nature, their potentialities, their level or their value. By assessing acts with precision, discipline judges individuals “in truth”; the penalty that it implements is integrated into the cycle of knowledge of individuals. (Ibid., p. 181)

This famously uncompromising view of how organizations constitute individuals contrasts starkly with some strong notions of performance and of the performer within the media industries themselves. Industry practitioners tend to argue that success on screen hinges first and foremost on the performers’ ability to “be themselves” and precisely not to “play a role,” “put on an act,” or otherwise adapt their behavior to the production apparatus. As a Norwegian TV producer puts it: “You can’t *play* a programme host. You have to *be* a programme host” (Ytreberg, 1999, p. 220). In this type of industry account, the necessary natural charisma is often seen to be possessed only by the chosen few, which serves to justify the exclusivity of being a media “personality.” The television writer, performer, and critic Clive James (1983, p. 174) has maintained, with studied arrogance, that “all you have to do on television is be yourself, always provided that you have a self to be.”⁶ In this type of account, some just “have it,” others just don’t.

It seems reasonable to say that the truth about how professionalism in performance comes about may lie between these extremes. However, a media production researcher will want to gain a more precise grasp of the ways in which the individuality of persons is put at stake in media’s production of performance. In conceptual terms, a main contribution from research on media has been the concept of “persona.” Reflecting, in 1956, on the then new television medium, Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl defined the persona as a “special category of ‘personalities’ whose existence is a function of the media themselves” (Horton & Wohl, 2006, p. 2). The two authors go on to describe the persona as making a similar impression on the television viewer as a friend or family member would do – that is, the impression of someone intimate and familiar. Several decades before the subfield of media production studies existed, Horton and Wohl made the connection between media performance and the requirements of media production: “[The performer] has the peculiar virtue of being standardized according to the ‘formula’ for his character and performance which he and his managers have worked out and embodied in an appropriate ‘production format’” (ibid., p. 35).

Horton and Wohl tended to speak of personae as an artificial construct that bore little resemblance to the performer’s identity and behavior outside media settings. However, a closer look at production practices (which Horton and Wohl did not provide) may suggest that a clear distinction between persona and identity is difficult to draw. This chapter has used the phrase “augmentation of individuality” to describe a gradual process of training and internalization for media performance. Personality augmentation is a process that builds on the performers’ prior identities, basic communicative competencies, and talents. The readying for mediatized performance

involves, then, the cultivation of some personality traits and the suppression of others by production members of staff who work according to the norms and procedures discussed in this chapter. The process is a very concrete and practical one, involving literally innumerable performances, both in simulated training and in actual performance situations. The performer gradually develops and internalizes a repertoire of set phrases, but also a repertoire of appropriate sounds such as brief laughs, poignant pauses, and continuers (e.g., “uh huh”) that help conversation along. There are also set looks, postures, gestures, movements, and mimicry. A working knowledge of complex technologies is required, along with a finely developed ability to micro-manage the body in time and space.

The routine result of this performance work is a persona that is demonstrably different from the individual person who first entered a production setting, although it is related to and it builds on that person. This chapter has emphasized how research helps us understand the nature and extent of such differences. It has also argued that the process of producing media performances involves the exertion of power, and in doing so it has suggested that conflicts are involved. As has been mentioned, media industry discourse often downplays issues of power and conflict, preferring to emphasize how natural charisma can carry the individual through production into successful performance. Some testimonials from within the industry speak to a certain effect of estrangement, however. An example is provided in the 1979 report of Harald Tusberg, a veteran performer in Norwegian TV entertainment, who went to America and was quite literally trained to be authentic:

In the course of a few months we were drilled to walk, sit and gesticulate naturally, to talk and perform communications of the most various kinds in an earnest tone. We were taught to “mean” what we said, to be on guard against false notes, to improvise and play dramatic scenes, to provide witty (planned) remarks in an interview situation [. . .] in short, to behave right in front of a camera and know how a camera must and must not be used. Our individual peculiarities were polished, augmented and incorporated into the setup. It is one of the strangest things I have ever been involved in. (Cited in Ytreberg, 2000, p. 47)

Tusberg’s insightful testimony to the augmentation of individuality reminds us of just how strange and paradoxical the production of media performances is. That strangeness has to do with the need to carefully plan what we usually think of as unplanned. It certainly speaks of extensive changes that can be felt by the performer as affecting the sense of self, although in a somewhat unresolved way. The references to “learning to walk” and being “taught to ‘mean’” seems to speak of an experience whose realness is hard to gauge but that is still felt as being strongly affective. Finally, by focusing on the element of paradox and estrangement, the citation from Tusberg reminds us that the logic of training for making a performance seem real and natural is an organizational, not an individual one. A strong link exists between this pervasive and peculiar process of individual transformation, the affordances of media

technologies, and the requirements of modern media organizations. That link lies at the heart of the study of how media performances are produced.

NOTES

- 1 Goffman's key text is *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, published in 1959. Around this time, related arguments about the foundational importance of performance were made in several academic fields. In rhetoric, Kenneth Burke (1969) developed the concept of "dramatism" as a strategic use of language in social circumstances. In 1955 J. L. Austin presented his theory of the "performative" aspect of language (Austin, 1975). His argument that language is not just a means of representation but also a mode of "doing" has been extended to a number of fields. The performative approach has powerfully informed feminist scholarship (see Butler, 1990) and is central to the cross-disciplinary field of performance studies (for an overview of these connections, see Carlson, 2004).
- 2 This tendency has been much commented on by media researchers, perhaps most famously in three dedicated issues of *Journal of Communication* (1983, 1993a, 1993b).
- 3 At roughly the same point in time, Scannell (1991, p. 11) argued that "all broadcast output is [. . .] a self-conscious, self-reflexive *performance* produced for audiences that are situated elsewhere."
- 4 The following section builds on an interpretation of Goffman's work that has been presented by me in greater detail elsewhere (Ytreberg, 2002, 2010). On this interpretation, his late essay "Radio Talk" (Goffman, 1981b) is a key text in terms of contributing both to media studies and to media and communication theory.
- 5 See also Lundell (2009). A more restrictive use of the concept of scripting can be found in Paddy Scannell's (2003) historical analysis of the management of liveness in British radio. Here scripted talk is contrasted with talk that is live and unscripted.
- 6 Critical discussions of persona and authenticity can be found among others in Dyer (1987), Gledhill (1991), and Tolson (2001).

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Imagination and Censorship, Fiction and Reality

Producing a Telenovela in a Time of Political Crisis

Carolina Acosta-Alzuru

ABSTRACT

Telenovelas seem an unlikely arena for political discourse. In 2003–2004 the Venezuelan telenovela *Cosita Rica* aired, in the middle of the country's political crisis and its deep polarization around the figure of President Hugo Chávez. In addition to the usual love stories, *Cosita Rica* included characters who were metaphors of the protagonists on the political scene (one character's story was an allegory for Chávez), plots that reflected the embedding of politics in Venezuelans' everyday life, and a storyline that mirrored the presidential recall referendum of August 2004. This chapter examines how *Cosita Rica* was produced in a time of political turmoil. It is an open window into the life span of telenovela production; through it we are able to observe the writing and the mise en scène processes and how the commercial demands of the genre, the audience's readings, the comments of the entertainment press, and the government's censorship played a fundamental role in *Cosita Rica*'s production.

Telenovelas, long considered by some to be “the most watched television genre in the world” (McAnany & La Pastina, 1994), are melodramatic serials that focus on a central story of heterosexual love plagued with misunderstandings and obstacles. These melodramas seem an unlikely arena for political discourse. However, political commentary has been present in several Brazilian telenovelas (La Pastina, 2004; Porto, 1998, 2005; Straubhaar, 1988), and in Venezuela’s *Por estas calles* (*On These Streets*) (Hyppolite, 2000; Márquez, 1999).

In 2003–2004 the Venezuelan telenovela *Cosita Rica* took the stage, in the middle of the country’s political crisis and deep polarization around the controversial figure of President Hugo Chávez. *Cosita Rica* both straddled and blurred the line between fact and fiction through its complex and realistic characters – some of them allegories of political personalities (including Chávez) – and through its multiple plots framed by Venezuela’s political and socioeconomic crises. The telenovela was broadcast in the space of 11 months (September 30, 2003 to August 30, 2004), which included the difficult period that led to the presidential recall referendum of August 2004 and the referendum itself. Simultaneously mirroring and criticizing reality, *Cosita Rica* achieved high ratings despite the audience’s political polarization.

This chapter examines how *Cosita Rica* was produced in a time of national political turmoil. My study is a contribution to media production scholarship because, in a media industry characterized by secrecy, it opens a window into the lifespan of telenovela production. Through this window we are able to observe the writing, staging, and acting processes in the context of commercial demands for high ratings, the audience’s responses to the program, the comments of the entertainment press, and the government’s censorship rules. All of these elements played a fundamental role in the production of *Cosita Rica*.

Theoretical Framework and Methods

Even though there is still a shortage of cultural studies of media industries in the US, this research area has been growing at a fairly steady pace in the last years (see Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009). Forerunners in this tradition, such as Todd Gitlin’s (1983) *Inside Prime Time* and Julie D’Acci’s (1994) *Defining Women*, embrace a broad conception of culture as a “site of social differences and struggles” (Johnson, 1986/1987, p. 39). For Richard Johnson, cultural studies is a project that stresses lived experience, legitimizes popular culture as a valid research topic, and focuses on conflicts over meaning in order to “to abstract, describe and reconstitute in concrete studies the social forms through which human beings ‘live’, become conscious and sustain themselves subjectively” (p. 45). Several theorists have tried to model the project to this end: Stuart Hall (1980); Johnson himself (1986/1987); du Gay, Hall, MacKay, and Negus (1997); and D’Acci (2004).¹ All of them include production as an essential element in the study of media and culture.

However, a cursory glance at the cultural studies literature shows a disparity between the number of studies that focus on media production and the amount of research that examines media texts and/or audiences. In general, scholars show a marked preference for the “decoding” aspects of the communication process, while the “encoding” side seems somewhat neglected (as argued in D’Acci, 2004; Kellner, 1995; Levine, 2001; Ytreberg, 2000), or treated as its opposite (MacKay, 1997). This shortage of cultural studies of media production is the result of several factors. First, scholars often choose to study reception rather than production because there is a generalized perception that it is not easy to gain access to media production sites and personnel. Second, D’Acci (2004) argues that the seminal collection *Cultural Studies* (Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler, 1992) contributed to American cultural studies’ move toward text-centered approaches and foci. This focus, writes Douglas Kellner, helped produce an imaginary divide between cultural studies and political economy, even though

[i]nserting texts into the system of culture within which they are produced and distributed can help elucidate features and effects of the texts that textual analysis alone might miss or downplay. Rather than being antithetical approaches to culture, political economy can actually contribute to textual analysis and critique. (Kellner, 1995, p. 6)

Although I do not disagree with Kellner, I would add that, in order to study the telenovela industry, we must also study processes of media production as cultural phenomena. Beyond economic relations and organizational structures, the processes themselves are “assemblages of meaningful practices that construct certain ways for people to conceive of and conduct themselves in an organizational context” (du Gay, 1997, p. 7). Cultural studies of production assume that media and culture are inextricably linked, since “culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings – the ‘giving and taking of meaning’ – between the members of a society or group” (Hall, 1997, p. 2). Telenovelas demonstrate these exchanges of meaning par excellence. There is constant negotiation between the writers, the director, the production team, the actors, the audience, and the institutional staff that participates in the social formation of the genre. As Jesús Martín-Barbero (1993) argues, the telenovela is a site of “mediations” between production, reception, and culture. The genre thus offers a perfect example of how production and consumption are deeply articulated (Quiroz, 1993).

My own cultural study of the production of *Cosita Rica* is organized largely around the “circuit of culture” model (du Gay et al., 1997) and intends to show how meaning is created and negotiated through processes of production, representation, identity, consumption, and regulation (see Figure 16.1). Each of these processes reveals how the meanings associated with the telenovela are produced, negotiated, and contested. Each one informs the cultural study of production in a more complete way. Hence I studied production processes through 40 hours of individual interviews with *Cosita Rica*’s actors, directors, and producers, and through 30 hours of interviews with head writer Leonardo Padrón. I supplemented these interviews with 200 hours of participant observation on the production set of the telenovela and by watching several episodes with Padrón, observing his reactions. Representation and identity processes

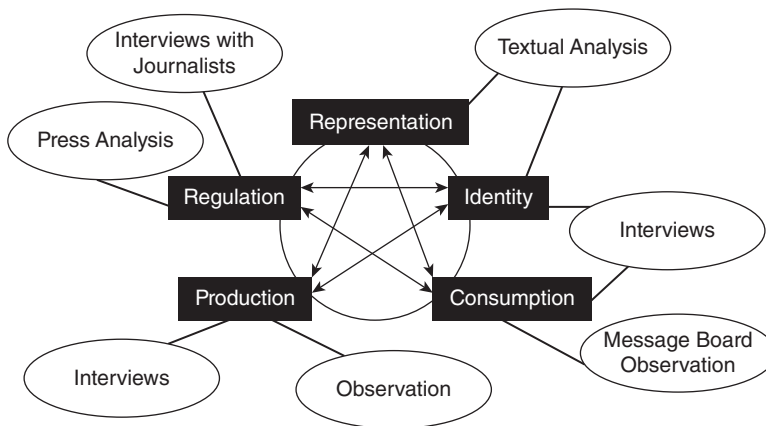


Figure 16.1 Study theory and methods (based on du Gay, Hall, MacKay, & Negus, 1997 and their concept of the circuit of culture).

were examined through a textual analysis of the telenovela's 245 episodes. I further studied identity and consumption processes via 40 individual and group audience interviews, open-ended email questionnaires, and sustained observation of Internet message boards devoted to *Cosita Rica*. These gave me insights into the class and political differences between the various audiences of the telenovela. Finally, I looked at regulation processes by interviewing entertainment reporters and analyzing the extensive press coverage (778 news stories) of national current events and the political implications of *Cosita Rica*. Therefore, although this chapter focuses on the production of the telenovela, the circuit of culture reminds us that production processes are linked to representation, identity, consumption, and regulation.

Some scholars have criticized circuit models for being reductionist and for limiting the way we approach the study of cultural products (see Grossberg, 1997); but I agree with D'Acci's response to this criticism:

A circuit model doesn't hawk a formulaic approach to TV studies; rather it underscores that we cannot start from ground zero each time we embark on a new project, and that explicitly working from the scholarship of the past (scholarship that has contingently delineated and analyzed various dimensions of production, reception, cultural artifacts, and socio-historical contexts) is the best way to structure our current inquiries and our pedagogical practice. (D'Acci, 2004, p. 431)

Context: Reality, Crisis, and Television

Venezuela's Political Crisis

On February 4, 1992, Venezuelans woke up to the surprising news that an attempted coup was in progress. The country, deemed as Latin America's most stable democracy

at the time (Blanco, 2002), had not experienced a similar event since 1958, when the last dictator, Marcos Pérez Jiménez, had been deposed. The attempt was short lived. By the end of the day the insurgents had surrendered, then President Carlos Andrés Pérez was back in his office at Miraflores Palace, and the captured leader of the coup appeared on national television – a sign that the government was again in control. A paratrooper with the rank of lieutenant, Hugo Chávez, looked with aplomb at the camera in front of him as he serenely accepted sole responsibility for the coup's inception and failure. Chávez asked his followers to depose their weapons and surrender, since their goals could not be achieved *por ahora* (for the time being). This *por ahora* television moment changed the fate both of Chávez and of Venezuela (Villegas Poljak, 2002).

Chávez became president of Venezuela in a landslide election in 1998. Soon after, the party system suffered a severe breakdown as he drafted a new constitution and reinvented institutions to further his left-leaning Bolivarian Revolution. Four years later political polarization settled in Venezuela, tainting and pervading all aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life. Chávez is a messiah for his supporters and a devil for his opponents. He is adored and feared. His supporters allege that the opposition has not allowed him to govern. Opponents argue that he is an incompetent autocrat.

In April 2002, after massive street protests against his government, Chávez was briefly toppled in a business-organized military coup, only to be brought back to power 48 hours later by the military. The return to power followed the mobilization of Chávez supporters – *chavistas* – who clamored in the streets of Caracas for their president's return. In December of the same year the opposition, structured under the umbrella organization Coordinadora Democrática, orchestrated a two-month strike that embraced the oil industry. This strategy proved to be a huge miscalculation. Chávez survived the work stoppage and fired the oil industry employees who had participated in it. The economy suffered a severe blow. Exchange controls were enacted, many businesses closed and unemployment figures rose to new heights, as the economy contracted by 29 percent (Forero, 2003).

After the failed strike, the opposition tried a legal alternative: to activate Statute 72 of the constitution, which allows for a mid-term recall referendum of the president. (In other words it allows voters to remove their president from office before the expiration of the presidential term.) The thorny path to the referendum began in November 2003, with a petition drive to gather the necessary number of signatures to request the referendum. Three months later the National Council of Elections (CNE, which stands for Consejo Nacional Electoral) deemed 1.3 million of these signatures "invalid"; street violence ensued. Then the CNE implemented a process through which the invalid signatures could be "repaired." Finally, in June 2004 the presidential recall referendum process was activated, much to the opposition's delight.

The historic referendum took place on August 15, 2004 after a short but intense political campaign, which was plagued by mutual accusations of abuse and deceit. Chávez stayed in power. His supporters and opponents stayed in their respective

ideological camps. The polarization created then in Venezuelan politics and society persists until today.

Chávez and the Media

From the beginning of the crisis, the Venezuelan mass media played a crucial role in this story. Chávez entered the political stage through television. As a presidential candidate, he was supported by almost all media owners and conglomerates (Hawkins, 2003). However, as business, professional, and elite circles became increasingly disenchanted with the new president, they started fearing the effects of the Bolivarian Revolution. The honeymoon ended and the tone in the media changed gradually, but steadily. In his weekly allocution to the nation, “Aló, Presidente” (“Hello, President”), Chávez repeatedly lashed out at privately owned media. He once called media moguls “horsemen of the Apocalypse” and asked the Venezuelan people to distrust them. By the time of the 2002 coup, the private media were unequivocally opposed to Chávez and had assumed an overt political role.

In June 2003, when the first episodes of *Cosita Rica* were being written, relations between the government and privately owned media were extremely contentious. The latter were in critical financial straits due to the national strike. Their content was unmistakably oppositional. Out of fear of the wrath of *chavistas*, print media offices and broadcast stations were heavily guarded. Reporters wore bullet-proof vests and other anti-riot gear on a daily basis. There were documented cases of threats and physical violence against journalists, and even against entertainers (Tremamunno, 2002). The president appeared regularly on *cadenas* – mandatory public radio and television broadcasts.² During these sessions he derided all private media and threatened to control their content.

Polarization and Telenovelas

Venezuela is a major player in the international telenovela market (Mato, 2005). In the last decade, the Venezuelan telenovela industry has both struggled with and been shaped by the internal political forces of polarization, government-media belligerence, and media regulations that have characterized the presidential terms of Hugo Chávez. Two private television networks – RCTV (Radio Caracas Televisión, owned by the Phelps-Granier family) and Venevisión (owned by the Cisneros family) – are Venezuela’s main telenovela producers and exporters. For the last 50 years they have battled with each other fiercely, in a ratings war that has defined Venezuelan television. The latter has also been marked by the changing relationship between these private networks and the Chávez government. *Cosita Rica*’s production took place in this defining context.

Telenovelas have a stronghold on Venezuela’s prime-time television. Many Venezuelan telenovelas follow the traditional format of *la telenovela rosa* – a love story

about a heterosexual couple in which both partners have to overcome obstacles and intrigues in order to achieve happiness together. The two main characters usually come from different socioeconomic backgrounds; therefore their love story is also a story about socioeconomic advancement. Simplistic, one-dimensional, Manichaeian characters are linked in a main storyline, in which love always wins over evil (Cabrujas, 2002). In contrast, telenovelas *de ruptura* break with this traditional format, as they include social and cultural issues taken from Latin American reality. These telenovelas present complex characters, which are both ambiguous and unpredictable, and their storylines combine personal and social problems in a narrative fiction that attempts to chronicle and critique social actuality, speaking to the audience in terms of a shared reality (Martín-Barbero & Rey, 1999). *Cosita Rica* belongs in this latter category.

***Cosita Rica's Production*³**

It is almost impossible to identify the precise moment in which a telenovela begins to be conceptualized. The creative spark occurs in an imperceptible place in the author's brain (or heart); it is the result of his experiences and talent, and it becomes eventually the ideas that will shape the story. It is far easier to pinpoint the event that leads to the long-term business deal that places a telenovela on the screen.

Cosita Rica's author is the Venezuelan poet and writer Leonardo Padrón. In his case, the creative trigger for his many telenovelas has usually been the city of Caracas and the many characters that inhabit the streets of this fascinating, glamorous, and dangerous metropolis, which is also home to 25% of the Venezuelan population. *Cosita Rica* began like many business deals with a lunch meeting. Padrón's trajectory as an experienced and successful telenovela writer meant that he did not have to compete with other authors to capture the attention of network executives.

Over that lunch, Padrón explained the general concept he had in mind, the characteristics of the main protagonists and their love story, and outlined some of the subplots. The author's thesis for *Cosita Rica* consisted of two stories: "The tale of an immense love and the story of the lack of affection between the political extremes in Venezuela" (Leonardo Padrón, June 18, 2003). His first audience for this story was the network's president, its vice-president, and the person in charge of *dramáticos* (dramas). These network executives liked Padrón's proposal. The conversation then veered from general ideas to particular deadlines – when to turn in the first scripts, when to begin shooting, when to go on the air – and to other particulars: set locations, names of possible protagonists, cast members, and the executive producer and general director who would realize the scripts. Padrón got the green light to start the project of putting his ideas into practice.

Telenovelas, much like soap operas, are made to fit existing talent pools and tight budgets. As he designed characters and storylines, Padrón imagined who would be the best actor for each role. The network negotiated with those artists and their

agents. Once Padrón had confirmation that an actor/actress was on board, he would tailor the character specifically for that person. Meanwhile executive producer Consuelo Delgado and general director César Bolívar explored possible locations for the story in *Cosita Rica*. The budget of a Venezuelan telenovela is considerably lower than that of its Brazilian and Mexican counterparts.⁴ Therefore Delgado and Bolívar had to be creative about choosing locations. For example, all the scenes scripted for a college coffee shop were actually videotaped in the network cafeteria. Gradually *Cosita Rica* acquired its eventual shape. Actors signed their contracts and met with Padrón to talk about their characters, and a small number of episodes were written. In August 2003 production began. In September Venevisión broadcast the first promotions. Finally, on September 30, *Cosita Rica* entered the ratings battle.

How were the writer's ideas transformed into episodes that aired at 9 p.m. every Monday to Saturday? With the exception of Sundays, Padrón and his team of three writers (the *dialoguistas*) wrote at least one episode of the telenovela every day. The time span between each finished episode and its broadcast was originally two weeks in September 2003, but this process shortened to three or four days as the telenovela's finale approached. This is the main reason why telenovela writers have no time to rest. They absolutely must generate one episode per day, in an inexorable routine:

It's an overwhelming creative system. [. . .] Your inspiration must be on a schedule. You have to create a story during nine months that seem to last forever. You write a pile of 12,000 pages, 5,500 scenes, and 200 hours of dramatic tension. [. . .] You can't wait for the arrival of the muse. You must wake her up and bring her to work on time. (Padrón, 2002, p. 51)

Cosita Rica's writing process lasted over one year and was not limited to "office hours." Very early each morning, Padrón outlined (*diagramaba*) the next episode by creating a list of scenes. This is a delicate process. It requires a clear sense of dramatic structure and of the audience's tastes regarding the storyline and the characters. In a good episode outline (*diagra*), the writer moves the story from one cliffhanger to the next and creates linkages, so that the story holds the audience's attention without losing sight of the characters' essential traits. Padrón divided the scenes among his writers, saving for himself the ones that were key to *Cosita Rica's* argument and dramatic structure. Several hours later, when all the scenes had been written, Padrón proceeded to assemble, revise, and polish each episode, taking particular care of his "left-hand margin" notes for the technical crew and cast members in each shoot. Throughout this process he consulted with his writers and with Delgado. Shortly before dusk Padrón emailed the definitive version of the episode, approximately 40–50 pages with 25–30 scenes, to Delgado.

In her capacity as an executive producer, Delgado studied the episodes with the eyes of the person in charge of "making the writer's ideas and dreams come true" (Consuelo Delgado: June 11, 2003). For her, each episode was a long list of props, sets, talent, and equipment requirements. General producer Carolina De Jacovo then converted each script into the shooting schedule – *la pauta* – a daily timetable

organized by scenes, which governs each studio and shooting location and details everything needed: sets, props, actors, director, and production assistants. Script and *pauta* were then copied and given to every single person involved in the production. Actors usually highlighted their lines as they learned them, and they quickly decided on a strategy for their scene(s).⁵ Personnel in the departments that handled props, sets, and wardrobe also worked to be ready for the upcoming shooting schedule, which began very early each morning and ended late at night on most days.

After all the scenes in an episode were videotaped, the episode itself went to the editor's booth, then to the music department, and finally to the post-production department, where it was finalized and promotional previews were prepared.⁶ Meanwhile Padrón stayed on top of as many production details as he could manage. He analyzed, for example, the promotional calls and argued for a number of commercial breaks that would not weaken the dramatic structure of his story. He also worried that President Chávez would interrupt the broadcast with one of his many *cadenas* and carefully examined the ratings, trying to figure out the recipe for staying on top without betraying his *telenovela*'s essence. At home, Padrón watched the final version of his text on his television screen. He focused on the unavoidable gap between the script and the production. He analyzed the actors' performances, which became a frequent source of inspiration. Before going to bed he would work a bit more: "After I watch the episode, I usually pre-outline the *diagra* I will work with the next day" (Leonardo Padrón: April 27, 2004). And that is how each day in the lifespan of *Cosita Rica* ended: with a glimpse of what would come the next day.

***Cosita Rica's* Flight**

Padrón frequently compared the daily struggle of writing and producing a telenovela with flying an airplane on a very long flight. I use the same metaphor to describe some of the key moments in *Cosita Rica*'s journey, which will illustrate the everyday life span of a telenovela from a production standpoint, without losing sight of the articulations with representation, identity, consumption, and regulation.

Like an aircraft, a telenovela must take off with enough power to reach cruise altitude and speed in an adequate amount of time. It is also essential to keep the plane on the air through storms and turbulence until it is time to land softly. Ratings and shares, which are "God and currency" for any commercial television business, determine the duration of the flight.

September 30, 2003–March 2004: Takeoff and Flying at Cruise Altitude in a Turbulent Country

On the evening of September 30, 2003 *Cosita Rica* took off. And, even though network Venevisión had been consistently losing the prime-time ratings war for the past two

years, it took *Cosita Rica* only a couple of weeks to own the first place. The audience enjoyed the telenovela's balanced mix of love, melodrama, reality, humor, and political commentary. By the end of October *Cosita Rica* was flying at cruise speed and altitude. Its main competitor, RCTV's *La Invasora*, had been definitely relegated to second place in the audience's preference. The entertainment press covered and commented on *Cosita Rica* extensively.⁷ Padrón, his writers, the cast, and the production team worked feverishly without major interruptions or problems. And by February, the network's decision makers, ecstatic with the telenovela's success, asked Padrón to extend it from the planned 180 episodes to 240.⁸ Since the writer felt his story had still many possible developments, Padrón agreed to the extension, while production anticipated the continuation of a smooth flight.

In contrast, Venezuela was increasingly agitated as Chávez's opponents gathered the necessary number of signatures to trigger a constitution-based recall referendum of the president. By the end of February 2004, the National Council of Elections announced that 1.3 million of the collected signatures were invalid; this triggered a week of violent street protests in Caracas, which were aggressively squelched by the National Guard and kept people away from their work places. Production stopped that week, and it was necessary to broadcast reruns for several days. When the telenovela returned during the first week of March, the episode included a monologue by the teenage character Nixon. He was the story's occasional narrator, representing the voice of young Venezuelans who face an uncertain future in a polarized country. In a voice-over accompanied by real images of the street protests and by the National Guard's ensuing repression, Nixon said:

I'm very sad because of my country. Venezuela used to resemble the word happiness. But now everything is different. There is fire in the streets. People are shooting each other. I can't feel the breeze from the *Avila* because oxygen now stings, like eyes itch with tear gas.⁹ Some of my friends' parents have disappeared or are dead. Everyone has a stone in their hand . . . or in their minds. Everyone's angry. One of our teachers told us that this is the way wars begin. I'm very scared, even though my dictionary has words that could help us become the country we once were: democracy, freedom, tolerance. But there's a word I've been searching for and I can't find: peace. I'm 15 years old and I live in the country that grownups built. However, these days nobody is behaving like an adult. Instead, they act like rabid dogs. Is it possible that it's easier to kill ourselves than to respect each other? I'm 15 years old and I want someone to give me back my country. Someone . . . or everyone . . . A country that resembles peace . . . peace . . . please . . . (Episode 113)

In general, audience members for and against the president approved these words, which resonated with their recent experience (Acosta-Alzuru, 2011). Mirroring political reality, however, was not an easy road for Padrón. The audience liked occasional editorializing and enjoyed the use of metaphor, as in the case of the charismatic, verbose, and polarizing character Olegario Pérez, which Padrón wrote as an allegory of President Chávez (ibid.). But, when the telenovela re-created

a notorious and widely reported case of authority and physical abuse by the National Guard (Benzaquen, 2004), my study participants were divided in their appreciation, and not by their political position. Some enjoyed watching the sequence, arguing that it “helped people comment what was happening in the country” (AMELIA, 27). Others thought it was “too much” (ANDREA, 35) and “too similar to the tragic events in the streets” (MONICA, 46). The network received many phone calls from viewers who warned that, if the telenovela was going to become another newscast, they would stop watching it. Such was the nature of the tightrope that *Cosita Rica* walked between reality and fiction, between being a mirror and providing entertainment.

April 2004: A Two-Airplane Race and *los Niños de la Calle*

In April, Venezuelans took a break from political unrest, as the CNE decided to implement a process to “repair” the signatures deemed invalid. The television competition, however, heated up at 9 p.m., when RCTV premiered its new telenovela, *Estrambótica Anastasia*, and won the ratings the next ten days in a row. Padrón had been preparing for the new competition. His strategy was to wait a few days and then to exploit the dramatic conflict of *Cosita Rica*’s favorite story of young love (the *historia de amor juvenil*)¹⁰ (Acosta-Alzuru, 2007); in the story, identical twin sisters separated at birth – one poor, the other rich – fall in love with the same man.

In a plot reminiscent of Mark Twain’s *The Prince and the Pauper*, María Suspiro and Verónica meet for the first time in their early twenties and decide to exchange places. They are opposites, two sides of the same coin:

María Suspiro is war. Verónica is peace. María Suspiro is hyper. Verónica is serene. The first is joyous. The second is melancholic. María Suspiro is intuitive. Verónica is rational. To me they’re both luminous. María Suspiro is the blazing sun of high noon and Verónica is the light of sunset. Neither one is night. (Leonardo Padrón: May 8, 2004)

María Suspiro falls in love with the luxury of her sister’s life, and Verónica falls for her sister’s boyfriend, Cacique, who does not know that his girlfriend is really two different women. As the plot progresses, the relationship between Cacique and Verónica heats up. Their “chemistry” surpasses the television screen. The love triangle is set in such a way that, by the time the public realizes that Cacique is (unknowingly) really in love with Verónica, they already love María Suspiro’s exuberance too.

Ten days after the premiere of *Estrambótica Anastasia*, in a heavily promoted episode, Cacique finds out that María Suspiro has an identical twin sister and that the two women have been exchanging places. Even with a forced 10-minute interruption for Chávez’s allocution, ratings soared to the highest point that *Cosita Rica* would ever achieve. Not even its final episode topped the numbers of that pivotal evening. *Cosita Rica* regained its first place. The writer’s strategy had worked.

The fact is that when a story has broadcast 150 episodes, the audience has its favorite characters and stories. It would be senseless to navigate against the audience's likes and dislikes. [. . .] When the telenovela faces a strong rival, I must underscore *Cosita Rica's* strengths. This is what I'm doing with Cacique and the twins, and it's working. (Leonardo Padrón: April 27, 2004)

In April, in addition to the fierce ratings war, *Cosita Rica's* production had an incident with the Chávez government, which was related to a subplot focused on the high number of abandoned and runaway children and adolescents who live in the streets. Known as *los niños de la calle* ("street children"), these youngsters have dropped out of school and do not count on family support. They survive among the filth and insecurity of Venezuela's largest cities as beggars and/or petty thieves (Márquez, 1999).¹¹

Street children have a presence in *Cosita Rica* in a plot in which 15-year-old Nixon, who lives in one of the poorest sectors of the city, meets a group of *niños de la calle*. Despite their aggressive and seemingly disdainful attitude, their physical and emotional hunger gives away their needs and disturbs Nixon in profound ways, as these youngsters place him in the unusual situation of being the most "privileged" in the group. Nixon's mother, an unemployed, single parent, gets involved and organizes fundraisers on the street children's behalf. In this way Nixon and his mother become the conscience that reminds the viewers that, in spite of these children's ubiquitous presence in the streets, it is easy to become desensitized to their plight and to forget them, even when we are seemingly looking at them:

NIXON (VOICE-OVER during the New Year spectacular fireworks in Caracas): Like every year, we were all betting on a great New Year and a country that finally resembles our dreams. [. . .] The only thing that saddened me was to think of how my friends from the streets were doing at that time. I know that at a happy time like New Year's, the whole country forgets their existence. Maybe in this coming year there will be a President that will remember them. Hopefully . . . (Episode 75)

The political overtones of this storyline reached a climax when Nixon and his friends decided to take advantage of a political rally to voice the needs of *los niños de la calle*. Nixon climbs the stage, takes the microphone away from a politician who is delivering a trite speech, and speaks out on behalf of his friends:

NIXON: You would think *los niños de la calle* are dumb and can't speak. I say this because it seems to me nobody is listening to them. Today I speak for them, as if I were one of them. Grownups, don't mention us until you learn to look at us without disgust. The only thing we want is a place that could be called home and something that resembles a school. We don't want to hear any more lies. We don't want to listen to any more unfulfilled promises. (Episode 145)

The network edited Nixon's monologue. In the original script, the youngster also said: "Mr. President, don't mention us anymore in your speeches. Members of the opposition, don't use us in your political propaganda."

The editing of this monologue was the first instance of prior restraint related to *Cosita Rica*. It was caused by an incident that occurred while shooting these scenes. With every permit required by law, the sequence was shot in a quiet street across from the army's social entity, Club de Suboficiales. A few minutes after young actor José Manuel Suárez (who played Nixon) said his lines, Minister of Defense General Jorge Luis García Carneiro arrived at the location:

He was very irritated and upset. First, he kicked one of the guards of the Club de Suboficiales because he had allowed the telenovela to videotape there. Then, he unplugged some of the network's equipment and yelled that if we didn't leave the premises in 30 minutes, he would detain everyone. (Leonardo Padrón: April 17, 2004)

In addition to ordering the editing of the monologue, network executives scolded executive producer Delgado for her choice of location for this sequence and warned Padrón about the political color of this particular plot. This first instance of self-censorship by Venevisión was a sign of alarm and heralded changes in the network's political position.

May 2004: The Electric Storm

In May, Venezuelans opposed to Chávez "repaired" their signatures to recall the president and waited, while the CNE slowly audited and tallied the signatures. In *Cosita Rica* new characters appeared, creating new dramatic plots, solving some of the older ones, and giving the entertainment press more fodder for stories and gossip columns. Padrón worked on ways to return his protagonists – Diego and Paula C. (played by actors Rafael Novoa and Fabiola Colmenares) – to *Cosita Rica*'s center stage. In the ratings competition, the telenovela stayed firmly in first place. In spite of all these positive developments, May was a stormy month for Padrón and for *Cosita Rica*'s female protagonist Colmenares.

Measured in ratings and shares, the emphasis placed on the twins' plot at the end of April had worked successfully. However, the audience felt a bit disoriented, as it perceived that the protagonists' story was now second in importance, a transgression of the telenovela codes. "I feel the protagonists are now in the sideline" (ANA, 49). There was some discomfort among the cast too. One actor told me anonymously: "In this telenovela the protagonist code has been broken. Last Tuesday we won the ratings war with an episode that did not feature the female protagonist at all."

On May 4 an upset Colmenares met with top network executives and threatened to resign unless her character regained the importance of a protagonist. They promised her that they would talk to Padrón. However, the next day, when the network's president and vice-president met with the writer, they did not mention the topic of Colmenares' possible resignation, focusing instead on the successful strategy of elevating the volume to the twins' storyline (Leonardo Padrón: May 5,

2004). Padrón had already written a sequence of episodes focused on the main love story that included protagonist Diego interrupting Paula C.'s wedding with antagonist Olegario.¹² The plot was promising and the production team worked long hours for the mise en scène of these episodes, which were videotaped in a country estate outside Caracas.

Colmenares, however, had already talked to the press. Entertainment reporter Marlene Castillo wrote on May 11:

Fabiola, more depressed and disappointed than upset as she watches her character lose its rank of protagonist, presented her resignation to Venevisión top executives, who did not accept it with the promise of a "reconsideration" that would revalue her role to what it used to be. (Castillo, 2004b, p. 20)

The next day other reporters and gossip columns echoed the news of Colmenares' resignation. But, on May 13, the respected daily *El Nacional* reported that "Padrón denies Fabiola Colmenares' resignation" (Silva, 2004, p. B10). Entertainment reporters who had written about the resignation as a *fait accompli* reacted angrily:

Leonardo Padrón denied Fabiola Colmenares' resignation. It isn't the first, nor is it the last time that this happens. But to deny us when we're supported by the truth bothers us. [. . .] Colmenares DID resign. (Castillo, 2004c, p. 19)

When the promotions for the upcoming wedding episodes were broadcast, the press assumed this development as confirmation that Colmenares had indeed resigned and Padrón had been "scolded" by network executives who were appeasing the actor (Sepulturero, 2004c).

Paula C.'s interrupted wedding with antagonist Olegario produced good ratings, although significantly lower than those of Cacique and the twins.¹³ Venevisión's executives were happy, even though *Cosita Rica*'s distance from RCTV's *Estrambótica Anastasia* gradually decreased when the protagonists were finally together. What mattered was that the Padrón-Colmenares storm seemed to be over without having any effect on the audience's support of *Cosita Rica*.

At the end of the month, however, a gossip column published a note that began a whole new wave of speculations regarding the future of protagonist Paula C. Using the pseudonym "El Sepulturero," a columnist wrote that Padrón was so upset with Colmenares that he was going to introduce in the telenovela a serial killer, played by a Mexican actor, who would murder several characters, including the protagonist (Sepulturero, 2004a). The supposed addition of the "Mexican psychopath" was repeated by at least two media outlets (Castillo, 2004a; Sepulturero, 2004b), even though Padrón flatly denied it.

The writer knew this unfounded rumor could be damaging to his telenovela. He was right. To audience members, the "Mexican psychopath" was the opposite of the

realism they enjoyed and expected in *Cosita Rica*. On the Internet, message boards buzzed with anger (see *Cosita Rica*, n.d.):

LET'S UNITE AND REJECT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IN *COSITA RICA*!

May 24, 2004

According to the press and to a reliable source, Paula C and Diego will be out of *Cosita Rica* soon. A serial killer will appear and kill a bunch of characters, including them. Let's say NO to this destruction of our beloved telenovela! I hope that Padrón reads these lines one day and realizes that this is the worst thing he could do!!

–Dragoons

LET'S SAVE *COSITA RICA*!

May 27, 2004

Padrón wants to damage the telenovela . . . Nooooo . . . The press says that César Evora and another Mexican actor are going to be part of *Cosita Rica* as a serial killer. How ridiculous!! All *Cosita Rica* Fans must unite and not allow this to happen! We want the telenovela to continue reflecting the country's situation!!

In this way the stormy month ended with Diego and Paula C. recovering their protagonist status, *Cosita Rica* regaining first place, but with diminishing ratings, the press being obsessed with the entrance of a serial killer, and Padrón feeling the first signs of fatigue and facing the last months of his very long telenovela.

June–July 2004: Turbulence

In contrast with the situation in May, when *Cosita Rica*'s ratings were not altered by the electric storm generated by its unhappy protagonist, in June the telenovela encountered turbulence that turned on the warning indicators in the cockpit.

The month did not begin well. *Cosita Rica* lost the ratings in the first two days. The protagonists had been together for a week, and their storyline had lost its dramatic tension. Meanwhile the writer of its main competitor, *Estrambótica Anastasia*, had included a murder/“who'd done it?” plot that attracted viewers. The audience had become impatient with *Cosita Rica*, wanting to be constantly surprised by the telenovela. Acknowledging that the main love story's tension was based mostly on keeping the protagonists apart, Padrón generated a new obstacle for their love: Diego is kidnapped by a Colombian guerilla fighter. The audience gave this plot twist a cold reception, even though it evoked similar events that had shaken Venezuelans in the last decade. Furthermore, because Diego's kidnapping coincided with another storyline in which Patria Mía, a favorite character, gets involved with a drug trafficker, the audience felt that *Cosita Rica* had lost its luminous qualities. Certainly the balance between reality, melodrama, and humor had been altered, and both the ratings and the audience's comments showed the public's displeasure: “They forgot the central idea. Now we have to swallow this modern guerrilla. It's ridiculous. Every time they

show kidnapped Diego, I stand up and do something else. It's boring and totally uninteresting" (MONICA, 46). Here is a post on the message board for the show again (Cosita Rica, n.d.):

PLEASSSSEEEEE

June 21, 2004

Don't you think that since Fabiola Colmenares' temper tantrum the telenovela has changed? It's now such trash. The protagonist kidnapped, Patria Mía with that junkie. Please don't transform the telenovela into something boring and predictable!

–Elsa

Cosita Rica lost on June 18 and barely won the next day. Padrón declared a state of emergency and called a meeting with his writing team.

I think that *Cosita Rica* is suffering from erosion at the same time that its competition has become more interesting. To be honest, I don't think people liked the guerrilla plot. I've heard too many comments of people saying that the telenovela is now too serious and kind of heavy. The emergency indicators are definitely on. (Leonardo Padrón: June 21, 2004)

Decisions were made: add more humor to the script, elevate the volume of the characters and storylines that the audience loved (like the love story between Cacique and Verónica), write a three-month time ellipsis (a jump in time) that would solve/dissolve the plots that were not working, and use the telenovela itself to dispel the annoying rumor about the "Mexican psychopath."¹⁴

In the last week of June, the government-controlled network Venezolana de Televisión (VTV) premiered *Amores de barrio adentro* at 9 p.m. A blatantly pro-Chávez dramatic serial, it changed nothing in the prime-time ratings war because the Venezuelan audience all but ignored it, which suggested that, regardless of their political stance, Venezuelans were not interested in telenovelas that resembled political pamphlets.

Meanwhile, on most days, *Cosita Rica* and *Estrambótica Anastasia* were neck and neck in their quest to win ratings. When July arrived, Padrón made a move that returned his telenovela to the first place. Fictional character Olegario Pérez, like Chávez, the real-life character he evoked, now faced a recall referendum relative to his administration of cosmetics corporation *Emporio Luján*, a metaphor for Venezuela. The audience received this development, plus a refreshing time ellipsis, with pleasure: "*Cosita Rica* is now in an active and dynamic path. It's like they've given it some oxygen, and now it's as attractive as when it first started" (ROSALBA, 42). "I thought it was great that the telenovela skipped those three months. It gave it a new life" (REBECA, 20).

The writers, the cast, and the production team were exhausted, though. They wanted the telenovela to end as soon as possible. In an extremely polarized country, shooting scenes close to the date of the Chávez referendum worried everyone who

worked in *Cosita Rica*. However, their wish that the telenovela would end before August 15, when the historic referendum was due to take place, was not granted.

The Minister of Information and Communication and members of the Comando Maisanta (the government organization in charge of Chávez's referendum-related political campaign) met with Víctor Ferreres, president of Venevisión, and ordered that Olegario's on-screen referendum could not take place before Chávez's. The network had no recourse but to comply. In this meeting the government made clear that they were following *Cosita Rica*'s stories closely and warned Venevisión about using the telenovela for propaganda purposes. Feeling threatened, the network responded by implementing a self-censorship system. Scripts were carefully read by the network's legal department. Dialogues were modified and some scenes were re-taped, which added yet another layer of complexity to the last month of production.

Even with this annoying self-censorship in place, Padrón knew that *Cosita Rica*'s parallel path with reality could not be altered. July ended with *Cosita Rica* in first place and increasing its advantage over its competitor day by day. On the 27th, Venevisión announced *Cosita Rica*'s *etapa final* (final stage) and aired the first promotional broadcast for the telenovela that would substitute it in the 9 p.m. slot.

Venezuelans looked forward to August, when their country's destiny and the fate of the characters that had entertained them for almost a year would be decided.

August 2004: *Cosita Rica*'s Landing

The presidential recall referendum and its consequences marked the month of August. Two weeks before Chávez's referendum, *Zeta*, a political magazine with a clear oppositional stance, veered from a 30-year-old policy of not showing artists or entertainers on its cover and displayed a picture of Olegario with the headline "'Olegario' tá cagao" – "'Olegario' Is Shitting His Pants" – which clearly referred to Chávez.

The parallels between the telenovela and the national political arena were unmistakable. Venezuelans spent most of August 15 in long lines, waiting to vote for or against their president. Actor Carlos Cruz, who played Olegario in the telenovela, also stood in line for many hours to vote. Some passersby from the opposition acted toward him as if he were Chávez: "We're going to revoke you!" "This is your last day in the presidency!" (Carlos Cruz: August 27, 2004). Both political sides were sure they would obtain victory. In the wee hours of the morning of August 16 the CNE announced the president's victory. The opposition cried fraud, while the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Carter Center certified the result. Venezuela was now divided not only between *chavistas* (pro-Chávez) and *antichavistas* (anti-Chávez), but also between satisfied and frustrated Venezuelans.

In *Cosita Rica* it was finally time to prepare the aircraft for landing: resolve plots and decide each character's fate. The line between reality and fiction was further

blurred. The entertainment press mentioned the telenovela on a daily basis, and even the political press speculated about the fate of both Chávez and Olegario, while the audience had come back in mass to watch *Cosita Rica*'s last month: "I like everything that's happening in *Cosita Rica*. I'm enjoying it so very much. Sometimes I want it to end to see what will happen with certain characters. But at other times I don't want it to ever end" (ANDREA, 35).

On August 19, after more than two days of almost non-stop work from the writers, Padrón emailed *Cosita Rica*'s final episode. It consisted of 85 pages and 79 scenes, which ended the telenovela that had put Venevisión back in first place. *Cosita Rica* landed on August 30, exactly 11 months after it had taken off. Olegario, like Chávez, wins his referendum, and his opponents, like those of Chávez, cry fraud. Paula C. and Diego lived happily ever after. So did Cacique and Verónica, while María Suspiro fulfilled her girlhood dream of becoming Miss Venezuela.

Olegario's ending gave Padrón some unpleasant experiences. He received many anonymous text and phone messages calling him "immoral" and suggesting that he had been co-opted by the Chávez government. Throughout *Cosita Rica*'s 11 months the president's opponents had applauded the parallelisms between Olegario and Chávez. However, they were upset when Olegario won his referendum, because they felt that, just as Olegario was a satire of Chávez (and they liked that), now he was legitimizing the president (and they disliked that). These *antichavistas* felt that Padrón, *Cosita Rica*, and Venevisión were deserters in Venezuela's political battle.

The audience enjoyed the final episode, although, for those who opposed the president, "it brought back bad memories from Chávez's referendum" (DANI, 27). Sixteen months after the final episode aired I was still receiving emails from my study participants mentioning *Cosita Rica* as an unforgettable telenovela that had marked them. After its long journey, *Cosita Rica* had finally landed. The pilot and crew could finally say thank you and rest:

I truly believe that *Cosita Rica* will be a memorable chapter in our lives. We achieved a resonance within the audience that surprised us all. Each character became part of Venezuelans' affective imaginary. You, actors, managed to enter the viewers' retinas and furnish their smiles. You became topic and dessert every evening. I want to thank you for giving a piece of your soul to your work. I also want to apologize for the grey scenes, the lukewarm dialogues or the incoherent situations that I may have written. In a journey as long as this one, it was impossible that none of us lose our way, at some point. The important thing is that we've arrived to the end, unbeaten in our quest to make a more dignified television and accompany our country at a historical time of strife. We were the fiction that gave the public laughter, love and reflection. Today I turn off my computer, exhausted and happy, worn out and sad, thankful and taller, older and more human, thanks to you and to this story. Our story. [. . .]

Thank you. As I embrace you I say out loud: thank you.

And my heart stands up and applauds you forever. (Padrón, n.d.)

Conclusion

Those who place their words in the guts of a telenovela know it well: Love without ratings doesn't last.

Barrera Tyszka (2002, p. 65)

The life expectancy of a telenovela is determined by its ratings. "Love without ratings doesn't last" is the tenet of an industry that is often heartless and stubborn in its quest for success. The latter is strictly defined in terms of ratings and shares, which are the currency of the television industry. The quality of a show is never nearly as important as the numbers that measure the audience's choices. From the entertainment press to hardcore telenovela fans, ratings and shares impregnate every aspect related to a telenovela's production and reception.

These numbers also determine the survival of writers in the industry. It is not desirable to have a losing record. And, even though all writers have failures in their trajectory, it is necessary for their permanence in television that these failures are scarce and isolated occurrences. Studying Padrón as he wrote *Cosita Rica* allowed me to observe how he struggled every day with the tension between the commercial requirements of the genre and his own creative and stylistic needs as an author. I witnessed his battle to couple rating and quality in a commercial product that ends up not being his. On occasions, I saw how he succumbed to the strictly commercial parameters of an industry that can be like a sausage factory. I also witnessed how he overcame these factors and showed the best of his creative talent, as his telenovela encouraged the audience to reflect on the country's polarization and on the nature of political leadership.

Studying *Cosita Rica*'s production process also helped me understand the actors' craft/art in an industry that often does not care for real talent. In Venezuela there is an understanding of celebrity that assumes that Venezuelan actors have the lifestyle of the most glamorous of their Hollywood counterparts. In reality, the large majority of actors belong to the middle class. Most of them are not on the networks' payrolls, but are only hired by the telenovela. Hence their jobs are far from being stable sources of income. Furthermore, in a country where the theater and the film are not nearly as developed as television, telenovelas are the actors' main source of living. The actors' survival, like that of telenovela writers, also depends on the success of the melodrama they are working in. And, sometimes, as in the case of Colmenares and the creator, Padrón, the actor's professional achievement (via the character personified) is at odds with the success of the telenovela and of the writer.

Observing every stage and locus of *Cosita Rica*'s production process, I was struck by the fascinating paradoxes of these shows, which are, simultaneously, consumed and disdained in massive amounts. In telenovelas writers, actors, directors, and producers are determined to be artists striving for perfection in a highly commercial genre, riddled with imperfections arising from the industrial pace of production. In

the case of *Cosita Rica*, this paradox was further complicated with the telenovela's political content and context.

Examining *Cosita Rica* allowed me to observe the endless search for an answer to the question that dominates and determines the telenovela genre: What does the audience want? Day after day, all those involved in the writing, production, and decision processes try to answer this question and present their bets regarding the right answer. Day after day, they read in ratings and shares how right or wrong they were and whether their wager was a winning or losing bet. This is a life or death gamble for each telenovela and for the professional continuity of its makers. This industrial process is the key to grasping the articulations between media, culture, and society. For Venezuelans, *Cosita Rica* was entertainment, reflection, and catharsis at a difficult historical juncture. As I witnessed *Cosita Rica*'s flight, I saw first hand the dialogue between television and country, and how creativity was nurtured or restricted by the reality of Venezuela's political moment.

Epilogue

In March 2005, seven months after *Cosita Rica* ended, the Ley de Responsabilidad Social en Radio y Televisión (Law on Social Responsibility in Radio and Television) went into effect. This law, denounced by Human Rights Watch as coercive and stifling of freedom of expression (Human Rights Watch, 2003), imposes severe penalties on media outlets that do not comply with its content regulations. It includes strict rules regarding telenovelas' language and storylines.

In May 2007, alleging that RCTV was a "terrorist" media outlet, President Chávez did not renew the network's 50-year-old airwave concession. Hence RCTV ceased to exist as a commercial network, while TVES (Televisora Venezolana Social), a government station, occupied RCTV's frequency in the spectrum. Since then, Venevisión, the country's only surviving telenovela-producing network, is under severe self-censorship.

Today it is impossible to produce and broadcast in Venezuela a telenovela like *Cosita Rica*.

NOTES

- 1 Briefly, Hall's (1980) "encoding/decoding" model accounted for media producers, texts, and consumers. Johnson described his model as a "circuit" and included production, texts, readings and lived cultures. Du Gay, Hall, MacKay, and Negus (1997) and D'Acci (1994) subsequently included media production, representation, identity, consumption, and regulation in their models for a "circuit of culture."
- 2 "In 1999 there were 62 hours and 27 minutes, in 2000, almost 108 hours, in 2001, 116 hours and 58 minutes. In 2002 the figure dropped to 73 hours, but in 2003 there were

- 165 hours and 35 minutes. Up until July 24, 2004, there were 87.23 hours [of presidential *cadenas*]” (Marcano & Barrera Tyszka, 2004, p. 278; my translation).
- 3 A note about typographical conventions: throughout this chapter, quotations from production participants (writers, actors, producers, and technical crew) will be identified under “participant: interview date.” Audience members’ words will be recorded under “PSEUDONYM, age.” Quotations from Internet message board and chatrooms will appear under the pseudonym “nick” for each participant.
 - 4 At the time, Brazilian telenovelas had a budget of \$100,000–120,000 per episode. In Mexico each episode cost \$60,000–80,000. Venezuelan budgets were \$15,000–30,000 per episode (Mato, 1999, p. 234).
 - 5 For an actor, working in a telenovela is like being in a year-long acting “bootcamp.” Unlike in film or theater, in a telenovela nobody knows ahead of time all the twists and turns of the plot (not to mention how these unknown factors will affect each character). Furthermore, because telenovelas are broadcast on a daily basis and are not governed by seasons (like US TV series), once production starts, there is little time for actors to plan and strategize. Personifying a telenovela character is like knitting a huge sweater in which the writer holds one knitting needle and the actor holds the other one.
 - 6 Because telenovelas occupy prime-time slots, promotions of the upcoming episode are aired throughout the day.
 - 7 The number of news stories focusing on *Cosita Rica* more than tripled those dedicated to *La invasora*.
 - 8 There is no set number of episodes for a telenovela. However, 120 episodes is the standard used in network contracts with writers and actors.
 - 9 The Avila is a mountain that defines life in Caracas.
 - 10 In addition to the main love story, most telenovelas now offer a love story between younger characters. The inclusion of the so-called *historia de amor juvenil* started as an attempt to lure younger audiences to the genre (Espada, 2004). Today these love stories of younger lovers are a staple of the genre.
 - 11 According to UNICEF, the number of *niños de la calle* in Venezuela had increased from 2,500 in 1992 to more than 8,000 in 2003, the year *Cosita Rica* was broadcast (De Venanzi & Hobaica, 2003).
 - 12 I use here the Venezuelan convention of referring to the character by his/her first name.
 - 13 The episode in which Cacique discovered the twins’ existence won 15.4 to 6.1 ratings points. On the night when Paula C.’s wedding was interrupted, *Cosita Rica* won 11.6 to 7.0.
 - 14 In three different episodes, when a character mentioned her/his concern about the existence of the Mexican psychopath, another character replied with undeniable scorn: “There’s no Mexican psychopath! Don’t believe everything you read in the press!” After that, the press stopped mentioning the “*psicópata mexicano*.”

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Distributed Creativity in Film and Television

Three Case Studies of Networked Production Labor

John T. Caldwell, M. J. Clarke, Erin Hill,
and Eric Vanstrom

ABSTRACT

This chapter will examine the systematic ways in which cultures of facilitation and “distributed creation” fuel Hollywood corporate, labor, and creative practices. The study brings together three substantial but largely invisible, ignored, or camouflaged sectors of Hollywood that are fundamentally important in the creation of film/TV screen content, yet have received scant attention from either scholars or critics: assistanting, marketing research rituals, and content development outsourcing. All three areas help constitute the industry’s production infrastructure, which can be thought of, alternately, as interpersonal and inter-organizational networks through which the task of content creation is “distributed,” or as “catalytic” sites of mediation and negotiation that are subsequently erased by above-the-line creative executives: these habitually hijack credit for Hollywood’s content creation on the basis of professional postures of managerial or personal exceptionalism.

Introduction

John T. Caldwell

The genius of the Hollywood production system for film and television lies in two interrelated workaday habits. The system excels at effectively “distributing creativity” to teams of artists and contract workers, even as it “harvests” and manages this collective idea churning into months-long and complex narratives for series television and for blockbuster film franchises. This chapter examines the ways in which the industry distributes, harvests, and monetizes creative work; and it does so through three case studies of very different industry sectors. These studies all underscore that “production” actually includes wide-ranging work practices that go far beyond the traditional stereotypes of location shoots and sound-stages. They also raise questions about the collective nature of creative work, and how this group work differs up and down the production food chain – from “below-the-line” craft workers to “off-the-set” support personnel and to “above-the-line” executives. These cases challenge production studies to think beyond physical production *per se* and to understand better how the distances, and the extent of interaction, between artists and executives are managed and how the social bonds between workers impact the film and television we experience on a daily basis.

Before considering work “outside” – or off the set – two examples illustrate “distributed, then harvested” creativity in places traditionally viewed as being “inside” creative spaces. First, distributed creativity in the prime-time writers’ room – where writer/producer teams create narratives through real-time pitching, debating, and negotiating story elements – can alternately function like brainstorming R&D (research and development), like group family therapy, or like a deadlocked jury room. This work environment has proven essential in creating large multi-episode story worlds, in part because the dozen or so writers present in a room learn their craft over time, in a system of graduated assisting, apprenticing, mentoring, and producing. Long-term teaching and modeling unfold here – that is, along with screen-writing and producing – which makes them model activities for corporate multitasking. The room survives industry-wide because successful executives have learned to monitor the chaos selectively, to glean ideas efficiently, and to channel the brainstorming economically so as to create focused high-concept screen content.

Physical production provides a second example, since traditional camera crews “on the set” also work in “teams.” Yet, unlike writers’ rooms, these crews are organized around a quasi-medieval craft-mentoring system and are managed in a military-style, hierarchical, chain-of-command scheme. Both of these disciplining measures – distributed creativity and physical production – are supported by the job-threatened IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees) unions and by management’s cost-obsessed executives, who do not want crews to “invent,” but only to “render” their expensive and risky investments. The “speak only if spoken to” rules implicit in a camera crew differ dramatically from the constant, effusive “who can

speak the loudest” group speculation that characterizes the writers’ room. If camera crews still follow a classical Taylorist/Fordist approach to distributing production work (segmented and assigned down the line, in an assembly-line fashion), then writers’ rooms follow a post-Fordist/psychotherapeutic model of simultaneity (creativity as an encounter group).

Both examples underscore why research on creativity and constraints should consider legal, economic, unionist, historical, and institutional factors – not just organizational structures or interpersonal interactions – in order fully to understand a specific culture or subculture of production. The following three case studies of collective work do just that. Each is a short essay that challenges us to compare insights gleaned from fieldwork research in Los Angeles to dominant trade discourses and popular depictions of production. Each case also asks us to think about creative work in production far beyond the on-the-set confines of the soundstage or the writers’ room, paying heed to the legions of off-the-set support workers once thought to be “ancillary.” Hierarchies, “teamwork,” and “sharing” – sometimes in tortured manifestations – are as important for production off the set as they are for production on the set. Finally, these essays prompt us to think about where creative labor actually resides now – in the digital, post-network era. Each case shows how distributed, then harvested creativity is no longer confined to the bounded worlds of crews and rooms. Now, in the age of online media and economic recession, collective creative work melds indistinguishably with “outsourcing” (Clarke), with “dues-paying” (Hill), and with “crowd-sourcing” (Vanstrom).

In the first essay M. J. Clarke contrasts popular trade theories with his industrial research on the outsourced creative workers who produce Hollywood’s newly branded ancillary content for “tentpole” mega-shows like *Lost*. In showing how studios now manage and monetize “infrequent contact” with increasingly anonymous production artists, he turns Chris Anderson’s “long tail” theory on its head, showing how the current reorganization of screen content mirrors a major reorganization of creative workers. In the second case study Erin Hill compares “insider” blogosphere communications to her own fieldwork with producers’ and agents’ assistants, painting the picture of an unruly and poorly paid office workforce, whose gendered labor and contention is only barely managed through the habitual mantra of deferred career gratification and through a culture of “dues-paying.” She is particularly good at suggesting historical reasons for the industrialization of “emotional labor” and how a culture of “suffering for *entrée*” helps keep Hollywood’s lowest paying jobs filled with an endless supply of cheap labor. Unlike Clarke’s disaggregated artists, Hill’s assistants are *not* far from the centers of power and are instrumental in creation; yet they remain invisible nevertheless. Finally, Eric Vanstrom shows how ostensibly unauthorized fan activities “outside” of the studios, in online start-ups like the “Hollywood Stock Exchange” (which cultivates sophisticated management knowledge about the film industry), have actually become more effective than “inside” studio marketing research in predicting a film’s commercial success or failure. Vanstrom’s picture – of “fans” defined through their “executive” affinities, and of box-

office competencies freely fueling Hollywood's futures markets – undercuts two scholarly orthodoxies: that fans are unauthorized subjects recreationally hijacking screen content for personal ends; and that fans are subjugated by Hollywood's market research and media's "surveillance" regime.

All three case studies show just how calculated and problematic the practices of redistributing non-union work have become to the new Hollywood. Consider that Clarke's conglomerates obsess on *reconnecting* ancillary content to mother brands by simultaneously *disconnecting* and outsourcing production work. In turn, habitual industry recriminations against the lowest paid workers transform Hill's vast *collective* of producers' assistants into suffering *individuals* – career ascetics who serve their vocational sentences. Finally, the industry easily converts the unruly "distributed intelligence" in Vanstrom's fan *hive-sourcing* into market research *outsourcing*, even as it freely hijacks and gathers fan intelligence-sharing into its marketing and business plans. Therefore all three cases involve pushing labor (its entitlements, health plans, and authorship aspirations) farther away from corporate centers, even as management ranges more widely to harvest creative ideas and intellectual property (IP) back for its screens. This trend may spur us to research distributed-harvested creativity in the executive suites and in finance and development meetings. After all, at this rate, executive teams may be among the only "workers" left harvesting ideas on the studio lot.

Aggregating Content/Disaggregating Labor in Tentpole TV

M. J. Clarke

Depending on the expert you cite, network television is either drawing its dying breath or slowly mutating into something radically new. Regardless of the description one chooses, change in the organization of work around many fictional television programs is evident. In the following pages my purpose is two-fold: first, I wish to show how network television producers in the US are currently experimenting with distributed organizational forms that are meant to capitalize on a postdigital landscape by more aggressively incorporating what Henry Jenkins (2006) has called transmedia; second, I intend to demonstrate the problems and provisional solutions raised by this important shift in creative management and its exploitation of loose social bonds. This section examines a specific mode of entertainment production, which distributes creative roles to a number of workers (a sort of limited crowd-sourcing) and across a number of platforms – a technique that I call, echoing the event-building and image-saturating strategies of the contemporary film, "tentpole" TV. What follows will then suggest some of the difficulties encountered by traditional television makers in their efforts to disperse creative responsibilities, as well as several common solutions favored by these same workers and producers of affiliated transmedia. In attempting to sketch a portrait of tentpole TV production, my section

draws on industrial and popular press representations of the world of television workers, contrasting such representations to the conclusions drawn from a series of interviews with transmedia professionals.

In early 2007, *Wired* editor and television doomsayer Chris Anderson was the keynote speaker at the annual National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) conference, where he promptly informed the entire television industry: “you don’t have megahits [. . .] the blockbuster is a diminishing part of the market as demand is distributed on a vast amount of products” (Nordyke, 2007). Here Anderson was drawing on his hugely influential book *The Long Tail* (2006), in which he discusses a “supply chain revolution” brought about by innovations in digital storage and distribution: this revolution creates an infinite amount of shelf space and an infinite range of demand, suggesting that nearly all the goods, no matter how obscure, will sell at least a few units when brought to this virtual market. The thesis of the book is that the mass of these nearly infinite niches – what Anderson calls the “long tail” – outnumbers the volume of singular mainstream hits. Thus thousands of video podcasts taken collectively do better numbers than CSI.

However, I would argue that a certain trend in television production suggests that the blockbuster isn’t dying, but in some cases may be meeting the challenges cited by those who prefigure network television’s death – and in ways not contradictory to Anderson’s own observations. In his book, Anderson also describes the vital role of so-called filters that drive demand down the long tail, to more and more obscure niche products. The filters primarily addressed are online ones, such as “user recommends” metrics on long-tail exploiting Internet businesses like Amazon and Pandora. What these examples ignore is the way in which preexisting intellectual properties can also act like filters, pushing demand down the “tail.” In fact a recent trend in network television programming – a trend I call tentpole TV¹ – follows just this tactic, exploiting the streamability of content. Streamability is a new media term, coined to describe the way in which entertainment products have increasingly been made to be more replicable, more modular, and more transferable (Murray, 2005). I argue that the use of long-tail economics does not eliminate the blockbuster in television but gives rise to this other trend that, by moving affiliated content through multiple channels, allows the filter of the brand to soak up fabled latent demand all the way down the long tail. For example, one can look to the program *Lost* (ABC, 2005–2010), which hypothetically amassed the largest share of its revenue from its traditional on-air advertising, a little less from DVD sales, a little less from online advertising on affiliated websites, a little less from the share of profits from licensed video games, a little less from licensed novels, magazines, and so on. It is not unreasonable to suspect that, by combining all of these services and products associated with *Lost*, one could construct a model of distribution not unsimilar to the long tail, with demand progressively shrinking but always present – all the way down to the *Lost* candy bar.

Tentpole TV has been accompanied by managerial creativity among television professionals, a fact lampooned in a recent *New York Times* article that began with a job announcement for a television executive who knows how to move content and

how to “shovel it onto the Internet in a way that makes money” (Siklos, 2006). Not quite as lost as this article suggests, tentpole-TV makers have actively experimented with new job roles and functions. And, as attitudes toward television’s ancillary texts – traditionally maligned both in the academic and in the popular press as the zenith of the so-called commercialization of culture – have significantly softened and as the economic fortunes of network television have shifted, a new breed of storytellers, eager to exploit multiple media channels, has been employed in key creative positions. High-profile network showrunners, from *Lost*’s Carlton Cuse and Damon Lindelof to *Heroes*’ (NBC, 2006–2010) Tim Kring, have picked up on the concept of transmedia and have used it as justification for their own increased creative presence in everything, from *Lost*’s alternative reality game to *Heroes*’ web comics. Recently National Broadcasting Company (NBC) Universal head Jeff Zucker commented upon this growing practice in the field of network TV by stating: “All of these things have to line up early on in the food chain but not drive the creative” (Wallenstein, 2008). Translated from management speak, Zucker’s comment is arguing that, to be successful, transmedia must originate in the creative writing core of a series. By more aggressively overseeing the creative integrity of a program’s off-air manifestations, the job of showrunner has evolved to “managing a brand” – in the words of *Heroes*’ Tim Kring (Kushner, 2007). This means that showrunners are responsible for more than just the writing of scripts and the editing of episodes – namely for the maintenance of an entire textual world. For example, the *Lost*-themed mobisodes (original content for cellular phones) *Lost Missing Pieces*, penned by series writers, feature brief character moments, many depicting events implied in the on-air series, or “missing pieces.” In other words showrunners must pay careful attention to the on-air program’s unarticulated gaps and ellipses – textual aporiae that can become the source of the next transmedia text. Moreover, such work necessitates the existence of a more aggressive breed of creative managers and middlemen to oversee all the expanding manifestations of the core series. For example, *Lost* reportedly relies on its accountant-turned-writer Gregg Nations to maintain a ledger on all the minutiae of the intricate series. Showrunner Carlton Cuse described the staff’s reliance on Nations’s book-keeping in a recent *New York Times* article by saying: “we quickly realized that we needed some system to keep track off all the details, that we weren’t going to be able to do that by memory” (Wyatt, 2009).

At the same time as series writers and producers have reconfigured the organization of their own work, they have aggressively reached out to an army of freelance creative workers, incorporated in a vast system of loose social bonds, to provide transmedia extensions. Considering just these sort of changes, journalist David Wolf began a recent *Broadcasting and Cable* think-piece by pondering: “What does the term ‘television mean?’” (Wolf, 2007). In the article, Wolf sees uncertainty in the future of the TV business, given the flood of new entrants and platforms. This picture of a television with shifting boundaries and with an inconsistent set of personnel echoes observations made by a certain strand of contemporary social thinkers, who have turned away from the image of a powerful “Society” to examining the much more complicated fluid arrangements of what we may call loose social bonds. These diverse sets of theorists have considered

the diminishing power of institutions to guide action (Bauman, 2000); they have more rigorously isolated the importance of individual practice in reconstituting these institutions, now fragile (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1979); and they have studied the consequences of the increasing atemporality and aspatiality of contemporary networked and individualized labor arrangements (Castells, 1996). Despite vast theoretical differences and inconsistencies between these and like-minded thinkers, all would agree that, in the social science of the past, the solidity of social institutions, of their roles, of their boundaries, and of their bonds was overstated. Tentpole TV, I would argue, with its temporary, individualized bonds between workers along the long tail, with its unclear boundaries between traditional and other new media, with its shifting and evolving responsibilities for old and emerging professions, and with its experimental textual forms, becomes a model illustration of just the sort of agglomerations referred to by theorists of loose social bonds and a set of provisional responses to David Wolf's central query.

The looseness of networked bonds plays itself out in interviews with transmedia professionals as an organizational ambivalence that wants both to pull ancillary media in close to the creative core of the series and to keep it separate. To enforce their outwardly ambivalent attitude towards transmedia, television producers as a whole have largely favored a set of industrial practices designed to minimize contact between freelancers and their on-air supervisors. In the first case television producers, in order to maximize the economics of the long tail, rely on the work of freelancers to fill out the textual worlds of tentpole TV programs – a project whose sheer volume, complexity, and associated expenses invalidates simply relying upon the work of the series staff. While in television most labor is temporary, transmedia labor, in kind, is frequently freelance and project-based, minimizing producers' obligation to ancillary creatives.

Contact with freelancers is also minimized through a system of organizational barriers designed both to coordinate the approval process and to limit feedback loops. Despite the fact that freelancers often negotiate the exclusive rights to the adapted property, they are still beholden to the internal approval processes of the original IP owner. However, television producers have largely avoided micro-management in favor of looser structures of oversight. For example, writers of media tie-in novels based on network television properties have described their process as one marked by "double approval," which refers both to these writers' distance from the creative core of the series and to the temporality of their work. In the first case, "double" refers to the fact that authors are twice removed, from series producers and writers, through a system of middlemen, be they editors or licensors. And in the second case "double" refers to the fact that the authors' work is reviewed at two key hinge points, the prospectus and the manuscript, with no contact in between. Commonly it is during the pre-production phase that transmedia freelancers receive most scrutiny. One comic-book editor of television-licensed titles described his own firm's approval process to me in a personal interview by stating:

There's usually more scrutinizing at the start because its more a matter of just making everyone feel comfortable with the direction of the story, the look of the artwork. And

once they [licensors]’re comfortable with that, they tend to trust you a bit more and don’t scrutinize to the same degree.²

Infrequent contact is also an expected mode of behavior in the affiliated video game industry. An article published by the industry website *gamasutra* vetted the advantages and disadvantages of working on licensed titles, warning: “Get used to hearing the phrase, ‘I’ll get back to you by Wednesday especially on Thursday’” (Nixon, 2006). The approval process, however, is much more complicated in the case of current-generation video games that, because of their audio and visual sophistication, have to negotiate separately the likeness rights of acting talent, in addition to securing the property license.

Contact between the creative core and freelancers is also complicated by the temporal limitations placed upon transmedia creatives, which similarly minimize contact. Typically tight deadlines often imposed by IP holders make frequent contact and confabbing simply impossible. Artists working on the *Heroes* webcomic described working on a turnaround for as short a period as five days, while media tie-in writers are typically given three months to assemble a final manuscript. And, because transmedia workers are hired per project, they too are financially motivated to work very quickly. For example, one tie-in novel writer in a personal interview explained to me: “I try to write six or seven books a year because that’s how you make a living [. . .] If you spend a year writing on an *Alias* book, that’s a recipe for bankruptcy.” Similarly, the field of licensed video games is notorious for its rapid schedules and time crunches, which often result in compromised and hurried products.

Typically, licensed texts are arranged through an advance versus guarantee model whereby an outside organization guarantees the IP owner a minimum reimbursement, a large portion that is immediately paid – the advance; the remainder will be paid through royalties on each licensed unit sold. This means that these deals are generally low risk for IP owners; the latter receive the guarantee regardless of performance. While transmedia firms, be they video-game publisher or comic-book company, bear the financial risk, they are still held in check by the potential veto power of the approval process. As a result, the organizations and the freelancers who work for them practice a very measured form of self-censorship, which ensures that their work avoids the paradoxical constraints of both repeating and contradicting the on-air series.

Without anything resembling day-to-day, face-to-face contact to ensure creative integrity, tentpole TV producers often rely on several techniques to maximize trust and to undergird loose social bonds. Workers are often selected on the basis of pre-existing inter-firm relationships and of their native reputation systems. For example, when Fox’s *24* sought to produce its own series of mobisodes, it tapped a producer who had previously filmed DVD (digital versatile disc) extras for the program’s season box sets. Frequently producers farm out hiring and other creative decisions to trusted “brokers” (Dimaggio, 1977) or “contact men” (Hirsch, 1991). For example, the *Heroes* webcomic was staffed by artistic personnel (penciling, coloring, lettering)

all affiliated with the small, Los Angeles-based comics firm Aspen MLT (Michael Layne Turner), whose own editors were in charge of hiring decisions. Reportedly this inter-firm relationship was based on the efforts of *Heroes* and of comic-book writer Jeph Loeb acting as a contact man with a prior co-collaborator – Aspen founder and comic artist Michael Turner (Tabu, 2007).

Former freelance *Star Trek* writer and inventor of the Tribbles, David Gerrold (1973), describes the impossible position of freelance writers in television: paradoxically, they have to know more about the program than its writers, without having access to production data. The question then becomes how in fact these freelancers can guide their own work with minimal contact from the series. One can assemble a set of explicit and implicit mandates given to freelance workers; but more frequently I have found that these workers act on insights given by their fandom for the on-air series. In his *Art Worlds* (1984), sociologist Howard Becker discusses the vital role that conventions play as social glue that binds together the members scattered throughout any given artistic endeavor. I argue that details arrived at through fannish enthusiasm and through repeated viewings act in a similar manner, allowing freelancers to make more or less appropriate creative decisions without intimate coordination with a program's creative core. Nearly without fail, all the transmedia freelancers I have talked to expressed at least a casual devotion to the franchise they worked on prior to employment. And fannish desire for transmedia integrity matches or – arguably – exceeds such a desire among IP holders. The convention most frequently discussed by tentpole TV freelancers is the use of character – a conglomeration of actions, attitudes, and backstory – to make decisions. For example, a freelance writer on the *24* comic minimized the importance of the real-time format in the translation of the series, claiming that it is the character of Jack Bauer who guides the series and his interpretation of it: “Jack Bauer hits at something basic that’s missing from other media. And it’s that he’s resolute . . . it’s a sort of modern interpretation on the John Wayne mythos.”³ I argue that academic media studies must take seriously these sometimes idiosyncratic, distributed industrial arrangements, their resultant practices, and their textual consequences if it is to track properly this discipline's always elusive object of study.

Distributed Assistanthood: Dues-Paying Apprentices and “Desk Slaves”

Erin Hill

This is the business, always has been and always will be – it’s called paying your dues by working long hours, taking it up the ass and not getting paid [. . .] – if you can’t hack it, then go back home, live with mommy and daddy and work at the local bank.

Deadline Hollywood commenter discussing assistant pay cut (Finke, 2009)

Blogger Nikki Finke's recent report on the pay cut planned for assistants at the newly merged William Morris Endeavor Entertainment (WME) talent agency was met with a surprisingly vicious response from her readers (2009). The reactions, which appeared on the comment thread of her *Deadline Hollywood* blog, were not surprising simply by virtue of being angry – indeed some venting was to be expected by, and on behalf of, the assistants in question, given that what was at stake was a nearly 20% drop in salary (from \$13.50/hour to \$11.00/hour). Rather the anger of the “commenters” (to use the online term) was surprising because it was expressed most frequently and most vehemently in *support* of management. Commenters applauded the architects of the pay cut while admonishing assistants that they were “not coal miners” and telling them to “sack the fuck up and deal with it,” to “grow up!! The world isn't fair . . . get used to it,” and even to “try Iraq for three years” (Finke, 2009, p. 1). These respondents further insisted that the assistants would be foolish to strike, since “in this town, walkout equals lock out” and they'd quickly be replaced by others “chomping at the bit to take their place” (ibid.).

Finke's blog, though *de rigueur* reading for many Hollywood insiders, is unaffiliated to any studio, agency, or network. Therefore it's easy to dismiss the comment dustup as a random Internet flamewar, separate from the entertainment industry proper and from its system of production. However, I would argue that the blog and its comments are very much part of the system and represent a perfect example of one of that system's most important sustaining functions: the continuous development of industrial mythology that, over time, is codified and dispersed as fact through its creative products, and by and to its members. It is this mythology that surrounds and supports the system, helping to contain and control the contributions of low-status workers – such as assistants to writers, producers, directors, agents, and executives. Despite claims to the contrary made by the industrial boundary police on Finke's blog and elsewhere, these workers are absolutely essential to the industry's products and do impact them creatively. Examining the specific mythology at the root of the *Deadline Hollywood* exchange, as well as its historical precedent, will help explain the lowly place of assistant work in the Los Angeles film and television industry and why assistants not only stand for poor treatment at the hands of employers, but are often willing accomplices in perpetuating it.

Popular shows like *Entourage* (2004–2011) and films like *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) glamorize creative industries right down to their scut workers (the assistants), and, through the hero's journey narratives, explain these industries as a world that can be navigated and mastered – if one is willing to accept that world's rules. Industry workers and aspirants who watch these types of texts see the Hollywood entertainment industry as being ordered and as making sense, when – as Caldwell points out – in reality “production cultures are far too messy, vast and contested to provide a unified code [. . .] for breaching [their] walls” (2008, p. 36). Caldwell argues that the industry self-theorizes, codifying the accumulated industrial myths into a relatively unified mythology, which keeps an increasingly divergent mixture of industrial modes from diverging completely (p. 34). This mythology is especially useful in keeping low-status, entry-level

jobs filled with cheap labor. In studying assistant work, I've identified the advice, stories, and "industrial wisdom" surrounding the concept of "dues-paying" as an overarching mythology that makes such a feat possible in this sector.

Actual assistant work is usually some combination of clerical and administrative work, personal errands, and creative/executive-level work on an employer's projects. Some actual assistants have supportive, mentoring employers and others wind up on the desks of bosses who are abusive and who assign them only unrewarding tasks. Despite this range of experiences, the mythology that has evolved around dues-paying – the process of "paying one's dues" at a low-status job in order to prove worthy of a higher status position – tends to elevate and celebrate the harshest, most embarrassing extremes of assistanthood and the most abusive, "screamer" bosses. From TV shows to chick-lit novels and to networking websites, stories of assistants completing unsavory tasks and taking vile abuse circulate endlessly. The stories might be mistaken for simple "venting," if they didn't so often carry the moral that these sorts of experiences should not be shunned but rather desired, as the trial by fire necessary for advancement. Just one example of that moral at work can be found in the how-to manual *It's All Your Fault! (How to Make It as an Assistant in Hollywood)*, which describes "assistanting" as "a purgatory" and "a rite of passage which, if suffered and surmounted, can land you in those heavenly regions beyond the pearly gates of Brentwood or Los Feliz" (Robinson & Morris, 2001, p. 14).

On the Finke blog, the necessity of dues-paying seems to be the only thing that all commenters agree on. Many times throughout the blog's 172 comments from June 16, 2010 on, assistants and their defenders qualify remarks by insisting that they know they must pay their dues, while the faction in favor of pay cut accuses assistants of not being willing to go far enough, insisting that they accept their fate, because "[t]his is the business, always has been and always will be" (Finke, 2009, p. 1). Statements like these show just how effectively dues-paying mythology contains worker dissent, since, contrary to the industrial wisdom it purports to impart, the dues-paying model of suffering for *entrée* is by no means the way "it always has been." In fact, for the first 60-plus years of the entertainment industry, this model didn't exist at all. What did exist was a sector of the workforce that was allotted low pay and low status because it was sex-segregated and feminized.

In the early days of film, the implementation of Taylorist "scientific management" meant that studios segregated work into scores of new "departments," as I detail elsewhere.⁴ This in turn produced an explosion of paperwork – an intermediate product that economists refer to as "clerical output" (Fine, 1990, p. 12). New business technologies designed to create and store this clerical output had been gendered as female, and clerical work was feminized, because women could be paid and promoted less and were thought to be more "manually dexterous and tolerant of routine" than men (Davies, 1982, p. 55). In the film industry this workforce made possible increased paper communications between various departments and the directors, producers, and executives who served by turns as managers in the developing system of production – which Janet Staiger describes in its various stages in *The*

Classical Hollywood Cinema (Bordwell, Thompson, & Staiger, 1985, pp. 128–142) – so that large numbers of films could be tracked and monitored. In this developing, large-scale system of film production, women – as secretaries, stenographers, and script girls – became the primary producers, distributors, and custodians of the clerical output without which the expanding studios could not have functioned, and they provided much needed rationality and control to the system of production by serving as the recorders, rule minders, and timekeepers of the creative process. For this they were rewarded with a salary that was competitive with those of other skilled “women’s professions” (e.g., teaching or nursing), but they had little expectation of promotion out of the female-dominated clerical ranks. However, especially at the highest creative levels of the production process (i.e., in the offices of writers, executives, directors, and producers), secretarial work at studios was not actually limited to the clerical sphere.

As Kathleen McHugh has explained, by the early to mid-1900s domestic labor had come to be associated both with the subjective, emotional, and maternal values stemming from the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity and with the rational, organized, and detail-oriented qualities encouraged after its early twentieth-century transformation into the discipline of home economics – a process influenced by Taylorism (McHugh, 1999, p. 61). The result was that woman’s identity was variously constructed as emotional caretaker, household manager, wife, mother, and detail-oriented record-keeper/organizer. These jobs were meant to be carried out with the appearance of ease, or of doing little (p. 76). Studios similarly assigned women to detail work, but they also expected them to take a managerial view of the sphere they inhabited through effortless multitasking, list-making, and filtering of information. There, too, they were called upon to use wifely, motherly, or daughterly skills to nurture co-workers, to mitigate the emotional content of messages, to communicate pleasantly, and to exercise an influence under the guise of feminine passivity, all while rendering their efforts virtually invisible through other aspects of gendered performance – such as chatter, flirtation, and gossip associated with girlish pleasure and leisure.⁵ Self-effacing, extra-clerical skills from the domestic sphere even enabled some women to expand their duties in order to better meet the needs of their employers or co-workers in film production, and in some cases they achieved a measure of creative agency despite their relatively powerless positions. Such was the case with Marcella Rabwin, secretary and later executive assistant to Hollywood producer David O. Selznick from 1932 to 1944. In the mere five pages that she devotes to her own career at the end of a memoir filled with stories of the celebrities who crossed her path, she admits to running Selznick’s offices, holding meetings in his place, composing many of Selznick’s famous memos herself, and signing his initials “as authentically as he could” (Rabwin, 2000, p. 161); but she refuses to take even the smallest amount of credit for his creative achievements. Like many successful female workers in the studio system, Rabwin achieved a kind of agency, but that agency came in part through her willingness to confine the signs of her own authorship to the reference initials at the bottom of Selznick’s memos.

The use of femininely deployed skills –by which I mean skills normally thought of as masculine, such as delegating orders to underlings, which are rendered non-threatening by a female worker when deployed with or disguised through some kind of feminine performance (e.g., nurturing) – seems to be common to successful workers in feminized, clerical-based jobs. I group these skills under the heading of *creative support* – a phrase of my own construction, which draws not only on the concept of *gender performativity* advanced by Judith Butler, where gender is constituted “through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 1990, p. 179), but also on Arlie Hochschild’s characterization of the parts of workers’ jobs in which “the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself” as *emotional labor* (Hochschild, 2003, p. 5). Hochschild defines emotional labor as labor that “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (ibid.). *Creative support*, then, represents the combination of feminized skills, gender performance, and emotional labor deployed in these different, clerical-based women’s jobs to support the movie-makers, to facilitate their creative vision, and, occasionally, to impact that vision. This phrase helps to link and explain the methods by which different female movie workers fitted themselves into the studio system by working *through* their gender in a way that was acceptable to that system.

Although the ranks of assistants in contemporary Hollywood are far more gender-integrated than those of secretarial staff in the studio era, the actual work they do is not. The official job duties of assistants have changed very little since the studio era, and the unofficial expectation that assistants offer employers self-eliding creative support subsists as well.⁶ Additionally, despite great social change since the studio era, many socially constructed, essentialist notions of men’s skills versus women’s skills remain in the minds of both workers and employers, even though the language of job ads and corporate documents is gender neutral.⁷ Therefore, though there is no such thing as a typical relationship between an employer and an assistant in today’s freelance, ad hoc entertainment industry, I argue on the basis of this evidence that assistant work remains feminized across gender. This continued feminization goes part of the way to explaining the continued low status and compensation of assistants, since pay may not have increased when men came to the field in large numbers if assistant work was still coded as “women’s work.” However, to explain how continued low wages were accepted by the new, gender-integrated generation of assistants, it is necessary to return to the concept of dues-paying.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, at about the same time as assistant work began to be gender-integrated, modern assistantship shifted from being a career separate from others in the industry – one from which workers could not expect promotion – to a dues-paying quasi-apprenticeship in which workers were primarily compensated not in money, but in training for their future profession under one of its masters. Though it goes by various other names (trainee programs, internships, assistant hyphenates), apprenticeship is common practice in unionized below-the-line film professions, so it makes sense that it has been adopted by above-the-line profes-

sionals and agents. However, the difference between an assistant location manager and a producer's assistant is that, as with any real apprenticeship, the assistant location manager's union – the 399 teamsters – regulates the length, pay, and conditions of its members' apprenticeship and determines when they are eligible for promotion and pay raise. By contrast, there are no rules governing an assistant's pay, how he or she earns it, and what kind of training or promotions he or she may receive.

In reality, assistantship hasn't changed from the days of secretarial work so much as it has been rhetorically rebranded, so as to have the appeal of an apprenticeship without offering any of its guarantees. Hence the widely varying range of pay and work experiences of contemporary assistants.⁸ The mythology of dues-paying retrofits those parts of the apprenticeship system that are most favorable to management on to those – formerly gendered – aspects of the job that are equally favorable; then it spins the new combination as being not only attractive, but a key to success in the business. The sanctioning of work conditions through dues-paying might be more defensible if the promises of the dues-paying mythology were more consistently delivered. My research has shown, however, that, far from it being the case that assistants find themselves on track to creative or executive positions after a few years on the job, there is an extremely large assistant dropout rate due to the financial, mental, and emotional strain endured by workers for up to 10 years without promotion.⁹

The dues-paying mythology makes little mention of the contributions that assistants make to the creative process. However, like the earlier studio secretaries, the assistants in my study found themselves participating in creative projects through contemporary forms of creative support, which go from proxying for, and filtering non-creative work away from, employers to delimiting creative solutions to problems (say, generating writer lists or narrowing a field of 50 scripts to the five best) and to actively generating content (such as by creating transmedia texts). The impact of an assistant's work on creative texts was not as clearly delineated as that of the work of those higher in the creative food chain, who often characterized assistanting as ancillary, or parallel to the creative process. Yet, as members of the network that creates screen content, assistants were clearly essential to the process, being responsible for a large portion of the distributed knowledge that went into collaborative efforts and quietly carrying out a large share of the development and production work that took place on paper.

Far from being ignorant of the discrepancy between their value to the system and their compensation, most assistants recognize and accept it. Though California's labor laws for working overtime are broken every day in Los Angeles, offenses are seldom reported and attempts at unionization are rare and fruitless, since, under the rules of dues-paying, complainers "never work in this town again." The assistants accept their fate because most of them believe that, if they pay their dues, they will be rewarded. And when they aren't, the mythology is in place to shift the blame from management to the assistants, for being unwilling to pay their dues. Of course, the only definite beneficiary of this policy is the industry that continues to sustain itself on these workers' backs. This helps to explain why *Deadline Hollywood* blog com-

menters with seemingly little stake in the dispute angrily champion management over labor. Whether they've transcended assistantship, are themselves assistants, or are outsiders looking in, the commenters actually do have a stake in the argument: a belief that the system is rational and that they have the ability to succeed – if only they can master it. And so they defend the system, policing its boundaries and its mythology, just as they've been mentored by television or job gossip to do. This rationalization sanctions the system, helping it contain exactly the kind of dissent that, ironically, might ultimately make it fairer and more masterable.

Sourcing Film Market Intelligence: Box Office Data, Tracking, and the Hollywood Stock Exchange

Eric Vanstrom

Together with creativity, Hollywood distributes much of the collection, measurement, and analysis of market and audience data to outside research firms. This case study examines one such firm: the Hollywood Stock Exchange (HSX), a virtual market that uses “crowd-sourcing” to aggregate knowledge about box-office gross, star power, and other entertainment “commodities.” In tracing the historical shift in box-office information from industrial secret to a widely reported and analyzed cultural topic, I argue that box-office data are the primary tool through which organizations and participants make sense of the film “market” and attempt to limit market uncertainty. HSX is then contextualized as a part of the industrial practice of “tracking” – that is, of accessing box-office potential through audience research and historical modeling on the basis of various textual variables (genre, star, director, soundtrack, etc.) and contextual ones (release date, competition for viewers from other release, number of theaters, distribution/marketing strategy, demographics and patterns of consumption, etc.). HSX's users analyze, distribute, and create market intelligence as they track production news, promotions, marketing strategies, and audience interest; in short, HSX traders are encouraged to act more like studio marketing specialists and researchers than like objects of research, subjugated by surveillance (see Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2008, pp. 282–294). HSX suggests how market knowledge and forecasting expertise are distributed ad hoc and well beyond “professional” media organizations, to knowledgeable and engaged film audiences.

However, HSX traders are also *products* of technological and economic forces that reshape all aspects the film market and media research. In particular, the evolution of digital technology and of computer networking has created exponential growth in consumer and market research industry and has shifted the amount of data available and the ways in which they are collected, analyzed, and circulated. Media fragmentation (new media delivery platforms, the disaggregation of content, and increased bandwidth) and audience fragmentation (“long tail” economics and niche audiences) have thrown traditional market and audience measurement tools and

methods into disarray. In some ways this has made audiences more elusive and unpredictable, while in other ways:

[N]ew systems of measuring media audiences, of gathering feedback from them, and of anticipating their tastes and preferences [. . .] are making it possible for media industries to fundamentally redefine what media audiences mean to them and how they factor into the economics and strategy of the businesses. (Napoli, 2008, p. 2)

HSX traders are at times unruly and unpredictable, but, as with studio executives and film marketers, maximizing profits and limiting market uncertainty is their collective mission and interpretative framework for accessing films.

Box-office grosses have always been important within the film industry, but the weekend/weekly charts as we know them today were brought on by conglomeratization of the media industries, the ever-shortening window for distributing and marketing studio films, and shifts in how box-office numbers are collected and distributed. Hollywood studios were historically reluctant to reveal financial information about their operations. Moreover, box-office data were difficult to obtain and of limited value until the late 1970s. Reflecting the classical Hollywood film market, box-office numbers were regional, unevenly compiled over time, and largely utilized by theaters in the hope of gaining any knowledge they could about the films that might find their way into their theaters. Not surprisingly, given the decline in attendance, increased competition in the media marketplace, and the development of consumer research in other fields after World War II, “the use and development of film audience research began to accelerate” (Handel, 1950, p. 4). By 1985 independent firm Entertainment Data, Inc. (EDI, later Nielsen EDI) could offer a complete national picture of box-office sales electronically, in real-time. And the speed at which box-office data now circulates has helped to reshape the film market (by front-loading almost all marketing and promotional activity in order to generate good opening weekend numbers) and labor (by turning each film release into a full-blown “branding” campaign on a global scale and continually adjusting to local market feedback).

In the contemporary Hollywood of tentpole productions and increased risk associated with every picture release, the high costs of saturation distribution and their massive marketing campaigns ramped up the need for more accurate predictions of box-office potential. And the coming wave of corporate culture and highly educated executives with postgraduate degrees in finance, advertising, and consumer goods would soon turn “tracking” into an astoundingly strategic practice that balances advanced polling, demographic-minded mapping and scheduling, and sophisticated historical models (Wyatt, 1994). Since 1978 National Research Group (NRG) has been the primary supplier of tracking information culled from random national telephone surveys and from its own historical box-office database. In the mid-1990s the development of the Internet along with massive decline in media audiences created opportunities for new research firms to compete with NRG’s dominance; these firms included the Online Testing Exchange (OTX) and MarketCast, which attempt to

reach subjects online. In 1997 NRG was bought by VNU (a Dutch publishing company), which publishes *Variety* and now owns Nielsen Media Research. Reed Business Information, publisher of *The Hollywood Reporter*, bought MarketCast soon after. The consolidation of the media research and business information industries mirrors the consolidation and globalization of media industries and audiences in general, as well as the collapsing distinctions between them, as these firms expand their reach across media and around the globe in order to offer an ever more “complete” picture of consumer behavior and of the integrated media marketplace.

In the last 20 years, tracking methodology has also shifted from controlled survey groups and telephone polling toward qualitative research informed by crowd-sourcing, ethnographic research methods, and passive electronic monitoring systems (used by Nielsen EDI and Rentrack to report box data electronically, in real time). Moreover, the availability of tracking data has also exploded, thanks to movie-related services like Moviefone and Fandango, which “harvest” site traffic, search data, and ticket pre-sales and monetize them as tracking research sold to studios and theater chains. Film-related websites, like *imdb.com* and *rottentomatos.com*, harvest tracking information by surveying visitors’ awareness of certain films and willingness to see them, producing data that is then shared with clients and partners. Some sites, like HSX, will offer the findings from these ad hoc surveys back to the online community, as a means of generating activity and traffic on the site.

Outside the film and media research industries, box-office data – and even tracking numbers – circulate widely, as part of our understanding of the film industry and popular culture. Box-office data are widely reported as items of general news and have become the ground for something of a marketing race between studios, as they compete to “win the weekend” in order to sell the film’s success as a reason to see it. In that way box-office gross is a cultural obsession and a part of the popular understanding of Hollywood movies, especially as professional film criticism fades in influence and notions of commercial success appear to be merging with ones of quality. Today, just as film distribution and marketing rely on these data to make industrial decisions about how to produce, market, and position films in order to limit risk, audiences increasingly utilize the same data to navigate their participation in the market. Arguably the prevalence of market data in popular culture and their use among members of audiences increase corporate transparency; but, as the HSX example demonstrates, box-office data and tracking information are increasingly mixed up with reflexive movie-marketing strategies and campaigns designed to cultivate niche audience, to control viral word-of-mouth promotion, and to blur the line between market data and marketing. The fetishization of box-office numbers in industrial and consumer cinematic discourse today is an excellent example of how Hollywood blurs the line between cultural/artistic production and economic/business activity.

Created in 1996, the Hollywood Stock Exchange is another interesting example. HSX describes itself today as an “integrated marketing, research and technology company driven by its patented entertainment stock market” (Lamare, 2007). This

carefully worded company boilerplate is intended to capture the multitude of practices and profit models that make up HSX as a business-to-business research service and as an ad-supported virtual market for consumers. As a “virtual stock market,” HSX allows would-be movie moguls to prove themselves in an online market that lets “traders” invest 2 million “Hollywood dollars” in Movie Stocks and Star Bonds and measures their bets as they rise and fall with each week’s box-office grosses against a pool of investors – who, according to HSX marketers, include a fair number of Hollywood luminaries. Complicating this distribution of industry analysis for fans is that HSX also wants “insiders” to play. “Insider knowledge is not only legal on HSX, it is encouraged,” claims the site. This mixing and “networking” of industry practitioners and audience is part of what makes this community unique. For these “savvy” traders, all relevant film information – such as cast and crew announcements, funding issues, production problems, marketing materials, and so on – usually affects a stock’s price. Being good at the game is, then, not easy. It requires – even from crowd-sourced outsiders – detailed knowledge of how feature film production, distribution, marketing, and exhibition are organized and operated and of how the market/target audiences are liable to react to a film in relation to developing information. In short, HSX makes the crowd think about films like studio marketing specialists or executive producers.

Markets, whether based on actual or on virtual currency, are excellent aggregators of information and very good at answering questions that have a definitive solution, like box office (Surowiecki, 2004). HSX’s “movie stocks” are pegged to a film’s domestic gross four weeks after release. Through the trading activity of users, the price of a particular movie stock offers a forecast of the box-office gross after a month in release. In that sense, the exchange functions as a “prediction” or “futures” market – that is, a speculative market that creates assets whose final value is tied to a particular event or market outcome. Anita Elberse (2005), professor of marketing at Harvard Business School, compared HSX’s forecast, as a prediction tool, with other tracking methods, and found – astonishingly – that the HSX closing price the night before a movie’s opening is the single *best* available forecast of its weekend box office. HSX is more accurate at predicting box-office results than traditional “insider” tracking methods. The ability of prediction markets to aggregate the distributed intelligence of a diverse group of “outside” traders (with different and uneven degrees of market knowledge) into an accurate forecast has stimulated the industry’s embrace of “the crowd.”

Recently a number of books and articles about prediction markets began championing the “democratic” power of networked prediction markets in terms familiar to academic cultural studies, theories of resistance, and historical theories of technological determinism. These arguments pitted the “collective intelligence” of the people and the inherent liberating potential of the “participation,” “interactivity,” and collective engagement of the Internet against the increasingly irrelevant bureaucratic old-guard “experts,” whose job is to analyze, understand, and predict market eventualities (Hubbard, 2007; Surowiecki, 2004). Not everyone is sold on this

phenomenon, however. Harold Vogel, president of Vogel Capital Management and author of *Entertainment Industry Economics* (1986), says that much of HSX is “window dressing and fluff to make people appear erudite, when they really aren’t,” but he adds that, “for the in-house studio prognosticators who make a living actually tracking film demand and adjusting marketing campaigns, HSX can be a valuable tool.” Apparently Cantor Fitzgerald, the financial services and bond-trading company that bought HSX in 2001 in the hope of turning its virtual market into a real one, recognized that potential too. Former Nielsen Media Research executive and marketer Andrew Wing was hired to oversee HSX’s market research product and to expand market partnerships for HSX. Thus HSX was conceived as a game designed to take advantage of the public’s obsession with box-office numbers and to harvest the forecast it produces as real-time tracking research, selling the data as well as ad space and promotional opportunities to film marketers, media analysts, and buyers.

Throughout its history, HSX has attempted to negotiate its competing visions of marketplace equality and information transparency for all with marketplace control and manipulation through proprietary systems of data collection and audience surveillance. For example, HSX founders, Wall Street brokers Max Keiser and Michael Burns, initially envisioned the site would “democratiz[e] the [film] financing process,” enticing virtual traders into becoming real investors in independent production (Lamare, 1996). Beginning in April 1997, HSX hoped to allow traders to invest real money in low-budget film, with breakout potential. “The concept is to democratize the filmmaking process,” explains Burns. “Why should it just be the studio executives who get to decide what movies we watch? How do they know what we want to see? And they think that we have no say, and we’re ultimately the ones that [*sic*] pay to see movies anyway” (quoted in Van der Zanden, 1997). Thus HSX was originally conceived as a film-financing marketplace that levels the playing field between producers and consumers by offering audience members the opportunity to become investors. The marketplace would do away with insider politics, nepotism, creative compromise, and other problems associated with the developing, financing, and green-lighting of a Hollywood feature and replace them with the populism of the free market. Market participants would have to put their money where their mouth is; tracking would become a pure expression of interest and personal judgment of the market (it seems to matter little whether that be construed as cultural taste or as investing acumen). Ideally a film’s potential could be judged on its own, before a saturation release would be forced onto the multiplexes and before market positioning, branding, and targeted ads/promotions would have a chance to tip the balance of marketplace equity.

More recently, Veriana Networks Inc. and Cantor Fitzgerald have used this line of argument as they lobbied the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Congress for approval of a real “box-office futures” market. Veriana’s Media Derivatives, which would only be open to professional traders, “will help better manage economic uncertainty and financial volatility,” according CEO Rob Swagger, who added that “every other segment of our economy has had a means to offset risk. The entertain-

ment industry has not had an opportunity for futures-type contracts” (quoted in Shields, 2010). Hollywood’s labor guilds and lobbying infrastructure back-lashed quickly, associating the market with gambling, suggesting how susceptible it was to manipulation, and arguing that, in a down economy, such a market would risk depressing box-office receipts further by “negatively affecting financiers’ and audiences’ pre-release perception” (Fleming, 2010). From the perspective of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), box-office futures pricing is “lacking any reliable economic basis.” Thus the fault line here is really *perception*, protecting the industry’s ability to control and predict the marketplace through distribution, branding, and marketing of individual films. The industry-wide objection to film futures markets often postures as a concern to protect the creativity, art, and experience of film. Yet the objection is also about maintaining tracking research and box-office data as relative measures of profitability, quality, and success – both within the film industry, as career capital for above-the-line executives associated with a hit film, and between media industries, as sales data for, say, a television licensing deal. In this context, rather than “lacking any reliable economic basis,” box-office futures ground, even if they don’t fully measure, many of the economic activities related to the distribution and marketing of a film theatrically and across various release windows. However, the continued focus of tracking research and box-office receipts on a single revenue stream for films in a shrinking market is rather inexplicable – unless box-office analysis and reporting are seen as marketing/promotional tools for a film’s initial release, pushing the theatrical release as a “loss-leader” (since few films make turn a profit from domestic release alone) for the 10- to 20-year life cycle of Hollywood films today.

Tracking research and box-office data are, then, increasingly necessary, accurate, and available for measuring and anticipating audiences in today’s fragmented and cluttered film market. The importance of box-office data has spread to popular culture and influences filmgoers and our culture to view films in economic terms, as notions of entertainment and quality merge with ones of profit and chart position. In this way tracking research and box-office data are a part of what Caldwell (2008) theorizes as Hollywood’s “manic disclosure/non-disclosure” of industrial information, which it makes in an effort to manage and control risk in the globalizing and fragmenting film market. In audience communities like HSN, we have seen how increased disclosure and circulation of industrial data have encouraged the audience to engage with the film industry on its own terms, collapsing the distinction between producer and consumer as a matter of interpretative and informational differences. Such disclosure also seems to have improved and sped up tracking research, as well as the ability to forecast audience behavior accurately. At the same time, the collapsing distinction between marketing and market data, the interpretative relativity of tracking research, and the limitations of box-office data in relation to the profitability of a film over time are forms of non-disclosure that obscure the market, making audiences less predictable and yet, ironically, further exposed to market research and surveillance.

HSX's virtual market and traders are caught up in this paradox; they create and use market data and production information in order to forecast box-office profits, while the site not only sells its crowd-source intelligence, but also collects data about its users' tastes and moviegoing habits, in order to sell them to studios along with its real-time tracking service. The site also sells marketing space and promotional opportunities to marketers and media buyers looking to connect with savvy, reflexive audiences on HSX (mostly middle- to upper-middle-class men, aged 18 to 45). Partly because of the industry's manic disclosure/non-disclosure, contemporary film audiences are invited to consider the film market not as cultural expression, or even as simple entertainment, but as an object of economic and cultural analysis, and themselves as potential players in this marketplace. This distances the audience from filmgoing as a cultural and aesthetic experience, making economic frameworks the arena for interacting with and understanding the film industry. In this context, the MPAA's successful lobbying efforts against box-office futures – on the grounds that they would wither traditional labor divisions, that they would kill creative autonomy, and that such a market would be subject to manipulation from those with inside information – is not only a way of putting the cart before the horse, but also a highly hypocritical one.

NOTES

- 1 An informal, expanded list of these programs would include *24* (FOX, 2001–2010), *Alias* (ABC, 2001–2006), *Day Break* (ABC, 2006), *Drive* (FX, 2007), *Heroes* (NBC, 2006–2010), *Invasion* (ABC, 2005–2006), *Jericho* (CBS, 2006–2008), *John Doe* (FOX, 2002–2003), *Journeymen* (NBC, 2007), *Kidnapped* (NBC, 2006), *Kings* (NBC, 2009), *Life on Mars* (ABC, 2008–2009), *Lost* (ABC, 2004–2010), *The Nine* (ABC, 2006), *Push, Nevada* (ABC, 2002), *Prison Break* (FOX, 2005–2009), *Reunion* (FOX, 2005), *Surface* (NBC, 2005–2006), *Traveler* (ABC, 2007), *Vanished* (FOX, 2006).
- 2 The quote here is from an informant interview conducted as part of my fieldwork for this article and of my book *Transmedia Television* (Clarke, 2012). These interviews with media practitioners were conducted over a three-year period (2007–2009) under the condition of interviewee anonymity. This quote is taken from my fieldnotes, as are all the following ones, unless otherwise indicated. For more information on this research and fieldwork, please refer to my book.
- 3 From informant interview, 2007–2009; name withheld under conditions of anonymity.
- 4 See Hill (2007).
- 5 The monthly studio newsletters at MGM, RKO and Warner Bros. at this time reflect almost nothing but this gendered performance, with descriptions of female workers focusing on how much they like to giggle or chatter while rarely mentioning their work.
- 6 I base these claims primarily on interviews conducted with 40 assistants in 2007, as well as on my own experiences working as an assistant to TV and film producers for four years. See Hill (2007).
- 7 Many interview subjects stated that, when they heard of a plum job opportunity, they would try to discover, before applying, if the employer was looking for a man or a woman,

as many employers simply believed that only women could be good assistants: they were naturally more detail-oriented and had pleasanter phone manners. It's true that there were also instances of employers (usually men) who only hired men; but the explanation given for this preference was usually related to the belief that only men could absorb the kind of abuse the employer planned to hurl at them. This seems to indicate submission – an attribute associated with women under essentialism – to be an important part of the job. Indeed, the men I spoke to rarely if ever connected acts of masculine performance with success on a given employer's desk; they named instead self-effacement, submissiveness, and endurance of detail-oriented scut work as job prerequisites.

- 8 Among the assistants interviewed, salaries and work conditions ran the gamut from safe and respectful environments with decent pay and regular hours to downright hostile, sexually inappropriate, or harassing workplaces, and work weeks of 80–100 hours without overtime (Hill, 2007, pp. 71–111).
- 9 Of the 40 assistants I interviewed three years ago, only one has been promoted to a junior executive-level position, and seven have left the industry completely during the same period.

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YouTube Stylo

Writing and Teaching with Digital Video

Alexandra Juhasz

ABSTRACT

The impact of YouTube on media production and distribution has been break-neck, immense, and seemingly irreversible. In this chapter I argue that media production professors need to embrace, and not to avoid YouTube, as if it was what the French call a *stylo*: a pen. To do so, we need to better understand YouTube and YouTube videos. I impart here some of the lessons I have learned from teaching an experimental course, Learning from YouTube, in which all the course work has been *about*, but also *on*, the site. These lessons illustrate the genres, contents, and styles of “video writing” that my students have developed to expand the reach of YouTube’s more standard and banal content. The lessons also address how knowledge of the technologies, ownership, architecture, and customs of the site can allow for careful, considered, and self-referential student work to become a critical part of this unruly archive.

Dreams of YouTube Writing

This, right here, is writing with words on paper about video on YouTube. This variety of YouTube writing uses words to call up digital sounds and images, in a scholarly prose common to the field of media studies. It is to be read on paper, in a chapter of

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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this book. However, the YouTube writing that is the focus of this chapter is a new kind of academic text (and cultural object), enabled by digital technologies that allow for video to become something akin to a pen ideally suited for expressing critical thinking about a medium within that very medium. In the second section of this chapter, I will introduce 10 writing styles displayed in YouTube videos made by my students for the course *Learning from YouTube*, which was held on and about YouTube in the Fall of 2007, 2008, and 2010. In the course, my students' videos (their sole academic assignments) examined YouTube critically by speaking through its own forms. In the process their videos, and this chapter about them, also trace the shape of the culmination of a dream: what communication might look like when it is freed from the constraints of word and page; what students might say when they are liberated by technology and enabled to speak about media, while being aided along the way by an education in video history and production as well as by critical media literacy (and also aiding them). The first section of the chapter sets the historical, pedagogic, and personal dimension of this dream of writing; the second will investigate what was realized in the student work – or in the YouTube writing – that was actually produced.

I came to teach on and about YouTube in 2007; I was both hopeful and critical. This corporately owned platform makes the most of several digital technologies in order to facilitate video production, distribution, and storage for increasingly large numbers of users who have access to a computer. While YouTube is essentially a platform for exhibition, it has taken on many other functions as well: people make, comment on, store, view, and move videos off it. YouTube holds videos and advertisements made by people and by corporations, as well as serving as host for personal, corporate, and non-profit “channels” that curate video for other users from its huge “archive” of moving images. YouTube's architecture and corporate imperatives set the standard for the conventions of socially networked video. Thus, when I say “YouTube” across this chapter, I refer to these many things, all under the umbrella of this brand. However, in what follows I am most eager to talk about less common uses of the platform, namely about YouTube as a form and forum of academic writing and education. Of course, while we were using it in this anomalous way, YouTube always also remained a larger cultural and corporate form of entertainment, revenue, and expression, and we spent a good deal of our energy trying to understand these facts by generating user-generated video about them.

Like many others (in and out of academia), I believe in the best for people-made culture, and I am certain that media literacy plays an important function in this project. Educating students as well as activist community members about making media and thinking critically about them has always been central to my work. My dream has been to participate in the production of committed media – media that rely upon, reference, and produce historical, artistic, and theoretical knowledge, committed to an articulated project of world- or self-changing. My goals for the course were similar to those of earlier projects that had focused upon writing and teaching about, and making, the committed media of AIDS activists, feminists, antiwar activists, and queers. For my class *Learning From YouTube*, our efforts

would be to understand the uses, structures, vernaculars, limits, and possibilities of a new media phenomenon and to work together to push this platform toward loftier goals than entertainment: that is, toward education, community-building, self-expression, history-making, and activism. Thus, together, we would produce contemporary media criticism using YouTube as our subject and pen (there was very little written about YouTube by scholars in 2007). Ours was a hopeful and productive use of the site, one that enabled community, critique, and control in an otherwise often resistant online environment (corporately controlled, entertainment-driven). Of course, while the technology was new, the underlying commitment to this pedagogical (and penmanship) project – to integrate media production, theory, literacy, history, and activism – has a long history in and out of the media production college class.

Thus, before I turn to what my students and I learned about using YouTube as a pen, about critically writing about a medium within that medium, I will look at the history of this older vision about media writing: “It is always interesting to review old utopian visions, as they remind us of our part in fulfilling the expectations of earlier generations,” writes Bjorn Sørenssen (2008, p. 48). He continues: “By developing new media technology there is also created a new and changed pattern of production and distribution and, subsequently, a new aesthetics” (ibid.). The 10 YouTube writing forms that follow – our new “YouTube aesthetics” – are the culmination of a century’s efforts to maximize the ease and accessibility of learning about, making, and watching moving images. Every generation, it seems, attests to the fact that that *theirs* is the era in which this wistful reverie is at last realized. “A Descartes of today would already have shut himself up in his bedrooms with a 16 mm camera and some film, and would be writing his philosophy on film,” proclaims Astruc (1968, p. 19) in his often revisited “Birth of a New Avant-Garde: The *Caméra-Style*.”

As a teacher using YouTube and related digital technologies, I join with those before me like Raymond Bellour (as well as my colleagues working today on related new media investigations), who have hoped to link technology, avant-garde production, and media literacy in the name of freedom of expression: “Everything attests to the fact that video is more deeply rooted in writing than is cinema, that it gives real life to Alexandre Astruc’s prophecy hailing after the war the birth of an avant-garde he defined as the age of the pen-camera” (*caméra-style*; Bellour, 1990, p. 421).

Many of the wistful, political, populist, or creative among us have yearned to teach media production like it is in writing: cheap, accessible, common, expressive, intelligent, analytic, aesthetic – our modernist lingua franca. On YouTube, users can write about video with video if they are so directed. Students think about the meanings of images with pictures; they contemplate the reach of sounds with noises of their own; and they engage with the power of text by using typography. Just this sort of stylo dream has been fueled by multiple politics of voice: varied hopes for democratization, radicalization, or diversification of media expression allowed by the ever expanding availability of technological tools. Conjuring his related prophecy, Bellour asserts something achingly similar for the video tools of his time: “the image is

‘written,’ in varying degrees, when its preexisting matter is modulated with the aid of various machines, as well as when it is even more deliberately conceived with the aid of a graphic palette or a computer” (ibid.).

But such visions were not solely the preoccupation of 1940s French cinéastes and 1990s poststructuralist film theorists. Several authors in Grieveson and Wasson (2008) attest that, since its earliest days, academic media pedagogy has also aspired to this same stylo – a technology, a method, and an impulse that integrate making and thinking about, or with, moving images toward critical expression or toward self-expression. According to Dana Polan (2008, p. 96), from the outset, teachers of cinema knew that

film represents the synthesis of the impulses and ideas that ran through the great humanistic tradition. If the great books moved knowledge into the realm of the spirit, the fact that cinema was art requiring very practical labor – all the techniques and chores of filmmaking – meant that it causes abstract notions to be regrounded in worldly activity.

Polan introduces the 1937 project of Scott Buchanan, who invented a liberal arts curriculum for the innovative St. John’s College that would culminate with instruction in both filmmaking *and* film aesthetics. “Simultaneously an art and a set of practical techniques, cinema represented a mediation of the mental and the manual fully appropriate to the contemporary world” (ibid., p. 115). In the same anthology, Michael Zryd (2008) convincingly argues the same idealistic project for the *next* generation of media educators. He explains how experimental filmmaking of the 1960s was housed, cultivated, and encouraged via an academic film study committed to personal and sometimes radical expression. Quoting from a 1960s report on film education by O. W. Reigel, Zryd paints the film school of that era as organized for “the individualist young man, usually with a ‘literary’ (verbal) orientation, who has an urge to express his personality and ideas. In the absence of the film medium, he would probably be writing stories, novellas and poems” (ibid., p. 194).

But, these exemplary early efforts aside, I’ll suggest that, before YouTube (and related web 2.0 video technologies), there were only (or mostly) stylo dreams deferred. For reasons pragmatic, institutional, economic, and professional, to integrate the hands and the head in one media studies classroom or project proved to be the exceptional, if always glaringly obvious pedagogic project. In the mid-1980s I slunk up the elevator, renamed course credits, and lied to administrators to access the *verboden* realm of video cameras and their teachers on the 9th Floor of New York University’s Production Department – while I was earning my PhD from the scholars of Cinema Studies housed on the 6th. As continues to be true to this day for those who wish to integrate media theory and production (and perhaps activism, too), I had to write a full-length doctoral dissertation on AIDS activist video even after I had completed, in 1990, an award-winning documentary about women and AIDS, funded by the New York State Humanities Grant and widely distributed – *We Care: A Video*

for *Care Providers of People Affected by AIDS*, 1990, about which I wrote my first scholarly book, in 1995 (*AIDS TV: Identity, Community and Alternative Video*, 1995).

“The divide between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ has often been a sharp one,” writes Gill Branston (2000, p. 24). His article is one of several attempts to answer this puzzling question about our bifurcated field, in the first section in *Reinventing Film Studies* – an anthology with a title noticeably similar to the that of the book about the history of academic film studies previously mentioned. Branston continues: “Theory, in the most distasteful extremes, [is] the haughty downlooker on practice, history, the everyday, secure in its self-proclaimed possession of totalizing accounts . . . Without such objective knowledge, it was implied, practice was benighted and ignorant” (p. 24). In the 2000 account of the discipline’s invention our pen dream is thwarted, because it is too closely related to ideological visions – visions of Russian constructivists, feminists, people of color, and Marxist politicians bent upon making things that could actually be used for social change – to be associated with a new academic field in search of institutional sanction. My own doctoral AIDS project raised just the fears that Branston suggested when I sought to bring both safer sex politics and community video-making to traditional cinema studies. Such ideological commitments to community and identity building within a social justice framework evidenced in my work are often, although not always, behind similar pedagogic projects that link media literacy and production.

So, again, outside one-offs like my own 1980s camcorder AIDS work within academic cinema studies, our techno dream awaited its moment, its machine, its real home: YouTube, the Internet, the digital – at least according to a special section of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies’ *Cinema Journal* – a section devoted to “Digital Scholarship and Pedagogy” (McPherson, 2009). Here several authors, including myself, make the now familiar case that *ours* is, at last, the moment for a radical, integrated media pedagogy; that this is the time, at long last, for *video writing*. John Hartley (2009, p. 140) begins by explaining why “knowing and doing” have been split, why our stylo has been continually deferred until now:

The tradition of modern scholarship – now some centuries old – has tended to favor the abstraction of knowledge from action in order to develop explicit rather than tacit knowledge [. . .] In the Industrial Revolution, for instance, “workers by brain” were abstracted from “workers by hand,” white collar from blue, art from artisans, design from fabrication, knowing from doing.

He ends by announcing that our age transforms media pedagogy “from representation to productivity,” where “the most important change is that the structural asymmetry between producers and consumers, experts and amateurs, writers and readers, has begun to rebalance. In principle (if not yet in practice), everyone can publish as well as ‘read’ mass media” (p. 143). While past dreamers were certain that *their* newest technology – 16 mm camera, VHS camcorder, digital Hi8 – was at last small enough, cheap enough, and user friendly enough to finally become the pen,

we attempt yet again to assert that it is our generation's *home computer* – an even cheaper machine that houses words, as well as images and sounds, cameras and microphones – that is the most real deal. In her contribution to *Cinema Journal*, Anne Friedberg (2009, p. 150) agrees, but she ends with an important challenge:

We are now able to write with the very images and sounds that we have been analyzing. But even if we have the technical ability to quote and cite and embed moving images/texts/archival documents, will every media scholar want to follow the Godardian imperative and “write” with images and sounds?¹

Well, now that you ask . . . no. Interesting: Friedberg is right! Not *every* media scholar is writing (or teaching) with images and sounds (while, of course, many are engaging in their own pedagogic projects, which “write with images and sounds.”) So why do some take this on, and others not? Currently, most scholars of media are trained in words about images and are taught that they need distance from the object we study. But, ready or trained or not, we’ve been awarded the pen, and the question is, what will we do with it? How will we teach with it? Will we write with it? And won’t our students so compose, whether we teach video writing or not? Educators have certainly begun to incorporate YouTube into their classrooms (and, since my 2007 YouTube pedagogic project, many more professors and students have experimented in migrating their studies, writing, and pedagogy to the web). However, most of contemporary YouTube pedagogy employs the site as an easily accessible archive of illustrative clips (a good use, to be sure, but a limited one). A slide show, not a pen. Interestingly, media production education has also been slow to embrace YouTube, perhaps because the vast majority of what can be found there is almost diametrically opposed to the specialized standards of form and quality that have been developed across the discipline’s history. So we still teach the tried and true way – write on paper, cherish the ink pen, make high-quality PBS documentaries, fetishize our professional quality machines – while the world outside our classrooms, including our students, flocks to amateur user-generated content.

Our students were raised within the digital, and they come to class with a digital stylo in hand: making and watching media about media every day. This they’ve learned at home through how-to videos, digital versatile disc (DVD) extras, mainstream media that mocks but also uses amateur efforts, and scores of repeatable “fan vids” (that is, fans’ name for their voluminous online practice) networked on YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace. “In this respect, the computer fulfills the promise of cinema as a visual Esperanto – a goal that pre-occupied many film artists and critics in the 1920s,” writes Lev Manovich (2001, p. 79). “Indeed, today millions of computer users communicate with each other through the same computer interface. And in contrast to cinema, where most ‘users’ are able to ‘understand’ cinematic language but not ‘speak’ it (i.e., make films), all computer users can ‘speak’ the language of the interface.” Until recently, media literacy has primarily focused on understanding the ideological underpinnings of media (how to read

it) over the practical, formal, and political concerns about how to make it, given how hard that has been.

This is why my students' efforts to understand YouTube within YouTube are so useful for proponents of a critical media literacy. Their writing on, about, and with YouTube – their banal and daily acts of “speaking the language of the interface” – can teach us how to think about instruction within and about video 2.0: an accessible tool for inscribing personal, artistic, and intellectual reflections. I will suggest that media production professors (as well as media scholars) need to embrace, not avoid, YouTube and that, in so doing, we can also work to improve it by helping to contribute to its sea of mostly mediocre and uncritical products a new stream of smart and critical student work. By expanding our teaching methods to account for this new forum as well as for the forms it supports, we can also contribute our “expert” knowledge about teaching media production in addition to the vast multitude of discourses available on the site and across the Internet. Furthermore, by encouraging our students to produce “quality” work that can also succeed under the specific parameters of the site (which are quite different from those that organize the other places where student work has typically circulated), we can affect YouTube itself, as a source of media education as well as of distribution. School-learned knowledge of the technologies, ownership, architecture, forms, and customs of the site can allow for careful, considered, and self-referential student work to become a critical part of this unruly archive.

As more and more media are produced, viewed, and distributed in the format of short, intense videos on YouTube, I will conclude that it is imperative that our students become digitally literate as readers, critics, and writers of this contemporary – and perhaps dominating – trend in new media, and that we are most qualified to teach them to write with the digital stylo, even as we must remain equipped to learn. In a world – and in a medium – where the differences between amateur and expert blur, I will hold on to my knowledge and experience as a video production professor and media scholar, even as I understand that I have much to learn from the “digital natives” of today's media, writing as they will, at last (and hopefully with the teachers' help and participation), with a YouTube stylo.

Forms of YouTube Writing

In my integrated media studies and media production course Learning from YouTube, I have been interested in participating with my students in primary research about online video.² We study (while participating in them) the forms and functions of this particular poster-child for web 2.0 by investigating digital video with video. Engaging the site together against YouTube's primary aims of entertainment, we write online, on YouTube, about the limits of its corporate architecture, as we also examine our own needs as new media makers, users, and learners. For the class, students are

required to do all their course work as either YouTube videos or comments. In the process, we rework academic writing (video serves as the only permitted format for traditional “papers”) for the digital classroom. In this section I will introduce the 10 new forms of academic video writing that my students invented or assumed in their work during the 2007 and 2008 classes: public writing, isolated writing, amateur, entertainment, reflexive and convergence writing, visual, chaotic, control, and censored writing. I will offer examples of each form from my students’ huge output of work for the course. Needless to say, describing their work on paper pales against seeing their critique of YouTube on YouTube. For this reason I have included the URLs in notes.

I developed these 10 categories while trying to systematize my students’ work, and their work came from trying to systematize YouTube. Thus my categories often point, simultaneously, both to my students’ work and to YouTube video more generally. That said, I will only look to my students’ videos, using their inventive projects to draw out the terms for effective academic communication with a YouTube pen. While each of these stylistics can be found within traditional expression through writing and through the media, I suggest that they are modified, hybridized, and amplified in my students’ online academic video writing in ways that serve to demonstrate the current state of video within web 2.0, as well as how we might best teach it. As you will see, some of these “writing forms” are focused on larger social issues (public/private, amateur/expert, for example), while others are more aesthetic and formal (reflexive, visual, and so on); and some of the terms encompass the social and pedagogic experience of the class (on YouTube and off), while others are much more focused upon understanding the aesthetics of the class’s output. Needless to say, pursuing this close and complex relationship between style and content, form and ideology is defining for my practice, for the dreams of media literacy it is founded upon, and for the course itself. Thus, as I look at my students’ writing, I will aim to raise not just the relevant aesthetic and textual issues but also the social, institutional, and political ones that writing with YouTube encompasses – including the relationship with larger questions of media architecture, ownership, industry, and power, which was brought to our attention through the process of learning from within a corporately owned social network.

There are the three overarching styles used with all 10 forms of my students’ video writing. The first is word-reliant. In this academic form, the user writes a more or less traditional paper and reads the words on to video. Notably, this variety of writing allows for the expression of the most complex meanings and for the construction of the least interesting videos. Words that travel straight from paper to video take up too much time and are too didactic for YouTube’s vernacular of speed and condensation. The powerful expressive capacity of the image is also denied. Particularly at the beginning of each semester, many of my students would read papers to the camera, or even type them as a scroll onto the screen. Next – probably the most common and arguably the most successful form for our purposes – is the illustrated summary, composed through the bullet-pointing of more detailed ideas, which are then cut to

images from YouTube as evidence. This is YouTube as PowerPoint, and it's a method of communication we are already familiar with. Here the student reads or writes a list of short ideas and uses YouTube videos to illustrate them. Finally – perhaps my favorite, and certainly the most creative form – is the YouTube hack, where academic content is wedged into a popular YouTube vernacular mode, making its argument through an integrated approach, which occurs in both form and content. An example would be a video about advertisements on YouTube, expressed through the form of a popular YouTube advertisement. Beside these common formats, I also note the ubiquitous use of two more common tones and structures across my students' 10 forms of writing: parodic humor and self-reflexivity. Given the ubiquity of these two approaches, my students will still sometimes pull the unexpected power play of sincerity, which creates productive tension with YouTube's expected cynicism, humor, and self-reflexivity, and does so in ways that define the site.

Public Writing

- ALEX JUHASZ: We're recording! If you don't want to be seen on YouTube for this class, you should know we're recording, so you might want to be behind this area over here. You're going to be on all semester.
- STUDENT: It's so awkward.
- JUHASZ: You're in the shot.
- STUDENT: I know!

(Learning from YouTube: September 4, 2007, Pt. 1)³

Web 2.0 technology has altered human behavior, interaction, and communication in more ways than I can introduce here. Of greatest relevance to this consideration, however, is one particular and much noted phenomenon: the digital's influence upon the increasingly open nature of private life. On Facebook, YouTube, and the like users ubiquitously and unflinchingly post for social scrutiny images from the realm of home and family, once thought to be private. In his book on YouTube, Michael Strangelove (2009, p. 33) explains: "Whereas much of the home movie-making of the analog era was guided by a desire among filmmakers to show themselves to themselves, we now stand witness to a growing compulsion among online videographers to show themselves to the world." However, as publicity-seeking YouTubers readily make use of the recognizable, tried and true do-it-yourself (DIY) forms of home movies or family snapshots, things change when their new practices modify these forms' traditional locale. On YouTube, conventions for both the content and the use of the home movie have changed. Strangelove clarifies the differences: "The home movies of the 1970s generally did not focus on unfamiliar people, death, arguments, use of the bathroom, vomiting, and sexual intercourse" (p. 29).

On YouTube, home users train their camcorders on people, activities, and behaviors that used to fall off the radar of the permissibly visible: on parental drinking and

fighting, on soldiers' views of war zones and abuse against civilians, on the internal life of college classrooms. When the private becomes public, the focus of students' work also adapts. "In the hands of teenagers the camera becomes a tool for rebellious and transgressive behavior" (p. 49). In this vein, many of my students gladly show themselves and their peers on YouTube in compromised positions: under the influence of drugs or alcohol, engaged in sexual flirtation, titillation, or interaction. For instance, in "Picture of America (Hilarious Drunk College Students)," by CollegeKnowledge,⁴ my students ironically suggest that the "Future of America" will be in the hands of drunken college students: "What would you do if you were president?" "Legalize marijuana, end the war in Iraq, subsidize the refining of glass." While student video-makers have always pushed envelopes of propriety, this used to be visible only within the small community of the classroom. How does this radical public openness affect the teaching of video?

Usually (or at least ideally), the exclusive liberal arts classroom where I work depends upon an intimate and "safe" gathering of high-paying (or scholarship receiving) and carefully selected students to create a communal pedagogy. In my typical Pitzer College classroom, once the doors are closed, students are asked to contribute their interpretations and sometimes personal experience or knowledge to the class community, being always aware that they are not professionals but are certainly experts in training. Students, often feeling vulnerable in the eyes of their classmates and of their esteemed professor, are challenged to add their voices to the building dialogue – one in which they are active, continuing members. Meanwhile, aware of the power dynamics that structure the classroom by allowing some to speak with comfort and others not, I engage in strategies designed to alter the "safety" of the space. After leaving the classroom, students write for the professor, and sometimes to each other; but the general public is neither their audience nor their critic. The classroom's privacy and possibilities for mutuality encourage the development of a voice.

In this dynamic it is odd for a professor to make *her* work public. And yet I began this class – planning for its structure to imitate my understanding of YouTube's – with a press release. Picked up by a local newspaper (as I anticipated it might), this went onto the Associated Press (AP) wire (which I did not anticipate), and then the course was covered in print, radio, television, and across the Internet for about two wild weeks. While initially thrilled by such media exposure, the students quickly tired of the mainstream and digital media, which, while quick to judge, were astoundingly superficial in their coverage. Needless to say, lofty (and time-trusted) pedagogic dynamics shift when the world can see – and also participate in – the work of classroom learning. What does it mean to ask a novice to learn in public, or for a teacher to do the same? When students "write" on YouTube, their efforts at developing a voice are open to public scrutiny and to YouTube's sandlot culture. Many viewers of my students' (first) videos responded with nasty comments telling them to "learn to use a tripod" – not to mention the ubiquitous personal attacks, which were almost uniformly made against women, people of color, or those perceived to be gay or lesbian simply on account of the act of speaking as themselves, visibly on the site.

While making the class and its assignments publicly available serves to increase access to higher education and expands the limited participation within any brick and mortar classroom, it is vital to note how the disciplining structures that safeguard and control learning in a closed classroom – or a paper written for course work that will circulate privately between teacher and student – no longer function. In their absence, such confinements become both surprisingly visible and unusually desirable to students. For instance, the compact (and grades) of a closed classroom insure that all student participants are (relatively) committed and attentive. This is unenforceable in a YouTube classroom. Given these conditions, it was fascinating to see my students bent upon re-establishing the privacy of their classroom by using YouTube to create protected group pages, for instance, thereby holding out the curious and insulting public that I had initially invited in. This is only the first example of their efforts to bring discipline to a class where I had given it away, in my efforts to expand their voice and control in ways that I thought were mirroring the user-generated platform we were studying.

Thus this new public video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of control, sexism, voyeurism, censorship, and self-censorship. America's definitive structures of public and private, profit and non-profit education also come to the fore, which allows for a meta-focus upon how the systems of higher education at large, and the college classroom more specifically, organize and control both student output and teachers' attention.

Isolated Writing

In "MS130 Want Some High School Musical 3? Watch till the End!"⁵ the student video-maker whose YouTube user-name is ziliemd begins with the inter-title "3 steps to become a YouTube Guru! Nov 2008 . . . Input: an ordinary guy . . . And the transformation begins . . ." We watch as this mild-mannered Chinese college student, in classic to-the-camera, video blog (vblog) shot, begins his online presence, then, cut to "step 1," he takes on costumes and attitude, seeking more fame and attention, and, cut to "step 2," adds "entertainment elements," lip synching with a friend, to elevate the fun even as the class assignment is to do the serious work of explaining the academic book *Serious Leisure* (Robert Stebbins, 2006). Thus ziliemd expertly produces in video form the kinds of practices that Stebbins introduces in writing.

In same-time counterdistinction and close connection to the public writing mentioned above, much YouTube writing, while openly presented to the YouTube public, is produced in and about isolation and in the hopes of finding community. The lone and lonely individual speaking to the computer camera in her bedroom – the video blog – is a definitive form of the medium. While it is highly debated (on YouTube and off) whether networked pleas for friends through the expressions of the individual and unique self can produce the desired effects of community's sustained interaction, recognition, mutuality, shared goals, and connection, it is clear that a

great many YouTubers write videos from the seclusion (and safety) of home and with some hopes of departing this place: whether this be to find fame or simply a friend. What does this portend for the teaching of YouTube writing?

Interestingly, the voice of the written text (like mine here) is typically not particularly self-conscious about its solo status (why, oh why, am I typing here alone . . . woe is me). Meanwhile, the solo YouTube writer is visually framed as a face alone, in the private sphere, and is just as often verbally preoccupied with her isolated condition. In “MS130 Want Some High School Musical 3? Watch till the End!” ziliemd literally adds a friend to his second and third shots, to reflect visually (and to increase it, because the shot is more interesting) the possibility of making friends, or at least of having more viewers. While writing with the intention of self-expression is as defining for the written medium as it is for the vlog, it is the purpose (and possibility) of actually interacting with others eventually, in almost real time – although often in less than real space – that most distinguishes these various writing forms. And yet, counterintuitively, a good deal of isolated YouTube video seems to be meaningless, silly, or egotistical ruminations on self – hardly a calling card for further interpersonal interaction. Interestingly, video art, too, has been long censured for being a “narcissistic” mode: a technological mirror allowing the self to interact solely with itself, in an endless loop of absorption and fascination. On YouTube we merely see a democratization of this effect. “The biggest content category is occupied by the ‘ego clips,’” writes Bridgit Richard (2008, p. 145) in the first anthology of critical essays on YouTube. “They excessively serve the narcissistic self representation of the users. In this category a wide range from shy monologues to visual self-prostitution are [sic] to be found.”

Of course, as is often true for YouTube, the reverse of narcissism is equally defining for its forms: the lonely video-maker looking outward, making sincere and humble stabs at communication, a lone voice waiting for recognition in the wilds of the internet. While the lucky few do break out to be heard around the world (as our class did), most YouTube videos suffer from “NicheTube’s” guarantee that no one will actually find, see, or hear you in the uncharted and unruly sea of similarly useless attempts at communication and self-expression. Given YouTube’s reliance on votes, ranking, and other forms of popularity engineered through its search and rating functions, the random thoughts of lonely girls usually go unfound and unheard. Thus, isolated video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of self-expression and community, particularly within a corporately run architecture that allows for the most outlandish to have the best chances to be seen.

Amateur Writing

In one long take, shot in a dorm room, with a white board sloppily tipped against the wall behind him we see a student who says: “This is my video post: what can YouTube teach us? [. . .] I will do some teaching of my own. I’ll teach you a little about myself

in a segment I call '5 things about Ben!' This is the '5 things about Ben board.' We'll begin with 'V-card.' I lost my virginity at 16. I'm not sure that's appropriate but I'll go with it."

(What YouTube Can Teach Us: bhecht84)⁶

The vblog is a hallmark of YouTube and a seal of amateur writing: a word-reliant format that uses the author's computer or other home devices to capture her talking in something close to real time, most often about herself (see isolated writing). Visibly (and aurally), the media production of a lay person who makes the most of consumer technology, the guarantees of production expertise, or a college education in media production (careful lighting, clear and complex sound, artful framing, story management and development) are lacking – by definition, and even by design. While bhecht84 has the skills and education to make artful ruminations for his other classes, for Learning from YouTube he produced the intentionally messy "What YouTube Can Teach Us," because his use of "bad" form permits his use of "bad" taste (see public writing); all of this comments, via form, on his understanding that YouTube loves how people talk about their inane and trivial private experiences: "I lost my virginity at 16."

Amateur writing is the easily recorded, unedited words of real people talking into their low-end cameras about their private pleasure or pain, or perhaps demonstrating their exceptional or laughable skills. Everything they *don't do* marks the veracity of the form. On YouTube "crude is cool, as opposed to slick" (Sherman, 2008, p. 162). The bad but cool video of YouTube holds itself in direct opposition to the hot and professional, the other most common vernacular of the site. In the media production classroom we teach video-making *en route* to professional standards and methods: an expensive, collaborative, skilled practice where form is either transparent or carefully figured. This is the antithesis of the developing YouTube vernacular where

[t]he use of canned music will prevail. Recombinant work will be more and more common. Collage, montage and the quick-and-dirty efficiency of recombinant forms are driven by the romantic, Robin Hood-like efforts of the copyleft movement. Real-time, on-the-fly voiceovers will replace scripted narratives. Personal, on-site journalism and video diaries will proliferate. On-screen text will be visually dynamic, but semantically crude. Crude animation will be mixed with crude behavior. Slick animation takes time and money. (Ibid., p. 161)

Amateur writing celebrates and foregrounds its formal inadequacies. In this way YouTube is not really a level playing field. By reifying the distinctions between the amateur and the professional, the personal and the social, the bad and good, in both form and content, YouTube maintains (not democratizes, as it insistently proclaims) distinctions about who really owns culture even as more people can make it. In the meantime, amateur writing has itself become a legitimate form of dominant video production. Contemporary corporate media often fakes amateurism in hopes of gaining what amateur video is thought to hold: authenticity, individuality, realness.

“The misleading ‘ideology of authenticity’ as a cultural consensus is based on the poor quality of the recording tools with their low resolution, as well as the presentation in small windows on the computer screen, which conspire to create ‘a look of everyday life’” (Richard, 2008, p. 143). When students self-consciously use or mimic this convention (as bhect84 did so artfully), it carries this (short) history of meanings and customs.

Thus this new, amateur video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of the relations between both professional skills and thought-through simplicity, as well as how these forms are used in relation to open-ended questions of personal authenticity and corporate legitimacy. Teaching amateur writing within the history (and changing standards) of DIY media forms is a good place to start, putting demands on the students to speak to each other in this way: exacerbating and highlighting difference and status (of women, foreign students, or working class students) who must speak as themselves, even if their vernaculars and homes mark disparities.

Entertainment Writing

“Gimme gimme more,” sings Britney Spears, as this song comes up for sale from iTunes at the bottom of a YouTube video where a male and female student wear outlandish wigs and sunglasses while gorging themselves on buckets of chicken, handfuls of burritos, and shopping carts full of chips, junk food and candy. Britney sings her refrain, “Gimme gimme more,” while the videomakers enact and then reverse their gluttony and purge all they have digested. The pop music track stops briefly, only at video’s end, as we see a car full of these hungry fast food junkies, and our male lead says to the intercom: “Can you give me more special sauce? Can you give me ketchup and mustard? Can you give me a napkin? Can you give me pepper?”

(Britney Spears Uncensored Dancing and Eating: jweitzel)⁷

Today’s middle-class students, schooled at home (and on the road!) on YouTube, iPhones, and Britney Spears (“gimme more”), want *more* information relayed with *more* ease and fun and plentitude; they want it pleasurable, simplified, and hilarious. They don’t want to be bored, even as they are always distracted. On YouTube, the rule is to be entertained with video, and more of it! This occurs through forms that are readily accessible, short, and easily identifiable: like pop songs. There should be no work expended to “get” a video. Thus entertainment writing is often both about, and made with, the ripped or imitated forms of already recognizable mainstream (or YouTube) media. It is writing about and through dominant diversions. It can also take up the amateur forms of comedy or spectacle, which celebrates or parodies the exceptional or standard behaviors of real people (like YouTuber jweitzel’s vomiting chicken) or pop stars. The point is to laugh, feel, and recognize – quickly and with a punch. My students’ video, relying as it does upon the song as well as upon the persona of Britney Spears, uses her highly recognizable work to provide a short-hand into their critique of consumer pop culture. The artists themselves say almost

nothing; and we get it immediately. In his contribution to the *Video Vortex Reader*, video artist and writer Tom Sherman prophesizes what I call *entertainment writing*: “Extreme sports, sex, self-mutilation and drug overdoses will mix with disaster culture; terrorist attacks, plane crashes, hurricanes and tornadoes will be translated into mediated horror through vernacular video” (Sherman, 2008, p. 162). The bulimic dance of jweitzel is exactly Sherman’s extreme.

Schooled as they are, contemporary students believe that even college should speak in this extremely entertaining language, which they already like and know and deserve. A good professor makes “hard” information understandable, palatable. While I have always been aware that I am a performer, I feel this to an unparalleled degree when I teach or write on YouTube. There I need to be quick and forceful, condensing my ideas into slogans: bite-size morsels of edification that are easily regurgitable. YouTube is not a place for the complex, deep, slow, or hard – which was once understood to structure the life of the mind, the work of the artist, the experience of the counterculture, the ways of the classroom. While students have often taken pleasure in the rigorous work of learning, entertainment writing is not founded on such delectations. Rather it feeds upon YouTube’s staple ease, plentitude, and self-referentiality. Thus entertainment video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of the easy and ready pleasures of the expected, comfortable, and consumable as well as of how easy these are to eliminate.

Reflexive Writing

Using only still frame grabs of the site as visuals, we hear this commentary: “YouTube provides a prime example of how the content that we as a society create is shaped largely by the forms and rules of the medium that we use to share this content. For instance, the restricted comment length and poor archiving features for YouTube comments has contributed to the prevalence of short, often inflammatory comments . . . Decisions made at the corporate level for purely capitalistic reasons effect the medium in terms of content that appears on the website.”

(What Can YouTube Teach Us? baxteric1)⁸

Videos about two things – about YouTube videos and about corporate entertainment media – have become the hallmark of YouTube. Making such videos is reflexive writing. But this kind of writing is also entertainment writing, because it is almost always fun, in a postmodern way . . . It makes YouTube its content as well as its form and method – since, as I’ve already established, a significant amount of the content and form of YouTube is entertainment. This creates a dizzying hall of media mirrors – videos quoting, mashing, and copying other videos – and then, as in all things reflexive, there are two possible results. The first is heightened self-knowledge; the second is an abyss of unknowing. These binaries (like most others) coexist on YouTube and have a mutual influence. Knowing more about YouTube allows for an

awareness of its common state of unknowing, itself a form of cynical and cyclical entertainment.

Many YouTube videos take YouTube as their subject: for instance its community, or rules, or censorship. YouTubers contribute to all manners of video studies about the site, using other videos as both evidence and substance. My students' course work for "Learning from YouTube" is a prime example of this tendency: the site holds their videos, which are its critique, built from other YouTube videos; and these are then covered by other media or YouTubers, and those stories are ripped and put back onto YouTube, where users respond again. Even in our case (an example that starts with YouTube reflexivity and leads to self-knowledge), we see how quickly "the real" dissolves into nothing more than an awareness of YouTube's knowledge of itself alone. We fall into an abyss where YouTube refers back to nothing but itself, and we are part of this loss or transformation. We become a necessary but unmissed casualty to a richer and endlessly self-referential and self-fulfilling life online. Thus this new and reflexive video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of the real in relation to the ready pleasures of its loss, while also helping students to understand the (artificial) limits of the site and of the media it holds.

Convergence Writing

We see images ripped from the internet over which text reads: "How does YouTube function within other webmedia? Example: Googlemaps. Users can create content like pictures and video. Here's what I found when I typed in Japan." We see stills of cherry blossoms, a subway map, a sports car, and a neon-lit street. "It's still hard to connect information and create real dialogue or learning, especially because you can find things like this . . . " We see a YouTube video of a baby singing "Hey Jude" with a guitar in hand.

(YouTube in Context: kimballzen)⁹

Convergence writing is a more mobile and adaptable form of reflexive writing. As Henry Jenkins (2006) points out, the new media allow for expression that gains in impact by moving across platforms while building upon the power of ready-made memes already encrusted with meaning (and ownership). Convergence writing moves on and off YouTube quickly and sometimes virally, picking up other forms, just as a snowball does: subway map, "Hey Jude." While Jenkins argues for the revolutionary power of this rapid and free movement, after reading him and also researching on YouTube, my students and I were less sure; see kimballzen's comment that connection, dialogue, and learning are less easy to secure than the accumulation of user-added stuff. Thus convergence video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of the many sites, forms, and languages of new media, particularly as students make their YouTube writing about

other forms of writing (*Star Wars* yields the fan fiction that is the subject of “Media Convergence *Star Wars* Fan Fiction,” written by my student, wtto2005;¹⁰ there wtto2005 looks at fan fiction.net and discovers on its *Star Wars* page that, while there are 795 pages of fan fiction, one finds only 56 pages through ratings).

Visual Writing

Over one quickly edited minute and covering the Avril Lavigne’s hit “Girlfriend” we see video of: cute kitten, a train ride, women mud wrestling, the Girlfriend music video, a baby laughing, a unicorn animation, and some Soulja Boy dance instruction. The video concludes with text: “YouTube is changing society and now society is changing for YouTube, have we been tricked?”

(Everything People Love about YouTube: edauenhauer)¹¹

Visual writing depends on images linked through rhythm and related sounds. “Hey hey, you you, I don’t want your girlfriend” plus cute kitten. It does not depend upon written words, as the writing of old did. “Hey hey, you you, I know that you like me” plus train. Its 500-character limit and sandlot culture produce a dumbing down for the written word that is structurally impossible to remedy. “Hey hey, you you, I could be your girlfriend” plus mud wrestling. Here the limits of the site’s architecture hit against its corporate conditions: songs and beats, the more popular and recognizable the better to hear you with (plus baby laughing). So the way to be heard on YouTube is through video (music video). Being another category of entertainment and reflexive writing, this style banks upon the amusing stylistics of montage, appropriation, and parody. Meaning is quickly lost to feelings that are buttressed by the sound of music and cut to the speed of Final Cut Pro (or other home editing software, including YouTube’s). What “people love about YouTube” is how easy it is to make and see and understand. Relying both on spectacle and on humor, visual writing is also, counterintuitively, the terrain of the expert; for it is highly dependent upon corporate popular media, even (or especially) as modified by “amateurs.” Corporate videos express ideas about the products of mainstream culture in the music-driven, quickly edited, glossy lingo of music videos and commercials. They consolidate ideas into icons – which are often things to buy, like pop songs. “The current environment favors messaging, the propagation of short, direct, functional messages,” writes Sherman (2008, p. 166). Importantly, this has real effects on the kinds of culture we see. He continues: “the characteristics of poetic art, ambiguity and abstraction, are not particularly useful in a messaging culture.”

Understandably, visual writing is the most difficult form to use in academic video writing, but students try, usually through opposition, producing image-laden, inexplicably speedy montages that mean nothing, except that this meaningless linking (cat to train to wrestling) is how we mean on YouTube. Of course, this is in direct opposition to the vblog, where communication occurs through real-time words and where image

quality is basically insignificant. This new, visual video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of the power of the written (and even spoken) word in relation to the ready pleasures of its absence.

Chaotic Writing

Almost impossible to describe, it's so quick (7 seconds!) and strange, to a techno beat we see: a guy dancing, a cat super-imposed and spun, a super-hero placed onto that, the guy with a walrus mask on his head and the words "do we want more from youtube?" flashed at the end.

(Worst Movie Ever Made: baxteric1)¹²

Ideally, the college classroom and its writing requirements are disciplined spaces and practices where knowledge moves in a formal and structured routine, familiar to all players. While the critical classroom begins to alter this script by giving more power to students and by allowing knowledge to be created dynamically, this is neither the random chaos of information nor the hidden controls of YouTube. *Chaotic writing* knows it will be lost (because it isn't any good, no one will watch it, and it will remain unranked and thus unseen); it tries to reach for meaninglessness, and perhaps randomly – if reflexively – it links to other meaningless writing, to which it has almost no deducible connection. It either celebrates YouTube's unstructured archive or is confused by it; or it confuses us – or it clarifies that confusion. Unknowing and pleasure are the point.

However, for effective education (and communication), structure remains paramount: to manage conversation; to allow ideas to build in succession, permitting things to grow steadily more complex; and to be able to find things once and then again, so as to link them, map them, and experience them more than once and also communally. Again, the significance of discipline within the academic setting tests the rule. Without it ideas stay vague, dispersed, and random – if fun (or funny). There is no system of evaluation and you can't find things or build upon them. Chaotic writing laughs at education in the name of entertainment; it celebrates the waning of meaning and the spiraling out of control of signification. It is either celebratory or anguished, and usually it is both: "Do we want more from YouTube?" This new, chaotic video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of the random and the structured, the euphoric and the forlorn.

Control Writing

In this video, I speak to my computer, sitting in my office, as I read a list of twelve reasons why it is hard to learn from YouTube over two minutes of real-time video.

(Summary of Learning from YouTube at the Midterm 2: MediaPraxisMe)¹³

Control writing works against, and in response to, the previously mentioned chaotic, undisciplined culture of YouTube and attempts instead to force structure and the possibility of building complexity into its pages. It attempts to map or connect work, while making the most of YouTube's weak architecture – a web 2.0 environment that disallows most of what we expect on the web: linking, versioning, tagging, saving. Control writing strives to organize its own visibility, legibility, and linkability through the rigorous, theorized production of titles, tags, and networked promotion. It tries to understand the mechanisms, rules, and forms of YouTube so as to better direct these toward comprehension. Otherwise ideas stay vague and dispersed, there is no system of evaluation, and you can't find things or build upon them. Categories and order allow for discipline, which may punish or provide elegance, or both. This new, control video writing demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching considerations of discipline and structure, as well as their absence. YouTube separates the artist from the user. "Artists must pick up on the everyday forms of videos, but move beyond this. Artists must identify, categorize and order the various strata of everyday videos by using an appropriate video language to interact with the world effectively and with a certain elegance" (Tollman, 2007, p. 170). Here the professor gains and loses control as she attempts to question how the rules of traditional academic writing and video production do and do not translate into work penned through a video stylo.

Censored and Copyright Writing

To see "Blacks on Youtube Final," by VannaBlack4u,¹⁴ a research project on whether empowering or positive images of black people are ever popular on the site, you have to authorize that you are of age. This is because it has been flagged by users as being inappropriate for younger audiences. Many videos by my students have been taken down because they used songs owned by the music industry, while others still are gone for reasons of self-censorship: maybe the students didn't want their sophomoric efforts visible to you (or me).

Censored and copyright writing are corporate varieties of control and/or chaotic writing (it's all so confusing!) and are definitive of YouTube (usually heralded as a "democratic" platform). Content is built upon a promise of free expression; users nevertheless routinely flag it, servicing the corporation, whenever ideas stray from the comfortable confines of the hegemonic. "How do you find Black people on YouTube?" VannaBlack4u asks. Simple: "by SEARCHING for terms like Fight, Babymomma, Bitch, Ass, Trick, Ho." While sexual and violent images are easily found across the site, both ideological and corporately owned content are quickly lost. Then YouTube itself commonly censors content through a system of rules and procedures that are both opaque and shifting. Thus this new form of video writing – censored and copyright writing – demands that the YouTube professor make central to her teaching

considerations of voicelessness in the face of corporate control, a political theme that permeates all the previous categories. And here again the corporate architecture of the site creates and controls user behavior and access to information.

Stylo Dreams Deferred

If one wishes to be part of the twenty-first-century, media-saturated world and wants to communicate effectively with others or express one's position on current affairs in considerable detail, with which technology would one chose to do so, digital video or a pencil?

(Sherman, 2008, p. 163)

A pencil? YouTube is a corporately owned, highly structured domain that allows average users to write beyond the reach of a pencil with networked video. While infinitely more visible, their writing is also always circumscribed by capital, hegemonic ideology and by dominant media. If the pen or pencil is cheap and easily bought at the mall or online, but if it does not come with a teacher, we learn from YouTube that it will predominantly be used to mimic familiar forms, not to challenge them. We learn that, while everyone can be a writer, not all users will be “masters”:

The media-master is characterized through technical expertise and perfection, and has special skills relating to the medium and its structure. [. . .] Seen from the point of view of the art system of fine arts, the amateur normally represents the infantile, naïve and unreflected, almost too perfect imagery, that is generated through visual stereotypes or motifs of popular culture [. . .] Most YouTube-uploaders do not intend to establish or implement a new art form or aesthetic. (Richard, 2008, p. 150)

The dream was never simply to write, but to do so with a view to a better, integrated, and original aesthetics of the now, of the self, and of the self-aware. Contemporary digital video writers, like my students, armed with their pen and enabled by YouTube, also need digital video teachers who will work with them to produce video writing that integrates history, aesthetics, analysis, and control to truly fulfill this perennial dream of visibility, expression, and everyday communication and expression.

NOTES

- 1 Friedberg is referring to Jean-Luc Godard's reference to film critic Alexandre Astruc.
- 2 My YouTube page about the teaching of this class is at <http://www.youtube.com/MediaPraxisme>. A “video-book” about these efforts was “published” by MIT Press in 2012 as well; it can be found at <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/author/default.asp?aid=38947>.

- 3 I will give the title, author and universal resource locator (URL) for each of the course videos I discuss, but obviously the best way to write about YouTube video is online, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CDrYwXVOn4>
- 4 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdGsM-y-dXQ>
- 5 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxPwe6FjTjk>
- 6 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZ00UqFRmzg> (removed)
- 7 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuZpKTA3ZQ>
- 8 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UFRHgP71us>
- 9 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYe6mOYUOWk>
- 10 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crlcYR2oySc>
- 11 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2eUPc3F08A>. All of these images and sounds are found from the “most-viewed” videos on YouTube.
- 12 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9E-j8c6KZc>
- 13 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulK9XZwGqDc>
- 14 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6rd5MscyPI>

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Queer Broadcasts

Backstage Television, Insider Material, and Media Producers

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines critical tools for examining queer elements of production manifest in comedy texts. Building on the basics of queer theory and scholarship on camp, it reviews a set of methods for queer analysis of production details appearing in quasi-fictional television programs about the entertainment business. Referencing examples from US series, it employs the terms “insider,” “camp,” and “queer” to demonstrate how scholars can extract historical evidence about the industry from images of television production. The chapter considers the industrial, intertextual, and social dynamics that have contributed to the queer content evident in TV culture by looking at backstage series that represent queer work as an obvious aspect of the media industries as a whole, rather than as something specific to gender and sexual minorities. It argues that we can better understand the creation of queer media by analyzing satirical depictions of the production process.

In June 2011 Tina Fey, the creator of *30 Rock* – a National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC, 2006–) sitcom about a fictional NBC sketch show – issued a public statement following press coverage of an allegedly homophobic stand-up routine that one of her actors performed in a comedy club. Taking a “we are everywhere” approach shared by radical queer activists and more moderate campaigners for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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transgender (LGBT) rights, Fey, who also stars in the show, stated that, without their “gay and lesbian coworkers at *30 Rock*,” she and her colleague, Tracy Morgan, “would not have lines to say, clothes to wear, sets to stand on, scene partners to act with, or a printed-out paycheck from accounting[. . .]” (Hibberd, 2011). This official acknowledgment of queer workers on a comedy series may be a first in the business. However, more informal shout-outs to queer labor behind the scenes of television productions have been part of satirical backstage comedies such as *30 Rock* since programming began. These series, which are set in show business and populated by fictional industry personnel, suggest the importance of using queer methods to study media production. The term “queer” indicates a set of interpretative practices partially at odds with the dominant gender/sexual system – as well as with other ideological frameworks – and provides needed leverage for addressing many people’s lived experiences.

Scholars often assume that media texts mask the production process, while they see the content of these texts as self-evident. A queer perspective on backstage TV points out that this relationship can be inverted. Comedy series that represent the television industry satirically carry evidence of actual production cultures. This evidence illuminates queer content that is seldom acknowledged. In this chapter I discuss some of the critical tools available for examining queer elements of production manifest in broadcast texts, and I do so without regard for the personal lives (that is, for the sexual identity or sexual history) of the people involved. While it can be useful to investigate the experiences and artistic expressions of the many self-identified LGBT people who have worked as television producers over the years, it is also important to consider the industrial, intertextual, and social dynamics that have contributed to the queer content evident in TV culture. Below, I build on the basics of queer theory and scholarship on camp to outline a set of methods for a queer analysis of the production details that appear in fictional television programs. With reference to relatively successful US series, I elaborate these methods through the terms “insider,” “camp,” and “queer.” I include a brief close reading of *30 Rock*, one of the premier backstage satires of the 2000s, to demonstrate how scholars can extract historical evidence about the industry from fictional texts about television production. Backstage series represent queer work as an obvious aspect of the media industries as a whole, rather than as something specific to gender and sexual minorities. I argue that we can better understand the creation of queer media by analyzing texts about the production process than by attempting to pinpoint individual LGBT producers as proof of queer content.

There are no hard and fast rules for how onscreen comedy relates to people situated at social peripheries, or for how an “insider” view relates to the reality of the industry. However, in looking at backstage programs, we can see patterns in the way these texts mediate between representation, history, and the industry’s heteronormative limits. In the case of television, queer content can be present when neither the characters nor the actors who play them are necessarily themselves queer. At the same time, this content links up with a diffuse realm of queer labor. The discussion below addresses a production subculture centralized in the US, which has a transna-

tional history in terms of personnel and circulation. It may have parallels and counterparts in other national contexts, as well as possible compatriots on a global scale. In one episode of the Home Box Office/British Broadcasting Corporation (HBO/BBC) quasi-documentary series *Extras* (2005), for example, Ian McKellen, an internationally recognized actor and prominent mainstream LGBT rights activist in England, casts Andy Millman (Ricky Gervais), a sitcom star, in a gay play after McKellen describes his preparation for *The Lord of the Rings*, a Hollywood franchise filmed in New Zealand. While the present chapter focuses on a specific subgenre of television, insight into the collaborative dynamics that arise in relation to the production of TV comedy can serve as a model for readers interested in other formats, genres, and media industries. Even within television, insider material turns a satirical eye on many different production cultures around Hollywood, including those related to film, music, dance, design, software, advertising, publicity, and other media arts. While I focus on television's representations of itself and on its producers, backstage series shed light on queer elements in a variety of production traditions. My study suggests that investigations of divergent threads and subgenres in different media can contribute to the recovery of queer histories at a level beyond traditional accounts of production studies and the conventional politics of representation. Exploring how these histories intersect is an essential step in understanding the full weight of queer media history.

Production Studies, Expanded

The US television industry has generated many satirical backstage series since its inception, such as the variety programs of Ed Wynn, Milton Berle, Burns and Allen, Ernie Kovacs, and Jack Benny; *Where's Raymond?* (ABC, 1953–1954), *The Bob Cummings Show* (NBC, 1955–1959), and *Mr. Adams and Eve* (CBS, 1957–1958); *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (CBS, 1961–1966), *Seinfeld* (NBC, 1989–1998), and *The Larry Sanders Show* (HBO, 1992–1998); *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (HBO, 2000–), *Joey* (NBC, 2004–2006), *The Comeback* (HBO, 2005), *The Starter Wife* (USA, 2008–2009), and *Californication* (HBO, 2007–). Programs about media producers feature aspects of industry jobs that usually remain outside the limelight, portraying meetings in the writers' room of a series, for example, or the activities of a talk-show host during commercials. The backstage subgenre calls for methods of study focused on queer forms and meanings as well as on queer characters and producers. Integrating queer studies with media production studies more fully offers an opportunity to expand the field's critique of production cultures and the representations they make. In the case of queer media studies, this entails seeking an understanding of queer representation beyond the scope of figures that are gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and so on – be they characters, performers, writers, or directors.

Queer production is evident throughout the history of television comedy in various elements of queer gender, queer sexuality, and queer culture. The phrase

“queer gender” refers to expressions and styles of gender that question or critique universalized sex, gender, and sexuality categories, or show no interest in upholding them. One principal way this attitude appears in television programming is through rejections, ironic inflections, and transpositions of supposedly natural gender norms, including attraction to the so-called opposite sex. In the context of most culture industries, first censors and then scholars quite systematically omit queer elements from a variety of media texts. The queer elements that scholars overlook, which have survived censorship, often take the form of implicit references to the actual production process. I discuss this set of evidence as “insider material.” In the context of US culture industries, insider material concerns, at its broadest level, the way the politics of representation plays out in a free-market economy disinclined from protecting minority groups. Encompassing a mass of queer content that congregates in seemingly minor details, insider material offers traces of queer media production that are independent of the purported sexual identities or sex practices of their producers, as well as of those of the fictional insider characters that breathe life into these traces. Capturing queer content distinct from sexual categories is important for the recovery of queer history. Historians often presume to find proof of queer representation in sexual categories, but queer representation actually resists the idea of a point of origin in identity, and many aspects of industry life that are not particularly queer – as in LGBT – contribute to production contexts and texts that are queer in other ways.

Self-reflexive attention to the social spaces in which the people who produce media interact with one another may seem superfluous compared to factual accounts of production practices. However, comic acknowledgments of alternate TV histories within programming texts connect to actual industry contexts and are crucial for capturing characteristics of production cultures that are necessary for understanding queer representation. Insider material illuminates a tradition of experiences adjacent to dominant norms, which are too often subsumed within a single, universal narrative. As Lynn Spigel (2001, p. 22) writes, “media have numerous histories through which they were imagined and used by different groups.” Through a study of Hollywood film criticism, Chon Noriega (1990) has shown that people often project onto the past the notion of a “monolithic anti-homosexual” climate that is not historically accurate. Even though documentable queer representation proliferated long before the contemporary era of commercialized LGBT representation, scholars regularly assume that “historical evidence and homosexual ‘images’ either do not exist or were censored” (ibid., p. 21). Whether historians assume that references to queer people and queer culture would have been unthinkable or would have been inevitably censored, queer facets of broadcast texts fall disproportionately by the wayside.

Attention to media production on screen makes visible a world of queer content that in turn illuminates production cultures backstage. The insider material that appears throughout US TV programming, much of which occurs at a level of detail rarely included within the scope of TV scholars’ objects of study, channels an intan-

gible aspect of the medium's history of production. Media producers can recall elements of their everyday lives; but, even when peppered with anecdotes, these retellings will always be filtered through narratives centered on "bigger" issues. Bringing queer methods to bear on insider material allows historians to capture a production tradition with a unique structure of feeling around industry hierarchies, comic sensibilities, sexual experiences, and queer gender. Despite enormous changes in the television landscape brought on by shifts in technology, demographics, and delivery systems, insider material cuts across the industry's history. Insider material is evidence not merely of a secondary queer history, but of television history itself. A consistent set of risqué backstage comedies recognized as important contributors to TV history have also made important contributions to queer history through their presentation of insider material.

With insider material, producers refer to television production in the present moment and in earlier periods. These types of reference defamiliarize US TV history, opening up past production cultures for re-examination. In addition to insights into the context of production as it existed at the specific moment when a media product was made, seemingly inconsequential moments of programming transmit a vast realm of showbiz knowledge, which is oriented toward the industry's own history. Backstage comedies regularly depict unconventional gender relations, idiosyncratic gender presentations, and coded frankness about non-normative sex practices and sexual identities. I discuss this material under the label "queer" because it defies boundaries related to gender and sexual norms, and it does so in ways that relate to historical queer cultures established beyond the limits of dominant media representation. When backstage series feature insider styles of comedy, they often represent queerness as a primary characteristic of the entertainment industry, recapturing an especially ephemeral aspect of media production.

Insider Positions

A broader understanding of the position that media industry insiders occupy can help scholars use the insider material in backstage sitcoms to illuminate queer TV production. The word "insider" designates a set of people with access to information withheld from others. I hesitate to use the term in relation to queerness, because people tend to think that an insider position automatically signals privilege, and heteronormative (and homonormative) forces continually police and expel queerness – from public and private life as well as from representation. The perspective that insider material channels is more typically the province of social outsiders, whose relationship to privilege can be complicated.

Consumer capitalism, which demands the appearance of novelty alongside familiarity and sameness, makes specific demands on the producers of popular culture. Standardized modes of production, distribution, and exhibition ask creative people

to make concessions to turning a profit – which is the “bottom line” – demanding they navigate a maze of social relations oriented toward making money from art (or making money *rather than* art). Through self-reflexivity around topics related to these processes, insider material highlights the constraints and contradictions that media makers encounter in creative work, which stem from pressure to please the public – or at least to strike a chord with a certain audience segment.

In the commercial arts, the relationship between workers’ knowledge of the industry and their position within it can be out of step. Memoirs of Hollywood players attest to this. Diversely positioned participants in studio systems cultivate knowing viewpoints on industry relations in light of their everyday encounters with the business side of entertainment – be these direct encounters or ones that happen through decisions trickling down from people with more control. Whether owners, executive producers, high-profile actors, and in-demand writers or bit players, uncredited editors, prop artists, and personal assistants, media producers draw on experience with and on hearsay about contracts, casting calls, rewrites, and the like. Compared to people without access to Hollywood behind the scenes, these workers know more about why and how specific products get made. At the same time, different degrees of such knowledge mark divisions between producers with different roles, incomes, backgrounds, lifestyles, investments, interests, and alliances in the industry.

The insider perspective is not necessarily snide or condescending, although it can be. Being jaded by the industry is part of a complex pattern of emotional investment and disillusionment. There is a prevalent image of insiders as malicious executives; but self-deprecation and defeatism are also common outcomes of immersion in showbiz, particularly for those who occupy lower positions within industry hierarchies or who have a sense of artistic integrity in their work. Censorship, assimilation, and compromise are a fundamental part of life backstage. Experiencing these processes affects producers, especially those who belong to minorities and are unable to represent themselves on their own terms due to the cultural norms, interpersonal mores, and economic incentives driving the industry. The label “insider” may have a certain allure, but the entertainment world is full of (queer) people who see the high life without fully living it and may struggle for decades without ever really making it. Whatever their position within Hollywood ranks in terms of compensation and job security, or creative control and credit, workers maneuver for knowledge and clout in ways that relate to their subject position and status within the broader social hierarchies replicated (or refigured) by the industry. While there is considerable freedom in specific pockets of US media production with regard to diversity in gender and sexuality, the roles of influential LGBT players have historically been contingent upon these players’ obscuring central aspects of their lives or finding a way to be open where others could not.

Complex power dynamics related to these issues color the operations of the entire industry. Some producers who are not LGBT become knowledgeable about queer life and sympathetic to the everyday oppressions it entails, and they do so on the basis of behind-the-scenes contact with people in the industry. Participating in, or

being privy to, the production process can give people a skeptical view about the standard wheelings and dealings of show business. While many media makers remain immersed in the broader ideological beliefs of the culture, others see through them. Discrimination, favoritism, hypocrisy, and corruption consistently impact the making of major media texts. For those who are aware of the institutional dynamics surrounding decisions about different media properties, the personal is political. Whatever the producers' positions, their interpretations of their own everyday experiences at work shape their perspectives on hierarchies of power, cultural production, and the Hollywood racket.

Insider Material on TV

Most US television producers today live in Southern California and work in Los Angeles. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that, as of 2008, there were over 350,000 people in film and television production there. While New York – the TV industry's initial home – remains a broadcast center, industry wisdom holds that, for a chance at true success, hopeful workers must move to LA, an area whose palpable orientation toward Hollywood fosters hip and alternative social opportunities, cultivating specific industry subcultures marked by class, race, education, and language. In a context where studio big wigs tap into local talent and starving artists court a level of success that will forever transform their work, insider material emphasizes the ironies of the “tinsel town” experience for an assortment of media makers.

Satirical backstage programs regularly reflect insider perspectives by comparing the world depicted on television screens with the lives of the people who produce programming. Through cleverly orchestrated indirect meanings, these series express some of the ways in which life in the industry affects people's subject positions and sensibilities. Insider material tends to accentuate the ways in which media production cultures differ from the outside world. For example, when asked if one of his colleagues could find a child to act in a commercial he was directing, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*'s Robert Petrie, head writer of a fictional variety show, joked that he did not think they knew any; as a family man with a hybrid identity merging entertainment experience with a suburban-dad mentality, he was surrounded by people whose desires departed from cultural norms such as the convention of becoming parents. According to the insider view on backstage life – which typically occurs behind the scenes, but in this case appears on screen – people in the industry have different ways of living and crack jokes about topics that are taboo outside of either show business or queer culture.

While laying bare the reality of the industry's production cultures, first-hand knowledge of studio practices gives media producers a vantage point that differs from that of most people. Inasmuch as people interact with popular culture, it makes a significant difference if they encounter backstage details about certain figures and

affairs, particularly information that is not part of official marketing campaigns. Someone who takes celebrity reports at face value has a perspective on Hollywood products that diverges from that of someone with blackmail fodder on a closeted star, for example. While the average consumer must seek out information to deflate the romantic view the media industries cultivate about themselves, producers on the inside of the dream factory see these myths punctured as a part of their everyday lives. Being privy to behind-the-scenes affairs allows producers to form opinions about the actual – rather than the stated – circumstances around industry decisions. In view of the hierarchies and injustices of the system, acquiring insight into professional matters beyond the level of other people's insight can lend insiders a unique form of power.

Insider material indicative of this reality shines through in backstage TV programming. For example, comedy writers with a satirical bent generally have an intimate understanding of the censorship tendencies around queer representation and give vent to their frustrations through self-reflexivity in scripts. Backstage texts offer media producers an opportunity to create fictional representations of people in their own positions. Series set in the world of TV production open up a circle of knowing characters – which serve as proxies for actual insiders – for the home viewer and for the historian. In some cases, this connection is direct. Real-life comedy writer Selma Diamond inspired Rose Marie's Sally Rogers in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. The talent agent Ari Emanuel influenced Bob Odenkirk's Stevie Grant in *The Larry Sanders Show*, as well as Jeremy Priven's Ari Gold in *Entourage* (HBO, 2004–2011). Even these characters, however, are an amalgam of different industry figures that their producers have encountered in the business. Series like these provide an important venue for examining industry tensions. Where the infrastructures of broadcasting guard the type of information that could provoke social change, backstage texts intervene. They channel undocumented histories of queer experience that resist the effects of dominant infrastructures and ideologies.

Insider Aesthetics

Backstage texts showcase undervalued aspects of TV history and should be analyzed as camp because they resonate at more than one level. Camp is a comic mode that interrupts conceptual divisions commonly depicted as essential and unproblematic. It does so by playing on incongruities related to sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, age, era, and other markers of social distinction. Camp is a unique mode of production and a particular style of insider discourse. It is tied to the experience of minority groups with dominant culture. One of camp's principal markers is that its content exceeds what would be considered obvious by the average person. According to literary critic Susan Sontag (1999, p. 54), the camp mode approaches mass media products "as an aesthetic phenomenon [. . .] not in terms of beauty but in terms of the degree of artifice, or stylization." In treating popular culture as an art, camp emphasizes

unforeseen implications in everyday objects and texts and constantly creates new ideas with the cultural meanings that circulate through media. Through the most minor inflections, camp practices bring out profound nuances in different experiences and social dynamics. By experimenting with signification and other cultural phenomena, they create new possibilities. As Michael Bronski (1984, p. 43) writes, camp marks the talent to “see beyond what is clearly evident; to grasp a reality beneath or totally separate from what is taught [. . .] it contains the possibility of structuring and encouraging limitless imagination – to literally create a new reality.” Media producers draw on this talent, as do consumers.

Despite producers’ involvement in camp, scholars often study camp as a style of reception, explaining it as inherently about media consumption. Where the idea of camp texts is recognized in this school of thought, the double meanings of such texts are considered unintended meanings that viewers create as part of an original, unexpected interpretation. This approach involves an implicit assumption – and sometimes an explicit condition – that the sensibility consumers bring to bear on a product was completely foreign to the scene of its production. In this model, camp texts correspond to a history of cultural appropriation undertaken by oppressed groups, and not to anything camp about the texts themselves or about the people who made them. In fact, critics generally represent camp as a reading practice that goes against the original intentions of the producers behind the texts. Often things are understood to be more camp if their makers are sincere and the audience is not.

Within this paradigm, scholars have addressed camp as an underground queer practice that, particularly after the attention that Sontag’s “Notes on Camp” essay brought to it in the late 1960s, has been intermittently in the cultural spotlight, generally as a relatively sanitized version of a formerly queer practice. Along with studies of queer camp practices that take place far from the gaze of the mass media, scholarship has understood camp as a type of fan culture that, like other subcultures, is constantly being appropriated for profit by the culture industries, in cases ranging from ABC’s *Batman* series (1966–1968) to Madonna hits like “Vogue” (Sire, 1990) and beyond. Queer culture and camp are far from synonymous, but camp has been integral to many strands of queer production, from Wildean dandies, roaring 1920s drag performers, and interwar cabaret artists to the Harlem Renaissance, the postwar underground, and ACT UP (the Aids Coalition to Unleash Power). Camp has been a news item for decades, but it is still not widely understood. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1997, p. 27) points out, camp is often “seriously misrecognized” even by scholars working within gender and queer studies.

The literature on camp thus focuses on issues of hegemony, including the ways in which on the one hand marginalized groups put popular culture to their own use and, on the other, the culture industries help secure ideological dominance by incorporating creative energies from these same oppressed groups. Television, for example, whether in music videos, “quality” programming, or cartoons, is a prominent mechanism for integrating queer sensibilities into the dominant culture by making them consumable for the broader public. While this model of cultural appropriation is invaluable for understanding many historical incidents concerning camp, it does not

cover all of the ways in which camp interacts with the media industries. In spite of camp's underground status and of the misperceptions surrounding it, many aspects of camp thrived before it surfaced in the mainstream; and they continue to do so, in television as well as in film and the fine arts.

Insider material is about production, not appropriation, and camp's status as a queer mode of production is fundamental to understanding how TV's backstage series differ from other forms of camp. Writers, performers, and other workers draw on camp as they make programs, treating their own everyday lives as an object of art, to satirical ends, through displaced and specialized forms of address. Camp's foremost characteristics are an interest in the artistry of everyday objects, an investment in intricacy and in increasing embellishment, and a desire to expose contradictions and ironies in the way people think about culture. On the basis of this orientation toward overlooked elements of everyday life, camp continually draws attention to details about the way things are made and meanings circulate. As a result, while its connections to queer culture on the receiving end of the media industries are vital, camp is about media production – and in many ways fundamentally so.

The most compelling work on camp production stems from scholars' attempts to describe where queer culture comes from and how it is produced amid such hostility. Satirical queerness often appears in the guise of straight characters, and this helps producers avoid having their work (and themselves) identified as queer. The need to displace queerness feeds into camp's satirical work by calling for representations that are simultaneously undetectable to those who disagree with them and "in your face" from a queer perspective. Steven Cohan (2005, p. 17), for example, describes camp as the "outright satire" of "straights' blindness to a queerness standing with hands on hips right before their eyes." Even when it is seemingly unrecognizable as queer, camp reflects – as Bronski (1984, p. 43) explains – the various ways in which "queers try to preserve their own [. . .] livelihood in a homophobic setting." When producers make media in the camp mode, they activate a layer of meaning that others, who share their view, can appreciate. While television programming and the culture that surrounds it are certainly known to provide camp – whether in the form of movie reruns or sitcom characters like *Will and Grace*'s Jack McFarland and Karen Walker (NBC, 1998–2006), or like *Queer as Folk*'s Emmett Honeycutt (Showtime, 2000–2005) – backstage series have yet to be critically addressed as a primary source of camp. Various aspects of the industry have established and sustained camp as an everyday part of the culture of television comedy production – a part that is noticeably queer and intimately tied to the industry's production processes across the postwar era and today.

Safety in Numbers

Camp, insider material, and queer television representation are intimately intertwined, historically as well as conceptually. Like camp, comedy works through mul-

multiple layers of meaning, and satirical producers tend to play up the camp viewpoint that generates insider material because queer content is often comic and can serve as a punch line. Self-reflexive media texts like satirical backstage TV series call for critical distance on the production process and build a space of knowingness into programming content. This space sustains the density of signification required for queer meaning. As Chris Straayer (1996, p. 2) writes: "A queer viewpoint [. . .] raise[s] questions and propose[s] strategies that reveal subtexts and subversive readings in a more complex system than the patriarchal heterosexual system assumes." In the US TV context, camp gives vent to comedy producers' feelings about what their networks and sponsors consider permissible and what they will include or cut.

From the industry's inception, broadcasters have understood censorship of programming content to be an integral stage of the production process. As a 1951 article in the trade journal *Sponsor* put it, "the business man" working in TV had a responsibility to "reflect and echo public taste as commonly interpreted" (Boddy, 1990, p. 98). The US networks acted in the private interest of corporations and, in conjunction with government regulation, promoted the need for censorship. With McCarthyism and the purge of dissidents from entertainment, the industry carefully sought to prevent any evidence of a connection to the "political, artistic or literary avant garde" from appearing in programs, in part because it relied on unorthodox creative laborers. With ongoing deliberations about what was permissible and what would be aired or excised, insider material often appeared as a form of retaliation to network bias against it. In this context, comedians would regularly poke fun at executives and at their censorship practices through the programming they produced. To do so, they often created suggestive material around sexual non-conformity and gender variance.

While camp is by definition attuned to issues of production, as these relate to social differences such as gender and sexuality, the camp mode evident in satirical backstage television comedy is especially oriented toward the heteronormative constraints on creativity that a range of producers experience in the television medium. The industry is hyperaware of demographics, marketing, and Nielsen ratings, and producers are regularly coached to prevent anything that might alienate the show's desired audience from making it to the final product. This process can be contentious, as was demonstrated by the production histories of programs like *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* – a late 1960s variety show with slang and in-jokes that NBC's censors could barely keep up with – or *Ellen* – a 1990s sitcom that ABC (and Disney) monitored so closely when the lead character was about to "come out" that this point in the plot became more about publicity than about crafting a nuanced story. Camp responds to this kind of situation without implicating its producers, by generating incisive and specialized commentary around the industry's protocols and failed attempts at repression. On a special event program that promoted the new NBC shows of the 1958/9 TV season, for example, George Gobel momentarily spoke the language of NBC's "suits," presenting a pie chart that showed the decline in comedy variety – one of the main sources of insider material at that time. Suggesting that

the network favored money over morals while it promoted itself as a guardian of American values, Gobel called NBC executives “not really crooked, but a little kinky” (*The Steve Allen Show* of September 21, 1958). Referencing the industry’s corruption and hypocrisy just as the quiz show scandals broke, this metaphor of kinkiness as being better than crooked doubled as slang for niche erotic behaviors, many of which can be understood as queer. Gobel’s job at NBC may seem like stereotyping, since it associates sexual “deviancy” with violations of business ethics. However, with TV comedy producers implicated, to an even higher degree than their bosses, through associations of entertainment production and sexual non-normativity, this line emphasizes queerness at each end of the industry. At another level, it ironically gives voice to the ribald sensibility executives were attempting to strike from programming by firing comedians and by dropping variety shows. At postwar moments like this and through to the present, camp productions have been informed by an insider sense of the freedom of representation available in backstage situations. Participating in this tradition, they have recirculated queer history from an insider perspective.

In television comedy, the camp mode has contributed to representations that were potentially scandalous, but ultimately fleeting and generally unremarked upon. Adapting to the industry’s production processes, the producers of backstage shows typically situate minor characters and incidental guest stars as sources of queer history, simply because these are more expendable and less in the spotlight. Because not everyone who is queer participates in camp and not everyone who participates is queer, insider material emerges as if from a diffuse collective, as part of everyday life behind the scenes in a profession that relies on queer producers while willfully ignoring their centrality.

Writers and performers are major forces in the circulation of insider material. The collective authorship of scripts means that writers are not always themselves held responsible for the risqué material they may produce. Comedy series can have 10 or 20 writers on staff at any time, and they often employ more. While a writer constantly referencing queer things may not get very far or last very long, the potentially taboo content of television productions is typically assessed at the group level, through general negotiations with the writing staff as a whole. Producers tend to mediate conflicts with executives, allowing writers and performers a certain amount of leeway in what they can try to get away with before encountering pressure from censors or being forced to drop material that people higher up consider beyond the pale. Actors and television personalities engage with insider material across a similarly mediated playing field. While TV stars are under extreme pressure to maintain a particular image, they can always blame questionable material they perform on writers. Entertainers are under intense scrutiny, but they are also rewarded – and often – for “ad libbing” racy material. They may be experts at slipping even racier material under the radar of the industry’s authorities. While a series showcasing an insider sensibility can be up a creek if it does not have enough general appeal, a person with this sensibility has an advantage.

Throughout commercial television history censors have continually attempted to shut down material with overtly sexual connotations, a subset of which includes queer content. In relation to queer representation, the industry wins the war but wages a losing battle on a smaller scale. Television camp is thus a great example of how queer culture proliferates in the face of attempted repression (and it does so at the level of discourse as well as at that of individual agency). It also indicates the extent to which camp, like other forms of queer production, springs from a string of factors beyond individuals' self-identification as LGBT. Although the creative mindset behind camp is directly tied to queer experience – most commonly, the experience of eluding or defying social norms around gender and sexuality – it is never a direct function of sexual orientation. Paul Roen (1994, p. 9) notes, “an enormous amount of camp has been perpetrated by heterosexuals,” while “a dreary assortment of gay men [. . .] are unable to comprehend the very concept of camp.” Within an industrial production context for film, Cohan notes that camp is a complicated result of “the collaboration of queer and straight personnel” as they produce programming by following standardized network procedures for specific formats and genres (2005, p. 87). This collaboration process adds another queer element to camp by resisting the essentializing connections among gay men and camp that people commonly assert.

Queer TV Culture

The term “queer” is crucial for tracking the interconnections among insider material and camp in backstage TV over the years. Scholars often use “queer” to designate representations that call into question the apparent coherence of concepts like heterosexuality, homosexuality, masculinity, and femininity. As scholars in many disciplines point out, social inequalities take place through the construction of categories like female, male, straight, and gay, as they intersect with particular ethnicities, cultural locations, and material contexts. “Queer” describes textual and intertextual dynamics – in addition to social dynamics – that undermine the formation of dichotomies and hierarchies in the realms of sex, gender, sexuality, race, class, ability – and beyond. “Queer” can also signal an emerging or erratic space of cultural production, particularly of new or unregulated possibilities for gender and sexual relations.

“Queer,” in this use, is often assumed to be a recent derivation. It is commonly understood that activists first reclaimed “queer” in the 1990s; but some artists appear to have had a similar relationship with the word much earlier. When scholars encounter instances of “queer” people, or of behavior labeled “queer,” prior to the 1990s, they typically infer the exclusively derogatory meaning of a slur, or they translate it into a more benign sense of odd or eclectic, deemed to be unconnected to the proud usage of contemporary queers. Yet the term's use in the past can also be seen as a marker of pride in social difference, as well as an appropriately evasive strategy for

representing gender and sexual non-conformists who rejected the medicalized label of homosexuality. Dating back to the postwar period, self-identified coteries of queers united around shared artistic ideals, gender rebellion, and other points of social antagonism. Throughout the era of early television, various subcultures eluded hetero norms and refigured them for their own purposes. Historiographers (Howard, 1999) and literary scholars (Adams, 1999) have found that self-described queers used “queer” as “a self-conscious redeployment of the pejorative connotations that accompanied the term” at least as early as the 1950s (*ibid.*, pp. 554–555).

At the same time, modes of artistic production that are not self-consciously queer have regularly fostered queer culture. When considering insider material, television’s unique forms of representation are as important to address as its specific modes of production. Particular forms, especially comedic and episodic forms, can be understood as queer for a variety of complex political and aesthetic reasons. Many camp forms are queer because of a formal connection as well as because of a cultural relation. In response to secrecy, denial, and silence around queer culture, these representations employ inventive and anarchic logics; turn naturalizing discourses on their heads; and occupy positions in contradistinction to dominant norms. While producers often engage different facets of queerness through *double entendre*, intertextual references, physical performance, and fast-paced dialogue, their use of similar strategies to represent not so queer content has also, in many cases, circulated queer meanings and new possibilities. These strategies, in addition to being formally queer due to their divergence from conventions of verisimilitude and sincerity, are also recognizably queer in that producers have very often used them to convey queer content that industry watchdogs would otherwise censor. Queer forms tend to foster queer content and concurrently call it up by association.

Camp strategies can also be queer by virtue of the particular ways in which, as circulating texts, they produced queer possibilities in public culture. While the content of queer images is crucial to the ways they signify, insider material in a camp mode also proliferates queer forms. From Arnold the pig’s TV watching on *Green Acres*, which simultaneously takes a derisive swipe at audiences and construes the small screen as a magical medium, to the flicker of Chuck Lorre’s split-second vanity card rants (readable only on “pause”), which allow this writer–producer–director to vent about his experience in the industry, images that might not seem queer or have queer people identified with them regularly participate in queer culture. Queer culture is a realm of public interaction stemming from “queer” as a point of positive self-identification. Queer culture emerges from the social spaces, artistic productions, and popular touchstones negotiated by queer people. Its markers are blurry because of its generally queer-phobic surroundings and because of the crossover between it, show business, and other art cultures. While hostile to queers and queerness in its own ways, Hollywood has long welcomed queer labor and has thus been more likely than other fields to harbor queer culture.

Even as the media industries have promoted dominant norms, they have been crucial to the development of alternatives to traditional family living, both through

the production cultures they generate and at the level of representation. Hollywood's queer enclaves predate TV. As Abrams (2008, p. 7) shows in *Hollywood Bohemians: Transgressive Sexuality and the Selling of the Movieland Dream*, popular images produced in Southern California represent the place as a world of freedom and artistic expression. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century and beyond, such images associated opportunities for producers with the region's "sexual abandon," depicting a social landscape in which "homosexuals, adulterers, effeminate males, and butch females [. . .] embodied the pleasures of the forbidden and the taboo." According to him, this convention of using sexual nonconformity and queer gender to represent Hollywood demonstrated to viewers that "those who did not follow norms could lead successful lives" (ibid.). While myriad changes have taken place since the period addressed in Abrams's study, media publicity has continued to associate Hollywood with offbeat opportunities and queer labor with the media industries. Images of commercial artists often present simplified versions of lived deviations from dominant gender and sexual norms in ways that demonized or ridiculed these differences. Nevertheless, these representations generally establish connections between media production, the freedom to be queer, and the possibility of being rewarded for queer work. As Matthew Tinkcom (2002, p. 32) explains, the "chance given to queer men and women *to labor as queers*" is a fundamental component of the "liberatory possibilities" available in Hollywood.

One subplot of a 2008 episode of *30 Rock* titled "Subway Hero" demonstrates the strong links between backstage series' self-reflexivity about media production and their understanding of queerness as a part of entertainment. While exposing the mid-century media industries' rampant sexism and racism (à la AMC's *Mad Men*, 2007–), this narrative thread simultaneously represents the seemingly archaic culture of NBC during TV's "golden age" as a place of unforeseen sexual freedom. With rapid fire winks, the show suggests that, while some things have changed – Tina Fey's Liz Lemon is a big shot, not a "sandwich girl" – many other things too taboo to be broadcast remain the same behind the scenes. This subplot hinges on the performance of seasoned character actor Tim Conway's guest appearance as Bucky Bright, a forgotten television celebrity. Visiting the studios where the fictional *TGS* (a doppelganger of sorts for *Saturday Night Live*, NBC, 1975–) is produced, Bright reveals repressed aspects of the medium's past to network page Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer). Kenneth, a straight-laced aficionado of broadcasting minutiae who claims to have studied TV theory at Kentucky Mountain Bible College, is thrilled to meet the former star, until Bright's comments about the earlier period disrupt Kenneth's naïve vision of their sacrosanct profession.

In one of the more striking comic moments, Kenneth – a character that, as *30 Rock*'s writers alternately suggest, is closeted to himself and straight (but really weird) – is shocked to hear Bright reminisce about how having sex with another man did not make you gay when he worked in TV – from the 1940s, when TV broadcasts first began, through to the early 1970s, an era still undisturbed by the emergence of cable channels and fanfare around overt LGBT characters. After Bright sees a picture

of himself among a boat crew resembling the cast of *McHale's Navy* – a satirical military sitcom from the 1960s on which Conway starred – he tells Kenneth about a time when “men were men” and he spent a lot of time with “the boys.” Back then, he says, “If you wanted to do something private with another man, it wasn’t gay. It was just two men celebrating each other’s strength.” As Kenneth recoils from the picture of old school television production that Bright paints, he realizes that his experience at the network is just as outrageous.

Bright’s comments identify a disavowed history from the postwar period within the infrastructure of network television, describing the queerness thought to be absent from US TV culture prior to the 1980s as quite obviously present. Bright’s revelations about the medium’s golden age depict it as a time during which practices related to everyday queer life went on undeterred, despite the fact that anything even vaguely sexual – much less homosexual – was purportedly censored. Conway’s appearance is one of many recognizable doppelgangers connected to real-life production contexts in *30 Rock*. The tour of NBC’s office and studios that the employees of its show-within-a-show give visitors, which mirrors an actual tour and facilitates namedropping from the network’s history, is another. In one instance, Kenneth directs a group to the place where, he says, comedian Gracie Allen “took Jack Paar’s virginity.”

Like the material written for Conway, this joke represents a queer take on gender and sexuality. It also connects the ostensibly fictional to actual history, by revealing queerness in the repertoires of TV comedians from the postwar period – a broadcast era assumed to be conservative and conformist, but which actually aired a lot of controversial material under the radar of industry watchdogs. The line is funny in part because, at the level of gender trouble, it rings true to the performers’ oeuvres. Kenneth’s evocation of Gracie Allen (one of the medium’s stars in the 1950s, who was routinely dismissed as scatterbrained and childlike but demonstrated an expert command of adult humor) and of Jack Paar (a major personality in TV in the 1960s, who was emotionally volatile and famously confronted the network about censorship while on air) suggests privileged insight into the semi-public lives and performance styles of comedy icons – lives and styles that conflict with the ways official TV history represents their onscreen personae and overall output. Bringing together two icons that a contemporary audience may not know, the joke associates stars who delivered queer content over the course of their careers with a televisual legacy of gender and sexual eccentricity.

Backstage images produced within a camp mode have continually celebrated and explored what Alexander Doty (2000, p. xiii) calls “moments of ‘multiple queerness’.” In order to pursue the line of questioning above, consider an example from *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* (1950–1958), a hybrid sitcom-variety vehicle for the radio legends that merged theatrical skits with direct address. On a 1950 episode of this program, Gracie informed her husband that “ninety per cent of all fickle husbands are men!” and George, turning to the audience, said: “The remaining ten per cent are handled by our agent.” This joke suggests that there are a lot of queers working in

Hollywood, and it does so by raising the possibility that not all husbands are men and by referencing a statistic that is resonant both with the Kinsey reports on the prevalence of homosexuality and with the standard cut agents receive from their clients' paychecks. Husbands who are not men can refer to husbands who are women (like butch dykes or trans women), and to husbands who are not women but might be likened to them (fags and trans men). By simultaneously alluding to these possibilities while also evoking something outside of them (whether non-binary genders or a more elusive sense of queerness), the episode creates a moment when, as Doty (1993, p. xiii) puts it, "a number of distinct, sometimes contradictory, queer aspects or approaches suggest themselves in the face of a mass culture event." In Doty's words, this "multiple queerness" is part of why it can be "difficult [. . .] to attribute the queerness of mass culture to just one source or another" (ibid.). In light of the collaborative process of comedy production and of the way in which insider material circulates within show business, such instances of queer representation can be seen to arise from the industry itself as much as from an individual writer or performer.

Camp accrues even around Hollywood types that seem completely straight. For example, when hyper-heterosexual shock jock Howard Stern makes a guest appearance on *The Larry Sanders Show* – a series concerning the eponymous late-night talk show in which writer-producer and star Garry Shandling regularly interviewed celebrities playing themselves – and it turns out that Sid (Sid Newman), the man in charge of the cue cards, is a huge fan, Stern tells Sid to "take his top off," comically likening Sid to the babe-types that Stern regularly ogles during his radio program, despite Sid's gender. This joke does not mean that either figure is gay; as it collapses Stern's male and female fans and points to the homoeroticism of media consumption, it should be understood as queer – as should the appearance, in the series, of stars like Brett Butler, Ellen DeGeneres, and David Duchovny, all of whom played against their perceived sexualities. Issues of gender presentation and perception work similarly. In the *30 Rock* episode addressed earlier, for example, Conway's Bucky Bright character reports that, while wandering the halls of the NBC building overnight, he encountered a "giant lesbian," and he asks Kenneth: "Who is Conan O'Brian, and why is she so sad?" While this line might seem homophobic in its appeal to the narrow-minded perception of lesbians as "imitation men," it accentuates the queerness of industry types – pointing to Conan himself as an "imitation man" – and thus it trades in the discourse of stereotypes while cultivating representational inversions and ironies for comic effect. As Ann Pellegrini (2007, p. 178) writes, "by refusing to refuse [. . .] stereotype[s]," camp "convert[s] the sting of stereotype into the sharp wit of social commentary." This camp conversion links queer gender, queer sexuality, and queer forms of representation.

Distinct from gender identity, yet highly intertwined with gender representation, queer sexuality refers to eroticisms that resist description as exclusively straight or gay. In some cases, an image registers differently from both hetero- and homosexuality. In other cases, it is especially distinct from one but not in a way that fits with the other. Consider, for example, a brief exchange during the *Burns and Allen* episode

discussed above, in which Gracie thinks that her neighbor Harry is sleeping with his new secretary behind his wife Blanche's back. Gracie's suspicions are initially aroused because she assumes the secretary is a woman; but when Harry arrives with Blanche and introduces a man as his new hire, Gracie takes the same attitude despite the change of gender, telling Harry: "You're silly to chase after him. She's much prettier." This joke suggests that there is no significant difference between homo- and heterosexuality, even though differences between men and women are obvious. This sentiment runs counter to the dominant discourses on gender and sexuality in place during the time of the episode's production.

Not all topics are fair game in showbiz at all times. However, as countless Hollywood memoirs (and the 2005 film *The Aristocrats*) show, a significant amount of space has been available backstage for speaking about subjects considered unmentionable elsewhere. Looking at the way references circulate about homoeroticism, sex, women's sexual conquests, gender variance, and bi/pansexuality sheds light on the possibilities for queer production in media contexts assumed to be homogeneous. Insider material highlights the fact that the world of big-time media production and the world outside of it can be vastly different, and that this difference can affect the industries' final products. Camp representations mobilize queer content through insider material, doing their defamiliarizing work not through statements with a traditional veracity but rather through hyperbole, obliqueness, and euphemism, or even through comments that seem patently false. The queer investments of camp include, as Sedgwick (1997, p. 28) explains, "the prodigal production of alternate historiographies," an "irrepressible fascination with ventriloquistic experimentation," and "disorienting juxtapositions of present with past."

Without striving to translate insider material at a literal level, we can use it to record a complex legacy of small screen comedy that has otherwise been absent from television studies' version of TV history. To return to a *30 Rock* example cited above, it is possible, but unlikely, that Gracie Allen actually had sex with Jack Paar in the hallway at NBC; so why is she represented as having "screwed" a fellow comedian? Jokes about television comedians in quasi-fictional series point to an important interchange between onscreen and behind-the-scenes television production across time. Representations of what it is like to make television connect with reality in direct and indirect ways, which illuminate actual TV productions and texts. While the connection between the backstage worlds on television and their real social contexts can be metaphorical, specific details often signal that some aspects of the fictional environment emanate from actual occurrences. Queer content that appears in this representational space reveals an unacknowledged aspect of industry life.

Conclusion

The material that backstage programs use to satirize the industry broadcasts an insider version of TV history that treats the creation of queer media as an established

fact rather than as an unfounded allegation or an impossibility. For anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic media scholars, the unique truth value of insider material provides leverage for reckoning with heteronormative interpretative contexts that are constantly second-guessing the existence of queer media. Taking a wide view of censorship, artistic compromise, and small-scale rebellions, we can use backstage series' representations of production contexts to capture the textual effects of collaborative work in industrial media in the present and in the past. Across decades, the networks of TV comedy producers who create backstage representations have demonstrated great facility with the instabilities of the sex/gender/sexuality system. Given the tight constraints on programming, comedy producers' most interesting work – from an artistic perspective and from a political standpoint – often plays out in ephemeral aspects of life as a commercial artist, both on and off the clock.

Not all backstage shows were camp, and not all camp took place in backstage settings; but, when brought together, the various components of “queer” collided, providing fertile ground for unpredictably queer dynamics. Camp moments of television programming, no matter how brief, created dense nodes of queerness, which expand the space of formation for possible queer subject positions. For viewers, recognizing camp requires an investment in the details of multiple webs of interconnected insider perspectives. Camp knowledge of different social contexts, production factors, and textual forms produces insider material; a predisposition to mobilize this type of insight aids in its reception. It may be the case that queer producers are the entire insider audience at the receiving end of camp. However, it might also be the case that televised camp engenders queer producers. As critic Bruce Hainley (1993, p. 2) has observed, during the 1950s, TV was “almost as instructive” in teaching gay camp traditions as first-person initiation into queer subcultures.

There has been a consistency about the insider position across historical change, because, despite increased rights (typically, for those who are already relatively privileged), the broader heteronormative context and the pressures it creates for queer artists persist. Today's popular culture would seem to be vastly different from the media climate that existed when television programming debuted, yet insider material figures just as prominently in contemporary TV, not least because there is a continued need for queer perspectives that conflict with dominant LGBT norms as well as with hetero norms. An understanding of insider material that foregrounds its satirical powers is crucial to the study of queer camp in a post-network culture in which blindness to a more radical queerness occurs amid a hyperawareness of homosexuality and of an increasing range of gender and sexual minorities.

The archive of insider material in backstage comedy calls for paradigms of media analysis that allow for the possibility of queer representation no matter how heteronormative (or homonormative) the text or production context may appear (or how many LGBT characters or producers it may involve). Traditional frameworks for historicizing media production might dismiss fictional programming as a source of evidence in the study of actual studio cultures. However, historians can benefit greatly from this material. While clueing us into important forgotten aspects of media production, the appearance of Hollywood production contexts on screen can

help scholars develop analytic models sophisticated enough to unpack these representations. Camp complexity lends itself to a historical perspective on popular culture that recognizes queer production as an integral aspect of television comedy since the beginning of broadcast culture. It behooves scholars to interpret the insider material that producers reveal during comic moments within this sphere of recognition. From the beginnings of satirical TV comedy through to *30 Rock*, the camp productions of Hollywood workers have been informed by, and have recirculated, the queerness of showbiz history and the profound freedom in backstage comedy representation, available where it is least expected.

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Hollywood Elsewhere

The Runaway Locations Industry and Transnational Production Cultures

Serra Tinic

ABSTRACT

In an era of rapid media globalization, transnational production practices have been transformed to the extent that Hollywood, both as a metaphorical state of mind and as a literal mode of cultural production. This chapter examines the cultural and economic debates surrounding the runaway productions through a case study of Vancouver, British Columbia – a city that has been dubbed “Hollywood North” and is now considered the model upon which other international cities attempt to build their own service industries to attract and accommodate US television and film productions. Drawing upon my previous fieldwork within the Vancouver television production community (Tinic, 2005), I argue for a reconsideration of the ways in which we study media production to better address the local, regional, and global reconfigurations of space and culture that accompany the economic dimensions of the international locations industries.

In one of the first ethnographic studies of the US motion picture industry, Hortense Powdermaker (1950, p. 23) stated: “Hollywood itself is not an exact geographical area, although there is such a postal district. It has commonly been described as a state of mind, and it exists wherever people connected with the movies live and work.” Sixty years later, the rapid pace of media globalization has transformed

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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transnational production practices to the extent that Hollywood, both as a metaphorical “state of mind” and as a literal mode of cultural production, is now located in Prague, in Vancouver, in Australia’s Gold Coast, and in other international destinations. Over the last thirty years an increasing number of US television and film producers have moved their projects outside of the United States, in search of artistic realism in locations shooting and also in pursuit of the economic benefits offered by favorable currency exchange rates and labor environments. Consequently cities around the world are investing in the requisite production infrastructure and creative personnel to compete for a piece of what has come to be termed the US “runaway locations industry.” The rise of these new Hollywood service centers brings questions of the spatial politics of global inter-city competition to the forefront of media production scholarship. Therefore an exploration of the cultural geography of the new creative networks developed between Hollywood and these “locations” cities is imperative to understanding contemporary changes in the media industries and in the texts they produce across national contexts.

This chapter examines the cultural and economic debates surrounding runaway productions through the case study of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada – a city that has been dubbed “Hollywood North” and is now considered the model upon which other international cities attempt to build their own service industries, in order to attract and accommodate US television and film productions. The story of Vancouver’s development as Hollywood North dates back to the 1970s, when the provincial government established the BC Film Commission with a mandate to attract and facilitate US film and television production as a means of diversifying a resource-based economy that was suffering the exigencies of global commodities markets. By capitalizing on the geographical diversity of the province’s scenery, on the lower value of the Canadian dollar, and on physical proximity to Los Angeles, the commission contributed to the development of a service locations industry that would eventually establish Vancouver as the third largest production site for US television series and movies, after Los Angeles and New York.

Vancouver’s relationship with Los Angeles-based producers transformed the region’s television and film production community in ways that have not been adequately discussed in much of the academic scholarship about runaway productions. Not only did the entrenchment of Hollywood North allow for the development of new creative partnerships and intercontinental professional networking, it also led to a global profile for the city that would establish it as a centre for international co-production projects. However, rather than exploring the transnational reconfigurations of space and place evidenced by Vancouver’s rise as a production centre, much of the academic debate remains mired in nationally focused macrolevel analyses of the political and economic dimensions of locations production.

In the United States, Vancouver’s success in attracting runaway productions led to vociferous complaints and to intensive lobbying, within the Los Angeles production community and within labor unions in particular, to “bring the industry back home” (Haysom, 1996). Such sentiments came to be echoed in scholarly research

that implicitly connects the runaway locations industry with other forms of global economic outsourcing – such as the flight of the automobile and information technology industries (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005). In Canada, analyses of Vancouver as Hollywood North resonate with the earlier work of Dallas Smythe (1981) and with his compelling insights into the peripheral status of Canadian television within the North American political economy of broadcasting. Without overt reference to the concept of cultural imperialism, the implication of recent analyses is such that the presence of US productions may operate as a form of production imperialism wherein the city and the province become a branch plant for LA-based studios and executives (Christopherson, 2005; Gasher, 2002). This is not to say that issues of labor strife and continental inequity are insignificant, but rather that such matters only provide us with a partial understanding of the multifarious implications of new transnational production practices. As O'Regan and Goldsmith (2003) assert in their study of the Australian context, such nationally focused analyses, and the qualification “runaway” for locations industry itself, privilege the conceptualization of Los Angeles as somehow the only “natural” home to Western television and film production. In their preference for the phrase “international studio complex,” the authors underline the importance of studying contemporary production cultures from a transnational vantage point.

My argument here offers a parallel to that of O'Regan and Goldsmith and to their call for the exploration of an “international production ecology.” Drawing upon excerpts from my previous research within the Vancouver television production community (Tinic, 2005),¹ I present new questions and frameworks for case studies of global production locations centers. I assert that, as industries of cultural production become increasingly mobile, we need to be better attuned to the ways in which producers work across borders and contribute to the emergence of new global media networks and of media spaces in general. In brief, I argue for a reconsideration of the ways in which we study media production, so as to address better the local, regional, and global reconfigurations of space and culture that accompany the economic dimensions of the international locations industries. Such sites have often been neglected or subsumed under dominant considerations of national systems of production. In the case of Vancouver, the evolution into Hollywood North may in fact facilitate the development of the city into a “media capital” as depicted by Curtin (2003, pp. 204–205):

[. . .] [cities] that have become centers for finance, production, and distribution of television programs. Centers of media activity that have specific logics of their own that do not necessarily correspond to the geography, interests, or policies of particular nation states. [. . .] They are switching points rather than containers.

The chapter begins by contextualizing “Hollywood North” within contemporary debates about the cultural geography of economic and cultural globalization processes. I then offer an overview of the specific governmental strategies that led to the development of the locations industry in Vancouver and of the concomitant aca-

demic critiques of runaway productions from both sides of the border. The following section extends Curtin's conceptualization of media capitals through a brief case study of the continental success of Vancouver showrunner Chris Haddock. Haddock's success in producing dramas for both Canadian (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)'s *Da Vinci's Inquest*, 1998–2005) and US (Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS)' *The Handler*, 2003–2004) television networks illustrates the new forms of cross-border creative networks that develop in transnational production contexts – a cultural dynamic that is often overlooked in macrolevel academic analyses of global media settings. The chapter concludes with the proposition that comparative analyses of the cultural, economic, and geographical distinctions among different runaway locations sites (or international studio complexes) can give us a better understanding of both the emergence of new global media capitals and the contemporary challenges and opportunities facing Hollywood itself.

Media Geographies: The Politics of Space and Place

In the 1990s media studies research began to engage in a productive dialogue with larger interdisciplinary debates about the contemporary dynamics of cultural and economic globalization. The works of cultural geographer David Harvey (1990) and of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996), in particular, brought questions of mobility and spatiality to the forefront of global media analyses. In an era of scholarship that increasingly questioned the “nation-state” as a stable category of cultural identification, these authors contributed to a growing lexicon, which media studies drew upon, in an attempt to grapple with the contradictions and continuities that marked an acknowledgment that *international* no longer seemed an adequate modifier for the changing terrain of global communications practices and reception. Appadurai's depiction of “flows” and “scapes” of people, symbolic representations, and capital (to name but a few) and Harvey's emphasis on the transformative dimensions of global spatial politics in relation to the community formations of local places, underlined the increasing permeability of territorial borders and the multidirectionality of cultural exchange and impact. Although never explicitly articulated within these works, it seemed evident that the role of the media as both transnational corporations and cultural intermediaries should be brought to the forefront of questions of globalizing spaces at all levels, whether economic, interpretative, and/or representational.

Indeed, the media are inextricably linked to the cultural geography of globalization. The images they produce of spaces and places contribute to the global flows of people (whether émigrés or tourists) and discursive modalities. Moreover, the media industries, too, are increasingly mobile, as changes in production and distribution practices become transnational in scope. The evolution of the transnational film and television locations industry is but one example of the ways in which the media are implicated in questions of spatial competition and in the representation of places.

In a manner similar to that of other global corporations seeking economically advantageous conditions for the manufacture and distribution of their goods, Hollywood production companies are increasingly *dis-located* from their national centers in New York and Los Angeles as they move their projects on the road, in search of cheaper labor and aesthetic realism. The establishment of Vancouver, British Columbia as “Hollywood North” is one of the more vivid examples of the new forms of city–region competition that marks Harvey’s depiction of the struggle to control the terrain of space according to the interests of global capital. Consequently, in thinking about the relationship between the media and local, regional, and national communities, we need to reconceptualize *identity*, *space*, and *production* within a larger global cultural and political economic context (Mahon, 1993).

Most scholars tend to discuss globalization as a relatively recent phenomenon and focus their attention on the changes in the global economy that witnessed the passing of the Fordist model of production to one of flexible accumulation, from the 1970s into the present day.² Advances in satellite, computer, and other electronic communications technologies – and the consequent *placelessness* of international capital – marked the 1980s as a decade of rapid movement into a global political and economic environment marked by interdependence between its parts (Robertson, 1990). In this era of “disorganized capitalism” (Lash & Urry, 1987), questions of group identity become more problematic as people, cultural forms, and production practices are no longer territorially fixed. In communications terms, the media are implicated in contributing to the simultaneous development of supranational and subnational group affiliations that have led some Western nations to confront conflicting conceptualizations of cultural identity – local, regional, and national – for the first time.

To review the growing body of literature on the cultural ramifications of globalization from a Canadian vantage point is to experience an unsettling sense of *déjà vu*. As political economists will argue, the Canadian economy prior to the 1970s is best described as one of “permeable Fordism,” in that its particular characteristic “since 1945 [was to be] permeated by international – or more exactly, continental – effects. Its Fordism was designed domestically, but always with an eye to the continental economy” (Jane Jenson, quoted in Angus, 1997, p. 23). Those years immediately following the end of World War II were a contradictory time in Canada’s national trajectory. It was, in Harold Innis’ terms (quoted in Laba, 1988, pp. 86–87), its brief moment of nationhood between British colonialism and US economic imperialism. By the 1960s Canadian industry was beginning to be seen as a branch plant of US corporations, and internal fault lines deepened as a result of increasing complaints of colonialism from within – Ottawa against the provinces and Québec against the country. It is within this context that Vancouver’s development into Hollywood North has been critiqued as the logical outcome of a continental economic relationship in which US capital interests subsumed Canadian labor forces.

However, as theorists debate the dissolution of the nation as final arbiter of a sense of community under the current processes of globalization, they address an issue that echoes the Canadian experience since the nation's establishment – namely the fact that local, regional, national, and continental/international identities have always coexisted and competed within the political and geographic construct of the nation-state, and that such community identifications need not be mutually exclusive. It is precisely this dialectical relationship between global and local cultural practices that is most evident in the example of the Vancouver television industry and in the larger Canadian national identity debate. Among the producers I spoke with, only a few did not express a desire to operate within three cultural fields at once: the local, the national, and the international. If given the opportunity, they intended to take the particular experiences of their community (which cannot help but be inflected by global themes, given the large, diverse, and active ethnic communities within Vancouver), set the stories *within* the larger national context, and circulate them throughout the international marketplace. The realities of international television production and the quest for distribution and markets, to some extent, demand a fusion between the particular and the universal.

The role of cultural producers has only recently gained attention in media globalization studies, which tend to emphasize the rapid flow of media content in abstract terms, but rarely examine the specific negotiations behind the images that end up on television and on the movie screens around the world. However, these groups of transnational professionals can be seen as “third cultures,” which are important conduits of global cultural flows; and, while they operate in cosmopolitan circumstances, they are just as likely to be “locals at heart” (Featherstone, 1990, p. 9). It is, in fact, this cosmopolitan–local persona that I found reflected in my conversations with Vancouver television producers. Whether selling to the national networks or to international distributors, the independent producers underlined that stories that were overly *particular* to a place were difficult to pitch. In this respect, more homogeneous or universal programs are perceived to be more successful in market terms. However, a caveat was offered by all the producers, in that their choice of stories and the mode in which they told them could not but be informed by their own cultural and social experiences – the phrase most often used was that inescapably vague *Canadian sensibility*.

What was most interesting about the definition that each one provided when pressed as to the nature of this sensibility was the repeated reference to the experience of marginality, both within the nation and internationally – the idea that control and decisions were always elsewhere. In this respect, regional location was a strong source of identification for these people; but it was not separable from each location being a part of a larger collection of regions that were muddling through together, always in the process of trying to define themselves as a group. As these individuals underlined, the idea of the Canadian *nation* was still an important reference point, even when they operated in a global context. But within that context they retained

the sense of regional alienation and of lack of participation in the larger definition of the national community.

Decades ago, when discussing a definable *Canadian* identity, the famed literary critic Herman Northrop Frye commented that “contemporary Canadian culture, being a culture, is not a national development but a series of regional ones” (quoted in Mandel & Taras, 1987, p. 211). In fact, unlike broadcasting studies, Canadian literary and anthropological analyses have long emphasized the importance of locality or region as a creative force in the articulation of cultural expression. In this respect, the tensions between the forces of regional fragmentation, national centralization, and the US political and cultural presence have been fundamental to the frameworks of literary and ethnographic analyses.

The global flow of capital, as well as the global reach of popular culture via international media, has redefined the notion of local identity. The British architect Kenneth Frampton’s call for a “critical regionalism” is an especially useful framework for the study of Canadian culture and communication. According to Frampton, “local cultures can only be constituted now as locally inflected manifestations of global culture” (quoted in Robins, 1989, p. 161). Therefore, instead of looking for authenticity in local culture, critical regionalism seeks to examine how local identity is constructed through *pastiche* and *bricolage* from whatever cultural materials are available or *at hand* (de Certeau, 1984).

David Morley (1992, p. 282) refers to this simultaneous dynamic of “globalization and localization” as a “politics of space and place” wherein “places [. . .] are perhaps best seen not as ‘bounded areas’ but as ‘spaces of interaction’ in which local identities are constructed out of resources (both material and symbolic) which may well not be at all local in their origin.” The differentiation of *place* and *space* takes on new dimensions in the postmodern dilemma of cultural fragmentation. As Harvey (1990) explains, *place* (local culture) becomes crucial to marginalized groups, both intra- and internationally, as such groups have a better command over cultural definition at this site than they have over *space*, which is the terrain of national institutions and global capital. Thus, to the extent that fragmentation may lead to an intensified search for collective identity or may “secure moorings in a shifting world,” it should be explored within the context of place (*ibid.*, pp. 301–304).

In this respect, Vancouver provides a strategic location from which to examine the relationships between regional, national, and global cultural productions. Before the 1980s, Vancouver was the largest production center for English Canadian television programs outside of Toronto. However, with the increasing centralization of CBC programming at the network level in Toronto and with decreased access to federal broadcast production funds, regional television producers in British Columbia have felt they were denied the opportunity to tell English Canadian stories for almost twenty years. As a result, the Vancouver production community has taken advantage of the Hollywood presence and pursued co-venture agreements with US producers and co-production projects with other international partners to make programs for global audiences, of which Canadians constitute a small minority. The globalization

of the Vancouver television industry can be seen, from one perspective, as the logical outcome of the weaknesses of federal broadcasting policies and institutions that have sought to use nationalism, as defined by central Canada, as a “conscious strategy of pasting over the cracks” of regional discontent (Melville Watkins, quoted in Laba, 1988, p. 82).

National public service broadcasting began in Canada in 1932, with the establishment of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Corporation (CRBC, which became the CBC in 1936) at the recommendation of the Aird Commission Report – the first in a long line of Royal Task Forces on broadcasting policy. The Aird Report was the first government mandate to institute the concept of *national unity* as a counterforce to US culture in Canadian communications policy. As Wayne Skene (1993) underlines, the Aird commission and subsequent task forces defined national unity as *inter-regional communication*. Within this model, programming was to originate in the provinces and the central network was to serve a function of dissemination rather than one of production. The committee was sensitive to the fact that a centralized programming system might alienate rather than unite the regionally distinct provinces into a nation. Therefore the foundation of a Canadian broadcasting policy was designed to encourage local producers to share among themselves their communities’ cultural narratives and to avoid a single, centralized definition of *Canadian* culture. However, the economic and technological challenges of developing the sizeable Canadian broadcast distribution system eventually led to the exact form of centralization that the Aird Commission had sought to avoid. By 1968, the year of a new Broadcasting Act, the phrase *national unity* had been changed to *national identity*, and television programming (as defined by headquarters in Toronto and Montreal) was seen as the means to create *a* Canadian identity and at the same time to defend oneself against US cultural domination (Raboy, 1990).

The centralization of decision-making for English Canadian television drama eventually culminated in a political struggle between the regional and national production centers over definitions of programming of sufficient quality to merit inclusion at the national network level. The situation became more acute for regional producers, as the federal government began to divest from national public broadcasting during the economic downturn of the 1980s. Regional programming carried the burden of the federal budget cuts, and by 1989 75% of the CBC program budget was allocated to national programming, while the remaining 25% (which was directed to regional production) was targeted primarily to sustaining local news programming (Hoskins & McFadyen, 1992). What little remained of regional drama production was lost in 1990, when the CBC was forced to address a corporate shortfall of \$108 million and did so by closing or downsizing several regional stations and by canceling hundreds of hours of programming. In the end, regional production suffered a loss of \$46 million, while only \$12 million were cut from the national network.

Consequently, when I first began fieldwork research in the late 1990s, there was not a single television drama in production at the CBC’s Vancouver production center.

However, the growing success of the provincial government's effort to establish the city as a primary site for US runaway television and film production provided new opportunities for domestic television producers to explore continental and international creative and financial partnerships that would, to some extent, mitigate their increased marginalization within the national broadcasting sphere.

Constructing Vancouver as *Hollywood North*

In the 1980s the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture in British Columbia developed the "Super, Natural British Columbia" campaign, which promoted travel to the province by extolling the beauty and variety of British Columbia's natural landscape in a series of advertisements directed both at US and at out-of-province Canadian markets. While "Super, Natural BC" remains the province's official tourism motto to this day, by the mid-1990s the formula became more closely associated with the fact that Vancouver was the production home of eight of the top US *supernatural* television series – including *The X-Files* (1993–2002), *Highlander* (1992–1998), *The Outer Limits* (1995–2002), *Sliders* (1995–1999), *Strange Luck* (1995–1996), *Millennium* (1996–1999), *Stargate SG-1* (1997–2007), and *The Sentinel* (1996–1999). The connection here is not meant to appear facetious. The rationale for producing these series in Vancouver is, in fact, largely the diversity of locations available in a coastal province that also contains a glacier mountain range and a dry, rugged interior region. The Lower Mainland's gray, rainy, and foggy winters also provide the natural light and settings that writer-producers and directors of photography (DPs) relish in their efforts to establish the necessary atmosphere for such programs. And it is no coincidence that the BC Film Commission, the organization largely responsible for recruiting runaway US television and film production, was initially established within the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture.

The connection to small business is, however, misleading. In British Columbia, film and television production and tourism are multi-million dollar industries that are integral components of the province's larger economic globalization strategy and goal to establish Vancouver as a world-class or global city. The financial success generated by runaway productions³ became vividly apparent during the watershed period of the 1990s. In 1997 the television and motion picture industry spent directly an estimated \$700 million dollars in Vancouver – an increase of \$100 million from the previous year. During that year, the BC Film Commission provided service to \$2.7 billion worth of productions (one third of the potential market) and confirmed Vancouver's status as the third largest production center for US movies and television series (BC Film Commission, 1997). In fact, of the approximately 200 television programs and movies shot in the province between 1996 and 1997, only an estimated 20% were domestic Canadian productions (Rice-Barker, 1997, p. 3). By 2000, the spending figure reached by the film and television industry had surpassed the \$1.18 billion mark.

This integration of the Vancouver locations industry into the larger Hollywood production structure has led critics to argue that foreign production has not only displaced domestic production in British Columbia but has also erased any sense of place, by commodifying this production or selling producers “an industrial setting (physical sites and services) rather than a cultural and historical site (a source of stories and characters)” (Gasher, 1995, p. 233). This indictment of US and other international productions in British Columbia is partially accurate. Foreign producers do not choose to bring their projects to Vancouver to tell Canadian stories or to portray Canadian settings. In fact, much of their pre-production work consists in finding sites that can stand in for other places, usually some place in the United States, and then in *dressing* them accordingly (which means removing any physical objects that could identify a location as Canadian in any way). The title of the BC Film Commission’s centerpiece promotional brochure, *The British Columbia Shooting Gallery: We Can Give It to You for a Song*, is indeed the best illustration of the argument that the locations industry commodifies Vancouver as geographical space to be sold to international television and film producers.

The Shooting Gallery is a 30-page glossy magazine that underscores the reasons why foreign producers have flocked to Vancouver over the past decade: the diversity of British Columbia’s geography, the inexpensive Canadian dollar (which fluctuated between 79 and 89 US cents throughout the 1990s and declined below 65 cents in 2002), well-trained film crews, and, importantly, the proximity to Los Angeles, the center of the US industry. The discourse of commerce provides the subtext of the publication and uses a play on words and song titles to frame snapshots of Vancouver communities frozen into stage-set vignettes with generic locations identifications: “The Big City,” “Urban Ethnic,” “Deep Woods,” “Industrial,” “Residential,” “The Mountains,” “The Period Look,” “The Railroads,” “The Countryside,” “The Farm,” “The Wild West,” “Small Towns,” “High Tech,” “Coastlines,” “Ranch Country,” and “Wilderness.” Beginning with the subtitle (*We Can Give It to You for a Song*), the brochure tells foreign producers that “This land is your land” and that, for a fraction of the costs elsewhere, Vancouver can be made to look like anywhere in the world; and it closes with the invitation to “Come and get it. . .”

However, the goal of attracting commerce – rather than the goal of national cultural development – was the central mandate of the BC Film Commission. The commission was created in 1978 by a provincial government that sought to diversify its resource-based economy by creating an industry that would not be subject to the exigencies of commodities markets. To this extent, the BC government’s economic strategy exemplifies Jane Jenson’s (1993) depiction of the patterns of post-Fordism in Canada during the mid-1970s and 1980s. At the time, the provinces found themselves increasingly in conflict and competition, in their efforts to restructure, politically and economically, in ways that “often implied abandoning efforts to protect the borders of the domestic economy” and favored “accommodating new regimes of accumulation” (ibid., p. 159). An important aspect of this process were the appeals made by provincial governments, using the neoliberal discourse of globalization,⁴ to

encourage “unions to participate in new kinds of tripartite bodies to design programs for restructuring industry and re-locating Canadian production in the new global economy” (ibid., p. 158). The BC Film Commission’s mandate exemplifies this strategy. The first step to developing the Vancouver locations and service industry was to negotiate a cooperative agreement with the BC film and television unions and thereby to establish a conducive economic environment for US producers. The next step was to send a team to Los Angeles and convince the studios and producers that Vancouver would be the ideal city for their production needs. One member of the commission summarized the province’s initial strategy:

LA has always been based around the top five or six major studios. Each of those studios has a major executive in charge of production for features, for television, etcetera, so you go and you sit in their offices with pictures, a portfolio book, with the union hand in hand – government and the union walking into the office and saying whatever it takes to get them up here and they would come. Sometimes a feature is going to come here anyway, because it’s locations driven. For instance, when [director] Fred Schepisi’s going to do *Iceman*, where are you going to get glaciers that are within 20 or 30 minutes’ flying time from downtown? Vancouver has that option – anything that’s wilderness-based, which is exciting for viewers – you can stay at the Sutton Place [a luxury, downtown hotel], go to the Seymour Demonstration Forest and look like you’re actually lost in the woods – work for 12 hours and drive back to the Sutton Place. It’s great and they like it. (Interview with author, August 13, 1997)

It is precisely these amenities, and the Seymour Demonstration Forest in particular, that made Vancouver home to *The X-Files* for the show’s first five seasons. The series’ creator, Chris Carter, needed a forest for an unidentified flying object (UFO) landing scene in the first episode and, as forests are somewhat scarce in Los Angeles, he found what he needed in Vancouver. Carter became one of the city’s biggest boosters, with his declaration that he had found the “biggest backlot in North America” (quoted in Leiren-Young, 1995a, p. S12).

Vancouver’s capacity to serve as the “biggest backlot in North America” was actually noticed long before *The X-Files* and the creation of the BC Film Commission. In the 1930s, when Canada was still a British dominion, Hollywood producers took advantage of the fact that shooting movies on location in British Columbia would allow them access to the highly protected film market in the United Kingdom. These “quota quickies,” as they were called, constituted the first stage of the BC locations industry until 1938, when Britain revised its quota system so as to exclude productions from the dominions as domestic content (MacIntyre, 1996, p. 132). The second stage of the BC locations industry did not begin until the early 1970s, when US directors such as Mike Nichols and Robert Altman moved their productions on location, in search of greater “realism” (ibid., p. 133). The development of the BC Film Commission and its ability to capitalize on the positive experiences of the early US directors and producers who had worked in Vancouver can thus be seen as the third and most enduring stage of the city’s evolution toward becoming a Hollywood service centre.

However, it is not the BC Film Commission alone that has guaranteed the longevity of the Vancouver locations industry. The provincial government committed to maintaining the necessary infrastructure by investing millions of dollars in the building of studio space, in order not to lose any potential productions for lack of production facilities. To keep the industry growing, the provincial government spent \$4.4 million to build studios in 1987. A one-time steel fabrication factory, The Bridge Studios (The Bridge) opened with four sound-stages and the largest special effects stage in North America, all facilities that enabled Vancouver to attract high-budget Hollywood features such as *Jumanji* (1995), *Alive* (1993), and the \$100-million Disney movie *The Thirteenth Warrior* (1999) (Leiren-Young, 1995a, p. S7). The government's commitment to maintaining a secure environment for runaway US production led to spin-off effects in attracting international capital investment in other studios and sound-stages. Two years after The Bridge was built, Stephen J. Cannell decided to make Vancouver the production home for his series *21 Jump Street*, *Booker*, and *Wiseguy* and built North Shore Studios to accommodate his production needs. At the time, North Shore Studios was the largest sound-stage in Canada and Cannell's confidence in Vancouver as a production environment provided the impetus for other LA producers to go beyond using the city as a temporary locations site and actually to move their television series production there. North Shore Studios would eventually become the production center for *The X-Files* until the show's relocation to Los Angeles in 1998. Later on it would also become the production center for Chris Carter's short-lived series *Millennium* and for the *X-Files* spin-off *The Lone Gunmen* (2001).

The provincial government further accommodated the interests of international capital investment in Vancouver in 1996, when it agreed to a partnership with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) Worldwide Television, which was undertaken in order to build a fifth sound-stage at The Bridge. The agreement allowed MGM a long-term lease on the sound-stage for the television series *Stargate SG-1*, which began production the following year. The MGM-government agreement met with mixed emotions from local Vancouver producers, who were not so much concerned with the growing amount of US production in the city as with the government's hesitancy to transfer some of the revenue into a fund that would support domestic film and television production. MGM's senior vice-president of television Mel Swopes responded to these concerns by stating: "When you look back at earth from space you see no borders and no boundaries. Let's celebrate our differences and build our global film-making community" (quoted in Wilson, 1996, p. C13).

It is statements like this one that fuel the arguments of those who see the locations and service industry as displacing domestic production and denying the sociocultural specificities of place, while Vancouver becomes assimilated into the Hollywood production structure. It is, after all, difficult to "celebrate our differences" when the concentration of effort appears to be directed at helping to produce another nation's stories. If we were to proceed from a purely economic perspective, the sheer number of US productions in Vancouver would appear to reinforce the perception of Hollywood's displacement of domestic production. However, unlike other forms of international capital and resource/production flows,

the “globally mobile” film and television industry does not merely “create and use up places for the purposes of production or consumption” (Nigel Thrift, quoted in Morley and Robins, 1995, p. 31). In other words, merely by filming projects in Vancouver, international producers do not first exhaust the labor, resources, or sites needed for domestic production and then move on to the next locations city, leaving Vancouver a depleted resource town, like the “rust-belt cities.” Rather, the production and post-production facilities built to support US runaways, as well as the skills and partnership networks developed throughout, persist and enhance the domestic regional television and film communities.

In fact, before British Columbia was able to attract runaway US production, local producers were dependent on the transitory whims of central Canadian broadcasters and policymakers to support and maintain any level of domestic television and film production in the province. The fact that there were fewer domestic productions prior to Hollywood’s arrival in British Columbia further contradicts the implication that foreign television and film industries somehow supplant the domestic. This was, indeed, the common grievance of most of the producers I spoke to during my fieldwork in Vancouver. Neglect from federal decision-makers and disparate access to financing were seen to be far greater barriers to developing local productions than the presence of the Hollywood production machine was. Ironically, many of the producers found that ancillary benefits from working within the US system, at home, somewhat filled the void left by the lack of federal support. In this respect, the training and the income derived from working on US projects were seen to be invaluable to these producers’ eventual plans of amassing the capital and connections required to stabilize their own production companies. This is the central contradiction of the US production presence in Vancouver: it absorbs labor and resources while simultaneously creating opportunities for local producers to fund and distribute their own programs independently.

This potential to develop cross-border and mutually beneficial creative networks has been largely overlooked in macrolevel analyses of contemporary global television production strategies. Rather, the emphasis within such production studies tends to reproduce the traditional core-periphery model of political economy arguments, wherein Hollywood’s domination in the global circulation of television programming extends now to the transnational colonization of those who labor to produce it. Indeed, placing the focus on what has come to be termed “the new international division of cultural labor” (NICL) tends to create the impression of a seamless regime of governance in which Hollywood (as a monolithic force) regulates the global television production and distribution chain through control over cultural labor, co-production treaties, marketing, and exhibition (Miller, Govil, McMurria, & Maxwell, 2001, p. 18). As the authors of *Global Hollywood* argue, the volume of runaway productions today is the culmination of a process that dates back to the 1940s and to the strategy of US studio executives to “avoid restrictions on expatriation of profits, [and] exploit government subventions and cheap, docile labor” (ibid., p. 56).⁵ The conceptualization of an emergent NICL provides important insights into contempo-

rary strategies of global capital flows in film and television production. However, it insufficiently articulates the constraints or opportunities that define the experiences of cultural producers working within the transnational television locations production infrastructure. Studios may indeed be searching for “docile labor,” but this does not guarantee that workers are unable to establish alternative networks and to exploit the resources of capital investment to their own interests. As Mark Banks (2007, pp. 26–27) underlines, such political economic analyses tend to “neglect subjectivity” altogether and “overlook the embedded social relations of cultural commodity production.” Indeed, his explication of the trend toward a “craft production style,” wherein smaller companies of creative professionals work both within and outside of the parameters of larger studio control, underlines the contradictions within capitalism – namely that, while executives desire to control labor, they must allow for a degree of autonomy if innovation and artistry are to flourish in the name of profit (*ibid.*, pp. 21, 29). Banks’ preference for the qualification “compliant” (*ibid.*, p. 36) as opposed to “docile” labor parallels my own analyses of the ways in which incorporation into the strategic interests of the US locations industry allowed the ancillary networks and the resources for creative professionals in Vancouver to foster the growth of independent production and distribution companies.

It is, nevertheless, important to note that discourses of commodity labor power in the runaway productions industry tend to reproduce the overdetermined dichotomy between above-the-line workers (“creatives”) and below-the-line workers (“crews”) in television production. Here critiques of runaway productions fall into two categories: (1) concern over the displacement of jobs for US technical crews when “Hollywood” goes on location in another country; or (2) a race to the bottom, economically speaking, since second-unit production crews in other countries are regarded as “docile” worker bees as long as they are willing to accept lower wages in exchange for the opportunity of employment on US productions. In North America, pessimistic accounts of runaway productions are thus depicted as extensions of global post-Fordist regimes of flexible labor, which are epitomized by outsourcing and international branch plants. Such characterizations of the negative impact of runaway productions provided a powerful rhetoric that, in turn, fueled a divisive politics, which positioned US and Canadian production unions into a state of competitive – if not combative – relationship with each other. This phenomenon can be witnessed in the intensification of US union lobbying, which followed the rise in actual volume of runaway productions to Vancouver. The extent of inter-city competition between Los Angeles and Vancouver reached its zenith in the mid-1990s, when then Mayor Richard Riordan, in partnership with actor Charlton Heston, announced the opening of the Los Angeles Film Office as part of a strategy to “bring the movies back home” (Haysom, 1996, p. A6).

Although the divisive components of transnational labor issues remain of central concern to our understanding of the complexities and contingencies of global runaway productions, it is also imperative to further explore the grounded micro-politics of the television industry and the more intangible cultural aspects of the new

creative networks and geographies that have emerged in the transnational televisual environment. As both Allen Scott (2005) and John T. Caldwell (2008) underline, the current challenges facing Hollywood unions are, directly, a result of the restructuring of the studio system in Los Angeles itself, as opposed to being merely the result of the flight of production to other countries. Over the last 30 years, Hollywood studios have moved their projects “out of house,” to smaller independent companies (even if these latter remain within the larger conglomerate) that form competing networks of flexible production; and such companies are increasingly defined by the use of non-union labor (Caldwell, 2008, p. 80). Moreover, the attempt to “redefine geography through symbolic references to the *space* of film and television work” (ibid., emphasis added) diminishes the importance of the more intangible cultural dimensions that weave through our understanding of the NICL. Caldwell’s fieldwork within the industry specifically highlights the importance of exploring the microlevel practices of production as those members of the industry who fall “below the line” are found to be contributors just as integral to the creative process of televisual storytelling as the writers, the directors, the actors, and the producers who are economically above the accounting “line.” Scott’s and Caldwell’s studies correspond well with a growing body of literature in the field of media cultural geography that moves beyond core–periphery explanations of global production practices, in an effort to understand the fluidity of, and the tensions in, the new transnational networks that define contemporary television.

Media Capitals, Creative Clusters, and Runaway Production: The Case of Haddock Entertainment, Canada

Curtin’s (2009) conceptualization of “media capital” is, arguably, one of the most cogent explications of the synthesis of cultural and economic factors that mutually inform the global television production and distribution landscape. As Curtin argues (ibid., pp. 112–116), today’s media industries are driven by tripartite forces informed by the “logic of accumulation,” “trajectories of creative migration,” and “forces of socio-cultural variation.” The concept of media capital accords advantage to those sites – global cities or regions – of media production that not only allow for the expansion of markets and productive resources (“the logic of accumulation”), but also rely on the creativity of a workforce that is equally dedicated to the task of cultural expression and to economic profit (“creative migration”). The significance of the third dimension – sociocultural variation – and the promotion of the “local” as a means to address “niche markets outside of foreign control and competition” are particularly significant insights, which speak to the shortcomings of political economic perspectives that reproduce world systems theory into the field of television production studies. Indeed, through

its emphasis on the sustained importance of national and local institutions as driving forces in cultural production, Curtin's explication of media capital contradicts the insinuations or accusations of imperialism, which underline many critiques of locations productions. In all respects, Curtin's depiction of media capital provides a far more compelling framework for understanding the logic of Vancouver as "Hollywood North" than the two other existing explanations of this mode of production do – either the more traditional "outsourcing" explanations or the "branch plant" ones. Illustrative cases in this regard are the story of Vancouver showrunner Chris Haddock and the continental success of his series *Da Vinci's Inquest*.

Haddock is, in many respects, the face of the contradictory forces that define Vancouver as "Hollywood North." Haddock grew through the ranks and established himself as a writer on the US runaway production *MacGyver* in the 1980s. Throughout the process, he became particularly familiar with the creative processes and constraints of both the Canadian industry and the US one. In the late 1990s CBC found itself in a crisis, with a dearth of dramatic series for the network's prime-time schedule, and it began looking at pitches from regional producers to complete the schedule for the new fall. Haddock's pitch for his new crime procedural *Da Vinci's Inquest* eventually won out against its competitors and, in the process, raised eyebrows as to whether the nation's public broadcaster had sold out to those who worked within Hollywood North. In other words, would this be a recombinant series that merely emulated US procedural ones, such as in the *Law and Order* (1990–) genre? The concerns were not without credence, given that the head of drama at the time wanted a series that would have "global legs" and thus the potential for international sales (Tinic, 2005). In the end, it was because Haddock was established within the runaway productions industry that he was able to sell to the national public broadcaster a series that was very locally specific – a fascinating contradiction. Moreover, the risks he was able to take while working with a public service broadcaster (PBS) would eventually lead him to sales in the restrictive US broadcast network market and to a subsequent opportunity to develop a series for CBS.

Da Vinci's Inquest drew on the real-life cases of Vancouver's crusading coroner and later mayor Larry Campbell. It was a no-holds-barred examination of the coroner's attempts to improve the conditions of existence for the people living in Vancouver's downtown eastside – Canada's poorest neighborhood – which was marked by homelessness, drug use, and prostitution. In fact the four-block radius of the neighborhood had the highest rate of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in the Western world according to the World Health Organization (WHO). These dark themes were filmed in a visual style that pulled no punches. In fact it wasn't unusual to see characters shooting up in scenes reminiscent of the 1996 British movie *Trainspotting*. This was not typical network prime-time fare. Yet *Da Vinci* became a breakout hit for the CBC; and its success was noted by a relatively new Vancouver-based distribution company – Thunderbird Films. Thunderbird was in the process of developing a niche within the "Hollywood North" production sector that would specifically market Canadian domestic programming of sufficiently high production

quality worldwide. Although *Da Vinci* had already been sold to 50 countries, Thunderbird was determined to get it into the US market. The company was relying on the industry's recognition of Haddock's name as a consequence of his experience in Hollywood North; but it was also relying on its own assumption that "American audiences [were] hungry for intriguing dramatic series that can simultaneously stretch the mind as well as entertain" (Thunderbird Films, 2005). Thunderbird Films eventually collaborated with the LA-based distribution company Program Partners to sell the series to CBS, which was facing a crisis in syndicated programming due to an overreliance on reality television programming.

At first CBS was reluctant to take on such a dark series, but Program Partners was able to sell the network on account of Haddock's being a familiar figure within the Hollywood structure, both through his writing of *MacGyver* and through his development of the critically acclaimed but short-lived US series *The Handler*. It was this ability to speak to Haddock's cross-border production experiences that solidified the sale of *Da Vinci's Inquest*, which not only resulted in ratings that exceeded all network expectations (beating out *CSI: Miami* and *Alias* in syndication) but also garnered that all important promotional buzz from national television critics such as the *New York Times*, which hailed it "as like nothing else you've seen on television." The success of *Da Vinci* solidified the relationship between Thunderbird and Program Partners to such an extent that the latter now distributes to US networks several Canadian procedurals, under its brand "Crime Watch" (Nordyke, 2006).

Haddock and his production company, Haddock Entertainment, form but one cursory example of the cross-border creative relationships that have emerged through the auspices of the continental runaway productions industry. Nevertheless, it is an instructive case of what Aida Hozic (2001) has described as the move to a "merchant economy" in global television production strategies, whereby the power of distributors increases in the expansion of supply, as opposed to the expansion of production. Although Vancouver, *qua* Hollywood North, may yet await the ascendance to the status of media capital that Curtin depicts, it very much corresponds to the definition of emergent creative cities and networks, as given by M. E. Porter (2005) and Terry Flew (2007). As Flew notes, it is often within the so-called "second-tier cities" that we see the most entrepreneurial cultural industry practices: these practices draw the most skilled and globally mobile labor into an intersection between creative and economic sectors (Hans Mommas, cited in Flew, 2007, p. 186) that actually extracts resources from the "first-tier" global cities. In a seeming correspondence with Richard Florida's (2005) definition of "creative cities," Haddock himself articulates the ways in which "production cities" move beyond reductionist core-periphery exhortations:

A lot of people in the US have said to me they would like to have what I have – which is complete creative freedom – and not have to live in LA. And just as soon as we make it easier for people to do that – with tax relief – then it [Vancouver] will become one of the three or four great cultural cities in the world. (Quoted in McNamara, 2004, p. F1)

While Haddock's sentiments speak to the maturation and entrenchment of Vancouver's position within the larger continental film and television production geography, his statements echo several of the problems raised by creative city boosters, including Florida. In this respect, there remains a line between those who are seen to "create" and those who labor to enable the cosmopolitan mobility of show-runners such as Haddock. To a great extent, the production workers "below the line" remain place-bound and dependent on the success of domestic producers, executives, and distributors, who are committed to the continued growth of their immediate communities. Yet, precisely in this regard, case studies that examine the particular circumstances of local-global production practices provide important interventions and elaborations for more macrolevel analyses of the globalization of Hollywood's production strategies. In brief, there are no guarantees, and questions of space and place are integral to our understanding of the contradictions that are inherent in the transnational objectives of global capital. Here, to reinforce Banks' (2007, p. 27) argument, we must remain attuned to the questions of subjectivity, as creators/laborers are active agents in the "personification of class relations and alienation" and thus represent varied and differential commitments to communities of production across the exponential rise of cities competing to be the next "Hollywood North."

The International Production Ecology

Vancouver is in many respects an anomaly in Hollywood's runaway production sphere. As a center of production, it affords more comparative advantages than most of its competitive cities, states, and countries (ranging from Louisiana, New Mexico, and Michigan in the United States to Australia's Gold Coast and Auckland, New Zealand). Location is the primary advantage, both in terms of proximity to Los Angeles and in terms of locations regarded as physical settings; but the commitment to maintaining state-of-the-art studio space, special effects, and post-production facilities has also betowed upon the city a "home away from home" quality, which enhances the two-hour commuting time back to Hollywood. And, contrary to arguments about inexpensive or "docile" labor, Vancouver continues to draw Hollywood productions despite a global recession and equivalent currencies. Given the combination of highly trained and productive crews (still remunerated under union regulations) and tax incentives, the province saw an increase of \$250 million in total spending, to the total of \$1.2 billion, from one year to the next (BC Film Commission, 2009). In fact the US network series *Fringe* (2008–) moved to Vancouver in 2009, after failing to garner favorable production circumstances in New York (Thielman, 2009). To this extent, Vancouver has become a model for other cities and countries that attempt to attract runaway locations productions. In recent years the most striking parallels have been between Canada on the one hand and Australia and New Zealand on the other. All three countries share similar concerns with regard to small domestic

markets and national cultural goals for network broadcasting. In fact Australia has followed Canada's lead where the "plasticity" of locations promotion is concerned (Landman, 2009, p. 143). In this respect AusFilm, the equivalent of the BC Film Commission, has created a "map" of the country that substitutes the nation's regions with recognizable international locales, particularly those of the United States, just as *The Shooting Gallery* does (see above, p. 475). However, it is difficult to trump the success of New Zealand's work on the 2001–2003 trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, where the runaway locations industry has shown the global industry that anything is digitally possible. Nevertheless, to end on a cautionary note, Vancouver's apparent success as a global model for the synthesis of global and domestic television and film production should not be seen as an easily replicable formula, or as a panacea for government divestment in the cultural sphere in small-market nations, or as an engine of growth in US states. The story of Hollywood North was a 30-year process that began with economic incentives but only truly came into its own once the technical infrastructure and face-to-face personal networks had been established. Indeed, it was the micropolitics of cultural exchange, on the ground (so to speak), that make Vancouver difficult to pinpoint (or emulate) in larger structural analyses of the new international division of cultural labor in the global television and film industries.

NOTES

- 1 In 1996 I conducted a one-year fieldwork study of the development of the US runaway locations industry in Vancouver, British Columbia. The central objective of that project was to determine how regional producers reconciled the economic and aesthetic requirements of a globalizing media industry with the nationalist goals of Canadian broadcasting policies. The project integrated three components: (1) in-depth interviews with members of the Vancouver television industry, including locations scouts, broadcasting executives, television development personnel, and program managers; (2) archival research on Canadian television programming and policy and analysis of discourse in the industry trade publications; and (3) textual analysis of television programming. This chapter contains excerpts from work I have published on that study: see Tinic 2005, 2008.
- 2 Fordism is defined by the system of assembly line manufacturing of standardized, mass produced commodities that dominated the economic systems of Western countries until the 1970s. Post-Fordism has come to designate new regimes of production and accumulation under process of economic globalization, namely the trend toward global outsourcing of production, the growth of knowledge and technology economies, and just-in-time production of specialty products for global niche consumers.
- 3 Although the phrase "runaway production" has most recently and explicitly been linked to US television and film productions in Canada, there is a long history of economic "runaways" from Hollywood. After World War II, countries throughout Europe found themselves economically disadvantaged in the cultural production sphere and, given the established domestic quotas on imported television programs and films, they established the cost-sharing template for international co-productions that exists today. Moreover, any local subsidiary of a foreign production company was allowed domestic tax incentives

and subsidization. As a result, many US productions moved to Europe to take advantage of the economic incentives and bypass import quotas. Aida Hozic (2001, p. 96) notes, it was US unions that first coined the phrase, calling these “runaway productions,” as the number of such productions tripled between 1949 and 1960.

- 4 Neoliberal discourses maintain that free-market policies – rather than government- or state-sponsored programs and subsidies – provide the most efficient means of delivering social and economic benefits to societies at a global level. These discourses advocate trade and production liberalization in a global economy and regard the private sector as the preferred provider of goods and services. Neoliberalism emphasizes individual autonomy and responsibility and the transference of all risks to the individual.
- 5 Jefferson Cowie’s (1999) historical analysis of Radio Corporation of America (RCA)’s persistent search for inexpensive labor for its radio and television manufacturing plants is an excellent reminder that the issues raised in arguments about the NICL are not new to a post-Fordist global economy. Beginning in the 1930s, RCA moved its factories from New Jersey to Indiana, to the Southern United States, and eventually to Mexico in the 1990s, in response to the workers’ capacity to organize and resist exploitation. Not only does Cowie illustrate the micropolitics of laborers’ negotiations of economic constraints; he emphasizes that all inter-city competitions for capital might better be described as processes of “transregionalization” than looked at through the more demarcated parameters of “transnationalization” (ibid., p. 2).

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Youth as Cultural Producers / Cultural Productions of Youth

Lora Taub-Pervizpour

ABSTRACT

This chapter offers an introduction to the diverse field of youth media production and practice. To do so, it begins with a consideration of the “crisis of voice,” identified by Nick Couldry in his book *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism* (2010). In relation to this crisis and to the systematic silencing of young adults from low-income communities and from communities of color, media making is explored as a field of practice within which young people gain access to critical resources for raising their voices. The chapter brings these issues into focus through an ethnographic study of a youth media program for economically and racially diverse adolescents in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

In his book *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*, Nick Couldry (2010) begins his bold project – that is, the project of naming a “crisis of voice” – from Paul Ricoeur’s claim that “we have no idea what a culture would be where no one any longer knew what it meant to narrate things” (1984, p. 28). The contemporary crisis of voice documented by Couldry has its genesis in the global ascent of neoliberalism in the 1980s and has by now insinuated itself into all domains of the social world, so we can discern it in the realms of politics, economics, and culture.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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Treating people as if they lack [the] capacity [to narrate their lives] is to treat them as if they were not human; the past century provides many shameful examples of just this. Voice is one word for that capacity, but having a voice is never enough. I need to know that my voice matters; indeed, the offer of effective voice is crucial to the legitimacy of modern democracies, while across economic and cultural life voice is offered in various ways. Yet we have grown used to ways of organizing things that ignore voice, that assume voice does not matter. (Couldry, 2010, p. 1)

Couldry argues that the doctrine of neoliberalism fundamentally “reduces the complexities of what it describes” and “presents the social world as made up of markets, and spaces of potential competition that need to be organized as markets, blocking other narratives from view” (ibid., p. 6). Within this context it is “consumer choice,” not “voice,” that has value. Market forces matter, while the potential social force of an engaged citizenry is suppressed.

In the US, no other group is told as often as youth is that its members’ voice does not matter. And no group is more excluded than youth from the possibility of having an effective voice. Young people fare worst of all in relation to neoliberal politics, which commodifies all facets of their everyday lives at home, at school, in communities, and in the wider culture of childhood. Neoliberalism values young people only in so far as they wield any degree of consumer power. The crisis of voice under neoliberalism is experienced most acutely by children and young adults from low-income communities and from communities of color, who are systematically rendered voiceless. Henry Giroux and others have identified the extent to which education advances neoliberal reasoning.

Central to the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology is a particular view of education in which market-driven identities and values are both produced and legitimated. Under such circumstances, pedagogy both within and outside of schools increasingly becomes a powerful force for creating the ideological and affective regimes central to reproducing neo-liberalism. (Giroux, 2004, p. 494)

This chapter attempts to document the particularities of this crisis of voice for low-income African American and Latino youth in Allentown, Pennsylvania who participate in HYPE – the Healthy Youth Peer Education program. HYPE uses digital media tools in the service of identifying, raising, and sustaining the voices of marginalized youth and brings these voices to bear in public conversations about healthy communities. HYPE is a collaboration among local institutions, professionals, and students engaged in a collective effort to explore what it looks like when communities choose to value the voices of young people who have been systematically silenced. By constructing a space in which young people can name and critique the ways in which they are silenced across multiple social institutions – school in particular – HYPE makes young people and adults join as allies in the difficult task of imagining a social world where teens’ voices do matter. This chapter describes one local response to Couldry’s call to action:

Treating voice as a value means discriminating in favour of ways of organizing human life and resources that, through their choices, put the value of voice into practice, by respecting the multiple interlinked processes of voice and sustaining them, not undermining or denying them. (Couldry, 2010, p. 2)

I also wish to suggest here that youth media programs create the conditions of possibility to produce these stories, and therefore they hold a promise as sites of human activity from which an alternative to neoliberal politics can be built. HYPE is one example of a site socially organized to promote what Couldry identifies as “a counter-rationality voice” (ibid., p. 14). The work presented here explores the relationships between young media producers and the adults who ally with them in their cultural productions. To ally with young people in their media making is, at its best, to construct a process of valuing voice. Documentary fieldwork conducted with HYPE over three years underscores the important reality that providing access to new technologies and practices will have a limited meaning or impact unless the participants intentionally construct social relations that are more just and more humane, in the face of the inequities that frame adult/youth relations in their community and in the culture at large. In their cultural productions, HYPE youth have documented those inequities, showing how they shaped their marginalization in relation to the local police, the school authorities, the neighborhood residents, and corporate mass media. At another level, HYPE youth remind us of the imperative to build more just and more equitable relationships *within* the sites and practices of media production.

Youth Media Production: Frames of Reference

As a field of practice, the youth media body has a long history of promoting young people’s rights to become the narrators of their own lived experience. As JoEllen Fisherkeller’s (2009) survey of the field demonstrates in detail, youth media production varies in relation to the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which it occurs. A common driving force for much of this practice is the recognition that young people often have limited access to spaces that are organized to promote the very possibility of their raising the voice as citizens. The field of youth media was largely forged through local grassroots efforts made by advocates aiming to redress the exclusion of youth voices from public life.¹ As one practitioner notes in Ingrid Dahl’s comprehensive *State of the Youth Media Field Report* (2009, p. 8):

Those of us who come to this field have done so because we know at our core that working with young people, identifying issues of relevance for them, and guiding their media productions to be powerful tools of change is unmistakably a radical and essential movement in education.

Young people are producing stories across a range of media that document hopes, sufferings, losses, and longings that they experience directly or witness within their communities, and that are based on class, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality.² To be sure, these narratives offer evidence of young people's ability to imagine a future in which their voices are valued and their stories matter.

The role of electronic media in the lives of children has commanded the attention of scholars since at least the 1930s, when the Payne Fund Studies famously attempted to track the impacts of film – the “new media” of that decade – on young viewers. In that enduring history of concern, it is a relatively recent development that scholars have focused analysis on young people as *producers* of media not because young people's engagement in media production is new, but because there is academic bias toward consumption.

Young people have always participated in productive cultural practices. On the basis of decades of work in listening to children in various US contexts, Robert Coles (1998) argues that children have a “documentary impulse,” an inclination to play with the available tools of communication in order to make a record of what they have seen and heard in the world and to share it with others. Similarly, in *Girls Make Media*, Mary Kearney (2006, p. 24) details the history of girls' cultural production at the turn of the twentieth century, bringing to light extensive historical evidence that “American girls have long been involved in creative activities that, though often invisible to others, link them directly to the realm of cultural production.” Kearney claims that “American girls have always been culturally productive using various media to express themselves and for communication with others” (*ibid.*, p. 2). This is true today more than ever before – for boys and girls alike.

Still, the culturally productive activities of young people remained almost unexamined by scholars throughout the latter half of the twentieth century in favor of analyses focused on young people's consumption of media. In the 1980s and early 1990s, informed by some strands of cultural studies, scholars challenged the enduring stereotype of youth as mass media's naïve and passive recipients or vulnerable victims and stirred an interest in young people as media producers. In an essay reviewing key contributions to this burgeoning research literature, Vicki Mayer observes:

If the initial motivations of cultural studies scholars could be characterized as a concern with the ways that power operates through the production and consumption of popular culture, the new focus on young people as media producers seeks to understand how this once marginalized social group could play an active role in this dialectic. (Mayer, 2007, p. 404)

Once it was recognized that young people have agency – a limited one, but agency no less – the question *what do young people do with the media* broadened to include not only the engagement of young people as consumers, but their media making practices as well.

Researchers turned attention to youth as media producers in part to critique the extent to which young people's understandings of identity, community, and participation were situated within commercialized contexts. (Some efforts were surely born out of equal frustration with the near neglect of the production within scholarship on youth and popular culture). In the late 1990s, as "school reform" fundamentally restructured education around neoliberal politics and market incentives and childhood more broadly was reshaped in the image of consumer culture, critical media scholars could not but ask: What spaces do remain where young people are encouraged to think about themselves as more than consumers? In what social contexts do youth encounter models of citizenship not defined by consumption or shaped through by commercial forces? An expanding and diverse array of youth media programs (including radio, video, journalism, and other media formats and practices) located primarily in after-school community-based settings held promise as sites where young people could access the means of communication enabling them to produce their own mediatized accounts of the social world.

Several researchers have already attempted to map a significant and growing interdisciplinary literature on youth media production (Buckingham, Banaji, Burn, Carr, Cranmer, & Willett, 2005; Goldfarb, 2002; Goodman, 2003; Sefton-Green & Soep, 2007), writing from a variety of academic disciplines – media and cultural studies, communication, political science, sociology, education, literacy studies, and history. A good part of this literature is comprised of studies from youth media practitioners, whose frontline accounts deepen our understanding of the practices constituting youth media and question the (often) tenuous alliance of power between youth media makers and the adults who create the conditions for their cultural productivity. Not only are there many forms of youth media; there are also many paths to understanding and interpreting youth media. Much of this work is referenced and figures prominently throughout the present chapter.

In this section I want to briefly highlight just one of these pathways to understanding youth media – an orientation that, I think, avoids a troubling tendency to segregate youth media academics from youth media practitioners. The work I discuss here shows us that it is possible – perhaps even essential – to be rigorous about both: Mayer's *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and Mass Media* (2003), Ellen Seiter's *The Internet Playground: Children's Access, Entertainment, and Mis-Education* (2007), and various research articles by Glynda Hull and her colleagues in Oakland, California. Though they approach youth media production from different disciplines (media and communication, education), these authors share a simultaneous engagement as active practitioners/volunteers and researchers. At San Antonio Cultural Arts (SACA), Mayer volunteered her video and journalism skills to support a group of Mexican American youth to produce a video documentary, *Altars on the West Side*, while she studied the meaning of this work within the context of both commercial and alternative Mexican American media in San Antonio, Texas.

Around the same time, in an ethnically divided working-class community in southern California, Seiter helped construct a computer lab and an after-school newspaper

class in order to give children the communication access and the skills they needed if they were to represent their own lives and community and to use their own voices in doing it. Seiter explains the appeal:

The program allowed me to put to good use my knowledge of pedagogy and computers to benefit children who never dreamed of attending the universities where I received my training. By helping children develop a sustained interest in computer applications and Internet usage, I hoped the kids might see more benefits of education, and begin to imagine themselves as future university students. (2007, p. 20)

Teaching computing and journalism skills to community youth at this lab and in a more affluent suburban school setting for nearly four years, Seiter was able to closely observe children's computer and Internet use. These observations form the basis of her study of the intractable disparities among children in their access to and use of the Internet. Mindful of Clifford Geertz's (1988, p. 6) assertion that ethnographic writing usually "consists of incorrigible assertion," Seiter argues:

The legacy of action research is to expand the children's sense of the possibilities, the rewards and the experiences that await them if they can stay the course and make it to college. Professors can learn a tremendous amount from extended and extensive contact with young students and the public schools in which they struggle. Such work can have an invigorating effect on academic theories of ideology, of identity, and of the role of media and technology in everyday life. (2007, p. 105)

In 2001 Hull co-founded with Michael James a community technology center in the heart of an urban neighborhood in West Oakland, California. At Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth (DUSTY), Hull – a professor of education at the University of California in Berkeley – collaborates with community partners to design and study after-school programs for youth on digital, multimodal, multimedia composing. DUSTY's purpose is to create an alternative educational space where youth can develop an authorial and agentive self. In Hull's work there is a seamless connection between advocacy and scholarship on young people as media makers. The lines between them blur – in the following explanation given by Hull, Kenney, Marple, and Forsman-Schneider (2006, p. 8):

Children are the most constrained of all social actors; parents and caretakers, schools, and society regulate their activities and choices. Yet children are indeed agents in their own social worlds. As they grow, they claim more and more autonomy as social actors. We are interested in the role of multimodal learning and expression in this process, as well as the role that an afterschool program can play when it provides structures that allow children to exercise agency.

I would argue that the authors discussed here share a self-conscious effort to direct the resources and energies of their academic institutions to projects that begin to

redress the information inequalities in their communities. Seiter (2007, p. 102) writes of her youth media partnership as “only one of many that offered academics an opportunity to be useful, to share some of the wealth concentrated at universities,” in a wider effort to address the unequal distribution of technology and educational resources in the US. The works included here are models, because they help establish frameworks that inform the subfield of youth media production analysis and because they provide a model for rigorous analysis of young people’s cultural production within a broader social justice agenda. Indeed, the studies of Mayer, Seiter, and Hull et al. suggest the rich possibilities of youth media production as a leading edge in the wider media democratization movement.

If youth media are the leading edge in the battle for media democracy, what does that edge consist in? What imbues youth media with democratizing potential – the possibility of contesting neoliberalism’s denial of voice and its claim that only market value matters? An overlapping emphasis on process is unmistakable across the work of Mayer, Seiter, and Hull et al. Reflecting on her experiences both as a volunteer and as a researcher collaborating with Mexican American youth on a video project in San Antonio’s west side, Mayer stresses that products are significant, but not as much as the process of making them is: “Grassroots video projects do not create citizens. Rather, they are places that potentially reinforce the ways that people feel like members of a community” (2003, p. 115). Hull and colleagues (2006, p. 8) at DUSTY in Oakland, California reflect on how, through “the design of our curriculum and participant structures, we position digital storytellers as authors, composers, and designers who are expert and powerful communicators, people with things to say that the world should hear.” The influence of educational theorist and activist Paulo Freire’s concept of critical consciousness is evident both in Seiter’s after-school journalism/Internet program and in Hull’s DUSTY. In describing this critical orientation, Seiter writes:

In an adaptation of Freire to the environment of new technologies, the goal is to encourage children to conceive of the Internet as more than a game machine or a new delivery system for music, television, and film, and entertainment-industry publicity. My hope was to encourage children to use the Internet as a means of voicing their nascent critical consciousness. (2007, p. 21)

According to Hull and James, DUSTY’s curriculum and pedagogy encourages young people and adults to position themselves “as local and global community members able to remake their worlds” (Hull & James, 2007, p. 5, citing Freire, 1970).

Mayer’s study draws out another facet that makes the three studies cited here exemplary: a necessary and nuanced understanding of the relationship between consumption and production. While focusing on her collaborations with Latino youth in their video production, Mayer does not ignore the fact that “commercial mass media were omnipresent in the daily activities” of the teens, who “talked about

media constantly” (2003, p. 119). Mayer, Seiter, and Hull et al. each recognize, in their respective involvements with youth media, that the consumption of media and of popular culture powerfully contributes to the context in which production takes place. Mayer describes this with a transparency understandable to anyone who has sat beside a teen to log a videotape. “Much of my own work with the young volunteers at SACA relied on our common media interests; logging video footage did not seem so boring if we could talk about Justin Timberlake or the latest Spanish-language telenovela” (ibid.). In this way, Mayer argues, consumption is productive, and her participant observation and interviews recapture the dynamic interplay of media consumption and production in the lives of the Latino youth with whom she worked, “citizens who consume mass media but also desired an alternative to them” (ibid., p. 118).

Anne Haas Dyson first drew attention to the value and meaning of children’s affinities for popular culture within the spaces of learning in her 1997 book *Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom Literacy*. Dyson’s ethnographic study of writing practices in an elementary school in Oakland, California shows how children used popular culture – for example the television show *X-Men*, commercial music, and football – as writing subjects and resources for building “webs of connection” with others. “Writing was not so much an expressive medium for individual souls as a tool for social beings whose major concerns were not learning to write” (Dyson, 1997, pp. 42–43). The complicated social processes at play discerned by Dyson helped Seiter make sense of the fact that Worldwide Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) was always the first writing topic of choice among Latino boys in her computer lab. Looking at wrestling in its cultural, historical, political economic context, and in the context of her ethnographic and longitudinal research, Seiter avoids the trap, common among critics, of seeing only the sex and violence in the WWE. Seiter untangles the issues of class, race, and gender, which bind Latino boys’ consumption of WWE to their journalism productions. “If our official curriculum focused on learning research tactics on the Web and the genre of newspaper writing, the boys’ writing about wrestling reflected their unofficial work of shoring up identity and creating a space in which they could feel powerful” (Seiter, 2007, p. 65, drawing on Dyson).

The scholarship introduced above resonates with Couldry’s impassioned call for spaces that put the value of voice into action. Mayer, Seiter, and Hull demonstrate that having a voice is not enough – the rich, textured, and sometimes troubling accounts of young people’s storytelling documented by these three researchers exemplify what it means to listen to young people and to communicate back to them, transmitting the message that their voices matter. Like Couldry’s, my argument is that we don’t just need more youth media: we need to create opportunities for more youth to witness the democratic possibilities of their media within their local communities. Expressing a self-declared, hard-earned pessimism about technology and education, Seiter asserts:

The time for technological utopianism is past: we need to be clear and precise about the goals and the feasibility of technology learning, in the context of a realistic assessment of the labor market and widening class divides, struggles for fair employment in both technology industries and other job sectors, and the pressing need to empower students as citizens who can participate actively in a democracy. (2008, p. 50)

To be sure, media and communication researchers can contribute to the difficult work of constructing spaces where youth voices are being heard and valued. Fisherkeller (2009, p. 25) has urged media and communication researchers to “help youth media by encouraging the support and maintenance of programs already existent and by envisioning new kinds of creative and strategic partnerships and collaborations among youth media programs and media and communication researchers.” In the remainder of this chapter I turn to one such collaboration, in Allentown, Pennsylvania – where, since 2006, I have worked with community partners to grow and sustain a youth media program called HYPE.

HYPE: Context and Method of Study

HYPE offers youth of high school age opportunities to engage in social change and public advocacy through leadership development, digital storytelling, the performing arts, and documentary media. Participants live in the predominantly low-income and racially diverse neighborhoods of Center City Allentown.³ In the first section of what follows I focus on program activities during the summer of 2009, when six Latino and six African American youths between the ages of 15 and 20 participated in HYPE. The group consisted of three young men (Rashid, Anthony, and Jamie) and eight young women (Alyssia, Jessie, Sheridan, Dahlia, Gabby, Shaniqua, Clarice, and Amanda). The study draws on the qualitative methods of participant observation and documentary fieldwork and includes data from field notes written by the researchers and other HYPE staff members, a range of documentary sources, and unstructured interviews with three HYPE students; the interviews were conducted by Eirinn Disbrow, an undergraduate research intern. Disbrow also conducted in-depth interviews with Jenna Azar, HYPE co-director, and with education scholar Michael Carbone, who, as chair of the education program at Muhlenberg College, where HYPE is located, has extensive knowledge of the culture and politics of the local public school system. The documentary video produced by the HYPE teens in the summer of 2009, *Roots of Change*, also provides important insights for considering the possibilities of valuing youth voices in Allentown.



Figure 22.1 Preparing for person-on-the-street interviews, HYPE teens are empowered with cultural tools for storytelling. *Source:* Jenna Azar, HYPE Co-Director, Healthy Youth Peer Education.

Power and Powerlessness Behind the Camera

HYPE offers a safe and supportive context for learning and development, where young people have possibilities to raise their voices and name their concerns about problems they see in their community. I conceive of this as a “third space,” as theorized by Kris Gutiérrez (2008), by Glynda Hull and Katherine Schultz (2001), and by others – a site where different activity systems (school, community, family, university) collaborate to create a context that promotes the formation and negotiation of new roles, relationships, learning, identities, and – above all – voices. HYPE students overwhelmingly view the community as unwelcoming to young people in general, and adults as mistrustful of low-income youth, in particular those of color. Person-on-the-street interviews conducted by HYPE on a summer morning confirmed this perception. In the words of one middle-aged White male interviewee: “What do I think of teenagers? Buncha hoodlums, that’s what I think.”

No experience demonstrated better how disempowered HYPE students feel in the face of authority than the interview they conducted with the principal of the largest public high school in the local school district. The interview team – Amanda,

Dahlia, Shaniqua, and Sheridan, accompanied by Disbrow and Azar – traveled the eight blocks between HYPE and the high school by car, equipped with camera, microphone, and a list of carefully scripted questions. The interviewers were visibly anxious as they sat in the principal's waiting room. When he entered – a large and gruff man with a thick grey, walrus mustache and wearing an oversized school jersey – all of the girls froze in silence. Doing nothing to put them at ease, he cleared his throat: "Well?" Urged by Disbrow, they mumbled their names, averted eye contact, and filed behind him into an office crowded with memorabilia in the school spirit. The girls quickly sank deep into their seats, leaving Disbrow to set up the camera. Amanda held the sheet of interview questions and positioned her chair next to the principal, but out of the camera frame; she was more reticent and nervous than she had been conducting person-on-the-street interviews earlier in the week. Disbrow asked many of the follow-up questions, hoping to provide a model for the teens to adopt. But they said very little, and the principal made no visible effort to engage them or to quell their discomfort. The interview footage reveals some of the issues of power and ethics that emerge when young media makers turn their cameras on the adults who have very specific forms of authority over their lives.

Early in the interview, when asked about the difficulties of his work, the principal shares that his greatest struggle is "getting kids involved" in extra-curricular activities. He barely mentions a notorious lack of resources before turning to speak at length about the importance of non-academic after-school activities – band, football, theater, music. This was one of the few times when Amanda veered from her interview script to ask (with evident disbelief and with her own young awareness of larger issues at stake), "Do you think the reason they're not involved is because they choose to be or because the resources aren't there?" The principal replies, "It's a choice thing. These opportunities are there. It's just a matter of kids choosing." Amanda presses on: "Do you think they are motivated [to participate]?" "Well, that's a deeper question. What is motivation?" After an awkward silence, the principal at last acknowledges that "it's tough for our kids. A lot of them have commitments after school, a lot of things beyond their control," but he emphasizes that "it's up to each individual student to make the most of the opportunities we provide."

The principal claims that "fun kids" are the best part of his job, but the girls themselves experience the school as anything but fun, and as deeply unwelcoming. Education scholar Michael Carbone finds the interview footage striking for the complete absence of any conversation about academics. "He doesn't see these kids as potentiating into anything, as emergent adults," explains Carbone, who oversees student teachers placed in the district.

It's disingenuous to talk about the kids' participation. If I were a kid, I'd be thinking, "this is my responsibility?" No, it's the responsibility of the school to be inclusive of all young people and to create a space and activities that are responsive to students' academic needs and interests.

This underlying injustice shaped the teens' interview with the principal. Initially eager to conduct the interview, the teens stated after the fact it was really "a waste of time," meaningless, and ultimately disempowering.

In the institutional context of the inner-city school, the "principal's office" is almost always marked as a space of conflict, punishment, and control, not a space that values youth voices. Jenna recalls the interview experience:

The kids were quiet, they were compliant, they weren't asking any questions that were harder than what they wrote down. They weren't pushing at all, and so in terms of the way that urban institutions are set up to educate youth – that is what you saw. *They were maintaining order.*

One of the interviewers, Shaniqua, sat captivated by the principal's power: "I was thinking about while he was talking [how] there are so many kids in that school and it's just him that has the authority over them and that's it." *That's it.* Steven Goodman (2003, p. 25) astutely claims that "urban high schools are taking on the look and feel of prisons," and there is little doubt among the HYPE girls that the principal looks and seems like the head security guard. In trying to make sense of the dynamic during the interview, Azar reflects, "What you see when young people come up against power [is that] they only have a few options, and most of the time they chose the power of disengagement, the power of not caring."

It would be wrong, however, to see this disengagement as "apathy," a common complaint lodged against young people. In their long-term "Public Connections" research project in Britain, Couldry, Sonia Livingstone, and Tim Markham (2007, p. 5) share a similar stance. "Rather than blaming young people for their apathy, the finger might instead be pointed at the online and offline structures of opportunity that facilitate, shape and develop young people's participation." Listening closely to young people in focus group interviews, these authors find that "[y]oung people protest that 'having your say' does not seem to mean 'being listened to,' and so they feel justified in recognising little responsibility to participate" (ibid.).

If HYPE teens felt excluded from any real conversation during the interview with the principal, reviewing and editing the interview footage offered a second opportunity to engage critically with the issues he dismissed and to determine how the principal's perspective would be included in their video. Back in the editing studio, implicit and explicit struggles over what to include and exclude quickly emerged. Amanda sat to review the footage with Sylvia, a HYPE college intern and a former student at the high school presided over by this principal. Sylvia recalls the complexities of that task:

When I listened to [the principal] talk, I tried to be as objective as possible because we had just talked with Lora [Taub-Pervizpour] about representing someone's voice as true as possible. However, when I heard some of his answers to questions concerning a possible relationship between HYPE and Allen or his alleged openness to hearing student opinion, I couldn't help but think it was just a show because there was a camera on him. Having come out of [that high school], only a few students know that it is even

possible to start a new club/program in the school and he favors AP/honors and sports teams. If you are not in those two groups, you are pretty much forgotten about. Despite these feelings, I still dragged the clips down and left them as possible ones for the final cut. I knew I probably wasn't going to do the final cut, so I left the clips for others to decide. (Email correspondence with the author)

Decisions about what to include and what to exclude are always subjective (Coles, 1998), and in this instance they reveal some of the tensions between adult and youth perspectives.

Working from clips identified by Amanda and Sylvia, a small group extracted a sound bite that triggered the program coordinator's concern. In her role as program coordinator, Azar was alert to the potential backlash that the young filmmakers (and students at the same school as the principal) faced if they were perceived to be portraying him in a negative or unfair light. She also warned about the risk of turning the principal against the program, which could potentially undermine wider community support. Jenna advocated that the teens recover the wider context of the clip, and they did so without protest.

Clearly, taking away young people's creative control over their cultural production runs counter to the goals of the youth media movement. Youth media educators share a responsibility to expand young people's right to communicate, not to impose further limitations upon that right. But Jenna's concerns reflect her awareness of our responsibility to ask the students critical questions that challenge them to think through the implications of their production choices. The teens were disillusioned by the outcome of the interview with the principal, and, although they were not particularly concerned about showing their principal in a negative light, they understood the practical and ethical dilemmas Jenna was identifying in the context of the bigger picture. The teens recognized the possibility that, if the principal disliked his portrayal in the film, he could shut down their voices at school and in the community. Locating conversations about the ethics of representation at the center of our work can empower young people to make production choices that serve the larger social justice objectives at stake. But these objectives need to be weighed against the aim of valuing youth voices – a *process* that, according to Couldry, is of urgent importance for the creation of a more democratic future. This was not, however, the only time in the process of producing *Roots of Change* that youth and their adult allies intensely negotiated conflicting visions and goals.

The Rough Cut: "This is Our Call to Action"

With just two days left until the public screening, the HYPE crew gathered to watch a rough cut that was assembled during the weekend from four distinct segments created by four smaller production teams. Prior to that moment, there was but a loosely shared understanding of how the segments would flow together. The long

silence after screening the 18-minute video was broken by one of the program's founders, an educator who was struck and dismayed by an overabundance of adults on screen. "I just don't get the sense of HYPE," she lamented, asking passionately: "Where is my HYPE?" This was a reminder that documentary is always a partial representation of reality; and she also underscored the multiple and sometimes competing visions/narratives held by adults and teens as they collaborate in youth media work. This was even more evident as HYPE teens weighed in with their impressions on the rough cut: Jessie disappointedly shared that it was not at all what she had envisioned; Jamie called it "boring and unimpressive"; Rashid looked crushed while offering a worried reassurance that "it's going to be okay." With the community screening just 48 hours away, things did not feel like they would be okay.

Jenna asked how the film reflected on HYPE itself and what image it transmitted to the community. If it were poorly received by the public, would the teens be vulnerable? Concerns about backlash and youth vulnerability are not unique to HYPE (see Gaines & Villarroel, 2010), but HYPE had very specific reasons to be cautious. When a short HYPE video examining the unfair treatment of youths by local police was featured at an official city event the year before, it angered an assistant police chief, who felt blindsided and blamed event organizers. Experiences like this one are powerful reminders that processes that attempt to value the voice of the youth will be threatening to those who hold traditional forms of power over them – the very power that functions by denying them an effective voice in their community.

The rough cut had the effect of raising the teens' voices and catalyzed them to assert their role at the center of the media-making process. They became animated about their vision for the documentary and committed themselves to doing the hard work ahead, in order to make it "their own." In the fast-paced and high-pressured environment leading up to the community screening, relationships between youth and adults were again renegotiated. As the teens looked for direction to Eirinn, a more advanced college student, she worried about having too big a handprint in their work. In some ways disappointment over the rough cut was a call to action, compelling the youth to participate more fully. They sat for long stretches of time editing at the computers, ignoring their vibrating cell phones or the lure of other online pursuits. Eirinn's interactions with the teens during this time were shaped by her own awareness of the need to deliver a completed documentary video that would meet the diverse expectations of youth and adult stakeholders alike. The responsibilities shared by adults and students in the production process has long been a subject of tension, writes Goodman (2003, p. 57) of his 20 years of experience with youth media at the Educational Video Center in New York City:

Students need to take ownership of their project and create something they will be proud of to show in public. But they can't be expected to move the project through all phases of production unassisted and on schedule. The teacher bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the group meets its deadline and the production results in a finished product.

As we came closer to the end of the production schedule, assistance and support from the adult educators was vital. Revisiting these last stressful moments of HYPE, Shaniqua recalls:

I think some of us just started giving up because it was just too much. Everybody was stressed, everyone was getting attitude with each other, people were crying. If we didn't have the adults there then I don't know what would've happened.

Shaniqua and her peers leaned heavily on Eirinn during these final days, as the students worked at the edges of their digital-editing knowledge and Eirinn tried hard to maintain their role of driving the production process. During a short afternoon break we took the opportunity to refocus and articulate our collective understanding of what was meant by “youth-driven/adult-supported” media production. On the chalkboard, we made a diagram of two concentric circles, one labeled “youth driven” and the other labeled “adult-supported.” The teens were asked: “What does *youth-driven* look like to you?” Their answers and descriptions filled the inner circle. We then asked, “What does *adult-supported* look like to you?” Their ideas of the kind of support they were expecting filled the space of the outer circle. This jointly produced artifact became an important guide in the remaining hours of HYPE, particularly in navigating the slippery border between adult support and control. Jenna highlights this ambiguity as she considered those final days and hours:

Would we [adults] be doing a disservice to the partnership [with the teens] if we were to sit back and watch and let them be creative but knowing in many senses that they wouldn't be successful [. . .] or maybe they would be and we've never given them a chance? When are we taking control because we need to and when are we taking control because we don't know how else to respond? Is it simply that we are not comfortable waiting to see what they come up with because it represents us as much as it represents them?

Clearly, adults need to take stock of what may be contradictory impulses and responsibilities shaping the production process. We want to encourage youth participants to take ownership of their work, which may at times collide with our obligation to protect the youth who participate in our programs. Constructing youth media programs around a framework for valuing voice requires both vigilant awareness of the interests and agendas of audiences for youth-made media and a keen sensitivity to the fine edge between “protecting” the youth and “censoring” their voices.

Youth Cultural Production: Negotiations

The rough-cut screening was tough on youth and adults alike. HYPE educators left conflicted responses to the conversation: excited, on the one hand, that the teens were roused to claim ownership of the documentary making process; frustrated, on

the other, that this newfound determination had not surfaced as strongly earlier in the five-week program. What responsibility did the teens bear for the disappointments of the rough cut? Some had simply not “shown up” for the documentary work, preferring instead to hang out or to pursue other online digital media practices at every opportunity – Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, gaming, and texting with cell phones.

Not only does this unsettled tension provide another moment for examining the ethical dilemmas that emerge when adult and youth agendas collide, it also raises important issues of class and race, which are embedded in the social conditions of HYPE. Many of the Latino and African American participants have limited access to high-speed Internet. While survey data from the Pew Hispanic Center and the Pew Internet & American Life Project suggest that the gap in home Internet use between white and Latino households may be shrinking – given the rising percentage of Latino households with broadband connections from 2006 to 2008 – disparities of access in households with annual incomes under \$30,000 persist (Livingston, Parker,

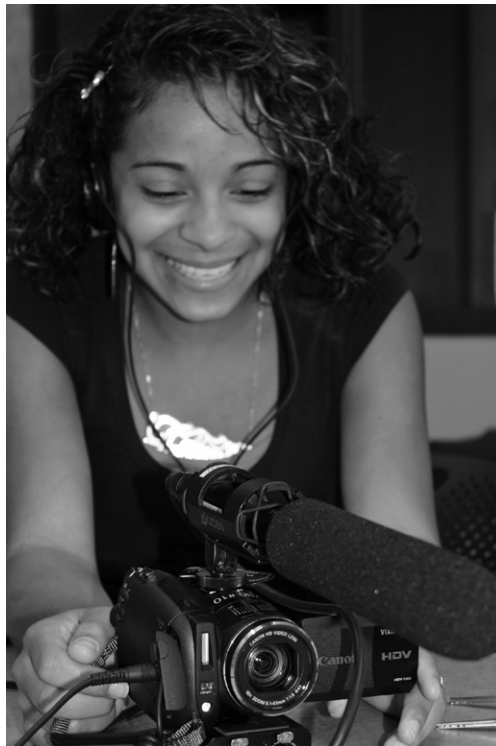


Figure 22.2 Exploring the community with video cameras in hand, HYPE helps teens develop a sense of themselves as agents of change. *Source:* Jenna Azar, HYPE Co-Director, Healthy Youth Peer Education.

& Fox, 2009). Access to computers in urban public schools is similarly limited by an absence of infrastructure and support and by the current organization of the environment around standardized curricula and high-stakes testing. Compared to computers in suburban public schools, those in urban schools are often older, and Internet access is slow and heavily restricted. By contrast, most of the work at HYPE takes place in a college room with 16 state-of-the-art Apple computers, high-speed broadband access, two printers, and a scanner. The multimedia production studio is similarly well equipped, with multiple high-definition video cameras, a mobile laptop system, and other production tools the value of which surely exceeds the average annual income of a high school teacher in the district. The draw of the technology for lower income students is undeniable (Seiter, 2007), and it is difficult to dismiss the teens' online activities as mere distraction from the "legitimate" media-making goals at hand.

Cell phones were ubiquitous at HYPE during the summer 2009 program, as was access to an array of digital media devices, including Nintendo DS and other handheld gaming systems, iPods, and MP3 players. While the teens mostly observed the rule that prohibits talking on their phones during HYPE, they were almost always connected via texting and Internet social networking sites. When they were working at the computers, they toggled between HYPE work in iMovie or GarageBand, for example, and MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, gaming or fan sites. For some scholars, these digital media practices signal a new kind of creative production for youth. Patricia Lange and Mizuko Ito (2009, p. 261), for example, argue that online media practices constitute a kind of creative production in the digital age, suggesting that, "for most youth, profile creation is a casual activity in defining a personal web page and graphic identity, pieced together with found materials on the internet. This is a form of messing around that can provide some initial introductions to how to manipulate online digital media." Henry Jenkins and his collaborators (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2009) suggest that social networking sites and other spaces where youth create and share content online provide them with possibilities to engage in a "participatory culture." Within this conceptual framework, digital and online media are seen to comprise a "new media ecology," which has the potential "to reshape the conditions under which young people engage with media and culture, moving youth from positions as media consumers to more active media producers" (Lange & Ito, 2009, p. 244).

At HYPE we also recognize that, beneath the surface of this casual "messing around," there is an excitement to connect with new media that can be mobilized to engage youth in other forms of media making and can perhaps represent even "a starting point for broadening media production into other forms" (*ibid.*, p. 261). New opportunities to create personally and socially relevant content may be particularly meaningful for youth of color, in the context of an Internet that is, as Seiter (2007, p. 17) argues, "so heavily skewed toward white, English-speaking professionals who are interested in making purchases online." As a program, HYPE values the knowledges and experiences that youth bring to the table – and this includes, increasingly,

their experiences online. As media educators, however, we also have a responsibility to give students information about the limitations of these practices, situated as they are within a context of commodification that is notoriously relentless in targeting urban Latino and African American youth. Seiter (*ibid.*, p. 104) insists that media educators and researchers bear a responsibility to “teach children about the economics of the Internet” – for instance to make transparent the “hidden forms of commercialism” implicit in the business of mining and profiling on the basis of user-generated content.⁴ There are huge differences between online avenues and the streets one walks to get to school or to the store.

Beneath the hype of transforming youth into a “participatory culture,” social networking companies profit from the steady stream of content that users generate in the form of posts, photos, links, friends, and personal profile information. Nicole Cohen (2008, p. 7) is careful to note that, “[w]hile these sites can offer participants entertainment and a way to socialize, the social relations present on a site like Facebook can obscure economic relations that reflect larger patterns of capitalist development in the digital age.” Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube are very much a part of the institutions of media that form what Goodman (2003) describes as a system of authority, one that contributes to the criminalization and commodification of the urban working class and youth of color. Creating social networks online, meaningful as they may be, is no substitute for the daunting work of constructing a more inclusive community for these youth in Allentown. The longing for a voice to shape a more just community is deeply felt by HYPE teens, as exemplified by Jessie, a 16-year-old Latina student mentor in the HYPE program for three years.

Jessie’s Intro: “In a Short Couple Bars, It’s Like Exactly the Point”

Things never stay the same
They constantly change
Looking back at the past
It just rattles your brain
The way things form overtime
What will it take to form it
The way we envision it
In our minds
Teens are the future
So trust me enough
To let me shape the city with a mentor’s touch
With the help of children and adults
We will work together
To achieve results
A beautiful place with so much potential
If we took a stand

We'd sell the plans
 And the way it looks states
 That we can create
 A healthy community that we aren't seein'
 That can accommodate
 All Allentonians to be in.

Jessie wrote this rap two days before HYPE ended. They are the first words uttered in *Roots of Change* (HYPE, 2009), and they capture the teens' desire to make the film "their own." As Jessie and Rashid rap, Jessie and Shaniqua appear on screen, leaning out of the windows of Jenna's car as they drive through the streets of Allentown. The production process that shaped the intro sequence came as close as anything to HYPE's collectively defined ideal of youth-driven and adult-supported media.

Roots of Change opens with shots of Ccenter City Allentown⁵ – row homes, store-fronts, gas stations, an art museum, abandoned buildings – interspersed with close-ups of Jessie and Shaniqua gazing out of the car window at their community. Much like a music video, Jessie's rap lyrics drive the scene. She was outspoken in assuming responsibility for rewriting the introduction, although she had little experience of working with the editing software. For two days Eirinn sat with Jessie while she reconstructed the intro, providing just enough guidance with the program for Jessie to be able to render visually the ideas in her mind. From a youth media educator's perspective, this was rewarding work, with a passionate student actively creating the scene. At one point Jessie beamed, "I could do this forever."

Midway through her rap, Jessie asks: "What will it take to form it / The way we envision it / In our minds?" She is speaking of the community of Allentown, but the question is worth asking in relation to youth media. What does it take, in the context of HYPE and youth media more generally, to create conditions that empower young people to realize their cultural productions with greater autonomy and agency? What does it look like to create a process that values youth voices? A good part of the answer, to be sure, rests with Jessie herself, who demonstrated throughout HYPE a deep understanding of what it means to be in this community as a Latina, a teenager, and an advocate for social justice.

It's hard. The way school is set up, it's like a dictatorship. Even teachers say, "This is not a democracy, it's a dictatorship." At HYPE, I feel like we learn how to have relationships with adults and we work *with* them and then at school we have to work *for* them.

Jessie managed to locate herself in relationships with HYPE adults as an active participant and partner. We recognize, however, the difficulties HYPE students may encounter when they are challenged to rethink their view of themselves and their relationship with the community beyond HYPE.

Jessie felt these pressures acutely in the context of her home life:

EIRINN: How does HYPE affect other areas of your life?

JESSIE: Well, actually, it gets me in trouble a lot with my Dad because we get into arguments and he tells me not to talk back and I'm like, "I don't go to HYPE to learn how to be quiet! I have my own voice!" And then he tells me to shut up [laughter]. But the way we practice stuff [at HYPE], it's really comfortable. It's not like at school where we have to [sit there] and take notes.

EIRINN: What was your favorite memory from HYPE this summer?

JESSIE: Filming the intro. I was just really excited and I had a vision. Filming it was really fun because it was like exactly what I had in my head, and then adding the rap – it just made it that much better. That was my favorite part, like every time I watch it I just tell everybody, "This is my part! I did this!" I do love that rap too [. . .] I feel like in a short couple bars, it's like exactly the point.

Listening deeply to Jessie, Eirinn gets as close to her vision as possible and supports her as she acquires the skills necessary to render the vision so that others may be able to see it. Years of experience at Educational Video Center have demonstrated to Goodman that media educators must constantly manage and assist the media production work with youth without overstepping their boundaries, by "leaving little room for youth decision making or ownership" (2003, p. 104). The collaborative meaning-making process driven by Jessie and supported by Eirinn is a promising response to Jessie's refrain: "What will it take to form it / The way we envision it / In our minds?"

Jessie and her peers completed *Roots of Change* just in time for a community screening attended by family, friends, college professors, public officials, and community leaders. It was received with much praise; one young girl in the audience asked the HYPE filmmakers: "How can I be like you?" The film's message was powerful, the filmmakers' voices were impossible to ignore, and in the space of the screening they briefly experienced a community that actively valued their voice. As Jenna pointed out:

These teens are out there challenging stereotypes. I can't tell you how many times I've heard from people, "Racism doesn't exist." That's where it becomes absolutely a social justice issue, when these teens are heard, because they are the ones that experience so much of [the stereotyping and racism] on a regular basis.

The young producers' longing to shape community change infuses the multi-voiced narrative in the documentary's final sequence:

There need to be more opportunities for us to go out and advocate and be the mentor that we were trained to be. (Jessie)

It's so when you guys leave – you meaning the audience – you don't just say, "Oh yeah, that documentary was nice," and then go outside and just think about it for two

minutes and you're changed for that two minutes you go outside, but to help us because we can't do this alone. Teens too – don't go out and be like, "Yeah, I saw this cool doc and then I went home and nothing happened." You can be a part of something like this. Do something you know is going to positively change Allentown – that's why we're making this doc. (Clarice)

We want to go out into the Allentown community and start changing it – start shaping it – start working in it to create a better tomorrow, but we can't do it without the help of the citizens. (Jessie)

Conclusion

If youth media is to fulfill its promise as a force for valuing voice and creating particular conditions through which young people and adults are allied in this goal, it will require us to reflect constantly on our objectives, methods, and – crucially – the social relationships that shape youth cultural production. Whether we call it youth-driven, youth-made, or youth-created, it is up to media educators and students to articulate collectively what is meant by these terms and how their meaning is constituted through our media-making practices. Then we have to work hard at constructing relationships that do justice to the democratic ideal of young people raising their voices and being valued as cultural producers and participants in community life. As Goodman (2003, p. 112) observes: "We have come quite far. But damn, we still have a long way to go."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The voices of many community partners informed this research, and the author acknowledges in particular the Healthy Youth Peer Education (HYPE) teens who share their perspectives through media production; HYPE co-director Jenna Azar; HYPE undergraduate interns Eirinn Disbrow, Sylvia Boateng, Joanna Whitney, and Stephanie Lamb; faculty from the Departments of Media and Communication and Political Science at Muhlenberg College; and HYPE founders Abby Letcher, MD, and Roberta Meek. The author recognizes the generous support for HYPE from Muhlenberg College, the Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust, and the Program for the Funds for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. The author is also grateful for Sara Vignieri's close reading and editorial suggestions. An earlier version of this work, co-authored with Eirinn Disbrow, appears in *Media and Social Justice*, edited by Sue Jansen, Jefferson Pooley, and Lora Taub-Pervizpour (Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

NOTES

- 1 While some high-profile national – and even global, corporate-driven – youth media campaigns have emerged, the complicated relation of this development to the history of youth media is a subject for another paper. See, for example, Adobe Foundation, “Adobe Youth Voices,” <http://youthvoices.adobe.com>.
- 2 Much of this work is represented in the *Youth Media Reporter*, the leading multimedia Web journal for practitioners, educators, and academics working in the field of youth media. See the journal’s website: <http://www.youthmediareporter.org>. The last issue of the journal was published in March 2011, but past issues dating back to 2005 are archived online.
- 3 This area has been the focus of significant community development initiatives and funding efforts, through which it has been designated a “Weed & Seed” area. More recently, through a collaboration among various philanthropic foundations in the region, it was designated a “Youth Empowerment Zone.”
- 4 Seiter’s study concludes with a compelling list of recommendations that media educators, teachers, and parents can leverage in activities that aim to educate children so as to make them think critically about the Internet. See Seiter (2007, pp. 103–106).
- 5 Center City refers to the downtown and business area of Allentown, a densely populated and multicultural neighborhood that is currently the focus of an urban renewal effort.

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“What’s TV Good For?”

Views of Producers of Television for Children around the World

Dafna Lemish

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the goals of producing quality television programs for children around the world as they pertain to issues of culture and gender in a world of profit-driven globalized market. It is based on interviews, conducted between 2004 and 2008, with 135 producers from 65 countries. The main themes highlighted are: the tension between the preservation of local cultural identities by television programs and the highly successful Western programs disseminated by globalized networks (such as Nickelodeon, Disney, Cartoon Network); and the crafting of strong, complex, and diverse characters to serve as role models for children and to provide them with a vision for an improved self and a better future. Television, according to the study, is expected to be a safe and relevant space for children.

There are few critical studies of the production domains of television for children. Several scholars who have undertaken comprehensive analyses of the children’s television industry in the US and UK explored various economic, organizational, commercial, and content-related topics (Alexander & Owers, 2007; Banet-Weiser, 2004; Bryant, 2007; Bryant & Monge, 2008; Buckingham, Davies, Jones, & Kelley, 1999; Hendershot, 2004; Pecora, 1998). These studies unveiled some of the mechanisms in operation in this professional world and demonstrated, for example, how economic

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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pressures enforced institutional decision-making processes that incessantly drive for higher ratings in a profit-driven market.

These studies have also been helpful in documenting the fact that the community of children's television production and broadcasting shares one assumption that seems to be applied in axiomatic fashion, and therefore serves as a non-debatable truism: although girls will watch boys' shows, boys will not watch girls' shows. Direct evidence of this shared belief comes more specifically from the few studies that actually talked to professionals themselves (e.g., Seiter & Mayer, 2004). The implications of this truism are profound, as it provides a rationale – both economic and “moral” – and a general argumentation for the production of more programming aimed at boys' interests and needs, under the umbrella of serving children's tastes and pleasures.

However, overall, we still know very little about what media professionals assume and expect of their child audience, and what role they assign themselves in the production processes (Buckingham, 2008). In a rare example of one such study (Buckingham et al., 1999), the researchers identified four broad discourses about child audience in their interviews with professionals in the UK. The first, a protectionist discourse, perceives the child to be vulnerable to the negative effects of the media and therefore in need of protection. The second discourse is child-centered and dwells on the child's essential nature and unique stages of development, which form the rationale of specific industry practices. The third understands the child to be a consumer of services and goods provided by the industry. And the fourth discourse frames the child as a social actor who is perceived to be a citizen in the making. The authors' discussion focused on the implications of these different discourses of childhood for the practices employed by broadcasters of children's television and for the yet to be realized potential of a research agenda that will probe these findings and discover others.

Though little is known about producers' perspectives on their work, the fundamental reality is that these are the professionals whose thinking and actions create the story lines and representations of social worlds that travel globally on children's screens. The vast literature on the roles screen culture plays in children's lives suggests that it has significant implications for their development and well-being in all aspects of human life: cognitively, socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and even physically and sexually (Calvert & Wilson, 2008; Lemish, 2007; Mazzarella, 2007; Pecora, Murray, & Wartella, 2007; Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2008). Critical reviews of television programs popular among children suggest that much of what children are watching around the world does not necessarily have their best interest in mind. Indeed, much is violent and imbalanced in terms of gender and human diversity (class, religion, ethnicity, race, disability). Furthermore, it is highly commercialized, hypersexualized, and quite often just plain uninspiring. Yet alternative programming for children does exist on television that is sensitive to their needs and well-being. In my experience, these quality productions are produced for the most part in educational public as well as in small specialist for-profit and not-for-profit organizations around the world, and occasionally by some of the big commercial corporations (Lemish, 2007).

A much debated issue, both in the professional and in the scholarly world, is that of the meanings ascribed to “quality” television. These meanings are embedded in larger concerns about the role of power hierarchies in television for children – concerns such as: Who defines what quality is, and on whose behalf? What are the criteria for judging quality? Who determines them? And do they shift across cultures as well as over time? Is quality judged differently for different audiences? Have new television genres and aesthetics, as well as innovations in television production techniques, created a need to adjust definitions of what quality means?

Overall, we can say that the criteria of quality employed are colored by value judgments, personal tastes, and emotional responses to television content (McCabe & Akass, 2007). Yet there is a broadly shared view that can be summarized as follows. Quality children’s television needs to provide children with programs prepared especially for them without taking advantage of them; programs that entertain, but at the same time try to advance child viewers – physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially. Furthermore, such programs allow children to hear, see, and express themselves, as well as their culture, language, and life experiences, in ways that affirm their personal identity, community, and place. Doing so requires taking steps to protect and encourage programs that reflect local cultures and cultures with minority languages. At the same time good quality programs for children recognize, and seek to be inclusive of, the significant differences that exist among children, which are the result of their cognitive and emotional development, talents, interests, personality characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and social environment. Finally, such programs are expected to offer children a variety of genres and content that do not necessarily reproduce programs according to a successful formula and that avoid unnecessary presentations of violence, sex, and other contents deemed age-inappropriate (Lemish, 2007, pp. 200–201).

Who, then, are the people engaged in advancing alternative productions for children that can be defined as “quality” television, according to these general domains of agreement about criteria for determining quality television? What do they bring with them to their workplace? How do they perceive their profession, their responsibilities, and their limitations? And, most of all, what roles would they like television to play in fostering children’s well-being? The social action research adventure that I advanced sought to answer these questions.¹

The Study

Over the course of four years – between 2004 and 2008 – I interviewed 135 media professionals from 65 countries in all continents, whom I met at various international events for children’s media, including the most central ones: Prix Jeunesse International festivals of 2004, 2006, and 2008 in Munich, Germany; the Japan Prize of 2006 in Tokyo, Japan; the Basel–Karlsruhe Forum of 2007 in Basel, Switzerland; and the 5th World

Summit on Media for Children in 2007 in Johannesburg, South Africa.² These events are designed to allow professionals to exhibit, exchange and network with, and learn from other professionals concerned with quality productions for children.

Collaboration with the interviewees spanned from enthusiasm and desire to converse and willingness to share ideas and dilemmas through to rare occasions of outright antagonism (although these few incidents do not seem to have anything in common). Most expressions of reluctance to be interviewed were related to a concern about inadequate English linguistic skills and an overburdened schedule during the events. What was clearly helpful for my project was the atmosphere and the expectations of conduct in these international events: professionals who attend them come with a predisposition to interact, network, meet new people, talk about their work, and demonstrate tolerance and interest in the work of others. So, being approached by a total stranger who presented them with a request to meet was a completely normal and accepted situation. Therefore, on the whole, interviewees were agreeable and in the majority of the cases seemed delighted to have an opportunity to talk about themselves and their own work, as well as to express their views on the work of others to which they have been exposed during the event or outside it.

Interviews included questions about the producers' own personal career development; their current work; their perceptions of social issues in their culture and in television for children in their country; their impressions of social representations in their own work and in that of others, which they had viewed in the festivals and elsewhere; their suggestions and aspirations for change – and the like. While I embarked on this study with a specific interest in changing gender representations in children's television around the world, the interviews developed in quite unexpected ways, to encompass a host of issues of concern in television production (such as cultural diversity, the workplace, budgeting, and policy).

Each of the 135 interviews was unique, and, collectively, they created a wide range and diversity of responses. Interviewees employed various types of response techniques that included the use of diversion, confrontation, and avoidance strategies, as well as advancing personal agendas. Overall, it is impossible to summarize their nature in a unified manner, except to say that they required a great deal of flexibility on my part. Almost all interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and – since most interviewees were not native English speakers – they were also lightly edited for English, but with the attempt to preserve the style and flavor of the original conversation. The transcripts were later submitted to a grounded thematic analysis of the main issues that surfaced in the interviews.

The presentation of this project here, in a very selective and brief form, mobilizes the expertise of professional producers of quality television, allows their voices to be heard, and in doing so enables them to contribute to debates within the community concerning critical approaches to media studies. I make use of selected quotations to enable the producers to speak for themselves rather than I, the privileged researcher, attempting to represent their views in my own voice. Thus the project that evolved now also illuminates the potential benefits of integrating professional and academic

ways of knowing about the media and social world. When quoting or referring to interviewees, I use pseudonyms reflecting their specific gender and culture, as well as their other individual characteristics. The following discussion focuses on two main themes: who the producers of quality television for children are; and what quality television means to them.

Who Are the Producers of Quality Television for Children?

Collectively, producers of quality television for children represented a diversity of cultures, religions, races, historical backgrounds, political regimes, technological advancement, media systems, and a host of other variables that may affect the social realities portrayed on the screens. The predominance of female interviewees (two thirds) is, however, reflective of the professional makeup of the field of media production for children (suggested also by others, see for example Banet-Weiser, 2004). Indeed, many interviewees commented that female professionals dominate the specialty of children and youth as well as educational television within the world of television production; as Augustine (Portugal) put it, “it’s a woman’s world.” The observation about the feminization of this area is consistent with, and reflects, the traditional segregation of occupations, which perceived the area of children and television to be an extension of women’s specialization in the private sphere. Such, for example, was the explanation offered by Hanne (Norway): “Women choose caring jobs and children’s television is more caring than economics, news, or sports. So you can see the same pattern: most of the people involved in children’s television are women.” A similar argument was put forward by Eric (Canada): “I think it is a way to balance the fact that there are so many men working in media and other fields, and women are caring, and they are good in nurturing children [. . .].” The above two quotes suggest the argument that, first, the definition of femininity includes a capacity for caring, apparently perceived to be lacking in masculinity; and that, second, children’s television is an extension of the private sphere of childrearing and nurturing, as is evident in many professions dominated by women (e.g., education, nursing, social work). Many other interviewees supplied evidence of having internalized this position as well. This was particularly evident among female Asian interviewees (from Pakistan, Malaysia, Nepal, Iran), who explained how children’s television was perceived to be a legitimate professional area of employment for women in societies where women’s presence in the workforce was not necessarily always deemed to be acceptable.

Another explanation offered for the dominant presence of women in this domain relates to the political economy of media employment. Hope (US), for example, provided a structural argument in addition to the nurturing one: “[It] started coming about 25 years ago, when it was a fairly young industry, so women who came in at

the bottom, as I did, as somebody's secretary, were able to move up in the rank." This explanation too, is not unique to the television industry: women find it much easier to move up the ladder in young organizations with a yet to be established tradition of male domination.

That the feminization of media professions is associated with lower status and income, as well as with a lower frequency of long-term contracts, has been documented in many studies (as in the case of the feminization of other professions – education, secretarial work, or family medicine), and its discussion is not within the scope of the present chapter. Yet evidence of this significant phenomenon leads to more general political economy concerns related to the interlocking relations of gender and money (Meehan & Riordan, 2002), including their impact on the field of television for children more generally (e.g., global phenomena of limited governmental support and low budgets for educational children's programming), as well as to the material conditions of women working in this domain of media practice.

Furthermore, there is additional employment segregation along some marked lines within the specialty – and the world – of children's TV. Interviewees agreed that, while women occupy most of the roles of producers, developers of content, and consultants, they remain a minority among those who actually convert these ideas into television programs – that is, among the technological and production professions: directors, camera and sound professionals, or program directors. While organizational and content-oriented roles are more "women-friendly" and are deemed to be more in line with feminine traits and skills, the technical ones have been historically male dominated, and thus more difficult for women to infiltrate and flourish in. Most notably, argued many interviewees, the world of animation, which dominates the industry and perpetuates many of the problematic stereotypes, remains mostly a male world, as very few animation artists are women. Indeed the US animation guild reports a 10% membership of women (Geena Davis Institute, 2007).

In addition to the various aspects of horizontal segregation, many interviewees brought up issues related to vertical segregation – that is, the hierarchal authority structure within each workplace. Despite the fact that children's TV is a "woman's world," in many places this world is still managed by males at the executive levels of decision-making. While this situation was changing dramatically, according to North American and European interviewees it remained particularly true in many other countries in the rest of the world.

The discussion of the gendered aspects of employment in children's TV brings us back to the point of focus of this study: the influence that this situation may have on the content produced in such an environment. Clearly, television production is not an individual creative activity, but it is part of a contextualized cultural process, situated in a particular institutional setting. However, a specific reference to the personae involved in the "moment" of production "in which cultural objects or texts are brought into being" (Buckingham, 2008, p. 222) deserves our attention. This line of thinking leads us to a series of questions, such as: Do women produce different

types of programs from men? Do they prioritize different issues? Do they bring to the screen different perspectives? Do they choose more female characters? Do they develop different narratives? Similar questions have been debated, for example, in the area of news journalism: Do women journalists define news' values in a manner different from men? Do they advance a different social agenda? Use a different language and style? Interview more women and present them in a less stereotypic manner? (see Byerly & Ross, 2006).

Overall, it is interesting to note that few interviewees evidenced any awareness that the gender of persons involved in the TV world makes a difference to the kind of television content produced for children. However, as many of my interviewees suggested in one way or another, it is the survival impulse of making money that is much stronger among female industry leaders than their feminist conscience, and therefore women in positions of power do not necessarily behave differently from their male colleagues in similar decision-making positions or make different choices from the ones they do. As noted above, this argument has been made in relation to other realms of media production, and it suggests that the mere gender of the professional is no guarantee of particular social sensitivities, nor does it provide sufficient motivation to struggle against institutional barriers and to take personal career risks.

Perceiving Television for Children as a Safe and Relevant Space

The overriding theme that emerged from the interviews with regard to producers' perceptions of the role of quality television for children was the desire to present to them a world that is safe, yet relevant to their real life experiences. "Safety" was framed by several of the interviewees in general terms, as a symbolic space where "parents can turn the TV on for their child and not worry that something will suddenly be on it that is disturbing or inappropriate," as Diklah (Israel) stated. Disturbing and inappropriate are usually terms referring to violent and sexual representations, the two "red flags" often cited by politicians, policymakers, and advocate groups. However, in the context of this study, those concerns were taken for granted, as the interviewees moved beyond them, to much more nuanced concerns regarding the social world presented on television. As Mike (US) expressed passionately:

Television can be forward-thinking, it can show people different ways of living and accepting. I don't want to reflect reality the way it is, but reflect reality the way I think it should be [. . .] as we grow up we forget about love. We get busy, we get smart, we become greedy – all these things happen to us [. . .] I don't mind modeling a utopian world, I would rather have people who say I have learned something from that show, that's what I want to do, I want to make a positive change, even small, rather than validate the problems.

Similarly, Abby (US) said:

I think that we as program-makers have a responsibility to those children, and we have to show them the good things in life. And the good things in life are not merchandising and they're not television-to-sell things, they're embracing interesting characters, they're showing love, they're showing strength in individuals, morality [. . .].

It is interesting to note that both of these quotes surmise that a better world is one not so dominated by money, which was a central underlying theme of the study.

In sharing their visions of a safe and relevant television world, producers framed their ideas within two general meta-themes along the lines of designing a program concept: the nature of characters on children's television, and the characteristics of the context in which the storylines are developed. Interestingly enough, the narratives themselves received little attention in the interviews, as they seemed to be perceived as driven by the creative process of designing strong characters and of placing them in a socially desirable environment. We turn now to the discussion of these two meta-themes.

Strong, Complex, and Diverse Characters

A prerequisite for quality television for children was the presentation of both boys and girls on television as "strong" characters, as suggested by Maggie (Ireland): "A strong character is someone that takes the lead in action, who suggests solutions to problems." When probed for more details, interviewees suggested that a strong character is, for example, energetic, intelligent, active, trustworthy, cooperative, someone who works toward a goal, overcomes difficulties and deals wisely with conflict. Such characters are supported by good friends and by caring adults. Interviewees referred to an ethical dimension of personality: the character would have to be someone who is respectful and caring of others, and who is concerned about values that go beyond one's own gains and self-centered satisfaction. Brad (US):

I think you would like to show that good character matters, that morality can be a successful formula for your life, that it's not only the nasty, thin, rich, obnoxious people who are successful. So for both boys and girls I think they need to see a way through to being good human beings as well as successful people.

A theme repeated by several interviewees addressed the need of both boys and girls to see children overcoming difficulties and becoming stronger and better as a result of the challenge, along with stories of girls and boys who are survivors, not victims. Beatriz (Ecuador) wanted to present a character that "knows very well where she wants to go, what she decides, but [is] also able to show weaknesses, and how to deal with them [. . .] to show the process [of] how one can deal with weakness and convert

disabilities into abilities.” Eric (Canada) shifted this thrust when he suggested that boys and girls need programs about finding one’s mission in life:

It’s not about role models; it’s about becoming who you are. We have a wide variety of characters in our society and we need all these people with different skills. So, it is not about trying to convince them to become something else. Of course there are some role models, like I use athletes a lot [. . .] but the kids will have to discover who he or she is, so I don’t want to portray a certain type of person they should be like, this is not my vision.

Kate (US), too, believed that engaging characters are what makes the difference in children’s television:

I think that it’s nice when you have characters that are heroic, you know, whether they are boys or girls. Where there are opportunities for the kids to see courage and be in a difficult situation and use an ability to reason to get out of it [. . .]. That’s probably not where the rest of the business is going, because a lot of movies are about a lot of special effects and they don’t care much about characters. But to stand the test of time, I think you have to have characters that kids relate to and connect with.

Strong characters on children’s TV are also complex characters, according to these professional experts. The need for character complexity was one of the central arguments raised by interviewees, given their widespread critique of the general presence of underdeveloped characters and, more specifically, of gender stereotyping. Their arguments claimed that unidimensional characters built upon one specific trait (e.g., being the “bitch-blonde” or “goody-book reader” girl, or being the “bully” or “geek” boy) lend themselves to simplification, stereotyping, and underdeveloped plots. While this is quite an accepted rule in scriptwriting (Cowgill, 1999; Dancyger & Rush, 2007), interviewees insisted that it is essential in efforts that seek to break stereotypes, since underdeveloped characters almost always fall into the trap of reducing the type of person they portray to specific traits, for instance gendered ones, along traditional binaries such as active/passive, rational/emotional, leader/follower, ugly/sexy, intellectual/fun-loving, manipulative/victimized, and so on (Lemish, 2008). Here is Mike’s (US) view:

Stereotypes are due to a lack in creativity. When someone is very creative, they are not going to create stereotypes, since stereotypes are a product of bad writing. If you create well rounded, complicated characters, they won’t be stereotyped. Having interesting characters means oftentimes going against types to keep them fresh and interesting.

Julie (UK) provided a more detailed explanation in advocating for complexity:

I think the more complex we can make our characters, the more sides of them that we can show, whether they are boys or girls, the richer the characters are [. . .]. Complexity

of characters is what everybody should strive for [. . .] what's really important is: Do we believe these characters? Do we understand them in that context? Do we think they feel what they feel and behave how they behave?

Part of the effort to provide children with a “safe space” of television via the choices made in the presentation of characters was a desire to present a society of inclusion. Elaine (Brazil), for example, suggested: “When we talk about inclusion we are talking about the blacks, and the poor, the disabled, the Indians [. . .].” Similarly, Svein (Norway) described diversity issues related to recent immigration waves from around the world, a concern expressed by many north European interviewees:

We try to raise the status of children coming from other countries [. . .] as there are a lot of immigrant children [. . .] We have to reflect that in all of our programs [. . .] We have to show children from Turkey and Pakistan, and also from Asia – Korea, Vietnam. A lot of the children have been born here and they are mixed in the Norwegian society more than their parents, and that's where some of the conflicts are. And we have to deal with it on television.

The interviewees' discussion of diversity calls for attention to be directed to the intersections between all central human circumstances and characteristics that interact to construct identities: gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, language, geography, history, abilities, age, sexuality, family. Diversity is required everywhere, in all the forms and types of characters in fiction and non-fiction formats, both frontstage and backstage: different bodily and facial shapes and skin colors, costuming and apparel of all cultural styles and fashions, languages and accents, home interiors and foods, customs and religious traditions. This diversity should reflect the urban and the rural ways of life, as well as the various classes that constitute and are representative of children's worlds. Good characters and exciting stories can appear in all colors, shapes, and forms.

Overall, participants' framing of diversity assumed a general liberal position, most often referred to as multiculturalism and tolerance for difference, expressed by means of representations that are consistent with the changing configurations of societies and with the challenges involved in shifting away from the hegemonic whiteness on television. Interestingly, while racial hybridity seems to be a growing feature of commercial children's television and related merchandising (with popular images such as the Bratz Girls, Lizzie McGuire, or the Cheetah Girls), interviewees did not address it directly or give it as an example of representations to be included in children's programming. Hybridity and racial ambiguity can be interpreted as producers' acknowledgment of the lack of racial purity, yet at the same time it seems to work as a successful marketing strategy, which attracts diverse audiences through a limited number of characters that seem to speak to all of them. One ambiguous “Brown” character can appeal to a wide range of ethnicities – including Latin, Middle Eastern, Asian, and Native American – without alienating public of Caucasian descent (Valdivia 2008; 2009). With trends of colorism (the whitening of people of color), even some

Black populations can relate to the character “Brown” as one of their own. This may help, for example, to explain the global success of the Nickelodeon pre-school hit *Dora the Explorer* (2000–); the ease with which Japanese animation featuring racially ambiguous characters travels; or the popularity of *High School Musical* (2006), whose lead female character is a Latina. For some interviewees, hybrid characters represent a true vision of a world of racial equality, one in which people create life together on the basis of who they are and of the nature of their relationship, rather than on the basis of their biological and cultural heritages. However, for others, hybridity represents a form of “dissolving” or “erasing” race instead of marking and celebrating it, and therefore a true danger to the preservation of heritage and a threat to the most basic beliefs that constitute people’s identities.

These concerns build upon a feminist reaction to the historical failures of a variety of media, including children’s programming, to incorporate the diversity of marginalized voices: of young people, of non-heterosexuals, of the disabled, of people of color, and of people from lower classes of society. It is worth noting, however, that sensitivity to diversity issues has come to be understood not only as a moral and political issue, but also as a requirement for a central cognitive skill that is crucial for survival in the global world. The need to cultivate a “respectful mind,” as Gardner (2008) defines it – responding systematically and constructively to differences among individuals and among groups, seeking to understand and work with those who are different – extends beyond mere tolerance and political correctness, into the realm of flourishing and well-being. Indeed, Todd (US) described a program he was producing along these lines:

We have segments produced in Israel, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, South Africa, Russia, Holland. And all of these are segments about a child in another culture mastering something difficult in their culture. They may have nothing to do with our culture, but it’s the common sense of mastering and of struggle, of what is similar and different to the child in the audience [. . .] so a child in Mongolia, a little girl who learns to balance balls on her head, is appealing to a young boy or a young girl here who is saying “I don’t do that but I respect and understand the challenge of her learning how to do it, just as I respect the little girl in Holland who has to learn how to ride a bicycle because everybody rides a bicycle there to get from one place to another.” It’s the idea of struggle and it’s a universal concept but it has its own particular attitude and angle [. . .].

As Todd explained, highlighting commonalities in spite of their cultural manifestations is perceived as a means to advance tolerance and cultural understanding.

Finally, related to the notion of presenting strong, complex, and diverse characters was the suggestion to present, in children’s programming, the perspectives of children themselves, as they are viewed and expressed by them. The notion of empowering underrepresented and misrepresented groups by giving them a voice in the media has been discussed extensively by scholars with diverse interests and coming from a variety of theoretical approaches (Couldry, 2008). Children, in particular, lack space, a voice, and hence agency – both in the theorizing of childhood and in its

representation, in all cultural and media forms. The extremely limited presentation of children's voices in research has led some scholars to question our ability to make sense of their media experiences and of what can be concluded about their inner worlds. One form of "giving voice" is the development of children- and youth-made media – for example independent blogging, the posting of photos and art-work, and the production of home videos and biographical documentaries; guided school projects; aided productions in training workshops and specialty classes; or involvement in social movements and activism through the use of media and through the production of messages. The value of these activities in the development of literacy skills, civic engagement, and personal growth has been widely discussed (see Chalfen, 2008; Kearney, 2006). However, in the context of our discussion, "giving voice" has quite a different (albeit related) meaning, as it refers essentially to enabling children's perspectives to be expressed in adult-produced media. For the most part, this is rationalized by producers in terms of the importance of the programs becoming relevant to children's lives and in terms of producing better "value" and higher quality programming for children audiences. These interviewees felt that creators of children's programs often talk about children rather than letting children talk for themselves. This was also expressed in the form of a distinction between programs *about* children and programs *for* children. This distinction suggests that a program featuring children does not necessarily have children's well-being and needs as its goal.

Several examples illustrate this argument: Emma (Bolivia) said: "We made a series with the title *With Our Own Voices* where children talk about their lives, about their rights. They can speak, they can talk with their point of view; and I think it's very important that they do so in their language [. . .]." Margaret (Kenya) shared: "We were watching a program from Asia about a girl who wants to go to school and it is very interesting because it was a story from a girl's point of view [. . .] so the issues are still the same but from a different point of view." And Mpule (Botswana) recommended: "I give them all voices so that they share how they feel, they share their success stories, their fears, their disappointments together. Let them have a face." Thus it became clear that casting children as program characters may be a necessary, but is certainly not a sufficient, condition for a program to be considered a quality program for children.

In summary, then, according to my interviewees, a diversified screen provides more realistic and humane portrayals of current societies around the world, and is also central to the well-being of the children growing within them. It celebrates girls and boys as children who share the same challenges, aspirations, morality, dreams, and hopes; children who need love and friendships, have adventures and overcome difficulties; children who are curious and eager to explore their surroundings, and who struggle with their multiple identities; children who try to carve their place in the world. Children's television, the interviewees advocated, needs to present children who are self-willed, positive, share their problems and accomplishments. Good programming, so the interviewees told me, brings children closer to each other and

at the same time closer to themselves. With so much in common, sticking to gender and racial stereotypes “is just plain lazy,” they often said, while developing fun and smart characters who are true to themselves but also do unexpected things is difficult and creative. As many of the conversations unfolded, it became clear that breaking stereotypes and opening up the screen to the possibility of blurring gender and racial differences and of offering children a real choice that cuts across divides is seen by interviewees as a way to foster a safer and healthier environment for children’s growth and development.

Between the Local and the Global/ US

In addition to offering children strong, complex, and diverse characters with their own voice, interviewees believe that television has a responsibility to offer children visions of a socially desirable context in which such characters take action. Concern for social context spreads on a wide spectrum, from family arrangements on the one hand to a global world order on the other. The presentation of children growing up while they are supported and cared for by responsible and loving adults is claimed by many to be one of the major contributions that television can make to assist children. These may be street children in huge urban centers whose life circumstances left them to fend for themselves, or “latchkey” children of affluent families – of parents caught in the pressures of a competitive capitalist world who pamper their children with leisure technologies and accessories as replacements for a real and meaningful presence in their lives. Given this emphasis on change, I should also note that none of the interviewees spoke in favor of restoring a traditional family structure with a clear distinction between the private and the public sphere, with a stay-home mom and a wage-winning dad. Neither did they specifically address children as the purpose and goal of family life – a central notion associated with capitalism (Kapur, 2004). Instead they expressed a wish to recapture the view of families as responsible for the well-being of children, and particularly a view of adults as significant caregivers and upholders of culture and tradition.

Indeed, for many of the interviewees, particularly those from non-Western countries, television for children was expected to serve nation-building roles and to encourage children, first and foremost, to love and take pride in their own culture even as they learn tolerance to others. As Sumita (Bangladesh) put it: “Good television for children means that you teach them that they should love their country, they should love their culture, and also they should gain knowledge of other cultures.” This theme was strongly entangled with a discussion about the Americanization of children’s television around the world. Producers were cognizant of the unique “feel” of their local productions, as they were constantly comparing their work to that of others in their profession – especially those in the “imagined production center” of what they referred to as the Westernized television screen. This social practice of “imagination,” to apply Appadurai’s (1990) conceptualization, refers to the

construction of collective aspirations for some global sense of place. The interviewees, however, tried to dissociate themselves from such a collective imagination, as they were wishing for their own local voice to be on the screens that children were watching.

Thus the much debated tension between “local” and “global” and the perceived consequences of cultural globalization, as well as the differing conceptual varieties of Americanization and Westernization (Featherstone, 1990; Feguson, 1992; Tomlinson, 1999), were salient in the interviewees’ reflections on their own work. Unsurprisingly, “global,” as used by the interviewees, rarely meant “universal.” Indeed globalization seemed to refer to the spread of products and images mediated by the West (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991), from which none of the countries involved in this study was immune. Thus the notion of “the West and the Rest” came out very clearly in their discourse, together with a form of cultural particularism through which producers attempted to assert their own unique identities. The claim that we live in a world increasingly characterized by Americanization has been put forth repeatedly by these interviewees, reflecting much of the intellectual and political thought on these issues. Objections to the erosive power of globalization on local cultures have frequently featured among the fears of Americanization: the influence of the US and, more specifically, of its values, ideology, economics, political interests, and culture. As in other realms of discussion, the critique expressed “from the ground up” by the producers here is strongly entangled with admiration for things North American, as well as with a desire to perform at a similar professional level.

This cultural “feel” was frequently framed within the local–global tension, highlighting a clear “we” versus “they” binary. Mapule (Botswana) expressed it quite bluntly when she said:

We, as a developing country, we train in the West [. . .] We do what the West is doing. They’re sort of being the leader, and we are being the followers. It is only now that we are trying to find out our own voices within the global village. To say what is really our need as a country, as Botswana; what are our cultural values [. . .].

Mapule recognized the dependency of her society on the resources and training offered by the developed West, but she suggested that this comes at a price – the price paid to the cultural authenticity of the images on the screen.

Interestingly, the “we” versus “they” was not unique to non-Western societies alone, as many of the interviewees from European countries – as well as from Australia and Canada – defined themselves as “we” in contrast with a specific US “they.” For them, globalization trends are clearly synonymous with American imperialism, as they do not perceive themselves to be part of the Westernizing cultural trend. While it is impossible to measure the intensity of responses in this type of study, my reading of the interviews suggests that the interviewees from Western non-American countries were as concerned and critical of US television as the non-Western producers were. Sarah’s (Australia) argument is paradigmatic of such views:

We get so much American TV . . . I don't think we get a balance, our kids are watching mostly American shows and a lot less Australian ones . . . like the whole American high school scene is so completely different in America . . . I think the peer thing is different, the whole structure of high school, you know, junior high etc., we don't have it . . . the lifestyle is similar but different, the accent . . . slang . . . [. . .]. There are programs with the Black American family that have no relevance to Australian[s] at all . . . it doesn't mean our kids don't enjoy them, the comedy or whatever, but it certainly does not look like their own homes or their families, the way they speak, there is a difference . . . they are not reflecting our culture but somebody else's. And, since most of adult television is American, they [children] will get that soon enough – so we [producers of television for children] try to keep a bit of Australian culture.

Comparing one's television programs to the dominant US ones was a common discursive strategy adopted spontaneously by many of the interviewees, regardless of the topic under discussion. Kasper (Denmark), for example, compared his culture to the US screen:

Yes, definitely American programs look differently. I don't think the American ones are bad. I used to have this feeling that this is not real, that no Danish school kids have a convertible car to drive to school in, and none of the school kids live in a house together with other school kids. So, I was thinking what was this doing to our kids, and how could they identify [. . .]. And *Friends*, which is a very big serial, has a lot of morals in it, and a lot of issues that the children learn. But, I can never do one like that, first, because I don't have the budget, and second, because it doesn't really look the same when it is not in America. So whenever we do something we will go the other way, we step back and make real drama or real series about our own life, true identity.

The longing for more visibility of their own culture, as expressed above, was shared by many of the producers and was interwoven with a deep concern for issues related to the political economy of local production, as Leona (Philippines) explained:

In the context of media landscape, where you have dominantly imported programs 70–30 [*sic*] percent, it becomes imperative to develop something that is indigenous, that is theirs [our children's]; that speaks in their language and deals with topics that are about their lives, not only as young children growing up in a particular stage in their lives, but as Filipino children.

Valentina (Chile) recounted in her own voice what she understood children to be saying, on the basis of their participation in a workshop conducted by her station:

Children said, "I want to see me there! I want to see a Chilean boy there. I want to see my culture there. I don't want to look like a boy in Manhattan, because this is not my life, this is not my style of living, I don't feel me if I watch a guy on motorcycle. That's not my reality."

Some producers took this desire for cultural visibility a step forward and translated it into their actual work. Suzanna (Kenya), for example, was more proactive about the ways in which they attempted to highlight cultural uniqueness:

The whole thing about this animation project is that we are not drawing from an obscure content base. We are going for African stories, myths, heroes [. . .], creating a cultural grounding in the first place. We need to pay attention to our culture, our language, our needs . . . We have, for example, a big problem with female mutilation. Some issues are not necessarily addressed by the programs that are imported . . . We have issues that are very particular for Kenya and we would like to have programs that address them. We think our children will relate more to the stuff that they see everyday rather than things like *Powerpuff Girls*. They are good because they say that girls are heroes but at the end of the day you want to bring up a citizenry that knows their country, these are our leaders of tomorrow.

Interestingly, Suzanna, like many of her fellow interviewees, is not blind to the potentially valuable contributions that some US television for children is providing, as her example of the *Powerpuff Girls* (1998–2005) implies. Again, like most other participants in this study, she is also quite familiar with the “big hits” traveling around the world and attracting children all over. Nevertheless she positions the specific needs of raising the “leaders of tomorrow” in her and their Kenyan culture in clear opposition to what US productions can offer them.

Indeed, on occasion, discussions of discrepancies between the local and the North American were perceived as cultural clashes and took a clear form of critique. Direct blame was directed at US television and its role in perpetuating inappropriate values (e.g., consumerism; a Caucasian unattainable “beauty myth”; middle-class lifestyle; hypersexualization of culture). Interviewees even critiqued approaches employed by US producers, claiming that they flooded the children’s television market with stereotypical representations of the supposed American way of life and its associated gender roles and racial stereotypes.

Thus US programming was criticized at many levels: for being stereotypical of gender and race; for perpetuating a particular, unattainable beauty model for girls; for being irrelevant to indigenous cultures; for being too limited in the scope of its content and in issues for children as they mature; for unnecessarily accelerating adulthood. True, these critiques echo many of the themes that dominate the discourse in the literature about cultural imperialism. Yet these are not views of academics, but rather statements made by practitioners, people who populate the production professions in the television industry around the world, most of whom are far removed from the heated intellectual debate flowing through academic journals and argued over in conference halls. That is, these are the views of hands-on television producers, who watch a lot of television for children from around the world and who struggle to create their own.

Some of the North American interviewees dismissed the notion of “American values,” claiming that the US culture itself is heterogeneous, and they disregarded

the conflation of economical interests with cultural influence. A few of them referred specifically to 9/11 as a sea-change date that made them think differently about their role as television producers, as Todd (US) explained: "I think one of the things we say [is that] we have to teach children not only to respect the differences but, after 9/11, how to stand up to intolerance, and so that's part of what we are trying to do in our shows." Abby (US) also reflected on the particular global circumstances in which US children are raised today and on what she would like to see television provide children:

I'd like children to feel comfortable in their world. [. . .] There are so many fears in children's lives now, all over the world, that television has a responsibility to children to try and make them feel safe and to feel good about themselves, and good about their world. Now their world might be their backyard, but also to understand different cultures and to embrace other cultures [. . .] The key for me to children's television is to make children feel safe and protected and excited about the world and I think that children are terrified of the world, terrified of traveling, and I know younger children who don't want to go anywhere, they want to stay at home. And I think that that makes very insular adults and I think that television has to expand the mind but it also has to give children courage.

Children, so the argument goes, are facing similar global issues of personal safety, anxiety over the future of the world and their place in it. Television has a responsibility toward all the children to help them become courageous citizens of this world.

North American professionals also brought up the fact that they adopt (and adapt) programs produced elsewhere; the unprecedented success of the Japanese animation series *Pokémon* is a case in point. This is an example of the "the Megaphone Effect," according to which "true acceptance of a cultural product seems to come from crossing the Atlantic and becoming a success in the United States [following which] items seem to acquire an ever-expanding sphere of appeal extending across the globe" (Bloch & Lemish, 2003, p. 159). *Pokémon* began in 1996 as a video game used in Nintendo's Gameboy; it became a popular TV series, a card game, a movie, and then the subject of massive merchandising. From Japan it traveled to the US and from there to the rest of the world, becoming an instant hit, dubbed "*Pokémonia*" in the late 1990s. The international commercial success of *Pokémon* was based on the effective use of localizing. This included the omission of five episodes, deemed unacceptable to US child audiences on account of the overly sexual objectification of the female character; changing the names of characters so that they would have a more appealing sound to the US ear; and changing color schemes (see Tobin 2004).

Direct reference to such forms of localizing was provided, for example, by Dana (Israel), who, in her discussion of purchasing Japanese animation, explained:

All of these series go through American adaptation, as there is a need to censor them here and there [. . .] It is a completely different world of concepts and values [. . .] different taboos [. . .] For example, they had secondary narratives relating to homo-lesbian

themes, or open sexual themes. There was once a scene with a grandfather type who pinched a young woman's ass, which I thought was very serious, more so than a battle scene. So we buy them from the Americans and not directly from Japan, because we are closer in culture to the American culture.

Dana's explanation serves well to illustrate how US plays the role of a cultural megaphone for products whose origins lie elsewhere.

Such adaptation efforts are immediately relevant to the desire for authenticity, which came across strongly in the interviews, as a call for television programs for children to be constructed with depictions of true-to-life characters, narratives, and social contexts. There seemed to be broad agreement among this global collection of interviewees that most popular commercial television texts designed for children (as well as for adults) promote behaviors and attitudes that are inauthentic in relation to viewers' own inner selves and desires, while camouflaging the structural mechanisms in operation behind them.

Children's TV and Social Change

Overall, then, the interviewees' discourse, presented here in a very selective, condensed, and brief form is about processes of change – those that are taking place and those that need to occur – in the global television industry's productions oriented to young audiences. Through citations from the interviews I conducted, we come to learn about the producers' ideologies and these ideologies' extension into production practices, the producers' experimentations with a safer social world, relevantly negotiated by the media, as well as the interviewees' alignment with the discourse of social responsibilities and how they advance their visions for social change. As a presentation of itself, this action research project mobilized the expertise of professional producers of quality television, allowed their voices to be heard, and in doing so enabled them to contribute to debates within the community of critical approaches to media studies.

The trend to deliberately incorporate a variety of social issues – health, literacy, risk behavior, conflict resolution, racial tolerance, and so on – in the programming of all the genres of entertainment viewed regularly by children and youth (including soap operas and telenovelas, cartoons, drama, talk shows, quiz shows, and reality TV genres) is particularly evident in the non-Westernized world. This approach draws from the study of “edutainment” genres – that is, an integration of education with entertainment (Singhal & Rogers, 1999) – which have been constructed and employed around the world to advance social change. It recruits popular television texts to advance awareness of social issues, with the ultimate goal of contributing to the empowerment of young viewers by offering them not only information and knowledge, but also role models, reasons, values, and the motivation to be involved in

shaping attitudes and actions that can be incorporated in their own everyday life. The effectiveness of most such efforts has yet to be studied in a systematic, comprehensive manner, although, from what we already know about the relationship between children and media, there is reason to believe that such an approach does have a great potential to contribute to the well-being of children viewers.

However, a critical view of the obstinately conservative status of children's programming in relation to the possibility of change was shared by many interviewees, and even by top executives of major US media corporations. And, interestingly, there seems to be widespread agreement that, since "it is all about money," the most effective arguments for advancing change should not be moralistic ones about social responsibility, but rather arguments that are framed as profit-driven: arguments that demonstrate how money can be made by changing images and by catering to growing demands from the children audience. As one top executive who spoke on promise of anonymity observed: "The best way to promote change is to show there is profit in it." In reflecting later over this proposal, a Latin American executive sighed: "No wonder that television is called, in the US, the 'industry.'" She explained, in response to my request for clarification, that the choice of the term "industry" (over "arts" or "world," for example) reflects the ideological value system behind it: this is a corporate world driven by profit considerations, producing goods on an assembly line, to be sold to mass consumers. Thus "better" programming, for the industry, does not mean "socially better," but rather "more profitable."

In striking contrast, many interviewees – particularly those more gender-sensitive, socially engaged, and involved in advancing change – reflected on the need to develop their own awareness and social consciousness continually, because they admitted to falling regularly into the trap of gender bias, for example – given that all of us have been so strongly acculturated to gender blindness. Interestingly, they employed a model of social epistemology that assigned researchers a very important role: scholars can assist them by conducting action research that will put at their disposal data and observations about attempts to advance programming and about organizational changes related to key social issues. Furthermore, their critical perspective challenges the axioms discussed above and draws a rich agenda for the socially engaged research that is involved in policy and programming changes: Is it true that boys will not watch girls' programs? Will introducing greater diversity expand audience numbers, or will it lead to a decline in them? Do new images of boys and girls, as well as of new relationships and collaborations between them, appeal to various young audiences? How do children react to seeing persons who do not fit the "ideal appearances" of the people on their screens? How are decisions made in organizations that produce and broadcast for children?

Overall, I concluded that most of these interviewees want to be listened to and to learn from relevant research that will help them in their decision-making processes. This finding stands in sharp contrast to another accepted "axiom" employed in both academic and industry circles: one that argues that these two professional worlds are mutually suspicious, disrespectful, and dismissive. Accordingly, so the axiom goes,

professionals believe that academic research functions in an unapproachable and generally out-of-touch “ivory tower,” irrelevant because it is unaware of, or unwilling to account for, the constraints of “the real world.” In turn, academics believe that many professionals are too arrogant and uninformed to listen to solid, substantiated, and evidence-based advice. The findings of this study support a view that is diametrically opposed to both claims: the media professionals who participated in the study call for serious, in-depth, and productive collaboration between these two worlds of expertise.

The professionals’ desire for collaboration with academics is encouraging, given the rise, in academic associations and published scholarship, in current debates about the role of communication scholars as public intellectuals (Garter, Dutta, & Cole, 2009). Indeed, this study can be seen as an example of how engaged scholars of media studies and media professionals can move beyond conventional studies of media representations toward developing our understanding of the ideologically driven mechanisms, political economy constraints, and means of production that drive the images that both academics and many media professionals have been criticizing for so long.

NOTES

- 1 This chapter is based, with permission, on Lemish, D. (2010). *Screening gender on children’s television: The views of producers around the world*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- 2 For a detailed methodological account, see Lemish (2010, Chapter 2).

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Is Media Work Good Work?

A Case Study of Television Documentary

David Hesmondhalgh and Anna Zoellner

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines a politics of creative media work in order to make claims for what is good work. These claims follow a number of recent critiques of work emerging from media production studies. Drawing on sociology, philosophy, and social theory, the chapter develops a model for the analysis of good and bad work in general. A case study of the independent television sector in the UK and Germany then applies this model to illustrate the coexistence of positive and negative features in media work. This intervention aims to promote the kind of emancipatory social action necessary to make access to good work, including good creative work, more equal and just.

To what extent is the work involved in media production *good work*? What is the quality of working life in the media industries? These are surely vital questions for anyone concerned with media production, and yet they have been neglected amidst the boom in studies of creative or cultural labor in recent years. Many recent critics have rightly pointed to problematic aspects of media labor, and we explore some of these below. But we shouldn't forget that there are real reasons to think of media work as attractive, satisfying and rewarding, at least some of the time.

In one research interview, for example, a camera operator spoke of the pride and satisfaction he gained from work that involved "doing really good camerawork that

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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really expresses the situation and expresses it really honestly.”¹ Among a number of examples, he talked about a documentary he had helped make about air traffic controllers at New York’s John F. Kennedy Airport. Filming was taking place in the air traffic control tower, and one of the controllers there was “quite a plane spotter, and he quite often went out on the runway anyway, so I said ‘why don’t we do some stuff out of the tower?’” Simon’s instinct was to get closer to the planes. Although the sense of planes being “dots on the screen” was “part of the story,” Simon thought it would be a good idea to get closer to these “great big lumbering beasts” and to “actually get down on the runway with this guy because he was a fantastic talker.” Simon explained what then happened:

We got down there and then this amazing fog came in and it was one of the most extraordinary sequences ever and the guy was amazing. I thought “that’s fantastic,” a plane was coming through the mist and taking off when it was almost not supposed to be, and you kept seeing great big jumbos lumbering by about 30, 40 feet away. We were really close, and with this guy, these big, big planes lumbering by, and his dialogue, it was just amazing. I thought “we’ve really got this right. We’re on a winning streak here. Because we’ve persevered and because we’ve tried so hard and because we cared so much, we’re now reaping the rewards and our luck is in.” Just after this happened, there was a cloudburst and it was all [over] in a few hours, and the next thing the planes started taking off again and going up into the sky because the mist eventually cleared with this rainstorm, and I was getting these amazing things called vortices, which is where you get these amazing capes of mist and things surrounding the planes. Although that’s been filmed before by people, even the air traffic control people said those shots were really amazing. The planes were taking off with these great capes on them and you could just see the wind flow, like little wind tunnels. We went back to the hotel and we looked at some of it on the monitor and we were just so happy. We thought “yeah, we really did it; today we really did it. If we don’t live another day . . .” and we got there, for once we got it right . . . Just to occasionally get it really right and to really hit the nail on the head and actually just express something perfectly so you can walk down the street on air and think “I got that right . . .” There’s a lot that goes into that to get to that situation, but if you do get there, boy, it’s satisfying.

There is here not only delight in capturing the planes close up, a matter of unusual access, but also pride in having captured on camera striking and unusual footage. Simon quietly includes reference to the admiration and recognition of the air traffic controllers – perhaps suggesting a proxy for the audience that might eventually see the film – and that of his collaborating peers. Although of course his story involves an element of self-aggrandisement, it also conveys the shared, cooperative pleasures possible when good creative work is achieved.

Simon’s account allows us to consider the issue of good work we raised at the beginning of the chapter in terms of the individual experience of one man – one worker. Yet the quality of work is also a matter of social justice. For access to such work is highly unequal, and it is only possible under certain circumstances. This makes it important to consider what precisely constitutes good jobs, occupations,

and careers. And if we are particularly concerned with media production, as this book is, then we need to consider whether media jobs are good ones.

We explore these issues in the following way. In the first section of this chapter we discuss a number of significant critiques of media work that have appeared in recent years. During this time there has been a remarkable rise in studies of creative or cultural labor. It is now more than reasonable to speak of a turn to cultural work in the social sciences and humanities. Much of this research has emerged from media production studies. We want to examine the normative assumptions underlying some recent accounts, and we also want to address the implications of such accounts for constructing a *politics* of creative media work, including the kind of emancipatory social action necessary to make access to good work, including good creative work, more equal and just. This, we claim, needs to be a central element in the analysis of production in media studies. In the second part of the chapter we develop a model for the analysis of good and bad work in general, which might be applied to creative media work. In doing so, we bring together the analysis of media production with the analysis of work in general, drawing on sociology, philosophy, and social theory. In our view, this is a long overdue move in media, communication, and cultural studies. In the third and final section we draw on qualitative empirical work conducted in the independent television sector in the UK and Germany for the purpose of analyzing some of these issues. We show the complex coexistence of positive and negative features in one particular media occupation.

Critical Analysis of Creative Labor

The problem raised by a number of recent critical studies of media work is whether the attractiveness of this kind of work might be a kind of seduction, which encourages workers to accept unjust and/or exploitative labor markets and working conditions. This, in particular, has been a line pursued in what might broadly be called “cultural studies” approaches to media work. A large part of the motivation here has been to counter some of the complacency surrounding creative and new media work on the part of policymakers (perhaps especially creative industries policy) and some of their academic cheerleaders who extol the benefits of creativity and entrepreneurship. These cultural studies-influenced writers have drawn, to varying degrees, on sociology and social theory concerning work and organizations for their examinations of new media and creative labor. In some analyses, the influence of poststructuralist studies of work and organizations has been particularly apparent.²

Gillian Ursell’s (2000) early contribution was innovative because it drew attention to the potential importance of ideas, developed in other fields, concerning how “subjective desires for self-actualisation” can in many cases be harnessed to business goals (Rose, 1999, p. 145). Ursell therefore was drawing attention to the particularly high levels of personal investment in media work – something that had increasingly

been noted by sociologists of work and by organizations concentrating on other fields (such as Kunda, 1992 on high-tech engineering), but that, somewhat surprisingly, had hardly been applied to the media industries at all.³

Discussing how notions of creativity, talent, and work are being redefined in those burgeoning micro-businesses of the cultural sector associated with young people, including fashion and design, but also entertainment industries such as clubbing, recording, and magazine journalism, Angela McRobbie (2002a, p. 523) echoed Ursell in pointing to the utopian aspirations involved in the “attempt to make-over the world of work into something closer to a life of enthusiasm and enjoyment,” and in focusing on how this leads to a situation where, when things go wrong, young people entering these creative worlds of work can feel they only have themselves to blame. In this respect, McRobbie usefully broadened the study of creative work to encompass a wider set of conditions and experiences, including the way in which aspirations to and expectations of autonomy could lead to disappointment, disillusion, and “self-blaming.” She also pointed to the gendered aspects of these conditions – women being now expected to find full-time work, uninterrupted by family commitments, satisfying, and enriching (p. 521). The context for McRobbie’s critique (see also McRobbie, 2002b) was the then UK Labor government’s creative industries policy and their general valorization of labor, where “work comes to mean much more than just earning a living; it incorporates and takes over everyday life” (McRobbie, 2002b, p. 99). McRobbie was usefully questioning the “ideal of self-expressive work” (2002a, p. 101) and its place in Labor’s advocacy of “a new youth-driven meritocracy,” involving a labor of love and self-exploitation.⁴

Similar issues have also been explored by other researchers in relation to work in the information technology (IT) sector, forms of work sometimes unhelpfully blurred with creative labor in governments’ conceptions of creative industries. Andrew Ross (2003, p. 9) observed how, in the eyes of a new generation of business analysts in the 1980s, Silicon Valley “appeared to promote a humane workplace not as a grudging concession to demoralized employees but as a valued asset to production.” “New economy” firms, he argued, aimed to provide work cultures that “embraced openness, cooperation and self-management” (*ibid*). But this, showed Ross, was closely linked to long working hours and a serious blurring of the line between work and leisure. Whilst the dot.com working environments of the 1990s offered “oodles of autonomy along with warm collegiality,” they also enlisted “employees’ freest thoughts and impulses in the service of salaried time” (Ross, 2003, pp. 17, 19). Also writing about new media work, Rosalind Gill (2002), in a study of European freelance new media workers, found evidence that features of the work that seemed superficially attractive, such as its informality and its high levels of autonomy, were in fact particularly problematic for women because of the lack of clear criteria for evaluating work, and especially because of the difficulties such informality caused when seeking new contracts.

More recently, a significant intervention has been made by Matt Stahl, who, more than most of these cultural studies writers, brings systemic political economic

questions to bear on creative labor and, in so doing, advances debates about the relationships between capitalism, autonomy, self-realization, and creative labor in intriguing and often valuable ways. Stahl's starting point is how "the personal and political-economic dimensions of the alienation and domination characteristic of capitalist society appear in attenuated forms in popular music" (2006, p. 1). This combination of attention to both political economy and subjectivity is helpful. Drawing on the cultural industries tradition of political economy, Stahl recognizes that various historical forces protect the creative worker from the full force of alienation and expropriation identified as features of capitalism by many of its Marxist critics, most notably from the contradictions arising from creativity-commerce relations. This, along with the attachment of ideals of self-realization to "artistic" careers, makes music and other creative labor *desirable*.

Stahl's aim is to puncture this apparent desirability. In a fascinating range of cultural sites, Stahl sees evidence of intense struggles over the value and meaning of musical production. Rock ideology provides discourses of authenticity that superficially allow for musicians to struggle against capitalism in the realm of culture – even pop acts such as the Monkees (1966–); but this discourse is used by television producers to capture the identification and desires of audiences. The *Idol* (2001–) television franchise shows provide narratives of meritocracy, offering drastic warnings to those who seek to aspire beyond their abilities, whereas contemporary rockumentary, exemplified in the film *DIG!* (2002), offers moral tales about the dangers of taking bohemian excess too far. In all these cases, Stahl claims, we can see signs of the way in which authenticity and authorship are central to accumulation through cultural production. This is particularly apparent in battles between record companies and artists over contracts and legislation concerning creative labor and the rights deriving from it. Just as the primitive accumulation of modern Europe enclosed common land in order to render it private property, copyright provides "a new, inexhaustible common stock out of which new productive property can be generated and a new class of capitalists established" (Stahl, 2006, p. 224).

Stahl's account explains these roles for subjectivity, autonomy, and authenticity in historical terms. The original primitive accumulation of medieval Europe (extended to other realms by European imperialism; see Harvey, 2003) forced production away from the family, into waged employment outside the home. For Stahl, borrowing from Eli Zaretsky (1976), this created a separation between work and life, with the latter "more free" than the former, and this helped to create more personal forms of subjectivity by compelling men and women to look to themselves for meaning and purpose. Eventually, as mental labor becomes increasingly incorporated into production in the twentieth century, such "personal" subjectivity became more important – even central – to capitalism. At the same time, however, the historical compacts between businesses, states, and labor, where the latter traded in autonomy and ownership for decent pay and working conditions, were relinquished. Stahl suggests that the incorporation of subjectivity into capitalism acts as a kind of pacifying device in the era of neoliberalism and that popular music's democratic promise that "you can

do this too” is a particularly salient way in which “liberal society” (a phrase that seeks to cover both capitalism and democracy) promises an end to alienation and appropriation by offering independence and autonomy (Stahl, 2006, p. 23). This has an important economic as well as a cultural aspect. Musicians seem to bypass corporate control by commodifying their identity as property, which can then earn monopoly rents through the copyright system. But this apparent autonomy masks alienation and domination. Only a very few musicians really gain the autonomy and ownership associated with authorship; most musicians operate “below the line,” in ways that render them little better than wage slaves. Stahl suggests that the desirability of creative labor is a version of the way culture serves to affirm capitalist societies.

There are two important theoretical strands underlying Stahl’s analysis. One is a concern, derived from poststructuralism and autonomist Marxism, with “the production of subjectivity” (Read, 2003), which might be better called “the productivity of subjectivity”: the way in which certain modes of subjectivity are necessary and central to a given mode of production. This is apparent in the way in which discourses of authenticity seem to offer a challenge to capitalism, permitting a certain amount of conflict in workplaces (possibly a distinctively popular music version of creativity–commerce relations). Ultimately, though, these discourses are presented by Stahl as sustaining new variants of capitalism, or at least as masking alienation and domination. This understanding derives from the other main theoretical strand in his research, which is a very strong critique of the profoundly undemocratic nature of the relations between employers and employees.⁵

The Debate About Creative Work

In a variety of different forms, then, these cultural studies-influenced critics of media production work have found autonomy and self-realization to be tied to conditions such as self-exploitation and self-blaming. In the strongest version of such critiques, which involve political–economic as well as subjective processes, self-realization becomes a systemic requirement. These critiques have been central to recent analysis of media work and have been very valuable.⁶

Yet there is an absence in this work. In an important contribution, Mark Banks (2007) has partly endorsed the pessimism of many such accounts of creative work (and also, to some extent, of accounts from critical theory and political economy perspectives); but he has also qualified that pessimism, drawing on his own empirical work and on a range of social theorists. Drawing on the work of Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2001) on individualization, Banks finds hope that transformations in modern life have enhanced the possibilities for social action and reflection. He refers to the views of Scott Lash and John Urry (1994) that the cultural industries themselves have provided flows of signs that have enabled genuine reflexivity and independent creativity in modern societies. This is a world away from Theodor

Adorno and Max Horkheimer's (1979) "culture industry" thesis of standardization and pseudo-democratization. Banks sees evidence of such individualization and reflexivity in a number of aspects of contemporary cultural production.

First, says Banks, there are widespread signs that "social creativity and independent artistic production are actually on the increase" (Banks, 2007, p. 102) and a willingness to explore counterrational and radical creative impulses remains alive. The aesthetic realm "continues to provide resources and inspiration to a whole range of social actors, not just artists and creative cultural workers" (ibid., p. 103). Regardless of whether or not this realm is a creation of bourgeois society, a practical belief in it has proven persistently inspiring. This is linked to a broader democratization of the aesthetic domain, which offers capital new opportunities for commodification, but it also broadens the constituency of people who can live a life governed less by accumulation than by the pursuit of aesthetic goals. Related to this, Banks (pp. 108ff.) turns to the Aristotelian concept of *practices* to argue that the pursuit of internal rewards continues to provide a very important part of the motivation of cultural producers. A practice, as defined by the philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre, is a coherent and complex form of cooperative human activity

through which goods⁷ internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (1984, p. 187)

Practices need to be sustained and of sufficient size to include numerous subactivities. Planting turnips is not an example of a practice in this sense, says MacIntyre, but farming is. Kicking or throwing a football with skill is not a practice, but football is. But many activities are practices: "arts, sciences, games, politics, the making and sustaining of family life" (ibid., p. 188).

The notion of *standards of excellence* is extremely important. MacIntyre is defending the ethics of pursuing excellence. *Goods internal to that form of activity* is a crucial phrase too. Internal goods or rewards "are such that their character can only be identified by reference to the specific nature of the practice concerned and its particular standards" (Keat, 2000, p. 23). External goods or rewards are, by contrast, not dependent on the nature of the practice through which it is achieved. These include money, power, prestige, and status.

Banks asks his readers to consider the possibility that there is enough variation within the institutions of contemporary capitalism for practices to be able to endure in modern cultural production.⁸ Internal and external rewards may not be quite so mutually contradictory as is implied by perspectives that see markets as necessarily eroding quality.⁹ What is more, practices can flourish at the expense of market-led imperatives. Firms can act as profit-satisfiers rather than profit maximizers, and this is summed up in the idea of doing it for love and not for money. This can lead to

self-exploitation, but it has another side too, encouraging resistance to the excessive pursuit of external rewards. Banks (2007, p. 120) also claims that moral systems of trust, honesty, obligation, and fairness remain present in contemporary capitalism, and he gives examples of the resilience of social and cultural values among the creative workers he interviewed in previous research. Later in his book, he elaborates on this view by suggesting that we need to think of creativity–commerce or art–commerce relations in terms of a triad composed of orientations toward creativity, commerce, and the social (*ibid.*, p. 184). The idea here is that such a conception would allow us to consider the degree to which creative workers seek not only to live an aestheticized life, but also actively to intervene in social relations. Political and aesthetic goals may often be in tension, in that many may feel that pursuing morality through artistic production undermines aesthetic and “practice”-like aspects of production; others may be looking for some kind of synthesis of the two.

Banks’s contribution is a valuable one, because it suggests the possibility of a more balanced appraisal of the relationships between subjectivity and creative labor than that provided by many of the cultural studies critics. So, too, does the work of Georgina Born. In an essay on the way in which aesthetic value has been treated in television studies, Born (2000) trenchantly critiques debates about quality in television for their relativist unwillingness to adjudicate between producer and audience discourses of quality, and she argues for the importance of analyzing the discourses of media professionals. In particular, Born suggests that researchers should attend to

a category of specifically media intellectuals whose task is to mediate the generic dynamics that bridge the past, present and future of media output. Their skill is in the art of judging how to progress a set of generic possibilities in given conditions, and how to balance the enhancement of the entertainment, pleasure and education of the audience. (*ibid.*, p. 406)

Crucially, this puts emphasis on the *positive possibilities* of cultural production, and it does so by asking when its powers might be used “responsibly, creatively, inventively in given conditions, and when not” (*ibid.*). It also suggests the importance of theorizing agency, reflexivity, and value. In later work that was based upon her own ethnographic research, Born analyzed the “situated ethics and aesthetics” of BBC television producers in documentary, drama, and current affairs (Born, 2004, pp. 84–87; see also Born, 2002). Born does not claim that reflexivity always results in better television; rather, she argues that a key analytical task is to consider how the reflexivity, intentionality, and agency of cultural producers conditions the creativity and innovation possible within a given medium. This task, in turn, she locates within the context of genre theory, stressing the difference between various attitudes to generic change: “nostalgic repetition, the rich mining of the familiar, which may itself be achieved in more and less inventive ways”; “a self-conscious exceeding of the previous horizons of expectation”; and the production of generic stasis, involving the entrenching of given codes (Born, 2000, p. 421).

The tensions between the pessimistic accounts discussed above and Banks's and Born's critical insistence on a more balanced appraisal brings us to the fundamental problem raised at the beginning of this chapter: *to what extent is it possible to do good work in the media industries?* For, if the high levels of autonomy and the enhanced possibilities for self-realization that some sociologists (e.g., Ezzy, 1997; Sosteric, 1996) have identified as features of good work and that seem to be present in the media industries lead in the end only to self-exploitation, then these supposedly desirable forms of labor look bleak indeed. Is creative labor, then, really barely disguised "bad work"? Might it even be a particularly modern form of bad work, where the subject's desires for autonomy and self-realization become folded into systems of discipline and accumulation? It seems to us that these debates rely fundamentally on assumptions about, and on interpretations of, the subjective experiences of workers; and it seems only right to listen to and observe creative workers reflecting on their work, while taking into account the probability that their relationship with their own experience will often be opaque. In order to address these questions, we need to develop and draw on theorized, historicized accounts of the forces shaping cultural production. And, as we have explained, an important "intermediate" level – one between the subjective experiences of workers and the historical and systemic forces that structure those experiences and are, in turn, at times structured by them – is that of the organization: the level where work in the cultural industries is managed, coordinated, and divided. In the remainder of this chapter, two different strategies are employed. The first is to outline an approach, developed more fully elsewhere (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011a), that might clarify the normative dimensions of creative media labor – in other words it might clarify what the relations are between attractive and problematic elements of media work. The second is to draw on qualitative and ethnographic empirical analysis of subjective experience to illustrate some of the ways in which a particular site of labor combines good and bad work in complex ways.

Toward a Model of Good and Bad Work

We are not alone in considering explicitly what might constitute good and bad work. Writers have used various terms for "good" and "bad" and have developed various frameworks. Randy Hodson (2001), in his invaluable summary of numerous ethnographic studies, uses the concept of *dignity* as the basis of his assessment of contemporary work, and he outlines ways in which workers experience challenges to their dignity: mismanagement and abuse, overwork, incursions of autonomy, and problems of participation and involvement. Below, we draw on Hodson's useful deliberations and we comment on his categorization. His concept of dignity is a valuable one, but we feel that simply to use the qualifiers "good work" and "bad work" allows us more flexibility and helps us more easily to cover the normative ground.¹⁰

A helpful and comprehensive discussion of research on “good jobs” is provided by the economist Francis Green in his book *Demanding Work* (2006). Green identifies six aspects of job quality: skill levels (because skills are “the means by which people have the potential for self-fulfillment,” *ibid.*, p. 16); work effort or intensity; personal discretion over job tasks and participation in workplace decisions; pay; low risks and security (in terms of health and safety and of job tenure); and job satisfaction and affective well-being at work. Green is dealing almost entirely with “objective” aspects of work – “objective” in the sense that they would be widely agreed upon to be quantifiable and measurable.¹¹ It will become apparent that some of his categories overlap with ours, which focus on subjective experience. Leaving such issues aside, we repeat that our concern is primarily with the exploration of subjective states and of people’s reflections about them (and with forces that might shape such experiences); and this concern is best pursued through the kind of qualitative work we have undertaken.

In his 1964 book *Alienation and Freedom*, the sociologist Robert Blauner took up the concept of alienation, suggested by Marx and Durkheim, and attempted to provide a more careful specification of it, so that it might act as a basis for research.¹² In our view, Blauner’s discussion remains useful, because it is an unusually bold and transparent effort to develop normative concepts for the analysis of work. What’s more, Blauner was helpfully clear that the concept of alienation had only an indirect relationship to questions of human happiness. In his view, work was rarely experienced as either entirely miserable or totally pleasurable. This is surely right. Our discussion will look primarily at elements of good work understood in terms of *the experiences of individual workers*. By good experiences we do not mean happiness, joy, or even pleasure – though these may be fleetingly part of the experience of work. Labor often involves an element of struggle, difficulty, and compulsion, even for those who “like” or “enjoy” their work. To seek happiness in work might be to invite disappointment, as it inevitably involves frustration and struggle. We need other conceptions of good and bad work (or of unalienated and alienated work, in Blauner’s terms) beyond happiness and pleasure.

Blauner offered a thoughtful outline of four types of work alienation, which he felt were of particular significance in modern societies: powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. There are problems and contradictions in his categorization, in his choice of terms, and in his discussion. We point to these problems in what follows and we develop our own conceptualization, building on Blauner’s thinking and on that of other social scientists and philosophers who have studied work in the interim.

An alternative word for the freedom and control that Blauner sees as the positive opposite pole of powerlessness is *autonomy*. Hodson discusses the importance of autonomy, which he feels to be particularly central to professional and craft workers, whose jobs “depend on the daily exercise of autonomy in relation to tools, techniques, and work priorities” (2001, p. 140). Workers in these *relatively* powerful and high-status forms of work often have a very uneasy relationship with managers and

greater power in relation to management than many other workers. Hodson also states that such workers often report greater levels of job satisfaction and meaning, and greater levels of creativity at work, than workers in other types of occupation. Many creative workers, we will argue, can be thought of as craft and professional workers, and they seek forms of autonomy – though with crucial differences deriving from the particular status of aesthetic autonomy. Autonomy is such a difficult and disputed concept that we must refer readers to discussions elsewhere (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011a). Nevertheless, it is a crucial normative concept for work as a whole (not just for the professional and craft workers whom Hodson discusses), and perhaps especially for creative work as part of media production.

Turning to the concepts of meaninglessness and meaningfulness, Blauner seems to use these in two different and rather narrow ways. One refers to the worker's sense of the whole process of production, or her lack of it. But it is not clear here whether Blauner's main concern is with the effects of this condition on a worker's individual autonomy (that she becomes unable to exercise discretion because her own role is strictly delimited) or with its effects on a worker's level of absorption and interest (the job is *boring* because its relation to the whole is not understood, or felt to be of concern). The former aspects are best dealt with under autonomy. The latter are important aspects of work. It may be best actually to use terms such as *interest*, *involvement*, and *absorption*, or *detachment* and *boredom*, rather than *meaningfulness* and *meaninglessness*, which might best be reserved for the second way in which Blauner uses them – to refer to awareness of the purpose or, better still, to the social and cultural value of products, and, linked to that, to the goals of the organization producing them. We think it is best to deal with issues concerning good work in relation to the social and cultural value of *products* separately from process, and we return to this question of value briefly in the next section (see also Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011a).

Blauner's discussion of isolation is marked by an appeal to the value of integration into a community that is not unusual for US sociology of the mid-twentieth century. One danger of Blauner's take on this is how easily integration into work organizations might, under profit-making systems, become a way of encouraging a false sense of unity among workers, in the interests of profit-maximizing firms. Yet, if we modify our conceptualization of it, it may be possible to talk of isolation as a feature of bad work. The desirable opposite of isolation might be better conceived of as *sociality* than as *membership*, and the merits of sociality might be conceived of in terms of the values of friendship, solidarity, cooperation, and *shared* enjoyment and interest. Hodson writes that co-workers "provide the social fabric that is often crucial for meaning at work" and "a significant line of both formal and informal defense against managerial fiat" (Hodson, 2001, p. 18). This conceptualization of isolation and sociality is developed elsewhere.¹³

Most problematic of all is Blauner's conception of self-estrangement. This merges three different aspects of good and bad work: discussion of the "alienating" experience of boredom or of the "non-alienating" experience of interest or absorption;

questions regarding the relation of people's work to self-esteem; and their sense of fulfillment and development over time. We have already mentioned above that the first of these, interest or lack of it, is a separate feature of our model. The second element in Blauner's discussion of self-estrangement, *self-esteem*, also needs to be separated out, as it is too important to be merged into a broader category. It matters that work can enhance or diminish our sense of self-esteem and, related to this, our sense of others' respect for us and recognition of our work.¹⁴

The third element of Blauner's discussion of self-estrangement, people's sense of fulfillment and development over time, is in our view extremely important in relation to good work. Concepts such as career, vocation, and calling indicate widespread desire to sustain good work over time. The term we want to borrow to refer to this aspect of good work is *self-realization*. This has its origins in translations of Hegelian ideas about humanity's historical achievement of its own potential, and it has come to refer to "the fulfilment by one's own efforts of the possibilities of development of the self" (the Oxford English Dictionary's definition). The idea has roots that go deeper than those of the English word. Articulated by philosophers such as Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, it is a core goal of post-Enlightenment thought. Later, Freudian psychoanalysis sought to increase the individual's understanding and awareness for the sake of the development of the self. By mid-twentieth century, however, the idea of self-realization had become attached to popular therapy movements that some writers see as deeply bound up with problematic forms of individualism (Illouz, 2007, p. 45). The humanist psychologist and early management guru Abraham Maslow placed "self-actualization" – realizing one's own personal talent or potential – at the top of his famous hierarchy of needs: when other, more basic needs (physiological needs, needs for security, love, and esteem) were met, then self-actualization, "the desire to become more and more what one is," could serve as a motivating force for human action (in *ibid.*).¹⁵

One problem with the concept is that, in contemporary culture, notions of self-realization and its close relative, self-actualization, are often not far removed from narcissistic forms of competitive individualism. Life-coaching guru Anthony (or Tony) Robbins, for example, offers books, recordings, and classes that use the concept of self-actualization to show us "how to awaken the giant within" (Robbins, 1992). It is possible, then, to see a focus on self-realization as mere evidence for a "culture of narcissism" (Lasch, 1980). The German social theorist Axel Honneth has argued that, increasingly in the twentieth century, "members of Western societies were compelled, urged or encouraged, for the sake of their own future, to place their very selves at the center of their own life-planning and practice" (Honneth, 2004, p. 469). As a result, individual self-realization becomes linked to "institutionalized expectations" and "transmuted into a support of the system's legitimacy" (*ibid.*, p. 467).

Do such developments make self-realization irredeemable as a normative concept? Not necessarily (and Honneth does not think so either). The concept of self-realization need not be an example of out-of-control narcissism or competitive individualism. Progressive collectivist political projects generally involve some kind of notion of

self-realization. Jon Elster claims for example that, while Marx thought that communism would be better than capitalism for a number of reasons, he also condemned the latter “mainly because it frustrated human development and self-actualization”; this was the other side of Marx’s much more sketchily portrayed concept of alienation. Communism was a society in which people could “fully realize their potential as all-round creators” (Elster, 1985, p. 83). Nor does the appropriation of the term by management gurus and therapists diminish its importance in understanding human life. The fundamentally ambivalent achievements of psychoanalysis (see Zaretsky, 2005) include an emphasis on the pursuit of healthy self-realization, and, at its best, this can involve working toward a reflexive understanding of the limits on this goal. Our aim here is not to advocate a Marxian or psychoanalytical concept of self-realization, but to point out that the term need not be linked to competitive individualism or narcissistic fantasies about individual triumph. It can serve as the basis of ethical discussions concerning the place of work and of creative labor within conceptions of human well-being and social justice. It makes it possible for us to discuss how work and other key elements might contribute to a (pluralist) notion of successful development of the self over time.

Some vital aspects of bad work appear to be missing from Blauner’s breakdown of alienation. The improvements in working conditions in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s may have led him to assume that problems of job *security* and *overwork* were not sufficiently important to be included in his framework. Or it may be that Blauner did not consider these to be aspects of alienation *per se*, but part of some broader problem of pay and conditions. Whatever the reasons, these surely need to be included in any consideration of the quality of work as experienced by workers. It is true that, under his categories of powerlessness and control, Blauner recognized that control over the pace of work was critical and constituted “the most insistent, the most basic aspect of a job” (1964, p. 21). But to subsume it under control seems not to do justice to this importance; moreover, this is only one type of overwork.¹⁶ Hodson categorizes overwork as one of the major challenges to dignity in the workplace and, together with the intensity of work, he also considers excessive hours. Employees work too hard and too long not only where they lack autonomy, but also in cases where there are contradictions of employee involvement. Programs calling for heightened employee involvement, such as work teams, quality circles and so on, have the potential to increase responsibility and dignity at work, says Hodson, but “they also can be used manipulatively to pressure workers to work harder and to increase output through intensified self-supervision and peer pressure” (2001, p. 20).¹⁷ All this relates to the question of balancing the emotional, physical, and time demands of work with other aspects of life, including caring for the young and the elderly, contributing to communities, and simply enriching one’s life through leisure.

Insecurity is an interesting term, because it has an objective, measurable sense, which concerns conditions and length of job tenure; but it also has a widely used subjective meaning, too. When we say we feel insecure, we suggest that we lack a

sense of safety. At work, this might involve threats to physical health through injury and contact with harmful substances, and the physical effects of mental states such as anxiety and stress. But workers, especially those on short-term contracts, might also feel insecure about their futures. There are other dimensions too, related to ethnicity, class, gender, and age. One of the most important contributions to sociology of work in recent years has been Richard Sennett's exploration of the "corrosive" effects of flexible work (1998). In his chapter on risk (*ibid.*, pp. 76–97), he writes about how the current conditions of corporate life are "full of prejudices against middle age, disposed to deny the worth of a person's past experience," and treating the middle-aged as averse to *risk*; and he traces the disillusioning effects of this mentality on Rose, a New York bar-owner who tried to break into advertising.

We have now encountered a number of the main elements comprising our model of good and bad work, one which is substantially different from Blauner's model of alienated and unalienated labor. To summarize so far, we have outlined a conception of good work as involving autonomy, interest and involvement, sociality, self-esteem, self-realization, work–life balance, and security. This is coupled with a conception of bad work as involving – conversely – control by, or dependence on, others; boredom; isolation; low self-esteem or shame; frustrated self-realization; overwork; and risk.¹⁸

Let us clarify our purposes here. We have spent some time clarifying these normative grounds because (a) the quality of working life is a fundamental matter for everyone, not just for creative media workers; and (b) the analysis of creative media work has neglected any extended consideration of these issues so far. However, in order to make such clarifications, we acknowledge that our discussion has had to be somewhat abstract. So we now relate the above conceptualization to media work by drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork (see also Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011a). In particular, we focus on questions of autonomy and self-realization.

Working in Television: Documentary Development

In what follows we draw on an ethnographic study¹⁹ in order to analyze the personal experiences of cultural workers in relation to the above model of good and bad work. In particular, we are talking here about labor in the television industry – more specifically, in independent production companies specialized in documentary and factual programming.²⁰ The study focused on the development process of television production, that is, the first stage in the production process, during which ideas for future programs are conceived and further developed into program proposals to be pitched to broadcasters and other funding bodies. Development work involves the brainstorming of new ideas and researching content and context. This might include who and what might be filmed, and where. A crucial aspect of development is the presentation of such research in the form of written proposals

to broadcasters, who of course act as the main financiers and distribution platforms for independent television producers. Development teams of researchers, producers, and assistant producers (AP) are led by the head of development (HoD), who coordinates and guides the activities of the team, in conference with the companies' executive producers.²¹

A marked feature, in both companies that were studied, is the high degree of independence for workers of all levels and responsibilities. For example, they exercise discretion over their work tasks: over the time, the order, and the way in which these work tasks are carried out. The workers comment positively on this form of *autonomy*, and in some cases they even value it more highly than financial gain. Other forms of autonomous work include working from home, having relatively flexible work hours, having an individualized work schedule, and enjoying a lack of (close) supervision. All this is clearly appreciated by workers, as the German head of development explains when asked about what she enjoys about her work:

Today I only got here at 2 pm, I did not have to justify that to anyone for example. The job needs to be done, how I do that is entirely left to me. In the end I am a freelancer for [the company], a service provider. Nobody is looking over my shoulder every five minutes, that's really nice. [. . .] The style here is very delegating. It would be hard for me if it was any different. It's quite a luxury and for that I happily put up with the not-so-great pay.

Even at the more junior level of researchers and assistant producers, where workers are given greater guidance in their work, the specific execution of work tasks is largely left to the individual. This autonomy provides workers with a sense of responsibility and contributes to work motivation and satisfaction. The standard recruitment phrase – “able to work independently” – seems to be a practical requirement for this type of work. This is apparent in the following statement by the German HoD:

I don't fancy at all telling you exactly what to do down to the very last detail. That's no use, because then I can do the job myself, really. But that also requires a high degree of independence and self-reliance, and there are people who you have to explain every little bit of shit to and they are just not suited. Someone who can't work independently is not suited to the job. You never do anything twice. Everything changes all the time and you have to be extremely flexible.

Autonomy in documentary development concerns not only issues of work organization but also creative activities and decision-making. This is a major factor in the attractiveness of television labor and, potentially, an important contribution to self-realization. The degree of creative autonomy in the independent television sector is closely related to the hierarchical position of a worker. Some creative input in development involves all members of the team. But decisions about the creative content or style of a program and about whether an idea is further

developed or rejected are made by workers in more elevated positions – notably the head of development and the executive producers. These more “creative” elements of project development concern for example the conception of new program ideas, including potential narrative structure and visualization, and the writing of program proposals. Such activities can be carried out by a team – for example in brainstorming and development meetings where every worker can equally offer input – as well as on an individual basis. Workers, even at the junior level, have the freedom to “run with an idea” and “shape it” (an HoD, UK) – that is, to further develop what might be just an issue or a problem into a full concept for a TV program, including narrative perspective, choice of specific content, locations, and potential contributors. The evaluation of such creative efforts is reserved for senior workers, who decide about alterations and future actions regarding the project. The British HoD describes this process as follows: “So it’s not that I’m being told initially, this is what you must do, it’s that I’ll go to them [the executive producers of the company] with what I’ve done and then we’ll move it from there.” Executive producers consequently have the highest degree of creative autonomy. This is a central part of their motivation for work. In both case studies, they are co-owners of the production company, and creative independence in the creation of TV programming was a central reason for setting up the companies in the first place, as one British executive producer describes: “We were three filmmakers who thought that we would like the opportunity to work on our own rather than within [a broadcasting station] where we all worked.” Nevertheless, there are also elements of dependence and control in this setting, where conflicting views might exist. For example, during the fieldwork a junior worker expressed criticism of a senior producer’s insistence on continuing research for a project despite a persistent lack of success in the junior worker’s search for matching contributors. On other occasions workers insisted on the potential of a project idea, and they did so against skeptical views or rejection from the executive producers or from the HoD. In addition, there are dependencies at a larger level that influence the degree of autonomy, as executives need to consider economic rationalities and their dependency on their broadcaster “clients” in their decision-making.

In addition to autonomous work, there are other desirable features of working in television in general and in factual and documentary production in particular. Such features contribute to a sense of fulfillment and *self-realization* beyond material rewards, and they are sought out by workers in the course of their professional career. In spite of having different work roles and responsibilities, workers share many values that provide them with work satisfaction, and even with pride. In our case study such values include creativity (as addressed above), variation, and the (potential) impact of their work. Program making for television is perceived as a creative activity.²² The capacity to reach a large audience means that this creativity has the potential to be widely shared (see Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011a, chapter 9). To be involved in this process is considered attractive – as this development producer from the UK describes:

It's quite exciting, you feel like you're in the fast lane of stuff. You're where it's happening, you're where programs are getting made and that's what the country is seeing on television. So that – it's really exciting. And I like Channel 4, if you'd said to me, "who'd you like to work for, what programs do you watch?," I'd say Channel 4.²³

Fulfillment through work is strengthened if work responsibilities coincide with personal interests and preferences, as in the case of this worker's personal preference for Channel 4 programming. The German HoD considers such an overlap of work and personal taste a specific advantage of her job, as it provides her with the opportunity to follow up personal interests through work projects. This blurring of boundaries between work and leisure can be a problem, but it also has its potential pleasures and rewards. The issue here isn't so much excitement *per se*; it's that the excitement derives from the ability to realize one's sense of self by pursuing work projects that comply with one's sense of what is ethical, interesting, or of high quality – a sense that, in the case of media producers, is partly (though of course not entirely) built up through media consumption (other sources include family, education, and religion).

Workers further value the variation of their everyday work both with regard to the kind of activities involved and with regard to the program content they develop, as – so it is claimed – "you never do the same thing twice." Although processes and methods follow specific patterns, every project has a different story and requires an individualized approach. This development researcher from the UK considers this an attractive aspect of her work: "And it's an exciting job, and you learn stuff every day and you meet new people whereas working on dramas apparently from what I've heard is really boring, and soaps and all this kind of thing is really dull." Contributing to documentary programming carries a particular value for workers in this sector due to the genre's potential for portraying social reality, for performing critical investigation, and for influencing audiences' views of the world. Workers talk of countering ignorance and prejudice and of the opportunity to "change people's perception" and to "make them think" as ideal outcomes of their efforts. This is of course closely linked to a notion of politics, or at least of ethics: a goal of contributing to the well-being of others. Variation and impact also relate positively to *interest and involvement*, regarded as elements of good work vis-à-vis the social and cultural value of the products the workers create.

Workers accept that there are limitations to their roles and responsibilities, and they accept the degree of autonomy and self-realization that is available to them; but often they compare their work positively to other jobs. A strong sense of personal career development that involves a belief in future career progress encourages workers, especially junior workers, to accept compromises with regard to interest and involvement, autonomy and self-realization in their current work role. By moving up in the hierarchal structure, they expect to have greater opportunities for creative autonomy and self-realization, as well as larger monetary rewards. At the top of the ladder in the independent sector are executive producers who, as in our case study,

are often (co-)owners of their businesses and possess a high degree of creative autonomy and control with regard to the programming they create and a strong sense of self-realization as successful creatives/program makers *and* entrepreneurs.

However, this sense of potential progress can be understood as a way in which workers come to accept dubious features of media work. There is an enormous oversupply of workers, and the television labor market is extremely competitive. Most workers will never reach this level of career status. Yet career-building and future work satisfaction provide strong motivations for television workers, which ultimately facilitate the acceptance of exploitative elements such as overwork and insecurity among workers as a necessary evil in exchange for the privileged opportunity of self-realization. One UK executive producer even claims that “it’s not a job, it’s a vocation.” Working overtime, working on weekends, working while unwell, and changing one’s personal plans to accommodate work are typical features for all workers, and they are particularly intense the higher the worker’s hierarchical position.

For example, one German worker jokingly complained about her boyfriend forgetting what she looks like because she had to work so many hours. The HoD in the same company kept an air bed in the office to sleep on for a few hours when doing night shifts – which happened several times during the observation period. On another occasion, a producer and a director commented on the fact that they were finishing their work for the day at an unusually early hour (5:15 p.m.), and the producer encouraged her colleague, who had two young children, to go home, as his family would be happy to see him in person once in a while rather than just talking to him on the phone. So workload and the *work-life balance* are frequent topics of conversation between the workers; and sacrifices in private life for the sake of good work performance are critically or empathically commented upon, but accepted as normal – just “part of the job.” In the German case study this became a kind of competitive element between some of the workers, who seemed to show off or overtrump each other with the excessive numbers of hours they worked.

Pressures such as high workload and tight deadlines do not only impact on the workers’ work-life balance, they also limit *autonomy* in the workplace. As the British HoD observed, “I haven’t got the time to have a lot of freedom but I do have the option to have a lot of freedom.” But overwork is not only down to managerial decisions within the company, for example understaffing or the use of inexperienced but cheap labor, or a result of the nature of project development whereby many projects need to be “juggled” at the same time. It is also caused, and often, by the company’s “clients” – such as broadcasters and funding bodies whose requirements and deadlines guide the activities and work priorities of the development team. For example, in the British case, the company was asked on a Thursday night, by a commissioning editor at Channel Five, to develop ideas for an observational series by the coming Monday morning. This left only Friday to brainstorm and contact sources for research and access during business hours, and eventually most of the team was feverishly involved in this task. The HoD and an executive producer then worked over the

weekend to prepare their suggestions for the broadcaster. During the first week of our observation in the German company, a project idea about the future of food for the Franco-German culture channel ARTE had to be researched, written, and presented to the commissioning editor over the course of five days (Thursday to Tuesday), in order to meet an internal deadline at the targeted broadcaster, which involved weekend work and very long work days for the two-person development team of HoD and the observing researcher.

The general acceptance of overwork is facilitated by the *lack of job security* in the independent television sector. All workers (except for the executives) are employed freelance or on short-term contracts (ranging on average between 3 and 6 months) and, especially at a junior level, workers are subject to a high degree of uncertainty about what will happen when their contract ends. In many cases workers' contracts were repeatedly renewed, on a short-term basis, especially if work relations were successful and the company was satisfied with the performance and commitment of the workers – including their readiness to work extra hours. Workers at a senior level, such as the head of development, are employed freelance, but in a more long-term, though non-fixed, appointment. However, their higher levels of security, pay, and creative autonomy also subject them to higher performance pressure and to substantial personal investment in their working life. Several workers said that, despite their insecure and uncertain working conditions, they enjoyed the flexibility of the employment structure, as it provided them with more variety in their working life and with more control over the development of their career. Nevertheless, insecurity is a central concern for television workers. One AP expressed the view that her ideal employment model would be “a steady part-time job that paid the rent and the rest freelance work”; and this attitude is typical of many workers in this industry.

Closing Comments

As is the case with most occupations, work in television is not good or bad *per se*. Rather, we have observed a complex and sometimes contradictory combination of elements of good and bad work.²⁴ The results confirmed that autonomy and self-realization can be thought of as positive characteristics of television work, but at the same time workers experience negative conditions in the form of overwork and insecurity. On the whole, though, the workers observed in our studies perceived insecurity and overwork as manageable pressures, given the satisfaction they gain from autonomous work and the opportunities for self-realization. Part of this is the *excitement* of being involved in television and building a successful career in this area. For many, this tips the scale toward a positive experience of their work life.²⁵ We further argued that these features of good and bad work are common to many workers, but the degree of their influence differs according to workers' position in hierarchies. Working in television can offer many workers, at all the hierarchical

levels, an experience of good work; but positions of higher seniority seem to provide more opportunity for autonomy and self-realization. Career-building becomes a central objective for television workers and elements of bad work are temporarily accepted as a worthwhile investment for a better (professional) future.

The recent boom in studies of cultural and media work is potentially a vital contribution to media production studies, which might be accused of having neglected media production as *work*. But an adequate normative conceptualization of media work depends upon a much closer engagement with other disciplines that have also analyzed labor, occupations, and careers. We have tried to show, by surveying a wide range of recent research and by drawing upon our own empirical analysis, the potential benefits that such an engagement might bring, by developing a more fully conceptualized scrutiny into the nature of contemporary media labor.

NOTES

- 1 This example is drawn from fieldwork conducted by David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, carried out between 2006 and 2008 in three different industries (television, magazines, and music), and funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. See Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011a).
- 2 Approaches to production inspired by the interdisciplinary project known as cultural studies tend to draw on understandings of the relationships between subjectivity, meaning, and social power on the other more than other approaches do. Here we pay less attention to what might be called “political economy” approaches to media work, but see Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011a, 2011b) for further discussion. For definitions, and for an attempt to clarify discussions about the relationship between these two sets of approaches, see Hesmondhalgh (2007, pp. 29–50).
- 3 It is worth pointing out that this is somewhat different from a Marxist critique. Building on groundbreaking studies of the formation of “consent” in workplaces by Marxian sociologists such as Michael Burawoy (1979), Ursell acknowledged that processes such as union de-recognition and considerable reductions in labor costs and earnings provided plenty of evidence to support a Marxist reading focused on exploitation and property. But she also noted “an intensification of the self-commodification processes by which each individual seeks to improve his/her chances of attracting gainful employment” (Ursell, 2000, p. 807) and analyzed how television workers had, in the era of casualization and increasing freelance work, come to take on the work of organizing their own labor markets.
- 4 On the idea of the “creative industries” and its adventures in global policy, see, among others, Hesmondhalgh (2007) and Ross (2009).
- 5 Stahl refers approvingly to David Ellerman (1992), for example, who sees work in capitalist modernity as being based on an illicit hiring and renting of people – which, in the private sphere, fundamentally contradicts democratic norms and values established in the public realm. Capitalist modernity is therefore seen as being at odds with itself. The problem is that this relies heavily on a notion of self-ownership that, Gerald Cohen (1995) convincingly argues, undermines collectivist claims for justice.

- 6 Though there have also been significant contributions from organizational, business, and management studies (McKinlay & Smith, 2009) and from the political economy of culture (Mosco & McKercher, 2008). For discussion, see Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011a).
- 7 "Goods" here is used in the sense of "rewards" rather than "things to be possessed." And, in case it isn't clear, the term "practice" is being used here in a specific philosophical sense rather than in the broader sense, recently made popular in social and political theory; it is used, namely, to refer to the importance of understanding societies in terms of routinized forms of action and understanding (Schatzki, 1996; Warde, 2005).
- 8 To do so, Banks draws on Russell Keat's (2000) impressive modification of Alisdair MacIntyre's ideas discussed above.
- 9 A perspective that was to be found in postwar cultural policy, for example; see Garnham (1990, p. 158) for criticism of this tendency.
- 10 Russell Keat (2009) makes a similar move to ours, preferring the phrase "good work" to the phrase "meaningful work" as the latter is discussed by a number of political philosophers such as John Rawls (1971) and Adina Schwartz (1982): "work that is interesting, that calls for intelligence and initiative, and that is attached to a job that gives the worker considerable freedom to decide how the work is to be done" (Arneson, 1987, p. 522).
- 11 The obvious exception is Green's category of subjective well-being. The use of survey data to measure other aspects of well-being besides wages is a welcome development in economics, even though there are many very difficult conceptual issues surrounding the operation of expressions such as "job satisfaction" and "well-being" in surveys. The move is welcome because it goes beyond the one-dimensional model of the person in neoclassical economics (for a critique, see Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). Our concern is qualitative, but we would be very pleased if this made a contribution to the building of theory that might help to refine well-conducted survey work concerning labor.
- 12 Blauner's study was conducted on factory workers in four different manufacturing industries, and he was interested in the way new forms of automated technology might actually serve to reduce alienation. Our concern here is not with this aspect of his book, but with its conceptualization of good and bad aspects of work.
- 13 One prominent variety of modern Marxism, often referred to as "autonomism," puts special emphasis on the possibilities that solidarity and cooperation in modern forms of work might encourage broader forms of social solidarity, which could bring about revolutionary transformations in society. See Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008, 2011a).
- 14 In recent years, matters of esteem have been pushed to the fore in political theory by contributions that have argued for and against the idea of *recognition* as the basis of justice and of other normative claims. See Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003); and see Beate Rössler (2007) for a discussion of the politics of recognition in relation specifically to work.
- 15 Creativity was tied closely to this. As Maslow himself put it, "the concept of creativeness and the concept of the self-actualizing, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing" (Maslow, 1971, quoted in Illouz, 2007, p. 45).
- 16 Green (2006, pp. 47–49) provides a valuable discussion of conceptualization and measurement (through surveys) of work effort or work intensity.

- 17 This kind of internalized commitment to work, resulting in overwork, is a key part of the critical case “against” creative labor in recent years. See, for example, Andrew Ross (2003).
- 18 These elements relate mainly to the experience of the *process* of paid work. However, as we indicated above in our discussion of Blauner’s concept of meaninglessness, there are crucial further dimensions to our understanding of good work – dimensions involving *the social and cultural value of products* (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011a). A notion of good work that involved only workers’ experience of the labor process would risk severing the ethics of work from the ethics of production.
- 19 The study involved five months of participant observation in the development departments of a British and a German production company in 2008, as well as interviews with the observed workers. In total 10 workers from different hierarchical levels were interviewed, ranging from researcher to executive producer. For reasons of confidentiality the identities of the workers and of the companies have been anonymized. See Zoellner (2009, 2010) for further discussion. Both studies reported in this chapter (by Hesmondhalgh and Baker, and by Zoellner) made use of participant observation – a key method in the analysis of media production and of labor.
- 20 For another significant study of labor in the independent television production sector, see David Lee (2008).
- 21 The size of project development teams varies even among middle-sized companies; it can range from a single person to whole teams in single or even double figures per company, and in some cases workers switch within a company between development and production.
- 22 Though of course there are different work roles with varying degree of creative involvement. See Hesmondhalgh (2007, pp. 64–65) for an overview of the division of labor in the cultural industries.
- 23 This development producer was employed on a fixed contract, and she specialized in developing program ideas for Channel 4. As part of her work role, she liaised with executive producers and commissioning editors.
- 24 For a similar analysis of work across three industries – television, music, and magazine journalism – see the empirical research reported in Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011a).
- 25 Workers may of course be coping with the negative conditions of their work through a certain amount of denial. However, those negative conditions can become overwhelming and workers might consider a career change as a result of a lack of opportunities for self-realization. This was the case, for example, with one of the observed development workers in the UK. He expressed frustration over the conditions he encountered in television production. In particular, he found the short-term nature of work contracts a severe burden, but he also had a deeper problem with the overall approach of television documentary. The development producer was in his twenties, he had a background in science and worked as a science communicator prior to his employment in television. To “see science on television in creative ways” was one of his main motivations to work in the sector, and he was disappointed by the superficiality and sensationalism that accompanied much of contemporary science programming. As a result, he considered a career change if his current contract was not to be renewed.

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Community Media Production

Access, Institutions, and Ethics

Ellie Rennie

ABSTRACT

In policy terms, community media are known as the “third sector” of the media. The description reflects the historical expectation that community media can fulfill a need not met by the commercial and public service broadcasters. A defining element of this “need” has been the means to production for nonprofessionals, particularly groups not represented in the mainstream media. The historical construction of community media reveals production to be a guiding principle; both a means and an end in itself. This chapter examines the various rationales underpinning community media production, including empowerment, media diversity, and the independent producer movement. Using case studies from youth media, the chapter critiques producer-centric models of community media. In the contemporary media environment, production alone cannot meet the social needs that community media were established to address. Instead, I propose a rationale that combines both production and consumption ethics.

Production is more than the day-to-day work of community media organizations. When taken to mean part of an industrial cycle, production is central to the theoretical underpinnings that have defined, and to some degree determined, how community media should be accommodated in the media landscape. Advocates have argued that the means of production should be available to all, extending community access not

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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only to production skills and program resources, but also to communication spaces and technologies. Broadcasting reforms in many countries have helped institutionalize community media through access measures that enable amateurs and community representatives alike to take part in media production. In this chapter I trace the intellectual history of community media, looking at production as a defining rationale both in practice and in policies. In the digital age this rationale needs rethinking, as new technologies both enable and complicate not only access to the means of production but also the ability to institutionalize critical media structures. In the final section of this chapter I consider issues of ethical consumption as a new way forward for thinking through the role of community media in the digital age.

The community media I refer to in this chapter emerged during the mid-twentieth century, when media production was restricted to a few dominant participants. For instance, in the USA and Canada, early community media production via public access television – that is, public, educational, and government access (PEG) – existed both as alternatives to and in negotiation with large, commercial cable television companies (Fuller, 1994). In time, community media have grown into their own sector of national media landscapes. In Australia, what began as a handful of experimental radio stations in the 1970s became officially, in 1992, the third sector of broadcasting, after commercial and public service. Today it is the largest sector of the media in terms of number of broadcast licensees.

Community media exist in all corners of the globe, and, although demands for community media have not decreased, their place within the broader media environment is changing. When I first started to produce and write about community media in the mid-1990s, community stations were the only real means for amateurs to distribute sound and video content to broadcast publics. Mainstream media offered a few avenues for public expression, such as home video programs, letters to the editor, talent shows, and talkback radio; but they ceded no editorial control or ownership of their content. Community media gave people a more direct means to access media platforms and to control production processes and content. In the current media environment, however, the community media sphere has been crowded with other noncommercial, citizen-led forms of media production. Individuals may contribute “user-generated content” to communities, but this content is mostly distributed across commercial sites such as YouTube. Government broadcasters may bring more people’s voices into media content through digital storytelling or content-sharing hubs, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Pool project (<http://www.pool.org.au>); but, while they provide access, these projects seem to rely on national companies. Indeed, these days it is often easier to access and participate in mainstream media outlets, which is due to their advanced technologies, better bandwidth, and public branding campaigns.

If access and institutions alone do not distinguish community media, then we need to identify what community media may do differently from commercial or government-funded media. I posit that community media are something that participants choose because of the values they uphold. If the dilemma of the new media

environment is identifying and navigating the abundance of media production and consumption outlets, then the benefit of community media is that they offer a value-based system for these forms of media participation. The historical foundations for theorizing community media provide a starting point for thinking through the values of these media in the digital media age, turning our focus to the politics that underpins a later consideration of ethical consumption over participatory production as a way to retheorize community media.

What Are Community Media?

The phrase “community media” refers to media that originate in civil society, outside of commercial and governmental control. Although there is a long-standing debate in the field as to whether “community media” is too broad a description to be useful, I choose it to reference the community sector as a field of action that operates with aims and purposes different from those of commercial enterprises and government agencies. Those who participate in community media often do so because they are attracted to these aims and purposes as alternatives to other media, and this leads some to call community media “alternative media” (Atton, 2002, 2004; Comedia, 1984; Duncombe, 1997). The phrase “community media” on the one hand suggests organizational structures that are unique to the community sector, while on the other it encompasses the loose ties and informal arrangements that connect people and provide impetus for alternative types of relationships between producers and consumers.

In this relational sense, “community” can mean kinship connections, but more frequently it designates other social bonds. The term is often used to appeal to a sense of belonging or to a shared identity. A community can be a worthy or a functional group. It can suggest a warm or coherent way of living together. At other times, it can simply refer to people who share geographical proximity or cultural affiliation. As philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990) has pointed out, though, “community” can also be an exclusive and narrow term, signifying a social arrangement that promotes a denial of its members’ differences. By appealing to an impossibly shared subjectivity, a community can mask or justify an “us versus them” mentality, resulting in racism or other forms of social divisions.

A community can also be put to work as a way of consolidating and advancing social causes. It possesses political usefulness, in that it refers to associations and groups that make up the third sector – including organizations that represent particular affiliations, and formal or informal networks that may promote particular causes, interests, or hobbies. The third sector includes large charities and small clubs, which are driven by factors other than profit-making and may provide services that government has either failed to fulfill or are best left outside of government jurisdiction.

As a whole, the community media arena is therefore an organic sphere of social affiliations and networks, as well as of the structures that support such groups in

order to ensure that they can fulfill their social and cultural goals (Rose, 1999). The third sector gives space to a myriad of activities that may be independent of government and commerce, but that can also be leveraged to achieve certain ends associated with the state, such as services, or with the market, such as development. Beyond this, the third sector can also fulfill the social or cultural needs of its participants, whether they be producers or consumers. It is this final operational use that I will return to later in relation to community media ethics.

Community media can include local public access media, diasporic news and culture, media development projects, and various forms of culture jamming. Some scholars resist the description “community media,” because potentially it includes less progressive communities in these fields. It stands to reason that, if the phrase “community media” implies universal media access, then that would include people from communities that provoke hatred and unrest. I am less concerned with what should or should not be included under the community media umbrella than I am with the structures that support community media’s ability to thrive as a third sector. In my own work, I have chosen to use community media, as they convey the attempt to take what is part of the social world – as in those relationships we call “community” – and to institutionalize them in media. Community radio stations in Australia, for example, are “exactly the type of institutions that define the contours of civil society,” in that they are “self-governing nonstate actors that exist as non-profit-seeking expressions of the mutual and collaborative intent of ordinary people to effect social change through discursive means” (Fairchild, 2010, p. 25).

This definition does not make community media an alternative expression of citizenship, or something radical by nature (see also Rennie, 2006), but it also means that community media are not free of structural constraints. In Australia, community broadcasters must be incorporated associations and operate as not-for-profit entities in order to receive licenses. Structural constraints for community media vary by country, region, and locality; these reflect the various struggles that community groups frequently faced in order to achieve community media legislation. Early fights for community radio and television, for example, centered on access to the electromagnetic spectrum – that is, the “airwaves” needed for analog broadcasts. More recent fights have related to cable or satellite transponder capacity, and they were followed, even later, by battles for affordable broadband access. The resulting policies have formed a patchwork of requirements and guidelines for making community media.

Today the various programming groups that use community stations are often less formally organized than the third sector itself. Some participants, such as independent producers, student filmmakers, and sports clubs, may work independently, without committees or rules. Individuals belonging to these groups might actually prefer to use commercial or government media to publish their content online, but they may find it easier to access community organizations for radio and television broadcasting. These facts introduce several tensions into the ways community media have been defined and practiced.

Community media policy, where it exists, is designed around the needs of producers and of the communities they represent. Without specific laws and regulations that apply specifically to community associations, community media have proven to be vulnerable to commercial or state interests. At the same time, producers may see themselves as working independently of a community association, or he or she may reject officially registered affiliations altogether. This makes formal requirements for community governance difficult to achieve. Moreover, non-profit regulations that ensure that community media do not behave commercially may guarantee public access to stations, but they may frustrate those producers who use, or even prefer, commercially available platforms and production technologies. These tensions, embedded as they are in the definition of community itself, are present in theories of community media, which have focused on issues of access to, participation in, and control of the means of media production.

Theorizing the Importance of Production and the Means of Communication

The production process has been a key focus of community media theories, which can be traced to origins in Marxist social theories, in particular those of Walter Benjamin and Raymond Williams, and in critical media studies. Community media theories have developed concepts, such as access, participation, and control, which help imagine alternative means of production, across both social and material processes (e.g., Kellner, 1990).

Walter Benjamin, an influential German intellectual writing during the Weimar period, was perhaps the first to introduce the idea of an alternative means of production. Benjamin was associated with the Frankfurt School, which set forth a critique of mass media as a capitalist institution that sealed the fates of a subordinated working class. In 1934 he gave a speech to the Institute for the Study of Fascism, at which he argued that publishing ideas, even from a critical viewpoint, is not enough to alter society. The creator, he insisted, must look at his or her position within the system as a whole, including the production process. Only by critically realigning where the work sits in relation to the “forms and instruments of production” (Benjamin, 1982, p. 214) can social change occur. Benjamin desired the advent of socialism, but what mattered most was whether cultural work transcended the bourgeois processes that upheld capitalism. Production, he asserted, needed to be freed from market influences in order to be truly revolutionary; simply expressing challenging ideas would never change the system if these ideas were distributed through the industrial press. Benjamin’s speech has been adopted in contemporary critical media studies as a way to understand the role and purpose of left-oriented segments of community-based media, particularly those outlets that seek to challenge mainstream media.

To this, Raymond Williams, a thinker who profoundly influenced the development of cultural studies, advanced Benjamin's groundwork for community-based media. Williams claimed not to subscribe to the idea of a mass culture. He wrote: "There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses" (Williams, 2001, p. 46). His theory of culture embraced liberal humanism in that it insisted on the individual as a free agent and on culture as mutable and contestable at the level of everyday experience. In his later work, however, Williams came to accept Marxism and to focus on the institutions and production forces behind people's agency and on their everyday cultural experience.

Asserting that the means of communication – everything from simplest forms of language to communication technologies – is socially or materially produced and reproduced, Williams (1980) regarded umbrella terms such as "media" unhelpful, because they conceal the different ways in which communication occurs, as well as usage and control of their means. The means of communication are not just forms, but means of production, containing economic forces as well as social relations. For example, the press relies on unequal social relations, whereby those who do the manual work of printing do not write the ideas, a situation that makes them "instrumental in the transmission of the writing of others" (*ibid.*, p. 58). From a critical perspective, the supposedly free press essentially reinforces class divisions between "those who have something to say and those who do not" (*ibid.*). For Williams, socialism required more than the basic "recovery" of human capacities that capitalist forces have taken away. Instead, it needed the "necessary institution of new and very complex communicative capacities and relationships" (*ibid.*, p. 62) – in particular, new forces and new relationships in the means of communication. Only by changing the productive relationship between community and communication could one make social transformation occur. Williams found a practical example of such transformation in community radio, "already within our reach" in 1978, and in the possibility of what he called "multi-way interactive modes, which can take us beyond 'representation' and selective transmission into direct persons-to-persons communication" (*ibid.*, p. 61). Williams thus imagined social networking as a practice that potentially subverted the undemocratic production forces that dominated other media forms.

The intellectual frameworks surrounding community media thus came from a leftist, anti-capitalist intellectual arena, stemming from attempts to understand culture as part of the broader political structures that assisted and inhibited the freedoms of the majority of working people. The ideal of using communication means to develop alternative structures of production and thus to subvert unequal social relations has been a platform in international relations and global debates over communication rights since the 1960s; this platform can be summed up as "the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public communication – all elements of a new concept, the right to communicate" (CRIS Campaign, 2005, p. 17).¹ Its influence remains strong in relation to what other scholars have called alternative media, grassroots media, participatory media, radical media, or even development media. For some, who have participated in these global

debates, community media became the site for realizing a movement, “even if the [community media] groups themselves were acting independently of the [. . .] debate and [were] largely unaware of it and often of each other” (ibid.). Although many of the community media outlets proliferating over the past 30 years had no political intentions at all, their collective presence challenged media ownership and control structures by being independent from corporate or state interests. This became the core focus for some community media researchers and policy advocates (for instance Hazen & Winokur, 1997; Aufderheide, 2000).

For other community media researchers, however, the focus on production processes as the *raison d’être* for community media projects has led many groups to assert that participation is in itself a radical project, providing an alternative to mainstream media structures. Communication rights, after all, remain a marginal issue in policy spheres. Despite their official recognition of community media, “[t]he codification of communication rights in international agreements – let alone the widespread recognition that communication is a basic human need as well as a fundamental human right – is no guarantee that these rights are respected or upheld within and between nation-states” (Howley, 2010, p. 7). Further, many scholars have questioned whether community media are capable of changing broader media structures to any great extent. Changing the means of production on a large scale has proven to be a complicated task, involving “problems of effective access, of alternatives to class and state control and selection, and of the economics of general distribution” (Williams, 1980, p. 58).

In defining what she calls “citizens’ media,” for example, Clemencia Rodríguez (2001) sees the transformative potential in the act of participation and in the agency inherent in media production. Rather than overhauling ownership and control of the media – as inferred in Benjamin’s earliest articulations – Rodríguez claims that the importance of citizens’ media resides at the local level, in disrupting power relations in everyday life and in opening up the possibility for empowerment. She concludes that:

Even if the information and communication channels are left untouched, even if the mainstream media structure is left unaltered, citizens’ media are rupturing pre-established power structures, opening spaces that allow for new social identities and new cultural definitions, and, in a word, generating power on the side of the subordinate. (ibid., p. 160)

Attempts to impose order, or to scale up community media, could even threaten the subtle achievements of small-scale media. For instance, some have argued that a number of community radio stations in the United States lost touch with the grassroots by changing their programming and practices when Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) money became available (see Walker, 2001).

The revolutionary intentions of reclaiming the means of communication through collective ownership or participatory production have been influential, and they are

evident in several national community media policies. While they differ on the needs of producers and of the communities they represent, these policies are often framed by the general language of participation and by the need for media to be accessible to producers from that community. Examples of how community participation and access have been enshrined in legislation include the following facts:

- The Council of Europe's Declaration on Community Media 2009 states that community media are not-for-profit in nature, are independent, and involve the "voluntary participation of members of civil society in devising and management of programmes" (CM/Del/Dec(2009)1048/5.1E).
- The South African Broadcasting Act of 1999 includes requirements that community radio licensees must be "managed and controlled by a board which must be democratically elected, from members of the community in the licensed geographic area" (Government of South Africa, 1999, Broadcasting Act 4, section 32(3)). Programming must "reflect the needs of the people in the community which must include amongst others cultural, religious, language and demographic needs" (section 32(4)).
- The Broadcasting Act of Canada states that the Canadian broadcasting system should be comprised of "public, private and community elements" (Government of Canada, 1991, 3(1)(b)) and must "include educational and community programs" (3(1)(i)(iii)). The regulatory authority defines community radio as "owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organization, the structure of which provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large. Programming should reflect the diversity of the market that the station is licensed to serve" (Canadian Radio–Television and Telecommunications Commission, 2000, paragraph 21).
- In Ireland, community radio stations are "owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organization whose structure provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by the members of the community at large" (Broadcasting Commission of Ireland, 2009, p. 3).
- The UK includes "the promotion of civic participation and volunteering" in its definition of the social objectives of community radio, as outlined in the Community Radio Order 2004 (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2004, section 2(3)(g)).
- In Australia, legislation provides that community broadcasters "encourage members of the community served to participate in the operations of the service and the selection and provision of programmes" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992, Schedule 2, Part 5 (2) (c)).

These incantations toward community participation sit strangely among communications laws otherwise focused on concrete matters of public resource allocation, responsibilities toward audiences, and market controls. Such policy concessions have been mostly a way to accommodate a gap not filled by commercial or public

broadcasting services, rather than a way to challenge those systems. In practice, the motivations behind community media production and distribution are diverse, as can be seen through the following examples of interlinked community media endeavors in the city of Melbourne, Australia.

Participants' Motivations for Community Media: Three Examples

Three different instances of community media, all created for and by young people, illustrate the diversity of community media: organizations based on access and participation; organizations intended for development or social change outcomes; and the less structured groups of amateur creators that choose to work outside of the mainstream media. Together, they demonstrate that the diversity of community media is not just cultural, but that different institutional structures are created to achieve different outcomes. The first two examples exist within third-sector structures, while the third example is intentionally informal and avoids institutionalization.

Access and Participation: SYN

Student Youth Network (SYN) is a youth-run community radio licensee that has been operating full-time since 2003. I spent two years getting to know this station and researching the dynamics of youth radio, which was different from the student radio that emerged in universities in the 1970s. The original student stations were no longer as accessible to young people, as volunteers stayed on, grew older, and the culture of the station changed with them. In order to avoid this fate, SYN insisted that programmers had to leave the station on their 26th birthday and limited the amount of months per year that an individual radio announcer could be on the air.² I began researching SYN partly to see why young people – the so-called “digital generation” – might want to establish an old-fashioned community radio station. Couldn't they simply carry out their media activities online? After a while I began to see that the station was a central point of their production.

The station was a place where young people could come together. It enabled a more complex form of media engagement, including a real work environment and access to a sizable audience of approximately 80,000 listeners weekly. Those who might have reasonable levels of what could be called “informal digital literacy” learned how to structure stories, to be articulate to a public, and to manage their media time and resources. The “SYNners,” as they called themselves, did not always succeed in making innovative content or changing media routines. Not everyone left

with a positive, well-rounded experience or with new means for self-expression. However, if it was a coherent and successful project all the time, then I suspect it might not have been enough of a challenge for those involved. The constant influx of new people meant that the organization had a tendency to repeat mistakes. Yet the same organizational policies that encouraged turnover also ensured that the station has remained accessible and that its content has never gone stale.

SYN has become more multiplatform in its operations than many community broadcasters, partly because those involved have been open to learning and producing across a range of media that they distribute online. The radio station is still the entry point into the organization for many, particularly for school groups that come to SYN through its many training programs. This has been the main income source for the station. SYN is an example of an organization that is committed to access and where community participation produces positive outcomes, such as innovation, as well as obstacles, such as lack of experience and of professionalism.

Social Change and Development: YouthWorx Media

It is fair to say that the young people who come into SYN of their own accord (for instance not those in school groups) are mostly already confident with, or interested in, media production. The founding SYNners were aware from the start that disadvantaged young people were less likely to get involved. They formed partnerships with various youth organizations, including a large project that was developed by SYN in association with the Salvation Army and Swinburne University. The YouthWorx Media project, as it is known, is an example of what has been called development or participatory media – which brings me to my second example of the different motivations underpinning community media. The phrase “participatory media” has been used mostly in the context of media projects in the Third World, entailing media projects established by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with strong direction from local communities toward social change outcomes. The intention of participatory media projects is to give communities control over the messages and information in ways that are culturally and politically appropriate, together with skills and livelihood opportunities (Gwinn-Wilkins, 2000; Servaes, 1999). Although much of the literature on participatory media applies to these Third World projects, the same approach is used in First World countries for certain “disadvantaged” segments of the population, such as at-risk youth or public-housing residents.

YouthWorx Media has provided access to technologies and skills in the same way as SYN, but with a greater level of support, using networks with various social services and schools. Aside from media production, YouthWorx has focused on other outcomes, such as building the confidence of participants, encouraging teamwork, responsibility, and providing paths to schooling and education. Unlike the SYNners, who were mostly already at school or university, YouthWorx participants could get training for future credentials. Although YouthWorx has produced good content

under the guidance of professional media trainers, the emphasis is, just as much, on providing those involved with a space where they can be free from the problems of home or of the streets. YouthWorx has thus been a more directed and deliberate endeavor than SYN. It has acknowledged that access, on its own, does not necessarily meet all needs.

Amateur Authority and Aesthetics

At the opposite end of the spectrum from YouthWorx and SYN is the community media production sphere of zine makers. Zines are “non-commercial, small-circulation publications which are produced and distributed by their creators” (Spencer, 2005, p. 13). The stories and artwork contained in zines are produced by an individual, or (less often) by a group. Zines avoid some of the barriers of media regulation and distribution by virtue of being small-circulation print media. In this respect, they are not unlike participatory media online. Zines disrupt the boundary between consumer and producer and are produced via nonprofessional methods and systems.

Stephen Duncombe (1997, p. 120) calls this form of media production “do-it-yourself,” as in “You did-it-yourself because no one else out there was doing it. Or because when they did it, they got it horribly wrong.” Punk zines, for instance, began appearing because punk music was ignored in music magazines. When mainstream media appropriated the punk aesthetics, punk zines “kept it real” for members of the subcultural community. Media participation, in this context, encompasses anyone who cares enough to get involved. In fanzines (zines about a particular show, product, author, band, and the like), the work is a way for the audience to claim a productive role in relation to the object of its consumption. In some instances, that might mean hostile or satirical engagement; or, at other times, celebration or extending characters and narratives into new territory, beyond the original author’s intention (Jenkins, 2006). The amateur methods of zines also encourage others to create. Sometimes this is a deliberate call to arms, as are instructions on how to make a zine. Other zines simply encourage by example. Duncombe describes one instance in which *Punk* interviewer Legs McNeil departs in mid-interview, leaving musician Richard Hell to complete the interview himself. Zines thus strip the authority from the notion of producer. Such proudly amateur behavior proves that “anybody can do a better job as an interviewer than Legs” (1997, p. 119), opening up the playing field, about which Duncombe writes: “This notion of emulation – turning your readers into writers – is elemental to the zine world” (ibid., p. 123). A final and related point is that zines are deliberately amateur in their look and in their “closeness” to the subject, making no false claims to objectivity or professional distance. In the zine world the amateur aesthetic is often deliberate, a choice to remain streetwise rather than polished or mainstream. You don’t have to be good at making zines to make a zine; the creator’s prerogative overrides skill as the main credential.

As zines show us, there are structures even at the deinstitutionalized end of the community media spectrum. The intentions, values, and differentials of zines define

an “alternative” sphere of media making, which is part of the community media sphere but may also exist outside or in spite of it. Although zines are not a core part of SYN’s activities, the organization has hosted the occasional zine workshop. I travelled to the annual youth festival This is Not Art, in the regional city of Newcastle, Australia, with a group of people from SYN. The festival hosts the country’s largest zine fair. The zine makers I met there spoke of their attraction to the low-fi aesthetics and the production process for zines. Although zines hardly qualify as community media, much less as a media movement, their popularity and connections to other community media forms and practices raise important issues about theories of community media that presuppose means of production, access, and participation as the core definers of community media.

Beyond the Limits of Community Media Theories

Theoretical debates about community media focus on their values and on whether community media can form part of a coherent political movement. This debate includes the limitations of community media policies in effecting social changes and the expansive possibilities of digital technologies, which have further blurred distinctions between producers and consumers. Yet to retheorize community media in light of their politics at the current conjecture requires that scholars include a discussion of community media consumption and ethical consumer choices in their discussions of production means and values.

Researchers Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs (2010) critique participatory production as the main theme in theorizing community media, centering instead on the problem of visibility as a crucial platform for what they call alternative media theory. For them, alternative media cannot challenge “all forms of domination” in an age of fragmented public spheres, nor can they foster “societal alternatives to capitalism” when sustainability relies either on stable financing or on self-exploitation (ibid., p. 141). In their view, the history of small-scale participatory media often shows that they remain marginal precisely because they have rejected professional processes that would allow them to reach broader audiences more efficiently (ibid., p. 143). Small-scale media cannot achieve such an ambitious project as overturning the current means of production, they argue. Rather, the success of alternative media depends on the visibility of critical media content across public spheres. Citing the philosopher Herbert Marcuse, they write: “This means that alternative media at some levels can also employ capitalist techniques of media production in order to advance their political aims. Alternative media can make use of capitalist structures and at the same time criticize these structures” (ibid., p. 146). For them, professionally produced and financially solvent magazines on the political left, such as *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, and *Z Magazine*, should be included in a cohesive theory of alternative media that conceptualizes access, social change, and alternative values and aesthetics

in terms of the ability to challenge and critique the economic inequalities that prevent participatory democracy.

While Sandoval and Fuchs's critique is not completely new,³ their point that alternative media are not an antidote to capitalist media suggests that community media need to go beyond participation as a good in and of itself. Writing on her experiences with OURMedia/NUESTROSMedios, an international network of hundreds of participatory media groups, media researcher and activist Gabriele Hadl (2007, p. 17) argues that, while the network's diversity is its greatest strength, its "fuzziness" around shared concepts and goals is a weakness. Framing the problem as an obstacle to any unified community media movement, she reflects: "It has become increasingly clear that a way must be found to connect nuanced analysis and effective practice" (*ibid.*, p. 16). Hadl's point is important precisely at this moment, when publics worldwide are beginning to hold a neoliberal/neoconservative agenda accountable for a series of global social and environmental damages, including the buying and selling of personal data. Community media have the opportunity to challenge the ways their audiences are sold to corporations in the digital media environment, whether through Google searches, Facebook networks, or YouTube uploads and downloads. Community media producers sometimes rely on these corporately owned technologies, but they do not have to be complicit with the aims of these services.

The participatory production process can advance the dominance of commercial media, and therefore it can no longer be viewed as a means of challenging such power on its own. While this is a matter of content visibility, as argued by Sandoval and Fuchs, it is also a matter of creating governance structures for a media third sector that upholds noncommercial governance practices. Hence we return to the conundrum inferred decades ago by Williams: How do we enhance the visibility of communities through media already dominated by a capitalist mode of production?

In their handbook on communication rights, the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign critiques the concept of freedom of expression as individualistic and unmindful of power inequalities. Its authors write: "It can do little to prevent the loudest voices" (CRIS Campaign, 2005, p. 22). Communication rights, on the other hand, entail communicating, that is, speaking and being heard.

While freedom of expression guarantees that we can speak our thoughts freely, it by no means guarantees that another can or will listen and (re)transform such speech into new thoughts and actions. Communication rights thus imply, at least in part, the initiation of an ongoing cycle, without which language is just so many dead words. (*Ibid.*)

"The right to be heard" is a relatively new concept in community media theory that stretches theory beyond production and into consumption – or "listening," as some prefer to call it (Couldry, 2006; O'Donnell, Lloyd, & Dreher, 2009). To begin to listen, however, audiences need to know that ethical media systems already exist; they need to be able to find what it is they are looking for and to enjoy it when they do. This

calls for new systems and strategies: education campaigns, and possibly even ethical labeling systems for non-profit community media.

Audiences expect community media to be different from mainstream media in upholding different principles. Some of these limitations, such as the lack of advertising, have also made community media clearly recognizable to audiences. In the online environment, such limits and constraints either do not exist or are hidden from public view. The only way to know if something is community media online is if that site says so; and, even then, *caveat emptor*. The multinational corporation NewsCorp owns MySpace, for example, which often uses the term “community media” to describe its website (Reiss, 2006). Audiences need to be able to recognize what community media are and how to evaluate their content.

Community media online operate very much according to the same ethical values as community media in other places do. They frequently allow for open access and amateur participation in running the organization and in developing existing technologies in order to serve identifiable social needs rather than market niches. Community media avoid using personal information for marketing and tend to consider ethical issues when it comes to advertising. Nor do they intentionally impose technological gatekeeping to restrict the ways users access information. Knowing these aspects of their production, community media audiences use an ethic of care in the construction and participation of community media. A similar type of care is also found among audiences in commercial sites, but this usually occurs after rights have been infringed or audience trust has been lost. For example, online communities have pressured YouTube to enact communication rights according to a perceived mutual responsibility between the patron platform and its users:

The specific issues raised as part of these complaints work to reveal the implicit “social contract” that had structured their participation, but which is only made explicit once it appears to be broken, at which time discourses of entitlement, fairness, and labour politics emerge. (Burgess & Green, 2008, p. 13)⁴

The ethic of care in community media, on the other hand, is pre-emptive, something that occurs not in relation to corporate behavior, but as a foundation principle that enables the user to know what he or she is dealing with before he or she gets involved.

The ethical consumption of community media suggests that the consumer has at least some power to effect social change by making choices based upon his or her moral values. The individual and collective aspects of production operate in tandem with those of consumption. Although consumption is an individual act, the systems that enable such a choice to be made are collectively organized, either as a cooperative venture or through a central body. The Fair Trade label, which is applied to products such as coffee and crafts, promotes “good” labor and environmental production practices, encouraging ethical compliance in work. The labeling system also entails an educative role, in that consumers need to be informed of the consequences

of their purchases in order to make a choice in favor of fair trade. As the choices consumers make are subjective and based on a changing environment and culture, their ethical choices are not statically fixed, but are part of the changeable moral system associated with the condition of postmodernity⁵ (Bauman, 2001; Littler, 2009).

If a “Fair Trade-like” ethical system were applied to community media, it would require effective navigation methods, adequate visibility, as well as efficiency in the networks that define and aggregate community media into a global movement. If there are real differences between the ways in which community media function and behave by comparison with media from other sectors, then the issue is how to make those differences explicit. Producers and consumers both have to navigate through the available and abundant content on the Internet. Whether they post content on a particular site or enter into a public discussion forum with friends, all citizens need to make informed decisions about their engagement in the new media landscape. This may involve solutions such as labels or classifications that alert audiences and producers when they come across a community media outlet that offers privacy assurances or encourages open-source technologies. A more subtle approach would be navigation tools (such as search engines) that show how social networks, linking, and recommendations already enable ethical choices for media engagement.

Conclusion

Questions of access and participation in production alone are insufficient for understanding and defining community media in a digital media age. Community media theories inherited some of the blindspots of Marxist theorists, who focused on who controls the means of communication or the social contexts in which media are produced, rather than on media audiences or consumption. As David Morley points out, this body of work has a tendency “to prioritize the study of ‘production’ to the exclusion of the study of all other levels of the social formation” (1989, p. 33). As the boundaries between audiences and producers collapse, the dynamics of consumption, navigation, and networks must now be taken into account.

Why not assist audiences and producers to know community media through an ethical choice label or system? Studies of Fair Trade commodities highlight the contradiction inherent in ethical choices: that even critics of capitalist market practices must participate in commodity culture. Critical scholars have frequently dismissed consumer movement ethics as complicit with market capitalism – the very system that created the class inequality that the consumer seeks to redress by buying better products (Littler, 2009). Consumers can also exhibit willful ignorance, avoiding or not seeking out information on some products in order to avoid the potential inconvenience that comes with knowledge and responsibility (Brown, 2009). Such limitations deserve consideration in relation to community media choices, especially

when individual choices implicate universal communication rights and the traded goods are not material products, but information flows. Issues such as these require further testing and theoretical enquiry.

The implications of these ethical issues are not simply theoretical, however. If scholars, policymakers, and practitioners continue to describe community media only in terms of media production, then the risk is that community media will be lost in a sea of participatory or user-generated content, and this vital rebalancing of the media system will remain marginal. The answer for community media makers and users does not need to be an embrace of mainstream distribution channels or a compromise with the institutional structures of the third sector. The defining features of community media can remain intact, including dedication to communication rights and/or to small-scale organizations. Yet the question of visibility must be addressed; for making values and methods clear to the consuming/producing public will only become more important in the future. What we are seeing is the arrival of ethics in the realm of consumer products that is not led by the labor movement – producers, as the Marxists and critical theorists assumed – but is “fuelled in large part by moral and material revulsions generated by the affluent lifestyle itself” (Soper, 2008).

I have only touched upon the many issues involved in community media consumption here. The intention of this chapter, however, has been to re-examine debates on media production as a guiding framework for understanding community media and to raise some doubts as to their applicability in the new media environment. Critical media studies, including Raymond Williams’s account of the means of communication as a means of production, retain valuable insights into what it means to include so-called “ordinary people” in the media production cycle. Community media have enabled participation and emulation and have brought amateur innovation into the media system. The rise of the Internet, which has been judged as “too nano” in the past (Downing, 2007, p. 3), has meant that such forms of production can no longer be ignored.

To truly take community media seriously, however, we need to ask difficult questions, to do with ethics and with how certain structures and even technologies (open source versus proprietary software, for example) shape the media environment. Although these issues are being addressed within the community media sphere, definitions based on production alone fail to take account of community media’s role in maintaining communication rights.

NOTES

- 1 Specifically, the UNESCO debates on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) centered on the free flow of information, particularly news values that reinforced the dominance of the global North and West, the impact of foreign ownership in poorer countries, and the difficulties of maintaining cultural integrity against the tide of international media, in other words “cultural imperialism” (see MacBride, 1980).

- 2 See Rennie (2011) for a full history of SYN.
- 3 John Downing (2001), for example, writes that using any binaries as starting points in distinguishing alternative and mainstream media would be ultimately false and unhelpful in reinforcing the marginality of alternative media.
- 4 Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2008) use the example of the backlash toward Oprah Winfrey's YouTube channel by users who saw the site turning into a "one-way" channel for a big media company, which could edit front page-featured videos, thereby exploiting user-generated videos for its own interests.
- 5 By "postmodernity" I mean the state of living in a society where the defining principles of modernism – rationality, hierarchy, and the assumption of absolute knowledge – are no longer in place. In the works of Bauman (2001) and Littler (2009), consumption (rather than production) drives economic and cultural life, contributing to a moral complexity that is a distinctively postmodern phenomenon.

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Neglected Elements

Production, Labor, and the Environment

Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller

ABSTRACT

This chapter applies a materialist, ecological approach to analyze the physical environment in which media production takes place, focusing on media-related occupations across global supply chains. We argue that conventional production studies have too narrowly circumscribed this sector and that more comprehensive research on media production labor is needed. We critique the idealism and pro-growth ideology that draws production studies toward both a focus on consciousness and the so-called aristocracy of talent. Our aim here is to find ways for media production studies to help establish a just system of environmental accounting, which challenges the creative industries to stop stealing from the Earth and from working people in the name of growth.

Only recently have we started to understand the negative impacts of digital electronic equipment worldwide. Most of us, overwhelmed by the technological wonders that these devices are capable of, forget to ask ourselves “How have they been made?” “By whom?” “Where?” “Under what conditions?”

The increasingly faster and more versatile computers, appealing mobile phones, high-definition TVs, Internet, tiny music players, ingenious photo cameras, entertaining games consoles and even electronic pets give us the idea of a developed, pioneering and modern

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume II: *Media Production*. Edited by Vicki Mayer.

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world. It is indeed a new era for many; but the dark side of this prosperous world reveals a very different reality, that far from taking us to the future, takes us back to a darker past.

CEREAL (Centro de Reflexión y Acción Laboral, 2006, p. 4)

This chapter aims to expand the conceptual boundaries used by contemporary production studies to analyze the media industries' impact on the environment and exploitation of labor "below the line" – below writers, producers, executives, directors, actors, and managers. We consider a larger number of occupations within media production that are essential to digital electronics, from mining metals to assembling low-value parts. This broadens the scope of technologies that count in "media production" so as to include anything with a circuit board and any media process or device that uses water or electricity.

We hope to show that production studies can benefit from this material approach. In that spirit, we begin with a brief critique of production studies' residual idealism, which we think keeps the subfield from distinguishing itself within media studies and diminishes its independence from the industry it takes as its object of research. Then we address the media's environmental and labor impact and oppression, and we explain how a green, materialist analysis can employ supply chain research to widen the purview of production studies. Before we conclude with suggestions for further research, we offer a brief case study of the political economy of Mexican *maquiladoras*, a key site for international production studies. Along the way, we hope to model changes needed in the long, valuable history of cultural research into media production.

Production Beyond Consciousness¹

In writing this chapter, we were fortunate enough to benefit from the legacy of a remarkable group of scholars who have studied media production from a cultural perspective over the past 60 years. There is a voluminous literature about print and audiovisual newsrooms and documentary (Boyd-Barrett, 1995; Breed, 1955; Cottle, 2003; Gans, 1979; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1989; Golding & Elliot, 1979; Jacobs, 2009; Riegert, 1998; Tracey, 1977; Tumber, 2000; Hannerz, 2004; Tuchman, 1978; Tunstall, 1971, 2001; *Worlds of Journalism*, 2006). Cinema and television have generated outstanding critical ethnographies, from the moment when Hortense Powdermaker (1950) bequeathed Hollywood the name of "the Dream Factory" through to John T. Caldwell's study of Hollywood's intersecting "production cultures" (2008). Media scholars have written about the proxemics and deictics of making horror movies, science fiction and documentary television, and soap opera. The most significant names are Edward Buscombe, Manuel Alvarado, Albert Moran, John Tulloch, and Todd Gitlin; but others have contributed a great deal as well (Abu-Lughod, 2005; Alvarado & Buscombe, 1978; Buscombe, 1976; Cantor, 1971; Dornfeld, 1998; Elliott, 1979; Espinosa, 1982; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin, 2002; Gitlin, 1983; Goldsmith & O'Regan, 2005; Gregory, 2007; Moran, 1982; Ortner, 2007; Silverstone, 1985; Tulloch & Alvarado, 1983; Tulloch & Moran, 1986; Ytreberg, 2006).

Their principal focus has been on how meaning is encoded at the point of production and generally linked to the morphology of texts and their decoding at the time of reception. Production studies overlap with media, communication, and cultural studies more generally. Like mainstream textual analysis and audience studies, such research is trying to answer a riddle: Why do these texts matter – what makes them meaningful? If we revisit the venerable, stolid engineer's or quantitative surveyor's model of sender–message–receiver (SMR), we find coeval status accorded to all three points on the chain, in a pragmatic way that wants to understand the best way of getting a point across (Weaver & Shannon, 1963). The model offered by television studies goes further, specifying the people involved in the process and displacing the linearity of SMR with feedback loops that fold in on themselves to create “television's ‘hermeneutic circle’” (Michaels, 1990).

Production studies oscillate, depending on inclination, genre, and access, between the consciousness of this or that particular agent – from scriptwriters and journalists to members of the public. These forms of consciousness are inscribed in communications between writers and producers, business strategies, films, programs, ratings figures, and fan blogs. There is value in understanding how texts come to be, their contents, and what happens to them. But the idealism of privileging consciousness – of owners, producers, texts, and audiences – puts a fundamental limitation on production studies. As these theories seek to specify how production aims to create consciousness, they are drawn into a conceptual territory dominated by the media industries themselves.

At such moments we can understand Bart Beaty's comment that “media studies has found its objects of study seemingly dictated by *Entertainment Weekly*” (2009, p. 23). One of the pioneering figures in the cultural studies of media production, the late Manuel Alvarado, noted that, some decades ago, “producers did not want researchers and academics sniffing around their underbellies, uncovering and revealing their working practices (and maybe malpractices!).” Conversely, today “everyone in the media industries [. . .] wants to explain the significance of their role” (Alvarado, 2009, p. 309).

One way to check whether production research has been captured by the consciousness business is to ask whether it is governed by the criterion of economic growth, such that production is valued for amplifying pleasure and serving capital accumulation (box office, ratings, and so on). That approach is compromised, because it focuses on the consciousness of the actors who create growth. In such cases new technologies, new modes of media consumption, more screens, higher resolution, greater mobility, and promises of ubiquitous information, entertainment, and nostalgia streaming into pocket-sized devices appear as virtues. In this story of limitless growth, the principal goal of technology is to overcome scarcity by providing smaller, faster, and lighter media devices at ever lower prices to consumers.

The material origin and function of media technologies is easily forgotten in such digital abundance, overtaken as it is by the symbolic power of the technological sublime: the enchantment with the seeming magic of iPhones, flat-screen HDTVs, wireless communication, 3-D IMAX cinema, mobile computing, and so on. The

technological sublime relates to what Karl Marx called “the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour” once they are in the hands of consumers, who lust after products as if they were “independent beings” (1987, p. 77). In everyday life, the sublime experience of electronic machinery conceals the fact that physical work and material resources went into their “being.” Mere mention of the political-economic arrangements that make shiny new things possible is rejected like bad medicine, an unwelcome buzz-kill of “cool stuff.” The technological sublime makes the idea that “more is better” palatable, axiomatic; even sexy. Such symbolic power underlies what Juliet Schor (2010, pp. 40–41) calls “the materiality paradox”: the greater the frenzy to buy goods for their transcendent or non-material cultural meaning, the greater the use of material resources.

A green political-economic approach to media production, predicated on regard for workers and for Earth, can disrupt the technological sublime. Marx often drew his readers to this ethical orientation through sarcasm and irony, as when he wrote that industrial progress was “progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil [. . .] ruining the lasting sources of that fertility.” Capitalist technology and associated social relations sap “the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the labourer” (Marx, 1987, p. 475). An unlikely ally, Heidegger, noted the paradox of the “forester who measures the felled timber in the woods and who to all appearances walks the forest path in the same way his grandfather did.” Heidegger recognized that, “whether he knows it or not,” the forester actually works for the culture industries; “subordinate to the orderability of cellulose,” he is “challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered to newspapers and illustrated magazines” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 299).

There is ironic tension in the very pages you are reading, which have been printed by an industry that is responsible for deforestation and high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, on a par with mining and petroleum. Making paper poisons the environment with chemicals and their synthetic byproducts, including dioxin, the most dangerous human-made substance emitted through pollution. Print-shop working conditions also pose environmental risks to workers exposed to toxic smog, heavy metals, solvents, silver, film and paper dust, and wastewater (Environmental Protection Agency, 1995; Tripsas, 1997, pp. 124, 142).

One kind of labor is exalted in the technological sublime. Not surprisingly, it is well suited to propagating the ideology of growth. To 1960s anti-socialist ideologues like Zbigniew Brzezinski (1969) and Daniel Bell (1977), communications technologies promised the permanent removal of grubby manufacture from the First World and its mooring in the Third, provided that reactions to global business and the blandishments of socialism did not create class struggle and that the US continued its textual and technical dominance. Since the 1970s, “knowledge workers” have been recognized as vital to sustaining First World economies, thanks to information-based industries that promised endless gains in productivity and the purest of competitive markets (Bar, with Simard, 2006, p. 351). This is the “aristocracy of talent” (Kotkin, 2001, p. 22), which has attained pre-eminence through a discourse of progress, infor-

matization, and the “creative industries.” Its high priests proclaim an epoch of knowledge workers operating through techniques, technologies, and networks. This neoliberal clerisy has a presence even within cultural studies, via a New Right faction dedicated to a discourse of “creativity” (Flew & Cunningham, 2010; Keane, 2009; Mattelart, 2003, pp. 177–178, p. 43).

Labor is thus acknowledged within the technological sublime, but only when it is abstracted from physical, dirty work: on the left, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri refer to “immaterial labor,” which exchanges information, knowledge, and emotion, filtered through computer invigilation (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 286, 290–292). The futurist Alvin Toffler invented the related concept of “the cognitariat” (1983), which has since been taken up and redispersed by progressives. Negri (2007) uses it to describe people mired in contingent media work who have advanced educational qualifications and facility with cultural technologies and genres.

The cognitariat plays key roles in the production and circulation of goods and services, through both creation and coordination. They are media producers, to be sure: using media technologies, they add value to property, and they operate close to the means of creative production. But they comprise a category of laborers delimited by a narrowly defined consciousness industry:

- artists, comprising musicians, directors, writers, and journalists;
- artisans, including sound engineers, editors, cinematographers, and graphic designers;
- impresarios, who connect proprietors and executives to artists;
- proprietors and executives, who control employment and investment and negotiate with states; and
- audiences and consumers, who pay for content, interpret it in order to give media meaning, and elide real barriers of entry to media production through their dubious anointment as producers/consumers (prosumers).²

These groups operate within institutional contexts:

- private bureaucracies, which control investment, production, and distribution across the cultural/copyright industries;
- public bureaucracies, which offer what capitalism cannot, while comporting themselves in an ever more commercial manner;
- small businesses, run by charismatic individuals willing to take risks; and
- networks, that is, fluid associations formed to undertake specific projects.

Conventional production studies see the world of media labor confined to a small patch of creative industries in which the consciousness of industry mavens defines the reality of production practices, mirroring the growth ideology and the kind of apolitical enchantment with media technologies found in trade publications and entertainment news outlets. In contrast, a growing body of critical research into media labor is generating information from below the line of elite industry research;

and it does so by drawing on more diverse and independent sources, including labor unions and policy analysis (Blair, 2001; Chakravartty, 2007; Christopherson, 2006; Day, 2005; Deuze, 2007; Dex, Willis, Paterson, & Sheppard, 2000; Elmer & Gasher, 2005; Forum, 2010; Gall, 1998; McKercher, 2002; McKercher & Mosco, 2007; Miller, 1990a, 1990b; Miller, Govil, McMurria, & Maxwell, 2001; Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Neff, Wissinger, & Zukin, 2005; Ross, 2009; Rossiter, 2006; Sholle, 2005; Ursell, 2000).

By modifying production studies' fundamentals through an ecological and labor approach, we hope to see media, communication, and cultural studies leaven their fascination with growth with a focus on sustainability. This is by no means aberrant. Some extant research considers the physical nature of work and what it does to people and the environment; such are Luis Reygadas' (2002) account of how television sets are made, Jefferson Cowie's (2001) study of Radio Corporation of America's "seventy year quest for cheap labor," and Vicki Mayer's investigation of electronics assembly workers in Brazil (2011). At the same time there is a rich vein of cultural studies interacting with science and the environment, and some of it is articulated to the media (Acland, 2007; Berland, 2009; Nixon, 2000; Ross, 1995). The following section examines media production and the life cycle of media technologies from an ecological materialist perspective, using supply chain studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of media production work.

Labor and Environment in Media Production

In the factory, I assemble five computer cards per minute. More than 3,000 cards in my 11-hour daily shift. But I have never used a computer myself, I don't know how to; what's more, I don't even know what the computers I make look like when finished.

(Unnamed Mexican worker; quoted in CEREAL, 2006, p. 6)

I work like a machine and my brain is rusted.

(19-year-old female worker from Guangxi at the Compeq printed circuit board factory in Huizhou City, China; quoted in Chan & Ho, 2008, p. 22)

Media production, information and communication technology (ICT), and consumer electronics (CE) are major sources of toxic waste, pollution, and labor injustice – this is their legacy and, for now, their future.

Consider the US motion picture industry. Its mass-produced raw film stock was derived from chemical processes for making cotton cellulose and silver nitrate emulsion. By 1926 Eastman Kodak was the second largest consumer of pure silver bullion, after the US Government Mint. Nitric acid baths extracted silver nitrate, and the cellulose film base came from cotton that was bleached and immersed in nitric acid and sulfuric acid, rinsed in water, and fed into mixers with solvents, so as to produce

a honey-like paste (Blair, 1926; Reilly, 1991; Twilight City, 1936). Eastman Kodak's raw-film plant at Kodak Park in Rochester, New York exposed workers to acids and acid vapors as well as to other irritants – including abnormal levels of silver and cotton dust, which inflamed their upper respiratory tracts and eyes and increased the risk of their contracting byssinosis or “brown lung” (Bowden & Tweedale, 2002; Dartmouth Toxic Metals Research Program, n.d.; Test-Tube Love Seat, 1940; Viscusi, 1985). From the 1920s on, Kodak Park was sucking more than 12 million gallons of water daily from Lake Ontario and spewing the used water, along with chemical effluents, into the Genesee River (Blair, 1926; George Eastman House, n.d.). By the end of the century, Kodak was using 35 to 53 million gallons of fresh water a day. It was the primary human source of pathogens released into New York State's environment (United States Department of the Interior, 2008).

Down the road from manufacturing, in 2006, the motion picture industry was the biggest polluter in Los Angeles. Its toxic emissions from driving, flying, exploding, and electrifying reached the same level as the aerospace and semi-conductor industries, while offshoring production further stimulated ecological despoliation. James Cameron's claims to global environmentalism, for example, may be welcome, but they are insufficient to make up for the horrendous impact of *Titanic* (1997) in Mexico, while Leonardo DiCaprio's credentials as a green spokesperson should be revoked in the light of how *The Beach* (2000, directed by Danny Boyle) destroyed Thai habitats (Corbett & Turco, 2006; Maxwell & Miller, 2009; Miller et al., 2005).

Likewise, before ICT and CE begin their life cycles as finished goods brought to market by Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) – the major brands like Apple, Dell, Hewlett Packard (HP), IBM, Kodak, Sony, and so on – they must be assembled piece by piece, along a supply chain that stretches from the mines that supply the metals to the foundries and factories making parts, and on to final assembly and packaging. There is no point along the supply chain where the environment and workers are safe from harm. For example the semi-conductor – the heart of all electronic equipment – is produced by hundreds of companies around the world for a market dominated by Intel, Samsung Electronics, Toshiba Electronics, Texas Instruments, Qualcomm, ADM, and other major brand component suppliers. Its production requires millions of kilowatt hours of electrical power, half a trillion gallons of de-ionized water, hundreds of millions of cubic feet of bulk gases (much of it poisonous), and millions of pounds of acids and solvents exposing workers to dangerous toxins and carcinogenic chemicals (Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, n.d.).

By the time the finished electronic products reach above-the-line producers and consumers, evidence of the supply chain's toxic history has disappeared into the technological sublime – the devices appear as environmentally benign, postindustrial wonders. Also invisible is the radiation emitted from televisions, computers, electronic games, computer monitors, cell phones, laptops, networks of telecommunication and electrical towers, and power lines (Brigden, Santillo, & Johnston, 2008; Environmental Working Group, 2009; Lean, 2008). Human-made electromagnetic fields (EMFs), the basis of electronic media, spread radiation that has “no counterpart

in man's evolutionary background" (Massey, 1979, p. 149). The electromagnetic spectrum is comprised of ionizing radiation (ultraviolet rays, X-rays, and gamma-rays) and non-ionizing radiation (extra-low and very low frequencies (electrical power lines), radio waves, and microwaves). Non-ionizing radiation occurs at the atomic level when energy excites electrons and molecules without knocking the electrons loose, as ionizing radiation does (*ibid.*, pp. 109–111). By 1980, research into this topic led to policies that set parameters for human exposure to these forces; those parameters included the energy level of signal generation, proximity to signal source, radio wave frequency resonance with affected bodies (EMF absorption rates vary among species, sizes, and ages), pulsed versus continuous wave forms, and duration. Transmission towers and signal generators (and some consumer electronics) pose biothermal risks to media workers continuously exposed to radio, TV, and telecommunication equipment, as well as to office workers on the top floors of buildings within the range of high-power transmission antennae (*ibid.*, pp. 121–125; National Research Council, 2005, 133–137).

When these media technologies are thrown out at the end of their life cycles, the resulting electronic waste (e-waste) generates serious health and safety risks: bone disease, brain damage, headaches, vertigo, nausea, birth defects, diseases of the stomach, lungs, and vital organs, disrupted biological development in children. These conditions result from exposure to heavy metals (lead, cadmium, and mercury among others) and toxic fumes emitted when burning e-waste (Leung et al., 2008; Ray, Mukherjee, Roychowdhury, & Lahiri, 2004; Wong et al., 2007).

It is important to note that the ecological problem of media technologies is not just "one for the scientists." As research on environmental harms caused by media technology emerged between 1980 and 2000, membership in environmental groups worldwide more than doubled. Activists, public health advocates, workers, and policymakers publicized the impact of the electronics, electrical, and energy industries in Silicon Valley and elsewhere (Byster & Smith, 2006, p. 109; Dalton, 2005, pp. 453–454; Maxwell & Miller, 2009). Bodies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Standardization asked for greater transparency and uniformity in the way ICT and CE corporations do business – and so have international legal agreements to reduce the toxic content of electric and electronic goods, for example the 2003 European Union's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE) and the 2003 Directive on the Restriction on the Use of Certain Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment. OEMs were forced to confront environmental problems in production and to devise internal codes of conduct that met ILO guidelines for worker safety (RoHS).

With the exception of Sony, which commenced environmental audits in 1994, the major companies only began to consider ecological impacts in the 2000s (van Liemt, 2007). To minimize state regulation and to gain green credibility with the public in First World countries, OEMs adopted a strain of public relations pioneered in the 1990s by textile and footwear industries in order to address labor exploitation and environmental damage. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) became a watchword

as OEMs began to audit working conditions across their global supply chains and to disclose their findings and remediation efforts.

OEMs are the lords of the electronics supply chain; they control intellectual property, technological research, design, and marketing. Below them are the extractive industries, small-scale cottage assemblers, and contract manufacturers. The latter have grown massively since the 1990s, with about 75% of global electronics manufacturing and 60% of cell phone production outsourced to them by OEMs (GoodElectronics, Overeem, & CSR Platform, 2009, pp. 19–20). Five major contractors control this section of the chain:

- Foxconn Technology (Hon Hai Precision) of Taiwan: Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard (HP), Sony, Amazon Kindle;
- Flextronics of Singapore: Cisco, Kodak, Ericsson, HP, Microsoft, Motorola;
- Jabil of the US: Cisco, Philips, HP;
- Celestica of Canada: Motorola, Palm, Research in Motion, Sun Microsystems, HP;
- Sanmina-SCI of the US: Cisco.

These multinational ICT corporations operate factories in scores of countries, employing tens of millions of workers – a structural arrangement that emerged in the late 1970s, when big ICT and CE firms set about departing First World factories for the sweatshops of developing countries, in accordance with the New International Division of Labor (NIDL) (Fröbel, Heinrichs, & Kreye, 1980).³ While it is common to find environmental and labor codes within these companies' corporate communications, the pressure for them to adhere to safety guidelines has come largely from OEMs' implementation of supplier responsibility audits. In 2004 Dell, HP, IBM, and the contract manufacturers Flextronics, Solectron (bought by Flextronics in 2007), Sanmina-SCI, Celestica, and Jabil developed an Electronic Industry Code of Conduct, which set benchmarks giving watchdog groups like Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM) tough standards by which to judge OEMs like HP (high marks) and Apple (low) (van Liemt, 2007, p. 15).

The main trade groups representing the OEMs are the Electronic Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC) and the Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI). The EICC and GeSI have begun supply chain audits of labor and environmental conditions in the extractive industries. Metals used in electronics (tin, cobalt, palladium, gold, copper, silver, and aluminum) are extracted from mines (and obtained from recycling). They then travel the supply chain via buyers, brokers, and refiners. In 2008 the annual proportion of the global metal supply going into ICT and CE was 36% of all tin, 25% of cobalt, 15% of palladium, 15% silver, 9% of gold, 2% of copper, and 1% of aluminum (GeSI & EICC, 2008, pp. iii, 24–26, 34–36; Grossman, 2006, pp. 29–33). Roughly 11 million people work in the formal mining sector, which operates about 4,100 major mining companies (of which the top 150 control 80% of the global output). Tracking the number of workers in the metals supply chain is complicated

by a globally diffuse informal sector – artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), a notoriously harsh, low-tech, poverty-driven form of mining – and by a large population of workers whose jobs depend on it (porters, buyers/transporters, smugglers, exporters, and so on). The ILO (2010) estimates that, while there are about 13 million workers in ASM worldwide, the total number of workers involved is 200 million.

Virtually all ASM is concentrated in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where about a million children labor in mines (GeSI & EICC, 2008, p. 56). In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, over 90% of mines are controlled by militias, who use threats, intimidation, murder, rape, and mutilation to enslave women and children, then extract profits to buy more weapons. This supply of “conflict metals”/“conflict minerals” is mixed with the rest of the global supply and sold on the international commodities market before ending up in phones, computers, games, and media production equipment (Global Witness, 2009). In terms of the environmental impact, over a quarter of the world’s active mines “overlap with or are within a 10-kilometer radius of a strictly protected area”; one third is “within areas of intact ecosystems of high conservation value”; one third “in stressed watersheds”; one fifth in earthquake prone areas; and more than a third “in areas that may be predisposed to water quality problems” (Miranda et al., 2003, p. viii). This does not take into account the chemical waste and toxic effluents associated with refining.

The current proliferation of CSR strategies that use supply chain audits has opened up a critical juncture, exposing new information about ICT and CE supply chains. While not completely transparent, the new audits make OEMs more vulnerable to ecologically informed and critical production studies, if we undertake them (though there’s no telling how long today’s environmental *perestroika* will last). Still, there is no uniform pattern to these audits in media production, because film and TV producers and distributors have patchier CSR strategies for environmental reviews – by now we hope it is clear that media production must include ICT, CE, and film and TV manufacturing and studio “creativity” (van Liemt, 2007). And, with labor geographically so dispersed via international subcontracting, union density is “startlingly low around the world,” which makes it difficult to gather reliable information on working conditions and labor practices (Ferus-Comelo, 2008, p. 141). This might explain why existing audits have been unsuccessful in reaching the part of the supply chain where thousands of labor-intensive component makers provide contractors with resisters, capacitors, cables, switches, microchips, unfinished circuit boards, wires, connectors, power supplies, clips, screws, and so on. Part of this activity is internalized within large factories where it can be monitored, but a significant amount of work takes place in people’s homes (GoodElectronics et al., 2009, p. 51).

Studies of the supply chain must also take into account e-waste, respecting methods developed by environmental science, public health, and engineering scholars, policy-makers, and activists. An increasing number of firms address the problems of reuse and recycling of old or discarded electronics, while the EU’s WEEE Directive and efforts to enlist manufacturers in recycling have brought greater pressure on OEMs to take responsibility for their products’ afterlife. Until that happens, global working

conditions in the informal salvage and recycling sector will remain marginal to CSR audits, and millions of workers who labor in the global salvage business will be ignored.

These inconsistencies in OEM audits are coupled with a lack of sociological and historical understanding of the socioeconomic changes that have accompanied the rapid growth of contract manufacturing in Asia and elsewhere. The internal audits give us the names of Dell's and HP's suppliers, for example, but they don't tell us that Apple petitioned the US Federal Communications Commission to hide governmental review of the iPad, which would have disclosed to the public the way in which it exploits multinational labor (see Federal Communications Commission, n.d., for Apple's letter to the Commission's inquiry, BCG-E2381A). Meanwhile, investigations into its Chinese suppliers have shown that Apple uses children to assemble its gadgets and that it is unresponsive to the chemical poisoning of workers at Wintek (an iPhone supplier) and to the searing conditions behind numerous suicides at a Foxconn factory that makes iPhones and the first iPads (Barboza, 2010; Chan, 2010; Moore, 2010a, 2010b). The suicides should be of particular concern for media production researchers, because they point to an ongoing clash between the twenty-first-century means of producing media technology and the mass mobilization of rural Chinese youth to work in these factories (the largest migration in history, by some measures). These stresses of factory life are symptomatic of contemporary industrial organization: we know that post-Fordist factory systems are geared to meet OEMs' demand for rapid design innovation and ever shorter cycles of new product roll-outs through just-in-time production. But there is also an ethico-political dimension to the way Chinese contract manufacturers implement this system: these young people are removed from virtually all the social resources that would help them adjust to their sequestration in high-tech, high-speed, high-security compounds – that is, resources like family, friendship, freedom of association (they can't even talk to one another on the assembly line), or forms of cultural enjoyment and release.

Workers losing their lives to meet production deadlines has been part of communication technology's history, from railways to integrated circuits. What's new here is that a vast population of young workers has been thrust into a low-cost, high-velocity factory system whose output is increasingly driven by First World hyper-consumerism, with its manufactured desires for fast-changing fashions promoted by advertising and marketing. Apple's pressure on suppliers is not only an end-run to beat competitors to market, but also an incitement to the frenzied pursuit of the symbolic power of *the device* and its promises of instant gratification via the technological sublime.

Production studies must play a part in exposing these unsustainable systemic tensions in the ICT and CE supply chains, perhaps taking inspiration from a new generation of Chinese workers, who have begun to push back against OEMs through strikes and other forms of resistance, including by using mobile devices to document and publicize the inhumane working conditions at Foxconn and other contract manufacturers (Barboza & Bradsher, 2010, p. B1).

The example of such activists impels us to conduct studies of the total life of the commodity sign, from its manufacture to its decline, and of all the people who bring it to us and then remove it when we've grown bored with it or it breaks. Before we consider other ways in which production studies can train its focus on these issues, the following section provides a closer look at a key site of media production work in the global assembly line.

The Case of *las maquiladoras*

The National Coalition of Electronic Industry Workers declares that, five years after the publication of the Electronic Industry Code of Conduct, the same companies that signed the Code are the ones violating the human labor rights.

The Code states (part A-7) that the signing companies should respect the workers' freedom of association. This right, in our Federal Labor Law, is constantly violated. We recall two recent cases. The first one: the dismissal of more than 10 workers of Flextronics, only because they demanded transparency on the issue of profit shares.

The second case was the dismissal of Aureliano Rosas Suárez, Omar Manuel Montes Estrada, and Vicente de Jesús Rodríguez Roa, sacked because they demanded their right to have their wages leveled. They also worked for the company Flextronics.

We inform the International Electronic Industry that the members of the National Coalition of Electronic Industry Workers will continue to use this mask as a symbol of our repression. But the coalition will continue demanding and defending our human labor rights.

(National Coalition of Electronic Industry Workers; quoted in Centre for Reflection and Action on Labour Issues, 2009, p. 28)

This quotation comes from a group of Mexican workers in electronics. They stage protests in white masks for the media and around the employment agencies that govern casualized labor in assembly plants. The coalition stands up to this political economy. It is the solitary civil society voice that is organic to workers on the line (and to those who have been dismissed). The official trade unions that address working conditions in Mexican ICT and CE plants are neither representative of workers nor interested in worker grievances. Instead they help manufacturers bypass laws covering contract negotiations, and they prevent labor from forming independent unions. As CEREAL put it: "90% of workers belong to a trade union; but 90% of those do not know it" (2006, p. 15).

Mexican *maquiladoras* opened their doors in the mid-1960s, when the *bracero* ("strong-arm") guest worker program between Mexico and the US was terminated. The Mexican state introduced import tax exemptions to stimulate in-bond input assembly,⁴ and Washington permitted the duty-free return of assembled components that had originated north of the border. What began as a temporary initiative

attained massive economic significance during the 1980s and 1990s, when electronics became a core industry. The industry's warehouses, managers, and researchers are generally based in San Diego. Components are imported from there – and also from Germany, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand. So “high value” is created in the US and elsewhere; dangerous, dull, and poorly remunerated work is done across the border. Tijuana was dubbed “TV Capital of the World,” because so many sets were assembled there. In 2002 Mexico accounted for 30.42% of television set and video equipment exports to the US, and China for 18.5%. But competition arose due to tax incentives and to low-wage and energy costs in China, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam. By 2006 Mexico's and China's percentages were virtually equal (35.07% compared to 34.76%). *Maquiladora* employment fell each year, from 2000 to 2003. The global recession, evident by 2008, slashed employment and investment. The nearly 200 companies that assembled ICT and CE in Mexico decreased production by almost 40% from the middle of that year: Sony announced the closure of a TV plant in 2009, with the loss of 600 positions. The *maquiladora* slide slowed later that year, because firms looked to cut the time wasted exporting parts and importing sets across the Pacific. Production was boosted and job growth accompanied it, but not at pre-recession levels. In all, 144 plants closed in the 12 months leading up to October 2009, and 122 new ones opened (see Castañeda, in this volume; Centre for Reflection and Action on Labour Issues, 2009; Gaffney, 2010; García & Simpson, 2006; Mendoza, 2010; NOTIMEX, 2010).

It is not as though labor costs were high in the *maquiladoras*: wages consistently declined from 1993 to 2006, while productivity increased. Two full-time workers in a Mexican plant receive just two thirds of the wages needed to support a family of four, prior to medical and educational expenses. Not surprisingly, the people who make these gadgets can't afford to purchase them. Because a flat-screen TV sold in San Diego is exempt from customs duty, it costs less there than where it was made, across the border in Tijuana (Where Is “Away?” 2009). The key instrument of exploitation has been the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement/Él Tratado de Libre Comercio, because, despite technically including environmental and labor protections, the Agreement/Tratado ushered in low wages, violations of the labor law, and exposure to unhealthy chemicals and gases – a toxic life in every sense (Simpson, 2007, pp. 166–167).

The 1983 La Paz agreement between Mexico and the US mandates that *maquiladora* waste return to its country of origin; but enforcement has been lax, and statistics about the flow of contaminated goods and the environmental side-effects of production are spotty. Civil society groups on both sides of the border, notably Las Voces de la Maquila (<http://www.lasvoces.org>), the Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental and the Environmental Health Coalition (see both at <http://www.environmentalhealth.org>), remind authorities of their responsibilities and encourage citizen activism (García & Simpson, 2006; Simpson, 2007). Greenpeace (n.d.) is also involved.

Women have long been at the forefront of the *maquiladora* electronic labor process. For instance, when RCA moved its radio and TV plants from New Jersey to Indiana

and then to Ciudad Juarez in Mexico, in search for ever cheaper labor, company elders sought a workforce of young unmarried women. This strategy had little to do with biological kinesiology (in other words, with the docile, nimble-fingered girls found in managerial playbooks); it was rather about gender and power (Cowie, 2001, pp. 17–18; Maxwell & Miller, 2008). The Centre for Reflection and Action on Labour Issues (2009) interviewed thousands of workers in 2008 and 2009 across the Mexican electronics sector, disclosing systematic sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination. Employees are often subjected to invasive interviews, body searches, and pregnancy tests; illegally excessive working time is common and uncompensated; women are sexually harassed; contracts are non-existent or highly precarious temporary agreements; some managers use psychological violence; workers are exposed to dangerous chemicals and fumes, having little or no training about the hazards or proper protection from them; and the freedom to form independent unions or other organizations is absent. Despite the fact that, in factories, each woman prepares more than a hundred central processing units per an hour, women are categorized as “temporary” employees, so employers can elude regulations and contracts that govern full-time workers (Paterson, 2010; van Liemt, 2007, pp. 12–14).⁵

Conclusion: Creative Production Is Theft

Remaining non-union is essential for survival for most of our companies. If we had the work rules that unionised companies have, we'd all go out of business.

(Robert Noyce, co-founder of Intel; quoted in Catholic Agency for Overseas Development [CAFOD], 2004, p. 3)

I was three months pregnant. I told them when I was one month pregnant; I asked my facilitator to move me, but she said no, not until they have found someone else. I worked from 3.30 to 12 p.m. On 17 November 2005, when I arrived at work, I started to feel unwell. I went to the lavatory and noticed I was bleeding. I went straight to the infirmary and the doctor told me it was nothing, that it was normal. I went back to the production line and told my supervisor I was feeling quite sick, and asked him for permission to leave. He talked with the doctor over the phone and then told me “I’m not letting you out, don’t be a wimp . . .” [T]he baby wasn’t growing properly. [The doctors] told me it was because of the lead, and I believe that; that’s why I wanted to be moved when I found out I was pregnant, but I wasn’t allowed . . . I lost my baby . . . I got very depressed and spent all those days crying. I was only given two days sick leave.

(Rosa, 21, ICT production worker for contract manufacturer Jabil, Chihuahua, Mexico; quoted in CEREAL, 2006, p. 23)

There are [. . .] plenty of girls with good eyes and strong hands. If we run out of people, we just go deeper into China.

(Manager of Chinese electronics factory; quoted in CAFOD, 2004, p. 31)

Foxconn's suicides are a reminder of the human cost that can come with the low-cost manufacturing US tech companies demand.

(*Bloomberg Businessweek*; quoted in Wong, Liu, & Culpan, 2010, p. 36)

Despite the evidence, conventional economic models persistently omit the environmental and human costs incurred by toxic chemicals, fossil-fuel energy consumption, plastics, pollution, and other harms that inhabit the supply chain and life cycles of media and communication technologies. Environmental and human “expenses” remain “off the books” when net revenues are tallied up to measure growth in media and technology markets, adding to the illusion that these sectors are ecologically benign drivers of economic expansion. Were we to consider ecological and human liabilities as vital financial information, then accounting in the media and communication sector would reveal “fictitious incomes and real costs that haven’t been reckoned with yet,” demonstrating the need for sustainability and for regulated limits to growth (Schor, 2010, p. 18).

We have argued that, while the focus on consciousness and work in production studies generates worthwhile research at a particular level, the result is fundamentally indistinguishable from that of the ordinary science of media, communication, and cultural studies, and it makes production studies susceptible to industry self-analysis/interest. Too often, we recycle a pro-growth ideology because we are dazzled by the aura surrounding media technologies and creative occupations – the so-called aristocracy of talent, which comprises the recognized ensemble of workers in production practices. Our aim here has been to throw some shade over that dazzle and to look instead at neglected labor through a more materialist, ecological understanding of the physical environment in which production takes place. Media production studies can help to establish a just system of environmental accounting that shows how and where creative production steals from the Earth and from the working people in the name of growth. We’ll conclude with some observations on where future research is needed.

Given the scope and scale of media-related occupations across global networks, media production researchers face many challenges in studying labor and the environment. One difficulty concerns the definition of who counts as a media production worker. We have argued that conventional production studies have circumscribed this sector too narrowly and that more comprehensive research on media production labor is needed. As we have shown, before a director says “action” or an editor enters data that shape a narrative, a thousand assembly lines from all over the world have streamed into production vectors. By some estimates, there are nearly 200 million ICT workers, including professionals, software and services, assembly workers, and jobs that are enabled by the skilled use of information technology (Raina, 2007, pp. 18–25). Future research must be increasingly comprehensive, so the field of production studies needs to adapt and to design quantitative methods to help identify organizational relationships, geographical bonds, and interlocking occupations in media production supply chains, which currently link computer scientists, engineers,

designers, marketing researchers, miners, mineral brokers, refiners, chemists, factory laborers, server-warehouse employees, telecommunications workers, truck drivers, salespeople, office clerks, and anyone whose job has been “informationalized” with ICT tools, or who has contributed innovation, time, blood, or sweat to the making, distribution, and reception of a media device or text.

Another difficulty arises when we try to look beyond settled patterns in the NDIL to discern new formations in the structure of global labor at different sites around the world. For instance, the late twentieth-century pattern that set poor regions to make the “low-value” constellation of pieces and parts of a device and the richer regions to produce “high-value” research and development remains largely intact; but the rapid pace and expansion of outsourcing is making stark distinctions of this kind increasingly unreliable as guides for present-day production research (Bottini, Ernst, & Luebker, 2007). By 2004, 35% of ICT and CE manufacturing jobs were in China (as compared to 7% in the US, 9% in Japan, and 10% in Western Europe). As the case of the *maquiladoras* shows, the trend suggests further concentration in Asia, at the expense of jobs in competing countries like Mexico, which was once a standard site for outsourcing low-wage ICT and CE manufacturing (Carrillo, 2009, p. 14; van Liemt, 2007, p. 8). Production studies must continue to track these macrolevel changes in the international division of labor and to be alert to their effects on ecosystems and on workers’ lives.

Finally, low levels of unionization in the global supply chain have severely hampered research on the working conditions and environmental hazards associated with media/film, ICT, and CE production. Without widespread union representation and improvement in the exercise of associational rights, production workers lack independent institutional sources of information – a situation that is “casting doubts on the prospects of raising labor standards through [CSR] codes of conduct alone” (Ferus-Comelo, 2008, p. 157; Centre for Reflection and Action on Labour Issues, 2009). As long as political-economic arrangements militate against free unionization, it will be difficult to find reliable and representative statistical analyses of workers’ exposure to toxic materials and of other workplace hazards. To meet this challenge, media production studies must do more to internationalize its fieldwork and research methodology, placing researchers and doctoral students on the ground in the global supply chain. In the meantime, research will rely on a patchwork of non-governmental organizations, local activists, policy-oriented journalists, and CSR audits. Reports made by SACOM (Chan & Ho, 2008), by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD, 2004) and by the Centro de Reflexión y Acción Laboral (CEREAL, 2006; Centre for Reflection and Action on Labour Issues, 2009), for example, have provided instructive accounts of the conditions in Chinese and Mexican plants (see also Nautilus Institute, Natural Heritage Institute, & Human Rights Advocates, 2002). As we have seen, such sources depict a system with weak labor protection, which is dependent on poverty-driven, gendered, immigrant labor. The majority of workers are young, single, female migrants aged between 16 and 25, laboring in factories for seven days a week and for 16 hours a day, in compulsory

residency, in sequestration from friends and family, and with no social freedoms. Some are fired at 21, when they attain their majority. Men are often not hired because they are seen as potentially militant (Chan & Ho, 2008, p. 8).⁶

This is a sobering corrective to celebrations of media “freedom.” So, as we track the lives of commodity signs that fascinate us, we need to forgo the comfort of the consciousness paradigm, striving instead for a more complex and nuanced approach, which is as broad-minded and expansive as the work of the activists, corporations, unions, and scientists who study labor and environmental processes. That means forming teams with environmental scientists and labor sociologists; reading environmental audits; and learning technical languages – in short, being as nimble as an activist or policymaker is.

We are confident that the methods and ethics of media, communication, and cultural studies can contribute to a more just and sustainable world, if agile media production analysts are prepared to go back, back, back – like a similarly agile baseball or cricket outfielder or football goalkeeper – to control the signs they love.

NOTES

- 1 Several terms and phrases are used to describe the media industries and their analysis, all of which connect to the notion of consciousness. They include “creative industries” (used by industry policy and the New Right of cultural studies); “culture” or “cultural industries” (used by the left and by some policymakers); and “copyright industries” (favored by US capital and its allies and handservants).
- 2 For a useful account of the prosumer, a preferred concept of cultural studies’ New Right, see Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010).
- 3 We have seen this tendency in film-and-television production as well (Miller, Govil, McMurria, & Maxwell, 2001; Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005).
- 4 In-bond (or *maquila*) assembly refers to the requirement that *maquiladoras* post a bond equivalent to the value of the imported, duty-free components. This is done to force the factory to export all finished products containing the imported inputs, at which point the bond is returned.
- 5 For an explanation of this conduct as systematic and built into the architecture of certain sites rather than as individual conduct, see Salzinger (1997, 2000). This research is from an earlier time, when these practices may have been less common.
- 6 One of us spent time with Chinese factory workers during the only afternoon a week when they were allowed to move beyond factory walls.

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Understanding Hypercommercialized Media Texts

Matthew P. McAllister and Alexandra Nutter Smith

ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews critical-cultural media studies work on “hypercommercialized” media texts and offers an analysis of such a text. Given the incentives for commercial and promotional messages to grab the attention of consumers and integrate into their lives, we are seeing a variety of hybrid commercial forms in media. Product placement/integration, branded entertainment, sponsorship, cross-promotion, and other hypercommercial texts appear in different media and contexts. This chapter examines reasons for the prominence of these hybrid forms, and integrates previous research to explicate their textual dynamics and cultural implications as well as theoretical concepts that can be useful in interrogating them. The NBC comedy *30 Rock* is used to illustrate how different commercial contexts influence the meaning of a hypercommercial text. A discussion of how increased interactivity and target marketing further complicate the study of hypercommercial texts concludes the chapter.

Filmmaker Morgan Spurlock, in his satirical 2011 documentary *Pom Wonderful Presents The Greatest Movie Ever Sold*, asks Ralph Nader, “Where should I be able to go where I don’t see one bit of advertising?” Nader’s response is, “To sleep.” As this exchange signals, the “millennial era” may be someday known as the “hypercommercialized era.” Commercial and promotional intrusion is found in several venues, including

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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politics, education, and medicine (Aronczyk & Powers, 2010). As Spurlock self-reflexively explores, one especially key location is in media content. Media texts not designated as “advertising” have become increasingly invaded by advertising messages and branded icons. Since 2000, in the United States we have seen such commercially and promotionally oriented phenomena as:

- *Madden Nation*, a television program on the cable television network ESPN that debuted in 2005. Jointly created by ESPN and the videogame company EA Sports, the program featured expert players of the Madden NFL videogame squaring off against each other for the right to be crowned champion of that particular game each season. When aired on ESPN, *Madden Nation* – a giant commercial for the videogame – also featured ads for other products and promotions for other shows, most demographically targeted for the young, sports-oriented male.
- *Lucky* magazine, a hybrid of a magazine and shopping catalog with different textual features that blur the commercial, the editorial, and the promotional. Debuting in 2000, *Lucky* is seen as a significant brand-friendly success for the embattled magazine industry. As the editor of *Lucky* beamed, “everything in *Lucky* has got to be worth explaining to your friend why she should buy it” (quoted in McNamara, 2011, n.p.).
- The use of “long-form” ads like BMW’s *The Hire*. A 2001 series of five-minute-long “webisodes,” *The Hire* used the talents of such directors as Guy Richie and Ang Lee to tout BMW’s maneuverability in these half films/half ads. Available for a time on BMW’s website, teaser television commercials for the webisodes – ads for ads – aired on television in early 2001 (Owczarski, 2007). DVDs of the ad-based webisodes may be purchased on Amazon, which also includes DVD extras like two “making of” features about the campaign.

Although these examples are all from post-2000, they illustrate trends that began at least in the mid-1980s toward a “hypercommercialization” of culture (McChesney, 1999). Certainly the presence of intrusive advertising is nothing new, but the particular modern versions, the reasons for them, and their implications in our current cultural context have attracted a large amount of scholarship and triggered some rethinking of assumptions about the relationship of advertising to media content. Much of the scholarship examining hypercommercialism focuses on the United States, which is also largely the focus of this chapter, but this is a global phenomenon that likewise has its roots in the 1980s (Frith & Mueller, 2010; Mattelart, 1991).

Hypercommercialism often involves the blurring of commercial assumptions and messages into different cultural forms. It can involve the relatively superficial, such as product placement: inserting brands into the background of a scene or the casual use of a brand by a character in a movie or television program (Galician, 2004). More intense versions include product integration, where a brand becomes part of a plot for a movie or a TV episode, and branded entertainment, where a brand becomes the premise for some sort of entertainment (Lehu, 2007), such as *Madden Nation*.

Hypercommercialism has invented new hybrid forms, often signaled by mutated words like infomercial, advertorial, advertainment, and advergaming. As Mattelart observed early in this cultural trend, such hybridity removes distinctions “between news and commercials, advertising and editorial, publicity and journalism, publicity and reportage, between promotional surface and editorial content, advertising and the programme” (1991, p. 130). It also involves the mixing of different textual types together in a way that may integrate a larger flow of commercial and promotional messages. As will be reviewed, the nature of hypercommercial texts has implications for culture and democracy.

The majority of research on hypercommercial techniques such as product placement and sponsorship is conducted from a business-oriented point of view: do these techniques sell, and how can we make them more effective? But a significant amount of scholarship from a critical and cultural perspective focuses on the ideological and cultural dynamics of these texts, including the effect of hypercommercialism on artistic autonomy, cultural space, democracy, diversity, and critical thinking. Given their hybrid nature and the different contexts in which they may appear, studying modern hypercommercial texts is especially challenging.

This chapter will explore some of these trends, the reasons why we see them now, the research that has attempted to understand these developments, and contextual complications that can arise in critiquing hypercommercialism. The chapter will end with a discussion of the future of hypercommercial trends, including likely forthcoming variants and points of resistance.

Precedents and Context

McChesney specifically labeled our modern times as the “age of hypercommercialism” (1999, 2004) and a “commercial tidal wave” (McChesney & Foster, 2003). Others have talked about “the commercialization of culture” (McAllister, 1996), the “web of brands” (Klein, 1999), advertising “clutter” (Goldman & Papson, 1996), “the dangerous spread of commercialized culture” and “ad creep” (Ruskin & Schor, 2005; Bettig & Hall, 2012). Such work focuses on both the wide *breadth* of advertising and corporate promotional visibility throughout different sectors of society and culture, and the imposing *depth* of control over media content and culture by advertising forces.

Earlier eras have also seen very visible and pervasive forms of advertising, shaped by particular economic and technological dynamics. Raymond Williams (1980) argued that observers of many different eras have been so distraught with the presence of commercial messages that they often declared that it could not possibly get any worse. (The authors of this chapter, on the other hand, will argue at the end that it absolutely can get worse.) The streets of mid- and late nineteenth-century London were filled with flyers, posters, placards, and walking sandwich boards, while newspapers became more receptive to advertising placement. At about the same time

in the United States, national magazines and newspapers began to generate the majority of their revenue from advertisers, thereby shaping content to be complementary to the advertising messages (Andersen, 1995; Baker, 1994; Ohmann, 1996).

A commercial surge in the United States also occurred between the 1930s and the 1950s, as a sponsorship model of funding was applied to radio and television. In such cases, one broadcast program would be funded by, and exclusively promote, one brand. Advertising agencies representing these brands produced programs for the broadcasting networks, facilitating the infiltration of programs with the sponsoring brands and using program hosts and actors to pitch brands during the commercial breaks (Cross, 2000; Samuel, 2001).

A case can be made that we have entered a new era of hypercommercialism with its own unique contextual forces and characteristics. Digital technologies since the 1990s have had complex effects upon the nature and degree of commercialism in society. Certainly, older technologies such as the remote controls and VCRs in the 1980s introduced the idea of “viewer control” over when or even if viewers had to watch the commercials. However, digital viewing technologies like the DVR accelerated this anxiety for many advertisers (Carlson, 2006). These technologies combined with theoretical “ad-free” televisual spaces such as premium cable networks, on-demand movie services, and videogame consoles that frustrated advertisers from reaching prime demographics. As a result, advertisers became more aggressive in blurring the line between advertising and programming (i.e., product placement), making it more difficult to avoid ads and demanding that media creators cede control to commercial interests.

The effect of the Internet upon advertising and promotional practices has been and will continue to be enormous (Spurgeon, 2008). Its layout protocols and multimedia modalities encourage the blending of different content categories, including commercial forms with noncommercial forms. It creates additional and enduring commercial spaces, such as websites devoted to promotion and branding and the archiving of television and print commercials that previously had a limited shelf life. Given that it costs no more to link a 10-minute-long video than a 5-second-long video to a site, longer promotional forms are viable on the web, including hybrid promotional forms such as “advergaming” and “webisodes.”

The Internet also pressures traditional media to be more advertising receptive. The redirection of advertising dollars to the Internet means that newspapers and television are increasingly desperate to retain advertisers – and therefore more likely to give advertisers increased influence over content decisions. The Internet easily matches specific ads with specific content or user behavior such as search terms and previous web uses: banner ads for travel services next to web stories, search results about travel, or suggestions about future purchasing based upon purchase history. A similar commercial innovation is the development of behavioral measurements of advertising effectiveness for the Internet – such as “click-through” aggregates that indicate how many web users have not only seen a banner ad on a website, but actually acted upon it.

Other media developments encourage the hypercommercialization of culture. Modern media corporations both distribute advertising for other companies and have their own brands to sell. Scholars analyzed the media's own "promotional culture" (Wernick, 1991) and cross-media synergy (Meehan, 1991) well before digital forms were introduced. But the monetization of media products facilitated by digital media – selling film and TV programs as DVDs and through e-commerce sites such as iTunes – further emphasizes media promotion. Corporations leverage their licensed brands in various revenue-generating forms and in publicity-generating forms such as magazine covers, behind-the-scenes features, and cross-promotions with fast-food companies and other marketing partners (Gray, 2010; McAllister, 2000). Because a corporation like Disney depends on both advertising revenue through its subsidiaries like ESPN and ABC and direct-sales revenue, such corporations are constantly searching for corporate partners who aggressively mix advertising buying with cross-promotion for media licensing. Such deals often include inserting promotional messages in movies and television programs.

Changes in the advertising industry also facilitate hypercommercialization. The growth and influence of global holding organizations such as the WPP Group and Omnicom, who in turn own several large agencies each, began in earnest in the 1980s and 1990s (Leiss, Kline, Jhally, & Botterill, 2005). Not only can such holding companies create and place global advertising campaigns, but they also encourage the practice of large-scale integrated marketing campaigns (IMC), where the traditional marketing functions of advertising, promotion, and public relations coordinate the placement of "on-topic" branded messages in many different locations. The Internet similarly encourages IMC, given its abilities to easily fold in traditional advertising forms with press releases, e-commerce, sales promotions, and publicity for sponsored and cross-promotional events. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become valuable IMC tools that can complement and extend print and television advertising campaigns cheaply.

Hypercommercialism has several implications for our culture and society (see, for example, Budd, Craig, & Steinman, 1999; Bullen, 2009). It infuses our culture with amplified consumerist perspectives that further the social practice of brands and shopping as symbols for status and identity. Hypercommercialism shrinks the amount of ad-free cultural space (as Ralph Nader wryly notes at the beginning of this chapter), making commercial influences a powerful force in the public sphere. It undermines media literacy as commercial and noncommercial forms become difficult to distinguish, a primary criterion for evaluating when a message is designed to persuade and when it is designed to entertain or inform. Artistic and democratic autonomy in media is eroded, and critical examinations of consumer and commercial culture within media texts are muted. In its modern manifestations, hypercommercialism combines media messages with capabilities of digital technology, including e-commerce, data mining, target marketing, and niche market discrimination (for the latter, see Turow, 2006).

Hypercommercialism is a trans-media phenomenon. Using previous scholarship, the following sections review just a few – but by no means all – of the most striking cultural and mediated domains where such trends occur.

Film and Television Entertainment

The insertion of brands in films and TV has a long history (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006; Turner, 2004). However, during the 1980s and 1990s product placement in film was further institutionalized and became an assumed industrial practice (Miller, 1990; Wasko, Phillips, & Purdie, 1993). Product placement encourages particular types of films: action-adventure and comedies (since these are conducive to commercial messages), movies with happy endings, and scripts with product placement-friendly scenes. Licensed-based films like The Mighty Ducks franchise (or comic-book-based films) not only plug the license but also create an environment for other product insertions (Fuller, 1997). Miller notes that the exchange of directing talent between movies and commercials influenced the style of films to make them more commercial-like. Rising costs encourage product placement opportunities be targeted early in the filmmaking process, even while the script is still being formed, and with assurances of positive framing for the brands (Clifford, 2010).

With its diversity of advertisers, television has a different history with product placement than film. Although the sponsorship era in the 1950s saw many product inserts, the routine placement of products in prime-time scripted shows was arguably downplayed from the mid-1960s until the 1990s. The 1990s featured a significant increase (Andersen, 1995; Budd et al., 1999). Reality television's "spontaneous," non-scripted image and commercialized financing of production helped legitimize the practice (Deery, 2004; Magder, 2009). Deery, for instance, argues that two subcategories of reality shows – the hedonistic and the Spartan – both ease the integration of brands. Hedonistic programs, like *The Apprentice*, wallow in the exhibition of high-end brands that are associated with *The Good Life* (see also Jenkins, 2006). Spartan programs such as *Survivor*, on the other hand, deprive contestants of brands and they are sometimes literally in tears when hosts offer up branded snacks as rewards. In such cases, brands become hailed as heroes to the contestants. However, as will be detailed later, product placement and product integration are now common in scripted television programs.

Other incentives encourage hypercommercial television content. Television programs and networks are designed to create friendly environments for advertising messages. Specific genres and channels oriented around makeovers (Sender, 2006), wedding and romance programs (Engstrom, 2008), and programs on The Food Network (Ketchum, 2007) celebrate the creation of identity and empowerment through consumption and heavily promote and merchandise branded goods, includ-

ing cross-promoted or synergistic partners. Wenner (2004) notes that with the increased sophistication of digital production techniques, retroactive digital inserts of products into older films and television shows may become more likely and introduce particularly dicey ethical concerns. Of course, home shopping channels integrate direct commerce with around-the-clock promises of not just bargains, but also class mobility through brand acquisition (Cook, 2000). Home shopping's ultimate legacy may be as an early model for the blending of television and e-commerce, as will be discussed in the chapter's conclusion.

Sports

Andersen (1995) labeled the marriage of brand marketing and large-scale mediated sports as "probably the most commercialized sector of popular entertainment." Mediated sports, given their entertainment orientation, appeal to consumption-oriented males (Vavrus, 2007), cultivation of passionate fandom, and image of being apolitical entertainment, make them a cultural form of great appeal to marketers and advertisers. The Superbowl, for example, is one of the biggest venues for high-profile advertising. The 1984 airing of the "Big Brother"-themed commercial that debuted the Macintosh computer was a watershed for large-scale "event" advertising (Stein, 2002). Since then, the Superbowl has become a large-scale celebration of advertising, with news coverage, advanced marketing hype, and reviews of the commercials afterwards (McAllister, 1999).

Sports are also visible cultural venues for corporate sponsorship, where brands are woven throughout team and event symbolism. Globally, sports such as soccer and rugby create long-term sponsorship deals with particular brands like Adidas. Such arrangements trigger struggles over the cultural meanings of teams as their status as both local or national public goods and their commercialized meaning as globalized commodity and sponsorship partners collide (Scherer, Falcous, & Jackson, 2008). In the United States, some of the most commercialized forms of sports are in the so-called amateur realm. The Olympics offers a long history of sponsorship association, including the 1992 Olympics and the heavy promotion of the US basketball "Dream Team" spreading messages of nationalism and individual heroism in different promotional forms (Wenner, 1994). US broadcasts of end-of-season college football bowl games fill the screen with both the title sponsor (such as the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl) and subsidiary advertisers throughout the broadcast of those games. The sponsor's name appears on field and stadium signage as well as on player uniforms, but also increasingly throughout the broadcast as digitally inserted graphics. In such cases, college sports arguably are among the most commercialized forms on US television; for example, less than 20% of the broadcast of the 2007 US national championship football game airing on the Fox network was without a corporate logo or brand name on the TV screen (McAllister, 2010).

As a highly commercialized form of entertainment, sports may serve as a “ground-breaker” for invasive marketing and therefore a source of legitimation for increased visibility of corporate brands in other venues and forms of culture.

Children’s Culture

Schor (2005) argues that the biggest growth market in the late 1990s was children, with US teen and “tweens” becoming “the most brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialistic generations in history” (p. 13). Kids’ media are especially characterized by a triple-whammy of marketing incentives: (1) media corporations such as Disney and Time-Warner promoting their own licensed merchandise (like iCarly and Superman, respectively); (2) kids-oriented brands for fast food, cereal, and toys/games heavily advertising and cross-promoting on children’s media; and (3) adult-oriented brands – vehicles and vacation spots – targeting kids because of their role as an important “influence market” over family purchasing decisions.

The commercialization of children’s media is therefore highly integrated, where it is difficult to discriminate media content from commercial and promotional messages. Books based on branded goods such as M&M Counting books mimic the packaging of those goods (Linn, 2004). Teen girl magazine articles about the prom focus on empowering the self through prom-oriented commodities also advertised throughout the magazines (Mazzarella, 1999). Branded programs on the Disney Channel and even state-funded channels serve as “program-length commercials” for licenses and brands (Mjøs, 2010). Children’s television flow between product commercials, branded programming, and branded “program separators” – the latter purportedly designed to create spaces between ads and non-ads but frequently using corporate logos – blend elements even further (McAllister & Giglio, 2005). Websites designed for children routinely contain unlabeled and integrated forms of advertising (Nairn, 2008). One such integrated form is the adverggame, blurring distinctions between marketing communication and mediated content. Games found on branded websites like Nickelodeon.com are more likely to restrict children’s play to a “branded universe” than foster more creative approaches. In some cases, the chat rooms in such branded sites limit responses to certain options via pull-down menus, with many of these options being brand licensing oriented (Grimes, 2008). Food companies that target children heavily use adverggames on their websites to promote their products; unhealthy foods high in sugar and/or fat are especially likely to use this promotional strategy, with candy and gum brands being the most frequently found advergamed food product (Lee, Choi, Quilliam, & Cole, 2009).

A children’s brand such as Bratz is not just available as dolls and toys but is also a *post hoc* media entity, featuring an animated television show, a live-action Hollywood film, DVDs, CDs, books, and magazines. Not only is the overall Bratz brand promoted in these media, but so are specific Bratz products as well as the perpetuating of shopping and consumption as a form of girl empowerment (McAllister, 2007).

Even without specific financial relationships between a media creator and marketer, children's media, including fictional books, may be filled with references to consumer brands as ways to distinguish character preferences, but still nevertheless encourage a consumption orientation (Bullen, 2009).

Journalism

A common assumption about the ideal structure of modern news is that a wall separates the business functions of a news organization from its news gathering functions. With this wall, reporters have autonomy from advertising and ownership influence and can maximize the contribution of journalism as a public good. However, many critics argue that this wall – if it ever really existed as a perfect barrier – has eroded against surging promotional tides (Bagdikian, 2004; Baker, 1994; McChesney, 1999). Advertising's effect on news is wide, including shifts toward more business-oriented stories and away from labor reporting, appeals to more upscale readers and the ignoring of more underprivileged areas of communities, hesitancy to criticize advertisers, acceptance of press release-oriented stories, and emphases on ad-friendly news topics such as celebrity, fashion, and lifestyle news. Ironically, shifts in advertising revenues may lead to the eventual demise of journalism's flagship medium, the newspaper, but this demise could also be attributed to newspapers' moving away from what they do best historically (watchdog and public advocacy journalism), a movement encouraged by their advertising-revenue orientation (McChesney & Nichols, 2010).

As examples like Starbucks' sponsorship of cable network MSNBC's *Morning Joe* program make clear (Stelter, 2009), television news may be especially susceptible to specific forms of hypercommercial content, including the insertion of advertising and promotional messages in the news. Wood, Nelson, Cho, and Yaros (2004) found significant brand mentions in late afternoon and evening television news, especially local news. They also found instances of what they called "cross-promotion" and what other scholars have labeled "synergy bias" (Williams, 2002) and "plugola" (Higgins & Sussman, 2007; McAllister, 2002). Morning news programs may be especially accepting of promotional and synergistic content (Cleary & Adams-Bloom, 2009), with stories about films, programs, or other brands owned by the parent corporation. In such cases, news becomes a promotional arm of its corporate parent, and it is a characteristic of news divisions owned by entertainment conglomerates oriented toward brand licensing.

Music

Modern music has long embraced aggressive forms of promotion, as payola scandals since at least the 1950s indicate. Integrated promotion is a staple of the modern music

industry. MTV, for example, was built on the idea of short promotional forms (music videos) as its early content premise. Music videos served as marketing vehicles for music sales and had a style that both influenced and was influenced by television advertising (Aufderheide, 1986).

As with many media facing the digital age, the music industry faces significant challenges to its traditional business model, and these challenges have encouraged an embrace of advertising partnerships. Klein (2009) explores the integration of music into advertising, arguing that increasingly artists are looking toward placement of their music in television commercials as both a potential revenue stream and a publicity vehicle. However, aside from economic drawbacks (including low synchronization fees and the limited life of any given ad), a cultural danger of such strategies is incentivizing musical creation to be advertising friendly. In fact, mentions of brands in songs have increased historically, with rap/hip-hop/R&B being especially pronounced in their use of brand-infused lyrics (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009).

Marketers also use and shape music for their own promotional purposes. Volkswagen upgrades its brand image by using off-beat songs in its commercials, sponsoring musical events including US public television's 2003 documentary series on the blues, and has even released CDs such as *Street Mix: Music from the Volkswagen Commercials, Vol. 1* (McIntosh, 2009). Internationally, corporations may sponsor musical events to circumvent policy restrictions on traditional advertising (Patel, Okechukwu, Collin, & Hughes, 2009) and associate with the hipness of global youth culture, although how fans respond to corporate branding may not always be under the branding corporation's control (Carah, 2010).

With sponsorship, product placement, webisodes, and other forms, the above contexts have often encouraged scholars to rethink the very nature of media content, given the unique and hybrid nature of hypercommercialism. The next section explores how the concept of the commercial "text" has been reconceptualized.

The Complex Nature of the Hypercommercial Text

For the most part, the main commercial text that scholars have studied is the advertisement: the full-page magazine advertisement or the 30-second television commercial. Many influential and insightful examples of studies examine the semiotic and ideological components of this conventional advertising text (Goldman, 1992; Williamson, 1978).

But by its very nature, hypercommercial content blends discrete forms of culture into a larger promotional mix that is difficult to clearly separate. Commercials, promotions, programs, movies, and other forms are stirred in a textual soup where, in everyday experience and increasingly in industrial practice, they are parts of a promotional whole. As surveyed below, scholars have made adjustments given the prevalence of hypercommercialized forms and are increasingly studying promotional

media not as a series of isolated commercials, promotions, or films but as a semiotic integration.

We see this in the large-scale promotional mix of synergistic media brands. The cross-media and coordinated licensing elements of synergistic corporate media lead to “commodity intertexts,” or various versions of brands (or texts) such as Batman that appear in different media like film, TV, comic books, books, music, videogames, and theme-park rides (Meehan, 1991). These intertextual licenses serve as revenue generators and as cross-media promotions for each other (Hardy, 2010). Media corporations thus promote licenses with as many of their owned media outlets as possible. Increasingly such intertexts are not just cross-media duplicates (images of Batman in various media) but advance an integrated metanarrative throughout the different versions, a marketing and narrative strategy labeled as “intertextual flow” (Proffitt, Tchoi, & McAllister, 2007) and “trans-media storytelling” (Jenkins, 2006). In such cases fans will miss out on a backstory, character motivation, or subplot development if they do not acquire all of the licensed manifestations. With the Matrix franchise, for example, the movies alone did not add to the official narrative arc of the story – so did the animated release *The Animatrix*, the *Enter the Matrix* videogame, and various “loaded” versions of Matrix DVDs.

A related but even broader concept is that of the “paratext” (Gray, 2010). Gray argues that increasingly media texts are supplemented – or even potentially subordinated – by related texts that promote, comment upon, and influence the meaning of those “original” texts. Although paratexts for media are not new – movie trailers are one early example – digital media have perpetuated them. Promotional “making of” features on DVDs can both influence the potential meanings of films and add “aura” or credibility to the film by discursively constructing the film as a great piece of art.

The paratext is a useful concept for other kinds of hypercommercial content besides media promotion. Increasingly, forms of advertising are being supplemented with their own paratexts that not only distribute the commercial message more widely, but also add legitimacy to the advertising message. For example, high-profile advertising campaigns like for the Toyota Prius (the “Harmony” campaign) often produce their own “making of” documentary features about the campaigns that are distributed on their branded websites and throughout video-sharing sites like YouTube. Such features serve several functions, including promoting the advertising agency and specific personnel that created an ad. But an important function is to influence potential interpretations of the ads so that the ads’ persuasive and ideological functions are de-emphasized, and their artistic and filmic characteristics are highlighted (McAllister, 2011).

Digital production and distribution have encouraged another type of commercial paratext: user-generated content, much of which is commercially based, including its most intense form, the user-generated commercial (UGC). Typically in these cases a marketer will hold a contest that invites consumers (presumably “fans” of the brand) to submit a homemade commercial for the brand, posting the submissions to

a website where other consumers/fans comment and vote on the UGCs. A contest for Dove Body Wash attracted thousands of submissions, brought visitors to the contest site, generated media publicity for the winning ad that aired during the 2008 Oscar broadcast, and embedded the contest and UGCs in a discourse of feminist empowerment and artistic achievement (Duffy, 2010). This last strategy converges with comparable themes in “making of” documentaries of ad campaigns that seek to elevate the cultural status of the brand and campaign.

Similarly, social networking sites like Facebook provide advertisers with unique opportunities to capitalize on free consumer-provided labor (Cohen, 2008), including user-generated praise for brands on Facebook pages or “fanning/liking” the pages of companies or even advertising mascots. This user-generated activity adds to the credibility of branded Facebook pages and spreads the brand to other Facebook friends’ pages. Data that are mined from social networking profiles allow ads to be precisely targeted, blurring user content with the ad messages and obscuring the fact that the site is structured to steer users toward sponsored groups (Morrissey, 2006).

Other commercial forms of hybridity complicate how one conceptualizes the idea of the “main” commercial text. Budd, Craig, and Steinman (1999) argue that the similar styles and icons between network television and television commercials – including product placement and shared acting talent in ads and programs – can be viewed as a giant “commodity flow” where viewers are encouraged to understand connections between different content forms and see them as interconnected. Similarly, kids’ television’s mix of corporate branding, commercials, licensed programming, and cross-promotion often obliterates differences between promotional and nonpromotional categories as these forms flow into each other. In one three-hour block of programming on ABC Saturday morning in 2002, for example, the word Disney was said or shown 178 times in various content categories such as opening/closing credits for licensed-based programs, branded program separators, product ads, and program promotions (McAllister & Giglio, 2005).

As implied by the above, specific contexts in which hybrid commercial texts are embedded are important and complicate commercial scholarship. Although the availability of television programs and movies on DVDs facilitates the study of such texts compared to the days of nonrecordable film and television, it also encourages a tendency toward decontextualization of the texts from specific commercial contexts of reception. Watching a film on DVD removes it from the commercial and promotional paratexts of the theatrical setting, and adds potentially very different paratexts. Even more dramatically, studying a commercial network television program through a DVD release, iTunes file, or video-sharing website takes that program away from its original context in which specific ads and promotions surrounded the program. For research that focuses on hypercommercialized qualities, this context may be critical for understanding initial meaning formation around integrated commercial messages. The following section describes one such example where the context of commercial paratexts matters.

Commercial Paratexts and Contexts in *30 Rock*

Cross-promotions between product advertisers and media companies generate paratexts that add meaning to traditional advertising messages. In the case of the product advertiser, the association with a TV show or movie helps to legitimize and glamorize the brand. But the flow of meanings works both ways. The coordinated and cross-promoted advertising messages may also serve as paratexts to the media texts, changing or altering the meanings of the film or television program.

Take, for example, the use of parody about product placement in a November 16, 2006 episode, “Jack-Tor,” of the television program *30 Rock*. As a program co-produced by NBC Studios and NBC Universal Television and distributed by the NBC network, *30 Rock* results from vertical integration – with producer and network being owned by the same company. Given that in the economic structure of network television advertisers pay the networks directly, the combined producer/distributor role makes the program more easily accessible by advertisers than programs produced independently of the network (an increasingly rare characteristic).

This particular episode opens with main character Liz Lemon and the other producers and writers of the “show-within-a-show” on *30 Rock*, *TGS*, listening to a video presentation for a new initiative by Jack Donaghy, the NBC executive who supervises *TGS*. At this time, GE owned NBC (a network now owned by Comcast). In the video, Jack says:

For over a hundred years, GE has been imaging the future, today. And I’m here today to talk to you today about a wonderful new synergy. It’s called product integration. It’s revolutionizing the way we monetize broadcast television. How does it work? Simple. All you have to do as the writing staff of an NBC show is incorporate positive mentions, or “pos-mens,” of GE products into your program. For example, you could write an episode where one of your characters purchases, and is satisfied with, one of GE’s direct current drilling motors for an offshore or land-based project. Product integration, setting a new standard in upward revenue stream dynamics . . . for all of us.

Once the video is over, those around the table react indignantly, although comically contradictorily, to the new initiative:

LIZ:	I’m sorry, you’re saying you want us to use the show to sell stuff?
JACK:	Look, I know how this sounds.
LIZ:	No, come on Jack. We’re not doing that. We’re not compromising the integrity of the show to sell . . .
PETER [drinking a Snapple]:	Wow! This is diet Snapple?!
LIZ [smiling broadly]:	I know! It tastes just like regular Snapple, doesn’t it?
FRANK:	You should try Plum-a-Granate. It’s amazing.

- CERIE [directly at the camera]: I only date guys who drink Snapple.
- JACK: Look, we all love Snapple. Lord knows, I do. But focus here. We're talking about product integration.
- LIZ: No, we're not your shills.
- JACK: Oh, oh, I'm sorry. That's right, they're artists, like James Joyce or Strindberg. Get real, kids, you write skits mocking our presidents to fill time between car commercials.
- LIZ: That's not fair. Josh gets a lot of fan mail for Gaybraham Lincoln.
- JOSH [in an effeminate voice]: Four score and seven beers ago.
- LIZ [looking at a Snapple cap]: Guys know that Holland is the only country with a national dog? There's little facts in there.

The use of parody of product placement has a fairly long tradition, going back at least to the 1992 movie *Wayne's World* and continuing through the earlier mentioned *Pom Wonderful Presents . . .* In the case of *30 Rock*, the scene comments on two forms of promotional intrusion on television programming: synergistic corporate ownership and product placement from external corporations. Here the "joke" is that, although the character of "Liz Lemon" expresses outrage at the over-the-top mandate to use the euphemistically labeled "pos-mens" as a form of GE corporate ownership synergy, the corporate commodity that is "Liz Lemon" (as well as all of the characters in the scene) becomes subservient to another form of commercialism, product placement from the external brand, Snapple. Five characters often at odds with one another in the program – Liz, Jack, Peter, Frank, Cerie – unite in their love of Snapple. One could take this scene as a vicious comment on selling out; the characters are not even aware of their contradictions, although these contradictions are clearly being signaled to the audience (Jack later in the episode calls such self-referential comedy "hippie humor").

Although amusing, the scene's stance on product placement is contradictory. For example, how might we interpret Jack's earnest criticism of the television staff's claim of moral purity, and their response to this criticism? He is arguably framed in the debate as a voice of reason. He contends that for them to think of themselves as having artistic integrity as television workers is delusional; they instead produce puerile entertainment that caters to the lowest impulses of the masses, a criticism that Josh then confirms with his Gaybraham Lincoln gag. Jack's point about TV being a sell-out medium is of course further justified by the Snapple "shilling" that occurs before and after his counterpunch, a shilling in which Jack himself willingly participates. (A later scene in the episode briefly shows a man in a Snapple costume asking directions for the Human Resources department of NBC.) Jack's scolding therefore offers a corporate perspective and takes a little of the bite out of the point of the parody: if TV is already a medium of selling out, what difference do a few "pos-mens" make?

This particular episode – airing early in the show's run – was reviewed quite a bit in newspapers and online. A few television critics at the time – perhaps watching pre-

broadcast DVDs sent to them by NBC to encourage reviews for the new show – commented on the scene’s conflicting messages. Put another way, the reviewers are noting the scene’s multiple “polysemic” meanings. Tom Shales of the *Washington Post* interpreted the scene as “shaky,” unclear, and perhaps positioning the viewer with Jack:

Presumably, viewers are not to take seriously Liz’s pompous announcement – that “we are not compromising the integrity of this show” – when Donaghy asks her to insert product placements, for such GE wonders as its offshore drilling motors, into the comedy scripts. But then in a blink, Liz is heaping gratuitous praise on Snapple, by name, and later a man dressed as a bottle of Snapple saunters into the scenario.

Is Fey making fun of the show-within-the-show or the show itself? Or both, or neither? (2006, p. C1)

Another reviewer critically noted the promotional benefits of even a parodist representation: “The only problem with sitcoms asking us to contemplate ‘stuff’ is that the way they do it forces us to think even more about the things they’re selling. This is not just irony, it’s bottomless, grinning cynicism” (Dailey, 2006, p. A2).

For fans who posted reviews for this episode on such sites as tv.com and imdb.com, the parodies were judged by their humor, not their critique. From imdb, for example, one fan wrote, “The Snapple gag didn’t make me laugh at first until it emerged for a second time unexpectedly,” while another offered, “Funniest scenes were when Liz refused to sell out, she and the other characters were suddenly plugging the Snapple drinks culminating in a walk-on by someone wearing a Snapple costume.” On tv.com, a fan wrote, “I loved the jokes about product placement, so much so that I’ve since shown that part to a few friends.”

But why Snapple? Was Snapple just an absurd brand to parody (“Plum-a-Granate”), or was there another reason Snapple was used? The scene itself is unclear on this, and therefore a viewing of this scene on DVD, or even as a rerun later in the season, that does not include the original commercials would leave this question open. However, this question was answered in another venue: the original broadcast of this episode in 2006 that did include commercials. Aside from the polysemic or humorous stance of the scene itself, the flow of commercial messages in this original broadcast is another factor that may influence the critical interpretation of the scene.

The above-described Snapple scene functions as the opening pre-credits sequence (or “cold open”). After Liz expresses her amazement at the Snapple-provided Holland-dog factoid, the program immediately cuts to its opening credits. Then, the first commercial after this break is an ad for Snapple, shot in a quirky style not unlike that of *30 Rock*.

Just as Gray (2010) argues that one effect of paratexts is to reinforce “preferred” interpretations of primary texts, here then the commercial that follows the opening scene reinforces that Snapple was a friendly and like-minded business partner of NBC, and that the parody of product placement arises from a product placement deal, and is therefore not a fundamental criticism.

As a paratext, this commercial tie-in may influence a critical reading. For example, another television reviewer, commenting in her blog and clearly watching the real-time broadcast version, noted the role of the Snapple commercial in altering her interpretation of the opening scene: “Last night’s episode was fun, especially the Snapple bit, though it was kind of ruined when they cut to a commercial break and there was an actual Snapple commercial. I felt like I’d been set up and I don’t like feeling set up” (de Moraes, 2006). In this case, the reviewer overtly signals that the commercial paratext aired during the original broadcast context influenced her interpretation. For others with similar interpretative schemas, such a feeling of being set up may make it difficult to trust any discussion of brands or commodities in advertising-supported media. How do we know that any mention, review, examination, parody is not a result of a cross-promotion?

In fact, as de Moraes suspected, the Snapple placement *was* part of a larger campaign by Snapple’s parent company, at that time named Cadbury-Schweppes, that year. What may be especially surprising about this deal is how cheaply NBC sold out its program. According to one trade article, the cross-promotion required that “the company neither pays any additional fees for integration nor does it have to increase its network media buys,” although Snapple point-of-purchase displays may have promoted the tie-in, thus “sweetening the pot” (Schiller, 2007).

Given the economic relationship, we may also ask about the meanings that the paratextual relationship has for the commercial marketer. In Snapple’s case, to what extent does it enhance Snapple’s brand when the brand is in on the joke (when it is also aware of the self-reflexive “hippie humor”), especially since the marketer chose a commercial that was similar in style to the program in which it was embedded? Although de Moraes, as a professional TV writer, was turned off by the commercial paratext, other viewers may have found it delightful that Snapple was in on the joke, as the Snapple commercial potentially signaled: the company is hip enough to make fun of itself and even uses the same sort of humor itself – a style of humor that presumably is enjoyed by *30 Rock* fans. None of the online fans quoted above indicated their reaction to the program–commercial combination, so it is unclear to what extent they may be noticed or been influenced by it.

A later *30 Rock* example also illustrates how the textual relations between media and commercial texts may influence meanings and even make it difficult to hierarchize such texts as “para” or “primary” (as Gray argues is problematic for modern media texts generally). A commercial airing during a March 2010 episode was somewhat hyperbolically labeled by the trade journal *Advertising Age* as a “new direction” in ad-media cross-promotions and signaled “the day when commercials are indistinguishable from the programs they support finally arrived” (Steinberg, 2010). This commercial for Dr. Pepper (part of the same Snapple corporation) featured comedic actor Chris Parnell as Dr. Spaceman, the good-natured but inept *30 Rock* character who says the tagline of the then-current campaign (“Trust me, I’m a doctor . . .”) but adds a particularly *30 Rock*-esque touch (“. . . in seven states and Bermuda”).

In this case, it was the commercial that copied the noncommercial text, having the character evoke the same goofy persona in an ad as he does in a *30 Rock* episode. In this case, then, the program serves as a fairly explicit paratext for the commercial. Although the ad can be understood without any textual knowledge of *30 Rock*, that intertextual knowledge arguably makes the commercial funnier as one immediately recognizes the Spaceman's character and humor. This is true whether the ad is viewed in its original broadcast context or on YouTube. But because the commercial first debuted during a *30 Rock* episode, that context reinforced the similarity between the commercial and the program. Even though apparently the specific *30 Rock* production company was not involved in the making of the commercial (Steinberg, 2010), the overall visual style and soundtrack of the commercial mimicked the program. In this way, the commercial was more similar in its style to the episode than to other ads in this campaign. That a more traditional Dr. Pepper commercial in that same campaign also aired during the same episode both reinforced the connection between the program and its sponsor, and signaled the "designer" nature (Deery, 2004) of the Spaceman ad where it references the specific program in which it is embedded as a special variation on this connection.

Other product integration/ad spot deals appear on *30 Rock*, some without such an ironic frame as in the first season. A February 2009 episode featured McDonald's McFlurries as a key plot device (Jack: "These McFlurries are amazing!") with McDonald's commercials airing during the program, and a May 2009 episode mentioned the Universal (and NBC sibling) film *Mamma Mia!* (with Liz calling it "the international film song-sation!") followed by a commercial for the DVD.

By no means was *30 Rock* alone in such commercial tie-ins. Its sibling program *The Office* had similar textual connections to ads for Chili's restaurants, the iPod, and Staples office supplies, and the much-loved Fox television show *Arrested Development* struck a similar deal with Burger King integrated into a 2005 episode. Increasingly corporate-driven media view such commercial intrusiveness as a necessary condition for profit maximization.

Conclusion: Interactive Product Placement and Antimarketing Blowback

This chapter has reviewed trends in hypercommercial media content. It focused on different content genres such as film and television, sports, children's content, news, and music to discuss how hypercommercial influences cut across different types of content. The chapter also explored the multifaceted characteristics of hypercommercial and hyperpromotional texts, including their "messy" nature as a text and integration of related hypercommercial paratexts and the importance of studying such texts in different contexts. Given the traditional tools at the disposal of marketers – commercials, promotions, sponsorship, and product placement/integration

among them – and their varied use, scholars should use care to understand how these tools may vary in different outlets.

Such texts and trends will continue to be a major influence in our media culture, and may intensify in the near future. The chapter has mostly focused on how hypercommercial content integrates advertising influences into what historically are considered noncommercial content forms. But the Internet and other digital media forms have added additional characteristics that may be blended into hypercommercialism even beyond web surfing. A characteristic of the Internet is its combination of selling and e-commerce, as sites like amazon.com can place promotions for products on the same screen as purchasing capabilities (Spurgeon, 2008). The data-mining nature of the Internet also means that such sites can target specific promotional appeals based upon the previous and current surfing patterns and purchasing history of the web user.

What we may be seeing as we move toward digitization is an accompanying commercialized future. Take television as an example, and certain precedents that ultimately could be models for a new hypercommercial model. As previously mentioned, home shopping channels integrate viewing with purchasing (Cook, 2000). Additionally, “enhanced” format reality television like *Big Brother* allows viewers to offer feedback about outcomes, a form of interaction that is consumption-based (Nightingale & Dwyer, 2006). As television becomes more Internet-like, it may continue in these directions by integrating interactivity and e-commerce capability not just within advertising forms, but even within programming forms. We may see the technological capability to purchase products featured in programs, a capability that, once enacted, may then be expected by advertisers as a routine part of television. In addition, the ability of television to collect data about media use to create targeted advertising messages – as the Internet now routinely offers – could continue to be folded into advertising logic and expectations of television and other media (Andrejevic, 2009). So, our hypercommercialized television screen of the future may include the ability to purchase not just generic products that are integrated into television programs, but even targeted products that are digitally inserted for particular viewers based upon their consumer data profile. In these cases the influence of advertising upon programming decisions will be fundamental and intimate, and will create even more commercialized contexts that may vary not just by medium or type of commodification, but even by individual user.

Other forces can stem the tide of an increasingly hypercommercialized future. Concerns about the future of journalism have triggered conversations among policymakers about alternative funding sources besides advertising (McChesney & Nichols, 2010). Privacy concerns may also influence the creation of more restrictive policy toward data collection as such models expand beyond the Internet. And as Klein (1999) has documented, when corporations overreach their social authority, people can fight back. Culture jammers, public protests, and political movements can result from groups angered by the very visible nature of overly aggressive corporate branding. Klein’s focus on such trends in the 1990s perhaps captured a particular

historical moment and was more about the corporate takeover of public space than about media content. Nevertheless, her work serves as a model for democratic blow-back in an era of YouTube and social networking sites that can be used for political organization as well as for integrated marketing. A digitized media future may offer more variants of hypercommercial content, but also can offer anticommmercial advocates more tools for protest as well.

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And Now a Click from Our Sponsors

Changes in Children's Advertising in the United States

Nancy A. Jennings

ABSTRACT

Many children worldwide spend a considerable amount of time with media. However, children's exposure to advertising may differ as a reflection of different public policies enforced around the world. Many policies worldwide place limits on the amount of advertising permitted, yet concerns rise about the nature of the messages (whether few or many) that children encounter. Therefore, this literature review will examine advertising messages that appear in children's media environments, focusing on television content and then exploring advertising in new media, specifically online advertising. Content analyses of electronic advertising reflect the interplay between public policy, industry self-regulation, and marketplace forces. As such, the United States provides an example of how these three forces operate together and is the focus of this review.

Many children growing up in the world today spend a considerable amount of time in front of the television screen. For example, recent research indicates that US children ages 8–18 spend a little over 7½ hours with media per day, and over half of that time (4½ hours) is spent with TV content (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Irish children ages 4–14 spent an average of over 2½ hours per day watching television

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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between 2000 and 2002 (Broadcasting Commission of Ireland [BCI], 2003). Similarly, Australian children ages 0–14 years watched an average of over 2½ hours per day of free-to-air broadcasts in 2001 but decreased to just over 2 hours per day by 2006 (Australian Communications and Media Authority [ACMA], 2007). Indeed, daily viewing time of children in Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Sweden, and Germany increased in 2010 compared to 2009 (Szybist, 2011). Considering the amount of television children watch, their exposure to television advertising is potentially quite high. Research in the United States suggests that young children ages 2–7 years see an average of 13,904 television ads per year, whereas children ages 8–12 years see 30,155 ads, and children ages 13–17 years see 28,656 ads (Gantz, Schwartz, Angelini, & Rideout, 2007). However, children's exposure to advertising may be quite different around the world as a result of public policies regulating children's advertising.

A full spectrum of regulatory policies of children's advertising can be found around the world. Some countries such as Sweden and Norway ban all television advertising directed to children under 12 years of age (Gunter, Oates, & Blades, 2005). Other countries restrict advertising to younger children only or during and adjacent to children's programs. Australia does not permit advertising during programs targeted to preschoolers (ACMA, 2005). In the Flemish area of Belgium, no advertising is permitted within 5 minutes before or after programs for children under the age of 12, and Denmark prohibits advertising breaks during programs throughout the broadcast day (Quinn, 2002). By contrast, other countries permit advertising to children, but the parameters for permitted children's advertising in various countries differ as well as the authority of the government in relation to self-regulatory agencies. For example, in the United States, governmental regulation permits no more than 12 minutes of advertising per hour on weekdays and 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends at the macro level (Kunkel & Wilcox, 2001). However, content guidelines are not federally mandated. The self-regulatory agency of the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) offers guidelines but relies on the "good-faith cooperation of advertisers" to follow their suggestions (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993, p. 151).

While many policies worldwide place limits on the amount of advertising permitted, concerns rise about the nature of the messages (whether few or many) that children encounter. Therefore, this literature review will examine advertising messages that appear in the children's media environment, focusing on television content and then exploring advertising in new media. The review will focus on quantitative content analysis research that takes a broad-based look at the advertising on children's television. Research that focuses on one specific category of television advertising (such as food advertising) or one key element of advertising depictions (such as character gender) is excluded from this current review. Moreover, this review will focus on advertising practices in the United States as an example of the interplay between self-regulatory guidelines, governmental regulation, and marketplace forces.

Television Marketplace and Policy Changes in the United States

Trends in advertising content on television are particularly interesting given media and policy changes in the United States over the years. Three notable changes occurred in children's media during the 1980s. First, a "licensing frenzy" (Bryant, 2007, p. 19) flourished as toy manufacturers, content creators, and broadcasters formed relationships that blurred the lines between content and marketing, creating branded play both on and off the screen. Second, cable began to penetrate more and more homes in the United States. Along with the rise of cable came the launch of two channels dedicated entirely to the child audience, Nickelodeon and the Disney channel, in the early 1980s. These channels provide a specialized outlet for advertisers to reach their target audience. Finally, videogames began to become popular in the home, and with portable games available by the end of the 1980s, the future of advertising and children's media would forever be changed.

Marketplace changes reflected policy changes in children's media regulation. Alexander and Hoerrner (2007) refer to the 1980s as the "deregulation decade" in which "the marketplace was supposed to separate quality programs from junk, and it was supposed to punish advertisers who unfairly target children with deceptive messages" (p. 36). The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) determined that if appropriate alternative programming existed for children in the community, then the broadcaster was no longer responsible to serve the needs of the child audience (Kunkel & Wilcox, 2001). The result of this deregulatory position from the FCC was reflected in the abundance of program-length commercials where the lines of marketing and content are blurred through toy, product, and content tie-ins as described above. This blurring had further implications for the FCC's second major type of policy known as the "separation principle" in which stations are mandated to maintain a clear distinction between program and commercial content. During this era of deregulation, the FCC relaxed its position on program-length commercials originally defined as programs associated with products, hence the prevalence of these types of programs in the 1980s. Faced with pressure from Congress to re-regulate the industry, the FCC redefined program-length commercials to resemble the definition of host-selling such that traditional advertising engaging the use of television characters to promote a product could not be placed adjacent to or within a children's program involving those characters.

Another programming policy change that had implications on advertising regulation was the adoption of the Children's Television Act (CTA) of 1990, which marked the end of the deregulatory era and the beginning of the "decade of reckoning" (Alexander & Hoerrner, 2007, p. 37). One requirement of the CTA of 1990 was the restriction of the amount of advertising permitted during children's television programming to no more than 12 minutes per hour on weekdays and 10.5 minutes per

hour on weekends. The regulations went into effect in fall of 1992, and a study of seven markets indicated a reduction of one 30-second advertisement on average between 1991 and 1992 (Snyder, 1995). However, by 1994, advertising had returned to pre-Act rates (Snyder, 1995) similar to rates documented in 1993 by Byrd-Bredbenner (2002). By 1999, the networks were back in compliance (Byrd-Bredbenner, 2002) and appeared to have remained in compliance in 2005 when all commercial broadcast stations reported an average of 7.95 minutes per hour of advertising content during children's programs (Gantz et al., 2007).

Moreover, as digital television came into existence, discussions opened concerning broadcasters' obligations to serve the child audience in the new digital age in respect to advertising and program content material both online and on digital television. In the fall of 2000, the Federal Communication Commission released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC-00-344) to seek comments on a variety of issues relating to digital television and the child audience (FCC, 2000). After reviewing the comments, the FCC released a Report and Order (FCC-04-221) with new proposed rulemaking (FCC, 2004). In respect to advertising and children, the Report and Order prohibited the appearance of websites in programming content that links to commercial material, redefined commercial material to include promotions for non-educational programming, and changed the definition of host-selling. On February 9, 2006, child advocate organizations such as Children Now and various representatives from the industry such as Viacom, The Walt Disney Company, and Fox Entertainment Group submitted a Joint Proposal (FCC-06-33A2) to the FCC which suggested the following changes in relation to advertising content: (1) the Website Rule; (2) the Host-Selling Rule; and (3) the Promotions Rule (FCC, 2006).

The Website Rule

The FCC proposed that any display of websites during programming directed to children ages 12 and under be permitted as long as they meet the following criteria: (1) the website provides substantial program-related or other educational material, (2) the website is not primarily intended for commercial purposes, (3) the website's home page and other pages clearly separate and label commercial from noncommercial content, and (4) the website is not used for e-commerce or other commercial purposes (FCC, 2004). Any websites that do not meet this four-part test would be counted toward the total minutes of advertising time permitted by the Children's Television Act of 1990 (no more than 12 minutes per hour weekdays and no more than 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends). The Joint Proposal suggested that display of websites only count toward the total time allotment if the display is during programming material or during a promotion, and that the promotion needs to be clearly separated from programming material (FCC, 2006).

The Host-Selling Rule

The FCC proposed a ban on the display of websites during children's programming or during commercial material that use characters from the program to sell products or services (FCC, 2004). The Joint Proposal suggested website addresses displayed during or adjacent to a program should not contain products that feature characters from that program or characters appearing in that program that are actively used to sell the products. However, this rule should not apply to third-party links from a company's web page, on-air third-party advertisements with websites, or pages that are primarily dedicated to multiple programs or multiple characters (FCC, 2006).

The Promotions Rule

According to the FCC, commercial matter is redefined to include promotions of non-educational or informative television programs or video programming services (FCC, 2004). The Joint Proposal suggested that promotions for children's or other age-appropriate programming appearing on the same channel or promotions for children's E/I programming on any channel should not be included as commercial matter (FCC, 2006). Until 1999, time for program promotions hovered between one to two minutes per hour (Barcus, 1975; Condry, Bence, & Schiebe, 1988; Kunkel & Gantz, 1992). However, in 1999, the time for program promotions jumped dramatically to almost five minutes per hour (Byrd-Bredbenner, 2002).

Decision

On September 26, 2006, the FCC approved a Second Order on Reconsideration and Second Report and Order based on revisions filed in response to the 2004 Order and the Joint Proposal. As such, the FCC adopted the changes suggested by the Joint Proposal in order to make a clear separation of commercial websites from programming content. In regard to the FCC's proposed host-selling rule, the FCC permits the sale of merchandise featuring a program-related character in parts of the website that are clearly and sufficiently separated from the program itself. Finally, the FCC accepted the suggestion made in the Joint Proposal and refrained from considering promotions as "commercial matter."

Historical Comparisons of Non-Program Content in Children's Television in the United States

Despite concerns voiced about the effects of advertising on children and youth, few *comprehensive* content analyses that cover all forms of non-program content during

children's programs have been conducted. In the early 1970s, F. Earle Barcus documented the state of advertising and non-program content during children's television programming. His work set a precedent for examination of non-program content and has been replicated and applied to television advertising from the 1950s (Alexander, Benjamin, Hoerrner, & Roe, 1999), 1980s (Condry et al., 1988), 1990s (Byrd-Bredbenner, 2002; Kunkel & Gantz, 1992), and in the new millennium (Gantz et al., 2007).

Given this similarity in coding schemes, comparisons can be made across time with a few exceptions. First, to date, no published studies have been discovered for television advertising on children's programs in the 1960s. Therefore, for this literature review, the 1960s will be omitted from analysis. Second, Gantz and his colleagues (2007) employed a different strategy for sampling of programs. They submit that since children often watch programming that is intended for a broader audience, it is necessary to examine the advertising content in programs children actually view rather than limiting the analyses to just programs produced for children. All of the other studies included children's programming only. Therefore, comparisons are limited with this most recent study (Gantz et al., 2007). Third, Kunkel and Gantz (1992) made distinctions between cable and broadcast networks in their analyses. When appropriate, comparisons will be made with broadcast networks only across time, but the results regarding cable in 1990 will be provided.

Amount of Non-Program Content in the United States

Barcus (1979) identified four different kinds of non-program content including: (1) commercial product announcements, (2) program promotional announcements, (3) noncommercial announcements, and (4) other/station identification. The commercial product announcements were advertisements for products and included such codes as the name of the manufacturer, the product advertised, product claims, and marketing tactics. The program promotions included announcements for upcoming television programs. The noncommercial announcements consisted of public service announcements, and the last category captured other announcements including station identification messages. In the 1980s, Condry and his colleagues (1988) separated the noncommercial announcements into two categories: (1) public services announcements (PSAs) and (2) educational drop-ins (drop-ins). Both of these categories involved educational messages about health, safety, nutrition, and other information. However, a PSA was created by a nonprofit organization whereas a drop-in was produced or co-produced by a network. Furthermore, Condry and his colleagues combined program promotions with station identifications under the category of promos. Byrd-Bredbenner (2002) followed the same categorization as Condry and his colleagues (1988), whereas Kunkel and Gantz (1992) separated the station identifications from other types of messages. For comparison with Barcus, the PSAs and drop-ins were combined as well as station identification and the "other" category.

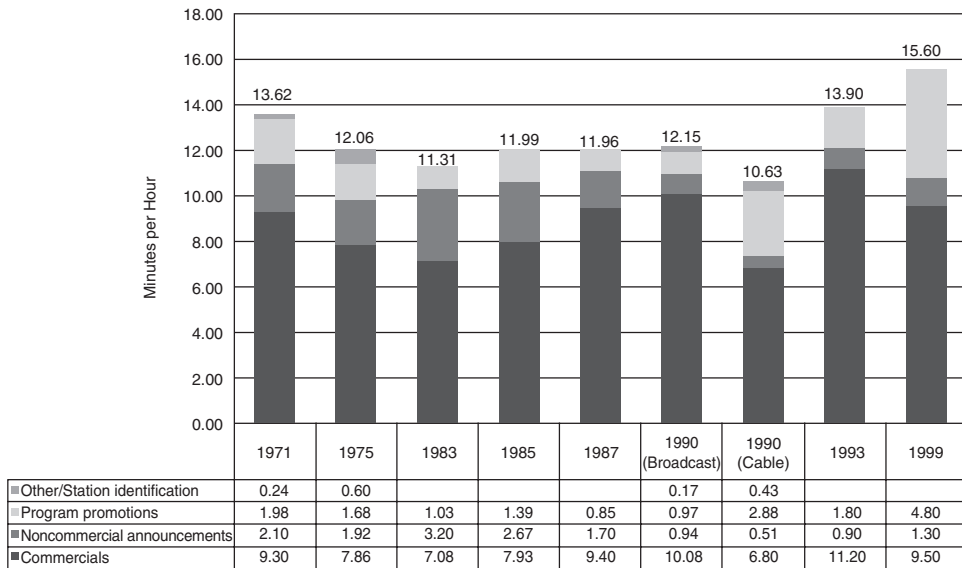


Figure 2.1 Non-program content type by year.

Changes can be seen across the years in both advertising and noncommercial announcements (see Figure 2.1). For a decade between 1975 and 1985, commercial advertising remained at its lowest (between 7 and 8 minutes) on broadcast networks. Beginning in 1985, the amount of advertising content rose, reaching a peak in 1993. By the end of the almost 30-year span, the amount of advertising returned to near original rates at just under 10 minutes per hour.

While advertising content seemed to rise, less time was spent on noncommercial messages. The amount of time dedicated to noncommercial content reached a peak in 1983 at 3.20 minutes per hour. After 1983, noncommercial content decreased to reach its all time low in 1993. In 1999, an increase was noted. Indeed, between 1983 and 1993, as the amount of time for commercial messages continued to rise, the amount of time dedicated to noncommercial content waned. As a result, there became a growing emphasis on advertising rather than on the noncommercial content such as educational drop-ins and public service announcements.

Moreover, the average length of a commercial on the networks has changed dramatically since 1950, but held relatively stable from the 1970s to the 1980s. Standardization of programming and advertising length was not a common practice in the 1950s. As a result, the length of advertisements in the 1950s ranged from as short as 11 seconds to as long as 3½ minutes; however, the average length of advertisements in the 1950s was a little over 1 minute (Alexander et al., 1999). Over time, advertisements begin to decrease in length. Between 1971 and 1975, the average commercial length declined from .56 minutes to .50 minutes (Barcus, 1979), the equivalent of the new 30-second spot.

Indeed, in the 1970s, the vast majority of the advertisements (92%) were 30-second spots (Atkin & Heald, 1977). The average commercial length continued to shrink in the 1980s. The average commercial length began at 30.90 seconds in 1983 and gradually decreased to 29.63 in 1984 and to 29.31 seconds in 1987 (Condry et al., 1988). Kunkel (2001) suggests that advertising spots may even be as short as 15 seconds in the 1990s, although no studies conducted in the 1990s or the 2000s report the average commercial length.

Products Advertised in the United States

While seasonal differences were observed in the frequency of toy commercials (Barcus, 1980; Condry et al., 1988), research in the 1970s indicated that four product categories – toys, cereals, candies, and fast food restaurants – made up the lion’s share of product types advertised to children, accounting for 80% of all ads (Barcus, 1980). This was a dramatic change from advertising in the 1950s where only 44% of commercials advertised products in these categories (Alexander et al., 1999) (see Figure 2.2). Products such as appliances, dog food, and food staples such as milk

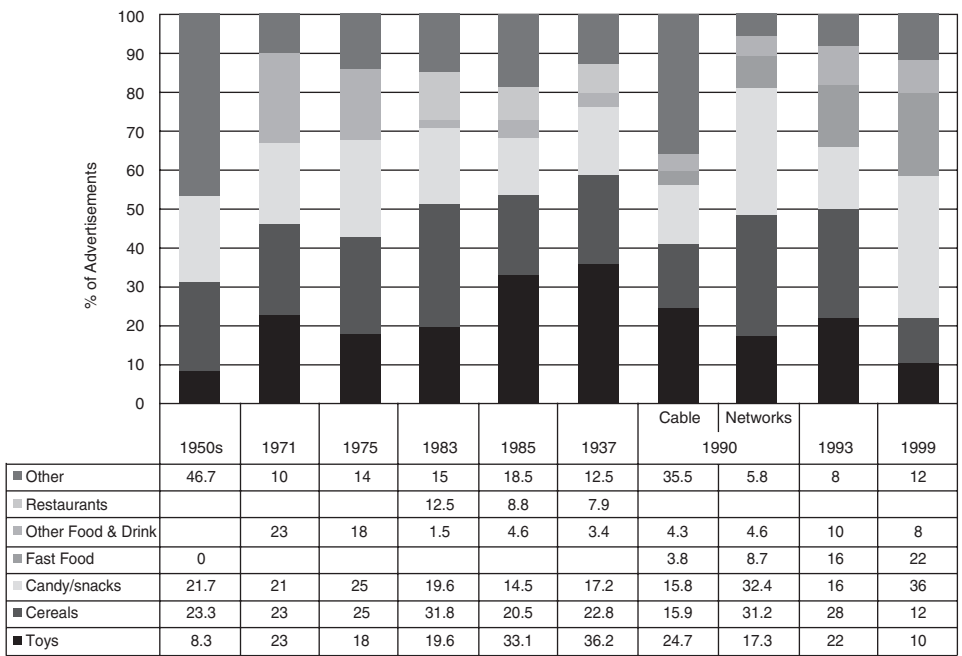


Figure 2.2 Type of products advertised by year.

and peanut butter were more common at that time, which may be a reflection of the novelty of television such that even adults would watch children's programs (Alexander et al., 1999). Studies conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s indicate that the four product categories from the 1970s still dominated the field, but fluctuation in the distribution of these categories changed over time. By 1975, cereals (25%) and sweets (25%) accounted for half of the products advertised (Barcus, 1979). However, in the 1980s, advertisements for candies (17.2%) and cereals (22.8%) declined while toy commercials (36.2%) increased dramatically (Condry et al., 1988).

Ads for "other" products – including such things as hygiene, clothing, leisure activities, recreation parks, recorded music, and entertainment – have also experienced fluctuation. Ads for "other" products grew in the 1980s, reaching a peak in 1985 at 18.5% of all advertisements (see Figure 2.2). However, these fluctuations were noted on broadcast networks only. In 1990, a comparison could be made between types of products advertised during children's programs on cable networks and on broadcast networks. Interestingly, advertisements for "other" products accounted for a little over a third of all advertisements on cable networks. Schor (2004) suggests that cable companies such as Nickelodeon place such advertisements during children's programs to influence what has been called the "influence market." McNeal (1992), a leading scholar in children's consumer behavior, posits that children are three markets in one – they spend their own money (current market), they influence their family's purchases (influence market), and, through their own consumer experiences as children, they can become brand loyal into adulthood (future market). As part of the influence market, children in the United States have had more of a voice in parental purchases to the extent that many parents now believe that they know less about products than their children (Schor, 2004). Moreover, by 1983, over 70% of children's television programming hours came from cable (Pecora, 1998). Therefore, it would be expected that children would be watching cable more than network children's programming and, thus, would be influenced by the prevalence of "other" adult-oriented advertisements.

The 1990s marked an era of change in other ways. First, by the end of the 1990s, the distribution of toy advertisements returned to those found in the 1950s, with a decrease in commercials for toys to 10% by 1999 (Byrd-Bredbenner, 2002). Second, the percentage of advertisements for candy and snacks reached an all time high at 36% of all commercials (Byrd-Bredbenner, 2002). Finally, a noteworthy increase was observed in fast food advertising in the 1990s. Starting at 8.7% of advertising in 1990 (Kunkel & Gantz, 1992), fast food marketing increased to 22% of all advertising by the end of the decade (Byrd-Bredbenner, 2002). This rise in advertising of sweet, non-nutritious food has become of increased concern as the rate of childhood obesity has risen over the past 30 years. Since 1980, childhood obesity has tripled among school-age children and adolescents (Ogden, Carroll, Curtin, Lamb, & Flegal, 2010). Therefore, a number of recent studies have begun to examine the nature of advertising of food to children.

Selling Techniques and Appeals in the United States

Little has changed in the types of appeals used to advertise to children. In the 1950s, the appeal to “fun” was found in two-thirds of all ads directed toward children, followed by an appeal to “taste” (Alexander et al., 1999). Results from the 1970s indicate that appeals were closely tied to specific categories of products. For example, in food products, the most frequently used appeal was “taste” whereas “action/speed/power” and “appearance of the product” were most frequently used in commercials for toys (Barcus, 1975). Research in the 1990s found appeals being used in a similar way. “Taste/flavor/smell” was most commonly used in cereal and breakfast food ads (46.6%) and “product performance” was most commonly used in toy commercials (Kunkel & Gantz, 1992). However, it should be noted that in the advertisements for fast food restaurants, “fun/happiness” was the most common appeal used (71.9%) in the 1990s, suggesting that “good times may indeed be more important than great taste in selling hamburgers” (Kunkel & Gantz, 1992, p. 146).

Various selling techniques have been used to attract the child audience. The use of premiums and prizes declined dramatically in the 1950s. Only 11 commercials had premiums or prizes, yet nearly all of these commercials (10 or 90.7%) appeared in the first half of the decade (Alexander et al., 1999). Premiums continue to be a selling technique employed in the 1970s and 1990s, and, similarly to the use of appeals, premiums were more likely to be used for specific product categories. Premiums were more likely to be used in commercials for cereals (47%) in the 1970s (Barcus, 1975), and fast food restaurants (36.2%) in the 1990s. Therefore, the use of premiums is more likely to be associated with food items and restaurants than with other product categories. Recently, this practice has been called into question. In December 2010, the Center for Science in the Public Interest filed a lawsuit against McDonald’s Corporation for use of toys as a marketing tool for its product. In 2010, McDonald’s spent nearly 13% of its domestic (US) advertising dollars on marketing its meal for children known as the Happy Meal, which includes a toy with every meal (Morrison, 2011). Two counties in California have passed legislation prohibiting the inclusion of toys in kids’ meals that do not meet nutritional requirements (Morrison, 2011). Other areas are now considering such a ban while some fast food restaurants are responding to these actions. In 2011, Jack in the Box removed toys from its kids’ meals (Morrison, 2011).

Another practice that seems to have grown since the 1950s has been the use of disclaimers. Disclaimers provide additional information about a product in order to avoid misleading the consumer. However, most disclaimers use adult-oriented language such as “some assembly is required” or “part of a balanced breakfast.” Children who are 8 years old and younger often do not understand the disclaimer and show greater comprehension of the intent of the disclaimer when simpler language is used such as “you must put this together” (Liebert, Sprafkin, Liebert, & Rubinstein, 1977; Palmer & McDowell, 1981; Stutts & Hunnicutt, 1987). In the 1950s, only five

commercials (8.3% of ads directed toward children) contained disclaimers (Alexander et al., 1999). However, disclaimers became much more prevalent in the 1970s and 1990s. Disclaimers could be presented either in a visual depiction, strictly audio voiceover, or both. In the 1970s, audio disclaimers were most common (22%), followed by visual disclaimers (11%) (Barcus, 1975). Only 8% used both audio and visual cues simultaneously to reinforce the message (Barcus, 1975). Similarly, although more disclaimers were present in the 1990s, audio disclaimers (49.6%) continued to be used more commonly than video (32.1%) or a combination of audio and video disclaimers (18.3%) (Kunkel & Gantz, 1992).

From Old to New Media: Digital Natives in their Digital World

Born into the world as “digital natives,” today’s youth spend their childhood surrounded by digital technologies and are “‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). As such, they have different life experiences than their parents, the “digital immigrants” (Prensky, 2001, p. 2). Indeed, for today’s youth, use of mobile and online media has become a standard activity. A recent study of 8- to 18-year-olds found that 20% of their media consumption (2:07) happens on mobile devices such as cell phones, iPods, or handheld videogame players (Rideout et al., 2010). Furthermore, home Internet access has grown to nearly 84% among young people, and 59% of today’s youth have high-speed Internet access (Rideout et al., 2010). Given the changes in children’s screen use and the continued growth of new technologies, research has begun to examine the role of advertising in these new digital environments for children.

Digital environments provide opportunities for engagement that have never been experienced before with traditional media forms. Digital television allows for the convergence of Internet and broadcasting in which viewers may click on icons on the screen to get to websites (FCC, 2000). While this has the potential to be an incredible educational tool, there is also the hazard that children are one click away from direct sales and interactive advertising. Children can play in “branded environments” (Montgomery, 2001, p. 641) in which content and advertising are blended together until they become seamlessly integrated. Therefore, research has begun to better understand the nature of these sites, the impact of advergames and online advertising on the lives of children, and the connections between television advertising and online marketing.

The separation of content and advertising can be particularly difficult for young children. Rossiter and Robertson (1974) submit that there are a number of cognitive distinctions that children must acquire in order to understand the purpose of advertising. Among those, children must recognize and distinguish between the informational function of advertising and its persuasive intent. Robertson and Rossiter (1974)

suggest that recognition of persuasive intent requires higher cognitive processing skills. Indeed, Blosser and Roberts (1985) submit that the informational dimension of advertising is recognized first and even some preschoolers are able to indicate comprehension of this dimension (Macklin, 1987). Given this development of understanding, young children in particular may perceive advertising as informative rather than persuasive.

Under the guise of knowledge provider, advertising offers a great deal of information about various products and services. Recently, children have been directed to websites from commercials to learn more about what they see on television. In a content analysis of non-program content during children's Saturday morning television, I found that almost half (44.6%) of the commercials provided website addresses for the products or services advertised (Jennings, 2006). A third of the commercials for fast food restaurants had website addresses and seven of ten commercials (70.8%) for toys contained website links. Advertisers can then lead children to these digital environments by informing them of where to go.

Advertising success online is measured in part by the length of time individuals spend on the website (Montgomery, 2001). In order to keep children at these sites, advertiser-sponsored videogames known as "advergaming" (Moore, 2006) have been developed. Gaming is an especially good way to keep children on a particular website since 19% of children's daily computer time is spent playing computer games (Rideout et al., 2010). Moreover, online gaming is the most frequently reported online activity for preschoolers and children in kindergarten through the fifth grade (DeBell & Chapman, 2006).

Very few studies have been published concerning advergaming and online advertising to children. Of the content analyses that have been published, all of them have focused on Internet food marketing (see Table 2.1). Elizabeth Moore provided the first in-depth examination of advergaming in her work with the Kaiser Family Foundation (Moore, 2006), in which she described the state of online food marketing

Table 2.1 Content analyses of websites concerning food marketing

Citation	Sample	Time of data collection
Moore (2006)	77 major food advertisers' websites	Summer and Fall of 2005
Alvy & Calvert (2008)	10 popular children's websites	October 2005–March 2006
Kelly et al. (2008)	315 websites: 119 food product sites and 196 popular children's websites	February 2007
Lingas et al. (2009)	30 top-ranked children's websites in the United States in 2006	July 11, 2007–August 28, 2007
Henry & Story (2009)	130 food and beverage "superbrands" websites	October–November 2005
Lee et al. (2009)	Top-selling food companies and family restaurants	July–September 2006

in detail. Her work has stimulated further research in the area. Of the studies concerning online food marketing, different samples of websites have been drawn resulting in different types of findings. Therefore, the results will be discussed based on the nature of the sample, either websites that sell food products or popular children's websites.

Popular Children's Websites

Food is commonly mentioned on websites that children frequent often. Kelly and her colleagues (2008) found food references on 43.9% of popular children's websites accounting for 932 food references. The amount of food references on popular children's websites varies, however, by site. Alvy and Calvert (2008) found tremendous variability in the presence of food on children's websites, ranging from none (on 3 of the 10 websites studied) to up to 241 instances of food marketing. However, one website takes the lion's share (78%) of food marketing references because it is a site for food/snacks (candystand.com). Of the websites that were not food-selling sites, 67 references were made to food, with half of those present on one website (Neopets.com) (Alvy & Calvert, 2008). In another study of 28 popular children's websites, 93 unique food products were referenced within one link from the home page of these sites (Lingas, Dorfman, & Bukofzer, 2009). Clearly, online food marketing is readily accessible from popular children's websites.

Further analyses of these foods advertised on children's websites indicate that often these foods are non-nutritional. Of the 93 unique products advertised in 28 children's websites, nutritional information was available for 77 specific products mentioned. Of those, only two products (Nestlé Juicy Juice Harvest Surprise and Quaker Oats Oatmeal) met the Institute of Medicine's tier 1 criteria for nutritional foods recommended for children (Lingas et al., 2009). The majority of the products (52%) fell into tier 3 as foods that are not recommended for any child at any time during their school day (Lingas et al., 2009). Similarly, Kelly and her colleagues (2008) found significantly more food references for unhealthy foods (60.8%) compared to healthy foods (39.2%). Moreover, a higher proportion of unhealthy foods appeared on websites targeted to adolescents (76.0%) than the general population (60.6%) or young children (58.6%) (Kelly, Bochynska, Kornman, & Chapman, 2008). Combined, the ease of access to food marketing and the abundance of unhealthy food advertised raise concerns, particularly related to the rise of childhood obesity worldwide.

Food Marketing Websites

Various strategies are used to attract children to food-selling websites. Moore (2006) identified six major types of online activities to attract and keep children, including: (1) advergames, (2) brand exposure beyond games, including television

commercials, (3) extension of online activities offline, (4) customization of online experience, (5) marketing partnerships and brand alliances, and (6) educational activities. These activities encompass a wide variety of techniques that are particularly appealing to children and useful for advertisers to establish brand identity.

One of the most prevalent and publicized strategies is the use of advergames, which fuse online gaming with advertising by embedding brands and products in the game play. While this technique has been well publicized, not all websites emphasize or use games. Advergames are more likely to appear on websites with a designated children's area (84%) than on websites without children's areas (19%) (Henry & Story, 2009). Similarly, Moore (2006) indicated that 73% of sites posted one or more games containing food brands, and the majority of games on top food marketers' websites (87.6%) contain some type of brand identifier (Lee, Choi, Quilliam, & Cole, 2009).

Various game features contribute to the game engagement. First, over a third (39%) of games allow the user to personalize their experience in the game by selecting players and opponents, or designing the game space (Moore, 2006). Second, a number of features are used during game play to sustain a child's interest in the game. These techniques include multiple levels of play (45%), game points as awards (69%), and time limits for game play to encourage repeated play (40%) (Moore, 2006). A third way to extend play time and game engagement is to specifically ask a player to "play again?" at the end of the game. This technique was present in 71% of the advergames on food marketing websites (Moore, 2006). Finally, to entice competition and motivate players, gamers are invited to post their high scores to a leader board (39%) (Moore, 2006).

Brand identity is a key element to advergames. This is accomplished in a variety of ways. First, integration of brand identifiers as active game components contributes to brand identity. Various items can be used as game components such as brand logos (43%), brand spokescharacters (41.6%), branded food items (39.6%), and product packages (37.2%) (Lee et al., 2009). Second, brand identifiers can also appear as tools or equipment within the game. For example, 46.7% of advergames used brands as primary objects that children were required to obtain in order to win the game (Lee et al., 2009). Another way is to incorporate food items into game play. Over half (58%) of advergames use food items as primary game pieces (Moore, 2006). Third, brand identifiers may be used to decorate the game frame. Brand logos appear in 89.3% of advergame frames, followed by brand spokescharacters (26%), product packages (16.9%), and branded food items (8.0%) (Lee et al., 2009). Finally, most games have multiple brand identifiers (Lee et al., 2009; Moore, 2006). Eighty percent of advergames contain two or more brand identifiers (Moore, 2006).

Beyond advergaming, other techniques expose children to food brands. First, television commercials appear on websites. While Kelly and her colleagues (2008) found commercials on 20.2% of food product websites, Moore (2006) discovered that over half (53%) of websites for food have commercials available for viewing. Second, the presence of brand spokescharacters can further enhance brand exposure. Over half (55%) of websites with designated children's areas used brand spokescharacters as a

marketing technique. Similarly, Kelly and her colleagues (2008) found that websites targeting young children were far more likely to have promotional spokescharacters (57.9%) than those targeting adolescents (21.4%) or the general population (8.1%).

Websites offer opportunities to interact with the product offline as well. First, downloadable items such as screen wallpaper, screensavers, desktop items, and coloring pages are readily available. Kelly and her colleagues (2008) found this practice significantly more often on websites targeting young children (52.6%) rather than the general population (32.5%) and adolescents (28.6%). Indeed, according to Moore (2006), 76% of food websites targeted to children offer a downloadable item, and half (52%) offer two or more items. Second, through consumption of products offline, consumers can earn points or codes that can be accumulated for rewards. Thirty-nine percent of sites offered these programs in child-directed food marketing websites, and among those sites that do offer these programs, 97% offer points that consumers obtain from food product packages (Moore, 2006). A third way in which consumers can interact with products offline is through recipes that involve the advertised food. Almost a quarter (23%) of food marketing websites provided recipes that featured the brand as an ingredient and, of those, 80% were child-friendly recipes that can be prepared without adult assistance (Moore, 2006).

Customization of websites and development of website communities are other techniques to maintain interest in and repeated visits to websites. Website memberships were available on 38.7% of websites studied by Kelly and her colleagues (2008). However, nearly 70% of websites with a designated children's area allowed the user to register or create an account on a brand home page (Henry & Story, 2009). Moreover, Henry and Story (2009) found that designated kid's clubs were available for children to join on 37% of websites with designated children's areas. Website membership permits special privileges to its members which can lead to the customization of the Internet experience. For example, Moore (2006) found that on gushers.com, members have the opportunity to create and decorate their own virtual room, which can be updated and redecorated on return visits.

Marketing partnerships through sponsorships, promotions, or media tie-ins were also found on several food marketing websites. Most of the websites (79%) with designated children's areas had promotional tie-ins such as celebrities or athlete endorsers or sporting events (Henry & Story, 2009). Sports celebrities were most often found on websites targeting adolescents (28.6%) compared to those targeting children or the general population (Kelly et al., 2008). Moreover, almost half (47%) of websites incorporated some form of television or movie tie-in (Moore, 2006). For example, *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* was part of marketing techniques on seven different websites (Moore, 2006). Almost a third (31%) of the sites had a movie tie-in, a quarter of the sites (25%) had a tie-in to one or more television shows (32 different shows overall), and 9% of the sites had both a movie and television show tie-in (Moore, 2006).

Educational content is also available on food marketing websites. This comes in the form of nutritional information and in what Kelly and her colleagues (2008)

describe as “advercation” (p. 1183), such that the food product or the brand is integrated into an educational lesson. Two-thirds (66.4%) of the food product websites studied by Kelly and her colleagues (2008) contained basic nutritional information and information about allergens. However, Moore (2006) found that basic nutritional information was more likely to be found on websites for the general population (88%) than on websites for children and teens (38%). Interestingly, advercation (79.0%) was more prevalent than nutritional information (66.4%) (Kelly et al., 2008). However, Moore (2006) noted far fewer instances of advercation with only a third of websites using this technique.

Various features for protection of children were also noted on many of the food marketing websites. Nearly all of the sites (97%) in Moore’s 2006 study contained information explicitly labeled for parents. This information included a disclosure on what information is collected about children visiting the website, management of “cookies,” legal information, and Internet safety tips (Moore, 2006). Indeed, Kelly and her colleagues (2008) found that 87.4% of websites had legal information, and 68.9% of websites had statements about “cookies.” “Ad break” warnings were present on some websites. Moore (2006) found that only 18% of websites had “ad break” or “ad alert” warning to designate and identify advertising content. Henry and Story (2009) found this to be more frequently used on websites with a designated children’s area (32%) than on websites without a designated children’s area (1%). Fortunately, when “ad breaks” were provided, they often appeared on multiple locations throughout the site (Moore, 2006).

Discussion and Conclusion

Advertising continues to be a central component of children’s media, whether in traditional forms of television or on newer technologies such as the Internet. Interestingly, the blurring of the line between advertising content and programming content continues to be a struggle throughout the history of children’s media. Governmental policies speak to a need for a separation of advertising and content, but corporate strategies push them together.

Convergence seems to be a binding element in the contemporary advertising environment. First, children are using multiple media devices to reach different types of media content. For the first time since 1999, children’s time spent with traditional television decreased, to be replaced with new ways of reaching TV content on their mobile devices (Rideout et al., 2010). Moreover, young people use the computer on average about an hour per day (1:03) to listen to music, watch TV, and play DVDs (Rideout et al., 2010). The lines of access to content have become blurred. Second, children are eating, wearing, and playing with media tie-in and branded products. The proliferation of media tie-ins has become so commonplace that it has become a part of everyday living for children. Their on- and offline play through branded

environments has become a natural state. This convergence of media and marketing manifests itself in their desires for products. In a study of children's Christmas wishes, I found that almost three-fourths (73.7%) of all toy wishes were media-related as either requests for videogames or videogame systems (48.3%) or as media-branded toys (25.4%) such as Bratz dolls or Star Wars Legos (Jennings, 2009). Interestingly, as children got older, their requests for toys decreased while their requests for media products increased (Jennings, 2009). Media-related toys may provide a scaffolding for the transition to media devices.

The omnipresence of media and marketing in the United States may be having a greater influence on children and consumerism than ever imagined due to the continued convergence of the two. According to Moore (2004), "advertising, entertainment, and the brand experience reinforce and flow into one another" (p. 164). Preston and White (2004) suggest, "In this process [of branding], kids are transformed not simply into consumers but into marketing tools as well. The branded child becomes a living billboard for the desirability of products and the lifestyles that are linked to them . . . carrying it into different cultural spaces and relationships" (p. 126). With this blending of advertising, branding, entertainment, and education, this new media environment is "like water to a fish . . . [and] . . . remains hidden" (McLuhan & Nevitt, 1973, p. 1). It saturates the US lifestyle to such an extent that the individual is often unaware of its influence.

Future research needs to explore more closely the child's branded environment. First, a detailed look at websites other than food marketing sites is necessary. Children's play has incorporated many digital aspects. They engage in online games, indeed, but not just on food marketing sites. Therefore, a closer look at other sites, particularly toy sites, is necessary. Second, cultural expectations of advertising saturation need to be explored. Media tie-ins and branded logos can be seen in almost every corner of a child's life from the toys they play with to the books they read. Indeed, recognition of letters in advertising and company logos has begun to be referred to as "environmental print" and as a way to teach early literacy skills to young children (Horner, 2005). Third, more updated information about children's advertising on television is essential. The literature on children's advertising seems to disappear at the beginning of the new millennium. Perhaps this, too, is a reflection of the cultural acceptance of advertising and marketing practices.

The presence of advertiser-supported media coupled with media-licensed or character merchandise has become normalized. The distinction between where the advertisement ends and the content begins no longer exists, particularly as children's play both on- and offline becomes a branded environment. Since children are early adopters of new technologies and new media, they are inducted into a media culture and hence a branded culture early in life. Revisiting public policy and cultural expectations concerning the "clear separation" principle becomes even more important in the digital world. The water in which children now tread is murky, and further examination of the water is needed.

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Women's Portraits Present in Print Fashion Advertisements

A Content Analysis of Spanish Fashion Magazines from 2002 to 2009

Paloma Diaz Soloaga and Carlos Muñiz

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the findings of a content analysis of 568 luxury brand (e.g., Gucci, Dior, Loewe, Chanel) print advertisements published between 2002–2005 and 2007–2009 in high-circulation Spanish women's magazines – *Vogue*, *Telva*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Woman*. We address the following two research questions: (1) Which female stereotypes are used to portray women in the luxury fashion brands' print advertisements? (2) Do certain factors explain the use of each female stereotype in advertising? Our findings reveal the most frequently portrayed role for female models in these ads is the "hedonist and sensual," which shows women above all as objects of pleasure who also narcissistically contemplate their own beauty. This advertising stereotype reinforces and crystallizes the social stereotype of the woman who is *valuable* as long as she is physically attractive.

If, on the other hand, we sum up the "female" historical duty of having to be beautiful, it will also be valid in a broad, abstract sense, which naturally rejects the reduction of beauty, for example, to a pretty face. We would not be violating this concept if we say that a hunchbacked old woman can be "beautiful," because in its broad sense the concept means harmony of the total being in itself, that brings to the work of art, the most harmonious human work in itself, its relationship, not always properly inter-

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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preted, with “beauty,” and also means the unity of the interior and the exterior with its symbolism, frequently full of circumlocutions, meaning the capacity to always rest upon itself with self-satisfaction.

(Georg Simmel (1983, p. 90))

In the early 1970s, the critic John Berger claimed that “publicity persuades us of such a transformation by showing us people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour” (1972, pp. 131–132). But he also pointed out that it is important not to confuse advertising with the pleasure or benefits to be enjoyed from the real things it publicizes: clothes, accessories, cars, cosmetics, baths, food, and so on. But for Berger, publicity is not about objects but about social relations. Its promise is not of pleasure but of happiness: happiness as judged from the outside by others.

This chapter aims to study the female image created by advertisements published in women’s fashion magazines in Spain. The resources and strategies of fashion brands change as time goes by, just as in other market sectors. Fashion advertisements mostly use human models in easily recognizable situations or behaviors, thus resorting to stereotypes in part because (1) we look at advertisements for a very short length of time – fractions of a second – and (2) they target a wide-ranging, diverse audience in terms of age, social class, and culture. Therefore, stereotypes are effective in achieving the objective of the advertisement being understood as quickly as possible, by the largest possible audience. Very often these advertisements target an even larger audience since campaigns are usually directed at international markets where cultural differences increase the need to ensure that the advertisements are understood as easily as possible. One example is a campaign run by the French brand Louis Vuitton for fall/winter 2010. The advertising images inspired by the North American TV series *Mad Men*, set in the United States of the 1950s, made a big impact on others’ brand collections for the same fall/winter season. In 2008 Vuitton, in collaboration with The Climate Project, former US Vice President Al Gore’s nonprofit organization, did a series of ads with celebrities like Catherine Deneuve, Steffi Graf, and Sofia Coppola, among others, who share common interests with the brand. Both are examples of representations of female images present in fashion brands’ graphic ads that can be found in women’s magazines everywhere, in multiple countries. Given the fact that many high-fashion, luxury brands like Vuitton are marketed on an international scale, it is important to study the images contained in their advertisements.

Literature Review: Studying the Portrayal of Women in Advertising

Nearly 40 years have gone by since Erving Goffman published his famous study *Gender Advertisements* in 1976. His analysis of female images depicted in

advertisements sought to demonstrate that women are presented by advertising as a reflection of the values existing in society and culture at a specific time. Goffman's study, which adapted the classic frames of editorial news content analysis to advertisement content analysis, has become an academic model for many scholars studying the portrayal of the female body in the media, as well as for those studying the portrayal of any figure in advertising. In his work, Goffman identified six frames that stem from a perspective of male superiority over women: Relative Size, Feminine Touch, Function Ranking, The Family, The Ritualization of Subordination, and Licensed Withdrawal. These frames allowed him to demonstrate that the image of women is strongly stereotyped by the media and, specifically, by advertising.

Mee-Eun Kang (1997) replicated Goffman's study with advertisements collected between 1979 and 1991, obtaining similar findings. Other works, such as that of Penny Belknap and Wilbert Leonard II (1991), formulated with a methodology that was very similar to Kang's and proposed as a conceptual review of Goffman's study, questioned the validity of the six categories. In their study, Belknap and Leonard claimed that Goffman's methodology was controversial, especially his sampling technique: "Instead of randomly selecting advertisements, he drew a purposive sample. That is, he chose advertisements from newspapers and magazines that were judged to be representative of some none-too-easily understood nor recognized themes reflecting gender differences [...] he deliberately selected advertisements that mirrored gender differences, sometimes ones that captured the nuances of social relationships" (1991, p. 106). In their own study they collected 1,000 advertisements from *Good Housekeeping*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Time*, *MS*, *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, and *Rolling Stone* and found that the frames of Feminine Touch and Ritualization of Subordination were discovered fairly often; Licensed Withdrawal was infrequent; and Relative Size, Function Ranking, and The Family were very rare. From this, they began a debate on whether advertising is a passive reflection of society or an active influence on society.

More recently, Katharina Lindner's work (2004) used Goffman's six concepts as a starting point and enriched them with contributions from other authors, such as Kang (1997) and Jean Umiker-Sebeok (1996). Interestingly, she found that female images in general interest and fashion magazines were still strongly stereotyped, appearing in settings such as kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, or unreal and decontextualized surroundings. Meanwhile, the female image had become increasingly objectified, being used as an object of beauty or pleasure. Despite the interest aroused by Goffman's research, his methodology does not actually meet the standards demanded nowadays for quantitative or qualitative analyses, since the categories or frames are established *a priori* by the author on the basis of his subjective opinion.

While some authors continue to employ and/or test Goffman's frames, other scholars take different approaches. For example, prior to Goffman, Alice Courtney and Sarah Wernick Lockeretz (1971) analyzed 729 advertisements published in 1970 in several general US magazines in order to discover whether the portrayal of women was particularly stereotyped and narrowly defined. In their conclusions they highlighted the fact that, despite the feminist demands of that era, very few advertise-

ments could be considered offensive for women. Years later, Courtney and Thomas Whipple (1983) co-authored a book on sex stereotyping in advertising that illustrated the way in which advertisements divide women by contextualizing them in professional or homemaking settings, while drawing our attention to the alarming objectification (dehumanization) of women in advertising. In this same manner, although in a popular way, Jean Kilbourne (1999) documented how advertising objectifies women's bodies in order to sell. Her research, documented in her four influential *Killing Us Softly* documentaries (1979, 1987, 2000, 2010), has been an important contributor to the dialogue.

Gary L. Sullivan and P. J. O'Connor (1988) also conducted analysis of the portrayal of women in advertising compared to their professional performance in real life between 1958 and 1983. This content analysis allowed the authors to affirm that some of the stereotypes identified by studies conducted in the 1970s, such as "a woman's place is in the home" or "women do not do important things or make important decisions," or "women are fundamentally objects of pleasure for men," had changed.

Finally, while the above studies are traditional quantitative content analyses, a growing body of research has sought to analyze the topic from a more qualitative, cultural studies perspective, including the work of Diane Barthel (1988), Carolyn Kitch (2001), Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross (2006), Anthony J. Cortese (2008), and Juliann Sivulka (2009).

The Role of the Media in the Crystallization of Stereotypes

It is well known that stereotypes provide a shortcut for knowledge and offer a way of being easily understood by the majority of the members of society, even though, as Walter Lippmann explains (1997), they can also lead to errors in the interpretation of reality. For Lippman stereotypes are also the guarantee of self-respect of any individual since they protect our identity and understanding of the world surrounding us against the assaults of others. Contrary to Lippmann's sharp but neutral appreciations, Lawrence Blum (2004) gives a very negative description of stereotypes, pointing out that they are largely, though not entirely, false and misleading judges of the groups that render them. Similarly, stereotypes are also immune to counterevidence. For Blum, from a moral perspective, stereotypes are used only with regard to false or misleading generalizations since the falseness is both part of and a necessary condition for them. "It is false, or at least misleading, to say that Jews are cheap, Blacks lazy, Asians good at math, women emotional, and so on" (Blum, 2004, p. 256).

Focusing on the mechanisms through which stereotypes may be acquired, Stangor and Schaller (1996) emphasized that these involve attention, recall, and integration of information. For these authors, it is a fact that stereotypes are learned and can be

changed, first of all through the information that individuals acquire through direct contact with members of other social groups. These authors base their assertion mainly on the individual mental process of creating stereotypes, and pay only scant attention to the influence by which stereotypes may also be learned and changed through indirect sources such as leaders, parents, peers, and the mass media.

Ellen Seiter (1986) considers that media influence is more than evident and demonstrates that television, radio, magazines, the Internet, and so on are central to understanding the normalizing process of stereotyping by individuals. Seiter (1986) and Patricia Devine (1989) also claim that stereotypes are activated subconsciously and applied in a controlled and free manner based on one's decision to use the stereotypic information in a specific judgment. For this reason, many other scholars who have analyzed media content focus mainly on race and gender to find images and representations that might contribute to the reinforcement of social stereotypes (Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Gorham, 2006, 2010; Kilbourne, 1990; Valls-Fernández & Martínez-Vicente, 2007). To this end we may cite William Kilbourne, who did an experimental study in 1990 that demonstrated the influence of exposure to stereotypical images of men and women depicted in leadership or nonleadership attitudes.

Nevertheless, regardless of the commercial intentions of the issuer – in the case of commercial communication, we are referring mainly to marketing directors, designers, advertising creative directors, and fashion photographers – social stereotypes crystallize as a result of the repetition of stereotyped messages. Consequently, fashion brand advertising displays only certain models for women: how they should act or present themselves in order to be successful in private and public settings.

It is well known that one of advertising's main aims is to shock its target audience into ultimately purchasing the product that is being promoted. In order to accomplish this, and given the heterogeneity of the members of this target audience, preliminary knowledge must be obtained through analysis of the socioeconomic and psychosocial characteristics, given that these obviously vary according to the socio-cultural context. The first objective is to show, to a wide and heterogeneous group of women, images that they can easily understand and admire. Secondly, advertisers want to create a unique universe of values that can be identified with the brand and never mistaken for others.

While some authors believe that choosing this strategy is a way to save costs, others are doubtful of its true effectiveness in international markets. Nelson and Paek (2007) conclude that proponents of standardization argue for a strategy based on shared consumer traits, economic savings, and the benefits of a shared global brand, while opponents assert the dangers of global strategies due to different local market conditions and cultural uniqueness. Nevertheless, global campaigns cannot be denied in the design of current image strategies by major advertisers.

Fashion brands also resort to these advertising standardization strategies in order to promote their products because they are aware of women's interest, and they continue to put considerable pressure on women when depicting the brand universe

and values that define each fashion house. The majority of advertising campaigns are designed with global markets in mind, and the same advertisements are placed in the magazines of countries that are culturally very different. Most luxury brand campaigns are designed in the country of origin of the brand, mainly Italy, France, Britain, or the United States, and are then placed in fashion magazines in hundreds of countries all over the world.

For example, in 2010, we analyzed fashion advertisements published in high-end magazines from Portugal, China, and Spain to be able to compare women's images from different countries and find differences and similarities among them. Not surprisingly, we noticed that representations of women in fashion magazines were almost the same throughout the world. To simplify, we can say that the main reason for this is that the international fashion brand campaigns are primarily generated in Europe or the United States and then distributed worldwide. Thus the images that we see in fashion magazines in each country are very similar to each other or even the same. However, we should note that "although advertisements can be fairly similar across cultures, the content does not allow us to assess if women share the same meanings cross-culturally" (Nelson & Paek, 2007, p. 79). Moreover, this does not mean that women from these countries all dress the same, since they customize and adapt the outfits and make them local, adding a cultural touch. According to Mooij (2004), global brands are rarely consumed or used in the same way in different countries. However, there is an emphatic predominance of the occidental female stereotype advertised in the fashion magazines.

The advantages and disadvantages of standardizing advertising through the use of stereotypes are not only that they homogenize the image of women offered to society as a whole, but also that real women tend to identify and compare themselves with this stereotype.

A Study of Fashion Brand Advertising

This chapter reports on the findings of a content analysis of 568 print advertisements published between 2002 and 2009 exclusively in women's and fashion magazines in Spain. Unlike Goffman, we did not base our study on a set of frames used as a basis for arranging the advertisements but preferred to undertake the study without the "bias" of such frames, and to allow the results of the content analysis to speak for themselves. Our aim was to allow the advertisements to tell us whether any concrete stereotypes existed, and to indicate the proportion of each stereotype in the overall sample selected. The formulation of a code book was very useful for this purpose, in which we "asked" – in a rhetorical way, since they were unable to talk to us – the female models who were present in the advertisements about their physical features, dress style, poses, or attitudes in front of the camera. Some questions were based on

Goffman and Lindner's categories; others were generated by the researchers trying to find the values that could define stereotypes. On the basis of the images reflected by the models, we attained a "profile" of each model that, when brought together, allowed us to extract the women's general features and the stereotypes generated, as well as their permanence over time since we were analyzing advertisements for seven different years during the period from 2002 to 2009. (Advertisements from 2006 were not included in the analysis since there were insufficient representative advertisements collected from that year.)

Research Questions and Methodology

Given the previous research on this topic, this study was guided by two research questions:

- RQ1 Which female stereotypes are used to portray women in the luxury fashion brands' print advertisements?
- RQ2 Do certain factors explain the use of each female stereotype in advertising?

In order to address these questions, we analyzed print fashion advertisements – in particular luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Dior, Loewe, or Chanel – appearing in the Spanish women's publications with the greatest circulation: *Vogue*, *Telva*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Woman* since they comprise the main source of information for consumers, most of whom are women. A total of 97 brands from this sector were identified and classified in turn into six groups, according to the type of product being advertised:

- 1 Clothing
- 2 Cosmetics
- 3 Beauty treatments
- 4 Perfume
- 5 Accessories (handbags, shoes, belts, glasses)
- 6 Others (such as lingerie, jewelry, or watches)

Based on the analysis of these magazines from 2002 to 2009, a set of advertisements was selected to conduct the content analysis, and a total of 568 print advertisements for luxury fashion brands were identified. All luxury fashion ads found during the years under study were included except (1) those that did not include women and (2) those in which the women's features were not visible. We also eliminated duplications. Fifteen percent of sample advertisements were published in 2002, 9.2% in 2003, 15.3% in 2004, 19.5% in 2005, 12% in 2007, 11.1% in 2008, and 18% in 2009.

Since the aim of the study was to determine the female stereotypes or profiles reflected in fashion brand advertising, the "character" in the advertisement was used

as the unit of analysis for the study rather than the fashion brands. Male characters who sometimes appeared in the advertisements accompanying the female characters were not included in this analysis since our focus was specifically on female images.

In order to conduct the content analysis and answer the research questions on the basis of the theoretical framework reviewed, a code book was created. While some researchers carried out their content analyses following Goffman's classifications, we took these frames into consideration only to be able to formulate four groups of questions: (1) those that referred to the descriptive variables; (2) those that referred to some aspects of external appearance; (3) those that referred to the values and stereotypes that the models express through their external appearance, attitude, behavior, or body position; and (4) those that refer to the environment of the place pictured in the advertisement. Lindner's (2004) work was significant at this point, even though we did not specifically replicate her outline since our goal was to let the statistic "talk" about the stereotypes that emerge through this content analysis of the women present in the advertisements.

This process yielded the following main sections:

(1) *Identification of stereotypes.* In order to determine which female stereotypes exist in the fashion advertisements analyzed, the presence (1) or absence (0) of certain aspects or characteristics (29 items) related to the external appearance of the female characters located were coded. Specifically, the study analyzed whether the character reflected "love," "family," "maternity," "listlessness," "weakness," "sorrow," "submission," "triumph," "freedom," "conquest," "faithfulness," "transgression," "sexual attraction," "pleasure," "seduction," "modernity," "comfort," "emotional success," "aggressiveness," "joy," "personal effort," "friendship," "enjoyment," "professional success," "competitiveness," "risk," "violence," "failure," and "homemaking." Because some terms overlapped in their meaning, we operationally defined some words to assist the coders. For instance, joy and enjoyment do not have exactly the same meaning and we defined them to make the coder's job easier: joy was defined as happiness due to a spiritual experience – the contemplation of beauty, seeing something good – whereas enjoyment was defined as a pleasure caused by a physical experience – eating, smelling, or touching something; it is also related to sexual feelings. We did this for the Spanish words, since each language has its linguistic differences that correspond to certain concepts.

(2) *Predictor variables in the use of stereotypes.* In order to study the factors that would explain the presence of each stereotype in the advertisements or, to be more precise, the fashion advertisements analyzed, 19 variables were established that would be either independent or predictor variables in the study. Specifically, the following characteristics of the advertisements were studied and grouped into categorical variables: the type of product advertised (1 = clothing, 2 = beauty products, 3 = perfume, 4 = accessories, such as handbags, shoes, watches, or belts); the social class of the female character, paying attention to her clothes and accessories, as well as the context of the advertisement (1 = lower or middle class, 2 = upper class) – this

categorization was used when just a single character portrayed as belonging to the lower class was detected; the character's build (1 = extremely thin, 2 = slim, 3 = normal). To explain the interest of observing the context of the advertisement in more detail, what we were trying to find out when we looked at the income-level appearance of the character was whether this was evidence that the luxury brands sometimes emulated the low-income classes as a sales proposition.

The presence of the following characteristics was also coded dichotomously (1 = yes, 0 = no): (1) whether the advertisement used people who were famous; (2) whether the models were young looking; (3) whether the models had athletic bodies; (4) whether the models had androgynous features; and (5) whether the models were being seduced by men.

Even though we did not analyze male images, we paid attention to men's interactions with women. This was essential for the definition of women's attitudes toward men and toward other women. In this sense it is a common assertion that women usually dress to impress other women more than to impress men. Women somehow tend to think that men pay attention not to the fashionable characteristics of their outfits but to their bodily appearance as a whole. Even though it is impossible to verify this hypothesis solely with the content analysis we carried out, at least we could offer an idea of what is important in women's representations, and thus demonstrate what forms part of the ideal of women today.

Another clarification necessary at this point refers to the meaning of the "androgynous aspect" of the models. By this characteristic we refer to the intention of the photographer and the brand to show women who are not very feminine but have some "masculine" features: having short hair, wearing a tuxedo or tailored men's suit and/or braces, posing in a typical and well-recognized male position – for instance, portrayed as Indiana Jones or Dracula. To ensure that the coders clearly understood this component, we showed them some examples of each before they started.

(3) Furthermore, a *dichotomous evaluation* was performed of whether the advertisement displayed nude or semi-nude bodies, perfect bodies, or just the character's face; whether the model's body was used in the advertisement as an aesthetic value; and whether the external appearance of the character was related to happiness. Finally, and more closely related to the space recreated in the advertisements, an analysis was conducted to determine whether in the advertisements the consumption of the product was related to beauty, conveyed luxury, and was realistic, whether the product brand was presented as a status symbol, and whether out-of-focus images were used when advertising luxury brands. The answer options were 1 = yes and 0 = no.

At this point we also need to clarify the statistical techniques we used to answer our research questions. As was mentioned previously, we collected a number of advertisements on which we conducted a content analysis of the visual information that the models gave us through their facial expression, outfit, posture, and so on. We then applied factor analysis to the resulting data, with the main goal being to

find groups of homogeneous variables from a large number of variables. Those homogeneous groups were made from the correlation of variables among them; we also tried to ensure that the groups were independent from one another – in other words, homogeneous inside the group, heterogeneous among others. Since we collected a great deal of data from the content analysis, we were interested in knowing whether the answers could be associated in a typical path; that is, if there were variables with a common significance. Through this process we could simplify the number of dimensions that might explain the images of the advertisements and the stereotypes that the models represent. For this aspect we recommend reviewing the works of Papacharissi and Oliveira (2008), Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), and d’Haenens and de Lange (2001).

Factor analysis is a technique that can reduce data dimensions. Its goal is to look for the minimum dimensions that can explain the maximum information that the data contain. For this reason it was the perfect tool to achieve our aim. In the case of this research, all variables were codified as “dummy,” and we measured the presence or absence of certain characteristics in the advertisements’ models. The reason for using factor analysis in this project was to reduce the data with the idea of detecting the stereotypes that emerge from the fashion ads.

A group of university students from the Centro Universitario Villanueva and the Universidad Complutense de Madrid assisted in the coding and recording of the units of analysis. An initial training period in coding was completed in order to guarantee the highest possible level of homogeneity in the interpretation of the questions, and the first 20 units of analysis were analyzed jointly. This was of particular importance in those questions referring to the values that were present in the characters, and consequently the meanings of some of the terms that might be ambiguous (e.g., pleasure, joy, listlessness, weakness) were defined. Afterwards, once the data had been coded and recorded in the databases, a statistical analysis was conducted using the program SPSS v.15.0, the results of which were interpreted in relation to the research questions put forward.

Findings

Female Stereotypes Portrayed in Advertising

As mentioned earlier, in order to answer the first research question, it was determined whether the characteristics or values of the women portrayed in the advertisements could describe certain stereotypes most frequently used by advertisers to present luxury fashion brands. For this, an initial factor analysis, with varimax orthogonal rotation, of the principal components was completed using the 29 items that define the “stereotype features” in order to determine the extent to which they were organized among themselves into different components or factors. The quality of this factor analysis was tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, which

produced a value of .72, and Bartlett's test of sphericity, which was statistically significant, $\chi^2(406) = 4130.438$, $p < .001$. All of these data demonstrated the quality of the analysis conducted. A total of nine factors were obtained from this initial factor analysis, which together explained 60.48% of the variance. In order to simplify the factor solution, the factors that consisted of a single item were eliminated. The internal consistency of each of the remaining items was also analyzed (Cronbach's alpha) in order to rule out the items that did not achieve an acceptable level of reliability for this type of exploratory study. This produced a total of 18 items that represented the women's characteristics or values, which are grouped into the four factors with the highest internal consistency.

In order to corroborate whether these four factors bring together the characteristics of the characters in such a way that they could be considered as different female stereotypes in advertising, another factor principal component analysis, with varimax rotation, was performed to determine the relationship of these factors within the resulting factors. The resulting Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic offered a value of .75 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant, $\chi^2(153) = 2733.259$, $p < .001$, and therefore the quality of the analysis conducted was established. Based on the results (see Table 3.1), the existence of four factors could be determined which

Table 3.1 Second factor principal component analysis (with varimax rotation) of the characteristics or values reflected by the women in the advertisements

Characteristics or values of the women	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
The character conveys competitiveness	.750			
The character conveys professional success	.726			
The character conveys triumph	.684			
The character conveys modernity	.625			
The character conveys transgression	.615			
The character conveys conquest	.611	.458		
The character conveys emotional success	.551		.470	
The character conveys pleasure		.742		
The character conveys sexual attraction		.722		
The character conveys seduction		.595		
The character conveys joy		.545		
The character conveys family			.818	
The character conveys maternity			.735	
The character conveys love		.416	.644	
The character conveys homemaking			.607	
The character conveys sorrow				.801
The character conveys weakness				.761
The character conveys listlessness				.693
Eigenvalue	3.042	2.479	2.367	1.937
Percentage of explained variance	16.899	13.775	13.152	10.763
Total percentage of explained variance	54.589			

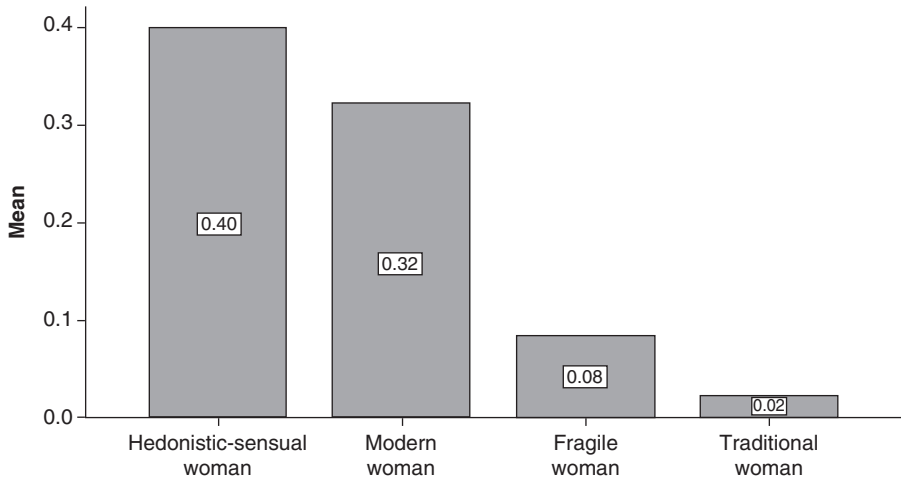


Figure 3.1 Mean score of the female stereotypes detected in advertising.

together explained 54.59% of the variance. These factors matched other female stereotypes present in the advertisements analyzed:

- 1 *Modern woman* ($\alpha = .78$, $M = 0.32$, $DE = .29$), consisting of the items in which the woman reflected the values “competitiveness,” “professional success,” “triumph,” “modernity,” “transgression,” “conquest,” and “emotional success.”
- 2 *Traditional woman* ($\alpha = .67$, $M = 0.02$, $DE = .11$), consisting of items that are related to “familiarity,” “maternity,” and “homemaking.” “Love” was eliminated from the scale since it decreased the internal consistency of the indicator.
- 3 *Hedonistic-sensual woman* ($\alpha = .65$, $M = 0.40$, $DE = .32$), consisting of the items “sexual attraction,” “pleasure,” “joy,” and “seduction.”
- 4 *Fragile woman* ($\alpha = .66$, $M = .09$, $DE = .21$) related to images of “sorrow,” “weakness,” and “listlessness” (see Figure 3.1).

Stereotype Usage Patterns Over Time

Once the female stereotypes present in advertising had been detected for the years studied, we went on to investigate whether a joint usage pattern existed among them in the advertisements that were analyzed. As can be seen in Table 3.2, a significant joint presence was observed of the *hedonistic-sensual woman* and *modern woman* stereotypes, $r(566) = .118$, $p < .01$. Nevertheless, their association with the *traditional woman* stereotype, $r(566) = -.090$, $p < .05$, and, in particular, with the *fragile woman* stereotype, $r(566) = -.137$, $p < .001$, was negative. This proves that there was no tendency to present these stereotypes together in the fashion advertisements analyzed. The joint use of the *fragile woman* and *sensual woman* stereotypes, $r(566) = .132$,

Table 3.2 Correlation between female stereotypes and year of publication

	1	2	3	4	5
Modern woman	–	.118**	–.090*	–.137***	.163***
Hedonistic-sensual woman		–	–.149***	.132**	–.031
Traditional woman			–	–.068	–.136***
Fragile woman				–	–.181***
Year of publication					–

$N = 333$. The associations were significant at *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

$p < .01$, was also detected, while a separation strategy existed in the advertisements for the *sensual woman* and *traditional woman* stereotypes, $r(566) = -.149$, $p < .001$.

Moreover, on studying the association between each stereotype and the variable related to the year of publication (see the results in Table 3.2), a significant correlation was detected with the *fragile woman*, $r(566) = -.181$, $p < .001$, and the *traditional woman*, $r(566) = -.136$, $p < .001$, stereotypes. Therefore, it seems that there was a tendency to use these stereotypes less in advertising over the years, although this decrease was not particularly sharp considering the value of the relationship (see the data in Table 3.2). Regarding the *modern woman* stereotype, $r(566) = .163$, $p < .001$, the findings offer an image of moderate linear growth in its use throughout the years studied. A linear association was not detected for the *hedonistic-sensual woman* stereotype and therefore its presence remained stable throughout the eight years studied.

Explanatory Factors for the Use of Stereotypes in Advertising

The identification of the four female stereotypes made it possible to address the second research question, that is, to determine the factors that affect or explain the use of each stereotype in the advertisements studied. For this, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted using each of the stereotypes as a criterion or dependent variable. The characteristics of the advertising message were taken as independent or predictor variables of the stereotypes, making it necessary to transform the items that were of a categorical nature. Consequently, based on the variable “product type,” four new variables were generated in which the presence of each type of product was measured (clothing, cosmetics, beauty treatment, or accessories), with the absence corresponding in each case to the groups that were not selected or that of “others,” which was left out of the regression analysis. The same procedure was followed for the “social class” variable, where the variables for lower class and upper class were generated; the “build” variable, where the categories extremely thin and

normal formed the new dummy variables; and finally, the type of brand, creating two dichotomous variables that measured the presence of conventional or unconventional brands. The rest of the predictor variables, which were dichotomous in every case, were used just as they were defined, contemplating the presence (1) or absence (0) of a certain characteristic.

The first multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, with the successive step method, using the *modern woman* stereotype as the criterion variable. This method was selected right from the start since it is the most suitable for an exploratory study. The regression model was statistically significant, explaining 53% of the variance, that is, the presence of the stereotype in advertising. Therefore, 11 factors were identified that explained the presence of this stereotype in advertising, 9 of which corresponded to the character's characteristics and the other 2 to the formal aspects of the advertisement. The most important of the variables related to the character was that the character displayed androgynous features, $\beta = .526$, $p < .001$, followed at a distance by a slim build, $\beta = .168$, $p < .001$, and being represented as a member of the upper class, $\beta = .135$, $p < .001$. The influence was also acceptable when the advertisement showed the model's body as an aesthetic value, $\beta = .133$, $p < .001$, the model had a normal build, $\beta = .121$, $p < .001$, an athletic body, $\beta = .115$, $p < .001$, or was portrayed as a member of the middle class, $\beta = .103$, $p < .01$. The fact that the character was being seduced by a man, $\beta = .070$, $p < .05$, or was not nude, $\beta = -.070$, $p < .05$, was also an explanatory aspect of the use of the *modern woman* stereotype, although to a lesser extent. Finally, the fact that the advertisement related product consumption to beauty was observed as an explanatory formal aspect, $\beta = .196$, $p < .001$. The presence of this stereotype tended to decrease in beauty product advertising, $\beta = -.055$, $p < .10$, although the result was tendential rather than significant (see the data in Table 3.3).

Another multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, with the successive step method, but in this case to determine which variables predicted to a greater extent the presence of the *hedonistic-sensual woman* stereotype in advertising. The regression model was also statistically significant and managed to explain 30% of the variance of the stereotype being analyzed (see the data in Table 3.4). In short, six factors were observed to be significantly explanatory regarding the use of the stereotype. As a result, the advertisements that mostly used the *sensual woman* stereotype were the ones that showed models being seduced by men, $\beta = .330$, $p < .001$, that showed nude or semi-nude bodies, $\beta = .197$, $p < .001$, and in which the product consumption was related to beauty, $\beta = .336$, $p < .001$. The greater presence of middle-class characters was also an explanatory variable, $\beta = .108$, $p < .01$, tending in this case to make the presence of the use of the *sensual woman* stereotype increase. Moreover, certain variables used as independent variables in the model explained the use of the stereotype, but in this case in a negative fashion. Therefore, when the advertisements advertised beauty products, $\beta = -.103$, $p < .01$, or the model did not display androgynous features, $\beta = -.100$, $p < .01$, the use of the *sensual woman* stereotype decreased.

Table 3.3 Explanatory factors for the presence of the modern woman stereotype

Predictor variables	B	ET	β
Aspects of the character			
The character displays androgynous features	.343	.021	.526***
The character's build is slim	.099	.024	.168***
The character belongs to the upper class	.081	.022	.135***
The body is shown as an aesthetic value	.084	.024	.133***
The character's build is normal	.076	.025	.121***
The character's body is athletic	.088	.024	.115***
The character belongs to the lower or middle class	.085	.030	.103**
The body shown is nude or semi-nude	-.063	.026	-.077*
The character is being seduced by a man	.060	.026	.070*
Formal features of the advertisement			
Consumption of the product is related to beauty	.124	.024	.196***
Advertises beauty products	-.058	.033	-.055 ⁺
F	59.699***		
R ² corrected	.53		

N = 568. The associations were significant at *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$ and tendential at level ⁺ $p < .010$.

Table 3.4 Explanatory factors for the presence of the hedonistic-sensual woman stereotype

Predictor variables	B	ET	B
Aspects of the character			
The character is being seduced by a man	.310	.034	.330***
The body shown is nude or semi-nude	.176	.032	.197***
The character belongs to the lower or middle class	.097	.032	.108**
The character displays androgynous features	-.071	.026	-.100**
Formal features of the advertisement			
Consumption of the product is related to beauty	.231	.026	.336***
Advertises beauty products	-.119	.042	-.103**
F	41.862***		
R ² corrected	.30		

N = 568. The associations were significant at *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$.

A multiple linear regression analysis, with the successive step method, determined that there were seven variables that predicted the use of the *fragile and/or submissive woman* stereotype. Once again, the regression model was statistically significant, explaining in this case just 20% of the variance of the female stereotype studied (see the data in Table 3.5). A review of the results made it possible to observe that the factor that explained to a greater extent the presence of this stereotype in the adver-

Table 3.5 Explanatory factors for the presence of the fragile or submissive woman stereotype

Predictor variables	B	ET	B
Aspects of the character			
The character is extremely thin	.239	.035	.262***
The character is young looking	.119	.030	.154***
Relates the character's external appearance and happiness	-.063	.018	-.145***
The character is athletic	.068	.022	.124**
The character displays androgynous features	-.050	.019	-.106*
Formal features of the advertisement			
Consumption of the product is related to beauty	.097	.019	.213***
Advertises accessories	.042	.019	.088*
<i>F</i>	20.814***		
<i>R</i> ² corrected	.20		

N = 568. The associations were significant at ****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05.

tisements analyzed was the fact that they presented characters with an extremely thin build, $\beta = .262$, $p < .001$. The fact that the advertisements related product consumption to beauty, $\beta = .213$, $p < .001$, the character was young looking, $\beta = .154$, $p < .001$, or displayed an athletic body, $\beta = .124$, $p < .01$, also explained in a positive manner the use of this stereotype. It also explained positively the fact that beauty products were being advertised, $\beta = .008$, $p < .05$, although this association was very slight. Furthermore, two variables were detected that generated a less frequent use of the stereotype: the fact that the character's external appearance was related to beauty, $\beta = -.145$, $p < .001$, or that the character displayed androgynous features in the advertisement, $\beta = -.106$, $p < .05$. In both cases, the appearance of these characteristics in the advertisement was related to a lower presence of the *sensual woman* stereotype.

Finally, the predictor variables of the use of the *traditional woman* stereotype were analyzed by means of a multiple linear regression analysis in successive steps in order to detect just the explanatory variables of the stereotype usage. The resulting equation was statistically significant, explaining 13% of the stereotype variance. Of the 8 items detected as explanatory, 5 were related to the formal features of the advertisement. This stereotype was the one whose presence in the advertisements was explained to the greatest extent by the formal aspects rather than by the character's physical characteristics (see the data in Table 3.6).

The fact that in the advertisement the brand presented was being portrayed as a status symbol, $\beta = .221$, $p < .001$, that cosmetics were being advertised, $\beta = .127$, $p < .01$, and that it had a highly realistic appearance, $\beta = .104$, $p < .05$, was the formal aspect that contributed positively to the increase in the presence of the stereotype. With regard to the character's features, the fact that the model's external appearance

Table 3.6 Explanatory factors for the presence of the traditional woman stereotype

Predictor variables	B	ET	β
Aspects of the character			
The character displays androgynous features	-.040	.011	-.160***
Relates the character's external appearance and happiness	.035	.010	.154***
The character is young looking	.036	.016	.090*
Formal features of the advertisement			
The advertisement conveys luxury	-.059	.012	-.256***
The brand is presented as a status symbol	.052	.013	.221***
Advertises cosmetics	.029	.009	.127**
The advertisement is realistic	.023	.009	.104*
Consumption of the product is related to beauty	-.024	.010	-.100*
<i>F</i>	11.477***		
<i>R</i> ² corrected	.13		

N = 568. The associations were significant at ****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05.

was related to happiness, $\beta = .154$, $p < .001$, and she seemed young looking, $\beta = .090$, $p < .05$, also positively explained the use of the stereotype. As in the other regressions completed, factors that contributed negatively to the presence of models characterized as traditional women were also detected. This occurred with the presence of models displaying androgynous features, $\beta = -.160$, $p < .001$, the portrayal of luxury in the advertisements, $\beta = -.256$, $p < .001$, or the association of the advertised product with beauty, $\beta = -.100$, $p < .05$.

Discussion and Conclusions

As can be observed throughout the text and tables in this chapter, the most frequently portrayed female stereotype in luxury fashion brand advertising studied was the "hedonist and sensual," which shows women, above all, as objects of pleasure. Its presence can be described as overabundant since it represents a very high percentage of the overall sample. The woman depicted in this stereotype is mainly concerned with her physical appearance for the purpose of seducing or being seduced, while displaying herself as a source of pleasure and narcissistically contemplating her own beauty. This advertising stereotype reinforces and crystallizes the social stereotype of the woman who is *valuable* as long as she is attractive on the outside.

The stereotype with the second highest presence in the sample is the so-called "modern woman," defined by values that are similar to those of the "hedonist and sensual" stereotype but with a greater portrayal of the concept "modern," that is,

with the aesthetic use of features that the coders interpreted as “current,” “ground-breaking,” and “up-to-date.” This means that compared with the hedonist woman, the modern woman appears to be androgynous, is strikingly thin, and is identified with the upper class. Remarkably, together these two stereotypes make up 72% of the total sample. This is even more disturbing if we consider that the fragile woman represents only 0.08% of the sample and the traditional woman just 0.02%. In other words, they are underrepresented as female stereotypes.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy aspects to emerge after analyzing and comparing the findings of studies conducted from the 1960s to the 1980s is precisely the suppression of the family- and home-loving female stereotype, and a change of direction toward the hedonist woman, who is concerned with her appearance, has no ties or commitments, and seeks self-affirmation in the conspicuous consumption discussed by Thorstein Veblen (2008). Even though we only analyzed advertisements published in fashion magazines and not general interest or housekeeping magazines, we should point out that Goffman’s study also had fashion advertisements in his sample, as did other authors.

Therefore, the media and the advertising structure – at least those related to the fashion world – do not seem to have achieved the expected triumphs of liberation proposed for female imagery since the times of Erving Goffman or Alice Courtney, given that the stereotype has simply veered from women who are dependent on men to women who voluntarily objectify themselves to achieve their goals. In both cases, the portrayal of women and the role they play is still that of submission, although it could be said that nowadays submission is voluntary, a point that is yet to be proved.

As explained earlier on, the image of the traditional woman, defined by the features of familiarity, maternity, and homemaking, is practically nonexistent in the high fashion advertisements. Despite the harsh criticism of radical feminism in the 1970s, current postfeminist trends no longer view maternity as a symbol of submission or a strategy of man’s power over woman. Nevertheless, fashion brands do not select images of women who are committed to maternity or family. They have discovered that it is more interesting in terms of sales to favor the image of an “independent” woman who is fully self-sufficient. We have highlighted the word independent because the woman portrayed does not appear to be fully independent, since she is not depicted as a working professional with the capacity for self-finance. We definitely consider that this can continue to nourish an artificial need to possess objects and use beauty to attain the desired objects: the conspicuous consumption defined by Veblen.

This simply consolidates a stereotype – unconnected to reality – of a woman who succeeds in life exclusively by herself, without any emotional, personal, freely acquired commitments. The majority of women all over the world continue to consider the values of maternity, family, and love as essential components of self-fulfillment.

We believe that these female stereotypes can also have long-term consequences on the development and consolidation of sexual identity. Specialists in this field like

Jutta Burggraf (1995) indicate that three aspects must be considered in the sexual identity development process: biological gender, psychological gender, and social gender. The latter, also known as “civil gender,” is assigned to each person at birth and expresses the way in which that person is perceived by those surrounding him or her. It is the result of a cultural and historical process that is unique to each individual and highlights the functions, roles, and stereotypes that are allocated to diverse groups of people in every society. Psychological gender refers to each person’s psychic experiences and their awareness of belonging to a specific sex; it normally coincides with a person’s biological gender, although it can also be profoundly affected by education, culture, and the environment in which he or she lives, particularly during childhood and adolescence.

Without going into a detailed analysis, since we do not have sufficient data and it is not the objective of this chapter, we consider that the development of the psychological gender can also be affected by this media phenomenon.

We would argue that blaming men for this excessive presence of stereotypes seems to be unreasonable. In her book about women who have worked in the US advertising industry since its origins, Juliann Sivulka (2009, pp. 17–18) indicates that “women became increasingly involved in the design, marketing, and advertising of commodities, they also had a significant influence in shaping lifestyles, perpetuating stereotypes, and engendering the practice of consumption as a feminine pursuit,”¹ thus demonstrating that very often it is women, and not just men, who have contributed to the perpetuation of certain social stereotypes in the way in which they show reality through advertising.

Once more the initial assertion emerges: society is a reflection of advertising and advertising influences society, in some way making it change and progress and maintain the systems of the past. After all, we can state that they both influence each other, but the media have a special responsibility since they might be challenged about the evil consequences of using stereotypes on purpose to harm or degrade a group or just to perpetuate a disrespectful image of it. But luxury brands have no conscience about doing so with women. Or do they?

NOTE

- 1 The author is, in turn, quoting Campbell (1997).

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Marketing Militarism to Moms

News and Branding after September 11th

Mary Douglas Vavrus

ABSTRACT

This essay fuses a feminist analysis of news media with political economy and branding research to examine a case study of how a group of mothers – “Security Moms” – became branded and pressed into profitable service for the Republican Party and a “peace through strength” think tank. I argue that constructed identities like this one, which come in and out of vogue in mainstream news media, tell important stories about the media’s relationship to feminism. Since the 1990s, news stories in the United States have popularized groups of women and men supposedly cohering around particular practices: “Soccer Moms” and “NASCAR Dads,” for example. Such identities not only prove to be profitable for corporations, they also politicize identities and reinforce both neoliberalism and self-surveilling governance.

Walking through a parking lot several years ago I spotted a bumper sticker that caught my eye. “Soccer Mom and Proud of It!” it exclaimed. This bumper sticker stuck out not only because I have researched the Soccer Mom identity and how it has been used by mainstream news outlets to talk about women as a swing-voting bloc (Vavrus, 2002), but also because it underscored a phenomenon this chapter addresses. That is, the woman who drove this shiny new SUV had willingly adopted a media-generated, media-circulated label for her identity, and in the process had

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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given herself over to being part of the desirable Soccer Mom niche market – one that, I argue, has attained the status of a brand. That the Soccer Mom has attained the status of a brand is evident in the various sites in which that label has appeared – this bumper sticker, t-shirts, electoral politics, advertising campaigns, marketing literature that predicts women's consumer habits – and in how the label circulates culturally to define a group of women. But I am less interested in self-professed Soccer Moms than I am with a larger process: how and why groups of people are constituted and then labeled by mainstream news media and what happens to these labeled groups once they are brought into existence. This chapter's case study is based on one such group: Security Moms.

Soon after the United States had begun its preemptive war on Iraq and then President Bush had declared "Mission Accomplished," and amidst a massive propaganda campaign to convince the public of Iraq's Saddam Hussein's involvement in the events of September 11, 2001 (McLaren & Martin, 2004, p. 288), the Security Mom debuted in news narratives about women and electoral politics. The Word Spy website defines a security mom as a "woman with children who believes the most important issue of the day is national security, particularly the fight against terrorism" (www.wordspy.com/words/securitymoms.asp). Security Moms emerged during the 2004 presidential campaign season ostensibly to identify a group of women predicted to be a swing-voting bloc, much like the Soccer Moms of preceding campaigns (e.g., see Tumulty & Novak, 2003); but unlike Soccer Moms, Security Moms' public statements legitimated both right-wing military policy and a patriarchal gender dynamic prevalent in public discourse after September 11, 2001 (Enloe, 2007; Faludi, 2007). As this chapter will illustrate, news discourse mainly frames Security Moms as being desperate for protection, especially that offered by a strong patriarchal figure like George W. Bush, whom they claim to trust completely. In their performance of Bush administration propaganda about the War on Terror, Security Moms' media constitution encourages adherence to a historically specific, post-9/11 security regime, their fearfulness presenting a rationale for heightened state surveillance and the incorporation of surveillance and security technologies into their domestic lives (Grewal, 2006; Hay, 2006).

Media institutions in the United States continually produce new labels like "Security Mom" for human behaviors, compressing layers of complex and often contradictory practices into catchphrases: think "Mean Girls" or "Generation X," for example. Instead of taking these labels at face value, this chapter posits that the gendered life practices captured in these phrases and then circulated throughout the media in both news and entertainment are more significant than their light-hearted media treatment would suggest. Some of these labels evolve into brands as they circulate through media windows, their meanings becoming increasingly multi-layered and valuable for political institutions, political parties, polling organizations, media corporations, and the public relations and marketing industries.

Following Rakow (2010), who argues for the value of analyzing identity, my research challenges "the notion of identity as a stable and unvarying natural category

without political or material consequences” (p. 139). She cites the “rising incidences of hatred and threatened violence in response to [Barack] Obama’s election,” which illustrate starkly that the “politics of gender, race, and class are far from over.” In this example alone, it is “possible to see the contested and arbitrary nature of identity categories, as well as what is at stake in the process to define and enforce them” (p. 139). My analysis of media-constructed identities relies mainly on the news media’s own terms for them, and traces linkages between these identities and the institutions that constitute and circulate them. What I argue is that media-constructed identities come into existence as a result of a confluence of efforts by powerful and resource-rich organizations that stand to gain when these identities are perceived as *prescriptive* as well as *descriptive*. I concur with Fejes, who asserts that, “[u]pdating Foucault, it would seem that today the consumer-based media, and not the state, the church, or the scientific professions, are the far more effective creators and regulators of identities and desires” (2001, p. 207).

Constructed identities that become brands, and come in and out of vogue in mainstream news media – like Security Moms and Soccer Moms – tell important stories about both the media and the political interests that influence media content. Since the 1990s, US news media have popularized groups of women and men whose identities supposedly cohere around particular practices: “Soccer Moms” and “NASCAR Dads,” for example. I focus this chapter on a case study of Security Moms, which reveals the patterns of representations used to construct this identity as well as the political stakes in its public acceptance. I argue that this case of constituting and politicizing identity – branding – encourages governance of gendered conduct that aligns with the military and foreign policy agendas of the Bush White House after September 11, 2001.

Because gender is crucial to the constitution of this media identity, I utilize a feminist analysis, the chief goal of which has been articulated clearly by Riordan (2002):

Feminism seeks to understand and theorize power as it pertains not only to women, but also to other groups marginalized on the basis of their race, class, sexuality, religious background, ethnicity, age, dis/ability, etc.” (p. 13, n1)

In feminist scholarship, gender is the primary, albeit not the exclusive, aspect of interest; as Dow and Condit (2005) argue, feminism is “ultimately oriented toward the achievement of ‘gender justice,’ a goal that takes into account the ways that gender always already intersects with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.” Moreover, “gender justice may include but can also go beyond the seeking of equality between men and women, to include understanding of the concept of gender itself as politically constructed” (p. 449). This is, as van Zoonen (1994) has phrased it, a cultural process: “a negotiation over meanings and values that inform whole ways of life” (p. 41). Such a negotiation is evident in almost any discourse in which mothers and their conduct are central, as they are in this case study.

Because the Security Mom identity is produced and reproduced in news media, I focus on these narratives. News texts possess credibility for being straightforward, transparent reflections of reality,¹ and thus express normative lessons to viewers, listeners, and readers about how they should understand and fit into the world around them; for this reason, they are potentially significant for establishing norms in all sorts of areas: gender, race, class, politics, and so on. Consequently, news media provide fertile ground for entrenching masculine dominance and its unfortunate counterpart, feminine irrelevance, and have therefore long inspired feminist scholars to both analyze and alter news reporting about women and feminism (for an excellent and comprehensive review of the “historic dialog” between news and feminism, see Barker-Plummer, 2010).

Gallagher’s (2005) enormous (and enormously useful) report on gender and international news media reveals a number of unsettling trends in mainstream news found in 76 countries from around the world. Among other trends, she shows that women are “dramatically under-represented in the news,” that “women’s points of view are rarely heard in the topics that dominate the news agenda,” that “as authorities and experts women barely feature in news stories” (p. 17), and that “news on gender (in) equality is almost non-existent. [...] Stories with a gender equality angle are almost completely absent from the major news topics of politics (3%) and the economy (1%)” (pp. 19–20). Such patterns only reinforce the legitimacy of women’s invisibility; as Gallagher points out, “if issues and people do not make the news, they can be dismissed as unimportant. They need not command public attention” (p. 28). I would add that on those occasions when gender is front and center, it is likely to take the form of an identity such as Security Mom – one that serves a marketing purpose of promoting a lifestyle, a politics, or some combination.

Some feminist scholars, myself included, have concluded that *postfeminism* informs media representations of women and girls (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009; Tasker & Negra, 2007; Vavrus, 2002). I have defined postfeminism as a “revision of feminism that encourages women’s private, consumer lifestyles” (Vavrus, 2002, p. 2) – one that “rejects feminism’s more provocative challenges, such as those grounded in critiques of capitalism and class privilege” and takes for granted – not to mention benefits from – the gains brought about by the first and second waves; however, postfeminism asserts that “feminism actually harms women, overall, because it gives women unrealistic expectations – that we can ‘have it all’” (p. 22).

In this chapter, I use the term postfeminism, although I recognize that Douglas (2010) departs from the term, substituting “enlightened sexism” in its place. Her rejection of the term is due to its suggestion

that somehow feminism is at the root of this when it isn’t – it’s good, old-fashioned, grade-A sexism that reinforces good, old-fashioned, grade-A patriarchy. It’s just much better disguised, in seductive Manolo Blahniks and an Ipex bra. (p. 10)

Postfeminism does indeed reveal sexism at its core and reinforces patriarchy, but it also illuminates feminism – for both positive recognition and blame. In other words,

although feminism blaming is a recurrent theme in postfeminism, it is accompanied by an implicit recognition of the gains for which feminism and feminists are responsible (Vavrus, 2010). I have found that what Gill (2007) calls a “postfeminist sensibility” pervasive in news discourse, including that which constitutes Security Moms. That is, the Security Mom brand is productive of a lifestyle used to sell a militaristic politics of motherhood in much the same way as consumer products are marketed; in this way it aims to govern private as well as public conduct by appealing to women’s desires to exercise political agency and choose a politics that will best serve their family’s interests.

As I will show, this identity does not arise organically or emerge from average women’s everyday practices, but is instead produced as part of an Astroturf campaign (see Stauber & Rampton, 1995, for an explanation of hallmarks of and purposes for such a public relations campaign) that attempts to maternalize security to advance the agenda of the Bush White House and minimize the gender gap for Republicans. Because the influence of advertising, public relations, and marketing is strong and even ubiquitous in news today (e.g., see Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2008; Potter, 2010), news media research must consider how news content is shaped by these industries as well. I have done this examining NASCAR Dads (Vavrus, 2007) and Soccer Moms (Vavrus, 2002), for example. Other feminist work in this vein can be found in King’s (2006) work on cause marketing and Gunn and Vavrus’s (2010) research on the marketing of menstruation-related remedies. Using a Foucauldian analysis of biopower, these latter two consider the means by which women’s bodies, cycles, and diseases may become the targets of marketing campaigns that center on the production of self- and other-surveilling subjects.

The analysis of Security Moms in this chapter also draws on the concept of biopower: the “power over life” (Foucault, 1978, p. 139) that modern institutions seek to manage in populations by encouraging self-disciplining subjects who exercise “judgment and self-judgment concerning the normal and abnormal in relation to an identified norm” (Gunn & Vavrus, 2010, p. 118). Biopower explains a gendered brand such as Security Mom’s function as a governing apparatus: the examples I provide in this chapter illustrate how the brand attempts to establish a normative discourse about family life, domesticity, and emotional labor in the post-9/11 United States using terms that emphasize the well-being and safety of the population of mothers and children it aims to govern. With such a population of parents, the discursive constitution of the power over life definitive of biopower emerges clearly with emphasis on filial responsibilities (especially pronounced for mothers). This brand thus provides a functional model of gendered conduct; by analyzing it, my goal, like Dean’s, is to lay bare its “taken-for-granted character” (1999, p. 36), understand the power relations that inhere within it, and illuminate the political stakes for its incorporation as a governing discourse. The remainder of this chapter explains, first, my rationale for and use of the Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and biopower in this context, and, second, illustrates how these operate with the branding process generally, and finally, with the Security Mom brand in particular.

Governing Gender through Brands

According to the CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, Kevin Roberts, the goal of branding is to inspire “loyalty beyond reason” among consumers (quoted in Conley, 2008, p. 2). To achieve this, marketers use numerous means and sites to attempt consumer identification with their products and services, so that each brand appears to hail us personally, as individuals, as we aspire to reach our goals (Gobé, 2001; Turow, 2006). Lury (2004) believes that brands are “compelling object[s] of sociological concern,” not least because they are “linked to practices of government and self-government” and have “regulatory effects” (p. 150) on the consumers they hail. Typically associated with consumer products, brand image is created using information gained through test marketing consumers, mining demographic and psychographic data, and scrutinizing the results of marketing surveillance conducted by services like ACXIAM and Epsilon. According to Vass (2005), imprinting a brand’s aura on popular consciousness requires inundating the public with as many means of communicating its marketing message as possible, including press releases, advertisements in multiple sites, direct marketing, news stories, and face-to-face contact.

Each identity brand I have scrutinized – from Soccer Moms to NASCAR Dads to “metrosexuals” – has been featured prominently in news media for a period of at least a few months, and represents efforts by numerous organizations to constitute it, articulate it to a population, and reference it with a label that simultaneously expresses organizational goals for governance and links these to the agendas of larger organizations. Deployment of the NASCAR Dad brand, for example, benefited the news organizations that aired stories about it, NASCAR broadcasters, the hundreds of NASCAR-sponsoring corporations, various branches of the military that recruit at NASCAR races, and the Republican Party (Vavrus, 2007). Each brand encourages behaviors and desires that fall within bounds established in the circuits of exchange between these organizations. Arvidsson refers to brands such as these as “political brands,” and argues that they offer “an answer to the homelessness of post-modern subjects. Like commercial brands [they profit] from this homelessness by offering a possibility for identification within a prestructured space” (2006, p. 92).

Thus, viewing constructed, gendered identities as brands may reveal the purposes for these persistently invoked and circulated constructions and how and where they articulate to governing agendas. The concept of governing conduct emerges from Michel Foucault’s later writings on governmentality (see Foucault, 1991), in which government refers to “‘the conduct of conduct’: that is to say, a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (Gordon, 1991, p. 2). Government is thus not reducible strictly to domination; instead, it comprises

those practices that try to shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups. This is a perspective

[...] that seeks to connect questions of government, politics and administration to the space of bodies, lives, selves and persons. (Dean, 1999, p. 12)

The “space of bodies, lives, selves and persons,” or a population, is a concept crucial to governmentality, as the objects of government are people and their practices, through both self- and other-regulation.

A population is constituted by a governing apparatus, which works by identifying a “population in need of calibration at the same time as it mobilizes that population to perform its own transformation” (Greene, 1999, p. 5) – often around some form of their practice, such as hygiene, reproduction, or consumer habits. Josh Gunn and I (2010) coined the term “gyniatric apparatus” to analyze advertising campaigns for three different menstruation-related drugs (Serafem, Seasonale, and Remifemin) that, we argued, together resulted in a “life-long project – from menarche through and beyond menopause” of medicalized self-surveillance and perpetual transformation (p. 113). As we will see, news media hail mothers as a population “in need of calibration” – one whose personal and familial safety has been compromised by terrorists and must therefore be recuperated; recalibration in this context appears possible only when mothers capitulate to the post-9/11 logic of security as the best means to protect their families.

In this view, a population transforms not because of overt manipulation but because of a perception that it is pursuing self-fulfillment by exercising freedom and choice (despite its choices being constrained within the bounds set by the very institutions that benefit from its actions) (Dean, 1999, p. 32; Graham, 1997). As Rose (1996) points out:

Contemporary practices of subjectification [...] put into play a being that must be attached to a project of identity, and to a secular project of “life-style,” in which life and its contingencies become meaningful to the extent that they can be construed as the product of personal choice. (p. 195)

Governing objectives guiding the Security Mom lifestyle are produced by interactions between numerous institutions: news organizations, TV networks, advertisers and marketers, think tanks, and political parties, all of which contribute to the discourse exhorting mothers to choose the Republican Party as a means of fostering both familial and national security. Nor are such appeals at all accidental; rather,

[i]t is the expertise of market research, of promotion and communication, underpinned by the knowledge and techniques of subjectivity, that provides the relays through which the aspirations of ministers, the ambitions of business, and the dreams of consumers achieve mutual translatability. (Rose 1996, p. 162)

The Security Mom brand embodies one such relay, and aligns neatly with the ministerial aspirations of the post-9/11 Bush White House, and the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, as well as the business ambitions of corporate news

media outlets perpetually in search of affluent demographic groups to which to pitch their narratives and, most importantly, their sponsors' wares (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2008). Whether any consumers' dreams were realized as a result of the Security Mom brand's existence is less certain.

Arvidsson describes brands as "complexes of information that enter into the informational flows of daily life and direct and anticipate it in particular ways." Further, what makes consumer brands effective is also the case for identity brands like the Security Mom: "like many other forms of contemporary governance, [brands] rule through the freedom of its [*sic*] subjects, empowering them in particular directions" (2006, p. 127). As I will demonstrate below, news media constitute Security Moms as subjects whose political affiliations ebb and flow as domestic and geopolitical conditions change: when Bill Clinton was president, so-called Soccer Moms were represented as Democrat-voting liberals; after 9/11, their label changed to Security Moms, and they were cast as safety-obsessed Republicans (some newly so, having just abandoned the Democrats), voting to protect themselves and their families from terrorists. Even once this campaign was over, vestiges of this brand remain in public discourse (e.g., though not necessarily called out by name, Security Moms live on in Sarah Palin and the "Mama Grizzlies" she represented during the 2010 midterm election season).

The Politics of Motherhood in the Post-9/11 World

Two chief aspects of Security Moms highlight their brand as productive of governing and self-governing gendered conduct: first, their willing submission to patriarchal power, and, second, their intense fearfulness about terrorist attacks that, they assert, pose the greatest threat to the sanctity of their home and family.² The Security Mom brand maternalizes "power over life" as a governing apparatus that recalibrates Soccer Moms; by shifting their gender and electoral politics to the right, normalizing the militarization of their everyday lives, and performing propaganda, the Security Mom represents a media makeover and political transformation for this population. Using these elements, news media craft a brand identity that renders mothers as uniform supporters of President Bush, his administration's policies, the war, and the military, all in the name of security at home.

As a generic modifier, the term "security" denotes safety and comfort, but its use after September 11, 2001 obliquely calls up a construct that has become articulated to the US's anti-terrorism policies. That is, since the attacks on the United States that occurred on September, 11, 2001, "security" has become an enthusiastically utilized, yet vigorously contested, term that now connotes those activities begun by the Bush administration (and mostly continued by the Obama administration) as part of the "War on Terror": wiretapping; Internet and other digital surveillance; no-fly lists; preemptive war; and a heightened militarization of society, among others (Grewal,

2006; McLaren & Martin, 2004). As it is constructed in media texts, the Security Mom brand legitimates these measures and, by referencing the new brand's once-liberal Soccer Mom qualities, models how and why other concerned mothers might recalibrate their politics, too. This brand justifies patriarchal masculinity, sanctioning it as acceptable – even necessary – to make home and the homeland safe from external threats.

Time magazine's early coverage gave Security Moms their most visible debut. "Goodbye, Soccer Mom. Hello, Security Mom," the June 2, 2003 cover headline trumpeted, as the story inside presented the Soccer Mom as having "'morphed into Security Mom'" (Tumulty & Novak, 2003, p. 1). *Time*'s initial narrative sets the tone for subsequent treatments of Security Moms, which hew to the same formula and style of expression: using passive voice, reporters disavow any responsibility they or other journalists may have for constructing and propagating the identity while they simultaneously assign to it specific qualities, often relying on only the slimmest – or no – evidence:

Swing voters have always been elusive creatures, changing shape from election to election. The profile and assumptions about them in one contest seldom apply to the next one. This axiom is proving true again with that most-talked-about slice of American political demography: the Soccer Mom. Since 9/11, polls suggest she has morphed into Security Mom – and that development is frightening to Democrats, who have come to count on women to win elections. (Tumulty & Novak, 2003, p. 1)

Even while they claim no responsibility for its emergence, the reporters personify this alleged new bloc, ascribing qualities to its members and providing readers a sense of its members' politics:

She used to say she would never allow a gun in her house, but now she feels better if her airline pilot has one. She wanted a nuclear freeze in the 1980s and was a deficit hawk in the 1990s, but she now believes the Pentagon should have whatever it wants. Her civil liberties seem less important than they used to, especially compared with keeping her children safe. She's someone, in short, like Debbie Creighton, a 34-year-old Santee, Calif., mother of two who voted for Bill Clinton twice and used to choose the candidates who were most liberal on abortion and welfare. "Since 9/11," Creighton says, "all I want in a President is a person who is strong." (Tumulty & Novak, 2003, p. 1)

The Security Mom articulates the ideology of post-9/11 security and all it has come to encompass, to a gendered practice – being a good mother – in news coverage that draws from, deepens, and extends the historical experience and knowledge of that gendered practice. When media texts yoke "mom" to "security" during this tumultuous time in the United States, the historical specificity of both terms must be considered. Here "mom" reverts to a traditional, patriarchal motherhood: one that cedes responsibility for her safety and that of her family to a strong, male figure – President Bush – in the interest of their domestic security (see Faludi, 2007, for a book-length

analysis of the resurgence of intensely patriarchal protection narratives circulating since September 11, 2001). In the context of political news stories, “mom” naturalizes family and domestic caretaking responsibilities as those properly belonging to women, whose parental fears and concerns after the September 11 attacks are adroitly exploited in this discourse.

Conservative media commentator Michelle Malkin’s inflammatory manifesto in *USA Today* several days before the Democratic Party’s national convention in July 2004 fleshed out the Security Mom further:

I am what this year’s election pollsters call a “security mom.” I’m married with two young children. I own a gun. And I vote. Nothing matters more to me right now than the safety of my home and the survival of my homeland. I believe in the right to defend myself, and in America’s right to defend itself against its enemies. I am a citizen of the United States, not the United Nations. [...] What I want is a commander in chief who will stop pandering to political correctness and *People* magazine editors, and start pandering to me. (2004, p. 11A)

Malkin’s demand further set the tone for media coverage of Security Moms, who granted interviews to television programs, print media outlets, and radio news shows throughout the 2004 campaign season, when their votes were sought by Democrats and Republicans alike. Although Malkin’s extreme-right political position was not the only one these media Security Moms held, in television news it dominated and defined these mothers by virtue of the fact that more of them appeared to echo that position than any other (Malkin is, by her own account, a Soccer Mom too [Grewal, 2006, p. 32]). Malkin’s op-ed and reporters, too, thus reproduce the commonsense view that, *en masse*, these women had moved rightward on the political spectrum after the attacks of September 11, 2001, had disrupted their halcyon days as Democrats, when they could simply enjoy their children’s soccer games without fear.

The Security Mom’s nurturance is thoroughly steeped in militarism and pro-Iraq War sentiment, but by 2004, US voters were expressing increasing dissatisfaction with the Iraq War, particularly its seeming endlessness and ever-increasing casualty count (Harris & Muste, 2004, p. A4). The Security Mom brand thus legitimated unpopular Bush administration war policies by personifying support for them and then articulating that support to a group of mothers who, in recent history, had consistently supported Democratic – not Republican – presidential candidates (since the 1980s this gender gap has plagued Republican candidates; the 2004 election was no different [Gender Gap, 2004]). The Security Mom accomplished this in part by fusing maternal nurturance with the public and private logic of the post-9/11 security apparatus in the United States, and clearly expressing the belief that only George W. Bush could keep them safe.

As I noted earlier, Security Moms are likely the product of an Astroturf campaign – one designed to popularize policies that, at the time the brand emerged, were becoming deeply unpopular among the US public. Both the Center for Media and

Democracy's "Source Watch" and the Institute for Policy Studies' "Right Web" (both media source monitoring organizations) have revealed that the term "security mom" was created and spun by a group called Family Security Matters (FSM). FSM is a front group for the Center for Security Policy, a "hawkish security policy and think tank and advocacy group" that advocates US military interventions, such as attacking Iran as a means of achieving stability in the Middle East (Source Watch, 2008, p. 1). Soon after it was formed, FSM "claimed to represent 'security moms'" and acted to "communicate to American women what we need to know" (Source Watch, 2008, p. 1). The founder of FSM and its chief spokesperson is Carol Taber, who also sits on the board of the right-wing Independent Women's Forum (Right Web, n.d., p. 1). Another spokesperson for the group, Gay Bryant, describes FSM as a "non-profit, non-partisan communications initiative formed by a group of passionate women." Their role, she continues, is to "build grassroots efforts and resources for making the Security Moms' voice heard in the White House and on Capitol Hill" (Source Watch, 2008, pp. 1–2). So whereas her male counterpart, the NASCAR Dad, is both ideological and commercial (see Vavrus, 2007), the Security Mom's brand identity is much less a site for the showcasing of consumer commodities than a pitch for mothers to embrace Bush administration policies, politics, and propaganda – decidedly difficult to sell to people otherwise disinclined to support military expenditures and militarization (as Security Moms were said to be prior to September 11, 2001).

The brand also permits feminist politics (embodied by Debbie Creighton, among others) to be disarticulated from progressive second-wave goals of dismantling patriarchal laws and practices, and rearticulated to an ideology constituted of markedly patriarchal and militaristic policies and practices. Because Security Moms are former Soccer Moms (read: liberal), they lend credence to the notion that feminism and other liberal positions on issues are impractical and even dangerous after September 11. Ironically, their ability to be Soccer Moms at all is possible, as Grewal (2006) points out, only because successful feminist agitating to pass Title IX resulted in "a huge influx of girls and women into recreational activities as well as increased school and college athletic opportunities for them" (p. 33). Such a political erasure is a classically postfeminist denial of the importance of feminism in women's lives today, as is the accompanying expressed desire to be led by a "strong" and patriarchal male figure.

Thus (and not surprisingly given their hawkish think-tank origins), Security Moms in news media are shown as mostly white, mostly Republican, 18- to 49-year-old fiercely protective mothers living in traditional, nuclear family households. They are referred to as "target demographics," revealing their potential usefulness for marketing unpopular policies. Although a few Democratic and undecided Security Moms appear in news stories, they are far outnumbered by Republican women. Describing Security Moms, broadcast and cable news programs ascribe these qualities to them: "More than any single issue, security has defined that battle for women voters and has created a new swing group, the security mom" (Capus, 2004); "[c]oncern about terrorism and the safety of their young families has turned these soccer moms into security moms" (Cable News Network, 2004). What's more, Security Moms know

that “during crises [...] mommy issues often take a backseat to security” (Eldridge, 2003). “The women who are worried about the war in Iraq are worried about the safety of their own families. And they accept the idea that we are fighting over there to protect ourselves over here” (Fischer, 2004). They are “voting this year not only for a president but for peace of mind” (Capus, 2004). FSM’s Carol Taber defines Security Moms “both demographically and psychographically. Demographically she’s a woman with children in the household. [...] Psychographically, when they go to the polls, they have the A Number 1 concern, the safety and security of their children and they’re going to be voting on this issue” (Eldridge, 2004).

That the terms “demographic” and “psychographic” appear here suggests that the Security Mom’s greatest value lies in her ability to market a lifestyle to both women and news media outlets: one that reproduces and reinforces Bush administration claims about war and homeland security, and recapitulates planks in the 2004 Republican platform.³ Again a spokesperson for FSM, Carol Taber reported that her organization had conducted focus groups with undecided female voters. On the subject of the security of their families (which she claimed was their “A-number 1 concern”) she said,

President Bush scores very well here because they really do see him as a strong and resolute leader. But they don’t see the same thing in John Kerry. [...] Some women said about Mr. Kerry, I don’t trust him. Some said I don’t know what it is about him; I just don’t like him. Some women said he looked sneaky. [...] Some women said he’s too rich to be president. [...] they saw President Bush [...] as very strong, very consistent, and a defender of America and American families. (Eldridge, 2004)

Throughout Security Mom news coverage, commentators and guests present the act of acceding to President Bush’s benevolent patriarchy as both inevitable and desirable, as Bush is the most trust-inspiring presidential candidate featured in these news stories whereas John Kerry is viewed with suspicion. One Security Mom with a military husband, for example, told CNN that she thought President Bush was the candidate who would do the right thing by the armed forces. She said, “in my heart I know that President Bush is looking out for these guys. I mean, in his heart he’s doing what he thinks is best” (Cable News Network, 2004). Although she wasn’t referring specifically to Security Moms, Cynthia Enloe aptly explains the phenomenon voiced by these women: “[I]t is much easier to claim the authority to speak for others if one can claim to be The Protector; it is much easier to be silenced and to accept that silencing if one absorbs the self-identity of The Protected” (2007, p. 60). Although these Security Moms are not literally silent, they cede their right to vocalize criticism when they capitulate to the paternalism of the president, who by then had accumulated a long record of intolerance to criticism of his administration (McLaren & Martin, 2004).

In this discourse, George W. Bush emerges as The Protector and Good Father, the preferred alternative to John Kerry’s First Husband. But by also mixing incestuous

metaphors and using language such as “wooing” and “courting,” the same discourse presents both Bush *and* Kerry as suitors pursuing Security Moms as if they were potential romantic partners. For example, one Fox correspondent exclaimed that “the courtship is on” (Eldridge, 2003). And on *The Early Show*, a correspondent noted that both candidates appeared with their wives in televised interviews with Dr. Phil, an effort for President Bush to “win more women over” and for Senator Kerry to “try to win them back” (Neufeld, 2004). The gendered dimension of this coverage plays into traditional expectations about male protectiveness and female vulnerability that Faludi (2007) and Enloe (2007) argue have prevailed in public discourse since September 11, 2001; the attacks of that day and responses subsequent to them reactivated and intensified a narrative in which Security Moms play the part of women seeking protection from terrorists for themselves, their children, and their country.

Enloe’s term “militarized motherhood” (2000) describes the exploitation of mothers by warmakers eager to garner ideological and material support for the armed forces – a practice that goes as far back as the Revolutionary War. Militarized mothers aid in the process of recruiting bodies to fight wars because, despite military service being imbued with resonant symbols of masculinity and national pride, military recruitment is still a difficult business – particularly with an all-volunteer military attempting to win simultaneous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (since 2004, the military has had problems meeting recruitment goals) (see Cooper & Jaffe, 2004; Moniz, 2005). Enloe argues that, historically, this situation invites “[r]ecruit-hungry government officials” to

wield more than the idea of masculinized, militarized citizenship. They have needed to craft and deploy a specially honed concept of motherhood. Designing militarized motherhood, however, also requires marginalizing or suppressing alternative notions of motherhood. (2000, p. 247)

Indeed, the 2004 Security Moms displace in news stories the once ubiquitous (and liberal) Soccer Moms, attempting to secure maternal allegiance both to the GOP and to the War on Terror. Security Moms perform as exemplary militarized mothers, exhibiting obedience to what the commander in chief asks of them and trust that he is doing what’s best for them, their loved ones, and their country. The contemporary militarized mother, however, is not asked to relinquish her children to the war effort; instead, individuals and groups ancillary to the military attempt to persuade her capitulation to the rationale underpinning the War on Terror and ideological support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is worth noting that no Security Mom in these news stories raises questions about the wars or national security policy, despite the public’s increasing skepticism and doubt about both during this time.

With respect to their children, Security Moms appear neurotically fearful. One fretted that, “I watch my kids go to school and I hope they come back” (Capus, 2004). Another echoed her paranoia, “I don’t let my kids go anyplace. I’m – you know, we’re talking about going on vacation. Where can we go? How do we get through the

airport? How do – where is a safe place?” (Neufeld, 2004). Michelle Malkin’s manifesto included this confession that showcases not only her neurosis, but also her ability to echo a Bush administration talking point (Nichols & McChesney, 2005) to connect two figures – Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein – whose alleged collusion justified war on Iraq:

I make my husband take his cell phone with him everywhere – even on a quick milk run or on a walk to the community pool. We have educated our 4-year-old daughter about Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. She knows that there are bad men in the world trying to kill Americans everywhere. [...] And at night we ask God to bless our troops as they risk their lives trying to kill the bad men before they kill us. (Malkin, 2004, p. 11A)

Security Moms thus legitimate a gated community mentality, justifying a divided society in which They (the “bad men”) are separated from Us (Americans and “our troops”), thereby minimizing the threat They pose to Us (Low, 2003, p. 139). Moreover, they set out the rationale for mothers – good mothers, that is – to deploy all those surveillance technologies marketed to quell the fears of anxious parents when they are away from their children. Katz (2001) refers to this as the “child protection industry” (p. 48), and notes that it is

part of the \$1.1 billion home surveillance industry brought about by the migration of spy technologies and logics across the domestic frontier. Its products enable parents to monitor from afar their children, childcare workers, and others interacting with their kids. (p. 48)

Security Moms voice fears that because even home is not a refuge from terrorists, mothers must be fully committed to taking every protective measure possible. Perhaps they will move to a gated community or introduce security technologies such as GPS devices in their children’s clothing (Goodman, 2007) or nanny cams (Rodino, 2005). To quell their fears, they expand their homes and childcare practices to include security technologies, thus increasing their own surveillance capabilities and optimizing their ability to protect their families. Further, these technologies potentially improve their capacity for biopower, for which they have been assigned responsibility by dint of being mothers. This news coverage thus has a dual propaganda function: to sell the so-called War on Terror and rationalize the defensive actions, services, and products perceived as necessary to metaphorically transform home into a modern fortress from which to guard against terrorists.

In addition to this performance, news media constitute Security Moms as a synecdoche for how “everything changed” for the United States after September 11, 2001; as such, they legitimate tactics used in the so-called War on Terror, including the War on Iraq and everything else falling under the sign of “security” at this historical moment. One reporter used an image evocative of the security checkpoints at airports to claim that Security Moms are on one side of a “security threshold” that

Democrats will have to “pass” before they could even hope to gain or regain Security Mom support (Guarino, 2003). During the 2006 Congressional election season, another Security Mom, this one a former co-director of the group “Security Moms for Bush,” asserts that

moms have a choice this November when they go into the voting booth. They can choose to vote for officials who have supported programs such as the NSA surveillance program, CIA detainee program or the PATRIOT Act – the programs which have made this country safe and not have an attack in five years – or they can vote for those who have sought to undermine or even rejoice when they killed those programs. (Fox Broadcasting Company, 2006)

That this Security Mom is open about her conservative political stance *and* appears on a Fox news program makes her statement predictable; what is less predictable is that this meme is woven throughout Security Mom discourse, even that emanating from purportedly nonpartisan outlets such as CBS, NBC, and PBS.

The Security Mom embodies attributes and beliefs that govern conduct by making controversial policies seem practical, rational, and sensible for women to embrace. Connecting a policy – or even a war – to maternal love justifies it, enhances its attractiveness, and dulls its controversies, which, in the case of war on Iraq, concern the grounds for conducting a preemptive war, the use of torture in interrogations, and the attempts to quash dissenting views on the war. For their potential to obscure these controversies or make them palatable, Security Moms in 2004 become part of the right’s strategy to eke out enough public support for an increasingly unpopular war to push President Bush to a second term. After the 2004 election, their reemergence in 2006, 2008, and again as Mama Grizzlies suggests a continuing need to buttress neoconservatism and cast in a positive light those Bush administration policies that have been subjected to public scrutiny and protest (e.g., the NSA’s wiretap program, to which the Security Mom above refers, was made public in December 2005 by James Risen and Eric Lichtblau of the *New York Times* – to widespread public dismay and White House chagrin). This is exemplified in a *CBS Evening News* segment on 2006 Security Moms, which introduces Julee Floyd – the main Security Mom in the piece – with this comment: “since September 11, there has been a serious side to almost every decision mom Julee makes.” Ms. Floyd elaborates: “I would say after 9/11, you know, there are all sorts of issues that you start thinking about. What if I was on that plane? What if I was on that building? What if my child ended up being in that building?” (Hartman, 2006). On *Fox News*, the former Security Mom for Bush co-captain ends her entreaty to voting mothers this way:

Look, moms have a choice: When they go to the voting booth they can choose to wake up in a country where they get up in the morning and worry about whether or not they are going to get their kids to school on time or wake up in a country like Israel, where it is a leap of faith to put their kids on the school bus every morning or take them to the pizza parlor or the mall. (Fox Broadcasting Company, 2006)

The rhetoric of choice imbues Security Moms' sentiments; in this example and elsewhere mothers can opt for the post-9/11 security state to protect children or risk the United States turning into a "country like Israel." Such a sentiment illustrates well the notion of governing conduct through choice and freedom, and it is not difficult to see that no real choice is being offered here: mothers must support the candidate and party promising to best protect their families. Rodino argues that this is how *matres bellicosae* have functioned historically, and that their contemporary incarnation as Security Moms "demonstrates the durability of maternal constructions that advocate destruction in the name of preservation" (Rodino, 2005, p. 383). Such is the paradox of the Security Mom: as she accepts war and the trappings of a security state to ensure that her children live safely, she consigns Iraqi children (and adults) to life in a war zone and all that entails.

Conclusion

The story of the Security Mom is a cautionary tale for news audiences, feminists, and anyone else concerned about achieving gender justice, for it plays a role in reproducing the (masculine) protector/(feminine) protected dichotomy that Enloe (2007) identifies. Such a dichotomy is fraught with problems, not the least of which is that the

protected's natural habitat is the domestic sphere – that is, the sphere of life where caring matters more than strategizing. Consequently, the protected is feminized insofar as the protected needs somebody who can think strategically and act in her (the protected's) best interests. (p. 61)

I would add that such a structure also vests protectors with exclusive rights to understanding national security matters, and therefore sole province over and responsibility for protecting mothers and their children – in this case, from terrorism.

Circulation of the Security Mom brand thus reproduces and rationalizes patriarchal "family values," pro-war propaganda, and maternal fearfulness that justifies Bush White House policies and politics. The corporate news media go along with assertions about Security Moms, never disclosing (and perhaps not knowing) that the source for this construction is a front group for a right-wing think tank, one that promotes Bush administration policies. The Security Mom is not the first example of a media construction being deployed to govern maternal conduct (see Douglas & Michaels, 2004, for many other examples); nor is it the only example of an attempt to militarize mothers, as Cynthia Enloe (2000) has shown. However, the Security Mom's politics of motherhood is taken up in news reports with such ease and credulity that this example should serve as a reminder to regard news constructions of motherhood with skepticism.

Such wholesale promotion of front groups' messages as news has become a common media practice, as investigative reporting budgets at many outlets have been cut to the bone if not eliminated entirely (McChesney, 2008; Potter, 2010). However, this should not excuse these outlets for being played in this way and, advertently or inadvertently, participating in the circulation of Bush administration propaganda to elicit from this target population "loyalty beyond reason." This brand is hardly a neutral description of a population's actions and beliefs; instead it accords with a controversial ideology and set of policies whose chances of acceptance by a dubious public may have benefited from being performed by mothers.

On the other hand, this case study also suggests that the maternal voting public is dubious about enlisting as Security Moms, despite Family Security Matters' best efforts to influence their hearts and minds. That is, although *news outlets* have uncritically adopted the Security Mom brand and constructed an intensive campaign around it, the women to whom this campaign was marketed appear to have been much less receptive to its claims and premises; in other words, this branding campaign was at least a partial failure. To reiterate note 3 below, Elder and Greene's election *post hoc* data analysis revealed that "[m]others, like women overall, were distinctive in being less supportive than men on most defense and war-related issues in 2004" (2007, p. 11). Their data show that the gender gap this campaign attempts to redress resisted think-tank machinations and instead remained about the same in 2004 as it had in prior election years. This is but one example from this time period that illustrates a stark difference between what the news media and the general public are willing to accept about rationales for war and national security policy. For example, while US news media beat the drums of war loudly and persistently in late 2002 and early 2003 (something that many reporters and even then Secretary of State Colin Powell have issued *post hoc* regrets about having supported [see Moyers, 2007]), protests *against* the United States going to war in Iraq erupted globally. After a weekend of such protests in February 2003, which brought hundreds of thousands of people into the streets, President Bush responded with the following: "Size of protest – it's like deciding, well, I'm going to decide policy based upon a focus group" (Purdum, 2003).

To dismiss the hundreds of thousands of people opposing war as a "focus group" expresses at the very least the anti-democratic sentiment that marked President Bush's two terms in office. But it also points to a perhaps unconscious gesture indicating the important role marketing and branding played in the Bush administration's attempts to sell the Iraq war as a product (Solomon, 2005, documents this in great detail). The Security Mom branding campaign fits in well with the larger Bush propaganda-marketing campaign, and further articulates consumerist notions of "freedom" and "choice" to war policy in an attempt to win public consent to fight a war large segments of the public opposed. Despite this brand's ultimate failure, we will doubtless witness other such attempts to exploit maternity and govern a population through bumper sticker slogans. If nothing else, this chapter suggests why we might want to look more closely at a bumper sticker with "mom" on it to discover who or what is sitting in its driver's seat.

NOTES

- 1 See Meehan (2005) for a discussion of the endurance of the metaphor of TV as a window on the world, and how TV industry economics render this view meaningless.
- 2 To be clear: I do not ascribe these qualities to women myself; rather, I provide examples from the news media's discourse about them to illustrate the assumptions conveyed about women labeled Security Moms and their political tendencies.
- 3 Political scientists Elder and Greene – who used National Election Study data from the 2004 campaign to investigate the Security Mom and NASCAR Dad constructions – conclude that there is “no support whatsoever for the idea of ‘Security Moms’” (2007, pp. 10–11). Moreover, their data show that, in 2004, women were significantly less likely than men to support increases in defense spending and spending on “the war on terror,” that women were less likely than men to think the Iraq War and the war in Afghanistan were worth it and less likely to think that the Bush administration had made the country more secure. Thus, the “Security Mom” label was not only inaccurate, it also misrepresented the position of mothers to some extent. Mothers, like women overall, were distinctive in being less supportive than men on most defense and war-related issues in 2004 (Elder & Greene, 2007, p. 11). Their study affirms the Security Mom brand's propaganda function: it attempts to mold and sculpt women's politics to adhere to Bush administration policies and the Republican National Committee's agenda as Bush (and Republicans before him since Ronald Reagan) faced the prospect of a large gender gap in the November 2004 election (Center for American Women and Politics, 2004). The fact that four years later, in 2008, these brand qualities and values could be condensed into one high-profile person – vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin, who would go on to almost single-handedly energize her party's conservative evangelical base – shows that the brand's value lay primarily in its ability to showcase and glorify the ideology of a party whose policies had grown unpopular (to say nothing of disastrous) over the preceding eight years of its dominance.

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“Honey-Drenched, Rags to Riches, Good versus Evil Stories”

The Telenovela as a Cultural Referent in the US Press

Guillermo Avila-Saavedra

ABSTRACT

A telenovela is a Latin American form of serialized television melodrama. Until recently, telenovelas were only broadcast in the United States for Spanish-speaking audiences. This essay explores how mainstream American print media framed the telenovela genre in their coverage of four telenovela adaptations broadcast in English on My Network TV (a Fox-owned station) in 2006 and 2007. The analysis helps locate the coverage of the telenovela in a larger social and cultural context. Specifically, My Network TV's telenovelas suffered from an identity crisis. They were never embraced as telenovelas by the network, they were promoted as a new US genre, and their Latino identity was never explicit enough to be relevant.

Ever since the first Spanish-language television network, SIN (Spanish International Network), started broadcasting out of Texas, California, Florida, and New Jersey in 1961 (Veciana-Suárez, 1990), Spanish-speaking audiences in the United States have been watching telenovelas. In doing so, they have been keeping a tradition shared by millions of television viewers in Latin America. In fact, this form of serialized melodrama has been the cornerstone of Latin American television since the first television adaptations of radionovelas were made in Cuba in the 1950s and were quickly exported throughout the region (La Pastina, 2004). Over several decades, the telenovela became

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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a multibillion dollar industry reaching far beyond the borders of Latin America. Mexican, Venezuelan, Brazilian, and more recently Colombian telenovelas have been dubbed and successfully exported to Europe and Asia (Mato, 2005). The global success of telenovelas can be explained on multiple levels: the universality of melodrama, the familiarity of topics, and the appeal of serialized narratives. On the other hand, in the United States telenovelas have remained mostly the privilege of Latino households. However, even if mainstream US audiences are not aware of them, the United States has been host to an extraordinary evolution of the telenovela genre.

This evolution has taken place along with the development of Spanish-language broadcasting and the growing influence and presence of Latinos in the United States. Today, in fact, some of the most successful telenovelas are produced in Miami by a subsidiary of NBC with international casts and then sold around the world (Mato, 2005). According to Sinclair (2003), the telenovela industry in Miami is “a kind of cultural equivalent of the Hollywood film industry” (p. 212) that is becoming the essence of Latino media in the United States. Moreover, telenovelas are now being adapted for English-speaking audiences by mainstream networks.

This unprecedented form of cultural crossover is illustrative of the more influential role of Latinos in the United States. The interest in adapting telenovelas for mainstream viewers is indicative of the growing influence of Latinos as producers and consumers of media. One advertising industry report claimed that “births are outpacing immigration as the main source of Latino growth, and these US-born Latinos – already 60% of all Latinos – are less likely to speak Spanish as their primary language and are better educated, higher earners and more prone to marry outside their ethnic group than the immigrant generation that preceded them” (Navarro, 2006a, p. C4). If advertising money is any indication, media analysts predict that “as technology transforms media consumption into a pull mechanism with consumers in control, we will see an explosive growth and demand for Hispanic-oriented English-language media, in all forms” (Cartagena, 2006, p. S6). One of the first indications, the first bilingual television commercial in mainstream television, aired during the 2006 Super Bowl broadcast by Toyota (Ostrow, 2006). Telenovelas broadcast in English could appeal to millions of younger second- and third-generation Latinos, while introducing a new television genre for mainstream audiences at the same time. On the other hand, how telenovelas are adapted and received by English-speaking audiences may reflect the changing status of Latinos in mainstream US society. This essay examines the origin, generic structure, cultural relevance, critical and audience reception, and eventual cancellation of four telenovela adaptations broadcast on My Network TV (a Fox-owned station) in 2006 and 2007.

The Latin American Telenovela

Broadly defined, a telenovela is a Latin American form of serialized television melodrama that always comes to a narrative conclusion. Telenovelas air five nights a week

for an average of six months. This definition resists the temptation to compare telenovelas to US soap operas with their never-ending narrative arcs or to network television prime-time dramas, which air once a week and where returning seasons are dependent upon ratings. Beyond structural differences, a telenovela can be defined in stylistic terms as well; its melodramatic tone has come to be regarded as a distinctly Latin American aesthetic. Scholars discuss the role of the telenovela as an icon of cultural identity.

Roura (1993) labels the telenovela as “the empire of the domestic” (p. 37) and identifies particular elements that characterize the genre. Traditional telenovelas require an evil female character, an “Eve,” who is usually evil beyond rationality and comprehension. Her counterpart is a “Maria,” the good female character defined as “virginal, submissive, good, loyal, naïve, fragile, and incapable of the sexual act” (Roura, 1993, p. 62). Other important elements are the male protagonist, who is often the source of female antagonism, and a setting that displays luxury in order to highlight the class differences that often prevent the protagonists from being together. Gómez (1996) articulates the themes that constitute the genre. Happiness is difficult and does not come easily, good eventually overcomes evil, the role of destiny shifts from sadistic force to provider of happiness, and the value of marriage is confirmed as a sacred reward. An interesting element of Roura’s analysis is that she defines telenovelas as a pornographic genre. She argues telenovelas are gendered texts. Just like sexual pornography is designed to stimulate and release masculine fantasies, telenovelas are designed to satisfy women’s emotional needs. This explains their popularity beyond their original contexts of production and consumption.

Defining the boundaries of the genre can be problematic for telenovela research. Traditionally all telenovelas were constructed as love stories. These days, however, telenovelas can follow the adventures of a high school class or the successes of a fashion designer. According to Acosta-Alzuru (2003b), there are two broad categories of telenovelas: the telenovela *rosa*, which focuses on the romance and misfortunes of a heterosexual couple, and the telenovela *de ruptura*, which explores social issues perceived as problematic. Mandoki (2002) identifies 15 very specific categories of telenovelas, classified by age groups and topics, although she acknowledges that they often overlap. González (1992) argues that given the lack of a proper definition of the genre, each researcher has to articulate her own. This discussion is, however, purely academic. Audiences recognize a telenovela when they see one, based on its serialized format, the recurrence of actors, and the anticipated joyous conclusion.

La Pastina (2001) identifies cultural capital as a key variable in the process of interpretation among telenovela audiences in rural Brazil. In exploring the influence of telenovelas on the working class of Brazil, Vink (1988) discusses the telenovela as a social discourse where “the dominant and best formulated discourses are those on personal and private relations: gender, love, marriage, and family; discourses on social classes and their relations are secondary” (p. 181). Acosta-Alzuru (2003a) examines a Venezuelan telenovela whose producers refuse to label it as feminist despite its innovative way of portraying gender roles. She argues that even when more positive

gender portrayals are gaining a space, telenovelas still reinforce a notion of feminism as undesirable.

González (1992) points out the need for a cultural approach in telenovela research. He argues that although telenovelas are commercial products, their real significance lies in collective and cultural interpretation. Martín-Barbero (1993) highlights the economic relevance of the telenovela, linking its commercial and cultural environments. He argues that telenovelas, with their emphasis on the dramatic elements of perceived ordinary lives, constitute a cultural defense against the increasing commodification of life. Straubhaar (1984, 1991) highlights the role of the telenovela as a form of regional cultural expression that challenges notions of US cultural imperialism and promotes a Latin American identity. In that sense, telenovelas constitute a vehicle of regional cultural identity.

Telenovelas and Cultural Identity

As discussed in the previous section, telenovelas challenge notions of cultural imperialism from the North to the South. Telenovelas are exported as a Latin American genre, but little has been said about their national identities. La Pastina, Rego, and Straubhaar (2003) attempt a classification of telenovelas according to country of origin. Mexican productions tend to have little context; Colombian telenovelas are more comic and ironic; Venezuelan productions are more emotional; and Brazilian telenovelas are the most realistic with clearer temporal and spatial contextualizations. These authors argue that telenovelas are both entertainment and information because they are producers of cultural meaning and images congruent with social processes in Latin America. According to La Pastina and colleagues (2003), it is difficult to spot future trends in telenovela research as they become more and more globally interconnected with other forms of entertainment. They argue that telenovelas are evolving to a point of “continuous re-adaptation and integration within the urban landscape they have become symbolic of” (p. 5). In other words, they believe telenovelas have the potential to promote social change and future research should focus on how audiences incorporate these narratives into their daily lives.

Acosta-Alzuru (2003b) examines a number of nontraditional telenovelas dealing with issues such as sexual harassment, domestic abuse, abortion, and homosexuality. She argues that viewers only receive as acceptable telenovela narratives those issues that have long been part of an open public debate. Telenovelas cannot freely deal with issues that are perceived to be overly controversial and have not been extensively debated. Telenovelas constitute sites of mediation between production, reception, and culture. Understanding each instance of the culture circuit provides a clearer understanding of the production of meaning out of media texts. Each instance can be studied independently but is dependent on the others. As Acosta-Alzuru notes, “these articulations are underpinned by tensions between the commercial demands

of the genre (high ratings) and the creative-ideological demands of the author" (2003b, p. 212). In other words, production and consumption are interconnected.

In her analysis of three popular Mexican telenovelas, Beard (2003) argues that because of their popularity and media monopoly, telenovelas exercise great influence on the social construction of gender and the maintenance of cultural meaning in Mexico. According to Beard, despite their perceived differences in terms of content, style, and intent, Mexican telenovelas tend to reflect images of gender, sexuality, race, and class that validate the dominant system in force. For example, she notes that the only indigenous-looking characters in telenovelas tend to be maids and household help. In terms of gender, Beard argues that telenovelas reinforce "appropriate feminine" behaviors and support the idea that "only certain forms of female behavior and appearance, only certain gendered performances, are considered normal in society" (2003, p. 82). Finally, in terms of class, Beard argues telenovelas support a capitalistic economic model by constantly "blurring the lines between advertisement and entertainment" (2003, p. 86). It is interesting to note that, according to Beard, Televisa executives reject pushing a political agenda since the network envisions telenovelas as reflecting reality rather than as educational instruments.

Because telenovelas in Mexico dominate ratings and the networks' programming, González (1992) argues that it is essential to understand the relationship audiences establish with the programs; textual analysis of telenovelas is irrelevant and inconsequential. González focuses on how audiences use telenovelas. He argues, for example, that audiences find telenovelas helpful when solving problems on issues ranging from financial decisions to childrearing. Therefore, telenovelas perform cultural and educational functions beyond their mere aesthetic or entertainment value.

On the other hand, according to Mandoki (2002), research on audience reception often ignores telenovelas' aesthetic value. Their popularity in places as far as Russia and China suggests there is something universally meaningful about them. She argues that telenovelas "need no training for appreciation, and their aesthetic value is as obvious to its fans as it's negligible to its detractors" (2002, p. 183). Mandoki wants to understand what kinds of relations are established between telenovelas and their audiences, and she concludes that telenovelas are "far from the sublime and close to the ordinary" (2002, p. 208) but have the potential to reflect situations that are relevant for their audiences and therefore an important field for exploring media's social and cultural influence.

The work of other scholars ties telenovelas' commercial logics of production with their cultural logics of consumption. Martín-Barbero (1993) argues that telenovelas are significant subjects of analysis because of their economic relevance for Latin American media industries and because of their "modeling presence" of social customs and values. He argues that the commercial success of telenovelas in Latin America is a consequence of Latin American societies' struggle between increasing commodification and loss of the melodramatic aspects of traditional culture. Telenovelas constitute a sort of weapon in this struggle. They are a defense strategy against the commodification of daily life and against the loss of identity.

Tufte (2000) argues that telenovelas are globally the most successful genre of television fiction. Through an ethnographic approach to the reception of a particular telenovela in different parts of Brazil, he argues that audiences' interpretation is the result of a negotiation between direct readings of the telenovela text and audiences' particular situations. Tufte also argues that the economic and cultural conditions in Brazil are best represented as a hybrid between tradition and modernity. Telenovelas exemplify this inherent contradiction that is part of Latin Americans' daily lives. Also in the context of Brazil, Vink (1988) examines the incredible popularity of the genre. According to Vink, telenovela narratives emphasize the characters' romantic lives and family situations, while ignoring most of the social and economic contexts where they take place. He argues that in Brazilian telenovelas, when the narrative touches on socioeconomic issues, the discourse of class is morally charged with a critical view of the upper class and an idealized view of the working class. Vink concludes that by presenting the lower economic classes as a sort of ethical ideal, telenovelas have limited capacity to promote social change.

An element of telenovela research that remains insufficiently examined relates to the reception of these programs outside of Latin America. In exploring the reception of telenovelas among Latinos in the United States, Barrera and Bielby (2001) define five specific cultural functions that telenovelas perform for Latinos in the United States: (1) recreating Latino culture; (2) providing familiar narratives; (3) offering an opportunity to hear the native language; (4) portraying more traditional gender roles that are more consistent with Latino culture and hard to find on mainstream Anglo television; and (5) providing a representation of extended families that is valued by Latinos in the United States. Barrera and Bielby conclude that telenovela audiences in the United States gain much more than entertainment; telenovelas are instrumental in "recreating and maintaining a strong cultural bond to Latin America" (2001, p. 13). However, the telenovelas included in their research are Latin American productions aired on US-based Spanish-language networks. The English-language telenovela, intended for both English-speaking Latinos and mainstream audiences, is a recent, completely unprecedented development. An understanding of telenovelas' ability to transfer across geographical and cultural borders is relevant to the core of this analysis.

International Telenovela Flow

Latin American telenovelas can be discussed as a form of resistance against cultural imperialism from US media. Due to their global popularity and economic success, telenovelas in fact represent a contra-flow media form, a concept that explains how cultural production is not limited to flow from rich to poor countries but is rather a two-way street. For example, more than half of the Eastern European television channels have Latin American telenovelas in their programming (Biltreyst & Meers,

2000), and one of the main producers in the region, Brazil's Red Globo, exports telenovelas to more than 128 countries (La Pastina, 2004). Beyond cultural and historical comparisons, the ground for Latin American telenovelas' success is economic; telenovelas are relatively inexpensive to produce compared to other foreign media products. Biltereyst and Meers believe that Latin American telenovelas should be seen as equal players in the globalized media market. Media conglomerates such as Televisa in Mexico, Red Globo in Brazil, or Venevision in Venezuela should not be considered different from US-based media corporations. According to Biltereyst and Meers, Latin American telenovela producers have clear commercial strategies by responding to an increased demand for cheap television programming. Therefore, efforts to replicate the success of telenovelas in countries outside of Latin America are tied to the telenovela's ability to provide inexpensive programming that attracts large audiences.

Examining telenovelas' global appeal, La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) argue that audiences approach media texts based on cultural proximity, defined in both geographic and linguistic terms. On the other hand, the global appeal of telenovelas beyond Latin American relative cultural homogeneity can be explained from multiple levels: the universality of melodrama, the familiarity of topics, and the cultural, historical, and linguistic similarities in Latin America (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). However, telenovelas are cultural texts and their ability to transfer across borders, without substantial adaptation, is limited. Arguably, the extreme success of telenovelas in their domestic markets can only be replicated by reproducing the genre in the specific social and cultural contexts where the television text would be consumed. That would be the commercial rationale behind the US-produced, English-language telenovela.

Mato (2002, 2005) argues that the big production centers, such as Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela, have resisted a complete cultural homogenization of their telenovelas. When distributing telenovelas in Latin America, producers still face resistance to local accents and national references. According to Mato, "the city of Miami has become consolidated as a 'territorial' point of reference for the transnationalization of [the telenovela] industry" (2002, p. 195). Miami-based telenovelas, with multinational casts and lack of specific references, appear as culturally neutral productions. Mato argues that in the context of media globalization, Miami can become the center of production of a homogenized Latin American telenovela industry. Ever since NBC purchased Telemundo in 2002 (James, 2007), the Miami-based telenovela has been replacing Latin American productions as the main source of telenovelas for Latinos in the United States. This development can also be considered the immediate precedent to the US-produced, English-language telenovela.

Despite the fact that millions of people in the United States regularly follow telenovelas, and the documented stylistic and aesthetic influence of telenovelas on US soap operas (Bielby & Harrington, 2005), until recently the telenovela genre had seldom been covered by the mainstream press. A simple LexisNexis search for the term "telenovela" in major national newspapers reveals how the number of stories

jumped to 589 in 2006 from 106 in 2005 and 149 in 2004. This sudden burst of journalistic attention was not of course gratuitous. It responded to the announcement by all the major networks of plans to adapt and develop telenovelas for mainstream, English-speaking audiences, and it took momentum with the launching of a new television network wholly devoted, at least initially, to the idea of the English-language telenovela.

My Network TV

In 2006, the invasion of the telenovela in US television seemed imminent. Several English-language telenovela plans were announced and reported in the press (Albiniak, 2006). Mexican actress Salma Hayek reached an agreement with ABC to adapt the widely successful Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty la fea* (I'm Betty, The Ugly) for mainstream audiences; the show, *Ugly Betty*, premiered in September 2006. Latina television producer Nely Galán was reportedly working on an adaptation of the novel *The Dirty Girls Social Club* by Latina author Alisa Valdes-Rodríguez as a telenovela for Lifetime (Huff, 2005). Another Latina television executive, Nina Tessler, was quoted several times working on telenovela adaptations for CBS (Fernández, 2006). However, it was a new network, born of a melodramatic, telenovela-esque saga of corporate mergers and acquisitions, that finally gave the green light to the first truly US-produced, English-language telenovelas.

In the first half of 2006, CBS Corporation and Warner Bros. decided to merge their struggling networks, UPN and WB respectively. Both UPN and WB had been created in recent years in order to target a younger, more racially diverse demographic, and both had independently delivered mediocre results to their parent companies. The result of the merger was the CW television network. Local affiliates that signed with the new network acquired the new logo and corporate image as well as the most successful programming from the deceased networks, including *America's Next Top Model*, *Smallville*, and *Everybody Hates Chris*. However, a problem arose in those markets where both UPN and WB had local affiliates. Suddenly there were local stations without network affiliation and without programming. The solution came from Fox (Bauder, 2006; James, 2006).

Because of different agreements, purchases, and mergers, the Fox network already owned several UPN local affiliates. Fox immediately announced the creation of a new network, My Network TV, to supply programming and support to all the local stations left without network affiliation after the UPN–WB merger, and hopefully to more local stations around the country. In that sense, My Network TV is innovative; it is a hybrid between a traditional network and a syndication company. For example, WPHL in Philadelphia is now called MyPHL17 and borrows the logo and image of My Network TV, while WHP in Harrisburg is still a CBS affiliate that happens to buy some of its programming from My Network TV. This identity crisis is just one of the confusing aspects of My Network TV and might explain the lack of an “About

Us” link on the company’s website. Fox announced the launching of My Network TV for September 5, 2006. Fox also announced that the cornerstone of its programming would be prime-time daily dramas with 13-week narrative arcs. The network did not publicize the fact that the scripts had been adapted from successful Latin American telenovelas. In fact, the network did not hire writers but “translators who condense and convert old telenovela scripts from Spanish to English” (Bianco, 2006a, p. E3). As far as identification is concerned, some network executives called the new shows “short dramatic series” (Elliott, 2006b). Others in the press called them really long miniseries; nobody from the network called them telenovelas, even though that is clearly what they are. Just as clear was Fox’s intention to create a new network in order to lure a particular demographic, since “telenovelas broadcast in English could appeal to millions of younger second- and third-generation Latinos who speak English more frequently than Spanish” (Elliott, 2006a). My Network TV’s offering consisted of four one-hour shows that ran in pairs between September and December 2006 and between December 2006 and March 2007 and that eventually failed to deliver the expected ratings. The shows were *Desire*; *Fashion House*; *Wicked*, *Wicked Games*; and *Watch Over Me*. This essay explores how mainstream print media framed the telenovela genre in their coverage of these telenovela adaptations. This discourse analysis helps locate the failure of these shows in a larger social and cultural context.

Methodology

Although similar in some fundamental elements, discourse analysis is more complex than content, narrative, or rhetorical analyses because it emphasizes not only the meaning of the text but also the social construction of meaning through the text (Acosta-Alzuru & Lester-Roushazamir, 2000). Therefore, language is analyzed in light of the social positions of the speakers and the relationship of power between them. MacMillan (2006) defines discourse analysis as the “broad area of language study, containing a diversity of approaches [...] and very different methodologies” to investigate the social use of language (p. 1). According to van Dijk (2001), the fundamental nature of discourse analysis is “understanding the nature of power and dominance and how discourse contributes to their production” (p. 301). Van Dijk (2001) argues that ideologies play a vital role in discourse analysis since ideologies function as interpretative frameworks that determine social attitudes and beliefs (Dellinger, 1995). Therefore, van Dijk envisions language and discourse in the same way as Stuart Hall and other cultural and media scholars envision media texts. The political, economic, social, and cultural contexts where discourse is produced and consumed are fundamental for understanding the relationship between language and power. An approach to discourse analysis that emphasizes and exposes the relationships among texts, ideologies, and cultural power has been favored by a poststructuralist, cultural studies-oriented branch of media studies. According to Fairclough

(1992), the relevance of discourse analysis is “showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief” (p. 12). He argues that discourse analysis should consider ideas and values that are both present and absent in the text.

In media studies, discourse analysis requires multiple in-depth readings of the text subject of analysis, identification of themes and categories, and the establishment of relationships between themes and the broader social and cultural contexts where the media text takes place. When analyzing media texts, the focus of discourse analysis is on social conditions and how media language legitimates social control and allocates cultural power (MacMillan, 2006). According to Fairclough (1995), media discourse should be placed in the “wider cultural context of detraditionalization and informalization which are profoundly changing traditional constructions and conceptions of self-identity” (p. 73). Discourse analysis of mediated texts is useful to reveal the larger dynamics behind the production of those texts. Acosta-Alzuru and Lester-Roushanzamir (2000) define discourse as “a system of representation in which shared meanings are produced and exchanged; discourse emphasizes relations of power while also attending to relations of meanings and the process of production and exchange are therefore ‘materialized’ within the text” (p. 307). They apply discourse analysis to their examination of the social and political dimensions of journalistic coverage during wartime, while Gavrilos (2002) applies discourse analysis to understand how news media represent and construct an ethnic community in the United States.

Analysis of the press coverage of television programs is relevant to understand the social and cultural contexts of production and reception. According to Mittell (2001), the examination of television genres requires a discursive approach that considers the different dimensions where television texts take place. Television analysis, Mittell notes,

[s]hould gather as many enunciations of the genre from the widest possible range of sources, including corporate documents, press reviews and commentaries, trade journal accounts, other media representations and the texts themselves. Linking together these numerous discourses will begin to suggest more large-scale patterns of generic definitions, meanings and hierarchies. (2001, p. 4)

Through analysis of the mainstream press coverage of each of these telenovela adaptations, this essay examines the social and cultural discursive connections around the telenovela genre present in the United States today. Discourse analysis is useful because, as stated above, it emphasizes not only the meaning of the text but also the social construction of meaning through the text (Acosta-Alzuru & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2000). The analysis focuses on the extent, tone, and intent of coverage of the telenovelas, not only as a new television genre but also as a cultural product of Latin American origin. The press articles analyzed come from six prominent

newspapers (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Tampa Tribune*, and *Houston Chronicle*), one media-related popular magazine (*Entertainment Weekly*), and one trade publication (*Broadcasting and Cable*). The newspapers were chosen either due to their national relevance or because they represent a geographic area in the country where Latinos are more numerous. All of the articles were obtained from the Lexis-Nexis database. The time frame studied ran from August 1, 2005 (shortly before the start of the 2005–2006 television season) to May 15, 2007. The search terms included “telenovela,” “my network TV,” and the program titles. Additional background and contextual information was gleaned from the network’s website descriptions of the plots and characters, weekly 10-minute recap videos posted on the network’s websites, and my own nonsystematic viewing of the programs and familiarity with some of the original Spanish-language productions.

Desire

Initially, My Network TV had announced that all their shows would take the umbrella title of *Desire*. Eventually, however, they decided to identify only their 8 to 9 p.m. show with that name. *Desire* is an adaptation of the successful Colombian telenovela *Mesa para tres* (Table for Three), produced by Caracol TV in 2004. Although several changes were made to adapt the story to the US context, the basic plot is quite simple and remains the same. Two brothers, on the run from the mob, hide in a new town and become restaurateurs; the real drama begins when they realize they are in love with the same woman (*Desire*, 2006). Even though *Desire*, being a new experiment for the network, benefits from a smaller budget than comparable prime-time shows, it is undeniable that the US adaptation has much higher production values than the Colombian original.

The adaptation of the script tends toward “Americanizing” the characters rather than the plot. The show’s director, Alex Wright, is quoted as saying that “generally Americans have less body language than Colombians do, so we have less of that; throwing your hands up in the air and saying ‘Dios mío,’ all that stuff is out” (Navarro, 2006b). However, regardless of how mainstream the characters appear, taken out of their Colombian context some elements of the plot (e.g., Colombian drug lords become New Jersey Italian mobsters; the social and cultural oddness in the United States of grown men’s extreme closeness to their mothers) seem particularly alien to US social and cultural contexts. The show performed poorly for the network; the debut obtained a 1.0 rating and the remaining episodes averaged a 0.4 rating in the key 18–49 demographic (Benson, 2006). It is never explicitly stated but the network’s intention to attract the Latino audience is obvious given the casting decisions; therefore, opportunities to draw cultural references abound. Latinos would not only be attracted presumably by the genre and plot, but they would find familiar faces among the actors as well. Tomy Dunster, who plays George Marston in the show, has appeared in the Argentinian telenovela *Rebelde way* (Rebel’s Way) and the

Mexican telenovela *Mientras haya vida* (As Long as there's Life). Eliana Alexander, who plays the brothers' mother Rita Thomas, appeared in the Miami-based, Spanish-language network Telemundo production *La ley del silencio* (The Law of Silence), broadcast in the United States and throughout Latin America in 2005.

Fashion House

The 9 to 10 p.m. timeslot in the network's initial offering was occupied by *Fashion House*, an adaptation of the Cuban telenovela *Salir de noche* (Going Out at Night), produced by ICRT (Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión). The plot revolves around the hostile takeover of a fashion company by two competing industry tycoons whose families and histories are dramatically intertwined (Fashion House, 2006). *Fashion House* was the network's safest bet due to its two big, if somewhat forgotten, stars. Bo Derek and Morgan Fairchild portray the two rival fashion gurus and there is more than enough fighting and screaming between them. As suggested by television critics (Bianco, 2006b; Shattuck, 2006), for mainstream US audiences this fictional relationship would be strongly reminiscent of that played out by Joan Collins and Linda Evans in *Dynasty* throughout the 1980s. Latino audiences, however, would also recall other memorable strong female leads in famed Latin American telenovelas, such as Lupita Ferrer's role in the 1985 Venezuelan telenovela *Cristal* (Crystal), produced by Radio Caracas Televisión, which was also set in the fashion world. Furthermore, the feisty heroine who is not afraid to throw a tantrum has had multiple incarnations in Latin American telenovelas, from 1983's *La fiera* (The Fiery One) to 1987's *Rosa salvaje* (Wild Rose) and 1985's *Las Amazonas* (The Amazons). As noted earlier, telenovelas are designed to satisfy women's emotional needs (Roura, 1993), so overly dramatic, emotional female characters are recurring elements of Latin melodrama, from Mexican telenovelas to Almodóvar's award-winning films. In *Fashion House*, Cuban American actress Natalie Martínez, as the frustrated fashion designer Michelle Miller, also adds to the Latino flair. *Fashion House* performed only slightly better than *Desire*, averaging a 0.6 rating throughout the show's 13-week run (Benson, 2006).

Wicked, Wicked Games

Even if publicly disappointed by its first shows' performance, My Network TV, and implicitly Fox, bet on a second two-show round of English-language telenovelas from December 2006 to March 2007. The 8 to 9 p.m. timeslot of the second offering was occupied by *Wicked, Wicked Games*, an adaptation of the 1998 Venezuelan telenovela *Aunque me cueste la vida* (Though It Might Cost Me My Life), produced by RCTV (Radio Caracas Televisión). The plot is a story of revenge. A woman (played by Tatum O'Neal) is rejected by the object of her infatuation; she returns 25 years later,

rich, beautiful, and powerful, to take revenge. She plans to use her innocent twin sons to seduce the daughters of her former lover and take control of his possessions. Her plans fall apart as the youngsters fall genuinely in love (*Wicked, Wicked Games*, 2006). This is the one show that lacked explicit Latino appeal. None of the cast members is Latino and the business-like setting feels alien to the core of the story. In fact, some stylistic elements of the plot were severely toned down for mainstream audiences. In the original telenovela, the story of revenge took place in a context of magic spells and gypsy curses, elements that are completely absent in the US version. However, these changes work against the adaptation since such a wicked thirst for revenge, witch-like laughs and evil stares included, appears disproportionate in the context of profit margins and stock values provided by the show. *Wicked, Wicked Games* performed just as disappointingly as the previous shows, averaging a 0.7 rating throughout its run (Benson, 2006).

Watch Over Me

The 9 to 10 p.m. timeslot in the second round of English-language telenovelas was taken by *Watch Over Me*, an adaptation of the Argentinian telenovela *Resistiré* (I Will Resist), produced by Telefe in 2003. In 2006, Televisa produced its own adaptation for the Mexican market titled *Amar sin limites* (To Love without Limits). The plot is a love triangle. Julia (Dayanara Torres), “an alluring graduate student and rare beauty” (*Watch Over Me*, 2006), is engaged to a wealthy man involved in criminal activities that she ignores. Julia falls unexpectedly in love with a poor but honest man. Because of her engagement, she struggles to keep her feelings secret until the true nature of her fiancé is revealed. Of all the My Network TV shows, *Watch Over Me* has the most explicit Latino appeal. Dayanara Torres might appear as a newcomer to mainstream US audiences, but US Latinos would remember her as the 1993 Miss Universe from Puerto Rico who went on to star in multiple telenovelas and married and divorced singer Marc Anthony. Furthermore, her character, Julia Rivera, is clearly identified as Latina while both her love interests are Anglo men. The Latina/ Anglo love ensemble has been a rare occurrence on mainstream television. In addition, Julia’s openly gay brother Ryan was played by Omar Avila, who was recently seen by Latino audiences in the 2005 Venezuelan telenovela *Soñar no cuesta nada* (*It Doesn’t Cost Anything to Dream*), produced by Venevisión and broadcast in the United States on the Spanish-language network Univision. Colombian-born actress Catalina Rodríguez and Mexican American actor Tony Castillo also had recurring roles in the show. However, *Watch Over Me* performed just as poorly as its predecessors and its final episode marked, at least for the time being, the end of telenovelas as the cornerstone of My Network TV’s programming.

On March 1, 2007, just days before the final episodes of *Wicked, Wicked Games* and *Watch Over Me*, My Network TV announced it was abandoning the telenovela format. The shows were replaced by two weekly serialized dramas, *American Heiress* and

Saints & Sinners, and the rest of the programming schedule was filled with movies and sports shows. In February 2009 My Network TV announced it was moving from a network model into a hybrid programming service (Malone, 2009). Under this model, My Network TV provides only limited prime-time programming to its affiliates, which need to turn to syndication services to fill their schedules. Currently the network offers no original fictional programming. The consequences of the failure of My Network TV's English-language telenovelas are significant. In a media market where more and more networks and cable channels compete for the same advertising money, other networks are unlikely to repeat the telenovela experiment. Furthermore, even if these telenovela adaptations were not explicitly targeted to Latinos, the alleged influence of bilingual Latinos as a media audience is now questionable. The failure of a new television genre takes on social and cultural dimensions.

The mainstream press followed the birth, troubled life, and apparent demise of the English-language telenovela with much interest. The importation and adaptation of television genres or programs is not necessarily big news. Adaptations of reality television shows like *Big Brother* and *American Idol* as well as of comedies like *The Office* and dramas like *Queer as Folk* have made their way from Europe without much fanfare. After all, Europe has always been a cultural referent in the United States, and audiences are not likely to even be aware of the precedence of television concepts. That is certainly not the case for the importation of telenovelas from the South because it represents a little reminder that cultural currents actually run both ways. Therefore, the idea of a US-produced, English-language telenovela is not something that goes easily unnoticed for critics or audiences. According to González (1992), telenovelas require no definition since Latin American audiences recognize one when they see one. Mainstream audiences, however, are not familiar with telenovelas, and the proper introduction of a new idea always requires a definition. Like any media text, telenovelas constitute sites of mediation between production, reception, and culture. Therefore, the style and tone chosen by the mainstream press to define the telenovela for the greater public are illustrative of their approach to the whole collection of people, cultural meanings, and social conventions that the idea of an English-language telenovela represents. Based on a discourse analysis of mainstream US press coverage of these programs, I have identified the following themes: (1) a devaluing of the telenovela genre and (2) the use of the telenovela as a cultural proxy for Latinos.

Devaluing the Telenovela Genre

Definitions of the telenovela found in the press are relevant precisely because they are not academic definitions. Arguably, television critics in newspapers and magazines exercise more influence on the public's appreciation of the new genre than culture and media scholars. Interestingly enough, in the US mainstream press telenovelas are defined either in reference to or in opposition to soap operas and recent serialized

prime-time dramas. Even though “any channel surfer can see that Latino prime-time dramas have more oomph than that yanqui ‘Days of Our Lives’ fuss” (de la Torre, 2005), most critics find the telenovela/soap opera reference useful. Therefore, in the words of newspaper television critics, telenovelas can simply be “melodramatic soap operas that are hugely popular on Spanish-language networks” (Levin & Bianco, 2006) or, more explicitly, “telenovelas are melodramatic, episodic TV programs, broadcast in Spanish, that combine elements of soap operas, mini-series and serialized shows like ‘Dynasty’ and ‘Desperate Housewives’” (Elliott, 2006a). In obvious and sarcastic reference to some less than memorable television shows, an *Entertainment Weekly* television critic thinks of telenovelas as “Aaron Spelling suders on speed” (Bierly, 2006). (Spelling was the producer of such 1980s prime-time soap operas as *Melrose Place* and *Beverly Hills, 90210*.) An interesting aspect of this approach to defining telenovelas is that it does not acknowledge telenovelas’ influence on recent serialized television programming in the United States. *Desperate Housewives* is an obvious reference to define telenovelas precisely because the show, and other recent serialized programs, borrows heavily from the Latin American genre and not the other way around (Thottam, 2006).

When it comes to style and aesthetics, some definitions border on offensive while somehow remaining just playful. In such cases, telenovelas are “saucy, spicy, campy soap operas” (McDaniel, 2005) or “sex-drenched stories centered on impossible love affairs, implacable enemies and insoluble family problems” (Elliott, 2006a, p. C6). Although similar notions of the genre have long been held by Latin American scholars and critics, in the context of the US mainstream press they take on a different connotation. By obvious association, they reinforce stereotypes of Latinos as overly sexual, overly emotional, family-centered people. Saucy and spicy are not necessarily bad characteristics, but they tend to portray Latinos as one-dimensional and predictable.

Culturally sensitive approaches tend to be the exception and are mostly found in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Other sources’ definitions can take a very negative tone. Again, it is worth considering that these definitions are more than media reviews, they are also harsh evaluations of a foreign culture. It is only the fact that they are dealing with television shows that frees these critics from the political correctness of US journalism. Very condescendingly, a telenovela can be described as “a steamy low-budget soap opera genre that has become the staple of television programming in Spanish-speaking countries” (Carter, 2006), “over the top and unintentionally comedic,” “produced dirt-cheap” (Levin, 2006, p. 1D), as simple as “honey-drenched, rags to riches, good versus evil stories” (Porter, 2005, p. AR1), and consist of “heaving bosoms, breathless dialogues and betrayal” (Whoriskey, 2006, p. A1). A devastating definition describes the “classic conventions of the genre” as follows:

Scenes are videotaped; unhappy couples consult priests as well as therapists; men and women alike weep big, glistening glycerin tears of rage and sorrow; the maid wears a starched apron and uniform; the villain cackles; and the music is as exaggeratedly melodramatic and campy as a soap opera parody on “The Carol Burnett Show.” (Stanley, 2006, p. E3)

This expert assessment suggests not only a lifetime of telenovela watching, but also an absoluteness that finds nothing salvageable in telenovelas, not even the campiness others celebrate. If telenovelas are no better than parodies of soap operas, an already underappreciated genre, the obvious question is why would anyone want to reproduce such bad television in the United States? Starting with this rhetorical question as an assumption, it is fair to say that journalistic assessment of My Network TV and the first English-language telenovelas was hardly objective. With an average circulation of 2.3 million and claiming more than 4.3 million readers (*USA Today*, 2007), *USA Today* is the nation's top-selling newspaper. Given its wide reach and presumed lack of regional flavor, arguably *USA Today* represents the average, mainstream cultural taste of people in the United States. Therefore, the assessment of the newspaper's media critic, Robert Bianco, is particularly relevant. Bianco is at best skeptical of the English-language telenovela:

We can debate forever whether there's a prime-time audience for telenovelas in English. (Isn't part of their appeal to a Spanish-speaking audience precisely the fact that they're in Spanish?) Even so, in the countries where the genre is big, one assumes the shows are able to attract correspondingly big talent. Here not so much. (2006b, p. 3D)

At worst, he appears derisive. Speaking about the translation of telenovela scripts into English, Bianco notes, "one can only hope the scripts have lost something in the translation – though my guess is they would be awful in everything from English to Esperanto," and then concludes, "think of the most incompetent soap opera you've ever seen, imagine something even worse, and there you have My Network TV" (2006a, p. E3). At least from the perspective of *USA Today*, which echoes throughout coverage from other sources, the failure of the network seems to have been both expected and desired.

The Telenovela as Cultural Proxy

Some television critics attempt a more sophisticated approach and try to locate telenovelas within a cultural and social context. Navarro, of the *New York Times*, explains that for US Latinos telenovelas "function like a kind of cultural touchstone" and that even bilingual Latinos follow them because they show "a Hispanic presence not found in most English-language programming" (2005, p. AR1). Telenovelas are part of a Latino heritage. Sometimes critics define telenovelas not by comparing them to soap operas but by their unique characteristics. They quote network executives praising telenovelas' "rich cinematic look" (Elliott, 2006b, p. C8) and "crazy, fun, dramatic and melodramatic" narratives (Bierly, 2006). Navarro concludes, rather ominously, that "the genre is so distinctive that some say it is better left alone" (2006b). However,

even culturally aware critics work with a rather limited definition of the telenovela, and a variation of the genre that is very popular and deals with historical and political issues is never commented on.

Even if assuming that media critics cannot greatly influence the tastes or media consumption of US audiences, their opinions are still relevant. Media critics represent the voice of the mainstream press, an important social institution. Arguably, critics do not approach a media text in isolation, but rather within a social and cultural context. Television critics found problems in almost every aspect of the telenovelas, from the music – “this Americanized melodrama is underscored – but mainly undermined – by mournful pop tunes” (Stanley, 2006) – to the production values, evidently inferior to other network prime-time dramas (Cridlin, 2006). Even the name chosen for the network created suspicion (really a spinoff of another Fox-related venture, the My Space website). Some wondered if the name was too explicitly Latino, given the tendency to use the possessive to signal that something is meant for exclusive consumption by US Latinos, as in “tu canal” or “nuestro canal” (“your station” or “our station”) often seen in Spanish-language television stations. The obvious implication, even before the shows premiered, is that mainstream audiences will feel alienated. The fear of Latino influence is also evidenced by the use of Spanish in several of the shows’ reviews, for example: “it will be *muy interesante* to see whether this import will prove mainstream enough [and can] deliver *la pasión* in English” (Treviño, 2006, p. 11A). Arguably, such use of Spanish highlights the foreign nature of telenovelas with an emphasis on cultural stereotypes.

However, most critics took issue, perhaps rightly so, with the shows’ poor writing and acting. Speaking of the shows’ supposed cliffhangers, Bianco (2006c) comments: “Can you stand the suspense? Yeah, odds are you can” (p. 10D). On the other hand, even critics who tried to explain the failure of US-produced, English-language telenovelas by the inability of the network to respect the essence of the genre in the adaptation process end up, perhaps unconsciously, undermining the genre itself. Stanley notes:

“Desire” and “Fashion House” try to follow their Spanish-language models more faithfully and falter. If nothing else, they prove that some things are good because they are bad. These seek to freshen the Latin prototype with more expensive cinematography and hipper music and are, of course, much worse. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but sincere imitation is downright insulting. (2006, p. E3)

The argument here is multifold. Media reviews are critical of these adaptations for being poorly made, but they are also critical of the telenovela genre in general. More importantly, by constantly highlighting the telenovela origin and popularity in Latin America, arguably media critics in the mainstream press are critical of the discerning taste of Latinos as a cultural group.

Discussion

In the introduction to her latest book, *Once upon a Quinceañera: Coming of Age in the USA*, author and essayist Julia Alvarez (2007) answers the question, what exactly is a quinceañera?, by saying, “the question might soon be rhetorical in our quickly Latinoizing American culture” (p. 2). Arguably, the same can be said about telenovelas. The question, what exactly is a telenovela?, might soon be a rhetorical one. If only for that reason, the recent inauspicious foray into the English-language telenovela has had profound implications. An important element of Latino culture is becoming common cultural currency in mainstream US society. On the other hand, the failure of My Network TV’s telenovelas is disquieting on its own merits.

An advertising executive quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* on the potential of English-language telenovelas states that “everyone is curious to see how this will play out; it defies all the conventions that make network television work” (James, 2006). She goes on to consider whether audiences would rather see “more sophisticated narratives.” It is fair to say that the My Network TV telenovela adaptations were clumsily done, poorly acted, and insufficiently promoted, which at least partly explains the overwhelmingly negative reviews they received in the press. Furthermore, the programs’ failure might be the result of some self-fulfilling prophecy of low expectations. Supposedly excited about the new shows, even network executives cannot help conceal their condescension toward the genre. Bob Cook, president of Twentieth Television, a division of Fox in charge of the telenovelas’ production, is quoted as saying that “there are some very popular telenovelas that we did not option; the reason is because they were too corny, too over-the-top, too overstated and didn’t adapt well to American sensibilities” (Bauder, 2006, p. 6). One wonders if the same contempt for television audiences in Latin America tainted the network’s evaluation of the particular US demographic they were trying to attract. Arguably, the network based its bet not on the genre’s strengths but on a perceived lack of sophistication on the part of the audience. Audiences did well, then, by responding less than enthusiastically.

In light of all the evidence, are we supposed to conclude that over the span of a few months we have witnessed the rise and fall of the US-produced, English-language telenovela? Other evidence suggests a more nuanced evaluation. My Network TV is a new network, with limited budgets, a handful of local affiliates, and no name recognition in an already cluttered media landscape. It does not seem fair to lay the blame for the failure entirely on the genre or the concept. Another interesting piece of evidence has to do with regional differences in audience reception. According to Hibberd (2006), the shows performed a lot better in New York, averaging ratings of 1.8, than in California, where shows averaged an almost invisible 0.2 rating. This information raises important questions about the cultural tastes and social dynamics in different parts of the country. Answers to these questions might suggest a better

timing and more effective promotion strategies for future English-language telenovela projects.

Besides its commercial failure, the English-language telenovela, as adapted by My Network TV, also failed to engage in a discussion about the status of Latinos in US society. These telenovelas failed to create a direct connection with Latino audiences while attracting mainstream audiences at the same time. They failed to raise important social and political issues about Latinos and did not produce iconic or memorable media images for US Latinos. In terms of the hybridization of US television, these telenovelas failed to show the potential of Latin American genres. Arguably, these English-language telenovelas were mere translations with only superficial nods at cultural adaptation. In summary, My Network TV's telenovelas suffered from an identity crisis. They were never embraced as telenovelas by the network, they were promoted as a new US genre, and their Latino identity was never explicit enough to be relevant. On the other hand, another recent and more critically and commercially successful hybrid show such as *Ugly Betty* on ABC (another telenovela adaptation) may be a better reflection of the aesthetic and cultural influence that Latin American genres may exercise on US television. Cultural hybridization has little to do with imposing cultural products "as is," but a lot to do with borrowing, adding, mixing, and blending. These new shows stress the need for and point in the direction of further research of hybrid US Latino television programming. This kind of scholarship is clearly relevant, given the growing influence of US Latinos as producers and consumers of media, and the inherent power of television to symbolically articulate negotiations for social and cultural power.

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Changes in the News Representation of Minorities Over the Course of 40 Years of Research

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ABSTRACT

Much attention has been given by media researchers to the news representation of minorities over the last four decades. Numerous studies over the years have shown that the coverage of minorities in the news is rife with negative stereotypes and generalizations. This chapter aims to discuss major issues and questions raised by analyzing trends in 40 years of studies of news representation of minorities. These include: What is the image of minorities in the news? Why is the news coverage of marginal groups so biased and which factors explain their coverage patterns? How and why has the image of minorities changed over the years? Which theories and research methods were used in order to analyze the news representation of minorities? And how do the leaders of minority groups and regulators work to change the negative stereotypes and the problematic images of minority groups in the news?

Much scholarly and public attention has been devoted to the news representation of minorities and socially marginal groups over the last four decades. Numerous studies over the years have shown that the coverage of minority and marginal groups in the news is rife with negative stereotypes and generalizations. Just as directors, producers, casting people, and advertisers have “reserved” certain problematic roles for

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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minorities in movies, TV series, and advertisements, journalists and news editors have tended to associate members of minority groups primarily with negative events, behaviors, and topics such as crime, poverty, and disorder. Nevertheless, although the image of minorities and marginal groups is still problematic, several researchers claim that during the last two decades positive changes have occurred in the image of certain groups (Avraham & First, 2010b; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

Grounded in the concern that negative media images result in negative public perceptions, in recent decades minority group activists have been working to challenge media stereotypes and to improve the portrayals/coverage of their groups. In addition, during recent decades regulators – primarily in various European countries – have begun to take steps to promote less stereotyped representation of minority groups, and to encourage a fairer reflection of cultural diversity in the national media, either by legislation or by benefits and incentives for media franchisees, editors, and producers (ter Wal, 2002).

By analyzing trends in 40 years of studies of news representation of minorities, the goal of this chapter is to discuss five major questions: (1) What is the image of minorities in the news? (2) Why is the news coverage of marginal groups biased, and which factors explain their coverage patterns? (3) How and why has the image of minorities in the news changed over the years? (4) Which theories and research methods were used in order to analyze the news representation of minorities? (5) How do the leaders of minority groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social change organizations, and regulators work to change the negative stereotypes and the problematic image of minority groups in the news? While diversity can be defined in various ways – race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, nationality, sexuality, and so on – in this chapter I would like to concentrate on social/national/racial/ethnic minorities. This is not to imply that the study of news representations of other marginal groups is not warranted, but rather that space limitations for this project preclude being more inclusive.

Representation and Shaping Our Perception of the World

Over the years, scholars have studied the media's power and effect on the social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. For example, Hoare (1991) argues that newspapers' mass circulation makes them a powerful, aggressive agent, and that they translate this power into decisions regarding what to cover (or not to cover), what significance will be given to various stories, and what will be the direction or judgment of the events. Other scholars have argued that journalists' influence lies in their role as "gatekeepers" who have the power to decide what events become news, thereby determining what the public will read, hear, or see (Shoemaker, 1991; Tuchman, 1978; Walmsley, 1982). Whatever the case may be, it is a well-established

fact that the media construct our reality regarding the events happening around us (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Avraham, 2003; Cohen & Young, 1981; Weimann, 2000).

The media provide us with “social knowledge” about our world; they paint our social and cultural landscape in a way that serves as a basis for the formation of personal identity and the distinction between us and others (Jakubowicz, Goodall, Marin, Mitchell, Randall, & Seneviratne, 1994). The belief that media images can shape our perception of reality and our behavior is one of the main reasons why so many activists, scholars, spokespeople, and researchers focus their attention on media images and call for changes in media representation of certain groups.

According to Tuchman (1978), news is socially constructed through well-recognized frameworks that are influenced by the routines through which reporters gather, filter, and judge information, a fact that has been documented by numerous other scholars (e.g., Avraham, 2003; Crane, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). News production is not merely a process of gathering information, writing, editing, and reporting on major events and different groups (van Dijk, 1988a). Cultural, social, economic, and professional constraints affect the news production process (Hackett, 1984; Hall, 1977; Tuchman, 1978; van Dijk, 1988b). Therefore, at the base of the social construction of reality lies the claim that the news is not an objective means of *portraying* reality, but rather a means of *constructing* reality (Tuchman, 1978). The news production process creates a singular version of “reality” through the amplification, sensationalization, and polarization of ideas and images within a limited, well-defined range (Waitt, 1995). The news creates and reinforces labels for groups, places, events, and situations (Avraham, 2000, 2003; Davis, 1990; Wolfsfeld, Avraham, & Aburaiya, 2000).

News content reinforces existing attitudes toward and beliefs about groups, places, and issues in three ways: selective exposure, selective perception, and selective memory. When an individual has little or no real-world contact with the members of another social group, the media provide basic information that constructs that group’s stereotype and image (Dahlgren & Chakrapani, 1982; Gold, 1994). The images of groups, places, and issues are based on knowledge, and the more knowledge a person has, the more accurate his or her perception of the group, place, or issue generally will be (Gold, 1994; Kariel & Rosenvall, 1978). The media dependency hypothesis predicts that the media’s influence on perceptions of social reality decreases when a person has personal experience related to the covered phenomenon (Perry, 1987). An individual learns through the media what significance he or she should ascribe to different groups, places, and issues with which he or she has no contact. It is because of this power, Walmsley (1982) believes, that the media are an effective instrument of social control.

Representation of Minorities in the News

Numerous studies have shown that the coverage of minority and marginal groups in the media is problematic. These studies, conducted mainly in the United States

and Europe, have proven time and again that the representation of these groups in advertising, news, film, and television has been meager, and that when they have been covered, many have been marginalized and stereotyped (Avraham et al., 2000; Downing & Husband, 2005; Lahav & Avraham, 2008). Van Dijk (1996) argues that the news plays a major role in the creation of ethnic relations. He believes that journalists present ethnic groups as “them,” and thus define those who belong to the collective and those who do not (Lundby, 1992). Jakubowicz and colleagues (1994) argue that “othering” certain groups and creating the image of the “other” as a threat allows “us” to determine what “we” are not.

Researchers who have studied the news coverage of minority groups have found that in most instances there has been a tendency to ignore minority groups or to portray them negatively – what has been called “symbolic annihilation” (Tuchman, 1978). Such coverage implies that the “other” represents a threat to social order. In addition, implicit in this coverage is the notion that minorities are to blame for society’s economic and social maladies, which are a result of the fact that “they” are different from “us.” The description, coverage, and portrayal of the “other” in the news, whether based upon religious, national, ethnic, or other differences, is attended in many countries by the widespread use of generalizations, stereotypes, and prejudices. Ignored are the background, causes, and social-political context that have led to the difficulties and crises involving minorities in many areas (Avraham, 2003; Avraham & First, 2010b; Downing & Husband, 2005; First, 2002; Jakubowicz et al., 1994).

Research has shown that leaders of many social groups are disturbed by their group’s news image (Avraham, 2003), but the question remains how we can analyze and compare the coverage patterns of minorities. Several researchers have made considerable contributions to the study of coverage of groups. Among them are Strauss (1961) and Gould and White (1986), who argue that the news image of a group can be examined only by means of comparison with that of other groups. Comparisons of different groups are based on quantitative measures (more, less) or on criteria for the contrast between or the similarity of the groups compared. When the metaphor used is “development,” groups are described in the context of the point they have reached in the life cycle. “They” are more (or less) modern, more (or less) settled, more (or less) advanced than “we” are. Thus, the ways in which the news chooses to cover certain groups can lead to the formation of “us” and “them” identifications (Anderson, 1988; Avraham, 2000; van Dijk, 1988a). As a result, “proof” of the developmental levels of different groups is provided by the selection of events that receive coverage (Avraham, 2003; Dahlgren & Chakrapani, 1982; Strauss, 1961).

“Symbol,” “stereotype,” “label,” and “reputation” are the main concepts used when examining group image in the news media. When a group is labeled as one in which certain types of events and activities occur, it becomes a “symbol” of these activities. As a result, other events related to the social group are not covered (Shields, 1992). Strauss (1961) defines this phenomenon as “reputation” and argues that the tendency to speak stereotypically of social groups persists so that even if changes in the real-life situation of these groups occur, they are not reflected in the media

coverage patterns (Elizur, 1994; Graber, 1989). Shields (1992) adds that the myth created regarding a certain group can persist for years, whether it is favorable or not. For example, Burgess (1982) notes that local municipal leaders in northern England believe they must still combat stereotypes persisting from the nineteenth century concerning their way of life. As soon as events are covered that serve to describe certain groups' behavior patterns, their image is created accordingly.

According to Epstein (1973), editors' and reporters' stereotypes become self-perpetuating when their past experiences influence their choice of future stories to cover. Relph (1976) claimed that images of groups in the news are transferred through what he called "opinion makers" and distributed by journalists via use of stereotypes. Usually the news reflects stereotypes that already exist in society and the public, while giving them much broader distribution and a means of continuity from generation to generation (Gans, 1979; Gould & White, 1986; Pike, 1981). Elizur (1994) commented that the centrality of television in our lives during the previous decades increased the creation of stereotypes of groups, places, and subjects covered. Stereotypes and distortions result when television news covers crises in which minorities are involved through short, highly superficial reports that lack both background and commentary.

Theory and Methodology in Research of News Representation of Minorities

Studies that focus on news images of minorities have employed several theories – with or without the aid of conceptual approaches such as ideological critique, feminism, semiotics, and psychoanalytic theory – and research methods. Here, first, I would like to concentrate on three central theories: representation and media frames (both of which are linked to the social construction of reality attitude), and organizational theory; second, I would like to briefly discuss research methods used by researchers in the field.

Representation Theory

One of the main theories used by researchers in order to conduct studies dealing with the image of minorities is representation theory. In the beginning of this research the term "representation" was mostly used to signal the presence or absence of people of color in the media, or constructive versus unconstructive portrayals (Downing & Husband, 2005). Later, however, Hall (1997, p. 15) asserted that representation means "using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to 'Other' people." According to Hall, "representation is an essential part of a process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between

members of a culture” (Hall, 1997, p. 15). At the core of representation theory lies the constructionist approach, which is derived from the phenomenological approach and serves as its point of departure. This theory is influenced by the input of social-political reality, symbolic reality, and the interaction between them. Representation is considered as both a process of ongoing construction of identities in any given culture and a stereotyping force (van Dijk, 1996). Stereotyping “reduce[s] people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by nature” (Hall, 1997, p. 257). Thus, stereotyping fixes differences. Moreover, stereotyping deploys a strategy of “splitting”: it separates the normal and acceptable from the abnormal, and then excludes or expels what does not fit or is different. Because it tends to occur in situations involving power inequities (Dyer, 1993; Hall, 1997), stereotyping as a classification system serves to maintain the social and symbolic order.

At least three dimensions are relevant when examining a group’s place in any given society. The first dimension is the very existence of the group in the media; due to society’s power hierarchy, media access is not available to weak groups (First, 2002; van Dijk, 1996). Empirical examinations of a group’s presence in media content, or a “head count” (Greenberg & Brand, 1994), is used to study the representation of “the other.” A second dimension is the quality of how a group is represented in the media. Researchers analyze variables such as the professional-social role that the “others” play in texts, the subjects to which they are connected, the contexts in which they appear, and so forth (First, 2002; Greenberg & Brand, 1994). A third dimension is the reciprocal relationship between members of the majority and minority groups. In news programs and talk shows, for instance, this relationship is measured by examining the characteristics of the journalists, moderators, and commentators, and their relationships with members of various groups (Avraham, 2003; Avraham & First, 2010a).

Symbolic annihilation (Tuchman, 1978), another angle of representation measurement, is divided into quantitative and qualitative indicators (Kama, 2002). While the quantitative aspect is similar to the “head count” approach, the qualitative one refers to the role of the “other.” Yet this category is incomplete without the added element of identity. According to this approach, the identity of any individual is her/his biography (name, age, residence, occupation, title, and so forth); a deprivation of one’s biography amounts to objectification (First, 1998). Finally, the interaction between members of majority and minority groups may operate through two mechanisms: inclusion and exclusion, as discussed below. Beyond the question of whether the characters that belong to different social groups appear in broadcasts, it is also imperative to relate to the quality of the characters’ representation, the way they appear, and the context in which they appear (Greenberg & Brand, 1994).

Media Frames

As with representation theory, at the core of media framing theory lies the constructionist approach, which is derived from the phenomenological approach and serves as their point of origin. Both theories are influenced by the input of social-political reality

as well as symbolic reality and the interaction between the two. Moreover, framing specifically is the outcome of modes of representation, and vice versa. Both theories are fundamental parts of a process whereby meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture in these two realities. Despite the two theories' similar origins, the research dealing with representation has focused until now primarily upon the coverage patterns of minorities and marginal groups in media content. Research on framing, on the other hand, lately relates more to organizational levels (Avraham, 2003; Avraham & First, 2010b; Wolfsfeld, 1997; Wolfsfeld et al., 2000).

The discussion of media frames constitutes the link between various fields of research regarding representation, or, in other words, between processes and products, because a dialectical relationship exists between the two. While different definitions of media frames exist (e.g., Gamson, 1989; Gitlin, 1980), all suggest that framing involves the placing of "facts" or components perceived as "reality" inside frames that provide coherence, through a causal explanation, a moral statement, or a recommendation for a solution. A media frame can be identified through journalists' use of metaphors, key sentences, and symbolic verbal and graphic means, with various people and interest groups constantly battling for control over media frames most suitable to their needs. According to Liebes (1997), framing includes the following mechanisms: excising, sanitizing, equalizing, personalizing, demonizing, and contextualizing.

The media carry out their role as ideological instruments by shaping, distributing, and reproducing the limits of legitimate discourse. News people make use of available framing mechanisms and social-cultural codes to turn uncommon, extraordinary events into understandable media events (Gitlin, 1980). Media organizations are constantly involved within a changing social-political environment, making representation a dynamic process. In this environment, cultural suppositions regarding society's central values influence journalists' work patterns, news production processes, and the end result (First, 2002; Gitlin, 1980; Herzog & Shamir, 1994). Journalists thus prefer stories that are recognized as efficient and receive professional approval, as well as stories that are culturally acceptable. Editors are influenced by the perceptions they hold of their target audience, and they tend to believe that the majority group has little interest in minorities unless their actions might interfere with the majority's day-to-day life (First, 2002). Wolfsfeld and colleagues (2000), for example, show how the annual protest day observed by some Arabs in Israel was framed in the Hebrew national media as a threat under the "law and order" frame. This is a classic example that illustrates the effect of journalists on the interpretation of events and the construction of reality. Reporters and editors could easily have framed the events as a request for equality, but instead chose to frame them in a negative way.

Organizational Theory

One of the key concepts to understand how media outlets construct representation of different groups is "access." Barzel (1976) defines this term as the freedom of a non-media-related person to reach the media. In other words, how easy is it for any

individual in society to make his/her opinions or actions public knowledge through the media? Barzel argues that it is a media employee who decides who will be granted this access, and that this decision is dependent on external and internal factors (Avraham, 2003). In other words, media decision-makers such as editors, journalists, producers, and TV anchors facilitate access for some groups, offering them presence and extensive, favorable coverage, thus legitimating their status and power. Other groups are not given access; these same groups also receive little attention in social life (van Dijk, 1996). Therefore, people who do not belong to the elites or to powerful social groups are the subjects of news coverage only when they are involved in political activities or become victims of disaster or crime. Issues and players on the national news scene reflect a country's power and control structure (Avraham, 2003; van Dijk, 1996).

Organizational theory emphasizes the role of the media organization as a central component of the media process that is influenced by various factors and constraints shaping its image and work routines. In order to better understand this role, the whole news production process is analyzed. During this process, one can see how professional and cultural assumptions are "translated" into news production conventions that affect the image of different groups. The daily race for stories and sources, along with the fact that reporters and editors usually work under severe time constraints, does not enable newspeople to think about the political and social consequences of their actions. Decisions regarding coverage patterns are made automatically and are based on news construction routines. The use of the term "construction" indicates that news stories are produced within a certain narrative frame that places events in specific social, economic, and political contexts.

Research Methods

Studies that have analyzed news images of minorities have used diverse research methods over the years. These studies have moved from news coverage patterns analysis to organizational research and lately also to policy analysis. Studies on news coverage patterns mainly used qualitative and quantitative content analysis, while organizational studies used in-depth interviews of journalists and leaders of minority groups, concentrating on analyzing the media routines and their effect on social groups' news images. In the next stage we find studies that measure the effect of regulatory policy on the image of social groups. Although qualitative and quantitative analyses are still popular among researchers, organization and policy analyses focus on the reasons for the problematic news representation and steps made to improve it. It appears that a combination of several research methods might lead to a better understanding of social groups' media images and the factors behind them.

Content Analysis

The research methods, as mentioned by Downing and Husband (2005), that have been applied to content analysis range from the heavily quantitative to the strictly

qualitative. In other words, there are two dimensions to deal with news coverage patterns of social groups: nature and quantity (Avraham, 2003; Manheim & Albritton, 1984). The quantity dimension refers to the amount and visibility of coverage the group receives in the news media. Factors examined include details such as the number of reports or photos of the group, on what page or in which section the articles appear, the article's size (in the press) or the length of the report (in TV news), and so forth. But we know that it is not only the amount of media coverage that is important, so too is its quality. This aspect is illustrated in the second dimension, the nature of the media coverage, which refers to several factors: which subjects are most frequently covered from the social group (such as crime, poverty, social and community events, culture, sports, or violence); the ways the social group is described in the reports; who is represented as being responsible for the events that are covered; who is quoted and who is the source of the information reported; what is the tone of the stories, media frame, or photo captions (Avraham, 2000; Dominick, 1977; Graber, 1989; Larson, 1984; White, 2006). In this dimension the studies that treat the nature of coverage "beyond the numbers" apply a "qualitative analysis" approach. This body of research focuses on more subtle levels in which the spirit behind each news item or article is monitored. Such studies look for stereotypes, generalizations, and myths that appear in the coverage of certain social groups, and embrace a more general theme regarding the social group's identity (Avraham, 2003; Shields, 1992; van Dijk, 1988b). Examples of such statements are: "This group does not consider education as an important means for a better life" or "the group members are frequently involved in crimes and illegal events." Because of the powerful effect of statements like these, many researchers try to locate and reveal such themes. This analysis is also called "quality content analysis" or "symptomatic reading"; it is also used by researchers who conduct policy analysis in their search for means and methods used by regulators to improve the media image of social groups. Here one can find analysis of regulators' decisions, steps to promote fair representation, policies adapted, and their effects.

In-Depth Interviews

While in-depth interviews as a methodology cannot study content itself, it can study the factors influencing the content that is produced. The semi-standardized in-depth interview is a research method characterized by a number of core questions that serve as the foundation for all interviews conducted (McCracken, 1988). As applied to the study of news coverage of minority groups, the aim of these interviews is to learn as much as possible about the norms, beliefs, sources, and assumptions governing the actions of journalists during the news production (Gans, 1979). Interviews are unique because they provide detailed information about the reasons an interviewee made certain decisions or wrote an article in a certain way. The information gathered from interviewees reveals routines, organizational dynamics, opinions, values, motives, experiences, and emotions (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). Reporters are usually asked about their primary sources of information, their relationships with

decision-makers and group leaders, the types of stories they believe their editors and their readers prefer, and their process of socialization within the media organization. Editors are usually asked about newspaper policies on certain issues, the types of events they define as “news,” and the ways in which they explain what news stories they prefer. Leaders of social groups are usually asked about their relationships with reporters and editors, their access to the media and why they find it important, their methods of delivering messages to the media, the types of stories they believe the media prefer, their understanding of the “rules of the game” with regard to associating with the media, and their willingness to allot funds and resources to the establishment of marketing programs and public relations campaigns.

Reasons for the Problematic Image of Minority Groups

In order to understand how and who constructs the representation of minorities in the media, it is imperative to examine the factors responsible for their problematic image. In my book on the image of marginal groups in the Israeli media (Avraham, 2003), I present a dynamic model: “An integrated model of factors constructing coverage patterns of social groups and places in the news media.” According to this model, the factors that affect the image of minorities are: (1) the social group’s characteristics (population size, geographic location, crime rate, and socioeconomic indicators); (2) editorial policy and social-ideological distance between the news team and social groups; (3) social-political environment; and (4) the social group’s public relations. Because of space limitations, this chapter will concentrate on the last three factors.

It seems that the best way to understand how different factors construct the news image of minorities is by means of an example: analysis of coverage patterns of social groups in the national press. The three social groups in question are located in Israel’s geographic periphery: inhabitants of development towns (Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries), Arab Israelis living in Israel, and Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories. The national newspapers’ editorial boards are located in central Israel (Tel Aviv) and groups in the periphery are usually covered by regional correspondents. According to Avraham (2003), over the 40 years examined by the study, members of these groups were described in a stereotyped manner; they were often the subject of unsubstantiated claims and writers used generalizations and “us” versus “them” language, for example:

- **“The national-religious settlement community is being shaped as a separate socioeconomic entity.** To call it a parasitic entity would be harsh. But what do

these protests create in six days of work? **What, if any, is their contribution to the livelihood of the Israeli people**, not only to their spiritual power – that is a legitimate question” (*Ha’aretz*, July 13, 1993).

- “**Most [settlers] do not ‘create’ anything**, but are employed in the bureaucratic system established in their residencies or drive to work daily in Israel” (*Ha’aretz*, January 1, 1998).
- “The people of *Netzer Hazzanii* [Jewish settlement in the West Bank] **do not believe in peace**” (*Ha’aretz*, November 13, 1992).
- “A week before the Levi affair, Bet-She’an [a northern development town] was shocked by another event. [...] **Although the answer is known to the whole of Bet-She’an...**” (*Yedioth Aharonoth*, June 14, 1991).
- “Lottery fever raged among residents of Sederot [a southern development town] yesterday [...] **they all think about one thing: the dream of getting rich the fast way** [...] people are filling out lottery forms like madmen” (*Yedioth Aharonoth*, May 12, 1992).

In the last two examples we can see how journalists used generalizations to describe a social group by implying that the group members think and react in the same way. Other generalizations have been made about the cultural features of Arabs, as shown in the following examples:

- “*Tamra* is one of the largest villages, **but not one of the most educated ones**” (*Ha’aretz*, May 30, 1985).
- “As far as the social-economic aspect is concerned, this Arab village is an exception [...] **although it is a Muslim village**, *Jatt* has a long tradition of education” (*Ha’aretz*, September 8, 1987).

Many news stories emphasize the “otherness” of these groups. Residents of development towns are referred to, sometimes literally, as different from the “common Israeli.” The following excerpt expresses the difference using a biological metaphor:

- “In fact, one may ask if the development towns have grown a special human species of people, **different than the species ‘common Israeli’**” (*Ha’aretz*, January 12, 1990).

The lack of self-consciousness with which the question is raised of similarity or difference between residents of development towns and the “common Israeli” is surprising. Conspicuously absent is a discussion of who defines “who is an Israeli” and who is the “common Israeli” – is it a resident of a development town or of a city in central Israel, a settler, an Arab, or an ultra-Orthodox Jew? There are other strategies used to clearly delineate between the “first Israel” and the “other Israel.”

Editorial Policy and Social-Ideological Distance between Journalists and Social Groups

Many researchers have explained coverage patterns of social groups according to the proximity of group members to the journalists and editors covering the groups (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Jakubowicz et al., 1994; van Dijk, 1996). Decisions on defining the target audience, the news definition of a social group, and the allocation of reporters are mostly determined by social-ideological proximity. Group members who are socially and ideologically similar to journalists will be considered part of the target audience, their news definition will be positive, and one or more reporters will be allocated to cover them on a regular basis. Such proximity can be based on ethnic, racial, or religious identity. For example, in the study on the Israeli media mentioned above, I found that places and groups considered to be in close social-ideological proximity to the media's decision-makers received wide and positive coverage (Avraham, 2003). The reverse was also found to be true: groups that were considered distant from the media decision-makers received scant or negative coverage.

One of the most important elements to examine when looking at issues of proximity of this type is the ethnic origin of the journalists (Adams, 1986). Van Dijk (1988b, 1996) maintains that in Western countries, White journalists work within the dominant ethnic consensus, and this is reflected in the media content/journalist discourse when they cover places comprised primarily of minorities. This discourse creates a distinction between "us" and "them," using labels, stereotypes, and prejudice (Fair, 1993). It can be anticipated that journalists of color would cover such places differently because of their familiarity with the culture, resulting in less stereotyping and prejudice. For example, Wolfsfeld and colleagues (2000) found that the coverage patterns of demonstrations in Israeli Arab cities were affected by the fact that these cities were covered by Jewish journalists and editors (Avraham, 2003; Avraham & First, 2010b).

Socio-Political Environment

By "socio-political environment" I mean the context in which the media operate and interact with different actors. Journalists and editors always operate within a certain sociopolitical context that affects the ways they collect information and report events. This context encompasses the central values of their society, the political culture, and the political arena (Johnson, 1997; van Dijk, 1996; Wolfsfeld, 1997). The social-political environment comprises the form of political government, society's dominant values, public opinion, political culture, and media ecology. Its importance lies in the fact that changes within it can compel the media to change their attitude toward minority groups and the way they are represented. This change in the image of minorities, which is dependent on the social-political environment, transforms this model into a dynamic one.

The connection between coverage of social groups and the sociopolitical environment has been examined in various studies. For example, I found that the coverage of peripheral cities in Israel was affected by the fact that the nation's elite felt threatened by people from these cities after the 1977 parliamentary elections (Avraham, 2000). Dunn, McGuirk, and Winchester (1995) claim that the image of industrial cities symbolized prosperity and power in the past, while in the postindustrial era they symbolize pollution, recession, and crisis. Other studies have shown that the image of settlement groups in the Israeli national media was affected by changes in the central values of society, the political culture, and public opinion (Avraham, 2003; Herzog & Shamir, 1994). Changes in the political culture can lead to changes in the interpretation of any given group, place, or event. For example, Yuchtman-Yaar and Ben-Rafael (1987) found that the media image of kibbutzim (collective agricultural settlements) had become more negative in recent years because of the growing individualism of Israeli society. The cases portrayed in each of these studies illustrate that images of places and groups may change in response to changes in the sociopolitical environment (Avraham & Ketter, 2008).

The Group's Public Relations

In the last two decades marginal groups also have worked to improve their image, claiming that poor representation fixates their adverse social status and prevents their integration into the majority groups. So the fourth factor addresses the public relations efforts made by members of the social group and their struggle to gain media access. As discussed in the previous sections, many factors can affect, positively or negatively, the image of a social group in the news media. So far we have seen that a social group's image is determined by factors over which, for the most part, it has no control. Social groups cannot control the sociopolitical context or the editorial decisions made by journalists. This does not mean that a social group cannot influence its own media image. It can do so through public relations and promotional efforts. These may help the social group's leaders to overcome factors that may cause the media either to ignore the group or to report negatively on it, such as a small population size, large distance from media centers, or reputation as a source for crime news.

There are three different components of the public relations efforts made by groups: awareness, resource allocation, and professionalism. The only public relations efforts that have the potential to be successful are those in which all three exist (Avraham, 2003).

- 1 *Awareness.* The first component is awareness among the social group leaders of the importance of media image and of how their actions and behavior affect the image of their social group in the national media (Walker, 1997).
- 2 *Allocating resources.* However, awareness is not enough; to succeed, they need to allocate sufficient resources to operate their public relations effort, for

example, an adequate budget, skilled people, and equipment (Wolfsfeld, 1988, 1997).

- 3 *Professionalism.* Even if a group's decision-makers are aware of the need for public relations and are willing to allocate resources to it, their efforts will fail if those responsible for implementing the strategy are not professional (Burgess, 1982). For example, I found that many social groups appoint spokespeople for different reasons, but due to their incompetence they are not able to help create a positive social group image in the news media (Avraham, 2003).

Changing Representations

How and Why Have News Representations of Minorities Changed Over Time?

The representation process is influenced by both the social-political reality and the symbolic reality within which the process exists (Adoni & Mane, 1984). Journalists have long ignored issues related to minority communities and individuals, and have not turned to minority groups as sources of information about news events or as the interpreters of such events. Exceptions were found in news about sports and entertainment, considered as "soft news." Over the years minority coverage has widened but has remained largely stereotypical, with generalizations, a sense of threat, and "us" and "them" distinctions (Larson, 2006). Notwithstanding the problematic representation of minorities, the changes that have taken place over the last two decades cannot be denied. Analyzing the change in representations of women and people of color in the US media as an example can help us understand why representations change over time.

Despite the fact that the representation of women and people of color in the media is still problematic, over the past two decades it is possible to see significant change, such as a more egalitarian representation of these two minority groups (in comparison with men and Caucasians), their casting in more significant roles in television series and films in comparison with the past – and not only as objects or in negative sexual contexts – and their association with exclusive products in advertising. The reasons for these changes in representation derive from changes that emerged in the social-political environment regarding the status of these two groups, such as those brought about by the civil rights and women's rights movements. For example, the increased purchasing power of many minority groups and women has enabled them to stage boycotts against marketers who use demeaning images in their advertising. In other instances, when minorities or women have attained key positions in media industries, they have directly influenced portrayals, resulting in less stereotyping and fewer demeaning representations (Cortese, 2004; Wolfsfeld et al., 2000).

Promoting Cultural Diversity in the Media

Recognition of the need for fair media representation of social groups increased after the racial riots of the 1960s in the United States. A committee that researched the reasons for these riots claimed that negative coverage of minorities in the media contributed to their frustration (First & Avraham, 2007). As a result, the committee suggested encouraging the media's decision-makers to employ minorities, to improve their media access, and to bring minority points of view much more often to the events that were covered. The committee believed that these steps, in conjunction with other measures, might decrease social-racial tensions. During the 1970s the American Editors Association called upon media outlets to employ many more minority newsmen (First & Avraham, 2007). Since then cultural diversity has become an important issue in the US media. For example, recent years have seen the creation of the "Newsroom Diversity Index," which analyzes the number of journalists in each media outlet who are minorities and compares the percentage of minorities among that area's target audience. There are a number of cases that show that promoting cultural diversity within media content does not lower ratings but actually increases them (First & Avraham, 2007). It is also important to mention that employing minorities and fair representation helped Channel 4 to become one of the most popular networks in the UK (First & Avraham, 2007).

In 2002 the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia published a collection of studies devoted to the place of the media in representing and promoting cultural diversity in European countries between 1995 and 2000 (ter Wal, 2002). The studies reviewed related both to the representation of different groups in different genres, primarily in the news, and to actions taken as a result of flawed representations. The rationale underlying this collection is an understanding that the media play a democratic and active role in their ability to grant a voice to the different actors in society and their way of reporting on ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. In other words, at the basis of the publication of this collection lies the perception that in multicultural societies, the discussion of representation has become part of the agenda of national and international institutions and organizations. In addition, those who deal with the subject are unwavering in their goal of improving the representation of minorities in the media (www.mediadiversity.org; www.multicultural.net). Studies that examine the reflection of cultural diversity in the media are being conducted and attempts are being made to identify the roots of the problematic representation of various groups. In these studies, use is made of diverse research methods that assist in analyzing subjects such as the scope and quality of the report, media routines, constraints and processes of newscast production, all of which form the patterns of media representation of minority groups (ter Wal, 2002). Over the last decade regulators have begun to address issues related to minority representation and the reflection of cultural diversity in the national media by means of legislation or incentives for franchisees, editors, and producers (ter Wal, 2002).

Studies conducted throughout the world on issues related to the media's representation of all aspects of a multicultural society (nationwide, private, and public) are the initiative of researchers working in academic frameworks as well as of the regulators responsible for the media's activities. In other words, theoretical-academic research is coupled with administrative research in the majority of European countries. In numerous cases, research serves as a catalyst for change and diverse initiatives in the sphere of broadcasts (ter Wal, 2002). In European countries that have become multicultural over the last decades of the twentieth century, awareness has been heightened of the need to reinforce the cultural diversity of the media, and national television stations have begun addressing the issue. For example, in the UK, production companies and broadcasting networks (including Channel 4, ITV, BBC, among others) joined forces to establish the Creative Diversity Network (CDN) with the objective of promoting a diverse representation of people and groups in the television contents they produce. Network directors claim that the UK is changing, and the content viewed on television should change as well, otherwise programs would become irrelevant to the lives of numerous viewers who would find it impossible to identify with the stories, actors, and characters that appear on screen. In addition, the objective of CDN is to increase the number of minorities employed by television networks and production companies. ITV, the largest commercial network, has been preparing to introduce multiculturalism to its national and regional broadcasts, and producers who work for the network must demonstrate how they expect to reflect multiculturalism in their programs (First & Avraham, 2007).

Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with studies that analyzed news coverage of minorities and marginal social groups. Interestingly, this field attracts researchers from many different countries, disciplines, and approaches, a fact that can help us understand the popularity of this field. My analysis has shown that research over the years has changed as regards theories, approaches, and methods. The studies referred to in this chapter provide many examples of biased news coverage of minorities. Journalistic images of these groups are still problematic, although changes have been seen over the last few decades. In other words, the news image of minorities is dynamic.

The amount of research on the image of minorities that was published during the 1990s increased compared to the 1970s and 1980s (Downing & Husband, 2005). These studies raised the problematic image of marginal groups to the public agenda, contributed to the positive changes that have occurred, and increased awareness of the news image of minorities among the public and journalists. These researchers deserve much credit for helping to advance this issue, especially given that other actors in the public sphere, such as journalists, government, and majority group leaders, exhibited no particular interest in promoting discussion on the subject.

While the subject of minority representation has been popular in the United States since the 1970s, in Europe the issue became more popular during the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium. The increased interest in Europe can be seen primarily as a result of the large waves of immigration that took place during these years. The growing political-economic power of immigrant groups, among other factors, increased the demand for a change in media representation. Until that time, the issue of minority representation in the media was on the margins of public discourse in Europe. For example, it was only in the mid-2000s that the first Black news anchor was appointed on one of the French TV networks.

Most studies on the topic of news media representation of minority groups have used content analysis as a research method, primarily due to the convenience of and easy access to media content. But more studies have been addressing the role of media organizations in an attempt to understand what organizational considerations come into play in creating representations of minority groups. It must be mentioned that although several production and newsroom studies have been published, there is still a need for similar studies that will expose media organizations' routines, as well as the production codes and norms that guide reporters in news coverage of social groups (Downing & Husband, 2005). While representation studies were important in raising the issue to the public agenda, they were less effective in changing the situation because they did not reveal the production process behind the images. In addition, researchers have begun to address image enhancement efforts of minority leaders and NGOs as well as regulatory attempts to change media images.

It seems that changing the news image of minorities should result from dialogue between leaders of minority groups, journalists, editors, academics, and NGO representatives. Such cooperation can produce and develop a code of ethics, responsible professional standards, and an organizational code to help news teams cover issues related to minorities while avoiding problematic representations, generalizations, and stereotypes. All of the factors involved in the news coverage of minorities in the media involve great challenges but also many opportunities due to technological developments and changes in consumption patterns of different target audiences.

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Is There Local Content on Television for Children Today?

Katalin Lustyik and Ruth Zanker

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the dichotomy between “local” and “global” television content targeting children in the context of debates on media globalization. Our three case studies – TVNZ6 in New Zealand, Minimax in Eastern Europe, and Al Jazeera Children’s Channel in the Middle East – focus specifically on locally produced content offered on thematic children’s television channels launched to promote the cultural heritage of a particular nation or region. Operating in small but radically different media environments on different continents, these channels provide concrete examples of how local content is conceptualized and what types of content are being offered and produced for children today.

At this moment, there are nearly 2 billion children under the age of 18 worldwide who are targeted by an increasing number of television programs and dedicated children’s channels. As such globally circulated programs and networks expand their reach using multimedia platforms, the question becomes: Is there a need – and room for – locally produced television content for young people? From the perspectives of many governments, the public, and producers and broadcasters, locally produced content developed with the interest, perspective, and views of local children in mind can provide them with a sense of their own place in an increasingly complex world.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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But how is local television content defined in different parts of the world today, and what kind of programs are actually being produced?

This chapter explores the dichotomy between “local” and “global” television content targeting children in the context of debates on media globalization. Our three case studies focus specifically on locally produced content offered on thematic children’s television channels launched to promote the cultural heritage of a particular nation or region. They operate in radically different media environments in three distinct regions of the world: the Middle East, postcommunist Europe, and the South Pacific. With the selection of our case studies we hope to provide concrete and distinct examples of how local content is conceptualized and what types of content is being produced for children today in various parts of the world. The first case study examines a thematic local children’s television network in New Zealand. TVNZ6 was a noncommercial digital channel that operated as part of a much attenuated public service broadcasting sector. This channel was dropped in February 2011, to reappear in May 2011 as Kidzone24 on the majority Murdoch-owned Sky platform. The second case study focuses on children’s television content in Hungary, and more specifically on Minimax Hungary, an Eastern European regional commercial network targeting children growing up in a dynamically transforming postcommunist media system. The third case study looks at television content produced in the Middle East for children by focusing on Al Jazeera Children’s Channel (JCC), a pan-Arabic non-commercial edutainment channel established in Qatar and funded by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF).

Undertaking this project has involved the collection and analysis of different types of data. In-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of the children’s television industry such as producers, network officials, and media researchers in three locations – Hungary (between 2000 and 2002), Qatar (in 2010), and New Zealand (between 2007 and 2011) – with the aim of gathering valuable insight from those whose work is connected to children’s television in their respective regions. In addition, we have collected and analyzed data from the television schedules of three thematic children’s channels between the spring of 2010 and summer of 2011: TVNZ6, Minimax Hungary, and Al Jazeera Children’s Channel. We specifically examined and compared the programming offered during the last week of April 2010 in the case of each channel. In each location, we also monitored other television channels that regularly offered children’s programming between the spring of 2010 and summer of 2011, and gathered some concrete examples from their early June 2011 schedules. The websites of the three television networks – tvnz6.co.nz (and subsequently tvnz.co.nz/kidzone24), minimax.hu, and jcc.net – as well as regional media watch groups were also monitored on a regular basis for information related to program content.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first provides a general overview of the key characteristics of the global children’s television landscape. The second section focuses on what local television content is and why it is still relevant. It also explores the dichotomy between “local” and “global” content in the context

of debates on media globalization. The third section looks at television content offered to children in three culturally, politically, and linguistically distinct regions of the world: the South Pacific, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Through our three case studies we examine the content of three thematic children's television channels, each of them launched during the last decade to promote the cultural heritage of the specific nation or region. The fourth section describes the similarities and key differences between how local content is conceptualized and offered by the selected television networks.

The Children's Television Landscape in a Global Context

The current global children's television landscape is incredibly diverse and dynamic. Some of the recent and most visible developments include young television viewers being offered more programming than ever before, with animated shows constituting the largest, fastest-growing, and often most creative portion of the programming (Messenger Davies, 2010). Television networks dedicated solely for this niche audience have become increasingly prominent and influential features of audiovisual markets around the world. The content of the most prominent globally available television networks such as Disney, Nickelodeon, and the Cartoon Network is produced in the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom (e.g., Steemers, 2010).

Nations who dominate production also tend to dominate global cultural trade. The global production and programming ecologies for early childhood and older children are diverging in important ways. Early childhood programs are increasingly considered to be among the most exportable and commercially exploitable forms of children's television because they have several market advantages. They are set in largely uncontested early childhood landscapes and young children love viewing repeated programs. Such programs also appeal to new audiences every two years, which creates a short cycle and is cost effective for programmers, and animation and puppet shows can be cheaply dubbed (Steemers, 2010). For commissioners the initial costs may be high, but the returns from sales and the efficiencies generated by repeats for successful programs are enticing. It is not surprising that *Teletubbies*, *Dora*, *the Explorer*, or *Curious George* dominate global television services. The older school-aged group, arguably, makes for a much less homogeneous global audience, although some shows such as *SpongeBob SquarePants* have garnered a global audience. Audience provision becomes politically fraught as young people naturally begin to explore their individual agency and experiment with culture and identity (Australian Communication and Media Authority [ACMA], 2007).

Thematic channels targeting children constitute one of the fastest-growing and most dynamic sectors of the global media industry today (Steemers, 2010). Many children in Europe have access to the dozens of children's channels. In the last decade,

the number of dedicated channels targeting young viewers has skyrocketed and they have become increasingly diversified based on their primary goals, funding mechanisms, branding activity, target audiences, geographical reach, content, and use of digital platforms. There are age-specific (Baby TV for toddlers) and gender-specific (Disney DX targeting boys) channels, publicly funded channels (CBBC in the UK, Kinderkanal in Germany), and national channels funded and controlled by governments (Central TV's Children's Channel in China). And we can find channels associated with a particular country (TVNZ) or region (Minimax in Eastern Europe, Al Jazeera Children's Channel in the Middle East). The most prominent players, however, are the globally circulated channels owned by US-based transnational media corporations such as Viacom's Nickelodeon, Time Warner's Cartoon Network, and Disney. They are considered to be the "masters of the children's television universe" that have preserved their dominant position and generated "impressive profit margins" even though the competition has increased during the last years (Westcott, 2008). With "the accumulation of enormous capital, marketing experience and the control of the global market" they have a "tremendous competitive edge" to expand on a global scale (Wu & Chan, 2008, p. 198).

Recent global television hits for this age group are often high quality and based on extensive formative research. Nickelodeon's globally circulated content tends to reflect the tastes and desires of children tested in the United States, but it is branded as content that would appeal to children in many parts of the world (Hendershot, 2004). Nickelodeon is marketed as "the world's only multi-media entertainment brand dedicated exclusively to kids," and, according to Viacom's interactive global map, Nickelodeon has a "global reach" with a few exceptions such as Greenland (Viacom, 2010). What the map is not designed to show is the amount of locally produced content offered in various regions. According to Sandler (2004), the majority of Nickelodeon channels operating around the world had a strong US flavor with 75% of the programming composed of Nick US originals. As our sample schedules show, there is minimal or no local content offered on the Nickelodeon channels in New Zealand, Hungary, and the Arab world. As high production quality and well-researched Nickelodeon and Disney programs circulate globally, is locally produced television content still important?

The Importance of Local Content

Governmental and scholarly debates as well as public concerns have long focused on the asymmetries in the flow of global media content targeting children and young people. Before we examine local television content offered in our selected regions, this section briefly describes typical government officials, broadcasters, and scholarly positions on the importance of offering local content for children, as well as young people's perceptions of local and globally circulated television content.

For some public broadcasting advocates, such as a former head of Children's Television at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the asymmetries in global media content flow targeting young people mean that "in many parts of the developing world, children are moving from local radio to Disney or Fox without having any television which is specific to them and their culture" (Home, 1997). By contrast, national media-funding policy for children's television programming in many parts of the world is predicated on telling stories and hearing voices that reflect local cultures. To a former managing director of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), domestic children's television is a "vitally important programming territory" that has to be "protected":

I'm not suggesting the influence being detrimental, but it's not a national Australian influence and it's not conceived or developed with a view to telling our stories [...] It was incredibly important and absolutely fundamental that Australian children received Australian programs scheduled by Australian producers and made available on Australian-owned and operated services. (Shier, 2001, para. 3)

Some media scholars such as Nyamnjoh (2002) argue that global media content can create rather explicit "hierarchies" by classifying children as "primary" and "secondary" media consumers:

Children who have access to global media content that is produced without their particular interest in mind are often victims of *second-hand media consumption* even as first-hand consumers, since the media content at their disposal seldom reflects their immediate cultural contexts. They may have qualified as global consumer citizens thanks to the purchasing power of their parents and guardians, but culturally, they remain consumer subjects, and must attune their palates to the dictates of undomesticated foreign media dishes. (Nyamnjoh, 2002, p. 43, emphasis added)

Children in many countries with small or underfinanced media markets can be "best conceptualized as being at the end of hybrid cultural flows" (Zanker, 2002, p. 78).

Even in nations with strict local content quotas, requirements for license renewals, and provision of comparatively generous funding sources for children's programming, local content today constitutes a very small portion of children's media choices. Now with national channel operators under ratings pressure from global branded niche channels that often lock up first-play hits, there is growing resistance to compliance. When the United Kingdom regulator removed children's provision from core licensing requirements, ITV, the country's largest commercial television network, stopped production and limited the repeat scheduled hours of content for children because they were perceived to be costly (Steemers, 2010). National dedicated children's channels program a mix of quality global and local reruns and more rarely commission new work. The two public digital children's channels in the United Kingdom, CBBC and CBeeBies, show predominantly repeated programs, overwhelmingly animated and many from the United States, while first-release programs

by British producers amounted to 1% of transmission time (UK Office of Communications [OFCOM], 2008). The newly launched Australian public digital channel ABC3 is not equipped to do better than the BBC's children's channels in meeting Australian children's media needs (Edgar, 2009).

Documents such as UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) demonstrate a rather universal desire to create a balance between the protection of local cultures and the promotion of cross-border flows of cultural content, but it is largely contested how this can be achieved successfully. The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) supports the media rights of children. Article 17 describes rights over access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of children's social, spiritual, and moral well-being and physical and mental health. This, importantly, includes the linguistic needs of indigenous children and access to their local cultures and information (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990).

The Convention is an ambiguous document, however. The tendency of the discourse of children's rights has been to admit children to the public sphere. It treats them, in certain respects, as citizens, as if children's views should be given due consideration in processes that affect their interests. This would appear to respect the right of children's voices to be heard within the cultures and communities in which they physically live and where they have tangible opportunities for cultural and political agency. This embraces provision of content in indigenous languages and access to local cultures and information. At the same time, "the Convention affirms the 'freedom' of children to seek, receive and impart information of all kinds [...] either orally, in writing, or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of the child's choice" (Buckingham, Davies, Jones, & Kelley, 1999, p. 169). Those targeting child consumers draw on freedom of speech principles to argue that children are active audiences whose agency should be respected, especially in terms of their preferences within popular consumer culture (Zanker, 2004).

Do children care for local content? Ethnographic and audience studies that focus on the children's consumption of local and globally circulated media products often reveal that they do not necessarily distinguish between them. Some scholars contend that while children might be consuming the same media content and using the same communication technologies, it does not necessarily result in cultural homogenization: "Conversely, the world is becoming ever more culturally diverse despite what seems like a common culture of consumption and style" (Lemish, Drotner, Liebes, Maigret, & Stad, 1998, p. 554). Others argue that given the global influence of a handful of media conglomerations, "[W]e might all be consuming Disney in complex and ambivalent ways, but in the end we are all still consuming the same thing. The space for alternative childhoods, for alternative stories to be told, may be steadily reducing" (Buckingham, 2001, p. 294).

The preference for global or local content is not a zero-sum game. Children's heightened interest in shared popular global culture does not preclude interest in the

local and particular and pleasure in sharing these stories. Research also tells us that viewers, young and old, usually prefer familiar settings and context, and their native language if the story is interesting and of high production quality (Thickett, 2007). Children want to experiment with their emerging sense of social agency and explore a range of identities within media spaces. Many of the contradictions discussed in this section as we explored the dichotomy between “local” and “global” television content for children are also revealed in our three case studies.

Local Content on Local Thematic Television

Hungary, Qatar, and New Zealand, along with many other countries, have been thoroughly integrated and incorporated into the world communication infrastructure, with a substantial amount of audiovisual programming targeting children coming from abroad. Our case studies examine the availability of locally produced television content in three different media institutional settings: an increasingly fragile national public service broadcasting sector (TVNZ6), regional commercial network owned by transnational media conglomeration (Minimax Hungary), and regional free-to-air noncommercial network funded by a private nonprofit organization (Al Jazeera Children’s Channel). In each of our cases studies, we provide some basic information about the country’s media system and then focus particularly on local versus nonlocal television content specifically offered to young viewers in general and in the case of dedicated locally launched channels.

New Zealand’s TVNZ6

New Zealand is a tiny nation of 4 million people, of which just over 850,000 are children aged up to 14 years. Television remains their top entertainment choice (Lealand & Zanker, 2008). New Zealand has a deregulated broadcasting system where the principle of “countering market failure” is a central plank of its broadcasting policy. There are no quota requirements or license renewal public service requirements. The result is a minimalist public service broadcasting model which places a sense of national identity as central to its mission. The 1989 Broadcasting Act put in place the local content broadcast funding commission, New Zealand On Air (NZoA), which funds, on a contestable basis, locally produced children’s programs to be shown on TV2 and TV3, two national commercial free-to-air networks. NZoA is required to consider the size of the audience that will benefit from the programming it funds, as well as issues of diversity. It is unlikely that locally produced New Zealand children’s television would exist without NZoA. Currently, approximately US\$13 million is allocated for the creation of local content for children and young people.

The local children's production ecology is fragile in New Zealand. National broadcasters have suffered a loss in advertising revenue, new voluntary codes around food advertising limit the range of advertisers, and child audiences are inexorably shifting to global satellite channels. Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, and Nickelodeon are overseas feeds, with any local content strictly related to marketing and branding of the channel. As an example, we include the 24-hour programming schedule of Nickelodeon New Zealand from June 2011 and added the country of production for each show (see Table 8.1). The majority of the programs, as can be seen in Table 8.1, are produced in the United States, with a few exceptions such as *Hi-5* (Australia), *Shaun the Sheep* (UK), and *Degrassi: Next Generation* (Canada).

Table 8.1 Nickelodeon New Zealand's schedule (June 7, 2011)

12:00 a.m.	<i>The Ren and Stimpy Show</i> (US)
12:30 a.m.	<i>The Angry Beavers</i> (12:25 a.m.) (US)
1:00 a.m.	<i>Aaahh!!! Real Monsters</i> (12:50 a.m.) (US)
1:00 a.m.	<i>Hey Arnold!</i> (1:15 a.m.) (US)
1:30 a.m.	<i>Rocko's Modern Life</i> (1:40 a.m.) (US)
2:00 a.m.	<i>CatDog</i> (2:05 a.m.) (US)
2:30 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (US)
3:00 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (2:55 a.m.) (US)
3:30 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (3:20 a.m.) (US)
3:30 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (3:45 a.m.) (US)
4:00 a.m.	<i>The Fresh Beat Band</i> (US)
4:30 a.m.	<i>Yo Gabba Gabba</i> (US)
4:30am	<i>Shaun the Sheep</i> (4:25 a.m.) (UK)
5:00 a.m.	<i>Shaun the Sheep</i> (4:55 a.m.) (UK)
5:00 a.m.	<i>Dora the Explorer</i> (US)
5:30 a.m.	<i>Shaun the Sheep</i> (5:25 a.m.) (UK)
5:30 a.m.	<i>Go Diego Go!</i> (US)
6:00 a.m.	<i>Shaun the Sheep</i> (UK)
6:00 a.m.	<i>Wayside</i> (6:10 a.m.) (US/Canada)
6:30 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (6:35 a.m.) (US)
7:00 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (US)
7:30 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (7:25 a.m.) (US)
8:00 a.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (7:55 a.m.) (US)
8:30 a.m.	<i>The Fairly OddParents</i> (US)
9:00 a.m.	<i>The Penguins of Madagascar</i> (8:55 a.m.) (US)
9:00 a.m.	<i>The Penguins of Madagascar</i> (9:10 a.m.) (US)
9:30 a.m.	<i>Shaun the Sheep</i> (9:20 a.m.) (UK)
9:30 a.m.	<i>Dora the Explorer</i> (9:25 a.m.) (US)
10:00 a.m.	<i>Dora the Explorer</i> (9:50 a.m.) (US)
10:00 a.m.	<i>Team Umizoomi</i> (10:15 a.m.) (US)
10:30 a.m.	<i>Hi-5</i> (10:45 a.m.) (Australia)
11:00 a.m.	<i>The Fresh Beat Band</i> (11:10 a.m.) (US)
11:30 a.m.	<i>Go Diego Go!</i> (11:35 a.m.) (US)
12:00 p.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (US)

Table 8.1 (continued)

12:30 p.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (12:25 p.m.) (US)
1:00 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (12:55 p.m.) (US)
1:30 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (1:25 p.m.) (US)
2:00 p.m.	<i>Victorious</i> (1:50 p.m.) (US)
2:00 p.m.	<i>Big Time Rush</i> (2:15 p.m.) (US)
2:30 p.m.	<i>Ned's Declassified</i> (2:45 p.m.) (US)
3:00 p.m.	<i>The Fairly OddParents</i> (3:10 p.m.) (US)
3:30 p.m.	<i>The Penguins of Madagascar</i> (3:35 p.m.) (US)
4:00 p.m.	<i>The Penguins of Madagascar</i> (3:50 p.m.) (US)
4:00 p.m.	<i>Spectacular Spider-Man</i> (4:05 p.m.) (US)
4:30 p.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (US)
5:00 p.m.	<i>House of Anubis</i> (US/UK/Belgium)
5:00 p.m.	<i>House of Anubis</i> (5:15 p.m.) (US/UK/Belgium)
5:30 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (US)
6:00 p.m.	<i>True Jackson, VP</i> (US)
6:30 p.m.	<i>Victorious</i> (US)
7:00 p.m.	<i>Big Time Rush</i> (US)
7:30 p.m.	<i>Drake & Josh</i> (US)
8:00 p.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (US)
8:30 p.m.	<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i> (8:25 p.m.) (US)
9:00 p.m.	<i>Avatar: The Last Airbender</i> (8:50 p.m.) (US)
9:30 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (9:20 p.m.) (US)
10:00 p.m.	<i>Drake & Josh</i> (9:50 p.m.) (US)
10:30 p.m.	<i>Instant Star</i> (10:20 p.m.) (Canada)
10:30 p.m.	<i>Degrassi: Next Generation</i> (10:45 p.m.) (Canada)
11:00 p.m.	<i>True Jackson, VP</i> (11:10 p.m.) (US)
11:30 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (11:35 p.m.) (US)

Source: Nickelodeon NZ program schedule from nick.co.nz.

Perhaps the closest to public service provision is found on Maori Television, funded directly by the government to foster indigenous Maori culture and language. However, an initiative in 2005 saw the government committing funding to the setting up and running costs for two digital noncommercial public service channels available through a “freeview” digital set-top box, but only for six years. Both channels lean heavily on the “mothership” of state broadcaster Television New Zealand (TVNZ) for infrastructure and are part of TVNZ’s market strategy of “content on every screen.” One of these digital channels was TVNZ6, a dedicated child- and family-oriented network that reached 60% of New Zealand homes. There were three zones on TVNZ6: early childhood-focused Kidzone from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., TVNZ Family until 8.30 p.m., and then TVNZ Showcase until midnight.

The programming strategy on TVNZ6 was for commercial-free, educational programming designed to be enjoyed by parents and children together. Local content consisted of repeats of the many early-childhood programs commissioned over 20 years by commercial national broadcast channels from NZoA funding. These included the first locally designed early-childhood program commissioned by TV3 in the early

Table 8.2 TVNZ6 programs divided by origin of production (week of April 25, 2010)

Local content

(times not listed but repeated as cycles of programming from 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. family time)

Milly Molly (2006–8)

Zip and Mac 3D (from book) (2008)

Puzzle Inc

The Big Chair (1997–2000)

The Go Show (2005–6)

Giggles (2010 for TVNZ6)

Massey Fergusson (2002–4)

Buzzy Bee and Friends (2009)

P.e.t. Detectives (2003)

Freaky (2003)

Family-appeal local shows

6:30 p.m. *Just the Job*

7:00 p.m. *Park Rangers*

7:30 p.m. *Anzac Tales from Te Papa*

8:00 p.m. *The Kiwi who Saved Britain* (dramatized life of Keith Park)

9:00 p.m. *Mirror Mirror* (kidult drama)

Nonlocal content

The Mole Sisters (from book), animation (Canada, 2003)

Rupert Bear (from book), animation (Canada, 1991–7)

Chuggington, animation (UK, 2008)

Zoomix, animation (Spain, 2007)

Caillou (from book), animation (Canada, 2008)

Roll Play, series (Canada)

Fireman Sam, animation (UK: Wales, 1985–)

Spider 2d, animation (UK, 1991–)

Hurray for Huckle (from book), animation (Canada, 2007)

Eco Company (teens) (US, 2009)

The Animal Shelf, animated (US, 1990s)

Story of Tracey Beaker (from book) (UK, 2001–8)

24Seven, boarding house drama (UK, 2002–6)

Roman Mysteries (from book) (UK)

Source: Press television listing guide.

1990s, *You and Me*. Other repeated NZoA-funded early-childhood programs include *The Big Chair*, *Bumble*, *The Dress Up Box*, and *Buzz and Popp*. Schedules were rotated and repeated over the week. “Quality” imported shows like *Rupert Bear*, *Fireman Sam*, *Postman Pat*, *Chuggington*, *The Mole Sisters*, *Angelina Ballerina*, *Caillou*, *Berenstain Bears*, and *The Wiggles* also rotated in the schedule.

Most local shows in the sample week from 2010 were reruns of children’s programs funded in past years by NZoA (see Table 8.2). Only two shows were funded using public funding allocated to TVNZ6: *Giggles*, a sketch comedy show for early childhood, and *Kidzone*, a presenter-driven linking show that repeated three times a

day (at 8.35 a.m., 12.35 a.m., and 4.35 a.m.). Four series of 150 (5-minute) low-cost episodes of *Kidzone* were commissioned. Each week has a different theme and its young adult presenters, a Pacific mix, present “live” music, dance, and song in a range of languages. The producer, director, and team are early-childhood trained. Presenters suggest activities for when television is turned off and validate children in their cultural Pacifica diversity. New Zealand children contribute stories to share. Phillips, the show’s producer, uses television to “scaffold learning” (M. Phillips, personal communication, 2010). *Anzac Tales from Te Papa*, screened in the evening and targeting families, was a special compilation of military-related *Tales from Te Papa* episodes in commemoration of Anzac Day (Australia and New Zealand memorial day).

TVNZ6 commissioned only one show for tweens, the short form *In Between*, which included episodes on sibling rivalry, being gay, depression, and drugs. *In Between* linked to Bebo, a popular social network site, but lack of promotion meant that the power of interactivity was never really tested. *Kidzone* morphed into TVNZ6 Family. TVNZ6 Family only shows repeated, previously viewed local content, such as “kidult” dramas like *Being Eve*, *Holly’s Heroes*, and *Mirror Mirror*, also commissioned earlier from the children’s fund of NZoA. Other locally produced content includes shows such as *Just the Job* (career show), *Pioneer House* (historical reality show), and *Korero Mai* (learning Maori). Some local content has been funded in conjunction with the national museum Te Papa and the Department of Conservation. These shows recirculate within these institutions and via DVDs in schools.

TVNZ6 was unpromoted by its “mothership,” the national TVNZ network, yet still gained a fervent following. In February 2011, after data for this study had been collected, TVNZ announced that TVNZ6 was to close down as a free public service channel. In its place TVNZ negotiated a profit-share deal with the pay platform Sky. In May 2011, *Kidzone24* appeared as a 24-hour channel as part of the basic Sky satellite package that reaches 49% of New Zealand homes. This deal caused some controversy, given the investment from public funds in the local programs on its schedule, and fans built a Facebook page (facebook.com/keepkidzone) to share their concerns. The programming of *Kidzone24*, similarly to TVNZ6, is a combination of older and newer local content and nonviolent educational programs that are predominantly North American and European productions and co-productions (see Table 8.3).

Minimax Hungary

Hungary, a postcommunist nation of 10 million, has one of the most highly developed television markets in Eastern Europe, dominated by two foreign-owned commercial broadcast channels, RTL-Klub (RTL Group) and TV2 (ProsiebenSat1). The public service broadcaster Hungarian Television, after being in a monopoly position for over 40 years during the communist era, saw its national viewership decline to 13% during the last decade (MAVISE, 2010). While the production of children’s programming existed as a core service since the introduction of television in Hungary

Table 8.3 Kidzone24 programs divided by origin of production (week of launch, May 1, 2011)

Local content

Kidzone with Kayne (2010) (every half-hour)
The Go Show (2005–6)
Zip and Mac (2008)
The Dress Up Box (2001)
Buzzy Bee and Friends (2009)
Giggles (2010)
You and Me (1993)
The Wot Wots (2009)

Nonlocal content

Guess with Jess (UK, 2009)
Boblins (UK, 2006)
Babar and the Adventures of Badou (Canada/France, 2010)
Enjie Benjy (UK, 2002)
Postman Pat: Special Delivery Service (UK, 1981)
Fireman Sam (UK: Wales, 1985)
Angelina Ballerina (UK, 2002)
Berenstain Bears (US, 2003)
Captain Mack (UK, 2008)
Zoomix (Spain, 2007)
Chuggington (UK, 2008)
Miss Spider's Sunnypatch Friends (Canada, 2004–)

Source: Kidzone24 program schedule available on TVNZ's website.

in the 1950s, today, internationally circulated popular shows dominate the children's television sector.

Currently, about a dozen niche television channels compete for young viewers, among them Boomerang TV and Cartoon Network owned by Time Warner, Jetix, owned by Disney, KidsCo, owned by NBC Universal, and Minimax and JimJam, owned by Liberty Global (see Table 8.4).

Shows from the extensive library of Nickelodeon, the Cartoon Network, and Disney have been offered on national broadcast channels in Hungary since the mid-1990s, dubbed in Hungarian. Today, these US-based networks are available as stand-alone channels, as can be seen from Table 8.4. The majority of children's channels operating in Hungary today provide a local-language feed and a website but no locally produced content. As an example, we include the programming schedule of Nickelodeon from June 2011 (see Table 8.5). The titles are translated from Hungarian to English and the country of production is indicated for each show. As Table 8.5 shows, the Nickelodeon channel available in Hungary had no locally produced content and relied heavily on US Nickelodeon productions. Many of its programs overlapped with those offered on Nickelodeon New Zealand's channel.

While the total number of shows offered for children has grown exponentially during the last 20 years in Hungary and other Eastern European countries, there is

Table 8.4 Children's channels available in Hungary (in spring 2011)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Broadcasting company</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Main targeted country</i>
Baby TV (version in English)	Baby Network Limited	Children's channel	United Kingdom
Boomerang (version in Hungarian)	Turner Broadcasting International Limited	Children's channel	Hungary
Cartoon Network (version in Hungarian)	Turner Broadcasting International Limited	Children's channel	Hungary
Disney Channel	The Walt Disney Company Limited	Children's channel	United Kingdom
Disney Channel (version in Hungarian)	Jetix Europe Channels B.V.	Children's channel	Hungary
Duck TV	Mega Max Media, S.R.O.	Children's channel	Slovakia
Duck TV HD	Mega Max Media, S.R.O.	Children's channel	Slovakia
JimJam (version in Hungarian)	Jimjam Television Limited	Children's channel	Hungary
KidsCo (version in Hungarian)	KidsCo Limited	Children's channel	Hungary
KiKa	Germany	Children's channel	Germany
Minimax (version in Hungarian)	Chello Central Europe, S.R.O.	Children's channel	Hungary
Nickelodeon (version in Hungarian)	Nickelodeon UK Limited	Children's channel	Hungary

Source: MAVISE (2010).

very little locally produced content available. Even though local content quotas for broadcasters exist in Hungary, both public and commercial national broadcasters claim that they do not have the financial resources to invest in "the revitalization" of local children's programming funded by the state during the communist era (ORTT, personal communication, 2002). While in 2002 the Hungarian National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT) voted to allocate a small portion of broadcasting funds to support the production of local children's programming, with the Ministry of Culture also creating a fund to promote and protect local cultural identity by means of locally produced television programs, the revitalization has not happened yet (Országos televíziók, 2002). As an example, we include weekday programming schedules of the main national broadcasters: public service broadcast channels M1 and M2, and commercial channels RTL-Klub and TV2 (see Table 8.6). Programs offered specifically for children that day consisted of an evening block on M2. None of the programs shown in the block was produced locally.

The only channel that has succeeded in creating a "local feel" is Minimax Hungary. Symbolically, as a present for Hungarian children from Santa Claus, Minimax was launched on December 6, 1999, targeting the 4 to 14 age group. According to its Hungarian founders, the idea of the television channel came from a group of

Table 8.5 Nickelodeon's Hungarian programming schedule (June 6, 2011)

4:00 a.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
4:25 a.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
4:50 a.m.	<i>Ben és Holly apró királysága (Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom)</i> (UK, 2009)
5:00 a.m.	<i>Dóra, a felfedező (Dora the Explorer)</i> (US, 2000)
5:25 a.m.	<i>Go, Diego! Go! (Go Diego Go!)</i> (US, 2005)
5:50 a.m.	<i>Ben és Holly apró királysága (Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom)</i> (UK, 2009)
6:15 a.m.	<i>Vissza a farmra (Back at the Barnyard)</i> (US, 2007)
6:40 a.m.	<i>A Madagaszkár pingvinei (Penguins of Madagascar)</i> (US, 2008)
7:05 a.m.	<i>Macseb (Cat Dog)</i> (US, 1998)
7:30 a.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
7:55 a.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
8:20 a.m.	<i>Ni Hao Kai-lan</i> (US, 2008)
8:45 a.m.	<i>Go, Diego! Go! (Go Diego Go!)</i> (US, 2005)
9:10 a.m.	<i>Minimentők (The Wonder Pets)</i> (US, 2006)
9:35 a.m.	<i>Ben és Holly apró királysága (Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom)</i> (UK, 2009)
10:00 a.m.	<i>Dóra, a felfedező (Dora the Explorer)</i> (US, 2000)
10:25 a.m.	<i>Dóra, a felfedező (Dora the Explorer)</i> (US, 2000)
10:50 a.m.	<i>Jimmy Neutron kalandjai (The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius)</i> (US, 2002)
11:15 a.m.	<i>Az életem tinirobotként (My Life as a Teenage Robot)</i> (US, 2003)
11:40 a.m.	<i>Avatár – Aang legendája (Avatar: The Last Airbender)</i> (US, 2005)
12:05 p.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
12:30 p.m.	<i>Drake és Josh (Drake & Josh)</i> (US, 2004)
12:55 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (US, 2007)
1:20 p.m.	<i>Tökéretlenek (Unfabulous)</i> (US, 2004)
1:45 p.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
2:10 p.m.	<i>Tündéri keresztszülők (The Fairly OddParents)</i> (US, 2001)
2:40 p.m.	<i>Fanboy and Chum Chum</i> (US, 2009)
3:05 p.m.	<i>Avatár – Aang legendája (Avatar: The Last Airbender)</i> (US, 2005)
3:30 p.m.	<i>A Madagaszkár pingvinei (Penguins of Madagascar)</i> (US, 2008)
3:55 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (US, 2007)
4:20 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (US, 2007)
4:45 p.m.	<i>Drake és Josh (Drake & Josh)</i> (US, 2004)
5:10 p.m.	<i>Drake és Josh (Drake & Josh)</i> (US, 2004)
5:35 p.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
6:00 p.m.	<i>SzpongyaBob Kockanadrág (SpongeBob SquarePants)</i> (US, 1999)
6:25 p.m.	<i>Macseb (Cat Dog)</i> (US, 1998)
6:50 p.m.	<i>Tündéri keresztszülők (The Fairly OddParents)</i> (US, 2001)
7:15 p.m.	<i>A Madagaszkár pingvinei (Penguins of Madagascar)</i> (US, 2008)
7:40 p.m.	<i>iCarly</i> (US, 2007)
8:05 p.m.	<i>Drake és Josh (Drake & Josh)</i> (US, 2004)
8:30–9:00 p.m.	<i>Az alakulat (The Troop)</i> (US/Canada, 2009)

Source: www.port.hu.

Table 8.6 Weekday children's programming schedule on main Hungarian national broadcast channels (June 6, 2011)

Broadcaster	Program	Country of origin and year
M1	none	
M2	6:20 p.m. <i>Malackó</i>	UK, 2000
	<i>Esti mese (Evening Tale)</i>	
	6:30 p.m. <i>Malackó</i>	UK, 2000
	6:35 p.m. <i>Zöld Föld</i>	Italy, 2010
	6:45 p.m. <i>Robbie, a foka</i>	Germany, 2001
RTL Klub	none	
TV2	none	

Source: www.port.hu.

enthusiastic friends who wanted children to be able to watch their favorite programs, which simply disappeared from television screens after the privatization and deregulation of Hungary's media system in the 1990s (Minimax, personal communication, 2002). The group examined each television channel available in Hungary at the time and came up with services for children that the others lacked: nonviolent, educational but simultaneously entertaining programming that originated primarily from Europe, with special emphasis on Eastern European puppet and animated programs that were popular during the 1970s and 1980s. Minimax's immediate success according to its program director was based on its nonviolent and local and regional content, as well as its continuous contact with viewers (Lazar, 2003). In its early years the channel emphasized that over 80% of the programming originated from Europe, with 20–25% of it coming from Hungary and Eastern Europe, such as the once popular Polish cartoon *Lolka and Bolka* (Minimax, personal communication, 2002). Since the mid-2000s, Minimax's programming schedule has relied heavily on global hits from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada, and Australia such as *Postman Pat*, *Global Grover*, *Elmo's World*, *My Little Pony*, *Franklin*, and the *Magic School Bus*.

As the sample schedule for April 30, 2010 (Friday) shows (Table 8.7), the majority of the programs came from the United States and Western European countries, with the exception of *Bob and Bobek* (*Bob a Bobek, králíci z klobouku*, 1979), a Czech animation popular throughout Eastern Europe, including Hungary, during the 1980s. Many of the programs listed in Table 8.7 were repeated during the day (the same or a different episode).

There were four 5-minute-long programs produced specifically for Hungarian children between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. during the sample week (see Table 8.7). *Minimax Híradó* (Minimax News) is a monthly 5-minute-long magazine-style program with two hosts produced by the network. The short segments focus on local artists, local books, or cultural events, some of which seem to target parents rather than children. During April 2010, five episodes of the show rotated daily in the schedule. The

Table 8.7 Minimax Hungary programming divided by country of origin (April 30, 2010, Friday)**Local content**

Minimax Híradó (Minimax News) (5 min)
Te már olvastad? (Have you read it?) (5 min)
Magyar Népmesék (Hungarian Folk Tales) (5 min)
Alma-klip (Music video clip) (5 min)

Regional content (dubbed)

Bob and Bobek (*Bob a Bobek, kráľíci z klobouku*) (Czech, 1979, 8 min)

Nonlocal content (dubbed)

My Little Pony (US, 20 min)
Martha Speaks (US, 25 min)
Elmo's World (US, 15 min)
Global Grover (US, 5 min)
Adventures of Bert and Ernie (US, 10 min)
Mary-Kate and Ashley in Action (US, 30 min)
Viva Pinata (Canada/US, 15 min)
Busytown Mysteries (Canada, 25 min)
Chuggington (UK, 10 min)
Mr. Bean (UK, 10 min)
Timmy Time (UK, 15 min)
Roary the Racing Car (UK, 10 min)
Fifi and the Flowertots (UK, 10 min)
Lenny and Tweek (Germany, 5 min)
Leo and Fred (Germany, 5 min)
Once Upon a Time... Man (France, 25 min)
Pat & Stan (France, 5 min)
Geronimo Stilton (Italy, 25 min)
Bindi, the Jungle Girl (Australia, 25 min)

Source: Minimax program schedule, minimax.hu.

program series *Te már olvastad?* (Have you read it?) started in the fall of 2009 as part of the network's campaign, in partnership with libraries and publishers, to promote books and reading among a new generation of children who preferred television and gaming. Hungarian celebrities, including musicians, television hosts, politicians, and sports personalities, were asked to talk about their favorite childhood books and the importance of reading.

Alma-klip is a music video clip created by the network working in partnership with the popular Hungarian children's music group Alma (Apple). The latest Minimax in-house production launched in 2011, *Minisef* (Minichief), teaches children basic cooking techniques that do not require adult assistance in the kitchen.

The last local program, scheduled twice a day during the sample week from 2010, was *Magyar Népmesék* (Hungarian Folk Tales), a 10-minute-long animated series that used a local folk art visual style and archaic folk-style narration. The series has been

around for decades and is considered a significant part of the nation's audiovisual heritage. It is among the few television programs that survived regime changes in Hungary, with a total of 89 episodes created between 1978 and 2006.

Minimax has become an influential local brand in children's media culture in Hungary and was celebrated as an Eastern European success story at the end of the 1990s. Since 2007, however, Minimax has been fully owned by Chello Central Europe, the Europe-based content division of Liberty Global, a US-based transnational media company. Today Minimax is a leading commercial pan-regional network with local language feeds and dedicated websites provided for Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Moldova, and the former Yugoslavian countries with the exception of Slovenia.

Al Jazeera Children's Channel

When the Qatari First Lady Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al Missned suggested the establishment of a noncommercial educational/entertainment children's channel for the region in the early 2000s, it seemed like a "fantasy" in the Arab world (Lepeska, 2010). The lack of consideration by either governments or corporations to fund children's programming meant that locally produced content practically did not exist until the mid-2000s (Kuttab, 2007). Most of the children's programming offered on national television channels across the region was imported and dubbed in local dialects. During recent years, the number of dedicated children's channels in the region exploded with the arrival of US-based branded channels such as Disney XD, Disney Channel, Playhouse Disney, Nickelodeon Arabia, Boomerang, JimJam, and Middle Eastern-based networks including Spacetoon TV, MCB3, and Al Jazeera Children's Channel (JCC) (see Table 8.8).

Table 8.8 Children's channels available in the Middle East between 2008 and 2011

<i>Name</i>	<i>Broadcasting company</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Available in 2011</i>
Al Jazeera Children's Channel (JCC)	Al Jazeera Network	Children's channel	yes
Boomerang	Turner Broadcasting International Limited	Children's channel	yes
Cartoon Network	Turner Broadcasting International Limited	Children's channel	yes
Disney Channel, Disney XD, Playhouse Disney	The Walt Disney Company Limited	Children's channel	yes
JimJam	JimJam Television Limited	Children's channel	yes
MCB3	Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC), UAE	Children's channel	yes
Nickelodeon Arabia	Nickelodeon UK Limited	Children's channel	no
Spacetoon	Spacetoon Media Group, UAE		yes

Nickelodeon Arabia, an Arabic-language, free-to-air channel dedicated to Arab children aged 2 to 14 years old, launched in 2008 and included its most popular shows, such as preschool hit *Dora the Explorer*, *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Jimmy Neutron* for older children, live-action *Drake & Josh* and *Unfabulous*, and the Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards. The network was a result of a partnership between Viacom's MTV Networks International (MTVNI) and the Arab Media Group (AMG) of the United Arab Emirates. Nickelodeon Arabia went off the air in 2009 as a result of media ownership changes in the United Arab Emirates. As a result, since November 2010 a Nickelodeon block exists on the children's entertainment channel MBC3 that includes *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *The Mighty B!*, *The Fairly OddParents*, *Fanboy and Chum Chum*, *The Penguins of Madagascar*, *Back at the Barnyard*, and *My Life as a Teenage Robot*. The content of the majority of children's channels is imported and dubbed in local dialects, the exceptions being MBC3, which offers some locally produced shows, and Al Jazeera Children's Channel.

After three years of research and planning, the Al Jazeera Children's Channel (JCC) – a pan-Arabic edutainment network dedicated to children – was launched in September 2005 in Qatar. While the channel shares its name with the influential Al Jazeera news network, also established in Qatar almost a decade earlier, and the board director who also oversees the Al Jazeera Network, they are completely independent from each other. JCC, along with satellite campuses of prestigious US higher education institutions, is located in the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development's flagship project, Education City, on the outskirts of Doha.

JCC, with its primary mission "to encourage the love of learning and discovery" and operating as a noncommercial enterprise funded by the Qatar Foundation, represents a unique model (JCC, personal communication, 2010). The overall mission of the channel, echoing that of the Qatar Foundation, is to make a difference in the lives of Arab youth by promoting "self-esteem, understanding and freedom of thought" (Al Jazeera Children's Channel, 2007). JCC's ambition is to plant "the seed of hope for a better tomorrow, but also for a better Arab citizen" (general manager, quoted in Lepeska, 2010), and to function as a bridge to connect Arab children around the world. JCC's language choice of classical Arabic also aims to promote a pan-Arabic shared identity and serves as a tool for learning or practicing Arabic among the Arab diaspora. Many older children, growing up on programs dubbed in regional dialects, however, find cartoon characters speaking eloquent classical Arabic "strange." They make fun of their younger siblings, who naturally use the vocabulary previously associated with school (JCC, personal communication, 2010).

Local content is perceived to be crucial for JCC, and its programming consists of 80% local content, with some of the shows produced in-house in one of three high-tech studios. Local production mainly consists of nonfictional programs with a preference for incorporating real children in real-life situations with regional relevance (JCC, personal communication, 2010). According to JCC, "[T]his goal is realized by carefully studying and producing relevant content and ensuring that it resonates with the needs of this target audience's daily life as well as their culture" (Al Jazeera 2006–2011).

Among the most popular JCC-produced programs are game shows such as *Ad Darb*, in which teams of children compete in various subject areas such as history, science, and geography in front of a live studio audience. JCC also offers thematic magazine shows for the first time in the region. Its weekly debate show *Nadra Ala* encourages children to speak up freely and form their own opinions on a variety of issues. Topics have included female circumcision, illiteracy, and child labor. In each episode regional correspondents share their international reports with the audience and a panel of experts. The show *Atfal Al Mahjar* is a weekly magazine that focuses on the Arab diaspora and on the everyday lives and challenges of Arab children and families living in non-Arab countries. One of the goals of the show is to highlight the Arab family's role in supporting their children's native language, faith, and traditions. *Min Al Malaab* is a sports magazine, while *Al Abtal* follows the daily activities of seven groups of student athletes and covers their daily routines, including their educational and cultural lives. *Kallemni* is a discussion show that features one Arab child in each episode, who shares his or her thoughts, personal insights, emotions, and feelings with the host of the program.

Other JCC programs have more of an entertainment element, such as *Ana wa ekhwait*, a comedy show depicting family life and values in the region. The main plot focuses on a Syrian family moving to Qatar, where the father working at a radio station encounters comedic characters and situations. Several programs produced in-house, such as Baraem's animated series *Nan and Lili*, have won over critics at international festivals. While special programming is offered for Ramadan and there is a show about the Qur'an, religious ideals are not allowed to dominate the channel. However, as JCC's general manager explains, "Islam is part of our daily life, it's our religion, and it should be integrated into our content" (quoted by Lepeska, 2010).

As the list of programs aired on April 30, 2010 (Friday) shows (Table 8.9), there were 11 different programs produced specifically for Arab children, several of them shown at least twice a day with different episodes.

Besides the JCC-produced shows, several others are co-produced in partnership with production firms in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Japan. Nonlocal content is "carefully selected" from the international market with the aim to open up "avenues for Arab children to learn about different environments and cultures" (JCC, n.d.). After its initial success, JCC split into two channels in January 2009 to better serve specific age groups. Baraem TV (*baraem* means "buds") is aimed at 3- to 6-year-olds, while the original JCC is dedicated to 7- to 15-year-olds. The latest addition to JCC's expansion is Taalam TV, the first Arabic video-on-demand (VOD) educational platform, launched in 2010. It primarily targets schools and educators, who can access detailed programming information and watch the shows at any time.

Today Al Jazeera Children's Channel and Baraem reach 45 to 50 million households in all 22 Arab countries, many parts of Africa, Europe, and Asia. With the planned future launch of an English-language version of Baraem TV, the next territory for the network is North America.

Table 8.9 JCC programs divided by origin of production (April 30, 2010)**Local content**

Min al Malaab (Sports Corner) (15 min)
Ana Wa Ekhwati (Me & My Siblings) (15 min)
Sahat al Founoun (You Can Do It) (30 min)
Min hawlina (Around Us) (30 min)
Kallemni (Talk To Me!) (30 min)
Aabakira tahado al iaaqa (15 min)
Al abtal (The Champions) (15 min)
Atfal el mahjar (Children of the Diaspora) (30 min)
Circo Massimo (Big Circus) (Italy/localized version, 60 min)

Nonlocal content (dubbed)

Ellen's Acres (US, 15 min)
Maya and Miguel (US, 30 min)
Land Before Time (US, 60 min)
Henry's Amazing Animals (Canada, 30 min)
Miss BG (Canada, 15 min)
The Eggs (Canada/Australia, 15 min)
Sitting Duck (US/UK/Canada, 30 min)
Benjamin the Elephant (Germany, 30 min)

Locals Answering Back?

Our three case studies described locally launched children's television channels in different countries representing diverse regions and media models. Minimax Hungary represented a fully commercial channel that achieved immediate popularity with its local flavor. Today Minimax offers very little local content and is owned by a transnational media conglomeration. Hungary's media system, along with many others in Eastern Europe, can still be described as "transitional," and the mechanisms are not yet in place to support local television content in the current, largely privatized and commercialized media landscape that replaced the state-operated system.

Al Jazeera Children's Channel (and Baraem TV), located in the Middle East, represent a noncommercial model with the primary mission to educate children by providing edutainment programs with as much local flavor as possible. Providing funding for JCC in the oil-and-gas-rich Gulf state, which has the second-highest GDP per capita in the world, seems effortless. The only programming criterion for JCC is to offer quality content that educates and makes better future citizens.

New Zealand's TVNZ6 provided a noncommercial children's service within the public media sector. It lacked the financial deep pockets of Qatar, and could not draw on parental nostalgia for Eastern European shows and the powerful commercial branding employed by Minimax Hungary. But in its short four years, TVNZ6 proved itself to be an innovative local content channel. Run on a shoestring, the noncom-

mercial digital channel had a strong commitment to Pacific-flavored local content. The decision to put publicly funded children's programs behind the paywall of Sky is business driven. It indicates that local content has value to local commercial interests, if only as a point of difference within the overwhelmingly globalized media environment. But will its value be enough to warrant new local commissions? Or will we see repeated circulation of local reruns originally funded for full service national free-to-air channels?

All channels studied were careful to assess the appropriateness of their local and imported shows for their audiences and aspired to an inventory combining gentle entertainment and engaging "edutainment." Their ratio of local content, however, varied greatly. In the case of Minimax, local content constituted a tiny segment and was repeated endlessly. In the case of JCC, a relatively large portion of its content was produced locally or co-produced with international partners. Continuous government funding has enabled a generation of children since 2005 to acquire Arabic from a popular inventory of programs, some of which are challenging in content. In New Zealand, public service provision and local content are inextricably intertwined. TVNZ6 (and now Kidzone24's) children's schedules draw cost-effectively on two decades of public service inventory as well as on some modest and cost-effective local commissions of its own.

Regardless of the amount of actual local content, all three channels identified the promotion of local culture and cultural heritage as one of their primary missions and described their key programming style as noncommercial and socially responsible edutainment. The interpretation of what constitutes local culture and cultural heritage differs in the three locales. In the case of JCC, the address has broadened from the national to a pan-Arabic region and beyond to the Arabic diaspora around the world. JCC provides a mix of programs that address children primarily as citizens rather than as consumers. JCC's promotion of the classical Arabic language aims to tie more than 20 countries and over 350 million Arabic speakers together in a region, where the language of finance and education is increasingly English. In postcommunist Eastern Europe, Minimax has positioned "our culture" as parental nostalgia for regional classics. Despite its brand being marketed as a local channel, it has not commissioned much new material to appeal to the tastes of current children. Minimax's address has also gradually broadened to include several countries in the region, where children watch the same content dubbed into Romanian, Czech, Slovak, Croatian, and other languages. Minimax's local appeal, in many ways, has been reserved instead for the commodified spaces of interactive clubs and merchandising. New Zealand's TVNZ6 attempted to create a national noncommercial channel for young people living in the Pacific. The verdict is out on the role that Kidzone24 will play in the regional mix as the pay platform Sky lobbies for a share of NZoA free-to-air funding.

One of the similarities we have observed between the three channels is the importance of continuous interaction with children and parents and receiving feedback from them. Both Minimax and JCC also regularly conduct focus group research with children and parents, who are asked to preview programs that the channels plan to

acquire or shows in production. In the case of JCC, both quantitative and qualitative studies are conducted regularly in different countries in the region and local educational programs are tested with different audience groups during the production phase. We also found that local content producers face similar challenges in creating shows particularly for older children. In New Zealand, producers say that they understand the needs of early childhood and younger children (e.g., 5- to 9-year-olds) but struggle with what appears to be a relentless shift by preteens (age 10–13) toward global media flows. As one New Zealand producer puts it, “They are a whole new challenge because they don’t tell you what they do want, but they do tell you what they don’t like and turn off” (J. Morrell, personal communication, 2009).

Conclusion

Television program imports that fill up the majority of children’s channels do not constitute a homogeneous group. In the case of TVNZ6, Minimax, and Al Jazeera Children’s Channel, television schedules are constructed to draw on so-called “good,” gentle, and educational imports from Europe, Australia, and North America. We found in our interview discussions conducted on three continents that there was often an implicit distinction made between “good” imports, such as Czech fairy tales, and “bad” imports, principally in the form of US and Japanese action-adventure cartoons. Globally circulated channels such as Nickelodeon and Disney also offer quality educational and nonviolent programs primarily for preschoolers and position themselves as socially responsible brands. What sets JCC, Minimax, and TVNZ6 apart are their founding or regulatory cultural objectives. They claim to offer local, culturally specific places for children, away from highly commodified popular culture created for the universal active consumer by transnational media corporations.

That said, however, we have found that nationally based thematic children’s channels can also grow into successful market players beyond original national boundaries and even be sold off to transnational media conglomerations. Minimax has laid claim to a regional market share in children’s entertainment, and JCC has grown exponentially in market share and popularity across widely flung Arabic-speaking nations. Both can be said to speak back to dominant audiovisual children’s flows from the periphery.

The volume of new-release Arabic content available for children on Qatar’s JCC after only five years in existence reflects the power to move quickly and decisively to meet cultural and educational objectives, as well as knowledge of local audience needs. Part of this power comes from economic clout. The channel can commission locally and at the global level on its own terms. This is in stark contrast to TVNZ6 in New Zealand, which, despite its valued mix of imported and Pacific regional appeal, could not reach its audience because of lack of government investment. Critically, this includes being able to find traction within the interactive places to

which young people are drawn. Hungary's Minimax lies somewhere in between the other two case studies. Currently, it commissions very little new local content, despite it being branded as an Eastern European channel, but it has managed to build a successful multimedia empire in the region.

As we have discovered through our case studies, nationally launched children's channels aim to provide safe and culturally approved places for children, with varying success. Each channel responds in its own unique way to the turbulence of media globalization and cultural and linguistic anxieties stemming from this. While television continues to be the primary media window for children today, and this chapter's main goal was to examine the dynamics of local and global television content, they can only be understood as part of multi-platform media systems. Moving beyond the local–global dichotomy, another important dimension of this debate for future studies would be to examine “the ability or inability” of local content offered on various television channels to “empower” young people “to have influence over the course of their lives” (Kraidy, 2005, p. 151).

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The Evolution of Hollywood Latinidad

Latina/o Representation and Stardom in US Entertainment Media

Mary C. Beltrán

ABSTRACT

This essay explores the evolution of Latina/o representation in Hollywood film and US television by reviewing the scholarship on Latina/o representation and stardom. The essay is structured in relation to methodological approaches and tropes that have emerged and become fundamental to the field of study as it has evolved. The sections below are organized to hone in on the themes of (1) Latina/o visibility and stereotypes; (2) racialization and the privileging of particular “Latin looks”; (3) constructions of Latinidad and related questions of authenticity; (4) hybridity and transnationalism; (5) self-representation and Latina/o participation within the mainstream media industries; and (6) recent hypervisibility and other contemporary trends. It concludes by addressing the multiple implications of today’s hypervisibility of Latina/o actors and calls for further in-depth study of such multivalent representation and its impact.

Scholars have explored Latina and Latino (hereafter, Latina/o) media representation and stardom in US film and television from a variety of disciplinary and methodological approaches. This chapter explores the evolution of this scholarship, some of the major research questions and themes that have arisen, and the concerns central to present-day studies. In illustration of these themes it also surveys key historical eras of Latina/o

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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representation and star promotion, and reflects on the impact of the rise of Latina/o self-representation and contemporary trends that have yet to be studied.

As individuals with ancestry in the US Southwest, Puerto Rico, or Latin American countries, Latina/os, also termed Hispanics,¹ are widely diverse, even while their cinematic and televisual representation has often flattened differences in its construction of an imagined, universal Latin-ness, or *Latinidad*. This representational history has its roots in Mexican American history, given that land that forms part of the Southwestern United States transferred from Mexico to the United States in 1848, transforming Mexican citizens to Mexican Americans overnight.² Mexican Americans also historically have been the largest US Latina/o group. In 2000 they comprised 58.5% of all Latina/o Americans, followed by Puerto Ricans (10%), Cuban Americans (3.5%), and smaller but steadily increasing numbers of Latina/os of Central and South American descent (US Census Bureau, 2001).³ Given their varied histories, Latina/os differ widely with respect to such factors as class, race, generation, and media habits. Spanish-language usage is a commonality among many Latina/os, but US Latinos may or may not speak Spanish. Younger Latina/os are also increasingly acculturated, demonstrating hybrid media consumption of both English and Spanish-language popular culture forms.⁴

Latina/o representation in US film and television is increasingly important to scholarship on US media, as the Latina/o population has grown exponentially in the last century and is expected to continue to increase. Latina/os became the largest non-White group in the United States in 2000 and now comprise over 15% of the population and 20% of youth under 18, according to the US Census Bureau. With respect to projections, it is predicted that Latina/os will comprise at least 24.4% of the US population by 2050.⁵

Scholarship on Latina/o representation in US film and English-language entertainment television, however, is still relatively new. Academic books on the topic began to be published in the early 1980s; pioneering scholars included Arthur Pettit, Charles Ramírez Berg, Ana M. López, Chon Noriega, Angharad Valdivia, and Clara Rodríguez. For the most part this first generation of scholars was self-taught and trained in history, Spanish language and literature, English, or other disciplines, as university departments in Latina/o studies and film and media studies were just being established. Some of the work of these scholars thus necessarily involved establishing the legitimacy of studying Latina/os and media representation, as Valdivia (2008) and Ramírez Berg (2002) have noted. The next generations of scholars have benefited from these inroads and the increasing establishment of Latina/o studies and media studies within the academy as well as from the growth and acceptance of cultural studies traditions. Differing approaches and questions thus have guided scholars of each academic generation.

With this history in mind, this introduction to scholarship on Latina/o representation and stardom is structured in relation to methodological approaches and tropes that have emerged and become fundamental to the field of study as it has evolved. The sections below are organized to hone in on the themes of (1) Latina/o

visibility and stereotypes; (2) racialization and the privileging of particular “Latin looks”; (3) constructions of Latinidad and related questions of authenticity; (4) hybridity and transnationalism; (5) self-representation and Latina/o participation within the mainstream media industries; and (6) recent hypervisibility and other contemporary trends.

Invisibility and Stereotypes

Much of the early scholarship on Latina/o film and television representation focused broadly on patterns in how Latina/o characters and images were depicted, and argued that such representation was typically characterized by invisibility and stereotype – recurring, one-dimensional characterizations typically assigned to subordinate groups in a society. The underrepresentation and marginalization of Latina/o characters in minor, often denigrating roles has a direct relationship to the history of Latina/os, and specifically Mexican Americans, in the United States. Mexicans and later Mexican Americans were often seen as impediments to the move westward by European settlers in the 1800s; notions of “Manifest Destiny” circulated in frontier literature and other artifacts of mediated culture tended to pose Mexican Americans as inferior in intelligence and integrity, and thus unworthy of the rights of citizenship. Early films merely rearticulated these “American” stereotypes. Arthur Pettit (1981) was one of the first scholars to systematically document Latina/o character types as witnessed in frontier literature and silent film Westerns; such characters typically might be villainous Mexican “greasers” or untrustworthy and lusty peasant women. Such representations began the pattern of constructing Latina/os as “Others” in contrast to White heroes and heroines, in a dynamic process similar to that other racialized, colonialist, and gendered representation.

While in recent years scholars are less likely to focus solely on stereotypes in study of Latina/o representation, the stark patterns in how Latina/os were depicted in Hollywood film prior to the 1970s prompted the first generation of researchers to hone in on them and document their prevalence. More specifically, Latina/o characters often were presented as especially sexual, aggressive, or childlike in characterizations that reified biased associations held by some US citizens of Latina/o women and men. Ramírez Berg (1990, 2002) summarized these representational patterns in relation to six Latina/o character types typical of Hollywood films: the Bandito and the Harlot, characters with aggressive, criminal, and promiscuous tendencies that can be traced back to the greaser films; the Latin Lover and the Dark Lady, characters based on notions of Latina/os as innately passionate and sexual, with this sensuality at times paired with more negative traits; and the Male Buffoon and the Female Clown, comic but typically unintelligent and infantile characters.

Similarly, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) and Frances Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman (1997) highlighted Hollywood’s tendency to confine Latina/os

and Latin Americans to characterizations that relied heavily on tropical island-related associations that reinforced the myth of discovery (Shohat & Stam, 1994), neocolonialist notions of South American, African, and Asian countries and their people and products as ripe for the taking. Such tropicalist tropes, as Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman (1997) described them, constructed Latina/o characters as possessing passionate tempers and/or libidos and through references to heat and spice. As noted by early scholars as well, Latina/os historically were not employed as producers in the film and television industries prior to the 1980s,⁶ which likely played a strong role in the continued construction of Latina/os in this manner within Hollywood storylines.

Meanwhile, another group of early researchers, communication studies scholars, approached these patterns with quantitative methodological tools to study representation in the medium of television. Social science-oriented researchers, for instance, have tallied the visibility and status of Latina/o prime-time television characters, typically coding whether such characters were in major or minor roles as professionals, criminals, or servants, in studies of US televisual diversity that documented the underrepresentation of Latina/os and the tendency in television's first decades⁷ to include Latina/os primarily in marginal and criminal roles. S. Robert Lichter and Daniel Amundson (1994), for instance, found that Latina/o characters constituted no more than 2–3% of all prime-time roles from the 1950s through the early 1990s, even while the Latino population grew dramatically during these decades. Subsequent studies have found Latina/os only slightly more visible as television characters. Some of the most recent studies include that of Dana Mastro and Bradley Greenberg (2000), Allison Hoffman and Chon Noriega (2004), and Elizabeth Monk-Turner and colleagues (2010). Monk-Turner and colleagues concluded that Latina/os comprised only 5% of characters in the March 2007 prime-time lineup.

Building on research that explored Latina/o representation in relation to image and stereotype, some scholars of Latina/o stardom⁸ also took note that Latina/o film stars' promotional campaigns often capitalized on the employment of stereotypes held by White Americans of Latina/os and Latin Americans, as they were believed authentic or were thought to increase appeal to White audiences. Latina stars thus were at times promoted in a manner in tune with the cinematic stereotypes of harlots or dark ladies, to borrow Ramírez Berg's terms. In addition, as I found in my research (Beltrán, 2009) on the historical trajectory of the promotion of Latina/o stars, they might be promoted through sexualized emphasis on their bodies and described as spicy, vivacious, or through some variation on such terminology, whether as "spitfires," "pepperpots," or "hot tamales." As I note in my research on Puerto Rican actress Rita Moreno's 1950s film career (Beltrán, 2009), Moreno found that playing up her public image as a flamboyant spitfire was often the only way she could get the attention of reporters at the time. Moreno and other Latina/o stars in past decades also faced limitations in regard to what roles they were allowed to audition for and the types of roles to which they were subsequently confined. Valdivia (1998), pointing to Puerto Rican actress Rosie Perez's early film career as illustration, described such patterns as an example of the symbolic annihilation⁹ that Latino and

female actors often experienced. Perez, Valdivia notes, typically was cast only as loud, working-class Latinas who served in support of other characters' goals rather than as protagonists in their own right.

While focus on stereotype in relation to Latina/o representation drove some of the earliest scholarship on the topic, it came to be viewed as limiting, as Ramírez Berg and Valdivia demonstrate in taking up different methodological approaches in more recent work. As Shohat and Stam (1994) and others have noted, specific focus on stereotypes cannot account for the multiple ways in which media narratives impart ideological discourses about the place of Latina/os in the US imagination or give Latina/os subjectivity and a voice. Scholars are now typically engaged in qualitative research beyond questions of the stereotype, for instance through studying Latina/o representation in relation to the social and industrial contexts in which it is produced and consumed and exploring ideological meanings attached to film, television, and star texts.

Racialization and "Latin Looks"

Another central trope within the literature on Latina/o media representation and stardom is that of racial categorization, or racialization,¹⁰ and its relationship to Latina/o mediated imagery. Given the lack of a biological basis for racial categories, media representations and star texts have long assisted in the construction and reification of race in the United States. In the case of Latina/o characters and stars, they have been constructed variously as White or as non-White (or, much more rarely, as racially ambiguous) throughout film and television history, echoing the slippery relationship that Latina/os have held to Whiteness in the United States.¹¹ Scholars thus have interrogated how this dynamic and contradictory history has played out in film, television, and star promotional texts and explicated the social and industrial implications of these constructions.

In one dominant dynamic, opportunities for Latina/o casting and star promotion in US film historically were (and arguably still are) dependent on how closely performers embodied White beauty and body ideals. As scholars documenting Latina/o participation in the industry's early decades noted, even at this stage actors' and actresses' appearance had a determining influence on their careers: social and industry attitudes promoted the hiring of actors with fair skin, European rather than indigenous features, and medium-to-tall, slim bodies (Beltrán, 2009; Ríos-Bustamente, 1992). In this manner, racialized beauty and body ideals dictated the opportunities afforded to Latina/o acting hopefuls: while some light-skinned Latina/os were cast in lead roles – particularly in the late silent film era, as discussed in more detail below – darker-skinned, shorter, and more "ethnic"-appearing Latina/os might be cast as villains or servants at best. Valdivia (2007) updates this research in scholarship on Hollywood's contemporary privileging of the European, in the form of Spanish stars, in recent years.

Class associations notably have also played a role in the racialization of particular stars and characters throughout US film and television history. As Joanne Hershfield (2000) and I (2009) found in analysis of the career of Dolores Del Río, an actress from Mexico who was a film star in the late 1920s through the 1940s, emphasis on her upper-class background in her promotional texts encouraged her public image as an elegant foreigner rather than a racialized Mexican. My research (Beltrán, 2009) on Del Río's career and that of her contemporaries before and after the film industry's transition to sound confirmed also the "cultural racialization" of Latina/o stars in this period. I use the term to describe how Latina/o stars, as their accents could be heard, were racially categorized based on accent, cultural traits, and class markers rather than on their appearance, which often was not so different from that of their Euro-American and European counterparts. Moreover, as I document (Beltrán, 2009), in this era actors like Del Río, now that their accents could be heard, also were no longer considered for roles earmarked as White and were confined instead to Latina/o or other "ethnic" roles, regardless of how fair-skinned they might be. These standards reinforced burgeoning social notions of Latina/os as non-White and perhaps non-American in the more xenophobic climate of the Great Depression. Dolores Del Río herself noted in interviews in the late 1930s that she was increasingly cast in limited roles that capitalized mainly on her abilities as a dancer and were overshadowed by flamboyant costumes, such as the lacy dress in which she was costumed for *Lancer Spy* in 1937. She eventually became frustrated with the situation and in the early 1940s moved back to Mexico, where she quickly became a major film star.

The racial politics of these unwritten casting guidelines thus confined Latina/o performers to limited, typically underdeveloped roles that did little to showcase their appeal or talent. Public and industrial racial notions also dictated that they not portray unambiguously White characters. As Rita Moreno reported in retrospective interviews regarding her years as a young actress in the 1950s, she was often told that she could not audition for a role because they wanted "an American" for the part (cited in Beltrán, 2009, p. 78).

On a related note, in the same years of classical Hollywood in which Latina/os were not considered for White or colorblind roles, the small numbers of more developed Latina/o protagonist roles that existed were at times played by Anglo actors and actresses, apparently based on the belief that Latina/o actors would not draw US audiences in to theaters. Incidences of non-Latina/o actors in what have been termed "brownface" performances (because of the brown makeup often worn by the actors) include Paul Muni as a hot-headed Mexican American lawyer in *Bordertown* (1935), Marlon Brando as the Mexican revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata in *Viva Zapata!* (1952), and Natalie Wood as Maria, a Puerto Rican woman, in *West Side Story* (1961). Brownface performance is more rare in recent years as it is increasingly viewed as politically incorrect, but it was witnessed as recently as the 1990s with the casting of non-Latina/o actors in such films as *The House of the Spirits* (1993) and *The Perez Family* (1995). Meanwhile, some contemporary Latina/o actors, such as Jennifer

Lopez, Benicio del Toro, and Jessica Alba, have been cast in “White” roles in the last decade, breaking down former casting barriers that Latina/o actors had historically experienced.

The film and television industries’ preferred appearance of Latina/o characters and stars, notably, has also shifted slightly in the last decades. As Rodríguez (1997) and Arlene Dávila (2001) note, film studios’ and advertisers’ preferred “Latin look” by the 1980s came to include a slightly tan skin tone (the better to differentiate Latina/os from African Americans), straight, dark hair, and dark eyes, despite the fact that casting Latina/o and Latin American roles in line with this look negates the actual diversity among Latina/os with respect to phenotypical features, skin tone, and body type. This look still dominates Hollywood expectations; America Ferrera, who is of Honduran descent, is viewed as Latina for casting purposes, while Cameron Diaz, of partial Cuban descent, is not. Building on Rodríguez’s (1997, 2008) work, I also posit in my own scholarship on Latina/o stardom (2009) that we are witnessing a slight widening of the range of preferred Latino looks in contemporary narratives. Valdivia’s research (2007) on the concurrent privileging of European ancestry and appearance, as witnessed in the privileging of Spanish actors such as Penelope Cruz in Hollywood film casting, cautions of limits to this expansion, however.

Further exploring the construction of Latina/o appearance and the racializing function it can serve is scholarship that has begun to interrogate the reinforcement of such ideals by Hollywood through its treatment of Latina beauty and bodies in mediated representation. As I note in research on this topic (2002), Latinas have been given a particular opportunity when a “Latin look” has been considered particularly beautiful – such as was the case for Dolores Del Río and Lupe Vélez in the 1920s and for Jennifer Lopez and Salma Hayek in the late 1990s – and I argue that notions of Latina beauty serve a discursive and often racializing function in mediated culture. This topic has since been taken up productively by other scholars, such as Isabel Molina-Guzmán and Angharad Valdivia (2004), Martha Mendible (2007), and Molina-Guzmán (2010). Molina-Guzmán, for instance, analyzes Latina representation and embodiment in contemporary media culture through case studies that include Jennifer Lopez, the female relatives of Elían Gonzalez, and Salma Hayek in her portrayal of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo in the 2002 film *Frida*.

Constructions of Latinidad and the Question of Authenticity

Another topic central to scholarship on Latina/o representation is how such representation constructs public notions of Latin-ness, or as scholars such as Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman (1997) and Molina-Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) have referred to it, Latinidad. As this survey of scholarship illustrates, Latinidad has been constructed in film and television in distinct and influential ways. In my own research (2009) I

refer to the Latina/o figures and culture created within Hollywood film and television storylines as Hollywood Latinidad, a vision that has evolved in relation to the status of Latina/os within the US popular imagination. Other scholars employ Latinidad to refer also to how Latina/o individuals and communities see themselves and other Latina/os. Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman (1997), for instance, use the plural term Latinidades to refer to the diverse and multiple visions of Latinidad held by Latina/os themselves, while in later scholarship Molina-Guzmán (2010) points to and examines how Latinidad is constructed both within mediated culture and by Latina/os themselves.

A number of scholars have studied and reflected on how Latinidad is constructed through US media representation (and arguably all of the scholarship surveyed in this chapter explores this topic, directly or indirectly); much of this scholarship relates the media representation to the social politics and economic climate of particular eras, to media industry developments, or to the political and economic relationships of the United States with various Latin American countries, among other factors, pointing to the correlations between social climate, media industry agendas, and Latina/o representation. For instance, with a focus on the evolution of mediated Latinidad, in *Latina/o Stars in US Eyes: The Making and Meanings of Film and TV Stardom* (Beltrán, 2009), I explore how Latino/a casting and star promotion have reflected and at times challenged the shifting sociopolitical status of Latina/os, through in-depth examination of the careers and evolving star images of seven film and television stars at differing historical junctures since the 1920s.

As I document (2009), building on the historical research of multiple scholars, including Ana M. López (1991), Ramírez Berg (2002), and Noriega (1992, 2000a), US mediated culture has witnessed a number of “Latin waves,” during which Latina/o and Latin American cultural forms have held particular appeal for US audiences and Latina/o performers experienced greater opportunity and visibility. Such waves emphasized particular configurations of Latinidad, however, that arguably have toed the line of popular racial politics while offering seemingly celebratory versions of Latinidad for US consumption. A case in point is the first such wave that I hone in on (Beltrán, 2009): the open and welcoming star system that Latina/os such as Ramón Novarro, Dolores Del Río, Gilbert Roland, and Lupe Vélez, all from Mexico, encountered in 1920s Hollywood. The popularity of melodramatic films and roles, social tensions over immigration, women’s increasing emancipation, and Italian actor Rudolph Valentino’s success contributed to an interest in darkly handsome and foreign actors with romantic images during this era. These first Latin Lovers became international stars in the mid- to late 1920s, the last years of silent film. They were cast in major roles of all nationalities, but *not*, it should be emphasized, Latin American or Latina/o roles – in this period in which such roles were typically heavily stereotyped. Hollywood Latinidad in this era thus was diverging and ambivalent: Latina/os were typically absent or clearly racialized Others within storylines, while fair-skinned Latina/o stars might have starring roles portraying characters of all backgrounds except Latina/o.

I uncover differing dynamics of Hollywood Latinidad in my case study of Desi Arnaz (2009), Cuban-born musician and actor who acted in films in the 1940s and in *I Love Lucy* in the 1950s and beyond. Arnaz's film career recalls the shifts of the 1940s "Good Neighbor" era, which prompted another rise of interest in Latina/o performers, in this case singers and musicians. In support of the government's Good Neighbor Policy during World War II by which political alliances with Latin American countries were sought, a number of studios produced films set in Latin American locales that supported notions of North and South American friendships, as Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez (1999) and Ana M. López (1991) have also explored. The films produced included biographical dramas and musicals, such as Disney's animated film *The Three Caballeros* (1945) and the Twentieth Century-Fox musical *Weekend in Havana* (1941). Latina/o actors such as Cesar Romero, Lupe Vélez, and Ricardo Montalbán thus experienced opportunities, while several performers with musical abilities were imported to perform in Latin musical numbers and play minor roles. Among the most successful were Desi Arnaz and singer-actress Carmen Miranda, who was born in Portugal but had grown up in Brazil. Miranda, known for her exaggerated costumes and performance style, appeared in such musicals throughout the 1940s. In numbers such as "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat," Miranda came to symbolize the comic, tropical Latina, in a spectacular but trivializing version of Latinidad. Arnaz also experienced success as a leader of Latin bands and in small film roles, particularly because of his skill at translating Latin music and culture for US audiences (Pérez-Firmat, 1994).

Another genre of films that at times presented US Latina/os in relation to social issues they were experiencing, the social problem film, also appeared in the late 1940s and 1950s, providing depictions of Latinidad that stood in stark contrast with the tropicalized Latinidad of the Latin musical. This post-World War II cycle of films emphasized exposing real-life social inequities, and thus presented narratives and images that in many ways challenged previous patterns of Latina/o representation. Some of these films addressed discrimination faced by Mexican Americans in their communities, including *A Medal for Benny* (1945) and *The Ring* (1952). Another, *Salt of the Earth* (1954), produced by blacklisted filmmakers, presented the real-life story of Mexican American miners who successfully went on strike to protest inhumane working conditions, and included the miners in the writing and as actors in the film. As Ramírez Berg (1992) and Noriega (1997) argue in historical studies, these films were distinct in their aim to present Latina/os realistically and with subjectivity.

Such films were fairly rare, however, and their popularity waned as the country and industry became more politically conservative in the 1950s. As I document in my research (Beltrán, 2009), Latina/o actors in the 1950s and 1960s, moreover, often found that their ethnic background was an obstacle to being cast in interesting, well-developed roles. As studios became disinterested in Latin-themed and social problem films, Latino actors and actresses experienced fewer opportunities. Some, such as Mexican Irish Anthony Quinn and Puerto Rican José Ferrer, downplayed their Latin heritage in their publicity. (In later decades, Raquel Welch and Martin Sheen, born

Jo Raquel Tejada and Ramón Estévez, similarly changed their names to avoid type-casting.) Others, such as Rita Moreno, tried to stay true to their heritage; such performers struggled with limited opportunities. Latina/o roles might include juvenile delinquents and gang members in urban dramas such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *West Side Story* (1961), or bandits in Westerns. One major exception to these patterns was Desi Arnaz, who, with his wife Lucille Ball, starred in and also was executive producer of the series *I Love Lucy* and spin-off productions throughout the 1950s and some of the 1960s, making him the first Latino star and executive in television. As I note (2009), however, he was viewed as a White foreigner and honorary American – particularly in relation to the romantic and relatable image that he and Ball had in the US imagination – rather than as an “ethnic” Latina/o.

More recently, the late 1990s also were trumpeted as a new “Latin Wave” in US popular culture. In this period projections that Latina/os would soon surpass African Americans as the largest non-White group likely influenced views of the Latino audience as increasingly important and influential. The media industries also received important wake-up calls regarding profits to be garnered from successfully promoting Latina/o stars and media texts, particularly in 1995 when music sales skyrocketed after the death of Tejano music legend Selena, a beloved figure among Mexican Americans who became a posthumous star for non-Latinos as well. It is notable that Nuyorican actor Jennifer Lopez got what is considered her breakout role portraying the singer in *Selena* (1997) two years later.¹²

As I document (Beltrán, 2009), Jennifer Lopez’s career prior to and after *Selena* is a testament to how shifting notions of the Latina/o audience and potential appeal to the mainstream provided new and greater openings for Latina/o stardom. Lopez found her first opportunities in Latino and African American-helmed film and television products, including the sketch comedy series *In Living Color* (Fox, 1990–1994), and such films as *My Family* (Gregory Nava, 1995) and *Money Train* (Joseph Ruben, 1995), starring Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson. She built on this to then star in mainstream films after *Selena*, ultimately launching a music career, production company, and clothing line in addition to a successful film career. In tandem with this success, Latinidad as constructed through Lopez’s star text was complicated by ambivalent discourses and the deployment of traditional stereotypes even while celebratory, however, such as in the “booty brouhaha” that called attention to Lopez’s purportedly unique derrière in the late 1990s (Beltrán, 2002, 2009). She and other Latina/o performers also were described as “crossover” stars, a controversial moniker given its implication that Latina/os existed outside the boundaries of US culture. The term was heard less by the 2000s, as Lopez has been joined by a variety of Latina/o performers within the realm of US stars.

In relation to Latina/o stars and more generally to study of how Latinidad has been constructed through mediated representation, researchers also have raised questions regarding the authenticity, or the historical and cultural accuracy, of Latina/o characters and star images. Scholars of film and media, for instance, have made note that Latin American cultures have often been conflated in inaccurate

representations in Westerns, musicals, and other Hollywood films, and that stars' performances and images often may not be accepted as authentic by Latina/o viewers as well. For instance, Sandoval-Sánchez (1999), in his analysis of the US theatrical and film careers of Carmen Miranda and Desi Arnaz, raises the argument that their Broadway and Hollywood performances in the 1940s conflated elements of Latin American cultures and submerged the Afro-Latino elements within those cultures to pose an imaginary, inauthentic Latinidad that fit comfortably with popular US notions at the time.

The trope of troubled authenticity has continued to have relevance in relation to Latina/o representation and is echoed in my own research (2009) on comedian Freddie Prinze, who rose to stardom playing the role of Mexican American Chico Rodriguez in the NBC comedy *Chico and the Man* (1974–1978). Prinze's character, notably, was the subject of ongoing debate and negotiation among the producers, the network, and Chicana/o and other viewers in the 1970s. Audience members who complained about the series felt that Prinze, of Hungarian and Puerto Rican descent, was not authentic in his portrayal of Chico and that the role as constructed was denigrating. Prinze, arguably the first Latino television star since Desi Arnaz, appealed in interviews that he was being unfairly judged. Despite the complaints and controversy, a wide audience tuned in to his performances, given the show's ratings. The series became a hit, and Prinze's career may have reached greater heights if it were not for his suicide in 1977.

A number of scholars (including this author) also have addressed the complicated questions related to demands for increased or "non-stereotypical" Latina/o representation. As Valdivia (2010) asks: "Are we asking for more Latina/os that are recognizable as Latina/o? If so, does this mean we need the inclusion of elements that we recognize as Latinidad?" (p. 124). This conundrum – of demanding greater Latina/o visibility but a diminishing of stereotyped images – is increasingly central to contemporary media culture. As such, it has been the focus of the many studies that have explored questions of authenticity and stereotype in the examination of Nuyorican star Jennifer Lopez, for instance.¹³ Given the dearth of Latina/o images in the entertainment media, Lopez and other Latina/o stars carry a heavy burden of representation – or of being expected to stand in for an entire underrepresented community.¹⁴ On the other hand, what is an authentic image, and who gets to decide? The lack of definitive answers to these questions underscores the natural tensions that exist in media representation between cultural marking (establishing that a character is Latina/o), authenticity, and stereotype.

Hybridity and Transnationalism

Also increasingly central to the study of Latina/o media representation is a focus on racial and ethnic hybridity (or *mestizaje*, as Gloria Anzaldúa and other scholars refer

to it¹⁵). Scholars such as Anzaldúa (1987), Valdivia (particularly in 2004, 2008), Gregory Velasco y Trianosky (2003), and Molina-Guzmán (2010) have stressed the importance of hybridity to Latina/o culture and identity, given the history of racially mixed ancestry for Latina/os – even while Latina/o communities may deny African or indigenous ancestry and film and television representation typically posit Latina/os as non-White or White. Media scholars increasingly note that hybridity thus is the constant flip side of racialization, for Latina/os in media representation and elsewhere in US social life. Anzaldúa (1987) claimed in her explication of the New Mestiza (who embraces her heritage in all of its multiplicity) that challenging denial of hybridity, while difficult, could empower Latina/os and all who experience oppression. As Anzaldúa and subsequent scholars have highlighted, Latina/o *mestizaje* has the potential to cross boundaries and disturb racial categories. Researchers, such as Molina-Guzmán (2010), have underscored the danger that Latina/o mediated figures thus pose through calling attention to and embodying the fault lines between racialized and gendered categories.

In my own scholarship I have taken up exploration of the overlap between Latinidad and hybridity in studies that have focused on ethnically ambiguous and mixed Latina/o representation and stardom. While Latina/o stars with European heritage have always been commonplace in Hollywood, given the privileging of White norms of beauty, a more recent development is the rising visibility of performers who have made their mixed heritage central to their promotion. In “The New Hollywood Racelessness: Only the Fast, Furious (and Multi-Racial) Will Survive” (2005), I note the rising visibility of and vogue for mixed-race actors and models, including those of partial Latino ancestry, in US popular culture since the late 1990s and argue that ethnically ambiguous actors and characters constitute a new racial paradigm that is gaining momentum (but with limited impact on traditions of White centrism still predominant in contemporary action films). In “Mixed Race in Latinowood: Latino Stardom and Ethnic Ambiguity in the Era of *Dark Angels*” (2008), I further interrogate such trends in Latina/o representation. Based on comparative analysis of the careers of Jessica Alba and Rosario Dawson, both of partial Latina/o heritage, I conclude that a racially hegemonic cultural imaginary continues to shape opportunities experienced by Latina/o actors of mixed heritage, with Alba given broader opportunities in film roles and in fact more fully embraced within Latina/o communities and by media advocacy groups, presumably because her looks are more assimilable to Whiteness.

An overlapping strand of scholarship calls attention to Latina/o diaspora and migration and transnational media flows in relation to Latina/o representation. In contrast, much of the early scholarship on Latina/o media representation took up its research from the perspective of nation, with respect to the implications regarding national identities and the place of Latina/os within the (North) American imaginary. My own 2009 book title, *Latina/o Stars in US Eyes*, is a vivid illustration. However, in a productive movement some scholars are conceptualizing study of Latina/o representation in relation to the diaspora, the movement of Latina/o audiences, and

global media flows. This is particularly useful given the continuous flow of Latina/o immigrants to the United States in the early part of the twentieth century, primarily from Mexico but in increasing numbers from Central and South American countries since. As recent immigrants join Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans whose families have been here for centuries, the US Latina/o population is dynamically tied to a global diaspora, with the impact of such transnational ties and movement underresearched elements of Hollywood Latinidad. Recent studies that take up diaspora as a central trope include Maria Elena Cepeda's *Musical ImagiNation: US-Colombian Identity and the Latin Music Boom* (2010) and Molina-Guzmán's *Dangerous Curves* (2010). Among other topics, they trace how Latina/o media texts are produced and consumed in the contemporary era of global media flows and multiple and diverse audiences consuming Latinidad. An apt illustration is one of Molina-Guzmán's (2010) case studies, the construction of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo for Latina/o and non-Latina/o, US, and international audiences in the film *Frida* (2002), with Salma Hayek standing in for Kahlo through multiple, competing discourses. Television series like *Ugly Betty* (ABC, 2006–2010), an adaptation of the Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty la fea* (1999–2001), also mark shifts taking place in the source and impact of Latina/o representations in relation to transnational media flows and global audiences.

Self-Representation and Participation in Mainstream Media

In relation to and at times in conjunction with scholarship that has explored Latina/o representation and stardom, researchers also have pointed to the importance of Latina/o employment within the media industries, particularly as writers and producers. A 1999 Tomás Rivera Policy Institute study (Pachón, DeSipio, de la Garza, & Noriega, 2000) commissioned by the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) found that most Latina/o actors experience obstacles to securing agents and finding employment. In 1998, Latina/os comprised only 4.3% of total SAG membership, worked only 2.9% of total work days, and were cast in supporting rather than leading roles far more than White or African American actors. Latina/os also are largely absent from media industry and talent management executive circles (Noriega, 2000b). The professional guilds for writers, actors, directors, and producers now report statistics regarding diversity in their ranks, while media advocacy groups such as the National Hispanic Media Coalition and journalists regularly note the continuing dearth of Latina/o writers, producers, and executives in television. An assumption of such efforts is that Latina/o media producers will be mindful of including Latina/os in media narratives and more accurately and fairly represent Latina/o characters and culture, an outcome that is not guaranteed, however.

Until the 1970s and well into the 1980s, moreover, Latina/os in the United States typically did not have access to training or support to become film and television producers within the mainstream media industries. Importantly, as Noriega (1992, 2000a) and other scholars of early Chicana/o and Puerto Rican film document, Latina/o media production has its roots in civil rights activism, and specifically the Mexican American and Puerto Rican movements, which reached their zenith in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was during this period that the term Chicano (and, for women, Chicana) began to be embraced as a label of pride by Mexican Americans. Given that many of these Chicana/o and Puerto Rican activists were the first generation to have been raised on television, their activism also often included awareness of the power of media images and of the need for creative control in their production.

As Noriega (2000a) notes, battles over media representation in this period were fought on two fronts by Chicana/o and Puerto Rican activists. Latino media advocacy groups, such as the Council to Advance and Restore the Image of Spanish-Speaking and Mexican Americans (CARISSMA), the Puerto Rican Action and Media Council, and Justicia, also known as Justice for Chicanos in the Motion Picture Industry, protested media images that were seen as denigrating and demanded training opportunities for Latina/os in the television and film industries. In addition, some Latina/os began producing short films and public affairs television series in conjunction with their activism. These films and programs are considered the first wave of Chicano and Puerto Rican cinemas; early activist-filmmakers included Moctesuma Esparza, Sylvia Morales, Jesus Salvador Treviño, Luis Valdez, and Bení Matias. As scholars of early Chicana/o and Puerto Rican film such as Noriega, Rosa Linda Fregoso (1992), and Lillian Jiménez (1998) have documented, such self-representation and the Latina/o media producers to follow in later generations importantly complicate notions of Latinidad and of diversity within Latina/o communities.

As a result of these entrances, Latina/o filmmakers began to produce feature films and have an impact on Hollywood's construction of Latinidad by the 1980s. A number of these films were distributed nationally to respectable critics' reviews and box office.¹⁶ They included Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* (1981) and *La Bamba* (1987), Gregory Nava's *El Norte* (1983), Cheech Marin's *Born in East L.A.* (1987), and Ramón Menéndez's *Stand and Deliver* (1988),¹⁷ and were joined by the first wave of films by Cuban directors who now lived in exile in the United States, such as León Ichaso and Orlando Jiménez Leal's *El Super* (1979) and Ichaso's *Crossover Dreams* (1985). True to common assumptions of the impact of self-representation, these films offered Latina/o (and particularly male) characters with cultural specificity as well as with subjectivity and dignity. As a result, they catapulted a few to stardom, such as Mexican American actor Edward James Olmos, who portrayed El Pachuco in Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* and teacher Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*, and Puerto Rican Esai Morales, who played Richie Valens in *La Bamba*, as I note in my research (Beltrán, 2009). A number of Latin American actors also were cast in starring roles in other Hollywood films in this period; they included Cuban actor Andy Garcia, Irish Cuban Mercedes Ruehl, and Maria Conchita Alonso, a Venezuelan of Cuban descent. Curiously, the success of

this handful of films and stars led the news media to dub the 1980s the “Decade of the Hispanic” in 1987. In the press coverage, Olmos also was promoted as the primary star and as a symbol of Latino visibility in US popular culture. In interrogating this promotional focus for these films and for Olmos, I found (Beltrán, 2009), building on the work of Kathleen Newman (1992), that it constructed this slight rise in Latina/o visibility as unthreatening to the US status quo. Given how Olmos in the 1980s portrayed decidedly ethnic characters that fought within rather than against the system and was known as a champion of the oppressed in his public appearances, his star image did not threaten to displace the traditional, White Hollywood hero or hierarchies within the US imagination.

With respect to Latina/o self-representation, a greater diversity in the types of stories and characters has emerged in Latina/o-themed film projects since the 1990s, reflecting the divergent interests of the newest generation of Latino and Latina filmmakers and their presumed audiences. Successful films with Latino themes and main characters since the 1990s include *Real Women Have Curves* (2002), directed by Columbian filmmaker Patricia Cardoso, and *Quinceañera* (2006, Richard Glatzer, Wash Westmoreland). A number of new actors and actresses have found success and stardom as a result. In recent years, Latina/o-themed films are rarer while Latina/o actors are often integrated into diverse ensemble cast projects, as is the case for the television series *Ugly Betty*, shifts that call for new and targeted study.

Conclusion: Contemporary Trends and Research Questions

Can we envision another way of representing Latina/os? And does this actually amount to assimilation or a new hybridity of being? These are questions we might need to remember as we continue our analysis and resulting activism.

(Valdivia (2010, p. 124))

The present day is one in which multiple and competing trends in representation of Latina/os beg further critical examination. In the 2000s, the roster of Latino/a actors with name recognition among non-Latinos and Latinos alike has grown, as actors such as America Ferrera, Michael Peña, and Selena Gomez are joining the likes of Edward James Olmos and Jennifer Lopez in the public imagination and a few Latina/os for the first time are considered international box office draws. Latinas are being posited as protagonists in children’s programming, such as in *Dora the Explorer* (Nick Jr., 2000–), *The Wizards of Waverly Place* (Disney Channel, 2007–), and *Camp Rock* (Matthew Diamond, 2008). We are witnessing a greater nuance at times in Latina/o representation and the rise of a handful of Latina and Latino writers and media producers, even while denigrating images have not disappeared altogether.

The visibility and apparent popularity of Latina/o actors and characters today illustrates both how marketable Latinidad now is and tensions therein (Molina-Guzmán, 2010). Given these trends, some scholars are exploring the increasing “Latinization” of US culture as Latina/o culture and stars become more popular and integrated, to differing conclusions. Molina-Guzmán (2010), Valdivia (2008, 2010), I in my own work (Beltrán, 2009), and other contemporary scholars importantly draw attention to the multiple implications of such hypervisibility. These scholars remind us that this also entails the inclusion of contradictory discourses that reaffirm Latina and female disenfranchisement in national and global culture, particularly as Latina/o immigrants are scapegoated for US social problems and xenophobia is on the rise, pointing to the need for further in-depth study of such multivalent representation and its impact.

NOTES

- 1 The terms Latino (and the more gender-encompassing Latina/o) and Hispanic are both used to varying degrees in different regions in the United States to refer to people whose ancestry can be traced to Latin American countries. Hispanic, a term coined by the US government in the 1980s that makes reference to Spanish ancestry and the Spanish language, is used decreasingly, however, in favor of Latino, which privileges geographic reference and acknowledges indigenous and mixed ancestry.
- 2 For more information on this time period and Mexican American history more generally, see Rodolfo Acuña (2000).
- 3 See US Census Bureau, *The Hispanic Population: A Census Bureau Brief* (2001), at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf>.
- 4 Second- and third-generation Latina/os in particular typically consume both English and Spanish-language media (Johnson, 2000).
- 5 See Jennifer M. Ortman and Cristine M. Guarneri, US Census Bureau, *United States Population Projections 2000 to 2050* (2009), at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/analytical-document09.pdf>.
- 6 A small number of Latina/os of privileged backgrounds were involved in film production prior to the transition to sound film, however, as Ríos-Bustamente (1992) documents regarding the silent film era.
- 7 Commercial television networks began producing and broadcasting narrative programming in the United States in the last years of the 1940s, while it spread more widely and more Americans watched television regularly in the 1950s.
- 8 When stardom is viewed in purely economic terms, film and television stars are defined as those actors whose popular appeal is such that they can draw in viewers based on their name alone. Stars with such demonstrable appeal to draw in viewers to movie theaters or to watch a television series are considered to be “bankable” and serve as driving forces for media production.
- 9 Gaye Tuchman (1978), describing how women were represented in the mainstream media in that period, coined the term symbolic annihilation to describe these dynamics. She broke this down further to three distinct processes: omission, trivialization, and condemnation.

- 10 Racialization, a term coined by Omi and Winant (1986), is the process by which racial categories and related associations have been constructed and reified through social institutions, including the entertainment media, and social history.
- 11 Confusion still exists regarding whether Latina/os are a race or an ethnic group. While Latina/os are not considered a separate race by the government, they are a racialized ethnic group, viewed as non-White in the popular imagination.
- 12 The term Nuyorican refers to an individual born in New York and of Puerto Rican heritage.
- 13 Focus on Jennifer Lopez has been so prevalent in recent scholarship that Valdivia (2010) singles her out as a case study running at the end of every chapter of her overview of Latina/o communication studies to discuss the trend; among the scholars who have analyzed the representation of Lopez at some stage of her career are Frances Negrón Mutaner (1997), Barrera (2002), Aparicio (2003), Molina-Guzmán and Valdivia (2004), Valdivia (2007), and myself (2002, 2009).
- 14 The dynamics of the burden of representation are explored by scholars such as Shohat and Stam (1994) and can be traced back to early writers on African American representation such as James Baldwin (1968).
- 15 *Mestizaje*, a Spanish word, refers to mixture or mixing; it has commonly been used to describe racial mixing in Latin American countries. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) made the term central to her scholarship on the progressive utility of embracing submerged elements of Mexican American heritage and marginalized people within communities.
- 16 As Henry Puente (2004) reports in research on the distribution of US Latino films in the 1980s and 1990s, this involved many missteps on the part of US film studios and distribution companies, however, particularly regarding how to best market films to Latina/o audiences and the mainstream public.
- 17 Latina filmmakers, while they did exist in this period, tended to produce short films outside the Hollywood system, as Fregoso (1992) explicates on Chicana media production.

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Queer Gazing and the Popular

A Study on the Representational Strategies of Queer Representations in Popular Television Fiction

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, we elaborate on the construction of queer representations in popular television fiction. In spite of the critical and commercial success of “queer” television fiction series (e.g., *Queer as Folk*, *The L Word*, *Six Feet Under*), queer representations are sometimes still seen as controversial. The aim of this chapter is to obtain a better insight into the social and emancipating role of queer representations in contemporary popular culture. A theoretical integration and a translation of the concept of queer theory offer a conceptual framework for this study on media representations. In particular, this chapter relies on this framework for the analysis of television as a popular discourse machine in relation to the production of queer representations in global popular television series. Our textual analysis stresses the different strategies of queer representation in popular television fiction. We discuss the potentiality, limits, and restraints of this diversity of strategies and explore the limits of representing queer within the realm of contemporary popular culture.

Contemporary Western society is dominated by a media culture (Featherstone, 1995; Kellner, 1995). Besides printed media, radio, and information and communication technologies (ICTs), television is still an important medium in the realm of everyday life. Fiction, and especially fiction series, is ubiquitous in this Western television world, and broadcasters travel around to buy not only formats but also fiction series. Several studies with an emphasis on the political economy of the global media market (e.g., Chalaby, 2006; De Bens & De Smaele, 2001) have stressed the importance of importing fictional television formats. In this respect, Biltereyst (1995) has already argued that the European market is dominated by North American (i.e., US) fiction. European channels have gained success with fiction series such as *24*, *Lost*, *Heroes*, *Prison Break*, and *Sex and the City*.

Recently, television series that predominantly represent queers have also entered the international television market. In this chapter, the concept of “queer” refers to those who do not consider their sexual identity and/or desires as strictly heterosexual, and/or who articulate sexual and gender identity positions that are considered as diverging from the heteronormal. Hence, queer representations can have the potential to challenge heteronormativity and/or heteronormative representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) characters and articulate queer identities.

To this end, we illustrate how potential queer strategies are articulated in popular television series. In particular we focus on *Queer as Folk*, *The L Word*, and *Six Feet Under*, since these series on the one hand represent characters who transgress fixed identity positions and, on the other, subvert and/or depict alternatives to certain heteronormative institutions, practices, norms, and values, unlike *Will & Grace* (see Provencher, 2005). These series are not only popular on television but are also successful (like many other series) on the DVD market. *The L Word* was broadcast in 44 countries, *Six Feet Under* in 22, and the original British *Queer as Folk* in 16 countries, quite comparable with, for example, the popularity of *Sex and the City*, which was broadcast in 39 countries.

It should be noted that the increase of LGBT representation on television began in the late 1990s. Prior to that time, LGBTs on the small screen were rarely present. In contrast, cinema and Hollywood have always represented LGBT and queer characters (Dyer, 1990). Even during the era of the US Production Code, subtextual articulations of queerness were depicted on the big screen (Barrios, 2003). (From 1934 until 1968, Hollywood installed the Production Code Administration (PCA) as a self-regulatory institution that provided self-censorship rules.) Among other constraints, the PCA forbade depictions of sexual perversion. From the 1950s on, LGBTs did enter the small screen, albeit as sidekicks who very often had to be “cured” of their “sexual deviancy.” During the 1980s and 1990s, most of the series exchanged the pathological queer for a more mainstream gay character. However, series that are explicitly defined as queer by their producers are a recent phenomenon within Western media culture. As such, fictional texts are created that are positioned outside the borders of heteronormativity (Hayward, 2000). This practice very much corresponds with some of the basic premises of queer theory, the poststructural theory that contests strict categorical views on

gender and sexuality (Seidman, 1996). These series represent characters whose gender and sexual identities are blurred, paradoxical, and undefined. Further, these series expose and deconstruct the way mainstream Western society reiterates and consolidates the hegemonic discourse of heteronormativity, for instance by questioning the hierarchical supremacy of certain institutions (e.g., marriage), practices (e.g., procreation), and norms and values (e.g., monogamy, stability, longevity).

Even without production intentions, these explicit queer representations are preoccupied with “alternative” representations of identity and sexuality. Besides the fact that the signifying practices in relation to these representations are multilayered and not fixed, we want to explore the representational strategies that are being used to depict the British and North American queer characters in fictional series like *Queer as Folk*, *Six Feet Under*, and *The L Word*. Elaborating on queer theory, we will analyze these media texts and stress the different representational strategies of queer identities in popular television fiction. These series are interesting to research not only for their queerness, but also because they are present in the contemporary international DVD market and gain large audiences in Western broadcasting media.

Mapping Queer Theory

The roots of queer theory can be found in the late 1970s when the concept of homosexuality began to be questioned, a phenomenon that radically changed gay and lesbian studies (e.g., Creekmur & Doty, 1995).¹ At that time within academia and grassroots movements in particular in Western countries, homosexuality began to lose its essentialist and uniform connotation while homosexual desire came to be positioned in a social and historical context (for an overview, see Seidman, 1996). Still, it is important to state that essentialist notions of homosexuality are still predominant in Western mainstream societies and that queer thinking in academia and activism is not a unified endeavor. Gradually, class, race, ethnicity, and nationality were integrated into the debate about identity (Seidman, 1995). Social constructivism was the dominant approach or paradigm within which identity and sexual orientation were discussed from historical and cultural angles, from which emerged two important principles. The first was that socially recognized sexual orientations vary culturally and historically; the second suggested that in cultures where heterosexuality and homosexuality are acknowledged, sexual behavior can move between these categories or incorporate both (McIntosh, 1997). As a consequence, unified values or political aspirations were rendered practically impossible because of the diversity within the queer community (Seidman, 1995).

At the same time, in feminist film theory contradictions were revealed. Research on different feminisms focused on changing the structure of patriarchal societies in order to end the oppression of women and minorities, which in the 1970s experienced a theoretical transformation into film studies (Chaudhuri, 2006). In this context the

accomplishments of feminist film theorists were of great importance (for example, Laura Mulvey's (1975) groundbreaking essay on questioning the male gaze in cinema). But what seemed to have been overlooked by both the British and the American traditions of feminist film critiques were the "real" women. Teresa de Lauretis (1987) pointed out that feminist theory continued to think in terms construed by patriarchies, creating women as a universal sex category opposed to that of men (see Benhabib, Butler, Cornell, & Fraser, 1995; De Vos & Van Bauwel, 2002), making differentiating between "women" and "Woman" impossible. Such a differentiation required a radical rethinking of the very concept of gender. Founded on Michel Foucault's technology of sex (1976), de Lauretis suggested that there is a technology of gender that is the product of hegemony. This enabled research in which men and women were analyzed in relation to power strategies rather than merely in relation to one another. Judith Butler (1999) also reacted against the assumption of women having a common identity, in the sense that at certain moments in time and place common goals and/or aspirations are articulated as shared and even universal in relation to women's emancipation building on a common identity as a woman. Although this insistence was constructed within feminist movements and theory to challenge patriarchy in the context of women's emancipation, the conformance to the boundaries of representational politics promoted exclusion and misrepresentation. Butler suggested a radical rethinking of the ontological constructions of gender and identity within the frame of feminist political practice. Butler (1999), who is considered to be one of the leading queer theorists, raised the issue that is foremost in communities of women and LGBTs, namely, the importance of understanding how categories such as "women" or "gays" are produced and reiterated.

Besides the fact that there is a diversity within queer studies and despite the overlaps and interrelatedness with lesbian and gay studies, queer theorists share a concern with how some lesbian and gay scholars try to legitimize homosexuality as a sexual minority by positioning it within the binary construction of homosexuality versus heterosexuality, and by disregarding the hegemony that regulates and reiterates this framework. As a result, these minorities remain conceptualized as the opposite extremes in a spectrum where the center is intact. Queer theory is about reacting against these normalized hierarchies and identity politics, conducting research outside the boundaries of predefined gay or lesbian communities (Seidman, 1995; Stein & Plummer, 1996). The concept of resistance is at the core of queer theory. It is a conscious refusal of labels that define what it is against and it emphasizes a retreat from binary thinking (McIntosh, 1997), which is why queer theory embraces all "non-normative" identities relating to the need to revise society's assumptions about gender and sexuality (Hayward, 2000). In this context, Steven Seidman (1995) is correct to suggest pushing the hetero/homosexual opposition from the individual to the cultural level, and to formulate it as a category of knowledge that encompasses the possibility of imagining homosexuality at the center of popular culture and society, which also exposes the emphasis on heteronormativity. Larry Gross (1998) makes similar claims in his work on sexual minorities and the media, arguing that

audiences – and especially minority audiences – can read media texts “as if,” reversing the hegemonic meanings embedded in them.

Queer theorists draw on French poststructural theory, its methods of deconstruction, and Foucault’s legacy, particularly his views on power/knowledge and the history of human sexuality (Lapsley & Westlake, 2006; Seidman, 1995). A characteristic of poststructural theory is its rejection of a total theory, which implies that texts can be approached from multiple perspectives focusing simultaneously on discourses and non-discourses, uncovering multiple signifiers such as context, intertextuality, and different subject positions in addition to the text itself (Hayward, 2000). Many poststructuralists use deconstruction to analyze the signifiers and to unravel the modes of representation in a text. Deconstruction is a mode of reading against the grain (i.e., not a method) that is aimed at attacking the ideological values of hegemonic institutions by revealing the illusions being created in a text (see Derrida, 1987). According to Seidman (1995, p. 25):

It is the rendering of literary analysis into social analysis, of textual critique into social critique, of readings into a political practice, of politics into the politics of knowledge, that makes deconstruction and the queer theory inspired by it an important movement of theory and politics.

Finally, queer theorists are heavily inspired by Foucault’s (1980) view on power as a possibly repressive and productive factor. Power is not only repressive and disciplinary (from above and institutional) but can also produce agency within the subject (i.e., individual subjects). Broadly, agency can be considered as a discursive construction that produces power. The merit of Foucault’s concept of power lies in his linking of power and the discursive position of resistance, in which resistance is allowed to expand and to be articulated as a reflection of power relations. The risk of this perception, according to Mark Thorpe (1999), is that when emphasis is laid on the social factor a pessimistic view is created, meaning that resistance and change are almost impossible in the praxis and only take place at a theoretical discursive level. The introduction of discursive articulations of resistance gives power to each social actor, and the inequalities in the power relations might be overlooked. Thorpe rightly argues that valorizing the margins as progressive spaces of resistance can lead to problems in the attempt to turn theory into empirical evidence. Based on his own research, he makes some suggestions about how to (re)consider the “margins of resistance.” Thorpe (1999) says that these margins of resistance can be seen as both “something” and “nothing,” “there” but “nowhere” as one shifts between lived views, imaginative presentations, and localized structures of validity and meaning. This theoretical insight is particularly fruitful for media and film studies because of its nonromantic and nonidealistic view on the concept of resistance.

Resistance can be present in contemporary representations but at the same time these are incorporated by the boundaries of contemporary mainstream popular culture. There is an opportunity and a potential space for resistance but it is incorporated

in mainstream media, and the optimistic notion of pleasure and resistance within media studies is left behind. Furthermore, Foucault (1976) suggests that there is no essential truth of human sexuality as each time it is reconstructed in society's discourses where different sexualities are produced. The fluidity within sexual identity implies that queer theorists find it pointless to conduct a politics of identity in the name of repressed sexualities that can become new sexualities in the future; rather, they prefer to focus on how subjects construct their sexualities in relation to the mechanisms of power and knowledge (Dunphy, 2000; Lapsley & Westlake, 2006).

Queering Academia

Studies of representation are no longer served by the "screen tradition" – film scholars who emphasized the role of film as a text and who were once indispensable to research on cinema (e.g., Gove, 1996). Jeff Lewis (2002), for example, criticized the screen tradition for being concerned mainly with the subject and how it relates to the text. In a similar vein, Ien Ang (1991) criticized screen theorists' textual determinism or their focus on the text as the main source of meaning, thereby ruling out the text readers. According to Ang, readers are able to offer different interpretations of the same text. The noble goal of creating a unified theory of signification, ideology, and subjectivity had become unachievable (Lapsley & Westlake, 2006).

Even with this limitation in mind, we argue that the first step in deconstructing and unraveling these contemporary queer representations is embodied in a textual analysis of these fictional series, more specifically of the queer representational strategies, without falling into the passive "spectator trap" of film theory. The deconstruction of the represented queer identities is conceptualized by work on identity that is part of the active viewer paradigm that challenges textual determinism and conceptualizes the viewer assuming an active role within the signifying practices. This implies that both the text and the audience give meaning to identities such as class, sex, ethnicity, and nationality (Stacey, 1994). This conceptualization embroiders on Hall's fundamental work on the theory of identity (see Hall, 1992, 1996, 1997), which postulates that identities are discursive constructions that produce subjectivities with meanings that are fluctuating in time and place. Rosemary Hennessy (1995) valued cultural studies because of "the intellectual's commitment to and articulation of the relationship between theory and practice." She stressed that what distinguishes cultural studies from film studies is the scarce acknowledgment within film theory at the beginning of the 1990s of race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity, or the role of gender in these concepts (Hennessy, 1995, p. 22). The interdisciplinary field of cultural studies has much stronger ties with activism and notions of exclusion, diversity, and inequalities are much more prominent in its work. One could argue that gender gained recognition in feminist film theory; however, even here some theorists did not include race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity and focused solely on the construction of "woman" (Chaudhuri, 2006). If we consider Henderson's (1995) remark on the ease

with which cultural studies transgresses disciplinary borders, it becomes clear how comfortably queer theory can be merged into it. The need for this is accentuated by Lapsley and Westlake (2006) in their *Film Theory: An Introduction*, which described how postmodernity in all its diversity demands different approaches and methods. The authors stressed that “it is hard to see how anyone could now plausibly advance claims for the universal validity of a particular orientation while delegitimizing all others” (Lapsley & Westlake, 2006, p. xv).

It is not only film and cultural studies that benefit from queer theory, but queer theory itself becomes more viable when its theoretical stances are integrated into film studies or cultural studies, both of which include research on LGBT and queer representation. Although queer theory engages in the promotion of individuality and celebration of differences, it never fully explains the type of difference politics it envisions. Seidman (1995) even suggested a conscious refusal on the part of queer theorists to formulate ethical and political points of view or imagine a constructive social project. Seidman (1995) referred to Judith Butler and her suggestion to expose and undermine the compulsive reenactment of heterosexuality and the assumption of causality between sex, gender, and sexuality by means of deconstructive critiques such as drag or performative politics (see also the work of Halberstam, 2005; Edwards, 1998).

Besides the theoretical emphasis on performance and subjectivity, it is important to link these almost ontological positions to the ideological and emancipatory positions of research on queer representations. The critique that there is no solid ground for subject positions could be countered, possibly by applying queer theory to research LGBT representations. Specifically, a queer theoretical perspective allows for highlighting the resistant potential of queer representations to expose or disrupt the hegemonic heteronormative discourse.

Recognizing and identifying these articulations would facilitate the formulation of constructive social practices. As such, queer theory could become an element of research aiming at concrete, constructive ethical points of view.

Putting the Queer into Media Studies

The integration of queer theory into film studies resides in a small but significant number of essays regarding queer film production and reception (e.g., Gittings, 2001; Rich, 2004; Wallace, 2000). Researchers mainly depart from the key idea of queer theory, which is a rejection of the biological and essentialist notions of gender and sexuality, perceiving them as fluent and socially constructed. Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin (2004), for instance, emphasized that queer film research aims at exploring all non-normative sexualities and how they relate to the screen. The possibility of broadening the spectrum beyond gay and lesbian identities makes it possible for scholars to embark on the practice of queer reading (e.g., Cover, 2000). Apart from Alan Sinfield's (2004) queer readings of literature, one of the first queer readers of

texts was Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985). In *Between Men*, Sedgwick reread English literature to expose discriminations and contradictions in what she called “homosocial desire,” a continuum between the homosocial and the homosexual. In doing so, she reacted against the opposition of the latter two as separate categories. She found this opposition to be less emphasized among women than among men in current society. This difference in emphasis contrasts to Athenian societies, which recognized the homosocial continuum among men. For this reason, she suggested that research on sexuality should be conducted in relation to historical power relationships (Sedgwick, 1985, pp. 1–5), a perspective that has been adopted by queer film theorists in some of their essays on gender and sexuality. Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman (1995) put great effort into revisiting gaze theory. They reviewed it in relation to queer theory and referred to the debates over identification in cinema that raised (still unanswered) questions about gender and identity. The problem lies in the concept of identity, which sneaks in and prevents queer reading from being detached from the identification practices in the queer gaze. Although the authors quite firmly argue that identification is fluid and constructed, their idea seems to be approaching the linear “natural” and “essential” bounds of queer reading and identification.

Alexander Doty is another prominent queer film reader who has formulated in a more balanced way propositions in the spectatorship paradigm within film studies. According to Creekmur and Doty (1995), reading practices can vary from revealing queerness in popular culture by questioning the role of mainstream culture and its preferred readings to reinscribing queerness at the margins of popular culture and positioning queer and queer readings on the scholarly agenda of research into popular culture. Doty – well aware of the irony of the subtitle of *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon* – stressed that the practice of queer reading should not be interpreted as making texts queer, but rather as trying to understand how texts might be understood as queer (Doty, 2000). Robert Lang (2002) also gazed at Hollywood through a queer looking-glass and discovered hidden homosocial and homosexual bounds in films such as *Batman and Robin* (1997), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), and *The Outlaw* (1943). The latter is a Western that features the character of Doc Holliday falling in love with Billy the Kid.

The flexibility of the concept of queer makes it possible to understand almost any film as queer to a greater extent than standard lesbian or gay films. Doty (2000) referred to classic Hollywood films such as *Thelma & Louise* (1991) or *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), in which he recognized the creation of an unstable space between the same-sex leads that leaves room for all sorts of interpretations (see also Doty, 1995). Put otherwise, it enables us to read and expose non-normative sexual desires that remain concealed within the heterocentric and stereotyped way of watching films and other popular culture products. It also exposes how LGBT characters are only recognized as such when they are portrayed in clichéd and often pejorative ways (Doty, 2000).

The concept of representation looms in every queer reading, although approaches to it vary. Researching queer representation in a historical context involves considera-

tion of the political and social contexts in which these films were made and seen. North American films that were made in the 1940s and 1950s, when the Production Code (which forbade references to sexual perversions such as homosexuality) was in force, had to find ways around it to enable the representation of gay and lesbian characters on screen (Barrios, 2003). Queer reading practices that focus upon contemporary culture either regard the representation of gay- or lesbian-identified characters or work on queering popular mainstream cinema (see Dhaenens et al., 2008). David Gauntlett (2002) falls within the latter tradition, although he regards queering texts as inventing alternative readings that the authors did not intend and most audiences do not recognize. The body of queer film studies is a diverse package of possible readings of queer and non-queer movies in which the spectator is a mere construction in the mind of the author. Doty (1995, p. 77), for instance, talked of already queerly positioned viewers and straights, both of whom are assumed to be prone to queer impulses. It is therefore important to look at the text and the representational strategies before making arguments about the reading and possible alternative readings. Yet, media studies and screen studies could benefit from the insights and theoretical conceptualizations of queer theory, especially when analyzing queer representations.

Textual Deconstruction

In discussions on queer reading, the dominant voice is that of the queer scholar, while media producers and audiences are often overlooked. Most of the scholars are doing significant theoretical work, but the academic queer gaze shifts from theory to audience and the text is often forgotten. Using a textual analysis (Van Bauwel, 2005) based on the tradition of film analysis, in this chapter we distinguished several representational strategies when a queer identity is represented in popular television fiction. We analyzed moments of queer identity by the characters in the series *Queer as Folk*, *The L Word*, and *Six Feet Under*. Therefore, we analyzed two different levels of the series' textual signifying practices – narrative (e.g., characters, actions, space) and cinematographic elements (e.g., camera movement, lighting, editing). The latter category was divided into aspects of the image (camera use, light, color use, juxtaposition) and aspects of sound (music, spoken language, natural sound, on screen or offscreen). Together, these elements create the *mise-en-scène*, which gives meaning to the articulated queer identity.

Queering Television

For this study, we focused on three series that feature queer characters and/or are described as queer series. First is the American family drama series *Six Feet Under*

(HBO, 2001–2005), which revolves around the Fisher family that has lost its paterfamilias and is left with the father's funeral home. One of the sons is David Fisher, a closeted gay man who has a relationship with Keith Charles. Second is the British drama series *Queer as Folk* (BBC, 1999–2000), which features a tightly knit group of predominantly gay friends in a contemporary urban environment. The final series is the American drama series *The L Word* (Showtime, 2004–2009), which focuses on the lives of a tightly knit group of primarily lesbian friends in contemporary Los Angeles. The series *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word* can be considered queer by “nature.” Even though many of the characters label themselves as, for instance, gay or lesbian, most of them can be considered queer. Further, these series depict a queer community in a cosmopolitan environment. *Six Feet Under* differs, aside from the fact that some of the main characters are queer; its focus is not on a queer community and most of the time the thematic scope is not queer-related (which is the case for the other two series). However, besides a diverse and rich set of characters, these series share some common strategies for representing a queer identity. Most of the strategies can be situated at the narrative level since these series can be described as a narrative genre where plot and character development are important elements of the genre conventions. Thus, our textual analysis focused on the plot and characters.

We distinguished the following five strategies: parody, strategies of corporeality, strategies of “matrix” reversal, strategies of role reversal, and strategies of rearticulation through discursive pleasure. They were all manifested in different forms and equalize at a certain point the representational strategies that are used to represent gender benders (Van Bauwel, 2005).

The queer manifestations articulated by *parody strategies* are often very strong representations of stereotypical queer representations (e.g., the stereotype of the overemotional queer or the butch lesbian) and are articulated through cross-dressing, overacting, and travesty. Especially in the series *Queer as Folk*, these strategies are used and often indicate the construction of gender identities and gender roles. This articulation situates itself foremost within the actors' codes (such as vestimentary, gesticular, and kinetic). Parody, often in the guise of self-irony, results in the excessive use of mimetic codes that produces an identity solely constructed out of stereotypes. There is also a temporary simulation of an extreme stereotypical gender identity, and the actual gender identity is not lost, although the fixed identity disappears. For instance, the effeminacy of the stereotypical gay character Alexander in *Queer as Folk* (season 1, episode 3) is exaggerated in such a way that what becomes mocked is the process of stereotyping instead of the character. Similarly, the series parodies heteronormative gender roles, for instance through characters systematically calling their male friends “girlfriends.” This strategy can be seen as a form of resistance, but it seldom makes a clear statement of resistance against dominant heterosexual identities. In addition, this strategy does not articulate a clear “agency.”

The *strategies of corporeality* emphasize the performance of the protagonist. The material body reflects the “other” gender identities or articulates an ambiguous gender identity, sometimes called the androgynous ideal. Often “agency” and active identity

construction are present. These strategies are also mainly articulated through the actors' codes, such as kinetic codes under the guise of a masquerade. For instance, in *The L Word* these strategies can be seen as a form of criticism of a fixed gender identity. The series features Shane, a character who articulates androgyny in multiple ways. She claims a lesbian identity, which signifies a female subjectivity while nonetheless playing with both masculine and feminine codes. In contrast, Max opts more radically for a male identity, by embodying masculine stereotypes and pursuing a bodily reconfiguration from female to male. Still, both characters resist the notion of fixed identities that are based on causal relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexuality. However, this is a much more subtle strategy, where the cinematographic representation remains hegemonic and one often adopts a "male" gaze. In particular, *The L Word* has earned criticism because of the "heterosexual lusty gaze" embedded in the series; Candace Moore (2007) has referred to the "tourist" gaze where the male heterosexual viewer is looking into the lesbian world of West Hollywood. Nevertheless, this strategy can be interpreted as a form of resistance that is largely incorporated and often partial. For instance, in the pilot episode, new neighbor Jenny is peeping through a wooden fence at two women making love in the neighbors' swimming pool. Although this scene is constructed around the male gazing lustfully after two lesbian women, it assumes a female subject position through Jenny's gaze. Thus, it resists the stereotypical image of the male gazing and subject position.

The strategies of "matrix" reversal, on the other hand, depart from a more radical position. In these strategies, queer is articulated as the norm, hegemony is transformed as queer, and heterosexuality is reallocated to the margin. The role reversal and the ambiguous game are articulated by the number of queer characters, and by the camera perspective with which the spectator mostly identifies and which is equal to the protagonist's view. Both *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word* depart from an almost exclusive queer site that is constructed as the dominant realm. For instance, *The L Word* is set in West Hollywood, which already has the connotation of being a lesbian-driven community, and *Queer as Folk* represents a street community that predominantly exists out of gay bars, gay health clubs, an LGBT community center, and so on. Most of their characters assume an LGBT or queer identity, which makes queer desire the norm. Hence, by making queer desire hegemonic, heterosexual desire becomes exceptional and rare. The role reversal is found in the "queer point of view" that turns everything upside down and works in an anti-hegemonic fashion with regard to queer identities. "Agency" is clearly present, and resistance against the dominance of compulsory heterosexuality is articulated.

At another level, we distinguish the strategies of role reversal that are articulated by playing around with traditional gender roles and identities. These strategies are often encountered, and both female and male characters, queer and heterosexual, employ them. The text often supports role reversals under the guise of amplification, and the articulation is at the level of the mise-en-scène, a clear active "agency" conferring subjectivity to the performance that articulates a possible resistance. This strategy is clearly articulated in *Six Feet Under*, where the series' gay couple David and Keith

constantly renegotiate their roles toward each other in their relationship. They subvert the appropriation of fixed gender roles and parody them by mocking or exaggerating heteronormative domestic positions, for instance when David calls himself a “jealous housewife” on discovering that Keith is working late in a bar filled with gays (season 4, episode 7). They also renegotiate their sex roles through actively switching sexual positions (e.g., “bottom” and “top”). As such, they challenge the notion of a fixed sexual and relational position. Further, the series also deploys these role reversals in the dynamics of heterosexual relationships. For instance, Brenda’s boyfriend Joe actively desires to be sexually dominated, thus challenging the unquestioned dominant position of the male.

A final form of representing queer are the *strategies of rearticulation through discursive pleasure*. They articulate ambiguity in a more positive way, with the production of a discourse that very subtly resists patriarchal and heterosexual ideology. A theme often used in these strategies is female lesbian sexuality, which is represented as active and positive, without a radical reversal of the “gaze,” but certainly with a reversal of the object of the “gaze.” *The L Word* features several lesbian sex scenes that represent the characters as subjects with agency instead of objects of desire. In several sex scenes between Dana and Alice, for instance, the sex is not represented as picture-perfect and heavily eroticized but as messy and playful. In these strategies, the articulated resistance is much more subtle and incorporated, but the subjectivity that is created through the rearticulation of the discursive pleasure makes it possible to give it the meaning of resistance.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have argued that it is important for contemporary popular culture theory to include themes such as queer representation. This is the sphere of hegemonic and anti-hegemonic ideological production in which, according to Beverley Best (1998), social change and transformation are possible. Without pleading for a romantic turn to the radical politics of the voices at the margins, we emphasize the potential for a social transformation that allows the margins and the resistance to find places outside of and within the dominant order. This dialectic of the queer discourse either in the hegemonic sphere or at the margins can only be understood on the basis of a “snapshot” of the discursive repertoires. Queer articulations are dependent upon those that attribute meaning and have to be situated in time and space. The representational strategies are only one element in this complex realm of signifying practices. By conceptualizing resistance as fluid and situated, we are unable to differentiate “fixed” recurring patterns or to make general statements about the (in)existence of articulated queer resistance in the media sphere. But explorative studies such as this case study are important to embody queer theory into mainstream media studies and to point out in what way these queer representations are depicted without stating

that these representational strategies are interpreted in a specific way. The academic community should pay more attention to the theoretical richness and relevance of queer theory, and especially to the integration of these insights into film studies and media studies. Researching queer representation, queer theory, and the possibility of transgressing the boundaries by means of queer reading should be a part of this research in which identification is conceptualized as being detached from spectatorship. This case study in particular has argued that common representational strategies (parody, corporeality, matrix reversal, role reversal, and rearticulation through discursive pleasure) are used in contemporary queer television series. Beside the diversity of queer characters in these series, similar strategies of representation can be distinguished and can be seen as one of the main signifiers of queerness in the televisual machinery.

NOTE

- 1 This theoretical introduction to queer theory is based on Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst (2008).

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Mediated Portrayals of Masculinities

Heather L. Hundley

ABSTRACT

The focus of this chapter is specifically on how researchers have studied and written about the portrayal of masculinities in US media. The chapter opens by tracing the evolution of academic study of masculinities in US media beginning with stereotypical representations that led into identifying three key types: hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, and metrosexual masculinity. The chapter then reviews how scholars have written about the portrayals of masculinities in specific US media such as film, television, and print. While this literature review is by no means exhaustive, it demonstrates the range of research in the past four decades, illustrating media's increased portrayals of masculinities over time, and offers suggestions for future directions.

Early feminist media studies research laid the foundation and sparked interest in the study of male characters. In fact, research on “masculinity studies in communication was scarce prior to the late 1980s” (Mazzarella, 2008, p. 69). To understand the development of examining masculinity in the media, one must understand the development of feminist media studies.

On the heels of second-wave feminism, many scholars in the late 1960s and early 1970s began examining the number of female characters in film and television.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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Initially scholars typically used content analysis to count the number of female characters and compare it to the number of male characters. By the mid- to late 1970s, second-wave feminism was critiqued by scholars such as bell hooks (1981), who discussed racial differences among women. Thus, in the 1980s, media scholarship examining portrayals became even more complex, with many researchers claiming the importance of critically interrogating how characters' gender, race, and class were depicted as well. Today, scholars realize the myriad of traits, demographics, and other features of a person (regardless of being a real person in everyday life or a mediated character) in what is called identity studies.

With more women earning PhDs and becoming professors, many second-wave feminists began women's studies programs in universities. Noting that feminists do not just study women and women's issues, some feminists turned their interests to men and men's issues. Thus emerged gender studies programs, replacing preestablished women's studies programs.

Early gender research dichotomized males and females. Drawing from Derrida's notion of *différance*, male is what is *not* female. Hence, what is masculine is not feminine (Brown, 1999; Jeffords, 1994; Kirkham & Thumim, 1993; MacKinnon, 2003). Following this line of thought, masculinity was stereotypically associated with power, strength, hardness, action, and the public sphere, whereas femininity was linked to powerlessness, weakness, softness, passiveness, and the private sphere (Bean & Harper, 2007; Brown, 1999; Kirkham & Thumim, 1993).

It is important to note that these early conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity representing this simplistic dichotomy were established in most of the West. That is, biologically sexed bodies are referred to as boys/men or girls/women and culturally created genders are associated with these sexed bodies. Therefore, in the United States, men are masculine and women are feminine (D'Acci, 2004). Yet, while many cultures use the terms sex and gender interchangeably, others view them as separate traits (Jandt & Hundley, 2007). Thus, irrespective of different sex and gender concepts, a study of men or male characters is often a study of masculinity. Gendered portrayals in the media are salient to examine because they can be varied, which speaks volumes about the culture from which they evolve.

Often, the sex/gender differences are collapsed when critiquing mediated portrayals. For instance, drawing from Bordo's (1999) extensive research on the physical body, Worley (2000) aligned with Butler's (1990) work on the performance of genders and claimed that "although biology may constitute the male body, culture inscribes all bodies, including male bodies, with meaning" (Worley, 2000, p. 120).

The focus of this chapter is specifically on how researchers have studied and written about the portrayal of masculinities in US media. This chapter is written in two sections. The first traces the evolution of examining masculinities in US media beginning with stereotypical representations that led into identifying hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, and metrosexual masculinity. The second discusses how scholars have written about the portrayals of masculinities in particular US

media such as film, television, and print. While this literature review is by no means exhaustive, it demonstrates the range of research in the past four decades and illustrates media's increased portrayals of masculinities over time.

From Masculinity to Masculinities: Evolving Portrayals in US Media

Initially the concept of masculinity was singular. The stereotypical, tough guy image in the media was a "known and stable concept" (MacKinnon, 2003, p. 33). "Fundamentally, Hollywood movies show the process by which gender is represented – and masculinism maintained and threatened – in our culture" (Bingham, 1994, p. 19; also see Horrocks, 1995). Craig (1992) wrote that "masculinity is what a culture expects of its men" (p. 3). While the standards were difficult to define, Kirkham and Thumim (1993) noted that while masculinity was not definitive, men must live up to it in our culture. Despite these vague concepts of masculinity, as with portrayals of femininity, several scholars expressed the inherent power media maintain in perpetuating unrealistic portrayals (Bingham, 1994; Kirkham & Thumim, 1993; Mason, 1992; Morrison & Halton, 2009; Vavrus, 2007). In fact, the "media have perpetuated the perspective that individuals who do not conform to their assigned gender are abnormal and unnatural" (Cooper, 2002, p. 53).

By the late 1980s, gender research was "increasingly interdisciplinary, drawing on research from social and behavioral sciences as well as the humanities and even the natural and biological sciences" (Kimmel, 1987, p. 11). By the early 1990s media scholars followed suit, drawing from numerous disciplines, including gender studies, anthropology, and sociology, and came to realize that masculinity varies in culture and history (see, e.g., Connell, 1987; Jandt & Hundley, 2007; Messner, 1996). All bodies, including men's, were considered sites "where differing and evolving versions of masculinity [or femininity] are envisioned and performed" (Worle, 2000, p. 120; also see Bordo, 1999). This was evident in the media as well; "Over the years tough guys [in the movies] changed" (Neibaur, 1989, p. 1).

Based on Connell's (2002) research, Kivel and Johnson (2009) maintained that "while masculinity is grounded in difference, it is not a static characteristic or personal identity trait. Instead, masculinity is a fluid construct that is organized within social relations and ultimately changes those social relations" (p. 110). Furthermore, the concept of masculinity is "fraught, divided, and therefore changeable" (Penley & Willis, 1993, p. xviii). Thus, because of its malleability and as "an ongoing discursive and cultural practice" (Vavrus, 2007, p. 247), the term "masculinities" became widely used and accepted (also see Beynon, 2002; Connell, 1987; Hearn & Morgan, 1990; MacKinnon, 2003; Mazzarella, 2008; Messner, 1996; Woodward, 2004) "to more adequately describe the complexities of male social position, identity, and experience" (Katz, 1995, p. 134).

Differing Masculinities in the Media

In the past four decades, with the increased scholarly attention on mediated portrayals of gender, several types of masculinities emerged. For instance, in the 1980s, initially scholars examined masculinity in the media as if it were one unified concept and argued that masculine stereotypes were confining (Farrell, 1986). A decade later there was an attempt to categorize the roles that men play in the media. Scholars at the Sixth Annual Children and the Media Conference, for example, summarized five classic media icons of masculinity: “The Joker,” “The Jock,” “The Strong Silent Type,” “The Big Shot,” and “The Action Hero” (Children Now, 1999a).

Simultaneously, rather than categorizing men’s roles in the media, several scholars described masculine characteristics displayed in the media. The characteristics were generally based on stereotypes. For example, in a focus on portrayals of males in mediated sport, a study reported that masculine images traditionally included speed, danger, and aggression and showed that a “real man is strong, tough, aggressive, and above all, a winner” (Children Now, 1999b, p. 11).

Jeffords (1994) noted seven masculine qualities, namely, being competitive, athletic, decisive, unemotional, strong/aggressive, powerful, and never feminine. Other masculine traits included comradeship, loyalty, bravery, endurance of pain and suffering (Newsinger, 1993), the ability to inflict and endure violence, survival skills, adventure, exploration, courage, and ingenuity (Ryall, 1993). Some scholars found that alcohol consumption was also identified with masculinity (see, e.g., Hundley, 1995; Lyons, Dalton, & Hoy, 2006; Strate, 1992; Wedding, 2000; for more masculine characteristics see Beggan & Allison, 2001; Jhally, 2002; Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000; Williams, 1994).

As an extension of listing stereotypical masculine characteristics, scholars began theorizing and developing terms related to masculinity in the media. These terms were used to describe particular types of men/masculinities. For instance, in his analysis of movies from the 1950s, Cohan (1997) discussed two types of masculinity, “hard” and “soft.” “Hard masculinity,” he claimed, was “the standard when defending the nation’s boundaries” (p. xii), whereas “soft masculinity” was the standard “of an orderly, responsible home life” (p. xii). Hard masculinity, then, aligned with John Wayne Westerns and war films, while soft masculinity paralleled Jimmy Stewart movies about domestic life.

Connell (1985) initially coined the term “hegemonic masculinity,” explaining it as a culturally naturalized form of masculinity. This form consisted of stereotyped traits and characteristics of being a “real man” that focused on power. It served to privilege and legitimate patriarchy (also see Fahey, 2007; Hanke, 1998; Mazzarella, 2008; Trujillo, 1991). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity naturalized the roles men and women play in our culture, but more importantly, the media portrayed it in terms of “how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance” (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1987, p. 179).

Hegemonic masculinity incorporated aspects of feminism (MacKinnon, 2003), thus, in addition to displaying manly stereotypes, mediated hegemonic masculine characters were also seen contributing with household responsibilities, sharing in child raising, and supporting their wives' ambitions. Hanke (1992) referred to these characters as feminized men. This type of masculinity was particularly apparent in 1980s television that featured "softer" men in touch with their feelings (McEachern, 1999).

Hegemonic masculinity was accounted for in both US culture and US media. Sociologists referred to this feminization of men as a "crisis in masculinity." Cohan (1997) concurred that "a culture's representation of masculinity in crisis thus often reflects a perceived 'feminization of men'" (p. xi). Creeber (2002) explained that this "crisis" was partially a result of the post-Fordist era, which is also recognized as the deindustrialization of US culture. Hence, a "new breed of man" was born, a "sensitive man" (Creeber, 2002, p. 170). Once hegemonic masculinity was identified and denaturalized, the "natural" characteristics of masculinity, including heterosexuality and Whiteness, were exposed.

In reaction to feminized men portrayed in the media, extreme versions of masculinity were identified in the media as well. Scholars theorized hypermasculinity as a form of extreme masculinity void of any feminization. It was defined as characterizing men who were "tough, aggressive, ultra-competitive, strong and dominating" (Iwamoto, 2003, p. 45). Furthermore, hypermasculine men were powerful, hypersexual, and feared. This type of man was "incompetent in personal relationships" (Prusank, 2007, p. 169) and ultimately provided excuses for "bad boy" behavior (Prusank, 2007).

As a defense against feminization of men in the United States (Joyrich, 2000) and as a reaction to this "problem," Hollywood began producing hypermasculine characters such as "Dirty" Harry Callahan (*Dirty Harry*, *Magnum Force*), John Rambo (*Rambo*), and John McClane (*Die Hard* series) to combat soft male characters such as television's Frank Furillo (*Hill Street Blues*), Michael Steadman (*thirtysomething*), and John Cage (*Ally McBeal*). More recent examples of hypermasculine men are evidenced with Black men, particularly sports stars, gangsta rappers, and thugs (see Iwamoto, 2003; Means Coleman, 2002; Pompper, 2010; Saddik, 2003; Wolfe, 2003).

Whereas several scholars believed hypermasculinity was a reaction to hegemonic masculinity, Palmer-Mehta (2009) argued the theoretical construct of mediocre masculinity as a morphing form of hegemonic masculinity "to fit the contemporary social situation" (p. 1070). This is a type of masculinity in which men are far from ideal. *The Man Show* and its first hosts, Jimmy Kimmel and Adam Carolla, served as examples of mediocre masculinity. Despite being mediocre, they still maintain their power as White males.

In the past decade, yet another type of masculinity emerged – metrosexual masculinity. Initially used in 1994 by cultural critic Mark Simpson, media scholars began examining this type of masculinity in the media about a decade later. What MacKinnon (2003) termed the "new man," Tragos (2009) deemed the "metrosexual" (p. 545). Described as "a gift to advertisers, the metrosexual image-conscious man

spends considerable resources on appearance and lifestyle” (Pompper, 2010, p. 684; also see Shuggart, 2008; Simpson, 2002). This included men who were “unashamed about beauty care, shopping, and spa treatments” (Bing, 2003, p. 68). While hegemonic masculinity embodied a feminized version of masculinity, metrosexuals embody a feminine version of masculinity. The metrosexual is a heterosexual, “in touch with his feminine side” (Aldrich, 2004, p. 1733), yet some people may consider him gay or bisexual (Coad, 2008).

Opinions differ on the reasons for the emergence of hegemonic, hyper-, and metrosexual masculinities. The deindustrialization of the United States combined with second-wave feminism certainly provide rationales for masculinity to possess feminist ideals. Whether that occurs hegemonically or not is a matter of perspective. For some, this softer form of masculinity may have been a “crisis in the feminization of men.” Hence, hypermasculinity could be argued as a reactionary device. As an extreme version of masculinity, “hypermasculinity exposes anxiety about masculinity” (MacKinnon, 2003, p. 5). Yet, as an extension of that argument, some scholars may claim that hypermasculinity presented a crisis in the overmasculinization of men. As a reaction, metrosexuals emerged in media and culture. Despite the explanations of why these masculinities emerged, it is evident that the US media depict several types of masculinities.

In reviewing literature regarding the portrayals of masculinities in US media, it is apparent that a hierarchy of masculinities exists. Scholars agree that hegemonic masculinity is the most preferred or encouraged in the media, whereas other forms of masculinities are subordinated. Moreover, homosexual masculinities are “at the bottom of the gender hierarchy among men” (Connell, 1995, p. 78). In fact, hypermasculinity and metrosexual masculinity are said to reify hegemonic masculinity, as the next section of this chapter reveals. In so doing, US media validate White, male, heterosexual privilege in the culture.

Hegemonic Masculinity in the Media

Whether explicitly stated or not, hegemonic masculinity is quite prevalent in the literature describing portrayals of mediated masculinities (see, e.g., Gardiner, 2005; Hanke, 1998; Jansen, 1994; Jeffords, 1994; Katz, 1995; Kirkham & Thumim, 1993; Mason, 1992; Mazzarella, 2008; McEachern, 1999; Messner, 1996; Prusank, 2007; Walsh, 2009). Trujillo (1991), for instance, capitalized on the theory of hegemonic masculinity. In his analysis of baseball pitcher Nolan Ryan, he argued five key characteristics Ryan possessed that expressed hegemonic masculinity. They were physical force, occupational achievement, familial patriarchy, frontiersmanship, and heterosexuality. The literature pertaining to mediated portrayals of hegemonic masculinity contains some commonalities with several stereotyped characteristics of masculinity, such as being strong, heterosexual, powerful, and White.

In reviewing the literature, it is evident that researchers concur that this form of masculinity remains at the top of the masculine hierarchy whereas all other forms are subordinated masculinities and exist to reaffirm hegemonic masculinity. For instance, Mazzarella (2008) examined the three main male characters in the cable television reality program *American Chopper*. In her analysis, she claimed that the father, Paul, represented hegemonic masculinity whereas his sons, Paulie and Mikey, portrayed subordinated and complicit masculinities respectively. This, she argued, legitimated patriarchy and granted credibility to the traditional male role.

In Gardiner's (2005) examination of the *South Park* film *Bigger, Longer, and Uncut*, he found that the male portrayals reaffirmed hegemonic masculinity as "the world is a playground of powerful, male-bonded, American white boys" (p. 61). Thus, for male characters that do not fit these descriptors, they existed to substantiate the preferred version of masculinity.

Similarly, in an analysis of the television situation comedy *Home Improvement*, McEachern (1999) illustrated how the show juxtaposed two versions of masculinity. The supporting character, Al Borland, portrayed "soft masculinity" whereas the main character, Tim Taylor, represented the "wild man" who generally displayed hegemonic masculinity but occasionally depicted examples of hypermasculinity. Interestingly, rather than giving complete preference to the hegemonic form, McEachern (1999) noted that these two versions "enable the comic mode of the sitcom to constantly interrogate these masculinities and their relationship" (p. 11) to each other. In fact, the "gags question the authenticity of his [Tim's] masculinity" (p. 14). As evidenced in this review of mediated hegemonic masculinity, scholars have critically engaged in examining how media support this form of masculinity and juxtapose it against other forms of masculinities. Ultimately, such analyses allow scholars to question hegemonic social constructions of gender and expose their racist ideology and preferred sexual orientation supporting White heteronormativity.

Hypermasculinity in the Media

One way of questioning masculinity, including hegemonic masculinity, is through portrayals of ubermasculinity or hypermasculinity. This extreme form of masculinity includes "a cool pose ritualizing masculinities of toughness, pride, control" (Pompper, 2010, p. 684; also see Iwamoto, 2003; Majors & Billson, 1992). While hypermasculinity is not necessarily race specific, more often it is connected with Black masculinity. For instance, in a study of Tupac Shakur, Iwamoto (2003) argued that "the gangster or mob image was one of the main cultural-media influences on the formation of Tupac's identity" (p. 46). Moreover, "the gangsta culture or 'thug' lifestyle reinforced Tupac's hyper-masculine values" (p. 46). While identifying Tupac's hypermasculine image projected in the media, Iwamoto (2003) claimed that Tupac was well aware of media's racist bias but nevertheless capitalized on it to his own demise.

In an ethnographic account of convicted felon Caryon Johnson, Means Coleman (2002) connected the “thug life” to Black male characters in films like *Boyz n the Hood*, *Friday*, and *Menace II Society*. Such characters displayed excessive power, control, and strength over women, in the streets, and in their neighborhoods. Furthermore, they defied traditional enforcement by engaging in unlawful behaviors.

Earlier research did not necessarily use the term hypermasculinity, but in their descriptions and arguments, the term was implied. For instance, Brod (1987), Jhally (1990, 1992), Katz (1995), and Katz and Jhally (1999) expressed concerns about the pervasive reification of violence and masculinity (a construct of hypermasculinity) as a cultural norm. With examples such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, and Bruce Willis, predominantly young, male audiences “latch onto big, muscular, violent men as cinematic heroes” (Katz, 1995, p. 135). Parallel to this description, Mosher and Sirkin (1984) explained that a “macho man” possessed callous sexual attitudes and displayed violent tendencies. Furthermore, danger was exciting to macho men (also see Mosher & Tomkins, 1988; Tomkins, 1979).

McEachern (1999) and Prusank (2007) described hypermasculine characteristics and claimed them as “natural” traits in all men. For instance, Prusank (2007) studied teen magazines and compared two forms of masculinity – the “good/new” man (e.g., hegemonic masculinity) and the “natural” man (hypermasculinity). In examining these distinctions, Prusank (2007) stated that “inherent within all males is the potential for the ‘new man’” (p. 170); however, the “natural man” also exists, perhaps just below the surface.

McEachern’s (1999) examination of *Home Improvement* found that despite Tim Taylor’s desire to understand women (a characteristic of hegemonic masculinity), as he often discussed interpersonal issues with his neighbor, Tim’s base need for “more power,” as he supercharged up anything with a motor, was difficult to escape. According to McEachern, this quest for power (a component of hypermasculinity) was Tim’s “natural” trait. Nevertheless, McEachern suggested that hypermasculinity was less desirable than hegemonic masculinity because, more often than not, it resulted in embarrassment and degradation for Tim.

Another study that compared “traditional masculinity” (i.e., hegemonic masculinity) with “uber-hegemonic masculinity” (i.e., hypermasculinity) was Woodward’s (2004) study on boxing. Without using the term hypermasculinity, she described its characteristics. Specifically, Woodward wrote that boxing is “a spectacle beset with contradictions and ambiguities enjoyed and reviled in equal proportions” (p. 15) in that it depicts a “display of the perfect body and the grotesque [excessive] body” (p. 15) simultaneously. Hence, the excessive bodies in boxing are spectacles that, in essence, parody the male body. Therefore, Woodward claimed that ultimately boxing’s display of excess served as a “mock masculinity,” reaffirming traditional masculinity.

While the aforementioned scholars suggested that hypermasculinity was less encouraged or reviled in US media than hegemonic masculinity, others argued whether hypermasculinity was a result of hegemonic masculinity. For instance, in

analyses of men's magazines published in 2001, Gauntlett (2002) took direct issue with Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks (2001) in terms of their position on the "crisis on masculinity" and how it was played out in the media. Specifically, Jackson and colleagues (2001) found that men's magazines in the 1990s reasserted old-fashioned masculinity and served as a backlash against the feminization of men. Gauntlett (2002) readdressed the "crisis" by stating that "contemporary masculinity is 'in crisis' since women are more successful" (p. 250) and that "men's problem is not their new role, it's clinging on to the old one" (p. 251). Hence, he found that men's magazines presented "insecure men finding their place in the world" (p. 180).

Metrosexuals in the Media

As a relatively new construct, metrosexual masculinity in the media has been examined by a handful of scholars (Clarkson, 2005; Draper, 2010; Gamson, 2005; Lewis, 2007; Ramsey & Santiago, 2004; Sender, 2006; Shuggart, 2008; Westerfelhaus & Lacroix, 2006). Interestingly, the majority of literature about mediated metrosexuals examined the popular cable television program *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. Shuggart (2008), for instance, studied 35 episodes of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, a book by the same name, and *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*. As a result, she claimed that metrosexuality was used to "rationalize commercial masculinity" (p. 280). In fact, most of the literature concluded the same thing. That is, that gay men were used to "solve the 'problem' of the male consumer" (Sender, 2006, p. 133), particularly White male heterosexuals.

Diverging from *Queer Eye*, Draper (2010) examined three editorial transformations of *Details* magazine. Initially, the magazine was gay-inclusive, depicting hegemonic masculinity. The second incarnation of the magazine was exclusively straight and what Draper called *Maxim-ized* (after *Maxim* magazine). This suggested the magazine contained illustrations of hypermasculinity. The third editor decided to recreate *Details* magazine and present metrosexual masculinity. By doing so, Draper (2010) claimed the magazine "utilized gayness to construct difference between 'straight' masculinities" (p. 357). Further, he contended the magazine "constructed new male audiences" and "legitimized them [i.e., metrosexuals] as 'authentic' straight identities" (p. 357).

Clearly the research on masculinities in US media has identified various types of masculinities. Generally speaking, they can be categorized as hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, or, more recently, metrosexual masculinity. In addition to acknowledging these types of masculinities, scholars concur that the media present a hierarchical preference. Furthermore, while some scholars provide explanations for the emergence of multiple masculinities, they do not all agree.

Masculinity and Race

Research exists examining mediated portrayals of the intersection of masculinities and race.¹ That is, scholars are asking how masculinities are depicted by characters from a variety of racial backgrounds. Analyses of Whiteness and masculinity are generally synonymous with analyses of hegemonic masculinity. However, other than studies of hegemonic masculinity, most of the research involving masculinity and race examines Black characters (see, e.g., Brown, 1999; Cornwell & Orbe, 2002; Dunbar, 1999; Elise & Umoja, 2009; Gabbard, 2004; Orbe & Lyons, 2009; Persson & Newman, 2008). Nevertheless, there is also research examining masculinity and other ethnicities including Chicanos (Fregoso, 1993), Asians (Parrenas & Siu, 2007), and Native Americans (Parker, 2003) in the US media.

Other than work on hegemonic masculinity, which incorporates Whiteness, other studies explicitly examined the portrayal of White masculinity (see, e.g., Bannister, 2006; Butterworth, 2007; Consalvo, 2003; Oates, 2009; Walsh, 2009). Consalvo (2003), for instance, critically examined news coverage of Dylan Harris and Eric Klebold, the two boys responsible for the Columbine High School shooting spree. She found that the media portrayed them primarily as monsters, having no gender. Secondly, the media subordinated their masculinity, portraying them as “geeks.” In terms of race, ultimately, Consalvo (2003) claimed that the media portrayed them as “deviant by choice” since these “middle class white boys were denied a privileged position promised to them” (p. 40) by society.

In another article that juxtaposed masculinity and race, Walsh (2009) examined the *New York Times*, CNN, and MSNBC coverage of the Democratic primary from January 2008 to June 2009. She argued that Hillary Clinton portrayed hegemonic masculinity by making race invisible whereas Barack Obama was depicted as an alternative form of masculinity since he was effeminate, not White, not Black, and not manly. The fact that Clinton is a woman highlights the social construction of gender and is further discussed in the next section of this chapter.

While comparing mediated portrayals of White and Black masculinities, Jeffords (1994) stated that it was the White man’s burden of masculinity to save countries (*Rambo* series), artifacts (*Indiana Jones* series), or corporations (*Die Hard* series). Discussing *Lethal Weapon* and *Die Hard* as examples, she continued that Black men did not have that burden. Rather, Black men enforce the system whereas White men challenge the system. Thus, mediated masculinities by race do vary.

Traditionally, portrayals of Black masculinities have been limited and stereotyped. Orbe and Hopson (2002) confirmed this in their examination of seven African American male cast members from nine seasons of MTV’s *The Real World*. In their semiotic analysis, the Black characters were portrayed as “angry, emotionally unstable or unpredictable or both, a violent threat, and sexually aggressive” (p. 220). As a result, the authors argued that these portrayals “legitimized a general fear of Black men” (p. 220).

In Brown's (1999) study of Black superheroes in comic books, he posited that masculinity in Western culture is equivalent to White masculinity. However, he maintained that Milestone Comics targeted to Black consumers "offers an alternative to hypermasculinity" (p. 26), which all too often prevails in portraying Black masculinity. Pointedly, he argued that typical Black superheroes are "too hard, too physical, too bodily" (p. 27), whereas their White counterparts represent a wimp/warrior duality (e.g., Clark Kent as Superman). Yet, according to Brown (1999), the Black superheroes in Milestone Comics emphasize brains over brawn, which depicts a welcome new type of Black masculinity.

Similar to Brown's (1999) claim that Black men are oftentimes portrayed as hyper-masculine, Persson and Newman (2008) contend that Black characters in the media are shown as overtly sexual and produce a "monstrous masculinity" (p. 632) that contributes to racial tensions. Despite these mediated portrayals, Dunbar (1999) viewed the "marginalized status of black masculinity" as a capitalizing opportunity for NBA player Dennis Rodman. Moreover, she argued that Rodman's diversion of hegemonic masculinity distinguished his eccentricities and visual style, which was packaged and sold to consumers.

Whereas the media portray Spike Lee "in unidimensional and stereotypical ways" (Orbe & Lyons, 2009, p. 371) "as confrontational, controversial, and as audacious" (p. 371), Orbe and Lyons assert that he is also a "family man," "an indispensable activist," and "changing and evolving" (pp. 376–377). In his films, "Lee's depictions of black men differ sharply from the images cast by Hollywood" (Elise & Umoja, 2009, p. 298). In an examination of Spike Lee's movies, Elise and Umoja (2009) contend that "he abandons the one-dimensional presentation of the black man as a macho hero, eunuch, sidekick, amoral pimp/hustler/thug, and the buffoon" (p. 299). Instead, Lee reveals Black men as "sexual beings, not brutes: vulnerable to their passions, not victims of them" (p. 297). Furthermore, the Black men in Lee's films are "virile, intelligent, and essential" (p. 299).

Garnered by Brown's (1999) study of Milestone Comics, Elise and Umoja's (2009) analysis of Spike Lee films, and Orbe and Lyons's (2009) examination of Spike Lee, it may be easy to suggest that nonracist, realistic portrayals of a racial masculinity must be created by someone from that race. However, Cornwell and Orbe (2002) revealed that it is not that simple in their study of *The Boondocks* comic strip. Specifically, Cornwell and Orbe found that readers expected *The Boondocks* creator, Aaron McGruder, to represent the African American community – a task impossible to achieve. Not only are members from any community broadly diverse, but audiences maintain the power to interpret mediated portrayals in a variety of ways.

In an analysis of the film *Zoot Suit*, Fregoso (1993) argued that typically a range of masculinities is possible for the dominant culture. Nevertheless, for non-White males, masculinity is depicted as narrow and negative. Chicanos, she claimed, were generally portrayed in the media as violent, unruly conquistadors, blood-thirsty Aztecs, greasers, Latin lovers (e.g., sexually promiscuous), and gang members. However, the film she examined depicted a transformation of the

Chicano from being a violent gang member to revealing a positive version of masculine brotherhood.

Just as initial studies on masculinity focused on stereotypes, early research on masculinity and race has done the same. hooks (2004) contended that racist, capitalist patriarchy continually produces limited constructions of Black masculinity. Yet, irrespective of mediated racial stereotypes, “analyses of masculinity and race are striving to avoid any easy reductionism” (Nakayama, 2000, p. 113). Researchers continually interrogate the ways media represent racial masculinities.

Masculinity and Class

Very few studies have examined the intersection of the portrayal of masculinity and class in the media (Consalvo, 2003; Crawley, 1998; Mazzarella, 2008; Reser, 2005). While Consalvo’s (2003) article about Harris and Klebold touched upon the boys being from middle-class families, the thrust of her argument was not about the boys’ economic status. Reser (2005), however, focused on class as a major factor in how masculinity is portrayed in the film *The Full Monty*. Reser argued that women in this film maintained the economic power, whereas the out-of-work male protagonists engaged in stripping to earn money and, therefore, reclaimed their masculinity.

Similarly, Mazzarella (2008) examined working-class masculinity in the cable television docusoap *American Chopper*. She claimed that the program was a celebration of respectable working-class men’s work in that every episode highlighted skilled vendors contributing to the custom craftsmanship of motorcycles.

In another article, Crawley (1998) examined coverage of the America’s Cup race and maintained that “sailing has been used as a site for demonstrating masculinity among sailing’s upper- and middle-class, male participants” (p. 33). Hence, clearly, economic status has implications for how masculinity is portrayed, yet relatively few scholars have engaged in such analyses.

Masculinity and Sexual Orientation

As mentioned, hegemonic masculinity was solely about heterosexual males, among other characteristics. However, in the early twenty-first century, researchers have focused on gay masculinities (see, e.g., Avila-Saavedra, 2009; Fejes, 2000; Goltz, 2007; Linneman, 2008; Morrish & O’Mara, 2004). In his review of research on gay masculinities, Fejes (2000) noted that “in the past, a gay male acted [stereotypically] masculine as a way of hiding the fact that he was gay. Today, a gay male can be both masculine and openly gay” (p. 116).

Linneman (2008) examined the sitcom *Will & Grace* and found that the show included multiple representations of gay masculinities. These ranged from an effeminate gay man to a “very straight gay” (p. 583). What some scholars call gay masculinity Morrish and O’Mara (2004) deem “alternative” masculinity in their analysis of cable television’s *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. In their research, the authors conclude that the show confirms gay stereotypes and depicts patriarchal supremacy, but illustrates five versions of gay masculinity with the show’s five recurring characters. Avila-Saavedra (2009) conducted a discourse analysis of television shows with leading gay male characters (e.g., *Will & Grace*, *It’s All Relative*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*) and determined that while increased numbers of gay characters are evident on television, they do not challenge heteronormativity.

Extending research on gay masculinities, Goltz (2007) examined the magazine *Instinct* and argued that it depicts hypermasculine queerness, which was defined as oversexed gay men taking pride in having multiple partners. The magazine’s portrayal of hypermasculine queerness was “performed through dismissive sarcasm, irony and ‘harmless fun’” (p. 99). While the magazine “delights in offending readers and mocking them” (p. 99), Goltz dismissed the parody since *Instinct* “does not claim social responsibility” (p. 107).

Similar to early research on portrayals of women in the media, and then later on men in the media, stereotypical representations were highlighted. The discussion of hegemonic masculinity began and, shortly after, analyses of hypermasculinity started appearing in scholarship. This aligns with research on gay masculinities in that early research argued that the media stereotypically portrayed gay men. As with research on hypermasculinity, and as a reaction to feminized hegemonic masculinity, Goltz (2007) found extreme versions of gay masculinities perhaps to combat effeminate gay portrayals.

Masculinity and Gender

The introduction of this chapter noted that sex and gender are distinguished in many cultures. However, many cultures naturalize a connection between a person’s biological sex and socially constructed gender. While masculinity is a performed gender associated with men in Western culture, research has just begun to untangle this connection by exploring instances in which women demonstrate versions of masculinity. For instance, Walsh (2009) claimed that Hillary Clinton was portrayed as an example of hegemonic masculinity during the Democratic primary in an analysis of the *New York Times*, CNN, and MSNBC. Mandziuk (2000) characterized masculinity as a “transgressive masquerade” (p. 105) in her discussion of “crossing borders beyond gender difference” (p. 105). Finally, drawing from Halberstam (1998), Cooper (2002) analyzed the film *Boys Don’t Cry* and argued that it destabilizes masculinity and heterosexuality by normalizing female masculinity.

As evident in this review, the study and portrayals of masculinities in the media have evolved. Initially, scholars exposed various masculine stereotypes in the media. Then research on hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, and metrosexual masculinity began appearing in academic journals and books. By denaturalizing hegemonic masculinity, scholars then began questioning how race, class, sexual orientation, and gender influenced the depiction of masculinities in the media. Clearly, “masculinity is constantly being constructed and reconstructed in culture, within and across boundaries of race, class, ethnicity, and age, often in contradictory ways” (Gabbard, 2004, p. 58). This trajectory illustrates the evolution of the portrayal and research on mediated masculinities. It is clear that masculinities are not static and diversity is seemingly considered.

By understanding the myriad versions of masculinities and the diverse characteristics that shape masculinities, the next section of this chapter reviews how scholars have examined masculinities in specific media, namely television, film, and print.

Masculinities “Appropriate” for Specific Media

In reviewing the literature regarding portrayals of masculinities in the media, it was obvious that some scholars focus on specific media. For instance, some scholars examined masculinities in film (see, e.g., Bingham, 1994; Fregoso, 1993; Gabbard, 2004; Jeffords, 1994), while other scholars studied masculinities in television (see, e.g., Feuer, 1986; Fiske, 1987; Joyrich, 2000). Cohan’s (1997) research alluded to genre-specific masculinities. Moreover, research suggested that a specific portrayal of masculinity was more acceptable in a particular medium, therefore viewers should expect a certain type of masculinity when consuming certain media. The next section reviews the literature in this area and discusses some implications.

Masculinities across Media

Masculinities in Film

Investigations of masculinities in film are primarily published in books about stereotypical, hegemonic, or hypermasculinities (see, e.g., Bingham, 1994; Jeffords, 1994; Kirkham & Thumin, 1993). Some books focus on specific racial masculinities in film (see, e.g., Fregoso, 1993; Gabbard, 2004; Parrenas & Siu, 2007). Despite recognizing a film genre-specific masculinity, MacKinnon (2003) claimed that masculinity was jeopardized and questioned in 1970s films. As a result, hypermasculinity was predominant in 1980s films (also see Bingham, 1994). She found that, in films in the

1990s, a tension was created between individual heroic versus social and family responsibilities. She posited that films today possess an increasing focus on masculinity as a troubled and unsure construct.

Other scholars examined specific film genres. Krutnik (1991), for instance, studied masculinity in film noir and thrillers. Akin to this research, Jeffords (1994) focused on hypermasculine images in action/adventure films. Grevin (2009) coined a new film genre, the double protagonist film, and claimed that such films are “represented by two diverging styles of masculinity, the narcissistic and anachronistic social outsider” (p. 27), also referred to as the masochist. In this genre, Grevin claimed, the masochist was preferred whereas the narcissist was portrayed negatively. These scant examples evince an oversight of research of masculinities in particular film genres. That is, one might assume that the portrayal of masculinity in a “chick flick” is far more divergent than the portrayal of masculinity in a war movie. More research is needed to assess the range of masculinities within various film genres.

Masculinities in Television

Just as film has gendered genres, so does television. As such, some television critics (Feuer, 1986; Fiske, 1987) argued that particular programming is directed to specific gendered audiences. For instance, feminine television contains continuing and multiple storylines, numerous characters, emphasis on dialogue, sensitive male protagonists, stereotypically macho male villains, disruption, and polysemy (Fiske, 1987). Feuer (1986) explained that a feminine narrative was akin to (daytime and night-time) soap operas such as *General Hospital* and, more recently, *Desperate Housewives*.

Masculine television, on the other hand, is goal centered and consists of one storyline, an emphasis on action, competition, male bonding, and an absence of both women and traditional obligations (family and work). Feuer (1986) deemed masculine narratives as cop/adventure shows. In the 1980s such programs included *Magnum P.I.*, *Miami Vice*, and the *A-Team*. Today, masculine television is evident in sports programming such as that presented by the NFL, NBA, and other professional associations.

Mazzarella (2008) argued that the cable program *American Chopper* presents a docusoap genre for men. That is, the series is a blend of traditionally feminine programming such as soap operas; however, it simultaneously maintains characteristics of masculine genres such as an absence of women and the presence of competition and male bonding. Similar programs on cable television fit this description, such as *Pawn Stars*, *Deadliest Catch*, and *Ax Men*.

With the increased technology of cable, satellite, and fiber-optic delivery allowing for more narrowcasting and niche programming, the representations of gender on television have changed dramatically since the 1980s (D’Acci, 2004). In fact, since the 1970s and early 1980s, D’Acci claimed that gender binaries have been broken. Gauntlett (2002), however, recognized the differences in genres. For instance, from

the 1950s through 1970s, 65 to 80% of characters on television were men (Elasmar, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999; Gunter, 1995). During the 1995–1996 television season, 65% of characters were men. Nevertheless, in 1970s sitcoms, the male to female ratio was nearly 50:50 (Miles, 1975).

Indeed, televised “representations of gender today are more complex, and less stereotyped, than in the past” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 90). While television broadcasts “the man channel” and “movies for guys who like movies about guys,” networks like Lifetime, Oxygen, and WE present stereotypical “women’s” programming and broadcast networks air content for mix gendered audiences. Since television is an easily accessible mass medium, it makes sense to present a variety of masculinities to appeal to the broadest audience possible. In the sitcom *Two and a Half Men*, for instance, Alan, one of the two male protagonists, is more nurturing and feminine whereas Charlie, the other male protagonist, is oppositionally chauvinistic and demonstrates hypermasculine tendencies most of the time. Both characters are juxtaposed against each other, both are laughed at, and both have redeeming qualities. This allows audience members to connect with or select the portrayal of masculinity that suits them best. It also suggests that men should not be too feminine or too masculine.

Masculinities in Print

Fewer scholars have published research examining the portrayal of masculinity in print compared to masculinity in film and television. The research on print media includes books (Bean & Harper, 2007; Beynon, 2002; Mandziuk, 2000), comics (Brown, 1999), newspapers (Beynon, 2002), magazines (Gauntlett, 2002; Goltz, 2007; Mooney, 2008; Prusank, 2007), and advertising (Jhally, 2002; Messner & Montez de Oca, 2005; Wenner, 2009).

In terms of books and literature, Bean and Harper (2007) examined three books targeted to young adults. They found that the books presented gendered performance with socially scripted characters, but that they were open to change. In essence, the books they studied presented wider visions of how boys can be masculine. Mandziuk (2000) argued that literature can present masculinity in very transgressive forms. Yet Beynon (2002) examined newspapers and popular books and discovered negative portrayals of fathers, who were depicted as physically or emotionally absent. From this brief review, it appears that portrayals of masculinities in literature can be far more diverse than on television and in film.

In analyses of masculinities in magazines, scholarship is incongruent. Specifically, Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks (2001) claimed that men’s magazines present hegemonic and hypermasculine portrayals of masculinity. Gauntlett (2002), however, argued that men’s magazines depict men as complex and contradictory, focusing on

stereotypically repressed aspects of masculinity such as health, fashion, and relationships. More akin to Jackson and colleagues (2001), Mooney (2008) found that men's magazines highlight sexuality and naturalize pornography. Like film and television, it appears that the genre has great control over the versions of masculinities portrayed. Hence, *Maxim*, *Playboy*, and *Penthouse* may draw on stereotypical, hegemonic, and hypermasculine depictions of masculinities, whereas magazines such as *Men's Health*, *Men's Journal*, and *GQ* may present alternative versions of masculinities such as metrosexual masculinity. Similar to books, the narrowcast nature and prevalent individual consumption enable a broad variety of masculinities to be portrayed in magazines.

Finally, while advertising is not a medium *per se*, it does rely on media to promote goods. Hence, studies on masculinities in advertising typically involve print media, yet some also include television. The most consistency was found here in terms of scholarly conclusions about masculinities in advertising. Just as ads with women predominantly feature sexualized femininity, D'Acci (2004) pointed out that masculinities have "long been used by commercial culture to associate heterosexual desirability with consumer products and consumerism" (p. 376) as well. Further, regardless of whether masculinity or femininity is presented in advertisements, "everyone is under pressure to look good" (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 90) and "consumer capitalism makes objects of us all" (MacKinnon, 2003, p. 100).

Future Research

This review was designed to give readers an overview of the development of research on portrayals of masculinities in the US media. It remains clear that as media representations evolved, so did the scholarship. As society changed with World War II, the civil rights movement, second- and third-wave feminism, the end of the Cold War, deindustrialization, and other recognizable events, so too did portrayals of gender in the media.

It should be evident that research in this area is not complete. While it remains important to continually examine hegemonic functions of masculinity, hypermasculinity, and metrosexual masculinity, there are large gaps in research exploring race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. In fact, identity studies should continue to examine how masculine identities are portrayed, reified, resisted, or altered.

Further, genre studies can investigate what types of masculinities are acceptable, unacceptable, prevalent, or absent in particular media or within specific genres in various media. That is, the vast majority of male characters in sitcoms are feminized and far from hypermasculine. Hence, should scholars choose to examine the types of identities (e.g., masculinities, including raced, classed, gendered, skilled, sexually aligned) that are successful in various media or within specific genres, this will tell us more about the culture in which we live.

NOTE

- 1 The term “race” is used here since that is the term used in the literature. However, Orbe and Drummond (2009) posited that, given the opportunity, people of color were more likely to “question US categories for race and ethnicity” (p. 437). While the terms White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and others are limited and “rigid conceptualizations” (p. 437), they are the terms used in the literature. Analyzing these terms is beyond the scope of this chapter.

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Shifting Contours of Indian Womanhood in Popular Hindi Cinema

Sujata Moorti

ABSTRACT

This essay offers an overview of the shifts in representations of woman and femininity in popular Hindi cinema. Through a historical overview the essay underscores the relationship between the cinematic figure of the woman and the nation-state. During the colonial era, the category Indian woman was a capacious one, including men who cross-dressed and foreigners as well as Indian women. Ironically, these images were allegories for the anticolonial nation-in-formation. In the postcolonial era (1950s–1980s), the figure of the woman symbolized the many facets of India's struggle for self-reliance. Since the 1990s, images of Indian women have become one of the primary sites where the anxieties of globalization are worked through. The essay argues that contemporary Bollywood films offer a very limited repertoire of images of the ideal Indian woman. However, Hindi films from an earlier era offered more tantalizing possibilities for the articulation of a female subjectivity.

A tall, masked, pistol-wielding woman wards off a bunch of villains from atop a moving train. This blonde, blue-eyed, strapping female equivalent of Robin Hood is not a Hollywood persona but, rather, a very popular star from early Hindi cinema, Nadia. Known by her fans as *Hunterwali* (the huntress), Nadia is the antithesis of the stereotypical coy, all-singing, all-dancing Hindi film star associated with today's Bollywood. How

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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did an Australian come to be one of the most popular female stars of Hindi cinema in the 1930s, during the height of the anticolonial nationalist movement? This is one of the paradoxes this chapter explores as it offers an overview of the representations of women in popular Hindi film. The iconic figure of Nadia serves as a touchstone for us to understand the complex narrative positions accorded to woman and the feminine in Hindi film. In the analysis that follows, I contend that early Hindi cinema offered a great variety of roles for women, roles that permitted women to assert their autonomy and authority even as they were tethered by social gender roles. In addition, as I illustrate, the concept of the Indian woman on screen was a capacious term not bounded by geography or narrow understandings of gender. Notwithstanding the few compelling films of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, this essay argues that the era of globalization has been marked by an attenuation in the roles assigned to the female and the feminine. This nonlinear historical trajectory offers some insights into the manner in which concerns about the nation are mapped onto the figure of the female. This chapter does not offer a facile equivalence between representations of women and discourses of the nation. Rather, it uses cinematic images as a way to think through the shifting ideas ascribed to gender at any given moment. It also does not offer a nostalgic idealization of the past; instead my arguments about the historical differences in gender roles seek to underscore how changes in the cinema industry, its formalization and incorporation into a global marketplace, are inscribed in narrative structures. This exegesis on the representations of women is also instructive in thinking through the relationship between technology and modernity. If cinema is the exemplary technology of modernism and melodrama the central genre for articulating its accompanying structures of feeling, then how can we understand the relationship between cinema and society in an era of global capitalism?

Much as in Europe, the technology of cinema was introduced in colonial India in 1896. In the 100 years that have followed, the Indian cinema industry has numerically surpassed its Western counterparts in terms of production, circulation, and reception. As I and other scholars have argued, Hindi cinema – one of several regional language cinemas – has largely been considered India's popular culture. The industry rivals Hollywood in terms of production; daily audiences number in the millions; and its reach expands beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, not just to the diaspora but to many parts of the global South (Larkin, 1997; Rajagopalan, 2009; Sen, 2008). Through an examination of the central role the female figure has come to occupy in this arena of popular culture, I will outline what is at stake in these images and why we must heed them to understand not just Indian media culture, but also that society at large.

For audiences unfamiliar with the conventions of Indian cinema, watching a film could be a befuddling experience. The movies tend to be long – they are now a little over two hours but in the past ran well over three hours. They are often characterized as melodramas and contain multiple storylines. Scholars describe Indian cinema narrative structure as marked by “endless digressions, circularities, and plots within plots” (Dissanayake & Sahai, 1992, pp. 10–11). Above all they are structured by the

two epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Indian films often refer overtly and covertly to themes addressed in these ancient Sanskrit epics. The *Ramayana* charts the narrative of the righteous King Rama who is exiled and returns after vanquishing King Ravana. A key narrative here is Ravana's abduction of Sita, Rama's wife, and her successful rescue. The oral narrative offers prototypes of the ideal brother, ideal wife, and ideal husband. The *Mahabharata* is a longer epic, and documents the story of two warring sections of a dynastic family. The narrative includes the *Bhagvad Gita*, often identified as laying out the precepts of Hindu philosophy. These epic stories could be understood reductively as melodramas with multiple subplots and as staging the triumph of good over evil.

Most Indian films have between six and seven songs, but these movies are technically not musicals, or at least not as the concept is understood in the West. These films defy understandings of genre, and instead contain elements of romance, tragedy, action-adventure, and comedy all in one narrative. Starting in the 1970s, this multi-genre cinema was called the *masala* film (the Hindi word *masala* refers to the spices used in Indian cuisines), and this aspect is identified as a key defining feature of Indian cinema (Lutgendorf, 2006).

It is important to note that the label Indian cinema is a catch-all phrase encompassing a number of regional cinemas, with their own modes of production and distribution, most notably Tamil, Malayalam, and Bengali cinemas. The Bombay-based¹ Hindi cinema industry that I examine in this essay has come to occupy the status of the national cinema, and it is this cinema most people refer to when they speak of Indian films.

Soon after the first screening of the Lumière Brothers' film in Bombay in 1896, Indians started to experiment with this technology. In the era of the silent film, one could argue that Indian cinema could be understood in the singular. The emergence of sound technology marked the proliferation of linguistic and regional variabilities, fracturing any idea of a homogeneous Indian film industry (Ganti, 2004; Kabir, 2001). On an international level, what transpires often as Bollywood refers specifically to Hindi cinema.

The arguments in this essay are confined to mainstream Hindi cinema. I would make very different arguments about gender if I were to examine any of the other regional cinemas. For instance, it could be argued that Malayalam and Bengali films offer some transgressive paths whereas Tamil films are emblematic of the seductions of patriarchy. Any of these regional cinemas could help us understand why some ideas about femininity, femaleness, and heteronormativity continue to resonate with audiences. In the essay that follows, my focus is exclusively on popular Hindi cinema, although I make some references to art cinema. As I explain later in the essay, beginning in the 1960s, the Indian government started to sponsor alternative cinema through the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) and later the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). The FTII offered formal training in all aspects of the film industry while the NFDC provided funding for films that eschewed the popular Hindi cinema grammar. Directors such as Shyam Benegal, Adoor

Gopalakrishnan, and Santosh Sivan are associated with this alternative cinema, which is often referred to as art cinema.

Considering the wide swathe of materials I wish to examine, any approach adopted will necessarily be partial and schematic. I have opted to track the historical variations in the representation of women. Following existing conventions in Hindi cinema scholarship, I work with a periodization practice that is simultaneously attentive to changes in the film industry and key moments in national history. Thus, I examine first the colonial era (1900–late 1940s); second, the 1950s–1980s, encompassing the “golden era” of Hindi cinema and its decline; and third, the 1990s–present, which mark the emergence of a global Hindi cinema or Bollywood. Rather than map the shifts in representations in a nationally determinist fashion, this periodization is intended to be suggestive of possible vectors of confluence. This technique is likely to raise more questions than answers, but this is also part of the essay’s charge to lay out possible areas of future scholarship.

This chapter is situated within and emerges from a feminist film perspective; I consider the categories woman and femininity not as biologically fixed but as unstable and constantly evolving. Thus, even though the essay is designed to illustrate the shifting roles assigned to the figure of woman at various points in popular Hindi cinema, I will illustrate that the Indian woman depicted is an ideological construct growing out of and as a response to the newly emerging idea of the nation and a concept of modernity that is radically vernacularized (Hansen, 1999).

A few more caveats are necessary. Cinema watching in India has always been a noisy, communal, and rule-defying experience. For instance, the silent film era was silent only nominally. Apart from the live musical accompaniments, the film-viewing experience was a highly participatory one including live performances by dancing girls, jugglers, and musclemen (Burra, 1981). Even today, in an era of multiplex theaters, audiences sing along to the songs on screen, recite the hero’s lines, and maintain extended conversations with the on-screen actors. Feminist film theories premised on the cinematic experience as a highly individual one do not translate well under these conditions (Doane, 1987; Mulvey, 1975). Similarly, although the majority of the audience in theaters tend to be male, Mulvian theories about the male gaze or the Oedipal structuring of gender lose some of their explanatory power in the Indian context, especially since the modes of production, circulation, and representation in Hindi cinema are at odds with the Hollywood model (Majumdar, 2009). Veena Naregal (2004) points out that mainstream Indian cinema’s mode of address “makes little attempt to subordinate spectacle and visceral effect to reinforce the realist illusion” (p. 521).

Consequently, this essay is informed by insights from Anglo-American feminist film theories but is not structured by them. In this historical overview of popular Hindi film’s representation of woman and femininity, I illustrate how gender as an ideology is mobilized in Hindi cinema; I signal the particular ways in which femininity, sexual difference, and heteronormativity help propel narrative movement, and I outline the ways in which Hindi cinema has worked through the conundrum of

female pleasure and sexual desire. I draw as well on postcolonial feminist theory to situate the representations of women within pervasive colonial and patriarchal structures. As this essay reveals, the landscape of gender in Hindi cinema is quite complicated and does not adhere to a formulaic binarized understanding.

Reel Women?

Colonial-era films (1896–1947) are marked by great variability in representations of gender. During the silent cinema era, when the technology was still a novelty, Indian filmmakers relied largely on retelling already familiar stories. Thus the colonial era witnessed the proliferation of movies that were derived from the aforementioned epics, *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. The first full-length Indian feature film was about Raja Harishchandra (Phalke, 1913), a tale embedded in the *Ramayana*. Early Indian films also centered on biopics of iconic figures such as *Kalidas* (Reddy, 1931), a renowned Sanskrit poet, or *Sant Tukaram* (Damle, 1936), a seventeenth-century poet. These familiar stories often served as an alibi to underscore nationalist, anticolonial sentiments. Although the British had strict censorship laws in place, Indian filmmakers used a number of symbols, such as the spinning wheel, to signal their empathies for the nationalist movement. Since none of these films exists in their entirety, one must rely on extra-cinematic materials such as publicity posters or newspaper accounts to chart this period in film history.

In narratives derived from the epics, women figured only marginally, and even these figures were played by men. As Neepta Majumdar (2009) has noted, one of the primary reasons for the cross-dressing practice was the stigma associated with the cinema industry. In a tenor akin to that of Frankfurt School theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the intelligentsia in India disdained cinema as epitomizing the low taste of mass culture (and as the antithesis of high culture). Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) believed mass culture served the interests of capitalism, thereby cultivating false needs. They coined the term “culture industry” to set up a contrast with the high arts, such as painting and classical music. Indian intelligentsia, including government officials, held views that were analogous, and branded cinema as vulgar entertainment with no redeeming features. In light of this condemnation, the upper classes, particularly women, did not want to be associated with cinema. There is a double process at work here. At the turn of the century, under colonial codes of gender, “respectable” women were not associated with the public sphere. Any woman who appeared in the public arena was immediately associated with being a prostitute or at the very least as not respectable. This division of public and private realms seems identical to Victorian gender relations in the West, but as Partha Chatterjee (1993) has noted, in colonial India the public–private split took on a different salience. During the colonial era, Indian men conceded the public arena as associated with the West and modernity. The private arena was then recast as the

repository of Indian tradition. In particular, the private arena was designated as the female realm and conceptualized as the domain of Indian culture and values. Consequently, women's exclusion from early Indian cinema was ideologically driven under the signs of patriarchy, colonial ideology, and class privilege. Nevertheless, because early cinema relied on the epics, women could not be thoroughly expunged; they appear in the silent era as a spectral presence with cross-dressing men hinting at the possibilities but never fully occupying the status of women. Scholars have noted that several reviews of the early cinema pointed out the delicacy of features and femininity of the cross-dressing men, but these actors' authentic femininity was also disavowed by the reminder that these *reel* women were *real* men (Majumdar, 2009). As I point out later, in this era gender was framed as performance and not as biology.

As Indian films started to move out of the familiar narratives of the epics, they became an important staging ground for the rehearsal of a nationalist gender ideology. In contrast to British understandings of India as a society and culture oppressive to women, the anticolonial nationalist movement exculpated religion and Indian tradition. Nationalist leaders were apt to turn to a (mythologized) distant past of gender equality in India. They argued against the civilizing mission of colonialism, claiming that a return to India's true past and not a turn to the West would restore women's rights. Within such a discourse women had to simultaneously ascribe to age-old traditions and be modern subjects.

In her sweeping overview of the representations of women in Indian cinema, Urvashi Butalia (1984) identifies *Gunsundari* (*Why Husbands Go Astray*, Chandulal Shah, 1927) as the first film to address the "woman question." Unlike in the earlier movies where men performed female roles, in this instance the female protagonist was played by Dorothy Kingdom, a foreigner. The narrative centers on a philandering husband who turns to a dancing girl because his spouse does not perform her wifely duties to his satisfaction. In an attempt to secure her marriage and draw her husband away from his paramour, the woman becomes more modern. Butalia (1984) argues that the movie instructs women to be dutiful wives and companions to secure happiness. Even while acknowledging the focus on wifely devotion, other scholars have singled out the film as characteristic of the manner in which colonial Indian cinema tried to recast conjugality in a modern mold, as a companionate relationship (Barnouw & Krishnaswamy, 1980).

During the silent era, the individual roles offered women were quite limiting, reiterating a restrictive gender ideology. Nevertheless, what made this era interesting is the range of women who were given these roles. Most "respectable" women did not enter films; nationalist ideology had secured the private sphere as that of women and of tradition. This ideological practice was compounded by Hindu and Muslim codes of conduct, which enjoined women not to display their bodies to the public. However, those who were not structured by such authoritarian patriarchal codes of docility, chastity, and purity found the Indian film industry to be a receptive work arena. Thus there was Patience Cooper, the aforementioned Dorothy Kingdom,

Ruby Myers, who took on the stage name Sulochana, Renee Smith, who was cast as Sita Devi – these women were Anglo-Indians and Eurasians, or people who could be theorized as subaltern in this context. In film after film these actors were assigned roles from epic tales that extolled the virtues of docile, obedient, and self-sacrificing women. These actors adopted familiar “Hindu” names (except for Patience Cooper), but their embodied presence also opened up the space assigned to the category Indian woman. In this instance, Indianness was not about biology but about how one performed femininity. Such an expansive definition suggests that Indianness was about how one behaves, the values one espouses, and was not determined by consanguinities. Sangeeta Datta (2000) characterizes the presence of these foreign women as an early moment of global forces operating in Indian cinema. In subsequent years, many of these women could speak enough Hindi to carve successful careers after the advent of sound technology. As mentioned previously, the talkies resulted in the fragmentation of Indian cinema into a variety of linguistic and regional cinemas.

During the colonial era, Hindi films often gave voice to ideas that were central to the nationalist movement. British censorship laws, however, required that these messages were coded. Ideas pertaining to social reform, such as securing women’s education and widow remarriage, could be articulated unambiguously as they were not seen as anticolonial. In this milieu of redefining the modern Indian woman, Devika Rani emerged as the “first lady of the Indian screen.” One of the first “respectable women” to enter the film industry, Devika Rani worked initially as a set designer before she was cast as a princess in *Karma* (Frantz Osten, 1933), a bilingual, Indo-German production. She also starred in *Achut Kanya* (*Untouchable Girl*, Frantz Osten, 1936) a film that adopted a key topic of social reform within the anticolonial nationalist movement: the dismantling of the caste system. The film narrates a doomed love story between an upper-caste Brahmin boy and an untouchable teenager. While the fathers of the two protagonists approve of this transgressive romance, others in society frown upon them. By narrative’s end the romance is thwarted as the two marry within their caste. If Devika Rani’s character was revolutionary because she crossed caste lines, she is also domesticated by narrative’s end when she becomes the self-sacrificing wife who dies to protect her husband. Scholars have singled out this role as creating the archetype of the village belle in Hindi cinema (Datta, 2000). *Achut Kanya* is emblematic of the limited perch provided women in the colonial-era cinema. While the narrative gestures toward (radical) social change, the figure of the modern Indian woman serves to recuperate the existing order where the wife remains bound by conventions and devoted to her husband. While on screen Devika Rani’s character ends up fitting the narrow confines of the modern traditional woman, offscreen she challenged the social order. She was a co-founder of Bombay Talkies, a major Hindi film studio, and a collaborator in Indo-German productions. The choices Rani made in her private life shaped her star persona and illustrated how the Indian female star has been fraught with contradictions (Chakravarty, 1993; Majumdar, 2009).

Devika Rani’s reign as a star occurred at the same time as the popularity of Nadia – the swashbuckling hero who figures in the opening paragraph of this essay – soared.

Cinematic depictions of Indian women tap into two contradictory representational archives. The most prevalent one is that of the docile, chaste, and submissive woman, as I have already outlined. By tapping into images of fierce warrior goddesses, Indian women could also be represented as aggressive and independent. Nadia fits into this second model of an authoritative and strong femininity (Gandhy & Thomas, 1991). Born in Australia, Mary Evans adopted the name Nadia. Working with the studio Wadia Movietone, she was predominantly known for her roles in stunt films, riding atop a speeding train, chasing villains on a charging horse, or physically outmaneuvering villains. Her iconic role in *Hunterwali* (*The Lady Hunter*, Homi Wadia, 1935) captures some of the anomalies of the positions assigned to women of this era: even as Devika Rani had to resort to being a subservient, tradition-bound wife, Nadia could wield a whip, clad in a tight sheath and tall boots. The blonde star's sexuality was carefully elaborated, but her films rarely concluded with a traditional romantic ending for her character.

Most critics compared her unfavorably against “respectable” stars, but her fans acclaimed her as Fearless Nadia. She made her career in stunt films such as *Miss Frontier Mail* (Homi Wadia, 1936), *Hurricane Hansa* (Homi Wadia, 1937), *Punjab Mail* (Homi Wadia, 1939), *Diamond Queen* (Homi Wadia, 1940), and so on. Actor and filmmaker Girish Karnad recalls Nadia as his first memory of cinema. With her swashbuckling heroics she symbolized for him courage, strength, and idealism (quoted in Thorner & Krishnaraj, 2000). Nadia transformed the already-popular stunt genre by fearlessly challenging oppressive social forces and protecting the poor in film after film. Stills from her movies and publicity posters show her with every kind of weapon – bows and arrows, swords, whips, pistols – lifting men over her head, and playing with lions. Nadia was frequently shown working out in the gym, which promoted a “keep-fit” craze at that time (Gandhy & Thomas, 1991).

Nadia as a tough, capable, omnipotent image served as an alternative role model for women in the colonial era. In addition, her films frequently exhorted women to fight for themselves. Nadia subverted the dominant stereotype of Indian woman as a docile suffering victim. Instead, she was represented as a woman possessed of exceptional physical strength and prowess, which is recapitulated in the image of Radha in *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957), as I explain below.

The daughter of a British soldier, Nadia served as an unlikely allegorical figure for the nationalist struggle. In more recent years, following the release of a 1993 documentary *Fearless Nadia: The Hunterwali Story* (Riyad Wadia, 1993), she is now being recast as the first feminist of Indian cinema while others have found her a useful entry point to offer queer readings of early Hindi cinema (Wenner, 2005).

Recent scholarship has excavated more about female stars from the colonial era such as Durga Khote and Sitara Devi. These writings offer an important palliative to the hagiographic accounts of early Indian cinema, which have been peopled almost entirely by males. Rather than rehash these narratives, I have offered above a brief account of two leading female actors and the kinds of roles offered them. While not representative, this account is suggestive of the possibilities available for women in

the early years of cinema. A recurrent concern in colonial cinema is the interplay between tradition and modernity in a variety of fields, and woman becomes the central node for this discussion.

A New Nation's Cinema: From Strong Mothers to Docile Wives

The cinema of the post-independence era (1947 onward) was marked by dramatic shifts in the industry following the collapse of the studio system. Family-based banners, such as R. K. Films headed by Raj Kapoor, took the place of the studios. In addition, the partition of the nation resulted in several stars and industry figures moving to and from Pakistan. Concerns and symbols from the colonial era continued to crop up in movies from the 1950s, but the tone of Hindi films shifted. A new cadre of directors, such as Mehboob Khan, Guru Dutt, and Bimal Roy, influenced by Nehru's secular ideals and the principles of the Progressive Writers' Movement, produced a series of films that are the core of what is considered to be the golden era. Hindi films from the 1950s offered a sharp social critique with a balance of song and dance sequences; these films were deemed a new genre called the "social." Ravi Vasudevan (2000) has identified the social film as one that addresses issues of social justice through a focus on the family. These films continued to tease out the relationship between modernity and tradition, often through the figure of the woman, but this dialectic was parsed as one central to the survival of the nation. Guru Dutt's films, such as *Pyaasa* (*Thirst*, 1957), offered a scathing critique of existing attitudes toward prostitutes and the commodification of art. Similarly, Raj Kapoor's films, such as *Awaara* (*Vagabond*, 1951) and *Shree 420* (*Mr. 420*, 1955), emphasized the conflicts between urban and rural India, modernity and tradition, and offered a more humane vision for the new nation. The new India these films envisaged would be rid of all vestiges of the corrupt past, but only after a sustained struggle. Hindi films from the 1950s were not only popular in the subcontinent but had a huge following in the Soviet Union, Greece, Egypt, Nigeria, and other countries.

In the social film, female roles were predominantly limited to that of the lover of the male protagonist. In movies such as *Barsaat* (*Rain*, Raj Kapoor, 1949), the female stars of Nargis and Nimmi are celebrated for their constancy, loyalty, and willingness to sacrifice their happiness for their families. In the "social" film, women were presented as central to the project of nation-building, but their autonomy was not of paramount importance. Rather, the narratives helped to shore up a limited definition of the traditional Indian woman.

The rising star of the 1950s films was undoubtedly Nargis, who was paired repeatedly with Raj Kapoor. Her character in *Mother India* is often singled out as exemplifying the new roles assigned to women in the social film: wife, mother, and beloved. Mehboob's film drew upon the conventions of the social but also offered significant

variations from that genre. In a gesture reminiscent of colonial-era rhetoric, the film validates the maternal and imagines the Indian nation as female.

The nationalist movement used the evocative slogan of Mother India (*Bharat Mata*) as a rallying cry and to engender a specific structure of feeling in this emergent culture. The future-nation-to-be was personified as a mother goddess and a whole range of popular culture products promoted this vision. In this rhetoric the nation was represented as a female figure, a composite of the Hindu goddesses Lakshmi (wealth), Saraswati (knowledge), and earth. The future nation was visualized as a woman in a sari, often a saffron one. The image was crafted carefully so that her bodily contours were mapped onto the geographic space of the nation. By tapping into the Hindu pantheon of goddess figures, this slogan simultaneously represented the maternal woman as caring and nurturing as well as fierce and aggressive in protecting her children. The Mother India slogan permitted nationalist leaders to conceptualize the independence movement as akin to religion (Ramaswamy, 2010). In addition to this nationalist valorization of the maternal figure, a US writer, Katherine Mayo, published a book entitled *Mother India* in 1927 that offered a scathing critique of Hindu society, culture, and religion. The book effectively validated the “civilizing mission” of British colonialism. During the independence movement, nationalist leaders devoted a lot of energy contesting Mayo’s book. In the post-independence era too, leaders were preoccupied with invalidating Mayo’s claims and offering a different vision of Mother India. The iconization of the nation as female has continued, but with different valences (Chakravarty, 1993; Datta, 2000). Mehboob’s film and the figuration of Nargis as Radha must be understood within these multiple discursive strands that feminize the nation and valorize the maternal.

The melding of the material, romantic lover and modern female subject come together in an evocative fashion in *Mother India*. Scholars have offered very nuanced accounts of Mehboob’s vision, his depiction of the female protagonist, and the effects of the film in contemporary Hindi cinema (Bagchi, 1996; Chatterjee, 2008; Thomas, 1989). Mehboob’s film was made ten years after India secured its independence and has been characterized as a paean to the new nation. In a film noted for its production values, its musical score, and its script, the narrative centers on Radha, played by Nargis, who we first encounter as an old woman, revered by her community. Through a story narrated entirely in flashback, we come to understand how Radha comes to occupy such a central location in the village. We witness her transformation from a young submissive wife to the village’s grande dame. Through a lifetime the film documents her persevering against a corrupt moneylender, natural disasters, her husband’s disappearance, and the death of her children. In this melodrama, Radha is clearly the focus; the film extols her strength and power, which are seen as integrally bound with her respect for traditional values (Thomas, 1989). Through all her travails she remains a paragon of wifely devotion and chastity. She is also depicted as honorable; when her adored younger son abducts a young woman, Radha kills him, asserting that she may be a mother but she is also a woman.

In her in-depth and provocative analysis of the film, Gayatri Chatterjee (2008) points out the different ways in which Mehboob mobilizes Hindu mythology to layer and thicken the narrative. Radha comes to stand not only for the ideal mother but also for the future of the nation; through her tenacity she propels her community from destitution to industrial modernity, a site of dams and cranes. Mehboob offers a melodramatic account of womanhood but his film also acknowledges the conditions of the peasant class. Radha is depicted working the fields, a perfect comrade to her husband; once he disappears she tends the fields alone. She is simultaneously in charge of the home and the domestic sphere. Mehboob's *Mother India* blends socialist ideals with traditional values. Radha is shown consistently as a worker and a mother, linking repeatedly work and sexuality. The film depicts motherhood as an affective condition and also as labor. Through this juxtaposition the movie offers a celebration of femininity that goes beyond a sentimental evocation of the mother. In an unusual move, the film begins with a third-person documentary-like account, but then the narrative is taken over by Radha and it is her point of view that predominates. She appears as the iconic wife, an active narrative agent, and a symbol. In most of the social films from the 1950s, the female characters are presented as strong and their power resides in their adherence to traditional values. *Mother India* is unique in that it does not present a male protagonist as securing Radha's rights. Rather, it is she who fights for her rights and those of other dispossessed people in her community. It is also narrated from her point of view.

Binarized Femininity

The 1960s marks the decline of the golden era and the rise of romances and action-adventures. In terms of gender, what is most significant is the emergence of a binarized femininity: the good woman/bad woman. In film after film, the good woman is depicted as a self-sacrificing mother, a dutiful daughter, or a respectful wife. She does not question the men in her life and reveres social traditions. The good woman is always pitted against the bad woman for the hero's affections. In a resuscitation of anticolonial rhetoric, the bad woman is conjured as someone "Western," independent, and presented as antithetical to middle-class values (Butalia, 1984, p. 109). In effect, the other "side of the coin of modernity" is equated with being bad. The figure of the bad woman became so formulaic that a small group of actors was associated with it and stars like Helen gained a following for her performance as the vamp.

I have argued elsewhere that Helen acquired cult status, playing the figure of the femme fatale in over 700 films (Moorti, 2003). Her character offered the counterpoint and the foil against which idealized Indian femininity could be reiterated; she is the negative print of the ideal Indian woman and a condensation symbol of Western degeneracy (Mazumdar, 2007). Helen Richardson, the actress whose screen name is Helen, is of Spanish and Burmese origin. She is reminiscent of Nadia because her

racial otherness was signified similarly through overt markers of alterity: hair, dress, name, and behavior. Like all the bad women or vamps, Helen was typecast in a narrow mold: licentious, Westernized, overtly sexual, given to drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, and, above all, putting on lewd staged performances dubbed as cabaret. Given names like Rosie or Mary, “she was parodied as either an Anglo-Indian (a racial outcaste) or a member of India’s Christian minority. A demi-mondaine, she was often a cabaret dancer operating in smoke-filled bars, nightclubs, or similar ‘foreign’ dens of vice [...] where clad in a tight-fitting western gown she performed audacious dances” and tried to lure the hero (Kasbekar, 2003, p. 299). Above all her deviance from the good woman model is marked by her demonstrations of uncontrolled female lust and wantonness.

Although she is the antithesis of Indian femininity, the vamp’s role is often more of an equal to the hero than the heroine. The vamp’s role is also feminine in that she is present on screen to evoke desire and be the sex object. Dressed in campy feather boas, elbow-length gloves, and fishnet stockings, the vamp represents the rebel who does not seek social acceptance. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the figure of the vamp, specifically that of Helen, has been incorporated in Indian gay subculture. In effect, some scholars have argued that in the good woman/bad woman model of Indian femininity, the vamp becomes the site of all sexuality and the good woman is leached of any affect or desire, except that of compliance and subservience. In Hindi cinema from the 1960s and 1970s, the vamp is the only female character depicted as having agency and as a subject who acts on her own behalf. She never wins the hero’s affections but she has an autonomy and subjectivity that are denied the good woman.

The one other instance in which female sexuality is foregrounded is in the courtesan film. The *tawaif* or courtesan film was a subgenre centered on the figure of the female public performer. Unlike the caricatured figure of the vamp, the courtesan is a site from which Hindi cinema reflects upon the historical transformations unleashed by modernity (Chakravarty, 1993). The courtesan films are tragic melodramas where the gendered contradictions of the modern Indian nation are laid bare. Significantly, the courtesan is a public performer, literate, and well versed in high culture.

Courtesan films, with their focus on a lost Mughal culture, could be interpreted as representing a nostalgia for a pre-British India. Scholars have also identified these films as representing a limited form of resistance to conventional gender roles (Virdi, 2003). The *tawaif* encapsulates key masculine and feminine characteristics and challenges gender binaries. As a financially autonomous, public woman, the courtesan occupies a masculine cinematic space; her ability to control her sexuality allows her to reconfigure the mantle of respectability. For instance, the courtesan may reject a suitor and proclaim her respectability by refusing the highest bidder, if necessary. However, her cinematic presence as a seductress reiterates her femininity. She is repeatedly presented as a sexual subject, and an object of male desire. Greg Booth (2007) contends that the *tawaif* constitutes a third gender while Oldenburg’s (1991) ethnographic account fleshes out how this resistant, female-centered community survives in patriarchal society. However, the filmic version of the courtesan

narrative domesticates this transgressive figure by positioning her as someone who seeks the respectability offered through marriage and domesticity. Once she falls in love, she willingly gives up her independence (and her public performances) to become an abject figure longing for conjugal bliss; she willingly submits herself to a singular male figure. While the domestication of woman was a common theme of the “socials,” the courtesan genre hinges on how this domestication is accomplished.

The *tawaifs* are more heroic than their respectable counterparts, and they are often more heroic than their lovers as well. The courtesan is a more active agent of narrative resolution than other Hindi female film figures. Her desire to be desired is, however, repeatedly relocated within the confines of domesticity and conjugality. The courtesan's ability to queer gender scripts is thus very limited. In Hindi cinema grammar the *tawaif*, who was once an active participant in courtly Mughal culture as a singer, is reduced to a prostitute (Arora, 1995). The courtesan film is exemplified by *Pakeezah* (*Pure Heart*, Kamal Amrohi, 1971) with Meena Kumari as the protagonist, who falls in love with an aristocrat. It is also one of the rare films where a courtesan successfully transitions from a public performer to a respectable woman. This sub-genre is emblematic of the modes through which Hindi cinema inched its way through the ideological contradictions laid bare in the narrative transition from feudal romances to modern romances.

Urvashi Butalia (1984) contends that in the 1980s, Hindi cinema starts to respond to some issues raised by the women's movement such as rape, dowry, and widowhood, if only in a superficial manner. *Insaaf ka Tarazu* (*Scales of Justice*, B. R. Chopra, 1980) is emblematic of a film that seemingly responds to feminist concerns about rape, but the manner in which the topic is narrated and depicted does little to dismantle dominant (mis)understandings of the crime. The film's heroine Bharati (Zeenat Aman) is an independent career woman working as a model; she is financially independent and is able to support her schoolgirl sister, Nita. Bharati is raped by a rich industrialist, Ramesh, and presses charges against him. She loses the court case, and subsequently her job, and is forced to relocate to a new town with her sister. When Nita comes of age and seeks a job, she is raped by the same industrialist during her interview. Bharati responds by taking a gun and killing the rapist at his office. In the criminal trial that ensues, Bharati gives voice to familiar feminist claims about the trivialization of female complaints and the law's inability to attend to rape claims. Comprehending the misogyny of the legal system, the judge frees Bharati. On one level the film is attentive to issues raised by the women's movement; however, the camerawork serves to reposition women as sexual objects of the male gaze and not as sexual subjects. The rape scenes are enacted at great length; the framing and editing of these sequences are more akin to seduction than violence. This and other rape-revenge films offer the possibility of an “angry woman” genre with women positioned as vigilantes. Apart from the visual grammar, the film's narrative too undermines its feminist claims (Virdi, 2003). In her impassioned address to the court, Bharati reiterates a conventional good woman/bad woman dichotomy and

positions Indian women as “temples of worship.” Such rhetoric erases the violence of rape as an assertion of male power and instead redefines it as a religious desecration. *Insaaf* moves the female protagonist beyond the status of a self-sacrificing victim and into a vigilante. However, through Bharati’s assertion of a virgin/whore dichotomy as a counterpoint to rape, it becomes clear that the film’s engagement with feminism is only skin deep. *Insaaf* was representative of a range of rape-revenge narratives that emerged in the 1980s, replete with possibilities but disappointing in the final analysis.

However, there was at least one thin slice of Hindi cinema that offered some more affirming possibilities. The decline of the golden era was accompanied by the rise of an alternative cinema, which was often characterized as art cinema in direct opposition to the popular aspects of Hindi cinema. As I have mentioned previously, the training and funding sources for this genre of Indian cinema are the most significant markers of difference between this and mainstream popular cinema. Alternative cinema narratives offered a wider range of possibilities for female protagonists. In these movies, women occupy locations of the socially disenfranchised such as in *Manthan* (*The Churning*, Shyam Benegal, 1971) or *Nishant* (*Night’s End*, Shyam Benegal, 1975), but they also possessed an agency that is refreshing. *Mirch Masala* (*Spices*, Ketan Mehta, 1985) is emblematic of this genre foregrounding the manner in which women are sexually objectified in rural India, where feudal practices predominate. However, the female protagonist does not submit to the local patriarch and instead mobilizes other women to collectively fight the oppressive system. Unlike popular Hindi films that reiterated women’s cinematic status as objects of the male gaze, Mehta’s film refuses the Mulvian gaze (Bagchi, 1996). For instance, the film shows the male landlord gaze lasciviously at women, but the audience never sees the women through his gaze. Mehta’s film does not position the audience as voyeurs; rather, he subverts our expectations to see women through the male gaze. The historical setting of the narrative draws attention to the continuities between historical formations and contemporary settings in how gender roles are materialized.

In the 1980s apart from “feminist” directors in the alternative cinema circuit, actors start to cross over between art and popular cinemas. Consequently, a stable of actors – such as Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil, Deepti Naval – start to be associated with roles which, if not feminist, at least broaden the possibilities for women. This was also accompanied by the entrance of more women directors in mainstream Hindi cinema such as Sai Paranjpe, who provided women-centered films that moved beyond the existing repertoire even while working within existing Hindi cinema grammar. Radha Subramanyam (1996) singles out *Rudaali* (*The Crier*, Kalpana Lajmi, 1992) as exemplifying this cross-over practice, wherein a subaltern subject internalizes, resists, and subverts the dominant ideology. The movie is based on a short story written by Mahasweta Devi and is overtly feminist in its form and content. Examining the movie, Sumita Chakravarty (1999) highlights the aspects that are lost in translation from literary text to filmic narrative. She argues

that while the movie foregrounds an agentic female subjectivity, in an effort to appeal to a popular audience the representation of the protagonist nevertheless hews to mainstream cinematic grammar. The film foregrounds female friendships and mother–daughter bonds, but it does not offer possibilities for agency outside the stereotypical positions patriarchal culture offers women. Movies outside of the mainstream offer tantalizing possibilities for reconfiguring Indian femininities but often fall short of their radical aims.

The Global Romance

In the 1970s and 1980s increasingly Hindi cinema became more about men and masculinity as the “angry young man” genre emerged. This subgenre reflected the growing disenchantment with the Nehruvian secular project and the oppositional position popular culture adopted with respect to the government. Superstar Amitabh Bachchan is most commonly associated with this role, where he ventriloquized the common person’s anger toward an unequal and exploitative social order (Deshpande, 2005; Kazmi, 1998). Like rape-revenge narratives, the vigilante justice promoted by these movies offered individual solutions to structural problems. While these movies seemed to be radical, they helped reinforce the existing social order. This is especially pertinent with respect to their reassertion of a narrow gender binary. For instance, movies such as *Sholay* (*Embers*, Ramesh Sippy, 1975) celebrated male friendship and homosocial bonds but also asserted an aggressive masculinity. The angry young man’s masculinity was in sharp contrast to earlier representations of Indian heroes, who seemed almost effeminate. This shift in masculinities was accompanied by a new representation of femininity. In blockbuster hits such as *Deewar* (*Wall*, Yash Chopra, 1975) and *Zanjeer* (*Shackles*, Prakash Mehra, 1973), the good woman/bad woman dichotomy prevailed; women were reduced to the role of mother or subservient wives. These two-dimensional female figures substituted for the more robust female characters of the social film. The 1990s, however, marked some significant shifts in Hindi film representational practices.

The changes in gender ideologies I narrate below are facilitated by significant alterations in the cinema industry structure. The Indian government officially recognized the industry in 2001, changing the financing structures of cinema production quite dramatically. In 2005 the government allowed multinational companies such as Sony to co-produce Indian films. More significantly, though, in the early 1990s the Indian government started to liberalize its economy and to integrate it more thoroughly within the global capitalist system. This shift in the political economy resulted in important social shifts that are registered in cinematic representations. On another level, Indian cinema had become more aware of audiences in the diaspora and now started to consciously elicit their attention. People of Indian origin living

in Australia, North America, and the United Kingdom – what Vijay Mishra (2002) terms as members of the second diaspora – had entered the middle class in their home countries and were relatively wealthy. The turn to the diaspora makes sense in terms of revenue generation, but it also significantly altered the tenor of gender discourse. In particular women of South Asian origin are represented as repositories of “Indian” tradition; female modesty and chastity are revalorized as well (Ganti, 2004; Moorti, 2005).

Hindi popular cinema was largely addressed to the middle class (Prasad, 2001). This starts to shift in the era of the Hindi global cinema, the era of Bollywood (Ganti, 2004). Although Bollywood has been used as a short-hand term to refer to all films emerging from India, scholars have argued persuasively that it more accurately references the small slice of cinema that has gained international currency. Madhava Prasad (2003) contends that Bollywood is a “new cinema coming from Bombay but also, lately from London and Canada, which has [...] produced a new self-image of the Indian middle classes.” In this new brand of Indian cinema, Indian identity is centered in Anglo-America rather than within the geographic space of the nation-state (Gopal & Moorti, 2009).

In the new Bollywood cinema, Jenny Sharpe (2005) contends that conjugality and romance are narrated with a focus on the wealthy. Analyzing the sudden popularity of blockbuster wedding-themed films, Sharpe argues that the class conflict central to earlier romances is reconfigured in the new Hindi cinema. She identifies the film *Maine Pyar Kiya* (*I Fell in Love*, Sooraj Barjatya, 1989) as signaling the disappearance of the middle class from the Hindi cinema screen. In this film and others circulating under the name Bollywood, consumer culture and global brand names are repeatedly thematized, thus naturalizing the shift in focus from the middle class to the affluent. Class conflict is recalibrated as a clash of lifestyles, so social structural issues are reformulated as individual choices. Thus for women the adherence to Indian patriarchal conditions is positioned insidiously as a choice between a Western lifestyle and traditional Indian values. Unlike in the socials, which tended to highlight the injustices perpetuated in the name of tradition, contemporary romances present tradition as a choice women freely and willingly opt for.

The diaspora becomes the primary avenue through which this new money class enters the screen. For instance, in a film like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (*The Braveheart Will Take the Bride*, Aditya Chopra, 1995), the romance is between two second-generation Indians living in London, but a large portion of the narrative is staged in India. In terms of gender, the new romance films are rid of the good woman/bad woman dichotomy. Instead, aspects of the vamp figure are collapsed onto the figure of the female protagonist. Thus, before she falls in love with the hero, the female protagonist bears all the markers of being a modern, cosmopolitan subject: she is independent, opinionated, drinks alcohol, wears “Western” clothes, and so on. She displays as well the potential of sexual subjectivity. However, once she is in love she is transformed into the image of the good woman, clad in saris and suddenly acquiescent and subservient to the male figures.

The global Hindi films stage what Patricia Uberoi (2006) has identified as “an arranged love marriage” where the couple fall in love but wait for their parents’ approval to get married. This waiting period allows the narrative to insidiously insert a return to traditional values, ideas that are asserted through the female’s performance. Significantly in the new global Hindi movies, the woman from the diaspora is depicted as being more authentically Indian than those residing in the geographic space of the nation. Unlike the earlier middle-class films, Bollywood films are aimed at pleasing diasporic audiences and the cosmopolitan upper class within India. It is thus not surprising that the diasporic female subject emerges as the ideal global Indian subject. Contemporary Bollywood films have replaced competing visions of India with a banal patriotism, where lifestyle choices are seen as the most important signifier of national identity. Thus opulent weddings become one of the primary sites where the new global Indian asserts simultaneously their cosmopolitanism and their adherence to Indian tradition. Competing ideas about the nation-state have been replaced by a corporate diasporic nationalism, one where lifestyles and commodity culture become the avenues of subjectivity.

Unlike the two previous historical periods I have highlighted in this essay, in the global Hindi cinema, India and the West are no longer presented as antithetical to each other or as constituting a binary; rather, the diaspora permits a confluence. The Other or alterity, most often rural India, appears as a spectatorial backdrop against which a global Indian identity is performed.

Starting with the success of *Kal Ho Na Ho* (*Tomorrow May Never Be*, Nikhil Advani, 2003), a number of Hindi films have been set entirely in the diaspora centering around the lives of non-resident Indians (NRIs).² In these films, NRIs lead lives that are centered on other people of Indian origin; the storylines are depopulated of the local populace, who appear only as colorful aspects of the “exotic” Western landscape. Apart from advancing the idea of the arranged love marriage, the lives of these diasporic Indians has provided Hindi filmmakers the opportunity to address the topic of divorce. In films such as *Kabhi Alvida Na Kahena* (*Never Say Goodbye*, Karan Johar, 2006) and *We are Family* (Siddarth Malhotra, 2010), the women are not demonized for obtaining a divorce. This is a dramatic shift from the earlier ideas of subservience and self-sacrifice that were the essential pillars of good womanhood. On a superficial level, this seems like a significant shift in the depiction of Indian femininity. However, I contend that, like the arranged love marriage, these new familial structures provide a glossy façade for the assertion of a tradition-bound woman.

If the diaspora is the physical space where East and West meet, Indian woman becomes the symbolic site where the values associated with these regions come to reside. The films may visually present a woman who is mobile and independent but the narrative anchors this woman to an ambivalently defined set of Indian values. Contemporary Bollywood’s global Indian woman may be assertive, self-confident, and a sexual subject, but she holds on to the supremacy of the maternal principle. The new Indian femininity is recoded as a seamless blend of the traditional and the modern, exemplified in a companionate marriage. Through this new brand of NRI

films, the diaspora is no longer configured as external to the nation; instead it is recuperated within the horizons of Indians' everyday lives. India itself becomes impossible to separate from the diaspora.

Conclusion

Watching Indian films in chronological order, a viewer will be struck by the vastly different production values. Hindi films today look and sound much like their Hollywood counterparts. They are glossy and allow the viewers to participate in virtual tourism, soaking in the sights of Sydney Harbor, the Pyramids of Giza, *über*-modern Dubai, or iconic sites from the UK and the United States. Bollywood films capture in visual form the "shock and awe" induced by global capital flows. India itself is visualized quite differently. The slums and crowded cities of the past have given way to the opulent lives of global India. Bollywood films help audiences negotiate the forms of society enabled by the latest phase of globalization; they permit flexible attachments to more than one community.

But as I have argued throughout this essay, in terms of gender roles the films of the colonial era provided the most expansive and heterogeneous definition of femininities. Equally important, heterosexual romance was not always the central thematic. In contemporary films, as the Indian woman has come to look more like her counterpart in the West, the strictures of femininity have become more restrictive. On a superficial level, today's Bollywood films tell stories about cohabitating couples, divorced women, or even about women who proclaim single parenting. However, at the end of each of these narratives marriage and a heteronormative family structure emerge triumphant. Earlier films pointed out that marriages and family structures were the product of larger community desires, but today's films present these same old ideas as the result of individual choices. Without romanticizing the earlier cinema, it is important to note as well their more capacious definition of femininity. The female protagonists from today's films adhere more closely to the beauty ideals of the West. Indeed, I contend that while certain "Indian" values are asserted, today's film and film stars easily blend into a Hollywood landscape.

Equally significantly, Indian cinema's understandings of gender and Indianness have shifted considerably. Some colonial-era films presented gender and Indian identity as performative structures. Since the 1950s, though, biological explanations of national identity and femaleness have become ossified. Perhaps most insidiously, Indian female identity is cathected with Hindu identity. Indian cinema has opened up the space to address non-heteronormative sexual identities, but often in regressive ways. Outside of mainstream cinema, however, there is a growing independent industry that has offered challenges to these hegemonic ideas of gender, sexuality, and national identity. Amidst the sexily clad, thin, dancing Bollywood subjects, audiences are left longing for representations that commodify neither feminism nor tradition. The project to fashion a cinematic space for the new Indian woman remains deferred.

NOTES

- 1 Although the city is now called Mumbai, I use the older name Bombay to signal the historical antecedents of the Hindi cinema formation.
- 2 NRI is the term by which the Indian government acknowledges and solicits the economic resources of the population of Indian origin.

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Portrayals of Female Scientists in the Mass Media

Jocelyn Steinke

ABSTRACT

Scholarly interest in media portrayals of female scientists has emerged as a focus of media studies research because such portrayals (1) reflect cultural views and trends related to the status and roles of women in the workforce and society, and (2) are potential sources of information and influence about future professional roles for children and young adults. This chapter traces the historical underrepresentation and gender stereotyping found in portrayals of women scientists in the mass media and describes the role these media portrayals play as factors that can limit the representation and status of women in the science, engineering, and technology (SET) workforce. This chapter also explores contemporary portrayals of female scientists that challenge gender-stereotyped claims of science as a masculine domain and examines the potential of these more progressive portrayals to broaden the participation of women in SET.

Scholarly interest in media portrayals of female scientists has emerged as a focus of communication research for two main reasons. First, media portrayals of women in professional roles, in general, reflect cultural views and trends related to the current status as well as the changing roles of women in the workforce and society (Downs, 1981; Glascock, 2001; Haskell, 1979; Massoni, 2004; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999;

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992; Weigel & Loomis, 1981). Second, media portrayals of women as science professionals, in particular, are potential sources of information and influence about future professional roles for children and young adults. This chapter traces the historical underrepresentation and gender stereotyping found in portrayals of women scientists in the mass media and describes the role these media portrayals play as “important contributors to the construction and maintenance of gender stereotypes” (Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008, p. 201) and as factors that can limit the representation and status of women in the science, engineering, and technology (SET) workforce (Schmader, Johns, & Barquissau, 2004). This chapter also explores contemporary portrayals of women scientists that challenge gender-stereotyped claims of science as a masculine domain (Kelly, 1985) and examines the potential of these more progressive portrayals to broaden the participation of women in SET.

Gender-stereotyped portrayals of working women relegate women to particular professional domains in ways that both mirror the reality faced by women and simultaneously limit women’s potential for advancement and growth in the US workforce. Media portrayals of female scientists, in particular, for many years have reflected the traditional gender stereotypes seen in media portrayals of working women in other professions, specifically that have emphasized femininity or beauty (Fouts & Burggraf, 1999; Henteges, Bartsch, & Meier, 2007; Hoerrner, 1996; Lauzen & Dozier, 2002; Massoni, 2004; Neuendorf, Gore, Dalessandro, Janstova, & Snyder-Suhy, 2010; Paek, Nelson, & Vilela, 2011; Rivero, 2003), domesticity (Downs, 1981; Johnston & Swanson, 2003; Moseley & Read, 2002; Signorielli, 1982), romantic or other interpersonal relationships (Dundes, 2001; Lauzen et al., 2008; Peirce, 1997; Signorielli, 1982), and dependency on men (Paek et al., 2011). More recently, as more women have entered the workforce and as their professional contributions have gained more recognition, some media portrayals have changed to reflect both the increased presence and significance of women in the workforce (Lauzen et al., 2008). Similarly, more recent portrayals of female scientists in film and on television have changed to portray female scientists in an expanded array of professional roles that challenge traditional gender stereotypes that formerly relegated them to secondary roles subordinate to male scientists (Long, Steinke, Applegate, Knight Lapinski, Johnson, & Ghosh, 2010; Steinke 1997, 1999, 2005). Careful examination of media portrayals of female scientists is an important area of research because these portrayals provide portraits of women assuming roles that have been culturally defined as acceptable for women, while they simultaneously reflect, convey, and reinforce cultural assumptions about the role of women in society (Elena, 1997; LaFollette, 1988; Steinke, 2005).

Presenting positive portrayals of female scientists has been identified as a critical strategy for increasing the participation of women (Steinke, Applegate, Lapinski, Ryan, & Long, in press; Steinke et al., 2009; Steinke, Lapinski, Long, VanDerMaas, Ryan, & Applegate, 2009), a group that has historically been underrepresented, in the SET workforce (National Science Foundation, 2011). While the science and engineering workforce has grown at a rate faster than the total workforce in the United States

over the last several decades, women remain underrepresented in science and engineering (National Science Foundation, 2011). Recent statistics indicate that males comprise 74% of employed US scientists and engineers while females comprise 26%, with minority females and males comprising small percentages of these totals (National Science Foundation, 2011). Greater participation of women and other underrepresented groups in science and engineering is needed to ensure a diverse workforce to provide more varied perspectives to develop new questions, approaches, practices, and interpretations (Congressional Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering, and Technology Development, 2000).

Scholarly research in the field of communication has investigated media portrayals of female scientists as presented in a variety of media. Early studies that focused on portrayals of female scientists included those that examined representations in magazines (LaFollette, 1988, 1990; Nelkin, 1987), children's television programs (LaFollette, 1981), and newspapers (Nelkin, 1987). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, research on portrayals of female scientists centered on depictions in a wider array of media including newspapers (Fursich & Lester, 1996; Shachar, 2000), children's television science programs (Long, Boiarsky, & Thayer, 2001; Steinke & Long, 1996), PBS television documentaries (Steinke, 1997), popular films (Flicker, 2003; Steinke, 1999, 2005), and websites (Steinke, 2004). More recent research has investigated portrayals in television programming most likely viewed by adolescents (Long et al., 2010) and has linked research on media content with audience studies related to young viewers' responses to portrayals of scientists, in general, and female scientists, in particular (Steinke et al., 2006; Steinke et al., 2007; Steinke et al., 2009; Steinke et al., in press). This line of research focused on the specific effects of these portrayals on young viewers' perceptions of science and scientists and their identification with scientist characters on television (Steinke et al., in press). The following sections of this chapter trace the underrepresentation and the gender stereotyping of female scientists in media portrayals appearing in newspapers, magazines, films, websites, and on television in the United States. The final section of this chapter focuses on more contemporary positive portrayals of female scientists on television and discusses the implications for developing young women's interest in scientific and technological careers.

Who's Working in the Lab? A Look at the Numbers

Numerous media content studies focused on portrayals of female scientists often began with a simple count to compare the number of male scientists with the number of female scientists. Overwhelmingly, most of these studies reached the same conclusion: male scientists outnumber female scientists in the mass media. Studies of a variety of media, with only few exceptions, repeatedly document a higher percentage of male scientists than female scientists or show them as completely absent from scientific laboratories.

Scholars who examined press coverage of scientists were among the first to document the greater number of male scientists than female scientists in magazines and newspapers published in the early to mid-1990s. In a historical analysis of mass-circulation US magazines published between 1910 and 1955, LaFollette (1988) noted that “fewer women than men acted as communicators of science” (p. 262). LaFollette attributed this difference partly to those who wrote the magazine articles. She added that female authors of women’s magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal* were more likely to discuss science and medicine; however, magazines for a more general audience like *Collier’s* or *Harper’s* featured few science articles by female authors (LaFollette, 1988). She explained that few female scientists wrote for popular magazines, in part, because of the limited number of female scientists at that time. LaFollette (1988) noted: “The media visibility of female scientists was understandably affected by their relative invisibility within science, for the pool of potential female authors and biography subjects was small. Although the women’s suffrage movement and employment shifts during World War I had attracted more women to the laboratories, neither the general status nor the power of women in science changed” (p. 264).

Studies of newspaper coverage of scientists yielded similar findings. Two analyses of the *New York Times* found more male than female scientists profiled in “Science Times” columns. An analysis of columns published in 1993 and 1994 noted that only 2 of the 11 scientists profiled were female scientists (Fursich & Lester, 1996). An analysis of columns published in 1996 and 1997 found female scientists were profiled in less than one-fourth of the profiles (Shachar, 2000). A more recent study of the “Science Times” examined coverage from 1980 to 2000 and found that only 16 out of 203 (7.9%) of scientists were women, and no women were explicitly classified as engineers (Clark & Illman, 2006).

Similar findings related to the underrepresentation of women scientists existed in UK press coverage. Research on portrayals of female scientists in press coverage from 12 national UK newspapers, including *The Times*, *Guardian*, *Sunday Telegraph*, and others, noted a greater percentage of male scientists than female scientists profiled (Chimba & Kitzinger, 2009). Of the 51 scientists in UK national press coverage, 84% of the scientists were male and 16% were female (Chimba & Kitzinger, 2009).

The dominance in the number of male scientists as compared to the number of female scientists occurred on the television screen as well. One of the early studies to examine gender differences in the number of televised scientists looked at television programs produced for children or shown during times when children would likely be viewing these programs (LaFollette, 1981). This study found that male scientists outnumbered female scientist characters by three to one. According to LaFollette, “Nothing actually prevents more major and minor scientist characters from being portrayed as women, other than the traditional male bias of the medium” (1981, p. 10).

Several other studies of television programs replicated and extended this early content study and documented the unequal representation of female scientists in children’s television programming. Gender differences in representation also were

found in children's educational science programs from the 1990s such as *Mr. Wizard's World*, *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, *Beakman's World*, and *Newton's Apple* where twice as many adult male scientists as adult female scientists were shown (Steinke & Long, 1996). The authors noted that the masculine image of science and of scientists as being male was further promoted by the titles of these programs: "The titles of three of these programs also suggest, either literally or figuratively, male possession or ownership of the world of science" (Steinke & Long, 1996, p. 107).

Some improvements in the representation of female scientists in children's television programming appeared to occur later. A slight increase in the representation of female scientists was found in children's educational programs from the mid-1990s (Long et al., 2001). This study noted that while two of the programs examined, *Newton's Apple* and *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, showed more adult males than adult female characters, the other two programs analyzed, *Beakman's World* and the *Magic School Bus*, did not (Long et al., 2001).

One of the most recent studies of television programs most likely to be watched by young adolescents once again indicated more male scientists than female scientists in the television programs analyzed (Long et al., 2010). Male scientists significantly outnumbered and appeared in significantly more scenes than did female scientists in 14 different television programs. These programs included *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, *CSI*, *CSI: Miami*, *CSI: New York*, *Danny Phantom*, *Dexter's Laboratory*, *DragonflyTV*, *Friends*, *Kim Possible*, *MythBusters*, *Strange Days at Blake Holsey High*, *The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius*, *The Simpsons*, and *The X-Files*. Of the 196 scientist characters identified in this study, 113 (58%) were male and 83 (42%) were female. However, this study also noted that female and male scientist characters were more equally presented in educational television programs funded by the National Science Foundation than in the other television programs examined.

Like studies of children's television programming, a study of television programming content during prime time also found more male than female scientists. One study found three male scientists for every female scientist in prime-time dramas (Signorielli, 1993). This ratio was the same as the ratio found for children's television programming in the 1970s (LaFollette, 1981).

Not until the late 1990s did a study of a PBS documentary series note an exclusive focus on female scientists (Steinke, 1997). A study of television documentaries about science documented the dominance of male scientists in both number and time shown on screen for one of the documentaries examined. An analysis of an 8-hour PBS science series titled *Evolution* specifically reported differences in the amount of time female and male scientists appeared on screen when profiled in this series (Wagner & Caudill, 2003). Overall, female scientists were given only 62% of the airtime given to the male scientists. The authors found that female scientists were given 124 seconds of screen time while male scientists were given 200 seconds of screen time (Wagner & Caudill, 2003). However, the authors also examined a different 8-hour PBS science series titled *The Shape of Life* and found that both female and male scientists were shown on screen for an average of 175 seconds

(Wagner & Caudill, 2003). In a separate study of the PBS documentary series *Discovering Women*, female scientists were noted to be the sole focus of these documentaries (Steinke, 1997).

In movie theaters and DVDs, the trends in representation echoed those found in the press and on television: male scientists outnumber female scientists. According to my study of popular films from 1991 and 2001 (Steinke, 2005), only 25 out of 74 films that identified scientists as lead characters showed female rather than male scientists and engineers as lead characters. When present, female scientists and engineers appeared in a variety of film genres including action-adventures, comedies, dramas, science fiction, and horror films. Some of the films in which female scientists and engineers were featured included *Batman and Robin* (1997), *Contact* (1997), *Junior* (1994), *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Love Potion No. 9* (1992), *Medicine Man* (1992), *Nell* (1994), *The Nutty Professor II: The Klumps* (2000), *Space Cowboys* (2000), *Species*, (1995), *Twister* (1996), and others.

The findings of the many studies documenting the underrepresentation of female scientists in the mass media reflected trends in the underrepresentation of female scientists reported at US colleges and universities and in the workforce for over 20 years. Statistical information about the current status of US women scientists from the National Science Foundation noted that women still constitute a smaller percentage of those who receive degrees and are employed in science and engineering than they do in the US population (National Science Foundation, 2011). In the NSF report, *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 2011*, changes in women's representation from 1989 to 2008 were evident for some, but not all, science and engineering fields. For example, while women's participation has increased in the social sciences and biosciences, their participation compared with men is at medium to low levels in physical sciences and mathematics and at low levels in engineering and computer sciences (National Science Foundation, 2011). In addition, this report reveals that a higher percentage of female than male scientists were employed part time and cited family responsibilities as the primary reason for working part time (National Science Foundation, 2011).

Research on the representation of female scientists in US media appears to be of great importance in light of these statistics. Media images of scientists have the potential to influence public perceptions of scientists (Congressional Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering and Technology Development, 2000). Thus, more inclusive portrayals are needed to change stereotypical images and public attitudes about scientists, in order both to broaden and build a more competitive scientific and technological workforce, and to encourage and fully develop the potential of young women who can make important contributions in these fields' interpretations (Congressional Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering and Technology Development, 2000). The following sections of this chapter explore the varied representations of female scientists in media portrayals when they are presented.

Female Scientists in the Press: Extraordinary but Marginalized Scientist as well as a Good Wife and Mother

The earliest studies of media portrayals of female scientists examined coverage in newspapers and magazines. These studies of press portrayals of female scientists have found that images reflected conflicting societal perceptions of female scientists and views about the role of female scientists in the scientific workplace. The overall image of female scientists in the press presented female scientists as extraordinary but still subordinate to male scientists and still required to fulfill their domestic role.

Early portrayals of female scientists focused more on the unusualness of being a scientist and a woman, and prioritized female scientists' domestic abilities over their scientific abilities. In her analysis of depictions of female scientists in popular magazines in the early to mid-1900s, LaFollette (1988) argued that magazines created images of female scientists as "superstars" (p. 263), in part by featuring fewer female scientists than male scientists. According to LaFollette (1988), if not presented as "superstars," female scientists were shown as subordinate assistants to male scientists. In either of these roles, female scientists were portrayed as relatively scarce and insignificant in the world of science.

The portrayals of female scientists in these magazine biographies focused on the hard work and sacrifices experienced by female scientists and suggested that women were more fulfilled through marriage and motherhood than through their work as scientists (LaFollette, 1988). Some of the magazine biographies of female scientists focused on their domestic qualities and showed them as lacking traditional masculine qualities needed to succeed in science such as "intellectual objectivity, physical strength, and emotional detachment" (LaFollette, 1988, p. 266). Some of the images in magazine articles even suggested that female scientists in the laboratory were a potential distraction for male scientists.

A study of newspaper and magazine coverage from the 1960s to the 1980s of female Nobel Prize winners noted portrayals of female scientists that perpetuated the view that being a scientist presented a conflict with being a mother (Nelkin, 1987). According to this study, "While successful male scientists appear in the press as above the mundane world and totally absorbed in their work, the few women laureates have a very different image" (Nelkin, 1987, p. 18). A photograph of a female scientist showed her in front of her kitchen stove, and articles commented on her domestic activities such as cleaning, cooking, and selling brownies for the PTA (Nelkin, 1987). Nelkin discussed the gender stereotypes conveyed by this type of coverage: "The overwhelming message in these popular press accounts is that the successful female scientist must have the ability to do everything – to be feminine, motherly, and to achieve as well" (Nelkin, 1987, p. 20).

A later study of magazine content noted a similar focus on the conflict between being a scientist and being a woman. A thematic analysis of magazine articles published after the release of the books written by two female scientists, Rachel Carson and Theo Colborn, documented the stereotypical images created of these two environmental activists. Magazine coverage of both Carson and Colborn marginalized their scientific status either by not identifying them as scientists or by focusing on their dual identities as women and scientists (Corbett, 2001). This study noted that the dominant image of Carson in the magazine articles since the publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962 portrayed her as a passionate and emotional woman and focused on her personal rather than professional life. Corbett (2001) wrote: "Numerous stories focused on Carson's marital status and personal style, references that were used to devalue her and dismiss her work" (p. 728). Most images of Carson were unflattering: "Until her death, the picture painted of her as a woman was of an emotional, rather unstable, and reclusive woman – not someone to whom the men of science needed to pay much attention" (p. 729). Articles in news magazines also labeled *Silent Spring* as inaccurate and emotional, further discrediting Carson's competence in science (Corbett, 2001). Only after Carson's work was legitimized did magazine articles begin to mention the masculine as well as feminine qualities she possessed (Corbett, 2001).

Magazine articles about Theo Colborn reiterated the images and themes noted in magazine articles about Rachel Carson. Magazine articles that appeared after the 1996 publication of Colborn's book, *Our Stolen Future*, were more likely to recognize her as a scientist; however, magazine articles also portrayed her as biased and conjecturing (Corbett, 2001).

Portrayals of female scientists in newspapers, like the portrayals in magazines, marginalized them by focusing on their feminine and domestic qualities. A textual analysis of the "Scientists at Work" columns of the "Science Times" sections of the *New York Times* from 1996 to 1997 examined the portrayals of the female scientists profiled in this column. This study noted the profiles of female scientists presented a "gendered frame for the story" that depicted these women as individuals with an unusual interest, mentioned challenges these women faced with work and family balance, and emphasized the domesticity of women (Shachar, 2000). Additionally, the lack of female scientists selected for profiles in the press treated them as tokens, further focusing on the underrepresentation of women in science (Shachar, 2000) and reinforcing cultural stereotypes of science as a male domain.

Gender differences also were found in a study comparing profiles of male and female scientists published in 12 national newspapers in the United Kingdom in 2006. This analysis found that age, parenthood, relationship status, and appearance as related to clothing, physique, and/or hairstyle were more likely to be mentioned in the newspaper profiles of female scientists (Chimba & Kitinger, 2009). Chimba and Kitinger noted that while these descriptions portrayed female scientists in ways that break free of some of the negative stereotypes of female scientists as unattractive and unfashionable, descriptions focused on femininity could have negative

implications by drawing attention away from female scientists' professionalism and implying that they are using their sexuality to attract attention.

Female Scientists on Television: Moving Away from Marginalization and Subordination to A Lab of Her Own

Early studies of portrayals of female scientists on television primarily revealed images of them in marginalized and subordinate roles. "A Lab of Her Own? Portrayals of Female Characters on Children's Educational Science Programs" (Steinke & Long, 1996) was one of the first studies of children's educational science programs to document gender differences in the presentation of the professional status of scientist characters. Female characters in these television programs from the 1990s typically were cast in secondary roles of lower prestige in the scientific community and were often shown assisting a male lead scientist character; only one of these programs, *Newton's Apple*, featured a male actor sharing the lead scientist role with a female actor (Steinke & Long, 1996). Female scientist characters on these television programs were most often shown as apprentices, laboratory assistants, or science reporters. The authors argued that these images reflected and reinforced the cultural stereotype that promotes a masculine image of science and offered young female viewers few female role models with whom to identify. A study of similar children's educational science television programs from the mid-1990s noted more equitable portrayals of female and male scientists; female characters were as likely as male characters to be labeled as scientists and were accorded the same status (Long et al., 2001).

Public interest in increasing the representation of women in science, engineering, and technology led to television programs specifically created to promote positive images of female scientists. The PBS documentary *Discovering Women*, broadcast on PBS in the United States in 1995 and funded by the National Science Foundation, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and the Intel Corporation, focused on depictions of professional female scientists. My analysis of this six-part series focused on the portrayals of female scientists in this series as related to three key issues: (1) expertise and competence, (2) balancing personal and professional responsibilities, and (3) experiences working in a male-dominated field (Steinke, 1997).

The portrayals of a physicist, biochemist, geophysicist, archaeologist, computational neuroscientist, and geneticist in *Discovering Women* shattered traditional stereotypes of female scientists. The female scientists featured in this PBS series were not only given prominent roles on television, but they also were featured in a primary role as lead scientists in prominent positions and as leaders in their respective fields, running their own research laboratories and directing their own research projects (Steinke, 1997). Comments from the narrator, colleagues, and the featured scientists in each episode accentuated the expertise of these female scientists, and the use of

the individual voices of the female scientists in *Discovering Women* speaking about their scientific research was noted as one of the most powerful techniques for highlighting their expertise, competence, intelligence, determination, seriousness, resourcefulness, and enthusiasm for science (Steinke, 1997). The author argued that the frequent appearance of these female scientists in research laboratories asserted their equal position with male peers in the scientific community and dispelled the myth that science is a career that requires masculine traits and attributes.

The portrayals of female scientists in this documentary series provided depictions of them that countered many existing traditional stereotypes of female scientists as well as the stereotypical popular depictions of them conveyed by the media up until the late 1970s. The series' focus on providing realistic portrayals of the lives and experiences of female scientists, however, also highlighted the real challenges many of them faced balancing work and family. For example, I found that "Despite the strong emphasis on the women's strategies for balancing work and family responsibilities, the tension and frustration this issue brings into the lives of many of the female scientists surfaces in half of the episodes" (Steinke, 1997, p. 423). I noted that these media portrayals of female scientists did present the women as in control of the individual decisions they made to best support their professional and personal goals.

A recent study of 14 television programs popular or likely to be seen by young adolescent viewers noted several improvements in the portrayals of female scientists (Long et al., 2010). Specifically, after studying the following programs, *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, *CSI*, *CSI: Miami*, *CSI: New York*, *Danny Phantom*, *Dexter's Laboratory*, *DragonflyTV*, *Friends*, *Kim Possible*, *MythBusters*, *Strange Days at Blake Holsey High*, *The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius*, *The Simpsons*, and *The X Files*, Long and her colleagues (2010) found that female and male scientist characters were equally likely to hold high-status positions as scientists. Although shown less frequently, the typical female scientist character in these programs was portrayed similarly to her male counterpart – she was an unmarried, Caucasian adult who did not have children, and was likely to be portrayed as intelligent (Long et al., 2010). This study noted some gender stereotyping of male scientists by portraying them more often with the masculine attribute of independence; however, both male and female scientist characters were equally likely to be shown exhibiting the masculine attributes of dominance and athleticism. This study documented the progress in counter-stereotypical media portrayals of female scientists as compared with earlier media portrayals.

Female Scientists on the Big Screen: Competent, Independent, and "Remarkably Beautiful"

An examination of 122 film biographies of scientists and inventors focused mostly on portrayals of the lives of male scientists (Elena, 1993). These biopics centered primarily on portrayals of women in the medical profession and featured in traditionally acceptable roles for women as nurses. Depictions of female nurses included

biopics about Florence Nightingale, Edith Cavell, Elizabeth Kenny, and Margaret Sanger, and a couple of depictions of the first female doctors, Emily Barringer and Elizabeth Blackwell. Of the 122 film biographies analyzed, only 19 of these were female scientists, and 11 of these were female nurses (Elena, 1993, 1997). Elena (1993) noted that two of the few film biographies that featured female scientists were films about Marie Curie (the 1943 film *Madame Curie* and the 1991 film *Marie Curie*). Other film biographies about female scientists included the 1988 film *Gorillas in the Mist*, focused on female scientist Dian Fossey, and the 1983 film *Silkwood*, focused on the life of Karen Silkwood, a technician at a nuclear power plant (Elena, 1993).

In a more in-depth analysis of the 1943 film *Madame Curie*, Elena (1997) noted that in depictions of female scientists in the cinema, female scientists were “victims of filmmakers’ discrimination” (Elena, 1997, p. 272). Elena emphasized that the stereotypes presented in films influenced public perceptions of scientists at the time. In the film, Marie Curie embodies an “awkward duality required for a female scientist” (Elena, 1997, p. 276) that centers attention on both her domestic life and her professional life. The film primarily focused on Marie Curie’s romantic relationship with her husband, Pierre Curie, and was created to be a love story centered on their relationship (Elena, 1997). According to Elena (1997), the stereotype of female scientists as research assistants subordinate to male scientists is perpetuated in the film’s portrayal of Marie Curie as her aspirations are shown as secondary to those of her husband Pierre, and reinforces “feminine subordination” (p. 271). While at times the film portrayed Marie Curie as a devoted wife and mother, she also was portrayed as a female scientist of “exceptional talent” (Elena, 1997, p. 272), possessing great self-control and who was unemotional. Elena argued that the film consistently reinforces the “surprise at the phenomenon of a woman scientist” (p. 275).

My case study of the 1997 Warner Bros.’ film *Contact* focused on the portrayal of a female scientist in a lead role in the film (Steinke, 1999). As the film depicted the professional career of a young female scientist, Dr. Eleanor (Ellie) Arroway, it dispelled traditional stereotypes of female scientists by depicting Ellie in a high-status professional position as the director of a scientific research team and by presenting her as a competent, determined, persistent, talented, and committed scientist. This media representation of a female scientist, however, also highlighted the real challenges, frustrations, discrimination, and disappointments that many professional female scientists face (Handelsman et al., 2005).

The focus on the romantic lives of female scientists noted in both historical and contemporary media portrayals of female scientists also was noted in the film *Contact*. However, unlike the findings from previous analyses of films, like Elena’s study (1997) of *Madame Curie*, my study noted that depictions of the female scientist lead character did show Ellie Arroway abandoning her career or allowing her personal romantic relationship to overshadow her scientific aspirations (Steinke, 1999). In addition, I noted the significance of portrayals like that of Ellie Arroway in *Contact* that present a female scientist as a role model. I specifically pointed out the last scene of the film

in which Ellie is shown talking to a group of children about her research, providing a positive and counter-stereotypical image of female scientists.

Films have provided a wide array of portrayals of female scientists, although most of these have been stereotypical. A study of the image of female scientists in 60 feature films from 1929 to 1997 found six different stereotypical portrayals of female scientists (Flicker, 2003). These images depicted female scientists as the old maid (*Spellbound*, USA, 1945), the male woman (*Andromeda Strain*, USA, 1970), the naïve expert (*The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, USA, 1997), the evil plotter (*Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade*, USA, 1989), the daughter or assistant (*Torn Curtain*, USA, 1966), and the lonely heroine (*Contact*, USA, 1997) (Flicker, 2003). This study noted that more recent films portrayed female scientists as “remarkably beautiful” (Flicker, 2003, p. 315) lonely heroines. Flicker (2003) explained: “She has outstanding qualifications and her competence outclasses the men. She is possibly the most competent scientist in her special area. She is a modern, emancipated woman. She finds it natural to move within a male environment, and accordingly, she also has appropriated some male traits. Her greatest (or only) interest is her scientific research” (p. 315). This image of female scientists mirrored earlier representations of them found in press coverage of female scientists that depicted them as extraordinary scientists. However, this image also offered a departure from the many depictions of female scientists found on television that portrayed them as subordinate to and less competent than male scientists.

My textual analysis of 23 popular films from 1991 to 2001 examined portrayals of female scientists and engineers cast as primary characters in these films (Steinke, 2005). My analysis focused on the following recurrent themes in these portrayals of female scientists: appearance; characterization; expertise, ability, and authority; work versus romance; and work and family life balance. I found that as symbolic models that serve as sources of information about female scientists, the portrayals in these popular films reinforced cultural norms related to femininity. Glamour, attractiveness, popularity, youth, and romance were dominant themes noted in these portrayals (Steinke, 2005). However, these stereotyped portrayals also were balanced by more realistic representations that also showed female characters in professional positions of high prestige in the scientific workforce. Some of the portrayals emphasized the overt and subtle forms of stereotyping and discrimination female scientists face working in male-dominated fields:

Female scientists and engineers in professional position of high prestige in some of these films were questioned or challenged by male colleagues or peers, criticized for a lack of credentials and professional experience, experienced a loss of research funding or lab space when male supervisors failed to see the value in their research, [were] ridiculed and dismissed for taking unconventional approaches when doing science, pushed aside and silenced when providing explanations or justifications for their actions, sexually harassed when perceived as a threat by male colleagues, and pushed away as male colleagues stepped forward to take credit for their discoveries and accomplishments. (Steinke, 2005, pp. 54–55)

I concluded that these portrayals, although realistic, may focus on the challenges of being a female scientist and thus threaten girls' identification with the character and undermine their future interest in science and engineering careers (Steinke, 2005).

Female Scientists in Cyberspace: Gains in Professional Status Yet Challenges with Bias and Work/Family Balance

The proliferation of educational intervention programs to encourage girls' interest in science across the United States in the late 1990s and continuing through the present date has provided a new source of media images of female scientists on the Internet. My analysis of science and engineering websites for girls (Steinke, 2004) noted the new source of easily accessed images of female scientists and engineers available online and the potential opportunity for providing vicarious contact with role models of female scientists. Across the 27 websites identified and analyzed, 168 biographies of female scientists and engineers provided information about these women and presented images of them that focused on their work as professional scientists and engineers. I found that many of the biographies, specifically those sponsored by universities and scientific companies, featured positive images of female scientists and engineers, showing them as successful professionals who had received encouragement from their families, presenting portrayals of them in positions of high prestige in the scientific community, and describing specific strategies they have used to successfully balance work and family commitments (Steinke, 2004).

While many of these portrayals of female scientists and engineers in the website biographies presented positive images, some portrayals mentioned challenges with gender discrimination experienced both within and outside the scientific community (Steinke, 2004). I discussed the potential effects of these images on girls' perceptions of female scientists and scientific careers and the importance of media images that show women working successfully in scientific fields and competently combining work and family roles.

Conclusions

Historically when female scientists have appeared in the mass media, they have often been underrepresented and depicted in ways that have marginalized their contributions and have perpetuated cultural myths about science as an inappropriate career for most "ordinary" women (LaFollette, 1988, 1990). Media portrayals of female scien-

tists have reinforced gender stereotypes through images that downplay female scientists' expertise (Corbett, 2001; LaFollette, 1981, 1988, 1990; Nelkin, 1987; Steinke & Long, 1996), focus on the conflicts involved in balancing women's professional and personal lives (LaFollette, 1988, 1990; Nelkin, 1987), show women in professional roles as subordinate to male supervisors (Steinke & Long, 1996), suggest female scientists are a potential distraction to male scientists (LaFollette, 1988), and feature women and men interacting in ways that reveal both overt and subtle forms of stereotyping and discrimination against women (Steinke, 2005).

The absence of positive media portrayals of female scientists and the continued presentation of gender-stereotyped portrayals of female scientists serve to reinforce and maintain the myth of science as a masculine domain (Kelly, 1985). Studies of school-aged children reveal that over the years, children continue to report gender-stereotyped perceptions of scientists (see review in Steinke et al., 2007). Using the Draw-A-Scientist Test (DAST), these studies noted that when asked to draw a picture of a scientist, children often depicted a White male scientist, similar to the predominant image of scientists they see on television (Long et al., 2010; Steinke & Long, 1996). These findings suggest the influence of the "symbolic annihilation" (Tuchman, 1978) of female scientists in the media and its influence on girls' perceptions of female scientists, and possibly even on their interest in science careers. When girls do not see women scientists or when they are exposed to only negative stereotypes of women scientists in the media, they may even feel effects of "stereotype threat" (Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002, p. 1615) that lead them to question their competence and to view science careers as incompatible and unachievable.

Over time, media portrayals of female scientists in some media outlets have become more varied and less stereotyped; however, female scientists are still underrepresented in many types of media. The most noticeable change that has been evident in these portrayals has been noticed in the professional status of female scientists. Many contemporary media portrayals of female scientists, particularly in film and in popular television drama programs, have been more likely to show women as the primary scientists leading a team of researchers or lead investigators rather than as research assistants or subordinates. These depictions of female scientists in an expanded array of professional roles challenge traditional gender stereotypes that formerly placed female scientists almost exclusively in secondary roles subordinate to male scientists.

Another change noted in media depictions of female scientists, particularly for those who appear on television and in film, is the focus on glamour and attractiveness of female scientists. These depictions may help dispel popular stereotypes of scientists as geeky and unattractive, and may do much to encourage more girls to consider science careers. However, these depictions reinforce a cultural emphasis on beauty for women. These images can also degrade female scientists by focusing on beauty rather than ability. Another significant change in portrayals has been a shift in focus on the domestic work of female scientists as wives and mothers to either few or no

mentions of domestic work or parenthood. This lack of focus on work and family in portrayals of female scientists provides more equal treatment as compared with portrayals of male scientists, but showing few or no working mothers in scientific workplaces also may convey a more subtle message that balancing work and family is not an attainable goal for female scientists.

Previous research has noted that it is unlikely that just one factor accounts for the underrepresentation of women in science, but rather, as one researcher states, it is a “complex interaction of factors that tend to push girls and women away” (Blickenstaff, 2005, p. 383). The public image of scientists has been singled out as an important factor in understanding the attitudes girls develop about careers in science (Congressional Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering and Technology Development, 2000). Cultural representations that present science as a masculine domain may lead girls to develop gender schemas that create a masculine image of science (Baker & Leary, 1995; Kelly, 1985; Maoldomhnaigh & Hunt, 1988). When girls label science careers as masculine, they may automatically exclude themselves from educational and professional opportunities in these areas (Lee, 1998). Cultural representations that present science as masculine domains also may lead boys to develop gender schemas that promote attitudes that keep them from seeing women as capable science professionals (Steinke et al., 2006). These attitudes contribute to the documented challenges women scientists have reported with unconscious institutional bias that has led to instances of covert discrimination (Handelsman et al., 2005) and subtle forms of bias in scientific workplaces (Gunter & Starnach, 2005).

It is clear that continued analysis of media portrayals of female scientists is critical for better understanding popular perceptions of the role of women in science and for challenging stereotyped assumptions about the role of women in society. Understanding the social influences of the inclusion and portrayals of female scientists in the media is important for developing all students’, and in particular female students’, interest in scientific careers. It will take ongoing examination of the array of portrayals of female scientists presented in both traditional and newly emergent forms of media in order to determine how positive images of female scientists can best promote future interest in science careers and how these images can better reflect the contributions of women in science.

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“She’s the Real Thing”

Filming the Nostalgic Past through Vietnamese Women

Diem-My T. Bui

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines three US-produced films about Vietnam released post-embargo: *Heaven and Earth* (1993), *The Quiet American* (2002), and *Three Seasons* (1999). By considering the discursive construction of the films, including how the actresses participate or are represented in them, I explore variations on Trinh T. Minh-ha’s question on the Other: Who speaks? What speaks? How does the speaker establish knowledge about Vietnamese women when “speaking about” a story? Following the films’ releases, the United States and Vietnam underwent economic and political changes in their relationship that made Vietnam more accessible to multinational corporations and tourists. By constructing Vietnamese womanhood and women as available for discovery by the West in these films, Vietnam and Vietnamese women became part of the renewed accessibility and the reenactment of transnational mobility stories. The films suggest that the women’s bodies are the means of returning to an idyllic past untainted by war and global capitalism.

In director Brian de Palma’s film *Casualties of War* (1989), Private Eriksson, played by Michael J. Fox, spots an Asian woman on a bus and flashes back to his service in the Vietnam War. There begins his story of the rape, torture, and murder of a Vietnamese girl taken hostage during a raid of a suspected Vietcong village. The girl is central

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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to the transformation Eriksson undergoes in his struggle for justice for the girl. It is from his viewpoint that the story of the casualties and horrors of war is told and experienced. In remembering the war, Hollywood “remembers” his story or stories like his through films on the war. Thus, knowledge about the experience of war and about Vietnam is limited to these mainstream Hollywood stories. Moreover, Vietnamese women are relegated to supporting roles in their own war in most of these films. What happens when their characters speak in film? What do we learn of them, of the war, and of the country that was divided into two nations?

This chapter examines representations of Vietnamese women in three US-produced films in the Vietnam War film genre. In these three films, *Heaven and Earth* (1993), *The Quiet American* (2002), and *Three Seasons* (1999), Vietnamese or Vietnamese American actresses are central characters. All three films were released in the post-revisionist era on the war that sought to reenact the war by establishing the Vietnam War veteran as hypermasculine and revenge-seeking. The films examined in this chapter focus on different moments of the war, including before and after the war. By considering the discursive construction of the films, including how the actresses participate or are represented in them, I explore variations on Trinh T. Minh-ha’s (1991) question on the Other: Who speaks? What speaks? How does the speaker establish knowledge about Vietnamese women when “speaking about” a story?

Collective Memory-Making in Films on Vietnam

Darrell Hamamoto (1994) refers to the traumatic experience of the US failure in Vietnam as “the Vietnam Syndrome,” which describes the national citizenry’s crisis of confidence that challenged the political and military will of the United States. This crisis of confidence followed from President John F. Kennedy’s declaration of the United States as the model nation of democracy and the Free World. The contradiction between its declaration as global role model and the failure of the United States to police the spread of global communism forced US citizens to rethink their leadership position in the global arena. The Vietnam Syndrome inspired the US launching of the Gulf War as a resolution to its perceived loss of stature. Moreover, this syndrome affected media production on remembering the war. To compensate for this crisis, the Vietnam War was reenacted through Hollywood films and replayed and reworked as the US collective remembrance of the war.

In their reworking of the war, Hollywood films produced archetypal characters who dealt with major issues of the syndrome: the crisis in masculinity, in national identity, and in politics. Jeffords (1989) finds that these representations are emblems for what she terms the “remasculinization” of US culture following the war. The characteristics that are deemed important in reaching male adulthood are reaffirmed in Vietnam representation through such films as *The Deer Hunter* (1979), *Missing in Action* (1984), and *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* (1985). Because the war in Vietnam was

considered a failure, the films focused less on the war's outcome and more on the way the war was fought (Jeffords, 1989). Yvonne Tasker (1993) echoes the point that national identity is as important as masculinity in war films, particularly in the constructions of race. Vietnamese became the representations of Orientals through their invisibility, and Black Americans were the marginal representations of the literally disproportionate number of Black casualties compared to White casualties. The presence of Vietnamese characters in the films was felt, but their subjectivities were rarely developed, and only in relation to the US characters' narratives. Such invisible representations allow for reworking the memory of the war, since the US soldiers and their narratives are foregrounded or given prominence in the films. This focus on US soldiers reduces the Vietnamese to minor roles in their own civil war.

John Storey (2003) calls this fantasy revisionist narrative a Hollywood-produced "regime of truth." Vietnam War films helped to construct a memory of the war and a desire to win the war. Storey cautions, however, that productions of these meanings in the films do not necessarily mean that they were consumed by audiences without question. Rather, in order for these films to be invested in by studios, the meanings had to resonate with US audiences at a period in time when re-remembering the war in all its trauma was central for catharsis from the Vietnam Syndrome. Marita Sturken (1997) examines the power of photographic images in this memory-making and argues that they offer and create compelling versions and meanings of history. The production of meaning partly involves the process of forgetting and remembering as constitutive healing. Film is one way to achieve catharsis through collective forgetting and remembering. One such film is Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986). Albert Auster and Leonard Quart (1993) contend *Platoon* was a cathartic film that sought to escape from the Vietnam Syndrome that had plagued the nation since the end of the war. John Wheeler, president of the Center for the Study of the Vietnam Generation and chairman of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Fund, said: "The Vietnam memorial was one gate our country had to pass through. *Platoon* is another; it is part of the healing process" (Auster & Quart, 1993, p. 131).

Thomas Patrick Doherty (1993) characterizes the scholarship on gender in cinematic representations of Vietnam as in need of analysis on women. The search to examine women in Vietnam War films has been narrowly defined as US women, while the representations of Vietnamese women have been overlooked. Since film engages with our history and becomes a significant part of narrative writing on history and national identity, examining films where Vietnamese actresses play major roles allows us to see how their characters' narratives are articulated within the rewriting of history through cinematic representation.

Orientalist Logic

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991) suggests that until we transform our society of the male-centered spectacle, we will continue to neglect the sexual oppression of women.

Thus, if we examine the spectacle of Vietnamese women in Vietnam War films, we could say that Vietnamese women will always be understood within the Orientalist logic that purports to “own” them through cinematic knowledge production. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) examines the relationship between dichotomous constructs, the West and the East, and how the discourse of Orientalism creates and maintains that relationship. Orientalism, Said argues, is produced through uneven exchanges with varying degrees of power (intellectual, political, moral, and cultural) and operates within a binary logic of West and East. In the spectacle of the Other, representation and the circulation of its meaning are dependent on the exercise of symbolic power. Vietnam War film discourse that continues to produce narratives in which Vietnamese women play marginal roles in their own war contributes to the discourse on the women as sexualized beings whose only functions are sex and death. Vietnam War films restage the war and, thus, gender representation. It is this restaging of gender in Vietnam War films, and how Vietnamese female subjectivities get rewritten and articulated in history, that is the focus of my concern.

David Desser (1991) shows us that in Vietnam War films the absence of the enemy is also an image, because it imagines the North Vietnamese enemy as a sickness within US society. The enemy is a monolithic Oriental such that images of the South Vietnamese are also images of the enemy, blurring the lines between communist and nationalist Vietnamese. Further, Desser maintains that images of Vietcong female fighters, such as in *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), “feminize” the enemy so that we come to associate the enemy with the figure of a woman. Therefore, the woman-as-enemy is a major undercurrent in the United States’ attitudes toward the Vietnamese, suggesting the prevalence of racialized and sexualized bodies in Vietnam War films. Desser concludes that “even the retrospective dramatic analyses of the Vietnam War focus on *us*, on what the war did to us, on how we entered Vietnam with either good or bad intentions, but never on Vietnam as a historical site, never on the Vietnamese as genuine subjects, as people with a culture, a heritage, a political agenda, even a cultural and political confusion all their own” (1991, p. 97).

Desser’s analysis of Vietnamese subjectivity returns us to Trinh’s question on who speaks and what speaks. The films that confront the experiences of those in the war were a way for people to deal with the trauma of a war that seemed to have no cohesive logic, because it produced fractured identities, both personal and national. John Newsinger’s study (1993) on masculinity in some Vietnam War films shows that White heterosexual male soldiers’ narratives are symbolically communicated through such memorable scenes as those in Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*, where soldiers surf while under fire, *Playboy* playmates perform to the soldiers in the jungle, and the Air Cavalry behaves with Western-style heroics. By speaking through these narratives, the films demonstrate their mastery or knowledge of the Vietnamese as Orientals who operate in sexual service and as body counts. Milton J. Bates (1990) argues that when films such as *Coming Home*

(1978), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), and *Apocalypse Now* were released, they helped the general public and war veterans confront the Vietnam experience and trauma. Characters of Vietnamese women, even when marginal, are important in this confrontation.

In the cinematic confrontation and reflection of the war, *Heaven and Earth*, *The Quiet American*, and *Three Seasons* attempt to take a different approach from previous Vietnam War films by offering alternative narratives to the White heterosexual male GI. *Heaven and Earth* centers its story around the autobiography of a Vietnamese woman who settled in the United States. *The Quiet American* reflects on the cause of the war through the eyes of an aging British journalist. Finally, *Three Seasons* takes a multilayered approach by narrating several different viewpoints: a Vietnamese female prostitute, a Vietnamese male cyclo driver, a young Vietnamese youth, a Vietnamese lotus picker, and a US Vietnam War veteran. The one narrative common to the three films is that of the Vietnamese woman whose sexuality becomes a product of the war. Indeed, Vietnamese women as lovers, prostitutes, and wives to US GIs were acknowledged in the media as consequences of the United States' involvement in the war. Furthermore, all three of these films abide by the myth of discovery in which the women are found to be connections to an idealized past. This myth of discovery is used by the filmmakers either in media discussions on the films or in the films themselves. Although cinematic retellings of the war could include stories of these women at its center, these stories are relegated to marginal positions. When they are told, they are shallow representations cast in images of pleasure and desire (for heterosexual US men). The Vietnam War film genre depends heavily on the trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute in constructing a narrative that explores the fractured masculine identity.

The trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute is rooted in the long history of Asian women serving as lovers for Western males, both in fiction and in reality. US involvement in Asian conflicts had set the conditions that made possible sexual encounters between Asian women and US soldiers in prostitution and in marriage. In Hollywood cinema, the Southeast Asian prostitute is an exoticized and eroticized figure. Her function as a sexual being for Western males is most essential to the narratives, because her character establishes the line between masculinity and femininity (Jeffords, 1989). Whether the prostitute is a sex worker in a night club or a girlfriend considered a body for sexual use and abandonment, the consequence of this trope in films is that the prostitute's situation frequently ends in violence (death or abuse) or a dead end (she remains a prostitute). She is positioned as the disposable feminine Other in contrast to the masculine White Westerner with whom the film offers the spectator identification. The sexual experiences of the main female characters echo the elements of this trope but the women end up either transcending their situation or being resigned to it. Moreover, press coverage of the films often reenacted elements of this trope through gendered representation of the actresses.

Dramatizing a Vietnamese Woman's Story: Oliver Stone's Vision of *Heaven and Earth*

Oliver Stone's cinematic adaptation of Le Ly Hayslip's autobiographies, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace*, is his third film in a trilogy on the Vietnam War, following *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989). *Heaven and Earth* was released domestically in December 1993 and made just less than \$6 million. In an interview, Stone made clear that the film was his attempt to present a lesser-known narrative about the Vietnam War when he stated that Hayslip's story was "a different side of the war for Americans. Here was a story of a way of life that none of us knew or cared about when we were in Vietnam" (Hoover, 1994, p. B1). In his previous films, Stone drew on his personal experiences as a GI during the Vietnam War to represent a realist perspective and fractured masculinity on the big screen. *Heaven and Earth* was not simply about representing a "different side of the war" but also about supplementing Stone's own struggle to understand the war: "Making *Heaven and Earth* rounded out my own experience in Vietnam [...] It's the story of the villagers and that's the story that we American soldiers didn't understand" (Hoover, 1994, p. B1). Stone consulted with Hayslip to write the screenplay and direct the film. He credits her participation in the creation of the film to his increased understanding of the Vietnamese and their philosophical views: "Thanks to Le Ly, I came to understand the Vietnamese people and their close connection to their ancestors and their land" (Hoover, 1994, p. B1).

The film centers on Vietnamese Hayslip, played by first-time Vietnamese American actress Hiep Thi Le. Its opening shots show Hayslip's home village, Ky La in central Vietnam, depicted as an idyllic place prior to the French colonization of Vietnam. Le's character narrates her journey from Vietnam, just before the start of the Vietnam War, to the United States after the war, and finally back to Vietnam. Along the way, Le is tortured and raped by soldiers, impregnated by her employer, and eventually married to a US soldier played by Tommy Lee Jones, who takes her to the United States. The epilogue of the film finds Hayslip years later as a successful business woman who, for the first time since leaving, returns to Vietnam with her sons. Back in Ky La, she meets a villager who tells her that "rebuilding a nation after war is like trying to start a family by getting raped!"

Stone's understanding of Vietnam and the Vietnamese leans toward romanticizing a Vietnam prior to the communist takeover and to the US intervention in the war. Mariam Beevi (1997) argues that Stone, and Hayslip through her texts, stages the "Vietnamese American experience" in which two cultures, "Western" and "Eastern," are seen as mutually exclusive in moral and religious beliefs. The film's opening sequence suggests a heavenly place where fields are lush and green, families are intact, and Buddhism and peace govern the people. It is the village of Ky La where

Hayslip spent her early childhood years happily with her family. In order to portray the nostalgia for village life, Stone sent his actors to Ky La, where they learned about living in this traditional farming village. In his staging of Hayslip's story, Stone creates an archetype of a Vietnamese American woman who "has to overcome anger, ambition and particularly, sexual promiscuity epitomized by prostitution; she must purge herself of these 'Western' influences and regain her 'Eastern spirituality,' in turn redeeming her 'nationality'" (Beevi, 1997, pp. 43–44). Like the US Vietnam War films that represent a masculinity fractured by the experience of war, Beevi asserts that *Heaven and Earth* presents a fractured femininity that can be healed through Hayslip's transformation as a "new international immigrant woman" who recaptures her spiritual and ancestral traditions. Further, by presenting Hayslip's story as a return to "home," Stone rewrites the narrative of nation-building on her body through her loyalty to her US husband (even as she divorces him) and to her children.

Hayslip's body is central to the story she tells as a refugee woman, because the body is where issues of nationalism and national conflict are inscribed. Whereas Beevi suggests that Hayslip's body is the instrument to show the return to familial duty as nation-building, Leslie Bow (1994) argues that Hayslip's feminine sexuality is the conduit through which national conflicts are defined. Bow claims that Hayslip's political allegiance is established in the commodification of her sexuality. Viet Nguyen (1997, 2002) concurs that Hayslip's body is necessary in the narrative of the refugee for the United States to come to terms with this immigrant population. For Nguyen, representation of Hayslip's body as a victimized one makes it possible for US audiences and readers to understand Hayslip's experience more fully. These scholars point out that the focus on corporeality is a narrative device in the telling of Hayslip's story of the refugee for Stone's audience.

Other Vietnamese women in Hayslip's story are just as central to telling the refugee experience through the body. Their characters in the film also contribute to the construction of Hayslip's gendered body. Hayslip's mother, Mama, is a constant reminder of her duty to the family and of the importance of chastity. Mama shows little warmth toward her daughter, but offers Hayslip her approval at the end of the film by saying that Le Ly has completed her circle of growth and that Mama's destiny as her mother is over. Kim, Hayslip's sister, is the wayward Vietnamese woman commodifying her body in a brothel for US GIs during the war. She later marries a physically abusive GI and moves with him to the United States. Madame Lien is the heartless wife of Le Ly's employer, the Master, who orders Le Ly to be sent out of the house for being impregnated by him. These three female characters – Mama, Kim, and Madame – are the various paths of womanhood and help to construct Hayslip's body as a site for the negotiation of national identity. In other words, they represent what Hayslip has either chosen not to become or not been allowed to become as a Vietnamese woman. They are the boundaries of her womanhood by instructing Hayslip on her virtue and her duty as a woman and mother. In this sense, Vietnamese womanhood is constructed through the several female characters in the film who are each suffering victims in their own way. Judith Butler (1993) asserts that

it is this reiterative discourse that makes, regulates, and constrains sexuality. Hayslip is defined against the repudiation of the three supporting Vietnamese female characters. That is, these women are excluded from the redemption Hayslip receives in the end because they are resigned in their suffering, unlike Hayslip, who is portrayed as the courageous immigrant woman who works her way out of her situation. Hayslip is not constructed in isolation but, rather, in what Butler maintains is a performance of multiple articulations of norms or set of norms. A normative heterosexuality is established through this performance. Hayslip's numerous affairs with men, both in the book and in the film, help to construct Vietnamese womanhood as a necessary return to familial duty and virtue. The story that Stone offers his audience is part of a discourse of normativities that collectively produce an immigrant woman's narrative of struggle and redemption. The immigrant/refugee narrative is one about individuals who work hard to achieve success – the myth of the model minority. Moreover, this type of narrative suggests that immigrants are able to access an authentic past described in Stone's film as a prewar, pre-border crossing, and an agrarian-based life.

Also central to understanding the narrative of the film is press coverage about the film. The refugee narrative is used to describe actress Hiep Thi Le's connection to the story. A LexisNexis keyword search on Le produced only a few articles, which described her as a new actress. Some of the newspaper coverage addressed Le's personal experience as an immigrant:

What begins as a fable becomes a grand opera, then soap opera. Le Ly, bravely played by Hiep Thi Le, herself a boat person who left Vietnam in the late '70s, is narrowly defined as a career victim. (Gabrenya, 1994)

Hiep Thi Le has been there, too. She was born in Vietnam. In 1978, her family began fleeing the country in stages: Le and a younger sister soon joined the "boat people" bound for Hong Kong and spent three months in refugee camps. (Giles, Duignan-Cabrera, & Peyser, 1994)

Stone cast her because "she was so unspoiled." And that's precisely why directors have taken the trouble to make stars from scratch. Directing nonactors, says Neil Jordan, [...] "is like working with a child. There's a sense of reality there. There's no technique." (Giles et al., 1994)

Stone seems to have discovered the unspoiled Vietnamese woman in casting Le, who appears to be Stone's authentic representation of a Vietnamese woman untainted by the consequences of war and Western influence. It is also through the immigrant narrative that this discovery is structured. For instance, the *Chicago Sun-Times* published an article solely on Le and how the film was something to which she could relate: "The story hit home for Hiep, who was one of Vietnam's boat people" (Pearlman, 1994, p. 2NC). Le is seldom presented as an actress based on her merit, but rather as an actress who had to draw on her similar experience as a Vietnamese refugee to play the part. Paralleling the film, the narrative in these articles also

focuses on the individual, where the context of family, friends, and historical events is neglected in the retelling. It is similar to the "pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps" notion that is part of the myth of the model minority of Asian Americans in which the media depict Asians in the United States as being ideal racial minorities who became successful as a result of individual will and determination. In the media surrounding the film's lead actress, Le is depicted within the immigrant/refugee narrative like the lead character, Hayslip, without venturing beyond a story about her hard work to achieve her US success. It is her "unspoiled" exposure to Hollywood and her experience, her authenticity, as a boat person that the media and Stone declared to be relevant to the film. In framing the actress as a discovery, Stone takes credit for finding the actress and giving her the opportunity to showcase her communication of her refugee experience.

Stone brought to mainstream audiences in the 1990s a Vietnamese woman's story that is translated to audiences into a refugee success story and a gendered national identity. Further, the Vietnamese American actress who plays this woman in the film is also made to fit into this same story. Hayslip's sexuality is defined through the film's management of the other Vietnamese female characters' sexuality in the film. For instance, Hayslip does not sell her body like her sister, even when offered a large amount of money. By not commodifying her body to the GIs, Hayslip may recoup her compromised sexuality. As with the overplayed trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute, Hayslip underwent similar experiences of rape, affairs with White men, and having their children. However, Hayslip ends as a success story and offers a reconciliation of past conflicts between the United States and Vietnam and between old and new Vietnam. Both Hayslip and Hiep Thi Le's stories have been commodified as selling points in Stone's vision of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. Hayslip's identity as a refugee has been bounded and regulated by the sexualities of the women in her story and the story that Stone rewrites for the screen.

Around the time this film was released in late 1993, Vietnam was reemerging in the news as the United States began to lighten up on its previously rigid stance of no reconciliation with Vietnam imposed shortly after the end of the war. Matthew Killmeier and Gloria Kwok (2005) maintain that because Stone's film was released during a time of reconciliation between the two nations, the film contributes to "the American recuperation of Vietnam as an object of neoliberal imperialism" (p. 269). That is, as the United States normalizes its relations with Vietnam through renewals of trade and tourism, the success story of Le Ly Hayslip reads as part of the cultural incorporation of Vietnam in the United States' neoliberal empire. Discourse on Vietnam in the 1990s described the country as a more accessible place after the war. The refugee narrative and the trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute in *Heaven and Earth* aid in representing Vietnam and Vietnamese women as part of this renewed accessibility and the reenactment of a transnational mobility success story.

Oliver Stone adapted *Heaven and Earth* during a significant shift in Vietnam-US relations in which the two countries began a reconciliation of the past. Also during this time, Vietnamese Americans were a new addition to the model minority myth

through the immigrant/refugee narrative. This narrative was echoed in the casting of the lead actress and the press coverage of her own life story. Reconciliation in the 1990s and in the film referred not only to the resolving of conflicts between Vietnam and the United States, but also to reconciling Vietnam's present with Stone's vision of an authentic, mythical old Vietnam. The refugee success story, in conjunction with the trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute, constructs Vietnamese women as available for discovery by the West, which just has to search for the "unspoiled" Vietnamese woman. The trope polices the sexuality of Vietnamese women by framing it as a woman's choice to commodify her body and contrasting it against the choices of the other female characters. National identity and authenticity are inscribed on women's bodies and heralded as the paths toward immigrant success.

The Quiet American: Phillip Noyce's Critique of War

The 2002 cinematic interpretation of Graham Greene's 1955 novel *The Quiet American* is, on the surface, a film about the political and personal influences of a journalist's coverage of the beginnings of a war. Media discussion of the film placed it as a timely critique on US foreign policies following the 9/11 attacks on the United States. However, contextualizing the film within the history of Vietnam films by the United States and within the framework of a gendered Western gaze offers a different reading. In its fictionalized story of reporting the events leading up to the United States' Vietnam War, the film uses romance as a narrative device to communicate knowledge about Vietnamese women to the US viewing audience.

Three decades after the end of the Vietnam War, cinema continues to contribute to the ongoing moral, political, and social debates surrounding the United States' involvement in that war. US films on Vietnam overwhelmingly are about the experiences of US soldiers in the war (for partial bibliographies of these films, refer to Dittmar & Michaud, 1990; Whillock, 1990). More than depictions of history, these films represent current attitudes about the war such that they create a sense that this war has never ended (Anderegg, 1991). The filmmakers of *The Quiet American* acknowledge their film's participation in US understandings about its role in the Vietnam War. Director Phillip Noyce, in explaining his reasoning for adapting the book into a film, comments that it was "the great Vietnam War movie that hadn't been made. A film not about the experiences of fighting the American war against the Vietnamese, but a film that explains why the fighting occurred, why the Americans prosecuted that war over such a long period with such vehemence" (Bffc.net, 2002). Furthermore, the filmmakers suggest that the film has relevance to policies about war in general and is a caution against jumping into war. This film, read within contemporary political events, indicates recent public sentiment about the United States as a meddler in world affairs and connects the Vietnam War to the Second Gulf War. In an interview, Noyce made this connection in his comment on the

character of Pyle, saying "George [W.] Bush is the ultimate Alden Pyle!" (Tang, 2003). Noyce expanded: "The issue is whether America's responsibility to the rest of the world justifies meddling in the internal affairs of other sovereign nations. We are facing that question with Iraq" (Gorbach, n.d.).

The film narrates a love triangle between a middle-aged English journalist, his young Vietnamese mistress, and a young US doctor in 1952 Saigon on the eve of United States involvement in the Vietnam War. The story is told through the eyes of Thomas Fowler, who lives with his Vietnamese mistress *Phuong* but is married to a Catholic woman who remains back in England. Fowler and *Phuong* meet Alden Pyle, who tells them he is a doctor who specializes in eye diseases. Fowler eventually discovers Pyle is a US spy. Pyle falls in love at first sight with *Phuong*. From that point the film describes two parallel stories: the story of the love triangle of Fowler, *Phuong*, and Pyle, and the story of Fowler's uncovering of secret US dealings with the South Vietnamese against the communists, which ultimately lead to the Vietnam War.

The film's love triangle is a metaphor for the Western world's intervention in Vietnamese governance and politics. *Phuong* stands in to represent the nation of Vietnam, while Fowler and Pyle are the well-meaning men who intend to save *Phuong* from her limited occupation as a dancer catering to foreign men. This behavior is most evident in the scene in Fowler's apartment where the men argue with each other over who can take better care of her while *Phuong* looks on. After the argument, the choice finally is posed to *Phuong*, who decides to stay with Fowler out of loyalty to him. As a metaphor, *Phuong* is passive, helpless Vietnam while Fowler is the benevolent (aging) Western colonizer and Pyle is the new imperialism of the United States. The film works on another metaphorical level through the discourse surrounding it. An examination of media discourse on the film shows an emphasis on the political opinions of the male filmmakers and actors. Cynthia Fuchs (2003) points out that despite *Phuong* being a major character in the film, the media neglected to address the role she plays as the object of men's desires. Indeed, interviews and press conferences focus more heavily on Brendan Fraser and Michael Caine, who play Pyle and Fowler, respectively. Moreover, Do Thi Hai Yen, who plays *Phuong*, is not presented in interviews as having deep insights into her role, while both Caine and Fraser speak in-depth on their roles. Actors Caine and Fraser discussed in interviews and in the director's commentary on the DVD release how they came to realize their characters, Caine bringing his experience in the Korean War to the film and Fraser researching the history of Vietnam for the film. One of the few anecdotes revealed about Do Thi Hai Yen coming to play this role is that she is the girlfriend of the actor Quang Hai, who plays General The, and doesn't speak English (Bffc.net, 2002). At the movie premiere, Fraser offered his view of Do: "Greene created *Phuong* as a symbolic representation of Vietnam. Do Thi Hai Yen represents great Southeast Asian dignity and beauty" (Vietnam News Agency, 2002). Her experience of making the film is voiced almost entirely by the director, Fraser, or Caine, and her thoughts on the film's message are completely absent from media discussion on the film.

Karen Shimakawa (2002) argues that when Asian American actors perform Asian roles for US audiences, they bring with them a history of images that imbue the

Asian body with Orientalness. Indeed, the reason Do was chosen for this role appears to be because she embodied this Orientalness. Noyce explained why he chose Do, who had no previous acting experience, over 500 other Vietnamese women from all over the world who auditioned for the part: “She’s the real thing [...] The Vietnamese diaspora had all been changed and polluted by the desire to be American or French. Because she had been locked away for so long, she really was a Vietnamese woman from the fifties. She has a certain reserve, she has a dignity” (Noyce, 2002). Noyce articulated Do as an authentic representation of Vietnamese women of the 1950s and, by doing so, contributes to the production of knowledge on Vietnamese womanhood as rooted in the exotic Orient, the Miss Saigon or the Vietnamese Madame Butterfly. Noyce confessed in an interview that a Vietnamese female friend of his voiced her criticism of the portrayal of Phuong, arguing that Phuong would not have found it as easy to leave Fowler for Pyle as shown in the film but would have been tortured by her feelings of loyalty (Gorbach, n.d.). By choosing not to allow Phuong the depth and complexity he does with Fowler and Pyle and by the limited discussion in the media of Do’s contribution to the film, Phuong remains a mere narrative tool in a love triangle story that serves as a metaphor for players in war. Phuong succeeds as the object of desire of these two men, because she fits into the Oriental romance structure in which Lisa Lowe (1991) explains that both the woman of desire and the Orient are located as an Other, inaccessible and different. Phuong’s passivity and ultimate resignation to her situation at the end of the film are made plausible as they fit her into what Gina Marchetti (1993) describes as a long history of Orientalist representations of the Madame Butterfly figure. Like Madame Butterfly, Phuong is an Asian woman who falls in love with a White man and submits to his authority. She is shown in the film as being suspicious of Pyle’s activities but is allowed neither the space nor the disposition to question them.

The media discussion and the filmmaker’s own comments on the film privilege a Western gaze of war over a more encompassing understanding of war’s deep embeddings in the politics of race and gender. This Western gaze is both masculine (trumping any female participation in discussions) and imposing. Self and agency of the Vietnamese female are erased by the film’s depictions of Vietnamese women and by its media discourse – the women are intended for sexual service for US men. Susan Jeffords argues that the discourse on the Vietnam War redefines constructions of what is masculine and feminine “so that women are effectively eliminated from the masculine narration of war and the society of which it is emblem, either by the masculine point of view from which the stories are told or by themselves as exiled ‘refugees’ from U.S. social relations” (1989, pp. 185–186). Information about Phuong, Do, and Vietnamese women is confined to what the filmmaker and media choose to dispense.

The film ends with newspaper headlines on the French withdrawal from Vietnam, the communists declaring war on South Vietnam, and the United States entering the Vietnamese civil war. The technique of flashing newspaper headlines at various points throughout the narrative attempts to imply the film as a report of the political events prior to the war. In doing so, *The Quiet American* reports an idea of the authentic Vietnamese woman to the US public through a reliance on photojournalism as

the communication of reality. Phuong’s reserve and resignation to her fate, as created by the men in her life and by the political events, demonstrate that even if Phuong did “speak” for herself, her fate is decided by the men and the political events. A love triangle as a metaphor for US foreign policy positions Vietnam as the feminine counterpart to the United States as self-declared protector and hero. In both the love triangle and the film’s version of Vietnam’s role in the war, Vietnamese women and Vietnam have no choice but to play out their destiny as pawns in the lovers’/Western political agenda. To further understand the representation of the West, the film underscores the ages of Fowler and Pyle as metaphors for the shifts within Western power. Fowler, the older man, represents the aging British Empire, while Pyle’s youth, in contrast, suggests the rise of US imperialism. Media discussion on the film also interprets Phuong and Do as passive women. It is possible to invert such interpretations to discuss how Phuong might be fully aware that Vietnam is changing and that she makes choices based on an awareness of her country’s revolution and her own condition. Yet what we see instead is an adherence to the trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute, who is represented with little complexity and functions as a character to further a director’s statement on a different war.

While filmmakers and media characterized the film as more of a commentary on war and a caution against entering wars, I suggest that the film participates in a rearticulation of the colonialist framework of Orientalism. Interestingly, the film calls out the meddling of the United States overseas and makes transparent US interference in prolonging a long and bloody war. However, the problem is in the interpretation of Vietnam, symbolically represented through the female character, Phuong. As a subaltern, Phuong’s ability to speak is managed by the men, symbolically representing competing Western nations. In media discussions on the film, the filmmakers had an opportunity to delve further into US foreign policy and to go beyond a critique of the United States as simply acting as cowboys and sheriffs in global politics. The film services the United States’ neocolonialism by failing to interrogate the gendered relations in the love triangle and by advertising Do Thi Hai Yen as an authentic Vietnamese woman who, in her “authenticity,” creates what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls “the desire to acquire and protect it” (1989, p. 88). The gendered relations at the geopolitical level go unchallenged, while neocolonialist constructions of knowledge of the female Other remain intact.

Three Seasons: Tony Bui’s Imagining of Vietnam’s Future

In his memoir *Jarhead* (2003), Anthony Swofford describes his experience serving in the US Marines. He explains that the appeal of watching Vietnam War movies would incite the soldiers to violence. He writes: “All Vietnam war films are pro-war no matter what their supposed message [...] The magic brutality of the films celebrates

the terrible and despicable beauty of our fighting skills.” Despite a film like *Apocalypse Now* being ultimately an antiwar tale, many films about the Vietnam War offer an eroticization of violence in warfare. For the men in *Jarhead*, the littering and disposal of bodies in Vietnam War films operate through an objectification of the enemy body. For example, the extended rape, torture, and murder of the Vietnamese woman in *Casualties of War* offer no narrativization beyond her body’s sexual function. Viet Nguyen (1997) describes scenes such as these as a pornographic spectacle of death for Vietnamese viewers. In other words, they identify with the dead bodies that are objectified and sensationalized as enemy bodies in warfare. Filmed in the midst of a dramatic economic and cultural shift for Vietnam, the 1999 film *Three Seasons* is an attempt to move the focus on Vietnam from the US perspective of a pornographic spectacle to Vietnamese perspectives.

Vietnamese American director and writer Tony Bui intended to create a feature film that would showcase Vietnam to US and international audiences. He wrote *Three Seasons*, which was filmed mostly in the Vietnamese language. Americans, here, mainly are extras who are driven around the city in cyclos, while Vietnamese fill most of the leading roles. *Three Seasons* was the first US film given permission by the Vietnamese government to be filmed entirely on location in Vietnam since the war. Released in 1999 by October Films, *Three Seasons* was well received in its showing at the Sundance Film Festival, grossing over \$2 million and showing in 66 theaters in the United States.

The film follows four narrative threads of Vietnamese characters and one American man in Saigon, a.k.a. Ho Chi Minh City. Kien An, a young woman, goes to work as a harvester in the lotus ponds where she meets a reclusive teacher, The Dao, living in a temple in the middle of the pond. Cyclo driver Hai falls in love with the prostitute Lan, who longs to live the life of people in air-conditioned hotels. Named after his Woody Woodpecker t-shirt, Woody is the 8-year-old boy who works the street at night to sell trinkets to tourists outside of bars. James Hager is the US veteran in search of his Amerasian daughter, whom he knows only by a photograph.

A review in *Sight & Sound* (Macnab, 2000) criticizes the film for its discontinuity in editing when the film jumps from scenes of rain to scenes of clear weather. The reviewer misses the point of the main theme of the film, made obvious by its title, *Three Seasons*. In Vietnam, only three seasons are recognized: dry, wet, and growth. Tony Bui intended the seasons as a metaphor for the cyclical changes in Vietnamese culture. He described the influence of his personal journeys to Vietnam, which shaped his impression of Vietnamese culture and eventually his filmmaking: “Visually, I was so struck and affected by what I saw. There were so many changes. It’s a country going through a stage of influence. In 1992, there were Russian ships and kiosks everywhere. By 1997, all of that was gone, replaced by Coca-Cola and Pepsi signs and taxis – taxis didn’t even exist in Vietnam in 1993. From 1992 to 1997 there was a dramatic change and influence, and it was all Western” (LoBrutto, 1999). This Western influence Bui describes is represented throughout his film by the large Coca-Cola and Maxwell billboards decorating the Ho Chi Minh landscape, camera shots

of towering skyscrapers in the process of being built, and the proliferation of hotels catering to wealthy foreigners. The transnational corporate presence in Vietnam was made possible in part by the Clinton administration's lifting of the US embargo on Vietnam in 1996. The removal of the embargo accelerated the growth of US trade with Vietnam and its exploitation of Vietnam's labor resources.

Bui works the theme of economic and cultural change in the film not only in the background but also within the stories themselves. Kien An, the young woman who finds employment as a lotus harvester, wanders the street every day to sell her bundles of flowers, which she carries in baskets across her shoulders. One day she notices a group of men selling lotus flowers from the back of their truck. The flowers are plastic, mass produced, and cheaper to buy than the real ones. The film reveals its nostalgia for the days prior to mass-produced plastic flowers when women labored in ponds to handpick each blossom. This nostalgia reappears when The Dao, the reclusive teacher hiding his disfigured body from the world, desires to hear the song the women in the floating market of his childhood sang, which Kien An sings as she harvests the flowers. He describes his longing: "I had forgotten my youth, the only time I was pure and whole, until I heard your song."

Woody, the child, represents the potential of a lost childhood. He works at night selling souvenirs in such places as the famous bar *Apocalypse Now*, and gets drunk for the first time when James Hager offers him beer. However, he has moments of a child at play. Later, he is shown play-acting in a Western gun fight; he watches cartoons in electronic stores and joins in a street soccer game. All these activities evoke the nostalgia of youth.

This longing for youth is reiterated in the story of the prostitute, Lan. She recounts to Hai, the cyclo driver, stories of her school days when she wore a white *ao dai* and walked along a beautiful grove. Hai tells her that there are better ways for her to make money than through prostitution. Lan replies that she dreams of living the life of people in hotels. She says, "The sun rises for them and we live in their shadows," admitting that she would marry one of them just to gain that lifestyle. Lan's character suggests a desire to fulfill constructed needs, in which she believes the luxurious life of hotels is the epitome of an ideal lifestyle. Such a constructed desire may be the result of this global capitalist expansion into post-embargo Vietnam. In the end, she returns to walk in her garden grove in her white *ao dai* after she has given up being a prostitute.

The film implies that it is possible to erase the effects of war and capitalism on one's life if one chooses to. Kien An decides to return to the floating market of The Dao's childhood where factory-made flowers have yet to dominate. Lan renounces her life of prostitution, dons the dress of her school days, and accepts the life she has. Woody continues with his youth and gains a young friend. James Hager finds his daughter, who has become a *bia om* girl, a woman who serves as a date for men in bars. He tells her that he intends to do right by her. Hai remains as he was at the start of the film, a cyclo driver with a good heart. The moral is that he ends up with his object of affection because he remained true to his sense of self.

This theme also appears in Nguyen Du's classic nineteenth-century Vietnamese epic poem, *Truyen Kieu*, or *The Tale of Kieu*, about Kieu, a woman who is passed from man to man, from marriage to prostitution, and to a new, but platonic, lover. Through it all, she fulfills her familial duties to her father and lover and retains her sense of obligation as a woman. This poem remains popular for Vietnamese in Vietnam because it is a metaphor for Vietnam, which endured centuries of outside invasion by Chinese and French colonialism and US imperialism. Prostitution is Kieu's moment of submission, but she is able to recoup herself by marrying a man for whom she has only platonic feelings. *Three Seasons* appeals to this romanticized notion of a nation through the character of Lan, who engages in the immorality of prostitution but later forsakes it. Darrell Hamamoto's (2000) examination of *Three Seasons* posited that Lan's character is a metaphor for a recuperation of Vietnam's fall from grace following the war. He argues that the film implies a post-imperial Vietnam is available for pimping to transnational corporations when the film captures the symbols of capitalist development – advertising billboards and the building of skyscrapers. Lan, like Kieu, persists through difficult times by selling her body. She is a modern Kieu living in a country that is being quickly integrated into a global capitalist economy. While I agree with Hamamoto's conclusion that the film puts forth Vietnam as available for “pimping” to transnational corporations, I also argue that Bui offers his film as a way to suggest how Vietnam can retain its identity in the face of social crises resulting from the inevitable capitalist integration.

Three Seasons distances itself from US films on Vietnam that objectify Vietnamese bodies, particularly women's bodies, in an attempt to reconcile its traumatic experience of the war. As Marita Sturken (1997) suggests, the Vietnam veteran's story is ever present and is a form of memory. This selective memory dominates over and rewrites the Vietnamese story for the veteran's catharsis. *Three Seasons*, on the other hand, has Vietnamese characters with stories that do not depend on the objectification of their bodies for audiences. There are narratives about Vietnamese women that indicate more than the function of their bodies for sex and death – that is, they are depicted as making choices in a rapidly changing society. However, the objectification of bodies that does occur in the film is in the nostalgia of bodies in labor prior to the war and integration into the global economy. The manual labor of Kien An and the renunciation of Lan's sexual labor promote a return to a past prior to an economy marked by flexible accumulation and capitalist exploitation of third world labor. Yet a return to this past in reality is impossible because Vietnam itself cannot reverse its accelerated integration into global capitalism.

For director and writer Tony Bui, social change is cyclical, like the changing of seasons. *Three Seasons* resolves the social dilemmas (prostituting one's self and conspicuous consumption) that arise from the expansion of capitalism into Vietnam by suggesting that one can choose to remember the past and choose to live true to one's principles. At the end of the film, Hai hands Lan the book he has been seen reading throughout the film. The title of the book finally is revealed to the audience. It reads in Vietnamese: “Ren Nhan Cach” (translated as “be persistent in living a moral life,”

a modern Vietnamese self-help book). The past that *Three Seasons* desires is an idealized past. The film disregards the new labor complexities that result from Vietnam being thrust into global capitalist expansion after the lifting of the embargo. The demand for prostitutes and *bia om* girls only grows as more foreigners invest in the country and hotels continue to rise to accommodate them. It is likely that Kien An and other women in her socioeconomic position eventually will have to find low-wage work in one of the many transnational factories made possible by flexible accumulation. *Three Seasons* invokes a classic Vietnamese text using a woman's body as metaphor for a nation and, thus, includes Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans in a story of Vietnam that takes into account the war and the experience of a country in capitalist development. It expands representations of the Vietnamese subjective experience by not resorting to the pornographic spectacle of dead or dying bodies. While giving more narrative substance to Vietnamese, the film makes Vietnamese women coherent and complete only when they have epiphanic moments of returning to a mythic and idealized past. It implies that, like *The Tale of Kieu*, one can return to an authentic culture and salvage one's virtue even after being exposed to immoral practices. *Three Seasons* engages with the past by claiming that a return to it is natural because social change is cyclical. It offers more depth to the Vietnamese affected by the war. However, the influence of capitalist intervention and the global flows on cultural and national identity remain unquestioned in this film, and this notion of the cyclical nature of society leaves us with the impossible quest for an authentic past.

Conclusions

While *Three Seasons* broadened representations of Vietnamese women in sex and death, all three films, either in the film narratives and/or in media discussions on the film, construct Vietnamese women's bodies as portals for an authentic Vietnam that existed prior to the United States' memory of war, colonization, and advanced globalization. Earlier Vietnam War films articulated an abstract Vietnamese woman who functioned more as a body count in the US soldier's narrative. As Vietnam and the United States began to normalize their economic and political relations in the early 1990s, the films carried a nostalgia for an idealized past. US multinational corporations are seeking to open operations in Vietnam, while tourists find it to be an affordable and exotic locale. Vietnam has been rewritten to be open and accessible to global capitalist investment, while Vietnamese women are portals to an idyllic life prior to US military intervention and the crisis of national identity. The three films examined here depart from other Vietnam War films by incorporating Vietnamese women's characters as central to the narrative. The films also offer an alternative perspective to the cinematic responses to the Vietnam Syndrome. As the films look to Vietnam's future, they also look back in search of an authentic Vietnam that is attainable through the bodies of Vietnamese women.

The United States' identity crisis has worked on and through the bodies of Vietnamese women in the form of sex and death. The Vietnamese actresses in *Heaven and Earth* and *The Quiet American* were both plucked out of obscurity and had no prior acting experience. Their "innocence" and "authenticity" became strategies for selling the films to audiences, where Vietnam could be displayed as retaining elements of that nostalgic past. Their characters' sexuality is compromised, and the culprits are men of war from both sides. *Three Seasons*, the one film by a Vietnamese American filmmaker that is shot almost entirely in Vietnamese, further supports a neocolonial discourse by advocating a return to that past, as a Vietnamese prostitute forsakes her lifestyle influenced by Western materialism for a return to an idyllic childhood. Her sexuality is what is at stake in that forsaking. The return to a prewar era, when life was unspoiled by global capitalism and US corruption and vices, is hocked to the audience as part of the experience of Vietnam and Vietnamese people.

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) assert that Hollywood films about non-White life stories speak for marginalized communities and, thus, hinder attempts to represent themselves. Media discussion and the film narratives act in conjunction to produce and reiterate the trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute. The trope of the Southeast Asian prostitute serves this neocolonial discourse in identifying Vietnam as having been contaminated by political, economic, and military interventions, just as the Vietnamese prostitute in the films has been compromised by individuals who have been part of these same interventions. The Southeast Asian prostitute in the context of Vietnam allegorizes the positioning of Vietnam as feminine in need of care, guidance, and rescue, like the benevolent United States, a myth of discovery, during colonization. She/Vietnam cannot represent herself; she must be represented. Her story must always be told in relation to her lover, rapist, or client. Within the media discourse on the films, the filmmakers and Western male actors are privileged over the Vietnamese actresses. All three films suggest that the presence of the masculine is necessary for the Vietnamese woman in articulating her subjectivity.

In an examination of the media discourse on the films and the films' narratives, who speaks becomes more of a question of who is speaking for the actresses and their characters. The construction of their characters on screen as a return to an exotic past also was reflected offscreen in media discourse on the films. During the period of normalization of relations between Vietnam and the United States (and the lifting of the embargo), these films on Vietnam articulated meaning and desire that served a neocolonial stance. No longer does the United States seek to occupy other nations territorially, but, through the strategies of advanced globalization and flexible accumulation, the United States occupies Vietnam economically. The nostalgic return to Vietnam's past through the women's bodies is obscured when films and filmmakers reflect on the consequences of war without attention to the connotation of Orientalism in war, both on screen and offscreen, for Vietnamese women.

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Chinese Cinema at the Millennium¹

Defining “China” and the Politics of Representation

Gina Marchetti

ABSTRACT

Chinese-language cinema has been undergoing dramatic changes since 2000. Many of these changes parallel economic, political, social, and other cultural developments that have radically transformed the Chinese-speaking world. As Chinese cinema develops out of this diverse population, transnational exchanges, diasporic alliances, and immigrant connections complicate any picture of a “national” or unitary Chinese cinema (Zhang, 2004). However, culture, language, ethnicity, and history link Chinese communities together, and the dynamics of a marketplace in which Chinese-language films circulate make the study of Chinese cinema a fecund research topic. From popular commercial features to esoteric exercises in film art for cultured elites, Chinese cinema continues to make a mark on world film screens. In addition to looking at the current scholarship on contemporary Chinese-language cinema, this essay explores the key themes, issues, and concerns found on Chinese screens at the millennium.

Chinese cinema has been undergoing dramatic changes since 2000. Many of these changes parallel economic, political, social, and other cultural developments that have radically transformed the Chinese-speaking world. Under Deng Xiaoping and his successors, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has aggressively developed its economy, eviscerated its socialist “iron rice bowl” institutions, and seen a tremendous

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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gulf emerge between the rich and the poor, the countryside and the urban centers, with a shift in the population from the rural hinterlands to booming megalopolises. The suppression of the demonstrations in Tian'anmen Square in 1989 served only as a minor bump on the road to China's eventual membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and nearly complete integration into the global neoliberal economy. In 1997, Hong Kong, a British colony, returned to Chinese sovereignty and, since then, has been charting its own course as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the PRC. Since the end of martial law in the 1980s, Taiwan has struggled to assert itself on the world stage as more than a "renegade" province of mainland China. With the economies in the PRC, Hong Kong, and the Republic of China (ROC)/Taiwan going through cycles of boom and bust, Chinese-speaking people in other parts of the world – including the predominantly Chinese city-state of Singapore, the sizable populations of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia, as well as the "overseas" Chinese living in the Americas, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere – embrace or distance themselves from a global Chinese identity as they see fit.

As Chinese cinema develops out of this diverse population, transnational exchanges, diasporic alliances, and immigrant connections complicate any picture of a "national" or unitary Chinese cinema. However, culture, language, ethnicity, and history link Chinese communities together, and the dynamics of a marketplace in which Chinese films circulate make the study of Chinese cinema a fecund research topic. Within the context of the current scholarship on contemporary Chinese-language cinema, this chapter explores the key themes, issues, and concerns found on Chinese screens at the millennium. Covering some of the principal genres and narrative formulae frequently found in contemporary Chinese cinema, the analysis extends to representations of the nation, ethnicity, and the political processes that form the foundation of a contested and often fragmented "body politic."

Cataloguing all of the elements of Chinese genre films from 2000 to 2010 would demand more than a single volume – let alone a chapter. As a result, it seems more productive and, potentially, more useful analytically to look at those elements common to more than one genre. To this end, the focus here is on the common characters, plots, icons, themes, and issues that appear in genres such as martial arts, crime, comedy, horror, historical epic, documentary, and melodrama, among others. These films exist in a complex intertextual matrix that, of course, extends beyond the parameters of Chinese-speaking screen culture. These motion pictures compete with and speak to global concerns involving cinematic language and aesthetics, the international marketplace for film, and to popular genres that transcend ethnic Chinese cinema. In addition, these films take up issues that go beyond the borders of the Chinese-speaking world and involve economic, political, social, environmental, and other issues of global significance. In other words, these common elements provide insight into transnational Chinese cinema as well as indicating how Chinese-language motion pictures circulate within global film culture.

Exploring the content, then, of Chinese cinema opens up a window onto those changes that have occurred elsewhere that resonate beyond the borders of the PRC,

Taiwan, or Hong Kong. Changing labor relations, migration, growing class inequities, patterns of consumption, gender roles, sexual orientations, human–technology interfaces, cyber-societies, environmental degradation, post-9/11 anxieties, terrorism, surveillance, and the opportunities and stress involved with increased travel and instantaneous global communications all play a part in what can be seen on Chinese screens.

Representing the Chinese “Nation”

Within scholarship on Chinese cinema, debates continue to rage on the definition of the term. Since very different nation-states and other territories lay claim to being “Chinese” (e.g., PRC, ROC/Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau) and diasporic communities produce films in Chinese or about the ethnic Chinese experience outside of Chinese borders, scholars have turned to concepts such as “Chinese-language” (Berry & Farquhar, 2006; Lu & Yeh, 2005; Xu, 2007; Zhang, 2002) or “Sinophone” (Shi, 2007) cinema to use language as a basis for categorization. (For more on the transnational character of Chinese film, see Lo, 2005; Lu, 1997.) However, given that Chinese-language films can be broken down into various dialects (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, among others), using the dominant dialect of Mandarin as a marker of the “Chinese” character of the film can be problematic. Particularly in the past and in recent years, the linguistic hybridity of films made in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the PRC has become more noticeable. Often a switch in dialect makes a plot point as a character speaks to others in a local dialect (subtitled in Chinese characters for the benefit of the audience). Even as Chinese films have globalized, the tendency to make distinctions through language has increased. Hokkien, for example, has resurfaced after the lifting of martial law in Taiwan. The use of this particular dialect divides the audience into those who have their roots in the pre-Kuomintang (KMT) Japanese colony and those who feel more comfortable communicating in Mandarin, the “official” *guo yu* (national language) of the KMT government-in-exile in Taiwan (Yeh & Davis, 2005). Many independent filmmakers in the People’s Republic also use dialects to mark their interest in the local or to contrast rural and/or provincial interests with life in the constantly evolving notion of a Chinese nation. Even as spectacles in Mandarin dominate the new multiplexes, so-called Sixth Generation, “urban,” “underground,” or independent filmmakers (Pickowicz & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2007) make films that use Beijing argot or local dialects to capture the feeling of being alienated from this project of fashioning a national identity on screen. In Hong Kong, of course, shifting use of languages has long been a factor as Mandarin and Cantonese productions were often punctuated by English or other Chinese dialects. Multiple soundtracks, dubbed dialogue, layers of subtitles, and alternative versions allow Chinese films to travel across these linguistic borders while maintaining a sense of a common ethnic identity.

The connections among language and national identity as well as local or community affiliations come to the foreground in many films. Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), for example, has been a rather divisive film for Chinese viewers because of Lee's decision to work from a Chinese translation of an English-language adaptation of a Chinese *wu xia* martial arts novel and have all the actors speak Mandarin (rather than dub the nonnative Mandarin speakers such as Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Yeoh). (For more on the production process for this film, see Sunshine, 2001.) Directed by Taiwan-born Lee, the film features ethnic Chinese actors from around the world, including the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. This highlights the melting-pot nature of Qing Dynasty imperial China (ruled at the time by the non-Han Manchu minority) and the polyglot hybridity of an emerging "global" China, or what Confucian scholar Tu Wei-Ming has called "cultural China" (Tu, 1994).

Borrowing liberally from the cinematic heritage of Beijing native King Hu, who established the new *wu xia pian* in Hong Kong in the 1960s, Lee, himself the child of mainland exiles, peoples the landscapes of mainland China (something King Hu never had the opportunity to do) with a younger generation from the PRC (Zhang Ziyi as Jen) and Taiwan (Chang Chen as her love interest in the wilderness), middle-aged characters played by Hong Kong stars (Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Yeoh), and an older generation associated with King Hu and exiles from the mainland (Cheng Pei-Pei as Jade Fox). As the first transnational Chinese-language mega-hit of the new millennium, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* continues an aesthetic tradition that predates the advent of the cinema in China. Like many other *wu xia* stories of heroes, bandits, stolen objects, warrior women, frontier wastelands, and a countryside outside the control of the central government, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* uses its story to allegorize the Chinese nation with a woman – Jen, in this case – torn apart by the various contending forces trying to assert ideological hegemony. With a dramatic Western Chinese setting in the Gobi desert, the edges of the Qing Empire easily stand in for the contested borders of present-day China – from the nationalist movements in Taiwan and the democracy movements in Hong Kong to the calls for greater autonomy for Tibet and the Uighurs of Xinjiang. Jen, significantly played by a mainland actress (a fact driven home by her accent), romanced by old Shanghai (Cheng Pei-Pei), Taiwan (Chang Chen), and Hong Kong (Chow Yun-Fat), remains elusive as she jumps into the void at the end of the film – just as the PRC, from the perspective of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the diaspora, maintains its mystery accompanied by a certain dread.

Although shunned in the PRC (as seen in a cool critical reception as well as box-office returns) (Chan, 2003; Kim, 2006; Klein, 2004; Martin, 2005; Wang & Yeh, 2005), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* serves as the base for a series of call-and-response productions that reverberate in the first decade of the new century. The first clarion reply to Lee's feature came from another formidable auteur – Fifth Generation filmmaker Zhang Yimou. His film *Hero* (2002) provides a mirror image of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, with Lee's film set in China's last (Qing) and Zhang's in China's first

(Qin) dynasty. It features an all-star pan-Chinese cast with actors from the PRC (Jet Li, Zhang Ziyi), Hong Kong, and the diaspora (Tony Leung, Maggie Cheung, Donnie Yen). However, rather than ending with a leap of faith into an abyss, the film highlights the return of the eponymous hero (Jet Li), who remains nameless in the film, to the deadly embrace and unifying power of China's first emperor, Qin Shihuangdi (Chen Daoming).

Jet Li had made a name for himself as a transnational martial arts star, working in Hong Kong, Europe, and the United States, after getting his start as part of the PRC's prestigious *wu shu* team. Working through a narrative about rebellious factions trying to defy the Qin emperor's drive for Chinese unity, Jet Li's return to work in the mainland seems to add to the significance of his performance, gesturing toward national unity – conforming to this vision with the character's dying breath even after he purposely botches the assassination attempt (Chan, 2009). Told in a series of flashbacks that literally color the truth with different hues associated with various versions of the story, *Hero* complicates its depiction of nationalism and submission to a central figure of authority that can consecrate China as “our land.”

Subsequent films have continued this allegorical back and forth between visions of the Chinese nation as a unified whole (often, as in the case of *Hero*, bloodily achieved) and invocations of “China” as more diffuse and diverse, spilling over the edges of any definable nation-state, and characterized by a diasporic, flexible identity with the Chinese wanderer as a citizen of the world. These narratives take place in dynastic China at pivotal points in history when diverse peoples came together to acknowledge their fealty to the Chinese empire or at points when these same people rebelled against the emperor's heavenly mandate to rule imperial China. All of these films play with a similar dialectic. China acts as a modern (“Western”) nation-state based on what Anderson might call an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983). However, this image of the modern state vies with an older vision of China as an empire made up of tribute nations, non-Han minorities, and hybrid populations linked to trade along ancient routes, for example, the Silk Road (*Warriors of Heaven and Earth*, 2003; *The Treasure Hunter*, 2009) or the Tea-Horse Road between Yunnan and Tibet (Tian Zhuangzhuang's documentary *Delamu*, 2004). The edges of the empire provide the setting for many of these films, with Western China from the Gobi Desert to the grasslands of Mongolia as particular favorites; for example, *Mulan* (2009) or Tian Zhuangzhuang's *Warrior and the Wolf* (2009).² Even films by independent filmmakers from the Sixth Generation feature references to the Western deserts and grasslands as a nod to the importance of the border and the limits of the national. For example, several of Jia Zhangke's films including *The World* (2004) and Zhu Wen's East–West meditation *Thomas Mao* (2010), among others, are set in or near Mongolia or enlist Mongolia as a central trope within the film.

The Russian (Jiang Wen's *The Sun also Rises*, 2007) and Korean (Zhang Lu's *Dooman River*, 2010) borders also pop up periodically, and characters from Japan and the Middle East pass through. Although it may be tempting to say that films directed by filmmakers from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or the diaspora would highlight the idea of

“China” as a cosmopolitan, pre- or post-national entity, unified by a written language and shared history rather than by the “mandate” of any particular government or notion of “citizenship,” this is really not the case. As the example of *Hero* shows, stories about the founding moments of the Chinese nation tend to contain contradictions, and, as various depictions of Emperor Qin show (contrast Chen Kaige’s *The Emperor and the Assassin*, 1999, with his classmate/former collaborator/fellow Fifth Generation rival Zhang’s *Hero* and the Jackie Chan vehicle, *The Myth*, 2005), specific historical figures may be sympathetic and justified at one point and depicted as villains the next.

Looking at films set in feudal China (*The Warlords*, 2007; *Red Cliff*, I and II, 2008–2009; *Confucius*, 2010) and films about the founding moments of the Republic of China (*Bodyguards and Assassins*, 2009) and the People’s Republic of China (*The Founding of a Republic*, 2009) may help to clarify this point. All the films deal with challenges to the Chinese nation as a unified state, questions of the legitimacy of rule, and narratives that allegorize the construction of the nation by references to actual historical figures and incidents as well as mythic reconstructions of legendary figures and their exploits. The two sets of films are directly in conversation with each other. *The Warlords* self-consciously references the same material on which *Red Cliff* is based (*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), and *Bodyguards and Assassins* shares much of the same production team and star power with its counterpart, *The Founding of a Republic*. While *The Warlords* and *Red Cliff* highlight the tendency of China to be torn apart by uprisings, rebellions, and challenges to its imperial ambitions, *Bodyguards and Assassins* and *The Founding of a Republic* point toward the constitution of China as a modern nation-state under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong respectively as “founding fathers.” However, as these films circulate in the same markets with quite a lot of shared talent and resources (e.g., Peter Chan directed *The Warlords* and produced *Bodyguards and Assassins*), the ideological differences may be smoothed over by common narrative strategies, star performers, locations, stunts, and computer-generated imagery (CGI). Nationalist fervor or anti-nationalist resistance become less a conscious declaration of a specific auteur and more a manifestation of the range of ideological positions available within the hybrid genre of the historical epic/*wu xia pian*.

The Warlords is based on legends surrounding an actual assassination during the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864) against Qing rule. Like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *The Warlords* references another film from Hong Kong’s golden age made by Chang Cheh, who, like King Hu, was an exile from mainland China. Chang Cheh’s film *Blood Brothers* (1973) takes up the story of three comrades-in-arms who find themselves on the side of the Qing forces but whose sympathies change during the course of the story – helped along by an adulterous love triangle. Again, casting may take on allegorical significance, since the two blood brothers, who turn away from the violence of the state, are played by Hong Kong actor Andy Lau and Taiwanese/Japanese actor Takeshi Kaneshiro, while the Qing general is played by PRC-born Jet Li. In this case, Jet Li sacrifices his sworn brother in order to bring peace to war-torn



Figure 15.1 An opera presentation of *The Three Kingdoms* in *The Warlords* (2007), produced by Media Asia Films; Morgan & Chan Films; China Film Group.

China. Seeing the general as a traitor to his sworn brother (by having an affair with his wife) as well as to the common people, the third brother Jiang (Takeshi Kaneshiro) knifes the general while Qing sharpshooters simultaneously shoot him in the back. Jet Li, then, takes it from both sides, dying at the hands of his bandit comrade as well as of his imperial masters.

As China settles into a relationship with Hong Kong based on a “one country, two systems” model developed for the repatriation of Taiwan, films about people facing a decision involving their loyalty to one side or another in a particular historical conflict increasingly find their way to Chinese screens. In *The Warlords*, for example, the allusion to *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* underscores the traditional importance of personal loyalty and “brotherhood” at moments when conflicting forces tear at China. The Ming Dynasty novel revolves around upholding the oath of brotherhood among three sworn brothers at a time when those bonds are tested by changing political loyalties at the end of the Han Dynasty. When the three blood brothers in *The Warlords* are doubled in the Peking Opera interlude in Chan’s film, their face makeup resembles the makeup usually used for the Peach Orchard sworn brotherhood of Liu Bei, Kwan Yu (Guan Gong), and Zhang Fei of *Three Kingdoms* fame. The crosscutting in that scene highlights the mythic nature of the story and juxtaposes it with the “brotherhood” of the three protagonists in *The Warlords* as founded, by contrast, on the superficiality of popular entertainment, publicity generated by the general’s exploits, and theatrical displays. Genuine brotherhood is dead, if it existed at all, and only the shallow performance of these fundamental ties remains.

Several other films take up characters and incidents from Lo Kuan-chung’s *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (including *Three Kingdoms: Resurrection of the Dragon*, 2008, and *The Lost Bladesman*, 2011), which begins with the line generally translated as “The Empire, long divided, must unite: long united, must divide.” (For more on the novel, see Wu, 2003.) This line eloquently addresses the anxieties surrounding

the “rise of China” as a global economic force, a new or renewed imperial presence, as well as the calls for greater autonomy from places such as Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet. Given this, John Woo’s choice to return to Hong Kong/PRC filmmaking with *Red Cliff* (Parts I and II), based on a famous river battle from the period, makes considerable sense. Woo established his career within the Hong Kong triad genre, making classic films about brotherhood such as *A Better Tomorrow* (1986) and *The Killer* (1989). These hits spoke to the audiences between the signing of the Joint Accord, which set the timetable for Hong Kong’s change in sovereignty, to the repercussions of the June 4 crackdown in Tian’anmen on the British colony. Woo moved to Hollywood around the time of the Handover (1997). With *Red Cliff*, Woo returns to Asia to take up an adaptation of perhaps the best-known Chinese story about brotherhood and the nation, reworking it to focus on the friendship between two men who are depicted as rivals in the novel, Zhou Yu (Tony Leung) and Zhuge Liang (Takeshi Kaneshiro). Again, the casting may be significant, with Hong Kong and Taiwan stars facing off against a mainland actor who takes on the role of the arch-villain Cao Cao (Zhang Fengyi), obscuring what this classic tale, which is also a hugely popular videogame, actually says about China as a world power or coherent nation-state. The spectacle of military formations, featuring geometric designs, also complicates the picture quite literally by appealing to what Siegfried Kracauer (1995) has termed the aesthetics of the “mass ornament,” in which individual volition merges into the repetitious patterns of mass society (as seen, for example, in Zhang Yimou’s staging of the opening ceremony at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing). (For a look at how *Red Cliff* has been received within the Chinese diaspora, see Cheung, 2010.)

As another case in point, Hu Mei’s *Confucius* (2010) ostensibly pays tribute to the venerable ancient sage who has become, for some, a token of China’s reinvention of itself as a mercantile society based on traditional values. Given that Confucius had been denounced as a feudal holdover opposed to women’s equality just a few years before, female director Hu Mei’s reinvention of the figure by casting Chow Yun-Fat as the scholar-politician-deity merits some consideration. Chow may be best known for his triad-brotherhood films with John Woo (such as *A Better Tomorrow* and *The Killer*) as well as forays into history in films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and comedies such as *Once a Thief* and *God of Gamblers*. Hailing from Hong Kong and associated more with the action of the *jiang hu* than with the veneration of a Confucian temple, Chow appears to undercut the gravity to which a tribute to Confucius would likely aspire. Although the sage does get to engage in a bit more military action than he did historically, Confucius tends to look foolish on many occasions. At one point, even his horse seems to laugh at him when the master falls in the mud while trying to make a hasty escape after being excluded from a ritual. Nan-zi (Zhou Xun, a mainland actress known for her beauty as well as acting ability), who plays the female villain in historical accounts, seems to get the best of Confucius, who ends up acting like an awkward teenage boy in her presence. Fifth Generation director Hu Mei, in fact, may not be alone among women of her cohort who linked feudalism, Confucianism, sexism, and anti-Mao/anti-revolutionary sentiments together. Resurrecting Confucius through a

Hong Kong actor known for his gangster/action/romantic comedy roles may be one way of keeping that contradiction between Confucius as business advisor and Confucius as feudal counterrevolutionary alive.

This same tension appears to exist in other films that deal with Chinese history. During the Cold War, historical films were sharply divided ideologically with figures like Confucius, for example, and his teachings venerated in Hong Kong and Taiwan and denounced in the PRC. However, these earlier divisions erode as co-productions within the Chinese-speaking regional industry become commonplace. The ideological swirl of films such as *Bodyguards and Assassins* (pointing toward the commemoration of the centenary of Sun Yat-sen's triumph over the Qing, 1911–2011) and *The Founding of a Republic* (made to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic, 1949–2009) that results can be dizzying. While Emperor Qin and General Ma may be ambivalent subjects of assassin attempts, any threat to Sun Yat-sen would be taken as an assault on one of the few unifying figures in modern Chinese history. As the mastermind behind the movement that led to the downfall of Manchu rule and the founder of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen is venerated by the Nationalists (KMT) in Taiwan as well as the Communists (CCP) in the PRC. After his death, his wife, Song Qingling, went on to be a key supporter of Mao and the 1949 Revolution, while her sister, Song Meiling, became Chiang Kai-shek's wife and first lady of the ROC government-in-exile on Taiwan (finally dying in 2003 in New York City where she had taken up residence).

Bodyguards and Assassins and *The Founding of a Republic*, made by many of the same co-producers (including Fifth Generation filmmaker Huang Jianxin) and showcasing a common pool of on-screen star power, use a similar formula to update the turgid genre of the “propaganda” film or patriotic epic. While *Bodyguards and Assassins* involves pure fiction with a dash of history and *The Founding of a Republic* tries to put in as many “true” facts and details as possible, both films allow the pan-Chinese audience to see “their” history on screen as well as spot dozens of the region's most popular stars in either leading or cameo roles. While *Bodyguards and Assassins* can rely on Sun Yat-sen as a dependable unifying figure, Mao gets sidelined in *The Founding of a Republic* with figures such as Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-Kuo (played by dashing mainland actor Chen Kun), taking up more screen time than might be expected. This may acknowledge Taiwan's reinstatement of the KMT with the election of Ma Ying-jeou in 2008 and improved relations with the PRC – after the years of “separatist” tensions coming from the presidency of the Democratic Progressive Party's Chen Shui-bian.

Coming full circle with his reconsiderations of the Chinese nation, Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution* (2007) restates many of the same concerns found in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Although as a sexually explicit spy thriller it seems to be galaxies away from the *wu xia pian*, both films have quite a lot in common, specifically a focus on a central female protagonist as an ideological battleground for conflicting personal and political sentiments. Although James Schamus calls *Lust, Caution* “the Chinese porn movie” (Sperling, 2008), he followed the same procedure for both films, which he co-wrote,

by working with English translations of the original materials, scripting them in English, and then working with translators/co-writers to put them back into Chinese. The similarities in the films' characterizations of women contending with their own desires within the oppressive context of feudal or fascist attitudes toward women speak to preoccupations that include and transcend patriotic feelings and specifically Chinese concerns. (For more on *Lust, Caution*, see Chang, Schamus, & Wang, 2007; Chi, 2009; L. Lee, 2008.)

Like Lou Ye's *Purple Butterfly* (2003) and Chen Kuo-fu and Gao Qunshu's *The Message* (2009), *Lust, Caution* deals with spies in Japanese-occupied China. Chia-chih (played by Tang Wei, a relative newcomer from the PRC) becomes embroiled in an assassination plot (as another iteration of the political assassination theme) against Mr. Yee (Tony Leung), a higher up in the quisling Wang Jingwei's regime, which collaborated with the Japanese invaders in Shanghai during the Occupation (World War II). To execute the plan, Chia-chih becomes Yee's mistress; however, at the fatal moment, she chooses to put aside her patriotic sentiments and her loyalty to the resistance in order to save her lover's life. The film builds to this climactic moment, which takes place in a jewelry store. Yee has decided to solidify his bond with Chia-chih by purchasing a ring for her. Chia-chih uses the assignation in the jewelry store as a setup for Yee's assassination, but she allows him to escape instead.

No voice-over narration, no intertitles, no dialogue spoken by other characters allows us into either Yee's or Chia-chih's head at that critical moment in the jewelry store. Lee keeps the film on the level of speculation – she loves him, she thinks he loves her, she has lost “faith” in the validity of her cause (maybe she simply can no longer see the Japanese as all that bad or the Nationalists as all that good). Ultimately, then, the film remains mute, and the political implications of Chia-chih's action obscure. Lee's use of explicit sex and mixed sentiments about the Chinese nation, putting glamorous Hong Kong star Tony Leung as a murderous traitor in bed with a young Chinese actress, eliciting rumors about whether they actually “did it” during shooting, did not play well in the mainland. Cinematic choices, then, involving casting and nudity may make more of a statement about the differences within the Chinese-speaking world than any direct statement about democratic rights, sovereignty, or local autonomy could.

The Global Economy and the Rule of Law

Intertwined with questions of China as a “nation,” “empire,” and global presence, the gargantuan changes in China's political economy preoccupy many filmmakers. China's embrace of capitalism, consumerism, and what Debord has called the “society of the spectacle” (1994) finds its expression on screen in often caustic treatments of publicity, advertising, marketing, and tourism. In several films, the neoliberal “new” economy is satirized as a transnational scam. Hong Kong comic Stephen

Chow's *Shaolin Soccer* (2001) lampoons the dog-eat-dog competitiveness of Chinese society, for example, by displacing it onto the exploits of an amateur soccer team hoping to find some spiritual redemption and brotherhood through kung fu. The purity of their intentions aside, the losers know they have "made it" not from the level of their skill but by the appearance of their captain and his girlfriend's faces on a giant billboard as the "Kung Fu Couple" at the film's end (of course, alluding to the concluding image of the Hollywood musical *Singin' in the Rain*, 1952).

In a similar vein from across the border, Feng Xiaogang's *Big Shot's Funeral* (2001) features a Chinese cameraman, Yo Yo (Ge You), employed by a declining film director, Don Tyler (Donald Sutherland), who falls into a coma when faced with the financial failure of his current project being shot on location in the PRC. Yo Yo, a natural publicist and budding entrepreneur, sells advertising space and time as part of the fake funeral for the Western celebrity auteur, but Tyler's recovery, of course, complicates the spectacle of his death. (See Braester, 2005; Wang, 2003; Zhang, 2008.) Jia Zhangke's *The World* (2004) uses a theme park (shot on location in Beijing and Shenzhen) as a metaphor for China's entry into the global economy. Behind the exotic spectacle of India, Japan, the United States, and Europe, the tourist site becomes the meeting ground for human traffickers, designer label counterfeiters, sex workers, petty thieves, and other miscreants from across China as well as across the Russian border. In both films, the global economy, the "open market," and the "free" flow of people and images add up to corruption, exploitation, and deceit. (For more on the film, see Lu, 2008; McGrath, 2007; Silbergeld, 2009; Zhang, 2009.)

The triad film perhaps best exemplifies this treatment of the global economy out of control. Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's *Infernal Affairs* trilogy (2002–2003) (Marchetti, 2007), remade by Martin Scorsese as *The Departed* (2006) (Marchetti, 2010), unravels the knot that binds cop and crook within the underground economy of sex, drugs, and contraband munitions. The trilogy highlights the uncertain power of state/police authority in an era of changing political loyalties (Hong Kong's transformation from a British colony to a "Special Administrative Region" of the PRC) and globalized economics. The narrative interweaves the crisscrossed lives of two moles (one a triad masquerading as a cop, the other an undercover operative in the gangs) as a metaphor for the schizophrenic identities these mercurial economic positions and shifting political loyalties foster. Although they operate on opposite sides of the law, something disturbingly similar about these two moles makes them interchangeable in several significant ways.

Played by two of the biggest stars in Hong Kong, Andy Lau and Tony Leung, the pair meet only briefly at various points in the story. At the beginning and end of the narrative, the two encounter each other in a shop selling classic audio equipment. The two strangers immediately bond (forgetting that they had met before in the police academy) as salesman and customer in the quintessentially Hong Kong act of shopping. Both part of the consumer/service economy, they listen to a Mandarin singer from Taiwan and finish the sales transaction with a credit card, the global symbol of



Figure 15.2 Tony Leung and Andy Lau in *Infernal Affairs* (2002), produced by Media Asia Films; Basic Pictures.

middle-class financial power. The fake cop/real customer does not suspect the real undercover/fake merchant of hiding drugs inside one of the speakers, and both play their roles as consumer and merchant with more sincerity than either manages to muster as either cops or crooks. However, the deal-making that takes place in the legitimate economy parallels the corruption of the police force as well as of the underworld. The traditional values of loyalty and brotherhood found in the Confucian classics as well as in epics like *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* no longer operate, and the global marketplace has challenged the authority of older institutions.

Uncertain identity and unclear loyalties become central to films similar to *Infernal Affairs* that focus on their protagonists' paranoid delusions and schizophrenic tendencies. These include *Confession of Pain* (2006), *Mad Detective* (2007), *To Live and Die in Mongkok* (2009), *Accident* (2009), and *Overheard* (2009), which, like *Eye in the Sky* (2007), highlight surveillance as a major theme. The Jackie Chan–Daniel Wu vehicle *Shinjuku Incident* (2009) exports the madness to Japan with a story about mainland migrant workers on the wrong side of the local yakuza and transplanted Taiwanese triads. Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Millennium Mambo* (2001) also deals with a woman drifting on the edges of Taiwan's triad societies and against the landscape of Japan. However, unlike Jackie Chan's love interest in *Shinjuku Incident*, Vicky (Shu Qi) moves between men accompanied by her voice-over meditation on her youth, which takes the film far outside the usual parameters of the triad genre.

Featuring the spectacular and violent encounter of the state with the criminal, the triad film has taken up many of the anxieties associated with changing understandings of the "rule of law" in the Chinese-speaking world. As producer and director, Milkyway's Johnnie To has developed this theme as part of his auteur signature. Whether looking at police units or criminal gangs, To falls back on generic themes of brotherhood and bloodshed in order to explore the anxieties associated with the

vicissitudes of global capitalism (including the economic downturns in 1997, 2003, and the post-2008 economic “tsunami”) in relation to the legal system. In films such as *PTU* (2003) (Ingham, 2009; V. Lee, 2008; Teo, 2007) and *Election* (2005), the plot revolves around the possession of a coveted object (a gun, a ruling scepter) that signals the vulnerability of authority and its putative legitimacy to loss or theft.

Although the English title of *Election* refers to a vote for a new triad chief rather than the chief executive of the HKSAR (the film’s Chinese title simply refers to the “black society” of the triads), the allegorical possibilities of the cross-border jockeying for power that forms part of the plot for To’s film cannot be ignored. Documentary filmmaker Tammy Cheung, in fact, does not hesitate to use the same English title for her film *Election* (2008), a cinéma vérité treatment of Hong Kong’s electoral process. Both To and Cheung put their fingers on the issue of “democracy,” access to government decisions, and the transparency of the legal system as key to an understanding of the legitimacy of any political form, and many other films throughout the Chinese-speaking world deal with the same issue. In the People’s Republic of China, documentary films such as Zhao Liang’s *Crime and Punishment* (2007) and *Petition* (2009) take an acerbic look at the law, and hybrid fictions such as Ying Liang’s *The Other Half* (2006), set in a Chinese law firm, also deal with the PRC legal system.

Several fiction and nonfiction films from the PRC, in fact, bring together a constellation of issues involving environmental degradation, the corrupting forces of global capitalism, and the political excesses of the nation-state. Li Yang’s fictional *Blind Shaft* (2003), for example, deals with murderers who prey on migrant workers involved in illegal mining operations. Other films chronicle the impact of the Three Gorges project on the lives of those displaced by the dam, including documentaries such as Li Yifan and Yan Yu’s *Before the Flood* (2005) and Jia Zhangke’s fiction/documentary diptych *Still Life* (2006) and *Dong* (2006). Wang Bing’s epic documentary *West of the Tracks* (2003), with a running time of 554 minutes, chronicles the slow decay of factory life in the “rust belt” of China’s northeast, and Hong Kong filmmaker Ann Hui sets part of her fiction feature *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (2006) amidst the same provincial industrial wasteland. (See Marchetti, 2009; Szeto, 2011.)

Jia Zhangke’s hybrid documentary/fictional reenactment *24 City* (2008) also depicts the transformation of China’s heavy industry, but in a different part of the nation – the city of Chengdu in Sichuan. Because of its proximity to the epicenter of the 2008 earthquake, Chengdu has occupied the minds – and the screens – of many since the disaster. Du Haibin’s documentary *1428* (2009) takes its title from the precise time the earthquake struck at 2:28 p.m., and Feng Xiaogang’s blockbuster *Aftershock* (2010) mixes the family melodrama with the disaster epic as its story journeys from the 1976 Tangshan earthquake to the Sichuan quake of 2008. In the case of *Aftershock*, the natural disaster depicted on screen may not appear to be so “natural” when the story of a mother who chooses to have her son rescued at the expense of her daughter in 1976 likely conjures up images of collapsed school buildings and photographs of the student victims in Sichuan in 2008.

The Aftershock of History

As films such as *Aftershock*, *24 City*, *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt*, and *Lust, Caution* demonstrate, the writing and rewriting of recent Chinese history preoccupies filmmakers as much as the dynastic past. Filmmakers return to key traumatic moments time and again, for example, the Japanese Occupation, the Cultural Revolution, the White Terror in Taiwan, the 1967 riots in Hong Kong, the June 4, 1989, crackdown in Tian'anmen. The 1937 Rape of Nanjing, for example, has often been brought to Chinese (as well as Western) screens, and it continues to elicit controversy. Lu Chuan's *City of Life and Death* (aka *Nanjing! Nanjing!*, 2009) challenges Chinese understandings of the massacre by including a humanized portrait of Kadokawa (Hideo Nakaizumi), a Japanese soldier who also decries the slaughter and commits suicide rather than be part of the violence. Li Ying's documentary *Yasukuni* (2007) takes a more indirect approach by focusing on the controversies surrounding the Shinto shrine in Tokyo that honors Japan's war dead, including war criminals involved in the Rape of Nanjing and Taiwanese soldiers conscripted to fight against other ethnic Chinese during the Pacific War.

While known for casting Japanese karateka as villains, Chinese martial arts films, perhaps acknowledging the continuing importance of the Japanese audience, often feature Japanese warriors in sympathetic roles. In the Jet Li vehicle *Fearless* (2006), loosely based on the historical figure Huo Yuanjia and set before World War II, Tanaka (Shido Nakamura) sits down for a civilized cup of tea to bond with opponent Huo. The Donnie Yen film *Ip Man* (2008), also based on the life of an actual martial artist (Bruce Lee's Wing Chun master), set during the Occupation, portrays the Japanese martial artist Miura (Hiroyuki Ikeuchi) as more sinister. Wei Te-Sheng's *Cape No.7* (2008) takes a very different approach to the Japanese colonization of Taiwan by imagining the end of the war as a series of love letters between a teacher, repatriated to Japan, and his local Taiwanese student, providing a nostalgic backdrop for a story about contemporary life on the island. Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Café Lumière* (2003) wittily imagines the sexual flow between Japan and its former colony going in the opposite direction as a Japanese woman returns home pregnant after a sojourn in Taiwan working on a biography of composer Jiang Wen-Ye, born in colonial Taiwan and educated in Tokyo, who worked in Japanese-occupied Beijing and stayed after 1949 until his death in 1983. Like *Lust, Caution*, *Café Lumière* dares to question the line between personal and political loyalties – individual desire and nationalist sentiments. Hou takes up the challenge of making a Taiwanese film in Japanese – as a reversal of the Japanese propaganda films made in Manchukuo in Chinese during the Occupation that play in the movie theaters depicted in *Lust, Caution*.³

Johnnie To and Wai Ka-Fai's *Running on Karma* (2003) examines the atrocities of the war from a spiritual distance, making unexpected karmic connections between the present and the past in a story about a Hong Kong lady cop and a former monk turned exotic dancer from mainland China. Working in the PRC, actor-director-writer

Jiang Wen's *Devils on the Doorstep* (2000) uses satire to confront the legacy of the war in a story about two hapless Japanese prisoners detained by Chinese villagers; the controversy surrounding the sympathetic portrayal of the bond between the Japanese POWs and the peasants caused the film to be banned and Jiang barred from directing for several years. (See Martinsen, 2005.)

After the ban, Jiang moved from the Japanese Occupation to the Great Leap Forward (1959) and the end of the Cultural Revolution (1976) with *The Sun also Rises*, a magic-realist sweep across China to the Gobi Desert and the Soviet border. Historical tensions and political realities become a whirl of images and sensations, bedroom farce, and slapstick comedy. In fact, PRC films made after 2000 tend to move away from depicting the violent excesses of periods such as the Cultural Revolution to focus on the continuing impact of political movements on individuals and their families. Wang Xiaoshuai's *Shanghai Dreams* (2005) features a family torn apart by the drive to return to Shanghai from Guiyang after the Cultural Revolution. Zhang Tianhui's documentary *Farewell, Beijing* (2010) follows Gong Fenghai, a "sent-down youth" from the Cultural Revolution, as he tries to find a way to return to Beijing and retire closer to his family (much to their chagrin). Hong Kong director Ann Hui's *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* focuses on a woman who had been sent away from Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution and had made the choice to abandon her working-class husband and their daughter in order to make a life for herself back in the metropolis.

In *Everlasting Regret* (2005), Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan uses the life of his female protagonist Qiyao (Sammi Cheng) to trace the political vicissitudes of life in Shanghai from the 1930s through the end of the Cultural Revolution and into Deng's Reform Era. Even a film such as Ning Ying's *Perpetual Motion* (2005), an all-female look at approaching middle age in Beijing, contrasts the shiny Mao buttons and Cultural Revolution LPs stored away in the attic of the privileged courtyard home in which the film is set with the trauma of families destroyed by the political climate of that era.

In a parallel fashion, Hong Kong cinema returns to the trauma of British colonialism and the Cold War era, while Taiwanese films look back in horror at the KMT's "White Terror" purges. Wong Kar-wai, of course, masters the depiction of the pain and desire characteristic of Hong Kong's postwar period in his films *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and its sequel of sorts, *2046* (2004). Dealing with characters displaced temporally (historically) and spatially (geographically) in the wake of World War II, the 1949 Chinese Revolution, and the rise of US influence and the Japanese economy, the films use adulterous couples, cuckolded husbands, bored housewives, and frustrated lovers to explore the ways in which that era parallels our own. Using a roving camera, a soundtrack sampling world music, and a stylishness exemplified by the tailored *qi pao/cheung sam* the women wear, Wong creates a cinematic world full of broken dreams, exiles' fantasies, displaced people, and misplaced romantic desires.

In fact, the *qi pao* stand as emblems of this trauma of displacement. Beautifully tailored, using patterns that mark the passage of time and the seasons, as well as

marking the line between the elegance of high fashion and the drab, cramped surroundings in which the refugees find themselves after fleeing Mao's China for crowded Hong Kong across the border, the distinctive Chinese dress does more than mark the women as desirable sex objects sown into silky gowns that cling to their bodies. The *qi pao* define the exiles as part of an affluent, displaced class from Shanghai, known as the center of Chinese fashion before 1949, pointing to the only way they can continue to display their wealth and privilege in their new environment.

As an outsider who does not come from Shanghai, Chow Mo-wan (Tony Leung) has difficulty even seeing his wife's affair with the husband of the glamorous Su Li-zhen (Maggie Cheung), who lives next door. While he plays the cuckolded husband and repressed lover in *In the Mood for Love*, Chow Mo-wan undergoes a complete change of character in *2046*, perhaps alluding to the ways in which the times demand radical changes in even the deepest parts of the psyche. The changes in clothing, mood, and morals seem to parallel the vicissitudes of the time, and Yonfan's *Prince of Tears* (2009) takes up similar themes against the backdrop of the KMT's "White Terror" in Taiwan. As in Wong's films, Yonfan's narrative looks at the Cold War through women's fashions and romantic entanglements, while adding a layer of political intrigue as the KMT tries to ferret out and execute so-called communist spies.

Samson Chiu's *Mr. Cinema* (2007) and Alex Law's *Echoes of the Rainbow* (2010) explore life in Hong Kong at its poorer margins during the Cold War period. Living on the edges of the colonial city as squatters, the characters in these films lead a precarious existence. In *Echoes of the Rainbow*, for example, the tailors, shoemakers, and small businessmen who eke out a living as squatters in Hong Kong must contend with corruption at every point. The British cop on the beat demands bribes to permit them to stay in business. In order to get basic care in the hospital, nurses and technicians for blood transfusions must have an inducement that literally becomes "blood" money when the young patient dies. The hospital in the mainland to which the family turns in desperation to help their son offers no solace, since it has been incapacitated by the Cultural Revolution. While US dreams of space flight and the promise of advancement through an English education offer some hope to the younger generation in the film, the passing away of the young leukemia victim lessens the impact of the film's nostalgic evocation of the past.

Mr. Cinema looks at the same era through the eyes of a leftwing film projectionist, who also struggles to maintain himself and his family in colonial Hong Kong. The protagonist Zhou ("Jow" in Cantonese is a homophone for "left" so the character, played by Anthony Wong, is also known as "Leftie") acts, however, as a somewhat naïve idealist rather than a radical communist ideologue. He neglects his family to attend political meetings and rallies in addition to spending hours screening films from the PRC. Although his environment may speak to his political sentiments, the fact that his banter with his KMT neighbor eclipses any leftist political organizing he actually accomplishes points to *Mr. Cinema*'s failure to take the left seriously. In fact,

one of the more droll scenes in the film involves Zhou realizing that both he and his KMT neighbor agree that the disputed Diaoyu Islands belong to “China” (whether PRC or ROC) and definitely not Japan. In *Prince of Tears*, communist sentiments become the stuff of high drama and tragic consequences, whereas, *Mr. Cinema* treats the left as comedy and its impact on the family as melodrama.

Although Zhou dreams of going to Tian’anmen, the film does little to examine the roots of the anticolonial feelings that may be fueling that wish. *Echoes of the Rainbow*, in fact, appears to address the reasons for the 1967 riots better, even though the film is conveniently set two years after the fact in 1969. While *Echoes of the Rainbow* may avoid the riots, it does not shy away from British colonial excesses and the creeping cultural and military presence of the United States in Hong Kong. *Mr. Cinema* breezes past the 1967 riots on its own way to the 1997 Handover, while avoiding that other milestone that shook Hong Kong – the demonstrations in support of the May–June 1989 protests in Tian’anmen. The centrality of Tian’anmen in Zhou’s imagination and as a visual icon in the film only serves to underscore that absence in order to make a tacit ideological point.

In fact, the trauma of Tian’anmen has seldom found its way to Chinese screens in any substantive way. Emily Tang’s Hong Kong-produced *Conjugation* (2001) does take up the lives of recent graduates trying to get by in Beijing immediately after the crackdown, and Lou Ye’s *Summer Palace* (2006) explores the sexual meanderings of a group of university students before, during, and after the demonstrations. Stanley Kwan’s queer romance *Lan Yu* (2001) includes a scene featuring the June 4 crackdown, but the connection between the political demonstrations and any call for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) rights in China remains obscure. *Mr. Cinema*, then, may say more by the conspicuous absence of the 1989 demonstrations in either Tian’anmen or Hong Kong by leaving it as a void in Chinese history.

Conclusion

As “China” continues to be a contested concept on transnational screens in the first decade of the millennium, filmmakers return to the same themes – defining the nation, borders/border crossings, political divisions and controversies, the marketplace, law, and history. As Hong Kong redefines its new position as an SAR, Taiwan continues to struggle with its status, Tibet and Xinjiang agitate for greater autonomy, and the ethnic Chinese living elsewhere negotiate their identities within various nation-states, Chinese-language cinema plays a role in imagining these identities and alliances. Of course, these crises of national legitimacy, economic clout, and personal identity go beyond the specifics of Chinese film culture. In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, for example, Gilles Deleuze notes that while in the past filmmakers could address moviegoers en masse, this no longer remains true. He states: “the people no longer exist, or not yet . . . the people are missing” (1989, p. 216). This seems to be a fair characterization of contemporary Chinese cinema. The Cold War politics and

national alliances of the past no longer operate, and this has consequences for the cinema that extend beyond the case of Chinese film. Again, as Deleuze observes:

The death-knell for becoming conscious was precisely the consciousness that there were no people, but always several peoples, an infinity of peoples, who remained to be united, or should not be united, in order for the problem to change [...] the people exist only in the condition of minority, which is why they are missing. (1989, p. 220)

As stories about the disintegration of Chinese dynasties such as the classic *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* vie with popular histories of founding moments of the modern Chinese nation-state, this tendency to see the Chinese people as “missing,” fragmented, and/or in the process of being united or not resonates with trends in global film culture.

Many related issues of family structure, women’s roles, sexual orientation, migration, class divisions, and labor appear in other Chinese-language films during this period as well, all pointing to a crisis of defining the Chinese “people” as their identities multiply and mutate. Ranging across ideological positions, geopolitical considerations, and very different conceptions of what it means to be “Chinese” in the world today, contemporary cinema allows for debates about identity to occur and various possibilities to be visualized. However, Chinese screens also close off other avenues for consideration, cordoning off areas of the imagination, placing them “off limits.” Many films, therefore, appear to say more through what filmmakers have chosen to leave offscreen than what, in fact, appears in the cinema. Some positions receive considerable attention at the summit of blockbuster epics, while other perspectives remain in shadow in the valleys of independent production. The contemporary visual landscape contains the contradictions and concerns that form a vision of “China” in the last 10 years, and this brief overview prompts further consideration of why filmmakers define, visualize, and present the issues surrounding China in these particular ways at this moment in time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Fanny Chan and Lin Yiping for their help with this chapter. I am also grateful to Sebastian Veg and Sharon Mazzarella for their comments on an earlier draft.

NOTES

- 1 The Romanization of Chinese names does not follow any single system in this chapter. While *pin yin* is used for names and phrases associated with films from the People’s Republic of China, other systems (or commonly used English renderings) are used for names associated with other places and/or Chinese dialects.

- 2 It is interesting to note that Tian Zhaungzhuang, the film's director, started his career with a very different sort of film set in Inner Mongolia, *On the Hunting Ground* (1985).
- 3 Although this chapter examines Chinese-language cinema, an exception is made in this case because this Japanese-language film, made by a Chinese-speaking director, is clearly part of Hou's oeuvre and in conversation with other Chinese-language films analyzed here.

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Violent Content on US Television

A Historical Overview of the Research

Nancy Signorielli

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the portrayal of violence on US television from both a historical and current perspective. It reviews the results of 40 years of content analysis research conducted as part of the Cultural Indicators Study as well as research conducted by the National Television Violence Study between 1993 and 1996. The essay focuses on violence in television programs as well as those characters who commit and/or are victimized by violence. Finally, the essay examines contextual elements of violence portrayals in terms of programs and characters.

Violence on television has been a critical societal concern since television entered our homes in the 1950s. Most of the attention and research on violence have focused on its portrayal and its effects, particularly in relation to children. This chapter will discuss the portrayal of violence on US television from a historical perspective and will examine what we know about television violence at the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century. It will discuss how violence has been defined in this research, how public policy has been an important component fueling research on television violence, as well as some theoretical perspectives relating to the portrayal of violence. The predominant focus is on television violent content in a US context.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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As we progress in the twenty-first century, although we spend more and more time with “screens,” the screen we still watch the most is television (Blair, 2009). Today, however, the way we watch has changed from the decades when we only could watch the “big three” networks (ABC, CBS, NBC), perhaps PBS, and maybe a UHF station. Now broadcast network television as well as cable channels, while still designed to appeal to the general audience, seek more narrow audiences. Television has also become an “on demand” medium. We can purchase DVDs, whole seasons of our favorite programs, and can call up movies and programs whenever and, to some extent, wherever we want “on demand” (Gandossy, 2009). Consequently, we are no longer tied to the time-bound schedules of broadcast television or cable channels. In addition, we spend more and more time watching television on computers and the World Wide Web, mobile phones, gaming devices, and MP3 players that do more than just play music. Images and screens thus take up a substantial portion of our day.

Nielsen (2009) reports that viewing statistics are stable and have been rising for the past few years. At the end of 2008 the average person watched TV in their home for about 5 hours a day or more than 150 hours a month. Watching TV on a mobile phone could add another 3.5 hours a month, and watching on the Internet another 2.5 hours a month. Moreover, about 7 hours a month of viewing were “time-shifted” programs. Children’s media use and television viewing remained high. The most recent report of the Kaiser Family Foundation, a survey of 2,000 youngsters between 8 and 18, found that children’s media use averaged more than 7.5 hours a day, a figure that expanded to almost 11 hours a day when multitasking was taken into account (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Children watched television for 4.5 hours a day, which included 24 minutes watching TV or movies on the Internet, about 15 minutes watching on their cell phones, and another 16 minutes watching on their iPods. The Nielsen report (2009) also found that viewing increased with age. Young adults between 18 and 24 watched almost 4 hours a day, those between 25 and 45 watched almost 5 hours a day, while those older than 45 watched more than 6 hours a day. Consequently, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, few escaped exposure to television.

Television’s role for the past 60 years as the central and most pervasive mass medium in US culture has not changed. Television still plays a distinctive and historically unprecedented role as our nation’s most common, constant, and vivid learning environment. Television, whether we watch on a traditional set, on our mobile phone, or on the Internet, is still our primary storyteller, telling most of the stories to most of the people, most of the time. Stories are found in dramas, action-adventures, situation comedies, reality programs, the news, and even commercials. These stories, however, are the product of a few multinational and centralized commercial institutions. Television’s stories show and tell us about life – its people, places, power, and fate – as well as how things work and how to solve problems. Characterizations represent the good and bad, the happy and sad, successes and failures, and show who’s on the top and who’s on the bottom of the economic ladder

and/or pecking order. As such, characters do not live or die but are created or destroyed to tell the story.

Common themes cut across all programs and present aggregate and conventional images. Commercial constraints, however, limit the diversity of television content (Morgan, Shanahan, & Harris, 1990). Television thus cultivates a common world view and common stereotypes through a relatively restrictive set of programs, images, and messages. One such set of images, in particular, relates to violence.

This chapter will focus specifically upon the portrayals of violence on US television, most often discussing prime-time broadcast programming as this is where the lion's share of the research has been conducted. The review will discuss television violence from a historical perspective as well as discussing the existing research, focusing specifically upon research that has been conducted and published during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In addition, in order to provide the most up-to-date assessment of violence on prime-time television, the review will present and discuss data from the author's ongoing yearly content analyses of week-long samples of prime-time network programming broadcast each fall between 2000 and 2009. The data set consists of 783 programs and 3,268 major or leading characters. The methods used in this ongoing research can be reviewed in several recent publications by the author (see, e.g., Signorielli, 2003). Although important, this review will not discuss violence in videogames (since another chapter in this volume covers that topic), nor will it discuss effects of television violence.

The Policy Perspective

In the past 40 years US public concern about television violence has fluctuated, almost cyclically. Between 1968 and 1978 there was considerable public concern and numerous Congressional hearings about the amount of violence on television. Most, if not all, of these hearings did not result in substantive action (Hoerrner, 1999). Public debate subsided during the 1980s era of deregulation. Concern about television violence surfaced again in the early 1990s with the passing of the Television Violence Act (designed to protect the networks, for three years, from antitrust action if they joined to talk about ways to reduce violence on television). Toward the end of 1992, when it appeared as though little had changed in regard to television violence, the close expiration date of the Television Violence Act prompted its author, Senator Paul Simon (D-Illinois), to warn of harsher legislation. The result was a renewed promise by network executives that they would explore ways to reduce violence in prime time (Dustin, 1992). In 1993, for the first time since the late 1970s, Congressional hearings on television violence were held and a number of separate bills relating to television violence were introduced in Congress (Hoerrner, 1999). In response to Congressional concern, the television industry implemented parental "advisories" before those programs they designated as "violent."

These advisories, however, did not adequately solve the problem and an amendment was added to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that mandated all television sets 13" or larger, manufactured after 1999, be equipped with the V-chip, an electronic device that enables parents to screen and block the programs their children watch on television. The television industry was asked to develop a rating system to use with the V-chip to filter violent and sexually explicit programming (Federal Communications Commission [FCC], 2000). The result was the implementation of ratings (TV-G, TV-PG, TV-PG14, TV-M, TV-Y, TV-Y7, and TV-Y7-FV), similar to those used by the motion picture industry, supplemented by advisories for content (V-violence, S-sexual situations, D-suggestive dialogue, and L-language).

In the late 1990s, a Kaiser Family Foundation study of programs on 10 major US broadcast and cable channels (Kunkel, Farinola, Farrar, Donnerstein, Biely, & Zwarun, 2002) found that the ratings did not adequately reflect content. For example, while 7 out of 10 PG-14-rated programs had violence, 1 out of 5 G-rated programs and more than half of the PG-rated programs also had violence. Moreover, many of the programs that had violence were not given the content-based "V" rating and many children's violent cartoons were not given the "FV" (fantasy violence) label. Similarly, Signorielli's (2005) analysis of nine week-long samples of prime-time network programs broadcast between 1997 and 2003 found that 9 out of 10 programs had an age-based rating while only 4 out of 10 had a content-based rating. While those programs with age- and particularly content-based ratings accurately reflected the degree of violence in the program, many programs with violent content were not given the "V" content-based rating. Unfortunately, while half of the parents surveyed by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania in June 2000 said that they were aware of the ratings, very few said that they actually used them (Woodward, 2000). Finally, there is evidence that ratings are most often used by those parents who are very much aware of the problems television viewing may pose to their children. In short, advisories, age- and content-based ratings, may be "preaching to the choir" (Abelman, 1999, p. 544).

The Theoretical Perspective

Numerous theories explain why the study of television violence is important and how it may affect viewers, especially children. Desensitization (see Potter, 1999) and social learning/social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2009), for example, examine the immediate and typically harmful effects of viewing violence. Desensitization or "conscience-numbing effects" (Bushman, Huesmann, & Whitaker, 2009, p. 364) suggests viewing media violence results in viewers becoming less sensitive or sympathetic to real-life violence; viewers may have less empathy and are less willing to help victims of violence. Priming is also an important theory. Berkowitz (1984), for example, posits that exposure to media violence may move viewers, especially those

who may be frustrated or angry, to be poised to behave aggressively in certain situations. Similarly, Huesmann's (1988) social informational processing theory posits that viewing violence may lead to the development of scripts about violence that provide guidelines about what to do in certain situations or what kinds of consequences might result from certain aggressive behaviors.

Cultivation theory and the Cultural Indicators paradigm, on the other hand, look at viewing violence from a cumulative, long-term perspective and examine institutional policy perspectives, messages about violence on television, and what it means for viewers to live with violent television images. Cultivation theory argues that to understand the effects of viewing on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors we must examine television as a collective symbolic environment with an underlying formulaic structure (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009). Commercial constraints necessitate that common themes cut across all programs. These, in turn, cultivate common world views and stereotypes. Violence is one such theme and is especially important in the cultivation perspective because people are more likely to experience violence when they watch television (whether in news or entertainment programs) than in real life. Consequently, cultivation theory predicts that people's conceptions about violence are more likely to reflect the messages about violence they see, day in and day out, on television. Cultivation research has found that those who watch more television are more likely to view the world as a mean and scary place, to believe that crime and violence are more prevalent than they actually are, and to take precautions to protect themselves, their homes, and their families against crime (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994).

Defining Violence

Research on television violence has, for the most part, focused on physical violence. There have been relatively few studies of psychological (emotional/verbal) violence (see, e.g., Mustonen & Pulkkinen, 1997) because psychological violence is more difficult to define, both conceptually and operationally, and to isolate consistently. In fact, measures of psychological violence often do not meet the discipline's standards for reliability.

Research conducted in the Cultural Indicators paradigm defines violence as "the overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or other) compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing" (Signorielli, Gross, & Morgan, 1982, p. 163). This focus includes all plausible and credible violence. Comic violence in a humorous context is included because humorous violence may increase the risk of learning aggressive behaviors (Baron, 1978; Berkowitz, 1970). "Accidental" violence and violent "acts of nature" are also included because such actions are purposeful, claim victims, and demonstrate power. In fiction, writers add such scenes to programs to propel the story and

perhaps to eliminate or incapacitate certain characters. Interestingly, gatekeepers of some recent reality programs (e.g., *Survivor*) have added physical violence between “contestants” or “participants” to maintain interest in the competition or day-to-day group activities.

The National Television Violence Study (NTVS), conducted during the mid-1990s, also focused on physical violence. This project defined violence as “any overt depiction of a credible threat of physical force or the actual use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings” (Wilson, Colvin, & Smith, 2002, p. 41). The NTVS thus included credible threats of physical violence, rather than psychological or emotional violence, and also included “depictions of the harmful consequences of unseen violence” (Wilson et al., 2002, p. 41). In addition, the framework of the NTVS was sensitive to the context in which violence was presented (committed by heroes or villains, punished or rewarded, etc.) and brought context to the foreground as an important element in the portrayal of violence on television.

Historical Perspective of US Television Violence

Concerns about television violence have sparked intense debate since television’s earliest days. There is general agreement that there is violence on television, but because of differences in the way violence is defined and measured, there is little agreement, and considerable controversy, about the degree or amount of violence (Lometti, 1995; Signorielli et al., 1982; Signorielli, Gerbner, & Morgan, 1995). But, even though these differences exist, there is ample evidence that violence is an ongoing and important element of television programming, particularly during the prime-time hours (Hetsroni, 2007; National Television Violence Study, 1997, 1998, 1999; Signorielli, 2003; Smith, Nathanson, & Wilson, 2002).

The earliest content analyses of television programming (Head, 1954; Smythe, 1954) coded programs “off the air” and found considerable violence in samples of New York City television programming. Violence appeared in two-thirds to three-quarters of all television plays at a rate of 6 to 10 incidents per hour in prime time and at rates three or four times as much in children’s programming (mostly cartoons). Dominick (1973), in an analysis of all prime-time programs broadcast during February 1972, found that two-thirds of the programs contained some violence and that 60% of the violence could be categorized as assault, armed robbery, or murder. Unlike real life, violence by strangers was more frequent than violence by someone who was known to the victim. In another study of programming aired during the mid-1970s, Dominick (1978) noted that television presented violence from a law enforcement point of view, emphasized personal violence, ignored social aspects, did not present an adequate picture of the legal process, and did not provide accurate information about crime, criminals, and real-life violence. Similarly, Haney and

Manzolati (1980) found that television crime and violence emphasized greed and other personal characteristics but rarely addressed underlying social conditions.

An analysis of television series with law enforcement or other violent themes broadcast between 1950 and 1976 (Taylor & Dozier, 1983) found that violence was systematically presented within a framework suggesting that people have an unquestioned moral and/or legal right to use violence, including deadly force, to protect the status quo. Finally, Greenberg, Edison, Korzenny, Fernandez-Collado, and Atkin's (1980) analysis of dramatic series in three seasons of programming in the mid-1970s found that violence (defined as "physical aggression") occurred more than 9 times per hour between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m., more than 11 times per hour between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m., and more than 21 times per hour during Saturday morning children's programs.

During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s most of our knowledge of violence on television came from the Cultural Indicators (CI) Project. The NTVS contributed to our knowledge about television violence in the mid-1990s. The CI Project examined and measured the amount of physical violence on television by monitoring prime-time and weekend daytime network broadcast television programming and studying relationships between television viewing and conceptions of social reality (Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980a, 1980b, 1986; Gerbner & Signorielli, 1990; Morgan et al., 2009; Signorielli, 1990), periodically publishing the results as the violence profile.

One of the early reports of the CI Project looked at violence in prime-time and Saturday morning programs broadcast between 1967 and 1975 (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). This report found violence in more than 8 out of 10 programs with an average of 5 violent actions per program and 7 acts of violence per hour. Over half of the major characters were involved in violence, either committing violence, being a victim of violence, or both, and 1 in 10 major characters was involved in killing.

Another report (Gerbner et al., 1994) found, for samples of prime-time programs broadcast between 1973 and the fall of 1992, that violence appeared in 7 out of 10 programs at the rate of 5.3 incidents per hour and 4.6 incidents per program and that half of the major characters in these programs were involved in violence. Moreover, the figures reported for the samples of programs broadcast during the early 1990s were under the CI Project's 25-year averages. In the sample of programs from the 1992–1993 season, while 65% of prime-time fictional dramatic programs contained violence and 46% of the characters were involved in violence, the average frequency of violent acts was 2.9 per hour, about three-fifths of the 25-year average.

The NTVS (Smith et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 1997, 1998) examined physical violence in three yearly samples (1994–1995, 1995–1996, and 1996–1997) of three composite weeks of programming across 23 channels operating between 6:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. each day. The sample ($N = 8,200$) included broadcast (commercial networks, independent stations, and public television) and cable channels (basic and premium offerings). All genres except game shows, religious programs, "infomercials," or home shopping channels, sports, instructional programs, and news were included (Smith et al., 1998).

The NTVS found similar levels of violence and no change in the prevalence of violence from the 1994–1995 to the 1996–1997 television seasons; 58% of the programs in the 1994–1995 sample, 61% of the programs in the 1995–1996 sample, and 61% of the programs in the 1996–1997 sample contained violence. There was, however, in prime time (8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.), an 8% increase in the overall level of violence in cable and broadcast programs; 59% of the programs in the 1994–1995 sample, 66% of the programs in the 1995–1996 sample, and 67% of the programs in the 1996–1997 sample contained violence. The largest increase from 1994–1995 to 1996–1997 (14%) was found for those programs broadcast on the commercial networks. This study thus found in prime time, the time of day that draws the largest share of viewers, an increase in the percentage of programs with violence.

A more recent examination of the 1996–1997 NTVS data set (Smith et al., 2002) found that the amount of violence in prime-time programs was similar to that found in programs aired during other times of the day. Violence was found in 6 out of 10 programs and the rate of violent interactions in prime time was 6.6 per hour compared to 6.4 per hour during other day parts. This analysis found that 67% of broadcast network programs contained violence at a rate of 5.2 violent interactions per hour, figures similar to those for programs on basic cable. Premium cable programming, particularly the movie channels, had the most violence – 88% of the programs at 12.4 violent interactions per hour.

There were two other studies of television violence in the programming of the 1990s. An industry-funded study (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox) monitored at least four episodes of every prime-time and Saturday morning (7:00 a.m. to noon) network program in each of three seasons (1994–1995, 1995–1996, and 1996–1997) and two weeks of programs on independent stations, public television, and pay cable (Cole, 1995, 1998). While this analysis did not provide overall measures of the level of violence in these samples between 1994–1995 and 1996–1997, there was a drop in the number of television series that raised frequent concerns about the way violence was presented. The only programs that raised more concerns at the end of this three-year period were reality shows (e.g., *World's Most Dangerous Animals*, *World's Scariest Police Chases*).

The Center for Media and Public Affairs (Lichter & Amundson, 1992) isolated physical violence on 10 channels (network, independent, and cable) during one day. Violence appeared most frequently during the afternoon (2:00 to 5:00 p.m.) with 19.1 acts per hour, in the early morning (6:00 to 9:00 a.m.) with 15.8 acts per hour, and during prime time (10.2 acts per hour). In an update, Lichter, Lichter, and Amundson (1999) isolated acts of violence in two randomly selected constructed weeks of prime-time network and cable fictional programs ($N = 284$) and 50 movies on cable and broadcast television during the 1998–1999 season. They found 12 acts of violence per episode (half were “serious”) in broadcast programs and 10 acts per episode (half were “serious”) in cable programs.

US Television Violence Before and After the Turn of the Century

The work of the CI Project has continued into the twenty-first century in the ongoing research of the author. One study (Signorielli, 2003) examined television violence in samples of fall network programming broadcast between 1993 and 2001. This analysis found that violence appeared in 61% of the programs at a rate of 4.5 acts of violence per program. The levels found in this analysis were similar to those found in earlier analyses in the CI perspective as well as those found in the NTVS. This analysis, however, found that fewer major characters were involved in violence. Compared to earlier CI analyses (see, e.g., Signorielli, 1990) when more than half of the characters were involved in violence, only one-third of all the characters at the turn of the century were involved in violence. Although more men than women were involved (38% of the men compared to 27% of the women), the proportions of Whites and minorities were almost equal.

Men were more likely to both commit violence and to be victimized – 27% of the men commit violence compared to 19% of the women and 27% of the men were victimized compared to 17% of the women. There were no differences in the percent of Whites and minorities who committed violence or who were victimized. Interestingly, during the 1990s the ratios of hurting to being hurt changed from the patterns seen in the 1970s and through the mid-1980s (Signorielli, 1990) for women but not for men. At the turn of the century, for every 10 male characters that hurt or killed other characters, 11 were victimized, the same ratio found in the earlier analysis. For women, however, instead of 16 women being victimized for each woman who hurt or killed, the odds were now even – women were equally likely to hurt or kill as be hurt or killed.

An analysis of violence in prime-time programs broadcast during the first decade of the twenty-first century was conducted for this chapter to bring our knowledge of the levels of violence in prime-time programming up to date. The methods used in this analysis are the same as those used in Signorielli (2003), extending that analysis to samples of network programming broadcast in the fall of each year between 2000 and 2009.¹ The variables used the same definitions in all of the CI-related research and meet all standards for reliability.

This new analysis shows that while some elements of the portrayal of violence have escalated in the first decade of the twenty-first century, others have declined. The percent of programs with violence, for example, increased from 61% of the prime-time programs broadcast in the 1990s to 69% of the programs in the decade after the turn of the century, a difference that is statistically significant ($F = 4.21$, $df = 1,1395$, $p = .04$). Violence, moreover, increased during the 2000s. There was a statistically significant increasing linear trend in the percent of programs with

violence from the fall of 2000 to the fall of 2009 ($F = 19.4$, $df = 8,774$, $p = .000$). The percent of programs with violence rose from a low of 53% in the fall of 2000 to a high of 85% in the fall of 2008 but dropped to 79% in the fall of 2009. The number of violent actions, however, remained steady with an average of 4.6 acts of violence per program and no evidence of any increasing or decreasing trends.

There were differences in the involvement of characters in violence. Data from the first decade of the twenty-first century show that there were no statistically significant differences from the 1990s in the overall percent of characters involved in violence (36% of all characters). Again, proportionately more of the men (42%) than the women (28%) were involved in violence but, as seen in the 1990s, the percent of Whites and people of color involved in violence was essentially the same (about 25%). Although more men than women were involved in violence, both men and women were equally likely to hurt or kill others as be hurt or killed themselves. Interestingly, after the turn of the century, involvement in killing increased significantly for both men and women. In the last decade of the twentieth century 9% of the men and 5% of the women were involved in killing. By comparison, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, 12% of the men and 7% of the women were involved in killing, differences that are statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 20.54$, $df = 1$, $p = .00001$ ($N = 7,256$)).

The Context of Violence

The NTVS elevated the importance of the context of violence in understanding how violence is seen on television. Two contextual elements in the early research of the CI Project were the appearance of humorous violence and the significance of violence in the plot or storyline. Some of the earliest research in the observational learning/social cognitive perspective (Bandura, 1986, 1990; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961, 1963) along with other early studies of symbolic aggression (Lovas, 1961) found that youngsters often learn and reproduce violent behaviors seen in cartoons, i.e., humorous violence. At the same time, cultivation theory posits that humorous violence is an effective way to convey lessons of power. Although comic violence may appear less threatening, the actions are often mean-spirited with few realistic consequences, a sure formula for influence. These lessons may then translate to viewers developing conceptions of living in a mean and dangerous world and overestimating chances of being involved in violence by those who watch more TV (Gerbner et al., 1980a).

Cultivation theory also explains the significance of violence in the plot reflected in the complex social scenario illustrated by the patterns of committing violence and victimization in characterizations as well as the frequency of violence in the program. These elements ultimately cultivate a sense of fear, intimidation, and vulnerability reflected in the positive relationships between television viewing and scores on both the Mean World Index and the Index of Alienation and Gloom (Signorielli, 1990). In

short, the more violence there is and the more important it is for the storyline, the more likely viewers believe that they live in a mean and dangerous world. Similarly, those who watch more television, particularly if they have been to college, are more likely to feel more bored, depressed, and lonely (Morgan, 1984).

Our knowledge about the context of violence comes from early studies of the CI Project that examined humor and program genre. During the 1970s slightly more than a quarter of prime-time programs were comic in nature and less than half (45%) included violence at a rate of 2.0 incidents per program and 3.6 incidents per hour. In addition, close to half of the network prime-time programs were action-adventures, an exceptionally violent genre, with 94% containing some violence at a rate of 7.8 incidents per program and 6.8 incidents per hour (Gerbner et al., 1980b). Similarly, Signorielli (1990) in an analysis through the fall 1985 sample found that only one in five prime-time programs had humorous violence.

The examination of graphic, immoral, intentional, and justified violence as well as the portrayal of the physical consequences of violence are also critical to the understanding of the context of television violence. Each of these elements is supported by several theories, including desensitization (Potter, 1999) and social learning/social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). Cultivation theory is also relevant because it explores how these elements relate to how different groups of viewers perceive their own vulnerability. Specifically, heavy viewers are more likely to believe they will be victims of violence and consequently more likely to buy more guns and locks as well as have watchdogs for protection (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Jackson-Beeck, 1979).

The NTVS advanced our understanding of the contextual elements in the portrayal of violence on television in the mid-1990s (Smith et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 1997, 1998). The NTVS examined the consequences of violence, whether or not humor was involved, the graphic nature of the violence, whether or not weapons were used, and the degree of realism. The analysis of data from the 1994–1995 sample found that the context in which violence is presented posed risks for viewers (NTVS, Executive Summary, 1994–1995). In particular, three-quarters of the violent scenes had unpunished perpetrators, negative consequences of violence were rarely presented, one-quarter of the violent incidents involved the use of a handgun, and fewer than 1 in 20 programs emphasized antiviolence themes. Yet, television violence was not particularly graphic. While the analysis found that broadcast network programs had less violence than cable channels, the context of violence on both broadcast and cable was similar.

The NTVS also examined year-to-year changes in the portrayal of the contextual elements of violence. Looking specifically at violent broadcast programming, only 35% of the prime-time programs in 1994–1995, 23% of the programs in 1995–1996, and 24% in 1996–1997 had any long-term negative consequences of violence. At the same time, there was no display of remorse, regret, or sanctions in 6 out of 10 of the violent scenes in these samples. Similarly, while two-thirds of the violent interactions in the 1994–1995 sample did not show any pain as a result of violence, the

proportion dropped to slightly more than half of the violent interactions (54% in the 1995–1996 sample and 53% in the 1996–1997 sample). This analysis indicated that violence on television, examined at the program, scene, and interaction level, was antiseptic and devoid of pain and suffering.

Smith and colleagues (2002) found that prime-time broadcast network programming and basic cable programming were less likely than premium cable programming to include violent interactions that depicted pain or harm. The violent interactions in premium cable programs also were more likely to show long-term consequences of violence than the network broadcast programs or the basic cable programs. Moreover, prime-time network broadcast programs were relatively devoid of pain and suffering.

Potter and Smith (2000), in an analysis of data from the second year of the NTVS (1995–1996), examined graphic portrayals of violence. This analysis found that most violence presented a low level of graphicness and that the violence in fantasy programs rarely exhibited graphicness. High levels were found in only 1 out of 10 violent actions. Moreover, it was presented with a high degree of realism. That is, the violence in live-action programs (recreated reality programs) had human targets and perpetrators. The use of guns and knives (shooting or stabbing a victim) was also related to higher levels of graphic violence.

Potter and colleagues' (1995) analysis of a composite week (6:00 p.m. to midnight) of programs broadcast on ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC in the spring of 1994 also found that aggressive acts were typically presented in a context-less venue; fewer than one in six acts was depicted with any major consequences, only one in six acts was punished, while one-third were actually rewarded. While Potter and Ware (1987) found that only 1 in 10 acts of violence was punished and that heroes and villains were equally likely to commit antisocial acts, violence, at least from the perspective of the perpetrator, was seen as justified. Similarly, Lichter, Lichter, and Amundson (1999) found that most television violence did not have either psychological or physical consequences and occurred in a moral vacuum because heroes saw the violence they committed as justified (in self-defense, in a law enforcement context, etc.).

Signorielli's (2003) analysis of programming broadcast between 1993 and 2001 found that 39% of the programs did not have violence, that violence was an important element of the plot (significant or major) in 34% of the programs, and that 29% of the programs had violence that was not important to the story (minor to the plot). On the other hand, there were changes in the presentation of violence in the last 10 years. The analysis of data from 2000 to 2009 found that the percent of programs without violence decreased to 31% of the programs, while 43% of the programs had violence that was significant to the story and 26% had violence that was not particularly important to the story (minor plot element). Interestingly, there was a significant linear trend in the percent of programs with violence – in the fall of 2000 half of the programs (53%) had violence while in the fall of 2009 almost 8 out of 10 programs (79%) had violence.

Prime time is also more likely to have violence that is serious rather than comic in nature. At the end of the twentieth century, Signorielli (2003) found serious violence in 37% of the programs and comic violence in 18% of the programs. Once again, there were no trends in the appearance of this element of the context of violence. There was, however, some change in the portrayal of comic and serious violence at the start of the twenty-first century. Almost half of the programs broadcast after 2000 had violence judged to be serious in nature while only 13% had comic violence. In addition, while the percent of programs with comic violence did not change between the fall of 2000 and the fall of 2009, the percent of programs with serious violence increased during this time period from 40% of the programs at the first part of this decade to 60% of the programs at the end of the decade. (There is a statistically significant linear trend. $F = 11.65$, $df = 8,774$, $p = .0007$.)

Similar to the findings of the NTVS, Signorielli (2003) found that contextual elements did not appear very frequently during prime-time broadcast programs. More than 4 out of 10 programs had no context of violence. Violence that was intentional was found in 4 out of 10 programs, while justified violence, immoral violence, and showing the consequences of violence were found in about a third of the programs. Gratuitous and graphic violence occurred least often, appearing in a quarter of the programs. Overall, the average number of contexts was 1.8 per program, while programs with violence had an average of 2.9 contexts of violence per program. Moreover, there was a statistically significant linear trend. In short, the number of programs that included a context for violence in the story increased during the 1990s from 1.2 contexts per program in the spring of 1993 to 3.8 contexts per program in the fall of 2000.

The numbers of programs including contexts of violence in the storyline continued to increase during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Overall, only 34% of the programs in this decade compared to 44% of the programs in the last decade of the twentieth century had no context of violence. Interestingly, all of the contexts of violence (immoral violence, intentional violence, graphic violence, justified violence, and consequences of violence) except gratuitous violence increased. Specifically, almost half of the prime-time network programs broadcast after 2000 showed the context of violence compared to about a third of the prime-time network programs broadcast before 2000. Moreover, the average number of contexts per program increased from two contexts per program in 2000 to almost three contexts per program in the fall of 2009 ($F = 9.71$, $df = 8,774$, $p = .002$).

Signorielli's (2003) analysis of characters in programs broadcast during prime time in the 1990s found little information about the context in which characters commit violence. Only 13% of the men, 5% of the women, 9% of the Whites, and 9% of the characters of color who committed violence were either rewarded and/or punished for their behaviors. Similarly, 14% of the men, 11% of the women, 13% of the Whites, and 12% of the characters of color were presented as committing violence that was justified. Remorse was rarely found, exhibited by only 4% of the men, 3% of the women, 3% of the Whites, and 4% of the characters of color. And finally,

only 9% of the men, 5% of the women, 7% of the Whites, and 7% of the characters of color were portrayed as having committed immoral violence. Overall, gender differences were statistically significant but race differences were not.

Between 2000 and 2009, although the percentages of characters shown in relation to a context of violence increased slightly, there was still little information about the context in which characters committed violence. Only 15% of the males, 8% of the females, 11% of the Whites, and 12% of the characters of color committed violence that was rewarded or punished. Men were a little more likely (17%) than women (12%) to commit justified violence while Whites and people of color were equally likely (14%) to commit justified violence. Again, few characters committed immoral violence (10% of the men, 5% of the women, 8% of the Whites, and 7% of the people of color), and even fewer characters (5% of the men, 3% of the women, and 4% of both Whites and people of color) exhibited any remorse for the violence they committed.

Violence in US Children's Programs

Children's cartoons have a considerable amount of violent content. One of the first studies of children's television found that over half of the children's programs monitored during late October 1960 contained violence that was an important part of the story (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961). Poulos, Harvey, and Liebert (1976), in an analysis of programs on two Saturday mornings during the 1974–1975 television season, found that three-quarters of the programs contained violence. Liss and Reinhardt (1980) found that Saturday morning network prosocial programs in the late 1970s were just as violent as regular cartoons. Similarly, Greenberg and colleagues (1980), in a study of Saturday morning programs broadcast between 1975 and 1978, found that cartoons contained more acts of violence than programs broadcast during the prime-time hours.

Studies in the CI tradition consistently found high levels of violence in samples of children's weekend-daytime programs broadcast in the fall of each year. For example, between 1967 and 1978, violence was found in 94% of these programs at a rate of 6 acts of violence per program, 18 acts of violence per hour, and involved 80% of the characters (Gerbner et al., 1979). The last CI analysis of children's weekend-daytime programs examined samples broadcast between the fall of 1973 and the fall of 1992 (Gerbner et al., 1994) and found violence in 92% of these programs at a rate of 7 acts per program, 23 acts per hour, and involved 80% of the characters.

The NTVS examined children's programming aired between October 1995 and June 1996 (Wilson, Smith et al., 2002). The analysis found violence in 69% of the programs targeted to children under the age of 13. Moreover, the violence was more concentrated in children's compared to regular programming. Violent incidents, interactions between perpetrators and targets (PATs), occurred 14 times an hour

compared to 6 times an hour in non-children's programs. In addition, there were 7 scenes of violence per hour in children's programs compared to 3 per hour in non-children's programs. The amount of time devoted to violence, however, was similar for both children's and non-children's programs.

The NTVS analysis of prime-time programs also examined the context of violence in children's programs. Wilson, Smith, and colleagues (2002) found that violence was more sanitized and trivialized in children's programs. While more than half of the violent incidents involved lethal violence, the violence was rarely graphic. At the same time, a third of these violent scenes were rewarded and 8 out of 10 scenes had no type of punishment. Similarly, about two-thirds of the violent incidents showed no consequences of violence or physical injury to the victim, but three-quarters of the scenes presented violence in a humorous context. Moreover, the degree of violence was related to the type of children's program. Slapstick (*Tom & Jerry*), Superhero (*Power Rangers*), and adventure/mystery (*Scooby Doo*) programs had considerably more violence than programs focusing on social relationships (*Care Bears*) or magazine formats (*Barney*). Overall, Wilson, Smith, and colleagues (2002) concluded that violence in children's programs proposed considerable risks for young viewers.

There is not much information about the characters who are involved in violence in children's programs. Poulos and colleagues (1976) found that half of the violence committed in children's programs was by White males and half by animal (typically anthropomorphized) characters. Gerbner and colleagues (1994) found that more of the male characters than female characters in children's programs were involved in violence. Overall, more of the characters in children's programs were involved in violence and they were more likely to be victims of violence than to commit violence. Leaper and colleagues (2002) found that males exhibited more physical aggression and were victims of aggressive behavior in adventure and comic genres, while females were shown as fearful.

Similarly, the NTVS found that perpetrators in children's programs often were animals or other anthropomorphized creatures and that humans involved in violence were likely to be males. In addition, those who committed violence in these programs often were praised or even rewarded with material goods. At the same time, the victims were not portrayed realistically. Violence was sanitized so that victims did not exhibit pain or suffering and there were few signs of the types of physical injuries that would realistically be expected from the violence they suffered (Wilson, Smith et al., 2002).

A recent analysis of children's programs conducted in the CI tradition (Signorielli, 2008) examined 147 Saturday morning children's programs aired between 8:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. on ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, CW, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, and Disney during the month of February 2007. Violence appeared in 86% of these programs at an overall rate of 7.0 acts of violence per program and 16.7 acts of violence per hour. Adventure programs (e.g., *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*) were the most violent, with 98% having some violence and close to two-thirds with violence that was a significant part of the story. While 7 out of 10 teachy-preachy

programs (e.g., *Veggie Tales*) were violent, most of this violence was not an integral part of the story. Half of the teen-scene programs (e.g., *That's So Raven*) had some violence but it rarely was an important part of the story. Once again, hourly rates of violence were high. While the entire sample had 17 acts of violence per hour, there were differences by genre. Adventure programs had 23 acts of violence per hour, teachy-preachy programs had 8 acts per hour, and the teen-scene programs had 4 acts per hour.

The violence in these children's programs was somewhat sanitized in that there was little, if any, graphic violence. At the same time, the violence was often presented as intentional and immoral. Characters' involvement in violence remained at high levels. The only major difference between today's programs and those of 30 years ago was that in 2007 the female characters had a greater likelihood of committing violence and were less likely portrayed as victims of violence.

Conclusion

Overall, we have not seen much change in the levels of violence in US prime-time network broadcast programs and in children's programs. From the 1950s to the first decade of the twenty-first century, violence has been an important and significant element of television programs. While, the overall amount of violence varies by genre (crime and action programs have more violence), it is still relatively difficult to escape watching violence. While the more diverse programming of the twenty-first century gives viewers opportunities to find nonviolent programs through "on demand" technologies, in order to totally avoid television violence a viewer must be adept in using these new technologies and take the time to implement them.

In short, the overall levels of violence have not changed and, if anything, have increased since the turn of the century. The overall numbers of major characters actually seen committing violence or being victims of violence, however, have diminished. Some of this may be due to the very popular crime-scene programs such as *Law and Order* or *CSI*, which focus on a crime that has already been committed and show, through the use of technologies (some of which may not really exist) (Houck, 2006), how crimes are solved and, for the most part, the perpetrators brought to justice.

At the same time, the portrayal of violence in programs of the first decade of the twenty-first century continues to show gender differences but few race-related differences. More men than women are involved in violence, primarily because men still outnumber women during prime time (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Moreover, within-gender distributions show that the proportion of men involved in violence (about 4 in 10) is considerably larger than the proportion of women involved in violence (about 1 in 4). Both men and women, however, are equally likely to commit violence (hurt or kill others) as to be victims of violence (be hurt or killed). The findings for

gender distributions are similar to those of the NTVS (Smith et al., 1998) but smaller than Gerbner and colleagues' (1980a, 1980b, 1986, 1994) studies of programs from the 1970s and 1980s.

Another interesting difference is that the presentation of the context of violence has become somewhat more important. Through the 1990s and into the first decade of the twenty-first century, programs have begun to show that violence may have consequences, may be intentional in nature, and may be presented as justified in relation to the story. There is, however, little graphic or gratuitous violence, which, in turn, may reduce the amount of visual gore and thus show less realism. This has serious implications because less realistic images may result in viewers learning scripts of aggressive behavior and storing them for possible use in the future (Potter, 1999).

Similarly, even though today's programs may give more information about the context of violence overall, television may still not adequately support or reinforce the lesson that "crime does not pay." Indeed, the context in which characters commit violence still does not appear very frequently and the characters who commit violence typically are not sorry for their actions, and may not be punished for their transgressions. From a social learning perspective these messages may result in viewers being more likely to learn and even accept aggressive behaviors. Thus, the environment of violent entertainment in which many people, particularly children, spend most of their free time may be potentially harmful for viewers (Smith et al., 1998). Moreover, as Potter and colleagues (1995) conclude, television's lack of realistic contexts for violence may signal that aggression and violence are acceptable. Thus, the long-term effects of watching television violence may result in a vicious cycle. Eron (1982), for example, has postulated that viewing leads to aggressive behavior and those who are more aggressive typically watch more violence.

Finally, as cultivation theory postulates, the ultimate long-term effects of watching television violence may pose threats for civil liberties and freedom. Cultivation studies have found that those who watch more television, compared to those who watch less, are more likely to overestimate their chances of being involved in violence, believe that fear of crime is an important personal problem, and assume that crime is rising (when in actuality it is not). Those who spend more time watching television tend to believe that they are living in a mean and dangerous world as well as express feelings of alienation and gloom (Morgan et al., 2009; Signorielli, 1990). The problem is that today, even though there are more viewing choices, violent images are difficult to avoid; as a result, those who watch more television may become more fearful and alienated. The end result is that they may express sentiments of dependency and be willing to accept deceptively simple, strong, and hard-line political and religious postures if these beliefs seem to promise to relieve existing insecurities and anxieties. From the perspective of cultivation theory, the overall long-term effects of television violence may be the ready acceptance of repressive political and social environments that could translate into a loss of personal liberties.

NOTE

- 1 The analysis was not conducted in the fall of 2007 because the author was on sabbatical and did not teach the class in which this data collection/analysis has been conducted since 1993.

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Blogging Culture

Content and Representation in Blogs

Zizi Papacharissi and Sharon Meraz

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the evolution of blog content, from the early stages of personal home pages, to the development of the blog format, to A-list blogs that influence other media and public opinion. Blogging content is examined, with a focus on blogging norms, patterns, and dominant trends the form of blogging takes on. As the blogosphere is vast and diverse, the authors consider the plurality of blog content and the functions it serves for multiple bloggers and potential audiences. Blogging content is examined as a form of sociocultural expression, with an analysis of its function and place in contemporary societies. The chapter concludes with a look at what the future holds for blogs and associated, emerging web platforms, in the context of converging media and reflexive societies.

Content is conditioned by context, and context in turn may be reinterpreted through content. The culture of postindustrialization has advanced a transition from existential to self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Self-expression values refer to the desire to control one's environment, increase one's autonomy, and question authority. Media content lends shape and form to these conflicting and converging tendencies (Bauman, 2001; Giddens, 1990). Blogs epitomize self-expression, in a manner that permits individuals a form of control over their personalized media

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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ecology, affords a measure of autonomy, even if temporary, and enables the questioning of authority. One could argue that, for contemporary citizens, blogs present a sociocultural practice that reflects and reifies the desire for control, autonomy, and the questioning of authority. Blog content as artifact reflects and reifies these tendencies.

This chapter examines the evolution of blog content, from the early stages of personal home pages, to the development of the blog format, to A-list blogs that influence other media and public opinion. Blogging content is examined, with a focus on blogging norms, patterns, and dominant trends the form of blogging takes on. As the blogosphere is vast and diverse, the authors consider the plurality of blog content and the functions it serves for multiple bloggers and potential audiences. Blogging content is examined as a form of sociocultural expression, with an analysis of its function and place in contemporary societies. The chapter concludes with a look at what the future holds for blogs and associated, emerging web platforms, in the context of converging media and reflexive societies. In line with the volume's focus on content and representation, we begin by mapping the origins and evolution of blogging content. We examine how blogging content differs from that of neighboring media practices, and consider ways of theoretically situating it within contemporary mediascapes and ecologies. To this end, the chapter then considers gender, class, and racial or ethnic representations in blogging content, so as to assess the sociocultural contribution of blogging. Finally, we conclude by examining the meaning of blogging content for networked publics.

Blogging Content: Evolution

Blogs can be traced back to the mid-1990s and are characterized by a diary-like format aimed at primarily documenting the everyday experience. An earlier form of blogs can be traced to personal home pages, which developed as online personal spaces, home to the personal reflections and pursuits of their owners. Personal home pages were characterized by their emphasis on self-expression, introspection, and, in general, a presentation of the self through multi-mediated storytelling (Dominick, 1999; Papacharissi, 2002a, 2002b; Smith, 1998; Walker, 2000). In these discursive spaces, users adapted norms to the online setting to effect connectedness and to self-disclose within architectures heavily influenced by templated design. Blogs evolved out of templates that emphasized the chronological sequencing of storytelling, as websites featuring regular updates, an array of links, and the author's personal take on a variety of issues and events. For most nontechnical users, usage of the early blog format did not deviate from the standard layout of template design (Scheidt & Wright, 2004). With the growth of blogging platforms, the use of blogs became more accessible and was driven by major events, typically major catastrophes or political campaigns (Allan, 2006; Allan & Matheson, 2009). A small number of high-profile

bloggers were responsible for a strong and positive influence on the public perception of blogs, and research has shown that the 9/11 terrorist attack, the Iraqi War, and the 2004 US presidential election campaign were pivotal events that directed media attention to blogs (Hogg, Lomicky, & Hossain, 2008; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005).

Nowadays, blogs are typically defined as web pages that consist of regular or daily posts, arranged in reverse chronological order and archived (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004). Internet enthusiasts greeted blogging as a groundbreaking development in the world of news reporting and information dissemination (Gillmor, 2006; Sullivan, 2002). Academics, activists, and a variety of publics recognized the democratizing premise inherent in the practice of blogging, as it affords media consumers the opportunity to become media producers or produsers (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006; Coleman, 2005; Jenkins, 2006). Bloggers present a personalized take on the events of the day, including, but not confined to, news events. It is not uncommon for the abstract, diverse, and heterogeneous collective of blogs, known as the *blogosphere*, to succeed in placing a news item in the mainstream news agenda, or elevate its profile. By creating noise over issues or political candidates initially marginalized by mainstream media, blogs or bloggers frequently function as gateways to mainstream media coverage (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Meraz, 2007; Tremayne, 2007; Walker Rettberg, 2008).

Research has shown that blogs can broadly be divided into A-list blogs (popular publicized blogs), blogs that are somewhat interconnected, and a majority of sparsely socially connected and less conversational blogs (Herring et al., 2005). The latter majority of bloggers frequently engages in self-confessional posting that resembles the tone of diary keeping, with few exceptions that engage in journalistically informed punditry (Papacharissi, 2007; Scott, 2007; Sundar, Edwards, Hu, & Stavrositu, 2007). Despite their potentially infinite reach, the majority of non-A-list blogs are typically assembled with a smaller audience in mind, one that closely mirrors the individual's personal social sphere. Thus, content produced frequently merges what media theories have classified in the past as the distinct categories of the "informational" and "social" into news that is personal, social, and participatory (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010).

Numerous Pew Internet and American Life Project reports have revealed that most early blogging content was created by men, although the difference margin was slight (57%; Rainie, 2005), and debatable, and has by now evened out (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Bloggers tend to be younger users under 30, with considerable Internet experience, and the proportion of bloggers who are White is smaller than the proportion of Internet users in general, indicating blog use is more popular among social and ethnic minority Internet users (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). They also tend to be more media and computer literate, pursue a wider diversity of online activities, and get their news online (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Non-personally oriented blogs are more likely to be authored by older, married, and better educated males, who blog mostly about government and politics to mass intended audiences that they do not know

personally but feel they know rather well (Cenite, Detenber, Koh, Lim, & Soon, 2009). Personal bloggers, on the other hand, are mostly students or IT workers, who tend to express their thoughts or document their lives for smaller audiences they mostly know personally (Cenite et al., 2009). As a result, blogging content frequently serves needs for self-expression and connectivity, met by producing content that blends commentary on public affairs with private introspection and discussion of personal matters.

The Private, the Public, and the Personal in Blogging Content

A hobby for most, blogging is motivated by goals and priorities that are subjective, aimed at connecting bloggers to their social sphere and a variety of publics, and involving them in the process of information production and consumption. Even though the public imagination frequently compares the blogger to the journalist, the two are driven by different needs, or, alternatively, cater to the same ends but from different perspectives. Blog content is determined by subjective inclinations and tendencies based on a personal evaluation of content (Lu & Hsiao, 2007). Even news-oriented, A-list blogs can present a *mélange* of public and private information that is subjectively arrived at and removed from Western standards of the journalistic profession observed by objective or partisan press traditions. Blogs are both public and private, and challenge cultural norms that discern private from public (Gurak & Antonijevic, 2008). The practices of blogging and journalism, however, are compatible, and, to this end, several major news outlets survey blogging content to obtain a public opinion substitute. Most mainstream outlets have incorporated blogging into their traditional reporting and use it to provide in-depth reporting and/or indulge specific journalists' story interests. The symmetrical relationship between independent blogs and traditional mass media is furthered when A-list bloggers are invited to produce guest columns for newspapers or when newspaper columnists are used as sources on A-list group blogs.

The civic merit of blogging content is frequently appreciated by examining how it competes with or completes journalism, thus filling some of the voids created by contemporary media. Within this media landscape, web-related innovation enables direct citizen intervention in the media agenda, reifying citizen journalists, and thus making the democratic space upon which citizens and journalists interact more pluralistic (Bimber, 1998) and directly representative (Coleman, 2005). Online technologies like blogs create content that serves as the material cause of mobilization and public discussion.

As potential opinion leaders, bloggers use their own blogs as public pulpits to express opinions on affairs public and personal (e.g., Scott, 2007; Tremayne, 2007).

Through a web of interconnections with other citizen journalists, activists, and commentators, and with conventional media, blogging content may create sufficient noise to impact the media, public, and policy agendas (Walker Rettberg, 2008). It may take on many forms, which range from the frequently mundane subject matter of personal home pages to the more politically charged content of alternative social movement media (Atton, 2001). Motivated by a watchdog's orientation, blogging content will draw attention to issues marginalized or ignored by mainstream media (e.g., Meraz, 2007; Sundar et al., 2007). Blogging content acquires meaning as it successfully dilutes the singular agenda-setting influence of traditional news sources on the public agenda to present novel, subjective interpretations of what constitutes news. Atomized acts of journalism performed via blogging may, for instance, afford citizens unique storytelling duties and the ability to "place" themselves in the story (Robinson, 2009), or to report on "unknown" stories (Rutigliano, 2009). In this sense, blogging content and mainstream journalism may be understood as complements rather than substitutes to each other (Deuze, 2009; Gillmor, 2009).

Still, blogging content is typically found to be expressive first and deliberative only by accident. A content analysis of a random sample of blogs revealed the design, structure, and content of the average blog to be driven by self-expression and social connectivity (Papacharissi, 2007). Similarly, an ethnographic study of teenage girls' uses of blogs revealed that teen girls used blogs as creative tools for maintaining relationships and expressing identity (Bortree, 2005). These girls used blogs to delineate "safe" spaces for self-expression and community, but were also challenged by maintaining a consistent sense of self across a variety of friends, family, and other publics that presented possible readers of their blogs. Further studies indicate that bloggers tend to write for friends and family, thus using blogs and similar media that afford "the public performance of personal thoughts" to enhance existing relationships (Stefanone & Jang, 2008; Stefanone & Lackaff, 2009, p. 964). Some have characterized blogging content as "phatic," or emblematic of communication that has purely social and not informational or dialogic intents (Miller, 2008). Others find content to reflect individualistic patterns of sociability (Hodkinson, 2007), and emphasize immediacy, the subjective, and decentralization (Matheson, 2009). In this sense, blogging content sustains an ongoing project of the self, affording users opportunities for intimate communication in a mediated setting.

Self-disclosure on blogs has been connected to social support and improved social integration for bloggers, thus creating social capital on a personal level (Ko & Kuo, 2009). Blogging content is frequently characterized by verbal motifs of self-discovery and identity play (Blood, 2004; Gonzales & Hancock, 2008). Blogging language and tone will frequently be more experimental, playful, and relaxed (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008). In the context of blogging communities, however, ground rules, the presence of moderators, availability of profile information, net etiquette, and a variety of content-regulating practices will also shape the parameters of blogging content (Silva, Goel, & Mousavidin, 2008).

Blogs combine elements of personal media with the potentialities of mass media, thus indulging content produced privately and broadcast publicly under relatively deinstitutionalized settings. As a result, the hybrid rhetoric or vernacular of blogs is not defined by a single institutional structure but contains a variety of institutional references woven into discursive themes that blend personal priorities with mass aspirations. The following sections examine how representative blogging narratives may be.

Blogging and Representation

The prevailing hope with the release of blogging technology was that real-world inequalities would lessen, allowing all voices, races, and regions to have an equal chance for representation online (Ito, 2003; Lebkowsky & Ratcliffe, 2007). Unfortunately, this scenario has not come to fruition. Like existing inequalities in the real world, and similar to prior technologies that failed to redress race, gender, and class imbalances, Web 2.0 technologies have spawned their own levels of inequalities. The mechanisms that have led to the growth of power inequalities within the blogosphere prove difficult to surmount for many bloggers who find themselves in a similar minority position to their real-world status.

This inequality has been highlighted by blog aggregators such as Technorati and BlogPulse, who seek to provide snapshots of an ever-expanding blogosphere by highlighting the top 100 blogs across all genres and regions. This popular list, which has been around since the early twenty-first century, has led to the growth of an A-list group of influential bloggers who wield power on the agendas of traditional media and general web publics (Farrell & Drezner, 2007; Tremayne, 2004). These popular blogs, often focused on politics, technology, or entertainment, also seek to indicate their group memberships in relevant communities by linking to additional blogs in their blogroll lists. These blogroll links, which are semi-static, have further boosted the popularity of existing popular blogs since blog aggregators utilize counts of a blog's incoming links as a metric for determining blog popularity (Thompson, 2006). The mechanism that creates blog celebrity status fuels itself: newly created blogs, seeking attention, link to these already-popular blogs in an effort to receive validation from credible bloggers. This scenario, well described in social network science theory by the term preferential attachment (Barabási & Albert, 1999; Barabási, Albert, & Jeong, 2000), has made it difficult for less popular blogs to gain visibility among web publics and traditional mass media entities.

For a variety of reasons, existing real-world inequalities in terms of gender, race, and class were largely transferred to the US blogosphere during its early explosive growth, making women, minority bloggers, and lower socioeconomic classes disadvantaged as later entrants to the blogosphere. The well-documented criticism that the popular US blogosphere is largely White and male (Meraz, 2008) has also resulted

in a series of countermeasure strategies adopted by many of these invisible communities, who seek to raise their status and influence to the web publics interested in their content. Many of these countermeasures attest to the significance of free blogging technology, which may not whitewash inequalities but provides a platform for the articulation of the interests of niche, interest-based web publics. Blogging technology has enabled previously invisible web publics to highlight agendas of interest to their communities, and it is from this vantage point that blogging has served the varied purposes of underrepresented publics as it relates to race, class, and gender diversity.

Blogging and Race

Within academic discussions of the political blogosphere, little formal focus has been dedicated to the intersection of blogging and race. Few popular, minority-status political bloggers consciously push a race agenda. In terms of general genre popularity, blogging about race has failed to acquire popularity within the US blogosphere, as evidenced by blog aggregators like Technorati or BlogPulse, which show few to no political bloggers who highlight race issues within their top 100 listings. Similarly, since the creation of the Annual Weblog Awards in 2001 (a community-driven award system that collates Internet votes to determine the best weblogs by genre), there remains no category for minority blogging. Though blog awards exist for separate regions of the world, the lack of specific identification of blogging with race best illustrates the general belief that blogging is a neutral technology.

Minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics disproportionately represent the laggard adopters of the Internet and its associated technologies (Spooner, 2000, 2001). Though blog tools are free, it has long been noted that a user's Internet skill impacts his or her capacity to innovate with web technologies. As such, it is not surprising that these minorities are less likely to blog when compared with their White counterparts. Yet, though the popular bloggers are less likely to be a minority, bloggers in total are less likely to be White (60%) when compared to the general Internet audience (74%), with approximately 20% and 11% of bloggers identifying as Hispanic and African American respectively (Lenhart & Fox, 2006).

Little work has been done on the political uses of blogs among racial minorities outside the United States. In one of the few studies, Yao (2009) found that migrant Filipino women in Britain used the blog tool to connect with others of shared status in both online and offline contexts. Within the United States, of all minority groups, the political usage of the blog tool by Blacks has been most visible and documented. In a practical sense, Black bloggers have been alive to their marginalization within popular blog listings and within community-wide metrics that seek to reveal popular blogs. In an effort to circumvent their invisibility, Black bloggers have formed their own, alternative Black awards system, designed to highlight the interests and

achievements of Black bloggers. Highlighting bloggers from over 90 countries across 31 interest-based blog categories, the Black Weblogs Awards, since their creation in 2005, have drawn public attention from traditional media entities and web publics. Such political blogs as *Negrophile*, *The Field Negro*, *Jack and Jill Politics*, and *Postbourgie* have claimed the top political blog category over the recent years of this award's existence. It is undeniable that Black bloggers are creating conscious networks to make themselves visible to their audiences; for example, at the 2010 South by Southwest Interactive Conference in Austin, Texas (an annual US conference that highlights emerging technology trends and their consequences for politics, culture, and society), the first-ever panel on Black blogging titled *Black Blogging Rockstars* sought to address common issues that bloggers of color face in trying to make their blog relevant and successful to their web publics.

Very little work has been done regarding the motivations to blog among Black bloggers; however, findings from interviews reveal that Black bloggers share similar socioeconomic status to bloggers in other prominent communities (Pole, 2006). According to Pole (2006), Black bloggers are highly educated, with most having attained postgraduate education. In this study, Black bloggers confirmed that they place heightened significance on Black issues relevant to their community, though they do not seem constrained or limited to adopting a Black agenda. These bloggers saw their primary audiences as highly educated and Black, and they often use their sites to encourage their primarily male audience to participate more deeply in political activity.

Black blog communities also enact identity performance, enabling participatory web publics to affirm a sense of Black identity. In enabling a focused discussion of subject matter of importance to Black communities, such as AIDS, one study also found evidence of Black identity performance as witnessed through cultural and linguistic markers, which was utilized by Black audience members to provide social support and create a sense of shared, in-group identity (Kvansy & Igwe, 2008). Yet, the limitations of the blog tool in its capacity to support threaded, complex cross-conversation among conversational participants was evidenced in another study, suggesting that the technology remains somewhat limited in its capability to support a deeply focused discussion on highly charged racial issues (Brock, 2009).

Blogging and Class

The adoption of blogging technology over the years has followed a trajectory similar to that predicted by theories such as the diffusion of innovations. Since the development of blogging software in 1999, the earliest adopters of the technology were technophiles, highly political individuals, often male, highly educated, and of a higher socioeconomic class (Rainie, 2005; Sifry, 2005, 2006). Now over a decade old, blogs can be considered a mature technology as they now yield ground to newer, trendier web activities like microblogging and social networking sites.

Current statistics on the demographics of bloggers suggest that blogging remains a tool utilized by higher socioeconomic classes. According to Technorati's 2009 State of the Blogosphere report (McLean, 2009), 75% of bloggers have college degrees, 40% have graduate degrees, and 25% earn over \$100,000 annually. Like prior technologies open to interpretative usage, the blogosphere is also stratified by the skill base of its users. Though the majority of this college-educated crowd blog as a hobby (72%), 9% of bloggers are self-employed through their blog while 4% are professional bloggers for a company or organization. Bloggers who are self-employed or professional bloggers earn money through their blogging endeavors, with more than one-third of these bloggers earning over \$100,000 annually. A blogger's capacity to monetize his or her blog through attracting advertising is limited to only a small percentage of this already highly educated group of web publics.

It is possible that the blog tool's encouragement of longer-form writing may have created a gap in its adoption by the poor as a vehicle to publicize their political and social experiences. Oftentimes, the acute disempowerment of the lower socioeconomic classes is made visible during natural disasters when they most lack the voice to express their vulnerability; in such situations, their stories are left to be told through the eyes of the more powerful. During the 2005 US Hurricane Katrina crisis in New Orleans, tourists, traditional media, and popular bloggers used the blog tool for disaster response management as they sought to locate missing people through blogs and database tools (Meraz, 2006). Similarly, during the 2004 Asian tsunami crisis, wealthy tourists armed with hand-held video cameras captured the event in real time, posting videos to video blogs in their efforts to become the voice for the disempowered and poor. As Zuckerman (2004) noted in his work on deploying blogs in Africa, the tool's ready availability has not resulted in its steady uptake by the third world populations most capable of being helped by its democratic potential. Territories that lack broadband access and have lower Internet penetration may be unable to reap the promised benefits of blogging.

Clues that the longer, primarily textual form of blogging may have hindered its rapid adoption among less-educated and affluent populations are readily apparent. Less socioeconomic stratification has been witnessed with photo-blogging or blogging through photos, as evidenced by Flickr photosets of the Katrina crisis, the 2004 Asian tsunami, the 2007 London bombing event, and the 2009 Iranian protests. Mobile phones can capture photographs, and there is arguably less skill required to post photos to free photo-storage sites on the web like Flickr and Photobucket. Twitter, a nimble, microblogging application developed in 2006 that constrains written communication to 140-character status updates, was also readily adopted by citizens during such incidents as the 2009 Moldovan protests (Morozov, 2009; Telegraph, 2009) and the 2009 Iranian protests (Corley, 2009; Shachtman, 2009) as they sought to broadcast first-hand news accounts to an international audience. At the behest of the US government, Twitter (2009) rescheduled routine maintenance to ensure that the tool was kept functional for Iranian citizens to publicly relay their dissent during the most active period of broadcasting protests.

Blogging and Gender

Disagreement persists over gender inequity in blog tool usage. Like former technologies in the early stage of diffusion, between the years 1999 and 2005 men outstripped women in the adoption of blogging technology (Rainie, 2005). However, since 2006, many argue that women have achieved parity with men in the usage of the blog tool (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Though some accounts continue to cite men as more predominant users (McLean, 2009), specifically in relation to political blogging (Seely, 2007), or as more credible writers than females (Armstrong & McAdams, 2009), what is clear is that women have blazed a trail in the usage of the blog tool for networking and empowerment in relation to both the domestic sphere and the political arena. As it relates to the younger generation, girls outstrip boys as content creators and in the usage of the blog tool for personal journaling and social connections (Davis, 2010; García-Gómez, 2009; Lenhart & Madden, 2005; Lenhart, Madden, Smith, & Macgill, 2007), making this generational change a fundamental shift in how genders adopt emerging Internet technologies.

As of 2010, it is more common to see women political bloggers as leading voices and sources on politics; for example, Arianna Huffington of the *Huffington Post* and Jane Hamsher of *FireDogLake* feature prominently in traditional media news reports. Outside the United States, women bloggers (Campbell & Kelly, 2009) and girl bloggers (Harris, 2008) are also increasingly adopting the blog tool to document their political experiences through a personal lens. However, even as late as 2007, women political bloggers were still outnumbered by men in the top 100 popular blog listings as generated by blog aggregator tools such as Technorati. Male bloggers have suggested that female bloggers are less interested in politics (Drum, 2005a, 2005b; Ratcliffe, 2005). Women bloggers accused male bloggers of insular and gender-homophilous linking practices (Harp & Tremayne, 2006; Meraz, 2008), a trend that they state had resulted in their subversion in blog aggregators, which total a blog's incoming links as a measure of credibility, reputation, and relevance. The academic wealth of literature locating differences in writing style between women and men (Argamon, Koppel, Pennebaker, & Schler, 2007; Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Coates, 1986; Gneezy, Niederle, & Rustichini, 2003; Tannen, 1993) was also advanced as an explanation for women's difficulty in gaining an audience within the often cut-throat, highly charged, opinionated atmosphere of the political blogosphere. This is in keeping with research that supports women bloggers' more likely embrace of the personal journal blog style when compared with male bloggers, who use blogs for filtering the web's long-tail information supply (Herring & Paolillo, 2006; Karlsson, 2007; Meraz, 2008; Pederson & Macafee, 2007). Blog studies conducted outside the United States suggest less gendered usages of the blog tool (Van Doom, van Zoonen, & Wyatt, 2007) when compared to the sharp, binary gender divides found within the United States. Similarly, women's blogging intentions appear to be strongly motivated by self-expression

compared to men's blogging intentions, which are typically influenced by general personal outcome expectations (Lu & Hsiao, 2009).

Since 2005, women bloggers have sought to network, in both face-to-face and online settings, in an effort to heighten their visibility and influence while providing a supportive gateway into the immense diversity of subjects of women's blogging efforts. BlogHer, created in 2005 from a face-to-face conference, is now host to thousands of women's blogs and is considered the premiere destination for locating women's blogs. In 2006, BlogHer formed an advertising network in an effort to connect women bloggers to eager marketers who continued to take note that women are the chief online purchasers for their family (Hogue, 2009). BlogHer's political influence has been visible in its attainment of credentials to cover the 2008 US Democratic National Convention in Denver, and in its invitation in 2009 by the US White House to debrief leaders on the significance of women online as a social network. Women currently outnumber men in usage of social networking sites (Taylor, 2009), and BlogHer represents a growing trend of female-only Internet spaces geared toward social connections among women, similar to other web destinations like CafeMom, iVillage, Glam, ParentsConnect, and Kaboose.

These formal organizational spaces may have given women bloggers growing confidence to document subject matter once considered the sole preserve of the private sphere. The phenomenon of sex blogging is practiced by women who seek to reassert control over the knowledge and narratives of female sexuality (Ann Wood, 2008; Attwood, 2009). Another significant trend is the phenomenon of mommyblogging (Lopez, 2009; Meraz, 2008). Mommybloggers seek to tell genuine stories of motherhood as opposed to the glamorized portrayal of mothers as presented on magazine covers. On a day-to-day basis, mommybloggers who embrace all forms of work-life balance populate their blogs with real-life accounts of such issues as postpartum depression, infertility, and frustration in juggling multiple roles as wife, mother, and worker. Prominent mommybloggers such as Heather Armstrong (Dooce.com), Ree Drummond (The Pioneer Woman), Alice Bradley (Flinslippy), and Stephanie Nielsen (Nie Nie Dialogues) have gained celebrity status among female audiences online, with some supporting their families from their blogs' monetization. In 2008, the power of mommybloggers as a social network was evidenced in their backlash against the company Motrin for portraying moms who wear their babies in slings as crazy and overly fashion-conscious (Petrecca, 2008). The hashtag #motrinmoms became a trending topic on Twitter, and the company Motrin was eventually forced to deliver a public apology to these mothers on the web. In the realm of politics, women and girl bloggers are also using the blog tool to document their political experiences outside the US context (Harris, 2008).

Though some high-profile women bloggers deplore the creation of separate women-only Internet spaces as an effective countermeasure strategy against male patriarchy in the blogosphere (Powers, 2004), women bloggers have used these spaces to elevate the public profile of issues once relegated to the lifestyle sections of newspapers (Harp, 2007; Poindexter, Meraz, & Schmitz-Weiss, 2008). Women bloggers'

public refusal to dismiss gender inequity in the blogosphere has resulted in conscious, gender-homophilous networking for political and social purpose.

Future Trends

Trends in the content of blogging affirm its character as a public space, not a public sphere, dedicated to ideas, persons, and publics eluding the reach of mainstream media. Combining personal and mass media affordances, blogs blur agendas personal, private, and public, producing perspectives that are subjective and unique. The ensuing multiplicity of voices that fills the civic landscape promotes “dissensus” over consensus, thus “bringing to the floor what forces attempt to keep concealed” (Mouffe, quoted in Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006, pp. 973–974). The civic effect is one of pluralization, though not of inherent democratization. Mouffe (2000) terms similar attempts *agonistic*, thus describing the character of expressions that are suggestive of plurality and conflict and lie at the heart of *the political*. Agonistic actions can have both emancipatory and destructive consequences for democratic publics, but they always succeed in promoting a somewhat anarchically driven model of disagreement that favors pluralism. Mouffe uses the concept to expose the paradox inherent in contemporary democracies that require a homogeneous public sphere at the expense of heterogeneous pluralism. As a result, the expressive autonomy of citizens is compromised for the sake of argumentative consensus. Blogs reinstate expressive autonomy to ordinary citizens, who function as agonists of contemporary democracies, pluralizing but not necessarily creating or promoting democracy. Unlike Mouffe’s dissenters, bloggers are agonists of both *the personal* and *the political*. The personal becomes political, and the political remains personal, as this genre traverses and rarely distinguishes the two.

Within this plurality, there is undeniable inequality, fueled by the usage of the blog tool among a web public that is diverse in skill and interest. The utopian notion that the blog tool would transform media economics from its blockbuster, hit-driven culture of elites to a more egalitarian system of niche platforms that command smaller audiences (Anderson, 2008) has not been realized to the degree formerly perceived. True to other large-scale web networks built on Web 2.0 technologies (Hindman, Tsioutsoulis, & Johnson, 2003; Kittur & Kraut, 2008; Kittur, Suh, Pendleton, & Chi, 2007), the blogosphere is a system dominated by a few users. These celebrity blogs that command an inordinate degree of attention in the long-tail media supply have the capability to set the agenda both within the blogosphere and outside to the traditional media entities that once viewed this citizen media platform with suspicion and derision.

As blogs evolve, so do their political functions. The blog format, once celebrated for its promotion of individualism, is now utilized with the intention of maximizing network effects in both audience size and advertising dollars. Political blogs increasingly

resemble traditional media newsrooms through their embrace of team blogging and editorial workflow practices similar to the traditional entities they once served to supplement or critique (Stoller, 2007). Persistent, successful blogging remains a dedicated practice of the higher-educated, higher-income, more politically interested segment of the web public. This trend is set to continue as traditional newsrooms downsize in an effort to remain profitable in a twenty-first-century media climate that no longer enables these entities to realize economic gains through constraining media supply (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010). As big media bloggers join the blogosphere, and former journalists join political blogs like *Politico* and the *Daily Beast*, the US political blogosphere is being transformed from its early identification with the “pajama-clad” amateur to a climate where institutional attachments offer decided advantages to blogger independence.

Blogging, now arguably a mature technology, can be viewed in retrospect as part of the first generation of participatory Web 2.0 tools, which, though revolutionary for their time, eventually yield to tools that continue to advance our understanding of what it means to express sociality online. Blog technology, originally designed for promoting self-expression and easy web content creation, was significant in its consequence, shifting the read-only web to a read-write web for those users who lacked the technical skill to make the web responsive to their individual content-creation acts. The more participatory web public, now accustomed to the ease of uploading text, audio, and video to the web, has come to demand and expect new functionality from emerging toolkits. The blog platform, highly responsive to individual and group expression, was arguably primitive in its capacity to support community, conversation, or collaboration through its infrastructure of comment streams, trackbacks, and linking.

Applications that support immediacy and rapid, real-time updates are eroding the popularity of blogging among those networked publics that primarily desire to forge community and encourage conversation. These networked publics, not solely driven by the desire to broadcast information, are shifting to status-update platforms, or micro-media applications like Twitter and social networking sites, which encourage continuous information flow in smaller-sized increments. In the words of Edelman PR blogger Steve Rubel (2009), the blogosphere is “like a singles tennis player who focuses solely on the baseline game, logging long balls back and forth,” in comparison to applications like Twitter, which encourage “playing doubles – and at the net all the time.” Some of these newer Web 2.0 applications like Foursquare and Gowalla include location-based features, enabling hyperconnectivity at the local level with other users who share geography and/or interest.

Whether these emerging Web 2.0 tools are viewed as a natural progression of blogging or as a replacement to blogging, what is certain is that blogging as a web activity will attract a smaller percentage of the web population as choices expand to support more specific, localized activity. To date, blogging remains the prime tool for longer-form expression, and its usage will continue to impact the political, cultural, and economic landscape of the Internet along with emerging platforms that further our capacity for connectivity and sociality.

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Videogame Content

Game, Text, or Something Else?

Mia Consalvo

ABSTRACT

This chapter surveys the most recent scholarly work done on videogame content. It identifies several lines of research that have emerged in this area, including debates over the best methods for studying game content, representation-based versus gameplay-based approaches, and theoretical foundations for studying games. In addition to providing a broad overview of recent work in such areas, the essay also provides a more detailed account of how such research works, through an examination of the author's past videogame studies. These include studies that have examined titles such as *The Sims* and *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*, among other examples. These studies demonstrate how theory may and may not be useful in studying games, how methods must be adapted to best scrutinize dynamic content, and the many meanings that can be taken from contemporary games. The essay ends with a discussion of how future research on games should proceed, and the identification of the areas most pressing in terms of investigation.

What does it mean to study a videogame, without asking players how or why they play? If we study videogames, is the meaning in the representations the game offers us, in its narrative or story, in the gameplay we enact, or in some combination of those? And if we can agree on where the “meaning” resides, how do we go about

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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figuring out that meaning? This chapter is an exploration of past and current studies of videogame content. It explores what scholars have said in relation to games and their meaning, but it also discusses the various methods those scholars have used, including their challenges and limitations. It does so in order to explore the particularities of studying games – to give the reader a better sense of the history of videogame content, but also a better understanding of how that content was found, and how one might go about conducting one’s own study. It raises some questions for the reader to consider, and also points to areas that need further attention from scholars of videogames. It does so by reviewing what has been done so far, discussing the limitations of various approaches, and offering two case studies of how an analysis of game content could look. Overall, though, it should leave the reader with one central question to consider: How do games make meaning, and how can we go about finding the meanings that arise when people play videogames?

Analyzing Videogame Content

Studies of videogame content have been conducted since at least the 1980s, as researchers have tried to understand the images, actions, and themes prevalent in games as they progressed over time. A little-known study from 1985 (cited in Provenzo, 1991) helped establish a baseline for later research, finding that “in a sample of 100 video arcade games, [researcher Terri] Toles determined that 92 percent of the games did not include any female roles, and that of the remaining 8 percent of the games, 6 percent had females assuming ‘damsel in distress’ roles and 2 percent in active roles. [...] in the case of the two females who do take active roles, neither is a human – one being a Mama Kangaroo attempting to retrieve her child and the second a feminized blob, Ms. Pac Man” (Provenzo, 1991, p. 61).

Two better-known books on the topic, both released in 1991, provided additional overviews of content in games and helped set the agenda for future research programs. Eugene Provenzo’s *Video Kids: Making Sense of Nintendo* (1991) was an analysis of popular Nintendo games for the NES system. To study the games, Provenzo utilized multiple methods: analyzing the 10 most popular games of the time according to *Nintendo Power* magazine; reviewing their instruction manuals; and looking at advertising and reviews for those games. Additionally he conducted a content analysis of the box covers of another 47 games, as well as employing surveys and open-ended interviews with young game players. Provenzo (1991) found that in most games he studied, “violence and aggression [...] become the only viable operative principle by which the player can function. They become a substitute for personal reflection and contextual judgment” (p. 127). Furthermore, “gender bias and stereotyping are evident throughout the games included in the Nintendo system” (p. 100).

Marsha Kinder provided a somewhat more sympathetic reading of Nintendo games in her own book, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games*

(1991), exploring the links between various popular entertainment options for children, including cartoons, videogames, movies, and television. Using a psychoanalytic framework, Kinder argued that while gender stereotypes were indeed present in games, the games could also have a beneficial effect on the relations between fathers and sons, such that “the games can help boys deal with their rebellious anger against patriarchal authority” (1991, p. 104). Such studies by Provenzo and Kinder were meant to provoke parents and potential researchers interested in media to consider the possible long-term as well as short-term effects of game images and gameplay on youth. Perhaps foreshadowing the rise of the serious games movement a decade later, Provenzo argued: “games become powerful teaching machines and instruments of cultural transmission” (1991, p. 75).

Content Analyses of Games

As games continued to flourish and expand in complexity – both in terms of graphical realism and in the scope of what was technically possible for gameplay – researchers continued to concentrate on a few areas of content, most notably how gender and gender roles were represented in games. Thus, much research that shaped the field and perceived knowledge of videogame content concentrated on how male and female characters were portrayed in games, and, for female characters, how often (if at all) they appeared, and in what sorts of roles. In their findings, researchers from the 1990s and early 2000s found a fairly consistent picture of those characters. For example, in one of the most widely cited studies of the time, Dietz (1998) found that there were no female characters in over 40% of the games she sampled, and when women were present, they were generally portrayed as the “damsel in distress” or were sexualized via their appearance or clothing. Beasley and Collins-Standley (2002) similarly found that females were absent from the majority of the 47 randomly selected games they analyzed, and there was a significant sex bias in how male and female characters were portrayed.

Researchers continuing to study gender and sexual representations in games have generated consistent findings since those early studies. In 2009 Downs and Smith analyzed videogame characters in 60 top-selling games, again finding that female characters were underrepresented, and those that did appear were significantly more likely to be shown as partially nude, wearing sexually revealing clothing, and possessing an unrealistic body image. Following that, in 2007 Jansz and Martis studied the introductory movies in a non-random sample of a dozen popular games, finding again that female characters were portrayed as hypersexualized and as sex objects, albeit with a few in leadership roles.

Taking a broader approach than just gender, the Children Now group (2001) commissioned a study that examined the 10 top-selling games created for each of the six videogame consoles available in the United States at the time (Dreamcast, Game Boy Advance, Game Boy Color, Nintendo 64, Playstation and Playstation 2) as well as

games for personal computers. The researchers conducted a macro-level analysis examining game characteristics such as genre, rating, game elements, and levels of sexual and violent content, as well as a micro-level analysis that “identified each unique character and examined such characteristics as gender, race, role and the character’s ability to commit and be a victim of violence” (2001, p. 28). The study reported similar findings with past research: violence was a predominant feature, with 89% of games featuring some sort of violence; and with no punishment for killing in any games, and the killing by player-controlled characters being almost always justified. With regards to gender, males continued to dominate in terms of both total characters in the sample and being 73% of player-controlled characters. Female characters again behaved in stereotypical ways and were often hypersexualized. In some of the first findings concerning race, the study found that more than half of all human characters were White, with Latino/a characters being nonexistent and Native Americans “essentially invisible” (2001, p. 22). The most usual site of diversity was sports games, but even in that genre portrayals were problematic, as “African Americans were most likely to display aggressive behaviors” compared to characters of other races (2001, p. 23).

Content analyses of gameplay content have continued, as researchers attempt to determine macro trends across larger numbers of games. One of the more recent such projects obtained sales data from NPD and analyzed the 150 top-selling games (from March 2005 to February 2006) across nine platforms, with the results weighted according to actual game sales (Williams, Martins, Consalvo, & Ivory, 2009). The researchers looked for representations of gender, race, age, primary versus secondary character status, as well as game rating and console specifications. The results were remarkably consistent with past findings: there was a “systematic over-representation of males, whites and adults, and a systematic under-representation of females, Hispanics, Native Americans, children and the elderly” (2009, p. 815). More specifically, “Hispanics and Native Americans did not appear as a primary character in any game, they existed solely as secondary characters” (2009, p. 825). Furthermore, the study found that only 10.45% of primary characters (those that drive the action) were female – suggesting a decline in the number of playable female characters in games over the past several years – the Children Now (2001) study had identified 27% of playable characters as female. There are two potential explanations for that shift – one is that the number of female playable characters has actually declined over time (a downward trend of more than 16%); the second is that the Williams et al. study is a more accurate accounting of female primary characters as it takes account of game sales rather than simple percentages of game characters. Thus, the actual number of female playable characters may have remained constant, but the new study weighted findings in terms of the games that individuals actually played. More such studies will be needed to determine the better answer.

Researchers have also explored the content surrounding videogames, such as ads for games in magazines, and the cover art on videogame boxes. Those sources have generated similar findings, demonstrating that ads and box art often feature scantily

clad female characters and male heroes that are aggressive and central to the story (Burgess, Stermer, & Burgess, 2007; Dill & Thill, 2007). Interestingly, such images have become so standardized that some companies have used such images to promote games that have nothing to do with the images depicted. The company Evony, developers of the online strategy game *Evony: Age II*, used suggestive images of scantily clad women to advertise its game, leading to complaints about the truthfulness of its advertising (Johnson, 2009).

Qualitative Analyses of Games

Qualitative researchers have also studied the content of videogames, although of necessity they usually limit themselves to smaller samples, sometime focusing on a specific game or series. One of the most analyzed series has been the *Tomb Raider* franchise featuring Lara Croft. A female version of Indiana Jones, Croft explores distant lands in order to find treasures as well as fend off the competition and hostile locals – whether animals or humans (Kennedy, 2002; Mikula, 2003; Schleiner, 1998). Other gender researchers have focused on games featuring the television heroine of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Krzywinska, 2003; Labre & Duke, 2004). Much of this type of work pays attention to the sexualization of the central female character, but also spends time analyzing the gameplay of the various titles, going beyond findings of violence to explore how powerful female figures might be meaningful for female players in their abilities to shape and control the worlds around them.

Most of this past work on content has focused on visual representations in videogames, along with discussion of gameplay mechanics as they also relate to content. This has formed the bulk of analysis, although newer approaches are emerging. For example, Jorgensen (2007) has done important work studying sound in games, exploring how it contributes to narrative and world building, and how it can be key to successful gameplay. While sound was originally quite primitive in early games (usually relying on MIDI files), more recent games feature orchestral scores, popular musical artists, voice acting, and complex audio cues. We need much more study of sound in games, and how it contributes to our experiences of playing.

Another key area for study is the space of games – both in terms of the spatial narratives being constructed and analyses of how space itself is constructed in games. So far, Aarseth (2009) has explored the world of *Azeroth*, arguing that while promotional rhetoric for *World of Warcraft* (WoW) emphasizes a large world ready for exploring, in actuality the geographical space of *Azeroth* is quite small, in order to better facilitate player and avatar movement through the world, as well as to keep terrain varied enough to hold player interest. In a broader study of space, Nitsche (2008) explores the architecture as well as player use of game spaces, concluding “game spaces have become part of our cultural spheres” but that “the cultural significance of a game space is instantiated by localized player activity” (p. 244).

Limitations of Past Approaches

While larger quantitative studies (usually content analyses of top-selling titles) can give us a broad picture of what images appear in games, those findings are limited by a few factors. First, in order to cover such a large number of titles, exhaustive play is sacrificed for breadth. Most often, game titles that are “analyzed” are not studied in any depth – either one introductory level is played, or the introductory movie is studied, or the first 10–30 minutes of the game are recorded and then analyzed. There is no way to know for sure if these time frames or excerpts are truly representative of the games played, as there is rarely material taken from the various games’ mid-points or endings for additional analyses. Thus it’s important to remember that not all of the game content has been studied, and the characters and events that appear later in the games will most likely not be included in the analysis.

In contrast, qualitative studies can provide the depth and detailed level of analysis that larger-scale studies cannot, but must limit themselves to making claims about a single title, or perhaps a series of titles. Such studies also tend to take gameplay into account in more subtle ways than content analyses can provide – often providing meaningful distinctions between different kinds of player actions, for example, as well as game genre conventions that can make a large difference in how players perceive particular games. For example, Carr (2003) points out how both *Planescape Torment* and the *Silent Hill* series of games use a horror theme along with a similar model of spatial navigation to drive player action. But particular gameplay mechanics make the experience of playing those games very different: while *Planescape Torment* “refuses to be hurried, the nerve-wracking *Silent Hill* urges the player from point to point, puzzle to solution, and onwards to a resolution. [...] *Silent Hill* [...] wants to frighten its players.”

Another challenge for analyzing videogame content is the constantly changing nature of the technologies and platforms available for games, which can profoundly shape the scope of the visuals, the audio, potential interactions with non-playable characters, as well as gameplay mechanics themselves. Thus, studying the first *Final Fantasy* game on the NES system is quite different from examining *Final Fantasy XIII* on Sony’s Playstation 3. In addition to having graphics that are magnitudes of order more sophisticated, the games themselves are quite different – there is a full audio score and voice acting to consider in the latest version, and enemies in *Final Fantasy XIII* will react in more sophisticated ways than in the original game. There are more hidden objects and events to uncover, as well as mini-games and references to past game objects. Thus to be able to speak with any certainty even about one series of games – the *Final Fantasy* franchise – a researcher must keep studying each new release.

Related to the technological developments just mentioned, games have also grown in complexity in another area – branching paths, or multiple storylines or endings. Some games, such as *The Sims*, actually do not have endings and thus have multiple

pathways that the player can decide are successful or failures, but increasingly even games with a linear progression offer multiple solutions to various challenges, as well as a multitude of endings, in order to increase the replayability of the game in question.

That broadening of content has interested as well as vexed game studies researchers, who question just how much of a game must be played in order to fully understand and critique it. While not as much of an issue with content analyses that focus on the first few minutes of a game, for qualitative researchers intent on completing a game to study it, the question becomes: What does it mean to complete a game? Is it only to play through once to the end? But what if there are multiple endings or pathways to one or more endings? Game researchers must ask themselves what they are trying to achieve with their analysis – if they wish to understand the game in its totality, then they must indeed play through as many elements and options in the game as possible. This may demand dozens of hours of play, just for a single title.

Likewise, game researchers have questioned how much of their own effort must go into that gameplay. Scholars have debated whether or not it is acceptable to cheat in a game in order to reach certain content (Aarseth, 2003; Kucklich, 2007), or simply to cheat in order to gain the knowledge of how that particular action (or set of actions, if the game is complex) might impact gameplay. Thus, it might be one thing to use a cheat code to advance to a certain level in a game if one has already played through the game once, to then explore other avenues or choices offered in the game. And it might be another issue if the researcher chooses to engage in griefing¹ a multiplayer game, in order to see how the game proceeds, and how other players react to that deviance (Myers, 2009). These are questions that must be considered when doing any in-depth analysis of a game, as they can impact in fundamental ways how the researcher plays the game, what her resulting experience is thus like, and then what the analysis itself is focused on.

Some other challenges for doing analyses of game content can relate to issues of access – if researchers want to study a wide range of games across various consoles, they must have access to those consoles, as well as the games themselves. With new console and PC game prices at approximately US\$60, that can mean a sizable investment in a set of games. While the number of contemporary consoles has now shrunk a bit from past numbers (Playstation 3, Wii, Xbox 360), there are still handhelds (PSP, 3DS, DSi) to consider along with entirely new platforms for games, such as different mobile phone platforms (the iPhone, Blackberry, Palm OS, and Google's Android open source platform), Flash games, Shockwave games, SNS games (on sites such as Facebook and MySpace) as well as browser-based online games and downloadable games. Some games appear across multiple platforms, forcing researchers to question which version of a game to use for analysis, or to include all versions in a study. There are also games that have appeared using Twitter as a platform, and ARGs and mobility-centered games that can cross platforms or use non-electronic platforms entirely. Thus platform is a consideration that continues to be relevant in studying game content.

Finally, although game publishers have always had global releases of games, they are increasingly attempting to simultaneously ship localized versions of the games they create. Games can be released in one locale only, in a few selected regions, or in many languages across multiple countries and regions. While some games may have only minor modifications across those areas, other games, such as those in the *Phoenix Wright* series, are subject to extensive modification. While one researcher may not be interested in how games shift in content as they cross international borders, others might find that to be their primary area of interest. Thus, having access to various international versions of games, systems to run them, and the language and cultural abilities to interpret them, might also be necessary for gaining a fuller understanding of a game's content.

Case Study I: *The Sims* and Queerness

As a way of understanding some of the challenges associated with studying game content, I'd like to discuss my experiences with analyzing the computer game *The Sims* and several of its add-on expansion packs. I started the study intent on exploring how the game represented sexuality – in prior playthroughs of the game I was struck with how open the system was to allowing the creation of heterosexual, gay, and lesbian Sims (Consalvo, 2002). Thus I set about exploring in a more systematic way how the affordances and constraints of the game influence the ways players could enact sexuality (if not queerness itself) in *The Sims*.

The Sims is the bestselling PC game of all time – it (“it” includes its many iterations: *The Sims*, *The Sims 2*, *The Sims 3*, console and handheld versions, expansion packs, and the ill-fated online version, *The Sims Online*) has sold more than 125 million copies globally, has been translated into more than 22 languages, and is available in more than 60 countries. It is most often described as a type of digital dollhouse, with players given the option to create multiple Sims, Sim households, to control and direct their lives, as well as the ability to create and modify game elements that players can then share with others, and to use the game as a platform for storytelling.

One of the immediate challenges such a game presents, aside from whether to even consider it a game, is its open-endedness. This is not a game like *Dream Chronicles* or *Dragon Age*, with a discernible endpoint, unambiguous goals, and (relatively) straightforward challenges for the player. Instead, the game allows the player to create challenges for herself, whether they are to successfully raise a Sim family, or to creatively kill Sims; to build mansions; to tell soap opera-like stories; to create fashions and objects to enhance the Sim universe; or to create challenges such as the “homeless Sim” challenge that was famously chronicled on a blog (Burkinshaw, 2009).

In approaching the game, the question of exactly how to analyze content became a central concern for me. There was no overarching storyline in *The Sims*, and game-play options seemed to be multiple and varied – perhaps varying greatly from player

to player. At the time there were few models for doing any sort of game analysis, and more traditional forms of textual analysis relied on narrative structures that didn't seem present.

Thus to get a sense of the game and its approach to sexuality, I devised my own methods for study. First, I simply played the game. I created multiple households, consisting of a variety of Sim configurations. There were traditional families, groups of friends, gay and lesbian couples (with and without children), as well as individuals living alone. I assigned them multiple goals, including career advancement, romance, being social, accumulating wealth, and creating or advancing families. They acquired money and greater resources, while some of them were purposeful failures. I purchased and had them use as many objects as possible, to see what options they could or could not employ with them. They also were social (and occasionally antisocial) to see what friendships, romances, and enemies would result.

After doing all of this, I created a systematic approach to mapping the game, which drew from activities and elements I observed during gameplay, and which I thought could be used by other game researchers as a way to systematically approach the study of games (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). First, I created an inventory database for all objects I employed in the game. That included non-interactive as well as interactive objects. Objects were catalogued according to cost, interactivity, what types of interact options the object offered (sit, nap, eat, sleep in, etc.), and how those options changed according to particular variables, including how many Sims could use the object, the mood and relationship status of the Sims using the object, as well as whether or not users were children and/or adults. Thus, I could differentiate the significance of the "love tub," which would only allow adult Sims to embrace in it, from less interactive objects such as plants and chairs.

Next, I analyzed the interface of the game, which was defined as "any on-screen information that provides the player with information concerning the life, health, location or status of the character(s), as well as battle or action menus, nested menus that control options such as advancement grids or weapon selections, or additional screens that give the player more control over manipulating elements of gameplay" (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). Of particular note with *The Sims* is the Sim creation screen. While players are given the option to choose Sim gender, shade, age (child or adult), and appearance, there is no check-off box or choice given for sexuality. Yet Sims can be sexual in the game, in ways the players wish them to be. Thus the game does not force such options onto players but allows sexuality to be expressed (or not) as a form of activity chosen by players, rather than a fixed part of identity.

The next piece analyzed was larger and more dynamic – mapping interactions within the game. While Sims themselves speak Simlish (which is gibberish to humans), they are able to engage in actions with other Sims, and it is important to see what sorts of interactions are available to them; this can vary based on their relationship with the other Sims, their personality, their age, and their mood. Thus I could study how the interaction options changed for two Sims as they moved from being strangers to acquaintances, then friends and perhaps either lovers or a married

couple with children. I could also contrast those options with Sims that were enemies, or how interaction options differed between two child Sims versus two adult Sims.

Lastly, I explored the gameplay itself, perhaps the most open-ended of my categories. While this area could be quite different depending on the type of game chosen, here I looked for elements such as emergent behavior, avatar presentation, and the overall look and feel of the game world. With *The Sims*, one of the more interesting elements of emergence occurred when Sims would engage in social interactions that their owners did not intend – so a gay Sim (as constructed by the player) might start flirting with a female Sim, or in the case of Robin Burkinshaw's (2009) Homeless Sim challenge, when the daughter Alice finally received a paycheck for her first job, she indicated that she wished to donate the money to charity, even though she herself still slept on the streets.

Overall, these four components can give researchers a more systematic way to study videogame content. However, it is important to recognize that these elements are not equally important in all games; thus, a game with few if any inventory items will have a much smaller Object Inventory to analyze, while a game with detailed and rich dialogue will require a much greater investment in mapping that interaction. We will also likely see the development of greater refinements to these tools as games and their genres become more specialized – we already need something more focused for studying Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs). Yet this study does provide one guide, and also indicates the multiple levels of complexity involved when a researcher wishes to study videogame content.

More Recent Work

One of the more systematic attempts to gather a collection of deep game analyses is the edited volume *Well Played* (Davidson, 2009). Contributions come from a variety of sources, including game scholars from different disciplines as well as professional game designers. Many of the pieces are descriptive of games, discussing their narratives and gameplay mechanics and what makes these games “good” in some way. For example, Noah Falstein's (2009) discussion of the turn-based strategy game *Advance Wars* is an excellent analysis of the gameplay system implemented by the designers, and he talks at great length about how the game is an almost perfectly balanced system of opposing and defending military units. Yet such pieces don't really tell us much more about the game's larger meanings, or how they might compare with other similar games.

Other game designers take a more ambitious approach, such as Nick Fortugno's (2009) study of the action-adventure title *Shadow of the Colossus*. Again we find a discussion of the story and mechanics, but Fortugno is also intent on demonstrating how the game's story and gameplay elements work together to create a game that models tragedy successfully. And Fortugno is also successful in his own argument,

showing how the game creates a sense of futility in the player's actions in elegant ways. He writes about how the game exploits a player's sense of what a game normally expects (follow a game's direction to kill specified monsters), by revealing through the monsters' actions and the game's ending how that did not help the player fulfill the larger goal of rescuing a lover from danger.

Game scholars also explore specific games in depth, including Isbister's (2009) personal account of her delight playing *Parappa the Rappa*, Squire, Durga, and Devane's (2009) discussion of a multiplayer session of *Civilization*, and Gee's (2009) account of his time trying to be the "best Solid Snake" he could be in *Metal Gear Solid 4*. One of the more detailed and theoretically informed studies is Rusch's (2009) analysis of *Silent Hill 2*. She carefully demonstrates how the game's storyline and its gameplay work in tandem to model the process of psychotherapy. She explains that the game is similar to the therapeutic process in that "therapy can be understood in terms of a journey with the obstacles in the way – be they mere roadblocks, lock and key puzzles, or monsters – representing mental or emotional blockages that have to be overcome in order to find the source of the trauma" (2009, p. 252).

Likewise, Fernandez-Vara explores *The Secret of Monkey Island*, particularly how puzzles are central to the game's design. She argues "puzzles in videogames should help us know more about the gameworld, the fictional world where the game is taking place. [...] puzzle solving reveals that Melee Island is becoming a tourist attraction of sorts – since the pirates cannot make a profit from their usual trade, they make a living out of aspiring pirates, who will pay for lessons in swordfighting. The 'treasure' that Guybrush digs up is a t-shirt, and he gets another t-shirt when he defeats the Sword Master as proof of his accomplishment" (2009b, p. 346).

Such approaches show how three elements are needed to deeply analyze a game – an understanding of surface representations, usually involving the story or narrative; an accounting of the game's mechanics and how those also help shape the experience of play; and finally the usefulness of theory in allowing the analysis to make broader claims about a game's relationship with culture. Without theory, the analysis can feel more like a description or a review – it's unbounded from the larger conversation about culture, and cannot contribute. Good analyses using theory show how games connect with other forms of media, other aspects of culture, and how they are evolving our understandings of complicated concepts such as gender, identity, exploration, and failure, to name just a few.

The Case of MMOGs

Analyzing single-player or offline multiplayer games can be difficult enough, but there is a special challenge in studying the content of online multiplayer games – particularly virtual world spaces such as MMOGs. Much of the research on such spaces has focused on the players and how they interact with one another and with the game worlds (Boellstorff, 2008; Dibbell, 2006; Taylor, 2006). Yet there has

been some work studying the worlds and content found in MMOGs, detailing such elements as gendered representation of avatars (Corneliussen, 2009), raced images (Higgin, 2009; Nakamura, 2009), the content of quests (Walker-Rettberg, 2009), the corporate structure of activities that the games demand (Rettberg, 2009), how death is constructed (Klastrup, 2009), fashion as aesthetic and gameplay element (Tosca & Klastrup, 2009), and the larger mythologies of the worlds themselves (Krzywinska, 2009).

One of the challenges of doing such research is that the meaning of an MMOG's content is shaped in large part by its players. MMOGs don't provide many ways for players to create much content (unlike a virtual world such as *Second Life*), apart from a few that allow the creation of add-on player modifications (mods) to the game's user interface (UI). But players form communities that come to value and interact with content in ways that can change the meanings of that content over time, and not always in ways that developers have expected or intended.

For example, Dutton (2009) investigated a particular player activity in *Lord of the Rings Online (LoTRO)* – studying those who wished to play female dwarves. In the fiction of the game (referred to as Lore), itself drawn from the larger canon of Tolkien's mythological franchise, female dwarves were seldom seen outside dwarf communities, leading to the assumption that all publicly encountered dwarves were male. And in *LoTRO*, the avatar choice for dwarf is just that – a singular choice – rather than the more normal male/female choice found with all other races in the game. While the option itself is unmarked (simply named “dwarf”), the images suggest the only option is a male dwarf. Yet some players have objected to that limitation, arguing for the ability to play a female dwarf.

While some have been content to lobby the developer (Turbine), others have taken matters into their own hands – actively creating “female” dwarves on their own. To do so, most choose the lightest skin option available, as well as options for the neatest and least facial hair offered (Dutton, 2009). Players also will use the varied clothing options in the MMOG to dress their avatars in either dresses or a feminine manner; and they also give their dwarves female-sounding names. Thus, they have reconfigured the content to serve their own interests and desires, rather than waiting for Turbine to (perhaps) listen to their protests and make appropriate changes (or not). While such activities are not particularly widespread, and there exists debate among players about whether or not such actions are appropriate, it does suggest the need to take player actions in MMOGs (if not all videogames) into account when studying content – as players themselves can be quite active in modifying (if not creating outright) what is considered central to such games.

Related to that, but more obviously focused on player-generated content, is research that studies mods to various videogames. While much research in relation to mods focuses on the motivations of modders as well as the value of their creations to the game industry (Postigo, 2007; Sotamaa, 2009), some research has also examined the creations themselves. Thus Sihvonen (2009) explored the world of mods for *The Sims*, analyzing the varying levels of player creativity in such creations, as well

as arguing for the need to look beyond traditional genres of study in this area – mainly first-person shooters and strategy games. She writes that such artifacts can both reinscribe dominant ideologies and challenge them. Additionally, her textual analysis of mods created by individual players shows us the partial truths and contested meanings that reside in mediated forms, as well as in the intentions of creators – both professional and amateur.

Such studies raise key questions about the study of user-generated content. While I will not go into further discussion of research that investigates such content, it is important to remember that such content can be of equal if not greater importance to players – particularly if games offer players tools or simply encourage the creation of elements such as objects, maps, artwork, or storylines that can generate significant meaning for those who encounter them. Players can also serve as co-creators of games, and their contributions are key to keep in mind when we think about the elements that comprise any game. Thus, understanding how content functions can be a moving target – one must usually explore the player community as well, to see how they are interpreting various content, how it is actually being used (or ignored), as well as how it changes over time.

Case Study II: *Phoenix Wright*

As mentioned earlier, one of the more enduring themes in the study of videogame content has been exploring the prevalence of gender stereotypes, which have been fairly easy to find across genres, years, and game platforms. One of the most hyped targets for study has been Lara Croft of the *Tomb Raider* series. Game scholars (as well as some game critics) have protested her unrealistic proportions. Critics also argue that rather than giving women the option to play as a hero of their own gender in a videogame, Croft mainly serves as eye candy for (straight) male players, a mannequin-like figure who doesn't talk back, nor even have any love interests in the games from which to detract from the player's alleged interest in her as a sexual object (Fantone, 2003).

Yet such critiques focus mainly on the *representation* of Lara, rather than her role as a tool for the player (as controllable avatar) to traverse the game's environmental challenges, argues game theorist Espen Aarseth (2004). In a protest against the "colonization" of game studies by those in film and media studies, Aarseth (2004) instead advocates for studying the ludic aspect of such games, writing, "the dimensions of Lara Croft's body, already analyzed to death by film theorists, are irrelevant to me as a player, because a different-looking body would not make me play differently. When I play, I don't even see her body, but see through it and past it."

But feminist (and other) game theorists argue that such a position is itself deeply gendered, with Aarseth's dismissal of the visual importance of Croft reinscribing "stereotypical gender formations where the 'hardcore,' abstract, formal, mathemati-

cal systems privileged by these approaches to games are masculinized while the ‘casual,’ material, visual content, and non-essential aspects of games are feminized” (Soderman, 2009). Moulthrop (2004) writes that “Lara Croft’s physique may consist of raw data but it cannot be treated as such for critical purposes. While one may look past or through the avatar body during play, the significance of games as cultural forms goes beyond the player’s time in the loop.”

Both Aarseth’s position and that of his critics have merit – representations in games do matter, but they are not the only aspects of content that can make meaning in a game. Clearly, gameplay and its affordances are central to understanding games, yet the challenge is how to convey that in doing actual game analysis. It cannot be an either/or proposition, with representations *or* gameplay being the sole focus of a study, if a researcher wishes to truly understand a game. But what would such an analysis look like? As a way to go beyond discussion of surface representations (without of course dismissing their importance), I’d like to talk about a game I have previously analyzed (Consalvo, 2009), the 2008 Nintendo DS title *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*.

Phoenix Wright does not easily fit traditional game genre descriptions. As the title suggests, it lets the player assume the role of an attorney – more specifically, the new defense attorney Phoenix Wright – trying to prove various clients innocent of the charges against them. This occurs through investigation of crime scenes for clues and information and questioning potential witnesses, culminating in courtroom performances where the player as Phoenix must not only show her client is innocent, but also figure out (as well as prove) who actually committed the crime, ultimately forcing a confession from the real perpetrator. That’s the story, anyway, and there are interesting things that could be said about the visual representations the game offers, but more relevant here is the gameplay itself, and the way that it encourages the player to view evidence, as well as how to play the game.

Drawing from earlier work on *The Sims* and methodological tools for studying games as texts, we can examine objects and their particular role in the game as one way into that deeper analysis (Consalvo, 2002; Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). But rather than completing an exhaustive object inventory, however, it can also be instructive to determine how objects function in the logic of the game, especially in contrast with another key element of gameplay – interrogating witnesses. As I mentioned, the player can investigate crime scenes as part of the game, and will find (as well as receive) items that are key for later parts of the game. Some items are fairly mundane – crime reports, photographs, ID cards; others are specific to the scene, such as a spear used for a murder, or a clocklike statue used to hit someone on the head. Others appear useless at first glance, such as a trading card or a dinner plate with a steak on it, but these objects do have important uses. Thus, for example, a witness may not be willing to give testimony unless you bribe him or her with a particularly coveted object (such as that trading card), but the card was only obtained via another character, who gave it to you in exchange for something else, another mundane object you acquired in your investigation. Thus, objects can serve as a sort of currency in

the game – something not immediately obvious if one looks at the visual representations of the objects only, rather than both their appearance and their function in the game.

Objects are also key elements during the testimony parts of court trials. Witnesses often lie while on the stand (and have been instructed to do so by the prosecuting attorney), and their lies must be exposed through the judicious presentation of evidence to the contrary. But while individuals may lie or dissemble, evidence speaks for itself and is never shown to be false. Thus, objects have even greater currency in the game than spoken testimony, privileging evidence over speech as more valuable in getting to a successful verdict (and thus winning a game). Again, this is something that might not be evident if studying the surface representations of the game, or even analyzing the dialogue. Objects matter, greatly, but their successful use must be unlocked by the player.

Another way around the impasse of sticking with visuals is through recourse to performance theory, which questions the role of the body and movement in context-specific spaces. Videogame scholars have been slowly drawing from this approach, although most of it has been applied to how the player moves her avatar in the game space (Burrill, 2008), or exploring the relationship between a player and her avatar (Gee, 2003). Fernandez-Vara goes further, writing that if we consider videogames through performance theory, we can understand certain types of game activities as urging the player toward a “restoration of behavior” activity, such that “the pleasure of restoring behavior in adventure games such as *Myst* resides in discovering what the behavior is by exploring the world, identifying the problem and finding its solution” (2009a, p. 7).

Another helpful way to consider performance is through recourse to Judith Butler (1993). Originally writing about gender as a performance, Butler argues that gender and gendered identities are not static, natural parts of our selves. Instead we ourselves do the work of dynamically constructing our gender every day, with clear boundaries from contemporary culture about acceptable and unacceptable performances. Relative to gameplay, we can see how a game encourages individuals to play games in certain ways, rather than others.

For example, we can examine *Phoenix Wright's* courtroom system and the game's saving process for elaboration of this concept. In each episode of the game, the player gathers evidence and interrogates witnesses, with everything leading up to the courtroom trial, where Phoenix must challenge witnesses through presentation of the appropriate evidence at the correct time, in order to expose faults in their statements and thus bring about the exoneration of his client (thus winning the case). The game uses a kind of “penalty meter” that slowly subtracts “lives” when Phoenix acts incorrectly. If all lives are lost, the case is also lost, and the player must restart the courtroom scene from the beginning of that day. Playing the game does not require any manual dexterity or speed-related skills – it is all about the successful presentation of evidence and skillful interrogation of those on the stand. In that way, if the player keeps playing, trying every available option, eventually she will win the game.

So either through restarting a day's events over and over again, or in saving the game before each challenging moment, the player has the option of moving ahead slowly yet surely. But the game is about much more than trial and error. To truly play the game well and enjoy the experience, the game encourages the player to not save continually – to take risks and see the outcome. Saving is fairly easy, but to do so the player must quit out of the game and restart the system to reenter the scene. While not as cumbersome as doing so with a console, it still takes the player out of the flow of the game, as well as the experience of being in a tense courtroom, where the next step might make all the difference in exonerating or condemning your client.

Thus gameplay performance, via the player's specific choices and inputs, plays a central role in the setup of the game. The safer route is slower and removes the player from the fictional world, while the riskier route is more of a gamble, perhaps making it feel more like a real courtroom drama. Thus, the game enables different play styles for different players, through how they enact their own performances. This is something only an analysis of the gameplay could tell us, but is something central to understanding the game. So in actuality the fiction of the game (courtroom adventure) and the gameplay itself (countering testimony, playing it safe or going for broke) build on each other to reinforce the thematic core of the game. But we need an analysis of *both* the representations (here narrative) of the game and a study of its gameplay in order to make that determination. More game analyses are beginning to do this type of work, but it requires a deeper level of engagement than surface content analyses or basic genre determinants.

Conclusion

What is the future of studying game content, and what do we as researchers need to be focusing on? First, it would seem obvious, but the debate between narratology and ludology is over, if it ever really began. Both “sides” have made crucial points – that games can have important and intriguing stories and narratives within them, and also that games are more than simple representations. Gameplay must be considered an essential element to include in any game analysis. There is simply no way that one field or discipline can now lay claim to game studies, because we need multiple, varied approaches in our challenge to understand videogames.

We also need deeper studies of games that go beyond single titles, or broader content analyses that only look at snippets of games. An excellent example is Pinchbeck's (2009) study of multiple games within the first-person shooter (FPS) genre over the period of a decade. His examination of the interplay of gameplay and narrative in FPS games shows how a deep approach to studying content over time can yield more insightful understandings than work focusing on a singular game. His extensive study prompts him to conclude that “narrative and gameplay are really the same thing, atoms in a network with the same basic function: to describe an

experience and manage a player to deliver an appropriate set of inputs to a limited set of outputs” (2009, p. 264).

Additionally, Mosberg Iversen (2010) makes a compelling case that our frameworks for understanding games cannot be overly broad or abstract – that different types of games call for varying approaches. Thus, her work on computer role-playing games demonstrates that “games in the middle,” as she terms them, occupy a space where narrative and gameplay are equally important and thus should be studied that way, in contrast to games where either gameplay or fiction takes greater precedence, thus encouraging different ways to examine them.

While many studies of videogame content draw from theory to help us understand the meanings found in games, not all do so. Many content analyses, for example, make arguments about the potential impact of such content on players but do little to contextualize findings beyond that. In contrast, qualitative studies generally begin from theory, seeking to use it to understand what videogames have to offer to players. Both approaches are valid yet yield different conclusions. I believe using theory is important, but only in order to see how representations or actions might either reinforce what we already know or challenge traditional offerings. Theory also helps situate findings within a larger tradition. Content analyses can compare findings with past studies but offer little in the way of understanding why we are seeing what we do. Thus they are snapshots of a particular moment in time that might differ from past images, yet not do much more.

It might be best to end here, with the acknowledgment that even if we need more and better analyses of videogames, we shouldn’t work to develop global tools for those studies. Situated studies are generally preferable, taking account of the variability found in contemporary games. Thus while always taking into account elements such as visual representations and game mechanics, we also need to acknowledge how differences in genres, scale of games, multiplayer versus single player, player-created content and the like can make key impacts on our approaches, methods, and findings.

NOTE

- 1 Griefing is the act of purposely harassing, annoying, or otherwise disturbing other players.

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Rethinking Violent Videogame Content

Conceptual Advances and Directions for Future Research

Kenneth A. Lachlan

ABSTRACT

Numerous empirical studies have attempted to quantify the frequency and context of violence in popular videogames. While these studies have proven valuable, they overlook recent research suggesting that videogame content is far more complicated than that found in linear media. In particular, individual user characteristics, varying levels of gameplay, familiarity with the gaming environment, and length of time immersed in the game have been overlooked. But research suggests that these factors will play a critical role in how players use and respond to videogame violence. This chapter synthesizes the videogame content literature with recent behavioral research. It concludes by offering an updated conceptual model of violent content that includes not only the game, but also user and situational variables that may mitigate this content. Suggestions for future content-analytic methods are discussed in light of this conceptual model.

Since the early 2000s, parents, academics, and policymakers have expressed consternation over the nature of violent videogames, voicing concerns regarding the potential for negative effects on both youth and adult game players. Empirical research exploring the content of videogames has suggested that videogames may be rife with

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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unsavory content. These included extensive graphic violence (Smith, Lachlan, & Tamborini, 2003), violence that is committed by primarily White male characters (Lachlan, Smith, & Tamborini, 2005), repeated use of gun violence (Smith et al., 2004), sexualized portrayals of female characters (Beasley & Standley, 2002), and verbal aggression and substance abuse (Haninger & Thompson, 2004). The findings concerning violent content have stirred perhaps the most public debate, leading critics to suggest a relationship between playing violent videogames and both short- and long-term aggressive behavior (Elmer-Dewitt, 1993). US news media have been quick to draw linkages between videogame play (as other controversial media) and high-profile school shootings at Columbine High School and Westside Middle School (Gegax, Adler, & Pedersen, 1998). A substantial corpus of research has established a link between playing violent gameplay and aggressive behavior (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Ballard & Lineberger, 1999; Sherry, 2001). At the same time, a smaller number of studies have sought to quantify violent game content by examining the frequency of violent interactions, the nature of violence, and the contexts surrounding this violence.

Methodological techniques used to explore behavioral responses to videogame exposure are fairly well established. Short-term responses in terms of aggressive attitudes and behaviors have been evaluated using experimental procedures that have been used confidently for decades by social sciences. Correlational studies establishing noncausal linkages have used well-established sampling and survey techniques, as have studies exploring the motivations and gratifications derived from videogame use. Meta-analytic studies concerning the effects of videogames, and violent games in particular, have also relied on tried and true methods of evaluating effects across programs of research.

However, we cannot logically have the same degree of confidence in the methodological approaches taken in the videogame content literature. These studies have relied on content-analytic techniques that were developed first for print media, and then adapted to linear electronic media (e.g., film and television). Among other methodological shortcomings, these studies fail to consider that interactive media may present unique implications for sampling, unitizing, and content generation (Schmierbach, 2009) and that simply reapplying these techniques to videogames and other interactive content may lead to an inaccurate depiction of the ways in which game content may fluctuate.

Also overlooked in the robotic reapplication of these techniques is the role that the game player herself will likely play in the generation of interactive content. There is reason to believe that individual personality characteristics, and past gameplay (either general or with the game in question), may impact the frequency, nature, and context of violent game content. The gameplay experience will also likely vary based on the experience of presence, or "a psychological state or subjective perception in which even though part or all of an individual's current experience is generated by and/or filtered through human-made technology, part or all of the individual's perception fails to accurately acknowledge the role of the

technology in the experience” (Lombard, 2000, cited in Bracken, 2006, p. 725). This chapter reviews past research on the effects of violent videogames. It goes on to discuss past videogame content analyses, as well as the linkages between personality, game experience, and presence and behavior in interactive environments. It then presents the one standing study that has made a small attempt to explore these relationships, and concludes with discussion of future directions for evaluating violent game content.

Research on Videogames and Violence

Previous Research on the Effects of Videogame Violence

Research on the uses and gratifications of videogames reveals that children, adolescents, and adults alike spend a substantial amount of time playing videogames. Recent research suggests an upward trend over the last 10 years in the amount of time children ages 8 through 18 spend playing videogames, from 26 minutes per day in 1999 to 86 minutes in 2009 (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). The knowledge that home videogames are both prevalent and feature graphic violence has led to a long tradition of videogame effects research, dating back to the early 1980s (Dominick, 1984). Much of the early research on the effects of videogame violence was correlational in nature. For example, Wiegman and Van Shie (1998) found a relationship between a preference for violent games and reports of violent behavior; other studies have offered similar findings with kids (Dominick, 1984; Lin & Lepper, 1987) and adults (Anderson & Dill, 2000).

Numerous laboratory studies have also attempted to establish a causal link between gameplay and aggressive responses when provoked. Anderson and Ford (1986), Ballard and Lineberger (1999), Anderson and Dill (2000), and a number of other experimental studies suggest a causal relationship between violent videogame play and immediate subsequent aggression, while Shutte, Malouf, Post-Gordon, and Rodasta (1987) offered that children who played violent games were likely to react violently when provoked after gameplay.

Previous Content Analyses

Concern over the potential link between violent videogame content and aggressive behavior has more recently led to a number of content-analytic studies attempting to quantify the frequency of videogame violence. These studies have also attempted to identify problematic contexts for violence, based on past research in television and film indicating specific context outcomes related to aggressive attitudes, behaviors, and desensitization.

Braun and Giroux (1989) performed an evaluation of 21 arcade games in their efforts to quantify the rate at which the destruction of characters typically takes place. They posited that about three-quarters of their sample featured the death or destruction of others, and that this content was more commonly found in games with themes concerning war or crime. Dietz (1998) reported similar findings in an *ad hoc* evaluation of 33 games for the Nintendo and Sega Genesis home gaming systems.

Smith, Lachlan, and Tamborini (2003) attempted to apply the coding and analysis plan of the National Television Violence Study to videogames, with particular concern for the ways in which frequency and context of violence might vary across game rating. They found that videogames rated for mature audiences were more likely to contain repeated violence, gun violence, and bloodshed and gore. A series of follow-up studies using these data posited that videogames may be more likely than television to present gun violence that is unrealistic, justified, and repetitive (Smith et al., 2004), and that violent perpetrators in videogames are often White male characters, not dissimilar in appearance to those toward whom violent games are marketed and who may thus see the perpetrators as attractive behavioral models (Lachlan et al., 2005). Haninger and Thompson (2004) examined an hour's worth of taped content from 81 popular games rated "T" for teen, in an attempt to identify problematic content in games rated for younger audiences and examine content taking place in different time frames during the game. They argue that about 90% of the games rated for teens necessitated the use of violence, while 69% required game players to kill other characters.

While these studies provide important data in the ongoing social dialogue about violent games, the methodological approaches taken in these studies have been based on past research on linear media such as print, television, and film, and have failed to consider the possibility that videogame content may vary from player to player.

Conceptual Shortcomings

To date, videogame scholars have relied heavily upon content-analytic techniques that were never designed for interactive media (see Schmierbach 2009 for a comprehensive review). In particular, the content analysis research on videogames has been criticized for questionable sampling procedures, coding conventions, levels of data analysis, unitizing, and variable selection. While these are valid concerns, less clearly articulated are conceptual issues related to interactivity and to variation in content across multiple game players.

This chapter will limit discussion of these conceptual limitations to the evaluation of violent content in videogames. However, further exploration of the conceptual issues associated with quantifying videogame content across many contexts is encouraged, and it is hoped that this chapter will at least provide a stepping stone in initiating that conversation.

Incorporating Conceptual Issues into Videogame Content Research

The Role of Player Personality

It is likely important to consider the personality characteristics of individual game players and their subsequent effect on game content. A substantial amount of research on the effects of television and film violence has identified particular personality characteristics as covariates in aggressive responses, the formation of aggressive attitudes, and the acceptance of observed violence. In particular, trait aggression and psychoticism have been identified as covariates that may positively predict aggressive responses to violent media; those who may exhibit stronger tendencies along these factors may be more subject to the influence of violent media. Further, past research has indicated that those higher in trait empathy may be less likely to respond aggressively after exposure to film or television violence. In terms of the moral approval of observed aggression, past research has indicated that personality traits such as vigilantism and a desire for social justice may impact the extent to which audience members morally approve of observed aggression.

Personality characteristics have also been demonstrated to be important considerations when considering the appeal of videogames, and the extent to which they predict game selection and enjoyment. Hartmann and Klimmt (2006), for example, offer that a number of personality characteristics related to action tendencies, competitive tendencies, achievement tendencies, aggression, and frustration may play a role in the games that individuals are inclined to select. With regard to aggression, they offer that those with more aggressive personality characteristics and tendencies may be drawn to aggressive content, in a manner similar to past research on selective exposure to linear media.

What makes videogames different from television and other linear media, however, is the ability to make decisions within the context of gameplay and alter the content of the mediated experience through these decisions. Personality tendencies, including trait hostility and trait aggressiveness, are at least partially conceptualized in relationship to certain action tendencies. In terms of aggression, this may include the likelihood that one will choose to engage in violent or hostile behaviors with or without provocation and the tendency of the individual to use aggressive tactics to achieve behavioral goals.

When we narrow the focus of this line of reasoning, there appears to be a specific relationship between aggressive personality characteristics and game content. The very same personality attributes that draw game players to particular titles, and that may moderate their responses to aggressive game content, may also affect decision-making within the context of gameplay. It is therefore the case that these user personality attributes will alter the content of the game experience itself, since both

short-term responses and long-term plot turns will be related to whether or not the player decides to use a game character to enact violence, how to do so, what extent to do so, and to whom.

Prior Experience

It is also the case that past experience with videogames, and perhaps with a specific game title, will affect the way in which the content within that game title will unfold for the experienced or inexperienced user. Videogames are, of course, games. Part of the appeal of any game revolves around the presentation of challenges that may be easy to understand, but difficult to master. With regard to videogames, they present the game player with challenges that vary over time, as through experience the game player will learn to overcome certain obstacles and tackle new ones (Hartmann & Klimmt, 2006). Thus, it can be expected that through experience with a particular game, the decision-making opportunities for the use or non-use of aggression and the means in which it is used will vary as a function of experience with the game.

Further, the level of experienced immersion and interactivity discussed below is likely to vary based on game experience. Lee, Park, and Jin (2006) have offered that as game players become more familiar with an interactive environment, they are more likely to become comfortable with navigating and interacting with the environment, producing cleaner sensations of presence. This makes sense logically. If you think about the first time you may have played a particular game, you may have had difficulty navigating the environment, using the controls, interacting with other characters, and so on. Through repeated gameplay, you probably became more comfortable with these factors.

It may also be the case that experience with games in general may influence the content experience. While there is a great deal of variability from game to game in terms of the plot, content, and decision structures, there are some conventions that are consistent across games. Many first-person shooter games, for example, are built using one of a handful of graphics engines. Haptic devices, such as joysticks and remotes, tend to be similar across games and game systems. A relative level of familiarity with these more common game elements may also play a role in the ability to experience certain challenges and immersion, and in turn with decision processes and content outcomes.

Presence

Prior investigations of videogame content have failed to consider the role of presence in the production of videogame content, despite the fact that several studies (Howe & Sharkey, 1998; Tamborini, 2000; Witmer & Singer, 1998) have posited that

the experience of presence will directly impact behaviors within interactive environments. Steuer (1992) and others have defined presence as the extent to which we perceive that we are actually present in a mediated environment, as opposed to feeling present in our natural physical environment. The experience of presence within a mediated environment is likely to range along a continuum from relatively high to relatively low, depending on some combination of one's susceptibility to the experience of presence as a trait characteristic, as well as attributes of the interactive environment that may interact with these tendencies to produce a highly immersive experience.

Witmer and Singer (1998) have extended this definition to specify involvement and immersion as psychological states that underscore the feeling that one has left their physical environment and become immersed in a mediated one. Tamborini (2000) argues that the vivid audio and visual features and interactive nature of videogames and other modern interactive media are likely to evoke these feelings of involvement and immersion. Since contemporary videogames feature sophisticated haptic controls, lifelike graphics, and advanced artificial intelligence in terms of the characters found within games, they are likely to produce strong feelings of immersion and interactivity, even among those not especially predisposed to these experiences. It is not difficult to see how these levels of immersion within the mediated environment, and the extent to which they simulate real-life actions, may impact the propensity toward using violence if the game player in question is already predisposed toward aggressive tendencies.

This process is further complicated by the notion that not only are videogames inherently high in presence compared to other media, but that this increased degree of presence may be a critical component of the appeal of videogames. Tamborini and Skalski (2006) have argued that videogames provide powerful mental models of both the self and others, and that these mental models provide a certain sense of connectedness to others that are not offered in other more linear media. In this way, some presence features such as social presence (see Biocca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003) are not only psychological experiences that may shift the decision-making processes and subsequent content, but are part of the very appeal of the game itself. As such, evaluating the extent to which the game player experiences these varying forms of presence and/or their trait susceptibility to these experiences may allow us to predict the nature of the content that an individual will produce in varying circumstances.

Much like the argument above concerning aggressive personality characteristics, it is easy to see how one of the aspects of videogame play that is found appealing by videogame players may also impact the nature of the content that is produced. If the experience of presence is inherently part of the appeal of videogames, and the experience of presence is also related to decision-making processes concerning aggression and subsequent aggressive content, then the very motive for playing in the first place may be related to the content outcomes that can be expected within a given interactive environment.

In summation, there is reason to believe that videogame content is a far more complex phenomenon than has been articulated in past content-analytic research in

the field. It is not likely to be a function of the game alone, but is more likely a combination of user attributes, such as personality and past experience, and the extent to which the interactive game environment replicates real-life interactions, providing the game player with a sense of presence. The susceptibility of the game player to become immersed in the interactive environment then becomes an equally critical consideration, alongside personality characteristics and past gameplay experience. In order to fully evaluate the potentially risky violent content in popular videogames, one must simultaneously consider not only the game itself, but characteristics of those inclined to playing the game.

Further, it may be the case that these relationships are game dependent. While most content-analytic studies have attempted to present “snapshot” views of the universe of videogames, their attempt at making sweeping statements about the nature of content across all games might be misguided. Intuitively, it is likely the individual subtleties related to gameplay within individual games beget relationships between these variables that will change dramatically across different games. To this point, very little empirical research has attempted to explore the ways in which game player characteristics might be related to potentially risky content, and the ways in which these relationships may shift from game to game.

Lone Study

Despite the variability in game content that one could expect given these user characteristics, a single study conducted by myself and Erin Maloney (2008) has attempted to draw linkages between user attributes and quantified game. We decided to take a first stab at exploring the relationship between user attributes and game content, by looking at a number of game participants playing a small number of games. Using conventions drawn from experimental research, we recruited 160 research participants and randomly assigned them to play one of four violent videogames. Using the same coding scheme and analysis techniques as Smith, Lachlan, and Tamborini (2003), we routed the audio and video signal through a VCR, recorded the content, and then subjected the content to the analytic procedures. This allowed us to examine content characteristics across all four games, and to break down the pattern of content within each game. It also allowed us to use inferential statistical techniques to draw associations between user attributes and patterns of content, both within each game and across all games in the study.

The results of our study, albeit one with a small sample and a limited number of games, provide evidence of tremendous variation in game content across the game experiences of individuals playing exactly the same game at the same stage (the beginning of the game). Without going into detail beyond the scope of this chapter, the rate of violent exchanges, the frequency with which certain context features were present, and the nature of the violence in question varied greatly both within and across games.

For example, 40 participants played the game *SoCom: Navy Seals* for a period of 20 minutes from the beginning of the game. Across those 40 participants, the mean number of violent interactions was 43.14, with a standard deviation of about 20. In other words, in the distribution of the number of acts of violence, the middle 64% of them fell approximately between 23 and 63. Characteristics of these violent exchanges contained a great deal of variation too. The number of acts of violence featuring firearms averaged about 40 with a standard deviation of about 20. The number of acts depicting extreme harm (severed body parts or visible entrails) averaged about 20 with a standard deviation of about 9. The list goes on and on, but the bottom line is that with this and three other games, there was tremendous variability in both the frequency of violent interactions and the frequency of certain context characteristics associated with that violence.

We then went on to explore the relationship between individual personality characteristics, presence, and the frequency of these occurrences. Using multiple regression analysis, we linked attributes of the game players to the variability in these content characteristics across all four games. The analyses involved the simultaneous consideration of a number of game player attributes: these included demographics, perceived realism, trait aggression as measured by the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility), the factors of the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (extroversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and social desirability), measures from the Social Justice Questionnaire (empathy, vigilantism, and punitiveness), and telepresence tendency.

The analyses produced significant statistical models of three of the dependent content variables: the number of unjust acts of violence, the number of violent acts involving handheld firearms, and the number of acts in which no harm to the victim was observed. Income and hostility psychoticism positively predicted the frequency of unjustified acts of violence, while trait hostility negatively predicted the frequency of these observations. Argumentativeness and empathy positively predicted the frequency of gun violence, telepresence tendency negatively predicted gun violence. Psychoticism positively predicted the number of acts that did not portray any kind of harm.

While the initial analyses indicated that one's propensity toward experiencing presence and individual game player personality characteristics may influence game content across the entire study, we were also interested in the extent to which these relationships may be variable from game to game. Logically, it may be the case that the plotlines, gameplay, and highly specified game characteristics might impact whether or not these user attributes affect violent content. In fact, we recommended examining these relationships within the contexts of individual games, rather than attempting to generalize from a small number of games to the universe of videogames on the whole. These statistical analyses were then repeated within individual games, in order to explore the possibility that different user characteristics may predict different content across different games. Generally speaking, the results revealed the expected outcome: that the game player-level predictors of the frequency of various violent content outcomes were variable from games to game.

For example, within those subjects playing *Rainbow 6*, the analyses revealed only two significant models. Trait physical aggressiveness positively predicted the frequency of justified acts of aggression, while empathy negatively predicted the frequency of these interactions. Game players who were higher in their levels of both verbal aggressiveness and vigilantism were, for some reason, more likely to commit acts of violence in which the victims were not depicted in a manner exhibiting tangible physical harm.

The within-game analyses for *SoCom: Navy Seals* painted a much different picture in terms of the user characteristics that may affect gameplay. While these factors did not affect the frequency of any specific type of violent interaction, they did predict the total number of violent acts coded within the game over 20 minutes. Across 40 participants, psychoticism tended to negatively predict the total number of acts of aggression, while the frequency of these interactions was positively related to extroversion, social desirability, and empathy.

Two statistically significant sets of relationships were detected within *Grand Theft Auto 3*. The number of unjustified acts of violence observed during the gameplay session and the number of acts of violence using natural means of aggression were both related to game player characteristics. Trait hostility negatively predicted the number of unjust acts of violence observed across those playing this particular game. Within *Grand Theft Auto 3*, numerous player-related variables predicted the number of acts using natural means. Trait verbal aggressiveness, argumentativeness, and extroversion positively predicted the number of violent acts using natural means such as punching or kicking, while there was a negative relationship between these types of acts and the game players' levels of hostility, vigilantism, and immersive tendencies.

For the final game in the analysis, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, we found no significant relationships between user attributes and the frequency of varying types of violent content. None of the personality attributes they explored were related in any way to the content outcomes under consideration.

What to Make of This?

This leads us to the question of how to interpret these findings, and where to go from here. A fairly substantive body of research has argued for a relationship between playing violent videogames and antisocial effects on game players. In the wake of these studies, a number of content-analytic studies have attempted to evaluate the frequency and context surrounding videogame violence, and to identify specific presentations of violence that have been found problematic in other research contexts (e.g., television and film). While these studies provide valuable data concerning patterns of gameplay content, our study examining the role of player attributes has revealed findings that are inconsistent, difficult to explain, and highly variable across only a small number of games.

The findings from our study (Lachlan & Maloney, 2008) suggest the potential for quantifiable relationships between game player characteristics and game content, but more broadly they suggest to us that our understanding of videogame content might be seriously underdeveloped. In this one data set, not only is there a great deal of fluctuation in the frequency of violence and the contexts associated with these interactions, but these fluctuations are different across different games, different game players, and are on occasion systematically related to different game player attributes. Further, the findings concerning the relationship between the user and violent content are often counterintuitive, suggesting that we may need to revisit our conceptualizations of game content and the decision processes on the part of game players that are critical in the production of this content.

Variability in Game Content

Within and across multiple games, it appears as though the frequency of different types of interactions is highly variable. This variability casts serious doubts on the plausibility of past conceptualizations of interactive content, both in this context and in others. For the most part, previous content-analytic studies on videogame violence have presented a “snapshot” of the frequency, nature, and context surrounding violent interactions in a given game by analyzing a single unit of content, generated on one occasion, by one game player (typically one of the researchers or a research assistant). There may be alternate directions for conceptualizing exactly what game content is and how it should be measured. The current chapter offers that videogame scholars begin to think about content as a *dependent variable*, as opposed to a static content outcome that can be measured using the techniques and conventions germane to linear content analysis. In other words, it may be more useful to think of videogame content as an outcome, one that is dependent to an extent not only on the game parameters, but also on user characteristics, presence, gameplay experience, and so on.

If we are to conceptualize content units as dependent on multiple factors, then perhaps the approaches that we take to content from a methodological and data-analytic standpoint can be grounded differently. Instead of thinking of content units and analyses as comparable to linear content, it may be the case that videogame content (and, for that matter, any interactive content) bears a closer resemblance to data conventions more closely associated with behavioral research. This approach – thinking of content characteristics as dependent variables based on multiple predictors – would allow game researchers to use inferential statistics to estimate the true scores of varying content units in a universe of potential content experiences associated with any one game. Over a large number of players, the frequency and context of various content attributes could be estimated. By thinking of content outcomes in terms of means and standard deviations, game researchers could begin to assemble a more sophisticated picture of game content, and one that might be

more representative and generalizable (at least within game). While this approach might be time consuming and tedious, it would allow for the evaluation of measures of central tendency along any given content outcome. This would not only allow for more sophisticated evolutions of game content within a given game, but would allow for comparisons in game content across games, systems, genres, and ratings using different inferential procedures involving mean comparisons (*t*-tests, ANOVA, etc.).

Variability Based on Presence

In addition to this reconceptualization of content, the findings of our study (Lachlan & Maloney, 2008) force us to reconsider other assumptions regarding game content. While the study did not measure the level of presence experienced, it did measure telepresence tendency, or the individual user's susceptibility toward experiencing presence experiences. For the most part, presence tendencies were not strongly related to the likelihood that certain types of violent content would appear. However, there were a few instances in which presence *negatively* predicted the frequency of some types of aggressive content.

While this may appear counterintuitive, further consideration of the role of presence in interactive violence leads to a logical thread not dissimilar to that associated with past game experience. It may be the case that those who are prone to experiencing presence may have an increased capacity to take a task-oriented approach to the use of violence. In these circumstances, violence can be used by the game player as a means of accomplishing certain tasks, while random nonsensical violence may be more closely associated with those who have not adapted well to the virtual environment. In other words, the more comfortable one is with the game, the better one adapts to and maneuvers around the environment, the more one can strategically use a small number of violent acts to efficiently accomplish a task or meet a goal. While logical, this commentary is somewhat speculative, and scholars should further consider the exploration of presence and habituation to virtual environments on the decision-making processes that lead to aggressive or violent content.

Variability Based on Past Game Experience

Notably, our 2008 study did not include past game experience – either in general or with the game in question – as a predictor of game content. This is perhaps problematic, as we could expect certain variability in the production of violent content based on familiarity with the game.

While research has not directly addressed this possibility, it is not difficult to see how familiarity with the game could affect these outcomes. What might be counterintuitive is the ways in which it may affect content. When thought through to its

logical end, it may be the case that game experience actually *reduces* the frequency of aggressive outcomes.

For example, let's take *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. In this game, there is an early stage in which the character played by the game player has to break into a golf course, ride a golf cart around, locate an enemy character, and kill him using a five-iron. An inexperienced player might be inclined to swing at anything that moves, while following unfamiliar cues throughout the physical landscape of the game. A game player with prior experience, however, would know the whereabouts of this character within the virtual realm, be able to identify this character, understand the reward structure inherent in eliminating this character, and kill him rather quickly and efficiently. Anecdotally, while coding much of the game content, coders in our study noticed that poor game players tended to log higher frequencies of all kinds of violent exchanges. Players that "got themselves killed a lot" were more inclined to behave aggressively toward most or all of the characters they encountered during the gameplay period, and were given more opportunities to attack the same characters as they found themselves having to repeat various levels of the game.

While this is an anecdotal observation drawn from one study, it does raise an interesting point: that we may have to reconsider whether or not the frequency of violence or of the occurrence of certain types of violence is of paramount importance, or whether familiarity with the game environment underscores a certain clinical approach to the use of violence that may attenuate the frequency with which these acts of violence take place.

Variability Based on Personality Differences

This study also examined the impact of personality characteristics on the frequency of violent occurrences, both across all four games in the study and within individual games. While the results generally suggest a link between these individual attributes and different types of game content, there is very little consistency in the extent to which what personality characteristics predicted what type of content from game to game. In fact, even the direction of the relationships between certain personality characteristics and content outcomes is inconsistent. This further complicates our understanding of the interactive nature of content, and the ways in which certain personality tendencies may interact with parameters of the game itself to predict certain types of content.

Let's return to the *Grand Theft Auto* series, this time looking at the analyses that were run on *Grand Theft Auto 3*. Intuitively, one might think that trait hostility would positively predict various aggressive acts. It's a fairly logical line of thinking: a more hostile person is given the opportunity to aggress in a simulated environment, with a reward structure associated with this simulated aggression, so they take full advantage of the opportunity and commit more acts of simulated violence than a less hostile person.

However, this is not the case. In this particular study, trait hostility was negatively associated to the frequency of unjustified violence committed across all four games, and violence involving natural means (such as punching and kicking) in *GTA:3*. With regard to the relationship between hostility and unjustified violence, it may be the case that those who are high in hostility are prone to enact aggressive responses *specifically when provoked*. This would then limit aggression responses to characters within the virtual realm that are recognizable as presenting a credible threat, as opposed to those of an unknown or good nature.

As a function of the storyline and interactive realm of *GTA:3*, game players are allowed to roam around the physical environment freely, interacting with other characters as they please. At times these can lead to positive outcomes (such as acquiring money or information), or negative ones (such as getting arrested or killed). As a result of the freedom to make choices concerning how and when to approach other characters, game players must go out of their way to utilize physical aggression involving natural means. If one chooses to aggress, there are faster, more efficient means of committing violence, such as shooting another character or running him/her over with a vehicle. Those who are predisposed toward hostility may prefer to use aggression strategies that do not involve direct contact with other characters, but instead offer a quick and easy means of eliminating other characters. Thus, the specific parameters of gameplay in *GTA:3* may lead to an association between a personal-ity attribute and a particular violent content outcome.

Numerous other examples of gameplay parameters leading to these relationships between user and content can be seen across the study. Physical aggressiveness predicts justified violence in *Rainbow 6*, but not in the other three games in the analysis. Empathy negatively predicts justified violence in *Rainbow 6*, even though it positively predicts gun violence across all four games. While only a single study using a small number of games and players, our study (Lachlan & Maloney, 2008) provides initial evidence of a problem in the content-analytic research later articulated by Schmierbach (2009) and others: that the interaction between game player attributes and highly specific aspects of the game itself is likely to produce tremendous variation in content, and that this variation will often be difficult to predict.

Conclusion

While not addressing other recent criticisms of the videogame content analysis literature, our study does shed light on the largely overlooked interface between game player and game parameters. When thinking about this particular study, combined with what we already know about the relationship between gameplay and aggression, we are drawn to three conclusions. First, we should expect a great deal of variability in game content from user to user. This fluctuation within game content across different players, regardless of the more specific factors that predict these

fluctuations, suggests that we may have to revisit our conceptualizations of game content and the conventions with which we have historically analyzed game data.

Second, presence and past experience with a given game may sometimes play a role in the content that is produced. Making this picture a little murkier is the notion that telepresence may be negatively associated with violent content. This suggests a need for research addressing habituation to videogames, task-oriented virtual aggression, and perhaps even our most basic concerns when it comes to the link between violent game content and aggressive behavior. While behavioral research on television and film has historically been grounded in concern over the frequency of observed violent interactions, the real concerns associated with videogame violence might be quite different. Wildly excessive repetition of violence may simply take place as a function of unfamiliarity with the game system or an inability to experience presence in the interactive environment. Lower frequency of violent interactions, while appearing benign, may actually be the product of a systematic, clinical understanding of the use of violence in instrumentally accomplishing tasks.

Finally, the potential relationships between game player personality characteristics and videogame content require further inquiry. These relationships appear largely inconsistent across different games, and may force us to reconsider our units of analysis and the degree of generalization we seek to accomplish in studies evaluating these relationships. For example, it may be difficult (if not impossible) to make a statement regarding what impact psychoticism has on the frequency and nature of violent content across all videogames; it may be completely plausible, however, to evaluate this relationship within one game or a handful of games from a particular genre or series. This limitation in the extent to which we choose to generalize stems from the argument that the relationships between player attributes and content are a product of specific gameplay parameters of each game.

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Transmedial Aesthetics

Where Form and Content Meet – Film and Videogames

Tanya Krzywinska

ABSTRACT

Videogames may offer new ways of telling stories and engaging players by virtue of their interactive characteristics, but do they offer any differences from cinema in terms of content and representation? While videogames are formally distinctive, this chapter shows that, to a lesser or greater degree, they nonetheless draw on vocabularies developed within cinema. Through an examination of *Final Fantasy XII*, as well as with reference to a range of other games, this chapter analyzes how, through an interlacing of form, content, and representation, videogames work in convergent and divergent ways to create for the player an emotionally resonant aesthetic experience.

Convergences and divergences between film and videogames have been the subject of some quite considerable analysis within the context of recent academic work, conducted mainly within the emerging field of digital game studies. Within this is a pivotal engagement with the way that form shapes content. This relationship is the focus of this chapter, which further takes as a central analytic example the game *Final Fantasy XII* (Square Enix, 2006). While by no means all academic work focused on videogames is conducted by those with a scholarly interest in film, several game studies academics have a film studies background, including myself, Diane Carr,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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Geoff King, Bernard Perron, Bob Rehak, and David Surman. What is remarkable is that many existing analyses focusing on the distinctions of form and content between videogames and film stress that the former should be regarded as a distinctive form in their own right, despite videogames also being a screen-based audiovisual medium. In early work on videogames, scholars such as Espen Aarseth, Jesper Juul, and Markku Eskelinen expressed an understandable concern that the interest shown in videogames by film scholars would entail games being subsumed as a subsection of film studies. Old theories and arguments used in the analysis of film would simply be rehashed without paying due attention to the considerable differences and unique features of digital games. Further, the fear was that the use of film studies models might stultify the broader process of exploring what digital games could potentially become. To their minds, these interlopers came along with a risk of dismissing what is specific to videogames in terms of their formal and ludological features, their design and construction, and the unique experience of playing them. This is not, however, evident in most of the existing work conducted on games from those with a film studies background. The consensus of opinion is that, unlike film, videogames are rule-based, place emphasis on player agency, and are governed by ludological rubrics. This is clearly a formal distinction, but does it make for a distinction in terms of content? In many ways form and content are co-dependent, yet in some regards the same tropes simply become remediated.

While it is crucial to note the formal divergence between film and videogames, it is nonetheless the case that videogames do draw on film form and content (as well as other media) in a variety of ways. Award-winning game designer Peter Molyneux has said that cinema provides game makers with good and well-developed models for creating engaging characters and for making more meaningful and emotionally resonant gameplay features.¹ As well as showing that game designers often look to cinema for inspiration (and, indeed, in some cases aspire to the financial and critical successes of cinema), this comment provides an example of David Bolter and Richard Grusin's influential concept of *remediation* (2000). Games are not made in cultural isolation; many features of existing media inform the strategies used in new media, but the exchange is far from simple and straightforward. This means that both form and content are likely to be informed by established media formations.

Critical perspectives used within film studies, including approaches drawn from other disciplines but tailored to the task of addressing film, can be used to highlight convergences of form and content between videogames and film. Close formal analysis of the type used in film studies to analyze the structure, impact, and meaning of the moving image is of particular use in understanding games, and implicitly formal analysis is also considered with content (story and character in particular, rather than representation and reception). Formal and content analysis can also be applied to the ludic and participatory elements offered by a game, even if these core elements are what make videogames qualitatively different from other media. Other types of approaches used in film and media studies to analyze reception, the types

of investments and interpretations that audiences and individual viewers bring to the text, are, however, very useful to help understand the qualities and affordances of games themselves, their role in contemporary culture, and indeed why certain formal and content formations have proved popular and affective with audiences. Film-based approaches can also be used in a comparative way to ascertain significant differences between the two media. Models and methods derived from art studies, media studies, social science, philosophy, psychology, and psychoanalysis developed for the analysis of screen-based media can also prove helpful to the process of understanding more fully some of the pleasures offered by games, pleasures that needed explaining in terms of the interplay between form and context, as well as the ways in which videogames are embraced by broader social, cultural, and ideological contexts. That is not to say that there is no need for the development of bespoke approaches that emerge from the particular questions videogames provoke, and there is room, of course, for the analysis of representation. There are some aspects of videogames that do indeed demand new concepts and models if we are to understand better their particularities, influences, and potentials in terms of both form and content. This analysis focuses not on representation, however, but on the relationship between form and content.

While videogames have various formal, content, and industrial links to film (industrial convergence is addressed later on), the centralization of the ludic, player agency, and interactive components, as well as the actual business of designing and making them, means that videogames diverge in some significant ways from film. As a means of highlighting some of these differences and to show the particularities of videogames, I will focus on one recent game, citing other examples where they are relevant. This is a game that has, it should be said, a closer relationship to film than many other existing games or game genres. While games such as *Tetris* or *Bejewelled* cannot be described as having either narrative or cinematic camera-based features, the game chosen here has a highly developed storyline, uses many cinematic-styled cut-scenes both in game and “movie” sequences, and the franchise from which it is drawn includes two films: *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (2001) and *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* (2005). As such, is it a useful game with which to demonstrate that some videogames share certain features with film in formal and content terms. I keep my analysis to the very opening scene of the game to gain depth. As such, this is not an essay about the game itself but as a means to look at the relationships between form and content in the context of a very cinematic game. Even in a videogame that is clearly inspired by cinema and that uses content formation found across recent screen-based popular fiction, it is, as we shall see, divergent in terms of its form, design, and the type of experience offered in some important and innovative ways. In order to better understand videogames, we have to take account that content is linked to form in a special way. The link is the player. Without considering play – how the player accesses the text through his or her participation in the game – we cannot consider either content or form, as both are intrinsically linked to what the player does.

Aesthetics of Convergence

After loading the first game disk into my PlayStation 2, I sit on the sofa and watch as the opening scenes of *Final Fantasy XII* (Square Enix, 2006) unfold on the television screen, the game controller lying limply in hand. The busy, blink and you miss something introductory montage sequence has all the characteristics expected from a sophisticated and high-budget digitally animated film, and it is designed to be both visually impressive and inviting. The prominent use of widescreen format is inherent to this, representing one of the ways that games and film converge as screen-based media in terms of form and content. More so than 4:3 aspect ratio, widescreen format, first developed for cinema, lends itself admirably to the task of creating the type of visual spectacle that gives the effect of a panoramic vista. The format encourages, as David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson note, “horizontal composition,” and it was first used in genres “in which sweeping settings were important” (2001, p. 212). The game’s opening cut-scene takes full aesthetic advantage, shaping form and content, of the commercial success of widescreen television in the domestic arena (see Figure 21.1). An unanchored camera moves with moderate speed downwards through white fluffy clouds evoking immediately a sense of freedom and movement (to view the opening scene see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L20Ph_IC514&mode=related&search=). A small skyship comes into view at the bottom of the screen, further widening the scope of the on-screen space; the camera follows



Figure 21.1 Widescreen, panoramic vistas.

the skyship's swooping trajectory more speedily through the air and over a fantastical sunlit cityscape. Cut to birds in flight, which travel in a contrary direction to the earlier trajectory of the craft, drawing the eye in a different direction and enhancing the sensation of freedom and motion. Strange skycraft that resemble the fantastical, antiquated, steam-punk flying machines of Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron von Munchausen* (1988) float weightlessly above the city, while smaller craft whiz between them. Sky and earth are tied together through editing and framing into one space – providing an efficient invocation of the game's world – which is a product of form and constitutes a basic component of game content. Using the principle of cinematic attraction, the saturated colors glow with jewel-like intensity, the detailed textures provide visual delight and add further to the sense of epic-proportioned scale, again characteristic of the game's particular content design.

Through a montage of ever-moving dissolves, various vistas of the landscape come into view. A boy looks out to sea, the camera still in flight, never settling to allow quiet contemplation of any one image. We are taken on a fly-mation journey, tourists in a new land. A change of mood: a close-up of heavy armored bodies introduces a counterweight to the previous fluid lines of flight; war darkens the screen and a skycraft plummets to the city, showering flame and debris, its downward motion in sharp contrast to the soaring horizontal axis of the previous and subsequent sequences. A small skycraft curves away into the horizon, creating a huge depth of field, followed by a range of vignettes using in-game graphics of fantastical creatures fighting, fleeing, intercut with sky battles and explosions, while huge, strange, and clearly magic objects throw bolts of light across the screen. All is movement – cinematic form and “world” content bound in unison. The pace then gears down for a short while to show close-ups of key characters in the game, each also talking in animated ways, gesticulating, eyes trained horizontally on their interlocutors, the camera still moving; more creatures are fleeing; the pace and sense of movement, signifying war-induced panic, increase. A clear-eyed anime-inspired boy with hair waving in the breeze looks upward. All this is accompanied by a full orchestral soundtrack that changes mood in accordance with the fleeting images, formal features providing what is often called in the game industry “flavor” (a term that implies content design).

The types of camera angles used, the framing, the character and location exposition are all features born of form and content that we might expect from a mainstream film (the vignettes of characters have perhaps more in common with televisual formats, however). The fluidity of the sequence, the vistas that would be impossible to create in a live-action pro-filmic context, are enabled because this is digital animation (informing form and content, therefore): the camera is not a “real” camera but a totally fictional creation that celebrates the freedoms of perspective offered by the highly flexible fabrications of digital animation. The meticulous attention to movement and light, and the geometries of the visual choreography, are all content designed to capture and delight the eye. And, as with film, only to look on and enjoy what is seen is demanded from the player.



Figure 21.2 The spectacle of procession.

The game title appears after a few minutes of black screen, a result of the game software loading into the console's memory in the next sequence. This represents something of an interruption that would be unlikely in cinema, but it reminds viewers that they will become, in a short time, players – an “X to skip” icon appears in the corner of the screen, a subtle textual indication that this is a game and not a film. A second cinematic sequence ensues, which moves us to the events on the ground, and a date and location appear in scripted text. This sequence is far more narratively loaded than the previous one. Some of the images seen at the start reappear, but this time they are given a stronger context (content forged through formal patterning). A royal wedding procession appears, peopled by a host of human and fantastical creatures including what look like white rabbits playing drums. This draws on, but dwarfs in its scope and spectacle, the type of impressive historical pageants seen in the biblical films of Cecil B. DeMille or Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* (1963), to which are added the fantastical stylistic qualities of anime (see Figure 21.2), a mode of animation based often on comic books popular in Japan. The scene also recalls the celebratory processions of the *Star Wars* series, which are used to showcase Industrial Light and Magic's special effects and helped to establish the company's centrality to the cinema of digital attractions, a status to which Square Enix also appears to aspire. (The game itself is something of an homage to *Star Wars*.) The young couple, wide-eyed, flawless, and idealized, are married by an elderly priest, making use of a well-worn metaphorical image of Hope. Rapidly the scene changes, as the recently wedded boy-man expresses his intent to go to war and military

processions take the place of the joyous wedding scene, providing an entry into the common war-based rhetorics of games and fantasy fiction more generally. Movie-style credits overlay the scene, present in the corner of the screen rather than prominently centralized, as occurs conventionally in film. Their presence underlines the game's clear aspiration to cinema, marking authorship in a similar way. While company logos are ubiquitous, opening credits have occurred rarely in videogames, although recently they have appeared in high-profile games that have similar production costs to Hollywood films.

A battle ensues, shown taking place alternately in the sky and on land, a series of aerial shots, close-ups, and midshots unfolds, all in third person except for a first-person shot out of the window of a small skycraft; as elsewhere in these opening sequences the framing and editing grammar of cinema is used. In the thick of battle the newly wedded boy-man is slain. To add to the melodrama, his wife sheds a single tear, bowing her head as we are shown, through a classic shot–reverse shot, her lifeless young husband shrouded in flowers in his coffin – again drawing on a well-worn image of melodrama designed to evoke pathos. This montage sequence then clearly aspires to epic and melodramatic registers: the viewer learns of the power struggles in play, the personal tragedies and heroic action that set the particular milieu of the world. The cost of producing these scenes for a film would in all probability mean that they would be made longer and be placed more centrally in the story. We are presented with a world in which the viewer is being invited to become a player. While it is undeniably cinematic, it is perhaps more intense and condensed than would commonly be the case if this were live-action film – game form shaping content.

What we have here is something that looks more like an advert for a film than a film itself (and it is common for attention-grabbing cut-scenes to be made before games go to market to exhibit at industry shows). The effect is to entice the player into the game's world, pulling focus on historical events that provide the context for gameplay. The use of montage provides an economical and evocative sense of the complex world that we are about to enter into as players. While these scenes offer all the audiovisual pleasures of cinema on a grand scale, they also have the function of keying the player into the game world. With the world clearly in chaos, sunlight replaced by war-torn gloom, a series of scripted text screens appears. Some overlay a map of the world showing different states, and a voice, later revealed to be the antagonist in the main game plot arc, tells us what we can read in flowing script of the perilous state of the kingdom of Dalmasca caught in the struggle between two great empires: Archadia in the east and Rozarria in the west. Dalmasca has surrendered to the might of Archadian armies. This breaks the rule of cinema – to show and not to tell – but the encouragement to read the screen here heralds the fact that the player will be required frequently to read scripted text in the game and pay attention to what is written. Written information is part of game form (and genre-based), certainly, but it is also clearly content – a rhetorically designed device that players of such games will expect and which aims to immerse the player further into the virtual space of the game.

During these opening sequences the game controller lay quietly in my lap, although held in such a way that it could be ready quickly for any required action, the presence of the controller acting as a reminder that I am “watching” a game and not a film. The transition from being a viewer, with time to let the eye linger on the luscious graphics, to becoming a player is gently introduced. The game prompts the player to press a key to scroll through the scripted text that explains some of the game’s back story. This is another reminder that this is a game and that games require players to respond to cues through correctly timed button presses on the controller, enabling the story to unfold and allowing actions to be taken. Thus, a primary difference between the modes of engagement offered by games and film comes into view, and this difference clearly affects form and some aspects of content. Again the screen goes black, but this time it opens on a blurred, reverse iris point-of-view shot of one of the soldiers seen in the earlier cut-scene (this blonde, self-possessed warrior is named Basch and is designed through his bearing and look to attract the player into the game space).² There is a scripted cut (edit) from first-person view back to an image of an anime-style boy, on the verge of becoming adult, who is returning to consciousness after being injured. An edit back to his point-of-view locates us in the skin of this character and subject to the attention of Basch. As well as a very cinematic storytelling device, the blurred point-of-view shot, along with the preceding scripted text/map sequence, is used to help mask, at least to some extent, the transition between the high-resolution pre-rendered graphics of the opening cut-scene to real-time graphical rendering – technical concerns shaping content, therefore. Real-time graphical rendering is required in videogames because the on-screen image changes in accordance with the players-characters’ movements and actions – again, technical concerns shape the appearance of content. This marked shift in graphical fidelity is something that would not happen in cinema or even in anime, and the transition marks this out as a game rather than a film.³ It also acts as a call to action for those who are attentive to the visual grammar that is specific to videogames.

I take up my controller in anticipation, now eager to play. But before I am able to act in the game, I watch as Basch fights then kills several heavily armored opponents – whetting the player’s appetite to get stuck into the action. The scene provides an exemplar of what will be expected of the player-character shortly and emphasizes the immediate dangers of the location. Basch then speaks to the player’s character, who we learn is named Reks. Basch communicates with the player in two different modes: he speaks to the player *as* player and also communicates through scripted text that appears at the base of the screen. His speech is always in character, but the scripted text is not, even though it is in first person. At times this accords with the fictional diegesis, but at others it tutors the player in the use of the controller, in how to interact with non-player-characters and how to fight. This acknowledges form but shapes content. For example, “Basch: Do you see the mark above my head? That’s a Talk icon. You can talk to any character showing one of these.”

Direct address to the viewer is used very occasionally in mainstream film, for example at the start of *The Libertine* (2005). However, it is more common within

science fiction and fantasy films that deal with complete fictional worlds as a means of communicating to viewers the often complex pseudo-historical factors that have led up to a present situation (*The Lord of the Rings* films, for example). Games of the type that also take place in fictional worlds, such as the *Final Fantasy* series, use this technique, but it is also aimed to tutor the player. There is a mix of diegetic and extra-diegetic information that would be very unusual in other media, but here is content driven by the participatory form of games. (Diegesis and diegetic are terms used in film studies to denote that which is integral to the given fictional world; non-diegetic or extra-diegetic refers to that which is present in the text but not directly anchored in the fictional world. Non-diegetic music, for example, is not “played” or heard by characters.) This dual register is echoed in the co-presence of speech and scripted text and might appear “odd” when seen together to those unused to playing games who are more familiar with film. Noting such co-presences again highlights how games differ from film in aspects of their content because of an underlying difference of form, specifically, the requirement of participation and the need to tutor the player in the particular design of a given game’s participatory interface (the interface then has to be factored into the content as well as the form of games). If a player does not actively initiate a discussion with the character that Basch has asked the player’s character to speak to by correctly using the game’s interface, nothing more will happen; this is in stark contrast to film, where there is no requirement on the part of the viewer to perform any action to keep diegetic events in motion.

Other extra-diegetic text and graphical features appear on the screen and can be regarded as content that is designed to aid the player in playing the game. Some are situation-specific menus that allow players to initiate fights or choose which enemy they target. Engaging in turn-based combat, which the player is required to do throughout the game as a core activity, produces “health bars” above enemies’ and party-members’ heads (these important feedback mechanisms are part of the game’s content, telling the player about the status of the fight, and diminish as player-characters make a strike with their in-game weapons). Numbers also appear for a few moments to indicate the percentage number of hits; occasionally a word such as “block” or “parry” splashes across the screen, making more sense of the differentiation of hit points achieved in combat. Graphic-based colored arcing lines indicate to the player which characters are attacking and being attacked (see Figure 21.3). Such “feedback” content enables players to make informed choices about what they do. Are the foes too strong? Should they run beyond the reach of these opponents? Or should they change opponents? A fight is therefore busy with information and action. While the informative features are anchored to the actions taking place in the diegesis, they are also in a filmic sense extra-diegetic, but all constitute content and are born of game (and, indeed, generic) form. This demonstrates how, in terms of content, games marry together diegetic and extra-diegetic features to form a gestalt, to use Craig Lindley’s useful term (Lindley, 2002),⁴ between the practical features or rules of gameplay and the fictional world created by the game. Jesper Juul makes a similar point, stressing the intersection between games as rules and games as fiction:

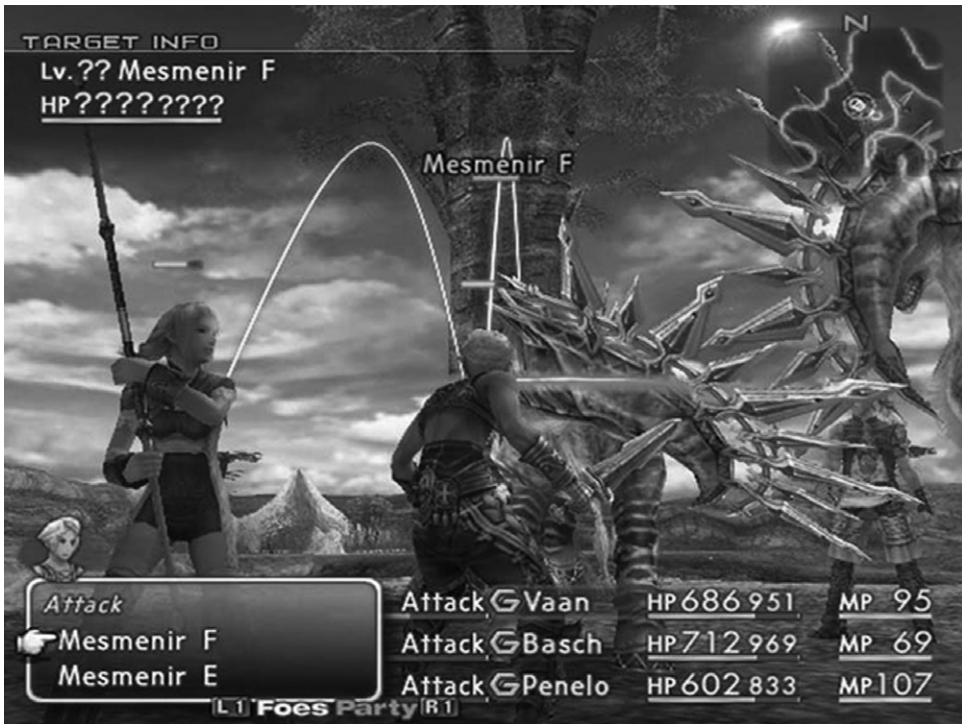


Figure 21.3 Graphic-based colored arcing lines indicate to the player which characters are attacking and being attacked.

“fiction cues the player into understanding the rules, and rules can cue the player into imagining a fictional world” (2005, p. 6). It is the combination of fiction (diegesis) and rules (exhibited through extra-diegetic features) that can be regarded as constituting form and content, that enable players to be agents within the fiction, making videogames fundamentally different from film (even if the representations of gender and war are derived from existing and normative traditions). The gestalt formed in the relationship between game and player means that rules are inhabited and transcended, often through what the player brings in terms of emotional and imaginary investment to his or her character and the game’s world. This only occurs because of the particular nature of the form and its shaping of content.

Therefore, during the game’s tutorial sequence, players are on a learning curve, being shown how to read content as part of what they are expected to do to progress through the game. Continuing with the unfolding of events in the game, more storyline is delivered and Reks finds the King of Dalmasca dead, learning that Basch killed him for his willingness to surrender Dalmasca to the Empire. Reks is once again wounded, this time by Basch (shaping up as the antagonist of the piece). As he falls into unconsciousness – it is unclear whether or not he has died – he calls the name of Vaan, his brother. We soon learn that it is not Reks we will play through

the rest of the game but Vaan. This represents a surprising twist in a game of this type, one that is inimical to game format, as, unlike films, where multiple views are afforded and a switch of point-of-view is common, games often anchor the player's point-of-view to that of one character who represents us in the world of the game, as with Lara Croft in the Tomb Raider games. While some games are not so arranged, in real-time strategy and management games for example, continuity of point-of-view is common within role-play and action-adventure games and helps players to gain a sense of identity within the world of the game. The shift into the skin of a new character accords with the game's cinematic aspirations. It also has a narrative and dramatic function, nascent at this point of the game, yet suggesting to the player either that the death of Reks will motivate Vaan to turn against the Empire or that he may need to be rescued. Through a series of scripted text screens, which shifts the time frame forward, we learn, erroneously, that Basch has been hanged as a lesson to all those who would oppose the Empire. Vaan, through whom the player now acts, is living hand-to-mouth in Dalmasca under the occupation of the Empire, but clearly aspires to being a warrior, the fate of his brother unknown both to him and to the player. As with many other fictions, this state of equilibrium is unlikely to last, but it will allow the player to get used to the game's interface and its particular vocabulary of actions. This again provides an example of content shaped by the demands of the game's participatory form.

The numerous cut-scenes in *Final Fantasy XII* work with the audiovisual grammar of cinema through framing, editing, and camerawork (even if this is rather hyperbolic in a manner similar to high-octane action-movie trailers). During gameplay sequences, however, the framing is anchored to the movements of the player-character, the camera positioned slightly above and behind the shoulder of the character, tracking its movement seamlessly. This is a product of game form, framing aspects of content. Unlike earlier games in the series, *Final Fantasy XII* does not use pre-rendered backgrounds. This means that the camera can be moved independently to some extent to facilitate a more flexible point-of-view, required for checking for objects or enemies and to get a better view of the terrain without having to move the character in the game space (which might in some situations attract unwanted aggression). However, the camera does pivot from a fixed point, which retains a link between the player and the character's perspective on the game world. This marks a significant difference from the more mobile framing conventions commonly used in cinema and plays a profound role in determining the nature of the game's content.

There are some considerable differences between the way that stories are structured and delivered in games and films, although there are some points of crossover. The tightly knit structures of cause and effect often found in cinema do, however, suit the feedback formations that characterize digital games. While it is rare, for example, for repetition to occur, as it does commonly in games (try and try again!), content formations might, however, be closer between games and films. With its greater than usual use of cut-scenes, *Final Fantasy XII* borrows from cinema as well as from tropes developed within the fantasy genre. Well-established fantasy

iconography and characterization, with their tendency to value heroic acts in battles against evil, lend an established generic flavor to the game's content.⁵ As a result of the aspiration to create a game with an epic and complex narrative, the story structure of *Final Fantasy XII* resembles, at least to some extent, the more flexible narrative structures of the type commonly found in recent Hollywood blockbuster action movies. In this sense, *Final Fantasy XII* is more cinematic than most other games. Such films tend to include sequences of action and spectacle that are often said to temporarily suspend narrative in favor of other more visually located pleasures. This might suggest that the structure of popular action-based film narratives has become more like that of games: the long chase sequence near the start of *Casino Royale* (2007), which involves much jumping and running, provides an excellent example. It is also possible that the frequent presence of game tie-ins with films has promoted this so that films can be translated easily into game format, which suggests a move toward what might be termed an aesthetic of convergence.

Narrative as Form and Content

Narrative and story have attracted a great deal of debate amongst videogame scholars. The tools employed to analyze the structure of narrative in mainstream films offer some use for the analysis of story in games, but in many ways they fail to deal adequately with the media-specific manner in which games structure and deliver story. Story is of course constituted in terms of content and form. Models of narrative found in mainstream films are more similar in games that Jesper Juul (2005) calls "games of progression." Such games, *Final Fantasy XII* included,⁶ require the player to follow a predetermined course of narratively framed action and have a more linear construction as a result. "Games of emergence," however, such as management games, real-time strategy games, MMOGs, and role-playing games, have a broader range of options and potential outcomes available to players that make these games more complex and open. These games, therefore, are either not concerned with narrative or are far less plot driven than games of progression. This is clearly a distinction of form, but these differences also influence content in certain respects.

In many games of progression, narrative is shifted more to the sidelines than is the case with most mainstream film. This is the case even in a game like *Final Fantasy XII*, which has a highly developed and complex story. But that is not to say that it is not important as a means of contextualizing what the player does in the game. Moment-by-moment developments, many of which are focused on achieving localized tasks, usually gain narrative importance through their position in the wider frame. Within games of emergence, however, the emphasis is often on what Lisbeth Klastrup (2003) has called the "player-story": the story that emerges through the choices, trajectory, and investments of the player. In *The Lord of the Rings Online*, for example, players are offered an environment that provides a host of means through

which game characters can be developed by players in imaginative ways, interacting in-character with other players should they choose to do so and tailoring play style accordingly. In addition, players are provided with the means to make some significant choices about what they specialize in and they can choose from a list of character types to best suit their gameplay preferences. The game's content (the design of the spaces, the items in the game, the broader mythos and ethos of the game) then supports the player-story, providing props for role play, for example. In addition, various choices are offered that allow the player's character to develop different types of skills. This content is of form, but it is content in a diegetic sense.

To some extent *Fable* (2004) combines features of games of emergence with games of progression: although there is a set path of progression, the player can, as in most role-playing games, choose to specialize in different modes of combat (e.g., spells, melee). Player choices make for some differences in the experience of the game, although they do not provide the breadth of divergence found in many other RPGs. Importantly, then, the scope for player intervention differs in games, and this is an issue not just of form but also of content. *Final Fantasy XII* provides the player with a good deal of freedom of character customization: you can develop Basch into a thief or Vaan into a mage. This flexibility is designed to suit different playing styles, placing greater influence on the player-story where the character of the game content is designed to be shaped by the player, but is often based on cues provided by the game's content (as well as being made possible by the game's participatory form). In all these cases, however, a comparative analysis between the structure and delivery of narrative in film and games can be used effectively to highlight convergences and divergences between the two media in terms of form and content. Significantly, narrative has a more central, organizing role in film than in games. Many games have little or no narrative, and where they do, players can choose whether or not to attend to or make imaginative investment in the game story, or even whether or not they regard their own experience of playing a game in story terms. Some players, for example, might simply choose to skip all the cut-scenes in *Final Fantasy XII*, preferring instead to get stuck into playing the game. From a design perspective, what many fantasy-based role-playing games aim to do to make for a compelling and immersive experience is to enable players to make use of the participatory nature of games to build into the content and form provided, something that makes players feel that their experience is uniquely based on their particular choices.

Affect, Movement, and Time

I turn now to what I regard as a significant aspect of the relationship between film and games and form and content in games that has hitherto received somewhat scant attention, and which builds on points made in the "Aesthetics of Convergence" section above. This absence is likely to have resulted from the centralization within

game studies of debate around the relative merits of ludology and narratology. This has tended to polarize the field. As a consequence, many authors, perhaps to avoid censure, have been intent on highlighting the ways that games diverge from film rather than considering points of possible convergence. Nonetheless, the goal of generating affect, by which I mean making what happens in a fiction matter to player/viewer/reader, is common to both media. Gilles Deleuze's (1986) writing on the affective qualities of cinema, informed by Henri Bergson's (1971) work on time, provides a productive means of considering affect and bodily sensation in relation to games. It also provides an impetus for ascertaining how games create affect differently from film in terms of form and content. The goal to generate diverse affective experience underlies the use of a host of different techniques. Indicative of these are: suspense, anxiety, tension, relief, frustration, anger, pity, delight, surety, and fear. In this sense, representation is often subtended to affect rather than cultural agendas around the politics of representation. Games regularly make use of the types of techniques used in cinema to generate affective experience. Due to space constraints I will focus on two indicative examples. The first focuses on music and the second on graphics and gameplay – in terms of content and form. These examples stand in for a multitude of possibilities.

Both films and games use music and sound effects as important formal and content means of setting a scene or event's emotional pitch. Music and sound often tell us how to read what occurs and also provide a very immediate way of evoking particular physical sensations. As players travel through the area known as the Shire in *The Lord of the Rings Online*, they encounter eight types of music that are representative of the English countryside and a kind of rural authenticity. Each of these musical styles is inspired by folk music. They are divided into jaunty foot-tapping tunes played on acoustic instruments (flutes, violins, and guitar) and more plaintive and wistful tunes, mostly played on single instruments (these are mainly non-diegetic but at times diegetic – in the village of Stock, musicians can be seen playing on the bandstand outside the village tavern, and most taverns have minstrels). In combination with the green and pleasant rural landscape of early summertime, with hobbit homes nestling in the safety of small hills, the soundscape composed of folk music, ambient sounds such as bird song, a gentle breeze blowing, and domestic animals is clearly designed to evoke a desirable pastoral idyll. Representing something of "good" and of value, it is designed to make the player care about its fate when it becomes imperiled. When traveling in the Shire, there is a strong sense of peacefulness and nostalgia for an uncomplicated life (Figure 21.4), a representation that is clearly motivated by a desire to engage the player at an emotional level. The same types of images, sounds, and music (similar style and instruments, although with different intellectual property content) are also used in the early scenes of Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy.

The tranquility and comfort of the folk music is counterpoised dramatically with the music associated with spaces or beings designated as evil or threatening. In the Old Forest region of the game (Figure 21.5), sustained unresolved chords,



Figure 21.4 The Party Tree in the Shire: pastoral idyll.



Figure 21.5 Attacked in the Old Forest by a warped oak.

accompanied by eerie, from-the-depths trombone sounds and tympani, provide an immediate and highly disturbing sense of tension and threat. Exciting it might be, but the representational scheme is designed to motivate the player to fight to conserve in narrative terms the quotidian life of hobbits. Similar types of musical arrangements are heard in the film with similar effects. In each case music, both as content and operating representationally, forms a gestalt with the story – the valuable “small cares” existence of hobbits is threatened by evil forces. In conjunction with jarring and ominous music, the labyrinthine design of the Old Forest, in which the hapless traveler is apt to become lost, with dangerous trees that uproot themselves to kill the unwary, is far from a comfortable and relaxing place to be. Indeed, many players complain in “out-of-character” chat about the place and its perils, which to some extent demonstrates the way in which music, gameplay, reception, and graphics are knit together to produce strong affect. This affect is heightened because of its juxtaposition with the Shire – which is giving potency in terms of content and representation, in much the same way as in the film and the novel, but form means that the player has a real place, real choices and actions to take, in this virtual space.

Whether it is melodic and bright or dissonant, jarring, and dark, music has powerful affective qualities, making it a potent aspect of content and, in some regard, representation. As Henri Bergson has written, the rhythm and measure of music suspend “the normal flow of our sensations and ideas by causing our attention to swing to and fro between fixed points, and they take hold of us with such force that even the faintest imitation of a groan will suffice to fill us with the utmost sadness” (1971, pp. 14–15). Music is affective because, he says, it impresses feelings upon us rather than expressing them, arousing sympathy in our minds “just as a mere gesture on the part of the hypnotist is enough to force the intended suggestion upon a subject accustomed to his control” (p. 16). Toward the goal of producing affect, music is indispensable: the movements of music can move us profoundly, far more easily than visual representational means alone. In broader game history terms, moving from small cartridge memory to CD and then to DVD format has made significant shifts in the amount and complexity of audio in games; the availability of greater space for sound files means that games are now better able to mimic the quality and complexity of sound and music in cinema, which provides thereby an increasingly potent means of making games more meaningful. Music is therefore a powerful component of a game’s content and representational schemes, and is often tied into gameplay activities, for example, hearing a threatening, lethal “warped oak” coming your way before you are able to see it.

In the opening cut-scene sequences of *Final Fantasy XII*, described earlier, there is a heavy emphasis on visual movement that is designed not only to arrest the gaze but also to give viewers through virtual means a physical sense of unanchored movement.⁷ The pursuit of this affective quality drove the design of the content. Through the mobile, airborne camera, aided by the creation, through editing and framing, of a sense of speedy movement in a huge depth of field, a sense of disembodied freedom, of soaring, of not being weighed down and fixed to matter or point-of-view

is strongly present. This is emblematic of both the theme and the broad ethic of the game: fight to free the world from stultifying oppression. Movement, travel, is life and stasis, death.⁸ After the cut-scenes end and play begins in earnest, the player-character becomes earth-bound, limited in where he or she can move by various hard and soft boundaries including non-player characters (NPCs) that represent the oppressive force of the Empire. Vaan, Reks, and, by implication, the player are locked into constrained situations by the programmed organization of the game's space and physics as well as the conditions of the diegetic world. This content ties into the very form of games. These constraints determine the player-character's movements and actions. The player-character is in multiple senses determined (overdetermined in the psychoanalytic sense) to break free and learn how to move and act according to will without clumsy restraint. Form, representation, and content have a pleasing unity, therefore. In short, the goal – the imagined ideal – is unrestrained agency. Significantly, very early on in the game, Vaan passionately proclaims his intense desire to become a flyer, which is finally fulfilled in the last scene of a successful play-through. This ties very neatly into what I regard as the extended metaphor established at the start of the game of flight as emblematic of freedom. Also very neatly (under the badge of fortuitous serendipity), it dovetails with Deleuze's own investment in what he calls "lines of flight," which is used to mean deterritorialization (no longer earth-bound, no longer bound) as a form of resistance to leaden and restrained hegemonic organizations of subjectivity, thought, experience, and life in general. I don't for a moment believe that the authors of the game are intentionally making their game through reading Deleuze; instead, across a range of boundaries including cultural ones, both game and Deleuze use the poetic notion of flight as a metaphor for freedom.

Could the same felt meaning be achieved in a film? Yes, but because of differences of interactive game form, this extends into other dimensions. In the context of a game, through the character, the player actively bumps into various boundaries that are experienced as diegetic limits on play and agency, as well as limitations of the programmed actions that the character can make. This gives, as I have said elsewhere (Krzywinska, 2002), a very direct and felt experience of the way that external forces and bodily realities limit personal agency. It is representational and operates through content, but it is form that provides this hands-on experience of constraints on agency. In the cinematic cut-scenes we are given images and, importantly, sensations of what it is to be free – the cinematics act, therefore, as emblematic of an ideal "free" state unhindered by the restraints of embodiment (unachievable but relative and thereby informative structurally, textually, and affectively). The opening cut-scene seems therefore to represent the sphere of the imaginary and thereby imbues the rest of the game with a certain sense of realism, even if it is represented graphically in anime terms. As well as acting as a counterpoise to the particular embodiment and determinations we experience during gameplay (and in real life), this is also indicative of the high regard that the game designers have for cinema and their own aspirations to achieve the heights of what they think cinema has offered

viewers. Herein lies a damning indictment of the way that games are regarded culturally and industrially as a lower form of activity than filmmaking.

In the game, movement is far more restricted and less fluid than within the cinematic cut-scenes, yet, paradoxically, within these the player is required to do nothing but watch, even as they might capture the imagination and locate the viewer in the soaring realm of the fantasmatic. Taking up suggestions from Bergson (1971, 2004) and Deleuze (1986), the passivity within which we are encased when watching a film results in a high degree of affective intensity. Because we cannot act, the energy that is generated turns inwards, strengthening through the very nature of the virtual affect. If this is the case, then what of games? If we are provided as players with the capacity to act, to have some agency to prevent Vaan from dying in a fight, for example, then is there less affect in play than if we were simply watching him have a fight in a film? Speculatively, I believe the answer is no. Here we cut to the heart of the differences between playing a digital game, doing things in real life, and watching a film. Games require the player to make tightly measured movements in response to what occurs on screen. Agency is condensed within these tiny controlled movements. If we get out of hand, as it were, then we fumble our actions. The act of having to control what we do extremely carefully, to reproduce certain key presses in a given order in response to the stuff of content, means that energies are still folded back on themselves by virtue of the control, or mastery, the player needs to exert. Erroneous play (leading to repetition and stasis) or success (leading to a state of flow and a sense of moving forward through time) both feed into the register of interactivity to create intensity. Frustration ensues when we don't control what we do absolutely, a type of self-blaming frustration that I, at least, have never felt when watching a film. Even if one is frustrated with a film or television show, it is rarely on account of one's own bungled action. If we do get things right, self-satisfaction is the result – the type of affect that makes us feel very good about ourselves, and again that type of affect in a truly physical sense is not something I have experienced when watching a film. Content and representation have, then, a supporting role in the formal player-centric context of games.

Nonetheless, playing a game demands close reading from players, close reading of content and representational schemes, if they are to make the right kind of responses. If you don't pay attention to events, or proxemics and kinesics (the positioning of characters/objects and the way they move) when watching a film, then only potential meanings are lost, whereas in games you, the player, lose far more, and it's *personal*. Games therefore are architected from learning curves that tutor the player in how to read closely the cues provided by a situation and how to react in cognitive and physical terms.

Games and films are different entities, yet as screen media the boundaries between them are far from sealed. Games borrow from film, films borrow from games. Players bring what they know of film to games, and with the recent trend for tie-ins between games and films, viewers are apt to bring to the experience of watching film their knowledge of games. *The Lord of the Rings Online* provides an indicative

example. Imagery established within Peter Jackson's films informs the game and players role-play often using representational character and situation cues from those films (indeed, it appears that more players use the films to inform their presence in the game's world than the books on which the franchise is based). With the Final Fantasy franchise, the games came first. The two films consolidate the game worlds across different, but related, media, and they use crossover imagery between iterations of the franchise. Those who have played the games are very likely to read the films through their experience of the games; intertextuality is therefore a property of content, representation, and form. Popular culture has of late embraced world-based fictions such as these because the format lends itself well to multi-authored cross-media franchises. These become playgrounds for numerous writers and artists, as Henry Jenkins (2006) has said; a context is set up and they are able to make up multiple stories and experiences within the context of the world. Given that convergence is fast becoming core to the business strategies of the contemporary media industry, fictional, virtual worlds offer up a recognizable brand with particular flavors that make use of the various characteristics of different medial forms that can be used to produce a whole range of products to make for greater market penetration. This dovetails all too neatly with increasing technological and industrial convergence, which depends on formulating devices to create long-stay, regularly spending audiences and consumers. As such, the spheres of games and media are merging ever closer in terms of content and representations, even though games and films have a range of formal differences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Anna Powell's *Deleuze and the Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), as reviewing Anna's book reignited an interest in Deleuze and Bergson. Thanks to Douglas Brown, David Surman, and Esther MacCallum for their thoughtful and informed comments on drafts of this chapter.

NOTES

- 1 Peter Molyneux in conversation about the influences that informed the design of *Fable 2* (Lionhead) with MA Digital Games Theory and Design students at Brunel University, London, UK, March 2007.
- 2 Basch's character recalls the historical figure of Yuki Hideyasu (1574–1607). Pastiche of Edo grand narratives are a staple of Japanese cinema and also filter into Japanese role-playing games (RPGs). (My thanks to David Surman for pointing this out.)
- 3 The *Final Fantasy* games have often been criticized for the gulf between cut-scenes and in-game graphics, but with each incarnation and with developments in graphics processing, the difference is lessened.

- 4 I differ from Lindley's argument here in that I maintain that narrative and gameplay form a gestalt in their own right, because they work together through the game fiction and rules.
- 5 In Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) cut-scenes are rarely used except in opening expositions. *Guild Wars* is, however, a notable exception. Some games have dispensed with cut-scenes completely, preferring instead to deliver story through gameplay, as is the (often celebrated) case with *Half Life* (1998).
- 6 Although often thought of as an RPG, *Final Fantasy XII* has a lot in common with action-adventure games.
- 7 As mentioned above, I point the reader to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L20Ph_IC514&mode=related&search= to view the opening cinematic sequences of the game.
- 8 This is echoed in the motif of nethercrite, the reification of magic (a gift from the gods), created by the convergence of magical tradewinds, versus manufactured nethercrite, a creation of the Empire that sucks magic from the world.

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Recent Trends in Research on Health Portrayals in the Media

From TV, Newspapers, and Magazines to Websites, YouTube, and Manga

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ABSTRACT

Health information may be obtained in a variety of ways, but the data indicate that the media are a key source for most people. Key topics related to health information in the media include those focusing on various addictions (drugs, alcohol, tobacco), cancer information (focusing on screening, treatment, and coping), direct-to-consumer ads, coronary heart disease, weight concerns, misdiagnosis, mental health portrayals, seizures, steroids, asthma, and genetic issues. Much work examines the accuracy of health information reporting as well as the usability/accessibility/readability of health information. Risk issues are an important component of work in this area. Additionally, nutrition and food safety information is frequently featured. More recent research is most likely to be theoretically based, to focus on unusual health concerns or unusual media, and to provide an international focus. This essay addresses these issues as well as differences amongst various media in the presentation of health information. It concludes with innovative directions for research on health portrayals in the media.

The concern voiced by social critics about portrayals of health issues in the mass media stems from the belief that the mass media are so pervasive that they are nearly inescapable. However, it is not the pervasiveness of the media alone that prompts concern about the way health issues are portrayed in the media. A growing body of research suggests that exposure to those portrayals can impact the audience in a variety of different ways. Discussions of these impacts include social learning and modeling, issue framing, cognitive priming, agenda setting, spiral of silence, and cultivation. While this chapter focuses on media content, audience members can be, and indeed are, influenced by these portrayals under some conditions. Given this, it is important to review recent research examining media portrayals of health issues in order to determine the kinds of information the audience is receiving about health and wellness.

Early literature on media portrayals often focused on media representations of sex and violence because scholars and social critics alike were concerned that the media could promote antisocial behavior. Anecdotal evidence of this potential for audience influence was often provided as a way of demonstrating the need for such research. For example, scholars and social critics cited the statistic that television character Marcus Welby, M.D. received thousands of pieces of mail requesting medical advice (Gross & Jefferies-Fox, 1978), while a major publication like *Time* ("Television," 1984) discussed copycat crimes generated from media portrayals. Examples of these events abound, and include Joseph Brandt setting his wife on fire after watching Farah Fawcett in the made-for-TV movie *The Burning Bed* (1984). Exactly what it means to request medical advice from a TV character is not clearly delineated by those scholars, but the actor Robert Young was not a physician, and if it were not for his success on *Father Knows Best* (1954–1960) and *Marcus Welby, M.D.* (1969–1976), it is unlikely audience members would have been as interested in his diagnostic skills. It is interesting to note that even today the Internet is literally littered with social critics pointing to audience responses to the good doctor Welby.

Media scholars employing content analysis have always been interested in the accuracy of those media portrayals (c.f. Berelson, 1952; DeFleur, 1964). Scholars often compared the race, gender, and age of TV characters with those distributions within the US population as a way of identifying an expected value for the demography of television. Evidence of the paucity of female characters and/or characters of color was provided by comparison with their respective percentages within the population. Similarly, scholars interested in health portrayals have also relied on comparisons between media portrayals and best health practices as a means of demonstrating the accuracy or the inaccuracy of media portrayals (Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982). For example, Kauffman (1980) employed the food pyramid as a criterion for interpreting TV portrayals of eating. Turow and Coe (1985) compared TV portrayals of misdiagnoses with national averages provided by the medical industry. Diefenbach (1997) examined the realism and accuracy of mental health portrayals. He found that characters with mental illness were between 10 and 20 times more violent than US citizens diagnosed with mental health problems.

This trend continues and can be seen in a recent investigation examining prime-time medical dramas. Moeller, Sadler, Moeller, and Rahey (2010) investigated how seizures are portrayed on *Grey's Anatomy*, *House*, *Private Practice*, and the last five seasons of *ER*. Not surprisingly, they found the portrayals a convenient narrative technique for adding drama and pushing the storyline along, but less than accurate in the portrayals of seizures and, perhaps more importantly, the treatment of those seizures. Specifically, 46% of the seizures in the episodes studied were found to be inconsistent with the recommendations of the National Epilepsy Foundation's guidelines for seizure first aid, while only 29% were consistent with those guidelines. Contrary to some portrayals, holding the patient down and/or putting something in the patient's mouth are inappropriate and medically contraindicated.

Health portrayal researchers must also consider the fact that patients want more information about their illness, treatment options, and side effects of treatments than they receive from their physicians. Further, they want written patient information or healthcare literature to supplement the information provided during office consultations (Donovan, 1991). So it is natural that when looking for health information, patients often turn to the mass media. Mills and Davidson (2002) and others have found that television, newspapers, and magazines are important sources of health information for many patients. Similarly, the Internet has also become an important source for health information (Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Fox, 2005).

Scholarly Outlets for Content-Analytic Investigations

In a recent investigation, Manganello and Blake (2010) identified studies published between 1985 and 2005 that examined portrayals of health and health-related issues in the mass media. The search yielded 441 articles published in 182 different academic journals over the two decades. Each article was coded for the type of media examined, health issue, theoretical rationale, and journal title. Forty-nine percent of the articles appeared in just five journals: *Sex Roles* ($n = 23$), *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* ($n = 21$), *American Journal of Public Health* ($n = 17$), *Journal of Health Communication* ($n = 14$), and *Journal of Communication* ($n = 14$). The most frequently content-analyzed media channels were magazines (35%), newspapers (31%), and television (29%). Fewer than 10% of the articles analyzed more than one media channel within a single investigation. While most of the content-analytic investigations focused on the articles in magazines and newspapers, 45% of the magazine studies focused on advertisements and 16% analyzed articles and advertisements and/or magazine covers. In the case of television, only 27% of the studies examined advertisements and 14% examined television news. The remaining 59% studied entertainment programming on television.

An analysis of the most frequently studied health issues suggests that the majority of the articles focused on substance abuse (22%), violence (20%), sex and sexual behavior (16%), and body image/obesity (15%). Fifty-five percent of the articles cited at least one theory or model as the rationale (or partial rationale) for the study, and 70% reported intercoder agreement or reliability estimates for the content categories.

With that study providing a solid baseline for further investigation, the authors of the present chapter examined content-analytic investigations published over the past five years. The analysis of these investigations yielded three notable trends within health portrayals research: (1) the investigation of a wider variety of illnesses and health issues; (2) the application of a wider variety of theoretical rationales for the investigations; and (3) increasing diversity as evidenced by greater emphasis on international portrayals and a wider variety of media channels.

Recent Trends in Content-Analytic Investigations

The Examination of Illness and Health Issues

Even the most cursory examination of the health portrayals literature leaves the reader with a strong impression that scholars are looking at a wide variety of illnesses and health issues. Without empirical testing it is impossible to state that researchers are examining a much wider range of illnesses and health issues than they have in the past, but it certainly appears to be the case.

For example, Quick (2010) conducted a large-scale content-analytic investigation of the portrayals of steroid use on television news programs. While previous work (Denham, 2004a, 2004b) examined portrayals of steroid use by specific individuals (e.g., Carl Lewis and Ken Caminiti), Quick analyzed all portrayals between 1990 and 2008 on three networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) to see how the issue of steroid use was framed in the media. Using the health belief model (Janz & Becker, 1984) to generate content categories, Quick found that 64.5% of the news stories studied identified one or more of the barriers facing those individuals when they decided whether or not they should take steroids. The barriers included illegality (73%), drug testing/getting caught (15%), health costs (12%), suspensions (12%), fines for steroid use (<1%), and the expense of buying steroids (<1%). Similarly, stories not mentioning health consequences were far more common than stories identifying the health consequences of steroid use across all three time periods sampled (1990–1996, 1997–2002, and 2003–2008).

A second example of the increase in types of health issues investigated by some scholars can be seen in the interest in direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs (DTCA). DTCA – the marketing of prescription drugs to audiences through newspaper, magazine, and/or television advertising – is a relatively new advertising

technique, and one that has just recently begun being examined by health communication researchers. Among the industrialized nations it is legal only in the United States and New Zealand. Examination of manuscripts sent to the journal *Health Communication* since 2008 indicates that 12 manuscripts focusing on DTCA have been submitted for publication. To date only Sokol, Wackowski, and Lewis (2010) have examined these DTC advertisements to see the kinds of information that is provided to consumers.

Sokol and colleagues (2010) analyzed the five women's magazines with the highest circulation rates (*Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Redbook*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Good Housekeeping*) published between July 2005 and June 2006. The DTC advertisements found were produced by 35 different marketing companies and focused on 56 different medications as well as 36 different medical conditions, the most common of which were chronic conditions (42.7%), mental health problems (15.4%), lifestyle conditions (14.5%), cardiovascular conditions (12.8%), acute conditions (7.7%), and cancer (6.8%). Most often the name of the drug (40%) and the condition to be treated by the drug (62%) were identified in the headline of the advertisement. Initially examining the unique magazine advertisements, the researchers observed that 84.2% of the ads were product claim ads for prescription drugs. Product claim ads identify a particular drug by name and associate that drug with the particular health problem it is intended to resolve or manage. Far less common (10.1%) were: (1) help-seeking advertisements – designed to educate and raise consumer awareness but including no references to any particular drug names; and (2) reminder advertisements (5.8%) – those advertisements that identify medication names but do not link them to a particular malady.

A fourth example of the increase in health issue diversity can be found in an investigation by Johnson, Henderson, Pederson, and Stonecipher (2011). The researchers' concerns over how newspapers portray asthma is predicated on the prevalence of the disease within the population (just under 12% of US citizens have asthma at some point in their lives), the costs associated with asthma (about \$20 billion annually), and the fact that there is no known cure for asthma (American Lung Association, 2010). A total of 203 articles focusing on asthma were identified, nearly half of which focused on issues other than asthma (e.g., air quality and allergies). Eighty-five percent of the stories contained one or more asthma management strategy (e.g., avoidance of drugs), and 43% contained at least one fear-based message (e.g., asthma is scary, asthma is stifling, or asthma can kill).

Finally, recent investigations focusing on health portrayals have not ignored mental health issues. Rather than simply examining portrayals of mental health, and recognizing that physical activity, a healthy diet, social activity, and engagement are believed to benefit our cognitive health, Friedman, Laditka, Laditka, and Mathews (2010) examined 178 articles published between 2006 and 2007 in the 20 most widely circulated magazines with a variety of different intended audiences. They found that the most common focus of cognitive health articles was diet, and there was little discussion of other factors affecting cognitive health such as hypertension or diabetes.

Publications oriented toward the African American audience were least likely to contain stories and columns focusing on cognitive health. Equally troubling was the lack of emphasis placed on social activity as an antidote for cognitive decline – only 15.2% of the articles made mention of this fact. When mentioned, social activity was most often relegated to a list of things that might help, and little emphasis was placed on this important cognitive health consideration. Similarly, physical activity was seldom mentioned by itself as an activity that can reduce the risk of cognitive decline. The importance of physical activity on a variety of other health problems, including hypertension, obesity, vascular health, and diabetes, was also largely ignored.

To strengthen our contention that there has been an increase in illnesses and health issues examined by portrayals researchers, a list of the articles focusing on health portrayals that were submitted for publication in the longest-standing journal in the area, *Health Communication*, between 2006 and 2011, was generated. The partial list of health illnesses and health topics included hormone therapy, sex education, transgendered community websites, sexual behavior and HIV, alcohol abuse, cough syrup contamination, food advertising, congenital cytomegalovirus, cigarette advertising, human papilloma virus (HPV) and the HPV vaccine, nutrient content claims, skin cancer, heart disease, organ donation, DTCA, smoking fetish videos, diet, tanning, health website privacy policy statements, clean air, depression and cognitive health, portrayals of healthcare professionals (including physicians, nurses, nutritionists, psychiatrists, counselors, physical therapists, pharmacists, masseuses, and paramedics), avian flu, medical tourism, breast cancer, substance abuse, alcohol abuse, and breastfeeding. Perhaps the most unusual issues investigated within one of these content studies were Lapinski's (2006) examination of pro-eating disorder websites and Kim, Paek, and Lynn's (2010) examination of smoking fetish videos.

The Employment of Theory

The majority of the studies examined in the writing of this chapter were theoretically based. This comes as no surprise, as Manganello and Blake (2010) found that 55% of the content analyses published between 1985 and 2005 in the journal *Health Communication* cited at least one theory or model. Our examination of all articles published in *Health Communication* between 2006 and 2011 suggests that this trend continues and is strengthening.

Initially a list of all content-analytic investigations that focused on health portrayals was generated. This list contained all articles that were published, rejected, or to be revised and was then reduced to the 22 articles that had been accepted for publication. Each article was then coded for inclusion of a theoretical rationale. Seventy-seven percent of the published articles cited at least one theory or model ($n = 17$) and 31.8% of the published articles cited two or more theories ($n = 7$). Of the five additional investigations focusing on health portrayals, one was a descriptive study of media portrayals, two were rhetorical analyses, and two were textual analyses.

From this analysis it is clear that researchers employ a variety of different theories in their efforts to describe media portrayals of illness and health. Our review of the 22 content-analytic investigations published in *Health Communication* suggests the most commonly employed theory was Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (28.6%, $n = 6$). Researchers employing social cognitive theory or social learning theory typically focus on the kinds of behaviors and/or the kinds of information that audience members learn about health from the media.

The second most common theoretical base (19.0%, $n = 4$) for content-analytic investigations was framing theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 2000; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Studies based on framing typically focus on how health issues are presented or framed as a way of extending the simpler issue salience approach typically employed by research based on agenda setting. Framing studies look at how the argument or issue is presented rather than just the number of times an issue is presented in the media.

Agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) was the third most common theoretical rationale for the health portrayals research examined (14%, $n = 3$). Agenda-setting research focuses on how frequently a health issue is portrayed and/or the prominence of the issue. Generally, the agenda-setting rationale does not examine issue framing unless both are mentioned explicitly.

Tied for the fourth most common theoretical rationale (9.5%, $n = 2$) are the health belief model (Rosenstock, 1974), cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1970), and the extended parallel processing model (Witte, 1992). Other theories used only once within the 22 studies included: social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985), social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), narrative theory (Fisher, 1987), and the sexual imagery model (Byrne, 1977).

For example, Greenberg, Rosaen, Worrell, Salmon, and Volkman (2009) examined media portrayals of eating and drinking on children's television shows. Within this investigation they employed both Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Gerbner's (1970) cultivation theory in their efforts to gain insight into the problem of obesity in the United States. The role the media play in this problem has been investigated by a number of scholars, who generally find that the eating and drinking habits of TV characters are far from healthy. In this investigation, Greenberg and colleagues (2009) examined 50 children's shows, 50 shows targeted at 9- to 14-year-olds, 40 afternoon soap operas, and 50 prime-time programs and found reason for social critics to be concerned. Specifically, they observed that eating and drinking are common activities and foods considered unhealthy – foods containing oils, solid fats, and foods with added sugars (OFFS) – are particularly prevalent. These potentially problematic foods are typically eaten as snacks or treats and are quite commonly ingested on programs oriented toward younger viewers. They also found that the consumption of alcohol is customary on shows viewed by children aged 9 to 14 and that drinking often occurs as a social activity within the context of a celebration. Greenberg and colleagues also found few negative consequences for eating unhealthy foods or drinking alcohol, and observed social rewards associated with

drinking alcohol on these programs. Teens in particular are often shown characters that are drinking alcohol, and such drinking is often associated with partying and general merriment.

These findings by Greenberg and colleagues (2009) are interesting for a variety of reasons – not the least of which is that they illustrate that researchers need to recognize that media portrayals can impact audience members in different ways. From the perspective of social cognitive theory, the audience is more actively involved with the learning and/or imitating process. In the case of teens exposed to drinking, the paucity of negative consequences and the association with merriment suggest viewers can learn that drinking results in fun and few negative consequences. In the case of young children eating junk food, cultivation theory suggests children need not learn or even notice the relationship between the unhealthy behavior and its consequences. Merely being exposed to themes on television can yield the belief that overeating or eating in a less than healthy manner is not only acceptable, it is to a large degree the “American way of life.”

Other researchers also employed multiple theoretical models in their analysis of health portrayals. Quick (2010) employed media framing theory and the health belief model in his investigation of steroid use. Baek and Mayer (2010) employed Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory and Byrne’s (1977) sexual imagery model in their investigation of sexual imagery in cigarette advertising. Gold, Cohen, and Shumate (2008) used social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and Fisher’s (1987) narrative theory in their examination of proscriptive models and evidence in smoking advertisements. Rains and Bosch (2009) used social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and exchange theory (Bagozzi, 1979) in their investigation of health website privacy statements. And, as was pointed out above, Greenberg and colleagues (2009) employed social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1970).

The remaining two articles employed three theories within their investigation. Noar, Clark, Cole, and Lustria (2006) used social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), media framing (Kahneman & Tversky, 2000; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001), and the extended parallel processing model (Witte, 1992). Wang and Gantz (2010) employed agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), social learning (Bandura, 1986), and cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1970).

The use of multiple theoretical models is advantageous to the researcher because it allows more sophisticated content-analytic schemes to be employed. Researchers can use the theory, the previous research findings, and the known boundary conditions of the theory to fine-tune their categories. In addition, the use of multiple theoretical models allows researchers to pit different theories against one another. These competitive situations can produce significant insight into the validity of the various theories.

In addition to using multiple theories in their investigation, Baek and Mayer (2010) also employ a public policy argument in their examination of sexual imagery in cigarette advertising. While concerns about portrayals of sexual imagery and the dangers of smoking have long been of interest to communication scholars, this investigation

focuses on the legal arrangement known as the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) to determine whether depictions of sexual imagery changed after the agreement. The MSA was signed in 1998 by the four major US tobacco manufacturers and the Attorneys General of 46 US states, prohibiting advertising and promotional practices targeting youth. The MSA was in principle an effort to restrict or limit the amount of cigarette advertising exposure to which the youth of the United States were subjected.

Baek and Mayer (2010) suggest that cigarette advertisers began to modify their techniques to incorporate more sexual imagery into the advertisements in an effort to encourage the purchasing of tobacco products without overtly targeting young people. The authors' concern was, then, to determine if sexual imagery in cigarette advertising had changed since the agreement was signed. The results of the investigation suggest that there was a significant increase in scantily clad female models after the agreement. Further, the incidence of advertisements containing sexually explicit material and ads depicting voyeurism increased after the agreement was reached. The authors contend that this change in the visuals of the advertising is an attempt to influence young people without violating the letter of the agreement.

Media Channels and Internationalization

Health communication scholars have begun examining an ever widening variety of different media channels in their efforts to document portrayals of illness and health issues. In the analysis of articles published in *Health Communication* between 1985 and 2005, Manganello and Blake (2010) found that 35% of the studies focused on magazines, 31% focused on newspapers, and 29% focused on television. As a point of comparison, seven articles (31.8%) published in *Health Communication* between 2006 and 2011 examined TV portrayals of health, six articles (27.3%) examined content found on the Internet, five articles (22.7%) examined health portrayals from newspapers, and four articles (18.2%) focused on health portrayals in magazines. Channel variety, however, is more than simply the addition of the Internet to traditional media channels such as TV, newspapers, radio, and magazines.

An example of channel variety can be found in the work of Wang and Gantz (2010). While the researchers examined television content, they focused on local news programs in four media markets rather than the more common examination of national programming. Wang and Gantz (2010) argue that local programming needs closer scrutiny than it has traditionally received because 56% of US adults consider local news programs to be an important source of health information and because little previous research has focused on local news programming. In this investigation, the authors examined 1,382.5 hours of newscasts on seven channels (the affiliates of ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, UPN, WB, and Univision) in four different markets (a major market, a large market, a medium market, and a small Midwestern market) aired between December 2004 and June 2005. Just over 8% of the 40,112

news stories focused on health issues, which means that about 1.26 health stories aired every 30 minutes. About 46% of the stories were less than 30 seconds in length and 74.5% of all stories lasted less than 60 seconds. Another example of the increasing interest in a wider variety of media channels can be seen in the TV channels selected by Wang and Gantz (2010). The addition of niche cable channels and international channels to the more typical big three (or big four with the addition of Fox) again illustrates how media portrayal research is changing.

While differences in markets were observed – the Indianapolis market had fewer health stories than Terre Haute, South Bend, and Chicago – the headline findings come from the frequency of illness types. Mental health stories rarely appear on the local news and gerontological health stories were even less common. The illnesses depicted or presented in descending order were as follows: cancer (12.2%), heart disease (5.5%), flu (3.4%), obesity (2%), diabetes (1.2%), joint and tissue disorders (1.2%), and lung diseases (1%). The distribution of general health issues was as follows: physical illness (46%), healthy living (24.8%), health insurance, health law or health policy (12%), parents and children (6.8%), environmental health issues (3.8%), mental health issues (3%), and aging (0.7%). Very few stories contained contrasting viewpoints on issues but most stories were neutral in tone and unlikely to produce unwarranted fear or a disinclination in viewers to engage in further health information seeking.

A second example of an increasing variety of media channels can be found in the studies examining YouTube videos. Tian (2010) used media framing theory in her examination of organ donation videos on YouTube. Kim and colleagues (2010), on the other hand, examined smoking fetish videos on YouTube. Smoking fetish videos are those produced by individuals that promote or encourage smoking, and in which the smoking is associated with sexual behavior. These pro-smoking messages are often geared toward adolescents, who make up the largest portion of Internet users. Kim and colleagues (2010) noted that pro-smoking messages on the Internet are rarely regulated, despite criticism and regulatory efforts against smoking. They further note that most smoking prevention programs, which are addressed toward adolescents, emphasize education about the long-term health consequences of smoking, but ignore the short-term benefits experienced by youth. These short-term benefits include looking cool and sexy – which is, of course, exactly what the smoking fetish videos do so well.

Employing social cognitive theory, the authors examine the prevalence of smoking fetish videos on YouTube, document the accessibility of those videos, and describe portrayals of smoking and the models who smoke in those videos. Using the search term smoking on YouTube identified 139,000 hits. When narrowing the search to smoking fetish videos (those containing smoking and sex), a total of 2,200 videos (or 1.6% of all smoking videos) was identified. While videos that are flagged must be approved by the YouTube staff to ensure the viewer is 18 years of age or older, only 15% of these videos were not accessible to children. It appears that over 95% of the videos contained explicit portrayals of inhaling and exhaling tobacco as well as

models holding tobacco products. In just under 50% of the cases the models were shown lighting a cigarette (91%), cigars (3.2%), pipe (1.6%), or a hookah (.5%). Using the Motion Picture Association of America's (2005) scheme for rating content, only 40% of the videos would have been rated PG and 27.2% of the smoking fetish videos would have received a rating of R. And, again, these videos, unlike motion pictures, go unregulated on the Internet. Other recent content studies have examined other resources on the Internet for health portrayals, including Lapinski's (2006) examination of pro-eating disorder websites and Noar and colleagues' (2006) examination of safe-sex websites.

Scholars studying health portrayals did not ignore the fact that 60% of all teenagers pleasure-read on any given day (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010) and many of those teens spend as much time reading as they spend playing videogames (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). In their quest to find out what those bookworms learned about health, Coyne, Callister, and Phillips (2011) examined alcohol and other substance use and abuse in adolescent novels. The authors used the *New York Times* Best Sellers List to identify 40 best-selling adolescent novels sold between June and July of 2008. Coding the 14,005 pages yielded a total of 357 incidents of substance use (including alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and legal drugs). As expected, alcohol use ($n = 240$) was more common than all other substances combined (tobacco ($n = 79$), illegal drugs ($n = 35$), and legal drugs ($n = 3$)). Surprisingly, the most common reasons for substance use were habit or addiction ($n = 98$) and socializing ($n = 86$). Somewhat less frequent reasons for use were relaxing ($n = 55$), coping with stress and other difficulties ($n = 50$), and celebrating (9.0%, $n = 32$). The substances used in the stories were acquired by the user in 75% of the cases, and there were no consequences for substance use in 83% of the cases. Coyne and colleagues (2011) employed the general learning model (Buckley & Anderson, 2006) in this investigation to describe the mechanisms through which media portrayals may affect adolescent attitudes and behaviors. Unlike other models of media influence, proponents of the general learning model suggest the media can activate extant cognitions and cognitive scripts as well as create and strengthen those scripts over time. This investigation also points to an additional theory that has been used recently to guide health portrayals research.

As noted above, the broadening examination of health portrayals also includes a focus on international contexts. An interesting example of scholars examining international content is Liu, Liu, Xiao, Cai, and Xu's (2010) study of depictions of skin cancer in Chinese newspapers. Liu and colleagues content-analyzed 134 articles about skin cancer published in Chinese newspapers between 2000 and 2007. The articles represent 1.8% of the articles found in the database focusing on cancer; the number of articles about skin cancer increased from 10 articles in the year 2000 to a high of 35 articles in 2006. The most commonly discussed type of skin cancer was melanoma – discussed in just over 38% of the articles; treatment of skin cancer was discussed in 41.8% of the articles analyzed.

In an effort to strengthen our contention that scholars are looking at a wider variety of channels, an analysis of articles that were not published was also performed.

Robinson and Agne (2010) examined 99 articles that were rejected for publication in the journal *Health Communication*. From this inventory of articles that were not published, a list of health portrayals topics was compiled. In some cases the authors of these manuscripts were asked to make revisions and declined, and in other cases the articles were rejected by reviewers. Clearly, the articles examining health portrayals focused on a wide variety of health issues and channels. Some of the more interesting channels investigated by the researchers include: English-language newspapers from India, results from Google searches, Japanese newspapers, medical tourism websites, and Japanese manga or graphic novels. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. We applaud the authors for their creativity, and are pleased to report that in several cases the articles have been subsequently published in *Health Communication* or elsewhere.

The Big Picture

Communication scholars and researchers have long been interested in the way health issues are portrayed within the media, and it appears that such interest has not waned. The argument that health communication scholars have begun studying an expanding list of illnesses and health issues has been made but certainly not decided here. Examination of other research publication venues and even conference presentations will need scrutiny, and the results of those analyses will need to be compared with historical data on health portrayals.

New technologies such as the Internet have also generated new channels and research opportunities (e.g., Facebook, blogs, YouTube, and websites). Those channels were not available prior to the widespread adoption of the Internet. Perhaps even more importantly, these new channels allow media content to be produced by sources other than the media conglomerates that once held the reins to the mass media. These technological innovations also make the study of traditional media channels such as newspapers or magazines much easier and in many cases much easier for sampling. Further, the availability of these materials online has in some cases made identifying search terms far easier than manually examining print materials page by page. In fact, historians may one day describe this time as a renaissance period for scholars interested in studying health portrayals.

It is clear from the analysis of health portrayals that the widespread adoption of Internet-based technologies contributes to the examination of new health concerns. For example, before the advent of the Internet, scholars interested in analyzing pro-eating disorder content would have had a much more difficult time finding the content to analyze. Concern about such portrayals would have been far less because the content would not have been readily available as such websites make that information today. Similarly, the thought of trying to publish a content analysis of smoking fetish home movies gives a researcher pause. Again, access to the content would have

been difficult and the small opportunity for audience exposure to such materials would all but ensure such study would never have been considered. YouTube videos demand scrutiny by mass media scholars because home movies are now viewed by so many people. For example, in 2010 the first five games aired on ESPN's *Monday Night Football* averaged approximately 11 million households, with 15 million viewers watching these games (Zurawik, 2010). Those are *great* numbers – the kind of ratings of which a cable network dreams. For comparison's sake, however, the original viral video commonly referred to as the *Star Wars Kid* was viewed some 20 million times between 2003 and 2006 (Wei, 2010). The video was so popular that many variations of that film clip were developed, and the many variations of that video had been viewed some 900 million times during the same time frame (Wei, 2010). Current estimates suggest that the video and its many variations have been viewed over a billion times (Wei, 2010).

In some cases, such as portrayals of cloning or food irradiation, the particular health issues result from technological development. In other cases technological developments simply make niche content (e.g., smoking fetish videos) widely available, more widely consumed, more amenable, and more viable as a health topic for researchers. In fact, the widespread proliferation of TV channels has seemingly contributed to a leveling of the playing field in the pursuit of gaining an audience. To give this contention some detail and context, consider that when the Nielsen ratings began in 1950, the average home had one TV set while in the year 2010, well over 80% of all homes had more than one TV and, in fact, over 30% of all homes reported having four or more TV sets (Godinez, 2010). Similarly, in the 1950s the average household received three TV channels (Godinez, 2010), while in the 1970s the average household received about 10 TV channels, and in 2010 Nielsen data suggest the average household received a whopping 118.6 channels (Marketing Charts, 2010). The proliferation of TV channels and TV sets within the home allows viewers within a single household to watch different programs. During the 1970s the three TV networks, for example, accounted for about 95% of the total audience and today less than half of the TV programming consumed can be found on a network (Harris, 2008).

The implications of channel proliferation to studying health portrayals are many and not lost on scholars and researchers. Channels attracting an audience that once was deemed as secondary to network TV or the highest rated magazines or newspapers must now be more closely considered as sources of health information. Leydon and colleagues (2000), Mills and Davidson (2002), and others have found that television, newspapers, and magazines are primary sources of health information for many people. Patients are also employing the Internet in their quest for health information. For example, approximately 75% of all US citizens use the Internet (USC, 2004), and 79% of these users report having searched for health information online (Fox, 2005). In fact, over 50% of all US Internet users report having looked for information about specific diseases or medical problems, certain medical treatments or procedures, and diet, nutrition, vitamins, or nutritional supplements at one time

or another (Fox, 2005). The fact that people use the mass media for health information further strengthens the argument for studying a wide array of health issues. In fact, the further a health issue is from the mainstream, it is arguable, the more reliant or dependent the consumer is on a particular source of information (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Robinson & Tian, 2009). This realization suggests that scholars should focus on a wide variety of media channels in their efforts to describe health portrayals.

Further, Dutta-Bergman (2004) suggests that media usage/consumption is not a zero-sum game. Instead, he argues that consumers of the media will employ the various channels in a complementary fashion. He suggests people interested in sports will watch sports programming on television, listen to sports programming on the radio, read about sports in newspapers and magazines, and surf the Internet for information about sports. Similarly, people interested in health information will actively seek out information from any channel that they believe will provide that information. Support for the contention, labeled media complementarity theory, is growing, and the research suggests that audience members seeking out information from the media (particularly health information) are guided by need and interest (Tian & Robinson, 2008a, 2008b).

Scholars employing media complementarity theory as part of the basis for their study, then, have the beginning of a rationale for studying health portrayals across media channels. If people use the media purposefully, it is reasonable to examine what they will find about a particular health issue across channels. Obviously, this also suggests that scholars need to consider and perhaps reconsider the commonly used practice of sampling by channel.

In years gone by, scholars may have been hesitant to undertake a large-scale project of local news, such as that described above by Wang and Gantz (2010), for fear of reviewer criticisms about the sample. Studying content from a variety of different media channels is also advantageous to health communication scholars by allowing additional insight into the relative importance of channel characteristics on those media portrayals. For example, scholars focusing on television news programs are likely to find that whether or not a health issue is covered may be determined by the availability of video to air along with the story. This notion of channel bias has been discussed in great detail within the mass communication community, and such bias can impact what issues are aired and how they are depicted to some degree (Cantor, 1980).

Similarly, scholars focusing on time-bound channels such as newspapers are likely to find an event bias (Boorstin, 1961). Stories about health issues are more likely if there is a precipitating event that can be described within the story. Hunger is hardly news, but a hunger strike or famine may be news. By studying media content from different channels, scholars can begin parsing the differences in channel characteristics and other determinants of how media content is portrayed. In short, scholars examining health portrayals across a variety of different channels can begin to parse the effects of channel properties, editorial policies, and market economics. Stories

that are told in the same way regardless of channel are interesting, but finding that stories are told differently depending on the channel would be even more interesting. Stories that are told in the same way in channels with and without editorial control certainly deserve a different kind of attention than stories that are told differently depending on the channel on which they are found. New media channels such as blogs are undoubtedly constrained in many ways – just as the content aired on more traditional media channels is constrained by time and space, advertising interests and costs, and social and political pressures. However, by studying the content differences in these disparate channels, insights into the similarities and differences that exist may be identified. Examining how health issues are depicted in different countries may assist us in better understanding the impact of factors such as culture, economics, government regulations, and social pressures on media portrayals. Likewise, examining how health issues are depicted in different countries may also assist us in better understanding the impact of media portrayals. Health issues that are treated differently in different countries would be expected to produce difference effects within audience members. The first step, however, is the mapping of these health portrayals.

Not unrelated to the proliferation of media channels being examined by health portrayals researchers is the increasing diversity in the types of health issues being examined. The examination of such a multitude of health issues provides scholars an interesting opportunity to better understand health attitudes and knowledge, the media, and culture. Using these disparate health issues as a window into the culture may shed some light on how and why the media portray particular issues. For example, a scholar looking at how eating disorders are framed might be able to make interesting comparisons with the way HIV/AIDS is portrayed. Similarly, a scholar looking at eating disorders might examine how obesity is framed relative to anorexia nervosa or bulimia. Such an analysis takes content analysis of health portrayals from a purely descriptive endeavor – based primarily on the opportunity for audience learning – into the realm of interpretation and culture studies. Commonalities in the way diverse health issues are portrayed can provide insights into whether the portrayals are a function of the channels, misunderstanding of the health issue, literary license, or other societal forces. Meta-analytic techniques dividing health portrayals into acute and chronic illnesses may shed light onto the why and how health issues are depicted.

Of course heightened audience awareness of health issues can produce patients who are actively involved in their healthcare, and it can also lead the hypochondriacs among us to new heights of concern. Health portrayals researchers need to be ever mindful that content analysis needs to be more than an exercise based on the simple counting of things. What “more” coverage of something indicates is a debatable issue, but at the very least content analysis needs to be based in a strong theoretical rationale.

Manganello and Blake (2010) found that researchers examining health portrayals are likely to employ a theoretical rationale for their study. The theory can and

should be used as the basis for conducting the content analysis as well as the basis of the content-analytic category scheme employed within the investigation when possible. For example, a researcher analyzing how cancer patients are portrayed on television may use Cutrona and Russell's (1990) work as a basis for coding the types of social support they receive within a medical drama. The researcher then starts the research with a commonly accepted set of descriptions of the types of social support. The availability of extant operational and conceptual definitions of key variables can assist the researcher by ensuring particular types of social support do not go unexamined. Previous social support research can be translated into useful and theoretically significant content categories. This allows the researcher to extend the theory as well as map the portrayals of health within the media. Obviously, the use of more than one theory may allow the researcher to generate even more sophisticated content-analytic schemes and ultimately make such research more valuable. Finally, the use of Cutrona and Russell's (1990) work may encourage the researcher to examine how patients provide social support to others – an opportunity that patients welcome. This kind of direction is why scholars should use theory and research in the development of their category systems. The need to provide social support to others is precisely the kind of category that might go unexplored without consideration of such theoretical work as that of Cutrona and Russell (1990).

Scholars frequently use more than one theoretical position as the basis for their study and/or the basis for their content analysis scheme. The use of multiple theoretical perspectives potentially allows the development of a more nuanced content category scheme. For example, a researcher might use Cutrona and Russell's (1990) typology to identify the different types of social support provided and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory to provide a theoretical basis for coding the consequences of social support. In this way the researcher can describe how social support is portrayed in the media and also identify character responses to social support.

In addition, the use of multiple theories allows scholars to examine the relative benefits of different theoretical perspectives – particularly in content studies that also gather audience effects data. For example, a researcher might examine how the media portray health issues from the agenda-setting perspective. Such research would focus on frequency of portrayals. Some researchers go beyond simple frequency counts and code the portrayals for prominence. Other researchers examine the same issue from the agenda-setting perspective and also incorporate media framing theory in the design of the study. For example, a news article can frame alcoholism as a health issue or it can portray alcoholism as a social problem or even an individual psychological problem. For example, is drinking framed as something people do to celebrate or something they do when things go bad? The frames (e.g., alcoholism is a social problem or a health issue) lead the audience to view alcoholism as a particular kind of problem – based on the way it is portrayed in the media.

Still another researcher interested in media portrayals of alcoholism might use agenda setting and priming theory as the basis of their study. They would do this to determine the affective responses likely to occur within the audience members as they are exposed to the health issue. Is the issue of drunkenness portrayed as a “joke or a good time” or is it portrayed as a tragic problem? Researchers might use priming here instead of framing because they want to know the kinds of affect the person will associate with excessive drinking.

Still another researcher might couple social cognitive theory with agenda setting to see what the audience learns from the characters that they could subsequently imitate. And yet another researcher might use agenda setting and cultivation theory as a way of looking at the issue of alcoholism on a larger, cultural level. This researcher might be interested in determining if the media portray alcoholism as an individual problem or a problem that will be solved by the government, the medical profession, or some other institution. Has the problem of alcoholism been medicalized by the media or has the government been portrayed as paternalistic and the caretaker of the citizenry?

At first blush these studies seem very similar, but in actuality all that they share is a focus on portrayals of alcoholism. In all of these cases, researchers are basing their work on the fact that the audience is learning or being conditioned by media portrayals. What they learn and how they learn it, however, can differ dramatically from theory to theory. However, the use of multiple theories in a study focusing on health portrayals need not employ theories that are to some degree variations on a theme.

For example, a content analysis examining portrayals of healthcare professionals might use social cognitive theory to determine what viewers/readers learn from the media about doctors and nurses. A second theory, however, such as Knapp's (1984) relational development model, might be useful for examining how the patient-physician relationship develops. Or the scholar might use the pragmatic perspective of Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) as a way of getting at the mechanisms that TV characters use to develop relationships with audience members. Both of these theories are quite far afield from a learning model and could shed interesting light on health portrayals.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that media portrayals are a function of a multitude of factors, including culture, storytelling convention, history, economics, time and event biases, current events, and technological development, to name but a few. While these considerations are outside the scope of this chapter, they are offered as a reminder for scholars to focus on the specific details of the portrayals, the impact of such portrayals on health decisions made by audience members, as well as broader societal concerns. The study of health portrayals is an important area of research that needs to be grounded theoretically and less an exercise in pure description. It is hoped that the trends identified within this chapter provide some insights and some direction for future research. We believe studying media content in a variety of different ways is important because it helps establish the fact that content is indeed reflective of something beyond simple chance in the way it is portrayed.

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Canadian (Re)Presentation

Media, First Peoples, and Liveness in the Museum

Miranda J. Brady

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores relationships between media and Indigenous identity construction in the Canadian Museum of Civilization's (CMC) First Peoples Hall (FPH) through an analysis of place-based media and archival research. It explores the specific historical, economic, and pedagogic contexts influencing media adoption in the CMC and FPH, and argues that while the museum attempts to forward a progressive curatorial agenda through Indigenous collaboration and new media adoption, the CMC has yet to fully explore the contemporary implications of Indigenous representation. Finally, this chapter questions celebratory discourses of new media as a panacea for representational maladies and the idea of representation itself as a panacea for Indigenous concerns.

Large-scale, centralized museums for general audiences in settler societies have been shifting due to new museological understandings, norms, and practices, where the question of participation has become central. National museum projects dedicated to Indigenous topics around the world have been shaped by this transformation from New Zealand to Canada. "Active collaboration and a sharing of authority" have become the norm in many Indigenous exhibitions (Clifford, 1997, p. 210). While mostly non-Native curators and anthropologists possessed the cultural legitimacy to

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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interpret Native histories in large-scale museums of the past, Indigenous people themselves now play a greater role in the curatorial process in many contemporary museums; place-based media have increasingly been central in evidencing their participation (Brady, 2011a, 2011b). Over the past 30 years, developments in place-based media technologies and shifts in Indigenous representational practices have facilitated new relationships between Indigenous identity construction, media, and the idea of active participation on behalf of both non-Native visitors and Indigenous subjects.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC, 1989), a revamped version of the Canadian Museum of Man, and its First Peoples Hall (FPH, 2003) emerged amongst the debates centered on issues of Indigenous representation, and they were products of their time. Increases in Indigenous consultation and pedagogic discourses promoting active learning greatly influenced the CMC, along with pressures to stay competitive with other social institutions. Each of these factors justified the adoption of new media technologies in the museum. CMC founders attempted to push the museum into the twenty-first century through exhibition practices and cultural policies that were seen as progressive for the 1980s and 1990s, and planners were highly motivated to demonstrate the museum's relevance as a modern institution through the integration of new representational approaches and technological trends. In particular, museum leaders were fixated on the idea of liveness and the pedagogic potential of interactivity.¹

The enthusiasm about the liveness enabled by new media in the 1980s and 1990s, though reinvigorated by contemporary technologies, was not new. As Jeffrey Sconce (2000) suggests, such discourses date back to the mid-nineteenth century with the advent of the telegraph, the telephone, and wireless communication. The television was discussed in similar terms (Spigel, 1992, 2001). The idea of liveness was a way of imagining the West's ingenuity and the conquest of space. The ideals of achieving "global presence" and simultaneity continued to be important during the Cold War and the Space Race, especially in discourses constituting the satellite (Parks, 2005, p. 23). While simultaneity had been a popular concept in the 1960s with Telstar I's first live trans-Atlantic broadcast (Parks, 2005), the same idea was popular in museums of the 1980s as satellite use and the computer became more accessible. In museums of the 1990s, discussions about the World Wide Web reproduced the ideals of global presence and what can be characterized as the "rhetoric of the electrical sublime," which suggests that "communication, exchange, motion brings humanity, enlightenment, progress" (Schivelbusch, 1978, cited in Carey, 1989, p. 208). Canadian museum professionals in particular were influenced by icon Marshall McLuhan (1964) and the notion that media could facilitate a global village (MacDonald & Alsford, 1989).

The concept of liveness maps onto Indigenous museum representations in particularly interesting ways. In older museum forms, this meant a highly contained bringing to life (Wakeham, 2008) while newer museums have extended this idea to include live communication. Museums have a long history of utilizing media in attempts to create a live experience for visitors as they learn about Indigenous peoples and cultures. In natural history museums of the past, this liveness was presented

through the (re)animation found in life-sized dioramas, mannequins, and taxidermic animals, where Indigenous people were suspended in historic live-action poses, but with the assumption that they had been pacified or driven to extinction. Pauline Wakeham (2008) discusses this tradition in *Taxidermic Signs*. According to Wakeham, museums of the early twentieth century self-fashioned as benevolent salvagers who preserved Indigenous cultures to save them from apparent imminent oblivion. They did so by locating Indigenous people in the past alongside the reanimated carcasses of deceased animals and appropriated cultural patrimony. Wakeham identifies the imperialist nostalgia and perverse colonial voyeurism in freezing colonial subjects in a pre-contact, “suspended pastness” (2008, p. 17). Museums demonstrated colonial power and the “purportedly inevitable extinction of an inferior race” through the act of representation itself, by reanimating Indigenous people under Eurocentric terms (Wakeham, 2008, p. 20). Wakeham suggests that taxidermic semiosis carried over to Indigenous representation in other cultural forms like cinema, which also has a history of salvage impulses in early documentary, where Indigenous people were staged outside of technological, Western contexts (Raheja, 2007).

Museums like the CMC seek to avoid colonial voyeurism through Indigenous participation and by placing Indigenous people in modern contexts. However, the question remains whether efforts to recreate liveness for mostly non-Native audiences through static, prerecorded testimonials from disembodied constituents are really that different from past attempts at reanimation. In both cases, the focus is on creating a live experience for a general audience in accordance with normative museological practices and with the limitations of popular place-based media. In both cases, the focus is on the experience of the visitor.

Regardless of attempts to break away from outmoded museum practices, the contemporary Indigenous museum has been criticized for continuing a number of long-standing and problematic traditions. According to critics like Eva Mackey (2002), Indigenous identity is used instrumentally in state institutions like the CMC where “officially sanctioned self-representation” helps to reaffirm national identity (p. 83). Mackey writes, “Aboriginal people are necessary players in nationalist myths: they are the colourful recipients of benevolence, the necessary ‘others’ who reflect back white Canada’s self-image of tolerance” (2002, p. 2). Mackey suggests that such self-affirming mythos distracts focus from the ongoing problems faced by Indigenous people and the state’s responsibility to intervene.

Similarly, other national museums like the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (2004) have been criticized for their efforts to reach mostly non-Native audiences, rather than Native “constituents” (Brady, 2008, 2009), and some scholars have questioned whether large-scale, centralized museums actually benefit Indigenous people (Boast, Bravo, & Srinivasan, 2007). Scholars have also pointed out that prerecordings of oral traditions do not allow for audience adaptability, which is central to oral performance (Verran & Christie, 2007), while others cite the problems occurring when Indigenous people lose control over interpretive contexts as their cultures are being presented to general audiences (Isaac, 2007).

Museums adopt place-based media in attempts to represent Indigenous identities to general audiences and to articulate a sense of Indigenous liveness, which is a way of self-fashioning in juxtaposition with older museum forms, a phenomenon Wakeham describes as the “meta-museum” (2008, p. 65). As Raymond Williams (1974) argued, the cultural forms of media help to shape and guide the ways in which they are used and understood. As the following passages argue, there are limitations and opportunities for media use in articulating Indigeneity. While the inclusion of new media technologies can suggest that museums are in tune technologically and that Indigenous identities are contemporary rather than trapped in the past, there are broader implications to their use and the technocratic impulses prescribing them. While the FPH was a response to problematized museum practices of the past, the implications of new Indigenous representational technologies demand further consideration. Also worthy of reflection is the priority placed on representation itself and the degree to which other important issues go unaddressed (see Isaac, 2007; Lonetree, 2006).

The following passages explore such issues within the context of the CMC by providing an overview of the conditions shaping the museum’s opening in 1989, FPH planning, and media adoption. A study of FPH media will demonstrate the ways in which planners conflated discourses of representation, pedagogy, and competition. A brief discussion about the exhibit’s reception by the popular press, Indigenous newspapers, and academic journals will provide further insight into the ways in which these discourses were reproduced and experienced in the museum. Finally, this chapter will conclude by addressing the implications of new media adoption and the focus on visitor experience and representation in Indigenous exhibitions as well as the relationships between Indigenous identity construction, the ideal of liveness, and the use of place-based media in the CMC and its First Peoples Hall.

Fashioning a “Museum for the Twenty-First Century”: From Artifact Collection to Information Utility

As media technologies saw increased use in public spaces of the 1980s and early 1990s, Canadian museums and other heritage institutions faced a crisis (MacDonald & Alsford, 1994). Nonprofit institutions like national museums had limited budgets, and the increasing digital divide created by new educational technologies threatened obsolescence for those left behind. Leaders at the Canadian Museum of Civilization embraced the technological zeitgeist as they planned the opening of their “museum for the twenty-first century” across the Ottawa River from Canada’s capital city and Parliament Hill (CMC, “Written in the Stone”). Taking their cue from other museums and commercial institutions like Disney’s Epcot Center as well as popular

philosophies in communication and pedagogy, they envisioned a media-rich museum (MacDonald & Alsford, 1989).²

Leading the technological development for the CMC was special projects manager Stephen Alsford, who wrote and spoke prolifically on the topic of media technologies and museums along with inaugural CMC director George MacDonald. Alsford was a strong proponent of new media acquisition, and he suggested it would help the CMC keep pace with the many other institutions vying for the attention of potential visitors (Alsford, 1991). The inclusion of technology was in line with the museum's modernizing attempts, including the construction of its new facilities in Gatineau, Quebec, and the institution's renaming from The Museum of Man to the less gender-biased Museum of Civilization. The CMC's opening provided the opportunity for the institution to transform its identity and, as a national museum, it would reflect broadly on Canadian identity as well. Indigenous themes were closely tied with nation throughout the museum, from the curvilinear building itself, designed by the Blackfoot/Métis architect Douglas Cardinal, to the exhibits, including the Grand Hall, which showcased a number of traditional Indigenous cultures. Plans also began for the First Peoples Hall, which would address more contemporary Indigenous topics, but they were postponed until after the museum's opening.

Both MacDonald and Alsford were determined to push the CMC into the next century through technology. However, it was difficult for CMC staff to make decisions about the newly available and costly media with which they had limited knowledge. There were a number of new devices being marketed for exhibition and data management, including early interactive computer kiosks, community networks and satellite connections with other cultural institutions, videodiscs as well as the technologies for creating them, and lasers capable of producing digital models. The wow factor was high, and shiny vendor brochures promised "interactivity" and improvement of "problem-solving skills."³ One company boasted that with its kiosks, "a student's ability to interact directly and immediately with the 'source' of instruction more closely parallels 'live' education."⁴ The same kind of language about interactive education was mirrored in the discourse of museum planners, who made pedagogic justifications for technology adoption. For example, CMC staff wrote, "What is especially interesting with these products is the ability of the viewer to control and direct the course of a given scenario and realize its outcome based on his or her earlier decisions."⁵ Stephen Alsford collected information on such interactive devices and referenced their use in the British Museum of Mankind's *Living Arctic* exhibit, through which visitors determined the fate of Indigenous Arctic and sub-Arctic hunters by making a series of choices via digital kiosks. Prerecorded, edited video footage of Indigenous actors helped to create a more realistic feel for the educational tool (Interactive Video, 1988).

Similarly, Alsford collected information on the JASON Project, another interactive program that offered a sense of liveness, connecting scientists and educational institutions via satellite. The JASON project used robots to film underwater sites like sunken ships from the Battle of 1812. The images were downlinked to Turner Broadcasting

Systems (TBS) in Atlanta, where they were made into a final production, which was broadcast simultaneously to subscribers. The effect of liveness offered by JASON excited museum planners. Not only would visitors connect with underwater sites via “telepresence,” but JASON would also provide networking possibilities with other institutions across Canada and the United States.⁶

The adoption of such technologies was justified by a popular pedagogical turn toward active, experiential learning philosophies. The idea of real-time technologies, which facilitated interaction with visitors, was grafted onto such ideals. For example, CMC consultant Tom Sherman, an artist/performer who utilized electronic media in his work, encouraged the museum to adopt technologies to enable a live exchange of information with visitors. He argued,

The Museum should be as open to the reception of information from its visitors as it can possibly be. Storage, design and playback can only be valuable processes as the natural residue of a living communications environment. To place an emphasis on the creation of a Museum which only transmits information one-way is ill-advised.⁷

Regardless of the celebration of dialogic models of pedagogy and communication amongst museum administrators, there was palpable reticence amongst CMC staff, who did not have the expertise to operate or maintain new educational devices. The rate at which first-generation technologies like interactive touch screens would become obsolete was also unclear, leading to further hesitation. Alsford was frustrated with sluggish attitudes toward technology adoption as the CMC’s debut neared, and he wrote to MacDonald,

I would like to see our people take a more serious attitude towards developing/acquiring a real interactive video learning module in time for opening! Instead there seems to be a “let’s wait around and see if anything better comes on the market in the next few years” attitude. This won’t win us any brownie points as a museum for the Information Age.⁸

As Alsford’s comments suggest, he, like many in the museum industry, were feeling the pressures to make museums more appealing to general audiences through new media. Limited funding factored into building concerns over the museum’s distracted audience, and Alsford and MacDonald worried about the tendency of museums to act as followers when compared with other institutions and the “commercial marketplace” (Alsford, 1991, p. 13). Like Marshall McLuhan (*Playboy* Interview, 1969), they believed that resistance to new media was futile, and the only way to succeed was to accept, if not embrace, the maelstrom. “21st century audiences” encountered high-technology devices routinely, not only in theme parks but in banal spaces in their “schooling, recreation, and work experiences” and had come to expect them in public places (MacDonald & Alsford, n.d.). MacDonald and Alsford saw the “entertainment industry” as a “competitor with the museum world for the discretionary leisure time of the public,” and the “power of television, film and video to inform,

sway opinions and shape cultural consensus” was “enormous” (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991, p. 308). They wrote,

The question is whether we can persuade the public to prefer our high-integrity information products to the products of institutions motivated primarily by profit. To do so, we will often need to adopt the tools and techniques those competitors have led the way in utilizing. (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991, p. 308)

Surely, such a philosophy about the education/entertainment crossover justified the inclusion of the IMAX theater, which would help to supplement the CMC’s federal funding (Riley, 1996).⁹ The museum was the first in the world to integrate a dome with IMAX screens measuring seven stories, allowing for 180 degrees of vision and including 13,000 watts of power (CMC, “About the Theatre”).

In addition to gee-whiz technologies like the IMAX theater, the “tools and techniques” of competition consisted of the commercial model in which the museum now saw itself. In that vein, CMC leaders suggested that museums consider information, rather than artifacts, as their “primary resource, or commodity” (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991). They argued that this perspective positioned museums centrally within the information age, “in which information-based services are expected to be a key to economic prosperity and to social status – two things necessary, in the real world, to museums to ensure their effectiveness, if not their survival” (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991, p. 307). The museum, or “information utility” (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991), was more than just a public service, according to the museum’s leaders; it would need to compete for audiences.

The discourse of competition occurred frequently in planning documents and reflected the CMC’s desperate efforts to remain relevant amongst very different types of institutions. While the CMC certainly took its cues from other museums, it also compared itself with profit-driven players with much larger budgets. In a 1983 meeting, CMC staff noted that Disney’s Epcot Center had 127 media units, five of which were interactive, or touch screen.¹⁰ While many US institutions enjoyed the financial support of corporate sponsors, and the differences in orientation between the institutions were obvious, CMC leaders believed they were fighting the good fight for the hearts and minds of the visiting public. If the Epcot Center symbolized the American dream, the CMC would have to prove that Canada had not been left behind. However, as will be discussed in the next section, the CMC’s priorities shifted as debates over Indigenous representation transformed the museum landscape.

Museum Practice and Indigenous (Re)presentation

Discussions about the CMC’s First Peoples Hall (FPH) began as the Museum of Man was making its transition into the Museum of Civilization (McGhee, cited in

McCarthy, 2000a), though it would be nearly 14 years after the opening in 1989 before the FPH was completed. Around the same time, controversy over Indigenous exhibition came to a head with the infamous Glenbow Museum exhibit, *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*. Contention over the exhibit along with global trends greatly influenced plans for the FPH, and the CMC decided to scrap initial ideas begun in the 1980s, deeming them “too traditional” (Lofaro, 2003).

The Spirit Sings was part of the 1988 Winter Olympic art program and featured a historical theme relating to the “cultural and artistic heritage of Canada,” in which Indigenous artifacts and cultures were on display (Wilson, 1992, p. 6). None of the six guest curators involved in the exhibit were themselves Indigenous. Although response amongst museum professionals centered on the exhibit’s lack of Indigenous consultation, a number of other issues had actually fueled tensions with Indigenous groups. The Alberta Lubicon Lake Band of Cree was in a long-standing struggle with the Canadian and Alberta governments over recognition of their ancestral lands, while Shell Oil, which had been a major corporate sponsor of *The Spirit Sings*, was exploring the same contested lands for natural resources (Wilson, 1992, p. 6). The band protested the exhibit to draw attention to their claim and concerns over health and environmental degradation. *The Spirit Sings* came to stand for all that was wrong in the world of Indigenous exhibition. However, while response to the exhibit in the museum community addressed complaints about Indigenous participation in curation, it overlooked the original grievances of the Lubicon about their land claims and Shell Oil. The focus shifted primarily to issues of representation rather than the other major underlying concerns.¹¹

The CMC was heavily involved in shifting museological practices as employees like archaeologist Robert McGhee worked with Indigenous groups to rethink collaborative models, and the museum sponsored a symposium on Indigenous curation. A related Task Force on Museums and First Peoples sponsored by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) worked from 1989 to 1991 on potential curatorial solutions. Its mission was to “develop an ethical framework and strategies by which Aboriginal peoples and cultural institutions can work together to represent Aboriginal history and culture” (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992, p. 1). A number of recommendations resulted from the symposium and the AFN/CMA Task Force and were outlined in a book titled *Turning the Page*. The Task Force strongly recommended that there be (1) increased “involvement of Aboriginal peoples in the interpretation of their culture and history by cultural institutions”; (2) “improved access to museum collections by Aboriginal peoples”; and (3) “the repatriation of artifacts and human remains” (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992, p. 1). In addition, the Task Force recommended “consultation be considered a necessary part of the development process of any exhibition or representation of First Peoples in museums” (p. 19).

Several CMC employees, who had been involved in the AFN/CMA Task Force, were also key to the planning of the FPH, which not surprisingly reflected many of the recommendations laid out in *Turning the Page*. In 1991 CMC Director George

MacDonald dedicated the 20,000-square-foot space behind the museum's Grand Hall to the FPH (Harrison, 2003).¹² The Grand Hall, one of the museum's inaugural exhibits, showcased Indigenous cultures, while the FPH would cover more contemporary topics. The latter exhibit would reflect newer museological trends, demonstrating both ideological and technological updates to the museum. As recommended by the AFN/CMA Task Force, Indigenous consultation was key to FPH planning, and Indigenous participants served on several committees including the Architectural Team, the Curatorial Team, the Support Team, the Advisory Committee, and the Consultation Committee, which was assembled based on suggestions from curators (McGhee, cited in McCarthy, 2000a, p. 19). In addition, Indigenous employees like Plains Cree/Blackfoot artist Gerald McMaster, who served as a co-chair early in the process, were key to the shaping of the FPH. Planning would take more than 10 years, and while a core group of Indigenous consultants would maintain a fairly consistent presence throughout its development, the involvement of several CMC employees was more erratic as some, like McMaster, left the museum for other opportunities (Harrison, 2003; Phillips, 2006).

The Consultation Committee assisted with content themes, principles, and architectural guidelines.¹³ "Principles for Development" reflected the focus on representation and Indigenous participation and suggested, "The Hall will present the history, culture, and current realities of aboriginal peoples in the voice(s) of aboriginal peoples."¹⁴

The FPH had very ambitious representational goals and, according to Consultation Committee notes, planned to represent "All First Peoples of Canada [...] including those following traditional and contemporary paths, and living in both rural and urban environments."¹⁵ In addition, the CMC was quite concerned with disrupting misconceptions about aboriginal people such as the idea that they are "remnants of an obsolete way of life."¹⁶ Media technologies played a central role in serving the goals outlined by consultation committee members, especially the articulation of a sense of Indigenous voice and the use of contemporary Indigenous testimonials to disrupt stereotypes, many of which had been developed through popular media.

The FPH Master Plan suggested that media would be central to representing Indigenous people in contemporary lifestyles, starting with the Welcome Area into the exhibit. It suggested that the Welcome Area "should be heavily dependent on electronic audio-visual elements, which are appropriate for an exhibit stressing the contemporary nature of First Peoples societies."¹⁷ Moreover, the document suggested that the inclusion of media would make for convenient updating to include topical issues. Similarly, Mohawk Consultation Committee member Wendell Beauvais suggested this area would "affect the mood" of the visitor and "should provide the visitor with a tactile experience that will set them up for the visit through the hall proper."¹⁸

The use of media was consistent with the visions laid out by CMC leaders George MacDonald and Stephen Alsford (1989), who clearly celebrated new media and the pedagogic and technological discourses of liveness and interactivity. As the next

section will discuss, these technological foundations were conflated with Indigenous representational goals in the FPH, which were centered on demonstrating participation in representation and contemporary lifeways.

Media Technologies and the First Peoples Hall

The CMC's focus on liveness, experience, and Indigenous (self-)representation is apparent beginning with the FPH Welcome Area. When compared with the Grand Hall, which visitors must traverse before entering the newer exhibit, the space is much darker, and this becomes immediately clear as visitors move through the entrance. While the Grand Hall is lined with 365 ft × 50 ft floor to ceiling windows, allowing for views of the Ottawa River and Parliament Hill and for ambient lighting to flood its open spaces, the FPH is much more cavernous and curves into a number of winding, partitioned-off areas (CMC, "Grand Hall"). While the Grand Hall is more structured around life-sized props, including totem poles and six replicas of Northwest Coast homes built from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, new media technologies are more central in the First Peoples Hall for creating the sense of liveness discussed in earlier planning. According to Alsford (1991), such props or "environmental reconstruction" encouraged "role-playing" amongst visitors, which he believed promoted cultural understanding. The Grand Hall's focus on traditional culture and its inclusion of very few updated media devices juxtapose with the flashing images of the FPH's screens, which feature testimonials from contemporary Indigenous people against the backdrops of their homelands. One of the important functions of the FPH's mediated texts is to demonstrate Indigenous participation in narrating the exhibit in the first person.

A large screen lining the dim FPH Welcome Area is one of the first features coming into view through the entrance, and a film's aural cues and flashing visuals draw the attention of visitors in that direction. The film features Indigenous people from several communities commenting on tradition and their contemporary lifestyles. Each clip is filmed in the individual's respective community or place of work, from a medical clinic to a First Nations school. The film assumes an interview style in which the interviewees appear to be responding to the question, "What do you want people to understand about being an Aboriginal person in Canada today?" (Phillips & Phillips, 2005, p. 62). However, the interviewer is not present in the shots, and the questions prompting the responses are never heard. Therefore, it appears as though the individuals featured in the film are speaking directly to the visitor. Although the statements are prerecorded, visitors are captured in a live communicative act by assuming the position of the intended recipient as they move through the Welcome Area space. The realism achieved through this style of film helps to disguise the editorial process involved in its creation. Moreover, because the Indigenous participants are seen in fairly contemporary contexts, filmed in the early 2000s, the

screen provides a sense of liveness when compared with the otherwise inanimate objects included throughout the museum.

The segments were shot by several Indigenous video producers throughout Canada, who asked the same scripted interview questions of participants but attempted to prompt a “spontaneous” response by encouraging participants to talk about themselves.¹⁹ Importantly, the filmic style used in the Welcome Video is unlike the documentary style of films often included in outmoded natural history museums; these older films were treated as scientific or anthropological research instruments and generally depicted Native people in their natural contexts while their behaviors were interpreted by non-Native narrators. In such films, Indigenous people were generally not allowed to speak directly to viewers without expert framing and interpretation. The videos in the FPH are self-referential to former museum practice because they display a new genre of filmic museum texts, demonstrating one of the ways in which the CMC signifies its reflexivity about older forms of museum representation.

While many of the themes in the exhibit are contemporary, planners were careful to illustrate the ways in which traditions and connection with environment continue in modern contexts through the use of media. For example, as visitors move past the introductory section of the museum, a longer video titled *Relationship to the Land* plays in a quiet corner, where seating is provided. In this living room-like area, designed as a “contemplative space,” members from Indigenous communities throughout Canada make statements about “the relationship of aboriginal identity to the ‘land.’”²⁰ Like the Welcome Video, a central communicative intent for this film was to “Involve aboriginal people in the creation of the product.”²¹ Indigenous participation itself is also on exhibit in this area as interviewees speak directly to viewers without a narrator interpreting or speaking on their behalf.²²

Contemporary Indigenous connections with tradition are further demonstrated in the Diversity and Origins section of the FPH. In this area, oral traditions are articulated via several forms of media including text panels, an art installation, film, and an audio storytelling booth. It includes one of the FPH’s two theaters, in which a film recounts the Mi’kmaq creation story, “Where We Come From,” as told by Stephen Augustine of Big Cove, New Brunswick. This film depicts a male elder sitting around a campfire with several companions, who listen attentively as he recounts the creation story. As it is told by a narrative voiceover, which actually speaks over the elder, the film is acted out in several shifting scenes. Periodically, the film returns to the campfire and its occupants. The theater is dark and circular, and because its seating faces the semicircle of the campfire, viewers are positioned as though they are sitting there with the actors. Therefore, it is as though visitors are either closely observing the event or are part of the group to which the story is being told. In addition, because the actors in the campfire scene are dressed in contemporary clothing, unlike the actors playing out the oral tradition, the point of departure could be the present moment. Due to the temporal moment and narration, a sense of liveness is conveyed with “Where We Come From,” as with the *Relationship to the Land* and Welcome videos.

Visitors are again part of a communicative act in an audio storytelling booth where they can listen to stories from various Indigenous oral traditions via earphones. They include themes about the Mortal World, the Sky World, and the Under World from different groups.²³ Curators opted to “Use aboriginal readers whenever possible” and aimed “for grassroots rather than trained voices.”²⁴ The effect is another performance in which listeners are positioned as the direct receivers of first-person narratives from Indigenous participants, and the interpretive intermediary and frameworks appear to be absent. The medium appears to be appropriate for the content, as a reviewer in the *Ottawa Citizen* suggested:

These engaging tales are an excellent way to experience storytelling, and the prowess of the recorded performers is such that listeners often laugh out loud. This clever presentation also avoids the irony of forcing the visitor to read about oral tradition. (“Hall honours First Nations,” 2003)

As the reviewer suggests, the visitor experiences this section of the exhibit through a number of aural and affective cues, or live mediation.

While the first two zones of the FPH are much more focused on contemporary themes, Zone 3 focuses on Survival and Cooperation in Ancient History. However, the historical themes addressed therein are also placed in modern contexts. Five themes organize the space into different “environments.”²⁵ Combining lighting, architecture, artifacts, life-sized objects, and diorama-like settings with projections, aural cues, and short films, this space recreates several regions in which Indigenous people lived historically and continue to reside in contemporary times. Large screens are used for projecting changing landscapes in the background, setting the stage for an Arctic village, a plains bull run, a maritime campground, and an Iroquois longhouse. The backgrounds for the first four areas change simultaneously with the seasons, as do the sounds heard overhead. For example, when the projected images show snow on the ground in four of the environments, the sound of wind whines through the exhibit, providing a multi-sensory experience for the visitor. Spring brings with it different images for each space as well as the new sounds of chirping birds and the hum of insects. Though text panels explaining historical migratory patterns and activities accompany each of the five spaces, the changing environments in this section of the exhibit play an important role in facilitating the feeling of a dynamic and live space.

In addition to its historical background and transforming spaces, this section includes short films placing each of the environments in more contemporary contexts via five television monitors with earphones. The short films shown in this area address controversial topics such as the famous 1990 Oka standoff between Mohawks and authorities over land. Another video discusses the legal battles faced by Inuit Arctic hunters for their whaling rights, and shows footage from the 1990s in which a group harvested its first bowhead whale after the courts ruled in their favor. The five areas present long, historical backdrops while at the same time allowing for

critical commentary on the effects of colonization and ongoing struggles over sovereignty and the revival of traditions. Though a narrator interprets the short videos, a number of interviews are included in which Indigenous participants speak directly to the camera, and the views presented are more sympathetic to the Indigenous agents involved in the conflicts.

As visitors exit the exhibit through the final zone of the museum, *Arrival of Europeans and Modern Existence*, there is one last notable media installation, a small theater featuring a 10-minute film titled "Affirmation." As its title suggests, the themes of the film on "contemporary Aboriginal people and perspectives" are very positive and uplifting.²⁶ A number of Indigenous people such as elders, successful professionals, and schoolchildren make statements like, "you can do anything you put your mind to," and upbeat music plays in the background. The film also takes place in a realist documentary style, and it spans a number of locations and activities with fast-action shots and montage. While the final areas in the FPH address some of the tumultuous results of colonization, the final sentiment expressed through the film's affect-evoking images and sounds suggests to visitors in the Indigenous first person that everything will be alright. It provides one last live and uplifting communicative act as visitors exit.

As the next section suggests, the CMC's emphasis on media technologies was not lost on museum reviewers. The following description of FPH reception in the local popular press reveals the ways in which the ideals of liveness, experience, and representation not only helped to constitute the FPH, but also circulated in popular discourse, which often conflated such concepts with media use and adoption. The proliferation of such ideals suggests they are powerful and commonly held values, which extended beyond museum administrators and planners to public expectations of contemporary exhibition. By identifying omissions in the coverage, we can better understand which issues were not explored with the privileging of visitor experience.

Reception of the FPH

Not surprisingly, reviews of the FPH in local popular media and Indigenous publications largely reflected a celebratory attitude toward Indigenous participation and the use of multimedia in the exhibit. While several reviews focused on visitor experience, very few mentioned the more critical issues shaping the FPH. For example, on the CBO-FM program "Ottawa Morning," reviewer Alvina Ruprecht praised the audio storytelling booth, stating, "It was really very well conceived, so you were almost there, living the experience but also sensing what the spiritual experience might have been."²⁷ Ruprecht cited the sense of liveness and experience facilitated by the exhibit and emphatically remarked that it was "very different" from *The Spirit Sings*. However, she made no mention of the conditions spawning protests of the former exhibit or whether they had been resolved.²⁸

Several popular press articles were also heavily constituted by official CMC discourse and noted the sense of Indigenous voice and environment in the exhibit. Tony Lofaro's article in the *Ottawa Citizen* noted the importance of "extensive planning with aboriginal groups" and provided a quotation from David Morrison, the CMC Director of Archaeology: "This is the First Peoples Hall and we wanted it to have, in part, a First Peoples voice" (Lofaro, 2003, p. D8). Similarly, another article in the *National Post* suggested that the museum provides a balance between Indigenous voices and scientific perspectives, and its title was appropriated from the comments of a CMC official: "Neither voice drowns out the other" (Cowan, 2003, p. AL1). Denis Armstrong of the *Ottawa Sun* wrote that the exhibit "inspires awe," and noted the "eerie realism" with which "the exhibition recreates the natural environments of First Nation people" (Armstrong, 2003, p. 28). Armstrong devoted several lines to quotations from Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation President and CEO Victor Rabinovitch. Similarly, *Inuit Art Quarterly* included interviews with spokespeople Robert McGhee and Gerald McMaster prior to the opening (McCarthy 2000a, 2000b). The journal's case studies included celebratory statements from the co-curators on the consultation process (McGhee, cited in McCarthy, 2000a).

Very few stories mentioned the FPH's more critical omissions, including the continuing struggle of the Lubicon Lake Band of Cree over land rights and a newer conflict between the CMC and the Algonquin Kitigan Zibi First Nations, who were launching complaints against the museum for its possession of human remains from the Ottawa Valley. The museum had been reluctant to repatriate the remains because they carried "significant scientific data" ("Tonight on Citydesk," 2003, p. B4). Though coverage in the Indigenous newspaper *Windspeaker* on the opening of the First Peoples Hall was very celebratory (Andrews Miller, 2003, p. 25), another article on the same page of that issue discussed the Kitigan Zibi "tug of war over remains" with the CMC (Logan, 2003, p. 25). However, *Windspeaker* did not disparage the exhibit for its failure to address the topic of repatriation, and it did not rehash the AFN/CMA Task Force recommendation that museums increase their efforts to repatriate human remains (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992, p. 1). Moreover, neither story noted the irony that one of the first sections of the FPH Welcome Area features a greeting from the Kitigan Zibi reminding visitors that they are standing on Algonquin land. While the exhibit is legitimated by Indigenous participation and representation through the inclusion of the Kitigan Zibi statement, it avoids the more polemical topics concerning the group.

Like the popular press, coverage of the FPH in *Windspeaker* was laden with quotations from the CMC. Andrea Laforet, Director of Ethnology and Cultural Studies, is cited several times, and her remarks reflect an anticipation of concerns held by Indigenous audiences. Laforet highlights the involvement of First Nations people in FPH planning, mentorship programs for Indigenous students at the CMC, outreach efforts and publications, and even a program related to "sacred material" in which "First Nations are invited to view items from their history and identify special care and handling" (Laforet, quoted in Andrews Miller, 2003, p. 25). Reviews in non-Native

popular media focused more on visitor experience, gee-whiz media technology, and curatorial participation than the outreach programs directly impacting Indigenous people. However, the theme of Indigenous curatorial participation was emphasized in both Indigenous and popular media in lieu of other concerns, suggesting an overall focus on representation.

Reviews from academics in scholarly journals reflected more critical and analytical commentary on the FPH. For example, while a review from Métis scholar Olive Patricia Dickason (2004) is mostly descriptive, she notes that the exhibit fails to address current problems, “which has encouraged the criticism that politically, the overall presentation of the First Peoples Hall is ‘thin’” (p. 360). Similarly, in her review in *Anthropologica*, Julia Harrison (2003) noted that the museum did not take a strong position on the controversy over government boarding schools. While also congratulating the new museological paradigm demonstrated by the CMC, Ruth Phillips (2006) points out the fact that senior administration positions at the museum are not held by Indigenous people as with the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, which is managed separately from the rest of the museum complex. The numerous quotations from non-Native CMC administrators in popular and Indigenous media reviews of the FPH reflect the CMC’s differing administrative structure.

Regardless of such critiques by academics, overall reception of the FPH in local media was celebratory. The exhibit largely escaped criticism while reproducing the discourses of museum leaders themselves, including notions of self-representation through a focus on collaboration and the ideals of liveness and visitor experience.

Conclusion

At the same time museums faced the problematization of Indigenous representational practices in the 1980s and 1990s, CMC administrators were intrigued with innovations in place-based media. New media adoption would help the museum facilitate an experience of liveness for visitors, and pedagogic discourses celebrating interactivity justified their inclusion. Museum leaders believed that the “tools and techniques” of the entertainment industry might help renew visitor interest, and they adopted the discourse of competition through which they compared themselves with market-driven, media-laden sites (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991, p. 308). This combination meant that the troubles of representational practices and institutional relevance were conflated, and concerns with colonial ideology were pinned on obsolete representational media. In this way, new media were conveniently touted as solutions to representational, economic, and pedagogic troubles in the CMC and First Peoples Hall. Indigenous concerns such as the land claims of the Lubicon Cree were omitted as outmoded forms of representation were problematized and visitor experience became central.

As Indigenous collaboration became a priority in exhibitionary practice, representation and Indigenous participation themselves became the subjects of exhibition and, along with visitor experience, were the teloi of museum media. FPH planners used new media in attempts to bring disembodied Indigenous peoples and cultures to life in a contemporary and interactive manner for the benefit of general audiences and in order to signify the museum's reflexive approach. Indigenous people speak in the first person to the audience about their cultures via FPH media, and this approach facilitates the experience of liveness for the visitor. Media appear to enable seamless communication from Indigenous participants to visitors, making them feel as though they are "almost there, living the experience."²⁹ In many ways, the FPH achieves media immediacy or transparency, which Bolter and Grusin (2000) describe as "ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and act of mediation" (p. 11). At the same time, the FPH expresses the "desire to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real," which becomes "the viewer's experience" (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 53). The real for FPH visitors is the experience of taking part in what appears to be a live communicative act with Indigenous participants.

However, as David Turnbull (2000) suggests, representational devices are "necessarily selective" (p. 99). Both the museum and its media mask the silences created through their use. Reviews in popular and Indigenous newspapers continued these silences as they celebrated the opening of the FPH, but the struggles over the repatriation of human remains and Indigenous homelands, which had spanned decades and first inspired the AFN/CMA Task Force, were long forgotten. Indigenous representation and visitor experience became the foci of news stories just as they were central to the exhibit.

Moreover, regardless of celebratory discourses, new media in museums can still lock Indigenous people into static contexts. Some of the reasons include the rapid rate at which new media devices obsolesce and the slow pace at which museums adapt due to their bureaucratic nature. Museums must strategize and budget years in advance for exhibits, and it is difficult to make anything look contemporary under such circumstances. In this time, staff members and priorities change. Take, for example, the Origins Theatre where the Mi'kmaq creation story, "Where We Come From," still plays, nearly a decade after the opening of the exhibit. The same collections of objects are still on exhibit in glass cases outside of the theater as well, regardless of the intention to show a "diversity of origin/creation stories" and to rotate associated artifacts at least once a year.³⁰ If the idea of using media is to avoid locking Native people into one static context, the "Where We Come From" example indicates that such efforts can be abandoned once an exhibit is functional, especially in light of budgetary constraints.

FPH planning documents indicate that curators believed media productions could frequently rotate, making for dynamic representations of Indigenous cultures. However, the exchange and updating, which would ostensibly depict Indigenous cultures as less static, never occurred. Each of the media productions, which largely address topics from the early 1990s, remains the same. Prerecordings are static by

nature and contradict the goals of articulating Native identity as contemporary and fluid. Moreover, museum media can feel comfortable for non-Native visitors experiencing a twinge of White guilt, but interpretive context and knowledge can also be more closely monitored by Indigenous people within the context of tribal museums (Isaac, 2007; Verran & Christie, 2007).

With each new permutation, media technologies are heralded for their democratizing potential, but they obsolesce very quickly. In addition, each new media adaptation brings its own representational issues, and there will always be trouble in bounding Indigenous representation so closely with new media. While Pauline Wakeham (2008) suggests that taxidermic semiosis extended beyond the diorama to early cinema, new media in exhibits like the FPH share some similar problems. There are of course important distinctions in that Indigenous people were not invited to share authority over interpretations of their cultures in museums of the past. However, dioramas, mannequins, and taxidermic animals, like new media in museums today, were similarly meant to evoke a sense of liveness and to create an experience for non-Native visitors. While today's new media use is justified through discourses of pedagogy and competition, it shares similar goals, which privilege visitor experience while overlooking other contemporary concerns such as the reasons the exhibit *The Spirit Sings* was protested by the First Peoples to begin with.

This chapter was not designed to minimize the importance of representing Indigenous people in contemporary contexts. The FPH demonstrates some opportunities for Indigenous people to address struggles with authorities over land rights, the lasting effects of colonization, and environmental concern (Brady, 2011b). There are also important lessons that can still be taken away from conflicts like the 1990 Oka standoff. However, such political issues tend to be rooted firmly in the past through dated footage rather than addressed in the contemporary moment in the FPH. These articulations have remained the same since the museum's opening in 2003. Media texts were considered by museum planners to be more adaptable to changing issues and conducive to a sense of liveness, but have remained static, even in this "museum for the twenty-first century." Museum professionals will undoubtedly continue their quest for the latest in communication technologies, but as the FPH demonstrates, the focus on liveness and representation itself can distract from other important issues and silence the longer stories and problems inherent in such ambitious sites.

NOTES

- 1 It is useful at this point to outline the concepts of liveness and interactivity as understood in this chapter. John Durham Peters (1999) points out that as electric media developed, they had the capacity to record and transmit life, and therefore the relationship between liveness and media like motion pictures, radio, and television was naturalized. In particular, those media capable of simultaneous broadcasting became associated with liveness, where

- the “contingency” of transmitting a new event was still possible (Peters, 1999, p. 218). Interactivity, in a basic sense, can be defined as “the degree to which participants in a communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse” (Hanssen, Jankowski, & Etienne, 1996, p. 61, citing Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988).
- 2 Videodisc Project Meeting, September 22, 1983 [meeting notes]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409, 99-I0027 box 2f1. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 3 Interactive, n.d. [white paper]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409, 99-I0027 box 2f2, p. 1. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 4 Digital Equipment Corporation, 1983 [brochure]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409, 99-I0027 box 2f1. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 5 Travel Report: Interactive Image Technologies LTD. (I.I. T.), Toronto, n.d. [note stapled to report]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409, 99-I0027 box 2f2, p. 1. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 6 JASON Project Transmission Plan, May 1990 [JASON brochure]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 7 Sherman, T., May 20, 1990. The Use of Media by the Canadian Museum of Civilization: Research and Recommendations [report]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409, 99-I0027 box 2f4, p. 21. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 8 Alsford, S., 1988. Demonstration of Museum of Mankind Interactive Video [memo]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409, 99-I0027 box 2f2. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 9 The Canadian Museum of Civilization at a Glance – 2002 [information sheet]. Vertical Files, MCC-CMC-First Peoples Hall. Gatineau. CMC Library.
 - 10 Videodisc Project Meeting, September 22, 1983 [meeting notes]. Stephen Alsford Collection. MCC/CMC Archives Docs INSTIT I-409, 99-I0027 box 2f1. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 11 According to the Lubicon Lake Nation website, the group’s concerns remain unresolved. See Lubicon Lake Nation, <http://www.LubiconLakeNation.com/>
 - 12 The First Peoples Hall – Project Background, n.d. [information sheet]. Vertical Files, MCC-CMC-First Peoples Hall. Gatineau. CMC Library.
 - 13 Draft First Peoples Hall: Committees, teams, advisory groups, consultants, August 3, 1999 [draft document]. First Peoples Hall Master Plan and Correspondence. ACQ. 2003-1-0029.G3 box 2. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 14 Canadian Museum of Civilization: First Peoples Hall – Consultation Committee Phase I Report, June 27, 1994 [report]. First Peoples Hall Master Plan and Correspondence. ACQ: 2003-1-0029.G4. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 15 Principles for Development of the First Peoples Hall, Canadian Museum of Civilization First Peoples Hall, Consultation Committee: Phase I Report, June 27, 1994 [document]. First Peoples Hall Master Plan and Correspondence. ACQ: 2003-1-0029.G4 box 2. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 16 Communication Intent for We are People of the Present World Zone 2: We Are Still Here – General, n.d. [document]. First Peoples Hall Master Plan and Correspondence. ACQ: 2003-1-0029 box 2. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
 - 17 Exhibit Master Plan: First Peoples Hall: Canadian Museum of Civilization, September 6, 1996 [document]. First Peoples Hall Master Plan and Correspondence. ACQ: 2003-1-0029 box 2, p. 5. Gatineau. CMC Archives.

- 18 Preliminary Storyline – First Peoples Hall, n.d. [document]. First Peoples Hall Master Plan and Correspondence. ACQ: 2003-1-0029 box 2. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
- 19 FPH Audiovisual Products Report #1, April 8, 2002 [report]. ACQ: 2003-1-0029. Gatineau. CMC Archives.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid., p. 4.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 The First Peoples Hall – The Story, n.d. [information sheet]. Vertical Files, MCC-CMC-First Peoples Hall. Gatineau. CMC Library.
- 26 Ibid., p. 20.
- 27 Review of the First People Hall at Museum of Civilization, February 3, 2003. Ottawa Morning, CBO-FM, 08:22 [transcript]. CMCC Daily Press Clippings, February 7, 2003. First Peoples Hall. Gatineau. CMC Library.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Bridges, D., n.d. [memo]. First Peoples Hall Zone 2. ACQ: 2003-1-0029. Gatineau. CMC Archives.

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Calypso and the Performance of Representational Politics

Susan Harewood

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the intersection of representation in calypso performance, representation in calypso research, and representation in parliament. The chapter highlights the ways in which a particular discourse of citizenship shapes the ways in which calypso is thought about and how the democratic project in the English-speaking Caribbean is imagined through calypso performance. The argument focuses on the productive nature of calypso research. It is contended that much of this research, though vitally important to identifying the significance of calypso within the region, has, nevertheless, tended to reinscribe a rather limited view of citizenship. The chapter makes a case for reimagining calypso's political significance by suggesting ways to reinvigorate the creative practices of calypso research.

Any licit approach to questions about representation, in other words, must make available a shifting multifocal and mobile set of grids.

(Shohat, 1995, p. 176)

A critical question for many is, Where are the new Carnival musics leading? Or, to put it another way, what kinds of future might be envisioned through them?

(Guilbault, 2007, p. 276)

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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Calypso has been at the center of the modern Anglo-Caribbean nation-state. The calypsonian (i.e., the performer/writer of calypsos) played a key role in resisting imperialism in the pre-independence period and, in the post-independence period, calypsonians have been hailed for their ability to keep a check on the power of political elites. In fact, academic research on the calypso has told and retold a narrative that posits a direct link between representation in calypso and political representation in the parliamentary democracies of the Anglo-Caribbean. In this chapter I seek to examine this narrative. The chapter focuses on the intersection of representation in calypso performance, representation in calypso research, and representation in parliament. I highlight the ways in which a particular discourse of citizenship shapes the ways in which calypso is thought about and how the democratic project in the region is imagined through calypso performance. Thus I focus on the productive nature of calypso research, suggesting that calypso research emerges within and reinscribes a limited view of citizenship. The chapter makes a case for reimagining calypso's political significance by suggesting ways to reinvigorate the creative practices of calypso research.

I will begin with a review of the calypso research literature by examining the intersecting notions of representation that have surfaced in the work. Thus the chapter will briefly examine representation as presence, particularly in the early literature on calypso. In this earlier literature, scholars sought to articulate presence in order to challenge racist colonial ideologies. However, the main way in which representation emerges in the calypso literature, and which I focus on in this chapter, is representation as "standing in for" as both calypsonian and politician are described as standing in for or representing "the people." Thus the chapter focuses on the work that is done by the heavy emphasis on "the political calypso," and how the political calypso is defined in the literature plays a part in how citizenship and political participation have been imagined. Finally, the chapter will trace the possibilities of imagining a different political project within the region by returning to some of the creative research strategies used in calypso research, by drawing upon research strategies that are missing from the literature, and by examining the challenge posed by new carnival music styles.

Calypso Research: Histories, Intellectuals, and "The People"

Calypso is a popular music genre that emerged in nineteenth-century Trinidad. Indeed, Trinidad is recognized as the center of the calypso world, though calypso is in many ways a transnational music because of the number of influences that came together in Trinidad to give rise to this rich art form. It is also transnational because other Caribbean territories have developed their own, though often related, creative calypso music traditions. And finally, it is transnational because it is an important part

of the cultural life of Caribbean diasporic communities. Calypso is a music form most closely linked to the pre-Lenten carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. However, though calypso remains linked to carnival, the very engine room of the festival, the number of carnivals that have arisen through the Caribbean and the diaspora have meant that there is a significantly longer period in which calypsos can be created, performed, and heard around the world. Calypso is a music of praise and celebration, blame and castigation, joke and wit. It is a dance music, a music that should be listened to very carefully to catch the play on words and coded messages, and a music that should be sung along to. It is known for its incisive critique as well as its parodic laughter aimed at the social and political foibles of members of society from those with the highest status to the lowest status. It is, in fact, possible to identify myriad ways in which calypso operates within the Caribbean and, though the research on calypso seeks to highlight that breadth, there are a number of key themes that consistently emerge, two of the most important of which I explore below. First, I examine the research that focuses on the history of calypso, which is often linked to important discussions of musical, national, and racial authenticity. Second, I examine the research on the political calypso and the ways in which it links the music to parliamentary representation.

Constructing Histories

The foundational academic work on calypso was conducted by scholars from anthropology, ethnomusicology, folklore, and literature rather than media studies. Many of these writers had differing, though related, objectives. Deborah Thomas and Karla Slocum (2008) provide a valuable examination of the position of the Caribbean in anthropological research. They examine some of the “master symbols” that have guided anthropological examinations of social change in the region. When we examine the foundational calypso research, it is possible to recognize that two of the master symbols identified by Thomas and Slocum – cultural retention and cultural stripping or deficiency – have been important to the ways in which calypso has been examined. Thus, much of the early work seeks to write against the colonial archive and its effort to produce a Caribbean defined by deficiency.

Some of the earliest writing seeks to establish the origins for the actual word “calypso.” For example, Daniel Crowley (1959) outlines eight origination narratives, some serious, some amusing, that suggest how the word calypso might have been derived. These origination narratives include the theory that calypso might have been derived from *kaiso*, an African word meaning bravo; *carrousseaux*, a word derived from the old French term for a drinking party; *caliso*, a Spanish word meaning peon; *carrizo*, a Latin American word meaning reed and also used for bravo; and *carieto*, a Carib word for a joyous healing or courting song. Different elements of this list are replicated across the calypso literature. Errol Hill (1967, 1972) investigates Crowley’s eight narratives and finds most of them “highly improbable.” Hill ultimately is

persuaded by his research that Crowley's first narrative is the correct one, that is, that calypso derives from the African, specifically Hausa, word *kaico* or *kaito*, which became *kaiso*. (This word is still used today to signal a song well sung, to refer to the calypso music genre, and especially to refer to particularly excellent calypsos.)

As I have suggested, these origination narratives, or related ones, are replicated across the literature, and often in their recounting the emphasis is placed on how these narratives highlight the multicultural nature of Trinidad. For example, Crowley draws attention to the racial diversity in Trinidad and then states that "nearly every national and racial group [in Trinidad] has its own theory of origin for calypso, both the word and the institution" (Crowley, 1959, p. 59). The diversity of Trinidad's ethnic and racial makeup is the starting point for many of the texts and seems to be used for two important purposes. On the one hand, the emphasis on the multicultural nature of Trinidad seems to provide some evidence as to why Trinidad, and not one of the other Caribbean territories, is the home and originator of calypso. Thus, some of the writers challenge not only those who try to suggest that calypso emerged from one of the other islands, but also those who wish to suggest that calypso was a Tin Pan Alley invention. The calypso craze in the United States in the 1950s seemed to have prompted some murkiness over calypso's origins. Thus the early research challenges this murkiness, and differentiates between the novelty songs made for profit in the United States and the true calypsos of Trinidad. This is, perhaps, interesting because the question of authenticity in the face of commercial pressures has arisen in the contemporary period.

Another reason for the emphasis on multiculturalism that emerges from the literature is that the emphasis sought to challenge the scholarship, which argued that the ethnic diversity of the Caribbean colonies meant they could never attain the type of unity that would make them successful societies and successful nation-states. Thus, in some ways the emphasis on difference within unity is an argument for the possibilities of self-government. This can be seen, for example, in Elder's work. His article "Color, Music, and Conflict" (1964) is illustrative of a nationalist narrative that argues that, despite diversity, national unity is possible:

Colonial governors, low class women of lax morals, African heroes, batoniers and tiepins whose names adorn the history of Trinidad, strong men and Amazonians – all have had their role in a land where men of many racial origins struggle, in the crucible of race-mixture, towards something unique in history – towards a new nationhood which is gradually evolving out of this diversity. (Elder, 1964, pp. 128–129)

This quotation locates Elder's work within the national independence project (Trinidad and Tobago gained independence in 1962). He presents his cast of characters – from colonial governors to Amazonians – to indicate the race, class, and gender difference that he sees as now being united under the sign of the nation.

Nevertheless, despite the emphasis on the multicultural influences on calypso, the main thrust in the literature is in identifying the calypso as an African-derived cultural

practice. There was some initial debate on this issue that is, perhaps, illustrative of the struggles over the conceptual boundaries of national identity in the Anglophone Caribbean. In his history of calypso, Raphael "Roaring Lion" De Leon (1980–1988) emphatically states that the calypso originated in France and that those who suggest that it originated in Africa are not only wrong, but are also perpetuating a damaging falsehood. De Leon states that documentary evidence demonstrates that the calypso was invented in 1295 in France by Guillaume de Machaut. He suggests that the French *ballade* has the same musical structure as the calypso and that the *ballade* was exported from France to a number of countries. In the processes of exportation, the name of the *ballade* changed and in Trinidad and Tobago this *ballade* was renamed the calypso. De Leon (1980–1988) suggests that the *ballade*/calypso came to Trinidad and Tobago via French planters who came to the island from Martinique. De Leon is not the only one to suggest that the calypso is not African. Peter Manuel (2006) stated that the calypsos of the 1930s "were essentially English in character," though he provides no clear reason for this conclusion. Perhaps the contentious nature of this idea of a European source for calypso is suggested by the story that in 1859, the American William Moore stated that the calypso was simply a Trinidadian version of the British and US ballad; a crowd gathered outside of his hotel and the calypsonian Surisma the Carib ridiculed Moore's conclusions in song (Brown, 1990; Crowley, 1959).

By contrast, other scholars such as Errol Hill (1972), Raymond "Attila" Quevedo (1983), Trevor Marshall (1986), Gordon Rohlehr (1990), Keith Warner (1982), and Hollis "Chalkdust" Liverpool (1998) draw a direct genealogy of the calypso from African music forms. Like De Leon, Hill, Quevedo, Rohlehr, and Warner stress the importance of the arrival of immigrants from Martinique and Haiti; however, these writers suggest that it was the *African slaves* that arrived with the planters who brought the calypso to Trinidad and Tobago as well as Africans freed from slave ships.¹ For example, Rohlehr (1990) starts his richly comprehensive text by suggesting that "one possible approach to writing a history of the calypso in Trinidad would be to identify its West African roots and then to trace what happened to that oral tradition in colonial Trinidad" (Rohlehr, 1990, p. 1). He links this approach to the work of anthropologists such as Melville Herskovits. This is an important link as it contextualizes the research within the discourse of African cultural retentions and thus illuminates some of the issues to which calypso researchers are speaking.

The research on calypso was emerging in a period in which the presence of intellectuals of the formerly colonized territories was transforming the production of knowledge within certain parts of the academy and beyond it (see, e.g., Gershenhorn, 2009; Schwarz, 2003). This transnational movement of bodies, ideas, and activism meant that spaces were opening where scholars could challenge the standard racist tropes about inferiority of colonized subjects.

For example, Melville Herskovits was influenced by these changes. According to Kate Ramsey, Herskovits' interaction with African American scholars/artists convinced him of the continuity of African cultural forms. He believed that the exploration of these continuities would "instill greater self esteem and pride among

peoples of African descent by culturally validating their connection to an ancestral past” (Ramsey, 2000, p. 199). Not only is it possible to see a link between Herskovits and Rohlehr, but it is also possible to see links between Herskovits and Jacob Elder, whose work has been fundamentally important to calypso music research. Elder collaborated with Alan Lomax, who studied under Herskovits; in his PhD dissertation, Elder uses a scale developed by Herskovits to indicate the level of “Africanness” in Trinidadian music and religions. Using the scale, Trinidad got a “B” for quite African whilst Brazil got an “A” for very African. Using Alan Lomax’s method of cantometrics Elder set out to measure change and how much “Africanness” still remained in Trinidadian music forms. He based his work on the calypso, but was interested in being able to draw conclusions about the breadth of Trinidadian music practices. Elder (1964, 1966, 1969) was especially interested in African survivals. In his dissertation he identified his research interests in the following manner:

First granted that the Negroes brought with them a highly developed musical culture with them to Trinidad. Granted that they encountered in the slave-society certain socio-cultural conditions which compelled them to adjust their “way of life” in order to survive in their new environment. Granted that change in the Negro musical culture was bound to occur, we then ask: Has Negro musical culture as it stands today in Trinidad assimilated non-African music traits more than it has retained its own ethnic traits? (Elder, 1966, p. 7)

Note that in this statement Elder immediately takes as a given that which colonial scholarship refused to recognize – the value and complexity of Black cultural practices. He thus challenges the colonial deficiency caricature. His work was a direct engagement with an issue that was controversial at the time – whether Caribbean people of African descent and African Americans had retained, despite the ravages of slavery and imperialism, any cultural connection to Africa. He based his work on the calypso, but was interested in being able to draw conclusions about the breadth of Trinidadian music practices. He would go on to write about the broadest range of Trinidadian cultural practices, and became part of Trinidad and Tobago’s post-independence government as Minister of Culture and Education for Tobago as well as consultant to the Ministry of Youth Sport Culture and Creative Arts for the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

These histories are important in a variety of ways. First, we recognize that the histories provide an answer, or answers, to the question of where this cultural practice came from. In doing so, the absence of or racist representation of people of African descent in colonial scholarship is met with presence – not only in the histories that write Black people into history, but also the scholars themselves whose presence in the academy poses new questions. Certainly, these were questions that some would steadfastly ignore but the questions are posed nevertheless.

Second, the histories are part of the processes of building a national imaginary. Intellectual work on nationalism has identified the importance of making traditions and originary myths to the production of national identities (see, e.g., Anderson, 1983;

Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Though the origins of European nations might be set in the ancient past, colonial settler states like those of the Caribbean often bypass the originary myths of the indigenous peoples and negotiate a more recent narrative linked to the time of European “discovery.” However, constitutional independence for these states requires a rethinking of the colonial narrative of origins, and calypso research has been important to the renarrativization of national origins. What William Green says about Caribbean history in general is true of calypso histories too. Green states that the creolization of Caribbean history has resulted in an emphasis on laboring-class resistance and the generation of “new national heroes whose historic exploits are thought to affirm creole traditions and express the legitimate aspirations of island peoples” (Green, 1993, p. 28). This scholarship, therefore, was part of what Hall (1994) called “imaginative rediscovery” or what Shohat (1995) called “compensatory origanism.” Both Hall and Shohat recognize these acts of constructing roots as vitally important. Though Hall ultimately highlights the problems with discovering original, essential identities in an unproblematized past, he still stresses that such historical excavation “continues to be a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation amongst hitherto marginalized peoples” (Hall, 1994, p. 393).

The third way that these histories are important is the way in which they can draw our attention to the imaginative work of scholarship. Note that Hall makes reference to “imaginative rediscovery” and the “creative force” of these histories. These renarrativizations are creative or imaginative intellectual acts. In order for the calypso scholars to write the work that they did, they had to read against the colonial archive and write against the colonial archive. For example, in “The Calypsonian as Artist: Freedom and Responsibility,” Rohlehr (2001b) reads the history of calypso through the ordinances passed against calypso. The histories also had to seek out alternative informants and sources of knowledge. In this the calypso became both the object and subject of the studies as the calypso has been used as a valuable historical document in itself. Thus, Keith Warner lauds the calypso as a historical document: “One can follow the varying faces of Trinidad’s social and political history through a careful analysis of many of the calypsos composed over the years” (Warner, 1982, p. 59). Similarly, Cynthia Mahabir (1996) describes the calypso as “the subordinate class’s transcript of important events in Trinidadian society” (p. 60). The writers argue, then, that in calypsos we can read the political history of a people. This perspective serves as an intellectual framework for work such as Louis Regis’ *The Political Calypso: True Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago 1962–1987* (1999). He uses his survey of Trinidadian calypsos from 1962 to 1987 (together with some foundational discussion of the 1956–1963 period) to examine the political history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Like Hall, I must ultimately be skeptical of fixed historical narratives as a source for unproblematic essential identities. Nevertheless, the creative impulse in research seems to me to be something that we need to retain at this time. The ability to read against the grain of the colonial archive and seek out alternative sources to those legitimated by colonialism are research strategies which, I will suggest later in this chapter, must be reinvigorated in this postcolonial period.

The Political Calypso: Intellectuals and “The People”

There is a broad range of calypso topics and forms. Nevertheless, the political calypso tends to receive the most attention in the literature and in media commentary. Gordon Rohlehr defines the political calypso in the following terms:

The political calypso emerged out of this background of conflict as a medium for articulating class struggle as well as a vehicle for transmitting images of self and potential, different from the images which had traditionally been transmitted by the prevailing order. (Rohlehr, 1985, p. 2)

He states that it emerged at the same time as the rise of adult suffrage and the trade union movement. Thus, the political calypso is presented as an important part of the processes that led to and characterized the new democratic Caribbean state. Rohlehr further points out that the response from the colonial administration to this political ferment, including the politico-aesthetic art form of the calypso, was predictably draconian and included “sedition bills, armed occupation, and the censorship of books, pamphlets and calypso records and performances” (Rohlehr, 1985, p. 2). Thus the political calypso is closely tied to modern democracy in the Caribbean. In fact, Frank Manning probably makes the most unequivocal connection between the democratic enfranchisement and the calypso:

Calypso is an expression of participatory democracy and a means of preserving it. Like the voting franchise, it is an instrument of retribution against an incumbent government. (Manning, 1990, p. 246)

Generally, the writing on calypso has delineated a three-way relationship between the politicians, the calypsonian, and the audience. In this relationship the audience is equated with the electorate and the calypso is said to faithfully reflect the reality facing Caribbean citizens. This leads to a position in which the calypsonian is said to stand in for the citizens, representing their interests to the political directorate. This, then, is the symbolic work performed by much calypso research – it is the representation of calypso that serves to legitimize a particular style of representational government. However, I would argue that this legitimization of the parliamentary system and the authority of the calypsonian and politician, though progressive in some ways, comes at the expense of the voice of the electorate.

In some ways it is possible to recognize the calypso research as depicting calypso as the ideal liberal democratic space of deliberation and opinion formation. Two interrelated tropes that are consistently used within the research focus on the political calypso as a type of public sphere. These are the description of the calypso as the “poor man’s newspaper” and the calypsonian as the “voice of the people.” Both phrases seek to define the calypso as an accurate archive of public events and the

calypsonian as both recorder of those events and faithful representative of his audience. The phrase “the poor man’s newspaper,” or variants of it, can be found in a number of works on calypso. Quevedo (1983) suggests that calypso was identified as the “living newspaper” by the US magazine *Time* in 1949. Since that time the phrase has been used to emphasize the calypsonian as a monitor of social political events, as taking on the watchdog function of the press. Thus Gordon Rohlehr, who evinces a broad and multifaceted range of roles for the calypsonian in the rich body of his work, identifies the calypsonian as, among other things, an investigative reporter of local events in his “Man Talking to Man” article (Rohlehr, 1985) and a guardian of freedom of expression in both that article and in “‘We Getting the Kaiso We Deserve’” (1998). Similarly, the idea of the calypsonian as the “voice of the people” is also replicated across the literature and seems to perform similar work; that is, it portrays the calypso and the calypsonian as mirrors that simply reflect the will of the audience/electorate. The “voice” trope appears in a variety of ways. John Patton (1994), for example, writes of the calypsonian as a seer. Frank Manning (1990), quoting calypsonian The Mighty Sparrow, describes the calypsonian as “the mouthpiece of the underprivileged.” C. L. R. James, again with specific reference to Sparrow, describes him as *vox populi* and suggests that Sparrow “faithfully reports public sentiment” (James, 1973, p. 376). Therefore, these writers suggest that the experiences of the underprivileged and the artistic expression of the calypsonians are the same. In fact, Warner, drawing from C. L. R. James and Selwyn Ryan, reinforces the idea of the “fidelity of the calypsonian as indicator of contemporary public opinion” (Warner, 1982, p. 70).

To hear the calypsonian, then it would seem, is to hear “the people” through the offices and creative talent of their own intellectual. Accordingly Christine Ho (2008) refers to the calypsonian as an organic intellectual, and certainly the Gramscian concept that these calypsonian-intellectuals emerge from the working classes and assist in the consciousness raising of the workers runs through descriptions of the calypsonians in the literature. For example, in Regis’ (2007) monograph about Black Stalin, a quote from the calypsonian seems to emphasize his own sense that his intellectual labor emerges from his connection his community.

As a composer and man living with and talking with people you have to understand what I sing is the people own . . . is them thing. All I doing is take it up, nice it up and hand it back to them . . . cook it nice, fix it up sweet, so I got to find the correct seasoning to put in it. (Regis, 2007, p. 113)

This is a role that Gordon Rohlehr (2001b) also sees Stalin performing. Yet Rohlehr, who as I have suggested before tends to see the complexity of the different roles that the calypsonian occupies, also draws attention to the vanguard intellectual persona of calypso. Thus he contrasts Stalin’s knowledge, which he sees as emerging from the class struggle, with that of The Mighty Chalkdust, former teacher, author, university professor, and a leading scholar of calypso and carnival. In any case, though

much of the literature seems drawn to the idea of the calypsonian as an organic intellectual, in many ways it is the vanguard intellectual who actually takes form in the methodologies used in the literature.

A comparison of two chapters can make this point quite clearly. In Keith Warner's chapter "Social and Political Commentary in Calypso" from his book *Kaiso! The Trinidad Calypso: A Study of the Calypso as Oral Literature* (1982) and in Louis Regis' chapter "The Calypso and Politics 1956–1962" from his book *The Political Calypso: True Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago 1962–1987* (1999), one can witness the suturing of calypso and electoral politics quite clearly. One can also see that, although the idea of *vox populi* is definitely present, the actual voices and interests of "the people" disappear quite quickly. I have selected these two chapters because the information that they present is replicated at different points within the literature and, therefore, forms an important part of the way that the political calypso is perceived.

The structure and method of both chapters is very similar. Both scholars trace moments in Trinidad's political history from the rise of the People's National Movement (PNM), led by Dr. Eric Williams, in 1956 through to independence in 1962 and a little beyond it. Both chapters highlight the contributions that The Mighty Sparrow made to Williams' political fortunes. Sparrow and Williams are presented as the heroes of this period in Trinidad and Tobago's political life. Williams is presented as the hero pushing through policies that create the modern, independent, self-confident nation-state. Sparrow is presented both as Williams' heroic cheerleader – indeed, a major plank of PNM public relations – and as a mirror for public sentiment. The chapters are not formulaic; nevertheless it is possible to see some similarity in the way the analysis is presented: a key political moment in the history of the nation-state is presented, the calypsonians' lyrical interpretation of that political moment is then presented, and finally, conclusions about the audience's agreement with that interpretation are made from the same lyrics. This is problematic as one cannot read audience reactions from content; the meaning-making processes of the active audience are complex and largely unpredictable.

The substitution of the scholar's interpretation for that of the audience that we find at this point in Warner's and Regis' work is seen at other points within the calypso literature. For example, it is particularly clear at those moments in the literature when audience assessment of the value of a calypso is presented but discounted, often in favor of the writer's evaluation. This happens, perhaps most often, in the assessment of the new carnival music such as soca.² For example, Rohlehr (1998) contends that the audience is too ready to accept mediocrity and identifies some calypsos which, in his estimation, should have been popular but were not. Similarly, Regis suggests toward the end of his book that one of the major challenges facing the calypsonian is his increasingly "hedonistic" and "giddy" audience, who are "addicted to the anodyne of pop music" (Regis, 1999, p. 209). The audience's evaluation is, therefore, viewed with some skepticism. However, on the other hand, the politicians' assessments carry a little more weight. Both Warner and Regis, for example, use approval and appraisal from leading Caribbean and international

anticolonial leaders C. L. R. James, Albert Gomes, and Eric Williams to affirm the political significance of the calypso.

Thus, by ventriloquizing the audience reactions by reading reactions from lyrics, and by substituting the politician's and the scholar's views for those of the audience/electorate, it would seem to me that the research is naturalizing a form of representational politics in which the electorate are, if not irrelevant, at least marginal. "The people" is a monolithic category, and the pertinent question to ask, then, is what work this concept of "the people" does. It gives the appearance of lending legitimacy to the political project articulated in the literature on the political calypso. Taken without reflection, the presence of "the people" in the public forum that connects the calypso stage to the parliament, and the articulation of their interests in calypso form, is the ideal of liberal democracy. However, as I have suggested above, the category of "the people" actually serves to erase citizens/the electorate/the audience from the spaces and practices of political discourse as imagined in the calypso literature. This is much of the terrain suggested by Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). Can "the people" speak? No, and for many of the reasons Spivak discusses. "The people" can only exist as a category constructed in the literature and thus cannot speak, nor effectively be heard in this silenced position. "The people" suggests a clearly defined political community with congruent interests. However, this depiction hides not only the heterogeneity of identities and interests that comprise Trinidadian or Caribbean society, but also the ways in which this category relies on those colonial definitions of race and gender to which I made reference earlier. Thus, though "the people" seems almost progressive in its inclusivity (we are all people, aren't we?), its construction in the literature demonstrates the persistence of colonial racial and gender ordering.³ This ordering produces the borders of the category "the people" and reveals that there are very few residents of the Caribbean whose right to humanity/citizenship cannot be viewed with some suspicion.

Suspect and Invisible People

One way in which we might pay close attention to how the category of "the people" can inadvertently limit the ways in which active citizenship is imagined is by analyzing how the arrival of the US GIs in Trinidad in 1939 is represented in the literature. The United States established a base in Trinidad during World War II – a significant event in the narrative of both Trinidad's history and the history of calypso. The arrival and social impact of the GIs is presented over and over in the calypso literature. For the research that focuses mostly on the steelbands, the arrival of the GIs and the establishment of the oil refinery are mostly identified as the catalysts to the invention and development of the steelband. However, in the literature that more specifically focuses on calypso, the arrival of the GIs is described as having devastating effects on the gender, race, and sexual relations in the island. There are three main sets of characters in this story: the GIs, the women, and the calypsonians.

The GIs are identified as an invading force that, while bringing jobs, money, and an audience for calypsonians, is also seen as a catalyst for moral decay in the island as the numbers of brothels, prostitutes, and nightclubs increased. Elder describes the difficult social conditions – industrialization, a widening gap between rich and poor, pressure on housing – and then states that “It was on these conditions that World War II descended, with the invasion of Trinidad in 1939 by the American serviceman, his wealth, his power and his emphasis on success” (Elder, 1964, p. 134). As an invading force, then, the GI is identified as a threat to the nation.⁴

In the literature and in this sense of an invading army, women’s bodies become the very symbol of the nation. Transnational and postcolonial feminist scholarship has explored and critiqued this issue time and again – the control of women’s bodies becomes equated with the control of the nation-state, the contours of women’s bodies and reproductive rights become inseparable from the control of the landscape and contours of the territory. The calypso literature consistently and uncritically makes use of women’s bodies in these ways. Thus, for example, in Elder (1964), Hill (1972), Warner (1982), Moore (1999), Manuel (2006), and Ho (2008), women are identified as the site at which Caribbean men stake their claim to the nation in the face of the challenge from the US GIs. Ho, for example, writes, “In defense of Trinidadians, calypsonians sang about the fury of the common man whose woman, wife or sister had been stolen from him” (2008, p. 10). Thus women are presented merely as property that could be stolen from a calypsonian, who is then pushed to use his creative lyricism to defend Trinidadians – one might say Trinidadian citizens. I would argue that in this example women cannot be said to have full membership in the category “the people” as they exist merely as symbols of, not citizens of, the nation. This inability to attain full humanity presents itself throughout the research. The scholarship is faced with the challenge of what to do about the silences. Most of the calypsonians were/are male and the calypsos recount some male perspectives on women. Much of the literature highlights various aspects of what Elder called “The Male/Female Conflict in Calypso” (1968). Of course the researchers cannot rewrite the gendered thinking of calypsonians of the 1930s and 1950s; however, if the calypso’s field of engagement is being taken as a model for the modern Caribbean state, then it seems to me that the writers who are making this argument must think carefully about what this means to the democratic project. To put it another way, might scholars who read against the grain in order to intervene in imperial discourses provide similar strategies for intervening in sexist discourses?

In many cases the matter remains unaddressed. Some of the writers continued to build on the idea of the calypso as an accurate record, and thus one or two seem to take the calypsos as indicative of the inherent perfidy, greed, and highly suggestible nature of Caribbean women. Thus Manuel states that when the GIs arrived in Trinidad, “calypsonians watched with dismay as local women forsook their company for that of the free spending GIs” (2006, p. 224). Most, however, looked to psychological and social reasons. For example, Elder drew on literature that suggested that Black males were psychologically damaged by being brought up in matrifocal families. He

argues that the songs reflect the calypsonian's neurosis and that it is a reversal of the Oedipus complex that is likely to affect the "man-child" for the balance of his life. At some points, Warner's (1982) analysis takes the anti-female songs less seriously than Elder seems to. Thus he suggests that the number of calypsos that castigate women for being "unclean" or "ugly" are just examples of the calypsonian being "ungallant." This seems to dismiss these songs, then, merely as examples of bad manners. Nevertheless, Warner does take up feminist author Merle Hodge's psychological reasons to explain the male/female interplay in calypso. Warner takes up Hodge's contention that Caribbean men were psychologically emasculated by slavery, the Crown Colony system, and the US invasion in the 1930s, and they therefore sought healing through the denigration of women.

It should be clear that these accounts pathologize Caribbean gender and sexual relations. The ideas of the greedy, over-heated Black woman of low morals and the emasculated yet hypersexualized Black male are part of the colonial archive of representations that seem here redeployed within the nationalist project. What we are seeing, then, is the persistence of the moral economy of colonialism. Despite the efforts in the literature to challenge the colonial discourses of deficiency, this dehumanizing narrative still makes its presence known. This is extended to non-Black Caribbean citizens as well, though not always in exactly the same way. Though Caribbean citizens of all racial heritages run the risk of being deemed excessive in their tropicalized sexuality, many are simply written out of the narrative altogether – made invisible, in other words. For example, Shalini Puri (1997) presents one of the few accounts of the US GI invasion that references Indian women specifically. Puri's article, in general, is a less celebratory account of the political calypso than some of the other texts to which I have referred. Her work deals with the production of nationalized racial hierarchies within the Trinidadian national imaginary and provides a strategic re-reading of Indian women's agency within these accounts.

It should also be clear that this pathologizing of the men and women of the Caribbean makes their right to full citizenship suspect. There has been an unbidden hierarchizing of citizenship at the heart of the calypso literature, and this points to a significant problem. I have been suggesting that not only does calypso have a part to play in representational politics in the Caribbean – this is a case made over and again in the literature – but also that the calypso literature itself is part of the way in which calypso comes to make meaning, especially within the politics of the region. The productive nature of these academic discourses can be traced in cultural policy decisions, calypso competition criteria, and in the public discussions about the meaning, purposes, and political significance of calypso (Guilbault, 2007; Harewood, 2008b). However, the limited access to full citizenship afforded in these discourses suggests that the democratic project is failing to deliver on its independence promises. This failure is the subject of a growing body of Caribbeanist literature, especially, though not exclusively, on Jamaica. Thus, Holger Henke's chapter, "Freedom Ossified, Political Culture and the Public Use of History in Jamaica" (2003), which contends that the project of freedom within the Caribbean has been ossified into a set of

narrow and anemic celebrations of independence, inspired a number of scholars to examine political culture in the region. Similarly, Percy Hintzen (2005) contends that the nationalist movement included “the people” but without permitting equal rights to citizenship. The working classes were still seen as immature, deficient, if you will. In much of the rest of his work Hintzen highlights not only the ways in which access to citizenship is classed, but also how it is racialized. Caribbean feminists have launched a consistent challenge to the masculinist construction of the Caribbean nation-state. So how might these critiques of the political culture in the region inform calypso research? What strategies, then, are available to challenge the persistent effects of the colonial moral economy, even as it has snuck into a literature that has not only sought a progressive response to domination in the region, but has, in many instances, been successful in its ability to challenge some forms of control?

Envisioning Futures: Performance and “Disreputable” Spaces

I would argue that the possibilities of calypso research contributing to the freedom project of the Caribbean lie in considering the ways in which calypso performance practices exceed the ways in which they are described and analyzed in calypso research. In my own scholarship I have attempted to do this by analyzing calypso and soca through performance, and by considering those calypso music practices that are less “reputable” than the political calypso. I would also like to suggest that possibilities in calypso research also lie in asking more consistently what it means to have a multicultural society in the Caribbean, and how this might inform our theoretical engagement with the popular resistive arts.

The bulk of research on the calypso analyzes the music genre through the examination of lyrics. There are some good reasons for this. The play of language in calypso is a significant part of both its appeal and its power. I have argued elsewhere that perhaps one of the reasons that calypso has fit so readily into the idea of “the poor man’s newspaper” is because of its emphasis on words. However, I have also suggested that relying almost exclusively on the lyrical content of what is, after all, a music genre limits our attention to the multiple ways in which calypso makes meaning. Thus I have sought to locate calypso within the field of carnival masquerade (Harewood, 2005, 2007) and its attendant movement, flexibility, and polysemy. My work seeks to analyze calypso performances, certainly by acknowledging the importance of the lyrical content, but also by listening to the meaning making in the music and instrumentation and looking at the costuming, dance movement, props, and the spaces of performance. This not only opens one up to the multiple ways in which calypso makes meaning, but it also pushes one to acknowledge that all meanings, whether lyrical or otherwise, are not as stable as might first appear. This not only draws attention to the polysemy of the performance practices, but also

permits me to concentrate on the complex chains of meaning at play in the lyrics too. In doing this, I seek to open the texts of performance up to more and more questions. This is a different pedagogy of scholarship, one that, rather than being built on certainty, is one built on the creative potential of inquiry. Such a focus can contribute not merely to the academic quest to discover, but also to the intellectual's quest to imagine.

The focus on performance also permits more effective engagement with the new music style, soca. In much of the literature, soca is cast as the profligate child of calypso and a direct contrast to the legitimate work that is done by the political calypso. Part of soca's "failure" is seen as its seeming rejection of the calypsonian's sophisticated word play. In contrast to the dismissal of soca, Jocelyne Guilbault asks what I think is an extremely important question, reproduced in one of this chapter's epigraphs. My research seeks to think through what is to be gained by examining the "disreputable" spaces of soca performance instead of keeping the focus on the reputable and legitimated styles of the political calypso. I ask what is the political work that is being done in these, in some ways marginalized, but in other ways extremely popular, spaces of performance.

One of the answers that emerges from the examination of soca and its relationship to the political calypso ideal is that these disreputable spaces are also the spaces for female and youth performances. Thus, dismissing these spaces also delegitimizes youth and female voices within the nation-state. It must be acknowledged that performances are not without their problems (though I have equally suggested that calypso performances are also problematic). Rohlehr's (1998) contention that soca performances often make women available for male consumption is right on the money. However, my examination of soca singer Alison Hinds' performance (Harewood, 2006) is not posed in the heroic, triumphant genre of the political calypso narrative. Rather, it seeks to examine the complex meaning-making strategies taking place in the new musics in the new spaces.⁵ How might we attend to different ways national identity is imagined in the performances of female performers and their fans? This is a key question, it seems to me, because of much of what I have outlined above – that only certain ways of imagining the nation have been legitimated in the dominant nationalist project. My work seeks to find ways to pay attention to the multifocal lenses through which nation and identity are performed.

In this section of the chapter I have paid some attention to the possibilities of the instability and multiplicity of meaning. I would also contend that the acknowledgment of this instability of meaning can lead to a reassessment of and return to one of the most important research strategies that has been used by calypso scholars – their willingness to read against the grain. Earlier in the chapter it was suggested that calypso scholars sought out alternative sources and strategically read the colonial archive. Given the problems outlined above, I believe that calypso scholarship can take up this strategy, this time reading across the grain of the dominant nationalist canon. For example, more critical engagement with the racial and gender hierarchies at play in calypso performance and within the calypso research can potentially

lead to a reassessment of the ways in which the category of “the people” has managed to narrow the definition of citizen (Harewood, 2008a, 2010). Part of this critical engagement must take a long hard look at an even more fundamental question: What are the pros and cons of examining the popular arts when colonial history has often meant that there has been a racialized and gendered division of labor around the symbolic arts? Within my own work I have sought to address this by looking at what factors shape the spaces of performance. However, more work also needs to pay attention to identifying the impact of particular definitions of “popular” and “popular arts” within the racialized environment of the Caribbean.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to examine the productive nature of calypso research. The chapter seeks to examine, therefore, representation of calypso within the calypso literature and how this links to representational politics. The chapter has examined key themes that have come to the fore in calypso literature – the uses made of history and the significant place that the political calypso plays within the literature. I have sought to suggest that the calypso literature is an important part of the way in which calypso is assigned value. The discourses articulated within calypso research are part of the way in which calypso makes meaning, and, because calypso is so closely tied to representational government within the region, we should acknowledge the narrow conceptualization of citizenship that is articulated in the scholarship as having material effect on democracy within the region. Certainly the notion of citizenship presented in the calypso literature does not exist there alone. In fact, what I am drawing attention to is a societal, commonsense understanding of narrowed citizenship, and that we as scholars can attend to this by paying close attention to the relationship between calypso literature, calypso performance, and parliamentary practice.

Nevertheless, I have also suggested that calypso and soca offer counter-discourses that can challenge the dominant nationalist narrative and the emphasis on limited citizen participation. It is the contention of this chapter that paying attention to alternative ways in which the nation and ideas of national unity are being imagined through calypso and soca requires research strategies that try to focus on calypso and soca’s polysemy. Ultimately, my argument in this chapter has been one that has sought to think through the project of democracy within the Caribbean in part, as an imaginative project. Within this imaginative project the role of the academic is not only that of critic. The calypso scholar has always been engaged in a creative exercise. Thus the ability to read against the grain, to cultivate new sources of knowledge, and to demand visibility in the face of colonial erasure has played its part in the anti-imperialist work of the region. I would contend that these creative practices must be put to use in the ongoing project of freedom in the Caribbean.

NOTES

- 1 Britain ended its slave trade in 1807 and from that point on patrolled the area of the Triangular Trade in order to stop rogue slaving.
- 2 Soca music is a more contemporary style of carnival music that emerged from calypso in the 1970s. It tends to be marked by faster beats, recurring lyrics, digital music production techniques, and often fusions with other regional and international forms of music.
- 3 When I say “colonial” in this context I do not mean to suggest an unbroken line in which race and gender mean exactly the same thing today that they meant in the colonial period. Rather, I am seeking to highlight two things. First, the persistence of these forms of ordering – colonial hierarchies of race, class, and gender – but also international economic structures that continue to shape the contemporary period. This highlights the second reason I am using the term colonial – to highlight the flexibility of these concepts. Although the world changes, global capital changes too and constantly redeploys hierarchies as a continually changing strategy of survival.
- 4 Of course Trinidad and Tobago was a colony at the time; nevertheless, the sense of national unity and the desire for national self-government were certainly stirring.
- 5 My work also focuses on Barbados and the Caribbean diaspora rather than on Trinidad and the Caribbean diaspora, which is the focus of the bulk of calypso literature.

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Technology, Convergence, and Power

Current Trends in Text-Based Approaches to Media Studies

Sharon R. Mazzarella

ABSTRACT

In this introduction, I provide a historical, methodological, and epistemological context for a discussion of the current state of text-only approaches to media studies as exemplified by the chapters in this volume. I begin with a discussion of the specific methodology of content analysis not to give it primacy, but rather for the sake of chronology. I then discuss more qualitative approaches to the study of media content and representation before justifying why text-only studies of media are relevant. Finally, I explain the organizational structure of the volume and introduce the individual chapters before offering concluding thoughts and future directions for media content studies, specifically, the need to: (1) continue to embrace and respect a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives; (2) remain open to evolving and refining our research questions as the technology and content evolve; and (3) acknowledge the potential of interdisciplinarity to make our scholarship more robust.

[M]edia texts present a distinctive discursive moment between encoding and decoding that justifies special scholarly engagement. The narrative character of media content, its potential as a site of ideological negotiation and its impact as mediated “reality” necessitates interpretation in its own right.

(Elfriede Fürsich (2009, p. 238))

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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Studies of media content have been a staple of media studies since the field's beginnings. While many people erroneously use the phrase "content analysis" to refer to any and all studies of media content, there are actually a variety of ways to study such content, only one of which is correctly labeled "content analysis." The chapters in this volume come from a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches and highlight the richness of media content and representation studies. Moreover, they exemplify how such studies have evolved as media content itself has evolved. In this introduction, I provide a historical, methodological, and epistemological context for the chapters contained in this volume. I begin with a discussion of the specific methodology of content analysis not to give it primacy, but rather for the sake of chronology. I then discuss more qualitative approaches to the study of media content and representation before justifying why text-only studies of media are relevant. Finally, I explain the organizational structure of the volume and introduce the individual chapters before offering concluding thoughts and future directions for media content studies.

Quantitative Analysis of Media Content

According to the author of one of the leading content analysis textbooks, Klaus Krippendorff, "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (2004, p. 18). While Kimberly Neuendorf, author of the highly influential *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, offers a more extensive definition later in her book, she begins with the following brief definition: content analysis is "the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics" (2002, p. 1). Similarly, in yet another key content analysis methodology textbook, Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacey, and Frederick Fico define the approach as "the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods" (2005, p. 3). Words like "systematic," "objective," "rules," "categories," "quantitative," "replicable," "valid," and "statistical method" evidence the connection between content analysis and the scientific method employed in the subset of media studies that grew out of the social and behavioral sciences.

While Krippendorff traces the concept of content analysis back even as far as seventeenth-century Europe, the precursor of modern content analysis is generally considered to be the "quantitative newspaper analysis" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 5) of the early twentieth century. At that time, US journalism schools were established paralleling a public and scholarly concern about the content of newspapers. Early studies such as Mathews's 1910 piece documenting the large amount of space allotted to what he termed "demoralizing," "trivial," and "unwholesome" content in US newspapers arrived at their conclusions by measuring column inches devoted to

particular topics (as cited in Krippendorff, 2004, p. 5). As other forms of mass media emerged in the early and mid-twentieth century, the quantitative techniques of early newspaper analysis were translated to study the content of other media. Neuendorf (2002), for example, identifies Edgar Dale's 1935 content analysis of the written descriptions of some 1,500 movies released in 1920, 1925, and 1930 as such an example. Published as part of the classic Payne Fund Studies, Dale documented Hollywood's reliance on love and crime stories. Krippendorff identifies the 1930s and 1940s as "the second phase in the intellectual growth of content analysis" (2004, p. 6). Paralleling the rise of the development of the social sciences, public opinion research, and theoretically grounded social research, scholars of media content expanded the range of questions asked about the content, incorporated theory and operational definitions to guide their research, and utilized new statistical tools. In addition, content analysis was used as part of larger research projects incorporating other methods such as survey research (Krippendorff, 2004). Certainly, the Payne Fund Studies mentioned earlier would be an example of this, as that body of work included experimental, survey, interview, and autobiographical case studies along with content analysis to provide a comprehensive picture of the relationship between audiences and films at the time. According to Krippendorff, the first "concise presentation of these conceptual and methodological developments under the new umbrella term *content analysis*" appeared in a 1948 report by pioneering communication scholars Bereleson and Lazarsfeld titled *The Analysis of Communication Content*. Krippendorff argues that "this first systematic presentation codified the field for years to come" (2004, p. 8). Content analysis was successfully used to study propaganda and wartime messages before and during World War II (seen notably in the work of pioneering communication scholar Harold Lasswell), and by the end of the war, its benefits became obvious to scholars in other disciplines including psychology, anthropology, and history among others. Content analysis still remains a staple in media studies. In fact, in her 2002 textbook, Neuendorf described content analysis as "the fastest-growing technique over the past 20 years or so" (p. 1).

Qualitative Analysis of Media Content

According to Neuendorf (2002), "with regard to content analysis, there seems to be a widespread but wrongheaded assumption that 'anyone can do it' with no training, and there also seems to be another common misperception that any examination of messages may be termed a content analysis" (p. xv). Furthermore, many approach content analysis as an easy project only to discover that it is unexpectedly difficult with issues such as operationalization, inter-coder reliability, and statistically significant measures being some of the few elements of a well-carried-out research project. In addition to content analysis, media studies scholars use a variety of more qualitative techniques whose roots are found not in the social and behavioral sciences, but

rather in the humanities – literary theory, film/cinema studies, and critical/cultural studies. While content analysis is one specific methodology, there is a range of qualitative approaches used by media studies scholars. I stop short of calling them “*qualitative* content analysis” because that implies that (quantitative) content analysis is the original and more valued, while *qualitative* content analysis is an afterthought. It is comparable to the trend of universities calling their men’s teams the Tigers, for example, and their women’s teams the “*Lady* Tigers,” implying that the men’s teams are the original, and the women’s teams are second fiddle. (Which, in terms of funding and media exposure, they often are, but that’s another story.)

In 1996, Ellen Hijmans offered her typology of qualitative approaches to the study of media content. The first is *rhetorical analysis* or *rhetorical criticism*, which has its origins in Greek philosophy, notably the work of Aristotle. It focuses less on what communication messages say, and more on *how* the message says it – on the rhetorical strategies employed. While used in media studies, rhetorical analysis is employed more often in communication studies to analyze non-mediated messages. *Narrative analysis*, derived from literary theory, focuses on the “formal narrative structure” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 5) of stories, for example Propp’s canonical analysis of characters in Russian fairy tales (1968) which established now-classic character archetypes such as hero, villain, helper, and so on. *Discourse analysis* focuses on the use of words and manifest language. It is used often in analyses of public communication, typically to study phenomena such as speech, conversations, and the like. *Structuralist/semiotic analysis*, for example, the influential work of Roland Barthes, is related to linguistics and focuses on latent meanings, signs, sign systems, and symbols. *Interpretive analysis* emphasizes forming theory from the observation and coding of messages.

In addition to the above as documented by Hijmans, Neuendorf (2002) identifies other qualitative approaches including *conversation analysis*, which is the analysis of “naturally occurring” conversations – interviews, for example. She also identifies what she calls *critical analysis*, which has its roots in cultural studies and film studies, and which can be seen in many of the chapters in this volume. Such studies incorporate a range of critical/cultural theories such as feminist theories, critical race theory, political economy, and so on. In fact, they may also incorporate one or more of the approaches already identified by Hijmans. Fürsich (2009) and others use the term “textual analysis” to broadly refer to such studies (while that phrase is often erroneously used as a synonym for “content analysis”).

Such “qualitative reading strategies” (Fürsich, 2009, p. 240) assume the subjectivity of the researcher (in comparison to the emphasis on objectivity employed in content analysis). Moreover, textual analysis goes “beyond the manifest content of media, [and instead] focuses on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text” (Fürsich, 2009, p. 240). According to Kellner (2010), “Each critical method focuses on certain features of a text from a specific perspective.” For example, Marxist scholars focus on representation of class, while feminist scholars focus on gender portrayals. Critical race scholars examine representations of race and ethnicity while those grounded in queer theory address ideologies of sexuality.

Interestingly, some within the fields of media and cultural studies have criticized text-only-based approaches as providing an incomplete picture of the mediated landscape. For example, in 2007 Greg Philo of the Glasgow University Media Group argued that such approaches are deficient in that they fail to include analysis of production and audience, what du Gay and his colleagues have called the “circuit of culture” (1997). While acknowledging the advantages of such holistic approaches, Fürsich argues that “only independent textual analysis can elucidate the narrative structure, symbolic arrangements and ideological potential of media content” (2009, p. 239). Text-only media studies do not assume the roles of the producers or the audience are unimportant, but rather acknowledge that texts are a dynamic and rich source of ideological messages that warrant deconstruction. As Fürsich reminds us, “The question (guiding textual analysis) is not how accurately does the text reflect reality but what version of reality is normalized and as a consequence, how emancipatory or hegemonic is the text” (2009, p. 249). In fact within media studies, “reflection” is not a useful term as it implies a direct correspondence between reality and media, something that mediation challenges intrinsically.

Interestingly, while this volume is specifically on media content and representation, and while other volumes in this larger project focus on production and audience, some of the chapters in this volume *do* address the role of producers and audience in addition to content. Clearly, there is room for a range of approaches to the study of media content, and many scholars choose to carry out a combination of approaches throughout their career or within one particular research project.

Content and Representation

This volume is purposely titled “Content *and* Representation.” While it includes overviews of scholarship out of the social/behavioral science tradition of (quantitative) content analysis, it also includes numerous chapters coming from a more critical/cultural tradition, the latter of which has been extensively (although not exclusively) concerned with issues of representation; what Stuart Hall defines as “the production of meaning through language” (1997, p. 16). (Language, of course, is broadly defined to include the language of mediated artifacts.) Hall writes extensively about the constructivist or constructionist approach in which “it is not the material world which conveys meaning; it is the language system, or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts” (1997, p. 25). Such an approach can be seen, for example, in the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault and media studies scholars employing a Foucauldian approach, as do some of the authors in this volume.

At the heart of many studies of representation, including those from a Foucauldian perspective, is the issue of power. Who has the power to represent themselves and others? How is power represented in mediated texts? How do representations laterally reproduce or challenge power? A grounding in the “politics of representation” often

guides media studies scholarship examining how particular groups – women, transgendered people, teenagers, Latino/as, and so on – are represented. The questions asked are not so much whether such portrayals are positive or negative, realistic or unrealistic, biased or unbiased, but rather how such portrayals are constructed ideologically. In fact, as Angharad N. Valdivia points out, media studies has moved beyond such “binary approaches” (2010, p. 74). The chapters in this volume, whether employing a content or textual analysis approach, evidence this turn to more complex analyses of representation and power.

Volume Structure

Organization

While this volume could have been organized in any number of ways – theoretical, methodological, epistemological, conceptual – I chose to organize it by focusing on the function of the content studied: (1) Persuasion and Information, (2) Entertainment, and (3) Interaction and Performance. In this age of convergence and boundary blurring (advergames, anyone?), it may seem archaic to use such an organizational structure, but I chose to organize the volume this way for a variety of reasons. First, it links to the history of how studies of media content evolved. Recall that early content analysis, for example, focused specifically on journalism (informational media) and then matured through studies of propaganda (persuasive media). This was followed by its use in studies of entertainment media – radio, film, and television. Finally, the evolution of media technology itself has been toward the creation of more interactive forms of media including the Internet and videogames, to which media studies scholars have now turned their attention.

While intention often guides content creation such that historically content intended to persuade had been quite different from content intended to entertain, today, as McAllister and Smith remind us in Chapter 1, one of the biggest trends in media content is the blurring of persuasive, informational, and entertainment messages as seen in the phenomenon of hypercommercialization. This is why this chapter opens the book – because it addresses this big-picture trend. I also chose to close the book with the section on interaction and performance because it too speaks to one of the most important recent trends in media content – the role of the “audience” in producing and/or interacting directly with media content.

Scope

In addition to including both qualitative and quantitative approaches to media content studies, this volume offers a range of additional distinguishing features beginning

with its international scope. Authors in this volume are based in 10 different countries – Belgium, Canada, Hong Kong, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, the scholarship presented addresses media content found in an array of geographic areas ranging from Europe to Latin America, from the Middle East to the Caribbean, and from Asia to North America. Topics covered are also diverse, ranging from advertising and journalism to popular television and film; from music to videogames; and from blogs to place-based media.

This volume approaches content studies broadly. Not only does it include chapters from both the textual analysis and content analysis traditions, but the format of the chapters also varies. Some chapters are reviews of the literature while others are case studies. Essays also evidence the broad array of theories and intellectual concepts that ground content and representation studies – cultivation, feminist, hegemonic masculinity, political economy, poststructuralism, othering, Orientalism, hegemony, and so on.

At first glance, the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008). While these seven chapters focus on females, they also address other issues including blogging, representation of nations, branding, and science.

As is representative of the field, most of the chapters are analyses of media/cultural content produced for mass audiences, yet some focus on content produced by individuals (e.g., bloggers, videogame players, musicians). In fact, it is the chapters focusing on these topics that force us to rethink the way we define media content, in particular with videogames where the “audience” (aka “player”) plays a role in creating the content.

In the course of editing this volume, it quickly became clear that other artificial distinctions such as those related to production or audiences or effects or content are also problematic. Several of the essays in this volume do go beyond the text-only approach and take into account one or more of these other factors. Through her archival research, Miranda Brady, for example, provides extensive background on the decision-making processes behind the introduction of place-based media in museums and how such decisions affect Indigenous representations. Katalin Lustyik and Ruth Zanker include a great deal of information on the structure of the children’s networks they study. In addition, they have conducted extensive interviews with network officials to more fully understand children’s television content. Similarly, other authors make reference to the potential effects of the content studied (Steinke, Signorielli, and Robinson et al., for example), while other authors such as Kenneth Lachlan and Mia Consalvo challenge us to think differently about how we study videogame content – specifically, the fact that the “audience” (i.e., the player) influences content.

Many of the chapters in this volume evidence the way media studies content and representation scholarship intersects with other fields, including Latino/a studies, game studies, women's studies, cinema/film studies, queer studies, sport studies, masculinity studies, and so on. This interdisciplinarity brings a richness and depth to media studies content and representation scholarship that adds to its relevance in a multi-cultural, global, and technology-driven world. Taken as a whole, then, the chapters in this volume evidence the multiplicity of ways in which media studies scholars approach the study of media content and representation.

Introduction to the Chapters

Part 1: Persuasion and Information

The first section of the book, "Persuasion and Information," returns us to two of the earliest concerns about media content – advertising and news. The section begins with three chapters on advertising. While the first one provides more of an overview of current trends related to hypercommercialization, the other two chapters focus on two of the most frequently researched subtopics related to advertising content – portrayals of women and advertising to children.

In Chapter 1, "Understanding Hypercommercialized Media Texts," Matthew P. McAllister and Alexandra Nutter Smith take a big-picture look at one of the most important media trends in recent years – the global phenomenon of hypercommercialization. Beginning as early as the 1980s, hypercommercialization is best described as commercial messages and imperatives invading other forms of culture, resulting in such hybrid cultural artifacts as advertorials, advergames, infomercials, branded school books, and so on. McAllister and Smith argue that such artifacts are "messy," thereby blurring the distinction between advertising and other forms (e.g., news, entertainment, education). They conclude with a discussion of what they see as the future trends in hypercommercialization, mostly related to the Internet.

Focusing specifically on the US context, Nancy A. Jennings examines the research on children's advertising in Chapter 2, "And Now a Click from Our Sponsors: Changes in Children's Advertising in the United States." Jennings puts US children's advertising into a broader context by discussing the legal regulations, the historical evolution, and the future directions of both content and scholarship. Focusing extensively on the current children's media environment in which marketers are moving more and more to the web to reach child consumers (for example, the kind of advergaming that McAllister and Smith include in their description of hypercommercialization), Jennings reminds us that "convergence" seems to be the watchword best describing children's advertising today. She concludes with a call for research on the branded environment in which children grow up.

Continuing with a focus on persuasive messages, Paloma Diaz Soloaga and Carlos Muñiz examine “Women’s Portraits Present in Print Fashion Advertisements: A Content Analysis of Spanish Fashion Magazines from 2002 to 2009” in Chapter 3. Based on their analysis of hundreds of luxury brand advertisements in high-end Spanish fashion magazines, the authors document the persistent stereotype of presenting women as objects of pleasure – valuable only for their physical appearance.

The next four chapters in Part 1 focus on informative media content – news and sports. While the topics of each of these chapters differ, so too do their approaches as they incorporate a range of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological groundings – political economy, feminism, power, poststructuralism, content analysis, and discourse analysis.

In Chapter 4, “Marketing Militarism to Moms: News and Branding after September 11th,” Mary Douglas Vavrus provides the bridge between the persuasion and information subsections of Part 1. Informed by feminist theory, political economy, and branding research, Vavrus unpacks how the news media constitute and politicize identity brands such as that of the “security mom” – women/moms who are concerned with national security and who were projected to be a swing voting bloc in recent US elections. Vavrus shows how the security mom identity, which emerged during the 2004 US presidential election, took on the status of a brand that was then used to reproduce the patriarchal values and pro-war agenda of the US power elite at the time.

While Vavrus calls on Michel Foucault’s concepts of “biopower” and “governmentality” in her analysis of security moms, Marie Hardin and Erin Whiteside also invoke Foucault in their chapter “From Second-Wave to Poststructuralist Feminism: Evolving Frameworks for Viewing Representations of Women’s Sports” (Chapter 5). Hardin and Whiteside trace the evolution of scholarship on women’s sports, and demonstrate the potential of a poststructuralist/third-wave feminist approach to studying the topic in contrast to the more traditional, second-wave approach that had dominated the literature. Comparing the two approaches as being grounded in the way each conceptualizes power – either the Gramscian (second-wave) or Foucauldian (third-wave) approaches – and being careful not to devalue earlier scholarship on women and sports, the authors encourage future scholars to consider the potential of a poststructuralist approach.

While the Latin American cultural phenomenon of telenovelas has generated a significant amount of scholarship, Guillermo Avila-Saavedra examines not the content of the ubiquitous programs themselves, but rather US news coverage of English-language adaptations of four telenovelas for US audiences. In Chapter 6, “‘Honey-Drenched, Rags to Riches, Good versus Evil Stories’: The Telenovela as a Cultural Referent in the US Press,” he employs discourse analysis of mainstream US press coverage of these programs to document the coverage’s devaluing of the telenovela genre and its use of the genre as a cultural proxy for Latinos. As a result, Avila-Saavedra argues that the coverage created an “identity crisis” for the programs, contributing in part to their low ratings and quick cancellation.

Continuing the focus on news coverage of minorities, Eli Avraham addresses “Changes in the News Representation of Minorities Over the Course of 40 Years of Research” in Chapter 7. Focusing on a range of contexts – Israeli, European, and US – Avraham seeks to address how minority groups have been covered in the press; why the coverage has tended to be stereotypical; and the role of activists in influencing the coverage of their own group. He offers a model outlining the dynamic factors that affect the journalistic image of minorities: (1) the characteristics of the group (e.g., population size, geographic location, socioeconomic indicators); (2) editorial policy and “social-ideological distance” between journalists and the members of the group in question; (3) the social-political environment; and (4) the public relations strategies employed by the group activists.

The last chapter in Part 1 provides a bridge between the first and second sections in that it focuses on media content that is at once designed to inform (i.e., educate) and entertain – children’s television. In conducting case studies of three locally launched children’s television channels – TVNZ6 in New Zealand, Minimax in Eastern Europe, and Al Jazeera Children’s Channel in the Middle East – Katalin Lustyik and Ruth Zanker seek to answer the question: “Is There Local Content on Television for Children Today?” Through their case studies, the authors document the different ways each of these three channels has responded to media globalization. While the stations may still include “good” imported programming from abroad, they also provide locally produced programming that highlights local culture and traditions.

Part 2: Entertainment

The chapters in Part 2 highlight the intersections between media studies and other fields as mentioned earlier. They evidence the interdisciplinary nature of media studies, and the way in which media studies has crafted rich, nuanced approaches to the study of entertainment media content and representation.

The first chapter in Part 2 is Mary C. Beltrán’s “The Evolution of Hollywood Latinidad: Latina/o Representation and Stardom in US Entertainment Media” (Chapter 9). Focusing primarily on Hollywood films and US television programming, and informed by the broader literature in Latino/a studies as well as her own extensive body of scholarship, Beltrán’s analysis raises issues of Latino/a visibility, racialization, authenticity, Latinidad, hybridity, transnationalism, and self-representation. By focusing on the evolution of Latino/a stars decades ago ranging from Delores Del Rio and Carmen Miranda to more recently popular celebrities including Salma Hayek and Jennifer Lopez, Beltrán teases out the nuances and complexities of the representational politics guiding such images. She concludes with a discussion of the current marketability of Latinidad and the implications of such hypervisibility.

While the increasing hypervisibility of Latino/as in the media can be attributed, in part, to the growing purchasing power and size of the Latino/a audience, the

increased purchasing power of the LGBTQ community (in the United States, anyway) has impacted the increase in queer-focused programs (Streitmatter, 2009). Beginning with a discussion of what they see as the “theoretical richness and relevance” of queer theory, Sofie Van Bauwel, Frederik Dhaenens, and Daniel Biltereyst (Chapter 10; “Queer Gazing and the Popular: A Study on the Representational Strategies of Queer Representations in Popular Television Fiction”) analyze “moments of queer identity” and queer representational strategies in three globally successful television series typically considered as queer and/or including queer characters: *Queer as Folk* (UK), *The L Word* (US), and *Six Feet Under* (US). Deconstructing the texts’ signifying practices – specifically narrative and cinematographic elements – the authors document the queer signifiers present in each series. Throughout the essay, the authors argue for the importance of incorporating themes of queer representations in studies of media and popular culture.

Continuing with this section’s focus on representation, Heather L. Hundley addresses “Mediated Portrayals of Masculinities” in Chapter 11. The operative word in the title is the plural, “masculinities,” as influential scholarship in the sociology of gender reminds us that there is not one “masculinity” but rather a range of “masculinities” and that scholars “have to examine the relations between them” (Connell, 1995, p. 76). In her chapter, Hundley reviews how studies have examined a variety of masculinities in the media including hegemonic, hypermasculine, and metrosexual. Written in two sections, Hundley’s chapter begins by reviewing the literature on the evolution of media studies scholarship on US mediated representations of masculinities including the intersections between that topic and race, class, and sexuality. The second half of the chapter focuses on portrayals in each of a range of US media. Hundley argues that, despite the dramatic increase in studies of mediated masculinities in recent years, there are still notable gaps in the literature, in particular when it comes to the intersections of masculinities and other identities – race, class, sexuality, and so on.

While there are various types of masculinities, there are also various types of femininities. In Chapter 12, Sujata Moorti examines one type – “Shifting Contours of Indian Womanhood in Popular Hindi Cinema.” Through a detailed historical analysis from Indian colonial times (1896–1947) through the present, Moorti shows how, through the figure of “woman” in Indian cinema, larger social, cultural, and political issues have been worked out – for example, India’s struggle for self-reliance in the postcolonial era and anxieties about globalization in recent years. Interestingly, while she argues that current-day Bollywood films offer a limited representation of Indian womanhood (restricted primarily to a heteronormative focus on the family), earlier eras, in particular the colonial era, offered more possibilities for female subjectivity.

The discussion of possibilities for female subjectivity is at the heart of Jocelyn Steinke’s literature review, “Portrayals of Female Scientists in the Mass Media” (Chapter 13), as she examines the topic in relationship to broader cultural beliefs about the role of women in the workforce, specifically in the sciences. Focusing on the broader literature on the topic, as well as on her own scholarship specifically,

Steinke documents the way in which US media (e.g., films, television, Internet) historically have underrepresented and stereotyped female scientists. She links concerns about such portrayals to the broader concerns about the lack of women in science, engineering, technology, and math occupations, including evidence that cultural representations of science may play a role in defining such fields as “masculine.” Steinke concludes that, despite recent improvements in portrayals, there is still a long way to go.

While Moorti focused on cinematic constructions of Indian womanhood in Chapter 12, specifically on how such constructions stood in for broader national/cultural issues, in Chapter 14 (“‘She’s the Real Thing’: Filming the Nostalgic Past through Vietnamese Women”) Diem-My T. Bui analyzes representations of Vietnamese womanhood in three US-made films about Vietnam – *Heaven and Earth* (1993), *The Quiet American* (2002), and *Three Seasons* (1999). Bui focuses not only on the portrayals of the film’s female characters but also on media coverage of the actresses playing those roles in order to ask questions about “who speaks?” Grounded in the literature on othering and Orientalism, Bui unpacks how the female body in these films is constructed as an aid in returning to an “authentic” Vietnam – a nostalgic and exotic past that existed before the war.

While Moorti and Bui focus specifically on how womanhood is constructed to stand in for broader social, cultural, political, and national issues, in her chapter on “Chinese Cinema at the Millennium: Defining ‘China’ and the Politics of Representation” (Chapter 15), Gina Marchetti analyzes dozens of post-millennial Chinese-language films in order to understand how such films represent the Chinese “nation” as well as China’s evolving political economy. She argues that “China” is a contested concept in transnational cinema, and that in constructing China, filmmakers continuously return to the same themes – defining the nation, border crossing, the marketplace, political divisions and related controversies, as well as law and history.

The final chapter in Part 2, Nancy Signorielli’s “Violent Content on US Television: A Historical Overview of the Research” (Chapter 16), takes us in a slightly different direction than the previous chapters. Grounded in cultivation theory and part of one of the most prolific media studies research projects, Cultural Indicators, Signorielli reviews the literature on the topic from a historical perspective as well as from the perspective of very recent studies including ongoing yearly content analysis of US prime-time programming and the National Television Violence Study of the mid-1990s. Examining both the amount and context of violent portrayals, Signorielli shows that the level of violent television content has not changed greatly in that it remains an “important and significant” element of prime-time and children’s television content.

Part 3: Interaction and Performance

Part 3 highlights issues of interaction and performance, primarily but not exclusively as related to new media. In the first of two chapters about blogs (Chapter 17), Zizi

Papacharissi and Sharon Meraz look at the big picture in terms of the evolution of blog content. In their chapter “Blogging Culture: Content and Representation in Blogs,” the authors examine blogging as a form of sociocultural expression. Acknowledging the breadth and diversity of the blogosphere, the authors examine the plurality of both blog content and functions, notably as issues of self-representation intersect with race, class, and gender. Informed by the theories of Chantal Mouffe, Papacharissi and Meraz conclude with a discussion of the agonistic nature of blogs – highlighting plurality and conflict – and argue that bloggers are agonists of both the personal and the political.

Papacharissi and Meraz reference the increase in female political bloggers as well as girl bloggers who, they argue, use a personal lens to highlight their political experiences. It is precisely this phenomenon that Jenny Gunnarsson Payne addresses in Chapter 18, “Blogging the Third Wave? Citizens’ Media, Intimate Citizenship, and Everyday Life.” Situating her research within the growing body of scholarship on feminist media production, the author analyzes three specific Swedish feminist blog projects on such topics as bare female breasts, eating disorders, and motherhood/breastfeeding to show how they function as a form of feminist micro-narrative, or more specifically what sociologist Kenneth Plummer describes as “intimate citizenship.” The author argues that third-wave feminist bloggers such as those she studied are not so much *dis*-articulating feminism (in a postfeminist sense) as *re*-articulating feminism in an ongoing and continuous process.

The next three chapters in Part 3 focus on videogames. While much of the public attention and scholarship on videogames has centered specifically on violent content and/or the effects of such content, the three chapters in this section offer alternate ways of looking at games and gaming. In particular, all three chapters challenge traditional ways of studying game content. In her chapter “Videogame Content: Game, Text, or Something Else?” (Chapter 19), Mia Consalvo raises a range of methodological and theoretical questions related to the study of videogames – what she calls “the particularities of studying games.” Her primary goal is to answer the question of “how do games make meaning?” In so doing, she reviews the limitations of past approaches of studying videogame content and offers two case studies of her own to suggest more effective ways for scholars to study the topic. She concludes with a call for “situated” rather than global approaches to the future studies of videogames so that researchers can take into account the peculiarities of specific games.

Through his analysis of the role of the player in relationship to violent videogame content, Kenneth A. Lachlan in his chapter “Rethinking Violent Videogame Content: Conceptual Advances and Directions for Future Research” (Chapter 20) demonstrates the complexity of games, and argues that the tools, language, and methodologies employed in traditional content analysis research may not reveal the full complexity of game content. He argues that user attributes such as personality, past game play experience, how much the game replicates real-life environments, and a sense of “presence” for the player actually influence the content. Rather than traditional effects research, for example, which would look at how content influences audience,

Lachlan argues that research on videogames, including violent videogames, must incorporate the interface between game player and game parameters to understand how the player influences content. In other words, content should be a dependent variable – an outcome – and not a cause.

While Lachlan examines how player characteristics shape videogame content, Tanya Krzywinska in Chapter 21 focuses on “Transmedial Aesthetics: Where Form and Content Meet – Film and Videogames.” Specifically, through a case study of *Final Fantasy XII* as well as references to other games and films, she examines convergences and divergences between film and videogames to show how form can influence content. By focusing on concepts such as the “aesthetics of convergence,” narrative as form and content, as well as affect, movement, and time, the author shows how film and game each borrow from the other, while viewers/players bring their knowledge of one to their experiences with the other. She concludes by reminding us that, while games and films still have formal differences, this is one more example of media convergence.

While the previous chapters have focused on one or another specific medium such as the Internet or videogames, in Chapter 22 James D. Robinson, Teresa L. Thompson, Jeanine Warisse Turner, Robert R. Agne, and Yan Tian undertake a review of the recent literature of how health-related topics have been presented in a variety of media including newer media such as medical tourism websites, Japanese manga, graphic novels, young adult novels, and YouTube videos. By focusing their chapter, “Recent Trends in Research on Health Portrayals in the Media: From TV, Newspapers, and Magazines to Websites, YouTube, and Manga,” specifically on content analyses published over the past five years, the authors have documented three trends in health portrayals research: (1) the study of a wider variety of health topics; (2) more diversity in the theoretical grounding of such studies; and (3) a broadening focus of media outlets studied to include more international portrayals and more types of media channels. Certainly, this chapter could easily have fit into either of the two previous sections since it addresses informational/persuasive and entertainment media as well as interactive media, but a major point made by the authors is that audiences are looking more and more toward interactive media such as that provided by the Internet for their health information, and they remind scholars of the importance of studying such portrayals.

Continuing the focus on interactive media, Miranda J. Brady explores place-based media – specifically its use in the Canadian Museum of Civilization’s (CMC) First Peoples Hall (FPH). In her chapter “Canadian (Re)Presentation: Media, First Peoples, and Liveness in the Museum” (Chapter 23), Brady interrogates the role of place-based new media in Indigenous identity construction. Brady not only examines the content of place-based media itself but also conducts an in-depth analysis of archival documents related to the construction of the FPH and news coverage of the process. Grounded in her analysis, she reminds us that colonial power can be found in the act of representing Indigenous culture in Eurocentric

terms, in particular when the focus is on the museum visitors' experience of "liveness" and interactivity. While new place-based technologies offer opportunities to represent Indigenous people in new ways, Brady argues, they also "mask the contingent nature of representation."

Concluding the volume is Susan Harewood's essay "Calypso and the Performance of Representational Politics" (Chapter 24), which addresses not how calypso music represents but, rather, how calypso is represented in the literature about it. Her essay is a theoretically grounded examination of the academic discourse – specifically historical accounts – about calypso, and how that discourse is linked to representational politics. Harewood argues that histories play a role in the construction of a "national imaginary," yet such histories, while working to solidify the significance of calypso, have also functioned to reinscribe a narrow view of citizenship. So while calypso itself plays a role in the representational politics of the Caribbean, the academic discourse about calypso contributes to the ways in which calypso makes meaning. She calls for a rethinking of the colonial narrative of calypso's origins and evolution.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the chapters in this volume evidence the dynamic and vibrant nature of media content and representation studies. Scholarship in this area has evolved to actively address the evolution of media technology, trends in convergence in media content, and changes in the role of the audience in relationship to that technology and content. Media content and representation scholars no longer limit their research questions to binary oppositions of positive/negative or biased/unbiased, but rather have achieved a high level of complexity and nuance in their analysis. Moreover, scholars have reached out to other fields in order to ground studies of content and representation in a range of rich theoretical concepts. These interdisciplinary links add relevance and depth to studies of media content and representation, and have kept the field from becoming stagnant.

For the future, media content and representation scholars need to continue to embrace and respect a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives. We need to remain open to evolving and refining our research questions, and to consider that perhaps we need to ask new questions as the technology and content evolve. While celebrating the unique and important contributions of media studies, we also need to be open to what scholarship in other fields offers us, not because it is better, but because it is complementary. Thus, we need to acknowledge the potential of interdisciplinarity. Overall, it is an exciting moment in the scholarship of media content and representation, and this volume provides a glimpse into the current and future trends of such scholarship.

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Media Studies

The Interdiscipline of the Present and the Future

Angharad N. Valdivia

Media studies is a rapidly growing, widely relevant, and evolving field – an interdiscipline (Valdivia, 2003). While some scholars have bemoaned the loss of focus on process and effects, especially on milestone studies (DeFleur, 1998), others find the breadth and porous contours to be conducive to a worthwhile intellectual pursuit (Sterne, 2005). To be sure, between 1998 and the present, there has been a huge growth in interpretive and critical approaches, which have nonetheless flourished in the margins as the effects paradigm – the stuff of milestones – has firmly retained its central place in the field, at least in the United States and the Netherlands. Indeed, efforts to map out the diversity of the field of communication (Craig, 1999, 2001), which we might call the broader umbrella for media studies, yield a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping and other times mutually exclusive approaches. The terrain of contemporary media studies acknowledges that most of us live in intensely mediated environments, so that Livingstone (2009) writes on the mediation of everything, and Hay (2000) writes of refrigerator studies. The former expands on how media and communication are “ever more crucial in today’s world” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 13), and the latter asks us – as a field over a decade ago, while continuing to encourage us (Hay, 2010, 2011) – to consider the broader web of networks to which other technologies, such as refrigerators and toasters, contribute in terms of routines and practices that serve to mediate the world for us. The latter line of questioning has proven immensely prescient as many of us live in highly networked webs of media and communication, where not only can our location be pinpointed at any given moment thanks to elements in our mobile technology, but also, if we chose to, we can broadcast a narrative of our location and other audiovisual bits of information constantly to many – such as our hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter or Tumblr followers.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume III: *Content and Representation*. Edited by Sharon R. Mazzarella.

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Nonetheless, whether we are talking of old media technologies or institutions (see Nerone, Volume 1, *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), we are witnessing the constitution of new audiences and a shift in traditional audiences (see Parameswaran, Volume 4, *Audience and Interpretation*) through the invitation offered by seductive content in a dynamically converging and synergized media environment (see Mazzarella, Volume 3, *Content and Representation*). The effects of these technologies and content continue to be measured and studied (see Scharrer, Volume 5, *Media Effects/Media Psychology*). While media platforms and patterns of production are converging, enduring tendencies toward concentration of ownership and control of media industries coexist with the emergence of new patterns of labor, practices, and updated forms of exploitation (see Mayer, Volume 2, *Media Production*, as well as some chapters in Gates, Volume 6, *Media Studies Futures*). This is not surprising given the rapidly expanding new media and communications technologies, many of whose functions replicate previous technologies while other uses (and abuses) bring new possibilities, utopian and dystopian, to the fore (see Gates, Volume 6). Unexpected global locations of nodes of influences result in previously unsuspected transnational alliances and networks (Castells, 2009).

As an early caveat to this triumphal celebration of media, I must remind readers that most of the above sentiment refers to a media-rich group that luxuriates in a wealth of networks and technologies. Yet we must not forget that even as I write this introduction at the very end of 2011, fully 50% of the global population have intermittent access to electricity. Mobile telephony may be widely spread, but the radio remains the most reliable global medium (see the *Journal of Radio Studies*). Beyond the fact that it is cheap, it neither relies on nor requires electricity or literacy, in English or any language. Furthermore, despite our current fixation with digital, wireless, and mobile media technologies, in times of crisis – whether natural such as a huge earthquake or in wartime – when the electric networks are down and we are thrown back into old school forms of media and communication, radio returns to its central location as a reliable and essential medium. So before you continue reading this introduction, or continue to read any of the absolutely outstanding volumes of this encyclopedia project, go out and buy yourself a radio – one that is both electric and battery powered. You might never need it, but if you do, you will be very relieved to have it.

The fact is that media are everywhere, and nearly everyone shares lifelong experience with and expertise on particular forms of media. Dating back to the 1920s – as identified both in Nerone, Volume 1 and Mazzarella, Volume 3, the study of media has been multi-modal and heterogeneous. Theoretical and methodological complexity has grown since the Payne Fund Studies. International, transnational, and global perspectives have become absolutely essential. Not that they ever were not, but now that media are produced, consumed, and circulated transnationally, media studies has to take this into account. Inclusivity of the heterogeneous components of the population in regard to the media has also grown. Scholarship that was once nationally bound and focused on White middle-class males has expanded to take into consideration gender, nation, region, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and class.

Furthermore, as both Downing (2003) and Castells (2010) remind us, we must not forget the importance of religion in the contemporary world, as many armed conflicts revolve around religion, and media content, production, audiences, and effects are interlaced with religious impulses.

Media studies is an interdiscipline. As such it draws on and benefits from a number of contributing fields such as history, philosophy, psychology, political science, education, literature, and sociology. Yet even as it draws on those many fields, it is its own area of studies. Too often other fields, whose interdisciplinarity takes them into media studies, see this interdiscipline as new – as in, “oh look, we just discovered that we ought to look at media.” Our field becomes the direct object of other scholars’ deployment of the myth of discovery. Just like Columbus discovered “America,”¹ scholars from other fields continue to “discover” media and media studies. A century’s worth of theories and research disappears in the process, and many of us often find ourselves in other disciplines’ conferences listening to presentations that implicitly suggest direct effects, transparency, mimetic images, and so on. Transparency, when media content, industries, audiences, and practices are treated as if they spoke for themselves, as if there were no mediation, is often the tactic taken by scholars outside our discipline. What we as a field contribute to the understanding of culture and society is, at the very least, that mediation is complex and that understanding mediation helps us to uncover patterns of power, distribution, and potential justice. Media studies is about unearthing and maximizing the democratic potential of practices, institutions, technologies, and audiences that pervade our contemporary life.

Nonetheless, as Gates reminds us in her introduction to Volume 6, one central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: What counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated media” capture a general sense of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the complex dimensions and issues that these terms encompass? By paying careful attention to issues of history and context, this encyclopedia seeks to trouble the usage of these terms even as they are used rather carelessly in popular culture and public policy.

The six separate volumes of this encyclopedia were present as six separate sections in *A Companion to Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2003), the volume that provides the model for this encyclopedia and that was, in turn, modeled after McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*. The editors of the individual volumes put together a stellar cast of authors who in turn produced original chapters. All volume editors were asked, indeed implored, to compose a table of contents that was inclusive in many ways. First, inclusivity in terms of global topics was paramount, and we strived for inclusivity in terms of authors and global regions as well. This, as I have discussed elsewhere (Valdivia, 2011b), is not as easy as it sounds. Differential access to the latest research, culturally different approaches to writing and developing an argument,

resources that might enable a given scholar or team to develop a project and get it ready for publication, and so on, are all variables that effectively discriminate in favor of those of us in well-funded research universities in wealthy countries. We recruited some scholars whose work we translated into English, and all editors worked assiduously to cast as global a network as possible.

Another element of inclusivity was paradigm diversity. Schooled at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) at the University of Illinois, I am the recipient of an educational tradition that highly values paradigm inclusivity. Insofar as it was possible, we included scholars using quantitative and qualitative approaches, sometimes both of them at the same time. Obviously the *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume focused solely on the social scientific tradition, while both the *Content and Representation* and *Audience and Interpretation* volumes included scholarship using both approaches. A third element of inclusivity was gender, race, and sexuality diversity. Cutting across as a focus that can be conducted in the research included in any of the six volumes of this project is the work of transnational feminism and globalizing gender studies (Hegde, 2006). Editors sought scholarship that would include these vectors of difference, as media studies really makes no sense without their consideration. Yet even within each of these categories we encounter new gaps that merit more research. For example, as Mazzarella mentions in the introduction to Volume 3: “the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008).” The rise of masculinity studies follows feminist studies as a logical move once we realize that femininity is socially constructed. Indeed, this is a process that this collection of volumes entices us to accomplish: a greater degree of preciseness to this complex concept of media studies, which all of us who work within the interdiscipline intellectually seek to explicate.

As a final note about process, these volumes have been peer reviewed in an innovative manner for an edited collection. First, each table of contents was submitted to the peer review of a senior scholar within that area of the field and edited accordingly. Then, as the chapters came in, within each volume authors reviewed other chapters. Ideally, each chapter was reviewed by two other authors as well as by its editors. As the overall editor of the project, I carefully reviewed all volume editor introductory chapters. Now the review process is turned over to you, the reader.

Media Studies Today

As an organizing principle for this book, I have followed since 2003 the structure provided by many different editions of Denis McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*:

An Introduction. Dating back to the first edition in 1983 and up to the sixth edition in 2010, whose name has changed, appropriately enough, to McQuail's *Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail provided a manageable way of dividing up the field into components that, while overlapping – as they had to be since these components were teased out more for scholarly inquiry than because they are discrete and differentiated – provided a useful way to look at the breadth of study of the media. We all experience media as an integrated experience. Media inherit values and histories that are in turn explicitly or implicitly incorporated into their production; then we either consume and/or interpret media in relation to regimes of representation, with particular audiences and interpretive tactics in mind, with some desired effects over which we have little control, and contributing to a future that – like effects – we wish we could influence but really cannot. Still for the purposes of research, we tease out the media experience into a number of areas.

The volumes of this encyclopedia match the sections of the *Companion*, which used McQuail's schema and added the “futures” section. Thus we have history, production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, and futures. We will later add a “methods” volume to complete the encyclopedia. While these areas are teased out for the purposes of research, there is great cross-pollination by scholars in media studies. We find that some scholars use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or at least rely on both. We also find that many scholars write about two or more of the six areas mentioned above. In fact, many of the major trends in current research encompass holistic media studies approaches. Among these contemporarily salient research projects are network analysis (e.g., Castells, 2009, 2010; Chan, 2007, 2011, forthcoming; Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010); girl studies (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Durham, 2004; Projansky, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Valdivia, 2008, 2009, 2011a); transnational feminism (Hegde, 2006; Molina Guzmán, 2010; Valdivia, 2011b); and neoliberalism as an undergirding framework of analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Hay, 2000, 2010, 2011; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monge, 2009). McCarthy (2011) expands the focus of neoliberalism in media to the educational system and the efforts of many cities, such as Chicago, to become a cosmopolitan, globally vibrant center of economic activity, thus linking media studies to educational policy studies.

Many of these recent research tendencies converge in the critical examination of the “posts.” Scholars develop amazing analyses demonstrating the potential of an intersectional approach that uses race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and class all at once, for people experience these elements in an integrated manner. Roopali Mukherjee's *The Racial Order of Things* (2006) set the bar for intersectional analysis of the “post-soul” era. Tasker and Negra (2007) provide a comprehensive introduction to the political implications of postfeminist culture, while Molina Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) apply the intersectional approach to the study of celebrity Latinas. Joseph (2010), in her provocatively entitled “Tyra Banks is Fat!” (a title that, to be fair, comes straight out of tabloid magazines and television coverage), explores the implicit racism and sexism of the postracial and postfeminist veneer of reality

television in general, and Tyra Banks's brand in particular. Molina Guzmán (2010) explores the transnational deployment and commodification of the Latina body, both spectacular and everyday. The politics of the post appears in all elements of media studies as these scholars foreground media studies even as they situate their work within a broader context of geopolitics and the dynamically changing mediascapes. While it may be fashionable to suggest the end of media studies, just as others have previously declared the end of history or of ideology, what this encyclopedia convincingly illustrates is the field's ability to expand as new practices, technologies, and institutions arise. As many of the editors and contributors will document, "new media" is a misnomer as neither the technology nor the uses or assemblages are so new (see Morley, 2006). What at first may seem to be epochal breaks are revealed by many of the contributors to be far more continuous elements in relation to history, culture, and media.

Editors and Volumes

We begin with normative theories and history. **John Nerone**, author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in US History* (1994), co-author, with Kevin Barnhurst, of *The Form of News: A History* (2001), and co-author and editor of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), as well as author of many other journal articles and book chapters, is the perfect historian to lead us through this fertile terrain of scholarship. Volume 1 on history underscores that while all media have long histories, historians agree neither on the definitive tale of origin nor on the particular historical approach. Moreover, Nerone, the careful historian, alerts us to the fact that even our use of the word media in relation to communications is quite recent.

Nerone's volume includes normative and historical approaches. Historical research, drawing on normative frameworks or not, continues to offer media studies scholars great insight and tools with which to understand contemporary media. Furthermore, there is great diversity within historical approaches to media studies. Beyond cultural memory and special effects as components of media history, we are also witnessing an explosion of careful work that revisits the archive, data, and documentation. Kafka (2009) brilliantly studies that most elemental component of media – paper. It seems like such a simple task: how do we study the construction and use of paper, the "bureau" in bureaucratization, the work of scribes? Kafka concludes that: "As scholars continue to research the history of paperwork, we need to keep in mind that we are defending not only the 'historical record,' but the political one" (2009, p. 352). Indeed, these are the perfect words to keep in mind as we read the volume on history so elegantly crafted by John Nerone.

Volume 2, *Media Production*, is composed by **Vicki Mayer**. Among the many publications by Mayer, we can list *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (2011), *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and*

Mass Media (2003), and *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (co-edited with M. J. Banks and M. T. Caldwell, 2009). Mayer begins her volume by reminding us that “[M]edia production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how.” We expect to find, and we are not disappointed, a combination of keen attention paid to the sociological approach to our field, something about which McQuail had previously written in *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), and the more critical analysis of neo-Marxist political economy now accompanied by a focus on labor issues in the global setting. Moreover, as explicitly stated in one of her book titles, Mayer paradigmatically maintains a dialogue between political economy and cultural studies, an approach that resonates with globally used approaches in our field. The tension between structure and agency pervades this fine volume. Mayer remarks that “[I]f the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers.” So the new production studies is global by necessity as transnational ownership and production of media industries cannot be denied; blends political economy and cultural studies; foregrounds issues of labor, both above and below the line; and takes up issues of networks, intellectual property, and subjectivity as producers are constructed in terms of categories of identity.

Sharon Mazzarella, a prolific scholar of issues of youth and the media, leads us through the wide world of “content and representation.” Author or editor of books including *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2010), *20 Questions about Youth and Media* (2007), *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2005), and *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (2001), Mazzarella is a rigorously trained social scientist who also pursues qualitative research. As such she is the ideal editor for this volume, which is respectful of both of those methodological approaches. Indeed, for many a budding media studies scholar, content and representation provide the first point of entry, as these are the aspects of media that we experience most directly. Although, of course, all media have normative implications, histories, and a complex web of production, most people focus on the finished product: the television show, the movie, the blog, the social media website, the song, the newspaper, the advertisement, the catalogue. Content analysis is alluring yet amazingly difficult to carry out. Representational analysis also bears the sophistication of a range of theories. Neither is an easy task, and quantitative approaches complement interpretive studies. Mazzarella presents a persuasive argument as to why content/representational analysis remains an essential component of media studies and why projects that are well carried out tell us much about the world and the circuit of culture. Unsurprisingly, this area of research continues to be plentiful.

Radhika Parameswaran edits Volume 4 on audience and interpretation. Parameswaran’s research includes two long articles in *Journalism and Communication*

Monographs, “Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India” (2009, co-authored with K. Cardoza) and “Global Media Events in India: Contests Over Beauty, Gender, and Nation” (2001). Her work has focused on the intersection of feminist cultural studies, gender and media globalization, South Asia, and postcolonial studies with a particular emphasis on issues of audience and interpretation. As such she constructs a volume worthy of her areas of expertise, with plenty of chapters illustrating global and gender issues. This volume also bears the traces of an interdisciplinary field that includes social scientific paradigms such as uses and gratifications as well as more humanist approaches that now include global and online ethnographies. Parameswaran remarks that “audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception.” “Populist tendencies” refers to the “discovery” of the audience around every corner, as it were, without proper attention to issues of power and structure. In the contemporary moment, audience studies is vibrant and innovative. Whether we look at fans or online digital communities, to mention just two of the many possibilities, the construction and potential agency of the audience are major issues that continue to guide the production of media and subjectivities. Illustrative of the many philosophical quandaries undergirding the location of the audience within media studies is Jack Bratich’s chapter in Volume 6, as audience analysis is part of the present and future of the field. In addition, audience connects with issues of production as it undeniably takes labor to be part of any audience.

Erica Scharrer guides us through the fifth core component of media studies, media effects and media psychology, the dominant paradigm in the United States as well as in other global settings such as the Netherlands, and the paradigm that reaps the most funding in a positivist framework that values scientific demonstration of impact. Scharrer has co-authored, with G. Comstock, *Television: What’s On, Who’s Watching, and What it Means* (1999), *The Psychology of Media and Politics* (2005), and *Media and the American Child* (2007), and, with L. Weidman and K. Bissell, a long article in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, “Pointing the Finger of Blame: News Media Coverage of Popular-Culture Culpability” (2003). Scharrer brings to the volume on media effects/media psychology a long-standing engagement with the social scientific paradigm in our field. A well-carried-out effects study tells us much about the influence of media on individuals, groups, and societies. The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before. Thus Scharrer asks: “Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending time with media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and

conditions help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses?" These questions require complex methodological and theoretical expertise to answer. Many of us were schooled in a critique of the "hypodermic needle" model, though we have since learned that the media sometimes have or generate direct effects. Why else does a multibillion dollar advertising industry exist in the United States? However, we continue to marvel at the long-term cumulative effects that are far more complex than we originally anticipated. Furthermore, effects scholars, such as many of those contributing to Scharrer's volume, seek to explore how to effect positive change as well as how to avert more nefarious outcomes.

Finally for now,² the encyclopedia concludes with Volume 6 on media studies futures edited by **Kelly Gates**. Gates's own research is the veritable embodiment of a focus on futures. Author of *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance* (2011) as well as co-editor with Shoshana Magnet of *The New Media of Surveillance* (2009), Gates studies the discursive formation of the wishful deployment of recognition technology with an "almost gleeful futurism" that suggests "if only" the systems were in place, before 9/11, for instance, our present and future would be different, better, and so on.³ Futures is, by definition, a transient category, as within 10 years the content of this volume will be the stuff of the present, or maybe even the recent past. As Raymond Williams has written, we cannot anticipate what will be an emergent media form until it is *post facto*. The futures volume takes up some of the issues around Internet, gaming, social media, mobile telephone in a converged media form, biopolitics, and digitalization technologies such as biometric body scans. Gates asserts that media studies needs to take seriously the possibility that *radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media are and where they are headed. All of the chapters in this volume could be retrofitted into the other five volumes. Yet together they compose a vision of the field as it moves forward, taking up issues that date back centuries, engaging them with theories and modes of media that only apparently represent new terrain.

This is the state of the art of media studies. It is a field where we know better than to use the term "new" media – for all media are somewhat new but also very old in many of their aspects. Scholars in this encyclopedia take us back to the production of paper even as they bring us up to the latest technologies, assemblages, and institutions that arise to mediate our world. Contributors to this encyclopedia share the belief not only that media studies is an academic exercise, but also that by engaging in this important area of studies we are somehow contributing to a more just vision of the world. As the separate volumes build on each other, whether we are engaged in media at any of their analytical nodes (production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology), we are simultaneously linked to its history and its future. As a diverse heterogeneous field that is global, interdisciplinary, intersectional, multi-methodological, I cannot imagine a more exciting and potentially liberatory academic enterprise to be involved with.

NOTES

- 1 In this introduction and whenever possible, this encyclopedia uses “America” to refer to a continent and “US” or “United States” to refer to the country, unless we are quoting from scholarship that uses “America” otherwise.
- 2 A *Methods* volume is projected to be released at a later date, edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.
- 3 Few people know that Gates submitted her dissertation proposal the day before 9/11. What to the committee seemed like futuristic queries became the very real present within a period of 24 hours.

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The Audience in the Graduate Curriculum

Training Future Scholars

Meenakshi Gigi Durham

ABSTRACT

Because media audiences are changing as technologies and populations change, ethnographic approaches offer nuanced and versatile ways of understanding the complex interactions between people and media. Although a quarter-century ago cultural theorists like Richard Johnson and Stuart Hall drew attention to the linkages among production, texts, and audiences, a great deal of research – especially student research – tends to center on texts. But texts are meaningless until they are interpreted by audiences; and, increasingly, audiences are producing texts for mediated distribution, which adds a new twist to our conceptualization of “the audience.” In this chapter I address the crucial issues that are to be raised in teaching audience research to graduate students – from access to ethics and power in the field, to data collection, to writing media ethnographies – and I discuss how these issues play out in the classroom and in supervised research contexts. I also tackle the problems of negotiating institutional support for long-term ethnographic work. All this material is illustrated through examples of ethnographic fieldwork conducted by graduate students, and I focus particularly on studies that raise sensitive methodological and theoretical questions.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Audience research is not for the faint of heart. The study of media audiences calls for energy, courage, determination, patience, flexibility, people skills, a sense of humor, and a spirit of adventure. Most graduate students in media studies – indeed most media scholars – are aware of these requirements, which is perhaps why so few of us actually undertake it. But the rewards of audience work are unmistakable, particularly with regard to our understanding of the real-world implications of mediated messages. Media scholarship is meaningless without audience research.

The pioneers of our field were acutely aware of this. “It is in its *discursive* form that the circulation of the product takes place,” wrote Stuart Hall more than a quarter of a century ago. “Once accomplished, the discourse must then be translated – transformed again – into social practices if the circuit is to be both completed and effective.” He added forcefully: “If the meaning is not articulated in practice, *it has no effect*” (Hall, 1980, p. 128). Richard Johnson (1986/7) emphasized the vital links among production, text, and audience in his groundbreaking “circuit model” of culture. “The ultimate object of cultural studies is not, in my view, the text, but *the social life of subjective forms* at each moment of their circulation,” he noted (p. 198). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) argued that “media researchers ought to be studying human needs to discover how much the media do or do not contribute to their creation and satisfaction” (p. 30).

But audiences are complicated: their negotiations of media texts are varied, enigmatic, contradictory, cryptic. We need complex methods in order to gauge the intricacies of audience engagements with texts – methods that probe the subtleties of message decodings and the identity politics that might motivate them, whether the latter relate to class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or to the complex combinations and permutations of these and other life circumstances that might predict and explain what media messages mean.

By comparison, texts are easier. Texts are static: they are in online databases, or on microfilms in libraries, or in archives. They sit politely and await the researcher’s arrival, and every time the researcher returns they are the same: they don’t grow old, change their minds, sicken, or die. It is usually not difficult to gain access to texts: at the most, one might need a university identification card, a library card, or a letter of authorization in order to get to them. Texts don’t object to the researcher’s presence; they don’t get cold feet and drop out of the study halfway through; they won’t be traumatized by the research; and they won’t sue the researcher later on.

Moreover, a researcher often doesn’t need to get out of his or her chair to study a text, especially in this era of near-universal online access to documents. That’s a tempting idea for many researchers who spend all their time in their chairs and at their screens anyway!

And, finally, there’s a god-like element to analyzing texts: you are in control of interpreting them. Your analytical methods are geared to interrogating the patterns, juxtapositions, and structural elements that convey meaning, and using those methods allows you to conclusively explain the text’s significance and impact.

Of course, audiences don't always read the texts the same way scholars do; and they don't read them as the text's producers do, either.

And there's the rub.

There would be no need of audience analysis if the media operated as a "magic bullet" and meaning were seamlessly transferred from producer to text to receiver, without any possibility of misapprehension. But slippages happen all the time: the car named "Nova" was seen by Latino audiences as one that wouldn't go (*no va* in Spanish); the Manson family found directives for murder in the Beatles' song "Helter Skelter"; the darkening of O. J. Simpson's face on the cover of *Time* magazine was viewed as racist by some readers, but not by others. The reinterpretation of media texts is a routine aspect of mediated communication, and in order to fully understand what the media mean in society, audience research is imperative.

Texts don't exist in a vacuum. They are, in a sense, alive: they connect with people in social circumstances in various ways; they are accepted, resisted, dismissed, rethought, adored; they motivate social action, policy, and legislation; sometimes they influence behaviors; sometimes they are derided as junk; sometimes they become iconic. We can't know about the social life of media texts unless we acknowledge that audiences are a crucial and dynamic element of the media system.

Confronting the System

It's challenging to convince fledgling scholars of these research imperatives. In-depth, qualitative audience work takes time to conduct – far more time than a quantitative analysis; and this fact results in longer times to graduation and in the need to extend the funding for such projects. These realities pose myriad bureaucratic obstacles, which both the students and the supervising faculty need to understand in order to facilitate more qualitative audience research in departments of communication and media studies. In anthropology or sociology departments, an extra year of funding, dedicated to fieldwork, may be built into doctoral programs, where the time demands and exigencies of ethnographic endeavors are more common and better understood. In order to foster media audience research, communication programs should also begin to see extended fieldwork as routine, and as a valued element. In communication programs, then, funds need to be set aside to offer longer term support to those students who will conduct field analysis; planning must be done with this recognition in mind. Alternatively, advisors can work with students to secure grant funding for such projects; federal, state, and local initiatives exist for ethnographic projects on topics salient to current government priorities. In addition, many universities are developing a growing commitment to globalization and to internationally focused research, so these initiatives may be tapped for support. Audience research *does* require more resources in order to be conducted, but finding funding sources is possible. Recently, a student on a master's degree course in our program at the University

of Iowa conducted fieldwork in the Arctic among the Inuit people, cobbling together money from a variety of funding sources – some internal (such as a small research grant from the university’s Student Government Association) and some external (a Fulbright scholarship) to stay in the Canadian Nunavut territory for several months (Gunderson, 2009).

Graduate faculties need to take such financial issues into consideration in their planning and budgeting, in order to conduct qualitative audience studies successfully. Second, university administrations need to be reminded that “time to degree” is not a valid or useful criterion in the evaluation of graduate programs. It is no secret that, at the University of Iowa, where I teach, many graduate programs are now in jeopardy: they are in danger of being eliminated as a result of a university-wide assessment that has used this factor (among others) as a criterion in judging graduate student success (Olsen, 2010; Task Force, 2010). But certainly disciplines requiring long-term fieldwork – anthropology, ethnomusicology, qualitative sociology, social work, and, yes, communication – must unite to explain to the administrative powers-that-be the irrelevance, and indeed the counterproductive nature of such a criterion. Long-term fieldwork produces the kind of rich, meaningful data that cannot be obtained in any other way, and it must be commended and supported.

Third, painstaking paperwork and protocols confront audience researchers. They range from following university procedures for “human subjects research” to securing permissions from potential study participants, from their institutional administrators, and sometimes from government entities. These preparatory measures have to be undertaken for the researcher’s protection as well as for that of the subjects. Graduate advisors and dissertation chairs need to take time to help their students understand the necessity of these procedures and to assist these students in completing such tasks in a timely fashion. Interdepartmental collaborations, discussion groups, or other networking opportunities can help graduate students feel supported in these rather tedious and daunting endeavors. It’s an extra effort, but the value of the research justifies the time that needs to be put in upfront.

It’s easy to see that, for all the reasons outlined above, textual analysis offers a safe and stress-free haven to many graduate students. And confronting the challenges of audience research creates even more quandaries: how does one identify the audience? What constitutes a valid audience population, especially in qualitative inquiry? How does one initiate contact with such audiences, once they are identified? And, on top of all that, there’s the specter of the university’s Institutional Review Board, whose criteria have grown more draconian over time. So – is audience research really worth the hassle?

It’s essential for media scholars of the future to recognize that it is. Media studies are incomplete without audience research. Moreover, fieldwork can be fun. Leaving the academic environment to venture into dormitory rooms, high school cafeterias, homeless shelters, newsrooms in Hawaii, call centers in India, or villages in Africa offers new experiences, exciting encounters, unexpected epiphanies, and opportunities for both professional and personal growth. It is my view that the best audience

research requires immersion in often unfamiliar settings and situations. The outcomes of such research are incomparably rich, and they make invaluable contributions to the scholarship in our field. Thus this chapter will focus on qualitative, field-based studies of audiences because of their potential to yield nuanced, detailed, and in-depth understandings of how audiences negotiate the contemporary media-saturated environment.

Learning the Ropes

But scholars need to be meticulously trained to conduct good audience research, as the potential pitfalls are many, and the validity of the findings rests on the rigor of the researcher's methodological approach – both to data collection and to analysis.

Unfortunately, precious little training in audience research is offered in most graduate programs, in part because most graduate curricula call for only one or two methods classes – usually one “qualitative” and one “quantitative,” if the student is lucky (if not, the two are rolled into one quick overview that offers a week or two on survey methods and ethnographic fieldwork). But audience research really shouldn't be undertaken on the basis of such flimsy preparation. To conduct thorough, valid, and perceptive research on media audiences, students ideally need to be familiar with the major audience analyses in our field and to have a sound understanding of best practice in their chosen methods.

Training in research methods happens in an environment that tends to pay scant attention to graduate pedagogy; the teaching of graduate students is often left to intuition, mysticism, and serendipity. While manuals and handbooks on the topic of undergraduate college teaching abound, similar attention is seldom paid to the graduate classroom. Graduate students are often expected to absorb knowledge through a process of osmosis. This is a dangerous expectation in preparing students to conduct audience research. For ethnographic fieldwork in particular, the complexities and challenges are so great that adequate preparation is essential if sound evidence is to be collected; a great deal of time could be wasted if students are given short shrift regarding the study of audience cultures.

Teaching a graduate seminar in qualitative methods for the study of communication is a little like herding cats: there are so many issues to deal with, each of which is so complex and buttressed by so much scholarship, that trying to organize everything into a single term's syllabus is literally impossible. But basic topics can be raised, and students' appetites can be whetted for more explorations in ethnography. In teaching these seminars I try to include not only basic texts, but also more sophisticated and engaging ones, like Ruth Behar's *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (Behar, 1996) – a reflection that has many resonances for the former journalists in my classes – or Tom Boellstorff's *Coming of Age in Second Life* (Boellstorff, 2008), a book that appeals to the many new media enthusiasts enrolled. Despite the

shortness of a typical semester, I try to send students out of the classroom to conduct at least one quasi-ethnographic study; they return with field notes, recordings, and visual data that we then organize, parse, and interpret through the lens of the relevant theory – probably the most difficult part of any field investigation.

My preliminary exercises involve putting students in groups or pairs; generating a broad research question that is timely and topical (such as: “Are there age-related responses to ambient media in public spaces?”); and sending the teams out to conduct observations and take field notes. Entering the field may be tricky, but, once accomplished, it is usually enjoyable and stimulating. The teams can generate their own research strategies, combining participant observations with in-depth interviews; they bring their notes back to class and work on organizing, analyzing, and interpreting them theoretically. The team approach also allows for engaging issues of triangulations and validity in qualitative inquiry.

Dealing with the mass of field notes, recordings, and other documents accumulated during the course of a study is in fact the true test of the audience researcher. And of course there isn’t just one way of collecting or organizing and interpreting field data. Discussions of the various ways in which one can make sense of qualitative information are a key aspect of any class in methodology. Again, the choices may be intimidating to a newbie – there is no formula to follow, as there would be in a quantitative study, where an ANOVA or a chi-square would present clearly defined steps that yield comfortably empirical results. With field notes – as Wolf (1992) observed – we are dealing with “disorganized thoughts, detailed observations of minutiae, descriptions of rituals, transcripts of conversations, diagrams, and detritus” (p. 128), some of which can be discarded, some of which are treasures, and all of which call for nuanced and varied methods of analysis. In an introductory seminar the most one can do is to indicate the almost limitless approaches that can be used in the analysis of field data. Fortunately most universities offer more specialized classes, which will help students to hone their understanding of how to handle necessarily messy data – messy because, as Wolf (1992) puts it, “[e]xperience is messy [. . .] When human behavior is the data, a tolerance for ambiguity, multiplicity, contradiction, and instability is essential” (p. 129). A broad knowledge of how to interpret and write up field notes can help students negotiate these trials.

I also direct students to classes on ethnography taught in other departments, notably anthropology, but sometimes in other, unexpected disciplinary units as well: at the University of Iowa, the Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry, an interdisciplinary program, periodically offers a seminar in feminist ethnography, while the English department regularly lists a graduate course focused on ethnographic writing. Eclectic and cross-disciplinary coursework of this kind will enrich a student’s understanding of the multiple facets of immersive audience research.

In addition to classroom instruction, I’d suggest that one doctoral comprehensive exam should focus on theories of the audience, if the student plans to do audience research, because audience analysis has been a key element of our field for more than a quarter of a century now. It’s important for students to know about the core

developments in this area and to recognize the wealth of theoretical and methodological approaches that are possible, as they put together their research plans. From David Morley's *The Nationwide Audience* (1980) to Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984) to Radhika Parameswaran's articles on feminist media ethnography in India (1999, 2001, 2002), from Elihu Katz and colleagues' (1974) work on uses and gratifications to John Fiske's ideas of the active audience (1989, 1993) and to Bella Mody's thoughts on audiences in developing countries (2010), there's a treasure trove of scholarly literature on the subject that illuminates the almost limitless possibilities of media audience research. The media audience scholar should read outside the field, too, as insights from anthropology, sociology, and ethnic studies are vital to this research area.

From this literature, young scholars will learn that it's possible to conduct audience research in virtually any imaginable setting; the choice rests – first – with the researcher's driving questions, and depends – second – on the feasibility of the study.

Fieldwork is, of course, impossible without access to the field. I referred earlier to the feasibility factor, which must be considered carefully as one embarks on a plan of research. In the following section I'll outline some of the considerations that need to be assessed at the outset of any qualitative or quasi-ethnographic audience study.

Risk and Power

One of my doctoral students was eager to investigate the uses of media among undocumented Chinese women working “under the table” in restaurants, laundries, and other businesses. She had had some experience of these situations and knew that, because many of these women were illiterate in English, media in their native language were lifelines for them, shoring up their sense of identity and offering them reassurance and familiarity. She wanted to conduct a participant observation in a restaurant or sewing sweatshop, taking a job there herself and studying the day-to-day media usage of the workers.

It sounded like a great plan; but, the more we thought about it, the more we realized that it couldn't work. The potential harms to the study participants – an important consideration for any university's human subjects board – would be great, and the women themselves would be acutely aware of this. Most of all, they would fear that their “illegal” status would somehow be revealed to the authorities, which could result in job loss or, in the worst-case scenario, in deportation. As an ethical matter of informed consent, my student would have to tell them of her goal of writing their stories into a dissertation, which would raise red flags with them immediately.

We considered asking the university's institutional review board (IRB) for a waiver of informed consent; but, if we got it, the ethical implications of the work would become even more complex. My student, a Chinese woman herself, was privileged by comparison with the women she'd be studying: she was in the United States legally, on a student visa, getting her graduate degree, and on the way to an upper-middle-class

career as a university professor. She was *safe* by comparison with her proposed subjects, whose lives were in constant peril and who were working in grim, grinding, and impoverished conditions. Deceiving them about who she was in order to gather data for her research seemed like a breach of faith that just wasn't justified.

Ethical considerations like these are at the core of audience research, and they go far beyond the matter of "risk to subjects," which review boards are concerned about. The most potent ethical issues rest on the paired concepts of risk and power. One of my graduate students noted sagely that researchers are inclined to "study down" – that is, to investigate populations of lower social status than the researchers. Hence we tend to have many audience studies of housewives, children, college students, and working journalists. By comparison, we don't tend to see studies of politicians, business executives, doctors, lawyers, or university administrators: these groups are adept at building walls around them that effectively bar graduate students, or even university professors, from gaining access to their elite worlds. It's rare and difficult for us to "study up."

Because we "study down," the power differentials between the researcher and the researched are of pivotal importance. Oakley (1981) suggests that a nonhierarchical relationship between researcher and researched is an optimum condition for gathering information, and the feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith famously noted that researchers participate in "relations of ruling":

There are and must be different experiences of the world and different bases of experience. We must not do away with them by taking advantage of our privileged speaking to construct a sociological version which we then impose upon them as their reality. We may not rewrite the other's world or impose upon it a conceptual framework which extracts from it what fits with ours [. . .] Their reality, their varieties of experience, must be an unconditional datum. (Smith, 1990, p. 25)

The temptation to "study down" may be a well-intentioned effort to represent under-represented perspectives or give voice to socially ostracized or silenced populations – to "speak for others," in the now-classic formulation of Linda Alcoff (1991/2). But, of course, in speaking for less privileged others, the researcher is taking the words out of their mouths – a power move that prevents the subaltern from speaking (Spivak, 1988). Still, there is potential merit to the corollary idea of *speaking on behalf of others* – a progressive project that introduces the element of activism to scholarship. Because of these complexities, the motivations and ramifications of "studying down" need to be explicitly considered as part of the study's theory and methodology.

Study participants may be intimidated by the status and background of the researcher, which may constrain their behaviors and their responses to questions. The research setting is inevitably altered by the presence of a researcher, especially in an ethnographic study, so questions of validity become paramount and their answers can hinge on the relationship between the researcher and the study partici-

pants. Long-term immersion in the field setting is one answer to this dilemma: true participant observation can only be effectively accomplished if the researcher becomes deeply familiar with the setting and the subjects, without losing her/his observational acuity. An intimate knowledge of the field “is also a source of knowledge that makes possible a transformation of what we know, specifically of the anthropologist’s own self-understandings” (Borneman & Hammoudi, 2009, p. 14). It’s crucial for fledgling researchers to be aware of the delicate balance to be struck in field settings before plunging into a research project.

There is also the question of “activist ethnography,” the well-intentioned efforts to effect progressive social change through research; these can be successful, but they can also backfire, causing more grief than good. For decades, ethnographers have been aware of the ways in which social research has served colonizing, imperialist, and racist agendas. The feminist and postmodern critiques of these problems countered these trends by generating ethnographic experimentations with collaborative, dialogic, and activist forms of participant observation. Oftentimes now, the subjects or participants in a study are seen as “epistemic partners” and the research is perceived as providing “collaborative resources for common objects and questions” (Marcus, 2007, p. 9). Activist ethnography can be a powerful societal force, and there are growing movements to support applied research of this kind. In her presidential address to the Council on Anthropology and Education, Catherine Emihovich exhorted students and faculty to engage in action-oriented research: “[W]e must find a way to harness all the wisdom and knowledge we have collected over the years to engage in action at all levels” (2005, p. 306). Examples of successful activist ethnographic projects abound, from working with grassroots community organizing groups in order to challenge unemployment, housing affordability, and local segregation (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt, 2007) to fostering indigenous peoples’ resistance movements (Hale, 2006). Yet, as Hale (2006) cautions, activist researchers are often “partly implicated in the very systems of oppression they set out to oppose” (p. 98) or, worse, they can impose outsider views and disrupt local situations in ways that actually harm the communities being studied. Funding sources and institutional affiliations can also affect the slant and focus of the research. If activist projects are undertaken, the researcher must be certain that they are carried out in close coalition with the members of the community and that they support the expressed goals and needs of the local people. Yet such involvement will, of course, have implications for the entire project: as Fine (1993) has noted, “participant observation often becomes participant intervention: finding a problem, we wish to fix it” (p. 287) – and these motivations shade the way in which data are gathered, findings are reported, and studies are written up. It is critical for audience researchers to be acutely aware of this problematic and to foreground it in their research designs.

My student Yu Shi did end up studying working-class Chinese women, but they were not undocumented laborers, and they were fully informed of her research goals. As she pointed out in her dissertation:

establishing and developing [a] rapport with the participants was a complicated task. I had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, like the participants, I am an ethnic minority and a woman, which allowed me to establish a good relationship with them at the very beginning of the fieldwork. As the participants indicated, they respected me for my education and treated me as an ethnic insider. [. . .] Our middle-class versus working-class differences didn't really undercut our friendly relations, because they identified with me in the sense that I was a poor student living on a graduate assistantship, which is often less than their annual incomes, although at the same time they thought of me as a well-educated person heading toward the American mainstream and having a promising future.

Yet, on the other hand, as some of the women indicated, in their minds I was also a young student, coming from another state, staying for a short period of time, and having little in common with them. (Shi, 2005, p. 39)

Negotiating these intricacies as part of her relationship with her research subjects was one challenge of her dissertation work; her awareness of the need to explicate these issues added strength and rigor to her data collection and analysis. Thus reflexivity is a crucial aspect of audience work: the researcher's identity location vis-à-vis that of the participants, the researcher's goals and motivations for undertaking the research, the researcher's perspectives on the participant population, all impact the value of the project.

Different populations call for different recognitions of power and risk. Working with children exacerbates the power hierarchies at play, and class differences further complicate the mix. In my own fieldwork with schoolgirls (Durham, 1999, 2001, 2004). I found that middle- and upper-class children were open to my research, indifferent to my recording and note-taking equipment, and unconcerned about my presence in their environment, whereas impoverished children were guarded and wary, reluctant to be recorded, and confrontational about my goals. The differences stemmed from their varying experiences with adults: lower-income children had learned to view adults as punitive, authoritarian, and generally critical presences in their lives, so these girls were justifiably more suspicious of my interest than their middle-class peers.

Several of my graduate students have undertaken audience research with children, and they have grappled with these complexities as part of their methodological strategizing. For Shayla Thiel, ensuring that the girls she was studying did not feel coerced into disclosing private information was of vital importance. She was studying girls' uses of instant messaging, and the data she used were submitted voluntarily by her subjects.

I asked them to send me only the conversations with which they were comfortable and allowed them to do so over an extended, flexible period of time. As a researcher, I understand this practice might bring up questions of "validity." [. . .] In order to maintain validity, I asked them to send me "all kinds" of conversations, but in the philosophy of feminist scholarship, I left the instructions ambiguous so that the girls would not feel forced into sharing intimate details of their lives that made them uncomfortable or powerless in the process of the study. (Thiel, 2004, p. 40)

Thiel dealt with validity through the use of multimethodological triangulation.

None of these issues could have been successfully handled if the researchers had not had a keen understanding of their research subjects, as well as a great deal of self-awareness regarding the relational dynamics at work between themselves and their subjects. Before a researcher sets up a method for conducting audience research, he or she must learn as much as possible about the intended study population. Robust audience research cannot be undertaken blindly: knowing as much as possible before entering the subjects' "space" allows the researcher to develop an appropriate method as well as suitably nuanced and sophisticated research questions. I recently heard a research presentation in which the researcher had made certain assumptions about an ethnic minority group's reactions to health messages. The researcher had no empirical ground for making these assumptions: they were based solely on stereotype, and therefore they jeopardized the entire research enterprise. The questions being asked, the method that had been developed, and the theorization framing the study were all irrelevant in light of the fact that the underlying assumptions were unproven and untrustworthy.

One of the three decrees carved on Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi in ancient Greece was "Know thyself." My advice to future audience researchers is: "Know thyself and thy subjects before starting a study."

Mentoring the Fledgling Researcher

As detailed above, the exigencies of audience research in the field call for close and attentive relationships between graduate advisors and their students. When students are conducting audience work, situations arise that are unlikely to crop up in text analysis – or even in experimental settings, where conditions are more closely controlled. In fieldwork, students run into all manner of ethical and personal dilemmas: they may become emotionally attached to their study participants; they may discover illegal activity and be uncertain as to how to deal with it; they may be asked to engage in unethical behaviors in order to gain access to a social setting or gather information; they may run up against uncooperative or hostile people; they may be threatened or physically harmed. It is incumbent upon the faculty mentor to maintain close contact with his/her students while they're in the field, in order to advise, guide, and protect them from harm while the study is underway. Field situations are dynamic and unpredictable, and circumstances change almost daily. Inexperienced field researchers may not know how to handle the problems that present themselves in the field, so mentors must be available for consultation at any point.

Helpful mentoring is born of experience: the best mentors for fieldworkers are those who have ventured into the field themselves and have dealt at first hand with the provocations and challenges of audience research. Because of this, mentors can't afford to be reticent about sharing with students their own work – and their own

dilemmas, problems, even failures; these “tales of the field” are part of the learning experience. I, as well as other faculty members who teach classes on audience research and supervise graduate students conducting it, sometimes assign our own articles in classes, and we do it with the goal of discussing the predicaments and aggravations we encountered in our own forays into the field and of encouraging students to ask probing questions and to interrogate the ethics, politics, and problematics of our methodologies. For example, during my own fieldwork with adolescent girls on issues of gender and sexuality, I promised these girls confidentiality, but I also determined, privately, that, if I came across a child in an abusive situation, I would break my promise and report it. And in fact I did learn that one of my study participants had been sexually abused by a family member; fortunately the school social worker had already alerted the authorities and the situation was being handled by Child Protective Services. Jennifer Hasty (2010) reflects on the notion of positionality in the pursuit of fieldwork, exploring the ways in which “responsible complicity” with the community one is studying can sometimes draw researchers into participating in possibly unethical or even illegal activities. As a young ethnographer conducting media anthropology at a newspaper in Ghana, she was asked to lie in order to get a story: she dodged the situation. Other fieldworkers have had to make difficult decisions about participating in illegal activities such as drug use or dealing, or about concealing such activities from the authorities. These are just a few examples of the predicaments of positionality in fieldwork, but the need for alert and expert mentoring is underscored through the recognition that contingencies of all sorts can intervene in the best designed field observations.

Space and Place

When we’re studying media audiences, we generally want to know how they’re using the media: their choices of media, their engagements with them, their negotiations of media messages, and their production of media. These research aims call for making choices about the setting in which it’s best to learn about these processes. There are, of course, a wide variety of physical – and, increasingly, virtual – locations in which to study media audiences; all require the researcher to decide on a space in which the study will be conducted and then to “cross a border” into that space.

Sometimes these spaces are classrooms, or specially equipped university research facilities outfitted with wide-screen monitors, recording equipment, and one-way mirrors for observation. Experiments, focus groups, and sometimes questionnaires or surveys are administered in such settings. At other times, surveys are conducted via telephone, email, or the Web; then the “space” of the study is auditory or virtual. Sometimes the researcher attempts to study the audience in a more “natural” environment and enters a home, a school, a club, a dormitory, or some other setting in order to try to observe the audience in its characteristic habitat, so to speak.

In all cases, the choice of “space” has its drawbacks as well as its strengths. A space that the researcher has designated and prepared for a study has the “benefit” of being thoroughly artificial; that is, as Webster and Sell (2007) point out, “[a]rtificiality means that a well-designed experiment can incorporate all the theoretically presumed causes of certain phenomena while eliminating or minimizing factors that have not been theoretically identified as causal” (p. 34). In artificially contrived research settings, the researcher doesn’t have to consider the impact of environmental factors on the data: the data can be considered in isolation from all other factors. Research facilities in fact do facilitate research: they make data collection easier and more manageable. They are geared to the researcher’s convenience.

Paradoxically, this very artificiality can be a significant drawback in media audience research, where audience members tend to interact with the media in an eclectic assortment of settings, while they are beleaguered by distractions of every sort or comfortably ensconced in some private and familiar space – perhaps in a bedroom or basement – or among friends, in a bar or cafeteria. Such settings reflect more accurately the ways in which the media are part of an overall social space or living environment, allowing researchers to track the ways in which media use happens in everyday life. Given these realities, the data gathered in focus group facilities, laboratories, or classrooms may not be generalizable, because they have little bearing on real-world media use. Moreover, study participants may feel uncomfortable or intimidated by such settings, and their responses to the media may be affected accordingly. Power is, once more, a factor in selecting the location of an audience study.

On the other hand, the “messier” real-world research spaces pose problems, too. The researcher’s presence is the first: the researcher is the stranger element in the field setting and must work to find a place in it. He/she has to establish a rapport with the study participants, ensuring that they are fully informed and have consented to the study. Becoming familiar with the research environment could take weeks or months; while initial observations can and should be recorded, patterns as well as anomalies can only be discerned after longer-term immersion in the field setting.

Fieldwork complicates data collection. Field researchers must decide whether to use obtrusive recording equipment – which, again, may discomfit the study participants – or whether to try to find more subtle methods of collecting data, perhaps by reconstructing a situation shortly after its occurrence, but not in the presence of the study participants. Crang and Cook (1995) describe researchers running to the bathroom to write up their field notes, a condition jokingly known as “ethnographer’s bladder.” In the field, ambient noise can muffle tape recordings, coffee can get spilt on notebooks, cameras batteries can run out. There are definite challenges to doing field research; but as Borneman and Hammoudi (2009) assert, “the agony of fieldwork [is] integral to knowledge production” (p. 260). Being there matters.

A note needs to be made here about entering audiences’ physical environments. In this online era, it’s tempting to believe that text and audience merge: that words on a screen are equivalent to the person who generated them. And indeed, online ethnographies can, and have, been conducted – though the notion is still controversial

and must be approached with rigor, caution, and a thorough understanding of the implications. As Hine (2006) points out: "Online social formations seem to challenge existing ways of conceptualizing research sites and ask for new strategies of exploration" (p. 10). Can online social environments be conflated with offline ones? How does one verify the identity of an online informant? What are the concerns with validity and reliability in online research?

In Jay Clarkson's (2006) dissertation research on the production of masculinity in an online gay community, these questions were asked in order to formulate a method that would yield valid data and findings. In his decision to study the online community so as to gain "a better understanding of these men's cultural practices and the institutional and ideological factors that influence them," Clarkson argued for "the unique characteristics of the Internet as a research space" (p. 53). "The men use this space and the discussion of media stereotypes as an identity expressive function," he notes (p. 48). In addition, he decided to observe the site as a so-called "lurker" – but not as a participant, since his participation had the potential to disrupt the site's authentic dynamics.

Yet Clarkson's defense of online-only ethnographies has been challenged and debated in more recent years, as the popularity and scope of analyzing online interactions has dramatically increased. Lindlof and Shatzer (1998) point out the potential perils of misinterpretation or miscommunication in online interactions, which could arise from lack of nonverbal cues and other ambient information. Yet Marwick and boyd (2010), in a study of Twitter users, focused only on the online context, arguing that the online arena constitutes a "networked community" that can be studied on its own.

Thus a crucial question vexing ethnographers today is that of the validity of online research as authentic fieldwork. Is "being there" online the same as "being there" in person? How trustworthy, verifiable, and useful are online spaces as research sites? How can one verify the claims made in the virtual world? In Lee Farquhar's dissertation on identity negotiation on Facebook, the pros and cons of online research were carefully weighed; Farquhar concluded: "The value of online interactions is bolstered when coupled with offline interactions. They become informative both in terms of understanding the individual through their discussion of other content and through differences (if any) in their performances in each setting" (Farquhar, 2009, p. 53). Farquhar coupled online participant observation with offline "F2F" interviews with his subjects, a methodological decision supported by much of the relevant scholarship in this area.

"Emerging online spaces of the Internet [. . .] belong to an entirely new category of space," notes Burrell. She argues that cyber-ethnography must be understood as a process in which the researcher "physically inhabits only certain parts of the space" (Burrell, 2009, p. 187). The field site must be thought of as a network that includes online and offline locations and their intersections. Triangulation, multi-sited approaches, and verification become more central to fieldwork involving online communities and virtual identities. "Use of the Internet frequently involves an engagement

with the imagination and the production of imagined spaces because there is much that this medium conceals,” she writes; but “imagined spaces constituted an important source of meaning that could be related to the experiences and activities of Internet users on a nonimaginary plane of existence” (pp. 193 and 194). Both the imaginary and the nonimaginary are crucial to virtual ethnography: one cannot be privileged over the other. Validity is tied to constructing the field site as one that closely tracks the phenomenon under investigation.

In this vein, media audience research in an Internet age calls for new methodological and theoretical questions to be asked. As the Internet and related technologies evolve, online media audiences cannot be conceptualized in traditional ways, as they often are both producers and receivers of media; they are simultaneously occupying multiple roles and locations in the media matrix; and in a rapid-fire, interactive, dynamic media environment new approaches and understandings of “audience” are called for. Media studies is a field that is bombarded by minute-to-minute changes – in technologies, in audiences, in social configurations, in economic structures, in identity politics. The virtual is melding with the “real” and the hyperreal in unforeseen ways. There is a growing literature in this area, and students opting to conduct online audience research must be well versed in the methods, theorizations, and debates that surround and support such work.

Tackling Audience Research: Closing Thoughts

All of these developments in media audience research engage two key questions: What is a media audience – and why conduct audience research? Neither has an easy answer any more. The first calls for new definitions, new conceptualizations, and new research approaches in an era of post-postmodern fragmentation and constant technological flux.

The second calls for philosophical reflexivity and for a sense of how one’s work might contribute, not just to the field of media research, but to our knowledge of the world. As Ang (2000) pointedly demands: “Why are we so interested in knowing about audiences in the first place?” (p. 487). To what end are we invading people’s spaces, interrogating their practices, analyzing the texts and images they create? From a critical/cultural studies perspective, there is always a degree of exploitation in such an enterprise. Traditional audience research has always had a commercial or political aim; more critically oriented studies have addressed the nature of media, their role in subjectivity, their motivating mechanisms. The training of future scholars must guide them to think carefully about why they might want to engage in audience research, what their relationship with those audiences should be, and what the ultimate good of such research will be.

In the end, the research questions the student is asking will drive the method of data collection; ethnography and related qualitative approaches are best suited to

research questions that seek to uncover the subsurface complexities of people's engagements with media in their everyday lives. As Gillespie observed:

Ethnography highlights the small-scale processes, rather than the large-scale products, of people's perceptions, thoughts, and action. The ethnographer reads the world, as she reads mediated messages, through the eyes of her informants themselves; she focuses on the microprocesses of daily uses, interpretations, and identifications. (Gillespie, 1995. p. 1)

No other methodological investment can offer the depth, texture, intricacy, and verisimilitude of long-term fieldwork. When research seeks to penetrate into the complex workings of the media in the gloriously heterogeneous and diverse "real world," then the researcher must arm himself or herself with a field diary, recording equipment, informed consent forms, and an intrepid attitude, and venture, like an explorer, into the media wilderness, where a multitude of joys and discoveries about media audiences await. In the end, it is the academy's responsibility to teach and mentor future media scholars to find their way in the wilderness of audience research.

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Fostering Surprise and Productive Discomfort in Audience Studies through Multi-Sited Ethnography

Kim Trager-Bohley

ABSTRACT

Can an increased engagement with multi-sited ethnography invigorate audience studies? Yes. Too often, media and audience studies scholars have tended to hamstring ethnographic methods by predetermining their audiences, their activities, their research sites, and the temporal sequence of their research. This chapter argues that multi-sited ethnography has the potential to enlarge the boundaries that have circumscribed and enclosed media/audience studies if researchers can avail themselves of its central strengths – its unpredictability and flexibility. I urge audience studies scholars to embrace a flexible research imaginary that can be open to surprise, modification, and productive discomfort while tracking mobile social formations that crisscross multiple and unexpected sites and local–global dichotomies. Drawing on my fieldwork on global sponsors of literacy in the United States and Singapore, this chapter discusses several overlapping elements of multi-sited ethnographies: (1) its tracking strategies; (2) its emphasis on complicitous relationships; (3) its greater exposure to multiple perspectives, including multi-level power dynamics; and (4) its unbounded, open-ended notions of the field, which are not limited or constrained by place.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Today an increasing number of third-generation audience scholars have experimented with multi-sited ethnography in order to demystify and “ground” everyday life in a mediatized, globalized world. This impulse is particularly strong among those who are interested in new media such as mobile phones, blogs, and podcasts (Bakardjieva, 2005; Hartmann, 2006; Karl, 2009). Many of these researchers have already pushed the boundaries of ethnography beyond the field’s early theoretical formulations of this approach (see Radway, 1988), for example by defining fieldsites conceptually rather than spatially. Interestingly, though, with a few notable exceptions (Green, 1999; Lotz & Ross, 2004), there has been relatively little shop talk collectively among these scholars about the pragmatics, ethics, and implications of multi-sited ethnography. Surprisingly, some keystone contemporary overviews in audience studies only devote a couple pages to this methodology (see Bird, 2003).

What, if anything, does multi-sited ethnography offer media and audience studies? The present chapter explores this question. Ultimately, I argue that multi-sited ethnography has the potential to generate greater insights into new modes of translocal social experiences and everyday life in a mediatized, globalized world than a single-sited audience/media study or a political economy-based analysis. Moreover, I contend that the insights garnered from the former approach are more likely to reveal the fluid and multilayered complexities of power dynamics and social relationships than the latter modes. Finally, I suggest that multi-sited ethnography is a particularly effective approach to discover the intertextual links and disjunctures among various intersecting, though not always apparent, discourses and sites where we can witness the fabrication of the taken for granted concept of culture.

In my experience, multi-sited ethnography has offered an important methodological tool to examine the continuity and disruption between competing ideologies, practices, and discourses of reading, in an age in which global capitalism is increasingly structuring and intersecting with consumers’ media experiences. Drawing on the ethnographic and theoretical problems I encountered during my fieldwork on global sponsors of literacy in the United States and Singapore, I suggest that there are several dimensions of multi-sited ethnography that have the potential to invigorate tired narratives of audience studies and to disrupt limited notions of reception, of audience activity, and of the global–local nexus.

Though multi-sited ethnographies have informed and inspired the “research imaginary” of media scholars – for example, Nick Couldry’s (2003) conceptualization of “passing ethnography” (pp. 49–52) and Patrick Murphy and Marwan Kraidy’s (2003) understanding of “translocal ethnography” (pp. 304–305) – in most cases multi-sited media ethnography has been carried out by cultural anthropologists. Here are three examples in cultural anthropology: Abu-Lughod’s (1997, 2005) studies, which track a television serial as it circulates from Cairo to Upper Egypt, Hannerz’ (2003, 2004) studies, which investigate the practices of foreign news correspondents in Jerusalem, Tokyo, and Cape Town; and Rotenberg’s (2005) study, which explores the transnational connections between podcasters, producers, listeners, and advertisers.

These studies deploy ethnographic observations from fieldwork to illuminate contemporary modes of translocal social experiences. They also provide important insights into the ways in which the micro-practices of everyday life, including media rituals and media consumption, are tied to larger, macro-forces of global capitalism. Most notably for the purposes of this chapter, these authors reflect about the ethical and methodological issues that typically mark this genre of research. Unfortunately, in most audience/media studies that have attempted this kind of multi-sited approach, such reflexivity is absent or tenuous. All too often the phrase “multi-sited ethnography” is just dropped into the methodological section of a media studies article, without much explanation or discussion.

While anthropologists of various stripes have been grappling with the benefits and pitfalls of multi-sitedness for years (Coleman & von Hellermann, 2009; Falzon, 2009), media scholars have been slower to engage in a sustained dialogue about the rationale, proposed objectives, and political/ethical stakes of this approach. Moreover, when one flips through current and past issues of the *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, the *Global Media Journal*, the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, and other journals, only a few studies explicitly position themselves as multi-sited ethnographies. Even global media studies are marked by “a paucity” of works that directly embody or discuss this approach, as Kraidy and Murphy (2008) lament (p. 346). Clearly a large number of media ethnographies still remain single-sited, at least geographically (Baisnée & Marchetti, 2006; Hasty, 2006).

Intriguingly, several researchers who have conducted multi-sited or multi-sited(esque) media ethnographies have deliberately chosen alternative names to label their work. For example, Georgiou (2006) injects the phrase “multi-positioned ethnography” to describe her study, which draws on fieldwork research carried out in London and New York and designed to explore mediatized spaces and diasporic cultures among the Greek Cypriots (p. 35). And, though Terhi Rantanen (2005) draws on George Marcus’ understanding of multi-sited ethnography and asserts that “multi-sitedness” is a key term in her study, she prefers to use the phrase “global mediagraphy” rather than “multi-sited ethnography” to define the methodological approach in the book *The Media and Globalization*, which uses ethnographic methods such as oral history to examine how “four generations of three families” dispersed across five countries “connect or disconnect via media communications” (p. 14).

Perhaps some scholars who study the media and its audiences are reticent about defining parts of their work as “multi-sited ethnographies” because of the stern, albeit necessary and productive, critiques that were levied at the pioneers of media ethnography: they were attacked for producing only “quasi-ethnographic” studies, which did not live up to the anthropological ideal (Abu-Lughod, 1997; Ang, 1996; Bird, 1992; Murphy & Kraidy, 2003; Nugent & Shore, 1997; Ortner, 1995). The ongoing criticism waged at contemporary multi-sited projects within cultural anthropology may also give some media scholars pause (Candea, 2007; Coleman & von Hellermann, 2009; Hage, 2005). On top of this, reports of cultural anthropologists researching more than eight geographically dispersed fieldsites in one study (Falzon,

2009, p. 17) and assertions made by Peterson (2003, p. 269) and others that, “to be done properly, multi-sited ethnography may well require a team of ethnographers” are no doubt overwhelming – say, for a media studies doctoral student, who in all likelihood has only taken one or two courses in ethnographic fieldwork and none specifically geared toward multi-sited ethnography, as this remains an undertaught research method in communication and media graduate programs.

Of course, these are just speculations. One certainty, though, is that, at this point in time, the role and place of multi-sited ethnographies in media studies in general and in audience studies specifically seems unclear. This position of multi-sited ethnography is all the more puzzling given the fact that, in his highly influential article on multi-sited ethnography, cultural anthropologist George Marcus (1995) asserted that media studies was “one important arena” in which this approach was emerging. What happened? And how might an increased engagement with multi-sited ethnographies revitalize the field?

In this chapter I argue that multi-sited ethnography has the potential to break down the circumscribed boundaries that have enclosed media/audience studies, if researchers avail themselves of its central strengths – its emphasis on unpredictable outcomes of fieldwork and on flexibility. Too often, media/audience study scholars have tended to hamstring ethnographic methods by making *a priori* assumptions about the audiences the audiences, their activities, the research sites, and the temporal sequence of the research (Amit, 2000, p. 17). In doing this, researchers do not leave themselves open to discovering the unexpected connections and disjunctions that are supposed to unfold during a project (Marcus, 1995). Consequently their fieldwork experiences and subsequent accounts contain a lot of recycled themes and few surprises.

I contend that “being surprised” is an important component of intellectual inquiry, especially in ethnography, even though it has received little attention in cultural studies and media studies, as noted by Murphy (1999, p. 208). When entering the field, media researchers need to embrace a flexible research imaginary that is open to surprise, modification, and the productive discomfort that comes with the unknown. Fortunately, several overlapping elements embedded in the multi-sited ethnographic approach encourage this orientation: (1) its tracking strategies; (2) its emphasis on complicitous relationships; (3) its greater exposure to multiple perspectives, including multi-level power dynamics; and (4) its unbounded, open-ended notions of the field, which are not limited or constrained by place.

It is important to note that one particular aspect of multi-sited ethnography prematurely closes, or at least limits, research possibilities and surprises: its conceptualization of the object of inquiry. I discuss this limitation in the next section. Here I also give a brief overview of the origin and development of multi-sited ethnography, especially as it pertains to media and audience studies. Then I provide a description of my multi-sited approach to global sponsors of literacy. The remainder of the article ethnographically contextualizes the four aforementioned dimensions of multi-sited ethnography and discusses their potential to reinvigorate theory construction and methodological innovation in audience/media studies.

Multi-Sited Ethnography: Possibilities, Problems, and Pleas

As a concept, multi-sited ethnography made its official *début* on the academic radar in 1995, with the publication of George Marcus' "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." This is not to say that anthropologists and others weren't previously practicing this sort of method. They were, of course, as Marcus carefully details (pp. 102–105). But, prior to his article, multi-sited ethnography lacked a unifying name, a documented history, and an articulated vision. Marcus gave this approach a voice and brought seemingly disparate areas of study under one methodological roof. During the past 15 years, Marcus' conception of multi-sited ethnography has been critiqued, modified, and "refunctioned" by researchers across the social sciences who have adopted multi-sited approaches to explore the ways in which world systems such as globalization, capitalism, migration, postcolonialism, and transport technology impact local and transnational networks, flows, and movements (Holmes & Marcus, 2004, 2005).

Marcus' (1995) "reformative thesis," as Falzon (2009) calls it, can be read as an attempt to elevate ethnography's place in an increasingly globalized world and as an intervention into debates that questioned whether this approach could keep pace with the complex systems, processes, and realities that characterize a postmodern society (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Marcus, 1995, p. 97). Marcus defined the object of inquiry in multi-sited ethnography as the circulation of particular social formations – such as objects, identities, and cultural meanings – embedded in interlocking world systems, in diffuse time-space (p. 96).

One significant point to stress here is that Marcus initiated a shift in the focus of fieldwork, from set places and subjects to the movement of complex social formations that cannot be investigated from a single fieldsite (Hartman, 2006, p. 280; Marcus, 1998). This has obvious implications for the audience study scholar, because, as she examines a particular formation that moves along and through circuits and paths, her inquiry will inevitably be pushed beyond "an audience," "the text," and "reception" due to the fact that a social formation on the move (be it a television show, a communication practice, or a media corporation) will invariably intersect with multiple social actors (producers, cultural critics, editors, distributors, and so on) and cultural/communicative contexts (production, distribution, public reception, home viewing, cultural performances, and impersonations).

For Marcus, "the very heart" of the multi-sited mode is "following connections, associations and putative relationships" among and through multiple sites that cross-cut dichotomies such as the "local" and the "global," the "lifeworld" and the "system" (Marcus, 1995, p. 97). Therefore he advocated that researchers adopt tracking strategies that would enable this sort of intellectual discovery. More specifically, he urged scholars to literally follow the objects of their study, for example "the people," "the

thing,” “the metaphor,” “the conflict,” “the biography,” and “the plot, story or allegory.” Researchers have added to Marcus’ original list since its inception. Strauss (2000), for example, decided to “follow the practice” in her transnational study of yoga. And Green (1999) attempted to follow multiple paths within her single study of virtual reality technologies. Today certain tracking strategies have been identified as particularly apt for specific fields. For example, Boyer and Hannerz (2006) encourage ethnographers of journalism to “follow the story.”

Researchers of education, migration, sociology, religion, and other fields have viewed Marcus’ conceptualization of multi-sited ethnography as groundbreaking because it pushed ethnographic research beyond the classical anthropological notions of a single, bounded fieldsite (often represented as Malinowskian ethnography), and it broadened and diversified the scope of topics deemed worthy of ethnographic inquiry. As noted earlier, though, a number of reservations have been expressed about multi-sited ethnography. From the beginning, some scholars have challenged Marcus’ depiction of the “boundedness” of early fieldwork and fieldsites (Falzon, 2005; Hendry, 2003, p. 499; Strathern, 2004). Other scholars have suggested that, in purporting to study the “world system,” multi-sited ethnography embodies the very tacit holism it was trying to critique and escape (Candea, 2007; Hage, 2005).

One of the most frequent criticisms waged against multi-sited ethnography is that it compromises the researcher’s ability to capture local texture, depth, and breadth (Burawoy, 2003; Hage, 2005). This charge is of particular interest to, and concern for, audience and media scholars, who have for years bemoaned the contextually challenged ethnographies that too often characterize their craft (Ang, 1996; Darling-Wolf, 2003). Probably for this reason, Abu-Lughod (1997), Kraidy and Murphy (2008) as well as others insist that a multi-sited ethnographic approach to audience and media studies must work in tandem with a Geertzian “thick description,” which is based on rich contextual interpretation (Geertz, 1973). Though Kraidy and Murphy seem to concede that Geertzian thick description has some limitations (e.g., its peripheral placement of power issues), and though Abu-Lughod suggests that it may need to undergo “some creative stretching to fit mass-mediated lives,” none of these researchers explains what sort of modifications thick description needs when extended to multi-sited ethnography (Abu-Lughod, 1997, p. 110). In such applications, do our conceptualizations and practices of thick description need to be modified? I think so.

A multi-sited ethnography in which the ethnographer geographically and conceptually follows a mobile object of inquiry through systems, chains, or paths is going to require a type of thick description that looks and feels different from the thick description that is traditionally associated with interpretative ethnography. This is because the latter approach is directed by different goals and assumptions from those of the former. Traditionally, for example, one assumption of thick description is that, to interpret and understand a particular culture, an ethnographer must fully immerse herself within it (Geertz, 1973, p. 4). Yet, as noted by Horst (2009, p. 126), “the purpose of multi-sited fieldwork is not a ‘full,’ located understanding of ‘culture,’ but rather one which targets transnational networks and flows.” For Horst (2009),

Wittel (2000, p. 5), and others, depth and breadth in a multi-sited ethnography is sought through the thick description of a network, not of its individual nodes. Given the practicalities and objectives of multi-sited ethnography, some sites will – and should – be thicker than others.

For the purposes of this chapter, my primary concern with Marcus' formulation of multi-sited ethnography is his preconceived and ultimately reified understanding of the object of inquiry (social formations such as objects, identities, and cultural meanings). Even though he and his colleagues stress the importance of choosing research sites as they unfold in the field, *a posteriori*, and the importance of following the moving objects through their various crisscrossing and unexpected paths (Falzon, 2009), these researchers do not embrace the same open and flexible orientation toward the transformative nature of the objects themselves and their potential conceptual and material offshoots. In my study of global sponsors of literacy, which will be detailed in the next section, my initial object of inquiry changes and multiplies. While I set out initially to follow a “thing” (according to the corporate model), that thing soon became coupled with a “practice” (book browsing) that led to multiple physical and discursive “conflicts” (for example, kiasu browsers). Through my tracking, I also observed the way in which individuals whom I labeled as “audiences” (book browsers) in one site transformed themselves into “producers” (letter writers) in another site.

Drawing on his multi-sited ethnography of Malayali migrants in Rome and Ernakulam, Gallo (2009) considers the transformative nature of multi-sited objects of inquiry and of pleas for a more radical openness to this reality. His reformulation of the relationship between multi-sited ethnography and the object of inquiry is particularly relevant to my insistence on the intellectual importance of surprise. So I quote Gallo (2009) at length:

[M]ulti-sited ethnography implies not only the capacity of being ready to put into question theoretical assumptions and research expectations that precede fieldwork; it also requires the researcher to put into question previous sites of ethnographic inquiry in light of new ones. This paradox is probably best understood if we consider the shift from the more formal understanding of multi-sited ethnography as articulated by Marcus (1995), to a more radical one. In the first stance, this strategy emerges from the objective of following a “known conventional process” – this being a person, object or idea. But, in my experience, through the same process, what was (partially) known became almost “unknown,” as I had to locate my initial interests within a new set of emerging, unexpected relations and research possibilities. This brings us to a more recent elaboration of the concept, in the sense that the multi-sited field emerges from collaboration with which fieldwork begins. (Gallo, 2009, p. 89)

In line with Gallo and others, I urge multi-sited audience scholars to allow their initial object of inquiry, along with their site selection, to unfold and transform through their fieldwork and relationships with informants – or “paraethnographers,” to use a term by Marcus. An inability to recognize or adapt to the transformative modifications of

circulating social formations will result in the same sort of closure that the conceptual foreclosure of fieldsites engenders.

My Project: Multi-Sited? Multilocal? Or Just Multiperspectival?

During graduate school I became interested in the anthropology of reading and textual practices in the context of globalizing capitalism. More specifically, I became fascinated with the ways in which commercial “sponsors of literacy” increasingly structured and intervened in the reading experience. Deborah Brandt (1998) developed the concept sponsors of literacy to refer to any agents – personal or public, elite or nonelite – who “enable, support, teach and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress or withhold literacy – and gain advantage by it in some way” (p. 166). I have found her work extremely useful in considering how individual textual practices are tied to larger socioeconomic structures. Brandt’s work prompted me to ask: How have the practices and ideologies associated with particular sponsors of literacy impacted mundane textual practices such as reading, book buying, and bookselling? How have ordinary readers and print professionals understood and responded to these powerful cultural institutions?

With the growing popularity and ascendancy of Borders Group, Inc. and Barnes & Noble in the late 1990s, I began thinking about these questions in the context of mega-bookstores. Importantly, Borders and Barnes & Noble are not just companies in the business of selling books and CDs. They are powerful corporate sponsors of literacy that have in recent decades rivaled traditional ones – such as libraries and public schools – in guiding individuals on “what, when, why, and how” to read (Brandt, 2001). The conceptualization of reading that mega-bookstores propagate stands in contrast with the reading experiences institutionalized by traditional sponsors of literacy in the West. These sponsors taught the masses in their home country (Soltow & Stevens, 1981) and abroad (Forbes, 1986; Rooke, 1980) that reading was a serious activity, and they tamed unruly readers by imposing discipline on the body and on the mind. In general public schools, religious Christian publishers, and independent bookstores have traditionally encouraged slow, deliberate reading, reading as a process driven by the goals of spiritual enlightenment, intellectual development, and aesthetic awareness, not by sensory pleasures (Wright, 2005).

In the 1990s US mega-bookstores such as Borders and Barnes & Noble began to promote a conception of “good reading” and “good bookselling” that stood in contrast to the one propagated by traditional sponsors of literacy (Miller, 2006; Mitchell, 2006; Trager, 2005; Wright, 2005). In an effort to increase sales and attract consumers, Barnes & Noble and the Borders Group ushered in a social, sensual model of reading, which distanced itself from the didactic functions incorporated by the model of traditional sponsors of literacy. By the late 1990s Borders began

transporting this model of bookselling and this ideology of reading to the Asia-Pacific region. Borders opened its doors in Singapore on November 1997, during the maelstrom of the Asian financial crisis. With an initial stock of more than 120,000 book and 2,000 magazines, Borders became the source of another maelstrom in the book world. Its “social, sensual” model of bookselling was unequivocally viewed as the format innovator among consumers and print professionals (Trager-Bohley, 2010).

My first endeavor in exploring how social and sensual models of bookselling intervene in everyday reading practices took place in a Borders bookstore located in a Midwestern university town in the United States. There I conducted a single-sited ethnographic study that entailed in-depth interviews, participant observation, and systematic participant observation. After conducting interviews and engaging in participant observation for one year, I decided to systematically document and analyze the café reading that occurred in the store. So I recorded the readers’ activities on a reader profile sheet. The time frame was one week, from nine o’clock in the morning to eleven o’clock in the evening each day.

The reader profile sheet was designed to help me assess reading practices and habits, including reading absorption level. I noted, for example, how many books, magazines, and newspapers readers brought to their table. I documented the types of material they read. I documented how many reading breaks they took. I recorded whether they read alone or with others. And I timed how long for they read. On the basis of these profile sheets and of my other fieldwork, I discovered that a large percentage of these café readers “inhabited,” to use a term by Fuss (1989), many of the contemporary reading practices, including hyper-reading breaks, genre blurring, and manic skimming, that mega-bookstore promote to increase consumption.

Through interviews and participant observation, I discovered that even the self-defined serious readers in the café, who shared a history of being closely affiliated with traditional sponsors of reading (that is, libraries, universities, and literary critics), had adopted many of the above practices. I found their responses to the reading environment constructed by Borders significant because it provided some insight into the socializing potential of mega-bookstores as contemporary sponsors of literacy. In my findings, I argued that Borders had intervened in the way in which these individuals came to understand and practice reading.

Though some of my informants, namely the more serious readers, characterized the reading culture at Borders as undisciplined when comparing it to that of libraries, for example, the environment still seemed pretty orderly, to judge by my Singaporean friend’s account of the “chaotic” scene that marked the Borders bookstore in her home country. Her report encouraged me to read more, among other factors, about some of the controversies, confusion, and questions that accompanied Borders’ transnational expansion in the late 1990s.

Informed by my research in the United States, I became interested in the way in which Borders Group and other transnational booksellers such as the Japanese-based Kinokuniya emerged as global sponsors of literacy in Singapore and elsewhere during

the late twentieth century. At this time, the internationalization of transnational booksellers and of the practices they encouraged had not been the subject of a focused research. To pursue this topic, I knew that my research would have to take a transnational turn. A multi-sited project began to emerge. But where does one begin? At the time when I was designing my study, Borders had more than two dozen international stores in five different countries. The question of how to select the initial fieldsite is a common concern among multi-sited ethnographers, who are often attempting to follow an object that is located geographically or conceptually in multiple sites (Falzon, 2009). Eventually, on the basis of several conceptual and practical factors, I chose to commence my transnational fieldwork in Singapore.

To begin, Borders Singapore was the corporation's first international store, and I thought it would be interesting and revealing to study this business prototype. Second, I thought the cultural context of Borders Singapore would provide a greater contrast with my single-sited study in the United States than the other (mostly Western) international Borders stores would. Though I was pursuing an initial fieldsite that was culturally and politically very different from my former fieldsite, I also sought to do research in a country in which English was spoken by the majority of its citizens. As an initial fieldsite, Borders Singapore met this condition. Finally I was drawn to do research in Singapore because of the country's multicultural diversity and geographical proximity to other international Borders stores. With a limited budget and a one-year time frame, I thought these variables would afford me some flexibility in exploring the multiple and diverse cultural sites that might unfold during my fieldwork. In general, I tried to pick an initial fieldsite that blended multi-sited opportunities with the feasibility concerns of doing a project abroad.

During my year in Singapore (2005–2006), a former British colony that is now an island nation-state in Southeast Asia with a population of more than 4 million, I conducted open-ended interviews with more than 80 individuals associated with Singapore's print culture, including publishers, writers, librarians, booksellers, everyday readers, and government officials. In addition to the in-depth interviews, I conducted five focus groups with individuals associated with various sectors of a print culture (e.g., Malay librarians and Readasia book club members). In Singapore I tried to go to as many book and cultural activities as possible. To triangulate my interviews and participant observation data, I distributed a five-page survey concerning reading and textual practices to 235 undergraduate students enrolled at the National University of Singapore.

While my research in the United States involved "studying sideways" and "studying up" in a single place-based site, my research in Singapore required me to study "up," "down," and "sideways," in virtual and physical space, while considering the complex ways in which "audiences" participate in and/or intersect with a web of social actors (producers, distributors, journalists, and the government) in the production, consumption, and reception of transnational media (Nader, 1972; Hannerz, 1998, 2004). While initially I had only planned to interview print professionals and consumers associated with Singapore's English print cultures, eventually I broadened my informant pool so as to include professionals and consumers associated with Singapore's Chinese, Malay,

and Tamil book sectors. This unexpected expansion of sites was triggered by several field opportunities that opened up through my meeting new informants – who became paraethnographers – associated with these minority print cultures.

I classify my research in Singapore (not just my geographical move to Singapore from the United States) as multi-sited, and not just multilocal, because of the cultural differences that marked each site. As others have noted, a site or field doesn't necessarily have to be a geographical place involving a sojourn to two or more countries (Falzon, 2005; Gallo, 2009). Of this, Mark-Anthony Falzon asserts: "It seems that multi-sitedness actually means not just sites, but spatialized (cultural) differences – it is not important how many and how distant sites are, what matters is that they are different" (2005, p. 13). I would also contend that my project on global sponsors of literacy is best defined as multi-sited rather than multiperspectival, because it goes beyond offering diverse perspectives from one site about a set social formation. It examines various perspectives found in multiple and diverse sites about mobile, transformative social formations.

Drawing on my fieldwork in the United States and Singapore, I will now explore four overlapping elements embedded in multi-sited ethnographies that encourage surprise, productive discomfort, and a flexible research imaginary.

The Diffusion, Modification, and Rejection of Borders' Model of Bookselling

Dimension One: The Unexpected Connections and Disjunctions Discovered Through Tracking

During my first few weeks in Singapore, I spent much of my time observing the reading and social scenes that occurred in the 32,000-square-foot Borders bookstore on Wheelock Place, off Orchard Road, the posh shopping district in Singapore. I took notes throughout the store – in the jungle of the children's section, in the cruising zone by the magazines, and in the *al fresco* Borders Bistro. Given my interest in tracking the internationalization and diffusion of Borders' social, sensual model of reading, I was particularly eager to discover the ways in which the store's layout, clientele, title selection, and social practices were similar to and different from those found in the Borders store that I had previously examined. Early on in my participant observation of Borders, I became aware of one significant difference between its bistro and the Borders café that I had observed in the United States. An excerpt from my fieldnotes offers these observations:

While I was drinking my iced coffee in the Borders Bistro, I noticed that more people were drinking Tiger Beer than sipping cappuccinos or tea. It was a Friday night at 5 p.m.; the scene was lively and loud. There was little serious reading going on. In fact,

there wasn't one bookworm poring through a stack of books. I didn't see any tables loaded down with a pile of magazines or books. What a contrast to the "study hall atmosphere" that often marks the Borders in [name of researcher's hometown]. After talking with my waitress about the festive atmosphere, I found out that customers here were not allowed to bring unpurchased magazines into the bistro. Hence no stack of books.

While Borders Group Inc. attempts to construct a social, sensual model of reading in all of its stores, it adapts and modifies its format to ensure financial success. Borders' decision to prohibit unpurchased print material in its bistro was, in part, a preemptive move to curb potentially destructive behavior that might reduce store spending. This policy was a major deviation from the bookseller's standard operating procedure in the United States, where its stores encourage patrons to take unpaid material into the cafés. Borders' decision to prohibit newspaper browsing in its Singapore shop was another departure from corporate standards. Collectively, these differences and others contributed to reading environments distinguishable from those that I observed and documented in the United States (Trager, 2005).

The disciplinary signs throughout the Borders store in Singapore were also in contrast to the store environment that I observed in the United States. In the Singapore store, customers were barraged with "dos and don'ts" signs such as:

For the safety and shopping ease of our customers. Please keep the aisle floors clear.
We invite you to browse and enjoy in the seating areas provided throughout the stores.

Despite its explicit disciplinary measures, Borders Singapore still held onto its reputation as a social, cool, liberal hangout place. In interviews and focus groups with young middle-class and upper-class consumers, Borders was often described as "funky," "hip," and "fun" with the "latest blockbuster books." For many educated and affluent Singaporeans, Borders constituted a spatial conduit for the articulation and performance of their cosmopolitan identity or global persona. In regard to this motivation, consider the following comment from a male Singaporean Malay reader in my Wardah Books (English Islamic Bookstore) focus group: "People are enjoying this moment. They can go to a huge bookstore like Borders in between shopping and going to a movie. And they can feel like they are a part of this global culture." In news accounts and political speeches, Borders and other transnational booksellers in Singapore were equated with the global and the modern, while local bookstores were critiqued as provincial. The majority of booksellers in Singapore modified their models to various degrees, in response to Borders' initial format innovations, as the following headline in *The Straits Times* highlights: "Times [the Bookshop] revamps to draw Borders' crowd" (Kerk, 2002).

During my fieldwork, several of the booksellers whom I interviewed conceded that they had spent time at Borders in an attempt to understand the success of its corporate model. In regard to this, a male Chinese Singaporean owner of a used

bookstore said: "One has to admit they [Borders] are successful. Our store is different, what we do is different, but I have learned a couple of things from them." While tracking the way in which Borders' social, sensual model of reading was being diffused, modified, and sometimes rejected by Singaporean booksellers, I met two former Borders employees who now own or work at an independent bookstore. They both asserted that the present stores in which they work are informed, in one way or another, by the knowledge and skills they acquired while working at Borders. Both stressed, however, the fundamental ways in which their current bookselling practices and philosophies differed (oftentimes quite intentionally) from Borders' model of bookselling.

After two years of work, Mu'Hsin left Borders to become a bookseller at an Islamic bookstore, Wardah Bookstore. In an interview, his boss pointed out several contributions that Mu'Hsin had made to his store, including the open display of books. Mu'Hsin and his boss wanted to capture some of the physical "attractiveness" that Borders embodies. Though they had few qualms with the social, sensual dimensions of Borders' model (minus a few menu items in the bistro), they thought it was missing another important "S" word: spiritual guidance. For Mu'Hsin, bookselling is a calling, and it has the potential to play an important role in spiritual development. For this reason Mu'Hsin didn't approve of Borders' "fast-food approach" to bookselling, in which booksellers seldom seek to understand a reader's knowledge and spiritual base. At Wardah booksellers are expected to offer book recommendations that are in harmony with their customers' "spiritual level."

Kenny Leck was once a shining star at the Borders bookstore in Singapore, and he even has an "employee of the month" certificate to prove it. But, a few years into his job, he became dissatisfied with the corporate culture of the store, and his performance began to decline in the eyes of his supervisor. Eventually he was fired from Borders. But this termination actually inspired Kenny to fulfill his dream of owning a bookstore that "would include all the things I liked about Borders and exclude the things I didn't [like]." Books Actually, a quirky store that specializes in literature, is the manifestation of Kenny's dream. A large sign in the middle of his store captures one of his dissatisfactions with Borders' model of reading. In big black print, the sign reads: Books Actually Worth Reading. And it is a critique of Borders on the grounds that the latter carries, in his opinion, too many bestsellers. Though Kenny has problems with some dimensions of Borders' corporate model, he admits: "I learned a lot there, and some of the things I did there, I do here [such as author signings]."

In line with the body of literature on "local entrepreneurs" and globalization (Martin-Barbero, 1993; Skalli, 2006), my oral histories with Mu'Hsin and Kenny demonstrate the powerful role that local actors play in driving global forces and local variation forward. These former Borders employees are neither victims nor heroes in any sort of stale global-local audience study plot. They are just entrepreneurs/workers who have tried to capitalize on the "local" and "global" resources at their disposal, within an evolving cultural context full of "local" and "global" constraints. Their stories illustrate some of the unexpected connections and disjunctions I made

while tracking the circulation of Borders' social, sensual model of bookselling transnationally and multilocally.

Dimension Two: Complicit Informants as Site Generators

During my in-depth interview with Kenny Leck (see above, p. 69), Enoch Ng Kwang Cheng, publisher of Firstfruits, walked into Books Actually. I recognized him from the Singapore Writers' Festival and other book events. While Kenny and I continued our talk, Enoch displayed several of his new titles in front of the store. Enoch and Kenny had become friends through their mutual interest in promoting Singaporean literature. After hearing more about my project, Enoch insisted that I should spend more time considering non-English-based print cultures in Singapore, specifically the Chinese reading/print cultures. He believed that the arrival of transnational booksellers in Singapore had also affected this sector. At first I resisted slightly: "The problem is that I don't know Mandarin," I said. Convinced that non-English-based bookstores were an important area to explore, Enoch walked me down to Bras Basah Complex (Book City), introduced me to some Chinese booksellers, and helped me conduct and translate a couple of interviews.

Though I felt some anxiety and momentary discomfort walking into these Bras Basah shops, unprepared as I was for these unexpected interviews, the information that I gathered through my fieldwork on Chinese booksellers revealed an important and surprising disjuncture. Most Chinese booksellers asserted that their stores and their activities had not been affected by the arrival of Borders' social, sensual model of bookselling. Of this, Yeng Pway Ngon, owner of Grassroots Book Room, said in our interview (translated by Enoch): "Borders has not affected us [Chinese booksellers] but Kino has, because Chinese students go there now." Chinese booksellers did not try to emulate Borders' model of reading and bookselling. In fact, several took pride in distinguishing their stores from it. Some Chinese booksellers did, however, view the Japanese-based bookstore, Kinokuniya, as a model to emulate because of its success and ability to preserve its Asian identity.

I think my collaboration with Enoch illustrates the complicit relationships that often mark multi-sited ethnography. Though these relationships can certainly exist in a single-sited audience study, they are more common and intense in multi-sited ethnography due to the various dynamics of this approach (Falzon, 2009; Gustavson & Cytrynbaum, 2003; Marcus, 1995, 2009), which include the basic realization that a researcher cannot be an expert in every potential site that unfolds. Consequently she must rely more heavily on her informants and on their knowledge of sites. Gustavson and Cytrynbaum (2003) contend that the relational dynamics in multi-sited ethnography push the researcher to multiple sites. I agree. And in this way informants become "site generators." With more sites come more topics, and diverse subjects that may surprise the researcher. In turn, these surprises, as illustrated through my encounter with Enoch, can lead to fruitful connections or disconnections.

A former reporter for *The Straits Times* was another of my informants who became a site generator. Through her I learned that the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore drew on Borders' social, sensual model of reading in revamping the NLB and a few of its other branches. Though I had not originally planned on spending much time researching this library or its governing body, I chose to embrace a flexible research imaginary, wherein the NLB became a key site where I explored the circulation of Borders' corporate model. Through interviews with NLB members and others, I discovered that, soon after Borders arrived in Singapore, the visitorship rate at the National Library dropped. Of this, one NLB manager said: "When Borders came in, my senior quite openly said we are competing with Borders. So we adopted Borders' strategy by repacking the look and the feel of the library."

The NLB attempted to compete with Borders through emulation. "Borders [Bookstore] was used as a model for emulation, as it was successful in bringing people in and spending their discretionary spare time. By looking at how Borders displayed its books and created the 'cool' look, we [learned] from them," said former NLB Chief Executive N. Varaprasad. To emulate and compete with Borders, the NLB needed to know the specific areas in which it lagged behind its market competitor. Therefore the corporate planning division of the NLB conducted a market competitor analysis that positioned Borders as its market challenger. On the basis of the results and implications of this study, the NLB borrowed Borders' marketing concept of "the third place," along with other lifestyle retailing techniques from this commercial sponsor of literacy.

At many levels, the NLB's efforts "to revitalize the image of the public libraries and to debunk the stereotype of libraries as old, unfriendly and uninteresting" were highly successful (Library 2000, 1994, pp. 9–10). Clearly the NLB's appropriation of marketing and retailing techniques practiced by Borders bookstore and other mega-bookstores helped the NLB achieve its successful makeover. But it appears that there have been some unexpected consequences connected to this model emulation.

In a 2006 press release, the NLB reported that "[it had] seen an alarming three-fold in the number of forum letters to the newspapers about the lack of library etiquette among library users." While doing fieldwork in various libraries in Singapore, I heard numerous complaints from customers and patrons about bad library etiquette. During my focus group with Malay librarians, one woman said that "Borders-like behavior" such as "talking on the phone" and not returning books was on the rise. The following confessional comment, made by one library patron – MoMo – illustrates the sort of behavior the librarian was referencing: "I don't usually put back the magazines. Are you supposed to? I've seen others leave them on the table."

Through further fieldwork, I eventually concluded that the third-place brand and lifestyle practices that the NLB library adopted were embedded in Western capitalist habits and had corresponding ideological underpinnings, which triggered the "customer-oriented" ("Borders-like") behavior that some Singaporeans, especially the elderly, deemed "bad." Certainly the NLB's strategy of co-opting consumer culture to renew itself and to compete with transnational actors such as Borders

confirms findings in other studies, which underscore the fallacy of simplistic audience studies and political economy-based analyses that equate the local with “stasis” and the global with “dynamic change” (Smith, 2001, p. 157; Chong, 2003).

Importantly, the NLB’s version of the third place was introduced to and experienced by some segments of the local population such as disadvantaged Singaporeans, who probably would not have entered the Borders bookstore. In this way the NLB served as an important cultural mediator between local and global forces. While the NLB’s appropriation of Borders’ third-place brand demonstrates the creativity and resourcefulness of local players, it also demonstrates the constraints these agents face in controlling diffused models and concepts. Though transnational models, concepts, and practices have become dislocated from their geographical roots, they are not unmarked by their origin. My identification of the transformative modification of Borders’ social, sensual model of bookselling – as it moved through various nodes in Singapore such as the National Public Library – would not have been possible without the help of my complicit informants or site generators, as I have come to call them.

Competing Discourses, Ideologies and Conflicts Concerning Borders’ Practices

Dimension Three: Increased Perspectives Produce “Messy” Narratives

In tracing the circulation of Borders’ social, sensual model of bookselling from the United States to Singapore and then to various sites within this island nation, I was frequently exposed to competing discourses, ideologies, and conflicts concerning the reading and the social practices that this sponsor of literacy encouraged.

When the Borders bookstore opened its doors in Singapore, many local booksellers still encased their print merchandise in shrinkwrap. But Borders laid all of its books and magazines naked on the shelf and ushered in an age of unbridled browsing in this equatorial island. Since the 1990s, browsing has been an integral aspect of Borders’ “social, sensual model” of bookselling – one that helps yield an intense, experiential (“hands-on”) shopping experience for consumers (Trager, 2005). A number of Singaporean consumers, however, handled Borders’ printed material in a fashion different from what this self-avowed “leading global book seller” expected or desired.

For almost a decade, various social agents – including publishers, booksellers, “good patrons,” and newspaper editors – censured “rough book browsers” at Borders for dog-earring magazines, clogging book aisles and failing to return magazines where they belong (Trager-Bohley, 2011). In many cases, the practices and discourses surrounding the browsing debacle at Borders became “boundary drawing” activities that divided “good patrons” from “bad patrons” (Bauman, 1992, p. 677). But the more

perspectives I gathered on the browsing controversy, the more layered and tangled the story became.

One representative of an international publishing house in Singapore told me in an interview: "I don't think they [Borders] understood the psyche of Singaporean consumers; they didn't understand their conception of browsing at all." For this publisher and a few others, manic browsing at Borders stemmed from a particular psychological attitude toward shopping that the general population of Singaporean consumers seemed to embrace. Several Borders store employees, however, expressed a more specific, concrete theory. They argued that much of the wild browsing and "bad" book behavior at Borders took place in the children's section of the store, where some adult Singaporeans allowed their children to run about unattended. A few customers blamed the browsing debacle on Borders' interior design and on its "desire-to-be-different" approach to bookselling.

From the beginning of the Borders' "browsing debacle," editors from *The Straits Times* – Singapore's partially government-owned newspaper – made vague references that implicated their unrefined countrymen as the browsing offenders, even though the majority of patrons at Borders Singapore have always been middle- and upper-class cosmopolitans and expatriates (Trager-Bohley, 2011). Most of these journalists clearly put their editorial weight behind the global bookseller and positioned it as a positive "foreign talent." Here is but one example:

For all the advancements we have made in other areas, it looks like the civic consciousness department is non-existent. Unfortunately for Borders, it is light years ahead of the local yokel. [. . .] Please, you guilty ones out there, don't abuse this system and spoil it for the rest of us. [. . .] It would be good to be known for being a gracious and dignified race together with all our achievements rather than [. . .] a selfish, unrefined bunch. (Editorial by Cheong, 1997)

In newspapers, online, and in my interviews, many cosmopolitans who defended Borders echoed *The Straits Times* pro-globalization, pro-transnational corporation argument. Similarly to *The Straits Times* editors, a large number of these Borders patrons also used "otherizing" language when they criticized browsing offenders, in an effort to affirm their cosmopolitan identity through negation and to position themselves as arbiters of proper behavior and etiquette. Though many of the discourses surrounding the browsing controversy of Borders intersected with and seemed informed by a larger hegemonic discourse propagated by *The Straits Times* and the People's Action Party, a few discursive formations departed from these influences; these included the "kiasu book browsing theory," which will be discussed in the next section.

While the average reader may view book browsing as a mundane act, my research reveals the way in which this social practice became entangled in competing conceptions of reading, bookselling, shopping, and cultural values. Moreover, the discourses that spawned from "bad book browsing practices" became a "fertile ground for the reworking and reassertion of essentialist stereotypes" (Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008,

p. 668), including class and ethnic ones. However, I didn't discover this dynamic until I began to seek "outside" perspectives on the problem in unexpected, non-place-based sites. I believe that the book browsing debacle at Borders Singapore was inherently messy because it involved tracking a mobile and transformative social formation (in other words a thing, a practice, and multiple discourses) through a web of social actors who occupied different and competing positions along the global-local faultline.

Dimension Four: Unorthodox and Unplanned Sites Can Yield and Support Insightful Research Data

Audience studies scholars who track moving social formations among multiple and unexpected sites that cross-cut dichotomies such as the "local" and the "global" are inevitably going to find themselves, at one point or another, inhabiting an outsider position. While this stance is beset with challenges such as fostering informant trust, the productive discomfort that often marks it yields intellectual surprises that push the scholar to review earlier observations, theories, and fieldnotes in light of new findings.

In Singapore, my outsider position as an *ang mo* ("Caucasian person") had an impact on the multiple sites where I researched and on the relationships that I had with my informants. At times, my positionality as well as that of my informants affected the topics broached and explored during interviews, focus groups, and casual conversations. In general, Singaporeans are reluctant to discuss local politics and race/ethnicity issues in public. They are doubly cautious about examining these topics with outsiders. Though some of my informants did – guardedly – discuss race issues with me, their reluctance to do so prompted me to explore the issue of race, reading, and bookstores elsewhere. One day I stumbled upon a couple of websites where Singaporeans did open up about this topic. To my surprise, I came to regard one of these websites as a fieldsite.

Several of my informants, as well as multiple web posters on soc.culture.singapore, asserted or suggested that the browsing problems at Borders could be traced to the so-called "kiasu/kiasi offender."

ASEAN OBSERVER: When they [Borders] started this new "liberal" bookshop I was certain it was a matter of time before S'poreans showed themselves so kiasu, thick-skinned and selfish that even Borders would have to impose some order. I'm just wondering when they'll have to wrap up all of their books like the other bookshops have had to do.
(soc.culture.singapore poster)

Hwang, Ang, and Francesco (2002) have defined kiasu as an "obsessive concern with getting the most out of every transaction and a desire to get ahead of others." While Singaporean Chinese frequently banter the word around in a playful manner to poke fun at one another, it can be an ethnicized, charged word when used by others in a disparaging manner. Consequently, non-Chinese Singaporeans hesitate to accuse

Chinese Singaporeans of embodying this trait. During my fieldwork in Singapore, however, several Singaporean Indians, Singaporean Malays, and expatriates suggested that kiasu Chinese patrons were the main browsing culprits.

Although many of my interview and focus group informants initiated the topic of kiasuism, they appeared somewhat hesitant about discussing directly with me the link between ethnicity, kiasuism, and bad browsing. Online, however, this connection was explicitly discussed and quickly became emotionally charged and fueled by racism. A few bookstore patrons viewed the bad behavior at Borders as another example of the pushy, “get ahead,” kiasu attitude that marked the privileged majority ethnic group of Singapore ethnic Chinese. Consider the following exchange on soc.culture.singapore in 2002.

- APU NEH NEH: The disgusting habit of the Chinese of reserving seats can best be seen at Borders Bookstore. You will see the Chinese people take piles of books and bring them to the sofa to read the books for hours. They usually do this in pairs. When one needs to go to the toilet they will put the books on the sofa and their partner will “guard” the seat for them. Sometimes they will be gone for 15 mins to 30 mins and later come back with a new set of books. You will never see a Malay or Indian indulging in such anti-social behavior. Now it has almost become a culture at Borders.
- KNONENEH: Nothing new. Indians and other races do that too. Just another of your racist anti-Chinese posts.
- CHENG THNG: I go to Borders quite often and can verify that most of the borrowers are non-Malaysians and non-Indians. I asked a Malay colleague why and she tells me there are no Malay books there.

This charged discourse is an example of how explicit and implicit discourses about ethnicity in Singapore sometimes bubble up around seemingly ordinary acts such as browsing because the government stifles frank discussions on these topics. By tracking various permutations of the Borders browsing conflict as they unfolded in multiple (and sometimes unexpected) sites (in print, online, and in interviews), among a variety of agents (Borders employees, publishers, customers, and editors), for almost a decade, intertextual movements and disjunctures were discovered that provide insight into the interpenetration of cultural and textual practices such as reading and bookselling. Many of these connections and disconnections would not have been discovered in traditional, place-based, bounded fieldsites.

Conclusion

At this point in time, the status of multi-sited ethnographies in media studies in general and in audience studies specifically is still murky and unclear. While an increasing number of researchers in this present wave of media studies are experimenting

with multi-sited ethnography, there have been few sustained field-based dialogues about the rationale, proposed objectives, and political/ethical stakes of multi-sited ethnography. Several scholars who have conducted multi-sited or multi-sited(esque) media ethnographies have deliberately chosen alternative names to label their work. This fragmentation has made assessing the progress and innovations of this methodology difficult. This is an unfortunate situation, because, as this chapter attempted to illustrate, multi-sited ethnography has the potential to reinvigorate audience studies through its embedded elements of surprise, namely (1) its tracking strategies; (2) its emphasis on complicitous relationship; (3) its greater exposure to multiple perspectives, including multi-level power dynamics; and (4) its unbounded, open-ended notions of the field, which are not limited or constrained by place.

Surprise is an emotion that can be both pleasurable and unsettling to an ethnographer. It is the outcome of the unexpected. This unpredictability often engenders productive discomfort that drives a researcher to explore ideas and associations hitherto not anticipated, or seemingly disconnected. In this way surprise is an important intellectual tool in the field. Its value is in interrupting and perhaps displacing pre-determined research agendas and objects of inquiry. This disruption often destabilizes ethnographic narratives, offering new, “messy” layers of possibilities and questions about social formations and their conceptual offshoots. When embraced, the element of surprise may lead to a constructive process in which the ethnographer interrogates previous sites, being informed by her or his knowledge of new ones.

Though ethnographic surprises tend to undermine the unity and stability of a project, they also enlarge a researcher’s capacity to make new meaning while deepening and extending previous arguments and theories. In an age of increasingly “globalized audiences,” surprise is a dynamic element connected to the practice of doing multi-sited work, because the nature of social formations and of their conceptual offshoots will inevitably transform and change as they move through tangled and unexpected networks.

Drawing on ethnographic examples, this chapter has shown that, if media researchers embrace a flexible research imaginary that is open to surprise, modification, and the productive discomfort that comes with the unknown, multi-sited ethnography has the potential to generate greater insights into new modes of translocal social experiences and everyday life in a mediatized, globalized world than a single-sited audience/media study or a political economy-based analysis would. Moreover, its insights are more likely than those of single-sited ethnography to be multilayered in terms of power dynamics and social relationships.

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Studying Audiences with Sense-Making Methodology

CarrieLynn D. Reinhard and Brenda Dervin

ABSTRACT

The field of audience or media reception studies is concerned with questions of what, when, where, how, and why people engage with media products. Across divergent fields of inquiry, research has focused on understanding how aspects of the media product, the person consuming the product, and the situation impact outcomes of reception. Amid the various options available for defining the audience and for labeling audiences on the basis of the media products they engage with, at the core of any concept of the audience are human beings attempting to make sense of their everyday lives. Woven into the fabric of people's everyday lives, the media are an integral part of audiences' attempts to make sense of the different worlds they inhabit. Dervin's sense-making methodology provides a theoretical and methodological approach to understanding audiences at the evolving time-space intersections of individual, collective, and situated dimensions. This methodology allows scholars to understand human beings' sense-making processes in the midst of contexts that constitute their daily lives, both as individuals and as parts of a collective. The chapter discusses examples of research that use the sense-making approach to study audiences' modes of "engaging" with gendered media and with virtual worlds in order to illustrate how knowledge of audiences gained via this methodology can enrich the existing work on media audiences.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Introduction

The primary goal of this chapter is to outline an intellectual and practical approach for studying audience/user reception that is informed by Brenda Dervin's sense-making methodology (abbreviated as SMM). The chapter discusses research drawn from reception studies in order to demonstrate current and potential applications of the research approach we describe here. Our main purpose is to illuminate the conceptual contours of SMM's potential usefulness for reception studies that strive to be holistic and authentic; hence the chapter refers briefly to relevant empirical projects, but it does not report comprehensively on their research results *per se*. Throughout the chapter we use research terminology – including such phrases as “life-facing,” “engaging,” and “step-taking” – drawn from and informed by the SMM approach (Dervin, 2008; Dervin & Foreman-Wernet, 2003).

SMM is a philosophically informed methodological approach that is based on a metaphorical conceptualization of human sense-making designed for systematic application to research design, data collection, and analysis. On the basis of a core assumption that human life-facing involves taking steps (material and phenomenological) across situated conditions that are, at least in part, discontinuous, SMM's metaphor is applied methodologically by directing research attention to how humans (e.g., audiences/users) take situated material and phenomenological sense-making steps, bridging gaps in time and space and arriving at outcomes that form the situated entries for the next moments in time-space. The entire framework is assumed to be metaphorically epistemological; it is not intended to be, in itself, ontological, even though, as a research tool, it is designed to attend to what is ontologically “real” for sense-makers. In our discussion we focus on how we have applied SMM to study those times and spaces where a person – the audience/user – has engaged with some media product: we refer to such times and spaces as media reception situations.

We position the focus on media reception situations as a subset of audience and reception studies. In particular, we are not discussing what constitutes the “audience” or the “user,” nor are we interested in the domestication of media products into the spheres of people's everyday lives. Instead we concentrate on the reception processes associated with engaging with media products. We define reception processes as those internal and external behaviors associated with decoding and recoding media technologies and mediated content. Thus our study of media reception situations is interested in understanding the internal and external behaviors that occur when one is engaging with media products.

To begin our discussion of how we have studied media reception situations, we will first illustrate what we see as the complexities of media reception situations by locating various factors that have historically been posited in literatures as potentially influencing media reception outcomes. We group these factors into three main categories that we conceptualize as constituting the media reception situation. These foci are:

- on the media product, the content and technology features;
- on the person, sociodemographic and psychographic characteristics;
- on the context of use, the situation, and sense-making processes.

Our assumption is that most theorizing to date has focused on the nature of the media product, the nature of the person, and, to a lesser extent, the nature of the context of use. Usually the context of use and the media reception situation have been treated as synonymous and unitary. This contrasts with how SMM implements an assumption of situationality: the idea is that events seen as unitary by outsiders can be systematically examined from the perspective of actors and how they see themselves as moving through the events in terms of material and phenomenological step-takings; these moves are sometimes informed by past habits and propensities, and sometimes by unique situations.

Our goal is to illustrate how we have used SMM in audience and reception studies to address all three contributing factors in a media reception situation through the “lens” of situated sense-making processes. To that end, we have employed SMM to inform the data collection and analysis of media reception situations.

In this chapter we present an outline of our definition of media reception as a situation of audience/user engaging with a media product; we discuss how various approaches have generally focused on some aspects of the media reception situation while at the same time pinpointing what we see as struggles; we discuss how we have made SMM assist in our understanding of media reception situations; and we conclude with case studies typical of the kind of studies we have been conducting.

Media Reception Situation

A number of different discourses have in some way dealt with the phenomena that constitute a media reception situation: an audience/user, a media product, and the contextual situation in which both are positioned. The differences across discourse communities often blind us to the fact that, at least sometimes, these communities are all pursuing reception studies when the term “reception” is used, as we use it, to focus on processes of engaging with media products. Far beyond media and communication studies, we find that in a wide array of discourse communities (e.g., political science, health education, legal studies, policy studies, art education, and management) there is growing interest in how audiences and users react to and engage with messages relayed through media products.

These scholarly treatments of “reception” have mostly pointed to two central entities: the person who is engaging with the media product; and the media product itself. Far fewer have explicitly included the contextual situation of reception in their formulations. Generally, however, it is fair to suggest that there is increasing agreement that media reception involves a social and historical situation in which an

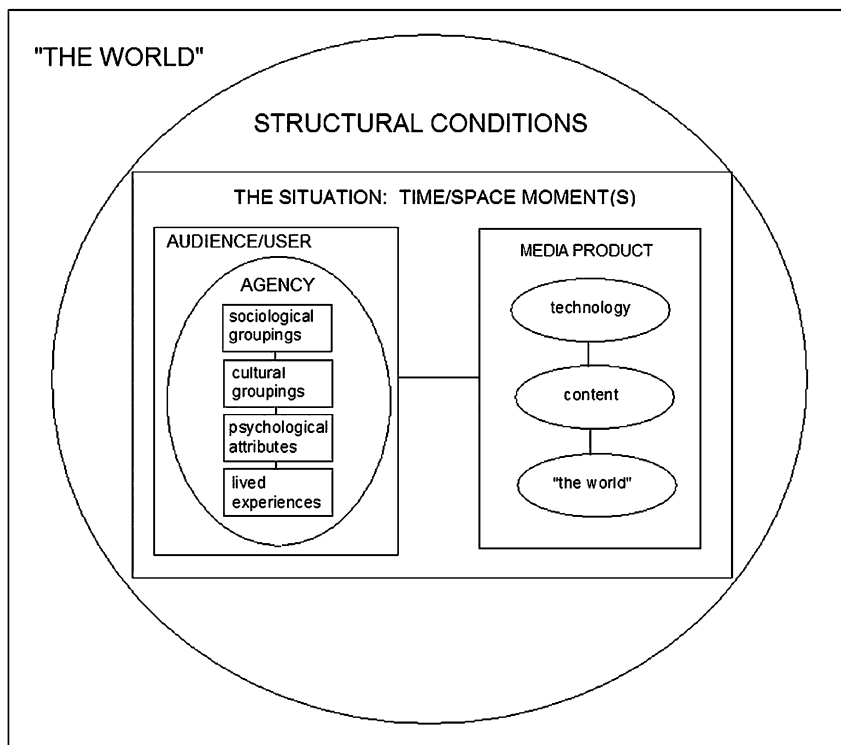


Figure 3.1 Illustration of media reception situation. *Source:* The figure as presented is informed by Richard Carter's "picturing language" (Dervin, 2003).

audience/user engages with a media product in the context of everyday life – and the latter includes the variety of ways in which everyday life situations and the world at large can impact the person's process of engaging. Drawing on the myriad literatures that have focused their attention on the audience reception process, we offer our own understanding of how these bodies of work converge to produce a "picture" of the media reception situation in Figure 3.1.

In the figure there are four main components: (a) "the world"; (b) the situation: time-space moment(s); (c) the audience/user; and (d) the media product. Each main component is ascribed either subparts or attributes to show what we assume is the interconnectedness of the components and the deep complexity of any given media reception situation.

(a) "THE WORLD" is a shorthand term applied to the combination of sociocultural, political-economic, and historical/material conditions in which the situation occurs, with potential for impacting both the audience/user and the media product through the internalization of "the world" before, during, and after the engaging. In this model "structural conditions" are assumed to be a constant attribute of "the world," although particular formations would vary across time-space.

(b) THE SITUATION – TIME–SPACE MOMENT(S) is a specific intersection of time–space moments that provides the contextual boundaries within which the audience/user physically and interpretatively interacts with the media product. The audience/user and the media product are pictured as having some kind of connection, producing the act of engaging, within any given time–space moment. Because time–space is assumed to be constantly moving, it is likewise assumed that these interconnections may vary across time–space.

(c) THE AUDIENCE/USER is conceptualized as possessing agency, the capacity to act physically and interpretatively. Agency is, in turn, pictured as potentially being enacted in instances where it is informed and/or impacted by lived experiences and/or by the various structural groupings to which society assigns humans membership and within which individual users may (or may not) implement their agency. These include sociological and cultural groups, as well as psychological attributes that the audience/user may or may not have and habits developed over time.

(d) THE MEDIA PRODUCT contains an interweaving of technological interface and content structures that potentially cue and constrain how the audience/user engages. Additionally, content is encoded within, and from the conditions of, “the world” in which it was created. We consider these constraints and affordances to be the media product’s parameters of engaging: the requirements imposed upon the audiences/users that potentially impact the quality of engaging with the media product.

This illustration is intended to reflect what we see as a fuller picture of the complexities of a media reception situation. In the next section we describe how various discourse communities have studied media reception situations primarily by focusing on one or two of the components in Figure 3.1.

Approaches to Researching Media Reception Situations

Various discourse communities have studied media reception situations to understand (a) what has led audiences to the moment of engaging; (b) what occurred during the engaging; (c) what resulted from the engaging; and (d) how (a) and (b) have impacted (c). Usually the different approaches emphasize different components of the media reception situation, regarded as expected predictors for the processes and outcomes of the engaging. Primary approaches that have researched media reception include studies of media effects, of uses and gratifications (U&G), of film reception, of human–computer interaction, of everyday life ethnography, and of decoding/encoding (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990; Schneiderman, Plaisant, Cohen, & Jacobs, 2009; Staiger, 2005).

Media effects studies has typically been concerned with identifying what, during a media engaging situation, leads to a specified outcome – such as being more violent

or sexually aggressive. Research has typically focused on measuring the amount and type of engaging with some predetermined content (e.g., violent films, pornography), and on attempting to find a correlation or a causal relationship between this kind of engaging and outcomes. *Uses and gratifications studies* (U&G) was developed within the media effects community in order to counter a tendency for media effects studies to assume that everyone exposed to the same content would be impacted in the same way (Reinhard & Dervin, 2009). Instead, U&G sought to understand what motivated the audience/user to engage with the media product, on the assumption that, by understanding this motivation, the researcher can better predict under what conditions exposure will result in some specified effect. The utilization of the U&G concept to understand media effects has led some to label this chiefly quantitative approach as “media uses and effects studies” (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990).

Film studies has traditionally focused on deconstructing film texts as a means of understanding film productions processes and authorial intentions. Questions about the moviegoer have been handled by spectator theories (Staiger, 2005), where the reception of the moviegoer is theorized to be dictated by some aspect of the filmic text. More recently, by drawing on cognitive psychology (Bordwell, 1989) and on German reception theory (Holub, 1984), increased emphasis has been placed on the meaning-making processes that occur when an audience/user engages with a filmic text. However, as with spectator theories, these new approaches have been largely theoretical, lacking empirical evidence with which to refute or substantiate claims.

Human-computer interaction (HCI) studies, also known as design studies or user studies, is largely concerned with issues of hardware usability and ergonomics. When the research is about a media product – and these encompass, chiefly, computer-based applications (e.g., electronic games, or particular software products) – HCI studies seeks to ascertain what about the media product helped or hindered the audience/user’s engaging (Schneiderman et al., 2009). Thus, a typical research approach has involved a laboratory session whereby audiences/users are exposed to media products and their reactions are recorded. As with media effects studies, the desire has been to understand what determines the outcome of the engaging, typically conceptualized as usability.

Everyday life ethnography studies and *decoding/encoding studies* have in common their roots in qualitative methodology and in critical/cultural-theoretical considerations. Both fields can be seen as concerned with issues similar to those researched in media uses and effects studies: chiefly their object is what leads audiences/users to engage with media products and what results. However, because of differences in research philosophies, these approaches have studied the media reception situation by focusing more on uncovering the agency of the audience/user and the role of media reception in everyday life. This emphasis includes lived experiences and material conditions of each person’s everyday lifeworld, as well as motivations and outcomes of engaging.

The primary difference between everyday life ethnographic studies and decoding/encoding studies has involved the methods used to study the process of engaging.

In ethnographic studies, various methods, such as in-depth interviews and participant observation, have been used to generate a map of the various interpretative and performative acts and material objects that are part of the media reception situation. In encoding/decoding studies, individual and group interviews have been conducted to understand what Hall (1993) described as the encoding of ideological positions into media products and the ways in which people decoded, or dealt with, these positions.

Unfortunately there is insufficient space here for a full accounting of these various discourses and of their theoretical and methodological considerations. In our view, all have made important advances, but each continues to struggle with particular aspects of media reception. What we see as a struggle relates to the particular focus of each approach on the media reception situation. We review each focus below as a “lens” for studying the media reception situation: each lens offers a partial glimpse into the situation and struggles to show a fuller picture. Our intention in this discussion is to extract what we see as general patterns. Clearly there is great variability and rich depth in the way different researchers approach their studies of audience/user media engaging. For our purposes here we bracket such variability in order to focus on major thrusts.

Approach 1: Focusing on Media Product Structures

Most approaches to studying reception emphasize the impact of various assumed structures on outcomes of media reception. Usually these impacts are assumed to be constant and predictive, both in qualitative and in quantitative research: such has been the case, historically, when the structure was a material object: the media product.

Across discourse communities, technological and content features of media products and the production practices and forces that determine them are assumed to cue and constrain the type of reception possible with that media product. For HCI the focus is on the interface and on how the technology creates certain parameters of engaging, or requirements on the physical and interpretative interactivity the audience/user must perform in order to engage with the media product. For media uses and effects, film, and encoding/decoding studies, the focus is on the content; this orientation may include a focus on the ideological positions of the world argued to be encoded into the content’s message. These ideological positions, for example, may extend to messages regarding what is appropriate or not for gender, class, and ethnicity relations. Whether the focus is on the content or on the technology, typically there are assumptions about what the outcome of the engaging would be, should the audience member engage with the media product, as is expected by those who designed and produced that product.

We do not argue against the presence and potential impact of such structures. The media product is a material object that, we assume, has been produced with the intended parameters for engaging, as well as with built-in ideological meanings, be

they intentional or unintentional. A videogame requires certain types of action on the part of the audience/user, which are different from the requirements placed upon the reader of a literary novel. These requirements impact the act of engaging with the media product; should the videogame and the literary novel have the same content and the same ideologically attached meanings, the interface could also potentially impact interpretation. Thus we assume that we cannot discuss media reception situations without appreciating the structural characteristics of the media product being engaged with in the situation.

However, to conceptualize the media product's "impact" on reception in a deterministic way presupposes that every engaging with a media product, from every audience/user, must produce the same outcome. Almost all the studies focusing on the impact of media products have tended to explain audience/user differences as not being due to the agency of the audience/user, and they did so by assuming that media structures are somehow internalized by audiences/users and that this is what predicts or explains media reception outcomes. Studies arising from the encoding/decoding approach provide somewhat more leeway, by assuming that individual differences in interpretation arise from internalized audience/user structures that drive the process of audience/user decoding of content (Hall, 1993). However, this assumption involves a struggle we discuss in the next section.

Approach 2: Focusing on Audience/User Structures

This approach to studying audience reception emphasizes the impact of structures that are assumed to be internalized by, and thus to become integral parts of, the audience/user of the media product. These audience/user structures are considered to reflect the internalized impact of audience memberships in socially defined groupings based on sociodemographic and/or psychographic categories. Sociological and cultural categories include such demographics as age, gender, or ethnicity, and psychographic categories include such traits as the need for cognition, internal-external control, or sensation-seeking.

Sociodemographic categories are groupings that reflect sociocultural and historical constructions of appropriate internal and external behaviors for individuals as based on socially accepted group membership categories. Usually these categories are imposed, as if audiences/users had no agency awareness of these memberships. In some work, explicit attention is placed on audiences/users as agents aware of their socially accepted group memberships. Most research, however, assumes that these group membership categories, recognized or otherwise, have a constant and unified impact. The internalization of external membership is assumed to occur through living from day to day in societies and cultures that define what constitutes membership in a particular subgroup.

Psychographic categories, used more extensively in media uses and effects studies, also rely, although less obviously, on externally imposed and socially accepted mem-

bership groups – a reliance that should be understood in terms of various psychological theories regarding personality traits and behavioral tendencies. These socially accepted conceptualizations are then used to explain audience/user media engagements. Psychographic categories are theorized as resulting from experiential learning and/or neurophysiologic ingrainings. Depending upon which theory the researcher subscribes to, the psychographic categories may be conceptualized as being originally internal, or as being external and then internalized during a person's life.

Thus studies that focus on audiences/users often predict that the impact of media engagements results from, or is related to, sociodemographic and psychographic groupings of traits; and they emphasize how an audience/user is positioned as a member of various externally defined groupings. Like the focus on the structures of media products, the focus on structures assumed to be internal(ized) by human beings usually presupposes that all the group members will respond in similar fashion to media products. The core assumption is that, if audiences/users share common traits, norms, and values deriving from their membership, then those audiences/users would be expected to react *en masse* in a particular way toward a particular media product. Differences in the outcome of media reception situations would be expected to be greatest between members of different groups rather than between members of the same group. This assumption is usually made both for approaches that study audience members as agents endowed with knowledge of their group membership position and for approaches that consider such membership to be unconscious and unarticulated.

Again, we do not argue that such internalized structures do not have potential connections with media engagements. The difficulty, however, is that the assumption of group uniformity in reception is rarely tested. More research is needed to understand the conditions under which group membership does matter in determining the outcome of media reception situations, and the conditions under which it does not; there may be more similarities within groups than between them.

Approach 3: Focusing on Situational Structures

The last of the “structures” in Figure 3.1 deals with specific aspects of the environment and of the context within which a situation occurs. This structural category is the least studied one. In those cases where it has been studied, the assumptions enacted have tended to be similar to those we described above for structures of the media product and the audience/user.

Typically, a study's focus on situation attempts to be the description of the context, not in terms of the evolving moments of the audience/user's experience, but in terms of how an external observer understands the situation. For example, the techniques of observation of everyday life ethnography detail the surroundings in which an engaging occurs, examining how these material conditions impact media reception. In media uses and effects and in HCI studies, the situation will sometimes be

employed as a between-subjects variable and the researcher will compare locations of engaging such as workplace versus home or public versus private.

In both qualitative and quantitative approaches to media reception, there has tended to be more empirical focus on generalized media engagements than on specific instances of engaging. It is our contention that asking audiences/users about general media engagements assumes that there is stability to media engagements; for example, an audience/user who watches a television serial will watch each new episode in a repetitive/habitual way. Because the usual research approach has been to assume stability, the potential variability within different media reception situations has been left unstudied. In essence, attempts to capture a stable average representation of media engagements elide differences among these engagements.

The above does not mean that researchers have not attempted to address specific instances of engagements. However, these attempts have usually been implemented in artificially constructed laboratory or experimental situations, where attention to audience/user interpretation is lacking. We argue that, in order to understand media reception more fully, we need to introduce a treatment of situation in terms of what we call “situationality”: the nature of the situation as engaged, interpretatively and materially, in the evolving step-takings.

Approach 4: Focusing on Sense-Making Processes

The last approach addresses the potentiality for agency, as depicted in Figure 3.1. Studies taking this approach consider the sense-making processes: internal and external behaviors that occur within the situation. In our view, this aspect of media reception situations is understudied. Most attempts generalize situations in unitary ways, as they are seen by outside observers. Few researchers have examined what we think will be a productive contribution to media reception studies – namely situated step-takings through media engagements.

Some approaches have considered agency in relation to structure(s). In fact uses and gratifications, encoding/decoding, and ethnographic studies developed as a reaction against conceptions of the passive audience/user being deterministically affected by the structures we discussed. However, such studies still resort, typically, to assuming that internal(ized) structures grounded in external ones, imposed by society and culture, are determining factors in explaining, understanding, and predicting outcomes (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990; Morley, 2006).

Again, we do not claim that structures do not potentially cue and constrain reception. We do argue, however, that there is something more that we need to understand: how the audience/user makes sense of these structural features, and the play of these structural features in given media reception situations. Our use of the term “play” here is deliberate in that, while there have been many rich attempts to examine audience/user enactments of structural features (of media, of societal memberships, and of contexts of use), very few have deliberately and theoretically allowed audience

sense-making to deem structural features irrelevant, or otherwise invisible. Further, few have examined how this “play” changes in character as audiences/users move through media reception situations.

Situated and evolving audience sense-making is, for us, the missing link in media reception studies. We argue that we cannot know how media products constrain and cue reception without attempting to understand audience/user sense-making of media product structures. Likewise, we argue that we cannot assume group membership as a determining factor, eliding personal, situated sense-making without examination of that sense-making. The lynchpin for us is the question: How do the audiences/users’ views of their everyday lives, as well as their acceptance of and struggles with membership categories, relate to the way they interpret the structural features of media products, so that there results what we, as researchers, study as media reception?

As a possible way to answer this question, we will now turn to how we have used Dervin’s SMM to (re)empower agency in order to conceptualize media engaging outcomes as resulting from situated sense-making processes.

Dervin’s Sense-Making Methodology (SMM)

SMM has allowed us to move further toward our goal of determining how a person makes sense of a situation of engaging with a media product in that it has allowed us to account for the audience/user’s interpretation of various structural features of a specific media product, of any group memberships, and of the context or environment in which the engaging occurs. In doing this accounting, we have been able to tease out how these sense-makings may or may not be important factors impacting the reception of the media product. What has allowed us to pursue this goal is our use of SMM as a methodological approach informing question formulation, data collection, and analysis.

SMM is an approach that has been in development and use for some 30 years. We describe it only briefly here, attending especially to those aspects that have most informed our address of media reception studies. Figure 3.2 below illustrates the central metaphor of SMM, which draws on a wide variety of philosophic sources (Dervin & Foreman-Wernet, 2003; Dervin & Naumer, 2009). Relying heavily on the work of Richard Carter (2003), SMM uses the idea of discontinuity or gap as a central concept in its methodological foundation. Gap is assumed to be a universal of the human condition: this time-space moment is not identical either to the preceding one or to the next. Time-space keeps moving. Hence the sense-maker is always conceptualized in SMM as moving, as never complete, and as never fully predetermined. SMM does allow for repetitious, habitual, constrained interpretations and behavior, but it does not assume these in advance.

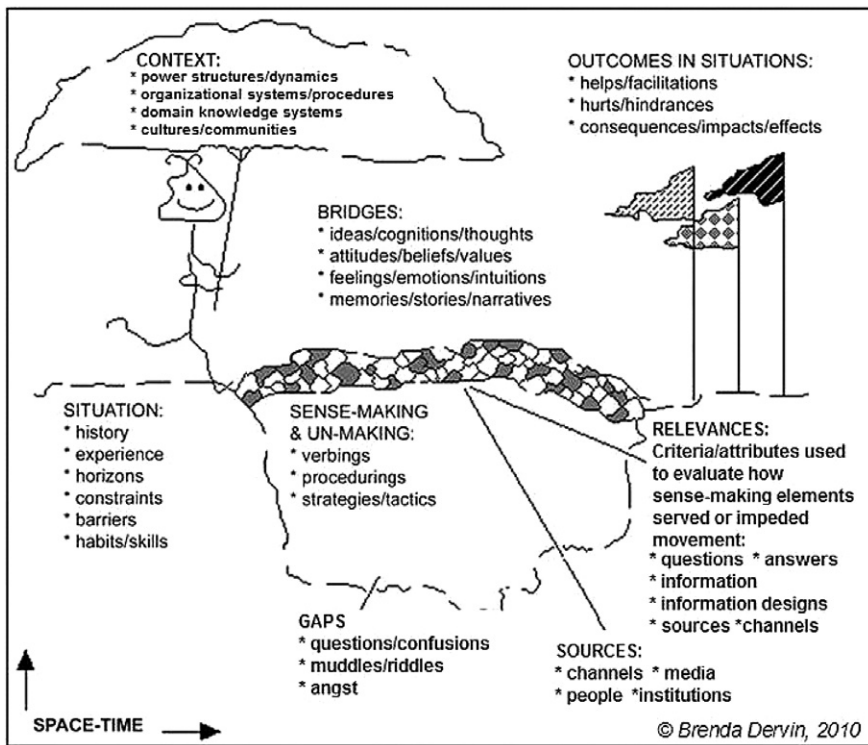


Figure 3.2 Dervin's sense-making methodology metaphor. © Brenda Dervin, 2010.

The focus on gap in SMM does not presuppose that people are constantly stopped by ontologically real gaps. Nor does SMM presuppose that every time-space moment is filled with riddles, questions, and confusions. Rather, methodologically, the discontinuity assumption allows us to attend to how audiences/users make sense as they move through the before, the during, and the after of their media engagements. In some of these movements there will be no questions asked, but only repetitions of thoughts, answers, and practices from the past. These repetitions are seen as bridges over the gap. In other such movements there will be abrupt stops and many accompanying questions. These question-askings and searches for answers are also seen as potential bridges. In other movements there will be confusions that never get resolved, and time passes creating a bridge that is constructed out of unanswered and maybe even unasked questions. Yet in other movements there will be emotional experiences, and they become the bridge.

The description above is intended to illustrate the nature of SMM, although space limitations do not allow us to capture all relevant nuances. SMM has been designed not as an ontological theory but as a tool for methodological guidance. In SMM the entire framework – what is called the sense-making methodology metaphor and is sometimes referred as “the SMM triangle” – is positioned as a metaphor. It is around

this metaphor that SMM develops a set of philosophically derived interviewing protocols, which have allowed us to address how audiences/users interpret the material and phenomenological aspects of their movements before, during, and after specific media reception situations.

An SMM interview is usually open-ended and highly structured. There is a repertoire of queries used to reflect SMM's philosophical assumptions about humans and human communicating activity (Dervin, 2008). The interview is structured so as to study human activity as being situated, as empowering the informant's interpretative experience, as understanding the informant's ever present potential struggles between agency and structure, and as always moving around and around and deeper and deeper into the informant's experience of the situation. SMM assumes that few humans come to question-answering situations that are fully articulated. There are assumed gaps among mind, spirit, heart, and body that require time for fuller articulation.

SMM interviews are always anchored by focusing on situations or events – time-space-bound moments of sense-making/sense-unmaking. A study could be interested in looking at the sense-making step-takings in just one situation, or at a series of situations that may or may not seem related to one another. Further, SMM interviewing protocols are designed to train interviewers in a new kind of listening. Interviewing is designed with a minimal imposition of researcher jargon – typically, the “nouns” of etic expertise – onto informants' experiential worlds. The goal of the SMM interview is to construct a space that facilitates and empowers informants to explain their worlds in their own terms and modes of sense-making. The SMM interview invites informants not only to describe their worlds, but to draw connections between things in their worlds – past, present, and future. As described below, SMM implements a repetitive circling of informant experiences. It may be said, by doing so, the SMM interview aims to enlist informants as fellow researchers and to empower them as theorists of their own worlds.

Across some 30 years of applications, a core set of SMM queries has been drawn from the philosophically informed SMM metaphor, and it has been positioned as constituting the essentials of an SMM interview. These queries, when appropriately adapted to particular cultural and language contexts, are considered to address universals of the human condition and the assumed mandate for humans to make and unmake sense through evolving and changing time-spaces. In the most recent formulation, these core SMM questions draw from the following array: What *questions, muddles, confusions* did you have? What *ideas, conclusions, thoughts* did you have? What *emotions, feelings* did you have? Was anything *helpful*? Was anything *hurtful or hindering*? If so, how? How did what was happening relate to your *past experiences*? How did what was happening relate to your *sense of self*? How did what was happening relate to your thoughts on *power* and how does it operate in the world around you? If you could wave a *magic wand*, what would you have changed?

In a process that Dervin labels “an archeological dig,” these core interviewing questions are applied multiple times in a given interview, and they are applied to the changing brackets of time-space. In this way SMM attempts to “surround” the situation as it

was experienced by the audience/user. The aim is to assist audiences/users to reach fuller recollections of how they saw what was happening in media reception situations at particular time–spaces, as well as before and after them, and of how they saw what was happening in those time–spaces as relating to other times and other spaces.

There is not sufficient room here to detail all the various SMM interviewing approaches; these are described elsewhere (Dervin, 2008). Across the 30 years, a number of studies have examined the media reception situation. A subsection of SMM-inspired studies have worked to map the sense-making processes in media reception situations by examining a variety of media products: Dworkin, Foreman-Wernet, and Dervin (1999) on TV news; Shields (1999) on advertisements; Spirek, Dervin, Nilan, and Martin (1999) on newspaper reading; Huesca and Dervin (2003) on hypertext versus non-hypertext; Foreman-Wernet and Dervin (2004) on elite arts and pop culture products; Reinhard (2008) on gendered media engagements; Reinhard and Dervin (2010) on virtual worlds; and Dervin and Song (2005) have employed a uses-and-gratifications analysis.

The next two sections present two case studies of reception research recently conducted by the senior author. Each case uses a different SMM interviewing approach. These two example applications of SMM to reception research aim to understand more fully how much agency and structure(s) are interwoven in media reception situations. The first case study focuses on gender as a sociocultural structure; the second, on technological interfaces as media products structures.

Case Study: Gender as Structure

One commonly used approach to SMM interviewing is the “life-line.” In this type of interview the informant is asked to recall a series of events that fit the criteria of the study’s research question. Time–space is made to cover the length of the informant’s entire life, or at least an extensive period of time. After chronological events have been listed, the informant is asked to select the ones that will be triangulated, which involves using the core set of SMM queries described above. Thus a series of situations from the person’s entire life-line are discussed. While the results yield a shallower dig of any one situation than alternative SMM interviewing approaches do, the naming of a series of events provides a looking-glass into the informant’s past and present life horizons and into how each given event fits into that whole.

This approach to interviewing was used in Reinhard’s (2008) dissertation with the goal of more fully understanding how audiences/users engaged with media products that they saw as gendered: that is, those they saw as meant more for men than for women, and vice versa. In this study the primary structure being investigated was gender as a sociocultural force that works on, through, with, and against agency to determine appropriate behaviors. Gender was studied for how it came into the media reception situation; and this aspect of it was investigated in two ways, both of them

from the audience/user's interpretative stance. First, the researcher examined how gender was perceived as impacting people's choices about which media product was more appropriate for men or for women. A second concern was to address how gender was seen by audiences/users as relating to their sense-making during the media engagements. Thus, instead of simply comparing men's and women's engagements and using gender as a predetermined differentiating factor, this study looked at how the participants saw gender as being involved in media engaging situations.

In the study, 21 male and 22 female college students residing in the United States were interviewed using a life-line interview. Participants were asked to list times in their lives when they engaged with media products that they saw as being primarily meant either for men or for women. Participants were also asked to recall times when they engaged with such gendered media products only once or repeatedly. After constructing this list, participants were asked to select one situation from each of these types, and their choice resulted in interviews for four types of media reception situations.

Each media reception situation interview began by asking what led the participant to see that particular media product as gendered. Then, by using the core SMM interviewing template, each situation was examined in greater depth. Further, participants were asked to reflect on how they thought that their responses to each query connected to their life at the time of the media engaging and to what they considered appropriate for men versus women.

Figure 3.3 presents a brief excerpt from an interview conducted with a young male, Ted, about his engaging with a romantic comic book series – a media product he saw as meant more for women. This figure shows how the questions focused on the nature of the media product (the section in white), the experience of engaging with the media product (the sections in light grey), and the follow-up questions (the sections in darker grey).

In order to illustrate how the SMM interviews elicited participant sense-makings with gendered media, we include below direct quotations. Excerpts in this first group exemplify the occasions when men and women discussed what led them to decide that a media product was meant for men (the first two quotations) versus meant for women (the last two quotations).

The explicit content. They're extremely violent, and they degrade women. There are very little female characters in the videogames, and when they are they're half naked. (Carla, engaging with violent videogame)

It's definitely a hip-hop sort of movie, and again the overt sexuality in that aspect. (Barclay, film *Coach Carter*)

Romance is for women, sex is for men. Which is unfair, 'cause I love a good romp as much as a man does, and dating is about romance. (Becky, online dating sites)

The female main protagonist. [. . .] And I got interested in it because I saw some scenes and I thought they were pretty emotionally compelling and I thought would be interesting. (Ted, romance manga)

TED, YOUNG MALE / MEDIA FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, USED ONLY ONCE**MEDIA PRODUCT NAME:** I guess the girl's manga. *Angelic Lair*.**WHY DIRECTED TO WOMEN OR GIRLS:** Well, I guess...my friends, I didn't think about it at all when I first picked it up until a friend said, you know that's a girl's manga, right? I was like, oh yes, I guess that makes sense. A female-named protagonist, and they were fighting robots in it, kind of exciting robots, so I thought it was cool. I got interested in it because I saw some scenes that I thought were pretty emotionally compelling. And I thought it would be interesting. So I picked it up and I read it and I liked it.**DESCRIPTION:** I guess the first time I saw it or heard of it was...my friends and I had been looking through anime music videos. There was one particular one that I thought was really good. It made me...the emotional side of the music video and I saw the anime comic to it and so I thought it would be an interesting read. I guess that was my first encounter. But then I almost might have encountered it by random hanging out at stores which my friends and I did a lot at that age.**QUESTIONS, MUDDLES:** I guess after a point I wondered why it had to be a girl's manga when I was physically reading it. So I enjoyed it. I recognized the aspects but I didn't really so I kept reading it. Except I couldn't find that last issue.**LIFE CONNECTION:**

Yeah, like I said, I was at the point of coming out, if not there, and so I didn't really care as much about gender stereotypes. I had gone from not really knowing much about stereotypes, to falling in line with them and trying to fit my life into them to not really giving a damn. I think that's where I was at the time.

SENSE OF GENDERING:

Say again? Yes. Because these sissy things, you know, were not supposed to be in my territory, but...I don't know how to answer it.

EMOTIONS, FEELINGS: Yeah, I was interested in characters and I was caught up in kind of a struggle, I rooted for her...I did all the things you're supposed to do with a good story.**LIFE CONNECTION:**

Maybe a little, with what I was reading I was getting used to rooting for the underdog. It was kind of a common theme that I encountered a lot and I felt comfortable doing it.

SENSE OF GENDERING:

Yeah, I don't think guys are supposed to care all that much, but I think that's changing, especially with big time movies where there's not a whole lot of action. But for the most part, guys like action movies, and action-filled things, and they root for the underdog because they want to see him kick some ass. And they don't root for people just because they're interested in them or like them or feel connected to them. I think it's generally not acceptable for them.

HELP, FACILITATING: Yeah, it was cathartic, I'd cry a little, I'd be happy, the same thing as with fiction, I could get lost in the world**SENSE OF SELF:** I always wanted to be the hero at that point in time, so I guess, yeah.**Figure 3.3** Interview transcript excerpt for participant discussing media meant for women and used only once.

In these quotations the participants were focusing on specific structural features of the media product as attributes relevant to their decision. The structural features of media products that were designed for one gender or another concurred with the assumptions held in US society at the time as to what is appropriate media content for men (action, violence, sex, sports) and what is appropriate media content for women (romance, dating, emotions). However, while participants could readily point to the very structural features that we would assume characterized gendered media, some did so in active resistance. In these cases participants explicitly reported that they were aware that their presence as audience members was not received positively by their society.

Here is a second set of quotations that focus on how men and women regarded what their society and culture says about what is appropriate for men versus women.

I guess I was a bit confused because as kid I was kinda under impression that I could do whatever wanted, so why are these women at home and not taking an active role in the film? (Barbara, cowboy movies)

I know I'm a woman, and have sexual desires, but in my mind it's still hard for me to understand why a woman would want or feel the need to be in that industry, where it is much more acceptable for me to go yeah, a guy's into porn because that's all a guy wants, that's what we're told. (Gloria, pornography)

The whole idea of a man being really excited to get the next season of a show that's just about a bunch of women and their dating habits, where the main character is a sex advice columnist, didn't jive with my image of what men want but I found it very compelling myself. (Zane, television series *Sex and the City*)

In these examples we find each man and woman struggling to accommodate what, on the basis of their gender category membership in society, they've been told was appropriate with some experiences or interpretations from other aspects of their lives.

Of course, these quotations have been taken out of context, so they feature here outside of their relation to other sense-makings/unmakings in the media reception situations, as detailed by the participants. In the brief space allowed here, it is hoped that these quotations demonstrate that, by considering gender as part of the interpretative actions of the audience/user in the media reception situation, we can begin to understand more fully the complex ways in which gender and other sociocultural structures can be influential, inconsequential, contested, and/or contradictory when examined from the vantage point of audience member sense-makings.

Case Study: Media Interface as Structure

Another commonly used SMM interviewing approach is the micro-element interview. From the perspective of how time-space is handled, in this approach the informant essentially skips around time-space within the confines of a particular situation, attending to those micro-moments that come to mind in response to the roster of SMM queries initially applied to the situation as a whole. After this initial triangulation, which is called "level 1," SMM queries are applied to each of the responses in what is called a "level 2" triangulation. This approach has advantages in that it can more easily make for a shorter or longer interview, depending on how many times the SMM triangulation levels are used. Another major advantage is that this type offers a manageable way to ask an informant to recall a number of situations that are related to each other on several research-based criteria and then to ask informants to compare these situations to each other.

This interviewing approach was applied in our second case study. While this interviewing approach has been commonly used over a 30-year period, this particular study is an unusual application, because it also serves as an example of how SMM

can be used as an interviewing approach for data collection within an experiment. SMM has been designed as an interviewing approach applicable to any research situation in which one wishes to understand more fully what others think, feel, need, want, and how they see the connective maps of their worlds. In the research context, SMM is useful for any research application where asking questions of informants is seen as an appropriate means for data collection, be that for surveys, experiments, focus groups, or participant observation. Our argument is that SMM interviews are applicable to experimental data collection because they allow us to understand situationality as it is experienced by our informants, instead of conceptualizing the informants as passive receivers (Reinhard, 2010). This, we suggest, is essential, particularly when one is studying communication processes, because the internalized nature of the meaning-making aspects of communicating always provides the potential for the play of agency.

The intent of this experiment was to compare how informants made sense of four different media product technologies (that is, interfaces) with the same type of content – the superhero genre. This created a within-subjects experimental design, as the experiences with the media product technologies were artificial and imposed upon participants, who had little to no experience with the technologies that were exposed to them. Film was used as a primary quasi-control, as it did not require any physical interactivity; videogame was a secondary quasi-control, because it did require physical interactivity but is not classifiable as a virtual world media product. Two types of virtual worlds, one game-based and one social-based, were the last two media products included in the study.

Each informant engaged in all four media reception situations, and certain aspects of these situations were predetermined: the nature of the media product, the location of the engaging, and the level of the participant's experience with the media product. After each informant had completed these four sessions, a SMM micro-element interview was conducted in order to explore the informant's experiences in and comparisons of the four experimental conditions.

Figure 3.4 below shows the interview structure, as illustrated from Nicolaj's exposure to the Second Life media interface condition. This figure shows how the questions focused on comparing experiences (the section in white) by going in depth into each specific experience with an SMM triangulation level 1 (the sections in light grey) and by pursuing the follow-up triangulation level 2 of asking how the aspects that were the focus of level-1 responses helped and/or hindered (the sections in darker grey).

The example shows that the interviews asked participants to recount what happened in each media engaging and, once these recountings were made, to compare the experiences with each other. In Denmark 14 students and professionals participated in the study; the number was evenly split between men and women within an age range of 17 to 58. Participants had various past experiences to go with these different media product interfaces – a factor that will be taken into account as part of the context of the media reception situation in future reports emphasizing research

NICOLAJ, MALE, 31 / SECOND LIFE

BEST/WORST: That is number four. *And what leads you to say that?* Well, the fact that I still can't decide if it's an online community or a computer game. It's sort of...it seems to me that it's an online community that tries to be a computer game. And it might be my expectation of it being a computer game that is destroying my opinion of it, but it is – it takes a lot of my opinion of the game.

MAKE BEST?: I'm not sure, because I still don't know if it's supposed to be a computer game or an online community. And in my mind an online community will...is not gonna top a computer game. It's not going to be better than a computer game.

QUESTIONS: I couldn't find the off switch. I couldn't figure out how to leave.

HELP/HINDER: Well, it was pretty much the last point in a long line of disappointments about it. *How did not being able to see the point in the setup hinder your experience?* I didn't see the point in continuing it, because, well, in my mind the whole purpose of an online community is to be able to talk to more people. If I have an online...a physical online avatar in an online world, I can actually interact with more people by walking down the street, because there are more people in the actual world than there are in Second Life. In my opinion, the online community should give me the opportunity to interact with more people than normally. A physical avatar like that reduces that to almost nothing.

EMOTIONS, FEELINGS: None other than just disappointment.

HELP/HINDER: Well, it showed me that this is not the program for me. It's not something that I'll be participating in, in the future.

FUTURE EXPECTATIONS: Not really, because I hadn't...I had heard that Second Life was an online community, but I'd also heard that it was a very good online community. I didn't...on purpose I didn't check what kind of community it was because I wanted to keep an open mind about it.

HELP/HINDER: Well, if I had checked it out a bit, I probably would have learned to stay away from it from the start. Although not really, because it was a part of the experiment, right? There was no escaping it. If I had tried it before, if I had checked it out better, then I probably would have gone into this experience with a bit more prejudice than I did.

Figure 3.4 Interview transcript except for informant discussing Second Life interface experience. *Source:* Reinhard (2010).

results. For our purposes here, we illustrate how an SMM interviewing approach allowed us to address the complex intertwinings of structure and agency. To this end, we compare just two participants and their exposures to two different media interfaces: a movie and Second Life.

The parameters of the experiment allowed the participants to choose, from a library of 15 titles, a movie they had not seen. This made the comparison of movie sessions more difficult across participants, because, while the movies were conceptualized as having the same media interface, the specific content varied. However, from an interpretative perspective, since all the movies focused on “superheroes” and were “new” to informants, the novelty of content in these engagements can be considered reasonably comparable.

Unlike the movie session, the Second Life session was more controlled, in that each informant was required to go to the same place in the virtual world. However, upon arriving at this location, informants were allowed to proceed as they desired. As with the movie, then, the interface was the same, but there were differences in what happened in the virtual world, or in the content.

The two informants we are comparing are Nicolaj, a 31-year-old male whose movie choice was *The Incredible Hulk*; and Flemming, a 25-year-old male whose movie choice was *Elektra*. The Second Life site that each informant was asked to visit was “Metrotopia: City of Superheroes,” an island designed specifically for the study.

Looking at how Nicolaj and Flemming made sense of their movie interface experiences, it stands out how Nicolaj, when asked, reported that he faced no gaps in his experiencing of his movie, while Flemming had many questions and confusions.

So it really never did get you any background information of the world of the superhero, and stuff in terms of where are we, what is the background setting of this. It just gave you very few background information about Elektra and then you're supposed to know what everything else is. (Flemming, engaging with the film *Elektra*)

However, unlike with the movie interface, both Flemming and Nicolaj experienced similar gaps in dealing with the Second Life interface. In fact they both experienced similar problems in controlling objects in the virtual world.

Some of the outfits, the pieces that I chose for my avatar, didn't fit at all. I chose a cape form that latched itself onto a shoulder. (Nicolaj, Second Life)

It didn't work some of the time trying to get stuff like how to wear the freaking Japanese hair that was floating on top of my skull but then just ignore this. And I guess if I needed, I could just have asked the other characters in the game how to do stuff so I wasn't too worried about this. So in that way it didn't affect me. (Flemming, Second Life)

As seen in the previous quotation, Flemming “found” ways of bridging the gap that Nicolaj did not.

All the time, because it was quite clumsy but it was a lot of that was [*sic*] – the thing of the graphic user interface was much the same as in *City of Heroes*. But in *City of Heroes* it really mattered. I didn't feel that it mattered at all in Second Life. Until I was told how to shoot and how to engage in different combat styles, how to use my superpowers. I could just get those answers from a real live human being, and that really helped. (Flemming, Second Life)

Nicolaj also experienced gaps that Flemming did not in his Second Life journey.

It seems to me that this set-up with the avatar and the online community, it limits your access to the online community a lot. I don't see the point of because the graphics and the gameplay is very bad compared to the other three. So it doesn't really function as a computer game as such. And because you have a physical avatar in the world, it limits you greatly in terms of the online community. So I really don't see the point of the set-up. (Nicolaj, Second Life)

Even with these brief clips from some 300 manuscript pages of interview transcriptions from the experiment, we tapped into sense-making variability both within and

between conditions that began to allow us to see complex intertwinings – in this case, between media product structures and audience/user agency.

Since our purpose here is to illustrate how we have used SMM interviewing approaches in studying reception processes, there is no room to report study results fully. Suffice it to say that, in general, the experiment elicited evidence regarding how media product interface technologies generally impact sense-making, while it simultaneously began to identify patterns of similarities and differences both within and between participants' experiences and within experimental conditions that contained different interfaces (Reinhard & Dervin, 2010). We consider this to be a modest but helpful beginning to our attempts to understand what audiences/users experience in their media engagements with different kinds of media products.

Conclusions

Our research approach and these interview extracts were informed by Dervin's sense-making methodology metaphor, the core tool that organizes SMM's reliance on a broad spectrum of philosophical sources. SMM does not contest that there are structural aspects of media and life conditions that constrain audience/user interpretations. However, SMM fundamentally accepts that no audience/user interpretation of a media product can be seen *a priori*, as written in advance, by virtue of knowing something about the nature of the media product, the audience/user, or even the situation. The interpretative acts of the sense-maker always have a potential room to play. The question becomes how to conduct research in ways that allow us simultaneously to address, in systematic fashion, both the *a priori* constraint and the interpretative play.

SMM's approach to studying media reception situations has begun to provide us with the ability to understand the conditionality of the influence of structures in media reception situations. The case studies illustrate this understanding. These studies did not assume that *a priori* structural differences of gender and interface would determine the outcome of the media reception situation. Instead they sought to bring out the agency of audiences/users, as these made sense of the situations. In this way we have been able to begin to identify the conditions in which factors like gender or interface matter in determining media reception outcomes, as well as how they matter, and even why.

Of course, SMM has limitations; all research approaches do. The deep qualitative interviews can make analysis time-consuming; the amount of material gathered can appear daunting whether the analytical procedure is qualitative or quantitative. Even though SMM has been used in large-scale studies, typically fewer deep qualitative interviews are collected, in order to reduce analysis time. This strategy, of course, lends itself to criticisms of reduced generalizability. Further, as with other methodologies reliant on self-report, some critics challenge that SMM interviews are based

on trusting audiences/users to “truthfully” and “completely” recall their experiences. While SMM’s philosophical and methodological edifice has been designed to address this challenge and in fact positions it as philosophically inappropriate, it is the kind of challenge launched against all retrospective interview data. Another frequent criticism, usually originating from those who adhere to more classical political economic and cultural studies assumptions, is that SMM is like “motivational” research, because of how it elides on its metaphorical bridge such usual research categories as values, memories, attitudes, opinions, and affect. Again, SMM’s methodological foundations, drawing on sources from philosophy, neuroscience, and complexity theory, argues explicitly against these expert categorizations imposed on everyday experience.

In sum, then, we argue that SMM has given us a more holistic ability to study audience/user engagements with media products. It has helped us to understand the complexity of intertwining factors that are involved in media reception and to go beyond solitary-factor explanations. We have been able to more completely disentangle these factors while simultaneously understanding how they interact, as well as how they can be traced backwards, forwards, and sideways into the everyday lives of audiences/users.

Our work in applying SMM to study media reception situations has only just begun, but we have collected sufficient data on a variety of situations to suggest the promise of the journey. In addition to the data collections described here, as examples, we have applied SMM to the study of what audiences/users see as their media guilty pleasures, as their addictions to video and computer games, and as the lessons they learned from media characters about society and how society works.

What leads us to continue on this research trajectory is the emerging wealth and depth of the data obtained, which flesh out these situations and the extraordinary reports of human experiences within them. We do not argue for SMM as “the” research approach for reception studies. Indeed, built into SMM’s philosophical edifice is the proposition that we must surround the phenomena of our interest with every research tool possible. In this sense, we position SMM as a complement and a supplement.

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The Abbreviated Field Experience in Audience Ethnography

Patrick D. Murphy

ABSTRACT

In an effort to contend with virtual fields of communication and cultural exchange and institutional constraints, a growing corpus of ethnographic work within audience studies has dispatched with the notion that fieldwork is constituted through sustained encounters in stable, situated fieldsites, thus shifting the ethnographic *mise-en-scène* to more accessible networked worlds of virtual communities or to inquiry driven wholly by prearranged interviews, conducted outside the flow of everyday practices. These shifts have converged with institutional realities (e.g., restrictive travel funds, reductions in sabbaticals, elimination of internal summer grants). Together, these factors position observation through embodied fieldwork at the margins of much ethnographic practice within media studies. Given these investigative trajectories and institutional limitations, this chapter explores how audience researchers can return to a more existentially grounded notion of fieldwork, which is capable of enriching the study of networked communities as well as other areas of inquiry. Focusing on short-term fieldwork, I use tales from the field to make a case for how and why even abbreviated site visits can generate crucial data for crafting audience ethnographies that can help us interpret better the links between media consumption and production.

It's the summer of 2009, and I am about to enter a place called "La ciudad de los niños" (Children's City), recently renamed "Kidzania," a more branding-friendly appellation: this is a theme park located inside a mall in the Santa Fe suburb of Mexico City. I am accompanied by my wife and our two daughters (ages 6 and 11), along with my sister-in-law and her two little ones (ages 2 and 4). The entrance invites us to "get ready for a better world" (preparate para un mundo mejor) – their corporate slogan – a promise based squarely on the park's delivery of "edutainment" through a variety of role playing activities.¹ The four youngsters are to be our guides and translators of this experience. After a quick scan of those in line I appear to be the only non-Mexican visiting Kidzania that day. However, once I purchase my "reservation," make my way down a corridor and through a security point, and have my "boarding pass" checked at the "gate" by a teenager who claims to be an American Airlines' employee, I enter into a world that is instantly and quite disappointingly recognizable.

The center of town, fashioned as a small town square, is defined in no small measure by its vast display of corporate logos – Avis, Cheetos, Nestle, Telemex, Purina, Barbie, Johnson & Johnson, McDonald's, Bridgestone, Coca Cola, Televisa, Panasonic, Pemex, Walmart, Cartoon Network, Domino's Pizza, DHL, Fujifilm, HSBC, Herdez, Quaker State, Proctor & Gamble, and more. But, however evident these markers of corporate culture are for me, for those unaware of or unconcerned with such things the mixture of national and international advertisements merges seamlessly into the grain of this carefully crafted community of fun, acceptance, and, above all, participation. Indeed it is a safe, kid-centered world of possibility, neatly packaged as a local and intimate space where children are made "citizens" upon arrival and, for a few hours, asked to help run the city.

My daughters respond to this invitation with a mixture of excitement and, at least in the case of my 11-year-old, with feigned sophisticated lack of interest. This becomes most evident when we wander into a discothèque sponsored by Barbie's My Scene. I encouraged them to dance on what seems to me a muy padre (very cool) elevated dance floor, complete with floor squares of the Saturday Night Fever type, lighted and choreographed. Wow, who wouldn't be inspired to boogie down here! Well, evidently my kids, who think it's very naco (tacky). Before I interpret this response as resistance to the corporate machine, I remind myself that these are the same kids who had no reservations about singing and dancing to Michael Jackson's Billie Jean in the back of their aunt's new, videoscreen-loaded minivan on the way to the mall. So it must be my presence that's in the way.

Moving out of the disco, my children show more enthusiasm about the prospects of making their own "Gansitos" (fruit-filled and chocolate-covered cakes) at a small Marinela bakery. There they become the bakers; they even work in the production line, where each cake is mechanically wrapped in the iconic gansito (gosling) cartoon character package. But there is no need for storage, as each one immediately unwraps and consumes the fruits of her labor. I make the joke (which only I find funny) that, if they ruin their teeth, they can head over to the Listerine dental service on the other side of the street; they opt instead to take to the Kidzania highways. But before Avis will rent them a car they need to be issued driver's licenses and to fill up their tanks at Pemex. When

the chore of driving gets tiring, they refuel themselves by heading over to Domino's Pizza, where they make their own pizzas, stopping at an HSBC ATM to obtain more Kidzos (the currency of Kidzania). Hunger satisfied, other possibilities await. Mexican television giant Televisa, for instance, has its own "studio" here, so Kidzania citizens who aspire to be newscasters or telenovela stars can test their performative skills. When their cash flow runs out, temp work as a fireman, doctor, model, or construction worker generates more spending cash.

At around 10 minutes to 2:00 p.m. we learn, however, that there is a Cinderella clause. "Citizenship" runs out, and Kidzania residents are forced to evacuate the town so that the new, afternoon shift of citizens can enmesh itself in better worldom. As my family and I are herded out of the complex, together with 200 or so other visitors, by a band of 17-year-old "Servicio Pan Americano de Proteccion, SA de CV" security guards, for some reason we are handed packages of Herdez pasta and led to the point where the amusement park spills into the inner bowels of the giant mall. There is no direct exit from park to the parking lot. Instead, the mall is the transition; and, as we move through it trying to locate our parking exit, Sears, Liverpool, El Palacio de Hierro, Sanborns, and TGI Fridays frame and guide our exodus. Negotiating my way through the mall I can't help but wonder that, if Kidzania did indeed offer a better world, from what world are the visitors hoping to escape when they enter? My query is not limited to Mexican audiences, as a later visit to the Kidzania website reveals that the company has set up shop in Dubai, Korea, Chile, India, Japan, Portugal, and Indonesia. Moreover, to extend the experience, the website offers downloadable Kidzania songs, ring tones, wallpaper, and something called mobile wallpaper.

In my attempt to digest the experience a bit more, I start to think that perhaps my initial inclination to recoil from this training center of consumer citizenship only thinly disguised as an amusement park doesn't generate the right questions. Instead of asking from what world Kidzania's visitors are escaping, for instance, maybe I should be asking how and why the world of Kidzania is attractive to kids and their parents. Moreover, what might this highly constructed, participatory, and performative space "mean" to those charged with its delivery?

Such questions are often difficult to pursue in situ because, even though these could serve as potential ethnographic fieldsites, it is not easy to stop people in the flow of the experience to ask. In the case of Kidzania, parents are shepherding children through a gauntlet of sensory intensity (or perhaps it's the other way around), and employees such as the American Airlines boarding personnel and security guards have tickets to check and pasta to distribute. And my kids, now back in the minivan and fully engrossed in Michael Jackson's *Man in the Mirror*, had little interest in helping me deconstruct the experience on the way home, their down time to decompress already being filled with more stimuli. Anyway, I certainly can't complete with Michael Jackson, so I am left to ponder these mediascape mysteries of production, reception, and meaning-making alone, as I peer out at the mean streets of the Distrito Federal.

I began my chapter with this tale from my family visit to Kidzania in order to help frame a methodological question: Can such site visits be constituted as fieldwork within a broader ethnography of media audiences? When my family was considering, for the first time, spending the day at Kidzania, I certainly didn't present the trip as a great opportunity to do field research ("Hey everybody, want to do a media-scape site visit today!"). Nevertheless, I have to confess that, as a media researcher, I was already taking headnotes when I went through the American Airlines gate of Kidzania. And I know I am not alone in making such generative transitions. Indeed, regardless of the original intent, media researchers are often inspired by embodied experiences of rich, performative media spaces, and in fact they are often the catalysts through which research projects are launched and elaborated. Yet at issue for me here is this: Can quick and dirty field visits – whether unplanned ones, such as what I have described above, or more deliberate and focused endeavors – provide audience researchers with the sort of data-rendering experiences that are ethnographically thick enough to stand in for more immersive and sustained field practices? Indeed, given the limited possibilities for participant observation on the part of the audiences actually consuming media, site visits have the potential to compensate for investigative gaps in ethnographic media research that is often driven wholly by prearranged interviews, as opposed to utterances delivered in the flow of everyday practices. But when do such field experiences become "ethnographic," and how might the possibilities and limitations of such abbreviated excursions be negotiated to help animate richer audience ethnographies?

Fieldwork in Media Studies

I ask these questions within a history of ethnography in media studies that has been uneven and often methodologically oblique. These questions also come with the understanding that, as the signature method of anthropology, ethnography has long been grounded in physical fieldsites, and in fact accounts of fieldwork have traditionally presented and thus constituted ethnographic evidence. As a *product*, the ethnographic text is understood to be generated by the *process* of doing ethnography, which was established through long-term participant observation. Though it may be presented in a variety of expository or narrative forms of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), the product is an articulation of the ethnographic process (Murphy, 2008). Historically, however, media ethnographers have not established the kind of bounded, long-term fieldwork of anthropology, so the body of ethnographic scholarship in media studies has been less defined by a particular kind of orthodoxy (e.g., participant observation). Moreover, unlike what happens in anthropology, where an ongoing reformulation of what can legitimately claim to be fieldwork is taking place directly in relation to "the aesthetics and the regulative ideals of the Malinowskian paradigm of research" (Marcus, 2006, p. 2), media scholars have often been content to nibble at the edges

of this anxious reconsideration of the limits and partialities of traditional fieldwork. These tendencies have unfolded and influenced the character of ethnography in media studies for a number of interrelated reasons.

First, although the roots here are perhaps not deep, they are wide, as over the years media ethnographers have maintained a fairly flexible, at times even ambiguous, notion of ethnographic practice. In the formative years of the field, from the late 1970 through to 1980s, most media studies did not present a normative model of fieldwork that necessitated immersion, rapport, observation, and the most recognizable product of this kind of work – fieldnotes. Many followed instead the less prescriptive but nevertheless identifiable path of applying methods associated with ethnography (in-depth interviews, conversational interviews, group interviews, time-use diaries, letters, family albums, and other personal documents) in the vein of Morley, Ang, Radway, Schröder, and others who were interested in establishing an empirical commitment to the study of popular culture production and consumption. By the late 1980s the quasi-ethnographic marbling of media studies was colored further by a greater focus on political and epistemological issues tied to representation. The debate surrounding the representation of the “Other” constituted a disciplinary “crisis” in anthropology, and its force hit ethnography squarely, as a practice discursively wedded to colonialism and the objectification of non-Western subjects. But, whereas anthropologists wrestled to come to terms with the translative process between fieldwork and ethnographic text, for a long time media studies seemed content to discuss the limits of reflexivity as *the* object of inquiry, as opposed to an epistemological dilemma tied to “voice” and to “being there” and “writing here,” and this state of things prompted some to question media studies’ ethnographic commitment (Bird, 1992; Drotner, 1994; Murdoch, 1997; Murphy, 1999; Nightingale, 1993). And, although more recent ethnographic work produced by media scholars has signaled an attempt to deal directly with issues of representation, field experience, and reflexivity (Boylorn, 2008; Kim, 2005, 2006; LaPastina, 2005; Mayer, 2005; Murphy & Kraidy, 2003; Parameswaran, 2001; Podber, 2007), most of this scholarship has been generated by researchers of media and globalization.

Second, a growing corpus of media ethnography is moving away from the notion that ethnography is constituted through sustained encounters in stable, situated fieldsites. The emerging ethnographic vision can be found in the descriptive tropes now used by media ethnographers, “cultural interlocutors,” “complicity,” “lurking,” “mobility,” and “embodied subjectivities” serving in place of classic anthropological terms like “informants,” “entrée,” “rapport,” and “immersion.” This language reveals an understanding of fieldwork that is configured by a world where cultural exchange takes place, routinely now, in something called cyberspace and where social ties are shaped through things like chatting, surfing, and tweeting. But these adjustments are also more than just about penetrating virtual fields of communication and exchange, as the fieldwork itself is being increasingly defined as a dynamic, even ephemeral experience, conducted in what could be characterized as a context of fluid situatedness. Bird (2003), for instance, has called for an “opportunistic ethnography” (p. 5),

developed through “researcher-absent” methods (p. 17). She argues that media researchers should be less concerned with “insignificant” issues such as time in the field (p. 8), and they should commit themselves instead to the “ethnographic way of seeing” (p. 12). Rather than privilege immersion in specific sites, Bird places an emphasis on communication with participants and on asking the right questions, which would be designed to create situations where “the participant is invited to define the terms of the encounter” (p. 12).

Additionally, there is Hills’ (2002) reconceptualization of fieldwork as something conducted through an “ethnography of the self” (p. 81). Hills is primarily interested in fan culture, and his autoethnographic privileging of the self casts the personal–locational at the interpretative core of the ethnographic process. This move serves as a means of overcoming the limitations of low-tech, face-to-face ethnography when the subject of the research involves making sense of the multiple theaters of media reception. Also, rather than celebrating the “native’s point of view,” which he believes leads to inherently weak interpretations of fan culture because it is reliant on the “auto-legitimation within fan culture” (p. 66), Hills advocates self-reflexivity as the ethnographic path through which to question the currency of the fan’s own interpretations of media texts. Given these parameters, “the field” is an internal place for the ethnographer-fan, and self-interrogation is the tool that must constantly be deployed in order to interpret one’s own identities and affiliations within the fan communities of media cultures under study.

Somewhat complementary to Hills and Bird’s reconceptualizations of fieldwork is Couldry’s (2003) more existentially grounded, yet no less fluid argument that media researchers need to develop “passing ethnographies” capable of yielding “knowledge under certain conditions” (p. 44). At the core of Couldry’s vision of ethnography is the perception that, since people live increasingly “mediated lives,” meaning and understanding are always partial and situated. Therefore, in order to reveal patterns of thinking in media audiences, ethnography needs to be less focused on the total life contexts and more sensitive to context as something rhetorical, negotiated, and situational. In other words, instead of an encamped “being there” vision of ethnography, in line with the anthropological tradition (e.g., in the village), Couldry advocates for an ethnography that is in the moment as much as it is in the field. “Listening closely and effectively to people’s talk need *not* require a full ethnographic contextualization for that talk” (p. 52). Instead it can be spontaneous and conducted across a range of multi-sited contexts, which are built on mutual exchange (“complicity”) rather than on rapport, in order to capture patterns of cultural thought and action related to media discourses.

Taken together, the ethnographic visions sketched out by media scholars like Hills, Bird, and Couldry are less rigid and considerably more open than classic ethnography to experimentation and to an adjustment based on the communicative elements of social networks and media events. While the change in the ethnographic *mise-en-scène* may very well suggest a less rigorous connection to the concrete fieldsite and to the immersive process of participant observation, these authors nevertheless

present ideas for a new imagining – both of how ethnography can tackle more phantom-like practices of cultural exchange and information sharing by shifting emphasis to fleeting moments of ethnographic opportunity, and of how those moments are negotiated to bear ethnographic fruit.

Third, it is important to understand that, in media studies as elsewhere, the recent move to ethnographic field studies without a traditional sense of fieldwork is tied to institutional realities. At its height, anthropological fieldwork was a methodological beneficiary of university systems, at least in the US, where it was receiving huge sums of money. Today we might admit that our ethnographic cocooning is just as much a product of institutional budget cuts, which are felt by researchers most often in the form of restrictive travel funds, reductions in sabbaticals, and the elimination of internal summer grants, all of which translate into less opportunities for field studies built on “being there.” Not surprisingly, many media studies research projects consist now of “traveling” to more accessible virtual worlds, in order to study community media convergence audiences and virtual communities.

These last two factors – that many media scholars are working to establish a new sense of what constitutes ethnography and that institutional pressures shape the practice of media ethnography – underscore the observation that the ethnographic method is at a time of transition and profound change. Or, as anthropologists James D. Faubion and George E. Marcus (2009) put it, one can simply say that “fieldwork is not what it used to be.” Of course Faubion and Marcus are writing about anthropology, and so perhaps a better take on the idea that new kind of fieldwork needs to be formed is to say that, at least within media studies, “fieldwork is what we decide it will be.” In stating this I am of course poking a bit of fun (with a Geertzian wink) at the fact that media studies is in the somewhat interesting position that, since it never really had an established “rites of passage” approach to fieldwork vis-à-vis anthropology, it is, to an extent, freer to explore a new vision of ethnography. Or at least this is how it seems to be playing out. Indeed, it is quite ironic that, in many ways, the absence of a grounded notion of fieldwork in media studies has made the transition to today’s global mediascape of convergence, networked communities, and the inescapable echo chamber of corporate media messages somewhat more open to an ethnographic adjustment for the study of audiences. That is, if the politics of the rites and rituals of the field encounter was not something particularly hobbling to the enterprise of audience ethnography before, why would media ethnographers suddenly be overly concerned by their limitations in an age of emerging virtual tribes and of exponential growth in social media communities?

Observation and the Field

In mapping out some of the forces that have formed ethnography’s profile in audience studies, I want to underscore that I am not advocating a move away from

long-term media ethnographies grounded in the study of physical sites of reception and production. Rather, as I acknowledge the pressures and limitations that affect ethnographies built on extended fieldwork and I build on some of the past work that calls for an opportunistic ethnography and emphasizes the situatedness of experience and self reflexivity, I want to suggest how and why audience ethnographers might reconsider short-term field visits conducted in physical sites as a way to deepen the ethnographic commitment to the study of networked communities of media production and consumption. Indeed, as Livingstone (2010, p. 569) asserts, audience ethnography still represents one of the best ways to study ecologies of power when it remains focused on analyzing consumption's relation to production (as mapped, for instance, by Johnson's, "circuit of culture," by Hall's "encoding and decoding," and by Habermas' "life world," in concert with the "system world"). In my view, this involves investing in an understanding of media ethnography that draws on the embodied experience in the field, even if that experience is less immersive than that of anthropology's established tradition.

Consider for instance, as an extension of the audience research tradition, how the situated and sensual experiences of fieldsite visits might be employed to research the elaboration of increasingly complex and integrated "mediascapes" (Appadurai, 2003). Defined by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai as image-centered, narrative-based "strips of reality" comprised by a "complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens, and billboards" (p. 43), mediascapes are inflected by political and historical contexts and shape the flow of cultural capital that audiences experience. As part of an interlaced series of scapes through which social actors navigate, mediascapes serve as the building blocks of "imagined worlds" (p. 43).

My introductory tale from Kidzania hints at how a site visit can tap into the performative, participatory, and "passing" nature of some of these mediascapes, not to mention how global and locally integrated they have become over the last few years. It also illustrates how such existential experiences might serve as a point of departure for elaborating audience research – first informed by observation and then built on to move steadily toward a more identifiable audience. But digesting these experiences to initiate such an ethnographic process is no simple task, as such sites can be quite dense and fluid, and thus researching them can be more than a little challenging: although they vary in terms of size, complexity, and coherence, these are – primarily, even if not exclusively – strategic spaces of cross media marketing that are constantly being adjusted.

Nevertheless, it is because of the potential of fieldsite visits to reveal entry points into research that there is good reason to argue for an experiential, observational path to the study of audiences. Clearly, now more than ever, we live in a world where spectacle and multiplatform messaging form commercial mediascapes designed to engage individuals through their subjectivity. Often these corporate creations represent efforts to shape and sell a particular brand image, making it not just an image, idea, or slogan, but an experience calculated to inscribe a discursive frame of reference for its audiences. And, as commercial interests continue to respond to technological

innovation and seek out ways to harness its potential, such performative spaces are not just the terrain of Kidzania-type malls or amusement parks venues. In fact, in an effort to craft a better, more socially responsible brand image, many companies have taken to establishing entire media divisions dedicated to elaborating interactive mediascapes that dovetail together to shape public perception. More and more this is preformed through brand management that relies on the sophisticated interlacing of public relations, social responsibility efforts, social media (e.g., issue blogs and responsive twittering), self-publishing, employee buy-in, and strategic framing. Interestingly, these efforts have lead to some of the most diverse sites of cross-cultural interaction, production, and reception, as their audiences are comprised not only of those sanctioned as *the* consumers (say, ticket holders, shoppers, travelers, site visitors, investors, journalists), but also of those involved in the production of these sites (account managers, tour guides, vendors, sales clerks, security, maintenance workers) – and sometimes even of those more peripherally or oppositionally connected (street vendors and artists, culture jammers, activists, and the like).

To get a better sense of how and why these kinds of efforts have been designed to engage audiences, I arranged to conduct a site visit at the headquarters of a company that has invested heavily in the elaboration of its own mediascape of brand management.

Notes from a Visit to Monsanto

In the spring of 2009 I was invited to visit the Public Affairs unit of the US-based multinational agricultural biotechnology giant Monsanto and to tour their corporate headquarters. As part of a larger project I was working on, which focused on the media in the contexts of environment and globalization, I was interested in learning about Monsanto's media operations in relation to their corporate image, and particularly to the key issue of sustainability. After I undertook some preliminary research on Monsanto's product lines, following the debate about Monsanto's business practices, I reached out to the head of the public affairs office and was immediately contacted and invited to visit the company's headquarters for a tour and to sit down meeting with some members of its team – an invitation that was surprising at first, as I had been warned by colleagues how notoriously unresponsive Monsanto was to research requests.

As I was driving down the winding entrance of Monsanto Drive, it quickly became apparent that this was truly the model of a Midwest corporate campus: it was a big, almost bucolic place, located in the western suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri. Monsanto Drive is tree-lined and it twists and turns past a host of office buildings and parking lots ranging from A to X, divided into north and south designations. Various signs direct visitors to these buildings, as well as to the Monsanto Child Development Center and to the Security Office. In view of the company's rather controversial

status around the globe, as I drove in I was struck by the lack of a heavy security presence, at least one that I could see. Instead of being stopped and directed, I parked on my own in lot N-1 and wandered around several buildings, asking staff for assistance until I found the correct entrance to Building A. Once I was there, a receptionist took my name, and within minutes I was greeted by Tom, my tour guide for the day. As if to punctuate Monsanto's global reach, Tom informs me that we will be joined by the governor of the Sarangani Province in the Philippines, but he assures me that the tour will just consist of the three of us.

Tom escorts me to the R visitor's center, and on the way there we chat. I find him personable and quite knowledgeable about Monsanto's history and product lines. Indeed, he entertains all of my questions in an easy and friendly way, fielding even my most provocative questions with grace and patience (for instance when I ask about Agent Orange – a topic that Monsanto dubs a “legacy issue” – one among others). Through my conversations with Tom I learn that he is a graduate of the University of Missouri's prestigious journalism program, and was a long time journalist at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. He indicates that he left the newspaper after things there became too contentious, and he stressed that he finds Monsanto a much more pleasant place to work because of its transparency among staff and administrators and because of the generally positive attitude about what the new employer stands for – something he shares with me when he confesses that, ironically, he never felt like a journalist (“In journalism, everyone had such cynical views of the world that I came home depressed and exhausted everyday”: Monsanto employee, personal communication, April 20, 2009).

To begin things, I am to take a tour before meeting with the Public Affairs team. The governor from the Philippines is already in the waiting room, and Tom directs both of us to a small theater, to watch a 12-minute video. The video is instructive; we learn that Monsanto has over 15,000 people a year participate in the tour and that the campus was established in 1964, on 500 acres. The company's showcase product has long been the herbicide Roundup, but we are informed that Monsanto now invests over \$900 million per year in research and development, 95% of which is spent on seed development and only 5% on chemicals. We are also introduced to the “Monsanto Pledge,” which is “Dialogue, Transparency, Respect, Sharing and Benefits” (available in six languages) – the central strategy through which, as I learn throughout the day, Monsanto is very deliberately rebranding itself as a food company rather than a chemical company.

When the informational video ends, Tom points to a map and explains where we will go. He escorts the governor and me down a series of stairwells and long hallways, many of which have small emergency showers outside of old chemical labs. Tom assures us that most are relics from the past and that all the old chemical laboratories have now been renovated into seed labs. As we move down the corridors, there are touch screens with short videos at each stop in the tour that orient and introduce us to the topics we are being educated about. These videos range from lessons about the oil content of corn and advice on cultivating low transfat soy to presentations

about increasing the cotton crop yield and instruction in the science of “seed chipping” corn and soy. Tom tells me that each “station” on the tour is designed to have three “take-home points,” and in fact I learn quite a lot about the scientific process behind bioengineering.

Thematically the tour is organized around the master code of “sustainability,” which in turn dovetails with Monsanto’s branding agenda of being seen as a seed company as opposed to a chemical one. This message does not just reside at the thematic center of the tour but, as I will learn later, during my round table session with the Public Affairs team, sustainability is clearly the battleground where Monsanto sees its discursive struggle with the “activists” (a term used to describe many of its critics, but particularly those involved in the organic food movement) being played out.

After the tour is completed, the Philippine governor is picked up by another Monsanto representative and led away, while Tom takes me to a meeting room for my session with the Public Affairs team. I am a bit early and the lunch buffet is still being set up as I arrive. The meal consists of grilled salmon accompanied by, as if to punctuate the morning’s learning points, a beautiful garden salad of red lettuce, red ripe tomatoes, purple onion, and other greens. Within a few minutes the members of the Public Affairs team start to make their way into the room. All are very friendly and introduce themselves. As they state their names and positions within the company, I have to admit that, even with my academic credentials, I feel quite surprised by the degree of access I am being given for this working lunch. I am introduced not only to the director of Public Affairs (the person who initially invited me to Monsanto), but also to her superior, the director of Issues and Employee/Electronic Communication. Others who join us for the lunch include the assistant director of Public Affairs, the director of Internal News and Communications, the social media specialist, the communications project manager, the research and development (R&D) pipeline director, and the manager of tour coordinators. I am given an hour and a half to interview them in round table style while we munch on the fresh garden salads and salmon.

The conversation that unfolds is not unlike one fostered in a focus group session, providing details both on topics introduced through my questions and probes (e.g., how Monsanto has used the media to address its history of highly controversial products – such as Agent Orange in Vietnam, Roundup Ultra in Plan Colombia, and recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) in milk production) and on issues that emerged as the interlocutors interacted and engaged with each other (information versus spin, or outreach and science versus uninformed criticism and myth). The group genuinely seemed to enjoy the opportunity to talk to me, as well as to each other. I am also struck by how young most of the team members are, half of them being in their early thirties. All present themselves as being committed to Monsanto’s mission and troubled by the fact that that mission is largely misunderstood and unappreciated.

Emerging from my interview with the group is the assertion, which was expressed many times, that “we are a seed company.” This was thematically consistent with

the morning tour, and indeed I am reminded that legacy issues such as Agent Orange and rBGH are part of Monsanto's past. I am told that, unlike competitors such as Dow Chemical, Monsanto today has very little invested in agri-chemical research and development. One participant adds:

That's the old Monsanto, a different company that existed prior to 2000. Today we are committed to food production and feeding the world. But it's been difficult to convince people of that transition and purpose because everything we say is challenged because of our legacy. Our message is neutralized. (Monsanto employee, personal communication, April 20, 2009)

It was for this reason, I am explained, that the media team was assembled. Interestingly, they see this shift – away from the old “legacy” and toward the notion that Monsanto is a seed company – and the path leading to it primarily as a matter of changing the topic of conversation, from “how” things are done to “why.”

As I learn quickly, this is a highly sophisticated process, based on the interdepartmental communication synergy model of “Promote, Respond and Implement.” In this model the focus is not, say, on the science of developing corn with higher oil yields, but rather on the reasons why producing higher yields is important. Through this shift in emphasis Monsanto is attempting to drive public perception away from *what* it makes and toward *why* what it does has social value.

One of the main instruments through which this institutionally coordinated effort is being elaborated is the use of an employee blog. I was told that this terrain within the Monsanto mediascape is designed as an effort to “make employees ambassadors” by encouraging them to be involved in conversations about Monsanto.

In the past, many employees would go to parties or visit with friends who would say, “Monsanto is genetically altering my food and creating Franken-food,” or some such ridiculous thing. The point was, our employees didn't know how to respond to external critiques or handle difficult questions about Monsanto. (Monsanto employee, personal communication, April 20, 2009)

The blog, which was started in February 2009, was created to facilitate an employee conversation about the company, and it permitted even “extraordinarily critical” comments. In the place of photos of each employee, participants used customized South Park avatars to interact through the blog. Conversations that surfaced in the first months of the blog included serious discussions about “chronic issues” (for instance Indian farmer suicides, especially among cotton growers) as well as tackling external critiques (such as Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*) or issues presented by groups most critical of Monsanto (Center for Food Safety, or GM Watch).

In addition to the blog, Twitter is used as a social media tool, in order for people to interact both with employees and with audiences external to Monsanto. According to one communications project manager, “we were given the freedom to try new directions” (ibid.). The result is that Twitter has become the communicative mode

of information exchange that Monsanto has placed at the center of its social media efforts – since the account, which was started in September 2008, quickly grew to about 900 users. Several social media specialists are assigned to answer questions on Twitter and to direct people to the company's main website for more information. Moreover, this is a way to get employees to respond to “activists,” community members, and others. Significantly, the social media specialists also see it as a “really good way to get different voices in the conversation, be those ‘activists’ who post their own preferred websites or Monsanto’s own ‘Field advisors’ (biologists who work with farmers testing Monsanto seeds) who bring their experiences in the field to the conversation” (ibid.).

The blog and Twitter are both used to direct audiences to “For the Record” – an “issues management site” presented on Monsanto’s main corporate website – so that they can access more in-depth information on a given subject. This site provides planting and harvesting updates; it also links to an informational website about specific products or issues and can be set up to email information directly to investors. “For the Record” was described to me as being “much more conversational than [a] typical information site, but not as much as a blog” (ibid.).

In addition to websites, blogs, and Twitter, Monsanto employs video and television to help shape its message. One of the most direct examples is its farm show coverage from Iowa and Illinois. The aim here is to bring the shows, via the Monsanto website, to audiences unable to attend the shows themselves. The coverage of a show is designed to “go beyond press releases” through the use of video, bloggers, and webcam coverage of events (ibid.). In addition, Monsanto has its own internal television news show, created to be a “one stop shop for information” for its employees. During my interviews, Monsanto’s Internal News and Communications director (also executive producer of the show) informed me that his aim was to create news programming that was about Monsanto and for Monsanto employees, but without it sounding like corporate propaganda; and he shared with me: “I despise spin and corporate speak” (ibid.).

Finally, there is also *Monsanto Today*, the company’s online news magazine, which is responsible for chronicling topical issues of interest for Monsanto’s investors, employees, and others, who are just generally interested in agricultural issues. In many ways this is the company’s flagship media product, and it is dedicated to establishing an official record of Monsanto’s activities and accomplishments. As one of the writers of *Monsanto Today* explained to me: “We take true journalistic principles and apply them to Monsanto issues” (ibid.).

After my lunch session with the Public Affairs team I was led to a large office area divided into some twenty smaller modular partitions. There I was given access to a number to division heads working along with the Public Affairs team to “Promote, Influence and Respond.” It was within my conversations with these division representatives that I was able to get a better sense of how “sustainability” is understood and articulated at Monsanto. During my talks with several of the social media account managers I was told that they are committed to sharing with readers how

Monsanto's investment in sustainability is really about feeding the world. To do this, they are constantly surveying other blogs, websites, and mainstream media (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch* editorials, *Huffington Post*, *The Ethicurean*), in order to gauge "what's being said and where the conversation is going." In this way they anticipate critique and are able to address issues raised by the "local food activists," whom Monsanto sees as its chief rivals in the domain of sustainability. In fact, from Monsanto's point of view, adopting social media was just a way to level the playing field and to add its own voice to the conversations. As one Monsanto social media blogger put it to me: "Sustainability was becoming *the* domain of the organic farmers, but we need to produce more food so where does the technology come in? This is our way to help people understand what we are doing" (*ibid.*).

I am taught that there are also crop-related challenges that Monsanto focuses on. The three main seeds that Monsanto's engineers have worked on are for row crops: corn, soy, and cotton. The company sees these as something less intimate or personal than fruits and vegetables, and so the problems related to them are, in its eyes, distinct. Veggies, I am told, are both more global and more local than grains are. "People put tomatoes on their tables. There's an aesthetic to them and people have an everyday connection to them. It's hard to say that about soybean or cotton" (*ibid.*).

This distinction between row crops and vegetables is addressed directly when I meet with the communications director of Seminis, a company acquired by Monsanto in 2005. Seminis has a footprint primarily in Africa, Eastern Europe, South America, and Asia, and it has worked to increase the yield of "open field" crops like tomatoes. The company's operations are smaller, since its 4,000 employees are working in 51 research stations around the world, in an attempt to keep the company's image tied to local and regional producers. This, I am explained, means that the researchers work closely with different local growers, and the focus is more on breeding than on biotechnology. To make sure that the operations don't "carry the baggage of the grains," Monsanto has elected to keep the name "Seminis," which originally belonged to a European company.

In our research we found that, though Monsanto scores high as a technology brand, it is still tied to legacy issues. The European colleagues of Seminis established a subtler brand, so we kept the name. This left Monsanto to take the hits. This positive equity transfer allowed us to maintain the focus on vegetable as food rather than agriculture. This is important because frankly, Monsanto still does not know how to "talk food." (Monsanto employee, personal communication, April 20, 2009)

The sense that people have a relationship with vegetables and that these are much more visible than soy or cotton was something that became quite salient in my interviews. One Seminis account administrator said: "People have a pastoral vision of food. Organic has done a good job of controlling this image, but there are large farms that are also family farms which grow the food we eat" (*ibid.*). Another added:

Michael Pollan's "Omnivore's Dilemma" emphasized taste in relation to sustainability. Cardboard tomatoes came from Big Ag, and tasty tomatoes from the farmers market. We are very aware that this is the perception that we need to work to overcome. So, our current push to "produce more, conserve more, and improve farmers lives" is not juts a tag line about more corn for, say, biofuel. It is also a way to think about sustainable food production. (Monsanto employee, personal communication, April 20, 2009)

The media strategies described to me and listed above are how Monsanto is attending to these image concerns, and they are of course elaborated in concert with more traditional public relations operations and sponsored events around the globe, which are designed to help craft Monsanto's image. The emphasis during my interviews was largely placed on employee response to these media, and in fact I was told that, on the basis of their own research, over 75% of all US Monsanto employees and 55% of all Monsanto international employees use the website. "Employees can be very interactive," I was informed, "adding their own video, articles and blogs." For example, one social media specialist shared with me the case of the blog "What is Corn," which was generated when a single issue took hold, and within a few hours over "110 comments appeared," being followed by people posting articles, video, and even international debates (*ibid.*).

But, as mentioned earlier, beyond targeting employees to help make them corporate ambassadors, Monsanto develops its information sites as resources for external audiences. A member of the Public Affairs team said: "we want to be positioned so that people can come to us for credible information." This sense of positioning is vital, I think, and it is reflected quite directly in the Public Affairs team's mission: "Promote, Influence and Respond." The mediascape that emerges from these distinct efforts underscores how, through cross-media, multiplatform strategies, and brand management, a corporation is attempting to *shape and guide* the contours of what is being talked about, all the while presenting the flow of ideas and information as flexible, open to debate, exploration, and argumentation, and customizable. But what becomes apparent throughout a site visit like the one I describe above is that the measures taken to create and maintain the terms of a discourse, though ostensibly under constant negotiation and open to being reviewed by audiences, are highly coordinated and driven by both corporate agendas and personal motivation – qualities not necessarily self-evident to those who might consume the company's message and interact with its mediascape.

Conclusions

The last few pages, which I presented as a mixture of narrative description, quotes from conversations and interviews, and field notes, suggest a few observations about the ethnographic quality of my site visit and, by extension, about whether a short field visit can generate ethnographically thick material for research. So, by way of

conclusion, I wish to consider some of the “take home” points – to borrow the Monsanto terminology – that the site visit of a mediascape (both in the sense that the tour is a mediascape and in the sense that the company itself is creating and maintaining one for a host of audiences) can provide for the elaboration of an ethnography of Monsanto audiences.

First and foremost, there is a sense that even a short-term version of “being there” is important for establishing a fuller sense of how, both as producers and audiences, the communities of networks involved in the delivery and consumption of the mediascape are shaped and elaborated. Nightingale (2008) reminds us that fieldwork “is based on the premise that communication is a material process in the sense that it is something that can be observed, recorded, documented, analyzed and written about,” and hence it “involves finding ways to transform the fleeting character of communication and social relations into durable analyzable forms” (p. 1). To be in the field is to observe, to experience, and to document those observations and experiences. Though my day of meetings, interviews, and tour falls well short of a field stay in classic ethnographic terms, it does offer something more than what Couldry describes as a “passing ethnography,” and indeed in many ways it does continue the Malinowskian tradition of “getting away from the table on the verandah and hanging around the village instead, chatting, questioning, listening in, looking on – writing it all up later” (Clifford, 1990, pp. 51).

More specifically, the case of the Monsanto site visit shows how even a limited field experience can provide opportunities for engagement and observation that are ethnographically evocative. Such situated, existential experiences are immensely helpful for revealing linkages and connections to social networks and for teasing out a deeper, fuller sense of how “corporate culture” is translated into “media culture” (e.g., why “sustainability” matters to Monsanto, how social media account managers see “activism,” how the image of vegetables is distinguished from that of grains by corporate divisions). In short, though partial and highly limited as a site visit, the opportunity to move about in the context of people’s professional environment allowed for a more complete, observable, and experiential understanding of the cultural communication and generative processes and roles within the Monsanto team of media professionals, their imagined community of readers, and their sense of creative purpose.

But, while data-rich, the Monsanto example still leaves somewhat open and unanswered the question: When does fieldwork become ethnographic? One day in the field, even one as productive as my Monsanto visit, does not make for a media ethnography. What it provides instead is an ethnographic path for getting the voices and images from the field into our audience ethnographies, in ways that chatroom or telephone interviews, time-use diaries or fan letters cannot. So, for audience ethnographers, the potential quality of elaborating fieldsite visits in relation to more audience-centered data gathering efforts has a number of implications. First, to achieve ethnographic validity, such abbreviated field experiences of observation and exchange in corporate sites where media products are generated can serve to comple-

ment and extend, not sit in for, the range and variety of ethnographic choices (interpretive communities studied, for example) and relationships (access and entrée to communities, friendships, key informants, and so on) that ultimately define an ethnographic product in audience studies. Second, the grounding of audience ethnography in some sort of existential place and experience provides a means through which to move closer to the investigative chore of linking and following events and activities that shape and frame the imagined worlds of media users and producers. Indeed, as Livingstone (2010) recently noted, within media studies there is *still* a “distaste for the risky negotiations with ‘real people’ on their home ground” (p. 569). To move off of the proverbial veranda and hang out in the village allows audience ethnographers to ask better questions and to engage more fully the webs of meaning elaborated between mediascapes and their audiences. Even abbreviated field experiences can be a vital tool for audience ethnography, because, with a fieldsite visit and conversations that emerge within them in tow, any subsequent analysis of audience responses to blogs, chatroom exchanges, television viewing, or other media in which an audience is immersed can be interpreted in relation to the partial knowledge gained through a range of abbreviated field experiences.

NOTE

- 1 According to its Dubai website (<http://www.kidzania.com/dubai/>), Kidzania is “an entertainment and education center for kids – the first to offer kid activities based upon the oldest game of all: role playing. This center combines real environments with activities that allow kids to play to be grown ups. It is a city scaled down to kid size where the most common establishments you would find in any city are recreated. In this city, kids learn real life skills, reinforce educational concepts from school and values the importance of each role and profession that exist in a city. All of this is possible through the concept of ‘edutainment.’”

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Studying Addiction

My Journey Through the Landscape of Telenovela Consumption

Carolina Acosta-Alzuru

ABSTRACT

There are stories that are addictive. In particular, there are some stories, originally scripted in Latin America, that constitute a pandemic transmitted daily via the television screens of more than 130 countries. These serialized dramas are called telenovelas, and the simplicity of their codes belies the complexity of their production and consumption. This chapter focuses on the audience study aspects of my journey through the telenovela landscape. Telenovela consumption loci defy national borders. Such consumption occurs not only via television, but also on the Internet. Hence, in addition to the use of interviews, focus groups, and participant observation in Venezuela, my studies have required my presence in the swampy grounds of Internet message boards dedicated to telenovelas and in social media outlets where my movements are still somewhat tentative. The chapter's tone varies from descriptive to personal as the chapter itself chronicles more than a decade of research attempting to understand telenovelas' addictive soul.

There are stories that are addictive. In particular, there are some, originally from Latin America, that constitute a pandemic transmitted daily via the television screens of more than 130 countries. These serialized dramas are called telenovelas, and the simplicity of their codes belies the complexity of their production and consumption.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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The main fare of every telenovela is a central story of heterosexual love, hindered by intrigues and obstacles. But not all telenovelas are the same. They are usually located in a continuum between the traditional *telenovela rosa* and the so-called *telenovela de ruptura*. The traditional *telenovela rosa* is a Cinderella story where the two main characters usually belong to different socioeconomic strata. These telenovelas offer a catalog of Manichean characters. Villains are evil and conniving, and the heroine is virtuous, naïve, and sweet. The love story's context is of little importance. In contrast, in the *telenovela de ruptura*, political and sociocultural issues provide a realistic environment for a love story in which characters are complex and not always predictable (Steimberg, 1997; Acosta-Alzuru, 2003b).

Telenovelas are much more than melodramatic stories of star-crossed lovers. They constitute one of the biggest industries in the television business and a commodity in the international market. Telenovelas are creations for those who write and work in them, and ratings and shares for network executives. Most importantly, they are a staple in the daily media diet of those who consume them. For me, telenovelas are an endless and complex object of study. They are a privileged epicenter where we can examine media, culture, and society; a reflection of Latin America; one way to decipher my country, Venezuela; a constant academic challenge; and the territory through which I have been traveling for a decade.

This chapter focuses on the audience study aspects of my journey through the telenovela landscape. Telenovela consumption loci defy national borders. Such consumption occurs not only via television, but also on the Internet. Hence, in addition to the use of interviews, focus groups, and participant observation in Venezuela, my studies have required my presence in the swampy grounds of Internet message boards dedicated to telenovelas and in social media outlets where my movements are still somewhat tentative.

In this chapter, which both summarizes my work and reflects on the research process, I describe how I follow telenovela consumption and interact with these shows' audience members. First, I present an overview of my research on telenovelas – the itineraries of the four case studies I have undertaken, the questions that guided them, and the methodological choices I made to investigate the audience in each instance. This section provides the big picture of a decade of research and the context for the chapter's second section, where I offer brief tours through the reality of studying the telenovela audience in different sites and via a variety of methods. The essay ends with a concluding section that reflects my journey still further and takes a peek into my future travels.

Throughout the chapter I write in the first person and use vignettes to give the reader a glimpse of telenovela audiences and of the experience of taking their pulse, even across geographic distance. But the tone of the two first sections is different. The "Itineraries" segment is more descriptive, and the "Walking Tours" is more intimate and reflexive. The two tones signal (sometimes in an uneven and choppy manner) my progression from an "observational" to a "reflexive" technique of representation (Murphy, 2008).

As I acknowledge my writing's uneven tone, I am keenly aware of the implications of these representations and of how they "draw attention to or obscure the relationships developed, dilemmas faced, and surprises encountered via our own ethnographic encounters" (ibid, p. 283). I am also painfully conscious of the main reason for those variations in my tone: they offer evidence of my own struggles to detach myself from the more traditional (and "safe") forms of academic writing that I was socialized to pursue, and they allow instead personal reflection and critique to govern my writing in the same manner in which they have become the heartbeats of my prolonged academic immersion in the study of telenovelas (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

This chapter, conceived for a volume focused on audience studies, touches on inextricably related topics like fandom and online ethnography, which are complex and worthy of extensive and in-depth treatment, but beyond the scope of what I can provide here. In other words, the chapter is not about fandom;² but you will encounter fans as you read it. Neither does my account foreground online ethnography or its academic literature,² but you will find me wrestling with issues of identity as I walk through message boards and social media.

Finally, although I am mindful that, for some scholars, "audience-based identities and tastes [can be] seen as a threat to academic identity" (Hills, 2007, p. 44), I do not shy away from my dual identities of media academic and member of the audience I study. In that sense, when I conduct my research I do not set myself above telenovela watchers or apart from the popular culture we all consume. The travelogue that follows this brief introduction reflects my commitment to seeing myself as being thoroughly entangled in the phenomena I study and write about.

Itineraries

Ethnography is a multi-faceted process in which the requirements of detail and richness, rigor and systematicity, have to be carefully balanced, and where there is no single methodological procedure.

(Morley & Silverstone, 1991, p. 160)

Research motivated my journey through the landscape of telenovelas. Theory illuminates my path. Research questions determine both my itineraries and the methodologies that organize my voyage. But my ride is also intensely personal. None of my previous objects of study had stretched my academic muscles and challenged my determination as much as telenovelas do. After six years of immersion and training in US academia, telenovelas reconnected me with my country of birth and allowed me to understand like never before its political, social, and cultural environment.

1999–2000: *El país de las mujeres* (175 episodes)

- *Destination*: gendered Venezuela
- *Packing list*: in-depth interviews and focus groups, after the telenovela ended
- *Travelogue*: Acosta-Alzuru, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c

“You know, Carolina, we’re watching this telenovela in Venezuela that you might find interesting,” commented my friend Fernando when we saw him in Miami in February of 1999.

“Really? Why?”

“It’s different. It’s about a group of women who’re cousins. It isn’t like the typical dumb telenovela. These women say interesting things and their stories are realistic.”

“Mmm . . . what’s its name?”

“*El país de las mujeres*.”

“*The Country of Women* . . . Great title! I’ll be on the lookout for it. Maybe I’ll get lucky and Univisión will show it.”

I was lucky. A couple of months later Univisión started broadcasting *El país de las mujeres*. My friend was right: this telenovela was different from the traditional *telenovelas rosa*, with their repetitive love stories and trite language. I was hooked and intrigued. Soon I was analyzing the audiovisual text and wondering how the Venezuelan audience – soaked in the dual ideologies of *machismo* and *marianismo* – was reading these storylines and dialogues with feminist overtones.³ In addition, I was surprised to learn that *El país de las mujeres* was not written by a woman, but by the Venezuelan poet Leonardo Padrón.

Hence, after months dedicated to the textual analysis of *El país de las mujeres*, I decided to go beyond the text. Using the “circuit of culture” (Du Gay, Hall, Mackay, & Negus, 1997) as an organizational tool, I designed a comprehensive study that required a methodological mix: interviews and focus groups to study the audience, and interviews with the writer and cast members to examine encoding. Existing scholarship on telenovelas suggested that my project was ambitious. I was determined, though. Thanks to a Junior Faculty Grant I traveled to Venezuela, where I conducted interviews and focus groups after the telenovela’s final episode had aired.

I returned to the US energized by the evidence I had gathered. I also experienced the satisfaction of getting the work done and the mixed emotions of fulfillment and anxiety that precede analysis. At the same time I had a budding concern: since I do not live in Latin America, would I be able to continue studying telenovelas? Soon I set aside my preoccupation and immersed myself in the analysis and writing of conference papers and articles related to *El país de las mujeres*. Meanwhile Venezuela entered a new historical stage, as it became increasingly polarized around the figure of President Hugo Chávez.

2003–2004: *Cosita Rica* (245 episodes)

- *Destination*: political Venezuela
- *Packing list*: in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation, questionnaires via email, and observation of message boards
- *Travelogue*: Acosta-Alzuru, 2007, 2010, 2013.

I returned to my country in June 2003, after the failed April 2002 coup attempt against President Chávez and the two-month national strike of December 2003–January 2004. Venezuelans were deeply changed. Politics and the rigid logic of polarization had invaded everyday life, labeling and dividing the population into pro- and anti-Chávez opposing sides. This time my research goal was more modest: to interview people who worked in the telenovela industry and to learn their opinions regarding the kinds of stories that could and should be told in a politically charged Venezuela. After interviewing actors, producers, and network executives, I returned to writer Leonardo Padrón's house. He was writing the third episode of his new telenovela, *Cosita Rica* (*Sweet Thing*), scheduled to air in September:

"I want to tell the immense and passionate love story of the protagonists. At the same time, I intend to tell the story of this country's deep division. Therefore, the antagonist will be the president of a corporation in which employees are divided. Some admire him and some loathe him."

"You mean like a metaphor of Venezuela?" I asked.

"Exactly!"

Research questions raced through my mind: How would my polarized country receive this telenovela? Would they decode the metaphor? How soon? How would the government react? Could the writer pull this idea off? My academic instincts went into high gear: "I MUST study this one as it happens!" But how could I? The writer assured me that I would be granted the access I needed to study his creative choices and decisions and the production process. But the geographic distance was a reality I needed to deal with. I applied successfully for a grant from the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts at the University of Georgia and traveled to Venezuela four times during the 11 months when *Cosita Rica* was on the air. Audience members were first interviewed in person and then I requested them to answer questions via email every two weeks. I monitored message boards, interviewed some of their participants, and analyzed *Cosita Rica*'s ratings and shares on key dates. The production aspects of my study included over 30 hours of interviews with Leonardo Padrón and more than 40 hours of conversations with actors, directors, and production team members. In this way I was able to follow continuously both *Cosita Rica*'s production encoding and the audience decoding.

Cosita Rica represented political Venezuela. I dedicated innumerable hours to the study of the many metaphors and allegories included in the telenovela and to

the production and consumption of its carefully calibrated mix of romance, reality, humor, and commentary. Given the country's deep polarization around the figure of Hugo Chávez, I was particularly interested in the audience's reception of the telenovela's political critique. *Cosita Rica* marked my definitive intellectual and emotional return to Venezuela, as I connected with my country through my scholarship. This case study became my first book written in Spanish (Acosta-Alzuru, 2007). It also placed me, for good, on a parallel route to writer Leonardo Padrón. I realized that the engagement of his stories with political and sociocultural issues rendered his telenovelas a particularly suitable epicenter for the examination of the links between media, culture, and society. In consequence, now that I felt I had "conquered" the geographic distance and knew I had the stamina required for these complex studies, I was determined to continue studying Padrón's telenovelas. For his part, he was comfortable with my inquisitive presence close to his work and gave me increasing access to his creative process.

2006–2007: *Ciudad Bendita* (204 episodes)

- *Destination*: vain Venezuela
- *Packing list*: in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation, questionnaires via email, observation of message boards, and daily access to ratings and shares
- *Travelogue*: Acosta-Alzuru, 2008a, 2008b

My country is obsessed with physical beauty. We take immense pride in our 70+ international beauty crowns. And, even though 51% of Venezuelans live under the poverty line (Ponce, 2009), they spend more on cosmetics and beautifying procedures than on education (Delgado Barrios, 2006). The use of plastic surgery is widespread. Venezuela ranks among the top three countries in the world for plastic surgery (Sosa, 2001; International, 2007). The media deliver a steady diet of perfectly shaped women and men. And telenovelas are no exception.

In this context, Leonardo Padrón wrote *Ciudad Bendita* (*Blessed City*) with the explicit purpose of critiquing Venezuelan vanity and obsession with beauty. In particular, the protagonists transgressed the beauty code (she has a noticeable limp that cannot be cured, and he is not handsome). They also deviated from one of the telenovela's most enduring codes: protagonists meet and fall in love immediately, before a series of obstacles and misunderstandings keep them separated for most of the episodes until the happy end. In *Ciudad Bendita*, instead, protagonist "Bendita" is infatuated with the antagonist for the first 50 episodes, and only falls in love with protagonist "Juan" after episode 70. Furthermore, in addition to its atypical protagonists, *Ciudad Bendita* included storylines that criticized the national fixation with physical appearance, eternal youth, body image, and plastic surgery.

With so many violations of the telenovela code, could *Ciudad Bendita* succeed in the aggressive ratings war? Would the audience decode the critique? These were the main questions that directed my examination of this telenovela, my third case study.

I was interested not only in those viewers who watched *Ciudad Bendita*, but also in regular consumers of telenovelas who rejected its transgressive codes and stayed away from it.

The audience research design was very similar to the one adopted in my previous study. I traveled to Venezuela four times, in order to conduct interviews and focus groups and to observe families that watched *Ciudad Bendita*. I also took the pulse of viewers via email questionnaires and phone interviews, which allowed me to breach the geographic gap. There was one important addition to my methodological toolbox, though: I had access to ratings and market shares on a daily basis. These numbers rounded up my understanding of audience behavior, as they gave me snapshots of *Ciudad Bendita*'s consumption that complemented nicely my qualitative research. And, since television production and consumption are deeply connected and mutually articulated, it was particularly helpful to analyze the numbers that constitute the currency of the television business and determine the professional survival of those who work in it.

2008–2009: La vida entera (120 episodes)

- *Destination:* the “universal” telenovela made in Venezuela
- *Packing list:* in-depth interviews (in person or via Skype), focus groups, participant observation, questionnaires via email, observation of message boards, analysis of daily ratings and shares, social media, and chats via Blackberry Messenger
- *Travelogue:* in progress

Venezuela has long been considered a major player in the international telenovela market. But, in the last decade, the country's productions have lost ground to telenovelas produced by creative newcomer Colombia, traditional rival Mexico, and powerful Miami-based Telemundo (owned by the US network National Broadcasting Company (NBC)). By 2008, although Colombian telenovelas included a wide range of storylines, Mexico and Telemundo privileged melodrama and trite romance over telenovelas with local flavor, which incited reflection about gender roles and political and sociocultural issues. In addition, the Venezuelan telenovela industry had both struggled with and been shaped by the internal political forces of polarization, government–media belligerence, and media regulation that have characterized the presidential tenures of Hugo Chávez (Tremamunno, 2002; Cañizales, 2003; Marcano & Barrera Tyska, 2004; Acosta-Alzuru, 2007).

For 50 years, privately owned networks Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) and Venevisión battled against each other fiercely, in a ratings war that defined Venezuelan television and its telenovela industry. The latter has also been marked by the changing relationship between these networks and the Chávez government. After a brief honeymoon period with the president, both networks joined the ranks of the opposition until July 2004, when Venevisión drastically moderated its editorial line after a much-publicized meeting between its chief executive officer (CEO), Gustavo

Cisneros, and Chávez. By 2006 Venevisión was not broadcasting any content that was critical of the government. In contrast, RCTV maintained its oppositional stance. In May 2007 the government did not renew the network's 50-year-old license. RCTV ceased to exist as a commercial network, and Venevisión was suddenly in the unusual position of being assured of high revenues in Venezuela regardless of the quality of its programming. Venevisión's executives decided to prioritize the international market over the captive local audience by producing telenovelas "devoid of local flavor that tell universal love stories" (Arismendi, 2008).

Leonardo Padrón, who had given Venevisión four of its most resounding successes – *Contra viento y marea*, *El país de las mujeres*, *Cosita Rica*, and *Ciudad Bendita* – is well known for his competitive nature and for the strong local flavor and realistic context of his stories. However, in 2008 he wrote telenovela *La vida entera* (*A Lifetime*) under unprecedented circumstances: there was no domestic competition, but there was instead an order to write a "universal" telenovela, without local references, that would compete effectively in the international market. Hence my research questions focused on whether the audience would embrace this mandated change in the writer's style and storylines. Would Venezuelans still be able to recognize themselves in this telenovela (as happened in previous telenovelas written by Padrón)?

I traveled once to Miami, the "Mecca" of the international telenovela, to conduct interviews with writers and network executives at Univision and at Telemundo. These conversations, focused on the area of production and marketing, provided important clues for the audience dimension of the study.

I visited Venezuela three times and introduced a few changes to the methodological design of this case study. These modifications were the product of four new developments: the unavoidable presence of social media, the possibility of conducting video interviews via Skype, the generalized use of Blackberry devices in Venezuela, and the international consumption of the telenovela via video sharing services and webpages.⁴ Facebook became the newest site in my collection of loci where I gathered information about audience reception. I monitored Facebook pages related to *La vida entera* and created a Facebook group for it, where viewers exchanged opinions and I had the possibility of suggesting discussion topics. In addition, YouTube and other video sharing sites blurred the geographic borders of *La vida entera*'s audience. For the first time my study counted on audience participants located in the United States and Europe. Skype allowed me to conduct interviews that were closer to a "face-to-face" experience than regular telephone had permitted. Finally, the widespread use of Blackberry smartphones among many of my audience research participants gave them the opportunity to comment spontaneously on the telenovela, without waiting for my prompts or questions.

* * *

The itineraries I have charted thus far show that I started my journey by conceptualizing the audience as a group bound by geography – Venezuela – and by its

consumption of a specific telenovela – *El país de las mujeres*. My first methodological toolbox was conventional: interviews, focus groups, and participant observation conducted in Venezuela. As I delved deeper into the topic, my notion of the audience became defined less by geography and more by telenovela production and consumption as signifying cultural practices. This translated into an increase in the number of sites where I could observe and analyze the telenovela audience. In addition, my determination to monitor reception throughout the lifetime of particular telenovelas and the rapid development of telecommunications technology expanded my catalog of methods and gradually increased the opportunity to gather participant-generated information.

Walking Tours

It is a qualitative research tenet to combine emic and etic perspectives so that they provide a multidimensional view of culture (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). And it is the experience of many that you can understand the essence of a city only by walking through it. This section relies on these two principles. It consists of short “walking tours” through the locations where I study telenovela audiences. In them, I offer specific research anecdotes and some of the reflections that they have elicited through the years.

An Eclectic Neighborhood: Family Rooms, TV Rooms, Bakeries, Coffee Shops, and the Internet

In Venezuela I use traditional qualitative methods to study the audience: interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. One of my favorite and most useful research routines is to watch, in the company of a family at home, an episode of the telenovela I am studying, and then to follow up on this observation exercise with a focus group.⁵ It is not difficult to find participants for these occasions. Venezuelan families usually watch the 9 p.m. telenovela together (Barrios, 1988; Acuña & Blanco, 1994; Vallenilla, 1994; Marín, 2003). I observe as they watch and comment on the episode, jotting a few key notes and taking many “headnotes” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I am particularly interested in participants’ reactions and comments related to my case study’s research questions. At the same time, I take note of whether they give their exclusive attention to the show or just watch it while they do something else. I also notice who is in charge of the remote control and how certain characters, storylines, or dialogues trigger responses and emotions in each family member. These observations help me tailor my prepared focus group guide to this particular party. Hence I put the same questions to every family that participates in my study, plus some questions that I craft on the spot, which are specific to each group’s consumption experience. These are rich evenings, which do not end

when I arrive home. They require several hours of writing, as I expand my fieldnotes before I finally go to sleep.

Supposedly, I was taking a two-day break from my research at the beach condo/club outside of Caracas where I have vacationed since my childhood. But, as the evening progressed, I knew I had to watch the telenovela I was studying at 9 p.m. The TV set in our apartment is tiny and unreliable, so I decided to go to the TV room in the clubhouse. Hopefully people would be watching *Cosita Rica*. I arrived at 8:50 p.m. and the room was already nearly full. I sat in the last row of chairs. About forty people, ranging from children to senior citizens, waited for the evening's episode. The television was already tuned to Venevisión.

When *Cosita Rica* began the room was suddenly quiet. Everybody watched intently until the commercial break, when they all started talking at the same time, commenting on the telenovela within their small group of friends. I was furious at myself: I had not anticipated that this could be a research opportunity! Therefore the queen of notepads, writing utensils, and research gadgets did not even have a pen! My hands clenched tightly the only object I had with me: the keys to the apartment.

I noticed a girl in the middle of a group of tweens. She was probably 12 or 13 years old. The girl was imitating "María Suspiro," one of *Cosita Rica*'s most popular characters. Its storyline of identical twins separated at birth, who fall in love with the same man, had captured Venezuelans' imagination. My study already indicated that this was the telenovela's overwhelmingly favorite storyline. I observed the girl intently as she spoke to her friends using María Suspiro's nasal tone, vocabulary, and mannerism. Her friends laughed, delighted with the impersonation. She repeated the routine during every commercial break. Her audience increased every time and roared with laughter. When the episode ended, a lady who was probably in her 70s turned to the girl and asked: "Please, can you do the María Suspiro thing one last time before we leave?" Without a shred of shyness, the girl agreed. For about 15 minutes, people in the room interacted with "María Suspiro" before giving the girl (and the character) a standing ovation.⁶

In Venezuela I also conduct face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews with audience members. I use an interview guide that includes questions that are particular to the telenovela I am studying and queries that explore telenovela consumption in general. During the interview I often show participants specific telenovela scenes to set up a particular discussion topic. For this reason, ten years ago I would conduct all interviews at a central location, where I had a TV/VCR unit. Now I can show the scenes on my laptop, and conversations can take place wherever it is most convenient for the participant: homes, restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries.

If the participant agrees (and, so far, no interviewee has ever declined), this first interview is followed by periodic email questionnaires and occasional exchanges

through chats and interviews via Skype.⁷ My goal is to follow the audience throughout the telenovela's lifetime, even if I am away from Venezuela. I should note that my audience studies require information gathered on the production side of my study. Especially day-to-day knowledge of each episode's content, before it is actually broadcast, informs some of my audience questions. The end result is a wealth of evidence regarding the telenovela reception process and its articulations to the cultural context and to other moments in the circuit of culture: representation, identity, production, and regulation.

Participants enjoy the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions about their favorite television show. At the end of the study, when I ask them to reflect on the experience of being a research participant, they write lengthy paragraphs explaining why they looked forward to our conversations and to my emails. They also admit that participating in the study encouraged them to become aware of details about the stories that they never noticed before. Some of them even say that being in the study "changed" them as viewers.⁸ Most importantly, they felt that my research gave them a "safe and serious" space to talk candidly about telenovelas.

The delicious aroma of coffee and baked goods permeated the air of the pastry shop where Gabi and I were about to meet. It is a smell that never fails to work a miracle on me: it reconciles me with my troubled country, where research can be an uphill battle.

I glanced at my watch. It was 4 p.m. I had been there for ten minutes already. I looked around even though I knew that Gabi would probably be late. After all, it is almost impossible to find a Venezuelan who will arrive punctually to a meeting; especially in Caracas, where traffic is maddening. This is why I always use the tried-and-true strategy of telling my participants how I will dress for our meeting, so I don't have to be on the lookout for them for an extended period of time.

I concentrated on my notes and didn't notice Gabi's arrival, ten minutes later. "Hola, are you Carolina?" I looked up and saw a young woman whose outfit was obviously similar to the way *Cosita Rica*'s protagonist, "Paula C.," dressed in the telenovela. As I thanked Gabi for coming and offered her something to eat and drink, I noticed that she was even wearing a choker with her initials, just like "Paula C." did.

During the interview it became clear that Gabi was a huge fan of this telenovela, and particularly of Fabiola Colmenares, the actor who played "Paula C." Gabi even confessed that she had modified her wardrobe to dress like this character at all times.

One hour later, when we were wrapping up the interview, I heard a cell phone ringing with the unmistakable tune of *Cosita Rica*'s musical theme. I looked around trying to guess where the sound was coming from. Gabi laughed, "It's my phone. Now you know how crazy I am about this telenovela!" Then she stood up

and raised the back of her top to show me a small smiley face tattoo on her lower back. She proceeded to explain that *carita feliz* was the nickname she had assigned to the telenovela's male protagonist. "I'm in love with him, and I don't know what I'm going to do at 9 p.m. after *Cosita Rica* ends!"

Walking on the Wild Side: Life on the Message Boards

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explain it well: communication and community are linked. The context of communication is the community, and the circulatory system of the community is provided by communication. Furthermore, the relationship between communication and community has been marked by technological developments – the telegraph, the railroad, and the telephone (Carey, 1989). Similarly, advances in telecommunications, new media, and the Internet sustain virtual communities. Internet message boards are examples of virtual communities built around a common interest, where users post and respond to other users' posts. These messages are organized and archived by topics (threads) defined by the users whose communication is asynchronous.

The number of message boards dedicated to telenovelas seems infinite. Every country where telenovelas are consumed has several of them, most telenovelas have their own, and networks and production companies host several message boards too. Their level of activity varies greatly. Some have a handful of posts per day, while others have an overwhelming number of messages and threads. For example, back in 2005 when I had been observing message boards for a couple of years, Univision already hosted more than 800 of them; the boards had 3 million users who exchanged 30 million messages per month (Pisani, 2005). Today those numbers are even bigger.

In my case studies, I monitor daily several message boards, all written in Spanish:

- the board that is specific to the telenovela I am studying (for example, *Cosita Rica*: <http://www.network54.com/Forum/223657/>);
- the boards of the telenovelas that compete directly against the one I am studying;
- TVVI (Televisión Venezolana e Internacional), the most popular board dedicated to Venezuelan television. About 90% of its posts are related to telenovelas (<http://s6.zetaboards.com/TVVI/forum/14090/>);
- Recordar es Vivir, international message board focused on telenovelas, where Venezuelan telenovelas are a recurring topic of discussion (<http://www.network54.com/Forum/243414/>).

These message boards offer an array of content: from valuable information to the repetition of gossip and press speculation of the worst kind. We can also find in them specialized voices coexisting with mini campaigns designed to manipulate public opinion.⁹ Board participants live around the world and are fluent in Spanish.

They range from those who consider telenovelas an art form to those who see these shows exclusively as a source of gossip. Some users are polite, while others are extremely rude.

Most board participants feel the need to hide their true identity behind a pseudonym (“nick,” an obvious shorthand for the English word “nickname,” is the term used by board participants in Spanish). For personal and/or professional reasons, some board users lurk and participate very little. There are others, however, who take advantage of the anonymity that their “nick” provides to cultivate a particular agenda: either to promote/defend or to denigrate/attack a particular telenovela product, network, artist, and so on. These users merit close attention. If you follow them through time, their agenda eventually surfaces.¹⁰ And these agendas are great pointers to the strong competitive economic undercurrents present in the telenovela world.

After a couple of weeks of observing the boards included in my study, I am usually familiar with the most active participants, their styles, and the different roles they play: moderators, leaders, industry informants, cheerleaders, critics, hecklers, and snipers. Many participants hide behind their “nick” and never identify themselves. Others reveal their true identity at some point or when I approach them via the option of a direct message.¹¹ All of them create an online persona with distinct characteristics, which incorporate varying degrees of fandom for the telenovela genre, for a particular telenovela, for an actor, or – most common in the Venezuelan boards – for one of the two major telenovela producers: RCTV or Venevisión. When the latter is the object, network fandom is akin to partisanship. In extreme cases it is similar to sports hooliganism.

I usually participate very little in these message boards. I post a message or two, explaining that I am a Venezuelan scholar who studies telenovelas and that, as part of my research, I will be reading their posts. I also provide my email address and offer to answer any questions they might have about my study or about myself. Moderators usually email me a welcome. On rare occasions I receive correspondence from other board members. My decision to be a non-participant observer is due to my fear of getting tangled in one of those arguments in which one is not sure of the intentions and agendas behind the discussing “nicks.” For years I have wrestled with the impossibility of crossing the swampy terrain of message boards without getting soiled. Simply put, there are too many virtual agendas that are at play. And it is safer to observe and take fieldnotes without forgetting that anyone can hide behind a “nick.”

There are key occasions for message board observation that help to understand the reception process. For example, during the broadcast of a telenovela’s first and final episodes, I keep an eye on the reactions and comments of these virtual communities as they watch my object of study. There are some enlightening in-depth discussions that illustrate the parameters and factors that the audience considers when choosing a particular telenovela.

At the same time, contradiction and speculation can also reign in message boards. Frequently arguments generate more heat than light. It is particularly interesting to observe the board behavior of some users who also participate in my study via

interviews, chats, and email questionnaires. Often their online persona is completely different from the individual whom I meet face to face in Venezuela. Many times their opinions on the message board follow one of the board's opinion leaders and/or the partisan position of their own constructed online persona, and they are different from the ones they express in my study. This, of course, begs two questions: Who is the real person? And what are his/her real perceptions and opinions? Notwithstanding inconsistencies, hidden agendas, and role playing, the observation and understanding of message boards is essential for my research, because these inflection points help me deepen my knowledge about telenovelas. It is in these contradictions that the paradoxes inherent to this genre thrive and some of the questions that need to be answered hide.

It was the most surreal experience of my life. The bookstore was packed with people. I had already given two short interviews that would appear later on national television. "*Hola*, thanks for coming! What's your name?" I asked each person who was standing in the long line in front of the table where I sat signing copies of my book *Venezuela es una telenovela*.

I was in Caracas, and this was my book's official presentation. I kept observing myself as I played the unusual role of being the center of attention, and signed copy after copy.

"*Hola*, thanks for coming! What's your name?" I asked the twenty-something man who was standing in front of me as he smiled warmly and handed me his copy of my book.

"My name is Luis, but you might know me as 'telenoveler' from the TVVI message board," he said.

I looked at him intently. I knew exactly who he was in the Internet. However, I had always pictured him as older, with a mean demeanor and a harsh tone of voice. This guy seemed pretty nice. I shook his hand.

"Can I have a picture with you?" he requested.

"Sure," I said. "Now, *this* is extremely surreal," I thought, as I smiled to the camera.

The woman who took the picture introduced herself:

"*Hola*, I also participate in TVVI. I'm "marina10," but my real name is Mirna. It's very nice to meet you, *doctora*."

Luis and Mirna explained that they had just met in person for the first time here at the event, and that there were two more TVVI participants standing further back in the line: "justo" and "fanaticonumero1." An hour later, when I had finally signed all the books, I sat with the four of them. Only Mirna lived in Caracas. The three men had travelled to the capital with the express purpose of attending the presentation of my book. We talked about how they had finally met in person that night, and they joked about some of their attitudes and posts in the board. We took more pictures. Two days later I saw the photographs and read their posts about the book event and me in the TVVI message board. Suddenly

the line that separates the virtual realm of computer mediated communication and what we call reality had blurred. The TVVI community was now more “real,” whereas I had become a bit virtual.

The Newest Borough: Social Media

What does the contemporary self want? The camera has created a culture of celebrity; the computer is creating a culture of connectivity. As the two technologies converge – broadband tipping the Web from text to image, social-networking sites spreading the mesh of interconnection ever wider – the two cultures betray a common impulse. Celebrity and connectivity are both ways of becoming known. This is what the contemporary self wants. It wants to be recognized, wants to be connected: It wants to be visible. If not to the millions, on Survivor or Oprah, then to the hundreds, on Twitter or Facebook. This is the quality that validates us, this is how we become real to ourselves – by being seen by others.

(Deresiewicz, 2009)

Facebook

A social media network “can be defined as an individual web page which enables online, human-relationship building by collecting useful information and sharing it with specific or unspecific people” (Kwon & Wen, 2010). In other words, social media are online places where people share, network, and communicate. In addition, these sites encourage feedback such as voting, comments, and favorites. (An example of this characteristic is Facebook’s “I like” feature.) Social media usage has grown exponentially in the last five years. According to the Nielsen Company, people spend more time on blogs and social networks than on other online destinations. Globally, Facebook was the most popular social network site in December 2009, when it had 206.9 million unique visitors (Ehrlich, 2010).

In 2008, when I designed my study of *La vida entera*, I was already aware of the massive presence of telenovela groups and fan pages on Facebook. Some were set up and administered by the telenovela’s producing network/company, while fans created other groups. Hence I decided to set up a group for *La vida entera* where fans could exchange opinions, post pictures, and generally exercise their fandom. This was a different experience from monitoring the message boards. First, most group members watched *La vida entera*, as opposed to the behavior of message board participants, who sometimes commented even if they had not watched the show. Second, the use of pseudonyms is rare in Facebook.¹² Third, I played an active role as I posted topics on the group’s discussion board.

Membership in the group reached 625 by the telenovela’s final episode.¹³ Group participants used the “wall” extensively to express spontaneous opinions. During the six months when the telenovela was on the air, I posted 24 topics on the discussion board, which elicited spirited exchanges. These topics were inspired by my study’s

research questions and by developments in the storylines. In addition, group members posted 16 discussion topics, and also web links and photographs related to *La vida entera*. Some members created a spinoff group dedicated to actor Luis Gerónimo Abreu, who played “Guille.” This character’s love story with “Tata” eclipsed the protagonists and became the public’s favorite.

Once again, I witnessed the links between consumption and production. User-generated content from this Facebook group often came up in the production side of my research. Author Leonardo Padrón read carefully the musings of group participants, and actors working in *La vida entera* occasionally wrote on the group’s wall and replied to the public’s comments.

Video Blogs and Chats

“This video has content from Venevisión International, which has blocked it in your country on copyright grounds.” The message appeared every time someone outside Venezuela tried to watch *La vida entera*’s episodes uploaded on YouTube and other video sharing sites. The warning was displayed even on videos uploaded by the network for promotional purposes. Venevisión executives told me that the rationale for this was to increase the international sales of the telenovela. This international block disgusted viewers around the world who had watched previous telenovelas written by Leonardo Padrón, admired many actors in *La vida entera*’s stellar cast, and were used to watching telenovelas online.¹⁴

Soon there was an alternative: full episodes were embedded in a blog. The news traveled fast along the telenovela grapevine, via individual emails and chats. At the same time, fans protected the site. I could not find any posts on message boards or social media that included the actual address of the blog. As one audience member told me, “we must keep the secret so Venevisión never finds it.” Before long, people were watching and writing so many comments on the blog that the author/owner (who used a pseudonym) decided to embed a chat on the site where some of *La vida entera*’s hardcore fans met regularly to talk about their telenovela. Every day, at the time when it was 9 p.m. in Venezuela, a group gathered virtually to chat about the episode being broadcast. Participants who were watching live in Venezuela would do a “play by play” of the telenovela for those living abroad, who eagerly “listened.” During commercial breaks and at the end of the episode, the chat’s activity intensified significantly. I observed this nightly ritual with fascination. Many chat participants lived in Europe and stayed up until after midnight in order to participate in the conversation. The next day they would write about how tired they were for lack of sleep. But they rarely missed the chat. Two months after *La vida entera* had ended, there were still occasional chats on the blog. The conversation usually centered on how much they missed the telenovela and on “Guille” and “Tata,” their two favorite characters.

I contacted the blog owner the moment I heard about the site. We emailed periodically and he kept me informed about his decision process regarding the

content of the chat. When *La vida entera* entered its final month, he offered to place a recruitment announcement for my study on the blog. I wrote the notice and he placed it prominently, at the top of the main page. Thanks to the announcement, I was able to interview, via Skype and email, 32 audience members who did not live in Venezuela and watched the telenovela on the blog. These one-time interviews at the end of the telenovela rounded off my study and provided remarkable material, which supplemented the evidence gathered from viewers who watched in Venezuela. I also interviewed, in Caracas, three of the chat participants who delivered each episode's "play by play." In sum, the video blog and the chat became important research sites for my study. They represented yet another place where telenovela consumption revealed its addictive, determined, and transnational qualities.

I woke up to another sunny morning in Caracas. I had planned this one carefully. At 9 a.m. I would interview Adriana. At 11.30 a.m. it would be Graciela's turn. Both women had emailed me, responding to my announcement in the blog. I set up both interviews over the phone. Adriana immediately told me who she was in the chat: "mimo." Graciela only mentioned her blog video consumption.

Even though each conversation should take about an hour, I never schedule interviews at only one hour distance from each other because of the city's traffic and the culture's general lack of punctuality: I try to avoid at all costs making my participants wait. If someone must wait, that should always be me.

I arrived at the bakery at 8.30 a.m., with enough time to have breakfast. Adriana arrived only a few minutes after 9. However, the interview was much longer than I expected. Her answers were lengthy and detailed. Surprisingly, Graciela arrived at 10:30, when I was wrapping up Adriana's interview. I introduced them: "Hola Graciela, this is Adriana. I'm about to finish my conversation with her, and I'll be ready to talk with you. Meanwhile, can I get you a cup of coffee and a pastry?" Graciela and Adriana shook hands. Adriana asked: "Do you participate in the chat, Graciela?" "Yes, every night," answered Graciela with a broad smile, "I'm 'ggrr,' and you?" "I'm 'mimo,' replied Adriana. Next thing they were laughing and hugging each other, delighted to finally meet face to face. [. . .]

Victoria also participated regularly in the chat. I interviewed her one afternoon at the coffee shop of an arts complex she wanted to visit. When our conversation was almost over, Victoria showed me some cartoons she had drawn of her favorite characters in *La vida entera*. The level of detail in her work fascinated me. Also, there was so much excitement in her voice as she explained each element she had included in her drawings! She promised she would email me all the cartoons. I was surprised to see that one of her drawings was titled "Carolina." It was Victoria's depiction of me studying telenovelas. Right there I realized, more than ever before, that researchers, too, are produced, represented, and consumed. I am also a character in my journey.



Looking Back and Looking Forward

Scholars frequently report having difficulties in recruiting participants for their studies. I have not encountered these hurdles. Telenovelas are consumed massively and there is no shortage of potential study participants. In addition, audience members are usually eager to share their experiences and opinions. They enjoy talking about these shows' characters and plots. At the end of each case study, many report that their participation gave them a feeling of validation about their telenovela consumption habit. This foregrounds one of the many paradoxes inherent to this television genre: it is simultaneously (and massively) consumed and derided. And that contradiction marks everything and everyone related to telenovelas – viewers, writers, actors, regulators, and the scholars who study them.

Geographic distance is the main source of many of the challenges that I face in my research and the trigger for the methodological solutions I strive to find, aided as I am by technology and new developments in telecommunications. The mix of being culturally close to, yet geographically far from, Venezuela exacerbates the

insider/outsider tension that is part and parcel of ethnographic studies (Murphy, 1999; Parameswaran, 2001). I occupy the subject position of outsider when I research production. Even after a decade of investigating telenovela production in Venezuela, and despite the continuous warm welcome I receive in television studios, dressing rooms, and writers' homes and offices, I know I am an outsider. I do not work in the telenovela industry. In contrast, I do not feel as an outsider when I study the audience because I watch telenovelas. And, although years of research have left their mark on my consumption process, I still think of myself as an audience member, and that links me to my reception participants regardless of other demographic and cultural markers where our identities do not intersect.

The insider/outsider tension points to the key role that identity plays in academic research. Identity is an undeniable factor in the topics we choose to study and in the epistemological and ontological assumptions and commitments that underpin our scholarship. But it is also a fundamental concept for the examination of telenovela audiences where identities are not only constructed in the telenovela text, but also produced, consumed, and regulated within the specific cultures that impregnate the sites where I have studied telenovela reception. This is most patent in my face-to-face exchanges with study informants who also participate in message boards or social media. It is a facet of my journey that needs to be further studied and analyzed.

The comprehensive nature of my case studies challenges me as much as the geographic gap does. Attempting to study telenovelas using a multiperspective model like the circuit of culture is not for the faint of heart. It requires particular stamina and creativity, because it is akin to running on a parallel course to a strange Olympic event: a relay obstacle race. As I run, I can see up close how the runners pass the baton to each other. I watch how ideas and talent become a script, and how hard work and more talent transform the script into televised installments. I observe how audience members interpret what they watch and make it part of their everyday life, and how the entertainment press reports and speculates about the production and consumption of the audiovisual text. I witness the way the audience's readings become factors in the writing and staging of the story. And I can detail the kinds of hurdles that make up the race's course – professional, personal, commercial, expected, imposed, or unanticipated obstacles. This is a difficult, complex, long race, which requires both speed and endurance. This race also provides evidence characterized by depth, texture, and complexity: it never simplifies my object of study for the purpose of our investigation, and it underscores the links among media, culture, and society.

My journey is not finished. The theoretical articulations of the different moments of the circuit of culture demand more research. The changing, paradoxical, and unpredictable nature of the telenovela world requires more studying. And my country also calls for continuous research. Venezuelan television and telenovelas are changing as the country transforms. Political polarization keeps growing, and the Chávez government is gradually diminishing the freedom of expression through media content laws and through the closing of opposition media outlets. The chilling

effect of these measures is already obvious. And the impact on international sales of Venezuelan telenovelas is undeniable. Therefore it is not the time to stop. On the contrary, as both the industry and its context change, I must continue to examine how and why telenovela addiction works. Hence I face new itineraries. There are more destinies and audience hot spots that require my presence, and more packing lists that need to be planned for. I still have a lot of walking, talking, and observing to do as I traverse the beguiling landscape of telenovelas in search for their addictive soul.

Itinerary in progress: La mujer perfecta (120 episodes?)

- *Possible destinations:* the end of Venezuelan telenovelas? The first telenovela protagonist with autism. The first telenovela with Twitter: @lamujerperfecta
- *Packing list:* in-depth interviews (in person or via Skype), focus groups, participant observation, questionnaires via email, observation of message boards, analysis of daily ratings and share, chats via Blackberry, participant observation on Twitter
- *Travelogue:* to be determined

NOTES

- 1 There are wonderful books that give fandom the in-depth treatment it deserves. I recommend particularly Jenkins (1992), Hills (2002) and Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington (2007).
- 2 Some of the authors who have written about the ethics, procedures, and conundrums of doing online ethnographies are Bird (2003), Sade-Beck (2004), Markham (2008), and Driscoll and Gregg (2010).
- 3 *Machismo* is a set of beliefs that include the idea that men are superior to women, have more extensive rights, and belong to the public sphere, while women should stay in man's shadow and in the private realm. According to *marianismo*, women are morally superior, they are the owners of spiritual strength and they have a capacity for self-sacrifice that makes them particularly fit to be good mothers. The combination of these two ideologies places women in the private sphere of the household and makes them take the brunt of parental responsibility.
- 4 According to Research in Motion (Blackberry's manufacturer), Venezuela outpaces Europe in per capita use of smartphones (Cancel, 2009).
- 5 Families that have participated in my studies range from three to eight members. The structure of these groups varies from traditional – mother, father, and children of different ages – to nontraditional combinations. The latter include, but are not limited to, grandmother and grandchildren, grandfather, mother, children and aunt, and mother, children and mother's partner.
- 6 All the vignettes in the chapter were written on the basis of my unpublished expanded fieldnotes.
- 7 Participants who belong to lower socioeconomic strata have Internet access thanks to the widespread presence of Internet cafés in their neighborhoods.

- 8 Because telenovelas are a spectacle of emotions, their consumption tends to be very emotional. Participants in my studies tend to rationalize more their reception of the shows, which moderates the emotional aspects of their consumption.
- 9 The entertainment press lurks in message boards. Through the years I have seen repeatedly how a post becomes “news,” even when it was completely untrue. This is the main reason why some use message boards to advance their own agendas.
- 10 Often, in time, even their true identity becomes obvious.
- 11 Most message boards have the option of contacting other registered users directly, via their “nick” (their email address is not shown). This type of communication is private and does not appear on the message board. I approach some users this way to ask them if they would be willing to have a conversation with me about the telenovela I am studying. About 30% of those contacted agree to meet me in person or via Skype.
- 12 The absence of pseudonyms does not imply that each user does not construct a Facebook persona. We all do when we choose what to include in our profile and what to post on our wall and our friends’ walls.
- 13 After I created the group, two Facebook fan pages were created. One had 98 fans and the other over 1,600. Both pages had almost no activity.
- 14 In addition to discouraging the public’s good will toward the network, blocking the videos did not seem to help international sales either, which is a topic that is beyond the scope of this chapter. The jury is still out on whether blocking content encourages or discourages international sales of specific telenovelas.

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The Reflexive Self

The Expressive Subject in Makeover Television and Audience Research

Katherine Sender

ABSTRACT

Drawing from a large audience research project conducted by a team of researchers at the University of Pennsylvania, I consider how the methodological challenges of doing audience research can inform a broader investigation of the production of a reflexive self. Looking at responses to four US makeover reality shows, our data suggest that neither of the two main perspectives that dominate reality TV research, the uses and gratifications approach and the governmentality critique, fully account for the meanings the viewers we talked to brought to makeover texts. They acknowledged learning some things from these shows, while pointing to big differences between the shows. Yet producing themselves as disciplined citizens appears far less significant than their investments in the possibilities of self-transformation: specifically, transforming the self's relation to the self. Makeover shows facilitate an articulation of a particular kind of self, which has insight into itself, has agency about itself, and that cares for itself. Yet this reflexive self is also produced through the research process, where implicit hierarchies of value concerning expressivity and self-reflection are paralleled, even reinforced, by the apparently diverse routines of low-brow makeover television and high-brow academic research.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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The capacity to reflect tends to be seen, first, as a distinctly modern phenomenon and, second, as something fundamentally good.¹ Given the emphasis, in reality television and in makeover shows in particular, on the production and performance of the self, audience research in this area seems an ideal place to consider what we mean by reflexivity, how this is shaped, and what its values and limits might be. Makeover shows encourage viewers to see themselves as if from the outside and to consider their lives within overarching narratives of transformation, meanwhile promising that consumption is the answer to the question of the self. As part of a larger genre of reality television, makeover shows present audiences with glimpses of their production processes, allowing a reflexive distance in the construction of reality. Other media technologies, especially online, provide access to communities of critics who weigh in on the shows' production routines. Makeover shows and their reception epitomize shifts toward increasingly reflexive modes of mediated engagement, which deserve analysis. Further, investigation into reflexivity makes its own reflexive demands. What role might audience research play in reproducing assumptions about the cultural value of reflexivity? This chapter draws on data gathered for a large audience research study of viewers of US makeover shows (Sender, in press). I consider here the extent to which audiences of makeover television shows can be seen as reflexive about their engagement with the shows, the manner in which audiences draw on makeover narratives to produce a reflexive self, and the manner in which reflexivity might be a product of the research process itself.

Anthony Giddens (1991) sees the modern identity as inherently self-reflexive. In contrast to the pre-modern self, constrained as it was by role and structural position, the modern self "has to be reflexively made [. . .] amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities" (p. 3). The flexible capitalism that characterizes the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has manifested in part through diversifying media technologies and genres. These mediated forms offer unprecedented opportunities for self-representation and demand reflexive attention to the idea of self-presentation and assembly. Makeover television's *raison d'être* is to help people navigate through the puzzling diversity of possibilities that this new media landscape offers: What to wear? How to eat? Who to be? Makeover television is paradigmatically self-reflexive in Giddens' terms: its narratives and modes of representation posit identity, the body, affect, and behavior as intensely involving projects of the self; the genre narrates that self as one having a (traumatic) past and an (idealized) future in a journey of self-discovery; the project of the makeover involves constant self-scrutiny and revision; its stories reproduce and rework other narrativized and mediated modes of self-production, borrowing from what Rose (1999) calls the "psy disciplines," as well as from women's magazines, talk shows, and self-help literature (see for example Gamson, 1998; Woodstock, 2002; Grindstaff, 2002; McGee, 2005). Finally and most seductively, makeover television shares the modern romantic idea that only through self-reflexivity can subjects find their authentic, inner being – a self capable of being "true to oneself" (Giddens, 1991, p. 78).

Giddens and others argue that reflexivity allows agency and choice, thereby granting individuals greater personal freedom. Ulrich Beck, for example, argues that reflexivity promotes autonomy from social structures and hierarchies: "The more societies are modernized, the more agents (subjects) acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and to change them accordingly" (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994, p. 174). Reflexivity produces agency and allows for "detraditionalization" – that is, for freeing oneself from structural forms of determinations, norms, and expectations. Both Giddens and Beck hold an optimistic view of reflexive modernism, seeing the increasing autonomy that reflexivity affords as a way for subjects to contemplate and critique the social and economic conditions of modernity. It is precisely the freedom to be in control of one's own image and destiny that makes the fantasy of the makeover so appealing.

This freedom that reflexivity seems to offer has proven especially important for scholars interested in media reception – both as a way to resist some of the top-down models of media effects and as a way to engage with audiences' perceptions of texts. John Corner (2009) argues that reality television draws from two contradictory traditions in documentary film: the reflexive style that acknowledges the production process within the film itself; and the observational, "fly-on-the-wall" style of shooting and editing. "Much reality television [. . .] mix[es] moments of self-conscious and playful artifice with moments of intensive commitment to the truthfulness of their images, the 'reality claims' of which at least equal the much-discussed 'ideology of transparency' of classic observational work" (p. 62). For Corner, the friction between the fantasy of the window on the world and the revelation of the window frame itself precipitates some degree of reflexivity in audiences. As in other reality genres, makeover show production conventions encourage a reflexive position by showing candidates talking directly to the camera and by offering glimpses of production equipment such as microphones and cameras.

In her large audience research project, Annette Hill (2007) also argues that contradictions within reality television promote reflexivity in its audiences. She suggests that reality television's uneasy location between transparency and artifice demands that viewers reflect on its truth claims: "The intermediate space of [reality television] can be transformative, and at times we will personally connect with something in a programme, reflecting on what that person or real event means to us, creating a powerful self-reflexive space" (p. 110). For Hill, media reflexivity is an outcome of reality television's precarious position at the interstices of fact and fiction. She calls her respondents' skepticism about reality television a "chain of distrust" (p. 140) and appreciates that viewers are critically more engaged with the truth claims of reality television than with those of news programs and documentaries, where she would like to see more reflexivity. Although both Corner and Hill are ambivalent about the virtues of reality television, this genre's frank acknowledgement of its production processes might be one of its more progressive aspects, offering audiences space to reflect on its claims to represent the real world.

Reflexivity also has a long tradition in social science research and writing (see for example Van Maanen, 1988 on reflexive writing, and Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995

for an overview). Pierre Bourdieu (in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) has advocated “epistemic reflexivity” (p. 36), through which sociology “continually turns back onto itself the scientific weapons it produces” (p. 214). This is consistent with Bourdieu’s analysis of habitus and field; within the field of intellectual inquiry, the scholar must rigorously investigate her own habitus and the routines of thought that shape her production of knowledge. Loïc Wacquant describes this approach: “What has to be constantly scrutinized and *neutralized, in the very act of construction of the object*, is the collective scientific unconscious embedded in theories, problems, and (especially national) categories of scholarly judgment” (p. 40). For Bourdieu and Wacquant, this means that researchers must pay attention not only to their social position (gender, class, etc.), but also to the investments and limits of their intellectual field – indeed to the assumptions that underpin the intellectual enterprise itself, which radically separates the thinking from the object of thought. “The subject of reflexivity must ultimately be the social scientific field *in toto*” (ibid.).

Importantly, for Bourdieu reflexivity must be a social commitment, not an individual one, and he derides what he considers to be a US fashion in the social sciences, taking it for a narcissistic, solipsistic focus on feelings and textuality. Nor does Bourdieu have much patience for the radically relativistic position taken by some reflexive social scientists, which he sees as undermining the intellectual project. For Bourdieu, a socially embedded reflexivity

compels us to repudiate the absolutist claims of classical objectivity, but without for all that being forced into the arms of relativism; for the conditions of possibility of the scientific “subject” and of the scientific object are one and the same. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 214)

The challenge, in reflexive sociology, is to consider collectively these conditions of possibility. Like the other kinds of reflexivity noted above – self-reflexivity and media reflexivity – epistemic reflexivity is, for Bourdieu, a kind of freedom, in this case one that offers “the means of a potentially liberating awakening of consciousness” (p. 215). Bourdieu’s rather pessimistic view of social change is leavened by an optimism of method.

Given the different foci of these three types of reflexivity – of the self, of media, of method – does it make sense to consider them together? For Giddens, reflexivity means being able to reflect upon one’s life and history and to construct a coherent (if changing) narrative about the self. For Beck, reflexivity means being able to consider, and possibly detach oneself from, the limits posed by one’s class and gender. For Corner and Hill, reflexivity involves assessing generic conventions and aesthetics in order to critique their truth claims. For Bourdieu and others with methodological concerns, reflexivity is fundamental to the researchers’ responsibility to consider our own habitus and investments in shaping the assumptions and techniques of research. As a preliminary attempt to articulate what might be the overarching features of reflexivity, I suggest that there are three key attributes that link these perspectives: to

be able to see a phenomenon (the self, social structures, a text, a method) in its context; to be able to consider the possible influences this context has on the phenomenon; and to be attentive to processes and not only to outcomes, because phenomena are always contingently situated in time and space. Further, all three perspectives hold that reflexivity affords freedom from tradition, from ideology, from a partial world view.

How might the idea of reflexivity be useful in understanding some of the ways in which people discuss makeover television? Conversely, in what ways can audience research help clarify what we mean when we talk about reflexivity? In what ways can reflexivity be seen as a valuable attribute or perspective, and what might be the limits of this value? After an overview of the methods used in this audience research, I go on to discuss examples of reflexivity within the three frames outlined above: self-reflexivity, where respondents used makeover shows to imagine themselves from the outside; media reflexivity, where they discussed elements of the shows they believed were constructed and/or manipulated; and research reflexivity, where interviewees commented on their participation in the research process itself. I conclude the chapter by considering the extent to which these examples of reflexivity are an attribute of audience engagement with texts and what, by contrast, may be a classed and gendered performance of reflexivity demanded by the research context.

Methods for Audience Research

After an earlier textual analysis of *Queer Eye* (Sender, 2006) I became frustrated with my own and others' rather top-heavy critique of makeover shows and with the assumptions that this approach allowed about the influence of such shows on everyday life. There is a rich history of audience analyses, especially feminist, of traditionally women's genres (see for example Radway, 1984; Ang, 1985; Press, 1991; Bird, 2003), which seemed to have been forgotten in the rush to make sense of the new (and not so new) contours of reality television. I was especially interested in makeover shows because of their expressly pedagogic approach to the self and its transformations: what did audiences make of these exhortations to change? Did they laugh and point at the unfortunate candidates on the screens, or did they obligingly adopt the consumer instruction that saturates the texts – or both? How might asking the audience what these shows mean to them complicate most critics' assumptions of audience effects?

Between fall 2005 and spring 2007 a team of researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and I conducted extensive audience research on four US makeover shows: *The Biggest Loser*, where 14 contestants compete to lose most weight; *Queer Eye*, where five gay men give a makeover to a hapless heterosexual guy; *Starting Over*, which features six women living together to get their lives in order; and *What Not to Wear*, in which women are transformed from frumps and floozies into models of

respectable upward mobility.² Rather than getting an impression of people's responses to reality television broadly, as Hill (2005) had done, or even of responses to lifestyle reality shows in general, as Skeggs and her colleagues did (Skeggs, Thumim, & Wood, 2008; Wood, Skeggs, & Thumim, 2008), I was interested in responses to shows that privileged certain types of makeover narratives: weight loss, image makeovers, televised psychological interventions, and male makeovers. I chose these four shows because each epitomized one of these narratives (although they often combined more than one type), because they had the highest ratings in their type of makeover shows, and because they featured non-actors.

There were three phases in the audience research: conducting four online surveys, one for each show (fall 2005 to spring 2006); doing interviews with regular viewers recruited from that survey (spring and summer 2006); and doing interviews with a comparison group that was neither recruited online nor made up of regular viewers of the shows (fall 2006 to spring 2007). For each show, I selected every episode produced in the space of two seasons (2005–2006) and I coded it for candidate and host characteristics, definitions of the candidate's problem, nature of the makeover, type of instruction, amount and type of product placement, and so on. I also analyzed the press coverage of these and other makeover shows, intending to look at popular discourses about them.

The Survey

The survey was designed to investigate some of the key themes that had emerged from existing textual and audience approaches to reality television and to makeover shows in particular: what viewers liked and didn't like about the show; whether they picked up tips and passed them onto others, and to whom; whether they identified with the shows' candidates and hosts; what other shows they watched and what sense they made of these. We also asked for basic demographic data (gender, age, education level, occupation, and so on) as well as for data about viewing habits – in relation to the show in question and to makeover viewing more generally.

We posted requests for participants on a variety of reality-show themed websites. Some were message boards specific to the shows; others were blogs about reality television in general. We assured participants that their information would be kept confidential. We received 1861 completed survey responses: 464 for *The Biggest Loser*, 230 for *Queer Eye*, 544 for *Starting Over*, and 623 for *What Not to Wear*. Women outnumbered men in responding to all four surveys; the largest percentage of women was for *Starting Over* (95%) and the smallest for *Queer Eye* (75%). White respondents made up almost 90% of the survey participants; with around 6% African Americans, 2% Asians, and 2% reporting "other" or "mixed race." Fewer than 4% identified themselves as Latino/a. Almost 90% of the *Biggest Loser*, *Starting Over*, and *What Not to Wear* respondents identified themselves as heterosexual, compared with 72% of the *Queer Eye* respondents. The modal age group for respondents to all four surveys

was 30–39; *The Biggest Loser* and *What Not to Wear* skewed slightly younger than *Queer Eye* and *Starting Over*. Just under two thirds of the respondents to each show were married, in a civil union, or living with a partner; around a third were single. Almost 40% of all the respondents had a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree. Because of the limited availability of Nielsen data, it is hard to estimate how like the “actual” (i.e., Nielsen-rated) audience our respondents were. A comparison with the general population shows that our survey respondents were in general likely to be white women aged between 20 and 40, with an education above the average level.

Once we collected the surveys, two graduate students and I designed a coding scheme for all the open-ended responses, looking at such things as the extent to which respondents valued the instructional aspects of the shows, how much they picked up tips and what kinds of things they had used in their lives, whether they had passed on tips to others, how they critiqued the experts’ instruction, and what their perceptions were of the commercial appeals embedded in the shows. The survey responses were co-coded by at least two of us and were checked for intercoder reliability, which exceeded the acceptable minimum degree of agreement of 0.7 in almost all cases.

Interviews

We contacted all the survey respondents who had indicated that they were willing to talk to us about the shows and about their own viewing habits, and we interviewed 110 in this group: 24 on *The Biggest Loser*, 22 on *Queer Eye*, 37 on *Starting Over*, 22 on *What Not to Wear*, and 5 on multiple shows (where respondents had completed more than one survey). The gender, race, education, sexuality, and relationship profiles of the interviewee group were very similar to those of the survey.

All the interviews were set up via email and conducted on the telephone. Some researchers have used more ethnographic techniques to investigate viewers’ immediate reactions to scenes in reality television shows; such was Helen Wood’s “text-in-action” approach (Skeggs et al., 2008). Others have employed participant observation in order to understand how people interact with media in their homes and in public places (see for example Seiter, 1999; McCarthy, 2001; Hoover, Clark, & Alters, 2004; Hoover, 2006). While being similarly committed to an “ethnographic way of seeing,” in which researchers try to “get close to those studied as a way of understanding what their experiences and activities *mean to them*” (Bird, 2003, p. 8, quoting Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995, p. 12), telephone interviews have the advantage of efficiently gathering interview data from a large group of people distributed over a wide geographical region. Further, I was less interested in viewers’ immediate reactions to the textual features of the shows or to the general use of media in everyday life than in collecting a range of narratives about how people interpret the place and meanings of makeover shows.

All interviewees were given pseudonyms, and their audiofiles were transcribed. These were imported into NVivo ethnographic coding software and coded for the

themes that had emerged both in the survey and in the interviews: references to transformation, instruction, the inner and the outer self, emotion (the candidates' as well as their own), realness, identification, engagement with the commercial appeal of the shows, activities while watching the shows, and so on.

Comparison Group Interviews

Our survey and interview recruitment strategies oversampled people who had access to the Internet and to email and who consumed (and in some cases produced) online content about reality television. These methods were therefore likely to overemphasize the views of people who were well educated, employed, and affluent, on one hand, and who were highly engaged in and informed about reality television, on the other. As a point of comparison, we interviewed 20 people who were recruited through local advertising and temp agencies and were not regular viewers of the shows.³ Participants in this group were paid for their time. Their demographic information reflects much more closely than our group of regular viewers the gender, race, and education profile of the US, although they tended to be younger than the national average.

The group of 20 was divided into four sets. Five participants in each set watched individually an episode of one of the four shows and then answered questions similar to those of the regular viewer group. Unlike the telephone interviews, these comparison interviews tended to be both much shorter – ranging from 15 minutes to just over half an hour – and more diverse in their responses. The length might be accounted for by the media laboratory setting for the interview and by the unfamiliarity these interviewees had with the shows: they only had the one example to draw on in their responses, even if they had watched other types of makeover shows. Unlike most of the regular viewers we talked to, who generally expressed positive views about the shows even if they had some criticisms, some comparison group interviewees expressed strong skepticism, cynicism, and hostility to the show they watched for the study. Others, however, said that they enjoyed watching it, so much so that they would start to watch it at home – an inadvertent form of promotion for the shows that I hadn't anticipated! Like the regular viewer interviews, these were transcribed, imported into NVivo, and coded according to the same coding structure. Even though the comparison group data are somewhat scarce and were gathered in rather artificial circumstances, they nonetheless offer some insight into what people who don't participate in online forums about the shows and who aren't familiar with the shows might make of them.

To summarize, the data for this reception project consisted of textual analyses of the four shows and press coverage of them and of makeover television in general, survey responses from more than 1800 people, in-depth phone interviews with 110 people, and comparison group interviews with 20 people. The survey provided us with a large amount of relatively anonymous data, which we used for broad assessments of

the uses and meanings of the shows and mined for themes to explore in subsequent interviews. The interviews with regular viewers were open and exploratory and they drew on interviewees' often deep knowledge of the shows and of their genre. The comparison group interviewees were more like the population as a whole: they were not already fans of the shows, and therefore they were likely to reflect a rather casual viewer's impression of the genre. Triangulating between textual data and different kinds of interpersonal data demonstrates that highly engaged viewers reflect upon makeover narratives in describing their relationships with themselves, their social worlds, their media engagements, and the research process.

Three Modes of Reflexivity: Self, Media, and Research

Unsurprisingly, these combined methods yielded a great deal of data about people's sense of makeover shows and of their relevance to their own lives. I explore these themes more thoroughly elsewhere (Sender, in press). Here I focus on the ways in which the viewers we talked to engaged reflexively with the shows. If reflexivity is the ability to see a phenomenon in a contingent and reciprocal relationship with its context, in what ways can both the regular viewers and the comparison group viewers be said to take a reflexive approach in their discussions of the shows? What might reflexivity among our respondents suggest about audience research and its usefulness in assessing the cultural significance of media forms? Three types of reflexivity permeated discussions with the audiences: self-reflexivity, media reflexivity, and research reflexivity.

Self-Reflexivity

Regular viewers frequently made reflexive statements about how the shows encouraged them to see themselves in the broader context of their lives through the mediated frame of the candidates' experiences. This process was captured more powerfully, because viewers saw the candidates as real people with whom they often identified, and strongly so. One example came from Casey, a *Biggest Loser* woman viewer, who said:

Even by watching the show, it can help you realize changes that you need to make for yourself. Not only are they talking to the people on the show, but they're also talking to the audience that's watching the show. And you realize, "Oh, if I am overweight, then I could have problems with this down the line."

The increasing possibility that ordinary individuals' lives may appear in public and mediatized forms intensifies self-reflexivity. Rachel's husband and home were the

object of a makeover in *Queer Eye*. She described how, as a result of the production and airing of the episode in which they appeared, she was more likely to make long-term changes in their lives. In the interview Rachel discussed what she thought was most effective about the experience:

The reality of seeing yourself on television, I think. Because, you know, people go to counseling, people go to Weight Watchers, all that kind of stuff, and it's not until you actually see yourself on TV that you go, "Oh, I really have to do this." And you realize that other people besides your immediate family are seeing whatever the situation is.

Rachel's reflections on the self and on interpreting her personal circumstances through a mediated gaze were not unique to her, but they were imaginable for viewers who hadn't been on the show. Gareth Palmer (2004) argues that "to be filmed by cameras is suddenly to share the look of the other, to objectify yourself from a vantage point in which this look is inscribed within the seemingly 'objective' gaze of the surveillance footage" (p. 183). Participants frequently described how the shows and the hosts encouraged audiences to adopt the "look of the other" to see themselves as if from the outside. A *What Not to Wear* viewer, Gabby, described other people's posts on an online discussion board: "I've read many people who say that they have Stacy and Clinton in their heads when they're getting dressed or going shopping or whatever." The use of non-actors, the rendering of experience through new technologies, and the genre's claim to authenticity maximize this process whereby viewers put themselves in the candidates' shoes and, after looking at them, turn a similarly appraising eye on themselves.

Giddens (1991) has argued that a fundamental feature of self-reflexivity is the production and revision of narratives that ground identity in a world that no longer permits the fixed, stable sense of place that is supposed to have existed before modernity. "The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems" (p. 5). As one of these abstract systems, the media offer a confusing array of possible narrative components. At the same time they also suggest that these narratives are particularly suitable to make sense of this array, in what Nick Couldry has termed "the myth of the mediated center" (Couldry, 2003, p. 2). Makeover shows offer narratives structured around the candidates' failures and the need for transformation, and these narratives are taken up, if unevenly, by viewers. They were most common in responses to *Starting Over* – perhaps inevitably, given this program's reliance on psychotherapeutic discursive techniques that call subjects to account for themselves. Peggy, for example, recalled one housemate, Kelly, whom she had particularly identified with:

I understood that Kelly had those issues, and it probably came from her childhood and things that were said to her, how they linger with you. Somebody had said to her that she was being sexually [provocative] with her father, and although that wasn't said to me in that way, my father said he wished I had died when I had cancer. And that has

always been with me my whole life, that one thing you can't just let go. So I understood when she said that was one statement that kind of changed her whole life; that one changed me.

Peggy's story links her own devastating experience of being told something unbearable to Kelly's similar experience; the link here is not the thing told but the significance of their experiences in shaping both their lives. By sharing this experience with her on-screen proxy, Peggy made it possible to reintegrate this statement in a different framework, in which, like Kelly, she was no longer responsible for it.

Even the most compelling narratives of transformation, however, may not offer all respondents the kind of agency and autonomy from the past that the advocates of modern self-reflection might hope for. A *Biggest Loser* viewer, Rebecca, told us her story of a long struggle with weight gain and loss:

When September 11th happened, I was working on the thirteenth floor, and we had 26 flights of steps to go down. I thought I was going to die. And that made me rejoin [Weight Watchers] again, and I lost almost 100 pounds. And I kept it off, I did great. And then little by little, when stress starts coming into my life, I'm eating non-stop again. This is ridiculous! So, even though the stress was there then, I would look at [Biggest Loser candidates] and say, "Wow, look at how great they look!" And then I'd get a bowl of ice cream. I'm like, I don't understand why I would do that.

Although Giddens and others assume that self-narratives are likely to be empowering and freeing, it may be as important that they conform to what Eva Illouz (2003) calls a "culture of suffering" (p. 111), where stories of struggle become the primary means to construct a narrative of the self. On the basis of the paradigmatic figure of Oprah Winfrey, Illouz argues that suffering has become constitutive of modern identity, especially for women.

Stories of suffering are not only the domain of women, however, nor are they articulated only by participants already committed to the self-project of the makeover show. Terrance, a man in the comparison group who had not previously seen *Starting Over*, related to a housemate's financial problems in the episode. He said:

Thank God I'm not who I was. I'm not who I was, but I'm not who I want to be. But I'm moving towards where I want to be. But I mean honestly, I would have been in that same situation [as the housemate] maybe four or five years ago.

Terrance's self-appraisal suggests that makeover show narratives of the self are not unique to the genre but rather draw from broader cultural impulses to tell these kinds of stories. Further, he gives weight to Illouz's (2007) claim that the twentieth century saw an "increased emotional androgynization of men and women" (p. 37). In general, however, we can look at the impulse to produce narratives of the self not as a means toward autonomy from structural constraints such as gender and class, but as a reworking of gender and class norms, in part through changing media and communication technologies.

I don't intend here to undermine these interviewees' uses of narratives in dealing with painful experiences. I do, however, want to consider these uses in terms of Giddens' assumption that narrativization allows a seemingly infinite freedom to invent oneself from arbitrary life events, where "the line of development of the self is *internally referential*" (Giddens, 1991, p. 80). The only criterion is whether it all makes sense in terms of one's own internally generated narrative. However, as Ellen Granberg (2006) argues on the basis of her research on how people who have lost a great deal of weight construct stories about themselves and this process, narratives of the self must be recognizable and credible. They tend to draw on "a stock of 'canonical' narratives" (p. 112) and must be met with at least some acceptance from others, to whom they are told. As Foucault (1978) observes about religious and sexual confession, Rose (1999) about discursive practices within the psy disciplines, and Prosser (1998) about transgender autobiographies, these narratives are embodied and felt, at the same time as being institutionally convenient, even necessary. Far from offering the freedom to invent oneself that Giddens proposes, self-narratives are as likely to deliver the narrator into affective and economic systems that are disconnected from her own interests, however comforting these narratives might feel at a personal level.

Further, commercial communication technologies have been fundamental to the very idea of a "self" that we recognize in the modern era. Some interviewees discussed how they used online sites as an intensified means toward self-reflexivity. *Starting Over* viewer Tori talked about updating her MySpace page daily:

I was doing quotations every day; I do it every couple days now. [I'm] thinking about posting a biography that I'm writing but I'm not sure. I posted the links to it. I post about my struggles – like I have anger issues and panic attack issues . . . I get panicky and then I get angry. I write when I have episodes about that.

Henry Jenkins (2006) is optimistic about the possibilities of convergence and interactivity for audience productivity, where new media technologies offer an unprecedented range of venues, texts, and other resources for self-representation. Mark Andrejevic (2004), however, is suspicious of the role of new interactive technologies as a route to "self-expression and self-knowledge" (p. 97). He is concerned that only by submitting to external and – increasingly – internal monitoring will we come to believe ourselves to be authentic. Andrejevic also warns us that the ideal realm of democratized media, what he calls "participatory interactivity," is too easily co-opted by media companies to extract more labor from engaged audiences, in the form of "productive surveillance" (p. 2). What might seem to us like the freedom to create ourselves can readily be transformed into what Maurizio Lazzarato calls "immaterial labor" (1996). This formula describes activities not normally perceived as "work," but that nevertheless generate profit from ephemeral commodities – information, knowledge, cultural capital. Like other types of capitalization, these profits do not return to those doing the labor.

Giddens sees the ability to be self-reflexive as affording a welcome autonomy from the structural determinants of the past. Audiences' discussions of the makeover

shows suggest that self-reflexivity is mobilized by their viewing practices and that it forms a common and pleasurable mode of engagement with the shows. Self-reflexivity does not represent, however, the freeing from constricting identity categories as promised by optimists of postmodernity; audiences' engagements suggest that reflexivity re-essentializes an authentic inner self that must be expressed. Self-narratives tend to conform to generic expectations that are shaped within the commercial demands of the makeover texts. These programs thus facilitate a self-surveillance that feels like self-awareness, an intimate relation with the self. The extent to which self-reflection is mediated through surveillance technologies and through canonic narratives demands a revision of Giddens' model of a pure, self-referential reflexivity, uncontaminated by economic, technological, and cultural conditions.

Media Reflexivity

The second kind of reflexivity involved the respondents' perceptions of what they saw on screen and how these perceptions were shaped by the economic, technical, and aesthetic contexts in which they were made. First, audiences were highly critical of some of the instruction offered in the shows; they criticized advice from the hosts especially when they saw it as promoting the sponsors' products. *Biggest Loser* interviewees commented on the "shameless plug" of oatmeal and Jell-O dessert: when we asked Seth if he remembered products that were featured on the show, he chanted "Jell-O; Jell-O, Jell-O!" But, even though the regular viewers whom we talked to criticized particular styles or product placements, they did not dismiss the commercial premises of the shows *in toto*. In contrast, members of the comparison group were more likely to reject the shows as a genre on the grounds of their expressly commercial appeals.

Second, both regular and comparison group interviewees were attentive to the reality status of the genre. According to writers such as John Corner and Annette Hill, reality television's aesthetic conventions and this genre's blending of fact and fiction generate spaces for audiences to consider their truth claims. Like Hill's respondents, many of the viewers in this study were well aware of how scripting, editing, and even genre expectations not only shaped but also challenged the realism of the shows. Robert, for example, spotted the producers' sleight of hand in *What Not to Wear*:

When it comes to the unreality aspect of the show, and as I told you, I am a freelance writer and there's spots where I can tell that [the hosts'] responses are completely scripted; typically it's when they're coming up with these really smart-ass zingers. I mean, yes, some of those are real. But particularly when you see them watching the makeover [candidate] shopping, on the day when they go out shopping alone . . . If you look, the way the lines come out, it's definitely scripted. I think what happens is, they sit down, they look at everything, and Stacy and Clinton will make comments – I think the comments Stacy and Clinton originally make as they're watching it are genuine. And then the scriptwriters get it and they tweak it a little bit.

Some viewers criticized the shows for what they saw as formulaic editing that manipulated the emotional ups and downs of the episodes. Cathy, a *What Not to Wear* regular, said:

I think there is a pattern, and I think they could be more creative with their editing on the pattern, because it's almost like after a while, they've just kind of gone into a pattern, more or less. Like, the start is [candidates] are resistant, and by the middle they're being a little more emotional and softening up, and then by the end they're saying how great Stacy and Clinton are. That's pretty much across the board.

Many respondents mentioned that their online interactions cultivated a more reflexive approach to the shows. For example, Deborah, who was recruited through a women's support website based on *Starting Over*, said:

[The producers] show good and bad with all of [the housemates], but I think sometimes they may show more good of one or bad of another, again for TV purposes. But I think most of the people who watch it tend to realize that they do that [. . .] Going on the [message boards] you get a lot of interaction with people and what they think about stuff that happened, and mostly everyone that I've seen their messages thinks the same way I do about all of that.

Another interviewee who was quite active online was Bill, a *Starting Over* viewer. He offered the most sophisticated analysis not only of editing conventions, but also of how the show's production routines linked with existing genres. Bill notes that *Starting Over*:

blends the two great things about daytime TV, which is the self-help focus of a talk show with [*sic*] the hyperbolic drama of a soap opera [. . .] What's refreshing about soaps is that people get hysterical, and that's sort of fun, it's sort of nice [. . .] [On *Starting Over*] it's often like someone's had a horrible fight with another houseguest, and they get all worked up trying to talk to somebody on the phone or one of the other houseguests. And that I find interesting, because it definitely does have that reality show thing of people that get used to having cameras as a part of their world, so if it's not completely manipulated, it's definitely like their guard is down and something's happening in front of the camera, and there's something thrilling about that.

Bill was a regular participant on Television Without Pity (TWP), a particularly astute and witty website that has forums for the synopsis and critique of numerous US television shows. TWP raises audience critique to an art form, as Mark Andrejevic (2008) argues; the website pays "recappers" to provide often hilariously snarky synopses of episodes that "often focus on production details such as lighting and editing, thereby helping to direct the attention to the formal aspects of the shows they describe" (p. 26). Andrejevic argues that part of the pleasure of participating in TWP is in the construction and representation of the self as "savvy" (p. 38), duped neither by the artifices of the production processes nor by the promise that their activities

will have any influence on the producers. Yet Andrejevic concludes that savviness does little to protect TWoP participants from the extraction of labor entailed in the work of being watched while watching shows, to paraphrase Dallas Smythe's famous phrase. On the contrary, the pleasures of critique intensified the participants' investment in and loyalty to particular shows.

Further, it is striking that, despite this savviness, many of the people we talked to remained highly invested in what Ien Ang calls the "emotional realism" of television (1985, p. 45). This describes the audiences' attribution of emotional authenticity to a television show (*Dallas*, in Ang's research) that is also seen as highly artificial at the "empirical" level, in terms of setting, apparent wealth, plot, and so on. In my make-over study, the audiences' recognition of the genre's constructed elements sometimes enhanced their sense of the shows' emotional realism. Danielle acknowledged that *The Biggest Loser* producers recruit a particularly emotional group of contestants, but nevertheless she saw the show's rituals as precipitating expressions of real feeling:

I think [the emotions are] realistic because of the intensity of their circumstances . . . They might pick people who are more emotional, or people who express themselves well because obviously they want people who are going to be expressive because otherwise the show might be boring. So partly it's the selection process, but I also think it's the circumstances that bring out emotion – anybody would be emotional in such circumstances when they're making these dramatic changes in their lives and they're in these intense circumstances with competition and exercise and diet [and] getting weighed on national TV on the world's most gigantic scale. [Laughing]

The viewers' often quite sophisticated critiques of the impact of production processes on the empirical realism of the shows sits in an uneasy tension with the same viewers' perception of the shows' emotional realism.

The regular viewers were highly reflexive about the production contexts, the need to produce good television for audiences, and the commercial demands on the shows. Even if reality television allows audiences a reflexive distance from its processes and aesthetics, however, Corner (2009) is not optimistic that this involves either "a new reflectiveness on the part of program makers" or "a new refusal on the part of audiences to accord reality status to what they see on television" (p. 62). Savviness about production processes does not herald an era of media literate and critically distanced viewers in any simple way. For many of the regular viewers in this project, critical appraisals of the shows intensified their engagements with them, especially when these appraisals were shared in online discussions with other fans. Critiques of the shows' empirical realism do not dislodge perceptions of emotional realism; the regular viewers who participated in this study saw the emotional expressions as real, despite – or even because of – the constructedness of the circumstances in which such expressions appeared. Media reflexivity does not necessarily offer protection from the ideological and industrial contexts of watching the shows, as advocates of media literacy would assume.

Research Reflexivity

Occasionally respondents were also reflexive about their participation in the research project, being aware that they were constructing narratives about the shows for a particular audience: a media researcher. They reflected about the research process in three ways. First, interviewees indicated that they were aware of their own narratives as constructions, a way of telling a story. One viewer, for example, struggled to tell a coherent narrative about what she saw housemates going through on *Starting Over*:

That's really tough because I'm trying to figure out what angle to come at it from. I guess the easiest way for me to break it down in my head is the different seasons; I actually started watching it towards the last part of season two. I was home and stumbled across it and got hooked. And then on another channel they started showing season one. So it was kinda cool; I was watching Chicago one day and LA the next. And it was a totally different feel.

This interviewee suggests that she consciously selects both “in [her] head” and for the interviewer one out of several narrative options to describe her watching two *Starting Over* seasons in parallel.

In the second type of research reflexivity, interviewees indicated that they were aware of popular and academic critiques of media audiences as dupes. This may have been especially acute for women viewers, who are used to defending genres that are traditionally associated with women and are considered to be low-brow forms of entertainment. One woman, for example, wanted to avoid being seen as a dupe of *The Biggest Loser*. When the interviewer asked whether she felt that the show's editing allowed viewers to see participants in a relatively real way, she said:

Yeah. I almost hesitate to say that because so much of reality shows, everybody just hates them, or they say they hate them and watch them in private . . . I don't want it to come out as “Marci says . . . and boy is she an idiot!” [Laughing]

This interviewee was most explicit about her awareness of how her perceptions of *The Biggest Loser* may confirm negative stereotypes about (women's) fandom of reality television. The interviewees' awareness of negative characterizations of audience behavior came through in many interviews, however, where these people expressed embarrassment about the kinds of shows they watched and about their emotional connections with the candidates.

In a third type of research reflexivity, the interviewees acknowledged that they were in a reciprocal conversation between interviewee and interviewer. *What Not to Wear* viewer Barclay teased the interviewer for posing leading questions to her, in a way similar to that of the hosts on makeover shows:

-
- INTERVIEWER: Do you think that is a theme in the show, that there's a "real you" in the end, that wasn't showing in the beginning?
- BARCLAY: Yes, that's a good way to put it. You've just done the TV thing. Now I'll say, "Yes, it seems like . . ."
- INTERVIEWER: I'll admit it was leading!
- BARCLAY: You can just use my quote.

This exchange suggests that Barclay was well aware of media conventions whereby unequal distributions of power produce the discursive outcome of the encounter. Credentialed interviewers (makeover hosts, journalists, academic researchers) shape what interviewees (ordinary people) will say and then use it in a quote, in order to confirm what the interviewer already wanted to argue.

Some interviewees thus saw the interview encounter reflexively. Although observations about the research context were fewer than about self-reflexivity and media reflexivity, respondents frequently saw themselves, their media consumption, and even their participation in this research within broader social and institutional contexts.

Producing Reflexivity

Three types of reflexivity – addressing the self, media production, and research processes – come into play in the study of makeover television audiences. These are not distinct, however, but rather intersect within the contemporary project of producing a self that is generally reflexive. The fact of seeing and representing the self as reflexive offers a defense against the broadly held assumption that television audiences are media dupes. Self-reflection allows a pleasurable relationship with a self that can be explored and expressed. Further, interviewees' research reflexivity draws one's attention to the power differentials between researchers and subjects: the latter wrest back a portion of the control usually assumed to belong to researchers. Collectively, reflexivity has been constructed as an ideal mode of subjectivity in which people represent themselves as being apart from, and therefore as having agency in relation to, both themselves and their contexts.

Reflexivity did not, however, function equally across all the shows and all the viewers. The degree to which regular viewers reflected about their engagement with makeover shows depended to some extent upon the specific show they watched and their degree of social interaction with other people about that show. The four shows mobilized very different levels and types of self-reflexivity among the participants in this study. Regular viewers were most likely to discuss *What Not to Wear* and *The Biggest Loser* in terms of self-reflexivity conceived of as self-surveillance; the emphasis placed in these shows on the scrutinizing and sometimes hidden camera was adopted by many interviewees as a technique they applied to themselves. *Starting Over* interviewees were most likely to exercise self-reflection through the construction of life

narratives that echoed the narratives profiled on this show. *Queer Eye* interviewees were not especially reflexive about self or media, which surprised me, because it is the one most similar to *What Not to Wear* in its style and techniques. This makes me wonder whether the emphasis on men's transformations made this show less successful in engaging the kind of self-scrutiny and stories that characterize feminine approaches to the self.

Those interviewees who had a lot of social contact with other viewers were most likely to be reflexive about the media contexts and techniques of the shows. Those who were active on online message boards were especially articulate about their perceptions of the production conditions and generic formulae of the shows. The ability to learn and share background knowledge about the shows seemed to encourage sometimes high levels of skepticism about the truth claims of the makeover genre, if not the shows' emotional realism.

What did not seem to make a great deal of difference in reflexivity among regular viewers was their gender or their levels of education. Andrea Press (1991) and Skeggs and her colleagues (2008) found that middle-class women were much more likely to distance themselves from television content, whereas working-class women were more likely to identify with the characters or candidates on screen. The middle-class women in Skeggs and her colleagues' research reflected upon lifestyle reality shows' manipulative techniques and low-brow status and tended to ally themselves with the researchers who they assumed shared this view. Working-class women, in contrast, seemed less comfortable with the research process, tended to identify with the women in the shows, and placed themselves in the narratives by imagining how they would feel or respond, which the researchers call "immanence" (p. 15). On the other hand, I found very little difference among regular viewers, across genders or a range of education levels, in terms of how much they reflected about themselves and their viewing practices.⁴ If self-reflexivity is an immanent position and media reflexivity a distanced one, regular viewers' expressions of immanence and distantiation were more related to the shows they watched and to the amount of online interaction they had than to their own gender or education levels. Further, some of these interviewees expressed both immanent and distanced perspectives on the same texts, which suggests that these approaches are not mutually exclusive. Among people already invested in the makeover shows, immanence–distantiation is not a single continuum determined by gender and class but can describe positions held simultaneously by the same person – for example someone who is emotionally highly invested in a candidate and sees herself in a similar position, while also critiquing the artifices of the show.

I found more differences between participants across education levels and gender in the comparison group, however, in a way similar to that described by Skeggs and her colleagues (2008), although these differences were less marked than in their research. The comparison group as a whole made fewer observations about production context, probably because these necessitate some familiarity with the show over time, and there were fewer examples of self-reflexivity in this group. Within the comparison group cohort, interviewees with fewer years of education tended to

describe the contents of the show with less critical comment than those with more education, and they were less likely to be self-reflexive in response to the texts. There were still moments of reflexivity here too, though: Chris, a man with a high school education, commented on the editing of *What Not to Wear*: "It did look like they made you see what they wanted you to see." Comparison group interviewees with more education tended to be more frank and more critical. Peter, who had a bachelors degree, commented on the editing in *Starting Over*: "I mean it's TV. It's trying to manipulate you. John Forrest said 'When faced with telling the truth or telling the legend, always tell the legend.' Well, the same goes for reality TV." Peter's comment might be more literary than Chris', but I wouldn't claim that it is more reflexive. The middle-class distanced and working-class immanent associations that Press and Skeggs and her colleagues found in their studies may be somewhat stronger in the comparison group, but not overwhelmingly so.

The very similar levels of reflexivity among regular viewers of different genders and educational levels may be interpreted in a number of ways. High degrees of reflexivity demonstrate the persuasiveness of the text: the shows effectively interpellated their regular audiences by encouraging particular ways of talking about the self in relation to the shows. Regular viewers who were recruited on internet message boards participated in social online activity that cultivated a shared critical perspective among a group of savvy viewers. Additionally, high levels of self reflexivity prioritized the perspectives of the affluent and educated people who were overrepresented in the self-selecting group of regular viewers. These arguments have weight, but aren't sufficient to fully account for the contrast in degrees of reflexivity between the regular and comparison group viewers. The first may account for the self-reflexive, immanent engagement with the shows but not the distanced view that media reflexivity affords. The second ignores the many respondents who said they had minimal online interactions with others and merely went online to get information about the shows. The third argument fails to account for the highly reflexive statements among the regular group interviewees who had fewer years of education than the cohort mean.

I began to consider the high levels of reflexivity among the regular viewers who self-selected into this project partly as a product of the research exchange itself. Whereas Giddens argues that reflexivity is an inherent attribute of modernity, Adkins (2003) and Skeggs and her colleagues (2008) argue that reflexivity is a performance of selfhood in situated moments. They write: "In our research, the groups of women recruited from different classed and raced backgrounds deploy their available cultural resources to produce 'performances' of class, *made* rather than found, in each particular type of research event" (p. 7). Because the regular viewers were self-selecting, those who volunteered were already likely to be invested in reflexive self-performances, irrespective of gender or educational background. This group wanted to talk about the shows, what these meant to its members, and how they contextualized them in their own lives. These participants were aligned with the overarching project of the four makeover shows that encourage, allow, or demand self-reflexivity. But this is also the project of audience research: both makeover shows and audience research require that

participants produce a reflexive self, someone who can see the self as if from the outside, who can tell stories about the self, and who values authentic self-expression.

Both research and makeover television offer people across genders and a range of educational backgrounds the possibility of performing self-reflection, which comes with certain pleasures and privileges. Self-reflexivity suggests leisure, media reflexivity suggests literacy, and both are historically the product of privilege and status. Makeover shows democratize both kinds of reflexivity by situating them in the ordinary; audience research expands the reach of reflexivity through its commitments to representativeness. Reflexivity isn't a part of modern identity because it is inherent to the modern condition, but because it's valuable and valued and it grants status.

This is not to simply celebrate reflexivity as a freedom afforded by media engagements and research participation. As Rose (1999) and others have noted, self-monitoring and therapeutic techniques are less freedoms to create oneself than they are expectations of modern citizenship. Self-reflexivity is compatible with the neoliberal values of responsibility, agency, and choice, and media reflexivity does not in itself liberate audiences from the commercial reach of media systems. Even commitments to epistemic reflexivity may obscure the possibility for co-optation. Those of us engaged in audience research must consider how our practices situate participants within larger frameworks of good citizenship: "Look! Audiences have agency! They aren't dupes! They are self-aware!" Further, we must be cautious about reifying identity categories (gender, class, race, age) that are as much an invention of biopolitics and market segmentation as they are meaningful ways to compare audiences. This is particularly so when we valorize reflexive performances that may be more likely (though not necessarily) to be articulated by well-educated research participants.

Audience research neither demonstrates that audiences are free from textual influence through their reflexive practices, nor offers the opportunity for participants to free themselves from such influences by reflecting upon their experiences. Instead, like makeover shows, audience research invests in an economy of knowledge that produces reflexivity for institutionally useful ends (even if these may also be ends that we prefer). Such considerations should not paralyze audience research, however. Rather than looking from the outside in at how the media promote expressive and reflexive performances of selfhood, we can consider how *both* makeover shows and the research interaction encourage expressivity and reflexivity that are part of a larger cultural impulse toward these modes of selfhood.

NOTES

- 1 This chapter develops themes originally presented at the Affective Audiences preconference at the International Communication Association's annual conference in Chicago, 2009.
- 2 Thanks to research fellows Christopher Finlay, Nicole Rodgers, Adrienne Shaw, Riley Snorton, and Margaret Sullivan for their efficient and enthusiastic efforts on this project.

- 3 Thanks to Diana Mutz for generously sharing research subjects from her study.
- 4 Because class is a notoriously difficult concept to define, especially in the US, I take education as a measure of people's likely access to economic, social, and cultural capital.

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Reflexivity in Data Analysis

Constructing Narratives of Family Digital Media Use In, Through, and For Public Engagement

Lynn Schofield Clark

ABSTRACT

Drawing from a large study of digital and mobile media use among US teens and their families, this chapter reflexively traces the way in which a particular research narrative about media use came into being. The narrative in question focuses on a young woman who engaged in extensive and troubling digital and mobile media use. Various stakeholders – university students, research assistants, members of the public, and members of various academic research communities – offered differing and sometimes conflicting interpretations and explanations of this narrative, in effect becoming collaborators in the process of data analysis and in the narrative's reconstruction. The chapter argues that it can be helpful to consider such contradictory responses to potentially polarizing research narratives, since, in an era of reflexive media scholarship, researchers are accountable for the ways in which their writings might contribute critical perspectives to public debate. By reflexive data analysis I mean an act of recognizing that the researcher, as a socialized agent, shapes her analysis in accordance with the creativities and constraints afforded in relation to her place in the social structure. The chapter therefore argues that how a researcher understands the audiences of research narratives contributes to the construction of such narratives, and a reflexive approach to this process can prepare scholars to contribute productively to public conversations about the role of media in the lives of young people.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Introduction

As my own children have entered their pre-teen years, I have come to have more in common with the families of pre-teens and teens that have been at the center of my interview-based and observational research for more than ten years. What I've become interested in recently includes not only how technology is coming to play a role in the everyday lives of families, but how parents and teens *understand* the role of technologies in their lives. I'm also concerned about how our research contributes to – or could contribute to – those understandings. In other words, I want to know more about the discourses that shape and inform how people approach the “problem” of technologies in the home, and how we as researchers might contribute new directions to that discourse.

In this chapter, therefore, I present a case study of how a particular narrative that emerged in my research project “Teens & the New Media @ Home” became meaningful in different public contexts that included parents, young people, and members of my own research community. I present here the story of how I worked on the analysis of this narrative and in the process became aware of my own biases and intentions. I also discuss how I became aware of the different assumptions that shaped and ultimately determined how various audiences interpreted the narrative and gave it meaning. From this I make the argument that, as qualitative media researchers become more familiar with how our research narratives are received by differing audiences, we can consider how to present our work in such a way that it contributes best to public discussions and to public culture by reframing debates about the role of the media in family lives and in society. Thus, to frame this study, I begin by considering how critical cultural studies media audience researchers are currently thinking about what it means to be reflexive researchers, and I conclude with considerations on how such reflexivity—specifically about what we write, for whom, and why – might better enable us to understand the roles that we are positioned to play in contributing to the direction of the dominant discourses surrounding media in US family life today.

The Rise of Reflexivity in Media Audience and in Qualitative Methods Research

There's a certain irony in the fact that we as audience researchers haven't always been very reflexive about how we interact with our own audiences. As Patrick Murphy (2008) noted in his review of the evolution of media user or “audience” studies, the field has gone through four distinct phases in relation to qualitative research methods.

The “interpretive turn” of the mid-1980s, he argues, was largely the work of feminists who were striving to challenge the frameworks of textual criticism that

emphasized how media *auteurs* constructed meaning and intended their works to be understood. Feminist scholars were also interested in contesting elite critics' interpretations of media texts and policymakers' efforts to police and control the media environment (for early examples of the interpretive turn, see Ang, 1995; Morley, 1980; Radway, 1984). The earliest approaches to qualitative media audience research, Murphy argues, were *expository*: they sought to grasp things from "the natives' point of view," to cite anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. Researchers such as James Lull (1980), Andrea Press (1989), and Thomas Tufte (2000) wanted to tell richer stories about different kinds of audiences and about their varied engagement with media in their everyday lives. Yet, Murphy observed, the researchers often seemed to disappear in the process. Researchers are slightly more visible in what he termed the *observational* style of S. Elizabeth Bird (1992a, 1992b, 2003) and Sonia Livingstone (2002, 2010), both of whom more clearly allow interviewees greater control over the research encounter.

By the middle of the 1990s, a third style of qualitative media research and writing had emerged: the style that Murphy terms the *interactive*, which was dialogical in nature, incorporating "a mixture of narrative, polyvocality, contextual information, and reflexivity" (Murphy, 2008, p. 280). Gillespie's (1995) work on British Indian families watching television in London was one example, and work by Kim (2006) and Acosta-Alzuru (2005) also embodied this approach. Interactive researchers recognized that we needed to locate ourselves in the field when writing up our research narratives, and this usually meant paying attention to the researcher's intersecting positions on race/ethnicity, class, and gender, among other things (Chavez, 2008; Clifford & Marcus, 1986). It also meant recognizing, as Erving Goffman (1959) reminded us in the middle of the twentieth century, that the stories people tell through their words and actions are part of a performance that a person or a set of people enact as a channel for communicating who they are and why they do what they do. This doesn't mean that the stories we hear in research settings aren't true; it just means that, as researchers, we need to be mindful of the fact that they are told for a reason. The teller may want to "get my story out there," or she may want to help a researcher (or help herself) by trying to tell the story she thinks the researcher wants to hear (Stoller, 2005). For instance, when studying how parents and their children talked about media use in their homes, my colleagues and I observed that parents relied upon "public scripts" about media, as they offered us what we termed "accounts of the media" (Alters & Clark, 2004). As we wrote:

Our use of the term "accounts of the media" references two different yet complementary meanings of the word "accounts." First, the nature of interviews means that parents were called upon to offer stories, or accounts, of how their family operated in relation to media [. . .] Second, the term "accounts" refers to a related phenomenon that structured how the parents told their stories about media: Parents were self-consciously aware of the importance of parenting, a task for which they felt accountable. The accounts of the media that parents gave in our study were always inflected with their assumptions about proper and desirable parental behavior in relation to the media. (Alters & Clark, 2004, p. 5)

In other words, whenever parents told us what their families did regarding media within the household, their stories were inflected with the knowledge that they were accountable, as parents, for maintaining some control over their children's media environment. Because they wanted to present themselves as good and responsible parents, they shared many concerns about the violence, sex, and stereotypes they saw and heard in mainstream media, and they told stories that tended to overstate their interventions into the media lives of their children (even as the children sometimes agreed with, sometimes contradicted, and sometimes simply misunderstood their parents' intentions).

This particular chapter grows out of concerns with public scripts in my earlier research and aims to contribute to what Murphy describes as the fourth phase of qualitative media research – what he terms the *reflexive* approach. In Murphy's definition, "reflexive" research involves "the observation of participation" and ruminations on the processes of representation itself, as seen in work by Kraidy (1999), La Pastina (2006), and Parameswaran (2001), among others. According to Murphy (2008), this latter style of ethnographic writing "invokes personal experience as a way to push the limits of difference and explore the boundaries of and potential for identification in a manner that asserts a political and ethical commitment to understanding how power operates" (p. 281). This reflexive approach points the lens toward the researchers and the "public scripts" that shape the researcher's own manner of telling stories, recognizing that we *all* speak through existing narratives. It also recognizes that some narratives, such as those related to certain racial/ethnic, gender, and class positions, are "coded as 'good science,'" as sociologist Michelle Fine (1994) has noted (see also Mayer, 2005).

Within this reflexive approach, it's important to acknowledge that those of us who are professors, scholars, and even college students are now or may become members of what sociologists Barbara and John Ehrenreich (1977) termed "the professional/managerial class." Power and responsibility accompany this cultural position. As organizations, politicians, journalists, marketers, and others seek the attention of the professional/managerial class, the needs, desires, and assumptions of this group come to have consequences in the "real world": they influence, among other things, the ways in which teachers teach, the ways in which labor and childcare are arranged and managed, the ways in which healthcare is sought and disbursed, and the ways in which newspapers represent problems. Therefore, even as we *contest* certain cultural narratives in our work, those of us who write research narratives may inadvertently *protect* other cultural assumptions, as Mayer (2005) and Seiter (1990) have each pointed out.

For example, it is important for scholars to recognize that their work operates in relation to power and can serve to construct versions of "good parenting" that support certain norms of middle-class life. As we seek to draw connections between our scholarship and the concerns of public life, we can become engaged in what Nikolas Rose (1999) has termed the governance project of neoliberalism, transferring the responsibility for parenting wholly to individual parents and absolving the public and

the government of any responsibility for providing supportive structures for family life. This is further complicated by the fact that parents, policymakers, and educators often seek advice about how adults should handle media in relation to young people, and this often shapes a media scholar's invitation to speak publicly in the first place.

We need to become aware of our own biases and of the very human tendency to want to protect our own interests, as prior reflexive researchers have noted. Yet we cannot fail to notice that our cultural position also affords us opportunities to critically evaluate existing discourses and to do our part, when possible, to participate in challenging them. The question is: how do we do this effectively when it seems that much of the public criticism of the media is out of step with our own?

As scholars, we have been socialized to produce what Hills (2002) has termed "institutionally acceptable forms of knowledge" primarily for academic audiences (p. xil). However, I want to highlight the fact that our *potential* audiences include not only the scholars who read our work in scholarly journals; as our work becomes part of a larger knowledge base that shapes the questions to be asked and the concerns to be addressed in public life, our broader audiences may include parents, college students, policymakers, educators, and many others we might not even anticipate. In other words, our audience may, and probably should, include members of the broader public who are also concerned about the role of the media in social change and in everyday life. Hence I'd like to suggest that scholars should explore how the various constituencies of which we are a part understand the stories we tell about those who live in a highly mediatized world. We must consider that the narratives we create may become part of the cultural repertoire that shapes how others think about and experience digital and mobile media in their everyday lives (Swidler, 1986). Such contemplation about the forces and contexts that surround research becomes an ethical concern, then: we need to be reflexive not only about our biases and our positionalities as analysts and writers of research, but also as producers of knowledge whose narratives of research inevitably enter into dialogue with narratives that existed before our research. These narratives can frame how our research will come to have meaning among various constituents.

Having a foot in the worlds of parenting, college teaching, and scholarly research, and hearing how digital and mobile media are discussed in these various settings, I am reminded of what Annette Markham (2009) has referred to as the multiplicities that can emerge when we strive to be accountable for the stories we tell. My own analysis becomes more partial and hesitant, but – I hope – also more nuanced for taking into consideration the many ways in which different people have a stake in how stories are told, to whom, and for what ends. I want to become more reflexive about how the narratives of research that I want to craft acquire their meanings within different contexts. And this, in turn, will highlight the responsibilities that a researcher has today as she makes choices regarding which stories to tell, how to tell them, for whom, and with what consequences.

In the next section, therefore, I share the narrative of Kayla's story and its interpretations, highlighting the contexts in which this particular research narrative

becomes meaningful. I also show how research comes to have meaning as the result of collaborative conversations between researchers and a host of people we meet in our professional and personal lives, who help us make sense of our work. Of course, we don't usually think of college students and of our neighbors and friends as collaborators in the analysis of our data; we don't think that way even of our academic colleagues most of the time. As academic researchers, however, even when we speak casually to other peer researchers, we are inevitably opening ourselves up to interactions that shape our findings and our awareness of what audiences might expect from our research.

How Research Is Made Meaningful: The Story of Kayla's Story

"Can you believe she said that?!!" my college-aged research colleague Caroline exclaimed as we read the transcript of the interview she'd done the day before with an 18-year-old high school senior. The young woman she'd interviewed, who we'd called Kayla, had stated that giving up her iPhone and Facebook account would be akin to "losing something very dear to me, like a baby or something." Caroline was surprised by Kayla's impassioned response because she knew that Kayla had had very negative experiences online with ex-friends and ex-boyfriends who had taunted her and had posted mean messages for her to see. To hear Kayla speak of her online activities as if they were a positive and meaningful part of her life came as something of a shock to Caroline, and she believed that Kayla's embeddedness in digital and mobile media would be of great interest to me as a researcher looking at teen and parental practices around these things.

But, in spite of my young colleague's surprise, Kayla's comment about how important social media were to her was not a completely unexpected or inexplicable statement to me, given the existing research on the topic. Researchers such as Danah Boyd (2008), Susannah Stern (2007), and Amanda Lenhart (2002, 2007, 2010) have long been discussing the crucial role that mobile media and social networking sites have come to play in the lives of US teens. By 2009 research had demonstrated that more than 95% of households with children had cell phones and that more than 65 billion text messages were sent in one month alone (Cellular Telephone Industries Association (CTIA) Semi-Annual Wireless Survey, 2008; Lenhart, 2010). We know that teens don't differentiate between online and offline communication with their friends; they rather view their online practices as an extension of their social lives, and thus they live out what concerns them most in both places (Watkins, 2009). So I listened to Caroline and other members of my student research team as they discussed what they found interesting in Kayla's story – the story of a young woman completely immersed in digital and mobile media. Yet I also recognized, somewhat sadly, that an analysis emphasizing Kayla's emotional attachment to digital and mobile media would verify what others

had already found rather than contributing something new to the conversation. And, as a researcher, I was expected to do the latter.

For me, what was more surprising and compelling in Caroline's conversation with Kayla occurred later in the interview, when Kayla was asked why she thought her mother and father didn't have any rules to govern her rather excessive and self-destructive mobile and digital media use. "They just don't care as much as other parents," she said with a shrug. Why, I wondered, would a teen like Kayla give lack of caring as an explanation for her parents' lack of rules governing digital and mobile media use? From the rest of her interview, it did seem that Kayla's parents didn't place many restrictions on her mobile and digital media use. But there were many young people in our sample who had similarly minimal restrictions, especially among the older teens we had interviewed. Most of the time during our interviews with them, older teens with few restrictions on their digital and mobile media use had responded with a comment akin to the one made by 16-year-old Montana. Montana's mother knew little about what her daughter did online, but, as Montana noted, "my mom teaches us what is right and wrong but she doesn't set limits 'cause she trusts me." Trust, not lack of caring, was the common theme that had emerged in how older teens and their parents discussed the rules governing digital and mobile media use (Clark, 2009). And in fact Kayla's mother did talk about how she trusted Kayla to make the right choices. Or at least she wanted to trust Kayla, in spite of the fact that Kayla had engaged in cyberbullying and cyberstalking, had posted online numerous unflattering photos and comments about being drunk or engaging in other risky behaviors, and had generally spent so much time online and texting that she'd almost failed out of school. Were Kayla's parents more tuned out than they seemed to be? Was Kayla just a troubled kid? Was no other explanation needed? And what difference would it make if, as I later came to conclude, Kayla's complaints about her parents' apathy were calculated to gain the researcher's sympathy?

At the time when we were first analyzing the interviews, I believed that I was focusing on the second comment because it was so different from what I'd heard among other teens, and thus it could lead to new insights, worth sharing in research settings. Later I came to see what seems now obvious: the comment about her parents stood out for me, at least in part, because I am a parent, and I am situated in narratives of parenting that would react to such a statement with disbelief, as if it were not a true statement (e.g., "Kayla is lying, and of course her parents care; she's just trying to get Caroline's sympathy"), or, even worse, with judgment ("well, if her parents don't care, then that explains why her life is such a mess"). I didn't think that either of those approaches constituted a sufficient or compelling explanation for Kayla's attachment to digital and mobile media and for the irreplaceable role they had come to play in her life.

Caroline had suggested that she interview Kayla when she'd be working with my research team on the *Teens & the New Media @ Home* research project, an interview-based and observational research effort that extended nearly over a 10-year period. The project, which included close to 300 in-depth interviews with teens, preteens,

and their parents, had occasionally relied upon younger research team-members to identify and interview participants of high school age.¹ Caroline and Kayla had been co-workers, and Caroline sensed that Kayla, who was four years her junior, looked up to her. It wasn't surprising, then, that Kayla created a narrative about her digital and mobile media use that sought to garner Caroline's sympathy. Caroline also knew that Kayla's father and mother had divorced and that Kayla's father had become increasingly distant from his daughter, despite her obvious admiration for him and her tendency to glorify him while denigrating her caretaking single-parent mother. A lot of Kayla's acting out through digital and mobile media seemed to be an effort to gain the attention that she was lacking, in Caroline's view.²

My own response to Kayla's story wasn't initially as sympathetic as Caroline's. She reminded me of my own onetime "best friend" Beth, a physically beautiful young woman whose flair for drama, desperate need for attention, and tendency toward self-destruction meant that at any moment those closest to her could become the target of her meanness. In Kayla I saw a young woman who had shown poor judgment time and again. She had been both a perpetrator and a victim of cyberbullying. She had been disloyal and cruel to people she claimed were her friends; her best friend Rhonda became her ex-best friend when Kayla slept with Rhonda's boyfriend.

I also recognized Kayla for the kind of young woman whom my own mother would have labeled a "troublemaker." In addition to her relational troubles, Kayla had been threatened with expulsion from school because she'd refused to take down from Facebook photos of herself that flaunted sexual innuendo as well as the use of illegal drugs and alcohol. As a parent, I knew that, if my own daughter had a friend like Kayla, I'd be worried. And, if my daughter started acting out as Kayla did, I'd know that I had a serious problem on my hands.³

As I started to talk about Kayla's story among my own circle of (mostly non-academic) friends, I noticed that their initial response to the story echoed my own. Those who were parents tended to sympathize with Kayla's mother and father. They knew moms who were similarly exasperated by daughters who seemed unreachable, or they had felt that way about their own child at one time or another. If they had been a "Kayla" themselves at an earlier point in their lives, they had even greater empathy for what Kayla's parents were going through. And, if they were parents of younger children, as many of my personal friends are, Kayla's story triggered worry. What was it about the technology and/or about Kayla's earlier life that had made her more vulnerable to such self-destructiveness, they wondered – and what could they do to help their own children to avoid a similar fate? I realized that part of the reason why Kayla's story seemed so compelling to me was that I was positioned as these worrier-parents are: that is, unable to avert my eyes from Kayla and identifying, in alternation, with her victims and with her parents.

Then I told Kayla's story to my college students. I found that college students empathized with Kayla, recalling their own struggles with being cyberbullied or reliving the shame of having been perpetrators. They related to the way in which Kayla talked about the importance of connecting with others through digital and mobile

media. They related to her choices, too; what I had seen as cruel and self-destructive behavior, they described as characteristics of what they argued were “normal” risk-taking behaviors in teen culture. They noted that risk taking was a way of establishing oneself as desirable, adventurous, and exciting. They also noted that excluding others (even friends) in dramatic ways was a means of making a claim for attention and popularity. Their analyses echoed those of social scientists who have explored why young people engage in risk-taking behaviors (Lying, 1990; Cohen & Taylor, 1992; Douglas, 1992; Lupton, 1999).

The college students who heard Kayla’s story also related to her sense that her parents had no idea about her experiences: “My mom didn’t know what was going on a lot of the time either,” 20-year-old Meghan said, noting that her mother, like Kayla’s, regularly combined the names of the two most popular social networking sites, Facebook and myspace, incorrectly referring to “MyFace.” College student Meghan said that she too, like Kayla, had hidden many of her riskier practices from her parents even as she’d widely shared them among her peers online. Meghan and her peers didn’t believe Kayla when she claimed that her mother and father didn’t care, but they didn’t think that was a particularly poignant or meaningful statement from Kayla, either. In fact my interlocutors of college age read my concern as that of a worried parent, or at least as that of someone they needed to reassure. I shouldn’t blame either the technology or the parents, they told me – as if my adopting one or the other position were behind the fact that I was telling Kayla’s story from my research in the first place. Which in turn made me question why exactly I *was* telling the story.

Researchers of digital and mobile media related to Kayla’s story in yet a different way. “New media can be so isolating,” one colleague said, shaking her head as she placed Kayla’s story of digital media overuse squarely in the realm of behavioral studies that tend to see technologies as creating problems for individuals and for society. Another colleague, situated within the critical/cultural studies tradition of research, as I am, raised an interesting question, but he also identified himself as “blissfully unaware” of the fears of parenting – a not-so-subtle reminder that research into parenting is definitely not a hip topic in academia and is sometimes viewed as inherently conservative. “But she seems like an awfully extreme case,” yet another skeptical critical/cultural studies colleague protested. This colleague questioned both how I was interpreting Kayla’s story and whether or not I should tell it at all. He argued that Kayla’s story could reinforce concerns about digital media causing stress and harm among individuals. Such stories tend to gloss over broader concerns of inequitable distribution of digital access, he suggested. Another colleague agreed, pointing out that stories like Kayla’s can overwhelm any consideration about the possible positive uses of digital and mobile media in young peoples’ lives – and that, this colleague felt, was the kind of research that parents, educators, and policymakers especially needed to hear from the research community right now.

So what was the story that I wanted tell, and why was I interested in telling it? Caroline’s explanation, rooted to some extent in the logic of family systems therapy, explained why Kayla’s actions served to worry her mother, to get her father’s (and

everyone else's) attention, and to garner her a reputation among her peers as an adventurous and dramatic risk taker. Her actions were understandable given their currency within her peer culture, as my college students had pointed out, even as they were also made comprehensible in light of parental worries and within the framework of "dangerous media/vulnerable children" that researchers, policy-makers, and journalists tend to reinforce for parents. In fact the only community where her story didn't fit was my own primary scholarly home of cultural studies and reception research scholars, who prefer stories of active and creative digital and mobile media users to stories of pain and self-destructive behavior. This lack of fit is what probably made her story particularly compelling to me as a parent with insider knowledge about how both parents and researchers might respond to it.

As I tried to grapple with the different ways in which parents and young people approached Kayla's story, I was struck by the paradoxes of life in contemporary US society that are reflected in this story. We all want the bonds of community and meaningful relationships, as well as the time to attend to the people who matter to us. This is what's at the root both of parents' concerns for their young children and of the desire of young people like Kayla to remain connected to their peers at all times, even if such connections are painful. Yet the demands of the economy drive us to value efficiency and speed, and to appreciate the importance of "looking out for number one," or of creating our own "personal brand" in order to compete in the global order (Peters, 1997). Thus we employ technologies in our lives in order to maintain and improve relationships with those who are most important to us, even as our use of those technologies feeds the engine that, in turn, drives technology companies to produce new technologies that are faster, smaller, and less expensive and make life more efficient and paced faster than ever before. And we rely upon the media tropes of celebrity and upon the commercial realm to reinforce who we are for ourselves and for others, so that young women like Kayla learn to act like a "star" in the drama that is her own life – often in ways that can undermine her other, more relational goals. Kayla's story of "live fast, die young, leave a trail of glory online in your wake" is part of an old story of the celebration of youth in Western culture, and it is also part of a more contemporary cultural message: it reveals what it means to grow up in the context of a digital age in which technologies enable meaningful relationships even as they can also exacerbate and undermine our ability to maintain those meaningful relationships. Perhaps we need so desperately to give precedence to the importance of relationships in our lives because it feels as if our ability to shore up those relationships is constantly under siege.

And there is a responsibility for the researcher, then, in how Kayla's story is told and what it might come to mean in various settings. I believe that many cultural studies and critical scholars seek to call attention to the paradoxes and dilemmas of everyday life and to the role that technology plays in those dilemmas. We are interested in "the contrast between what is said and what is not said, between what is explicit and what is assumed" (Morningstar, 1993). We hope that our research might help others to better understand how certain taken-for-granted cultural practices come to be valued and

repeated not because they're reasonable or because they will actually help us meet our goals (achieve the life we want, or reach the society we want), but because they are part of a commonsense way of doing things that, upon reflection, tend to benefit the status quo and reflect our culture's darker side (Swidler, 1986).

Kayla's story can therefore speak to the concerns of parents, young people, and scholars, even if it raises more questions than it answers. Stories like Kayla's can remind those of us in critical/cultural and qualitative media studies that we don't always acknowledge the pain and disappointment that can be a part of parenting and of childhood. Because we don't foreground these key issues, we are not always prepared to consider how fears of these things shape the anxieties people bring into their considerations of the role of the media in our everyday lives. If critical/cultural studies scholars want to move the debate in the direction of considering the opportunities as well as the risks of digital media, we need to take seriously the fact that concerns about both positive *and* negative personal and interpersonal experiences inevitably guide the ways in which people approach the role of media in everyday life. Thus I believe that stories like Kayla's are important because they provide an opening for discussion. When we recognize, together with the audience of parents, educators, and policymakers, that young people like Kayla need support and are seeking relationships and are doing so ineffectively, then we can also raise the question of contrast: how do other young people learn to utilize digital and mobile media so as to gain support more *positively*, and so as to develop good relationships? Rather than allowing our interlocutors to counter us with questions about the "problem of the media," therefore, we are participating in reframing that question in terms of how media are situated in relation to shared hopes and goals. As scholars, we may find a more receptive and broader audience when we acknowledge, rather than overlook, the felt experience of our audiences.

By recognizing and speaking to existing concerns about childhood fears and disappointments, an analysis that addresses digital and mobile media use within a stratified society can also take a different direction. Rather than viewing digital media along the lines of a "digital divide" or deficiency model, in which some have privilege and others are lacking it, we can bring to the fore adult concerns about addressing children's negative choices that span the economic spectrum. This foregrounds children's agency while also drawing attention to those young people and families that find ways of working within their own contexts. How they do so then becomes particularly interesting and helps to reframe the conversation, transforming it from one of individual choice into one of structural limitations. This, in turn, raises new questions, such as: How are our society's focus on efficiency and our subsequent use of digital and mobile media creating challenges that are greater for the more disadvantaged families than for the middle-class ones – and also different in kind?

One relevant example of how we as scholars might participate in and contribute to a publicly-minded research that reframes debates about media effects comes from the field of family studies in the US. Frustrated with the ways in which conservative think-tanks were defining women's roles in the workforce as a problem in US society,

social historian Stephanie Coontz and her colleagues formed the Council on Contemporary Families (CCF) in 1996 (Council on Contemporary Families, n.d). This organization is dedicated to raising the awareness of sociological research among ordinary families and to providing the press, educators, and the public with the latest research from professional demographers, economists, family therapists, political scientists, and sociologists (among others). When an issue arises in public life, the organization proactively solicits experts who can write editorials or news releases about their research to counter conservative and reactionary positions. When the US census decided to allow greater differentiation in the reporting of race and ethnicity, for instance, two sociologists wrote a news report, which CCF released, about dispelling stereotypes regarding Hispanic/Latino families; this way they made their views widely available to journalists. Such work takes an activist orientation toward the news media and is accomplished through the efforts of a collective group of citizens, who come together in order to address their concerns about the direction of public debate in terms that the news media recognize. Each year the CCF holds a conference and invites scholars to contribute to its annual issue of *Unconventional Wisdom* – a report that collates findings on topics of interest within public realms, such as “Do Babies Make Marriages Better or Worse?”; “Does the College Hookup Scene Mean the End of Commitment?”; or “Do Children of Two-Parent Families Succeed More than Children of Single-Parent Families?” The work of the CCF is not without controversy, particularly as the members of the CCF sometimes challenge the work of prestigious and well-funded scholars within their own field. Yet over the years the consistency and quality of the work of its members has contributed to the organization’s credibility among journalists, policymakers, and members of the public. At the same time members have also become better at articulating how their research addresses contemporary concerns, thus making their work more amenable to external funding organizations and to arguments about the success of knowledge transfer between academics and the public.

The report on UK media and families by Sonia Livingstone and Ranjana Das (2010) offers an excellent example of an approach that begins by addressing public concerns and then goes on to reframe the debate it occurs in. After an introduction that acknowledges that media have become thoroughly embedded in the everyday lives of European families, the report opens with a section titled “What Are Media Effects?” A brief yet conclusive review of the literature ends by noting that media effects are rarely supported by evidence in a straightforward way, and that media effects depend on a complex range of factors that may be hard to predict or control. The report then moves the discussion toward a consideration of how various factors interrelate in the actual media experiences of families, effectively addressing them and then identifying the widely accepted assumptions regarding media that one finds among policymakers, parents, journalists, and others. I believe that, if we wish to gain a wider audience for our research, we need to address the issues underlying the broad concerns with media impact continuously and systematically, in our own research as well as in our collective work as members of a field of study.

Rigorous Research and the Work of Interpretation

“So, do you bring institutional review board (IRB) forms with you when you go to your friends’ houses?” a colleague joked when I mentioned the subject of this article to him. I don’t; but, as Elaine Lally (2002) noted about the use of humor, the joke highlights contradictions in the approach to research that I am advocating. In other words, “this isn’t really research, and you’re not going to claim it is, right?” – the colleague might have said. Or perhaps he might have objected that such reliance upon friends, colleagues, and students for data analysis is not a “rigorous” form of analysis. But rigor is a term that has come under debate in much social scientific research in recent years. “Traditional modernist research has focused on rigor to the neglect of the dynamics of the lived world,” as researchers Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren (1998, p. 287) argued. Trustworthiness, they suggested, is a more appropriate word in critical qualitative research. They advocate a comparative approach to analysis, noting that, “through their knowledge of a variety of comparable contexts, researchers begin to learn their similarities and differences – they learn from their comparisons of different contexts” (p. 287).

Being immersed in a field, becoming an expert, is part of a long tradition in anthropology that has yielded rich ethnographic analyses. That’s the tradition of anthropologists from Bronislaw Malinowski to Clifford Geertz to Michael Wesch’s recent forays into the anthropology of YouTube. United States sociologists such as E. Franklin Frazier and Robert Park have also engaged in this kind of close-up, in-depth research, a tradition carried on notably in recent years in the sociological work of Barbara Ehrenreich, Arlie Hochschild, and Harriet Pipes McAdoo. These and other scholars have argued that, in order to produce credible accounts, researchers must live in a culture until they feel they know what’s going on, and then they must live there some more, until they start to see its contradictions. The kind of knowledge that gets generated in this approach is up close and empathic, and it “rings true” or finds comparability among audiences.

Baym (2009) has similarly argued, following Montgomery and Baxter (1998), that “the goal [of qualitative research] is comparability and the ability to offer analyses that can be coordinated with others” (p. 175). For qualitative researchers, this means that the process of engaging in research comes to include not only interviews, observations, or other forms of data gathering and analysis, but continuous explorations of the larger cultural context in which the data gathering has occurred and will occur. Therefore conducting and analyzing interviews is only one part of the process of engaging in rigorous qualitative research, because, between formal interviews, we are thinking through our research questions and placing our own ongoing interpretations in conversation with other things we encounter along the way.

Hence, when we agree to present our research at academic conferences or to speak at public gatherings, we are disciplining ourselves to come up with an organized way of talking to others about what we think we’re seeing, and then we have the

opportunity to notice how others – our audiences – respond to what we say. Perhaps a key mark on the road to rigor, then, is that, if our stories are compelling, members of our audience will want and even feel compelled to talk to us afterwards, sharing their own stories or experiences in order to underscore our insights or to illuminate something about their own. In those instances we know that we have found comparability, or some way for others to relate their own knowledge (whether researched, lived, or some combination of the two) with what we've said.

But comparability is not the only attribute of rigorous research in today's context, just as self-revelation is not the only attribute of reflexive approaches. As researchers, we don't need to speak *for* those who have less access to making such contributions to public life, but we can speak *up* for them, as Cope (2008) has argued in her discussion of the role of the scholarly advocate in publicly engaged research. Moreover, as Fine (1994) has argued: "If we recognize race, class, gender, and sexuality to be socially and historically contingent, then silence, retreat, and engagement all pose ethical dilemmas. All are tangled with ethics of knowing, writing, and acting" (p. 152). Thus, as researchers, we are positioned not only to have access, but to bear the responsibility for how we will speak up, and to what ends.

I came to realize that the reason I wanted to tell Kayla's story was not to garner sympathy for her or for her parents, but to recognize the difficulties of adolescent life and of teen-parent relations, which often give a particular shape to how families experience digital and mobile media in their lives. I wanted to draw attention to how these new media can provide encouragement for young people as they foreground self-branding, self- or celebrity-building through dramatic online encounters, and the felt need to be in constant contact others, often to the detriment of their relational goals. I also wanted to draw attention to the fact that parents have largely accepted the public script that says that it is the individual responsibility of parents to nurture and support young people through these difficulties, that they do so in order to guarantee their economic place in society, and that we must not expect much in the way of public programs that will support our interpersonal or familial goals. In short, I wanted to connect the needs of both young people and parents, as expressed in their relation to digital and mobile media, with those of an economic system that says that we must promote ourselves and think of our relationships instrumentally and efficiently, and that we should overlook the fact that, throughout history, families have benefitted from strong legislative policies that make it easier to balance work and family life than the ones in place in US society today. I therefore saw Kayla's narrative as one that opened rather than closed dialogues. Sharing her narrative has enabled me to speak up for the need that all young people and the adults in their lives have for strong relationships, and for societal structures that encourage rather than hinder those relationships. A simple story like Kayla's can therefore create an opening for making connections between media studies and widespread concerns about how family structures are changing in light of economic pressures, and it can allow media studies to speak to broader issues of significant import in our collective lives.

Conclusion: On the Role of Media Studies in Public Life

As a parent who is studying parenting practices in relation to digital and mobile media, I'm constantly reminded of how much the public debate about childhood and media is structured around the "culture of fear" context typical of the US, given our culture's tendency to see things outside our immediate domestic context as threatening and in need of containment. I have enjoyed the challenge of trying to understand how to take parental concerns with the seriousness they deserve while also attempting to draw attention to the ways in which talk of digital and mobile media becomes imbricated in what Ehrenreich (1990) has described as the "fear of falling" out of the middle class (through lost job opportunities, inferior education, or too much counterproductive distraction) and in the mantra of personal instead of collective responsibility.

Many of us who enter a life of scholarly inquiry do so because we believe that we want to contribute to what Giroux (1992, p. 10) has termed "a public mission of making society more democratic." Many of us want to see ourselves as "champions for the silenced and excluded groups in our society," and thus we want our scholarship to address concerns we believe we share with members of the public. Yet at some point we, as scholars, come to grips with the fact that the world is a complicated place and that, if it were easy to solve the world's problems, someone would have already done it. So what, then? Do we decide that we should give up on research and writing and become activists? Do we decide that we need to find our teeny niche within our field and hammer away within it, as a safe career move? Do we find we need to coin a phrase so that, even if our ideas aren't new, we can be credited with starting a new strain of research? Each of these approaches seems to shortchange the possibilities for research as a contributor to social change, even in our day of more humbling assessments of the contribution of research to public life.

What seems to me to be the relevant challenge is gaining an understanding of how our very small piece of the puzzle fits into a larger puzzle, so that, whereas our research can't answer every question, it can contribute to a larger conversation. Beginning with this humbler goal of contributing to an ongoing conversation, we can then be more conscious, or more reflexive, about which conversations we want to contribute to, and how.

In today's world, scholars need to earn the right to be heard in public life. We need to consider the questions we ask from the perspective of the most pressing issues that our subjects face: in the case of the parents and young people I've studied, this includes considering how to deal with conflict and stress in family life – both with the problems that are exacerbated by digital and mobile media and with the frustrations and tensions that can be remedied through use of digital and mobile media to strengthen our connections to one another.

If conducting rigorous qualitative research has come to mean an appreciation for how our research is read and understood, or for how it "plays" among different

audiences, then taking responsibility for what it might come to mean in those various settings is an important part of our research task today. Publicly-minded research must consider how research narratives can either reinforce dominant perspectives or challenge existing discourses. In the case of research addressed to parents, I believe we can challenge the helicopter-parent concern (which is related to teen vulnerability), the story of an individual's culpability in disastrous personal outcomes, the hopelessness that might surround a story such as Kayla's, and, most importantly of all, we can reinforce the need for empathy for all young people and our support for parents in their efforts to nurture and raise their children.

NOTES

- 1 The Teens & the New Media @ Home project had its start at the University of Colorado, where I served as co-principal investigator on the Symbolism, Meaning, & the New Media @ Home in-depth interview-based research project. From 2001 to 2006 I conducted and oversaw interviews and collaborated on interpretation and analysis with my colleague Stewart Hoover and a number of excellent research associates including Monica Emerich, Curtis Coats, Diane Alters, Joe Champ, Christof Demot-Heinrich, Scott Webber, Michelle Miles, Jin Park, AnnaMaria Russo, Kati Lustyik, Denice Walker, and Dan Mercado, who worked on an undergraduate honors research project on the topic. In 2006 the project moved with me to the University of Denver, where I was fortunate to work with research assistants Rachel Monserrate, Alexis Lynn, Art Bamford, Colette Holst, Caroline Davidson, Deidre Helton, Jill Dierberg, and Nik Vukovich.
- 2 As of this writing, Kayla's Facebook profile features her cradling a bottle of vodka under one arm as she drunkenly grasps a friend's shoulder.
- 3 As a professor, I admired Caroline's compassionate response to Kayla's story, and together we talked about the responsibilities of telling Kayla's story and Caroline's own responsibilities to Kayla, given Kayla's obvious personal problems.

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Media Ethnography

Thickness and Force

Matt Briggs

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores some of the contributions that media ethnography can make to theorization in media and cultural studies, while also highlighting the need for continuing methodological inventiveness in audience research. Initially the issue of “thickness” is highlighted in order for the chapter to explore the multiple practices that are articulated in and through media use. In doing this, the chapter also explores some of the relationships between identity, media texts, and media consumption by tracing the ways in which the practices, roles, and activities that make up our everyday lives both shape and are shaped by the meanings that we make both of the act of watching television and of television’s content. Second, by proposing the concept of “force,” the chapter explores one way of researching the experiential and embodied aspects of meaning-making, as well as the emotional investments and attachments that audiences hold in relation to their media. The methodological problems inherent in rendering the concepts of “thickness” and “force” are highlighted throughout, as well as the opportunities that are afforded by methodological creativity in this area. The case study is drawn from research in the field of children’s television and parenting practices.

René Descartes, writing in the 1640s, enumerated the passions as: wonder, esteem, scorn, generosity, pride, humility, servility, veneration, disdain, love, hatred, desire, hope, apprehension, jealousy, confidence, despair, irresolution, courage, boldness, emulation, cowardice, terror, remorse, joy, sadness, mockery, envy, pity, self-satisfaction, repentance, approval, gratitude, indignation, anger, vainglory, shame, distaste, regret, and lightheartedness.

(Highmore, 2009, p. 3)

I start this chapter with a reference to Ben Highmore's book *A Passion for Cultural Studies*. I do so because he urges us to think about the sheer *force* of our passions in relation to the media. "Passion," in this context, we must understand, is about "the pull and push of your connection to the social world, it is about the ebbs and flows of your feelings, the peaks and troughs of your liveliness, the pounding of your creaturely-ness" (Highmore, 2009, p. 3). Passion, then, is primarily concerned with the *force* of everyday experience: with feelings, emotions, and affects, with identity and subjectivity as irreducibly lived. It points to the ways in which culture, meaning-making, and power, the relations between self and others, are never experienced and lived out in the abstract, as so many discourses, meanings, ideologies, or representations. It acknowledges the ways in which such things always come to *matter* as lived, as embodied, as personal and passionately invested. Such an emphasis, Highmore argues, requires us to approach culture as a passionate field. It is "this sense of intimacy," he argues, that is crucial, for the force of our passions connect us to our cultural worlds: they "catch hold of us, attach us to ideas and beliefs, and in doing so 'scoop' out a space for an imagined subject of that culture" (p. 4).

A Passionate Culture

These issues are explored in a number of different ways throughout the present chapter, although my principal aim here is to think about how media ethnography can expand the ways we think about media texts, their meanings, and the practices that enable them – practices through which these texts are drawn into semiosis. My case study draws upon my research in the area of children's media culture. Here lies the unifying link between the three terms in the title – ethnography, thickness, force; for, if we want to conduct useful media ethnographies, it is not enough to call upon the somewhat vague and imprecise notions of "thick description" (a phrase borrowed from Clifford Geertz); it is also vital to expand what we include in such descriptions, to reconsider the role of researchers as we investigate phenomena, as we write, and, most significantly, to expand our intellectual approaches to media texts. The last action is imperative; for, all too often, a concern with audiences forecloses a deep and creative examination of media texts – a situation that is compounded by our narrow conceptualization of meaning-making. In putting forth this argument I will pay particular

attention to the ways in which my research has addressed issues of identity on one hand, and on the other hand the affective or *passionate* modalities of semiosis through which meanings are made and through which culture comes to matter.

Generating Thick Data

My key models in designing the research presented in this chapter were Shelby Anne Wolf and Shirley Brice Heath's (1992) ethnography of reading, together with the tradition of self-reflective media studies work – for example Matthew Hill's (2002) work of fan culture and Theresa Senft's (2008) account of webcam girls. While I don't intend to review here any of it fully (for an excellent overview, see Murphy & Kraidy, 2008), this tradition is still uneasy about clearly delineated realms of objectivity and subjectivity and seeks to capture, and indeed to benefit from, the ways in which we as researchers are caught up in what we study. Wolf and Brice Heath, for example, systematically record the first author's daughters' emergence in the world of storytelling over a total of nine years. Unlike some audience research traditions, in which we find formal interviewing, surveys, and carefully coded transcripts (Fisch & Truglio, 2001), such an ethnographic method is far less precise, employing a mixture of data collection methods. These include systematic note-taking, opportunistic scribbling on the back of whatever comes to hand, tape recording, and general background or implicit knowledge. In this fieldwork environment, the ethnographer must find productive and useful ways to reflect upon and record fleeting aspects of shared experiences and emotional connections (Wolf & Heath, 1992, pp. 9–14). As such, Wolf is fully represented in the research materials. Her presence in the ethnography is not simply that of a neutral observer. Rather she is a central and important part of the social and family dynamics she studies and observes. As I explore below, when we want to study passionate culture, the force of media experience, and its thick embedding in everyday life, such a subject position for the researcher becomes very useful. It makes the *experience* of the researcher into a central part of the project itself: something to be embraced rather than something awkward and embarrassing (and somehow to be got around).

In my own case, my “thick data” were generated at home, as I explored my son's meaning-making of preschool television programs. My first research notes were made when my son Isaac was just over seven months old. The “fieldwork phase” of the research generated approximately 400 pages of notes, which represent 126 entries recorded over a 12-month period. As thick description tries to account for the broadest possible set of relationships and practices, my observations were not restricted to the occasions when Isaac was watching television, but rather took into account anything that seemed to be connected with how meaning-making practices were being shaped by my wife Sara and me, in our roles as new parents. In this mode of fieldwork I recorded any spontaneous speech and behavior in which we alluded to

fictional characters, both while watching television or reading books and in our routine interactions with Isaac, for instance in play and caregiving. As I demonstrated above, much detail about what we were doing at the time and about our home environment and media ecology was included in my notes. The purpose of my observations was to situate Isaac's meaning-making experience of television as closely as possible in the context of his daily routines, of his relationship with us, and of his rapid physical and psychological development.

These participant observations were supplemented on 16 occasions with an audiovisual recording of Isaac and Sara or me watching *Teletubbies* together. In total, these 16 recordings amount to around eight hours of footage. In addition, I generated around two hours of footage of Isaac playing, reading, dancing, looking at the computer, and coloring. Following Marilyn Cochran Smith's (1984) protocol, all the audiovisual materials were fully transcribed. I recorded the speech between Sara, Isaac, and myself, as well as the speech between the Teletubbies and the narrator. My records also included details of the music and other diegetic sounds. I made an effort to align horizontally the documentation of media rituals with an account of what was happening as we watched, who responded how and when, and also with what was happening on the screen between the Teletubbies (for examples, see Briggs, 2007b and 2007c). These transcriptions were then placed in the context of the appropriate field notes, those that were recorded around the general time of the recording.

Thick Description and Textual Analysis

There are important methodological issues involved in the mode of research I describe here, because most audience research is designed and conducted in ways that are not especially helpful in terms of feeding back into our understanding of media texts and of the meanings that they offer (see Briggs, 2009b). While Gillespie's (1999), Hoover, Schofield Clark, and Alters' (2004), and, to a lesser extent, Georgiou's (2006) media ethnographies have endeavored to *combine* the analysis of viewing practices, family life, and media texts with the meanings that are made (that is, the process of semiosis) in such a thick and forceful analytical moment, other ethnographies – such as those by Hugh Mackay and Darren Ivey (2004), Thomas Tufte (2001), Elizabeth Bird (2003), Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (1992), and JoEllen Fisherkeller (2002) – consider the texts either apart from the ethnographic analysis or not at all. Of course, there is no automatic reason to do any of these things, and the accounts provided in these analyses are full of important insights that I am not able to review in full here. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, quite often, when audience research presents itself as using the methods of ethnography, it is built around relatively thin descriptions. Fisherkeller for example spent two and a half months in a school and conducted a survey with 50 students, all of which was

designed to enable her to select the three focal participants who inform the bulk of her research. However, these key informants were very thinly researched: there were just one home visit to a child's parents, between one and three hours in duration; two audio taped interviews with each focal participant, 12 months apart; and a single session of watching television with the informants in their own homes, together with one visit to Fisherkeller's own home (with follow-up phone calls a number of years later).

There are some very notable exceptions to this tendency toward "thin" description; such is Purnima Mankekar's (1999) magisterial ethnography. It is worth dwelling on it for a moment, for throughout the research she clearly demonstrates how television's texts and their scheduling, characters, and discourses intersect with the organization of domestic space, the ordering of time, family rituals, identities, and gender roles. In this comprehensive ethnography, the texts she considers and the method of analysis she pursues are firmly embedded in the feelings and structures of passionate culture. It is worth considering one example here, namely how Mankekar explores the ritual aspects of viewers' engagement with *Param Veer Chakra* – a hugely popular series broadcast on India's state-run television channel Doordarshan.

Briefly put, *Param Veer Chakra* told the story of members of the Indian armed forces who had been awarded the eponymous medal for bravery. The address was both personal and national; the series was taking its audience through the life of each soldier, his youth, his family, his military career, and finally the acts of heroism for which he had been honored. As Mankekar explains, while the narrative structure is similar to that of soap opera insofar as it is centered on psychological conflicts, in *Param Veer Chakra* the heroes are torn between love for their family and love for the nation. In all the cases, the force of nationalist affect prevails over the pull of family-based passions. This structure and the strong nationalist sentiments it provoked were predictable, and indeed sought after (Mankekar, 1999, p. 262). The passions that the program roused (the melodramatic pleasure, the pathos, and the nationalistic sentiments stirred up by the series) were, however, part and parcel of the ritualistic structuring of time and space in the homes that Mankekar researched. Here is her account, which is worth reproducing at length:

In the neighbourhoods where I did my research, television sets were turned on every Sunday morning, as soon as the family awoke. For the most part, people went around their morning routines with the soundtrack forming a background to their activities. But the title music of *Param Veer Chakra* functioned as a call to viewers to come and watch. Older members of the family, children, and men of all ages would stream in as soon as the opening notes of the song flowed through their home. Typically, many women would watch as they continued their household chores, but in their case as well, the signature tune would induce a heightened state of attention towards the sounds and images they would try to snatch as they went about their work. As with many signature tunes, the title music of *Param Veer Chakra* functioned both to remind viewers that the episode was about to begin and to emotionally prepare them for the narratives. As far as I could tell, on hearing the title song at the beginning of the episode,

viewers would relive the pathos of the closing scenes of the previous episode and slip into a mood of tragic expectancy as they sat down to watch that morning's show. (Mankekar, 1999, p. 265)

What I hope to demonstrate here is that there is much to be gained in terms of understanding our media culture when we see how meanings that are offered to us by *specific* media texts are drawn into semiosis in the complex practices, spaces, and relationships of everyday life. Indeed, as Jenny Kitzinger (2004) has argued, if the media have any influence at all, it is only through these complex audience activities, and it is the relationship between the three that we should endeavor to understand. In this way we start to see, in the illustration above, the issues of the thick embedding of practices, of the force of the media, of and the way in which they enter our passionate culture. As I detail in what follows, Isaac's introduction to television has to be seen in relation to a whole range of parenting practices, to the daily organization of our lives as parents of a pre-school child, to a wider set of discourses about childhood, parenting, and television, and to the institutions that govern them. As I have argued, such a thick description also needs to be set within accounts of how we felt about these things with our passions: what it felt like to watch, what our hopes and fears, our pleasures and frustrations were; how watching television with Isaac made an impression on us, in our minds, and on our bodies.

Accounting for Force

While the principles of thickness and force are designed to overcome the separation between "text," "context," and "response," the final accounts have been presented (in their published form) as narratives rather than in the somewhat ossified form of transcriptions, which is significant in trying to capture the feelings and affective forms of a passionate culture – that is, the ways in which the media "impress" upon us. But this was the case with the published narratives only; the conceptualization and *preliminary* analysis emerged, however, from the behind-the-scenes process of transcribing, which calls for creating distance from fieldwork experiences and observations (the objectification of a table, with the clarity that this provokes). These initial analyses were subsequently *developed* and rewritten in narrative form as I watched the videos again. It was an evocative process, which brought back to me – and, it is hoped, evoked for the reader – a sense of the force of these encounters, of their thick entanglement in the multiple contexts of passionate culture. There was much going back over the materials and much rewinding (and at least as much frustration with how long it takes and with the sheer size of the undertaking). Sara would come into the study at times – to watch, to remember, to feel. Her comments (of a personal nature) have found their way into the analysis. Many times a passing phrase, a tone of voice, or a glance revealed a lot; they drew my attention to things

I had missed, forgotten, or thought previously unimportant. Participating in my fieldwork, she was pointing out details that were hidden in the thickness of context, details that invariably brought me back to the *experience-near* nature of force (when I was tempted to stand back too far) through the *experience-distant* nature of concepts (Geertz, 1983, p. 57).

Valerie Walkerdine's (1997) ethnographic research is useful here, for she suggests that such a commitment to thickness of context acknowledges the interpersonal (or *passionate*) space occupied by those involved in the research act, and that the problems with challenging the truth claims of ethnography have more to do with not taking on board our feelings in a systematic manner than with denying having these feelings in the first place. Instead of seeking to banish the force of passionate culture, she seeks to undermine the division between objectivity and subjectivity and to disrupt the idea that the subjective is something that "interferes with, biases and distorts the truthful view of the object of study." As she continues:

I will suggest that it is an impossible task, to avoid the place of the subjective in research, and that, instead of making futile attempts to avoid something which cannot be avoided, we should think more carefully about how to utilize our subjectivity as a feature of the research process. (Walkerdine, 1997, p. 59)

Against the tenets of positivism, Walkerdine's position requires us to take seriously the *force* of our own personal experience as an analytic category, while recognizing that, as thickly embedded or positioned subjects, we have the ability to grasp certain features of media practices in more adequate ways, precisely because we are dealing with experiential aspects of knowing.

Introducing Isaac

Isaac is just 8 months old, it's Sunday afternoon, and his mother, Sara, has just switched on *Teletubbies*. They have been playing, there are toys scattered over the floor: reds, yellows, greens, and blues. Isaac looks up at the camera, grinning, while I film the moment. This is nothing unusual, as we are always filming him in order to capture – or rather to produce – our family memories:

"Is that the camera?"

"Have you got your Po?"

"Say hello . . . hello, hello!"

Isaac is sitting on the floor playing with his new Po doll; we have just returned from shopping and he is very pleased with it, it's a new toy, but he continues to chew on a plastic building block (dribble running down his chin). *Teletubbies* starts; he hears

the music and looks around to the television. This is a real effort, as he is sitting with his back to the television (he has to twist right around); but it's worth it.

Joining in on the introduction, Sara shares Isaac's pleasure as the Teletubbies jump out of their holes, one at a time. This is a ritual: Sara and Po join in on our side of the screen: "Huh, What's that? Oh, Po."

NARRATOR: One.
TELETUBBIES: One.
SARA: One.
NARRATOR: Two.
TELETUBBIES: Two.
SARA: Two.
NARRATOR: Three.
TELETUBBIES: Three.
SARA: Three.
NARRATOR: Four.
TELETUBBIES: Four.
SARA: Four.
SARA: Do you want to turn around so you can see.

As they finish, Sara picks up Isaac and turns him around, sitting him in her lap, and she sits Po beside him, saying: "Look, Po's watching." All of a sudden the theme music bursts out, breaking its restraint as the Teletubbies dance and introduce themselves. Meanwhile the periscope announces "time for Teletubbies, time for Teletubbies"; as they do so, Sara picks up the Po toy and makes it jump to the rhythm of the music:

NARRATOR: Tinky Winky.
TINKY WINKY: Tinky Winky.
NARRATOR: Dipsy.
DIPSY: Dipsy.
NARRATOR: La La.
LA LA: La La.
NARRATOR: Po.
PO: Po.
SARA: Po.
SARA: Po's dancing look!
TELETUBBIES: Teletubbies, Teletubbies, say hello.

The Teletubbies turn to face us, waving "Eh oh!" As they do so, Sara waves Isaac's arm in return; he looks delighted. The singing and music continues and Sara makes Po dance along with the music again:

NARRATOR: Tinky Winky.
TINKY WINKY: Tinky Winky.

NARRATOR: Dipsy.
 DIPSY: Dipsy.
 NARRATOR: La La.
 LA LA: La La.
 NARRATOR: Po.
 PO: Po.
 SARA: Po!

As they play, Sara makes Isaac kiss Po to the rhythm of the music; he grins broadly again, rocks forward slightly, his eyes are bright with wonder: he is completely absorbed in this ritual. Sara and Isaac and Po all hug together on this side of the screen, while the Teletubbies hug on their side: "Teletubbies, Teletubbies, big hug!" "Big hug ahhh"!

A few moments later the windmill appears and the Teletubbies run through the hills to look. We cut to the periscope and Sara asks: "Hu! Where have they all gone?" She has preempted the part of the periscope, which repeats after her: "Where have all the Teletubbies gone?" The dialogue continues as Sara asks again "Where are they?" and dances Po up and down: "We know where Po is don't we!"

Po had a special significance for us. When we first started watching *Teletubbies*, we somehow engineered an affinity between Isaac and Po. I first noticed this when Isaac was 7 months old, as I recognized how much they resemble each other. Quite by chance, he was wearing a red baby-grow; and he seemed to act and feel like Po, with his growing social feel, his mobility, and his curiosity. As we watched, the "littlest one" produced a passionate response: I picked him up for a cuddle (I just had to). Squeezing him tight (close to tears) I asked: "Are you my little Po?" Perhaps the intensity of the emotion (in the mind) is matched by the affective wave (a welling-up) that rises through the body; the two seem to express each other in a dialogic expression of feeling. A few days beforehand, Sara had picked up Isaac, asking: "Do you want a cuddle? Are you Tinky Winky? No, you're Po because you're red." She cuddled him saying "Big Hug," adopting the Teletubbies' intonation. Her affective cadence in imitating the Teletubbies seems to reproduce something of the feeling that lies in and behind a real hug.

A few weeks later Isaac was attracted to dolls in the *Tomy, My First Teletubby* range. Sara suggested that we buy him Po, "because she is the smallest." It was actually two weeks later that we bought him Po. Isaac was miserable, having had a tummy bug, and Sara told me he needed it "as it will make him feel better." When we arrived back home, she suggested to Isaac that he could watch *Teletubbies* with Po: "Wow! Yeah! You going to watch with your Po!" Soon after this Sara started referring to Isaac as "Pissey Po" ("hello my little Pissey Po"). One morning Isaac brought Po into bed with us. Sara picked up Isaac with Po and gave them a big hug: "Ah, it's my big Pissey Po with his little friend Po, are you my Pissey Po?" We laughed sentimentally at his red baby-grow, "ah he looks like Po," and I surprised myself by adopting this "voice" (an inflection) in those moments when we were being most sentimental.

On Being a Parent: Thickness and Force

As a game, Teletubbies was “easy,” in the particular sense that it gave us something to do. It was an *activity* much like those where we interacted through books or toys. “It was easy”: this sounds perhaps a little too frivolous (or lazy, perhaps negligent, inattentive): like I wasn’t trying. I feel like I have to defend myself against this “easiness” and against the accusation of neglect, which is so readily assumed when one lets a child watch television. As I write, as I present myself to the reader as a parent to be scrutinized, I find myself feeling apprehensive, self-conscious perhaps: my cultural capital is on display. I will be judged not only as a researcher, but also as a parent. I need to capture what I mean by “easy,” and to find the root of my unease. The question emerges at a point of tension where I am reluctant to speak, to reveal myself. I get a glimpse of the culture that envelops me, of the forces that shape me: it is this place from which I can speak.

Our ease with the Teletubbies game was not due to lack of attention. It was not a lack of care, nor was it an abandonment of Isaac to the screen. Rather, when I say “easy” I mean it to suggest something about the way in which the text *offered a structure for interacting*, just as turning the pages of a book or playing with building blocks do. I don’t feel uneasy about these: I feel proud to display them; I congratulate myself (“what a good parent I am”). No, the unease is specific to television. I was busy, and at times I found it hard work being with Isaac, keeping him (and myself) entertained, while I was feeling that I had other work to be getting on with. I felt that, to be a good parent, I should have to attend to him constantly: to engage as much as possible, to be attentive to every manifestation of his development, and to recognize, nurture, and celebrate his growth. Television is often positioned against the discourse of good and dedicated parenting, and against the dispositions that responsible parenting seems to demand. In some versions of this discourse, subjecting one’s children to television is seen as tantamount to abuse (Buckingham, 1997).

But parenthood is fraught with contradictory demands, and I’m not so sanctimonious as to hide this: I needed things to do with Isaac when my capacity for unstructured play waned, when I tired of being attentive, when I was frustrated, and when other things were on my mind. Being with a toddler is hard work. There is a whole support network of institutions, formal and informal, commercial or otherwise, which acknowledges parents’ struggles and taps into the interpersonal dynamics that are produced – whatever they may be. The culture industry, in which *Teletubbies* is a major player, is just one part of this field. As such, *Teletubbies* can be seen as less of a text and more of a signifying practice: at once a set of discourses, a discrete text to be watched, and a material practice – but also a set of affordances to be taken up and used, to be drawn into semiosis (Kress, 1997). In short, media rituals precipitate a complex set of meanings, some of which were socially given while others were produced as we played. My questions are: Just how do media intersect with culture, and how is one to account for this confluence? These are questions of thickness and questions of force.

Descriptions: Through Thick and Thin

The phrase “thick description” was originally proposed by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his famous book *The Interpretation of Cultures*. For those of us who are not trained anthropologists (and I take it that the majority of this book’s readers fall into this category), this can be something of a slippery phrase, not least due to Geertz’s somewhat elliptical style of writing. Geertz suggests, for example, that thick description should be concerned with the “webs of significance” in which we are suspended (which we ourselves have spun), and he likens it to reading a manuscript: “foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries.” To make matter worse, such a manuscript is not written but finds its form in the “transient examples of shaped behavior” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10).

Rather than endlessly working through Geertz’s concept of thick description and deconstructing what he meant by it, I think we can begin to see what lies at its basis in what has been written above. In this account, the rather mundane practice of watching television with an infant is situated in a much wider nexus of cultural practices. We see the ways in which *Teletubbies* is not so much a discrete program as a part of wider play and parenting practices, a part of the routines and habits that structure our day and perhaps get us through it. In this we see the ways in which the text is perhaps best approached as a game rather than as a set of meanings; something that has implicit roles, or a set of rules if you like (Briggs, 2007b, 2007c). *Teletubbies* is also something that articulates a set of discourses: that the program has to be educational, that the romance of childhood, or play, should be made useful (Briggs, 2006). In this capacity, as I have argued elsewhere (Briggs, 2006, 2009a), *Teletubbies* says more about the construction of the “good parent” than it does about the child. As a signifying practice, it was an almost constant form of address, and one of several trailers made claims about *CBeebies*’ ability to “release your child’s potential”:

Mozart wrote his first composition at four –
So what ever your child’s potential, we’ll always encourage it:
CBeebies, helping little ones discover big things.

At this confluence of identities and feelings (passions), institutions and discourses (structures), we can see, perhaps more precisely, Geertz’s measure of an adequate thick description. This must be, mainly, a description of meanings, the practices and texts that generate them, and their significance as they unfold in the lives of those we seek to study. But it is also, at once, a case of seeing how these meanings are structured, lived out, and experienced; how they feed back into each other, are resisted, are embraced, are reproduced. But how, then, if this is the case, should we generate such thick and forceful accounts? How do we *render* passion?

Writing Passionately

This brings us finally to the question of representation: How shall we write from the standpoint epistemology of thickness and force? How shall we order the ethnography? With what signature should the work be signed: how do we render, not only thickness, but also the force of a passionate culture? Since the poststructuralist crisis in ethnography and the so-called “interpretative turn” that ensued in the 1980s, these issues have come under increasing scrutiny. James Clifford notes, for example, that ethnographic writing is fictive like a production, or that its creations are “true fictions.” On this construction of writing, the oxymoron (or contradiction) deliberately suggests the partiality of the claims we make about our ability to represent truth. The realities we produce are dependent, to no small extent, on the language and rhetoric used in the thick description, on the conceptual frameworks employed, on the institutional contexts, and on the honesty and skill of the ethnographer (Clifford, 1986, pp. 6–7, 25). Hence ethnographies are necessarily *partial* in both senses of the term: they are dependent upon the multiple positionings of the ethnographer there in the field, and they are dependent on the situated nature of the interpretation (the ethnographic text) there in the context of the institution and of the questions that have been asked – *and the questions that it is permissible to ask*.

Concerns raised about the truthfulness of ethnographic accounts, such as the ones produced here, miss the point. While what I recorded was true in the ontological sense that it happened (that I haven’t made it all up), epistemologically the issue is less secure. There are now different sets of issues: how could one hope to verify this? Is this significant? Is it ever possible? Would someone else in the room produce a similar account, use the same words, notice the same things, and consider them to be significant enough to deserve being recorded? What would have been lost in the research materials if I had limited myself to the observable and the verifiable? To argue that my field notes could be invested with the same authority that positivist data have would be a methodological sleight of hand, as Geertz puts it. However, it would also deny the particular form of writing that thick description demands (Geertz, 1973, p. 23).

In suggesting this, Geertz is addressing the question of how to write – the question of what scriptural practice is suitable for rendering comprehensible the thickness and force of lived experience. I want to briefly consider the challenge of representing lived experience, as it is an important and overlooked aspect of writing, both in textual analysis and in audience research. I think that Roland Barthes’ work is particularly interesting (and no doubt challenging) in this respect, for this is a question to which he constantly returned in his later writings, most of which deal with the passions. Barthes deliberates, variously, on the pleasure of the text (1975), on the nature of love, and its expression in discourse (1978), on desire (1992b), memory (1992a), loss (1980), and the self (1977). These writings are marked by a very different style from that we normally find in criticism. They are non-linear and polyphonous. They

have no single points of entry. They are written as a number of fragments. Indeed, most of this work is arranged numerically or alphabetically. Since the scriptural practice is non-accumulative, these texts only make sense if they are read in a fragmented and decentered manner. While as Barthes suggests, fragmented scriptural practices upset the customs of reading in our society (1974, p. 15) and create particular challenges for the reader schooled in academic writing, such forms of writing that interrupt narrative norms do seem to convey a sense of forceful affect, as well as the inflections of lived experience.

Barthes' (1992a) posthumously published essay "The Light of the Sud-Ouest" accounts for this affective prose quite beautifully. There Barthes reflects on his childhood home in Bayonne. To know one's home, he suggests, to know one's place in the world, to recollect the past, to understand one's present, "to read" all of this and to say something of significance about it, is to *read the cultural through the self*. Such an interpretative practice demands that we *learn to know* through the confluence of mind and body, through memory and affect: "to perceive it in terms of the body and of memory, in terms of the body's memory. I believe it is to this vestibule of knowledge and of analysis that the writer is assigned" (pp. 8–9). I read Barthes as arguing that culture, mediated as it is by memory and perception, is known not only through our thoughts (of whatever kind), but also through the *sensations they afford*: that to know is also to summon up something of the experience of an event, and *then to evoke it through language*. We need a vocabulary and a syntax that can render the *sensations* that experience affords: "odours, exhaustions, sounds of voices, errands, changing light, everything that with regard to reality, is irresponsible and having no meaning except to form, later on, the memory of lost time." This, he argues, is one way to understand the cultural through the self; for "these inconsequentialities, then, are a kind of gateway to that huge region with which sociological data and political analysis are concerned" (Barthes, 1992a, pp. 7–8).

Inconsequentialities

The Teletubbies look like soft toys (either teddy bears or dolls); and, like many other children, Isaac had a Po and a Tinky Winky, along with a family of assorted soft toys. Often these would accompany his viewing. They were part of a wider passionate culture, and, as such, their provenance (a singularity; a personal genesis; a history) endows them with meaning. These connotations tell of the semiotic materiality of the Teletubbies, of the closeness, the warmth, the affection of our passionate culture. As we (Isaac, Sara, myself) look, we experience their touch: the lighting, the perspective (the *mise-en-scène*) highlight their materiality; the signifier transposes from sight to touch (it is synesthetic). *The gaze has a texture, it has a temperature*: they look soft: we feel the cuddles, the "big hugs" of our passionate culture, as we cuddle together: Isaac, Po, myself (it could be *Wibbly Pig* or *Pooh*, the principle is the same).

This is also a matter of characterization: the well-observed movements of the Teletubbies, their regular somatic displays of pleasure, of awe, of curiosity, of excitement. These are readily recognizable: *this, Isaac might say, is what my body feels like* (its forms of feeling) when I run, jump, giggle, sing, hug, bounce, fall, roll: when I know what is coming, when we jump up in peek-a-boo: feeling is drawn into semiosis. We recognize the passions that accompany experience: the simple delights of hiding behind a hill, of jumping up, of waving (“hello”); of greeting (“big hug”); of repetition (doing this again and again, so I know what it will feel like). This matches (it expresses) the rhythms of Isaac’s body, the rhythms of his play. It amazes me, he wakes at seven after almost 12 hours of sleep, plays until mid-morning with an intensity I can barely keep up with, and then, exhausted, he is back to bed for two hours:

Running across to the windmill full of expectation: holding hands with my friends:
my tummy lights up: wow!

The Pleasures of Sound

These are pleasures of speech, of rhyme, as I call out “Tinky Winky, Dipsy, La La, Po.” The television lights up “zing, zing, zing, zing” as I shake my legs: a tingling feeling, tingling (iridescent) with excitement and anticipation.

The Polyrythms

Each character has a motif, often they seem to be superimposed: a cacophony of movement, of sounds and bodies; each appears on the hillside:

Tinky Winky with his handbag,
Dipsy his hat,
La La her ball,
Po on her scooter:

They greet us, with a joy and an enthusiasm (an eagerness) that match their movements:

“Hello!”
“One day in Teletubbyland all the Teletubbies were very busy.”
“Very busy!” comes the Teletubbies’ reply.

They never stop:

Tinky Winky marches . . .
Dipsy, she dances . . .
Baby Sun smiles and coos . . .
La La bounces the ball.

Po rides the scooter – but the excitement is too much for her (for her body), she falls exhausted onto the floor:

“Po tired.”

“So Po decided to go and have a rest.”

“Po rest,” she replies, as if to affirm: off she runs to bed.

“Go to sleep, its time to rest, go to sleep, la le la, its time to go to sleep,” the lullaby gently soothes. “Ah, Po’s asleep.”

A short rest and all is well; ready to play: *again, again, again, again . . .*

Passionate Bodies, Passionate Minds

One way of thinking about these issues of affect, as this type of embodied expressivity, is to conceptualize the body as a core that *grounds subjective experience*. As Barthes argues, we come to know as much through our bodies as we do through our minds (Barthes, 1992a, p. 7). Our bodies, however, are never singular but always dispersed: located in an environment; a body of experience, and an experiencing body. For Barthes, at once “a digestive body,” a “nauseated body,” and a third body “which is migrainous”; others that are “sensual, muscular . . . humoral”; still another, which is *emotive*, “which moves, is stirred, depressed, or exalted or intimidates.” And there are more: the “socialized body,” the “mythological body,” the “artificial body,” the “prostituted body.” Finally, “local bodies,” which is to say (in a different sense) ecological bodies: “A Parisian body (alert, tired) and a country body (rested, heavy)” (Barthes, 1977, pp. 60–61).

As Susanne Gannon writes, for Barthes the body is a source of knowledge: “but it is unreliable, fragmented, and dispersed in time, not a reliable reflection of any coherent or stable self” (Gannon, 2006, p. 481). This is precisely the point – and the difficulty – in autoethnography: not to make experience posit a stable “I” in its name, but to account (with the aid of concepts) for a phenomenology of the self in process: a self who experiences an affective (embodied) subjectivity in concert (or in dialogue) with others. I take this to be a question of thinking about the phenomenological and affective nature of the experiencing I; of what Ulrich Neisser (1988) calls the *ecological self*. In Neisser’s account these multiple bodies provide a phenomenological locus of being: “I am the person here in this place, engaged in this particular activity.” This can be thought of as the experiential self of agency and corporal affectively: the *embodied self in a particular environment*: the self in what I can see, do, hear, feel, touch and control: the “I who can do this,” the “I of coordinated movement,” the “I as distinct from the environment” (Neisser, 1988, p. 36).

As such, the ecological self is radically contextual and must be phenomenologically conceived: to move is to perceive consequences, both optical and kinetic. The

perception forms an awareness, a nascent self emerging from the earliest moments of life. This is a coming into being as “bounded,” “articulated,” “controllable”; “by what it can see, and what it can do.” The ecological self is directly perceived, rather than as an object of thought (pp. 39–41). This is *vital*: the self is never disembodied. We always *experience* from a location: from a *position*. Subjectivity is *situated* in such an account. It must be: it is the nature of our embodiment in time and space (a lived, an ecological context).

This is important not only in terms of thinking about embodied experience, but also for thinking about the self in relation to the world. Taken as such, the ecological self can be thought of in the following ways:

- *the self of agency* (of authorship over actions and non-authorship of others – of being done to, of volition and repeatability: “this happens”);
- *the self of coherence* (of a physical whole which is bounded: not the shards of the fragmented self but a unity formed by a locus for integrated action);
- *the self of affectivity* (who recognizes and remembers the patterns and traces of actions – who feels);
- *the self who has a history* (it has a sense of enduring: “it goes on being”).

Through practice, the ecological self *comes into being* in a dialogue with others, with objects, and with self-experiences: “the self is not an experience of being but an experience of becoming, a process of improvisational co-activity with potentially infinite possibilities for self discovery” (Fogel, Koeyer, Bellagamba, & Bell, 2002, pp. 193–194). As this account suggests, the ecological self is performative. It is enacted and engaged, which is to say brought into being and preformed through physical play. The text affords this: there in front of the television as Isaac explores the corporeal, the mediated (simulated), and the material worlds: singing, dancing, waving, joining in, chewing toys, newspapers, pulling cables, blowing “raspberries,” insisting on feeding himself, crawling, tumbling, being hugged, bathed, and changed. *He is a self with a physical potential for action*. His body is drawn into semiosis experientially; it is felt through forms of feeling in physical and sensual play. While this is pragmatic (Isaac intrudes into the semiotic ecology), it is also pedagogic: Isaac *observes, he sees, he listens, and watches*. There is recognition: “I can do that,” “I can feel that.” This is experiential, which is to say affective *as well as* cognitive. These experiences, this ecological self, are cause for celebration: the self is reflected back quite literally by the Teletubbies, whose ebullient characterizations find their origin in Isaac.

The Ecological Self

Isaac is 12 months old. He watches quietly, I sit on the floor behind him; he is having a mid-morning snack (juice and a biscuit): “would you like some daddy” he seems

to say as he turns around. He pulls himself up against me, offering the biscuit into my mouth “umm, yum yum, thank you, thank you very much: it’s the rabbits, it’s the rabbits, wow!” (I revoice *Bugs Bunny* as the falling refrain sounds in the background). Isaac almost supports his own weight now, and he looks straight into my eyes – our bodies move in concert as I apply just enough pressure in just the right place. This is familiar, sedimented: we both take pleasure, him in standing, and me in “how well he is doing.”

Tinky Winky appears from behind a clump of talking flowers. He waves to us as I ask Isaac what he is doing. I sing along, with the ditty “do do tahh, ohhhh, what’s that Tinky Winky doing?” He says “Eh Oh” as he looks at us from the diegesis. He waves again. I return the gesture by waving Isaac’s hand: “Eh Oh.” He seems to say hello himself, in a vocal display of pleasure: “yeeh, yeah, yehhhh, yeahhhh.”

The narrator begins his commentary: “one day in Teletubbyland, Tinky Winky stood on one leg.”

This is no monologue – we all take turns responding:

MATT: Standing on one leg!

TINKY WINKY: Stand on one leg!

Isaac is kneeling on bended knees, as we talk he launches himself forwards; sensing the change of tension, *anticipating his movement*, I pick him up into a standing position: our gestures are coordinated. Just as Tinky Winky prepares for his physical play, I literally scaffold Isaac (to support, but also to prompt):

“Can Pisse do that?”

“Can Pisse stand on one leg?”

“Look at that! Can Pisse stand on one leg?”

A drum roll sounds in the background; it marks, with perfect timing, Tinky Winky’s bodily performance and Isaac’s efforts at standing: as he leans against me, propping himself up, I lift one of his legs in the air, saying “oohhhhhhhh yeah!” (I finish on the last flourish of the drum).

“Again, again,” Tinky Winky enthusiastically signals his pleasure jumping up and down. “Again, again”: he repeats the trick.

Just as he stands up on his own, lurching forward I say: “Can Pisse stand on two legs?” Wobbling he grasps the neck of my t-shirt. As he swings around, I pull him in for a hug: “Yeah clever boy. You’re going to stand on two legs, you try, like Tinky Winky.”

In two weeks Isaac will be walking on his own: then he will jump up and play peek-a-boo with the Teletubbies: launching himself upwards (expressively): “BOO!” Isaac plays alongside and with the Teletubbies. Sara and I scaffold Isaac’s experiences and, as we assume the implied role, we mediate the text: we draw it into semiosis. These rituals punctuated our patterns of relatedness. In this textual play we take pleasure in our bodies. Isaac explores his body’s potential and the subjectivity this engenders. Textual and corporal play works in tandem *with the other*, for the

ecological self is also the self who anticipates, whose body and emotions are shared. A self “in concert” with the other: who literally dances (embraced, as we have seen). Playing peek-a-boo, the familiarity of touch and of being held, the regularities of caretaking (“the way mummy changes me,” “the way daddy hugs me”); laughing together, watching *Teletubbies*: these are totally social experiences that are embodied, but routine. In short: they are *habitual*. In peek-a-boo, these interactions excite Isaac in a crescendo of joy and suspense; they are sedimented, however, as they are anticipated; the body knows and expects what is to come, it is prepared, and there is an affirming self-knowledge in this: “this is me, I carry on.” Through this play, Isaac is engaged in vital self-experiences (Stern, 1985, pp. 101–105).

Here I am trying out new ways of thinking, of how affect is related to the text beyond the identification of emotional responses or “pleasures” – a much too general term. By doing so I have to take my lived experience as the epistemological datum. It is not enough to rely on the objectively identifiable (to turn it into a text: to read it). This may explain something of the poetics of the act, of what can be seen on the tape; but this is not isomorphic with the erotics of the act: it fails to capture it, it exceeds it, it speaks a different language – or rather it accompanies it, like another semiotic register. In essence, this is the nature of the passions; for, while they flow and circulate, while they are both subjective and shareable, they are not readily objectified, recorded, and textualized. As an issue of lived experience, passionate culture can only just be spoken of, only just represented. The representation will always be but a poor approximation. We need new vocabularies, new ways of writing, and new ways of thinking to capture this.

Thickness, Force, Power

To conclude the research, I want to return to these issues now, insofar as they can be related back to what is arguably the central issue in media studies: *the question of power*. I do so by developing a theme that has emerged at several points in my argument and that links the questions of lived experience, affect, and power (pedagogy). As I have suggested, I think these can be profitably thought through as an *affective pedagogy* (Briggs, 2007c; Highmore, 2009). This is important; for thinking through the relationship between affect and cultural reproduction seems to be an important way of rethinking the rather sterile opposition between “audience pleasure” and “ideological effect.” This is often conceptualized as an opposition between *power* (the text) and *resistance* (the audience). Important as these questions are, they seem not to relate to the wide range of meanings that are in play as semiosis is generated, and often they are posed as high-level conceptual issues rather than as empirical questions to be pursued (e.g., Fiske, 1987).

In place of this power/resistance paradigm, I return to the perspective of passionate culture and ask a final question about the yoking of play, affect, and the pedagogic. To

do so, it is useful to look at Elspeth Probyn's (2004, 2005) work, for she suggests that one important function of affect is to make us care about things. However, affect does not only make us care; it suggests *ways of caring*, and *different ways of being involved*. Here, as I have argued (Briggs, 2007a), affect is the meeting of the mind (the psychological) and the body (the physiological). In such a way Probyn argues that affect creates what can be thought of as "the mindful body": *an embodied subjectivity, which is directed toward the world in a specific and affective modality of interest* (Probyn, 2004, pp. 26–27).

The Mindful Body

Teletubbies was habitual: it was routine. Childcare is work, and watching television, for Sara and myself, was part of this childcare. However, this work of childcare can be playful. As work and as play: once one accepts the ambiguity, one can enjoy the game of playing along while still going through the motions, subjected to its logic and to its repetition (both the daily routine and the fixed form of the text): *hellos, tummy tales, dancing, magic windmill, goodbye*. Play and non-play are not to be sequestered into separate corners of experience. While the routine of childcare is enjoyable, often rewarding, it is also a responsibility. Sara and myself were positioned here as responsible parents (habituated, as I have argued), and I am positioned here in a double articulation, as a responsible parent *and* as a researcher. My cultural capital was clearly on display, to be scrutinized – by myself and by others. In this way I was a subject of discourse; I positioned myself in relation to it: I habituated myself (see Briggs, 2006, 2009a).

In respect of this habituation, Isaac, as we have seen, certainly wanted *Teletubbies* on, again and again. It was a regular part of the day, a routine: it was *habitual*. The program was one means through which our routine was managed and through which Isaac became socialized into the abstract structuring of time (Davis, Buckingham, & Kelley, 1999). Isaac didn't always need to go to sleep after *Teletubbies* at 10.25, but I needed him to do so. I had other things that needed doing: I needed that hour or so, that space, that time. In this respect, while he wanted to watch, I also wanted him to watch. He was being "stitched" into culture here, in the abstract structuring of time, of space, and of the uses of his body (Foucault, 1979). In the broadest sense, this was an affective pedagogy: the playful and *affectionate* regulation of his body and of his time. Here we see the channeling of his somatic energies (his passions) toward adult needs and desires, which is to say cultural need and desires. He was learning through play.

An Affective Pedagogy

Isaac is now 16 months old. For once it's a lazy Sunday with no rushing around. We are having a long leisurely breakfast in the kitchen. I'm enjoying this quality time.

Throughout our meal Isaac plays with a *Teletubby* magazine (not designed to be “read” but to be played with: colored in, ripped, talked about, shared). Finished, we move into the front room for *Teletubbies*. *Tweenies* is approaching the end, and Milo, Fizz, Bella, and Jake sing and dance the conga. Sara asks Isaac: “Do you want to dance?” He refuses (he is tired, he complains). He walks across to mummy, climbing on her lap, sucking his thumb, one hand behind his ear (his comforter). I interpret his feelings for him: “No, I need a cuddle.” I think that he will go up to sleep as soon as *Teletubbies* has finished. Perhaps I shall do some work, I have marking to do: so much for my leisurely Sunday.

The *Teletubbies* trailer begins. It is announcing what is to come and Sara sings along with the music: “Tinky Winky, Dipsy, La La, Po.” She gently rocks to the rhythm, matching it with Isaac’s mood. After a lull, the familiar music starts again, and Isaac walks over to the television. He picks up a small red basket on the way and hums along to himself, as he pokes it with a white stick (of the type to which balloons are attached). What is “to hand” is drawn into meaning-making here: he shakes it up and down (rather like a conductor’s baton), saying “hello” to the *Teletubbies* as they appear in their house:

ISAAC: It’s there.
 SARA: Who’s that!
 MATT: Look! Look at that!
 ISAAC: Yeah, Yeah! It’s De! Da.
 MATT: You saying hello!

A little later the *Teletubbies* march off to the clarion call of the tummy tale. Isaac matches his excitement to theirs: he recognizes the move in the game and vocalizes in anticipation and involvement. The progressive marching music continues as Tinky Winky, Dipsy, La La, and Po turn and look up at the windmill. Amid their gasps of delight and wonder Isaac shouts out “Daaaa!” and I respond excitedly “What’s it going to be?!!” This is both a question about my pleasure and a request for an answer. Now he will learn about the world. Isaac’s reply is a physical response: he runs across to the television and touches the screen as the *Teletubbies* hug (“they love each other very much”). The pedagogic, the ludic, and the passionate converge: a weave of voices.

To play the text with Isaac is at once to submit to childish pleasures and to share them with him, but it is also to teach him, not only the lessons of the text, but also *how to make his pleasures useful*: how to harness his passion. In this way we watch with him; we teach him how to respond (scaffolding his involvement): here you join in, let us know if you like it, call out, jump up, sing, talk, and dance: these are our friends. The mood (the inflection, the intonation) of this passionate voice is “wow.” It harnesses his interest, it becomes at once its heuristic partner: “How?” The emphasis here is on the pedagogic: *on the sharing of interest*. Our bodies become mindful.

This is a pedagogy that is based on affect as much as it is based on ideation. This semiosis translates across different semiotic modes, from touch and sound to sight:

it is synesthetic. This is to reverse the common critical position (a cultural pedagogy): Isaac isn't *making sense* of the Teletubbies *as characters*, he isn't building up a complex portrait of psychological and cultural traits (the semic, the cultural, and the symbolic codes) in order to explicate a plot (to make sense of the story): he doesn't "read" or "decode" the text in order to make sense of the world, himself, and others. Isaac doesn't ask what the text really means; what (by allegory) that stands for: "What is the social message, the moral?" Later he will attend to these issues and explicate the text in this way (among others). The texts he will watch will address him with this pedagogic voice. His culture will teach him to do this kind of reading (at school, where ideation is the final goal of the text) (Turnbull, 1998). At 18 months, this is not a form of cognition available to Isaac: to critically approach the text *only* from this position would be to ignore the dynamics of passionate culture and the "impressions" of the text. Here research will need to find ways of asking what happens when feelings and structures meet in passionate culture, when they are yoked together in the thickness and force of everyday life.

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Nomadic Scholarship

Translocal Approach to Audience Studies

Fabienne Darling-Wolf

ABSTRACT

This chapter reflects on the challenges of developing a translocal approach to audience research. After providing a short critical review of the literature outlining the benefits of such an approach from a theoretical point of view, this essay goes on to discuss the difficulties arising from the attempt to develop an understanding of audiences' experiences in different environments informed by a truly comparative lens. An approach, in other words, that considers how the experiences of audiences in different parts of the world relate to one another. Informed by the author's experience as a white European US-educated scholar employed by a US university – a scholar whose work has extensively focused on Japan, but who is also significantly influenced by her French citizenship and familiarity with francophone academic literature – the chapter considers the practical implications of conducting fieldwork in multiple cultural contexts, as well as the consequences of approaching research with a keen awareness of our (and our informants') complex identities.

In his seminal work on the hybrid nature of contemporary cultures, Argentinian Mexican cultural critic Néstor García-Canclini (1995) describes the anthropologist as entering the city by foot, the sociologist “by car and via the main highway,” and “the communications scholar by plane” (p. 4). Much of the corpus of communication

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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research in the United States seems to justify this characterization. The hefty bodies of work on political economy and transnational media flows, on the transmission and processing of information, or on the politics of media representation are typically concerned with drawing large-scale outlines of media production, content, distribution, and/or reception processes – in other words (and to continue García-Candlini's metaphor), with producing an aerial view rather than a detailed map of the city. In fact, one wonders at times if the communication scholar enters the city at all.

While such investigations have certainly contributed to our understanding of the role of communication in society and culture(s) – and while I do not mean to suggest that we stop producing such research – their macro-level perspective limits their ability to address the realm of reception and, more specifically, the process of *interpretation* and meaning-making that takes place at the micro-level when audiences consume media texts. In order to better address what Stuart Hall (1980) characterizes as the “decoding” end of the communication process, we need to more specifically attend to audiences’ “on-the-ground” negotiation of various cultural texts in different sociocultural contexts.

Using transnational communication research that focuses on the “local” reception of “global” texts as a starting point, this chapter discusses how developing a multi-sited translocal approach to media reception that “focuses on connections between several local social spaces, exploring hitherto neglected local-to-local links” (Kraidy, 2005, p. 155) can help us confront the challenges of fieldwork and contribute to the development of a more sophisticated multidimensional understanding of media audiences. Bearing in mind the theoretical challenge of approaching research with a full awareness of our (and our informants’) multiple identities, I further consider what a translocal approach might look like, not only in the context of global media studies but also in the broader realm of qualitative communication research. I close by offering a number of strategies that scholars engaged in audience research might usefully employ to develop a more translocal perspective on audiences’ lived experiences and to help them address the politics of conducting such research in a Western academic context. Throughout the chapter, to illustrate my points, I will often draw on my personal experiences as an individual who lives and conducts research in multiple cultural settings. The examples I outline here will demonstrate the usefulness of personal experience as a productive research tool, particularly when we become aware of the translocal aspects of our experiences.

Not an Easy Task

Attending to audiences is not an easy task. While scholars recognize the need to develop a better understanding of audiences’ lived experiences in specific contexts, scholarly attempts to address this need have tended to remain “theoretically sophisticated but

empirically thin,” producing “quasi-ethnographic” works that lack a “commitment to immersion, building of trust, long-term observation, or participation in the daily lives of research participants” (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003, p. 3). This reluctance, on the part of those who study audiences, to leave the relatively safe realm of theory may be explained in part by the fact that entering the city by foot, alongside the anthropologist, can be an extremely messy business when one is a communications scholar.

At the most practical level, the “political economy” of ethnographic research predicated on costly and time-consuming field experience often has dire consequences (financial and otherwise) for scholars in a discipline lacking a tradition of fieldwork. As communication scholars Patrick Murphy and Marwan Kraidy (2003) explain in the introduction to their edited collection on ethnographic perspectives in global media studies, the ethnographic study of media audiences is, as a result, “constantly under threat of becoming the epistemological privilege of well-funded scholars at elite institutions” (p. 4). This reality becomes evident to me each year when I teach qualitative methods to doctoral students (in a Mass Media and Communication program). Despite my attempts to encourage students to pursue ethnographic methods, the time constraints of the program coupled with the seemingly insurmountable financial challenge posed by fieldwork typically result in most of my students choosing textual analysis as their preferred method, with the occasional addition of qualitative interviewing. The difficult economic conditions under which most academic institutions currently operate make it unlikely that this situation will change for them once they develop their dissertation project or find themselves on tenure track – if they ever are “lucky” enough to get there.

In a similar vein, those of us who managed to spend months or years in the field conducting our dissertation research on audiences or human subjects have often found that we could not reproduce the experience until after we are safely tenured and/or promoted. While I was able, for instance, to return to Japan (the focus of my dissertation work) to conduct fieldwork during summers when I was on tenure track, at other times in the academic year I was discouraged from planning for longer fieldwork periods, which might interfere with my teaching schedule and research productivity.¹ If spending a few weeks with informants each summer can help us develop a better understanding of media audiences, it is not exactly analogous to the total immersion or long-term observation that Murphy and Kraidy (2003) are advocating.

At a more general level, when researchers do choose to conduct fieldwork, the identity politics of a research method critiqued for its historical collusion with colonialism and Western imperialist discourse remain painfully difficult to negotiate. Indeed, if the intense debates initiated by the rise of postmodernism about the politics of representation and the (im)possibility of “speaking for the Other” have usefully complicated our understanding of power issues in ethnographic work, they have also rendered the practice of fieldwork increasingly intimidating. It is consequently not particularly surprising that a growing body of media ethnography should be “shaped more by the critique of ethnography’s association with colonialism and Western discourse than by the surprise and productivity of the field encounter”

(Murphy & Kraidy, 2003, p. 4). Fully engaging the historical legacy of Western imperialist discourse on ethnographic work requires scholars associated with American or European institutions to come to terms with the fact that they are conducting research from an inescapably privileged vantage point – a fact that does not necessarily render ethnographic audience research hopelessly perfidious or useless, but one that must nevertheless be addressed and carefully negotiated. This is, by all means, not an easy or comfortable task.

Add to this the challenge of accessing the “increasingly intimate, microscopic and virtual reception environments and practices” created by media technologies that, “unlike the less closed-in and more performative–ritualized spaces that have been the customary sites for ethnographic inquiry throughout anthropology’s history” (*ibid.*), render the very notion of “doing fieldwork” increasingly problematic, and the situation gets even messier (for a more detailed analysis of the shifting nature of ethnographic fieldsites, see for example Clua, 2003; Couldry, 2003). Despite the mess, however, scholars interested in investigating how audiences negotiate media messages in various environments do continue to insist on entering the city by foot (or at least on a bicycle). They choose to do so because, if the challenges of fieldwork can be daunting at times, media ethnography also generates unique opportunities to engage media reception in all its complexity.

A View From the Ground

The pioneering audience studies of Janice Radway (1984), Ien Ang (1985), Andrea Press (1991), Elizabeth Bird (1992), and others too numerous to mention here have taught us that we often get a completely different picture when talking to individuals and observing their engagement with popular culture from the one we take when analyzing media texts and/or the politics of their production and distribution. This fact has become painfully obvious to scholars interested in the relationship between the global environment in which popular culture is generated and distributed and the varied local contexts in which it is consumed.

Those who are looking at processes of globalization from the point of view of political economy see a picture of the world where global media production is increasingly concentrated in the hands of powerful corporations from the richest nations (Herman & McChesney, 1997; McPhail, 2002). These scholars argue that this situation produces inauthentic and alienating cultural forms, which thoroughly penetrate and disrupt the local cultures to which they are ultimately distributed (see for example, Giddens, 1999; Tehranian, 1999). Others recognize that transnational flows are increasingly multidimensional and complex but nevertheless argue that global media promote “an American conception of the world” (Hall, 1997, p. 33). As Hall (1997) puts it, globalization speaks English, even if in a “variety of broken forms” – including “Anglo-Japanese, Anglo-French, Anglo-German,” or even “Anglo-English” (p. 28).

Those who study transnational flows “primarily conceived in terms of multinational corporations, powerful media, communication technology, or government actors” might, however, “fail to recognize the diversity of paths that can lead to global cultural connections” (Condry, 2006, p. 207). What if, for instance, the use of English is less of a symptom of US hegemony than a tool to question powerful elites’ essentializing characterizations of “local” culture – as scholars suggest is the case of much Japanese popular music (see for example Condry, 2006; Stanlow, 2000)? What if the US origins of this global English are ultimately lost, for listeners, in this multidimensional mixing of global cultural production, where our collective memory is “made from the fragments of different nations, making it difficult for that memory to be distilled from any one particular group” (Yúdice, 2001, p. xxvii)? The insertion of “on-the-ground” engagement with local agents into considerations of global processes significantly complicates the picture of transnational cultural influence. As Murphy and Kraidy (2003) remind us: “While globalization may be discursively situated in terms of broad economic, political and cultural trends, media consumption is [. . .] perhaps the most immediate, consistent and pervasive way in which ‘globality’ is experienced” (p. 7).

Indeed, the ethnographic audience research of numerous global media scholars underscore how local agents are often actively engaged in a complex process of transnational reinterpretation through which they translate, mutate, and “indigenize” cultural imports (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 84) – a process that is not, however, devoid of power struggles or negative implications for those involved in it (see for example Parameswaran, 1999; Darling-Wolf, 2003a, 2004; La Pastina, 2007). This research demonstrates that, as local audiences’ identities and hybrid cultural forms are being fashioned in relation – or even in opposition – to the global through involvement with increasingly abstract and deterritorialized imagined communities (Anderson & Kingsley, 1999; Niezen, 2004), the global–local nexus becomes a site of simultaneous resistance and domination, enacted on multiple interlocking axes and negotiated in complex and often unpredictable ways (Appadurai, 2001). In other words, “[t]he identification of structures of power by political–economic media research is necessary, but not sufficient, for an understanding of the local–global dynamic. Grasping how power works in concrete local settings is crucial” (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008, p. 351).

In this context, “[p]art of the challenge of understanding cultural globalization involves recognizing that the global and the local are not so much matched pairs as they are symbolic crystallizations of more fluid, ongoing processes unfolding over time” (Condry, 2006, p. 86). In order to fully tease out the implications of this recognition one must, as García-Canclini (2001) suggests, “focus on the concrete conditions in which cultural processes develop in different countries, on the interaction of globalizing projects and the specific multicultural social arrangements obtaining in given regions” (pp. 3–4). Kraidy and Murphy (2008) propose a view of the local that “ventures beyond prevalent conceptualizations of ‘the local’ as something that exists in suspended opposition with ‘the global’” (p. 339). They contend that an ethnographically thick translocal approach “focused on an intricate

understanding of the encounter between local life and global forces” (p. 339) is a necessary component of such a project, as it “enables an understanding of the local–global dialectic through the comparative study of multiple locales” (p. 346). As they conclude:

Empirical research inevitably must begin with a local context, but if we are to build a truly global subfield of global communication studies, then a doubly comparative research approach is needed, working comparatively between and within various locals, on the backdrop of global processes that are often mediated by national institutions. Multisited research thus must go hand in hand with translocal theorization. (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008, p. 351)

Why Translocalism?

The move toward thinking in terms of “translocal” rather than “global” rests in part on the recognition that, when scholars speak of “the global,” they are often actually describing a series of translocal encounters. I was recently powerfully reminded of the emphasis on the translocal as I was attending an academic conference on the theme of encouraging students to become “global citizens.” The vast majority of the discussions among the scholars present (all engaged in some form of “international” research) centered on the benefits and politics of programs for study abroad (that is, means to provide students with a variety of enlightening *translocal* experiences) rather than on strategies designed to help students develop an increased awareness of the fact that their daily lives and activities – from the coffee they drink in the morning to the TV they watch at night – are necessarily embedded in worldwide networks of interaction with manifold economic and political implications for individuals around the globe.

Thus, developing a truly global perspective on audiences is not an easy task. As Straubhaar (2007) reminds us, “[o]ne of the main limits on globalization in media and culture is that relatively few people have a primarily global identity” (p. 6). Similarly, processes of transnational influence often operate within relatively limited geocultural and transnational cultural–linguistic regions rather than on a truly worldwide scale. “In short, ‘global’ is not ‘universal,’ and ‘global communication’ does not mean ‘universal communication’” (Mowlana, 1997, p. 8).

A translocal approach to audiences can, however, inform our understanding of the global if it is not simply limited to producing translocal encounters (the “study abroad” approach, which often still rests on dualistic comparisons) but is used instead to investigate global–local connections through empirical investigations of multiple local sites, *considered in relationship to each other and within a broader global context*. A translocal approach can, in other words, enable us “to refocus on the local, which is after all the site where meaning emerges, without disengaging from issues involving global forces,”

since “[i]t is through the comparative study of local life in various locations that a living, breathing sense of global communication flows, processes, and outcomes can be comprehensively grasped” (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008, p. 339). Perhaps the most productive aspect of translocalism is that it allows us to address “how one local can help us understand another local” (p. 343). Using the example of global reality television formats adapted to various local environments, Kraidy and Murphy illustrate how this might work. Noting that “[t]he a priori assumption that various format adaptations are linked to the original format (global) but not to each other (locals) is difficult to sustain in the globally connected contemporary world” (p. 347), they explain how, for instance, a Lebanese text may be better understood in terms of its relation to the French incarnation of a format than to its globally licensed form:

[I]f we look at the Endemol format of Fame Academy, a realitybased, singing and dancing competition show, we see that its Arabic-language format adaptation by the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) was mediated by the French adaptation, both called Star Academy. Although France, a large industrialized country with vibrant creative industries and a transnational sphere of influence in the Francophone world, is not usually considered a “local,” in this case, the French broadcaster TF1 was just another local adapter of a global format created in the Netherlands. However, in the current global geopolitical and cultural context, France cannot be considered strictly local in its relationship to Lebanon, where it previously was the colonial power. We therefore have several levels of mediation that complicate the simple local–global dyad. (p. 347)

In this case, the postcolonial relationship between France and Lebanon offers a more useful framework of analysis than a conceptualization of power relations more broadly characterized in terms of local versus an undefined global.

More generally, translocalism can inform our understanding of the local–global articulation in audience research by providing for a wider range of references to draw on in the process of interpretation. I find, for instance, that I tend to interpret individuals’ attitude toward religion in my Japanese fieldsite – where Shinto and Buddhist influences are fluidly negotiated – through the lens of my experiences in predominantly “Catholic” France, where the legality of abortion has remained largely uncontested since 1975, where most people typically go to church only on Christmas night (and, occasionally, at Easter), and where people use birth control but assume they will have children some day and choose to baptize them as infants when they do: where, in other words, the pope’s pronouncements are taken with a (rather large) grain of salt and religion is generally approached as an element of culture to be negotiated rather than as a choice profoundly formative of one’s identity, as is often the case in the United States. As a consequence of this different positioning, I tend to find US scholars’ frequent linking of Japanese religious syncretism to Japan’s “exceptional” ability to globalize foreign elements (see for example Robertson, 1992) somewhat exaggerated.

Translocal connections can thus usefully run in multiple and complex directions. My personal experience of growing up in France on a heavy dose of both US and

Japanese media has informed my understanding of US and Japanese global influence – while at the same time providing insights on French cultural protectionism – just as my work with Japanese media consumers has helped me better understand audiences in French and US contexts (and vice versa). Similarly, when I moved to Japan for the first time, I found life in the countryside highly reminiscent of the small French town where I grew up. The population density, the way people addressed each other in the streets of the village (“Hot isn’t it?” “Cold today!”), the multilayered mountains always on the horizon, evoked a “structure of feeling” (Williams, 1961) much more similar to that of the rural France of my youth than to that of the urban United States, which had by then become my “home.” Years later, however, when I decided to reconnect with my local culture “of origin” by buying a “fixer-upper” in a village some 30 kilometers from the town where I was born, I found my experience of the place steeped in translocal comparisons with Japan. An extract from field notes taken in 2008, when I arrived in the village for the summer, illustrates this process:

We drive up the mountain. It is gray with a fine rain. This reminds me so much of driving up the mountain in Shikoku. When we get to a spot where the fog is hanging on the side of the mountain, I ask [my partner] if he knows what this reminds me of. He says he does. I can’t believe how similar to Japan this is. It is interesting how this place that I am from is so familiar not because that’s where I am from but because it reminds me of a far foreign place. It takes on a completely new meaning for me.

This shows how translocal encounters can shape our understanding and experience of various “locals” – including, in my case, the place where I am “originally from” – on multiple and multidimensional axes. I suggest that this multilayered process of complicating the local offers productive potential for scholars involved in all areas of audience research, even if their research is not necessarily conducted in a transnational context.

We Are All Translocal, Including Audience Researchers

Taking a historically long view on transnational and intercultural influence, sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) convincingly argues that processes of translocalism and hybridization are the historical norm rather than the exception. Noting that “we are all migrants” (2009, p. 25), he suggests: “The moment we shift lenses from sedentary to *mobile* categories, the whole environment and the horizon change: hunting, nomadic pastoralism, fishing, trade, transnational enterprise, and hyperspace all have deterritorialization built in” (p. 144). The recognition that “hybridity is deeply rooted in history and quite ordinary” (p. 97) has significant implications for the development of a translocal approach in communication research. Under this premise, as Pieterse

contends, “[w]hat is problematic is not hybridity but the fetishism of boundaries that has marked so much of history” (ibid.). In other words, recognizing that we are all, to some extent, translocal (or, as Pieterse would put it, hybrid) encourages us to critically engage the politics of representation permeating academic research. As Pieterse wonders:

[I]f all cultures are hybrid all along, then the problem is not hybridity but boundaries: how is it that boundaries are historically and socially so significant? How come that while boundaries continuously change shape in the currents and tides of history, boundary fetishism remains, *even among social scientists?* (Pieterse, 2009, p. 109, emphasis mine)

If we must be careful not to unquestionably celebrate cultural syncretism and translocalism without taking into account the historical circumstances under which hybridity develops – as Yúdice (2001) reminds us, for many “hybridity results from having to satisfy basic needs by participating in a system of production and consumption not of one’s choosing” (p. xv) – Pieterse’s questions are important ones to address. Answering them requires us to recognize that (1) all identities are, as he suggests, translocal at least to some extent; (2) some elements of our translocal identity are nevertheless more obvious and/or readily acknowledged than others; and (3) we must critically consider why and how these elements are privileged over others.

For instance, my own translocality is enacted most powerfully on a transnational and/or transcultural axis. Born and raised in France, I have spent most of my adult life in the United States, where I currently teach. I am engaged in an ongoing relationship with Japan, where I moved for the first time as an English teacher some 15 years ago, and which became the main focus of my research (and my ethnographic fieldsite) shortly thereafter. I have lived on the island of Shikoku for several years and have been teaching a summer workshop in Tokyo on a regular basis for the past 10 years or so. I have always returned to France regularly to visit family and have remained close to the francophone community in the United States through my two daughters’ French immersion school. I have recently chosen to spend a year-long research leave conducting fieldwork near the town where I grew up (I am looking out onto the French countryside as I am writing these lines). I have homes in France and the United States, and my bicycle is parked in Tokyo (it literally is). In addition to my professional and personal relationships to these three cultural environments, my life partner of 20 years is a Canadian of Ukrainian origin, and, while I have never lived in Canada, we frequently visit his family there. Our daughters are US, French, and Canadian citizens and like to “claim” their “Japaneseness” through expressions of familiarity and affection for a culture in which they have spent extensive periods of time from the moment they were born.

In a strictly academic setting, however, the fact that I speak an accented English, teach at a US institution, and mostly conduct feminist research on Japanese popular culture are the most common axes on which my translocalism is acknowledged and negotiated. Furthermore, not all facets of this identity are treated equally (or, for that

matter, are equally significant to my academic research). While I have never found my ability to conduct research on US or French popular culture challenged – despite the (possibly compromising) fact that I am a non-US citizen who left France more than 20 years ago – I frequently find myself having to establish my credentials in order to conduct feminist research in Japan. For instance, despite my much greater *academic* knowledge (from an anthropological, sociological, or historical point of view) of Japanese culture than of the culture of the other two nations where I have lived, the stamp of approval of a Japanese national was deemed desirable for validating my research on/with Japanese female audiences when I applied for tenure. I was also asked to include several males on my list of outside reviewers, as female scholars' ability to "objectively" judge my feminist research was deemed suspect. In other words, just as we embody different selves in different situations, some elements of our translocal identity necessarily, and at times problematically, take precedence over others in specific settings and at specific points in time.

More specifically, as some aspects of identity are normalized, others are, for lack of a better word and at the risk of sounding repetitive, "othered." For instance whiteness, maleness, middle-class status, and "Americanness" tend to be naturalized in US academic settings (unless one teaches, perhaps, in a Women's Studies or African American Studies program). As a result, the racial, gendered, class, and national identities of white, male, middle-class US citizens are rarely acknowledged and/or problematized. The complexity of identity politics in academic research has been discussed at length (see for example Narayan, 1989; Bow, 1995; Lakritz, 1995); a full-fledged consideration of its multiple implications is beyond the scope of this chapter and would be repetitive. Suffice is to say here that problematizing *all* identity boundaries emerges as a useful and necessary exercise. The following section offers some suggestions on how we might proceed to do it by developing a more translocal approach, which might be usefully applied beyond global media studies to various areas of audience research.

On Developing Translocal Strategies for Audience Studies

Questioning Our Own Identities

To develop a truly critical translocalism (Kraidy, 2005), one might productively start by considering the implications of one's own location(s). In a fieldwork setting, this means recognizing and attempting to come to terms with the multiple and complex ways in which our identity (and that of the participants in our research) is constantly performed and negotiated (for more detailed reflections on how this might be accomplished, see for example Akindes, 2003; Buarque de Almeida, 2003; Darling-Wolf,

2003b; La Pastina, 2007). In the French village where I currently live and conduct fieldwork, I have interestingly realized, for instance, that I am constantly “catching” myself claiming my insider status as someone who has grown up in the region. While this is at best an exercise in futility, considering my obvious outsider status as a long-term resident of the United States and, perhaps even more, as a university professor, the fact that I suddenly find myself emphasizing an aspect of my identity I rarely otherwise claim illustrates the politics of my own representational choices.

Defining myself as an *Ardéchoise* is not necessarily “wrong” – I did grow up nearby, I feel that the strongly asserted cultural specificity of the region remains part of my current cultural makeup, and it offers a convenient link to the lives of the people I interact with on a daily basis. I must be wary, however, not to let this strategic representation serve as a means to downplay other aspects of my identity, which may be more difficult to negotiate (including my status as a researcher), or to justify claims to a problematic form of automatic epistemological authority. At a practical level, I have found that the official consent forms I bring to formal interviews can serve as a useful reminder of my status as a researcher from a foreign institution. They help establish the link between my “local” self – the French-speaking me, who attended the local high school – and my “global” work, visually represented in the university logo at the top of the page and in the English language text surrounding it.

More generally, I must acknowledge that my translocal position is one of privilege that significantly differs from the forced translocality of migrant workers, of immigration that occurs as a result of political strife, intense economic hardship, or forced relocation, or of postcolonial experience. Even though I was raised in a predominantly working-class environment (I first moved to the United States as a live-in babysitter), my national and racial identities afforded me the privilege to *choose* a (somewhat) global identity. In a similar vein, while the historical encounters between France and Lebanon mean that Lebanese scholar Marwan Kraidy and I share some cultural commonalities that are based on the “conflictual unity bonded by common political and cultural experiences” (Pieterse, 2009, p. 74) that often arises from the experience of postcolonialism, I am constantly reminded in my relationship with him of the crucial qualitative differences between his knowledge of “my” culture – steeped in the legacy of forced cultural influence – and my familiarity with “his,” shaped by an orientalist desire for an exotic Other.

This does not mean, however, that these cultural commonalities cannot be positively harnessed to promote a greater understanding of the nature of transnational and transcultural influence in both of these cultural environments – as happened in our recent respective studies of the adaptation of the same reality TV format in France (Darling-Wolf, 2010) and in the Arab world (Kraidy, 2009). Indeed, if, as Pieterse (2009) suggests, “[p]owerful interests are invested in boundaries and borders” (p. 145), a critical translocalism must ultimately move beyond identity politics, to develop “a new awareness of and new take on dynamics of group formation and social inequality [. . .] furthered by acknowledging rather than by suppressing hybridity” (p. 121). In other words, considering the implications of our own location(s)

entails acknowledging the ways in which we are hybrid and harnessing the productive potential of this recognition in specific cultural, historical, and social contexts.

I was recently reminded of this potential when I realized that a Japanese informant – with whom I had long communicated in English or Japanese – actually spoke very good French and had traveled extensively throughout Europe. We both were delighted at this new connection, which took our relationship to a different level and complicated our understanding of each other's identities. We now speak French whenever we see each other. This incident also reminded me, however, of the power of my institutional connection to the United States in defining how I am viewed in my Japanese fieldsite, where interactions with Westerners are typically limited to those with the few English teachers (most often from the United States, Canada, or Australia) who make it to the island. It has encouraged me to acknowledge my French citizenship more honestly in my interactions with Japanese informants.

Denaturalizing Normalized Identities

As noted earlier in this essay, some identities are more easily recognized as translocal or hybrid than others in a US academic setting. One step toward developing a more sophisticated approach to translocalism entails recognizing the hybrid nature of *all* identities and denaturalizing those aspects of identity that have been hegemonically naturalized as the “objective” norm (for a discussion of this process, see for example Bordo, 1990; Harding, 1990; Narayan, 1989). We might productively start, for instance, by critically addressing the fact that white people have a race, men have a gender, heterosexuals have a sexual orientation (and so on), or that Native Americans are the only US citizens *not* to have acquired their national identity through a process of immigration (either forced, as in the case of African Americans, or voluntary). As illustrated above, doing so would entail encouraging individuals to consider the implications of their own translocal identities.

Our success in destabilizing the boundaries of race, gender, sexual orientation (and so on) also rests, however, on our willingness to let individuals whose identities have been historically and culturally normalized enter a conversation too often dominated by rigidly defined identity politics. This is not to suggest falling into a form of extreme postmodern pluralism that erases power relations and treats all perspectives as equally valid – we certainly must keep in mind that different identities have different practical and political consequences. But we must work to consider critically all identities, in all of their complexity. I often find, for instance, that within the academic community my status as an immigrant is superseded by my Caucasian racial identity and by my European origin – that is, I may speak with an accent, but I am granted the status of honorary US citizen as long as I more or less follow the rules of US academic behavior. Failure to acknowledge this important side of my identity not only diminishes the potential for recognition and coalition-building across identity boundaries within the immigrant community – to which, incidentally, I do feel

strongly connected – but also serves to problematically veil the complex ways in which the politics of race permeates the discourse on immigration, and, more broadly, “diversity.” A more productive route would be to involve everyone in a carefully situated critical examination of the “genealogies of hybridity” (Pieterse, 2009, p. 91) that “does not preclude struggle but yields a multifocus view on struggle and, by showing multiple identity on both sides, transcends the ‘us versus them’ dualism that prevails in cultural and political arenas” (p. 145).

Recognizing the “Local” of Academia

When I first moved to the United States from an environment where attending a four-year university was a relatively rare occurrence (neither of my parents went to high school, my sister attended a two-year community college), I often found the academic culture of vigorous in-class discussions, office hours (this was long before email became a favored form of communication between professors and students), extra-curricular activities, scholarship applications, recommendation letters, and honors programs more daunting than the broader Texas culture that I also found myself having to negotiate. Today I still find that the most difficult translations are often those from the world and speech of academia into the world and speech of individuals (frequently of a rural lower-class background) whom I conduct research with, rather than those “only” involving switching between different national languages – French, Japanese, English.

As a culture that “takes its capital from the scholarly tradition, from the machineries of literacy and education, which are affordable only to a privileged few” (Chow, 1993, p. 114), the academic context in which most scholars are immersed constitutes a “local” environment that significantly shapes the way they see the others and experience the world. Developing a translocal perspective requires us to learn to identify and negotiate this local context’s “cultural assumptions.” Because one must be highly educated to enter the ranks of academics, some of the greatest challenges in accomplishing this task are linked to class biases.

Regardless of the nature of the sociocultural background in which they were raised, (future) academics must learn to function in a professional culture that brings with it upper-class biases regarding, for instance, the nature of work (work is more than a way to put food on the table, individuals have some control over their daily schedules), the use of and access to technology (people can be reached at any time and/or wherever they might be, an email message can be expected to yield an answer within days, if not hours, of being sent, a computer must be replaced every few years), or what constitutes a “decent” salary (a lot more than minimum wage, even at the recently raised rate of \$7.25 an hour). Such assumptions are challenged on a daily basis in the small village of about 350 inhabitants where I currently reside. While most households count at least one cell phone, frequent and long conversations

are rare, and people are definitely not obsessed with their blackberries. In fact, it is not uncommon to have people tell you they could not call you because they were “out of minutes” (my own plan gives me 30 minutes a month, which, blissfully, I never use up). While I found it difficult to function without an Internet connection before a phone line was installed in our house – I missed my favorite newspapers and podcasts, kept on forgetting that I couldn’t check things online and got intensely frustrated trying to read my email from my neighbors’ computer that just seemed unbearably slow – few people here use email to communicate on a regular basis. I quickly had to learn that I simply couldn’t expect people to respond to my email messages, and that if I wanted to set up an interview I had to invite them to my house for dinner.

In other words, we must be aware of the ways in which the biases of academic culture might influence our interactions with individuals in other “locales” and the conclusions we draw about the significance of these individuals’ engagements with mediatized texts or cultural practices.

Developing Language Skills

Developing a translocal approach requires us to develop languages skills that help us communicate from one local setting to another. These skills may take the form of “traditional” foreign language competencies – often still a challenge in a US cultural setting that lacks a long tradition of language study from an early age (the national education system requires French schools to start teaching English to children in first grade, two more languages are added in sixth grade) – or they may focus on our abilities to translate the speech of academia into the vernacular languages of the audiences we study.

Granted, this is not always an easy task. While I was lucky enough to be encouraged to study Japanese in my PhD program, I have struggled to fit it into my busy schedule as a professor. But perhaps more time could be dedicated to it were it to take greater priority over the development of other research skills and not to be regarded simply as an extra-curricular activity. Furthermore, regardless of its ultimate success, the *process of attempting* to develop language skills is a useful exercise in humility, which helps destabilize the lazy naturalization of US English as a global language (“everyone speaks English”) and might ultimately encourage greater tolerance for the multiple versions of English spoken by individuals in different environments in all their peculiarities of accent.

In a similar vein, efforts to translate our work into everyday speech open up productive opportunities for conversations with individuals outside the limited realm of the academic community that most of us find ourselves so immersed in. Indeed, some of the most insightful discussions of our work might come from members of the audience we study, not from respondents to a conference panel. Take the

passionate discussions I had with a Japanese key informant over the course of an entire year after I suggested that Pikachu was representative of Japanese culture – this was at the height of the Pokemon craze. Or the pointed questions from a French media consumer regarding my analysis of the nationalistic subtext of reality television. Those were fruitful sources of research inspiration as well as highly enjoyable intellectual debates.

Moving Beyond Dualisms

Because it is predicated on developing a multi-sited approach aimed at undermining the often rigidly defined boundaries of identity and/or place, translocalism in audience research requires us to move “beyond dualism, binary thinking, Aristotelian logic” to emphasize “the *in-between* the *interstices*” (Pieterse, 2009, p. 120). This is not an easy task within an academic structure that, while often paying lip-service to the value of interdisciplinary research and collaboration, is generally organized around narrowly defined disciplines and/or area studies that scholars must “fit into” if they are to receive funding, recognition, or promotion (Appadurai, 2001). This division, in turn, exacerbates the identity politics discussed above, as scholars who do not fit neatly in any one category are encouraged to “pick a camp” (for a discussion of this process, see Bow, 1995).

While these structural issues may be difficult to address in the short term, moving beyond dualistic thinking can be a first step toward destabilizing such dualisms. We might productively start by thinking critically about the questions we ask each other. When talking about my work, I am often asked, for instance, whether I am a “bilingual,” which, in this particular context, generally aims at finding out whether I speak *Japanese*. I am, indeed, a “bilingual,” since French is my native language. I do my best in Japanese (enough to function in the field) and I dabble in Spanish. The fact, however, that the question is put in terms of “bilingualism” illustrates the continuing hold of binarism on academic logic – in a similar vein, I am often asked whether my children have “dual” citizenship. Critically assessing how this mode of thinking influences the way we conceptualize the world might help us recognize that multilingualism is not that uncommon – in fact the monolingualism of most US citizens is the global exception rather than the rule – and it might also help us develop a more complex understanding of identity, one liberated from the either/or, “us versus them” epistemology.

Similarly, we must acknowledge that seemingly simple questions such as “Where are you from?” may require complex answers (my typical response is “How much time do you have?”; my partner’s is “All over”), which teach us to respect individuals’ acts of self-definition in response to such queries (my oldest daughter likes to describe herself as “French, American, Canadian, and a bit Japanese”) and to accept “unsatisfactory” answers without further interrogation (avoid the still too frequent “No, but I detect an accent. Where are you from *originally*?”).

Embracing Hybridity – Not Just Theoretically

If, as Pieterse (2009) suggests, “[h]ybridity has become a regular, almost ordinary fixture in popular and mainstream culture” and “is inching up to become the leading paradigm with a steadily growing literature” (p. viii) in the social sciences, the recognition that hybridity “is deeply rooted in history and quite ordinary” (p. 98) must move beyond mere theoretical acknowledgment. But if scholars have powerfully addressed the implications of this recognition to complicate, for instance, our understanding of transnational cultural influence, this recognition is often more difficult to apply – as I hope to have already illustrated to some extent – in the lived experience of our daily academic lives. Those who, for reasons of national/cultural origin or ethnic/class background, do not fit the cultural standards of US academic culture neatly – the Asian teaching assistant (TA) with a strongly accented English, the junior faculty member who spends more time engaging in activism than publishing in academic journals, the non-American job candidate whom we suspect might at some time “decide to go home” – are often marginalized rather than celebrated as valuable sources for productive translocal encounters. While, certainly, a minimal ability to function in a US academic setting can reasonably be expected of individuals employed or studying at US institutions, the fact that translocalism is often construed in terms of the “problems” it creates rather than of the possibilities it offers prevents us from fully harnessing the positive potential of translocal individuals in academic life. We must learn to embrace hybridity in all its implications.

Reclaiming Interpretation

Because it encourages us to identify and draw on different aspects of our identity, a translocal approach is predicated on the recognition of the process of interpretation as a central element in developing a deeper understanding of the audiences we study. As Geertz reminds us:

The claim to attention of an ethnographic account does not rest on its author’s ability to capture primitive facts in faraway places and carry them home like a mask or a carving, but on the degree to which he [*sic*] is able to clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement. (Geertz, 1973, p. 16)

The politics of academic research have, however, turned interpretation into an intimidating process, particularly when it concerns the lives of individual audience members who can “talk back to us” rather than relatively quieter media texts. Often this results in an apologetic approach to identity, which is focused on the factors that may “bias” our research rather than on those elements that might usefully inform our interpretation of a particular situation at a particular point in time. Certainly, and as I hope to have argued assertively enough, considering critically the impact of

our identity on our research is a necessary exercise for all scholars to engage in – since, as Geertz (1973) reminds us, interpretation “raises some serious problems of verification” (p. 16). But I agree with Murphy and Kraidy’s (2003) contention that,

if media ethnographers have a political commitment to a *critical* ethnography – one that is concerned with how power is taking shape and transforming people’s lives on a global scale – then they must overcome their queasiness with the possibility of making generalizations and of objectifying/commodifying/inscribing the Other. (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003, p. 15)

Developing a translocal approach to audience studies encourages scholars “overcome their queasiness” by reclaiming their own identities and those of other scholars, with whom they might cooperate, as important tools in developing empirically grounded interpretations, informed both by theory and by a personal engagement with multiple research sites – as “an explorer, not a tourist” (Pauly, 1991, p. 7). Translocalism is, in other words, an important resource if we want to inform, contextualize, and complicate our understanding of other’s experiences and of the meaning of our own investment in academic work.

Concluding Remarks

In contrast to García-Canclini’s (1995) portrayal of the communication scholar entering the city by plane, Pauly (1991) describes the qualitative researcher as someone who “ambles along the circuitous back roads of public discourse and social practice” (p. 7). This second metaphor, I contend, can usefully guide the work of audience researchers interested in developing a more sophisticated and carefully situated understanding of individuals’ engagement with mediatized texts. If taking the backroads is not always an easy task, the more roads we travel, the greater our ability to draw translocal linkages between them and the greater the pool of experiences available to us for developing comparative and cosmopolitan interpretations of audiences’ media practices. In our voyage we must also, however, strive to develop a critical understanding of why and how some roads are better traveled than others, and we must challenge the notion that the more traveled paths are necessarily the more appropriate routes. Finally, we must keep in mind that we are not traveling alone. A translocal approach encourages us not only to develop our own multi-sited observations, but also to compare our travel logs with those of other, differently located scholars, including those whose road maps might significantly differ from ours. Such a comparative approach can help us better understand how our own experiences shape our understanding of the world and how, in turn, those of the individuals we study might influence their understanding and negotiation of the media texts they consume.

NOTE

- 1 I must note here that my colleagues as well as our department chair have always been very supportive of my work. Even with a supportive department, however, the larger organizational structure of the university often limits scholars' ability to conduct fieldwork when it is not perceived as a necessary requirement for tenure and/or promotion.

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Mythic Viewing

Reality in Indian Audiencehood

Vamsee Juluri

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the different ways in which media audiences think about reality, particularly in postcolonial contexts. Using data and findings from three studies of Indian audiences, the reception of a popular Hindi movie (*Hum Aapke Hain Koun*), the reception of music television (mainly MTV and Channel V), and an ongoing study of the reception of the mythological genre (covering recent animation films as well as older Telugu black and white classics), the chapter shows how audience readings of important issues like family, nation, and religion may be underpinned by deeper assumptions about human nature and reality. Finally, it explores some of the ways in which audience investments in commonsense ideas about what is “real” may illuminate the politics and possibilities of media audiencehood in postcolonial modernity.

Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which media audiences conceive of and think about reality. In an age when media producers and programmers are claiming that they produce authentic forms of “reality,” whether it is the globally ubiquitous genre of reality television or the growth in publishing genres like memoir

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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and non-fiction writing, the question of how audiences assume something to be “real” in the context of popular reception becomes an important and urgent project of inquiry for scholars in media studies. Such concerns have been addressed somewhat obliquely in audience research, especially in those studies informed by critical cultural studies approaches. However, in the wake of, on the one hand, the exceedingly vocal claims to the manufacturing of reality that were put out by media industries and, on the other, the somewhat evasive turn in responses to concerns about reality and truth that was brought about by uncritical postmodernism in the academy, it is important for audience researchers to take up the issue of how audiences bestow the all-important category of meaning, which declares that something is real.

How audiences do this is especially instructive in the Indian context for a variety of empirical and philosophical reasons. Since policies of economic liberalization were initiated in 1991, Indian media have expanded exponentially, plunging millions of people into a vibrant and pervasive mediascape consisting of dozens of global, national, regional, and local satellite television channels. India’s massive film industry, consisting of several centers of production in various languages like pan-Indian Hindi and other regional languages, did not find itself overwhelmed by the sudden influx of foreign-owned media; it has emerged instead as a major cultural force in India and in the Indian diaspora and as a significant influence on global popular culture. News and print media also continued to thrive in a market with a growing middle class. Given the massive increase in the quantity of media programming and consumption all around, the question of what audiences might believe to be real is indeed a complex one.

More recently, self-styled “reality shows” have become widespread on Indian television and have generated debate about a host of issues, ranging from the public display of private secrets (the show *Sach Ka Samna*) to the exploitation of children (the Zee Telugu dance contest show *Aata*, which was criticized by the state’s Human Rights Commissioner in April 2010). However, the question of what audiences think is real goes far beyond the confines of the reality genre alone, for the “reality” tag sometimes works as a signal to savvy viewers that it is all contrived anyway. Making judgments about the veracity of media is perhaps as pervasive as media consumption itself, as audiences decide to believe or disbelieve everything, from breaking news sagas about boys trapped in wells to infomercials about weight-loss and complexion-enhancing products. Even if specific media representations are believed or disbelieved, audiences also enact, in their reception practices, deeper beliefs about things like identity and nation, about why things are the way they are, and about everything that passes under the quiet certainty of commonsense. In the case of Indian audiences, there is another level of belief that is pervasively at work, especially in the consumption of mythological media. Movies and TV shows about the gods are not viewed in the Western manner of treating mythology as just stories; instead they draw on more complex religious sensibilities as well. To underscore all these examples, we may note one more iconic trope in popular media narratives about reality: the well-signaled and staged “moment of truth,” which has become a fixed feature in numerous genres. In reality shows, this moment is often signified in the exit interview

of the losing contestants or in private confessionals. In Indian soap operas, the moment of truth takes place in a scene of bright lighting, loud music, and costumes that are louder still, and expressive close-ups as family members assemble in a great hall to discover the truth about some betrayal or the other. Reality in many ways is a pleasure of popular media consumption that cuts across genres. The question to be examined is how audiences imagine it, and at what cost.

Three Trysts with Audience Realities: Family, World, God

The first reception study I discuss in this chapter is Juluri's (1999) study of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (henceforth HAHK; *Who Am I to You?*), a popular, commercially successful Hindi-language film released in 1994, just three years after India began a sweeping policy of economic liberalization that brought in its wake a massive everyday influx of consumer goods, foreign and domestic, and a public culture of rabid consumerism as well. The context is important to the understanding of the film's reception, because in some ways HAHK was the first major popular cultural phenomenon that captured the imagination of the nation since the dawn of globalization in India. At a moment when the media culture in India seemed awash with global images like the iconic red-costumed lifeguards of *Baywatch* (and Indian cinema seemed to have gone literally underground with its tales about crime and other sordid subjects), HAHK came down into the cinema halls and hearts of India like an angelic light, descending from the sweeping staircase of a grand, traditional Indian mansion from the movies of the mid-twentieth century.

The story of HAHK was simple enough. Two families talk about, and then arrange, a marriage between their children. The siblings of the bride and groom then slowly fall in love; along the way, some brief conflict ensues, but in the end everything is wonderful. Unlike many other Hindi movies of the time, HAHK had no violence, no profanity, and was greeted as a family movie in the sense that it was about family life, and also in the sense that it was a movie that the whole family could watch together. Its cheeriness was infectious; but it was also derided by critics for being "unrealistic." With its painfully detailed depictions of wedding customs, festivities, and inanities, it was even described as a "glorified wedding video." But at the same time the movie was at the heart of a massive outpouring of adulation, not only for its promise of sustainable happiness in a time of rapid social change, but also because of its ideological renewal of faith in a sense of Indianness that was much fought over in the political culture of the time.

The second study I discuss in this chapter is Juluri's (2003) reception study of music television conducted in the late 1990s. Despite initial concerns about cultural imperialism and Westernization, global satellite channels like Music Television (MTV) followed a programming strategy of localization in India that led to an intensely

hybrid cultural environment, built largely on Indian film songs presented as part of a rather global look, full of video jockeys (VJs) with American accents and extraordinarily exotic promos. My study focused on two broad issues. One concern addressed the proliferation of music countdown shows, with their attendant promises about representing the public through vox pop media interviews, and also through the instrument of the top-ten chart. A second concern was the emergence of a popular nationalism suited for a global context, as represented most vividly in the hit song “Made in India.” I discuss both these issues in the present chapter, focusing on the different ways in which audiences made claims about what they believed to be reality – whether the reality they were talking about was that of personal and emotional notions or an imagined geopolitical one, like national identities.

The third study I draw upon in this chapter is an ongoing study of the production and reception of mythological cinema (Juluri, in press). Myth, in Indian media and popular culture, is less closely associated with the Western understanding of myth as a story, a fiction, or a lie – in opposition to truth or reality – and more closely associated with popular religious tales from the *Puranas* (the name given to the ancient epics, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*). Indian cinema began as a largely mythological genre in the early twentieth century, retelling in cinematic form the time-honored tales of the gods that generations had heard as stories or had witnessed as performances in dance, art, and theater. In the 1980s, when Indian national television reinvented itself as a commercial medium, the serials that captured the largest audiences were about the *Mahabharatha* and the *Ramayana*. More recently, since the rise of satellite television and digital media forms, the tales of the gods have once again proved to be popular, commercially successful, and quite ubiquitous – in the form of animated TV serials, feature films, interactive compact discs (CDs), and the like. The audience for these myths, in this sense, has spanned generations of experiences in postcolonial modernity ranging from the Gandhian to the more recent Hindu nationalist. Tales of these audiences’ awestruck engagement with mythic media abound; prayers and ceremonies for the TV screen, conflation of actors with their divine roles, a deep sense of the miraculous, the sacred, the redemptive. However, as Rachel Dwyer (2007) writes, this important genre has seldom been studied for its own worth (being reduced instead to a corollary of political questions about religion), and my study is an attempt to contribute on that count. In the present chapter I focus mainly on the ways in which audiences invoke the idea of the real in discussing the tales of the gods, and I do so in order to highlight the nuances with which media and other epistemologies operate together in invoking a reality that is at once secular and sacred, human and divine, and ultimately reasoned out and believed in all at once.

Truth and Power in Audience Research

Despite a long-standing tradition of regarding, and being sensitive to, truth as something that distinguishes academic practice from other pursuits, questions of truth have

often been subsumed to questions of power in audience research. If the earliest effects researchers were concerned with were largely instrumental notions of media power, critical scholars have been concerned with power in a larger historical and political sense. However, a sense of opposition between power and truth has been implicit in the critical tradition and, to some extent, in cultural studies audience research as well – and that is a relationship worth recognizing here from the outset. Even as cultural studies audience research came out of a moment of intellectual rupture in earlier Marxist approaches to culture (as well as out of an opposition to dominant US social scientific mass communication research), it has maintained a sense of distinction about truth and power. The critique of ideology in Stuart Hall's encoding–decoding model, for instance, suggests that power is something we measure against how much the audience's perception of reality (usually an economic one) is distorted. Even as critical audience researchers have been circumspect about the role of the researcher in claiming unmediated and infallible access to reality, the fact is that reality, or an informed understanding of it, is what we invoke in our critiques of power.

However, as I have discussed in my book (Juluri, 2003), the epistemological concern with reality has also led audience studies in the past into a dead end of sorts: scholars claimed impasses about the project of audience studies precisely at a time when it was about to become a global project, poised to take on the rapid globalization of media and audiences (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003). Global audience studies have thankfully neither disappeared nor dissipated into a plunging vortex of epistemological navel-gazing, and reality has remained an abiding concern not only in what we do as researchers, but also in what we talk about. Justin Lewis (2004) argues, for example, that, even if the audience may seem less than fooled about the claims to transparency of the reality TV genre, it still accepts certain ways of knowing that have become a pervasive part of daily life in media-inundated societies. "It is difficult to consciously draw a line between the logic of the mediascape and the way we make sense of the unmediated world" (p. 299). As a striking example from the *Cosby Show* study (Jhally & Lewis, 1992) reveals, audience members can feel that a character doesn't look like a lawyer not because they have seen other lawyers or know what a lawyer looks like, but simply because they have seen lawyers on TV and know what a TV lawyer is supposed to look like. Media codes of reality, in other words, are so seamlessly entwined in daily life that even a savvy rejection of specific media representations, or even genres, may not amount to resistance in a political sense. To put it another way, audiences may reject specific media claims to truth, but questions about truth itself are not beyond the politics of media representations today. As for what this means for the traditional concerns of cultural studies like power and resistance, perhaps it is not incorrect to say that power is the default condition of audiencehood, and resistance is, at best, an occasional utterance or a comment made by scholars on that occasional utterance. To celebrate audience resistance might be too optimistic, but to disregard it entirely would be a fallacy too.

The problem of power is doubly compounded when we turn to cultural studies of global audiences for the simple reason that global scholars are frequently placed in a dilemma when they work in and study certain locations. While in some places

such as the United States and United Kingdom audience studies assume an unnamed normativity (presenting specific audiences as universal audiences), audiences in other places are often marked as the “other” in the literature. As a student of Indian media audiences, I must acknowledge that, while my arguments pertain to the Indian context, we must also be careful not to essentialize them into representations of otherness. Indian audience studies may share the concerns of British cultural studies, but there are elements of Indian thought that may also inform cultural studies as a global project. One could therefore propose that the truth of Indian audiences may not always be the truth of Indian audiences alone, but perhaps encompass the truth of audiences in general. In the case of some of the specific genres and themes of the Indian mediascape (which is as much global in its ownership, dissemination, and form as it is Indian), we may then assume that what audiences in India believe, how they believe it, and the politics of these practices may to some extent resonate with global scholarship. In the following sections I propose, on the basis of my own audience studies as well as from secondary readings of studies of audiences in India and elsewhere, that the media audience’s investment in reality may be examined in three broad categories: reality as something nasty, reality as something nice, and reality as religion. These categories do not pertain to any one genre or theme as such; they are proposed instead as a way of understanding what media texts and media audiences seem to assume as a basis for their beliefs and claims about myriad subjects – be these relationships, politics, identities, work, living, pleasure, violence, or peace. To put it another way, these categories may be seen as the main ones in and through which the media tells a story about reality and the audiences believe it. My aim here is to propose that how audiences make up their minds about what is real is as important to media scholars as what they make up their minds about. This is especially true when we look into the mental world of the audience beyond the notions of news, opinion, and fact. With news and political worldviews, as we have seen in numerous cultivation studies (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999), there is a clear and empirically observable difference between the opinions of an audience and the factual world. However, when we turn to areas of audience beliefs that cannot be easily verified against an empirical reality (such as the belief in the existence of gods, to name one, but also mundane ones, like how audiences view human nature, or society, or people in general), it is useful to explore what audiences turn to when making claims on reality.

Reality as Something Not So Nice

If there is one ideological fulcrum on which the reality television as a genre has come to rest, it is the depiction of human beings as fundamentally unpleasant toward one another. It may not be an exaggeration to say that what makes “reality” TV is the fact that its moment of revelation is often one of nastiness. The assumption of this

genre is that, if people are being nice, then they are only displaying a façade, a mask of civility put on perforce by individuals in a world where its absence can be punished by law or through other, less formal means of ostracism and disapproval. The competitive format is especially suited for encouraging an unpleasant outcome. Questions remain, though, as to how and why, the institutional quirks of attention-grabbing, drama, and ratings aside, the media culture has come to equate truth with things unpleasant. Historically, it may be safe to say that this phenomenon did not begin with the present glut of reality shows like *Big Brother* or *Survivor*, although the format of these shows may have narratively formalized such propensities. Even in fictional formats, bad behavior sometimes makes characters seem more realistic, as Justin Lewis (2004) suggests in his example of audiences that think of *The Simpsons* as the most realistic family on television.

While reality shows in India are not entirely given to the premise that the real is “not so nice,” the implications of realism as a media feature in the Indian context are somewhat more complex than in Western cultures, particularly in the case of popular Indian cinema. It may be useful to briefly review the codes of realism in Indian visual culture before turning to the ways these codes have played out in post-globalization forms and their reception. The two most popular media in India, cinema and television, have not had a history of realism in the Western fashion. Movies began as a largely mythological genre in the early twentieth century, and, even in the “socials” (the film industry’s term for non-mythological genres, like drama and comedy), melodrama and exaggeration have been the preferred form of expression and of pleasurable consumption. There have been some gestures toward realism in recent movies, largely in the area of logical writing and technical sophistication; but suffice it to note that there is more to the experience of Indian cinema than meets the eye – and the modern eye at that (Juluri, in press). Indian television began, however, with a somewhat more serious, self-appointed vision: it was to be the beacon of the Nehruvian state’s tool for development, modernization, and progress. Until commercialization heralded the need for entertainment and fiction in the 1980s, Doordarshan took reality rather seriously, in content and in form. What it showed viewers was not fantasies of dancing lights but documentary-style official-sounding pictures of farms and farmers, and national leaders like Indira Gandhi going about the business of the state. Interestingly, the promise of the real on television became more explicit in the wake of television’s commercialization, and especially in fictional serials. Since the 1980s, Indian television has changed to such an extent that reality shows feature today among many genres, and there are shows like MTV India’s *Roadies*, in which the criticism and humiliation of the participants is a touchstone of realism (the promos for the show also advocate something labeled “raw,” which presumably also derives from the broader semiotic stable of TV’s “realness”).

Although reality shows and their ritual humiliation of participants were not yet a part of the media universe at the time when I conducted my studies of Indian audiences (and they would prove richly rewarding as a topic for future research), the assumption of reality as revealed by something unpleasant was very much in evidence

in them. Interestingly, the belief in reality as a fundamentally unpleasant revelation is not something that comes up in my study of the mythological genre, although issues of realism in general do figure there as well. In the reception of HAHK and of music television, however, the idea of reality as being supported by something “not so nice” does figure. While the ways in which this is demonstrated is a far cry from the “real-is-nasty” claims that are so widespread in more recent reality programs and in soap operas, in order to assess how realistic (or not) a media text is it is useful to see how subtly audience members express their beliefs about what is lacking (morally or socially) in real life.

Despite the fact that Western-style “realism” is not a preoccupation of audiences when it comes to Indian cinema, it is instructive that discussions about how real(istic) HAHK was figured to a fair extent in my interviews with viewers. Nevertheless, casual comments about the movie, usually from my mass communication students at the University of Hyderabad, were often critical about the lack of realism in the film, and even about the lack of effort thereof (I still recall one student’s comment that the film was so contrived that even the backdrops in some sets were mere paintings). Yet, when I conducted my interviews, it was clear that audiences were invested in HAHK not just as a pleasurable experience, but as something that was real. I have discussed elsewhere four dimensions along which audiences believed in HAHK as real (Juluri, 1999), but in the present chapter what is most useful to consider is what the audiences anchored some of these beliefs on; and in the examples below we shall find that claims of reality are based on an assumption that reality is somehow unpleasant.

One participant in my study, for example, says that the family in HAHK is “too nice and idealistic to be real,” a sentiment echoed in various forms in various interviews. In another context, a participant observes that HAHK’s ideal family is appealing because families are facing various difficulties in real life. As middle-class viewers of cinema, their reading of idealism may not be surprising, considering how Indian cinema’s characteristic lack of attention to formal realism, or even to narrative realism, figures as a problem in popular reception. However, given the usual reticence with which class issues are discussed in everyday life, it is interesting to find conscious and explicit claims about realism that are based on HAHK’s depictions of class relations:

[It does not have] the usual kind of escapism [. . .] the driver–daughter romances.

HAHK was more natural, because both families were middle class. Other films show interclass relations.

The first comment absolves HAHK from the commonly made charge that Indian popular cinema is usually escapist, and it does this on the grounds that the characters in HAHK all fall in love and get married according to their station in life. The second comment is even more interesting in its use of the word “natural” to describe how romantic or marital relations are conducted in real life – which is mostly along intraclass rather than interclass lines. Both comments thus make the claim that it is precisely by reinforcing class rigidity that HAHK achieves a greater degree of narrative

realism than many other movies. The assumption, of course, is that interclass relations, or “driver–daughter romances” (a reference perhaps to the sort of “angry young man” movies that dominated the 1970s and 1980s, which featured a working class hero who worked as a driver for a rich man and fell in love with his daughter, usually following a rather misogynistic taming-of-the-shrew sort of courtship as well as a violent rendering of physical and social justice to the father-in-law to be), are only prevalent in movies and are seldom seen in real life. It may be the case that a middle-class background has something to do with finding reality in such a narrative. HAHK, in retrospect, was perhaps a precursor to a number of popular Hindi films since the 1990s, which marginalized class issues. With its careful etching of characters into their places (older brother, quiet and sober, marries older daughter of proposed family; younger brother, smart-alecky, marries his perky counterpart in his sister-in-law’s younger sister; sidekicks marry each other; and so on), HAHK addresses class the way middle-class Indians perhaps see it in their real lives, and it creates for its narrative a certain kind of representational authenticity.

Class also figures in claims to realism in the reception of music television programs, although the use of “reality” in this context seems to lend itself to a more benign form of appropriation in middle-class readings, as I show in the following section. However, what is relevant from this study is the fact that reality is once again seen as being authenticated by the breakdown of something; in this case, the breakdown of the ideal of accuracy. One participant, for example, feels that music countdown shows are realistic precisely because of the evident ignorance of those who participate in them:

Sometimes they’re just showing interviews, they don’t know what’s going on in the music world. Most of them, *ye picture mein hero koun tha?* [who was the hero in this picture] They think Urmila is same as Madhuri Dixit, something like that. The reality comes out.

This statement, made in the context of a discussion about music countdown shows that featured on-the-street interviews (often called “public” shows at the time), highlights an emerging tension in the ways in which viewers were making sense of new discourses about participation and popularity on commercial television in the late 1990s. When I conducted my interviews, there were nearly three dozen music countdown shows on satellite and cable television, and the genre was underscored by a pervasive play on the idea of the public (one such program was called “Public Demand,” and the interviewee above was speaking in response to the viewing of a clip from this show). In my interviews I found that there was considerable negotiation around the veracity of the countdown format itself – the question was whether the rankings for a song really represented something “real.” Participants were aware of the allegations that were often reported in the press about producers of countdown shows being sometimes subjected to pressures and favors from film and music producers in order to promote the latter’s songs in their rankings. One participant

questions the veracity of countdowns on the basis of their plurality, wondering how a countdown could be true when so many countdowns say they are true yet feature different ranks for their songs (often the same Bollywood hits). In another context, participants in my study also engaged with questions of realism in the context of the mannerisms (particularly accents) of VJs, many of whom had become celebrities among young people. Underlying all of these, though, was an emerging sense of self-consciousness among audiences, as being part of something called “the public” – which was spawned on the one hand by the pseudo-populism of privatized broadcasting and, on the other, imagined to grow up after globalization (imagined, that is, by the first generation of television viewers in India, in its popular desires). Statements like the one quoted above suggest that, while audiences are not naïve enough to accept at face value claims of reality (which in this case are ensconced in the idea of the public and in the countdown format), they do find and enact competences that enable them to lend meanings, in this case of realism, to what they watch. The questions this poses to researchers are how reality matches up to authenticity in audience readings; whether these readings are associated with anything unpleasant (classism or ignorance in the case examined in my study, or explicit nastiness, betrayal, anger, or aesthetics of dirt in the case of the more recent reality shows); and what the implications are for the meanings audiences give to their world.

Reality as Something Nice

Despite the overwhelming equation of reality with nastiness in media discourses, there are instances, in the moment of reception (and its subsequent study) rather than in the media discourses themselves, when audiences make claims to realism not on the basis of a breakdown in niceness, but on the basis of a belief in the decency of people and things. While it may be tempting to ascribe this to a heartening faith in human nature among Indian audiences, one could also make the argument that the moment of revelation of goodness in media narratives is far older in the Indian popular experience than in the reality show. Indian cinema has long been associated with a narrative tradition of moral recognition as a moment of closure. It may be said that what has made Indian movies “real” to their audiences is not so much a code of realism in a modern or technical sense as the emotional experience of involvement with the plight of the characters, culminating in a revelatory climax that involves a moral restoration of truth and dignity for previously misconstrued and mistreated characters (Juluri, in press). One might say that what we are speaking of here is nothing more than a “happy ending,” so typical of money-driven cinema, be it Hollywood or Bollywood, and it is easy to criticize such tales as nothing more than escapism or ideological deception. But the niceness assumption in popular Indian media and its reception deserve some inquiry into their role in audience reality-making.

Despite the occasional comment – such as the one discussed in the previous section, which measures the realism of a film by contrasting the niceness of its characters with people in real life – the reception of HAHK very much involved the deployment of belief in the niceness of things; people, families, and broader imagined communities, like those of nations and faiths. It is instructive that most participants in my study did not just view the exuberantly joyous and immaculately decent family in HAHK as just an “ideal” family, by contrast to a less than happy and decent “real” family. Instead, they saw the family in the movie as representative of how families really were. One participant (the same person who coined the colorful “driver–daughter romance,” the touchstone of realism discussed earlier) took issue with me during an interview when I used the word “utopian” to describe the family environment of HAHK. He insisted that it was not “utopian,” because utopia implies an object of fantasy, something that is not real. HAHK, and presumably the busily cheerful domestic heaven it depicted, were no Shangri-La for him. Instead he argued that what HAHK depicted was the “golden age” of the family: “Our families may have been like this [. . .] [HAHK] represents the Golden Age of the family, not necessarily a ‘dream’ but a golden age.” It may be easy to dismiss such views as middle-class nostalgia, or even as fantasy; but to do so would be an inaccuracy, given the fact that participants such as this one claimed to live in extended family households during their own childhoods, decades ago. Nor was such a perception confined to middle-class or privileged participants in my study. Working-class participants, some of whom were recent migrants to the city, also identified with the family members of HAHK, although their reference was not necessarily a distant past, but a more recent one: the life they had left behind in their villages. Class, age, and urban experience all seem to have played a role in this sort of interpretation. Younger participants who had experienced nothing but an urban, nuclear household environment their entire lives also seemed to see HAHK’s happy family as not necessarily unrealistic, but as something that they had missed out on in their generation.

The question of what exactly in HAHK made so many viewers feel invested in the reality of its depiction of happy family life is an important one, and it lends itself to numerous ideological analyses. I turn to some of these issues in the final section of this chapter; but suffice it to note now that the perception of reality that is at work here is not only a textual property of the film; it also reflects cultural competencies that are based on the life experiences of the audience. Such an interplay of seemingly unanticipated readings of reality, stemming from cultural competencies and from ideologically loaded texts, was also evident in my study of music television audiences. The two themes I examined in the reception of music television, the representation of the public on the one hand and the representation of national identity in an emerging global context on the other, indicated belief in a positive sort of reality, expressed in various ways. In general, reality was often ascribed to public shows and music countdowns on the basis of their interclass composition. Although my own view was that such representations tended to orientalize working-class figures for the consumption of largely middle-class urban music television audiences, the zeal with which numerous

middle-class viewers sought to claim an egalitarian sensibility suggests that they saw the public as something that spanned everyone, almost as if talking about class was somehow not polite. In the case of national themes, a subtler reality claim came into play, one that I did not anticipate on the basis of my textual readings.

If HAHK was the definitive post-liberalization Indian cinema, then Alisha China's *Made in India* was perhaps the definitive music video of the 1990s. *Made in India* was the first music album to achieve sales on a par with film music albums (cassettes and CDs of songs from Hindi and other Indian language movies), and its video achieved extensive airplay on MTV, Channel V, and various other music television channels. Coming as it did in the wake of years of rapid and intense globalization, its repetitive pop nationalism and its lyrics, its narrative, and its imagery about Indians finding success in a world full of other countries seemed to tell an important story about how Indians were thinking about themselves in a new media and social environment. The video features a fairy tale setting: it tells the story of a princess who is being wooed by princely suitors from different countries; she turns them all down and very nearly loses hope of finding a perfect match, when finally a successful suitor arrives in a box labeled "Made in India," and they all live happily ever after. Bright, colorful, exotic, and festive, *Made in India* would seem to media students to be a classic example of present-day orientalism (although I prefer to call it "self-orientalism"), with its snake-charmers, tigers, soothsayers, and other fantasy elements often seen as typical Western stereotypes of India. Despite the obviously fantastical aspect of its visual experience, audiences seemed to derive a sense of deep meaning from it. *Made in India* was seen by some participants in my study as not just any song, but a song that genuinely represented who they were. This authenticity was also seen as being different from a suggestion I had made, that perhaps *Made in India* was appealing because it had patriotic sentiments. It was not patriotic, these participants insisted, because patriotism is usually what one is forced to feel, usually by authorities. *Made in India*, on the other hand, was just who they were; as human beings, as husbands and wives, as Indians.

It may be easy, once again, to ascribe these perceptions to some textual properties of the video (the lyrics do repeat the word *dil* ("heart"), which many participants spoke about as an essential aspect of the Indianness this song represented to them), but key here is the assumption that audiences make about their niceness. The self-congratulatory part of their claims may not be surprising, but it must be acknowledged that the reason why participants see themselves as represented in this video, the reason why they find it real is precisely that they do not see it as blindly validating their virtues. As some participants noted, *Made in India* sets up a competition, fair and square, in the tradition of the *swayamvara* (a ceremonial practice of a princess choosing from a number of suitors). It is a liberal, open competition, and suitors will not be debarred on the grounds of race or national origin (although one might notice, as is the lot of media students, that the princess rejects the Caucasian suitor with just a wistful look and the African suitor by turning her face away altogether). The implication, as some of my participants observed, is that the video is not exhorting the virtues of

Indians *per se*; it is only advocating the choice of a mate with a “good heart,” and the narrative clearly shows that anyone, not just Indians, can have such a good heart. Finally, of course, the Indian wins – once again, not because he is Indian, but because he meets the standards of the international good heart competition. As naïve as this reasoning may sound to the critical scholar, it may not be far-fetched to note that there is a commendable quality in the effort, in the universal aspiration, as it were, shown by these young Indians to make sense of their nation and self in an emerging global context. If it was the perceived niceness and worthiness of India (even in an imaginary marital marketplace) that made *Made in India* seem real to them, then that is as instructive to us as the broader media discourses about the real as being something not so nice.

Reality as Religion

Given that audiences seem to assume that what makes a media experience real is its representation of niceness sometimes and of things that are not so nice on other occasions, how does one evaluate the question of what reality means to media audiences in general? I turn in this section to some insights from an ongoing study of mythological cinema, and I shall also take a closer look at examples from the previous studies that illuminate other relevant instances of how, in their own terms, audiences substantiate claims as to what they think to be real in speaking about their media experiences. While traditional religion is indeed a relevant concern in some of these cases (especially that of mythology), I call this section “Reality as Religion” rather than the other way around because I wish to make a point: cordoning off only certain beliefs or subjects as religious (say, in this context, “Hindu”) not only essentializes the borders of what we think religious faith to be (and this becomes doubly problematic in partially secularized contexts like India, where “religion” and “culture” are not easily distinguishable in everyday life), but it ends up privileging the not-religious as somehow “more real” and more important. My point is that “reality” in general may be seen as a religion; everything that audiences believe about themselves, the world, and the media (which permeate the former two) holds water on the basis of some faith (which may be sustained by reason, or it may not); and audience studies can teach us about the promises and perils of such beliefs. When music television audiences say that they think of globalization less as Western culture invading India and more as India going out triumphantly to win the respect of the world, when viewers of HAHK say that HAHK represents what it means to be truly Indian regardless of the class, caste or regional specificities of its characters, and when viewers of mythological cinema say that a certain genre of cinema is more real than another, what do they mean?

It is not unusual to find instances in audience interviews that are quite explicit in showing how participants make up their mind about something. These are instances

where audience members do not necessarily make a claim to reality on the basis of an assumption that reality is either nice or not so nice, but they invoke instead reason, evidence, and corroboration in numerous spontaneous and sometimes subtle ways. In the case of music television reception, for example, numerous participants emphasized the “naturalness” of public shows by contrasting how the people on the show were simply there, and these shows “were not like they just get these people together to be a part of it.” In the same vein, another participant says that shows like these may be more representative because there are many people featured on them, as opposed to only one. In this case, it is plurality that is of importance, even if it is an assembled one; and the plurality is invoked to ascribe value to the premise of the program and its attendant pleasures. If the presence of many people (“so many people are liking that song that is why it has to come”) is one common validation given by music television audiences, the epistemological force of visual representation also appears as a justification, albeit in more complex ways. Talking about *Made in India* as a video that was made largely for non-resident Indian audiences, one participant mentions that there are many Indians who lived abroad, and he validates his claim, rather unconsciously, by noting that he saw it on *Antakshari* (a popular music game contest) when it was filmed before live audiences residing outside India. Television, in this case, functions as its own cultural capital in representations of reality; one can speak about things one has not directly or physically experienced by invoking its content as evidence.

At the same time, there are also instances when audience members invoke the constructed and possibly distorted nature of television as a mediation of reality: “Whether it is really hit or they are making it hit” (about the producers of music countdown shows), “they should be like a realist in [presenting] [. . .] though it is a preplanned joke it should be presented as if it is spontaneous” (about how VJs should perform). Audiences do not see television as nothing but a transparent window upon reality. They are familiar with the cultural competencies of criticism and expectation, and they express them quite clearly, in order to convey what they think is an appropriate standard of performance for the producers and entertainers of television. VJs, for example, need to appear to be spontaneous, even if what they are saying has already been scripted for them. Along the same lines, there are also instances where similar assumptions about the ontology of television are being applied in a critical manner to performers whose work has not lived up to audience expectations. Some participants criticize VJs for “faking” American accents (although at the time of these interviews I felt that such accents were also somewhat normalized, and some participants would not have noticed them if I had not brought the matter up).

Audiences may negotiate the reality of television and of the world it represents, in ways that belie simplistic assumptions – either about their cooptation into a linear “seeing is believing” sort of hegemony, or about a resistance to hegemony born out of audience members’ ability to question television’s transparency as a medium. As the codes of television (and media) audiencehood become widespread and naturalized over time, we can find instances of both tendencies in the findings of contemporary research.

What is important for an understanding of the nature of reality, however, is the way mediatized and other realities have melted into one another in the landscape of daily life in many globalizing societies. As Justin Lewis (2004) writes, media do not just litter the landscape anymore, they are the landscape. By extension, one might also say that one is not just an occasional audience member anymore; it might instead be more useful to talk about audiencehood as a part of the global condition, with its mediations, memories, myths, and more, all making engagement with the media a reality, regardless of how one lives it or what one makes of it. Television's role as a center of new imagined locations emerges even when its authenticity is in question. As one participant in my music television study said, the reason why Indian VJs affect an accent is that they are "catering to a global audience," and people in the Philippines or Singapore may not understand an Indian accent. Globality itself is given the status of a reality here.

What then, is the nature of the reality that is ascribed to the gods, who have been such a pervasive feature of the Indian mediascape from the earliest days of cinema until the present? It may be fair to say that tales of the gods have been so pervasive and persistent that to cordon them off as sectarian religious media may not be entirely accurate (sectarian media do exist, too – for instance in the multimedia and literature brought out by religious organizations). To believers, as we might call them, movies and TV serials about Krishna or Rama are not just works of fiction, in the same manner as, say, a serial about Spiderman or Superman: although some confusion might be around the corner for a new generation of Indian children, reared on a new cultural diet that reinvents the gods in such a pop-cultural idiom. At the same time, viewers of such media forms do not necessarily see movies or serials about the gods as non-fiction, like the documentary or history – although that attitude began to change a great deal since the 1980s, when the TV epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* reimagined popular religion as a form of national self-discovery (Mankekar, 1999; Rajagopal, 2001). In some ways the question itself is an awkward one, importing as it does epistemological and ontological dichotomies that have not *not* occurred to the Hindu mind, but have indeed been avoided historically as an exigency of postcolonial survival (Nandy, 1983). I take the view of religion as being both time-honored and reimagined from generation to generation. The words, images, and practices that comprise Hinduism may be ancient, but their relevance, meanings, and implications have been neither essentially unchanging nor entirely fluid and meaningless. Since the first encounters with colonial modernity – and, specifically, with its technologies of mass communication (the printing press, the cinema) – the popular experience of Hinduism, and its tales of the gods, have been retold in ways that deserve analysis rather than a reductive accusation of false ideology. Film scholars (Das Gupta, 1989; Dwyer, 2007) describe the piety with which India's first film audiences encountered the miracles of their gods in Phalke's movies in the early twentieth century. More recently, tales of domestic piety and ceremony also surrounded the reception of Doordarshan's 1980s serials. Did audiences really believe that the gods were before them? What sort of reality was that? And did it single-handedly cause the phenomena of Hindu chauvinism, extremism, and nationalism?

Thus far, my limited study of audience interpretations of mythology suggests that what viewers experience and articulate in their viewing of such films is something that is not peculiar to religion (and this is, in any case, not easily separable, as mentioned earlier) but is constructed as a negotiation of a particular nuance of media experience. Mythological audiences talk about mythological cinema as they would talk about media in general; as a form of mediation, of its constructedness, of its aesthetic choices, and the like. But at the same time there is also an evocation of something far beyond just media. To begin with, what is particularly relevant to the concerns of this chapter is the use of the term “realistic” in talking about mythological media. Like the discussion of public shows in my music television study, the audience discussion of “realism” occurred without my prompting. Participants employed the notion of the real seamlessly in talking about mythology. While this may not be evidence that compels us to accept that these audience members literally believe what these movies are depicting, the viewer’s response does point out that ontological claims are not irrelevant. As one participant writes: “Mythological movies of the black and white era appear to be more realistic than the color ones. Introduction of color and technology diminish some of the mysticism that one associates with the mythological stories.” Does the term “realistic” here refer to a comparison with a physical reality? Or to a comparison with other texts? Or to an expectation about how the divine is represented in secular entertainment contexts, as opposed to ritually consecrated ones – like temples? Tellingly, such a contrast was made almost unanimously by participants, who valued the older, black and white mythological movies of the 1950s (which are often accorded a hallowed status as classics by generations of Telugu film audiences) over the big-budget color films that began to be made from the 1970s. The older movies are described by participants as “sincere,” “genuine,” “technically better,” and full of “charm” and “simplicity,” while the color films are described (largely accurately, if I may introduce my own aesthetic judgment here) as “theatrical, affected, gaudier, and louder” – and as “kitsch.” However, as much as these terms seem to relate to formal qualities of the texts in question, one can also find instances where a seemingly formal reading of the text blends into evaluations about what we might call the referent. In one comment about the Hindi TV serials of the 1980s, one participant rather summarily declares: “Hindi gods don’t look like god!” Although this participant acknowledges a possible bias implicit in being a native Telugu speaker, the spontaneity with which one evaluates what a god is supposed to look like is important. Once again, we might ask whether the expectation of what a god is supposed to look like is merely a cultural competency, acquired from the naturalization of certain codes of representation disseminated over decades by calendar art and cinema, or whether there a greater value to that sensibility too. Is the aesthetic of secularized sacred representation only a capitalist exigency, or are there other epistemic possibilities too? When audiences assume a certain kind of reality around such texts, is it the same as anything else in the media? Is it good or bad?

Conclusion

What audiences assume when deciding what makes a media representation of a god realistic may be far too ambitious a question to take on in the conclusion of a chapter. Even so, it is through this question that we may begin to understand where audience researchers could advance a project of critical scholarship, particularly in India and its diaspora. Indian media audiences may experience many meanings when they consume mythological texts; for some it may be a story, for others a lesson in history, and for others still a story that transcends the limitations of secular experience. However, the expectation of what a god is supposed to be like, especially in the context of a media representation, is best understood both as an aesthetic issue and as an ethical one. One of the participants in my study, for example, was quite aware that what gods are supposed to look like reflects a norm established in Raja Ravi Varma's paintings. But what sets apart an interpretation of, say, Krishna as a "character" and as a "god" is in how a movie or cartoon may depict his actions, as much as his appearance. In the popular devotional context in which mythology is consumed, the righteousness of a god's actions, be they social or interpersonal, becomes a crucial touchstone. It is not appropriate to take narrative liberties on this count, as one participant notes:

The later mythologicals were appalling. For one, they were gaudy and kitschy [. . .] But the worst thing was the changing of the basic story. Sometimes, the traditional protagonists were shown as villains and the villains as heroes, with utter disregard for the conventional notion of dharma and adharma [. . .] the connection with the original was lost.

A similar view was also in evidence in my interviews with some of the makers of mythological cinema. Writers, directors, producers, and actors (with very few exceptions) seem to approach the subject of mythology as if it represented not just a story, but moral instruction, even though this may be expressed as art, even popular art. What makes the gods real, in this sense, is not whether they look a certain way (although this is relevant), or whether there is historical evidence for their existence (although this has become a broader political debate since the 1980s), or whether their deeds are miraculous (although miracles are an important aspect of mythology and indeed piety). When viewers talk about the realism of mythology or the faithfulness a new movie shows towards the "original," they do not make so much a scriptural evaluation as a narrative one, placing particular weight upon ethical choices. Brooding gods beset with doubts and angst and all-too-human rage, of the sort depicted in the US comic books *India Authentic* and *Ramayana 3000* presented by Deepak Chopra and Shekar Kapoor, do not make for popular reception, on the scale achieved by mythological movies or the revered Indian comic book series *Amar Chitra Katha*.

Despite the moral imperative that informs the production and consumption of mythological texts, there is no denying that this imperative has been compromised by the historic ascendancy of political and commercial interests. While the appropriation of popular religion by one group of right-wing political parties in India is now well understood in cultural studies, there has also been a fair degree of change in the way in which the tales of the gods are now told, especially in the newer media, like satellite television. Many of the animated mythological cartoons that have been made since the 1990s, for example, fail to weave the mood of enchantment and instruction that characterizes some of their predecessors. The gods are now cartoon superheroes, combining their traditional tales of miracles and adventures with new activities, like surfing and high-fiving. At the same time there is a belabored attempt towards pedagogy, as if a litany of “facts” about the gods would help parents inject cultural heritage into their children as this generation grows up in a far more globalized world than that of their parents. The conscious creation of a cultural identity seems ominously poised to subsume the pleasures and delights that once came with such an identity. Pleasures and delights may still ensue from the consumption of mythological media, but these may in the future find themselves anchored less in moral guidelines and more in slogans. Future audiences may find a sense of reality not in the wisdom of mythology but in its possession, in every sense of that word.

However, the layering of mythology with a discourse of identity is still not the only factor at work in the broader experience of media audiencehood in India. As this chapter has hopefully shown, there are numerous ways in which audiences negotiate a sense of reality in their reception of media. Sometimes a media representation appears to be realistic because of a breakdown in goodness. Sometimes the converse happens. In any case, one may also speak of the reality that audiences imagine as a sort of religion, premised on the possession of ontological beliefs rooted in epistemological practices that may or may not be drawn from media discourses. However, as we witness the historic descent of millions of people into conditions of audiencehood that are ever more intense, narrow, privatized, and self-directed, we must take seriously the perils posed by this broader cultural trajectory. Audiences are surrounded by more media than ever before, but what happens when all that the media do is reflect each other and their claim for reality offers nothing more than each other’s epistemic bases? Indian audiences once found a movie to be realistic regardless of its aesthetics, if goodness was narratively recognized. Now realism requires mastery of a new set of cultural competencies, which cynicism may even expose, but the culture cannot extinguish. Reality now issues forth when a text represents the worst of human behavior and the most disgusting of aesthetics, such as the sepia-tinted sewage scenes of *Slumdog Millionaire* (another film that was lauded by many for its “realism”). What happens when audiences believe that human nature is essentially nasty and all else is only a pretense? At the time of my studies there were clearly exceptions to this and signs of hope, as audiences negotiated the discursive and the modern on the one hand, the non-discursive and the non-modern on the other. Audience researchers, and cultural studies scholars in general, would do

well to recognize both these elements. The media industries have taken to calling “reality” their particular view of human nature, and they have been enormously successful. Critical media scholars have fallen short, by remaining confined, in their critiques, to the positions and politics of identity and by failing to advance their critiques into popular beliefs about human nature. If it is reality itself that is at stake, we need to speak its language too, and the best way to learn its vocabulary is by taking it from the audiences who believe in it. Future audience researchers, especially those preparing to address the growing global genre of “reality television,” will do well to open up their own paradigmatic horizons and to build a stake in taking their findings and critiques into the broader discourse beyond academia as well.

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“Unity in Diversity?”

South African Women’s Reception of National and Global Images of Belonging

Shelley-Jean Bradfield

ABSTRACT

The public television endeavor in South Africa to translate a multicultural ideology into programming addresses the plurality of citizen-viewers in the country through the stipulation of language and local content quotas, among other corporate objectives. But the way women negotiate television’s attempts to reproduce a shared sense of national identity and the manner in which they view television as a means to participate in the national public sphere have not yet been assessed. This chapter intervenes by investigating the heterogeneous manner in which audiences utilize global *and* local programming in their identification as national subjects. First, white women offer an antagonistic response by distancing themselves from nation-building rhetoric and by expressing preferences for programming from other national contexts. Second, older black women collaborate by identifying with programming on television that they believe addresses issues of the nation directly. And, finally, a mixed racial and ethnic group of women demonstrate more ambivalent or critical responses to programming designed to bring people together around national concerns. The paradoxical responses of women to national programming suggest the exclusive qualities of the lived experience of multiculturalism versus the imagined success of the televised national project.

State discourses of nation-building in South Africa are predicated on the notion of multiculturalism as an ideology that enables the incorporation of previously segregated citizens into the embrace of the nation's newly founded democracy. Public television's endeavor to translate this ideology into programming content addresses the plurality of citizen-viewers in the country through the stipulation of language and local content quotas, among other corporate objectives. But scholars have yet to assess how women negotiate the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC's) attempts to reproduce a shared sense of national identity, and the manner in which they view and interpret television as a means to participate in the national public sphere. While a bulk of the research concentrates on the changes in television broadcasting since its inception in 1976, a few studies, outside of institutional marketing research and social science health communication, have examined how audiences in South Africa construct their identities in relation to the television programs they enjoy or reject. Moreover, the few reception studies that exist center on either the reception of global media (Salo, 2003; Strelitz, 2005; Tager, 1997), or they delve only into the reception of specific local South African television texts (Milton, 2005; Roome, 1999). This chapter intervenes in the field of knowledge on television in South Africa by investigating the heterogeneous manner in which audiences utilize local *and* global programming in their identification as national subjects.

In May 2007 and October 2008 I interviewed 25 women in South Africa about their television viewing practices; their responses demonstrate the extent to which viewers differ in their reception of televised projects of national unity. For instance, Liso, a young black college-aged student, spoke of her identification with the themes and characters of two national soap operas:

I love South African soapies [slang for soap operas] – yeah, I love especially *Isidingo*. *Generations* is now losing track but yet I love it, I love it a lot. But yeah, I'm aware of the fact that they just try and portray everyone to be rich and famous [. . .] [but] I just love the show.

Taking pleasure in soap operas that are designed to bring together a broad viewing audience around issues of nation, Liso accepted the objectives of the shows even though she critically acknowledged their lack of relevance to the South African context. Yet, even as Liso embraced the goal of bringing citizens together around common television shows, Darlene, a middle-aged white mother of two, expressed her dismissal of national productions for what she considered to be their inferior production qualities:

I don't feel [South African shows] are up on standard [. . .] it may be a perception of mine but you almost can just immediately pick up when it [a television production] is [South African]. You can switch it on [and] without even seeing a number plate of a car, you can see whether it's a South African production or not a South African production, and I just veer away from them.

Darlene's wholesale rejection of national television images raises the matter of imported programming, which she prefers to watch and identifies with closely.

Considering how women identify with or reject national *and* imported programming, I employ the related concepts of cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 1991) and multiple proximities (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005) as frameworks for examining how some viewers selectively identified with a national sense of self that was (re) produced through local public television programming, whereas other viewers resonated more deeply with imported programming, which extended the sense of belonging to a space beyond the nation. Described as a preference for broadcasting content that appears to be most similar or proximate to the experiences, context, values, language, and culture of a specific audience, the concept of cultural proximity predicts the popularity of media content that stems from similar geolinguistic or geocultural regions. Extending this theory further, the concept of multiple proximities illuminates how audiences might perceive international media products – among other possible proximities – as more proximate to their experiences, even when national versions of such texts are available. These two approaches to reception demonstrate, as Iwabuchi (2002) argues, that a sense of proximity is not inherent to or contained within the media text, but arises due to the strategic choices that audiences make in their judgments of proximity/similarity or distance/difference.

Examining women's responses to both national and imported programming while making particular reference to the national case study of *Home Affairs*, a domestically produced program, the present study suggests that viewers negotiated national belonging in the context of this show in one of three ways: women responded antagonistically to the sense of national belonging represented in the show, or they collaborated by identifying closely with *Home Affairs* images of themselves and their concerns depicted on the national screen, and/or women took up a critical position by simultaneously sympathizing with and supporting the national project articulated in *Home Affairs*, even as they also expressed preferences for shows from outside the nation. While closely registering with Stuart Hall's (1973) analysis of audience members' responses to news and current affairs programming as taking up "preferred," "negotiated," or "oppositional" positions, this study also parallels Ien Ang's (1982) analysis of Dutch viewers of *Dallas*, some of whom experienced pleasure, while others articulated displeasure through references to the ideology of mass culture, and others still employed a position of ironic viewing that negotiated criticism against mass media products yet admitted to the viewing pleasures of *Dallas*. Accordingly, I argue that, while the South African state's adoption of multiculturalism as a mechanism for unity in diversity is being translated onto the small screen, women across identity groups report varying degrees of national identification, degrees that often correlate with their positions of class, race, ethnicity, and education.

Analyzing the reception of television texts *within* the borders of South Africa as well as the transnational reception of texts from the United States originating *outside* of the country, I first explore the ways in which white women distance themselves from nation-building rhetoric and express preferences for programming from other national contexts. Second, I take into account how older black women identify with programming on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) that they

believe addresses issues of the nation directly. And, finally, I attend to a mixed racial and ethnic group of women who demonstrate more ambivalent responses to the pedagogy of a programming that has been designed to unify people around national concerns. I attempt to open up a space for women's voices by integrating their words in quotations throughout this chapter: this is the provenance of all the quotations where no source is given. The paradoxical responses of women to national programming gives us glimpses of the exclusive qualities of the lived experiences of multiculturalism versus the imagined success of the televised national endeavor.

The *Home Affairs* of South African Television

Following the lives of nine women in the first series and of six women in the subsequent series, *Home Affairs* asserts its uniqueness as a show by claiming to be "a drama series for women, about women and entirely produced and created by women with an all female writing and directing team, as well as a female director of photography – a first for South Africa" (SAARF, 2008). As the show is airing during adult viewing time, both its content and its scheduled broadcast time emphasize its unique feminine voice, even though the show did employ creative personnel who are men – including writers, directors, a director of photography, and numerous other production staff – and attracted an audience of both men and women. While *Home Affairs* is typical of other nationally produced television texts that incorporate a diverse range of characters and languages, its focus on "the connections people share with one another, unwittingly or not" is more unusual (SABC, 2010). The extent of these connections is exemplified first through Thandeka (Nthathi Moshesh) – executive of Young Blood, a nongovernmental officer (NGO) – who admits to being Katleho's (Lerato Moloisane) biological mother despite leaving her from birth in the care of Thandeka's older sister Nonhlanhla (Nomsa Xaba). Moreover, by offering sports scholarships (through her NGO) to young women from economically deprived situations, Thandeka becomes involved in Vuyokazi's (Brenda Ngxoli) dream of escaping poverty. In response to Thandeka's revelation of her status as a parent, Katleho, a young black woman, turns for comfort to Katherine (Jessica Haines), a white friend from childhood, – a surprisingly close relationship considering their diverse racial identities in the context of a history of segregation. Finally, making every effort to utilize her resources to tackle difficult social issues such as poverty and lack of education, Shanti (Sorisha Naidoo), an Indian medical doctor, offers state-sponsored assistance to Cherise (Therese Benade), a young white woman whom she suspects of being involved in an abusive romantic relationship.

Although multicultural casts and settings are typical dramatic conventions taken up in South African dramas, sitcoms, and action series, their incorporation into television is part of an intentional objective to help reunite citizens who have emerged out of a history of segregation. State and institutional discourses of nation-building and their translation onto the small screen are crucial issues that inform the multilayered

responses of women to *Home Affairs*, their sense of its proximity in the matter of defining citizenship, and their acceptance or refusal of women's place and status, as these attitudes are defined through television images of the nation.

To facilitate a discussion about plot, themes, and characters in *Home Affairs* and to encourage participants to think more generally about their television pleasures and viewing habits, including their use of national and imported media content, I screened the thirteenth and final episode of the first series of *Home Affairs*.¹ This final episode was staged as a drama that follows the unexpected interconnections between women in South Africa who hail from diverse backgrounds, locations, cultures, and age groups. Produced by Penguin Films, an independent production company, *Home Affairs* aired on SABC1, a public service channel of the SABC, which is in turn the oldest and largest television institution in the country. The one-hour drama played on Thursday nights for 13 weeks, in competition with *The Apprentice: SA* (2004–) on SABC3, the SABC's commercial channel, and with *Desperate Housewives* (2004–) on M-Net, a subscription-based television service. On the basis of its popularity and of the nation-building objectives that it fulfilled,² *Home Affairs I* was rebroadcast in early 2006 and recommissioned as a second series in 2006; a third and fourth series were commissioned and broadcast in 2007 and 2009, respectively.³ Each series was composed of 13 episodes, except for the fourth and final series, which comprised 26 episodes each.

Apparently illustrating Straubhaar's (1991) notion of cultural proximity, *Home Affairs* garnered approximately half of the market share during its premiere on September 15, 2005, in spite of competing with the US-format adaptation of *Apprentice SA*, broadcast on SABC3, and with *Riding in Cars with Boys* (2001), a US feature film broadcast on e.tv (this is a privately owned, free-to-air television company). Also demonstrating a partiality for nationally produced genres besides dramas, *Generations* (1993–), a South African soap opera broadcast on SABC1, attracted half of the national audience in spite of competing with the long-running US soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* (1987–). Moreover, by consistently attracting a market share of 40% or more across its first, second, and third series, *Home Affairs* indicates audience loyalty for national television shows, particularly as the balance of the available free-to-air audience was spread over three other channels, namely SABC2, SABC3, and e.tv (SAARE, 2008).⁴ Notwithstanding the show's success, however, the market share average does not address the ways in which identity categories factor into audience preferences, or the ways in which some viewers regarded *Home Affairs* as culturally similar and appealing while others overlooked the possible pleasures of this text and assumed identification with imported shows.

Imagining and Mediating the Nation

Expanding access to the public sphere with the transition to democracy in 1994 from an apartheid state, the Government of National Unity and, later, two African National

Congress (ANC) governments represented by Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki defined nation-building as “facilitating processes of exchange and dialogue between South Africa’s different cultural, regional, and linguistic communities” (Barnett, 1999). Recognizing the demographic plurality of racial groups, ethnicities, and languages among other things, the post-apartheid state envisions accommodating this diversity through multiculturalism, or the equal treatment of all people from different social locations (*ibid.*).⁵ Although the term “multiculturalism” is seldom used in South African policy debates, the existing cultural diversity presupposes the importance of considering how the state designs and regulates policies concerning diversity and the commonsensical set of beliefs that South African society *should be* organized around the notion of cultural pluralism. Yet the implementation of multicultural policies and ideologies has been hindered by multiple obstacles to its realization (Brown, 2000). For one, the notion of ethnicity as primary identity required for a political community harks back to primordialist ideas of ethnocultural nationalism and assumes citizens’ need for separation from other ethnic communities. Second, while multiculturalism emphasizes the rights of collectivities, when individual rights are subordinated to minority group rights, the potential for individuals to thrive is considerably reduced. Third, even though multiculturalism envisions a society of shared power and resources, minority communities often cannot agree on how to distribute these resources. Finally, even as multiculturalism emphasizes the protection of minority groups, this ideology marginalizes disadvantaged individuals from within ethnic majority groups and thus undermines the possibility of equality through diversity.

Confronting the challenges faced by the multicultural nation, the South African Constitution seeks to guarantee the equality of language groups, and policies of language equity have been expanded to include mandates for broadcasting institutions. In particular, the SABC is expected to “play a part in healing divisions of the past; to promote respect for democratic values and human rights; to supply information that allows citizens to exercise their rights, and to reflect the rich diversity of a united South Africa” (SABC, n.d.). As part of the nation-building agenda, the regulatory agency of broadcasting and telecommunications, which is the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, has outlined local content quotas for each broadcaster, including the SABC – whose two public service channels shoulder the bulk of public service and local content programming in the country.⁶ Corresponding with the “African Renaissance” – that is, Mbeki’s version of multicultural nationalism, in which South Africans rediscover and recreate images in their own likeness – local content regulations not only specify the amount of national programming on the schedule per channel, but also spell out local content quotas per genre, so that South Africans see themselves and their experiences to be constructed and reflected, rather than modeling themselves off the lives and hopes of people from outside the country. Yet, although multiple national identities are promoted through policies, regulation, and programming, the increased dependence of broadcasting on advertising and on its objectives limits the success of the project of unity through diversity. Because

television, and the SABC in this instance, is not the recipient of significant amounts of public funding, programming is commissioned to deliver the largest possible number of consumer audiences to advertisers rather than principally to serve the diverse interests and needs of viewers as citizens (Barnett, 1999).

Familiarity Breeds Contempt

That *Home Affairs* appeals mostly to women who are young and not white seems to be a foregone conclusion of the white women whom I interviewed, whose ages ranged from 39 to 65. Highly educated, with one graduate degree, two undergraduate degrees, and a high school diploma represented in this group of four, these women agreed that the show explored themes and characters that targeted groups other than themselves. Mary, an upper-middle-class stay-at-home mother and wife, hypothesized that young black women and "colored" women who were less well educated might be the objects of this nation-building programming, while Marie, an upper-middle-class career woman, wife, and mother assumed that younger women in their late teens and early twenties would enjoy watching *Home Affairs* and thus assimilate its themes of uniting the nation. Interestingly, Darlene, a lower-middle-class working mother and wife, reasoned that the national project was directed at the working-class, as none of her middle-class acquaintances followed the show:

No people that I associate with [. . .] I think would watch that. It's not something that I would expect anyone in my peer group or social group to say, "Oh, did you see *Home Affairs*?" No, and definitely, I mean, I have exposure to Afrikaans people and I have exposure to non-white people, maybe it is a class thing, I don't know.

Yet, even as they imagined other citizens as the targets of nation-building rhetoric, these women identified somewhat with the themes of the show. Understanding the decision of Thandeka (a high-powered black executive) to look after a white abandoned baby as a gesture that was symbolic of the racial integration underway in South Africa, Grace empathized with Thandeka's prior economic and career decision to give her daughter Katleho away at birth, and she admired Thandeka's courage to adopt a white child later on, even though that would prove challenging in a racially stratified society: "It was so beautiful when Thandeka takes home Cherise's white baby [. . .] it shows realistic and future possibilities of integration." Marie also pointed to the theme of racial integration that she saw illustrated through Katleho and Katherine's friendship. Noting that "my children are friends with some black children at their school," Marie reflected on the positive effects of representing multiracial relationships on television. Acknowledging her sons' friendships across race, Mary reflected on the significance of the fact that her daughters did not cultivate relationships that straddled diverse identity categories ("maybe it is a girl thing not to have

good friends across race”), even though her theory flew in the face of Katleho and Katherine’s friendship. Significantly, Mary asserted that “races get on pretty well in South Africa” and that cultural diversity was supported through increasing instances of subtitled programming on television that depicted a range of racial and ethnic groups.

The historical pressure placed on rural black women like Thandeka to leave their children with other family members, so that they may find work such as “charring” in urban areas, was another storyline familiar to women.⁷ Mary noted: “[Katleho’s] being abandoned is pretty typical but it is not typical that Thandeka didn’t stay in contact.” Likewise, Darlene noted the historical theme of extended family caring for children of domestic workers, although she, too, contrasted the practices of her domestic help with Thandeka’s abandonment of Katleho:

I can only speak of [. . .] the exposure I’ve had to Edith [domestic worker] because she’s in that situation, and [to] Andre [gardener] who works here as well [. . .] [and in their cases] ‘so and so’ looks after the children – even if it is an illegitimate child. But you know that there is still involvement in the child’s life by the parents, so Thandeka’s absence in Katleho’s life [. . .] was a bit unreal to me.

Although the circumstances of *Home Affairs* were familiar to these women, they found the development of the storylines difficult to reconcile with their personal experiences.

Although these four women agreed that *Home Affairs* attempted to take up the South African experience through a social realism mode of address that was familiar to them, their explanations as to why they did not watch *Home Affairs* differed to some extent.⁸ Instead of finding pleasure in programming that directly resonated with their daily lives, these women preferred shows that they perceived as being not “overdramatized,” not “too intense,” not grappling with the “real problems” of South Africa, and as parading “beautiful people” with “stories that aren’t so close to home.” Besides criticizing second-language English accents as irritating, Mary felt that “local shows don’t hold high enough status among viewers in South Africa because they show such bad acting – more like stage acting. So local shows don’t have status when compared to British, US, and Australian programming. And South African issues are real problems.” As a result, she preferred viewing imported programming that delved into lifestyles and values to which she could aspire on the basis of her upper-class status and access to cultural capital: her competent use of English, her stimulating career and qualifications, and her frequent international travel (Bourdieu, 2001).⁹

Even though the show explored social transformation in a dramatic format, which Marie generally enjoyed in imported programming, the dismal tone and the representation of serious and often insurmountable social problems discouraged her from watching local dramas that leaned toward realism: “I would only watch *Home Affairs* to get a handle on what my daughters might be going through, and what other parents feel about Cherise’s pregnancy (out of wedlock), for example.” In addition,

assuming that the show only targeted younger women in their late teens and early twenties, Marie acknowledged that imported programming was more applicable to her life: "I prefer to watch shows with beautiful people and stories that aren't so close to home." Thus, while acknowledging the ways in which *Home Affairs* attempted to model "how to improve your life," Marie did not perceive these images as being relevant to her own life.

Darlene, who was the most articulate one about her preference for imported programming, remarked on the inferiority of locally produced television programming, which seemed out of tune with her life and exhibited low production values:

It's not [. . .] a natural filming for me. I don't feel they're up on standard, but they may be being done by an American producer, I don't know. It may be a perception of mine but you almost can just immediately pick up when it is. You can switch it on [and] without even seeing a number plate of a car, you can see whether it's a South African production or not a South African production, and I just veer away from them.

Besides critiquing the production qualities of local programming, Darlene also found the subtitling of multicultural programming alienating rather than inviting, and she experienced the content of South African productions as too upsetting:

Ja, first of all, [*Home Affairs*] was far too emotional for me. The initial reaction of [Cherise], the happiness level of her getting married was great, and it was excitement, and then that extreme total level and total letdown [of Daniel not showing up for the marriage and then beating Cherise] was, I could have switched off there – that's where I would have switched off.

Contrasting the emotional intensity of *Home Affairs* that she despised to *The Bold and the Beautiful*, a US soap opera she had watched since college, Darlene explained that she admired the powerful female characters on *The Bold* and viewed their lives with pleasure. She reported that she enjoyed the show even though she would never behave like these characters, and that she had become an erratic fan now that she had young children in the house. The cultural capital she possessed was demonstrated in the form of a college degree and of her having spent her teenage years living in the United States. This cultural competence facilitated her comprehension of, and appreciation for, slang, jokes, and historical references that tended to be nation-specific.¹⁰ Although Darlene did not possess the financial means to mimic the lifestyles featured on imported shows, she identified herself as upper middle class with regards to her social attitudes and aspirations, elements that distinguished her from other members of the lower middle class. As in Press and Cole's (2001) findings about how working-class women either identified with or resisted television images of themselves, Darlene posed as "upper middle class-identified," thereby criticizing the attitudes and behaviors of people of her own social rank and aligning herself with images of upward mobility. Further supporting Press and Cole's study, the upper-middle-class women in this study assessed the proximity of imported

programming positively, because it reflected adequately their lifestyles and social and economic ambitions.

White women's disinclination to watch nationally produced shows that speak to South African issues and concerns appears to emerge from their desire to avoid engaging with serious matters that pose as entertainment and from their peripheral sense of national identity, with the help of which they are able to overlook the realities of a large portion of the population as irrelevant to their own "imagined community." Explaining the ways in which national identities can frequently be described as fragmented, La Pastina (2003, p. 12) makes a case for "mediated and conflicting notions of the nation that can potentially alienate rather than integrate the members of the nation who are peripheral to the power structures." Even though white women have historically been linked to power structures in South Africa, a fact that distinguishes them from the rural residents of Macambira to which La Pastina refers, the deficit in national media representations to establish their significance to the nation works to distance them from any involvement in constructions of group loyalty to the nation. Consequently, at the same time as images of national realities and concerns are constructed for television programming, white women assume their peripheral standing in such "depressing" matters of national uplift and racial progress. As in other well-educated and wealthy audiences, these women construct identities that pivot around television cultures, humor, and lifestyles originating in anglophone countries outside of Africa, and in particular around programming from the United States. Developing a stronger sense of proximity on the basis of the cultural and economic capital that is represented in imported makeover shows, travel shows, dramas, crime shows, and soap operas, these women, and by extension all those with access to extensive cultural capital, distanced themselves from national television representations. They sought out instead experiences of belonging that described a sense of nation much closer to their own imaginings – ideas very different from those held by women whose responses resonated with the national programming, as will be discussed below.

Familiarity and Desirability

Differing markedly from the white women who rejected national programming as unappealing and gloomy, four black women with whom I spoke engaged willingly with *Home Affairs* and other nationally produced shows. Claiming to be fans mostly of South African soap operas and neglecting imported programming completely, all four women were long-term aficionados of *Generations* (1993–), *Muvhango* (1998–), and *Isidingo* (1998–), soap operas that speak specifically to the South African context.¹¹ Moreover, all four women had watched the bulk of the first series of *Home Affairs* and related the events on the show to their personal experiences and the broader context of developments taking place in the country.

Each of these women – single mothers between the ages of 39 and 50 – spoke at least three of the following languages: Tswana, Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, English, and Afrikaans. Three of the women – Elsa, Ephie, and Adela – grew up in rural areas and relocated to a large city, where they found employment as domestic workers in wealthy white women's homes; they left their children in the care of family and were frequently sending financial support for them. The fourth and youngest woman, Yolande, had not relocated but lived in the town of her birth and labored as a domestic worker at a local high school. Adela and Yolande had acquired some high school education, but Elsa and Ephie only had a few years of primary school, the US equivalent of elementary school.

As mothers who had co-parented their children with the help of family and friends, all four women reacted viscerally to the act of Cherise deserting her newborn; Yolanda repeatedly queried "Where is the baby? Where is the baby?" while Elsa shook her head back and forth as she assimilated the abandonment. Immersed in other storylines as well, these women displayed more interactivity with the content and characters than any of the other participants in the study. When Nandi expressed her joy by ululating and doing a quick dance at the departure gate of the airport on her way to London, a journey she had been anticipating for years, the women laughed out loud and displayed great pleasure with her accomplishment.¹² In addition, Elsa covered her eyes with her hands and made a crooning sound when Danny beat Cherise, even as Yolande shot out questions about whether Cherise would report the abuse and fight for her rights. Reflecting on her life experience, Yolande contemplated the negative consequences that women face when they choose to fight for their rights, consequences that often result in abuse from their husbands; and she followed this remark with a sigh. After recovering from watching Cherise's beating, all four women empathized with Cherise's utter desperation, and they proffered advice at her every turn, articulating new responses each time she appeared on-screen. Proposing that she contact her parents about the abuse or take the baby-girl to an orphanage or clinic rather than leaving her in the street, these women identified closely with Cherise's personal problems and expressed familiarity with situations that appeared hopeless.

Trying to account for why Thandeka, a black woman, was willing to care for a white baby, Yolande speculated that Thandeka's concern for the baby stemmed from the remorse she felt about leaving her daughter with her sister at birth: "she's still guilty right now when she sees [something] like this – that is why she decides to take this child." And when Thandeka asked the clinic doctor what kind of a person would leave her baby in the street, Yolande leaned forward toward the screen and offered "just like you," confirming Thandeka's personal accountability while simultaneously expressing sympathy for Cherise's abandoned baby's cries.

Assuming that *Home Affairs* was realistic, Yolande remarked on a similar situation, in which a white child had been adopted by a black woman, a scenario she felt was representative of most interracial adoptions. Believing that racial differences should not factor into the availability of social assistance, these women

assumed that people across the spectrum would enjoy watching *Home Affairs*, because the show represented the country's breadth of racial and ethnic identities. These women agreed that their life experiences as domestic workers were depicted in the drama through several characters; hence they felt close affinities with all of the characters except two Indian couples, with whom they were less familiar. Although Yolande shopped for household items in the Indian section of town, she felt her interactions and observations were limited to the formalities of business transactions.

By linking their everyday lives to the themes and characters of *Home Affairs*, these women demonstrated their engagement with the drama and its similarities to their own lives. Just as the poor female domestic workers in Cairo investigated in Abu-Lughod's (2005) study related television images to their own experiences, these black working-class women made close correlations between television characters, real life, and the increasing number of instances where national programming had registered their tastes and experiences – an inclusion that clearly resonated with their sense of belonging to the nation. While not actively involved in the fight for access to the political–public sphere, these women nevertheless illustrate the ideal of this concept through their resonance with representations that reflect multiculturalism and offer new ways of imagining such realities, even though such images are constructed within middle-class imaginings. Like women in the nineteenth century in the United States who “found circuitous routes” to “have a voice in some space open and accessible to all where they could be counted in the general interest,” these women celebrated the reflection and reproduction of their views and experiences as a gesture toward their inclusion in the public sphere (Ryan, 1992). Significantly, even as these women recognized the correspondence between television images and their lives as domestic workers, their interpretations were influenced by the ways in which they positioned themselves as being “middle class-identified,” even though their economic means made them part of the working class (Press & Cole, 2001). By subscribing to middle-class values and lifestyles in spite of their lack of financial capital, these women were able to discern similar tastes and experiences, which were chronicled by national culture industries. While they clearly disagreed with Cherise's decision to walk away from her newborn, they did not judge her coldly but offered her advice and assistance as she negotiated the difficulties of life and relationships. Furthermore, these women understood Thandeka's nurture of Cherise's baby as a step toward assuming responsibility for her own abandoned daughter. Their exuberant and interactive style of endorsing the values and characters in this show suggests the ways in which they established the show as proximate to their lives, even though it originated in a different social context and economic class; and they experienced this proximity as pleasurable – celebrating the value of their lives as domestic servants, mothers, friends, and women. However, not all women found the themes of the show to be proximate or preferred; this I will show in the next section, where I discuss the responses of a group of women who tended to negotiate *Home Affairs* meanings to a greater extent.

Familiarity and Ubiquity

Calling attention to what Iwabuchi describes as the situated notion of proximity or the ability of individuals to perceive similarities that are particular to their own experiences, background, and location rather than a quality inherent to the television artifact, the third group of viewers whom I interviewed recognized similarities both in nationally produced programs *and* in shows derived from the United States. Their impression that both types of programming were proximate to their experiences and realities works to define similarity in ways different from those of the other viewers – both black and white – who found correspondence *either* in imported *or* in nationally produced programming. By way of example, all 17 women in this group followed at least one South African soap opera, namely *Generations*, *Isidingo*, *Muvhango*, and/or *Sewende Laan*, while also claiming to be fans of one or more US soap operas such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Days of Our Lives*. Occupying diverse categories of identity, these women were multilingual, multiethnic, multiracial; they ranged between 20 and 54 years of age, and some held graduate or bachelor degrees while others had only attended elementary or high school without completing their education and yet others described themselves as college students, stay-at-home wives, mothers, and/or working women.

Although these participants reportedly viewed both the imported and the South African programming, nevertheless they tended to favor one over the other and offered a variety of explanations and identifications to justify their pleasures. Some of these explanations accounted for the participants' sense of inclusion in the nation, while others intimated that they sought lifestyles and/or exercised values that did not mark them as national subjects. On the whole, these women adopted two stances toward programming: either they aligned themselves with the pleasures of the South African content, which they perceived to be realistic or comparable to their experiences or national knowledge; or they distanced themselves from the enjoyment of South African programming, which they found *too* realistic, even though they often-times described instances of recognition and engagement with the content.

As avid enthusiasts of South African soap operas, 11 women chronicled their fondness for South African content, even though they did watch imported programming to a greater or lesser extent. In their view, South African programming, and *Home Affairs* in particular, largely reflected their own everyday lives or experiences, was pedagogical in nature, and functioned to inspire citizens to imagine better lives; and this in spite of the fact that these same women were at times critical of the storylines and character development. While the notion of realism was central to these women's complicated pleasure in viewing *Home Affairs*, a second group of women, made up of six, observed a similar degree of realism in South African programming but experienced this "reality" as distasteful and off-putting. Confirming La Pastina and Straubhaar's (2005) findings that audiences respond to programming on multiple cultural levels in addition to geolinguistic similarity,

these women accounted for their enjoyment of imported programming as staging undemanding, universal themes, in contrast to the uniquely South African conditions that characterized national shows. In other words, the realism of national programming that resonated and inspired the first group worked to alienate the second group of women, even though they recognized their lives and the social problems of the country in the content.

Describing *Home Affairs* as realistic because “it’s kind of similar to our daily lives – most of the times [the things] that are happening there, [the things that] they portray, are like our real lives,” Nonne, a black middle-class college student from a neighboring country, represents both groups of mixed women, to judge by the ways in which the themes and characters ring true to her experience of being South African. Referring to Thandeka’s abandonment of Katleho, Nonne noted: “you can see that, nowadays, there are so many babies and also children. I think [women] do that [abandon their babies], yeah, they do that. It can be because of AIDS or it can be because of this kind of thing [career goals].” Liso, a young black middle-class college student from a neighboring country, also admitted to the realism of Cherise’s abandonment of her baby; she thought that “mothers do reject babies and can’t take care of them – I found that real.” Moreover, she pointed to Katleho’s hush-hush adoption by Nonhlanhla as a likely way to handle such a sensitive situation: “I found it true, the fact that Katleho maybe knew that Thandeka was her mother but that it wasn’t something that was spoken about in the open. It’s like sort of something that’s hidden. I found that real – it does happen like that.”

In addition to mostly perceiving the show to be a realistic and accurate reflection of the South African experience, these 11 women also experienced pleasure through the show’s moralistic and didactic tone. Thandiwe, a working-class Xhosa-speaking black woman in her thirties with an elementary school education, believed that *Home Affairs* modeled the possibilities of transformation so that viewers could see “what our lives *should* be.” For example Cherise, or any abused woman, “should have left her boyfriend”; and children should forgive their parents’ mistakes, just as Nonhlanhla teaches Katleho: “Your mother was doing that [abandoning you] but now you must forgive your mother.” Likewise, Gugu, a middle-class black woman in her forties who spoke Zulu and was also an international traveler with an undergraduate degree, mentioned that her favorite aspect of *Home Affairs* was its pedagogical disposition: “I could feel that if my son was faithfully watching it, he could have learned a lot from it, you know, especially from the angle of drugs, of women abused, all of those.” Mandisa, a middle-class Xhosa-speaking black woman in her thirties with a professional degree, maintained that the show taught viewers to differentiate between cause and effect:

It always happens with us, especially black[s], because we tend to have children and then we go and dump them with our Grand – our mothers – when [we] are pregnant, and then we want society and people to know that we don’t have any kids. So I think it’s got a message that was very educational.

Mandisa thus drew attention to the ways in which the realism of the show highlighted social practices and suggested the need for change.

Beyond comparing the show to their own lives, women found the themes of the show inspirational even if they also took a critical stance toward particular characters and storylines. Thandiwe emphasized that *Home Affairs* depicted life as it could/should be in South Africa: "I think it is saying 'this is what our lives should be,' Mam – because other people got no feelings for their wives. Sometimes the whites got no feelings for the blacks but some of the people have that feeling." Sharing Thandiwe's perspective for the potential for change in the country, Gugu highlighted the expanded possibilities for university students and young adults to cultivate relationships across race and class: "But now with these kids [Katleho and Katherine], both at university, outside the family environment, they could be attached [in spite of their different races] without any problem." Gugu thus found encouragement that young adults could forge more open relationships, as was illustrated on *Home Affairs*.

Even though women experienced pleasure in watching programming that was explicitly set in South African contexts, their engagement with shows such as *Home Affairs* was not a simple and straightforward identification. Instead, women were frequently critical of the ways in which realism was achieved, even as they identified at a general level with the authenticity of the show. Their capacity for distinguishing depictions of reality from their own daily realities suggests the anachronism of paternalistic and protectionist media policies that assess national viewers as infantile or deluded. As agents capable of evaluating critically messages of the media, viewers were thus able to conduct conversations about the reality of life in South Africa, as well as about general issues that they found compelling, from shows such as *Home Affairs*.

Demonstrating a critical approach to her enjoyment of *Home Affairs*, Amelia, a lower-middle-class 20-year-old "colored" woman, found Cherise's abandonment of her baby on the street implausible. She explained that "[Cherise] could have looked after the child. White women do not abandon their babies – they have other options." Demonstrating awareness of the racialized nature of economic capital, Amelia explained that white women typically possessed greater access to material resources than "colored" people like her. In a similar vein, Abigail, a working-class "colored" college student, connected the plot of *Home Affairs* with her own life, although she, too, was cognizant of the differences between the show and reality. Refusing to believe that a white woman like Cherise might suffer abuse, Abigail presupposed that such pain would more likely be inflicted on women who were "colored" or black, a matter-of-fact assumption she illustrated through her narration of a friend's experience of having her baby removed from her care because she was an unfit "colored" mother.

Although the second group of women also acknowledged the realistic mode of presentation in *Home Affairs*, they did not find pleasure in the aesthetics of this realistic national programming but instead gravitated toward imported programming that offered them entertainment rather than education. As a fan of *Bold* and *Days* rather than *Generations* or *Isidingo*, Olivia, a Tswana-speaking lower-middle-class

black college student attending college in a rural area of the country, explained that US soap operas “are clear – you understand – you don’t have to think, they’re just straightforward.” In contrast, she explained that South African soap operas blend programming objectives into “edutainment,” as was apparent in Cherise’s storyline, which required viewers to think: “when you see someone abandoning a child you obviously feel for that situation – you feel for the child. I think you come to a point where you feel, you know where you have that feeling that it is very wrong.”

Like Olivia, who had a sense of the educational impulse of South African shows, Mamello, a Sotho-speaking middle-class black college student, felt that South African shows were too realistic for her to enjoy: “even in the comedies [. . .] they deal with reality too much. You know, crime and the past, and they don’t move on – even the comedies! Comedy’s supposed to make you laugh, not depressed!” She found US shows more compelling on account of what she described as their lighthearted and inconsequential themes and tones.

Although the realism of *Home Affairs* was perceived by some women to be unattractive, these same women nonetheless identified closely with characters in the show. Mamello identified with the character of Thandeka, whose successful career in an NGO highlighted burgeoning career opportunities for black women in the country since the introduction of democracy. Acknowledging the benefits that her racial classification offered, as “it is even easier for them to hire me because I am black and a woman and I can go up very quickly and move to partner,” she also conceded that such policies were “pushing those women [black women chief executive officers (CEOs)] to go there and when they get there, they’re scared, they’re neglecting their families for work, they’re divorced.” Seeing her own experience mirrored in Thandeka, Mamello was nevertheless ambivalent about the effects of affirmative action policies, which reduced her pleasure in watching the show, as such moral lessons in the plot prevented her from relaxing during the show.

Farrah and Yafia, two Indian women who identified themselves as middle-class Muslim wives and mothers, typically watched very few South African productions and preferred imported programming, although both were engrossed in watching the episode of *Home Affairs* screened during the interview. Finding the show to be realistic and of current interest on account of its focus on interracial relationships – such as that between Thandeka, who is black, and Cherise’s baby, who is white – Farrah remarked on how the show corresponded with the changing values of the Muslim Indian community, which was grappling with the increasing problems of abandonment of babies and premarital sex – issues she felt had not been widespread when she was growing up. Significantly, despite acknowledging the social value of national programming, these two women did not elect to watch shows like *Home Affairs*, citing as reasons the need to screen its content from their young children (which they did by utilizing the tools of satellite television) and their preference for content related to the Muslim faith or community that was produced in other national contexts.

Although part of a group of women who preferred imported media content but nevertheless viewed a range of national programs, these women offered explanations

for their viewing practices and pleasures that implied that the life they imagined as ideal was not identical with national life as portrayed on television. While recognizing similarities in national television representations that felt true to the South African experience, these women did not desire the way of life depicted in national programming, and in some cases they held characters on the show in low moral regard. Significantly, while women in this group spanned a wide range of identities and had diverse ethnic, racial, age, and geographic origins, their economic affiliations tended to be middle class, and this similarity between them appeared to predict their preference for imported programming. Aspiring to a standard of living and social practices that emphasized beauty, optimism, and humor, much like the group of white women, these viewers veered away from social realist programming – or, in this case, shows produced by the nation. Calling attention to the notion of cultural competency to understand how black women viewers of *The Color Purple* negotiated the ideological meaning of the film, Bobo (2006) notes how viewers resonated with images of black women's histories and experiences, even though these images were produced within the institutional framework of white dominance. Similarly, the middle-class position of South African viewers shapes the interpretations they make of *Home Affairs*, particularly the fact that they prefer imported media images that promise more affluent lifestyles with fewer moral lessons. Using their class competencies, then, viewers interpret domestic shows as targeting women other than themselves, and thus they dismiss the relevance of national images of belonging.

Conclusion: Multiple Proximities and Nation-Building

In an attempt to expand the scope of South African audience research, this study has engaged with the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and class to examine how women respond to projects of multicultural nationalism through their reception of domestic and imported television programming. Although a diverse group of women were interviewed, several gaps remain still to be explored in future research. While this study focused on women's use of *Home Affairs* as one instance of local programming, men's reactions to such dramas remain unknown, even as a greater variety of social positions might suggest other uses of local programming, such as black upper-middle-class women's utilization of national programming and white working-class women's responses to shows such as *Home Affairs*. My analysis of interview data collected for this study shows that women viewers of *Home Affairs* recognized, to varying degrees, the ideologies of nation-building and multiculturalism that informed the show, since they maintained that this drama taught viewers how to improve the quality of their lives by aspiring to integration or unity in diversity. Depending on their partiality toward social realist programming, women reacted antagonistically, collaboratively, or critically to the goal of multicultural integration.

In their response to programming that they viewed as depressing and unrelated to their way of life or ambitions, white upper-middle-class women were inclined to reject the aesthetics and politics of social realism in dramas that invited them to participate in rebuilding the nation. Conscious of the manner in which *Home Affairs* constructed distinctive South African experiences in order to establish a sense of proximity, these viewers refused any corresponding identification. Rooted in their ample cultural and economic capital, viewers in this group identified more with programming stemming from anglophone geolinguistic regions that they deemed as relevant for their dreams and practices of upward mobility. Although these women made a cursory comparison of their lives to characters and themes in the show, the resulting similarities did not generate pleasure and often produced a rather unsympathetic response: viewers turned away from what they felt to be the grim realities of some South Africans' lives that triggered discomfort and anxiety. Confirming Iwabuchi's (2002) finding that cultural proximities, assumed to reside in local programming, do not necessarily create pleasure for national viewers, this group of white women preferred instead to watch imported programming that they identified as more contiguous with their social aspirations and as reinforcing their middle-class lifestyles and values. Yet, although white women in this study refused participation in the nation-building project and, by extension, refused integration in the multicultural nation, their oppositional stance is not necessarily any more progressive than black women's adoption of nation-building rhetoric. Presuming to be outside of the nation's project of uplift and not conceiving of themselves as targets of nation-building, these white women looked elsewhere for images of themselves. In other words, white women perceived themselves to be peripheral to the ideologies of integration and uplift, a perception anticipated by critics of multiculturalism who recognize the unlikely possibility that all subjects of the discourse of equality will be satisfied with their piece of the pie. On the basis of their cultural competencies, these women identified with other, more affluent national media industries and images of citizens, which depended less on social responsibility and more on ideologies of individualism and consumerism.

Although white women used imported programming for relaxation and entertainment, a group of older black working-class women preferred South African programming that they found inspirational for its portrayal of women in situations similar to their own, and, more often than not, they rendered images of citizens who valued racial integration, economic transformation, and ongoing reconciliation. As objects of nation-building rhetoric, these black women appreciated *Home Affairs* and aligned themselves with the moral imperative of creating unity; they did so by cheering on the characters' attempts to connect with each other and by wholeheartedly accepting the objective of integration, even though they had scarcely benefited from such national policies. Their sense that *Home Affairs* examined and exposed sensitive issues facing women, particularly women who were poor or who found themselves in relationships of abuse, underlines the ways in which television can create public spheres by promoting issues of general concern for discussion and debate. What is

also clear from their comments, however, is that ordinary citizens lack the power to call for social change, and that television mostly serves as an arena for opinion-formation and the exchange of information. As Press (1991) demonstrates, class is a key predictor of how audiences interpret media texts. To judge television content, working-class women thus appeared to use different criteria from those of upper-middle-class women, and they identified with nation-building ideologies that sought to legitimize citizens, regarding them as crucial to the progress of the nation. Moreover, the intersections of race and class informed audience decodings of television, as was evident in black working-class women's collective responses to the meanings of *Home Affairs*. These women's choice to view solely domestic programming appears to be contingent on the economic and cultural capital they possessed.

If the gratification described by these black women gestures toward an uncomplicated collaboration with official rhetoric, women who located proximity in both national and imported programming expressed a sense of critical identification with national objectives. One group of women exhibited a sense of cautious immediacy in relation to national programming, while a second group presented a more ambivalent relationship, out of deference for the ideas and lifestyles portrayed in imported shows. While both groups, composed of black, "colored," and Indian women, recognized *Home Affairs* as uniquely South African, the first group located a sense of hopefulness in the themes of the show while simultaneously identifying the ongoing legacies of apartheid, in which working-class black and "colored" women assumed the greatest burden of poverty and accumulated the fewest benefits from policies of affirmative action and multiculturalism.

Differences between the first group, women who critically accepted the pleasures of *Home Affairs*, and the second group, women who were more ambivalent in their identification, suggest the multiple points of proximity in women's relations with television programming and the complex modes of pleasure that are embedded in their social situations. Identifying several instances of similarity between their lives and the characters featured in *Home Affairs*, participants in the second group alternately described their lack of sympathy with the show and displayed a sense of recognition that the show somehow felt didactic rather than entertaining. Accordingly, while they watched national programming, these women were more hesitant about the pleasures of *Home Affairs*, a show they would not normally choose to watch.

Whereas racial affiliation appears to explain the interpretive strategies that both white upper-middle-class women and older working-class black women use to create meaning in television texts, the third group's responses cannot be consigned to a purely "racialized" analysis of the reception of domestic and international shows. Presenting a diverse range of identity positions, which encompassed race, ethnicity, age, geographic location, and religion, women in the third group did not respond according to any one homogenous category. However, as Bobo's theory of cultural competency illustrates, marginalized viewers may react either positively or negatively to media texts created within the dominant ideology. As citizens previously marginal-

ized in the apartheid state, black, “colored,” and Indian viewers have experienced a history of symbolic annihilation or the absence of media images of themselves on television. The recent proliferation of multicultural images on television provides women with images that they can either reject completely or negotiate more positively within the contexts of their histories and daily lives. On the basis of their cultural competencies related to class and race, women in this third group negotiated images that, for some, were more positive and reflective of their experiences, and for others held more negative associations and meanings, grounded in their backgrounds and social affiliations.

As women who live within the borders of South Africa and claim their rights as legal residents or citizens, the participants demonstrated multilayered identities through their varied attitudes toward nation-building rhetoric translated into television programming. Although the philosophy of multiculturalism promises the celebration and equality of all cultures, races, and genders, the accomplishment of South African unity in diversity has not yet materialized as a horizontal integration, but has instead been perceived by many women as one of fragmentation and even isolation. While multicultural nationalism has the potential to usher in an era of liberation (largely for the black majority), this form of nationalism perpetuates the historical legacy of national exclusivity – not only of white women, who feel estranged from any national identity, but also of women whose race and class intersect to construct identities that are not hailed by multicultural nationalism and who critically assess the ways in which the nation-state has delivered or not on the promise of inclusive citizenship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research study was supported by a Louise McNutt Dissertation Year Award, a Project of African Expressive Traditions Research and Travel Grant, and an Office of International Programs Pre-dissertation Travel Grant, all from Indiana University, Bloomington.

NOTES

- 1 Serial shows on television in South Africa are referred to as “series” rather than as “seasons,” a typical convention in the US.
- 2 Commissioning Editors at the SABC, whom I interviewed in 2008, explained how, even though a show might not meet the Market Share expected by the commissioning channel, it might be recommissioned for a subsequent series if it met particular objectives, such as the language mandate criteria required by the channel.
- 3 Unlike the US system, the SABC initially commissions shows for an entire series, usually 13 episodes for a drama, and it seldom cancels episodes before the series has aired completely.
- 4 Market share details were not available for the 2009 season at the time of this writing.

- 5 The theoretical challenge to national unity posed by heterogeneous cultures is to develop "unity in diversity" or "forms of political integration that are sensitive to, compatible with, and accommodating of varieties of difference" (see McCarthy, 1999).
- 6 "Local" content quotas refer to programming that is produced in South Africa rather than alluding to programming that is produced in a local or regional area within or outside of the nation.
- 7 Charring refers to household work that is hired out to women by the day. Historically, black and "colored" women in South Africa have earned their wages by charring in white women's homes.
- 8 Social realism is a visual style adopted by SABC1 that "reflects [people's] lives and their concerns, that takes their views into consideration – not tabloid or sensational" (SABC, 2008, p. 17).
- 9 Pierre Bourdieu describes four types of capital that define individuals beyond their social class: economic capital that can be translated into money; cultural capital that stems from educational qualifications; social capital represented by group memberships and cultivated to secure profits; and symbolic capital, or the unstated prestige, honor, and attention that signal access to a network of resources (see Bourdieu, 2001).
- 10 While programming from the United States contains references to the national context, some authors argue that United States programming successfully crosses national boundaries because audiences have become familiar with its conventions and themes and do not perceive such programming to be foreign or unfamiliar.
- 11 *Generations* (1993–) is a long-running soap opera set in an advertising agency headed by Karabo, the only surviving member of the Moroka family. Surrounded by a group of women as her assistants, Karabo is challenged by powerful men, as well as by Anne de Villiers, an employee at the agency for control of Ezweni Communications. Created by Mfundu Vundla, it is the most watched soap opera in the country on SABC1; *Muvhango* (1998–) is a Venda-language soap opera set in a Johannesburg township and it centers on the conflicts between a family across the rural and urban divide; is broadcast on SABC2. *Isidingo* (1998–) airs on SABC3 and centers on the relationships between the Haines family, which owns On!TV, and the Matabane family from Horizon Deep, a mining town. The soap opera is written by head writer Greig Coetzee.
- 12 Ululating is a high-pitched sound, produced by the fast moving tongue and uvula.

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A Framework for Audience Study of Transnational Television

Chua Beng Huat

ABSTRACT

In the past two decades, television in East Asia has become progressively integrated to constitute a regional cultural economy juxtaposed against the programs imported from the globally dominant US. In terms of popular reception, audience formation, and attendant social and political process, East Asian television programs have far greater regional impact than their US counterpart. Consequently East Asia television audience reception research has emerged in the past decade as a field that engages a new community of Asian media scholars. Drawing on this expanding field of research, the present chapter will attempt to develop the beginning of a conceptual framework that focuses on the reception of imported programs in different regional locations. Such a conceptual framework holds transnationality as the central problematic in a whole range of issues – such as the content transforming practice of dubbing, the generation of audience identification with foreign content and artistes, the politics of transnational fandom, and the possibility of a pan-East Asian identity. In addition to its heuristic value for other investigations of regional audience formations, this preliminary analysis, which has identified a small set of necessary components, invites further research to develop a more fully fleshed out framework for the analysis of transnational audience practices.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Introduction

As a consequence of satellite and cable technology, there has been a proliferation of television stations and channels in many urban locations around the world, and hence the quantity of global television programming time has exploded in the last three decades. Outside developed nations, the rapidly growing footprint of television has led stations to import programs from the global market rather than to engage in relatively more expensive in-house production. Television is thus a transnational industry – a situation exemplified by the dominance of the US as a major supplier of ready-made programs and formats to the rest of the world. The transnational character of media is indexed by ideologically laden concepts such as “cultural imperialism” and “cultural security”; the first refers to the presumed cultural influence an imported TV program might have on the culture of the importing locations, and dovetailing with this presumption; the second refers to the perceived need to preserve the local culture from such foreign cultural invasion or contamination. Beyond these imprecise and politically motivated concepts, which are always challenged whenever they are evoked, is the emergence of a transnational audience for TV products; namely, local audiences watching imported foreign TV programs, where the culture in which the audience is embedded is different from the culture of the location where the programs are produced.¹

A part of this global expansion of transnational flows of TV products consists in the emergence and consolidation of a loosely integrated East Asian television industry – Japan, Korea, People’s Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore (Chua, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2002). Since the mid-1990s the organization, the formation, and the cultural and political impact of this regional transnational audience have been the focus of media scholars in East Asia. Using the regionally organized East Asian television industry as an illustrative instance and drawing on the empirical research of media analysts from the region, this chapter outlines a set of research topics for the investigation of the character and consequences of the transnational consumption of television serial dramas. By emphasizing intra-regional flows, this analysis veers away from the prevalent tendency to examine transnational media in terms of US dominance over the rest in media globalization – an enduring academic trend that has directed both empirical research and conceptual discussions of audiences. The relative “cultural” proximity that exists within the regional audience in East Asia, along with the cultural distance from the US, demands new ways of thinking about transnational audience studies.

East Asian Pop Culture

Since the early 1920s pop culture – pop music, movies, and street operas – in different Chinese languages – primarily Cantonese, Mandarin, and Minnan/Hokkien/

Taiwanese – has traveled throughout East Asian locations where ethnic Chinese (henceforth Huaren, 华人),² are numerically the absolute majority, namely the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. In Singapore, which is geographically positioned in Southeast Asia, the ethnic Chinese represent an overwhelming majority – more than 70% – of the national population. This historically consolidated regional network of pop culture financing, production, distribution, and development of transnational Huaren audiences served readily as the foundational structure for the subsequent flows of television programs, once TV stations were established in quick succession in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore during the first half of the 1960s; PRC was by then closed off to the rest of the region.³ Pivotal in this history of regional pop culture is the Shaw Brothers enterprise. From the 1920s onwards, the company built a regional entertainment empire throughout, with the movie industry as the core business. Production was primarily based in Hong Kong, and the films were exhibited throughout the region in the company's own movie houses (Yung, 2008). In 1970s the Shaw Brothers established TVB, which swiftly became (and remains) one of the two dominant stations in Hong Kong. By the 1980s Shaw Brothers shut down the movie studios (Curtin, 2002), while maintaining the cinemas. Its TV programs, particularly serial dramas, were widely distributed throughout Huaren- dominant areas; for example, the internationally famous Hong Kong actor Chow Yun Fatt was first introduced to Singapore audiences on the small screen, in the very popular television drama *Men in the Net*, in the 1970s.

During the mid-1990s trendy Japanese dramas were added to this well-established television distribution network.⁴ The visual pleasure of watching these generic romance stories – of love gained and lost among urban young professionals, and with agonizing twists and turns – is derived from the beautiful men and women actors who represent the major and minor characters. The well-dressed and glamorous characters sport designer clothes, live in cosy small apartments, and eat in expensive – usually Western – restaurants in the high end sections of the city's entertainment districts; hence these programs epitomize the idea of “trendy.” Ota Toru (2004), a television program producer who works with Fuji TV, recalls that, when he first began producing these dramas during the bubble economy years of the 1980s, his aim was to eschew serious themes in favor of shows that emphasized instead fashion, setting, cast, and music, in order to target female viewers in their twenties. The regional popularity of these dramas, which attracted loyal audiences in East Asia, was largely accidental and circumstantial. Media liberalization in Taiwan, after the lifting of martial law in 1987, resulted in the sprouting of satellite channels, which then required inexpensive content to fill the radically expanded programming time. Taiwanese businessmen would travel to Japan and return with digital versatile disc (DVD) sets of Japanese dramas for illegal broadcasts. Meantime, the very porous and ineffectual ban on the import of Japanese cultural products to Korea – a ban that was in place since the end of the World War II, as a political response to Japanese colonization – was lifted in 1998.⁵ With the lifting of this ban, Japanese pop culture, including TV dramas, freely and openly flowed into Korea. The popular reception

given to Japanese programs in other parts of East Asia came as an unexpected surprise to Japanese producers, who had actually given little consideration to the likely export markets for their dramas.

By the end of the 1990s, just as Japanese trendy dramas were becoming part of the routine programming of TV stations in East Asia, the region was inundated with Korean pop culture. In 1995 the Korean government had taken a policy decision to make pop culture a new export industry (Shim, 2002; 2006, pp. 31–35). The almost immediate regional success of Korean TV dramas was largely due to the fact that they were much cheaper for the importers, namely about one quarter of the cost of Japanese dramas and one tenth of that of Hong Kong dramas (Shim, 2006, p. 13). Taiwanese TV stations were the first to import Korean dramas; they also acted as agents in re-exporting them to Hong Kong, PRC, and Singapore. The huge popularity of the very first drama to be broadcast in the PRC, in 1997 – *What Is Love All About* – caused such a sensation that PRC media writers dubbed the arrival of Korean pop culture, particularly TV dramas, as the “Korean wave” (Shim, 2006, pp. 28–31). In 1999, in Singapore, a new Mandarin language television station (Channel U)⁶ used Korean dramas as one of its primary vehicles to successfully carve out a significant audience base. The popularity of the Korean dramas pushed the established, government-owned dominant channel to compete for similar imports. The bidding war that resulted led to the merger of the two stations into a single corporation, MediaCorp, in 2004, an event that put an end to mutual financial cannibalization. Finally, in 2003 *Winter Sonata* was first broadcast in Japan on late-night satellite stations, but its popularity was such that it had three successive broadcasts within a two-year period (Mōri, 2008). Five thousand Japanese fans, largely middle-aged women, descended on the Tokyo airport in April 2004 to welcome to Japan the lead actor, Bae Yong Jun, whom they nicknamed *Yongsama* (“Prince Yong”).

There is no doubt that, by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, a loosely integrated regional television cultural economy has emerged in East Asia. As producers build the regional market into their business and creative plans, television programs from different regional locations travel across national and cultural boundaries routinely, albeit in unequal flows. Japan and Korea are primarily exporting countries, while Singapore and the PRC are largely locations for consumption of imported dramas. Taiwan and Hong Kong are exporters of Chinese-language dramas and importers of Japanese- and Korean-language ones. The unequal patterns in this regional flow are a consequence of market forces. Japanese and Korean dramas are dubbed and subtitled by their importers into Chinese languages, for distribution in the massive combined Huaren market of PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore and in the global diaspora. On the other hand, the dubbing or subtitling of Chinese-language dramas into Korean or Japanese is, financially, a process much less viable – although not entirely impossible – than the Japanese dubbing of Korean dramas. Television dramas from different locations in East Asia are now an integral part of the daily programming of local stations in different contexts; for example, the Mandarin language channel in Singapore carries several hours of Korean, Japanese,

Hong Kong, and Taiwanese dramas daily. The formation of a transnational audience for television programs that circulate across national borders in East Asia has taken place in tandem with the development of this regional television industry.

TV Drama Audience

The generic and technological features of popular media products determine to some extent the methodological and substantive issues concerning audience consumption that become possible avenues for academic inquiry.⁷ The serial quality of a TV drama demands that an audience maintain viewing at regular intervals, usually once a day or once a week for one episode. In order for people to form a committed drama audience, they need to sacrifice many other activities, or at least displace them, so as to catch the new episode each week. Sometimes audience members have to make special arrangements to video-record an episode if they cannot avoid missing it. They may have to carve out time to catch up with, and watch, the missed episode before the next installment is screened in the scheduled program slot. These active forms of engagement with screen culture draw the audience into an intimate virtual relationship with the characters of their favorite dramas. Unlike the open-ended format of American TV dramas, which can run until their audience wears thin, East Asian dramas typically conclude after a number of episodes. Arguably, knowing that there is a conclusion may encourage an audience to be more committed to sustained and regular viewing over the length of the series; significantly, it is commonly observed that the concluding episode of a popular drama series tends to secure much higher audience rating than any intermediate episode. Together, the demand for sustained engagement and the ease of access, since these dramas are brought unto TV screens at home, make the act of watching television dramas one of the most intriguing and important popular practices in the realm of audience reception studies.⁸

Domesticating/Preserving the Foreign

In analyzing transnational audience, one should logically begin by examining the details of the actual viewing practices. If “recognition” is indeed central to viewing pleasure (Ang, 1985, p. 20), then it is necessary to examine how recognition is facilitated across linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. This is usually done by either subtitling or dubbing or both. Analysis needs to pay attention to the mediation of subtitling/dubbing in the process of generating not only recognition and identification, but also difference and distancing from what is on the screen in transnational audience viewing practices.

As mentioned above, the flows of TV dramas within East Asia tend to run from Korea and Japan into the massive regional Huaren market, where the distribution of Korean and Japanese dramas is facilitated by dubbing into a Chinese language – Cantonese for Hong Kong and Mandarin for Taiwan, Singapore, and China.⁹ In dubbing, “visual synchrony” between the translated words and the lip’s movements on screen – that is, lip-sync – creates “the impression that the actors on screen are pronouncing the translated word” in order to generate the belief that one is viewing a “local” program; emphasis should be placed on the term, local.¹⁰ Constrained by this need to lip-sync, the translator must “move away from the source text to focus on the function of the text and on the viewer” (Varela, 2004, p. 35). Where expressions and contextual references of the source language have no equivalent in the target language, the translator/translation has an obligation to orient toward the cultural context of the target language and to change the source dialogue accordingly in order to “to provide the viewers what they are used to” rather than cater for the greater demands of professional written norms (Agost, 2004, pp. 68–69).¹¹ Elements of the culture of the target audience are thus introduced into the dubbed text. Therefore ideological dubbing is a process through which “a particular target culture for historical, social, and political or economic reasons, seeks to domesticate a foreign product and to make both the translator and the translation invisible” (Varela, 2004, p. 39).

In the case of East Asian TV dramas, dubbing adds to the domestication possibility / process, which is already facilitated by the relatively similar physiognomy, a shared ideographic Chinese script, a common Confucian worldview, and overlapping histories, both of conflicts and of diplomatic relations.¹² These factors – including “a sense of living in the shared time and common experience of a certain (post)modernity” (Iwabuchi, 2001a, p. 56) in contemporary times – constitute a multilayered “cultural proximity” that significantly accounts for the possibility of a regional East Asian television culture and industry.¹³ For example, the very popular Korean period drama series *Jewel in the Palace* (*Dae Jang Geum*, 大长今; henceforth *Dae*) chronicles the rise of a palace cook who subsequently became the first female physician to the Korean emperor in the sixteenth century.¹⁴ During that historical period, Chinese characters were commonly used by Koreans. Thus the written scripts that appeared on screen were often in Chinese ideograms. This contextual element further facilitated translation and dubbing into Chinese languages; the script was dubbed in Mandarin in Taiwan for one year, before it was dubbed in Cantonese in Hong Kong.¹⁵ To further domesticate this particular drama, the Hong Kong TV station intervened directly to provide additional “explanations” in Cantonese voice-over, that is, to offer the Chinese equivalents of the Korean recipes and medicinal items featured on screen. These localizing practices have effectively transformed *Dae* into a “local” drama. Audiences are drawn into consumption of the familiar, which facilitates identification with the characters on screen, and such production practices contribute undoubtedly to the popularity of imported film and TV dramas among the Huaren.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, the “foreignness” of imported Korean and Japanese dramas is an integral part of the viewing pleasures of such transnational audiences

as the Huaren. Foreignness is preserved on screen through various visual elements, especially those that signify “tradition,” for example ethnic food and traditional costumes. “Ethnic” costumes are, possibly, a most convenient and commonly used signifier of culture to display and represent the foreign readily; thus there is no mistaking the origin of an East Asian historical period drama, because Japanese, Korean, and Chinese traditional costumes are distinct from each other. In the case of *Dae*, for example, the costumes of the Korean court are heavily emphasized through visual imagery.

However, most of the regionally circulated dramas are urban contemporary ones, in which few ethnic costumes are featured. In such urban dramas, if the sound is turned off, the relatively similar physiognomy of East Asians renders it difficult for one to recognize the national origin of a drama, especially in indoor close-up shots of the characters on screen, unless one is able to identify the specific actors and actresses. Under such conditions, other vehicles are needed to signify foreignness. The foreign is inscribed in iconic or “slang” images (Khoo, 2006) that metonymically represent the city represented on screen: Tokyo Tower, the telecommunication tower in Shanghai, the Hong Kong ferry, public housing flats in Singapore, the Jeju Island in Korea, and, most generically, street scenes where the neon signs are in local language – the language of the nation producing the programs. The significance of such visual symbols of the foreign for a transnational audience arises from the fact that many of the locations that are featured on screen have also been successfully marketed as tourist sites. TV images are transformed into tourist sites, and TV audiences are transformed into tourists.¹⁶ The pleasure and exoticism of watching the “foreign” is also realized through the tourist gaze (Lee, 2004; Hirata, 2008).

In audience reception, translated and dubbed dialogue domesticates imported TV drama in order to facilitate identification, while the visual exotic foreign raises obstacles to it. Altogether, watching imported TV dramas is a fragmentary process of intermittent moments of identification and distancing rather than one of sustained and unwavering identification with what is on screen (Chua, 2008). This fragmentary process is borne out by empirical studies of transnational audiences in East Asia.

Fragmentary Audience

As in every communicative instance, TV drama narratives construct a reception space and a subject position for the audience; this is a space that induces identification with the on-screen character preferred by the director. However, resistance or rejection of the assigned audience space and its implied subjectivity is obviously always a possibility. In resistance, one would be distancing oneself from the character, the action, and the message on screen. Alternative moments of identification and distancing, where and when on-screen characters are “like me/us” or “unlike me/us,” are generated during real-time watching. For transnational audiences, this identification/

distancing process is mediated – and thus complicated – by an awareness of the foreignness of imported programs, which simultaneously facilitates the process of distancing and raises hurdles for identification.

Identification Ladder: From Human to Asian

From empirical investigations it appears that, during actual viewing time, identification shows a certain order of abstraction: the most immediate level of identification is also at the most generalized and abstract level of simply “being human”; as in some version of the audience response, “I understand the character because we are all humans.” For example, a Singaporean audience member comments:

It’s just that it is filmed in Japan and the characters are Japanese. But when you are talking about love, sex, and marriage, it happens anywhere in the world where someone, in a particular situation, has sex with someone else on a fateful night and then thinks about it and, you know, wonders, ‘Why did I do it?’” (MacLachlan & Chua, 2004, p. 166–167)

Variations of the “we are human” identification can be achieved when a specific element is added to the interpretative frame, for example in a situation where a Taiwanese person refers to a trendy Japanese drama thus: “Love stories in big cities are more *real* for us. We are young. It is what we *dream* of” (Ko, 2004, p. 123); or when a Hong Kong audience member writes on his website: “The major attraction of *Tokyo Love Story* [a Japanese drama] to me is that is not a story about somebody else. It is a story about our generation, about us, about myself” (quoted in Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 146). In these instances a generational claim is made, which thus indexes a more specific segment of humanity.

In a regional context, shared elements – such as language, history, geography – between audience locations and production locations can provide more specific bases for identification, which are less inclusive than “humans/anyone.” In East Asia this phenomenon can take the form of “I identify with the character because we are Asians,” which, ideologically, also says “we are not like non-Asians,” thus implicitly invoking an East–West dichotomy that is pervasive in the public sphere of the countries in the region. This attitude generates and affirms a sense of “Asianness” despite cultural differences between the production and consumption locations. It may be an instantiation of the claim of “cultural proximity.” Iwabuchi (2001a) suggests that such abstraction of being “Asian” generally embraces a loose combination of elements that include, significantly, the shared contemporary global modern consumer culture in all the developed capitalist economies of East Asia. Again, the abstract and general claim of “Asianness” (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 151) can be further specified with particularistic elements. As the extensive comparative study of Hong Kong and

Singapore women audiences of Korean TV dramas illustrates, “the Confucianist/traditional version of femininities” commonly portrayed in the dramas “provides the most comfortable subject positions for them” (Lin & Tong, 2008, p. 121). This evocation of “Confucianism” as a cultural source of identification isolates East Asians from other Asians.

Significantly, audiences interviewed in the various studies quoted above use the term “identification” to express their sense of “recognition” of themselves in the on-screen characters and narrative messages. However, analytically, this is obviously an overenthusiastic claim, and it cannot be taken literally, as implying that there are identical modes of thought and behavior that link viewers with on-screen characters. Rather, the different abstract frames that allow audiences to engage actively with their favorite dramas are closer to what reception theory has called “repertoire of interpretations” (Hermes, 1999). Nevertheless, despite not being literal, the “Asianness” frame has served as the conceptual basis for a regional “pan- East Asian” identity that has fuelled the cross-border consumption of popular culture – an issue that I take up later in the chapter.

Distancing/Embracing Difference

Crucially, during instances of identification with what is on the screen, the factual foreignness/difference of an imported TV drama for a transnational audience is never erased, but merely displaced and made to lie just beneath the surface of abstract identifications. These emerge as soon as on-screen characters act in a manner contrary to an audience’s sentiment, providing the reasons for the latter to distance itself from what is on the screen. For example, Singaporean audiences of married women apparently have a tendency to reject the Japanese dramatization of sexual relations: “I wish these Japanese dramas would not encourage our youths to accept those one-night love relationships so easily, sleep with each other and that’s it. This is very unacceptable” (MacLachlan & Chua, 2004, p. 163). Here the perceived difference between “they, Japanese” and “Singaporean us” is emphatic and unmistakable. “Foreignness,” standing in for the specificities of the “culture” of production locations, is evoked to create a distancing from more permissive sexual cultures.

This instance of distancing from/rejection of “Japaneseness” has greater conceptual and political implications. As Iwabuchi points out, “Japanese nationalists easily translate this spread of Japanese popular culture to other parts of Asia into the ‘Asia-yearning-for-Japan’ idea, which confirms [for the nationalists] the shift of power from the United States to Japan that took place in the 1990s”; and this implies a “newly generated Japan’s claim for its cultural superiority through asserting commonality with other Asian nations” (2002, p. 66). Iwabuchi further points out that this nationalist attitude is a reformulation and extension of a historically deeper “ambivalence of

the Japanese conception of 'Asia,' a cultural geography that offers Japan at once a shared identity with other parts of Asia and is also the source of Japanese feelings of superiority" (ibid.) – a sense of superiority that underwrote Japan's attempt to colonize the rest of Asia during World War II, transforming it into an Asian "co-prosperity sphere" under Japanese imperial leadership. The possibility of audience distancing from/rejecting "Japaneseness" disrupts the simplistic Japanese right-wing nationalist reading and the cultural imperialist fantasy of interpreting the positive reception of Japanese TV dramas in East Asia as evidence of these audiences' admiration for Japan. Conversely, as Iwabuchi rightly points out, instead of an Asia desiring Japan, this particular reading is more symptomatic of Japan's nationalist desire to "return" to embrace Asia, a desire that has been suppressed as Japan became culturally marginalized after being defeated in 1945 in the Pacific War (Iwabuchi, 2001b). Beyond the specificity of Japanese nationalist sentiments, the possibility of an audience distancing from/rejecting the "foreign" in an imported TV drama undermines any simplistic conception of popular culture as the instrument of a nation's "soft power," which supposedly operates through its ability to influence and win over others through the "attractiveness" of one's values and culture (Nye, 2004).¹⁷

Difference between the local and the foreign can, of course, be viewed positively and engenders a desire for the "other." For example, Taiwanese women viewers express their desire to be like particular onscreen characters: "I have a strong feeling that she is exactly what I want to be" (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 144) – and, one might add, "but am not," or "but would not be able to be."¹⁸ One particularly poignant instance of this "desiring" difference is that of the effects and changes that the Korean TV drama *Winter Sonata* wrought on middle-aged women in Japan. The first-hand experience of media sociologist Mōri Yoshitaka (2008, pp. 127–128), who was invited by his 65-year-old mother to watch this drama, is worth an extensive quotation:

I was a little bit confused by her suggestion, as I have not watched any TV dramas with her since I left home at the age of nineteen. To my knowledge, she has not been a big fan of TV home dramas at all, as she has always complained about the uncultivated taste of home dramas. Moreover, she had a strong prejudice against Korea and Korean people.

During the 2004 New Year's holidays, I watched the whole series of *Winter Sonata* with her. The drama was, in fact, more interesting than I had expected. However, what interested me more was the way in which she talked about the drama and the hero, Bae Yong Joon (nick-named Yon-sama in Japan), as if she were a girl. I found that she exchanged information about the drama through the Internet or over tea meetings with her friends. She became interested in Korean culture and even travelled to Korea. I started to wonder why *Winter Sonata* fascinated her so much, why Bae Yong Joon could change her idea on Korea, and what will happen to her during and after the Korean Wave?

Middle-aged Japanese female fans turned up in the thousands when Bae arrived in Tokyo airport, thus making visible an active audience practice that is generally

associated with teenage pop culture consumers. The arrival of this demographic of older television fans in Korea transformed the nation from a male sex tourist site to a female “friendship” tourist location. Many Japanese women began to think of the possibility of becoming “cultural brokers,” who can work on changing the image of Korea/Koreans in Japan and even improve the international relations between the two nations (Mōri, 2008). This particular instance of the Korea–Japan encounter in popular culture is obviously determined in part by the colonial/postcolonial relations between the two countries. It nevertheless demonstrates that foreignness or difference can become a source not only of visual pleasure, but also of embracing the other instead of expressing disdain or rejection.

To generalize, substantively what we find, empirically, in the transnational audience’s real-time reception of imported TV drama is an intermittent process of identification with abstract elements attributed to the commonalities between the audience and what is on screen, which often discounts the “culture” of the production location, and a process of distancing from, or embracing, the elements of foreignness/difference that may be attributed to the “culture” of the production location represented on screen. What emerges is, unavoidably, a fragmented audience as a conceptual figure. The factors that can be (and are) invoked – one can imagine for example “global citizenship,” gender, and class – as grounds for identification or distancing are invariably contextual. This opens up opportunities for empirical investigations into how different historical, political, social, and cultural factors can, and have been, evoked in different locations, across different national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, to anchor specific instances of identification or distancing.

Layers of Audiences

Leisure Audience Community

For the overwhelming majority of audiences, TV drama watching is a leisure activity that fills in the time after the necessary everyday life activities are done, in contrast to the commitments of the fans. Leisure consumers exceed the numbers of fans by wide margins. It is this large leisure audience that accounts for the “popularity” of TV dramas. Indeed, it is impossible to know in any precise manner the size of the leisure audience for a popular drama, except through proxy measures of relative audience ratings. Individual leisure audiences are as widely dispersed across geographic space as the pop culture products: the two cover the same radius. For these audiences, TV drama watching is largely a privatized activity in the home. As a rule, audience members do not seek each other out. The “community” of leisure consumers therefore remains latent and invisible. This may be a reason why the idea of a “community” of leisure audiences is underdeveloped and under researched. This community requires other social institutions to make it manifest and visible. An

illustrative but ubiquitous example of the manifestation of this latent community can be readily observed.

The “popularity” of a TV drama or any other pop culture product is, to a very significant degree, a media-constructed phenomenon. The “heat” of a drama is generated by the attention and coverage it receives from the multimedia culture industry across all its constitutive components – magazines, radios, newspapers, and television channels. For example, when trendy Japanese dramas reached the peak of popularity in Taiwan, *China Times*, Taiwan’s most widely circulated newspaper, “produced a weekly section [spanning an entire page] devoted to discussions of Japanese TV dramas.” Following its success, “many of Taiwan’s publishers began to target the young Japanese TV drama fans. This led to the popularization of a new genre of writing, which combines information on Japanese TV dramas with discussions about Japanese fashion or lifestyle,” with the result that “Japanese TV dramas and other inter-referential texts bind together to create a “mega-text”” (Lee, 2004, p. 133).¹⁹ In places like Singapore, which import television programs (including dramas) from all the production points of the region, a similar production of mega-texts is constructed for the larger East Asian television culture. In such locations, for example, the entertainment pages of local newspapers may be metaphorically read as an “imaginary” geography of East Asian television land – a geography marked by the production locations and a land inhabited by the regional actors and actresses whose appearances in these pages corresponds to the rise and decline of their popularity with the transnational audience (Chua, 2006).

Those who read the pages of this mega-text form a multitude whose members are unknown to one another. When two or more of the readers of these pages happen to be co-present at a social occasion or event and when, as part of the free-flowing social conversation, they exchange impressions and opinions concerning the latest Japanese TV dramas that are drawn from these readings of the mega-text, then a “community of audience members” is instantly materialized. Any item in this mega-text can serve to realize this potential community of leisure audience members. The co-conversationalists would constitute a “community” of at least two persons who share knowledge of the said dramas. When the occasion is over, the community formation gets dissolved. Such instantiation, materialization, and dissolution of “occasional” and “occasioned” communities are part of the practices of the overwhelming majority of leisure audiences. Occasions that give rise to a community of transnational television drama viewers are grounded in incidental face-to-face encounters. Furthermore, they are ubiquitous, although ephemeral and difficult to track. The ephemeral character works against addressing these viewers as part of a stable “interpretive community” (Alasuutari, 1999, p. 7); the latter would be constituted by an identifiable and relatively predictable empirical collective²⁰ – such as colleagues in an office or members of a family – who may adhere to a set of cultural norms. Many questions arise here: Do these ephemeral and ubiquitous occasional communities help to sustain television watching as a dominant global leisure practice? And does the multiplying of occasions where casual viewers engage briefly with

one another contribute to the “popularity” of the drama? Do such occasions provide leisure audiences with a sense of belonging to a larger “community,” outside of their private viewing activities, thus changing their subjectivities? Perhaps the most fundamental empirical question is whether there are any significant differences in the sense of “self” – such as feelings of being more “cosmopolitan,” of “liv[ing] in a larger world than in real life” (Hermes, 1999, p. 80) – when imported TV rather than locally produced dramas become the referential points of conversation.

Activist Transnational Fans

Beyond these ephemeral face-to-face communities of the leisure audience members are the conventional fan clubs, in which avid fans of a particular program, actor, or actress engage in collective activities of sharing information, exchanging paraphernalia, and organize celebrations around events and texts concerning their chosen celebrities. Fan clubs are often organized by corporate agencies to prolong the stardom of the celebrities they manage. The conventional activities of fans have long been a subject of audience analysis, and there is an extensive literature on fandom and fan culture. Constraints of space prohibit a review of this literature here.²¹ Beyond these conventional fan clubs, which remain location-bound in their organized activities, deterritorialized, and faceless but well coordinated, transnational audience fan communities of East Asian television dramas have been, and are being, formed by activist transnational viewers. Such deterritorialized transnational audience communities are enabled by new communication technologies, particularly the Internet, which facilitates immediate communication and organization between fans across geographic distances.²² The following analysis will focus on community formation among activist transnational audiences in the contemporary Internet age.

This is a summary of what happened with one of the Japanese television drama series, *Pride*, as recounted by Hu (2003, pp. 177–178):

In January 2004, a Hong Kong fan, R, who is a skilled Japanese speaker, did the Chinese subtitling for *Pride*, a few days after the original broadcast in Japan. She thanks T and A for their supplies of the raw material, and when she made a mistake in the subtitling, she took care to insert a correction by thanking another fan for pointing out the mistake. The version of R's Chinese subtitling of *Pride* was extremely popular in the Hong Kong newsgroup through its online circulation by means of BitTorrent. [T]he marketing of another version of *Pride* produced by a Taiwanese-based leading pirated-Japanese-VCD company seems to be threatened, because R's version has already been so widely circulated among Chinese fans through the Internet. The inner passions for drama, fan friendship and performance/self-expression are displayed in the context of this Chinese translation/subtitling; being “acknowledged by a community of like-minded is a characteristically romantic structure of feeling.”

The extensive quotation above has all the essential characteristics of a self-organized and self-affirming online community. What is very significant is that, in addition to

being geographically translocal, this community is also transnational and transcultural, on account of the need to translate and subtitle the downloaded drama. This need has produced a new category of audience, known among East Asian media scholars as “subfans”; that is, fans engaged in subtitling. Among the subfans are doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, who are needed because of their special knowledge of medical, legal, and other technical terms in the on-screen dialogue. The quoted description of the fans’ activities clearly points to the high level of organization and coordination work necessary for the entire sequence of downloading–subtitling–uploading–corrections–re-uploading to be accomplished smoothly on every episode of the drama; work is done at different locations without any face-to-face contact among the participants. What drives the language- and technology-savvy consumers, participants, or members to do the painstaking work of initiating and amending the translation and subtitling of their favorite drama series is their consuming passion for the drama. This immaterial labor, in which the audience is a producer of meaning and simultaneously “constitutes itself in immediately collective forms that exist as networks and flows” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 145), is done entirely for the pleasure and benefit of other members of the cyber-virtual fan community. Such practices of fandom, which extend the economic and cultural reach of television programs, escape the clutches of profit-oriented producers and distributors and elude the radar of censorship and other legal constraints of the nation-state.

Internet fan communities of this kind open up a new research terrain for the study of fandom. Some of the possible research questions are:

First, what are the transformative effects of the activities of subfans – recall here the prior discussion, about the interventions of dubbing and subtitling to the original drama text – both on the actual subjectivity and on the concept of an “active” audience? What do they achieve by taking us beyond the audience interpretation of the message, to an audience that becomes a producer of narrative/message?

Second, how does the immaterial labor of the subfans, who bypass the circuit of commercial broadcast stations, affect how “profit” can be extracted by investors in program production? This is an issue very rarely raised in audience reception research; for now, the investors are left to grapple with the problem of how to configure the “means of the control of communication and information technologies and their organizational processes” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 146).²³

Third, what kind of cultural politics does the transnational fan community generate in the locations of production and consumption? Some explorations on this last question will be undertaken in the rest of the chapter.

The Politics of a Transnational Audience

Conventionally within media studies the politics of transnational media flows tends to be framed within the twin concepts of cultural imperialism – the perceived negative effects of contamination and transformation that the imported media products

have on the local culture (Morley, 2006)²⁴ – and cultural protection/security – the perceived necessary protection of a local culture against foreign invasion of this kind (Tomlinson, 1997; Xu, 2010). Cultural protection tends to be discussed at the level of state policies that regulate both the quantity of imported media and the scheduling of imported programs, while cultural imperialism gets discussed at the level of US' global industrial dominance and its supposed ideological influence on the audience in the export market locations. The “discovery” of an active audience, whose members interpret the media texts within their own cultural and ontological horizons, effectively puts a dent on the reductionist assumption of hierarchical top-down “cultural influence.” However, the politics of cultural imperialism/protection plays out beyond the actual audience reception of transnational media programs. It spills over into this larger public political sphere, either in the location of production or in the location of reception. Two instances drawn from the East Asian television drama industry illustrate these two possibilities of the politics of transnational popular culture's flow and reception.

The first concerns Korean television actor Song Seung-Heon. In 2004, when he was a “hot” idol among East Asian audiences, the news broke that that he had “cheated” conscription to military service by faking his medical record. In a country that is still divided into a communist north and a capitalist south, where the veterans of the bitterly fought Korean War in the early 1950s are still alive, and where the two halves of the nation continue to be in a state of military alert because the uneasy peace is maintained by an armistice rather than a peace treaty, conscription is seen as a critical national duty of every male citizen. Furthermore, as a compulsory national duty, conscription is seen as the great “leveler” of social, economic, and political inequalities among Korean men. In such an intensely politicized atmosphere, any attempt to escape conscription is an extremely anti-patriotic act. The disclosure of Song's misdemeanor created a public outcry.²⁵ Pressured by such a nationalistic response, the government immediately hauled Song into the military, although at the time he was shooting a video on location in Australia. The government's action immediately provoked Song's fans across East Asia to mobilize and organize a letter-writing campaign designed to plead with the Korean government to allow Song to complete his video before enlistment. Knowing the sensitivity of military service to Korean citizens, the fans did not plead for exemption but merely for delay in enlistment. The fans argued that Song was making a much more significant contribution to the Korean nation, not only economically but also in cultural diplomacy, through his dramas. The campaign was to no avail. Song abruptly abandoned the shooting, returned to Korea, and was enlisted without undue delay.²⁶ This instance demonstrates the possibility of activist transnational fans organizing themselves to intervene in a sensitive political situation. From the national political point of view, fans organized an extraterritorial intervention into the domestic political sphere of the exporting location. Admittedly, as this instance demonstrates, it seems difficult to imagine how such transnational fans' activities could have any significant impact on the domestic politics of the exporting country.

In contrast, the second instance concerns the politics of audience reactions in the importing/reception location; and this is played out through contestations between audiences and non-audiences of imported TV dramas. Empirically, within any importing location, the size of the audience population of transnational media TV dramas is much smaller than the size of the non-audience population. This disproportion is of great significance in the cultural politics of the importing location. Issues arise when the non-audience – for whatever reasons, including broad nationalism, historical animosity between the importing and exporting nations, professional envy of local artistes against foreign ones – reacts negatively in public to the importation of foreign dramas.

The regional success of Korean popular culture has given rise to very vocal anti-Korean sentiments in many East Asian locations. In Japan, a series of “Hate the Korean wave” (*Kenkanryu*) comics has been published. In this context, the Japanese women, audience members of Korean TV dramas who imagined themselves as harbingers of change on the grounds that they “warmed” the relations between Koreans and Japanese, are likely to face a steep uphill task, especially with the continuing historical resentments of the colonizer–colonized antagonism between Japan and Korea. In Taiwan, the arrival of Korean pop culture has been metaphorically described as the “invasion of Korean wave.” Such anti-Korean public discourse “militarizes” the importation of Korean pop culture, suggesting a serious violation of Taiwan’s national borders. On the day when Bae Yong Joon, the star of the hugely popular drama series *Winter Sonata*, visited Taipei to promote his movie, *April Snow*, self-styled “nationalist” Taiwanese rock musicians staged a concert to lambast Korean popular culture and Bae himself. Significantly, as the audience of Korean TV dramas is largely female, the rock musicians also directed their sexist masculine rage against “foolish Taiwanese women” who were fooled by the “love, smiles, and good looks” of male Korean TV stars (Yang, 2008, p. 203). In China and Hong Kong, media professionals, including the star of action comedies Jackie Chan, protested against the extensive coverage that local media gave to visiting Korean artists. In all these instances, cultural nationalism, professional jealousy, and self-interests are inextricably blended to generate a call launched by lay non-consumers and media professionals to support local artists. The rallying call is ideologically framed as “expressing” and “representing” national interests – indeed nothing short of “national cultural preservation.”

In both these examples, the sphere of popular culture rubs up against the larger public sphere – specifically, against the politics of confrontation between transnational pop culture and nationalism. The contestation that ensues is an ideological one, in which one side is reinforced not only by numerical superiority of “citizens,” but also by the availability of the rhetoric of “nationalism.” In the case of Song, the intensity of Korean nationalist investment in compulsory military service clearly overrides the extraterritorial politics generated by Song’s regional fans, in spite of the fact that the export of Korean popular culture has become one plank of the nation’s export industry. In the more pervasive case of anti-Korean popular culture,

which can be found in different East Asian locations, the “foreignness” of imported TV dramas serves as an ideological resource for non-consumers to politicize local reception. Non-consumers and domestic producers of popular culture can readily use their demographic majority to “anoint” themselves as the “people,” the ones who “defend” the “national” culture against foreign cultural “invasion” or “cultural imperialism.”

In these two instances, the “nationalists” in the exporting and importing nations, respectively, made strategic use of the sign of the “nation” by discursively invoking its particular legislation on conscription, or the imagined threat to its culture from a transnational audience. The Korean nationalists ideologically prioritized national security ahead of the national economic interests invoked by the regional fans in their letters. The non-consumers of Korean pop culture in various East Asian locations frame and exclude the audience/consumers of Korean TV dramas as “anti-nationalist cultural traitors.” In both instances, obviously, the self-interested national government is complicit with the nationalists. This politics of transnational media culture flows inevitably raises obstacles to any theoretical or substantive desire to conceptualize a harmonious “pan-East Asian identity” among East Asian TV drama audiences. Such an identity, if it emerged at all, will be unavoidably an identity of a minority, which is fragile and contested in any locality.

Pan-East Asian Identity?

The increasingly regional integration of television’s popular culture economy in East Asia is evident not only in TV dramas, but perhaps even more conspicuously in blockbuster movies with actors, actresses, and investors drawn from the different countries in the region. With an expanding regional transnational audience population across different entertainment media, the question of the potential emergence of a pan-East Asian identity unavoidably arises. Indeed interviews with TV drama audiences often elicit comments that point to an identification with on-screen characters and actions on the basis of an unspecified idea of “Asianness.” The potential for such a regional identity is facilitated by the following factors: first, the relatively similar physiognomy, which allows for regional audiences’ “recognition/identification” with on-screen characters; second, aspects of shared premodern histories and co-eval contemporary capitalist development and consumer culture; and, third, supposedly strong family themes that are often read as reflections of a Confucian emphasis on the family as the fundamental unit of society and filial piety.²⁷

However, analyses of TV drama audience reception have uncovered factors that present obstacles to the establishment of a stable “pan-East Asian” identity. First, the identification with any element that may be constitutive of an abstract Asianness is intermittently but persistently being disrupted by audiences’ recognition of their difference and distance from the foreign culture represented on the screen, which

makes identification unstable. Second, for the overwhelming majority of audiences, viewing is a leisure activity, residual to the necessary routines of everyday life. In the unending layering and interaction of a constant stream of cultural knowledge acquisition that goes into individual identity formation, the impact of such residual activities is likely to be rather weak, as there are no social institutions that enforce compliance and offer payoffs to viewing. Third, both the life of a TV drama and the length and depth of audience loyalty are equally ephemeral. While there may be identifiable East Asian TV drama audiences that belong to either loyal fan communities or to ephemeral collectives of casual viewers, membership in these groups is always changing; as one fan grows out of a group, a new one joins in quick succession, simply following the rise and fall of a constellation of dramas and related celebrities. The duration of active consumption, even fandom, is often too short and amorphous to produce a stable community, and therefore such phenomena may not be capable of generating lasting effects on individual identity formation. Finally, as suggested earlier, we have to recognize that, if a pan-East Asian identity were to emerge at all among audiences of East Asian TV dramas, it would be that of an “excluded” minority in all the local national contexts, because such an audience formation can run up against local nationalist sentiments that resist foreign media culture products. At this point, the possibility and process of a pan-East Asian identity formation still remains at the level of an empirical question. Meanwhile, at the individual level, the TV dramas that viewers love to watch have definitely been etched into these viewers’ memories, and may in some ways even change their personalities and their lives, as the case of the Japanese female audience for the Korean drama *Winter Sonata* illustrates. Today’s audiences would undoubtedly be able to recall at some future date, with fond nostalgia, the period when such consumption of popular culture was an important part of their everyday life routines.

For an Analytic Framework

To begin to elaborate a framework for the analysis of a regional transnational audience, it is necessary to examine closely the actual viewing practices of such an audience. If “recognition” is indeed central to viewing pleasure (Ang, 1985, p. 20), then, it is necessary to examine how recognition is facilitated across linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. For a transnational audience, the process of recognition/identification with on-screen characters and narratives is not a straightforward process of “seeing oneself” represented on screen. It is a process that is always mediated by an awareness of the differences between the culture in which the subject audience is embedded and the “foreign” culture of the production location that is portrayed on screen. The “foreign” can simultaneously raise obstacles to easy recognition/identification and constitute an intrinsic part of the viewing pleasure. This mediation is further complicated by the fact that viewing is usually

facilitated, or mediated, by subtitling or dubbing – or both. Again, a double character is evinced. While subtitling and dubbing, particularly the latter, are aimed at suppressing, indeed erasing, the foreign in order to “domesticate” the content, they simultaneously remind the audience of, and in this sense they “preserve,” the foreign. Analysis needs to pay attention to the simultaneity of identification and difference and to the mediation of subtitling/dubbing in transnational audience viewing practices.

Second, it is necessary to differentiate the audience “mass” into conceptual/substantive categories of audience(s), with different viewing and related audience practices. The audiences of TV dramas can be categorized according to their commitment of time and activities, financial expenses, and “loyalty” to the genre in general – in the form of watching every drama possible; to a particular drama series; or, finally, to a specific celebrity stars/idols.²⁸ Three categories of audience can be identified: (1) the “leisure” audience, that is, one that does nothing more than watches TV for casual entertainment; (2) “fans” who go beyond merely viewing to participate in other activities of fandom, including joining fan clubs, going to fan parties, collecting memorabilia, and chasing after visiting drama actors in locations that range from airports to shopping centers; and (3) activist transnational fans who, in addition to doing all the conventional fan activities, will spare nothing to devote their time and energy to participating in internationally organized activities that support their television stars or idols. The emergence and consolidation of this last category of audiences has been facilitated by the development of new computer-based communication technologies that facilitate transnational communication, particularly the Internet. These fan categories obviously overlap. In terms of viewing habits, there is a descending order of engagement. A transnational activist fan is clearly also a fan and a leisure audience member, all rolled into one; while fans may not become activists in international organized fan activities, they are also clearly members of a leisure audience; finally, a leisure audience does not get involved in any serious fan activities. In terms of size of audience, the rank ordering is reversed: leisure audiences are demographically the largest, followed by fans, and then by transnational activist fans. Corresponding to the three audience categories, there are different notions of belonging to a “community” of viewers.

Third, beyond the actual television screen and audience viewing practices, there is the politics that comes with the “penetration” of foreign media cultural products into local cultural space. Within these frames, analyses tend to be stuck at the level of ideological debates around the global dominance of the US media industry and the local resistance this generates. The analysis of transnational audiences needs to examine how perceptions of nationalism and cultural imperialism play out in the attitudes and behaviors of audience members and non-audience members of imported media products. The hostility of some non-audience members toward the consumption of foreign TV programs, as in the case of Korean or Japanese dramas in Taiwan or China, shows that transnational television can cause rifts and divisions among the citizens of a particular nation.

The above elements are by no means the only factors that are necessary in order to create a framework for the analysis of transnational audiences – a prevalent phenomenon in the age of media globalization. Indeed, when we draw on empirical analyses of the regional East Asian television industry, we may find that these elements offer material for substantive conceptual considerations, but we still need modifications, elaborations, and additions for a richer analytic framework that can do full justice to the phenomenon.

Conclusion

Airwaves respect no artificial national boundaries, and television as a medium is intrinsically transnational. However, television content and its audience are respectively embedded in the cultures of the location of production and of the location of consumption. Content that flows across national boundaries also traverses cultural boundaries, thus creating a transnational audience. One such formation in the past two decades has been the emergence and integration of the East Asian television industry. Drawing on empirical studies of the regional audience of East Asian television, this chapter has attempted to map out a preliminary framework for levels of analysis of audience reception and audience formation processes, from accounting for individuals to accounting for communities of the nation and, finally, of the region. At each level, the reception process and the audience formation process are tied to empirical specificities pertaining to the difference between the location of production and the location of consumption, which opens up discursive spaces for a comparison with transnational audience formation elsewhere in the globalized media world.

NOTES

- 1 This transnational audience is different from diasporic individuals who watch from their present residential location programs coming from the home country. The case of the latter has been discussed conceptually by Appadurai (1996) and analyzed empirically by Robins and Aksoy (2006).
- 2 *Huaren* is used as a relatively “neutral” term for specifying Chinese ethnicity, because the English word “Chinese” does not distinguish between national and ethnic identities; a Chinese from the People’s Republic of China is Chinese with respect to both national and his ethnic identity; a Singaporean Chinese is *Huaren* by ethnicity, Singaporean by nationality.
- 3 Chua (2001) has discursively conceptualized this regional *Huaren* pop culture network as “pop culture China.”
- 4 There was an earlier history of popular Japanese martial arts movies, such as the *Blind Swordsman* series, the among *Huaren* audience. These movies were influential in the development of a martial arts genre in Hong Kong (see Yau, 2005).

- 5 The ban was lifted in October 1998, with the Joint Declaration of the New Twenty-First-Century Korea–Japan Partnership.
- 6 “U” sounds similar to the Chinese word 尤., meaning “excellent.”
- 7 To the extent that pop culture is the culture of the masses, it is a constitutive part of the larger popular culture. The latter includes local cultural practices of long standing – what we call “traditions,” religion, and other folk practices that, according to Stuart Hall (1981), may have greater potential for political and social change.
- 8 The groundbreaking study here is Ien Ang, 1985 (*Watching Dallas*).
- 9 TV programs are often broadcast in “dual sound,” so that the audience can choose between dubbed local language and the original language with local-language subtitles.
- 10 In addition to lip-synchrony, dubbing must also pay attention to “kinetic synchrony” – synchrony with bodily movements on screen – and to “isochrony” – synchrony in the timing of characters’ utterances on screen (Varela, 2004, p. 41).
- 11 Before dubbing can take place, a translation of the given script has to be undertaken; this is followed by “synchronization of the translated dialogue so that it matches the actors’ mouth movements and the other images as closely as possible” (Martinez, 2004, p. 4).
- 12 In the East Asian instance, the question of audience’s preference for the “cultural proximate” in foreign products is clearly multilayered, including physiognomic, historical, and civilizational layers. For a detailed discussion of these layers, see Iwabuchi (2002a).
- 13 Limitations of space do not permit a more detailed elaboration of this multilayered cultural proximity; see Iwabuchi (2002a).
- 14 To be consistent with actual practice during the sixteenth century, all written documents presented on the TV screen, from reports at the imperial court to personal letters, are written in Chinese characters, not in Korean alphabet.
- 15 Significantly, many in Singapore prefer the Cantonese to the Mandarin version, supposedly because of the “greater authenticity” effect of colloquial expressions, by comparison with the relative “stiffness” of the Mandarin version. This is more likely an expression of resistance to the official imposition of Mandarin as the only language of broadcast media.
- 16 The Korean tourism industry consistently uses Korean pop stars in all its advertisements.
- 17 Since the mid-2010s, politicians and policymakers in Korea, Japan, and China have been pushing the idea of popular culture exports as an instrument in soft power competition in the region; see Li (2008), Otmazgin (2008), and Lee (2009).
- 18 Iwabuchi invokes Dyer’s (1992) explanation of such audience sentiments: entertainment provides consumers with the possibility of experiencing “what utopia would feel like.”
- 19 Lee borrows the idea of the “mega-text” from Su, 1999.
- 20 That the audience is an empirical collectivity needs to be emphasized against the idea of the audience as what Ien Ang (1991, pp. 33–37) calls the “taxonomic collective,” used in TV industry.
- 21 For a representative and comprehensive review of fandom, see Lewis, 1992.
- 22 Such self-organized community differs in very significant ways from the fan clubs organized by media agencies with a view to consolidating the popularity of its stable of actors.
- 23 I would like to flag here the immense potential, as yet unrealized, that the concept of immaterial power holds for the analysis of audience reception theory.

- 24 The central argument of the “cultural imperialism” thesis has become complicated; it has moved beyond the simplistic assumption of a direct cultural impact of the foreign on the local, to include the export of formats from the US and the incorporation of the US model and of the path of television industry development (see Shi, 2008, pp. 1202–1203).
- 25 Cheating of the draft, by children of the rich and powerful, always generates public criticisms and imposes heavy costs on the future of the perpetrators when they are exposed.
- 26 For more details on this case, see Eva Tsai (2007).
- 27 In actual fact, the family as an institution is portrayed very differently in TV dramas from the different regional countries (see Kang & Soo, 2009).
- 28 “Idol” is a common term of East Asian fandom, which designates a “personalized” relationship between the fans and the favored actor. It signifies someone to “worship” and to “emulate.”

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Language and Indian Film Audiences

From Political Economy to Ethnography

Sunitha Chitrapu

ABSTRACT

This chapter makes a case for political economy and audience studies to complement each other, using Indian film audiences as an illustration. From a historical point of view, linguistic diversity has played an important role in state formation and politics on the one hand, and in the sphere of media and culture, including Indian film production, on the other. The reception literature on Indian film audiences reveals that films in the local languages hold great attraction for speakers of these languages; however, expensive and slick productions in languages other than the mother tongue do sometimes manage to capture audiences as well. Further, the language of a film determines its territorial site of viewing and therefore the extent of revenues that can be earned by that film; additionally, class acts as another mediator of film consumption. Film audiences in states with larger linguistic populations have access to a different set of films from the one accessible to film audiences in states with smaller linguistic populations. Fleshing out these connections, the present chapter raises questions that are of interest to audience research. If political economy directs audience studies toward considering the influence of regulations, policies, and the economics of production and distribution on film viewers' taste cultures, the messy realities and contradictions uncovered in audience ethnography can challenge political economy to incorporate social and cultural theories in order to modify its tendencies toward economic determinism.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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The cultural imperialism perspective considers the one-way trade in films and television programs, from West to East, to be rooted in imperialist ambitions to control former colonies, and it fears that this flow would be harmful to native cultures in non-Western nations (Beltran, 1978; Guback, 1969; Mattelart, 1973; Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974; Schiller, 1969). Certainly, early analyses of international communication found a pattern of “one-way traffic” in television programming, from developed countries in the West like the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany to developing countries in Africa and Asia (Varis, 1974). However, later studies showed an increase in “regional exchanges,” particularly in Latin America and in the Arab countries, where media content from adjacent countries began to be traded, and in particular, films from India, Hong Kong, and Taiwan were found to be popular in other parts of Asia (Varis, 1984).

Indian film exports to countries in Africa, Europe, and the former Soviet Union have been further documented by a number of scholars (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Bradeanu & Thomas, 2006; Eleftheriotis, 2006; Iordanova, 2006; Larkin, 1997; Meyer, 1999; Muhammad, 1992; Rajagopalan, 2006; Van der Steene, 2009; Vasudevan, 1995). Media economics researchers studying the international trade in media products observe that, in general, countries that have large and wealthy domestic markets are able to create media products (such as films) that are popular when exported because, while audiences prefer cultural proximity in media content, there is also a preference for well-produced – in other words, more expensive – content (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988; Waterman, 1988; Wildman & Siwek, 1988). A large domestic market is therefore an asset to a film industry that has international aspirations.

In a similar vein, Thomas Guback’s (1969) question – “If all industries are trying to export films, what occurs within markets?” (p. 14) – highlights the importance of investigating domestic markets for films. Thus, when scholars want to examine the international presence of Indian films, they would need to begin with an exploration of the domestic Indian film market’s social and economic contours. While it is well known that more films are produced each year in India than in any other country of the world, what do we know about the audiences that support such a high film output? In other words, what do we know about the demand for films in India’s pluralistic social and economic environment? There is still much to be discovered, learned, and understood about film audiences in India. With such a large and diverse population and a prolific film industry, India presents many rich opportunities to study film audiences.

One of the most prominent features of the Indian film market is the sheer diversity of its audiences. This diversity is not only in economic status, but also in culture and language. A staggering 22 languages are recognized as official languages in Schedule VIII by the Indian Constitution, while the total number of languages and dialects used by Indians runs into the hundreds. In economic terms, linguistic concerns are key components of a media market, because language determines access to, and therefore demand for, a media product (Wildman & Siwek, 1988).

India belongs to a tiny minority of countries (including Canada, Belgium, and Kenya) where films are produced in more than one language. Indian films have been produced in over 60 different languages ever since the beginning of sound film in 1931. When we consider this principal feature, we realize that, when it comes to media products such as films, India is not a monolithic national film market but a mosaic of different language markets that are dependent on the size and prosperity of the speakers of each language. One can, then, immediately make sense of the fact that the language spoken by the largest number of speakers – Hindi – is also the language in which the largest number of films have been made (starting from 1931, when language assumed importance in films as a result of the advent of sound), that Hindi films have higher budgets than films in most Indian languages, and that they are also the most popular exports. While the number of Hindi speakers is in the region of 400 million (as reported by the Indian census in 2001) – and this is certainly a large number compared to that of speakers of other languages – in terms of wealth, and hence of the share of disposable income that can be spent on film viewing, this Hindi-speaking audience is by no means in the same league as the slightly smaller but comparatively wealthier American audience for films produced in Hollywood. Thus it becomes apparent that Hindi films might do well in international markets that are smaller and less wealthy, such as in Africa or in Eastern Europe, but may not be as popular in larger, wealthier markets. Researchers such as Larkin (1997) have also observed that cultural proximity may work in favor of Indian films in some smaller markets in other non-Western contexts, as is the case in Nigeria. Language thus plays a crucial role in film production through its effect on market size, and therefore on film production budget and output; and, as we shall see in a later section, it plays a crucial role in film consumption as well.

While class and gender play an important role in shaping the reception of Indian films among diverse audiences, this chapter focuses primarily on the linguistic dimensions of audience demand for Indian films. Given the complex nature of Indian cultural production and consumption, a holistic, critical framework such as that advocated by the political economy approach allows us to take a “big picture” view of Indian film viewing. Through the breadth of analysis offered by this approach, a more nuanced understanding of findings from ethnographic studies of audiences becomes possible. In other words, political economy helps us understand “why,” while ethnography provides indispensable answers as to “how.” Combining the two approaches allows us to proceed from “how” to “why,” and our understanding gains both depth and breadth.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part introduces the reader to linguistic diversity in India, looked at from a historical point of view, from colonial times till the present day. The second part foregrounds the economic effects of linguistic diversity on Indian film production in the context of political economy. The third part examines the reception literature on Indian film audiences. The concluding part presents some implications of using the political economy perspective while doing ethnographic studies of Indian film audiences.

Linguistic Diversity in India

Language use in India is deeply tied to a person's distinct ethnic, regional, caste, and family background, and hence language and dialect preferences are slow to change. A study of the history of language policies in India reveals that neither Persian, which was introduced by the Islamic rulers as the language of the administration, law, and commerce, nor English, which was introduced by the British to aid in colonial rule, managed to replace the use of existing languages (Schiffman, 1996).

The language policy of the British colonial administration highlights the enduring significance of Indian languages. When India came under the rule of the East India Company, Persian and Hindustani continued to be used in the provinces as exclusive languages of the administration until the 1830s, when the Company's Court of Directors observed that knowledge of other Indian vernacular languages was also desirable. Going beyond Persian and Hindustani, lesser known Indian languages were given an official role from 1837 onwards, when a more diverse palette of regional languages started to be used by the colonial administration in the provinces. The colonial administration's patronage of these vernacular languages was motivated by concerns of efficiency and legitimacy and by utilitarian ideals of justice (Mir, 2006). Mir observes that "the records acknowledge that local linguistic practices were complex, and that vernacular languages were critical to effective rule" (p. 399).

The East India Company further acknowledged the importance of regional languages to colonial rule through its emphasis on language training for Company officials. In the south of India, in Madras (present-day Chennai), the Company set up a vernacular-language training centre in Fort St George and arranged for monetary incentives to officials in training for completing language training in Persian and Hindustani – but *only* if they had already acquired the necessary level of proficiency in a "native dialect" (Mir, 2006).

Further evidence of the priority accorded to regional languages in India is seen in the actions of the church. The church took note of the value of allocating resources toward learning and teaching the local languages to support its evangelical activities. In the nineteenth century missionaries wrote dictionaries, grammars, and guidebooks in various Indian languages (Schiffman, 1996). They also translated the Bible into Indian languages and mapped the regions of India by the languages spoken; in 1822 the Baptist Missionary Society released a language map of 47 Indian languages (Mir, 2006). In time, however, the English language created professional opportunities for Indians that led to its widespread adoption in business and government affairs; but Indian languages continued to be important (Schiffman, 1996). The complex balance between English and various Indian languages thus has a historical precedent dating back to colonial times in India.

During the struggle for freedom Gandhi recommended the use of Hindustani in place of English; the Congress Party favored the use of Hindi, which was resisted in non-Hindi speaking parts of the country (ibid.). After India's independence from

colonial rule in 1947, linguistic concerns played an important role in Indian politics. Within the first decade of independence, state boundaries were redrawn on a linguistic basis. While Hindi and English were constitutionally mandated as “national languages,” non-Hindi states resisted the “imposition” of Hindi, and this situation eventually led to a compromise known as the “three-language formula,” whereby school education in non-Hindi areas would include English, Hindi, and the local language, while in Hindi areas students would learn English, Hindi, and another Indian language (*ibid.*).

In time, however, Hindi language teaching took precedence in Hindi areas, whereas non-Hindi areas paid greater attention to English and the local language (*ibid.*). As Laitin (1989) points out, “[c]itizens develop complex language repertoires in order to interact with servants, family, merchants, colleagues and officials” (p. 415). A resident of a state like Bihar, where Hindi is the state language, needs to know only two languages, while the speaker of a minority language in a state where his mother tongue is not the state language will have to learn four languages: his mother tongue, the state language, English, and Hindi (Laitin, 1989).

Census statistics reveals that 24.79% of Indians are bilingual and 8.51% are trilingual (Census of India, 2001). Laitin’s (1989) position – the view that speakers of minority language groups will have to learn more languages – is borne out by census figures. For instance, almost 75% of those whose mother tongues have populations of approximately over 1 million speakers, such as Konkani and Sindhi, tend to be bilingual and between 35% and 50% of these speakers are trilingual (Raghuraman, 2010). As the size of the population speaking a certain language grows – as in the case of Punjabi, which is spoken by over 25 million people – bilingualism falls to 50%, and in the largest language groups it falls further – to 20% in Tamils and Bengalis, and to 12.5% in the largest language group, that of Hindi speakers (*ibid.*).

Thus we find that, from colonial times, regional languages have remained significant in India. The linguistic reorganization of states underlines the importance of regional languages, despite the decision to use English and Hindi as national languages after independence. The following section analyses the effect of this linguistic diversity on film production in India.

Political Economy and Linguistic Diversity in the Indian Film Industry

The study of economic structures, relations of production, and political systems that protect particular economic structures is the main concern of the political economy research approach to media (Meehan, Mosco, & Wasko, 1993). The roots of political economy can be traced back to Adam Smith and David Ricardo in the eighteenth century, when the relations between society and the decisions on economic resource allocation began to be studied; this study was followed by writings of Marx and

Engels, which outlined a normative/ideal economic model (“what ought to be”) that emerged from a critique of the capitalist mode of allocating resources (Wasko, 2003). The political economy approach emphasizes social change and history, social totality, moral philosophy, and praxis as its four central characteristics (Meehan et al., 1993; Mosco, 1996; Wasko, 2003); thus political economy takes a critical rather than a “celebratory” approach and uses methods from economics, sociology, and political science (Wasko, 2003).

The role of historical analysis is emphasized because it allows us to examine social change (*ibid.*). Underlining the importance of institutional analyses in the political economy approach, Garnham (1995) asks: “How is it possible to understand soap operas as cultural practices without studying the broadcasting institutions that produce and distribute them, and in part create the audience for them?” (p. 71). An understanding of the economic context is key to political economic analysis. Emphasizing an understanding of the capitalist context of media production and consumption, Meehan (2000) observes: “As human beings living in social collectivities, we do make culture – but in the context and within the limitations of capitalism” (p. 90). This is echoed by Garnham’s (1987) definition of cultural production “as the production and circulation of symbolic meaning, as a material process of production and exchange, part of, and in significant ways determined by, the wider economic processes of society with which it shares many common features” (p. 25).

In the history of Indian film production, the foreign exchange shortages experienced by the newly independent Indian nation in the 1950s led to a limit being set on the number of American films that could be imported into the country, because revenues earned by American film studios in India could not be repatriated to their home country (Pendakur, 1985). These limits continued until they were lifted in the mid-1990s, in a newly liberalized India. Indian film production thus occurred in the context of this limitation on competing imports. Second, unlike in the US, where film production and distribution are controlled by a small group of companies, a large number of companies of various sizes participate in Indian film production and distribution (Pendakur, 1990). Third, Indian films are subject to government censorship, a carry-over from colonial times, and this restricts the types of subjects that are addressed and the way in which they are addressed in Indian films (Pendakur, 1992). Fourth, Indian films have traditionally earned a greater share of their revenues from the domestic market than from exports (Pendakur & Subramanyam, 1996). Fifth, from the arrival of the video in the 1980s, piracy has been prevalent in the Indian film market (*ibid.*). All these factors play a role in shaping Indian film production.

Political economy scholars have examined the pressures that the unique economic properties of media products exert on media producers, who are constantly struggling to maximize their audiences in a chaotic and unruly media environment. These properties include relatively negligible reproduction costs compared to the cost of creating the media product in the first place (the first-copy cost), non-rivalrous consumption (a person’s use of a movie does not interfere with another person’s use of the same movie), and non-exclusive consumption (which involves the difficulty of

excluding those who have not paid to use the media product) (Garnham, 1995). For instance, even those members of the community who do not support their public radio station can still listen to it. These economic properties of media products lead media producers to maximize their audiences by pursuing monopolistic practices of media concentration or internationalization and cross-media ownership (*ibid.*). Writing about the economic imperatives that shape media production, Meehan (2007) thus notes that, “[w]ith an understanding of the rules and relationships governing cultural manufacture, we are better positioned to appreciate how the popular becomes popular” (p. 161).

Larkin (1997) highlights the importance of examining the political economy of the Indian film industry on the grounds that it clarifies “the relation between the economic and symbolic reasons for its popularity” (p. 411). We will see in a later section how economics plays a fundamental role in the ways in which films are made in Indian languages and in the fact that films made in some Indian languages enjoy advantages over others – in other words, it explains how popular Indian films become popular.

India is unique in that it is one in a handful of countries in the world where films are produced in a multitude of languages. Almost all other film producing countries make films in one national language. Of course Belgium, Canada, and Kenya are the notable exceptions. Belgian films are produced in Flemish and French (Mosley, 2001). Canada produces films in English, French, and some aboriginal languages. Even a linguistically diverse country like Indonesia only produces films in the national language (Heider, 1991). In contrast, as mentioned already, Indian films have been produced in over 60 different languages (not merely dialects) since 1931. In 2005 official records showed that a total of 1,041 Indian films were produced in 25 different languages.

The coming of sound was the technological event that triggered film production in Indian languages. The first sound film made in India was *Alam Ara* in 1931. Indian films began to be produced in the many languages spoken on the subcontinent (Thoraval, 2000). Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (1980) observe how this “discord of tongues” fragmented the large Indian film market into smaller markets, differentiated by language.

India thus resembles a federation of several film markets like the European Union rather than a national film market. In other words, it is a regional mosaic rather than a monolithic national film market. An examination of the economics of film production in India reveals that, statistically, production in Indian languages is significantly related to the size and wealth of the linguistic population: larger and wealthier linguistic populations support greater film production (Chitrapu, 2008). More films have been produced in Hindi (9,937) during the 75-year period from 1931 to 2005 than in any other Indian language, and production in the Tamil (6,362), Telugu (6,183), Malayalam (3,528), Kannada (2,798), and Marathi (2,628) languages follows – in exactly this order.¹

Further, film production in languages spoken by larger linguistic groups started earlier. The first sound film was made in Hindi in 1931. Official records show that

film production in Bengali and Tamil also started in that same year. Production in Telugu, Gujarati, and Marathi began the following year, in 1932. Other languages soon followed them in the industry: Kannada in 1934, Punjabi in 1935, Assamese in 1935, Oriya in 1936, and Malayalam in 1938. The languages with the largest film production all got their start within the first decade of the arrival of sound.² This order closely follows that of the percentage of speakers of these language during that influential decade. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (1980) report that the linguistic populations at that time were as follows: 140 million Hindi speakers, followed by the Bengali (53 million), Telugu (28 million), Marathi (21 million), Tamil (20 million +), Punjabi (15 million), Gujarati and Kannada (11 million each), Malayalam (9 million), Assamese and Oriya (2 million each), and Kashmiri (1 million) (Chatterji, 1945, cited in Barnouw & Krishnaswamy, 1980, p. 59).

The linguistic reorganization of states in the first decade of independence helped different sections of the Indian film industry to consolidate their audiences geographically. Moreover, the newly constituted states supported and funded cultural production in the state language. In some states, film production in the state language was supported by the state government through subsidies, low-interest loans, the development of film production infrastructure such as production and post-production facilities, favorable rates of taxation compared to those available for films in other languages, and also film awards (Pendakur, 1990). According to historian Ramchandra Guha,

The movements for linguistic states revealed an extraordinary depth of popular feeling. For Kannadigas and Andhras, for Oriyas and Maharashtrians, language proved a more powerful marker of identity than caste or religion. This was manifest in their struggles and in their behavior when the struggle was won. One sign of this was official patronage of the arts. Thus great effort, and cash, went into funding books, plays and *films* written or performed in the official language of the state. (Guha, 2007, p. 207, italics mine)

Since trying to understand the effects of linguistic diversity on the international trade in Indian-language films, I found four patterns related to the size of linguistic film markets in India (Chitrapu, 2008). As the size of the linguistic market increased, (1) film production budgets increased; (2) film exports increased; (3) audiences were exposed to a greater variety and number of films, both originally produced in the local language and dubbed; and (4) audiences were exposed to a greater variety of genre elements in films.

First, larger linguistic markets generally support films with bigger production budgets. Hindi film budgets are generally the largest in the country, which mirrors the fact that Hindi/Urdu speakers form the largest language group, comprising almost 40% of the Indian population. The next largest and wealthiest Indian-language film markets are found in the four southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala, which feature among the top 10 Indian states in terms of their gross state domestic product.³ In general, filmgoing is positively related

to income: well-off audiences see more movies and more types of movies than their less well-off compatriots (Barnett & Allen, 2000). This is true in the four southern states, which together supported approximately 59% percent of Indian cinema theaters in 2003 (Distribution of Theaters, 2004, p. 19). These markets produced large numbers of films and supported high production budgets.

Second, larger linguistic markets show greater numbers of film exports. For instance, more Hindi films than films produced in other Indian languages are exported and find a place on the popularity charts in other countries such as the USA, UK, and Australia.⁴

Third, film audiences in larger linguistic markets were exposed to more films produced in their own language, and also had access to more imported films dubbed into local languages than audiences in smaller linguistic markets. In the nine-year period from 1996 to 2004, 95% of films that were dubbed were dubbed into Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi. However, while these three linguistic markets were more open to dubbed films in terms of absolute numbers, in relative terms these films only formed a small proportion compared to the films actually produced in these languages.

Fourth, films made in larger linguistic markets carried a greater variety of genre elements. Genre elements reported by the popular website www.imdb.com for 679 films produced in the top six languages of film production in India – Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali, and Marathi – in the three-year period from 2003 to 2005 were examined. Only the Hindi film industry was able to support films that contained elements of all 17 genres reported by the website, including such expensive genres as animation, sci-fi, and war.⁵ In the fifth and sixth largest language-related industries – Bengali and Marathi – minimal to no elements of an expensive genre like action were found, while a comparatively inexpensive genre such as drama was predominant by comparison to the situation in the other four languages.

These economic differences sometimes fuel struggles for the control of exhibition venues. The travails of the Kannada-language film industry show that some audiences in Karnataka (which has many speakers of other languages apart from the local Kannada) were favorable to watching films in other languages than Kannada. The Kannada-language film industry attempted to create a preferential system of exhibition, whereby films produced in other languages would have reduced access to theaters, to the benefit of Kannada films. This led to strikes on the part of exhibitors, who – naturally – were more interested in full houses than in preserving the language or ethnic chauvinism of the state in which they were showing a film (Sharma, 2004). The resulting controversy received wide attention in the press.

Language is thus a powerful economic force that shapes the structure of Indian film production, and linguistic population size plays a role in deciding the moment when a language film industry came into being, the size of film production, the size of production budgets, the size of film exports, and the variety of genre elements in films made in a particular language. The next section briefly outlines the political economy perspective before proceeding to apply it to the study of Indian film audiences.

Research on Indian Film Audiences

Scholars engaged in audience studies have advocated the benefits of foregrounding such investigations against the context of audiences' media use. Pendakur (1993) points to the contributions made by Clifford Geertz, Pierre Bourdieu, and Marshall Sahlins to the "effort on the part of cultural anthropologists to synthesize the concerns of political economy with a more sophisticated ethnographic practice on interpretive lines" (p. 86).

Even if a political economy perspective is not explicitly advocated, the stress on historical and social context reveals this viewpoint. For instance, Parameswaran (2004) proposes that "audience studies must stress the relational web of porous social formations within which the media constitute viewers' identities" (p. 316) and the importance of "deep contextualization of audience activity" (see also Hall, 1980; Morley, 1986; Gibson, 2000, cited in Parameswaran, 2004, p. 318). Ang (1996) advances "radically historicized and socially contextualized analyses of the processes that shape readers' identities" (cited in Parameswaran, 2004, p. 318). Understanding the context of media use helps to take a more critical stance and guard against ethnographic studies that celebrate active and resistant audience members, studies that may ironically end up aligning their goals with existing dominant and hegemonic structures such as the corporate media industry (Ang, 1996). Meers (2001) advocates the use of "critical ethnography" to offer a "critical counterweight to the industry" (p. 140) in film audience studies, emphasizing the social and political context of media consumption that Moore (1996) favors. In Europe, such an approach plays an important role, especially given the strategic use of research in the creation of public policy with regard to films (Meers, 2001).

Emphasizing the historical approach to film audience reception studies, Allen (1990) observes that four components need to be considered: (1) exhibition, that is, "the institutional and economic dimensions of exhibition" (p. 349); (2) audience demographics and social meanings of filmgoing in the tradition of Radway (1985) and Ang (1996); (3) performance, that is, "the immediate social, sensory, performative context of reception" (Allen, 1990, p. 352); and (4) activation, that is, "how particular audience groups make or do not make sense, [*sic*] relevance, and pleasure out of particular moments of reception" (pp. 353–354). Allen cautions that assembling the data related to activation becomes worthwhile only when we pay attention to "what these data might suggest about the underlying structures of reception, their interaction, variability, modification over time or resistance to change" (*ibid.*), which comes very close to the political economy perspective's core interest of social change, even if it is not explicitly stated. He illustrates this with the example of interviews with black filmgoers of the 1920s and 1930s that reveal the key role played by cinema theaters in the community's cultural life.

Since audiences' reception of particular media is deeply interconnected with their economic and social contexts and the range of media texts they consume, the

theories that inform audience research should account for these factors (Livingstone, 1998). The importance of combining a big picture perspective with a closer view is supported by Alasuutari, who notes that,

Compared with anthropologists, who often have a cultural distance that enables them to see the forest for the trees, we have the disadvantage of being insiders. That is why we have to work hard, develop theoretical perspectives and methods that will better enable us to take distance, to see the bigger picture and ourselves in it too. (Alasuutari, 1999, p. 332)

The synergy between the political economy perspective and audience ethnography arises from the complementary nature of the observer's position in the two approaches; in other words, while the political economy approach examines the context within which culture is produced and consumed, ethnographic researchers take a participant observer position that is "emic," in other words that of the culture being studied, and not that of an outsider (Meehan, 2000). Such differences in positions make it evident that, when taken together, the two approaches lead us to a fuller understanding of the phenomenon.

Meehan (2000) illustrates the new understanding that a political economy approach can bring to audience ethnography, and she does so by using the example of Star Trek fans. She notes that fans are generally portrayed negatively both in news media and in entertainment media. They are presented as "fools" in the former and as "sexually unattractive fools" in the latter. She also notes that ethnographic studies of fandom reveal that these fans "feel scorned" by the treatment meted out to them by the copyright owners. Meehan uses the political economy approach to contextualize Star Trek fandom within the appropriation of leisure time by oligopolistic American media corporations operating within a capitalist system.

While fans represent a steady revenue stream for the corporation issuing the media product, additional revenue growth for the corporation comes not from fans, but from "mundanes" – that is, non-fans. Fans continue to be loyal consumers no matter what the corporation's behavior is toward them. However, through their various activities, fans threaten the accepted notion that media are "mere" entertainment and therefore must be contained, and this leads to the unflattering portrayal and the ridicule of fans in news and entertainment media. Thus, while the emic position of the ethnographer reveals the fans' unhappiness with the treatment they receive at the hands of corporations, the analytical approach used in political economy helps us theorize *why* they receive such treatment.

In India, film consumption is observed to take place amidst low-quality transport and energy infrastructure, and the film industry used to be subject to heavy taxation at the time of exhibition (Pendakur, 1990). The taxation on exhibition has led to some interesting effects, not observed elsewhere. In a startling contrast to Meehan's (2000) findings on the undermining of Star Trek fans in the American media, Srinivas (1996) observes in his study of the fans of Chiranjeevi, the Telugu filmstar, that fan associa-

tions were funded and cultivated by studios in Andhra Pradesh, India. He argues that, in an attempt to minimize distributor losses in the face of taxation that was independent of the number of tickets sold, distributors needed theaters to fill to more than 50%. Having dedicated fans meant having crowds on the opening day as well as repeat viewers. Fans in India thus serve an important economic function and are courted by the film industry.

Linguistic considerations influence not only how audiences consume media, but also how they choose to talk about and justify their audience consumption. Although this chapter is concerned with film audiences, a ready illustration of the importance of language for Indian media consumers is found in Parameswaran's (1999) ethnography of middle-class women's English-language romance reading in Hyderabad. Parameswaran contextualizes the importance of English-language skills in postcolonial India by delving into the historical role of English in India, where it has become the language of the power and business elites. She found that Indian romance readers had an instrumental view of English-language romance novels as tools that would improve their language skills, and therefore they expressed a preference for reading novels over watching television in regional Indian languages.

Preliminary research on film audiences shows that linguistic considerations also affect the economic structure of Indian film production in three main ways. First, films in the local language hold great attraction for particular sections of the local viewing audience. Srinivas' ethnographic investigation of film audiences in Bangalore found that, sometimes, lower-income and lower- to middle-income viewers were willing to pay more for the more expensive seats in the cinema theaters to watch regional language movies. As she observes, "[f]or such movies, *even* lower-income viewers are prepared to pay balcony rates and *even* 'black market' rates" (Srinivas, 2002, p. 163, *italics mine*).

In recent years there has been a spate of films in a regional dialect – Bhojpurī – despite Hindi being the main language spoken in northern states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The rise of Bhojpurī cinema in the Hindi heartland of eastern Uttar Pradesh and of Bihar can be traced, among other factors, to changing language equations in those regions (Tripathy, 2007). These changes occurred because of migration and the political consolidation of caste groups, which led to the production of cassettes and compact discs (CDs) of folk music that were popular with migrants seeking to escape the economic stagnation in these regions; and inexpensive films soon followed music albums (*ibid.*). In an observation that serves to underline the emotional connection that language creates between the audiences and media texts, Tripathy notes that, "[i]n a very significant sense, while Hindi has found a secure place in the lives of the masses in urban and rural India, it still lacks the intimacy of dreams that the vernaculars can provide" (p. 155).

The dubbing of films is practiced to a small extent in a few of the larger linguistic markets. When imported films are dubbed into Indian languages, culturally dissimilar materials are made culturally closer through what S. V. Srinivas (2003) calls "adding nativity." In his study of the circulation of Telugu-dubbed Hong Kong action

films in Andhra Pradesh, he observes that, through the process of language dubbing, “[t]he characters not only spoke *in* Telugu but they also spoke *like* characters in Telugu films; indeed, Hong Kong films were brought closer to Telugu films than ever before” (p. 55).

However, the importance of this cultural connection is mediated by the scale of the media production. Economic models of the international trade in film and television hold that, while audiences prefer media products that are closer to their own culture, they also prefer media products with larger production investments (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988; Waterman, 1988; Wildman & Siwek, 1988). This leads us to a second observation concerning the relationship between language and the economic structure of Indian film production. Expensive productions in languages other than the viewers’ mother tongue sometimes attract audiences. Sharma (2004) reports how audiences who lived near the Andhra Pradesh border but within the state of Karnataka, which had imposed a moratorium on the exhibition of films that were not in the Kannada language, actually travelled across the border into Andhra Pradesh to watch the Telugu films of their choice.

Third, the language of the film determines the site of viewing and therefore the extent of revenues that can be earned by that film. Gita Viswanath (2007), in an ethnographic investigation of film viewing practices in Bangalore, finds that young, mostly male filmgoers watch English-language films in the exclusive space of the “multiplex cinema generally housed in large, brightly lit and colorfully decorated malls,” where “the appearance of a Brad Pitt on a multiplex screen is received in a passive, suave and sophisticated manner” (p. 3290). While English films may be exhibited in multiplex cinemas, where the tickets are more expensive than in single-screen cinemas, they cater to much smaller audiences. Hollywood films in general have been observed to capture only 5–7% of the Indian market in terms of revenues, according to industry estimates (FICCI, 2007).

However, these filmgoers also report that they prefer to go to older single-screen theaters when they want to watch a film in a regional language, because “the clientele is more representative of the Indian demographics than in the multiplexes” (p. 3290) – in other words, the lower classes are also represented. Viswanath theorizes that these young people are able to “make unproblematic shifts in identities” when they switch between the two very different sites of film viewing. The reason for the move into the less exclusive space is this:

They claimed that watching the reaction of the stalls spectators from the balcony was part of their own enjoyment of the film experience. The space of the single screen theatre is more familiar, less intimidating and more tolerant of spontaneous behaviour. The viewing experience is more participatory, boisterous and intense. The appearance on screen of their favourite stars like Raj Kumar, Chiranjeevi or Upendra would be cause not merely for hooting, whistling, etc, but at times extreme adulatory forms of fan behaviour such as throwing coins on the screen or performing an “aarti” when the hero appears. (Viswanath, 2007, p. 3290)

Viswanath contextualizes Indian film viewing in multiplexes as arising from two related historical trends, the first of which is the change in the structure of film exhibition stemming from the decline of Indian theatrical audiences in the 1980s due to the rise of television. This phenomenon led to a reduction in the numbers of single-screen cinemas and to the birth of multiplexes. Further, the growth in the Indian economy – which was due to changes in government policy favoring liberalization – led to increases in the income of middle-class Indians employed in the service sector of the Indian economy. Although Viswanath does not claim to take a political economy perspective, the context and analysis she presents is in line with the political economy approach outlined in an earlier section of this paper, which calls for an examination of history and social change. From the perspective of our understanding of the role of linguistic diversity as a part of Indian society, we can argue that the shifts in identity that Viswanath reports are related to the complex language repertoires that Laitin (1989) described.

As expected, gender and class mediate both the linguistic diversity and the reception of films in India. The gendered nature of filmgoing in India is revealed in the ethnographic studies of Dickey (1993) and Derne (2000). Derne observes that in the north Indian town of Dehradun, women accounted for approximately only a quarter of the audience in the better cinemas in the town, and very few attended the cheapest cinema, which was more popular with the men. He attributes the low attendance of women at cinema theaters to the pressures of household responsibilities and to “the need to be respectable.” The economic inequalities that shape media consumption in India, referred to earlier in the chapter’s introduction, are also reported in these ethnographic studies of Indian film audiences. The work of Sara Dickey (1993), Steve Derne (2000), and S. V. Srinivas (1996, 2003) remains exceptional in that these scholars are among the few who have examined lower-income film audiences. Dickey’s (1997) ethnographic investigation in a small town in Tamil Nadu showed that Tamil film fans typically belong to the lower socioeconomic classes in Tamil Nadu, and through the social welfare activities of their fan clubs they distinguish themselves from the “poor.”

Class mediates the language of film consumption. For instance, Steve Derne (2000) observes that, throughout the duration of his study, only one Hollywood film played in the north Indian town of Benares, in 1987, and the film was not appreciated by the audience; however, Derne does report that audiences in the more cosmopolitan city of Bangalore enjoyed Hollywood films. Similarly, Dickey (1993) reports that many filmgoers belonging to the lower classes in Madurai, a medium-sized town in Tamil Nadu, had never seen a single Hindi film. In a continuation of this trend, urban middle-class Marathi- and Gujarathi-speaking audiences in Mumbai preferred to watch Hindi films and to consume English print media (Desai & Agrawal, 2009). Class also affects the themes that are popular in films. Rao’s (2007) ethnography of lower-middle-class film audiences in a small town in Punjab reveals a growing alienation from the globalized Hindi-language films, especially those aimed at wealthy diaspora audiences.

Implications for Studies of Film Audiences in India

The historical, economic, and research contexts outlined in the previous sections of this chapter point toward a robust future agenda for research on film audiences in India. In this section I raise questions and concerns that can perhaps direct the trajectory of future work. The historical importance of languages in India shows us how, despite the consecutive presence of Persian first, then of English and Hindi, regional languages continue to thrive in India. Depending on where an Indian citizen is living, he/she may use as many as four different languages. Linguistic diversity is a powerful economic force in India that shapes, among other things, the availability and use of films by audiences.

The economics of the linguistic market size for films reveals that audiences in larger linguistic markets have access to more films in their own language, whether through local production or through language dubbing; these films are made with bigger budgets and with a greater variety of genre elements. Film audiences in states with larger populations speaking the same language therefore have access to a different set of films than film audiences in states with smaller linguistic populations. While Hindi film audiences have access to (elements of) many genres in Hindi films, audiences of films in other languages may not have access to (elements of) as many genres. For instance, Hindi films contain elements of the action genre, while films in other languages are unable to afford elements of this expensive genre. Where do such audiences turn to satisfy their demand for action films, and what are the implications of this quest? Is it possible that, rather than turning to the more expensive Hollywood action films, Telugu distributors turned to the cheaper action films coming out of Hong Kong? Srinivas (2003) writes of the immense popularity of the Hong Kong action film in Andhra Pradesh and of the spread of martial arts schools in the state. Where do audiences in other states turn for their action films?

Past research on mass media effects and processes reveals the existence of knowledge gaps between media audiences with greater access and ones with reduced access. What kinds of knowledge gaps exist between Hindi film audiences and audiences of films with fewer speakers, say Konkani or Sindhi?

Media economics models of the trade in media products lead us to expect that films from larger linguistic industries travel better than films from smaller linguistic film industries. Films produced in Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu are also exported to markets outside India to a greater extent than films produced in languages with fewer speakers. How does this affect the diaspora audiences in different parts of the world? How do members of the Tamil diaspora choose films from India, in other words do they choose Tamil films, or are they open to Hindi films or films in other Indian languages? How do class and gender identities affect these complicated choices?

Within India, how do the patterns of flows in vernacular-language films affect audience responses and domestic markets? Some researchers hold that Hindi-language

cinema is popular throughout India, while others have found no evidence of this, especially with lower-income audiences. How do audience members' class and gender identities intersect with the consumption of films in languages other than one's own mother tongue? And how do these viewing patterns change with the availability of technologies such as digital versatile discs (DVDs), versatile compact discs (VCDs), and television? Given the various constraints imposed on women in India, do women in some parts of the country have access to certain genres of films that others don't have access to because of the languages that they speak?

Research also shows that media products from markets that are culturally closer to each other travel better than ones from culturally dissimilar markets. On the basis of this we would expect the four southern states to have a higher trade in each other's films than in films from other parts of the country. To what extent is this true? How do taxation and other forms of government regulation and intervention – such as support for production infrastructure – affect this balance? Is this kind of support borne out in audience/citizen endorsement?

With the gains made by India's services sector in the current global economy, English-language acquisition has increased as the preferred route for occupational and upward social mobility. How has this affected the choices that Indian filmgoers make? How are Hollywood films altered when they are dubbed into Indian languages? TV channels in India that screen Hollywood films routinely carry subtitles in English, because the English dialogues spoken by the actors have an American accent, which is unfamiliar to many English-speaking Indians. How does this affect Indian filmgoers like those interviewed in Desai and Agrawal's (2009) study, who watched Hindi films but read English newspapers? What are the choices made by young Indians who have come of age in a liberalized India and have grown up on television channels that are full of imported children's programming dubbed into their local language? What films do they select to watch?

The questions on Indian domestic and diaspora film audiences that this chapter's conclusion raise illuminate the ways in which the political economy approach to film industries can generate a robust agenda for audience research in India's rapidly changing landscape of film production and consumption. Political economy and audience ethnography in India's diverse and pluralistic multilingual media markets can enrich each other. If political economy directs audience studies to consider the influence of regulations and policies and the economics of production and distribution on film viewers' taste cultures, the messy realities and contradictions uncovered in audience ethnography can challenge political economy to incorporate social and cultural theories in order to challenge or modify its tendencies toward economic determinism. When political economy and audience ethnography approaches speak to each other, we increase our opportunities to draw rich insights into the various forces that govern the diverse multilingual practices of film viewing in India – a country that produces the largest number of films in the world.

NOTES

- 1 Compiled from statistics recorded by the Central Board of Film Certification reported in Rajadhyaksha and Willemen (1999) for the years 1931–1981 and from annual reports of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), Mumbai, India, for the years 1982–2005.
- 2 Film productions in these 11 languages, taken together, constituted 97% of Indian-language film productions in the 75-year period from 1931 to 2005.
- 3 Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2004. Statement: Gross state domestic product at constant prices. Retrieved Oct 30, 2007, from http://mospi.nic.in/7_gsdp_const_9394ser.htm
- 4 In Malaysia, owing perhaps to the large proportion of audiences of Tamil origin, Tamil films are more popular than Hindi films out of the films imported from India. Schiffman (1995) reports that 85% of the 1.5 million Indians in Malaysia are of Tamil origin. I found that Tamil films constituted 71% and Hindi films constituted 27% of Indian films featuring on the popularity charts.
- 5 The 17 genre elements are: action, adventure, animation, comedy, crime, drama, family, fantasy, history, horror, musical, mystery, romance, sci-fi, sport, thriller, and war.

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Watching Telenovelas in Brazil

Mediating the Everyday

Antonio C. La Pastina

ABSTRACT

Telenovelas in Brazil are, undisputedly, still the most popular form of entertainment. Even after almost 50 years of daily broadcasting and radical changes in media technologies that challenged the dominant media producers, a Globo network telenovela can still gather over 30% of the audience on a daily basis. Why have telenovelas managed to capture and hold the imagination of so many viewers in that country? On the basis of a range of qualitative reception and ethnographic studies that began to be produced both in Brazil and abroad in the early 1980s, and on the basis of my own ethnographic work, it seems that Brazilians have relied on telenovelas to maintain a sense of connection to the nation, to grasp and understand new urban middle-class trends, and to question normative ideas and structures in their day-to-day lives. On a less optimistic note, this chapter also argues that telenovelas, unintentionally, have reinforced a rural–urban divide in Brazil.

Augusto, a politician in his mid-thirties, liked television and telenovelas a lot. He never saw his desire to watch telenovelas as a threat to his manhood or his status in Macambira, a small rural community in northeast Brazil. Sometimes he watched television at his place, but mostly he would go to the house of a friend or a political supporter, since his wife worked the night shift as a nurse in a neighboring town. For

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Augusto, *The Cattle King* (1996–1997), a telenovela with a landowner as the hero and a landless peasant as the target of his love, provided good examples for Brazil. For instance Augusto saw pedagogic potential in Leia, the hero's adulterous wife.

At the beginning of the telenovela Leia was a well-married woman. After a while she left her husband for another man. It was a big conflict. But as time progressed, she returned home, saw her ex-husband and they talked. He accepted her. So, the television is showing that even if the woman leaves the man, it is not necessary to keep fighting, wanting to hit the wife. The telenovela showed to Brazil that it can happen within the Brazilian reality. It can happen because the telenovela is showing it. (Ethnographic interview with Augusto, December 23, 1996)

Augusto was arguing that telenovelas can show behaviors that are “modern” and urban, yet not in conflict with the values of Brazilians. For him, women in telenovelas, and consequently in larger metropolitan centers, were already liberated, and hence they were engaging in practices that were still perceived to be disreputable in a small town such as Macambira. He believed that women, even in rural communities, had gained more freedom and that people were more accepting. He believed that telenovelas had helped in part to usher in this process of change. This one-decade-and-a-half-old quote underlines the discussion that will follow in this chapter. Augusto argued for the relevance of telenovelas in Brazilian society and, indirectly, he explained why these melodramatic texts have aroused so much attention not only among viewers, but also among academics, advertisers, and social activists. Even after more than 50 years of daily broadcasting, of changes in delivery technologies, and of increasing fragmentation of the audience through a larger number of open-air networks, cable, satellite, and internet providers, a Globo network telenovela still attracts over 30% of the total audience on most evenings in Brazil. Why and how have telenovelas managed to capture and hold the imagination of so many viewers in Brazil for so long?

This chapter discusses telenovelas' audiences in Brazil and offers a case study of rural viewers in order to document the ways in which audiences make connections (La Pastina, 1999, 2005) between popular culture narratives and the circumstances of everyday life. On the basis of a range of qualitative reception and ethnographic studies that began to be produced both in Brazil and abroad in the early 1980s (see McAnany & La Pastina, 1994 and Jacks, 2008 for reviews of the audience research in Brazil), it seems that Brazilians have relied on telenovelas to forge their national identities, grasp new urban middle class trends, and interrogate the concerns of everyday life. The first section of the chapter, which serves as a background for the case study that follows, provides an overview of the social and economic contours of telenovelas. I begin this section by outlining telenovelas' classification as a women's genre and then summarize audience research on telenovelas; this is followed by a discussion of the role of product placement and social marketing in the creation of telenovelas. The next section of the chapter presents an overview of a case study in

rural Brazil that takes up the themes presented in the first section. The final section concludes by identifying some promising areas for future research.

Every Night on Prime Time

Brazilians, millions of them, tune in Monday to Saturday to watch the drama and comedy of various telenovelas, following a narrative for several months – sometimes six, if the ratings are low, sometimes up to nine or ten, if the plot grabs the national imagination. *To Live One's Life*, the 2010 program broadcast in the prime-time spot of the leading network, Globo, attracted both criticism and praise. It is the story of a gorgeous and clever young model who, with several other models, has a bus accident on the way back from a fashion show. She becomes disabled. The drama of romance, love, and betrayal features many characters, including the model's handsome millionaire father, and acts as a foil for her recovery and decision to live her life fully. This strongly prosocial characteristic has led some viewers to complain of being tired of seeing a story about women in wheelchairs, yet many audience members are fascinated with the heroine's life and her strategies for survival. Her experiences have prompted news stories about similar events in the real lives of wheelchair-bound individuals from different parts of Brazil. The socially conscious nature of this drama, coupled in this case with the provision of a real-life story of a disabled person at the end of each episode, is one of the many trademarks of the Brazilian telenovela.

Unlike its counterparts in other Latin American nations, the Brazilian telenovela has been developing, since the late 1960s, into a unique local genre incorporating the voice, characteristics, and preoccupations of the Brazilian urban middle class. By the early 1970s the Globo network had invested heavily in production values; for instance it increased the use of external shoots, which had been previously avoided due to cost. The network also promoted a modernization of the telenovela's themes, including current issues and texts written by Brazilian writers. Through this process Globo created what it termed, in its own publicity material, the *padrão globo de qualidade* (Globo Standard of Quality) (Straubhaar, 1982; Lopez, 1991). These changes in style led Brazilian telenovelas to become more dynamic and more closely associated with current events in the life of the nation. According to Mattelart and Mattelart (1990), Brazilian telenovelas are an "open work" or an "open genre." During production, the telenovela's creators receive direct and indirect input from viewers and fans, theatrical productions, commercials, elite and popular press, institutional networks, audience and marketing research organizations, and other social forces in society such as the Catholic church, the government, and activist groups (Hamburger, 1993).

For several writers (Straubhaar, 1982; Ortiz, Borelli, & Ramos, 1988; Lopez, 1995), the landmark telenovela that started the redefinition of the genre in Brazil was *Beto Rockfeller*, which was aired by Rede Tupy in 1968–1969. *Beto Rockfeller* escaped the traditional molds of the genre, presenting a telenovela in which artificial dramatic

attitudes were abandoned and the use of colloquial dialogue broke with previous patterns of literary speech. But not only the language changed; the dramatic structure, narrative strategies, and production values were also modified.

[In *Beto Rockfeller*] the reigning manichaeism became an integral part of the protagonist's character; the anti-hero took front stage, which up to that point had been occupied by firm and sensible characters, absolutely honest and capable of any gesture to save the heroine from adversity. [*Beto Rockfeller*] tried to get closer to the common people; to have good and bad attitudes much in the same way as they happen in one's life. (Fernandes, 1994; my translation)

Beto Rockfeller was the story of a middle-class young man who worked for a shoe store but used his charm and wit to pass himself as a millionaire – hence his last name. To keep his secret and maintain high social status, he had to engage in many less than honest activities. The telenovela reached very high audience ratings, leading the network to stretch it to almost 13 months (Fernandes, 1994). Globo – which up to that point had cultivated a very traditional style of telenovela, locating them in far away places with exotic settings and plots – saw the audience interest in *Beto Rockfeller* and championed this new strategy, placing the contemporary everyday life of urban Brazil front and center in their new telenovelas. In the decade that followed, Globo became the leading network of the nation, barely allowing competing stations to gain a fraction of the audience. In this process it reshaped the genre. Intentionally or not, Globo transformed the Brazilian telenovela into a forum for the discussion of Brazilian reality.

While Globo benefited directly from the dictatorship in Brazil – it had direct support from the government (Lima, 1988) – it also benefited indirectly from the 1968 imposition of censorship in Brazil. The institutional Act 5 (AI-5) heavily restricted the ability of many intellectuals, and particularly playwrights, to work in the theater and in the cinema. Writers such as Dias Gomes, Janet Clair, Benedito Ruy Barbosa, Silvio de Abreu, or Plino Marcos began to write telenovela screenplays. These writers were concerned with the urban reality and social preoccupations they observed, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, where the Globo network was located. They used metaphorical lenses to examine national and rural issues, tapping into the popular imaginary and into the patriarchal, patronage-based culture of northeast Brazil to subtly question the military dictatorship. The 1970s were years of military dictatorship, and Globo was clearly working in tandem with the regime to promote the nationalization of culture (Mattos, 1980). But the anomaly of having telenovela writers with anti-establishment credentials begs the question of why the regime was so lenient with this budding industry.

The writers were aware of the censorship laws and relied on romance to present the everyday; but, even so, they sometimes had their stories cut or censored. Additionally, the Globo network supported and was supported by the regime, becoming its unofficial voice with its 8 o'clock newscast that presented the government's

“reality” every night (Lima, 1988; Porto, 2007). The newscast benefited from the popularity of the telenovelas, which sandwiched that half-hour news show. This, I’d like to argue, also helped ensure that telenovelas were tolerated by the regime. Finally, most relevant to the present argument was a widespread misconception that telenovelas were women’s products, consumed only by women and consequently of little relevance (Hamburger, 1999).

Women’s Genre

This last point is rooted in the origin of the genre in the early US radio soap operas, which positioned television serial fiction as a women’s genre. Hamburger (1999), in her ethnographic study of lay theories of telenovela audiences, demonstrates how writers, advertisers, producers, and Globo management staff bought into this early view that the telenovela was a women’s genre. Marketeers consequently focused all their efforts on a female target audience, overlooking the evidence that men, too, were consuming these texts voraciously, even if they were reluctant to be openly described as viewers. Since at least the mid-1980s, the audience has been almost 40% male (Ortiz et al., 1988). This perception of telenovelas as gendered, as a female text, also relates to the construction of femininity in Brazilian culture and to the distinct spaces that were traditionally defined as masculine (the street) and feminine (the home), as discussed by Roberto da Matta (1985).

Perceptions of the telenovela as a women’s genre influenced most of the research produced in Brazil for the following decades. Studies by Leal (1988), Vink (1988), Prado (1987), Jacks (1993), Tufte (1995), and others worked steadily to build knowledge about women viewers, relying primarily on reception theories from the Birmingham School. Later works – such as Tufte (2000) and Lopes, Borelli, & Resende (2002) – used the notion of mediations, developed in Latin America by writers such as Guillermo Orozco in Mexico and Jesus Martín-Barbero in Colombia. Martín-Barbero (1993) proposes that, instead of studying the relation between viewers and texts from “the logic of production and reception [. . .] we [should] start with the mediations where the social materialization and the cultural expression of television are delimited and configured” (p. 215). These mediations are

[the] place from where one can understand the interaction between the space of production and reception: that which is produced on television does not necessarily relate uniquely to the requirements of the industrial system [. . .] but also to the demands of the cultural web and to the [audience’s] ways of seeing. (Martín-Barbero & Muñoz, 1992, p. 20; my translation)

With the mediations project, Martín-Barbero is attempting to decenter the media, arguing that they are losing their “specificity and becoming an integral part of the

economic, cultural and political system” (Richeri’s study, as cited in Martín-Barbero, 1993). This “abdication of mediacentrism” is a result of social movements that push the media to be integral to the economic system. Mediations are then the “structures encrusted in social practices and the everyday” (Lopes et al., 2002, p. 39; my translation). Therefore the mediations become a central sphere where media functions and interpretations can be understood in relation to everyday life, because “[they] produce and reproduce the social signification, thereby creating a *sphere* which makes the understanding of the interactions between production and reception possible” (Tufte, 2000, p. 21).

Leal’s (1988) landmark study on upper-class women’s and their maids’ readings of the telenovela *Summer Sun* became key to understanding the way these viewers dealt with these texts in their everyday lives. Class became a marker for how the telenovela was interpreted, but also for how gender was talked about. The wealthier and more educated women attempted to distance themselves from the narrative and discussed the genre and the text decoupled from their own everyday lived experiences, while working-class women engaged with the narratives at a personal level, talking about their lives and the lives of the characters in relation to each other and in interaction with each other. Upon its publication in 1988, Leal’s work became a model for the study of telenovelas in Brazil, creating a school based on reception theory and cultural studies.

The research of Lins da Silva (1985) and Tufte (1995) also suggests similar patterns of critical distance in the decoding of television messages. Unlike Leal’s, however, their research shows that this critical stance may be due to political consciousness and the engagement in political or community-based activities rather than simply reflecting class. Lins da Silva (1985) looked at the way workers decode news messages from *Jornal Nacional*, the nightly newscast aired by Globo Television. He collected his data from two working-class neighborhoods in Brazil: Paçara, on the coast of São Paulo state, and Lagoa Seca, in Rio Grande do Norte. Prior to starting the data collection, this researcher used an open-ended instrument to survey 250 people in both communities. Most of these people attended meetings later on and discussed the programming of the previous week, participating in some kind of community activity.

On the basis of his findings, Lins da Silva concludes that other sources, such as church, unions, political parties, radio, newspapers, and interpersonal contact offer the respondents information that often contradicts the one provided by television. His findings showed that (a) other sources were taken more seriously and may have been more influential than television; (b) previous knowledge of the issues discussed had an important role in aiding the decoding of messages; (c) news from abroad, which participants normally had no knowledge of, was taken at face value when aired on *Jornal Nacional*; and (d) local and national news, however, tended to be challenged. These findings, according to Lins da Silva, show that members of a community can make a critical reading of the information supplied by television, as long as they have access to other sources of information.

Telenovela Audience Research

In Brazilian telenovela research, one subject position has generally been privileged, be it that of class (Leal, 1988), political engagement (Sluyter-Beltrão, 1993), or gender (Prado, 1987; Tufte, 1995, 2000). Concentrating on one subject position alone reduces the possibilities for more textured analyses of audience reception. For each audience member, his or her identity might be multifaceted and several of his or her subjectivities may be engaged in the process of watching a single television program.

In contrast, Jacks (1993) focused on how regional culture mediates audience interpretations, consequently addressing issues of cultural similarities/proximities and becoming one of the first to rely on Martín-Barbero's early theorizing of mediations. Independently of class, viewers in Santa Maria, a mid-size town in Rio Grande do Sul, showed preference for characters presenting some of the characteristics they perceived to be inherent of the Gaúcho, natives of their home state. These viewers had already scored highly on Jack's scale of participation in traditional Gaúcho culture and were aware of local traditions and proud to engage in them. Jacks' work raises the issue of cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 1991; La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005), another important element in the identificatory process. Cultural proximity might be recognized through visual (e.g., the landscape, dress style), verbal (e.g., regionalism, historical references), or other characteristics associated with a particular regional "culture." Tradition, pride, and honor were seen as important elements in defining a telenovela character who potentially could be cast as Gaúcho.

In her work on the potential impact of telenovelas on the emancipation of working-class women, Vink (1988) argues that product placement, "the expansive form of advertising during telenovelas, is based on the belief that identification with heroes and heroines will increase the sales of all kinds of products" (p. 236). But one of the most compelling arguments for the process of identification and use of telenovela messages comes from Vink's retelling of Alves' research (cited in Vink, 1988). In *Coração Alado* (produced in 1981), Vivian, the main female character, is raped by her brother-in-law and has to decide between abortion and having the child.

Many women confessed to the researcher's wife that they had a similar experience and that the telenovela had helped them reevaluate the decision they had made at the time. Others admitted [to] having been faced with the same dilemma, and said the doubt exhibited by the telenovela character helped them to solve their problem. The striking element is that several viewers decided to get an abortion, even though Vivian in the novela decided against it. (Vink, 1988, p. 236)

The emotional involvement provoked by scenes to which a viewer relates personally probably has a strong impact upon such a viewer's identification with telenovelas. Viewers' identification with telenovelas takes place when they find similarities between their lives and the characters' situations in the texts. The perception of difference can also lead viewers to identify with characters and

situations. The social context, genre structure, and narrative strategies, as well as the message content, can all have an impact on the identification process. There are clear examples, such as those mentioned by Leal (1988), of women using telenovela situations to approach certain issues with their partners. For several viewers, the process of identification may allow them to experience vicariously the lives of people in other realities, through which they might rethink their own realities and slowly articulate changes in their daily lives. Most of the studies conducted on telenovela viewers have focused on one particular telenovela – or two, in the case of Prado (1987); but they all make reference to other telenovelas mentioned by viewers (Jacks, 2008; McAnany & La Pastina, 1994). Tufte (1995) tried to expand the focus from one telenovela to many by analyzing the case of an actress, Regina Duarte, as a star. However, from the selection of the media texts used in these research endeavors it becomes clear that the issues perceived and debated by viewers are directly related to the narratives within the text. Sluyter-Beltrão's (1993) viewers talked about political issues not only because her interviewees were more politicized, but also because the text she was using represented a clear parody of the Brazilian political system. This political subtext in the telenovela was reinforced by the elite news media that covered the telenovela as a political event. Leal's (1988) women could discuss their relationships more easily when characters in the telenovela were also discussing their own emotional relationships. Tufte's (1995) respondents could discuss their struggle and the feelings of being ridiculed or rejected due to their social class or race because the leading character in the telenovela was going through similar situations. La Pastina's (2004a) viewers engaged in political readings because *The Cattle King* dealt directly with land reform and political corruption. Telenovela themes offer a vocabulary and a set of references for the discussion of specific issues. But they also work in a sedimentary manner, forming layers of meanings, themes, and vocabularies. Many times the actors' roles are quite similar to previous roles from earlier telenovelas, and characters in other telenovelas may go through similar situations. Tufte (1995) cites the example of a *mulatta* woman recollecting the character of a black architect, played by Zezé Motta in the telenovela *Corpo a corpo* (1984–1985), who endured racial discrimination. Tufte's respondent talked about this character from her repertoire of telenovela memories to explain her views on the problem of discrimination in the 1990 telenovela they were then watching, *Rainha da Sucata*.

Prado's (1987) fieldwork in Cunha, a small town in São Paulo state, demonstrates the importance of social, historical, and political contexts in explaining women's readings of female characters in two telenovelas. One important issue raised by Prado's study is that messages encoded in the text will raise certain topics for viewers; so for instance a rural telenovela might have as a background issue the matter of land ownership; while an urban telenovela might raise issues regarding race or sexuality. There are certain limitations inherent in the text; these are due to the genre's rules and narrative strategies, as well as to the thematic emphasis of a certain telenovela:

[Through] the issues raised by the telenovelas, the women in them reach the real women viewers. We can possibly say that the women from the telenovelas function as a mirror, representing to the real women something that these women are and that they like or dislike; or something they are not and they would like or not like to be. (Prado, 1987, p. 138; my translation)

The text has an impact on the possible kinds of identificatory positions viewers can engage in. In research conducted in a small rural village in Ceará, La Pastina (1995) demonstrated that male respondents were clearly engaged with the 1994–1995 remake of *Irmãos Coragem*, a telenovela originally aired in 1970–1971, which promoted a clearly nationalistic project. Set in a rural northeastern town, the telenovela dealt with “rivalry among colonels, banditry, horses [. . .] it was more like a movie than a telenovela,” according to Assis, one respondent. Assis felt that it was easier to identify with characters in that telenovela because he felt more comfortable with a text that resembled a film rather than a telenovela – “which is more liked by women,” he said.

It is important to look not only at the direct context (the family and the house, as discussed by Leal, 1988 and by Morley, 1986, 1992), but also at the social, political, and historical environment in which the viewing site is located. The social environment considers structures such as gender, age, and race relations and elements such as health, education, and religion. The political sphere of the viewing site includes elements such as political patronage, corruption, and the perception of the role of politicians. The historical environment includes elements such as patterns of migration, traditional forms of economic survival, and racial and class hierarchies. Meaning can be apprehended only within a social–historical context; if the process is de-historicized, then meanings assigned to a text by viewers can potentially be misinterpreted.

Telenovelas for Profit

The commercial nature of telenovela texts requires a certain exposure to and awareness of capitalist culture to enable viewers to assess the meanings of some intertextual references such as product placements (La Pastina, 2001). These texts are surrounded by commercial breaks that target a particular segment of the viewing population, depending on the time and channel on which the telenovela is broadcast, as well as on the nature of the narrative. Together with merchandising, commercial insertions in the text help create a flow of meanings that must be assessed in terms of the local reality in which the viewers are inserted.

Brazilian telenovelas, especially Globo’s, have long used product placement as a commercial strategy to increase revenues (La Pastina, 2001; Melo, 1988). Specific products are either shown or mentioned in a dialogue, within programs, in return for a negotiated fee. For example, from 1983 on, a number of telenovelas on TV Globo carried in-program propaganda for a major bank, Banco Itaú. In the telenovela *Tieta*

(1989–1990), a modern, colorful branch of the bank was frequently shown in the middle of a small, traditional northeast Brazilian town. The bank branch opening was shown, and later on characters were shown doing business there, using its credit cards, and so on. Another TV Globo telenovela called *Top Model* (1990) contained a fashion show featuring the actual fashion line of a company partially owned by the daughter-in-law of Roberto Marinho, owner of the Globo network. Traditionally these product placements are tenuously related to the plot. Even though the telenovela's creative team does have some say in what will be inserted, most decisions regarding product placement are made by the marketing and advertising departments.

The goal is to make the product or concept advertised inherent to the narrative, forcing viewers to read that product or concept as a quality of the character using or manifesting it. With product placement, the networks can also circumvent legislation that limits commercials to fifteen minutes per hour, thus increasing the potential revenue per hour of production. *The Cattle King* (1996–1997) was very successful in attracting an audience that hovered around 50% of the television sets tuned in every evening. Several companies committed to advertising in this telenovela on the basis of the previous success registered by the writer, director, and leading actor in an earlier collaboration, but also on the strength of Globo's track record of delivering every evening a sizable audience with the desirable demographics.

Telenovelas for a Cause

The telenovela writer, on the basis of his or her personal agenda and in consultation with the network's office for social responsibility, develops social messages that are termed "social merchandising"; this is not the case in product placement (La Pastina, Patel, & Schiavo, 2003). These issues might include missing children (Gloria Perez's *Explode coração*, 1995), racial equality (*Próxima vítima*, 1994; *America*, 2005; *Viver a vida*, 2010), land reform and political integrity (Benedito Ruy Barbosa's *The Cattle King*, 1996–1997), and disability (*Viver a vida*, 2010) – to mention just a few. Some telenovelas, however, incorporate prosocial elements that are not inherently part of the narrative, such as messages about the importance of using condoms (*Pátria minha*, 1993) or specific health campaigns like promoting awareness of breast cancer (*História de amor*, 1996). This long-term use of telenovelas for social causes has trained viewers to read those insertions as parts of the narrative, and in some cases to evaluate the quality of the telenovela on the basis of these socially conscious messages..

Benedito Ruy Barbosa's first rural telenovela, aired in 1971–1972, was also the first Brazilian telenovela to use the genre for educational purposes. In *Meu pedacinho de chão* (*My Little Piece of Land*) he presented land conflict, but unhappy censors excised about 12 scenes. For all this censoring, most of the message was still communicated. The narrative was set in a small village, and Barbosa used that setting to discuss problems of rural life, promoting hygiene and agricultural information (Fernandes, 1994). *Meu pedacinho de chão* was co-produced by TV Cultura (the public television

station in the state of São Paulo) and Globo. The adaptations of national authors and the educational content of some Globo products, such as *Meu pedacinho de chão* and the children's show *Sítio do pica-pau amarelo* (*The Yellow Woodpecker's Ranch*), were symbolic of this strategy of promoting a national culture and of educating viewers. Barbosa believes that telenovelas are privileged sites for discussing the problems and conflicts of the nation and for promoting awareness and ultimately change. In *The Cattle King* he pushed his political agenda to a new limit through a subplot devoted to land invasion and the politics of agrarian reform in Brazil. In the next section this telenovela will be the point of departure in a discussion of reception in a rural town in Brazil.

Watching TV in Macambira: A Case Study of Rural Viewers

The residents of Macambira, a small rural community in Brazil where I have conducted research since the mid-1990s, remain avid consumers of telenovelas. I will discuss the interpretation of one telenovela and in this process I will point to the challenges of audience work, to the process of engagement that occurs between viewers and texts, and to how the complexity of the narrative is central for the interpretative processes to unfold.

In 1996–1997 I followed *The Cattle King* in this rural community. During the 10 months of broadcasting I watched this and other telenovelas in the company of local residents and I conducted ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and in-depth interviews. But, above all, as a long-term ethnographer, I became immersed in the everyday of the community and my questioning about telenovela(s) was just another topic of conversation among many I broached in the groups of individuals I joined, socializing on sidewalks around town.

The Cattle King was a complex narrative by Benedito Ruy Barbosa that, in spite of being melodramatic and having love triangles frustrated by family histories, rivalries, and staunch enemies clearly marked as villains, discussed serious issues that confronted Brazilian society at the time. The landless movement was working steadily to bring the plight of those without land to the forefront of national debate, while political corruption, a recurring problem in Brazil, was rampant in the mid-1990s. In *The Cattle King* the heroine was a landless peasant destined to win the heart of the local landowner. We discover later that the heroine, although just a peasant at an early point in the narrative, was really a very wealthy heiress who had lost her memory in a car accident – an accident in which her whole immediate family died: this is the nature of telenovela melodrama. The hero was the cattle king, the owner of enormous ranches that he surveyed by plane. But he was a good landowner, who cared about the landless; he was also the friend and political ally of an honest senator, himself incorruptible and a supporter of the landless cause.

In the complex intermingling of melodrama and social justice, adultery and premarital sex, key subplots emerged that served to bond and to destabilize the lives of

the characters. *The Cattle King* allowed viewers to engage with their own set of values and attitudes toward gender roles and sexual practices. In this process they questioned the validity of the images portrayed and their own reality. They shared their lived experiences while criticizing or praising the characters' actions and situations. The inherent genre repertoire available to viewers and the latter's familiarity with it allowed most of them, male and female alike, to participate emotionally in the narrative. In the following analysis I will demonstrate how viewers interact differently with these narrative elements, although on many occasions this happens simultaneously. This process, which I term media engagement, reflects the complexity of audience ethnography and its benefits.

The engagement between viewers/consumers and texts needs to be investigated as a process located in a broader context than the immediate site of the viewing interaction (La Pastina, 2005). I identified four stages of this engagement process: reading, interpretation, appropriation, and change. The first phase occurs when the actual reading happens, normally in the home, within a family context. The 'reading' phase is best understood in terms of a factual explanation of the narrative structure and content. The second phase occurs when the text is interpreted, which happens not only at an individual level but also through social interactions that might impose upon the text norms, values, and beliefs shared by the community. After interpretation, the third phase involves appropriation, where the issues brought up by the text and interpreted through mediating forces are used to explain one's own life or the social relations and cultural dynamics in which the reader is inserted. The processes of identification and catharsis are normally at work, and resistance also happens in this phase. The final stage in this engagement model is behavior change, which in many cases is the stage most challenging to document. This is the case even though ethnography, with its ability to develop longitudinal investigations, has the potential to observe community and social change that might be related to media presence. The four phases described here are an artificial attempt to impose an analytical framework upon an unruly process, but the framework does not assert that these stages are discrete or present in all textual engagements.

Telenovela appropriation in a small rural community such as Macambira is mediated by social talk (gossip), by knowledge of genre rules, by the viewers' cultural capital (particularly regarding urban lifestyles), by the local patriarchal culture, and by geographical isolation. Macambira's peculiarities also mediate the media consumption. Limited male employment and reliance on female labor, namely embroidery, have allowed women to gain greater independence.

Patriarchy

The questioning of local sexual mores and norms was experienced by many residents, who consumed telenovelas and other media products and saw a gap between their culture, values, and traditions and those represented on the screen (La Pastina,

2004b). It is in this sphere – between the local and the televised – that the mediations that structured viewers' interpretations of *The Cattle King* are located. Mediations are the sphere where production and reception interact, creating a space where interpretations can be understood in relation to their broad social, cultural, political, economic, and historical contexts. By raising issues of sexuality, trust, and moral norms, this telenovela fed viewers with material that, to some, resembled their own experiences. For others, it questioned the local patriarchal culture and exposed the gaps between representations of life in urban centers and their own lives in Macambira, thus reinforcing concerns over the telenovela's content.

The local patriarchal culture and its peripheral location in relation to the urban centers, as represented in the text, was a central mediating factor in the late 1990s. This telenovela's popularity was unquestioned in Macambira, even when elections were attracting most of the town's attention. Viewers followed the telenovela, asking friends and neighbors about what happened when they missed episodes and watching segments between meetings and rallies. Young and old talked about characters, used language from the telenovela, and knew about the main characters. Few residents had no information about the telenovela.

Established gender norms, attitudes, and the changing political economy of Macambira in many ways structured the levels of interaction between viewers and texts. Women's increasing economic power, due to their work as embroiderers, and the growing dependency of men on women's incomes have created a fracture in the traditional male–female domination patterns. This has allowed women to question their own and the men's roles in the household and community. The telenovela seemed to be one medium through which women observed alternatives; then they appropriated them in order to assess their own lives and the life of the community in relation to that of the characters in the geographic south. This finding supports earlier reception study findings by Leal (1988) and Vink (1988) and later ones by Lopes and colleagues (2002), which demonstrated how telenovelas were used by women to explain their lived experiences. Nevertheless, women wanted these contemporary contexts to be presented within the framework of traditional melodramatic narratives. Female characters in the telenovela could be independent and hard-working and male characters could be sensitive and understanding, but in the end the romantic couples had to finish the narrative by getting together and confirming the happy-ever-after ending. Several women perceived the process of contemporization of telenovelas with greater emphasis on social and political discourse a distraction from the central objective of these narratives: the romantic and familial relationships between characters.

Males, on the other hand, saw this process of contemporization as a bridge to what they perceived to be a realistic narrative, which justified their viewing and enjoyment of the telenovela. However, the established norms and attitudes regarding gender roles in the community still limited the males' possibilities of acknowledging the melodramatic as enjoyable. Telenovelas, for these men, were valued according to their perceived informational/realistic content. There was a perception that their masculinity, many times thrown into doubt by their inability

to provide for their households, could be damaged even more by their association with a feminized text such as a telenovela. Males watching the telenovela preferred to talk about issues that interested them; in the case of *The Cattle King*, it was land reform and the rural lifestyle (La Pastina, 2004a). Even if these texts were perceived as feminine, men used the rural lifestyle and the political narrative to think about their lives in relation to the urban modern south (La Pastina, 2001). Their interest in these elements of the narrative seemed to indicate that perceived gender norms and patriarchal values did in fact hinder male viewers' engagement with the more traditional melodramatic elements of class ascension, love, and betrayal. This, however, does not mean that men did not pay attention to those elements or were oblivious to them. It means that they took a greater interest in elements associated locally with the masculine sphere, such as politics and farm techniques, rather than engaging with elements normally associated with the feminine sphere, such as child rearing and romance.

Intertextuality

In the context of masculine versus feminine characteristics of this telenovela, as they were perceived by viewers, it was through this contextual information (which I gathered beyond the in-depth interviews) that I was allowed to understand the implications of cultural capital for the interpretation of intertextual references in *The Cattle King*. The blurring between reality and fiction and the self-referentiality of the telenovela (Ott & Walter, 2000) were caused by the interactions between characters and real politicians in the news media and in the telenovela itself. Without access to the news media from the south or exposure to the national news media on television, it is likely that viewers would not have possessed the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) required in order to engage with these elements of the narrative (see La Pastina, 2004a for a detailed analysis of this case). Consequently, current affairs knowledge was an important factor in the reading of these intertextual instances and in understanding the self-referentiality of this material. But a viewer needed more than current affairs knowledge. He or she needed access to other sources of cultural capital such as news magazines or newspapers and exposure to a broad range of TV programs – as well as experience outside the local community. All of these are central for the building of embodied cultural capital that can be used to decode cultural texts like *The Cattle King* according to genre expectations. It is unfair to expect viewers in a remote location such as Macambira, with the limited financial resources available to them, to have been able to acquire, and to possess, the embodied cultural capital that would have allowed them to observe and interpret references to content in other media, not available to them. Such findings support the view that telenovelas are authorial texts produced according to a particular agenda and with a limited concern for broader audience interests beyond the immediate ones of the urban middle- and upper-middle-class viewing population.

Although the intertextual nature of *The Cattle King*, along with its political and social messages, was missed by most Macambira residents, the telenovela was followed and appropriated by many local viewers, male and female, in the discussion of local politics. In a small community like Macambira, local elections are major community events that can affect one's life in dramatic ways. During the broadcasting of this program, Macambira was experiencing a conflict-full mayoral campaign, which became a central factor in the analysis of the telenovela. The subtexts of political honesty and land reform that were missed, in their intertextual complexities, by local viewers were nevertheless appropriated by them according to their actual, experiential knowledge of politics and land rights in the community. Ethnographic data allowed a contextualization of the residents' readings and interpretations thanks to the depth of the researchers' knowledge of these residents' everyday lives and their views on local and national politics.

News and politics are typically considered to be part of the masculine sphere, and telenovelas are mostly situated in a feminine domain. There is a cultural construction that links femininity to melodrama and telenovelas, but that is not a universal association. In the case of *The Cattle King*, the presence of a political discourse, perceived as an interpenetration of the traditional feminine text by "masculine" news, was the excuse that most men gave for being involved with the narrative. The gender dynamics within the community – women's limited political power, or their increased economic power and greater familiarity with the telenovela genre – helped explain their greater skepticism toward representations of politicians in the telenovela. But these women's readings may also relate to their experiences of bartering votes for food, jobs, and other benefits. The lasting effect of this telenovela can be seen in the fact that community members would still talk about the *The Cattle King* 13 years later, to describe a telenovela that gave them relevant information applicable to their lived experience.

The Limits of Product Placement

With the exception of a few younger and better educated audience members, most viewers in Macambira perceived product placement to be an integral part of the narrative, or they did not perceive it as such at all. Clothing and fashion trends in the text, for example, were not perceived as product placement, but as an inherent element of the genre: the glamour of upper-class urbanites. While the narrative's agrarian element prompted the Globo network to promote product placements targeting the rural and agrarian market segments, these insertions were seen by viewers, especially males, as part of the discourse on modern farm life as practiced in more developed areas.

If viewers in Macambira were oblivious to these product placements, this was not due to an inherent inability to understand the nature of advertisement; it was rather a result of social, economic, and cultural constraints related to their isolation from

urban consumer culture (La Pastina, 2001). The notion of engagement, introduced earlier in this chapter, helps to understand the relationship between viewers and product placement as a dynamic one, in which different viewers address the same text through different subjectivities, but also from within contextual structures that enable or constrain the text–reader relationship. The perspective introduced by engagement presents the relationship between text and reader as an active process, although not necessarily a conscious one, in which everyday life needs to be taken into consideration in the analysis of viewers’ interpretations of media texts.

In the case of some products that viewers chose not to use, for instance a particular brand of beer, the visibility of the product in the telenovela served to outline the notion of local taste, possibly reinforcing these viewers’ perception of their own identity as different from that of the people in the south, from where most telenovelas (and media in general) originate. It appeared that, in order to read these product placement insertions in the narrative, viewers were required to have a certain exposure to the products. But that did not guarantee that the product placement would be perceived for what it was. The difficulty of communicating specific product placement without sensitizing viewers may have limited the information gathered. The sporadic nature of some insertions – not all of them were presented regularly throughout the narrative – affected product placement perceptions, too – because not all viewers watched the program every evening. Unlike a plot that could be followed even if an episode were missed, commercial insertions required the viewer to be present and attentive at the moment of their occurrence.

Limited access to television commercials – which was due to the viewers’ reliance on a satellite dish that received only the national feed – might also have had an impact on the relationship between viewers and consumer culture. Still, most residents were aware of commercials, and many of them craved greater access to these snippets of consumer culture and to the goods promoted in them. The isolation of the community hindered this process of integration within the consumer mainstream, creating the perception of a peripheral state in which viewers did not have access to goods and lifestyles they desired. In limited ways, some of these lifestyles and goods did reach the community, promoting the absorption of this “foreign,” normally urban, reality. Mostly they arrived through television and were adapted, as was the case with fashion. The limited access to commercials might also be connected with the uncritical opinions about product placements held by some viewers. A greater familiarity with commercial narratives and products could possibly lead viewers to relate these textual insertions to the goods advertised in commercial breaks.

The interpretation of product placement seemed to be tied to traditional gender stereotypes about men’s and women’s roles in society. Men were much more attuned to the narrative’s rural elements, while women were more interested in elements connected with the fashion trends normally associated with the wealthy urban characters in the romance. This split seemed to be in harmony with the gender divide in terms of taste for telenovelas; and the latter’s utility, as perceived by men and by women, was placed in the different realms of information-gathering and pleasure.

For women, issues associated with beauty and leisure were more central, allowing them to chat about those images and trends with other community members. For men, the agricultural narrative, which related to a traditional source of income in the region, was seen as a venue for potentially useful information. Males looked for elements in the narrative that they deemed realistic; in the case of *The Cattle King*, this was the rural theme. That theme also allowed Globo to target rural consumers – mostly constructed as males by the network, through product placement. Male viewers knew about hats and other elements of men's fashion, but the telenovela served mostly to connect these men to something they understood: rural life. It also allowed them to talk about the telenovelas with other local viewers, without the potential feminization sometimes associated with telenovelas among rural populations (Almeida, 2003; La Pastina, 1999; Prado, 1987).

The emphases on certain levels of the telenovela narrative created a sense of peripheral status, of the telenovela being foreign to the urban, or even rural, reality portrayed on the screen. Foreign does not necessarily mean beyond national borders; it implies rather that a notion of center–periphery within the nation can create a cross-cultural distance within the national borders. Not unlike Abu-Lughod (1993, 1995), who, in working with rural groups in Egypt, noticed that these groups perceived themselves to be in the periphery of the nation, I found that people in Macambira saw themselves as being at the periphery of Brazil. This perceived gap between the industrialized south and the rural northeast may have led to a representation of the “other” as foreign. In this process local viewers felt isolated, estranged from the reality and culture of the Brazil represented on the screen. This gap did not seem to reduce the sense of belonging to the nation as a political entity, but rather it created a sense of injustice and inequality. It also created the impression of a cross-cultural conflict in which the values, morals, and attitudes of those from the south were distinct from those of the viewers in Macambira, even though they continuously invaded local reality through the media. In creating bridges between the local realities, rural and urban alike, mass media – and telenovelas in particular – promote access to information about events, ideas, lifestyles, and goods. In this process they define what is urban and, by default, what is rural, and they do it typically in terms of absence. This gap between what is available and what is seen on the screen may reinforce in the viewers a growing sense of being peripheral to the national and to global spheres.

The role of telenovelas in promoting a vicarious participation in the modern world (Leal, 1988) cannot be overlooked in Macambira. The desire to learn about fashion, lifestyle trends, and behavior was intrinsically associated with the process of watching television. Throughout the fieldwork, the growing access to multiple television channels with the help of an increasing number of home satellite dishes was fueling the viewers' knowledge of consumer goods and lifestyles. This growing participation in consumer culture may also have impacted viewers' awareness of media as a commercial enterprise. Nevertheless, the local isolation and the *de facto* limited access, as well as the meager financial means, remained a hindrance to a more complete

participation in the global consumer culture. Technological change may bring greater access to and awareness of this culture, but, as this case study has demonstrated, the cultural capital that is available to viewers remains a central element in the process of media interpretation.

Conclusion

Continuing my long-term involvement with this community, which I came to call “Macambira,” I returned once again in the spring of 2010 to conduct fieldwork. Telenovelas remain a vital form of entertainment in a community that has grown somewhat – to 2,800 inhabitants from around 2,000 in March 1996, when I first moved to Macambira. The levels of cultural capital necessary to decode telenovelas remain an important factor for audience members, as much as the content of the telenovela, if full engagement is to happen. In the spring of 2010 the prime-time Globo telenovela *Viver a vida* (*To Live One’s Life*) had much greater competition from other telenovelas and programs in several channels, which are now available in most homes, far more than had been the case with *The Cattle King* in the second half of the 1990s.

But the greatest challenger to, and enabler of, telenovela engagement was the Internet. It arrived in Macambira in 2007 and slowly became available to about one hundred homes, in addition to a three-computer Local Area Network (LAN) house. Through the Internet, viewers could search for information about the telenovela, follow the author’s blog, search for gossip about the actors, and shop. The Internet turned out to be a radical experience for a community that had lived in great isolation a decade earlier.

As discussed earlier, *Viver a vida* dealt with the difficulties of a former model who had become disabled. One of her former colleagues was black, and racial discrimination was addressed early in the telenovela, as well as the plight of the *favelados*, slum dwellers in Rio de Janeiro. In this context sexuality, healthcare issues, race, and disability were the topics that emerged in conversation about the telenovela. Unlike the 1990s, when a lack of cultural capital had been a factor limiting many rural viewers’ ability to engage with product placement and intertextuality, viewers in 2010 had a greater repertoire at their disposal for decoding these texts.

I have briefly mentioned these changes to indicate how audience ethnography and what I term media engagement allow for a greater understanding of the complexities of television audience membership and of the role it plays in the life of a community. The immediate and larger context where the viewing process takes place is relevant to the process of decoding and interpretation, as is the available mediascape in the community and the level of cultural capital necessary to understand the intertextuality present in the text. These characteristics change from community to community, from text to text, and they change over time.

Telenovelas, as I was told many times, have a central role in community life. The television set functions as an electronic storyteller, a bard (Fiske & Hartley, 1978), bringing into the community tales of “distant” lands and “foreign” practices. In this process, television exposes viewers to “practical inadequacies in the culture’s sense of itself” (p. 88). People incorporate and challenge values, norms, and beliefs presented in the telenovelas, which on occasions destabilize the culture from within. As has been clearly discussed in the reception literature, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate cause and effect through this type of audience research. I would like to propose, however, that through long-term ethnographic work it is possible to understand how media texts such as telenovelas become part of the repertoire of the community, possibly serving to create social changes over time, though the accumulation of knowledge from these texts.

Audience ethnographies allow for the possibility of assessing the different elements involved in the reception process and of evaluating how these elements interact within the context of the locality in which the observation takes place, as well as with the culture and identity of community members. Television audiences are fluid; they present different characteristics in different situations, in response to different programs. “Watching television should be seen as a complex and dynamic cultural process, fully integrated in the messiness of everyday life, and always specific in its meanings and impacts” (Ang, 1991, p. 161).

Since their inception in Brazil, telenovelas have evolved from a melodramatic mode to a more complex genre, with multiple formats and complex narratives, a star system, and a wide fan base. But the structural changes that Brazil is experiencing – a stronger economy and a greater sense of its global presence – as well as the radical transformation of information technology are putting more and more pressure on this genre. Telenovelas’ audiences are increasingly fragmented, watching less live broadcasting and consuming more content online. An important area of research for telenovela audiences in Brazil will be to understand how the increasing presence of the Internet alters the role of telenovelas in the everyday.

The Internet also provides a unique opportunity to study fan communities and how these might be evolving, possibly creating a source of cultural capital for rural viewers who are unfamiliar with the urban landscape presented in most of these telenovelas. And the proliferation of cable and satellite services, together with the increasing consumption of imported programming through these service providers, might also be impacting viewers’ sense of belonging to the local, the national, and the global.

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Using Ethnography to Understand Everyday Media Practices in Australian Family Life

Donell Holloway and Lelia Green

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the use of ethnography within a media and cultural studies framework to investigate media practices within Australian families. It begins by outlining the theory and practice informing audience ethnography research, and then it provides an overview of audience studies research in Australia over the past quarter-century. The chapter then draws specifically upon the authors' audience ethnographies, to illuminate how complex behaviors such as those associated with media consumption are best investigated from a suite of different perspectives: participant observation, interview, field notes, and an engagement with a number of informants within each household. The production of cultural value through engagement with such media as the television and the Internet crosses the boundary between the household and the wider world and requires self-reflection and analysis on the part of interviewees. In addition to this, media practices within the family are both an indication of and a constituent influence upon the family's social and cultural norms. Issues about "who lets whom use what and when" are major sites of negotiation for autonomy and independence as children mature within the family context. Thus, by studying media audiences via ethnography, researchers are offered a privileged insight into people's everyday lives.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Introduction

A lot of times, the kids will ring us during the week and say “I’ve got an assignment to do, I’ve got to use the Internet,” so I go, pick them up and they do their assignments here. (Jasmine, divorced mother of school-aged children who live predominantly with their father)

(Green & Holloway, 2004, p. 180)

This chapter addresses the notion of audience studies from an Australian perspective and, specifically, from the perspective of Australian audience studies researchers who embrace an ethnographic approach. Like researchers in other countries and regions, Australian audience studies researchers adopt a range of philosophical and methodological approaches. In focusing here upon ethnographic methodology, the authors do not intend to imply that this is the only appropriate framework for all circumstances, or even that it is the dominant approach. Further, there is no quintessentially “Australian” way to do audience studies research and, as will become clear, many Australian researchers are indebted to the foundational work of British and US audience studies researchers.

Commercial audience research with a focus upon ratings, focus groups, surveys, and “people meters” generates data of critical importance to advertisers and mass media organizations. In contrast, audience studies ethnographies are more likely to be relevant to policymakers and to academic scholarship – particularly to researchers, faculty, and students of media, communications, and cultural studies. However, no perspective arises fully formed. This chapter traces the history of the ethnographic audience studies approach, which was championed by the UK’s Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies through the work of David Morley, and examines its influence upon audience studies research in Australia. The chapter relies on the work of Daniel Miller to illuminate aspects of the discussion and to underline how people’s consumption patterns can build a sense of connection to others. Analogously with Miller’s approach, this study is allied with work that analyzes and emphasizes the social construction of the meanings and uses of technology.

The chapter offers an overview of three major strands in audience research. It charts the shift from research on audiences’ media preferences and on the programs they watch to newer work, which investigates more deeply audiences’/users’ contextualized consumption of communication technologies in the home; then it moves into a detailed discussion of the Australian approach to conducting and writing up ethnographic audience research. In contemporary work, audience members become the focal points of their own stories in terms of what they do, and why, when they choose to consume media, and in terms of how they use communication technologies in domestic spaces. The conclusion ties the chapter together, it underlines the ways in which this approach to audience studies makes visible audiences’ priorities

and negotiations, and it outlines the importance of showcasing people's everyday media and communication choices for empirical work on audiences.

Illuminating the theory and practice of researching audiences, this chapter draws specifically upon two audience ethnography projects. Most of the examples cited here are drawn from a comparatively large study, of 26 families with school-aged children (Green & Holloway, 2004), which was funded by the Australian Research Council (2002–2005) and examined the place of the Internet in Australian family life. The smaller study constituted Donell Holloway's research for the Masters degree (Holloway, 2003), which examines the spatial geography and the increasing number of media screens in Australian domestic spaces. Quotes from this second study will be indicated by the siglum "[Holloway, MA]." This is not to imply that the two projects chosen here represent the only, or the best, audience studies research coming out of Australia. Indeed the past generation of researchers in this field includes much exemplary work – for instance Palmer (1986b; now Gillard), Hodge and Tripp (1986), Ang (1991), Moyal (1995), Nightingale (1996), Lally (2002), Balnaves, O'Regan, and Sternberg (2002), and McKee, Albury, and Lumby (2008). The research presented here is one manifestation of the Australian approach to audience studies research.

Influences on Audience Ethnography in Australia

He [Matthew, 14-year-old son] prefers to use the lounge room because it is the bigger TV. It's also got the heater in it. At this time of the year it is the warmer room. It's also more comfortable [. . .] But also the other thing I think is because I'm usually in the kitchen and that's closest to, perhaps, where I am. It's also closest to where his food and drink is. But I like to think that perhaps it's also closer to [any] interaction with me.
(Mum, Lisa)

(Holloway & Green, 2008, pp. 50–51 [= Holloway, MA])

David Morley, Audience Studies and the Domestication of Technology

David Morley pioneered an approach to audience studies that put it in direct opposition to the kinds of ratings surveys that had previously been termed "audience research." Whereas most ratings were about quantifying and managing the audience (Ang, 1991), Morley's approach to studying audiences centered upon understanding the meanings that audience members made from their engagement with media products. This new, qualitative approach was initiated in the late 1970s, by Charlotte

Brunsdon and David Morley (among others), with a research project focusing on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)'s evening magazine current affairs program *Nationwide* (Brunsdon & Morley, 1978; Morley, 1980). The *Nationwide* study was originally set up to interrogate Stuart Hall's (1973) influential encoding/decoding model of communication, which argued against the classic sender–message–receiver framework (Shannon, 1948a, 1948b; Weaver & Shannon, 1963).

The classic communication model saw any problems with the effective communication of meaning as resulting from “noise” or “interference.” Hall's approach was to critique all three elements of the Weaver and Shannon model. He argued that the sender does not have the power to determine the reception of the message; the message can never be transparent as to meaning; and the receiver (audience) has the power to read the message in a variety of ways (Proctor, 2004). According to Hall, any message sent would prompt one out of three possible readings in the receiver. The “dominant” reading was the communication intended by the message sender; a “negotiated reading” was one where some elements of the dominant reading were accepted and some rejected; and an “oppositional” reading occurred when an audience member rejected a reading in its entirety. Testing this out, Morley had unionists (oppositional) and managers (dominant) watch *Nationwide* content in two separate groups and recorded their very different reactions to the program. As a result of the *Nationwide* study, Morley argued that the meanings people make of media reflect their social and cultural backgrounds: ultimately, audiences invest media with meanings. This approach to audience research positioned audience members as powerful and as able to offer an affirmative response to media, which honored their specific view of the world.

Morley went on to develop a more naturalistic approach to audience research. One of the critiques of the *Nationwide* study was that a group of people rarely found themselves sitting down together for the express purpose of watching a television program and commenting upon it. Instead, the practice of media consumption was integrated into everyday life and was generally a domestic activity. Responding to these comments, Morley's next big project was *Family Television* (1986), a study of the consumption of television within the family home. Just as the *Nationwide* research was about the viewing position of the audience rather than about the content of the program, *Family Television* was about a lot more than the simple act of watching TV. In Morley's opinion, “the social dimensions of ‘watching television’ – the social relationships within which viewing is performed as an activity – have to be brought more directly into focus if we are properly to understand television audiences' choices of, and responses to, their viewing” (Morley, 1986, p. 15). Inevitably, given that *Family Television* was based upon interviews with couples, the book addressed gender, power, and domesticity as well as audience responses to program content.

Morley used his interviews with 18 families to illustrate the dynamics of television consumption in everyday life. As he was to put the situation subsequently, in Daniel Miller's (1995) reader on consumption studies, “Once one takes seriously the fact that

television is a domestic medium (and is characterized by program forms specifically designed for that purpose), it becomes clear that the domestic context of television viewing is not some secondary factor, which can subsequently be sketched in" (Morley, 1995, p. 316). Rather, argues Morley, "the domestic context of TV viewing, it becomes clear, is constitutive of its meaning" (p. 321).

By the early 1990s the theoretical frameworks developing around audience studies had expanded to examine the ways in which households "domesticated" technology. The "domestication of technology" conceptual framework was spelled out in a seminal chapter by Roger Silverstone, in collaboration with Eric Hirsch and David Morley (1992). The three constructed the household as an entity with permeable boundaries and saw technology as being drawn into the household to meet particular social and cultural needs. The dynamic of "appropriation" marked the stage at which a technology was desired, sourced, and procured for the household, while that of "objectification" addressed the placement of the technology and the relative access enjoyed by different family members. "Incorporation" described the way in which the technology was integrated within the rhythms and practices of daily life. Finally, "conversion" assessed the means through which the products of technology and the information, knowledge, opinion, and understandings forged through its consumption could be harnessed to the broader ambition of identity formation and the creation of cultural capital.

In a refinement of the original model, Silverstone and Haddon (1996) proposed that the creative processes of "incorporation" and "conversion" should be considered in terms of everyday innovation and everyday innovators. They argued that consumers of technology find novel and unanticipated ways of responding to the opportunities afforded to them (e.g., Marvin, 1988), and that this becomes evident when we examine the ways in which people construct their relationships with technology. Such a perspective ties in with the notion that individuals, even within the same household, inhabit dynamic communication ecologies that are particularly tailored for them (Carey, 1993; Sless, 1995). These ecologies are constructed imaginatively, according to the materials available, the needs of the individual, and the preferences of the people that an individual communicates with. Over the past 50 years television has provided much of the cultural raw material that audience members use as conversation topics and through which they construct their sense of a wider social project. Since the turn of the century, however, people in Western democracies have increasingly turned to the Internet as well for the provision of a context for their place in the world.

Within audience studies, when researchers analyze people's use of communication technologies, they also comment on how audiences use the products of mass, niche, and user-generated media. Audience members fashion semiotic material from the media in ways that express their personal values and pleasures, allowing people to connect with each other. This "conversion" phase marks the climax of the functional value of popular culture as embodying "social pleasures and meanings" (Turner, 1996, p. 42). Thus the domestication of technology framework is also

implicated in the theory of consumption, since a major role of information and communication technology, in terms of audience studies, is to provide access to programs and material that individuals can consume and convert into social currency.

Daniel Miller and the Theory of Consumption

They're almost expected [by the schools] to have computer skills and if they don't have the exposure to the variety of programs that are available then they don't learn those skills and the research that goes with it [. . .] What's the awful phrase? Knowledge is power. (Interviewee)

(Green, Holloway, & Quin, 2004, p. 90)

As the consumption of media tells us about audiences, so the social biography of an object illuminates the lives of the people who use it (Kopytoff, 1986). Studying the ways in which people consume goods, services, and content offers a holistic view of people's engagement with media and technology and indicates how patterns of consumption connect audience members with others. US academic Igor Kopytoff highlighted the cultural dimension of consumption by arguing that "things" had a social biography as a result of their contribution to the social lives of their users. He demonstrated that consumption is a process particularly revealing of social and cultural value. His famous biography of a car in Africa "revealed an entirely different biography [or history] from that of a middle-class American, or Navajo, or French peasant car" (p. 67).

Daniel Miller's work *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987) ties the consuming subject to the contexts of household and mass production – including the production of mass media. His theory was tested in fieldwork in Trinidad that examined Trinidadian audiences' consumption and conversion of *The Young and the Restless*. At first glance this television series might seem to be an unlikely point of focus for Miller's work on consumption in a struggling postcolonial nation like Trinidad. The program deals with the improbable lives and loves of an ill-assorted collection of mainly white American characters, predominantly young and/or socially and sexually restless. Yet Miller could not ignore the great importance that his interviewees placed on being able to watch each episode of this soap opera:

Few televisions fail to attract a neighbour or two on a regular basis. Individuals may shout deprecations or advice to the characters during the course of the programme. Afterwards there is often collective commentary and discussion. There is a considerable concern to spread news of important events quickly. I was slightly "shocked" in my vicarious sense of propriety, when an important Muslim festival I was watching was interrupted by three ladies who collectively announced to the assembled group some new development which we had missed by taking part in the ceremony. (Miller, 1992, pp. 168–169)

Miller tried to rationalize the importance of the program for its Trinidadian audience and argued that it reinforces the “bacchanal as the lesson of recession [. . .] [a lesson] which insists that the domestic and the façade of stability is a flimsy construction that will be blown over in the first storm created by true nature” (p. 179). The idea here is that the seeking of pleasure and enjoyment are appropriate responses to deprivation, and that what may appear regulated and ordered on the surface is in truth only a veneer. Miller goes on to suggest that the program “colludes with the local sense of truth as exposure and scandal” and that audience members use the program as a way to discover and discuss the vagaries of appearance and reality, hope and fear, which make sense to them as a narrative for their daily lives. In this way *The Young and the Restless* “is not just Trinidadian but [. . .] ‘True True Trini’” (ibid.) and is identified by Trinidadians as communicating fundamental realities germane to their lived experience.

While the mass audience may be conceived of in terms of its international dimensions, audience studies research is concerned with uncovering the local construction of global culture (Morley, 1991). Given that elements of popular culture are valued and traded in debate and discussion, it is gossip, the exploratory and the new that has greatest conversion value and is the easiest to trade socially. Dynamic by nature, popular culture is continuously reinventing itself in local cultural exchange. Meanings are constructed collaboratively, at the level of the household and the individual conversation, through the circulation and exchange of ideas, memories, and opinions prompted by media products. Audiences are active in their use of media materials both as a means of communication with others and as a way in which to make sense of their world.

The Social Construction of Technology

It's great for this spontaneous kind of thing [. . .] I do communicate with France, with my friends [there]. Not extensively, but here and there I send an email. I go online and then I usually send everyone an email quickly when I've got a couple of hours. (Nadia)
(Holloway & Green, 2003, p. 11)

Both the domestication of technology and the theory of consumption sit within the overarching conceptual framework of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Social constructionism is a branch of epistemology (the study of knowledge, one of the traditional branches or “parts” of philosophy); hence it is concerned with the philosophical understanding of what people know and how they know it. Within the general debate about knowledge, social constructionism is sometimes positioned as the opposite of essentialism (Oderberg, 2007), which is built around the contrary idea that things have an inherent or essential meaning that underpins, but is entirely separate from, the ways in which they are socially constructed.

Social constructionism refers to the shared effort of a group, community, or entire society to construct meanings around an object or thing. For example, a number

of human societies construct the “pig” as “unclean” or “polluting”; in contrast, others construct it as ham, pork, or bacon. Communities and associations of animal rights activists might construct the “pig” as an intelligent animal, generally held in circumstances of unimaginable deprivation and tortured in order to provide humans with food that is often too rich in calories for their own good. In all these ways, argue social constructionists, the project of the construction of meaning is a social one, in which people deepen their understandings through shared discussion and through shared actions that put those understandings into practice. Discourse and narrative analysis become, accordingly, useful tools for understanding these socially produced “writings.” Key theorists in this field include Game (1991), Searle (1995), Hacking (1999), and Burr (2003).

The social construction of technology (SCOT) is generally associated with the work of Pinch and Bijker (1984), which was further developed by Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch (1987). It offers both a theory and a methodological approach that sets out a series of steps to follow when analyzing the uses of a technology. Within the SCOT framework, particular emphasis is placed upon “relevant social groups,” principally the producers and the users of a technology. Such “relevant social groups” can also include regulators and journalists, for instance. While one criticism of the SCOT approach is that there are no objective tests as to what constitutes a relevant social group, within the context of social constructionism the identification of any relevant social group is itself the outcome of social constructionist processes.

As social constructionism can be contrasted with essentialism, so the social construction of technology can be contrasted with technological determinism. Technological determinism argues that the “nature” of the technology determines its effects. One example of the technological determinist perspective is Theodore Roszak’s polemic against the computer:

No matter how high the promise of that age [the information age] is pitched, the price we pay for its benefits will never outweigh the costs. The violation of privacy is the loss of freedom. The degradation of electoral politics is the loss of democracy. The creation of the computerized war machine is a direct threat to the survival of our species. It would be some comfort to conclude that these liabilities result from the abuse of computer power. But these are the goals long since selected by those who invented information technology, who have guided it and financed it at every point along the way in its development. The computer is their machine; its mystique is their validation. (Roszak, 1994, p. 233)

A social construction of technology approach argues that the social potential of a technology changes over time, according to its use. The fact that the Internet was originally the creation of the United States Department of Defense’s Advanced Research Projects Agency does not mean that it is only ever, and can only ever be, a technology of war (Green, 2010).

Australian Audience Studies

Writing [emails] on the internet has that sort of anonymity that talking on the phone doesn't, like writing letters to and fro to people, but it's also immediate so you [have to] be careful what you say because you can say the wrong thing and then "Bam!" (Donna, discussing communication with her ex-husband during the breakdown of her marriage)

(Holloway & Green, 2003, p. 10)

When many Australian researchers argue for an "ethnographic" approach to audience studies (Gray, 2003), they are constructing a specific notion of ethnography, which suits their own purposes. It is ethnography that placed David Morley in the living-rooms of families and couples, to view along with them their shared and separate television programs. This approach to ethnography eschews the idea that it is still appropriate to gather together a group of people who would never usually watch television in each other's company – and to do it with the aim of sitting them down, screening a television program, and getting them to discuss it. For many Australian scholars, an ethnographic audience study aligns itself with *Family Television* and away from *The Nationwide Audience*, but it still accepts the insights provided by both research projects. It understands that the audience is powerful in its capacity to make and communicate meanings, and it assumes that this meaning-making power is most accessible to researchers in domestic spaces.

As in most Western democracies, there are three key components of Australian audience research: (1) research that informs policy and regulatory debates, which is often government sponsored; (2) research that has a marketing and sales focus; and (3) "academic" research, which investigates the importance of the media in people's lives and places media consumption within theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Each of these three areas will be briefly addressed, the greatest attention being paid to academic research and to key Australian scholars who have influenced the field. Audience research is often combined with content and textual analysis, so there is some specificity about the media programs to which the audience is responding.

Regulators and policymakers are interested in audience research because they believe that media has effects on audiences, even if it is unclear what effects occur in whose case, how, and when. This "media effects" hypothesis justifies some regulation of the media, for example the classification of movies and computer games that restricts them to audiences of the appropriate age. In post-World War II Australia the key authorities concerned with regulating broadcasting have changed over time, in response to developments in media, policy, and legislation. These successor institutions are the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (1949–1976); the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (1976–1992); the Australian Broadcasting Authority (1992–2005); and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA; 2005–2011). The Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007) carried out a major

study titled *Media and Communications in Australian Families*, while the Australian Bureau of Statistics also investigates such issues as Australian households' use of information technology and Australian Internet activity and access (2010a, 2010b).

Ratings research began as a means through which marketers and consumer behaviorists investigated and managed audiences, but academics soon began to use it to theorize the disciplining of audience members for commercial purposes. Critical theorists ultimately constructed the mass media as a way of delivering audiences to advertisers (Smythe, 1981). Australia's particular contribution to the field of ratings research lies in Ien Ang's (1991) seminal work on *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, Balnaves and colleagues' (2002) edited collection on *Mobilising the Audience*, and Balnaves, O'Regan, and Goldsmith's (2011) *Rating the Audience: The Business of Media*.

Whereas the ethos of the regulatory approach is based on a view that it is comparatively unproblematic to decide what is good and what is bad for would-be audiences, commercial audience research seeks to understand the media preferences of target publics, so that they can better deliver carefully tailored messages. The effort that goes into policymaking and commercial research indicates that audiences are problematic and can be unpredictable. Ideas about the active audience naturally follow on from the realization that different people form different understandings of the same media products, which means that they engage actively with what they consume. Over the past 25 years Australian academic audience researchers have tended to take an "active audience" approach to their work, which started with a burgeoning of research and publication in the mid-1980s.

The year 1986 was a good one for the new field of audience studies research in Australia. Bob Hodge and David Tripp (1986) published their book *Children and Television: A Semiotic Approach*, while Patricia Palmer (now Patricia Gillard) paid particular attention to girls' reception of television (1986a) and to the role of television as a source of material for children's play (1986b). In the same year an influential paper by Virginia Nightingale asked: "What's happening to audience research"? It was a precursor to her monograph on audiences (Nightingale, 1996).

Ann Moyal studied a different kind of "audience." In 1988 she investigated Australian women's uses of the telephone, conducting in-depth interviews with 200 women aged from 15 to over 75 and analyzing the participants' diaries in which they recorded their daily phone use. Using these data, Moyal suggested a distinction between "intrinsic" and "instrumental" uses of the phone where the latter involved information-seeking and the conduct of business (Moyal, 1995). Except for women who worked from their homes (who made 10–12 instrumental calls per week), Moyal's respondents averaged 2–6 instrumental calls over a 7-day period. This comparatively low level of instrumental activity contrasted with the high level of intrinsic calls: 20–28 per week, averaging about 15–20 minutes in length, but sometimes lasting up to an hour (ibid.).

The major purpose served by Moyal's respondents' intrinsic calls was "kinkeeping" (p. 289). This was Moyal's term for her respondents' use of prolonged and frequent communication to maintain and strengthen links with family and friends ("kith and

kin”). Kinkeeping meant that people who were emotionally connected with one another also remained closely aware of what was going on in each other’s lives. Citing Lana Rakow’s (1988) US studies, Moyal identified a major gender aspect to this emotional work, wherein kinkeeping was particularly recognized as “women’s business,” or “gendered work” and “gender work” (Moyal, 1995, p. 304).

The first Australian audience studies about computer usage began in the 1990s. They included Elaine Lally’s ethnographic study of computers in Australian homes, the arrival of the “personal computer” years before the domestic introduction of the Internet. Although Lally’s work was from the mid-1990s, it was published internationally in 2002 and included photographs of the family computer’s location in the domestic environment, helping the reader understand its place in the spatial and temporal fabric of the respondents’ homes. Robyn Quin and Jack Seddon followed Lally’s lead, but they specifically studied families with school-aged children and they investigated their use of the Internet. The fieldwork was carried out in 2002–2004, on the cusp of the transition from dial-up connections to the always-on broadband – and, ultimately, wireless – services. Some aspects of the research are included in Green (2010).

A recent Australian ethnography with a difference, by Alan McKee, Kath Albury, and Catharine Lumby (McKee et al., 2008), researched 1,000 members of the Australian audience for pornography, alongside contributions from producers and distributors of pornographic digital versatile discs (DVDs). A number of respondents contributed further to the research through in-depth interviews, and the results were published in *The Porn Report*. The authors argue that there is little evidence that pornography has negative effects among adult users, and they suggest that research that indicates otherwise has generally involved exposing non-pornography users to pornographic materials in laboratories: an unrepresentatively artificial environment. Additionally, the study indicates that most respondents believe their use of pornography offers positive benefits.

The Ethnographic Audience Research Approach

This chapter now considers ways in which ethnographic audience research may be approached and conducted. In general, an ethnographer, in embracing the ethnographic method, is making his or her presence explicit in the research. Skeggs, discussing feminist ethnography, comments that it is

[a] theory of the research process – an idea about how we should do research. It usually combines certain features in specific ways: fieldwork that will be conducted over a prolonged period of *time*; utilizing different research techniques; conducted *within the settings* of the participants, with an understanding of how the context informs the action; *involving the researcher in participation* and observation; involving an account of the development of relationships between the researcher and the researched and focusing on how experience and practice are part of wider processes. (Skeggs, 2001, p. 426)

Ethnographic audience research ticks most of these boxes, although an ethnographer in the anthropological tradition would quibble about the notion of “a prolonged period of time.” The period of time is prolonged in relation to that required by a survey or a focus group alone. In contrast to the survey, an ethnographic investigation involves multiple points of contact with the research unit. This unit can be the household, the parental couple (as in Morley’s case), or the individual within the household. The research approach discussed below stems from the authors’ Australian Research Council-funded “Internet in Australian family life” (IAFL) project. Eligible families had at least one child still at school and family members were interviewed separately, usually on two separate occasions.

The Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview approach utilizes a “guide” to the important topics to be covered in every interview, but it accepts that not all interviewees will wish to respond to all the aspects of the research in equal measure. Instead, the ethnographic interviewer learns more about his/her respondents’ views by allowing individual interviewees to set their own agenda within the research framework. This approach also allows for a more authentic communication and a more responsive exchange, and it genuinely values the interviewee’s input more than would be the case if the researcher determinedly inflicted the same questions upon all the respondents in the same way, using the same words and the same order in asking. Ethnographic audience researcher Shaun Moores describes his interview technique:

Interviews were relaxed in manner and conversational in tone – lasting up to two hours – and whilst I kept a mental checklist of key topics to be covered, informants were allowed the space to pursue issues which they perceived as important or relevant. They were actively encouraged to speak from experience and to relate episodes from their everyday lives. My style of questioning was chiefly open-ended, designed to produce narrative responses rather than brief answers. (Moores, 1996, p. 34)

Open-endedness implies lack of closure. As well as asking open questions, openness can be introduced through the use of multiple prompts: “Anything else?” Such flexibility and prompting limits the number of interviews that can be conducted in a day: it is unwise to schedule more than three, and they should be at least three hours apart. This gap allows for a break for the interviewer and ensures that he/she has time to travel to the next (interviewee-determined) location even if the first interview has lasted for up to two hours. In an ideal situation, researchers should offer the interviewee as much time as he/she wish to take. While the “average interview” length is typically one hour, the interview itself is usually preceded and followed by hospitable social exchange and by unrecorded general discussion, which can later be captured in the researcher’s field notes.

Interview as Social Event

The interview is itself a social event, and the researcher is embedded in it. The researcher is required to open communication, to establish trust, to offer an invitation and have it accepted, to travel to a convenient place of the interviewee's choosing (usually at the interviewees' home), to be welcomed there and offered refreshments. Once settled, the researcher and the interviewee participate in a face-to-face exchange that restates the reasons behind the research and the expectations of both parties. The researcher takes field notes of what is said and of what is seen. When the research involves technological equipment, such as a computer and access to the Internet, issues of objectification and incorporation remain important. Usually before the interview, sometimes after, the researcher asks about the placement of computers in the home. Typically, the researcher might ask to see the computers and the modem. He/she might check the access through broadband or dial-up. Is there more than one computer, and, if so, how many are connected to the Internet? Is the connection wireless, or does it use cable? Why are the computers placed in the positions in which they are found? At some point the researcher might ask and receive permission to take photographs of the computer work stations (Holloway, 2003; Lally, 2002); and in mid-discussion he/she might ask permission to turn on the recording, just so that he/she don't miss anything.

This ethnographic approach locates the interview within the context of a social information-giving exchange. It encourages the interviewee to talk about what they know: their family's approach to the Internet and the technology and telecommunications services required for accessing it. The ethnographic method values the everyday patterns and rhythms of family life and is passionately interested in the ways in which the family negotiates rights and opportunities for access. These are all areas upon which the interviewee is an expert and, as that expertise is recognized, the relationship develops and the interviewee warms to his/her topic.

Multiple Voices and Data Triangulation

The ethnographic interview has a rhythm: it typically ranges from half an hour to two hours in length. These parameters tend to reflect age and gender, as well as the sense of connection established between interviewer and interviewee. Domestic social life usually allows for one or two interviews in a single sitting; but, almost invariably with a household of three or more people, the researcher has to arrange a second visit to complete his/her work with the family. This is not a problem: it offers further validity to the approach. It offers the researcher an opportunity to check on different perspectives with different family members. Interviewing the parents and their child separately offers an element of "triangulation" and a range of viewpoints upon a topic:

Father of two, Xavier, expressed his concern about (what he perceived as) his teenage son's excessive use of the internet: "Well I think there's far too much time [. . .] Gavin'll spend a whole day on it. I try to get him to come to the footy on Sunday. No. He's available for friends [for online gaming and chat on the internet]. He'll spend all day on the computer" (Xavier). Son Gavin (16), in a separate interview, anticipated that this criticism had been made and felt compelled to counter it: "Well he [dad] makes comments like saying I'm not fit enough 'cause I spent too much time on the computer but I play soccer a lot. Like, I do sport perhaps everyday at school [. . .] I mean, I think, such a piece of crap (Gavin). (Green et al., 2004, p. 94)

Triangulation is a term borrowed from map-reading and surveying, which addresses a process through which a range of separate points can be used to identify and cross-check one unique location. This allows the person taking the readings to feel confident that they are indeed where they think they are. In ethnographic audience studies this triangulation dynamic is harnessed when field notes, interviewee comments, observations, and repeated visits all point to the same outcome. Thus Gavin and Xavier's exchange indicates that there is a discussion in the home about whether the teenager spends "too much" time on the Internet and what other activities might be consequently displaced. Triangulation allows the researcher access to information about complex beliefs and behaviors, and to multiple points of view.

Repeated visits also allow researchers to monitor change. Even the time between separate visits can be illustrative. For example, in Donell Holloway's Masters research, it became evident that a six-month gap was sufficient to identify a process of "cascade adoption." When revisiting two of the families within her six-family study she found that they had each recently purchased new or add-on technologies. Even though research participants had not anticipated the purchase of these technologies at the time of the initial interviews, within six months they had often "upgraded" their equipment or services by moving from dial-up to broadband or from one point of connection to wireless, or by buying a laptop as well as a desktop. One family had purchased a new, more powerful computer for the household, while another had acquired broadband access. The reasons for getting upgraded technologies are not always simple or unidimensional. Single mother of three Theresa (below) explained that a combination of pester power, changed work conditions involving less information technology (IT) support, and the prospect of improved connectivity influenced her decision to subscribe to broadband. She outlined her reasons in an email to Holloway:

We now access the Internet via broadband. I think this was from April 2003. There's a number of reasons for this: It's quicker, Nathan [15] was nagging cause ADSL is a better connection than the dial up modem for his gaming (which kept cutting out), and work advised staff that it was no longer supporting the option of giving staff access to the Internet from home (as they could not guarantee that this was complying with their AARNET responsibilities) via the dialup modem. And it is a much better service / access from / via the new ISP (Theresa, 44). (Holloway, 2003, p. 95)

Sometimes this cascade adoption occurred even though such a move had been explicitly ruled out in the earlier interviews.

Interviewing Children

On occasion, research participants are too young to be formally interviewed, yet their insights are still extremely important. This is especially the case if researchers wish to understand the means through which children enter Internet culture and become “enculturated” to the online environment. In her fieldwork Holloway, who is an experienced primary school teacher, encouraged her younger interviewees (aged approximately 5–10) to draw pictures of their ideal rooms, including where they would put a computer. These images provided access to a range of material that could then form the basis for a discussion with the child. This technique has also been used by Livingstone and Bober (2003).

One such image from Holloway’s work is included here, and represents Rhianna’s fantasy bedroom. Rhianna was aged 10 at the time of her interview, and her drawing reflects the desire of many children to use their bedroom as a “private place for socializing, identity display and just being alone” (Livingstone & Bober, 1998, p. 24). Rhianna’s fantasy disco space (below) also seems to distinguish this as a pre-teen girl’s fantasy bedroom. Pre-teen girls tend to use their bedrooms as “private place[s] for the enjoyment of personal music” (Marshall, 1997, p. 74).

Rhianna’s fantasy bedroom, with its media technologies as well as a funky hand chair and disco room, influenced (as she explained) by the retro film *Austin Powers*, acts as a reminder that contemporary children’s culture often seems quite

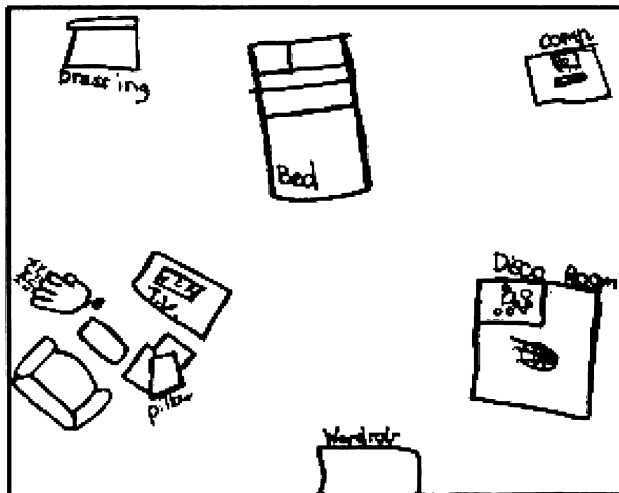


Figure 16.1 Rhianna’s fantasy bedroom.

indistinguishable from consumer culture. Children's involvement in a consumer culture, which is distinctly different from adults', is a relatively new Western phenomenon. It reflects a shift in the status of children and childhood, from a time at the start of the twentieth century, when large families were an economic asset, to much smaller numbers of "high-investment" children, one hundred years later. As children became liberated from the labor market and put into schools; as economic development and improvements in the standard of living provided increased "domestic well being; more clean clothes; more varied diet; cleaner, larger living spaces; more heating" (Seiter, 1998, p. 302); and as women's participation in the workforce increased, so, Seiter argues, a children's consumer culture steadily emerged.

This children's culture was an important part of Holloway's research into the increasing numbers of screens in people's homes and into family members' uses of the Internet in daily life. As well as asking children to talk to her as they drew their ideal rooms, Holloway would sit with the children and get them to show her how they used the computer. This included noting whether the child could turn the computer on him-/herself, seeing his/her folders, files, and favorite Internet sites, and finding out whether he/she used instant messaging software to talk to friends online. While older interviewees less commonly required such concrete ways for their knowledge to be accessed as part of the interview process, these strategies were useful with quiet teenagers, who were willing to contribute but who found "discussion" too taxing or difficult.

The use of these different ways of accessing information about individuals' and households' Internet culture involves some risk. The more data are collected, the greater the likelihood is that researchers will drown in details and find it impossible to process the material to their satisfaction. In ethnographic work it is important to maintain a sense of both the wood and the trees, as well as to have an understanding of what is already known in the field and of what is new, or specific to the project at hand. It may be impossible to do justice to all the data collected, but it is important to aim for a holistic overview as a means of identifying and disseminating critical elements of the findings. It is to the techniques of processing and analysis that this chapter now turns.

Processing and Analyzing Data

It [a teenage son's use of pornography] doesn't bother me at all. If he wants to do that then he can do it because he'll get sick of it and I think initially it was "let's see what we can do." I remember once, he called me in and says "Mum, come and look at her boobs" and I looked at it and I said "it's disgusting" or something and walked away and he laughed his head off. But I've never come in and found him looking at that stuff. I remember once, but I was home when he was looking at it. It's just not – [it's] something that I'm not really worried about. It's up to him.

(Green et al., 2004, p. 92)

The primary data in ethnographic research tend to consist of full transcript records of tape-recorded in-depth interviews; field notes and other researcher-noted observations; and specially created ancillary documents such as interviewees' drawings and photographs. Typically these elements will constitute a full text database that can be analyzed through the use of qualitative interpretative software such as NVivo. This analytical process is designed to facilitate an uncovering of the unconscious meanings and organizing principles used by interviewees to construct their view of the world. Making visible these underpinning elements of belief has some parallels with a "grounded theory" approach to analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), although the authentic use of grounded theory is to create new or revised theoretical propositions, which are grounded in qualitative data that can be further explored by other research.

While data analysis of large sets of verbatim materials can be thorough and complete and can seem to be objective through the use of appropriate software, there is always a subjective element determined by the researcher. This subjectivity is implicit in the decisions about who is interviewed, in the questions asked, in the size of the interview sample, in the inclusion of other research materials, and in the identification and use of themes from within the data. Two categories of transcribed data tend to be selected for inclusion in the writing up phase. The first priority is to identify interviewees' "common" experiences: insights and comments that recur in different contexts, offered by different interviewees. The clearest or most evocative statement of that common experience is the best one to use. The second set of sought-after data is the exceptional remark: the outlier. Including minority perceptions uncovered in the research is one way of offering balance and of honoring the diversity of the research population. It is also a demonstration that the people chosen and the questions asked have avoided the construction of a false conformity. A divergence of views brings the research to life.

In acknowledging the subjective element necessarily introduced in human communication by the research process, good ethnographic research often provides the reader with information about the ethnographer and his/her relationship with the research participants and, where this exists, his/her connection with the funding body. Sometimes research remains good even when the researcher has been unable to afford the time or cost of full transcription and has instead worked from partial transcripts. Such an approach can be justified by assessing field notes and summary data of the total database, with a view to identifying relevant themes. Following this meta-analysis, the researcher can drill down through the data to access the interviewees' verbatim comments related to the themes identified. These interview snippets are subsequently transcribed. In this semi-transcribed approach subjectivity is foregrounded more than is the case with a full-text database, but all ethnographic audience studies research is subjective.

Good ethnographic research does not concentrate upon establishing in any detail consistency between researchers from different projects, or between a project's interviewees. Instead, the aim of ethnographic research is to achieve what Geertz

(1973) calls a “thick description.” Talking about ethnographic anthropology, Geertz comments: “Rather than generalizing across cases, which is the normal scientific procedure, interpretive anthropology aims for ‘thick description’ by generalizing deeply within cases” (p. 26). In contrast with the primacy accorded by Geertz to thick description, Barrett (1997) takes the view that it is “the burst of insight” that characterizes “a well-developed sociological imagination and a flair for perceptiveness” (p. 249). He comments that,

although long periods of fieldwork and hard work are prerequisites to sound ethnography, these alone will not generate bursts of insight [which involve] deep penetrations into the minute details of people’s everyday life, quick perceptions that allow the field-worker to understand their innermost motives. (Barrett, 1997, p. 248)

All the direct quotations used in published research and final reports must come accurately from tapes that can be deciphered audibly and that are appropriately referenced and stored. Whether or not a full text database exists, the reader has a right to expect that verbatim quotes are verifiable. Even so, it is sometimes important that the respondent cannot be identified, and details of individual speakers are often partially fictionalized. Indicative biographical data are useful, however, and help the reader identify with the research and its findings. Naturally, only ancillary identifying information can be fictionalized – not verbatim quotes. Given this, it might sometimes be appropriate to fictionalize a place, if that place is not critical to the research or to the interview, and to fictionalize the names of people referred to by an interviewee. As a rule of thumb it is important to give an interviewee the possibility of hiding behind a “fact” in the research, if he/she is challenged by persons who think that they have recognized a speaker. In such cases an interviewee can make a statement like “Of course that’s not me, the interviewee quoted in that research has three children and I have one: it’s someone else.”

Ethnographic research offers a conversational input into research findings. This needs careful handling when one is writing up the research. It can be tempting to simply string together a patchwork of vivid quotes that, together, offer a “rich, deep” illustration of a theme. This is not good practice in Australian ethnographic audience studies research because it distracts from the goal of achieving rigorous analysis that underlies all good research outputs. Instead, quotations generally have to be introduced as an explicit illustration of a point being made, and also commented upon afterwards, in order to tie the verbatim quote clearly into the argument. In this way the research is not overwhelmed by the ethnography.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies’ approach to audience studies and has highlighted the importance of David

Morley's work in establishing the active role that audience members play in constructing meaning from media texts. It has also provided an overview of audience studies research in Australia over the past quarter-century, and it has positioned the authors' work in this context, subtly indicating that the notion of an active audience is now interrogated in terms of the media technologies that the audience in question uses as much as of the media programs the audience consumes. Thus an ethnographic study of multiscreen use in the family home (Holloway, 2003; Holloway & Green, 2008) or of family Internet use (Green et al., 2004) is a research response to emerging technocultures, as well as to changing media content. Once audience members are studied for the technologies they use, it becomes possible to see the connections they construct and maintain with others through technology-based communication. This reshaping of the field, made for the purpose of investigating how and why audience members use technology to connect with others, is now as important to audience studies as the meanings that these members make from content (if not even more important), and it puts the audience members and their priorities firmly at the center of the research paradigm:

When Lesley [the respondent's son] was looking at houses to buy in the east, I'd be on the Internet having a look as well to see what was on sale. "Lesley, have you looked at this one at such and such an agent?." So I'm on the west coast and he's on the east coast, [I'm] house-hunting for him over there [. . .] Now it's a [my] screensaver, his little house. It's awesome, so that kind of thing's really neat, to be able to bring family that are far away closer (Donna). (Holloway & Green, 2003, p. 8)

Ethnographic audience studies research requires an intensive commitment on the part of the researcher and an authentic engagement with the research participants. As a methodological approach, it has evolved over the decades and has been repurposed by media and communications scholars from the raw materials of methodologies used in slightly different contexts within sociology and anthropology. Ethnographic audience studies also privileges and celebrates the domestic and the everyday. It recognizes the value of understanding common experience, of exploring why people enjoy soap operas on television or reality TV. It avoids the value judgments of "high culture/low culture" debates and acts as a corrective to them. Given that one goal is to understand "social pleasures and meanings," the usual site in which these are produced is the domestic arena. Here people are more able to do what they wish in the ways they wish to do it: free from the constraints of employers and paid work regimes. Insofar as gender and age constraints prevent interviewees from consuming media in the time and place desired, ethnographic audience studies research can illuminate the power dynamics within the home and interrogate the mechanisms by which these power dynamics change – for example, as children get older and demand greater autonomy and responsibility.

Ethnographic audience studies is not so much about media consumption as about investigating the ways in which people consume media while forming and expressing their individual identities. Audience members use the media to construct an understanding of the society in which they live, of the ways in which their lives intersect

with that society, and of the means through which they are integrated within their social world. These understandings become accessible to the researcher from the rich data provided in in-depth interviews and from insights that illuminate the researcher's experiences, as well as the research participants' social practices and roles in different settings. While ethnographic audience research is subjective, it is also authentic. This research methodology offers many advantages as a way of explaining the importance of the media and of technologies of communication for the routines, rhythms, and events of everyday life.

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Beyond the Active Audience

Exploring New Media Audiences and the Limits of Cultural Production

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ABSTRACT

The digital media landscape presents unprecedented opportunity for research on media audiences, as the latter navigate and make sense of the new media. Although studies on how audiences make sense of news, information, and commercial discourses are very important, scholarship must take into account that – particularly in the era of Web 2.0 – the audience is neither “passive” nor simply “active” in how it makes sense of the media. Rather, the new media have almost fully collapsed the differences between audience and producer. This chapter applies Bourdieu’s understanding of cultural production to the study of new media audiences, reflexively focusing on research on girls’ use of one interactive media tool: instant messaging. However, the chapter also acknowledges how patriarchal hegemonic structures within the “old” media, the corporatization of the Internet, and issues of access prevent a universal interpretation of any new media audience; and, although spaces of resistance are available through the audience’s power to produce cultural artifacts, the scope of this resistance is still limited.

In a popular painting, *The Treachery of Images*, by René Magritte, a pipe is famously pictured floating above the phrase *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* ("This is not a pipe") presenting a paradox and inviting its viewers to question further the notion of what is represented before them.

As I sit down at my computer, staring at a screen filled with windows of Facebook, blog comments, "friends" awaiting invitations to chat, a Twitter feed, and good old-fashioned email, I can practically envision a sentence floating beneath the monitor: "This is not an audience" (or, to paraphrase Magritte, *Ceci n'est pas un public*). Despite all of the audience comments and status updates before me, and despite the fact that the audience appears to be actively reading and engaged as well, this is not an audience.

Or rather it is not an audience in the sense in which we, as media scholars, have traditionally considered the audience. Certainly, the audience has always been active to a certain degree. For the sake of making a point about activity, one could refer to the very active – vociferous, sometimes downright noisy – theatre audiences of the late eighteenth century. It is also important to consider mass media research paradigms in which some audiences were conceived of as being not particularly active. Many felt that newspapers and broadcast media did not allow for true interactivity, and this could be true; despite the active meaning-making process that many critical scholars from the early 1980s onward attributed to the audience, some mass communication scholars today conduct studies that still seem to consider traditional mass media messages to flow directly from the medium to the receiver. However, even traditional media effects researchers must acknowledge the challenge that the interactive nature of new media poses for one-way paradigms of media – audience interactions. So, for all intents and purposes, the audience today is not an audience.

In fact this point must take us toward the realization that the new media audience is so much more than just an audience. This chapter seeks to track the negotiated meaning of "the audience," from early Internet audience research to studies in the era of Web 2.0 and beyond, by focusing on two crucial ideas. First, the audience is now also a producer and gatekeeper. Second, the audience is now its own audience (and, perhaps even more crucially, that audience is aware that it has an audience). In the final part of the chapter – keeping in mind this complicated, negotiated construction of the new online audience – I will discuss two of my own qualitative audience-focused research studies to illustrate how this shifting audience presents both opportunities and challenges within the digital media environment.

The Audience as Producer

Although the field of audience studies has a long history in media studies, this chapter, which is by no means exhaustive, focuses on new media audience research in cultural studies – research that relates to youth culture. The chapter takes a selec-

tive path to illustrate certain conceptual points about audiences/users/consumers from previous research. However, it is helpful to begin here by using one of the earliest and best known communication models as a starting point for an argument. Shannon and Weaver's (1948) Source → Message → Channel → Receiver model (SMCR) very clearly illustrates how early scholars conceived of messages as flowing directly to audiences. The receiver was the end-point. End of story. Traditional media organizations today may still consider this model to exemplify their industry to a large degree, though they certainly have had to re-evaluate the audience in the age of interactive media. As their audiences have eroded and migrated to digital sources of news and information, which allow for increased personalization, immediacy, and interactivity, SMCR is far too simplistic a model.

Furthermore, this work by no means discounts the more "traditional" audience work that defines an audience either as a passive receptacle for mass media or as a creative, thinking, and constantly negotiating entity, which transforms traditional media texts. Instead it invites readers to reimagine or renegotiate their own understanding of an audience, as well as the eroding distinction between traditionally defined senders and receivers of information and the blurring or merging of roles between these formerly distinct groups. I mean to suggest that interactive media are fairly different animals from traditional media, and they require a different kind of audience – or perhaps something entirely different from an audience altogether. Our vocabulary might have to change.

The earliest new media audience studies felt more like anthropological experiments in an uncharted foreign terrain, and few communication scholars thought of them specifically as "audience studies." Some of the earliest scholars were graduate students, and some of the key works were Masters theses; Rheingold, who wrote one of the earliest studies, was not even a traditional academic. Methods were primarily qualitative and specifically ethnographic, and they often fell in the realm of participant observation – methodology not so different from the more groundbreaking one used in traditional media audience studies on television and print audiences in the 1980s and 1990s. Early media scholars studying online audiences understood even then that their audience was something of a different animal, as it could immediately respond to any method of study. For one thing, the audience members often did not engage in the same "social" meaning-making with the texts before them, because they engaged in their online practices alone, sitting at a computer. For another, only a relatively small portion of the population actually had the knowledge and means to access these mediated online worlds. Often the research was written from a first-person perspective, as it questioned new sociological and cultural phenomena, to be found online within early text-based virtual communities known as MUDs – an acronym for "multi-user dungeon," which referred to various Internet-based forums – and MOOs – an acronym for "MUD, object oriented" (Bruckman, 1992; Dery, 1994; Kendall, 1996; Reid, 1995; Rheingold, 1993; Turkle, 1995) as well as newsgroups and listservs (Baym, 1993, 1995; Gurak, 1997). In this work, the authors demonstrate very clearly the agency that the audience is granted in its ability

to make sense of not only the content before it – as was generally the case in past mass communication audience studies using more traditional media such as books, television, film, radio, magazines, and newspapers – but also of the medium itself. These scholars used primarily a combination of participant observation, online interviews, and quotation, in their own research, of the audience's posted text. Their research often seemed to demonstrate the future possibilities and potential of the new media as much as to understand the audience that engaged with it.

In the early 1990s, in the pre-web Internet world, these studies were a marvel for anyone who saw “cyberspace” as a playground for identity play, anonymous protest, intellectual discussion, rhetorical advancement, and unfettered creativity in a space that provided a sense of equality through its disembodied anonymity. Several early audience studies on the Internet quoted the *New Yorker* cartoon of a dog sitting at a computer screen and telling another dog: “No one knows you're a dog on the Internet.” These early audience studies signaled to the larger community of media scholars that the new medium was a new space in which to find an audience, albeit a relatively small one. Still, the studies were not shy about extrapolating online socio-cultural phenomena to the real world. Rheingold wrote:

MUDs are living laboratories for studying the first-level impacts of virtual communities – the impacts on our psyches, on our thoughts and feelings as individuals. And our attempts to analyze the second-level impacts of phenomena like MUDs on our real-life relationships and communities lead to fundamental questions about social values in an age when so many of our human relationships are mediated by communications technology. (Rheingold, 1993, p. 146).

These early studies also signaled a shift in the very idea of what constituted an audience. Clearly Internet users – even those studied in research that measured and compared the effects of online media content and those of traditional media content – were able, at least to a certain extent – through emails, chatrooms, and rudimentary discussion forums – to respond directly to the gatekeepers who produced content and to other audience members. Furthermore, as the audience members came to understand better how to use the tools of the web and how to construct their own web pages, the already blurry line separating audience member from producer shifted completely. In order to grasp better a particular facet of the new media audience, scholars began to analyze the web pages they produced. For example, Stern (1999) conducted an analysis of web pages produced by adolescent girls, and she did so in order to gain insight into how these pages served to broadcast to the world the girls' innermost thoughts. This was a novel study of an audience, one that, at the time, was not considered highly technical, both because of stereotypes associated with gender and because it was years before Xanga and other personal blogging applications became popular among teens and tweens. In 2000 Hine's groundbreaking book *Virtual Ethnography* granted a stronger sense of academic legitimacy to the idea of studying audiences/producers online. Although ethnography is often seen as

a more immersive research approach to studying sociological phenomena, Hine suggested that online communities allowed for immersion and in fact were ripe for in-depth study that did not require the researcher to leave her office. As was the case in active audience studies, ethnography – even just in a virtual sense – became an accepted means of analyzing online audience members within their “native” environment.

Despite the generally accepted legitimacy of virtual ethnography, Internet audience studies in the early part of the millennium also signaled that there had been a change in that audience itself. As access to the Internet increased, and the web and digital media technologies became a more normalized part of the lives of millions of people worldwide, the studies no longer felt as though they were being conducted in a foreign land. People’s behavior and emotional response online was often studied as an extension of their offline behavior, which suggested that the Internet audience did not present the separate facets of its life in a vacuum; and indeed studies from Clark (1998) on teen dating and from Sveningsson (2002) on friendships and romances online showed that online social bonds sometimes extended to varying degrees into the offline world.

Additionally, studies suggested that audiences integrated their new media use into their daily routines – at work, school, and home; new media were no longer sites of pure play, or a laboratory for identity negotiation, as was suggested in the early 1990s. In an effort to analyze this blurring line between the real world and the online world, scholars such as Lewis and Fabos (2000), Ribak (2001), and Livingstone (2003) studied their “audiences” while they were engaged in using new media within their homes. More recently, Gray (2009) used a combination of online and “traditional” ethnography to explore the “public” and “private” spaces in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender teenagers in rural America negotiated “queer visibility” – from their hometown community centers, where they would have to appear in person, to Web forums, where they could communicate anonymously if they wished. Similarly, Clark (2003) combines Web and real-world ethnographic methods to study adolescents and spirituality. My own research on adolescent girls’ use of instant messaging with regard to gender and identity, which will be discussed later in this chapter, uses a similar, multiple-method qualitative approach to explore one active audience’s use of new media technology. Press and Livingstone (2006) regard this idea – recognizing that digital media are simply another part of the audiences’ lives – as a welcome new direction in new media audience studies, with the help of which the research could go beyond “virtual ethnography” to “internet ethnography” and begin “to contextualise interpretation of online texts (reception of what’s on the screen) in relation to consumption of a technological good in the domestic setting (in front of the screen)” (p. 17).

Research on audiences tends to evolve with the availability of digital media technologies. As more interactive tools emerged on both amateur and commercial web sites, scholarship borrowing from the methodological toolboxes of anthropology and traditional mass communication proliferated in order to address this “new” media

audience. Starting in the mid-1990s, most news and consumer-oriented websites included their own forum sections, bulletin boards, and community sections; but scholarship on online fans of entertainment programming and on their participation in virtual communities (or “fan boards”) was the most robust. In these communities, passionate communication among users and creative uses of digital media are rampant, which makes them a particularly interesting (and perhaps, unusual) site for audience study. Often focusing on identity articulation and the production of cultural artifacts, audience studies of Internet fan communities analyze discursive construction and interactivity both among audience members and between the audience and the text. For example, Whiteman (2009) and Williamson (2005) study online communities of fans of the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spin-off *Angel* in order to reveal their negotiation of sexuality and gender identity; and Jenkins (2006) examines a variety of fan communities in order to better comprehend the role of the convergence between old and new media in producing hybrid (and sometimes, resistant) artifacts based on the *Harry Potter* series, on *Star Wars*, and on the US reality TV show *Survivor*. Costello and Moore (2007) used a web-based survey to learn how fans of various TV shows used the Internet to demonstrate how audience members were empowered by their ability to interact with one another and to act as “outlaw” fans, resisting the preferred narratives of shows, just as Ang and Michaels did working in person with fans of *Dallas*. These are only a few published studies in a sea of work on fan communities; but they demonstrate precisely how researchers could interrogate a traditional audience (“traditional” in the sense that the audience members watch television and movies) that functions very much like the theoretical “active audience” envisaged by Hall (1973, 1981). Additionally, this work supports the notion of an active – and often resistant – producer/audience member, an essential consideration in the study of the interactive new media audience. Hermes (2009), however, problematizes the consideration of online fan communities as “typical” audiences: “Fandom is appreciated for its specialized knowledge and affective investment, related to moods, feelings, and attitudes. Everyday media use, by comparison, is the lower form, which requires no other investment than fleeting attention,” she writes. “Fan studies are attractive and problematic in equal measure.” Still, she acknowledges that audience research, which considers its subject as an “empowered consumer-producer” within “mediated networks” – as does Jenkins in his 2006 studies on convergence and peer production – signals a new type of audience study, in which the audience members are not only contributors but also producers. This, Hermes says, is an important next step within audience studies in the new media environment.

Although this is most explicit in Jenkins’ work, other scholars have worked to make the distinction as well. For example, understanding the dynamics of bloggers and their audiences requires recognition that the audience is not only interactive but also productive. A blog, which could be defined as an easy-to-publish website that functions as a journal or personalized news site, provides tools to enable even the technically less inclined web audience members to publish their own musings and to attract audiences of their own. Largely characterized by its grassroots activism and

do-it-yourself ethics, the blogging movement captured both media and scholarly attention in the middle part of the previous decade (2000 to 2010). In *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*, Gillmor referred to the “former audience” in his analysis of what was happening as a result of increasingly interactive media online:

[T]he grassroots are transcending the pallid consumerism that has characterized news coverage and consumption in the past half-century or more. For the first time in modern history, the user is truly in charge, as a consumer and as a producer. (Gillmor, 2004, p. 137)

However, in the primary research conducted on blogs, most studies seem to focus on bloggers as gatekeepers rather than on the blog audiences, who contribute largely to the content within blogs (McGill, Iggers, & Cline, 2007; Steyn, van Heerden, Pitt, & Boshoff, 2007; Tomaszewski, Proffitt, & McClung, 2009). Few audience studies have examined both the blog’s founders/writers and its participants (apart from Carver, 2009 and a study of my own, which will be described later in this chapter), even though scholars have made clear that the audience – or the “former audience,” as Gillmor calls it – is what differentiates a blog from a traditional web page built with little or no capability for interactivity among users/audience members and the producers who created it. This becomes a more important issue for audience studies within the new media terrain of Web 2.0 and beyond, because the audience has added yet another layer to remind us that in fact it is still not an audience in the traditional sense.

The Audience Has an Audience (or The Audience is an Audience with An Audience)

With the immense popularity of social networking sites like Facebook and live micro-blogging services like Twitter, the meaning of “audience” must again be renegotiated and reimagined. Think of it as Audience 2.0 (Hermes, 2006). In this universe, new Internet applications and mobile devices make it incredibly easy for the audience to act as cultural producer on the fly (by writing and publishing whatever its members wish, to a very large audience of “friends”; by posting photographs; by commenting on others’ writing and posting). Not only is the audience/producer line still as blurry as ever; now the audience itself has an immediate, built-in audience that reads and views everything it, the audience, wishes to share. Furthermore, the members of this built-in audience are more aware than ever before that they are being watched in the new, interactive social media environment. In fact, being watched by – or, in the parlance of Web 2.0, being connected to – others is simply part of the attraction to using social media technologies; in

Twitter, part of the point is to be “followed” and to “follow” others as they post 140-character updates throughout the day. When a Facebook user posts a photo he has just taken from his phone to show the view from his hotel window on his vacation in Mexico, he certainly hopes to receive comments, or even just a small gesture of approval, as a Facebook friend hits the “like” button. When a Twitter user posts a link to an interesting article she read about her professional discipline in that morning’s *New York Times*, she hopes to be “re-tweeted” by many of her followers, thus increasing her own visibility in her community and sharing an excellent article with people who otherwise might not see it.

It is easy to get caught up in technical innovation, but Facebook and Twitter and their effects on audiences are not exactly the point. After all, new applications and services that we have not even heard of yet will certainly grow and dominate media stories and conversations in the coming years (no doubt you, the reader, will be already giggling at these references to Twitter and Facebook and thinking how far interactive media have come since this chapter was published). However, as scholars of the media, we should still observe changes in the audience as they are happening; and we can use the same methodologies and philosophical reasoning in studying the audience as we have from the time of the earliest audience studies.

Many scholars have called for changes in the way we consider audience studies in this most recent phase of Internet communication development. In his article “Participation, Remediation, Bricolage,” Deuze (2006) writes that, since people live in ways that increasingly connect, both offline and online, scholars should consider studying the various components of digital culture rather than focusing on one aspect of it. In considering how the new media audience may be studied for the “work” it produces, Napoli (2010) asks whether traditional mass communication research typologies can be applied in the study of such an interactive emergent environment. He calls for a “broadening” of the term “mass” as it applies to media, acknowledging that audiences must be considered both senders and receivers of mass communication. Hermes (2009) wonders whether audience studies are even appropriate in an era where “we are smarter as knowledge communities than as individuals” and “the wisdom of crowds stands in contrast to the strange mix of sophistication and naïveté that we find when talking with individuals” (p. 124). Ultimately, she believes that audience studies in the Web 2.0 era are still important because recognizing media power and agency is still important, and the researcher’s role can move from one of interpreter, storyteller, and theoretician to that of “coaches in media literacy” (p. 124).

Sundet and Ytreberg (2009) call for scholarship to withdraw from its conceptual work on “convergence culture” and to conduct empirical research in the tradition of active audience studies. Similarly, Press and Livingstone (2006) question whether a new paradigm of interrogation truly needs to be developed, suggesting instead that experience in studying traditional audiences could still provide a bedrock for the study of the new media audience; but they do acknowledge that online audiences present specific challenges:

To begin with, audience discourses and practices are more elusive because practice is often private – in the bedroom or study – making the audience researcher's presence even more salient than in the days of observing family television in the living room. Media engagement may be more transgressive or personal – including pornography, intimate conversations, personal advice, etc. And the use of media is harder to chart than in the days of mass communication – filling in a survey to record an evening's viewing is tricky, but by no means as tricky as recording and interpreting an evening's surfing or chat. (Press & Livingstone, 2006, p. 187)¹

Others go further – warning us that we should always look at our research questions in the sweep of cultural history, particularly because this will help us avoid getting too enamored of the wonders of the latest technologies (Spigel, 2001; Morley, 2006); in other words, we must realize that the telegraph provoked in its time many of the same dominant cultural discourses about progress and connectedness as the Internet does now (Standage, 1999). But these warnings can in effect end up discounting the Internet as a legitimate medium of study, and this would be a mistake. One does not have to be a technological determinist to note that millions of people are using the Internet in increasingly novel and interesting ways in this new millennium. Of course, we should recognize how culture has shaped technology (and vice versa) throughout history, but we should not discount the ways in which new media have generated new and revised forms of social relations.

In fact questions about the media audience in the interactive era are, arguably important, as the numbers of people with access to the Internet worldwide increase and social networking sites continue to outpace mainstream news sites in their number of visitors (according to comScore's statistics of worldwide unique visitors from June 2009, the top five sites included Google, Facebook, and Wikimedia Foundation sites like Wikipedia, while the only news-oriented site was CBS Interactive, the website for the US commercial television newscast, which was number eight; Schonfeld, 2009). The field of new media audience scholarship continues to grow and adds innovative work that does address the issues of the audience as producer and of the audience seeking its own audience. Researchers in this field use varied methodologies to get to the core of the interactive media audience; one is that of case studies – a methodology often used in organizational communication research, but less so in media studies research. For example, a case study by Russell (2007) examines how mobile digital media technologies were used by French youth to communicate what was happening in the 2005 riots outside of Paris; the same study also explores how various media outlets then appropriated these communications. Not only does the author employ an unusual methodology to study the audience; she also reveals a new facet – namely the audience acting as a producer tacitly aware of its own audience. This nuanced study uses Bourdieu's field theory (1993) in order to shed more light on questions of power, agency, and influence in the new media environment and to clarify the role of interactivity in shaping these questions. Carpentier (2009) uses the case study of a YouTube-like online platform in Belgium to illustrate the importance of social relevance and social relations in an

online participatory environment, while taking into account an audience that incorporates multiple layers of influence on production and reception. Carpentier ultimately argues that the traditional mass communication paradigm is not entirely discounted by new media audiences, which still seem to appreciate professionalism and the filter for social relevance that traditional gatekeepers provide.

Although case studies like these are useful in demonstrating different approaches to the audience as an *audience with an audience*, we should also heed Livingstone's (2004) warning against researchers becoming "melodramatic" in their bemoaning and romanticizing about the state of new media audience studies in an era when the media industry has become increasingly fractured:

Ten or so years ago, all was confidence and excitement in reception and then ethnographic studies, accompanied by ambitious talk of convergence of text and reader and, more grandly, of qualitative and quantitative methods, political economy and cultural studies, even social science and humanities. But soon after, the signs of dissatisfaction with supposedly celebrated, resistant, active audiences together with some of the supposedly flimsy methods used to research them, were loudly voiced and perhaps too readily acceded to, resulting in something of an exodus (of interest, of researchers) from audience studies as the field turned its attention to ever-newer media or other cultural phenomena. (Livingstone, 2004, p. 3)

In the next section I will discuss two studies of audiences in interactive environments that attempt to address some of the concerns expressed by Livingstone and others by using a multimethod approach to investigate the audience as it communicates both online and offline.

The Audience as Producer and the Audience That Seeks Its Own Audience

For those of us who have done qualitative primary research in the interactive media environment, "audience study" is a phrase that is rarely used – perhaps because of the complicated notions of "audience" that I outlined above.² However, the phrase can be reappropriated in many ways, in order to improve our understanding of how interactive media users are in fact an audience – albeit an active, hyper-aware audience. In my own research in this realm I have used multiple methods and theoretical frameworks to analyze this new audience's role as producer and consumer and as a doubly articulated audience. The researcher's work consists no longer in just interviewing and observing the audience as it reacts, or after it has reacted, to some particular media in a designated environment. The researcher must recognize instead that the digital environment is not the only environment in which the audience member is positioned. In the research I have carried out on adolescent girls by using

instant messaging (IM), the girls positioned themselves in particular ways in various online conversations with their peers, and in yet other ways in interview situations, away from the computer screen. Since my conceptual framework rested on Hall's (1996) idea that identity was always shifting and on Butler's (1990) notion that gender identity is performed through a series of repetitive acts that are imagined to constitute gender, it was imperative that I be able to view both of these aspects in my research participants, because different dimensions of their self-presentation signaled different aspects of their identity. Furthermore, identity itself was complicated by the fact that the girls' discursive construction varied from IM conversation to conversation, usually depending on whom they conversed with; and their tone and reactions in interviews with me differed from online to offline space. Furthermore, because I wished to incorporate the ideals of feminist ethnography – a field that attempts to place research subjects on as much of an equal footing with the researcher as possible – I was not comfortable asking the girls essentially to hand over every aspect of their lives to me, with little payment in return. (My university's Institutional Review Board agreed with this stance, incidentally.) Because of these complications, I settled upon a multipronged research approach. The adolescent girls would send me their IM conversations over a three- to six-month period, choosing on their own which and how many conversations to send to me. I would interview them in advance, in person whenever possible and over the phone when an in-person interview was not possible. As the research was underway, I would also contact them by email or IM for any clarification I needed, or simply to check in with them. This gave me conversations with a variety of peers chosen by the girls themselves to represent them – conversations that I could analyze as discourse (Gee, 1999), and it also gave me interview data culled both from an interactive mediated setting and from a traditional media or non-media setting.

Although the girls themselves did not differentiate aspects of their lives as “real life” or “online life” – which contradicts somewhat the data found in early audience studies online – I felt it was important to be able to see how the girls articulated gender and identity in a variety of settings. In virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000), the researcher may assume to a certain extent that those studied in an online community or setting might extrapolate their behavior to the “real world,” or they might believe that an intense, immersive study of subjects interacting in an online realm is a work of sociological research in its own right and that the Internet itself is a cultural artifact that deserves legitimacy. In general I agree with this stance. However, in media research in the era of Web 2.0 and beyond, it is imperative to observe and interact with those who are researched both as they use the Internet and (whenever possible) in face-to-face situations, if the researcher plans to make claims about theoretical concepts like identity. Perhaps this approach to online audiences marks me as a traditional social scientist, but the triangulation that can be obtained from the combination of oral/written and in-person/online conversations and interviews – in other words, from attempting to see the audience as producer and as active consumer – allows for a more complete picture of what is happening online. This combination

allows for a *bricolage*, a way to construct fuller meanings by combining a diverse range of objects in one's study in order to come to those meanings (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Derrida, 1978; Deuze, 2006). Through bricolage, it is possible not only to see this new audience in its many forms and functions, but also to build upon the past research that theorizes the "traditional" audience as active.

Keeping in mind bricolage as a mode of triangulation, I used this approach in a very different piece of research, on a journalistic blog that covered news and events in a mid-sized Minnesota community called Northfield. In addition to functioning as a conventional blog, where one gatekeeper published his thoughts and musings about Northfield and included links and news of interest, the blog also incorporated some interesting and somewhat experimental reporting techniques, including the use of crowd-sourcing, or asking the blog's online audience to give input during the reporting process. In thinking about how I could construct as complete a case study as possible on the blog, I realized that it was as important to study the founder and the main blogger as it was to study the audience, which appeared to be quite loyal and vocal in its comments on the blog. I set up the study so that I could conduct a number of in-person interviews with the blog's founder – a local man who also had a talk show on the Northfield community radio station – as well as with its "official" contributors: a traditional news professional who was being paid through grant funding to work as a traditional reporter for one year; a copy-editor; and the founder's co-hosts on the radio show. This part of the study was something of an investigation into gatekeeping, or an attempt to understand both the intentional and the unintentional choices that producers made in crafting the blog.

However, in the blogosphere, the blog's readers break down these traditional "gates" (Gillmor, 2004), and it becomes important to think about this audience as an important producer and mediator of the blog's content through its comments and contributions. Because of this, not only did I study the stories and video clips posted by these gatekeepers, but I also analyzed the comments and responses posted by the blog's audience. In many ways these audience members appeared to be part of a cohesive community; they were able to converse with one another and to add insight to the conversations that started from blog postings (much of this claim is based on the fact that the blog focused on local news events and information, and the audience members primarily used their real names). Often the audience members would post additional information for the reporter, telling her that she should contact certain people to help with her stories or suggesting that she look at the archives of a local newspaper for more background on similar issues that the city faced years before.

Observing this reporter–source/gatekeeper–audience member dynamic was exciting for me as a researcher, but I felt limited in the claims I could make about the audience. Although a few audience members listed their full names – and even linked to their own web pages, Twitter feeds and personal blogs in their profiles – most of them used only first names, and there was no way to guarantee that these were their real names. However, I was presented with a unique opportunity to study this audience: in an effort to connect with the audience better, the blog's producers held a

townhall-style meeting at a coffee house in Northfield, and around twenty of the most “vocal” audience members showed up and participated in person. By attending this meeting and talking to many of the attendees (most of whom were regular participants and posters in the blog discussions), I was able to gather insight into feelings and attitudes that were not articulated in the online interactions on the blog.

Furthermore, I was able to clarify an important misconception that I had cultivated through my analysis of online texts. In the situations where the blog’s audience members were able to contribute to the reporting process, I (and the reporter who received the audience input) both sensed a general feeling of satisfaction, and even accomplishment, from the interactions as they presented themselves online. You could see this in the comments that would be posted after the story had been published as well (for example, congratulatory remarks like “Great job on the story!”). In person, however, when the attendees were asked about whether they valued the opportunity for this input – specifically in response to whether they would pay for a blog that allowed them to partake in crowd-sourcing in this way – almost all of them responded that they did not care about that part of the blog. Instead they said that they preferred the more traditional reporting models it used. Granted, as a researcher, one must question group behavior in this setting (for example, the reporter was present, and perhaps they wanted to make her feel good), but this personal, live interaction proved to be a crucial component in my analysis. (Interestingly, this finding supports the conclusion of Carpentier’s (2009) study on Belgian online video audiences, which was mentioned in the previous section.) Had I not heard the audiences’ actual, real-life voices in addition to their voices online, I might have made some incorrect assumptions in my research.

Moreover, this situation might also better illuminate a point made earlier in this chapter: that the audience is more aware than ever that it has an audience. On the blog, the commenters making suggestions and contributions to the reporting might have been doing so because it was an opportunity for them to publish to a far-reaching audience in a very public way, which usually is not afforded to non-journalists. Furthermore, after contributing to the stories, their posts to the blog would not be erased, even after the story was published. In this sense their contributions would also live online, perhaps for many years to come. When working “on the record” in this way, it is possible that an audience behaves differently. Questioning this behavior and the work produced by it is exactly the task of the new media audience researcher today. We realize that the audience is active, productive, aware of its own audience, and we should get to the crux of what this means with regard to media production and representation.

This revelation has forced me to re-evaluate the research I conducted on adolescent girls and on IM, which was done many years before the blog study, and also before social networking sites like Facebook had taken over the new media landscape (Facebook and MySpace offer their own versions of chat or instant messaging on their sites, though many adolescents still use other IM clients as well). One of the major findings in this work was that this particular mode of communication was an

interactive diary – a space free from parents and teachers, where identity could be articulated and gender could be negotiated through interactive conversations that might then be saved or printed for (private) posterity. However, these conversations sometimes were pasted within other conversations and passed along to other peers – sometimes recopied and pasted and passed along to the entire student population at the participants' schools and beyond. In my analysis I could not help but think about the girls as being somewhat naïve about the blurring of private and public space, as they hashed out their personal lives in conversations that they thought were private. However, in considering this particular audience, I did not give enough credence to the fact that – as members of a generation so cognizant of being constantly watched, surveyed, and under surveillance—privacy had become less meaningful to them than it might have been to me, and perhaps to my generation (Generation X) and previous generations. In my current research about adolescent girls and their use of Facebook – which includes the comments, the photos, the status reports they post to make them seen by their “Facebook friends” – it looks as if being watched, or the *potential* of being watched, by one's peers is in many ways the entire point. Considering the prevalence of social media in their lives and the presence of reality television programming on every network, it did not surprise me to hear the girls I studied express little expectation of privacy and confidentiality.

Toward the end of my IM study I conducted follow-up interviews in my analysis, with the hope of being able to catch these kinds of nuances; but, by the time the analysis was finished and the conclusions drawn, the girls were older by two years. Their preferred online technologies had changed in that time; many had moved exclusively to social networking sites to communicate with peers. Furthermore, in the life of an adolescent in a study of identity, this often means that the audience has changed so drastically that its members do not even recognize themselves in their own work; and that was indeed the case here. “I don't even use IM anymore now that I'm a junior (in high school),” one girl told me. “I think a lot of that stuff is just funny now, but I really was into it back then.”

Part of the challenge lies in the fact that new media will always be new, dynamic, and changing, and, as Livingstone (2004) noted, the academic publishing community might have a tendency to embrace too quickly whatever new media is newer and, along with that new media, the audience that follows it. In 2010 IM is decidedly “old,” and the earlier studies on MUDs, MOOs, listservs, and newsgroups are considered ancient history. While insight into the changing interactive media audience could certainly be gained by revisiting this work and by using it to illuminate the cultural context of a world that has reached the point where social networking sites are part of people's daily lives, this type of audience work would now be relegated to historical journals.

The ever-changing landscape of new media takes us back to the point of departure of the chapter: to Magritte's inscription about the pipe, and to my own parallel statement about the audience. Within Web 2.0, audience studies researchers must now consider an environment where Hall's (1973) explanation for the processes of encod-

ing and decoding within media texts is skewed. Through interactive and social media, encoding and decoding take place simultaneously rather than in two separate steps. Both producers and audience members are regularly executing such meaning-making tasks. This return to the original understanding of the audience as an “active” entity has been cited frequently by scholars over the past decade, in essays about the study of interactive media audiences. Certainly, in their work over the past 15 to 20 years, many – especially those who authored the studies explored in this chapter – have grasped the implications of a growingly active and productive online audience. After all, the fact that the audience may no longer be an audience at all, or that it may be a new “super-audience” instead (that is, an audience with an audience with an audience . . .), speaks to the potential need for an entirely new label for this genre of research. Moving forward, we must question not only the interactive media audience’s dual role – as producer and audience – but also what it means that this audience is constantly aware of its new role and of its creative potential.

Ce n’est pas un public – indeed.

NOTES

- 1 Livingstone practices this nicely in a different piece of research on adolescents and social networking sites (Livingstone, 2008), where she interviews 16 teenagers in their homes while they demonstrate what they are talking about by showing her their MySpace, Facebook, and Piczo pages.
- 2 When I asked a colleague whether I could refer to one of her studies on blog audiences for a chapter I was working on about new media audience studies, her reaction was: “I didn’t conduct a survey for that article. That’s what you mean, right?”

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Counting, and Accounting for, Online Audiences

Fernando Bermejo

ABSTRACT

Audiences rarely define themselves. Rather, they can be considered to be the product of research procedures implemented by media/advertising industries and by academics. In spite of the evolving nature of these research procedures – which is due to methodological variations, market competition, and paradigmatic disputes – there existed in past decades a certain degree of consensus on how to count, and how to account for, media audiences. This fragile consensus has been challenged in recent years as a result of the prominence achieved by online media. In consequence, the media/advertising industries have had to reconsider measurement procedures in order to adapt to the characteristics of online media and audiences, and even the very nature and necessity of measurement has been questioned. In turn, academic researchers have had to reconsider their conceptualization of audiences, to the point of putting into question the very idea of the audience. The present chapter examines this dual attempt at reformulating the ways in which audiences are counted and accounted for in the context of online media.

The concept of the “audience” as it is commonly used today belongs to a set of ideas that refer to human collectivities.¹ In spite of this, the collective nature of the audience is rarely expressed directly. This is, of course, a historically bounded assertion, since, as Butsch (2000) has shown, the behavior of the audience as well as its capacity to express itself as such have starkly changed over the past three centuries. The audience of live performances,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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which dates back to antiquity, “was localized in place and time. An audience occupied an ‘auditorium,’ a space in which to hear and see what was going on and to respond directly” (McQuail, 1997, p. 3). It was thus able to perceive itself as a collective and to act as such. However, when technological devices were inserted into the communication process, physical co-presence ceased to be a necessary element of audiencehood, and immediate collective reactions became a much rarer occurrence.² In fact, the evolution of the mass media up to the late twentieth century can be described as a progressive separation from the lively audiences of performances (Butsch, 2000). If we consider the mass media that have been the dominant form of public communication throughout the past century, we can observe that the audience of those media hides in the privacy of media consumption,³ each member being disconnected from other members of the collective⁴ and only rarely asserting his or her own reality as part of an audience and acting upon it.⁵ In the era of mass communication media, the audience is for the most part the result of the defining work of others.⁶ And the audience measurement industry and the academic field of audience research are the most significant others generating definitions of the audience.

With the prominence achieved by online communication since the 1990s, both the audience measurement industry and the audience research field have faced the need to reconsider their tools and their concepts in order to keep providing those definitions. And this reconsideration has direct consequences on the institutional dynamics of the media, on the configuration of communication studies, and, ultimately, on the very reality of the media under study and of their audiences. And this is so because, for decades, the depictions of the audience provided by audience measurement have played a pivotal role in the economic and institutional dynamics of the media, especially in broadcasting (Ang, 1991; Napoli, 2003); because the field of audience studies has become in recent decades one of the most dynamic areas within communication research and conceptualizations of the audience have constituted a fundamental element of most communication theories (Allor, 1988); and because the way in which different social actors – from policymakers to media professionals and owners – conceive of and act upon the media depends to a large extent on the definitions of audiences that are available to them.⁷ In order to understand the changes triggered by the advent of the Internet as a relevant form of communication in these defining practices, the present chapter offers an analysis of the evolution of audience measurement in the online environment over the past 15 years – in others words, of the counting of online audiences. This analysis will in turn allow us to examine how commercial audience measurement may influence academic conceptions of and discourses on audiences – which can be considered modes of accounting for online audiences.

Counting Audiences

The practice of counting audiences, or audience measurement, has played an essential role in the economic and institutional functioning of the mass media for decades, and

it has been closely linked to the use of advertising as a media business model.⁸ This practice can be conceived of as a subset within the field of market research, which, in turn, can be considered as one of the different forms of control exerted over collectivities that characterize modern societies and nation-states.⁹ However, the shape and relevance of these techniques of control have evolved over the decades, in parallel with the evolution of dominant technologies and modes of communication.¹⁰

As a form of control, audience measurement shows an almost paradoxical nature, since usually it is more necessary when its implementation seems more difficult. The origin of this paradoxical situation can be traced back to a large extent to the ways in which the degree of control over access to communication can orient different media technologies toward specific business models. In modes of communication in which there is a clear spatial component – such as live performances or theatrical film releases – it is usually simple (1) to demand some kind of payment in exchange for access; and (2) to calculate the size of the audience either by counting ticket sales or simply by counting the people in attendance. In fact, in these communicative modes, advertising often plays a secondary role – if any – and there is little need to implement a specific and complex mechanism for measuring audiences. In modes of communication where there is no access to a particular space that can be controlled but there is a physical container – such as a book or a disc – that holds information, it turns out to be relatively easy (1) to demand some kind of payment in exchange for the physical container; and (2) to come up with a rough estimate of the audience from the number or copies sold. Again, in these modes of communication reliance on advertising tends to be low, and estimates of the audience are easy to produce – even if they are not exact, since the precise relation between the number of copies sold and the actual size of the audience is often unknown.

Broadcasting, on the other hand, offers an obvious contrast with the modes of communication described above.¹¹ In broadcast radio and television there is no space to which access can be restricted, and there is no physical container that holds the information. Thus it turns out to be rather difficult to demand payment in exchange for content. As a result, advertising turns out to be an almost natural business model for broadcasting.¹² And, for advertising to flourish, it is necessary to know the size and profile of the audience. But, since there is no physical space in which to count audience members and no transaction record from which to infer audience size, there is a strong need to develop specialized and complex forms of audience measurement – hence the relevance of audience measurement in broadcasting.

The online environment is rather peculiar in this regard. First, pay-models have not been easy to implement in the online environment and advertising has become a very relevant source of revenue – which, in turn, opens the door to audience measurement efforts.¹³ Second, even if control over access to communication products is not always possible, online communication leaves a trace, and there is always a record of the connection between senders and receivers. However, this record is so complex, so difficult to clean and analyze, so open to errors and omissions, that it requires deploying elaborate measurement strategies to estimate the size of the audience.

In fact the birth of the field of online audience measurement can be dated to 1995: it coincides with the advertisers' increasing interest in new communication technologies such as interactive television and the Internet. During the first years of the 1990s the Internet underwent a profound transformation and, while preserving most of its structural and defining traits, it became a very different network from the ARPANET, from which it grew.¹⁴ In those years, three related processes took place that help explain the birth of online audience measurement at that particular juncture. First, the Internet underwent a process of privatization and commercialization. All the different areas of the Internet's management and infrastructure were transferred into private hands, and commercial interests became a staple at all levels of online communication – from the actual telecommunication backbones to the content and services provided online; from the software necessary to connect to the net to the actual connectivity through Internet service providers. Second, the Internet became a mass medium in terms of the number of its users. For the first time, online users could be counted in the dozens of millions, and for a few years in the mid-1990s the number of Internet users worldwide more than doubled yearly. Third, asymmetry became a feature of online communication due to the introduction of a communication tool – the World Wide Web – that was basically unidirectional.¹⁵ The popularization of the Internet in the mid-'90s was due, to a great extent, to the advent of the web, a tool that made it extremely easy to consume information published by others but did so at the expense of becoming, at least for a few years, a medium in which content was published by a few and consumed by many (Roscoe, 1999). In this environment of commercialization, popularization, and asymmetrical communication, it is no surprise that the advertising industry became interested in online communication, since these were the same defining traits of the environment where it had thrived for decades: the traditional mass media.¹⁶

The first advertising banner appeared in 1994. At that moment, online publishers and the advertising industry understood that online advertising could become a significant source of revenue for all, and that this would only be the case if an online ratings system was set in place (Turow, 1997). As a result, starting in the spring of 1995 and in the space of only a few months, several companies and organizations decided to implement different procedures to measure online audiences. The online audience measurement industry had been born.¹⁷

Measuring Online Audiences

The online audience measurement industry created in the mid-1990s was clearly shaped by three main forces that conditioned its form and evolution. First, the general institutional framework from which it grew called for measurement efforts able to produce data that could serve as a coin of exchange in the trade of audiences constituting the core of the mass advertising business. This general framework

required, as had been the case in the measurement of the audience of previous mass media, data on audience size and composition of the audience of specific communication vehicles. Second, the new industry did not grow in a vacuum, but in the context of an established audience measurement industry that had for decades played a very relevant role in the functioning of the mass media. This ratings industry had structured itself around the model of independent third-party organizations that were able to reconcile the conflicting interests of the different stakeholders in the audience market (Miller, 1994). These organizations established a form of measurement that revolved around the idea of exposure to specific communication vehicles – what was actually measured was the number of people who had been exposed to a particular communicative product; any other objects of measurement were ignored for the most part. On top of this, the audience measurement industry had accumulated a great deal of methodological know-how that could be put to use in the measurement of online audiences (Webster, Phalen, & Lichty, 2000). In particular, the industry had focused on developing combinations of sampling methods and sophisticated data collection tools that could satisfy the demands of rigor among sellers and buyers of audiences. Third, while the general institutional framework and the legacy of the existing ratings industry pushed online audience measurement toward a line of continuity with previous forms of measurement, the new industry was confronted with a medium that presented rather novel technological features and generated distinctive patterns of use. If these evolving methods of measurement could not be properly adjusted to the new context, the whole established commercial institutional arrangements surrounding the counting of audiences could be put into question.

The persistence of the institutional framework demanding a coin of exchange for the audience trade was guaranteed by the determination with which the advertising industry promoted the development of online audience measurement in the second half of the 1990s. Led by Procter & Gamble and other large advertisers, and with the support of the main trade associations, the advertising industry facilitated the creation of different coalitions and organizations aimed at promoting and shaping online audience measurement. Through the Coalition for Advertising Supported Information and Entertainment (CASIE), the Future of Advertising Stakeholders (FAST), and the most lasting and influential Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), advertisers and, to a lesser degree, publishers attempted to fuel the online advertising industry through the development of standards and best practices that could be adopted by all participants in the audience trade. In turn, the legacy of the preexisting audience measurement industry has manifested itself through the role played by many of the established measurement organizations in the development of the new sector and through their attempts at becoming the independent third-party of reference by improving on existing methods and/or acquiring a position of market dominance.

But, in spite of general continuity in the measurement effort in terms of aim, logic, and procedures, online audience measurement had to adjust to some specific

traits of the new environment in which measurement operations were being implemented. The Internet as a communication tool presents obvious differences compared to previous media, and some of those differences have direct consequences on the particular forms measurement should take if it has to perform the role that is required of it. In particular, it should be noted that the Internet is an intrinsically global medium; it is a medium that is not bounded to the home, and it is regularly used from multiple access locations; it is neither a flow – like radio or television – nor a closed product, like print publications; it leaves a trace of every transaction of information taking place over it; it presents an endless number of communicative vehicles; and it can be accessed from a multiplicity of platforms (Bermejo, 2007).

These peculiarities explain, in turn, some of the problems and limitations of the different methods that have arisen to assess the size and composition of online audiences. In this sense, when the industry started to develop online audience measurement initiatives, two main routes seemed to be at its disposal. The first route entailed the adaptation of the measurement methods already in use in the audience ratings industry, in particular surveys and panels. The second route involved the development of new tools, which were based on the use of the records left behind by online transactions in order to estimate the size and profile of the audience – these took the form of log-file analyses and tag systems. Both routes have been followed by different measurement operations since the mid-1990s, and surveys, electronic measurement panels, log-file analyses, and tags have all been part of the measurement panoply used by the industry. However, all these methods have shown obvious shortcomings in their attempts at measuring online audiences and none has been able to become the standard of reference.¹⁸

Surveys – defined as the use of standardized questionnaires to collect information from a representative sample of a population – have traditionally been an essential pillar of the processes of audience measurement, particularly in the measurement of those media that do not easily lend themselves to the use of automatic devices attached to receivers in order to collect information on usage – mostly print publications and, for most of its history, radio.¹⁹ However, when they have been used to measure the audience of online media, their limitations have only been accentuated. This has been the case both because of sample size demands and because surveys essentially depend on interviewees' memory and sincerity –neither of which can be easily relied upon when measuring online audiences. The larger the number of vehicles – radio stations, television channels, websites, and so on – that need to be measured, the larger the sample required to offer stable data from all the different vehicles. If the audience is scattered across many different options, those options that attract a small portion of the total audience will face larger margins of error and high variation across subsequent measures of their audience. Due to the huge number of possible options available online to capture audiences' attention, this issue turns out to be particularly relevant, and surveys need to have sample sizes that are not always possible or viable in practical terms. In addition, the expectation that

online users will remember, and be able to recount, all the different websites they have visited and to specify how much time they have spent in each and what they have done while there is simply unrealistic. Likewise, expecting that survey interviewees will be willing to share with interviewers the details of all their online activity does not seem sustainable. As a result, surveys have played a marginal role in attempts at measuring online audiences. They have been used, for the most part, to estimate the global size of the online population and to understand macro-level issues such as frequency of use, speed connectivity, location of use, and so on. But they haven't been able to provide relevant data on the size and composition of the audience of specific online outlets.

The essential difference between panels and surveys lies in the use of samples. While in surveys the population sample from which information is gathered is normally used once, in panels the same sample is used over time to collect information on subsequent occasions, thus providing a longitudinal view of the evolution of the variables being measured. In their implementation for audience measurement purposes, panels are usually associated with the use of metering devices; while there are panels that use diaries instead of meters to collect information from the members of the sample, measurement operations that use meters are almost by default panels, since it does not make practical sense to install meters in a sample in order to gather information from it just once. As such, panels have been the dominant technique for the measurement of the television audience through the use of "audimeters" (that is, meters for audience measuring). And, since television panels have been, for decades, socially and economically the most relevant form of measurement, it seemed only natural to apply the same model to the online environment when the need to start measuring the Internet audience became apparent (Buzzard, 2003). The only significant difference in the implementation of panels has derived from the different nature of metering devices. While in broadcasting the meters have always been a piece of hardware attached to radio and television receiving devices – and, most recently, carried around by members of the sample being measured – in the online space these meters take the form of software tools that can be installed in computers to monitor online activities.

However, when used to measure the online audience, panels have faced three main hurdles that were not present – at least not to the same degree – in television measurement. The first one, as is the case with surveys, has to do with the size of the sample and the need to draw very large ones in order to cover a significant portion of the number of available online vehicles. Traditional online panels have offered statistically significant data for only a few hundred websites – often less than 300 – which represent a very small portion of all available websites.²⁰ The second hurdle faced by online panels has to do with the geography of online use. Audience measurement panels have usually drawn their samples from national populations. This means that the audience they measure is circumscribed to specific national borders. And, while that might not have been a relevant issue when measuring broadcasting

audiences – in spite of the international reach of some of its vehicles, broadcasting has traditionally been bounded to national borders – it actually turns out to be rather significant in dealing with such a transnational medium as the Internet. As a result, online measurement panels have been unable to measure the portion of the audience of online vehicles that are located outside the country where the panels are deployed. The third main hurdle faced by online panels has to do with the different patterns of media consumption. While television, the medium in which panels have achieved an indisputable success, is clearly tethered to the home – television consumption has traditionally taken place in domestic spaces – that is not the case with the Internet. If an online panel wants to measure the online audience, its sample cannot be limited to homes but has to take into account work spaces and “third places” – cybercafés, libraries, community centers, and the like. This has proven to be – in spite of significant efforts – an insurmountable hurdle for online panels. It is almost impossible to draw a representative sample of computers connected to the Internet in places other than homes and, even if such a sample could be drawn, it would be very difficult to deploy due to general resistance from companies and organizations to installing metering devices in their networks’ computers. In spite of these obvious limitations, online panels have been widely used over the last 15 years or so, as a source of data on online audiences.

But, besides other methods already used in the measurement of previous media audiences, the Internet offers an alternative route that is not open to other media. Online activity generates endless amounts of information that is constantly recorded, stored, and analyzed. This information can help in measuring online audiences, and two main techniques have been used to take advantage of it. The first technique is usually referred to as log-file analysis. Log-files are text files that are automatically generated by Internet servers; these files record the activity generated by requests to them. They store information such as Internet protocol (IP) addresses from which requests are made, cookies in the users’ browser, browser type, operating system used by the client, time stamp, and so on. But, while the richness of this information is unquestionable, measuring online audiences through the analysis of log-files turns out to be a rather complex process, fraught with technical problems, imprecision, and limitations. However, besides the fastidiousness of the cleaning and analyzing process, perhaps the main problem with the use of log-files for audience measurement purposes has been the inability to link the data recorded on online activity with individual users in a consistent and precise way, and the impossibility of deriving a clear demographic profile of those users.²¹ The use of tags, tiny invisible markers and code inserted in web pages that allow for the collection of information similar to that stored by log-files, has facilitated the automatization of the analysis, but it has not been able to overcome limitations in connecting activity with users.²² This means that the analysis of the records of online activity has serious shortcomings when it comes to offering an exact quantification of the size of the audience and a detailed profile of its composition.

Casting the Role of Measurement

Besides – and partly because of – the difficulty in adjusting the measurement process to the peculiar characteristics of the online environment, audience measurement has also been confronted with a transformation in its institutional role within the field of online commercial media. In broadcasting, ratings constituted an essential pillar of institutional arrangements: they guided most programming decisions, shaped the internal functioning of the media, and determined their financial success.²³ The extensive power held by ratings derived from the role they played as the fundamental piece of information that shaped advertisers' relations with the media. Ratings provided advertisers with (1) the guarantee that they were receiving what they were paying for;²⁴ and (2) the information necessary to target their ads – in terms of audience composition.²⁵ However, the online environment offers a much more complex picture.

In this scenario, measuring the size and profiles of an audience remains an important activity, but it does not occupy the central role that it held in broadcasting. The reasons for this are multiple. Of course, the difficulty in measuring the online audience analyzed above makes it harder for the results of the measurement to be accepted as a common currency in online economic exchanges involving advertising. A decade and half after its birth, and in spite of a process of consolidation, online audience measurement does not show signs of achieving the stability that the ratings industry presents in other media – there are competing measurement operations, competing methodologies, and competing general approaches to measurement. Besides this, the very diverse shapes taken by online communication and the many different business models that sustain them contrast with the relative homogeneity of previous media and business models, making it more difficult to find a common point of reference from which to explain the economic logic of the medium and to refer to an anchoring institutional arrangement. In this context, audience measurement seems to have lost its centrality in the institutional arrangements of the media in their online transition, because new forms of managing and targeting advertising have emerged – such as search-related and behavioral advertising – that seem to comply better with the characteristics of the online environment while being able to function without any audience measurement as such; of course, other types of data collection practices are necessary. Flaws, disputes, and competition in the measurement process are not in themselves enough to dethrone established institutional arrangements. As Napoli (2011) has pointed out, a viable alternative to these arrangements needs to be available if significant changes in the existing order are to take place.

In order to understand the viability of these possible alternatives to the system of trading audiences that is based on data provided by the measurement industry, some general dynamics of the online environment and of the online advertising management process need to be examined. There are, in particular, three specific characteristics of the online environment that seem to shape the evolution of online advertising and to influence the relevance of measurement:

- 1 *The Internet Leaves a Trace:* As pointed out before, a record of online activity is routinely generated and automatically collected as part of the activity itself. And if this record can be used as the source of information for targeting ads – and not necessarily in the form of audience measurement – there is no need to devise and implement complex and costly data gathering procedures for the advertising market to flourish.
- 2 *The Internet Affords More Interactivity Than Any Other Communication Medium:* While previous communication media were for the most part unidirectional and their usage flexibility was rather limited, the Internet allows for endless forms of user activity: reading, viewing, clicking, writing, playing, purchasing, and so on. This means that the restriction to exposure as the key piece of information for managing online advertising does not account for the complex relationship between media and users. Thus, and in combination with the above, huge amounts of information about audiences, derived from the many different forms in which they interact with the medium, can be easily and automatically collected and then used in the process of targeting ads.
- 3 *Over the Internet, Ads and Content Are Managed Separately and per Request:* There is no necessarily predetermined link between specific ads and specific communicative products, nor between specific ads and specific users. That is, every online request can return a different ad, breaking the traditional relationship between media outlets and advertising – in which content, ads, and audiences were bundled in a comprehensive whole.

If we look at these three issues in reverse order, we can say that, while the traditional form of managing the advertising process was based on the implementation of complex measurement procedures that sampled portions of the population to assess the exposure of select groups of individuals to specific communication vehicles, in the online context (1) there is no need to measure specific vehicles – since the content has been unbundled and advertising can be managed by individual requests; (2) the idea of exposure constitutes but a tiny fraction of users' engagement with the medium – it does not cover most of the interactive nature of the relationship; and (3) information can be collected on all users – not only on a sample of them – by simply capturing and analyzing the trace left by online interactions. Taking this into account, it seems easier to understand how traditional forms of audience measurement may be losing their central role in the context of online communication.

If we examine the evolution of online advertising over the past decade, it is possible to see new forms of advertising – such as search engine and behavioral advertising – that have gained increasing relevance and have adjusted to the three characteristics described above without demanding audience measurement – at least not in the way in which it was developed in broadcasting, or even in the first years of online measurement. Search engine advertising is based on the keyword searches of users seeking answers to their queries. Both because of the particular relation of users to the search process – they are looking for something – and because their

interests, wants, and desires are expressed in relatively concrete and concise terms, using those keywords as a way to link users and ads has turned out to be a rather effective and lucrative way of managing online advertising (Bermejo, 2009). Thus search engine advertising utilizes information provided by users – not captured through any additional data collection process – that goes beyond exposure – users are not exposed to content, they are searching for it – and these specific quests for information are used to target individual users – there is no longer a need to target a collective or a mass/undifferentiated audience.²⁶

Behavioral advertising is based on the collection of information concerning all possible online activities of users, a collection that is made in order to create an individual profile of each of those users; and this profile serves as the key piece of information to determine which ads are going to be displayed. Of course, the system is not perfect, and it faces problems such as the ability of users to delete or reject tracking devices, or the issue of multiple users per machine and multiple machines per user. However, it is becoming a regular form of managing online advertising and, again, it does not require any form of audience measurement because it relies on routinely collected information that individual users generate automatically. Behavioral advertising targets specific users at specific moments in time.

Accounting for Audiences

The adaptation of audience measurement to the online environment appears to face significant challenges and seems to be on its way to losing the central institutional role it has played for decades. We could surmise that this situation does not significantly affect the process of accounting for audiences, which lies at the heart of audience studies. Because the evolution of audience measurement presented here has a direct impact on a specific subsection of communication media – online media – and seems to be relevant largely for commercial audience research, we might be led to conclude that audience studies in the academy can remain unaltered and linger at the margins of these developments. On the contrary, I would like to argue that the situation described here actually has a direct influence on the field of audience studies, and I will do so by addressing six related issues.

First, even if we were to argue that the dynamics examined above are circumscribed to the online environment, the increasing relevance of online communication should make us wonder about the actual reach of these phenomena. The dominant forms of public communication at particular times in history have often exerted a strong influence over the general understanding of audiences (Neuendorf, 2001). In this sense, the overwhelming dominance of television as the medium of reference throughout the second half of the twentieth century has clearly shaped our understanding of audiences, our ways of accounting for them. It would be naïve to think that television has lost that central place in society in general and in audience studies

in particular. It would be equally naïve to think that this is going to be the case for very long. The rapidly growing relevance of online communication should lead us to consider the possibility that the specific dynamics of a subsection of the media in the current situation today might well transform tomorrow into the general overarching trends of media communication.

Second, even though the crisis underway in audience measurement seems to have its epicenter in the context of online communication, the truth is that its consequences have been felt across the board in the audience measurement industry. Although the history of commercial audience measurement includes frequent struggles over methodological procedures, market dominance, and the validity of measurement results, the general approach to measurement and its pivotal role in the economic functioning of commercial media has remained unquestioned. Currently, however, the problems that online audience measurement faces seem to be spilling over into all forms of measurement, and we are now witnessing a general questioning of audience measurement across all media (Turow, 2006). Considering the reverberations in other parts of the media world, it seems difficult to maintain that the issues discussed above only affect a small section of communication media. Rather, they are shaking the whole audience measurement industry.

Third, even if the two previous points were well taken, and we accepted that the situation examined here affects directly those forms of media communication that are on their way to becoming dominant and affects indirectly all other forms of commercial media communication, it still could be argued that this is not an audience studies' problem. After all, academic approaches to studying audiences have followed a different logic from commercial ones, have often used different methods, and have produced very distinctive views of the audience. However, we should consider Mosco and Kaye's (2000) assertion that "it was not until broadcasters needed to determine the actual size of the unknown audience that the analytical objectification of the audience began [. . .] eventually bequeathing to the field of mass communications an analytical category loaded with meaning" (p. 35). It is obvious that, once the concept entered the field of communication, it took on a new life, independent of the commercial interests from which it was derived. But, if the field of mass communication inherited the concept of "audience" from commercial research, and commercial research seems to be heading in the direction of discarding it as a useful way of understanding new media, we should at least wonder whether we want to keep using a concept when the field from which it originated does not seem to find a use for it any more.

Fourth, even though commercial and academic audience research have followed very different – often opposite – paths in terms of goals, methods, and results, ratings have a long tradition of being a source of data for academic audience research. Researchers of mass communication have explicitly relied on industry audience measurement sources to study media audiences, from the inception of radio (Beville, 1940) and television (Stavitsky, 2000) to the web (Webster & Lin, 2002). Given this fact, the influence of audience measurement data on academic research is not merely implicit and diffuse. To the extent that the nature of our knowledge of audiences is

changing, the types of questions that can be answered using old conceptions of audiencehood will also change.

Fifth, if we examine the evolution of audience studies over the past few decades, we can see that academic research has moved in the direction of seeking a more nuanced view of the constitution of audiences and of the meanings of audience activity. Scholars have argued that the mere counting of audiences acts as a form of control that reduces the complexity and richness of those audiences to mere data on exposure. To the extent that commercial research moves beyond the idea of exposure and in the direction of a more detailed depiction of audiences' practices, perhaps there may be increasing possibilities for collaboration and mutual understanding. This is what Napoli (2011) refers to when he says that the evolution in the field of audience measurement may represent changes in the relevance of different forms of inquiry in audience studies "and, perhaps most interesting of all, an opportunity for bridging gulfs that have developed between academic traditions and between academic and industry researchers." We need to acknowledge, though, that, in spite of this increasing possibility of convergence, the difference in goals and approaches will no doubt keep commercial and academic research in different camps, as contrasting and independent modes of studying and understanding audiences.

And sixth, over the last couple of decades, multiple traditions of research within the field of audience studies have been questioning the reality of the audience, and even the concept of the audience itself. Perhaps it was Allor (1988) who first explicitly stated this line of reasoning when he said that the "audience exists nowhere; it inhabits no real space, only positions within analytic discourses" (p. 228).²⁷ Thus, throughout the 1990s, a succession of authors began the discursive process of eroding the audience as an ahistorical abstraction or a naturalized concept. But before we decide on the demise of the audience as an analytic category, we should consider that the audience has had a long history of adaptation to new phenomena, an adaptation process that points to its resilience and flexibility. The concept of "audience" has changed from being applied to communicative situations in which there is a physical co-presence to other situations, in which technological mediation allows for communication at a distance; it has gone from referring to the act of hearing – whence its etymology (derivative of *audire*, "to listen" in Latin) – to encompassing the act of watching, or even reading (Radway, 1988). Thus, before we can herald the end of the audience as a useful academic or commercial heuristic, perhaps this discursive erosion and questioning needs to be paired with significant changes in the communication environment. The increasing relevance of digital and interactive forms of communication may actually offer the kind of change that encourages a productive engagement with the utility of the audience as a concept. While this history of conceptual adaptability might indicate that we are just witnessing a new expansion in the uses and meanings of the word "audience," it seems necessary to remark that across all of its past incarnations the only element that has remained stable in the situations to which the word refers is the fact that there is a clear separation and asymmetry between senders and receivers – from popes and kings who confer the status of

audience to lay people and subjects, to media organizations that produce content for the consumption of the mass audience. As Angus (1994) stated right before the Internet started to achieve its current relevance, in the most significant contemporary communication systems “audiences tend to remain simply audiences; that is, communication systems tend to sever audiences from reciprocal production of social knowledge and engagement in decision making” (p. 233). However, online forms of communication allow for the dissolution of that asymmetry and thus may break with the only trait of continuity in the different incarnations of our models of the audience. Online audiences often do not remain simply audiences. Still, the perfect symmetry and interchangeability between senders and receivers remains a counterfactual ideal in most communicative contexts, and there remains, for example, a clear difference between those who create and manage an online social network and those who take part in it as users. In the online context, asymmetry and power relations take a new, different form. However, the erosion of asymmetry in online forms of communication should at least make us wonder whether other concepts can better account for these new communicative realities. And it might well be that the general crisis that audience measurement is undergoing will serve as the final impulse needed for jettisoning our attachment to the concept of the audience. If that is the case, perhaps the same practices and the same modes of communication that the audience measurement industry seems unable to tame may serve as the source of inspiration for devising new ways of accounting for the relationship between people and their media practices of reading, watching, browsing, using, producing, and consuming.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank the “paper working group” at the Berkman Center (in particular Hal Roberts, Wendy Seltzer, David Ardia, and Donnie Hao Dong) for their constructive comments on previous versions of this chapter. My residence at the Berkman Center was partly made possible by a José Castillejo grant awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Education.

NOTES

- 1 Perhaps it could even be included within what Herbert Blumer (1951) called “forms of collective behavior.” See, for instance, Long (1994) for a use of the concept of “collective action” to analyze the practice of reading.
- 2 Writing can be considered to be the first technological device inserted in the communication process. The printing press was the means through which the technology of writing achieved an unprecedented social relevance, and it is often taken as the starting point for the history of modern communication technologies.

- 3 As Livingstone (2003) put it: "With the shift away from visible and audible participation by live audiences, the activities of the new, mass mediated audiences became highly interiorized and hence inaccessible to the researcher" (p. 17).
- 4 This lack of connection among members of the audience is partially eliminated in the home celebration of media events, as Dayan and Katz (1992) have shown.
- 5 For a study of some of these rare instances of "audience self-expression" in the age of mass media, see Newman's (2004) work on radio audiences.
- 6 This is what Dahlgren (1998) meant when he said that "'audiences' are always *at least in part* discursive constructs, shaped by specific institutional needs and discursive domains" (p. 307). In the same vein, see Bratich (2005).
- 7 See Webster and Phalen (1994) for a discussion of the different images of the audience implied in communication policy, and Hagen (1999) for a view on the impact of audience measurement on journalists and media producers.
- 8 For a detailed history of audience measurement in broadcasting, see Beville (1988) and Buzzard (1990).
- 9 Space limitation does not allow for a proper historical and conceptual contextualization of audience measurement within the field of technologies of control. See Beniger (1986), in particular Chapter 8, for that contextualization.
- 10 It would be questionable, at the least, simply to say that it is the evolution of technology that determines the relevance and form of audience measurement. There are obvious and complex institutional forces at play in these processes – and their analysis widely exceeds the reach of this essay. It is possible, however, and even fruitful, to look at the evolution of audience measurement from the point of view of the change in the communication technologies whose use constitutes the audiences being measured. See, along these lines, Napoli (2001, 2003, and 2011).
- 11 Print periodicals can be considered, in this context, a hybrid mode. On the one hand, there is a physical container that can be sold in exchange for payment. On the other hand, print periodicals have relied on advertising as a significant source of revenue for most of their history. The hybrid business model of the press obviously points to the insufficiency of the technological argument to explain the degree of reliance on advertising, and thus the importance of audience measurement – no doubt economic, legal, social, and historical factors need to be taken into account as well. Non-broadcast television also offers an interesting point of comparison, since control of access to communicative products does not rely on restricting spaces or on selling containers, but rather on technological barriers raised between producers and audiences – scramblers, etc. – in a fashion similar to the ways in which pay models have been implemented online.
- 12 Again, a narrative more nuanced than the one being offered here would be needed to explain how advertising became the predominant business model for broadcasting. See, for instance, Smulyan's (1994) history of the commercialization of radio in the United States.
- 13 See Bermejo (2009) for an evolution of online advertising revenues.
- 14 ARPANET was a wide-area computer network created in the late 1960s with the support of the Advanced Research Project Agency of the United States Department of Defense. It is commonly considered the precursor of the current Internet.
- 15 Obviously, asymmetry is not a necessary trait of the World Wide Web. In fact, the original design of the web by Tim Berners-Lee allowed users to modify web pages easily. However, as Berners-Lee (2000) has explained, the spread of the web in its inception was

accomplished at the expense of eliminating the original ability to edit the content displayed. The subsequent evolution of the web into what has been named Web 2.0 is in a sense a return – though incomplete and often highly controlled – to the original symmetry of the web’s design.

- 16 For a detailed analysis of these three elements and of the birth of online audience measurement, see Bermejo (2007).
- 17 In fact the “online audience measurement industry” could as well be called the “web audience measurement industry,” since, among all the different online communication tools, it was the web that attracted the most advertising interest and on which measurement efforts would concentrate.
- 18 In other media, even though different methods may be used to measure their audiences, there is usually a method of reference, and also, usually, a measurement operation of reference per medium per country. This has not been the case for online audience measurement.
- 19 Actually, the first metering device ever used to measure the media audience was a radio audimeter (Beville, 1988). However, the increasing proliferation, miniaturization, and portability of radio receivers made it impossible to use metering devices for most of radio’s history. In recent years, the advent of portable people meters has allowed for the reintroduction of audimeters as a way of measuring radio audiences.
- 20 Those that provide data for more than a few hundred websites use non-traditional sampling techniques in order to generate very large samples that need to be statistically manipulated to correct for bias.
- 21 Indirect inferences and complementary sources of data can aid in this endeavor. However, most records of online activity do not provide any direct demographic information that could be used to produce a precise profile of the audience being measured.
- 22 Tags are one of the tracking devices in use across the Internet. The first of these devices to appear were cookies, small textual files that are stored by websites in users’ browsers in order to identify repeated visits by the same user/browser. Tags, in their different denominations and forms – web beacons, clear Graphic Interchange Formats (GIFs), JavaScript tags, etc. – serve the same function of identifying subsequent requests by the same browser, but they allow greater flexibility in terms of the range of information collected and they facilitate the automatization of the analysis of this information. Flash-cookies also belong in this family of tracking devices currently used in online communication.
- 23 In this sense, the current state of online audience measurement and the new possibilities of obtaining information about the audience are also affecting the ways in which journalists see their role – see, for instance, McGregor (2007) – and the ways in which news organizations manage their business – see Graves and Kelly (2010).
- 24 It is obvious that the final goal of advertising is the generation of sales. In that sense, advertisers cannot be satisfied with simply knowing that their ads have been seen, heard, or read by an audience with a specific size and composition. However, in the world of the mass media, this is precisely what advertisers pay for. The online environment seems to have raised the accountability bar, and advertisers seem to be increasingly dissatisfied with advertising campaigns that only guarantee a certain audience. They increasingly demand proof that the audience is moving toward purchases, and this explains the interest in clicks and the growing relevance of performance-based pricing models. See Hoffman and Novak (2003) for an examination of the different pricing models used in online advertising.

- 25 This centrality of ratings has lead Meehan (1984) to provide a third answer to the question "What is the commodity produced by advertising supported communication media?" To the "naïve" answer – programs – and Smythe's (1977) answer – audiences – she added a third one: ratings. For her, the commodity that is traded in broadcasting's advertising market is not audiences – since they do not go through any real manufacturing and sale process – but rather the information produced about audiences through a complex set of institutional, economic, and methodological arrangements: the ratings.
- 26 On top of this, and because of the effectiveness of the system and of the ability to keep track of users' reactions to the ads in the form of clicks, search engines have been able to offer advertisers performance pricing models that seem to be more attractive to them, since they provide proof that users are closer to becoming consumers.
- 27 This led Dahlgren (1998) to contrast the past with the present of audience studies: "In some slightly mythic recent past – of no more than a few decades ago – 'audiences' used to be a rather unproblematic notion. They may have been seen at times as difficult (and expensive) to research, but the concept and the empirical reality it referred to had a fairly common-sense quality. [. . .] The status – ontological and epistemological – of 'audiences' was generally not in itself a topic which engaged researchers. Today we find ourselves in a very different situation" (p. 298).

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Always at Crossroads

Studying Online/Offline Intersections as a Postcolonial Feminist Researcher

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the transition from audience studies to cyberethnography on the basis of the author's own experience in doing research in computer-mediated communication and in teaching in online environments. The chapter describes her experience in developing methodologies for studying Internet interactions through theoretical perspectives by drawing on postcolonial feminist theories and critical cultural studies. Doing ethnography at online/offline intersections requires a hands-on approach, whereby the researcher works to build techno-mediated contexts while simultaneously living in them and also staying connected to related contexts offline. Such an immersive methodology allows the researcher to understand computer-mediated communication in global environments. In particular, the author refers to her experience of the "South Asian Women's network (SAWnet) refusal," as she developed her cyberethnographic methodologies in the early 1990s. She describes her experience in developing appropriate research methods to study such Internet-based global media.

In her article "The Challenge of Changing Audiences," Sonia Livingstone notes the shift in media communication from "mass" (one to many) to "communication among peers (both 'one to one' and 'many to many')." She asks if this means "that the concept of the audience is obsolete" (Livingstone, 2004, p. 75). Indeed, in turning to

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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study the Internet and computer-mediated communication, one might ask this question: Is the phrase “audience research” relevant anymore? For instance we hear terms such as “lurker,” “participant,” and “prosumer” (producer plus consumer), which seem to suggest a different relationship between the viewer and the media environment than the term “audience” would describe. When studying online-mediated environments we are forced to re-examine our relationship to the texts and screens we encounter.

What follows in this chapter draws on my experiences as I encountered this internet-mediated environment as a user, prosumer, teacher, builder, and researcher of online content through frameworks derived from postcolonial and feminist theories. As I narrate my encounters and dilemmas, my journey and explorations are situated, hence they are written from the vantage point of my particular location. The threads opened up here are intended to invite the reader to engage in an open-ended conversation with my thoughts and concerns.

My work occupies unique intersections of media and critical/cultural studies, as I continue to develop critical ethnographic methodologies – under the heading of “cyberethnography” and “epistemologies of doing” – for research and pedagogy at online/offline and global/local intersections and nodes. Communication and the understanding of organizations, as well as the role of culture and politics and of economic and everyday life are central to my research, as I conduct ongoing participant and performative ethnographies in emerging areas where digital communicative environments impact and shape globalization and where development work produces unexpected encounters between so-called new and old technologies.

Thus I examine how individuals act within communities while their subjectivities are shaped and they are produced as actors or subjects within interdependent global/local hierarchies. Not only do I ask who gets mapped out and why, but I also seek to understand *how* this happens, processually and structurally. I want to explore, for instance, how voices are produced, either in development contexts or in online contexts, and under what conditions “subaltern” speech gets heard. However, rather than stop at a euphoric celebration of this emergence of voice from a thus far marginalized group, I also try to investigate what implications these emerging voices might have for existing and emerging structures of power. I want to track how voice emerges in any of the contexts I examine, in order to understand where oppression shifts when particular marginalized groups gain representation within structures of globalization.

My continuing research examines social networking systems and craft movements online – specifically, the marketing of handspun and naturally dyed yarn within the context of what has come to be known as the “knitting renaissance.” I examine these online e-commerce frameworks for eco-friendly products and the consumer cultures evoked in these contexts in order to learn more about how the market is shifting and positioning consumer agency while it tries to educate consumers to adopt more eco-friendly ways of living and consuming. I suspect that these online movements (some under the header of “only hand-made”) mobilize existing digital technologies so as

to form networks and collaborations that have potential for producing shifts and collaborations just as cyberfeminists have hoped. Whether they fulfill their potential or are appropriated by power structures remains to be seen.

When I first attempted to do academic research on the Internet through the discipline of media studies, using critical communication and cultural studies frameworks, I realized that the disciplinary formulation of the notion of “audience” would not work for my research. I then delved into much of the literature that existed at the time and saw that several cultural studies scholars have negotiated the concept of “audience” even prior to the emergence of the Internet as a commonly accessible medium.

Thus I found several such scholars’ work to be of use in thinking about the relationship between viewers/readers/consumers and media texts. Stuart Hall’s important conceptualization of theory as struggle and of the notion of articulation (Hall, 1980) helped me justify the conceptualization of my research as a process – always partial, always incomplete – but with important findings to contribute to academic scholarship nonetheless. James Carey’s (1989) paradigm-shifting work on communication as ritual allowed in turn for a fresh approach to the study of media cultures and practices. Other scholarly research inspired me to rearticulate the idea of media research as an academic and political enterprise so I could proceed with my work: for example Larry Grossberg’s (2006) emphasis on radical contextualization, Herbert Schiller’s (1976) critiques of cultural imperialism; John Fiske’s (1987) writings on resistance and audience meaning-making; and Steve Jones’ (1995) early work on computer-mediated communication. These were some of the materials that assisted me in finding an anchor within the discipline.

However, my journey as a feminist researcher who was beginning to make connections with subaltern studies frameworks was a fairly lonely one within the discipline of communication, rhetoric, and media studies. Feminist scholars who engaged with issues in science, technology, and epistemology while questioning the universality of “knowledge” – scholars such as Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Evelyn Fox Keller, Linda Alcoff, Gayathri Spivak, and many others – assisted me in framing my work as situated knowledge that emerged from a particular location. In addition, postcolonial feminist philosophers and anthropologists such as Uma Narayan, Kiran Narayan, Chandra Mohanty, Kamala Visweswaran, or Mary John (to name only a few) were also encountering the same problems and challenges that I was facing in my research, even though they did not carry out their work in media environments such as the Internet.

Further, just as I thought I was alone struggling through (inter)disciplinary shifts and crossroads, I found that there were also colleagues in graduate school and beginning faculty members who were developing methods and theoretical frames for the study of the Internet. For instance, members of the “Spoon Collective” (http://www.drifline.org/spoon_collective.html) played a significant part in my early Internet investigations, enabling spaces of practice, experimentation, and conceptualizations. In addition, as I was getting done with my dissertation, I discovered colleagues such

as Lisa Nakamura, David Silver, Gil Rodman, Anne Balsamo, Jillana Enteen, Jonathan Sterne, Annette Markham, Nancy Baym, Mia Consalvo, Terri Senft (Janedoe), Lori Kendall, Kate O’Riordan, Carolyn Bassett, and so many others¹ who are now part of a fairly large and growing group of scholars called “Internet Researchers” and/or “Cyberculture Scholars.”² These were colleagues I had gotten to know interpersonally via Usenet Bulletin Boards, email lists, Internet Relay Chat systems on Unix, and MOOs (Multi-User Domains Object Oriented). In instances when we finally did meet face to face, we would mostly remember each other on the basis of our email account names or pseudonyms (mine being “Cyberdiva” and “cyborgwati”).

In the present chapter my task is to map my explorations of methodology for the study of Internet-mediated contexts. The first section of the chapter narrates my first encounters with computers, audience research, and Western academic frameworks (both quantitative and qualitative). The next section describes my main methodological framework and how it emerged through my experiences as a researcher of a South Asian women’s email list. The subsequent section outlines how I developed this framework still further, in pedagogical settings where students were required to “do technology” as they researched Internet-mediated environments.

Studying Computer-Mediated Cultures: Point of Entry

In this section I reflect on my experience of studying computer-mediated cultures, and I map a path that starts with audience reception and moves to offline/online and global/local intersections and mediations.

In my early years of graduate school as a Master of Arts (MA) student, I was introduced to the phrase “audience research.” At that time I learned that audience research was mainly connected to numerical findings – of television and radio shows, of advertisements, and so on. A magical piece of software on the DOS machine, called “SPSS” (Service Provisioning System Software), would spit out various statistical analyses that I was reluctant to do “manually.” All I needed to do was to figure out the variables, the questions to ask, and the meanings of the data that the computer threw out at me. I loved it. Think up variables, punch them in various combinations, and watch the computer spit out the results. I did not have to worry about statistical process – manually – which, even though I am a statistician’s daughter, I was terrified of. Punching things into the computer to see what it produced was fascinating to me. This fascination with the computer followed in the wake of my absorption with the mechanical typewriter in preceding years. I found nothing more comforting than the rhythm of typewriter keyboarding exercises as my fingers typed out the routine “asdfg,” “qwert,” and so on. As the rhythm went click-clickety-click, my thoughts – my very “being” – began to be materialized on white paper.

In the mid-'80s, when small businesses that previously offered typewriter tutorials began to provide computer training, I was compelled to sign up. As a "housewife," freelance writer/amateur poet, and mother of a toddler who was equally fascinated with his mother's typewriting, I sought to improve myself by going to computer tutorials. I learned early programs such as Word, BASIC, COBOL, and a smattering of Fortran.

I had read books about artificial intelligence and ELIZA (<http://www.knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/ELIZA/>), and I wished the computer would write poetry for me as well. As I learned more about computers, the punch cards that I had often stumbled across in my brother's strewn belongings when he came home in India for vacation from his Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) campus began acquiring historical significance to me. Later these punch cards acquired even more meaning, as I realized their similarity to the cards on the Jacquard loom once I began examining offline and online technologies in global/local contexts. Little did I know that, in my search for magic³ and in my laziness, I was to stumble upon complex, nuanced intersections of science, technology, text, image, subjectivity, and gendered spaces of technocultures.

I did not know it then, but the business that offered these tutorials was training the future off-shore labor forces for transnational businesses. Globalization in digital formats had arrived in my backyard in Bhopal, India, in the mid-1980s. Thinking historically, it is no surprise that the infamous Bhopal Gas Tragedy (December 1984), which resulted from manufacturing industries off-shoring outmoded technologies to third-world urban spaces, signaled the transition to a different phase in globalization. Globalization would appear more sanitized and benevolent even as more manufacturing jobs and computer hardware factories continued to be off-shored onto borderlands (*maquiladoras*) and other third-world regions, while the clamor of the digital made this process invisible. Thus, as audiences the world over watched the broadcast of this disaster and activist groups protested against the transfer of outmoded technologies, the focus of interest for communication scholars conveniently shifted to examining empowerment through information technology (IT).⁴

Upon completion of my MA, I worked my way into a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program, which had quite a different focus – namely on how communication should be studied. I entered the world of rhetoric and media studies and was introduced to cultural studies paradigms. No punching was possible here. Instead, I did encounter works by Edward Said, Jonathan Fiske, Kenneth Burke, Meagan Morris, Ien Ang, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Michel De Certeau among others. My idea of the media and online audiences and my approach to research took on different meanings in this context.

Cyberethnography

Starting with my dissertation project, which began in 1994, my work has continued to question whether feminist spaces for multiple forms of embodied power and for

networked and connected thinking/acting (as described in studies such as those of Donna Haraway) are possible online. In probing the intersections between feminisms and the new technology, I have attempted to explore and comprehend those aspects of production and design – skills, technical and cultural literacies, and material access – that are necessary to make such connections and collaborations possible.

Scholars such as Steve Jones point out that “issues with which sociologists and anthropologists, among others, have traditionally engaged when conducting their research are part of [‘Net’] discourse, for it becomes necessary to cover the ethical ground concerning participant observation, privacy, biography” (Jones, 1995, p. 3). These issues require us to move beyond frames of representation, viewership, and reception; they compel us to engage the context as producers, designers, users, authors, and inhabitants – in addition to being audiences, consumers, and readers. Thus “cyberethnography” unfolded as a methodological approach for the study of online contexts during my attempts to study a women-only email discussion list called “SAWnet” (South Asian Women’s network).

My research on SAWnet began after I had been a reader and participant in that email list for a while. This was an online space that I had originally entered in an attempt to find a community of women who might share a background similar to mine: educated South Asian women who had traveled away from their home-country or had a “cosmopolitan” background. Prior to my decision to write about SAWnet, I was already a fairly involved member (since late January 1994). I shared some fiction and poetry with members of the SAWnet email listproc. My attempts at studying this group took several forms.

My decision to research that email list was made when I had been a member of the listproc for a year or so. By then I was definitely a participant researcher. In summer 1994 I started my research by posting a survey on SAWnet with the intention of finding out how the nature of the online community had changed since the time of its formation. I also mentioned my intention (which was based on my being a freelance writer for magazines and newspapers in India in the past) of writing at least a magazine article about SAWnet. My interest in the changing nature of the group led me to try to find out if any members felt dissatisfied with how the group was interacting. I wanted to see what kinds of discourses were being marginalized. This prompted me to investigate the possibilities of dialogic interaction within an online community like SAWnet.

In researching the list, I had no access to the offline participants themselves. I was going to read their postings and textually analyze them. I also sent out a survey on the list, and I asked members to answer the survey. In other words, I was not sure how to go about researching that group of people and their use of the medium – the email list named “SAWnet.” Relying upon a combination of textual analysis of specific clusters of conversation and some (very few) replies to the survey I sent out, I wrote a paper for a graduate seminar, linking my analyses to theoretical frameworks from postcolonial theory, mainly on issues of nation and on the role women played in postcolonial nationalisms. I might have proceeded to write in this manner, mono-

logically, describing what I read as “texts” on the list. I would then have had a dissertation that “proved” how the literature on nationalism and women could be extended to describe South Asian communities in diaspora in the United States. Had I done that, my work would have appeared to be a critical engagement with the issues. In actuality, the work would have been quite uncritical, despite the fact that the language and the literature I was drawing from were cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and third-world feminist theory.

All this was going on while I was aware of the rule that posts could only be shared with nonmembers of SAWnet if the poster gave permission to this effect. I had asked and received permission to use the posts I had used in my paper. I did not imagine that writing a description of SAWnet would be a problem for any of its members, since this does not involve the use of anyone’s messages on SAWnet. However, in spring 1995, an anthropologist from New Zealand (not a South Asian) was also studying the same list at around the same time. She announced her intention of writing a paper about the community by posting her intentions to the list. It appeared that she was trying to sort out what methods and codes of ethics were appropriate in this environment. As an anthropologist, she treated the list as a group of people – not as scrolling screens of text, as I was inclined to do while writing up my research. She contacted some members of SAWnet personally, to ask for permission to use our posts. She announced her decision to study SAWnet and to write a paper about SAWnet (as I had done earlier on in 1994). This launched a series of discussions about the value of studying a group like SAWnet. Some women protested. They wanted to be “left alone” in what they perceived to be a private space. Discussions began to get very interesting, even heated. I decided to remind members of SAWnet that I, too, had been writing about SAWnet as part of my dissertation project since 1994. My entry into the discussions regarding SAWnet contributed to and further complicated matters (Gajjala, 2004).

As it turns out, my response to the posts and my interactions with members, both on and off the list (through a now antiquated chat feature in a DOS computer known as “talk”) took me in a direction where the participants became human subjects, even though I was researching them as “texts.” The “texts” were alive – they talked back to me. This realization became clear and evident to me once the group of members on the list began questioning the anthropologist about her research motives. The texts were talking back indeed.

It was then that I knew that I needed to be an ethnographer. I was too much a part of the life and community of this online group to be a detached survey researcher trying to understand users’ reception of meanings or the audiences’ meaning-making. I was, in very real ways, too much a part of the virtual community to be content with just analyzing what was happening on the list as “texts.” Thus, while textual analysis, just by itself, would have been fine to describe the content of the list during a specific period of time and to reveal how a very specific group of women with interests and links to South Asia were conversing at a very specific time and location, that would not have provided a glimpse into the process, form, or limitations of the

medium. Nor would textual analyses give the researcher insights into the hierarchies that are produced through the human–computer interface and through the ways in which different social groups used this specific medium. A textual analysis, in other words, could only be a part of more immersive kinds of investigation, which would help me discover how voice and silence get played out in such an online space.

Online experiences and interactions are, simultaneously, discursive subjects and living texts, where each text may follow its own logical force but all of them are also speedily frozen into archives, as “the past” of texts living in the present. The participants producing these texts develop affective relations within such a space and develop contextual bonds in this social world – bonds that hold them accountable to each other through the logical force of the rules listed and of the content shared. This in turn produces what is often termed a “virtual community.” To get at the multiple mediations that produced voice and silence in online contexts, a combination of multiple methods under the umbrella methodology of critical feminist ethnography was needed.

The Postcolonial Feminist Cyberethnographer

Further, in that particular instant of studying SAWnet, in order to find help with the dilemma I faced regarding my subjects, I turned to the work of postcolonial feminists and feminist cultural anthropologists. The work of Kamala Visweswaran, Kirin Narayan, Ruth Behar, Deborah Gordon, Uma Narayan, Mary John, and others was very useful to me as I was articulating the issues at hand. I had already been drawing on work by Haraway, Spivak, Alcoff, Harding, and others, in addition to work by subaltern studies researchers. This body of work helped me examine and theorize on the basis of the dilemmas and contradictions I faced in the “field” of cyberspace as I was studying SAWnet and issues of method and ethics of research. Those theories allowed me to open new ways of understanding what I would later learn were the beginnings of South Asian digital diasporas (see Gajjala and Gajjala, 2008).

The “SAWnet refusal” raises complex issues in relation to feminist ethnography and feminist Internet research. While the study itself was interrupted (this is what I refer to as a “refusal”) and my attempt at studying the group failed, the discussions leading to the failure highlighted several important issues in relation to ethnographic practices online and in relation to feminist practices of representation relevant to media and audience ethnographies. How do ethnographic practices and the ethnographer evolve in an online context? How are they revolutionized? What constitutes the field and how do we define its boundaries? Further, can we transpose concerns that arise out of real-life (RL) anthropology or face-to-face ethnography onto the study of virtual communities without considering seriously the very important differences in the nature of face-to-face interaction and virtual interaction? When can RL anthropological and critical issues be considered relevant to online ethnography? (See Jacobson, 1999 for a discussion of some of these issues.)

Considering the interactive nature of online participation, questions arise as to who is an ethnographer, who qualifies to be a “native” informant, and what the options are for refusing to be a subject. Specifically, the experience highlighted for me some of the ways in which conducting ethnography in cyberspace is distinctly different from real-life ethnography, while it also underscored some issues/problems that are specific to the technology/medium (Gajjala, 2004).

My quest to refine the study of online texts and online audiences led me to become an ethnographer and an amateur producer of online content. I examined how subject positions emerged in continuous interpersonal and group interactions and were simultaneously broadcast into public space, while creating the feeling (illusion) of privacy – sometimes even of intimacy – for the person offline in front of a single screen. The only way to study such an environment was to consider a shift in methods that would be synchronous with the contexts I entered. This was the understanding I took with me into the classes I taught. In these classes, along with various undergraduate and graduate students, I developed further insights into being a researcher of online contexts.

Ethnographies at Online/Offline Intersections

Traditionally, anthropologists and archeologists travel thousands of miles to faraway places in the world and live there for extended periods of time, in order to represent the people and culture there. Their legacy has left us with one of the most important qualitative research methods: ethnography. It is also important not to forget the colonial history of the imperial projects of nineteenth-century anthropology. Those of us who are feminists and critical researchers using ethnographic methods continually encounter points of complicity with those epistemologies.

Attempting to grasp the complexities inherent in issues of access, design, and production of Internet-based communities and other such communication spaces led me to concerns well beyond the scope of online texts and their visual cultures. I was compelled to go offline to look at what people do at the computer interface offline. I discovered (and this should actually be no surprise) that people do not sit at the computer interface and use the Internet unless there is an offline community that links them to the global interconnections possible through the Internet. I learned that I needed to study how the Internet served offline communities and why it was becoming a necessary tool of marketing and globalization. At a time when a website or some form of Internet connectivity was increasingly offered as an “easy” solution to reaching the market or to connecting to the global, I felt that I had to examine and check if indeed the Internet was a panacea to all problems of access and circulation.

In 1998–1999 I had the opportunity to converse and communicate in writing with Annapurna Mamidipudi of Dastkar Andhra. The editor of the journal “Gender and Development,” Caroline Sweetman, had contacted me and asked me to write about

the Internet and third-world women. Having lived in the US for nine years by then, and not having actually done any extensive field research in any non-US or non-Internet context until then, I decided to invite Annapurna (whom I have known all her life) to write to me. During the writing of this article (see Gajjala & Mamidipudi, 1999), I realized that I was likely to make fallacious assumptions in my research on cyberspace contexts if I did not learn about the offline environments in which Internet technologies are being sold as solutions to all sorts of problems. I also realized that policymakers, activists, and academics (wherever their political-economic background and the ideology stemming from it) were prone to privilege “the Internet” as an entry point and to give less importance to years and years of work already done by field workers in offline communities. Just as the blinding emphasis on “new” media sometimes ignores the bodies of work on various media produced over time that historically contextualize and inform how these “new” media function in society, the popular discourse of the Internet as a savior of all unheard peoples of the world continues to blind researchers of Internet-mediated contexts, preventing them from looking at the complex, layered contexts that produce the artifacts we study “on” the Internet. Thus, an exploration of the Internet as a media form using ethnographic immersion as a methodology may yield shifting notions of the audience. The researcher must enter into the cyberspaces s/he is researching – yet be aware of the offline contexts, the layered literacies, and the nuanced negotiations required in order to navigate these online spaces and be audiences, users, or participants in such contexts.

Therefore my work now includes investigating contexts and communities formed around offline technologies such as the handloom – which has a very effective, collaborative community, formed around its use for the production of cloth in rural South India, weaving still being the second largest rural livelihood in India despite problems related to global markets and the oppression of modernizing discourses. Therefore the study of such “emerging technocultures” is about incipient forms of handloom technology (since weavers and marketers of handloom negotiate how transnational capital flows to and away from them) as much as it is about the study of newly developing forms of digital communicative environments and financial instruments.

Among other things, I ask the following question: What encounters occur between people from contradictory worlds, and under what conditions would these encounters lead to dialogue as well as to further understanding and action toward a common emancipatory goal? My investigation led me to question the kind of subject implicit in cyberfeminist discourses, as well as to examine the kind of subject that emerges online. In my offline journeys through rural South India, ethnography is my main mode of investigation. However, while entering the field, I also work for the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Dastkar Andhra, which acts on behalf of handloom weavers in a variety of ways. Parallel to this, my offline ethnographies include travelling to various craft guilds and craft and fiber shows and expos and investigating the amateur practices of weaving, spinning, quilting, knitting, crocheting, and dying the yarn. Therefore my ethnographic method intersects with action research. Whether I travel as a collaborator with the NGO workers and officers, as

a participant in craft guilds, as a shopper, or as an ethnographer, I am continually marked. In India I am marked as a non-resident Indian tourist, consumer, and collector of handloom fabric and crafted artifacts to be transported back to the US in order to be used/displayed in my home or given as gifts to friends living here. In the US, among predominantly rural northwest Ohio communities, I am marked in certain ways as an outsider (even though I am a citizen of the United States), and I am sometimes included as an insider in select groups when I participate in rituals and behaviors that these communities find familiar.

I must note that, in itself, the social marking of my outsider or insider status neither places me in a lower position in a hierarchy nor frames me as more or less powerful than those I work with. What frames me as possibly more powerful than them is my academic position and the possibility that I may misinterpret and distort events on site. Therefore the scholar's enactment of "with" in "working with" a community outside the academy must be considered a very tenuous and delicate process of collaboration. This marking of my outsider status serves as a continuous reminder to me as an ethnographer that humility and uncertainty are an integral part of the learning process. Assumptions of intrinsic scholarly authority on the part of the researcher get her nowhere in her attempt to understand the contexts and motivations in any situation she investigates. The researcher's authority and power is not in the field *per se*; rather it resides in how she represents the field and in how her work mobilizes the field toward specific power formations.

Latour (1996) notes the power dynamics implicit in the process of translation from other contexts to academic writing and describes how this happens through the formation of "immutable mobiles." He writes:

[K]nowing is not a disinterested cognitive activity; harder facts about the other cultures have been produced in our societies, in exactly the same way as other facts about ballistics, taxonomy or surgery. One place gathers in all the others and presents them synoptically to the dissenter so as to modify the outcome of an agonistic encounter. To make a large number of competitors and compatriots depart from their usual ways, many ethnographers both had to go further and longer out of *their* usual ways, and then come *back*. The constraints imposed by convincing people, going out and coming back, are such that this can be achieved only if everything about the savage life is transformed into immutable mobiles that are easily readable and presentable. (Latour, 1996, p. 15)

Therefore I am not suggesting or claiming that expressions of humility, participation, contribution, or what I term "epistemologies and pedagogies of doing" (Gajjala, Rybas, & Zhang, 2010) are ways of extricating the researcher from such potential complicity and appropriation. Rather I am attempting to disrupt and upturn previously established binaries – "immutable mobiles" – through the snapshots I produce, understanding fully that the latter may be interpreted as "native" information on faraway premodern lives, regardless of all the disclaimers I make. The difficulty is not in gaining understanding through learning, travelling, and doing; the difficulty, the struggle, and the dilemma are in the craft of writing. If, as a researcher and as an academic, I am to establish that

I can write appropriately for an academic audience, then I must risk the flattening of what I have learned. If I am to break with the tradition of academic writing, I must risk doing it not effectively, sounding uninformed, or losing my own voice and location as a “scholar.” Within these stated constraints, my methodology is a struggle that includes the process of crafting the academic text.

Online, in cyberspace, the ethnographer does not always have to travel in the kind of physical space where the whole body encounters the field face to face. But the travel in time and in cyberspace allows her/him to live in the field in a different way and to carry out concrete participant observation. In order to conduct her research effectively, the ethnographer must first code herself into existing in these online worlds.

For instance, in *Material Virtualities*, Jenny Sunden (2003) writes of the typing into existence that is a requirement for any sustained online identity. This act of *be-coming* online creates a close relationship between the typist and the character she/he types into existence in the online world. This sort of relationship is no doubt the basis for the process of transformation described in the three-dimensional film “Avatar” released in 2009. It is of course no coincidence, I am sure, that the character, Mary, played by Sigourney Weaver, who heads the team that is providing intelligence (implicitly and explicitly) to the military and to the corporation, is clearly modeled on popular images of the female anthropologist (in short, she seems very Margaret Mead-like).

The online avatar/identity is curiously the production of both the offline and online world. Gonzalez (2000) critiques the naïve assumption that there is the virtual/real binary separating the reality from the virtuality. Actually, the closer one observes and participates in an online community, the more s/he would agree that the interplay of real and virtual is always present. No one can transcend the social categories and the repertoire of experiences, skills, and literacies that define who s/he is in the offline world, even as s/he connects to online worlds. Likewise, the learning and understanding produced through online living definitely exerts influence on the perception of the offline world.

Methodological approaches informed by “epistemologies of doing,” in conjunction with visual and textual readings and ethnographic investigations, lead to an actual examination of subjects in process. The production of layered, situated subjectivities in techno-mediated environments – online and offline – allows an understanding of situated agency within spectra of choices and constraints. Examining where we place our bodies or where our bodies are placed (whether visually, textually, or through architectural and city design and mapping) in time and space – in relation to technologies old and new – and how we interact with these environments leads to an understanding of the complexity of unequal power relations and structural formations within a global cyberspace.

Epistemologies and Pedagogies of Doing

To further understand the nuanced and layered ways of being online, I introduced assignments in my classrooms where students would be required to be immersed in

explorations and in the production of environments and selves in online environments such as text-based MOOs (multi-user domains/dungeons, object oriented), Web 2.0 tools such as YouTube, wikis, and blogs, social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, and three-dimensional environments such as Second Life and World of Warcraft.

In class settings I engage the continuum of possibilities along key dialectics of space/place, virtual/real, embodied/disembodied, membered/dismembered, and voice/voicelessness, in order to talk about technocultural identity. These identities are produced at various online/offline and global/local intersections through the following: visual performances and discursive self-representations; simultaneously disembodied and multiply-embodied performativity; and layered sociocultural, linguistic, and technical literacies. Students from my various classes engage as amateur ethnographers in such virtual worlds and online social networks. As an anthropologist, Boellstorff has shown, in his *Coming of Age in Second Life* (Boellstorff, 2008), that immersion in the context allows an understanding and a familiarity that in turn reveal multiple modes of meaning-making in these contexts. To borrow a phrase from a student in one of my classes where we used Facebook as a site to examine digitally media identities, online social networks and virtual worlds are “places” where “we put our stuff out” to share it with friends.

Further, over the years, online global networking and gaming practices have shifted our understanding of “friends” and the relational ways in which we exist among our communities and networks of peers. We no longer use the term “friend” to refer only to the one or two people whom we interact with in face-to-face encounters, or to people with whom we share our deepest confidences. There is also an interesting convergence between friends and audience, in an almost theatrical sense. It is at the intersection of placing objects in Internet space and in performing for networks of friends that current manifestations of online voice and agency emerge relationally.

This notion of placing objects, or “putting stuff out there,” as the student referred to above called it, and the perception of online space as a place are not limited to social networking sites such as Friendster, Facebook, orkut, hi5, MySpace, and so on. Neither is this notion of *placing* the self, relationally and performatively, for an imagined and real audience of friends new only to the post-online social networks. The idea of investing identity in objectified symbols, where the symbols take on a meaning of their own within the internal logic of the online world, has existed from the time of purely text-based MOOs and MUDs (multi-user domains). This notion of owning, placing, and sharing exists in music sharing software, computer games, and other virtual worlds as well. In fact the placing of the self relationally leads directly to the production of contextual and relational avatars (online identities) that are constructed and narrated technically, textually, and relationally through the encounters of individuals with online social contexts, and these encounters in cyberspaces produce different kinds of sensory experiences. The individual’s response to the new media environment is nuanced and layered as s/he learns to live and work in yet another global social world, and these experiences of immersion challenge older, established notions of “audience” and “user.”

Thus subjects (not audiences or users) are *placed* historically, contextually, and relationally in online networks. This placing leads to a reconfiguration of identity, labor, and literacies in tandem with transnational capital flows. This production of virtual identities simultaneously generates and dismantles shifting labor relations within the global economy, as labor forces are retooled and reskilled to work in digital economies, while specific offline production processes and labor conditions are made invisible.

As a student in my class pointed out after her experience in Linguamoo (an academic MOO-based community in the early 1990s and early 2000s): “[T]he meaning of language isn’t what we expect it to be necessarily when we put it out into the world in a particular rhetorical situation” (MA, 1997). This was one of the first times when, before asking the students to enter the MOO, I had also programmed and placed objects strategically in the environment, for these students to engage with. Each of the objects I had built was meant to engage specific concepts, on the basis of the course content. This student’s reaction leads us to understand what the blogger at cultureby.com is signaling when he says:

[W]hen the Second Life inhabitant present[s] herself as an elf, a chipmunk or a flaming goddess, she is using cultural categories and understandings from “away.” It is easy enough to say, “oh, but we all know what an elf, a chipmunk or a goddess is,” but this is precisely where the [. . .] [researcher] [. . .] is supposed to be scrupulous (as we may expect a philosopher to be scrupulous about claims to knowledge or judgment). (Grant McCracken, 2008)

Therefore, whether this happened in Second Life in 2007 or in LinguaMOO in 1997, the objects and contexts within these virtual worlds started functioning with a logical force that placed them firmly in the virtual world context. This virtual world context is related to the offline context, of course; it seems to mimic offline worlds, and indeed it has an impact on the body and mind that get affectively incorporated into the interface. However, just as physical objects carried out of their habitual context into a different one acquire a meaning specific to the new context, virtual objects, words, and labels do the same. This travelling of the objects and symbols shifts the meanings and requires different contextual literacies and skills for their re-placement and re-negotiation.

A new interface, a lot of times, poses challenge for users who are not familiar with it. The new environment, the new technoliteracy required, and the need to interact with people even if only virtually, all contribute to the uneasiness many users feel when they are first introduced to MOO, Facebook, or Second Life. From registration to the creation of avatars, Second Life guides the users through the journey of acquiring a digital being that participates in meaning-making in the virtual world and definitely has material consequences and material anchors.

So where is the “audience” today? When the viewer is no longer “outside,” viewing from a distance, but is involved in the production and circulation of the text, movie, or game, we must shift the relational viewpoint that allows us to understand how the media pervade our lives.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, my approach to the study of online media contexts draws from multiple disciplines out of necessity. I adopt critical ethnographic methodologies, whether under the heading of “cyberethnography” or “epistemologies of doing,” for research and pedagogy at these online/offline and global/local intersections and nodes. These ethnographies, interspersed as they are with my personal experience of being in communicative spaces of the diaspora through my own life, inform my continuing research in these areas.

My encounter with SAWnet in my initial forays into research on Internet-mediated communication has strongly shaped the way I continue my own research and advise my graduate students on the issue of methods for online research. In addition, my offline ethnographies, travelling with non-profit workers in urban and rural India, have shaped my perception and understanding of the impact that academic and corporate research about the Internet can have on shaping policy that affects the everyday life and the livelihood of people who have no say in how they are made to participate in or denied access to technological and financial structures of power.

Paradigms that Internet researchers engage with have allowed us to complicate the definitions of “audience” and audience research. But this is not the only point I wish the beginning researcher to walk away with. Identities produced within digital contexts enabled by computer software and hardware are made possible through the cooperation of the sociocultural digital place and of global networks involving time-space compression. These sociocultural contexts are co-produced by inhabitants who access these contexts. Both offline and online contexts that co-produce online environments – through presences and absences – are situated in uneven hierarchies of race, gender, class, caste, geography, language, technical literacy, and so on. At any moment in time, the individual researcher’s goal to understand these multiple layers can only be partial. The researcher needs multiple methods – sometimes textual analysis, sometimes a “deep hanging out” (Madison, 2005), sometimes a quantitative analysis or in-depth interviews. The researcher must continually be self-reflective concerning her/his own role – but not to the extent of becoming paralyzed and silent. The issues that come out of this struggle are often as important as the partial descriptions and so-called objective analyses of interpretative and quantitative data. The researcher must name herself.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Yeon Ju Oh, my research assistant, for her excellent feedback and encouragement on several drafts of this chapter and for her help with proofreading and editing. I also want to thank my newest mentee, Aditi Paul, for her encouragement and positive feedback as I was revising.

NOTES

- 1 I wish to ask my colleagues of that time (and those of now) to forgive any omissions: I have probably not mentioned some of my dearest friends and some of my most important colleagues.
- 2 See <http://www.aoir.org> and <http://www.amst.umd.edu/cwg/>
- 3 Television shows from the 1960s and 1970s such as *I Dream of Jeannie* and *Bewitched* had set me up to desire such magic in my life, so that I could indeed aspire to be a “super-woman” and to perform double shifts with great ease – a snap of the fingers and a blink, and I could be the perfect home-maker, mother, and creative writer.
- 4 Once the outsource/offshore IT workers were studied to reveal how “empowered” they were through IT, the researchers’ gaze shifted to examining online spaces of work and play. Thus the brown and black bodies laboring for the global IT industry were celebrated as empowered and conveniently packed away. At the same time the discourse of fan labor, consumer labor, play as labor, and so on emerged. This global “labor” force of users, consumers, fans, and computer-gamers has now become the focus of researchers, much like the celebration of “resistant” audiences of television in previous audience studies scholarship. Let me hasten to say, however, that this research is not without value when it is done with a great deal of reflection on the hierarchies produced and the kinds of labor it privileges. Neither are the two – the labor of brown and black bodies and the labor of fans and gamers – mutually exclusive: in my continuing work on transnational labor, digital labor, affective labor, and globalization I examine some of these intersections.

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Studying Online News Audiences

Trends, Issues, and Challenges

Deborah S. Chung

ABSTRACT

The exponential growth of thousands of online newspapers and millions of online news consumers is evidence that online news publications are a critical source of information. Online news sites have evolved over the past several years in content and form, and many have developed into serious publications incorporating innovative storytelling techniques and providing various methods of audience engagement. While research examining the evolving form of news online exists, very little is known about the audiences who visit the sites of these publications. How are online news audiences using interactive tools? How has the relationship between traditional information senders and receivers changed? This chapter surveys the major trends taking place in the world of online news publications and the latter's efforts to engage their audiences, as news organizations struggle to re-evaluate their traditional roles and practices in the online climate. This chapter's discussion includes, as part of news production, the integration of interactive features, the emergence of blogs, citizen journalism, and other social tools such as Twitter and Delicious.

Introduction

Throughout the history of news, technology has played a critical role both in advancing the spread and status of journalism and in challenging the traditional boundaries and conventions of journalism's practices and products. The Internet's multimodal and multidirectional qualities are altering how journalists gather and deliver information and how audiences receive and understand news. Newspapers, for example, which have been experiencing a continual decline in readership and circulation, have migrated online, in the hope of regaining audiences through the interactive lure of the medium. The Internet enables the convergence of different media forms and offers numerous options for audiences to find and consume news. As readers and viewers increasingly seek out the Internet as a major resource – for information, entertainment, and news – the Internet has attained the status of an upstart mass medium that is beginning to pose a serious threat to the established old media. Facing declining revenues and a shrinking readership for print media, the news industry has turned its attention toward audiences online and toward the ways in which traditional notions of news and news workers and enduring business models of journalism are undergoing transformation.

Scholars have devoted substantial attention to the growth of online news in the last decade. Research on online news has attempted to advance our understanding of the differing impact that qualities of the Internet such as convergence, synchronicity, and interactivity have on audiences' news consumption experiences (Chan-Olmsted & Park, 2000; Chung, 2004; Greer & Mensing, 2006; Rosenberry, 2005; Salwen, 2005; Schultz, 1999; Thurman, 2008). Newer communication channels have enabled audiences to have more engaged and involved experiences in seeking out information, and also increased levels of participation in defining and producing the news. Studying these changes in audiences' modes of engagement with news can help us better understand the vital role that informed citizens play in supporting and sustaining democratic structures of governance. Online news publications potentially offer more egalitarian opportunities for audiences to participate in civic life and to encourage them to become more actively engaged citizens. Functioning as a gatekeeper of information, the news industry has traditionally enabled citizens to make more educated decisions; it has also been a venue where hosts of competing individuals and institutions voice their perspectives in the public sphere. Many believe that the Internet and online news have the potential to extend these interactive opportunities for communication between and among various social groups and thus to offer a solution to the current crisis of journalism in the United States – a situation in which it appears that the media have lost touch with their audiences.

Several technological factors have contributed to the changing character of news audiences, particularly those who seek out the news online. The penetration of broadband (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009) has dramatically altered the way people read and view news and what they choose to do with the information

they acquire. News audiences are going online for more extensive news content from varied outlets and for entertainment and novel communication capabilities. Audiences' information-seeking behaviors are also changing because of saturation in media exposure and because of the exponential growth in options for media and communication tools. Consumers are also employing a high degree of multimedia switching and multitasking when they engage with new media technologies. Additionally, with Web 2.0 tools and social media taking center stage, the culture of active user participation and involvement has come to dominate some sectors of the media industry. In this rapidly changing media climate, we are witnessing a major departure from the traditional one-way dynamics of communication between senders and receivers of information to an interactive communication environment. As distinctions between senders and receivers blur in the online media environment, it is important to direct more attention to the processes that are creating shifts in journalism and in communication models of audience reception.

This chapter has five sections. The first takes a historical approach, in order to review and summarize the critiques directed at traditional approaches to audiences in mass communication. This section also considers the implicit promise of new media tools to alter and improve communication processes. The next section tracks the implementation of interactivity, a key quality of new media, in online news publications. The third section discusses how Internet news publications and blogs have affected news audiences – their consumption and reception of news – and explores the developing role of the Internet within the current interactive multimedia news climate. Noting the capacity of the Internet to enable audiences to become more independent agents of communication, the fourth section reviews scholarship on online news and participatory forms of citizenship, including on the impact of micro-blogging and social bookmarking tools. The concluding section examines future opportunities in the arena of online journalism and points toward the implications of an expanding active online news audience for research on the changing face of journalism.

Criticism of the Traditional Communication Model

The media have functioned as the gatekeepers of information in traditional mass communication models that depict a top-down, unidirectional approach to information dissemination. There has been a sacred distinction between mass and interpersonal communication channels, because senders of information in mass communication models have traditionally been separated from receivers of information. Shannon and Weaver's model (1949), which offered a linear and sequential process for the flow of information and communication, has reigned as the dominant mass communication paradigm for decades. Rogers (1986) refers to this model as "the single most important turning point in the history of communication science" (pp. 86–87).

Yet there has also been a long tradition of dissatisfaction with the traditional press regarding its insular and elitist information distribution practices. Media critics have argued that traditional mass media largely produce messages independently from the needs and desires of their audiences and that they have not provided opportunities for dialogue or political discussion with citizens. Habermas (1989) points out that the hierarchical structure of modern mass communication promotes a communicative model in which audiences are not invited to talk back. Christians, Ferre, and Fackler (1993) claim that the press has served primarily as a vehicle of expert transmission rather than as a network of community discussion. Rosen (1999) also called attention to the disconnect between journalists/news organizations and citizens/communities.

In response to such criticisms, newspapers have launched various movements such as the civic journalism movement, which aimed to re-engage with US citizens and their communities (Charity, 1995; Merritt, 1998; Rosen, 1992). For example, advocates of the public – or civic – journalism movement urged journalists to cover issues that are compelling to their audiences and communities and to frame stories that address people as citizens. Further responding to such criticisms, journalists attempted to provide, through polls and townhall meetings, feedback opportunities for citizen and community discussions, which then shaped journalists' reporting agendas (Nip, 2006).

In addition, promises about the unique qualities of the Internet, such as interactivity, have helped facilitate further opportunities for newsrooms to provide interactive experiences with news audiences, inviting them to participate in the production and presentation of news. The use of interactive features in online news publications allows audiences to experience an increased sense of agency (e.g., increased choice, personalization, customization, and interpersonal communication opportunities). These publications allow for various types of communication formats: one-to-one communications, for example email; one-to-few/many and few-to-few communications, for example chats; and even many-to-many communications, such as electronic bulletin boards (Morris & Ogan, 1996). The Internet allows news audiences to be active, prompting them to make choices with the help of an increased array of selection options in which the roles of senders and receivers are often merged. These transformations have significant implications for the existing mass communication theories, because traditional models no longer neatly fit a scenario in which audiences are increasingly refusing to stay passive. The Internet platform of online news publications allows for communication that may sometimes follow traditional models, but at other times may also give rise to altogether new configurations of communication.

Many professionals in the news industry and several media scholars have optimistically envisioned the new media as liberatory tools that can potentially undermine traditional forms of journalistic authority in the mainstream press and challenge the hegemonic power of traditional news content (Schultz, 1999; Schudson, 2005). The interactive and democratic capabilities of the Internet and its online news publications can, then – in principle – afford news audiences increased opportunities for participation and mutual discussion.

Online Newspapers and Interactivity

The exponential growth of online news publications and their steady consumption over the last 15 years have transformed the way news is delivered, presented, and received. Today, many century-old prominent news organizations have folded and many others have cut their print editions to a couple of days a week. Still others have opted to go exclusively online, ceasing print publication altogether. Web-based publishing continues to flourish, as many news organizations use the Internet as their primary platform. The following section documents how news publications make use of interactivity, a key quality of new media, in presenting daily news online as they seek to maintain their circulation – and presence – in the rapidly changing media environment.

Research documents the steady growth and development of online news publications. Interactivity, a buzz word dominating the news industry starting in the late 1990s, captured the potential and the promise of what could be accomplished with news websites. Outing (1998) argued that online news publications must embrace the task of facilitating communication between individuals and communities of readers, and that online news publications must strive to excel at such interactivity, in order to bring people together. New communication tools may offer audiences a newfound role as participants or as information providers, thus contributing to audience agency and to meaningful and relevant public storytelling. Sundar defines audience agency as

the degree to which the self feels that he/she is a relevant actor in the CMC [computer-mediated communication] situation [. . .] it is the extent of manipulability afforded by the interface to assert one's influence over the nature and course of the interaction. (Sundar, 2008, p. 61)

Agency allows users to feel involved as active participants engaged in the communication process. For example, hyperlinks allow users to choose specific news topics from an assortment of stories and to jump to content related to their personal interests. Tailoring news headlines offers a greater degree of control to the user. However, when examined more critically, the extent of the manipulability afforded to news audiences and the assertion of audiences' influence over content through such activities can appear to be limited. The audience may gain greater degrees of agency through other activities, which require more effort on the part of the user, such as using customization features (e.g., content submissions) or interpersonal communication options (e.g., message boards, chat features).

Several scholars found initially, however, that many news organizations had not pursued the full implementation of interactivity. These scholars criticized the media for failing to fully exploit the various interactive options available through the Internet. Initially, interactivity was implemented in limited ways, merely allowing

audiences a wider range of choice and selection options through multiple hyperlinks or audio and video files. In addition, the information was mostly dominated by text. Very few news organizations went the extra step to install more sophisticated interactive online features – byline links within stories, chat options, and discussion forums – that genuinely facilitated active human-to-human discussion. These observations about limited interactivity are documented in various studies going from the end of the millennium into the first decade of the new one (Chan-Olmsted & Park, 2000; Kenney, Gorelik, & Mwangi, 2000; Massey & Levy, 1999; Rosenberry, 2005; Schultz, 1999; Ye & Li, 2006).

Such findings may reflect the failure of news organizations to fully recognize and understand the evolving roles that both news producers and active consumers may concurrently play; by contrast, traditional communication models isolate the senders from the receivers of information. During these early years of online news site development, the speed of information delivery and the space allotted to that information were particular issues of interest, with greater emphasis being placed on text-based information. Initially users viewed the Internet as merely serving a companion role to traditional media outlets. Because newspapers, which rely mainly on particular arrangements of words and photographs, were traditionally considered the primary channel of information, the presentation of information online also modeled newspapers' methods of displaying content.

It is important to note that various news organizations – large or small, national or local – had recognized the dialogic qualities that the online medium offered and in consequence had made efforts to implement various novel interactive experiences for their audiences. However, research suggests that, while such transformations in storytelling may seem constructive in theory, the implementation of these presentation styles has proven difficult in practice. In a study of online news producers in the United States, Chung (2007) found producers to be generally interested in utilizing interactive options. However, producers identified various problems that emerge with the provision of interactivity. The heightened workload associated with such presentations of news has made journalism an increasingly labor-intensive job – one with higher expectations related to catering for audiences. Dialogic communication spaces have also enabled some audience members to hijack the online discussion environment – particularly message boards and forums – to express hostility and anger. Often conversations became uninteresting, unrelated, and even offensive. Concern for the quality of discussion online has raised red flags for online news producers; hence many experimented with screening practices and moderated forums or removed such discussion spaces entirely. Still other concerns pointed toward the technological clutter brought about by emerging communication tools that can take away from the actual content of the stories. Additionally, maintaining interactivity in online news publications was found to be costly because the organization needed a more extensive technological infrastructure to fully implement story formats that encouraged interactive experiences. The training of staff to monitor and facilitative interactivity presented yet another burdensome expense.

Overall, while some concerns were attributed to costs, the main hurdles to achieving interactivity had to do with the changing roles and expectations of news audiences as their members become more active participants online. Chung found that certain news organizations were more innovative in their approaches, while others adopted more cautious methods. In addition to the above-mentioned practical barriers that have hindered the implementation and adoption of interactivity, these patterns reveal differences in news organizations' philosophical approaches to the role of the newsroom. In general, independent media organizations and smaller, local news media were more enthusiastic about supporting forms of interactivity that engaged news audiences as informational sources and also allowed them to participate in dialogic communication.

In discussing different types of online journalism, Deuze (2003) identified a continuum ranging from superficial interactivity in editorial content to deeper kinds of public connectivity. In most mainstream journalism sites' online portals, the content is generally aggregated with extensive editorial content and limited forms of participatory opportunities. Here news sites offer mainly navigational interactivity, which allows news audiences merely to browse a site through the use of hyperlinks or menu bars. Deuze has argued that mainstream news media have not only merely transferred their content online, but that, in the process, these media have also imported their traditional journalistic culture into the online climate. Boczkowski (2004) also observed that early online newspapers have "neither ignored nor wholly embraced electronic publishing" (p. 20) but have "embedded as much sameness as possible while building something supposedly new" instead (p. 20).

Over time, online news publications have indeed become more sophisticated through the adoption of deeper content and increased multimedia features (Salwen, 2005; Greer & Mensing, 2006). The development and accessibility of broadband and newer media tools also contributed to such advancements. However, media scholars expressed continued concern over the limited opportunities that organizations have made available to news audiences for the latter's participation as engaged citizens.

The Engaged Audience: Interactive Features and Blogs

The previous section assessed how online news publications have integrated interactivity and its functionality in their presentation of news. The current section addresses how these interactive news presentation styles are used and received by news audiences. Christians and colleagues (1993) have declared that, when news audiences are finally invited to join the debate as conversational partners, they will awaken and function as competent citizens in society. The Internet and Web 2.0 tools seemingly offer such opportunities for news organizations. As Outing suggests (1998), online news publications can excel at bringing humans closer together by extending options for conversations and exchanges of opinions among citizens.

In this digital age, news organizations have the unique opportunity to facilitate discussion and dialogue among their readers. Literature suggests that citizens' interactions with media institutions and citizens' collaborative production of journalism with news professionals can lead to various positive outcomes. For example, Ball-Rokeach, Kim, and Matei (2001) argue that collaborative storytelling has transformative potential – namely potential for facilitating feelings of belonging and attachment: for example, people in a neighborhood can evolve from being occupants of a house to being members of a community. These researchers studied residential areas in Los Angeles where they tested the communication infrastructure model, and they eventually found that a system that involves residents, community organizations, and local media through an active and integrated storytelling system was the most critical factor in creating feelings of belonging. Further, Rojas, Shah, Cho, Schmierbach, Keum, and Gil-De-Zuniga (2005) also found that media dialogue, or participation in a discussion forum for example, contributed to awareness of an issue even more than content by itself, and also contributed to increased willingness for further engagement. Additionally, Shah, Cho, Eveland, Jr., and Kwak (2005) found that using the Internet as a resource and as a forum strongly influenced both civic engagement – often even more than its traditional media counterparts (print and broadcast media) did – and interpersonal communication.

The implications of the studies mentioned above are significant in that they highlight the potential positive outcomes (social capital, civic duty, civic engagement) of dialogic communication, especially online. These findings suggest the need for a more extensive examination of how news media can strategically use various types of new interactive media features to engage news audiences through community discussions.

While there has been much criticism of online news publications' lack of provision of meaningful interactivity, there are conflicting research results regarding the extent to which online news audiences actually make use of such features. General findings on audiences' activities online show that 44% of Internet users have created content such as photographs, stories, and audio or video files (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2004). More specifically, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2006) monitors online news audiences' use of search engines, alerts, and news updates. Reports issued by the Pew Internet & American Life Project track audiences' engagement with online news videos (2007a) and their comment-posting activities in online news group forums (2007b). Over the years, studies have offered general portraits of online news audiences – who their members are, what uses they make of online news sites, and why they visit online news publications (see Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2003; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2006).

A few scholars have made efforts to further understand the online news audiences' uses of interactive options. For example, Ye and Li (2006) examined how much online news audiences participated in opportunities that facilitate the democratic deliberation of ideas. They found that a majority of online newspapers they examined

supported a limited number of public forums. They also noted the relatively low levels of user involvement in existing forums. Ye and Li concluded that online newspapers have yet to develop into spaces that can advance democratic public discourse. While there appears to be potential for this kind of active engagement online, Internet newspapers offered few channels – such as online public forums – to help their readers engage in dialogue and in conversations with other individuals.

Chung has conducted various studies examining online news audiences' uses of interactive features. In classifying various interactive features commonly found on news websites, Chung (2008) found that online newspaper audiences frequently use features that increase their choice and selection experiences. However, features that call for more active involvement – getting involved as a source of information – were utilized significantly less frequently. Chung states that interactivity is not a homogenous concept and can be promoted through various interactive features that lead to distinct user activities. For example, video links offer news consumers a visual way of experiencing a news story. Users may also engage in multimedia galleries in order to view photographs that illustrate the stories they are interested in. However, participating in a question and answer (Q&A) forum is a considerably different user experience. An individual may submit a question, and that question may be answered by the participating "guest" of the day. This is often described as vertical communication. Users may also engage in message board discussions that center around a particular topic. In this case, news audiences may converse with other news consumers like themselves. This type of communication is described as horizontal communication. Thus users can choose to engage in an array of different kinds of news consumption experiences.

Chung's study demonstrates that online news audiences may not be making full use of this wide range of interactive opportunities; they are choosing options that demand less investment of time and labor. It appears that the online news audience does not engage equally with all the interactive features offered, especially those that require more effort to be made. More interestingly, certain demographic variables and user characteristics predicted the likely use of specific types of interactive features. For example, people who perceived themselves to be Internet savvy were more likely to use interactive features that involved multimedia technology. Users also carried their offline behaviors online with politically active individuals, and those involved with community organizations are more likely to make use of features that facilitated the expression of ideas.

Additionally, Chung's study recommended that online newspapers should strive to build their reputation for providing credible news, because news credibility acts as a positive predictor for various kinds of interactive feature usage. Establishing trust with audiences encourages them to participate actively and to provide feedback when they seek out news online. This study also reveals that online audiences are not using interactive features as extensively as they could, contrary to the anticipation and predictions of some media scholars and experts in the news industry. Different users seek out different kinds of interactive experiences; thus news organizations need not worry about implementing all the options and tools of interactivity in their online

news publications. In particular, such findings reveal that the potential of, and the need for, interactivity was cast in a rosy light as a result of exaggerated excitement over the results it could promise for audiences and for news organizations.

In an attempt to further understand why audiences use certain types of interactive features, Chung and Yoo (2008) identified three primary motives for visiting online newspapers: information-seeking/surveillance, socialization, and entertainment. They also found that particular motivations led to audiences' preferences for and use of specific types of features. For example, all three motivations were predictors of use of medium interactive features, which increased users' choice and selection options to find and read news stories. However, the information-seeking/surveillance motivation was not a significant predictor of use of features that allowed for customization and interpersonal communication capabilities. Indeed online users appeared to be goal-oriented in their activities and chose specific features to advance their goals.

Additionally, Chung and Nah (2009) investigated the associations between audiences' uses of interactive features offered in various news presentations and their perceived satisfaction with community news publications. Online community newspapers were of interest to the authors because previous literature had focused exclusively on larger metro dailies and some studies have documented that, among the newspapers that publish online editions, a significant percentage is made up of small, community non-dailies. In addition, smaller communities offer greater opportunities for audience-journalist interactivity (Lowrey, 2003).

In this investigation, Chung and Nah (2009) found that overall use of interactive features is positively associated with readers' perceived satisfaction with the community news site. Forums and Q&A features were the few exceptions where positive correlations did not emerge. Further, the authors grouped various interactive features conceptually and found, as a result, that customization features – such as content submissions, letter to the editor, and email byline links – were the sole significantly positive predictor of perceived satisfaction with community news publications. While much literature in the communications discipline reports the significance of human-to-human interactivity that may facilitate democratic deliberation online (Schultz, 1999; Stromer-Galley, 2000; Chung, 2007), this study demonstrates the importance of customization features that allow individuals avenues to express their ideas.

Such findings are initially confusing, given that Chung's (2008) study the year before had indicated that customization features were used least frequently. The findings of Chung and Nah (2009) suggest that the size of a community and its distinct characteristics can influence how certain interactive features are implemented and used. Hence further research should examine such variations among different communities, in order to understand more thoroughly online news audiences' uses of a range of interactive features.

The rise of blogs has also played a key role in the evolution of news online and in the debates over audience participation in the making of news. The entrance of the word "blog" into the Oxford English Dictionary in 2003 signaled the impact of the corresponding reality on the news industry and on society; it also conveyed

the idea that blogs have to be taken seriously, as legitimate forms of public communication. Academics consider blogs to be socially interactive and community-oriented channels and emancipatory tools that have the potential to counter hegemonic processes of traditional information delivery (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004). The practice of linking to and commenting on online resources produces a radically different kind of news discourse from that of the traditional media (Haas, 2005). As blogs are relatively simple to set up and maintain, millions of citizens have created their own personal blogs and thus have acted as informational sources, sometimes even participating in the public sphere as amateur journalists. Much of the excitement surrounding blogs was based on their perceived potential to counter mainstream media coverage and to provide alternative perspectives.

Mainstream news professionals have expressed concern about blogs and bloggers in relation to their objectivity, credibility, and training. However, journalists and bloggers have become increasingly aware of a possible mutually beneficial relationship. For example, bloggers can offer traditional journalism outlets with fresh perspectives and increased interactivity (Lasica, 2003). Kahn and Kellner (2004) describe bloggers as technoactivists who take advantage of, and enjoy, the democratic expression and discussion of ideas. They also suggest that bloggers may function at times as media critics. On the other hand, bloggers can learn traditional news values, rigorous editing, and the importance of original reporting from traditional journalists (Regan, 2003).

While blogs have secured their place in the online news landscape, here too there are conflicting messages in the scholarship, regarding the role of blogs in countering the hegemonic power of mainstream news outlets. Some scholars (e.g., Singer, 2005) discovered that certain blogs have adopted the journalistic role of gatekeeping in order to advance their authority, while others (e.g., Harper, 2005) show that blogs offer audiences an accessible forum for engaging, interpreting, and discussing news issues, and thus for exerting more control. Nonetheless, blogs have become a main staple of online newspapers and have fueled the popularity and success of online news publications. Blogs have allowed ordinary citizens to voice their opinions and perspectives as individuals and as members of different communities, and hence to challenge the authority of the mainstream press. Harnessing the availability of new, interactive tools, individual citizens are now able to contribute their own stories and interpretations of events to the public sphere.

The visibility of blogs to mainstream society can be attributed to a number of high-profile political cases. Most notable among these events was bloggers' prominent coverage and criticism of former Senator Trent Lott's (R-MS) racially insensitive comments at former Senator Strom Thurmond's (R-SC) 100th birthday celebration in December 2002, which forced Lott to resign from his position as Senate Majority Leader. The mainstream press, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, had offered limited coverage of the event. But, once Lott's remarks appeared on a popular blog, the story was circulated in the blogosphere and received a great deal of attention among bloggers, which subsequently fueled the mainstream media, directing their attention to this story.

Blogs have also proved to be influential during the national and international disasters of 2005. Mainstream media took advantage of blogs during the London bombings, from which it received 22,000 emails and text messages, 300 photos, and several video sequences (Douglas, 2006). As demonstrated during the London bombings, it was for the first time that citizen-produced coverage was considered more newsworthy than professional material (*ibid.*). Blogs also played a critical role during the Katrina disaster that same year. News media organizations used blogs to communicate constant updates of these events and to share compelling perspectives from ordinary citizens. The incorporation of this citizen-produced content in the space of mainstream news had significant implications: now the agenda of traditional journalistic operations must make room for citizen-generated coverage. Whereas content production was once considered an exclusive function of the mainstream press, ordinary citizens are now able to produce it more quickly and in more compelling ways than the mainstream media. For example, Delwiche (2005) examined stories most often linked to by blogs in 2003 and found that, aside from stories about the Iraq War, there was little correspondence between the media that the blogs linked to and the issues that appeared on the blog agenda. He concluded that there was an erosion of a unified media agenda, which presumably happened because bloggers seemed to construct an alternative agenda within the blogosphere.

Participatory and Citizen Journalism

The emergence of these new information communication technologies has generated greater enthusiasm about audiences' roles as information producers and as agents able to shape the public agenda and the policy agenda. Research also indicates that the use of the Internet carries civic potential and may enable effective collective action (Shah et al., 2005). Thus, news producers hoped to employ online media tools so as to bring audiences "closer" to the news and, in the process, to build and regain the public's faith in the credibility of the news media, which has been diminishing quickly over time.

Many believe that news publications' embrace of various interactive new communication technologies unleashes increased opportunities for individuals to become involved and engaged as active citizens of society. Audiences are becoming more active in their roles, as is evident in their growing participation in commenting, sharing, rating, tagging, and even producing news (Picone, 2007). Web 2.0 technology has made it easier for audience members to generate their own content (user-generated content) and become prosumers (producer-consumers) of information.

Specifically, "participatory journalism is the act of a citizen, or a group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information" (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Participatory journalism takes place when news audiences supply content independently of professional

journalists, yet professionals ultimately publish and market the news product as a whole (Nip, 2006). South Korea's OhmyNews is a representative example of participatory journalism. As Korea is one of the most wired nations in the world, nearly everyone there has high-speed Internet access, and its broadband network is also the fastest and most developed in the world (McCurry, 2010). This online environment enables a growing interactive approach to participatory news – one where citizens who register on the site can serve as reporters and information providers. OhmyNews's founder, Oh Yeon Ho, was determined to counter the eroding journalistic culture in South Korea and to revitalize it (Allan, 2006). Indeed OhmyNews has been remarkably successful and has become one of the most powerful news sites in the country, directly challenging established media outlets of the traditional sort.

Newer information communication technologies have thus facilitated a kind of journalism in which the formerly distinct roles of information producer and consumer are increasingly blending. However, the extent of the participation and engagement offered depends on the type of interactivity permitted by the owners of the news sites. Picone (2007) says that participation is not necessarily enforced; rather, participation may be enabled at different levels and audiences may take advantage of it to different degrees. Thus the fullest participatory qualities of online news publications may be practically unachievable, or even undesirable (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2007). Deuze, Bruns, and Neuberger (2008), however, found support for successful participatory relationships. In their investigation, they found that several news sites have managed to sustain and stabilize their online presence through the provision of participatory features, and these features have helped news sites to generate relevant and important news, thus pointing to the legitimacy of participatory forms of journalism.

Yet, to a large extent, participatory forms of journalism rely on the very mainstream news organizations that they seek to critique and expose. In the process of evaluating mainstream media, they further reform and combine existing ideas and new perspectives from both the traditional press and the new information producers, namely from news audiences. Thus the idea of journalism becoming a channel for conversation rather than a one-way lecture is beginning to find a foothold among journalists and news audiences, albeit it is not brought to full fruition. The increased possibility for users to generate customized content and participate in the production of news is altering the relationship between news organizations and their readers.

A growing number of ordinary citizens have also contributed their views as citizen reporters or amateur journalists, delivering stories to their communities through various interactive media tools (Nah & Chung, 2009). The Knight Citizen News Network (http://www.kcnn.org/citmedia_sites/) reports as of September 2011 that there are more than 1,200 citizen media sites, covering all 50 states of the United States and other areas of North America. There are different types of citizen reporters engaging in content contribution at various levels. Some merely post their thoughts or add comments to news publications. Some produce news content side by side with professional journalists. Still others also participate in the news-making

process through major news organizations' websites and/or citizen-based news media (Nah, 2008).

Nip (2006) describes this movement, which is based on citizen participation, as the second phase of public journalism, a phase that has been largely facilitated through interactive electronic communication tools. Nip argues that citizen journalism offers ordinary individuals the opportunity to influence the news agenda and to take control of the production and distribution of news, which departs significantly from predecessors such as traditional, public, interactive, and participatory journalism.

The increasing reach of online news and the subsequent popularity of blogs have demonstrated that many news consumers are open to interactive opportunities that allow for more active experiences in the reading and interpretation of the news. The Internet has increasingly come to be defined as a platform for user-generated content (UGC), and sites such as YouTube and Wikipedia are offering consumers avenues to publish comments, photos, and videos online, thus encouraging new forms of participation from ordinary citizens (Hermida & Thurman, 2008). Contributions from news audiences to online news sites come in various forms, such as online submissions of news stories and cell phone images of eye-witness accounts. Oftentimes, citizens are simply quicker and already on site, able to provide fresh perspectives and visuals – especially during crisis situations. In fall 2008, the micro-blogging tool Twitter was used during the Mumbai bombings in India to inform fellow citizens about the location of nearby hospitals, blood transfusion sites, and the whereabouts of family and friends. This kind of citizen-produced coverage often created alternative perspectives and generated a greater sense of community than the sensationalist perspectives of the mainstream press.

Such changes in the dynamics between the traditional senders and receivers of information have challenged professional journalists to re-evaluate their roles and their news practices (Chung, Kim, Trammell, & Porter, 2007). Furthermore, these changes have affected news audiences' perception and reception of news. Online news publications, powered with various interactive features and social media tools, are providing audiences with more engaging and meaningful news experiences. For example, social bookmarking tools such as Delicious (<http://delicious.com>) for web resources and Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>) for pictures allow news audiences to store and share with other users news of their own liking, through the web, rather than consume news that is filtered to them through traditional media channels. Thus individually customized news preferences may be propagated to mass audiences much as they have to traditional news media sources. Such tools provide important opportunities for news audiences to participate in information production, which has traditionally been confined – or restricted – to the journalistic profession. These features are part of a larger collection of tools, called social media, which have also contributed to strengthening the shift toward participatory and citizen journalism.

The Project for Excellence in Journalism (2007) reports the results of a study that compared the news agenda of the mainstream press with the news agenda featured on three prominent news user-sites – Delicious, Reddit, and Digg – during a random week.

The study investigated whether citizens defined news differently from professionally trained mainstream media journalists; it also examined what individuals do with their newfound power to act as disseminators of information. The findings from the study show that the news agenda of the three user-sites was significantly different from that of the mainstream media. Many of the user-selected stories that appeared in the three sites did not appear anywhere as top stories in the mainstream press. The stories on user-sites also had little follow-up and appeared only once. About 70% of the stories on user sites came from blogs or other social media sites, such as YouTube.

Most interestingly, this study found Delicious to have the most fragmented mix of stories and the least overlap with mainstream news topics (3%). Delicious drew more from blogs and non-news information sites than the other two news user-sites. Digg users drew from blogs more than from any other source, while Reddit's information sources were more evenly distributed among blogs, mainstream news media outlets, and non-news sites. The study concludes that the news agenda for news user-sites was not only more diverse in terms of story topics, but also more fragmented in terms of story sources. The authors state, however, that this does not necessarily point to the audiences' disapproval of mainstream media, but rather to the potential of user-sites to act as supplementary sources of news.

Chung and Yi (2009) also conducted an investigation into the selection and sharing of news stories from Delicious in order to identify the most frequently consulted news information sources and topics among news information consumers. Their findings document the diverse nature of the stories collated on this site – both from traditional mainstream media outlets and from new media channels. Social media sources and blogs in particular are growing as major news sources. As in the study reported above from the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2007), prominent traditional news media were not used exclusively, and the sheer volume of uncategorized pages suggests that online news audiences are considering alternative web pages encountered during casual navigation as sources of news. The authors conclude that the definition of news for online news audiences is becoming increasingly broad and complex as unclassified sources dominate tagged stories. It also appears that new information sources are compensating for deficient story topics in the mainstream media. Thus this study adds to the growing literature that documents an increasingly active news audience, seeking out news online in different ways. Information consumers are now able to participate as independent agents, if they so choose, and thus to contribute to the discussion and dissemination of ideas.

Challenges Ahead

As Chung and Yi's (2009) study illustrates, new interactive tools facilitate more active user experiences for news audiences. However, such studies have important implications for traditional communication theories and for the discussion of core issues

such as source credibility. In addition, these results raise questions about the fundamental matter of how to define the boundaries of journalism, given that audiences' views of news are evolving in the current media landscape and these changing perceptions of news will continue to challenge traditional journalism and its perceived authority. As news migrates online and technological advancements provide users with newer communication tools and with a multitude of novel user experiences, the practice of journalism today is in constant transition.

Additionally, a greater role for the audience as an active participant in influencing the form and content of news must also be accompanied by a greater sense of duty and responsibility. Online news audiences, empowered as they are with a broad array of interactive tools designed to help them offer their opinions and tell their stories, must draw upon a variety of information sources in order to separate fact from commentary. Individuals are now bombarded with information from unverifiable sources; hence the veracity of online news content is often questionable. Studies have found a positive relationship between the frequency of visits to a site and audiences' perception of the credibility of its content, which shows that the trustworthiness of a site is strongly related to how often one uses it (see Wanta & Hu, 1994). For example, research shows that, overall, most patients who suffer from cancer and use the Internet as a source of health- and cancer-related information have positive information-seeking experiences and they find the information credible (see Mills & Davidson, 2002). Online news audiences must be aware of these connections between use and perception and should be cautious about ascribing too much credibility to all online sources. Instead they must be mindful to gather news and data from a diversity of sources, including both traditional and newer media channels, in order to ensure that their information pool contains competing and alternative perspectives.

As the agenda-setting function of mass media is eroding and gatekeeping practices are no longer exclusively restricted to traditional media outlets, online news audiences are exposed to, and thus may develop, different agendas from those developed by consumers of traditional media outlets. Several studies note the potential of new communication technologies to contribute toward the fragmentation of news audiences (Katz, 1996; Sunstein, 2001). More options related to content choice and selection, along with the ability to act as sources, allow users to personalize their information environments, which may lead to the neglect of critical public information. Thus citizens may come to be ill informed about important current events and political issues (Katz, 1996; Sunstein, 2001). Such processes are of great concern to some media scholars, as the mass media have long facilitated shared collective experiences and have offered common symbolic anchors for making sense of politics and of public life (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002). Critics, however, also note the potentially positive outcomes of online news consumption as greater in-depth exposure to particular topics might enlighten and help readers become more educated experts on those topics. These citizens may gain specialized and deep knowledge on a certain set of issues rather than shallow, superficial information on a broad range of issues (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002).

Other pressing questions include online news audiences' experiences with social media tools, as major news sites are now linking their pages to social bookmarking and social networking features. These are critical questions, since social networking, for example, has surpassed even the largest circulations (or viewerships) of mainstream media. At the time of writing, Facebook boasts more than 750 million active users. A year before that it had 400 million active users, thus demonstrating that its users have nearly doubled within the past year. *USA Today* and *The New York Times* reach just over 1 million readers. As of September 2011, Facebook also reports that more than 30 billion pieces of content, such as web links, news stories, and blog posts, are shared each month. Research also reveals positive relations between the intensity of online social network participation and civic engagement and political participation (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). Therefore news publications should consider the potential of social media to retain and attract readers, especially at a time when online audiences are actively creating and maintaining relationships and sharing information through such platforms.

Today's news environment is one of the most unsettling for journalists, but perhaps also one of the most exciting – both for journalists and for news audiences – as news is moving toward a model of audience connectivity. Ultimately, the most important challenge for journalism today is to foster a more meaningful consumption of news and to find ways of revitalizing the relationship between the press and its audiences. Rather than focusing on the distinct roles of senders and receivers, it may be more fruitful to examine the changing media climate and the emerging tools that are available to enable journalists and citizens to work together in order to produce more meaningful and resonant stories. Kolodzy (2006) says: “participatory or citizen media is a convergence strategy that news audiences are using to get journalism back to its roots” (p. 4). Today's journalism requires creative strategies to think about more effective ways of producing and delivering news, incorporating technology and innovative tools, and including diverse new sources to help individuals become citizens in a global society. Most importantly, audiences should be invited to participate in this challenging endeavor.

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Participation Beyond Production

Possibilities for Reception and Ritual in the Study of Activist Audiences

Jennifer Rauch

ABSTRACT

In an era of “social media” technologies, instrumental goals such as networking, organizing, and information-sharing hold great sway over the study of activist culture. Researchers often conceptualize activists’ media use as participation in message production and dissemination, while overlooking practices related to reception and interpretation – that is, activists as *audiences*. In this chapter I propose that the moments in which activists engage with media as listeners, readers, and viewers are just as interesting to scholarship as those in which people create and/or share media relevant to activism. By shifting some emphasis from the transmission mode of activists’ media use to the ritual or symbolic dimension, we can better understand how media habits help sustain activist identities and a sense of belonging, which serves as a precursor to participation. I also assert the importance of low-tech media, face-to-face communication, and offline participation among such audiences, whose members aim to connect mediated activities with real-world ones, and identify some social limitations in technological activism. The chapter concludes by suggesting avenues for future study that explore why activists choose to receive certain messages and how ritual contributes to people getting and staying involved with activist communities.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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“We the Media.” “Be the Media.” “Become the Media.” When we think of activist media use, we tend to focus on practices related to producing and disseminating messages of social change as embodied by phrases like these. Such slogans have become so widespread since the turn of the twenty-first century that they’ve been espoused by everyone from punk-rockers and political activists to communication professors and tech gurus to media critics and professional journalists. For example:

- In 2000, one-time Green Party presidential candidate (and singer for the Dead Kennedys) Jello Biafra ranted against globalization in a spoken-word album called *Become the Media*, a motto also used by Jen Angel, the social activist inspired by World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle to launch *Clamor*, an award-winning magazine of radical culture.
- Dan Gillmor, a technology writer for the *San Jose Mercury News* who chronicled the dot-com boom and bust, focused on citizen journalists and bloggers in his 2004 book *We the Media*, which helped popularize the notion of the “former audience.”
- The 2009 handbook *Be the Media*, whose logo depicts an upraised fist clutching a microphone, features contributions and endorsements from the likes of Ben Bagdikian, Jeff Cohen, Rachele Kanigel, Kevin Kelly, Robert McChesney, Craig Newmark, Douglas Rushkoff, Norman Solomon, and Pete triDish.

More people are probably participating in media production and dissemination now than in the pre-Internet era, especially through new technologies that were once called “alternative” media (see Hamilton, 2001). The very concept of participatory communication, once an alternative model trumpeted by activists, has gone mainstream (e.g., Bowman & Willis, 2003). In an atmosphere of increasing fragmentation, interactivity, and convergence, the formation called “audience” may look like it’s evaporating. While some talk about the “people formerly known as the audience” as though they are extinct (see Gillmor, 2004; Rosen, 2006), others propose alternative categories such as “produser” or “prosumer,” which collapse the producer or professional and the user or consumer. Nonetheless, even people who engage with media at some moments of their lives as transmitters of information – including activists, whether as amateurs, native reporters, citizen journalists, or professional communicators – are, at other moments, readers or viewers or listeners of media. And those moments of reception matter a lot.

While activists are, undoubtedly, just as active in the production and distribution of content as anybody else – and arguably even more so – I would like to defend the “audience moment” in the media experiences of people who are working for political or social change. Audience moments are important because they represent instances wherein individuals have chosen, from the vast array of available media, to receive and pay attention to particular messages relevant to activism. Such acts might or might not lead people to create their own media responses or further circulate the activist content that speaks to them. It is likely that many audience members will subsequently become media producers or distributors – but first they must attend to such messages in the

original form. Activists can be defined as people who care enough about issues to devote time and money to their causes (Oliver & Marwell, 1992) – in which case audience activities such as subscribing to alternative publications or paying attention to community broadcasts can play a central role in social change.

Reader-reception, active audience, and ritual theories offer many useful approaches for studying such audience moments. Especially interesting, to my mind, is the role played by media in activists' daily lives, in what James Carey (1989) has memorably deemed the "ritual" mode of communication. Most work on activist uses of media has privileged the transmission mode, perhaps because activism is typically understood in instrumental and goal-oriented terms. One might argue that sitting on a sofa reading *The Nation* or *Human Events* is a passive activity and that audiences aren't "really" activists unless they're waving placards in the streets or sending online petitions or posting on political blogs. But such a limited stance does not hold up to close scrutiny. Choosing to read alternative media instead of the mainstream ones that dominate our culture is an intentional act of communication that can contribute incrementally to the creation and sustenance of activist identities. Thus I propose shifting the emphasis of media studies research on activism from the transmission or instrumental uses of activist media to ritual or social ones, which help build and maintain audience members' connections – both informative and affective – with activist networks, thus strengthening individual commitments and group solidarities. In other words, activist media do not only produce texts; they also produce communities.

This chapter begins by considering activists as transmitters of information, with an overview of the literature whose conceptual and methodological frameworks emphasize media production. Next I examine the implications of the research gulf between activist producers and their audiences, wherein intersubjective meanings can be overlooked and media effects taken for granted. After discussing recent empirical work on such audiences, I examine how ritual acts of media consumption in interpretive communities help build commitments and sentiments that might spur activist participation. Then, in light of the social limitations of online activism, I reassert the importance of scholarship that has focused on low-tech media audiences, face-to-face communication, and offline participation. I conclude by offering avenues for future study and by urging more attention to be paid to activist audiences in general and to the ritual aspects of their media consumption practices in particular. Such research can contribute to knowledge about why and how people use activist and alternative media to get and stay involved with activist communities; such knowledge is useful not only to advance academic discussion but also to inspire and improve forms of social action.

Untangling Activist and Alternative Audiences

The primary focus of this essay is *activist audiences* (as opposed to active, or even interactive, ones) and, to a lesser extent, alternative media that are central to the

activism. The terms *activist* and *alternative* are often used interchangeably, including as a descriptor for media, but they're not necessarily the same thing (Waltz, 2005). I understand activist audiences as people who care enough about (a) given issue(s) to regularly seek out and consume information beyond what's available in mainstream press coverage, and who take intentional actions to effect social change on the basis of those messages; the resultant actions might or might not include producing and participating in activist media. It follows, then, that activist media aim to bring about social change; that they engage in structural analysis concerned with class, gender, ethnic, or other forms of domination; and that they are committed to democratic communication principles such as popular access, participation, and self-management (Huesca, 2008, p. 9). By comparison, alternative media are often recognized for featuring critiques of mainstream media, espousing non-commercial or non-profit orientations, and providing counterinformation for sociopolitical action (Rauch, 2007). Activist media and alternative media are more alike than different, especially in terms of promoting participation in activism (an advocacy function that once set these two forms of media apart from mainstream journalism – now, perhaps, a fading distinction), to the extent that the former can be treated as a subset of the latter.

Hallmarks of activist audiences include a commitment to alternative media, a belief in the need for mobilizing information, and involvement in real-world events such as protests and campaigns that in turn influence how activist audiences interpret media content. Activist audiences resemble the general public in many ways, for instance in their capacity for active interpretation and in their use of mainstream news sources. Although there is substantial overlap between the categories “activist audience” and “alternative audience,” the two are not entirely equivocal. Research suggests that, while many activists prefer to symbolically distance themselves from corporate and commercial media, in fact they use more news sources, both mainstream *and* alternative, than the average person (Boyle, 2005; Rauch, 2007). The audience for activist and alternative media products sometimes includes people who accept mainstream politics and don't engage in much activism, but it is likely to be comprised mainly of people who self-identify as activists.

Activists as Transmitters of Information

The Independent Media Center movement, which pioneered activist uses of the Internet, is a robust example of modern participatory media (Wall, 2002). Usually called IMC or Indymedia, it was founded in Seattle in 1999, as a clearinghouse for independent or citizen journalists documenting World Trade Organization protests. The Seattle IMC was remarkable for reporting evidence that police used sub-lethal weapons against demonstrators at a time when mainstream media like Cable News Network (CNN) denied this had happened. Its work became a “prototype for a global

anti-corporate domination social movement that will increasingly rely on the Internet" (ibid., p. 40), and thus an influential antecedent of Occupy Wall Street Independent Media Centers (IMCs). These IMCs are based in hundreds of cities on six continents and mainly publish information online, but they have also launched a handful of radio stations and newspapers in English and Spanish, as well as a TV show. People consider Indymedia "activist," in terms of both form and content: an open-publishing model, citizen journalism values, and coverage of under-reported issues and events – especially protests (Atton, 2004; Downing, 2003b; Haas, 2007; Kidd, 2003; Pickard, 2006; Platon & Deuze, 2003; Wall, 2002; Waltz, 2005). Indymedia are examples par excellence of participatory communication axioms such as "Become the Media."

Literature on the Indymedia phenomenon illustrates how scholarship tends to explore the motives and practices of activist producers, and the content they produce, more vigorously than it explores their audiences. This trend goes back at least to the 1960s, when histories of that decade's activism typically centered on the activities of editors, writers, and artists for the alternative press while neglecting the role that readers played in the successes or failures of that press. More recently, scholars have begun to focus on activist networks that produce and circulate media – overwhelmingly, through new channels such as the Internet (e.g., Arquilla, Fuller, & Fuller, 1998; Atton, 2002b; Bennett, 2003; Castells, 1997; DeLuca & Peeples, 2002; Dunbar-Hester, 2009; Friedland, 1996; Kahn & Kellner, 2004; Redden, 2001; Ronfeldt, Ford & Gil, 2001). Other activist transmitters who have received significant attention include Zapatista rebels in Mexico and their transnational supporters, the US movement for public access to television broadcasting, and community radio such as low-power frequency modulation (FM) and the non-profit Pacifica network (Atton, 2004; Cleaver, 1998; De Angelis, 2000; Downing, 2001; Dunbar-Hester, 2009; Eliasoph, 1988; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Lasar, 1999; Opel, 2004; Ronfeldt et al., 1998; Stein, 2001), with ample research on Occupy media producers and producers now in progress.

A solid body of case studies has explored activist communication strategies for organizing, publicizing, and framing activist issues and events, as well as the constraints that such collective actors face (see Keck & Sikkink, 1998; McCluskey, 2008). For instance, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) took a constructionist approach to media activism aimed at influencing public opinion on nuclear power. Van Zoonen (1992) discussed how the women's movement used media to build a public identity. Ryan (2004) looked at how labor activists formed media campaigns around a Teamsters strike against United Power Service (UPS) in order to communicate messages to a mass audience. These studies often provide useful lessons for activists on how to produce events that draw press attention, how to influence media discourse, and how to create their own representations. In fact, the goal of transmitting messages often takes the form of handbooks for activists, for example *Prime-Time Activism: Media Strategies for Organizing* (Ryan, 1991), *Making the News: A Guide for Activists and Nonprofits* (Salzman, 2003), and *Be the Media: How to Create and Accelerate Your Message . . . Your Way* (Mathison, 2009).

The “Disturbing Gulf” between Activist Producers and Audiences

Communication scholars have told us a lot about activists as producers, which has been a fruitful area of research. But studying producer intentions does not necessarily clarify the roles that publications, programs, or websites play in generating social change or in sustaining activist commitments. The influence of activist and alternative content on audiences is often taken for granted, and questions about how and why readers use such media are often ignored. For instance, in his analysis of Indymedia as a form of radical online journalism, Atton (2004, p. 52) notes that the nature and impact of Indymedia uses by activists and others “remain open to question.” With communication technologies enabling interactivity in so many intriguing and novel ways, activists as audiences get short thrift. “Participation” in activist media is also often muddled with the issue of activists becoming producers of media texts, whereas it could be a serious mistake to reduce “involving audiences” to “creating media creators” (Waltz, 2005, p. 33). Gathering and distributing information is necessary to activism, of course, but it’s not wholly sufficient.

Few empirical studies have looked closely at activists as audiences, a neglect that is problematic considering that social movement organizers and critical-cultural scholars alike seem interested in, and would benefit from, learning how people consume media as resources for activism. John Downing, a leading voice on alternative and activist media, has called this research gap “a distinctly disturbing gulf” between our scant knowledge of how audiences use media and the mass of descriptions and theorizations of those media (Downing, 2003a, p. 625). It’s a paradox, he says, “that so little attention has been dedicated to the user dimension, given that alternative-media activists represent in a sense the most active segment of the so-called ‘active audience’” (*ibid.*).

So why is audience research on activists lacking? The producers of such media might have compelling reasons for not conducting these studies themselves. To wit: activists who launch and sustain media projects, often on a volunteer or non-profit basis, have little time and resources left for pursuing user research; political repression of dissent may dissuade some from implicating their audiences or themselves; others may resist the commercial or marketing paradigms underlying much audience research; or certain activist media producers may simply lack interest in their users (*ibid.*). Activist producers who conduct audience research often do so in pursuit of instrumental goals such as improving outreach, increasing revenue, or expanding readership. The task of examining the broader social or cultural aspects of activist media, then, falls disproportionately on scholars who face their own conceptual and practical obstacles to studying these audiences.

The academic inclination towards media production could be a theoretical one: because audiences are not visibly “doing” anything when they consume alternative media, they’re perceived as passive, or not even recognized as activists. Other biases

against studying activists in the receptive and ritual modes could be methodological. Most work on activist media usage focuses on the efforts of individuals or organizations to promote a message or to influence public opinion – in other words, it focuses on the moment when they’re engaging in transmission. In part this derives from the relative ease with which one can get access to a particular group’s ideas and actions through its website and/or to a group’s spokespeople in order to research a case study on, say, Indymedia or Pacifica or Zapatista practices. What’s more challenging is to reach individual members of the activist audience in those diffused moments when they’re using alternative media in a ritual mode. It’s simpler to persuade key members of a group, especially one that’s “trying to get a message out” anyway, to cooperate with a research project that might help publicize that message and recognize their work. Individual audience members are less willing to spend precious time participating in a study – unless they’re given an incentive, usually financial – and there are too few academics who can afford to give one.

Scholars might find it more difficult to study activist audience members (who are anonymous and dispersed throughout society) than activist texts (which are fairly convenient to collect and analyze) or activist producers (who are easy to identify and contact through their organizations or online presences). Audience research projects are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and unattractive to major foundations that prioritize mainstream media over alternative ones. And, as any activist can attest, papers are easier to organize than people. The prospect of gaining access to real people, especially strangers, might be daunting – though researchers interested in social change likely have affinities with activists working to create it. Such practical problems are surmountable when people have the will to overcome them, as is proven by the fact that researchers have already produced a great deal of empirical work looking at media reception, consumption, interpretation, and use by other audiences.

Current Approaches to Activist Audiences

Activist scholarship can learn much from reader reception and active audience theories, which propose that subjective meanings are actively created in the minds of people who read, listen to, or watch media – rather than assuming, as the instrumental view of communication has tended to do, that producers transmit objective media messages that are received and acted upon by the audience. The field of audience studies has benefited from interpretive analyses that explain how people use media, how they make sense of polysemic messages, and what the rituals of media consumption mean in people’s everyday lives (Lindlof, 1987b, 1991; Radway, 1991; Bird, 2003). This research has already brought to light the pleasure, creativity, and emancipation that some people find in using everyday media products such as soap operas, tabloid newspapers, and romance novels. The meaning of these media genres is often tied to their symbolic or ritual uses and to the collective sense of community they

create. Audience researchers have not yet paid much attention to similar uses of, say, the alternative media genre by activist readers and viewers.

Among the few studies to consider the potential implications of message reception for activists is a content analysis that identified the theme “we are not alone” in alternative press coverage of protests (McLeod & Hertog, 1999). The study concluded that such content increases the knowledge of activism’s potential within a group, links radical movements nationally and internationally, provides information and inspiration to mobilize future events, and conveys a sense of community (*ibid.*). Rather than gauging audience attitudes or behaviors through empirical methods, however, this research assumed that opportunities for exposure to such positive frames would yield these effects. Some uncommon surveys of alternative media users by Boyle have generated equally interesting insights. One study confirmed that activists use both a greater number of alternative media *and* a wider range of news sources than non-activists, challenging the perception that activists avoid mainstream media (Boyle, 2005). Another study found that use of alternative media such as protest websites was positively related to participation in protests (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009).

Another notable study aimed to measure activist audiences for Indymedia content in order to determine how many people were reading news on this alternative outlet during the US invasion of Iraq (Opel & Templin, 2005). Internet server reports showed a spike in traffic at several IMC websites around March 2003, as activists and other audiences sought out information about the military action from sources outside the mainstream press – a finding that suggests connections among alternative media use, periods of crisis, and activist mobilization. In their attempt to collect this audience data, however, the scholars faced resistance from some Indymedia producers, who likened the researchers’ request for user information to government surveillance *à la* Patriot Act. Opel and Templin concluded that the Internet’s power to monitor users “is viewed with a fair degree of suspicion by many within the IMC community, and that this suspicion presents a significant research barrier to further analysis of server traffic reports” (p. 15).

Despite occasional obstacles to gaining trust from community members, which is a concern common to all audience research, more such quantitative work is welcome. It’s crucial also to explore the audience dimension of activist media use via *qualitative* analyses, whether in a critical, cultural, social–constructionist, or interpretive vein. Focus groups, long interviews, and ethnographic methods have been widely used and proven useful by scholars in reader-response and audience research who contextualize audience members’ media consumption in relation to their lived experiences (Lindlof, 1991). In advocating for research on activist audiences, Atkinson (2005) points to the lessons of feminist and social constructionist theory: that non-quantitative methods can reveal the subjective meanings that participants make when consuming media texts. He argues that such research will help scholars better understand activist audiences, whose members use alternative media both to build a critical understanding of reality and to construct community (*ibid.*).

A rich example of the non-quantitative yet empirical approach is Gamson’s (1992) effort to understand how, if people are generally uninterested in politics or badly

informed about issues, so many of them do become active in social movements. Instead of relying on survey data of college students, as many scholars of public opinion do, Gamson conducted discussions with groups of people working mainly in the service industry or in clerical and office jobs. In their conversations about controversial issues such as nuclear power, affirmative action, and the Arab–Israeli conflict, his analysis identified the seeds of political action in the minds of working-class US citizens. While not intended as audience research *per se*, this study sheds light on how ordinary people interpret actively mainstream media messages such as op-ed columns, political cartoons, and network news programs – by reference to personal experiences, popular wisdom, and interpersonal conversations – rather than receive them passively.

As another example of the potential of audience research for explaining why activists use certain media and how they interpret them, consider my discourse analysis that examined how US activists articulated the “third-person effect,” a widespread perception that others are more influenced by media messages than one’s self is (Davison, 1983). This approach contrasted with the surveys and experiments prevalent in much third-person effect research: groups watched a news program and responded to non-directional questions in a naturalistic context where activists were allowed to express mobile and conflicting identities (Rauch, 2010). These activists, who reported feeling better informed about current events through their alternative media use in comparison to those who relied primarily on mainstream media, identified themselves, in alternation, as invulnerable *and* vulnerable to media influence. Despite distancing themselves from a “mass” audience, participants used discursive strategies such as role-playing, inventing dialogue, and posing hypothetical statements to imagine themselves as also being susceptible to mainstream news.

A large body of qualitative audience research has shown that groups whose members share specific psychological factors, social behaviors, or media orientations – as many activists do – tend to receive media texts in a distinct range of ways. For example, it is likely that activist audience members (1) select different media content (e.g., a greater proportion of alternative or activist content) from that selected by the general public; (2) interpret mainstream media messages in different ways from non-activist audiences; and (3) take different action from what other groups do, as a result of having been exposed to activist messages. Engaging in more rigorous audience research on activist audiences could make useful contributions to understanding both how social-movement messages are received, interpreted, and acted upon in the transmission mode and how activist communities are built and sustained through ritual communication.

Theorizing Activist Audiences as Participants in Ritual

As a prelude to discussing ritual and transmission modes of communication, I will offer some clarification of those terms here. *Ritual* refers to a symbolic act that brings people together in fellowship through the “creation, representation, and celebration of shared even if illusory beliefs” (Carey, 1989, p. 43). On the other hand, *transmission*

denotes “the extension of messages across geography for the purpose of control” – to employ a transportation metaphor (*ibid.*). According to Carey, the first conception emphasizes meaning, culture, and the maintenance of society in time, whereas the second stresses information, power, and the efficacy of communication across space. The transmission view, which tends to draw attention to discrete instances of demonstrable effectiveness and to yield case studies of successful media projects, has, to date, exerted a disproportionate influence on activist research. I’m not suggesting that transmission is bad and that ritual is good – Carey didn’t either – but that a fuller understanding of activist media requires both.

Carey keenly observed that empirical communication research has long embodied the transmission metaphor rather than the ritual one, a trend recurring in this literature on activist media. He thought that the continuity and coherence of communal life depended on resolving the tension between ritual and transmission views. Indeed, communicative rituals coexist with, and can serve as precursors to, instrumental acts; in other words, they can activate inquiry and direct action. “The purpose of news is not to represent and inform but to signal, tell a story, and *activate inquiry*,” Carey said (1989, p. 82; my emphasis). He shared Dewey’s belief that the extended, impersonal webs of relations in postindustrial “great society” should be converted into more intimate, geographically bound ones of a “great community” through communication. This strengthening of weak ties would build social capital, “so that genuinely shared interest in the consequences of interdependent activities may inform desire and effort and thereby *direct action*” (Westbook, 1991, p. 309; my emphasis). Audiences need facts and information, of course, but they also need discursive and interpretive resources to aid them in forming opinions, following arguments, understanding other people’s viewpoints, and debating the alternative goals that a community might formulate and pursue.

One must note that the power of ritual – as a set of practices, as an object of study, and as a tool for criticism and social change – has been questioned on several fronts. Ritual practices are sometimes seen as politically dangerous, anachronistic, conservative, arational or irrational, or as the politics of spectacle (Cottle, 2006). Ritual studies are sometimes criticized for promoting an uncritical, orderly, and homogeneous view of society or for disregarding power, ideology, and resistance (*ibid.*; Atkinson, 2005). Some scholars have equated an instrumental orientation with “active” media use and presuppose that a ritualized orientation must be “passive,” leaving little possibility of a dynamic relationship between the two (see Metzger & Flanagin, 2002). Nonetheless, there are persuasive arguments that a ritual approach to communication can serve democratic impulses, since “symbols, emotion, rhetoric and performance are constitutive of human communication” that guides participation (Cottle, 2006, p. 413). The interaction between ritual and transmission modes of communication has proven productive to scholars of activism, including protest studies that use both rational action models and ritual symbol frameworks.

In the twenty-first century, ritual and noninstrumental approaches to communication have found support in research on “affective intelligence,” which explains the

competences and behaviors of busy, distracted citizen-voters (see Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000; Marcus, 2002; MacKuen, Marcus, Neuman, & Keele, 2007). Much as Carey and others have clarified the role of rituals in communication, scholars of the “affect effect” have asserted the primacy of emotions like enthusiasm or anxiety in activating political deliberation (Marcus et al., 2000). Empirical tests demonstrate a dialectical relationship between affect and reason that prompts people to engage in thoughtful action, confirming that emotion can have a rational impact and, of course, that reason can yield an affective result. Similarly, reconciling the ritual and transmission aspects of communication might help explain why some people pay attention to alternative media and participate in activism while others do not.

Research on activism also shows that many people find their way into politics through emotionally motivating experiences (Teske, 1997). It follows that activist media practices often employ spectacular rituals to get attention and to generate anxiety about or enthusiasm for causes, in order to strengthen member loyalties and group allegiances (Marcus, 2002). Social change research has, to its detriment, overlooked the relevance of emotion to collective mobilization and individual activation, as Downing proposed (2003a). Renewed interest in the emotive and affective dimension of alternative media use is therefore “crucial” (ibid.). The affective and arational dimensions of activists’ communicative experiences could be fruitfully explored within the scope of reception analysis or ritual studies, drawing on some of the aforementioned knowledge already accumulated in allied fields of study such as sociology and political science.

Contributions of Ritual to Media Research

Various scholars have explored the social, symbolic, and ritual aspects of communication that help build and maintain communities by representing shared beliefs, by enabling civic conversation, and by activating participation. For example, Anderson (1991) looked at the daily ritual of reading national newspapers that helped foster “imagined communities.” Nord (2001) examined how newspaper readers throughout US history have used journalism to form community attachments and to engage in civic life. Rothenbuhler (1998) explained how ritualized media events such as the Olympic games or state funerals do not just reflect group memberships but help define them. Zelizer (1990, 1993) analyzed reporters’ first-person narratives about the Kennedy assassination, which followed the profession’s logic of ritual in first establishing journalistic authority. Zelizer has also studied how journalists’ collective interpretations of Watergate and McCarthyism reveal the ways in which this profession’s narrative rituals help establish journalism’s legitimacy.

Several researchers have drawn upon the concept of the *interpretive community*, a group that shares understandings of social reality, intersubjective meanings, and strategies for decoding certain texts (see Fish, 1980; Lindlof, 1987a; Zelizer, 1993;

Rauch, 2007). These communities include interpretive communities of production, such as journalists or television producers, as well as ones of reception, such as newspaper readers or activist audiences; people might belong to several, even conflicting, interpretive communities. When members share a commitment to certain inflections on behavioral norms and dominant ideologies – as activist audiences often do – interpretive communities can also be considered “subcultures” (Lindlof, 1987a). As Lindlof explains, media audiences that habitually use specialized, deviant, or obscure communications media or media content will tend to collectivize and to form interpretive communities, subcultures, and interest groups (*ibid.*). My own work has considered progressive activists as a subcultural interpretive community, because members of this audience hold similar orientations toward political engagement and they use alternative media, which have the potential to generate unusual interpretations that go against the norm or subversive meanings that threaten the social order implicit in mainstream media content.

Two empirical studies I have undertaken attuned me to the importance of rituals in interpretive communities. The first project interviewed independent publishers of *zines*, small idiosyncratic magazines that usually espouse do-it-yourself aesthetics and participatory ethics (Rauch, 2004). The vast majority of zine producers who talked to me engaged in these modest labors of love not for instrumental reasons – such as earning money or spreading a message – but mainly for affective reasons. They immersed themselves in ritual acts of production, circulation, and reception alike. They enjoyed the feeling of community that springs from sharing and exchanging zines in person, in meaningful everyday contexts. An observation that Waltz (2005, p. 79) makes about zine readers applies also to activists: they seek self-valorization through the consumption of media that mirror their own views and make them feel as if they are part of a social group (albeit one whose members may never meet in person), or that might even challenge their views and identities in ways that help clarify their own beliefs or expand their system of values.

The concept of ritual also proved useful to understanding another interpretive community I studied: an audience of activists involved with the movement “against globalization” or for democratic communication and global justice (Rauch, 2007). This community is rooted in the political ideals of the 1999 Seattle uprising, and it is committed to the communicative ideals of Indymedia (self-described as *grassroots*, *collective*, *anti-corporate*, *democratic*, *decentralized*, and *autonomous*). When I asked activists why and how they used alternative media, I expected, frankly, that they would talk about instrumental or transmissive concerns such as media bias, missing information, and getting the word out. They didn’t. Instead they focused on the role that alternative media consumption played in their daily lives. They said that it connected them to a community of like-minded people and recursively reflected and shaped their identities as activists. Those discussions underscored the important role that just reading, watching, or listening to alternative media – not necessarily producing it – plays in building and maintaining a sense of belonging even in communities that, like this one, prize participation. And, while those activists consumed a great deal of

mainstream news, they ritually downplayed their attention to these sources and performed the role of “alternative media user” when talking to other activists (Rauch, 2007).

Social Limitations of New Activist Media

People interested in activist media often celebrate the power of digital tools and online networks to encourage two-way communication and user-generated content. While activists are surely using new technology in novel and important ways, we must not overlook the continued cultural relevance of old media such as print or broadcasting, which still play a crucial role in connecting message creators with their audiences and in building activist communities. Carpentier and De Cleen (2008, p. 7) explain: “In this dazzling techno-optimism, we often forget that the routines, identities, practices, convictions, and representations that circulate in the old media system have not been lost and still co-structure the new media system.” New media provide an important channel for distributing activist messages – but they are not the only significant channel. I argue that we should retain a high regard for real-world activities, including both old media and unmediated communication, relevant to the audience moment. Following are some examples of research indicating how a renewed interest in older forms of communication, which aligns with some reappraisals taking place under the rubric of “slow media” (Rauch, 2011), could help inform our study of activist audiences.

Activist networks have been using a wide range of means – electronic and other – to exchange “user-generated content” and to create alternative channels of two-way communication for a long time, as Keck and Sikkink (1998) document in their comprehensive study of transnational advocacy groups. While communication has increased in quantity since the 1990s, partly due to new media technologies that speed up information flow and simplify contact between activists, these scholars stress that the formation of such networks relies on conferences and other face-to-face encounters where activists can share information as well as gain trust and discover common concerns (*ibid.*). Their global perspective reveals not only the limitations of techno-optimism, which can overlook the continued influences of interpersonal, print, and broadcast communication, but also those of ethnocentrism, since many regions and communities in the North and the South are less affluent and less dependent on new media than those where many researchers live and work. Legions of activists and proto-activists around the world continue to engage with social-change messages in a low-tech audience mode, whether by attending a conference in Brazil or by reading a pamphlet in Vietnam or by listening to a radio program in South Africa.

In the case of the Zapatista movement in Mexico, transnational activists used information as ammunition in a “social netwar” that helped resist the oppression of

indigenous insurgents (Ronfeldt et al., 1998). New technologies helped enable organizational networking there, but activists also “swarmed,” both physically and electronically, from around the world into the Mexican state of Chiapas to serve as local witnesses to the unfolding events (ibid.). Printed messages, faxes, and unmediated communication through human couriers – along with mixes of old and new media technologies – were also essential to this indigenous protest (ibid.). People studying the Zapatistas and other movements have concluded that the Internet was mainly useful to the extent that it fed an activist mechanism, carried online participation offline, and created “a synergy between the producers and the receivers of information, enabling different groups to make contacts and find new allies” (ibid., p. 116; Wojcieszak, 2009). The worldwide protests against Wall Street that began in 2011 derived their strength not only from information shared through social media but also from physical occupation of public spaces. We would benefit from knowing more about *who* receives activist information and *how* it feeds offline participation – for example whether and, if so, how alternative media actually activate audiences.

This critique of the myopic focus on new technology also rests in part on the assumption that “former audience members,” who visibly participate in activist media by producing (readily accessible) texts, represent the most salient aspects of those phenomena or the most notable audience for those messages. As Atton (2002b) has noted, activist media often aim to give voice to the voiceless and invert the hierarchy of access by developing media spaces where activists and ordinary people might present accounts of their own experiences and struggles. Yet the people who participate in online activist communities likely belong to a subset of “ordinary people” that is not very ordinary; ordinary or unmarked people do not all seek a voice or choose to participate in public media conversations (ibid.). For example, many scholars have studied people who write letters to editors but who, interesting though they might be, comprise a minority compared to newspaper readers who do not write such letters. The desire to participate in media conversations or media production – especially over the Internet – might not be as common among global activist audiences as some assume.

With the costs of new technologies decreasing and worldwide access to them increasing, the efforts of activists and researchers might increasingly focus on the Internet, both to their benefit and to their “peril,” as Wall writes (2002, p. 40). The time is ripe for renewed study of activist audiences from perspectives that take into account the importance of social interactivity versus the technological kind, of techno-skepticism versus unqualified celebration, of cultural diversity versus ethnocentrism, of older forms of slow and unmediated communication versus exclusively digital ones, and of the full range of audience members versus participant-performers who actively mark themselves. These far-ranging concerns should dampen the optimism of Internet boosters who believe that “becoming the media” is the worthiest goal of activism and the most deserving object of scholarship. And Carey – who questioned the cultural import of an electronic revolution that he considered “illusory” and “mythical” – provides many insights that support this reasoning.

Future Directions

This chapter has shown how research on the relationship between media and activism has, to date, provided ample description and analysis of activist producers and their messages. Yet those producers are not just creating messages, texts or products; they are also participating in the production and maintenance of activist interpretive communities. Not all people who participate in activist media do so through acts of production; those communities are equally maintained by acts of consumption, interpretation, and reception. That's why it makes sense for scholars to pursue the following goals: first, a better balance between studies of activist producers and activist audiences, the latter being preserved as a distinct category; second, a better balance between the transmission and ritual aspects of media use by activist audiences; and, third, a better balance between audience uses of old and new forms of media.

Relatively little work has focused on activist audiences, and we can still learn much from examining how they receive the messages that activist media produce. Some research on activist audiences could be placed under the rubric of transmissive communication, by focusing on media content and its effects. Exploring the dialectic of transmission and ritual communication modes is crucial to expanding empirical research on activist audiences and to counteracting the current imbalance toward producers. Neither account suffices without the other. Some of the questions offered here to guide future research could be approached from either viewpoint:

- *Who pays attention to activist media products, and why?* Future research could examine why and how activist audiences (or, less often, mainstream ones) receive alternative media content. This could illuminate media strategies for breaking through to mass media and would be useful, from an administrative perspective, to activist producers trying to understand their messages' impact.
- *What do activists do with the information that they receive from media sources?* For example, they probably use activist (and non-activist) content as resources in their daily lives: for making decisions, understanding personal experiences, managing social interactions, and organizing their time. Scholarship often takes the influence of activist media for granted, but it could profit from more evidence that exposure to activist content affects real-world attitudes or behaviors.
- *How does consumption, reception, or interpretation of alternative media differ between progressive activists and conservative ones?* Though work on activists' media use has focused on the left, activists might subscribe to any political ideology: progressive, anarchist, conservative, far-right, and so on. The little existing research on right-wing activists has focused on nationalists and neo-Nazis (Atton, 2004; Wojcieszak, 2009), the latter being provocative by linking the attitudes of discussion forum users to their offline actions.
- *What kinds of media products do activists choose to consume, and why?* We don't know much about what kind of media activists actually use. Some findings suggest that

they use a lot of alternative media, but also that they use more mainstream media than the general public does (Boyle, 2005; Rauch, 2007).

- *Do activists prefer alternative media to mainstream sources, and why?* We need to consider audience definitions of “alternative media,” a phrase that scholars have explicated in myriad ways (e.g., Atton, 2002a; Rauch, 2007). More empirical work is needed to understand why readers, viewers, and listeners value alternative media and, specifically, their opinions and impressions about the “alternative” qualities of the media they respect and admire.
- *How do activists interpret the messages they read, view, and hear in mainstream or in alternative media?* Studies might look at how activist audiences receive mainstream content – interpreting it against the grain, perhaps – and how they receive alternative content, in cases where activist media are effectively preaching to the converted (and thus embodying a literal meaning of “ritual” communication). Activists’ interpretations of protest coverage would be one rich subject for exploration.
- *How do activist audience groups in various cultures, regions, and socioeconomic conditions consume, receive, or interpret mainstream or alternative media products differently?* Researchers could take a closer look at international activist audiences – especially from developing nations and poorer communities – whose media practices and preferences might contrast with those of affluent US and European ones.
- *What rituals of media consumption or reception do activists engage in?* Do people consume activist and alternative media at particular times, in particular places, in particular audience groupings? Some activist consumption of mainstream or alternative media has an instrumental and rational orientation, while other acts of reception are oriented toward feeling a sense of social connection or collective purpose. Research might investigate activists’ habits of media use more broadly, as well as their rituals in the narrower sense, along with possible contradictions between the two.

Research along these lines on activist audience practices could help (1) draw attention to the role of specific media coverage or events in the birth and growth of movements; (2) address questions about the credibility of activist or alternative news sources; (3) examine alternative media’s influence on users’ oppositional consciousness; and (4) understand the role of emotion and affect in social involvement, as Downing suggested (2003a). Such results would be enlightening not only for scholars of activism but also for members of activist communities.

Conclusion

The dearth of work on activist audiences means that intellectual opportunities abound for interdisciplinary research on this topic from a wide range of theoretical

and methodological perspectives. Scholarship on activist audiences could be pursued in the social sciences or humanities; according to humanist, critical, cultural, or interpretive paradigms; and through the application of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. In particular, ethnographic studies offer the potential to contextualize the reception processes of activist audiences, who bring their preceding identities and wider commitments to bear in media encounters (Bird, 2003). Contextualization is especially important to this area of research, because ritual depends on the willing involvement of media participants who are not necessarily producers:

It only “works” when we want it to, when we volunteer something of ourselves, our collective identities, sentiments and aspirations within it [. . .] Ritual only comes alive experientially, emotionally, subjunctively, when actively read by audiences/readerships who are prepared to “participate” within it as symbolically meaningful to them, and who are prepared to accept the imagined solidarities on offer. (Cottle, 2006, p. 428)

This chapter has outlined some of the potential contributions of reception and ritual to our knowledge about media’s meanings in activist lives, both individually and collectively. In this discussion I have defined “ritual” in a somewhat loose manner, insomuch as everyday media consumption can be considered habitual and “ritualized” (Couldry, 2003). Some scholars have recommended defining ritualized media use as “a symbolic activity for participation in some larger order of meanings” and rigorously delimiting it as something exceptional, to be distinguished from mere “habits” and noninstrumental media use (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p. 83). The rational dimension of ritual hints that such acts of media consumption might also serve audience uses such as gaining pleasure, or they might provide social functions such as making connections; however, there is still much space for social reflexivity and critique beyond Durkheimian, neo-Marxist, or uses-and-gratifications theory (Cottle, 2006).

For the sake of simplicity, I have focused here mainly on the binary distinction of production–consumption, which risks obscuring the *circulation* of media among activist audiences. Discussions about so-called former audiences, which tend to mistakenly collapse the producer with the consumer, risk eliding the distinction between producing a new activist message and just distributing an existing one. For instance, screening an existing documentary to a new audience might be a significant act, but it is quite distinct from actually producing a brand-new activist film. Ditto forwarding friends or colleagues a link, via email, to a story published on an alternative-press website. Although circulation has received somewhat short thrift here, the concept has yielded constructive insights in my work on ritual, which reveals some of the social limitations of new media. A good illustration can be found in my research on zine producers, who circulated their printed creations by hand, in elaborate rituals of distribution. Those producers felt that print xerography offered a more gratifying and immediate way of making personal connections with their audiences and of building the zine community – where producers are also readers, and readers might become producers – than online publishing did. Material circulation by, to, and through audiences might likewise play an important role in building activist

communities, which share many participatory ideals, and perhaps rituals, with the zine community.

Research on activist audiences and interpretive communities that embraces ritual–transmission reflexivity could help explain how media consumption practices and preferences contribute to participation in democratic society writ large. Whereas people often assume that public disengagement and apathy are correlated with not paying attention to current events (see Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2007), activists comprise an audience that's both engaged and attentive. As information overload grows and attention spans shrink in the digital age, a continued emphasis on activist media production, at the expense of consumption, is exceedingly troublesome. Somebody has to listen to the activist messages available in alternative media . . . and, presumably, to act as a result of having heard those messages. With access to the means of producing and circulating information now more widespread than ever, public attention itself might be the scarcest resource. After all, as Gitlin (1980) has compellingly demonstrated, the lesson of 1960s activism was not just that people were recording what happened, but that the whole world was watching it, too.

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Audiences as Citizens

Insights from Three Decades of Reception Research

Kim Christian Schrøder

ABSTRACT

This chapter traces the insights about citizenship offered by audience reception research since its inception in the 1980s, through a theoretical and analytical portrait of five historical stages of reception research about mediated citizenship: (1) hegemonic citizenship; (2) monitorial citizenship; (3) popular citizenship; (4) participatory citizenship; and (5) ubiquitous citizenship. Maintaining a strong empirical commitment throughout, mostly to the findings of qualitative research, the chapter also reports substantially from recent and ongoing reception research into the ways in which the news media – and popular and entertainment media in a broader sense – may serve as resources for a political and cultural citizenship that is anchored in everyday life. The five stages of reception research, conceptualized as scientific paradigms, are modeled into a historical typology that synthesizes, for each historical stage, its aims, its theoretical foundation, the preferred methods, the key scholars, and the approximate year in which the paradigm became visible in the scholarly landscape.

The moment one starts to talk about citizenship, one is also inevitably talking about political rights, political and cultural power, and political and cultural identities. Citizenship in a democracy has to do with being and feeling like the member of a political entity such as a nation (Anderson, 1983), and with being able, to a greater

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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or lesser extent, to have a say in, and some power over, the running of the affairs of this political entity. In order to function as a citizen, one must have access to sufficient and relevant information about the circumstances – past, present, and future – facing the political entity, and one must have the right and the ability to participate in the public debates that precede political decisions. Finally, an individual must have formalized channels of exercising his or her power as a citizen, including – crucially – the ability to vote for the political representatives and leaders who exercise power on the basis of their being invested with the responsibility to ensure the citizens', or the people's, sovereignty.

In Western democracies, the media – along with other fundamental social institutions, such as the educational system – have played a pivotal role in facilitating the practice of citizenship for several centuries, by providing the democratic prerequisites for the citizenry. These prerequisites include supplying on a continuous basis the information that citizens need in order to monitor social affairs and facilitating a channel of public deliberation among the citizens, in order that they may cast their votes in an enlightened way in elections – which result in the formation of parliamentary bodies entrusted with the legislative process and the appointment of a political executive institution (government) (McNair, 2003). The media are thus the key guarantors of the democratically vital “public sphere” (Habermas, 1962), ideally a transparent informative and deliberative forum to which all citizens must have equal access.

A democratic society must have mechanisms for the continuous monitoring of the health of democratic processes, and – in addition to the media themselves – a range of academic disciplines have been entrusted with this task of monitoring. Communication and media research, alongside political science, cultural studies, sociology, economics, and other social and cultural scientific research traditions, has focused on the adequacy of relationships between (on the one hand) the institutions of the mass media, in their historically developing phases and their relative dependence on publicist and commercial motivations, and (on the other) the political institutions and processes – and especially on the possible consequences of the way in which the news media cover elections and affect their outcomes (see for instance Negrine, 1996, Strömbäck, 2008).

As a result of the division of labor within communication studies, reception research – a relatively young discipline, which has emerged around 1980 – has put the spotlight on what one could call the micro-processes of citizenship formation through the media, by considering, mainly through qualitative research methods, people's political meaning-making in their encounters with news formats in the context of everyday life. This chapter maps and critically examines the contributions of audience reception research to advancing our understanding of the ways in which the media have intervened in forging formations of citizenship for three decades.

While 30 years may seem a short period in the history of democracy, nevertheless this chapter argues that the three decades of reception research, while maintaining a generally shared perspective of *mediated meaning-making* on citizenship, can be seen as

a succession of five shifting lenses through which reception researchers have observed and interpreted the media/citizenship nexus. These shifting lenses have resulted from the changing agendas of political landscapes since the 1970s, from genre and program innovations of the media, and from the rapid development of digital and mobile media technologies that supplement and may even supplant the print and broadcasting media.

The five stages are each characterized by the dominance of one lens of perception, while previous lenses have continued to exist and to exert their influence even as new understandings have emerged and become dominant. The stages proposed and developed in the following pages are: (1) hegemonic citizenship; (2) monitorial citizenship; (3) popular citizenship; (4) participatory citizenship; and (5) ubiquitous citizenship.

If we lean unpretentiously on the notion of scholarly “paradigms” (Gitlin, 1978), we can say that a stage is a paradigmatic framework of understanding, which at a given point in time guides reception researchers concerned with mediated citizenship toward relevant and interesting objects of study, the appropriate methods for studying our research concerns, the expected findings, and the possible avenues for intervening in the observed practices.

Each stage will be characterized by a detailed presentation and discussion of one or two significant reception case studies, which illuminate the scholarly and political concerns of that stage. On the basis of these case studies, the distillation of a historical typology will then be attempted. The chapter will end with reflections on the theoretical and methodological visions that influence the paths currently taken by reception researchers into the contemporary and future landscapes of mediatized citizenship.

Reception Research: Delimiting the Scope of the Analysis

Following David Morley (1980) – who operationalized his mentor Stuart Hall’s theory of encoding and decoding (Hall, 1973) for his qualitative empirical reception study of the British current affairs program *Nationwide* (see below) – I define reception as the process through which “audiences differentially read and make sense of messages which have been transmitted, and act on those meanings within the context of the rest of their situation and experience” (Morley, 1980, p. 11). (For further definition of the field, see Jensen & Rosengren, 1990; Jensen, 1991; Schröder, Drotner, Kline, & Murray, 2003, ch. 8.)

Today the landscape of reception research is still dominated by qualitative methods, although this dominance has become less dogmatic than it was during the pioneering years. There is a consensus today among reception researchers that methodological pluralism is often the best way to obtain explanatory power (Schröder et al., 2003, ch. 17).

In the remainder of this chapter I shall map and critically examine the ways in which reception researchers have analyzed the media/citizenship nexus through five

related historical stages. It will not be possible to cover all the work within reception research that could be relevant for the understanding of mediated citizenship. This examination will limit its scope to empirical research that has focused on news rather than on entertainment media (although the latter will find their way into the account of Stage 3), and to research that has adopted a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach (although the latter will be considered from the moment it makes its appearance on the horizon of reception research in the mid-1990s; see Lewis, 1997). Mediated citizenship will be dealt with in a way that epitomizes its “political” as opposed to its “cultural” aspects – since the latter would have required the inclusion of reception insights about cultural and subcultural identities and about the gendered and ethnic dimensions of citizenship (see Radway, 1984; Ang, 1985; Liebes & Katz, 1990; Jhally & Lewis, 1992; Hermes, 1995) – all of which exceeds by far the space available here. The chapter does not define or discuss the notion of citizenship separately, as changing understandings of this concept will emerge from the outline and review of reception research over the five stages. Readers who are especially interested in going into political science-anchored discussions of citizenship in the context of media studies are referred to the extensive expositions in the work of scholars like Keane (1991), Livingstone and Lunt (1994), Schudson (1997), Dahlgren (2006), and Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham (2007).

Stage 1: Hegemonic Citizenship

The notion of citizenship dealt with under the description “hegemonic” is somewhat different from the notions of citizenship covered by the following four stages. For instance the term “citizen” is not used explicitly by the scholars whose work comes under this heading: Stuart Hall, David Morley, and John Fiske. However, these scholars are centrally concerned with questions of political power, political identity, and the formation of political consciousness in a class-divided democratic society, as they analyze through reception research how it is that those individuals and groups who have managed historically to appropriate power over society’s resources and social arrangements also succeed in holding on to this fundamental authority over the majority of citizens, whose lives are led outside the hierarchies of power.

It falls outside the scope of this chapter to provide even a shorthand version of the Marxist theory of capitalist society; but it has to be said that it was such a view that was pervasive in the intellectual climate of the 1970s in many parts of the humanities and social sciences, and this mindset dominated the first stage in reception research. At the time many political activists inside and outside of academia hoped to be able to mobilize the people – or the citizens – for the cause of large-scale political emancipation, through radical or reformist political action.

As a prerequisite to such liberating political action, the pioneers of reception research wanted to map the landscape of political consciousness formed by the mass

media and to illuminate the balance between the forces of oppression and those of emancipation in the informative genres of news and current affairs programs (Hall, 1973; Morley, 1980), as well as in the entertainment genres of television serials and popular novels (Fiske, 1987; Radway, 1984). Here we shall concentrate on the reception perspectives of Hall and Morley, whose work engaged the realm of politics directly by tackling its representations in news and current affairs programming. The work of John Fiske used the same theoretical framework and was highly contested because of its celebration of the semiotic oppositional powers of the subordinate classes (Fiske, 1987). Fiske coined the phrase “semiotic democracy” to explain how ordinary people had the freedom to decode media discourses in a manner that was at least symbolically oppositional to the hegemonic powers.

The seminal reception research inaugurated theoretically by Hall (1973) and substantiated empirically by Morley (1980) in his qualitative study of the BBC current affairs program *Nationwide* followed after both authors had conducted extensive textual analyses of mass media content. These critiques of media representations demonstrated the massive scale of the ideological hegemony propagated on behalf of the allegedly oppressive social arrangements that victimized the working classes while seemingly providing an affluent society with increasing standards of living and with consumer goods (Hall, Clarke, Critcher, Jefferson, & Roberts, 1978). The crucial question for reception researchers in this sort of situation was: How do audiences make sense of such a partisan consensual picture of societal issues and problems? How do they position themselves ideologically in relation to the ideological position offered by the *Nationwide* current affairs program? The reception interviews designed to provide answers to these questions were analyzed according to a template that assumed that the program offered viewers an ideologically loaded “preferred meaning,” to which they could relate through a “dominant,” “negotiated,” or “oppositional” reading.

This matrix has since become part of the terminological heritage of reception research, along with the notion of polysemy (multiple meanings). Morley sees the TV program as “a structured polysemy. [. . .] [I]t has been structured in dominance, although its meaning can never be totally fixed or ‘closed’” (Morley, 1980, p. 10).

From this definition of the preferred meaning it follows that it is somehow easier for viewers to swallow the preferred reading, which is the meaning that, so to speak, offers itself to viewers as the *dominant* reading; viewers actualize the dominant, hegemonic reading when they share the codes in which the program was encoded and the accompanying system of values, beliefs, and assumptions about the social world. When viewers share the program’s code in part and accept the preferred meaning broadly, but modify it in accordance with their own interests and preferences, they produce a *negotiated* reading. *Oppositional* readings occur when viewers do not share at all the codes that generated the program but draw on an alternative, politically critical and oppositional frame of interpretation.

Toward the end of the book Morley briefly relates his reception findings to more conventional forms of citizen behavior, such as party political affiliations and

preferences in parliamentary elections. However, he is careful to emphasize that there is no simple coupling of each of the three reading positions and party political affiliations. Among the groups that take up a particular reading position we may find a variety of party political outlooks and a variety of objective class affiliations. At the end of the day, therefore, Morley's findings do not enable him to discern fixed and predictable patterns in the mediated social production of hegemony and resistance among citizens.

Stage 2: Monitorial Citizenship

Without abandoning the theoretical understanding of how a capitalist society reproduces its social formation through the ideological discourses of the mass media, which characterized Stage 1, at Stage 2 reception research explores news reception mainly from the perspective of how the news enables citizens to *monitor* their social environment, which is relevant for their ability to function as political subjects in a representative democracy.¹ Inspired by James Lull's pioneering ethnographic study of "the social uses of television" (1980), Klaus Bruhn Jensen (1986; 1990) wishes to draw a descriptive map on the basis of informants' accounts of their uses of TV news in everyday life. The theoretical framework governing the study is remarkably similar to the Hall–Morley conceptualization of political hegemony, which is largely assumed to be the study's analytical premise. Jensen agrees with John Fiske that the polysemic potential of the news text leads to differentiated readings, which can be seen as semiotically "oppositional" in the sense of diverging from the ideologically dominant "preferred" reading inscribed into the news message. But Jensen disputes Fiske's assertion that oppositional readings are in themselves politically significant – semiotic resistance is not political resistance (Jensen, 1990, p. 58).

Jensen's analytical mapping of the everyday uses and readings of TV news shows that the real political potency of news reception is negligible. Casting the news program both as an "account" of the mechanisms of representative democracy and as a "resource" that audiences may potentially utilize in forms of political participation, Jensen bases his study on 24 individual qualitative interviews with US male respondents to a screening of yesterday's mainstream news program.

Echoing Lull (1980), Jensen distinguishes four different "uses" of TV news. Unlike Morley, he finds his informants' readings to be closely associated with the everyday situational context in which these informants watch the news programs:

- 1 *Contextual uses* have to do with the way news programs are watched as a flow and "punctuate daily life," often in the family environment and intersecting with gender roles and other power relations.
- 2 *Informational uses* occur when the news is watched for the "factual knowledge of political issues and events" that it brings to viewers, who find this knowledge

relevant “in their roles as consumer, employee, and, above all, as citizen and voter” (Jensen, 1990, p. 66). Here viewers follow the daily news as a way to maintain a modest level of political information between elections and to be able to engage in trivial conversation with other people. The news is not used for genuine political deliberation in the Habermasian sense associated with active citizenship in the public sphere.

- 3 *Legitimizing uses* occur when citizens are maintaining their political self-image by routinely following the news and deluding themselves that they are not too remote from the ideal of active citizenship. The ordinary news user is politically compliant. However, disgruntled semiotic opposition from the safety and comfort of one’s armchair is widely practised.
- 4 *Diversional uses* have to do with perceiving the news as a kind of (political) entertainment that serves to “divert the attention of the audience, not just from boredom and anxiety, but from major issues of social conflict and power” (p. 71). Diversion may arise from two characteristics of TV news: first, from the parasocial appeal and charisma of the anchor people; second, from the visual experience of immediacy, human interest, narrative drama, liveliness, and so on.

Jensen thus sees TV news as a public forum (Newcomb & Hirsch, 1983) that enables citizens to monitor their society routinely, on a daily basis, but in a hegemonic manner that has few or no repercussions on the nation’s political scene, a far cry from the active citizens conceptualized in Habermas’ theory of the public sphere.

Asking what can be done to remedy this sad state of affairs, Jensen argues that apparently the sheer availability of politically informative news programs is not sufficient to ensure a politically enlightened and active citizenry, not even in the case of well-educated social groups, the representatives of which were no more active politically than their low-educated counterparts. For Jensen, the answer lies in a deliberate effort on the part of the educational system to teach media literacy: “Since the political process is increasingly conducted through the mass media, popular participation depends on a new functional literacy comprising critical comprehension skills as well as concrete production skills” (p. 74).

This educational perspective on mediated citizenship is shared by Justin Lewis (1991), but his studies of news reception processes led him to look for the solution in a different direction, namely that of the producers of journalistic content: they ought to compose their news stories in alternative ways, which would hold greater appeal, ensure better comprehension, and build more useful insights into political affairs among the citizens. Lewis’ news reception study analyses 50 viewers’ understanding of the British Independent Television (ITV) news program *News at Ten*, in order to map the way TV news enables citizens to monitor their world by bringing to them the prerequisites of competent citizenship: “TV news is at the core of any modern democratic system. The quality of the decisions we make within a democracy depends upon the quality of the information we receive” (Lewis, 1991, p. 123).

The findings “suggest that TV news performs, even on its own terms, quite dismally” (p. 152). This assessment is due to the fact that the TV news offered by the news journalists is neither comprehensible nor meaningful to most ordinary people. The gist of Lewis’ argument is that TV news is not enough like fictional narratives: these have a tripartite structure – enigma, suspension, resolution – that catches and holds the viewer’s attention and paves the way for the process of comprehension. The news, by contrast, “is a form that, by abandoning narrative, abandons substantial sections of the viewer’s consciousness” (p. 129). The typical TV news story is inherently demotivating, because it takes a story and “squeezes the sense of mystery right out of it. [. . .] It is like being told the punchline before the joke” (pp. 130–131).

For Lewis, the solution to the miscommunication uncovered through reception analysis lies in the opportunity this provides for journalists to educate citizens, because, “if news adopted the conventions of narrative codes used in other cultural forms, it would be considerably more successful at communicating its message to people” (p. 138). This conclusion is slightly at odds with the findings of Goddard, Corner, Gavin, and Richardson (1998), who studied citizens’ understanding of televised economic news that used personalizing narrative devices in order to make the often abstract economic news easier to understand. The personalizing devices did serve to increase the informants’ understanding of the individual news story, but they did not seem to lead to a deeper understanding of the more abstract economic mechanisms of the national economy.

Stage 3: Popular Citizenship

While the reception research of Stage 1 and Stage 2 considered the ways in which sedentary viewers situated in their living-rooms made sense of television genres, the pioneering study by Livingstone and Lunt (1994) explored a novel and different program format, which gave access to the voices of audience members: the latter were invited into the TV studio to participate in debate programs. Such studio audience discussion programs were new at the time in a European broadcasting context; they resulted in part from the widespread deregulation and commercialization of television under the right-wing governments of the 1980s. Yet some specimens of participatory formats had existed in the US since the 1970s, notably the format-establishing *Phil Donahue Show*; this program format also surged in the US from the late 1980s on (e.g., *The Oprah Winfrey Show*).

In the classic form studied by Livingstone and Lunt, British programs like *The Kilroy Show*, *The Time the Place*, and *Donahue* invited lay people, experts, and politicians into a TV amphitheater studio in order to debate topical and controversial issues, which people usually have opinions about and which may trigger talk and debate. The fundamental concern, empirically explored by Livingstone and Lunt, was whether such programs, often considered as a low-culture genre by cultural critics, could be said to

have any democratic value. The answer hinges on whether the audiences that watch them regularly can be demonstrated to acquire significant prerequisites of citizenship precisely through the experience of watching such programs:

Is any purpose served by these discussions or are they simply entertainment programmes designed to fill the schedules? [. . .] Is this a new form of public space or forum, part of a media public sphere? [. . .] Does “real conversation” take place in these discussions and does this produce a community of citizens talking among themselves about issues of public concern? (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994, p. 1)

The yardstick held up by Livingstone and Lunt to measure the democratic quality of audience debate programs is clearly indebted to Habermas’ definition of the public sphere in its ideal form. However, granting that public debate must adhere to agreed rules of rational argument, Livingstone and Lunt do not require these programs to result in the achievement of consensual conclusions that reach beyond the program and into the circles of political power. Instead, following the theory of media as a “cultural forum” (Newcomb & Hirsch, 1984), Livingstone and Lunt describe Habermas’ requirement as “too stringent [. . .] for the present-day mass media cultural forum, which may more simply place arguments side by side without analysis or integration” (1994, p. 31). They argue that the value of the less than ideal public sphere of debate programs lies in their multivocal contribution (1) to a shared “contemporary version of common sense” (*ibid.*), which sets normative standards for human behavior; and (2) to the formation of people’s political and cultural identities at individual and group levels.

The methodological framework for Livingstone and Lunt’s project was comprehensive and consisted of multiple methods, which included focus groups, individual in-depth interviews, and, as an early example within reception research, the cross-fertilization of qualitative and quantitative methods. Livingstone, Wober, and Lunt (1994) supplemented the qualitative sense-making fieldwork with a representative survey of 500 respondents. Audience members were found to be very appreciative of the program’s admission of diverse voices as a basis for democratic debate. In addition to this plurality of voices, the existence of a genuine public sphere also depends on the perceived equality of these voices: everyone – both people in authoritative positions, such as politicians or scientific experts, and members of the lay citizenry – enters the debate on equal terms. Apparently the programs were successful in creating this levelling of voices:

Experts? [. . .] I think that people who Kilroy [the host] thinks are going to act as experts don’t always turn out that way. You often get much more useful information from the ordinary person in the studio who happens to be very good at communicating and has some significant things to say. (George, viewer, quoted in Livingstone & Lunt, 1994, p. 100)

Livingstone and Lunt also emphasize the overall evaluative and discriminating stance that audiences adopt toward these programs. Far from merely engaging in debate

programs for their titillating or sensational aspects, audience members deployed argumentative and evaluative aesthetic frameworks of interpretation to position themselves as public citizens rather than private consumers (see also Schröder & Phillips, 2005).

These results are on the whole corroborated by the findings of the survey study concerning the extent to which these qualitative findings can be generalized to the population of the UK. The survey confirms “the viewers’ skepticism about the authority of experts, their sense of involvement in the genre, their cautious acceptance of the genre as a putative mass mediated public sphere, and their interest in hearing the voices of ordinary experience” (Livingstone, Wober, & Lunt, 1994, p. 355). Remarkably perhaps, these responses were almost universal across demographic groups, only age being a distinguishing variable in a few respects: older viewers were more critical of the chaotic nature of the debates and more respectful of the experts. Interestingly, it turned out that the more one likes the program, the more one tends to see it as an authentically mediated public sphere, while those who do not find the program democratically enriching may nevertheless watch it in order to ridicule those who go on the show (p. 374).

In their concluding discussion of studio debate programs, Livingstone and Lunt situate them between the polar opposites of media content catering for “the public knowledge project” and media content catering for “the popular culture project” (Corner, 1991, p. 268). They stress that the traditional division between informative and entertaining genres on the one hand and the corresponding audience categories of “critical insight” and “mindless pleasure” on the other is not applicable to audience discussion programs: “Audience discussion programs do not fit into this opposition of information and entertainment” (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994, p. 179).

Other reception scholars have taken up the gauntlet of exploring the claim that popular entertainment, in its pure form, is inevitably detrimental to democratic endeavors. Pioneering this perspective, Liesbet van Zoonen (2005) presents an argument for the compatibility between entertainment and politics and against their separation, which in her view would only serve to aggravate the decline in political engagement; this is because in our modern culture, whether we like it or not (Postman, 1985), entertainment looms large in citizens’ everyday lives. Van Zoonen’s work is thus designed as an intervention with “an agenda to think about entertaining politics, instead of simply discarding it as irrelevant and dangerous to citizenship and the democratic project” (2005, p. viii; see also Curran, 2010).

Focusing her empirical work on fan culture as an intense form of audiencehood, Van Zoonen argues that “the behavior of fans in relation to soaps, popular music, and other entertainment genres is not fundamentally different from what is required of citizens” (2005, p. 16). Following performers and politicians respectively, “both fans and citizens follow their objects intensely, promote them to outsiders, deliberate among each other, come to informed judgments, and propose alternatives” (ibid.). And both kinds of relationship incorporate affective and emotional, cognitive and rational engagements. One should therefore acknowledge “the rational in fandom and the emotional in politics” (p. 17).

Van Zoonen also analyzes audience reception of films and TV series whose story lines include subject matter from the world of politics. Methodologically she does not base her analysis on empirical fieldwork that uses interview encounters with audience members, but on a fly-on-the-wall netnography. She observes discussion groups on Internet Movie Database, looking for answers to the question “whether and how entertaining politics enables people to perform as citizens” (p. 123). She concludes that the movies and TV series discussed by the groups

enable people to think about the dilemmas that politicians and politics face (reflection), criticize or praise politicians for their morals and stories for their ideology (judgment), and express their hopes and ideals (utopia). [. . .] [Thus] popular culture does indeed function as a source of gaining insight in politics and as a means to perform citizenship by presenting one’s ideas in a public setting. (p. 137)

Therefore, instead of denigrating the political potential of popular entertainment, educators should be alert to its political potential, because the fictional personalization and narrativization of politics “may offer a way into politics for people otherwise excluded or bored” (p. 150). Such findings are complemented by Johansson’s reception study of 55 readers of British tabloid newspapers (Johansson, 2009).

Stage 4: Participatory Citizenship

We now live in a convergence culture – a world in which, as Henry Jenkins puts it, “old and new media collide” (Jenkins, 2006). In the 1990s, when the Internet was still seen as a “new” medium, it was greeted with a mixture of utopian and dystopian visions: while the pessimists focused on its massive potential for surveillance and control of the remotest corner of human life, the optimists welcomed the Internet as a technology that would revolutionize all areas of cultural life, leading toward a new participatory public sphere in the realm of politics and innovating the world of education through new collaborative and creative ways of learning. Practices of “collective intelligence” and “collective creativity” would break down traditional divisions between the public and the private, mass and interpersonal communication, information and entertainment, production and consumption, and audience roles would hybridize into those of “produser” (Bruns, 2005) or “prosumer” (Toffler, 1980).

Today user-generated content (UGC) is actively solicited by news institutions, and the open publishing sites have developed into giant content-sharing fora and into a blogosphere. Some of the citizen interventions found here are extending the boundaries of democracy, because they are voicing alternatives and critical points of view that are more radical than those of consensual mainstream politics and that can therefore be seen as “oppositional” – not just *interpretatively* (as at Stage 1 above, when reception researchers were analyzing “oppositional” and hegemonic citizenship), but

interventionally: the alternative voices often originate in “a preoccupation with the global issues around which contemporary identity is shaped: globalization itself; the environment; protection of endangered species; human rights and free speech” (Ross & Nightingale, 2003, p. 153).

While political communication research has overwhelmingly focused on the role of the media in elections, Torpe’s (2006) study of online citizens explores whether the Internet adds something to the deliberative processes of local municipalities during a period of normal political activity between elections. Setting out to explore empirically how the Internet can be seen to enable deliberative practices or not, Torpe defines “public deliberation” as “non-coercive forms of arguments circulating between transmitters and receivers in open spaces based on mutual expectations of being listened to and receiving some sort of response,” where “consensus is a possibility, not a necessity or a normative ideal” (Torpe, 2006, p. 36). He also investigates whether the Internet can work in parallel with the traditional media in these respects and whether it adds new democratic affordances for citizens.

Torpe’s empirical study is a holistic one, in which he investigates Internet usage and experiences in three local communities in Denmark. He concludes cautiously that the Internet does have some potential for increasing citizens’ interest in participating in deliberations about local affairs, but that potential should not be exaggerated. Little “indicates that the net has replaced other sources of information or that new groups of people are included in the information activities (p. 39).

With respect to agenda-setting and deliberative functions, however, the net has had a moderately vitalizing effect on municipal democracy. While online participants tend to resemble those who are also active offline,

the open character of online debate forums may generally favour persons with low educational skills. Furthermore, it may be easier for many persons to post letters on an online discussion forum than to take the floor at a public meeting. [. . .] All in all the case reveals that an online discussion forum can serve as an alternative channel for raising issues that – for some reason or another – are ignored in the traditional media. (Torpe, 2006, p. 41)

Taking these issues to a new sphere – that of young people using the Internet for purposes of civic participation – Banaji, Buckingham, van Zoonen, and Hirzalla (2009) arrive at quite similar conclusions, drawing on reception analysis and other methods: while the Internet can be a valuable tool for young people who are already engaged in political or civic activity, the use of networked technologies is “not inherently democratic, nor does it automatically have democratic consequences” (p. 4). Another finding is that, in order to be successful in engaging young people, online provision should be linked to offline activities and to “related concerns and issues that young people are experiencing in their everyday lives” (ibid.). Moreover, the more these issues spring from young people’s local community or from aspects of identity politics, the more they are likely to engage young people in communicative and deliberative activities.

More in the fashion of classic reception studies, Wahl-Jørgensen, Williams, and Wardle (2010) analyze audience perceptions of user-generated content (UGC) in the news media. They are driven by a desire to explore whether the user-generated content enabled by digital communication technologies is transforming journalism in democratizing and egalitarian ways. On the whole, their findings confirm what has been found by other researchers (see Örnebring, 2008): UGC is no panacea for contemporary journalism, which tends to domesticate the participatory formats in accordance with commercial imperatives and professional norms. As a window on the audience's sense-making practices of UGC, Wahl-Jørgensen and her team interviewed 12 focus groups with a total of 100 people recruited to represent the key demographics of class, age, gender, and levels of activism. The group discussions were organized around different types of UGC: eye-witness accounts, online interaction, text messages and emails, and radio phone-ins.

Audiences were found to distinguish clearly between *content UGC* and *comment UGC*: generally informants are very positive toward content UGC, which includes audience footage, audience experiences, and audience stories and is perceived to be immediate, fresh coverage collected before the arrival of professional news teams. These forms of UGC add drama and emotion, are more authentic, and are seen to be a real democratization of news production (Wahl-Jørgensen et al., 2010, pp. 181–182). The researchers relate this preference for perspectives not produced by journalists (the professional experts of news reporting) to the findings of Livingstone and Lunt (1994), whose living-room audiences of television debate programs also found the contributions of lay participants to be more valuable than those of political and academic experts. Such populist “valorisation of the voices of ‘ordinary people’” appears to indicate that, “in contemporary public debate, the authority of the ‘deep personal’ experience trumps that of specialized professional or political knowledge of the facts” (Wahl-Jørgensen et al., 2010, p. 184).

In contrast, audience “comment,” which includes opinions offered by individuals in radio phone-ins or have-your-say debates on the Internet, is viewed less favorably, because the motivations of those contributing are viewed with suspicion: lay commentators are seen as “uninformed and inarticulate; publicity seekers looking for their five minutes of fame; holding extreme and often unpalatable views; and/or bored, lonely people with too much time on their hands” (ibid., p. 185). From a democratic perspective, it thus seems that the more UGC is offered by audience members as active citizens seeking to make a contribution to democratic deliberation, the less it is valued by news consuming audiences: “The self-interest associated with public participation undermines the value of the contribution, insofar as it does not appear to be motivated by concerns about the common good, but instead is squarely focused on displaying individual opinions (ibid., p. 186).

Equally dishearteningly, Wahl-Jørgensen and colleagues find that what keeps those who do care about the common good away from contributing to the citizen fora of the mediatized public sphere is the inconsequentiality of such contributions. As one informant phrases it:

RICHARD: Whatever I write in about the budget isn't going to change what our money gets spent on, is it? [. . .] If I knew that my information was going to go to the House of Commons [. . .], then I can see the point of commenting. But when you just comment, and just put your opinion into a computer like that there's no point. (Ibid., p. 187)

This sense of powerlessness experienced by citizens also looms large in the findings of Couldry and colleagues' (2007) large-scale mapping of public engagement with the media.

It would seem that, with such democratic despondency, we have reached an impasse for deliberative democracy on a mass scale:

the lack of interest in, and respect for, audience comment raises worrying questions about the much-heralded potential of new participatory genres, such as UGC, to enhance citizen participation and ties in with larger concerns about the place of political engagement in an anti-political culture. (Wahl-Jørgensen et al., 2010, p. 190)

On the one hand, it is clear that a citizen's desire to speak emerges from the belief that somewhere someone is listening and that, if the arguments offered are relevant and weighty, that someone will act appropriately. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there is no way this kind of universal communicative consequentiality can be operationalized in decision-making political units such as nations, regions, or even municipalities. It would therefore seem that, for most citizens in democratic societies, the rewards of communicative engagement with the media in public debates, in traditional and more participatory media, will have to come from involvement in local communities and from immersion in the political issues that individuals find to be personally worthwhile. Some of these community activities and their attention to issues, though local and small-scale, will have participatory ramifications beyond the national boundaries, emerging eventually in the contexts of supranational and global public spheres.

Cammaerts (2008) offers an extensive review of the participatory potentials of Web 2.0 (which he terms the "blogosphere"), in all the contradictory diversity of its coexisting emancipatory and oppressive potentials and its parallels with mainstream and oppositional discourses. His conclusions suggest the need to adopt both a sobering corrective to the utopian visions of the democratic potential of the social Internet and a theoretical invitation, based on the work of Chantal Mouffe (1999; see Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006), to move beyond the Habermassian ideal of "the" public sphere:

The image of the blogosphere as a deliberative space, as a model for an online (Habermassian) public sphere where every person is free to air his or her views, thus making rational dialogue between equal status-free participants in public debates possible, is somewhat problematic to say the least. [. . .] The image of [. . .] antagonistic public spaces (Mouffe, 1999) which are inherently conflictual [. . .] is more relevant to make sense of the online environment than the Habermassian consensual public sphere, implied by the notion blogosphere. (Cammaerts, 2008, pp. 373–374)

Stage 5: Ubiquitous Citizenship

For more than a decade, political and cultural theorists, including scholars with a key interest in media studies, have been attempting to re-theorize the notion of the public sphere in the direction of what they call cultural citizenship and civic agency (Turner, 2001; Dahlgren, 2006; Couldry, 2006). Their theoretical work draws on the extensive debates about Habermas' theory of the public sphere that have been going on since the translation of his 1962 German book into English in 1989 (Calhoun, 1992). While subscribing to the idea of a myriad of partisan "micro" public spheres feeding into the consensual Habermasian "macro" public sphere (Fraser, 1992; Garnham, 1992), or to Keane's vision of "complex mosaics of differently sized, overlapping and connected public spheres" (Keane, 1999), they also seek to redefine legitimate politics as something that cannot and should not be confined spatially to a sacred political sphere characterized by formal political institutions, but that is fundamentally anchored in people's everyday realities (Livingstone, 2005). Moreover, echoing the scholars of Stage 3 (popular citizenship), cultural citizenship also confronts the conceptions of citizenship that reify rationality and impartiality, arguing that political engagement is often a product of passionate feeling (Wahl-Jørgensen, 2006).

Dahlgren and Olsson's (2009) study of young citizens' enactment of mediated civic agency analyzes the "civic culture" concept of democratic engagement, previously developed by Dahlgren (2009). Through qualitative interviews in Sweden, the authors offer "concrete examples of how, specifically, the internet has been shaped into a resource for young, politically active people's concrete everyday practices of pursuing their political interests" (Dahlgren & Olsson, 2009, p. 209). Civic agency thus has to do with "the subjective side of citizenship," with how "one can see oneself as a citizen," and with "a sense of belonging to – and perceived possibilities for participating in – societal development" (*ibid.*, p. 200). The sample of informants is deliberately biased in favor of young people (16–19-year-olds) who are affiliated to political parties of youth organizations and various alternative activist movements.

Dahlgren and Olsson's interviews demonstrate that the Internet is an important resource for these informants' knowledge repertoires – for obtaining a regular overview of "the news," for seeking information from first-hand sources about what goes on under the surface of the political landscape, and for acquiring alternative or non-mainstream information. By participating in online debates in political fora, the informants are socialized to observe democratic values and procedures such as equality, solidarity, openness, reciprocity, tolerance, and so on and they learn adherence to the common good by engaging with other debaters, with whom they disagree, not as if the latter were "enemies," but by approaching them as rational and legitimate "adversaries."

The interviews also show that the young citizens are taking full advantage of the digital opportunities for activating collective intelligence and creativity, for instance by contributing to an "adbusters" website, where activists may collaborate about parodying unethical or sexist commercials (for digital content creation in the "mash-up

culture,” see Löwgren, 2010). As this study shows, some kinds of reception research that are carried out from the civic culture perspective, while declaring their interest to be in the performance of “citizenship in everyday life,” continue to adhere to a Habermassian normative notion of citizenship, according to which a certain level of engagement and activity in “real” politics is required in order for citizenship to count as legitimate. By implication, an individual who is not active in political organizations or in public debates tends to be left out of the investigation. Such a notion of civic culture is not really anchored in a multifarious, “not-so-political” everyday life.

However, another strand of contemporary thinking about media and citizenship incorporates the everyday perspective of citizenship into its theoretical agenda in a manner that breaks more radically with the Habermassian heritage, wishing to map and assess mediated citizenship in practices that are not just embryonic stages of “real” politics but are firmly lodged in the realm of the everyday and often are not perceived as political at all by individuals (that is, at a subjective level). Suggesting that citizenship today is “ubiquitous,” Jeffrey Jones argues that “we engage politics everywhere, all the time, and the media are central to that engagement” (2006, p. 9). Here citizenship is taken all the way to incorporate a celebration of the dormant political potential of people’s informal conversations in daily life:

The looseness, open-endedness of everyday talk, its creativity, potential for empathy and affective elements are indispensable for the vitality of democratic politics. [. . .] all forms of talk are of potential relevance for civic discussion, politics can materialize even in unexpected contexts of daily conversation. [. . .] Formal deliberative democracy is too restrictive as an ideal; it banishes by definition that speech which may be on its way towards politics, speech which originates in the disjointed settings of everyday life and yet manages to join together experience and information, wisdom and reflection in ways that may lead to question, contestation, political conflict. (Dahlgren, 2006, p. 279)²

Kevin Barnhurst (2003) explicitly denounces the Habermassian ideal of citizenship as he tries to develop a new ideal of citizenship as a yardstick for evaluating ordinary people’s political activity. According to Barnhurst, the Habermassian ideal of citizenship “sets up an unreachable ideal that devalues how people enact citizenship in daily life” (Barnhurst, 2003, p. 134), and “requires levels of commitment to political activity that amount to more than full-time work” (p. 137). On the basis of a qualitative life-story approach to citizenship, Barnhurst argues that political communication research should perceive politics as something that, for most people, “becomes intentional only in sporadic flashes” (p. 133).

With this growing awareness of the need to redirect the focus of political communication research toward the everyday micro-dynamics of democracy, reception research tends to adopt a theoretical agnosticism about what is democratically valuable and what is not. It is argued that the inconspicuous practices of daily life can be seen as the site of identities and passions from which people can sometimes – *if the occasion arises*, so to speak – be launched into the public sphere (Wahl-Jørgensen, 2006).

The empirical work of Irene Costera Meijer on the everyday news consumption and reception of young people in the Netherlands can be seen as congenial to this rejuvenated version of public sphere theory (Meijer, 2007). First, Meijer finds that, for many young informants, the distinction between information and entertainment is not operative. Thus fiction genres are said to be “informative” because they sustain emotional intelligence and thus provide an understanding of how something feels.

Second, Meijer finds that the informative function of media is becoming secondary to their communicative function in social networks, in other words the way news enables young people to join in the small talk of peer group networks. News reception research, therefore, should look not only for the “learning outcomes” of news consumption (as do Curran, Lund, Iyengar, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009 and Pew Research Center, 2008), but for the way news exposure contributes to “mediated public connection” (Couldry et al., 2007).

Third, Meijer refutes the accusations of superficiality directed at the young generation, which are sometimes heard from cultural critics. Even when young people are merely grazing the news media, they are not necessarily being superficial; they try to avoid missing anything important. And, while the “snacking” approach is the one they often adopt, they also go for the full meal once in a while – and therefore (while they are critical of traditional news formats) they nevertheless want “the news” to remain the way it is! News is sacrosanct.

In another empirical study based on the notion of cultural citizenship, Cornel Sandvoss argues that discourses around the consumption of sports do not mark the further decline of a free and rational public; rather such discourses can sometimes constitute “an alternative public sphere in which significant cultural, social, and political issues, which are neglected or insufficiently addressed in the official channels of parliamentary democracies, are negotiated and reflected upon” (Sandvoss, 2009, p. 60). The study consists of reception interviews with soccer fans and of a netnographic examination of the Internet conversations of fans of the German soccer club Bayer Leverkusen about non-white players in the team and about other fans’ racist abuse toward them. The analysis of these responses documents that sport holds immense political potential: the fan discourses incorporate exchanges about nationalism, ethnicity, religion, gender, and other issues of political significance.

In a wider sense, these findings can be seen as evidence that politics and citizenship are indeed being acted out everywhere, as part of a ubiquitous civic agency. Following Hartley (1999), Sandvoss argues that today the mass media *are* the public sphere, instead of merely being a sadly deficient *vehicle* of such a sphere, and that simply by virtue of being a member of the media audience the individual is a politically inscribed citizen.

Audiences as Citizens: A Historical Typology

The five stages of reception research on media-influenced citizenship presented and discussed above can be put together, in tabular form, into a historical typology, which

encapsulates in strongly reductionist fashion the key characteristics of the successive lenses through which reception researchers have observed, analyzed, and explained how the media influence the democratic prerequisites and practices of citizens and how citizens draw on the media as resources for democratic understanding and action (see Table 23.1).

For each stage, the typology lists the analytical and political aims of those working under the paradigm in question, the main theorists, the primary methodological approach, a handful of key researchers applying the perspective, and the approximate year in which the paradigm emerged. It should be stressed, of course, that the boundaries between the stages should be seen as porous and that previous stages (except Stage 1) continue without rupture, coexisting with emerging ones.

Ubiquitous Citizenship: Challenges for Reception Research

If politics and citizenship are everywhere, they should be explored everywhere. And, to the extent that they are intertwined with the media – which is a fundamental condition of life in mediatized societies (Strömbäck, 2008; Hjarvard, 2008; Livingstone, 2009) – reception research should explore them across the total ensemble of media.

Moreover, we should direct our empirical interest toward the ways in which the media – traditional and digital – function as everyday routine resources for what we might call “dormant citizenship” – how the media may, “subliminally” as it were, in an everyday, non-conspicuous process, help build the forms of civic knowledge, the communicative literacies, and the aesthetic repertoires that are the prerequisites for making the transition from latency to agency and from dormant to vigilant citizenship if and when the occasion arises in the life history of an individual.

In order for this to happen, it is necessary to adopt a radical user’s perspective, which means that we have to explore from the individual’s point of view how his or her particular constellation of media – routinely, subconsciously, and consciously selected from the ensemble of media – is subjectively perceived and makes sense in that individual’s life. Metaphorically speaking, we must ask people to tell us what – when they shop in the media-as-supermarket – they take from the shelves and put into their shopping carts, and why. This may involve reception researchers in empirical designs that extend the boundaries of reception research in the direction of audience ethnography, along the lines of Marie Gillespie’s study of the everyday TV talk of diasporic youth cultures in London. Her talk about news among Punjabi teenagers led to “explicit consideration of the themes of citizenship, class and ‘race,’ and religious, cultural and national difference and identity” (Gillespie, 1995, p. 26). Her study alerts us to the fact that, in many respects, the “political” significance of civic agency derives from practices belonging in the arena of everyday culture and of the creative expression of hybrid identities (see also the anthropological studies of news audiences in Bird, 2010, Part 2).

Table 23.1 Five historical stages of audiences as citizens, as seen by reception research

	Aim of research	Theory	Method	Scholars	Heyday
<i>Hegemonic citizenship</i>	Radical social change	Marx Gramsci, Parkin	Qualitative	Hall, 1973 Morley, 1980 Fiske, 1987	1973–1990
<i>Monitorial citizenship</i>	Democratic empowerment	Gramsci Habermas	Qualitative	Jensen, 1986 Lewis, 1991 Hagen, 1994	1985–
<i>Popular citizenship</i>	Public deliberation, political literacy	Habermas Fraser	Qualitative (+ quantitative)	Goddard et al., 1998 Livingstone and Lunt, 1994 Norris, 2000 Van Zoonen, 2005	1990–
<i>Participatory citizenship</i>	Deliberation Participation	Habermas Castells Mouffe Fraser	Qualitative (+ quantitative)	Jenkins, 2006 Carpentier, 2003 Cammaerts, 2008 Wahl-Jørgensen et al., 2010	2000–
<i>Ubiquitous citizenship</i>	Civic agency	Habermas Dahlgren	Qualitative Quantitative	Couldry et al., 2007 Meijer, 2007 Dahlgren, 2009	2005–

To label this radical, ideologically oriented kind of reception research in a way that aligns it with succeeding reformist approaches could be seen as a retrospective reinterpretation, or even as a retrospective imposition. The justification for doing so is that the reception research of the first stage does explore the ideological sense-making of what these scholars clearly saw as politically inscribed subjects.

Also, we should direct our attention to the online media sphere for a glimpse of people's spontaneous discussions of urgent social and cultural issues. Studying the two reality TV programs *Big Brother* and *Wife Swap* as a trigger for everyday political talk in the discussion forums connected to the programs, Graham and Hajru find that, in such discussions,

everyday political talk is not meaningless because it does not typically lead to direct political action. On the contrary, it is through participation in everyday talk whereby [sic] citizens become aware and informed, try to understand others, test old and new ideas, and express, develop and transform their preferences and opinions. (Graham & Hajru, 2011, p. 20; cf. Sandvoss, 2009)

Pursuing related micro-agency objectives, the reception study about cross-media news consumption that is currently carried out by the author of this chapter (see Schrøder & Steeg Larsen, 2010; Schrøder & Kobbarnagel, 2010) adopts a qualitative approach intended to discover, at ground level, the cross-media news packages (or constellations) appropriated by citizen-consumers from the news market supply. In principle, everyday citizenship emerges from engagement with all kinds of media, and any limitation of the scope of this project to news media is done solely for pragmatic reasons, to prevent the risk of wanting to study everything and ending up studying nothing. At the end of the project, we want to be able to discern the similarities and differences between the contents of the informants' news-shopping carts, to discover reliable and valid patterns or types of news media use with democratic implications.

It is a premise of our analysis that people's choice of news media is determined by what news media they perceive to be *worthwhile* – because the particular constellation they put together on a daily and weekly basis has established itself as one that cumulatively satisfies their conscious and unconscious needs for information about what goes on in their world. People only use the news media that they experience as delivering some kind of pay-off. There must be some metaphorical “interest” resulting from the “investment” they make in their portfolio of news media.

This has to do, above all else, with people's experience of the relevance of the news media's news and views, comments and columns, cartoons and comics, and the rest. The crucial factor in the experience of content relevance is the news media's capacity to enable “public connection.” A heuristic concept invented by Couldry and colleagues, public connection is defined as a shared

orientation to a public world where matters of shared concern are, or at least should be, addressed: [. . .] [P]ublic connection is principally sustained by a convergence in the media people consume. [. . .] “[P]ublic connection” represents our attempt to capture one key empirical precondition of democratic engagement in a way that does not privilege in advance any particular definition of politics. (Couldry et al., 2007, pp. 3–5)

In accordance with what was said above about the need to modernize and broaden the Habermasian notion of civic agency, we use public connection in a broader sense, to denote people's need to equip themselves both for the role of citizen-member of the democratic order, through mediatized information about public affairs, and for the role of belonging as a community member in the broadest possible everyday sense.³

Weaving public connections entails relying on media resources in order to participate in social and cultural networks of all kinds in everyday life; being able to navigate adequately as a spouse, parent, neighbor, colleague, consumer, and simply human being in late modern life; being able to communicate sensibly with significant others in one's close networks, as well as with more distant others in relevant commercial and institutional contexts. Public connection, in our use of the term, thus includes both what we might call "everyday public connection" and "political public connection." To illuminate the transitions among these two is the main challenge for reception researchers who wish to understand media citizenship.

NOTES

- 1 The concept of monitorial citizenship used here was coined independently of Schudson's (1998) characterization of citizens who engage in information-gathering and processing in the era of abundance of mediated information in the last decades of the twentieth century (Schudson, 1998). I use "monitorial citizenship" more commonsensically, to denote a citizen who relies routinely on the news media in order to form a working impression of his social environment.
- 2 The two strands of innovative thinking about civic agency outlined here sometimes coexist in the work of one scholar, although their political visions are quite different. For example, I draw on different writings by Dahlgren to illuminate the two strands.
- 3 A related effort to understand "how individuals and groups form democratic selves, or identities, and under what conditions of life" can be found in the work of Lewis A. Friedland (Friedland, 2001, p. 359). Using quantitative methods, this work represents an ambitious attempt to theorize and investigate into how societies cohere, focusing on the ecology of media communication at the local community level, while the citizens' sense-making of the media is not a central concern.

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Citizenship, Communication, and Modes of Audience Engagement

Exploring Alternative Voices in the Public Sphere

Christine L. Garlough and Dhavan V. Shah

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how citizens in Western and Eastern democracies are transforming communication messages and modalities to provoke audiences to engage in public life. These individuals are using a range of communication strategies and systems, some ancient and others nascent, to add their own voices and their constituents' voices to the public sphere. Reflecting on this orientation, we begin by considering how street theater is used throughout the world as a form of political rhetoric and as a venue for the creation of spaces where audiences may participate in thoughtful discussion. We focus on the use of theater by marginalized groups, as a medium for speaking about social injustices. We then consider how documentary film has been deployed across a range of countries as a tool in struggles for recognition and acknowledgment. Both "outsider" and mainstream efforts are explored, as sites for community building and maintenance. We end by examining how digital media are used in advanced societies as a means of populating the marketplace of ideas. Here we focus on how the Internet is used both as a source of information and as a sphere for audience interaction. In all of these cases, citizens are transforming the features and the form of media messages and modes, in an effort to incite their target audiences' interest and shape political outcomes and public policies.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Citizens involved in grassroots politics often engage in acts of witnessing and in testimonials about their life experiences as a way to participate in the public sphere. They present themselves in this way across a diverse set of communication modalities – from interpersonal and low-tech modes (conversation, street theater) to mass-produced and high-tech forms (documentaries, websites) – in order to share their perspectives on controversial issues. In this chapter we consider three such approaches to citizen communication and activism: street theater, documentary film, and political blogging. Regardless of the mode, the goal of these “acts of acknowledgement” is to draw audiences into this process through highly personal public performances – accounts of issues that entertain and inform – and to invite audiences to engage in turn with these questions and concerns, in meaningful ways (Schaffer & Smith, 2004, p. 16). Through performances of such communicative acts, citizens are attempting to engage with others, build community, and argue for political points of view.

According to Shuman (2005), the success of these autobiographical communications, which are intended not only to involve, but also to activate the audience depends on two judgments delivered by the people who encounter them: (1) the teller’s *experience* is understood as “real”, as something that actually happened; and (2) the *teller* is seen as entitled to claim the experience as his/her own. Such autobiographical accounts differ markedly from episodic frames and cues found within news coverage – that is, packaging press accounts around individuals and instances – that have been found to reduce the sense of shared responsibility (Iyengar, 1991) and to crystallize intolerance (Cho, Zuniga, Shah, & McLeod, 2006). Instead, these forms of witnessing and testimony highlight relationality (our lived connection to other human beings) and help to build community by drawing audience members into a process of actively acknowledging the perspective and experience of the teller.

Reflecting upon this orientation, we begin by considering how street theater is used throughout the world as a form of political rhetoric and as a venue for the creation of spaces for thoughtful discussion. We focus on its use by marginalized groups in India to speak about social injustices – specifically, what is called “sex-selection abortion” (selective abortion, where the selection is based on the predicted sex of the newborn) as a form of female infanticide. We then consider how documentary film has been deployed in a diasporic context as a tool in struggles for recognition and acknowledgment and as a site of community building and maintenance. Our focus centers on the documentary efforts of a grassroots organization to address issues of post-9/11 hate crimes directed at South Asian and Arab Americans. We conclude by considering the role of political blogs, videos, and other user-generated content in providing sites of (1) interaction with like-minded others; (2) confirmation of social perceptions; and (3) coordination for participatory action.

In all of these cases, citizens are transforming the features and the forms of messages as well as the modes in which messages are delivered, in an effort to shape political outcomes and public policies. Whether using street theater, documentary film, or digital media, audiences are seen as active parts in the communication process, telling their own stories and speaking back to expressive actors. It is through

these forms that alternative perspectives get communicated across conventional ideological or structural boundaries. Although distinct in many ways, these forms of autobiographical, narrative, and public testimonial provide channels for people to engage effectively with major public issues.

Political Street Plays

Street play performances take place all around the world, from the courtyards of South Asia to the town halls of America. They are a form of grassroots politics in which ordinary people put the aesthetics of verbal and non-verbal performance to work in the service of resistance. As Katrak (2009, p. 244) notes:

In this contemporary climate of social injustice and violence, I believe that the creative worker (artist and activist) plays a special role – through the tools of writing and performance, visual and expressive forms of music and dance – in representing political realities and in raising social awareness that can inspire social change.

This form is also used to communicate with audiences that might not otherwise get the message, due to limited access to communication technologies – whether print, broadcast, or digital. For this reason, street theater is often used as a political tool to express alternative perspectives on major social issues.

This observation is borne out by scholars from a variety of disciplines. Schechner (2003) writes about street theater performances in Shanghai in May 1989 that called for the resignation of Li Peng and for the retirement of Deng Xiaoping. Haedicke's work (2009) describes disenfranchised groups using performance to protest against unethical immigration practices. Garlough (2007) has explored how South Asian feminists use street plays to address issues of "dowry death" (the death of young wives as a result of in-laws' attempts to increase their dowry), caste, and sex-selection abortion. To illustrate our perspective on the role of street theater as a mode of introducing alternative perspectives into the public sphere, we consider the example of South Asian women's groups and their deployment of this cultural form.

South Asian women's organizations have labored to address the social inequality and everyday struggles faced by women in India since the early twentieth century. Growing out of movements for Indian independence, early activists tended to address "women's issues" in terms defined by nationalist reformers. In contrast, current work by women's organizations represents a varied array of political positions, ranging from radical feminist to Hindu fundamentalist (Kumar, 1993). These groups strive for social reform and legislative changes regarding issues such as rape, inheritance rights, domestic abuse, dowry death, and prenatal sex determination tests (Garlough, 2008a, 2008b).

In order to promote awareness about social conditions that require immediate attention, feminists in India participate in a variety of resistive activities. Some organizations

focus upon economic advancement or educational programs, whereas others attempt to raise women's self-awareness of gender disparities, or to increase political participation. Many organize protest rallies, run for office, lobby for special interests, and work within communities to tackle long-term goals concerning education and skills attainment. Our concern, however, centers on how grassroots feminist groups deploy street plays as part of political outreach campaigns. Many of these efforts embed performances within personal testimony, merging autobiography with familiar cultural forms such as songs, folklore, dance, and artwork. For these women, the combination of personal narratives with cultural forms yields a rhetorical resource for advancing political arguments, raising critical consciousness, and mobilizing groups of women.

Cultural Action and Street Theater

This use of culture for political purposes, labeled "cultural action" by many South Asian feminists, reflects a particular pragmatism. Some contend that traditional cultural forms and performances, typically associated with conservative norms and values, could be powerfully appropriated for subversive political purposes. These traditional practices hold political potential because they are an immediately recognizable means by which to engage and involve disenfranchised groups of women in civic issues that impact their everyday lives. Indeed, all cultural forms – popular culture, high culture, and folk culture – are viewed as potential *resources* in mobilizing grassroots political action.

So how can cultural forms be successfully transformed into compelling political tools? The reasons behind street theater's success are varied. In some cases, it is related to the iconic social importance of the form. In other cases, success stems from the form's ability to create ties to other audience members, to demarcate community boundaries, or to encourage self-reflection and national identity formation (Schechner, 2003). Often it involves including individuals who are socially disenfranchised (Boal, 1979; Kumar, 1993). Of course, the success of any given effort depends, at least in part, upon the target audience's familiarity with the particular cultural form that is used. As Zipes (1983) notes, the success of critically appropriating and transfiguring a cultural form depends on the audience's recognition of strategic changes in the typical format and content of that form. The uncanny experience of familiarity combined with unfamiliarity provokes critical inquiry.

This perspective draws attention to the fact that even traditional cultural forms can be successfully appropriated for the purpose of addressing contemporary issues from a critical perspective. Indian street theater's heritage stems from long-standing traditions of folk performance, classical drama, and Western theater that have been combined with "the political pamphlet, the wall poster, the agitational speech, the political demonstration – these all have gone into creating the diverse forms adopted by our street theatre" (Hashmi, 1988, p. 31). Akin to Boal's (1979) *Theater of the*

Oppressed, Indian street theater is a means through which individuals and groups can explore oppositional meanings and suggest new orientations for social action. These oral performances offer strategies of self-representation, used at particular times, in particular places, and in front of particular audiences (Bauman, 1986). In this sense, street plays are a twentieth-century phenomenon, often connected to a scene of protest linked to left-wing politics.

Indeed, to characterize such performances as mere entertainment certainly denies their power. Like other types of political performance, street theater creates an alternative space where civic struggles for social justice can take place (Clair, Chapman, & Kunkel, 1996; Madison & Hamera, 2006; Pollock, 2005). In addition to providing entertainment, it often offers the audience an opportunity for shared understanding and a chance to reflect upon how the personal narratives of others can resonate within a broader set of community concerns. However, unlike other dramatic forms, modern street theater is *principally* characterized by political, often militant, overtones. The range of groups that use street plays to discuss complex issues in an engaging, often colloquial fashion includes religious reformers, politicians, citizen groups, factory workers, and students. Yet the principal practitioners are middle-class urban activists who believe that their privilege requires them to bear responsibility for the less fortunate (Kumar, 1993).

As Garlough (2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) notes, due to the fact that street plays are essentially a mobile medium, actors can go out in search of an audience. This mobility means that often no formal stage exists, and props are kept to a minimum. Costumes, particularly masks, sometimes create a bit of illusion; however, the emphasis falls most heavily upon the performance of the actors. On the written page, prior to the performance, the structure of street plays resembles that of other literary dramatic pieces; however, in practice, the form remains somewhat open to the demands of the moment, and this often enhances the political potential of the event. For instance, during performance, audience members might publicly interact with the lines spoken on stage by shouting out a response, which may prompt further unscripted remarks from the actors. This provides an opportunity for both actors and audience members to contribute to a political exchange in a public space – a situation that is often unavailable to many disenfranchised individuals. In addition, sometimes a question-and-answer session follows the performance, allowing for deeper interactions between performers and audience members as they further interrogate the problems at hand.

Scripts often develop from small-group discussions within local organizations. In this context, women identify a particular problem that women in their community face and offer personal testimony regarding their experiences with the issue. Within their testimonies, common concerns often include the caste system, communalism, healthcare, political corruption, terrorism, current economic trends, alcoholism, sexism, or police brutality. Many times the authors explicitly reference these testimonies in the scripts; indeed, many activists feel that contextualizing issues through testimonies is the key to engaging the audience and successfully communicating their

agendas. In addition, popular film tunes, folk songs and dances, as well as characters from popular literature or media are frequently included in the scripts, not only to provide entertainment, but also to serve as touchstones or comparison points. The stage is a place where cultural possibilities are explored, performed, and suggested, with the hope of broader impact. These performances are also central to the politics of remembering and forgetting. They keep the trauma visible, they testify to the suffering of others, and they engage in the rhetorical work of witnessing that involves listening, deliberating, and exploring possibilities.

Sahiyar's Street Play

An excellent example of this type of grassroots feminist activism can be found in the street plays written and produced by the women of Sahiyar (see Garlough, 2009). Sahiyar is one of over four hundred women's organizations in the state of Gujarat. It is one of the first of its kind in the modern city of Vadodara (formerly Baroda). Sahiyar's approach to activism is decidedly radical, unlike that of more conventional women's organizations. Rather than focusing upon trade skills or literacy, they promote critical awareness of women's social oppression; that is their fundamental goal. This work addresses pressing needs of the women in their community, needs that arise due to the rise of rape, domestic violence, dowry harassment, and the use of sex-determination tests in recent years.

A relatively small organization, Sahiyar includes in its staff only part-time volunteers and a staff director, all of whom are women. The size of Sahiyar limits the types of activities it can sponsor. Its priorities include organizing demonstrations, social reform, counseling for "family affairs" and "personal problems," work with Dalit and Muslim women who struggle against communalism and casteism, and the publication of a feminist magazine called *Narimukti*, produced in collaboration with other feminist organizations. Recently, the group created a workshop to study Maharashtra's pioneering Anti-Sex Determination Act, with the hope of having a similar law passed in Gujarat.

Growing out of this project, the groups wrote and performed a street play called *Deekri chhu, manav chhu . . . manvtane marsho shu?* (*I am your daughter, I am a human being . . . will you kill humanity?*). As Garlough (2009) explains in an article titled "Feminist Street Performance and Grassroots Advocacy in India: Combating Sex-Selection Abortion," their mission was to increase awareness of the connection between the identification of fetuses as female and subsequent abortions. It is estimated that one half of a million female fetuses are aborted in India in a year simply because of their gender; so there are 10 million fewer female births than would have occurred without this practice (Jha, Kumar, Vasa, Dhingra, Thiruchelvan, & Moineddin, 2006). Many feminist groups have identified it as yet another form of violence against women – a mode of gendercide or eugenics. For Sahiyar, the issue of sex-selection abortion was one of ethics, and their street performance was a call to activate the individual and social conscience.

"I am your daughter, I am a human being . . . will you kill humanity?" was written in a feminist workshop with Krishna Nandi and other students in the Women's Studies program at Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The plot developed primarily from personal testimonies, case studies, and a sex-selection abortion survey that the women of Sahiyar had conducted in Vadodara and that encompassed a broad range of religions, classes, and castes. The women who agreed to participate in this street play performance were not professional actors; indeed, most of them had never acted before. Yet they participated because, as Daksha Patel explained to me in a fieldwork interview, "the issue is of critical importance to the lives and freedoms of women." Moreover, the testimonies given by women about the often-traumatic events leading to sex-selection abortions and the scope of the problem – 500,000 girls eradicated a year – instilled feelings of responsibility.

The performed scenes grew directly from interviews with women in the Vadodara area; they give a sense of the struggles and misfortunes that women experienced in their homes, neighborhoods, and hospitals; and they offer a counternarrative grounded in a postcolonial feminist politics of recognition (Garlough, 2009). Consequently the scenes not only focus upon the personal problems experienced by women faced with the possibility of being subjected to a sex-selection abortion, they also refute three common public arguments that support the practices of sex determination and sex-selection abortion: (1) girls are simply a drain on the economic resources of families; (2) sex-selection abortions are primarily a practice of illiterate, rural Hindus; and (3) women are generally un-coerced in their decision to have sex-selection abortions. This set of claims is advanced delicately, as the group also wants to make clear that they support a woman's right to abortion. The two issues, they argue, should not be conflated.

Audiences ranging from middle-class Hindus in temple courtyards to college students in university auditoriums to citizens at political rallies have witnessed this street play over a three-year period, with audience members also participating in the question-and-answer session that follows it. It is a powerful illustration of the ways in which individuals can use street play performance to keep a trauma visible, to testify to the suffering of others, and to engage in the political work of challenging social practices that are harmful to women. Most importantly, the performance of this autobiographical counternarrative in public offers an opening for political speech – a creation that is personal, interpersonal, and social. These street plays are not the only autobiographical form of mass communication that have been put to use by activists seeking to add their voice to the public sphere.

Activist Documentaries

For the past century, around the globe, non-fiction film has played a prominent role in the public sphere, providing a powerful means of persuasion that seeks to facilitate

deliberation and debate, constitute identities, and raise political consciousness. This can be observed in a range of contexts, from the 1930s Worker's Film and Photo League to the radical documentaries produced by South Asian feminists in the 1990s (Aguayo, 2005). Unfortunately most film studies scholars' academic discussions about documentaries fail to put the kind of theory that grows from the subfields of political communication or rhetoric at the center of their investigations (Holbert, Kwak, & Shah, 2003).

On the other hand, it is only quite recently that political communication scholars or rhetoric scholars have become interested in studying activist documentary films, learning how to promote the interests of social movements and how to perform social tasks by presenting a complex assemblage of discourse, image, and sound (Dow, 2004). Among the most valuable explorations of this intersection is Plantinga's (1997) work, which provides a rhetorical orientation to understanding non-fiction film.

Certainly there are many types of non-fiction films or documentaries that would hold the interest of those concerned with political or rhetorical discourse. Of particular interest, however, is the activist documentary. What makes a film an activist documentary? Some scholars argue that the defining element has to do with the intentions of the filmmaker, or with his or her ideological commitments outside of filmmaking. Others claim that it is a reflection of the political or moral content of the film. Still others believe that, to be considered an activist documentary, the film must intervene in the public sphere and create political agents who take up the political work initiated by documentary film. Nevertheless, scholars seem to be in agreement that the influence of activist documentary is primarily constitutive, providing a sense of shared identification and purpose (Blakesley, 2003; Dow, 2004).

Testimony, Recognition, and Acknowledgment

One of the central issues taken up by scholars concerned with testimony and witnessing is a critique of the epistemological nature of documentary film. Historically, both producers and audiences of non-fiction film have understood it to provide truthful and factual representations of the world. In consequence, the camera was compared to an eye that captured the world in action and accurately recorded it. Therefore documentary films were conceived of as a powerful witness of the veracity of particular human experiences – they stockpiled facts. However, in recent years most scholars have challenged this sense of objectivity and highlighted the constructive nature both of the recording and of the editing process, as well as the interpretative nature of the viewing experience (Plantinga, 1997). As a result, many scholars of non-fiction film have focused upon the attempts of various directors to play with traditional elements of documentary film in order to move the audience, from a passive viewing experience in which they uncritically accept the veracity of what is being presented to them, to a more active and reflexive viewing experience, which democratizes the interpretation of non-fiction content.

In relation to this, some scholars have been interested in the ways recognition and acknowledgment grow out of witnessing documentary films (Garlough, 2009). In particular, this perspective is concerned with how representations of suffering may move us to action. How might they renew our sense of collective responsibility for the lives of others, especially those whom we view as foreigners? Does our personal experience of traumatic narratives encourage acts of identification, or does it merely illuminate our encounters in a voyeuristic fashion? Questions about the nature of these representations also lead to a concern with the limits of understanding and recognition and with the potential of such shifts in consciousness to lead to concrete action.

These questions suggest something beyond a sense of “mere” acknowledgment, in which something or someone is only given notice in passing. Rather, they foreground a more substantive sense of acknowledgment, one that opens both space and time for others, allows for honest, critical discussion, and is therefore intimately tied to the prospect of protest rather than being opposed to it. As Michael Hyde argues in *The Life-Giving Gift of Acknowledgment*:

Acknowledgment is a moral act, it functions to transform space and time, to *create* openings wherein people can dwell, deliberate, and know together what is right, good, just, and truthful. Acknowledgment thereby grants people *hope*, the opportunity for [a] new beginning, a second chance, whereby they might improve their lot in life. (Hyde, 2006)

In this way acknowledgment has a political potential. It functions rhetorically, to give attention to others, thereby allowing people to share their concerns as well as to express the truth about their sense of their own existence.

SAALT's Documentary

An important example of the ways activist documentaries may engage in the public sphere as sites of testimony, witnessing, and acknowledgment is *Raising Our Voices*, a documentary made by South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). SAALT, based in Washington, DC, is a national non-profit organization whose aim is “to address political, social justice, and quality-of-life issues facing South Asian Americans, especially the disadvantaged and marginalized segments of the community.” It seeks to create an environment in which South Asians can participate and influence US public life, documentary film being just one of the tools it uses (SAALT, 2002).

SAALT works to accomplish its goals through advocacy, community education, local capacity building, leadership development, partnerships with other disempowered communities, and collaboration with broader civil and immigration rights movements. It has also formed partnerships with several other national coalitions in order to raise awareness of issues facing the South Asian community around immigration and hate crimes.

Raising Our Voices is one such effort. It addresses the rise of hate crimes against South Asian Americans in the last four decades, and it was initially completed just days before the tragic events of 9/11. Immediately following the attack – as a plethora of media images and stories directed our attention toward a devastated lower Manhattan and Pentagon, bodies of victims, the testimony of witnesses, and the grief of those who lost loved ones – hate crimes against South Asian Americans soared (Lavina, 2008).¹ Across the United States, individuals vilified as “terrorists” were beaten with baseball bats, attacked in their places of work and worship, violated verbally with racial epithets, and frightened by death threats. Not surprisingly, given the “rally around the flag” phenomenon that characterized mainstream discourse in the wake of 9/11, these forms of suffering were not prevalent in the public sphere and generally went unacknowledged by the wider US population, even by many South Asian Americans. But SAALT cataloged these hate crimes in the aftermath of 9/11 and collected testimonies from many of the victims, some for use in a modified version of the documentary and others for inclusion in an online archive.

The revised documentary was first screened in New York, barely three months after the terrorist attacks, and it provided an important framework for understanding and visualizing the impact of the post-9/11 backlash that affected so many South Asians in America. As SAALT Director Deepa Iyer noted:

The one really important thing to keep in mind is the sense of urgency. And the urgency came not from a self-imposed deadline but our complete understanding that there was so much going on in our community in terms of the backlash that this documentary needed to come out because it would make a difference. And it would be a tool and it would be for people to use to try and prevent some of the backlash from happening (SAALT, 2002).

She went on to explain that the documentary was intended to play a role in generating dialogue, understanding, even controversy. Propelled by the positive responses that the documentary received, SAALT launched a national hate crimes awareness campaign in 2002. Along with the documentary, SAALT compiled a companion guide designed to facilitate discussion of the issues surrounding the film. The guide contains background information on hate crimes, demographic information on the South Asian community, and ideas on how to incorporate the video into workshops. It also contains two separate sections – one intended for college students and the other for community leaders – with discussion questions and examples of the types of activities that community members could undertake, such as the creation of a local task force to monitor hate crimes, or the provision of interpreters in local police departments to help translate procedures and rights for victims with limited English proficiency.

Since then, the documentary has been screened in more than 150 venues. In May 2007, for example, it was shown at the University of Michigan’s first annual Hate Crime Week, which was taking place along with the Martin Luther King symposium. Many in the audience expressed concern about the ongoing discrimination directed

at South Asians. For instance one audience member stated: “I didn’t even know about half of the issues the documentary presented. It’s very shocking to see. I’m actually surprised to see that so many Indians are victims (of hate crimes). I thought (the backlash) was more of an Arab thing” (see Khatri & Doctoroff, 2002). This is a consistent response. As Iyer remarks:

People’s reactions to the film range depending on what point in time they were watching it [*sic*] and what they’re bringing to it. Most of the reactions are “I never knew this was a problem,” or “Such a severe problem in the community,” or “I’m so glad that this documentary exists because now everyone can see that these sorts of incidences are happening to our community.” There have been a lot of people who have broken down and cried. There are people usually after the film shown, there is a lot of silence for about 5–7 minutes because people are digesting and processing it. We give people that time but we don’t actually say, “what’s your feedback?” we actually let people process it before we go back . . . We ask questions: What about this documentary surprised you? What was new to you? That really sparks discussion (SAALT, 2002).

Her comments reflect how valuable the biographical narratives contained in the documentary have been in helping South Asians become more aware of the extent of the prejudice faced by other members of their community, encouraging as they did acknowledgment of the relational nature of such suffering. But more generally, the film is valuable because it contests a homogeneous understanding of US identity and encourages awareness of the broader need for US citizens to accept immigrants and diasporic persons. In addition, *Raising Our Voices* addresses the pressure to stay silent and, by allowing victims of hate crimes to share their stories, it shows a way also to address experiences of social violence, thus creating a context for acknowledging the marginalization of South Asian Americans and the disruption of their “homes.”

Digital Engagement

Although street plays have been used for centuries to entertain and illustrate social issues and documentary film has been put to work over the last several decades to catalog and comment on politics, the Internet and the advent of digital and social media platforms have provided a decidedly newer venue for engagement. Some trace back this development to the use of the Internet by the Zapatista movement over 20 years ago; as Kahn and Kellner (2004, p. 87) write,

the early adoption and successful use of the Internet in the early 1990s by the indigenous EZLN Zapatista movement in the Chiapas region of Mexico quickly dramatized how new media and grass roots progressivism might synergize, excite the world, and challenge status quo culture and politics.

With the rapid diffusion of the Internet as well as the increasing use of and reliance on this medium as a political venue, evidence of the Internet as a force in shaping engagement and activism has grown. A turning point in the use of the Internet for activism was the rise of the antiwar movement:

In late 2002 and early 2003, global anti-war movements began to emerge as significant challenges to Bush administration policies against Iraq and the growing threat of conflict. Reaching out to broad audiences, political groups such as MoveOn (<http://www.moveon.org>), ANSWER (<http://www.internationalanswer.org>), and the United for Peace & Justice (<http://www.unitedforpeace.org>) used the internet to circulate anti-war information, organize demonstrations, and promote a wide diversity of anti-war activities. (Kahn & Kellner, 2004, p. 88)

In the years that have followed, a growing body of work has supported the perspective that the informational and expressive features of the Internet support collective action (Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005; Shah et al., 2007). This body of work, which emphasizes the centrality of communication among citizens with a view to making political action possible, focuses on traditional modes of public-spirited participation, ignoring political protest participation and more radical forms of direct action.

Yet there is increasing attention being paid to the role of digital media in providing a means for political activists to insert alternative perspectives into the public sphere (Gueorguieva, 2008; Nah, Veenstra, & Shah, 2006; Thorson, Ekdale, Borah, Namkoong, & Shah, 2010). These scholarly inquiries consider how many emergent digital and social media are used for political purposes, from political blogs to online video. In many cases these online messages have an autobiographical component, weblogs often beginning as personal diaries and video posts often featuring a monologue to the camera and first-person accounts of events and experiences (Thorson et al., 2010).

For example, Thorson and colleagues' analysis of the 2008 passage of California's Proposition 8, which effectively banned same-sex marriage, found that most posted videos advocating for or against "Prop 8" were original content, often autobiographical, with a majority against Proposition 8. Most of the "No on 8" videos were amateur productions that functioned as a means of witnessing. In this sense,

witnessing is traditionally a strategy of the oppressed or powerless, as they are the ones most likely to fear being forgotten by the dominant population. The production quality of these videos varies considerably as what is captured is more significant than how it is captured. (Thorson et al., 2010, p. 180)

Of course, the act of witnessing also has an effect on the audiences that encounter the video; for, as McHale (2004) states, "when people watch videos, viewers feel as if they are witnesses, rather than just consumers of someone else's account" (p. 156). The same sense of outrage and disbelief that characterized the Prop 8 protest videos was also a feature of the antiwar blogs, which were a point of focus of the protests against the War in Iraq and the supposed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

The Gulf War and Media Dissociation

The role played by these political blogs offers a case study illustrative of the use of digital media for activism. Work on Internet activism around the Gulf War investigates how news consumption and political exchanges among visitors to antiwar weblogs may have influenced political participation (Nah et al., 2006). On the basis of a survey of Internet users recruited through online channels critical of the Iraq War, the research finds that these respondents used the Internet in ways that encouraged antiwar activism, especially when they talked about politics online.

Illuminating further the autobiographical nature of these activist communications, related research has found that the process of explaining how political blog use produces involvement in antiwar protests was highly personal, and it was linked to the social construction of reality presented in the mass media to justify the war. Contrary to the view that news media exert social control over dissenters by discouraging political expression and opposition during periods when the public is being encouraged to “rally around the flag” (Mueller, 1970), these scholars found that Internet access allows people to play a more active role in their selection of media. This reduces the influence of the mainstream media and increases the likelihood of dissenters speaking out and taking action (Hwang, Schmierbach, Paek, Zuniga, & Shah, 2006).

Specifically, Hwang and colleagues find that people who are alienated from mainstream media engage in information gathering and discussion via the Internet. The more the individuals surveyed felt that their views differed from mainstream media portrayals, the more motivated they were to use the Internet as a source of information and as a conduit for discussion. These very same online behaviors, then, facilitated antiwar political action. As Glasberg and Shannon (2011, p. 56) write, “the more immersed [these activists] become in the Internet, the more dissociated they become from mainstream media,” which, in turn, leads them to challenge the official narrative and resist political authority (also Bennett, Wells, & Rank, 2009).

Proposition 8 and YouTube

This ability to challenge official viewpoints and to organize forms of resistance to governmental action must be understood in its interplay with key institutions and public policy. As the case of the War in Iraq illustrates, digital media use can serve as a counterpoint to traditional mainstream media, providing a corrective to what is perceived as a media reality that is inconsistent with what an individual believes to be true. However, the goal of digital activists would often seem to rest on the hope that their efforts have the ability to sway key institutional players and to reshape public policy. The use of YouTube as a platform for political commentary and activism in relation to California’s Prop 8 provides a vivid example of the potential for this dynamic.

The work of Sayre, Bode, Shah, Wilcox, and Shah (2010) considers whether the witnessing that takes place on sites like YouTube can spur coverage in conventional news outlets. As Vaidyanathan (2008) notes,

the power to control the message is no longer in the hands of the political parties and candidates or the mainstream media. It's now shared by the public at large. They can distribute a piece of media on YouTube faster in a 15-minute news cycle than traditional media can in a 24-hour news cycle.

This potential agenda-setting role for social media cuts both ways, of course, since it's also possible that the traditional media have set the agenda for the public, encouraging its members to post their results on sites such as YouTube. The research of Sayre and colleagues considers both possibilities.

Accordingly, their inquiry considers whether people who post content on YouTube are acting in response to mainstream news, possibly in reaction to perceived distortions in that coverage, or whether videos generated by citizens have the potency to actually shape news coverage of an issue, leading the agenda setting process. This work builds on the view that the witnessing and deliberation present in YouTube videos and in the user comments they elicit provide a potential forum for a digital public sphere that could rival other such venues (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Milliken & O'Donnell, 2008; Silverstone, 2001). As Sayre and colleagues (2010, pp. 14–15) contend, “minority opinions in particular are likely to take advantage of alternative media in order to make their voices heard.”

Notably, all these researchers find that newspaper coverage, search traffic, and YouTube postings are mutually determined by public events (e.g., elections, court decisions); but, once this is taken into account, a connection emerges between YouTube and the news media – one that shifts depending on the period in question. Before the election, mainstream media appeared to drive YouTube activity, much of the latter being produced as a corrective. However, after the election and the passage of Prop 8, YouTube videos appeared to drive the news coverage and the search traffic. That is, attention to Prop 8 on YouTube followed the mainstream media coverage before the November 4 election, but, when mainstream media coverage declined, citizens and activists began using YouTube as a platform, to register their opinions that they felt were underrepresented in the mainstream; and the media followed. These citizens' autobiographical accounts, whether a monologue to the camera or a first-person account of an event, proved to be potent forms of speech, garnering attention from the news media.

Witnessing as Engagement

Each of these case studies highlights a particular type of political discourse; they are testimonies (or the performance of personal experience stories) used by grassroots

groups to address exigencies in the public sphere. Certainly, stories and their persuasive appeals are part of our everyday practices – so much so that often we are hardly aware of them. As Kirsten Langellier notes: “In everyday talk, we tell stories or personal narratives, about our experiences of the mundane happenings of an ordinary day and the extraordinary events that mark our lives” (Langellier, 1989, p. 243). Personal experience stories or testimonies also play a significant role in the public sphere within more formalized or heightened accounts, which address issues of social importance. While some stories may work to maintain the status quo or rationalize oppression, especially when framed in episodic terms (Iyengar, 1991), others may offer oppositional readings and counter-histories that respond to calls of conscience, acknowledge the suffering of self and others, and have emancipatory potential (Adorno, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992; Hyde, 2006; Pollock, 2005). More fundamentally, these biographical accounts, presented publicly through street plays, documentaries, and other modalities, are forms of political engagement around controversial and challenging issues.

Rich examples of this type of communication range from the testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who witness the disappearance of their children during the Dirty War in Argentina (1976–1983), to online grassroots forums such as YouTube, which were used by supporters and opponents of California’s Proposition 8, in the months before and after the controversial vote about defining marriage as an act between a man and women (Thorson et al., 2010). As Thorson and her team argue, these modes of communication turn audiences into witnesses rather than letting them just be passive consumers of an account of “others.” Because they do this, they can be used to “build community among like-minded others, reveal suffering to those geographically distant and, in some instances, serve as legal evidence of human rights abuses” (Thorson et al., 2010, p. 5).

Through these testimonies and the audience members’ act of witnessing them, conversations can occur about cultural differences and rights to self-determination (Schaffer & Smith, 2004, p. 16). These stories may also lead to a nuanced consideration of the communal, one that explores the challenges of living together. Furthermore, activists and members of grassroots movements use personal narrative to testify about forms of terror and trauma – including sexual violence, domestic abuse, political degradation, racism, terrorism, and genocide. Within tribunals and national investigations of human rights offenses, personal witnessing may play a key role in the creation of new rights protections (ibid.). These rhetorical discourses also create the possibility of address and acknowledgment from a listening community.

As noted above, Shuman (Shuman, 2005) suggests that the success of testimonies of suffering depend upon two factors. First, the *experience* that is at the center of the narrative is understood as real – something that truly happened. Second, the stories depend upon the authentication of identity claims – that is, on evidence that the teller is entitled to claim the experience as his/her own. In this way experience is presented as the most authentic kind of truth: the “real” experience of an “authentic” speaker.

Yet we know that autobiographical testimonials are never a “complete” account, as they are based upon fragments of memory that represent a particularly situated perspective (Felman & Laub, 1992). They are performed, an act of face-work driven by a desire for dignity and consistency in self-presentation (Goffman, 1963). Given this nature of autobiographical testimonials, the “truth” in personal experience stories is negotiated and subject to contested interpretations (Butler, 2005; Cavarero, 1997). As Smith (1998, p. 17) writes,

Every day in disparate venues, in response to sundry occasions, in front of precise audiences (even if an audience of one) people assemble, if only temporarily, a “life” to which they assign narrative coherence and meaning and through which they position themselves in historically specific identities. Whatever that occasion or that audience, the autobiographical speaker becomes a performative subject.

Both in the case of the street theater and in that of the documentary, which have been considered here, there are certainly aspects of performance and self-presentation. But this doesn’t detract from the fact that these two are forms of testimony and witnessing and that, as modes of engagement, they are at the center of much grassroots politics. These “acts of acknowledgment” draw audiences into interaction around an issue by simultaneously entertaining and informing them. The audiences, in turn, engage with these issues, participate in dialogues, and ultimately build a community. Their demands for acknowledgment – whether in the form of performing a street play, directing a documentary film, or developing a social media platform – highlight the bonds forged among members of a community and help create bridges to other groups.

NOTE

- 1 Partha Banerjee, community organizer of New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE): “There are many more hate crimes, particularly against South Asians, Muslims and Arabs after 9/11 . . . According to governmental statistics, there was a 1,600% rise in hate crime incidents right after 9/11. After that, the incidents came down, but once again have gone up. Most importantly, many hate crimes are not being reported because people are so afraid.”

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Studying the Elusive Audience

Consumers, Readers, Users, and Viewers in a Changing World

Radhika Parameswaran

ABSTRACT

This introductory chapter outlines the recent evolution of audience research, focusing on the ways in which the field has addressed the theoretical, economic, cultural, and technological currents of the moment. I argue that audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late eighties to mid-nineties, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception. This chapter explains the volume's contributions, its organizational structure, and the intellectual and empirical terrain of audience studies that the book's remaining chapters cover.

A group of women friends presenting papers at the International Communication Association's May 2011 conference in Boston decide to go to lunch. I am one of the fortunate members of this group. We sit down in a restaurant, and soon after we order our food, the sound of several conversations and of loud laughter begins to fill the space in between and around us. I mention that I had just seen the film Bridesmaids at home in Bloomington, Indiana, with a friend. The whole group is now listening to my reactions to the film, and, in a matter of minutes, others jump in to offer their own critiques of the film's take on weddings, girlfriends, romance, divorce, loyalty, beauty and body size, homophobia and heterosexuality, bi-racial celebrities, and humor and comedy. Already disgusted with the

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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politics of *Bridesmaids*' stories of gender relations, class, and sexuality, one woman in the group vows, there and then, that she would NOT watch the film. Another friend from the group returns home to Illinois, watches the film a few days later, and then submits to all of us, via e-mail, a humorous and insightful essay on the film's limitations. At about the same time a male relative from India, who had watched this comedic "chick flick" film in Delhi, sends me an e-mail to inquire about "real weddings" in America, and if indeed bridesmaids could interfere so much in their friends' weddings. His question reminds me of similar inquiries that acquaintances in the US made about Hindu weddings after they had seen the film *Monsoon Wedding*.

Bridesmaids returned to my life later in September, when students began trickling into my office to talk about their summer, and one student, who had seen the film too, said: "I was laughing and frowning at the same time. I was disturbed by my own laughter. I blogged about my responses with friends."

* * *

My anecdotal recounting of *Bridesmaids*' idiosyncratic circulation within the interpersonal and mediated arteries of my social and professional life is by no means "representative" of some larger universe of film viewing practices or of audience responses to this film. Yet, in the midst of working on this book on audiences, the discursive shadows of *Bridesmaids* that followed me for several weeks reminded me of the ways in which media and popular culture act as conduits and conductors for that other stuff, which we call "culture," and in the process of "charging" dispersed audiences their texts sometimes become the breeding ground for culture itself. Whether it is the news of turmoil in Syria and of the fragility of a European Union in crisis reaching numerous global publics or the global reception of *Slumdog Millionaire* on fan websites, old and new media forms and their audiences, users, browsers, producers, and consumers are constantly bringing one another into being, with corporations, governments, social movements, and individuals who are positioned within unequal hierarchies of power, acting as midwives of the public sphere. The richness of audience experiences in a world in which the media are increasingly bleeding into, traveling, contaminating, animating, and permeating everyday life has attracted some of the best debates in the academy over structure and agency, reality and fantasy, Althusser's "hegemony" and De Certeau's "tactics," cultural imperialism and hybridity, uses and gratifications and oppositional decoding/resistance, Foucault's subjectivation and Marxist determinism, globalization and localization, and patriarchal pedagogies and gendered pleasure.

Joining and enlarging these invigorating debates among varied disciplinary thrusts and research traditions, *Audience and Interpretation*, Volume IV of the *International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, aims to provide a state-of-the-art overview of theoretical and methodological developments in audience research, case studies of empirical work amidst different audiences, and reflections on productive future avenues that can advance the academy's endeavor to grasp the slippery and morphing concept of the

audience. Many of this volume's chapters do not treat these topics separately; instead, the contributions here often weave together theory, reflections on method, analysis of findings, and discussions of research approaches in order to give us integrated visions of the audience. The chapters' geographic and cultural terrain encompasses a wide range of countries: Venezuela, India, China, Japan, France, Singapore, UK, USA, Australia, Korea, South Africa, and Brazil. Twenty-seven authors from different parts of the world have come together in these pages, to converge at the conceptual site of the "audience." Readers of this book will be exposed to knowledge of different audience formations, a plurality of cultural and demographic spaces of reception, and diverse kinds of media genres, forms, and formats. The volume's content populates the field of audience studies with an unruly and heterogeneous sample of topics – children's media, online and television news, activist media, telenovelas, books and mega-bookstores, state-sponsored television dramas, social media, Bollywood films, plays, health communication, amusement parks, documentaries, reality television, and religious programming – a sample that generates new insights, revisits established concepts, and challenges the very notion of the "audience" itself.

The spectrum of methods utilized and presented across the chapters encompasses focus group research, interviews, participant observation, immersion in cultural and media environments, surveys, and auto- and family ethnography. While some authors present critical reviews and overviews of audience research in particular areas of the field, others take us through complex historical and transcontinental itineraries, which traverse the landscape of their work. Yet others deploy reflexivity as a research instrument, to enlighten readers about the intersections between fieldwork and family/personal life, between public knowledge and private/domestic spaces, *and* between the subject positions of researcher and audience member, or insider and outsider. While many authors present us with agendas for future research in their areas of expertise, in the case of chapters on non-Western nations, where the project of audience research has barely been inaugurated, authors devote a substantive portion of their work to outlining gaps in our knowledge of audiences in the midst of dynamic and flourishing media ecologies where the footprints of television, film, and newspaper apparatuses are inviting large sections of the populace to inhabit their upwardly mobile spaces of viewership and readership.

The Current Moment of Audience Studies

If we could imagine a series of brief audio press releases that greeted readers when they picked up this volume on audience studies and opened the cover (like the singing Hallmark cards), a few of these releases' audio headlines would announce the following: "Audience studies is not dead," "The audience never died, it is breathing, jumping, running, and leaping," "Audience studies staves off rigor mortis," and "Audience studies survives near death experiences." For scholars new to media

studies, these announcements might need some historical perspective. When I was finishing up graduate work in the US and writing a dissertation project based in ethnographic audience research set in India in the early to mid-nineties, that was a time when a backlash against audience studies had been brewing steadily; and this skepticism eventually gained full momentum just as I had wrapped up my project. Summarizing the dismissive tone and content of some sweeping critiques of the nineties that cast the entire enterprise of audience studies as banal, regressive, pro-capitalist, and naïve, David Morley (2006) writes that far too many scholars have been eager to suggest that “work on the complexities and varieties of media consumption has led us up a blind alley – with John Fiske usually cast as the evil Pied Piper who led us astray” (p. 102). Morley, a pioneer in audience studies, points out that it was fair to “argue that some recent audience work has exaggerated, and wrongly romanticized the supposed power and freedoms of media consumers,” but it was also equally shortsighted to imagine that a return to simple-minded models of media power or to the politics of false consciousness could solve these problems (p. 102). Ann Gray (1999) notes that the backlash of the nineties also had its gendered dimensions, especially when critics lamented the shift that audience studies had precipitated, from masculinist “real-world” concerns to low-brow popular culture consumed within domestic spaces (read women’s consumption of popular culture).

Taking up the ethnocentric tenor of arguments that advocated “moving on” from the seemingly “banal” project of audience studies, Vamsee Juluri writes eloquently about the problems I struggled to articulate 15 years ago, when discourses of disenchantment and closure greeted me at conferences:

As someone entering the field in the mid-1990s, I wonder what it means that the high moment of audience studies seems to have passed, perhaps to travel, like old American sitcoms to the rest of the world [. . .] [T]o risk abandoning the project of audience studies when the rest of the world is only beginning to enter audiencehood (in the sense of thirty channel platters and so on) is to forsake, as postcolonial writers have argued in the context of other post-al predictions, the sense of representation and intellectual practice altogether. (Juluri, 1998, p. 86)

My own thoughts at the time were: “Can Ien Ang’s work on *Dallas* viewers in the Netherlands stand in for the rest of the world?” Expanding on Juluri’s essay and on Timothy Gibson’s (2000) constructive ideas to engage structures of power in ethnographic work, my own publication “Resuscitating Feminist Audience Studies” also argues that audience studies’ new journeys in Asia, Africa, and Latin America’s postcolonial *and* globalizing contexts could generate fresh questions and concerns that were capable of liberating the field from the tired binaries of “duped versus autonomous” or “active versus passive” subjects (Parameswaran, 2003). Again, as Morley cautions us:

What is needed here is not to swing, in our despair, from a romanticized vision of audience empowerment back to an unreconstructed politic of media manipulation, but rather, as Clifford Geertz once put it, to vex each other with ever greater precision in attempting to clarify the issues at stake. (Morley, 2006, p. 104)

Vexing each other with a stimulating palette of questions, the authors in this volume join a community of other scholars – who have published books, articles, book chapters, and essays – to help audience studies not only defend itself from any lingering effects of the backlash, but also thrive and grow in productive directions, which do not simply advocate throwing out the old to celebrate the new or avant garde. David Morley (2006) candidly observes that neophilia and facile new revisionism – with grand claims to change the field by exorcising the past – often masquerade as genuine intellectual progress: “the one thing I do not think we should do is to airily dismiss previous work as if we all, obviously, ‘know better’ than that now. That way lies hubris” (p. 112). I agree. This volume’s contributions mark intellectual progress by constructively building on, stretching, revising, and assessing the legacy of previous research in the field. Looking back on the last decade, we can see that audience studies has matured across the spectrum of constituents it could reach – from publications that target scholars and students in interdisciplinary graduate seminars (Bird, 2003; Brooker & Jermyn, 2003; Hagen & Wasko, 2000) to shorter and more accessible texts for beginning student researchers in media and cultural studies (Briggs, 2010; Gillespie, 2005; Ross & Nightingale, 2003; Ruddock, 2007). The scope of recent work in audience studies spans the continuum of academic formats and genres, from robust conceptual speculations on research terminology and analytic approaches, the implications of particular institutional investments in the “audience,” and the impact of new media to empirical work among different kinds of media audiences and audiences in non-Western locations that are witnessing dramatic economic and cultural transformation due to globalization.

What are some key contributions of recent scholarship in audience studies? What new and regenerative routes for knowledge production are scholars mapping to help us understand audiences in a changing world? I sample and review here, in a highly selective manner, writings in audience studies that offer evidence of the field’s continued potential to engage with some of the most important and exciting conceptual, cultural, technological, political, and historical concerns of this century. My discussion here cannot do full justice to the breadth and depth of the work cited, because my goal is to acknowledge key themes rather than cover extensively the entire literature in audience studies.

What recommendations have scholars made to strengthen the methodological and conceptual scaffolding of audience studies? One stream of theoretical scholarship on historical and ideological conceptions of the audience constructively merges the ideas and projects of fields and traditions that are often slotted into binaristic and irreconcilable paradigms, namely political economy and ethnography, mass communication and cultural studies, journalism and popular culture, and qualitative and quantitative research. Webster’s analytic rubrics of the audience as “mass,” “outcome,” and “agent” elegantly unify conceptions of the audience across such diverse institutions as marketing and ratings enterprises and policy and academic fields and across qualitative and quantitative audience models that include film theory, media effects, literary criticism, reception and audience studies, and early

propaganda research (Webster, 1998). Webster writes that the way forward should be to incorporate more creative borrowing of interdisciplinary concepts and analytic tools, relinquish the impoverished active/passive interpretive model, and pursue an enlightened empiricism that makes room for synthesizing a number of research methods. In an otherwise spirited debate where they outline disagreements with one another, Barker and Morley, seasoned veterans of audience studies, reinforce Webster's more inclusive model of empiricism when they concur that it is time to cultivate more synthetic methodological approaches to audience research that are less bifurcated, more pragmatic, and more attentive to the needs of the questions at hand (see Press, 2006). Goran Eriksson (2006) also pursues this productive line of inquiry, which seeks to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative research. As Eriksson notes, by "freeing itself from the empiricist conceptualization of generality as representativeness" (p. 42), ethnographic audience studies can continue to explore the potential for generality in relation to "the domain of the deep structures of reality" (p. 32).

Marrying the textual impulses of rhetorical criticism in communication studies with empirical social science research on audiences in media and cultural studies, Jennifer Stromer-Galley and Edward Schiappa (1998) pursue an innovative goal of advancing what they call the "argumentative burdens of audience conjectures" in close readings of popular culture texts where authors make claims concerning the "determinate meanings of the text or the effects of texts on audiences" (p. 27). Stromer-Galley and Schiappa carefully review examples of rhetorical/textual criticism in order to identify and parse out such "audience conjectures" and claims, and then they make specific recommendations for audience research that would help to support and enhance these scholars' gestures toward audience reception. In an intriguing move, they design and implement an audience study project that follows up and tests claims made in 1995 by Thomas Goodnight in an essay on the films' *Jurassic Park* and *The Firm*, and in the end they write that wording in scholarly writing matters and that audience research is valuable for assessing the "social and political significance of popular culture texts" (Stromer-Galley & Schiappa, 1998, p. 55). In an excellent illustration of Webster's call for more interdisciplinary dialogue to enrich audience research, Helen Wood (2007) points to the limits of most textual analyses of television talk shows that import literary methods to deconstruct the complex and multidimensional – oral/audio, visual, performative, and linguistic – architecture of electronic media. Wood applies an "interactive" analytic lens – an approach that is inspired and informed by linguist Volosinov's insistence on studying verbal interaction and the dynamism of "multi-accentuality" in dialogic linguistic interactions – to examine the "generative" manner in which viewers watch and engage with talk shows. In Wood's detailed and fine-grained exploration of women's utterances and verbal responses to talk shows' parasocial and intimate address, the *peculiar form* of broadcast media and the communicative acts they facilitate rise to the surface, thus demonstrating the possibilities of redrawing the boundaries between speech communication and mass communication in audience research.

Publishing their essays in the same year, Shimpach (2005) and Bratich (2005) guide their readers through the historical tracks of disciplines and institutional forces to offer us two different re-visions of the audience: one that interrogates the collective and industrialized forms of “labor” that produce audiences, and another that utilizes Hardt and Negri’s concept of the “multitude” to problematize the ontologies of the audience in different academic discourses. For Shimpach, the tension between the very “real” practices of audience engagement with media technologies and the discursive construction and imagination of the audience in different institutional sites leads us toward a third way of taking seriously the affective, material, and performative practices of audience labor. Shimpach (2005) analyzes ethnographic audience research, Marxist-influenced writings on the commodity audience, and the history of audience reconnaissance and management techniques in the US motion picture industry, to argue that, “with labor knowingly foregrounded, differences in what is meant by audience in individual instances can be strategically subsumed under the rubric of a single over-riding conceptualization that at least implicitly, and as often explicitly, is premised upon the idea that the audience for the culture industries performs productive labor for itself and for those industries as a condition of being an audience” (p. 357). Jack Bratich (2005), who notes at the beginning of his essay that the “fugitive” and amorphous character of the audience ensures the longevity of audience research, adopts Hardt and Negri’s social theory of subjectivity – specifically, the idea of “multitude,” or the “creative capacities of cooperative social forces” to denote constitutive power – in order to “problematize” the early discursive production of audiences within the three sites of propaganda (vulnerable and reactive audience), marketing (desiring audience), and moral panics (vulnerable yet threatening audience). His essay concludes with a useful outline of the implications of his ontological treatment of the audience for empirical audience research, particularly the integration of “information technologies, communication processes, and strategies of biopolitical control,” and for the active audience model (pp. 261–262). Bratich’s historical and theoretical exploration of the multitude’s metamorphosis – its various incarnations of audience power – offers ideas to strengthen diverse traditions of audience research.

In addition to fleshing out more collaborative models of research that cut across boundaries, critics have also debated the limits and potential of anchoring audience studies to new conceptual paradigms, which address the media’s relationships with public education, the nation, and the unruly realities of global audiences’ participation and consumption activities. Livingstone (2008) addresses the recent migration of audience or user engagement – such activities as decoding texts or participating in the formation of imaginary communities – from the vocabularies of ethnographic audience studies to the pedagogic project of media “literacy,” which has possibilities for democratizing outcomes, but is also packaged, quite often, in normative terms by neoliberal institutions. She writes that the terminology of “literacy” is gaining ascendancy in multiple zones of public discourse: “Everywhere it seems we hear of cyberliteracy, digital literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, Internet literacy,

network literacy and so on, and this it seems, points to a new discourse whereby the academy can examine, critically or otherwise, with media and communication technologies” (p. 53). Measuring the literacy model’s fit for different media technologies, media genres, and ideological projects of audience emancipation, Livingstone concludes that, if developed further, the text–reader metaphor of critical audience studies can still retain its usefulness; however, it is also important for media scholars to engage with audience studies’ overlapping interfaces through the spreading literacy metaphor. Morley (2006) writes that the framework of “cultural citizenship,” which expands statist conceptions of political citizenship to the media’s capacity to strengthen civic culture and foster individuals’ and communities’ feelings of belonging or alienation, could be a promising conceptual hinge for audience research, and some recent work in audience studies has pursued the study of cultural citizenship in relation to audience subjectivities (Banet-Weiser, 2007; Dolby, 2006; Harindranath, 2009; Muller & Hermes, 2010). Adrian Athique’s (2008) essay sketches the notion of a “cultural field” as an alternative structure for imagining audience communities as sites of relational social practices rather than as discrete populations, and thus it proposes a timely revision of traditional models of fieldwork, which followed demographic classifications and privileged narrative cohesion by “analyzing trends in media use among a categorically defined community” (p. 30). A cultural field approach, according to Athique, would account for a complex matrix of situated practices that constituted one another:

A more sophisticated, or “situated,” ethnographic approach towards media audiences takes into account the heterogeneity of the population in question and the internal contradictions which are likely to exist within it. It also recognizes the external influences that both reinforce and destabilize the social identity of the group. In its most convincing form, a situated approach seeks to evaluate the whole range of cultural practices present within a sampled group; these might be variously constituted as forms of production–reproduction, import–export and relation–translation. (Athique, 2008, p. 31)

For Athique (2008), the notion of cultural field would imply that a study of film viewing would cast its ethnographic net wide enough to include fans and non-fans, cultural insiders and outsiders, and a host of other possible relational groups, so as to conceive of the cultural field as “a radial zone of influence within which viewers engage with a cultural artifact for different purposes, and from different standpoints, generating different meanings and pleasures” (p. 38).

Scholars in audience studies have also debated the implications of the spread of computers and of the Internet, as well as the implications of their associated technological convergences, for the future of audience studies (Alasuutari, 1999; Caraway 2011; Costello & Moore, 2007; Morley, 2006; Livingstone, 2004; Napoli, 2011; Newman, 2010; Sloan, 2009). While the spread of new media usage has generated unique formal and informal terminologies for our everyday engagement practices and subject positions – of users and browsers; lurking, defriending, e-mailing, tweet-

ing, and googling; netiquette and netizens; online and offline interactions; phishing and cyberbullying; and so on – Livingstone (2004) and Morley (2006) urge us to err on the side of caution before we rush to renew utopian or ahistorical ideas of powerful media effects. As Morley writes, a predominant strain of new media theory “returns us, ironically enough, to a place we started out from long ago – to a technologically determinist version of hypodermic media effects [. . .] it is as if technologies themselves had the magical capacity to make us all active – or in some visions, even to make us all democratic – a strange form of media effects indeed” (p. 117). Morley questions the institutionally funded “new orthodoxy” of theories purporting to capture the digital age, which argue that media studies has “got it all wrong for the last 20 years,” and he reminds us that the “rhetorics of the technological sublime,” which surround the new media, also accompanied such earlier technologies as the telegraph (p. 115). Livingstone’s essay on “What Is the Audience Researcher to Do in the Age of the Internet” (Livingstone, 2004) executes precisely Morley’s cautionary advice to consider the usefulness of the “old” – existing theories and methods – for the “new.” She starts with a number of insights from television audience research that can inform work on new media users, including the relevance of active audience theory for the “selective and self-directed” ways in which new media audiences are “producers as well as receivers of texts,” the constraining influences of capitalist media industries on audience responses, and the connections between media engagement and “analytic competencies, social practices, and material circumstances” (p. 81). Posing a series of excellent questions for future research on Internet audiences, Livingstone outlines the different and perhaps “magnified” methodological challenges that new media practices – surfing, game playing, instant messaging, privileging content over form, and consuming texts that are multimodal, hypertextual, and ephemeral – pose for issues of observation and access in empirical and ethnographic audience research. Taking on the vital issue of ethics in the context of qualitative audience research afforded by the Internet, Amanda Lotz and Sharon Ross (2004) describe the ethical considerations that must guide the research process, beginning with entering and monitoring chat groups and forums, procuring informed consent, ensuring a fair and dialogic exchange with the respondents, willingness to change research designs, accepting withdrawals and refusals from participants at any stage, and maintaining vigilance to protect subjects’ anonymity.

While scholars have genuinely lamented the fact there is far more abstract writing about audiences than work that is based on empirical research, it is also true that the field has made progress in studying both international audiences and audiences that have been historically excluded from the field, either due to marginalization or because they were considered too normative and powerful. Cultural anthropology and sociology’s discovery of the role of media in shaping and producing culture has helped audience studies gain a more international visage; feminist anthropologists and sociologists have carried out fieldwork in India (Mankekar, 1999; Derne, 2000; Dickey, 2007), Egypt (Abu-Lughod, 2005), and China (Friedman, 2006) to produce detailed ethnographies of audience responses to television drama and film in relation to discourses of

class, colonialism, caste, gender, and nation. Cultural anthropologist Mark Peterson's (2010) singular work on journalism's reading publics in India demonstrates the depth of contextual data on news literacies that only careful ethnographic work can yield; his analyses of such phrases as "taking the newspaper," "raddi," and "common man," which circulate among his informants, reveal the profound embeddedness of news in webs of social relations. Unlike in the early to mid-nineties, in the fairly barren landscape of global audience studies prevailing then, now we have a modest corpus of empirical research in the communications academy, which has explored, for example, the contours of media and popular culture audiences in such locations as Japan (Condry, 2006; Darling-Wolf, 2000, 2004; Muramatsu, 2002; Takahashi, 2010), Malaysia (Carstens, 2003), Australia (Aly, 2010; Holloway & Green, 2008), India (Juluri, 2003; McMillin, 2003; Parameswaran, 2002, 2003; Rao, 2007), Venezuela (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003, 2010), Brazil (La Pastina, 2004), South Africa (Bradfield, 2010; Strelitz, 2004), Singapore (Trager, 2008), Lebanon (Kraidy, 1999), China (Haiqing, 2006), and Denmark (Drotner, 2004). Several of the pioneering authors cited here are represented in this volume and, most importantly, their projects in global audience studies have propelled vigorous dialogue with other humanities and social science disciplines on phenomena related to globalization's spread – cultural imperialism, consumerism, neoliberalism, hybridity, postcolonial class formations, gender and nationalism, emerging markets, anti-globalization movements, and multiculturalism.

Some of the audience studies projects in different nations around the world, along with a growing body of work in the US, also foreground the cultural practices, media uses, and responses of communities whose profiles do not approximate to the historically dominant white, heterosexual, Christian, and middle-class subject position: examples of such work in the US include Mary Gray's (2009) ethnography of queer rural youth's consumption and production of online spaces; Vivian Barrera and Denise Bielby's (2001) qualitative exploration of Latino viewers' reactions to telenovelas; and Lakshmi Srinivas' (2002) and Aswin Punathambekar's (2005) research on film reception among members of the Indian diaspora. Reflecting the shift in gender studies toward critiques of manhood and masculinity, audience research has also departed from its long-standing focus on women audiences and femininity, to address the ways in which men take pleasure in and utilize media in order to construct their identities (Derne, 2000; Hoover & Coats, 2011). Finally, rare recent work (Davis, 2005) on the strong media effects of communications on investor behavior and trading patterns in the London Stock Exchange (LSE), which was based on interviews with elite fund managers, exemplifies the value of "studying up" in audience research, namely tracking and observing the lives of privileged groups in society.

The field of audience studies has also made advances in incorporating reflexivity, a key and indispensable aspect of qualitative research that facilitates ethical, flexible, and rigorous research design and demystifies the research process for other communities of scholars, and especially for beginning researchers about to embark on their first major projects. Far from encouraging narcissistic navel-gazing, audience researchers' reflexivity has produced thoughtful and constructive accounts that dwell

on fieldwork dilemmas, on the outcomes of using particular research methods, and on the challenges of navigating relations between and among research subjects. Elizabeth Bird (2003) embraces reflexivity in the introduction to her book, so as to offer instructive lessons on methods; she argues that “methods matter because the choices made, along with the very characteristics of the researcher, play into and ultimately shape the conclusions of any research” (p. 9). Bird’s candid evaluation of the methodological choices and strategies – soliciting letters and conducting telephone interviews – that she employed in some of her previous work both helps readers understand the ways in which gendered norms shape “data collection” and dispels the myth that telephone interviews are always necessarily a poor substitute for personal interviews. She also provides details of how “researcher-absent methods” where participants tape their reactions to, and their interactions with, media without the ethnographer being present allow scholars to gather data under research conditions that approximate closely the everyday lives of media audiences.

Essays probing the intersections between personal biographies/identities and the trajectories and peculiarities of fieldwork undertaken in particular locations by media and cultural studies scholars – essays published in the multidisciplinary journal *Qualitative Inquiry* – flesh out the concrete ways in which researchers act as embodied instruments of knowledge production in qualitative research (Murphy, 2002; Parameswaran, 2001). The interrogation of researchers’ subject positions in audience ethnographies has also expanded the horizons of debates over the politics of racial identity; for example, Vicki Mayer’s (2005) deliberations on “narcissistic whiteness” and “defensive whiteness” challenges whiteness’ invisible normativity and the tendency in scholarship to essentialize whiteness within ahistorical and functionalist “narratives of structural dominance or individual vulnerability” (p. 148). Reflexivity, as Lotz and Ross (2004) argue, is even more vital for research ethics when we mine or study audiences in the Internet age, where both scholars and subjects have to navigate the insecure and murky waters of privacy, anonymity, and intimacy in cyberspace. While audience studies must continue to deliver on its commitment to reflexive fieldwork and writing practices, these examples of sustained and serious attention to the research process get us closer to the use of “reflexivity to alleviate discrepant power relations” and to acknowledge power differentials in a manner that utilizes and advances feminist anthropology’s commitment to ethical innovations in theoretical approaches and research methods (Abu-Lughod, 1988; Behar, 1993; Clifford, 1986; Gordon, 1988; Lotz, 2000, p. 453).

Distinguishing Characteristics and Organization of the Volume

This volume picks up and builds on the current momentum of work in audience studies outlined in the previous section. Collating and bringing together major scholars

of national and international reputation and bright emerging researchers in the field, many of the chapters in this book synthesize and provide larger frameworks to interpret their authors' empirical studies and theoretical contributions and to specify productive questions, which can propel future debates and investigations. The volume's novel and distinguishing features extend to the first and leading part, which offers curricular, conceptual, and methodological strategies to strengthen the future of the field, and also to a part dealing with new media genres, which encompasses news, feminist online forums, institutional efforts to control and manage online audiences, and girls' uses of new media. The volume's integration of a wider range of subjects – such non-traditional topics as women audiences of health communication, consumers of multinational bookstores, and activist audiences are included here alongside more traditional audience studies content on viewers of popular culture – contributes still further to scholars' ongoing efforts to make the field more responsive to developments in the world and more inclusive of multiple audiences. Two chapters, one on China and another on India, which review recent media developments in these rising powers and emerging market nations in order to chart yawning gaps in what we know about audiences there, offer contributions that are not available in existing books. While edited collections often include a chapter or two where authors focus on reflexivity, this volume devotes a whole section to it, and the chapters here present different generic iterations of reflexive practices, from authors' deliberations on various stages of data analysis to the rare instance of work that showcases *audience members'* reflexive interpretations of research encounters. The chapters assembled in this book also represent different audience research traditions that have emerged from mass communication, cultural studies, media sociology, feminist anthropology, feminist media studies, and communication studies.

The volume is divided into five thematic parts, which address, respectively, future directions for the field, reflexivity, global media audiences, new media technologies, and citizenship. Some of the chapters could easily belong in two or more sections, and this ambiguity illustrates the hybrid analytic and methodological overlaps that characterize work in audience studies. My ensuing discussion of the different parts of the book and of the chapters will further highlight the volume's fresh perspectives on and new intersections with ongoing conversations about theory, fieldwork, methodology, data analysis, politics of research, and knowledge gaps in audience studies.

Part 1

The first part, "Expanding the Horizons of Audience Studies," takes up the challenge of considering trajectories for the field to multiply and mature further, whether this results from a commitment to "growing" new generations of scholars or from tackling different approaches to theory, methodology, and fieldwork – approaches that can lead us beyond the dualistic constructs of active/passive and duped/autonomous audiences. Pedagogy for the graduate curriculum still presents a mysterious and

uncharted terrain, especially when we compare it to the dozens and dozens of books and articles on undergraduate pedagogy. Gigi Durham's chapter "The Audience in the Graduate Curriculum: Training Future Scholars" in Part 1 may be the first of its kind: that is, the first to undertake an inventory and an account of the pedagogical challenges – from issues of access and human subjects review boards, to ethics and power in the field, to data collection, and to writing media ethnographies – that arise in courses designed to train students to study audiences. The process of teaching graduate students to manage audience studies projects occurs within formal classrooms and educational settings, in supervised research contexts, and in the less controlled and distant environments of fieldwork. Given the difficulties of studying human subjects, who can defy and rebel against the most well-planned research designs (unlike compliant and accommodating "textual" subjects), it is important for the academy to create public knowledge around the successes and failures of the graduate pedagogies that educate future scholars. Durham's essay takes on greater weight when we acknowledge the fact that some of the best and most innovative audience studies projects are birthed in the early stages of scholars' academic careers.

Patrick Murphy and Kim Trager-Bohley, whose chapters sit at contrasting ends of the spectrum, address methodological considerations that might shape the research designs of audience studies in the future. Murphy outlines the affirmative *and* pragmatic benefits of short-term fieldwork, or of abbreviated site visits, in an era when media researchers in the US academy are increasingly strapped by lack of time, funds, and institutional support. Trager-Bohley argues for the opposite, that is, for an expanded, flexible, and responsive vision of ethnography as a multi-sited endeavor whose open-ended pursuit of sites and subjects approximates Athique's (2008) notion of a more unbounded "cultural field." In the last chapter in this section, CarrieLynn Reinhard and Brenda Dervin broaden the theoretical horizons of audience studies. Their chapter explains the conceptual paradigm of Dervin's "sense-making methodology" and offers illustrative examples of data from research projects to introduce readers to the strengths of this comprehensive approach. Sense-making methodology, as these authors show, allows scholars to study audiences at individual and collective levels, facilitates more expansive and immersive projects, and accommodates a matrix of contextual factors that affect audiences' situated interpretations of the media.

Part 2

The second part focuses on reflexivity in audience research; authors here are using different theoretical and political lenses and multiple narrative approaches to flesh out their particular stances on reflexivity. Foregrounding reflexivity through the creative architectural form of her essay, Carolina Acosta-Alzuru draws on the organizational metaphor of the "itinerary" in order to turn a potentially dry and pedestrian plotting of her work across time into a captivating "travelogue" that chronicles the changing landscape of the research strategies and methods she has employed to

study telenovelas in Venezuela. Acosta-Alzuru writes candidly about the difficulties she navigated to arrive at more intimate and imaginative renderings of her research: “They [variations in my writing tone] offer evidence of my own struggles to detach myself from the more traditional (and ‘safe’) forms of academic writing that I was socialized to pursue, and instead allow personal reflection and critique to govern my writing and become the heartbeats of my prolonged academic immersion in the study of telenovelas.” Similarly blending his research on children’s television and his parenting practices with an ethnographic portrait of his own family’s viewing practices, Matt Briggs crafts a forceful and intriguing narrative, peppered alternatively with television’s scripts and family transcripts, which articulates the concept of “force” as a means to deconstruct the intricate process of humans’ meaning-making processes as well as to unpack audiences’ deep emotional and ideological investments in media culture. Briggs rightly points out that audience research needs to be boosted through proposals for “methodological inventiveness,” which can in turn foster innovation in theory-building and help us achieve “thickness” in our research narratives. Acosta-Alzuru’s and Briggs’ chapters remind us of the importance of writing and of narrative form – a neglected topic in audience research – in conveying our representations of audience research. For them, reflexivity is as much an inner cognitive and affective process as it is a research strategy that enables them to *externalize* their audience research projects through the art of writing and through narrative choices.

Lynn Schofield Clark mines reflexivity within her larger project on US families’ uses of new media in order to build a multilayered story of an “ethnographic dilemma”: this dilemma centers on a young girl, who engaged in excessive and sometimes inappropriate digital and mobile media use. Taking us backstage into the green room of qualitative research, where the messy and intimate processes of data collection unfold, Schofield Clark highlights the contingent and contextual forces that shape the writing and publishing formats of audience research. She argues that reflexivity helps us understand better the ways in which researchers’ identities, the demands and discourses of multiple stakeholders (university students, research assistants, members of the public, and various academic research communities), and researchers’ measures of what various reading publics expect influence the public audience studies research narratives we produce. While Schofield Clark digs into the inner recesses of fieldwork for one project, Fabienne Darling-Wolf takes an expansive view across time and space, to consider the challenges and opportunities that her identities present for her as a white European scholar who grew up in France, as an academic who lives and works in the US, as a researcher who carries out fieldwork in Japan, and as she moves across multiple geographic and institutional contexts. Darling-Wolf anchors her empirical accounts of reflexivity – of trying to understand different national and ethnic audiences’ responses to media in a connected global mediascape that also bears the imprints of history – to her advocacy of a “translocal” theoretical approach to audience studies that can engage with the criss-crossing networks of media flows.

Finally, Katherine Sender’s unusual treatment of reflexivity in her chapter, in the context of audiences for reality shows, pushes the boundaries of scholarship on this

topic by investing *audiences*, not just scholars and ethnographers, with the power to enact forms of reflexivity, that is, to exercise the critical capacity of achieving distance from the “self” and of projecting different “selves” that speak to one another. Such practices of reflexivity, which audiences perform and enact in research situations, are not simply “collateral damage” or incidental outcomes of audience research; in fact, as Sender shows, these productions of the viewer’s self that arbitrate the circulation and reception of reality shows challenge the functionalism of users and gratifications theory and the regulatory/disciplinary emphasis of governmentality critiques.

Part 3

The seven chapters in the third and largest part of the volume – “Finding and Engaging Global Audiences” – carry out three crucial tasks: they provide case studies of empirical research in South Africa, Brazil, and India; they offer critical reviews of the literature on audience studies in China and India; and they propose prescriptive theoretical and methodological models of research to study audiences in East Asia and Australia. Shelley Bradfield’s chapter on South African women television viewers and Vamsee Juluri’s chapter on Indian film and television viewers contribute new knowledge of audience responses to the media in postcolonial and “emerging market” nations that are grappling with the challenges of bridging racial, religious, class, caste, and cultural differences in the midst of economic and cultural globalization and its aggressive incursions. Bradfield’s analysis of a diverse group of South African women’s interpretations of the television drama *Home Affairs*’ fictional tales of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation illustrates the vicissitudes of the state-sponsored travels of multiculturalism into the intimate domestic and affective spaces of citizens’ lives in this post-apartheid nation. She peels off and takes apart white, black, and a mixed ethnic and racial group of women audiences’ different “globalized” and “localized” expressions of identification and disconnection with the drama’s characters in order to demonstrate that multiculturalism’s rhetoric of equality rings hollow in the face of the struggles that disenfranchised citizens continue to face. Juluri’s chapter, which showcases his ethnographic research in India, also exemplifies the unique strengths of ethnographic audience research. His interviews and conversations with audiences allow him to bring to light the extraordinary complexities of assumptions about human nature and reality that mediate television viewers’ seemingly “irrational” or “strange” responses to important issues related to family, nation, and religion in media culture. The author’s elegant and robust integration, under the conceptual umbrella of the “real,” of findings from his multiple projects of audience studies undertaken over time and across media genres also affirms the enduring possibilities of ethnographic work to generate grounded and located theory, which resonates with the particular influence of historical and cultural forces on audiences’ responses to popular culture. Echoing Juluri’s longitudinal mode of contemplation,

which links together the author's various research projects, another chapter in this section, authored by Antonio La Pastina, synthesizes this researcher's long-standing ethnographic media research in Macambira, Brazil, aiming to consider audiences' responses to various aspects of the social and capitalist content of telenovelas – including product placement, gender roles, social marketing, and generic conventions. Steering global media research away from its elitist metropolitan biases, La Pastina gently guides us through the material and mediated terrain of rural Brazilian viewers' lives, to argue – in contrast to the liberatory and populist tone of early audience research – that telenovelas have contributed further to the urban–rural divide and to power hierarchies of class and cultural capital in this upwardly mobile globalizing country.

In contrast to these three chapters, which are filled with data from fieldwork carried out amidst media audiences, Hongmei Li's and Sunitha Chitrapu's chapters, which take a critical inventory of China's and India's mediascapes respectively, make a persuasive case for amplifying the empirical base of audience research in these two nations. Li's chapter juxtaposes developments in China's exploding media environment with trends and changes in media and cultural studies research, so as to identify promising areas for future research on Chinese audiences. Chitrapu's overview of India's film industry re-orientates the almost obsessive focus on Bollywood in film studies, to engage with Indian cinema's various linguistic sectors, which cater to this postcolonial nation's multiethnic and regional film viewing audiences. Bringing the material realities of political economy in conversation with the potential of culturalist ethnographic studies, Chitrapu charts the missed opportunities for audience research that scholars can harness to produce a richer, fuller, and more pluralistic portrait of film reception in India that interrupts the hegemonic hold of Bollywood in the academy.

Finally, a chapter on alternative regional audience formations in East Asia and another one on television and new audiences in Australia contribute new ways to think about theory and methodology in global audience research. Chua Beng Huat's chapter on transnational television – which augments the mission of recent scholarly endeavors to engage with global media counterflows that take us past US media and cultural imperialism (Iwabuchi, 2001; Thussu, 2006) – analyzes the implications, for audience studies, of the traffic in media flows between and among nations in East Asia. Stitching together existing work along with his own research, Beng Huat addresses a series of phenomena – dubbing as a form of semiotic alteration, audiences' paradoxical forms of identification with foreign content and artists, the politics of nationalism and transnational fandom, and the emerging fragile contours of a pan-East Asian identity – to fashion a conceptual model that will help other scholars conduct audience research that is sensitive to the regional inflections of global audience formations. Donell Holloway and Lelia Green, who dissect systematically the benefits of different methods that scholars frequently use in ethnographic research, begin their chapter by outlining the origins and concerns of audience studies in Australia. Dismantling the methodological edifice of their own work on families'

viewing practices and interactions with media technologies, they argue that keen observations of mundane and familiar domestic spaces and close attention to audiences' struggles with negotiations over media use can add texture and nuance to qualitative work based on interviews.

Part 4

The still nebulous and uncharted waters of new media audiences are the focus of the fourth section of the book. How can we conceptualize new audiences in ways that do not simply import the ill-fitting baggage of old media technologies? Does it still make sense to erect boundaries between producers and audiences in the online media environment? What are the dilemmas that ethnographers should anticipate when they study online audience communities? Fernando Bermejo's chapter in Part 4 argues that new media audience practices are threatening to disrupt the fragile consensus on definitions of the audience that were forged earlier among various competing institutions. He charts the evolution of audience measurement techniques within various media industries and in the advertising world, to foreground the fresh complications that the new media pose for the managerial needs of corporate imperatives; and he evaluates the routes, methods, and techniques that researchers have devised to measure Internet audiences. Deborah Chung's chapter takes on a similar task, of appraising audience behaviors and communication models in the universe of online news media – a growing industry that has wrought major transformations in the fortunes of the rapidly declining print news industry in the US. She surveys trends and developments in the arena of online news – the use of interactive tools, the emergence of social media, and citizen blogging – to suggest fruitful directions for empirical research that can shed more light on the ways in which readers are flocking to the converging news habitats of cyberspace.

New media technologies have also attracted the attention of feminist media scholars, and authors Shayla Thiel-Stern and Radhika Gajjala explore the emancipatory potential of girls' and women's cyber-activities and cyber-communities from feminist perspectives. Thiel-Stern's chapter notes that new and mobile media have opened up opportunities for girls to express their agency and to bridge the gulf between "passive" and "active" subject positions by being both consumers and producers; but she also cautions us that lingering hegemonic patriarchal structures, the corporatization of the Internet, and continuing problems of access should restrain scholars from overestimating technology's alluring fantasies of resistance and freedom. Radhika Gajjala's chapter takes us on a biographical journey through the episodes of her ongoing feminist research program on Internet communities and online spaces in conjunction with the material imperatives of offline phenomena. Gajjala's descriptions of how she acquired her knowledge toolkit of theory and methods to study the new species of online audience communities fabricates the subject position of the cyber-ethnographer as a bricoleur, a flexible and open-minded scholar who makes use of

various and serendipitous formal and informal knowledge resources to study the still unresolved research questions that crop up in the context of online media.

Part 5

The fifth and last part, “Empowering Audiences as Citizens,” scrutinizes audiences in their avatars as citizen subjects: chapters here approach formations of citizenship through the lenses of public health media, activism, news media, and performative and documentary genres of production. Linda Aldoory’s chapter assesses the contributions of existing research on health messages and health campaigns that have targeted women from the point of view of their capacity to improve the quality of health communication and thus to empower female audiences. Aldoory argues that the biomedical paradigm, which assumes a linear progression from awareness to behavior, media campaigns’ assumptions about audiences’ middle-class lifestyles, and models of research that ignore issues of culture and power have hindered the development of public health media and of messages that can genuinely assist women to take charge of their lives. This chapter’s focus on health communication in Part 5 adds a neglected topic to the archive of academic audience studies work that we have accumulated over the last 15 years.

Jennifer Rauch’s chapter casts a new light on activist citizens, who have typically been studied as producers and disseminators of protest media rather than as subcultures or audiences of media and popular culture. Applying James Carey’s model of ritual communication to activists’ practices of media engagement and reception, Rauch proposes that shifting from the transmission mode of activists’ communication to their ritualistic and symbolic patterns of media consumption will enable scholars to offer greater insight into the cultural formation and political mobilization of activist identities in the first place. Identifying and discussing activists’ media preferences and their skepticism toward purely technological forms of dissent, Rauch recommends areas for future study on those ritual forms of communication and reception that inspire and invite audiences to become activists. Kim Christian Schröder’s ambitious chapter synthesizes an extensive body of knowledge on audiences as citizens, aiming to create a historical typology and taxonomy of audiences. Schröder’s theoretical and analytic distillation of three decades of reception research classifies the literature according to the following five categories: hegemonic citizenship, monitorial citizenship, popular citizenship, participatory citizenship, and ubiquitous citizenship. The author fleshes out the impulses, concerns, and research designs of each stage of citizenship, providing representative case studies that further help readers grasp more concretely the intellectual contours and contributions of each of these five stages.

Volumes on audience studies rarely include material on performative genres or on documentary productions. The final chapter in the volume and in this fifth part

merges production and reception in order to address the issue of how alternative genres of communication and media – street theater, documentary film, and ordinary citizens’ digital media productions – invite audiences to participate in acts of witnessing and to enter cultural and political spaces whose mediated rhetoric interpellates them as engaged and concerned citizens. Activists’ street theater and grassroots organizations’ documentary films aspire to earn instrumental forms of political recognition and acknowledgment from their audiences, and the testimonial accounts of digital media productions seek to incite sympathy from, and to build solidarity with, citizens. The authors acknowledge the distinctions between these genres, but they also argue that the autobiographical, narrative, and public testimonies circulating in public spaces though the vehicle of these genres may compel audiences to shift their subject positions from being isolated individuals to becoming connected and politically engaged citizens who participate in social movements.

* * *

In closing, I propose with great optimism that this volume’s chapters offer evidence that the unfinished project of audience studies will continue to be an exciting and innovative area for future argumentation and debate *and* for future empirical research. Numerous chapters in this volume bring to light the intellectual cracks, gaps, and fissures in the field that generations of scholars ahead can deliberate over and choose to fill and repair. The field of audience studies is a vital and indispensable component of the ongoing larger projects of the still young disciplines of media, cultural, and communication studies, which seek to inform and educate citizens about the evolving ways in which media culture and technological forms intersect with the trajectories of human agency, the influences of historical patterns and global affairs, the contingencies of everyday life, and the endurance of institutional power structures. Indeed, as numerous other critics in audience studies have pointed out, the “audience,” both real and imaginary, constitutes the basic epistemological, material, and discursive foundation for the very existence and spread of mediated forms. The enterprise of scrutinizing the audience, as this volume demonstrates, can facilitate invigorating and constructive conversations between and among various streams of research and theoretical traditions that address production and political economy, texts and representations, psychology of media effects, qualitative and quantitative paradigms, and multiple and convergent media genres. At a time when media culture’s fluid representations of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation are crossing geographic and political borders or erecting new boundaries to separate us into isolated and fragmented subcultures, creating knowledge of audience formations should take center stage in the academy’s mission to produce responsible and engaged global citizens, workers, consumers, and scholars.

I invite readers of the volume to join me and the authors here in our project to keep the audience alive and kicking.

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Media Studies

The Interdiscipline of the Present and the Future

Angharad N. Valdivia

Media studies is a rapidly growing, widely relevant, and evolving field – an inter-discipline (Valdivia, 2003). While some scholars have bemoaned the loss of focus on process and effects, especially on milestone studies (DeFleur, 1998), others find the breadth and porous contours to be conducive to a worthwhile intellectual pursuit (Sterne, 2005). To be sure, between 1998 and the present, there has been a huge growth in interpretive and critical approaches, which have nonetheless flourished in the margins as the effects paradigm – the stuff of milestones – has firmly retained its central place in the field, at least in the United States and the Netherlands. Indeed, efforts to map out the diversity of the field of communication (Craig, 1999, 2001), which we might call the broader umbrella for media studies, yield a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping and other times mutually exclusive approaches. The terrain of contemporary media studies acknowledges that most of us live in intensely mediated environments, so that Livingstone (2009) writes on the mediation of everything, and Hay (2000) writes of refrigerator studies. The former expands on how media and communication are “ever more crucial in today’s world” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 13), and the latter asks us – as a field over a decade ago, while continuing to encourage us (Hay, 2010, 2011) – to consider the broader web of networks to which other technologies, such as refrigerators and toasters, contribute in terms of routines and practices that serve to mediate the world for us. The latter line of questioning has proven immensely prescient as many of us live in highly networked webs of media and communication, where not only can our location be pinpointed at any given moment thanks to elements in our mobile technology, but also, if we chose to, we can broadcast a narrative of our location and other audiovisual bits of information constantly to many – such as our hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter or Tumblr followers.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Nonetheless, whether we are talking of old media technologies or institutions (see Nerone, Volume 1, *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), we are witnessing the constitution of new audiences and a shift in traditional audiences (see Parameswaran, Volume 4, *Audience and Interpretation*) through the invitation offered by seductive content in a dynamically converging and synergized media environment (see Mazzarella, Volume 3, *Content and Representation*). The effects of these technologies and content continue to be measured and studied (see Scharrer, Volume 5, *Media Effects/Media Psychology*). While media platforms and patterns of production are converging, enduring tendencies toward concentration of ownership and control of media industries coexist with the emergence of new patterns of labor, practices, and updated forms of exploitation (see Mayer, Volume 2, *Media Production*, as well as some chapters in Gates, Volume 6, *Media Studies Futures*). This is not surprising given the rapidly expanding new media and communications technologies, many of whose functions replicate previous technologies while other uses (and abuses) bring new possibilities, utopian and dystopian, to the fore (see Gates, Volume 6). Unexpected global locations of nodes of influences result in previously unsuspected transnational alliances and networks (Castells, 2009).

As an early caveat to this triumphal celebration of media, I must remind readers that most of the above sentiment refers to a media-rich group that luxuriates in a wealth of networks and technologies. Yet we must not forget that even as I write this introduction at the very end of 2011, fully 50% of the global population have intermittent access to electricity. Mobile telephony may be widely spread, but the radio remains the most reliable global medium (see the *Journal of Radio Studies*). Beyond the fact that it is cheap, it neither relies on nor requires electricity or literacy, in English or any language. Furthermore, despite our current fixation with digital, wireless, and mobile media technologies, in times of crisis – whether natural such as a huge earthquake or in wartime – when the electric networks are down and we are thrown back into old school forms of media and communication, radio returns to its central location as a reliable and essential medium. So before you continue reading this introduction, or continue to read any of the absolutely outstanding volumes of this encyclopedia project, go out and buy yourself a radio – one that is both electric and battery powered. You might never need it, but if you do, you will be very relieved to have it.

The fact is that media are everywhere, and nearly everyone shares lifelong experience with and expertise on particular forms of media. Dating back to the 1920s – as identified both in Nerone, Volume 1 and Mazzarella, Volume 3, the study of media has been multi-modal and heterogeneous. Theoretical and methodological complexity has grown since the Payne Fund Studies. International, transnational, and global perspectives have become absolutely essential. Not that they ever were not, but now that media are produced, consumed, and circulated transnationally, media studies has to take this into account. Inclusivity of the heterogeneous components of the population in regard to the media has also grown. Scholarship that was once nationally bound and focused on White middle-class males has expanded to take into consideration gender, nation, region, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and

class. Furthermore, as both Downing (2003) and Castells (2010) remind us, we must not forget the importance of religion in the contemporary world, as many armed conflicts revolve around religion, and media content, production, audiences, and effects are interlaced with religious impulses.

Media studies is an interdiscipline. As such it draws on and benefits from a number of contributing fields such as history, philosophy, psychology, political science, education, literature, and sociology. Yet even as it draws on those many fields, it is its own area of studies. Too often other fields, whose interdisciplinarity takes them into media studies, see this interdiscipline as new – as in, “oh look, we just discovered that we ought to look at media.” Our field becomes the direct object of other scholars’ deployment of the myth of discovery. Just like Columbus discovered “America,”¹ scholars from other fields continue to “discover” media and media studies. A century’s worth of theories and research disappears in the process, and many of us often find ourselves in other disciplines’ conferences listening to presentations that implicitly suggest direct effects, transparency, mimetic images, and so on. Transparency, when media content, industries, audiences, and practices are treated as if they spoke for themselves, as if there were no mediation, is often the tactic taken by scholars outside our discipline. What we as a field contribute to the understanding of culture and society is, at the very least, that mediation is complex and that understanding mediation helps us to uncover patterns of power, distribution, and potential justice. Media studies is about unearthing and maximizing the democratic potential of practices, institutions, technologies, and audiences that pervade our contemporary life.

Nonetheless, as Gates reminds us in her introduction to Volume 6, one central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: What counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated media” capture a general sense of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the complex dimensions and issues that these terms encompass? By paying careful attention to issues of history and context, this encyclopedia seeks to trouble the usage of these terms even as they are used rather carelessly in popular culture and public policy.

The six separate volumes of this encyclopedia were present as six separate sections in *A Companion to Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2003), the volume that provides the model for this encyclopedia and that was, in turn, modeled after McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*. The editors of the individual volumes put together a stellar cast of authors who in turn produced original chapters. All volume editors were asked, indeed implored, to compose a table of contents that was inclusive in many ways. First, inclusivity in terms of global topics was paramount, and we strived for inclusivity in terms of authors and global regions as well. This, as I have discussed elsewhere (Valdivia, 2011b), is not as easy as it sounds. Differential access to the latest research, culturally different approaches to writing and developing an argument, resources that

might enable a given scholar or team to develop a project and get it ready for publication, and so on, are all variables that effectively discriminate in favor of those of us in well-funded research universities in wealthy countries. We recruited some scholars whose work we translated into English, and all editors worked assiduously to cast as global a network as possible.

Another element of inclusivity was paradigm diversity. Schooled at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) at the University of Illinois, I am the recipient of an educational tradition that highly values paradigm inclusivity. Insofar as it was possible, we included scholars using quantitative and qualitative approaches, sometimes both of them at the same time. Obviously the *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume focused solely on the social scientific tradition, while both the *Content and Representation* and *Audience and Interpretation* volumes included scholarship using both approaches. A third element of inclusivity was gender, race, and sexuality diversity. Cutting across as a focus that can be conducted in the research included in any of the six volumes of this project is the work of transnational feminism and globalizing gender studies (Hegde, 2006). Editors sought scholarship that would include these vectors of difference, as media studies really makes no sense without their consideration. Yet even within each of these categories we encounter new gaps that merit more research. For example, as Mazzarella mentions in the introduction to Volume 3: “the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008).” The rise of masculinity studies follows feminist studies as a logical move once we realize that femininity is socially constructed. Indeed, this is a process that this collection of volumes entices us to accomplish: a greater degree of preciseness to this complex concept of media studies, which all of us who work within the interdiscipline intellectually seek to explicate.

As a final note about process, these volumes have been peer reviewed in an innovative manner for an edited collection. First, each table of contents was submitted to the peer review of a senior scholar within that area of the field and edited accordingly. Then, as the chapters came in, within each volume authors reviewed other chapters. Ideally, each chapter was reviewed by two other authors as well as by its editors. As the overall editor of the project, I carefully reviewed all volume editor introductory chapters. Now the review process is turned over to you, the reader.

Media Studies Today

As an organizing principle for this book, I have followed since 2003 the structure provided by many different editions of Denis McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*:

An Introduction. Dating back to the first edition in 1983 and up to the sixth edition in 2010, whose name has changed, appropriately enough, to McQuail's *Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail provided a manageable way of dividing up the field into components that, while overlapping – as they had to be since these components were teased out more for scholarly inquiry than because they are discrete and differentiated – provided a useful way to look at the breadth of study of the media. We all experience media as an integrated experience. Media inherit values and histories that are in turn explicitly or implicitly incorporated into their production; then we either consume and/or interpret media in relation to regimes of representation, with particular audiences and interpretive tactics in mind, with some desired effects over which we have little control, and contributing to a future that – like effects – we wish we could influence but really cannot. Still for the purposes of research, we tease out the media experience into a number of areas.

The volumes of this encyclopedia match the sections of the *Companion*, which used McQuail's schema and added the “futures” section. Thus we have history, production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, and futures. We will later add a “methods” volume to complete the encyclopedia. While these areas are teased out for the purposes of research, there is great cross-pollination by scholars in media studies. We find that some scholars use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or at least rely on both. We also find that many scholars write about two or more of the six areas mentioned above. In fact, many of the major trends in current research encompass holistic media studies approaches. Among these contemporarily salient research projects are network analysis (e.g., Castells, 2009, 2010; Chan, 2007, 2011, forthcoming; Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010); girl studies (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Durham, 2004; Projansky, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Valdivia, 2008, 2009, 2011a); transnational feminism (Hegde, 2006; Molina Guzmán, 2010; Valdivia, 2011b); and neoliberalism as an undergirding framework of analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Hay, 2000, 2010, 2011; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monge, 2009). McCarthy (2011) expands the focus of neoliberalism in media to the educational system and the efforts of many cities, such as Chicago, to become a cosmopolitan, globally vibrant center of economic activity, thus linking media studies to educational policy studies.

Many of these recent research tendencies converge in the critical examination of the “posts.” Scholars develop amazing analyses demonstrating the potential of an intersectional approach that uses race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and class all at once, for people experience these elements in an integrated manner. Roopali Mukherjee's *The Racial Order of Things* (2006) set the bar for intersectional analysis of the “post-soul” era. Tasker and Negra (2007) provide a comprehensive introduction to the political implications of postfeminist culture, while Molina Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) apply the intersectional approach to the study of celebrity Latinas. Joseph (2010), in her provocatively entitled “Tyra Banks is Fat!” (a title that, to be fair, comes straight out of tabloid magazines and television coverage), explores the implicit racism and sexism of the postracial and postfeminist veneer of reality television

in general, and Tyra Banks's brand in particular. Molina Guzmán (2010) explores the transnational deployment and commodification of the Latina body, both spectacular and everyday. The politics of the post appears in all elements of media studies as these scholars foreground media studies even as they situate their work within a broader context of geopolitics and the dynamically changing mediascapes. While it may be fashionable to suggest the end of media studies, just as others have previously declared the end of history or of ideology, what this encyclopedia convincingly illustrates is the field's ability to expand as new practices, technologies, and institutions arise. As many of the editors and contributors will document, "new media" is a misnomer as neither the technology nor the uses or assemblages are so new (see Morley, 2006). What at first may seem to be epochal breaks are revealed by many of the contributors to be far more continuous elements in relation to history, culture, and media.

Editors and Volumes

We begin with normative theories and history. **John Nerone**, author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in US History* (1994), co-author, with Kevin Barnhurst, of *The Form of News: A History* (2001), and co-author and editor of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), as well as author of many other journal articles and book chapters, is the perfect historian to lead us through this fertile terrain of scholarship. Volume 1 on history underscores that while all media have long histories, historians agree neither on the definitive tale of origin nor on the particular historical approach. Moreover, Nerone, the careful historian, alerts us to the fact that even our use of the word media in relation to communications is quite recent.

Nerone's volume includes normative and historical approaches. Historical research, drawing on normative frameworks or not, continues to offer media studies scholars great insight and tools with which to understand contemporary media. Furthermore, there is great diversity within historical approaches to media studies. Beyond cultural memory and special effects as components of media history, we are also witnessing an explosion of careful work that revisits the archive, data, and documentation. Kafka (2009) brilliantly studies that most elemental component of media – paper. It seems like such a simple task: how do we study the construction and use of paper, the "bureau" in bureaucratization, the work of scribes? Kafka concludes that: "As scholars continue to research the history of paperwork, we need to keep in mind that we are defending not only the 'historical record,' but the political one" (2009, p. 352). Indeed, these are the perfect words to keep in mind as we read the volume on history so elegantly crafted by John Nerone.

Volume 2, *Media Production*, is composed by **Vicki Mayer**. Among the many publications by Mayer, we can list *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New*

Television Economy (2011), *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and Mass Media* (2003), and *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (co-edited with M. J. Banks and M. T. Caldwell, 2009). Mayer begins her volume by reminding us that “[M]edia production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how.” We expect to find, and we are not disappointed, a combination of keen attention paid to the sociological approach to our field, something about which McQuail had previously written in *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), and the more critical analysis of neo-Marxist political economy now accompanied by a focus on labor issues in the global setting. Moreover, as explicitly stated in one of her book titles, Mayer paradigmatically maintains a dialogue between political economy and cultural studies, an approach that resonates with globally used approaches in our field. The tension between structure and agency pervades this fine volume. Mayer remarks that “[I]f the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers.” So the new production studies is global by necessity as transnational ownership and production of media industries cannot be denied; blends political economy and cultural studies; foregrounds issues of labor, both above and below the line; and takes up issues of networks, intellectual property, and subjectivity as producers are constructed in terms of categories of identity.

Sharon Mazzarella, a prolific scholar of issues of youth and the media, leads us through the wide world of “content and representation.” Author or editor of books including *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2010), *20 Questions about Youth and Media* (2007), *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2005), and *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (2001), Mazzarella is a rigorously trained social scientist who also pursues qualitative research. As such she is the ideal editor for this volume, which is respectful of both of those methodological approaches. Indeed, for many a budding media studies scholar, content and representation provide the first point of entry, as these are the aspects of media that we experience most directly. Although, of course, all media have normative implications, histories, and a complex web of production, most people focus on the finished product: the television show, the movie, the blog, the social media website, the song, the newspaper, the advertisement, the catalogue. Content analysis is alluring yet amazingly difficult to carry out. Representational analysis also bears the sophistication of a range of theories. Neither is an easy task, and quantitative approaches complement interpretive studies. Mazzarella presents a persuasive argument as to why content/representational analysis remains an essential component of media studies and why projects that are well carried out tell us much about the world and the circuit of culture. Unsurprisingly, this area of research continues to be plentiful.

Radhika Parameswaran edits Volume 4 on audience and interpretation. Parameswaran’s research includes two long articles in *Journalism and Communication*

Monographs, “Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India” (2009, co-authored with K. Cardoza) and “Global Media Events in India: Contests Over Beauty, Gender, and Nation” (2001). Her work has focused on the intersection of feminist cultural studies, gender and media globalization, South Asia, and postcolonial studies with a particular emphasis on issues of audience and interpretation. As such she constructs a volume worthy of her areas of expertise, with plenty of chapters illustrating global and gender issues. This volume also bears the traces of an interdisciplinary field that includes social scientific paradigms such as uses and gratifications as well as more humanist approaches that now include global and online ethnographies. Parameswaran remarks that “audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception.” “Populist tendencies” refers to the “discovery” of the audience around every corner, as it were, without proper attention to issues of power and structure. In the contemporary moment, audience studies is vibrant and innovative. Whether we look at fans or online digital communities, to mention just two of the many possibilities, the construction and potential agency of the audience are major issues that continue to guide the production of media and subjectivities. Illustrative of the many philosophical quandaries undergirding the location of the audience within media studies is Jack Bratich’s chapter in Volume 6, as audience analysis is part of the present and future of the field. In addition, audience connects with issues of production as it undeniably takes labor to be part of any audience.

Erica Scharrer guides us through the fifth core component of media studies, media effects and media psychology, the dominant paradigm in the United States as well as in other global settings such as the Netherlands, and the paradigm that reaps the most funding in a positivist framework that values scientific demonstration of impact. Scharrer has co-authored, with G. Comstock, *Television: What’s On, Who’s Watching, and What it Means* (1999), *The Psychology of Media and Politics* (2005), and *Media and the American Child* (2007), and, with L. Weidman and K. Bissell, a long article in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, “Pointing the Finger of Blame: News Media Coverage of Popular-Culture Culpability” (2003). Scharrer brings to the volume on media effects/media psychology a long-standing engagement with the social scientific paradigm in our field. A well-carried-out effects study tells us much about the influence of media on individuals, groups, and societies. The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before. Thus Scharrer asks: “Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending

time with media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and conditions help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses?" These questions require complex methodological and theoretical expertise to answer. Many of us were schooled in a critique of the "hypodermic needle" model, though we have since learned that the media sometimes have or generate direct effects. Why else does a multibillion dollar advertising industry exist in the United States? However, we continue to marvel at the long-term cumulative effects that are far more complex than we originally anticipated. Furthermore, effects scholars, such as many of those contributing to Scharrer's volume, seek to explore how to effect positive change as well as how to avert more nefarious outcomes.

Finally for now,² the encyclopedia concludes with Volume 6 on media studies futures edited by **Kelly Gates**. Gates's own research is the veritable embodiment of a focus on futures. Author of *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance* (2011) as well as co-editor with Shoshana Magnet of *The New Media of Surveillance* (2009), Gates studies the discursive formation of the wishful deployment of recognition technology with an "almost gleeful futurism" that suggests "if only" the systems were in place, before 9/11, for instance, our present and future would be different, better, and so on.³ Futures is, by definition, a transient category, as within 10 years the content of this volume will be the stuff of the present, or maybe even the recent past. As Raymond Williams has written, we cannot anticipate what will be an emergent media form until it is *post facto*. The futures volume takes up some of the issues around Internet, gaming, social media, mobile telephone in a converged media form, biopolitics, and digitalization technologies such as biometric body scans. Gates asserts that media studies needs to take seriously the possibility that *radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media are and where they are headed. All of the chapters in this volume could be retrofitted into the other five volumes. Yet together they compose a vision of the field as it moves forward, taking up issues that date back centuries, engaging them with theories and modes of media that only apparently represent new terrain.

This is the state of the art of media studies. It is a field where we know better than to use the term "new" media – for all media are somewhat new but also very old in many of their aspects. Scholars in this encyclopedia take us back to the production of paper even as they bring us up to the latest technologies, assemblages, and institutions that arise to mediate our world. Contributors to this encyclopedia share the belief not only that media studies is an academic exercise, but also that by engaging in this important area of studies we are somehow contributing to a more just vision of the world. As the separate volumes build on each other, whether we are engaged in media at any of their analytical nodes (production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology), we are simultaneously linked to its history and its future. As a diverse heterogeneous field that is global, interdisciplinary, intersectional, multi-methodological, I cannot imagine a more exciting and potentially liberatory academic enterprise to be involved with.

NOTES

- 1 In this introduction and whenever possible, this encyclopedia uses “America” to refer to a continent and “US” or “United States” to refer to the country, unless we are quoting from scholarship that uses “America” otherwise.
- 2 A *Methods* volume is projected to be released at a later date, edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.
- 3 Few people know that Gates submitted her dissertation proposal the day before 9/11. What to the committee seemed like futuristic queries became the very real present within a period of 24 hours.

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Mapping the Psychology of Agenda Setting

I

Theories of/about Effects Maxwell McCombs
and Jae Kook Lee

ABSTRACT

In the decades since the seminal Chapel Hill study, agenda setting has evolved into a broad theory and set of hypotheses encompassing five theoretical areas. Characterized by two major trends, all five of these areas remain active research arenas. There is a *centrifugal trend*, the expansion into new domains and settings far beyond the original realm of public issues. Their counterpoint is a *centripetal trend* in which scholars have turned their attention inward to further explication of the theory's basic concepts. Much of this work concentrates on the psychology of the agenda-setting process. This chapter examines the role of incidental learning and of moderator and mediating variables in the agenda-setting process, and the impact of agenda-setting effects at both the first and second level on the formation of attitudes and opinions and on subsequent behavior.

Classic Conceptualizations and Emerging Trends

The media lay the foundations of public opinion through their substantial influence on the topics at the center of public attention. This agenda-setting role of the media, its influence on what the public comes to regard as the most important topics of the

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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day, has its intellectual origins in Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922). His thesis that the news media are the bridge between the vast world of public affairs and each citizen's limited perspective of that world was empirically tested by McCombs and Shaw (1972) during the 1968 US presidential election. In the decades since their tightly focused media effects study in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, agenda setting has evolved into a broad theory of communication and set of hypotheses encompassing five theoretical areas.

Characterized by two major trends, all five of these areas remain vigorous research arenas today. There is a *centrifugal trend*, the expansion of agenda-setting research into new domains and settings far beyond the original realm of public issues. This includes such disparate areas as professional sports (Fortunato, 2001), corporate reputations (Meijer & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006), classroom teaching (Rodriguez, 2004), and religious practice (Hellinger & Rashi, 2009). Their counterpoint is a *centripetal trend* in which scholars have turned their attention inward to the continuing explication of the theory's basic concepts. Much of this work concentrates on the psychology of the agenda-setting process, which is the primary focus here. After a brief overview of all five areas of agenda setting, this chapter will examine the role of incidental learning and of moderator and mediating variables in the agenda-setting process, and the impact of agenda-setting effects at both the first and second level on the formation of attitudes and opinions and on subsequent behavior.

An Overview

In their seminal study, McCombs and Shaw (1972) compared the pattern of issue coverage in the news media used by voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with the list of issues that these voters considered the most important ones of the day. The media agenda of issues can be precisely described by rank-ordering those issues according to the amount of news coverage that they receive. In similar fashion, the public agenda of issues can be precisely described by rank-ordering the same issues according to the proportion of the public that regards each of these as the most important issue of the day. The high correlation found in Chapel Hill between the news media's issue agenda and the public's issue agenda supported McCombs and Shaw's theoretical proposition regarding the transfer of issue salience from the media agenda to the public agenda. In the decades since the Chapel Hill study, this basic agenda-setting effect – the influence of the media agenda on the public agenda – has been widely replicated in election and non-election settings for a vast array of issues worldwide and with a wide variety of study designs at both the macro and individual level (McCombs, 2004, pp. 30–32).

The 1972 Charlotte presidential election study (Shaw & McCombs, 1977) introduced a second area of agenda-setting theory, the elaboration of contingent conditions that moderate the strength of agenda-setting effects. Although Wanta and

Ghanem's (2000) meta-analysis of 90 studies from a wide range of settings found a mean correlation of +.53 with a relatively small variance, there are findings falling well outside this range. For example, Eaton's (1989) individual analysis of 11 issues found correlations between the media and public agendas ranging from $-.44$ for morality to $+.87$ for government performance. The median was $+.45$ for poverty. Foremost among the contingent conditions explaining these variations is the psychological concept of need for orientation (Weaver, 1977), which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The 1972 Charlotte study also introduced the concept of a second level of agenda-setting effects, attribute agenda setting. In theoretical terms, the Chapel Hill study examined basic agenda-setting effects, the transfer of object salience from the media to the public. *Object* is used here with the same meaning as the term *attitude object* is used in social psychology. For each object on the media agenda or the public agenda, an agenda of attributes can also be identified. This agenda is the hierarchy of attributes describing the object. For example, during the early months of the US presidential election, the news media present an agenda of candidates. The salience of these objects among the public reflects basic agenda-setting effects. The news media also describe these candidates, telling us about some of their attributes. Just as the rank-order of objects on the media and public agendas are compared to measure basic agenda-setting effects, the rank-order of attributes on the media and public agendas are compared to measure attribute agenda setting, the third area of agenda-setting theory (McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981).

The attributes of an object have both a substantive and affective dimension. Substantive attributes are the cognitive elements of messages that describe the denotative characteristics of an object. Examples of the substantive attributes of a political candidate are ideology and issue positions. For issues, substantive attributes include sub-areas – for example, unemployment and budget deficits as sub-areas of the economic problem – as well as such aspects of an issue as proposed solutions. The affective dimension is the positive, neutral, or negative tone in the descriptions of an object's attributes.

This core theoretical model of agenda setting described by first and second level agenda-setting effects and the contingent conditions moderating the strength of these effects has expanded in recent years to a fourth theoretical area describing the consequences of these effects for attitudes and opinions. All four of these areas will receive major attention in this chapter. A fifth area of agenda-setting theory, which is of less interest here, concerns the origins of the media agenda. This area links agenda setting to another field of mass communication research, the sociology of news.

The tightly focused Chapel Hill definition of agenda setting as the influence of the news media on the salience of public issues among the public has evolved into a broad theoretical perspective defining agenda setting as the influence of major elements in media messages – numerous objects and their attributes – on the salience of these elements among the public. We now turn to the centripetal trend in

contemporary research explicating the psychology of this agenda-setting process: the role of incidental learning and of moderator and mediating variables in the agenda-setting process, and the impact of agenda-setting effects at both the first and second level on the formation of attitudes and opinions and on subsequent behavior.

Agenda-Setting Effects from Incidental Exposure

Learning from the media can be either intentional or incidental. While the acquisition of information from the media usually has been conceptualized as an active process, incidental exposure is a viable alternative route to becoming informed. Agenda setting, which involves the acquisition of information about the salience of objects and their attributes, also is possible through both routes, intentional exposure or incidental exposure. At times, people pay close attention to the messages of the media. At other times, attention to these messages is far more casual.

Incidental learning has been discussed under a wide variety of definitions – occurring with minimal conscious allocation of attention (Bettman, 1979), without intent to remember (Jenkins, 1933), and without learning instructions (Frensch, 1998). The exact term used also varies – “low involvement learning” (Krugman, 1965; Robertson, 1976), “spectator learning” (Posner, 1973), and “incidental learning” (McLaughlin, 1965). Despite these variations, all refer to a phenomenon of learning passively about the environment without any significant involvement and intent to learn.

Learning about public affairs is costly when individuals expend resources to actively search for information, argues Downs (1957). However, the public often receives information in the course of doing other things, situations which involve little or no information costs. Popkin (1994) noted that most of the information that citizens use when they vote is acquired as a by-product of activities routinely pursued in their daily lives.

Incidental learning about public affairs that is relevant to the acquisition of knowledge in general, as well as to specific agenda-setting effects, can occur in two different ways: (1) through reactions to interruptions and (2) through low levels of attention (Bettman, 1979). When someone encounters information that attracts his or her attention while doing something else, this interruption can result in becoming informed even though the individual did not actively seek out the information (Beales, Mazis, Salop, & Staelin, 1981). The impact of soft news on people’s learning about foreign affairs (Baum, 2002, 2003) is an example of this interruption effect, in that the political information intrudes or *interrupts* while viewers are seeking casual entertainment or relaxation.

People also can acquire information without being significantly involved. The effects of low attention and low involvement learning are especially relevant for television and online messages in comparison to newspapers. Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) found that television is a more powerful tool for people to learn about

low salience issues, suggesting learning with low involvement. Acar (2007) found that incidental exposure to text advertising above an online gaming screen made a difference in preference for the advertised product.

Taking a slightly different tack, Frensch (1998) proposed two conditions under which implicit learning can occur: effortlessness and ubiquity. The first condition, effortlessness, is equivalent to Downs' (1957) concept of expending minimal information cost to learn about public affairs. The second condition, ubiquity, is related to the high level of redundancy across news media on the major issues of the day, so that even low levels of exposure are likely to create an awareness of these issues.

For example, people in northern New Jersey were more aware of candidates in a neighboring New York City election than were those in southern New Jersey, though most residents of New Jersey had no interest in the New York City elections (Zukin & Snyder, 1984). Northern New Jersey is in the same broadcasting market as New York City, so that people in the area were exposed to New York election news, regardless of their interest in it.

Marketing research suggests that incidental learning can influence the consequences of first and second level agenda-setting effects for subsequent attitudes and opinions. Janiszewski (1993) found that consumers' attitudes toward products in advertisements were formed in the absence of any conscious processing of the information. After reading a student newspaper that had been manipulated for the study, subjects in the treatment group had higher scores than those in a control group in a series of questions asking about their impressions of the products.

Although considerable evidence suggests that incidental exposure can contribute to awareness about many items, few studies have specifically investigated agenda-setting effects resulting from incidental exposure. One explanation for the paucity of research is methodological. Due to the nature of incidental exposure, it is extremely difficult in survey research to measure whether or how much people are incidentally exposed to messages in the media. However, a recent experimental study demonstrated that individuals incidentally exposed to a public issue were more likely to regard the issue as important than those not exposed to the issue (Lee, 2009). Three groups were incidentally exposed to news stories about the environment, while a control group was not exposed to the stories. The degree and nature of the incidental exposure was manipulated by specific instructions about the task, which was evaluating the usefulness of a college website designed for a general audience. One group only was instructed to navigate the website in order to evaluate its usefulness. Another group was instructed to move the cursor and hover over, but not to click on, banner ads leading to the web pages with the news stories, while the third group was instructed to click on the ads and then read the news stories for 10 seconds. Subjects in the third group, which was directed to pay some attention, but a very minimal level of attention, to the news stories about the environment, had significantly higher scores on the perceived importance of that issue than any of the other groups.

Incidental exposure is the lowest level of attention to media messages, but even this minimal exposure can have significant consequences. We swim in a vast sea of news,

absorbing news and information about the world around us through a continuous process of civic osmosis. There is abundant empirical evidence from the earliest days of our field about this learning from an array of media sources rather than a few distinct sources (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944, p. 122; McCombs et al., 2000, Table 4; Stromback & Kioussis, 2010). In the contemporary setting, Coleman and McCombs (2007) found that although younger adults are not exposed to traditional media as frequently as older generations and use the Internet significantly more, the agenda-setting effects of newspapers and TV news are highly similar across generations. This process of civic osmosis also is buttressed by the finding that the strength of agenda-setting effects are not monotonic with increasing levels of exposure, but frequently reach asymptote after moderate levels of exposure (McCombs, 2004, Box 5.2). The pervasiveness of these patterns of exposure also explains why many agenda-setting research designs do not explicitly measure individuals' level of media use.

Although some minimal level of accessibility is necessary for agenda-setting effects to occur as a consequence of exposure, individual differences regarding the applicability of the information also must be considered.

When people identify, interpret or, more generally, respond to a stimulus, what knowledge will be activated and used in their response? In answering this question, accessibility and applicability have been described as two distinct sources of knowledge activation, with salience contributing to knowledge activation through its influence on applicability. (Higgins, 1996, p. 164)

Wanta (1997) and Price and Tewksbury (1997) specifically linked the knowledge activation model to basic agenda-setting effects, evaluative responses by members of the public that a particular issue is an important problem facing the country. Other agenda-setting effects, the salience of various objects and attributes among members of the public, involve similar evaluative judgments.

Need for Orientation

Weaver (1977) introduced the psychological concept of need for orientation to agenda-setting theory in the 1972 Charlotte study of the US presidential campaign. In the civic arena, there are many situations where citizens feel a need for orientation. For example, in primary elections to select a party's nominee for office, there sometimes are as many as a dozen, largely unfamiliar candidates. Because it is a primary election, one orientating cue frequently used by voters, party affiliation, is moot. In these circumstances, voters frequently turn to the news media for orientation. Not every voter feels this need for orientation to the same degree, of course. Some citizens desire considerable information before making their voting decision. Others desire no more than a simple orienting cue. These individual differences in the desire

for orienting cues and information explain differences in attention to the media agenda and differences in the degree to which individuals accept the media agenda.

Conceptually, an individual's need for orientation is defined in terms of two lower-order concepts, relevance and uncertainty. Relevance is the initial necessary condition. Individuals have little or no need for orientation in numerous situations in the realm of public affairs because these situations are not perceived to be relevant. In these circumstances, the need for orientation is low or even nonexistent.

Among individuals who perceive the relevance of a topic to be high – to keep matters simple, relevance is dichotomized here as either low or high – the level of uncertainty about the topic must be considered. Sometimes individuals already have all the information they desire, and their degree of uncertainty is low. In this circumstance, people usually do not ignore the news media, but they primarily monitor the news in order to detect any significant changes in the situation at hand. Under these conditions of high relevance, but low uncertainty, the need for orientation is moderate. At other times, such as primary elections, both relevance and uncertainty are high. These circumstances define a high need for orientation.

The greater an individual's need for orientation, the more likely they are to reflect the issue agenda of the media. Figure 1.1 outlines the concept of need for orientation and reports the level of agenda-setting effects found amongst Charlotte voters during the 1972 US presidential election. During the summer months as the campaign took shape and, again during the fall campaign, agenda-setting effects increased monotonically with the strength of the need for orientation. This same monotonic pattern also was found in a Japanese mayoral election (Takeshita, 1993) and in many other settings subsequently.

As noted earlier, the core idea of agenda setting refers to the ability of the news media to focus public attention on a few key objects and on the dominant attributes of those objects. These attributes have two dimensions. Substantive attributes refer to specific components of an object, and affective attributes refer to evaluations of the components.

<u>RELEVANCE</u>		NEED FOR ORIENTATION	AGENDA-SETTING EFFECTS		
			US (Charlotte) June October		Japan
Low	-----	LOW	+ .15	+ .29	+ .39
<u>UNCERTAINTY</u>					
	Low -----	MODERATE	+ .35	+ .59	+ .62
High	-----				
	High -----	HIGH	+ .41	+ .68	+ .86

Figure 1.1 Need for orientation and agenda-setting effects.

In accordance with these core concepts of agenda-setting theory, Matthes (2006) developed three sets of measures of the need for orientation. Corresponding to the first level of agenda setting, there is a measure of need for orientation toward the object itself. For example, an individual may believe “it is important for me to observe this issue constantly.” Two additional measures examine need for orientation to specific aspects of an object. These measures take into account the second level of agenda setting, specifically, the substantive attributes of the object under consideration, “I would like to be thoroughly informed about specific details,” and the affective attributes of the object, specifically the journalistic evaluations found in commentaries and editorials, “I attach great importance to commentaries on this topic.”

Matthes (2006, 2008) found that these three sets of measures are highly correlated (the correlations range from $+0.70$ to $+0.88$), and their scores can be summed to create a single need for orientation (NFO) score for each individual. In an investigation of the issue of unemployment in Germany, Matthes (2008) found that the strength of NFO measured by this composite scale predicted basic first-level agenda-setting effects. However, the strength of NFO measured by the composite scale did not predict media effects at the second level of agenda setting, specifically, the affective attribute of the unemployment issue.

Chernov, Valenzuela, and McCombs (2009) examined the comparative strength of the traditional NFO measures and these new NFO measures in predicting agenda-setting effects among participants in a controlled experiment. Both sets of measures independently predicted first-level agenda-setting effects. The comparative strength of the two measures was examined in a series of multiple regressions. When the traditional NFO scale and the new summary NFO scale were entered simultaneously, the traditional NFO scale was the stronger predictor. Further analyses identified the first sub-dimension of the new NFO scale, the sub-dimension directly concerned with first-level agenda setting, as a stronger predictor than either the total scale or the other two dimensions. Finally, comparison of the traditional NFO scale with the first sub-dimension of the new NFO scale indicated that the traditional scale is slightly stronger.

Which is the preferred measure? Where they differ is their focus of attention. For the traditional NFO scale, the focus of attention is the news in general about a particular topic. For the three components of NFO introduced by Matthes, the attention is on aspects of the news that can be investigated as three specific focal points in the evaluation of relevance.

Elaborating the Concept of Relevance

Agenda setting is not a contemporary version of the massive media effects theories, such as the bullet theory or hypodermic model, that were popular in the early days of mass communication research. The media can stimulate agenda-setting effects,

but the magnitude of these effects is moderated by a variety of individual differences. Among these moderators, the accumulated evidence regarding need for orientation suggests that in particular a key moderator variable is relevance. Although uncertainty also defines NFO, it plays only a secondary role of distinguishing between moderate and high NFO for persons considering a topic relevant.

Over the years the relevance of public issues and other objects has been examined from a variety of perspectives, and closer attention to these studies in this review revealed the theoretical gestalt diagrammed in Figure 1.2. Explicating the dimensions of relevance, Evatt and Ghanem's (2001) analysis of the public's response to eight different issues on a set of 13 semantic differential scales identified two substantive

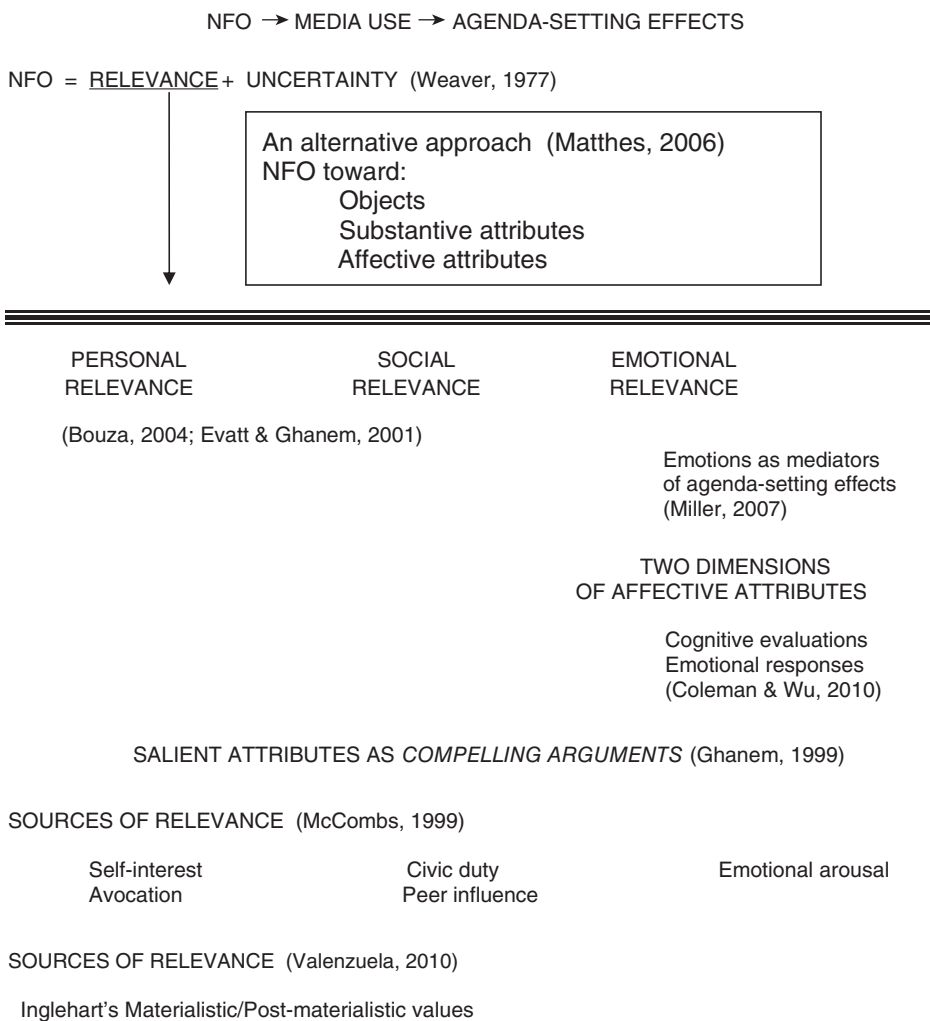


Figure 1.2 A theoretical gestalt: the psychology of relevance and agenda-setting effects.

aspects of issue salience, social relevance and personal relevance, and an affective aspect of issue salience, emotional relevance. Bouza (2004, p. 250) made a similar theoretical distinction to identify the *impact area* of political communication:

individuals maintain an important area of personal interests that is separated, to a certain degree, from what that individual considers to be public interests or everyone's interests . . . This clear distinction between an area of personal interests and another area of public interests makes the existence of an area that I will define as the impact area of political communications possible . . . because it is the area in which the individual feels a clear coincidence between the country and himself . . .

Approaching the concept of relevance from a different perspective, a pair of statewide polls in Texas explored why respondents named a particular issue in response to the widely used Gallup MIP question, "What is the most important problem facing this country today?" (McCombs, 1999). Using a set of questions developed to probe the personal resonance of an issue, analysis of these polls from 1992 and 1996 identified a stable set of five sources of issue relevance: self-interest, avocation, civic duty, peer influence, and emotional arousal. As Figure 1.2 indicates, these five motivations dovetail with Evatt and Ghanem's distinction between personal salience, social salience and emotional salience.

Focusing on emotional salience in *The Political Brain*, Drew Westen (2007, p. ix) declared that "the vision of mind that has captured the imagination of philosophers, cognitive scientists, economists, and political scientists since the eighteenth century – a *dispassionate mind* that makes decisions by weighing the evidence and reasoning to the most valid conclusions – bears no relation to how the mind and brain actually work." And in an agenda-setting experiment, Miller (2007) found that emotional responses to the news mediated agenda-setting effects, specifically when exposure to news stories was about the issue of crime, resulted in participants feeling sad or afraid. Although these two specific emotional responses mediated the relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda, other emotional responses did not result in a greater likelihood of regarding crime as an important problem facing the nation. Altogether the experiment measured the extent to which participants felt angry, proud, hopeful, and happy as well as sad and afraid while reading news stories about crime. Only feelings of being sad or afraid mediated the agenda-setting effect. Neither a general measure of emotional arousal nor a general measure of valence created from combinations of all six emotional responses explained the link between exposure to crime news and naming crime as an important issue facing the nation. However, the creation of negative valence did result in a greater likelihood of naming crime.

These findings are an opening gambit for agenda-setting research linked with the investigation of affective intelligence, an emerging area mapping the broad role of emotions across a wide range of political behavior that complements a rational person model of human behavior with an emotional person model of

human behavior (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000; Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, & MacKuen, 2007).

Coleman and Wu (2010) introduced a further theoretical distinction between two components of affective attributes: affect as emotion and affect as cognitive evaluations in terms of positive and negative. Details of their empirical results are presented below in the discussion of the affective impact of visual information. Here the research question is how these distinctions might clarify the concept of compelling arguments and previous research on emotional salience.

Certain characteristics of an object of attention may resonate with the public in such a way that these attributes become compelling arguments for the salience of the issue, person or topic under consideration. Ghanem (1997) found that not only did intensive crime coverage in the news generate high levels of public concern about crime as the most important problem facing the country (first-level agenda setting), but that an attribute of these crimes in the news – their psychological distance operationalized by drive-by shootings and local crime – influenced the salience of crime on the public agenda. This attribute was a compelling argument for the salience of crime as a public issue.

A dramatically different example of a compelling argument was found during the 1990 German national election, where the salience of problems in the former East Germany significantly declined among voters despite intensive news coverage (Schoenbach & Semetko, 1992). In this case, the compelling argument was the positive tone of the news coverage on the issue of German integration, an attribute that reduced the salience of the issue on the public agenda. More recent studies of compelling arguments have documented the impact of negative tone in the news on the salience of the economy on the public agenda (Sheafer, 2007); the impact of candidate attributes in the news across five US presidential elections on the public salience of those candidates (Kiousis, 2005); and during the 2000 US presidential election the impact of positive and negative attributes of issues in Kerry political ads (but not Bush ads) on the salience of these same issues on the public agenda (Golan, Kiousis, & McDaniel, et al., 2007). Although all these studies illustrate that compelling attributes on one agenda can influence object salience on another agenda, systematic theoretical mapping of which attributes function as compelling arguments – and the discrete roles of substantive and affective attributes – remains understudied.

Probing more deeply into what defines the relevance of public issues for an individual, Valenzuela (2011) found that Inglehart's (1977, 1990) concept of materialist and post-materialist values is strongly related to agenda-setting effects. Using a content analysis of major daily newspapers across Canada and survey data from a nationally representative sample interviewed during the 2006 Canadian national election, Valenzuela found that at both the aggregate and individual levels there were stronger agenda-setting effects among persons with materialist values than among those with post-materialist values. At the aggregate level, the correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda was +.55 for materialists and +.35 for post-materialists. These findings are consistent with the media's more prominent coverage

of materialist issues such as the economy and crime relative to post-materialist issues such as the environment and political reform. Further analysis at the individual level used an index of post-materialist values to predict susceptibility to agenda setting (Wanta, 1997). Controlling for demographics and political involvement, people with materialist values were more susceptible to the influence of a media agenda dominated by materialist issues than people with post-materialist values.

This theoretical gestalt defined by a half dozen previously scattered studies shows considerable promise for explicating the long-standing concept of relevance in agenda-setting theory.

Knowledge Activation and Agenda Setting

Both of the knowledge activation model's core concepts, applicability and accessibility, are pertinent to agenda-setting theory. Todorov's (2000) analysis of response patterns in survey research refers to applicability as the relevance of the larger context and specifically noted "the size of accessibility effects as a function of the applicability of knowledge activated by the initial questions" (p. 430). He further noted that "applicability constrains accessibility effects – a highly accessible concept may not be applied when it doesn't share any relevant features with the stimulus" (p. 431).

In contrast, Price and Tewksbury (1997) and Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan (2002) argued that agenda-setting effects can be explained on the basis of accessibility alone and framing effects on the basis of applicability (see Chapter 3, this volume). However, the research on need for orientation demonstrates that the salience of issues on the public agenda involves more than the accessibility of those issues as a consequence of the frequency with which they have appeared in the news. The perceived importance to an individual of an issue presented by the media is significantly moderated by that individual's perception of the issue's relevance, which is the core defining concept of need for orientation.

One of the few attempts to empirically distinguish accessibility and perceived importance is Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley's (1997) experiment comparing the effects of TV news stories that presented two different attributes of a highly publicized KKK rally, free speech versus public order. Nelson et al. concluded:

Media framing of the KKK controversy significantly affected tolerance for the group, and this effect came about primarily because the two frames stressed the relevance or importance of different values (free speech versus public order), not because the frames altered the cognitive accessibility of these values. (p. 574)

. . . Our results point to a more deliberative integration process, whereby participants consider the importance and relevance of each accessible idea. (p. 578)

Kim et al. (2002) focused specifically on the accessibility of six attributes of an urban development issue. Although the accessibility of these issue attributes increased

sharply with greater exposure to the local newspaper, the resulting attribute agendas among the public did not correspond to the attribute agenda presented in the news coverage.

There was, however, no apparent correspondence of salience of attributes between the media and their audience. Among both High and Medium Exposure respondents, *Increased Sales-Tax Revenues*, *Increased Potential for Flooding*, and *Increased Traffic*, which were emphasized in the media, were not more salient (accessible) than other attributes. Particularly, the *Increased Potential for Flooding* was in fact the least salient attribute among High Exposure and Medium Exposure respondents. (Kim et al., 2002, pp. 16–17)

What emerged was a very different media effect in which the *relative* amount of increased accessibility for the attributes among newspaper readers paralleled the media attribute agenda. These effects are different from the attribute agenda-setting effects based on direct comparisons of the media and public attribute agendas for various issues and public figures over the years (Benton & Frazier, 1976; Dussaillant, 2005; McCombs et al., 2000; Mikami, Takeshita, Nakada, & Kawabata, 1994; Weaver et al., 1981).

Testing the hypothesis that accessibility mediates the relationship between media exposure and agenda-setting effects, Miller (2007) reported two experiments using different operational definitions of accessibility that failed to find support for the hypothesis. The relevance of an item in the news is the operative factor in setting the agenda, with considerably more modest and mixed evidence for the role of cognitive accessibility.

Consequences for Attitudes and Opinions

Contemporary research is mapping the consequences of both first and second-level agenda-setting effects for attitudes and opinions, both the traditional focus in communication research on the direction of opinion – whether it is positive or negative – as well as the strength of opinion. The latter begins with the question of whether people have an opinion at all and subsequently considers the intensity of that opinion regardless of its direction.

Among the consequences of agenda-setting effects for the direction of opinion, priming is the most widely investigated. Priming is the influence of the news media on the criteria that people use to evaluate political figures and government policies. The agenda-setting effects of news coverage frequently result in the enhanced salience of an issue among the public, and this issue in turn becomes the criterion for evaluating a political figure or government policy. In other words, priming is an extension of the agenda-setting process (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Scheufele, 2000).

In the classic laboratory experiments conducted by Iyengar and Kinder (1987), issues that received extensive TV news coverage were more salient (agenda-setting effects) and were more likely to influence evaluations of the president's performance (priming effects) among participants exposed to this news than among a control group. Priming effects also have been found in field studies. Heavy news coverage of the Iran-Contra scandal shortly after the 1986 election significantly influenced respondents' opinions about Ronald Reagan's performance as president. The weight of assistance to the Contras in evaluations of the president increased substantially after revelation of the scandal (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Research on priming beyond the US political context has demonstrated similar results. News coverage of political reform proposals announced by the last British governor of Hong Kong significantly influenced the weight that the public assigned to these proposals in their evaluation of the governor's performance (Willnat & Zhu, 1996). News coverage of various issues during the 1986 German election also primed preferences for the two major political parties (Brosius & Kepplinger, 1992).

Another source of influence on the direction of opinion is attribute priming. As illustrated in Figure 1.3, attribute priming is a consequence of attribute agenda-

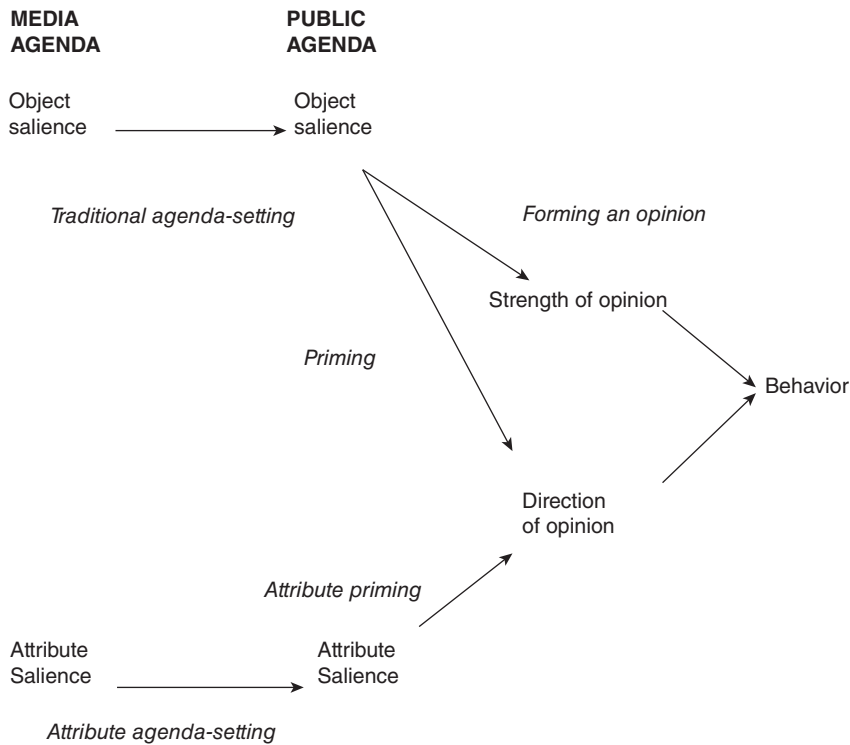


Figure 1.3 Consequences of agenda-setting effects for opinions and behavior. Reprinted from M. McCombs (2004). *Setting the agenda*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

setting effects, a process elaborating the broader concept of attitude and opinion change in which it is the increased salience among the public of specific attributes emphasized in news coverage that influences the weights people assign to those attributes in their evaluations of attitude objects.

This process of attribute priming frequently is a consequence of the affective tone of particularly salient attributes; that is, the degree to which salient attributes are perceived as positive or negative by the public. Sheafer (2007) refers to this influence as *affective attribute priming* and found significant evidence for this consequence of attribute agenda setting in his study of five Israeli elections. The more negative the media coverage of the economy, the lower were the evaluations of the general performance of the incumbent political party. Media coverage not only primed the economy as a criterion for judging the performance of the party in power, the affective tone of that coverage influenced the direction of the evaluations.

A study of state and federal elections in Texas combined both substantive and affective dimensions to examine the effects of attribute priming on people's opinions of the candidates for governor and US senator (Kim & McCombs, 2007). Significant relationships were found between the attribute agenda-setting effects of the news media and people's opinions of these four candidates. Additional analyses found that a greater number of the attributes describing the candidates' qualifications and character predicted individuals' opinions toward the candidates for heavy readers than for light readers.

Other evidence of a link between the affective attribute agenda and the direction of opinions was found in a comparison of Spanish citizens' ratings of six major political figures on an attitude scale with their descriptions of these men in response to an open-ended question used to elicit their attribute agendas (Lopez-Escobar, McCombs, & Tolsa, 2007). For these six public figures, the correlations between citizens' ratings and the overall tone of their affective attribute agenda ranged from $+ .78$ to $+ .97$. Low ratings were coupled with very negative descriptions, high ratings with very positive descriptions.

The consequences of agenda-setting effects also have been investigated for opinion formation and the strength of attitudes and opinions. Kioussis and McCombs (2004) found that the salience of 11 public figures in the news during the 1996 US presidential election was strongly correlated with the proportion of the public having an opinion about these persons, in particular, the strength of those opinions measured by both dispersion (holding a non-neutral opinion) and polarization (holding an extreme opinion). For dispersion, the median correlation was $+ .81$; for polarization, $+ .70$.

Evidence for a link between the public salience of issues and opinion strength also was documented by Rossler and Schenk (2000). The salience of two issues, German reunification and East German migrants, significantly predicted the strength of opinion on these two issues.

In accordance with the traditional sequence in hierarchy of effects models (McGuire, 1989), the prevailing view is that media salience influences public salience (an agenda-setting effect), which in turn affects the strength of opinion on the issue.

However, Kiouisis and McCombs (2004) found evidence for a transposed sequence of effects. Both opinion dispersion (holding a non-neutral attitude) and opinion polarization (holding an extreme attitude) mediated the relationship between the media salience and public salience of major public figures. In other words, media salience influenced having an opinion about a person, which in turn affected the public salience of that person. Though Kiouisis and McCombs raised an intriguing question about the order of the relationship between issue salience and attitude strength, nevertheless, their study provided strong evidence for a link between agenda setting and opinion formation.

For the budget deficit issue, Weaver (1991) documented significant relationships between issue salience and both opinion strength and the direction of opinion. As the salience of the deficit issue increased, opinion on the issue became stronger. Weaver (1991, p. 65) also noted the effects on the direction of opinion: "These findings tend to support Katz's (1980) conclusion that 'as a latent consequence of telling us what to think *about*, the agenda-setting effect can sometimes influence what we think' . . ."

Affective Impact of Visual Information

Although the television agenda, both at the first and second levels of agenda setting, is included in dozens of studies, nearly all of the television data reflects the text messages of TV news and political advertising. However, television is preeminently a visual medium of communication, and the lack of research examining its visual component has been a significant gap in our understanding of the agenda-setting role of the media.

Expanding second-level agenda setting to include the affective agenda of television news in its visual portrayals of presidential candidates, Coleman and Banning (2006) examined the national television news coverage of George Bush and Al Gore during the 2000 US presidential campaign. Their content analysis of the two candidates' nonverbal behavior – facial expressions, posture, and gestures – found more shots showing positive behavior by Gore than by Bush and more shots showing negative behavior by Bush than by Gore.

To determine whether these television images are related to the public's affective impressions of Bush and Gore, Coleman and Banning conducted a secondary analysis of the 2000 National Election Studies. One set of NES questions for each candidate asked if he had ever made the respondent feel "angry," "hopeful," "afraid," and "proud." Another set of questions asked respondents to what extent seven words and phrases described Bush and Gore. Two of these referred to negative character traits – "dishonest" and "out of touch with ordinary people", while five referred to positive character traits – "moral," "really cares about people like you," "knowledgeable," "provides strong leadership," and "intelligent." Scores on these questions were summed to form a positive and a negative affective attribute index for each candidate.

Comparisons of the positive and negative media agenda of attributes with the public's positive and negative agenda of attributes found modest evidence for the impact of visual messages. For Bush, there were significant correlations between the media and the public for both the positive and negative attribute agendas (+.13 for each). For Gore there was a significant correlation between the media and public only for the positive attribute agenda (+.20). Coleman and Banning (p. 321) note, "While the effect of nonverbal cues may be less than the effects reported for some verbal cues, the effect is nevertheless significant. . . . Visuals can play an important albeit modest role in facilitating impression formation in the political process."

Extending this analysis of affective agenda-setting effects from visuals, Coleman and Wu (2010) introduced the theoretical distinction noted earlier between affect as emotion and affect as cognitive evaluations in terms of positive and negative. No significant correlations were found between their measures of nonverbal behavior by Bush and Gore in the TV news shots with either the public's cognitive evaluations of the candidates' traits or the public's positive emotional responses to the candidates. Significant relationships were found between the content of the TV visuals and negative emotional responses (+.10 for Bush and +.12 for Kerry).

Political and Civic Participation

Beyond their impact on attitudes and opinions, agenda-setting effects have consequences for a wide scope of political and civic behavior. Discussion of politics, voting on election day, and donating money to political causes as well as more diffuse aspects of civic participation, such as membership in civic groups and community involvement, are linked to agenda-setting effects (Moon, 2008). There are consequences of first-level agenda-setting effects on issues from exposure to newspapers and television for both political participation and civic participation, consequences that are both direct as well as mediated by opinion strength. For second-level agenda-setting effects on the images of candidates, Moon found consequences for political participation from exposure to newspapers and television. The impact of agenda-setting effects on political participation was both direct as well as mediated by opinion strength. Exposure to the news and the resulting agenda-setting effects facilitate a wide range of political and civic participation.

Conclusion

Civic osmosis, the acquisition of information about public affairs often with little effort or close attention, results from the ubiquity and redundancy of the mass media. Among the significant by-products of these repetitive messages in the media are basic

agenda-setting effects and attribute agenda-setting effects. However, this media influence on the foundations of public opinion is tempered by individual differences among members of the public in the perceived relevance of these messages. A major contribution of this chapter is a theoretical gestalt elaborating the concept of relevance, which is the major theoretical component of need for orientation. This gestalt links a set of three perspectives on relevance – personal, social, and emotional – with the idea of compelling arguments and with individual attitudes defined by Inglehart's materialistic/post-materialistic values. This gestalt also further elaborates the emotional aspects of agenda setting. Beyond explicating the moderating and mediating variables in the psychology of agenda setting, this review also suggests new avenues of research into the consequences of agenda-setting effects for attitudes, opinions, and behavior. All of this will be productive for mapping agenda-setting effects in the expanding media landscape, a setting in which the broad effects of the traditional media and their new media counterparts are likely to co-exist with the tightly focused effects of niche media serving narrow and highly selective personal interests.

Agenda setting continues to offer an expanding array of new and theoretically important questions to be explored in all five areas of the theory. In the words of the famous fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, "Come, Watson, come. The game is afoot."

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Cultivation Theory

Television Fiction as a Vector of Socialization

Jan Van den Bulck

ABSTRACT

Cultivation theory was developed by George Gerbner of the Annenberg School for Communication and his colleagues in the late 1960s. The theory argues that by overemphasizing certain aspects of social reality (such as violent crime) and underrepresenting other aspects, television drama affects people's perceptions of reality. Even though it has attracted a lot of criticism, it is one of the three most generative theories in the field of communication research. In recent years much attention has focused on the study of psychological processes. This chapter argues that there are many challenges cultivation theory will face in the coming years. Both the fact that television viewing behavior is changing rapidly and the fact that only small relationships have been found need methodological attention. Developing a sociological theory of the long-term impact of television stories on culture and socialization may be the way forward.

George Gerbner and his colleagues of the Annenberg School for Communication started to develop the cultivation model of media effects in the late 1960s. In 1976 Gerbner and Gross, writing in the *Journal of Communication*, called the cultivation perspective a "new approach to research." By the time this article was published Gerbner and his team had been collecting and compiling data for nearly 10 years.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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Gerbner based his theory on the observation that much socialization in society takes the form of what he called *storytelling*. Communities create stories to illustrate what their social order is, what their norms are and to make their members accept them as normal (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 173). In their classic text on the sociology of knowledge, social constructivists Berger and Luckmann (1976) described how hunters in primitive societies socialized young members of the community by telling stories. Unlike Gerbner, Berger and Luckmann do not appear to have realized that the hunters do not have to talk about events that really took place (Van den Bulck, 1999, 2010). It suffices to invent a story, even a funny or mythical one, to show other members of the tribe what the norms are and what the penalties for transgressing them are. Societies thus use stories to offer their children “a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is relevant to what, and what is right” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176).

By the time Gerbner and his colleagues launched their views it had become apparent that television had become the most important source of stories about the real world. Gerbner and his team noted how much violence there was in television stories. They argued that the violence was essential to telling the story. A much-quoted definition said that:

TV violence is a dramatic demonstration of power which communicates much about social norms and relationships, about goals and means, about winners and losers, about the risks of life and the price for transgressions of society’s rules. Violence laden drama shows who gets away with what, when, why, how and against whom. (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 178)

Cultivation theory thus argued that violence is the vehicle stories use for illustrating norms and values.

While cultivation research is usually conducted by studying individuals, Gerbner set out to study societies within the much wider frame of what he called the *Cultural Indicators Project*. For this, he felt, three aspects of the role of stories in society needed to be studied (Gerbner, 1966, 1969). The first was *institutional process analysis*, which aimed to chart the power structures and societal processes that govern the production of media messages. The second was *message system analysis*. Quantitative content analyses were conducted to analyze the TV demography. It showed which groups were under- and overrepresented, which types of people tended to be victims and which people tended to be perpetrators of violence and crime. In a number of “violence profiles” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, & Eleey, 1977a; Gerbner, Gross, & Signorielli, 1979), Gerbner and his associates calculated the prevalence of crime and violence and computed “risk ratios” that showed which groups in the TV world were more likely to be perpetrators and which were more likely to be victims of crime (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The novelty of Gerbner’s approach is probably best captured by his contention that “‘Good guys’ were *of course* most likely to be the killers” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 190, *italics added*). While the idea of describ-

ing the positively depicted protagonist of a story as a killer must have been an unusual approach, it was perfectly logical from Gerbner's perspective. As explained earlier, violence was seen as a vehicle by which social norms and power structures in society were illustrated. By that logic the "good guy" has to kill because that is how the viewer knows what is approved by society and what is not.

The third element of the Cultural Indicators Project was called *cultivation analysis*. By using quantitative surveys Gerbner and his team assessed people's level of TV exposure and their perceptions of the world. Respondents were divided into heavy, medium, and light viewers and their answers on a number of questions were compared. There were several types of questions, including "Can most people be trusted?" or "During any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some type of violence?" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 192). Questions were devised using a forced-choice technique offering two answers, a "television answer" reflecting television reality or the television demography (suggesting that people were not to be trusted, that many men worked as detectives, etc.) and another answer that was closer to the real world. The percentage of light viewers giving the television answer was subtracted from the percentage of heavy viewers giving that answer and the resulting statistic was called the *cultivation differential*. This is the measure Gerbner originally used to illustrate the impact of television.

The first studies focused on perceptions of violence, victimization, and the number of people working in law enforcement (see Chapter 10, this volume). Later studies looked at other topics in a similar way, including gender roles (Signorielli, 1989; see Chapter 11, this volume), health (Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982; Signorielli, 1993), politics (Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, 1982; Morgan & Shanahan, 1992) and so forth (for early overviews see: Signorielli, Gross, & Morgan, 1982; Signorielli & Morgan, 1990).

As the theory evolved two modifications were introduced. Some TV messages correspond with what viewers already think or believe. The most likely effect of television in those cases is *reinforcement*. The Gerbner team called this process *resonance* (Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, 1980a, p. 15). The other refinement referred to what happens to subgroups with different (or even opposing) views and perceptions (conservatives versus liberals, men versus women, etc.). TV viewing offers members of different groups the same view of the world. Gerbner et al. (1980) believed this would lead to *mainstreaming*: because of their exposure to the same TV world view, heavy viewing members of subgroups would, in time, start to differ less from each other than the light viewing members of the same groups (Gerbner et al., 1980a, p. 15).

Early Criticism

The theory and methodology of Gerbner and his team's cultivation research attracted a lot of criticism. At times some of the criticism had the flavor of an ideological

debate. Even the television industry felt threatened enough to respond in academic journals (see, for instance, Blank, 1977; Gerbner, Gross, & Jackson-Beeck, 1977b).

The first type of criticism dealt with the statistical analyses of cultivation. Hughes (1980) reanalyzed the data from the National Opinion Resource Center (NORC) General Social Survey used by Gerbner and claimed that by introducing a number of control variables the relationships disappeared. The cultivation effect, he argued, was little more than a spurious relationship explained by third variables, a possibility entertained by a number of authors (Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Potter, 1988a; Tamborini, Zillmann, & Bryant, 1984; Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986). Hughes introduced an often quoted alternative explanation of the relationship between TV viewing and fear of violent crime. He argued that both fear and viewing volume were related to how much time people spent outside their homes. People who were more frightened were less likely to leave the house. People who spent more time at home were likely to watch more television. Being afraid would thus lead to watching more television, instead of the other way around (Hughes, 1980, p. 290; see Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, 1980b for Gerbner's reply). Drawing on Cook, Kendzierski, and Thomas's (1983) argument that personal experience with crime or personality traits such as alienation or anomie (McLeod, Ward, & Tancill, 1965; Potter, 1988a) may make people afraid to leave the house, Van den Bulck (2004) called this the *withdrawal hypothesis*.

The most outspoken of the early attacks on cultivation theory came from Paul Hirsch (1980, 1981a, 1981b) who also reanalyzed some of Gerbner's findings. Gerbner and his team replied at length to Hirsch's comments (Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, 1981a, 1981b). Hirsch argued that the cultivation hypothesis was unfalsifiable. He felt that this was especially true after the introduction of the *resonance* and *mainstreaming* concepts, as existing views were likely to appear either to be reinforced (*resonance*) or mitigated (*mainstreaming*). Hirsch felt that Gerbner et al.'s relationships were random fluctuations and argued that judgments and attitudes were likely to affect TV viewing rather than the other way around.

A closer look at Hirsch's criticism shows a fundamental flaw. Hirsch supported his ideas by comparing non-viewers with extremely heavy viewers. He noted elevated feelings of fear among the non-viewers, but not among the extreme viewers. According to Hirsch the "television answer" (higher levels of fear) should not have been found among non-viewers and should have been very prevalent among the heaviest viewers. The Gerbner team argued that it was "a little bit like trying to study religion by comparing atheists and fanatic fundamentalists" (Gerbner et al., 1981a).

Other critics felt that a quantitative content analysis was the wrong tool. "Content analysis, designed to measure manifest and quantifiable content [...] cannot satisfactorily reveal complex, connotative and ideological meanings" (Livingstone, 1990, p. 25). Counting violent acts gave every act the same weight and failed to take into account that the meaning of a violent act depended on the context. "The question for researchers is not how much violence might be available for personal involvement, but rather, what does violence mean to the respondent?" (Newcomb, 1978,

p. 274). Some have argued that this view required a semiotic approach to television content to show how television constructs meaning (Van Poecke, 1980, p. 428) but others pointed out that this would not make much difference as “a major problem with this kind of analysis is that it assumes that the messages defined by the analysis are the same as those absorbed by the audience” (Wober & Gunter, 1988, p. 13). McQuail (1994) labeled such approaches to media content and media effects “transmission models.” They are blamed for treating viewers as passive receivers (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 16) who simply “reproduce” the meanings put into television messages by the producers (Wilson, 1993, p. 46). Qualitative and by now classic studies such as those by Morley (1980), Ang (1985), and Liebes and Katz (1990) argued that meaning is not constructed by television, but by the viewer. Newcomb therefore suggested that cultivation theory would benefit from an ethnography of the audience because “different members of the mass audience will attach different meanings to the same messages” (Newcomb, 1978, p. 280).

Can Cultivation Survive the Active Viewer?

Has effects research become trivial and meaningless as a result of the introduction of the active viewer model, as Livingstone (1993, p. 10) seemed to suggest?

Krippendorff (1993, p. 38) argued that it is no longer acceptable for effects researchers to assume that a media message has a single, measurable meaning. The same television program can have different meanings for different viewers. A murder in a televised movie can tell one viewer that the world is a dangerous and unpredictable place, while another viewer may believe that the story confirms the impression that criminals are generally less intelligent than the police. Wilson (1993, p. 46) remarked that a cognitive or semiotic distance exists between “text” and “reader.” This distance has to be bridged for any kind of communication to take place. Beck (1994, p. 38) therefore made a distinction between *data* and *information*. Technical appliances transmit data. When as a “cognitive system” (a person) receives and interprets the data they become *information*. What is stored by the viewer is the interpretation of the data, not the data themselves.

Although some claim that there are as many interpretations as there are viewers this is not what the founders of the active viewer model suggested (Buckingham, 1993; Dayan & Katz, 1992; Livingstone, 1993; Morley, 1980). Viewers cannot attribute just any meaning to a text. “Texts are not infinitely open and may allow a limited number of possible readings. Perhaps the *New York Times* can be read as pornography, but that is unlikely to be its statistically dominant use” (Blumler, Gurevitch, & Katz, 1985, p. 260). Texts (particularly in the mainstream of television) usually have “preferred readings” (Livingstone, 1990), which are the interpretations most likely to be evoked in average viewers. North American action drama might make some more fearful while suggesting to others that “good” always wins from “bad” and other

viewers may be entertained without taking away any message, but not many viewers will get the impression that mainstream television is supporting the belief that the world is becoming safer and that crime rates are decreasing.

Television messages offer boundaries within which different interpretations are possible. Interpretations that fall outside the boundaries (such as “the world is becoming safer”) are unlikely to be produced by the confrontation of the data and the viewer. Such a perspective sees television “as the embodiment of a system of *causal restraints*, of a network of boundaries restricting the range of available information, views and images, and *not* as an evil demon manipulating the viewers as if they were programmable robots or marionettes” (Seaman, 1992, p. 307). By limiting the range of interpretations supported by its messages television produces a *boundary-setting effect* (Van den Bulck, 2003) whereby only world views falling within the boundaries are reinforced. This is comparable to what Gerbner called the “mainstream pull” of television (Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, 1994). When the boundaries within which interpretations are likely to occur become very narrow it may therefore be more appropriate to speak of a *data-setting* effect as very little interpretation is added to the televised data before it is stored as information.

Depending on the extent of “audience activity” or “cognitive processing” required from the observer, television messages can allow only a limited range of conclusions (*data-setting*) or a wider range allowing for “multiple readings” (*boundary-setting*) (Van den Bulck, 1996, 2003, 2010).

The Cognitive Revolution

In 1988 Berger and Chaffee (1988, p. 317) felt that communication and media research was entering a “golden age of cognition” that would see an integration of knowledge from cognitive psychology, interpersonal, and mass communication. A similar evolution could be observed among cultivation researchers, who had started to argue that finding effects (or, more accurately, relationships) did not suffice. The “how and why” of effects had to be explained as well (Shrum, 1995, p. 402). “Exposure to a communication is not a direct cause of social-reality decisions. Instead people must use various mental processes to interpret those communications and eventually to build a picture of the world. The influence of a communication must be mediated by these mental processes” (Shapiro, 1991, p. 3). According to some, cultivation was a label for a correlation rather than the explanation of an effect as long as there was no theory of how television fiction might affect viewers’ perceptions of reality (Hawkins & Pingree, 1990; Potter, 1993). Shapiro and Lang (1991, p. 686) even felt that the absence of a theory explaining the path from TV viewing to effect might lead to a considerable underestimation of the size of TV’s effects. What all of this meant was that “the perennial black box of mass media effects can be better illuminated by examining the black box of human information processing that goes on within it”

(Geiger & Newhagen, 1993, p. 42). The aim was high: Hawkins and Pingree (1990, p. 36) felt that calling media effects “learning processes” offered no explanation either – it just added one more label to the relationship.

The challenge was considerable. Beyond the age of 11 (Wright, Huston, & Truglio, 1995, p. 1707) most people recognize television fiction as being fictitious (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000; Potter, 1988b). They realize that television fiction does not show events that are actually happening in the real world. Any theory arguing that such fiction tells people something about the real world would therefore need to explain how this might work (Hawkins & Pingree, 1990, p. 36). It would have to go further than just offering an *implicit theory approach* (Roloﬀ & Berger, 1982, p. 17) that suggests that people “form impressions” about the world around them from all kinds of input.

First Order, Second Order, On-Line and Off-Line

Two distinctions have influenced a lot of thinking about the processes explaining cultivation effects: the distinction between first-order and second-order cultivation measures; and the distinction between on-line and off-line effects. Both distinctions have become intertwined.

The distinction between first- and second-order judgments was introduced by Hawkins and Pingree (1981, 1990). First-order judgments were “judgments related to the prevalence of particular constructs” (Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2004, p. 183). They entailed estimates of frequencies and probability, such as the number of policemen; the proportion of the total workforce working as doctors; the divorce rate, and so on. For first-order estimates it is possible to make a distinction between a “television answer” (reflecting the television demography) and a “real world answer” (reflecting the demography of social reality). Second-order judgments referred to attitudes and beliefs (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981, 1990; Potter, 1991, 1993; Shrum, 1995). For second-order measures it is much more difficult to define what represents television’s view of the world and, even more so, what the real world answer is (Hawkins & Pingree, 1990, p. 49; Hawkins, Pingree, & Adler, 1987, p. 553; Shrum, 1995, p. 404). The Gerbner team has acknowledged the distinction (Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, 1986) but Morgan and Shanahan (1997) remarked it was only useful when studying how cultivation works on a cognitive level. From the start it was assumed that television would affect first and second-order judgments differently (Hawkins & Pingree, 1982, 1990).

At first Hawkins and Pingree assumed that people store first-order judgments and use them to arrive at second-order judgments (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981; Shapiro, 1991; Shapiro & Lang, 1991). They expected first-order effects to occur as a result of accidental learning, made possible by low viewer involvement. “Second, the individual may use these bits of information to construct more general and integrated

conceptions of the world, and it is probably here that the 'higher' processes like inference or weighing television against other sources of information occurs" (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981, p. 358). Shrum and O'Guinn (1993, p. 438) called the first step the learning process and the second step the construction process. Such a relationship between first-order and second-order judgments is a common assumption. Social cognition theorists have remarked that

One might expect that judgments result from information stored in memory. People encode information about others, and when they need to make a judgment, they retrieve what they know and use it as a basis for judgment. If this process accurately characterizes what people do, then there ought to be a correlation between what people recall and their judgments. Attributions, evaluations, and other judgments seemingly ought to draw on the amount and organization of relevant data in memory. (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 328)

To their surprise Hawkins and Pingree did not appear to find a relationship between first-order and second-order judgments (Hawkins & Pingree, 1990, p. 43; Hawkins et al., 1987, p. 575). They had to conclude that "the two types of beliefs seem to be independently influenced by viewed television content" (Hawkins & Pingree, 1990, p. 43).

L. J. Shrum argued that the puzzle could be solved by looking at the type of judgment first and second order referred to. He applied the views of Hastie and Park (1986) and Tversky and Kahneman (1973) about judgment formation. Hastie and Park (1986, p. 261) made a distinction between *memory-based* processes, in which people use memories to arrive at a judgment, and *on-line* processes, in which people form judgments in response to stimuli from the environment. On-line processing occurs when people make a judgment at the time of encoding, or, in other words, as a stimulus is presented or as events occur. Shrum argued that this is when second-order judgments are formed. While viewing, viewers process information and are influenced in their attitudes and beliefs. Shrum argued that first-order judgments (such as estimates of prevalence or set size) were memory processes. Shrum's *heuristic processing* (2002) or *accessibility* (2007) *model* argued that Tversky and Kahneman's (1973) *availability heuristic* explained first-order cultivation effects.

Kahneman and Tversky demonstrated that the ease with which people can recall (if they remember examples) or imagine (if relevant memories are not accessible) an event positively correlates with higher estimates of the prevalence of that event in the social world. Shrum argued that television fiction makes memories easier to recall or imagine. When people are asked to produce a first-order judgment (for instance, when answering survey questions) they make an estimate based on what they can think of most easily. If they are motivated to take the source into account they seem to realize (at least intuitively) that they are using memories of fictitious stories. "[T]he model implicitly assumes that if heuristic processing leads to the use of television information in the construction of prevalence estimates, and hence produces a cul-

tivation effect, then inducing people to avoid the use of a heuristic processing strategy should eliminate the cultivation effect" (Shrum, 1997, p. 350).

Shrum's ideas about memory-based television effects may make the cultivation effect look like an artifact. In his studies the impact of television does not occur until people try to answer survey questions. Memory-based processing of television images is, however, equally likely to occur in real life. Some crisis situations, for instance, require a quick judgment on probabilities and risk. Research on people's perceptions of the success rate of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) shows, first, that television fiction considerably overestimates the success rate of CPR (Diem, Lantos, & Tulskey, 1996) and, second, that heavy viewers of such fiction are likely to overestimate this success rate as well (Van den Bulck & Damiaans, 2004). In a medical emergency where people would have to make quick decisions regarding the effectiveness of CPR (for instance when deciding whether or not to sign a "do not resuscitate" form) the same kind of process (and television effect) may occur.

The Final Word on First- and Second-Order Processes?

The distinction between types of judgments (first vs. second order) and the time frame of the process producing the television effect (on-line vs. memory based) has done much to advance our understanding of cultivation, but it appears to have reduced the scope of research on cultivation as well. If we return to some old definitions cultivation effects should comprise more than the first- and second-order judgments and the presence of on-line and off-line (memory-based) processes may not be as clear cut either.

First, revisiting some of the definitions of cultivation suggests that there should be more than two types of measures that are indicators of a cultivation effect. Definitions of cultivation used by Gerbner's team are very broad. In their review of two decades of cultivation theory, Morgan and Shanahan, for instance, argue that the empirical strategy of cultivation research is to assess "the degree to which heavy viewers are more likely to give responses that are demonstrably emphasized in the television world" (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997, p. 11). This operationalization means that the validity of the cultivation hypothesis depends on empirical proof that "television viewing cultivates assumptions about the facts of life that reflect the medium's most recurrent portrayals" (p. 8). In another definition, Gerbner, Gross, and Morgan (2002) delineated cultivation effects as "the independent contributions television viewing makes to viewer conceptions of social reality" (p. 47). Most definitions of cultivation seem to focus on learning about reality by viewing television, with a special emphasis on the effects of fiction and "storytelling." All of this suggests that cultivation theory is a theory about the role of television fiction in the social

construction of reality: it occurs when television fiction affects people's image of the real world.

If this interpretation of the definition of cultivation is accepted, then first- and second-order measures do not cover the whole range of potential outcomes. First-order measures in particular appear to be part of a larger array of effects that can be referred to as social reality construction. Research on fear effects of crime fiction (Cantor, 2004; Custers, 2010a; Sparks, 1989) shows that exposure to television fiction can lead to social reality effects that are neither first nor second order. Affective effects should probably be studied as a third-order effect.

Second, the distinction between on-line and off-line processes may not be as straightforward as current research suggests. When the viewer undergoes a sudden change in views, as is the case when a "Drench" effect (Greenberg, 1988) or "sudden insight" (Potter, 1993) occurs, this is an on-line effect. Similarly, research on the "affect heuristic" (Slovic, Finucane, & Peters, 2007) and the "risk as feelings perspective" (Loewenstein, Weber, & Hsee, 2001) claims that changes in fear can lead to changes in risk perception. Experiencing fear is sometimes used as an indicator of risk, whereby people reason "I feel fear therefore the risk involved must be high." Since it has been well documented that TV viewing can elicit fear "on-line" (Cantor, 2004; Custers, 2010b), it is possible that people's perception of risk and similar probabilities may change on-line as well as off-line.

Challenges for Cultivation Theory in the Twenty-First Century: From a Psychological to a Sociological Revolution?

Cultivation theory is among the most often cited theories in media and communication research (Bryant & Cummins, 2007; Bryant & Miron, 2004). It has survived over 40 years of scrutiny and criticism. Will the theory and the study of this type of effect survive long enough to see the medium it studies celebrate its centennial? After all, the TV world is still a mean and violent place (Hetsroni, 2007; Signorielli, 2003; Smith, Nathanson, & Wilson, 2002).

To survive and to thrive cultivation theory will have to deal with a number of challenges.

(1) *The relationship between television exposure and cultivation measures is small.* A well-known meta-analysis by Shanahan and Morgan (1999) reviewed hundreds of cultivation studies and found an overall effect size of $r = .09$. Another meta-analysis (Dossche & Van den Bulck, 2010) found evidence of publication bias: small, underpowered studies tended to report higher correlations ($r = .12$) than adequately powered studies did ($r = .05$). In both cases, however, the results held under multiple

controls. A separate meta-analysis looked at (extremely rare) experimental cultivation studies (Dossche, 2010). The overall effect size was much bigger ($r = .16$), even though similar evidence of publication bias emerged with published underpowered studies (with $N < 100$) producing much larger relationships ($r = .26$) than adequately powered ones ($N \geq 100$ and up: $r = .15$).

If cultivation research is to develop further it will have to devote more attention to the issue of small effects sizes. Are they spurious relationships, as some have argued (Potter, 1988a; Tamborini et al., 1984); are they actually large relationships hidden by poor methodology (Geiger & Newhagen, 1993; Mulac & Kunkel, 1989; Potter, 1993) or do we need to make a distinction between the size of an effect and its importance, as, for instance Rosenthal (1986, p. 142) argued? A small effect on a large population may be extremely relevant in its consequences.

(2) *Cultivation research needs to start worrying about its exposure variable.* Remarkably little attention has been given to the exposure variable in cultivation research. Originally the Gerbner team argued that viewers “watch by the hour” (Signorielli, 1986) in which case measuring overall TV viewing sufficed: all who watch a lot of television are exposed to a very similar picture of the world. Some have argued that different genres may have different effects (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2008; Segrin & Nabi, 2002), but there appears to be little interest in going into more depth than that. It is remarkable to note how many different operationalizations of the television-viewing variable have been used, all implicitly claiming to measure the same thing. As a result the construct validity of the exposure variable is often fairly poor (see Allen, 1981; Salomon and Cohen, 1978 for old, but still relevant observations). There are extreme differences in the measurement of TV viewing. Some examples will illustrate this. Doob and MacDonald (1979) counted the number of programs respondents had listed. Perse (1986) asked respondents how much TV they had viewed the day before the interview and how much they viewed on an “average” day and computed a mean from those values. Others used self-reports, diary methods or even set meter data (Bryant, Lucove, & Evenson, 2007).

There is another reason why the exposure variable may become a cause for concern in the future. Television viewing used to be an activity that was easy to delineate: there were relatively few channels. With recent developments TV viewing is becoming increasingly difficult to measure. People can watch TV on TV sets, computers, even mobile phones. They watch what is being broadcast, but may be equally likely to pay per view or call up content “on demand.” New generations emerge who may not watch entire programs, but rather look at particular scenes on Internet channels such as YouTube. It is becoming increasingly difficult to measure TV exposure reliably.

(3) *The challenge from other disciplines.* Many general introductions to sociology, psychology or political science hardly mention the media when they deal with how people are socialized or learn about their environment and the world. Bandura (1994, p. 67) remarked that “most psychological theories were cast long before the advent of enormous advances in the technology of communication. As a result, they give

insufficient attention to the increasingly powerful role that the symbolic environment plays in present-day human lives.” The same applies to sociology, political science, anthropology, and other fields. This appears to be changing rapidly. Many fields are becoming aware of the potential impact of the media in general, and television fiction in particular. Studies now appear which are, in essence, cultivation studies. Much of the research on “the *CSI* effect” (based upon the hypothesis that the way in which forensic science is presented in the crime show called *CSI* is influencing how juries perceive evidence in court cases) was published in law journals (Kim, Barak, & Shelton, 2009; Tyler, 2006). Medical journals have published on the potential impact of medical fiction on people’s knowledge of medical techniques (Van den Bulck & Damiaans, 2004), or on opinions and attitudes (Czarny, Faden, & Nolan, 2008; Wicclair, 2008). Other studies have appeared on risk perception (Bakir, 2010), risky behavior (Beullens, Roe, & Van den Bulck, 2008; Beullens & Van den Bulck, 2008; Villani, 2001), and so on.

Some of this research is fairly limited and simply applies the idea of fiction effects to areas media scholars have not thought of. The potential impact of emergency room drama on perceptions of the efficacy of resuscitation techniques is probably a typical example (Van den Bulck & Damiaans, 2004). In the long run, however, these developments pose two threats to the field of media effects and cultivation research. First, researchers from other fields generally fail to acknowledge (and are probably largely unaware of) the work done in our field. Second, not all of these studies can be catalogued as trivial applications of the idea that fiction may affect perceptions. Sociologists, psychologists, and others may be publishing interesting avenues for further research that have direct relevance to our own discipline (Bryant et al., 2007).

Cultivation researchers (and media effects researchers in general) should catalogue and monitor what other fields do with (and to) this subject.

(4) *What IS cultivation?* As new media and new types of content emerge, people have started to wonder what other types of media content may have cultivation effects. Some have looked at the news (Gross & Aday, 2003), or computer games (Beullens et al., 2008; Van Mierlo & Van den Bulck, 2004; Williams, 2006), but questions about the effects of Internet pornography (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009), music videos (Givens & Monahan, 2005), or other messages may be as important as the much older question of whether even cartoons can contain lessons about reality (Funkhouser & Shaw, 1990; Gerbner et al., 1980a; Potter, 1988b; Shapiro & Chock, 2003; Snow, 1983).

The Final Challenge: Toward a Sociology of Cultivation?

Cultivation theory is usually referred to as a media effects theory and much of the recent research on cultivation has been conducted from a psychological point of view

by looking at processes explaining how, why and when television messages affect people's perceptions or judgments. While the Gerbner school has acknowledged the advances made by those seeking to understand how cultivation might work (Morgan, 2009), a psychological approach to cultivation may not do justice to the theory. Empirical research on cultivation typically yields the small relationships discussed above. Jensen and Rosengren (1990) once remarked that television viewing never explains more than 10–20% of the variance of effect variables. Cook et al. (1983), however, pointed out that the *correlations* found are usually in that .10 to .20 range, which actually means that television viewing only explains about 1–4% of the variance.

This apparent weakness of cultivation research may be a limitation of the approach, not of the theory. Most research on cultivation has been done using cross sectional designs. There are rare exceptions using experimental approaches. Gerbner remarked long ago, however, that finding evidence of cultivation may not be that easy. First, light and heavy viewers of television all live in the same world. Those who do not watch television may be influenced by those who do (Morgan & Signorielli, 1990, p. 20). Busselle (2003), for instance, showed that children whose parents watched a lot of crime on television became more frightened about crime themselves, regardless of how much crime they watched themselves. Conversely, Van den Bulck and Van den Bergh (2005) remarked that children often influence, even socialize, their parents. Children also socialize each other. Those who do not watch a particular TV show may join in play with children who do watch it and may therefore be exposed to certain meta-narratives indirectly. Finding differences between heavy viewers and light viewers may thus be difficult. If both extremes of the TV viewing spectrum have been influenced the absence of a correlation between effect and TV viewing becomes meaningless.

Second, cultivation is a long-term process (Rosengren, 1994). It assumes that continuous exposure to countless similar messages will gradually affect people's world view. As such it is unlikely for a large effect to be demonstrated in the short run (Gerbner et al., 1994). In fact, on several occasions Gerbner and his co-authors remarked that cultivation theory was not a stimulus-response theory (Morgan & Signorielli, 1990, p. 18). "Thus, television neither simply 'creates' nor 'reflects' images, opinions and beliefs. Rather, it is an integral aspect of a dynamic process" (Gerbner et al., 1994, p. 23). Too often researchers have assumed that "no change means no effects" (p. 45), while the lack of change (and the preservation of the status quo) may be one of the most important societal effects of the media.

Even though further developments in the psychology of cultivation, studying the processes through which narratives affect people's perceptions of the real world, are important, cultivation theory is now in need of a macro theory, a sociology of cultivation. Some attempts have been made, for instance, to apply Berger and Luckmann's (1976) sociology of knowledge to the study of media effects (Bilandzic, 2006; Van den Bulck, 1999).

Communication and media research once developed out of the interests of a number of sociologists, but the two disciplines drifted apart (Pooley & Katz, 2008).

Sociology is only now, and quietly, rediscovering the media as a field of study. A comprehensive theory on how the *symbolic environment* of television is affecting the *Lebenswelt* might be just what the doctor prescribed.

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Framing and Priming Effects

Exploring Challenges Connected to Cross-Level Approaches in Media Effects Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of cognitive media effects and processes in the field of political communication. We examine the central role that accessibility-based and applicability-based models, such as priming and framing, have played in refining our understanding of communication effects at different levels of analysis. We then outline the theoretical and methodological challenges of such multi-level or cross-level approaches. In particular, we first present a formal blueprint for a multi-level model of media effects. Based on this overview, we discuss framing and priming effects at the micro-level. Here, we integrate disciplinary literatures especially from psychology and communication, and distinguish the theoretical promises underlying accessibility and applicability based models of media effects. Furthermore, we outline different forms of framing and priming effects on meso- and macro-level units. Finally, the cross-sectional challenges of modeling multi-level media framing and priming effects are discussed.

Priming and Framing – Modern Paradigms of Media Effects

Media effects models have changed considerably over the course of the last century (for an overview, see McQuail, 2005). Magic bullet or hypodermic needle models, assuming that mass media have a strong and direct effect on a largely monolithic audience, dominated most of the early empirical studies in our field (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

In the late 1930s and 1940s, Lazarsfeld and his colleagues (e.g., Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948) shifted the focus of media effects research toward a more refined understanding of (a) the audience, and (b) the communication process. Two concepts were particularly important in models of limited media effects: two-step flows of information, and reinforcement (Katz, 1957). The two-step flow idea refers to a process in which highly informed and socially-connected opinion leaders pass on relevant information to lay audiences (for an overview, see Weimann, 1994). Information, in other words, does not reach audiences directly, but is passed on through opinion leaders. Lazarsfeld et al.'s results also showed that most persuasive effects were reinforcement effects rather than attitude change, since lay audiences tended to selectively expose themselves to ideologically consistent messages.

In the mid-1970s, arguments against this limited effects model were raised simultaneously in Europe and the United States. In Germany, Noelle-Neumann offered her spiral of silence model as a new way of modeling strong media effects on people's perceptions of opinion climates and social norms, fueled by various social-psychological traits and processes (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Her call for a "return to the concept of powerful mass media" (Noelle-Neumann, 1973) was echoed by Gerbner and colleagues who proposed a cultivation model of media effects (Gerbner & Gross, 1974). Cultivation attributes strong mainstreaming effects to commercial media systems, particularly television.

The 1980s and 1990s, finally, marked the transition to what is seen as the current paradigm of "negotiation" models of media effects (McQuail, 2005). The media effects theories subsumed under this umbrella are also often referred to as cognitive models of media effects (D. A. Scheufele, 2000a). They are distinguished from the strong effects paradigms of the 1970s in at least two respects.

First, many of the recent effects models have acknowledged the inherent contingent nature of media effects (Eveland, Jr., 1997), depending on a host of orientations (McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 2009) that audiences use to make sense of and interpret communication content. This "negotiation" of meaning between communicated content and audience interpretation is also from where the paradigm derives its name.

Second, the focus of inquiry in the current approach to media effects has shifted away from Noelle-Neumann's or Gerbner's foci on the *social-level* outcomes of mass

communication, to the interplay between message systems and audience characteristics at different levels of analysis (D. A. Scheufele, 1999). Since the 1980s, our field has therefore seen repeated calls for multi-level approaches to media effects (Pan & McLeod, 1991), bridging micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis.

Some of the most dominant effects models subsumed under the “negotiation” paradigm of media effects are agenda setting, priming, and framing. Agenda setting usually refers to the idea that more frequent or more prominent media coverage also increases our perceptions of how important we think an issue is or how easily we can retrieve it from memory when needed (McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993). Priming (at least in the context of this media effect paradigm) extends the agenda-setting model and argues that the issues that have been made most easily retrievable in voters’ minds by mass media, will also be the ones that voters take into account when judging the performance or other traits of candidates (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Framing, finally, refers to the idea that the mode of presentation of a message (i.e., a message frame), can shape how audiences interpret this message by establishing implicit linkages to audience’s pre-existing interpretive schema (D. A. Scheufele, 1999; Tewksbury & D. A. Scheufele, 2009). Before exploring the specific effects models in this paradigm and their differences in greater detail, however, it is necessary to first explore the multi-level assumptions underlying all of them.

A Multi-Level Matrix for Media Framing and Priming Effects

A model of multi-level framing and priming effects is most easily illustrated by structuring levels of analysis around relevant social collectives (B. Scheufele, 2011). Such classifications can follow a formal hierarchy where the level of analysis is determined by the size of the collectives that are being studied (e.g., Lazarsfeld & Menzel, 1961). Smaller collectives, in such a model, are referred to as the micro-level whereas the larger collectives would be referred to as the meso- or macro-levels. Multi-level analyses (e.g., Hayes, 2006; Hox, 2002) rely on similar classifications.

Multi-level classifications can also be made by tying levels to social entities. Here, the individual recipient, for instance, marks the micro-level, social groups or political organizations represent the meso-level, and the political system with its communication structures is located at the macro-level. Classifications tied to social entities have been introduced by scholars in political science (e.g., Eulau, 1977), sociology (e.g., Alexander, Giesen, Münch, & Smelser, 1987; Coleman, 1994) and communication (e.g., McLeod & Pan, 1989; Pan & McLeod, 1991).

Regardless of how distinctions are made between different levels of analysis, the question arises about how to conceptualize (communication) processes linking different levels of analysis. Coleman’s (1994) seminal work – often referred to as the “Coleman bathtub” (e.g., Oakes & Kaufman, 2006, p. 11) – distinguishes three

“propositions” which are explained by using the example of Weber’s (1958) “The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism.” (1) The first proposition links the macro- to the micro-level, and explains how the social situation and the individual’s knowledge, motives or values interact by applying a bridge hypothesis. (2) The second proposition links the individual’s values with his or her “economic behavior” (both at micro-level). Here, “[i]ndividuals with certain values (referred to in proposition 1) adopt certain kinds of orientations to economic behavior” (Coleman, 1994, p. 8). This is similar to Esser’s (1999) rational-choice theory of social behavior, which assumes that subjects weigh different behavioral options and choose the one promising the best outcome. (3) The third proposition links the micro- back to the macro-level and explains how individual economic behavior leads to capitalism as a macro-phenomenon: “Certain orientations to economic behavior (referred to in proposition 2) on the part of individuals help bring about capitalist economic organizations in a society” (Coleman, 1994, p. 8). Esser (1999) calls this the logic of aggregation, which affords rules of aggregation or transformation in order to explain how social phenomena at a higher level emerge from individual behavior at the micro-level.

We are especially interested in what Coleman (1994) calls “Macro-to-Micro and Micro-to-Macro Transitions.” And, in fact, a very similar multi-level matrix based on the Coleman bathtub was provided by Pan and McLeod (1991) for mass communication. They speak of “cross-level linkages” in general, as well as of a “top-down” linkage in terms of the macro-micro-transition and a “bottom-up” linkage regarding the micro-macro-transition. B. Scheufele (2008) applied these ideas more specifically to media effects approaches. Using media coverage of violent antiwar demonstrations as one example, he refers to “bottom-up” media effects if mass media not only influence individuals (e.g., a single protester), but also shape the attributes of meso- or macro-units (e.g., the amount of violence of a demonstration). Conversely, he speaks of “top-down” feedback from a higher to a lower level of social aggregation if, for instance, the amount of violence at a demonstration provokes other protesters to attack the police.

These multi-level linkages are illustrated in Figure 3.1. In a first scenario, for instance, one could imagine two individuals (A and B) who are unfamiliar with antiwar demonstrations. Their willingness to participate (YA and YB) in a demonstration is low, since both the mass media (M) and their family (X1) or friends (X2) tell them that demonstrations are often interrupted by violent protesters. Three other subjects (C, D, and E) may be antiwar activists (X3) and therefore participate in a demonstration against, for instance, “Operation Iraqi Freedom” in 2003. The size of this demonstration (Z) – formally speaking, an attribute of the meso-unit “demonstration” – is therefore $N = 3$.

A second scenario assumes a different kind of media framing. Here, the mass media consistently frame “Operation Iraqi Freedom” as an unjustified delayed response to 9/11. Subjects A and B, in this scenario, may be mobilized to attend the rally partly based on these media reports, but also partly because their friends

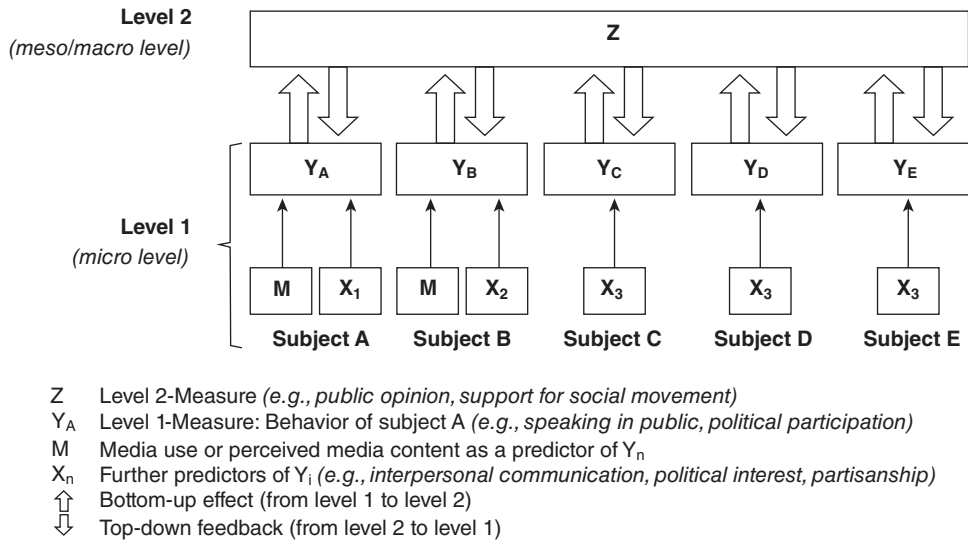


Figure 3.1 Micro-macro and macro-micro links. Adapted from B. Scheufele (2011). *Jenseits des Rezipienten. Die Herausforderungen für die Medienwirkungsforschung durch die Mehr-Ebenen-Problematik am Beispiel von fünf Wirkungsbereichen*. In T. Quandt & B. Scheufele (Eds.), *Ebenen der Kommunikation. Mikro-Meso-Makro-Links in der Kommunikationswissenschaft* (p. 118). Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

and family themselves follow the news and tell them that the invasion of Iraq was not justified. In this second scenario, therefore, media coverage contributes to the size of the demonstration “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” measured by the number of protesters which is now $N = 5$. This micro-meso transition can be considered a bottom-up media framing effect (up arrows in Figure 3.1). If the course of the demonstration is peaceful, A and B may participate in a future demonstration again. This meso-micro-transition can be considered a top-down feedback (down arrows in Figure 3.1) from the demonstration that A and B experienced (meso-level) to their willingness to participate in a subsequent demonstration (micro-level).

A third scenario replaces “subject” by “group” (each of them with $N = 10,000$). In other words, the antiwar demonstration has no longer five, but 50,000 participants and individual effects are now extrapolated to collectives. McQuail (2005) describes such “collective reaction” as follows: “Here some of the same effects are experienced simultaneously by many people in a shared situation or context, leading to joint action usually of an unregulated and non-institutional kind. Fear, anxiety and anger are the most potent reactions, which can lead to panic or civil disturbance” (pp. 468–469).

Based on this model, media effects theories, including priming and framing, need to be understood as processes that simultaneously influence individual, group and social outcomes. In the following sections, we therefore delineate each effects model at each unit of analysis, and then return to the model outlined in Figure 3.1 to discuss broader implications and future agendas for political communication research.

Framing and Priming at the Micro-Level

The various models of framing and priming effects have their explanatory foundations at the micro- or individual level. The broadest distinction at that level of analysis is the one between *accessibility*-based and *applicability*-based models of media effects (Price & Tewksbury, 1997).

Accessibility-based models include agenda setting and framing. Both effects models assume that the amount and prominence of media coverage of an issue can also increase how important audience members think these issues are or how easily they can retrieve them from memory (for an overview, see D. A. Scheufele, 2000a). Agenda setting and priming – in this context – have to be understood as two steps in a chronological series of effects. Agenda setting refers to the transfer of salience from mass media to audiences. Priming as a subsequent step, assumes that mass media can “prime” issues by making them more salient and – in turn – also activate related concepts in people’s minds. This is usually referred to as spreading activation (Collins & Loftus, 1975). As a result, the salient issue and related concepts are more likely to be used for subsequent judgments about candidates or issues (Hastie & Park, 1986).

Applicability-based models are distinctly different. They do not rely on the idea of increased salience and ease of retrieval, but instead assume that the effect of messages depends on their applicability to pre-existing interpretive schema. The degree of applicability can increase or decrease, depending on how a message is framed. Kahneman’s Nobel-prize winning work on prospect theory nicely illustrates this phenomenon. Respondents were shown an ambiguous stimulus in the form of a set of symbols that could be interpreted as numbers or letters. Respondents who saw the ambiguous stimulus embedded in a series of numbers interpreted it consistent with the surrounding frame, that is, as numbers, and respondents who saw it embedded in a set of letters interpreted it as letters (Kahneman, 2003).

Some researchers have treated applicability and accessibility models as equivalent (McCombs, 2004). We disagree with this view, and suggest that the two models are distinctly different. Priming (and agenda setting) focuses on what has been made salient by media coverage and how we use it for evaluations. The core process underlying priming and agenda setting, therefore is the ease with which a mediated issue can be retrieved from memory. Framing, in contrast, is largely unrelated to ease of retrieval of the mediated message. Instead, it focuses on how well the message

resonates with pre-existing schema (for an overview, see B. T. Scheufele & D. A. Scheufele, 2010).

This distinction becomes even clearer when we think back to the characteristics of the negotiation paradigm of media effects outlined earlier. One of these characteristics was the interaction of audience characteristics with the features of the mediated message. Agenda setting, first formulated in the heyday of the strong effects paradigm of the 1970s (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), assumes that the transfer of salience from media to audiences is a universal phenomenon that occurs across all groups of society. In fact, most of the early agenda-setting research tested its hypotheses by comparing methodologically questionable rank-orders of the most salient issues in news media to issue rankings in national Gallup polls (Funkhouser, 1973a, 1973b).

Framing, in contrast, is firmly embedded in the negotiation paradigm. It assumes that framing effects are stronger for messages that better resonate with socially shared schema, or for groups who are more familiar with the schema that a particular frame is applicable to. “Three strikes and you’re out” legislation in the United States is a good example. Without explaining the specifics of the legislation, it provides audiences with an intuitive understanding of the basic idea behind it. The “three strikes” frame is likely to be much more effective among US audiences for whom it resonates with an underlying shared schema. For audiences in Europe, this frame would be much less effective.

B. Scheufele (2004) picked up the argument of applicability and socially shared schema, but added two important other types of framing effects: The first one is called transformation effect: If media reports repeatedly frame an issue in a consistent fashion, audience schema can be modified step by step in terms of this media frame (see also B. T. Scheufele & D. A. Scheufele, 2010). A second, and partly related effect is called the establishing effect: If no socially shared audience schema is available, such a schema can be established by cumulative and consonant media framing. Such an effect should be more likely for issues or situations totally unfamiliar for most audience members. These two effects do not contradict the negotiation model of framing and priming effects, but rather complement and specify it. Finally, framing and priming can also result in shifts of opinions. Such attitudinal changes are quite different from the aforementioned persuasive media effects (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997).

In short, agenda setting, priming and framing are all processes that can explain cognitive effects at the individual or micro-level. In particular, they provide insights into how media transfer salience to individual audience members (agenda setting) and potentially shape their evaluations of policies or political actors (priming). With a parallel logic, they can shape how issues are being discussed among audiences (frame setting) and how those frames affect outcomes, such as attributions of responsibility or other issue stances (individual-level framing effects) (D. A. Scheufele, 1999). More importantly, however, both accessibility and applicability models have implications well beyond the individual level.

Framing and Priming Effects at the Meso- and Macro-Levels

As outlined earlier, framing and priming models are largely based on theories adopted from cognitive psychology and try to explain how cognitions, emotions, opinions, and behavior of *individuals* are shaped by media framing and priming. But what about media effects on *units at higher levels of analysis*, such as public discourse, the political arena, or social movements? A number of scholars in sociology, for example, have suggested that attempts by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other social movements to create and promote frames need to be examined using a collective identity approach (e.g. Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). By the same token, however, it is also reasonable to ask whether predominant media framing or priming can promote or undermine a social movement's framing activities. This would be a media effect on a unit at the meso-level.

Sociological Approaches – Framing Beyond the Micro-Level

Traditional framing and priming effects approaches provide few insights into how media framing and priming alter the pattern of public discourse on a topic, how they support or undermine particular policy stances, or how they strengthen or weaken social movements more generally. A more exhaustive, multi-level model of framing or priming effects, therefore, needs to combine *sociological traditions of framing research* with other theories of media effects, such as the spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; D. Scheufele & Moy, 2000). We will discuss some of these connections in greater detail later on in this chapter.

Although the sociological tradition of framing research is largely agnostic of the historical backdrop of media effects research, two strands of this tradition are nonetheless relevant for a multi-level model of framing and priming effects. The first strand focuses mostly on framing in the context of social movements and mobilization (Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). The second emphasizes the aspect of collective identity (e.g. Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) (for an overview, see Opp, 2009).

According to mobilization-based approaches (e.g., Snow & Benford, 1988) social movements “frame, or assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (p. 198). Anticipating similar distinctions in the communication discipline by Entman (1993), Snow and Benford (1988) highlighted problem definition (*diagnostic framing*) and treatment recommendation (*prognostic framing*) as important frame elements. But their conceptual framework also emphasized the *motivational* aspect of a movement's framing

strategy: First, a movement has to define what the problem is (e.g., globalization) and attribute responsibility, i.e. who can be blamed for it or can be held responsible (e.g., capitalism). Second, the movement has to offer solutions or strategies to solve the problem (e.g., fair trade). Third, a social movement has to mobilize its existing members, but also call other people (e.g., through leaflets or the Internet) to support or join the movement.

Snow et al. (1986) distinguish four types of frame alignment necessary to gain support: *Frame bridging* means connecting frames and thereby bringing together people who share similar views or ideologies. With *frame amplification* the movement addresses core values of society (e.g., freedom, humanity) which can serve as a “springboard for mobilizing support” (Snow et al., 1986, p. 469). *Frame extension* and *transformation* are somewhat self-explanatory: A social movement sometimes has to extend or transform its framing strategy in order to attract a broader cross section of people.

Collective-identity approaches (e.g., Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) expand on mobilization-based approaches and commonly distinguish three components of “collective action frames:” The first component – *injustice* – refers to the feeling among movement participants that they are not being treated fairly. The *agency* component addresses people’s awareness of being able to change things and influence (political) decisions through collective action. The *identity* component, finally, represents the in-group feeling which triggers collective action.

Using the example of nuclear energy, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) saw at least two roles for mass media in the context of social identity: On the one hand, mass media serve as an arena or playground for public discourse. On the other hand, they stimulate public discourse by providing interpretative packages and framing devices, such as metaphors, key words or exemplars.

Although these framing concepts have been applied to media framing (e.g., Eilders & Lüter, 2000), they were initially defined as attributes and tools of social movements, rather than media coverage or even media effects. The multi-level matrix presented in Figure 3.1 therefore takes these concepts a step further and connects them to media effects research. It outlines how the sociological and psychological approaches mentioned earlier can be integrated into a multi-level model of media framing and priming effects.

The target or *dependent variable* of such effects may be a social group, an organization or a political system. But according to D. A. Scheufele (1999) media frames themselves can be the dependent variable: Social groups try to promote their perspective and thereby influence how other NGOs or policy groups, for instance, think about an issue. These processes of “frame building” and “frame setting” (D. Scheufele, 1999) have been examined in several studies (e.g., Cohen & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Entman, 2004; McAdam, 1994; Miller & Riechert, 2001; Walgrave & Manssens, 2005).

One of the more exhaustive summaries of research on framing strategies and activities in terms of political deliberation was provided by Pan and Kosicki (2001). Their analysis also moves this line of research from the earlier, more conceptual work

to the “real political consequences” (p. 51) of framing activities during the 1992 presidential race: “The candidate who pledged to keep healthcare reform on top of his domestic agenda was swept into the White House and the Democratic Party maintained a sufficient working majority in both House and Senate” (p. 51). This was not only a result of efficient agenda building (Cobb & Elder, 1971), but also a result of successfully *framing* the issue as a question connected to social security and therefore effectively shifting evaluations of the presidential candidates toward these issues.

How media framing and priming contribute to political outcomes (e.g., elections, political decisions) can be considered a *bottom-up media effect* (see Figure 3.1): Media framing (see M in Figure 3.1) influences voting behavior of individual members of the electorate at the micro-level (see, for example, Y_A in Figure 3.1) as described by Price and Tewksbury (1997). Furthermore, media framing has an impact on the election outcome at the macro-level (see Z in Figure 3.1). This follows a simple *rule of aggregation*: All voting decisions Y_N (micro-level) sum up to the election victory Z of a political party (macro-level). In other cases, however, modeling media framing or priming effects on meso- and macro-units can be quite challenging.

Cross-Sectional Challenges of Modeling Multi-Level Media Framing and Priming Effects

When modeling multi-level media framing and priming effects, we face at least four problems.

(1) We already outlined the problem of *linking levels* in the “Operation Iraqi Freedom” scenario. Media coverage of terrorism provides another good illustration (e.g., Brosius & Weimann, 1991; Nacos, 2002; Stohl & Stohl, 2007; Tsfati & Weimann, 2002;). Terrorists try to gain public awareness for what they assume to be social or political problems, and try to promote their ideologies via televised messages, attacks on civil and military targets, and so on.

The first two activities are similar to what Snow and Benford (1988) called diagnostic and motivational framing. The terrorist attacks on Spanish trains prior to the Spanish national elections in March 2004, for example, were covered extensively by Spanish and international media. In the last days of the election campaign, the attacks and media reports had indirectly supported the Socialist party, which was a strong opponent of the Spanish involvement in “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” Since the media had framed the late election phase around the larger theme of terrorism, the electoral victory of the Socialist Party – and subsequently the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq – was partly a media impact on the macro-unit “political system,” and not just a simple individual-level media framing and priming effect on individual Spanish citizens as the micro-unit.

In addition, mass media themselves were a target of framing or priming. According to Nacos (2002) terrorists try “to win media attention and news coverage for their actions, their grievances, and their political ends” (p. 10). It is therefore difficult to separate media effects at various levels from other confounding factors. In other words, research on framing and priming effects on terrorism needs to explore a complex interplay of different units at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level. Among them are poverty or historically grounded hostilities, the ideologies of terrorists, mass media as the conveyor of terrorism-related messages, the Internet as a tool for recruitment and planning or attacks, but also as a communication platform for terrorists (Tsfati & Weimann, 2002), the activities of supporters, the fear of the public, and finally the decisions and debates in various national and international political arenas. Mass media play both a mediating and a shaping role in this context (e.g., Nacos, 2002). So, it is not only the media who prime politicians and the public by applying a certain frame – it is political actors themselves who frame and prime the issue according to their own preferences.

Similar problems can occur when we study media framing and priming effects in the context of social movements (e.g., Opp, 2009). Framing and priming effects operate from lower to higher levels of analysis and backwards through a complex set of *cross-level interactions*. This includes frame and agenda setting by mass media, citizens’ beliefs and predispositions (micro-level), the dynamics of demonstrations or the structure of particular social movements (meso-level), as well as the political decisions or even economic structures of a country (macro-level). The 2007 G8 summit in Heiligendamm (Germany) is a good example. Mass media *framed* the demonstrations around instances of violent opposition, and therefore shaped how the public, the police, and the demonstrators understood the events surrounding the summit. Yet, media coverage of the protests (meso-level) may also have shaped people’s willingness to participate in subsequent demonstrations (micro-level). We called this *top-down feedback* earlier (see down arrows in Figure 3.1). Some people, for instance, may be concerned about repeated reports about instances of violence and decide not to participate in future rallies. Others may feel provoked by media portrayals of violence and get even more violent, thereby reinforcing this “spiral of violence.” Again, it is difficult to separate the framing and priming effect of media coverage from the impact of other factors.

(2) The second challenge relates to *group contexts*. When we study micro-level framing effects we can easily measure cognitions, emotions, opinions or reactions of an individual recipient. But with groups it is fairly difficult to isolate the specific role that media play in impacting group-level variables. Social protest is collective action either in the “smaller form” of a single demonstration or in the “larger form” of a social movement. Thinking back to Figure 3.1, the size of a protest or the violence of a demonstration or movement is therefore an attribute of a meso- or macro-level unit (Z). However, it is virtually impossible to establish if an individual participant’s behavior (Y) is influenced by media coverage (M), and in which direction. More importantly, direct media effects may not even be a prerequisite for change, since

demonstrators may be exposed to them *indirectly* through interpersonal channels (e.g., D. Scheufele, 2000b).

These group level confounds are further complicated by what is called *reciprocal effects* (Kepplinger, 2007; Lang & Lang, 1953). These can occur if a demonstration becomes more violent, for example, due to television teams being on-site. Such reciprocal effects make it even more difficult to isolate the specific impacts of initial media framing and priming. In sum, media framing and priming effects beyond the micro-level require significant conceptual thinking about the social dynamics surrounding them.

(3) The third problem concerns the *mechanism of framing or priming effects*. This problem relates to the rules of aggregation or transformation mentioned earlier. According to Schulz (2009), models of learning, attitude change or information processing are not necessarily applicable to media effects on meso- or macro-level units. Moreover, other types of media effects have to be taken into account. As Halloran, Elliott, and Murdock (1970) outlined, media often create narratives around expectations about violence occurring, even before demonstrations take place. According to Merton (1996, pp. 41–50), such media framing can lead to a *self-fulfilling prophecy*: If media frame a demonstration in terms of violence before it actually occurs, they also influence interpretations and expectations among other social groups, such as the police. The police may deploy additional units to the demonstration, based on these media reports, which – in turn – can provoke demonstrators and trigger attacks on the police. These attacks trigger stricter enforcement by the police, which will further provoke protesters. The amount of violence at the demonstration (meso-level unit), therefore, is – at least in part – a result of the initial media framing, but also of various subsequent group dynamics, which are themselves triggered by media framing. Such a “spiral of violence” resembles the spiral of silence as described by Noelle-Neumann (1974): People monitor the opinion climate, and speak out or remain silent if they assume themselves to be of the opinion majority or minority. This stimulates a process in which the changing perception of the media climate reinforces the willingness to speak out, and so on. Schulz (2009) draws similar parallels to what he and others call the “mediatization” of the political system (see also, Kepplinger, 2002).

(4) The fourth challenge refers to the *target of framing and priming effects*. The individual recipient is – in many ways – an easy target (or unit of analysis) for empirical research. Yet, social movements, organizations, or even the political system are in many ways more relevant dependent variables. Unfortunately, shifting the dependent variable to group-level entities also requires an examination of the *structure* of these entities. For instance, if we explore media effects on an only loosely structured group, the dynamics of in- and out-group behavior (e.g., Tajfel, 1982) may explain how media framing and priming effects on each group member (micro-level) also affects the collective action of the whole group (meso-level). This could be called a *follow-up effect*. Organizations, however, are characterized by very different structures (e.g., Scott & Davis, 2007; Taylor, 1993). Media coverage is not perceived by an

organization as a whole, but by its individual members. For instance, if the media frame an issue in such a way that opposes a particular political party's goals, the party leaders will likely distribute talking points and other framing documents that help other party members and campaign activists to *counterframe* these media reports. Here, media framing leads to a top-down feedback within the organization.

But the target of coverage could also be the party members who may read reports about their party leader being involved in a political scandal. Following the *third-person effect hypothesis* (e.g., Davison, 1983), these party members may fear that the electorate could vote for an opposition candidate in upcoming elections because of what they assume to be strong effects of the media coverage surrounding the scandal. Therefore, party members may communicate with other party members in order to oust their leader and avoid further political damage. This example proves that the group-level outcomes of individual-level framing effects are much more complicated than modeled previously, and other types of media effects have to be considered when we want to explore media framing and priming effects beyond the micro-level.

Longitudinal Challenges of Modeling Multi-Level Media Framing and Priming Effects

Finally, priming and framing research faces at least three problems connected to longitudinal considerations.

(1) The first problem refers to *reciprocal bottom-up and top-down transitions*. It can be illustrated by referring – once again – to the spiral of silence theory. Here, “the perception-to-expression-to-reinforcement process constitutes a major cross-level mechanism with bidirectional flow of causal forces” (Pan & McLeod, 1991, p. 158). Based on a spiral of silence model, the position seen by the public as winning or in the majority will – over time – establish itself as public opinion. Although only a small percentage of the electorate may in fact change their individual opinion (micro-level) based on public perceptions of the predominant opinion climate, this small group may change the outcome of a closely-contested political race (macro-level). The final target of media effects in the spiral of silence model, therefore, is located at the macro-level, that is, election outcomes or social norms. Again, not only media coverage, but several other factors contribute to this effect at the macro-level.

Similar cross-level dynamics have been discussed using the example of the anti-globalization protest at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm. Here, the framing strategies of the anti-globalization movement, the media reports, the overall opinion climate, the individual willingness to demonstrate, and finally the internal dynamics of a demonstration produce a complex cross-level interplay of factors. Yet, this cross-level structure is not static, as illustrated somewhat simplistically in Figure 3.1, but dynamic in the sense of alternating or simultaneous bottom-up and top-down transitions.

(2) The aspect of *follow-up effects of media framing and priming* can be illustrated by using the example of the Spanish national elections in 2004 again. After the terrorist attacks, mass media, politicians, and other actors framed the final stage of the election campaign largely in terms of terrorism. Voters following these media reports were therefore also more likely to judge the parties in terms of their position towards the Spanish involvement in Iraq – with the Socialist Party being a strong opponent of this commitment. Such media framing and priming effects operate at the level of the individual voter (micro-level). Some voters were primed by the media while others already favored the Socialist Party for other reasons (see subjects A and B in Figure 3.1). The tally of all voters' decisions (see Y_A and Y_B in Figure 3.1) produced the electoral victory (see Z in Figure 3.1) of the Socialist Party. But the election outcome is not the only follow-up media effect. Another one is the Socialist Party's withdrawing of Spanish troops from Iraq prior to the election.

Another example is the evolution of a single demonstration into a more long-term climate of anti-globalization protests. If mass media create an *a priori* narrative of anti-globalization demonstrations around violent protests, as outlined earlier, they may actively contribute to such violence at the specific upcoming demonstration through a self-fulfilling prophecy. In addition, such framing – as well as the violence actually occurring – can shape the overall climate of protest in the long run. Both, protesters and the police will prepare better for each forthcoming summit. The police will send more police units and the protesters will be organized better themselves. The demonstrators will act more violently and the police will enforce laws more strictly. Whether such outcomes can still be perceived as a media effect may differ from case to case. The multi-level blueprint in Figure 3.1 at least gives a formal answer: Changes at higher levels can be called a follow-up media effect if a *significant amount of variance* at the higher level can be *traced back to media framing and priming*. Of course, other factors contribute to this as well, for instance, the financial resources or the framing activities of a social movement. Media may support or undermine social movements by framing and priming. But it is difficult to measure the empirical mechanisms behind these dynamics empirically. Thus, most aspects of cross-level dynamics almost inevitably remain an empirical blackbox, which even methodically sophisticated studies of long-term framing processes are unable to open (e.g., Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002).

(3) A final challenge is related to the *dynamic structure of the target* of framing and priming effects on units at higher levels. According to the spiral of silence theory, each person remaining silent will increase perceptions about opposing views gaining strength. As a result, opinion climates are changing almost continuously. Framing and priming are similar. If media frame a demonstration in terms of violence, they not only influence those people who are willing to protest in the first place, but also those who may have considered demonstrating but are now discouraged by the prospect of violence. As a result, fewer people may attend the rally and those actually protesting may appear even more violent. Here, media framing not only influences individuals (micro-level), but also has an *indirect impact on higher levels of social aggrega-*

tion. For instance, media reports during a G8 summit have an impact on the demonstration at this summit. But the amount of protesters or people's readiness to act violently may already be a result of earlier media reports, which offered narratives of violent protests at this summit (see also Kepplinger, 2007).

Conclusions

This chapter explored priming and framing as media effects theories beyond the micro-level approaches that have dominated much of the work in political communication. We first positioned this line of research in current models of media effects, which have shifted away from Noelle-Neumann's and Gerbner's foci on the *social-level* outcomes of mass communication. Instead, we urge researchers to fully explore negotiation models of media effects, that is, models that hypothesize interactions among micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis, regardless of many of the resulting complexities outlined in this chapter. This would also allow us to more explicitly connect the psychological tradition of framing and priming effects research, on the one hand, and sociological approaches to framing, on the other hand, at a conceptual level.

Second, as our overview shows, agenda setting, framing, and priming effects cannot be fully understood unless they are linked successfully to other theories or models of media effects. The spiral of silence theory or the third-person effect hypothesis have already been incorporated in our considerations about framing and priming effects at the meso- and macro-level, and future research should more systematically explore connections between these different effects models and their outcomes of different levels of analysis.

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Examining Media Effects

The General Aggression and General Learning Models

Christopher P. Barlett and Craig A. Anderson

ABSTRACT

The study of screen media effects is becoming especially important because people spend increasing amounts of time on visually realistic entertainment media. This chapter applies two related theoretical frameworks to the study of media effects: the general aggression model (GAM) and the general learning model (GLM). Both theories posit relations between media exposure and internal processes, behavior, and the development of long-term knowledge structures and attitudes. GAM focuses on the development of aggressive knowledge structures and attitudes derived from exposure to violent media depictions (amongst other aggression-related stimuli), and their relation to aggressive behavior. GLM, a broad extension of GAM, posits how long-term attitudes and knowledge structures are formed with continued exposure to any type of media (violent or nonviolent), and how “media-trained behavior” can ensue. How these processes operate, the role of individual differences, and short- and long-term consequences of media exposure are discussed.

Lessons Learned from Media

Mass media are powerful teachers. As we, and many others, have noted, the contents of mass media determines what they teach (e.g., Anderson et al., 2008; Gentile et al.,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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2009). For instance, Swing and Anderson (2007) noted that electronic media have been used in the classroom to teach topics ranging from photography to flying airplanes. Gentile and Gentile (2008) showed that well-designed mass media, videogames in particular, have all of the key features of excellent teaching. The question remains: What behaviors are viewers learning from the mass media?

This chapter describes two theoretical models that predict when, why, and for whom media exposure is related to behavior. The primary focus of this chapter is to describe the general aggression model, which posits how media violence exposure is related to aggressive behavior. Then we discuss the tenets of the general learning model. This model was more recently developed from the postulates of the general aggression model, and, thus, less text will be devoted to its description. The general learning model can predict how exposure to any type of media content may be related to “media-trained behavior.” In describing these models, we discuss earlier theoretical models that led to the derivation of the general aggression and general learning models, describe the relevant research testing these theories, and describe the role that certain individual differences play in these relations. Finally, future directions and conclusions are offered.

The General Aggression Model

The general aggression model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) is a dynamic, developmental, and social-cognitive integrative model of human aggression (see Anderson & Carnagey, 2004). GAM has the explanatory power to predict how exposure to any aggression-related stimulus (including media violence) is related to subsequent aggressive behavior. The full GAM can be dissected into two highly related sets of processes that operate in the immediate situation (proximate) or more distally. Proximate processes are those that are directly related to current aggressive behavior. Distal processes are those that tie immediate short-term effects of a given stimulus to the development of long-term aggressive behavioral tendencies.

Proximate GAM

The proximate GAM (see the lower part of Figure 4.1) begins with two types of input factors: Situation and person factors. Situational variables are those factors that the individual is currently interacting with that are related to the probability of engaging in aggressive behavior in the immediate situation. These may include exposure to media violence (Anderson et al., 2003), provocation (Bettencourt & Kernahan, 1997), heat (Anderson, 1989), and a host of other factors (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003).

Person factors are those individual difference variables that may be related directly to aggressive behavior (e.g., trait aggression, mood), or that may moderate the effects of situational variables. Research has shown that a variety of person variables

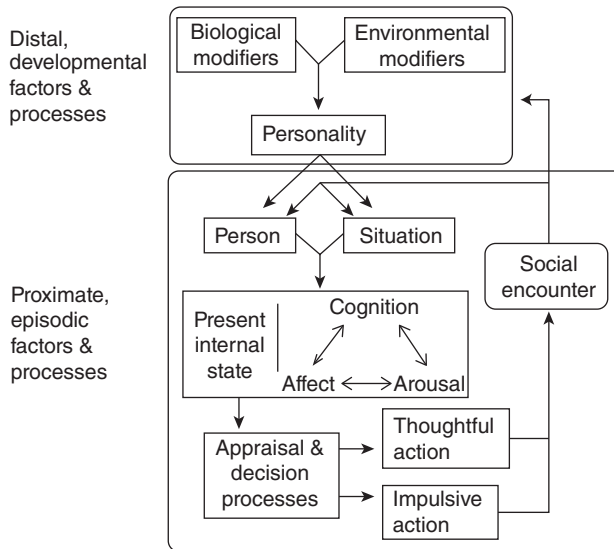


Figure 4.1 The general aggression model: a bio-social model of human aggression. From C. A. Anderson, & N. L. Carnagey (2004). *Violent evil and the general aggression model*. In A. Miller (Ed.), *The social psychology of good and evil*. Copyright Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission of The Guilford Press.

moderate the relation between media violence exposure and aggression. For instance, Bushman (1995) found that videotaped violence was more likely to increase aggression in high trait aggressive individuals than in low trait aggressive individuals. Markey and Scherer (2009) found that violent videogame exposure was related to more aggressive cognitions and aggressive affect for participants high in the psychoticism trait compared to participants with low levels of psychoticism. (See also Kirsch, Olczak, & Mounts, 2005 for the moderating role of trait hostility.)

One single episodic cycle through GAM's proximate processes focuses on how these input factors influence one's present internal state, consisting of aggressive cognitions, aggressive affect, and physiological arousal. All of these internal state variables have been predicted to be correlated with one another. For example, if one feels hostile or frustrated (aggressive affect) then those feelings may trigger aggressive thoughts. It is important to note that GAM does not state how many or which internal state variables are necessary for aggressive behavior to occur. Any one or combination of internal state variables is able to increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior. For instance, the relation between media violence exposure and aggressive behavior appears to be primarily influenced by the aggressive cognition route, although increases in aggressive affect or physiological arousal may also play a role in some cases (Anderson & Dill, 2000).

GAM further posits that the active contents of one's present internal state both influence and are influenced by a complex appraisal and decision process

(see Anderson & Carnagey, 2004). Borrowed from the attribution literature (e.g., Anderson, Krull, & Weiner, 1996), after experiencing a significant event an individual will make an initial attribution as to why it occurred. This initial appraisal can occur quickly and without conscious awareness, and may include behavioral response options. If the observer does not have the time, motivation, and cognitive resources to evaluate his or her initial attribution, then an impulsive behavior is likely to occur. However, if the person does have the time, motivation, and cognitive resources to reassess the initial attribution, then the observer must decide if the initial attribution is important and unsatisfying. If the outcome of the initial attribution is unimportant or satisfactory, then an impulsive behavior is likely to occur. If the outcome of the initial attribution is important and unsatisfying, then an individual may engage in a number of reappraisals of the event. This process iterates until the observer is satisfied with his or her attribution or until a response is required; then a thoughtful behavior is likely to occur. A thoughtful or impulsive action can be either aggressive or non-aggressive, and reappraisal does not guarantee that an initially hostile attribution will be altered. Knowledge of the input factor(s), the present internal state, and other constraints allow one to predict whether the behavioral outcome is likely to be impulsive or thoughtful, aggressive or non-aggressive.

Whether thoughtful or impulsive, aggressive or non-aggressive, the ensuing behavior influences the ongoing social encounter. This social encounter will feed back into the situational input factor. Thus, GAM posits a feedback loop that can lead to a violence escalation cycle. Anderson, Buckley, and Carnagey (2008) argued that aggressive behavior can involve any dyadic units that come into conflict with one another (e.g., two people, two nations). An event that triggers a hostile interpretation is coined as a triggering event that starts the violence escalation processes. This event can range from relatively minor perceived provocation (e.g., hearing a rumor) to a major perceived provocation (e.g., getting punched). After this initial provocation, the victim is likely to retaliate in a manner more severe than the initial provocation warranted. Next, the original aggressor is likely to retaliate with a more severe retaliatory response. This cycle tends to continue. At the person-to-person level, media violence (along with other situational and personological risk factors) is predicted to influence the knowledge structures retrieved, the extent to which the triggering event is perceived as hostile, and the specific behavioral response. Anderson et al. (2008) showed that high trait aggressiveness, paired with a minor triggering event, can initiate the violence escalation cycle.

Distal GAM

GAM incorporates a developmental cycle into its theorizing on aggression via the distal processes. Distal processes predict how continued exposure to aggression-related stimuli influences the development of one's aggressive personality (see upper part of Figure 4.1). Two types of modifiers are likely to influence the extent to which

an aggressive personality is developed. The first are biological modifiers that can influence the probability of aggressive behavior (see Raine, Brennan, Farrington, & Mednick, 1997). Anderson and Carnagey (2004) argued that such biological predispositions interact with the second type of modifier, environmental modifiers, to influence aggressive personality.

At its heart, GAM is a social learning model of aggression. Each time that an individual interacts with aggression-related situational variables serves as one learning trial. This can include the learning, rehearsal, and reinforcement of aggression-related knowledge structures (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004). Continued exposure to stimuli and situations that evoke aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors will eventually lead to the development of well-practiced knowledge structures that are used to interpret events, make decisions, and ultimately increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior. Media violence provides one such exposure to aggression. Figure 4.2 illustrates a number of ways that violent media exposure can influence the development of aggressive personality. Prior to discussing the different knowledge structures, it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list related to such development.

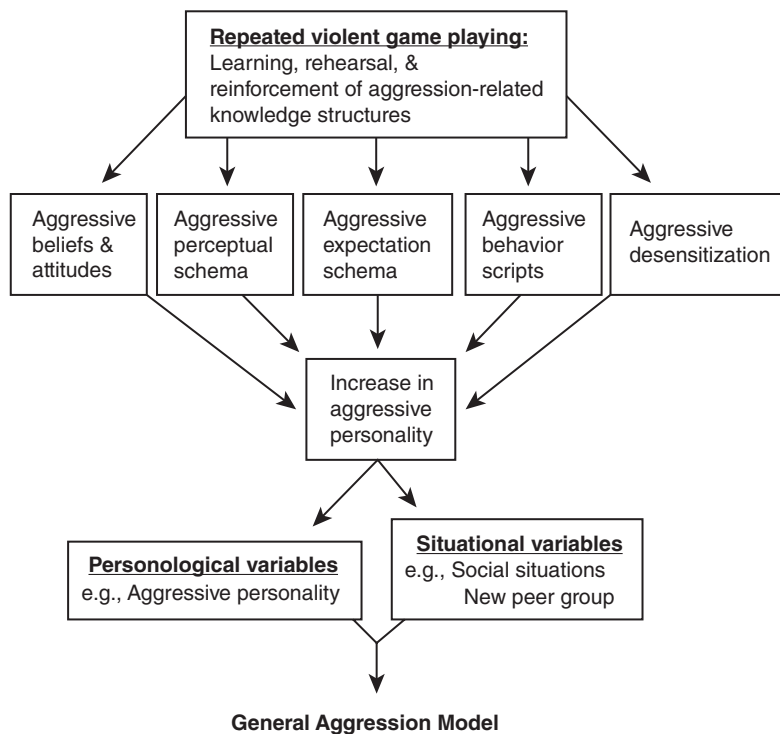


Figure 4.2 Effects of repeated media violence viewing. Reprinted, with permission, from the *Annual Review of Psychology*, Volume 53 © 2002 by Annual Reviews (www.annualreviews.org).

One process involves desensitization, defined as the “reduction in emotion-related physiological reactivity to real violence” (Carnagey, Anderson, & Bushman, 2007, p. 490; Chapter 18, this volume). Here, physiological reactivity refers to the magnitude of change in several indices of arousal (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance) when being exposed to real violence. It has been argued that desensitization is related to aggressive behavior because individuals will have less of a negative emotional and physiological reaction to seeing, thinking about, or planning real-life violence. Research has shown that exposure to violence in the media is related to desensitization (Bushman & Anderson, 2009; Carnagey et al., 2007). Therefore, continued violent media exposure is likely to be related to aggressive behavior because viewers may not be as emotionally or physiologically affected by real-life violence.

To test the desensitization hypothesis, Carnagey et al. (2007) had participants play either a violent or nonviolent videogame and measured their physiological arousal at baseline, after game play, and then after being exposed to film clips of real-life violence. The media violence/desensitization hypothesis predicts that participants who played the violent videogame should show less physiological reactivity to the film violence than those who had played a nonviolent game. This is exactly what was found (Carnagey et al., 2007). In a pair of follow-up experiments, Bushman and Anderson (2009) tested the relation between media violence exposure and the likelihood of helping a person in distress. Participants who had recently played a violent videogame or watched a violent movie were less helpful than those who had just played a nonviolent videogame or watched a nonviolent movie.

Other studies have examined how desensitization is related to aggressive behavior. For example, Bartholow, Benjamin, and Sestir (2006) found that the relation between media violence exposure and aggressive behavior was mediated by physiological desensitization, suggesting that desensitization is one process by which media violence is related to aggressive behavior.

Another long-term process involves the development of aggressive attitudes and beliefs. GAM predicts that positive attitudes and beliefs towards violence should be related to the development of one’s aggressive personality. GAM argues that these positive attitudes and beliefs regarding aggressive behavior are formed when an aggressive behavior is positively reinforced (see Bandura, 1965). There are numerous studies showing such effects. In the videogame domain, Anderson et al. (2004) found that videogame violence exposure was positively related to positive attitudes towards violence, and that the relation between violent videogame exposure and aggressive behavior decreased substantially (sometimes to nonsignificance) when positive attitudes towards violence were entered into the model. Longitudinal evidence found that exposure to violent videogames significantly predicted normative beliefs about aggression 30 months later, and that these aggressive beliefs were significantly related to subsequent physical aggression (Moller & Krahe, 2009). This provides support for the hypothesis that positive attitudes towards violence at least partially mediate the relation between violent videogame exposure and aggressive behavior.

Another process is formation of aggressive behavioral scripts (see next section for a discussion of script theory). Behavioral scripts are a specific type of knowledge structure represented in one's memory. Scripts are defined as mental representations of how the flow of events should occur in a given social situation (Abelson, 1981). Behavioral scripts guide behavior because they help cognitively map how one is to act. Related to aggression, behavioral scripts help dictate when and how one should aggress in certain social situations. In which situations these aggressive behavioral scripts may be utilized depends partially on the individual and what scripts are encoded. At a theoretical level, individuals who are continually exposed to real-life or media violence should have readily accessible aggressive behavioral scripts that are automatic and fairly retrievable, while those who have viewed less violence should have fewer aggressive behavioral scripts accessible, and the scripts that exist may not be as automatically retrieved. Indeed, research shows that short-term exposure to violent videogames increases the accessibility of aggressive scripts (e.g., Bushman & Anderson, 2002), and long-term exposure is related to hostile attribution biases (Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007).

Another long-term process is the development of aggressive perceptual schema. Perceptual schema are a type of knowledge structure that can be used to identify simple everyday objects, such as a computer, but also complex social events, such as a provocation (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004). These types of knowledge structures contain nodes, or concepts in semantic memory. Adapted from cognitive neo-associative theory (see next section), aggressive concepts with similar meanings (e.g., kill, murder) and concepts that are repeatedly paired with one another (e.g., knife, stab) become strongly linked in semantic memory. Priming one node of a well-developed associative network increases the likelihood that other nodes of that network will be activated. Research by Anderson, Benjamin, and Bartholow (1998) showed that after being primed with pictures of aggression-related items (e.g., guns), participants had faster response times to similar aggressive words, such as "injure," compared to control words, such as "survey," and compared to trials with nonaggression related picture-primers (e.g., plants).

Anderson et al. (2004) more directly tested the hypothesis that brief exposure to a violent videogame primes aggressive thoughts. In Experiment 1, participants played either a violent or a nonviolent videogame, then did a word completion task that involved making words from word fragments. As expected, those who had just played a violent game were more likely to create aggression-related words than those who had played a nonviolent game. These studies show that brief exposure to violent media images (e.g., guns) prime aggressive perceptual schema.

Distal evidence for the relation between media violence exposure and aggressive perceptual schema was found by Anderson et al.'s longitudinal study (2007, Study 3). Violent videogame exposure and hostile attribution bias (the tendency to perceive ambiguous acts as hostile; see Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch, & Monshouwer, 2002) of elementary school children were assessed at two points during

a school year separated by about six months. Repeated exposure to violent games predicted increases in hostile attribution bias, a type of aggressive perceptual schema.

Using a very different paradigm, Uhlmann and Swanson (2004) showed proximate evidence for the relation between media violence exposure (i.e., violent videogame exposure) and aggressive perceptual schema. Uhlmann and Swanson (2004) showed that high exposure to violent videogames among college students was associated with highly accessible aggressive self-images. Thus, violent videogames appear to create aggression-related knowledge structures of various types developmentally (distally; Anderson et al., 2007), and such games activate these knowledge structures when they are played (proximally; Uhlmann & Swanson, 2004).

GAM is Integrative

A strength of GAM is its ability to explain how myriad short- and long-term variables and processes are related to aggressive behavior. GAM has such explanatory power because it was derived from a number of other, more specific, aggression theories. Thus, GAM is an integrative model of aggression theories. Several of the theories that were influential to GAM will be discussed.

Cognitive Neo-Associative Theory

Berkowitz's (1984, 1993) cognitive neo-associative theory posits that specific emotional states and memories are represented as nodes in semantic memory (see Chapter 10, this volume). Once any node becomes activated, other related nodes become activated forming an associative network through a process called spreading activation. Berkowitz's model posits that after a provocation, for example, individuals experience negative affect, which activates at least two associative networks. The first network is the aggression-related tendencies network, in which aggressive thoughts and memories become activated, along with expressive motor responses related to aggression, and physiological arousal. After activation of this network, the aggressive thoughts and memories will activate feelings of anger. The second network is the escape-related tendencies network, which consists of thoughts and memories related to feeling fear, along with the strong physiological reaction to fear, and gross motor responses to being afraid. Once these networks are active, the result is the affective consequence of fear. Both of these routes then proceed to the next step of analysis, which consists of higher-order processing. The end result is a behavior that is either anger-related (for the aggression route) or fear-related (for the escape route).

Excitation Transfer Theory

Zillmann's (1971) excitation transfer theory posits that aggressive behavior can be explained by the arousal produced from any stimuli, including the media. The physiological arousal experienced from the media may carry over to another task, because such arousal may not decay quickly. Therefore, the physiological arousal present at the second task is a composite of any physiological arousal created by the second task and the residual arousal experienced by the first task (Zillmann, 1971). If the first and second tasks are close in time, and the second task is related to anger (e.g., a provocation), then that anger may be exaggerated and aggressive behavior may be more likely to occur (Zillmann, 1983). Research has shown that violent media exposure is related to more of a physiological arousal response than nonviolent media exposure (see Bushman & Huesmann, 2006), and excitation transfer theory would predict that the arousal produced by violent media will increase the probability of aggressive behavior during a subsequent interaction, especially if the second interaction or task involves an individual being provoked.

Social Learning Theory

Another important theory that influenced GAM is Bandura's social learning theory and the later version known as social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1978; Chapter 10, this volume). This theory discusses the development of an aggressive personality via myriad methods of learning that can account for individual differences in aggressive personalities. Social learning theory posits that observational learning and reinforced performance form the origins of aggression. Bandura (1978) argued that media violence exposure is related to aggressive behavior, because children are taught aggressive styles, the media shape images of and beliefs about reality, the media desensitize, and the media alter restraint over behavior. Continued observation and learning of aggressive behaviors may also be related to the development of aggressive beliefs that are likely to influence how one interprets social situations.

Script Theory

Huesmann's (1986) script theory posits that people decide to behave aggressively due to their programs of behavior (behavioral scripts) that are stored in memory. Huesmann (1988) argued that both observational learning and enactive learning are two processes by which scripts are encoded in memory. During learning, individuals will often pay attention to the salient cues and scenes in the environment. The information from these scenes, along with one's current mood and memory, help to evaluate the appropriateness of the behavior just observed. If the observed behavior

is positively reinforced (Bandura, 1965), then that behavior is likely to be evaluated as appropriate, and encoded in memory for later retrieval and used as a guide. If a behavioral script gets retrieved from memory, it is evaluated in terms of how socially appropriate the behavior is and how desirable the individual's goals are. If the evaluation of the behavioral script is deemed appropriate, that script gets retrieved and enacted. If the behavior is deemed inappropriate, then memory is searched for a more appropriate script. The mass media is one method by which individuals can observationally learn behavioral scripts, and determine what situations are acceptable for the use of these scripts.

Social Information Processing

Crick and Dodge's (1994) social information processing theory (SIP) posits that all individuals enter a social situation with a database of memories, schema, knowledge about other situations, and social norms regarding appropriate behavior. SIP posits that individuals will encode and then interpret the social situation. Once the cues are interpreted, goals are clarified regarding possible behavior. Appropriate behavior is then accessed from memory, often relying on behavioral scripts from the database. This response is then evaluated in terms of the appropriateness of the behavior (see Fontaine & Dodge, 2006 for specific factors that are important at this step). If the behavior is deemed appropriate, then behavior is enacted. If the behavior is evaluated as inappropriate, another response is generated and evaluated.

Role of Individual Differences

Individual differences, or factors related to the personality, have been shown to be related to aggressive behavior. GAM incorporates these individual differences into its theorizing in short-term and long-term processes. Examples of three individual difference variables will be discussed: hostile attribution bias, age, and sex.

Hostile Attribution Bias

A hostile attribution bias is the tendency to perceive ambiguous acts as hostile (see Orobio de Castro et al., 2002). This type of bias may influence attributions of intent in another's behavior in the short-term, and may influence the ease and development of accessibility of aggression-related knowledge structures in more distal processes. In longitudinal media violence research, Anderson and his colleagues (Anderson et al., 2007, 2008) found that hostile attribution bias acts as a partial mediator between violent media exposure and aggressive behavior four to five months later. Violent

acts in the media are often portrayed as an acceptable method of conflict resolution. Exposure to this type of content is a learning trial and continued exposure is likely to be related to the development of aggressive behavioral scripts through learning processes. For violent media viewers, the default response to another's ambiguous but harmful behavior (e.g., getting bumped in the lunch line) may be to attribute it as having hostile intent. This often increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior.

Age

Positive relations between media violence exposure and aggressive behavior have been found for adult (e.g., Bartholow, Sestir, & Davis, 2005) and child (e.g., Hoph, Huber, & Weib, 2008) samples. There is theoretical reason to expect age differences in the processes governing aggressive responding after viewing violent media. Bushman and Huesmann (2006) argued that after media violence exposure, adults are likely to act aggressively because of the activation and retrieval of very well-developed aggressive behavioral scripts. Children, on the other hand, are less likely to have these aggressive scripts readily available to guide behavior, because children should have been exposed to less violence. They argued that children will respond aggressively after viewing violent media because of imitation processes. Early research from Bandura (1965) found that children behaved more aggressively after viewing an aggressive model that was positively reinforced for his/her behavior. This suggests that both children and adults are likely to behave aggressively after exposure to violent media; however, the processes that delineate why this relation exists might differ. More likely, both types of process operate on both children and adults, with priming processes being relatively more predominant among adults, and imitative processes more predominant among young children.

Sex

Meta-analytic reviews have found that males are more physically aggressive than females (e.g., Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little et al., 2008). Therefore, sex may moderate the relation between violent media exposure and aggression. In their review, Anderson et al. (2003) cited evidence to suggest that males and females tend to have similar effect sizes in the relation between media violence exposure and aggressive behavior. Some empirical evidence suggests that males who played a violent video-game tend to be more aggressive than females who played the same game (Bartholow & Anderson, 2002). One possible explanation for sex differences is that male media characters tend to be more physically violent than female media characters (Anderson et al., 2003). Another explanation is that males tend to seek out media violence more than females, and research has shown that, on average, males play more violent videogames than females (Moller & Krahe, 2009). Whatever the reason, when effect

sizes from the videogame violence and aggression literature were synthesized, results showed no significant differences in effect size estimates between males and females after exposure to videogame violence, a result recently confirmed in a new meta-analysis of the violent videogame literature (Anderson et al., 2010).

General Learning Model

Not all mass media depict violent behavior. Depending on their content, the media can also teach audiences about gender roles, aggressive behavior, prosocial behavior, and a host of other social relations. Broader theories have been posited to predict when exposure to any media content will be related to its behavioral depiction. The general learning model (GLM; Buckley & Anderson, 2006; Gentile et al., 2009, Swing & Anderson, 2008) is a recent attempt to broaden the relevance of the social-cognitive and developmental insights of GAM beyond the domain of aggression. If the postulations of GAM are correct, then certain media effects can also be explained by a more general learning theory. The overlap between GLM's and GAM's predictions on the relation between media violence exposure and aggressive behavior provide substantial support for GLM. However, there is a paucity of evidence that can uniquely explain the postulates of GLM. One area of research that can be predicted from GLM, but not GAM, is the relation between prosocial media viewing and prosocial behavior.

Like GAM, there are distal and proximate processes within GLM. The processes involved in the proximate GLM are similar to GAM. Situational and personality input factors predict one's internal state (consisting of interrelated cognitions, affect, and physiological arousal). These internal state variables influence one's appraisal and decision processes, which influence behavior. The behavioral response feeds back into the dynamic situational input factor at the start of GLM.

The distal GLM (see Figure 4.3) posits that repeated learning and practice with any media is a learning trial that is related to the formation of three different, but highly related, processes. One process is the development of precognitive and cognitive constructs. Examples of such constructs include expectation and perceptual schema, beliefs, and behavioral scripts. Another process is the development of cognitive-emotional constructs, which include attitudes and stereotypes. A third process is the development of emotional constructs, which may include conditioned emotions and affective traits. These constructs have been predicted to be related to the development of or changes in one's personality (Gentile et al., 2009).

GLM can predict how any media portrayal can be related to "media-trained behavior," including aggression. However, the majority of work *uniquely* testing GLM has come from research examining the relation between prosocial media exposure and prosocial behavior. Indeed, the theoretical foundations for GLM were derived from early research testing the postulates of GAM as well as research testing the relations

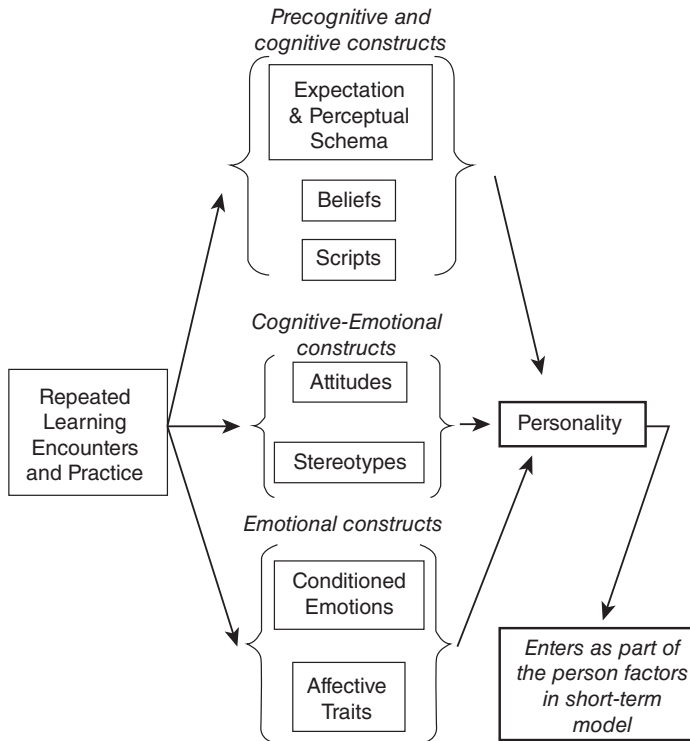


Figure 4.3 The general learning model. From D. A. Gentile, C. A. Anderson, S. Yukawa, N. Ihori, M. Saleem, L. K. Ming, et al. (2009). The effects of prosocial video games on prosocial behaviors: International evidence from correlational, experimental, and longitudinal studies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35, 752–763.

between prosocial media exposure and prosocial behavior. Although much empirical work has tested such relations, early research on prosocial game effects has been mixed. For instance, Chambers and Ascione (1987) found that prosocial videogame exposure was unrelated to prosocial behavior; however, the prosocial videogame used in their study did not depict many prosocial acts. Conversely, Liss, Reinhardt, and Fredriksen (1983) found that children exposed to a prosocial cartoon helped a fictitious partner significantly more than children who viewed either an aggressive cartoon or a cartoon that depicted aggressive behaviors to accomplish a prosocial goal. Despite the wealth of research in this area, there are apparent inconsistencies in the early literature, but recent empirical work has shed light on both the distal and proximate processes in GLM.

Support for distal processes in GLM would show that continued exposure to prosocial media is related to variables associated with prosocial personality tendencies, such as the likelihood of prosocial behavior, empathy, and cooperation. These

predictions were supported by a series of studies conducted by Gentile and his colleagues (2009). First, correlational findings showed significant relations between prosocial videogame exposure and helping behavior, cooperation, sharing, and empathy (Study 1). Second, a longitudinal study showed that prosocial videogame exposure significantly predicted prosocial behavior four to five months later, even after statistically controlling for other relevant variables (Study 2).

Support for the proximate processes in GLM would show that viewing prosocial media would predict the likelihood of prosocial behavior compared to viewing other (e.g., non-prosocial) media in the short-term. Support for this hypothesis was found by Gentile et al. (2009, Study 3) who had college-aged participants play either prosocial videogames, neutral videogames, or violent videogames and then complete a behavioral measure that afforded participants the ability to engage in prosocial and/or aggressive behavior. Results showed that playing prosocial videogames was related to more prosocial behavior compared to the other two game types. Also, playing the violent videogame was related to more aggressive behavior compared to the other two game types. Additional evidence from the videogame domain found a decreased number of aggressive cognitions after playing a prosocial videogame compared to a neutral videogame (Greitemeyer & Osswald, 2009).

Prosocial musical lyrics have also been found to be related to prosocial behavior, supporting the short-term processes in GLM. Greitemeyer (2009a) found that participants who listened to prosocial song lyrics had significantly higher accessibility to prosocial thoughts, higher levels of state empathy, and behaved more prosocially (donating money to a charity) compared to participants who listened to neutral song lyrics. Furthermore, Greitemeyer (2009b) found that participants who listened to prosocial song lyrics (compared to neutral song lyrics) had higher levels of prosocial behavior (picking up pencils and assisting in future laboratory studies), which was mediated by empathy, rather than prosocial thought accessibility. This supports GLM but also suggests that the affective processing route may be the most influential route in predicting short-term prosocial media effects on prosocial behavior; however, more work and replication is needed to support this claim.

Overall Conclusions

In this chapter we have discussed research on the relation between exposure to mass media content and behavior. In doing so, we have elaborated on the general aggression model, and we have elucidated how, why, and for whom media violence exposure is likely to be related to aggressive behavior. Second, we briefly discussed the general learning model, which is, in itself, a direct generalization of GAM. GLM has the power to predict many of the behavioral effects that the mass media shape, including aggressive and prosocial behaviors. Both of these models were discussed in terms of their proximate, short-term relations between the mass media exposure

and behavior, but also their longer, distal processes regarding the learning, development, and retrieval of several highly related knowledge structures that result from continued media exposure and that are instrumental in understanding long-term media effects.

Despite the wealth of evidence for the relation between mass media exposure and behavior, we believe that more work is needed. For instance, more high-quality longitudinal research is needed to test the relation between media violence exposure, various mediating variables, and aggressive behavior. Although accruing longitudinal evidence has become available (Anderson et al., 2007; Anderson et al., 2008, Hoph et al., 2008; Moller & Krahe, 2009), more work and replication are needed to determine more precisely how media violence exposure is related to aggressive behaviors years later. Also, we believe that focus on the effects of prosocial media exposure deserves increased empirical attention. Although recent evidence suggests that prosocial media exposure is related to prosocial behavior (Gentile et al., 2009; Greitemeyer, 2009a; Greitemeyer & Osswald, 2009), more work is needed to test for additional moderators and mediators in this relationship.

One research area that needs continued empirical attention, and that would test the postulates of both GAM and GLM, is the relation between exposure to relationally aggressive media depictions and relational aggression, defined as "harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their relationships" (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p. 711). Relational aggression is important to study because it may capture gender-related aggression tendencies. Research has shown that exposure to relationally aggressive media is related to subsequent relational aggression, but also to subsequent physical aggression (Coyne et al., 2008). Coyne et al. (2008) suggested that this provides support for GAM (and thus GLM), but also supports a crossover effect, such that viewing one type of aggressive behaviors in the media may generalize to other forms of aggressive behaviors.

Mass media are not inherently good or bad, but people learn and content matters (Gentile et al., 2009). What the media portray and teach is likely to determine what attitudes, beliefs, and behavior(s) get learned. Research has shown, and theoretical models predict, that violent content is related to aggressive behavior and prosocial content is related to prosocial behavior through such learning processes.

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Uses and Gratifications

A Social and Psychological Perspective of Media Use and Effects

Paul Haridakis

ABSTRACT

For several decades uses and gratifications (U&G) has been a predominant theory guiding research on media use and effects. U&G emphasizes the centrality of the individual in the audience–media use–effects relationship. Research guided by this audience-centered perspective has suggested that understanding media effects requires consideration of audience members' individual differences, expectations, goals, level of purposiveness and activity when using media to satisfy their needs and desires. Though much U&G research has focused on how and why people use media, it is, ultimately, a media-effects theory. In this chapter, I review the theory's origins, evolution, and application in the study of media effects. Finally, I discuss the social significance and new and enduring directions of U&G research in the study of newer media environments in which people have a growing number of media choices for consuming, sharing and creating media fare; and connecting with each other.

Introduction

Uses and gratifications is an audience-centered media-effects perspective. It stresses that media effects are the result of a confluence of factors working in concert, and that many of these factors are unique to the individual. Uses and gratifications

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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suggests that people's social and psychological characteristics influence their needs and desires which are manifested in their motives for using communication channels. Audience background characteristics and motives, in turn, influence media-use activity before, during and after use; attitudes about the media and their content; and, ultimately, effects.

Although uses and gratifications sees people as purposive, goal directed, and motivated in seeking to satisfy their needs and desires, it also recognizes that many effects – perhaps most – are unintended (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch 1974). Thus, researchers have used the perspective to explore consequences of media use other than gratifications sought to be obtained, including unintended or even detrimental outcomes of media use such as viewer aggression (Haridakis, 2002), media addiction (Kim & Haridakis, 2009), unintended perceptions gleaned from the media (Rubin, Haridakis, Hullman, Sun, Chikombero, & Pornsakulvanic, 2003), and a host of other outcomes.

But, on the whole, uses and gratifications suggests people choose media that they feel satisfies their needs. They develop expectations of media and rely on media and content that meet those expectations.

Origins and Theoretical Assumptions

Reviews of audience-centered perspectives often trace the roots of uses and gratifications to mid-twentieth century research in which scholars began to focus more deliberately on the functions media serve for people, such as surveillance, cultural transmission, entertainment and mobilization (Rubin, 2009). In early research, scholars identified reasons for which people used particular media and fare such as radio music (Suchman, 1942), radio quiz shows and serials (Herzog, 1940, 1944), newspapers (Berelson, 1949), comics (Wolfe & Fiske, 1949), and television (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Scholars came to recognize that media effects were attributable to more than simple exposure to media or their content, and that researchers needed to focus on learning more about why and how people use the media. Such a research orientation was referred to by various names including functional (Wright, 1960), phenomenistic (Klapper, 1960), and situational (Freidson, 1953). Katz (1959) referred to such an approach as uses and gratifications.

Klapper (1960) synthesized much of this research and concluded that individuals' psychological and social environmental differences, including group membership, interpersonal communication, and media use behaviors (e.g., selective exposure, perception, and retention) mediated the effects of media exposure. Much of the research reviewed by Klapper was more descriptive than explanatory. But, it did reflect the growing recognition of the need to account for individual-level and media-use differences in the study of media effects. This included the influence of audience activity (Blumler, 1979), media-use motives (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972), and background characteristics such as race (Gerson, 1966), personality, and social situation (Rosengren, 1974).

The uses and gratifications perspective that emerged from such research represented a theory of social and psychological needs that was lacking in mass communication research (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973–1974). Katz et al. (1974) summarized the perspectives' assumptions, and the breadth and scope of its application. They outlined the often-cited model of uses and gratifications that addresses

(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones. (p. 20)

This audience-centered model saw the media consumer as active, selective, and relatively goal-directed. While acknowledging that some media use is more casual and passive, purely involuntary, unconscious, and impulsive media use was largely outside the boundaries of the focus of uses and gratifications.

Since the 1970s, scholars have tested the assumptions of the uses and gratifications model outlined by Katz et al. (1974). They have focused on clarifying the conceptualization and operationalization of concepts central to the theory, and sought empirical verification of links among these concepts as they have applied the theory to study the use and effects of various media and content.

Rubin (2009) recently described five central assumptions of uses and gratifications. First, "Communication behavior, including the selection and use of the media, is goal directed, purposive, and motivated," and functional. Second, people "are variably active" in their "selection and use of communication" and "use media to satisfy felt needs or desires." Third, "Social and psychological factors guide, filter, or mediate behavior." Fourth, "media compete with other forms of communication – or, functional alternatives – such as interpersonal interaction for selection, attention, and use." Fifth, "People are typically more influential than the media in this process, but not always" (p. 167).

In sum, uses and gratifications theory addresses media use and effects as a process that begins with the individual's needs and desires which drive him/her to use communication to satisfy those needs and desires and ends in media effects, both intended and unintended. It recognizes that need satisfaction and other media effects vary based on a host of individual differences such as personality, social relationships, potential for interaction, availability of preferred and alternative media and interpersonal communication channels, motives for using media, and how actively media are used.

Evolution of Research

Over the years different studies have focused on different parts of the uses and gratifications (U&G) model outlined by Katz et al. (1974). Rubin's (2009) update reflects a

contemporary U&G model accounting for research that has refined and clarified the perspective's central tenets. Some research has focused on motives for using media and interpersonal communication. Some research has focused on understanding the variability of audience activity and/or linked motives to activity. Other research has focused on how one's social/psychological circumstances influence motives, selectivity, and/or other forms of audience activity (e.g., involvement, attention).

In still other studies, researchers have attempted to test assumptions of the whole U&G model. These types of studies typically focus on how audience background characteristics relevant to the subject of interest (e.g., medium, content, or specific media effect), media-use motives, and activity (e.g., selectivity, involvement, attention) work together to influence attitudinal or behavioral media effects.

Due to the breadth and volume of uses and gratifications research studies, available space only allows for a very abbreviated review of research conducted. It is my hope, however, that the representative review provided here will give the interested reader a flavor of the wider body of U&G scholarship of which the examples here are illustrative.

Communication Motives

The importance of audience motivation in U&G research cannot be overstated. Rosengren (1974) asserted that although U&G posits that needs drive human communication behavior, exploration of fundamental human needs is best left for biologists and psychologists. He stressed that uses and gratifications researchers concentrate their attention on communication motives in which needs are assumed to be manifested (e.g., an underlying need for human interaction may be manifested in motives such as seeking companionship or affection). Katz et al. (1974) suggested that researchers should, in fact, avoid conclusions about the cultural significance of a medium or media content until motives were fully understood. Accordingly, one important research direction beginning in earnest in the 1970s was the identification and conceptualization of media-use motives (e.g., McQuail et al., 1972).

One important advancement was the development of motive indexes that could be used to operationalize motives in empirical research. Greenberg (1974) developed an index to measure motives British children had for watching television. This research was extended by Rubin (1981, 1983). Rubin's efforts resulted in the 27-item television-viewing motive index. It measured nine specific motives for watching television: relaxation, companionship, habit, to pass the time, entertainment, social interaction, information, arousal, and escape. Greenberg's and Rubin's indexes have been used in various iterations over the years to study motives for watching television and specific television genres (see Perse, 2004).

Scholars have remained devoted to the exploration of motives in an effort to understand and explain the use of a variety of media and media fare. Examples of

contemporary research include the study of motives for using/watching news programs (Perse, 1990), soap operas (Rubin & Perse, 1987a), sports (Earnhardt & Haridakis, 2008), televised violence (Haridakis, 2002), TV talk shows (Rubin, Haridakis, and Eyal, 2003), reality shows (Barton, 2009), public television (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979), religious programs (Abelman, 1987), erotica (Perse, 1994), movies (Johnston, 1995), radio talk shows (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989), satellite radio (Lin, 2006), VCRs (Rubin & Bantz, 1987), the telephone (Dimmick, Sikand, & Patterson, 1994), cell phones (Leung & Wei, 2000), iPods (Ferguson, Greer, & Reardon, 2007), the Internet (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), Internet content such as political fare (Kaye & Johnson, 2002), Internet sites such as home pages and social networks (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Papacharissi, 2002), fantasy sports (Spinda & Haridakis, 2008), and interpersonal communication (Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988).

Together, studies suggest that there are some rather stable motives for using a variety of media and media content (e.g., information, entertainment, relaxation, escape, and to pass the time). On the other hand, research has identified motives unique to selecting or preferring a particular medium or content. For example, Johnston (1995) found unique motives for watching graphic horror movies (e.g., gore watching, thrill watching). Similarly, Perse (1994) reported four motives for using erotica: sexual enhancement, diversion, sexual release, and substitution for a sexual partner. Motives for watching sports have included reasons such as achievement, aesthetics, and physical attraction to athletes, among others (Trail & James, 2001).

The difficulty of accounting for all possible motives for using specific media or fare is exacerbated in newer media environments in which people can use a growing number of media for multiple or unique purposes. For example, people may use DVDs and VCRs to watch their favorite television programs, but may choose these technologies over television because they permit them to watch the programs on-demand (e.g., Rubin & Bantz, 1987). The same time-shifting advantage occurs with DVRs (digital video recorders) such as TiVo, and video sharing sites such as YouTube (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). People may use the Internet for some of the same reasons they use older media, and also because of its convenience (Hanson & Haridakis, 2008). And, people may prefer media such as cell phones because of their mobility (e.g., Leung & Wei, 2000).

At the same time, there may be differences between using the Internet for media consumption (e.g., listening to music, watching videos, acquiring information) and using the Internet to share information with others (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Similarly, although cell phones may be used primarily for interpersonal communication, they also may be used for status- or fashion-related reasons, and because of their immediacy (Leung & Wei, 2000). In addition, users' motives may differ depending on who they are talking to (e.g., immediate family members vs. business associates) (Leung & Wei, 2000).

One area of research that has been growing in particular is the study of motives for using online media for social and interpersonal interaction. Over 20 years ago

Rubin and Rubin (1985) argued that people can choose media to satisfy interpersonal needs and can choose interpersonal channels to gratify media-related needs. Newer media environments have provided researchers with interesting new opportunities to explore this observation. U&G researchers have noted that the Internet, for example, is used for both interpersonal and media-related reasons (e.g., Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008). Such findings prompted Haridakis and Hanson (2009) to suggest that there probably always has been a false dichotomy between media-use motives and interpersonal communication motives (p. 322). For example, teenagers watching a movie together or a family playing games on the Wii are most likely satisfying both interpersonal and media-related desires.

Today, researchers seldom examine the role of motives without considering their relationship with other important concepts with which they should be related, theoretically. One particularly important theoretical development in U&G inquiry was identifying the relationship between audience activity and motives for using media.

Activity

Because U&G posits “[c]ommunication behavior, including the selection and use of the media, is goal-directed, purposive, and motivated” (Rubin, 2009, p. 167), a central tenet of the perspective is that people are active media users and that their activity level is influenced by their motives for using media. Over the years scholars have come to regard activity as a variable concept. That is, people are more or less active at different times. Activity also is manifested in different ways, such as in intentionality, selectivity, attention, cognitive and emotional involvement with media or media fare, and use of the fare consumed. Activity also occurs at different times in the media-use process – before exposure (e.g., pre-exposure planning), during exposure (e.g., involvement, attention) and after exposure (e.g., thinking/talking about the fare consumed) (Levy & Windahl, 1984).

Finding patterns of relationships among motives and different types of audience activity led researchers to suggest that there are different orientations toward media use. Various bipolar terms have been used to describe these different media-use orientations. For example, media use has been classified broadly as proactive or passive (Finn, 1992), instrumental or ritualized (Rubin, 1983), and as utilitarian or diversionary (Perse, 1990).

Regardless of the terms that have been attached to these different orientations, each suggests media use rests on a continuum from more passive to more active. According to Rubin and Perse (1987b), “these are general orientations toward a medium and its content, not static or discrete characteristics of individual users” (p. 59). They reflect the multivariate relationship among motives, attitudes, and behaviors. Rubin (2009) explained,

Ritualized use is using a medium more habitually to consume time and for diversion. It entails greater exposure to and affinity with the *medium*. Ritualized use suggests utility but an otherwise less active or less goal-directed state. *Instrumental* use is seeking certain message *content* for informational reasons. It entails greater exposure to news and informational content and perceiving that content to be realistic. Instrumental use is active and purposive. It suggests utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement. (pp. 172–173)

Thus, some motives such as surveillance and information seeking reflect more instrumental use, whereas using media out of habit or to pass the time reflect more passive use. But, again, these are just broad generalizations that depend on the interrelationships among motives, attitudes, and activity levels. For example, using media habitually to escape may indeed reflect more ritualized use. But, if someone is using media or media content purposively to escape, then for that person at that point in time it may reflect more instrumental use. Kim and Haridakis (2009) speculated as much when they found that using the Internet to escape predicted a dimension of Internet addiction they termed “escaping reality.”

In short, the variability of activity depends on factors such as motives, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations of media and content. It also can be affected by social context in which media use occurs and the media consumer’s social situation, such as the availability of media and other communication channels from which to choose (Rubin, 2009).

The relative degree of activity may also be fostered or inhibited by the medium selected. Different media permit different levels of activity and/or interactivity. For example, certain media forms like talk radio, call-in TV like home shopping, and particular Internet functions (e.g., social networking sites) are specifically designed for interactive use. This inherent interactivity has provided researchers with new opportunities to flesh out the conceptualization and role of media user activity. It also, however, has raised new challenges not posed by the use of older less interactive media, because today media users are not just receivers of media fare. They also are content senders/sharers and creators.

Therefore, researchers have been applying U&G to examine different activities associated with receiving, sharing, or creating media fare. Consistent with U&G assumptions, research has suggested that people’s background characteristics and motives influence their media-use activities, whether they are consuming, sharing, or creating content. For example, in a study of personal home pages, Papacharissi (2002) found that social interaction-reward (how satisfying one found their face-to-face communication with others to be) was a positive predictor and life satisfaction was a negative predictor of home page expressiveness. Years of Internet use and number of years of web authoring were positive predictors of home page creativity, and years of computer use was a negative predictor of creativity. Not surprisingly, self-expression motivation predicted home page expressiveness and the amount of personal information included. Haridakis and Hanson (2009) found that male gender

and one's level of social activity were two background characteristics that predicted viewing YouTube videos, and social activity and internal locus of control (belief that one can control events in one's life) were characteristics that predicted sharing videos. Users also shared videos for entertainment, to coview with others, and for social interaction with others.

Media and Content Exposure

Uses and gratifications is a media-effects perspective. Because there can be no media use or effects without exposure, U&G researchers typically assess exposure to a medium or content in order to study its selection, use, or effects. Often, exposure is measured by asking respondents questions regarding the amount of time they spend with media or content or the frequency of use (e.g., Haridakis, 2002; Haridakis & Hanson, 2009).

However, the U&G theoretical framework places less emphasis on the effects of sheer exposure than it does on the effects of audience activity during exposure. Therefore, U&G studies often couple or replace measures of exposure with measures of one or more types of audience activity such as selectivity, media and content preferences, level of attention, and involvement with content.

Another exposure-related theoretical concept sometimes considered in U&G studies is the notion of functional alternatives. U&G suggests that people are most likely to choose the communication channel they feel will most ably satisfy their needs or desires. Sometimes, however, the preferred medium is not available. Thus, they turn to other communication channels, or "functional alternatives" (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972).

Use of an alternative channel is functional when it can be used in-lieu of another channel to satisfy a felt need or desire. For example, Rubin and Rubin (1985) suggested that media at times can be used to satisfy interpersonal needs. Pornsakulvanich et al. (2008) recently corroborated this when they found that the Internet was used to foster relationship closeness. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found that those who were anxious when communicating face to face, and found it less than rewarding, tended to turn to the Internet for interpersonal utility. In addition to the Internet, technologies such as the cell phone can be used to stay in touch with friends, family and associates (Leung & Wei, 2000).

Sometimes, though, selection of alternative media may be dysfunctional, such as when it has unexpected negative consequences. As Klapper (1963) noted nearly 50 years ago, "what may be functional for one sort of person may serve no function, or may be dysfunctional, for another sort of person" (p. 521). For example, researchers have speculated that too much reliance on television or the Internet may result in addiction to the medium (Finn, 1992; Kim & Haridakis, 2009). Similarly, during a crisis people may turn to the media for political information,

but may be more fearful than those who use the media for other reasons (e.g., Haridakis & Rubin, 2005).

Thus, in a U&G framework, there are a number of considerations in addition to sheer exposure. Media and content exposure is nonetheless important to measure, in order to understand what is selected, why and how it is used, and the effects it has. Making the latter determination requires consideration of media users' social and psychological background characteristics, which U&G suggests drive human communication behavior.

Background Characteristics

Uses and gratifications posits that "the selection of media and content, and the uses to which they are put, are considerably influenced by social role and psychological predisposition" (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973, p. 165). Various types of media users' characteristics have been linked with communication motives, media and content choice or preferences, attitudes toward media, and media effects. Researchers have examined the influence of demographic and social factors. Examples include race, gender, nationality/ethnicity, life position, availability of communication channels such as interpersonal interaction, social situation in which media use occurs (e.g., covieing with others), and a host of psychological factors such as various personality traits, dispositions, and attitudes toward the respective media or content (see Papacharissi, 2009; Rubin, 2009).

Of course, not all social and psychological characteristics can be accounted for in an individual study. Therefore, typically, U&G research focuses on characteristics relevant to the particular subject of interest in a study. For example, a study of media violence may take into account audience characteristics that have been or theoretically should be linked to the use, motives for using, preference for, or effects of media violence (Chapter 8, this volume). These may include factors such as disinhibition and experience with crime (Haridakis, 2002), sensation seeking and aggressiveness (Greene & Krcmar, 2005), neuroticism (Krcmar & Kean, 2005), and gender differences (Haridakis, 2006a).

A study of the use of media for interpersonal communication might account for factors such as unwillingness to communicate and loneliness (Pornsakulvanich et al., 2008). A study of sports media use might consider factors such as fandom and gender (Earnhardt & Haridakis, 2008), or racial differences (Bilyeu & Wann, 2002). A study of use of a newer medium might consider users' perceived self-efficacy with the medium (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). A study of political media use may consider factors such as interest in politics, trust in government, and political self-efficacy (Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, & Ponder, 2010; Kaye & Johnson, 2002). A study of reality television programs that permit viewers to peek into participants' private lives may consider a viewer trait such as voyeurism (Baruh, 2009).

Across studies, social and psychological differences of media users have been found to be differentially related to motives, activity, attitudes, and media effects. Below are some representative examples illustrative of typical uses and gratifications studies.

Representative Uses and Gratifications Studies

The U&G premise that people use media to satisfy particular needs and desires has led to examinations of gratifications obtained from media use (e.g., Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980). Over the years, though, researchers have applied the theory to study a host of media effects – both intended and unintended. What the studies have in common are consistent findings that various media effects are influenced by different social and background characteristics of media users, different manifestations of audience activity, use of different media and media fare, and various motives for using media – corroborating uses and gratifications assumptions.

Papacharissi (2009) suggested the term “effects” in uses and gratifications research must be employed “with care” (p. 141). Arguably one reason for such caution is that U&G researchers generally have not focused specifically on effects of media, but rather on effects attributable to how media are used. Thus, the theory often has been applied to examine and understand factors of media use (e.g., motivation, selectivity, audience activity) rather than effects, *per se*.

Motives and Media Selection/Use

Some research has focused on social and psychological antecedents to motivation and/or media use. For example, Finn and Gorr (1988) found that social support variables and self-esteem were positively related to watching television for mood management, and that social compensation motivation was positively related to loneliness and shyness. Perse and Rubin (1990) found that chronically lonely TV news viewers tended to watch the news to pass the time, and Roe and Minnebo (2007) found tensions within school and home social contexts were related to watching television for mood management. Weaver (2003) found that three personality traits – extraversion, psychoticism, and neuroticism – were differentially related to television viewing motives. Conway and Rubin (1991) found that viewer anxiety was related to viewing television to escape. Kaye and Johnson (2002) found users’ political self-efficacy predicted two motives – guidance and information/surveillance – for using the Internet for political information. More recently, Earnheardt and Haridakis (2008) found that sports fandom was positively related to viewing televised sports for entertaining relaxation and self-esteem/achievement motivation.

However, uses and gratifications researchers generally do not focus on motives as outcome variables. Rather, the perspective views motives as explanatory of media consumption, use, and effects. Accordingly, numerous studies have explored links between motives and/or audience background characteristics and selection of media/content, or other media-use activities and attitudes.

For example, Greenberg (1974) found that arousal viewing was related to watching adventure programs and violent programs. Rubin (1981) found that information viewers preferred talk shows, whereas arousal viewers preferred sports. He also found that viewing to pass the time correlated negatively with preference for news programs, and social viewing was negatively correlated with talk show preference. Rubin (1983) found interactions among viewing motives and viewing behaviors (e.g., program preferences and viewing levels) and attitudes (television affinity, and television realism). In a study of elderly television viewers, Rubin and Rubin (1982) found that companionship, escape, pass time, relaxation, arousal, and product advertising motives were associated with watching game shows and soap operas. Entertainment and information motivation was associated with watching news, talk shows, and documentary-magazine shows.

In addition to general television viewing, studies have focused on the influence of motives and/or background characteristics on consumption or preference for media content such as soap operas (Rubin & Perse, 1987a), news (Rubin & Perse, 1987b), sports (Earnhardt & Haridakis, 2008), erotica (Perse, 1994), reality TV (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007), religious television (Abelman, 1987), and violent fare (Haridakis, 2002), to name just a few.

For example, Rubin, Haridakis, and Eyal (2003) found that different motives and specific background characteristics predicted attraction to different television talk shows (e.g., Oprah Winfrey, Jerry Springer). Perse and Rubin (1990) found that watching TV news and soap operas more ritualistically was linked to chronic loneliness. Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) found that viewers who were higher in external locus of control, less mobile, and had reduced levels of interpersonal interaction tended to watch reality shows for companionship and voyeuristic purposes. Baruh (2009) found that younger individuals and women were most likely to watch reality shows.

Some background characteristics and motives related to consuming violent media fare have included extraversion and neuroticism (Krcmar & Kean, 2005), sensation seeking, verbal aggressiveness, argumentativeness, instrumental androgyny (Greene & Krcmar, 2005), male gender, arousal, and the motivation to pass the time (Haridakis & Rubin, 2003). In a study of news consumption across mediated sources (i.e., comedy news, cable news, broadcast news, Internet news, hometown newspapers), Diddi and LaRose (2006) found that news habit strength predicted overall news consumption, and that surveillance and escapism motives were consistent predictors of consumption.

Researchers also have explored the influence of background characteristics and motives on the selection and use of numerous other media such as radio (Dominick,

1974), music genres (Delsing, Ter Bogt, Engels, & Meeus, 2008), the Internet (Papacharssi & Rubin, 2000), the telephone (Dimmick et al., 1994), cell phones (Leung & Wei, 2000) movies (Johnston, 1995), and iPods (Ferguson et al., 2007). Lin (2006) found channel selectivity, diversion and habit listening motives, and certain radio format preferences predicted interest in adopting satellite radio. Leung and Wei (2000) found that instrumental motives (instrumentality, immediacy, and mobility), affection/sociability motivation, and subscribing to enhanced cell phone services predicted cell phone use.

Recently, researchers have been studying the use of the Internet's social media functions. These studies have suggested that user background characteristics and motives influence not only consumption of media fare, but dissemination or production of media content as well. For example, Haridakis and Hanson (2009) found that socially active males who watched YouTube videos for information, entertainment, covieing with others, and social interaction watched the videos more often than did their counterparts. The latter three motives (along with internal locus of control and level of social activity) predicted sharing videos with others. Papacharissi (2002) found that people who hosted personal home pages did so for entertainment and information-related reasons, to communicate with friends and family, for self-expression, for professional development, and to pass the time. Focusing on content creation, Leung (2009) found that recognition needs and social needs drove the production of user-generated content.

Intended and Other Positive Media Effects

Although studies such as those above have corroborated uses and gratifications assumptions regarding the relationships among audience background characteristics, media-use motives, and media-use activity, perhaps the most comprehensive U&G research has focused on ascertaining how a combination of these variables representing different stages of the Uses and Gratifications Model work in concert to predict various media effects.

Because U&G assumes media use is purposive and goal-directed, U&G studies often have focused on, arguably, desired positive outcomes of media use. Examples include satisfaction with programs, content, or media (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Perse & Rubin, 1988), liking of media fare consumed (Krcmar & Kean, 2005), knowledge (Vincent & Basil, 1997), perceptions of media utility (Perse & Dunn, 1998), parasocial interaction (sense of interpersonal connection) with media personae (Earnheardt & Haridakis, 2009; Haridakis, 2006b), connection with others (Pornsakulvanich et al., 2008), perceptions of psychological empowerment (Leung, 2009), and cross-cultural adaptation (Wang, Sun, & Haradak, 2009).

Together, the studies support assumptions that background characteristics as well as various motives or a combination of motives and audience activity levels reflective of instrumental and ritualized media-use orientations influence many desirable

media effects. For example, Nabi, Stitt, Halford, and Finnerty (2006) found that voyeurism and three emotional reactions (happiness, surprise, and relief) positively predicted and one emotion (anger) negatively predicted enjoyment of reality TV shows (Chapter 16). Those who watched reality shows for relaxation and entertainment also perceived them as realistic (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007).

Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) found that informational viewing motives predicted parasocial interaction with newscasters. Kim and Rubin (1997) found exciting entertainment, information/ voyeurism, and social utility motives, along with attention, involvement and selective perception, predicted parasocial interaction with soap opera characters.

Satisfaction with soap operas has been predicted by exciting entertainment motivation, escapist relaxation motivation, and attention (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Perse & Rubin, 1988). Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found that satisfaction with the Internet was predicted by information motivation and feeling valued by family and friends. Pornsakulvanich et al. (2008) found that using the Internet for self-fulfillment and affection motivation, and intended self-disclosure predicted interpersonal communication satisfaction.

Despite its emphasis on individual differences and people's media-use motives, U&G does not ignore the influence of the media. A major U&G assumption is that media are used functionally (e.g., to satisfy one's needs) and that the content consumed influences effects. For example, in a study of news media use by college students, Vincent and Basil (1997) found that current events knowledge was predicted by two specific news sources: print news and viewing CNN. Diddi and LaRose (2006) found that hometown newspaper reading was a better predictor of current events knowledge than the use of other mediated news sources, and that depth of coverage (across mediated sources) also related to current events knowledge. Baruh (2009) suggested that different types of reality show content (e.g., gossip, nudity, scenes in private settings) influence the voyeuristic appeal of such shows. What these types of U&G studies have in common that often differentiates them from other media-effects studies is that they see media content as just one factor amid other factors (such as media-use motives, activity, individual differences) that work in conjunction to influence effects.

Unintended Negative Media Effects

The above research suggests, on balance, that people's media use is relatively purposive and often results in need satisfaction and other intended positive effects. That does not mean, however, that there are not extraneous effects unrelated to media users' goals. As Katz et al. (1974) suggested, U&G recognizes that many if not most consequences of media use – positive or negative – may be unintended. For example, it is unlikely that people use media to become more aggressive, to experience fear, to cultivate limited perceptions of themselves or others, or to develop an unhealthy

reliance on a particular medium. But, U&G studies have uncovered such unintended or even detrimental perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioral effects.

For example, researchers have used a U&G framework to examine perceptual and attitudinal media effects. Some research has revealed that cultivation effects can at times be related to more passive – less selective and intentional – media use and at other times be related to instrumental use, depending on one's background characteristics, motives, attitudes about the media fare consumed (e.g., Rubin, Haridakis et al., 2003; Rubin, Perse, & Taylor, 1988), and enhanced by facilitative activity such as selective exposure and involvement (Kim & Rubin, 1997). Perse (1994) found that watching erotica for substitution (for a sexual partner) was related to acceptance of rape myths. Sexual enhancement and diversion motives related indirectly to rape myths through their links to hostile beliefs about women and exposure. In a study of problematic body attitudes among adolescents, Tiggemann (2005) found that a drive for thinness was related to soap opera viewing. Drive for muscularity among boys related to soap opera and music video viewing. Two TV viewing motives – social learning and escape from negative affect – were related to negative body image variables.

In studies of post-9/11 news use, some research has suggested that media news could be used for healthy ends, such as reducing uncertainty viewers felt in the aftermath of the tragic events of 9/11 (Boyle et al., 2004). However, other research has suggested that some TV viewers, such as those who measured higher in external locus of control and watched terrorist-related news stories for reasons of companionship, were more fearful (Haridakis & Rubin, 2005).

U&G research has also linked media use to negative behavioral effects. For example, Greene and Krcmar (2005) found that exposure to media violence was related to violent and risky behaviors. Haridakis (2002) found that disinhibited externally controlled males who watched televised violence primarily for entertainment were more aggressive than their counterparts. Haridakis (2006a) also found that the relationships among background characteristics, motives, and postviewing aggression differed by gender.

One behavior that has been receiving more attention recently is problematic media use that may reflect addiction to a medium. U&G researchers have long been interested in media dependency (see Sun, Rubin, & Haridakis, 2008). Through the prism of U&G, media dependency is considered a normal aspect of media use, because people are assumed to choose and rely on media they expect will satisfy their particular needs or desires. But, some research suggests that some media users may become overly dependent on a medium and exhibit more problematic and even addictive media-use behavior.

For example, Kim and Haridakis (2009) found that males were more prone to addictive Internet-use behavior. However, they found different manifestations of Internet addiction were differentially influenced by personality characteristics (locus of control, loneliness, shyness, and thrill seeking) and various motives (habitual entertainment, caring for others, escape, and excitement).

Social Media Use

In recent years, researchers have been devoting progressively more attention to the study of the use of media for social interaction. Such inquiry has a long tradition in uses and gratifications studies. For example, social interaction (e.g., something to do with friends and family) is one of the motives identified in television viewing studies and measured in the television motives scale (Rubin, 1983). Lull (1980) documented several social uses of television by families. Research has also indicated that sports fans often use sports viewing to form group cohesion and/or identification and social connection with other fans (for a review see Haridakis, 2010).

The emergence of social media like YouTube, social networking sites, and blogs has heightened the need to understand better the social uses and effects of media that permit receiving, sharing, and creating messages. As referenced earlier, U&G studies have uncovered both more traditional media-use motives (e.g., entertainment, information) and social-related reasons (e.g., social connection, covieing) for using the Internet's social networking functions (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Some research has focused on identifying motives specifically for the creation of online content (Leung, 2009).

The research has shown, not surprisingly, that socially interactive media such as cell phones and online communication are used to connect to friends, family, and business associates (Leung & Wei, 2000). They are used by diasporic individuals to achieve cross-cultural adaptation (Wang et al., 2009). They are also used to play games with others (Spinda & Haridakis, 2008).

Some studies have explored use of newer media to interact with strangers. Peter, Valkenburg, and Schouten (2006) found that younger adolescents were more likely to talk to strangers, as were adolescents who engaged in longer chat sessions. Adolescents who chatted to be entertained, to meet new people, and for social compensation tended to engage in more online communication with strangers. Those who were online more often interacted less frequently with strangers. Cho (2007) examined the influence of gender and motives on adolescents' self-disclosure in online chatting with strangers. Although gender did not predict self-disclosure, different motives (for interpersonal relationships, information, entertainment) did have differential impacts on the level of online self-disclosure.

Some research has focused on the use of the Internet to enhance or develop relationships. Pornsakulvanich et al. (2008) found that people who tended to use the Internet for self-fulfillment, felt their face-to-face communication was rewarding, and shared their feelings with others felt closer to their online partners than their counterparts (those lower on these characteristics). Those who used the Internet for affection and self-fulfillment reasons, and intended to disclose their feelings were more satisfied with their online communication than their counterparts.

These studies suggest that people are using social media for a wide range of activities, and, consistent with uses and gratifications assumptions, motives and individual differences differentially influence the various activities – viewing, sharing, and creat-

ing content – for which social media are used. The research also suggests that although people use social media for some of the same reasons they use more traditional media, there is a distinctly *social* aspect to social media use that reflects their social networking characteristics.

Conclusion

Like any theoretical approach, uses and gratifications has attracted criticism over the years. Critiques have ranged from methodological concerns such as researchers' reliance on self-reports to theoretical concerns regarding a lack of clarity of concepts, and for focusing too much attention on the individual and too little emphasis on the media's effects on cultural and societal factors (see Rubin, 2009).

Despite such alleged shortcomings, U&G has remained one of the most utilized media-effects theories. In fact, in a recent meta-analysis of research on just one medium – the Internet – Kim and Weaver (2002) found that nearly 22% of theory-driven articles from 1996–2000 mentioned or applied U&G. Arguably, U&G is a prominent theory in the twenty-first century because studies continue to support its fundamental tenets.

Perhaps one of the perspective's enduring strengths is its focus on the individual. This attribute has enabled it to be adapted to study uses and effects of each new medium that has emerged on the media landscape. Contemporary media environments in which people have more media choices and the ability to use media to not only receive content, but also create and share it, most likely makes the individual more important in the media use and effects process than ever before.

As Rogers (1986) said, media are tool technologies. The ways people have found and adapted these tools to satisfy their needs is one of the most important inquiries in media effects research. With its emphasis on individual differences, social contexts of media use, activity, and the importance of motives and needs, U&G has proved to be a valuable theory in that inquiry. Research guided by the perspective has indicated that understanding any media effect cannot be accomplished without considering how these various factors work in concert to produce the effect. Whereas some theories such as Cultivation focus on a particular medium, and others such as Agenda Setting and Framing focus largely on institutional media, U&G transcends media by focusing on the one enduring link in the process: the individual.

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Media Entertainment as a Result of Recreation and Psychological Growth

Tilo Hartmann

ABSTRACT

Media entertainment refers to users' enjoyment of media-induced sensations. This chapter argues that users feel entertained to the extent that media supports their adaptive tendencies to recreate and grow psychologically. Within the boundaries of their physiological regulation, users are believed to engage actively in cognitive, affective, and behavioral challenges imposed by media, in order to grow psychologically. However, a lack of physiological resources may limit users' engagement in challenges and consequently strengthen their enjoyment of more recreational and supportive media content.

Theorizing Media Entertainment

Media entertainment has been characterized traditionally as an enjoyable experience for the user (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004; Zillmann, 2003). Such a perspective views entertainment as a hedonistic user experience, typically triggered by cheerful comedy shows, light-hearted romantic stories, stimulating action movies, or relaxing media offerings (Bosshart & Macconi, 1998). In contrast, alternate approaches suggest that users may also feel entertained by media offerings evoking less hedonistic, but more serious and perhaps even sad experiences (Oliver, 2009; Tan, 2008).

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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This notion corresponds to the observation that media users may actively seek media content that evokes sad feelings, such as “tearjerker” movies, or horror or action movie content which induces aversive states such as fear or suspense (Andrade & Cohen, 2007; Mundorf & Mundorf, 2003; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). Users may also enjoy these typically aversive states in the safe context of media exposure.

As such, media entertainment does not necessarily comprise only light-hearted enjoyment. Rather, users may feel entertained provided that media content stimulates any state of enjoyment. For example, users may enjoy a distressing action movie as they reappraise positively aversive states triggered by the movie (Andrade & Cohen, 2002; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). In such a case, both positive and negative affects (or enjoyment obtained from aversive states) underlie users’ feelings of being entertained. Typically, in order to feel entertained, users’ pleasure responses must outweigh negative sensations experienced during exposure.¹ A number of examples exist in which negative sensations prevail, however, and as a consequence users fail to feel entertained. For example, users may feel bored by media content (Bosshart & Macconi, 1998). Alternatively, users may fail to enjoy as a consequence of feeling cognitively and affectively overwhelmed, deeply threatened or annoyed by media content (Zillmann, 1988). Taken together, this suggests that “users feel entertained over a certain episode [...], if they enjoy the ongoing chain of their own primary affective responses” (Vorderer & Hartmann, 2009, p. 545), triggered by media content.

Media entertainment research suggests a number of different mechanisms as to why users feel entertained and enjoy their primary responses to media content (for reviews see Bosshart & Macconi, 1998; Bryant & Miron, 2002; Klimmt & Vorderer, 2009; Oliver, 2009; Vorderer, 2003; Vorderer & Hartmann, 2009; Zillmann & Bryant, 1986). The aim of this chapter is not to review each of these mechanisms separately, but to discuss media entertainment from an integrated theoretical perspective derived from pleasure research. Research on pleasure in sexual intercourse (Boul, Hallam-Jones, & Wylie, 2009), food intake (Rozin, 1999), economical behavior (Kahneman, Wakker, & Sarin, 1997), decision-making (Hsee & Hastie, 2006), art appreciation (Silvia, 2005), music (Huron, 2005), literature (Nell, 1988), and audiovisual media exposure (Miron, 2006), suggests that pleasure responses are evoked typically by biological and psychological mechanisms that are responsible for promoting adaptive functioning throughout evolution (e.g., Cabanac, Pouliot, & Everett, 1997; Miron, 2006; Rozin, 1999; White, 1959). According to Damasio (1999, p. 78), “pleasure seduce[d] us into good behavior.” Likewise, Kahneman et al. (1997, p. 379) argue that “pleasure is evidently a ‘go’ signal, which guides the organism to continue important activities such as foreplay or consuming sweet, energy-rich food.” An abundance of studies have similarly documented the health-promoting effects of pleasure (Esch & Stefano, 2004; Zillmann, 2000). Pleasure responses thus appear tied to basic – and often adaptive – human tendencies. In line with this, I suggest that people enjoy media content based upon pleasure responses which are tied to two adaptive tendencies; to recreate and to grow psychologically through engagement in challenges.

The Enjoyment of Recreation and Psychological Growth

Throughout evolution, the human organism has struggled to sexually reproduce and to survive in potentially risky and unstable environments. Several mechanisms (or adaptations) that have evolved throughout this struggle for survival have become tied biologically to the reward or pleasure system of the human organism (Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). Via genetic reproduction, these mechanisms have become an integral part of being human. In accordance with these basic human mechanisms, contemporary environments, including media environments, are able to trigger pleasure responses (Miron, 2006; Ohler & Nieding, 2006). I argue that two of these basic mechanisms are crucially important in the media entertainment context; recreation (via homeostatic regulation and the replenishment of exhausted resources) and psychological growth (via engagement in challenges).

Recreation is adaptive, allowing “individual functional systems that have been called upon during a stressful experience to return to their prestressor levels” (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007, p. 205). Homeostatic regulation, that is, the ability to keep physiological resources in balance, may be considered part of an individual’s tendency to recreate. Homeostatic regulation maintains important parameters such as body temperature, arousal, and metabolic states within the optimal life-functioning range (Damasio, 1999). Pleasure provides the motivation to regulate and return imbalanced states to normal levels (“alliesthesia,” Cabanac, 1985; Saper, Chou, & Elmquist, 2002). For example, food intake is more pleasurable when people are hungry compared with satiated. Likewise, arousing media content is more pleasurable when people are bored rather than stressed (Zillmann, 1988).

In general, homeostatic regulation is eased by life-promoting environments. Humans possess a natural tendency to seek and enjoy supportive environments, particularly when they require recreation (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Due to the genuine importance of this mechanism, pleasure responses appear to be triggered simply by the awareness of supportive surroundings. For example, the mere perception of beautiful, or sweet and energy-rich objects seems to trigger pleasure (Kahneman et al., 1997). As such, humans may enjoy furnishing their living environment with flowers (Haviland-Jones, Rosario, Wilson, & McGuire, 2005) or being immersed in nature, such as a lush meadow or forest, particularly when feeling exhausted (Kaplan, 1995). Likewise, users appear to enjoy perceiving supportive environments portrayed by the media, particularly if they undergo depleting life episodes (Katz & Foulkes, 1962).

However, the principle of pleasurable recreation is not sufficient to explain all types of media entertainment, such as enjoyment of shocking horror movies or distressing videogames. As White (1959, p. 315) states, “we may seek rest and minimal stimulation at the end of the day, but that is not what we seek in the morning. Even

when its primary needs are satisfied and its homeostatic chores are done, an organism is alive, active, and up to something.” According to White, humans have an innate motivation to improve their “capacity to interact effectively with [their] environment” (p. 297) and, as such, engage readily in various environmental challenges. Engaging in challenges is adaptive, as it may result in learning and skill development, that is, progress towards more efficient interaction with the environment. Successfully engaging in challenges is rewarded with pleasure. This notion has been addressed in Positive Psychology under the label “psychological growth.” It receives specific support from research into self-determined activity and intrinsic enjoyment (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In general, users may enjoy media exposure not only because the situation allows them to recreate, but also because it provides important learning experiences, which improve capabilities and allows psychological growth (e.g., Oliver, 2009; Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard, & Organ, 2010; Vorderer, Steen, & Chan, 2006). Accordingly, enjoyment of both recreation and psychological growth may provide two crucial aspects of media entertainment. These aspects will be elaborated further in the remainder of this chapter.

Enjoyable Recreation During Media Exposure

Media entertainment is typically pursued during leisure time, perhaps after a strenuous day at work (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Leisure time situations are typically self-determined and free of external pressures. People may use such leisure time for recreational activities, that is, to recover from the preceding demanding episode (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). As understood in this chapter, recreation refers to both the harmonizing of imbalanced physiological states (homeostatic regulation) and the replenishment of exhausted physiological resources, with both processes linked to pleasurable responses. Media exposure provides a comparatively effortless way to recreate.

Homeostatic Regulation

Homeostatic regulation relates to maintaining physiological states, such as body temperature or arousal, within the optimal life-functioning range (Damasio, 1999). Rather than being fixed, these optimal levels vary according to a person’s condition (e.g., in order to fight an infection, a comparatively high body temperature may be rewarded, Cabanac, 1971), and higher-order cognitive goals (e.g., a higher body temperature may be desired in a sauna). Successful regulation towards optimal levels results in pleasure. Alliesthesia research (Brondel & Cabanac, 2007; Cabanac, 1971, 1985;), for example, demonstrates that sensory stimuli may arouse pleasant or unpleasant sensations dependent upon current internal states and goals. Likewise,

reversal theory (Apter, 1989, 1992) indicates that arousal is perceived as either pleasurable or aversive based upon the optimal level sought by an individual. For example, high levels of arousal will be experienced as pleasurable when an individual seeks excitement, yet experienced as unpleasant when an individual seeks relaxation. Equally, low levels of arousal will be experienced as pleasurable when seeking relaxation, yet unpleasant when seeking excitement.

A similar argument has been put forward by mood management theory (Helwegel & Weaver, 1989; Zillmann, 1988; Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). Mood management theory provides one of the most popular media entertainment theories addressing pleasure responses to media content and proposes that individuals use the media in order to terminate noxious states and intensify hedonic states. More specifically, the theory argues that people seek and enjoy the reduction of negative mood states and the enhancement of positive mood states (valence hypothesis). Sharing similarities with reversal theory, mood management theory further claims that users enjoy media provided media support their homeostatic regulation. People may thus seek and enjoy exciting media content in states of *extreme* boredom, yet seek soothing media content in states of *extreme* stress (arousal hypothesis). Existing research appears to support this assumption (e.g., Bryant & Zillmann, 1984; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2006; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010).

Findings related to the arousal hypothesis of mood management theory support the notion that people enjoy media content, which provides recovery from imbalanced physiological states. However, in contrast to reversal theory, mood management theory deals only with enjoyment among users attempting to recover from *extreme* states of overarousal or underarousal. In this context, reversal theory may complement the existing theoretical corpus by studying more broadly users' enjoyment of media content, which helps shifting arousal states towards optimal levels. Taken together, media exposure appears to be entertaining provided it supports users' recreational needs and enables them to regulate imbalanced physiological states.

Recovery of Physiological Resources

Recreation also refers to the recovery of depleted cognitive and physiological resources. Research on ego-depletion (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998) suggests that, for example, demanding cognitive activities, such as decision-making or abstract thinking, require volitional energy. Volitional energy is a cognitive resource that is based partly on blood glucose expended by these activities. If depleted, an organism's "readiness to re/act" becomes limited. Ego-depleted individuals thus become more passive and less regulated. They exhibit a stronger tendency for confirmatory information processing (Fischer, Greitemeyer, & Frey, 2008), are more susceptible to impulsive choices (Baumeister, 2009), suffer worse performance in logical reasoning (Schmeichel, Baumeister, & Vohs, 2003) and other demanding tasks, and abandon these tasks sooner than non-depleted individuals. Volitional

energy, however, may be replenished via sleep, sugar intake, and also via pleasurable media stimuli (Tice, Baumeister, Shmueli, & Muraven, 2007). When depleted, people may avoid activities demanding self-regulation and, instead, may engage in accessible and scarcely challenging activities, such as media use. Exposure to entertaining media may be particularly attractive, as it promises to replenish exhausted resources.

While direct empirical evidence is scarce, weary, and ego-depleted individuals may indeed seek media entertainment as a recreational experience (Reinecke, 2009a, 2009b). Anderson, Collins, Schmitt, and Jacobvitz (1996) note, for example, that stressful life events predict length of exposure to televised entertainment, particularly comedy shows. This may be plausibly interpreted in light of mood management theory, as stressful life events are likely to be associated with strain and exhausted resources. In the Anderson et al. (1996) study, stressed men tended to watch more violent action, and horror programming, while stressed women tended to watch more game shows. A panel study by Brosius, Rossmann, and Elnain (1999) likewise indicated that individuals who felt more depleted following an increased workload in their jobs spent more time watching entertaining television content. These findings may suggest that depleted individuals find media exposure pleasurable as it helps replenish exhausted resources.

Recreation requires the “dismantling” of existing real-world stressors. This typically implies that people become distracted and psychologically detached from such stressors (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Entertainment research frequently suggests that users enjoy the distraction of comforting media realities in order to escape troublesome life conditions (Katz & Foulkes, 1962; Moskalenko & Heine, 2003). Escapism refers to the idea that people occasionally lack the coping capabilities for everyday-life problems. Under such conditions, people may enjoy media distraction. In an experimental study by Moskalenko and Heine (2003), after receiving negative feedback, participants sought distraction from television for a longer time than participants receiving positive feedback. Media content may be particularly distracting when it is highly absorbing (Zillmann, 1988), perhaps because a gripping storyline provides ample opportunity for wishful fantasizing (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). In sum, these findings suggest that people may find pleasurable relief in the distraction provided by media offerings.

Recreating in Supportive Environments

In general, people may find it pleasurable to become immersed in life-promoting, that is, supportive and peaceful environments, particularly when seeking recreation (Kaplan, 1995). Likewise, individuals seeking recreation may find particular enjoyment in using media as a self-determined activity in a sheltering environment (i.e., warm and safe), such as their own private living room. Environments may be also supportive, because they foster social inclusion (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Indeed, people frequently enjoy media in social settings with friends (Bryant & Miron, 2002;

Sapolsky & Zillmann, 1978). In addition, media may provide vivid illusions of social connectedness. For example, people may feel included socially via engaging in parasocial interactions with media characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Experimental studies show that users enjoy media content more if they feel that they are being addressed directly by a media character (Auter & Davis, 1991; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). While these studies suggest that social connectedness is an important aspect of media entertainment, it remains plausible, albeit untested, that especially weary or depleted individuals seek and enjoy social companionship via their media exposure.

Individuals appear to prefer and enjoy different media content when weary or depleted compared to when they are well-rested (Brondel & Cabanac, 2007). For instance, depleted individuals will avoid cognitively taxing media content when seeking to recreate from previous demanding cognitive tasks (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Indeed, depleted individuals may fail to enjoy any media content requiring further self-regulation. Accordingly, depleted individuals are unlikely to engage in challenging media content, particularly when the challenges imposed require self-regulatory efforts which will drain already impoverished resources. Individuals will seek engagement in mediated challenges matching their capabilities for the sake of enjoyment, only to the extent that the necessary physiological resources are available.

Enjoyable Psychological Growth During Media Exposure

Humans are not purely recreating organisms, regulating physiological states and recovering exhausted resources. Rather, they have a natural tendency to engage in risky environments for the sake of “psychological growth and integration” (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 3). This view is commonly expressed in Positive Psychology: “Rather than viewing people as passively waiting for a [physiological] disequilibrium, we view them as naturally inclined to act on their inner and outer environments, engage in activities that interest them, and move toward personal and interpersonal coherence” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 230). In accordance with this view, humans, driven by curiosity and interest, have a tendency to explore their environment in order to improve capabilities, and gain a better understanding of their own existence. This may be viewed as a tendency to seek psychological growth.

Following White (1959), humans achieve psychological growth by engaging continuously in challenging interactions with the environment. Deci and Ryan (2000, p. 229) suggest that “it is part of the adaptive design of the human organism to engage interesting activities, to exercise capacities, to pursue connectedness in social groups, and to integrate intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences into a relative unity.”

Generally speaking, psychological growth is achieved via the mastery of challenges. As long as these challenges are sought autonomously, their mastery is enjoyable and accompanied primarily by the perception of competence (and, frequently, social connectedness; Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, people may enjoy mastering previously incomplete challenges in a videogame, particularly if achieved with a friend (Tamborini et al., 2010).

However, engaging in challenges is cognitively and physiologically taxing, and the outcome is often uncertain. Individuals may thus expend valuable resources discovering that their capabilities are insufficient to master a challenge. Two explanations exist as to why humans are inclined nevertheless to engage in challenges. Firstly, such engagement is driven by pleasurable emotions such as interest and curiosity (Silvia, 2005; Tan, 2008; White, 1959), which may counterbalance simultaneous negative experiences (Cabanac, 1992). Secondly, people are frequently willing to forego pleasure for the sake of long-term goals (Blascovich, 2008; Tamir, 2009). Engaging in challenges serves the ultimate long-term goal of psychological growth and mastery is rewarded with (intrinsic) pleasure (Deci & Ryan, 2000). They are thus likely to be sought even when they are effortful.

The term “challenge,” as used here, refers to a variety of cognitive, affective, visceral, and behavioral tasks imposed by the media environment. Challenges are taxing, require the investment of resources, and their outcome is comparatively uncertain. Mastery of challenges reveals the existence of important capabilities among individuals. Apter (1992) distinguishes between four types of challenges; (1) exploration of novel information, (2) voluntary confrontation with frustration, (3) overcoming basic physical limitations, and (4) active violation of social rules and other expectancies. Likewise, media content may challenge people in many ways. For example, entertainment media provide an abundance of novel information, ranging from social information from soap operas, novelty from fantasy worlds, and factual information via documentaries and quiz shows. Media also frequently challenge users by confronting them with innate body reactions such as fear. Media may further challenge users by violating social norms, displaying harsh forms of violence, sexual conduct, and other such unacceptable behavior. To reduce complexity, the array of challenges provided by entertainment media may be grouped roughly into cognitive, affective or visceral, and behavioral challenges. Some typical examples are discussed below.

Cognitive Challenges

Typically, enjoyment is induced when individuals engage in cognitive challenges and recognize that they are able to comprehend effectively (Biedermann & Vessel, 2006). Cabanac et al. (1997) suggest that pleasure results from effective cognitive mental work. In one of their studies, students displayed greater enjoyment of a poem, the more they were able to comprehend it. Likewise, Silvia (2005) noted that people found cognitively challenging abstract art more enjoyable when titles were provided allowing a meaningful

interpretation, rather than if no titles were provided. Comprehension of very familiar stimuli that are not cognitively challenging at all may also not be enjoyable as it fails to reveal psychological growth (Biedermann & Vessel, 2006). Much entertainment media provide comparatively familiar content and may be considered moderately cognitively challenging. Reasonably familiar stimuli are perceived as more pleasurable than entirely novel or overly familiar stimuli (Zajonc, 1968). Media content may thus be entertaining simply because it displays moderately novel content, less familiar than the real world, yet more familiar than abstract art, for example. Media content that is extremely easy (e.g., children's movies) or extremely difficult to comprehend (e.g., complex arthouse movies) may not be typically enjoyable. Accordingly, comprehension of media content may be enjoyable provided it involves the mastery of moderately difficult cognitive challenges.

In line with the idea that comprehension of moderately novel media is enjoyable, individuals may also appreciate media content that is cognitively challenging, because it puts their life into perspective. Most people become anxious about chaotic life circumstances, yet enjoy information that helps them make sense of life. Research into the principles of a good life and maturity (King, 2001), and ego-development (Bauer & McAdams, 2004), suggests that people enjoy gaining a more complex and integrated view of themselves, their life, and their world. Such insights move beyond mere positive self-related information and instead refer to more transcendental life aspects. Growing research of relevance to media entertainment indicates that users appreciate thought-provoking movies which provide meaningful insights (Oliver, 2008, 2009; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, 2011). Such meaningful experiences typically entail mixed emotions (i.e., pleasurable yet also painful facets, Oliver, 2008). Users may also experience meaningful and thought-provoking moments in movies that are funny or suspenseful predominantly (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010).

Affective Challenges

Users may also enjoy mastering aversive innate body reactions triggered by the media. Akin to hedonic reversals and pleasurable "mind-over-body realizations" in the context of painful food-intake (Rozin, 2000, p. 980), media users may take pleasure in many innate or highly automatic body sensations, which are actually painful or distressing (e.g., Andrade & Cohen, 2007; deWied, Zillmann, & Ordman, 1994). Horror movies provide one such example. Ample research demonstrates that males particularly enjoy the fear and distress induced by horror movies, especially if they are able to demonstrate their skills of mastery before a distressed female coviewer (Hoffner & Levine, 2005; Zillmann & Weaver, 1996; Zillmann, Weaver, Mundorf, & Aust, 1986). Reversal theory (Apter, 1989) provides a useful framework for studying such hedonic reversals. According to this theory, dangerous stimuli may be experienced as exciting, provided individuals perceive themselves as surrounded by a "protective frame" (e.g., observing a spider through a thick

glass). Such a protective frame may be purely imaginative. For example, males may enjoy horror movies more than females as they feel more protected and more capable of withstanding induced fear. Research by Andrade and Cohen (2007) suggests that such a “protective frame-of-mind” indeed moderates the impact of fear-inducing horror movies on enjoyment.

Behavioral Challenges

Mastery of behavioral or interactive challenges is pivotal to videogame play. Almost all videogames challenge the user’s hand-eye coordination. Videogames offer challenges with difficulty levels which adapt to the skills of the user and further provide clear feedback to inform users of their progress. Users may feel successful (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Frey, 2007) and competent when mastering the challenges imposed by videogames. Due to these structural aspects, videogames are capable of inducing pleasurable experiences of flow (Sherry, 2004).

It may be argued that non-interactive media allow users to vicariously experience the mastery of behavioral challenges. Dramatic narratives within action movies, for example, typically focus on the struggle between a protagonist (the good guy) and an antagonist (the bad guy), usually concluding with a happy ending in which the good guy triumphs over the bad guy. This happy ending may be enjoyable as the victorious protagonist communicates to the user that his (ideological) in-group is more powerful than the alternative. From such a perspective, users may bask in the glory of the protagonist and feel as though their own capabilities have been improved (Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989).

Ample evidence in the context of disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976; for an overview see Raney, 2003), one of the most important and established theories in the domain of media entertainment, indicates that viewers of dramatic content indeed demonstrate enjoyment when good triumphs over bad. Drama typically builds upon a struggle for justice. Viewers find enjoyment in the uplifting realization that the world is a just place and that the group whose values they share triumphs over the group whose values they do not share. Physiological processes play an important role in this process. Excitation transfer theory (e.g., Zillmann, 2006) suggests that the time-compressed chain of events in a stressful drama builds high arousal states in users. These high states of arousal turn into euphoria upon realization that the good guys triumphed over the bad guys.

General Characteristics of Enjoyable Challenges

Taken together, media offer an abundance of easily accessible challenges. In general, these challenges promise the most enjoyment when they are relevant to the user, when the user can autonomously engage in the challenge, and when the challenge

is of optimal difficulty (Blascovich, 2008; Rozin, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Sherry, 2004; White, 1959).

Challenges are perceived as relevant provided they inform an individual about a relevant aspect of himself or herself. Users are unlikely to enjoy the mastery of a challenge that indicates the existence of capabilities which are irrelevant. Consequently, the enjoyment of a given challenge varies in accordance with both gender and age. Male users, for example, appear to find greater enjoyment in challenges related to power, such as sports or violent videogames (Jansz, 2005). In contrast, female users appear to be more interested in challenging capabilities related to their social environment (for a general review of gender differences in media entertainment see Oliver, 2000).

In addition, research on intrinsic enjoyment and motivation indicates that people do not enjoy challenges when they feel compelled to master them. Rather, they enjoy engaging in challenges autonomously (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Use of entertainment media may frequently be accompanied by a sense of autonomy as it typically takes place at home during leisure time. During such leisure time, individuals are comparatively free to choose whatever media content they wish. They may determine freely the challenges in which they become involved. Accordingly, they may enjoy such media imposed challenges. Bidjerano and Newman (2010), for example, noted that autonomy in media activity choice was positively related to reported enjoyment and inversely related to anxiety associated with these activities.

Furthermore, research regarding both achievement and intrinsic motivation suggests that challenges are most enjoyable when they are of optimal difficulty (Harter, 1978). This implies that the challenge must be so new or complex that it can only be potentially mastered if individuals spend considerable effort and fully utilize their existing capabilities. Mastering challenges of optimal difficulty provides not only positive feedback but also new insights regarding the self. In contrast, challenges that are too easy are uninformative, as their mastery is obvious. In turn, challenges which are too difficult cannot be mastered and thus provide only negative feedback about existing skills and capabilities. Taken together, this suggests that media content may offer a diverse array of challenges. Media users may enjoy engaging autonomously with relevant challenges of optimal difficulty.

Physiological Boundaries of Challenge-Seeking

Users may engage willingly in challenges promoting their psychological growth. However, challenge-seeking necessarily occurs within the limitations of recreational demands. It thus seems plausible that users approach challenges that match their present physiological states and may withdraw from potentially threatening challenges (Blascovich, 2008). It is unlikely, for example, that individuals would enjoy engaging in challenges that threaten seriously their homeostatic balance (Rozin, 1999). Instead, they tend to approach and enjoy challenges that match their physiological

needs (Brondel & Cabanac, 2007). By definition, challenges bear a certain risk (Apter, 1992). Accordingly, attempts to master a challenge require self-regulation and sufficient volitional energy. Exhausted or depleted users may thus fail to enjoy challenges in which engagement and mastery demand self-regulation and volitional energy (Schmeichel, Demaree, Robinson, & Pu, 2006). Exhausted users may be prone to engage in comparatively less demanding challenges.

If cognitive resources are already exhausted, for example, stressed users are unlikely to seek the challenge of comprehending a complex philosophical book (Schmeichel et al., 2003), even if reading promises to reduce arousal and enhance psychological growth. Rather, such users may enjoy watching a mildly cognitively challenging movie. Likewise, depleted individuals who seek excitement may be interested in arousal-stimulating challenges presented via familiar and predictable content. They may enjoy, for example, recovering exhausted resources by sitting on the sofa and watching a familiar, yet arousing, thriller movie.

Conclusion

Based on a review of existing media entertainment research, this chapter argues that users feel entertained provided media induce enjoyable states and sensations. The core argument is that users enjoy media exposure to the extent that it assists their tendencies to recreate and grow psychologically. More specifically, media exposure is enjoyable – and thus entertaining – if it allows users to balance their physiological states and recover exhausted resources. Additionally, each media stimulus imposes a set of cognitive, affective, and occasional behavioral challenges. Users may enjoy engaging autonomously in mediated challenges which are relevant, of optimal difficulty and mastery or which indicate psychological growth. However, users may enjoy engaging in challenges only within the boundaries of their recreational needs.

Taken together, the present approach argues that media entertainment results from successful recreation and psychological growth. Similar approaches to media entertainment have been suggested in the past. Evolutionary approaches to media entertainment (Miron, 2006; Ohler & Nieding, 2006) share the idea with the present approach that enjoyment results from the stimulation of evolutionarily evolved and thus formerly adaptive pleasure systems. Another similar approach has recently been suggested by Tamborini et al. (2010). In their approach, they argue that media enjoyment results from the satisfaction of lower-order (e.g., physiological) needs and higher-order (e.g., intrinsic/self-actualization) needs. In their study, they provide preliminary empirical evidence that the satisfaction of intrinsic needs indeed underlies media enjoyment. Tamborini et al.'s (2010) satisfaction of lower-order needs is reminiscent of the recreational mechanisms reviewed in the present chapter, whereas the satisfaction of (intrinsic) higher-order needs is reminiscent of enjoyment derived from psychological growth.

A Concluding Remark on the Adaptive Function of Media Entertainment

The present perspective links media entertainment to evolutionary adaptive mechanisms. Namely, enjoyment derived from recreation and psychological growth. This corresponds to the general notion that pleasure is tied to adaptive mechanisms (Cabanac et al., 1997; Damasio, 1999; Dutton, 2009; Kahneman et al., 1997; Miron, 2006; Rozin, 1999; White, 1959). It is tempting to speculate that media entertainment still provides adaptive functions today. For example, it is clear that people need to occasionally relax and recover. It thus seems adaptive that exhausted resources are recovered and imbalanced physiological states become balanced. Entertaining media stimuli are easily accessible tools that may help effectively accomplish these needs (Reinecke, 2009a, 2009b; Repetti, 1989). In addition, media exposure may result in psychological growth and thus improve individuals' capabilities to interact effectively with their environment.

However, while this may suggest that individuals adapt to their environment when entertained by the media, the underlying mechanisms of this adaption evolved throughout phylogenesis in a remarkably different environment thousands of years ago. Accordingly, they may not necessarily foster adaptive behavior today. For example, in some parts of the world, the once adaptive mechanism of finding sweet and energy-rich food pleasurable may now lead to obesity. Likewise, it does not appear adaptive if obese people – reinforced by enjoyment – prefer media challenges to comparable, yet physically more demanding challenges, in the real world. Further, individuals may fail to adapt to their living environment if they continuously seek escape via the media rather than coping actively with existing problems in the real world (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). It remains to be seen whether such non-adaptive media entertainment outcomes are the exception or the rule.

NOTE

- 1 Differing mechanisms may explain this principle. Pleasure may outweigh aversive sensations throughout an exposure period, as users reappraise directly aversive sensations as something positive (Andrade & Cohen, 2007). In contrast, aversive sensations may dominate throughout the exposure period (without much positive reappraisal), yet intense states of pleasure, typically at the end of exposure, allow the overall experience to be framed as enjoyable (Zillmann, 2006).

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Selective Exposure to Violent Media

A Synthesis of the Research and Theoretical Overview

Marina Krcmar

ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews the research that has examined individuals' interest in media violence. It reviews definitions of media violence, as well as affect-based approaches to attraction to media violence (i.e., mood management and mood adjustment) and reviews the research findings that use this approach. Next, it reviews disposition-based theories that focus on how individuals evaluate media characters, form affiliations with them, and affectively respond to them. Disposition-based theories offer one possible explanation for attraction to media violence. Functional approaches (e.g., threat mastery) and psychological correlates of interest in media violence are also explored. Lastly, it proposes that social cognitive theory, when viewed as a meta-theory or meta-approach to interest in media violence, may offer an over-arching model to integrate the various perspectives reviewed in the chapter.

The Appeal of Media Violence

Concern about the *effects* of violent media date back at least as far as the 1920s when the Payne Fund studies investigated the effect of film violence on children (Lowrey & DeFleur, 1995) (Chapter 10, this volume). However, implicit in this concern is the

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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interest in media violence that must surely predate any effects. Obviously, we are not forced to consume media violence; yet, violent television, music videos, films, and videogames continue to be a booming business. So why do we consume it? This chapter considers the various theories and the empirical evidence that address this question. In addition, it attempts to integrate this literature into a comprehensive theoretical framework. After all, concern about the effects of media violence could all but disappear if only audiences would stop consuming it. With popular movies, television, videogames, and other media frequently and consistently depicting aggression and violence, that occurrence seems unlikely.

Selective Exposure

In general, studying interest in and attraction to media has fallen under the designation of selective exposure. As defined by Zillmann and Bryant (1985), “selective exposure designates behavior that is deliberately performed to attain and sustain perceptual control of particular stimulus” (p. 537). In short, research into selective exposure has assumed that we voluntarily choose the stimuli that we consume, including media. Furthermore, this approach recognizes that our choices are likely to be guided by affective, psychological, functional, and even incidental factors, and seeks to uncover what those factors are and the interrelations between them and our ultimate media choices. There have been many approaches to considering how and why we choose the media we do (e.g., Hartmann, 2009) and many ways of grouping the resulting theories and research. However, it seems appropriate to consider our choices as deriving from several broad motivations: We choose media (and other stimuli for that matter) (1) for affective and excitatory reasons such as fleeting moods (e.g., mood management, mood adjustment; Chapter 7, this volume); (2) for functional reasons such as fulfilling a need for information (e.g., uses and gratifications; Chapter 6, this volume); (3) due to internal personality and dispositional factors that drive our likes and interests; (4) for sociological reasons including cultural norms that may arise from our gender or our peer group or the desires of other members in our audience group; (5) or for incidental reasons: Perhaps I do not like the violence in a particular film, but I am watching it because it is showing in the waiting room while my car is being serviced.

If we begin to consider theories that explain the process of selective exposure that can be applied to interest in violent media and we consider the empirical work that has been done on the topic, the work tends to fall into at least one, if not more of these broad categories. However, prior to exploring our motives for violent media consumption, it is important to consider what we mean when we call something “violent media”. Thus, the following sections begin by discussing the *meaning* of violent media. Second, several theories are considered that emphasize the role of *arousal and affect* in media use, including mood management, mood adjustment and disposition theories and these are considered in terms of interest in violent media.

Third, the focus is on the areas of theory and research that emphasize the importance of *personality* in determining violent media choice. These include some uses and gratifications approaches as well as simple variable analytic research that has examined personality variables and media choice. Fourth, the sociological factors and incidental factors are considered that may influence interest in and attraction to media violence.

What is Media Violence?

In order to ask why we consume media violence, it is important to consider, however briefly, what we mean by media violence. For example, a televised match of football in the United States or a contact sport videogame may be violence to one viewer and good, clean family entertainment to another. Marvin (2000) has argued that researchers have never fully agreed on what constitutes media violence and that, in fact, this disagreement is instructive. She states: "Morality intrudes at every point of framing what counts as an act of violence" (p. 156). In other words, our definitions of violence are guided in part by individual, and thus sometimes idiosyncratic, moral judgments. Nevertheless, it seems both important, and, in my opinion, possible, to make some broad claims about media violence: What it is, how it influences us and, why we consume it in the first place.

Some researchers have defined violence in terms of any act of aggression, including comedic acts and those that result from non-human sources, such as acts of nature (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978). The Cultural Indicators project, conducted by George Gerbner and colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania defined violence broadly as: "the overt expression of physical force, with or without weapon, against self or other, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing" (Gerbner et al., 1978, p. 179). The National Television Violence Study, on the other hand, defined it somewhat more narrowly: "Intentional acts of force attempting to physically harm an animate being" (Smith, Moyer, & Donnerstein, 2006). Not surprisingly, the researcher's definition of violence affects the amount of violence detected in a content analysis and is likely to influence effect sizes in effects studies and in research on selective exposure to media violence. Despite variations in researchers' definitions of violence, Riddle and colleagues point out that audiences differ in their judgments of violence to an even greater extent (Riddle, Eyal, Mahood, & Potter, 2005). Whereas researchers tend to count individual acts of violence, audiences rely on the explicitness and graphicness of violence in order to determine if and how violent something is. Thus, perhaps scholars of media violence should focus greater attention on the degree of explicitness and graphicness in media violence, and stimuli chosen for effects studies, in order to determine why we watch violence and what the outcomes of viewing are. On the other hand, even sanitized violence, or *especially* sanitized violence, has been found to have negative effects

on viewers (e.g., Bushman & Huesmann, 2001) making it necessary for scholars to consider the degree of graphicness as a factor in defining violence but not a necessary factor in determining if something is violent. In any case, a reading of the extant literature suggests that not only are the best definitions of violence somewhat narrow and precise, but they focus on violence that is intentional, conducted by an animate being (e.g., human beings, cartoon monsters and animals, videogame characters) on an animate being and the definitions should consider explicitness and graphicness as *variables* in influencing selective exposure and effects.

From sports violence to unabashedly graphic portrayals, why do we watch? In her essay, Goldberg (1998) observes that most Westerners' first-hand experience with death and violence have receded dramatically since the eighteenth century at the same time that *representations*, both real (e.g., news) and fictional, have increased. She muses that perhaps we need to understand death and violence and that in consuming it in the safety of our living rooms, that experience is both instructive and safe. In other words, we watch mediated violence because we want to understand all aspects of life, including suffering and death and we no longer have real access to it (see also Oliver, 2003). Alternately, in considering the empirical literature on media violence, Sparks and Sparks (2000) offer three reasons for the appeal of violence: "because the violent images themselves evoke pleasure [...] or due to the enjoyment of things that co-occur with violence [...] or because of various gratifications that are indirectly related to the viewing of the images and are actually experienced after the images themselves are viewed (p. 74)." Thus, the reasons proposed by Sparks and Sparks (2000) parallel, to some extent, those that will be explored in the following sections. In sum, we consume media violence because we enjoy the affect or arousal of cognitions that we experience as the result of viewing, or we watch because we like the content that goes along with the violence, regardless of how we feel about the violence itself.

Excitation and Affect-Based Approaches

One possible reason for the selection of various media, both type (e.g., television vs. newspapers) and content (e.g., professional wrestling vs. drama) may be related to our emotions and our physiological arousal levels at the time of media selection. To say that I am "in the mood for an action/adventure film" is to imply that something about my emotional state is guiding me towards that. In fact, a sizeable body of research supports the link between our physiological arousal, our emotions, and our media choices at a given moment (see Knobloch-Westerwick, 2006 for a review). Furthermore, several theories have emphasized the importance of arousal and affect in guiding our media choices. Specifically, the theories of mood management and mood adjustment present arousal and affect as central in the selective exposure process; whereas, disposition theories rely more exclusively on affective responses and our attitudes towards characters.

Mood Management

Early theorizing about mood management actually fell under the title of Affect Dependency of Stimulus Arrangement (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). In its earliest iteration, this theory posited that individuals strive to minimize negative mood states and maximize or maintain positive mood states by arranging their environment (including media) to achieve that goal. In this case, mood was conceptualized as having affective and arousal-based components. More recently, Zillmann (2000) summarized mood management by stating that selective exposure to media stimuli was based on choosing content that was “(a) excitationally opposite the prevailing states associated with noxiously experienced hypo- or hyperarousal, (b) has positive hedonic value above that of prevailing states, and (c) in hedonically negative states, has little or no semantic affinity with the prevailing states” (p. 104). In other words, individuals select media that produce arousal that is opposite to how one feels *when one does not want to feel that way*, leaving you better off than you were before. In addition, when you feel bad, you do not want to consume content that reminds you of whatever made you feel bad in the first place. These basic principles guide media choice.

The notion that we'll watch negatively-valenced content (e.g., violence) when it is *not* similar to our current sorrow-inducing experience, has been added to and refined in the theory over the past 30 years (notably Oliver, 2003). Thus, according to more recent theorizing in mood management, it seems unlikely that audiences are always attracted to media offering positive hedonic valence, rather, negatively valenced media may offer appeal only if the story line does not mesh too closely with negative experiences encountered recently in one's own life. Thus, violent media, even with tragic story lines, may be attractive in some cases. Perhaps violent professional wrestling may be appealing to a recently-returned veteran whereas a violent war movie may not.

In addition, some evidence suggests that bad moods, either exacerbated by or independent of media choices, may be functional. In these cases, we are not motivated to terminate negative mood states, as suggested by mood management theory. Instead, we may in fact want to extend them. There are times, for example, when I may want to stew after being offended by someone, rather than being distracted from my bad mood. Thus, media violence may be functional in instances when I actually want to extend hostile or angry feelings. In keeping with this logic, Knobloch (2003) has refined mood management theory to include a state referred to as mood adjustment.

Mood Adjustment

There are undeniably times when negative mood states such as anger, sadness, or even stress may be either functional or at least appropriate. Intuitively, we seem to recognize when these negative mood states are called for and we make an effort to maintain the appropriate mood. Knobloch (2003) refers to this process as mood

adjustment and argues that we sometimes use media to maintain and adjust moods in anticipation of the situational requirements regarding mood. In one study, participants were angered by a confederate then led to believe that an opportunity to retaliate would or would not be imminent. For men led to believe they would have an opportunity to retaliate, they selected more hostile and bad news websites than those who did not think they would have the opportunity to retaliate. Thus, they opted to maintain their negative moods as a way of preparing for retaliation and thereby used media as a means of maintaining a hostile mood. Similarly, O'Neal and Taylor (1989) found that males were likely to choose violent, not soothing movies after being provoked by a confederate, but only when they believed they would see the confederate again. Therefore, one appeal of media violence may be that we consume it in order to maintain anger and hostility because we want to, for either real or perceived functional reasons. In other words, we may care to sustain anger because it seems functional to us if later, we can lash out at or harm the person who angered us in the first place!

In sum both mood management and mood adjustment suggest that we select media based on mood and arousal. How might these theories offer a framework for our understanding of the appeal of violent media? The arousal-based aspects of mood management are likely to help explain the appeal of at least some violent media because movies, television, and videogames that contain violence are often stimulating by nature. Fights, physical struggles, car chases, and danger are likely to increase physiological arousal levels through increased heart rate, galvanic skin response, and pupil dilation. Thus, it is not surprising that in order to manage low arousal levels, participants may seek out violent media or at least cite it as a reason to consume violence (Slater, 2003).

In terms of affect, violent media may offer aggressive participants the experience of hostile emotions in which they take pleasure (Slater, Henry, Swain, & Anderson, 2003) and may offer some validation for feelings of alienation that they experience (Slater, 2003). In either case, violent media may help sustain and even enhance aggressive feelings for people who want or need to feel these things. Whether violent media validate existing negative emotions, enhance noxious ones, provide for functional anger in individuals who perceive their anger *as* functional or encourage hostility when that is the desired outcome, it is important to stress that positive moods are not always perceived as desirable and violent media may help reach the desired outcome. Thus, theoretically (i.e., mood management, mood adjustment), empirically, and practically, the appeal of violent media may stem from our belief, however unconscious, that media help us control our arousal levels and affective states.

Disposition-Based Theories

One leading explanation for media enjoyment and thus for the attraction of media violence focuses on how individuals evaluate media characters, form affiliations with

them, and affectively respond to them. Although these theories can be applied to a vast range of content and in fact differ somewhat based on the type of content under consideration (Raney, 2006), here, we will focus on how our affective and affiliative responses to violent media and violent media characters occurs.

Affect is at the heart of disposition theories, with enjoyment of media and attraction to it driven by our feelings about a character. For example, Raney and Bryant (2002) found that liked characters' actions were interpreted positively and disliked characters' actions were interpreted negatively for the sake of maintaining audience's positive attitudes towards the character. Thus, viewers may accept and enjoy the violent actions of a liked character, especially when enacted against a disliked character. This would explain why audiences often cheer for the hero when s/he commits even brutal violence against the villain. Disposition theories would argue that the positive affective response to the hero would define the latitude of acceptance of the violence against the antagonist and thus, help shape the moral judgment. Violence in the name of a greater good (in this case, to harm the detested antagonist) is celebrated. It would not be enough to have the hero succeed; the villain must be vanquished. Violence is a very immediate and clear means to that end.

Although this may seem similar to the notion of "justified violence" in other research (e.g., Krcmar & Cooke, 2001), disposition theories focus on the relationship that the viewer forms with the violent actor, the protagonist. Thus, even in the case of unjustified violence (the hero may cast a final blow to the already-downed antagonist), the violence is enjoyed. According to disposition theory, then, violence is enjoyed when the viewer likes or identifies with the violent actor, regardless of the nature of the violence itself.

Functional Approaches

Although much research on the appeal of violent media has focused on the role that affect and arousal play in determining media choices, at least some research has considered how we might use violent media functionally, for example, in an effort to master threat (Sparks & Sparks, 2000).

Mastering Threat, Expressing Empathy, and Experimentation

Perhaps we consume violence because we are strategic in our media choices. Zillmann and Weaver (1997) argue that watching violence (in the case of their research, horror films) may offer males in particular an opportunity to show mastery over that which is considered distressing and frightening. Similar to Goldberg's (1998) proposal, discussed earlier in the chapter, Zillmann and Weaver (1997) suggest that modern society offers little opportunity to master real violent

threats: To be exposed to them, to understand them and to come to terms with our fear of them. Thus, media violence may be attractive because it offers a safe stand-in. Kuhrke, Klimmt and Vorderer (2006) refer to this as situational self-enhancement. They argue that playing violent videogames is functional in that it offers players an opportunity to gain a sense of power and control over their environment. In other words, violent game play offers an opportunity to compensate for perceived deficiencies in one's own life, whether those deficiencies arise from a lack of personal control (Kuhkre & Vorderer, 2006) or experiences of success (Klimtt, 2003). Jansz (2005) also underlines the possible role of affective mastery over threat through videogame play as a reason for its appeal; whereas Cantor and Nathanson (1997) suggest that children are attracted to violent media to deal with their fear responses to it. In fact, they have found that children who have been frightened by violent media in the past are more likely to seek it out again in the future, particularly when justice is shown being restored in the end, than those who have not been frightened in the past. Thus, it does appear that they are attempting to deal with their fear by not only watching violence repeatedly, but by demonstrating to themselves that in the end, it will all turn out fine.

These types of explanations are supported at least in part by research that consistently finds that males are more attracted to violent films, television and videogames than females are (Cantor, 1998; Sparks, 1991). In Western cultures, where male power and physical strength are valued, and where male success and achievement are often considered a measure of individual worth, it stands to reason that males would feel a need to overcome physically violent threats and to gain a sense of control over their environment to a greater extent than females.

Moral Disengagement

In addition, viewers may feel a certain moral disengagement *because* the violence is mediated and/or fictional. For example, videogames offer an ideal opportunity to morally disengage because of the very nature of the violence (Hartmann & Vorderer, 2010). Videogame violence is fictitious and unlike movies it does not (arguably) attempt to portray reality. With their interactive nature and potential to *be* the character, they offer yet another functional opportunity: To experience socially unsanctioned behavior without fear of social or legal retribution. In *Grand Theft Auto*, for example, players can not only drive dangerously, and enact violence on civilians and police officers, but they can pick up prostitutes and perform vandalism as well. In the case of videogames, one has the opportunity to not only watch behavior that one is unlikely to get away with in real life, but the player can actually perform it. This kind of behavior, including violence, is likely to be appealing to some individuals, thus functioning as a means of exploration with a safety net. Because players know that there are no real victims (at least not in the direct, immediate sense), they can morally disengage.

Personality Factors

Personality factors are broadly characterized as psychological dispositions towards media – those psychologically driven individual difference traits that influence attraction to violent media. For example, Weaver (1991) found that individuals who rated high on an index of psychoticism were attracted to graphically violent horror films. Another variable that has received much attention in the selective exposure literature is sensation seeking. Theoretically, sensation seeking is related to individuals' baseline physiological arousal levels and thus high sensation seekers have lower arousal levels and require more exciting and novel messages to attract their attention (Donohew, Finn, & Christ, 1988). Therefore, it is possible that at least some violence is attractive to high sensation seekers due to its graphic, novel and stimulating content. For example, Krcmar and Greene (2000) examined various personality traits and found that sensation seeking was related to adolescents' exposure to violent television. Other research into sensation seeking has also found that it predicts attraction to violent television and website content (Slater, 2003), and exposure to contact sports and real crime shows (Krcmar & Greene, 1999). These latter authors reasoned that high sensation seekers were "seeking out arousal that is produced by visually stimulating and unpredictable media content" (p. 40).

Krcmar and Keane (2004) explored additional personality correlates not only of exposure to violent media but enjoyment of it, as well. Interestingly, this research found that exposure and liking were not strongly correlated, suggesting that audiences may watch violence for reasons other than enjoyment. As discussed previously, if exposure is functional, audiences may consume media violence to fulfill some need without actually enjoying the viewing experience. Furthermore, there may be structural reasons for exposure to media violence. Perhaps my friends meet on the Internet to play a violent multi-player online game. I may enjoy playing with them, while not enjoying the violence *per se*. In any case, Krcmar and Keane (2004) examined the five major personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness) and found that whereas neuroticism was related to exposure to violent films and television, including reality shows such as COPS and violent drama, neuroticism was unrelated to liking these genres. Extraversion was also related to exposure to violent films and television as were some dimensions of the openness to experience variable. Lastly, agreeableness was negatively related to exposure to violent media. In another study exploring personality and media choice, Slater (2003) found a positive link between adolescents' scores on an alienation scale and their exposure to violent films.

Thus, it appears that personality factors do in fact drive needs. For example, sensation seeking may drive a need for stimulation that can be sought out through violent media. More neurotic individuals may seek out violent media as a means of gaining a sense of understanding and control over their fear of violence. Those who rate

high on a scale measuring openness to experience may seek out violence as a mean of encountering novelty. And those who are dispositionally cheerful and agreeable may in fact *avoid* violent media because of its inherent incompatibility with their general personality and outlook. In each case, however, it is the personality factor that drives the need, which in turn drives the media choice. Interestingly, that choice may not actually fulfill that need, which may be why these viewers do not necessarily report enjoying what they have chosen.

Trait aggression has also been investigated in terms of attraction to media violence. For example, Atkin (1985) found a link between aggression and exposure to media violence. More recent research has continued to support this claim, even in terms of newer media. For example, both Slater et al. (2003) and Colwell and Payne (2000) found that those who are higher in trait aggressiveness are more likely to seek out and play violent videogames.

In order to synthesize the sometimes disparate literature on the link between aggression on one hand and exposure to media violence on the other, Slater and colleagues (2003) proposed a downward spiral model. Utilizing a cross-lagged panel design, they tested both the hypothesis that exposure to media violence caused aggression and that aggression encouraged interest in and exposure to media violence. Data gathered from the adolescents in the study support the notion of a feedback loop. Whereas trait aggression does encourage exposure to violent media, exposure to violent media appears to encourage aggressiveness. Hence, one variable reinforces the other in a downward spiral.

Despite the importance of these personality factors in determining interest in violent media, recall research by Krcmar and Keane (2004) found that although personality may influence exposure, exposure to violent media did not necessarily predict enjoyment. Thus, other factors, both sociological and merely incidental are likely to encourage exposure to media violence as well.

Social Factors Influencing Interest in Media Violence

Sociological or social factors can be defined as those that take into consideration the features of the environment, both the viewing environment and the individual environment, that influence media choice. In other words, I would define sociological factors as those variables that arise from cultural influences, family influences and those individual factors such as gender that are at least in part socially determined. For example, Robertson, Blain and Cowan (2005) found that adolescent choices of media were most strongly influenced by family and peer choices. Other social factors, such as gender, also play a role. Cantor and Nathanson (1997) found that boys were more interested in violent television than girls, a finding that has been consistently

upheld in the research (e.g., Atkin, Greenberg, Korzenny, & McDermott, 1979; Lyle & Hoffmann, 1972). However, biological sex is often a stand-in variable. That is, biological sex is statistically related to many variables, not least of which is the interest in and enjoyment of media violence, but it is likely socially constructed gender more so than biological sex that has explanatory power.

Williams and Clippenger (2002) offer evidence that suggests an interesting sociological explanation. In their research, males played violent videogames either against a computer or face to face, against a stranger. Participants were actually more aggressive and more competitive in the computer play condition than in the stranger situation, leading the researchers to argue that a need for competition drives interest in and in some cases outcomes of violent videogame play. Indeed, a social need to compete is one of the motivations suggested by those who play violent videogames (Sherry, Lucas, Greenberg, & Lachlan, 2006). Thus, one explanation for interest in, at least, interactive violent media is a coinciding interest in the competitive aspect of many violent games. The fact that males, on average, are more interested in competition, because they are socialized by perhaps family norms and participation in cultural activities such as competitive sports, is therefore spurious.

Do We Really Enjoy Media Violence? Incidental Motives for Exposure

Although evidence does seem to exist that humans are intrigued by, attracted to or just curious about violence, is it possible that producers overestimate this interest and thus create more of it than we want, making exposure somewhat unavoidable? After all, of the 10 most popular films in the USA in 2009, some were unarguably violent (e.g., *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*; *Star Trek*) others were not (e.g., *Up*, *The Hangover*, *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs*) (<http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=2009&p=.htm>). Thus, it is possible that at least some of our exposure to violence could be incidental, co-occurring with some dramatic story line that we enjoy but not necessarily sought out because of the violence. After all, writers, directors and producers create films and programs based on what they hope audiences will watch, what they think audiences will watch and what they believe audiences will watch. Jordan and Woodard (1998) in their research in which they interviewed producers of children's programs, referred to this as conventional wisdom.

From those interview data, Jordan and Woodard (1998) determined which beliefs guided producers in the creation of programs. One belief that resulted in the production of violent children's programs was that "It is better to gear programs to a boy audience than a girl or mixed audience (p. 91)." Implicit in this assumption was that boys would certainly be attracted to violent programs and that girls would watch boy programs but not vice versa. Interestingly, the conventional wisdom that guided the production of children's programming was untested but strongly held by producers

and broadcasters. Thus, children were presented with violent programs, despite that the humorous ones might be as, or more appealing to them.

In addition to the fact that violence may be incidental to the program, individual exposure to violence may be incidental, or at least situational. For example, I may not enjoy violence but I may enjoy watching television or movies with my friends or family. When a violent movie is chosen by the majority, I watch because of my pleasure in the viewing situation, not because of my enjoyment of the violence or of the movie itself. Similarly, one motive for videogame play is that gamers may like the social nature of play. If the game happens to be violent yet provides the gamer with an opportunity to spend time with peers, once again, incidental exposure occurs. In any case, it is a mistake to assume that all exposure to violence is both intentional and due to the violence. After all, Krcmar and Keane (2004) found that exposure to violence and enjoyment of violence were statistically only very weakly related statistically.

Understanding Interest in Media Violence: Some Tentative Conclusions

So why are audiences attracted to violent media? Why do they consume it? And what sense can we make of the disparate lines of research and the assortment of variables and theories that attempt to explain the phenomenon? In turning to only affect and arousal-based theories such as mood management and mood adjustment, we ignore the very real role that the external environment such as peer norms may play in our attraction to media violence. On the other hand, threat mastery and other functional explanations offer some explanation for violent media use but tend to be somewhat narrow in their explanation. Each approach alone suffers from focusing too intently on a set of variables or causes to the neglect of others. What is needed is a broad theory, even a meta-theory that can provide an umbrella to link the reviewed theoretical approaches and variables under investigation. In the next section, I will propose a model that will help to integrate the various theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of attraction to violence and encourage scholars to utilize this broad-based approach in future research.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory remains one of the most influential theories in social psychology and has been widely adopted by scholars of media (Chapter 4, this volume). The intent of this section is by no means to offer a history or summary of the theory (which was well done elsewhere: Pajares, Prestin, Chen, & Nabi, 2009).

Instead, I will assume a basic understanding of the learning theory and attempt to point out some links between it and the research on selective exposure to media violence (see also LaRose, 2009). In short, social cognitive theory, in its 40-year evolution, attempts to explain the learning and enactment of human functioning that proposes that this functioning is the result of reciprocal determinism, or the bidirectionally linked interplay of three categories of variables. These include personal factors (such as affect and cognition, because they are individual difference variables, specific to the individual), environmental factors (both situational and environmental as more broadly defined), and behavior. Because media choice, and the selection of violent media in particular is, obviously, a behavior enacted by humans, it seems clear that those factors that influence it might fall under social cognitive theory. After all, the theory deals with the factors that drive or influence human behavior, of which media choice is one example.

From a sociocognitive perspective, we might categorize the various theories and variables we have discussed as falling under personological factors, environmental factors and behavioral factors. Specifically, we have discussed affective and arousal-based theories, as well as the desire to master threat. These could be construed broadly as personological factors. Similarly, personality factors that influence attraction to violent media (e.g., sensation seeking, neuroticism) also fall under the category of personological factors, as does gender. Environmental influences on attraction to media choice include sociological factors such as peer interest in media violence, family norms of exposure to media violence, and incidental factors, such as what programs, videogames and films are available at a given time. Lastly, selective exposure to media violence is clearly a human behavior or function. As proposed by Bandura (1986), these three categories of variables are bidirectionally linked and thus, reciprocally influence one another. For example, the environment (who I am with, what media are available) has an effect on my affect and perhaps my arousal. Affect and arousal, in turn can influence my interactions with my environment in a given moment. Both of these factors: Personological and environmental, then, can influence selective exposure to violent media in that given moment, which in turn, obviously, influences my affect, arousal and perhaps my interactions with that environment still further. Hence, the three categories of factors are reciprocally linked (see Figure 8.1).

Thus, to the extent that social cognitive theory can be thought of as a meta-theory, or even meta-approach to the exploration of human behavior, it offers us at least a starting point, a framework, for understanding the interplay of factors that influence selective exposure to media violence. In sum, we consume what we do due to factors relating to us as individuals, both momentary, state factors such as affect and long-term, trait factors such as personality variables; we consume because of our environment, friends, parents, the situation, and these all result in consumption of violent media. To consider any of these alone, or even to consider one as primary, is to engage in a reductionism that is tempting, but ultimately, not explanatory to understand the complex appeal of media violence.

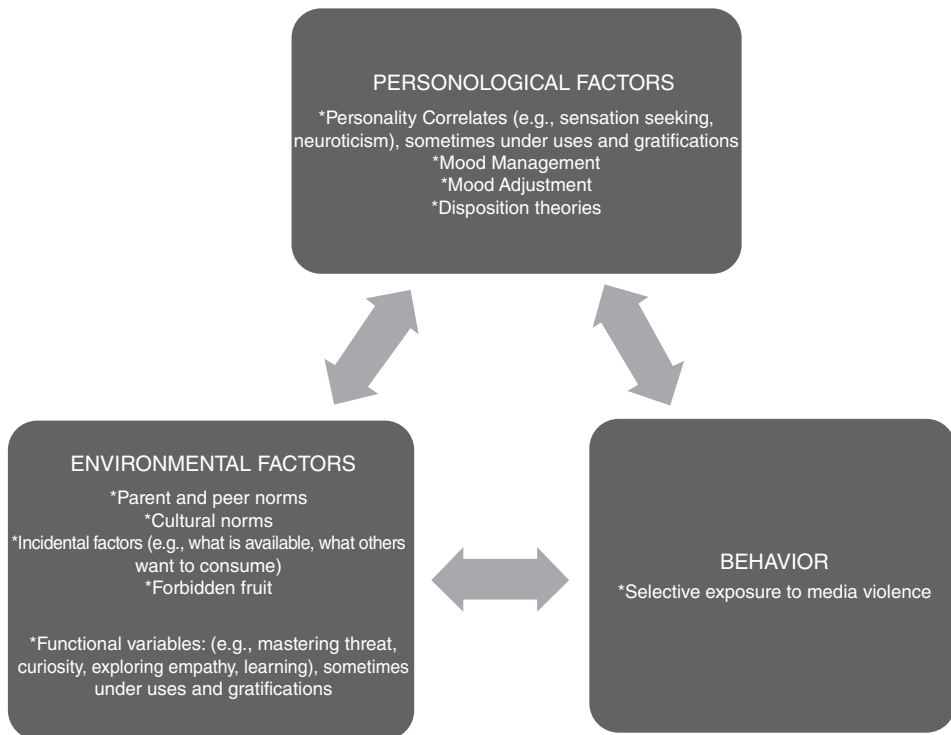


Figure 8.1 Bidirectionally linked factors predicting selective exposure to violent media: adapted from social cognitive theory (based on Bandura, 1986).

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Media Message Processing and the Embodied Mind

Measuring Bodily Responses to Open the Black Box

Annie Lang

ABSTRACT

This chapter critically reviews research which uses physiological and behavioral measures as covert, real-time measures of motivated cognitive processing. It is written from the common perspective in psychophysiological research that the mind is an embodied organ and therefore is sustained by the body. As a result, things which occur in the mind can be “seen” in the body. Thinking, feeling, and being are all dependent on the continuous electrical, chemical, and biological functioning of the brain. As the amount of thinking and feeling varies, so do the metabolic demands of the brain. As those metabolic demands vary, so does the autonomic functioning of the body. Careful measurement of bodily responses in controlled contexts can yield fine-grained information about thinking and feeling. Recent research has applied these measures to the problem of understanding media psychology. This chapter will discuss how variations in media structure and content influence motivational activation, which in turn influences emotional responses and cognition, and how psychophysiological and behavioral measures can be used to track the real-time processing of mediated messages.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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Mind, Body, and Media

This chapter takes the perspective that the embodied mind meets mediated messages in specific local environments embedded in culturally imbued social systems. The perspective is one of systems within systems; the cognitive system is embedded in a motivational system, which is embedded in a biological system, which is embedded in a social system, which is embedded in the cultural system. Further, it is assumed that all these systems are continuously interacting with one another over time creating one large and many smaller dynamic systems. Within this perspective, the task of the communication scholar is to understand the interactions between and within one or more of these systems (Lang & Ewoldsen, 2010). The chapter focuses on the interactions between the cognitive and motivational systems within the biological system. This is not to say that the interactions of these three systems with the local environmental system or with the larger social and cultural system are not important or interesting. It is simply to admit that focusing merely on these three systems is sufficiently complex for a start.

In many ways, this perspective is antithetical to traditional approaches to studying mediated messages (Lang, 2011). First, it eschews traditional distinctions not only between media but also between mediated and interpersonal communication. From this perspective all stimuli are messages and all messages are mediated by the sensory, cognitive, motivational, and biological systems in which a conscious mind emerges. Second, it denies the existence of stability and of effects and puts in their place the concept of continuous dynamic change in which certain patterns of interaction among systems are more stable and more likely while other patterns of interaction among systems are less stable and less likely. From this perspective, a purposive strategic mediated message propagates through the systems and through time causing variation in the interactions within and among the systems both in real time (what one might call the online processing of, or interaction with, the message) and, following the conclusion of the message, in some kind of internal system time where information gleaned from the message becomes part of the system and influences future interactions among all the systems. Thus, information (in a very catholic sense) which has been, perhaps purposefully, perhaps not, placed in a message (by the world, by a producer, or by a single human being) causes immediate and somewhat predictable real-time variation in the sensory, motivational, and biological systems which encounter it, whose function is to support the perception, encoding, and storage of an idiosyncratic mental representation of that information. Introduction of this information into the system thereby changes the system and all its future behaviors, though the extent of those changes is certainly dependent upon the nature of both the information and the message that delivered it. This perspective places communication at the intersection of the biological/motivational/cognitive system and the message.

Truly accepting a dynamic systems perspective makes the actual time during which the interaction between a person and a message is occurring of primary importance. Given that we can control the structure, the timing, and the content of the message we have an opportunity, as researchers, to “observe” how the system responds to the introduction of the message. To the extent that we can observe each of the nested systems (motivational, cognitive, biological) interacting with and responding to the message, we can come to understand, explain, and to some extent predict and potentially change the system. Time is of primary importance because change within the message from one moment to the next results in subsequent change within the tripartite human system from one moment to the next, which alters how the system interacts in the next moment with the changing message. Research from this perspective can eventually learn how variation in a myriad of structural and content features of messages can drive the motivated cognitive system towards different trajectories of interaction which may be desirable.

Studying communication this way requires the ability to track changes in messages and changes in the motivational, biological, and cognitive systems in real time and the development of theories, methods, and strategies for examining the interactions among them. In this way, we can begin to understand how certain types of content or structural features in messages predictably influence dynamic change in the biological motivated cognitive system that is a message recipient. To do so requires dynamic measures of both change in messages and change in the human-motivated cognitive system.

Given that this perspective is based in part on currently popular and historically venerable non-Cartesian traditions in psychology, epitomized by psychophysiology (Cacioppo et al., 2000), which views the brain as an embodied organ inextricably linked in to bodily functions which both support and reflect its activity, physiological measures seem a natural tool to use to provide a window into the operations of the motivated cognitive system. Psychophysiology is the science of linking physiological measures with psychological correlates (Cacioppo, Tassinary, & Bernston, 2000). It is important to fundamentally understand that physiological measures are indeed measures of variation in physiological systems. That is they are measurably precise veridical (exact and actual) measures of the operation of some specific aspect of physiology such as voltage potential in a muscle, electrical conductance across a variably moist surface, or the opacity to infrared light of a portion of the body. And they measure these within some specific and known margin of error both for the measure and across time. The measurement task is merely engineering. The science is in the work that has been done over the last hundred or so years to determine, in specific environments, how, in response to a controlled stimulus, these aspects of the biological system that we can measure correlate with theorized motivational, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to that stimulus – hence the term *psychophysiology*.

In other words, physiological measures do not provide an actual specific record of specific psychological states. Rather, in known circumstances with understood

stimuli, they are indicators of psychological states. Research in psychophysiology has demonstrated large and robust correlations between specific stimuli and specific physiological responses in specific controlled environments. Over the last 30 years a fair amount of work has been done to translate that work into the communication laboratory (Lang, 1994a). This has entailed enlarging the range of stimuli from simple tones, words, and images to dynamic audio and visual stimuli of all sorts and ascertaining whether these known large and robust correlations between stimuli and physiological measures hold in the more chaotic environment of the media message. In addition, while change over time is an essential part of the psychophysiological tradition, work with media has necessarily enlarged the timeframe from milliseconds and seconds to minutes and hours. Thus, importing psychophysiological methods and theory into communication research has entailed an increase in the complexity of the stimuli and of the measurement and a concomitant decrease in control over many aspects of both the stimulus and the response. Despite these difficulties, it has also provided us with the ability to observe and learn from real-time interactions between messages and the motivated cognitive system.

As may be clear from this introduction, both the observation and interpretation of the measures are necessarily theory driven. While a statement about an increase in activation in a facial muscle might be thought of as a simple observational statement, taking the next step, and claiming that it represents a change in an emotional or psychological state requires a theory of cognition, a theory of emotion, and a theory linking the stimulus properties of the message to cognition and emotion. Much of the research discussed in this chapter and much of the importation of various physiological measures into communication research has been done either in conjunction with the development of or under the auspices of the Limited Capacity Model of Motivated Mediated Message Processing or LC4MP (Lang, 2000, Lang, 2006a, 2006b). This model draws heavily on theoretical programs in psychology (Kahneman, 1973; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977), psychophysiology (Cacioppo & Sandman, 1981; Greenwald, Hamm, Bradley, & Lang, 1988; Lang, Simons, & Balaban, 1997b), and communication research (Bryant, Carveth, & Brown, 1981; Zillmann, 1982a). Its primary pieces were developed by others and integrated and applied to communication in an attempt to explain the real-time dynamic interaction between messages and the human biological, motivated, cognitive system. This chapter lays out the LC4MP, the embedded use of psychophysiological measures in communication, and discusses potential developments in this area.

The Theoretical Model

The *LCModelMMMP* presents a plausible explanation for how information moves from the message to the mind. The model is itself dynamic, minimalist and data-driven and seeks to remain compatible with our ever-increasing understanding of

neuro- bio- cognitive- psychology. As a result of these characteristics, the model incorporates the fewest possible theoretical variables and concepts needed to accomplish its task and strives to develop, for each concept, at least one specific measurement. Thus, unlike traditional effects research, where something about a message is manipulated and something about a person is measured after the message has been consumed, and these pre- and post-data are used as supporting evidence for what occurred in between; LC4MP attempts to measure every hypothesized dynamic interaction between the message and the motivated cognitive system in real time.

The **LCMMMMessageProcessing** takes the perspective that humans have a cognitive system capable of performing at least three specific processes, embedded in a motivational system designed by evolution to promote survival, embedded in the physiological and biological system which is the body. Variations in any of these systems caused by external (as in a mediated message or a conversational partner) or internal (as in a thought or an upset stomach) stimuli have immediate impact on the functioning of the cognitive system. The three specified processes in the cognitive system are encoding, storage, and retrieval.

Encoding is the idiosyncratic non-veridical process by which information contained in the external world (e.g., the mediated message) is turned into a mental representation. There are three important things to understand about this process. First, it occurs over time. This means that the amount of time the system has to encode a message significantly impacts the amount of information that is incorporated into the resulting mental representation. Second, encoding is non-veridical: Eyes are not cameras and ears are not audio recorders. Rather, seeing and hearing are driven by both hard- and software. They are constructive processes, which rely on the external information in the world and internal information which has been learned over a lifetime of interaction within and with the world. Thus, encoding produces not an exact representation of reality but rather a constructed one. Further, the construction rests not only on information from the external world but also on the experiences of the encoder. Thus, each person's representation is idiosyncratic. The aspects of the external stimulus selected for encoding will vary based on the interests, knowledge, and background of the person doing the encoding. This is not to say that each person will encode a completely unrelated representation of a given stimulus because the evolutionary mechanical characteristics of the biological system will ensure the encoding of aspects of stimuli directly related to survival. Similarly, psychological characteristics of stimuli will elicit from all encoders various automatic and reflexive cognitive and motivational responses, which ensure their inclusion in the final representation. Hence, the core of encoded representations, those aspects related to the basic functioning of the motivated cognitive system, will be there for everyone. What will vary between people is the selection from the myriad of other details which accompany that basic psychological core. Thus, when a fast-moving car comes screeching around the corner, careers off a lamp post, and rockets out of sight down an alley, all observers will report accurately that it was a vehicle, that it was fast-moving, the general direction from which it came, and more accurately the direction

in which it disappeared. Other details will depend on the observers. Car buffs may report on make and model, an artist might notice the color, the off-duty policeman may come up with a license plate number, and inveterate people watchers may notice something about the driver. These people will be selecting the details that are associated with how they have learned to see the world.

Storage is the process by which encoded mental representations become part of what a human knows. The LC4MP considers memory to be essentially neurologically based. It is likely that what a person is thinking about at any given time corresponds to the set of activated neurons which make up the representations of those things. Neurons which fire together, wire together and likely form in some way the neurological basis underlying association models of memory. The LC4MP does not endorse a specific model of memory but rather assumes that simultaneously active memories become linked and that activation can spread through the memory network. Thus, encoding creates an active mental representation of what is occurring in real time. Aspects of the external stimuli which are related to or match information already known activate their stored mental representations during this process and the simultaneous activation links the new information to the old. The process is largely automatic though people can work to increase the efficiency of the storage process.

Retrieval is the process of activating previously stored information. It happens automatically in response to stimuli in the external world (e.g., when you see an elephant, you effortlessly retrieve the label elephant and the knowledge that it is a grey animal with a trunk, etc.) and it can happen under the control of a person trying to remember what they know (e.g., can I remember if it is Indian or African elephants that have big ears?).

The *LimitedCapacity*4MP also argues that people do not have an unlimited ability to take in, store, or retrieve information. The model conceives of humans as limited capacity processors and conceptualizes attention as the allocation of this limited capacity of processing resources (Grimes & Meadowcroft, 1995; Kahneman, 1973; Lynn, 1966; Ohman, 1979; Reeves et al., 1985; Wickens, 1984). As a result, what is encoded, what is stored, and what can be retrieved is only a subset of the information contained in the world or in a mediated message. Many aspects of the environment, the processing system, and the message directly influence how these capacity limitations impact our ability to perceive, comprehend, and remember the information contained in messages. Among the most important external variables are the amount of information, the rate of information presentation, and the motivational relevance of the information. Among the most important internal variables are practice, prior knowledge, and expertise.

The model theorizes that limited cognitive resources are allocated independently (through both automatic and controlled mechanisms) to encoding, storage, and retrieval. Aspects of the environment which represent change, often associated with novelty (e.g., someone opening a door or the sound of a car starting) or that are learned signals of import (e.g., your name or a siren) elicit orienting responses (ORs)

and thereby the automatic allocation of resources to encoding. Aspects of the environment that are related to threats and opportunities automatically elicit motivational activation and thereby the allocation of resources to encoding and storage. When more resources are required to process a stimulus than have been allocated, processing performance is impaired and a form of cognitive overload occurs.

Within the LCMM*Mediated*MP encoding, storage, and retrieval, though capable of being influenced by intent, generally operate automatically and outside conscious awareness and control. Further, these are primitive, built-in, biologically based cognitive mechanisms developed by evolution and not subject to change within the relatively short time encompassed by human history. For this reason, a primary assumption of the LC4MP is that these processes initially respond to mediated stimuli as if they were real (Reeves & Nass, 1996). Certainly, as people interact with mediated stimuli their conscious knowledge that they are not in fact precisely “real” does function to influence these responses and alter how the system is operating. However, they cannot stop these processes from operating, they can only inhibit, shift, or facilitate them.

Finally, the LC*Motivated*MMMP theorizes that the cognitive system is embedded within a biological motivational system that was designed by evolution to promote survival of the species and the individual. The motivational system consists of two independently operating systems, the appetitive or approach system and the aversive or avoid system (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999). Activation in these systems varies continuously across time in response to external and internal stimuli representing threats and opportunities. The *appetitive* system activates in response to opportunities while the *aversive* system activates in response to threat. At any given time, the environment may contain threats, opportunities, both or neither. For this reason, the systems’ activation levels vary independently and automatically as needed. The two systems have somewhat different operating characteristics. Neither system is ever off; however there is a very low level of activation, which we might think of as idling. Dual systems theory suggests that in a neutral environment (e.g., one with no threats and no opportunities) both the appetitive and the aversive system will be idling, and, when that occurs, the activation in the appetitive system is greater than that in the aversive system. The difference between these two is called the positivity offset and its theorized purpose is to ensure that people will venture out into the world to search for opportunities. To make up for this lower level of idling activation, the aversive system is thought to react more quickly and more vigorously to potential threats. This characteristic is called the negativity bias. Its primary purpose is to ensure survival through swift threat avoidance, it being best to avoid probable threats first and think about it later rather than to fail to avoid and thereby think no more.

In addition to motivating behavior (e.g., approach and avoidance) the motivational systems are also theorized to motivate cognition (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 1997a). That is, at the same time that motivational activation may be driving increased blood flow to the muscles or the brain to support running or thinking; it is also fine tuning the distribution of finite cognitive resources among the processes involved in

thinking about the world (e.g., encoding, storage, and retrieval). Appetitive or approach activation is theorized to be strongly associated with information intake as information increases our ability to take advantage of opportunities. Thus the model predicts that as appetitive activation increases more cognitive resources are allocated to encoding and storage external information. On the other hand, aversive activation is primarily related to avoiding threat. Therefore, at low to moderate levels of aversive activation, where there are only potential, not imminent, threats, resources are allocated to scanning the environment and taking in information. However, once a threat has been identified, as danger becomes more immediate, resources are withdrawn from the task of taking in additional information about the threat, and are allocated instead to the internal tasks of retrieving information about how to respond in the current environment, and towards making decisions about what to do (Yeghiyan & Lang, 2010).

In the context of communication research, this means that messages which contain motivationally relevant content automatically activate the motivational systems resulting in a change in how the cognitive system distributes its finite resources and therefore a change in the amount of information which is encoded, stored, and retrieved. Motivationally relevant content includes any content that represents threats or opportunities. Some motivationally relevant content is determined by evolution, these things represent hardwired threats and opportunities. Hardwired opportunities include food and sex. Hardwired threats include signs of distress (screaming, weeping), fast onset stimuli, and intense (e.g., very loud, very bright, very smelly) stimuli. Thus, messages which contain strong emotion, food, naked people, high-intensity fast-moving action, snakes, spiders, and so on, are likely to elicit automatic motivational activation in most users. In addition, people learn through experience to associate motivational activation with a myriad of objects, words, expressions, places, and things. Some of these associations are cultural, some are specific to a given social system, and some are purely personal. Once learned, however, these things also automatically elicit motivational activation.

The Operational Model

As stressed above, all of this theorizing is not worth much if there are no measures associated with the various parts of the model. A set of cognitive and physiological time-based measures shown to be correlated with the motivational and cognitive processes discussed above have been developed, borrowed, and adapted for use in the communication laboratory. Many of these measures are familiar to communication researchers. However, because of the dynamic nature of the theory they may be employed somewhat differently when used from this theoretical perspective. For example, rather than looking at the average of the measure over an entire message, these measures are tracked over the time-course of the message and the over-time

interactions between change in the message and change in the motivated cognitive system are assessed. This allows for the measure of real-time, dynamic processing of the message.

In addition, research from this perspective requires dynamic measures of psychologically and motivationally relevant aspects of mediated messages since it is necessary to track the variation in signal, novel, and motivationally relevant information within the message as well as the change in variables related to the level of resources required to successfully encode and store the information contained in the message (Detenber & Lang, 2011). The next section will first present the motivated cognitive measures and then the dynamic message measures.

Motivated Cognitive Measures

The model as presented above makes predictions about motivational activation, orienting responses, resource allocation, encoding, storage, and retrieval. Therefore it requires dynamic measures of appetitive and aversive activation, encoding, storage, and retrieval, and the allocation of finite processing resources.

Encoding, storage, and retrieval performance are indexed by recognition, cued recall, and retrieval, respectively (Lang, 2000; Zechmeister & Nyberg, 1982).

Recognition is measured by presenting participants with an exact representation of what they saw or heard and asking them to decide whether or not they saw it. When measuring recognition it is not necessary for the participant to locate or retrieve information, they need only to perceive the stimulus and decide if they have seen it before. This is an appropriate measure of encoding, because people encode a great deal more information than they actually successfully store or can retrieve, but the process of encoding information leaves behind a residue of familiarity that allows people to determine, with remarkable accuracy, whether something has been seen before. Thus, accuracy on recognition tests is a good indicator of encoding performance. In addition to accuracy, signal detection analysis can also be used which takes into account the decision-making process involved in giving a “yes/no” answer and results in two measures, *D prime* which is an indicator of encoding performance and *criterion bias* which is an indicator of the level of familiarity required by the participant in order to give a “yes” answer (Fox, Park, & Lang, 2007; Shapiro, 1994). For example, a person has a certain sense of familiarity about a recognition target – if there is a reward for getting the right answer and no punishment for getting it wrong, people will have a bias towards saying “yes I saw that before” at a lower level of familiarity. Obviously, if being wrong is punished, they will have the opposite bias.

Cued recall measures are used as an indicator of storage. Cued recall procedures require that the participant be provided with a specific cue to the location of the detail you wish them to remember. In this case, the participant does not have to find where in-memory information is located, but needs to provide only the detail. Fill in the blank questions can be used to create time-locked cued recall tests.

Finally, *retrieval* can be indexed using free recall measures; people are asked to recall everything they can about a stimulus. This information can be coded as to when it occurred in the message providing an over-time retrieval measure. However, this technique only assesses retrieval of a message after it has been seen. The model also posits that during message processing people engage in concurrent retrieval. That is, they are calling up information from memory that is relevant to processing the current information. At this time, the model does not have a measure of concurrent retrieval.

The allocation of processing resources is assessed in a number of ways. First, secondary task reaction times (STRTs) have been used as an indicator of resource allocation (Lang & Basil, 1998; Lang, Bradley, Park, Shin, & Chung, 2006). In this paradigm, participants carry out a specific task (e.g., watching a mediated message). Periodically, a signal occurs to which they respond, usually by pushing a button, as quickly as possible. The speed with which participants respond to the periodic signal indicates the level of resources allocated to encoding the mediated message but not required for that task, called available resources. Message processing, in particular encoding, is thought to be highest when available resources are high and lowest when available resources are low or nonexistent. Structural and content features of the message contribute both to the number of resources allocated to processing the message (as a result of signal, novel, and motivationally relevant content which automatically elicit resource allocation) and the number of resources required to process the message (as a result of complexity and difficulty). Thus, the level of available resources is dynamically changing over the course of the message in response to these content and structural features. Probes are placed periodically and strategically throughout the message in order to test predictions about level of available resources as a function of message structure and content.

Within the LC4MP, variation in resource allocation during media use is also indexed by heart rate (Lang, 1994b). Parasympathetic innervations of the heart result in heart rate deceleration during periods of intense attention to external stimuli. Heart rate can be measured time-locked to media messages and analyzed in such a way as to provide information on both short-term, called phasic, and long-term, called tonic, variations in heart rate thought to be correlated with short- and long-term changes in resource allocation. Heart rate provides a more continuous and dynamic measure than STRT.

Messages contain both structural and content features, which introduce signal or novel content and therefore elicit orienting responses. Orienting responses result in a short-term increase in resources allocated to processing incoming stimuli and are indexed by a phasic (5 to 7 seconds) slowdown in heart rate. This short-term heart rate deceleration can be measured at specific points in messages where orienting is thought to occur. Over longer periods of time, sustained long-term deceleration in heart rate has been shown to be correlated with increased cognitive effort (defined in the LC4MP as total resources allocated to processing the message). Thus, by looking at the overall change in the trend of a heart rate series and the phasic

variation in heart rate around that trend, one can index both short- and long-term changes in resource allocation.

Motivational activation is assessed using a set of physiological correlates of motivational activation developed in research done to explicate dimensional theories of emotion (Bradley & Lang, 2000; Lang, Gilmore, Cuthbert, & Bradley, 1996). Within these theories, emotional experience is mapped onto two primary dimensions, arousal (ranging from calm to excited), and hedonic valence (ranging from unpleasant to pleasant). These theories posit that emotion arises as a result of underlying activation in the appetitive and aversive motivational systems. The direction of motivational activation, to approach or to avoid, maps onto the hedonic valence dimension. The extent of activation maps onto the arousal dimension. Research from this perspective has shown that aversive and appetitive activation are correlated with self-reported unpleasant and pleasant emotion, respectively. In addition several physiological measures including facial electromyography (EMG) (Bolls, Potter, & Lang, 2001), skin conductance (SC) (Lang, Bolls, Potter, & Kawahara, 1999), startle, and post-auricular response (PA response) (Sparks & Lang, 2010) are correlated with activation in the motivational systems.

EMG measures electrical activity in the facial musculature. Activation in three primary facial muscle groups has been shown to be correlated with emotional experience and, presumably, the underlying motivational activation. Measurable variation in the electrical activity of these muscles occurs long before there is visual change in facial expression. Activation in the corrugator muscle group, located to the inside of the eyebrows and involved in frowning, is correlated with negative emotional experience and aversive activation (Bolls & Lang, 2003). Activation in both the zygomatic major muscle group (located on either side of the mouth and involved in smiling) and in the orbicularis oculi muscle (which rings the eye) is correlated with positive emotional experience and appetitive activation. Facial EMG measures can be collected time-locked to media use allowing the assessment of moment-by-moment change in response to real-time change in messages.

Startle and PA responses are probe measures thought to reflect activation in the aversive and appetitive systems. The startle response is a primarily aversive response which is elicited by zero-rise time (i.e., stimuli which reach their maximum level almost instantaneously) or extremely intense (e.g., loud, bright, etc.) stimuli (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 1990). Startle responses vary from quite small to what is called the whole body startle. Their primary purpose is to interrupt ongoing processing, force the processing of a potential threat, and physically protect the body. An obligatory eyeblink is one component of the startle response. In the laboratory, startles are elicited by a very brief no rise-time burst of white noise. Electrodes placed on the orbicularis oculi muscle are used to measure the contraction of the muscle, which results in the eyeblink. The size of the blink is correlated with aversive and appetitive activation. At low levels of aversive activation startles are small, at high levels of aversive activation they are large. At low levels of appetitive activation startles are small and at high levels of appetitive activation they are even

smaller. Aversive activation is thought to facilitate startle while appetitive activation inhibits it.

The PA response is thought to have been correlated primarily with appetitive activation (Sparks & Lang, 2010). The electrodes placed on the post-auricular muscle, located behind the ears, measure contractions elicited by the same white noise probe that elicits the startle. PA responses are small during aversive activation or low levels of appetitive activation but much larger during high levels of appetitive activation.

Both PA and startle responses are probe measures, like STRT, which means they can be placed at strategic points in a mediated message to provide information about appetitive and aversive activation at a specific moment in time. Multiple probes placed over the course of the message provide insight into variation over longer periods of time.

The arousal dimension of emotion, thought to be indicative of activation in the appetitive and/or aversive motivational systems, is correlated with skin conductance (SC). SC is measured by running a very slight DC current between electrodes placed on the palm. Increases and decreases in the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system, correlated with the experience of arousal, result in the raising and lowering of the level of sweat in the eccrine sweat glands. Thus, with increasing sympathetic arousal, the level of sweat in the glands rises, resulting in faster conductance of the current across the surface of the hand, and thereby increased skin conductance.

Heart rate, skin conductance, facial EMG, startle, PA response, and STRT can all be measured time-locked to use of a given medium providing a picture of moment-by-moment change in appetitive and aversive activation and resource allocation. After media use, memory measures which track recognition, cued recall, and free recall for information occurring at specific time points over the course of a message, can provide us with an over-time assessment of cognitive processing. This information can then be used to assess the dynamic interactions between the medium and the motivated cognitive system. Future research in this area should continue to search for more and better indicators of the important processes and mechanisms posited by the model. Indeed some recent research has begun looking at functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) as an indicator of motivational activation during risky behavior (Potter, Lang, Brown, Fukunaga, & Krawitz, 2008b).

Dynamic Message Measurements

This brings us to the problem of how to measure dynamic change in psychologically relevant aspects (that is those that are thought to influence the motivated cognitive system) of mediated messages. LC4MP is primarily concerned with three types of psychologically relevant message information: (1) those aspects of a message which elicit orienting (e.g., signal and novel stimuli or structures), (2) the amount of information in the message requiring resources in order to be processed (e.g., complexity,

difficulty), and (3) motivationally relevant information (e.g., speed, rise time, pleasant and unpleasant information).

Because LC4MP theorizes that novel and signal aspects of mediated messages will elicit orienting responses which result in an increase in resources allocated to processing, we need to know which aspects of each medium function as novel and signal stimuli and to have a dynamic measure of these elements. The first step in developing these measures is to determine which aspects of any given medium elicit orienting. To date, research has developed a list of both content and structural elements in several media that have been shown to elicit orienting responses, these elements are called orienting eliciting structural features or OESFs. For example, in TV, camera changes, movement towards the camera, certain changes in form, and some forms of camera movement have been shown to elicit orienting responses (Lang, 1990). In web-based media, the appearance of emotional pictures, warnings, and animation have been shown to elicit orienting (Lang, Borse, Wise, & David, 2002). In audio messages, sound effects, emotional words, and voice changes have been shown to elicit orienting (Potter, Lang, & Bolls, 2008a). Given the list of OESFs for a medium, any media interaction can be coded over time for their occurrence. Each OESF represents a point in time when additional resources are allocated to encoding the message. Thus, the more OESFs there are, the more resources are automatically allocated to processing the message. In addition, there should be an increase in resources allocated immediately following each OESF.

Of course, while, in general, having more resources allocated should increase message processing, the actual relationship is also dependent on the number of resources required to process the information immediately following the OESF. When messages are more difficult or contain more information they require more resources to be successfully encoded. Therefore, a second measure, called information introduced (ii) is paired with the OESF measure (Lang et al., 2006; Lang, Park, Sanders-Jackson, & Wilson, 2007). The information introduced measure assesses the amount of information present before and after each OESF on a number of dimensions (five for audio information and seven for video information). The more dimensions of information present following an OESF, the greater the resources required to process it and the fewer the available resources. Combining the information introduced (resources required to process the message) and OESF (resources allocated to processing the message) measures results in an over-time measure of predicted available resources. One such recently developed combination measure is called the dynamic audio/video redundancy and complexity measure (DAVRC) (Lee, 2009). This measure produces a ratio of OESFs and a measure of the dynamic variation of information introduced for every 4 seconds of a given message. Recent research shows that it successfully predicts variation in secondary task reaction times and encoding over time within a message.

Finally, LC4MP posits that motivationally relevant material in messages will result in the automatic activation of the motivational systems, which automatically increases and redistributes the allocation of resources to message processing. Thus,

we need a dynamic measure of the motivational relevance of the information contained in messages. Research from the LC4MP perspective has taken two approaches to this problem (Lang & Ewoldsen, 2010). First, coders have been asked to identify messages, or portions of messages, as containing or not containing motivationally relevant information. However, the resultant measure is far from dynamic. A second approach is to have groups of subjects view the messages and continuously rate their emotional responses (Biocca, David, & West, 1994). Specifically, one group rates how positive and another rates how negative they feel while engaging with the message. The resultant continuous response curves provide an average rating of pleasant or unpleasant emotional experience for each second of the message. These can then be used as dynamic indicators of the amount of appetitively or aversively relevant information contained in a message (Wang, Lang, & Busemeyer, 2011).

Putting it All Together

This combination of theory, over-time message coding, and time-locked measurement of the motivated cognitive system allows us to answer questions about the real-time interaction of dynamically varying messages and the motivated cognitive processing system. For example, in a recent study, stimulus messages were selected based on the dynamics of their motivationally relevant information. Messages were chosen which began neutral and became either increasingly positive (called positive) or negative (called negative), or began neutral and simultaneously became increasingly positive and negative (called coactive). Figure 9.1 shows the relevant continuous response curves.

Participants then viewed the messages while STRT, startle, PA response, facial EMG, SC, and HR data were collected. Among the theoretical predictions were that appetitive and aversive activation should increase and decrease following similar increases and decreases in the continuous response measurement (CRM) measures

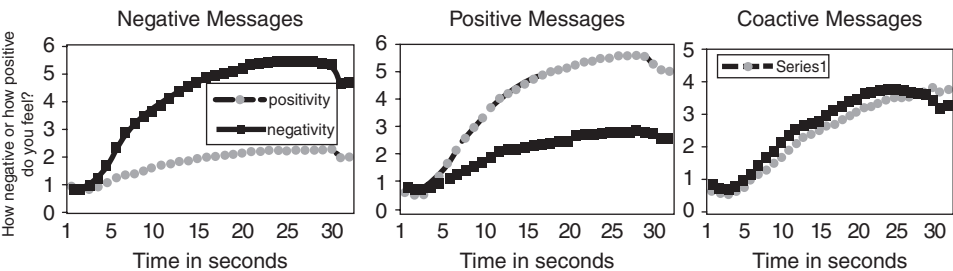


Figure 9.1 Continuous response measures of positivity and negativity.

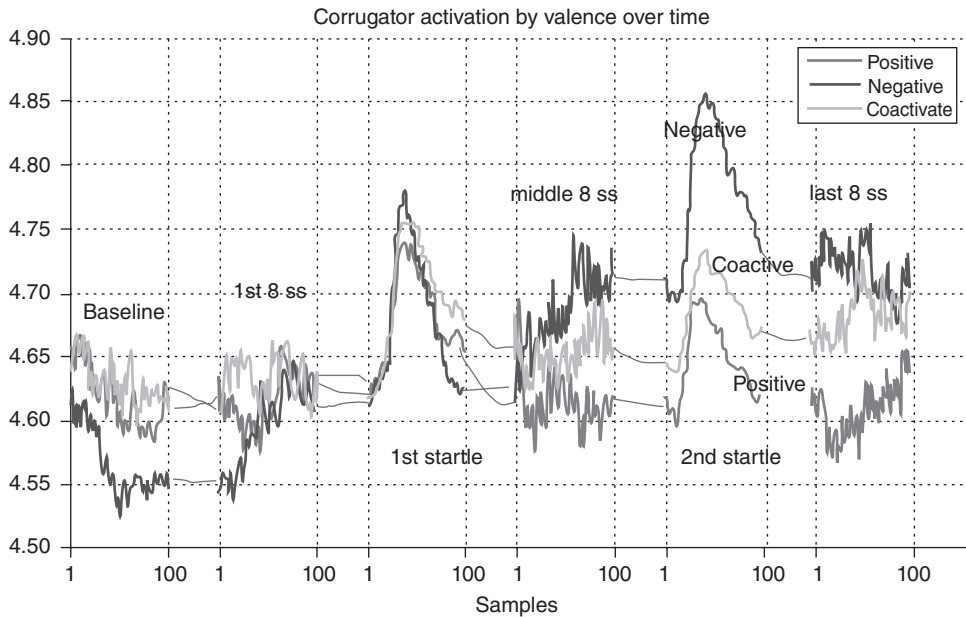


Figure 9.2 Corrugator activation.

of positive and negative motivationally relevant information. A research question asked what would happen during coactive messages. Figure 9.2 shows results for the corrugator muscle activation which increases during aversive and decreases during appetitive activation. At the end of the message, when the messages were highly pleasant, unpleasant, or both, this muscle was highly active during negative, inhibited during positive, and in between during coactive messages. In addition, during the first startle period, when messages were relatively unemotional, there is little variation in the startle response. However, for the second startle probe, when the messages are highly emotional, startle is facilitated for negative, and inhibited for positive messages, with coactive in between.

Average measures, over time, would not have allowed the mapping of the rise in appetitive and aversive activation following emotional content. Other analyses can be done to begin to investigate the lag between message and physiological change (Yegiyan et al., 2008).

Another approach is to create models that predict physiological and behavioral responses based on continuous motivational inputs. The Dynamic Motivational Activation Model (DMA) uses continuous ratings of arousal, positivity and negativity to predict variation in skin conductance, heart rate (HR), and facial EMG (Wang et al., 2011). The model predicts between 60% and 90% of the variance in the physiological data and estimates lag times between message change and physiological change by measure.

The Future

Obviously, research from this perspective has only begun to scratch the surface of the study of communication as a fundamental human process that operates in a nested series of dynamic systems. It is worth noting here, that this model, despite its fundamentally different conceptualization of the nature of communication, does not stand in opposition to more traditional effects theories and research. Indeed, it is hoped that it can begin to shed light on the underlying mechanisms which cause some well-documented communication effects. Examples of such attempts to meld the approaches can be seen. For example, Bradley (Bradley, 2007) has shown how this approach can produce a cognitive model that displays cultivation effects. Similarly, Bucy (Bucy & Bradley, 2003, 2004) has used this approach to examine unconscious processing of political messages. It is hoped that more research will also begin to reconceptualize traditional areas of communication research and approach our field not as arbitrary beginnings, endings, and resultant effects, but rather as a continuously modifiable input into a system that can alter its patterns, resting points, and outputs. To do otherwise is to miss the beauty and complexity of this very human behavior that we study.

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Thoughtless Vigilantes

Media Violence and Brain Activation Patterns in Young Viewers

John P. Murray

ABSTRACT

There is a long history of research on the topic of the impact of media violence and children. Concerns first surfaced in the early 1900s with questions about comic books, and then concerns about films, radio serials, and television programs emerged. More recently, concern has been focused on the graphic violence in videogames. In each instance, there have been valid reasons for the concerns and various studies have shown some link between media violence and aggression. However, the recent debates have become particularly heated because the nature of the violence presented to children and youth has become especially graphic and pervasive in various media formats. This review provides a description of the evolving consensus on research findings as the nature and specificity of research strategies have evolved over the past century. The review ends with a discussion of findings from the most recent research which points to neurological evidence of changes leading to disruptions in processing video violence and changes in attitudes, values, and behavior. The resultant pattern of neurological processing leads to the production of what may be called “thoughtless vigilantes” who lack remorse and understanding of the effects of violence on others.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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Viewing Video Violence

A 16-year-old male who was an “accomplished” player of the violent videogame, *Grand Theft Auto (GTA)*, carjacked an automobile from an elderly man, leaving him beaten and bloodied on the ground and drove recklessly down the highway. He was captured by police in a small town in Alabama and was taken to the police station for questioning and detainment. When one of the officers entered the interview room, the young man grabbed the officer’s gun and shot him. He then exited the interview room and shot another officer investigating the sound of gunfire. He next shot the police radio dispatcher in the adjoining office. Each killing was a “clean shot to the head” of the victims. He then exited the police station, stole a police patrol car, and drove quickly down the highway. He was later captured by a team of heavily-armed police from the surrounding towns. When questioned, more carefully this time, by police officers, he informed them that he had learned to shoot “head shots” – very difficult but very effective target shooting – by playing *GTA*. He also learned to effect his escape from the interview room by surprising the police officer and using his own gun to kill him from . . . you guessed it, playing *GTA*. (Tuscaloosa News, September 18, 2007).

Now, if this was just an isolated incident, one might be tempted to dismiss this as a tragic but unusual happening. Alas, this is not a unique event and variations on this theme have occurred in many parts of the United States and elsewhere in the world; wherever *Grand Theft Auto* or *Strike Force* or legions of other similar “shooter” games are to be found in the hands of young males. The adolescent years are the years before full brain development – such as that of the frontal lobes involving judgment and reasoning – have emerged in the youngster. In recent years, psychologists and neuroscientists have joined with communication studies professionals to examine several facets of brain and behavior in the context of exposure to video violence (Anderson et al., 2006).

We know a great deal about the behavioral and attitudinal changes associated with viewing violence. Indeed, there is a long history of research on this topic, dating from the 1950s through to the present. Much of this research was focused on the impact of violence on television (see, Murray, 1973; Pecora, Murray, & Wartella, 2007) and, more recently, studies of videogame violence (Vorderer & Bryant, 2006). The addition of studies of brain activation patterns while viewing video violence (see, Murray et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2009) provide insights into the ways in which viewers “process” violence and enhance our understanding of the nature of video violence effects. So, what do we know about the behavioral and neurological effects of viewing violence? Is there a basis for speculating that viewing video violence or participating in the entertainment violence of videogames can produce neurological patterns, stored images and behavioral-repertoire guides that might increase the likelihood of violent acting-out among youngsters? Might these actions become somewhat automatic by having this aggressive repertoire “triggered” by threats in

the social context; leading to “thoughtless vigilantes” who quickly respond to provocations with violence by leaning on the limbic system and other brain structures while bypassing the prefrontal cortex and rational decision-making that weighs the consequences of actions?

This chapter is designed to provide a review of the long history of research on behavioral effects of violence viewing and integrate the emerging evidence from neurological studies. We begin with the early research and concerns that set the stage for investigations of media violence.

Research and Social Concerns upon the Introduction of Television

The early studies of television’s influence began almost simultaneously in England, and the United States and Canada, in the mid-1950s. They were designed to take advantage of the regulated introduction of the new medium. Later studies – in the 1970s – would revisit these issues and this research strategy when television was being introduced into isolated communities in Australia (Murray & Kippax, 1978) and Canada (MacBeth, 1996; Williams, 1986).

In England, a group of researchers at the London School of Economics and Political Science, under the direction of Hilde Himmelweit, a reader in social psychology, began the first study of children’s television viewing patterns while TV was still relatively new (only three million TV sets were installed in the 15 million households in England). This study was proposed by the Audience Research Department of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) but was conducted by independent researchers. The research, begun in 1955, was published in a 1958 report, *Television and the Child: An Empirical Study of the Effect of Television on the Young* (Himmelweit, Oppenheim, & Vince, 1958). The US and Canadian study was conducted by Wilbur Schramm and his colleagues in communications at Stanford University. This project began in 1957 was published in a 1961 report, *Television in the Lives of Our Children* (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961).

The British and US/Canadian surveys provided a very important benchmark for understanding the broad and general effects of television on children. For example, Himmelweit et al. noted: “We have found a number of instances where viewers and controls differed in their outlook; differences which did not exist before television came on the scene. There was a small but consistent influence of television on the way children thought generally about jobs, job values, success, and social surroundings” (pp. 17–18). With regard to aggression, these correlational studies did not support an association. Himmelweit and her colleagues noted: “We did not find that the viewers were any more aggressive or maladjusted than the controls; television is unlikely to cause aggressive behaviour, although it could precipitate it in those few

children who are emotionally disturbed. On the other hand, there was little support for the view that programmes of violence are beneficial; we found that they aroused aggression as often as they discharged it" (p. 20). The conclusions of Schramm, Lyle and Parker were something of a mantra:

For *some* children under *some* conditions *some* television is harmful. For *other* children under the same conditions, or for the same children under *other* conditions, it may be beneficial. For *most* children under *most* conditions, *most* television is probably neither particularly harmful nor particularly beneficial. (p. 1; original italics)

But their conclusions also included the observation that those Canadian and US children who had high exposure to television and low exposure to print were more aggressive than those with the reverse pattern. Thus, the early correlational studies or surveys identified some areas of concern about television violence and set the stage for more focused investigations.

First Experimental Studies

Moving beyond these 1950s surveys, there was another set of studies that emerged in the early 1960s – not surveys or correlational studies but experimental studies that were addressed to cause and effect relationships in the TV-violence/aggressive-behavior equation. These initial experiments were conducted by Albert Bandura, at Stanford University, who studied preschool age children, and Leonard Berkowitz, at the University of Wisconsin, who worked with college-age youth. In both instances, the studies were experimental in design, which meant that subjects were randomly assigned to various viewing experiences and therefore the results of this manipulated viewing could be used to address the issue of causal relationships between viewing and behavior. The early Bandura studies, such as *Transmission of Aggression through Imitation of Aggressive Models* (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961) or *Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models* (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963), were set within a social learning paradigm and were designed to identify the processes governing the ways that children learn by observing and imitating the behavior of others. In this context, therefore, the studies used stimulus films (videotape was not generally available) back projected on a simulated television screen, and the behavior of the children was observed and recorded in a playroom setting, immediately following the viewing period. Despite the structured nature of these studies, Bandura's research was central to the debate about the influence of media violence. Moreover, the work of Berkowitz and his colleagues, such as *Effects of Film Violence on Inhibitions Against Subsequent Aggression* (Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1963) or *Film Violence and the Cue Properties of Available Targets* (Berkowitz & Geen, 1966), studied the simulated aggressive behavior of youth and young adults following the viewing of segments of violent films, such as a Kirk Douglas boxing film, *The Champion*. The demonstration of increased will-

ingness to use aggression against others following viewing, further fueled the debate about the influence of media violence.

Concern about the influence of TV violence began as early as the start of this new medium. The first Congressional hearings were held in the early 1950s (United States Congress, 1952; 1955). At these early hearings, developmental psychologist Eleanor Maccoby (1954) and sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld (1955) presented testimony that relied upon some early studies of violence in films, such as the 1930s' report, *Boys, Movies and City Streets* (Cressey & Thrasher, 1933) to outline a necessary program of research on the issue of TV violence and its effects on children.

As the 1960s progressed, concern in the United States about violence in the streets and the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy stimulated continuing interest in media violence. In response, several major government commissions and scientific and professional review committees were established, from the late 1960s through the 1990s, to summarize the research evidence and public policy issues regarding the role of television violence in salving or savaging young viewers.

The Five Principal US Commissions

The five principal US commissions and review panels – National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (Baker & Ball, 1969); Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior (1972; Murray, 1973); National Institute of Mental Health (1982) Television and Behavior Project; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1982) Child and Television Drama Review; and the American Psychological Association Task Force on Television and Society (Huston et al., 1992) – have been central to setting the agenda for research and public discussion.

In 1982, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) published a 10-year follow up of the 1972 Surgeon General's study. The two volume report (National Institute of Mental Health, 1982; Pearl, Bouthilet, & Lazar, 1982), collectively titled, *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties*, provided a reminder of the breadth and depth of knowledge that had accumulated on the issue of TV violence. In this regard, the NIMH staff and consultants concluded:

After 10 more years of research, the consensus among most of the research community is that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs. This conclusion is based on laboratory experiments and on field studies. Not all children become aggressive, of course, but the correlations between violence and aggression are positive. In magnitude, television violence is as strongly correlated with aggressive behavior as any other behavioral variable that has been measured. (p. 10)

In 1986, the American Psychological Association (APA) empanelled a Task Force on Television and Society to review the research and professional concerns about the impact of television on children and adults. The nine psychologists assigned to this committee undertook reviews of relevant research, conducted interviews with television industry and public policy professionals, and discussed concerns with representatives of government regulatory agencies and public interest organizations. The final report, entitled *Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society* (Huston et al., 1992), included the following observation about television violence:

US television has been violent for many years. Over the past 20 years, the rate of violence on prime time evening television has remained at about 5 to 6 incidents per hour, whereas the rate on children's Saturday morning programs is typically 20 to 25 acts per hour. There is clear evidence that television violence can cause aggressive behavior and can cultivate values favoring the use of aggression to resolve conflicts. (p. 136)

The extent of concern – both social and scientific – is demonstrated by the fact that over the past half-century, about 1,000 reports have been published on the issue of TV violence (Murray, 1980; Pecora, Murray, & Wartella, 2007). Of course, only a small percentage of these thousands of pages represent original studies or research reports, but there is an extensive body of research on the impact of TV violence. Nevertheless, the research history is best described in terms of the nature of the research approaches: Correlational and experimental, and their variants cross-lagged panel studies and field studies.

Correlational Research

The demonstration of a relationship between viewing and aggressive behavior is a logical precursor to studies of the causal role that TV violence may play in promoting aggressive behavior. In the typical correlational studies that followed the Himmelweit et al., and Schramm et al. studies, such as those conducted for the Surgeon General's research program (Dominick & Greenberg, 1972; McLeod, Atkin, & Chaffee, 1972a, 1972b; Robinson & Bachman, 1972), the researchers found consistent patterns of significant correlations between the number of hours of television viewed or the frequency of viewing violent programs and various measures of aggressive attitudes or behavior. Also, another study, Atkin, Greenberg, Korzeny and McDermott (1979) found that heavy TV-violence viewers were more likely to choose physical and verbal aggressive responses to solve hypothetical interpersonal conflict situations (i.e., 45% of the heavy violence viewers chose physical/verbal aggressive responses vs. 21% of the low violence viewers). Similarly, a further study in this genre (Walker & Morley, 1991) found that adolescents who reported enjoying

TV violence were more likely to hold attitudes and values favorable to behaving aggressively in conflict situations.

In another approach, a large database, the Cultural Indicators Project, has been used to explore the relationship between television portrayals and the viewer's fearful conception of the world. In a series of studies begun in the 1960s, George Gerbner and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania (Gerbner, 1970; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994) have tracked public perceptions of society in relation to the respondent's extent of television viewing. Of relevance to the violence issue, these researchers have identified differences in the risk-of-victimization perceptions, described as the "mean world syndrome" effect, of light versus heavy viewers. The heavy viewers (usually, five or more hours per day) are much more fearful of the world around them than are light viewers (about two or fewer hours per day). When questioned about their perceptions of risk, heavy viewers are much more likely to overestimate (i.e., greater than the FBI crime reports for their locale would suggest) the chance that they will be the victim of crime in the ensuing six months, have taken greater precautions by changing the security of their homes or restricting their travels at night, and are generally more fearful of the world. As Gerbner et al. (1994) note:

We have found that long-term exposure to television, in which frequent violence is virtually inescapable, tends to cultivate the image of a relatively mean and dangerous world . . . in which greater protection is needed, most people cannot be trusted, *and most people are just looking out for themselves.* (p. 30, italics added)

Special-Case Correlational Research

Studies such as the early surveys clearly demonstrate that violence viewing and aggressive behavior are related but they do not address the issue of cause-and-effect. And yet, there are some special-case correlational studies in which "*intimations of causation*" can be derived from the fact that these studies were conducted over several time periods. There have been three major "panel" studies: A study funded by CBS (Belson, 1978), one funded by NBC (Milavsky, Kessler, Stipp, & Rubens, 1992), and the third funded by the Surgeon General's Committee and NIMH (Huesmann & Eron, 1986; Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984; Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder, & Huesmann, 1972).

The CBS study (Belson, 1978) was conducted in England with 1,565 youths who were a representative sample of 13- to 17-year-old males living in London. The boys were interviewed concerning the extent of their exposure to a selection of violent television programs (broadcast during the period 1959 through 1971 and rated by members of the BBC viewing panel for level of violence) as well as each boy's level of violent behavior as determined by his report of how often he had been involved in any of 53 categories of violence over the previous six months. The degree

of seriousness of the acts reported by the boys ranged from only slightly violent aggravation, such as taunting, to more serious and very violent behavior such as: "I tried to force a girl to have sexual intercourse with me"; "I bashed a boy's head against a wall"; "I burned a boy on the chest with a cigarette while my mates held him down"; and "I threatened to kill my father." Approximately 50% of the 1,565 boys were not involved in any violent acts during the six-month period. However, of those who were involved in violence, 188 (12%) were involved in 10 or more acts during the six-month period. When Belson compared the behavior of boys who had higher exposure to televised violence to those who had lower exposure (and had been matched on a wide variety of possible contributing factors), he found that the high-violence viewers were more involved in serious interpersonal violence.

The NBC study (Milavsky, Kessler, Stipp, & Rubens, 1982) was conducted over a three-year period from May 1970 to December 1973 in two cities, Fort Worth and Minneapolis. Interviews were conducted with samples of second- to sixth-grade boys and girls and a special sample of teenage boys. In the elementary school sample, the information on television viewing and measures of aggression were collected in six time periods over the three years. The aggression measure consisted of peer ratings of aggressive behavior based on the work of Eron and his colleagues (Eron, Walder, & Lefkowitz, 1971). In the teenage sample there were five waves of interviews over the three years and the aggression measures were self-report rather than peer-reported aggression. In summarizing the results of this study, the authors concluded: "On the basis of the analyses we carried out to test for such a causal connection there is no evidence that television exposure has a consistently significant effect on subsequent aggressive behavior in the [elementary school] sample of boys." (Milavsky et al., 1982, p. 482). Similar null findings were reported for the elementary school girls and the teenage boys. However, re-analyses of these data by Kenny (1984) and Cook and his associates (Cook, Kendzierski, & Thomas, 1983) have concluded that there are small but clear causal effects in the NBC data and that these effects become stronger when analyzed over longer time periods through successive waves of interviews.

Finally, one of the longest panel studies, 22 years, is the work of Leonard Eron and his colleagues (Eron, 1963, 1982; Husemann & Eron, 1986; Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz & Walder, 1984; Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder & Huesmann, 1972). In the initial studies, conducted for the Surgeon General's investigation of TV violence (Lefkowitz et al., 1972), the researchers were able to document the long-term effects of violence viewing by studying children over a 10-year period from age 8 to age 18. At these two time periods, the youngsters were interviewed about their program preferences and information was collected from peer ratings of aggressive behavior. The violence levels of their preferred TV programs and other media and measures of aggression across these two time periods suggested the possibility that early television violence viewing was one factor in producing later aggressive behavior. In particular, the findings for 211 boys followed in this longitudinal study demonstrated that TV violence at age 8 was significantly related to aggression at age 8 ($r = .21$) and

the 8-year-old violent TV preferences were significantly related to aggression at age 18 ($r = .31$), but TV violence preferences at age 18 were not related to aggressive behavior at the earlier time period, age 8 ($r = .01$). When other possible variables, such as parenting practices and discipline style, were controlled, it was still clear that early media violence could be part of the cause of later aggressive behavior. Furthermore, in a follow-up study, when these young men were now age 30 (Huesmann et al., 1984), the authors found a significant correlation ($r = .41$) between TV violence levels at age 8 and serious interpersonal criminal behavior (e.g., assault, murder, child abuse, spouse abuse, rape) at age 30.

Behavioral to Neurological – Connections

Research conducted over the past 50 years leads to the conclusion that televised violence does affect viewers' attitudes, values, and behavior (Hearold, 1986; Murray, 1994; Paik & Comstock, 1994). In general, there seem to be three main classes of effects – aggression, desensitization, and fear:

- *Aggression:* Heightened levels of viewing televised violence can lead to increases in aggressive behavior and/or changes in attitudes and values favoring the use of aggression to solve conflicts;
- *Desensitization:* Extensive violence viewing may lead to decreased sensitivity to violence and a greater willingness to tolerate increasing levels of violence in society;
- *Fear:* Extensive exposure to television violence may produce the “mean world syndrome” in which viewers overestimate their risk of victimization.

Although the body of research on the effects of viewing television violence is extensive and fairly coherent in demonstrating systematic patterns of influence, we know surprisingly little about the processes involved in the production of these effects. Although we know that viewing televised violence can lead to increases in aggressive behavior or fearfulness and changed attitudes and values about the role of violence in society, it would be helpful to know more about how these changes occur in viewers.

To set the context for the continuing research – within the broad framework of a social learning paradigm – we know that changes in behavior and thoughts can result from observing models in the world around us, be they parents, peers, or other role models, such as those provided by mass media. The processes involved in “modeling” or imitation and vicarious learning of overt behavior were addressed in social learning theories in the 1960s (Bandura, 1962, 1969; Berkowitz, 1962, 1965) but we need to expand our understanding of the neurological processes that might govern the translation of the observed models into thoughts and actions.

As a start in this new direction, both Bandura (1994) and Berkowitz (1984) have provided some theoretical foundations for the translation of communication "events" into thoughts and actions. Bandura's "social-cognitive" approach and Berkowitz's outline of a "cognitive-neoassociation" analysis, posit a role for emotional arousal as an affective tag that may facilitate lasting influences. As Bandura (1994) notes: "People are easily aroused by the emotional expressions of others. Vicarious arousal operates mainly through an intervening self-arousal process. . . . That is, seeing others react emotionally to instigating conditions activates emotion-arousing thoughts and imagery in observers." (p. 75). With regard to aggression, we know that viewing television violence can be emotionally arousing (e.g., Cline, Croft, & Courrier, 1973; Osborn & Endsley, 1971; Zillmann, 1971, 1982) but we lack direct measures of cortical arousal or activation patterns in relation to violence viewing.

The pursuit of neurological patterns of cortical arousal in violence viewing would likely start with the amygdala because it has a well-established role in the control of physiological responses to emotionally arousing or threatening stimuli (Damasio, 1994, 1999; Kosslyn & Koenig, 1995; LeDoux, 1996; LeDoux & Hirst, 1986; Ornstein, 1997; Panksepp, 1998; Steward, 2000). Indeed, a recent National Research Council (1993) report from the Panel on the Understanding and Control of Violent Behavior, concludes:

All human behavior, including aggression and violence, is the outcome of complex processes in the brain. Violent behaviors may result from relatively permanent conditions or from temporary states. [...] Biological research on aggressive and violent behavior has given particular attention to the following in recent years: [...] (2) functioning of steroid hormones such as testosterone and glucocorticoids, especially their action on steroid receptors in the brain; [...] (6) neurophysiological (i.e., brain wave) abnormalities, particularly in the temporal lobe of the brain; (7) brain dysfunctions that interfere with language processing or cognition. (pp. 115–116)

Thus, one suggestion for further research on the impact of media violence is to assess some of the neurological correlates of viewing televised violence. In particular, the use of videotape of violent scenes can serve as the ideal stimulus for assessing activation patterns in response to violence. These neurobiological studies hold the key to understanding the ways in which children might respond to seeing violence in entertainment and this might also be the key to thinking about the desensitization to violence, or what some might describe as a "drugging" effect on the developing child. To assess this possibility, we embarked on an initial study of children's brain activations while the youngsters viewed violent and non-violent video program material. We reasoned that there may be similarities between the ways humans respond to the threats of physical violence in the real world and the neurobiological response to so-called "entertainment" violence.

Beginnings of Brainmapping

We can begin our quest with some notions and expectations drawn from previous research suggesting that we might find the “threat recognition” system – involving the limbic system and right hemisphere of the brain – as an area that will be activated while viewing video violence. The development of hypotheses about violence viewing and brain activation, however, needs to start with research on physiological arousal (e.g., Osborn & Endsley, 1971; Zillmann, 1982; Zillmann & Bryant, 1994) and link this to cortical arousal (Davidson & Tomarken, 1989; Davidson, Ekman, Saron, Senulis, & Friesen, 1990; Ekman & Davidson, 1993, 1994; Ekman, Davidson, & Friesen, 1990).

In our pilot study (Murray et al., 2006), we found that both violent and nonviolent viewing activated regions implicated in aspects of visual and auditory processing. In contrast, however, viewing TV violence selectively recruited right precuneus, right posterior cingulate, right amygdala, bilateral hippocampus and parahippocampus, bilateral pulvinar, right inferior parietal and prefrontal, and right premotor cortex. Thus, TV violence viewing appears to activate brain areas involved in arousal/attention, detection of threat, episodic memory encoding and retrieval, and motor programming. These areas are important because they are likely indicators of the perception of threat and possible long-term memory storage of the threat-event (particularly, these patterns are similar to the memory storage of traumatic events by PTSD patients. These activation patterns demonstrate that video violence viewing selectively activates right hemisphere, and some bilateral areas, that collectively suggest significant emotional processing of video violence.

Our continuing research at Harvard Medical School, Children’s Hospital Boston is designed to address these questions about violence viewing in a more robust study that employs a larger and more differentiated sample of children who have had differing experiences with violence (e.g., children who are identified as high or low in aggressive tendencies and children who have been victims of abuse). We will continue to use the methods and procedures that were demonstrated to be effective in the pilot study – we will conjoin measures of physiological arousal (e.g., GSR, heart rate) with neuroimaging techniques (e.g., functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging – fMRI) to track the emotional and neurological processes involved in viewing televised violence. We anticipate finding clear differences in the three groups of children, with the victims of violence – the abused youngsters – being most responsive to viewing media violence and the aggressive youngsters being the least responsive to the entertainment violence; this is the desensitization effect that results from extensive violence viewing and acting out the violence witnessed in the entertainment world of film, television, and videogame violence. In the past five or six years, there has been a great expansion in research interest in the connection of behavioral and neurological patterns related to video violence viewing. In particular, interest

has focused on the role of the prefrontal cortex in mediating or moderating the violence viewing and aggression relationships. Several recent papers have provided new insights on this fascinating area of research.

Exploring the Prefrontal Cortex

The most ambitious program of research in this area is the work of a group at the University of Indiana Medical School (e.g., Kronenberger et al., 2005a; Mathews et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2009). In their early research, the team focused on the issue of frontal lobe activation in aggressive and non-aggressive adolescents while viewing video violence in an MRI.

In one of the early studies (Kronenberger et al., 2005b), the Indiana team examined the relationship between media violence exposure in television and videogames in aggressive versus non-aggressive adolescents. They interviewed 27 adolescents (13–17 years) diagnosed as having Disruptive Behavior Disorders (DBD) with Aggressive Features and 27 controls who were matched for age, gender, and IQ, concerning their exposure to violence on television and videogames. The results indicated that the DBD-aggressive youngsters had higher aggregate media violence exposure, higher exposure to videogame violence, and higher parent-reported exposure to television violence than their matched controls. Indeed, exposure to television violence tended to be accompanied by exposure to videogame violence. Moreover, the relation between media violence and DBD was not due to the spurious effects of gender or IQ.

This initial finding encouraged the team to pursue the possible links between brain activation patterns while watching video violence. In the next study (Mathews et al., 2005), the team used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to explore frontal lobe activation in aggressive and non-aggressive adolescents. In an initial visit, subjects were given diagnostic assessments and media violence interviews. Aggressive adolescents (28 with Disruptive Behavior Disorder with aggressive features) and non-aggressive control adolescents (43) were given a semi-structured interview concerning media violence exposure and a media violence exposure index (MEVI) was constructed for each adolescent. In the second visit, the adolescents were presented with an executive functioning task (the Counting Stroop, or CS task) while in the MRI scanner of the aggressive DBD students, 19 successfully completed the CS task at 70% or better accuracy. These 19 DBD adolescents were matched (on age, gender, and IQ) with 19 controls who had also completed the CS task successfully. Analysis of the fMRI scans showed differences in executive processing patterns in the DBD adolescents when compared to the controls. The main area of interest was the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), inferior frontal gyrus (IFG), and the middle frontal gyrus (MFG). The results demonstrated sharp differences between the aggressive teens and the controls – the entire control group showed significant activation of the ACC, left MFG, and Left IFG, while the

aggressive teens showed activation only in the MFG, bilaterally. The main conclusion in this analysis is the fact that frontal lobe activation is reduced in aggressive (DBD) teens and this is reinforced by the finding that even in the control subjects, those with high media violence exposure demonstrated similarly reduced prefrontal activation, rather like the aggressive teens. Thus, the authors conclude that high media violence exposure alters brain activation patterns in both aggressive and control subjects and is responsible for reduced prefrontal control and executive function processing.

As a follow-on to these findings, the Indiana team (Wang et al., 2009), conducted a study that even a short-term exposure to a violent videogame changes both the frontal cortex and limbic system functioning in adolescents. In this case, the adolescents played a violent or nonviolent videogame within 10 minutes prior to an fMRI scan that involved measures of executive functioning (the Counting Stroop task). The adolescents (13–17 years) were screened for any history of neurologic or psychiatric disorders and 44 youngsters were selected on the basis of absence of pathology. The random assignment to two groups of 22 teens assigned to play either a violent videogame (*Medal of Honor*) or a nonviolent videogame (*Need for Speed*) demonstrated that the groups did not differ on age, IQ, or gender. All youngsters were interviewed about their media violence exposure (MEM) and were given 30-minutes training in learning and practicing to play whichever game was assigned. On the following visit, the youngsters played their assigned game for 30 minutes, immediately (within 10 minutes) to the fMRI scans. The subjects were given two tasks in the MRI, the traditional Counting Stroop task, a measure of executive functioning and attentional control, and the Emotional Stroop task involving emotion-laden violent and nonviolent words which are likely to activate the limbic system, particularly the amygdala. The results demonstrated that the youngsters who played the violent videogame (*Medal of Honor*) showed more activity in the amygdala (right) and less activation in the medial prefrontal cortex (MFPC) while the teens who played the nonviolent game (*Need for Speed*) demonstrated activations of the prefrontal cortex, the anterior cingulate cortex, and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. Indeed, there was a distinct uncoupling of activation with the amygdala in the nonviolent videogame group. Thus, the study demonstrates that even short-term involvement with violent videogame playing can significantly alter neural circuitry in the execution of cognitive and emotional tasks during fMRI scans.

Other researchers, Kelly and Grinband (2007) have shown that repeated exposure to media violence is associated with diminished response in the frontolimbic network. In particular, repeated exposure to violent media (but not exposure to other active but nonviolent media) results in reduced right lateral orbitofrontal cortex (lOFC) and a decreased interaction with the amygdala. Thus, violent media can result in diminished responsiveness to a brain network that is associated with behavioral reactive aggression.

So, what have we learned about neurological and behavioral correlations in relation to media violence? Clearly, we are in the beginning stages of this line of inquiry,

but we begin to see the patterns of potential influence. It is possible that repeated exposure to media violence may lead to changes in both the prefrontal cortex and limbic system interactions that may disrupt the processing of aggressive, emotion-laden information. The result may be an increase in aggressive behavior and/or the triggering of excessive aggression in response to provocations. The fact that aggressive and emotional arousing perceptions seem to be stored in the posterior cingulate gives rise to the possibility that these aggressive action patterns might become the instant-recall of a guide for social behavior. Hence, the possibility of the production of “thoughtless vigilantes.” Clearly, we need to be more “thoughtful” about our studies of media violence, aggression, and the neuro-cognitive processing of our daily experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Gender-Role Socialization in the Twenty-First Century

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ABSTRACT

Gender-role socialization has been a critical element in the study of mass communication since the late 1960s. This chapter will review our knowledge of this topic looking specifically at gender-role images on television, including broadcast programs and commercials, children's TV, and teen movies. The chapter focuses specifically on research conducted during the first decade of the twenty-first century examining images related to age, race, and occupation. A critical and key finding is that women continue to be underrepresented in most venues. The chapter also discusses the influence of these gender-role media images on people's conceptions about being men and women, particularly the continued relationship between viewing and expressing more stereotypical conceptions about gender roles.

Television and Gender

Gender-role socialization has been a critical element in the study of mass communication since the late 1960s. Most of the research and attention on the socialization of gender roles have focused on television as one of the most important agents of socialization in today's society. This chapter will focus specifically on television's

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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gender roles, looking at what we know about these messages at the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century and what we know about how these messages and images may influence conceptions about being men and women.

As we progress in the twenty-first century, although we spend more and more time with “screens,” the screen we watch most is television (Blair, 2009). Television has become an “on demand” medium. We can purchase whole seasons of favorite programs and can call up movies and programs whenever, and to some extent wherever (using computer, phones, etc.) we want.

Nielsen (2009) reports that the amount of time spent viewing has been rising for the past few years. At the end of 2008 the average person watched TV in her/his home for about five hours a day. In addition, the most recent report of the Kaiser Family Foundation found that children’s media use averaged more than seven and a half hours a day that expanded to almost 11 hours a day when multitasking was taken into account (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

Television’s role for the past 60 years as the central and most pervasive mass medium in US culture has not changed. Television still plays a distinctive and historically unprecedented role as the nation’s most common, constant, and vivid learning environment. Television, whether we watch on a traditional set, on our mobile phone or on the Internet is still our primary storyteller, telling most of the stories to most of the people, most of the time (Chapter 2, this volume). These stories, however, are the product of a few multinational and centralized commercial institutions. Television’s stories show and tell us about life – its people, places, power, and fate – as well as how things work and how to solve problems. Characterizations represent the good and bad, the happy and sad, successes and failures, and they show who’s on the top and who’s on the bottom of the economic ladder and/or pecking order.

This chapter will examine the portrayals of men and women in the media paying most attention to prime-time broadcast television programming as this is where the lion’s share of the research has been conducted. These portrayals will look at the intersection of gender roles in relation to age, race, and occupations. It will focus, as much as possible, on research that has been conducted and published during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In addition, the review will present data from the author’s ongoing yearly content analyses of prime-time network programming broadcast in the fall of each year. This data set, collected between 2000 and 2009, consists of 783 programs and 3,268 major or leading characters. The methods used in this ongoing research can be reviewed in several recent publications (see, for example, Signorielli & Bacue, 1999).

Theoretical Orientations

Socialization is the way people learn about their culture and acquire its values, beliefs, perspectives, and social norms. It is an ongoing social process; we are socialized and

resocialized throughout the life cycle. Traditionally, parents, peers, teachers, and the clergy have had the major responsibility for socialization. Numerous studies have found, however, that the mass media play a very important role in the socialization process (Berry & Mitchell-Kerman, 1982). Stereotypes, in particular, are important in television's role as an agent of socialization (Chapter 13, this volume). Stereotypes are conventional or standardized images or conceptions; they are generalizations or assumptions often based on misconceptions. Stereotypes lack originality; they fall back upon commonly known and often one-dimensional elements of portrayal. They appeal to people's emotions rather than intellect. Television programs with limited time to devote to character development often resort to stereotypes in the storytelling process. The concern is that viewers, especially children, continually exposed to television's stereotyped roles, may develop conceptions and perceptions about people that reflect the stereotypical images they see in the media.

The actual processes of media socialization, however, are different from those used by more traditional agents of socialization and may involve observational and/or social learning. Social or observational learning theory examines the role of modeling in a child's social development. It posits that viewers, especially children, imitate the behavior of television characters in much the same way they learn social and cognitive skills by imitating their parents, siblings, and peers (Lefkowitz & Huesmann, 1980). Bandura's (2009) extension of cognitive processing to social learning theory (social cognitive theory) added rules and strategies (the "how to") to the traditional why, what, and when of behavior change.

Bandura (2009) notes that this perspective is based on four subfunctions or processes: attention, retention, production, and motivation. Viewers must pay attention to the models; those who are more attractive or more salient may be more important. Attention, however, must be followed by retention: we cannot be influenced by models unless we remember what we have seen. Moreover, repeated exposure to the same images and/or models facilitates remembering. The third process, production, necessitates that viewers incorporate these images into their own behaviors. Finally, viewers must be motivated to incorporate these behaviors. Seeing media characters rewarded (or punished) when they behave in either traditional or nontraditional ways may facilitate learning specific sex-typed behaviors (Smith & Granados, 2009). Overall, television's stereotypes are particularly suited to the processes of social learning/social cognitive theory because they provide simplistic, often one-dimensional models of behaviors, strategies, and rules that appear regularly in many different genres of programs.

A second theoretical orientation relevant to the media's role as an agent of socialization is cultivation theory (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009; Chapter 2, this volume). This theory explores the general hypothesis that the more time viewers spend with television the more likely their conceptions about the world and its people will reflect what they see on television. Thus, television must be studied as a collective symbolic environment of messages with an underlying pattern or formulaic structure. Due to commercial constraints, television presents a common world view

and common stereotypes through a relatively restrictive set of images and messages that cut across all programs in all delivery systems. The term cultivation refers to “the specific independent (though not isolated) contribution that a particular consistent and compelling symbolic stream makes to the complex process of socialization and enculturation” (Gerbner, 1990, p. 249).

Gender-Role Images

The most consistent and pervasive gender-role image on television is the underrepresentation of women. Beginning in the 1950s (Head, 1954) and through the 1970s men outnumbered women by three to one on broadcast network television (Signorielli, 1985). Women’s representation began to increase during the mid-1980s. By the end of the 1980s the male-female distribution was roughly two-thirds male and one-third female and by the end of the twentieth century the distribution was about 60% male and 40% female (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). The underrepresentation of women in prime-time network broadcast programs has remained steady during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Data from the author’s ongoing research of yearly samples of prime-time broadcast network programming (situation comedies, dramas, action programs, and reality programs) show that yearly male-female distributions in the past 10 years have not veered from a 58% male ($F = .8446$, $df = 1,9$, ns) to 42% female ($F = .7340$, $df = 1,9$, ns) distribution. Consequently, although the distribution of men and women in prime-time network programs is more equal today, it does not come close to parity with the US population (51% female and 49% male).

Portrayals and Behind the Scenes Personnel

An interesting line of research shows that the distribution of males and females in prime-time programs is related to the gender makeup of those who create the programs – the writers, directors, producers, and other behind the scenes personnel. Lauzen and Dozier (1999) found that male characters outnumbered female characters and that men were three-quarters and women one-quarter of the behind the scenes personnel. The women, however, had fewer prestigious positions; they were the assistant directors or associate producers compared to the men who were producers or directors. Interestingly, there were more female characters when women were in more powerful behind the scenes positions (executive producers and producers).

The sex distribution of behind the scenes personnel is related to other aspects of male-female portrayals in prime-time programs. Female characters in programs with women executive producers were more verbal (spoke, interrupted, used more powerful language, and had the last word in a discussion or argument) than female characters in programs with male executive producers (Lauzen, Dozier, & Hicks, 2001). In addition, when women were behind the scenes, characters exhibited more

equitable on-screen portrayals by reducing the number of males in leadership roles rather than increasing the number of female characters (Lauzen, Dozier, & Bradley, 2004). Interestingly, when women were the writers or creators, both male and female characters appeared in interpersonal (home, family, romance) roles; when men were the writers and creators, both male and female characters were often seen in work-related roles (Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008). Finally, Lauzen and Deiss (2009) found that female characters spoke directly to the camera (broke the fourth wall) more often when women were behind the scenes.

Minorities and Gender

In the 1970s and 1980s, studies found that the numbers of Blacks on television began to reflect their proportion in the US population (Greenberg, 1980). Recent analyses show an even greater degree of parity. At the end of the twentieth century in broadcast prime-time network programs, Blacks reached a level of representation that accurately reflected their numbers in the US population but other minorities were practically invisible (Hunt, 2002; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Chapter 13, this volume).

The racial composition of prime time's leading characters is very much tied to program genre. Since the mid-1990s, Blacks achieved parity with their numbers in the US population because they were most often found in situation comedies that featured all-Black casts, and until 2006, on the WB network. However, when the WB and the UPN networks merged to form the CW television network in 2006, the all-Black sitcoms almost ceased to exist. Thus, given the continued ongoing demise of the situation comedy during the first decade of the twenty-first century, Blacks may lose ground in television representation.

A critical element in the representation of minority groups is gender representation. Minority women are consistently underrepresented in prime time (Elasmar, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999). Similarly, Hunt (2002) found the distribution of Black men and women was similar to the distribution of White men and women – 60% male and 40% female. Signorielli (2009a) found similar distributions by both race and gender; Whites and Blacks had a 58% male and 42% female distribution while the distribution for other people of color (Asians, Native Americans, etc.) was 55% male and 45% female. In another analysis of this data set, Signorielli (2009b) found that more racially diverse programs were more likely to underrepresent women while segregated programs (all/mostly White characters or mostly minority characters) had a more gender equitable distribution of characters.

Age

Study after study shows that the world of prime-time network broadcast television overrepresents young adult and middle-aged characters while underrepresenting children, adolescents, and the elderly and that women are cast as younger than men.

Signorielli (2004) found fewer than one in ten male and female characters were youngsters while elderly characters appeared even less frequently. Young adults and middle-aged characters, by comparison, appeared most frequently. Interestingly, more females than males were classified as young adults while more males than females were portrayed as middle-aged.

Character portrayals in the first decade of the twenty-first century show little change from previous analyses. The author's ongoing research shows that children, adolescents and the elderly continue to be underrepresented while young adults and middle-aged characters are overrepresented. Female characters are still more likely than the males to be cast as young adults (40% of the females compared to 32% of the males) while males are still more likely to be cast as middle-aged (59% of the males compared to 51% of the females). Thus, television programs at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century are still populated by those age groups advertisers most wish to reach – young adults and the middle-aged.

Occupations

Until the end of the 1980s and the middle of the 1990s, television consistently stereotyped the way male and female characters were cast in occupations. Male characters were often seen in “male” jobs (doctors, lawyers, politicians) and females in “female” jobs (nurses, secretaries, and household workers) (Elasmar et al., 1999).

Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2001) found that the world of work on television is determined by dramatic rather than educational considerations. Television programs revolve around those jobs that help tell a good story. The work of doctors, lawyers, police, and forensic specialists is more interesting and exciting than the everyday work of laborers and bus or truck drivers. Overall, fewer women than men were categorized as having an occupation – only six out of ten females compared to three-quarters of the male characters. But women were not always cast in traditional female jobs. By the end of the twentieth century, women were just as likely as men to be cast as professionals (doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.) and in white-collar (managers, clerical) jobs. Race and gender were also intertwined in occupational portrayals. Specifically, women of color were more likely than White women to be cast in blue-collar (service) jobs or in law enforcement.

Racially segregated (all/mostly White or mostly minority characters) and racially diverse (integrated) programs also differed in the types of occupations and levels of occupational prestige of the characters (Signorielli, 2009b). Women in racially segregated programs were not often depicted as having an occupation. Only four out of ten Black women in mostly minority programs were seen working outside the home and of those who were seen working, few were cast as professionals. Similarly, White women in all or mostly White programs were less likely to have prestigious jobs. Overall, the jobs of women in segregated programs, whether programs had mostly minority characters or mostly White characters, were the least diverse and the least

prestigious. Men's jobs, on the other hand, had little to do with whether the men were cast in segregated or integrated programs.

Since the turn of the century, the author's ongoing analysis shows that fewer women than men are still seen as having a specific job: three quarters of the men but only six out of ten women are portrayed in an occupation. At the same time, only one in five women is cast in a traditionally female job while about one-third have traditional male jobs and another third have gender-neutral jobs. Half of the males, on the other hand, have traditional male jobs and one in three has a gender-neutral job. Less than 5% of the male characters have traditionally female jobs. Women are as likely as men to be cast as professionals but while one in five men is cast in law enforcement related jobs, only one in ten of the women is so employed. Finally, television continues to overrepresent glamorous and more exciting jobs – doctors, lawyers, police, crime-scene investigators. The more mundane jobs, in which most people spend their work life, are rarely found. Moreover, television does not present work or occupations very realistically because while we know that characters have jobs, we rarely see them actually working. Interestingly, recent and very popular crime-scene programs (*CSI*; *Law and Order*) present these jobs as more glamorous and exciting than they actually are; the day-to-day, but important tasks, are often overlooked (Houck, 2006). Overall, content studies show that work, on television, typically appears to be easy and exciting and characters are almost always successful.

Gender Images in Children's Programs

As children spend so much time with television it is necessary to understand the nature of the images in these programs. Children's animated cartoons have traditionally been very sex-typed. Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) found considerable stereotyping consistent with traditional gender roles. There were more male than female characters, both in lead and supporting or minor roles. Male characters spoke more often than female characters. There were, however, some time-related differences. Cartoons produced after 1980 had more female characters than cartoons produced prior to 1980. Moreover, females in the post-1980 cartoons were more independent, intelligent, and competent than females in pre-1980 cartoons. There were also differences by cartoon type. The fewest female lead characters were found in chase-and pratfall cartoons (*Tom and Jerry*), followed by continuing adventure cartoons (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*), and "teachy-preachy" cartoons (*Smurfs*).

Cartoons broadcast in 2000 continue to be stereotyped. Leaper, Breed, Hoffman, and Perlman (2002) found that male characters outnumbered female characters by four to one in traditional adventure cartoons (*Spiderman*), two to one in comedy cartoons (*Animaniacs*), and 1.5 to one in educational/family cartoons (*Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?*, *The Magic School Bus*). There was, however, an almost equal representation of males and females in nontraditional adventure cartoons (*Sailor*

Moon, *Gargoyles*). At the same time, males showed more physical aggression, particularly in the traditional adventure cartoons, than the females. Overall, females were more fearful, more supportive, more polite, and more interested in romance. Finally, males outnumbered females in all types of children's cartoons particularly adventures (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*), except those geared toward teens (*Hannah Montana*, *That's so Raven*) (Signorielli, 2008).

Superheroes are particularly stereotyped. Baker and Raney (2007) found that two-thirds of the superheroes were very muscular males and one-third were average-sized females. Female superheroes were more emotional, attractive, concerned about their personal appearance and asked questions while the male superheroes were more likely to exhibit angry behaviors. Although all of the superheroes were physically aggressive and powerful, female superheroes were more stereotyped because they often worked under a mentor while the male superheroes had positions of leadership and operated independently.

The Children's Television Act of 1990 mandated that stations must air three hours of educational and informational (E/I) programming each week (Chapter 34). Barner's (1999) analysis of E/I programs with social interaction as an important plot element (e.g., *Sweet Valley High*, *Bobby's World*, *Ghostwriter*), found that a majority of the programs had males as central characters and included a boy's name in the title. On the other hand, no programs had a female in the central role or a girl's name in the program's title. Males outnumbered females 59% to 41% among foreground characters, percentages that mirror the male-female distribution in prime-time programs. Males also did more than females: males exhibited 2.1 behaviors, often gender-stereotyped, per scene compared to 1.5 behaviors per scene for females. Males made and carried out plans and sought attention, were more aggressive, dominant, and active; behaviors that elicited consequences. Female behaviors, on the other hand, were deferential, nurturing, and dependent; behaviors that typically do not result in consequences to the character.

Movies and Music Videos

Movies have consistently underrepresented female characters and perpetuated gender stereotypes. Lauzen and Dozier's (2005) analysis of the top films of 2002 found a male-female distribution of three-quarters male to one-quarter female. Men in movies are typically cast as older (in their 30s and 40s) than the women (usually in their 20s and 30s). Moreover, males, particularly those more than 40, were often seen in powerful and leadership roles while older women were largely invisible. Finally, older female characters were very negatively stereotyped and perceived as less attractive, less friendly, and less intelligent (Bazzini, McIntosh, Smith, Cook, & Harris, 1997).

The top teen movies distributed between 1995 and 2005 (e.g., *Clueless*, *Mean Girls*, *She's All That*, *Freaky Friday*) had more female than male characters – 55% female to

45% male. Interestingly, there were few if any adult characters; 99% of the characters were high school or college students (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008). Although socially cooperative behaviors appeared more often than socially aggressive behaviors and were not gender-related, female characters were significantly more likely than male characters to engage in socially aggressive behaviors (e.g., illustrating the mean girl) that were typically not punished and often rewarded.

Disney movies, a staple of children's viewing repertoire, are quite gender stereotyped. From the earliest movies, (e.g., *Snow White*), to more recent films focusing on heroines (e.g., *Pocahontas*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid*), studies consistently show the films rely upon gender stereotypes in telling the story (Wiersma, 2001). Dundes (2001) notes that one modern Disney heroine, *Pocahontas*, is defined both by her romantic relationship and her nurturing role. Similarly, Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*, shows both her romanticism and her willingness to embrace life as a human in order to marry the prince. Beres (1999), a clinician whose practice has largely focused upon providing counseling to women involved in abusive spousal relationships, notes that movies, such as *Beauty and the Beast*, tend to romanticize men's controlling relationships with women as well as perpetuate gender stereotypes. Finally, Tanner, Haddock, Zimmerman, and Lund (2003) note that Disney films typically stereotype male-female relationships by presenting couples (mothers and fathers, for example) in traditional gender stereotypes.

Music videos, particularly rap videos, continue to present differences in gender portrayals with men overrepresented and portrayed more positively than women (Conrad, Dixon, & Zhang, 2009). Women were likely to be dressed provocatively, objectified, placed in positions of submission and often found in videos with controversial themes (misogyny and materialism). Males, on the other hand, were in videos with both controversial and community-oriented themes (e.g., community unity, political awareness).

Images in Commercials

Research has consistently shown that television commercials are very gender stereotyped, with males outnumbering females in all but commercials for beauty, health-related, or household domestic products (Ganahl, Prinsen, & Netzley, 2003). Stern and Mastro (2004), for example, found more males than females in commercials and that females were most underrepresented as children and in middle age and least underrepresented as teenagers. Young adult females were the most attractive and very thin, while older women were less attractive and heavier. Analyses also found that traditional female roles were closely related to age: girls and older women were seen in relation to home and family, while young women were seen in the work-world and doing other activities outside the home. Coltrane and Messineo (2000) found the racial groups that appeared least often (Latinos and Asians) had the highest proportion of female characters but they were presented as children. In general

White men were presented as powerful, African American men as aggressive, White women as sex-objects, and African American women barely existed. Blacks appeared more frequently on commercials aired on BET and were portrayed with more respect (Messineo, 2008). Although Black women were seen more often and as sexually desirable on BET, the images were more gender stereotyped and demeaning. Finally, voiceovers were predominantly male.

A study of national commercials, portraying domestic chores in prime-time network broadcast programming, found that almost two-thirds of those seen doing domestic chores were women, typically mothers, who performed childcare related activities, cooked, or cleaned (Scharrer, Kim, Lin, & Liu, 2006). Most women were not employed outside the home. Men's performance of domestic chores, however, was often presented humorously sending the message that men are not really capable of helping around the house. Overall, most of the chores were stereotyped in terms of who did them; consequently, portrayals of both men and women were traditional rather than nontraditional or counter-stereotypical.

Commercials in children's cartoons are also very gender stereotyped (Browne, 1998). Boys were more likely to show how to use the product, even when the products were gender-neutral. Adult women and men were seen in very gender-typed roles with the women as homemakers and the men working outside the home. Interestingly, a study of images on cereal boxes (Black, Marola, Littman, Chrisler, & Neace, 2009) found evidence of considerable gender-role typing. Males outnumbered females by two to one and were more often portrayed as animals (e.g., Tony the Tiger) or adults while females were children or adolescents.

We thus find at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century that television images have not undergone many changes in terms of gender-role stereotypes. Women remain underrepresented, are younger than men, and race is often related to representation. While television does have some positive occupational portrayals for women, other media (e.g., videos, commercials, and cartoons), typically fall back on very traditional stereotypes.

Effects of Media Images

The description of television images is an important and necessary first step in understanding the role of television in society. Clearly, one cannot assess effects without knowing what people see. The rest of this chapter will discuss the effects of gender-role stereotypes, focusing, as much as possible, on studies conducted in the last 15 years. This chapter will focus only on research related to the possible effects of gender-role images. For more information about related topics the reader is referred to Chapter 13 for a discussion of racial and ethnic stereotypes, Chapter 15 for issues related to body image, and Chapter 19 for more information about sexual portrayals. This chapter will focus on how gender-role images influence children's perception

of, identification with, and cultivation of conceptions about the roles of men and women in society.

Perception of Gender-Role Images

Viewers, particularly children, are aware of and expect to find stereotyped images on television (Reeves & Greenberg, 1977). Thompson and Zerbinos (1997), for example, found that children perceived stereotyping in cartoons – boys were active and violent while girls were concerned with appearances and were found in domestic settings. Children, as young as kindergarten age, are aware of television's gender stereotypes and are able to predict whether men or women, boys or girls, would be found in different activities on television (Durkin & Nugent, 1998). More recently, however, Ogletree, Mason, Grahmann, and Raffeld (2001), looking at two cartoons produced during the late 1990s, found that elementary school children perceived the cartoon *Powerpuff Girls* as more aggressive than *Johnny Bravo*. Although the *Powerpuff Girls* themselves were seen as more androgynous, they did giggle often and sometimes resorted to typically stereotypical female behaviors (e.g., kisses) to achieve their goals.

Identification

Identification with characters in the media is influenced by gender-role stereotypes, particularly those on television. Children identify with television characters. As was true in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Reeves & Greenberg, 1977), boys are still more likely to name only a male as their favorite character while girls are equally likely to name both males and females as favorite characters. Hoffner (1996) extended this effect to what she calls wishful identification – wanting to be like characters, particularly those characters perceived as successful or attractive. This line of research finds that girls select as favorites female characters when they are physically attractive and select male characters when they intelligent and/or exhibit typical masculine traits such as physical strength. Hoffner's interviews with 7- to 12-year-old children show that wishful identification is more pronounced with same-sex characters and more pronounced for boys than girls. Interestingly, girls who choose males as favorite characters see them as "pseudo friends" rather than role models and perceive them as intelligent. At the same time, the girls show more parasocial interaction with same sex favorite characters, selected because they are attractive.

Aubrey and Harrison's (2004) study of first and second grade children found that the boys who preferred stereotyped content and male cartoon characters said they valued the traits of humor and hard work. Girls, who indicated they preferred male characters (in both stereotyped or counter-stereotyped roles) did not identify with or were not attracted to female characters. On the other hand, those girls who said

they preferred female characters cast in gender-neutral roles were attracted to and identified with female characters.

Identification continues into young adulthood. Undergraduates who watched more teen movies (e.g., *Mean Girls*, *10 Things I Hate about You*) expressed greater identification with the characters in these movies (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008). Moreover, college women who said they identified with female action heroes (e.g., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) believed that they had traits, such as confidence and assertiveness, in common with these female action heroes. These women also perceived that female action heroes were smart, confident, powerful, and attractive (Greenwood, 2007). In addition, Hoffner, Levine and Toohey (2008) found that while male college freshmen's favorite characters were males, only half of the freshmen women chose a female television character as their favorite. These students said that they liked characters portrayed with good paying and higher status jobs and did not particularly identify with characters whose jobs required a higher level of intelligence or skill.

Identification with television characters and their roles is but one way in which sex-role stereotypes and imagery may affect viewers, particularly children. Moreover, even though viewers, particularly children, realize that television characters are often gender stereotyped and may identify with them, another important question is how these stereotypes influence their attitudes and behaviors; that is, the cultivation of attitudes and conceptions about sex roles. The general and simplest hypothesis of cultivation theory and analysis is that those who spend more time with media, particularly television, will have views that reflect the dominant messages that they see (Morgan et al., 2009). Studies in this tradition thus compare the views, attitudes, and behaviors of those who watch more television (heavy viewers) with those who watch less television (light viewers). As television tends to be a gender-stereotyped world, using this general paradigm, we can posit that those who watch more television have more gender-role stereotyped views about men and women.

It is important to note, however, that studies of television's impact or effects are generally hampered because it is almost impossible to find control groups who do not watch any television. Moreover, those who do not watch television tend to be a small but quite eclectic group (Jackson-Beeck, 1977). Consequently, the overall effects of many of these studies are small because even light viewers watch several hours of television a day and experience many of the same things as those who watch more television (Morgan et al., 2009). Consequently, on one level, the deck may be stacked against finding relationships between viewing and espousing specific conceptions about the world, such as gender roles.

Cultivation of Gender-Role Images

The influence of the mass media, especially television, upon conceptions relating to gender roles examines how media may shape people's, and especially children's, views of what it means to be a man or a woman. This, in turn, may aid or abet goals

(occupational, educational, personal) a person may set out to achieve. Clearly the evidence points to the fact that society's notions of appropriate roles for men and women have changed (Signorielli, 1989). But, as noted above, television's images have not kept pace.

The research, including several meta-analyses, points to the existence of a relationship between television viewing and having more stereotypic conceptions about gender roles. Several meta-analyses have found support for this relationship. Herrett-Skjellum and Allen (1996) examined 19 nonexperimental and 11 experimental studies dealing with television and gender-role stereotypes and found an average effect size of .101. They also found all positive relationships and no age-related patterns, concluding that for these studies, particularly those using nonexperimental designs, television viewing is particularly related to conceptions about occupations. Morgan and Shanahan (1997), in a meta-analysis of all published studies relating to cultivation theory, found an average effects size of .102 in the analysis of 14 cultivation studies relating to gender roles. Likewise, Hearold's (1986) meta-analysis of 230 studies found that television viewing had a significant effect on gender-role stereotyping. Finally, the most recent meta-analysis (Oppliger, 2007) examined 31 primarily nonexperimental studies of adults. This analysis found a positive and statistically significant relationship ($r = .117$) between exposure to gender-role stereotypes and gender-typed behaviors and/or attitudes between both adults and children. Moreover, the correlations were similar for both males and females and were somewhat stronger for measures of behavior than attitudes.

One of the first studies conducted in the paradigm of cultivation theory looking at the relationship between viewing and espousing more or less sex-typed views, found support for this relationship. Signorielli (1989) in an analysis of the NORC General Social Surveys fielded between 1975 and 1986, found support for a general hypothesis that those who watch more television have more sexist views. She also found support for a mainstreaming hypothesis that groups of respondents, who espouse very different views when they are light viewers, have more similar outlooks in regard to women's role in society as heavy viewers. This analysis found that even though there was a decrease in the number of respondents who agreed with sexist statements between the 1970s and 1980s, television viewing was related to the maintenance of notions of more limited roles for women in society, particularly in regard to politically-oriented issues.

A recent reexamination of this hypothesis using data from the GSS fielded between 2000 and 2006 (Shanahan, Signorielli, & Morgan, 2008), found that this relationship had diminished. The authors suggest several reasons for this finding. First, and maybe most important, the GSS questions used to create the dependent measure in the two analyses are different because the questions asked between 1975 and 1986 in the GSS were no longer part of the questionnaire fielded between 2000 and 2006. Hence, the second analysis used different questions relating to gender roles. Second, people's conceptions about gender roles may have reached the ceiling because today most people are cognizant of real-life demographics that have pushed more women into

jobs, choosing smaller families, lower marriage rates, and so on. While television is slowly catching up with social reality, it is not surprising that cultivation relationships have diminished or disappeared in all but a few groups. Moreover, there is also some evidence that television may cultivate acceptance of nontraditional families such as unmarried women having children (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997).

Nevertheless, several studies show evidence for the relationship between media use, particularly television viewing, and expressing more sex-role stereotyped views. In particular, television cultivates more sexist attitudes in specific race/ethnically defined subgroups. Rivadeneyra and Ward (2005) examined the relationship between gender role attitudes and television viewing among Latino high school students in the Los Angeles area. Using a check list of English-language and Spanish-language prime-time programs, soap operas and talk shows, students' average monthly viewing was determined. Two measures of viewer involvement, motivation for viewing and identification with 16 specific television characters, were also collected. Gender-role attitudes were measured by a three-item feminism scale that included items such as "the husband should make all the important decisions in the marriage" and "a wife should do whatever her husband wants" (p. 462).

In general, Latino youth watch more television than European-American youngsters and, in this sample, the Latino girls watched more television than the boys. Those girls who watched more television, especially talk shows and situation comedies, were more likely to endorse more traditional gender-role stereotypes. In addition, watching more Spanish-language programs contributed to the expression of more traditional gender-role attitudes. Finally, perceived realism and viewer involvement were also related to expressing more gender-role stereotyped attitudes. The boys in the sample did not show the same degree of stereotyping, perhaps because they did not watch as much television as the girls, particularly those programs with more overall stereotyping. Moreover, the authors suggest that more stereotyped views for the boys were not found because the boys began with more traditional attitudes and findings may not have emerged because of existing ceiling effects.

In a study of 287 adolescents using measures taken at two points in time, Morgan (1987) found that television viewing made an independent contribution to adolescents' gender-role attitudes over time, but that television viewing was not related to some of their specific behaviors in relation to seven specific chores. Signorielli and Lears (1992), in a cross-sectional replication of this analysis with a sample of children in the fourth and fifth grade, also found statistically significant relationships between viewing and having gender-typed attitudes toward chores but no relationship between viewing and actually doing gender-stereotyped chores. Moreover, attitudes toward gender-stereotyped chores and actually doing girl- or boy-chores were related but gender-specific. Children, particularly those who said they watched more television, had more stereotyped ideas about who should do which chores, and were more likely to do those chores traditionally associated with their gender.

One area in which we continue to find relationships between viewing and conceptions about sex roles is in relation to occupations. While family and friends play a

large role in children's socialization about work, television's images have consistently made important contributions because television characters are seen frequently and are attractive role models. As noted above, however, television presents a rather limited picture of occupations, particularly for women and minorities, which over-represents exciting jobs and shows few characters actually working.

Signorielli (1993) found support for the relationship between television viewing and conceptions about male and female roles in a study analyzing data from the Monitoring the Future survey fielded in 1985. This analysis found that high school students' conceptions about work reflected two contradictory views about work that often appear on television. Television viewing was related to (1) adolescents wanting to have high status jobs that would also give them a chance to earn a lot of money and (2) wanting to have jobs that were relatively easy with long vacations and time to do other things in life. Hoffner et al. (2008), in a study of college freshmen, found that parents' views and the types of jobs their parents held as well as television contributed to students' attitudes and aspirations about work. Those youngsters whose favorite characters had an "easy job" also said that they would like to have a job that was easy; in short, they wanted to be like characters rarely seen working.

Similarly, Levine and Hoffner (2006) found that high school students got information about working and job requirements from parents and having a part-time job. At the same time they cited the mass media, although with some skepticism about the degree of accuracy, as providing information about work. The students said that dramas presented more negative views about work and gave the impression that work was difficult and stressful but that situation comedies provided positive information but mostly that work was easy and enjoyable.

Watching other media is also related to having more gender-role stereotyped views. Behm-Morawitz and Mastro's (2008) study of undergraduates found that those who watched and enjoyed teen movies (e.g., *Mean Girls*) saw female friendships in more stereotyped ways and did not have very favorable attitudes toward women. Moreover, watching and liking these movies led to the perception that being more socially aggressive may increase popularity with peers. Similarly, an experiment found that gender-role stereotypes may be influenced by commercials (Pike & Jennings, 2005). First and second grade students were placed in one of three conditions: (1) *traditional* who saw toy commercials in which boys played with gender neutral toys (e.g., *Harry Potter Legos* and *Playmobile Airport Set*), (2) *nontraditional* who saw the same commercials with the boys' faces digitally replaced by very feminine girls' faces, and (3) a *control group* who saw non-toy commercials (e.g., *Chuck E. Cheese Restaurants* and *Lucky Charms*). The results indicated that those children, particularly boys, in the nontraditional group were likely to say both boys and girls could play with gender-neutral toys while those in the traditional group said that only boys should play with gender-neutral toys.

Studies have also found relationships between watching music videos, especially rap videos, and conceptions about gender roles. As noted above, music videos tend to present very gender-stereotypical behaviors with rap videos often presenting

women as sex objects (Arnett, 2001). Bryant (2008) found that greater exposure to rap videos was related to Black adolescents having more adversarial ideas about male-female relationships and agreeing with the negative images of men and women in these videos. Interestingly, those youngsters who expressed higher levels of spirituality were less likely to accept the negative images of women, men, and male-female relationships portrayed in these videos. Studies have shown that younger African Americans do not necessarily like the way women are presented in rap music videos but, at the same time, are not necessarily opposed to these portrayals (Kitwana, 2002).

Ward, Hansbrough, and Walker (2005) found that African American high school students who watched more music videos and more sports programming had more traditional gender-role stereotyped attitudes and said that attributes such as being cool, athletic, rich, and attractive were important. On the other hand, viewing prime-time situation comedies, dramas, and movies was not related to more gender-role stereotyped views. In addition, an experiment, conducted as part of this study, found that those students who saw clips of music videos with very stereotypical portrayals of both men and women expressed more stereotyped and traditional views about sexual relationships and gender.

Conclusion

This review has explored gender-role socialization looking particularly at studies conducted at the end of the twentieth century and during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Overall, research shows, in venue after venue, that women are underrepresented, typically making up 40% of the characters. Moreover, the presentation of gender roles on television reveals a stable image that, in most cases, is very supportive of the status quo, especially in relation to race, and age. Interestingly, women who do not fit stereotypical molds on one dimension of their characterization, such as their occupation, often revert to very traditional gender-role stereotypes in relation to their interpersonal relationships with men. These images serve to support the notion that women should not outshine men, particularly those to whom they are married and/or have an ongoing romantic relationship (IMHI, 1997).

Recent studies on the impact of such images in regard to conceptions about gender roles are somewhat limited but still point to the existence of a relationship between television viewing and having more stereotypic conceptions about gender roles particularly among high school and college students. Support comes from studies conducted in both experimental and nonexperimental settings. In essence, television may be contributing to the maintenance of notions of more limited roles for women in society because the images seen on television typically foster the maintenance of the status quo compared to men's and women's roles in society.

Finally, we are just beginning to make inroads in understanding the powerful impact of this medium on our lives. It is imperative, however, that we continue to

expand our research on television's effects, as well as continue to monitor how men and women are portrayed in the media because new venues for viewing, particularly for children, may increase exposure to media images. This research, however, must be driven by specific information from ongoing studies of television content rather than suppositions about images in television programs. At the very least, continued research can help raise awareness of television's potentially stereotypical and perhaps problematic images and how such images may impact our lives.

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Race and News Revisited

The Content and Effects of Problematically Framing the News

Travis L. Dixon and Christopher S. Josey

ABSTRACT

Over the past many decades, scholars have extensively studied the portrayal of persons of color in the media and its effect on the individual. In this chapter we will devote particular attention to the ways in which race has been framed within the context of news in traditional (e.g., televised or print) and new media (e.g., online). A critical synthesis of the extant literature will be offered for traditional media, followed by a discussion of findings from effects-based studies. Next, we provide an overview of what is known from the study of persons of color in online news, drawing similarities and contrasts where appropriate to traditional media. Lastly, we discuss the shortcomings of current research paradigms, pointing to directions for future research.

Studying Race in the News

Scholars have been interested in the ways that persons of color have been portrayed in the mass media for much of the last century (Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 2002; Chapter 13, this volume). Early work focused on how persons of color, most often Blacks, were portrayed in entertainment media such as films and television. More recently, scholars also have turned their attention to detailing the ways in which race

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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is framed by news organizations (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b, 2002; Entman, 1994, 1992; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000, 1998; Josey, Dixon, Hurley, & Hefner, 2010; Romer, Jamieson, & de Coteau, 1998; Simon & Wright, 1996). News organizations are charged with accurately reporting events that happen across the globe. Thus news, because of its very nature, is crucial to study as consumers may interpret it as an *accurate* representation of reality. Research examining the portrayal of race in news content finds that persons of color are represented in highly stereotypic ways (Greenberg et al., 2002). Thus, it is likely that these problematic portrayals of persons of color may cultivate incorrect or stereotyped views of minorities for news viewers. These views, in turn, can have a multitude of deleterious *real-world* effects in the way individuals view and treat persons of color.

The title of this chapter is “Race and News Revisited.” In writing it we have two goals. First, we will synthesize prior research findings that detail the portrayal of race in news content and its possible effects. Second, we will explain how the changing nature of news content warrants revisiting prior research paradigms regarding race and news. To begin this chapter, we will consider the content analytic work that has been conducted in traditional media (e.g., print and television). We will then detail experimental findings from effects-based studies. Finally, we move beyond traditional media to consider emerging work in online news, pointing to areas for future research.

The Framing of Race in Traditional Media

Studies examining the framing of race in news programming have largely focused on television (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003). This is both intuitive and reasonable as most individuals relied on local and national news broadcasts as their primary information sources until recently (Josey et al., 2010). Initial studies in this area have primarily examined the portrayals of two minority groups: Blacks and Latinos (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b, 2002; Entman, 1992, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998, 2000; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Romer et al., 1998). This is largely the case because Blacks and Latinos are seen with greater frequency in news coverage, while other groups remain virtually invisible (Josey et al., 2010). Further, as Blacks and Latinos represent the two largest minority groups in the United States, it is only natural that a great deal of empirical focus has been devoted to representations of them as racial groups. Thus findings for Blacks and Latinos are generally much more robust than those for other racial groups such as Native Americans, Arabs, and Asians (Heider, 2000; Josey et al., 2010; Merskin, 1998; Oswald, 2005; Person & Musher-Eizenman, 2005). We begin by reviewing content analytic findings about the portrayal of Blacks and Latinos in traditional media.

Content Studies of Local News Programming

One of the first and most notable series of investigations was undertaken by Robert Entman and his colleagues, who performed a quantitative content analysis of 55 days of local television news in Chicago to determine if there were any systematic differences in the portrayal of Black and White suspects. Entman (1990, 1992) found that Black men accused of a crime were much more likely than similarly accused White suspects to be shown in the grip of a restraining police officer. Thus traditional news media portray Black men as needing restraint, requiring state intervention, and, consequently, as predators to be feared. Entman also found that Black men accused of committing a crime were less likely than White suspects to be identified by name in news stories. Entman interpreted such differences as evidence that when Black and White suspects are accused of similarly serious offenses, Black suspects appear to be treated in a more “dehumanized” manner. Whereas White suspects have individuating names, Black suspects are anonymous and members of a racial out-group. This is part of a long-standing narrative claiming that Black men are criminals. Moreover, Entman maintained that those Black suspects who were most dehumanized were portrayed as being the perpetrators of violence against White victims. These images appear to suggest that while crime is always a terrible event, it is even worse when committed by a Black man against a White victim. While limited to 55 days of coverage in Chicago, Entman’s findings suggest strongly that the television news perpetuated a series of stereotypical depictions where Black suspects were violent, nameless, and particularly inclined toward attacking White victims.

Although Entman (1990, 1992) limited his investigation to local Chicago stations, such stereotypical depictions are not confined to Chicago news. For example, Romer et al. (1998) analyzed the 11:00 p.m. news broadcast for three stations in Philadelphia over 14 weeks. In each of the stories, Romer and his associates coded the ethnicity of primary actors (i.e., “person of color” or White) and they recorded their roles (i.e., victim or perpetrator). Echoing Entman’s (1990, 1992) conclusions for Chicago, Romer et al.’s (1998) study found that Black Philadelphians were more likely to be shown as perpetrators than as victims in the news. In addition, Romer and his team found evidence that White Philadelphians were overrepresented as victims, and that these portrayals of White victims were driven by an overrepresentation of Black perpetrators. So even though crime reports indicated that only 10% of White victims are murdered by Black offenders, Philadelphia TV news depicted a world where 42% of White victims were murdered by Black thugs – *this amounts to an overrepresentation of Black-on-White murder by a factor of over 400%*.

Similar findings have emerged in studies by Dixon and Linz (2000a, 2000b) and by Gilliam and colleagues (1996, 2000) for the Los Angeles area. These studies reveal several findings. First, compared to crime reports, Blacks are overrepresented as criminal suspects in local news programs. On average, crime reports indicate that Blacks make up about 21% of actual perpetrators in the Los Angeles area, yet they

appear as perpetrators about 37% of the time on Los Angeles area news (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). As in Chicago and Philadelphia, television news in Los Angeles systematically fills viewers' heads with racialized images that perpetuate the stereotype of young Black men as a violent threat to society.

Moreover, research has shown that Blacks are generally associated in TV news with negative roles. For example, Dixon and Linz (2000a, 2000b) found that Blacks are more than twice as likely to appear as criminal suspects than as officers on news programs – put simply, television news depicts Black men as criminals, not as law-protecting police officers. Similar to the Romer et al. (1998) study, Dixon and Linz (2000a) also found that Black men are more likely to appear as perpetrators than as victims in the news in Los Angeles area news programs. In fact, when compared to crime reports, Blacks are underrepresented as homicide victims on local television news. Whereas Blacks represent about 23% of the victims portrayed in television news, they account for almost 30% of the actual victims in the Los Angeles area. Given that being a victim of crime puts one in a position of sympathy in most viewers' eyes, this underrepresentation of Black victims amounts to yet another subtle way that Black experiences get downplayed. Finally, Blacks are twice as likely as White suspects to have negative pretrial publicity aired about them in the news (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2002). For example, for Black suspects on television news, the news story is more likely (than for White suspects) to air the fact that they have committed crimes in the past. This reporting of past deeds is important because the American Bar Association has identified negative pretrial publicity as a hindrance to the constitutional principle of a fair trial. The bedrock commitment of our justice system, the belief that one is innocent until proven guilty, may be jeopardized by the mass-circulation of racial stereotypes.

The Portrayal of Latinos in News Programming

Latinos as a racial group have received far less attention across media types or genres (Greenberg et al., 2002). Analyses of Latinos in news programming and stories are few in comparison to those analyzing the portrayal of Blacks (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). What little research that exists on the topic, however, points to some stereotypical depictions that coincide with those of Blacks and some that diverge. Heider (2000) found that news coverage of Latinos centered on either crime or cultural festivals. In one of the first quantitative studies to assess the portrayal of Latinos in news, Sorenson, Manz, and Berk (1998) found that, when compared to real-world indicators, Latinos were underrepresented as suspects in homicide cases in print news. They also received less coverage as victims of crime. In a similar study, Dixon and Linz (2000a) found that Latinos were underrepresented as both perpetrators and officers when compared to real-world indicators. Further, Dixon and Linz (2000b) found that Latinos were underrepresented as victims of crime when compared to crime statistics. Dixon and Linz make the case that these findings are largely due to a high degree of underrepresentation and virtual absence of Latinos in news programming.

Studies conducted more recently have found similar patterns. Poindexter, Smith, and Heider (2003) found that Latinos were underrepresented as criminals in local news, accounting for only 2% of all perpetrators. In the same study, Latinos were less likely than Whites to be interviewed by reporters or be seen as reporters in news programming. In other content studies, Latino juveniles were more likely to be portrayed as lawbreakers than Whites (Dixon & Azocar, 2006). However, they were underrepresented when compared to crime reports.

The Portrayal of Whites in News Programming

As the largest racial group in the United States, Whites occupy a place of privilege and power in both the physical and mediated world (Clark, 1972; Lipsitz, 1998). As such, one would expect to see Whites portrayed in a much more positive manner across all media forms and content. Previous analyses have shown that Whites receive a larger portion of positive and sympathetic roles in news programming (Greenberg et al., 2002). Romer et al. (1998) found that in non-crime stories, Whites are equally likely to be portrayed in frequency compared to Blacks. However, in crime-related stories, Whites were less than half as likely as Blacks to be seen as perpetrators of crime and Whites occupied the majority of victim roles in televised news. Sorenson et al. (1998) found that Whites received more coverage in sympathetic roles such as victims of crime in print news as well.

Dixon and Linz (2000a, 2000b) found that Whites are underrepresented as both violent and felony perpetrators when compared to crime reports. Whites were less likely to be seen as lawbreakers in general than other racial groups, more likely to be seen as police officers than suspects, overrepresented as police officers and underrepresented as perpetrators of crime. Further, Whites were more likely to be seen as victims of crime in general than minorities, especially in homicide stories. One of the things we have been taught to forget by news biases is that a significant number of crimes are committed by White criminals; however, research indicates that White men make up only about 20% of the perpetrators shown on local television news (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b). By overemphasizing the crimes committed by Blacks and Latinos, and by underportraying the crimes committed by Whites, the news media racializes crime, showing it not as a communal dilemma to be addressed by all, but as a specifically racial problem in which predatory minorities victimize innocent White citizens. This systematic pattern of racializing news stories about crime depends in part on showing Whites as the upholders of law and order. This stereotypical local news depiction suggests that law and order is the province of White police officers, whose job is to defend White victims from Black and Latino villains. When inundated with such images, day in and day out, year after year, there can be little wonder that so many US citizens support harsher penalties for crime sentences.

Portrayals of Other Marginalized Groups in News Programming

The study of race and news has largely used a Black/White dichotomy. Only recent analyses include the study of Latinos and other racial groups (Josey et al., 2010). As

such, findings are limited. Whether this is due to the relative infrequency of these portrayals in news creating a lack of statistical power for comparisons, or just a lack of interest is currently not known. Three groups will be briefly discussed to understand what is known in this area: Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Arabs/Arab Americans.

Investigations into how Asians are portrayed by the media have received relatively little attention in comparison to Latinos and Blacks (Poindexter, Smith, & Heider, 2003). Poindexter and colleagues found that Asian Americans were less likely than Whites, Blacks, or Latinos to be the focus of news stories. Further, they were significantly less likely to be news reporters or interviewees for news stories. However, when Asians are featured in news, studies have demonstrated that Asians are portrayed as *model minorities* (Wong, Faith, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998). Wong and colleagues note that the model minority is characterized as obedient, hard working, and non-confrontational. This status largely causes Asians to be ignored from discussions of race and associations with problematic social issues.

Native Americans may have been the original settlers of North America, yet in the overall media landscapes they make up a miniscule proportion of the overall characters (Greenberg et al., 2002). When studies have found portrayals of Native Americans, they tend to be highly stereotypic (Merskin, 1998). Specifically, the roles offered are based on ancient notions of the brave warrior or involve some sort of highly mystical cultural practice. In news, Native Americans are largely invisible (Heider, 2000; Poindexter et al., 2003). When they are seen, they largely appear in stories revolving around sports mascots, alcoholism, gambling, or cultural festivals.

The final marginalized group to consider is that of Arabs/Arab Americans. Since 9/11, there has been an increased focus on how Arabs and Arab Americans have been portrayed in news media (Oswald, 2005; Person & Musher-Eizenman, 2005). Previous studies have demonstrated that Arabs in general are associated with issues of terrorism. However, research on these types of portrayals is largely still in its formative stages and has yet to yield robust results. Taken together, these findings show that outside of Latinos, Whites, and Blacks, other racial groups have received scant attention in the extant literature. Further study is needed to examine these portrayals using larger samples to hopefully draw meaningful statistical comparisons.

Summary of Content Analysis Findings in Traditional News Programming

Taken together, content analysis findings paint a bleak picture regarding the portrayal of race in traditional news programming. One could easily summarize the extant research with the following statement: Minorities occupy significantly more negative or stereotypic roles in news programming than Whites. Specifically, Blacks are over-represented as criminals, underrepresented in positive roles (e.g., police officers), and are more likely to be seen as the perpetrators of violent crimes. This general pattern

holds true regardless of the medium or level (e.g., local or network). Latinos are severely underrepresented when compared to crime and population rates. However, when they are seen, they are more likely to be seen as perpetrators of crime than victims or police officers. Whites, as a racial group, maintain a level of privilege in the news media. This is evidenced by sympathetic and positive roles. When compared to actual population data and crime reports, Whites are underrepresented as lawbreakers and overrepresented as victims (especially homicide victims). Finally, other marginalized racial groups are seldom seen in news, yet still portrayed in problematic manners. These findings suggest that news outlets dichotomize stories along classic racialized lines (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman, 1990, 1992; Josey et al., 2010; Romer et al., 1998; Sorenson et al., 1998). Here minorities are presented as *superpredators*, victimizing innocent Whites who attempt to uphold the law and societal values. Obviously, such scripts may have important implications for the ways individuals perceive and treat persons of color. As such, we now turn our attention to experiments that attempt to detail such effects and the theories that explain them.

How Stereotyped Media Content Affects the Individual

Experimental research in the area of the portrayal of race in news relies on several related theories. The first is the *cultivation hypothesis* which postulates that consumers of media will grow to have expectations of the real world similar to those found in the media they consume (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1980; Chapter 2, this volume). Thus, the cultivation hypotheses would postulate that the more consumers view stereotyped news content (e.g., Blacks as criminals) the more likely they would be to see that as a reflection of reality. Most often applied to survey research, cultivation has also been applied in experimental methodology, as well.

The next major theoretical tool used by scholars in experimental research is the theory of associated networks. Bower (1981) describes the way that individuals store and access information as a series of associated networks. Each network has a set of nodes that represent a piece of information. Some overarching concept or schema in turn links these nodes into a network. Networks of nodes are linked in a superstructure where activation of one construct *spreads*, activating others (Aldrich, Sullivan, & Borgida, 1989; Graber, 1988). Such activation is often referred to as spreading activation (Valentino, 1999). Important in this model are the powerful effects of priming. Priming refers to how exposure to a meaningful stimulus (e.g., race) brings to mind related concepts (e.g., crime) stored in memory (Berkowitz, 1984, 1990; Chapter 3, this volume). Thus, spreading activation and the associative networks model of cognition serve as explanations of priming effects observed in experimental research. Two concepts are key for the understanding of how this model explains news exposure effects: accessibility and application.

Accessibility

Accessibility is the ease with which a network of nodes can be activated and used by an individual (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Valentino, 1999). Repeated use of any construct makes it better developed and chronically accessible. Chronically accessible constructs are stable over time representing strongly held beliefs, which in turn are likely to be used when evaluating a stimulus. Networks can also be accessed because they were used recently or brought to mind from exposure to a stimulus (e.g., priming). It is widely agreed that accessibility (either chronic or recent) is a necessary condition for the use of stored stereotypic information. However, there is still debate regarding whether it is a sufficient condition to generate any deleterious effects or application of those cognitions.

Application

Some scholars would disagree with the notion that because a series of nodes is well formed and chronically/temporarily accessible it is more likely to be used when evaluating a stimulus (Devine, 1989). Devine argues that individuals can circumvent this process given the appropriate amount of cognitive resources and a high degree of motivation. Thus, accessibility of a construct is necessary but not sufficient to explain the use of stereotypes. For Devine and others, it is entirely possible for individuals to have a Black stereotype schema that is highly accessible and tightly developed, yet not use it if they are highly motivated and have the appropriate resources at their disposal.

In short, the cultivation hypothesis suggests that racialized news may contribute to the formation and maintenance of stereotypes in individuals. These stereotypes are represented as schema or associated networks in memory. The more news one consumes, the more likely they will chronically access and use these networks. The chronic access and use of these networks create more developed stereotype schema in one's memory. These schema will have a lower initial-activation threshold, making them more likely to be used when an individual is primed by racial cues in news. This can ultimately have a multitude of deleterious effects on participants' attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and emotions if one is not motivated to avoid relying on stereotypic schema.

Experimental Research in Race and News

Experiments studying the effects of stereotypic news coverage have proven quite fruitful. As with content studies, experimental work largely focuses on issues of crime and Blacks. In general, experiments find an association between exposure to stereotypic stories and negative evaluations of minorities. These studies most often rely

on priming as a theoretical justification for their results. Thus, exposing individuals to racialized news reports activates stereotypic schema that may be used to evaluate minorities (Devine, 1989; Dixon, 2006, 2007, 2008; Dixon & Azocar, 2007; Dixon & Maddox, 2005; Ford, 1997; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Oliver, 2003; Valentino, 1999). However, this trend is qualified by a number of moderating variables such as news viewing habits and existing racial attitudes.

Experimental Research Using Priming

In one of the earliest experiments, Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996) exposed White college students to news stories featuring either Black or White suspects. The stimulus stories were identical except for the manipulation of inserting either a Black or White suspect photo into the video. They found that those exposed to Black suspects rated the character as guiltier than those who saw the White suspect. Additionally, those exposed to the Black suspect condition felt that the criminal would engage in a similar behavior in the future more so than those who saw the White suspect.

In another early study, Johnson, Adams, Hall, and Ashburn (1997) had participants read a series of news stories. These stories contained articles that were either violent (e.g., mugging) or nonviolent (e.g., surgeon general warnings). Following exposure to these news stories, participants read a vignette about a criminal act where the criminal's race was varied (e.g., White, Black, not specified). Results indicated that those exposed to violent news stories attributed blame for the crime to personal rather than situational factors when the criminal was Black. The same was not true for the other manipulations (e.g., White or race unspecified) or for participants in the nonviolent conditions. Important in this study is that Johnson et al. did not prime race explicitly as in the Peffley et al. (1996) study. Johnson et al. (1997) take this as evidence of spreading activation such that implicit primes of violence activate related stereotypic schema for participants. These, in turn, are used when evaluating the fictitious Black criminal. Other studies have found similar implicit priming effects (Dixon, 2007, 2008).

Studies have also found powerful priming effects on behavioral outcome measures such as support for political candidates after exposure to racially coded news stories. Valentino (1999) argues that local crime coverage activates racial attitudes, which are then used to evaluate and make decisions regarding candidates. He exposed participants to either no crime story, a nonminority crime story, or a crime story with minority suspects. Following exposure, participants rated, then, President Clinton on a number of race-associated issues (e.g., crime and welfare) and non-race associated items (e.g., taxation). Valentino found that following exposure to crime news, President Clinton's performance on crime was rated lower by those who saw no minority suspect and lowest by those who saw a minority suspect. Further, evidence of spreading activation was found such that Clinton's performance on related *race-*

associated issues (e.g., welfare) was lowest for those who viewed a minority crime story despite not being explicitly primed with stories involving those issues in the manipulation. This was not the case for non-race associated issues (e.g., taxation). His results provide support for the notion that race need not be explicitly primed to activate race-related stereotypes.

Other scholars have examined the effects of racial primes on participant memory. In a series of studies conducted by Oliver and colleagues, participants were exposed to crime stories and asked to recall the race of the perpetrator (Oliver, 1999; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Oliver, Jackson, Moses, & Dangerfield, 2004). Findings from these studies provide evidence for a schematic processing perspective. These theoretical notions suggest that the news media have overrepresented Black criminality so often that viewers automatically associate Blackness with crime.

In one of these studies, Oliver (1999) exposed participants to a series of televised news stories including either a Black or White criminal suspect. Immediately following exposure, participants were asked to look at a series of photographs of Black or White suspect photos used in the stories as well as those that were not used in the stories. They were then asked to rate the likelihood that each photo was of the suspect from the story they just read. Results indicated that there were no priming effects for misremembering the race of the suspect featured in the embedded article. However, when participants were asked to return three months later and repeat the same task, results indicated that those who viewed the White suspect were significantly more likely to misremember the suspect as being Black. Oliver speculates that this effect is due to participants forgetting the race of the suspect over time and relying on existing schema to fill in the missing information.

In a similar study, Oliver and Fonash (2002) exposed participants to newspaper crime stories that featured both violent and nonviolent crimes. The stories contained photographs of both White and Black suspects. After exposure to these series of stories, participants were presented with photos of White and Black individuals and asked if they had been featured as part of the story. Findings indicated that when subjects misidentified photos as being featured in the crime news stories, it was more likely to be along racial lines (e.g., foiler Black photos misidentified as actual Black stimulus photos). Further, misidentification was higher for photos of Blacks than Whites in violent crime stories. There were no differences in nonviolent stories. Of note in this study and others performed by Oliver and colleagues, is that regardless of expressed racial attitudes, misidentification was higher for photos of Blacks than Whites in violent crime stories. However, Oliver and colleagues (Oliver, 1999; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Oliver et al., 2004) were explicitly measuring the effect of priming on participant memory and not other important outcome measures (e.g., evaluations of Blacks, actual behavior or support of race-associated issues).

Taken together these studies illustrate the powerful effect of priming on a number of outcome measures. First, explicit priming of race schema affects evaluations of Black criminal suspects. Second, implicit primes using *race-coded* issues (e.g., violent crime) causes spreading activation that leads to similar prejudicial judgments. Third,

when asked to identify an out-group member (e.g., Whites identifying Blacks), participants are increasingly forced to rely on existing associative networks and schema to make decisions. This causes more misidentification of out-group members, especially over time. Yet despite these robust findings, the above studies do not illuminate the role that prior racial attitudes may play in the evaluation of persons of color, *race-related* issues, or actual behavior. In addition, they do not provide explicit support for a cultivation effect. As such it is necessary to examine how racial attitudes and news consumption may moderate or exacerbate these effects.

Racial Attitudes as a Moderator

It is intuitive that existing racial attitudes could play a central role on how individuals interpret and react to racialized news messages. The associative networks model (Bower, 1981) posits that individuals who have highly developed and accessible stereotype schema should have those schema accessed more easily than those who do not, when exposed to racial primes in news. Accordingly, it is evident that measuring existing racial attitudes could explain important differences in reactions to racialized news. Further, measuring such attitudes provides scholars with an opportunity to hold them constant in analysis; parsing out the unique role that news consumption plays in the reaction to racial primes in news. As such endorsement of racial stereotypes is one of the most well-researched moderators in experimental studies of the effects of racialized news (Dixon, 2008).

Most studies have evidenced endorsement of racial stereotypes as a powerful moderator of priming effects and participant responses on attitude/behavioral measures (Dixon, 2008; Domke, McCoy, & Torres, 1999; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998; Gilliam et al., 1996; Peffley et al., 1996). Other research paradigms (Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Oliver et al., 2004) have failed to detect a moderating influence of prior racial attitudes on participant memory. In studies examining the relationship of stereotype endorsement and support for punitive crime policies, the general trend is that those who are exposed to primes involving Blacks are more likely to support such policies (Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998; Gilliam et al., 1996). These patterns are particularly enhanced for those who endorse stereotypes of Blacks (Dixon, 2008; Domke et al., 1999; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998; Gilliam et al., 1996; Peffley et al., 1996).

In a study conducted by Dixon (2006a) participants were exposed to news coverage of a majority of Black or race-unidentified suspects. He found that those who endorsed Black stereotypes were more likely than those who did not to support the death penalty. Further, he found that those who consumed the most news rated offenders as being more culpable than those who consumed less news. In a similar study, Dixon (2008) exposed participants to a crime story where race was manipulated to have either a White, Black, or race unidentified suspect. He found that those who highly endorsed stereotypes found the Black and race unidentified suspects highly threatening and culpable for their behavior. Results indicated a greater support for punitive crime policies for stereotype endorsers. Similar results

have been found using different primes for White participants (Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998, 2000).

On the whole it appears that endorsement of racial stereotypes amplifies negative evaluations of Blacks and of issues associated with Blacks as a racial group. This, of course is both intuitive and in keeping with prior research. However, as Dixon (2007) points out, findings such as these do not really speak to the unique role that repeated news viewing plays in this process.

News Viewing as a Moderator

Examining the role of the amount of news consumption as a potential moderator of the priming effects noted previously is crucial for scholars inclined to believe in a cultivation explanation for racial attitudes (Dixon, 2007). According to the cultivation hypothesis (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1980, 1994) repeated exposure to media content should develop cognitive schema in individuals, which lead them to see the world in a way that is consistent with that presented by news programming. If the cultivation hypothesis holds true, endorsement of racial stereotypes, outward behavior towards persons of color and perceptions regarding *race-associated* issues (e.g., welfare and the death penalty) should be influenced by exposure to stereotypic news coverage. Thus, those who consume little or no stereotypic news should exhibit a lesser degree of racial bias in such judgments, while those who consume heavy amounts of stereotypic news should exhibit a greater degree of bias in line with stereotypic schema.

In examining the unique role that stereotypic news stories play in cultivating unrealistic views of minorities, scholars are now examining prior news consumption as a moderating variable (Dixon, 2007, 2008). In one such study Dixon (2007) exposed participants to news stories featuring either White, Black, or race unidentified suspects. He also exposed participants to stories featuring a police officer manipulation with the same racial breakdown. Dixon had participants indicate how much news they viewed and complete racial recall measures for suspects and police officers. He found that race unidentified perpetrators were rated by participants as being more likely to have been Black. Heavy news viewers expressed more confidence that the unidentified officers were White than did light news viewers. News viewing also predicted less liking of featured Black officers and more positive evaluations of race unidentified officers.

These results provide evidence for a cultivation effect because the effects were most pronounced for heavy news viewers. Content studies have shown that crime perpetrating is heavily coded as a *Black issue* whereas law enforcement is coded as a *White issue* (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). Heavy viewing of such news exposes individuals to the *Blacks as superpredators/Whites as officers* script (Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998). This viewing makes these schema of crime and Blacks highly connected and accessible (Shrum, 2001; Shrum & O'Guinn, 1993). Dixon (2007) makes the case that; as a result, race does not have to be explicitly primed for heavy news viewers to make such judgments in ambiguous racial situations. Thus, for heavy news viewers, one only

need prime the Black or crime schema to activate the other. Experimental research bears this notion out (Dixon, 2007).

Summary of Experimental Findings

Taken together, experimental studies illustrate a number of key points. First, prior stereotype endorsement and news viewing play a large moderating role in determining the effect of news primes on outcome behaviors and attitudes. In other words, news consumers will react differently when watching crime news that features persons of color depending on their existing racial attitudes and their news consumption habits. Second, even when race is unidentified, spreading activation may occur such that mentions of crime with no identifiable race might bring to mind Black stereotypes, that in turn are then used by those who consume the most news. Thus, priming with a Black suspect may be a sufficient, but not necessary condition for negative evaluations and behaviors. Next, these negative outcomes are most pronounced for heavy news viewers and less so for light news viewers, a strong indication of a cultivation effect. Therefore, greater levels of news viewing can encourage the adoption of a distorted view of race and crime more in line with televised depictions than real crime statistics. Further, as time passes, consumers are forced to rely on existing schema to fill in the gaps in memory, thus creating a stereotypic recall bias for individuals who were initially exposed to a violent crime story. Finally, these experiments point to the relative stability of negative outcomes regardless of whether the dependent variables access attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors.

Revisiting Race and News in a New Media Environment

While experimental work has begun to examine the extent to which print and televised media can affect individuals' evaluations of minorities, over the past 10 years a gap has begun to emerge in the extant literature. Early studies detailing the portrayal of race in news programming began in the early 1990s and continued well into the early 2000s. However, since that time, relatively few content analyses have been conducted extending Entman's (1990, 1992, 1994) and Dixon and Linz's (2000a, 2000b) findings. Part of this is due to the extreme stability of the findings across content studies in televised and print media. Yet during that time new media began to supplant television and print as a dominant information source (Pew, 2000). In fact, studies are now showing that the Internet has led to a decreased reliance on television/print news and increased use of online sources as the first line of information (Pew, 2000). This fact has important implications for scholars seeking to under-

stand the effects of media portrayals. As such, the second goal of this chapter is to revisit the portrayal of race in news. Particularly, it is necessary to examine any pertinent new findings and explain possible medium effects.

A simple literature search reveals that work detailing the portrayal of race in online news is largely absent in the academy (Josey et al., 2010). However, as people shift their information consumption habits from traditional media to new forms, it is necessary to understand not only content differences, but also effects differences. In the first and only published content analysis of the portrayal of race in online news, Josey and colleagues examined the top 13 online news websites as ranked by overall traffic. Their sample included both traditional news sources with online counterparts (e.g., *New York Times*) and sources that only had an online presence (e.g., Google and Yahoo News). They examined the portrayal of race on a number of important levels: headlines, images associated with stories, top and popular news stories. In determining the race of individuals in stories, images, and headlines coders were asked to use all available information presented in the story. As such they were able to infer race based on images published with the story, surnames traditionally associated with particular races (e.g., Rodriguez), explicit mention of a person's race and prior knowledge of a person's race (e.g., O. J. Simpson). Notable about this study is that Josey and colleagues expanded their codebook to include races other than Blacks and Latinos.

Josey and colleagues (2010) discovered that Whites were largely overrepresented in images associated with stories (over 75% of the sample) while Blacks, Latinos, and Asians were underrepresented. In headlines, a similar pattern emerged. Whites occupied the majority of portrayals in headlines (82.5%) with minorities being extremely underrepresented when compared to US census data. More problematic was the fact that when the most popular stories read by viewers were examined, these patterns were even more pronounced.

Similarly, stories selected by news websites as *top news* that were prominently featured on websites exhibited the same misrepresentations as popular stories. However, one might wonder what types of portrayals are being seen in such stories (e.g., regarding crime, welfare, etc.). Josey et al. (2010) examined one particular issue that has historically been associated with minority groups: poverty. Findings indicated that Latinos and Blacks were disproportionately overassociated with issues of poverty when compared to other racial groups. Whites and Asians were underassociated with poverty. This trend was most pronounced in top and popular news stories.

Thus, when revisiting the portrayal of race using online content a few general trends begin to emerge. Whites are overrepresented in benign or positive manners, occupying over 80% of the portrayals. Blacks, Latinos, and Asians are underrepresented in online news when compared to US Census data. Troubling is that Blacks and Latinos were associated with a highly stereotypic issue, poverty, while Whites and Asians escaped such associations. Most troubling is that these findings were especially pronounced in the news consumed most by readers that was also deemed *top news* by online news organizations. In short, it appears that online news

organizations are faring no better in portraying race in a balanced and non-stereotypic manner than their offline counterparts. In fact, it appears that in many cases such portrayals may be worse in online news than in traditional media. We will now briefly consider the implications of such portrayals in online news.

Effects of Online News Portrayals

Traditional media effects research relies on paradigms that involve linear, largely non-interactive media. However, the Internet and new media present users with the opportunity to expose them to whatever communication they desire (Josey, 2010; Josey et al., 2010; Chapter 23, this volume). In such a user-driven environment, standard theories and research paradigms may not adequately account for the possible effects racialized portrayals may have on an individual. For instance, one of the more dominant theories in media effects research, the cultivation hypothesis, may not adequately explain how an individual chooses some messages over others. Therefore, it may be more difficult to ascertain why and how an individual may be affected by new media content. Scholars are now beginning to examine older theories such as selective exposure as a means to explain possible media effects in a new media environment (Appiah, 2003; Josey et al., 2010; Knobloch-Westerwick, Appiah, & Alter, 2008; Melican & Dixon, 2008).

Selective exposure posits that individuals rely on existing cognitive networks, attitudes, and beliefs when deciding which messages to expose themselves to (Klapper, 1960; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948; Sears & Freedman, 1967). Thus, it is entirely possible that the greatest explanatory variable for news consumption in new media is prior racial attitudes. Although this notion has yet to be formally tested by scholars in an experimental setting, early survey research has provided interesting results. In a survey measuring credibility ratings of online news organizations, Melican and Dixon (2008) found that those who most endorsed racial stereotypes found nontraditional news outlets (e.g., *Huffington Post*) to be more credible than traditional news outlets (e.g., *New York Times*). The reverse was true for those who did not endorse racial stereotypes. Melican and Dixon posit that individuals selectively expose themselves to such sources based on existing racial attitudes. It is possible that content differences are present such that nontraditional news websites (e.g., *Drudge Report*, *Daily Beast*) adhere less strictly to traditional notions of journalistic objectivity than traditional news websites (e.g., *New York Times*, *LA Times*), thus introducing elements of clear bias on race-related issues (e.g., crime, immigration, welfare). Further, it is plausible that nontraditional news websites simply cover such issues with greater frequency and depth than traditional news websites thus making them more appealing and credible for those who hold more prejudicial belief systems. Melican and Dixon point to the need for further content research and experimental studies to fully explain their results. To date, no content analysis has examined the portrayal of race across traditional and nontraditional online news sources, probing

for critical differences that would explain these findings. In addition, no experimental study has been conducted to examine the role of existing racial attitudes on news selection. Thus one can only speculate that individuals motivated by prior news viewing and racial attitudes may seek out information that is in line with their existing beliefs. This represents one of the major voids in the race and news effects literature. We will now consider other notable voids.

Shortcomings in Prior Research

As we noted in the previous section, one of the most notable voids in the extant literature is a lack of grounded content analyses in online news. Specifically, no study to date has taken a comparative approach to probe for content differences between traditional and nontraditional news websites. Given the survey findings by Melican and Dixon (2008) it is likely that content differences may be present. Specifically, these nontraditional websites may present a more distorted stereotypic portrayal of minority groups. The fact that individuals who endorse racial stereotypes view such nontraditional websites as highly credible certainly suggests that some selective exposure is occurring.

The one published study that has examined the portrayal of race in online news raises some interesting questions that must be addressed. Josey et al. (2010) started from a framework that coded a number of stereotypes (e.g., crime, welfare, illegal immigration). Research in traditional media (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman, 1990, 1992, 1994) all focused on largely crime-based stereotypes. As evidenced by their study, other stereotypes are present in news content. As such future studies need to catalog and examine the multitude of problematic portrayals in new programming as they too may have important effects in the way people view and treat persons of color (Josey et al., 2010).

Next, both content and effects studies must extend their lens beyond the Black/White crime script. Future studies must investigate the powerful stereotypes unique to each racial group (e.g., Arabs and terrorism, Latinos and immigration). It is likely that just as the *superpredators script* of Blacks as criminals has real implications on individual beliefs and behaviors, other scripts may have important and substantive outcomes. Thus scholars must seek to understand these scripts and their effects.

Finally, scholars must begin to look for precursors to priming effects. Using theories such as selective exposure and attention, scholars can investigate how individuals select and attend to news. Given that individuals are turning more to online news outlets for their information, scholars must understand what, if any, effect prior attitudes and behaviors have on news consumption. This is especially important with respect to racial attitudes. Scholars have noted that the Internet is a safe haven for divergent and problematic opinions (e.g., hate groups) (Bargh & McKenna, 2004;

Josey, 2010). Thus if prior racial attitudes can drive exposure to some content over others, it is entirely likely that those who endorse stereotypes will consume news that strengthens the association between problematic social issues and persons of color.

The impetus for grasping the mechanisms behind such practices is clear. Scholars must revisit race and news. We must detail changes in content patterns as we move to an online news environment. We must design experiments to examine how individuals select, attend to and store racialized news content.

Conclusion

This chapter began with two goals. The first was to synthesize the extant literature regarding the content and effects of racialized news portrayals. The second was to revisit these findings in light of a new media environment. As has become clear, both traditional and online news underrepresents minorities in relation to actual US census data (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Josey et al., 2010). When minorities are represented, they are presented in highly problematic and stereotypic ways. In traditional news programming, Blacks and Latinos are represented as criminals, while Whites are seen as victims and upholders of the law. In online news, Whites are disassociated with problematic issues such as poverty, while Blacks and Latinos are portrayed as poverty stricken.

Effects-based research has demonstrated a clear link between many of these problematic portrayals and negative evaluations of Blacks. Existing racial attitudes tend to exacerbate such effects. More importantly for media scholars, experiments have demonstrated the unique role that news viewing plays in the cultivation of stereotypic beliefs. Specifically, heavy news viewers are more likely to hold negative evaluations of Blacks and use those evaluations on a number of outcome measures.

In the end, it is clear that the news media do a poor job in fairly representing persons of color. Considering the overall racial landscape in news programming, persons of color are seen with less frequency than one would expect. This is especially the case in online news (Josey et al., 2010). When they are seen, minorities are likely to be portrayed in stereotypic manners and occupy a disproportionately high percentage of negative news roles (e.g., as criminals and as poverty stricken), while occupying a significantly smaller amount of positive news roles (e.g., as police officers and as wealthy) (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b). Returning to the underlying theory behind this process, it is likely that repeated exposure to such highly stereotypic images, especially for heavy news viewers, cultivates highly accessible cognitive schema within viewers that link persons of color with highly problematic social issues and stereotypic behaviors (Dixon, 2008; Gerbner et al., 1980, 1994). These portrayals ultimately affect news consumers and shape the way they interact with persons of color and the world around them.

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The Influence of Media Exposure on the Formation, Activation, and Application of Racial/Ethnic Stereotypes

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ABSTRACT

Although exposure to mass media content represents only one of a number of factors associated with the construction and application of racial/ethnic stereotypes, its influence should not be trivialized. Both theory and empirical research on media and stereotyping indicate that stereotypes arise from and are maintained via interaction with the messages offered in mass media fare – including exposure to both thematic messages as well as more uncommon messages stemming from idiosyncratic media use. Accordingly, to understand the role of the media in issues pertaining to stereotyping it is essential to consider: (a) how diverse groups are represented across the media landscape; (b) the manner in which exposure to these characterizations influences stereotype-based processes; and (c) the features of consumers and media messages themselves that may moderate stereotype-related outcomes. The present chapter highlights the existing research in each of these areas and offers suggestions for further study.

Media and Stereotypes

Exposure to mass media has long been identified as a factor contributing to the construction of social reality, including stereotypic views about the qualities seen as characteristic of different racial/ethnic groups (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002; Mackie, Hamilton, Susskind, & Rosselli, 1996; Mastro, 2009a; Shrum, 2004). Of course, mass media represent only one of a number of determinants of stereotypes; nonetheless the role of the media in stereotype-based processes should not be trivialized. Based on the empirical research in this domain, it is clear that stereotypic notions arise from and are maintained by audience members' interactions with both the persistent themes in mass media content as well as the more unique and/or uncommon messages stemming from idiosyncratic usage patterns (see Mastro, 2009a, for review). As such, any examination of the media's role in issues pertaining to media and stereotyping must consider: (a) the manner in which racial/ethnic groups are depicted in the media, (b) how exposure to these portrayals contributes to the formation, activation, and application of racial/ethnic cognitions, and (c) the characteristics of consumers and media messages that moderate stereotype-related outcomes. To this end, the present chapter highlights the work in each of these areas.

Portrayals of Race/Ethnicity in the Media

The effects of media use on stereotyping reflect, in part, the race-related features of media content itself. Accordingly, any discussion concerning the influence of media exposure on stereotypes and stereotyping would be remiss without taking into account the nature of racial/ethnic characterizations in the media. Given that the content analytic work in this area has been comprehensively reviewed elsewhere (see Mastro, 2009b, for review), only a brief overview of racial/ethnic portrayals in US mass media will be offered here.

When it comes to sheer numeric representation on prime time television, in film, in magazines, and in commercial advertising, Whites and African Americans are depicted at rates that meet or exceed their proportion of the US population (Children Now, 2004; Covert & Dixon, 2008; Eschholz, Bufkin, & Long, 2002). The same cannot be said for Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and those of Middle Eastern and Asian Indian descent – all of whom are only infrequently seen in these traditional media venues, if at all. The rate at which different groups are depicted in the media is intrinsically meaningful as such visibility subtly communicates messages to consumers about the strength and status of different groups in society; reinforcing intergroup behaviors that privilege certain groups over others (Harwood & Roy, 2005). However, the specific features attributed to different racial/ethnic groups in mass media offerings

are of even greater import, as these messages contribute to viewers' cognitions about different groups (which may ultimately govern subsequent race-related responses).

In terms of the types of roles and representations associated with different groups, distinct pictures emerge based on the race/ethnicity of the character (Mastro, 2009b). Although it has taken over 50 years, African Americans on TV, in the movies, and in advertising enjoy a diversity of parts, representing a wide-range of backgrounds, experiences, and opportunities. They are commonly featured as primary characters in fictional, entertainment content, holding high-status and respected positions (although this is less the case in film than it is in television). News coverage of African Americans, however, provides an altogether different (and more unflattering) picture (Entman, 2006; Chapter 12). When depicted in news photographs, African Americans are seen most frequently in sports stories (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). When coverage turns to politics, African Americans often fare poorly; with African American politicians presented as more demanding than their peers and characterized as striving to promote racial issues at the expense of public interest (Entman, 2006). The message is more egregious when it comes to coverage of crime in local news. Although the share of African American law-defenders (e.g., police officers) is consistent with their prevalence in society, they are over represented as lawbreakers compared with both depictions of Whites as well as with real-world arrest reports (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). Further, this discrepancy increases when the victim in the crime story is White (Romer, Jamieson, & DeCoteau, 1998). In these news stories, African Americans are commonly portrayed in a threatening and disheveled manner; appearing nameless and restrained (Entman, 1992, 1994, 2006). These notions are mirrored in the picture presented by videogames, wherein African American characters are seen displaying physical and verbal aggression at higher rates than other racial/ethnic figures (Glaubke, Miller, Parker, & Espejo, 2001).

Looking at representations of Latinos reveals that in nearly all forms of media content, this group is depicted in a largely unfavorable manner. When seen on TV, in film, and in advertising, Latinos are typically found in minor roles or group settings. Compared to their counterparts in the media, Latinos are portrayed as less authoritative, lazier, less articulate, less intelligent, more sexualized, and more likely to be in a service position (Children Now, 2004; Mastro, 2009b). The images offered in the news are equally unflattering. Here, Latinos are depicted as criminals more frequently than Whites (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). Further, when it comes to representations as victims, Latinos are seen at a level below both their White, on-air counterparts in the news, and below real-world crime reports (Dixon & Linz, 2000b).

When Asian Americans are seen in entertainment programming and advertising, they are most commonly found in minor and non-recurring parts (Children Now, 2004, Mastro, 2009b). However, in these roles Asian Americans are often portrayed in high-status and professional positions such as physicians, journalists, and elected officials (Children Now, 2004). Still, their presence is commonly marked by their passive nature. The exception is in videogames where they appear at a level above their proportion of the US population; typically as fighting characters who are often antagonists (Glaubke,

Miller, Parker, & Espejo, 2001). In terms of visual depictions/photographs of Asian Americans in print media, they are most likely to be seen in stereotypical context such as in coverage of scientific and medical issues (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000).

Native Americans, Middle Easterners, and Asian Indians suffer an even more severe form of neglect from the media. Although several content analyses of television, film, and advertising report finding no Native Americans, when they have appeared they are characterized as spiritual, as warriors, as having social problems (e.g., alcoholism), or in historical contexts (Children Now, 2004; Fryberg, 2003; Merskin, 1998). Interviews with workers in news organizations echo the findings from content analyses of entertainment media. Journalists acknowledge that they are most likely to address Native Americans in news stories that revolve around crime or ethnic festivals (Heider, 2000). Turning to characters from the Middle East reveals that representations linked with criminality make up the lion's share of roles for this group (Children Now, 2004). For Asian Indians, depictions are tied to stereotypical notions about traditional ceremonial practices, occupations, and gender roles (Ramasubramanian, 2005). As a result of their scarcity in the media, little more is known about the manner in which these racial/ethnic groups are portrayed.

Although this summary highlights contemporary images of race/ethnicity in US media, it is important to note that many of the most unfavorable representations, produced in previous decades, remain a part of the media landscape through cable channels which focus on "classics" and Internet sites which offer streaming video of past and present television programming. Altogether, the significance of these images cannot be overstated as (alongside audience characteristics) they define the stereotypes that are formed and the effects that are produced based on exposure.

Stereotype Construction

Despite the fact that theories in the domain of media effects, social psychology, and cognitive psychology all implicate media messages in the construction of stereotypes (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Mackie et al., 1996; Mastro, 2009a), only a few empirical studies have addressed the media's role in such processes (and even these only do so tangentially). As such, the specific mechanisms underlying media-based processes of stereotype formation remain inadequately defined. Nonetheless, the insights offered by these theoretical frameworks suggest that media messages are likely to account for a meaningful part of individuals' perceptions about racial/ethnic groups.

Absent preexisting differences between groups, media messages can contribute to stereotype formation by directing attention to features of certain groups and not others (whether or not legitimate) that encourage category-based distinctions. In so doing, the explicit and implicit messages conveyed by the mass media supply audience members with sets of attributes to be associated with different groups (e.g., qualities, value systems, attitudes, behaviors, status, etc.). In other words, exposure to messages about race/ethnicity in the media's texts and images promotes the

development of media-formulated conceptualizations of racial/ethnic groups and race-related judgments. As such, media can be seen to provide the cognitive foundations for stereotype formation.

One of the most straightforward routes to stereotype formation based on media exposure stems from humans' natural, unconscious ability to detect covariation. As Hilton and von Hippel (1996, p. 245) explain,

once an initial contingency between two events has been detected nonconsciously, people behave as if the relationship continues to exist long after the contingency has been removed [...] because contingencies are easier to learn when they are associated with individuals with whom one has little experience rather than with individuals with whom one has a great deal of experience, nonconscious detection of covariation is likely to play a larger role in the development of stereotypes about out-groups rather than in-groups.

Simply put, linking certain sets of qualities with particular groups (and not others) can quickly lead to abstracting this relationship so that it exists outside the context of the exposure. Accordingly, once the association has been made, it can become self-perpetuating, even gaining in strength absent any supporting evidence. Thus, the development of stereotypic notions about racial/ethnic groups is effortlessly facilitated by repeated exposure to the media construction.

This assertion is likely to resonate with scholars of cultivation theory who have long asserted that consistent exposure to the repetitive system of messages presented in the mass media (regardless of the veracity of the content) shifts viewers' social perceptions toward the media version of reality, particularly when these messages do not compete with consumers' real-world experiences (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002; Hawkins & Pingree, 1990; Chapters 2, 11, this volume). Given this, lower levels of real-world interracial contact would likely enhance the media's impact on stereotype formation. On the other hand, contact with minority group members who exhibit traits consistent with the stereotypes presented in the media also would yield especially pronounced effects (Shrum & Bischak, 2001). Put differently, the more the content of mass media overlaps with viewers' everyday lives the less likely these messages are to trigger scrutiny; thereby enhancing their influence on stereotype formation (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Ortiz, 2007; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2004).

Although not intended to address the cognitive underpinnings of stereotype creation, empirical evidence for these assertions can be (cautiously) gleaned from research examining cultivation effects based on exposure to particular genres/outlets of mass media. This work reveals that consumers' perceptions of different groups, indeed, come to mirror the media messages to which they are exposed. For example, audience members who are heavier consumers of television sitcoms (where African Americans enjoy roles as high status, successful professionals), hold more favorable beliefs about African Americans' real-world level of education and socioeconomic status (Armstrong, Neuendorf, & Brentar, 1992; Busselle & Crandall, 2002). On the other hand, those who are heavy viewers of dramatic programs (where African

Americans are more likely to be depicted in low-status positions) possess more unfavorable views regarding the educational achievement of African Americans (Busselle & Crandall, 2002). Individuals who consume elevated levels of news, both on television (Armstrong et al., 1992; Dixon, 2007) and in print (Vergeer, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2000), report stereotypic views about African Americans' (and other racial/ethnic minority groups') unlawful and menacing nature. Additionally, research reveals that as the amount of exposure to Latinos in the media increases (moderated by contact and existing racial attitudes), so too do perceptions that Latinos are criminal, unintelligent, and lazy – reflective of the overarching characterizations of this group across media offerings (Mastro et al., 2007).

Research framed in the tradition of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2002) additionally demonstrates the influence of media exposure on the acquisition of stereotypes about race/ethnicity. Rather than emphasizing repeated exposure to a consistent set of stereotypic messages (*à la* cultivation theory), social cognitive theory stresses the role of reinforcement in the process of learning from the media. For instance, television viewers can improve their attitudes towards out-group members by observing an in-group television character modeling positive and rewarding relationships with out-group characters (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Consistent with the research on cultivation theory, however, studies applying social cognitive theory focus more on stereotyping as an outcome than on how these mental constructs are formed. Nonetheless, results from this work provide further evidence in support of the assertion that exposure to media's messages about race/ethnicity contributes to the construction of stereotypes. Specifically this research finds that consuming negative characterizations of African Americans in the media leads to more unfavorable beliefs regarding African Americans' intelligence, work ethic, and socioeconomic status (Fujioka, 1999; Tan, Fujioka, & Tan, 2000). Similarly, exposure to unflattering portrayals of Native Americans produces more negative views of Native Americans, particularly in terms of socioeconomic status (Tan, Fujioka, & Lucht, 1997). Alternatively, exposure to positive messages about race/ethnicity in the media yields more favorable stereotypes about both African Americans (Fujioka, 1999) and Native Americans (Tan et al., 1997). The presumption here is that consumers evaluate the rewards associated with racial/ethnic characterizations (e.g., personal gain, enjoyment, social status) and if they are sufficiently confident in their ability to reproduce the modeled behavior (e.g., discriminating on the basis of race, or acting in an egalitarian fashion), then learning (and subsequent initiation) will be facilitated.

Taken together this body of research suggests that exposure to media messages provides the cognitive foundation for stereotype formation by offering the features that come to define different races/ethnicities. However, these stereotypic notions are additionally meaningful as they provide insights into the types of outcomes that can be expected as a result of exposure including straightforward stereotyping and discrimination as well as intergroup comparisons which ultimately serve group identity needs. Accordingly, the next question becomes, how does the activation of these constructs impact on subsequent effects?

Stereotype Activation and Application

Stereotypes can be defined as cognitive schemas organizing information about social groups. Regardless of their personal endorsement of the stereotype, all members of a given culture may still possess knowledge about the stereotype. Consequently, media exposure can make these cognitive structures more available (i.e., stereotype activation). Absent controlled inhibition processes, these media-activated stereotypes are likely to be applied; potentially provoking prejudicial responses (Devine, 2001). Priming research on stereotype activation and application addresses this relationship by tapping into a broad range of issues and outcomes.

In the current context priming refers to the process through which information about racial/ethnic groups that has been recently activated by exposure to the media, influences subsequent judgments regarding target minority groups (see Chapter 3 for priming in the context of political communication). Generally speaking, results from these investigations demonstrate that even a single exposure to racial/ethnic stereotypes in the media can influence: (a) majority group members' real-world racial/ethnic evaluations, (b) intergroup behaviors such as group enhancement, (c) political decision making, (d) minority group members' evaluations of self, and even (e) prosocial outcomes.

It is important to recognize that while the bulk of this research is focused on the harmful consequences associated with stereotypes, these constructs are not inherently negative. Instead, they can serve several important psychological functions such as facilitating the organized and efficient processing of information. Further they can aid in the enhancement of one's positive self-image. However, when they are utilized to support group-based distinctions which privilege certain groups at the expense of others, they become problematic. Not surprisingly, then, the majority of research has been devoted to the media's role in generating such antisocial outcomes.

Priming Real-World Racial/Ethnic Evaluations

Findings from such investigations indicate that even a single exposure to racial/ethnic stereotypes in the media can affect evaluations of minorities in the real world. For example, in their study assessing the effects of exposure to news depictions of race and crime on beliefs about African Americans, Johnson, Adams, Hall, and Ashburn (1997) found that alongside prompting stereotype-consistent responses, priming such depictions also provoked differential attributions for the behavior. Specifically, dispositional explanations (i.e., personality-based) were provided for African American perpetrators (particularly those implicated in violent crimes) whereas situational explanations were offered for White defendants. Consistent findings were yielded by Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996) in their examination of the influence of race primes in crime news coverage on subsequent racial/ethnic judgments. Their data

revealed a significant association between the race of the depicted suspect and stereotypic evaluations. Similarly, results from Abraham and Oppiah's (2006) research on the influence of implicit racial cues in news stories on consumers' stereotype-based evaluations suggest that exposure to even subtle depictions of race/ethnicity (i.e., referencing topics stereotypically associated with specific social groups without explicitly mentioning race), can generate stereotypic responses in White consumers. The authors contend that this result illustrates a tendency for more pronounced priming effects to emerge when the depicted trait is stereotypically associated with the target.

Notably, priming effects can occur in individuals who do not endorse the stereotype themselves. Merely being part of a culture where knowledge of such constructions is common can be sufficient to evoke the stereotypic response (Devine, 2001). However, to the extent that the association between the group and its stereotypical attributes is strong, priming will be greater. Here, again, media play a vital role by strengthening such associations. Studies have consistently demonstrated that racial priming effects are more pronounced among heavy media consumers than among light ones. For instance, Dixon and Maddox (2005) compared light and heavy media users' responses to a news story featuring a White or a Black crime perpetrator. They found that in comparison to light television news viewers, heavy news consumers were more likely to experience emotional discomfort when reading a story about a Black rather than a White perpetrator. Similarly, heavy news consumers, but not light news viewers, had more positive evaluations of the victim when the perpetrator was Black rather than White. Accordingly, these results demonstrate that repeated exposure can make stereotypes chronically accessible, and therefore more likely to be applied in the future. In other words, whereas recently primed constructs are more available for use in processing and interpreting information, long-term exposure strengthens the cognitive associations between the attribute and the target. So, when exposed to news portrayals of African Americans in the context of crime, the effect of priming should be stronger among those who are heavy news consumers.

Moreover, activation of a single construct can create a cascade of activated, semantically-related constructs that spread through the entire network of stored representations (spreading activation, Jo & Berkowitz, 1994). Accordingly, although a prime might relate to only one aspect of a stereotype, it can bias a broader array of social judgments. Put differently, priming a particular construct in memory not only affects judgments related to that particular trait, but also activates a wide range of schema for the target; influencing a variety of judgments beyond that which was primed (Ford, 1997). For example, listening to violent rap music by Black artists triggers other domains of African American stereotypes, affecting perceptions of Blacks' intelligence and work-ethic (Johnson, Trawalter, & Dovidio, 2000). Further, Valentino's (1999) research indicates that certain topics, such as crime and poverty, have become implicitly linked with race in US society and, as such, media coverage of these issues prompts stereotype-based responses regarding both the activated construct and semantically associated constructs.

In addition, because stereotypes can be used to enhance effective, but not necessarily accurate, information processing, priming these constructs can lead to distorted retention of media information. Several studies have shown that activating racial stereotypes encourages news consumers to complete the missing information in ways that make a coherent, but stereotype-consistent, story. For example, Dixon (2007) varied the race of a police officer and criminal depicted in a television news story such that they were White, Black, or their race was not identified. After watching the news program, participants were asked about the race of the perpetrator and the police officer. When the race of the perpetrator and/or the police officer was not mentioned in the news story, viewers tended to provide information that was consistent with their racial stereotypes. That is, participants assumed that the police officer was White and believed that the criminal was African American. Similarly, Oliver, Jackson, Moses, and Dangerfield (2004) examined the ability of individuals to recall the facial features of persons depicted in various news stories. They found that after reading a crime news story about a violent crime (but not after reading a non-crime story), participants tended to believe that the individual in the picture accompanying the story possessed more Afrocentric than Eurocentric facial features. Here again, media consumers constructed their memory in a manner consistent with their existing racial stereotypes. From a processing perspective, this tendency makes retrieval and organization of information easier and less laborious. In terms of stereotyping and discrimination, however, this process yields outcomes that are entirely undesirable.

Intergroup Behaviors

In addition to serving such cognitive functions, priming stereotypes can also assist individuals in maintaining their positive self-image. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), this outcome is driven by social comparison processes wherein individuals manage their identity needs by positively distinguishing their in-group from less favorable out-groups. To this end, mass media contexts are considered particularly efficacious in that they can be easily manipulated to manage identity demands via selective exposure and even selective interpretation of content (Harwood & Roy, 2005). Of course majority group members are advantaged by a broader array of media options which provide a basis for auspicious intergroup comparisons: However, with additional effort the same benefits can be attained by minority group audiences (Abrams, Eveland, & Giles, 2003; Abrams & Giles, 2007).

Experimental tests of these assumptions in the context of television use have met with somewhat consistent support in application to majority group audience members' exposure to stereotypical minority group portrayals. This research reveals that viewing unfavorable depictions of minorities in the media can provoke negative, stereotypical responses among White viewers (particularly highly race-identified

Whites), which in turn, appear to augment self-concept by offering a social comparison that privileges their dominant group (Mastro, 2003). Further, when the content of the media offers protection from the threat of appearing racist (e.g., through ambiguous messages), in-group favoring behaviors seem to be enhanced (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008). This is not to say that overtly prejudicial responses are unlikely to emerge based on media exposure (certainly the evidence reported here refutes that notion): However, the suggestion is that such outcomes may manifest even more so when media content offers protection from appearing racially biased.

Equally compelling evidence in support of the media's ability to subtly promote racial/ethnic antipathy can be found in Weisbuch, Pauker, and Ambady's (2009) examination of the influence of exposure to racially biased nonverbal facial expressions and body language in television programming on the implicit and explicit racial attitudes of viewers. Their results indicate that observing racial bias in nonverbal interracial interactions on television promotes pro-White attitudes, greater liking of White characters, and more prejudicial attitudes in general; despite the fact that these nonverbals go entirely unnoticed by the viewer.

Media use also has been linked to more nuanced intergroup responses involving differential usage of language. According to Semin and Fiedler (1988), speech parts vary in their level of abstractedness, with descriptive action verbs (e.g., "hit") being the most concrete and adjectives (e.g., "aggressive") the most abstract. This distinction is meaningful in that concrete language is seen to designate specific, possibly one-time acts (and thus, situational attributions), whereas abstract words suggest a more intrinsic and enduring characteristic of the perpetrator of the same behavior (and therefore, dispositional attributions). Notably, research assessing the influence of television exposure on such biases in language use (Gorham, 2006) demonstrates that consuming high quantities of television news (with its emphasis on African American criminality) predicts the use of abstract language (and dispositional evaluations) when describing out-group suspects (in this case, African Americans) and the use of concrete language (and situational evaluations) when characterizing in-group suspects (i.e., Whites). Gorham (2006) argues that these results are evidence of the fact that biased processing favoring one's in-group occurs without the conscious knowledge of the viewer.

Political Decision-Making

Assumptions based on media priming, alongside insights from theories of media socialization and policy reasoning, are all used to assess the influence of exposure to media depictions of race/ethnicity on political decision-making. Much of this research focuses on the impact of viewing depictions intersecting race and crime in the news on White audience members' voting decisions and judgments about policy issues (Mendelberg, 1997; Valentino, 1999). For example, in her experimental exami-

nation of the influence of exposure to news coverage of an incident in which a furloughed African American convict brutalized a White couple, Mendelberg (1997) found that, compared with those who were not exposed to the story, those who viewed the news story were more likely to be guided by their existing racial prejudice when making policy judgments. In particular, those who were shown the story reported greater resistance to government actions aimed at reducing racial discrimination in society.

Findings from Valentino's (1999) research examining the influence of exposure to crime-related television news on evaluations of presidential candidates yielded parallel results. His data indicate that support for Democratic candidates was particularly low on issues of crime and other race-coded topics (e.g., welfare) when audience members were exposed to minority perpetrators in the news stories (despite the fact that the content of the news stories was unrelated to the candidates). Under the same conditions, support for Republican candidates was especially high. Valentino (1999) argues that effects of this nature reflect the media's ability to activate existing perceptions of Democrats as weak on crime and sympathetic to minorities, resulting in negative evaluations. This assertion finds support in results obtained by Gilliam (1999) in his assessment of the influence of exposure to news stories featuring a "welfare queen" frame on consumers' views of African Americans. His findings indicate that exposure to such imagery increases negative evaluations of African Americans (as well as opposition to welfare spending) regardless of the welfare recipient's race.

Taking a different tack, both Tan, Fujioka, and Tan (2000) and Mastro and Kopacz (2006) looked at the influence of overall media exposure on attitudes about race/ethnicity and the implications of such perceptions on political decision-making. In each case, these researchers found that exposure to unfavorable characterizations of race/ethnicity in the media promoted more stereotypic evaluation of minorities in society (among White consumers) which, in turn, served to discourage support for race-related policies such as affirmative action.

Minority Group Members' Evaluations of Self

Of course majority group members are not the only audiences exposed to depictions of race/ethnicity in the media. Minority groups, too, are consumers of these messages. It is not surprising to note then, that minority audience members are critical of the unfavorable manner in which they are often featured in US media and see these portrayals as negative, inaccurate, and damaging to both their group identity and social status (Fujioka, 2005a, 2005b). Accordingly, for these groups, the selection of media requires more thoughtful and deliberate effort to protect self-concept (Harwood & Roy, 2005).

Yet, despite efforts to manage the potentially harmful effects of exposure to negative media images of one's group, research indicates that consuming these messages can nonetheless damage the self-concept and esteem of minority group audiences.

To illustrate, Fryberg's (2003) research examining the influence of exposure to Native American mascots (e.g., Chief Wahoo) on Native American audience members demonstrates that viewing these images has a negative impact on media consumers' personal and collective esteem. For example, exposure was found to be negatively associated with beliefs in the positive qualities held by the community. Comparable results can be seen in research looking at the effects of exposure to mainstream US media on Latino audiences. In particular, these findings reveal consumption to have a detrimental impact on Latinos' self-esteem along a number of dimensions, particularly among consumers high in ethnic identification and actively engaged in the content (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007).

However, in much the same fashion that exposure to negative portrayals of one's group can compromise viewers' esteem, positive minority role models can serve as a source of inspiration and self-enhancement for members of minority groups (Fisher-Keller, 1997). For example, viewing Oprah Winfrey has been found to increase African American high school students' confidence in having a bright future (Austin & Freeman, 1997).

Improving Attitudes Toward Minorities

Although little attention has been devoted to the potential for media to promote prosocial outcomes by improving White media consumers' views of ethnic minorities, research undeniably suggests that exposure to auspicious racial/ethnic messages positively influences consumers' race-based cognitions (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wänke, 1995; Mastro & Tukachinsky, 2011; Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996). In the main, this work demonstrates that activating positive media exemplars (e.g., specific models such as Oprah Winfrey or Jimmy Smits) and/or prototypes (e.g., generalized representations such as strong family values) associated with racial/ethnic minorities generates more favorable attitudes towards these groups as a whole as well as more sympathetic response to discrimination as a social problem.

Factors that Moderate the Effect of the Media on Stereotyping

Finally, it is important to highlight the consumer- and message-based attributes known to influence the race-based outcomes of media exposure documented above. Research demonstrates that these factors impact both the effects associated with media consumption as well as the interpretations of the media messages themselves. In particular, real-world contact, mediated intergroup contact, viewers' own racial identification, viewers' preexisting racial attitudes, and the typicality of the media characterization each serve as moderators of race-based media effects.

Real-World Contact

Intergroup contact theory (cf., Pettigrew, 1998) holds that direct interaction between members of different groups can improve intergroup perceptions. However, the nature of the contact experience is critical. Empirical research has shown that the impact of intergroup contact does not lie in mere contact alone, but in the warm and friendly feelings that are produced by it. In other words, being exposed to an out-group member is not sufficient to reduce stereotypes. Rather, individuals have to develop a friendship for the desired effect to occur. This assertion is founded in several theoretical assumptions. First, it is argued that, at least to some extent, individuals maintain negative views of out-group members due to a lack of access to positive information about the group. If this is the case, stereotypes can be reduced through positive shared experiences between groups; which may also serve to reduce people's uncertainty about the out-group and even provide stereotype-disconfirming information. Further, through direct, positive contact with out-group members, individuals become exposed to the intragroup diversity inherent to the group. This contact experience undermines stereotyping as it encourages individuals to abandon tendencies to view the group as entirely homogeneous.

Accordingly, environments that promote mutual understanding, support, and cooperation should be more effective than competitive contexts in producing favorable intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998). Certainly, media contexts have the potential to provide individuals with such positive contact experiences. Indeed, when these positive media-based encounters are offered, exposure yields more favorable emotional responses to the out-group and more constructive perceptions of the out-group in general. To illustrate, research by Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes (2005) has shown that emotional engagement with gay characters on television results in more favorable perceptions of gays in general. Importantly, this effect was *not* moderated by real-life contact with gays, suggesting that media-based contact with out-group members can be equally effective for all viewers, regardless of their everyday experiences with the out-group. Furthermore, unlike priming effects, which dissolve quickly after exposure, the outcome produced by viewers' attachment to out-group characters is relatively long-lasting. Unfortunately, to our knowledge, the effect of such parasocial relationships with racial/ethnic minority characters has not been directly examined. Nonetheless, these results clearly point to the media's ability to promote more promising interracial outcomes, given exposure to the appropriate media message.

Mediated Intergroup Contact

According to social cognitive theory, individuals can acquire new behaviors through observation of the consequences associated with others' actions (Bandura, 2002). In this type of vicarious learning, instead of receiving direct feedback, people

emulate behaviors that they observe to be rewarded in others and avoid performing behaviors that they see are punished. Indeed, studies have shown that observational learning is prevalent regardless of the type of the model – an actual person, a media representation of a person, or even a cartoon character. However, one's relationship with the model plays a meaningful role in the process. Specifically, identification with a media model (e.g., feeling similar to him/her) enhances the learning effect.

Recently, research has begun to apply this line of thinking to issues pertaining to media and race. The assumption here is that if people more easily relate to characters they identify as similar to themselves (e.g., in-group members), then when those in-group characters engage in positive relationships with out-group members, viewers vicariously share the positive intergroup experience. From this perspective, stereotypes can be reduced by way of viewers' identification with the in-group (rather than the out-group) character. To examine this assertion, Ortiz and Harwood (2007) explored the effect of exposure to *Will & Grace* (a sitcom featuring a gay protagonist) on heterosexual viewers' perceptions of gays. Their results indicate that viewers' identification with a heterosexual character that engaged in a positive relationship with a gay protagonist predicted viewers' positive views of gays. In other words, mediated relationships with in-group characters who model positive intergroup interactions provide viewers with the vicarious intergroup contact needed to produce more favorable perceptions of the out-group in society. Once again, to our knowledge, no studies have looked specifically at modeling cross-racial/ethnic relationships; however there is a sound theoretical basis to assume that such an effect would hold for interracial perceptions as well.

Racial Identification

Social identity-based research suggests that as the importance of one's own racial-ethnic identification increases so too does the motivation to protect the status and interests of that group (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Accordingly, for media consumers high in racial identification, exposure to stereotypes of out-group races/ethnicities promotes more unfavorable and stereotype-consistent judgments of those out-groups as well as more advantageous evaluations of in-group members; even boosting self-esteem under certain circumstances (Mastro, 2003; Mastro et al., 2008).

Prior Racial Attitudes

Despite what would seem to be an obvious link between consumers' existing racial attitudes and the influence of media exposure on racial/ethnic stereotypes, research

in this domain has met with inconsistent results. In some cases, findings indicate that existing racial attitudes moderate the relationship between exposure to media stereotypes and subsequent stereotypical judgments (Dixon, 2006; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996). Specifically, as racial antipathy increases, exposure to racial/ethnic stereotypes in the media generates more unfavorable race-based evaluations. In other studies, however, evaluative judgments were unaltered by consumers' existing racial attitudes (Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Oliver, Jackson, Moses, & Dangerfield, 2004). This may suggest that although media have a reinforcing effect by enhancing viewers' pre-existing beliefs, racial and ethnic media portrayals also have a main effect on stereotyping, regardless of media consumers' prior dispositions.

Typicality of Media Representations

Despite the potential for positive outcomes revealed by research addressing exposure to favorable representations of race/ethnicity in the media, it is possible that the prosocial effects of such media depictions may be limited to prototypical representations. Because counterstereotypical exemplars may be seen as unrepresentative of the group, positive evaluations of a constructive media model might not generalize to the group as a whole. In such cases, subtyping may occur; allowing the counterstereotypical representation to be dismissed as an exception to the rule and not as evidence of stereotype incorrectness (Kunda & Oleson, 1997). Extreme counterstereotypes may in fact enhance rather than weaken the stereotype they attempt to refute. Conversely, information about a seemingly typical group member is more likely to be incorporated in the overall evaluation of the group. In line with this hypothesis, Bodenhausen et al. (1995) demonstrated that favorable and salient counterstereotypical media exemplars (i.e., Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jordan) positively affected viewers' racial perceptions; however this effect disappeared when the models were processed as atypical of their group. Similarly, Mastro and Tukachinsky (2011) found that exposure to prototypical, positive media representations of Latinos (i.e., strong family values) but not exposure to positive, non-prototypical depictions was positively associated with Whites' favorable perceptions of Latinos in the United States.

Typicality of positive media models also constitutes a significant factor in promoting prosocial effects on minority media consumers. For example, Aronson, Jannone, McGlonean, and Johnson-Campbell (2009) hypothesized that exposure to declarations regarding the first African American nominee for US president would provide African American students with a buffer against stereotype threat. However, priming test takers with Barack Obama did not bridge the performance gap between White and African American test takers. The authors speculated that Obama was perceived to be atypical of African Americans as a group, diminishing the potential for his successes to generalize to their own.

Summary and Conclusions

As the evidence presented here clearly illustrates, the quality and quantity of media representations of race/ethnicity have significant social implications for both majority and minority group consumers. Along with the attributes of audience members, these media features create a shared version of what race/ethnicity represents in society; provoking a wide range of race-based outcomes related to both self and other. Of course, media are not solely responsible for the construction and application of stereotypes in society; however, it is difficult to deny that stereotypical media images of race/ethnicity play a meaningful role in shaping and maintaining the public's racial/ethnic cognitions.

Still, the outlook is not all bad – research shows that the media's impact is not limited to socially undesirable effects. Although stereotypes are difficult to change, exposure to favorable racial/ethnic media representations does have a positive impact, at least among certain media consumers. Thus, given the potential for media use to produce both positive and negative effects, the consequences of exposure and the mechanisms underlying such effects should remain on the agenda of contemporary media scholarship. To this end, a number of questions require more thorough attention.

First, further research is needed in exploring the role of media in the formation of stereotypes across the lifespan of the consumer. Perhaps because of pragmatic considerations, most of the research in this domain, both experimental and correlational, is limited to “one-shot” studies of adult audiences. Although these studies provide important insights into issues ranging from the activation and accessibility of stereotypes to the relationships between patterns of media use and existing attitudes, research is less informative when it comes to elucidating the specific mechanisms underlying initial stereotype formation. Accordingly, future studies should undertake the challenge of following media consumers over extended periods of time and exploring the long-term consequences of media exposure, beyond immediate priming effects.

Second, outside the lab setting people expose themselves to enormous amounts of media messages on a daily basis. Thus, the ecological validity of the research in this area would benefit from attempts to understand how exposure to a diversity of (possibly competing) messages impacts consumers. For example, what is the upshot of exposure to *both* positive and negative racial/ethnic media representations? Which messages win out and why? In addressing such questions, researchers could tap into notions rooted in the drench hypothesis (Greenberg, 1988); identifying specific media texts that, perhaps, have an impact above and beyond the effects of other media representations. In this way, it would be possible to investigate, for example, whether or not a parasocial relationship with a counterstereotypical African American protagonist on a single television show can override the negative effect of exposure to multiple representations of African Americans as criminals on local television news.

Last, because stereotypes are defined by both mediated and real-world experiences (Mackie et al., 1996), greater efforts aimed at disentangling the sources of these mental constructs may be of benefit in limiting their undesired effects. For example, it may be the case that stereotypes founded in media exposure have different consequences and routes to change than those derived from real-world exposure. If so, understanding the basis of these stereotypes and their subsequent influence on judgments is critical. Although this would certainly be a difficult task, such insights may open the door to altering and even eliminating the negative outcomes associated with stereotypes (e.g., prejudice) and augmenting the positive functions of these constructs (e.g., simplified information processing).

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The Relationship between the Media, the Military, and the Public

Examining the Stories Told and Public Opinion

Michel M. Haigh

ABSTRACT

The media play an important role in times of conflict. How the media tell the story influences the public. This chapter discusses the relationship between the media, the military, and the public. Topics examined include the historical relations between the press and the military, the impact of embedded reporters during the war in Iraq, how visual images of war impact public support for the war, how media coverage impacts public opinion, and how nontraditional forms of media such as late night comedy and military blogs impact the public's knowledge and attitudes.

Media and War

The media play an important role in times of conflict. The stories, photos, blogs, and jokes used to discuss the war may influence the knowledge the public has about war, their attitudes toward war, and their opinion about war. One recent example is when the Bush administration blamed the media for eroding public support of the Iraq War. When the Iraq War started in 2003, more than 70% of US citizens supported

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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it (Benedetto, 2003). By June 2007, 70% of US citizens opposed the Iraq War (<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com>). Bush stated the stories about Iraq were negative and failed to depict progress (Cloud, 2005), and this negativity led to a decline in public support.

The relationship between the press and the military can be turbulent. The public relies on the media to ask the tough questions needed to gain information about war in order to make up its mind about war (Aday, Livingston, & Herbert, 2005). However, research shows war coverage by the media is largely uncritical and often patriotic (Kellner, 1992; Newhagen, 1994; Pyle, 1979). When the press acts as a cheerleader, confidence in the press does not decline (Gross, Aday, & Brewer, 2002; Pew Research Center, 2003). During the first Gulf War, “media generally reacted with predictable boosterism” (Mueller, 1994, p. 74) instead of asking the difficult questions.

Previous academic research says military casualties drive public support for war (Mueller, 1973, 1994). The casualty intolerance hypothesis suggests US citizens generally don’t support war if there are large numbers of casualties (Larson, 1996; Mueller, 1994). Public support decreases as casualties increase (Larson, 1996), but if the government can say the operation is important, the public may support the losses (Feaver & Gelpi, 2004). Hansen, Haigh, and Pfau (2006) found for every 250 US military casualties in Iraq, the tone of television news coverage was about 14% more positive, confirming Mueller’s (1994) hypothesis that the media tend to be cheerleaders for the military and do not want to concentrate on the negatives of war.

There are very few media effects studies examining the relationship between war stories and their impact on the public. This chapter provides an overview of the military/press relationship, explains how the story of the Iraq War was told through the use of embedded reporters, examines the impact of visual images on support for war, and reviews the ways in which the press impacts public opinion.

The Press/Military Relationship

The press/military relationship dates back to the Civil War. The goals of the military and the press often conflict. The military wants the press to tell stories that build support for the war and its credibility (Paul & Kim, 2004); whereas, the media want to tell an accurate account of the military operations. One prominent example of a press/military conflict surfaced regarding the Vietnam War. US citizens watching the news received a mixed message about Vietnam because the military and the administration painted an optimistic picture of the war whereas the press often contradicted official accounts (Paul & Kim, 2004). Reporters were flown to a combat unit, saw the combat operations, wrote their stories, and then returned to their hotels. They would then attend the official military press briefing also known as the “five o’clock follies” (Rid, 2007). Reporters called the briefings the “follies” because the information at the briefing was sanitized, and the briefings did not paint the picture the journalists witnessed

first-hand (Rid, 2007). Military officials tried to make the bad news good but as support for the war eroded it became clear the military was not always successful. One explanation, therefore, for the tendency for the news media to provide positively framed, patriotic stories from the warfront is that such coverage is at least in part a result of attempts on the part of the military to control that coverage.

During the Gulf War, reporters had no eyewitness accounts of the war efforts (Brightman, 2003). The military controlled what reporters saw and read the reporters' stories before sending those stories to news agencies in the United States because they were trying to ensure the safety of journalists and the security of the mission (Paul & Kim, 2004).

After the Gulf War, members of the military and the media worked together to develop the Department of Defense (DoD) Principles for News Media Coverage of DoD Operations. The principles state (1) press pools will only be used during the early part of the war or when logistical constraints are present in that it might be too dangerous or hard for the media to maneuver; (2) The military would provide escorts and transportation when possible; (3) Reporters assigned to cover the war would have experience, have access to military units other than special operations, and be independent in their reporting (Paul & Kim, 2004). A group of military and media officials met in January of 2002 to develop the embedded press system used during the war in Iraq (Paul & Kim, 2004). The embedded system was a significant shift in military-press relations.

Embedded Reporters

The embedded system used during the war in Iraq was, in many ways, more successful than the press pools used in the past. This type of system "embedded" members of the press with units of the military. Being embedded is defined as "living, eating, moving in combat with the unit that [the journalist is] attached to" (Department of Defense [DoD] News Transcript, 2003, p. 2). The embedded press system allowed reporters to "have free access to military personnel at all levels; report general information about troop strength, casualties, and captured enemy forces; report information and location of military targets and objectives previously under attack; and report names and hometowns of service members with their consent" (Paul & Kim, 2004, p. 53). Due to the nature of the embedded system, it cost the news outlets around \$100 million to take part in the embed program (Harper, 2003). More than 2,200 reporters and camera crews covered the Iraq War. About 1,400 of those reporters were unilateral (nonembedded). There were more than 600 US and foreign journalists embedded during the beginning of the war (McClane, 2004; Paul & Kim, 2004).

Unfortunately, there are no media effects studies examining how stories told by an embedded or nonembedded reporter impact public support for the war in Iraq. Yet, there is a significant amount of research claiming there are differences in how

the story was told based on reporter status (embedded or nonembedded) (e.g., Pfau et al., 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Pfau and his colleagues (2004, 2005a, 2005b) and Haigh and her colleagues (2006) examined the impact of embeds on print and broadcast coverage. These findings are explored here to provide a better understanding of why the effect studies are needed and also to provide insight into how the Iraq story was told.

Pfau and his colleagues (2004) found embedded print reporters use more episodic frames [case study or event-oriented news report, offering concrete instances (Iyengar, 1991)]. In addition, embedded journalists tell more positive stories about the military and depict the military in a more positive light compared to unilateral reporters or reporters with an unknown status. Pfau and colleagues (2004) found during the first five days of the Iraq War, the coverage was more positive compared to the first five days of operation "Enduring Freedom" (the war in Afghanistan starting October 7, 2001), but not as positive as the first five days of the first Gulf War. Consistent with the above study, Pfau and colleagues (2005a) also found television news reports by embedded reporters during the first five days of the Iraq War were more positive in tone and in depiction of the military and employed more episodic frames compared to reports from nonembedded reporters. Thus, the use of embeds in the Iraq War appears to lead to more positive coverage during the start of the war.

If embeds were likely to report more positively on the war, news stories about the war in Iraq would differ after the invasion phase was over because the number of embeds had declined. Pfau and colleagues (2005b) and Haigh and colleagues (2006) compared the first five days of the invasion phase of the war in Iraq to five days of coverage in November 2004, almost nine months after the war started. Specifically, Pfau and colleagues (2005b) examined differences in broadcast news coverage. Embedded reports were more favorable toward the military, more positive in tone and depiction of the military, and more committed to the military's goals. The coverage during the first five days of the invasion phase of the war in Iraq was more positive than the coverage in November. Haigh and colleagues (2006) found print stories by embeds were more favorable toward the military and conveyed greater trust in the military. Print stories by embedded reporters were also deemed more credible by coders than stories from nonembedded reporters. Yet, in the Haigh et al. (2006) study of print news, there were no differences in these variables between the invasion phase and the occupation phase unlike in the broadcast stories in the Pfau et al. study (2005b). Thus, the possibility that the number of embeds shapes coverage at different phases of the war remains unclear.

Perhaps due to the difference in the reporting styles, there are some (Bucy, 2003; Ewers, 2003; Gralnick, 2003; Kalb, 2003) who question how embedding impacts the objectivity of the stories. Does the press act like cheerleaders as they have in the past, or perhaps even more so? Fox and Park (2006) examined CNN's coverage at the beginning of the Iraq War. They found nonembedded reporters to be more likely to use "we" or a form of it when telling a story than embedded reporters. Embedded reporters referred to themselves and the troops when telling the story, placing themselves as characters in the story. Embedded reporters used first-person singular nouns

more frequently than nonembedded reporters. However, Fox and Park (2006) did not find the objectivity of the story was impacted by the reporter using “I” or “we.” From these changes in language employed, therefore, it seems embedding reporters leads to a sense of community and greater connection between reporters and troops that may be reflected in the reporters’ coverage.

Older reporters with more experience have been found to be more positive about the embed experience (Fahmy & Johnson, 2007). Two-thirds of the journalist respondents in this study agreed their stories provided a fragmented view of the war; but also said their reports were fair. Unilateral or nonembedded reporters reported being able to pursue more stories and interact more freely with the Iraqi people, but had limited access to members of the military. The differences in access to military or Iraqi people impact how the story was told, according to the respondents. The reporters thought it was the editor’s job to take the reports and combine them for a complete picture.

It is important to understand how reporters’ status impacts the story told about the Iraq War because the type of story may impact support for the war. When people were supporting the war, the number of embeds was at its peak and the coverage was more positive in tone. Thus, the next direction in research should examine how reports from embedded or nonembedded reporters impact support for the war. The previous research explains how the use of embeds changed the way the Iraq War story was told and how the reporters felt they did telling the story, but the missing link is the audience’s perception of the use of embedded reporters. Future inquiries should address this critical topic.

Visual Images of War

Television has become the main source of information about war (Rid, 2007). There have been a number of books written about how television has been used to tell the war story (e.g., Hoskins, 2004; Morrison, 1992; Taylor, 1998). The consistent conclusion is that television has the power to influence public support for/against the war. One powerful aspect of war is the visual image. Images may show military casualties, which are defined as “any person who is lost to the organization by having been declared dead, missing, ill, injured, or duty status-whereabouts unknown” (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O63-casualty.html>). There are limited studies examining the impact of war images on attitudes toward the war, but before these studies are examined it is important to understand what war visuals the public sees in the media.

Some scholarly research finds limited visual coverage of casualties for the Iraq War (Aday, 2005; Griffin, 2004; King & Lester, 2005). Silcock, Schwalbe, and Keith (2008) examined more than 2,500 images of casualties appearing on US television,

in US newspapers, news magazines, and online news sites during the first five weeks of the war in Iraq. They found across media types only 10% of images included a dead or injured person (casualty). They did not find any images of dead or injured Iraqi troops. 15% of the images shown on television during the first five weeks of the war depicted casualties.

It is assumed public opinion is influenced by the visual images of combat operations (Gartner & Secura, 1998). Some believe images of war have the power to sway public opinion for or against combat operations (Perlmutter, 1999). During World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt imposed a ban on photographs of casualties but later relented saying the photos could galvanize support for the war (Perlmutter, 1999). Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan were photographed at ceremonies honoring those that fell during conflicts in Pakistan, Beirut, San Salvador, and the Persian Gulf. During the Gulf War, President George H. W. Bush banned photos showing the remains of dead soldiers arriving at Dover Air Force Base after several television networks showed him giving a press briefing, while the other side of the split screen depicted coffins arriving at Dover (Milbank, 2003). President Bill Clinton lifted the ban only to have it reinstituted by President George W. Bush (Milbank, 2003). President Barack Obama and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates lifted the ban in favor of having the families decide on a case-by-case basis if the photos should be taken (National Press Photographers Association, 2009). The photos from Dover are often referred to as "The Dover Test." It is the assumption that witnessing military coffins delivered to the Dover air base influences public support for the war (Penrod, 2004). Senator John Glenn asked, "Will public opinion and will support in the Congress still be there when the body bags or coffins start coming back through Dover, Delaware?" (Penrod, 2004, p. 7).

The possible influence of more or less sanitization in news coverage of war is severely understudied. Domke, Spratt, and Perlmutter (2002) state, "systematic investigations of the [...] influence of visual news images are rare" (p. 194). Perlmutter (2005) calls for systematic study of "the actual influences of visual images on foreign affairs" (p. 111). In a rare example of both a content study and a related effects study, Sherr-Pollard (2001) performed a content analysis of news photographs and then conducted an experiment assessing emotional impact of news images. The content analysis showed photographs depicting violence were rare, and these photographs elicited negative affect in the experiment.

Pfau and colleagues (2006, 2008) also provide evidence for how visuals impact attitudes and emotions about the war in Iraq. Pfau and colleagues (2008) compare the impact of network television news reports of combat operations of the Iraq War (with and without graphic combat footage) on viewers. Pfau and colleagues (2008) found broadcast news stories showing visual footage of combat did not elicit greater emotional responses than the same story packaged as a "reader" (meaning, without visuals). However, participants who viewed television news stories showing visual footage of combat had less pride in the US military than those watching a "reader."

Pfau and colleagues (2008) found television news stories accompanied by visual footage influenced attitudes toward the war in Iraq. Broadcast stories with visual footage of combat undermined viewers' attitudes about continued US military presence in Iraq (Pfau et al., 2008). 70% of the stories about the war in Iraq in late 2005 discussed setbacks or obstacles to success in Iraq, and more stories were focusing on US casualties (30%) (Noyes, 2005). This coverage corresponds with a decline in public support for the war (Milbank & Deane, 2005). Pfau and colleagues (2008) state the results of their study indicate "television news stories featuring visual footage of combat reduced viewers' pride about US military presence in Iraq, enhanced their involvement levels about the war, and reduced viewers' support for continued US military presence in Iraq" (p. 318).

Similar results are found when examining print stories and photos of casualties. Pfau and colleagues (2006) examined print photographs of the Iraq War and the ways in which these photos may impact public support for the war. They compared a number of different ways to package the news story (e.g., photo plus caption, full-text story with no photo, or a full-text story with a photo and a caption). Findings indicate print photographs of casualties caused emotional responses in readers. News stories showing a photograph plus caption elicited more negative emotions (e.g., puzzlement, anger, and sadness) than stories about casualties without a photo. Pfau et al.'s (2006) findings confirmed Sherr-Pollard's (2001) findings. Photographs depicting violence elicit negative emotions in readers.

Pfau et al. (2006) also found stories without photos and stories with a photo reduce readers' support for continued US military presence in Iraq. "As people encounter repetitions of the same visual images and/or additional complementary images, it is likely that effects would grow" (Pfau et al., 2006, p. 161). Pfau et al. (2006) found when print news stories (regardless of how they were presented) discussed the battle for Fallujah, this topic led to greater support for US military presence in Iraq, suggesting support for a war can be increased by discussing ongoing battles, which may depict progress in the war. Thus, the impact of not just one news story seen in isolation but a series of news stories seen through repeated news exposure to the war should be further examined in future research.

Public Opinion and War

The military blamed the press for losing the Vietnam War, and former President Bush blamed the media for losing support for the Iraq War. In the end, there is a debate over what really drives public opinion. When examining previous research, the argument for the "casualties hypothesis" is the most common (Burk, 1999). This hypothesis suggests US citizens do not want to get involved in international conflict when people die. Burk (1999) developed this idea based on Mueller's (1973) research stating public support for war is inversely related to cumulative casualties. Mueller (1973,

1994) examined the Korean and Vietnam conflicts as well as the Gulf War. This research consistently shows support for the war declines as the number of casualties increases. Larson (1996) also argues there is a cost-benefit calculation at play. The public decides to support the conflict if the objectives are clear and there is a high probability of success. Thus, there also has to be ongoing success and a victorious end for public support (Feaver & Gelpi, 2004).

Feaver and Gelpi (2004) propose communication moderates the public's reaction. "If policy makers can make the case that the operation is important, then we would expect the public to show a willingness to shoulder greater cost" (p. 146). If communication about the war "demonizes" the enemy, then support for the war increases (Feaver & Gelpi, 2004). Therefore, the characteristics of the news coverage of the war are important.

Marginal casualties accumulating at an increasing rate are critical in predicting the direction and magnitude of change in the level of opposition at home (Gartner & Segura, 1998). "Marginal" is defined as those casualties above and beyond what is experienced in normal operations. The term could encompass casualties resulting from a single catastrophic event or higher than the usual casualties suffered in an ordinary combat event. Mueller (1973) posits the log function of the amount of cumulative casualties alone swayed public opinion about the Korean and Vietnam wars. Other researchers disagree. According to Gartner and Segura (1998), it is the marginal casualties, not cumulative casualties that are important in determining support for a particular war. Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler (2005–2006) see casualty tolerance depending on the decision of going to war (was it the right one?) and the expectations about winning. An additional complicating factor is that the US public cannot accurately estimate the cumulative casualty numbers (Berinsky & Druckman, 2007; Boettcher & Cobb, 2006). Support for the war depends on the frame of the story, political ideology and attitudes, as well as individual attitudes about casualties of war (Boettcher & Cobb, 2006).

Hansen, Haigh, and Pfau (2006) aligned public opinion polls about Iraq with a content analysis of media coverage. They found when the tone of the television news coverage is positive and the number of casualties increases, public support for the war declines less compared to when the television news coverage is negative in tone and the number of casualties increases. In the data, support for the war erodes with positive coverage but at a slower rate than when the coverage is negative, supporting Feaver and Gelpi's (2004) theory. When the tone of television coverage is positive it appears victory is possible so people continue to support the conflict. This effect was only found for television news and not for print news stories. Hansen et al. (2006) explain this difference by concluding newspaper readers have stronger attitudes about the war and are not as easily swayed by the news content (Wenmouth, Jr., Shapiro, & Cutbirth, 1982). Hansen et al. (2006) find when newspaper stories were more positive, the decline in support for the war lessens (significantly) compared to negative coverage. These findings were not found for television news.

Nontraditional Sources of Information

Late Night Comedy

The public relies on sources other than the mainstream media for news. Two sources linked to political knowledge are late night comedy shows (Chapter 21, this volume) and blogs (Chapter 23, this volume). Research examining late night comedy reveals a number of political implications between late night comedy viewing and perceptions of candidate image (e.g., Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Young, 2004) and political behaviors (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005a, 2005b; Pfau, Houston, & Semmler, 2005). The Pew Research Center (2004) found 39% of people between the ages of 30 and 49 report learning something by watching comedy or late night comedy shows.

Late night comedy provides information about what is going on in the world, but comedians are supposed to be funny even in times of trouble, such as during the Vietnam or Iraq Wars (Peterson, 2008). One example occurred on January 11, 1991 (George H. W. Bush's deadline for Iraqi troop withdrawal in the first Gulf War). Johnny Carson started his monologue with a joke about Doc Severinsen's coat and Delta Burke's salary dispute before discussing the impending war. However, times have changed. During the Iraq War, Jay Leno employed the opposite strategy by leading with jokes about the war and then working toward less meaningful topics (Peterson, 2008). Thus, comedians and program hosts differ in their tendencies toward directly oppositional jokes about war.

The Smothers Brothers or *Laugh-In* used comedy to take aim at the government during the Vietnam War, while Carson tended to either avoid the topic or tell "soft" jokes about it (Peterson, 2008). During the war in Iraq, Jay Leno, David Letterman, and other late night comics told more jokes about Saddam Hussein and the UN allies rather than discussing George W. Bush's plans to invade Iraq in March 2003 (Peterson, 2008).

Haigh and Heresco (2010) analyzed almost 1,000 late night jokes about Iraq told from March 19, 2003 to April 9, 2007. Results indicate late night comics (Jay Leno, David Letterman, and Conan O'Brien) told prowar jokes during the first week of the war and then more neutral jokes later. The comedians depicted the US government negatively from 2003 to 2005, and more positively in 2006. The hosts told the most positive jokes about Iraq in 2006 and 2007 compared to 2003 to 2005, but this could be because they were telling fewer jokes as the war progressed. Hosts told the most jokes about Iraq in 2003 (354 jokes). This number declined each year (202 jokes in 2004; 172 jokes in 2005; and 173 jokes in 2006).

There is the potential for these patterns in late night comedy joke-telling to have an impact on the audience. Young (2004) found humor that was mocking candidates made negative character traits more salient with some viewers. This same pattern may be found for jokes mocking US policy. Future media effects research should also examine the differences between network late night content and cable content.

Monologue jokes by Leno and Letterman may not have the same impact on viewers' political knowledge or political attitudes toward policies and candidates when compared to the skits on the *Daily Show*. Future media effects research could also examine if watching late night television comedy might impact political behaviors, such as having a discussion or contacting political representatives about war efforts. This type of finding would support Moy, Xenos and Hess' (2005a) research. They found a positive correlation between watching late night television comedy and political involvement and discussions.

Blogs

Since the war in Iraq started in 2003, individuals have received information about the war from broadcast stories, print stories, and blogs. The use of online forms of information about the war has led to the war in Iraq being called an "Internet war" (Berenger, 2005; Hewitt, 2005; Weideman, 2003). Research examines how stories about the war are framed on US news websites (Schwalbe, 2006), how coverage of the war varies between United States and international online sources (Dimitrova & Neznanski, 2006), and what celebrity blogs say about the war (Trammell, 2006).

Tom Ricks suggests "milblogs" blur the distance between the military and civilian worlds (Hewitt, 2003). Milblogs are blogs written by service members overseas, former service members, individuals supporting the military, or family members of those serving. The blogs discuss the military, news and information about events, policies, and procedures (blogworldexpo.com, 2009). The milblog phenomenon began with *Sergeant Stryker's Daily Briefing*, which was created when a service member became disappointed with mainstream media coverage of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (*The Mudville Gazette*, 2005). By October 2009, milblogging.com was tracking 2,500 milblogs (<http://www.milblogging.com>, 2009). Milbloggers do not replace the mainstream press but "cover the story of Captain Helberg and Charlie Company when the mainstream media won't; and they will cover it in a way – with the kind of empathy born of shared experience – that the mainstream press can't" (McLeary, 2008, p. 40).

A study by Haigh and colleagues (2007) examined what milblogs discuss and whether milblogs influence people's attitudes about the war in Iraq more so than online news stories. Results indicate almost half (47.8%) of milblogs analyzed in the study discussed what was printed in the mainstream news (e.g., *USA Today*, *New York Times*, etc.). Diary-type posts discussed: other blogs, what the milblogger did that day, what the milbloggers' friends did, wounded or fallen soldiers, political figures, public support for the war, and special dates (e.g., celebrations of Mother's Day, Father's Day, or an anniversary). Less common topics discussed on milblogs included: Iraqi civilians, Iraqi forces, prisoner abuse, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and the Iraqi constitution. More than half of the blog posts linked to outside information (e.g., other blogs, videos, photos, or news stories), and 13.4% included a photo.

According to the Haigh and colleagues (2007) study, milblogs tend to be neutral in their depiction of the military and typically use a neutral tone to discuss the topics much like a traditional news reporter would.

Haigh et al. (2007) sought to determine whether milblogs, compared to online news stories, exert different effects on perceptions of credibility and attitudes toward the US war in Iraq. Experimental results show participants' attitudes toward the war and perceptions of source credibility (online news source or milblogger) did not differ based on the where the story appeared. Milblogs were considered by participants to be the most credible source to discuss IEDs, whereas online news stories were deemed more credible when discussing the Iraqi constitution or training Iraqi forces.

Milblogs could have the power to influence public opinion and public policies (Berenger, 2006; Schwab, 2007). However, Haigh et al. (2007) did not find milblogs impact attitudes more than online news stories. The topic of the story (training Iraqi forces, IEDs, Iraqi constitution) appears to impact individuals' attitudes, not the source of the story. As might be expected, attitudes tend to be more positive about the war when the stories individuals read indicate progress in Iraq (training Iraqi forces or ratifying the Iraqi constitution) (Haigh et al., 2007).

Haigh et al. (2007) did not find any differences in perceived credibility among the story sources (news story or milblog). Milblogs were deemed just as credible as online news stories in this study. This may be explained by the milbloggers being deemed "trustworthy" and "experts" because they are in the line of fire and have first-hand experience. This supports previous research (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000) suggesting milbloggers can be trusted because they are experts on the topic, the same as the reporters reporting news stories. We can conclude, therefore, that milblogs as well as other forms of blogging and online news sources join more traditional sources in bringing aspects of the war home to the public.

Conclusion

It is important to understand the relationship between the military and the media because it impacts how the story is told and the information the public has on which to form attitudes about the war. One significant change in the press and the military relationship is the creation and use of embedded reporters to report from the warfront. Future research should examine how the use of embedded reporters impacts public opinion. There is an abundance of research examining the differences between embedded and nonembedded stories and how the journalists thought they did telling the story, but there is a lack of research examining if these different stories impact public opinion.

There is also a lack of research examining how visual images influence attitudes about war. Pfau and colleagues (2006, 2008) and Sherr-Pollard (2001) have examined how visuals impact attitudes but more research can be done in this area. Pfau and

colleagues (2006, 2008) used a sample of college students. Results might vary for audiences who watch more television news, read the paper more frequently, and have had more life experiences. College-aged students provide a good sample for experimental research, but it is worth investigating these results outside of a laboratory setting. Research has found the US media is very sanitized when showing visuals of casualties. It is worth exploring the differences in support for war for individuals outside the US who are presumably exposed to more graphic images of war. The military is very concerned about US public opinion, but these images may be influencing global public opinion. Scholars also need to start analyzing public opinion and media content simultaneously much like Hansen et al. (2006) did in their study.

This chapter touches on a number of topics, but the overall theme is the lack of media effects studies. There are a number of content analysis studies and studies aligning survey questions with media use habits, but overall there are few studies examining the effects of information on public support for the war. The literature used to discuss each topic in this chapter (embeds, visuals, blogs, late night comedy) could be expanded to include direct studies of media effects. Researchers still have a lot to learn about the impact media have on individuals' attitudes and support for war.

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Understanding the Role of Cognition and Media in Body Image Disturbance and Weight Bias in Children, Adolescents, and Adults

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the role of cognition and media as it relates to body image disturbances and weight bias in children, adolescents, and adults. Specifically, this chapter examines the multidimensional factors related to an individual's body image and further examines how these variables relate to prejudice or anti-fat bias against others. Exposure to thin-ideal media and related effects on an individual's self-perception are examined in the areas of self-discrepancy, body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, and body self-esteem. This chapter further examines the relationship between media and obesity with a look at the role media potentially play in the development of overweight or obesity in children. Lastly, this chapter will synthesize work in the area of media, cognition, and body image from a theoretical perspective and offer suggestions for the direction of future research.

Media and Body Size and Shape

Younger children spend approximately 25% of their time awake watching television, exposing them to television characters and images that reinforce notions about the importance of thinness and attractiveness (Harrison, 2000b; Yamamiya, Cash, Mlnyk, Posavac, & Posavac, 2005). During this important developmental stage, children are said to form many of their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their own body shape and size and that of others (Smolak, 2008). If preventative measures aren't taken to address body image issues in these populations, they will find themselves living a lifetime with a negative body image. The general conclusion among researchers is that exposure to thin-ideal imagery is related to greater body dissatisfaction, lower body self-esteem, body dysmorphic disorder, self-discrepancy, and self-objectification in people of all ages (Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Jordan, Smisson, Burkner, Joyner, & Czech, 2005; Richins, 1991; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004). This is one of several reasons the media are said to play such a crucial role in the overall development of an individual's body image (Bissell, 2004a, 2004b; Harrison, 2000a, 2001).

Despite the representation of the thin ideal in a mediated context, the recent increases in childhood and adult obesity suggest a mismatch. Rather than there being a middle ground in which an "average" adult or child would see himself or herself in the media, what is viewed represents an end of the body shape spectrum that is largely unattainable. More importantly, the presence of thin and attractive women and muscular men has led to increases in anti-fat bias (AFB) among children, adolescents, and adults (Wang, Brownell, & Wadden, 2004). Published studies indicate that understanding the complex factors related to weight bias and body dissatisfaction involve social, psychological, and even sociological variables (Grogan, 2008). Along these lines, it may be in understanding the cognitive disposition of children and adolescents that helps explain how or why these attitudes and beliefs about the self and others are formed. This chapter explores the role of cognition and media as it relates to body image disturbances and weight bias in children, adolescents, and adults. Specifically, this chapter examines the multidimensional factors related to an individual's body image on both ends of the spectrum and further examines how these variables relate to prejudice or anti-fat bias against others. Lastly, this chapter will synthesize work in the area of media, cognition, and body image from a theoretical perspective and offer suggestions for the direction of future research.

Relevant Background and Earlier Work in the Discipline

In the United States, as many as 10 million females and 1 million males fight a life and death battle with disordered eating. Forty-two percent of first to third grade girls

want to be thinner. 81% of 10-year-olds are afraid of being fat. Furthermore, 91% of women recently surveyed on a college campus had attempted to control their weight through dieting (ANAD, 2010). Since the 1960s, the number of diagnosed cases of an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia has doubled, and health and psychological practitioners are seeing increases in disordered eating among preadolescents, women older than 30, non-Whites, and men – all traditionally not considered at risk for an eating disorder (Woodside et al., 2001). While recent news coverage of health issues has focused predominantly on the increases in obesity, especially in children, specialists in disordered eating argue that the societal gap is continuing to increase between those who are killing themselves with too much food and those who are killing themselves because of a lack of food (Landro, 2004).

Studies in the area of body image distortion suggest the media are one of many potential variables related to increases in disordered eating, especially in college and adolescent females (Harrison, 2000b; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw, & Stein, 1994). The media are often held partially responsible for young females' desire to be extraordinarily thin because of the number of media messages promoting the "thin ideal." Several studies over the last decade have examined this problem, looking at possible social, psychological, and biological correlates to the witnessed increases in disordered eating. More recent studies have also found body image distortion to be problematic for women and girls in countries including Canada (Gadalla & Piran, 2007), Brazil (Nunes, Barros, Anselmo Olinto, Camey, & Mari, 2003), Sweden (Sundquist, Qvist, Johansson, & Sundquist, 2003), and Qatar (Bener & Tewfik, 2006), and women of ethnicities such as Asian Americans (Phan & Tylka, 2006), African Americans (Lilenfeld, Jacobs, Woods, & Picot, 2008), and Hispanic women (Hrabosky & Grilo, 2007).

There's little argument that the media content women and girls are exposed to and pay most attention to contain repeated messages promoting the thin ideal (Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, & Thompson, 1980; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986; Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, & Ahrens, 1990). Content analyses of entertainment television, fashion magazines, and advertisements have confirmed that the body shape standard found in media has become thinner (see above citations), even though greater diversity in the body type represented on television is beginning to be seen. The presentation of ultrathin models in the media, and certainly the presentation of thin models at the exclusion of average or overweight models, enforces the notion that there is one acceptable body type for women (Kilbourne, 1999). At the simplest level, this mismatch between the ideal and actual self could be responsible for the development of an eating disorder or the development of trait characteristics related to disordered eating, including body dissatisfaction (Bissell, 2004a; Richins, 1991), drive for thinness (Bissell & Porterfield, 2006; Harrison & Cantor, 1997), or physique anxiety (Bissell & Porterfield, 2006; Jordan et al., 2005).

Numerous studies have determined that the self-esteem of adolescent girls plummets significantly as they transition into their developmental teenage years (12–18), and young girls are said to lose confidence, self-esteem, and independence at an early point in adolescence, largely because of harmful cultural messages and societal pressures

(Grogan, 2008; Kilbourne, 1999; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Pipher, 1994). During this critical developmental stage, girls may experience a loss of self-image and develop skewed attitudes about their competence and body image (Stice & Bearman, 2001; Stice, Killen, Hayward, & Taylor, 1999). This problem isn't specific to women though, as other studies have examined the relationship between these variables among men and boys and exposure to action/adventure films and action/adventure figures (Olivardia, Pope, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2004; Pope, Olivardia, Gruber, & Borowiecki, 1999).

Sports Media Exposure and Sports Participation

Although it is clear that a number of factors – including media – influence young girls' propensity to develop an eating disorder, exposure to thinness-depicting (TDP) media has been shown to significantly predict the symptoms (Bissell & Porterfield, 2006). One question that remains unanswered is if children are exposed to media messages that tout the positive aspects of the body – like sports – is it possible the outcome might be different?

Bissell and Zhou (2004) examined entertainment and sports media exposure and four body image outcomes in college women. Exposure to the TDP media was the strongest predictor of negative body image outcomes, and sports media exposure was marginally related to more positive outcomes. However, when exposure to a specific type of sport was examined, different findings emerged. When respondents' exposure to sports identified as lean (gymnastics, ice skating, swimming, and diving) was examined, the findings suggest increased levels of all four body image outcomes: body dissatisfaction, drive-for-thinness, anorexia, and bulimia. Lean sports are those in which the body is often on display and that often require a smaller body mass index in order to be successful, whereby non-lean sports include sports where less of the body is on display and greater muscle mass will not necessarily be a detriment to overall performance (basketball, soccer). The fairly big limitation to the above findings is that exposure to women's sports on television is sporadic, infrequent, and difficult to measure. Findings from this study identify a need for the refinement of the sports media exposure scale because the results suggested that exposure to some types of sports media were related to more positive outcomes. The general findings from this study suggest that sports media exposure might be linked to more positive attitudes about the body, but that finding may be predicated on the type of sport to which women are exposed.

The research, although minimal, which has investigated the relationship between girls' self-esteem, body self-esteem, and sports participation indicates a positive correlation (Smolak, Murnen, & Ruble, 2000). During this time of emotional and physical maturation and uncertainty, there is reason to believe that girls who actively engage in sports will have higher self-esteem than their non-athletic peers, since sports participation affords girls the opportunity to develop physical competence and de-emphasize the importance of physical attractiveness as the greatest measure of

their self-esteem (Daniels & Leaper, 2006). In a sport environment, girls can learn the value of teamwork and community involvement, form meaningful friendships, and girls may feel more confident and comfortable with who they are. Sports participation may also act as a beneficial mediator between TDP media exposure and low self-esteem, reducing the chances that young girls will develop an eating disorder (Cate & Sugawara, 1986). As noted below, media use, especially television use, by adolescents is high, so if girls spend less time doing things like watching television and spend more time doing physical activities like playing sports, that involvement could serve as a factor that helps elevate a girl's self-esteem.

Although several studies have examined sports participation and disordered eating outcomes, most have not included media exposure as a factor. For elite and professional athletes, involvement in a sport at a highly competitive level consumes great amounts of time, but it is important not to discount the role of the media. Subsequently, it is argued that the media may still play a role in shaping girls' sense of self and sense of body self-esteem by presenting images representing "ideal beauty" and "ideal thinness," even in media directed toward younger audiences. Bissell (2004a, 2004b) with Porterfield (2006,) and with Birchall (2008) examined sports participation as a moderating variable in athletic samples ranging from adolescent girls, elite adolescent athletes, and collegiate athletes. The findings from these studies indicate that media exposure is indeed an important variable. In the one study, Bissell and Birchall (2008) surveyed eighty 8–18-year-old female athletes about their time spent playing sports, their sport type – lean or non-lean – media use, and body self-esteem. In terms of this sample's media use, participants' television viewing was found to be quite specific because they had such limited time with the media. Also important was participants' own sense of media influence on themselves, an attribute that suggests a good deal about their own emotional and psychological development and maturity. In this sample, it was found that the older athletes, between 14–18, were more likely to believe that television played an important and influential role in learning how to be a girl, and the differences between the older and younger girls' scores on this question were statistically significant.

Despite great participation in sports and athletics, adolescent athletes exposed to thin-ideal imagery had significantly higher levels of body image distortion (BID) than participants who were not exposed to as much thin-ideal TV. In a study with Division I collegiate athletes, Bissell and Porterfield's (2006) findings closely mirrored those from the study with adolescent athletes: Exposure to thin ideal television was a significant predictor of increased levels of body image disturbance (BID) – body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, anorexia, and bulimia. Even though studies mentioned earlier have found higher incidences of BID in athletes classified as participants in "lean" sports, findings from this study indicated that it didn't matter what sport the participant played or how long the participant played the sport, dissatisfaction with body shape and size was high across the sample. This suggests that involvement in sport, while beneficial for younger girls, may serve as less of a buffer against other harmful variables such as media and peers as an individual grows and develops.

In another study with Division I collegiate athletes, Bissell (2004) found thin-ideal television exposure to be a significant predictor of four dimensions of disordered-eating symptomatology. In this study, sports media exposure was found to be related to decreased levels of BID; however, when a hierarchical regression model was run including exposure to other types of media, the relationship disappeared. This suggests sports media exposure may still be important in finding ways to combat negative body image, but additional research is needed to better understand that exposure. It is for this reason, and many others, that a more comprehensive picture of body image distortion should be developed.

In one of the seminal studies of the relationship between media and body image, Myers and Biocca (1992) found that women who watched even 30 minutes of television programming a day had greater body distortion than those who did not. Other studies examining entertainment media confirm these findings. Time spent with media is important, but the content exposed to is as important if not more so (Bissell & Birchall, 2008). Furthermore, what isn't known from some self-report measures is how much an individual is attending to the content. If the individual is sending text messages, surfing the Internet, or engaging in other activities, the effect of exposure might not be as great because the individual may not be engaging in the social comparison process. This opens the door for other theoretical explanations of the phenomenon, theories that explain specific use of the media and individual factors like cognitive processing styles. In addition to expanding the theoretical model, scholars more recently have concluded that a myriad of factors are relevant in better understanding the development of negative body image. While findings from earlier studies are important in better understanding the way individual, social, and mediated factors shape and influence the way women, girls, men, and boys come to think about their body shape and size, the thinking now is that those factors are more individualized. One key issue with earlier studies in mass communication and other disciplines is that they have often not been multidimensional and have excluded the consideration of other environments.

Broader Contextualization of Relevant Factors: Body Image and Individual, Social, and Mediated Factors

The pervasiveness of thin-ideal imagery in multiple forms of media suggests that most girls and women are going to be exposed to thousands of messages touting the rewards of being thin and being attractive. However, several experimental studies have found that women are not equally influenced by these media messages. Individual characteristics such as cognitive processing styles, weight or body mass index (BMI), overall self-esteem, self-consciousness, and a tendency toward social

comparison have been identified as relevant predictors (Fairburn, Shafran, & Cooper, 1999; Myers & Biocca, 1992) along with other individual, social, or mediated factors.

The development of poor body image or disordered eating behavioral patterns can be a product of the factors mentioned above alone or in combination. For example, Ricciardelli, McCabe, Holt, and Finemore (2003) examined what they called biopsychosocial factors relevant in predicting children's body image and body change strategies. They found that individual factors such as gender, age, race, and BMI were significant predictors of the examined outcome as well as social factors such as perceived pressure from parents, peers, and the media. Wang, Byrne, Kenardy, and Hills (2005) identified individual factors such as ethnicity and socioeconomic status as relevant predictors of body dissatisfaction in Australian children and adolescents, and Mikami, Hinshaw, Patterson, and Lee (2008) found some trait characteristics of ADD/ADHD to be relevant factors in disordered eating pathology in girls. Specifically, the authors found that what they called "baseline impulsivity symptoms" compared to symptoms such as inattention or hyperactivity best predicted disordered eating pathology.

As attention is turned to outside influences, factors such as an individual's home environment have been identified as strong predictors of disordered eating symptomatology (DE) in some individuals. For example, Canals, Sancho, and Arijia (2008) found that when DE was identified in one or more parents in a household, children in that household were at an increased risk for the development of DE behaviors.

In an attempt to gain a more comprehensive picture of body image among children, Bissell conducted a pre- and posttest within-subjects experiment with 200 first–eighth grade boys and girls in the fall of 2009. Results from this study indicate that cognitive and rational processing styles, household dieting behavior, the Children's Eating Attitudes Test, and exercise attitudes were all related to participant self-discrepancy (Bissell & Hays, 2011; Bissell & Parrott, 2010). In a diverse sample with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls in all seven grades, Bissell and Parrott (2010) found that children who scored higher on the rational processing scale, meaning they were more likely to think carefully about things, had lower levels of self-discrepancy when asked to identify their actual and ideal body shapes. This was found for boys and girls, although the coefficient was higher for boys in the sample. Experiential processors, meaning those more likely to use their gut reaction and be more instinctive, demonstrated higher levels of self-discrepancy, and this was also true for boys and girls in the sample, although the R^2 was higher for girls than it was boys. This statistically significant relationship was found at the pre- and posttests across the sample.

Household dieting behavior also proved to be a relevant predictor of self-discrepancy in the same study, but this was only found for girls at the pretest. The household dieting scale measured the amount of discussion and behavior related to dieting in the participant's home. Results from the pretest indicate that in households where dieting and weight were frequently discussed or in households where the mother was frequently dieting, self-discrepancy was significantly higher.

Theoretical Perspectives

The complex relationship between media and body image distortion in women and girls has been examined using several theoretical frameworks: social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), social cognitive theory (Bandura & Wood, 1989; Cash & Pruzinsky, 2004), self-discrepancy theory (Bessenoff, 2006; Higgins, 1987), cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1974; Levine & Smolak, 1996; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Tiggemann, 2005), and objectification theory (Bissell & Zhou, 2004; Cash & Pruzinsky, 2004; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002). Festinger's groundbreaking work in social comparison has led to a body of work using the theory as one possible explanation of body image disturbance. Festinger's belief that individuals frequently compare themselves to others on a variety of dimensions, including physical attractiveness and appearance, has supported a line of work examining individuals' comparisons between ideal others found in the media and themselves. Self-discrepancy theory is similar in concept in that the theory suggests individuals compare themselves to internalized standards, which are referred to as self-guides. The underlying premise of self-discrepancy theory is that discrepancies between the actual, ideal, and "ought" selves will result in emotional vulnerabilities, and in the context of studying body image distortion, these discrepancies may lead to outcomes such as body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, or related outcomes. Both of the above theories help us better understand the role of the individual in the development of BID, whereas theories such as cultivation or social cognitive theory help explain the role of social or mediated factors.

In its simplest form, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989) suggests that individuals learn via observation of others around them. Social cognitive theory could easily be linked to the underlying premise of cultivation theory, as both predict the ways an individual might come to model behavior, beliefs, and attitudes related to body image, especially after increased time spent viewing television. Cultivation theory can be used to explain the way initial impressions of a body image norm might be developed, as Gerbner and Gross (1974) proposed that individuals who spend more time viewing television will have perceptions about the real world that more closely resemble the world presented to them in a mediated context. This theory could be expanded to consider perceptions about body image and appearance norms because of earlier findings about the narrow presentation of ideal beauty and ideal body shape often found in entertainment media. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) offer objectification theory as a possible explanation of how and possibly why women and girls may respond to mediated messages via harmful attitudes or behavior as the theory suggests women, or more specifically the female body, is placed in a social context as an object rather than a subject. Objectification theory offers us a theoretical lens for understanding how a female might be led to view herself, based on female representations often found in the media.

One rather ironic factor about the media is that they can serve both a positive and a negative role in the development of a young girl's sense of self, especially as it relates to body image, creating incongruencies that make it confusing and complicated for viewers. As young girls look to television and movie stars such as Miley Cyrus (*Hannah Montana*) or Ashley Tisdale (*High School Musical*), they see glamorized images, which are, to a large degree, of very thin girls. Cultivation theorists would argue that repeated exposure to these thin-ideal portrayals will lead to distorted body perceptions, just as it does for college-aged and older women, due to television's ability to shape perceptions of social reality (Chapter 2). Many scholars examining the development of distorted body image in men and women suggest that it is the repeated viewing over time of similar content that contributes to an individual's beliefs about social reality (Tiggemann, 2005).

Despite the growing waistlines of children and adults nationwide, the representation of the body remains fairly narrow; yet, obesity has been a societal problem for decades. The question then arises, why is it that media representations of body shape have remained relatively narrow where children and adults have become increasingly larger? More importantly, what type of effect is seen when mediated representations of body shape do not mirror reality?

Other Body Image Outcomes: Anti-Fat Bias and Obesity

Nearly one in three children in the United States is overweight or obese, including youths, from 2-year-old preschoolers to 18-year-old high school seniors, and children of every race, ethnicity, and gender. Recent estimates show weight issues among children and adolescents remain a top health concern for the nation (Hedley et al., 2004). One question that merits attention from this array of stakeholders deals with the social and cognitive ramifications of obesity. Several studies have examined the convergence of increasing obesity rates and the psychosocial effects on children's perceptions of weight in themselves and others, but surprisingly little attention is given to the variety of factors that are relevant in the formation of negative attitudes about overweight and obese individuals.

The increased public and media attention to the problem has led to what Wang, Brownell, and Wadden (2004) call the "stigma of obesity" (p. 1333). They argue that unlike bias against minority groups, bias or negative attitudes towards overweight individuals is accepted and sometimes encouraged. Social marginalization and the stigmatization of obesity in adults have been well documented as resulting in disadvantages in employment, education, healthcare, and interpersonal relationships (Puhl & Latner, 2007). For example, McEvoy (1994) found in her study of employment discrimination against the overweight that the more overweight the employee,

the more likely he or she was to be discriminated against in the workplace. Puhl and Brownell (2001) found that obese individuals reported being discriminated against in public settings like grocery stores or restaurants. However, anti-fat bias and weight stigmatization are not confined to adults, as a growing body of research indicates that children may also be victims – and perpetrators – of anti-fat bias and weight stigmatization. While the existence and consequences of anti-fat bias have been documented, what remains unknown is how or when these biases or stereotypes about weight and obesity are formed in children.

The Role of the Media in the Development of Anti-Fat Bias

Decades of research on the media's influence on appearance norms and ideals shows that increased exposure to media, especially thin-ideal media, is related to a cultivation of perceptions about standards of beauty and thinness for the self and others. This type of exposure coupled with negative mediated representations of obese or overweight people may create or reinforce ideas about weight bias, especially in children. Certainly, the media may develop and nurture anti-fat bias (AFB) through the way television, magazines, and other sources present – or do not present – content. For example, a study by Latner and Stunkard (2003) found that children's media use, including magazines and videogames, was related to more negative attitudes toward obese youths. Television portrayals may be particularly problematic. Studies by Fouts and colleagues (2000, 2002) found that overweight characters are more likely to be the target of negative comments in television sitcoms. Negative comments also were backed by audience applause, which reinforced the negative comments and may lead the home audience to internalize gender and weight stereotypes. Television programs may also encourage anti-fat bias through the content viewers don't see. For example, studies have demonstrated that overweight people are underrepresented in television sitcoms, which may skew viewer perceptions of the prevalence of overweight people in the "real world" (Fouts & Vaughan, 2002).

In a study designed to measure anti-fat bias in young children, Bissell and Hays (2011) predicted that participants with greater exposure to the media would be more likely to exhibit greater anti-fat bias than those viewing less television; however, several other variables of interest were considered such as cognitive processing styles, demographic variables, and self-perceptions of body shape. Using two measures of explicit anti-fat bias and one measure of implicit fat bias, Bissell and Hays (2011) found in their study of 601 third to sixth grade children that fear of negative appearance evaluations and demographic variables were the strongest predictors of greater bias against overweight individuals. Television viewing was found to be a predictor of more positive assessments of overweight individuals, a finding contrary to what

was predicted. However, when other variables were considered in a hierarchical regression model, these variables – fear of negative appearance evaluations, an assessment of an individual's own fear of being overweight, and demographic variables – were stronger predictors of negative assessments and prevailed statistically. The Implicit Association Test was also used in this study to measure participants' automatic associations of specific adjectives (good, bad, pretty, smart, funny, useless) to one of two words – thin or overweight. Quite consistently, a majority of the sample assigned the positive adjectives to the word “thin” whereas a majority of the sample assigned the negative adjectives to the word “overweight”. This simply suggests that on some level, unconscious or subconscious, many of the children in the sample held attitudes or beliefs about overweight individuals that were negative.

In a similar study, Parrott and Bissell (2010) conducted a pre- and posttest between- and within-subjects experiment with 200 children in grades 1–8. Their findings identified several important variables in terms of predicted correlates of anti-fat bias, and these variables included individual factors (demographics, cognitive processing styles), social factors (dieting behavior at home, exposure to overweight peers and family), and mediated factors (exposure to thin-ideal programming). Findings suggest that of all demographic variables examined, age was the strongest predictor of anti-fat bias. Experimental condition was also an important variable in the level of anti-fat bias a child exhibited. In this study, participants were randomly assigned to one of five groups, four experimental groups (each viewed an image of an overweight boy or girl or an image of a thin boy or girl) and one control group (no image exposure). Children randomly assigned to the experimental group who viewed either an image of an overweight boy or girl were significantly more likely to have higher scores on both measures of AFB, meaning they were more likely to assign negative attributes to overweight individuals, and this was compared to responses of individuals exposed to the thin boy or girl and participants in the control group.

Of the two cognitive variables used in the Bissell and Parrott study (2010) – the experiential and rational processing scales – both were found to be significant predictors of anti-fat bias. Furthermore, implicit attitudes representative of fat bias were also evident across the sample, and these implicit attitudes were related to explicit attitudes of fat bias. Of importance here is participant age. Older children were higher on the rational processing scale whereas younger children were higher on the experiential processing scale. This suggests that the more a child thought about the overweight subject in the photograph, the less likely the child was to admit a bias against being overweight or obese. This conclusion seems to be supported by the fact that higher levels of rational processing were related to decreased levels of fat bias, and older children exhibited lower AFB.

If age and rational processing style predict decreased levels of anti-fat bias, an important question seems to be at what age does the bias develop? The negative attitudes toward overweight individuals were the highest in the younger children, and this could be a product of them answering truthfully rather than being fearful of admitting how they felt about the overweight subjects in the photographs. The

development of weight bias could also be a product of younger children being less familiar with what is considered to be socially acceptable.

Summary Discussion of Media Exposure and Anti-Fat Bias

Limited evidence exists examining the relationship between media exposure and an individual's likelihood to exhibit anti-fat bias or weight stigmatization. Content analysis of prime-time programming and children's programming suggests body shape norms are fairly narrow and could contribute to an individual's likelihood to uphold thinness as an ideal. The Bissell and Hays (2011) and Bissell and Parrott (2010) studies indicate that AFB and weight stigma are not just problems exacerbated by the media but that the individual and social factors (self-perception, demographics, household dieting behavior) can all contribute to an individual's development of negative attitudes toward overweight people. Media exposure remains an important variable though, as it is one of the several socializing agents and certainly a factor that helps shape an individual's view of social reality. This topic remains important to the scholarly community as a social issue because more children are becoming overweight or obese, and this trend appears to be increasing at an alarming rate.

Media and Obesity

Limited empirical evidence exists examining the relationship between media exposure and an individual's likelihood to be overweight or obese, simply because so many other factors – genetics, lack of physical activity, and increased consumption of high-calorie, low-nutrition foods and beverages – are equally (and sometimes simultaneously) relevant. A few general conclusions about the relationship between media and obesity can be made, however, and findings from more recent studies indicate that time spent with media is a key factor in an individual's likelihood to become overweight or obese. Morgenstern, Sargent, and Hanewinkel (2009) report a strong association between television viewing and obesity, and report in their study of just under 10,000 children from Germany and the United States that media use was directly related to participant BMI. For example, Morgenstern and colleagues found that when study participants had a television in their bedroom, their risk for overweight and obesity, essentially measured via BMI, was greater.

What isn't known from the studies reported above is which factor – BMI or media use – is a predictor or causal factor in the other. It could be argued that overweight or obese individuals, who are more likely to be sedentary, will spend more time with

media because they spend less time on other activities. The notion of television being used as a displacement for other activities was confirmed by a Cecil-Karb and Grogan-Kaylor (2009) study in that when parents perceived their child's outdoor environment or neighborhood to be unsafe, they were more likely to restrict outdoor activities in lieu of indoor activities, such as spending time with the media. Parental perceptions of neighborhood safety were significantly associated with their child's BMI, which was significantly associated with time spent with the media.

While time spent with media is one important variable in understanding predictors of overweight or obesity, the content viewed may also be a relevant factor. For example, the media may be responsible for the development of attitudes and beliefs about food, nutrition, and health (Powell, Szczypka, & Chaloupka, 2010; Taras & Gage, 1995), and if a child's belief system is shaped by negative health messages in the media, that child may be at increased risk for being overweight or obese. A recent study published by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (IOM report) indicated that the current practices for food marketing put children at a health risk because dietary patterns begin early in childhood and are shaped by social, cultural, and mediated factors, including television advertising. As studies over the last decade have shown, food ads targeted toward children have often emphasized unhealthy options versus healthy options. They further report that in the ads targeted toward children, few health-related messages were found but of the ones with some mention of health, the message was related to the food containing natural ingredients or that the food was low in calories. For children who spend a great deal of time watching television each day, exposure to unhealthy food messages may prevail.

The Kaiser Family Foundation reported in its 2010 study (Roberts, Rideout, & Foehr, 2010), *Generation M²: Media Use in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds*, that total media use by children between the ages of 8–18 was just under 11 hours a day, which represents a significant increase from time spent with the media based on data collected in 2004 (approximately eight and a half hours per day) and data collected in 1999 (approximately seven and a half hours per day). As reported in a more recent study, elementary aged children spent several hours a day watching television programs on the Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, and the Cartoon Network and spent additional time on the websites associated with those channels as well as websites targeted toward children (webkins.com, neopets.com, and playhousedisney.com) (Bissell & Hays, 2011). Additionally, food products that are associated with a media tie-in and that have a corresponding "toy" make resisting the food even more difficult.

In measuring a child's knowledge of nutrition and food preferences, it is important to examine media as one driving component in the development of knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about the foods they consume. Media are often blamed for the increases in childhood obesity, but beyond articulating that children spend too much time with media, little is known about how the specific content children are exposed to may influence their thoughts and decisions about the foods they consume. Lowry, Wechsler, Galuska, Fulton, and Kann (2002) report in their study of high school students' media use and their rates of sedentary lifestyles and obesity that one in three White students, one in two Hispanic students, and three in four Black students

watched more television per day than what is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (two hours per day). Most importantly, the authors report that in their sample, television viewing was found to be positively related to the consumption of high-fat foods and those participants who were overweight were also more likely to spend more time with television.

The general conclusion from these studies is that television viewing may be negatively related to children's food preferences, food intake, and nutritional knowledge because it may not only shape what they view to be healthy and good for them, but it may also shape their preferences for specific foods and affect how much food they eat while watching television.

The results of these studies shed light on the myriad factors that need to be considered in relevant theory development. From a theoretical perspective, cultivation theory is appropriate in better understanding how the media, especially television, may shape a child's sense of nutritional knowledge and food preferences. Given the conflicting messages found in some advertisements related to food – "it's fat free" or "low in fat" – children who are heavier viewers of television may find themselves more confused about healthy food choices than those who are exposed to less television. Even if advertisers are slowly addressing growing concerns related to obesity in children, the underlying premise of cultivation theory is that over time, viewers will adopt a view of the real world that more closely resembles that of the mediated world. Thus, it is especially important to have a clearer picture of the specific content children pay attention to and if newer technologies such as TiVo decrease the amount of time children spend watching advertisements.

With overall obesity rates on the rise and childhood obesity increasing in every state in the United States, understanding the social effect this has on children is an area in need of more scholarly attention. While the health consequences of obesity are irrefutable, the psychological damage associated with weight stigma or bias can also be quite detrimental. If children are engaging in unhealthy eating habits or if their preferences for food only include foods low in nutritional value, they may be setting themselves up for a lifetime of weight stigmatization on a societal level and health problems on an individual level. Knowledge of nutrition and food preferences may very well be directly related to an individual's weight and body shape, and in light of the research documenting that overweight characters in mediated contexts are perceived as deviants and that samples ranging from preschoolers to adults adhere to negative attitudes about overweight people, it seems evident that people who are overweight can face bias, prejudice, and discrimination in several contexts.

Directions for Future Research

Given the complexity of the body image distortion and weight stigmatization phenomenon, researchers must continue to study these issues from an interdisciplinary approach. Cognitive processing styles, an individual's home and social

environment, and media exposure are just some of the important factors that may help us better understand the way individuals process messages about the body. Through media literacy intervention programs, some individuals, especially children, may be better equipped to challenge messages that uphold thinness as a norm or ideal. Furthermore, through health literacy programs, individuals may be taught about the long-term consequences of extreme thinness or obesity and thus might take steps to prevent that from happening. More simply, we must educate children that social comparison with any target other will often lead to a negative outcome. More importantly, body image should be viewed in the context of health and not shape, size, or weight.

It is difficult to change the way people think, but it is important to take these steps through media and health literacy programs. Perceptions and beliefs about body image have developed and become entrenched, in part, because of the social, cultural and mediated emphasis on appearance and the thin ideal. A very important consideration in future studies is the perceived “realness” of mediated messages. With increased attention focused on the digital enhancement in still and moving images, it is possible women may be less inclined to feel the images influence them about their own body shape and size. The goal for future research should be to continue to find ways to combat the negative and/or harmful messages often found in entertainment media and to find ways to keep women and girls from destroying their physical and mental health at such early ages. Body image distortion is a mental health issue that could easily escalate to a public health crisis if preventative measures – on both ends of the body image spectrum – are not addressed. Some women and girls may be injuring themselves with too little food whereas others may be injuring themselves with too much. Regardless of where on the body image spectrum an individual is, the psychological and health consequences of extreme thinness or obesity are quite clear. The body of work in this area has proven useful in gaining better understanding of the way body image perceptions are formed and shaped. The key now is to continue this research with attention to an interdisciplinary approach so a more comprehensive picture of body image perceptions can be gained and women and men can start focusing on the things their body can do rather than how their body looks.

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Tracing the Course of Reality TV Effects Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter overviews the history of reality-based TV research, starting with efforts to define the genre and understand why people watch such programming, with particular attention to issues of voyeurism and desire for fame. The discussion then turns to research on the effect of reality TV consumption, which has progressed primarily through the lenses of cultivation theory, social cognitive theory, and perceived realism. Given the general focus on the negative effects of reality TV consumption, the chapter goes on to examine the possible benefits of watching reality TV, such as enhancing learning, coping potential, and cooperative behavior. The chapter concludes with some consideration of the health implications of watching reality TV programming, including desire for cosmetic surgery enhancements and motivation for healthy living.

Development of the Genre

Although its history reaches back to the early days of television, reality-based programming, or “reality TV”, did not gain substantial popularity until the dawn of the twenty-first century. Over 100 new reality programs have aired since the summer of 2000, and the genre continues to dominate as the newest staple of the TV diet in the United States and beyond (Reality TV World, 2010). Its increasing popularity among

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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viewers is matched by the increasing attention researchers have paid to understanding not only what constitutes reality TV but why it is so popular and what effects its viewing has on its audiences. In this chapter, we explore each of these issues, focusing on the documented as well as potential effects of reality TV viewing, with particular attention to the valuable outcomes that might emerge from consuming this form of programming.

Defining Reality TV

There is no clear industry standard or definition of reality TV. As a result, conceptualizations often err on the side of inclusiveness, capturing all programming claiming to present reality, including news programming, talk shows, and sporting events (e.g., Cavender & Fishman, 1998; Potter et al., 1997). Focusing solely on the programs that have emerged as part of the burgeoning reality TV phenomenon, like *Survivor*, *The Bachelor*, *American Idol*, and the like, Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt (2003, p. 304) defined reality TV programming as “programs that film real people as they live out events in their lives, contrived or otherwise, as they occur.” They further specify that reality programs are characterized by: “(a) people portraying themselves . . . (b) filmed at least in part in their living or working environment rather than on a set, (c) without a script, (d) with events placed in a narrative context, (e) for the primary purpose of viewer entertainment” (Nabi et al., 2003, p. 304). As their research indicated that most people find reality programming to be only somewhat real, the element of “unscripted”, rather than “reality”, is likely the more defining feature of the genre.

Despite the unifying elements that bridge the range of reality programs, there are substantial differences among such programs, suggesting several reality TV subgenres are likely to exist. Nabi, Stitt, Halford, and Finnerty (2006) identified five subtypes: romance (e.g., *The Bachelor*), drama (e.g., *Real World*), game show/competition (e.g., *Survivor*), talent (e.g., *American Idol*), crime (e.g., *COPS*), and informational (e.g., *Trading Spaces*), and this list is likely to expand and shift as new programs and formats emerge. For example, with the advent of personal makeover programs, like *What Not to Wear* and *Dr. 90210*, we imagine there may be a “personal transformation” subgenre. Similarly, programs such as *Extreme Makeover-Home Edition*, in which families facing extreme challenges are rewarded with a new home, *The Biggest Loser*, in which morbidly obese contestants compete to lose the most weight, or *Who do You Think You Are?* in which celebrities explore their ancestry, might be termed “inspirational” reality programming. Regardless of the number of subgenres of reality TV that may exist, we must point out that because any one program may contain qualities reflective of multiple subgenres, the boundaries among these categories are likely somewhat fluid. Thus, it is the qualities of the programs, not the categories *per se*, that are more interesting as the focus of research.

However, as we examine the course of reality TV research, it is evident that research has focused more on the genre in its entirety or, alternatively, on particular programs, rather than on the message characteristics that may cut across programming types. In the discussion below, we trace the evolution of reality TV research, beginning first with the fundamental issue of what attracts viewers to this type of programming before considering the possible effects such consumption may have on these audiences.

Why People Watch Reality TV

In light of the seemingly sudden onslaught of reality TV programming at the turn of this century, the questions at the forefront of researchers' minds were what sorts of people were attracted to reality TV and why did they watch. In the first investigation of these issues, Nabi et al. (2003) found that, demographically, viewers tended to be younger and have less formal education than non-viewers. Regarding traits of reality TV viewers, Reiss and Wiltz (2004a), in their examination of 16 basic human motives, concluded that the motivation for social status, or to feel self-important, most strongly related to reality TV consumption (perhaps as viewers can fantasize about achieving celebrity status), followed by the desire for vengeance (perhaps due to its association with enjoying competition). Further, Nabi et al. (2003) found that viewers high on impulsivity were more likely to view certain reality programs, like *COPS* and *Survivor* (probably due to their affinity for unscripted and thus less predictable action and outcomes) whereas viewers high on need for cognition were more attracted to other forms of reality programming, like *A Wedding Story*.

As to why viewers in general are drawn to reality TV, Nabi et al. (2003) found viewers were particularly drawn in by the suspenseful/unscripted nature of reality programs as well as the fascination of viewing others' interpersonal dynamics. However, the contrived elements and potentially manipulative editing were found to detract from its appeal. Of note, Nabi, Stitt, et al. (2006) found that people may enjoy reality programming for some of the same reasons they enjoy dramatic fictional programming. For example, they may experience positive emotions or be transported into the narrative (see also Hall, 2006). However, viewers seem to enjoy different subtypes of reality TV for different reasons. For instance, Nabi, Stitt, et al. found people enjoyed reality crime programs for what they learned, but reality-romance programs for the interpersonal insights gained. Given different underlying reasons for enjoyment, it is reasonable to imagine different program types might engender different types of effects, though there is, in fact, very little research on the actual influence of reality TV as discussed below.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing questions surrounding motivations for viewing reality TV involves the notion of voyeurism. That is, initial assumptions about reality TV included the idea that viewers received voyeuristic (i.e., illicit) gratification from

its consumption. Nabi et al. (2003), however, found little evidence that viewers received salacious pleasure in viewing or that they enjoyed watching others' pain, but rather were more curious about others' lives. Subsequently, Nabi, Stitt et al. (2006) found that curiosity about others as a gratification did differentiate reality-based versus fictional television enjoyment, though it did not predict enjoyment of all subgenres of reality TV.

Most recently, Baruh (2010) explored the notion of voyeuristic appeal in greater depth, arguing that audience members are drawn to reality TV as they are waiting for moments when the program participants drop their guard and reveal their true selves. In a direct comparison of curiosity about others (i.e., social comparison and sensitivity to the expression of others) versus the psychological orientation of voyeurism (i.e., pleasure from accessing what is usually not accessible), Baruh found that both curiosity and voyeurism associated with reality TV consumption, and when both were considered in tandem, voyeurism had marginally stronger predictive value. However, recent evidence suggests that reality TV does not have significantly more voyeuristic content than other types of programming, like crime dramas and situation comedies (Bagdasarov, Greene, Banerjee, Krcmar, Yanovitsky, & Ruginyte, 2010). Further, Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) found that reality TV viewers valued entertainment and habitual, "pass the time" motives over that of voyeurism. Further, only people with low levels of physical mobility and interpersonal interaction were more likely to watch reality TV to fulfill voyeuristic (as well as companionship) needs, presumably due to the limits of their own social opportunities. Thus, although voyeurism is present as a possible gratification obtained from watching reality TV, it does not appear to be the most important viewing motive nor is it unique to that genre.

Another viewing motivation arguably unique to reality TV involves the notion of fascination with fame. As Reiss and Wiltz (2004b) argue, reality TV shows may be so popular with such a wide range of viewers because US television audiences strongly identify with the desire to be famous. Indeed, their data suggested that of the 16 values assessed with the Reiss Profile, the desire for status and fame was the personal value that best distinguished devoted, regular viewers of competition-based reality programs from other viewers. The authors argue that the attention bestowed upon winners of competition-based programs taps into the need of devoted viewers to enhance their sense of self-importance. In other words, they explain that reality TV shows allow viewers to fantasize about gaining status and fame: watching people like themselves becoming a "celebrity" gives them a sense of satisfaction that they too could become celebrities some day.

In sum, viewers of reality TV watch for many of the same reasons people watch other forms of television programming. However, the unique elements of reality TV – real people engaged in largely unscripted activities – give rise to at least two motivations for viewing – voyeurism/curiosity about others and desire for fame – that may explain viewership beyond what more traditional typologies of viewing motivations may achieve. Further, though reality TV does evidence wide appeal, those with

certain personality traits (desire for social status, interest in vengeance, impulsivity) may be especially drawn to the genre and/or receive more gratifications from their viewing.

Although viewing motivation is a key question addressed by scholars of reality TV (as is the case for other media forms, Chapter 6), a second critical area of research addresses the impact that viewing such programming has on audiences' thoughts and behaviors. It is to this set of research that we now turn.

The Effects of Reality TV Consumption

As we reflect on the relatively brief history of reality TV research, it is evident that despite some interesting forays into industry-based effects, like how the reality TV format has contributed to the organizational restructuring of the television industry (e.g., Collins, 2008; Yngvar, 2009), the vast majority of effects-based research focuses on the impact that viewing such programming might have on audiences' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. In this vein, there are essentially two broad approaches to its study that mirror other orientations to the study of media influence: cultural studies and more empirical initiatives.

Cultural Perspectives on Reality TV

One major line of reality TV inquiry considers the construction of these programs from a cultural perspective, focusing on the ideological viewpoints conveyed about, for example, law and order, societal threats, and audience empowerment (Cavender, 1998; Fishman, 1999). For instance, Cavender and Bond-Maupin (1993) argued that law enforcement programs make use of storytelling conventions to encourage empathy with an unsuspecting victim who falls prey to evil, which, in turn, primes the notion that no place is safe. Cavender and Bond-Maupin further suggested that reality-based crime shows, like *America's Most Wanted* and *Unsolved Mysteries*, depict crime in ways similar to fictionalized crime shows, reinforcing existing cultural stereotypes about criminals and victims.

As the menu of reality TV offerings has expanded, so too has the research from this qualitative perspective, broadening to consider how such programs might impact audience views on class formation and management (McMurria, 2008; Shugart, 2006; Skeggs, 2009), consumerism (Dixon, 2008), confessional culture (Aslama & Pantti, 2006) and gender roles (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2006). For example, Dixon (2008) argues that "extreme makeover" shows help to create and, in turn, are sustained by the impression that one can easily transform critical components of one's life – one's body, one's home, one's identity – if only one has enough resources.

Although these studies do a nice job of bringing to light the more subtle messages that may be conveyed by reality programming, their goals are not to illuminate the effects such programs have on audience cognitions and behaviors. Although they note the messages the content may convey, it is the empirical work that documents the actual influence reality TV has on the viewing audience.

Empirical Approaches to Reality TV Effects

The bulk of the empirical work assessing the relationship between program consumption and beliefs about the social world and the self draws largely from cultivation theory (e.g., Gerbner, 1969; Chapter 2, this volume). As such, this research examines how what is portrayed as reality in reality TV programs might differ from the real environment, and how such misrepresentations might, in turn, lead to audiences' misperceptions about the world at large. Crime-related programs, like *COPS*, served as the initial focus for this line of inquiry (see Fishman & Cavender, 1998), and in essence, extant research suggests that such programs overrepresented violent crime, crimes solved, non-Whites as offenders, and Whites as law enforcement officers. Research has also found that such misrepresentations can influence the way audiences think about crime in society. For example, Oliver and Armstrong (1998) found that Caucasians who were frequent viewers of reality crime programs were more likely to exaggerate crime prevalence estimates than those who watched less of this type of programming, suggesting they might be more likely to see the world as a dangerous and scary place. Relatedly, Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, and Chiricos (2002) found that viewing programs, like *COPS*, strengthened confidence in law enforcement agencies, especially for White viewers.

As the scope of reality TV programming expanded, so too did the queries regarding how such programs influenced personal and societal expectations. For example, as "dating" programs, such as *The Bachelor*, *Temptation Island*, and *Joe Millionaire* emerged, questions about their influence on viewers' perceptions of dating partners and appropriate behavior in the context of dating relationships also emerged. For instance, Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, and Smith (2007) found that exposure to reality dating programs and perceived realism of such programs was associated with viewers' adoption of the dominant themes portrayed in them, including "dating is a game" and "women are sex-objects." Further, more frequent viewing of reality dating programs was associated with self-reports of behaviors typically found in such programming, including drinking alcohol and using hot tubs early in a dating relationship. Relatedly, Clark, Nabi, and Moyer-Gusé (2007) found that viewing "reality" dating programs, like their fictional counterparts, significantly associated with earlier expectations of sexual behavior – for oneself and one's peers – as well as earlier self-reported sexual behavior.

Most recently, the onslaught of personal makeover programs, especially those that involve cosmetic surgery, like *I Want a Famous Face* and *Extreme Makeover*, have raised

the question of whether viewers are more likely to perceive plastic surgery as more common as well as a more desirable option for the self. Indeed, evidence suggests that more frequent exposure to such programming is associated with stronger desire to undergo cosmetic enhancement (Nabi, 2009).

In essence, despite their vast differences in the content of interest, the lines of research traced in this chapter share a common theme. That is, they all examine how consumption of subgenres, or even particular programs, under the label “reality TV” associates with societal perceptions and expectations. This is wholly consistent with the vast quantity of research from the cultivation perspective that exists in the extant media effects literature (see Morgan, 2009). However, the cultivation-based research within the domain of reality TV arguably distinguishes itself in that the content under study has at least some *prima facie* claim to representing reality. That is, it is tacitly assumed that such programs may have greater influence given their inclusion of real people experiencing real outcomes, even if circumstances are contrived to some degree.

To the extent that reality TV programs are both perceived as more realistic than other programming formats and also misrepresent reality, this is an important line of inquiry. Indeed, this was the case in Ferris et al.’s (2007) research in which those who perceived dating programs to be more realistic were also more influenced by their viewing. However, as Nabi et al. (2003) noted, reality programs, though perceived as more real than fiction, are not necessarily seen as particularly real. Specifically, in a multidimensional space configuration derived from a reality program-sorting task, one of the two key dimensions to emerge was “fiction-reality”. Reality shows fell closer to the “reality” end of the fiction-reality continuum than situation comedies, dramas, and soap operas, but still fell at only about the midpoint along that continuum. Further, given there are multiple ways to conceptualize realism (e.g., event similarity, factuality, probability, typicality; Shapiro & Chock, 2003), it is possible that fictional programming may, in some instances be seen as comparably real or even more real – not in terms of event factuality but in terms of event probability, or the likelihood of the depicted events occurring in real life. Indeed, Clark et al. (2007) found that “reality-based” depictions of dating relationships were not seen as any more or less real than the fictional depictions. Thus, although in some instances reality TV may be perceived as more real than fictional programming and thus may be more likely to cultivate perceptions about the world as a result, we must not assume that this is always, or even usually, the case (see Potter, 1986).

Although the contrived nature of reality TV program construction, coupled with the often realistic tone of fictional programming, renders the variable “perceived realism” less compelling in the context of reality TV than one might imagine at first, the construct of identification may be more promising given that no matter how contrived the programming, there is no escaping the fact that real people are experiencing the outcomes portrayed. As such, viewers’ identification with those program participants may be of particular interest, and it is to this key issue that we now turn.

Identification and Involvement with Reality TV Personalities

Generally speaking, identification with media characters has proven to be an important variable in the study of the effects of entertainment media on audience perceptions and behaviors (Chapters 11, 13, this volume). In essence, identification refers to an imaginative process through which an audience member adopts the identity and perspective of a media character (Cohen, 2001). Specifically, Cohen argues that identification is a multidimensional construct with four major components: empathic (sharing the feelings of the character), cognitive (sharing the perspective of the character), motivational (sharing goals of the character), and absorption (the loss of self-awareness). He further asserts that identification may be triggered by a range of antecedents, including narrative message structure; similarity of the audience member to the character based on demographics, attitudes, personality traits, or life circumstances; perceived realism of the character; familiarity with the character; and certain personality traits, like self-esteem.

Identification may be particularly relevant in the context of reality TV as these programs cast real people – often ordinary folks with challenges in their jobs, families, relationships, careers, and health perhaps similar to the viewing audience. Given these reality TV personalities are in fact real people experiencing real events, audiences may become more involved in the program and relate to those individuals more readily than to media characters portrayed by actors and actresses, who are not actually experiencing the events portrayed (Hall, 2009). Further, the content of reality TV programs may be especially relatable to viewing audiences. Indeed, Hiltbrand (2004) argues that teenagers, who occupy a large proportion of the reality TV viewership, are strongly attracted to reality TV shows as they frequently address issues with which they can readily identify – relationships and rejection.

Despite its obvious relevance, only a few studies to date have examined the concept of identification in the context of reality TV. For example, identification has been cited as one of the reasons why adults choose to watch reality programming (Nabi et al., 2003). Identification has also been examined as a moderator of the effects of viewing reality TV on audiences' perceptions and behaviors. From a social cognitive theory perspective (Bandura, 1986), those who identify more with reality TV cast members would be expected to adopt their behaviors if the positive outcomes experienced by the program participants outweigh the negative ones. Nabi (2009) tested this prediction in the context of cosmetic surgery makeover programs and found that greater identification with the program participants did indeed predict greater expressed likelihood of undergoing invasive cosmetic enhancements when the program participants were perceived as having experienced positive outcomes. Further, those with lower body satisfaction who also identified with program participants expressed greater desire for invasive cosmetic procedures.

Thus, there is emerging evidence that identification with reality TV program participants may influence effects ranging from simple exposure to the programming to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes that result from viewing. As noted with perceived realism, we do not suggest that these outcomes follow a different process as identification with fictional characters, but rather that this process is more likely to be engaged as a result of the types of people cast in reality TV programs and the situations in which they are placed. However, this still remains an open question awaiting empirical support.

We would perhaps be remiss were we not to mention in this discussion an audience activity related to identification – that of parasocial relationships (PSR). Parasocial relationships refer to the seeming face-to-face relationships that develop between an audience and mediated personalities. Audience members in a parasocial relationship respond to the media character as if he/she were a friend or a personal acquaintance (Giles, 2002; Horton & Wohl, 1956). PSR differs from identification in that the latter lacks the interactional element. With PSR, a perceived relationship with the character develops in which the viewer maintains her or her own identity. With identification, the viewer sees him or herself as that character and sees the story events through that character's eyes (Cohen, 2001).

As with identification, research has revealed that reality TV viewers report parasocial relationships as a motivation for consuming the genre (Nabi et al., 2003). However, in their survey results, Nabi et al. found that viewers experienced greater parasocial gratification from watching fictional than reality-based programming (Nabi et al., 2006). Still evidence suggests that PSR may be a factor underlying the enjoyment of some forms of reality TV, like competitive game shows (e.g., *Survivor*; Nabi et al., 2006).

In terms of effects, there is actually minimal investigation of PSR in the context of reality TV. An exception is Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes' (2005) study of the effects of parasocial interaction (PSI) with gay cast members in *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, a reality-based makeover show with five gay professionals assisting a heterosexual male, on prejudice against homosexuals. Consistent with their parasocial contact hypothesis, increased parasocial contact with gay cast members led to a decrease in prejudicial attitudes against homosexuality. Moreover, the level of prejudice was negatively related to the degree of parasocial interaction with these characters. Thus, it is evident that PSI may play a role in influencing the beliefs of reality TV audiences. As we have seen with television's ability to influence gender roles especially when identification processes are triggered (Chapter 11), the process of relating to characters is an important concept for reality TV viewers, as well.

In light of the dearth of evidence in this area, there are several ways in which research might progress to elaborate how reality programming might stimulate PSR and related cognitive, emotional, or behavioral effects. For example, consistent with meta-analysis results regarding PSR (Schiappa, Allen, & Gregg, 2007), it is likely that the more a reality program includes cast members who generally seem like somebody the viewers can be friends with (or similar to their actual friends; e.g., *Survivor*

vs. *16 and Pregnant*) the more likely PSRs are to develop. As well, certain presentational techniques of reality TV may encourage PSR. Specifically, a hallmark of the reality TV genre is the inclusion of cast members' video diaries in which they disclose their thoughts and feelings about the events portrayed, and as Auter (1992) demonstrated empirically, a character's disclosure via talking to the camera/audience increases PSR. Further, to the extent reality TV shows are perceived as real, PSR may also increase (Schiappa et al., 2007). Thus, under certain circumstances, parasocial relationships may be enhanced by the reality TV format and consequently may be of particular importance when studying its effects.

It is clear that there is much room for future research on both identification and parasocial relationships in the context of reality TV. Most notably, understanding how aspects of reality TV programs, like self-disclosure, influence each of these two psychological states and to what effect would not simply enrich our understanding of this newer genre but also of the often conflated relationship between these two variables.

In summary, whereas perceived realism does not appear to be directly linked to the reality TV format, both identification and parasocial relationships may be enhanced by the type of people cast as well as the construction of reality TV programs in which familiar personality types in relatable situations disclose their thoughts and feelings directly to viewers. Of course, the research in this area is only in its infancy and future investigations would benefit from exploring these constructs further in terms of how frequently they occur, under what circumstances, and what their role in facilitating impact on audience attitudes and behaviors may be.

Exploring the Benefits of Reality TV Viewing

From its inception, the prevailing assumption has been that reality TV is a blight on the TV programming schedule, appealing to viewers' most base, voyeuristic compulsions and giving them the opportunity to delight in others' misfortune (Poniewozik, 2000). Not only have the motivations for viewing been cast in a rather unflattering light (as discussed above), but the effects of viewing in terms of distorting perceptions of reality in areas such as law enforcement and relationships have also been framed as overwhelmingly negative.

However, there are several ways in which reality programs might benefit viewing audiences. First, reality programs may serve as a source of useful information. Indeed, Nabi et al. (2003) and Nabi, Stitt, et al. (2006) found viewers often felt like they learned something about themselves and relevant life situations by watching reality TV. More specifically, Palmer (2004) found young adults learned about dating; relating to their families; and dealing with sensitive health issues, such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, and mental illness, by watching the way reality TV show participants dealt with these issues.

Second, reality programs may serve as a useful resource for coping with life experiences. For example, Nabi, Finnerty, Domschke, and Hull (2006) found that watching a composite episode of the MTV reality program *The Real World*, which chronicles the lives of seven young adults chosen to live and work together for several months, helped young adults cope with their lingering regret over past infidelities. Although research may not yet exist on the matter, it is also likely that other programs serve a similar function. For example, TLC's *A Baby Story*, which follows women through the final weeks of their pregnancies and into the initial weeks post-birth, may help expecting mothers and fathers as they cope with the stresses of pregnancy and impending parenthood. Similarly, ABC's *Supernanny*, in which an experienced nanny counsels parents of habitually unruly children, cannot only help viewers learn valuable parenting skills but also serve as a valuable source of reassurance and stress-reduction. To the extent that viewers learn from these and other such programs and apply positive lessons to their own life circumstances, their overall stress and uncertainty may be reduced.

Further, reality programming may promote positive virtues in viewing audiences. For example, Kiesewetter (2004) argues *The Ship*, a reality program in which 40 volunteers retraced Captain James Cook's 1770 voyage from Australia to Indonesia, depicts, and thus may inspire, cooperation, helpfulness, and selflessness (as opposed to competition, like many reality TV shows). More recently, programs like *Extreme Makeover–Home Edition* and *Undercover Boss* embody the ideals that goodness will be rewarded and that cooperation and teamwork are critical to success.

Reality TV and Viewers' Health

In keeping with the growing trend of interest in the role of the media in the health of viewing audiences, we would be remiss were we to omit consideration of the effects of reality TV viewing on physical health and well-being. As with research on media effects more broadly, this literature generally associates reality TV consumption with potentially unhealthy behaviors. For example, Blair, Yue, Singh, and Burnhardt (2005) analyzed depictions of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use in episodes of MTV's *The Osbournes* and found that 75% of the alcohol and tobacco messages implied endorsements for using these substances. Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006) found that for both men and women, viewing reality dating programs, like *Eliminate*, *Blind Date*, *Dismissed*, and *Joe Millionaire*, associated with adversarial sexual beliefs (e.g., men are only out for one thing, a lot of women seem to get pleasure in putting men down). Further, Manganello and McKenzie (2009) examined the presence or absence of child safety products as well as discussion of injury topics in reality TV programs including *Extreme Makeover–Home Edition*, *Supernanny*, *Room by Room*, *Trading Spaces*, and *Bringing Baby Home*, that focus on home renovation or family life and parenting. Although such programs may have the potential to help educate

adults regarding safe practices, like checking the water temperature when bathing a child or having smoke alarms in the home, such safety behaviors were rarely shown or discussed in these programs.

More recently, several studies have considered how the spate of reality programs featuring cosmetic surgery, such as *Extreme Makeover—I Want a Famous Face*, and *The Swan*, influence viewer attitudes toward cosmetic surgery and decisions to undergo potentially risky surgery (Crockett, Pruzinsky, & Persing, 2007; Markey & Markey, 2010; Nabi, 2009) as well as their possible effect on disordered eating among women (Mazzeo, Trace, Mitchell, & Gow, 2007; Sperry, Thompson, Sarwer, & Cash, 2009, for a more general discussion of body image and media, see Chapter 15). In this vein, Nabi (2009) found that though there was little relationship between cosmetic surgery makeover program viewing and body satisfaction or perception of risk of undergoing cosmetic surgery, a small positive association with desire to undergo cosmetic surgical procedures emerged. This relationship persisted even after taking into account general TV consumption as well as other factors, like identification with the program participants or the nature of the outcomes depicted. Further, as noted earlier, the evidence supported the role of behavioral modeling in this relationship. That is, the more young people identified with program participants and the more positively they viewed the outcomes of the participant's cosmetic enhancements, the more likely the viewers were expecting to engage in similar (perhaps risky) behaviors.

Similarly, Markey and Markey (2010) found that individuals who had a positive impression of reality TV programs featuring plastic surgery transformations were more likely to want to alter their bodies and faces via cosmetic surgery. They further found in their experimental research that participants who watched *Extreme Makeover* were more likely to indicate a desire to obtain cosmetic surgery than participants who watched a home improvement program. Taken together, these results suggest that reality TV may promote unhealthy or potentially risky behaviors, in part due to the behavioral modeling that may occur when viewers identify with program participants.

The evidence to this point overwhelmingly focuses on the negative health implications of consuming reality TV. However, it is essential to emphasize that it is the content of the programs, and more specifically the content that has been the focus of researchers to this point, rather than anything inherent in the genre form itself, that has resulted in this perception that reality TV consumption is unhealthy. Yet a new wave of health-oriented reality programs suggests that positive effects are not only possible but likely.

In response to the obesity health crisis in the United States in which nearly 34% of adults in 2007–2008 could be classified as obese and the proportion of obese children reached 17% (Flegal, Carroll, Ogden, & Curtin, 2010; Chapter 15, this volume), a newer generation of reality programs has been designed not only to encourage contestants to lose weight, but to inspire healthier behaviors in home viewers as well. Premier among these is *The Biggest Loser*, in which morbidly obese contestants compete to see who can lose the most weight through a combination of supervised

exercise and diet regimens. Each episode is also interspersed with trainer's tips on how home viewers can make simple changes to encourage a healthier lifestyle. Based on the argument above regarding identification with contestants as well as the educational information conveyed through the trainers' tips, one can imagine that viewing *The Biggest Loser* might encourage home viewers to make healthier choices with their own exercise and diet behaviors.

Although no published research speaks directly to this point, one unpublished study hints at the potential of reality TV to influence positive health behaviors. In their research, Thomas and Nabi (2009) randomly assigned participants to watch an episode of *The Biggest Loser*; an episode of another competition, but non-health related reality program (*America's Toughest Jobs*); or a health-oriented episode of a situation comedy (*The Office*) and explored the effects on self-efficacy regarding healthy eating and exercise. Although character identification effects were not detected in this study (which is unsurprising given the sample was comprised of generally healthy undergraduates of normal weight), results indicated that viewers of *The Biggest Loser* who perceived the program's events as more real also reported greater confidence in their ability to eat healthy and to exercise, and those who perceived both the events and people as real reported a greater motivation to exercise. Thus, there is evidence, albeit limited, that reality programming can be used to influence underlying motivations and efficacy, which may ultimately positively impact health-related behaviors.

Other television programs have also emerged to target the obesity crisis. For example, *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution* revolves around the chef's mission to change the eating habits of the "unhealthiest city in America" – Huntington, West Virginia. As a result, viewers, along with citizens of Huntington, can learn about proper nutrition and how to make simple, healthy meals at home. Further, reality programs are beginning to address other health issues beyond obesity. For example, the A&E program *Intervention* profiles individuals whose dependencies on drugs and alcohol or other compulsive behaviors have reached a crisis point such that friends and family, with the help of trained professionals, stage an intervention to motivate the afflicted person to enact real behavioral change. VH1's *Sex Rehab with Dr. Drew* targets compulsive sexual behavior. A&E's recent offerings, like *Hoarders* and *Obsessed*, focus more on mental health, depicting the real-life struggles and treatment of people suffering from anxiety disorders and related compulsive behaviors. One might even argue that NBC's *The Baby Borrowers*, billed as a social experiment in which teenagers who think they are ready for parenthood "borrow" infants, toddlers, young children, and preteens for a few days each to see what the demands of parenthood entail, might impact family planning decisions. Indeed, the tag line to the program was "It's not TV, it's birth control."

Despite the enthusiasm with which such programs may be greeted by those eager to see the power of the media harnessed for positive effect, we must note that there is always a risk that these health condition depictions may veer towards sensationalism, thus reinforcing and perpetuating stereotypes and paving the way towards

further marginalization of afflicted populations. For example, Sender and Sullivan (2008) argue that *The Biggest Loser*, despite the beneficial tips audiences may glean for healthy living, continually associates the concepts of “fat” and “lazy”, thus reinforcing the view that those who are obese are so because of their own lack of will. Similarly, though *Hoarders* may be seen as a show that not only offers insight into a unique form of obsessive compulsive disorder, it may also sensationalize the illness thus further marginalizing victims of mental illness.

In summary, although most research on the effects of reality TV on viewer health tends to focus on negative effects, and indeed negative effects on viewers’ health and well-being have been identified, emerging programs take advantage of this popular format to promote positive health outcomes for program participants. Consequently, through the processes of learning as well as behavioral modeling, it is reasonable to imagine that these programs have the potential to promote positive health outcomes in viewing audiences as well, though unintended negative consequences must not be overlooked.

Conclusion

Although reality TV has a history that arguably reaches back to the 1940s, it is only in the past 20 years – really the past 10 – that the genre has come into its own. As such, the research on its effects is still in its infancy. Issues regarding why people watch and the (generally negative) effects on viewers’ cognitions and behaviors have been the focus of research. But recently, as the scope of reality programming has expanded to encompass positive social and health-related messages, threads of research on the positive effects of these programs are emerging.

At this point, it is critical to note that though reality TV tends to be explored separately from other forms of programming, the processes through which fictional versus reality TV programming culminate in effects are unlikely to be different from one another. In this sense, reality TV is not unique. To the extent that reality TV is perceived as more real, this may contribute to the likelihood and intensity of effects. However, given reality TV is often not seen as being particularly real, these outcomes must not be assumed. To the extent audiences identify more with reality program participants, the possibility of behavioral modeling may increase. However, again, we must be cautious as there is not yet sufficient evidence to support the claim that viewers identify more with reality program participants compared to television characters. Further, given the overwhelming majority of research on the genre’s effects is based on correlational data, the claim of effects on attitudes and behaviors still awaits stronger empirical support.

Still, there are relatively unique elements of reality programming, including the inclusion of real people, the unscripted events, and its interactive nature, that make it worthy of closer scrutiny as we consider the influence its viewing may have on

audiences. For example, scholars might consider exploring issues related to the suspense associated with the unscripted endings and the unsatisfying endings that sometimes occur as a result, which may lead to different emotional effects compared to fictional programming. In addition, greater exploration into the role of self-disclosure in promoting or impeding voyeurism as well as identification may be of value, especially given that these psychological states may predispose or limit effects on attitudes and behaviors.

A particularly unique element of reality TV involves its often interactive nature, in which audience members may affect program outcomes through voting. Interactivity is one of the reasons young people are attracted to reality TV (Hiltbrand, 2004), and the agency attached to the influence interactivity offers may have implications for viewing frequency, identification, involvement, and, in turn, the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes that may ensue (e.g., see Godlewski & Perse, 2010). Indeed, understanding the dynamic and likely reciprocal nature of the relationships among interactivity and these variables would be a very interesting direction for future research. Thus, though the process of effects may not be different for reality TV compared to other forms of programming, its unique features may influence the intensity and likelihood of effects, which would indeed be a valuable route for future exploration.

Future research should also continue to expand upon the nascent literature on the positive and health-related effects of reality TV – both physical and psychological, especially as compared to other television genres. To pursue this sort of research agenda would surely add a more interesting and nuanced understanding of this fascinating, though often maligned, genre of television programming.

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Media-Related Fear

Short-Term and Enduring Consequences

Cynthia A. Hoffner and Elizabeth L. Cohen

ABSTRACT

Fear responses to media exert a powerful influence over people's perceptions, expectations, and behavior. Grounded in emotion theory, this chapter provides a framework for understanding fear responses to mediated threats in three areas of media scholarship: immediate responses to media, risk perceptions, and intergroup relations. First, the chapter examines why and how mediated messages evoke fear, and the consequences of fear during and after media use. Second, theory and research on the relationship between media-induced fear and risk perceptions are reviewed. Third, media-related fear is examined in the context of social relations, focusing on (1) how framing various groups as threats can lead to fear, stereotyping, and behavioral responses, and (2) how groups portrayed as threats respond when anticipating media influence on others. Finally, limitations of the literature and suggestions for future research (including the role of new technologies) are discussed.

Fear and Anxiety in the Context of Emotion Theory

Threats and danger are familiar features in the media landscape, and fear and anxiety are common emotional responses to these depictions. Several recent reviews have addressed responses to frightening media, most with a focus on children (e.g., Cantor,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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2009). This chapter addresses fear in relation to media from a broader perspective by examining not only immediate and lingering fear responses to media, but also fear-related media influences on risk perceptions, and the role of media-related fear in intergroup relations. A framework grounded in emotion theory is presented first, as a way to integrate media research in these three related areas of scholarship.

Broadly defined, fear is an aversive emotional response to threat or danger (Ohman, 2008; Rosen & Schulkin, 1998). Many words in the English lexicon describe fear-related responses, reflecting subtle differences in emotional experience. Yet their usage also reveals a distinction between the core emotion of fear (e.g., fear, terror) and anxiety (e.g., anxiety, worry, dread). Ohman (2008, p. 710) contends that fear and anxiety differ somewhat as subjective experiences, but argues that they are “overlapping, aversive, activated states centered on threat.” Given the complexities of media offerings and the diverse issues explored in research, a variety of terms are used in the literature to describe fear-related responses. Because this chapter draws connections among different bodies of literature that have studied related phenomena, we consider the concept of fear broadly in our discussion.

Elicitation of Fear

Appraisal theories of emotion provide one way of thinking about the elicitation of fear in the media context. According to Ellsworth and Scherer (2003, p. 573), “the basic premise of appraisal theories is that the organism’s evaluation of its circumstances (current or remembered or imagined) plays a crucial role in the elicitation and differentiation of its emotions.” Appraisals can range from rapid, automatic processing to more deliberate, effortful processing (Clore & Ortony, 2008; Lazarus, 1991). Most appraisal theories agree that a small set of appraisal dimensions combine to produce specific emotions such as fear, anger, or sadness. In appraisal terms, fear is defined as an anticipatory emotion that is evoked when an individual appraises a stimulus as a threat to personal well-being, including physical safety, goals, or plans. Fear is associated with appraisals of low power or minimal control over the situation. The appraised importance of what is threatened and the degree of disruption or harm posed by the threat influence the intensity of fear (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Lazarus, 1991; Ohman, 2008). Appraisal theorists also acknowledge that memory can play a role in the elicitation of emotion (Clore & Ortony, 2008). For example, environmental stimuli can activate fear-related memories or trigger conditioned fear responses (LeDoux, 1996; Ohman, 2008).

Consequences of Fear

According to evolutionary approaches to emotion, fear evolved to maximize chances of survival by alerting organisms to danger and motivating self-protection (Tooby &

Cosmides, 2008). Thus, fear is associated with increased environmental vigilance and a tendency to perceive stimuli as threatening, which can intensify fear through reciprocal influence (Ohman, 2008). In terms of behavioral responses, escape or avoidance is likely when an individual has little perceived ability to cope with a threat (Lazarus, 1991). But if the threat seems imminent and inescapable, fear may lead to attack – that is, fight rather than flight (Rosen & Schulkin, 1998). Yet behavioral responses to fear are determined by multiple factors. Ohman (1986) argued that the urge to escape from an attacking animal is relatively unproblematic, but that threatening social contexts can complicate behavioral motivations by introducing competing concerns, such as the need to avoid harm but also look brave in front of others. Moreover, protection from a threat sometimes requires more than simple escape, and the perceived efficacy of a protective action will influence whether it is taken (Witte, 1992). In addition, fear and other emotions (especially anger) sometimes co-occur in response to threat, leading to conflicting behavioral motivations (Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Finally, some scholars argue that the influence of emotion on behavior is largely indirect. Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, and Zhang (2007) contend that emotion shapes behavior primarily through feedback, appraisal, and learning. Thus, in addition to directly motivating self-protective actions, fear may lead people to anticipate particular outcomes and alter future behavior.

Emotion Regulation Processes

The experience of fear also often motivates efforts to regulate emotion (Gross & Thompson, 2007; Lazarus, 1991). During media exposure, people may use cognitive or behavioral strategies to manage or reduce fear (Cantor, 2009), or may appraise their fear in a way that facilitates enjoyment (Bartsch, Vorderer, Mangold, & Viehoff, 2008). Media-related fear and anxiety can play a longer-term role in risk perceptions and intergroup relations, and the ways that people cope in these contexts – by actively addressing perceived threats versus regulating emotional responses – can have important individual and social implications (Kemper, 2000; Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001).

Immediate and Lingering Fear Responses to Media

Threats such as crime, interpersonal conflict, and terrorism depicted in entertainment and news media often lead to fear, despite the fact that these portrayals usually pose no imminent threat to the audience (Cantor, 2009). Why do such messages evoke fear, and what are the consequences of fear during and after media use? This section examines these questions.

Factors Influencing Fear Responses

Responses to Direct Fear-Evoking Depictions

People often have direct fear responses to stimuli and situations depicted in the media. Angry, threatening faces, animals such as snakes and spiders, depictions of blood or injuries, and dark, isolated locations are all common elements of fear-evoking media portrayals. Evidence suggests that environmental cues like these can evoke fear automatically (LeDoux, 1996; Ohman, 2008). Scholars contend that humans are biologically prepared to develop fears of certain stimuli that posed a threat to our ancestors' survival. Ohman (2008) asserted that the four main types of fears – social fears (e.g., aggression, rejection), animals fears, fears related to death, blood and injury, and fear of wide open and closed spaces – are associated with adaptive behavioral systems shaped through evolution, and correspond to the most common types of phobias. Cantor (2009) argued that direct fear responses to specific media stimuli might be the result of stimulus generalization (a term derived from classical conditioning), in which depictions that resemble fear-evoking stimuli evoke a similar, but reduced, fear response. Thus, a spider shown onscreen may arouse fear, in part, because its perceptual features are similar to a real spider one might actually encounter. Less realistic-looking portrayals, or even verbal references, may evoke fear among people who are able to construct vivid mental images of fear objects (Sparks, Sparks, & Gray, 1995).

Sound also plays a role in evoking fear responses to media. People respond emotionally to vocal expressions of emotion and to a wide variety of environmental sounds, although context and past experience can modify responses (Bachorowski & Owren, 2008; Bradley & Lang, 2000). Vocalizations such as screams, as well as other sounds, can signify threat and function as warnings. Even when no threat is present, as when viewing media, automatic responses to sound cues can elicit fear. Music also can evoke a range of emotions, including fear and anxiety (A. J. Cohen, 2001).

Individuals differ in what frightens them based on personal history and patterns of appraisal (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). Preexisting fears can be evoked by media stimuli that resemble fear-evoking objects or remind people of frightening past experiences (LeDoux, 1996; Ohman, 2008). Neuendorf and Sparks (1988) found that prior fear of particular objects (e.g., dead bodies and cemeteries) was associated with more fear while viewing films that involved those cues. Similarly, people who have experienced trauma feel greater fear or anxiety in response to related events in the media (e.g., Long, Chamberlain, & Vincent, 1994).

Responses to Stories About Other People

Another factor in media-induced fear is responsiveness to other people. According to appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), fear arises from a perceived threat to personal well-being, which can include a threat to someone or something an individual values. Most entertainment and news media feature stories about people, and often show them in dangerous circumstances.

People respond more emotionally to the circumstances or experiences of people whom they like or care about. According to disposition theory (Zillmann, 2006), affective dispositions toward characters are based on moral evaluations, with approval of actions leading to more liking and caring for the characters, and greater emotional involvement in depicted events. When danger threatens a character, emotional responses are a function of both affect toward the character and the nature of the feared outcome, with more fear associated with severe threats to liked characters. Beyond affective dispositions, there are at least two ways people can be involved with media figures. Parasocial interaction entails responding to a media persona as a friend or interaction partner, which may develop into a long-term parasocial bond (Giles, 2002). Identification occurs when media users imagine themselves as a character, effectively taking on the character's identity while viewing a film or playing a videogame (J. Cohen, 2001; Klimmt, Hefner, & Vorderer, 2009). In general, studies show that involvement with endangered media persona enhances fear and suspense (e.g., Hartmann, Stuke, & Daschmann, 2008; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991).

Empathy is a key individual difference that moderates emotional responses to other people. There are many definitions of empathy in the literature, but most include empathic concern, or feeling for another person, and emotion-sharing, or feeling as another person (Batson, 1991; Davis, 1994). Empathy is enhanced when there is a close attachment to the other person, and may occur based on anticipated responses of that individual. Thus, fear during suspenseful scenes may be partially a function of empathy with expected responses of unsuspecting characters, especially those with whom the viewer has a close affective bond (Zillmann, 2006). Tamborini (1996) proposed that empathy should lead to greater negative emotion in response to horror films, primarily due to distress at witnessing the pain and suffering of other people. Several studies of responses to both entertainment and news have yielded findings consistent with this proposal (e.g., Harris et al., 2000; Hoekstra, Harris, & Helmick, 1999; Hoffner, Fujioka, Ye, & Ibrahim, 2009) demonstrating that empathy plays an important role in responding emotionally to the threat of harm to others.

The structure and format of threat-related stories also can influence appraisals and emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Mikos, 1996). In a narrative, cues that signal an impending threat can affect how viewers appraise subsequent seemingly-innocuous events, and can increase suspense and worry about endangered characters. Research with both children and adults has shown that fear and worry are intensified by forewarning of a threat in a scary program, and reduced by prior knowledge that the characters will escape harm (de Wied, Hoffman, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1997; Hoffner, 1997; Hoffner & Cantor, 1990). Music enhances foreboding in film narratives, and heightens emotional responses to scary episodes, such as the shower scene in *Psycho* (A. J. Cohen, 2001). To some extent, fear responses depend on an understanding of genre conventions that allow media users to recognize signals of impending danger, or understand when threats are not credible or are likely to be addressed effectively by the characters (Mikos, 1996; Zillmann, 2006). Absorption or transportation into a narrative enhances emotional involvement and should increase the potential for fear to develop in

response to threat portrayals (Green & Brock, 2000). As such, the increasing use of mobile devices for content delivery may alter media users' emotional responses, due to differences in screen size, level of concentration, and other factors (cf. Spence, Lachlan, & Westerman, 2009).

"This Could Happen to Me"

Fear reactions to media are also related to the perception that portrayed events are a threat to personal well-being. Even if depicted events are fictional, people may believe or imagine that similar events could happen to them or people they care for. Media scholars (e.g., Sparks et al., 1995) have invoked Frijda's law of apparent reality when discussing how the reality status of media depictions may alter emotional responses. Frijda (2007) argued that information that is appraised as "real" has stronger emotional impact. By real he does not refer to objective reality status, but to *meanings* that are experienced as emotionally real. Factors that impact perceived realism include the extent to which a media depiction resembles reality, its plausibility, and its likelihood of occurrence in the real world. Children gradually come to understand these concepts, yet judging the reality status of media messages is complicated even for adults (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000; Cantor, 2009). Objectively unreal events may seem real because they are actually shown, especially when they resemble reality (Sparks et al., 1995). Both children and adults respond with greater fear to fictional violence that occurs in live-action programs than in cartoons or between puppets (e.g., Gunter & Furnham, 1984; Osborn & Endsley, 1971).

Judgments about plausibility, or whether fictional depictions could occur in real life, depend on personal beliefs and interpretations. Most older children and adults, for example, believe that vampires, werewolves, and zombies do not actually exist. Yet even seemingly impossible portrayals such as those on the television series *True Blood*, which features vampires and werewolves, share many features with real life, including interpersonal threats, violence, and death. These kinds of portrayals may remind viewers of threats that definitely do exist, and thus arouse fear that carries over into their lives (Cantor, 2009). From Frijda's (2007) perspective, the meanings of these depictions may be emotionally real. Moreover, the line between reality and fantasy is blurred, even for adults. Some people believe strongly in scientifically unsubstantiated supernatural or paranormal phenomena, and others are willing to consider that such phenomena may be real (Cantor, 2004; Sparks et al., 1995).

Real-world experience may influence estimates of probability or likelihood of depicted events, but aspects of media portrayals also play a role. For example, vivid and frequent depictions of rare dangers, such as shark attacks or kidnappings, can increase perceived probability of threats. Perceiving a threat as more likely should lead to a greater sense of vulnerability and fear, which may affect long-term risk perceptions (Loewenstein et al., 2001).

Finally, connections between media threat portrayals and people's own lives tend to increase perceptions of personal vulnerability. Geographical proximity influences

perceived susceptibility to threatening events, such as crime or natural disasters (Wise, Eckler, Kononova, & Littau, 2009). News reports of threatening events that happened nearby, especially those that are random and unpredictable, have been shown to evoke more fear than those that happened at a distance (e.g., Heath, 1984; Schlenger, 2004; Smith & Wilson, 2000). Perceived proximity of fictional threats also affects emotional responses. In a study of reactions to a scary televised narrative, children who believed that the depicted threat existed locally were more frightened than those who did not (Cantor & Hoffner, 1990). Finally, perceived similarity to people in frightening media portrayals – such as children exposed to news stories about child victims – can increase fear (e.g., Becker-Blease, Finkelhor, & Turner, 2008; Cantor & Nathanson, 1996).

Consequences of Fear Responses to Media

Emotion Regulation During Media Use

Emotions experienced during media use can motivate efforts at emotion regulation (Gross & Thompson, 2007; Lazarus, 1991). Although fear in the context of media use may be appraised as a positive experience (cf. Bartsch et al., 2008), fear is often experienced as aversive, or appraised as situationally inappropriate, such as when viewing a scary film with peers. Efforts to reduce fear during media use include attentional deployment (e.g., distraction or looking away), cognitive change (e.g., reappraising a threat as unrealistic), response modulation (e.g., suppressing fear expressions), and situation modification (e.g., asking a friend to coview). When fear is overwhelming, people sometimes choose to end exposure (Hoffner, 1995). Paradoxically, witnessing frightened characters may lead some individuals to continue attending to a media offering. Research shows that observing other people express fear (indicating vulnerability rather than threat) can motivate approach behaviors and prosocial responses (Marsh & Ambady, 2007). Hoffner (1995) found that adolescents who were higher in other-focused empathic concern tended to manage fear from scary films through reappraisal, whereas those who were higher in self-focused personal distress tended to use distraction. She argued that “people who experience empathic concern (and who worry about the characters) presumably would not want to risk missing the outcome of suspenseful events by distracting themselves” (p. 341).

Media use often occurs in the company of others, and new forms of technology are increasing opportunities for shared media experiences (Ducheneaut, Moore, Oehlberg, Thornton, & Nickell, 2008). The presence and reactions of other people can alter emotional responses by influencing appraisals of threat and coping potential (Manstead & Fischer, 2001) and by providing comfort and support (Burlison & MacGeorge, 2002). Studies have shown that media-induced fear motivates both children and adults to seek physical contact, and leads coviewers to offer comfort to distressed companions (Harris et al., 2000; Hoffner, 1995; Hoffner & Haefner, 1997).

Wilson and Weiss (1993) found that coviewing a scary program with an older sibling (compared to viewing alone) reduced preschoolers' self-reported fear, presumably because older siblings modeled minimal fear, made comments related to emotions, and offered nonverbal comfort. In contrast, in a study of children's past coviewing experiences, those who watched with older coviewers reported feeling more fear (Hoffner & Haefner, 1997). This finding is likely to reflect the selection of more frightening programs by older individuals. Together, these studies illustrate the complex ways that the social context of media use can influence fear.

Fear and Selective Media Exposure

Selective exposure to media may function, in part, as a means of regulating emotions initially elicited by media use (Bryant & Davies, 2006; Gross & Thompson, 2007). Media exposure has always been selective, but opportunities for information seeking and for using media to regulate emotions have increased exponentially with the advent of the Internet, the diffusion of digital video recorders, and the proliferation of mobile media.

Humans have a need to monitor their environment, especially during periods of crisis or danger. In threatening situations, information can reduce uncertainty, facilitate self-protection, and help reestablish a sense of control (Tooby & Cosmides, 2008). Thus, when faced with an external threat such as September 11, people may seek news exposure as a way of coping with stress or anxiety, even when those emotions were initially elicited by news coverage (Boyle et al., 2004; Hoffner et al., 2009). Information seeking is particularly likely among people who prefer to cope with anxiety by monitoring their environment, rather than by blunting emotion through avoidance or reappraisal. Sparks and Spirek (1988) found that, following the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger, individuals with a monitoring coping style were more likely to seek negative emotional news about the event, compared to those with a blunting coping style.

Messages that minimize danger or provide reassurance also can reduce fear and anxiety (Lazarus, 1991). Media-induced fear may motivate subsequent exposure to media content that is expected to provide relief or comfort, as well as avoidance of content with the potential to reinforce fear (Hoffner et al., 2009). For example, Wakshlag, Vial, and Tamborini (1983) found that people who felt apprehensive after watching a crime documentary were less likely to select films that featured high levels of victimization (based on synopses), and preferred films that showed the triumph of justice.

Finally, people might seek or continue exposure to frightening media if fear is seen as an optimal emotional state for achieving a future objective (Knobloch, 2003). Based on an instrumental approach to emotion regulation, Tamir and colleagues argued that people may be motivated to feel fear if they need to accomplish an avoidance goal (Tamir, Chui, & Gross, 2007; Tamir & Ford, 2009). For example, they found that people who were expecting to play a videogame that involved avoidance of threat (e.g., avoiding dangerous flying monsters), as compared to other goals, preferred to

listen to fear-inducing music before playing the game (Tamir & Ford, 2009). Based on this reasoning, people who believe that fear of particular social or environmental threats (e.g., immigration, global warming) will help them effectively engage in protective actions may seek repeated exposure to fear-related media messages (Conway, Grabe, & Grievess, 2007; cf. Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005).

Lingering Fear and Anxiety

Despite efforts at emotion regulation, fear responses to media can have emotional consequences that linger for days, weeks, and even years. Numerous studies show that enduring emotional reactions – ranging from nervousness, nightmares, and sleep disturbances to more prolonged feelings of anxiety and depression – are prevalent among children and adults (Cantor, 2009). Sparks et al. (1995) found that people with more vivid mental imagery experienced more lingering fear, possibly due to their ability to imagine that depicted threats could happen to them personally. Behavioral changes are also common, such as avoidance of activities or locations associated with media-induced fears (e.g., avoiding the woods after watching *The Blair Witch Project*; Cantor, 2004).

Cantor (e.g., 2009) argued that fear conditioning, which has been implicated in development of anxiety disorders such as specific phobias (LeDoux, 1996), may underlie the formation of long-term media-related fears. For example, after viewing *Jaws*, about shark attacks, people reported experiencing fear in objectively shark-free bodies of water, such as ponds or swimming pools (Cantor, 2004). Studies also have shown that exposure to news about terrorism, mass shootings, and natural disasters is related to long-term fears, and to symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder among some individuals with no personal connection to the events (e.g., Fallahi & Lesik, 2009; Lau, Lau, Kim, & Tsui, 2006; Schlenger, 2004).

Fear and Risk Related to Real-World Threats

Media depictions that evoke fear may be linked to longer-term risk perceptions if they portray threats people expect to encounter later. Clearly the media depict a wide range of threats – related to health, crime, the environment, and many other domains – that are capable of generating fear and influencing risk perceptions. The concept of risk is defined in different ways by different scholars. But at its core, a risk refers to a threat that has some probability of occurrence. Risk perceptions are evaluations or appraisals of potential threats. Accordingly, risk perceptions are typically defined in cognitive terms, referring to estimates of the likelihood of encountering a threat (McComas, 2006). Greater perceived risk is associated with threats viewed as more likely to be personally experienced (susceptibility) and as having greater adverse consequences (severity) (Weinstein, 2000). A variety of other factors influence risk

perceptions associated with a threat, including controllability and familiarity (Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 1980).

Relatively little is known about the link between risk perceptions and emotion (Loewenstein et al., 2001), but there is ample reason to suspect that media-related risk perceptions are closely tied to feelings of fear and anxiety. Emotion theory indicates that perceptions of greater threat likelihood and severity lead to greater perceived personal vulnerability and more fear (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Weinstein, 2000). Recent emotion-based approaches to risk argue that factors such as vivid, emotion-laden threat portrayals may influence both perceived risk and emotional responses (Loewenstein et al., 2001; Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor, 2004). Moreover, consistent with evidence of a reciprocal relationship between appraisals and emotion (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2003), media-based risk perceptions and fear may be mutually reinforcing. Before discussing the role of fear in risk perceptions, a brief review of media influence on risk perceptions is provided.

Media Influence on Risk Perceptions

The media often inform individuals about threats to which they may be susceptible. Social amplification theory proposes that risks are defined for people by “amplifier stations” in society such as social groups or the media, which determine which risks are important and diffuse information about these risks (Kasperson, Kasperson, Pidgeon, & Slovic, 2003). Depending on how much attention is given to different threats, media sources can produce amplified or attenuated risk perceptions. The risk amplification function of the media may be partially explained by the availability heuristic premise, which contends that events that can be brought to mind more easily are perceived as more likely to occur (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Cognitive availability is associated with more frequent or recent activation (e.g., through media exposure) and with more vivid mental constructs. Moreover, the affect heuristic proposed by Slovic and colleagues (e.g., Slovic et al., 2004) suggests that emotions associated with risks may increase cognitive availability.

Studies show that people’s estimates of health, safety, and social risks are associated with greater reported exposure to news coverage of those topics (e.g., Coleman, 1993; Slater, Goodall, & Hayes, 2009; Slater & Rasinski, 2005). Slater and colleagues demonstrated that both exposure and attention to risk-related content are important in influencing risk perceptions. Exposure to media entertainment is also related to risk perceptions. For example, in a large sample of adolescents, Beullens and Van den Bulck (2008) found that reported exposure to music videos was related to lower perceived risk of speeding and drunken driving, whereas news viewing was related to greater perceived risk of those activities. Some evidence suggests that even one-time exposures to fictional programs can affect risk perceptions, although persistence of effects is not known (e.g., Cantor & Omdahl, 1991; Leiserowitz, 2004).

Cultivation theory also has been applied to media and risk perceptions (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Basically the theory contends that repeated exposure to patterns of television messages shapes people's perceptions of reality, so that heavier television users tend to see the real world as more similar to the world portrayed on television (Chapter 2). Cognitive accessibility and heuristic processing have been shown to underlie cultivation effects (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Most risk-related cultivation research has focused on crime and violence, but other risks such as those related to the environment have also been examined (Dahlstrom & Scheufele, 2010). Cultivation research has frequently confirmed that heavy television exposure, especially to news and crime dramas, is associated with greater estimates of real-world crime and violence, and higher perceived likelihood of being a crime victim (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010).

The media also shape risk perceptions by affecting how people think about threats. According to framing theory, media can alter how risk is perceived and interpreted by selectively focusing on some aspects of a threat rather than others (Scheufele, 1999; Chapter 3, this volume). Differences in the way a threat is presented can shape risk perceptions as well. For example, news stories that provide statistical data concerning the probability or severity of a risk have less impact on judgments than vivid risk exemplars, such as a story about an individual with first-hand experience (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000). Similarly, threats portrayed in entertainment programs that facilitate transportation and involvement with characters have a strong influence on personal risk perceptions (Green & Brock, 2000; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010).

The Relationship between Risk Perception and Media-Induced Fear

Clearly threats elicit fear and other emotions (Ohman, 2008), but only recently has research begun to uncover how emotions affect the way people process risks. Prompted by observations that people often neglect evidence such as probabilities when making risk-related decisions, scholars developed the "risk as feelings" approach that emphasizes the importance of emotions for risk perceptions and risk-related behaviors (Loewenstein et al., 2001; Slovic et al., 2004). This approach proposes that risk perceptions are a product of both how individuals cognitively assess risks and how they feel about them. There are several ways that fear responses to media may be related to risk perceptions. First, during media use, fear may increase attention to and evaluation of threat cues, and depending on the portrayal, lead to greater perceived severity or susceptibility (Cantor, 2009; Ohman, 2008; Weinstein, 2000). Second, if fear becomes linked to a particular risk, memory of the fear response may influence later judgments or decisions. Finally, repeated encounters with emotion-laden risk messages could reinstate and possibly intensify earlier fear responses, reinforcing a connection in memory. Slovic et al. (2004, p. 317) suggested that cogni-

tive availability “may work not only through ease of recall or imaginability, but because remembered and imagined images come tagged with affect.”

Research documents a link between fear or worry and reported long-term exposure to media coverage of specific risks (e.g., Dahlstrom & Scheufele, 2010; Van den Bulck & Custers, 2009). Lemal and Van den Bulck (2009), for example, found that women’s exposure to news about breast cancer was associated with greater fear of the disease, after controlling for several factors, including perceived personal risk. This outcome suggests that news may have impacted fear based on factors other than perceived susceptibility, such as perceived severity or ability to cope with the disease. A handful of studies grounded in cultivation theory has documented that media exposure cultivates fear of crime (e.g., Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz., 2000; Eschholz, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2003; Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2004). For example, Eschholz et al. (2003) found that exposure to local news, reality TV, and crime drama was related to more fear of becoming a crime victim, especially among people who perceived that their neighborhoods had a high proportion of African American residents. Unfortunately, many studies that have claimed to study “fear of crime” have not measured any emotion-related responses (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Thus, relationships among media exposure, cultivated risk perceptions, and fear responses remain unclear. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that the media’s ability to cultivate risk perceptions is closely related to its ability to cultivate fear.

Studies have suggested that media influence on fear may occur, in part, through an influence on risk perceptions (e.g., Chiricos et al., 2000; Ferraro, 1995). The interpretation that perceived risk can lead to fear is consistent with the functional view of fear as a response to threat (Ohman, 2008). From this perspective, individual differences in threat perceptions and associated risk should play a role in evoking fear. For example, people vary in their perceptions of the severity of particular crimes and other threats, and their level of fear is partially a function of perceived severity (Warr, 1987). This illustrates the importance of appraisal processes in responding emotionally to mediated risks (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003).

Emotions such as fear also exert a powerful influence on perceptions and judgments (Loewenstein et al., 2001; Scherer, 2003). Whereas positive emotions such as happiness can lower perceptions of risk, feelings of fear and dread have been shown to increase risk perceptions (e.g., Cantor & Omdahl, 1991; Dunlop, Wakefield, & Kashima, 2008; Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Media offerings that elicit self-referent emotions, such as fear for self, are particularly likely to affect perceived risk. For example, Cantor and Omdahl (1991) found that children who viewed frightening fictional portrayals of a house fire or a drowning subsequently were more worried about similar events happening to them, and also judged those events to be more likely, compared to dangers unrelated to those depicted.

If fear partially mediates the effect of media exposure on risk perceptions, this may help explain why more vivid, compelling media experiences – those capable of evoking the most emotion – have such a strong impact on individuals’ perceptions of those threats. Recent efforts to explain the influence of media narratives on risk

perceptions have provided striking insight into the underlying processes, but have relied primarily on cognitive explanations such as reduced counterarguing or lowered beliefs in personal invulnerability (e.g., Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010; Slater & Rouner, 2002). Yet emotion is infused in the authors' descriptions of the narrative experience and the persuasive outcomes. Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) argued that vicarious emotional experience is an important factor in facilitating the persuasive effects of narratives. Although they did not measure viewers' emotions beyond their involvement with the characters, who were dealing with an unplanned pregnancy, their framework strongly suggests that sharing the characters' emotions, such as fear or regret, may have contributed to a sense of personal vulnerability to unplanned pregnancy.

Behavioral Consequences of Risk Perceptions

People make risk-related choices every day when deciding where to go, what form of transportation to use, what food to buy, and so on. Many of these decisions are implicitly based on risk information conveyed by the media (Kasperson et al., 2003). Slovic et al. (2004) contend that people may give little thought to risks when making behavioral choices, unless risk perceptions are tinged with emotion, as they often are. Heightened risk perceptions, especially when accompanied by fear, can lead individuals to adopt behaviors to protect themselves or their loved ones from threat (Ohman, 2008; Tooby & Cosmides, 2008). A handful of studies have examined how media-cultivated crime perceptions lead to protective behaviors, and have implied (but not directly assessed) an important role for emotional response (e.g., Busselle, 2003; Nabi & Sullivan, 2001). For example, Nabi and Sullivan (2001) found a causal pattern in which TV exposure led to higher estimates of societal crime and violence, which resulted in greater intentions to take protective actions such as locking one's car door while driving or carrying a weapon. Of course, even when risk perceptions are accompanied by fear, individuals may still decide not to combat the perceived threat. Behavioral responses to threats are determined by other factors, such as the perceived efficacy of the response in addressing the threat and perceived self-efficacy (Lazarus, 1991; Witte, 1992). Thus, media messages that inform people about effective ways of coping may be more likely to prompt protective action.

Although fear that is relevant and appropriate can aid behavioral choices, Loewenstein et al. (2001) note that fear also can lead to disregard of objective risks, and to more risky (but less fear-inducing) choices, such as driving rather than flying to a distant destination. From the perspective of media influence, if media messages convey inaccurate information about risks, or contribute to heightened (excessive) fear through vivid and dramatic risk portrayals, then behavioral motivations may not correspond to actual dangers. A recent example is the drop in Measles–Mumps–Rubella (MMR) vaccinations in Britain (and subsequent increase in measles outbreaks) after extensive media coverage of a controversial study linking the MMR

vaccine with autism. The media gave relatively little attention to scientific evidence of the vaccine's safety, apparently stoking parental fear of a miniscule or nonexistent risk (Lewis & Speers, 2003).

An additional way of responding to risk is through information seeking, to obtain additional knowledge or reassuring information, as previously discussed. The Internet and mobile media have expanded up the possibilities for finding information related to risks, as illustrated by a study that explored Internet use during the anthrax scare in the United States in 2001 (Hobbs, Kittler, Fox, Middleton, & Bates, 2004).

Finally, perceived risk is an important factor in support for regulations or restrictions intended to contain or eliminate a threat. The psychometric paradigm developed by Slovic and colleagues (e.g., Slovic, 1987; Slovic et al., 1980) models how people subjectively define risk, and how their risk perceptions are related to their protective or regulatory actions. The paradigm includes two primary continuums related to how people define risk: dread (e.g., severe consequences, uncontrollability, catastrophic potential) and unfamiliarity (e.g., unknown, little scientific knowledge, delayed effect). Threats that are high on these continuums are more likely to prompt protective actions, which Slovic (1987) attributed to the deep anxieties people harbor about unknown and potentially catastrophic risks, such as nuclear power.

Media-Related Fear and Intergroup Relations

According to Kemper (2000, p. 46), "a very large class of human emotions results from real, anticipated, imagined, or recollected outcomes of social relations." Ohman (1986, 2008) contends that social threats are a major determinant of fear and anxiety in humans. One source of information about social relations is the media, which can influence how media users appraise others by varying the way various social groups and interactions are portrayed. When media portrayals frame different groups as threats, they can produce fear and anxiety in two ways: (1) they can lead people to fear members of groups portrayed as a threat; and (2) they can lead members of a group portrayed as a threat to feel fearful about responses from others. This section focuses on media-related fear or anxiety in the context of social perceptions and interactions.

Social identity theory focuses on how individuals define themselves as social group members, and examines evaluations or affect attached to those shared identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). To further explain social identity, Turner and colleagues developed self-categorization theory, which contends that when individuals perceive themselves as part of a social group, a process of depersonalization occurs and they cognitively redefine themselves in terms of that social group (Turner, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Different social identities become more cognitively accessible depending upon the context, or as relevant stimuli for self-categorization change. People magnify their similarities to members of their own

social groups, and perceive greater differences between themselves and out-group members (Turner, 1999).

Grounded in social identity/self-categorization theory, intergroup emotions theory (Smith & Mackie, 2008) proposes that when people define themselves in terms of group membership, they appraise events from a group perspective rather than a personal perspective, which in turn affects their emotional experiences. Believing that another group poses a threat may lead to fear or other emotions, most notably anger. This is important, because fear and anger have distinct effects on subsequent appraisals, judgments, and behaviors. Fear leads to pessimistic judgments and risk-averse decisions, and is associated with desire to create distance from or avoid the out-group. Anger leads to optimistic judgments and willingness to take risks, and is associated with desire to confront or attack the out-group (e.g., Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). In general, media depictions that portray various social groups as threats should impact emotions and behaviors of media users differently, depending on their group identifications.

Media and Fear of Other People and Groups

In addition to emphasizing violence and victimization, media offerings present a distorted view of *who* is likely to pose a threat to others or to society (e.g., Chiricos et al., 2000; Dixon, 2008). In their integrated threat theory, Stephan and Stephan (2000) argue that negative attitudes towards out-groups are largely a function of perceived threats associated with out-group members. According to the theory, these threats include (1) realistic threat to the well-being of the in-group (e.g., threats to physical safety or economic resources), (2) symbolic threat to the in-group's values or world views, (3) intergroup anxiety, related to awkwardness or uneasiness about interacting with out-group members, and (4) negative stereotypes, leading to negative expectations about the behavior of out-group members. Following the logic of integrated threat theory, the media have the potential to create fear by depicting particular groups as threats (Vergeer, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2000).

Sometimes media messages explicitly indicate that particular groups pose a threat. Conway et al. (2007) found that television host Bill O'Reilly regularly uses fear frames in his commentary. Their analysis showed, for example, that O'Reilly positions groups such as "illegal aliens" and "foreigners" as a physical threat to US citizens, in part by framing them as villains and discussing how they outnumber US citizens. But media indicators of who poses a threat are often less direct, and require that media consumers draw inferences based on patterns of media content. The news media disproportionately focus on crimes committed by people in particular social groups, such as African Americans, Latinos, and Muslims, and entertainment media suggest that members of these groups are typically violent criminals or terrorists (Chapters 12, 13; Dixon, 2008; Nacos & Torres-Reyna, 2007;

Oliver, 2003). Immigrants to the United States are often portrayed in a negative light, and are framed as posing economic and cultural threats (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008). Members of other social groups have also been painted as a threat by the media. For example, news and entertainment media often show people with mental illness as dangerous, violent, or unpredictable (Stout, Villegas, & Jennings, 2004; Wahl, 2006).

Media portrayals that depict particular social groups as threatening can lead people to experience fear or anxiety associated with members of those groups (Nacos & Torres-Reyna, 2007; Oliver, 2003; Vergeer et al., 2000; Wahl, 2006). Fear motivates self-protection (Ohman, 2008), and can impact behavior even if people “know” their emotional response is not based on rational evidence (Slovic et al., 2004). Media-induced fear of particular social groups may lead to consideration of how the threat from those groups can be eliminated or avoided in the future (cf. Baumeister et al., 2007). One possible outcome is that individuals may try to reduce or avoid contact with members of groups portrayed as threatening (Lee, Weil, & Shihadeh, 2007; Wahl, 2006). Media portrayals may also promote biased and discriminatory behavior towards members of these groups. Individuals who feel at risk may support public actions they perceive as protective, for example by endorsing public policies related to crime or immigration (Davis & Gandy, 1999; Fujioka, 2005). Importantly, fear of out-groups appears to be a motivating force driving these behaviors. For example, in a study with White participants, Brader et al. (2008) found that exposure to news coverage of Latino immigrants, but not European immigrants, was associated with greater support for anti-immigration policy and related behaviors (e.g., information requests and emails to Congress), in part due to anxiety responses to the news depictions. Their evidence suggested that this outcome depended not on the threat of immigration, *per se*, but on *who* the immigrants were; anxiety related to Latino immigrants directly influenced behavior.

As already noted, intergroup threats may elicit both fear and anger, depending on the circumstances. News coverage of September 11 highlighted the threat of terrorism, and also identified the perpetrators of the attacks as Arab Muslim individuals. In a survey soon after the events, Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, and Morgan (2006) found that both fear and anger were common responses among US citizens, but that these emotions were differentially related to response preferences. Fear was associated with greater support for deporting Arab Americans, Muslims, and first generation immigrants from the United States, whereas anger was associated with greater support for war.

Despite the media's role in reinforcing fears of out-groups, some evidence suggests that media offerings can also reduce fear and anxiety by offering positive mediated intergroup contact (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). For example, Muller (2009) found that watching a drama in which people from different cultural backgrounds interacted and resolved differences led people to see out-group members as less threatening. However, this outcome was observed primarily for individuals who identified with out-group characters while viewing.

Threat and Anxiety Related to Expected Influence of Media on Others

Media depictions can also elicit fear and anxiety in people whose groups are stereotyped as threats by the media. When people see media representations of similar others, this can “cue” their social identity, making them more responsive to messages that are relevant to their activated identity. For example, when African Americans are exposed to mediated images of their ethnic group, their awareness and sensitivity to other media portrayals of their group increases (Davis & Gandy, 1999; Fujioka, 2005). This heightened consciousness can translate to anxiety if individuals believe media depictions of their group are negative. Fujioka (2005), drawing from integrated threat theory, argued that perception of negative media portrayals of one’s own group fit the criteria for a perceived threat that needs to be combated. In addition to integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), several theoretical approaches are relevant to understanding people’s responses to negative media depictions of their own group – for example, being portrayed as a threat to others – and expectations about how other people will be influenced by these depictions. These approaches include stereotype threat theory (Steele & Aronson, 1995), the related concept of collective threat (G. L. Cohen & Garcia, 2005), and the influence of presumed media influence model (Gunther & Storey, 2003; Chapter 5, this volume).

Stereotype threat theory contends that individuals are often aware of negative stereotypes about their group and are fearful of behaving in ways that support the stereotypes. A prerequisite for experiencing stereotype threat is believing that others are likely to apply a stereotype in their interpersonal actions or attributions about one’s group. Thus, stereotype threat is thought to be laden with anxiety, which can influence performance (Shmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008). Studies have shown that television gender stereotypes can activate stereotype threat for women in relation to their math and science ability (e.g., Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002). G. L. Cohen and Garcia (2005) introduced the concept of collective threat, defined as the fear that stereotype-conforming actions of in-group members will adversely influence how they are viewed by others. Media exposure to stereotype-consistent depictions of in-group members can remind people of group stereotypes, and has the potential to activate collective threat (Fujioka, 2005; Richeson & Pollydore, 2002; Stuart, 2006). Research on the impact of stereotype threat, and the newer concept of collective threat, has focused on consequences for academic and intellectual performance, but the effects are not limited to these domains. Recent studies have found that intergroup interactions are affected by stereotype threat related to race (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008) and mental illness (Henry, von Hippel, & Shapiro, 2010). It seems likely that media portrayals can make threat-related group stereotypes more salient for members of stereotyped groups, leading to expectations that others will rely on those stereotypes in personal and social contexts (Fujioka, 2005). Such responses may contribute to anxiety, anticipated rejection, and even avoidance of intergroup contact (cf. Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

Stereotype threat and collective threat related to media portrayals may be particularly strong because people tend to believe others will be swayed by stereotypic media depictions of their group. Much research documents that people believe media messages have a greater influence on others than on themselves, and that these perceptions have behavioral implications (Perloff, 2009). Gunther and Storey (2003) contended that indirect effects of media operate via a process they called the influence of presumed influence. They stated: "People perceive some influence of a message on others and then react to that perception of influence" (p. 201). In other words, people's responses to media depend, in part, on how they perceive others are affected, independent of any perceived effect on themselves. In a study in Nepal, Gunther and Storey found that the presumed influence of a radio drama on healthcare providers affected clients' perceptions of and interactions with the health workers.

Perception of negative and misleading media images of one's own group can make people feel vulnerable because they believe that others are less capable of critically evaluating those images. As a result, they tend to be fearful that others will be swayed by these media messages, and will develop stereotypes of their group (Hoffner, Fujioka, Cohen, & Atwell-Seate, 2008; Tsfat, 2007; Tsfat & Cohen, 2003). For example, Tsfat (2007) found that feelings of alienation experienced by Arab individuals in Israel were related to perceived negative media coverage of their group and the presumed influence of that coverage on out-group audiences.

Presumed media influence can translate into behavioral responses. Gunther, Perloff, and Tsfat (2008) classify behavioral consequences of presumed media influence into two types, prevention and accommodation. *Prevention* is exemplified by support for media restrictions to protect others from perceived harmful effects, and has been well documented (Perloff, 2009). Of several types of *accommodation*, fear and anxiety about the media's influence on others seem most likely to motivate withdrawal responses, such as not doing something that is expected to lead to social rejection or isolation. For example, in a study of residents of "development towns" in Israel, Tsfat and Cohen (2003) found that the more residents believed that media coverage had led to negative public attitudes toward the towns, the more likely they were to consider moving elsewhere. Using the influence of presumed influence framework, and considering the role of emotion in behavioral responses, should lead to a more complete understanding of the consequences of mediated group stereotypes.

Conclusions and Interpretations

This chapter has argued that media-related fear can exert a powerful influence over perceptions, expectations, and behavior. Applying the concept of mediated threat and associated fear responses to three contexts – immediate responses to media, risk perceptions, and intergroup relations – has yielded a more comprehensive understanding of the role of fear in media uses and effects. Yet although much theory and research supports the arguments presented, the review has also uncovered gaps in

our knowledge. Scholars need to give greater attention to emotion in the study of media, considering the role of specific emotions as well as general indicators of emotional involvement (cf. Nabi, 2010). As others have argued, much research related to risk perceptions and intergroup relations reflects a bias toward cognitive explanations, which provides an incomplete picture of media influence (Brader et al., 2008; Loewenstein et al., 2001; Slovic et al., 2004). Another issue is that fear or risk perceptions are often measured shortly after media exposure, leaving open the possibility that these responses decrease over time if not reinforced. Likewise, fears attached to identity (e.g., stereotype threat) may lie dormant until activated by later events or situations. The role of individual differences such as group identity in responses to mediated threats also needs to be explored in greater depth. A more general challenge for media scholars is to develop models that consider the likely reciprocal relationship between threat perceptions and fear, as well as how these responses lead to complex behaviors.

There is also a need to understand how fear responses to media depictions are affected by and interact with other emotions (cf. Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Theories of emotion have begun to account for the possibility that different emotions – even those of opposite valence – can occur simultaneously (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). Future research should study media-related fear in the context of other emotions, which should reveal a more complete picture of how individuals respond to mediated threats.

Although individuals are becoming increasingly reliant on the Internet and mobile media, surprisingly little is known about the unique abilities of these technologies to convey threat information and evoke fear responses (McComas, 2006). Mobile technologies are making it easier for individuals to stay connected to news and other information sources, and to share information with others. But increased access to social networks could potentially enhance fear and anxiety by increasing the speed at which partially accurate or inaccurate information spreads (Ma, 2008). Newer forms of media such as social networking sites and Internet forums extend offline relationships and facilitate the development of new contacts, but also provide alternative contexts for social threats and fears related to interpersonal and intergroup communication (Douglas, 2008). In summary, a great deal is known about the role of fear in response to mediated threats, but there is still much to be learned, and rapid changes in media technologies offer challenges and possibilities for media scholars.

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Callous/Malice

An Examination of Desensitizing and Aggression-Causing Media Effects

Ron Leone and Angela Paradise

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the complex relationship between exposure to media violence, aggression, and desensitization across various effects dimensions, from physiological and cognitive to affective and behavioral. The impact of contextual factors of media violence is explored, supported by a discussion of Leone's work on "ratings creep." Susceptibility to media violence is also discussed, informed by Paradise's videogame research dealing with trait aggression and playing style. The authors conclude that the relationship between exposure to media violence, aggression, and desensitization is not linear. Short-term increases in responsiveness to violent media – suggesting aggression-causing effects – can cede to decreased responses – indicative of a desensitization effect – over time. It is this pattern, the authors assert, that is most likely to guide future research into these phenomena.

Key Outcomes of Media Violence

Startling statistics have been published on the number of violent and aggressive acts committed in the United States. According to the FBI (2010), more than 1.3 million violent crimes (e.g., murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) occurred

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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in the United States in 2009. That same year, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2009), which collects data on reported and unreported crime from the victim's perspective, measured approximately 4.3 million nonfatal violent victimizations of people age 12 or older. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (2008) reported that homicide continues to be the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10- to 24-years-old. Meanwhile, nationwide surveys found that nearly 20% of students reported being bullied on school property (CDC, 2010) and over 70% of teenagers have been "cyber-bullied" within the last school year (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

What factors contribute to the wide range of violent and aggressive acts that pervades the United States? To be clear, most social scientists agree that no single variable causes a person to engage in violent or aggressive behavior. Rather, a host of factors, including psychological and cognitive impairments, parental upbringing, drug use, and access to weapons has been linked to real-world violence and aggression. Yet, we must also consider our media landscape, which, as the title of our chapter indicates, is permeated by malicious acts of violence committed by television, film, and videogame characters, often portrayed as callous and indifferent to the suffering of their victim(s). Historically, many scholars have investigated the connection; Murray (2008; Chapter 10) identified nearly 600 correlational and experimental studies directly pertaining to television and film violence over a 50-year period. Although there are some critics who disagree (e.g., Fowles, 1999; Freedman, 1984), most reviews of this research (e.g., Potter, 2008) conclude that violent screen media can increase the likelihood that a viewer or player will think, feel or behave aggressively, as well as experience physiological arousal and exhibit decreased prosocial behavior.

Another negative outcome of media violence exposure – desensitization – is also becoming increasingly prevalent in the literature. Desensitization refers to lowered responsiveness to a negative stimulus (typically screen media) after repeated or prolonged exposure to it, often referred to as habituation (Cline, Croft, & Courier, 1973). This outcome has been conceptualized as a short-term, immediate reduction in sympathy or concern (Drabman & Thomas, 1974), and as a long-term, cumulative effect caused by repeated exposure to media violence (Thomas, 1982). From what Carnagey, Anderson, and Bushman (2007) call desensitization "processes" (e.g., decreased heart rate) to desensitization "effects" (e.g., empathy for victims of violence), research in this area has not garnered the attention aggression has. However, we argue that desensitization is an equally important outcome to study. In fact, some scholars believe that desensitization may be a far more pervasive effect than aggression; further, as we will address in greater detail, some research suggests that desensitization to media violence can influence reactions to real-world aggression (Thomas, Horton, Lippincott, & Drabman, 1977).

This chapter will focus on the outcomes of aggression and desensitization as they relate to media violence. We will examine the various ways researchers have measured the effects of media violence and structure our chapter by the physiological, cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes associated with aggression and desensitization. Next we will address the types of violent media content (i.e., the contextual portrayals) that

can heighten the likelihood of desensitization and/or aggressive responses, as well as consider the individual difference variables (e.g., age, gender, etc.) that can increase a person's susceptibility to the effects of media violence. We will conclude this chapter by considering the social significance of aggression and desensitization.

Physiological Outcomes

Researchers have long measured physiological arousal (e.g., heart rate, blood pressure, skin conductance, respiration changes, etc.) during or immediately following exposure to violent or suspenseful media. Investigations of television and film have found that violent messages, as well as sexual depictions, lead to increases in viewers' physiological arousal. Early research by Osborn and Endsley (1971) found that children's galvanic skin response (GSR) levels (i.e., "emotional sweating") were significantly higher when watching violent cartoons and live-action scenes when compared to nonviolent content. Likewise, Groer and Howell (1990) measured the heart rates and skin temperatures of preschool children while they viewed clips of the nonviolent, slow-paced program, *Mister Rogers*, and the verbally and physically aggressive, fast-paced program, *GI Joe*. The researchers found that when compared to watching *Mister Rogers*, the heart rates of children watching *GI Joe* were significantly higher.

While the aforementioned studies examined arousal in young children, more recent research has investigated the effects of arousal-inducing television and film content among older audiences. For example, Kalamas and Gruber (1998) examined the electrodermal responses of 10- to 15-year-olds exposed to clips of the film, *Friday the 13th*. The study found a significant increase in participants' physiological reactivity, and responses were stronger during scenes of implied or impending violence (e.g., the perpetrator approaching his victim) when compared to scenes of actual violence (e.g., the perpetrator stabbing his victim). These findings suggest that the suspense leading up to a violent act may be just as arousing, if not more so, than watching a violent act depicted on the screen.

In recent years, researchers have directed their attention to the arousal-inducing effects of violent videogames, with findings largely pointing to an increase in physiological outcomes. For example, Ballard and Wiest (1996) randomly assigned participants to one of three exposure groups: a highly violent version of *Mortal Kombat* (with blood), a less violent version of *Mortal Kombat* (without blood), and a nonviolent control game, *Corner Pocket*. Participants who played either version of *Mortal Kombat* showed significantly higher cardiovascular reactivity scores (measured by heart rate and systolic blood pressure) than those in the nonviolent condition; further, heart rates and blood pressure scores were significantly higher for those who played the more violent game compared to its less violent counterpart. These findings suggest that videogame violence can increase players' arousal, and that the physiological outcomes can increase with heightened violent content.

In a similar study, Fleming and Rickwood (2001) examined the relationship between violent videogame play and children's physiological outcomes by randomly assigning participants to play a paper-pencil game, a nonviolent videogame, or a violent videogame. Results showed that the children's heart rates and self-reported arousal increased significantly after playing the violent videogame when compared to the other game conditions, with females experiencing greater increases than males.

Despite these findings, some recent research, using the most technologically sophisticated games, suggests that violent content in videogames may be just as arousing as other game elements (e.g., pace, perceptual persuasiveness of graphics, screen size, etc.). For example, Ivory and Kalyanaraman (2007) randomly assigned participants to either a newer or older version of a violent or nonviolent videogame to test players' levels of presence, involvement, physiological arousal, self-reported arousal, and aggression (cognitive and affective). While the technological advancement of newer games increased players' physiological arousal (as measured by skin conductance) and self-reported arousal, there was no support for the researchers' prediction that those in the violent videogame condition would experience greater arousal than those in the nonviolent game condition. Likewise, Barlett, Rodeheffer, Baldassaro, Hinkin, & Harris (2008) failed to find a significant difference in physiological arousal between players of a violent and nonviolent videogame; they attribute this finding to the fact that the games tested in their study were equally exciting. Given these findings, we concur with Ivory and Kalyanaraman (2007) that future research should investigate the effects of content elements (e.g., violence) in concert with other game features (e.g., technological advancement) to better comprehend these variables' relative contributions to physiological arousal and other aggression-related outcomes.

Finally, expanding on the research on physiological outcomes, neuroscientists have charted new territory by studying media violence exposure and brain activation patterns. Using MRI technology, Murray et al. (2006) are investigating children's brain activity while watching violent television (see Chapter 10). At the same time, videogame researchers, such as Weber et al. (2006), have employed similar research designs, with preliminary evidence suggesting that playing violent games is strongly related to brain activity patterns characteristic of aggressive thoughts. While these studies are exploratory and limited by small samples, they provide an innovative foundation from which future neuroscientific research can grow.

Overall, the body of research on screen media suggests that exposure to violent content can lead to subsequent increases in short-term arousal. As noted by Anderson et al. (2003), these findings are especially noteworthy in light of evidence that increased arousal levels can heighten the likelihood of aggressive behavioral responses. In line with excitation transfer theory (Zillmann, 1991), arousal caused by media content (violent or nonviolent) may be misattributed as anger in situations involving provocation and in turn may increase the likelihood of anger-motivated aggressive behavior. In other words, heightened levels of short-term physiological arousal can have subsequent effects on aggression.

While exposure to media violence can indeed increase physiological arousal, researchers have long studied the way in which these responses can subside over time, with individuals' lowered responsiveness to media violence along various physiological measures indicating they are becoming desensitized to media violence after repeated exposure. Researchers have measured differences in physiological responses to exposure to violent media once (Bartholow, Bushman, & Sestir, 2006; Cline et al., 1973) or multiple times (Ballard, Hamby, Panee, & Nivens, 2006). More frequently, researchers exposed subjects to media violence and measured their subsequent physiological responses to a variety of alternate stimuli (Ballard et al., 2006; Linz et al., 1989; Thomas et al., 1977).

In an early study detailing results of two experiments, children who reported being heavy TV viewers had lowered GSR and blood volume pulse amplitude when viewing a violent film (Cline et al., 1973). More recently, adult males who enjoyed and frequently played violent videogames demonstrated different brain activity than men who enjoyed and played them less often (Bartholow et al., 2006). The amplitude of frequent violent game players' P300 event-related brain potential (ERP), which corresponds to aversive reactions to negative (e.g., violent) visual stimuli, was lower than infrequent violent game players' measures, in response to neutral, violent, and negative nonviolent images from Lang, Bradley and Cuthbert's (2001) international affective picture system (IAPS) (Bartholow et al., 2006). Epistemologically, Bartholow et al. (2006) advanced the study of desensitization, in part, by using neutral, violent, and negative nonviolent images from the IAPS in lieu of fictional violence from a Hollywood film. Where Cline et al. (1973) made a theoretical leap from TV exposure to TV violence exposure, Bartholow et al. (2006) had subjects complete a questionnaire regarding favorite videogames and perceived violence within when comprising high- and low-exposure groups. Bartholow et al.'s (2006) primary contribution to desensitization literature was their measurement of a specific brain reaction to stimuli, adding an additional physiological indicator to existing measures. These researchers examined short-term desensitization effects, relying on self-reported prior exposure (assumed or actual) to media violence as an antecedent to physiological responses.

More often, researchers expose subjects to media violence and measure physiological desensitization to subsequent stimuli. Thomas et al. (1977) showed subjects a violent police drama or nonviolent sports film and measured GSR during a subsequent real-world depiction of screen violence; those who previously viewed violence had lower GSR. Males in Linz, Donnerstein, and Adams's (1989) study exposed to "slasher" films had lower heart rates during the final part of violent clips they were exposed to than males who previously viewed nonviolent scenes. Ballard et al. (2006) measured adolescents' heart rate, systolic blood pressure, and diastolic blood pressure while playing violent or nonviolent videogames, and found lowered responses in all three areas not only during game play but across time (from Time 1 to Times 2 and 3); however, the pattern was not exclusive to players in the violent game group. Similarly, male subjects who played a high- or low-violence version of a first-person

shooter game for 20 minutes had lower heart and breathing rates over time. In the same study, those who played the high-violence version had lower GSR responses to subsequent exposure to “aversive” IAPS photos (e.g., mutilated corpses) (Staudemüller, Bliesener, & Luthman, 2008).

Ballard et al. (2006) assessed adolescents’ physiological desensitization to violent and nonviolent, active videogames (a) within a 15-minute session and (b) over the course of 3 weekly sessions. Measuring heart rate, systolic blood pressure, and diastolic blood pressure, their results were mixed. Within their gaming session, subjects relaxed, but did not demonstrate steadily decreasing cardiovascular responses. Further, no difference in responses between the violent and nonviolent games was found. Over the course of three weeks, subjects demonstrated decreased physiological responses; again, no differences in responses between violent and nonviolent games were detected. The authors concluded that arousing, but not necessarily violent, games invoked such responses (Ballard et al., 2006).

A crucial aspect of desensitization research is whether the pattern of reduced physiological responses found in most of these studies means individuals will care less or have blunted reactions when exposed to real-world violence. Yet, due to ethical considerations, researchers do not expose participants to actual violence, settling instead for mediated violence presented as real, such as actual news footage or staged conflicts. While operationalization of real-world violence varies, in general, it refers to depictions not created by Hollywood studios for entertainment purposes (Carnagey et al., 2007). Thus, the common trait shared by all content used as real-world examples is that it is mediated. Care should be taken not to mistake desensitization to real-world *media* violence for desensitization to real-world violence.

Thomas et al. (1977) measured subjects’ skin resistance during exposure to real-world violence after viewing violent or nonviolent arousing media. In experiment 1, children watched either an excerpt from a violent television police drama or a volleyball game, followed by a staged violent confrontation between two preschoolers caught on camera. Subjects who watched the violent police drama exhibited lower GSR responses to the real-world violence (i.e., the staged preschooler conflict) than control subjects. Experiment 2 was similar, except for the sample population (college undergraduates) and the real-world violence stimulus (unedited news footage of riots outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago). Male subjects followed the predicted pattern (lowered GSR responsiveness); the results were more tentative for females. Carnagey et al. (2007) measured college students’ heart rates and GSR before and after playing either violent or nonviolent arousing videogames for 20 minutes. Their physiological responses were measured as they watched a 10-minute videotape of real-world violence (e.g., courtroom outbursts, prison fights). As predicted, subjects who played one of the violent videogames demonstrated lower physiological responses to the violent clips. Recall that high-violence game players in Staudemüller et al.’s (2008) study had lower GSR responses to aversive IAPS photos; they were also more physiologically sensitive to the aggressive photos, as predicted, which was attributed to a priming effect of the violent videogame.

Thus, in terms of physiological desensitization, questions persist regarding different responses to violent versus active (but not necessarily violent) stimuli, especially as researchers have focused on the effects of violent videogame playing on individuals. Habituation over the course of single and multiple exposures remains a primary emphasis, as does its relationship to subsequent responses to a variety of stimuli, including real-world media examples (themselves often presented in a mediated, though ostensibly non-fictional, context). There is evidence to suggest that violent entertainment media use makes subsequent exposure to violence presented as having actually occurred, less physiologically arousing to research participants.

Cognitive Outcomes

Aggressive cognitions as an outcome of exposure to media violence have been measured in a variety of ways (e.g., word-completion tasks, thought-listing tasks, and word-reaction time tasks), with studies providing evidence of short-term aggressive thoughts following exposure to media violence. For example, Chory-Assad (2004) found that exposure to verbally aggressive TV sitcoms led to an increase in participants' aggressive thoughts. Research on violent movies (Anderson, 1997) and photographs of weapons (Anderson, Benjamin, & Bartholow, 1998) yielded similar results. In the past, researchers of television and film violence (see Chory-Assad, 2004) also applied thought-listing tasks in their research design, and recently videogame scholars have drawn on this measurement tool as well. For example, Tamborini et al. (2004) found that participants who played a violent videogame listed significantly more hostile thoughts than subjects in a nonviolent control group. Anderson and Dill (2000) found that even brief exposure to violent videogames can heighten aggressive thoughts, as measured by a reading-reaction time test. Likewise, Anderson et al. (2004) found that participants who played a violent videogame produced a significantly higher percentage of aggressive words (using a word-completion task) than those in the nonviolent videogame group. However, in a similar study by Cicchirillo and Chory-Assad (2005), aggressive thoughts were not observed among participants who played a violent videogame for 10 minutes. The researchers posit that "perhaps aggressive thoughts are not primed until violent videogames are played for longer periods of time, maybe long enough for players to learn the game and get comfortable playing it" (p. 446). This comfort may in fact be an indicator of desensitization over time.

Measuring cognitive effects in desensitization research often takes the form of perceptions of victims. Linz and colleagues (1989) had subjects view violence against women or arousing, nonviolent content, followed by scenes of men committing acts of violence against women. Participants then assessed perpetrators' and victims' levels of responsibility, levels of violence and victim injury, and victims' attractiveness. Subjects in the violence-viewing group judged the female victims as less injured

than did controls; however, they also attributed more responsibility to the perpetrators, a finding the authors described as a possible short-term, sensitizing effect of violence viewing.

Linz, Donnerstein, and Penrod (1984) explored the desensitizing effects of multiple exposures to violent content. On successive days, male subjects viewed "R-rated" violent films containing violence against women in which the female victims are not sexually aroused by the violence and usually end up murdered. On the final day, subjects and members of a control group watched a reenactment of an actual rape trial. Over the course of five days, subjects judged the films as being less degrading to women and less violent. Compared to the control group, subjects also deemed the rape victim in the reenactment as less injured and less worthy of sympathy, leading Linz et al. (1984) to conclude that regular exposure to media violence may reduce sensitivity to victims in other contexts.

Mullin and Linz (1995) explored "spillover" desensitizing effects of sexually violent material, again looking at the impact of viewing slasher films on men's evaluations of domestic violence victims. They sought to determine the persistence of desensitization by having subjects evaluate victims three, five, or seven days after the final exposure. Cognitively, subjects' estimates of the sexual violence in the films decreased over time. Moreover, subjects who evaluated victims three days after seeing the final film perceived less injury than those in the five-day later, seven-day later, and control groups, suggesting a recovered sensitivity on the part of subjects over an extended period of time.

Clearly, evidence suggests that time plays an important role in determining cognitive effects, whether it's during a single exposure to media violence or over the course of multiple exposures to it. The provocation and subsequent subsiding of aggressive thoughts related to media violence exposure suggest a pattern seen less steadily in the realm of affective responses.

Affective Outcomes

Whereas cognitive outcomes involve thoughts and information processing, affective outcomes embody emotions such as fear and anger. Research on television and film has shown that exposure to violence can contribute to feelings of hostility, anxiety, fear, and depression. However, the research on playing violent videogames and aggressive affect is less consistent, with some studies finding a significant relationship (e.g., Ballard & Wiest, 1996; Carnagey & Anderson, 2005; Gentile, Lynch, Linder, & Walsh, 2004) and others showing marginal to no support (e.g., Anderson & Dill, 2000; Scott, 1995).

In a series of experiments, Carnagey and Anderson (2005) explored the effects of rewarded and punished violent acts during videogame play on subsequent aggressive affect, investigating whether aggressive behavior is driven by cognition or affect; i.e., when comparing aggressive thoughts to aggressive affect, which is more likely to

influence aggressive behavior? They found that videogame violence, regardless of whether it is rewarded or punished, significantly increased hostile emotions relative to playing a nonviolent game. However, their findings, when compared to their other two experiments testing the outcomes of cognition and behavior, suggest that aggressive cognitions are more likely than aggressive affect to drive aggressive behavior.

While experimental and correlational data provide evidence of a significant link between violent videogame exposure and aggressive affect, other research paints a different picture. Scott's (1995) hypothesis of a linear increase in aggressive affect after playing a non-aggressive computer game (*Tetris*), a moderately aggressive computer game (*Overkill*), or a very violent computer game (*Fatal Fury*), respectively, failed to gain support. Anderson and Dill (2000) found that playing a violent videogame failed to significantly increase state hostility; however, violent videogame play significantly increased aggressive cognitions and aggression behaviors relative to players in the nonviolent game condition. In light of these findings, Anderson and Dill suggest that the effects of violent videogames may take "a cognitive and not an affective path to increasing aggressive behavior in short-term settings" (p. 786), but "do not rule out the possibility that under some circumstances violent videogame effects on subsequent aggressive behavior might be mediated by increased feelings of hostility or by general arousal effects" (p. 788).

Affective and attitudinal desensitization, typically operationalized in the form of sympathy for victims, is a frequent research focus. Recall the work of Linz et al. (1989), who took measurements of the moods (hostility, anxiety, and depression) of males who viewed violence, immediately after viewing and again after seeing the dependent measure clips. They found that exposure to violence had a short-term desensitizing effect on mood. Controls experienced increases in the three mood measures after viewing the violent clips, whereas experimental subjects did not (Linz et al., 1989).

In 1988, Linz, Donnerstein, and Penrod had male subjects watch either two or five slasher, "X-rated," or less explicit teen sex films, then view and evaluate a reenactment of either an acquaintance or nonacquaintance rape trial. Linz et al. (1988) predicted lowered responsiveness from subjects who viewed the sexual violence in the slasher films than those who saw nonviolent, sexual content, as well as differences in responses to the reenactments. Over time, sexually violent material that initially provoked negative affective responses (e.g., anxiety) in subjects subsided. Violence-viewing subjects were less sympathetic to the rape victim in the trial, and less able to empathize with rape victims in general than other subjects and controls. However, longer exposure periods were needed to affect the latter response. In subsequent work exploring the effects of multiple exposures to violence over time, subjects in Mullin and Linz's (1995) study became desensitized by viewing three slasher films in five days, displaying decreased hostility, but not anxiety or depression.

More recently, Fanti, Vanman, Henrich, and Avraamides (2009) examined short-term desensitization effects by showing subjects nine violent and nine comic scenes (alternating) and having subjects assess enjoyment of all eighteen and sympathy

toward victims in the nine violent clips. Using latent growth-curve modeling, Fanti et al. (2009) discovered divergent curvilinear paths for enjoyment and perceived victim sympathy during violent scene viewing. Over the course of multiple exposures to violence in the short-term, subjects' enjoyment started at a midpoint on the researchers' scale, decreased at first, and at clip five began a steady escalation culminating in highest levels of enjoyment for the ninth violent clip. Victim sympathy also began at a midpoint on the researchers' scale, increased at first, and at clip five began a steady decline paralleling the increases in perceived enjoyment. Fanti et al.'s (2009) work suggests that short-term desensitization effects are not always linear, as has been found in the past, but also can be curvilinear. The pattern of increased sympathy and decreased enjoyment evident by the midway point of their experiment provides some evidence for the possibility of short-term sensitization that may coexist with more conventional desensitization findings.

Funk, Bechtoldt Baldacci, Pasold, and Baumgartner (2004) assessed long-term desensitization effects of media violence on children through survey methodology. They assessed relationships between real-life and media violence exposure and desensitization, predicting lower empathy and stronger proviolence attitudes among children who report greater exposure levels, especially regarding videogame violence. Exposure to videogame violence was associated with lower empathy and stronger proviolence attitudes. Movie violence exposure was also associated with stronger proviolence attitudes. However, real-life violence exposure did not correlate significantly with either measure. Yet, their correlational survey data do not rule out the possibility that individuals with more proviolent attitudes and less empathy seek out more violent media rather than the violent media necessarily causing the proviolent attitudes or lack of empathy.

Funk, Buchman, Jenks, and Bechtoldt (2003) examined short- and long-term desensitization effects, focusing on relationships between children's exposure to videogame violence and their empathy, game preference, and attitudes toward violence (components of moral evaluation). To assess short-term effects, Funk et al. (2003) examined children's empathic responses to vignettes after playing a violent or nonviolent videogame and responses to vignettes in which they were asked what would happen next in the scenario, what they would do, and so on. To assess long-term effects, they explored relationships between exposure, preexisting empathy and attitudes toward violence, and vignette responses. No significant effect of type of game played on short-term empathic responses was found. However, participants with greater long-term exposure to violent videogames displayed lower preexisting empathy and lower scores on empathy vignettes. Thus, long-term exposure to violent videogames appears to have desensitized child participants, at least in terms of their levels of empathy, whereas short-term effects of playing a violent videogame (versus playing a nonviolent one) did not, suggesting a coarsening over time in the violent videogame player not paralleled in a single session.

Finally, Scharrer (2008) turned the lens to news content by exploring the relationship between amount of exposure to television violence, local newspapers, and local

television news and responses to news stories chronicling violent events (dependent measure). By focusing on emotional responses to the dependent news stories, perception of violence in them, and perception of the events covered as commonplace, the relationship between trait empathy – a frequent desensitization indicator (though not here) – and desensitization was explored. Respondents who reported higher exposure to violent entertainment television, local newspapers, and local television news were less sensitive to the violent news stories. Other predicted desensitization effects provided less uniform results. Trait empathy, as operationalized in this study, interacted with some forms of media exposure to predict emotional responses to and perceptions of the dependent measure stories, leading Scharrer (2008) to conclude that trait empathy plays a role in identifying individuals most susceptible to desensitization.

Along with the physiological indicators discussed previously, examination of cognitive, affective, and attitudinal responses provides a complete picture of the study of desensitization, with time playing a significant role in the process. The common focus on relationships between desensitization and subsequent exposure to stimuli will most likely continue to shape future inquiry, as will connections to aggression.

Behavioral Outcomes

Research has long shown that exposure to media violence can increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior and decrease the likelihood of prosocial behavior. Given that this volume includes a chapter on prosocial behavior (see Mares, Chapter 30), we will only address the research pertaining to aggressive behavior. Aggressive behavior, especially in correlational research, has been assessed using a variety of measures including self-reported, peer-reported, parent-reported, and teacher-reported aggression. Likewise, experimental studies have measured aggression in several ways, including observing participants in free-play situations, measuring the duration of noxious blasts that participants deliver to “opponents,” and employing projective tests.

Lab experiments dating back to the 1960s (e.g., Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963) demonstrate that television and film violence can cause short-term behavioral effects in some children and adolescents. Reflecting on the body of research, Sparks and Sparks (2002) contend that experimental data is “so consistent in favor of the conclusion that exposure causes increased aggression that fewer experiments have been conducted in recent years” (p. 275). Yet, there are some noteworthy examples of contemporary research. For example, Scharrer’s (2005) study, which examined the moderating role of personality, found some evidence that violent television programs can elicit a stronger effect among males with a higher level of trait aggression than their less aggressive counterparts.

To address limitations typically associated with lab-based research (e.g., artificiality, questionable measurement techniques, and the inability to assess long-term effects), scholars have conducted notable field experiments, including Boyatzis, Matillo, and

Newbitt (1995), who found that exposure to *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* led to a significant increase in children's physical and verbal aggression in the classroom. In addition, longitudinal studies (see Huesmann & Eron, 1986; Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003) provide convincing evidence that long-term exposure to television violence during childhood predicts aggression and, in some cases, criminal behavior, in adulthood. Despite the limitations of laboratory research, it is important to highlight the work of Anderson, Lindsay, and Bushman (1999), who found that the cumulative effect sizes of lab- and field-based studies are quite similar, thereby suggesting that laboratory research is externally valid.

Collectively, whereas the body of research on television and film violence is large and fairly consistent, the literature on violent videogames and their behavioral effects is smaller in size and occasionally yields some conflicting results. Gentile et al.'s (2004) survey of middle school students found that time spent with violent videogames was a significant predictor of both self-reported arguments with teachers and self-reported physical fights with peers. Likewise, Bartholow, Sestir, and Davis' (2005) survey of college-aged males found that exposure to violent videogames is significantly correlated with self-reports of aggressive behavior. However, Wiegman and van Schie's (1998) survey of Netherlands youth failed to show a relationship between overall exposure to videogames and peer-reported aggression.

In addition to surveys, experimental research has found that undergraduates who played violent videogames punished confederates by delivering stronger blasts of noxious noise than did participants who played a nonviolent videogame (Anderson et al., 2004; Bartholow & Anderson, 2002). More recently, in exploring the role of game attributes, Fischer, Kastenmuller, and Greitemeyer (2010) found that college subjects who played a violent videogame using a personalized character exhibited more aggressive behavior (measured by participants' willingness to dispense hot chili sauce to a subsequent participant) than those who played a violent videogame using a nonpersonalized character. Other research, such as Williams and Skoric's (2005) longitudinal study of an online violent videogame, failed to show an increase in behavioral aggression, whereas Anderson et al. (2008) found a significant, positive longitudinal relationship between playing violent videogames and aggressive behavior. Despite some inconsistencies in the research findings, it is important to note that three meta-analyses (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Sherry, 2001) have found that, in the aggregate, there is a positive and significant relationship between videogame violence exposure and subsequent aggressive behavior.

The possibility that becoming desensitized to violence leads the way toward aggressive or even violent behavior is a matter of strong social significance. If individuals who see a great deal of violence in the media consider violence to be nonarousing, normative, and no real cause for concern, might this disinhibit their own aggressive tendencies? For instance, research into the relationship between videogame violence exposure and aggression has explored the potential mediating role desensitization can play, leading some to speculate that physiological desensitization (e.g., reduced heart rate) or desensitization effects (i.e., empathy) could play a

mediating role between exposure and aggression (Carnagey et al., 2007). Based on subjects' physiological responses to pictures from the IAPS following game play, Staude-Muller et al. (2008) found that players in a high violence game-playing group were more sensitive to aggressive cues than subjects who played a low-violence version of the same first-person shooter, a difference "explained by the priming of aggressive knowledge structures . . . pre-activated by the aggressive content . . . and more easily accessible [by subjects in the high-violence group]" (p. 48). Bartholow et al. (2005) examined the role of empathy as a mediator of the effect of videogame violence exposure on aggression. In their primary analysis, empathy was not a significant mediator of aggression. Despite finding a significant mediating role between exposure and a specific aspect of laboratory aggression, Bartholow et al. (2005) concluded that empathy appears to play a weaker mediating role than hostility, for which the team also tested. While there is not yet convincing evidence supporting a mediating role for desensitization between exposure and aggression, researchers continue to study the connections between these two areas of effects to better understand their relationship to one another.

Violent Content in Context

Research, in particular the National Television Violence Study (NTVS, Smith et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 1997, 1998), has identified "high-risk" contextual features of mediated violence that facilitate or inhibit aggressive thoughts, attitudes, and/or behaviors. For example, drawing on social cognitive theory, research shows that rewarded violence or violence that goes unpunished increases the likelihood of learning aggression, whereas punished aggression diminishes the risk. Likewise, aggression committed by an attractive perpetrator has been shown to increase the likelihood of learning from mediated aggression, whereas violence committed by unattractive or unlikable characters reduces this risk. Along these same lines, the more a person identifies with perpetrators of media violence (especially those perceived as attractive or likable), the more likely he or she will learn from the character's actions. Studies have also found that justified violence (e.g., using violence to "save the day") enhances the likelihood of an aggressive outcome; unjustified violence decreases this likelihood. Finally, we know that the presence of weapons, especially conventional ones (e.g., guns, knives), violence that appears "realistic," and humorous violence can promote the learning of aggression.

Potter (2008) presents a provocative point about violent media and desensitization in *Media Literacy*:

The kind of violence that upsets people the most is precisely the type of violence that they need to be exposed to more. [...] It is] the violence that most people do not complain about – or even perceive – that is doing them the most harm. (pp. 307–308)

Based on his work analyzing television violence (Potter & Smith, 2000; Wilson, Smith, Potter et al., 2002), he contends that humorless, highly graphic violence offends people, leading them to call for its strict control or elimination from media content. Potter (2008) views this as an inappropriate action based on an appropriate response; that is, being offended by media violence is an indication of sensitization to it, which is a reasonable, if not healthy, response. If media outlets simply make violence more humorous or portray its consequences as less serious, it may placate the offended, but they (the media outlets) are only sanitizing the content, and essentially desensitizing the audience to it.

Consider the violence in the “R-rated” *Saving Private Ryan* (highly graphic and sensitizing) compared to the violence in most “PG-13-rated,” comic book-inspired films (less graphic and desensitizing). Where the violent depictions in the restricted (by MPAA rating) Spielberg film could sensitize viewers to the horrors of war and human suffering, those in unrestricted superhero franchise films could have the opposite effect, highlighting the violent exploits of a heroic character while trivializing the suffering of victims. Or think about the violence found on television, where “programs targeted to children . . . contain more violence overall and . . . it is far more likely to be sanitized and trivialized [than violence in nonchildren’s shows]” (Wilson et al., 2002, p. 29). When Leone and Barowski (2011) examined “ratings creep” (the notion that, over time, adult content escalates in films with the same rating), they found that violence in PG-13-rated films increased significantly since 1988. Of the over 2,000 violent sequences coded, from mild (1) to rough and persistent (5), the majority (nearly two-thirds) were mild; this is precisely the kind of desensitizing violence to which Wilson et al. (2002) and Potter (2008) refer. Leone and Barowski’s findings coincide with Carnagey et al.’s (2007) conclusion that “the modern entertainment media landscape could accurately be described as an effective systematic violence desensitization tool” (p. 495), and the violence found in PG-13 films would be a major structure in that landscape.

Who is Most Susceptible?

While all media consumers are potentially vulnerable to media violence, research has indicated that some people are more susceptible than others. Over the years, researchers have identified several factors (often referred to as “individual differences”) that heighten a person’s susceptibility to the effects of media violence. For example, critics concerned with media violence have positioned young children as a unique audience especially susceptible. This concern is indeed warranted, with Paik and Comstock’s (1994) meta-analysis finding an inverse relationship between the age of the viewer and the magnitude of the effect of television violence on aggression. In addition to age, gender is another individual difference variable of interest to researchers. Paik and Comstock’s analysis revealed that television violence tends

to have a stronger effect on males than females, in part because males often pay more attention to violence. However, in recent years, research suggests that females are increasingly susceptible to media violence; this is partly attributed to societal change, the increase in aggressive female media characters (Jansz & Martis, 2007), and the increase in females playing videogames (Entertainment Software Association, 2010). Clearly, more research is needed to shed greater light on gender and susceptibility to media violence.

In addition to age and gender, researchers have studied the role of personality traits – especially trait aggression – in the relationship between media violence exposure and aggressive outcomes (see Chapter 8). Slater, Henry, Swain, and Anderson's (2003) "downward spiral model" is especially relevant to this area of research. Their model suggests that youth with a high level of trait aggression seek out violent media content and that exposure to media violence predicts aggressive outcomes in youth, such that both relationships are mutually reinforcing. Indeed, some research has found that characteristically aggressive young people are more likely to be influenced in the short-term by viewing media violence than those without aggressive traits (Anderson & Dill, 2000, Study 1; Scharrer, 2005).

Playing videogames complicates the relationship between individuals' trait aggression and the effects of media violence in ways viewing it on television or film do not. The player's ability to modify game content is one of the key characteristics of "interactivity" distinguishing gaming from traditional media viewing. Further, players' individual differences variables (e.g., age, gender, personality traits, etc.) are likely to shape how they play and respond to the game. In short, since a player controls his or her character's actions, we must consider that there are certain types of people with preexisting personality traits, such as trait aggression, who may play violent videogames using a more aggressive playing style; furthermore, an aggressive in-game playing style may shape post-playing aggressive outcomes. Cicchirillo and Chory-Assad (2005) emphasize that very little research has taken into account the extent to which players' personality traits may moderate negative outcomes; they go on to issue a call for research whereby "researchers should consider capturing the game play of their participants (e.g., recording it on DVD or videotape) and comparing the actual content played or produced by the game players to their aggressive responses" (p. 447).

Paradise (2007) responded to this call by conducting an exploratory study to test whether trait aggressiveness shaped aggressive in-game playing choices, and consequently whether aggressive playing choices influenced players' short-term aggressive thoughts. As hypothesized, results indicated that participants who played a violent videogame (24: *The Game*) produced more aggressive thoughts than those who played a nonviolent game (*Tetris*); however, contrary to the hypothesis, trait aggression did not moderate this relationship.

Data obtained by measuring participants' in-game playing style of 24: *The Game* also revealed that individuals play violent videogames in vastly different ways, with players' in-game violent acts varying substantially (between 57 to 255 acts). Subsequent

analyses indicated that participants' trait aggressiveness did not influence their style of videogame play (more aggressive versus less aggressive). However, results showed that a more aggressive playing style predicted aggressive thoughts. It is important to note that, to our knowledge, only one other study (see Peng, Liu, & Mou, 2008) has examined the relationship between trait aggression and playing style, finding that those with high-trait aggression employed a more aggressive style of game play, even after controlling for prior gaming experience and gender. Given that Peng and colleagues' (2008) findings are contrary to those found in Paradise's (2007) experiment, more research is needed to examine this relationship.

Conclusion

The connections between exposure to media violence, aggression, and desensitization extend across various effects dimensions, from physiological and cognitive to affective and behavioral. And the evidence chronicling myriad effects of screen media violence on people, from young children and preadolescents to teens and adults, is supported by decades of research examining these phenomena. If one factor stands out as guiding the thinking about, research into, and future examination of these connections, it is time. As we gain insight into the importance of time, the complex relationship between these factors will be further explained.

What we do know is that the relationship between exposure to media violence, aggression, and desensitization is not necessarily linear. In the short-term, exposure can lead, initially, to increased responsiveness suggesting aggressive effects. However, at certain time thresholds, there is evidence of decreased responses, thus suggesting a desensitization effect. It seems clear that this pattern of increased responses that give way to decreased ones guides much of the research in the field, and will continue to do so in the future.

When considering these effects in the long-term, an even more complex relationship may emerge. Over time and multiple exposures to media violence, people become desensitized not only to the violent content itself but to a host of other stimuli. Just how long this desensitized condition lasts is still uncertain, as is its role in facilitating aggressive behavior, but scholars will continue to examine the relationship between these two areas of media effects. Likewise, future researchers must address the important contextual factors of violent content, especially with the increasing sophistication and vividness of videogames. How violence is portrayed (or perpetrated) on screen, and its influence on the people who are exposed to it most, must guide future research.

Ultimately, we return to central questions of media effects: Are people with trait aggression drawn to violent media, and, if so, does further consumption of it numb them to its effects, and by extension to the world and people around them? Subsequently, does it make those people more aggressive? The evidence suggests that

the answer to most of these questions is a qualified “yes.” Aggressive people consume a lot of violent media, and, over time, are less reactive to it both short- and long-term, which carries over into other areas of their lives. How far and for how long it carries over will shape these lines of inquiry in the future.

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Sex on Television

A Review of Socialization Effects and the Role of Context and Individual Differences

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents and emerging adults watch a great deal of television and research shows that they are exposed to a steady stream of messages about sex and sexuality, the vast majority of which do not contain important messages about safe and healthy sexual behavior. Research finds that young people learn information about sex from watching television and that their attitudes about sexual topics, including sexual health, can be influenced. Evidence is mounting that watching sex on television is linked to both initiation of and advancement in sexual behaviors. This chapter will review the evidence on sexual socialization effects with an emphasis on the role of the context of a sexual portrayal in the effects process. The importance of gender and race in the effects process will also be highlighted and potential positive effects of sexual content in the media will also be discussed.

Social Importance

Research has established that exposure to television portrayals can influence social behavior, both in children and adults. For example, numerous studies indicate that depictions of television violence can increase aggressive behavior among viewers (see Chapters 4, 10, and 18, this volume). Attention to the effects of sexual content in the

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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media on audience members is more recent and the growing body of empirical literature on this topic suggests that several different types of effects are likely to occur. Adolescence is a crucial time for sexual development and sexual identity exploration. Therefore, our focus here is mainly on adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18. However, some of the relevant research reviewed does include slightly older or younger samples.

This chapter will review the evidence linking the media to sexual socialization effects. The role of the context of a sexual portrayal in the effects process will be discussed. The importance of gender and race in the effects process will also be highlighted and potential positive effects of sexual content in the media will also be discussed.

The United States continues to have a much higher teenage pregnancy rate than other industrialized nations and over half of new cases of sexually transmitted infections in 2000 were among young people aged 15 to 24 (Weinstock, Berman, & Cates, 2004). These statistics are not surprising given that only two in three teens report using condoms every time they have sexual intercourse and only 30% report always using protection during oral sex (NBC News/People Magazine, 2005). Although sexual behavior is developmentally normative for adolescents, research has found that most sexually active teens express regret that they didn't wait longer to become sexually active (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2002). Additionally, research shows that the younger adolescents are when they initiate sexual intercourse, the more at risk they are for outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned teen pregnancies (Abma & Sonenstein, 2001). Clearly young people are not consistently practicing safe sex and, given the public health implications of this behavior, it is important to understand what factors play a role in the sexual socialization of young people.

Sexual Socialization

Many factors come into play in the sexual socialization of youth. Parents, friends, and school are all sources that may contribute to the sexual education of adolescents. However, it appears that young people may not actually get much information from these important sources of socialization. Many teens report that they don't talk with their parents about sex. A recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 56% of sexually active teens reported never having talked with their parents about sex. More than half of all sexually active teens also reported never talking with healthcare providers about STIs or contraception and they also report that sexual education doesn't prepare them to talk about sex (KFF, 2002). It is increasingly evident that the mass media may also play an important role in this process as well. Why might we expect sexual socialization effects to occur from mass media exposure?

First, young people spend a good deal of time engaged in some form of media use. Recent work by Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts (2010) reports that children

between the ages of 8 and 18 watch approximately four and a half hours of television daily, spend an hour and a half on the computer and about 30 minutes with print media. Second, sexual messages are extremely prevalent in all forms of mass media. Several large-scale content analyses of television conducted over the last decade by Kunkel and colleagues have found that sexual content occurs in approximately 70% of shows on television (see Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). Talk about sex occurs in 68% of programs and 35% of programs include some form of sexual behavior with portrayals of sexual intercourse occurring in more than 1 out of 10 television programs. Kunkel et al. (2005) also analyzed the top 20 programs viewed by adolescents aged 12 to 17 in 2004 according to Nielsen data. They found that 70% of the shows heavily watched by teens feature some sexual content and these shows average just over six scenes per hour of sexual talk or behavior. Just about one out of every two programs watched by teens contained sexual behavior, and 8% of these shows include sexual intercourse. Unfortunately, messages about safe and healthy sexuality are rare in the television landscape. In fact, the Kunkel et al. (2005) study found that only 4% of scenes with sexual content had any mention of sexual risk or responsibility. Only 5% of scenes with sexual content in teens' favorite programming mention sexual health issues. Additional work by Pardun, L'Engle, and Brown (2005) found a similar pattern for other media that adolescents use. Sexual content was frequent in movies, music, magazines and Internet sites yet explicitly healthy messages about sexuality were rare. Clearly young people are being exposed to a great deal of sexual content in the media yet it is important to note that they are not seeing many messages about safe and healthy sexuality.

Also missing from much of the television young people watch are messages about homosexuality. Recent content analytic work by Fisher et al. (2007) found that portrayals or discussion of gays, lesbians, or bisexuals are infrequent and stand in stark contrast to the previously mentioned prevalence of heterosexual content found on television. They found that only 15% of shows in their sample of more than 2,700 programs featured at least one instance of talk about sex or sexual behavior related to gays, lesbians or bisexuals.

Given the frequency and accessibility of sexual messages, socialization effects regarding sexuality are likely. As mentioned, young people may have an information gap when it comes to learning about sexuality. It's not surprising that the media may fill this gap as one of the most readily available alternatives. Young people may also find the media an attractive source for sexual information because they can observe characters dealing with sexual situations and dilemmas about which they may have questions but be too embarrassed to ask. For gay and lesbian youth, however, there is an extreme lack of role models to help fill their information needs. Overall, however, media messages are designed to be as appealing and engaging as possible and can be a very forthright source of sexual information. In some cases, young people rank the media as their top source of information about sexuality (Kaiser Family Foundation & Children Now, 1997).

Brown, Childers, and Waszak (1990) suggest that young people use the information provided in the media to learn sexual and romantic scripts. They can learn how, and when, it is appropriate to ask someone for a date and what precautions, if any, people should take if they are going to have sexual intercourse. Television, through its themes, storylines, characterizations, and dialogue, provides insight into these common sexual scripts in our society (Kunkel et al., 2005; Roberts, 1980). Notably, this is an aspect of social behavior to which young people otherwise may have relatively limited exposure. We now turn to an explication of some theories that shed light on the media's role in the sexual socialization process. Social learning/cognitive theory and cultivation are two theoretical perspectives that can help illuminate the ways in which sexual content in the media may influence young people.

Theoretical Perspectives

According to social learning theory, modes of response are learned through direct or indirect observation of models, including those presented in the media (Bandura, 1971). Viewers can learn “appropriate” behaviors by observing which televised behaviors are rewarded and which are punished. Implicit in this theory is the assumption that human behavior is guided by a desire for rewards. Therefore, the theory predicts that people will be more likely to emulate the behavior of others when those models are rewarded for their behavior. Research also suggests that, at least in the realm of violence and aggression, modeling is nearly as likely when the behavior is unaccompanied by any consequences – either positive or negative – as when it is rewarded (Bandura, 1977). Brown and Steele (1995) argue that “the theory would predict that teens who spend more time watching television programming that includes graphic demonstrations of attractive characters who enjoy having sexual intercourse with each other and rarely suffer any negative consequences will be likely to imitate the behavior” (p. 22). This is the predominant pattern of sexuality that is portrayed in the media so modeling effects seem likely.

In later iterations of his theory, Bandura (1994) focuses on the interaction between cognitive processes and environmental influences. One important cognitive factor is perceived self-efficacy, or people's beliefs about their ability to successfully produce certain behaviors. Bandura (1994) has shown that perceived self-efficacy can influence the behaviors that we choose to enact. We are more likely to model sexual behaviors we see in the media if we believe we have the ability to enact those behaviors. Research has shown that safe-sex efficacy, for example, is an important predictor of adolescent sexual behavior (Dilorio et al., 2001; Taris & Semin, 1998). Given that the media can lead to the perception that “everyone” is having sex and that negative outcomes are rare, it seems likely that the media could enhance sexual self-efficacy and encourage the modeling of sexual behavior as it may seem “easy” and unlikely to result in negative outcomes.

Additionally, contextual cues found in the media presentation such as the salience, attractiveness, and functional value of the modeled behavior are important. These cues seem especially relevant to sexual behavior as many young people don't have that much experience in this area and are interested in learning more as they anticipate their entry into the world of adulthood and "adult" behaviors. In addition, audience members are more likely to attend to, and learn from, models they perceive to be attractive. Many of the characters shown engaging in sexual intercourse on television are young adults and teenagers (Kunkel et al., 2005). These are characters adolescents are likely to find attractive and perceive as similar to themselves and this could increase the likelihood that they will model the behavior that they see especially since it is salient and perceived to have high functional value for adolescents.

Cultivation theory (see Gerbner et al., 1994; Chapter 2, this volume) predicts that heavy television viewers will, over time, come to perceive the world as portrayed on television as an accurate depiction of reality. Television is a powerful storyteller in our culture and it continually repeats the myths and ideologies which legitimize our social order and define our world (Gerbner et al., 1994). If unmarried couples are frequently depicted as engaging in sexual intercourse, cultivation theory would predict that young people who watch a lot of television would come to see unmarried intercourse as a cultural norm. Collins et al. (2004) argue that the prevalence of and emphasis on sexual content on television could create the illusion that sex is more central to daily life than it typically is for most people. In turn, this cultivation effect could contribute to sexual initiation among young people who believe that "everyone is doing it." Indeed, Brown et al. (2006) found the perception that one's peers are having sex to be one of the strongest predictors of early initiation of sexual intercourse.

Cultivation theory has been well supported in several areas of television content, especially television violence. What types of "facts" about sexual behavior would emerging adults who watch heavy amounts of television be likely to internalize? Based on the findings of Kunkel et al. (2005) discussed above, several likely patterns emerge. First, sex is very common. Most characters on television talk about sex frequently as well as often engage in sexual behaviors. Most people who have sexual intercourse are not married to one another yet they usually don't take any precautions to prevent unwanted pregnancies or sexually-transmitted diseases. Despite this lack of precautionary measures, most characters rarely experience any negative outcomes from their sexual behavior. Heavy television viewers may come to believe that sex is a common and important topic of conversation; that everyone is having sex; and that responsible sexual behaviors are not important or are unnecessary as negative outcomes are unlikely. The findings of Tolman, Kim, Schooler, and Sorsoli (2007) also suggest that heavy viewers may see homosexuality as abnormal or exceptionally rare given its infrequent portrayal.

In summary, both social learning theory and cultivation suggest that media depictions of sexuality can have an effect on adolescents. They can learn scripts for sexual behavior as well as cultivate attitudes about appropriate sexual behavior and

social norms. They may also model the behaviors they see on the screen. Unfortunately, they are not likely to model safer sex behaviors as these are rarely emphasized in the media landscape. These theoretical perspectives suggest that effects are likely. However, in order to determine if televised depictions of sexuality actually do have an effect a review of the direct empirical research addressing this issue is in order.

Empirical Research

A growing body of literature, both correlational and experimental, on the effects of sexual content in the media suggests several types of likely sexual socialization outcomes. These include cognitive outcomes, effects on attitudes, effects on sexual expectations, attributions and perceptions of social norms and, more recently, evidence of behavioral outcomes.

A significant body of literature demonstrates that attitudes towards sex and sexuality can be impacted by media portrayals. Several studies have shown that exposure to certain types of portrayals can be linked to increased acceptance of stereotypical attitudes towards sex. For example, students exposed to sexual and sexist music videos later offered a stronger endorsement of stereotypical attitudes towards sex than did those students not exposed to such content (Greeson & Williams, 1986). Ward (2002) also found that young women exposed to prime time television images endorsing stereotypical sexual schemas such as the sexual objectification of women or dating as a game, later offered stronger support for these stereotypes than did young women not exposed. Greater exposure to sexually oriented genres such as soap operas has also been linked to more stereotypical attitudes towards sex in some instances but not in others (see Ward, 2003). In their experimental work, Bryant and Rockwell (1994) found that exposure to sexual scenes from prime time television led to an increase in the acceptance of sexual improprieties (e.g., extramarital affairs) among teenagers in their study.

Exposure to sexual content has also been linked to attitudes towards one's own sexual status and experience. For example, Courtright and Baran (1980) found evidence of a cultivation effect when they noted that frequent TV viewers were less satisfied with their own sexual experiences and had more negative attitudes toward remaining a virgin.

Finally, it appears that exposure to messages related to safe sex can impact young people's attitudes toward condom use. Farrar (2006) conducted an experiment using college students and found that women exposed to prime time dramas featuring sexual intercourse and mentions of condom use later had more positive attitudes about safe sex and condom use compared to women who saw intercourse with no mention of condoms or safe sex, or the control group. These effects did not emerge for men (an interesting trend which will be discussed later).

Television has also been shown to affect broader normative beliefs about sex (see Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993). In other words, sexual content in the media can influence our beliefs about what we think other people believe and how they behave.

Evidence for cultivation effects is strong and a consistent association between viewing amounts and viewers' perceptions of sex has been demonstrated in several studies (Ward, 2003). Media may function as a sort of "super peer" and contribute to the sense regarding sex that "everyone is doing it." In particular, studies have demonstrated that more frequent exposure to more sexually oriented genres such as soap operas or music videos is linked to one's assumptions about the prevalence of sex and certain types of sexual behaviors typically seen in those genres (e.g., Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993; Ward, 2002). For example, undergraduate students who were more frequent soap opera viewers tended to give higher estimates of the number of people who get divorced, engage in extra-marital affairs or have children out of wedlock compared to less frequent viewers of soap operas (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981). Tolman et al. (2007) reported that, for girls, increased exposure to sexually objectified women and portrayals of men avoiding commitment led to decreases in perceptions of sexual agency. Fisher et al. (2009) found that teens that most often viewed sexually suggestive broadcast and cable shows were less likely to believe that sex would result in health problems. Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliott, and Berry (2005), in their longitudinal study of adolescents, also found that exposure to sex on television was significantly related to prosex norms and to fewer negative outcome expectancies. These findings make sense because, as mentioned above, negative health outcomes of sexual behavior are very seldom portrayed on television (Kunkel et al., 2005). The relative absence of homosexual portrayals on television may also cultivate negative attitudes. Gross (1984) found that television viewing was related to having stronger negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians and this effect emerged regardless of viewers' political beliefs.

As mentioned above, many young people report actively using the media to learn about sex. In fact, empirical evidence shows that learning does take place. Young people can learn information about topics related to sexual health from watching television. A survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation (1997) demonstrates clearly that young people can learn about sex and sexuality from television. More specifically, this research found that sexual health topics appearing in entertainment television shows can contribute to a substantial increase in viewers' awareness of important public health concerns. More recent research by Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, and Hunter (2003) found that adolescents who watched an episode of *Friends* that contained a subplot about condom efficacy and failure rates learned about condoms from watching the show. Both of these studies demonstrate that people can learn important information about sexual health from television and both will be discussed in more detail below in the section on "positive effects of sexual content."

In the experimental realm, Greenberg, Linsangan, and Soderman (1993) demonstrated that young people can learn from sexual content presented on television. Adolescents in the experimental group (ages 15 to 16) were exposed to several short

television clips (about 13 minutes) about topics such as prostitution, homosexuality, and married and unmarried sexual relations. All the clips were taken from situation comedies, prime time dramas, or soap operas. The results revealed that viewers were significantly more likely than non-viewers to have learned the meaning of several terms, such as “solicitation” and “freebie” when compared to teens in the control group that did not view the clips. These were terms that the teens did not uniformly know prior to exposure.

Effects of Media Portrayals on Sexual Behavior

Early studies on the effects of sex in the media on sexual behavior produced mixed results. Brown and Newcomer (1991) interviewed students at three different time periods (over four years) and found that having had intercourse by the third wave of data collection appeared to be related to seeking sexual content on television. In contrast, Peterson, Moore, and Furstenberg (1991) found that early exposure to television in general did not correlate with initiation of sexual intercourse a few years later. It is important to note that their measure of early television viewing was based on parental reports of their child’s viewing patterns. Also the television exposure variable measured television exposure generally and did not focus on types of content known to contain sexual talk and behavior. Therefore, the viewing measure may not have accurately captured exposure to sexual content on television. Some evidence does indicate that effects on behavior could be genre specific. Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1987) report that more soap opera viewing is linked to more sexual partners and more viewing of music videos is also linked to more partners but for women only.

More recently, three longitudinal studies have found evidence for a link between sex in the media and sexual behavior. Collins et al. (2004) examined 12- to 17-year-old subjects using surveys given one year apart. Television viewing was assessed at baseline and used to predict subsequent initiation of sexual activities the following year. The authors used Nielsen data to generate a list of programs frequently watched by teens in their target sample. Teens in the study then indicated the frequency with which they watched each of the listed programs. Three episodes of each of the programs were randomly sampled and content analytic techniques developed by Kunkel et al. (2005) were applied in order to determine both the amount and specific types of sexual content found in the shows. Participants subsequently received an exposure measure derived by multiplying their self-reported viewing frequency by an indicator of the average sexual content in an episode of each program. Overall, the authors reported that “a diet of TV high in sexual content at baseline was strongly related to initiation of intercourse and advancement of noncoital activities in the following year” (p. 284). This effect held even after controlling for more than a dozen other known predictors of sexual behavior. Watching the highest amount of sexual content effectively doubled the chances of initiating intercourse at the follow up. These effects were also remarkably consistent across all demographic groups.

Brown et al. (2006) took a similar longitudinal approach but they examined the effect of sexual content in television, movies, music, and magazines on the sexual behavior of Black and White adolescents aged 12 to 14 at baseline and 14- to 16-years-old at follow up. Respondents were initially presented with a list of offerings for each of the four types of media included in the study and asked to circle those they used regularly including specific television shows, movies, magazines, and music artists. Based on the results of this initial survey the media vehicles that were attended to by more than 10% of any demographic subgroup were analyzed for sexual content. For each participant a sexual media diet (SMD) score was then computed to be the overall proportion of sexual content in their media diet across those four media during a one month period at baseline.

For White adolescents a clear linear trend emerged such that White teens with higher SMD scores had sexual intercourse earlier than those with lower SMD scores. SMD also significantly predicted precoital sexual behavior at time two, even after controlling for precoital sexual behavior at baseline. The authors note that effect sizes for White adolescents were equivalent to what has been reported for the effects of violence on television and aggression. For Black adolescents the trend in the data was less clear. The effect sizes found were much smaller for Black adolescents and those with higher SMD scores were just about as likely to initiate intercourse as those with SMD scores in the middle. In a separate analysis of the time one data, Pardun et al. (2005) report, across all racial groups, that movies and music had a much stronger relationship with sexual behavior and sexual behavior intentions at time one than did exposure to sex in television and magazines. Clearly, it is important to examine more than just television when attempting to understand adolescent sexual socialization from media.

Martino et al. (2005) used structural equation modeling to look at the longitudinal relationship between exposure to sex on television and the initiation of intercourse among an ethnically diverse sample of 1,300 adolescents aged 12 to 17. They proposed a model where perceived sexual norms, self-efficacy, and outcome expectancies would mediate the relationship between exposure to television's sexual content and the initiation of sexual intercourse. Their model indicated a direct effect of exposure on intercourse initiation that was robust across gender and ethnic groups. However, they also found that, as predicted, the effect of television was fully mediated by the social cognitive variables of perceived sexual norms, self-efficacy, and outcome expectancies. After these processes are accounted for, the effect of television sex exposure on sexual behavior initiation is near zero. Across all racial groups, viewing sex on television was related to less negative outcome expectancies about the consequences of sexual intercourse, a finding that makes sense given that negative outcomes of sex are rarely portrayed on television. Less negative expectancies were in turn related to initiating sexual intercourse. Increased exposure also predicted higher estimates of the prevalence of sexual intercourse among one's friends and these perceived norms were also related to behavior changes.

A three-wave longitudinal study by Hennessy, Bleakley, Fishbein, and Jordan (2009) analyzed the relationship between adolescent (aged 14 to 16 at baseline) sexual behav-

ior and exposure to sexual media content over three years using growth curves. For this study, respondents' exposure to sexual media content was based on participants' own subjective rating of the amount of sexual content in each of the media titles (television, music, magazines, and videogames) they reported attending to. Their results also paint a complicated picture of the relationship between media exposure and sexual behavior. While they found changes in the amount of exposure to sexual content in the media to be predictive of changes in sexual behavior among White adolescents (similar to Brown et al.), they found little to no relationship among the Black adolescents in their sample. In fact, they found that both Black and Hispanic respondents actually evidenced a decline in the amount of sexual content they were exposing themselves to over the age range in the study. Therefore, it is possible that age 14 may be too late to capture a relationship between media exposure and behavior. The authors argue that it is possible that, by age 14, Black and Hispanic adolescents differ from White adolescents both in terms of their sexual behavior and their exposure to sexual content. This point is addressed in greater detail below in the section "Variables of Interest."

It is also possible, according to Bleakley, Hennessy, Fishbein, and Jordan (2008) that the relationship between sexual media exposure and sexual behavior is recursive. Their longitudinal study found evidence that sexually active adolescents are more likely to expose themselves to sexual content in the media. In turn, those exposed to sexual content in the media are more likely to progress in their sexual activity. Effects of sexual content in the media on sexual socialization may not be a straightforward linear process.

All of these recent longitudinal studies suggest a relationship between sex viewed in the media and sexual behaviors among at least some subgroups of adolescents. A complicated picture emerges, however. The results of Brown et al. reinforce the importance of examining more than just television and Martino et al. illustrate how the process of sexual media effects may not always be a direct one but rather one mediated through television's ability to influence young people's perceptions of social reality. It is also important to begin examining this relationship at younger ages as there is evidence that these effects may already be solidly entrenched by age 14 in some populations (Hennessy et al., 2009). Effects may also be recursive as sexually active adolescents expose themselves to more sex in the media and this increased exposure in turn leads to sexual behavior. Since the effects of sexual content in the media do not appear to be uniform across populations we turn now to a discussion of some of the important variables that may play a role in this process.

Variables of Interest

Age, gender, race, type of medium, and viewer involvement are some of the factors that can play an important role in how adolescents are affected by sexual content in the media.

Sexual content in the media is often implied or communicated via innuendo. Age or developmental level can play an important role in whether or not young people understand or are even aware of the sexual content they are exposed to. Younger children may not understand the sexual content they are being exposed to and adolescents who have not yet reached the start of puberty may not be as interested in sexual portrayals (Brown, Greenberg, & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993). As mentioned above, Hennessy et al. (2009) reported that Black and Hispanic respondents showed a decline in exposure to sexual content with an increase in age and they were also at a significantly higher level of sexual activity at an earlier age compared to Whites. It may be that Black and Hispanic youth are exposed to more sexual content at young ages or that they are affected by sexual content in the media earlier than White adolescents.

Race is a particularly important variable to consider when examining the effects of sexual content in the media. Some youth are more at risk from negative outcomes of sexual behavior than others. For example, young Black men and women have significantly higher rates of STIs than other ethnic groups in the United States (CDC, 2003). Interestingly, as mentioned above, findings for Black adolescents have not been as clear-cut as they have been for White adolescents. In the longitudinal studies examining sexual behavior, effect sizes were smaller for Black youth and trends between viewing sexual content and sexual initiation were not as clear (Brown et al., 2006) while Hennessy et al. (2009) found little to no association between changes in exposure to sexual content and changes in sexual behavior among Black youth. There are several possible reasons for these differences. Some research has suggested that African Americans watch more television and interpret the sexual content differently than other races (Brown & Schulze, 1990; Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999). Given that Black youth evidence higher levels of sexual activity at younger ages than White youth (Hennessy et al., 2009) it could be that Black youth are forming their sexual attitudes and expectations at younger ages and have already begun acting on them before the age ranges during early to mid-adolescence when much of this type of research is conducted.

Gender is another important variable that often surfaces when discussing the relationship between sexual content in the media and effects. A frequent trend is to see effects of sexual content in the media on women but not on men (Ward, 2003). Ward (2003) argues that effects are "stronger, broader, and more consistent among women than among men" (p. 367).

For example, Farrar (2006) found that portrayals of safe sex on television impacted women's attitudes towards safe sex but not men's and Ward (2002) found that young women exposed to stereotypical portrayals of sexuality in prime time television later offered stronger support for these stereotypes while men's attitudes were not affected. However, it should be noted that the longitudinal studies discussed above did not see the same discrepancies in their findings between men and women. Many studies done on attitudes or sexual expectations have either focused on particular genres of programming or have used particular television programs as stimuli in experiments.

It has been suggested that men and women are attracted to very different types of media content (Greenberg et al., 1993). In addition, some suggest that men are less likely to use the media to learn about interpersonal relationships (Huston, Wartella, & Donnerstein, 1998). For men, the types of programs used in many of these studies may not be their preferred “instructors” (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Since the longitudinal studies reported above measure sexual content in the shows that men are actually watching, this may explain why findings hold true for both men and women in those studies.

While television has historically been the most researched medium regarding the effects of sexual content, some recent research suggests that it may not be the most important, at least to early adolescents. Pardun et al. (2005) found that for early adolescents it’s important to analyze their movie and music preferences. In their study, television and magazines had much weaker associations with sexual behavior variables. While adolescents still spend more time with television than they do with music or movies (Rideout et al., 2010) it is possible that they perceive the latter to be more important. Movies targeted specifically towards teens, for example, often feature extensive sexual content. It is possible that the nature of music and movies allows for more frank sexual content thus contributing more strongly to sexual socialization effects. The nature of the Internet may also make it a very prominent source of sexual socialization for young people especially given that they spend approximately 90 minutes per day using a computer and most of this time is spent online (Rideout et al., 2010).

Finally, how engaged viewers are with their media can also play an important role in the effects process. In their study, Ward and Rivadeneyra (1999) found that viewer involvement was an important factor for women. Specifically, for the women in the study, stronger identification with popular television characters and reporting using television to learn about the world predicted a greater acceptance of recreational attitudes towards sex.

Context of the Media Portrayal

In addition to variables specific to the viewer, there are variables specific to the mediated portrayal itself that can influence whether and/or what types of media effects take place. As mentioned above, social cognitive theory states that viewers are more likely to model mediated portrayals enacted by attractive characters that are rewarded for their behaviors, particularly when these behaviors are salient and perceived to have functional value. The large-scale content analyses of sex on television conducted by Kunkel et al. have consistently found that these are exactly the types of sexual portrayals young people are likely to encounter on television.

Another contextual feature that is particularly important in the realm of sexual content is whether or not the portrayal also includes any mention or depiction of

important sexual health topics or topics related to sexual risks or responsibilities. We know from Kunkel et al. (2005) that these types of portrayals are exceedingly rare on television and from Pardun et al. (2005) that they are rare in movies, music, Internet sites, and magazines viewed by young people. This is unfortunate given that several studies suggest that exposure to this type of content can have positive effects on adolescents. Farrar (2006) found that exposure to messages about condom use increased college-aged women's positive attitudes about safe sex. Collins et al. (2004) found that African Americans in their study with high levels of exposure to portrayals of sexual risks and responsibilities were less likely to have intercourse at the second wave of data collection. Conversely, the fact that sexual behavior as portrayed on television virtually never has any negative consequences can have a negative effect on viewers, as demonstrated by the finding that viewing sex on television has been associated with holding fewer negative outcome expectancies for the consequences of sexual intercourse. In turn, holding fewer negative expectancies was then related to the initiation of sexual intercourse (Martino et al., 2005).

Positive Effects of Sexual Content in the Media?

When most people think of media effects, they are thinking about negative or harmful effects. As shown above, sexual content in the media certainly contributes to some negative outcomes among adolescents such as early initiation of sexual behavior, unrealistic perceptions about the consequences of sex, or skewed perceptions about the prevalence of different types of sexual activities. However, is it also possible that the media can have positive effects on young people?

The media can serve as a catalyst for sexual conversations between parents and children. Parents can be an important source of accurate sexual information for young people; however, adolescents may be too embarrassed to come to their parents with questions about sex or sexuality. A national survey of 500 adolescents conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation (2002) found that 33% of 15- to 17-year-olds said that something they saw on television spurred them to talk to their parents about sex.

In addition, Collins et al. (2003) conducted a survey of adolescents aged 12 to 17 who were regular viewers of the show *Friends*. They were asked questions about an episode that had recently aired in which condom failure rates and resulting unintended pregnancy are discussed as part of one of the show's subplots. Their results showed that 40% of the teens watched the show with an adult and 10% of the viewers subsequently had a conversation with an adult about condom efficacy. Youths who did talk with adults about condom efficacy were more likely to report learning something about condoms from the episode and less likely to report a decrease in their perceptions of condom efficacy than viewers who did not talk with an adult. So television may indeed serve as a catalyst and provide a safe introduction for teen-

agers to bring up sex with their parents and these conversations can help adolescents to learn accurate information.

As mentioned earlier, there may be an information gap for young people as they are learning about sex. They may not be getting much information from school or their parents. Learning is another effect of sexual content in the media that can be positive (assuming the information learned is accurate). Young people state that they learn about sex from the media. In the KFF (2002) study mentioned above, many adolescents claim to have learned something helpful from sex on television including how to say no to uncomfortable sexual situations (60%) and how to go about talking to sexual partners about safe sex (43%). Even though these types of sexually responsible situations are not that commonly portrayed on television, they are obviously capable of having a big impact on young people when they do occur. The Collins study referenced above indicates that television can serve as a source of safe-sex information. From 10% to 17% of viewers reported learning something new about condoms from watching the *Friends* episode and between 15% and 31% of viewers correctly recalled that condoms are between 95% and 100% effective when used correctly. Confirmed viewers (those who were able to correctly answer questions about the other subplots from the same episode) were more likely to have retained this information six months later. While the percentages of adolescents who learned from this episode may seem small, the authors themselves note that *Friends* was, at the time, one of the most popular shows for 12- to 17-year-olds and the episode was initially viewed by almost two million teens and has since been rerun countless times. The potential for learning is significant. Similar findings were reported for adults in a KFF (1997) study examining a portrayal of emergency contraception in the show *ER*. After viewing a relatively minor reference to emergency contraception within the show, the number of adult *ER* viewers who knew about emergency contraception increased 17% in the week after the episode aired.

The presence of information related to sexual risks or responsibilities of sexual behavior has been shown to have other positive effects on viewers as well. Farrar (2006) conducted an experiment manipulating the context of portrayals of sexual intercourse found in popular teen dramas. One group was exposed to three episodes of different programs where couples in the shows engaged in sexual intercourse and condoms were also mentioned or depicted somewhere within each episode. Another group saw programs where couples engaged in sexual intercourse but the episodes contained no references to condoms or safe sex. The control group watched teen dramas with no sexual content. Findings revealed that women who saw the shows with intercourse and safe sex had significantly more positive attitudes about condoms and safe sex than did the women in the other two groups. It should be noted that the references to condoms within these shows were relatively minor, only occurring in one or two scenes throughout the entire episode. Safe sex was hardly the focal point of these stories and yet, these scenes had a positive impact on young people's attitudes about responsible sexuality. The more frequently these portrayals are included, the more likely it is that young people

will come to see these important issues as part of the normative script for engaging in sexual behavior.

In addition to attitudes about safe sex, research also shows that the presence of messages about safe and healthy sexuality can impact adolescents' sexual behavior as well. Collins et al. (2004) found that African American adolescents who were exposed to the highest levels of sexual risk and safety portrayals were less likely to have intercourse and to progress in their noncoital sexual behaviors as well. This finding did not emerge for other races, however, and the authors suggest this as an important avenue for future research.

Conclusion

Many young people are engaging in unsafe sexual behavior, resulting in a high rate of STIs and unintended teen pregnancies. Teen pregnancies have profound effects on the young parents, the children, and on society. Teen moms are more likely to drop out of school and to live in poverty. Children born to teen moms are more likely to have a low birth weight, struggle with reading and math ability and even to drop out of high school themselves (Levine, Pollack, & Comfort, 2001; Terry-Human, Manlove, & Moore, 2005). While young people have a developmentally appropriate need to learn about sex and sexuality, many are not getting enough information from parents or from school thus creating an information gap. Research shows that adolescents engage in a good deal of media use and that this media is saturated with sexual content most of which does not contain important information about safe and healthy sexuality.

Young people say they use the media to learn about sex, and media portrayals are very attractive and salient for young people. Theories such as social cognitive theory and cultivation both suggest that effects from the media on the sexual socialization of young people are likely.

Empirical evidence in this area focuses on three main types of effects: attitudes, cognitions, and behavior. Research has shown that young people's attitudes toward sex and sexual topics can be influenced as can their perceptions about sexual norms. Young people can learn information about sex and about safe and responsible sexuality from the media. Finally, evidence from longitudinal work suggests that media diets high in sexual content can influence the initiation of sexual behavior and the advancement of other sexual behaviors. Sexual content in the media can have both positive and negative effects on young viewers, depending partly on the context within which it is portrayed. Variables such as the age, gender, and race of the viewer are also important in the effects process. Younger viewers may not be as interested in sexual content in the media or comprehend it as well. Some research also suggests that women are more affected by sexual content in the media and that different racial groups also respond differently. While the empirical evidence in this area has grown tremendously and consistently points to effects of sexual content in the media on young people, many avenues for future research remain.

Future Research

One important avenue for future research pertains to understanding how young people are interpreting sexual content in the media. What messages are they taking away? A better understanding of their interpretations might help us understand some of the differences in effects based on race that have been uncovered in some studies. It may also help us understand how younger kids are interacting with sexual content.

Research is also clearly needed on younger children, despite the inherent difficulties in conducting studies on such a sensitive topic with younger samples. It may be that effects from sexual content in the media are starting to emerge well before the ages typically studied (Hennessy et al., 2009). This may be particularly important to explore with Black and Hispanic youth who are exposed to more sexual content at younger ages and also tend to initiate sexual behavior earlier than White youth.

Research should continue to explore “edutainment” as a fruitful method of disseminating important messages about safe and healthy sexuality. If single episodes of shows like *Friends* and *ER* can impact people’s beliefs about safe sex, more frequent treatment of these topics across the media consumed by young people could prove beneficial. Research could also explore what factors make these types of portrayals so successful. If factors such as engagement with characters, identification, and so on, can be identified they can then be used to craft more long-term and extensive public health campaigns aimed at encouraging young people to engage in healthier sexuality.

As mentioned, most studies conducted up to this point have focused on television. Young people spend a great deal of time immersed with other media as well, however. Brown et al. (2006) found that exposure to sex in music and movies was a more important predictor of sexual behavior than exposure to television. As the media landscape continues to grow, we need to broaden our lens and continue to explore other media.

Finally, Ward (2002) also calls for more research on viewer involvement. Many of the variables related to involvement that have been shown to play an important role in other realms of media effects (e.g., violence) have been understudied when it comes to sex. Ward suggests heightened attention to variables such as identification, perceived realism, parasocial interaction and active viewing. A research focus only on the amount of content viewed may not tell the whole story.

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Political TV Advertising and Debates

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ABSTRACT

This essay begins by justifying the importance of two particular forms of political campaign communication, TV advertising spots and debates. Advertising spots and debates are two especially prominent forms of messaging in political campaigns and there is extensive research evidence regarding their role and the outcomes associated with each. Thus we sketch the nature of these key campaign message forms, focusing on the two dimensions of functions and topics. Then we discuss the historic controversy over minimal effects. This leads to a discussion of the effects of these important message forms, which is based on meta-analyses of these media.

Importance of TV Spots and Debates in Contemporary Society

For more than a century US political candidates have campaigned actively for the office of president. Indeed, in 2008 Barack Obama became the first candidate to decline federal financing for the general election campaign. He did so because accepting the federal funds meant he would be limited to spending \$84.1 million on his campaign (FEC, 2010). Declining federal financing meant he could spend as much as

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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he could raise; he spent \$760.1 million, \$427.6 million on media (Center for Responsive Politics, 2010). Others had declined to accept federal campaign funds for the presidential primary (e.g., George W. Bush and John Kerry in 2004; Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Mitt Romney in 2008; Lawrence & Schouten, 2007).

Initially, it was considered unseemly for a presidential candidate to campaign on his (all candidates were male at this point in time) own behalf. Of course, some would say presidential campaigns today remain unseemly. The first candidate to give a speech advocating his own candidacy was William Henry Harrison in 1840. In 1924, the major political nominating conventions were broadcast on radio. The first presidential primary debate, between two Republicans – Governor Thomas Dewey and Governor Harold Stassen – was broadcast on radio in 1948 (Kane, 1987). Harry Truman gave the first paid campaign speech, broadcast on television in 1948 (Jamieson, 1996). The 1952 election saw the first presidential TV spots aired in support of Republican Dwight Eisenhower and Republican Adlai Stevenson (Benoit, 1999) and ads ran in the primary as well as the general election campaigns. The first general election debate, of course, pitted Richard M. Nixon against John F. Kennedy in four one-hour debates in 1960; today millions of people watch the presidential (and, when they occur, the vice presidential) debates (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2010). Candidates employ a variety of means for reaching the electorate, including speeches, direct mail advertising, yard signs, campaign buttons, interviews, and, in recent years, candidate web pages, Facebook, and MySpace pages. Arguably, however, the two most important media in presidential campaigns are television spots and debates.

US Presidential Television Spots

Kaid declares that television advertising in political campaigns is the “dominant form” of communication between the candidate and the voter (2004, p. 157). During the 2004 primary campaign, for example, Democrats aired 16,683 and Republicans broadcast 12,042 political television advertisements, 95% of which were aired on local television stations (Czaja, Bausch, & Parrelli, 2007). With each successive year, candidates are spending more on campaign messages. In 2004, advertising media cost approximately \$1.17 billion dollars. Spending that included all marketing costs totaled approximately \$2.74 billion dollars, an increase of 126% from 2000 (Quinn & Kivijarv, 2005). In the first six months of the 2008 presidential primary season, candidates spent nearly \$200 million just on TV advertisements (TNS Media Intelligence, 2008). As indicated above, in 2008 Barack Obama spent more on his general election campaign overall, and his television advertising in particular, than any other presidential candidate in history. Clearly, candidates believe that political advertising is essential to their electoral success.

Scholars have produced considerable research investigating political TV spots; for example, books on this topic include: Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995), Benoit (1999), Diamond and Bates (1992), Dover (2006), Geer (2006), Goldstein and Strach (2004),

Jamieson (1996), Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991, 1997), Kahn and Kenney (1999), Kaid and Johnston (2001), Kern (1989), Lau and Pomper (2004), Maisel and West (2004), Nelson and Boynton (1997), Nesbit (1988), Schultz (2004), Thurber, Nelson, and Dulio (2000), and West (2009). Research has investigated the functions and topics of presidential advertising (e.g., Benoit, 1999; or Kaid & Johnston, 2001). Patterns of issue ownership – the notion that each major political party is viewed by most voters as best able to deal with certain issues – (Petrocik, 1996) in presidential (Petrocik, Benoit, & Hansen, 2003/2004) advertising have also received scholarly attention. Some research has investigated presidential advertising in other countries besides the United States (see, e.g., Kaid, 1995; Lee & Benoit, 2004; or Wen, Benoit, & Yu, 2004). Loudan (2010a) has compiled a useful bibliography of work on political advertising.

Television advertisements have specific advantages for candidates and citizens. Candidates are able to spend considerable amounts of money on advertising (Benoit, 2007), which allows creation of multiple ads, which can be aired repeatedly. Candidates have the ability to choose when and where these advertisements are aired, and thus can reach a more carefully targeted segment of the electorate. Unlike news coverage of the candidates and their campaign messages, the media do not filter television spots (although the media may replay ads and comment on them after they are aired). Additionally, advertisements are entirely scripted, which allows candidates to control the entire message. The campaign comes to citizens in their own home (or wherever they watch television); they do not have to seek out information (in most cases) to learn about candidates in an election. This factor is particularly important for citizens who have little interest in politics and rarely seek out information about the candidates and the campaign. These messages are also short (most are 30–60 seconds, although Obama ran a 30-minute spot in 2008) and require very little effort on the part of the citizen to process.

US Presidential Debates

Due to the extensive viewership, press attention, and extended discussion of issues in the campaign, scholars have paid considerable attention to political debates. For example, an estimated total of 53 million viewers watched the first presidential general election debate of 2008. 63 million were estimated to have watched the second debate, the largest number since the second presidential debate of 1992, with 69.9 million viewers (Moraes, 2008). Scholars have lavished considerable attention on presidential debates (books include, in chronological order, Kraus, 1962, 1979, 2000; Bishop Meadow & Jackson-Beeck, 1980; Bitzer & Rueter, 1980; Martel, 1983; Swerdlow, 1987; Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988; Lanoue & Schrott, 1991; Hellweg, Pfau, & Brydon, 1992; Hinck, 1993; Carlin & McKinney, 1994; Friedenberg, 1994b, 1997; Benoit & Wells, 1996; Schroeder, 2000; and Benoit et al., 2002). The Racine Group (2002) examined the literature on political election debates and concluded that, “few

deny that viewers find them useful and almost no one doubts that they play an important role in national campaigns” (p. 201). Loudan also has compiled a useful bibliography on political debates (2010b).

Televised presidential debates have several advantages for candidates and citizens. Debates are beneficial for candidates because they provide an extended amount of time for candidates to share their messages relative to television spots. Both candidates and citizens benefit from the extra time spent clarifying issue positions. Debates also provide free airtime for candidates to spread their messages, which is particularly important for candidates with smaller budgets and fewer television advertisements. Of course, even candidates with huge budgets can participate in debates. Candidates are able to reach millions of viewers nationwide that they might otherwise not be able to target.

Today, in the United States, participation in presidential campaign debates has become an expected part of the campaign (although the number of debates in which a candidate participates has varied from one in 1980 to four in 1960). As noted above, the first general election debate occurred in 1960. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declined to debate. Nixon, perhaps in part because of his loss in 1960, did not debate in 1968 or 1972. However, in 1976, President Gerald Ford decided to debate Jimmy Carter and the United States has had debates in every campaign since – as well as vice presidential debates in most years.

Debates also have advantages for citizens such as providing a somewhat more candid view of candidates other than from the media. Benoit, Hansen, and Verser (2003) argue that debates are unique in their influence over voters because they allow face-to-face communication between candidates. This format also allows for a direct comparison of issue positions and policy proposals. Unlike television spots, speeches, web pages, and direct mail brochures, debates offer a relatively unscripted performance of the candidate (Benoit, 2007). Candidates have less control over the content of the debate; even with prior knowledge of questions they are less certain what other candidates will communicate. Thus, debates provide a more candid view of candidates. Additionally, candidates do not have control over the production elements of this medium. For example, Scheufele, Kim, and Brossard (2007) argue that split screen shots – one candidate shown speaking and the other reacting in real time – allow viewers to see unintended nonverbal communication by the candidates.

The Nature of TV Spots and Debates

Benoit’s (2007) functional theory of political campaign discourse has been applied to political advertisements and debates. This theory posits that political campaign messages are intended to persuade voters that one candidate is preferable to another. This goal can be facilitated by the three functions of political campaign messages: *acclaims* (positive statements about one’s self), *attacks* (negative statements about

one's opponent), and *defenses* (refutations of attacks). These functions can be enacted on two topics: *policy* (governmental action, past and future, and problems amenable to governmental action) and *character* (the candidates' traits or personalities).

Functions and Topics of Political Advertising

Research (Benoit, 2007) on US campaigns (1952–2004) found that presidential primary advertisements used acclaims (72%) more than attacks (27%) and rarely used defenses (1%). The same relative proportion of functions occurred in general election presidential TV spots: acclaims (59%), attacks (40%), and defenses (1%). In both campaign phases policy was discussed more than character (primary: 54% to 46%; general: 62% to 38%). Roughly similar results have been found for non-presidential advertising (e.g., gubernatorial, senate, house) and for TV spots in other countries (Benoit, 2007).

We note that the emphasis on both acclaims and policy may seem high; however, news coverage emphasizes both attacks and character more than the candidates do in their advertisements (see Benoit, Stein, & Hansen, 2005). Generally similar results for function and topic have been observed for political leaders' debates in other countries (Benoit, 2007).

Functions and Topics of Political Debates

Research (Benoit, 2007) on US presidential debates has found comparable results (although defenses are consistently more common in debates). Presidential primary debates (through 2004) used 64% acclaims, 31% attacks, and 4% defenses. General election debates (1960, 1976–2004) used 57% acclaims, 33% attacks, and 8% defenses. Again, candidates in these messages tend to discuss policy more than character (primary: 68% to 32%; general: 75% to 25%).

Thus, in both forms of communication – TV spots and debates – positive statements about the candidate who is the source of a message are the most common function, although attacks on the opponent occur with some frequency as well. Responding to attacks (using defenses) is relatively rare and more common in debates than advertisements. Candidates generally focus on policy rather than character in their campaign discourse.

Campaign Media Effects

Today, the United States population is over 309 million (Census Bureau, 2010). It is clearly impossible for presidential candidates to meet even a tiny fraction of the

voters; so it is vital for candidates to use the media to reach voters (this is true of campaigns for other offices besides president, of course). For example, Herrnson (2004) observed that

With the typical [congressional] district containing approximately 646,000 constituents, candidates who wish to run competitive campaigns cannot rely solely on communications that involve direct voter contact, to say nothing of the difficulties faced by Senate candidates and an entire state's voting population. (p. 233)

Candidates may use the media to reach voters; however, the media have an opportunity to filter and comment on the candidates' messages. TV spots and debates allow candidates the opportunity to reach many voters without the gatekeeping of the media.

It is important to keep in mind that a given message does not reach every potential voter. Some voters choose not to watch debates; this choice is facilitated by the fact that many networks do not carry debates and because other media (DVDs, the Internet) are now available to citizens. The fact that presidential candidates can target where (in which media market) their advertisements are broadcast means some voters can not be exposed to a given campaign message. Furthermore, Stroud (2007) notes that "A substantial proportion of the public [...] consumes media sharing their political predispositions" (p. 358); some voters may elect not to use a given medium. Additionally, different voters can interpret a given message in divergent ways, which means the effect of a message can be mediated by voters' beliefs, values, and attitudes (including, of course, political ideology). Oliver and Krakowiak (2009) observe that "Effects of media on viewers are obviously not uniform – some individuals may be strongly influenced whereas others are impervious. [...] Individual characteristics may also heighten or intensify media influences, or may even provide a necessary condition for media influences to occur" (p. 525). Clearly, we must not expect that political advertisements will affect all viewers equally.

Minimal Effects Theory

The People's Choice (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948) is the classic source for the concept of "minimal effects" arising in the study of the effects of presidential campaigns on voters. Lazarsfeld et al. (1948; see also Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954) investigated a group of voters during the 1940 presidential election. The authors contended that campaigns have two main effects on voters: "activation," or "bringing their latent political attitudes to the surface," and "reinforcement," or "telling them what they wanted to see and hear" (p. 94). Only a few voters experienced another effect, "conversion," which was a change in preference from one candidate to another.

Another classic work was written by Klapper (1960), who argued that mass media are more likely to reinforce attitudes than to convert people from one candidate to another: “persuasive mass communication functions far more frequently as an agent of reinforcement than as an agent of change” (p. 15; echoing Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). Klapper suggested that these effects were largely due to *selective exposure* (people tend to consume messages which agree with their attitudes), *selection perception* (people tend to interpret using their existing attitudes), and *selective retention* in memory (information which agrees with a person’s attitudes should have more impact than discrepant information). Voters with less interest in the campaign tend to have less knowledge about the candidates. Thus, the voters who are most susceptible to persuasion (those with less knowledge) are less likely to pay attention to the campaign. Campbell (2000) wrote about the “minimal effects conundrum”: “Those who are most attentive to campaign information are the least open to persuasion by it and those who are most open to persuasion by campaign information are the least likely to be attentive to it” (p. 12, emphasis omitted). Zaller (1997) discusses this idea in greater detail:

The least aware rarely change their attitudes because, although likely to accept whatever they receive, they pay so little attention to politics that they rarely receive any new communication; the most aware receive new communication but are too critically inclined to accept its message, and so they maintain their attitudes unchanged; this leaves moderately aware citizens most susceptible to influence – they pay enough attention to politics to get net information but are not sufficiently astute to be able to react critically to it. (p. 299)

It is possible that those who are moderately aware could be less committed to their political attitudes; it may not be simply a lack of astuteness that makes such people more persuadable. Thus, early work on mass media generally and political campaigns in particular tended to minimize the effects of messages on voters and concluded that changing attitudes was much less common than activating or reinforcing attitudes.

In the 1990s, Finkel (1993) renewed the argument that the most likely effects of campaigns are reinforcement and activation of existing attitudes. He noted that “the *potential* does exist for campaigns to move individuals away from their vote dispositions” (p. 18, emphasis original), and he reported that conversion (changing vote preference) does occur in some voters. However, these effects tended to occur for both candidates with little net change in the campaign he studied (e.g., some voters who initially favored Reagan shifted to Mondale and others moved in the opposite direction).

A relatively new approach was developed by Campbell (2000), who advanced the theory of the “predictable campaign.” He notes that several factors tend to reduce the potential impact of election campaigns. First, many voters are relatively stable partisans (who will probably vote for their own party’s nominee). Second, some

voters make their vote choice early in the campaign. The state of the economy, which is known by voters before the campaign, is another factor in election outcome. Incumbency also exists prior to the campaign and (particularly in the House of Representatives) can be a significant advantage for candidates. Campbell argues that these considerations have a tendency to reduce the importance of the campaign. Campbell then observes that:

US presidential politics are very competitive. Usually the two major party candidates are relatively well-known. Both are relatively well financed. Both receive a good deal of media coverage. Both are taken as serious options by the voters. (p. 22)

The effect of highly competitive campaigns for the White House is a “leveling effect”: “Campaigns should generally have the effect of narrowing the difference between candidates” (p. 23). However, this does not rule out the possibility that a campaign could benefit one candidate over another.

Campbell (2001), looking for shifts in support that occurred during campaigns (postconvention polls to election day) argues that two campaigns, 1948 and 1960, were decisive, meaning that the candidate leading after the conventions lost the election after the general election campaign. He also indicated that three other campaigns (1976, 1980, and 2000) may have been decisive. He also concluded that there were significant shifts in support during nine other elections (1952, 1956, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996), “but not enough or in the direction to have changed what appeared to be the electorate’s precampaign preference” (p. 446). So, his analysis provides evidence that voting preference can shift during the campaign, and that these shifts may be enough in some years to change the outcome of the election.

Zaller (1996) suggests that two reasons can explain why previous research has had a difficult time finding large media effects on the vote:

Failure to meet the prerequisites of most successful scientific enterprises, namely good measurement of variables that actually do vary. [...] Failure to develop sufficiently incisive models of the effects of competing communication. Almost all work has involved essential linear models that are [...] incapable of capturing many of the mass persuasion effects that may plausibly occur (p. 59).

Holbert and Benoit (2009) develop a theory of political campaign media connectedness, which considers multiple media simultaneously and argues for examination of both direct and indirect effects of political campaign messages (direct effects of a message in one medium and indirect effects of one medium via another medium). Although competing campaigns may mask the true effects, we lean toward Zaller’s (1996) conclusion: “The true magnitude of the persuasive effect of mass communication is closer to ‘massive’ than to ‘small to negligible’ and that the frequency of such effects is ‘often’” (p. 18). Thus, we believe media effects on politics can be important so it behooves us to investigate the effects of political TV spots and debates.

Effects of Television Spots

Because presidential (and other) candidates rely so heavily on television advertising, extensive research has been conducted on this medium. Effects studies of this campaign medium concern various topics such as issue knowledge and candidate issue positions, truth in advertising and negative ads.

Benoit, Leshner, and Chattopadhyay (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of political advertisements, comparing student and non-student populations when possible, assessing the effects of spots on issue learning, perceptions of character, attitude towards candidate, agenda setting, and interest in the campaign. Finally, they also assessed effects on turnout and vote choice. (We also report information about the data on which their conclusions are based to help appreciate the strength of these claims.) They found viewing political advertisements significantly affects issue learning: 13 sets of data with an n of 4,873 yielded a mean effect size of .21 (Benoit et al., 2007). They reported that students learn more from ads than other viewers, but both groups showed significant issue learning. Six data sets ($n = 2,061$) examined the effects of watching ads on perceptions of candidate character. The weighted effect size was significant at .19. Seven studies with an n of 1,113 found that ad viewing has significant effects on attitudes toward candidates ($r = .17$). Again, studies using students as participants had larger effect sizes than other studies, but the effect for both groups was significant. Three studies with a combined n of 351 found significant agenda-setting effects (watching ads increased the importance to voters of the issues addressed in the ads); the effect size was .19. Research also investigated whether viewing televised political spots increased interest in the campaign. Nine studies ($n = 4,561$) yielded a significant effect size: .22. Twelve data sets with a combined n of 8,266 found a small but significant effect size for increased turnout of .07. Three studies ($n = 1,067$) found significant effects of ad watching on vote choice with an effect size of .19. There can be no doubt that watching political advertisements can have significant effects on viewers.

Perhaps one of the largest areas of *polisplot* research concerns positive and negative advertising. Research on negative advertising is somewhat questionable. For example, some research on negative advertising utilizes coding schemes that often code the whole ad as negative or positive (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). Benoit (2007) argues that many ads include both positive (acclaims) and negative (attacks) statements in ads; many ads also discuss both policy and character. Coding each theme in a campaign message – as opposed to using the entire ad as the coding unit – provides a more accurate measurement of ad content. Some scholars, such as Ansolabahere and Iyengar (1999) have found that negative advertising results in the demobilization effect and that negative ads can induce political cynicism (Ansolabere & Iyengar, 1994). Ansolabere and Iyengar (1999) argue that citizens dislike negative ads, called mudslinging, and this in turn causes them to think negatively about candidates producing the ads, as well as candidates being attacked in the ads. For these reasons,

they argue that citizens feel less inclined to go to the polls and participate in the political process.

However, meta-analyses on advertising effects do not show significant decreases in voting intention from viewing negative advertisements. Meta-analyses on phenomena that have amassed a large number of studies are often preferable when available, because this analysis compiles individual results of studies and averages results for clearer picture of the phenomena (Rosenthal, 1984). With the exception of two election cycles, political advertising has been significantly more positive than negative (Benoit, 1999). Two meta-analyses demonstrate that negative advertising is not significantly more powerful than positive advertising (Allen & Burrell, 2002; Lau, Sigelman, Heldman, & Babbitt, 1999). Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner (2007) in a subsequent meta-analysis found that negative advertising might even produce a slight mobilizing effect, although not statistically significant. However, they argue that negative campaigns do have statistically significant negative effects on political efficacy and government trust.

Benoit (2007) argues that negative advertising may produce a voter trade-off. Some individuals may be disinclined to vote after viewing negative ads (with negative advertising decreasing turnout for those voters), but others could be more inclined to vote after viewing negative ads, voting against mud-slingers to punish them (increasing turnout for that group of voters; see Martin, 2004). One way that scholars have attempted to wrestle with the continued replication and contradictory findings is refinement of experimental stimuli. For example, Dardis, Shen, and Edwards (2008) tested exposure to issue and image attack ads and length of exposure. They found that greater lengths of exposure to issue ads decreased self-efficacy (which is thought to be positively related to voting). Another approach in light of this controversy, is to study the mechanisms behind negative advertisements and the appeal for parties and politicians. Obviously, despite several meta-analyses and numerous continued studies, it seems unlikely that scholars will resolve the debate regarding a global evaluation of the effects of negative advertisements. However, scholars are making attempts to refine research in this area and dig deeper in the causal mechanisms behind our reaction to these campaign strategies. There can be no question that presidential television advertising warrants further scholar inquiry.

Effects of Debates

Effects-based research on political debates is diverse. This section will provide a brief synopsis of various studies and conclude with a discussion of the meta-analysis that has combined similar research in this area.

Due to the importance and the unique nature of debates, many scholars continue to investigate candidate trustworthiness, persona, and persuasiveness in this message form. The first study to explore issue information acquisition during primary debates (Pfau, 1988) used a pre/postdesign and found significant results for candidate issue-

position learning. A unique approach was employed by Pfau and Kang (1991), who assessed the effects of relational communication in debates using an experimental design. Dependent variables consisted of general attitudes toward a candidate, likelihood for voting, competence, sociability, and character. The authors found that dimensions of relational communication measured in survey responses were significant predictors in evaluations of candidate attitude and likelihood to vote for a certain candidate. One study that combines these variables of trustworthiness and persuasiveness is by An and Pfau (2004). The authors used inoculation treatments (which refute arguments that will appear in a subsequent attack) predebate viewing to assess whether treatments would increase resistance to counterattitudinal messages (thus decreasing the effectiveness of those attacks) in debates. Findings from their study suggest that inoculation helps prevent decreases in candidate favorability by respondents.

Subsequent studies continue to tout the importance of debates for several participatory variables. McKinney and Chattopadhyay (2007) found that debate viewing increased political information efficacy, a factor influencing political participation. When independents and "undecideds" watch debates they learn issue and character information, leading to greater confidence in their ability to cast votes. Additionally, viewers have the opportunity to see all candidates for a given party, and studies report that equal issue-knowledge acquisition occurs for most candidates, not just the viewer's preferred candidate (McKinney & Carlin, 2004). Debates also have the potential to agenda-set by increasing the salience of issue stances and character traits (Benoit, McKinney, & Holbert, 2001).

Meta-analysis has been used to cumulate research on the effects of televised political debates. One variable concerns whether debate viewers learn about the candidates' issue positions after watching a debate. In general election debates, 18 measurements of this variable were cumulated from 13 studies with an n of 7,202 (Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003); the weighted effect size was .256. Those exposed to televised political debates experienced significant increases in issue knowledge. Six sets of data from two studies ($n = 3,153$) found that debates increase the salience of issues to voters, with a weighted effect size of .187. General debates also had a significant effect on voters' issue preference – for example, does the voter support NAFTA or oppose it – (4 studies, $n = 625$, effect size of .136). Watching televised debates has an agenda-setting effect – making the particular issues discussed in debates more important to viewers. Three studies with an n of 216 yielded a weighted effect size of .291. Ten studies with 17 measurements found that viewing debates affected perceptions of the candidates' character ($n = 5,426$; effect size = .266). Tests investigating perceptions of candidate competence were not significant. Finally, effects of watching televised debates on vote choice were significant (25 data points from 14 studies, $n = 8,876$, mean effect size = .146). A few studies have also investigated the effects of watching primary campaign debates. Two studies with five unique data points ($n = 187$, weighted effect size .833) found that viewing primary debates significantly increased issue knowledge. Debates in this campaign phase influenced character perceptions (2 studies with 3 data points, $n = 169$, effect

size = .799). Furthermore, vote preference was related to debate viewing with an effect size of .541 ($n = 386$, 4 studies with 5 sets of data). So, the weight of research supports the conclusion that debates had substantial effects on those who chose to view them, with effect sizes ranging from .136 to .291 in the general election and .541 to .833 in the primary campaign. Although we have fewer studies (with a smaller n) of primary than general debates, it appears that viewing televised primary debates has a much larger effect. Presumably voters have more information and more strongly held attitudes by the time the general election debates are held.

Conclusion

Arguably, televised political spots and debates are the two most important campaign media today. Millions of dollars are spent on political advertising and millions of voters watch campaign debates. The Internet is increasing in importance over time (see Chapter 23), but it does not yet rival these more traditional campaign media in influence. With a population of over 300 million, candidates in the United States (as well as in individual states and other countries) must use the mass media. Both of these campaign media allow candidates to reach millions of potential voters. Meta-analyses of the research on these media demonstrate that political advertisements and debates have significant effects on voters – many with impressive effect sizes. Viewing political television advertisements increases issue knowledge, influences attitudes toward candidates, affects agenda setting, increases political interest, increases turnout, and affects vote choice: negative ads are not significantly more persuasive than positive ads. Watching televised campaign debates increases issue knowledge, increases issue salience, increases issue preference, affects agenda setting, influences perceptions of the candidates' character; effects are much larger for primary than general election debates. Furthermore, Holbert and Benoit (2009) have argued that it is important for future research on political campaigns to examine multiple media and investigate indirect as well as direct effects. Contemporary political campaigns (especially, but not exclusively, at the presidential level) match powerful candidates and campaigns. However, the idea that campaigns have “minimal effects” is simply wrong (see the recent exchange on this topic: Bennett & Iyengar, 2008, 2010; Holbert, Garrett, & Gleason, 2010). Clearly, more work remains to be done on the important effects of campaign media.

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News and Political Entertainment Effects on Democratic Citizenship

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ABSTRACT

For decades, political communication scholars have sought to better understand the various impacts of mediated communication on political behaviors that constitute the essence of democratic citizenship. Focusing on the key concepts of voter turnout, political participation, civic engagement, and political conversation, this chapter explores how various forms of media content shape individuals' political behaviors. It examines the extent to which these behaviors are a function not only of traditional news media, but also of political entertainment content, which in recent years has provided citizens with increasingly diverse perspectives about the political world. Discussion of these effects – and how they can change over time – is couched within larger issues related to the evolving media and political landscapes.

Manifestations of Democratic Citizenship

Driven by strong concerns about the state of democracy, political communication researchers consistently tackle a vast array of questions related to citizens' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. How do individuals understand and feel about issues in the world? To what extent and in what venues do citizens express their opinions? Under

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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what circumstances do they come to take action about problems in their community? The thrust of these intellectual undertakings relates to the role that communication plays in helping individuals to be knowledgeable and active citizens. An examination of findings from the last three quarters of a century reveals an increasingly nuanced set of relationships. No longer are large numbers of audience members influenced homogeneously by a few media messages. Rather, changes on a number of fronts – namely, the balkanization of media outlets, the fragmentation of content, and the growing recognition that individuals have certain predispositions that interact with message content – have necessitated another scrutinization of media effects on democratic citizenship.

Against this backdrop, we explore how citizens' use of contemporary media shapes their political behaviors. We are interested in the effects of individuals' consumption of not only traditional news sources, but also entertainment content that can have a political impact. Exemplified by *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and skits that appear on *Saturday Night Live*, such content – which we refer to here as “political entertainment” or “political comedy” – has not only proliferated, but also witnessed a steady growth in viewership. With mass audiences turning more and more to such content for information about public affairs, elections, and other aspects of the political world (Brewer & Cao, 2008), scholars have been motivated to revisit the extent to which political entertainment shapes citizens' behaviors.

This chapter begins with an explication of key concepts that occupy a unique space in the political communication literature – voter turnout, political participation, civic engagement, and political conversation – and how these behaviors are shaped by traditional news media outlets. After a brief introduction to the newer forms of political entertainment content that exist today, we identify their effects on political behavior as well, focusing on some key mechanisms of influence. Our conclusions highlight a few fruitful areas of research that merit attention as we seek to enhance our understanding of how both traditional and non-traditional media bear upon political life.

Studies of citizen behavior are motivated by the desire to better understand and enhance democratic life. After all, democratic theory is predicated on the assumption that citizens possess adequate and equal opportunity to express their preferences, argue for their self-interests, and participate in the decision-making process (Dahl, 1989). Simply put, citizen engagement in politics lies at the heart of democracy – and studies of political communication. However, ascertaining the extent to which citizens are engaged in politics is muddled by scholars' differing approaches of what constitutes “political.” Scholars initially equated political engagement with *political participation*, most commonly reflected in behaviors that include voting, contacting elected officials, and taking part in protests or demonstrations. These acts initially were differentiated based on how easy or difficult citizens found them to perform (Milbrath, 1965). Subsequent research on political participation, however, moved away from this unidimensional view to identify four activity clusters: (1) voting; (2) electoral campaign activity (e.g., persuading others how to vote, attending political

rallies, and contributing money to a party or candidate); (3) cooperative activity, such as forming a group to solve a problem; and (4) citizen-initiated contacts, such as writing a letter to an elected official (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). With few exceptions then, political participation traditionally has referred to citizens' actions reflecting a vertical (upward) communication from citizens to political institutions and elites (Moy & Hussain, 2011).

Any focus on behavioral manifestations of political engagement will identify voting as a key participatory act, traditionally viewed as "the entry-level stage of involvement" (Crotty, 1991, pp. 20/21). Concern with voting stems from the fact that it legitimizes the system (Niemi & Weisberg, 1993), and despite varying levels of turnout in the past several decades, is the most widespread form of political participation. While it may be the most widespread and egalitarian form of political participation, voting is also the act that conveys the least amount of information (Verba et al., 1995). If political participation were to be explicated based on the level of information each act conveys, then voting would rank quite low on this scale. After all, knowing that a citizen cast a vote or how he or she voted sheds no light on the motivation behind the vote. Voting, in other words, allows the politician minimal insight into the concerns of the electorate. Other forms of political participation, however, have the potential to convey considerably more information; for example, contacting a public official allows one to not only express concern for a specific issue, but also communicate the direction and intensity of opinion about that issue.

Like voting and other forms of political participation, *civic participation* affords citizens the opportunity to communicate concerns about their self-interests and the well-being of the group or community to which they belong. Civic participation refers to the *horizontal* communication between citizens to bring about improvement in their communities. Such participation is motivated by the desire to work toward a public good, but often involves interacting with others and typically does not involve electoral politics (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). Studies of civic participation have operationalized the concept to include volunteering in the community, giving to a community charity, attending town hall meetings and discussing the needs of the community, and working on a community project (see Moy & Hussain, 2011, for a review).

With its emphasis on horizontal communication, the concept of civic participation often has been viewed in the same light as *civic engagement*, which includes citizens' non-political activities as well as their sense of belonging to and trust in the ability of the community to mobilize and resolve collective problems (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). Similarly, *social capital* concerns citizens' relations to each other and how they work together effectively to meet shared goals (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995a). Scholars have identified social capital as having two dimensions: social trust (or trust in others) and social connectedness (sometimes called "civic engagement"), reflecting the extent to which citizens connect with their communities (Putnam, 1995b). These connections typically tend to be measured by the number of civic associations to which one belongs, but scholarly debates over the operationalization of this concept

have raised questions regarding how best to capture informal community participation (see Moy, Scheufele, & Holbert, 1999 for a review). Regardless of the indicators employed, there is a general consensus that networks of civic engagement cultivate social trust, which in turn facilitates the ability of citizens to work collectively.

In many ways, the common threads between concepts like civic participation, civic engagement, and social capital reflect a larger trend in political communication research. Recent years have witnessed a resurgent interest in studying how citizens interact with each other to form individual opinions and achieve common goals. These interactions come in various guises, as noted earlier, but all involve some form of political talk. Indeed, if voting is the form of political engagement that conveys the least amount of information, interpersonal discussion of politics with others falls at the other end of the spectrum. As a communicative act, political discussion or deliberation allows citizens to express detailed information about their interests. It also helps citizens form high-quality political opinions (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002; Gastil & Dillard, 1999) as well as social identities that enable them to think collectively through political issues (Walsh, 2004). In the context of national political campaigns, political talk generally serves to “filter [...] information from the macro political environment” in beneficial ways (Pan, Shen, Paek, & Sun, 2006, p. 317). Not surprisingly then, political talk has come to figure prominently in contemporary research on media and democratic citizenship. After all, interpersonal discussion of politics is linked to participation in public forums and other forms of political engagement (Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; Knoke, 1990; Leighley, 1990; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Indeed, the absence of regular and meaningful deliberation can lead to political alienation, not to mention poor public policy (Moy & Gastil, 2006).

What constitutes meaningful deliberation? With its Aristotelian roots, face-to-face conversation may be at the heart of democracy, but contemporary scholars believe that not all talk is equal. On the one hand, sociable conversation occurs with like-minded others and has no real goals. Problem-solving conversation, on the other hand, is more democratic; it often involves non-like-minded others and is public in nature. In this model of conversation, the act of speaking to others is a means to the end of good government, which presumably focuses on the common good (Schudson, 1997). Regardless of whether the deliberation occurs in formal town hall meetings, semi-structured online chat rooms, or informal interpersonal settings, the study of political talk reflects an emphasis on horizontal communication between citizens that can shape participants’ understanding of public good, their understanding of the issues involved, and perhaps policy.

Effects of Traditional News Media

Efforts to map the influence of “traditional” news media on various forms of political participation and civic engagement have generated relatively consistent findings,

despite different conceptualizations and methods adopted by scholars. Of course, to define a medium or outlet as long-standing is a moving target. By “traditional,” we refer to newspapers and television, the two media that have provided news about public affairs and the political world and have captured the attention of virtually all scholars interested in media influences on the aforementioned forms of citizenship. And although the Internet has not existed for as long as the other two media, it does serve the critical function of keeping the public informed about current affairs, especially as traditional news organizations have moved online to reach potential audiences every minute of the day.

Just as citizenship can be operationalized in numerous ways, scholars have taken different approaches to the study of media use. Survey measures of the concept, which provide the basis for most of the research in this area, have tapped respondents’ exposure to a given medium (e.g., the number of days one reads a newspaper or the number of hours one watched television the previous night), attention to specific content (e.g., international news), and motivation to use that given medium (e.g., how often one uses the Internet to learn about community events). In addition, research study designs vary greatly. Some opt for experiments employing media-based stimulus materials that differ in content (e.g., newspaper campaign coverage that is oriented primarily toward policy stances vs. campaigning strategies), while others rely on cross-sectional survey data. Such theoretical and methodological inconsistencies may generate differences in findings.

Mass media use – in particular, exposure and attention to public affairs content – tends to be positively related to political activity that defines citizenship. Such use typically enhances the likelihood of engaging in electoral and campaign-related behaviors (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; McLeod et al., 1996) as well as civically oriented acts (Moy, Manosevitch, Stamm, & Dunsmore, 2005). The mechanisms underlying these relationships may differ, however.

Newspapers

In the nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville (1884) theorized that newspapers promoted civic engagement in the United States. A century later, cross-medium comparisons sustained this conclusion, typically painting newspapers in a better light than television. This is true of the earliest research relating use of the two media to the likelihood of voting. “When practiced jointly, newspaper reading and television watching are associated with very high rates of turnout, but television may ‘add’ less to the combination than newspapers” (Glaser, 1965, p. 85). In the first two decades when television appeared on the media landscape, between 1960 and 1976, turnout declined only 1.5% for those most reliant on newspapers, compared to over 10% for those least reliant on newspapers (Shaffer, 1981). And data from the Center for Political Studies reveal that of the most politically apathetic, nearly three-quarters (74.8%) reported television to be the medium they used most often; the corresponding

figure among the most politically involved was 58.9% (Bennett, 1986). Positive relationships between newspaper use and citizenship continue to emerge: Newspaper reading tends to be associated with higher levels of civic engagement (Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005), voting (Wilkins, 2000) or the intent to vote (Drew & Weaver, 2006), and political conversation (Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999).

These positive effects are not only direct effects, but also can involve different mechanisms of influence. Reading newspapers can increase what citizens know about politics (Robinson & Levy, 1986, 1998), and increased knowledge is associated with greater political activity (Bennett, 1986; McLeod et al., 1999). Newspaper reading also imparts information as to how citizens can actually participate (Lemert, 1981), which in turn can increase the likelihood of partaking of traditional acts of participation. Citizens who read newspapers also tend to become more integrated into their communities, which in turn increases their level of investment in seeing that local problems get resolved (Stamm, 1985). In addition, newspaper reading can facilitate unintended political discussion (Chaffee & Mutz, 1988) that can interest less engaged citizens. In general, those who discuss public affairs issues within their social networks experience differential gains; that is, these individuals are more likely to participate than those who engage in either newspaper reading or political talk alone (Scheufele, 2002).

Television

Unlike the relationship between newspaper reading and political behavior, watching television news tends to elicit more negative associations. Moreover, that the effects tend to be mixed may stem from the use of different measures and/or the range of content available through this medium. For example, watching campaign news on television has been negatively related to the likelihood of voting and other forms of conventional political participation (McLeod et al., 1996). However, exposure and attention to national and international news on television has not been related to either voting or political participation (Eveland & Scheufele, 2000). Yet other research has found that watching “hard” or serious news on television correlates positively with participation in formal electoral politics (e.g., voting and belonging to political parties; Wilkins, 2000). The effects of watching televised news can be positively related to political participation: This type of media consumption translates directly into greater attendance at political meetings, contacting public officials, working on campaigns, and writing letters to the editor (Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004). Thus, although the evidence is far less conclusive than for newspapers, the bulk of the literature suggests television news can facilitate various forms of political participation, particularly when the content is germane and viewers’ attention is sufficient.

Like newspaper reading, watching television news equips citizens with knowledge regarding current events, policy issues, and political actors; armed with this

knowledge and information, citizens are more likely to engage in political action. As well, the very nature of the medium allows television news viewing to facilitate political action. With its reliance on visual cues, broadcast stories often involve compelling visuals and sound bites that generate political interest, another commonly identified antecedent to engagement in political activity. Visuals may also have more powerful effects in the long run as individuals learn to process visual cues before they learn to process verbal cues, and thus audiovisual cues can reach a much broader audience, starting at a much younger age (Graber, 1996). While print media are deemed superior in terms of the amount of political information they convey to audience members, newspaper stories have grown longer and increasingly oriented toward analysis and interpretation (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997), some of which may be beyond the level of understanding and interest of average citizens.

With respect to civic engagement, scholars have long debated how television can have an impact. In his time displacement hypothesis, Putnam (1995b) contended that the time citizens spend watching television has driven them away from their communities. According to this line of reasoning, the act of television viewing has privatized citizens' leisure time and inhibits participation outside the home; after all, one cannot at the very same moment sit at home watching television and serve as a intramural volleyball coach. Therefore, where citizens once were socializing with one another, working on community projects, and joining bowling leagues, with the penetration of television, they now are engaging in singular activities and "bowling alone" (the title of Putnam's [2000] seminal book). Despite the intuitively appealing nature of this argument, researchers have found no support for the time displacement argument. The time that citizens spent watching television had a direct negative impact on civic engagement; it did not decrease levels of engagement through perceptions of time pressures (Moy et al., 1999). Moreover, despite the prevalence of entertainment fare on television, it is media content not time spent with the medium, that appears to make a difference (Norris, 1996), as illustrated later in this chapter.

Today, as measures of television viewing and political behavior and analytic techniques have become more sophisticated, a nuanced picture of effects has emerged. Television news viewing enhances citizen activity indirectly (McLeod et al., 1999): A television news story generates political discussion, which leads citizens to turn to newspaper coverage of the issue, and reading the news increases political knowledge, which heightens one's belief that the system is responsive. Perceptions of efficacy then make it easier for citizens to take action. When it comes to deliberative conversation, the effects of television news are not as optimistic (Moy & Gastil, 2006). The more citizens watched television news, the more open to political conflict they reported themselves to be. Unfortunately, watching television news was also associated with lower levels of understanding of others' views. Because deliberative conversation is characterized in part by the use of logic, clarity of expression, turn-taking, openness to conflict, and the understanding of differing viewpoints, this finding

suggests that television news shows – a genre that now includes much incivility in political discourse – may be moving viewers toward an understanding of political talk that is less than ideal by deliberative standards.

The Internet

The rise of the Internet to political prominence has spawned a debate that has yet to be answered fully. Will new media technologies promote democracy by lowering the cost of communication and participation (Rheingold, 2000) or will they merely be an extension of the existing polity and not lead to significant changes in political behavior (Margolis & Resnick, 2000)? Early empirical research in this area generated inconsistent findings. For example, use of the Internet was shown to be unrelated to voting (Bimber, 2001) and to increase voting (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003); both studies, however, found Internet use to increase the likelihood of engaging in other forms of political participation.

But as scholars' understanding of what it means to "use" the Internet has grown more sophisticated, so has their understanding of the medium's political implications (see Chapter 23). Socially, informationally, or politically motivated uses of the Web increased civic participation behaviors, while using the Internet for household or social recreational use detracted from civic participation (Moy et al., 2005; Pasek, Kenski, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). Among the general US population, exposure to online campaign information was associated only with acts of civic participation. And among citizens who expressed greater interest in politics, exposure to online campaign information was associated with higher levels of civic participation, political participation, and political talk (Xenos & Moy, 2007).

Today, the Internet is like television in that it offers citizens a vast menu of content choices. Unlike television, however, the breadth of choices on the Web appears to proliferate with each passing week. As candidates, campaigns, and causes spend increasingly more time shaping their online presence so as to garner support, and as citizens consider reading blogs and joining social networking sites *de rigueur*, scholars are forced to revisit the effects of the Internet on democracy. The breadth of the Internet allows not only for obtaining information from different websites, but also for engaging in different activities online. As Gil de Zuniga, Veenstra, Vraga, and Shah (2010) noted, the range of political activities available to the public goes beyond the traditional measures of participation that scholars have employed for nearly a half-century. Indeed, as technology has developed, so too has views on what it means to produce and consume messages. Blogging allows citizens to become message producers, to express themselves to a potentially unlimited audience, to inform, and to mobilize. Similarly, political engagement has become increasingly common online via the use of social networking sites, according to a Pew Internet and American Life study (Smith, Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2009).

Political Entertainment and the Evolving Media Landscape

The fragmentation of content in today's communication environment is evident in the proliferation of websites and television channels, with many dedicated to a particular issue, obsession, or quirk. Concomitant with this multiplying of sources is how the same content is conveyed across different outlets. For instance, a political advertisement that gets aired once in a small market can receive national coverage by virtue of being included in an adwatch that is covered on network news (in which, for instance, a political analyst comments on the ad), taped and uploaded to YouTube, and referenced in numerous political blogs and "tweeted" through social networks. The clearly delineated media environment of the twentieth century is no longer.

Against this continually shifting media landscape, political communication scholars have turned their attention to examining the political effects of "infotainment," sometimes referred to as political comedy or political entertainment. The contemporary incarnation of political comedy – as reflected in late night talk shows – has gained political traction as candidates attempt to convey messages about themselves and their policies to audience members who are not typically politically engaged. Moreover, politicians can convey these messages without the filter of a journalist, whereby they risk having carefully crafted messages reduced to a sound bite. Consequently, the viewer who previously could escape the political world by turning to entertainment content has lost the ability to do so.

But political comedy is not a product of contemporary broadcast media. Laughter has long played a role in political discourse. Ancient Greek comedies, as exemplified by the works of Aristophanes, entertained audiences by satirizing political and social life equally (Bates, 1903; Heath, 1987/2007). In *L'Homme aux quarante écus*, Voltaire employed satire to criticize certain economic and political perspectives. These two exemplars from markedly different time periods illustrate just how political comedy has preceded the accounts that interest political communication scholars today. With their focus on electronic media, political communication scholars begin somewhere in the territory of Richard Nixon's 1968 utterance of "Sock it to me?" on *Laugh In*, or with references to *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*. Typically, this quickly gives way to more contemporary pop-political culture reference points such as Bill Clinton's appearances, in 1992, on *The Arsenio Hall Show* and MTV, Al Gore's and George W. Bush's appearances on late night and daytime talk shows in 2000, and John Edwards' formal announcement of his presidential candidacy on *The Daily Show* in 2003. Undoubtedly the list soon will include mentions of Tina Fey's unforgettable *Saturday Night Live* parody of 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin's interview with Katie Couric, which seemed to capture the public's attention as much as the original event it was meant to mock.

These iconic events signal how politicians have become increasingly reliant on popular, entertainment-based media outlets as means to reach potential voters.

These landmark appearances also draw attention to the explosion of media (television) channels. In 1968, the year in which Nixon appeared on *Laugh In* to soften his image, television audience members could access half-a-dozen channels (Bogart, 1972). Nearly a quarter-century later, however, when Clinton aimed to reach a younger audience by donning a pair of Ray-Bans and playing the saxophone on the *Arsenio Hall Show*, the media landscape had changed drastically. Cable channels had penetrated over half of all television households (Prior, 2007), offering viewers access to CNN, HBO, Showtime, Nickelodeon, Lifetime, and a host of other networks. This proliferation of specialized cable channels in the 1980s and 1990s would continue into the new millennium. What had started as a low-choice, broadcast-dominated communication environment with ample opportunities for incidental learning and widely shared political points of reference (Prior, 2007) had evolved into a balkanized media landscape with highly segmented audiences.

This “stratamentation” (stratification with fragmentation), as Bennett and Iyengar (2008) term it, does not necessarily mean that audiences are shrinking. Politicians’ appearances in televised political comedy today, even if viewed by relatively few in its original broadcast, can reach millions via television network websites, blogs linked to the footage, and YouTube. Multiple exposure to the same content consequently has challenged scholars to pinpoint when and under what conditions citizens were exposed to the content in question, and to ascertain the effects of such content.

Regarding the effects of political entertainment on political behavior, research in this area is characterized by mixed findings. On the one hand, Prior’s (2007) research suggests that the mere presence of entertainment options in the media landscape may dampen political engagement among significant portions of the public and exacerbate inequalities in participation. Consistent with this line of reasoning, a number of studies have found either null or negative relationships between “non-traditional” news sources and engagement or participation variables. These sources include political comedy shows such as *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live* (Cao & Brewer, 2008) as well as late night talk shows like *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *The Tonight Show* (Moy, 2008; Pfau, Cho, & Chong, 2001). Furthermore, entertainment-oriented content that includes sitcoms, dramas, as well as talk shows has a direct negative effect on civic participation (Keum, Devanathan, Deshpande, Nelson, & Shah, 2004).

On the other hand, political entertainment programming has produced democratically desirable behavioral outcomes. These positive effects appear in the form of either direct relationships with traditional political engagement variables, or with variables that are highly associated with participation such as expertise, efficacy, and attentiveness. For example, Cao and Brewer (2008) found positive associations between attention to political comedy shows and certain political activities such as attending campaign events and joining organizations. Additionally, in a comprehensive study of multiple forms of mediated political communication in the 2004 presidential campaigns, Pfau, Houston, and Semmler (2007) concluded that, “the influence of television entertainment talk shows such as *Late Night with David Letterman* and

The Tonight Show with Jay Leno was associated with greater likelihood of participating in the democratic process” (p. 125).

Given the relative dearth of studies that link political entertainment or non-traditional news sources directly to political behavior, scholars have taken to examining the process by which such a relationship can emerge and identifying other politically relevant factors that might influence behavior. For example, during a campaign season, watching entertainment talk shows can influence viewers’ political expertise and attitudes about democratic processes in general (Pfau et al., 2007). In addition, exposure to political comedy can increase viewers’ confidence in their own political abilities (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006) and stimulate interest in the world of politics and campaigns (Feldman & Young, 2008). Political attitudes and cognitions, particularly those related to political trust, matter as trust and engagement tend to move lockstep with each other. The evidence is mixed regarding how viewership can affect trust in traditional news media (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Moy & Pfau, 2000), but a recent study revealed that exposure to comedy shows is negatively associated with general levels of political trust, while exposure to talk shows is associated with greater trust in political parties (Tsfati, Tukachinsky, & Peri, 2009). These findings have strong implications for how consumption of political entertainment content can influence behaviors, with the process turning on the specific content of interest and the extent to which citizens trust particular institutions and/or officials.

Other patterns in the literature hinge upon individual-level predispositions such as political attentiveness or interest. In positing his gateway hypothesis, Baum (2003) theorized that exposure to content on a given issue in political entertainment programming will enhance interest in and consumption of additional news about this issue in traditional news. Studies undergirded by the gateway hypothesis assume that some viewers may be drawn to this type of content as a result of political interest, while others may select it more for entertainment value, creating an opportunity for incidental effects. Survey data from 2002 and 2004 support this assumption, at least for programs such as *The Daily Show*: A nontrivial proportion of that program’s viewers registered moderate to low levels of interest in politics (Cao, 2010).

The variance in political interest among political entertainment viewers has been leveraged into methodologically diverse research that speaks indirectly to media effects on political behavior. Both surveys and experiments document a process in which viewers with lower levels of attentiveness or political interest can experience unique gains in political attentiveness and learning relative to the already-savvy viewers who share their taste in television. Although the precise mechanisms of these effects remain somewhat unclear, most related research in this area tends to assume that politics wrapped in an amusing package simply makes engagement with political information more appealing and/or less taxing for those without a strong preexisting interest in politics (Cao, 2010; Parkin, 2010; Xenos & Becker, 2010). And if political interest is linked to political activity, then those with initially low levels of interest would become more participatory. Not all studies find differential patterns of

association that run in this direction, however. In an early study of exposure to late night comedy and daytime talk show programs during the 2000 presidential race, Moy et al. (2005) found that among viewers who were highly interested in politics, a significantly greater association existed between exposure and political activities such as voting and political discussion. That is, viewing political entertainment enhanced the likelihood of engaging in politics among those already predisposed to do so.

Taken together, this corpus of literature clearly identifies some potential for positive associations between viewing political entertainment content and behaviors that reflect engaged citizenship. But it is also clear that work in this area has found increasingly more contingent effects that require continued theorizing, and that scholars should not treat this particular genre of media content as a unitary phenomenon (Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009). Ultimately, with greater and greater blurring of the traditional boundaries between news and entertainment, such research will be increasingly important to address the changing media landscape.

Conclusions

For decades, political communication scholars have sought to better understand the various impacts of mediated communication on political behaviors that constitute the essence of democratic citizenship. Efforts that explore media effects on political and civic behaviors in their numerous manifestations have yielded a substantial set of insights. And, these insights continue to evolve. Research has documented a generally positive relationship between consumption of, or attention to, mass-mediated public affairs content and participatory behaviors. Over time, this work has come to identify the many ways in which these relationships may vary based on audience member characteristics (e.g., their level of political efficacy, their need to survey the political environment, and the extent to which they deeply process the information consumed) and/or the modes and types of communication in question.

The shift toward nuanced and sometimes highly differentiated findings stems from the set of dramatic changes in the mass media environment (and correspondingly, the mass media audience) over the past half-century. Notions of a mass audience began as one served by a relatively simple (broadcast) communications system. However, with the growth of cable television and web-based technologies, this general notion has given way to a complex mosaic of systems infused with a rich digital infrastructure. These technological changes present scholars of media effects and political communication with a target that is not only moving, but also morphing and multiplying.

As Bennett and Iyengar (2008) contended, this stratamentation has serious implications concerning the very core of how scholars think about media effects research. As numerous strands of inquiry have shown, individuals today rarely sit down to see what is on television as so many did in earlier eras. Rather, they are increasingly apt

to select a specific news broadcast precisely because they expect it to provide a particular set of ideological frames, or view a comedy program as a direct function of their preference for such content over news (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). In other words, gone is the assumption that news content, or any other programming, can be treated as relatively independent of an individual's consumption of, or attentiveness to, that content. Stratamentation similarly complicates the intuitive approach of related experimental research in which participants are randomly assigned to view one frame or another, or a comedic versus a serious treatment of a given issue. Though others are not as convinced of the seriousness of these implications (Holbert, Garrett, & Gleason, 2010), it is clear that stratamentation poses serious issues for media effects, in particular, media effects research focused on democratic citizenship.

Theoretical and methodological issues of endogeneity notwithstanding, it is worth identifying a number of substantive issues related to the fragmentation of mass media and the mass audience. As much as social and technological changes bedevil clear thinking about media effects as traditionally understood, they are implicated in a number of other patterns closely related to the collection of outcome variables we have focused on in this chapter. These issues and patterns lead the way toward fruitful areas of new research on the relationships between political communication and democratic citizenship.

The first deals with "infotainment" or political comedy programming, and how its unique properties may create an exception to the patterns typically associated with stratamentation. To explain, at the crux of most discussions of fragmentation is the notion of perfect (or at least increasingly perfect) media filtering. As Prior (2007) argued, an abundance of media choice has created a world in which it is easy for entertainment seekers to consume only frivolity and for political junkies to be exposed only to hard news. In other words, audience members can now efficiently translate their content preferences into personalized consumption. However, as noted by Holbert et al. (2010) and conceded somewhat by Bennett and Iyengar (2010), politically oriented entertainment programming is hybrid in nature, satisfying both news and entertainment preferences. As such, the mix of entertainment and information provided by programs such as *The Daily Show* or politically themed skits on *Saturday Night Live* works mischief with the notion of perfect filtering. This is demonstrated by the research on "gateway" effects reviewed earlier, including how entertainment-seekers receive political information and cues as a side effect of watching political comedy. At a minimum, such examples identify a safe harbor in which traditional conceptions of incidental exposure and media effects may continue to make sense. At a more general level, however, they serve to remind us that perfectly homogenized niche audiences may not be the only or inevitable outcome of media fragmentation.

A second issue that will clearly figure prominently in future research is how fragmentation has been occurring not only in terms of media content preferences, but also along ideological or partisan dimensions. The latter both threatens and offers opportunities for central aspects of democratic engagement. On the one hand,

ideological and partisan fragmentation poses serious threats to deliberation at the aggregate level. As many citizens occupy smaller and smaller niches, the groups to which they belong and identify may simply talk more and more past each other. Opportunities for true deliberation may be reduced to the enclave level, where the chances of civil encounters with those who hold opposing views are minimal (Sunstein, 2001). More informal interpersonal political discussion may be equally threatened. On the other hand, there is an inherent tension between deliberative engagement and more action-oriented participatory behaviors. The normative assumption behind deliberation, one that is borne out empirically, is that deliberation can enhance levels of political participation (Jacobs, Cook, & Delli Carpini, 2009). Yet as much as “hearing the other side” may delight deliberative theorists, it also is associated with less, rather than more, of other core forms of political activity such as voting (Mutz, 2006). As with any growing body of research, empirical inconsistencies may stem from different theoretical, methodological, and operational perspectives that themselves may be grounded in differing normative assumptions. Although existing efforts have provided key insights into these dynamics, it is clear that additional research into the full implications of ideological and partisan fragmentation for democratic engagement will be necessary for some time into the future.

Last but not least, understanding media effects on democratic citizenship requires a clear delineation of what constitutes meaningful political engagement. Just as recent years have witnessed an exponentiation of media forms, content, and channels, as well as the many communications patterns associated with these changes, there is an expanding menu of ways to participate. Citizens’ engagement in both vertical and horizontal interactions can now manifest online and offline. Citizens can now engage in political talk, not only through face-to-face encounters, but also via mobile telephony and a myriad of computer-mediated venues. Moreover, with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, citizens can increasingly provide political information and commentary to other citizens, loosening the monopoly on such communication previously enjoyed by a limited field of “professional communicators” (Page, 1996; Xenos & Kim, 2008). Today, the ease with which citizens can communicate and take action online – from emailing to paying bills to donating to a campaign – suggests that voting may no longer reflect the entry-level stage of involvement that Crotty (1991) believed.

In addition to posing a variety of basic questions about what *counts* as a useful political engagement variable, broader trends related to these shifting modes of citizen engagement have drawn attention to how conceptions of citizenship may shift over time as well. In particular, contemporary youth are abandoning traditional models of citizen engagement in which a strong sense of duty motivates largely institutionally structured participation and engagement. Instead, they are favoring more individualized politics that involve self-actualization and personal growth (Bennett, 2008). That young adults are also the ones turning to the web and staying connected is not insignificant, particularly as technology has bestowed upon society a 24/7 news cycle and traditional print and broadcast forms of news have melded.

Moreover, younger citizens are the ones to turn media consumption into media production. It is clear then that future scholarship will be unable to abandon fundamental normative discussion about what it means to participate and be a good citizen.

In conclusion, while political communications scholars have undoubtedly amassed a significant collection of insights into how media affect democratic citizenship and civic engagement, it is clear that unanswered empirical and normative questions remain. At each end of our most familiar equations, key players and concepts are in flux. Moreover, sociotechnical changes are calling the very form of those equations into question. What remains constant, however, is the importance of understanding the mechanisms and processes by which citizens interact with media and each other in order to learn about political issues, form opinions, and act in ways that communicate their preferences.

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Exploring Relations between Political Entertainment Media and Traditional Political Communication Information Outlets

A Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

A wide range of entertainment media content has been shown to influence some of our most important democratic outcomes. In addition, political communication scholarship is beginning to look at how certain entertainment-based media outlets function alongside more traditional political outlets (e.g., TV news, debates). In today's complex media environment, it is apparent that audience members do not experience entertainment media or news in complete isolation. There is *hybridity* across individuals, across genres, and across texts. Studying how various forms of political information work together, and how people make sense of them in tandem, is essential to understanding the broader role of media in politics. This chapter offers a plan of action designed to allow political communication researchers to engage in a theoretically grounded, systematic study of how entertainment media relates to, informs, and interacts with more traditional public affairs media within the context of politics.

The Rise of Political Entertainment

The study of political entertainment media has grown exponentially in recent years (e.g., Baumgartner & Morris, 2008). Political communication scholars studying media influence historically did so solely in the context of news (e.g., Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). But more recently, scholars have begun to recognize and stress the importance of entertainment content as an agent of political influence as well (see Holbert, Garrett, & Gleason, 2010). Among the kinds of political entertainment that have garnered scholarly attention are: late night talk shows (e.g., *The Late Show with David Letterman* or *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*), daytime talk shows (e.g., Oprah), political satire programs (e.g., *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Colbert Report*), entertainment-oriented news programs (e.g., *Entertainment Tonight*), situation comedies (e.g., *The Simpsons*; see Cantor, 1999), as well as dramatic TV programming (e.g., *Law & Order*; Holbrook & Hill, 2005). These diverse forms of political entertainment media have been shown to impact the full range of the hierarchy of effects, from salience (e.g., relative importance of a political issue; see Young, 2006), to knowledge (e.g., knowing the number of US troops deployed to Iraq; see Baum, 2003), to attitudes (e.g., feeling thermometer rating of President George W. Bush; see Holbert et al., 2003a), to behaviors (e.g., voting; see Cao & Brewer, 2008). It is clear from this empirical research that political entertainment content has the ability to generate democratic influences.

In spite of the abundance of confirmatory evidence in this arena, the study of the effects of political entertainment continues to lack a systematic approach, a cohesive theoretical perspective (Holbert, 2005), and an acknowledgement of broad historical, political and technological shifts underlying the growing phenomenon. The pages that follow will explicate the advances made in this emerging area of research – across studies of content, audiences, and effects. But more importantly, this chapter will identify ways in which each of these areas of study might better contribute to the broader conversation concerning political entertainment's role in today's political world. Areas of promise across the field are identified and the benefits of subtle, complex theoretical approaches are explored. Finally, the chapter articulates the imperative need for scholars in this domain to allow historical context to inform their models of media effects, and to work across epistemological traditions to capitalize on the wealth of insights emerging from our colleagues in more humanistic traditions.

In the Message is the Mechanism: The Importance of Content

Scholars have begun to systematically quantify the content within and across political entertainment programming. In fact, content analyses of some of the more popular

(and hence potentially influential) political satire programs (e.g., *The Daily Show*) have revealed important patterns and contrasts in theme and substance. Research by Fox, Koloen, and Sahin (2007) suggests that *The Daily Show* provides political information as substantive as the nightly broadcast television news programs found on the major US television networks. A recent content analysis of the same program by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism finds that Jon Stewart's content is akin to that of a cable TV news program, with a focus on national politics, the press, and purposefully selected news items from the day (see <http://www.journalism.org/node/10953>). Such analyses will help effects scholars explicate the mechanisms that account for the various levels of impact of these programs, which, in the absence of such content analyses, would be left to mere speculation. One realm in which the importance of content analytical approaches has become apparent in the development of effects mechanisms is in the study of late night political jokes (see also Chapter 14). Studies exploring patterns in themes, targets, and topics across various late night comedy programs (Niven, Lichter, & Amundson, 2003) have aided in the development of fruitful theoretical mechanisms of cognitive effects of late night political jokes (Young, 2006).

It is interesting to note, however, that the subtleties in content and theme even within subgenres of political entertainment (e.g., late night political humor) render this task complicated, but increasingly necessary. For example, while a number of studies examine the effects of "humor" on a range of political outcomes (e.g., Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2008), it has become clear that there are several different types of political humor (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony) and hence, to treat humor as monolithic is problematic, both conceptually and empirically (Hmielowski, Holbert, Jain, Lather, & Morey, 2011a). One necessary element to a theoretically driven effects paradigm in the context of political entertainment would involve large and systematic content analyses within and across political entertainment genres. For example, Baum's (2003) content analytical work on the nature of coverage of foreign crises on "soft news" programs offered useful and widely cited insights on the breadth and depth of political entertainment's treatment of issues like war. Such work is needed in other avenues of our political entertainment landscape to begin to develop the systematic approach alluded to at the outset.

Beyond the world of quantitative content analyses, the humanistic traditions have made great strides in advancing a conversation about the content of political entertainment. Cantor (1999), for instance, argues that the political messages offered on a show like *The Simpsons* exist on multiple levels. The first level consists of explicit and concise explicitly satirical political arguments. These statements are often memorable for audience members, but come and go rather quickly. On a recent episode of *Family Guy*, for example, two of the main characters find themselves back in time in Nazi-occupied Poland. While there, they observe that one of the Nazi soldiers is wearing a McCain-Palin political button on his lapel (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIWTB8POnkg>). These bits of content offer explicitly valenced political arguments (e.g., that McCain-Palin supporters are closeted Nazis). However, Cantor

argues that the more subtle, and potentially more profound, political influence of a show like *The Simpsons* rests elsewhere. For example, *The Simpsons* places all public policy and political issues in the context of the nuclear family (i.e., how the traditional family is impacted by these issues). It is this broader frame through which politics is presented that Gamson (1999) defines as “lifeworld content.” Such subtle and diffuse meta-narratives are inherently tied to the genre of entertainment, and may prove to have longer-lasting effects on a citizenry than more traditional political information like news.

As long argued by scholars in the critical-cultural tradition, the political importance of popular entertainment rests in the many nuanced political messages that reside within and across texts (e.g., Press & Cole, 1999). These political messages can be linked to such public policy issues as gay rights, women’s rights, abortion, and the environment (to name just a few examples; see Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2003b). Indeed, many of the assertions advanced by critical-cultural scholars have received empirical validation. As Holbert et al. (2003b) have stated, “many of the relationships suggested by these scholars appear to have measureable consequences” (p. 58). In short, there are many rich insights offered by critical-cultural scholars that can translate over to the offering of empirical questions that could provide understanding about a wide range of effects of political entertainment media content (see Condit, 1990 in relation to Holbert et al., 2003b).

Nowhere is this previous point better illustrated than in recent humanistic-oriented work on some of our most popular political entertainment programming, *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009). Baym (2005, 2009) argues that *The Daily Show* represents a new style of journalism and that elements of *The Colbert Report* mix together basic elements of play that are central to entertainment with factual information that is more traditionally found in news. While many scholars see the content and form of these shows as accessible and hence democratizing (Jones, 2009), not all scholars agree. Hart and Hartelius (2007), for example, argue that the nature of the political messages being offered on *The Daily Show* can inspire greater cynicism within young voters, a cohort already highly skeptical of politics in general. There is some empirical support to back up this claim (e.g., Baumgartner & Morris, 2006), but the nature of these effects as normatively positive versus negative is still very much in debate (Young, 2007).

The Who: The People Watching “The What”

Beyond the currently fragmented study of content and effects, the study of political entertainment would benefit from expanded and detailed analyses of the audience: *Who* is watching these programs? *Why* they are watching? And *how* do the characteristics of these viewers affect the extent to which they are affected by the viewing experience? Young and Tisinger (2006) offer the most systematic secondary analysis

(using both Pew and NAES data) of what best predicts exposure to programs like *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live*. Their findings suggest that younger people, and those listening to talk radio and consuming news online, are more likely to watch such political humor programming. In spite of these findings, the authors are only able to account for 14% of the variance in late night TV viewing among those who have a stated preference for *The Daily Show*. Clearly, there is much more we as political communication scholars need to do to better understand who is consuming this material and why.

A more recent study by Hmielowski, Holbert, and Lee (2011b), using statewide primary survey data, has been able to account for 50.7% of the variance in audience exposure to TV political satire (i.e., *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*). The authors found that a parsed multiple-regression equation using only four predictor variables was able to account for *almost half* (48%) of the variance in exposure to televised political satire. Those four variables were: age (negative predictor), liberal cable TV exposure (positive predictor, i.e., MSNBC programming), satirical situation comedy exposure (positive predictor, i.e., *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*), and affinity for political humor (positive predictor). The latter of these predictors, *affinity for political humor*, is a newly explicated individual-level audience characteristic designed to predict one's engagement with different kinds of political entertainment. Such innovative techniques illustrate the kind of subtle constructs that will prove useful to scholars studying political entertainment audiences in the future.

In addition to satisfying our mere curiosity regarding who is watching and why, capturing some of these individual-level audience characteristics has proved particularly beneficial to the development of theoretical mechanisms accounting for political entertainment's influence. Traditional political constructs like political knowledge, interest, and efficacy have been found to shape the extent to which viewers are affected by political entertainment in terms of various political outcomes including construct salience (Young, 2006), attitudes toward candidates (Baum, 2003), perceptions of news (Holbert, Lambe, Dudo, & Carlton, 2007), information seeking (Xenos & Becker, 2009), and participation (Cao & Brewer, 2008). Thus, the effects of political entertainment depend in part on prior levels of political knowledge, interest, and efficacy.

More subtle moderating effects are beginning to emerge through the study of both content and audience. For example, highlighting the complementary and reciprocal influence of political satire on perceptions of news (and *vice versa*), Holbert et al. (2007) illustrated that the effects of viewing political satire on viewers' perceptions of news was contingent on the order in which these programs were viewed. Much of this work has assessed the role of audience characteristics in shaping short-term outcomes (e.g., Cao, 2006). The next step involves expanding the subtle psychological and contextual constructs that shape how and to what extent political entertainment-based media effects unfold over time (e.g., transportation – i.e., the degree someone becomes consumed within a narrative; cue discounting – i.e., discarding of heuristics; cognitive elaboration; affect; political orientation like ideology or party identification).

Understanding how different kinds of people are affected by media content is not a goal unique to media effects scholars. Understanding how different kinds of people derive different meanings from media texts has also been a goal – albeit with a very different rhetorical frame – of those in the humanistic traditions for decades. As argued by cultural scholars (see Jones, 2010) the construct of the passive “audience members” ought to be reconceptualized as active participants in the consumption of political content. As scholars like Jones (2010) and Van Zoonen (2005) suggest, the act of consuming political information is a participatory act. “For better or worse,” argues Jones, “the most common and frequent form of political activity – its actual practice – comes, for most people, through their choosing, attending to, processing, and engaging a myriad of media texts about the formal political process of government and political institutions . . . ” (p. 23). In these terms, viewers are participating in the deconstruction and reconstruction of messages to create their own political understandings. Indeed, as illustrated in the concept of polysemy, media scholars have long argued that popular entertainment’s political influence resides in the multiplicity of political meanings that coexist within a single text. Hence, the role of viewer message construction is paramount. While the individual act of “decoding” mass media texts has its roots in this critical cultural tradition, empirical studies of the “conditional effects” of media messages continue to illustrate the importance of “message deconstruction” in shaping the outcomes experienced by different viewers. In other words, both research traditions have recognized the potential for different audience members to respond differently to the same media text.

The implications of viewers’ active construction of political meaning is well-illustrated by the popular satirical comedy program, *The Colbert Report*. A recent study by Baumgartner and Morris (2008) found that the effects of this program may not be as intended by the show’s creators. *The Colbert Report* is a satirical representation of a conservative political talk show (e.g., *The O’Reilly Factor*). The show’s host, Stephen Colbert, takes on the role of ultra-conservative talk show host throughout the program and never breaks from this ironic style of presentation. Baumgartner and Morris find that this style of presentation may lead viewers to retain more positive attitudes toward political conservatives, hence suggesting that the audience does not recognize the true intent of the satirical messages within the show. Another study by LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam (2009) found that liberals and conservatives perceived the content of the *Colbert Report* as equally funny, but for very different reasons. Liberals found the show funny because of the way in which conservative commentators were being mocked, while conservatives found the show funny for the way in which Colbert was making fun of liberals. The former group embraced the show for its intended purpose of being a satirization of conservative talk shows, while the latter group embraced a more literal translation of the program. In the end, both groups were able to find what they wanted to find in the program, indicating that these types of biased processing effects need to be taken into account in the study of political entertainment effects (see also Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974).

Even the creators of political entertainment seem to understand that, unlike the often strategic political discourse offered in the traditional elite-dominated “political spectacle” (Edelman, 1988), in the world of polysemic political entertainment, viewers construct or discover diverse political meanings within a single text. Jason Reitman, director of such acclaimed politically-themed films as *Juno* and *Thank You for Smoking*, has observed that both the ideological right and ideological left perceive his films as supporting their *own* viewpoint. It is the nuanced and complex nature of entertainment that allows for this multitude of interpretations (Moyer-Gusé, 2007). And, it is in these complexities and multitudes that the importance of political entertainment effects rest – albeit with new and complex methodological challenges.

Effects Mechanisms: Areas of Promise

We have firm empirical evidence that a variety of political entertainment messages can produce a wide range of democratic outcomes (see Chapter 21). However, the study of political entertainment effects has been fragmented and lacking in coherent theoretical approaches. A few of the most promising areas of research have, as recommended in earlier sections, integrated systematic analyses of programming content and audiences (or consumers), and have explicated subtle theoretical mechanisms, including interactive effects based on audience characteristics. This kind of approach is thriving in the study of political humor, for instance, as researchers have sought to categorize and quantify the content of political humor, satire, and irony, and develop micro-level information processing mechanisms to account for political effects within and across humor type (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2008).

Another promising area of effects research has approached the study of fiction and narrative. Here, scholars have empirically defined what constitutes “narrative” compared to non-narrative content and have developed the concept of “transportation into a narrative world” to refer to the experience of being absorbed into a given story. Scholars are recognizing that the process of transportation may account for narrative’s ability to affect cognitive processing and attitude change (Green & Brock, 2000). This exploration of the unique influence of fictional content has suggested that fiction may be categorized quite differently in the brain, and hence be subject to less scrutiny than non-fictional messages (Wheeler, Green, & Brock, 1999), a conclusion that has profound implications for the study of fictional or narrative style political entertainment from *The West Wing* to medical and crime dramas, to fictional films about politics or war.

Finally, we turn to the promising work by scholars integrating the seemingly incongruous worlds of emotion and information processing. For decades, the separation of news and entertainment was steeped in the notion that the former was rational and the latter emotional (see Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001). Just as the boundaries between these two genres have eroded, so too have the boundaries

between the study of emotion and reason in political communication (Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, & MacKuen, 2007). Indeed, the broader discipline of media effects has produced extensive evidence confirming the usefulness of integrating the study of emotion into information-processing mechanisms of mass communication effects (e.g., Nabi, 1999). According to this research, emotions like fear, guilt, and more recently, anger (Moons & Mackie, 2007) have the ability to inform how viewers categorize and cognitively process media messages. Given the abundance of evidence in this burgeoning field and the intimate relationship between entertainment and emotion (Tannenbaum, 1980), we urge scholars to seek to integrate this emerging theoretical perspective into the systematic study of the content, audiences, and mechanisms responsible for democratic outcomes – across and within political entertainment genres.

Hybridity

Political communication scholars in more humanistic traditions often emphasize the notion that the influence of political information in myriad forms is diverse, omnipresent, complex, and subtle. In spite of this, political media effects scholars to date continue to examine the most overt political outcomes (e.g., voting, favorability of political candidates, political knowledge) and the most overt political forms of entertainment (e.g., *The Daily Show*, *The West Wing*, *The Colbert Report*), but without attention to the subtleties or complexities underlying the phenomenon as a whole. This is not surprising, nor is it particularly worthy of scorn, *per se*. More often when a new area of study gains traction, as the empirical study of political entertainment has over the last decade, scholars first offer a series of novel or interesting effects and various strands of disparate research agendas. Over time, the body of work created through these disparate approaches comes to reveal trends, themes, and – important to our conversation here – important gaps.

One issue that falls into this latter category – gaps in the research agenda – concerns how political entertainment media relate to more traditional political communication information outlets, like news, in the generation of processes of effects (Holbert et al., 2007). Far too many scholars (including the authors of this chapter on occasion) have adopted a competitive framework in looking at the role of entertainment *versus* news relative to a host of democratic outcomes (e.g., Prior, 2005): Which increases political knowledge more? Which is more “substantive?” Which encourages more political engagement? This competitive framework has been counterproductive, as it seems to fundamentally misunderstand – and empirically misrepresent – our ever-evolving political media landscape. Instead, we must understand *how all forms of political content function in coordination with one another* in the production of a range of media effects. As Chaffee (1986) argued long ago, communication breeds more communication. It is here in these complementary dynamics that we

will find an accurate representation of how our citizens interact with their political worlds (see Holbert & Benoit, 2009). Such an approach will illuminate the evolutionary dynamics of the variety of political messages in the new media landscape, hence facilitating a broader, more systematic understanding of the role of media in politics.

Indeed, the audience does not interact with entertainment and news as distinct or competing genres. The people who consume political entertainment *are* the people consuming “traditional” political entertainment (Hmielowski et al., 2011b; Young & Tisinger, 2006). The unique addition of Baum’s “gateway hypothesis” (2003) to the body of political entertainment scholarship has shown the advantages of effects models that emphasize the complementary worlds of political entertainment and news. Several studies have confirmed the utility of such a hybrid approach, revealing that political entertainment content can serve as a “gateway,” leading to greater consumption of news content (Baum, 2003; Xenos & Becker, 2009; Chapter 21, this volume). In short, the limited evidence amassed to date points to entertainment and news functioning together in relation to the citizenry.

In spite of these early forays into the hybrid world of political media effects, as a discipline, we have yet to address what this complementary dynamic means for the study of media’s political influence. To develop such a framework, effects scholars must first contextualize their orientation to the study of political entertainment effects in the historical, economic, and technological roots of this hybrid phenomenon. Just as a keen understanding of the content and audience of political entertainment has informed the development of important effects mechanisms to date, so too must these larger issues of history, economics, and technology begin to inform the development of effects models across the hybrid media landscape.

Causes and Characteristics of Hybrid Political Media Environment

Much of the conceptual work underlying this discussion comes to us from scholars of culture, who, through observation, case study, and historical analysis, have begun to articulate the characteristics and causes of the emergent hybrid political entertainment landscape. Work by numerous prominent scholars in this area (Baym, 2009; Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001; Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009; Jones, 2010), has successfully framed the discussion of political entertainment in terms of the economic, cultural, and technological transformations that lead to the hybrid political entertainment environment we know today. We summarize this discussion to provide effects scholars with the necessary introduction to begin to think more broadly about the very patterns of effects they seek to understand.

The hybrid media environment we find ourselves immersed in today is a sharp contrast from that to which citizens turned even two short decades ago. The obvious

difference is the profusion of media options made available in the digital media environment, and the decline in the popularity – and hence power – of the once dominant big three networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC). Yet, as explicated by Delli Carpini and Williams (2001) and Baym (2009), this shift goes far beyond the simple increase in media options experienced by the average citizen. Throughout the bulk of the twentieth century, the dominant perspective of the political world was founded on a strict separation between elites and the masses, and, correspondingly between news and entertainment. This tradition, borne out of social scientific approaches to the study of individual and crowd behavior (LeBon, 1896; Lippmann, 1922) emphasized the need for people to be organized and governed by elites, or “experts,” as Lippmann argued, lest they become victims of whimsy or other dangerous forces, fears that many saw confirmed by the rise of the Nazi party in Germany during the 1930s.

The notion that the masses needed to be protected and instructed also shaped the nature of journalism throughout the century. Journalism became a profession, governed by “institutional structures and processes” (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001, p. 165) concerning the strict division between opinion and “fact” and between news and entertainment, as well as protective mechanisms designed to limit the influence of money on the production and content of news itself (Schudson, 1998). Throughout television’s first decades in the home, scarcity of resources and broadcast spectra, as well as the prohibitive cost to produce and air television content led to the concentration of broadcast power in the hands of just a few large networks. What accompanied this focused concentration of power was a stable hierarchy separating the news producers, on the one hand, from news consumers, on the other. It also facilitated a standardization in news formats and governing principles, including the implicit understanding across the networks that “network newswriters [. . . were] in the business of public information, a distinct enterprise from the networks’ wider profit-seeking strategies” (Baym, 2009, p. 11). Scholars argue that such policies “protected” journalism from the pressures of audience “wants,” leaving news decisions framed instead in terms of audience “needs” (Baym, 2009); hence reifying the news/entertainment distinction on yet another level.

Through a complex and rapid set of concurrent transformations starting in the late 1980s, however, these seemingly fixed guidelines and definitions quickly began to break down. Chief among them were the policies of the media deregulation of the 1980s, which extended into the late 1990s, as well as the simultaneous advances in digital communication technologies including cable and the Internet. Deregulation that began in the 1980s had far-reaching implications for the nature of media industries as a whole (Bagdikian, 1992), leading to increased consolidation of ownership among media conglomerates. With the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the expansion of media monopolies snowballed, the protected class of public affairs programming was rendered obsolete, and news programming that had otherwise been protected from economic pressures found itself squeezed for ratings and revenue (McChesney, 1999). As argued by Delli, Carpini, and Williams (2001), this process of

increased centralization of ownership “into a handful of international communications conglomerates with interests in film, music, cable, and broadcast television increases the pressure for profit and further blurs the line between news and entertainment” (p. 166).

This blurring of lines between news and entertainment and between what people need and what people want was simultaneously nourished by technological advances in cable and digital technologies. With a proliferation of channels and modes of access not bounded by time or space, media conglomerates began to acquire holdings across genres and platforms. Meanwhile, because digital media are decentralized by design, it soon became clear that their power and influence would be difficult to harness, hence mitigating the impact of the once-powerful mass media gatekeepers (see Baym, 2009). The migration of control over political information away from political elites increasingly challenged their already waning political authority (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001) and began to allow for other voices and genres to emerge as popular and legitimate sources of political information and understanding (Jones, 2010).

We argue that it is imperative that political entertainment effects scholars understand this historical perspective and allow it to inform their work. The existence of the political entertainment genre that we study today is inherently tied to the “post-network era” because the very transformations (in policy and technologies) that eroded the networks’ centralized authority, gave rise to the hybrid political entertainment landscape in the first place. As a result, an important synergy exists between declining network or journalistic authority on the one hand, and the rising authority of alternative voices and genres on the other. These concurrent shifts have invited – even encouraged – citizens to construct political meaning through multiple (if not infinite) channels, a phenomenon that was richly documented in the work of Delli Carpini and Williams dating back to 1994. Fortunately, there is increasing acknowledgment among scholars, journalists, and elites, that people *are* actively constructing meaning from these varied sources. At the same time, at least among cultural scholars, there is a salient recognition that none of these programs or genres exist in isolation from the others (see Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2010).

And so, we return to our aforementioned call for effects scholars to take into account the complementary relationship between mass-mediated political texts. We do so, however, not simply because individuals are consuming various forms of political information (Hmielowski et al., 2011b; Young & Tisinger, 2006), but because political content across the spectrum of mediated political information is by and large *symbiotic*. News programs adopt entertainment norms to meet growing demands for profit (Hickey, 1998) and increasingly report on political entertainment programming and its effects as news (Feldman, 2007). Meanwhile, overtly political entertainment programs (like *The Daily Show* or *Real Time with Bill Maher*) make explicit use of political “news” both in the coverage of political events and in the deconstruction of norms governing politics and news (Baym, 2003; Jones, 2010; Young, 2007). In addition, entertainment programming at large incorporates political topics, events,

narratives, and themes (Van Zoonen, 2005). Jones (2010) and Van Zoonen (2005) are among the growing number of scholars who highlight how such entertainment engages subtle political themes in a manner consistent with how ordinary citizens think about politics. By tapping into political themes through anecdote, emotion, humor, and narrative, such programming may “enable a closure of the estrangement between politics and citizens” (Van Zoonen, 2005, p. 7).

Increasingly, scholars are suggesting that the integration of politics into entertainment programming is far from accidental. Such hybridity in content may be a response to the traditionally symbiotic relationship between the press and politicians (Young, 2007) or to the traditionally elite-dominated political culture of the past (Van Zoonen, 2005). Indeed, Edelman’s (1988) *Constructing the Political Spectacle* suggests art – and perhaps by extension, entertainment – can serve as a *counterdiscourse*, or remedy, to the political theater that dominates mainstream political culture. Outside of the political world dominated by elites, entertainment might allow more people into the world of political meaning and understanding. By reframing politics into an accessible language of anecdote and emotion, political entertainment might help further shift ownership of “political meanings” away from elites to citizens (see Jones, 2010; Van Zoonen, 2005).

Conclusion: A Bright Future for Effects Research

From an empirical standpoint, the question is “Why do these observations matter?” and “What do we do with them?” Unfortunately, for quantitative media-effects scholars working in the domain of political entertainment, these observations complicate traditional effects models that dominate our work to date. However, rather than embracing a new paradigm of “minimal effects” (e.g., Bennett & Iyengar, 2008, 2010), we believe these observations open a door to a multitude of rich and fruitful areas of effects mechanisms to pursue.

Consider, for example, the empirical implications of the following observations of critical-cultural scholars: Jones et al. (2010) state, “Texts do not take on meaning for any reader in a vacuum. Rather, a reader will always make sense of texts relative to other texts, ‘socially’ or ‘intertextually.’” (p. 18). The concept of “intertextuality” speaks of the need to understand how engagement of politically-oriented entertainment content functions *alongside* the various types of more news-oriented messages audience members are consuming. *The Daily Show* does not function in a vacuum relative to news. In fact, *The Daily Show* only exists because of the news (Baym, 2005). In addition, we know that those who are engaging with *The Daily Show* are knowledgeable about politics and consume various forms of traditional news material. In terms of how readers make sense of texts “socially,” it is clear that a wide range of social events (e.g., war, economic distress, electioneering) serve to shape how we react to entertainment content with political themes. In fact, even what we deem to

be “political” changes as a function of social, cultural, and temporal context. How we come to define any one message as “political” or “nonpolitical” is determined in large part by macro-level factors and the individual’s perceptions of and experience with those factors – both of which are inherently shaped by social influences. And so, we see that understanding these *social* and *intertextual* processes of media effects is essential to capturing the complex reality of effects in the hybrid media environment. This is rich ground from which to generate multiple lines of media effects research, much of which will require scholars to work across several levels of analysis.

Also speaking of the *social* and *intertextual* nature of the new media experience, Jenkins (2006) stresses that, “Convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content . . . Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others.” (p. 3–4). The notion that people make connections between “dispersed media content” is essential. In this new media environment, a young voter in the 2008 election who is in search of political meaning and understanding will almost certainly craft links between dispersed media content as varied as: Obama’s now historic March 18, 2008 speech on race given in Philadelphia, *The Simpsons* episode in which one of Homer’s best friends, a character of African-American descent, becomes his boss, user-generated content on YouTube that expresses individual reactions to the Obama speech, or a documentary film by Neo-Nazis promoting White supremacy. It is the meaning constructed at the crossroads of these pieces of content (and influenced by the preexisting mental models brought to the various media experiences) that will influence how this person will come to think about multiple-attitude objects, ranging from race relations in the United States, to the president, to the prospect of having an African American chief executive. Ultimately each of these perceptions informs this person’s political behaviors as well as other attitudes that extend far beyond the immediate issues at hand.

Jenkins’ (2006) and Jones’ (2010) emphasis on the social nature of new media experiences will become even more relevant as our digital media environment continues to evolve (and with it the nature of our political messages). In the era of blogs, Facebook, and email, citizens no longer consume a newspaper article, magazine exposé, talk radio show, or hour-long television drama in relative isolation. Our consumption of media (no matter what form) is – and will increasingly become – a social act. As Plato stated long ago, we are political beings because we are social beings. Our media have become more social, and, by default, have also become more political. The complexity of connections we, as political and social beings, make will increasingly determine the makeup and feel of our own political identities.

Such observations explicitly denounce the notion that the influence of political entertainment can be found in individual messages alone. If “texts do not take on meaning in a vacuum,” then we seem to face the daunting task of assessing the impact of the landscape as a whole. Yet, when explicated in concrete operational terms, this seemingly impossible task of assessing media impact in light of *intertext-*

tuality, becomes a thoughtful and manageable exercise – one that will likely lead scholars to some novel and profound avenues of research. The methodological challenge for media effects scholars is clear: Running experiments or conducting surveys at this social and intertextual *crossroads* is a messy business. Nevertheless, we must continue to challenge ourselves to conduct our research where it will generate the greatest utility and insights. To date, the study of entertainment media and politics has excelled at picking the lowest hanging fruit, but it's time to get out the ladder and begin to seek out that fruit which is most ripe.

We would like to stress that the insights offered by our critical-cultural peers need not be seen as orthogonal to basic social scientific theory. Take for example the advice offered by Jones (2010): Scholars ought to, “. . . be aware of the multivocality of media texts, as well as attempt to understand the complex readings and relations that audiences make and have with television, including their abilities to negotiate, appropriate, employ, and appreciate many different types of programming forms that include politics” (p. 15). Consider this observation in light of the tenets of one of our most basic theories of persuasion, the elaboration likelihood model (ELM). Petty and Cacioppo's theory (1986) emphasizes the importance of the cognitive activity of the message recipient, stressing how a message's persuasive power functions in large part due to the motivation and ability levels of the message recipient (or deconstructor). Jones' observation urges scholars to consider the myriad of motivations and abilities audiences bring to the political entertainment media experience. Here, he is suggesting that these individual motivations and abilities shape how message consumers deconstruct and reconstruct the meaning within political content. In the language of media effects scholars, Jones is referring to the process of *elaboration*. Elaboration as defined by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) is the activity of generating cognitive responses in response to a given message. However, elaboration involves extending one's cognitive activity beyond what is offered in the message alone, instead seeking to connect this new information with preexisting sociological, psychological, and contextual mental frameworks. The meaning that ultimately results from this process often extends far beyond the original message as encoded by its producer and sender. Our point here is to highlight how the integration of more critical-cultural work into our empirical effects-based traditions does not mean abandoning existing theory. In fact, we will most likely find our existing theories to be rendered richer and more meaningful as we explore these links across our epistemological traditions (Hmielowski et al. 2011a).

What we propose is an integrated approach to political entertainment effects that incorporates the tenets of extant research on media-to-media relationships (Holbert & Benoit, 2009), better utilizes existing insights from critical-cultural scholarship, exhibits an awareness of historical, economic, and technological context, and employs an integration of existing cognitive and social psychological theory. In so doing, we seek to capture and reflect the context surrounding the media experience, as well as individuals' perceptions of the complex media environment. In essence, this broad model would:

- 1 Understand and acknowledge the rich historical, economic, and technological context underlying today's hybrid political entertainment landscape.
- 2 Consider the *social* and *intertextual* realities of the new media experience.
- 3 Use these frameworks to inform the development of effects mechanisms rooted in cognitive and social psychology.
- 4 Integrate the role of multiple messages (intertextuality) in the effects process (either directly through measurements of exposure or indirectly through measurements of audience perception, or content hybridization).
- 5 Emphasize the audience experience as one of active meaning construction.
- 6 Incorporate detailed studies of audience (characteristics and motivations) and content in this broader contextualized approach.
- 7 Deduce an appropriate cognitive and social-psychological mechanism to explicate the operative processes and their hypothesized effects.

Such an ambitious agenda cannot be undertaken by a small group of scholars with disparate message-focused research projects. What is required is a healthy marketplace of ideas shaped by a critical mass of scholars who are willing to work across epistemological boundaries. Once more, this work should not be undertaken solely within the United States or in Western democracies. Such a research agenda should take on a global perspective as broad issues being raised in this chapter are not bound by place or time (e.g., Tsftati, Tukachinsky, & Peri, 2009). This kind of collaboration is particularly difficult given that such research is being conducted across a multitude of disciplines and using a variety of methods and terminologies. However, we hope that through the publication of this chapter in such a comprehensive text, we can help to develop new and improved lines of communication. Through the integration of ideas across discipline and method, we see a bright future for scholarship in the area of politics and entertainment. The challenges are great, but so too is the potential for profound developments in our understanding of citizens' interactions with their political worlds.

NOTE

- 1 The authorship order is alphabetical – each author contributed equally to the chapter. The authors would like to thank Jayeon Lee (MA, University of Texas at Austin), doctoral student in the School of Communication at The Ohio State University, for her article collection efforts. We would also like to thank Mao Vang and Stefanie Best for their efforts during the final editing stages.

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Digital Democracy

How the Internet Has Changed Politics

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, the Internet has increasingly become part of the everyday life of US citizens. This chapter considers the impact of the growing use of the Internet on media use and political behaviors. Specifically it addresses the theoretical, practical, and empirical consequences of various uses of the Internet for sociability, social capital, online formats of news and politics, political blogs, online public spheres, and political messaging. We further consider the emergence of online spaces as sources for information and social interaction, and the implications of these spaces for democracy. Highlighted in this discussion is the advent of social media (e.g., blogs, Facebook, YouTube), and the corresponding development of new spaces in which citizens may “do” politics.

Using the Internet

Over the past two decades, the Internet has increasingly become part of the everyday life of US citizens. Seventy-one percent now report using the Internet on a daily basis, and their activity online is no longer limited to emailing and checking NCAA scores (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009). Citizens are using the Internet in new ways: to find information and products, to entertain themselves, and to communicate

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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with others in ways that extend beyond email. And with each passing year, the Internet offers more opportunities for information and communication than ever before. As it continues to become part of the everyday existence of most US citizens, it becomes increasingly important that we understand the role of the Internet in communication and politics.

The Internet has fundamentally changed the way we communicate and interact with the world. Twenty years ago, email was not a reasonable substitute for a phone call or letter. Fifteen years ago, you had to mail checks to pay bills. Ten years ago, no one watched videos online, and five years ago, it was “normal” to lose touch with friends over the years. Now we have instant communication, greater bandwidth, and a more networked and integrated Web 2.0. For better or worse, the Internet impacts the way US citizens go about their daily lives.

That impact has spread into the realm of politics as well. Candidates increasingly rely on the Internet to raise money and to connect with voters (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2008; Trippi, 2004) and once in office, use the Internet to provide access to an ever-increasing range of information on governmental policies and activities. But if candidates, politicians, and the public rely increasingly on the Internet for information, this raises the question: How does the Internet change politics?

The Internet, Sociability, and Politics

Platonic theory suggests that politics, stripped to its core, is an interaction between people. To understand the impact of new media on politics, we must first understand whether and how people have changed their interactions as a consequence of the development of new media. Moreover, sociability is linked to the mutual generation of social capital, which has been the focus of a great deal of research on online communication and politics because of its relation with civic and political participation (Wellman, Quan Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001; Chapter 21, this volume).

Sociability and Interaction

The impact of the Internet on sociability was one of the first questions addressed by a new brand of academic: the Internet scholar. There was great concern that time spent on the Internet would displace time spent interacting with friends and family. On the other hand, the Internet offered the potential for *increased* interaction, lowering the cost of communication, and limiting some of the problems caused by distance.

Most well-known of the scholarship indicating a negative relationship between Internet use and sociability is a study by Kraut and colleagues in 1998. Employing longitudinal data, the authors suggested that their data supported a time displacement theory for Internet use: time spent online was taking away from time spent in

person interacting with one's social circle, leading to depression and loneliness.¹ Although these impacts were relatively small, the findings fueled the debate about the potentially negative relationship between Internet use and sociability. However, Kraut's time displacement theory was challenged by Wellman and Hampton (1999), who argued that the Internet was not displacing communication with family and neighbors but was instead replacing time spent alone at home. They concluded the Internet actually facilitates the establishment of ties with multiple social milieus, and fosters cross-cutting ties across social groups.

By 2001, however, scholars began to agree on one core principle – it matters not only *whether* one uses the Internet, but *how*. A series of major works were published in 2001 and 2002, acknowledging that “utopian claims and dystopic warnings based on extrapolations from technical possibilities have given way to more nuanced and circumscribed understandings of how Internet use adapts to existing patterns, permits certain innovations, and reinforces particular kinds of change” (Dimaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001, p. 307). With this in mind, Nie performed a meta-analysis that suggested a spurious relationship existed between sociability and Internet use, and instead indicated that the same factors that promote sociability (namely education and wealth) also correlate with Internet use (Nie, 2001). Conversely, he also found some support for a time displacement theory to explain findings of a negative relationship between Internet use and sociability, which was corroborated by research which followed (Nie & Hillygus, 2002). Other studies contributed to a more refined understanding of the impact of Internet use on sociability, suggesting that the impact differed depending on the strength of the social tie in question (Papadakis, 2003; Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2000). In general, research since this time has found positive impacts of Internet use on well-being and sociability (BCS, 2010).

More recently, research has moved to explore emergent venues, including wireless Internet “hotspots” and social network sites, to answer new questions related to politics and sociability. If people are online not only in traditional places (such as the home or the office), but also in parks and public spaces, are they likely to become more insulated from the outside world? On the one hand, people using wireless Internet in public spaces are less exposed to diverse others because they are less interactive in that physical space. On the other hand, those users are likely to communicate with more diverse acquaintances online than are mobile phone users (Hampton, Livio, & Sessions, 2009). Therefore, preliminary research suggests that the expansion of the Internet to new locations can have mixed benefits.

The growing use of social network sites (SNSs) has also been acknowledged by the scholarship on Internet use, politics, and sociability. Early results indicate SNSs tend to have positive impacts on sociability. Notley (2009) finds that online social networks provide “at risk” youth with valuable opportunities for social inclusion. Others find that for the average youth, online social networks have become essential to daily life: “serv[ing] as a space for: (1) emotional support, (2) relational maintenance, and (3) self-presentation” (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009, p. 1141). A notable

exception is a Chinese study, which found depression in youth correlated with Internet use (Rabin, 2010).

Although Internet use is now generally considered to have positive consequences for sociability and interaction with others, some scholars still worry about the Internet's impact on society as a whole. Cass Sunstein has written extensively about his concern that the customizability of the Internet will lead to an echo chamber, in which people are exposed only to like-minded others and the topics that they choose (2008). The concern is that such customization leads to polarization and limits some of the benefits of cross-cutting messages that exposure to a diversity of viewpoints should promote, like tolerance (Mutz, 2006).

Sociability and Social Capital

Another aspect of sociability is social capital (see Chapter 21, this volume). Drawing upon the work of Putnam (2000), we conceive of social capital as the connectedness of individuals, the ties within and between groups, and the norms of trust and reciprocity in these connections. Understood this way, social capital has political consequences, as it is correlated with civic and political behaviors such as volunteering and voting (Shah, 1998).²

Generally speaking, scholars have found a positive relationship between Internet use and social capital. In a case study by Syrjanen and Kuuti, "IS [information systems] aided the formation of an infrastructure for social interaction, through collective conversation, action, and interaction space, which can be seen to facilitate the creation of new knowledge and thus the formation of social capital" (2004, p. 41). Others agree, suggesting that Internet use provides an additional forum for social capital, rather than transforming or diminishing it overall (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004).

Others argue that the Internet has a more nuanced impact on social capital, and its generation depends on the type of Internet use in question. For example, using the Internet for information-seeking purposes has been linked to positive social capital generation, whereas recreational Internet use has the opposite effect (Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001). Similarly, the amount of Internet use also matters, as heavier users are more likely to participate politically and civically (Wellman, Quan Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). Moreover, the type of community generated online may also have disparate impacts on social capital generation: communities based on geographic associations are likely to increase face-to-face interaction, whereas more disperse communities may decrease social capital (Blanchard, 2004).

New research on Internet use and social capital has also focused on the burgeoning use of social network sites. Ellison and colleagues find that Facebook use not only promotes traditional social capital, but also results in a new kind of social capital, "high school social capital," relating specifically to maintaining ties after geographical relocation (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Other studies considering social net-

working sites also find support for various manifestations of social capital, including life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009).

Summary and Future Research

Research on the relationships between Internet use, sociability, and politics has come a long way. As Wellman puts it, it is now that “the real analysis begins with more focused, theoretically-driven projects” (2004, p. 127). New trends in Internet proliferation, and the further incorporation of Internet use into the daily lives of most people are likely to modify the relationships we now see. Importantly, we should focus on developing theories that can be applied to future changes to the Internet. One thing is clear: “The Internet is helping each person to become a communication and information switchboard, between persons, networks, and institutions” (Wellmann, 2004, p. 127). Understanding the changing dynamics between the Internet, institutions, and individuals will be paramount for future research investigating Internet use, social outcomes, and political behavior.

News and Politics Online

As the Internet has developed and expanded, the focus of research has gone beyond the question of general Internet use and its effects to consider how people are using the Internet as a source of political information, and to what effect. A basic tenet of democratic theory is that voters’ choices must be based on informed thinking about political issues, so it is only natural that as online media have gained attention at the expense of offline outlets, political communication scholars have increasingly scrutinized the performance of the Internet as a source of political information.

Early research on online news was characterized by two extreme viewpoints: utopians anticipating the emergence of direct democracy as a result of the world of information and communication that would be at everyone’s fingertips (see, e.g., Coombs, 1998), and their dystopic counterparts predicting a cacophony of misinformation, narrowcasting taken to undemocratic extremes, and the general displacement of publicly significant news and information in favor of an expanding set of entertainment distractions (see, e.g., Sunstein, 2008). Bruce Bimber’s (1998) “accelerated pluralism” is a significant exception to early research regarding online news.

Noting that the overall media system was already undergoing a process of fragmentation, Bimber’s contention was that the introduction of online news would have the effect of speeding up this process. Bimber acknowledged the tenuousness of prognosticating about the future of a medium in its infancy, but expressed some doubt that the Internet would undermine the influence of established elites, and did

not see the Internet as something that would “restructure the nature of community.” Grounding his account in models of political participation and psychology, Bimber granted some chance that the Internet would foster media that were more independent from elites and interest groups and more representative of the public, and he argued that it would greatly expand the accessibility of public information. However, what Bimber most confidently anticipated was a diminishment of established media’s capacity to set the political agenda. The new media system would be less effective for established institutions and more tailored to the aims of issue-based group politics.

Bimber’s early doubts about the Internet enabling a populist infusion to politics are still debated. For example, recent presidential campaigns have revolutionized fundraising by making use of the Internet. In 2000, McCain enjoyed some surprise online fundraising success after performing well in early primaries. Four years later, Howard Dean rode an unexpected wave of online campaigning and fundraising to emerge as the early frontrunner in the Democratic nomination campaign, relying to an unprecedented extent on large numbers of small donors. In 2008 Obama set new records in fundraising for a presidential campaign garnering more than \$650 million. More than half of that money came from increments of \$200 or less, much of which was collected online (Luo, 2008).

Based on campaign fundraising alone, there does seem to be evidence of the Internet providing a boost to populist strains of US politics. At this stage, however, it is trickier to gauge the extent to which the Internet is changing the nature of community organizing and group formations – the other of Bimber’s two doubts. Online political communities can be found in the blogosphere, in social networks, and on the websites of political campaigns, but the goals of political organizing – mobilizing people to attend rallies, and turn out on election day – are still largely offline phenomena, suggesting that effective online organizing must still pair with real-world activities to be successful. The dynamics of political campaigns are in flux, and the Internet is by no means the only factor.

Exploring the psychological impact of online news, several studies have examined the varying effects of online news due to differences in information structure and consumption. In one experimental study comparing knowledge acquisition from paper and online versions of a story, Althaus and Tewksbury (2002) found that, in contrast to the regularity of professional TV and print publications, the lack of coherent, consistent cues online, as well as the decreased organization of information, resulted in less integration of information. They argued that newspaper readers had learned cues that differentiated a long-form story “above the fold” on the front page and a short item relegated to a back section of the paper. Online formats, at least at the time, had not developed such consistent cues. Along those lines, early studies showed decreased learning as a result of the “non-linearity” of news websites (Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002). More recent work, however, suggests that the nonlinearity of websites does not inhibit learning in its entirety, but changes the type of learning that takes place. Although linear sites (which mimic print news) encourage

factual learning, nonlinear sites increase knowledge structure density – allowing a more interconnected understanding of the world (Eveland, Cortese, Park, & Dunwoody, 2004).

The early utopian view of online news championed the low cost and increased access to political news and information. Recent research, however, has shed empirical light on how individuals actually consume online information. The notion of “googlearchy,” put forward by Hindman, Tsioutsouliklis, and Johnson (2003) examined the popularity of websites using complex searching and crawling tools, counting links in a manner similar to search engines themselves (also see Hindman, 2009). They argue that the Internet seems to be dominated by a very small number of websites, in spite of a multitude of sites available. However, it is unclear whether this finding holds in the changing environment online, where search engines are but one means of arriving at a particular website.

Summary and Future Research

Looking forward, many questions need to be explored further about the nature of news and politics online. While early online political information was dominated by major news sources with an offline presence, the nature of political information available online is changing. Today’s Internet users are confronted with a cacophony of online information, including traditional news, blogs, user-generated sites such as Wikipedia, and more. Research must now focus on how these burgeoning news sources – often without an offline presence – compare to their more traditional antecedents.

A second trend to consider is the growing concern that traditional media cannot make money providing content online at no cost. If the professional media follow through with increasingly sincere threats to make users pay for online information, it could mean that a brief era of egalitarian access to information will end as information becomes accessible only to those users who are willing to pay for it. It is also worth remembering that the influences of the Internet on politics are still just a subplot in the large domain of how politics is playing out in these times, regardless of the tools and methods being used.

Blogs

Although traditional news sources remain among the most visited websites, people are increasingly seeing the Internet as a place for more than news (Pew, 2008a). Many now visit a variety of online information sources, including political blogs. According to Farrell and Drezner (2008), a blog can be defined as “a web page with minimal to no external editing, providing on-line commentary, periodically updated

and presented in reverse chronological order, with hyperlinks to other online sources” (p. 2). The growth of political blogs in the last decade has been astounding: from a relatively unknown medium in 2004, when Howard Dean’s blog “changed politics” (Trippi, 2004) to their heavy use in 2008, when over a quarter of US voters used blogs for political information, an increase that is likely to continue, as younger voters are most likely to turn to blogs for information (Pew, 2008b).

The rise in political blogs has not gone unrecognized by scholars. Research has emphasized two domains: the content available on blogs, including the motivations of bloggers, the potential for selective exposure, and perceptions of media credibility, and the consequences of blog readership for processing and learning, interpersonal trust, and participatory democracy.

Content on Blogs

One of the primary roles of political blogs is to provide readers with information from other sources, inserting commentary on traditional news and serving a watchdog function over the government (McKenna & Pole, 2008). This content closely matches bloggers’ reported extrinsic motivations – informing people about relevant information, serving as a political watchdog, and critiquing mainstream media (Ekdale, Namkoong, Fung, & Perlmutter, 2010). Although internal motivations (such as formulating new ideas) are also important, it is extrinsic motives which lead bloggers to post information about political candidates and to participate offline, establishing a clear link between bloggers’ reported goals, blog content, and political blogger relations with the larger political sphere (Ekdale et al., 2010).

The ability of readers to self-select into content is an important consequence of the new media environment (Mutz, 2007). People often take advantage of this ability, using primarily ideologically congruent news sources and political blogs (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Veenstra, Sayre, & Thorson, 2008), especially among those who perceive the media to be hostile to their views (Hwang, Schmierbach, Paek, Gil de Zuniga, & Shah, 2006; Hwang, Thorson, Borah, Cleland, & Perlmutter, 2007). The ability to select agreeable content may partially arise from the structure of blogs: blogrolling – or creating links to other blogs – allows blogs to link to like-minded spheres, and is especially prominent among conservative blogs (Adamic & Glance, 2005). However, substantial skew remains in these blogroll links, with a few highly ranked blogs receiving many links in, leaving a long tail of blogs with few links (Farrell & Drezner, 2008).

It is not only important to consider how bloggers *believe* they relate to a larger political sphere, but also to examine how blogs *actually* influence the environment. If blogs have the ability to alter the agenda of the mainstream media it may be less important that blogs are highly skewed and people are selecting into agreeable content. However, research on the agenda-setting power of blogs suggests the relationship is complex: while blog coverage – and posts on these blogs – can sometimes

lead to more coverage in the news media, this relationship does not emerge for all issues and may even be negative when journalists move away from topics they think blogs have covered too extensively (Wallensten, 2007, see Chapter 1, this volume).

Implications of Blog Readership

The ability to expose oneself to primarily like-minded information may drive the perception among blog readers that blogs are one of the most credible sources of information (Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2004). Because people tend to rate agreeable information as more credible (Kunda, 1987), they are likely to see the blogs they read – which tend to agree with their views – as highly credible.

But the question of media credibility does not stop there. Given that bloggers' goals include critiquing the mainstream media, and that blog content reflects this goal (Ekdale et al., 2010; McKenna & Pole, 2008), it is also important to examine how credibility is understood when multiple sources of competing credibility are contained on the same page. Research suggests that the blog context in which a news article is found can affect ratings of story credibility, even when the content of the news story is consistent (Greer, 2003; Thorson, Vraga, & Ekdale, 2010). Evaluations of news story credibility and source credibility – such as the website on which the story is found – are highly correlated (Greer, 2003), so that a news article found on a “credible” website like that of the *New York Times* should be rated more highly than the same story found on a less reputable website. However, beyond the source cue, the tone and position of the site also have an influence: repurposing of news content on an uncivil or politically incongruent blog highlights the credibility of the news story (Thorson et al., 2010). Of course, the target of the attack should matter: critiques of the news story itself, rather than political actors or policy proposals, may instead emphasize its flaws and lessen news credibility.

It is not only perceptions of the news story that change when it is moved into a new context. Changes in the formatting and structure of information online can also impact memory. Eveland and Dunwoody (2001, 2002) developed the theory of structural isomorphism, which suggests that the structure of the Internet, including use of hyperlinks, has the ability to mimic memory structures, altering the nature by which information is gained. However, these differences may not affect everyone equally: blog readers appear to have more closely linked mental networks on political issues, making them more susceptible to an ethical frame of a news story (Veenstra, Sayre, & Thorson, 2008). If the online information structure mirrors memory structures, more research is needed investigating how this interacts with people's predispositions to affect learning and opinion formation.

Examining one type of structural format unique to political blogs, the close juxtaposition of blog commentary and neutral news information may impact citizen learning. When a neutral and a persuasive source are closely intertwined – a format available on many political blogs – the possibility for source confusion in learning

new information arises. When individuals are not motivated to carefully process the information – such as when they are lower in need for cognition or exposed to congruent blog commentary – they are more likely to confuse the source of their information (Vraga, Edgerly, Wang, & Shah, 2011). The effects on fact recall and source identification from changes in structure and tone are not limited to college students: even readers of political blogs are less able to identify the source of their information when faced with a more interspersed structure (Vraga, Edgerly, Wang, & Veenstra, 2009).

The question of whether political participation correlates with blog exposure is also important. Research suggests that political blog readers are highly participatory, and that this participation occurs in both new online expressive styles of participation, as well as more traditional offline formats (Gil de Zuniga, Veenstra, Vraga, & Shah, 2010). Exposure to like-minded blog commentary is an especially strong predictor of participation, mirroring offline research that suggests exposure to homogeneous opinions promotes greater political engagement (Hwang et al., 2007, Mutz, 2006).

Not all of the information encountered on blogs is likely to occur within this homogeneous echo chamber. Some researchers suggest that fears about the echo chamber online are overstated: although people do show some tendency to self-select congruent stories, the tendency to avoid incongruent stories is weaker than expected, and once confronted with incongruent information individuals spend substantial amounts of time reading it (Garrett, 2009). Furthermore, even attempting to view only congruent information does not mean that individuals avoid the opposition: in fact, blog posts may be more likely to mention the opposing party than their own (Koop & Jansen, 2009).

When exposed to attacking commentary, especially that couched in an uncivil tone, both positive and negative emotional reactions are aroused. When a blogger takes an uncivil tone in attacking the opposition, people feel proud of the blogger, whereas when their own party is being attacked, they feel angry (Fung, Vraga, & Thorson, 2011). This emotional arousal is differentially linked to action tendencies – anger spurs desires to “get back at” the blogger and mock her efforts, whereas pride deters people from these actions (Fung et al., 2011). Furthermore, negative emotional arousal is also linked to changes in social identity, less open-mindedness, fewer discussions with the other side, and greater desire to participate politically (Thorson, Fung, & Vraga, 2008; Vraga, Thorson, Fung, & Meyer, 2009). Ultimately, the arousal that can result from exposure to attacks on political blogs can result in both beneficial and harmful outcomes.

Summary and Future Research

Thus, scholarly research has begun to investigate the effects of this new form of media content available online. Research has demonstrated that blogger motivations

have a substantial impact on the content they produce online – and differences in this content affect media perceptions, learning of new information, and desire to participate politically. Although citizen-authored communications have always been a part of political life, the growing readership and potential agenda-setting power of political blogs may be an important source of bottom-up communication led by the public. Future research needs to more closely examine not only who is publishing political blogs, but also who is commenting, to better understand this potential for the public to influence politics.

Of course, blogs are not the only, or even the most popular, location for citizen activity online. More and more people report increasing use of social networking sites, not only to connect with friends, but also to search for information and express their political preferences (Bode, Borah, Vraga, & Shah, 2009; Pew, 2008b). Therefore it is also important to study other sites of social interaction online to truly understand the potential of the Internet.

Online Public Sphere and Political Messaging

A growing line of research explores the transformation of the public sphere from one intrinsically linked to physical space to one existing in a virtual arena (Janssen & Keis, 2005). Dahlgren (2005) identifies three dimensions that impact the viability of an online public sphere. In the structural sphere, the Internet has institutional features – ownership, control, regulation, financing, legal protection – that direct attention to or from particular communication spaces. The representational dimension concerns the output of the media: fairness, accuracy, completeness, plurality of views, framing, and agenda setting. At the interaction level the Internet affords individuals opportunities to engage with media messages and with other individuals. According to Dahlgren (2005), the “cyber transformation of the public sphere” (p. 151) has been marked by growing commercialization of the Internet (structure) that serves to constrain use of media for civic purposes (representation), and overshadows deliberative exchanges with so many non-political ones (interaction). Still, the Internet does offer possibilities for quality information exchange and improved civic engagement via online civic messaging (emailing a politician, organizing a social activity, etc.).

Formal Settings That Guide Online Deliberation

Many studies have explored the Internet’s ability to link citizens for deliberative discussion. Jensen (2003) studied www.nordpol.dk, a Danish site designed to reduce barriers of communication between citizens and politicians. He found deliberation to more accurately characterize horizontal exchanges (citizen–citizen, or politician–politician), whereas vertical communication was characterized by information sought

(citizen–politician) and provided (politician–citizen). Although politicians and citizens characterized the experience as a democratic success, it existed amid low overall participation among Danish citizens. Similarly, Cappella, Price, and Nir (2002) found that participating in a year-long online discussion during the 2000 presidential election elevated participants' argument repertoire; online interaction and group deliberation helped people state arguments for and against their own position.

Iyengar, Luskin, and Fishkin (2004) applied their deliberative poll (DP) framework online to test its ability to produce more informed individuals. Using voice recognition software, the weekly discussions were voice- rather than text-based and used a moderator to manage the speaking queue. As with face-to-face DP, participants were encouraged to submit questions to a group of experts, and answers were posted before the next meeting. The authors found that compared to a control group, online DP participants knew more about candidates and policy and showed more policy-based voting. This result may be especially telling considering the desired results were observed with a modest intervention of five one-hour online meetings.

Expression through Informal Social Channels

Interactive messaging tools (email, instant messaging, online chat rooms) provide individuals with opportunities to share political information and perspectives. Online communication can also help individuals organize to direct their actions toward common concerns. For example, 40% of email users in 2008 received an email encouraging political involvement, and 1 in 10 used email to encourage others to get involved in politics (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009).

Results are mixed on whether online discussion facilitates high quality interactions (Koop & Jansen, 2009). Some research has found that discussants in political Usenet newsgroups expressed viewpoints in a civil and polite manner (Papacharissi, 2004), chat rooms exemplified norms of viewpoint diversity and idea exchange (Stromer-Galley, 2003), and most postings on bulletin boards were related to or responding to earlier messages (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997). However, other research suggests a tendency for Internet users to reject opinion diversity and provide content that is of little substance: online bulletin boards serve as ideologically congruent communities of interest, (Uslaner, 2004); online forums offer debates of the "Did so" "Did not" variety (White, 1997); and campaign blogs offer primarily negative posts, few reasons, and discouragement of opponents offering substantive comments (Meraz, 2006).

Social media sites are also becoming a forum for political expression and influence. According to data from the United States, 19% of Internet users post material on political or social issues or use social networks for civic or political activities (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2009). Social media sites like YouTube and Facebook allow users to express views to a larger audience and reach out to other users and groups. Recent work by Bode, Borah, Vraga, and Shah (2009) suggests political use of Facebook predicts political participation and political engagement,

and at increasing rates, during an election cycle. Similarly, in the 2008 elections YouTube played an influential role in terms of volume and tone of videos (Cortese & Proffitt, 2009) and in mobilization of young voters (Dalton, 2009). A comprehensive study of YouTube and California's Proposition 8 found that YouTube functioned as a space for same-sex marriage supporters to express themselves after the election (Thorson, Ekdale, Borah, Namkoong, & Shah, 2010). Videos were characterized by diverse reason-giving in commentary (Edgerly et al., 2009), and YouTube videos influenced traditional mass media coverage of Proposition 8 (Sayre, Bode, Wilcox, Shah, & Shah, 2010).

Other studies of YouTube present a more skeptical outlook on the site's ability to introduce new content and engage in political discussion, with Turkheimer (2007) and Milliken, Gibson, O'Donnell, and Singer (2008) finding negative political clips generate more attention, suggesting people may be drawn to sensational political videos on YouTube. In an experimental study, Towner, Dulio, and Pazdro (2009) found exposure to user-generated content on YouChoose '08, YouTube's official 2008 election page, increased cynicism among viewers. One study found YouTube videos averaged 1.6 comments per video (Carlson & Strandberg, 2007), and another that these comments were often negative in tone (Milliken et al., 2008).

Summary and Future Research

A key issue for political and civic expression online is its ability to carry over to the offline environment. Recent research has sought to clarify the relationship between online expression and offline civic behavior. Shah, Cho, Eveland, and Kwak (2005) found online and offline media both spur interpersonal political discussion and online civic messaging which predicts subsequent civic participation. The results of Shah et al. (2005) suggest the Internet's low barriers to entry for political and civic expression do not diminish its predictive power for offline civic activities.

Conclusion

The Internet is not likely to disappear, nor is its growing influence in the political realm. Whether it is the use of Twitter to coordinate Iranian protests, the record-breaking campaign to raise money for Haiti relief via text message, or the growing amount of government data available online, the Internet is facilitating sociability and political behavior in new and important ways. As a scholarly community, we must continue asking questions about how and why this occurs and investigate the potential implications of such changes.

Communication is essential in order for political life – voting, campaigning, and volunteering – to take place. The Internet is important for politics because it lowers

the costs of communication and reduces the barriers of time and space, facilitating new kinds of communications. As Klotz puts it, "Interactivity makes the Internet a formidable medium for politics. Disseminating information, mobilizing, and citizen interaction lie at the heart of politics. The Internet is, therefore, well suited for political use" (2004, p. 5). The Internet can encourage voting (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003), allow for online political activities (Best & Krueger, 2005), and encourage political participation (Polat, 2005). It offers a place to communicate with individuals and with the general public (Ekdale et al., 2010; Stromer-Galley, 2003). Each of these behaviors contributes to democracy; the role the Internet plays in politics therefore cannot be denied.

However, much work remains to be done. The Internet is a frustrating beast to study, because it is a different creature from day to day. There is always a new innovation – social networking sites, video-sharing sites, microblogging sites – that alters what people are able to do online, thus changing the political culture online as well. Scholars must continue to press forward on questions examining online politics, even when they are difficult to study and rapidly changing. Furthermore, scholars must put more effort into developing models for the effects of Internet use that bridge disciplines, making these theories better equipped to deal with the shifts the Internet will bring to politics as the medium continues its one constant: change.

NOTES

- 1 Kraut came to different conclusions in a later paper, in which he determined that initial negative effects dissipated after the first years of Internet use. See Further Reading.
- 2 Though it is important to note that social capital does not always result in positive outcomes.

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Advances in Public Communication Campaigns

Charles K. Atkin and Ronald E. Rice

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an overview of the recent literature on the persuasive effects of public communication campaigns. The scope of the review is substantial, ranging from traditional media to new technologies and from US settings to developing countries. The campaign topics primarily deal with health promotion, along with prosocial behavior and environmental reforms. The chapter examines key theoretical concepts, processes, and strategic guidelines, including campaign design, evaluation (formative, process and summative), types of effects (direct and indirect), messages (prevention vs. promotion vs. informational vs. persuasive, and appeals), message sources, mediated communication, and quantitative dissemination factors. The chapter then illustrates these guidelines with three campaign foci: drug use, smoking, and risky drinking.

Studying Public Communication Campaigns

Public communication campaigns encompass strategies for producing effects on knowledge, attitudes, and behavior across a variety of domains, including political, prosocial, environmental, and health outcomes. Definitions of public communication campaigns typically specify the following components: Purposive attempts to inform,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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persuade, or motivate behavior changes in a relatively well-defined and large audience, generally for noncommercial benefits to the individuals and/or society at large, within a given time period, by means of organized communication activities involving mass and online/interactive media, and often complemented by interpersonal support (Rice & Atkin, 2009). The theories, designs, and impacts of media-based public campaigns have been summarized by Abroms and Maibach (2008), Atkin (2001), Backer, Rogers, and Sopory (1992), Noar (2006), Rice and Atkin (2009), and Snyder and Hamilton (2002). This chapter focuses primarily on the role of media campaigns in health promotion, because political effects are covered elsewhere in this volume (Section V: In the Political Arena) and because the theory and literature on health campaign effects are far more advanced than for environmental and prosocial effects. The communication strategies described in this chapter complement and augment the components of the social marketing framework presented in Chapter 25.

The content coverage emphasizes persuasive aspects of campaigns, which are the more consequential and well-studied aspects compared to awareness-oriented or instructionally oriented campaign strategies. Because the research literature indicates that campaigns typically have only limited direct effects on behaviors, a key priority throughout the chapter is to identify concepts, processes, and strategies for increasing the effectiveness of public communication campaigns.

The strategic guidelines presented in this chapter draw upon models, processes, generalizations, and recommendations in the voluminous quarter-century research literature on campaigns and related forms of persuasive communication. Key book-length theoretical perspectives and reviews include Atkin and Wallack (1990), Edgar, Noar, and Freimuth (2007), Hornik (2002), Maibach and Parrott (1995), O’Keefe (2002), Rice and Atkin (2001), Salmon (1989), Stiff and Mongeau (2003), and Witte, Meyer, and Martell (2001).

The following sections briefly describe the main phases and components of communication campaigns: Campaign design, evaluation (formative, process and summative), types of effects (direct – focal segment, prevention/treatment – and indirect – interpersonal influencers, media and policymakers), messages (promotion/prevention, informational/persuasive, qualitative dimensions, persuasive incentive appeals), message sources, mediated communication (interpersonal, mass, digital/online), and quantitative dissemination factors. The chapter then provides a brief summary of a major campaign from each of three campaign foci: drug use, smoking, and risky drinking.

Campaign Design and Management

Campaign design begins with a conceptual assessment of the situation to determine opportunities and barriers and to identify which outcome behaviors would be performed by which people (Atkin & Salmon, 2010). The design specifies *focal segments* of the population whose practices are to be changed, and the bottom-line *focal*

behaviors that the campaign ultimately seeks to influence. The next step is to trace backwards from the focal behaviors to identify the proximate and distal determinants, and then create *models* of the pathways of influence via attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, social influences, and environmental forces. The next phase is to examine the model from a communication perspective, specifying *target audiences* and *target behaviors* that can be directly influenced by campaign messages. A sophisticated campaign will seek to impact the most promising pathways, guided by a comprehensive plan for combining manifold components, and an appropriate theoretical framework matched to the desired outcome and the relevant audiences and social systems.

Among the notable frameworks are the Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) theory of reasoned action, which combines attitudes and norms along with belief expectancies and values to predict behavioral intentions; campaigns can influence beliefs about the likelihood of experiencing positive and negative outcomes and other components of the theory. Ajzen, Albarracin, and Hornik (2007) present models that incorporate reasoned action approaches into the theory of planned behavior; this provides insight into the pathways of influence from campaign messages to behavioral outcomes. Likewise, viewers exposed to messages depicting rewards for actions exhibited by credible role models are more likely to perform similar behaviors, according to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive learning theory.

The integrative theory of behavior change (Cappella, Fishbein, Hornik, Ahern, & Sayeed, 2001) applies a combination of the health belief model, social cognitive theory, and theory of reasoned action in a campaign setting. The transtheoretical model (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) identifies subgroups based on their current stage in the process of behavior change (precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, or maintenance). Slater (1999) integrates the application of media effects, persuasion, and behavior change theories in a stages-of-change framework. Over time, campaigns target specific audience segments at different stages of progression, which is now more feasible with new technology such as interactive websites.

Diffusion theory (Rogers, 2003) describes how new ideas and practices spread through interpersonal networks and the influential role played by opinion leaders. Opinion leaders tend to have greater exposure to media messages about a domain such as health, and are more likely to exercise informal influence over the attitudes and behaviors of friends and family members. A relevant application from the persuasion field is the dual processing conceptualization articulated in the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the heuristic systematic model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993); campaign strategists may design varied campaign stimuli operating via peripheral as well as central routes to attitude change. Glanz and Bishop (2010) review behavioral science theories used in public health interventions and campaigns.

Formative Research in Campaign Design

Effective design relies on the background information about the focal segments and interpersonal influencers collected in formative evaluation (Atkin & Freimuth, 2001).

Formative research is important in order to bridge the substantial gap between campaigners and their audiences, in terms of level of involvement in the topic, information holding, and attitudinal orientations. The first stage of formative evaluation involves preproduction information gathering to learn more about the situation and audiences. Databases, focus groups, and custom surveys provide useful understandings and insights into audience predispositions (e.g., current behavior patterns, values, attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge), channel usage patterns, and evaluations of prospective messengers and appeals. For community-based campaigns, researchers analyze communication networks, patterns of opinion leadership, and relationships among businesses and government agencies (Bracht, 2001).

In lieu of collecting customized preproduction information, designers can utilize available research programs with standard inventories of demographic and psychographic variables for use in campaign development. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) licenses the annual American Healthstyles survey for audience analysis (CDC, 2009), and the Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS) provides access to research on a representative US sample of adults on variables such as channel usage and risk perceptions (National Cancer Institute, 2009).

The second stage of formative research involves pretesting of rough message presentations to generate qualitative reactions in focus group discussion sessions and to measure quantitative ratings in message testing labs. Pretesting helps to determine whether the audience regards the message content and style positively (informative, believable, motivating, convincing, useful, on-target, enjoyable) or negatively (preachy, disturbing, confusing, irritating, dull). For example, pretesting can detect problematic elements that may trigger psychological reactance on the part of the audience, which can produce the dreaded boomerang effects that reinforce counter-productive behaviors.

Process Evaluation of Campaign Management

Process evaluation assesses both the design and management of the campaign, the extent to which designed elements have actually been implemented, and ways in which the campaign program can be improved for subsequent designers and implementers (Steckler & Linnan, 2006). Process evaluation is useful for maintaining ongoing awareness of, and identifying lessons for overcoming, social and structural obstacles, in community, workplace, school, state, and national campaigns. Such evaluation is often required by funding agencies, and provides valuable insights for subsequent campaign designers.

Summative Evaluation of Campaign Effects

After a campaign has been implemented, summative evaluation research is performed to assess outcomes. Valente (2002) summarizes the basic methodologies,

including field experimental, cross-sectional, cohort, panel, time-series or event-history designs, although qualitative components and mixed-methods evaluations provide unique, additional, and triangulated insights (see also Mertens, 2010; Noar, Palmgreen, & Zimmerman, 2009). Summative research can be conducted both during and after major campaign phases. Indeed, rigorous summative research requires designing-in evaluation activities right from the start, including baseline, ongoing (including usage data for online and interactive activities), end-of-campaign, and longer-term measures. At the individual level, evaluation researchers typically measure exposure and learning as well as effects on attitudes and behaviors. The preponderance of evaluation data suggests that campaigns are capable of exerting moderate to powerful influences on cognitive outcomes, less influence on attitudinal outcomes, and still less influence on behavioral outcomes (Atkin, 2001; Snyder & Hamilton, 2002). Further, behavioral outcomes tend to vary in proportion to such factors as the dose of information, duration of campaign activities, integration of mass and interpersonal communication systems, and integration of social-change strategies (enforcement, education, and engineering).

There are a number of reasons why a campaign does not attain a strong impact. Audience resistance barriers arise at each stage of response, from exposure to behavioral implementation. A major problem is simply reaching the audience and attaining attention to the messages (Hornik, 2002). Audience members are also lost at each subsequent response stage, including misperception of susceptibility to threatened consequences, denial of applicability of message incentives to self, defensive counterarguing against persuasive appeals, rejection of unappealing behavioral recommendations, and sheer inertial lethargy. Effectiveness of public communication campaigns is limited when receivers regard messages as offensive, disturbing, boring, stale, preachy, confusing, irritating, misleading, irrelevant, uninformative, useless, unbelievable, or unmotivating.

Evaluation may also assess the impact of the campaign on policymakers, organizations, and the community level. These outcomes usually involve alterations in environment factors (such as access to health resources, or changes in broader systems) that produce improvements in society (Rice & Foote, 2001). The population-wide consequences are typically examined via evaluation of aggregate changes in behavioral patterns to determine how fluctuations correspond to environmental variations.

Salmon and Murray-Johnson (2001) make distinctions among various types of campaign effectiveness, including *definitional effectiveness* (e.g., getting a social phenomenon defined as a social problem or elevating it on the public agenda), *contextual effectiveness* (e.g., impact within particular contexts such as education vs. enforcement vs. engineering), *cost-effectiveness* comparison (e.g., prevention vs. treatment, addressing certain problems over others), and *programmatic effectiveness* (e.g., testing campaign outcomes relative to stated goals and objectives).

It should be noted that campaign effectiveness is increasingly defined using relative rather than absolute standards. For example, a campaign may be deemed "effective" if it meets the objectives set by its planners. Indeed, some prescriptions for attaining

greater impact suggest that campaign planners set readily attained objectives. This does not improve campaign performance *per se* but it lowers the bar of expectation and, in so doing, increases the odds that the campaign will be viewed as a success.

Direct Effects on Focal Subpopulations

Most campaigns aim messages directly at the *focal segments* – at-risk subpopulations who might benefit from the campaign. The potential for direct effects depends on the relative prevalence of various types of receptiveness among target audience segments. A fundamental receptivity factor is stage of readiness to perform the practice; campaigns typically achieve the strongest impact with triggering or reinforcing messages designed for people who are already favorably predisposed. Another key audience segment includes those who have not yet tried the undesirable behavior but whose background characteristics suggest they are “at risk” in the near future; many may be receptive to persuasive messages. Those committed to unsuitable practices are not readily influenced by directly targeted campaigns, so a heavy investment of resources to induce discontinuation tends to yield a marginal payoff. Among focal targets, there are demographic, social, and psychological-based subgroups such as higher vs. lower income strata, high vs. low sensation-seekers (Palmgreen, Donohew, & Harrington, 2001), those experiencing psychological or social obstacles in accomplishing certain behaviors (Dervin & Frennette, 2001), and members of different cultures (Horner, Romber, Venable et al., 2008).

Indirect Effects on Interpersonal Influencers and Policymakers

A second effects strategy is to initiate an indirect or multistep flow by disseminating messages to potential *interpersonal influencers* who are in a position to personally influence focal individuals (Rogers, 2003). In a third effects strategy, the campaign may seek to alter the environment indirectly by aiming messages at societal and *organizational policymakers* who are responsible for devising constraints and creating opportunities that shape focal individuals’ decisions and behaviors (Wallack & Dorfman, 2001). Rather than relying predominantly on direct persuasion, campaigners may attain greater impact by investing effort and resources in campaign components affecting indirect or secondary target audiences who can (a) exert interpersonal influence on focal individuals or (b) help reform environmental conditions that shape behavior. According to Salmon and Atkin (2003), mass media campaigns have considerable potential for motivating personal influencers in close contact with the focal individuals, as well as producing effects on institutions and groups at the national and community level.

The interpersonal influence process has been demonstrated in numerous projects utilizing the two-step flow from media to opinion leaders, a cornerstone of the

diffusion of innovations model (Rogers, 2003). Campaigns aim at opinion leader audiences because they tend to be more receptive to campaign messages, and their indirectly stimulated activities are more likely to be effective than campaign messages directly targeted to the focal segment. Interpersonal influencers can impact behavior through activities such as dispensing positive and negative reinforcement, exercising control via rulemaking and enforcement, facilitating behavior with reminders at opportune moments, and serving as role models. These types of interpersonal communication provided a significant boost to the media-oriented campaigns in the seminal Stanford heart disease prevention project (Flora, 2001); behavioral impact was greater in a condition where the mediated messages were supplemented by intensive face-to-face instruction and informal interpersonal influence. One key advantage of opinion leadership is that the influencers can customize their messages to the unique needs and values of individuals in a more precise manner than mediated messages.

Valente, Hoffman, Ritt-Olson, Lichtman, and Johnson (2003) showed that first identifying student opinion leaders and then creating groups by assigning students to their nominated leaders was a more effective structuring procedure in a school-based tobacco prevention program than either having a teacher naming the leader and group members, or randomly assigning group members to an opinion leader nominated by students. Students in the first condition had more improved attitudes and self-efficacy, and decreased intention to smoke, compared to the random condition. The effectiveness of social network-oriented media campaigns, typically targeted to friends and family members of the focal individuals to be influenced, is reviewed in the health domain by Abroms and Maibach (2008). Examples of the impact of social agents can be found in HIV prevention interventions (Durantini, Albarracin, Mitchell, Earl, & Gillette, 2006) and parent-child communication about alcohol (Surkan et al., 2003).

Individuals' decisions are strongly shaped by the constraints and opportunities in their societal environment, such as monetary expenses, laws, industry practices, entertainment role models, commercial messages, social forces, and community services. Policymakers in government, business, educational, medical, media, religious, and community organizations can initiate interventions that alter the environment. Thus another means of integrating media and interpersonal communication is to organize campaign activities at the community level, which can engage stakeholders to interface with government agencies, schools, or businesses (Bracht, 2001). Some reformers combine community organizing and media publicity to advance healthy public policies via *media advocacy* (Dorfman, Wallack, & Woodruff, 2005; Wallack & Dorfman, 2001). The media advocacy approach seeks to frame public health issues to emphasize policy-related environmental solutions rather than the usual focus on individual responsibility for good health. Activists generate news media coverage to mobilize the public to influence policymakers to enact reforms to address health problems, particularly relating to smoking and drinking (Dorfman

et al., 2005; Holder & Treno, 1997; Niederdeppe, Farrelly, & Wenter, 2007). Gaining consistent visibility in the news media is a key to achieving an agenda-setting effect, which is particularly important in media advocacy strategies targeted to opinion leaders and policymakers in society.

Through agenda setting on health issues, news coverage can shape the public agenda and the policy agenda pertaining to new initiatives, rules, and laws. An important element involves changing the public's beliefs about the effectiveness of policies and interventions that are advanced, which leads to supportive public opinion (and direct pressure) that can help convince institutional leaders to formulate and implement societal constraints and opportunities. When Freudenberg, Bradley, and Serrano (2009) analyzed a dozen case studies of health campaigns, they found that the most widely used strategies are coalition building, media advocacy, and public mobilization, followed by policy advocacy, community organization, litigation, letter-writing, and public protest. Collaboration with the business sector is rarely used. A common theme is that advertising and promotional campaigns attempt to target vulnerable groups (e.g., youth, minorities, females, low social-economic status segments) in order to gain new markets despite evidence that the product harms health; this provides the rhetorical basis for undertaking initiatives.

Message Types

Messages: Prevention versus Promotion

In influencing behavior, campaigns either attempt to promote positive behaviors (e.g., eat fruit, buckle safety belt, recycle paper) or to prevent problematic behaviors (e.g., consuming fats, driving while intoxicated, burning forests), see Chapter 26. Traditionally, prevention campaigns present fear appeals to focus attention on negative consequences of a detrimental practice, rather than promoting the desirability of a positive alternative. This approach is most potent in cases where harmful outcomes are genuinely threatening, or positive products are insufficiently compelling.

The social marketing perspective is especially applicable to promoting desirable behavior, which involves offering rewarding gains from attractive "products" (such as tasty fruit, the designated driver arrangement, or staircase exercising). In developing behavioral recommendations in promotional campaigns, designers can draw upon an array of options from the "product line." These target responses vary in palatability associated with degree of effort, sacrifice, and monetary expense; a central strategic consideration in determining the degree of difficulty is receptiveness of the focal segment (Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002). The prolonged nature of campaigns enables the use of gradually escalating sequential approaches over a period of months or years.

Message Content: Informational vs. Persuasive

In many campaign situations, informational messages that seek to create awareness or provide instruction play an important role. Awareness messages present relatively simple content that informs people what to do, specifies who should do it, or provides cues about when and where it should be done. Even superficial messages can stimulate the audience to seek out richer in-depth content from elaborated informational resources such as web pages, books, and opinion leaders. The more complex instruction messages present “how to do it” information in campaigns that need to produce knowledge gain or skills acquisition, including enhancing personal efficacy in bolstering peer resistance and acquiring media literacy skills.

However, the central type of message in campaigns is the persuasive appeal. Most campaigns present messages featuring persuasive reasons why the audience should adopt the advocated action or avoid the proscribed behavior. The classic case involves the mechanism of attitude creation or change, usually via knowledge gain and belief formation. For audiences that are favorably inclined, the campaign has the easier persuasive task of reinforcing existing predispositions: strengthening a positive attitude, promoting post-behavior consolidation, and motivating behavioral maintenance over time. Because a lengthy campaign generally disseminates a broad array of persuasive messages, strategists often marshal a variety of appeals built around motivational incentives designed to influence attitudes and behaviors; the selection and organization of persuasive appeals is described in detail in subsequent sections.

Message Features: Qualitative Dimensions

A campaign encompasses a collection of individual messages varying in content, form, and style. Designing these messages involves the strategic selection of substantive material and creative production of stylistic features. In developing the combination of message components, the campaign designer seeks to emphasize one or more of five key message qualities (Salmon & Atkin, 2003). *Credibility* is the extent to which the message content is believed to be accurate and valid, and this qualitative factor is conveyed by the trustworthiness and competence of the source and the provision of convincing evidence. As more campaigns and their messages become accessible online, designers and evaluators need to become more familiar with the growing research on website and online credibility (Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003). Second, the style and ideas should be *engaging*, by using stylistic features that are superficially attractive and entertaining (or at least arresting), along with substantive content that is interesting, mentally stimulating, or emotionally arousing. To augment the influence on behavior, the presentation should be personally *relevant*, such that the receivers regard the recommendation as applicable to their situation and needs. Next, the *understandability* of the message contributes

to recipient processing and learning via presentation of material in a comprehensive and comprehensible manner that is simple, explicit, and sufficiently detailed. The final qualitative factor consists of *persuasive incentives*, the motivational appeals which are fundamental to the effectiveness of messages seeking to persuade the audience.

Message Appeals: Persuasive Incentives

Persuasive messages in public communication campaigns utilize a basic expectancy-value mechanism that is incorporated in several popular theoretical frameworks (theory of reasoned action, protection motivation theory, and health belief model). In this conception, messages primarily influence a collection of beliefs regarding the subjective likelihood of each outcome occurring, and attitudinal and behavioral responses are contingent upon each individual's valuation of these outcomes. The operational formula for preventing undesirable behaviors is *vulnerability* x *severity*, positing that the audience is maximally motivated by a high likelihood of suffering a very painful consequence. The incentive appeals often build on existing values of the target audience, so the messages tend to reinforce the predispositions or change beliefs about the likelihood of experiencing consequences.

For campaigns in the health domain, the basic dimensions of incentives include physical health, time/effort, economic, moral, legal, social, psychological, and aspirational aspects. Rather than over-emphasizing the narrow domain of negative health threats (e.g., death, illness, injury), campaigners are increasingly diversifying their loss-framed incentive strategies to include appeals not directly related to physical health *per se* (e.g., psychological regret, social rejection) and to give greater emphasis to gain-framed positive incentives (e.g., valued states or consequences such as physical well-being, saving money, social attractiveness; see Chapter 26, this volume).

One form of diversification of a campaign message mix is to increase the generally modest proportion of gain-framed incentives. Corresponding to certain negative consequences of performing the proscribed practice, there are mirror-image positive outcomes that can be promised. For example, the social dimension of positive social incentives includes gaining approval and respect, forming deeper friendships, building trust with parents, and being a good role model; examples of psychological gains include gaining control over one's life, positive self-image, attaining one's goals, feeling secure, or acting intelligently.

Regarding the number of different incentives, it is generally advantageous to use multiple persuasive appeals across a series of messages in a campaign, particularly when seeking to influence varied audiences. The key criteria for selecting incentives are the salience of the promised or threatened consequences, the malleability of beliefs about the likelihood of experiencing these outcomes, and pretest ratings of the persuasiveness of the potential arguments (see Cappella et al., 2001). These are identified and elaborated during the formative evaluation stage.

In conveying incentive appeals, campaign designers need to provide evidence to support claims made in messages. The type of evidence to be featured varies according to audience segment; for example, those who are knowledgeable tend to be more influenced by messages citing statistics or quoting technical experts, whereas dramatized case examples and testimonials by famous messengers may work better for low-involvement audience members (Perloff, 2003; Reinard, 1988). It should be noted that broad media audiences inevitably vary in predispositions, so special care should be taken when using extreme claims or selective factual information that may strain credulity and trigger counterarguing.

Message Sources

The *messenger* is the presenter appearing in the message who delivers information, demonstrates behavior, or provides a testimonial. Messengers help enhance each qualitative factor by being engaging (attractiveness, likability), credible (trustworthiness, expertise), and relevant to the audience (similarity, familiarity). These attributes can (a) attract attention and facilitate comprehension by personalizing message concepts, (b) elicit positive cognitive responses during processing, (c) heighten emotional arousal via identification or transfer of affect, and (d) increase retention due to memorability. The key categories of public communication campaign messengers are celebrities, public officials, topical expert specialists, professional performers, ordinary people, especially experienced individuals (e.g., victims or beneficiaries), and unique characters (e.g., animated or costumed).

Mediated Communication Channels: Mass and Digital

In disseminating messages, most campaign designers still rely on traditional broadcast and print channels that carry public service messages, entertainment-education placements, and news coverage. Websites carrying prepackaged informational pages have also been a central campaign vehicle since the late 1990s. In the past decade, campaigns have increasingly utilized interactive technology (e.g., blogs and microblogs, CDs and DVDs, tailored messages and websites, computer games, mobile phones).

In assessing each option for channeling campaign messages, myriad advantages and disadvantages can be taken into consideration along a number of communicative dimensions. Atkin and Salmon (2010) discuss channel differences in terms of *reach* (proportion of population exposed to the message), *specializability* (targeting specific subgroups or tailoring to individuals), *intrusiveness* (capacity for commanding atten-

tion), *participation* (active receiver involvement while processing stimulus), *meaning modalities* (array of senses employed in conveying meaning), *personalization* (human-relational nature of source-receiver interaction), *decodability* (mental effort required for processing stimulus), *depth* (channel capacity for conveying detailed and complex content), *credibility* (believability of material conveyed), *agenda setting* (potency of channel for raising salience priority of issues), *accessibility* (ease of placing messages in channel), *economy* (low cost for producing and disseminating stimuli), and *efficiency* (simplicity of arranging message production and dissemination). Channel appropriateness should be determined by the usage patterns of the priority or target audiences and the nature of the message, although compromises are made due to pragmatic factors shaped by resource limitations. Instead of paid TV ads, campaigns may rely on creative publicity techniques for generating news and feature story coverage in print media. Fortunately, certain topics in the health, safety, and environmental domains are considered to be attractive to professionals working at newspapers, women's magazines, TV newscasts, and daytime TV talk shows. The related practice of entertainment-education (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004), which involves embedding campaign topic-related material in entertainment programming, is widely welcomed by media gatekeepers in developing nations; however, campaigners have attained only sporadic access in the US.

Health interventions and campaigns are increasingly emphasizing digital media technologies (Edgar, Noar, & Freimuth, 2007; Parker & Thorson, 2009; Rice & Atkin, 2008). New media offer additional dimensions of campaigning through interactivity, narrowcasting, and tailoring. *Interactivity* has two primary dimensions, direction of communication and level of receiver control over the communication process, which yield four kinds of relationships between the user and the source (monologue, feedback, responsive dialogue, and mutual discourse). Each of these relationships can be associated with specific design features, such as surveys, games, purchasing products or services, email, hyperlinks, and chat rooms. Rimal and Adkins (2003) suggest applying social marketing principles to *narrowcasting* via segmentation and targeting Internet users. *Tailoring* involves designing customized messages that reflect the individual's predispositions and abilities (Kreuter, Farrell, Olevitch, & Brennan, 1999; Noar, Harrington, & Aldrich, 2009). Tailored messages can match the theoretically relevant characteristics of narrowcast audiences, and interactive/individualized feedback facilitates motivation to adopt behaviors. Online-screening questionnaires assess factors such as readiness stage, stylistic tastes, knowledge levels, and current beliefs, and then direct them to narrowly targeted messages. Not only does this approach increase the likelihood of learning and persuasion, but it decreases the possibility of boomerang effects. Using new media in campaigns to foster interactivity, individually tailored messages, and mobile access increases the likelihood of desired outcomes (Strecher, 2007; Ybarra & Bull, 2007).

The Internet has become a major source for online information, discussion, therapy, and access to physicians (Rice, 2006). Online health-related social support groups can increase reported social support, quality of life, and self-efficacy in

managing one's health condition, and decrease reported depression, according to a recent meta-analysis (Rains & Young, 2009). The value of anonymity inherent in web information search and online discussion groups is valuable for private or sensitive topics (e.g., STD/HIV prevention and testing). Portnoy, Scott-Sheldon, Johnson, and Carey's (2008) meta-analysis of 75 randomized controlled health trials involving computer-delivered intervention found improved knowledge, attitudes, intentions, health behaviors, and general health maintenance, across a variety of health domains (addiction/substance use, chronic diseases, nutrition, physical activity, and sexual health). Another meta-analysis of 85 studies using the Internet for health behavior change reported an overall small but significant positive effect, with stronger results for interventions applying theory in general and the theory of planned behavior in particular, those applying behavior change techniques, and those using other communication approaches, especially text messaging (Webb, Joseph, Yardley, & Michie, 2010).

Campaigns may utilize online public service promos, typically in the form of brief banner ad messages or solicitations to click through to a website. However, these messages have severe content capacity limitations, the sponsors have little control over placement of their banner ads, and ads are often blocked by computer software. Paid health promotion ads on social media sites have greater potential for impact because of more prominent placement and more precise targeting. Health PSA spots and long-form video messages attract modest viewership on YouTube, although unhealthy portrayals and parodies are also featured among the mix of messages accessible on this site.

Online mentors can use email to improve interpersonal support over time, such as the Digital Heroes Campaign designed to foster better youth development (Rhodes, Spencer, Saito, & Sipe, 2006). Mobile phones, especially short message service (texting) are well-suited for offering tailored, wide-reaching, interactive and continuing campaign interventions (Fjeldsoe, Marshall, & Miller, 2009). Cole-Lewis and Kershaw's (2010) review found consistent evidence of positive effects of text messaging on behavioral changes, across demographic and national differences.

Blogs serve an important role in linking users with similar information needs and concerns to share their views and experiences, while wikis support collaboration among campaign members. Podcasts can provide relevant audio information (such as social support, variations on the persuasive message, or related health news) to motivated audiences at their convenience (Boulos, Maramba, & Wheeler, 2006). Twitter can be used to provide updates and protocol reminders to campaign-specific followers. However, as with many Internet health information sources, tweets may include considerable misunderstandings or abuse of health information and medicines (Scanfeld, Scanfeld, & Larson, 2010).

Voice response systems, interactive video, DVD and CD-ROM, mobile phones, and computer games can be effective in reaching young people. Lieberman (2001, 2006) recommends that computer-mediated campaigns feature youthful genres, support information seeking, incorporate challenges and goals, use learning-by-doing,

create functional learning environments, and facilitate social interaction. Videogame learning relevant to campaigns includes skill acquisition from interactive games, improved self-efficacy through success in vicarious experiences, and role-playing and modeling. An effective example is the CDC's national VERB campaign designed to promote exercise among preteens; the campaign stimulated heavy traffic on the website and wide-scale engagement in site activities (Bauman et al., 2008; Berkowitz et al., 2008). Baranowski, Buday, Thompson, and Baranowski's (2008) meta-analysis of 25 studies of using videogames to affect health behavior (chronic disease management, exercise, and diet) found improvements in nearly all outcomes.

Quantitative Dissemination Factors

Beyond message qualities, four key quantitative factors are total volume of stimuli disseminated, amount of message repetition, prominence of placement, and scheduling of presentations within one medium or across multiple media (Silk, Atkin, & Salmon, 2011). A substantial *volume* of messages helps attain adequate reach and frequency of exposure, as well as responses such as comprehension, recognition, and image formation. A certain level of *repetition* of specific executions facilitates message comprehension and positive affect toward the recommended behavior, but overly high repetition produces wearout and diminishing returns. The optimum level depends on factors such as the qualities featured in the message execution and complexity of the subject matter.

Placement *prominence* of messages in conspicuous positions within media vehicles (e.g., front-page newspaper positioning, heavily traveled billboard locations, or high-rank search engine websites) serves to enhance both exposure levels and perceived significance of the topic on the public agenda. Depending on the situation, the *scheduling* of a fixed number of presentations may be most effectively concentrated over a short duration, dispersed thinly over a lengthy period, or distributed in intermittent bursts of "flighting" or "pulsing."

To maximize quantity, campaigners seek to gain media access via monetary support from government and industry (to fund paid placements and leveraged media slots), aggressive lobbying for free public service time or space, skillful use of public relations techniques for generating entertainment and journalistic coverage, and reliance on low-cost channels of communication such as websites and social media. Moreover, the reach of a campaign is often boosted by sensitizing audiences to appropriate content already available in the media and by stimulating information seeking from specialized sources.

Regarding the *length* of a campaign, the realities of the unrelenting problems addressed in public communication campaigns usually require exceptional persistence of effort over long periods of time ranging from several months to many years as successive phases of the campaign are implemented. In many cases, perpetual

campaigning is necessary because various focal segments are in constant need of influence: *newcomers* constantly move into the priority audience, *backsliders* occasionally revert to prior misbehavior, *evolvers* take their time in gradually adopting the recommended practice, *vacillators* need regular doses of reinforcement to stay the course, and *latecomers* finally give up bad habits and become receptive to the campaign. In other contexts, such as colleges, each year a new cohort arrives and provides new target audiences for campaigns concerning drinking, drugs, sexual behavior, depression, and other issues, so college campaigns must be continually implemented, formatively and summatively evaluated, and revised (Martell et al., 2006).

Identifying which media the target audience is most likely to use, and at what times, requires access to audience ratings and usage data, as well as an understanding of audience research methods and markets (Webster, Phalen, & Lichty, 2006). New media, such as interactive websites, social media, mobile phones, and virtual reality settings (Ybarra & Bull, 2007) present new challenges and new sources of data.

Example Campaign Focus: Anti-Drug Campaigns

Campaigns to prevent drug abuse have been a fixture in the media for more than a quarter-century, beginning with the “Just Say No” initiative during the Reagan presidency. The initial wave of campaigning occurred between 1985 and 1990, and corresponded with a decline in the use of drugs (particularly cocaine, the focus of the prevention messages in that era). Youth drug-usage tracking surveys in the early and mid-1990s showed a slight but steady upswing, which led to a revival in 1998 of campaigning by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP, 2010). From the start, the anti-drug campaigns have drawn upon substantial resources to obtain prominent media placements; funds have been allocated by the federal government, and access has been gained via cooperative ventures with the media industry.

Nearly \$1 billion was spent between 1998–2004 on the ONDCP campaign to combat drug use among adolescents in the 9–18 age range, with the key objectives of preventing initiation (especially marijuana and inhalants) and encouraging cessation among occasional users. This comprehensive social marketing effort featured messages targeted to youth, their parents, and other influential adults, disseminated primarily via television and radio, along with websites, magazines, and movie theaters. Ads sought to teach drug resistance skills, promote non-usage norms and positive alternatives (focusing on benefits of not using drugs), and prompt peer intervention; negative consequences played a significant role, but emphasized effects on academic and athletic performance rather than severe health harm.

Tracking studies since 2001 show a slight but steady decline in youth drug usage; two recent correlational studies indicate that youth exposed to anti-drug messages in the media are about one-third less likely to have recently used illicit drugs (notably

marijuana) and to hold stronger anti-drug beliefs (ONDCP, 2010). On the other hand, little impact of the national campaign on marijuana use and related cognitions was found by Hornik et al. (2008), who performed time-series analyses of a large-scale adolescent panel. Indeed, there are some indications of a boomerang effect, and the authors note that the sheer pervasiveness of anti-drug campaign messages may convey an “implicit meta-message” that drug use is prevalent (Hornik et al., 2008).

A more limited time-series analysis of one phase of the ONDCP anti-marijuana campaign in a mid-sized market demonstrated significant effects in lessening marijuana usage, attitudes, and beliefs among adolescents classified as “high sensation-seekers” (Palmgreen, Lorch, Stephenson, Hoyle, & Donohew, 2007). The researchers concluded that this impact was due to the dramatic depiction of negative consequences of marijuana use. Longshore, Ghosh-Dastidar, and Ellickson (2006) report that moderate or high exposure to the media campaign messages in combination with a classroom-based drug prevention curriculum led to a significant reduction in marijuana use among a statewide sample of high school students.

In conclusion, there is mixed evidence about the effectiveness of anti-drug campaigns. The overall pattern indicates that campaigns reduce usage among certain population segments, but the degree of impact is not proportionate to the high quantity of messages. Moreover, persistent portrayals of drugs in prevention messages may contribute to perceptions of a descriptive norm that usage is widespread; normative issues are examined further in the risky drinking campaign example below.

Example Campaign Focus: Antismoking Campaigns

The indirect approach (influencing the focal segments via campaign impact on policymakers) has been successful in the case of antismoking campaigns over the past 20 years. The initial large-scale campaign utilizing the environmental control approach occurred in the state of California, which effectively combated smoking with a coordinated combination of strategies promoting cigarette taxation, restrictions of smoking in public places and sales to minors, and attacks on the tobacco industry to undermine public attitudes toward marketing of cigarettes (Pierce et al., 1998). This was followed by a statewide campaign in Florida featuring the “truth” theme to challenge the industry’s deceitful marketing practices. This campaign also achieved substantial smoking reduction impacts on youth (Sly, Hopkins, Trapido, & Ray, 2001). The “truth” campaign was subsequently carried out nationally by American Legacy Foundation. Tobacco settlement funds provided resources for a wide dissemination of messages, primarily aimed at adolescents. Supplementing traditional strategies that emphasize smoking prevention or cessation appeals, the “truth” message themes featured public demonstrations against the tobacco industry. Studies show increases in anti-tobacco attitudes and substantial declines in youth smoking as a result of this campaign (Farrelly, Davis, Haviland, Messeri, & Healton, 2005). In addition, a survey

of recent quitters showed that anti-tobacco TV spots were the most frequently mentioned source of help, particularly younger former smokers; the most influential ads depicted illness or provided “inspirational” quit tips (Biener et al., 2006).

Two other examples demonstrate the effectiveness of media antismoking campaigns. A time-series tracking over a decade showed that exposure to tobacco control media campaigns significantly reduced smoking rates among adults (Wakefield et al., 2008). Multi-wave analyses by Levy, Mumford, and Compton (2006) showed that media campaigns and higher cigarette taxes led to reduced smoking prevalence among low-income women.

Example Campaign Focus: Risky Drinking Campaigns

A growing number of media campaigns have sought to create or alter public perceptions of social norms regarding the prevalence of unhealthy behaviors such as risky drinking, which is commonly overestimated by key segments of the population. In numerous college communities, media campaigns present statistical information to correct misperceptions about normative drinking levels; preproduction research helps to identify the dimensions of misperception; and pretesting research enables refinement of the messages to heighten understandability and credibility. Summative evaluation research generally supports the effectiveness of social norms campaigns in reducing undergraduate student drinking problems, as demonstrated in a multiple randomized trial of college campuses showing that the perceptions and consumption were lower in intervention locales than control locales (DeJong et al., 2006).

One of the federally funded model projects utilizing the social norms approach has been implemented at Michigan State University (MSU), where an elaborate series of campaign phases has been carried out starting in 2000. Each semester, a significant quantity of messages is disseminated via multiple channels including ads in the campus newspaper, posters displayed across campus, table tents in dining rooms and bars, campus TV and radio spots, a website, and social media. The basic strategy is to correct misperceptions of MSU student drinking behaviors and attitudes, using messages reporting actual survey data representing a variety of descriptive and injunctive norms (e.g., proportion consuming moderate amounts on typical evening of partying, proportion drinking on celebratory occasions such as Halloween and football tailgates, proportion performing protective behaviors such as arranging designated driver or staying with same group all evening, and proportion disapproving of “getting wasted” or pressuring friends to drink). Several outcome evaluation methods have been used, but one key technique is tracking global trends over time; data show a steady downward trend in reported consumption per occasion (from 5.6 drinks at the baseline in 2000 to 4.7 drinks in 2008), increases in protective behaviors,

and decline in experiencing negative consequences of binge drinking (Atkin, Martell, Smith, & Greenmayer, 2004; Martell et al., 2006; Smith & Atkin, 2009).

The MSU campaign also features a major environmental management component that encompasses police enforcement of public disturbance laws, strict ID checks and server intervention in bars, party restrictions by landlords and hosts, limits on location and length of tailgating on football game days, and suspension of students violating laws. These initiatives are promoted with campaign messages aimed at city policymakers, law enforcers, bar owners, involved publics, and drinkers. The message themes highlight evidence of harms to be avoided, marginalization of misbehavers, support for restrictions by constituencies, and warnings about consequences for violators. These control-oriented approaches provide a valuable supplement to the softer norms component of the overall campaign.

An example of environmental reforms at the national level can be seen in a pair of long-running campaigns by the Center for Science in the Public Interest to reduce youth alcohol problems. One campaign seeks to combat marketing of sweetened, high alcohol-concentration beverages ("alcopops") that appeal to young drinkers; limited success has been achieved via federal regulations and limits on local retailers. The second campaign is designed to mobilize college officials to persuade the NCAA to eliminate beer advertising during its televised sports event. The campaign has received the endorsement of hundreds of organizations and colleges, and more than 200 schools agreed to ban alcohol ads from local telecasts of local sports events (Freudenberg et al., 2009).

Conclusion

Most experts conclude that public communication campaigns have attained a modest rather than strong impact, notably in the health domain. This is partially due to meager dissemination budgets, unsophisticated application of theory and models, and poorly conceived strategic approaches. It is also due to the difficulty of the task facing the campaigner, who may be promoting complex or difficult behaviors, targeting resistant audience segments, or coping with limited resources, while at-risk audiences are constantly exposed to media portrayals and advertisements that highlight detrimental behaviors. In these situations, more emphasis should be given to relatively attainable impacts, by aiming at more receptive focal segments, by promoting more palatable positive products perceived to have a favorable benefit-cost ratio, by creatively generating free publicity, and by shifting campaign resources to indirect pathways that facilitate and control behavior of the focal segment via interpersonal, organizational, and societal influences. More generally, the degree of campaign success can be improved via greater diversification of pathways, products, incentives, and channels beyond the approaches conventionally used in public communication campaigns.

Despite the many barriers that diminish campaign effectiveness, the research literature shows many success stories over the past several decades. Health campaigns have made significant contributions to the progress in addressing important problems such as smoking, drunk driving, AIDS, drug use, heart disease, and unprotected vehicle occupants. These domains tend to be characterized by substantial quantity of message dissemination over sustained periods, widespread receptivity to the advocated action and accompanying persuasive incentives, and supplementation of mediated messages by campaign-stimulated factors such as informal interpersonal influences and social engineering policy initiatives. With the increasing adoption of sophisticated strategies and the rising priority of healthy and prosocial practices for individuals and society, there is a sound basis for optimism that campaigns can produce stronger impacts in the future.

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Effects of Social Marketing

Potential and Limitations

Michael D. Basil

ABSTRACT

Many efforts to improve people's health behaviors have employed communication campaigns. A related approach, but more extensive, termed "social marketing," applies commercial marketing methods to health and other social goals by trying to shape people's behaviors through facilitation and reward. Social marketing is limited by existing beliefs, social forces and other structural factors, and to the extent that we cannot develop viable products or solutions, it cannot really be employed. A review of research suggests that social marketing is used in different ways around the world. This evidence, as well as the primary research of the chapter author, suggests that social marketing is most effective when it goes beyond information and fear to find ways to make the performance of those behaviors easier, when it finds ways to fit within the context of existing beliefs and finds ways to work out solutions that are amenable to the range of consumers and constituents.

Communication and Information Campaigns

Many efforts to improve people's health behaviors have employed communication campaigns. Most typically this has involved the use of the mass media and other forms of communication to promote health behaviors (see Chapter 24, this volume). The historical basis of this approach can be traced to "information campaigns" in the 1940s

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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(Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947). Over the next few years many communication and public health practitioners have continued to focus on “information campaigns” and examined their power in influencing human behavior, especially in the realm of health (Mendelsohn, 1973). The general strategy underlying this approach is that when people are given appropriate information, they can make better decisions. A good many studies have examined the effects of these campaigns. A couple of recent meta-analyses of health communication campaigns have examined these health campaigns and concluded that information campaigns are generally effective in altering knowledge but not very effective in shaping behaviors (Keller & Lehmann, 2008; Snyder et al., 2004). That is, people learn some information, but only sometimes do they take action.

My own background has parallels with the story here. With an educational background in psychology and communication, it was easy and natural to draw on information theories to attempt to influence people’s health behavior. The persuasion orientation can be seen in literature in information campaigns and in cognitive psychology. But as I became involved in working in the area of health, often with “health education specialists,” I became aware that convincing people of possible negative consequences of products such as tobacco often was insufficient to motivate action. In many cases educational efforts competed with campaigns that were based on needs and motivations which targeted people of different ages, ethnicities, and races (Altman, Schooler, & Basil, 1991; Basil et al., 1991). For example, tobacco ads ignored health issues such as cancer and emphysema to focus on more immediately tangible social benefits such as attractiveness and popularity (Schooler, Basil, & Altman, 1996).

Another important issue underlying the success of social marketing efforts is the difficulty of remaining, in the face of dozens of competing health messages and health risks, as they say in public relations, “on message.” For example, as a result of the competing tobacco messages, people seem to have combined the arguments to conclude that smoking could make them attractive, popular, and thin, after which they might die, but many believing this would mean a fast and easy death. The health data do not support the easy death assertion, though, and the lack of response to this conclusion was a problem that was never adequately addressed. Similarly, my own research has examined how social agencies fighting over whether abstinence or condoms offered the best approach to the HIV issue, sidetracked and interfered with HIV prevention efforts for many years (Basil, 2008). Eventually, churches and public health agencies agreed to compromise on the use of a combined “ABC” approach, which allowed health prevention efforts to get back “on message” and return their efforts to attempts to combat HIV infection.

Fear Appeals

In addition to information campaigns, a parallel line of theory and research is in the area of fear or threat appeals. Fear is an intuitive approach that can be traced

back as far as information campaigns (Janis & Feshbach, 1953). The general strategy underlying this approach is that when people are more cognizant of the risks they face this should result in higher involvement with the issue, which would result in taking action (Roser & Thompson, 1999). A considerable body of research in this area has also shown that a threat does not necessarily equate to fear, and fear does not necessarily result in the most appropriate action (Rogers, 1975; Witte, 1994; Witte & Allen, 2000). That is, people learn what to be afraid of, but do not necessarily change their behavior in response. Sometimes the action they take is to “bury their head in the sand” to avoid exposure to additional fear appeals (Witte, 1992). In addition to limited effects, another problem with the use of fear appeals is the ethics of scaring people or reminding them of tragedies in their lives (Benet, Pitts, & LaTour, 1993; Hastings, Stead, & Webb, 2004; Jones & Rossiter, 2002). Overall then, the effects of fear appeals are limited and ethically concerning.

Although it is the opinion of this author that fear appeals are limited in their effectiveness and overworked, there are some circumstances when they can be effective. The protection motivation model (Rogers, 1975) and the extended parallel process model (Witte, 1992) predict that not only is the level of fear important, but so is people’s confidence, or efficacy, towards being able to enact a protective behavior. Supportive of those predictions, my own research, with colleagues, is finding that fear appeals are more effective when they include ways to enhance self-efficacy and response efficacy with specific behavioral options (Basil et al., 2007). This research demonstrates that when fear appeals also provide simple behaviors that can reduce the threat, these messages result in much higher behavioral intentions.

Personalization

As I was becoming disenfranchised with information-based approaches, AIDS was becoming one of the most important health issues of the day. On a November day in 1991, I, along with millions of people, learned that “Magic” Johnson was diagnosed with HIV and was retiring from basketball. Bill Brown, who was a colleague and a basketball fan, and I were convinced that Magic would make a remarkable spokesperson. We tried to explain to each other why we felt that way. There were many reasons to suspect that celebrities could be powerful, the foremost being Horton and Wohl’s (1956) theory of parasocial identification. Celebrities are people with whom millions of people develop a false sense of personal friendship. This is one of the reasons that celebrities are used frequently in commercial advertising (Alperstein, 1991; Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001). In addition, as former students of Ev Rogers, we were aware of a large body of “diffusion” research which has shown that friends and similar (“homophilous”) others are much more powerful influences than unknown (“heterophilous”) others (Rogers, 1995).

Armed with these theories of celebrity effects, including Bill's dissertation on parasocial identification (Brown, 1991), we quickly put together a survey and experiment to examine if this was true. The results were remarkably strong – parasocial identification, or a feeling of being close to “Magic” Johnson, was a very large predictor of news diffusion as well as attitudinal changes such as attitudes toward HIV and behavioral intentions to use condoms in future sexual encounters (Basil & Brown, 1994; Brown & Basil, 1995). In fact, the effects were so strong they remained a year later (Basil, 1996). Concern about a friend, virtual or not, is more powerful than simple knowledge of risk factors (Basil & Brown, 1997), and celebrities are people with whom millions of people develop a false sense of personal friendship, which appears to explain their power.

After having discovered the importance of celebrities through Magic Johnson, in subsequent studies we found similar effects for baseball player Mark McGwire (Brown, Basil, & Bocarnea, 2003a), and – although outside the scope of health-related outcomes, *per se* – Diana, Princess of Wales (Brown, Basil, & Bocarnea, 2003b). In the case of Mark McGwire, identification with him predicted attitudes toward child abuse and interest in steroids. For Princess Diana, identification predicted intentions just after her death to watch the funeral on TV and to blame the press for her passing. So friends, whether real or virtual, are an important way to make an issue feel “personalized.”

Social Marketing

Given the often limited behavioral outcomes of information and fear campaigns, another more extensive strategy that is increasingly applied to health communication efforts is the use of “social marketing.” Social marketing applies commercial marketing methods to health issues and other social goals (Andreasen, 2006). In the same way that commercial marketing focuses on sales, the social marketing approach is all about *behavior*, with a focus on finding ways to facilitate and reward those behaviors.

Social marketing has been applied to a number of issues, with some evidence that the approach was first applied in Asia to health issues such as the distribution of condoms (Harvey, 1999). Research supports the notion that general “calls to action” without additional incentives often result in little or no behavioral change, thus supporting the potential power of social marketing (Rothschild, 1999). Social marketing efforts that increase incentives, better accessibility to products such as condoms or mosquito nets, or provide additional value to the target market should be more effective in producing behavior change than information-only efforts (Rothschild, 2009; Smith, 2009).

The main strategy to successful social marketing is to provide direct exchanges to consumers based on their needs and wants. For example, providing attractive

protection appropriate to the person, such as hard hats promoting their favorite football team, is an example of an exchange. This is rooted in economic exchange theory, which explains that people will act if they perceive they are receiving something of adequate value in return (Rothschild, 1999). How do marketers find those potential exchanges that are attractive to consumers? Social marketing draws on several tools from marketing strategy such as consumer analysis, segmenting, targeting, branding, and positioning. Current social marketing generally puts a great deal of emphasis on identification of consumer segments and targeting. The use of segmentation and targeting tools does not necessarily result in social marketing however, as these tools are also used in a number of campaigns that only focus on education or fear (e.g., Bellows, Anderson, Gould, & Auld, 2008; Berkowitz et al., 2008). So segmentation and targeting tools are a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for a social marketing effort.

What else is needed to make a “social marketing” and not a communication campaign? In commercial marketing, before a promotion occurs, the current selection of products, their price, and their availability are examined and customers’ use and satisfaction with these products is analyzed. To be effective, social marketing campaigns need to take efforts to improve the products and their variety, reduce the costs to consumers, and increase the product’s availability. For example, in one attempt to reduce drunk driving, used limousines were purchased and used to transport people to and from bars where they would be drinking (Rothschild, Mastin, & Miller, 2006). When done correctly the communication component is only applied later, largely to provide awareness of the product or service; and sometimes mass communication may not even be necessary if the marketing program can grow organically using word-of-mouth communication to disseminate awareness of the program.

Theorists suggest that communication efforts work best when they constitute an integrated part of an overall marketing effort (Alden, Basil, & Deshpande, 2011). A focus on communication as the sole basis of social marketing is almost always a mistake – social marketing is not a matter of finding the right way to *say* something so much as it is a matter of understanding a problem, finding a feasible solution, and providing an effective and practical solution to people.

Although many in the health field focus on education or fear campaigns about nutrition, and nutrition is important to many consumers, so are taste, cost, and convenience (Glanz, Basil, Maibach, Goldberg, & Snyder, 1998). So although people can make use of nutrition labels (Basil, Basil, & Deshpande, 2009), these information-focused approaches are missing the important human behavioral factors of taste, convenience, price, culture, and habit. Similarly, although cognitive models such as the health belief model, which examines people’s rational and intentional behavior can be used to predict food choices (Deshpande, Basil, & Basil, 2009), there are other factors that come into play, such as taste, emotion, culture, and habit. Social marketing efforts need to realize that people have already discovered foods that are tasty, convenient, and inexpensive. So instead of just suggesting that people “eat healthy,” taste-testing, recipe-development, and availability of specific options should all be

used to ensure that specific suggestions can be offered which are tasty, convenient, inexpensive, *and* nutritious.

The importance of a behavior being relatively easy to perform can be seen in dog waste bags. By providing doggie bags at the entrance to parks and such, dog owners are encouraged to pick up after their pet. So can the behavior be explained by a lack of knowledge or a lack of fear? Given the ease with which doggie bags were adopted, this is not very tenable. Instead, there is good reason to believe that the additional appeal and convenience of doggie bags can explain this phenomenon. What can we learn from this example? Finding ways to make doggie bags more available to people is critical. After these efforts are in place, communication efforts can then be used to promote these doggie bags, though in many cases this may not be necessary at all.

As I train more and more public health practioners in social marketing I become more convinced that, in order to be effective, we need to widen our approach beyond education and fear-based campaigns. Although communication is an important aspect of social marketing, to qualify as “marketing” it needs to do more by finding easy, practical, and simple solutions for people and then communicate those options to people through integrated efforts (Alden et al., 2011).

Potential

The potential of using the media for social marketing is greatest when behaviors are relatively easy. The potential is also greater when behaviors are not just encouraged, but facilitated and rewarded. In other words, making a behavior easier to perform is usually more effective than simply providing information about the problem and solution (Kotler & Roberto, 1989). The focus on behavioral approaches can be seen in a variety of social marketing efforts such as in promoting the use of bicycle helmets where efforts may involve a bike event to raise awareness, or a contest which gives away a few bike helmets (to increase their desirability) and bike helmet coupons (decrease the price and make them more attractive in the short term; e.g., Alden et al., 2011). Some have recently suggested that social marketing also works best when products that help people to perform the desired behavior are created for the target markets (Rothschild, 2009; Smith, 2009). So if the behavior can be made easier to perform, this should also increase the likelihood of compliance.

Consider, for the point of illustration, the obesity issue. Research evidence demonstrates a rising incidence of overweight and obesity (see Chapter 15, this volume). Research also demonstrates the epidemiological connection between overweight, obesity and health risks. Based on these findings, governments have decided it is important to act. So they try to convince people to avoid being overweight by becoming more active. These types of information campaigns are often where the efforts stop. People learn that to lose weight they should be more active but find it difficult for a variety of very real reasons. Perhaps they become frustrated with their own

efforts and limited success. That's when the marketing efforts kick in. Commercial enterprises use this opportunity to create or expand their fitness facilities and make them more available by opening newer or more convenient locations, opening for longer hours (some are available 24 hours a day), or offering more attractive services (such as swimming pools and babysitting). They may offer assessment and training services so users are not as intimidated by the equipment. They promote these facilities with media advertising or direct mail offering low or free introductory memberships to enroll people in these facilities and make them financially viable.

A good social marketing program not only finds out what people are doing, but what the barriers are, and then finds ways to encourage behaviors at minimal cost or effort before launching communication efforts. Examples of good government and NGO efforts in the area of physical activity can be found in a variety of efforts to promote walking and taking the stairs (e.g., Reger et al., 2002). To be successful, social marketing needs to go beyond providing information or fear to providing solutions. Efforts may include getting older people to walk together and opening shopping malls to help mitigate concerns about weather and safety. These are examples of how social marketing can go beyond merely providing information to providing actionable solutions.

In support of the importance of actionable solutions, a meta-analysis of condom distribution programs demonstrated that it was not an increase in awareness of condoms that made the programs successful, but the increased distribution and availability of the condoms (Cohen et al., 1999). Similarly, in a study of bicycle helmet use, it was not increased awareness, but coupons that lowered prices that increased compliance (Ludwig, Buchholz, & Clarke, 2005). Another effort, mentioned earlier, demonstrated that it was not increased awareness of drunk driving, but the provision of rides to drinkers that was responsible for a decrease in drunk driving (Rothschild et al., 2006). In summary, social marketing efforts that introduce new products, lower the costs, or increase the availability demonstrate more behavioral effects than information-only efforts.

Limitations

Despite the promise offered by social marketing, as in commercial marketing, intervention efforts are limited by competition. In commercial marketing, despite billions of dollars spent on advertising to promote products, a majority of new products fail, largely because of competition. In social marketing, competition can consist of people's existing behaviors, beliefs, social forces, or structural factors that stand in the way. In both commercial and social marketing, people are naturally resistant to new ideas and it is only those ideas or products that strike a chord with consumers by providing considerable value for the price that the new product or behavior has any chance for success over the competition.

Education and information efforts can be effective to the extent that the problem is a lack of knowledge. In most of the world the notion that gaining weight comes from eating more calories than one burns, that fruit and vegetables are healthy, that physical activity has a variety of health benefits, and that reducing one's exposure to environmental toxins reduces risk for cancer are all well-known. What is hard is providing a *means* for people to achieve these ends. For example, finding a way to provide fruits and vegetables to satisfy people's hunger in a way that is as tasty, convenient, and as inexpensive as unhealthy foods is difficult. Imagine the difficulty of reducing your exposure to environmental toxins, if your current home is near a powerline or your basement emits radon gas – you would need to sell your home (possibly at a loss, since the hazard is now known), move, and locate a home that would have fewer environmental risks from those factors (and others). Who can know what all these factors are? To the extent that we cannot develop viable products or solutions, social marketing efforts are, like many communication campaigns, probably limited to raising awareness of a problem or issue.

Review of Previous Studies

In this section, the assertions about the power and limitations of social marketing will be examined in a review of research in social marketing interventions from around the world. This review demonstrates how important it is to provide more than just information, but to provide effective interventions with products that are affordable and easy to use.

The general approach to social marketing is very different in different parts of the world. In what we often term the “developed world,” largely English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, many efforts labelled as “social marketing” tend to consist of information and fear appeals. This can be seen across a range of social marketing interventions. These include alcohol use (DeJong et al., 2006; Gomberg, Schneider, & DeJong, 2001), food choice (Bellows, Cole, & Gabel, 2005; Reger, Wootan, Booth-Butterfield, & Smith, 1998), physical activity (Bauman, Bellew, Owen, & Vita, 2001; Bellows et al., 2008; Berkowitz et al., 2008; Hillsdon, Cavill, Nanchahal, Diamond, & White, 2001; Huhman et al., 2005, 2007; Huhman, Bauman, & Bowles, 2008), sexually transmitted diseases (Ahrens et al., 2006; Bull et al., 2008; Darrow & Biersteker, 2008; Futterman et al., 2001; Kennedy, Mizuno, Seals, Myllyluoma, & Weeks-Norton, 2000; Montoya et al., 2005; Plant et al., 2008), and tobacco use (Dietz, Delva Woolley, & Russello, 2008; Hersey et al., 2003). For almost all of these interventions, the entire effort was built around informational messages that simply provided information to the target audiences.

When examining the effects of these campaigns, the results are similar to what was found with other information and fear campaigns, specifically that most efforts demonstrate change in knowledge or awareness (e.g., Dietz et al., 2008; Hersey

et al., 2003; Huhman et al., 2008). Similarly, social norms campaigns often report a decrease in people's estimates of how prevalent an undesirable behavior is in others (e.g., Davis et al., 2007; DeJong et al., 2006; Gomber et al., 2001), but with regard to actual behavioral outcomes, the effects of these efforts are otherwise limited. A few studies have demonstrated that people will perform a behavior that is relatively simple or cost-free, such as getting a free STD test (Futerman et al., 2001), switching from high- to low-fat milk (Reger et al., 1998), or wearing a condom (Kennedy et al., 2000). In other cases any effects were limited to those populations who reported greater awareness of the campaign, which suggests that information was a helpful but insufficient condition for behavior change (Huhman et al., 2007; Montoya et al., 2005; Plant et al., 2008). For the majority of these attempts, however, the efforts resulted in no significant changes in behavior (e.g., Bull et al., 2008; Darrow & Biersteker, 2008; Dietz et al., 2008; Hersey et al., 2003; Huhman et al., 2008).

In the case of social marketing efforts focused on the "developing world," the efforts are often more varied. Of course there are some programs that use communication-only campaigns. These can be seen in efforts to alter behaviors such as antibiotic use (Goossens et al., 2006), condom use (Meekers, Agha, & Klein, 2005), and multivitamin use (Warnick et al., 2004). However, many social marketing efforts are based on marketing efforts that include increasing the availability of products such as condoms (Eloundou-Enyengue, Meekers, & Calves, 2005; Foss, Hossain, Vickerman, & Watts, 2007) or mosquito netting (Abdulla et al., 2001; Minja et al., 2001; Schellenberg et al., 2001). In these cases, the effectiveness of these approaches is measured in terms such as product ownership (Minja et al., 2001) or product use (Abdulla et al., 2001; Eloundou-Enyengue et al., 2005; Foss et al., 2007; Warnick et al., 2004). The most impressive efforts often show measureable differences in blood markers such as haemoglobin, prevalence of anemia (e.g., Abdulla et al., 2001), and even measures such as infant survival (Schellenberg et al., 2001). In these cases, increasing the availability of condoms or mosquito netting and providing them at affordable prices resulted in efforts that were not only effective in changing knowledge and attitudes, but behavior that resulted in meaningful measures of population health.

Conclusions

Evidence supports the notion that social marketing is most effective when it goes beyond education to provide simple behavioral alternatives, and when these options are consistent with individual beliefs and social forces. In the same way that commercial marketers bring products to the market such as fitness facilities or fruits and vegetables, finding ways to make products more accessible is a critical part of social marketing. As commercial marketers use coupons to reduce the cost of a product, social marketing interventions should also find ways to increase availability and lower price to encourage and shape desired behaviors.

The evidence suggests that the effects of social marketing are limited when focused solely on fear. Fear can cause people to bury their head in the sand and avoid additional messages (e.g., Witte, 1992). Adding easy and simple ways that people can protect themselves is more effective than focusing on fear itself (e.g., Witte & Allen, 2000). The evidence suggests that the effects of these efforts are limited by competing forces such as the cost and difficulty of safety gear. It is difficult to overcome inertia. It is also difficult when different parties act at cross-purposes, such as in the example in which churches and public health agencies fought as to whether abstinence or condoms should be the target, and distracted from the goal of AIDS prevention (Basil, 2008).

This chapter has proposed that social marketing has its greatest potential when it is not limited to information and fear but finds ways to make the performance of desired behaviors easier, when it finds ways to fit those behaviors within the context of existing beliefs, and finds ways to work out solutions that are amenable to a variety of consumers and constituents. Conversely, this chapter has also shown that social marketing is limited by existing beliefs, social forces, and other structural factors. As a result, social marketing is most effective when we can develop viable products or solutions that help people find alternative behaviors that are relatively easy to perform, such as wearing a condom, using mosquito netting to reduce malaria, or getting an inoculation to prevent disease.

Some of the desire to rely on appeals or interventions that focus on information and fear are likely to be as a result of habit, funding and mandates. The idea of shaping behavior can be seen as too coercive, so funding organizations, government agencies, and NGOs are often more comfortable with familiar education campaigns and fear appeals (Smith, Brugha, & Zwi, 2001). As a result, it is important to figure out a solution that is amenable to all constituencies. The social marketing approach requires finding those potential common solutions and employing methods of shaping behavior. As people become more aware of the potential of social marketing we hope they will be more likely to employ it to encourage positive change in health and social behaviors.

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Using Message Framing in Health-Related Persuasion

Theory and Evidence

Xiaoli Nan

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a review of theory and evidence concerning the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages in health contexts, with particular attention to research surrounding proposed moderators of message framing effects, including type of health behavior advocated, message recipients' involvement with the health issue and approach/avoidance tendency, and desirability of the end-state emphasized in the message. The review suggests that several theoretical perspectives including prospect theory, dual-process theories, and regulatory focus theory have been used to explain message framing effects. It is argued that there has been a lack of effort to integrate the different theoretical perspectives into a broader framework based on which the relative effects of message framing can be understood. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the current state of research and directions for future studies.

Defining Message Framing

Developing effective messages is central to the planning of public communication campaigns (see Chapter 24, this volume). Many communication campaigns address public health issues. One of the most important aspects of designing health messages

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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is to determine how to present information in a way that achieves maximum persuasive impact. Research on message framing conducted in the past fifteen years or so has shown that factually equivalent information, when presented in different formats, can lead to different persuasive outcomes. Gain-framed health messages that focus on the advantages of adopting the recommended behavior (e.g., “if you apply sunscreen, your skin will be protected from the sun’s relentless ultraviolet rays”) can differ systematically in their persuasiveness from loss-framed messages that emphasize the disadvantages of not engaging in the health behavior (e.g., “if you don’t apply sunscreen, your skin will be harmed by the sun’s relentless ultraviolet rays”).

However, there is no general agreement as to which message frame is consistently more persuasive. The relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed health messages appears to be influenced by an array of message- and audience-related factors, including the type of health behavior advocated (Rothman & Salovey, 1997), message recipients’ involvement with the health issue (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990), message recipients’ approach/avoidance tendency (Mann, Sherman, & Updegraff, 2004; Nan, 2008), and desirability of the end-state emphasized in the message (Lee & Aaker, 2004; Nan, 2007a). This chapter will provide a review of theory and evidence surrounding each of these factors as moderators of message framing effects and conclude with an assessment of the current state of research and directions for future studies. Practical implications and social significance of this body of research are also briefly discussed.

Framing is an important construct in communication research. The notion that how information is framed systematically influences message processing and attitude formation has spawned several streams of research with distinct operationalizations of framing. Research on *attribute framing*, for example, examines the persuasive effects of focusing on the positive versus negative attribute of an advocated position or object. For instance, an advertisement for a brand of ground beef can either focus on the positive attribute (e.g., “75% lean”) or highlight the negative attribute (e.g., “25% fat”). Typically, messages with positive attribute framing receive better evaluations and are more persuasive than those with negative attribute framing (Levin & Gaeth, 1988). Another type of commonly studied framing is *news framing*, which is often examined in the context of political communication (see Chapter 3). On the subject of healthcare, for instance, a news story can frame it as an ethical issue versus a material issue (Shah, Domke, & Wackman, 1996) or use a thematic frame that focuses on collective trends versus an episodic frame that highlights personal experiences (Iyengar, 1990). The use of different news frames often leads to distinct cognitive processing and attitudes (Scheufele, 1999).

Message framing as reviewed in this chapter shares similarities with other types of framing but also has its distinct features. The three types of framing (i.e., attribute framing, news framing, and message framing) share an important feature in that they all involve subtle language alteration of some sort. But they also have significant differences. First, the three types of framing are different in whether the frames try to maintain factually equivalent information. In this regard, message framing and

attribute framing are similar in that the frames contain factually equivalent information. News framing, on the other hand, does not share this feature as different news frames typically convey different information (e.g., ethical topics are factually different from material topics). Second, message framing and attribute framing are different in their operationalizations. In message framing, both gain and loss frames supply reasons why people should comply with the advocacy. In attribute framing, however, a positive frame stresses the fact that the advocacy is good (e.g., the beef is 75% lean), whereas a negative frame highlights the fact that the advocacy is bad (e.g., the beef is 25% fat), although the intention is really to show how people should dismiss this fact (e.g., the beef has *only* 25% fat).

Differences in framing operationalizations imply that the underlying psychological mechanisms through which framing influences persuasion may be different. For attribute framing, it has been suggested that focusing on the negative attribute of an object leads to activations of unfavorable associations, whereas highlighting the positive attribute activates favorable associations (Levin & Gaeth, 1988). Positive attribute framing, therefore, is often more persuasive than negative attribute framing. The effects of news framing are also grounded in the activation of different thoughts and associations (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Price & Tewksbury, 1997). Depending on the nature of the thoughts and associations activated (positive or negative), different news frames can result in different attitudes.

Compared to attribute framing and news framing, message framing appears to work through different psychological mechanisms. Examining the moderators of the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages reveals important psychological processes at work. But first, a review of the original body of research that inspired investigations of message framing is necessary.

The Origins of Message Framing

Research on message framing is rooted in the Nobel Prize-winning work of economists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman. Classic economic theories assume that human beings are rational. People's preferences, therefore, should not be affected by variations in irrelevant features of options or outcomes. However, this assumption was challenged by Tversky and Kahneman, who demonstrate that preferences are influenced by how the options are framed, a seemingly irrelevant feature (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Specifically, an individual's preference for a solution that will lead to an uncertain outcome (i.e., a risky solution) versus one that will result in a certain outcome (i.e., a non-risky solution) is predictably influenced by the framing of the outcome (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). In one of their studies (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981), participants were asked to imagine a disease that would kill 600 people. They were then asked to choose between two plans that could alleviate the situation. Plan A had a certain outcome and thus was a non-risky solution, whereas

Plan B had an uncertain outcome and thus was a risky choice. Plan A was either gain-framed (“if Plan A is adopted, 200 people will be saved”) or loss-framed with an equivalent outcome (“if Plan A is adopted, 400 people will die”). Similarly, Plan B was either gain-framed (“if Plan B is adopted, there is a one-third probability that 600 people will be saved and a two-thirds probability that no people will be saved”) or loss-framed with an equivalent outcome (“if Plan B is adopted, there is a one-third probability that nobody will die and a two-thirds probability that 600 people will die”). The most interesting finding was that when facing the gain-framed plans, participants preferred the non-risky solution (i.e., Plan A), but when facing the loss-framed plans, they preferred the risky solution (i.e., Plan B).

Tversky and Kahneman explained the findings with prospect theory, which posits that the observed preference reversal is due to different value functions that are associated with decision-making involving gains versus losses. Specifically, the value function in the domain of gains is typically concave, representing a tendency for being risk averse, while the value function in the domain of losses is convex, suggesting a tendency for being risk-seeking. The theory also postulates that people have a greater tendency to avoid a loss than to seek a gain with the same amount of expected value. For example, avoiding losing one hundred dollars in a gambling game may be perceived as being more important than winning one hundred dollars. This claim is represented by a steeper value function in the domain of losses than in the domain of gains.

Research on Message Framing: An Overview

Inspired by framing effects observed in the domain of decision-making, persuasive communication researchers explore whether similar framing effects can be observed in the area of persuasion. Instead of focusing on people’s choice behaviors under the influence of framing, persuasive communication researchers examine whether people’s compliance with a persuasive message is affected by how the message is framed. The majority of studies on message framing have been conducted in health-related contexts.

A seminal study on message framing effects was Meyerowitz and Chaiken’s (1987) inquiry on women’s compliance with a health message encouraging the performance of breast self-examination (BSE). The researchers showed two groups of female participants two different versions of the health message. One version of the health message was gain-framed (e.g., “research shows that women who do BSE have an increased chance of finding a tumor in the early, more treatable stage of the disease”), while the other version was loss-framed (e.g., “research shows that women who do not do BSE have a decreased chance of finding a tumor in the early, more treatable stage of the disease”). It was found that participants who read the loss-framed message manifested more positive BSE attitudes, intentions, and behaviors than those who read the gain-framed message.

Following Meyerowitz and Chaiken's (1987) original research, numerous studies have investigated the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages. In a recent meta-analysis, O'Keefe and Jensen (2006) identified over a hundred published articles, dissertations, and conference papers reporting findings on message framing effects. Despite the abundance of research, there is no general consensus as to whether one frame is more persuasive than the other. In fact, O'Keefe and Jensen's (2006) meta-analysis concludes that gain- and loss-framed messages do not generally differ in their persuasiveness. The lack of a main effect of message framing indicates two possibilities, (1) gain- and loss-framed messages truly do not have differential persuasive effects, (2) the two frames do exert different persuasive impact, with one frame being more persuasive under certain circumstances and the other frame being more effective under other situations. In the latter case, the meta-analysis would not be able to detect an overall effect of message framing because the opposing effects of message framing observed in different studies could have been cancelled out.

It appears that the second possibility is a promising one as research has shown that gain- and loss-framed messages do differ systematically in their persuasiveness when certain conditions are met. Indeed, a number of moderators in the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages have been identified. These include the type of health behavior (Rothman & Salovey, 1997), issue involvement (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990), approach/avoidance motivation (Mann et al., 2004; Nan, 2008), and desirability of end-states (Lee & Aaker, 2004; Nan, 2007a). The next section provides a review of research on each of these moderators, focusing on both theory and evidence.

Moderators of Message Framing Effects

Type of Health Behavior

According to Rothman and his colleagues (Rothman, Kelly, Hertel, & Salovey, 2003; Rothman & Salovey, 1997), health behaviors can be categorized into three broad classes. *Detection behaviors* are performed to provide information about the presence or absence of a potential undesirable health outcome. *Prevention behaviors* focus on averting the onset or development of a health problem. Finally, *recuperative behaviors* are any interventions undertaken to correct or alleviate an existing health problem. Drawing upon prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), the researchers argue that, "the effect of a particular frame on people's willingness to perform a behavior is contingent on whether the option under consideration is perceived to reflect a risk-averse or risk-seeking course of action" (Rothman et al., 2003, p. 281). Because detection behaviors can inform people that they may be sick, to initiate the behavior can be considered a risky decision. It then follows that loss frames will be more effective in promoting detection behaviors than gain frames. On the other hand,

because prevention and recuperative behaviors forestall or help the recovery of a health problem, they provide a relatively certain, desirable outcome. Thus, gain frames are expected to be more effective in promoting prevention and recuperative behaviors than loss frames.

Several studies have shown that loss-framed messages are more persuasive than gain-framed messages in promoting detection behaviors, including breast self-examination (e.g., Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987), mammography (e.g., Cox & Cox, 2001; Finney & Iannotti, 2002), and colorectal cancer screening (e.g., Myers et al., 1991). While no study has found gain-framed messages to be more effective than loss-framed messages in advocating cancer-screening behaviors (Rothman, Bartels, Wlaschin, & Salovey, 2006), a number of studies failed to detect any persuasive difference between the two frames (e.g., Lalor & Hailey, 1990; Lauver & Rubin, 1990). A recent meta-analysis (O'Keefe & Jensen, 2009) showed that loss-framed messages are slightly more effective than gain-framed messages in promoting detection behaviors, although the advantage of loss-framed messages over gain-framed messages was mainly found for breast cancer detection behaviors.

With regard to prevention behaviors, several studies have shown that gain-framed messages are more effective than loss-framed messages in promoting such behaviors, including sunscreen use (e.g., Rothman, Martino, Bedell, Detweiler, & Salovey, 1999; Rothman, Salovey, Antone, Keough, & Martin, 1993), exercise (e.g., Jones, Sinclair, & Courneya, 2003), and safe driving (e.g., Millar & Millar, 2000). A meta-analysis (O'Keefe & Jensen, 2007) indicates that gain-framed messages have a small advantage over loss-framed messages in advocating prevention behaviors, although the advantage primarily occurs for messages promoting dental hygiene behaviors.

Overall, Rothman and colleagues' prospect theory-based explanation of message framing effects provides a reasonable account for the observed evidence. In addition, the notions that gain frames work better for promoting prevention behaviors and that loss frames are more effective when advocating detection behaviors offer a useful conceptual map to health professionals when they make decisions about the type of information to be emphasized in a health message. However, their prediction that gain frames will be more effective than loss frames in promoting prevention behaviors often fails to receive support when the prevention act advocated is a type of vaccination behavior. In fact, several studies found loss-framed messages to be more effective in promoting various types of vaccination, including MMR vaccination (e.g., Abhyankar, O'Connor, & Lawton, 2008), flu vaccination (Ferguson & Gallagher, 2007), and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination (e.g., Gerend & Shepherd, 2007; Gerend, Shepherd, & Monday, 2008). One study found no difference in persuasiveness between the two frames (McCaul, Johnson, & Rothman, 2002). No study to date has shown gain-framed messages to be more effective than loss-framed messages in promoting vaccination.

What is unique about vaccination compared to other prevention behaviors that renders loss-framed messages particularly effective? One possibility is that, unlike other prevention behaviors such as using sunscreen and exercising that seem to be

safe and harmless, vaccination frequently engenders safety concerns (Ball, Evans, & Bostrom, 1998). The general public may recognize the benefits of vaccination, but at the same time may be cautious about possible side effects. Choosing to get vaccinated thus could be considered a risky choice. Thus, loss-framed messages should be expected to be more effective than gain-framed messages when promoting vaccination. Consequently, rather than making predictions about the relative effectiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages based on the function of the health behavior (i.e., prevention, detection, or recuperative), there appears to be particular utility to base our predictions on whether the outcome of performing the health behavior is risky or uncertain.

Issue Involvement

Other than the type of behavior promoted by a health message, message recipients' level of involvement with the health issue appears to be another factor that determines the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages. Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990) argue that loss frames will be more effective than gain frames when issue involvement is high, whereas the reverse will be true when issue involvement is low. Theoretical basis of these predictions is built upon dual-process theories of persuasion. Two prominent members of this theory family are the elaboration likelihood model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the heuristic systematic model (HSM; Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989). Both theories share the core assumption that people process information in two qualitatively different ways. One processing mode is more superficial or effortless, referred to as peripheral processing in the ELM and heuristic processing in the HSM. The other processing mode is more deliberative and effortful, named as central processing in the ELM and systematic processing in the HSM. According to both models, high motivation and ability to process information will lead to central or systematic processing. Under this situation, people will elaborate on the substantive content of a persuasive message that addresses the true merits of the central topic. Because negative information is often more powerful than positive information, a loss frame is expected to be more persuasive than a gain frame when message recipients are highly involved with the health issue. Indeed, research on information processing has documented a consistent asymmetric effect of negative versus positive information on people's cognitive and affective reactions (see Taylor, 1991). Negative versus positive information is often perceived as being more diagnostic and weighted more in people's judgments (Anderson, 1965; Dreben, Fiske, & Hastie, 1979; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Kanouse & Hanson, 1972). The notion that negative information receives more weight in judgment than positive information is also consistent with the idea of loss aversion specified in prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

When motivation or ability to process information is low, peripheral or heuristic processing will occur. Instead of elaborating on the substantive content of a

persuasive message, people with low motivation or ability to process information will only attend to salient cues in the persuasive message, such as attractiveness of the endorser or the valence of the message. The positive valence of gain frames presumably leads to more favorable persuasive outcomes than the negative valence of loss frames (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990).

Several studies supported the moderating role of issue involvement in the relative effects of gain- versus loss-framed messages (e.g., Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 2004). While Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy emphasize the importance of issue involvement, Rothman and Salovey (1997) suggest that depth of processing (i.e., the degree to which message recipients engage in careful message scrutiny) is the true moderating variable and any variable (including issue involvement) that influences depth of processing is expected to play a moderating role. These variables may be related to the message, the audience, or the recommended health behavior. For example, research has found that unexpected information stimulates message processing (Baker & Petty, 1994; Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Smith & Petty, 1996). Schwarz, Bless, and Bohner (1991) demonstrate that negative moods motivate systematic processing, whereas positive moods induce heuristic processing. In addition, Block and Keller (1995) have shown that perceived efficacy associated with a recommended health behavior (i.e., the degree of confidence that following the recommended health behavior will lead to the desired outcome) is negatively associated with depth of processing. They further demonstrate that when perceived efficacy is low, loss-framed messages are more effective, whereas when perceived efficacy is high, both frames are equally persuasive.

Overall, issue involvement or, more specifically depth of processing, is an important variable to consider when predicting the relative effects of gain- versus loss-framed messages. When depth of processing is minimal, message framing may have no impact on persuasion because the message is not processed adequately to have any impact on message recipients. When depth of processing is low, gain frames may have persuasive advantage over loss frames as message valence is often taken as a peripheral cue when forming judgment under this processing mode. Finally, when depth of processing is high, loss frames may be more effective than gain frames due to negativity bias (Taylor, 1991). However, it is also necessary to take into account the type of health behavior promoted when depth of processing is high. Rothman and his colleagues (Rothman et al., 1993) found that gain frames have more favorable impact than loss frames on females' sun protection behaviors, even though for females skin protection is typically a high involvement issue.

Approach/Avoidance Motivation

Another message recipient-related factor that potentially influences the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages is an individual's approach/avoidance motivation. In general, motivation theories posit two orthogonal motiva-

tion systems: behavioral inhibition system (BIS) and behavioral activation system (BAS) (Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000; Elliot & Covington, 2001). The BIS system produces avoidance motivations, rendering individuals highly sensitive to punishment or threat cues. The BAS system leads to approach motivations, which heighten sensitivity to reward or incentive cues. Overall, people with BAS are responsive to the presence or absence of positive outcomes, whereas those with BIS are sensitive to the presence or absence of negative outcomes.

The contrast between BAS and BIS is also evident in regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 2002), which distinguishes between two basic types of self-regulatory orientations toward goal pursuit: promotion focus and prevention focus. "A promotion focus represents goal pursuit in terms of hopes and aspirations (ideals) and entails an orientation toward accomplishment and a sensitivity to the presence and absence of gain/nongain outcomes. A prevention focus represents goal pursuit in terms of duties and obligations (oughts) and entails an orientation toward security and a sensitivity to the presence and absence of nonloss/loss outcomes" (Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004, p. 389). Although an individual can hold both a promotion and prevention focus, one orientation may be more salient or accessible than the other. Individuals who are predominantly promotion focused are more sensitive to the presence or absence of positive outcomes; those who are predominantly prevention focused are more sensitive to the presence or absence of negative outcomes.

A number of studies have demonstrated that message recipients' salient motivations (approach or avoidance) and orientations toward goal pursuit (promotion focus or prevention focus) have systematic impact on the relative persuasiveness of gain-versus loss-framed messages (Cesario et al., 2004; Lee & Aaker, 2004; Mann et al., 2004; Nan, 2008). Overall, the findings support the congruity hypothesis in that a health message is most persuasive when the frame and the motivation are congruent (i.e., a loss frame matched with an avoidance motivation or a prevention focus, a gain frame matched with an approach motivation or a promotion focus). Mann et al. (2004), for instance, measured participants' approach/avoidance motivation with the BIS/BAS scale. The participants were presented with a health message promoting dental flossing that was either gain-framed (e.g., "flossing your teeth daily removes particles of food in the mouth, avoiding bacteria, which promotes great breath") or loss-framed (e.g., "if you do not floss your teeth daily, particles of food remain in the mouth, collecting bacteria, which causes bad breath"). It was found that the loss-framed message worked better for people high in avoidance motivation, whereas the gain-framed message was more effective for those high in approach motivation.

Similarly, Lee and Aaker (2004) showed that people who differ in their regulatory focus respond differently to gain- versus loss-framed messages. The researchers demonstrate that loss-framed messages are generally more effective than gain-framed messages for individuals who are prevention focused. On the other hand, gain-framed messages are more persuasive than loss-framed messages for those who are promotion focused. Nan (2008) showed that matching the framing of a public service

announcement with message recipients' regulatory focus (a gain frame with a promotion focus, a loss frame with a prevention focus) can improve the persuasiveness of the message. Similar results were found by Cesario et al. (2004). In explaining the findings supporting the congruity hypothesis, scholars cited the notion of regulatory fit posited in regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 2002). Regulatory fit occurs when one's goal is matched with a strategy that is conducive of that goal. The theory argues that there is a natural fit between promotion-focused goals and pursuing these goals with eager means (e.g., achieve gains, avoid nongains), and between prevention-focused goals and pursuing these goals with vigilant means (e.g., avoid losses, ensure nonlosses). When the goal and means of goal pursuit fit with each other, people will experience a positive affect, which can be best characterized as a "feeling good" experiential state. Importantly, this positive affect may be transferred to message evaluations (Cesario et al., 2004). Lee and Aaker (2004) further argue that regulatory fit enhances message-processing fluency (i.e., the ease with which people process messages), which has a positive impact on message responses and evaluations. Gain-framed messages, by highlighting an eager means of goal pursuit, fit promotion-focused goals. Loss-framed messages, which emphasize a vigilant means of goal pursuit, fit prevention-focused goals. For these reasons, gain-framed messages are expected to be more persuasive than loss-framed messages for message recipients who are promotion focused, whereas loss-framed messages are expected to be more effective for those who are prevention focused.

The moderating role of motivation and the moderating role of the type of health behavior promoted in message framing effects might be regulated by the same psychological mechanism (Rothman et al., 2006). To the extent that thinking about detection behavior induces a prevention mindset, health messages promoting detection behaviors may generally foster a prevention focus. To the extent that thinking about prevention behaviors engenders a promotion mindset, health messages that encourage the adoption of prevention behaviors may serve to induce a promotion focus. As a result, gain-framed messages, due to their strategic fit with promotion-focused concerns, are more effective than loss-framed messages when the advocated actions are prevention behaviors. Loss-framed messages, due to their strategic fit with prevention-focused concerns, are more persuasive when the advocated acts are detection behaviors.

Desirability of End-States

One more important moderator of message framing effects that has been proposed in the literature is the way in which message framing can be operationalized. Specifically, research suggests that there exist at least two distinct operationalizations of message framing. The first involves desirable end-states. Under this condition, a gain-framed message focuses on the desirable end-state achieved through compliance (e.g., "if you floss regularly, you will increase the likelihood that your gum is kept

healthy in the long run"). A loss-framed message highlights the desirable end-state foregone through noncompliance (e.g., "if you do not floss regularly, you will decrease the likelihood that your gum is kept healthy in the long run"). The second operationalization involves undesirable end-states. Under this situation, a gain-framed message emphasizes the undesirable end-state avoided through compliance (e.g., "if you floss regularly, you will decrease the likelihood that your gum suffers from bacterial erosion in the long run") and a loss-framed message stresses the undesirable end-state suffered through noncompliance (e.g., "if you do not floss regularly, you will increase the likelihood that your gum suffers from bacterial erosion in the long run").

The distinction between the two operationalizations of message framing appears to be similar to the difference between the two self-regulatory foci posited in regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 2002). Operationalizations focusing on desirable end-states are aligned with a promotion focus, whereas operationalizations focusing on undesirable end-states are consistent with a prevention focus. However, it is important to note that the difference between a promotion focus and a prevention focus is primarily a variation in message recipients with regard to their relatively stable dispositions. In comparison, whether a desirable or an undesirable end-state constitutes the focus of a persuasive message reflects a variation in message feature.

A few studies have shown that operationalizing message framing either in terms of desirable end-states or undesirable end-states can have systematic impact on the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages (Lee & Aaker, 2004; Nan, 2007a; Zhao & Pechmann, 2007). Lee and Aaker (2004), for example, demonstrate that a gain-framed advertisement promoting Welch's grape juice worked better than its loss-framed counterpart when both frames were operationalized in terms of desirable end-states (e.g., the gain frame: "Get Energized;" the loss frame: "Don't Miss Out on Getting Energized"). On the other hand, the loss-framed message was more effective when both frames were operationalized in terms of undesirable end-states (e.g., the gain frame: "Prevent Clogged Arteries;" the loss frame: "Don't Miss Out on Preventing Clogged Arteries"). In another study, Zhao and Pechmann (2007) further showed that the most effective message was the one that matched the frame with an appropriate type of end-state as well as message recipients' regulatory focus. Specifically, they found that prevention-focused individuals were most persuaded by loss-framed messages anchored by undesirable end-states, whereas promotion-focused individuals were most persuaded by gain-framed messages operationalized in terms of desirable end-states. Nan (2007a) found a similar pattern of results, but only among individuals who were highly motivated to process the messages. Even though a number of individual studies have identified desirability of end-states as a significant moderator of message framing effects, O'Keefe and Jensen's (2006) meta-analysis suggests that operationalizing message framing differently in terms of desirable or undesirable end-states does not appear to make much difference in the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages.

Conclusions

Understanding the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages is of both theoretical and practical importance. Current literature on message framing has shed significant insight on how and when message framing influences persuasion. The majority of the literature focuses on message framing effects in the context of health communication. Four moderating variables have garnered most research attention. These include type of health behavior, issue involvement, approach/avoidance motivation, and desirability of end-states. Each line of research proposes specific ways in which the key variable moderates the relative effectiveness of gain-versus loss-framed messages and offers explanation for the underlying psychological mechanism. First, drawing upon prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), scholars have argued that gain-framed messages should be generally more effective than loss-framed messages when the promoted health behavior is used to prevent the onset of a health problem, whereas loss-framed messages should be more persuasive when the advocated health behavior aims to detect the presence of an illness (Rothman et al., 2003; Rothman & Salovey, 1997). Second, dual-process models (Chaiken et al., 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) inform the moderating role of issue involvement. It has been suggested that people with high issue involvement are persuaded more by loss-framed messages, whereas those with low issue involvement are persuaded more by gain-framed messages (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). Finally, regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 2002) suggests that the fit between the type of goals (approach or avoidance) and the means through which to pursue them (eager or vigilant) produces a sense of feeling right, which can be transferred to the evaluation of messages or facilitate message processing. With this reasoning, a number of scholars have argued that gain-framed messages are more effective than loss-framed messages when the messages are anchored by desirable end-states (Lee & Aaker, 2004; Nan, 2007a) or when the message recipients have approach motivations (Mann et al., 2004). On the other hand, loss-framed messages should enjoy a persuasive advantage when the messages focus on undesirable end-states or the message recipients hold avoidance motivations.

In conclusion, multiple psychological processes regulate the relative persuasiveness of gain- versus loss-framed messages. To date, these psychological processes have been investigated in isolation. There is in general a lack of effort to integrate the different theoretical perspectives into a broad theoretical framework based on which the relative effects of message framing can be understood. To what extent do these processes differ qualitatively from each other? Is there a common mechanism underlying all four processes? Scholars have argued that a similar psychological mechanism may be at work with regard to the moderating role of the type of health behavior and the moderating role of desirability of end-states (Rothman et al., 2006). This common mechanism is regulatory fit. Health messages promoting detection behaviors may naturally induce prevention mindsets, whereas those advocating prevention

behaviors are likely to prime promotion mindsets. Thus, gain-framed prevention messages are more effective than loss-framed prevention messages. On the other hand, loss-framed detection messages are more persuasive than gain-framed detection messages. Further, the moderating role of desirability of end-states and the moderating role of approach/avoidance motivation are both predicted by the principle of regulatory fit. If regulatory fit explains three of the four moderating variables that have been documented, what role does issue involvement play in this big picture? Rothman and Salovey (1997) argue that for message framing to have any effect, the message must be processed with some depth. Thus, the principle of regulatory fit in message framing effects may only hold when people have sufficient motivation and ability to process the message. When motivation or ability to process the message is minimal, message framing should make no difference in persuasion. When motivation or ability to process the message is low, Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990) argue that people actually have a tendency to respond more favorably to gain-framed messages as the positivity of message valence appears to serve as a peripheral cue in attitude formation.

Recent developments in message framing research suggest that peripheral processing may not be the only mechanism that leads to a persuasive advantage of gain-framed messages. Another psychological process involving psychological reactance may play a role in inducing more negative responses to loss-framed messages relative to gain-framed messages. The theory of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974) suggests that people like to have the freedom to do certain things. When the freedom to engage in or not engage in a certain behavior is threatened or eliminated, individuals will experience reactance, a motivational state that leads them to restore their freedom. In the context of persuasive communication, freedom restoration often involves message derogation, source derogation, negative thoughts, anger, and boomerang effects (i.e., adopting the forbidden act). Recent studies have shown that loss-framed messages are often perceived as a greater threat to freedom and induce more psychological reactance than gain-framed messages (Nan, 2007b; Quick, Bates, & Wang, 2008; Reinhart, Marshall, Feeley, & Tutzauer, 2007; Zhao & Nan, 2010). For these reasons, loss-framed messages have been found to be less effective than their gain-framed counterparts (Nan, 2007b; Quick et al., 2008; Reinhart et al., 2007).

Overall, extant research on message framing has generated significant insight into the important inquiry of the relative persuasiveness of loss- versus gain-framed messages. The implications of the theory of psychological reactance for the study of message framing have only begun to be explored. More research is needed to further our understanding of how psychological reactance may play a role in message framing effects. More importantly, more research is needed to integrate the different theoretical perspectives that have been cited to explain message framing effects. An integrated view based on regulatory focus theory, dual-process theories, and the theory of psychological reactance appears to be promising. However, whether and how prospect theory offers explanatory power over and above these theories still

needs to be determined. Recent studies showing a greater persuasive advantage for loss- versus gain-framed messages demonstrate strong applicability of prospect theory in message framing (Abhyankar et al., 2008; Ferguson & Gallagher, 2007; Gerend & Shepherd, 2007; Gerend et al., 2008). The extent to which prospect theory can be integrated into the broad framework needs to be considered. In line with the effort of developing a more integrated framework, empirical studies that examine the role of multiple moderating variables in a single design will provide appropriate tests for such a framework. Finally, how message framing can be strategically used in promoting recuperative behaviors calls for more systematic inquiry. Investigating message framing effects in promoting a complete spectrum of health behaviors and appreciating the differences within each broad type of health behaviors (e.g., vaccination versus exercise as prevention behaviors) will offer important theoretical insights into how message framing works in health communication.

While research on message framing effects offers a number of guidelines for how to construct effective health messages, to be able to truly follow these guidelines in practice would require significant formative research designed to pretest and evaluate alternative messages before the launch of a full-scale communication campaign. Formative research will provide insights into which framing executions are effective for particular combinations of topics and message recipient-related characteristics. Health communication has been increasingly recognized as an important component to comprehensive national/local programs that seek to protect and promote public health. Whether in the area of healthcare delivery or in the realm of health promotion, effective communication is often key to success. Applying what we know about persuasive communication in general, and message framing effects in particular, to the development of health communication messages is a critical step toward improving communication effectiveness and, ultimately, individual health and well-being.

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The Intended and Unintended Effects of Advertising on Children

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ABSTRACT

The effects of advertising on children have often been divided into two general types: intended effects (e.g., children's brand awareness, preferences, and purchase requests) and unintended effects (e.g., materialistic orientations, parent-child conflicts, and unhealthy eating habits). The first part of this chapter discusses theories of advertising processing. The second part reviews the literature on intended and unintended advertising effects. The third part addresses the factors that may moderate advertising effects, focusing on the role of children's development and parental communication. Finally, we discuss the social significance of the conclusions that emerge from the literature.

Children's Processing of Advertising

The past three decades have witnessed a dramatic commercialization of children's media environment. The financial attractiveness of the youth market, in combination with the growing number of media tools at the marketers' disposal, has led to significant increases in child-directed advertising. This chapter discusses the effects of advertising on children. These effects have often been divided into two general types: intended effects (e.g., children's brand awareness, preferences, and purchase requests) and unintended

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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effects (e.g., materialistic orientations, parent–child conflicts, and unhealthy eating habits). The first part of this chapter will discuss theories of advertising processing. The second part reviews the literature on intended and unintended advertising effects. The third part addresses the factors that may moderate advertising effects, focusing on the role of children’s development and parental communication. Finally, we discuss the social significance of the conclusions that emerge from the literature.

Since the turn of the new millennium, advertisers targeting the youth market have rapidly adopted new media technologies including branded websites, online message systems, and “brand placement” in popular computer games. However, as yet most studies have focused on traditional television advertising (i.e., discrete advertisements of standard lengths that appear at predictable intervals in program breaks). Moreover, television viewing is still children’s predominant leisure time activity (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010), and most child-directed advertising expenditures focus on television advertising. A recent global study investigating television advertising in 11 countries showed that at peak viewing times, children were confronted with an average of 27 commercials per hour (Kelly et al., 2010). Therefore, this chapter focuses predominantly on the effects of television advertising. In addition, in the theoretical sections, we also include considerations regarding non-traditional advertising practices

The existing child and advertising literature has predominantly focused on the outcomes of advertising exposure, while only sporadic attention has been devoted to the underlying mechanisms of the persuasion process (Austin, 2001; Austin & Johnson, 1997; Buijzen, 2007; Livingstone & Helsper, 2006). To understand how children process advertising, this chapter draws upon the rich theoretical and empirical work on adult persuasion processes. The adult advertising literature encompasses numerous models of persuasion, although most authors agree that persuasion can occur through several processes. The two most widely adopted multiple-process models are the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996) and the heuristic systematic model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; see Chapter 26, this volume). Although those models differ in several respects, they share the fundamental assumption that under some conditions, people process a persuasive message systematically and carefully (referred to as the systematic or central process) and at other times, they rely on simple cues or shortcuts, using low-effort mechanisms to respond to a message (the heuristic or peripheral process). Over the past decade there has been increasing attention toward a third even less elaborate process, characterized by a primacy of automatic, affective, and unconscious reactions: the automatic or experiential process (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999).

The three persuasion processes are characterized by varying levels of *cognitive elaboration* in response to a message – that is, the recipients’ level of processing of the available information in the immediate persuasion context. Cognitive elaboration, in turn, relates to the recipients’ level of attention to and awareness of the message and to their motivation and ability to process the message effortfully. In addition, each of the three persuasion processes comprises different mechanisms that lead to an effect. Thus, although each process may have an intended or unintended

effect, the specific mediating mechanisms via which this may occur differ in accordance with the processing route taken. Importantly, children's relatively immature advertising and consumer skills (e.g., advertising literacy, marketplace experience, brand memory, and consumption autonomy) are likely to affect their advertising processing. Before elaborating on the role of development, we first discuss the various processes and their intended and unintended outcomes.

Systematic persuasion processing is based on relatively extensive, deliberate, and effortful cognitive elaboration. For systematic processing to occur, the child must show high attention to and awareness of the message, and be highly motivated and able to process all available information. When children are concerned, it is relevant to distinguish between two levels of systematic processing. At the most elaborate level, critical systematic processing, an awareness of the persuasive nature of the message is involved, with the recipient actively applying the relevant persuasion knowledge or advertising literacy. At a less elaborate level, noncritical systematic processing involves a high awareness of the message or brand, without awareness of its persuasive intent. In the systematic process, persuasion mechanisms leading to attitude change involve active learning mechanisms and formulation of cognitive responses, such as pro- and counterargumentation to message claims and deliberation over the message source. The strength of the effect may depend on, for example, the strength of the persuasive arguments or the credibility of the message source (Petty, Cacioppo, Strathmann, & Priester, 2005).

Heuristic persuasion processing is characterized by a moderate level of cognitive elaboration. Compared to the systematic process, the recipient uses merely moderate to low levels of message attention and awareness, and a low motivation and ability to process the message. Within the heuristic process, the recipient looks for an easy way to form an overall evaluation of the product or brand and thus relies on relatively simple and low-effort decision strategies. Therefore, consumer defenses are less likely to affect this type of processing, when compared to systematic processing (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006). The mechanisms leading to persuasion involve relatively passive learning and information retrieval mechanisms, such as social learning and consumer cultivation (Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2005). The outcome of the heuristic process may depend on simple heuristic cues, such as number of persuasive arguments, source attractiveness, and product symbolism. Current marketing practices, particularly those aimed at children, rely heavily on this type of processing, given the increased focus on emotion- and entertainment-based strategies in persuasive messages rather than information and rational argumentation.

Finally, in *automatic persuasion processing*, advertising exposure leads to attitude change without explicit attention to or awareness of the persuasive communication (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999): Recipient motivation and ability to process are not required. Consumer defenses are unlikely to be activated, because recipients are often unaware that they are being targeted. Highly embedded and stealth forms of marketing rely on this type of processing. Explicit recall of the persuasive message and the advertised product or brand will be low, yet implicit brand memory and attitude

changes can be detected, for example through implicit recognition and association tests (Owen, Lewis, Auty, & Buijzen, 2010; Yang & Roskos-Ewoldson, 2007).

In the automatic persuasion process, persuasion occurs through implicit and affect-based learning mechanisms, such as evaluative conditioning (i.e., pairing a brand with affectively laden stimuli such as celebrity endorsers or pleasant pictures) and affect transfer (i.e., the positive affect associated with the media experience transfers to the brand). In this process, brand exposure leads to more fluent processing when the brand is encountered again. This facilitated processing fluency leads to a sense of familiarity that may, in turn, be misconstrued as a beneficial quality, resulting in positive affect toward the brand. The strength and direction of the effect within the automatic process can be determined by, for example, exposure duration and the valence of the message. For example, the positive affect associated with an entertaining advergame (i.e., a custom-built online game designed to promote a brand) becomes transferred to the brand (i.e., brand attitude change) outside conscious awareness.

Advertising Processing and Advertising Effects

Systematic, heuristic, and automatic persuasion processing may each lead to intended and unintended effects. However, the strength and endurance of the effect may differ according to the processing route taken. For example, recent literature on attitude formation suggests that different levels of processing may result in different types of attitudes, which in turn affect different types of consumer decisions. Specifically, lower levels of processing are more likely to result in implicit attitude formation, which plays a more important role in spontaneous and impulsive consumer behavior. Systematically formed attitudes are likely to be more explicit and predict more conscious and deliberate consumer decisions (Petty, Fazio, & Briñol, 2009). Unfortunately, the variables revealing the persuasion process and its particular outcome, such as implicit versus explicit measures, have largely been ignored in the research literature on children and advertising. Yet the few studies that have recently begun to explore this domain suggest that the mechanisms of adult persuasion also apply to children, for example revealing processing fluency mechanisms among young children (Auty & Lewis, 2004; Owen et al., 2010).

Intended Advertising Effects

Intended effects include the effects of advertising as anticipated by advertisers, marketers, and manufacturers of children's products. They may wish, for example, to influence children's brand awareness, brand preferences, and purchase requests. Intended effects have received ample research attention, mostly from marketing

researchers driven by the question as to how to target the child market in the most effective way. Unfortunately, most of the commercial studies are usually not available to the academic world. A literature search in the major social science databases shows that approximately 50 academic studies have been published on the intended effects of advertising on children. These studies can be roughly divided into three categories: studies on (1) cognitive effects (i.e., brand awareness), (2) affective effects (i.e., brand attitudes and preferences), and (3) behavioral effects (i.e., purchase requests to parents and consumption).

Cognitive Effects

Brand awareness is one's active and passive knowledge of a particular brand. Research on the brand awareness of young children has focused on two aspects of brand awareness: brand recognition and brand recall. Both brand recognition and recall have usually been operationalized by showing children a series of brand logos, brand characters, or commercials. In the case of brand recall, children were asked to name the specific brand when cued by the stimulus. In the case of brand recognition, they were invited to choose from a number of available visual options.

Both brand recognition and recall are important when making purchase decisions. For a decision for a particular brand in the retail environment, only recognition is necessary because the various alternatives are alongside one another on the shelf. For a decision to be made in another context, recall is necessary, because the various alternatives are not available at that time. In order to be able to function as a consumer, a child must therefore be capable of both brand recognition and recall. The relation between advertising and children's brand awareness has been studied in two ways. There is correlational research, in which the relationship between the frequency that children watch television and their brand awareness is determined. In addition, there is experimental research, in which children are shown one or more commercials for a particular brand, after which their brand awareness is determined.

The correlational studies investigating brand recognition all found that children who watched a great deal of television could recognize more brand logos and/or brand characters (Derscheid, Kwon, & Fang, 1996; Fischer, Schwartz, Richards, Goldstein, & Rojas, 1991; Valkenburg & Buijzen, 2005). However, the correlational research on the brand recall of children has come up with less clear results. In a study by Ward, Wackman, and Wartella (1977), children of 4 to 12 years of age were asked to name as many brands as possible from a particular product group. Although most products that were named were those that were advertised a lot on television, the relation between watching television and brand recall was not significant. However, with older teenagers, from 15 to 18 years of age, a positive relation was found (Ward & Wackman, 1971).

The experimental studies yielded similar patterns of results. As in the case of the correlational studies, in all experiments exposure to commercials had a considerable effect on the brand recognition of the children. In a study by Macklin (1983), for example, 4- and 5-year-old children were shown three commercials, one of which

was for a cereal brand. After seeing just one commercial, 61% of the 4-year-olds and 65% of the 5-year-olds could recognize the cereal brand. However, the experimental studies also revealed that the brand recall of young children was affected less by advertising than their brand recognition. However, this does not seem to hold for adolescents. A study by Dubow (1995), among 13- to 17-year-olds demonstrated that television advertising has a large effect on both the brand recognition and brand recall of adolescents, even greater than its effect on adults.

In conclusion, both the correlational research and experimental research on brand awareness shows that the influence of advertising on the brand recall of young children is smaller than its influence on their brand recognition. However, among adolescents, advertising exposure affects both brand recognition and recall. An explanation for this finding is that recall memory requires greater cognitive efforts than recognition memory (Siegler, 1998). Recalling something requires a mental journey to a particular information unit in memory and then, in a second step, an evaluation of whether the activated information unit is the correct one. In the case of recognition memory, only the second step is necessary. Most recall tasks, particularly those in which children have to come up with the brand name themselves, are probably too difficult for young children, whose memory abilities have not yet fully developed. Perhaps so difficult that advertising has little or no effect on their brand recall. An explanation for the finding that advertising does affect the brand recall of adolescents, is that older children possess better strategies to aid their memory, and have more brand-related knowledge and experience.

Affective Effects

This type of research focuses on the question of whether advertising can influence brand attitudes and preferences. Attitudes in general and brand attitudes in particular, are difficult to influence, in any case more difficult than brand awareness (Petty et al., 2009). Even the youngest of children have distinct ideas on what they like and dislike (Valkenburg, 2004). Their attitudes towards brands are determined by many factors, including their gender, cognitive level, temperament, media preferences, and their susceptibility to peer influence (Moschis, 1987). All these factors determine their selective exposure and attention to media content and advertising, and, as a result, the effects of these media contents. If children are not interested in the content of a commercial, it is unlikely that their brand attitudes and preferences will be influenced by it.

The research literature on affective effects of advertising can also be divided into correlational and experimental studies. Atkin (1975) was one of the first to find in a correlational study that exposure to advertising was not enough on its own to influence the brand preferences of children. He asked 755 children how often they had seen a certain commercial for a *Snoopy* pencil sharpener. He also asked them whether they liked the commercial and pencil sharpener. Initially he found a significant relationship between the number of times that children had seen the commercial and their attitude towards the pencil sharpener. That significant relationship, however,

disappeared once Atkin controlled for children's attitude towards the commercial. This means that children's liking of the commercial moderated the relation between exposure frequency and attitude toward the product. Other correlational research confirmed that the brand preferences of children are heavily influenced by their preference for the specific commercial (Derbaix & Bree, 1997; Moore & Lutz, 2000).

A number of correlational studies did find positive relations between children's exposure to advertising and their attitudes toward commercials and brands. For example, a recent study on Australian children's food attitudes and preferences showed that commercial TV viewing was associated with more positive attitudes toward junk food (Dixon, Scully, Wakefield, White, & Crawford, 2007). A possible explanation why some studies do find a direct relation between advertising exposure and attitudes is the strategy to include product symbolism in advertising. By depicting desirable symbolic values and appeals in commercials, such as fun, social status, attractiveness, and energy, advertising creates the impression that the advertised products are associated with those values (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000). The finding that children who watch more advertising hold more positive attitudes toward advertised products, could be explained by a longer-term consumer cultivation effect, in which higher exposure frequency leads to ideas and attitudes that are more similar to the values represented in advertising (Shrum et al., 2005).

The effect of advertising on children's brand attitude has also been investigated in various experimental studies. Some studies focused on sweets, ice cream, or cereals, others on toys and yet others on personal care products, such as anti-acne products or lipstick. Most studies showed children one or more commercials and then asked them how much they liked the advertised product. In a study by Gorn and Goldberg (1977) boys of 8 to 10 years of age were shown a cartoon. The study consisted of four experimental groups. In the first group, one commercial for a new brand of toy was shown during the cartoon. In two other groups, either two or three commercials were shown during the cartoon. A control group was not shown any commercials. The brand attitude of the boys who had seen the commercial was significantly more positive than that of those who had not seen the commercial. It made no difference whether the boys had seen the commercial once, twice, or three times. In the short-term, repetition therefore did not have any effect on the brand attitude of children.

Gorn and Florsheim (1985) showed seventy 9- and 10-year-old girls a video of 20 minutes with an interview with Steven Spielberg. During the video, half of the girls were shown two commercials of a lipstick brand and two commercials of a brand of diet drink. A preliminary investigation had revealed that the girls were interested in lipstick but not in diet drinks. The study found that the lipstick commercial had a positive effect on the girls' attitude towards lipstick, whilst the diet drink commercials had no effect on their attitude towards diet drinks. This study also confirms that a commercial has an effect on the brand attitude only if children have some degree of interest in the product or brand.

In conclusion, the various studies show that advertising can indeed affect children's brand attitudes though it does not necessarily have to happen. When a small effect

is found at the aggregate level (for all children together), there may be a larger, smaller, or even no effect at all within certain subgroups. The research also shows that the brand attitude and preferences of children are determined by many factors, including the gender and age of the child, the familiarity with the brand, the interest in the advertised brand or product, and the child's liking of the commercial.

Behavioral Effects

Most studies into behavioral effects have focused on children's purchase requests. Because children usually do not typically have the financial means to purchase products themselves, advertisers are most interested in the influence they exert on their parents' purchases. The correlational studies that have investigated the relation between advertising exposure and purchase request behavior have all demonstrated that children who often watch commercial television ask their parents for products more often (e.g., Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003b; Pine & Nash, 2002; Robertson, Ward, Gatignon, & Klees, 1989). In a study investigating children's Christmas wishes, we found that children who watched commercial television more often had more advertised products on their wish list. The brands most heavily advertised in the holiday season appeared on their wish lists most often (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000).

Several experimental studies have focused on behavioral advertising effects. Brody, Stoneman, Lane, and Sanders (1981) investigated the impact of advertising exposure on children's purchase requests. In the experimental group, 3- to 5-year-olds and their mothers were shown a cartoon with commercials for food products, while a control group watched the cartoon without the commercials. After viewing the cartoon, the mother and child went supermarket shopping. Children who had watched the cartoon with the commercials made significantly more purchase requests than children who had not seen the commercials. In a quasi-experiment among 475 Canadian 9- to 12-year-olds, Goldberg (1990) compared the household purchase of cereals among English- and French-speaking children. The English-speaking children, who were more likely to watch the US networks broadcasting most cereal advertising, mentioned significantly more advertised brands than the French-speaking children, who watched the low-advertising French-language networks.

In a more recent experiment, Auty and Lewis (2004) showed 6- to 7- and 11- to 12-year-olds a scene from the movie *Home Alone*. In both age groups, half of the children watched the scene with a brand placement for Pepsi Cola, while the other half watched the same scene without the brand placement. After watching the fragment, the children were offered to take a drink. They could choose from a tray with cans of Pepsi and Coca Cola. In the group of children who had seen the Pepsi brand placement, 62% took a can of Pepsi, while in the control group only 42% chose Pepsi. This significant effect held for both the younger and the older children.

In conclusion, most correlational and experimental studies investigating the behavioral effects of advertising observed significant relations between advertising exposure and children's requests for advertised products and brands. In addition, several studies have investigated the impact of advertising on children's food consumption

patterns. Because these studies have mostly been driven by concerns about the increasing prevalence of overweight and obese children, we discuss their findings in the following section.

Unintended Advertising Effects

Research into the unintended effects of advertising focuses on the secondary, often undesired, side effects of advertising exposure. The literature has included looking at the question of whether advertising (1) increases materialistic orientations, (2) stimulates family conflicts, (3) decreases life satisfaction, and (4) causes overweight and obesity.

Materialistic Orientations

First, a number of researchers have suggested that advertising makes children materialistic. According to these authors, advertising enhances materialism because it is designed to arouse desires for products that would not otherwise be salient. Advertising propagates the ideology that possessions are important and that desirable qualities – such as beauty, success, and happiness – can be obtained only by acquiring material possessions (Pollay, 1986).

Several studies have examined whether this is indeed the case. In the correlational studies that have been carried out, materialism has been investigated by asking children to respond to various statements, such as “It is true than money can make you happy” and: “It is my dream to be able to have expensive things.” With one exception (Ward & Wackman, 1971), all correlational studies found positive relationships between the viewing frequency of commercial television and the materialistic attitude of children and adolescents. In a recent longitudinal study in which 452 Dutch children between 8 and 12 years of age were surveyed twice with a one-year interval, we found that the causal direction pointed from advertising to materialism and not the other way around (Opree, Buijzen, Valkenburg, & Van Reijmersdal, 2010). The experimental studies, too, have shown that advertising has an effect on the materialistic attitudes of children (Goldberg & Gorn, 1978; Greenberg & Brand, 1993).

Parent–Child Conflict

Second, a number of authors have suggested that advertising contributes to conflicts between parents and children. The underlying idea here is that advertising encourages children to ask for the advertised product. Because parents naturally do not want to comply with all these product requests, they have to say “no” to their children more often. As a result, the chance of conflicts between the parent and child increases.

The question of whether advertising exposure increases the number of product requests has already been discussed. This is an intended advertising effect, and research shows that this effect exists. But do these increased product requests lead to more parent–child conflicts? The relationship between purchase requests and family

conflict has been investigated in five correlational studies. These studies all found a significant and high positive correlation between the number of purchase requests and parent–child conflicts (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003a).

An experiment conducted by Goldberg and Gorn (1978) also suggests that advertising can stimulate parent–child conflict. In this study, half of a group of 4- and 5-year-olds was shown a children's program in which a commercial for an appealing toy was inserted. The other half of the children was not shown this commercial. At the end, all children were asked whether they preferred to have a tennis ball or the advertised toy. It was added that their mothers preferred them to have the tennis ball. Children who had seen the commercial went against the wishes of their mothers more often (45.8%) than those children who had not seen the commercial (21.3%).

Decreased Life Satisfaction

Third, some researchers believe that advertising makes children less satisfied with their lives. Various hypotheses have been put forward for this claim. The first derives from the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). It is assumed that advertising paints a world for children full of beautiful people and desirable products. If children watch too many commercials and compare them to their own situation, the contrast between the two worlds can make them unhappy. The few studies that investigated this hypothesis have focused on the effect of beautiful models in magazines on the self-perception of teenage girls and female students. These studies have produced mixed results. An experiment by Richins (1991) found that female students after seeing a printed advertisement with a beautiful female model felt less good about themselves. In a study by Martin and Kennedy (1993), conducted among girls of 9 to 18 years of age, no influence was found of advertising on the way the girls perceived their own looks. See Chapter 15 for a more detailed discussion of media and body image.

Another hypothesis about the relation between advertising exposure and decreased life satisfaction involves materialism as a mediating factor. It is generally assumed that advertising-induced materialism results in decreased life satisfaction, because materialistic people are assumed to be less satisfied with their lives. Materialistic people consider objects as an important means to gain happiness. When the products fail to yield the promised state of happiness, unhappiness will follow. As described above, there is evidence for a relation between advertising exposure and materialism. However, although the relation between materialism and life dissatisfaction has been established among adults (Wright & Larsen, 1993), it has as yet not been found among children. In conclusion, the research into the relation between advertising and life satisfaction is too scarce and scattered to draw decisive conclusions.

Overweight and Obesity

Finally, advertising is often named as one of the possible causes for the increasing prevalence of overweight and obese children. Critics hold advertising responsible for the problem of childhood obesity because of its abundant promotion of unhealthy

food, that is products containing relatively high proportions of fat, sugar, and salt (Matthews, Cowburn, Rayner, Longfield, & Powell, 2004). Many studies have shown that exposure to food advertising leads to less healthy dietary patterns among children. In a household-diary study among 234 parents of children aged 4 to 12, in which we compared children's media use with their consumption behavior during four days, we found that children's exposure to food advertising was associated not only with their consumption of advertised brands (e.g., Lay's chips) but also with their consumption of the unhealthy advertised product categories (e.g., savory snacks in general) (Buijzen, Schuurman, & Bomhof, 2008b).

Most researchers also agree that exposure to advertising does increase the chance of being overweight (McGinnis, Gootman, & Kraak, 2006). However, the observed relations are often relatively small, especially when compared to other influences such as parental dietary patterns. In addition, it is often difficult to disentangle the specific role of advertising from other factors associated with television viewing. In the diary-survey study described above (Buijzen, Schuurman, & Bomhof, 2008a), we distinguished between advertising exposure and general television viewing behavior and investigated three alternative explanations for the relation between children's television viewing behavior and their weight status: (a) the advertising effects hypothesis (i.e., advertising exposure stimulates intake of energy-dense food products), (b) the eating while viewing hypothesis (i.e., television viewing is linked to total food intake), and (c) the activity displacement hypothesis (i.e., television viewing replaces more energy-demanding leisure activities). Our analyses showed that children's food advertising exposure and television viewing time were both associated with an unbalanced diet. In addition, television-viewing time was related negatively to outdoor playing time. However, recent longitudinal research suggests that in the long-term, advertising exposure is the most important predictor for being overweight and for obesity, lending the most convincing support for the advertising effects hypothesis (Goris, Petersen, Stamatakis, & Veerman, 2009; Zimmerman & Bell, 2010).

In conclusion, the literature shows that exposure to advertising has intended and unintended effects on children. However, these effects are not uniform and vary in strength for different types of children. Several moderating influences have been investigated, including individual and social factors. In the following sections we will focus on the factors that have received most attention in the academic debate: the role of development and the role of parents and caretakers.

The Role of Development

It is generally assumed that younger children are more susceptible to the effects of advertising than older children and adults, because young children lack the skills, knowledge, and experience to critically evaluate advertising. It is also assumed that when children have obtained the necessary cognitive and information-processing

skills, they become less susceptible to advertising effects (cf. Kunkel et al., 2004). Indeed, there is rather convincing evidence that such “advertising literacy” develops with age (Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2010). Remarkably, reviews of the advertising effects literature that have systematically investigated the role of development have not found conclusive evidence that age affects the strength of advertising effects (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003a; Livingstone & Helsper, 2006). Moreover, recent studies on the role of advertising literacy have found that even when children possess the knowledge and skills to critically process an advertising message, they can still be persuaded by it (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006; Mallinckrodt & Mizerski, 2007; Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2009).

These findings call into question the alleged moderating role of (literacy) development. A plausible explanation is provided by current insights that advertising effectiveness is not only determined by the cognitive and systematic responses to a message, but also, and perhaps more importantly, by less elaborate processing mechanisms – that is heuristic or automatic processes. As described at the beginning of this chapter, children can process advertising in several different ways. Applying advertising literacy (e.g., recognizing the source and the intent of a commercial) as a defense against persuasion requires high-level critical systematic processing. However, as we will argue in the following section, children are more likely to process advertising in less elaborate ways.

It is conceivable that development does not determine the *extent* to which children are influenced by advertising, but affects *how* they are influenced. Children’s relatively immature advertising and consumer skills (e.g., advertising literacy, marketplace experience, brand memory, and consumption autonomy) are likely to affect their processing of advertising messages. For example, when children are not yet able to recognize the commercial nature and persuasive intent of an advertising message, they will be less likely to process this message on the most elaborate level – that is, critical systematic processing. In addition, rational and critical systematic processing requires domain-specific knowledge which children often still lack.

The most important changes in advertising and consumer skills take place between infancy and early adolescence. Based on theories of consumer development and more general frameworks of children’s cognitive, social, and personality development, four phases in the development of children’s advertising processing can be distinguished: preschool (younger than 5-years-old), early elementary school (6 to 9 years), later elementary school (10 to 12 years), and adolescence (13 years and older). Within each phase, children accumulate consumer- and advertising-related skills and experience (John, 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

Up until the age of 5, children view advertising primarily as entertainment and are generally unaware of its persuasive intent. They have a limited ability to take a perspective other than their own, which inhibits their understanding of advertisers’ intentions (Moses & Baldwin, 2005). In addition, preschoolers lack the necessary information-processing abilities (i.e., explicit memory storage and retrieval) and market-related experience to process a persuasive message elaborately (John, 1999).

This renders systematic processing – and even heuristic processing – less likely. Preschoolers are therefore more likely to be influenced via the automatic process. Positive feelings evoked during exposure to attractive animated characters, bright colors, and lively music transfer to the advertised products and can help shape young children's brand attitudes without their knowledge (Moore & Rideout, 2007).

As children enter early elementary school, important changes take place in consumer development. Children become increasingly capable of perspective taking and contingent thought, and develop a basic understanding of advertising's selling intent. In addition, they become able to evaluate products and brands in more than one dimension. These increased abilities may result in more elaborate processing of persuasive communication. However, more elaborate processing does not necessarily involve critical processing in terms of counterargumentation and source derogation. Further, as their information-processing skills are not yet fully developed, early elementary school children are unlikely to spontaneously apply their persuasion knowledge as a defense during exposure to persuasive messages (Buijzen, 2007). Finally, children in this phase have been shown to be easily swayed by simple heuristic cues, such as favorite television characters, premiums, and physical aspects of product packaging (Calvert, 2008).

During later elementary school, children's cognitive and social abilities continue to evolve. Children become capable of abstract thought and reasoning and are able to see things within a broader perspective. They acquire the abilities and experience to process persuasive communication on a more elaborate level. They are able to evaluate advertising systematically and critically and to come to consumer decisions by carefully evaluating different aspects of advertised products and brands. In addition, on account of a growing financial independence and autonomy in making those consumer decisions, they are also more motivated to process messages elaborately. However, whilst they possess the abilities and motivations required for systematic processing, children in this age group still require prompts or cues to activate critical elaboration (John, 1999). Further, as peer influence becomes more important, late elementary school children become increasingly sensitive to heuristic cues, such as peer popularity and status appeal.

Finally, in adolescence, children's cognitive processing capacities reach adult-like levels and they become capable of processing advertising at the most elaborate level (Pechmann, Levine, Loughlin, & Leslie, 2005). Additionally, due to the development of hypothetical-deductive reasoning skills they become more critical and skeptical towards the surrounding world, including the commercial environment. However, despite these more mature cognitive skills, they are still in the midst of identity development, which may have important implications for the processing of commercial messages. In the early stages of identity development, self-presentation and conformity to the peer group or subculture are extremely important. In combination with a high degree of self-consciousness and social anxiety, this may result in a greater susceptibility to consumer symbolism, such as brand-related social status, image, and physical attractiveness.

In summary, it can be argued that young children are particularly sensitive to less elaborate processing mechanisms. Developmental changes characterizing childhood are likely to inhibit the motivation and ability to process persuasive messages systematically. It is therefore important to take children's developmental level into consideration when predicting how persuasive messages affect their processing of advertising. It is, however, uncertain whether and how this affects their susceptibility to advertising effects. Until recently, the advertising effects literature suggests that children's developmental level does not necessarily moderate the intended and unintended effects of advertising on children.

The Role of Parents and Caretakers

Parental communication is often considered the most effective tool in the management of advertising influence on children. The family context not only influences how children use the media and the messages they get from them, but also how literate they become as media users. Parents and caretakers have a wide range of communication strategies at their disposal to increase children's defenses against advertising effects, which can be grouped according to (1) the *object* of the communication and (2) the *style* of communication (Buijzen, 2009). First, parental communication strategies may apply either to the advertising messages or to the consumer-related attitudes and behaviors of the child (e.g., materialistic orientations, purchase requests, consumption behavior). Put in terms of advertising effects, advertising-related communication concerns the independent variable, while consumption-related communication relates to the dependent variable or outcome of advertising exposure.

Second, for both types of strategies two communication styles can be distinguished. A conformity-oriented communication style is aimed at obedience and conformity, and stresses control, rules, and restrictions, whereas a conversation-oriented communication style emphasizes open and critical family discussion (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Taken together, the various communication objects and styles result in four types of parental communication strategies: (1) conformity-oriented advertising communication, (2) conversation-oriented advertising communication, (3) conformity-oriented consumer communication, and (4) conversation-oriented consumer communication.

A conformity-oriented advertising communication strategy involves sheltering children from advertising by reducing their exposure to it, for instance by restricting children's viewing of commercial television networks. This type of strategy has also been labeled as restrictive mediation in previous research (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005). A conversation-oriented advertising strategy, or active mediation, includes making deliberate comments and judgments about advertising and actively explaining its nature and selling intent. Some parents use both types of strategies, trying to shelter their children from advertising, yet at the same

time explaining the intent of advertising and clarifying their motivations for the restrictions.

Further, a conformity-oriented consumer communication strategy may involve rule-making and restrictions regarding children's consumer attitudes and behavior, including their purchase requests and consumption behavior. A conversation-oriented consumer communication strategy emphasizes children's individual ideas and opinions and is aimed at increasing children's consumption autonomy. Parents using this strategy engage in active consumer education, focusing on the development of the child into a critical consumer. They may teach their children, for instance, to compare and evaluate products. These families center on open discussion between parents and children and value children's input and opinions when making family consumer decisions. Finally, similar to advertising-related strategies, parents can also use a combined consumer communication style, applying certain rules and restrictions regarding consumer matters, yet also explaining the motivations behind these rules.

In the past years, we have conducted several studies investigating and comparing the role of the various parental communication strategies. Our findings show that conversation-oriented communication strategies are generally more successful in reducing advertising effects than conformity-oriented strategies (Buijzen, 2009; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005). Most Western societies have become increasingly commercialized, and exposure to commercial messages is almost impossible to avoid. It is therefore important that children learn how to cope with those commercial temptations. However, conversation-oriented strategies are not always most successful in reducing advertising effects. Specifically, the effectiveness of the strategies may depend on the age of the child and on the type of effect that needs to be reduced.

When countering the intended yet undesired effects of advertising, such as excessive purchase request behavior, conversation-oriented advertising communication can be a successful strategy. In an experiment among 272 5- to 9-year-olds, we investigated the effectiveness of comments administered during children's exposure to commercials (Buijzen & Mens, 2007). Children were assigned to one of four conditions and received different types of comments while they were watching a compilation of six commercials for toys. The first group of children received factual comments about the commercials, including facts about the persuasive and selling intent of the commercials. The second group of children received evaluative comments, involving negative evaluations of the commercials and the products advertised. The third group received a combination of factual and evaluative comments, while the fourth group just watched the commercials, without any comments.

After viewing the commercials, the children completed a questionnaire measuring several intended effects of the commercials. Our findings showed that the combined comments were most effective in reducing these effects. Children who had heard both factual explanation and a negative evaluation were less positive about the advertised toys and showed lower intentions to ask their parents to purchase them. However, this effect did not hold for the youngest children. Among the 5- and 6-year-olds, none of the comments were effective in reducing the effects of the

commercials. A possible explanation is that these children had not yet developed the necessary information-processing skills to process and apply the comments as a defense against the persuasive influence. These findings support the idea that reducing young children's exposure may sometimes be the only effective way to counteract negative effects of advertising.

Liking and requesting advertised products are intended and relatively direct effects of advertising. Yet unintended and longer-term advertising effects, such as materialistic orientations, can also be countered by parental communication strategies. Several of our studies have shown that in families that are characterized by conversation-oriented communication styles, applying both to advertising and more general consumer matters, children are less receptive to the impact of advertising on materialism than in low conversation-oriented and in conformity-oriented families (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005). In general, conformity-oriented advertising communication is the least effective strategy. A possible explanation is that in reality these policies do not lead to sufficient reductions in children's advertising exposure. As argued above, in our consumer society it is often unfeasible to avoid children being exposed to advertising. Even when restricted at home, children can be exposed directly in other contexts, but also indirectly via friends and relatives.

In our diary-survey study on the impact of food advertising on children's consumption behavior, we also found that conversation-oriented strategies were most successful in reducing the effect of advertising on children's consumption of unhealthy advertised food, particularly those related to advertising (Buijzen, 2009). The relation between advertising exposure and energy-dense food consumption disappeared for children whose parents actively discussed the nature and intent of advertising.

In addition, however, this study yielded more insights regarding conformity-oriented communication styles among younger children. To test the assumption that restrictive mediation could be successful among young children, we also compared the success of the various strategies among younger and older children. Our results confirmed that among the younger children in the sample (<8 years old), conformity-oriented advertising communication was successful in reducing the impact of advertising. Parental attempts to restrict their children's exposure to advertising may be more successful among young children, because parents still have control over their media exposure. Parental influence on children's television viewing behavior diminishes as children grow older, for instance because they watch television in their bedroom more often.

So far, these results were in line with earlier findings and assumptions. However, in contrast with previous findings, conformity-oriented communication about consumption was also very successful in reducing the impact of advertising. An explanation might be that when it comes to children's food consumption patterns, the family context plays a particularly important role (Kremers et al., 2006). Although children exert increasing influence on family purchases, parents are still the primary gatekeepers to children's food intake. In general, they are the ones controlling financial expenditures and making the final purchase decision in the retail environment (Mangleburg,

1990). In addition, most parents can control access to food at home, for instance by family rules on snacking and by determining what's for dinner (Cullen et al., 2001). In our study, conformity-oriented consumer communication strategies may have prevented children from gratifying advertising-induced desires.

It has to be noted that the success of conformity-oriented communication might be a short-term one. It is conceivable that in the long term, children benefit more from a conversation-oriented strategy. Earlier studies have shown that strict parental control practices diminish children's self-control in eating (Fisher & Birch, 1999). With increasing age, children obtain more autonomy in their consumption choices. Children from conformity-oriented parents may lack the nutrition-related knowledge to deal with that autonomy when they grow up, because their parents failed to explain the motivation behind their restrictions. Although speculative, this does suggest that the results for conformity-oriented communication should be interpreted with caution. It is plausible that socio-oriented communication is more effective, in the short term as well as the long term, when parents explain why they imply certain rules and restrictions. Overall, more research is needed to investigate the interaction between the various parental communication strategies, particularly between conformity- and conversation-oriented styles (cf. Fujioka & Austin, 2002).

Conclusions

In summary, our review of the literature suggests that advertising can have intended as well as unintended, possibly harmful, effects on children. These effects can be moderated by parents and caretakers, especially by using conversation-oriented strategies. Our conclusions might contribute to the ongoing political and sociolegal debate on child-directed advertising, and help establish guidelines for its regulation. In many Western societies, concerns about the possible adverse effects of marketing efforts directed at children have led to policies regarding child advertising. One kind of policy approach focuses on regulation and restriction of advertising, while another aims at educating children about advertising, mostly through school-based media literacy intervention programs. In recent years, several countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands, have introduced such media literacy programs. Many studies have shown that media literacy programs can increase children's awareness, understanding, and critical attitude toward advertising (see Chapter 32, this volume).

Although increasing children's advertising and consumer literacy is important and necessary in our consumer society, literature suggests that literacy is not necessarily a defense against the persuasive influence of advertising. Applying critical defenses while being exposed to advertising requires a systematic level of processing and advanced information-processing skills. Up until the age of 12, most children have not yet developed the cognitive capacities to independently retrieve and apply their

knowledge as a defense against persuasion. In addition, they are more likely to process advertising in less elaborate ways, in which positive emotions and associations elicited by advertising are likely to overrule rational argumentation. Therefore, when trying to protect children from the possibly harmful effects of advertising, advertising literacy education is perhaps not the most effective policy.

However, the literature convincingly shows that parents and caretakers can effectively counter the undesired effects of advertising by critical discussion about advertising and by conversation and rule-making about consumption. Therefore, in our view media literacy programs should also incorporate parent-directed materials and focus, for instance, on raising parental awareness on advertising, consumer skills, and a healthy lifestyle. Not only is this a more effective way of increasing children's defenses, parents could also use some support in their battle against commercialism. Even though most Western countries have protective policies concerning child-directed advertising, the lion's share of the responsibility is still shouldered by the parents, who are usually the first to experience inconvenience as a result of advertising. Therefore, advertising-related policies could also be aimed at the empowerment of parents, by increasing parental defenses against advertising.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that parents and caretakers should not be considered as the only effective instrument to counter harmful advertising effects. First, literature suggests that parental communication efforts are not effective for all children. Specifically, children under the age of seven may benefit more from advertising restrictions. In addition, it would be unwise to invest in the empowerment of children and parents, while the commercial pressure is increasing, and advertisers keep developing more sophisticated methods to reach the child consumer. It cannot be denied that many of the advertised products are just too attractive to resist and that some marketing techniques, especially new embedded forms of marketing, are difficult to recognize and grasp – for children as well as adults. It is therefore of utmost importance that a fair and healthy media environment for children and their families is warranted, whether it is by self-regulatory or legislative policies.

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Media Use, Scholastic Achievement, and Attention Span

George Comstock

ABSTRACT

Since the introduction of television, concern has mounted about the potential influence of television and other media on children's scholastic achievement. Can television and other media forms interfere in the development of skills necessary for successful test scores, grades, and other measures of academic achievement? Or, conversely, can media facilitate the development of such skills? In the current chapter, the research evidence pertaining to these questions is reviewed, exploring such related issues as whether television contributes to a diminished attention span, declines in fantasy play, imagination or creativity, or displaces time that could be spent with homework or other educational opportunities.

Media and Scholastic Achievement: Key Questions

The influence of mass media on the scholastic achievement of children and teenagers has been of prominent concern since the introduction of television in the 1940s (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961). Might television or other media in some way interfere with how well young people are performing on standardized tests as well as in school? Early empirically-based analyses emphasized the particular fit between

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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characteristics of the young person and the amount and kind of media use (Schramm et al., 1961); seventy years later, the same prescription remains valid. What the young person brings to the medium – motive, attitude, cognitive ability – remains as important as what the medium – content, style, message – brings to the young person. The situational and evidentiary differences, however, are enormous. Two questions have remained paramount:

- 1 What does media use imply for scholastic performance and the cognitive and behavioral skills on which it rests?
- 2 Where there are positive or negative associations between media use and a measure of scholastic achievement – such as grades or test scores – what are the explanatory mechanisms and processes?

These seemingly straightforward questions about the allocation of free time have become increasingly perplexing to answer. The variety, availability, and use of media have all increased, and there is now a much broader array of data on which to base conclusions. The media environment has been changing swiftly, with new platforms and portals, increased availability of media in homes, and in particular in the bedrooms of the young, and increases in the amount of time spent with media (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Roberts & Foehr, 2004). It also is not clear that the criterion measure – the particular test or score (such as grades) chosen to reflect achievement – employed in some prominent studies has been sensitive to the media influence it was intended to capture. In addition, there is the suggestion in recent data that at least one long-standing pattern is dissolving.

Preeminence of Television

The stunning rise of newer media, in the public eye, has somewhat displaced the forest in favor of certain trees. Interpersonal and social applications of the Internet with their popularity and promise of profit-making understandably receive endless chronicling in the news media. Technological developments and the transient rise of new media “stars” – blogs, personalities, videoclips – entrance the public. Yet, extensive, reliable data warn that the emphasis on newer media may lead to a false impression of actual audience behavior and the media landscape.

Television easily remains the most-used medium among the young as well as those older. Estimated average daily viewing of television and related screen media by young persons of 4 hours 29 minutes dwarfs use of other media (Rideout et al., 2010). The figure for “live TV” (programming viewed on a TV set as it is telecast) is 2 hours 39 minutes; the remaining 1 hour and 50 minutes comes from recordings, videos, and other archival platforms.

The data not only record impressive use of television in both absolute (hours and minutes) and relative (proportions of media time and leisure) terms. They also record

Table 28.1 Media exposure and use over a decade: 1999–2009 (8- to 18-year-olds, hours: minutes)

Among all 8- to 18-year-olds, average amount of time spent with each medium in a typical day:			
	2009	2004	1999
TV content	4:29 ^a	3:51 ^b	3:47 ^b
Music/audio	2:31 ^a	1:44 ^b	1:48 ^b
Computer	1:29 ^a	1:02 ^b	:27 ^c
Videogames	1:13 ^a	:49 ^b	:26 ^c
Print	:38 ^a	:43 ^{ab}	:43 ^b
Movies	:25 ^a	:25 ^{ab}	:18 ^b
TOTAL MEDIA EXPOSURE	10:45 ^a	8:33 ^b	7:29 ^c
Multitasking proportion	29% ^a	26% ^a	16% ^b
TOTAL MEDIA USE	7:38 ^a	6:21 ^b	6:19 ^b

N (2009) = 2,002.

Statistical significance within rows: $p < .05$ (or less) when subscripts differ.

Total media exposure is the sum of time spent with all media. **Multitasking proportion** is the proportion of media time that is spent using more than one medium concurrently. **Total media use** is the actual number of hours/minutes out of the day that are spent using media, taking multitasking into account.

Source: Adapted from Rideout, V. J., Foehr, U. G., & Roberts, D. F. (2010, January). *Generation M²: Media in the lives of 8- to 18-year-olds* (Report No. 8010). Menlo Park, CA: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. This information was reprinted with permission from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. The Kaiser Family Foundation, a leader in health policy analysis, health journalism, and communication, is dedicated to filling the need for trusted, independent information on the biggest health issues facing our nation and its people. The Foundation is a nonprofit private operating foundation, based in Menlo Park, California.

that the displacement of television in the expenditure of time by young persons has had a firmer basis in expectation and speculation than reality. Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts (2010) estimate media consumption across a 10-year period, from 1999 to 2009, using large, nationally representative samples of 8- to 18-year-olds (Table 28.1). Computer and Internet use as well as media consumption in total all increase substantially, as would be expected from news media accounts. However, contrary to much in the news, consumption of television and related screen media also increase. This unlikely outcome – because time is unhappily finite – has been made possible by an increase in the use of two (or more) media at the same time and use of newer, more convenient platforms. As a result, displacement of the older medium of television has been confounded.

Television and Achievement

In repeated instances since the introduction of the medium, amount of television viewing has been recorded as negatively associated with scholastic achievement, and

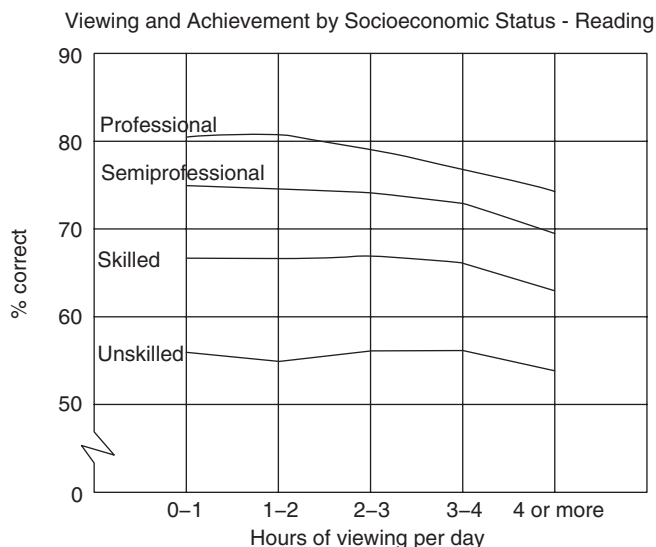
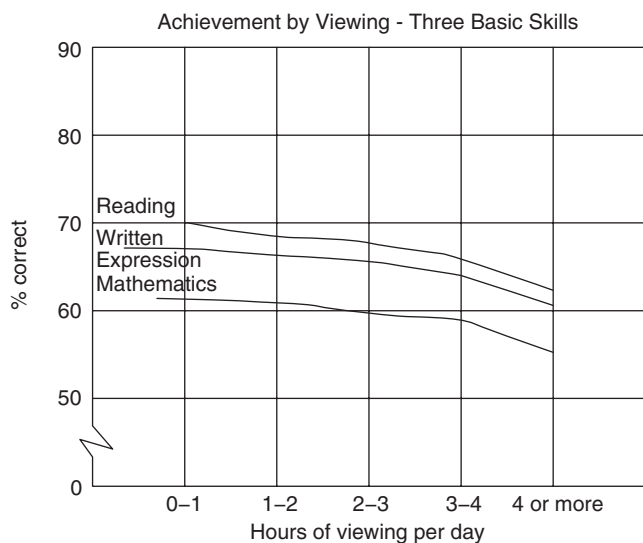
consumption of television remains prodigious among the young. The daily averages of more than 7 hours 30 minutes devoted to using media and 10 hours 45 minutes of exposure to various media a day among those 8- to 18-year-olds recorded by Rideout and colleagues (2010) include about 4 hours 30 minutes of exposure to television content.

There are six major sources – none of which by itself could be ignored – that together are compelling because of the size of samples, the diversity of subject matter, the range of grades, span of time covered, and the consistency of outcomes. They are:

- 1 The 1980 California Assessment Program (CAP) data, which include more than 500,000 fifth and twelfth graders.
- 2 The 1980 High School and Beyond (HSB) data collected by the National Center for Educational Statistics (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum, & Aubey, 1986), which cover more than 28,000 seniors.
- 3 The 1983–84 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data collected by the Educational Testing Service (Anderson, Mead, & Sullivan, 1986), which include about 70,000 in three grades across the United States.
- 4 The pooling of data from eight statewide assessments by Susan Neuman (1988) that essentially replicates the CAP inquiry in seven additional states, and represents several million pupils.
- 5 The meta-analysis by Micha Razel (2001) that includes about 1 million pupils in elementary, intermediate, and high school, with a sizable number from several dozen foreign countries as well as more recent NAEP US data from the 1990s.
- 6 The analysis by Nary Shin (2004) of children age 6 to 13 in about 1,200 families drawn from the 1997 Child Development Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID).

These large data sets concur in recording that lower achievement has been associated with greater amounts of television viewing. The emphasis has been on reading and mathematics, but this negative relationship holds for every subject for which data has been obtained, including science and social studies and a thorough representation of the three basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. The negative relationship also held for a wide range of grades (in these data, from the fourth through the twelfth), represents more than three dozen countries and covers almost two decades (from 1980 to the mid-1990s).

The CAP data (see Figure 28.1) provide an excellent example because they cover the three basic skills, include two grades distant enough from one another to leave little doubt that the relationship is widespread, and rely on a census (rather than a sampling) of everyone attending school on the day of testing (282,000 in the sixth grade and 227,000 in the twelfth grade). CAP follow-ups in 1982 and 1986 document the same inverse relationship for social studies and science.



Number of students by socioeconomic status

Occupation of head of household	<u>Hours of television viewed per day</u>					Non- response	Total	Percent
	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2-3</u>	<u>3-4</u>	<u>4 or more</u>			
Professional	15,731	11,176	7,022	3,787	4,976	337	43,029	15
Semiprofessional	15,634	12,927	9,449	5,812	9,631	495	53,948	19
Skilled	23,713	21,283	16,966	11,301	21,795	1,189	96,247	34
Unskilled	10,408	9,391	7,591	5,211	11,451	769	44,821	16
Nonresponse	11,505	9,866	7,266	4,627	9,481	1,173	43,918	16
<u>Total</u>	76,991	64,643	48,294	30,738	57,339	3,963	281,968	100
<u>%</u>	27	23	17	11	20	2		

Figure 28.1 Survey of sixth grade achievement and television viewing habits, California Assessment Program (1980). Reprinted by permission from California Department of Education, CDE Press, 1430 N. Street, Suite 3207, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Those who viewed the most and recorded the lowest achievement scores were substantial in number, accounting for about one-fifth of the CAP sixth graders. Nevertheless, there are several important caveats:

- 1 Household socioeconomic status (SES) is positively associated with achievement, and this relationship is far stronger than the negative associations between viewing and achievement.
- 2 As household SES increases, the negative association becomes more pronounced (for example, for those whose head is classified as “professional”, the curve is noticeably steeper than for those whose head is classified as “semi-professional”) but the proportion who view the most and register the lowest scores remains substantial (about 15% among those “professional” and “semi-professional”).
- 3 The inverse association is somewhat more pronounced in the twelfth than in the sixth grade.

These data suggest a particular kind of substitution or displacement in which a scholastically less-valuable experience (television) takes the place of more valuable experiences (other media, other activities) because the former is more enjoyable. Viewing television is apparently more costly in terms of achievement as the value of alternatives (as indexed by SES) increases. It is also apparently more costly when school is more demanding, as exemplified by the steeper decline in the twelfth grade.

The proposed relationship is readily testable by Gaddy’s (1986) analysis of the HSB data. At issue was the role of the availability in the home of educational resources such as an encyclopedia, books, newspapers, and magazines (and were the data being collected today, presumably computer and Internet access, which would be more often available in upper SES households). A sample of about 10,000 from whom data were obtained when they were high school sophomores and seniors, confirms that resources in the home are part of the relationship (Gaddy, 1986). As Table 28.2 shows, the inverse association – over four measures of achievement: vocabulary, reading, mathematics, and grades – was consistently stronger when resources were more plentiful.

This pattern, in which the association between viewing and achievement depends at least in part on the character of foregone opportunities, has led Comstock and Scharrer (1999) to offer a tentative hypothesis:

Television viewing is inversely related to achievement when it displaces intellectually and experientially richer stimuli. Viewing is positively related to achievement when the stimuli it supplies are intellectually and experientially richer than the available alternatives. (p. 259)

These data obviously do not establish a causal relationship between viewing television and poorer scholastic performance. What they do establish unambiguously is an inverse association at the time of their collection between viewing and achievement.

Table 28.2 Educational resources and achievement

Achievement measure	Correlation coefficient ^a					
	<i>High resource</i>		<i>Medium resource</i>		<i>Low resource</i>	
	Sophomore	Senior	Sophomore	Senior	Sophomore	Senior
	N = 2,974		N = 3,960		N = 3,112	
Vocabulary	-.241	-.220	-.076	-.121	-.037	-.094
Reading	-.226	-.174	-.064	-.089	-.064	-.086
Math level 1	-.211	-.204	-.105	-.122	-.084	-.109
Math level 2	-.171	-.175	-.097	-.110	-.073	-.113
Grades	-.189	-.148	-.080	-.089	-.051	-.074

^aSmallest significant correlation (one-tailed alpha = .05, corrected for design effect) for high resource, .042; for medium resource, .036; for low resource, .041. Calculated using Fisher r to Z transformation.

N = 10,046

Source: Adapted from Gaddy, G. D. (1986). Television's impact on high school achievement. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 50(3), 340–359.

The task is to explain this relationship. There is no convenient single study or recognized group of related studies that undertakes this mission. The remaining strategy, imperfect but unavoidable, is to pursue the several lines of separate inquiry that variously address this question and construct the most plausible answer.

Vanishing Relationship

Three analyses seemingly result in the disappearance of the negative relationship between the amount of viewing and achievement. Understandably, this vanishing is sometimes emphasized by reviewers (Schmidt & Vandewater, 2008). However, these three analyses, uniformly excellent at what they attempt to accomplish, do not address the central question of everyday television viewing and everyday school performance.

Gaddy (1986), using a sample of about 10,000 from the HSB data, examines the relationship between sophomore viewing and achievement – as measured by grades – in the senior year. The focus is on shifts in achievement over this two-year period. Initially, the association is negative. However, after controlling for a wide array of possible influences, the inverse association disappeared.

The problem, from the present perspective, is threefold. First, some of the control factors are likely to serve as the means by which television would influence achievement; for example, prior grades and educational resources in the home, both of which might have been suppressed by television use. Second, change in achievement

between the sophomore and senior years is a rather insensitive outcome (as so many students discover who would like to improve their grade point averages over the last two years of high school or college). Third, the longitudinal panel design ignores contemporary viewing, and individual viewing varies too much over such a three-year period for the sophomore measure to serve as a proxy for later years (Tangney & Feshbach, 1988). As a result, the analysis fails to address the issue of the relationship between viewing and achievement.

Gortmaker, Salter, Walker, and Dietz (1990), drawing on a nationally representative sample of 1,745 children from the National Health Examination (NHE) survey, analyze the relationships between television viewing and scores on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), the Wide Range Achievement Test in Arithmetic (WRAT-A), and in Reading (WRAT-R) over a four-year period. Again, after controlling for a wide array of possible influences, an initial negative correlation disappeared. From the present perspective, the problem is that when the earlier test score is entered as a control variable (as is the case here) the possibility of recording a change attributable to television – or anything else – is minimal. This is particularly the case with the WISC, which is intended to measure a trait and would confound expectations if it did not display stability over time.

Gentzkow and Shapiro (2008), similarly making use of an available body of valuable data (in this case, the 1965 national survey of achievement conducted by the sociologist James Coleman to assess the effects of racial segregation in public education), examined the relationships between test scores for five types of achievement in high school (math, spatial reasoning, verbal, reading, and general knowledge) and exposure to television in the preschool years. They were able to do this because of the television station-licensing freeze imposed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), beginning in the late 1940s to reexamine issues of spectrum assignment, which created community-level variation in access to the new medium. The analysis, drawing on the test scores of about 350,000 students, concluded that there was no negative causal contribution of earlier television to achievement those many years later, and that any effects probably were positive – and especially so for those from homes with fewer educational resources or where English was not the first language. The problem, from the present perspective, is that the analysis is confined to preschool access to the medium and adolescent achievement more than a decade later and does not examine contemporaneous adolescent viewing and achievement.

Curvilinearity

The question of curvilinearity is often justifiably raised because quite a few analyses report that achievement rises with increasing viewing before turning downwards (Fetler, 1984; S. Neuman, 1988, 1991; Potter, 1987; Razel, 2001; Williams, Haertel, Walberg, & Haertel, 1982). Yet, a glance at the massive – and thereby hard to discard

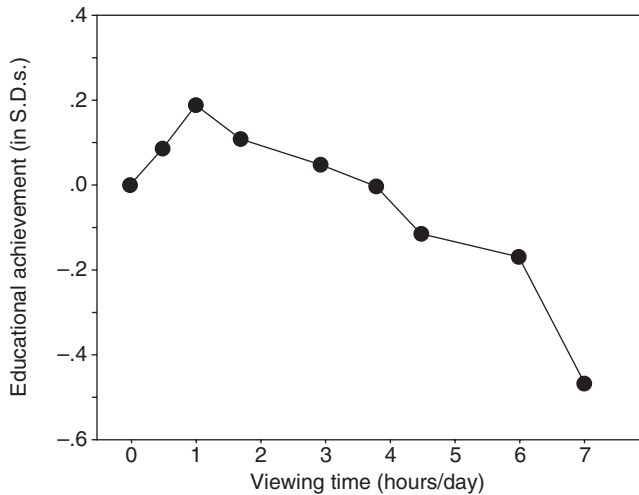


Figure 28.2 Achievement as a function of viewing time averaged over age. Reproduced with permission from M. Razel (2001). The complex model of television viewing and educational achievement. *Journal of Education Research*, 94(6), 371–379.

– CAP data for the sixth grade (again, see Figure 28.1) reveals only the scantest sign of curvilinearity.

Examination of the various sets of data discloses an interpretable pattern. In all instances, most of the curve is negative. When curvilinearity occurs (achievement scores rising with increasing viewing before descending), it is confined to the very early portion of the curve. An excellent example based on one million students is provided by the meta-analysis of six large-scale studies by Razel (2001; see Figure 28.2). Most of the slope is dramatically downward. And when curvilinearity does occur it is in the earlier grades. When high school and elementary school samples from the same study are compared, curvilinearity is largely confined to the younger ages. Again, Razel provides a graphic example (see Figure 28.3).

Curvilinearity, then, has been neither universal nor pronounced. It is a property of those younger; even then it is confined to the initiation of the curve, and is modest in magnitude. The data, in addition to indicating that viewing largely has been associated with lower achievement, also warn that television's role (and by reasonable extension, that of other media) may be quite sensitive to age.

Attention

One plausible explanation for a negative contribution by television viewing to achievement is that the undemanding pleasures of viewing interfere with the subsequent

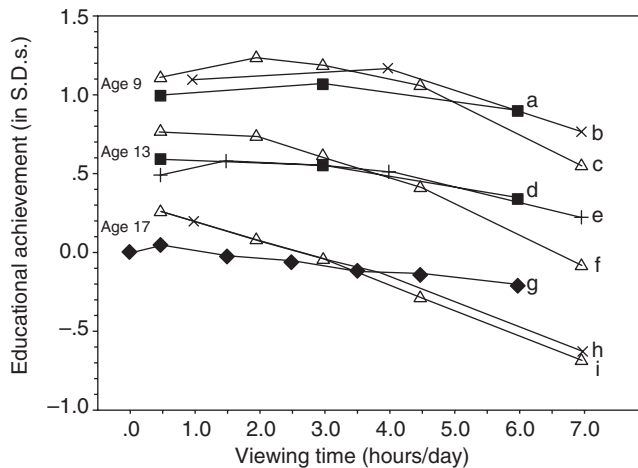


Figure 28.3 Achievement as a function of viewing time at different ages. Reproduced with permission from M. Razel (2001). The complex model of television viewing and educational achievement. *Journal of Education Research*, 94(6), 371–379.

ability or willingness to pay attention in a classroom setting or focus on a task. This outcome has variously been labeled an attention deficit (which would be distinct from and less severe than the clinical diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD; Schmidt & Vanderwater, 2008), impulsivity (Shin, 2004), or – in a useful if perhaps uninformative catch phrase – an “intolerance for schooling” (Hornik, 1981).

The pattern discernible in the data, which are confined to the viewing of young children, although certainly lacking the massive unanimity of the evidence on television and achievement, has three features (Anderson & McGuire, 1978; Desmond, Singer, & Singer, 1990; Geist & Gibson, 2000; Johnson, Cohen, Kasen, & Brook, 2007; Landius, Poulton, Welche, & Hancox, 2007; Salomon, 1979; Singer, Singer, Desmond, Hirsch, & Nicol, 1988; Singer, Singer, & Rapaczynski, 1984; Zimmerman & Christakis, 2007):

- The viewing of children’s educational programs by those of the ages for which the program was designed typically has not been associated with a decrease in measures of subsequent attention.
- The viewing of entertainment programs sometimes has been associated with decreases in measures of subsequent attention, and the viewing of violent programs in particular consistently has been associated with decreases in those measures.
- The viewing of television entertainment at an earlier age has often been associated with lower scores in later years on measures of attention, and this longitudinal relationship holds for all ages, including those who were adolescents as well as those who were of preschool age at the time of later measurement.

The evidence is largely correlational, but there are usually statistical controls for critical variables such as household SES. There also are experimental designs that unequivocally demonstrate contemporaneous causation for their particular circumstances. Two good examples are Geist and Gibson (2000) and Schmidt, Pempek, Kirkorian, Lund, and Anderson (2008), which together encompass distinctly different television stimuli and ages. In Geist and Gibson, the outcome measures were attention to and time spent on a task. About 60 fourth and fifth grade children were randomly assigned to three groups – no television, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, or *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. Those who viewed the *Power Rangers* gave less attention to and spent less time on the task than the other two groups, which did not significantly differ on these measures. In Schmidt and colleagues, the outcome measure is similar – attention to and length of time engaged in play. However, the children were toddlers and preschoolers (12-, 24-, and 36-months-old) and the stimulus was background television displaying an adult game show. Although the children did not spend much time looking at the screen, play was disrupted to a small degree by the operating television set. The inference is the same in both cases: television (violent in one, irrelevant in the other) adversely affected attention and persistence.

These analyses address the question of whether the attentional effects apparently attributable to television achieve the threshold of a clinical diagnosis of ADHD. Christakis, Zimmerman, DiGiuseppe, and McCarthy (2004), using large samples (1,278 one-year-olds and 1,345 three-year-olds) drawn from a nationally representative data base, found that parental estimates of viewing at ages one and three predicted scores representing attentional deficits at age seven. Stevens and Muslow (2006), using a similarly large, representative sample, found no such link between television viewing at kindergarten age and ADHD at first grade age. Obel and colleagues (2004) in a much smaller Danish sample similarly found no link between viewing at age 3 years 6 months and ages 10 to 11. A key factor is whether the Christakis and colleagues analysis reflects ADHD. The claim by Stevens and Muslow that their labeling of symptomology is far too generous is quite telling – but doesn't erase the deficits in attention they found. The most reasonable conclusion is to harbor ADHD as a function of viewing with considerable skepticism (but not dismissal) while accepting the more widely supported pattern of interference in both the short- and long-runs with attention and persistence as consequences of television exposure.

Language and Vocabulary

There is hardly any doubt that television disseminates words and phrases as attested to by the widespread familiarity by persons of all ages with advertising slogans. Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) convincingly documented this phenomenon in their large-scale study of the effects on children of the introduction of television.

Those in communities with television were about a year advanced in vocabulary compared to those in communities yet to receive the medium. However, three decades later, Williams (1986) and colleagues were surprised to find no signs of vocabulary gains in a remote community newly receiving television. Their choice of instruments was impeccable – the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), the vocabulary subtest of the Stanford-Binet (S-B), and the vocabulary subscale of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC). Each was a recognized, widely used measure. Not one registered an increase attributable to the arrival of television.

The explanation almost certainly rests in part with the focus and initial purpose of the tests and in part with changes in the media environment. These tests by design measure general vocabulary, and thus would exclude the words and phrases most likely to be newly brought to the community by television – the glossaries of news, sports, entertainment, and advertising. In addition, by this time (the 1980s) television was so commonplace that words and phrases introduced by the medium would be disseminated to non-viewers and infrequent viewers by word of mouth.

There nevertheless remains the power of television to teach new words and phrases directly when the medium purposefully introduces them to receptive audiences, as happens with children in the case of educational programs and just about everybody in the case of advertising. Many studies attest to this success (Linebarger & Walker, 2005; Rice, 1990; Rice, Buhr, & Otting, 1992; Rice, Huston, Truglio, & Wright, 1990; Rice, Oetting, Marquis, Bode, & Pae, 1994). However, Naigles and Mayeux (2001) in their review make the important distinction between lexical development (words) and grammatical development (rules). Educational television can present words clearly, repeatedly, and consistently in regard to usage, all effective devices to enhance learning. The teaching of grammar, as Naigles and Mayeux argue, in contrast is more dependent on interaction with a parent or caregiver and the consequent reinforcement of correct responses, and thus there is no comparable research record of media effectiveness.

The manner and content of presentation certainly matters. Linebarger and Walker (2005) compared vocabulary acquisition for very young children (age two-and-a-half) and found measurable differences for various educational programs, with *Blue's Clues* and *Dora the Explorer* in this instance having greater impact than *Sesame Street*. It also must be acknowledged that children from lower SES households are particularly likely to rely on television for exposure to stimuli related to language. For example, Neuman and Celano (2001) in comparing middle class and low-income neighborhoods found the latter starkly sparser in circumstances that would promote reading (including such prosaic aspects as signage, children's and young-adult books for sale, and places conducive to reading) and Jordan (2005) in a small sample of low-income children found that they did not differ much (Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella, 2003) in the regularity of being read to but that the amount of time spent on this activity was much less and television viewing was much greater, reaching about six hours a day on weekends.

Television, then, is an accomplished teacher of vocabulary under certain conditions. When television was introduced, access to an operating set equaled those conditions – new words and a naïve audience. They remain in place among children viewing educational programs. Children – and the population in general – have enhanced vocabularies as a consequence of the presence of television, but exposure itself (as was the case in the data of Schramm and colleagues) is no longer a necessary condition (as Williams and colleagues document).

Creativity and Imaginative Thinking

Television has been hypothesized to restrain creativity and imaginative thinking by three means: the foreclosure of imagination by the specificity of visual imagery; the rigid exposition of narratives that allow no time for personal reflection; and the conventionality of its themes, plots, and roles. The evidence comes from experiments (Greenfield & Beagle-Roos, 1988; Greenfield, Farrar, & Beagle-Roos, 1986; Kerns, 1981; Meline, 1976; Runco & Pezdek, 1984; Valkenburg & Beentjes, 1997; Vibbert & Meringoff, 1981; Watkins, 1988), surveys (Childs, 1979; Peterson, Peterson, & Carroll, 1987; Singer et al., 1984; Zuckerman, Singer, & Singer, 1980) and a quasi experiment (Williams, 1986) in which a community newly receiving television was compared with two communities that had been able to access the medium for many years.

The quintessential experimental comparison has been with stories that are read or heard. When asked to complete a story, children typically add less on their own to something seen on the screen than to similar stories read or heard. This effect, recorded repeatedly, is nevertheless better interpreted as a transient state than the inculcation of a trait. The nature of experiments, in which the less creative group would have been the more creative had assignments been reversed, compels such a conclusion – unless it can be demonstrated that such short-term effects would aggregate to a long-term deficit.

However, the quasi-experimental data of Williams and colleagues largely foreclose such a likelihood. In their three communities, one of which was receiving television for the first time, there were no significant associations between amount of viewing and creativity scores in the two communities that had access to television for many years, and in the community where television was new there was a small negative association on only one of the two major, recognized tests of creativity employed.

The ambitious experiment by Watkins (1988) importantly enlarges the picture. He asked third, fifth, and eighth graders to write stories that reflected either television or real life. The television stories were actually more elaborate and introduced thoughts and emotions on the part of the characters more often, and this was particularly the case for those who were heavier viewers of television.

The data overall lead to three conclusions, which depict a more nuanced and positive role for television in creativity and imaginative thinking than their hypothesized curtailment:

- 1 Young children, when asked to elaborate on a televised story will invent, embroider, and expand less than when the same story has been conveyed orally or in print – probably because the explicit visual images on the screen leave less need or room for imaginative innovation.
- 2 The documented suppression of creativity and imaginative thought – as measured by elaboration – is transient, and represents a state subject to changing circumstances rather than the diminishment of a trait.
- 3 When asked to engage in the creative and imaginative task of storytelling, television viewing among older children promotes more extensive effort, greater complexity, and the attribution of more thoughts and emotions to invented characters, although these tales are likely to conform to the conventions of television storytelling.

The varied evidence does not support effects leading to chronically greater or lesser degrees of creative and imaginative thought. In contrast, the evidence largely supports the view that television (and by implication, other screen media) gives shape and substance to the expression of creative and imaginative thought.

In Search of Explanation

None of the findings reported so far are satisfying in explaining the documented inverse association between amount of television viewing and scholastic performance. One does not have to stray far, however, to find a thoroughly convincing reason why those who view more fare less well on tests of achievement: heavy viewers, as a group, include a disproportionate number of young people whose attributes or behavior lead to poorer academic performance.

Comstock and Scharrer (1999, 2007) specify two factors that have had a particularly large role: mental ability and socioeconomic status (SES). Mental ability, measured by IQ tests, is inversely associated with amount of television viewing (Gortmaker, Salter, Walker, & Dietz, 1990) and, as one would expect, is positively associated with doing well in school. SES behaves similarly. Lower SES predicts lower performance in school (Fetler, 1984) and for decades has predicted greater amounts of television viewing (Comstock & Scharrer, 2007). In both cases, characteristics of the young person offer an explanation for the inverse association between viewing and achievement.

The links between mental ability and television viewing and between SES and television viewing are now somewhat weaker than they once were, because of the historical trend toward greater viewing by all population segments (Comstock & Scharrer, 1999), but are far from erased. They decidedly were well in place at the time of the collection of the CAP and other large sets of data. In the case of SES, even when there is an attempt to take it into account (as occurs when the CAP data are arrayed by occupational strata) SES will remain a factor within strata and thereby a potential explanation for any observed relationship between greater viewing and lower achievement.

Then there is the role of stress and conflict. Comstock and Scharrer (1999, 2007) draw from a number of different studies in concluding that children and teenagers who are troubled, worried, or quarreling with others are likely to turn to television as a source of relief. These same factors also are likely to lead to poorer performance in school. Again, characteristics of the young person offer an explanation.

The question is whether these undeniably influential forces are sufficient to account wholly for the kind of declining achievement curves visible in the CAP data. The answer lies in a large body of studies that disclose a variety of ways in which television may negatively affect scholastic performance.

Displacement

The displacement hypothesis, broadly phrased, holds that television takes time away from the maintenance and practice as well as the acquisition of the three basic skills – reading, writing, and mathematics (Comstock & Scharrer, 2007). In a narrower formulation, it has focused on reading (and in particular acquisition of the ability to read in the first to the third grades), for which television as a less demanding but equally sedentary (and similarly rewarding) activity would seem a formidable competitor that could extract a long-term and possibly lasting deficit in a crucial skill (Williams, 1986).

Shin (2004) provides an important test of a general form of the hypothesis by examining the role of several potentially competing factors in her analysis of about 1,200 families with children between the ages of 6 and 13. Overall, she found a modest negative correlation between viewing and achievement scores for reading and mathematics. She sought a variable in the available data (which were not collected for her purposes) that would test the displacement hypothesis, and found one in homework and study. As her path diagram shows, time spent on homework and study was suppressed by viewing but was positively associated with achievement (see Figure 28.4). Thus, her data support the view that television adversely affects achievement by taking time away from school-related activities.

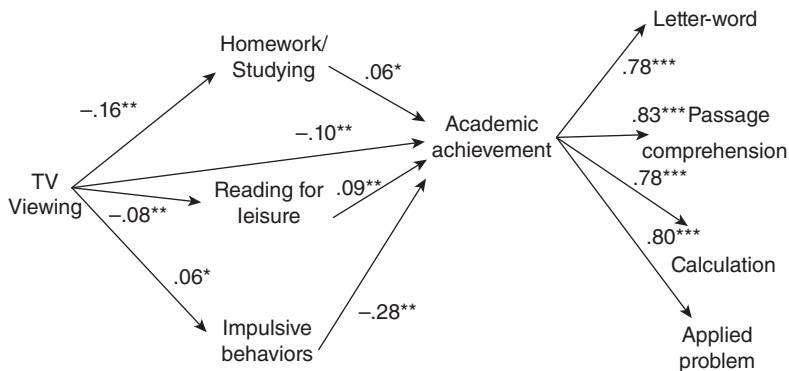


Figure 28.4 Exploring pathways from television viewing to academic achievement in school age children. Reproduced with permission from N. Shin (2004). Exploring pathways from television viewing to academic achievement in school age children. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 165(4), 367–382.

Coefficients are standardized beta weights. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

Interference

Armstrong and Greenberg (1990) in an experiment found that mental tasks done in the presence of an operating television set were inferior in quality. Those working in the company of the operating set scored lower in reading comprehension, spatial problem-solving, and cognitive flexibility. Shin in her sample of 6- to 13-year-olds found that impulsive behavior was slightly (but positively) correlated with viewing and was decidedly (if modestly) predictive of poorer performance. Koolstra and van der Voort (1996) in a sample of more than a thousand Dutch second and fourth graders found that those who viewed more invested less mental effort in reading, and this occurred after statistically eliminating the influence of mental ability as well as other variables. D. G. and J. L. Singer and colleagues (Desmond et al., 1990; Singer et al., 1988; Singer et al., 1984) consistently have found that viewing violent programming by very young children leads to problems of impulse control in the early grades. Interference by exposure to television with the quality of cognitive activity, and particularly with concentration and attention, is thus a candidate as a potential cause of the lowered scholastic performance by those who view more.

Socialization

The effects of television on reading by the young are not necessarily limited to decreases in time spent or amount of invested mental effort. They also arguably may

include a variety of shifts in attitudes and tastes and preferences that influence not only the disposition to engage in reading but the types of material chosen to read, and thereby the rewards and satisfactions that reading will supply.

Morgan (1980) found in a large sample of adolescents that greater viewing was correlated with a preference for print media that featured entertainment stars and tales of teenagers. Koolstra and van der Voort (1996), of course, found among their second and fourth graders that greater viewing was associated with the expenditure of less mental effort when reading. They also found that the greater the viewing at an earlier time, the more likely these young people would choose comic books as favored reading and the more likely they would categorize books as dull, boring, and unrewarding.

These findings fit rather nicely with those of W. R. Neuman (1982). He found that people in general – he interviewed adults – mostly thought about the entertainment value and execution of programming while viewing rather than the social or moral implications of the content. The medium in effect cues rules about storytelling. This may have some positive aspects for children and adolescents when engaged in constructing narratives, as documented in Watkins' (1988) experiment, but it may also lead to the embrace of the banal and trivial (if temporarily absorbing and even occasionally exciting).

Process

These various findings are integrated in Figure 28.5, which draws together evidence from a variety of sources and assigns a role both to the characteristics of the young person (which irremediably lead to the expectation that on the average those who view more television will perform less well on tests of scholastic achievement) and to the more speculative negative influences of the medium (which appear to identify television viewing as contributing to lowered scholastic performance). Two concepts are added to those already introduced – centrality of television and other screen-related media in the home, and orientation toward the set, dichotomized somewhat arbitrarily into instrumental and ritualistic viewing.

Signs signify the direction of the expected relationship (+, –), and the number of signs the apparent (if subjectively judged) strength. The emphasis or explanatory weight is greatest for the characteristics of the child, evident in the factors and weights arrayed on the left side (and especially SES and mental ability). At middle left, the concept of household centrality of television is introduced as a fairly powerful explanatory factor for amount of viewing. This dimension, which varies substantially across households, represents the degree to which sets are constantly on, few if any rules or restraints constrain viewing, and viewing essentially is continuous throughout the day, and has proved to be a predictor of viewing independent of SES (Comstock & Scharrer, 1999, 2007; Rideout et al., 2010; Roberts & Foehr, 2004). The intent is to make explicit the role of household-level norms.

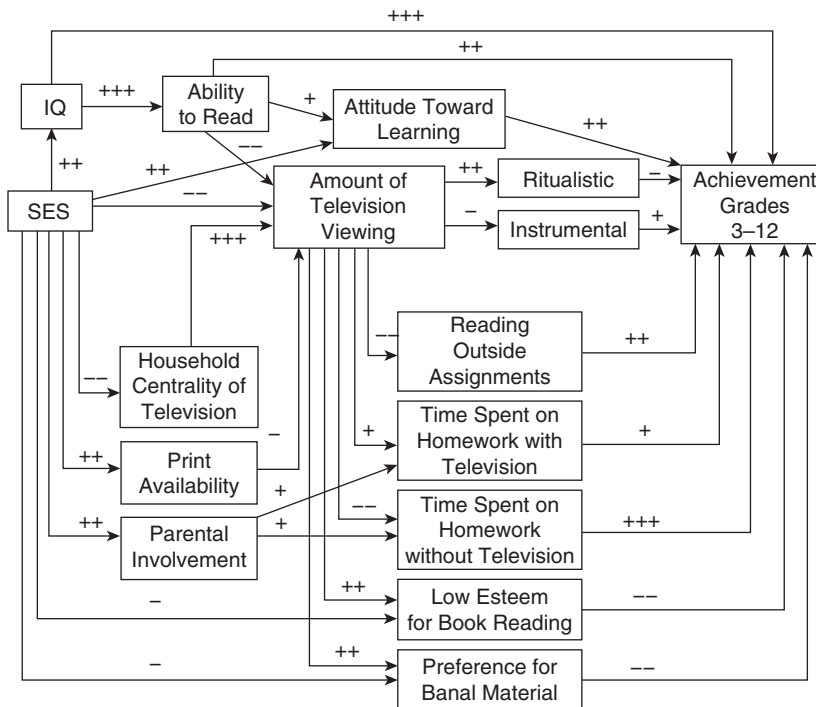


Figure 28.5 Path model: viewing, household and individual variables, and scholastic performance. From G. Comstock & E. Scharrer (2007). *Media and the American child*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

The possibly detrimental influences of television are represented largely by factors on the right, beginning with a specific instance of displacement (“Reading outside of assignments”) and continuing through another example of displacement (“Time spent on homework . . .”) and an instance of interference (“Time spent on homework with television”) and include two examples of attitudes of cultural socialization attributable to television (“Low esteem for book reading” and “Preference for banal material”). These are all factors empirically found to have been influenced by greater or lesser viewing, and each also has been found to have consequences for achievement.

Orientation toward the medium is introduced at the upper right. Rubin (1984) proposed the concepts of instrumental versus ritualistic use of television to distinguish between motivated, focused, interest-driven attention to specific content and viewing representing the desire to kill time, watch some television, or engage in a routine habitual for the time of day and circumstances. Motive affects not only attention to content but the kind of content chosen. Instrumental viewing that is selective and based on interests more often will lead to content that is emotionally and cognitively more demanding and sometimes more informative, and as a result can

enhance achievement. Unhappily, ritualistic viewing accounts for the majority of viewing (Comstock & Scharrer, 2007).

Looking Ahead

Television viewing – with the rare exception – has been consistently recorded as a modest negative correlate of academic achievement. There also have been empirically based justifications for taking at least the possibility of a causal contribution seriously.

Other Media

There have been comparatively little data collected on the systematic influence on scholastic performance of the quantity of consumption of media other than television, primarily because among the young (as well as other demographic groups) none has rivaled television in access, popularity or amount of time allocated. An exception are the recent national Kaiser Foundation surveys (Rideout et al., 2010; Roberts & Foehr, 2004; Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005), which comprehensively collected data on all media – screen, audio, and print.

The measure of achievement was self-reported grades for the nationally representative samples of 8- to 18-year-olds. This is not a strong measure compared to actual recorded grades or scores on standardized achievement tests, which were the criteria in the major data sets reviewed so far. It risks obscuring effects by grade inflation (in the most recent survey, almost two-thirds claimed “mostly As and Bs”). At the same time, it makes any relationship particularly convincing because such an upward migration would make any associations harder to find.

In the most recent survey, conducted in 2009 (Rideout et al., 2010), amount of media use overall (of which the largest component is television content, however disseminated) was negatively associated with grades. Media use overall was also positively associated with various measures of unhappiness and lower self-satisfaction. In both cases these relationships withstood statistical controls for important other variables.

Nearly half (47%) of all heavy media users said they usually got fair or poor grades (mostly Cs or lower), compared to 23% of light media users. Heavy media users were also more likely to say they got into trouble a lot, were often sad or unhappy, and were often bored. Moreover, the relationships between media exposure and grades, and between media exposure and personal contentment, withstood controls for other possibly relevant factors such as age, gender, race, parent education, and single versus two-parent households (Rideout et al., 2010, p. 4).¹

In contrast, print use, defined as “reading for pleasure” to set it apart from school-related media use, was positively associated with grades. The average for the 8- to 18-year-olds in 2009 was 38 minutes a day (compared to the four-and-a-half hours for screen media), with those who did read spending a more impressive 57 minutes. The relationship with grades was modest but decidedly positive: among those who read the most, 72% received high grades while the comparable figure for those classified as reading the least (or not at all) was 60%.

These data, more than six decades after the introduction of television in the late 1940s, record not only impressive, substantial increases in the amount of media consumption by the young but also three persisting (and therefore also noteworthy) patterns. The first is the negative association between media use and scholastic performance, with media overall in these data now substituted for television. The second is the appearance of personal discomfort as a factor in the amount of media use that might also interfere with scholastic performance; this is consistent with the well-known, often recorded positive association between stress and use of television (Comstock & Scharrer, 2007). The third is the identification of print use as contributing positively to academic achievement, a factor occupying a prominent place in the model (again, see Figure 28.5).

The data overall lead to the conclusion that time spent with media, and in particular television and other screen media that are the major components of media exposure and use, depress scholastic achievement. To dismiss this possibility is to ignore not only those many negative correlations and the often huge samples on which they are based (which could be justified by invoking the characteristics of the child), but also to dismiss the concepts of displacement, interference, and socialization. The Kaiser data do not absolve television and screen media because of the weakness of the achievement measure, but they do hint that the pattern of the past several decades may be changing.

Those most at risk would seem to be the 20% or so who are the heaviest viewers. This is certainly the group where achievement scores of all types are the lowest (again, see Figure 28.1). However, this is probably too simplistic. This group that registers the greatest deficit in achievement is also certain to contain many of those with characteristics that predict both greater viewing and lower achievement. The crucial factor is the opportunity cost of a particular mode of media consumption. Thus, those at risk cannot be identified by amount of media use alone.

Amount of viewing inevitably raises the question of content. As Schmidt and Vandewater (2008) sensibly argue in their review, the effects of how much is viewed depend partly on what is viewed. The data examined here represent what is ordinarily viewed and do not reflect what might have occurred had other viewing choices been made. Thus, content matters. Overall amount of viewing by children and teenagers has been negatively associated with achievement while the viewing of educational programming, when incorporated in the research design, has positively predicted achievement. The explanation (at least to an important degree) is that overall viewing has usually been dominated by entertainment. This factor is made explicit in the

model (Figure 28.5) by the concepts of instrumental and ritualistic viewing, where instrumental viewing is a positive predictor of achievement (and is intentionally broad enough to encompass a wide range of content as long as its viewing is motivated by interest).

The increasing similarity of social strata and demographic groups in use of screen media (with use greater for most), a long-term historical trend (Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, & Roberts, 1978; Comstock & Scharrer, 1999), implies that negative correlations with achievement scores will weaken (because those with stronger social and intellectual credentials for achievement will be spending more time attending to those media). Displacement may lose some of its force in response to conceivably better time management and a higher proportion of instrumental viewing among the recent recruits to greater screen use. Quite possibly, this is what has already been observed in the Kaiser Foundation surveys (Rideout et al., 2010; Roberts & Foehr, 2004; Roberts et al., 2005). In turn, the positive role for print is likely to be diluted by electronic media, whose informational role will be somewhat obscured by the large proportion of electronic media use devoted to personal and social communication. The pursuit of relationships between use of specific media and scholastic performance will become ever more problematic – and possibly hopeless – as the conditions and circumstances on which such relationships rest fade away.

NOTE

- 1 Heavy media use was defined as more than 16 hours of exposure per day (about one-fifth of the sample); moderate = 3–16 hours; light = fewer than three hours (slightly fewer than one-fifth of the sample).

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The Educational Impact of Television

Understanding Television's Potential and Limitations

Daniel R. Anderson, Heather J. Lavigne, and Katherine G. Hanson

ABSTRACT

Watching and understanding television requires the development of attention, media decoding, and narrative comprehension skills. Children under the age of two years have difficulty using televised information to effectively guide their behavior, a phenomenon known as the video deficit. Beyond the infant and toddler years, however, television can become a powerful tool for education. Programs designed with specific educational objectives and research-based curricula promote academic achievement and prosocial behavior. Educational television is an important asset for children's informal learning during the preschool years and beyond.

Television as an Educational Tool

Even before television was first broadcast as a mass medium, commentators expressed hopes and fears about its impact on education. On the one hand, TV could be a window to the world, and on the other, it could be an endless distraction from productive and sustained learning. This debate has hardly waned more than 60 years later – in fact, it has been extended to other electronic media. In this chapter, we

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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review the current state of understanding about children's learning from television. Our review here is limited: we only consider the impact of television programs, such as *Sesame Street* or *Blue's Clues*, that intentionally incorporate a curriculum in their design with specific educational objectives aimed at fostering cognitive, social, academic or school-readiness skills among its viewers. That is, we do not review research on the effects of purely entertainment programming (for a review see Chapter 28, this volume). We also do not review research on the use of educational television in the classroom or other formal learning situations. Instead, we focus on educational television that is experienced at home during so-called "informal learning."

We first provide a brief task analysis of television viewing in order to highlight cognitive skills necessary for comprehension and learning (see Anderson & Hanson, 2010 for a detailed analysis). For infants, television comprehension is a demanding task and is probably beyond their capabilities, even when considering educational programs and baby videos. We argue that only after about 2 years of age can TV truly become educational. Consequently, we divide the research literature into educational television impact before and after the age of 2 years.

The Task of Watching Television

The Medium

Watching television is not akin to watching events unfold through a window. Even with large-screen high-definition displays, televised events are confined to a restricted space that is visually and auditorily inferior to equivalent real-life experiences. Television screens fail to give us the sense of depth and "presence" found in everyday life. For example, TV does not afford its viewers with binocular depth perception, which arises from the brain's ability to extract distance information from the slightly disparate views of our two eyes when we look in three-dimensional space. Especially for infants and toddlers, television's impoverished images can lead to poorer encoding, retention, and transfer of information to everyday life.

Television is also limited because it cannot provide its viewers with contingent and responsive feedback. It is widely theorized, with empirical support, that very young children learn best through hands-on experience, actively manipulating objects in their environment as well as engaging with people in their world (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). In turn, these interactive experiences provide children with the knowledge to adaptively modify their future behaviors. This behaviorally active learning process is constrained during television viewing.

The Codes of Television

Television programs are structured by a set of conventions that organize the audio-visual flow of sounds and images into a coherent narrative. To media researchers,

the audiovisual production and editing techniques, such as sound effects, pacing, and dissolves, are known as the formal features of television. These features are effectively the grammar and syntax of television that mark scene and content changes, while fostering continuity across these changes (Huston & Wright, 1983). Formal features have an informative function ranging from calling attention to a particular part of the screen to simulating cognitive processes such as paying close attention to a detail (as in a shift to a close-up shot). Auditory changes and fast-paced motion tend to attract attention to the TV if the viewer is looking away (Alwitt, Anderson, Lorch, & Levin, 1980). Editing techniques can signal a change in perspective (as from one character's point of view to another) or a change in time and space (dissolves to infer a change in time). The interpretation of transitions calls upon prior experience with the medium, general world knowledge, and complex cognitive skills including an understanding of continuity in action sequences, time, point of view, and intentions, to name a few. Consequently, young children's ability to learn from television can be compromised by their limited cognitive abilities and lack of experience with the world in general and with television in particular. However, well-designed children's programs use specific production and editing techniques to support children's learning from television. For example, simply minimizing the number of transitions can help reduce children's cognitive load and possible confusion (Anderson, 2004).

Attention to Television

It is a misconception that children are mesmerized by television. In fact, they pay widely varying amounts of attention to TV, depending on a variety of factors. A typical viewer of *Sesame Street*, for example, will look at and away from the screen about 150 times in the course of an episode (e.g., Anderson, Lorch, Field, & Sanders, 1981). To learn from television, therefore, children need to look and listen at the right times in order to fully understand the narrative or lesson. They must also look at the most informative place on the screen during each portion of the program. The process of learning how to watch television is reflected in the increase in looking at TV across early childhood. Looking at television increases with age as children gain more control over their ability to selectively allocate their attention during the first five years of life (Ruff & Rothbart, 1996). It also increases as children become capable of understanding television content (Pempek et al., 2010).

Higher-Level Comprehension of Television

Children must not only learn how to decode the forms and features of television, but they must also understand the educational material presented on television. High-level comprehension of program content requires cognitive skills ranging from basic comprehension of language to comprehension of stories (e.g., story structure and components, character motivations, cause and effect, etc.).

Since children usually watch TV to be entertained and not educated, learning is often incidental rather than intentional. Fisch (2000) proposed that the two types of content – entertainment and education – result in two parallel streams of cognitive processing that place separate demands on children's limited working memory. Therefore, greater integration between the entertainment and education content within a television program will reduce the cognitive demands of viewing and bolster children's comprehension.

In summary, to create meaningful programming for children, there must be an appreciation of the complexities involved in watching television. For adults, watching television is a relatively easy activity; however, for young children, watching television is challenging given that they are limited in their cognitive abilities, real-world knowledge, and experience with the medium. Thus, for a television program to have a positive impact, the production team should undertake program development with an understanding of children's developmental abilities and perspectives.

Television Viewing among Infants and Toddlers

In 1998, *Teletubbies* debuted on PBS. It was the first television series made specifically for infants and toddlers. Since then, infant-directed television series and videos, such as the highly popular *Baby Einstein* videos, have become a multibillion dollar industry (Garrison & Christakis, 2005). Recent studies indicate that children begin to watch and are regularly exposed to television around nine months of age (Linebarger & Walker, 2005). Approximately 61% of infants under the age of two watch television on a daily basis, consuming an average of one to two hours each day (Rideout & Hamel, 2006).

Many baby videos and TV programs have made either explicit or implicit claims to enhance children's cognitive development (e.g., *Brainy Baby* series). However, unlike educational programs for preschool children and older, there are no available studies to support the producers' claims. In fact, a handful of studies have tested the educational efficacy of baby videos and have not found any developmental or learning benefits. In a naturalistic study, for example, Robb, Richert, and Wartella (2009) provided families of 12- to 15-month-olds with an infant-directed video, *Baby Wordsmith*, to view in the home over a 6-week period. Although this video features word learning, infants who viewed the video did not increase their receptive or expressive language with featured words relative to infants who were not exposed to the video.

Moreover, it is unclear how much infants and toddlers actually comprehend from infant-directed videos given the complexities involved in watching television. Although infants are born with a relatively precocious auditory system, their visual system at birth is poor with limited visual acuity, color and contrast perception, and object tracking, to name a few (see Slater, 2001 for a review). At least for several months after birth, it is unlikely that infants can perceive much on a television screen at a typical viewing distance. Despite these early perceptual immaturities, there are

many baby videos targeting infants as young as three months. By six months, however, the infant visual system is mature enough to see the television screen. At this age they can also recognize objects, characters, and actions on screen, and match the audio track to the visual stimuli (e.g., Tincoff & Jusczyk, 1999). Nevertheless, even with these perceptual abilities, infants' ability to learn from television is compromised by their limited cognitive abilities and lack of experience.

We are just beginning to understand the extent to which infants comprehend television. As an example, Pempek and colleagues (2010) showed 6-, 12-, 18-, and 24-month-olds comprehensible and incomprehensible versions of *Teletubbies*. All children watched a 10-minute comprehensible version of *Teletubbies*. In addition, half of the children viewed a version of *Teletubbies* that consisted of the same shots placed in random order, while the other half viewed a version of *Teletubbies* that was linguistically distorted (each utterance was reversed). Six- and twelve-month-olds did not discriminate among these different versions in terms of their attention. Only at 18 months of age did it seem to matter to the infants whether the program made sequential or linguistic sense. It is likely that the cognitive mechanisms important for basic TV comprehension skills (e.g., linguistic comprehension and comprehending the relationships between successive shots) are not available until about 18 months of age and older.

Does Television Have an Educational Impact on Infants?

Much of the current research on infants' learning focuses on their *inability* to learn from screen media. Even with simple unadorned video used for research, children under 2 years demonstrate a deficit in learning from television compared to learning from an equivalent live display. This phenomenon is known as the *video deficit* (Anderson & Pempek, 2005). Young children for example, are less likely to imitate simple behaviors from television, like putting a rattle together, relative to watching someone put it together in person (e.g., Barr & Hayne, 1999). A number of theories have been proposed to account for the video deficit; none of them are mutually exclusive, and all highlight the complexity involved in TV viewing.

One account of the video deficit emphasizes the perceptual impoverishment of television relative to real-life experiences (Schmitt & Anderson, 2002). Compared to live demonstrations, televised displays lack the dynamic and perceptual richness of everyday life resulting in potentially weaker mental representations (Schmitt, 1997). These perceptual differences may make it particularly difficult for children to transfer knowledge from television to reality. There is some evidence that differences in dimensional space result in poorer transfer of knowledge across dimensions (2D to 3D or 3D to 2D), but not within the same dimensional space (2D to 2D or 3D to 3D; Zack, Barr, Gerhardstein, Dickerson, & Meltzoff, 2009). Another study by Carver and

colleagues (Carver, Meltzoff, & Dawson, 2006) found that 18-month-old infants reliably discriminated between familiar and unfamiliar objects in both video (2D) and live (3D) conditions. Nevertheless, infants took longer to process familiarity differences during the video presentation compared to the live presentation, suggesting that young children need more time to encode information from video.

Another theory posits that infants and toddlers may not learn as much from television because they do not have an appreciation of its symbolic nature (Troseth & Deloache, 1998). That is, they do not understand the fact that television provides symbolic (or more accurately iconic) representations of objects and events that may (or may not) exist in the real world. This results in a failure to understand the correspondence between television and reality, an ability that does not reliably emerge until about three years.

Attention differences may also contribute to the video deficit. Children may find video presentations less engaging than real-life presentations (Diener, Pierroustakos, Troseth, & Roberts, 2008). As a result, they may pay less attention to television and be more likely to miss key pieces of information necessary for comprehension. Furthermore, even if young children pay attention to the video, it does not mean that they are paying attention to the right thing at the right time. Using eye-tracking methodology, Kirkorian, Anderson, and Keen (2008) found that one-year-olds' attention to what they look at while viewing a *Sesame Street* segment is highly variable across infants compared to four-year-olds and adults, who were more likely to look at the same thing at the same time. The older viewers are more likely to look at informative aspects of the display based on their understanding of the program.

Although infants and toddlers have difficulty learning from television, there are techniques that can be used to ameliorate the video deficit. Repeating content can support young children's learning by providing them with more opportunities to encode information (Barr, Muentener, & Garcia, 2007). In addition, verbal labeling, either through voiceover or with a covieing parent, helps children by scaffolding the viewing experience, highlighting important events onscreen (Brand & Tapscott, 2007). The viewing context and experience with television as a source of information are also important factors in reducing the video deficit. Two-year-old children, for example, performed worse on a simple imitation task when they viewed the demonstration on a television set at home compared to children who saw the same video demonstration in the laboratory (Strouse & Troseth, 2008). In contrast, those infants presented with a live demonstration (either at home or in the lab) did not differ in performance. This difference between home and the novel context of the laboratory may result from children's experience with television at home as essentially being irrelevant to their real-life experiences. In addition to viewing context, establishing an interactive relationship with young viewers through video also facilitates children's learning (Troseth, Saylor, & Archer, 2006). Relatedly, Lauricella, Howard, and Calvert (2010) found that with 21-month-olds, a familiar TV puppet was a more effective model for demonstrating nesting cups than an unfamiliar TV puppet.

Finally, coviewing with a parent may be an important factor in infant learning from television. Lemish and Rice (1986) found that television viewing can be a rich experience between parents and children, similar to book reading. Barr and colleagues (Barr, Zack, Garcia, & Muentener, 2008) found that parents who labeled objects on screen (“That’s green”) and questioned their children (“Where is the dog?”) while viewing had young toddlers who attended to and responded more to the television program.

That said, the research literature still lacks any demonstration that children under 2 years of age actually learn anything of value from watching commercial television programs or videos (in contrast to some demonstrations of infant learning from simple research videos). In fact, there has been little rigorous research to evaluate baby videos specifically designed to be educational. Moreover, video viewing by infants is a matter of some controversy. Recent correlational studies are suggestive that early television exposure during infancy is related to poorer cognitive outcomes (Anderson & Pempek, 2005). Furthermore, the American Academy of Pediatrics (1999) recommends that children under 2 years have no screen exposure based on the assumption that TV viewing displaces important social interactions necessary for development.

In summary, television viewing is an active and complex task that requires cognitive maturation and real-world experience. Not surprisingly, very young children have difficulties learning from television. Although there are techniques that support infant and toddler learning from television, there is very little research to show that they learn anything of substance.

Preschoolers and Television

During the preschool years (2 to 5), consumption of screen media greatly increases and then remains high throughout later childhood and the teenage years (Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella, 2003). With age from infancy to the school-age years, TV viewing encompasses a wider variety of content, moving from predominantly child programming to general audience and adult programming. In a survey conducted in 2005, it was reported that 82% of 3- to 4-year-olds and 78% of 5- to 6-year-olds watched television on any given day (Vandewater et al., 2007). Viewing does not just happen at home; preschool children in home-based childcare programs watch approximately four times as much television than those in center-based programs (1.39 hours per day versus .36 hours per day; Christakis, Garrison, & Zimmerman, 2007).

Once established, media consumption patterns from childhood are consistent throughout life. Those children that are “heavy viewers” will most likely continue to be heavy media users later in life (Rideout et al., 2003). Educational television probably has its greatest influence during the preschool years because most children

watch substantial amounts of TV, they are not yet engaged in formal schooling, and they have become capable of understanding well-designed educational programs. In addition, brain development continues at a rapid pace during the preschool years with the consolidation of many basic cognitive abilities occurring during this time.

Preschoolers' TV Viewing: A Task Analysis

As indicated above, the act of watching television becomes easier with greater capabilities in cognitive control and comprehension. With maturation, preschoolers can rapidly process the formal features of television and also recognize television as a relevant source of information.

Auditory Attention

Based on videotapes recorded in homes, preschoolers spend a third of their time or more when watching TV doing things other than looking at the screen (Anderson, Lorch, Collins, Field, & Nathan, 1986). Often, preschoolers divide their attention between television and other activities such as toy play. Because a great deal of information critical to comprehension is presented via the audio track, it is important to determine to what extent children listen to the TV when they are not looking.

Lorch, Anderson, and Levin (1979) found that 5-year-olds' recall of auditory content was better if they were looking at the television at the time the auditory content was presented. Field and Anderson (1985) found the same linkage between looking and listening in 5-year-olds, but found that the linkage was reduced in older children. That is, older television viewers appear to be more capable of listening while they are visually attending to something else. This multitasking behavior, of course, becomes the initial basis for the increasingly common use of multiple media at the same time, especially by teenagers.

Visual Attention

Television viewers (young and old) do not just stare at the TV screen. Rather, they look at and away from the screen many times during the course of a viewing session. The sporadic nature of looking at television can be observed even when the viewer is not engaged in a concurrent activity. An important aspect of modern production of educational television for children, therefore, is an appreciation of this fact. Consequently, production strategies are used to attract the viewer's attention at critical times necessary for comprehension of the key messages.

Of particular importance in getting and holding the attention of young children, is that the program must be comprehensible. That is, the dialogue and narration should use age-appropriate vocabulary, the plot structure should not be complex, the setting interpretable within the experience of a young child, and the editing should demand as little inference as possible. When full attention is critical for comprehension, sound effects or other formal features should be judiciously employed to elicit attention from those members of the audience who are inattentive. It is also important to design the program so that children readily recognize that the program is intended for them. This can be done by using common features that are characteristic of children's programs including "enhanced reality" (bright colors in set design), and the use of animation, puppets, child characters, and the like. Features such as these have been repeatedly found to be associated with enhanced attention in child viewers (Alwitt et al., 1980).

Other factors such as humorous content can increase attention and information acquisition. Zillmann and colleagues (Zillmann, Williams, Bryant, Boynton, & Wolf, 1980) found that unrelated humorous inserts increased 5- and 6-year-olds' looking to the television and memory of educational messages; although it should be noted that the best practice is to try to integrate the humor with the educational content (Fisch, 2000). In general, of course, storylines and content that preschool children find engaging are essential for sustaining attention and interest (for example, saving baby animals forms the core basis of the plotlines for the highly popular *Go, Diego, Go!*).

Comprehension

After they reach the age of 2 years, children become capable of learning from TV. Improvements in children's language and narrative skills make television content more comprehensible, thus improving understanding of plotlines (Linebarger & Piotrowski, 2009). Children begin to comprehend that television is an iconic and symbolic medium; that it represents characters, objects, and events that are not present in the real world but also that it *can* represent real people, objects, and events. They begin to make distinctions between what is real and not real on television, recognizing for example that animation is not real (Dorr, 1983). That said, preschool children love to act "as if" they are participants in a TV program, particularly when the program invites their participation. Invited audience participation was part of the success of the highly popular *Blue's Clues* (Anderson, 2004). It has now become a common device used in many preschool programs.

Television viewing requires an implicit understanding of the meaning of production techniques used to show changes in scene, character perspective, and time. For example, when depicting an important meeting in the Oval Office, program producers might show an establishment shot of the exterior of the White House to allude to the location of this interaction. Generally, these types of editing and film techniques are known as cinematic montage (Monaco, 1981). By age 4, children begin to

understand elements of montage. Four-year-olds can interpret simple transition sequences, point-of-view camera shots, and actions that are not explicitly shown but implied to the audience (e.g., the viewer may infer that a cartoon character got a spanking from a parent if he was yelled at in a previous shot and in the next, the character is shown rubbing his backside). Though preschool children show some comprehension of the basic elements of montage, understanding has been found to further improve in 7-year-old children and beyond (Smith, Anderson, & Fischer, 1985). These advancements can be attributed to children's growing base of life experiences (including TV viewing), increasing ability to appreciate transformations in time and space, and increasing awareness of their own and others' thoughts and unique perspectives (for example, correctly interpreting a point-of-view shot).

Towards the end of the preschool years, programming format and familiarity can increase children's comprehension. By this age, children are able to understand plots that follow a linear progression with no subplots and character activity involving concrete actions (Pingree et al., 1984). Children also begin to develop their own preferences for programs, becoming regular viewers of particular series. This familiarity with particular programs has been found to improve comprehension (Crawley et al., 2002).

Educational Programming

One of the cornerstones of an effective educational program is a thoughtfully designed curriculum. *Sesame Street*, more than any other program, is the pioneer in preschool educational programming. As part of its original creation, and as part of its continuing production, program producers, child development specialists, educators, and researchers engage in collaboration (Lesser, 1977). Educators and child development experts design the underlying curriculum (which varies somewhat from year to year), writers create content that incorporates the curriculum, and researchers test versions of that content to determine appeal, comprehensibility, and learning. Based on "formative" research with children, the content may be revised or abandoned if any aspect of appeal, comprehensibility, or learning is lacking (Fisch & Truglio, 2001). If an educational program was developed with federal funding, "summative" research may also be done. Summative research is conducted on completed episodes or even on an entire season or two of the program. It is usually done with a large sample of children and involves a formal research design and data analysis. Continued federal funding of the program may well depend on the findings from the summative research.

Unfortunately, most formative research and some summative research (especially if it is done by a commercial network) are proprietary, and unavailable for review. In addition, many summative research studies are not published in archival form and may be difficult to obtain. However, through a combination of evaluations shared

by producers and additional empirical work of academic researchers, it is possible to examine the effectiveness of various types of programming. Below is a short review of preschoolers' cognitive and social learning from educational television (for a more extensive review, see Fisch, 2004).

Learning from Educational Programming

Because it was the first widely viewed educational TV program, and because of its longevity (first broadcast in 1969), *Sesame Street* provides the most information about the effects of educational television viewing. The evidence shows positive effects from studies of exposure to single episodes to studies of sustained, repeated viewing of the series (Fisch, 2004).

Short-term research is usually concerned with whether children actually comprehend and learn the content in particular episodes. In one experimental study, for example, Hodapp (1977) showed that a single exposure to a *Sesame Street* segment resulted in preschoolers' increased ability to apply the same problem-solving strategy seen in the segment. However, these same children did not apply the strategy to a similar task in a different context. Single, brief exposures can promote the literal use of information, but application of the knowledge across contexts may be limited.

Repeated viewings improve children's ability to recall story plots, crucial details, and extract abstract problem-solving skills. For example, in a study of *Blue's Clues* by Crawley and colleagues (Crawley, Anderson, Wilder, Williams, & Santomero, 1999), children who saw an episode five times not only remembered more of the educational content than children who saw the episode once, but they also showed substantially more transfer of problem-solving concepts to new contexts. It is worth noting that attention to the episode of *Blue's Clues* did not substantially diminish over five viewings, and in addition, audience participation (pointing at the screen, yelling answers to questions, etc.) increased with repetition.

Following the first season of *Sesame Street*, an evaluation assessed the impact of viewing on the school-readiness skills of preschoolers. Results showed that, over the 26-month period of assessment, children who viewed *Sesame Street* most frequently showed the greatest gains in sorting skills, knowledge of numbers and letters, and other cognitive skills (Ball & Bogatz, 1970). Follow-up studies concluded that frequent viewers were later rated by their teachers as better prepared for school than the less-frequent viewers in the sample (Bogatz & Ball, 1972). It should be pointed out that these early summative evaluations were not true experiments insofar as children were not randomly assigned to watch *Sesame Street* or to be non-viewers. Consequently, it is possible that children who were more drawn to watch *Sesame Street* were different from those who were less attracted to the show. Such studies are always open to the criticism that the evidence in favor of the show is not conclusive (e.g., Cook et al., 1975).

Subsequent studies indicated that viewing predicted increased vocabulary (Rice, Huston, Truglio, & Wright, 1990), improved school readiness (Zill, 2001), and better performance on math and scholastic achievement tests (Fisch, Truglio, & Cole, 1999). One study investigated long-term impact beyond the preschool years. Anderson and colleagues (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, & Wright, 2001) recontacted 570 high school students who had been previously studied as preschoolers. In the original studies, detailed viewing diaries kept by parents indicated what programs the children watched. In the later “recontact” study, the by-then high school students were interviewed and their high school transcripts were obtained. Preschool viewing of educational television, particularly *Sesame Street*, was associated with higher grades in English, science, and mathematics. Educational viewing was also associated with greater leisure-time reading of books. In addition, *Sesame Street* viewers, when in high school, placed higher value on their academic performance, and tended to have higher levels of academic self-esteem. To summarize, *Sesame Street*, the longest-running and most-studied educational television program, provides both short- and long-term evidence that its viewers learn from the program and that this learning better prepares them for school. In turn, this preschool preparation is associated with positive consequences traceable at least through high school.

Inspired by the success of *Sesame Street*, (as well as audience ratings and sale of licensed products), Nickelodeon set out to design a new educational program to compete with those found on public television. *Blue’s Clues* was designed to teach cognitive and social problem-solving skills to preschoolers. The program design was based on research findings from studies done since *Sesame Street* was first broadcast. Whereas *Sesame Street* was designed on the assumption that children’s attention had to be maintained by frequent changes in image and content (Lesser, 1972), the design of *Blue’s Clues* was based on the presumption that children are cognitively active and engaged in thinking about the content and story line. It was also based on the idea that editing transitions provide a cognitive burden to young viewers. Finally, it made the presumption that given the opportunity, young viewers would be behaviorally and verbally interactive with the show if they were given the invitation to do so (Anderson, 2004). Following these ideas, the show provided a continuous storyline punctuated by solving problems posed by characters encountered during the search for “clues” to solve the main problem. The entire episode is produced with only three or four transitions that require viewer inference, and even these are clearly marked for the audience. Embedded within the format of the show is an interactive exchange between the host and the viewer, as he asks questions like, “What do we do when we find a clue?” (audience response: “Put it in our handy-dandy notebook”). Through pointing, making gestures, and calling out answers, the audience is encouraged to actively participate in the problem-solving activities.

In a study spanning two years of children’s exposure to *Blue’s Clues*, regular viewers performed better than non-viewers on problem-solving tasks seen on the show as

well as solving riddles that were not presented on the show (Bryant et al., 1999; Crawley et al., 2002). Other series such as *Allegra's Window* and *Gullah Gullah Island* have also been found to promote some types of problem solving (Fisch, 2004).

Children who do not develop basic literacy skills such as letter recognition by the time they enter school are three to four times more likely to drop out of school in subsequent years (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 2002). Therefore, literacy has been a target content area for preschool educational television programs. One such program is *Super Why!* a series targeted at children ages 3 to 6 that promotes skills such as alphabet and word knowledge, comprehension, spelling, and an understanding of basic story structure. Linebarger, McMenamin, and Wainright (2008) randomly assigned children to watch either *Super Why!* or a control educational program (that did not teach literacy skills) over the course of eight weeks. After a mid- and final assessment, results indicated that children who watched *Super Why!* exhibited significant growth on targeted early literacy skills such as letter knowledge, phonological and phonemic awareness, and language development.

Educational television can influence a variety of skills and knowledge areas. For example, programs such as *The Electric Company*, *Barney & Friends*, *Dora the Explorer*, and *The Puzzle Place* have been found to play positive roles in language and second-language development (Fisch, 2004). Other types of positive influences on cognitive growth include appreciation for music and the arts, general knowledge, and appreciation of diversity, among others.

An aspect of school readiness is to prepare children with social skills such as taking turns, sharing, and the like. Preschool children must also learn to recognize and evaluate their own and others' emotional states in order to effectively apply social skills. Additionally, children must learn self-control in the face of strong emotions. Such social and emotional learning is the curriculum target of many educational TV programs directed at preschool children. In a meta-analysis of 34 studies examining the prosocial effects of television, Mares and Woodard (2005) found that children in both experimental and home observation studies who viewed prosocial programming behaved in a more prosocial manner and held more positive attitudes towards measures such as altruism and social interactions as compared to other children (see Chapter 30). The results of these analyses also suggest that prosocial television has as much influence on positive social behavior as aggressive or violent programming has for negative behaviors.

The primary goal of *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* was to contribute to the development of preschoolers' social and emotional life skills. After watching the series over a four-week period as compared to aggressive or neutral programming, preschool children who viewed *Mister Rogers* showed higher levels of self-control and persistence in a school setting as compared to children who viewed aggressive cartoons or nature programming (Friedrich & Stein, 1973). Furthermore, low-income children in particular showed improvements in verbalization of their feelings, cooperation with others, and nurturance.

Sesame Street has a broad school-readiness curriculum that includes prosocial and emotional skills as well as verbal and numerical literacy. Research indicates that *Sesame Street* contributes to the development of prosocial behaviors such as cooperation, sharing, and reductions in aggressive behavior (Bankart & Anderson, 1979).

Another program produced by Sesame Workshop, *Dragon Tales*, was created with the primary goal to foster preschool children's social and emotional skills. After multiple exposures, viewers of *Dragon Tales* showed a positive change in goal orientation and social relationships (Rust, 2001). Ratings from parents and teachers in this study showed that viewers of *Dragon Tales* scored higher on their tendencies to "choose challenging tasks," "start or organize play with others," "share with other children," and "cooperate with others."

Beyond the Preschool Years

Children's understanding of television programs continues to increase, reaching essentially adult levels by about age 12 (e.g., Collins, 1983). In the school-age years, as self-concept develops, and as they become more cognitively sophisticated, children's TV program preferences change a great deal. For example, whereas preschoolers do not care a great deal whether a character is male or female, character gender becomes important for children older than five. Boys begin to strongly prefer male characters and girls prefer female characters (Luecke-Aleksa, Anderson, Collins, & Schmitt, 1995). Reflecting cognitive development, school-age children begin to watch programs intended for adults and general audiences, whereas preschool children overwhelmingly watch children's programs. In fact, school-age children will often actively reject programs they previously watched as being "for babies" and begin substantial explorations of programs that are not educational in nature or intent. It has also been suggested that older children begin to prefer programs of higher complexity, specifically, those that possess a narrative structure and that focus more so on character interactions (Calvert & Kotler, 2003). In addition to shifts in these preferences, the authors found the overall interest in "educational" programs declines for these older children. These developments in program preferences make the creation of educational television programs for children beyond preschool a challenge.

An example of an educational program beyond preschool is *Between the Lions*, a PBS program designed for young school-age children to promote literacy strategies and enjoyment from reading. Research surrounding this program suggests that kindergarten viewers of this series showed higher levels of word recognition and standardized test measures as compared to non-viewers (Linebarger, Kosanic, Greenwood, & Doku, 2004). This same study found that at-risk viewers had significantly greater gains than not-at-risk youth. This suggests that educational programs may have differing impact depending on parent education, socioeconomic status, and access to resources.

The Electric Company, which targeted the improvement of literacy skills in lagging readers in the second grade, was found to improve reading skills across 19 different goal areas, with the greatest gains for first and second graders (Ball & Bogatz, 1973). Other series like *Arthur*, *Ghostwriter*, and *Reading Rainbow* have been found to establish an increase in school-age children's interest in reading and writing (Fisch, 2004).

Math and science programs have also received positive evaluations. *Square One TV* and *Cyberchase* enhanced positive attitudes toward mathematical learning (Fisch, 2004) and increased recall, comprehension, and children's use of problem-solving strategies (Hall, Esty, & Fisch, 1990). Among the benefits of science-based programs such as *3-2-1 Contact* and *Bill Nye the Science Guy* are a better understanding of basic scientific knowledge and interest in scientific exploration (Cambre & Fernie, 1985; Rockman et al., 1996).

Finally, as children grow older, an understanding of civics, social studies, and current events becomes increasingly important for scholastic achievement and social competence. Child-friendly programs that have offered age-appropriate coverage of current events topics include *Channel One* and *Nick News*. These types of programs can present important knowledge to children in age-appropriate language and content.

Those children who watch educational programs clearly benefit. What is not so clear, however, is whether these programs can successfully compete with their entertainment counterparts for an audience. While preschool educational programs like *Blue's Clues* have been successful in terms of audience ratings, this is much less true for educational programs directed at school-age children. The challenge for the future is to get more school-age children watching educational programs.

How is Educational Television Successful?

The first step in successful educational television production is getting children to choose and pay attention to the program. Fortunately, we know a considerable amount about attention to television. Many programs, such as *Sesame Street* and *Blue's Clues*, have made use of this knowledge (Anderson, 2004). The second step is to ensure that the production is comprehensible and does not distract from the core educational content of the program. In this regard, productions benefit enormously from formative research done with storybooks based on scripts, storyboards, and animatics (usually black and white drawings and partial animation with audio from voice actors and stand-ins). Such formative research ensures that children can comprehend and remember the content. Systematic formative research was an aspect of *Sesame Street's* innovation (Lesser, 1974) and is currently employed in many successful educational children's programs.

The third step is transfer. Transfer occurs when information obtained in one context can be successfully applied in other contexts. Successful transfer has been

found for programs such as *Sesame Street* that concentrate on cognitive skills (e.g., Ball & Bogatz, 1970), *Square One TV* (Hall et al., 1990), and *Blue's Clues* (Crawley et al., 1999), among others, in teaching school-readiness skills such as literacy, numeracy, and a variety of problem-solving skills for preschool and school-age children (Fisch, Kirkorian, & Anderson, 2005).

So how can transfer be encouraged? One theory, Fisch's capacity model (2000), attempts to combine literature-spanning information processing, cognitive schemas, and other mechanisms to account for transfer of learning from television. The model asserts that transfer relies on an initial comprehension of the educational content, the creation of a mental representation that is significantly more abstract than the initial learned content, and its relationship to the novel problem to which it will be applied. Breakdowns at any level of this process can result in a failure of transfer. An example of a way to increase transfer is to show the concept in operation in multiple contexts; this helps the viewers develop an abstract idea of the concept that is not tied to a specific concrete context (Fisch et al., 2005).

Final Comment

Television is but one platform for educational screen media. It is undoubtedly the most important medium for informal learning by preschool children, but it becomes supplemented and to some extent supplanted by other media as children get older. For this reason, an important feature in educational television program design is to include, as part of the overall plan, interactive media such as Internet resources and activities, DVDs and computer games, as well as books, magazines, and board games. If children become engaged with TV characters, they want to see those characters on websites, in books, in computer games, and elsewhere. When they learn ideas, skills, and concepts, they like to encounter them elsewhere. Consequently, any educational production focused on television must ultimately become a project incorporating many media.

There has been little research, however, on the effectiveness of multiplatform educational programming. A recent exception is a summative research report on the mathematics program *Cyberchase* by Fisch and colleagues (Fisch, Lesh, Motoki, Crespo, & Melfi, 2010). They found that, compared to children who only watched the TV show, children who also used the program's website and interactive DVDs showed better transfer of skills to new problems. This finding is consistent with transfer of learning theory and is probably due to increased exposure to problems in more varied contexts, and also to practicing of skills learned while watching the TV program. Video exposure alone, of course, does not readily encourage children to engage in practicing newly learned skills, whereas well-designed interactive media do. The success of informal educational media in general is likely to be enhanced by the use of multiplatform designs.

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Prosocial TV Content

Children's Interpretations and Responses

Marie-Louise Mares

ABSTRACT

Two meta-analyses of the early research on prosocial effects of TV viewing suggest the possibility for positive effects, but also reveal a lack of systematic research into how best to achieve desired outcomes. Since then, the question has gained more social relevance because of a renewed international interest in using television to reduce prejudice and foster prosocial interactions, and because of the proliferation of programs in the United States that purport to teach socioemotional lessons. Research by Narvaez and others on comprehension of written texts suggests that there are important cognitive and moral schema developments that affect how children process moral messages. It is a central argument of the chapter that the same issues of interpretation and misinterpretation arise with prosocial television content. The latter part of the chapter focuses on the challenges of using TV as a tool for promoting inclusive attitudes, and a series of recommendations about how to increase the probability of positive outcomes.

Television as a Prosocial Force

Can television content be used to foster prosocial attitudes and behaviors among young viewers? The answer suggested by forty years of research is “yes” – but it

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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often seems to take more than unaided viewing and it can be challenging given the complexity of real world conditions. The central conclusion of this chapter is that prosocial TV content appears to have the greatest chance of success when viewed with an adult who encourages related discussion or activities. Even content produced with the best of intentions often has relatively small effects or no observable effects at all when children simply watch on their own at home.

There are several possible explanations. One has to do with media diets – those who watch prosocial television may often watch lots of other, less positive content as well (Rosenkoetter, Huston, & Wright, 1990; Wiegman, Kuttschreuter, & Baarda, 1992). An additional explanation, the main one I explore here, is that young viewers interpret prosocial media content quite differently than the adults who produce it for them. Given that the narrative structures of prosocial programs are often quite complex, young viewers may need help understanding the intended lessons and elaborating on them in ways that would lead to positive changes in attitudes and/or behaviors.

It is useful to begin by specifying what types of research are being considered here. My primary interest relates to the use of real television content to help children be inclusive, friendly, and cooperative in their social interactions. Part of that effort involves trying to mitigate the effects of negative or restrictive stereotypes. This chapter does not focus on the early experimental studies of the 1970s in which researchers generated their own content to examine the effects of modeling on altruism (e.g., generosity, helping, cooperation) and self-control (e.g., avoiding temptations to lie, cheat, or steal), though these are reviewed elsewhere (e.g., Mares, Palmer, & Sullivan, 2008; Mares & Woodard, 2001) and have been included in two meta-analyses of prosocial media effects (Hearold 1986; Mares & Woodard, 2005).

Following an initial swell of research in the 1970s, the question of how to promote friendliness, cooperation, and similar qualities via media content received relatively little attention for several decades. The issue became more salient again in the United States with the Federal Communication Commission's 1996 guideline that broadcast stations must offer at least three hours a week of educational/informative (E/I) children's programming in order to receive expedited license renewal. Content analyses of E/I programming (aired in Philadelphia in 1989–2000), found that the majority of the networks' educational offerings focused on socioemotional rather than traditional curricular lessons, such as the importance of getting along with others, being honest, overcoming prejudice, or feeling good about oneself (Jordan, 2004; Jordan, Schmitt, & Woodard, 2001). Given the mandate to produce programming with positive educational or socioemotional outcomes, the question arose again about how to achieve such goals.

But, it is worth noting *why* the topic languished for so long. Liebert and Sprafkin, two prominent researchers in the area of prosocial effects during the 1970s, wrote a textbook a decade later (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988) in which they reflected on the concern that began to escalate about prosocial media content as a form of brainwashing and manipulation. As they describe it, a national ad campaign to promote friendly interactions between children was met with increasing alarm as critics pointed out

that cooperation and other forms of prosocial behavior need not be considered good qualities – rather, children may need to be tough and competitive in order to succeed (Karp, 1984; Rivers, 1974).

Brown and Singhal (1990) raised a series of similar ethical issues about the increased international use of entertainment programming to promote a variety of social goals such as overcoming alcoholism, adoption of modern agricultural practices, and sexual responsibility. They noted the dilemmas about who should get to decide which values should be promoted as well as the potential (present in any content) for unintended negative consequences. Their ultimate conclusion was that viewers should be informed about the intended persuasive effects of prosocial content so that they can decide whether to watch, or allow their children to watch.

In the United States, the current practice is for most educational/prosocial programs for children to be accompanied by a website that explains the goals of the program and provides descriptions of sample episodes. This, of course, does not mean that parents know about this material or bother to read it. In international efforts, particularly those that are coproductions with Western media corporations, there remain the lurking issues of cultural imperialism and the imposition of Western values in places where they are inappropriate or unwelcome. The response of one major institution that has been at the forefront of international educational efforts, *Sesame Street*, has been to emphasize the cooperative aspects of coproduction. That is, programming goals and strategies are developed in close collaboration with educators, policymakers, and producers in the specific region.

Overall, then, prosocial interventions should involve working closely with others in cross-cultural contexts to avoid an imposition of values. Further, the ideal scenario would be that prosocial television programs would be attractive enough to make children watch voluntarily, and effective enough to produce positive outcomes from watching at home under normal conditions. However, much of the research suggests that children often need more assistance.

Weak Effects of Unaided Viewing at Home

In an early study, Friedrich and Stein (1973) studied the effects of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* – a live action program aired in the United States in which the main character, Mr. Rogers, consistently modeled friendly, supportive interactions. Short segments occasionally depicted social dilemmas faced by puppet friends, and these were resolved in prosocial ways. Friedrich and Stein began their field experiment with 97 three- to five-year-olds by examining the initial relationships between self-selected home viewing of *Mister Rogers'* and children's classroom behaviors (e.g., cooperation and empathy) during the baseline three-week period. None of the measures were significantly related to home viewing, either in the group as a whole or among specific subgroups of children.

Similar lack of effects were reported by Sprafkin and Rubinstein (1979) in their study of the home viewing choices and classroom behaviors of 500 middle-class seven- to nine-year-olds in the United States, and by Wiegman et al. (1992) in their three-year longitudinal study of 466 seven-year-olds and nine-year-olds from large urban districts in the Netherlands. At all three times of measurement, Wiegman et al. found only trivial, nonsignificant correlations between home viewing of prosocial content and roster-ratings of prosocial classroom behavior. They noted that children who watched a lot of prosocial programming tended to be heavy viewers who also watched a lot of antisocial content.

Studies that have examined the relationship between self-selected exposure to entertainment programming featuring non-traditional or counter-stereotypical portrayals also report weak effects. Rosenwasser, Lingenfelter, and Harrington (1989) looked for correlations between children's knowledge of three US programs featuring relatively non-traditional gender roles (*The Cosby Show*, *Growing Pains*, and *Who's the Boss?*) and non-traditional gender role beliefs. Only 4 out of 25 correlations were significant – barely above chance. Mares and Acosta (2010) studied a US sample of 128 four- to six-year-olds, and found no significant relationships between children's self-reported frequency of viewing 20 programs that purportedly taught inclusiveness and positive interactions, and children's interest in having classmates of different race/ethnicity or gender.

Rosenkoetter (1999) asked two samples of US 6- and 8-year-olds how often they watched 30 adult situation comedies (rated for level of prosocial content), and asked the mothers how often their child engaged in positive behaviors such as sharing and helping others. In one study, Rosenkoetter found a fairly strong positive correlation ($r = .57$) between prosocial situation comedy viewing and prosocial behavior, but only among the 6-year-olds (not the 8-year-olds) and without any controls for background variables except gender. In another study reported in the same paper, Rosenkoetter found a small, marginally significant correlation between viewing adult prosocial situation comedies and mothers' reports, but only among children who were able to identify the moral lesson in a sample episode of *Full House*. There was no relationship between prosocial viewing and behavior among the children who did not perform well on this task, consistent with the argument that comprehension (or the lack of it) is a mediator of the effects of home viewing.

Why Might Young Viewers Need Help Interpreting Prosocial Content?

One answer is that young viewers often need help interpreting any narrative (not just prosocial ones) because of developmental cognitive constraints. As outlined in Fisch's (2000) cognitive capacity model, young viewers have a smaller working memory and less background knowledge to use in understanding a televised story.

Thus, more complex narratives tax the limited resources available and increase the odds that viewers will miss or misunderstand much of the content.

Research suggests that young children (up to age eight) remember less content from a television program than older children or adults (Van den Broek, Lorch, & Thurlow, 1996). When they do remember events, they often have difficulty understanding how they are connected – how one event caused another, which in turn led to a later outcome (Collins, Wellman, Keniston, & Westby, 1978). Moreover, the types of information that seem very relevant to prosocial outcomes may be the most likely to be forgotten – how a character feels (Hayes & Casey, 1992; Knowles & Nixon, 1990; Thompson & Myers, 1985), what their motives are (Van den Broek, 1989) or what the consequences are for being nice or nasty (Collins, Berndt, & Hess, 1974). Not surprisingly, given their lesser attention to emotions, young children are less likely (though not unable) to be upset by a character's display of fear or misery (Wilson & Cantor, 1985).

A second point, as Fisch (2000) noted (and as Anderson and colleagues discuss at more length in Chapter 29, this volume), is the addition of educational material to narratives, which tends to increase the cognitive load for young viewers. The greater the load, the more likely it is that some content will simply not be noticed or that other content will be misunderstood or forgotten.

Third, research suggests that information about social groups is filtered through preexisting schemas, such that schema-consistent information is remembered best, and schema-inconsistent information is often forgotten or distorted (see Chapter 13, this volume). For example, Bigler and Liben (1993) had children listen to stories in which African-American and European-American characters interacted. In one condition, the African-American character was lazy (or mean, or dirty); in the counter-stereotypical condition, the African-American character was presented positively and the European-American character held the negative attributes. Children who were more cognitively mature and could classify stimuli along multiple dimensions were better able to remember the counter-stereotypical story. Less advanced children and those who initially held the most negative racial stereotypes often misremembered the counter-stereotypical stories. In their "version" the attributes were reversed to conform to their initial perceptions that the African-American character would have the negative attributes. Other studies have demonstrated the same reversals in memory for counter-stereotypical gender portrayals (e.g., Cordua, McGraw, & Drabman, 1979; Liben & Signorella, 1993).

Finally, young viewers may need help with prosocial content because of the specific developmental challenges of extracting moral lessons from narratives, particularly given the common structures of televised prosocial narratives in the United States.

"The Moral" as Especially Misunderstood Content

Narvaez (1998) has argued that children tend not to interpret moral lessons in stories in the same way as adults, because the act of extracting an overarching theme about

a moral principle is shaped not only by cognitive development but also by moral development. In one study, Narvaez, Gleason, Mitchell, and Bentley (1999) had 8-year-olds, 10-year-olds, and undergraduates read stories in which the main character faced a moral dilemma (e.g., whether to return extra change), and then choose which of four short messages and four short vignettes best captured the moral theme of the story. The 8-year-olds chose the correct vignette 11% of the time (below chance), and the 10-year-olds made the correct choice 45% of the time, compared to 91% for the undergraduates. Similar developmental patterns were also observed in another study (Narvaez, Bentley, Gleason, & Samuels, 1998), in which children with less developed moral schemas tended not to recall story content related to more advanced moral reasoning – in effect, age groups varied in the lessons they were extracting.

Not surprisingly, research indicates that it is harder for children to extract a “grown-up” version of the moral message if the story is a fable or is otherwise unrealistic (Goldman, Reyes, & Varnhagen, 1984). Jose, D’Anna, and Krieg (2005) reported that kindergarten and second grade children often misunderstood simple metaphors (e.g., a person can be emotionally “cold”) and proverbs (e.g., “all that shines is not gold”), and that comprehension of these forms was associated with greater ability to extract the moral of a fable. The more realistic the story (Lehr, 1988) or the closer an analogy to a real-world task (Gentner & Toupin, 1986) the better young children perform in recognizing the theme or applying the information to their own situation.

Identifying the Prosocial Lesson of Television or Film Narratives

How well do children do at identifying the intended lesson of audiovisual narratives? Rosenkoetter (1999) had 81 first, third, and fifth graders watch an episode of *The Cosby Show*, a US live-action situation comedy featuring the comedian Bill Cosby and his television family. Rosenkoetter identified six different moral issues in the episode he showed students (e.g., it is wrong to steal, wrong to lie, good to forgive). Virtually all students in each grade correctly identified at least one lesson, but it took rather more probing (up to five questions per lesson) to elicit the others. In another study in the same paper, he showed 73 first and third graders an episode of a different situation comedy, *Full House*, in which the main character had to decide whether to throw easy pitches to her boyfriend on an opposing baseball team and thereby make her team lose. When asked, approximately 80% of children said that they thought there was a moral lesson in the episode but only 32% of first graders and 46% of third graders correctly articulated what it was.

Along similar lines, Mares (2006) showed 72 six- to nine-year-olds the Disney animated film, *The Sword in the Stone* and asked them whether they thought there was a lesson in the film. As in Rosenkoetter’s (1999) study, most children (79%) said that they thought there was indeed a lesson. Of these, 14% said they could not say what

it was, 32% repeated some part of the story (e.g., “There was this sword in this stone, and this boy, he pulled it out”), and 53% gave a general moral principle that was not related specifically to the story (“You have to be nice to people.”). Only one child gave something approximating the lesson as identified by a separate group of 30 adults (about the importance of intellect and education over physical strength). He had seen the film multiple times.

Children’s difficulty in extracting the moral lesson from *The Sword in the Stone* (even when viewers had seen the film before) is not surprising given the complexity of the task involved, hence the cognitive resources required. The lesson had to be extracted from snippets of song and fragments of dialogue (“Use your head, boy!”) and there were no visual primes of the intended lesson. Arthur was shown flying through the air or swimming like a fish to escape various predators; although Merlin had lots of books, he and Arthur seldom consulted them. Thus it is unsurprising that children were unable to articulate the relatively unfamiliar lesson, and it is unlikely that watching the film would have prompted children to pause and engage in thoughtful (rather than physical) responses to social dilemmas.

How are Prosocial Lessons Taught in Television Content?

How do television producers go about trying to encourage and teach children to be friendly, cooperative, and inclusive? Smith et al. (2006) examined the frequency and context of altruistic acts on US television in 2005. They noted that there were approximately four instances of helping or sharing per hour in children’s cable programming and close to three per hour in public broadcasting programming (of which a high proportion is children’s content). Roughly half of all altruistic acts in children’s cable or public broadcast programs were initiated and received by human characters – the rest were performed or received by animals or other anthropomorphic characters. Half or slightly less than half were in realistic contexts, and a number involved humor (21% in public broadcasting, 43% in children’s cable).

We noticed similar patterns in our much smaller examination of television stations’ descriptions to the FCC of their educational programming (Mares & Acosta, 2008). We found 12 children’s programs that were purportedly teaching inclusiveness or tolerance of social differences. Most of them were targeted to children aged 8 and younger, and most were at least partly animated (10 out of 12, 83%) and contained anthropomorphic major characters such as cats, dogs, or dragons (11 out of 12, 92%). Moreover, examination of episode descriptions on *TV.com* suggested that tolerance was often taught by depicting one nonhuman character (e.g., a caterpillar) initially expressing prejudice or hostility toward another nonhuman character (e.g., a spider) and then learning, over the course of the episode, to be more inclusive.

Consider, for example, the following storylines. In an episode of *Rolie Polie Olie*, the main character (who lives on a planet where everything is round) is disturbed by the idea of playing with someone with a square head. In an episode of *The Berenstain Bears*, Papa Bear is bothered by the fact that a different species of bear has moved in next door. In *Miss Spider's Neighborhood*, Miss Spider faces hostility from other bugs that do not like spiders. In an episode of *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat*, a dog is teased for wanting to play with cats and engage in cat-like activities. In each case, the story ends with the character learning the error of his or her ways – but the happy ending is often relatively brief compared to the long build-up of initial discomfort.

There are two key features of these scenarios. First, they are not realistic which, given the prior research on children's difficulty with fables suggests that they may be challenging for young viewers to decode. It seems unclear that a child would reflect that just as a dog can play with a cat, so too can a girl play with a boy or a Chinese child play with an African American child. Second, and probably more importantly, much of each story is focused on negative rather than positive emotions and behaviors.

The Risks in Modeling Negative Attitudes and Behaviors

A handful of studies point to the risks of trying to teach prosocial behaviors by depicting an initial conflict or antisocial behavior. In fact, the results of our meta-analysis suggested that the negative effects of such depictions on children's interactions tend to be even stronger than "unadulterated" antisocial content, perhaps because the context of a prosocial program suggests that the initially hostile behavior being modeled is appropriate.

In an early study, Silverman and Sprafkin (1980) had 3- to 7-year-olds watch a 16-minute *Sesame Street* segment featuring either friendly, conflict-free interactions, or conflicts that were resolved peacefully. Pairs of children then played a marble game designed to measure cooperation: they could maximize the number of marbles they both got by taking turns, or they could ruin each other's chances by working against each other. Silverman and Sprafkin found that the prosocial-only condition had virtually no effects on cooperation in the marble game relative to a control group. However, those who saw the conflict-plus-peaceful-resolution actually cooperated less than did the control group. Similarly Liss, Reinhardt, and Fredriksen (1983) showed children either a non-aggressive excerpt of a *Superfriends* cartoon, or one in which the superheroes used aggression to teach someone not to steal. Those who saw the aggressive (though ultimately prosocial) content were subsequently less cooperative than those who saw the non-aggressive content and in a subsequent interview, they showed less comprehension of the plot and moral lesson of the episode. Most recently, Truglio, Kotler, Cohen, and Housley-Juster (2005) reported

on the effects of an episode of *Sesame Street* in which Telly Monster fantasized about beating up another character who kept taking his triangles. Although the story ended positively, children who saw the episode gave more negative responses when asked what a child should do in a parallel situation than they had before they saw the episode. (See also Fisch, Brown, & Cohen, 2001.)

To be fair, there are instances where this storyline seems to work. In the same paper, Truglio et al. (2005) also reported on the effects of another episode in which Big Bird's pen pal, Gulliver, was briefly unwilling to play with anyone who was not a bird. After being confronted by Big Bird ("If you don't want to play with my friend, then I don't want to play with you!") he learned better. Children gave significantly more positive responses to a hypothetical exclusion scenario a week after watching the episode than they had before they saw it. Presumably the differences in outcomes of the two studies had to do with the visual salience of the initial negative behavior and the speediness of the prosocial resolution.

Children's Interpretations

To examine these issues further, we decided to examine children's interpretations of a similar story. We chose an episode of *Clifford the Big Red Dog*, an animated program in which Clifford and his fellow dog friends (Cleo and T-Bone) and his owner, Emily Elizabeth, face various social dilemmas together. In this particular 10-minute episode (*The New Friend*) the dogs met a new dog that only had three legs (KC). Although Clifford is extremely (indeed, overly) friendly and concerned to be helpful, Cleo is primarily scared. She has a short fantasy represented by "thought bubbles" that KC chases and contaminates her. She lags behind to avoid walking with KC and comments to T-bone that this was because she was afraid of catching leg-losing germs. She refuses to catch a ball that KC threw her. Overall, Cleo is fearful for 9 minutes and 38 seconds of the episode, and the positive resolution only occupies the last 1 minute and 15 seconds. Sixty-four kindergarteners (aged 5 and 6) were assigned to watch either this original version, or an edited version (of the same length) with the fear removed.

The children in our study found it difficult to identify the moral lesson even though they were at the upper end of the target age-range. In many instances, they took the story at face value, regarding it only as a tale about a three-legged dog. Moreover, the two groups of viewers differed in their inferences – those who saw the original version, compared to those who saw the fear-removed version, were more likely to say that the dogs might get sick if they played with KC, and they rated him less positively. Not surprisingly then, the more they remembered that KC wanted to be friends and the more they remembered Cleo's initial fear, the less likely they were to identify the protolerance message. However, for children who saw the fear-removed version, remembering more of the (happy) elements of the story was associated with greater probability of identifying the message about tolerance.

Although we did not measure children's interest in playing with a peer with disabilities, we could see that most children did not understand the episode in the manner intended by the producers, and their interpretations were largely inconsistent with prosocial outcomes. The question then arises how one might try to improve comprehension in order to increase the odds that there might be positive outcomes.

Strategies to Try to Increase Positive Effects

Given the argument that weak effects of prosocial content are at least partly a result of cognitive constraints on processing, the logical solution is to try to improve processing and comprehension of prosocial content by freeing up cognitive resources. The strategies outlined here all involve some variant of this approach. I present them in order of least intervention to most additional adult intervention and (not coincidentally) in order of less consistently successful to most successful in fostering prosocial outcomes of viewing.

Repeated Exposure to the Content

Given that children often watch the same material repeatedly (Mares, 1998), one possibility is that with repetition, they would come to understand the material better, including the intended prosocial lessons. The evidence for the benefits of repetition is mixed. Presumably, the effects depend on how much repetition there is, and how consistent the prosocial message.

Anderson and his colleagues conducted a series of studies in the United States of children's responses to *Blue's Clues* (Anderson, Bryant, Wilder, Santomero, & Williams, 2000; Crawley, Anderson, Wilder, Williams, & Santomero, 1999). *Blue's Clues* was designed to teach thinking skills to preschoolers by having an animated dog (Blue) interact with a human character (Steve) and the viewing audience to solve a series of puzzles. The program was remarkable for its consistently positive interactions between characters, Steve's use of direct questions to viewers ("Can you help Blue find the triangle?") and for the fact that each episode was broadcast five times in a row (once per day each week).

Crawley et al. (1999) found that 2- to 5-year-olds' comprehension of a specific episode increased substantially over the course of five days' repetition. Although this initial study did not examine comprehension of prosocial messages (and prosocial interactions were not explicitly taught), Anderson et al. (2000) also conducted a two-year longitudinal study of 120 2- to 5-year-olds in which one of the measures included caregivers' repeated assessments of the child's social behaviors (e.g., helping others). Initially none of the children in the study had access to the program; subsequently, children who had access and watched regularly were compared with those who did

not have access. The majority of changes over time occurred in cognitive domains, particularly those explicitly taught by the characters. However, the ongoing, repeated modeling of friendly, positive interactions also appeared to have small, positive effects on children's social interactions. By the end of the second year, caregiver ratings of prosocial behaviors were 9% higher for regular viewers of *Blue's Clues* than for non-viewers.

Other studies, with fewer repetitions and less accumulation of prosocial modeling, found weaker effects. Persson and Musher-Eizenman (2003) compared the effects of showing European-American preschoolers 10 minutes of prodiversity television programming that either featured animated humans, puppets that resembled humans, or live humans. None of the conditions reduced children's preferences for photographs of Caucasians rather than photographs of Blacks and Asians or their preferences for "White" Fisher-Price Little People dolls rather than Black and Asian Little People Dolls. In a second study reported in the same paper, children watched the same episode four times over 12 days. Although children who saw the episode repeatedly understood some of the basic elements of the plot slightly better, their preferences did not change.

In the study of *The Sword in the Stone* (Mares, 2006), I compared the comprehension levels of children who saw the film for the first time in the study, with those who had seen it multiple times before. Even those who had seen it several times before found it difficult to make inferences about connections between events that occurred at very different points in the film and (as noted earlier) only one child could articulate the moral lesson. Thus, repetition is helpful, but it may not ensure comprehension (let alone effects) of fairly complicated narratives.

Adding Explanatory Inserts to Prosocial Content

Given the above, another alternative would be to try to make narratives simpler, not by changing the story, but by adding elements that would help draw attention to the most important events and/or that would explain the thematic connections. Again, the idea is to reduce the cognitive load required to process the information, thereby improving comprehension and ultimately improving effects.

Prior studies have found mixed effects of inserting content within episodes to try to increase children's comprehension. One of the first such projects examined five- and nine-year-olds' comprehension of an episode of the prosocial cartoon, *Fat Albert*. The researchers (Watkins, Calvert, Huston-Stein, & Wright, 1980) compared the effects of inserting short pauses after the key events (presumably allowing children time to process the information more fully) versus inserting short audio inserts that explained the otherwise implicit connections of events to the overall prosocial theme. Neither strategy produced significantly more comprehension than an unmodified version of the episode. A second study did find positive effects of audio-only inserts

on comprehension of implicit content (Calvert, Huston, & Wright, 1987), but found that audiovisual previews of the plot only increased picture-sequencing scores (not comprehension of implicit content). A third study reported that sound effects directing children's attention to key points were associated with increased implicit comprehension, but visual inserts depicting whether the main character was dreaming or awake were associated with decreased implicit comprehension (Calvert & Gersh, 1987). Neuman, Burden, and Holden (1990) studied the effects of an audiovisual preview that summarized a televised story up to the climax and ended with a statement to help children predict how the story might end. The preview helped children remember the central events and resolution but did not help them with implicit content.

None of these studies examined the attitudinal or behavioral effects of explicitly previewing the moral lesson of a story or of inserting evaluative comments about characters' behaviors. Thus we decided to build on the prior research by examining whether audiovisual inserts that summarized the moral lesson and negatively evaluated the initial conflict could increase children's comprehension of the overarching protolerance message and thereby foster positive attitudes and judgments related to inclusiveness (Mares & Acosta, 2010).

A total of 128 4- to 6-year-olds were randomly assigned to watch one of two animated TV episodes (from *Arthur* or *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat*) depicting initial hostility followed by friendliness (either with or without inserts), or to watch a control episode unrelated to tolerance. One insert at the beginning of the episode explicitly stated the moral lesson and its connection to the viewer's life; the second insert commented negatively on the main character's initial hostility. The hypothesis was that these inserted segments would provide scaffolding for young viewers, allowing them to understand the story better than they would without help.

The episode of *Arthur* (featuring a very human-looking aardvark) focused on conflict between boys and girls at a sleepaway camp, which was ultimately resolved by working together to beat rivals from another camp. The episode of *Sagwa* focused on a Siamese cat who was ridiculed for her friendship with mice, and as a result, initially avoided the mice until she learned better. After watching one of these two episodes (either with or without the inserts) or the control episode, children were asked to indicate which of a variety of diverse hypothetical classmates they would like to have in class and to evaluate an exclusion scenario.

Children who saw the cat-mouse episode with inserts showed significantly more prosocial reasoning about gender-based exclusion than the control group; those who saw it without inserts did not differ from the control group. Those who saw the boy-girl episode without inserts showed significantly less prosocial reasoning than the control group and were significantly less likely to show gender balance in their choice of hypothetical classmates; those who saw it with the inserts did not differ significantly from the control group. Thus the inserts seemed to enhance the positive effects of the cat-mouse episode and mitigate the negative effects of the boy-girl episode on gender-related judgments. Moreover, our argument that children's inter-

pretations of the content play a key role in explaining the effects of exposure was supported by mediation analyses – controlling for children’s evaluations of the initial hostility in the episode and their understanding of the intended moral lesson provided partial mediation of the effects of viewing condition on their classmate choices and moral reasoning about exclusion.

Overall, the set of studies suggest that comprehension (or the lack thereof) is indeed part of the reason why prosocial episodes are sometimes ineffective when watched without additional help. However, inserts of sound effects or explanations do not consistently foster improved outcomes.

Couldn’t Parents Explain?

Research on “scaffolding” suggests that comments and questions by adults can help children master a task that is within their developmental range of competence but would be slightly too difficult without assistance (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Wood & Middleton, 1975). One obvious possibility is that if parents want their young children to learn socioemotional lessons from television, they could coview, ask questions and, if needed, point out the moral lessons. Several studies (e.g., Clarke-Stewart & Beck, 1999; Collins, Sobol, & Westby, 1981) found that children were better able to remember the events of the story or make inferences connecting events, if they watched with an adult who made comments, asked questions, and corrected misinterpretations about the program. Similarly, Watkins et al. (1980) found that having an adult coview the episode of *Fat Albert*, pause it at key points and explain the importance of a particular event and how it related to earlier events (both temporally and thematically) created significantly higher comprehension. Remarkably, the points at which the adult paused the tape and the comments made were identical to those in the unsuccessful audiovisual inserts group described earlier.

Other research suggests that having adults make evaluative comments about television characters’ actions can help diminish negative effects (Nathanson, 2004; Nathanson, Wilson, & McGee, 2002) and enhance positive effects of viewing (Abelman, 1991). However, survey research (Rideout & Hamel, 2006) suggests that parents typically do not watch television with their children and instead report using the time when their children are watching to get other things done. Thus although this seems a potentially fruitful approach, it does not appear likely to happen with great regularity.

Activities that Elaborate on Prosocial TV Exposure

The final, most labor-intensive possibility is that prosocial television content can be accompanied by related activities and classroom discussion, elaborating on the prosocial themes. In general, the research suggests that positive effects are stronger under these conditions.

Readers will recall the Friedrich and Stein study (1973) of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* described earlier in which there were no significant effects of viewing the program at home. In contrast, there were significant changes in the subset of children who then watched 12 episodes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* over four weeks in preschool, accompanied by related activities. They persisted longer at tasks, were more likely to obey rules, and were more likely to delay gratification without protest, than those who watched other programs. Moreover, among children from families with lower socioeconomic status, those assigned to watch *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* showed more cooperation and friendliness in playground interactions, though these effects gradually declined throughout the two-week post-exposure period.

In a second study, Friedrich and Stein (1975) assigned 75 kindergarten children to either a control condition or to watch four episodes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and receive one of two types of training: verbal labeling (children were taught to describe how characters had felt and behaved) or role-playing (children used hand puppets to reenact scenes from the episodes). Over the next few days, the children had opportunities to engage in helping behaviors, either related to the program (helping a puppet from the program during a reenactment of one of the scenes) or in unrelated contexts (helping fix a torn collage). There were slightly higher levels of helping behaviors among the children who had watched *Mister Rogers* than among those in the control group. For boys, however, the effects varied by type of training. Role-play training strengthened the effects of the program, but verbal labeling was associated with some decreases in helping relative to the control group. Girls, by contrast, learned the content best in the verbal labeling condition.

In their third study, Friedrich-Cofer, Huston-Stein, Kipnis, Susman, and Clewett (1979) compared the effects of (1) 20 episodes of *Mister Rogers* over eight weeks without any additional prosocial materials; (2) 20 episodes of *Mister Rogers* and access to prosocial books and games; (3) 20 episodes of *Mister Rogers*, access to prosocial materials, and follow-up activities such as verbal labeling of emotions and role playing, and (4) neutral films. The researchers found that *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* alone produced relatively few behavioral changes. Children in the second group (viewing plus materials) displayed more positive *and* more negative behaviors. Only children in the third group (viewing and materials and activities) displayed more positive behaviors without any increases in aggression.

A similar finding emerged from Johnston and Ettema's (1985) vast field experiment with 7,000 fourth- through sixth graders across the United States, examining the effects of *Freestyle* (a US public television program designed to reduce stereotypes about gender roles in school). When the 26 quarter-hour episodes were watched in class and followed by teacher-led discussions of the issues raised, the students showed substantial changes in their gender-related beliefs and most effects were significant even nine months later. However, when the programs were viewed in a classroom with no follow-up discussion, there were many fewer significant effects. Among those who only watched at home, the few significant effects were limited to the heaviest viewers.

Overall then, a number of studies established that it was possible to use television programming in school to produce positive and relatively enduring changes in children's behaviors. Moreover, the effects were strongest among children from low-SES backgrounds who initially behaved less positively in school interactions. However, these positive changes primarily occurred in the context of extra material and rehearsal of the program lessons.

Conclusions

Although I do not lightly brush aside the ethical concerns raised about manipulating children, I would argue that it is indeed a prosocial outcome to have children interacting in friendly, inclusive ways. The research reviewed here suggests that there can be significant and important positive changes in children's social attitudes and behaviors as a result of media exposure.

However, the findings also indicate that it is often unrealistic to expect television content to have such effects on its own, given the cognitive work involved in extracting moral themes from stories. Moreover, when the stories adults produce for children contain mixed messages (lingering on hostile or fearful interactions rather than focusing on positive emotions), the outcomes of viewing tend to be less than prosocial.

The implication, explored here, is that improving children's comprehension of the intended point of a prosocial narrative is one path to improving the outcomes of exposure. Unfortunately, the research does not suggest that there is a quick and easy path to improved comprehension, though increasing the focus on visually salient demonstrations of positive feelings and behaviors seems a good start. Active adult mediation of the content, whether at the time of viewing or via subsequent discussions, labeling, and related activities appears, thus far, to be the best route toward positive effects of viewing. Thus far, the research on substituting adult mediation with audiovisual inserts finds only mixed benefits.

Given the FCC mandate for educational/informative programming and the genuine desire of producers and educators and parents to have at least a portion of children's viewing be socially beneficial, it seems wasteful not to work further to refine our understanding of what is involved in promoting values that we agree, as a society, our children should learn.

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The Effects of Internet Communication on Adolescents' Psychosocial Development

An Assessment of Risks and Opportunities

Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, we discuss both the appeal and psychosocial consequences of different types of Internet communication, such as instant messaging and social network sites. We identify five characteristics of Internet communication that may explain both the attraction of Internet communication for adolescents, as well as its potential positive and negative consequences. Next, we review the research that has addressed some opportunities (i.e., friendship formation and quality) and risks (i.e., cyberbullying; relationships with online strangers) of the Internet for psychosocial development. We end by outlining shortcomings of existing research and make some suggestions for future research.¹

Adolescents and the Internet

In most rich Western countries, Internet communication has become an integral part of adolescents' lives. Adolescents are the defining users of Internet communication. They far outnumber adults in their use of Internet communication technologies,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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such as instant messaging and social networking sites (e.g., Lenhart, Madden, Smith, & Macgill, 2007). For example, 53% of US and 91% of Dutch adolescent Internet users communicate online through instant messaging (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009a), and increasing numbers of adolescents have started to use social network sites (e.g., Facebook), blogs, and photo and video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube). Across thirteen European countries, 66% of all Internet users aged 15 or older visited social network sites in 2008 (comScore, 2009). Further, 28% of all adolescent Internet users in the United States reported blogging in 2007, as opposed to 8% of the adult Internet users (Lenhart et al., 2007). Finally, data from 2010 show that 74% of all US adolescents aged 13–18 have created a profile on a social network site (Rideout et al., 2010).

Adolescents' massive and rapidly changing use of communication technologies has elicited mixed reactions, both from academics and the public. On the one hand, concerns have been voiced that adolescents may become victims of abusive relationships, or develop shallow interpersonal relationships with strangers (for summaries of these concerns, see e.g., Donnerstein, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). These concerns have been fueled by parents' inability to control their children's Internet use (Donnerstein, 2009). On the other hand, it has been argued that the Internet provides adolescents with enormous opportunities to explore their identity in a relatively safe space; develop close and meaningful relationships beyond the obstacles of face-to-face communication; and find information and social support regarding developmentally sensitive issues (e.g., McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008; Turkle, 1995). Proponents of this position typically refer to adolescents' self-regulatory capacities and their Internet competence as a potential protection against adverse consequences (e.g., Sternheimer, 2003).

Adolescents' extensive use of the Internet and the uncertainty about its consequences call for an integrative perspective that helps us understand both the attraction of Internet communication and its risks and opportunities. The aim of this chapter is to hypothesize, and if possible, substantiate by evidence that both the appeal of Internet communication and its psychosocial consequences can be attributed to the enhanced controllability of self-presentation and self-disclosure in Internet communication. Self-presentation and self-disclosure are functional skills that have to be learned in adolescence, and are vital for two components of psychosocial development: identity and intimacy. We will discuss how five features of Internet communication influence self-presentation and self-disclosure skills, and thereby, identity and intimacy development. Subsequently, we review research on the opportunities and risks of Internet communication for adolescents' identity and intimacy development. Finally, we discuss some shortcomings of existing research and possibilities for future research. By Internet communication, we mean any social interaction on the Internet, but we focus on instant messaging and social network sites because they are most popular among adolescents. Texting through mobile phones, although also popular among adolescents, falls outside the scope of this chapter.

Internet Communication and Psychosocial Development in Adolescence

Developmental researchers agree that the overarching developmental goal in adolescence is that young people achieve psychosocial autonomy from their parents (e.g., Bukatko, 2008; Steinberg, 2008). Within this overarching goal, at least two developmental tasks are important for psychosocial development (Steinberg, 2008). First, adolescents have to develop a firm sense of *identity*, that is, they need to achieve a secure feeling about who they are and who they become (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Harter, 1999; Kegan, 1982; Loevinger, 1976). Second, they have to develop a sense of *intimacy*, that is, they need to acquire the abilities that are necessary to form, maintain, and terminate close, meaningful relationships with others (e.g., Buhrmester, 1990; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Buhrmester & Prager, 1995; Furman & Wehner, 1994).

Each of these two developmental tasks is accompanied by a specific skill that does not arise automatically, but that adolescents have to learn and practice. For the development of a firm sense of identity, they need to learn how to present themselves to others and how to adjust their self-presentation according to the reactions of others (e.g., Baumeister, 1982; Harter, 2003; Leary, 1996). Through self-presentation, adolescents not only communicate various identities to others, but they also learn to consolidate or modify these identities in line with the feedback they receive (Valkenburg et al., 2007). To develop a sense of intimacy and, more specifically, close relationships, they need to learn to disclose intimate information to others (e.g., Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988; Franzoi & Davis, 1985; Rubin & Shenker, 1978). Self-disclosure not only helps them to validate the appropriateness of their cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, but also elicits, through the norm of reciprocity, close, emotionally supportive relationships (Buhrmester & Prager, 1995).

Identity, Intimacy, and Five Characteristics of Internet Communication

Traditionally, adolescents learn and rehearse self-presentation and self-disclosure in face-to-face communication, often with peers and close friends. However, several studies suggest that self-presentation and self-disclosure – in particular to peers and close friends – increasingly take place on the Internet (Davis, 2010; Schmitt, Dayanim, & Matthias, 2008; Schouten, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2007). A possible explanation of why Internet communication is so attractive to adolescents is that, in comparison to face-to-face communication, it enhances the controllability of their self-presentation and self-disclosure (e.g., Schouten et al., 2007; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009b; Walther, 1992, 1996). In other words, young people can decide more easily than in face-to-face

conversations how they present themselves and what they choose to confide in particular others. There is initial evidence that many adolescents are aware of the controllability of Internet communication. In a Dutch study, 45% of the adolescents perceived Internet communication as more controllable than face-to-face communication (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006).

Five features of Internet communication are responsible for the enhanced controllability of self-presentation and self-disclosure. These features, which partly overlap, are: (1) anonymity, (2) asynchronicity, (3) cue management, (4) accessibility, and (5) retrievability. As will be specified below, these features are not inherently beneficial or harmful. The enhanced controllability that results from the five features creates a sense of security in adolescents, allowing them to feel freer in their interpersonal interactions than in face-to-face situations (Walther, 1996). Positively, this sense of security and freedom may loosen restraints and stimulate psychosocial development, for example through the facilitation of self-disclosure, which in turn stimulates friendship formation and maintenance (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009b). Negatively, it may increase uninhibited behavior, such as online aggression or bullying. Thus, the five features of online communication eventually provide adolescents with both opportunities and risks for psychosocial development.

Anonymity

In most Internet applications, adolescents are in command of the extent to which they want to be anonymous or identifiable as persons (although anonymity should rather be seen as a relative anonymity, given the technical problems involved in remaining completely unidentifiable on the Web). They may anonymously post questions about sensitive issues on online support networks, thereby finding information and social support (e.g., Subrahmanyam, Smahel, & Greenfield, 2006; Suzuki & Beale, 2006; Suzuki & Calzo, 2004). Conversely, the possibility of anonymous communication may also result in aggressive and insulting comments, as well as in online harassment of peers and classmates.

Asynchronicity

Some Internet applications, such as instant messaging, allow for communication to take place more or less at the same time (although online communication in such applications is never entirely synchronous). In other applications, such as email and social network sites, communication between partners is typically more delayed. Generally, adolescents' control over the information that they wish to convey grows as the asynchronicity of the communication increases. This allows them to carefully think about and edit information that is relevant to self-disclosure and self-presentation, for example when they design their online profile on a social network site. Conversely,

the asynchronous communication allows adolescents to tailor information such that it may become particularly painful for a target.

Cue Management

The Internet gives adolescents ample opportunity to control the richness of cues with which they present themselves (Schouten et al., 2007). Adolescents can decide whether they present themselves only through textual descriptions or whether they add more cues, for example by including pictures or video clips in their self-description. Moreover, Internet communication gives adolescents opportunities to edit and manipulate these cues (e.g., by means of specific software). On the one hand, cue-richness management and the editability of cues increase adolescents' possibilities to optimize their online self-disclosure and self-presentation. This enhances the opportunities for approval and social acceptance (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). On the other hand, cue-richness management and cue editability may trap adolescents in uncomfortable situations, for example when they exaggerate their online self-presentation, and subsequently become ridiculed and socially rejected by their peers.

Accessibility

Through the Internet, it has become extremely easy to look up persons and to get in contact with them. The easy accessibility of persons, for example on social network sites, allows adolescents to get in touch with other teenagers who they may not have seen for a long time or whom they cannot easily meet in their offline lives. Similarly, adolescents can conveniently spread information about themselves among a wide variety of people. However, the easy accessibility of persons on the Internet also creates risks for adolescents. For example, they can get in contact with strangers whom many adults may not consider appropriate company for adolescents. In addition, they may more easily become the target of unsolicited contact attempts than in offline settings.

Retrievability

Compared to face-to-face communication, information on the Internet can be retraced easily, often for a long time after it was posted. Moreover, information posted on the Internet can easily be copied and forwarded to others. On the one hand, the easy retrievability of information maximizes adolescents' opportunities to distribute information about themselves with a lot of people over an extended period of time, for example on blogs or social network sites. On the other hand, it enables

others to share information with an unintended audience, long after the information has initially been sent and at times when it may no longer be valid.

Opportunities and Risks of Internet Communication: Empirical Evidence

The five features of Internet communication explain – on a theoretical basis – not only why Internet communication is so attractive to adolescents, but also why it may be beneficial or risky for adolescents' psychosocial development. Recently, researchers have also started to investigate empirically whether Internet communication presents an opportunity or a risk to adolescents' identity and intimacy development.

Identity Development

Internet researchers have focused on two aspects of identity development: self-concept-clarity and self-esteem. Self-concept clarity refers to the extent to which beliefs and opinions about one's self are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and stable (Campbell, 1990). Developing a consistent self-concept is an important developmental task in adolescence (e.g., Steinberg, 2008). Self-esteem is the evaluative aspect of the self-concept, and it usually refers to how adolescents value their selves (i.e., their self-worth) (Harter, 1999, 2003). The development of self-esteem is also an important goal in adolescence.

Self-Concept Clarity

The risks of Internet communication on self-concept clarity are emphasized in two opposite hypotheses, the self-concept fragmentation and the self-concept unity hypothesis. The fragmentation hypothesis states that the ease with which possible identities can be crafted online fragments adolescents' selves. Moreover, the many possibilities for new relationships may confront them with people and ideas that may further disintegrate their already fragile selves (e.g., Gergen, 1991; Reid, 1998). In contrast, the self-concept unity hypothesis states that the Internet gives adolescents more opportunities than ever to get in contact with people of different backgrounds. As a result, adolescents can validate their identities against a vastly expanded social sounding board, which in turn stimulates their self-concept clarity (e.g., Calvert, 2002; Mazur & Kozarian, 2010; Schmitt et al., 2008; Valkenburg & Peter, 2008).

To our knowledge, at least three cross-sectional survey studies have investigated the relationship between Internet communication and adolescents' self-concept clarity (Matsuba, 2006; Mazalin & Moore, 2004; Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). These studies have yielded indecisive results. Two studies have shown that frequent Internet

use and online identity experiments (i.e., pretending to be someone else) were associated with a less stable self-concept (Matsuba, 2006; Mazalin & Moore, 2004). However, more rigorous, multivariate analyses demonstrated the spuriousness of the association between these Internet activities and self-concept as soon as other variables, such as loneliness and social anxiety, were considered (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). Therefore, current research does not permit the conclusion that the use of the Internet improves or hinders adolescents' self-concept clarity. Other factors, such as loneliness – and thus the lacking opportunity to learn about oneself in an offline social context – seem to influence adolescents' self-concept more strongly than Internet use (Matsuba, 2006; Valkenburg & Peter, 2008).

Self-Esteem

Fluctuations in self-esteem are particularly evident during adolescence (e.g., Harter, 1999). All theories on self-esteem agree that there is a universal desire among human beings to maintain, protect, and enhance their self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1989). Two important antecedents of self-esteem are the control over one's environment and approval and acceptance from others (Harter, 1999, 2003; Leary, 1996). Internet communication may provide adolescents with both of them. As discussed in the previous section, Internet communication enables adolescents to control what they want others to know about them. They can create or modify the presentation of their selves, and they can choose the pace, breadth, and depth of self-disclosure. By experimenting with their self-presentation and self-disclosure, they can optimize the reactions and feedback from their peers and thus enhance their self-esteem.

At least seven studies have investigated the relationship between (forms of) Internet communication and self-esteem among adolescents. Most of these studies have shown that Internet communication increases adolescents' self-esteem. For example, in a study that combined a survey of US adolescents with the analyses of their personal home pages and blogs, Schmitt et al. (2008) found that adolescents indeed experienced a sense of mastery and control through the creation of home pages and blogs. This sense of mastery and control, in turn, was associated with higher self-esteem. The sense of mastery and control was stronger among adolescents than among preadolescents, attesting to the important function of online self-presentation during adolescence.

Focusing on Dutch adolescents' use of social network sites, Valkenburg et al. (2006) also found positive relations with adolescents' self-esteem. The frequency with which the site was used was not directly related to self-esteem; the type of reactions that the teenagers received on their online profiles (i.e., picture and self-description) mediated the effect of use frequency on self-esteem. They found that the more often adolescents used the social network site, the more often they received reactions; and the more reactions they received, the more positive these reactions became. Eventually, these positive reactions were associated with a higher self-esteem. Because the vast majority of reactions to the online profiles were positive, most adolescents benefited from the use of the social network site. However, among 7% of the ado-

lescents, the reactions on their profile were mostly negative. For these adolescents, which involved mostly younger adolescents, their online self-presentation decreased their self-esteem.

In an experiment, Gross (2009) showed that online communication may even restore adolescents' self-esteem. Adolescents who had undergone a laboratory induction of social exclusion and afterwards communicated online with another-sex peer, showed a greater replenishment of self-esteem than adolescents who had been socially excluded and had solitarily played a computer game afterwards. Thus, the study suggests that online communication may help adolescents restore their self-esteem after temporary threats to belonging, which frequently occur in their lives.

The aforementioned studies point to a positive relation between adolescents' communication-oriented Internet activities and their self-esteem. However, none of these studies dealt with compulsive forms of Internet use, that is, an unhealthy attachment to Internet applications (e.g., Caplan, 2002). There is consistent evidence that compulsive Internet use – for instance, an inability to regulate the time spent online or the replacement of face-to-face activities with online activities – is negatively related to self-esteem (e.g., Kim & Davis, 2009; van der Aa et al., 2009). In summary, Internet communication seems to be beneficial for self-esteem only if it is not compulsive in nature.

Intimacy Development

Internet research has focused on whether Internet communication presents an opportunity or a risk for two particular aspects of intimacy development: friendship formation and the quality of existing friendships. In addition, research has dealt with two potential downsides of Internet communication: cyberbullying and relationships with strangers.

Friendship Formation

Research on the effects of the Internet on friendship formation has revolved around two hypotheses, the social compensation and the rich-get-richer hypothesis. The social-compensation hypothesis states that the Internet is particularly beneficial for lonely and socially anxious adolescents. Because of the controllability of Internet communication, these adolescents may more easily overcome the problems they face in offline communication. As a result, they may more easily disclose information about themselves while being online. This eventually facilitates the formation of friendships (e.g., Kraut, 2002; McKenna & Bargh, 1999; Peter, Valkenburg, & Schouten, 2005). The rich-get-richer hypothesis proposes that especially adolescents who already have strong social skills and many offline friends will benefit from the Internet when it comes to friendship formation (e.g., Kraut, 2002; Peter et al., 2005).

Studies on the effects of the Internet on friendship formation found support for both hypotheses. As predicted by the social-compensation hypothesis, lonely and

socially anxious adolescents have been found to prefer online communication to face-to-face communication (e.g., Peter et al., 2005; Pierce, 2009). They more strongly value the controllability of Internet communication and perceive it as broader, deeper and more reciprocal than non-socially anxious and non-lonely adolescent respondents do (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006).

However, there is evidence that, overall, socially anxious and lonely adolescents communicate online less often than non-lonely adolescents do, which is in line with the rich-get-richer hypothesis (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007c; van den Eijnden et al., 2008). This suggests that the greater appreciation of Internet communication by socially anxious and lonely adolescents does not in itself lead to new friendships (for an exception, see Valkenburg & Peter, 2007c). Rather, the occurrence of social-compensation effects may depend on certain conditions.

Research points to three basic conditions that need to be met for social-compensation effects to occur. First, adolescents *need to be motivated* to use Internet communication to compensate for troubles that they encounter in offline interactions. For example, in a Dutch study socially anxious adolescents generally communicated online less often than non-socially anxious adolescents, which subsequently impaired their friendship formation on the Internet (Peter et al., 2005) – an effect that has been replicated in other studies (e.g., Lee, 2009; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007c). However, if adolescents were motivated to use Internet communication to overcome problems they face in face-to-face interactions, they also started communicating more often online and eventually made more friends – a social compensation effect (Peter et al., 2005).

A second condition that needs to be met for social-compensation effects to occur is that socially anxious and lonely adolescents *need to use the Internet for communication* rather than for entertainment and information. As another study from the Netherlands has shown, adolescents with a low quality of friendships felt less lonely when they used the Internet for instant messaging. In contrast, they felt more lonely and more socially anxious when they primarily used the Internet for surfing (Selfhout et al., 2009).

A final condition of social-compensation effects is that adolescents' Internet *activities are not compulsive*. If these activities are classified as compulsive, socially anxious and lonely adolescents typically do not benefit from the Internet. For example, a survey among nearly 8,000 adolescents has shown that socially anxious adolescents were more prone to develop compulsive Internet use. This compulsive Internet use, in turn, was linked with greater loneliness (van der Aa et al., 2009). However, the study was based on a cross-sectional design. As a result, the causal relations found need to be treated with some caution.

Quality of Existing Friendships

Research on how Internet communication affects the quality of adolescents' existing friendships has also revolved around two hypotheses. The displacement hypothesis states that Internet communication impairs adolescents' quality of existing friends, because it displaces the time that could be spent in more meaningful interactions

with offline friends (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998; Mesch, 2003; Nie, 2001). Adherents of this hypothesis assume that the Internet motivates adolescents to form online contacts with strangers rather than to maintain friendships with their offline peers. Because online contacts are seen as superficial weak-tie relationships that lack feelings of affection and commitment, the Internet is believed to reduce the quality of adolescents' existing friendships.

The stimulation hypothesis, in contrast, emphasizes that more recent Internet-based communication technologies, such as instant messaging or social network sites, are designed to encourage communication with existing friends. As a result, much of time spent on Internet communication is used to maintain and deepen existing friendships, which eventually enhances the closeness of these friendships (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007b).

Overall, the stimulation hypothesis has received more support than the displacement hypothesis (for a review, see Valkenburg & Peter, 2009b). However, the positive effects on the quality of friendships are conditional. They have been found only when the Internet communication is *anonymous* (in contrast to *anonymous*) and interaction-oriented. Several studies have shown that adolescents only have friendships of higher quality (i.e., greater relationship satisfaction, friends' approval, and support) when they frequently communicated with their friends online through instant messaging (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007b). In contrast, the use of the Internet primarily for entertainment goals (e.g., playing online games, surfing) and for communication with strangers caused the quality of existing friendships to deteriorate (Blais, Craig, Pepler, & Connolly, 2008; Punamaki, Wallenius, Holtto, Nygard, & Rimpela, 2009; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007c).

Existing research points to two more extensions or qualifications of the stimulation hypothesis. First, the stimulation effect also applies to romantic relationships. A longitudinal study among US teenagers showed that, over the course of one year, the use of ICQ ("I seek you," an instant messaging software) improved the quality of romantic relationships (Blais et al., 2008). Second, the positive impact of *anonymous* Internet communication does not only apply to the quality of friendships, but affects the entire friendship process from friendship formation to friendship intensification and the definition of group identities. A Taiwanese study has demonstrated that the use of instant messaging helps adolescents to start and maintain individual friendships; to improve offline relationships; and to articulate a sense of belonging to the group of friends (Lee & Sun, 2009).

An attempt to explain why and how Internet communication can stimulate the quality of friendships is the Internet-enhanced self-disclosure hypothesis (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009b). This hypothesis, which received support in a longitudinal study (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009a), is based on three assumptions. First, in line with Walther's (1992, 1996) social information processing and hyperpersonal-communication model, it is assumed that a better cue management on the Internet creates a safe space that facilitates online self-disclosure. Second, higher online self-disclosure stimulates the quality of adolescents' friendships. Third, online

self-disclosure mediates the direct relationship between Internet communication and the quality of friendships.

Although the bulk of evidence points to a stimulation effect, some studies have yielded no significant relationship between Internet communication and the quality of friendships (Lee, 2009; Mesch, 2001; Subrahmanyam & Lin, 2007). Finally, there are also research findings in support of the displacement hypothesis. However, with the exception of the findings of an Israeli research group (Mesch & Talmud, 2006), these studies were typically done in the early days of the Internet (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998; for summaries, see Lee, 2009; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007b).

Two changes in Internet use may render negative effects on psychosocial development less likely now than when the Internet was new. First, in the early days of the Internet, it was hard to maintain one's existing social network on the Internet because the greater part of this network was not yet online. At the time, online contacts were separated from offline contacts. However, at present, the vast majority of adolescents in Western countries have access to the Internet. At such high access rates, a negative effect of the Internet on the quality of friendships is less likely because adolescents have more opportunities to maintain their social network through this medium. Second, communication technologies that were popular among adolescents in the 1990s, such as chat rooms, were typically used for communication between strangers. However, in recent years several communication technologies, such as instant messaging and social network sites have been developed that encourage adolescents to communicate with existing friends.

Communication with Strangers

Although recent communication technologies encourage adolescents to communicate with existing friends, a minority of them do use the Internet to search for contact with strangers (e.g., Peter, Valkenburg, & Schouten, 2006). Roughly, the studies on Internet communication with strangers can be divided into two lines of research. The first line of research has largely dealt with adolescents who use the Internet to cope with problems they encounter in the offline world. This line of research has generally found positive effects of online contacts with strangers. For example, an analysis of postings on health boards has shown that the typically anonymous communication on such sites provides adolescents not only with concrete information about pressing issues, but also with emotional support (Suzuki & Calzo, 2004). Similar results were reported for adolescents who talked with online strangers about severe diseases, such as cancer, or eating and self-injury disorders (e.g., Suzuki & Beale, 2006; Whitlock, Powers, & Eckenrode, 2006; Winzelberg, 1997). Recently, an experimental study has also demonstrated that an instant messaging session with an unknown opposite-sex peer can restore adolescents' self-esteem after experiences of social exclusion (Gross, 2009).

The second line of research on the effects of contact with online strangers has primarily focused on general online contact with strangers, regardless of the motives of teenagers. This line has found negative effects. For example, a survey study among Dutch adolescents has shown that online talk with strangers reduced adolescents'

well-being. Tellingly, the negative impact of online contact with strangers was most distinct among lonely adolescents (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007a). Contacts with online strangers also seem to moderate the relationship between adolescents' Internet communication and the quality of their friendships. Another Dutch study has shown that only among adolescents who primarily interacted with their friends did Internet communication increase closeness. Among adolescents who primarily interacted with strangers this was not the case (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007c).

Cyberbullying

An important risk of Internet communication is the increasing number of cyberbullying incidents among adolescents, with victimization rates being as high as 53% in some studies (for a review, see Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008). Cyberbullying occurs when Internet-based applications are used to systematically intimidate or insult a person in order to humiliate, embarrass, or hurt that person. Similar to offline bullying, cyberbullying involves intentional repetitive actions and psychological violence. Unlike offline bullying, however, cyberbullying is characterized (a) by the frequent anonymity or anonymization of the cyberbully; (b) the lacking confrontation of the cyberbully with the immediate impact of the cyberbullying; (c) parents' unawareness of cyberbullying; and (d) the easy accessibility and long-term retrievability of digital manifestations of cyberbullying (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008).

The bulk of existing research on cyberbullying has dealt with the characteristics of cyberbullies and victims. Typically, cyberbullies have low levels of social connectedness, externalizing problems (e.g., aggression, delinquency), and use the Internet frequently. Victims of cyberbullying usually have internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety, depression), are often also the victim of offline bullying, and tend to use instant messaging and webcams frequently (for a review, see Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). Research on the consequences of cyberbullying is still scarce. Correlational studies among US teenagers have shown that being the victim of cyberbullying is associated with increased social anxiety (Juvonen & Gross, 2008), psychological distress (Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006), and symptoms of depression (Ybarra, 2004). Other US-based studies suggested that being the target of cyberbullying is related to aggressive tendencies, poor anger management, and school problems (Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007a; Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2007b). However, none of the available studies has decisively demonstrated whether the various social and psychological problems cause or result from cyberbullying.

Conclusions, Shortcomings, and Future Research

Our review of the literature has shown that Internet communication has important consequences for adolescents' identity and intimacy development. It has also shown

the limitations of both dystopic and utopic views of the consequences of Internet communication for adolescents' psychosocial development. Neither is the Internet a place where adolescents are exclusively confronted with risks that they cannot handle, nor is it a place that, in itself and automatically, would create opportunities for positive psychosocial development. Rather, the nature of effects of Internet communication on identity and intimacy development seems to depend on at least six factors: (1) the predominant use of Internet communication (i.e., whether it is anonymous or nonymous); (2) the type of use (compulsive or noncompulsive use); (3) the type of communication partner (i.e., communication with existing friends or with strangers); (4) the time of data collection (i.e., the effects were more negative in the early stages of the Internet); (5) personality (i.e., the extent of social anxiety and loneliness); and (6) motivations to use a particular technology (i.e., the effects on friendships is beneficial only when the Internet is primarily used for communication rather than for entertainment/information seeking goals).

Although the impact of Internet communication on psychosocial development thus depends on technological, situational, and personal factors, our review clearly suggests that an adequate understanding of today's adolescents' psychosocial development cannot ignore their Internet communication. The thesis that media increase adolescents' possibilities for self-socialization is not new (Arnett, 1995). But never before have adolescents had such a chance to explore their identities with such a multiplicity of means while being so unsupervised by traditional socialization agents such as parents and schools. Our review suggests that, overall, this does not necessarily have to be a cause of concern, but it certainly raises important questions about the future role of parents and schools in adolescents' psychosocial development.

The research we reviewed has debunked several myths about the relation between adolescents' Internet communication and their psychosocial development. At the same time, the reviewed research has created many new insights that enrich our knowledge about the issue. However, there are a number of challenges in this line of research that future studies have to address. First, existing research has not paid sufficient attention to adequate sampling procedures and sample constitution. Several studies employed convenience sampling procedures. Online surveys, in particular, are often based on self-selected samples. The lack of truly random samples endangers the generalizability of the results. Moreover, there is the tendency to generalize from college students samples – emerging adults, thus – to adolescents. From a developmental perspective, this is problematic, not least when processes such as identity and intimacy development are investigated.

Second, many studies have been based on cross-sectional designs. This calls into question whether the impact of Internet communication on adolescents' psychosocial development has been studied rigorously enough. For the further development of the field, it is essential that more internally valid designs be chosen. While several studies based on longitudinal designs have already emerged recently (Selfhout et al., 2009; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009a; van den Eijnden et al., 2008), experimental research is very much needed.

Third, existing research sometimes tends to conflate highly different types of Internet use. As our review has shown, it is crucial that different types of Internet use and Internet communication be conceptually distinguished and assessed separately in their operational translation. For the valid assessment of different types of Internet use and Internet communication, it may be necessary to go beyond traditional self-reported frequency estimates in surveys. These estimates are prone to a number of distortions, ranging from memory errors to social-desirability biases. Alternative methods, such as the media diary method, have elicited promising results (Gross, Juvonen, & Gable, 2002), but are still rarely applied.

Fourth, there is the tendency in some research not to explicate sufficiently where and to what extent Internet communication differs from other forms of communication. As a result, it sometimes remains unclear what we really learn from studying Internet communication beyond what we already know from studies of interpersonal and mass communication. A profound understanding of the role of Internet communication in the psychosocial development of adolescents heavily depends on a stronger integration of the particular features of Internet communication into our theoretical frameworks. This stronger focus on more abstract features of Internet communication may also prevent us from generalizing findings obtained with one particular Internet application to Internet communication in general.

Fifth, much of the existing research has focused on rather simplistic main effects of Internet communication on adolescents' psychosocial development. Although this focus may be understandable given the novelty of Internet communication, it keeps us from a more nuanced view of the processes that underlie these effects. Moreover, it obstructs our view of individual differences in these effects. Investigating which groups of adolescents differ in the effects of Internet communication may greatly enhance our understanding of which adolescents may benefit from Internet communication, and which adolescents may be at risk.

Finally, existing research largely comes from rich Westernized countries. Many other regions and countries of the world are heavily underrepresented. For example, we know little about the extent and the consequences of adolescents' Internet communication in Latin America, Africa, the Arabic world, parts of Eastern Europe, and many countries in Central Asia. Because identity and intimacy development are inherently socially and culturally contingent, it may be that the results we report may change considerably with more research from the aforementioned regions. Cross-culturally comparative research, as has been started in Europe (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009), is therefore urgently needed.

In conclusion, as Internet communication has become so pervasive in the lives of many Western adolescents – scholars, parents, teachers, and practitioners are confronted with new questions about how this form of communication interacts with adolescents' psychosocial development. Although a young and thriving research field has started to address several pressing issues, many more will arise in the following years. At the beginning of the 2000s, few people would have imagined the emergence and success of social network sites. Even fewer people would have predicted that

adolescents would massively use these sites. And nobody would have raised questions about the risk and opportunities that this use may bring about. At the beginning of the 2010s, we are in a similar situation. We do not dare to predict which social Internet application will be the next big success. But we do predict that adolescents will be its defining users. And we also predict that it will be related to adolescents' psychosocial development.

NOTE

- 1 This chapter is an extension and further development of Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2011). Online communication among adolescents: An integrative model of its attraction, opportunities, and risks. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 48, 121–127.

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The Role of Parental Mediation in the Development of Media Literacy and the Prevention of Substance Use

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ABSTRACT

To provide a more complete picture of the existing state of knowledge regarding parental communication and media literacy in relation to substance use, this chapter discusses (1) parental mediation and its effects on children and adolescents, (2) relationships between parental communication and media literacy, and (3) how each factor (i.e., parental mediation and media literacy) relates to substance use. The chapter includes highlights from a survey that integrates parental communication and media literacy into substance use research among emerging adults. Findings suggest that negative active mediation is effective in fostering competency in media literacy into adulthood, whereas the passive activity of coviewing, the avoidance strategy of rulemaking and the reinforcement of message receptivity in positive mediation are weak or counterproductive influences for media literacy development. Deficiencies in media literacy can lead to risk-taking behaviors among adolescents and may exacerbate those behaviors when they reach emerging adulthood. It is suggested that future research should explore whether similar patterns emerge in other contexts, such as obesity, body image and Internet safety.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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Mediation in Homes and Schools

The omnipresent nature of the media, its sometimes questionable content, and its potentially harmful effects frequently alarm those responsible for protecting the welfare of children and adolescents. A plethora of literature has explored approaches that could effectively mitigate children's and adolescents' responses to certain television content and improve their understanding of beneficial content. Perhaps the most noticeable examples of these approaches are grounded either in a familial environment – that is, parental (or primary caregiver-based) communication – or in media education grounded outside of a familial environment, such as media literacy training in educational systems.

Parental communication regarding the media, a multi-dimensional construct that includes active mediation, rulemaking (often called restrictive mediation), and coveiwng, describes the avenues by which primary caregivers approach media use and content with their children, usually in a home environment. Although many scholars believe parents can play an important role in facilitating children's understanding of media messages and in reducing potentially negative effects of television content, many parents fail to engage actively in media-related conversations with their children. As a consequence, not all types of parental communication regarding the media effectively produce prosocial effects.

It seems intuitive that parents should have major influences on their children's uses and interpretations of media in decision-making. Ironically, however, research often has documented parental communication effects regarding media as modest or non-significant (e.g., Austin & Chen, 2003; Ennett, Bauman, Foshee, Pemberton, & Hicks, 2001; Nathanson, 2001a). Because many researchers remain convinced of the importance of the parents' role, the challenge of explaining how and why parents mediate media influences on their children has inspired some to focus on refining measurement and conceptualizations of parental communication avenues. In addition, others have investigated the potential for media education outside the home. Recent developments have included the emergence of professional organizations focused on advocacy, training, and research on media education.

One aim of media education is to give viewers sufficient skills to protect themselves from objectionable content and more effectively select beneficial content delivered through mass media channels (see Chapter 32). Media literacy training thus empowers individuals to use media for the greatest personal benefit instead of merely permitting media producers to use them as profitable consumers. Even though both parental mediation and media literacy can have beneficial effects for modifying children's responses to various media content, no studies to date have connected types of parental mediation to media literacy skills and, in turn, to behavioral outcomes. Parental mediation at its best is media literacy training from the most influential of teachers. It is likely, therefore, that various types of parental communication differentially impact the ways in which children interpret media messages, which in turn

leads to different results in terms of the internalization of media messages and, as a result, different behavioral outcomes as children grow up to draw their own conclusions and make their own choices.

To provide a more complete picture of the existing state of knowledge regarding parental communication and media literacy in relation to substance use, this chapter discusses (1) parental mediation and its effects on children and adolescents, (2) relationships between parental communication and media literacy, and (3) how each factor (i.e., parental mediation and media literacy) relates to substance use. The chapter includes highlights from a new study that integrates parental communication and media literacy into substance-use research among emerging adults. It then ends with discussions of venues for substance-use research and other topics based on the parental mediation and media literacy literature.

Parental Mediation and its Effects on Children and Adolescents

Parental mediation generally is defined as communication from primary caregivers about children's media viewing, particularly grounded in the context of television viewing (Austin, 1993; Fujioka & Austin, 2002; Nathanson, 1999; Valkenburg, Krcmar, Peeters, & Marseille, 1999). Despite the existence of various terminologies and typologies describing types of parental mediation, scholars by and large have come to a consensus that parental communication about media includes three specific behaviors in which parents engage: active mediation, rulemaking, and covieing.

Active mediation or instructive mediation is defined as the extent to which parents or primary caregivers actively discuss certain aspects of television with their children either during or after viewing (Austin, 1993; Fujioka & Austin, 2002; Nathanson, 1999, 2001b). Active mediation seeks to help children interpret media messages by ways of categorization (i.e., how television reflects the world in which we live), validation (i.e., endorsing or criticizing media representation of the world in which we live), and supplementation (i.e., providing additional information to help children understand television messages) (Austin, 1993; Messaris, 1982). The focus of active mediation research emphasizes the occurrence of validation activities within the family, the precursors of various styles of mediation, and the effects of mediation on mitigating children's interpretations of media messages and their behavior (for a review, see Valkenburg et al., 1999).

Active mediation has been linked to children's increased understanding of television, such as educational television and plots (Corder-Bolz, 1980; Desmond, Singer, Singer, Calam, & Colimore, 1985; Singer, Singer, Desmond, Hirsch, & Nicol, 1988; see Chapter 30) and their attention to political affairs news and political involvement (Austin, 1993). Parents and primary caregivers, however, can take on different forms of active mediation, including positive active mediation and negative active mediation

(Austin, Bolls, Fujioka, & Engelbertson, 1999; Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Fujioka & Austin, 2002; Nathanson & Botta, 2003). Positive active mediation refers to parents' endorsement and support of certain aspects of television programming (e.g., "I like the product on TV" and "I agree with what they just said on TV"), whereas negative active mediation describes parents' negative comments or disapproval of television programming (e.g., "Things on TV are not real" and "The actions done by someone on TV were not okay").

Depending on the nature of media content or caregivers' attitudes toward television messages, caregivers can employ either positive active mediation or negative active mediation to facilitate children's understanding of media messages or mitigate the potential negative impact of objectionable media content (Austin, Knaus, & Meneguelli, 1998; Nathanson, 2001b). The bulk of active mediation research, however, focuses primarily on negative active mediation either explicitly or implicitly by the way active mediation has been operationalized (e.g., Austin, 1993; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005; Buijzen, Walma van der Molen, & Sondij, 2007; Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2002; Nathanson, 1999, 2001b; Nathanson & Botta, 2003). This is likely to be due, in part, to scholars' concern over questionable media content, such as advertising, violent television shows, and shows with sexual content.

Research has shown that negative active mediation can lead to a variety of prosocial attitudinal and behavioral outcomes among children. Studies have found that negative active mediation lessens children's degree of aggression (Corder-Bolz, 1980; Nathanson, 1999; Nathanson & Cantor, 2000) and also successfully modifies children's materialistic attitudes and purchasing requests after exposure to advertising (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005). Through reasoning-centered discussion, negative active mediation is also associated with parents' skepticism toward advertising, which in turn is associated with children's critical viewing skills and discussions of political affairs between parents and their children (Austin, 1993; Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Austin, Pinkleton, & Fujioka, 2000).

Positive active mediation, on the other hand, has received less attention but shows effects distinct from negative mediation. More specifically, research has shown that the effects of positive active mediation on modifying children's understanding of and attitudes toward television greatly depend on what kind of media content parents mediate. For example, positive active mediation has been shown to relate to children's increased learning of cultural television programming, such as opera (Valkenburg, Krcmar, & De Roos, 1998) and educational programs, such as *Sesame Street* (Fisch & Truglio, 2001). Yet, in the context of violent media and alcohol messages, positive active mediation appears to be a counterproductive intervention strategy. It has been found to increase children's imitation of violent media (Hicks, 1968) and to be ineffective in facilitating discussions of political affairs between parents and their children (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001). Positive mediation shows moderate associations with negative mediation and has demonstrated potential for beneficial outcomes as noted previously, but negative active mediation appears to be more effective as a protective strategy against problematic media content and

persuasive influences after considering the age of the child and type of content. In addition, negative mediation appears to be more effective for fostering critical-thinking abilities and media skepticism among children (Austin, 1993; Austin et al., 2000; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005; Desmond et al., 1985; Fujioka & Austin, 2003).

A second type of parental communication strategy is rulemaking, often referred to as restrictive mediation. This describes how parents set rules for television viewing hours or for prohibiting the viewing of certain content (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Most of the rulemaking is related to *what* children can watch rather than *how much time* they can spend with media (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). A recent report shows that younger children (8- to 10-year-olds) have significantly more rules about which shows they can watch than children who are 15 to 18 years old (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010).

From a protectionist perspective, parents who use this communication approach express concern that television watching is potentially harmful to their children, particularly younger children (Barkin, et al., 2006; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010; Lin & Atkin, 1989; Warren, 2005; Wiman, 1983). Because it represents an avoidance strategy and does not facilitate critical discussion, however, we believe it is a stretch to refer to rulemaking as “mediation.” Indeed, it can facilitate family discord without providing constructive opportunities for critical analysis of actual content. As a result, to the extent children require rehearsal and experimentation with decision-making to develop independent communication competence, rulemaking represents a counter-productive approach to media effects intervention. In other words, simply prohibiting children from watching potentially objectionable content does not facilitate their autonomy in making important decisions regarding key issues (not to drink alcohol, not to use tobacco, to solve conflicts without aggression, etc.)

Having some rules that limit amounts of media use can be beneficial, particularly for young children not yet able to interpret many aspects of a message on their own (Baranowski, Baranowski, Thompson, & Greaves, 2005; Desmond et al., 1985; Nathanson, 1999). For example, in a study of low-income preschool children in New York, the odds ratio of children having a body mass index above the 85th percentile increased 1.06% for each additional hour of television viewing (Baranowski et al., 2005). In addition, having some rules associates with less media use overall – an average of almost three hours less among 8- to 18-year-olds – perhaps encouraging selectivity (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). Much of children’s media use is unsupervised, however, with 71% of children (76% of adolescents) having television in their bedrooms, and about a third having computers and Internet access in their bedrooms. As a result, prohibitions often have limited impact as young people obtain unsupervised access to media within the rules or by circumventing them at friends’ houses. Rulemaking, therefore, can encourage some degree of selectivity but has limited effects in the absence of active guidance that helps children practice using information sources critically in their decision-making. For example, research has shown that rulemaking is associated with children’s positive attitudes toward television shows with objectionable content, such as violent and sexual media, more

viewing of the content with their friends, and children's negative attitudes toward their parents (Buijzen et al., 2007; Nathanson, 2002).

The third type of parental communication strategy is *coviewing*, in which primary caregivers and children watch or enjoy a television program together without engaging in any discussion activities. Some scholars conceptualize coviewing in ways consistent with positive mediation, referring to it as *social coviewing* (Valkenburg et al., 1999). While active mediation and rulemaking often are indicators of either parents' concern about television effects or their (dis)approval of the programs, parents' own positive attitudes toward the programs (e.g., liking) strongly predict their coviewing behavior with the child (Nathanson, 2001b). Children often interpret coviewing with parents or primary caregivers as parental approval of television programming; apparent endorsement of certain messages, such as violent television shows, is often positively associated with children's television-induced aggressive tendencies and behavior (Krcmar, 1998; Nathanson, 1999, 2001b). Although coviewing caregivers may not expressly endorse content during viewing, it has long been established that a lack of negative reinforcement can be interpreted as endorsement, particularly in ambiguous or antisocial situations (Bandura, 1965). As a largely passive activity, therefore, coviewing produces little in terms of positive effects on children's decision-making (Dorr, Kovacic, & Doubleday, 1989) and appears primarily to reinforce children's perception that television characters are real and representative of people in the real world (Messaris & Kerr, 1984).

Parental Mediation and Substance Use

Research that examines parental mediation as it relates to substance-use attitudes, behavioral intention, and behavior among children and adolescents has revealed the extent to which parental factors reinforce or ameliorate positive imagery of substance use in the media (Austin et al., 2000; Austin & Chen, 2003; Dalton et al., 2006; Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Hanewinkel, Morgenstern, Tanski, & Sargent, 2008). In the context of alcohol advertising, Fujioka and Austin (2003) found that third, sixth, and ninth graders' self-reported parental mediation is linked to their decision-making concerning alcohol. Characters in alcohol advertisements were attractive and fun for children whose parents provided positive comments about advertisements at home. A positive relationship between active positive mediation and identification with characters in advertisements also was found. Children's self-reported active negative mediation was not related to their decision factors, however.

Expanding the study by Fujioka and Austin (2003), Austin and Chen (2003) self-reported results from a dataset that surveyed emerging adults. Consistent with prior research (Fujioka & Austin, 2003), recalled parental active positive mediation had a positive association with emerging adults' perceived desirability of alcohol advertising. Active positive mediation was further linked to their perceived positive conse-

quences of alcohol experimentation and use, which was directly linked to greater alcohol use and alcohol experimentation at a young age.

Research conducted by Dalton et al. (2006) and Hanewinkel et al. (2008) has found that prohibiting children from watching “R-rated” movies and coviewing R-rated movies with their children each independently decreased children’s risk for smoking and drinking. In summary, positive active mediation, in comparison to other forms of parental intervention, seems to be a risk factor that directly impacts the pathway through which positive portrayals of substance use are reinforced and behavior emulation and enactment are strengthened.

Relationships between Parental Communication and Media Literacy

The overall assumption underlying existing research regarding parental communication strategies has been that parents, as primary influencers and information sources for their children, should have considerable effects on their children’s development of media literacy skills. Some strategies, however, appear to have greater effectiveness than others, and not all parents appear to be sufficiently media literate themselves. For example, parents sometimes know less than their children do about new technologies or popular topics (Livingstone, 2004). Others are unwilling to discuss objectionable content preferring – often unrealistically – to simply keep it at bay. As a result, media literacy education has become increasingly embraced as an essential skill for public education. All 50 United States, for example, now have media literacy principles instilled in their Standard of Learning requirements in social studies, language arts, or health and consumer education (Baker, 2010).

Conceptualizations of media literacy have become more precise and consistent as this interdisciplinary field has grown in sophistication; also, avenues for cross-discipline sharing of ideas have increased. Media literacy education generally is defined as an individual’s ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms (Aufderheide, 1993; see Chapter 32, this volume). The four crucial media literacy components – access, analysis, evaluation, and content creation – emphasize media literacy as a “skills-based approach” to media awareness education (Livingstone, 2004). Particularly in terms of providing systematic pedagogical approaches and opportunities for content creation, school-based media literacy education has presented some advantages over home-based, caregiver-sourced communication strategies. In addition, some curricula have targeted concerned teachers and parents as students, to help them more effectively teach children about the media (Brown, 2001; Buckingham, 2005; Singer & Singer, 1998). Given the primary nature of caregivers as influencers despite the potentially systematic, comprehensive approaches offered by trained educators, it is important for research to establish more specifically how parental

communication strategies contribute to media literacy skills, particularly in terms of caregivers' probable emphasis on the skills of access, analysis and evaluation.

As an empowerment education strategy that fosters healthy skepticism and reflective-thinking skills, media literacy education frequently emphasizes the understanding of persuasive intent and techniques as a fundamental skill that will motivate further analysis and evaluation (e.g., Austin & Johnson, 1997a, 1997b). Many educational programs therefore provide youngsters with knowledge about how advertising controls the media industry, intended to help them understand that advertising and television programming are purposefully crafted to capture the attention of predetermined audiences (Bazalgette, 1991; Hobbs, 2001, 2007; Piette & Giroux, 2001; Villani, 2001). Media literacy activities often involve analysis of the underlying purpose for the advertisement, its intended target audience, its persuasive techniques, and its content elements as part of the instruction intended to foster improved media literacy skills (Austin, Chen, Pinkleton, & Quintero Johnson, 2006; Brown, 1991, 1998, 2001; The Center for Media Literacy, 2005; Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Miller, & Fitzgerald, 2007).

Media Literacy and Substance Use

Youngsters gain competency in critiquing, evaluating, and interpreting media messages by drawing from their knowledge structures. As children develop greater cognitive sophistication and the ability for abstract thinking, they become better able to generalize lessons from media literacy to other contexts, such as substance use, in which they need to evaluate information for use in decision-making that could later impact their behavior. Media literacy engages youth in critical analysis of glamorized and unrealistic depictions of advertising messages and encourages youth to produce counteradvertising messages to "talk back" to the media industry. This approach not only modifies youth's responses to substance-use advertising messages, but also empowers them to reflect on the negative impact media might have on their health.

Theoretically based media literacy has become an effective tool to prevent or alter substance-use behavior among youth (Austin, Pinkleton, Hust, & Cohen, 2005; Banerjee & Greene, 2007; Johnson, 1997a, 1997b; Pinkleton et al., 2007; Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen, & Fitzgerald, 2008;). Built on the message interpretation process model, Austin and Johnson (1997a) designed an experiment that compared results from the general and alcohol-specific media literacy training with third graders. Inspired by the theoretical principles of parental mediation, the alcohol-specific media literacy training discussed various aspects of advertising representations, such as categorization (e.g., Is it real or not real?), validation (e.g., Is it right or wrong?), and supplementation (e.g., media messages do not represent real-life examples). This technique, in comparison to the general media literacy training that only focuses on advertising skepticism, was more effective in increasing third graders'

understanding of the media. In general, the treatment group participants had an increased understanding of alcohol advertisers' persuasive intent, which then led to a decreased level of expectancies for alcohol consumption a few months later compared to third graders who did not receive such training (Austin & Johnson, 1997a, 1997b). Gender differences also were observed in the treatment group as girls were more likely to indicate a lower likelihood of alcohol use than boys.

Integrating Parental Communication, Media Literacy, and Substance Use

Even though the familial environment factor (e.g., parental communication) and the individual factor (e.g., level of media literacy) examined in this chapter each have been uniquely linked to substance use, the literature has yet to examine the conjoint influence of parental mediation and media literacy as they relate to substance use. Fortunately, young adulthood provides an opportune time to examine the confluence of primary caregiver influences and media literacy skills as predictors of decision-making outcomes.

A natural connection exists between active parental mediation and media literacy. When the media content in question is presumed or shown in prior research to lead to negative effects, the link can be disrupted through *negative* active mediation and media literacy education. Both approaches aim at effectively increasing youngsters' skepticism toward advertising and other media portrayals by training them to use critical-thinking skills and consider what is present along with what is missing in a given message. By the time they are emerging adults, media literate individuals should possess critical-viewing skills enabling them to identify a variety of visual symbol representations and meanings embedded in messages, to determine effects of the media, and to understand points of view presented in messages (Brown, 1991, 1998, 2001).

As a result, negative active mediation should predict higher levels of media literacy skills, particularly as represented by the existence of critical thinking and skepticism toward advertising and, more generally, the media portrayals. Positive active mediation, on the other hand, seems to reinforce the persuasive aspect of media messages, such as alcohol advertising (Austin et al., 2000; Fujioka & Austin, 2002), and should be negatively associated with media literacy outcomes. In addition, prior research has suggested that avoidance and passive communication strategies characterized by rulemaking and coviewing do not enhance critical-thinking skills in children and do not necessarily prevent children from accessing objectionable content. Simply put, limiting access to the content children could watch and coviewing are expected to detract from emerging adults' comprehension of the complex interrelations of advertising and the media industry.

We recently collected data from emerging adults to explore these issues. Participants were recruited from a large mid-Atlantic university to participate in one of two cross-sectional Internet-based surveys. Two versions of the survey were created to focus either on alcohol-use behavior or on tobacco-use behavior. Both contained previously validated parental mediation activities (Austin, 1993; Austin et al., 1999; Austin et al., 2000; Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Nathanson, 2001b, 2002; Nikken & Jansz, 2006) and media literacy measures, operationalized as skepticism for advertising, media skepticism and critical thinking (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Austin et al., 2005; Austin et al., 2006; Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Pinkleton et al., 2008). The surveys were administered through an online research participation system that included undergraduate students from various disciplines across the university. Results are reported here for the general sample and for alcohol use as a behaviorally based dependent variable.

Emerging adults, roughly defined as individuals aged 18 to 25, face as many identity exploration and formation challenges as adolescents do (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults are considerably more independent from their adolescent years, but are not entirely ready to embrace the responsibilities of adulthood. A significant characteristic of emerging adulthood is the continuous cognitive and identity development through the late teens and the twenties (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, this period is appropriate in that the results may shed light on the role of active and passive parent-child communication about the media in fostering emerging adults' media literacy skills in order to document their direct and indirect effects on current substance-use behavior.

We expected to find that negative active mediation would predict higher levels of media literacy among emerging adults as represented by skepticism toward advertising, skepticism toward media, and critical thinking, whereas positive active mediation, rulemaking, and coviewing would predict lower levels of media literacy among emerging adults. In addition, we thought it especially likely that higher levels of media literacy would predict lower levels of alcohol and tobacco use among emerging adults.

Given the primary nature of caregiver influences, we thought it would be possible to trace these direct effects of parental communication strategies even into adulthood. Generally, for example, in the context of substance use, previous studies have shown that parental discussion-based intervention strategies either reinforce or counter-reinforce substance-use messages in the media, which then associate with higher levels of alcohol and tobacco experimentation and use among adolescents (Austin et al., 2000; Fujioka & Austin, 2002; Jackson, 2002). Overall, the literature appears to suggest that parental reinforcement (i.e., positive active mediation and passive coviewing) and counter-reinforcement (i.e., negative active mediation) will continue to affect emerging adults' behavioral intentions and behavior (Kafka & London, 1991). In our study, we tested whether positive active mediation and coviewing would predict higher levels of alcohol use among emerging adults, and whether negative active mediation would predict lower levels of substance use. We also tested for effects of rulemaking, because parental mediation research rarely has tested how rulemaking affects young people's behavioral choices.

Table 33.1 Associations between parent–child communication about media and media literacy

Dependent variables/ independent variables	R ² change	<i>b</i>	<i>df</i>	F
Advertising skepticism				
Age	.01**	−.11**	(1,636)	7.68**
Positive mediation	.03***	−.19***	(2,635)	15.45***
Negative mediation	.01*	.11*	(3,634)	12.59***
Coviewing	.01*	−.10*	(4,633)	10.79***
Total R²	.06			
Media skepticism				
Negative mediation	.02***	.14***	(1,636)	12.29***
Rulemaking	.02***	−.16***	(2,635)	13.12***
Total R²	.04			
Critical thinking				
Negative mediation	.03***	.18***	(1,636)	21.84***
Coviewing	.01*	.10*	(2,635)	14.05***
Rulemaking	.01*	−.10*	(3,634)	11.15***
Total R²	.05			

Note. All betas are standardized. Control variables were entered first using the stepwise procedure; thus, they entered the equation when they were significant. Standardized betas reported from the block of entry. Independent variables entered using the stepwise procedure in a single block.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The results revealed that mediation and coviewing variables had distinctive relationships with media literacy measures, such that coviewing predicted less advertising skepticism but more critical thinking, negative mediation consistently associated with higher levels of media literacy, rulemaking associated with lower levels of critical thinking, and positive mediation associated with lower levels of advertising skepticism but was unrelated to critical thinking.

Even with demographic variables and media literacy variables controlled, parental coviewing was positively associated with increased levels of alcohol use. Negative and positive mediation had no direct relationship to current alcohol use. Media skepticism predicted lower levels of current alcohol use, but advertising skepticism and critical thinking were unrelated to the behavioral measures of substance use. For detailed results, see Table 33.1 and Table 33.2.

Conclusion

The abundant media effects literature has repeatedly concluded that exposure to potentially harmful media messages directly impacts youth's behavior through their

Table 33.2 Associations among parental communication, media literacy, and alcohol use

Dependent variables/ independent variables	R ² change	B	df	F
Alcohol use				
Age	.10***	.31***	(1, 345)	39.95***
Race	.07***	.27***	(2, 344)	35.54***
Media skepticism	.01*	-.10*	(3, 343)	25.27***
Coviewing	.01*	.10*	(4, 342)	20.12***
Total R²	.19			

Note. All betas are standardized. Betas reported at the second step reflect the relationship between the predictor and the criterion while controlling for all of the variables entered on the first step. For the race variable, White is coded 1 and non-White is coded 0.

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

decision-making processes. Two approaches – parental communication and media education – have been investigated to theorize possible mitigating pathways through which negative media effects could be countered and positive effects amplified. Parental communication and an individual's level of media literacy may each have a waxing and waning influence throughout a child's developmental trajectory. Within the familial environment, parental communication about the media has garnered much attention as primary caregivers, to some degree, shape and form younger children's conceptual understanding of the media.

Not all types of parental communication lead to positive outcomes in children, however, especially when the questionable media content (i.e., violent, sexual, alcohol, and tobacco messages) is examined. Within that context, negative active mediation is found to be effective in reducing youth's positive attitudes toward the questionable content and behavioral intention of imitating the depicted behavior. On the other hand, positive mediation, rulemaking, and coviewing generally produce more harm than good in that positive attitudes toward the content appear to lead to behavior enactment. For example, positive mediation associates with increased levels of youths' desirability toward alcohol advertising and wishful identification with its characters.

Similar to the positive outcomes of negative active mediation, media literacy education, the other commonly used approach for mitigating negative media influences, has enjoyed much success in substance-use prevention and intervention among youth. By developing an individual's ability to critically analyze and produce countermedia messages to "talk back" to the big media industry, media education increases youth skepticism toward advertising, enhances reflective thinking and lowers behavioral intention toward substance use.

The direct and indirect impact of parental communication and media literacy is best examined through emerging adulthood as parental influences may still have the residual effects that influence their media literacy levels. The condensed results

reported in this chapter are the first to establish that certain forms of parent-child communication about the media are associated with emerging adults' media literacy skills. These results also confirm that parental communication and media literacy skills independently shape emerging adults' substance-use behavior.

One of the contributions of this research is to extend parent-child communication about the media and media literacy research to the context of emerging adults. Much of the research on parental communication and media literacy focuses on children and adolescents. Yet, very little research has concentrated on the interrelations between emerging adults' past parental communication and their current media literacy skills. This chapter suggests that negative active mediation is effective in fostering children's competency in media literacy into adulthood, whereas the passive activity of covieing, the avoidance strategy of rulemaking and the reinforcement of message receptivity inherent in positive mediation are – at least in isolation – weak or counterproductive influences for the development of media literacy skills. On the other hand, deficiencies in media literacy can lead to risk-taking behaviors among adolescents and may exacerbate those behaviors when they reach emerging adulthood. It will be important for future research to explore how these influences interrelate with a more diverse population, to test hypotheses with longitudinal datasets, to examine these factors in other contexts (e.g., violence, obesity, body image, other substance-use behavior, and Internet safety), and to investigate whether the same patterns would be observed when studying positive media programming. In addition, it will be valuable to include the role of other communication mediators, such as peer and sibling interaction, in the study of how children develop independent information selection and processing skills that ultimately lead to important behavioral decisions.

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The Impact of Media Policy on Children's Media Exposure

Amy B. Jordan

ABSTRACT

Children's media policy is designed with two primary goals: first, to increase children's access to beneficial content; and second, to decrease their exposure to harmful content. This chapter explores the principles on which US children's media policy has been established. It then outlines current US media policies that address content deemed to be detrimental to children (including junk food advertising and violent content) and seek to improve access to media technology and educational content that is considered beneficial to children (such as E-Rate and the Children's Television Act). In addition to reviewing media policies, the chapter considers research on the implementation and impact of the policies, including the abject failure of the V-chip legislation and the ongoing discourse about privacy protection. The chapter concludes by arguing the need for a more deliberate use of effects research in the development and evaluation of children's media policy.

Foundations of Media Policy

In the United States, as in many countries, children's media policy is designed with two primary goals: first, to increase children's access to beneficial content; and second, to decrease their exposure to harmful content. At the same time, those who

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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craft policy are mindful of the important protection that the First Amendment provides to those who create and distribute media, including commercial content. Policymakers ultimately strive to walk a fine line between worthy but sometimes competing principles: the media's right to free speech and society's interest in protecting and educating the nation's children.

This chapter explores the foundational principles on which US media policy has been established, primarily as the principles relate to the child audience. It then outlines current US media policies that address content deemed to be detrimental to children and seek to improve access to media technology and educational content that is considered beneficial to children. In addition to reviewing media policies, the chapter considers research on the implementation and impact of the policies. The chapter concludes by arguing the need for a more deliberate use of effects research in the development and evaluation of children's media policy.

In the United States, judicial bodies have tended to favor the "least restrictive" approach to ensuring that children are not exposed to age-inappropriate content (Levesque, 2007; Napoli, 2001). Policies that have infringed on the rights of adults to access legal content, such as pornography, have been routinely struck down by the courts (Blevins & Anton, 2008). The Communications Decency Act, for example, proposed to ban indecent and pornographic content from the Internet in the interest of protecting children (Blevins & Anton, 2008). Opponents argued that the Act was a form of censorship, and that it would infringe on adults' rights to access such legal content. Judges agreed, and argued that other measures – such as media education and blocking technology – would provide an alternative means for protecting children (Levesque, 2007). Commercial speech is also deemed to be protected by the First Amendment. Those who would seek to persuade consumers to purchase products are allowed to disseminate their message in any form and to any audience as long as it is not deceptive or misleading (Napoli, 2001). In *Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp. v. Public Service Commission* (1980), the US Supreme Court laid out the four-step analysis to determine whether commercial speech regulation is constitutional. In what came to be known as the *Central Hudson Test*, Justice Powell proposed the following questions: (1) Is the expression protected by the First Amendment? For speech to come within that provision, it must concern lawful activity and not be misleading; (2) Is the asserted governmental interest substantial? (3) Does the regulation advance the governmental interest asserted? and (4) Is the regulation more extensive than is necessary to serve that interest? Thus the notion of the protection of commercial speech was concretized, as was the notion of the least restrictive means of regulation.

The privileging of the free speech rights of advertisers and media companies has created an environment in which the industry is encouraged to self-regulate. When advocacy groups express concern or when lawmakers begin to make inquiries into media practices, the industry is often stirred to preemptive self-censorship (Freedman, 2008). Since networks and advertisers are loathe to risk action by Congress, the Federal Trade Commission, or the Federal Communications Commission, they are

on alert for signs of public disapproval and potential new federal actions. This dynamic has been described by Kunkel (1988) and Starr (2004) as “regulation by raised eyebrow” and will be discussed at greater length later in the chapter, as we consider self-regulatory efforts by the industry.

Despite the reticence of the courts to limit speech, there is a long history of regulation in broadcast media. In the early days of radio broadcasting, the federal government recognized the enormous potential of the medium as a public resource for providing information to keep citizens safe, informed, and connected. With the Federal Radio Act of 1927, and later the Communications Act of 1934, a regulatory body was set up to provide licenses, to allocate portions of the spectrum to license holders in both radio and television broadcasting, and to ensure that licensees meet the “public interest, convenience and necessity” (Jordan, 2008). Unlike other media of its day, such as newspapers or film, broadcast radio, and later television was seen as a scarce resource (Jordan, 2008). The Telecommunications Act of 1996, which represented the first major overhaul of the 1934 Act, added new expectations for broadcasters, clarified the role of the FCC in overseeing cable channels, and introduced new regulations for the Internet. Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is charged with carrying out the laws of Congress, processing applications and renewals for broadcast licenses, providing guidelines to the telecommunications industry on issues such as network neutrality and digital television, and ensuring that the needs of children and the concerns of parents are being addressed.

The extent to which the FCC is active or *laissez-faire* and the types of issues the regulatory agency focuses on tends to reflect the political leanings and interests of the presidential administration (Kunkel, 1998). The agency is made up of five commissioners nominated by the president and confirmed by the US Senate for five-year terms (Napoli, 2001). As might be predicted, appointees within the same party as the president will reflect the views of the administration. For example, the United States witnessed a period of deregulation of media, including a loosening of ownership restrictions, during the Reagan/Bush era (McChesney, 1999), and then a renewal of interest in the ability of the FCC to encourage better quality children's television during the Clinton/Gore administration (Kunkel, 1998).

The rapid development and adoption of new media technologies has presented challenges for regulatory agencies. Rules are often applied in accordance with the media platform rather than the media content. For example, commercial broadcasters (one kind of platform) are mandated to provide educational programming for children, but cable casters (another kind of platform) are not. Yet all channels are required to limit advertising during children's programming (Jordan, 2008). Some words are deemed indecent on some television channels (and are subject to heavy fines for indecency) while on other channels profanity is commonplace. Distinctions between broadcast and cable channels are important for regulatory agencies, but are invisible to parents, who tend to see all television channels as “television” (Schmitt, 2000). With media converging, the platform approach to media regulation may be obsolete, particularly as children are increasingly likely to watch television on the

computer via network websites and collaboratives such as Hulu.com (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). Moreover, as the number of “broadcast” channels increases exponentially after the digital switchover, the original premise of regulation based on the scarcity principle must be called into question. Simply put, the notion that broadcast media are scarce resources; that is, that there are more individuals who want to broadcast than there are frequencies available, may no longer be a good rationale for media policy-making.

Federal Children’s Media Policies

This section of the chapter focuses on the ways in which federal policy shapes media content consumed by children. First, the government can encourage the provision of programming it feels serves the public interest – in this case, by addressing the educational needs of the child audience. Second, policies can be put in place that aim to reduce children’s exposure to age-inappropriate or otherwise harmful content – for example, exposure to cursing, sex, violence, or excessive or misleading advertising. In some cases, a policy may be designed to do both. The Children’s Television Act of 1990, as we will see below, is legislation that addresses the “good” (by encouraging the provision of educational programming) and also the “bad” (by limiting the practice of host selling in advertising).

The Children’s Television Act of 1990 and the Subsequent 1997 FCC Processing Guideline

Television during the 1970s and 1980s was perceived by child advocacy groups, such as the Action for Children’s Television (ACT), as devoid of enriching and educational content and teeming with commercials and violence (Jordan, 1996). By 1990, after a decade of lobbying by ACT and others, Congress passed the Children’s Television Act (CTA). The Act was significant in two respects. First, it took on the hypercommercialism of children’s television by reestablishing advertising time limits on children’s programming that had been eliminated during the Reagan years of deregulation, and by banning the practice of “host selling” wherein characters from the television program pitch products during ad breaks within and adjacent to that program. Second, the CTA required broadcasters to significantly increase educational and informational program offerings for children (Kunkel, 1998).

Research conducted by Kunkel and Canepa (1994), the Center for Media Education (1992), and The Annenberg Public Policy Center (Jordan, 1996) found that the CTA of 1990 did not yield significant changes in the broadcasters’ educational offerings. Programs that were labeled as educational were often of dubious educational value. The cartoon show *The Jetsons*, for example, was justified as educational because it

taught children about the future (Center for Media Education, 1992). Researchers at the Annenberg Public Policy Center looked at the 1995–1996 broadcast season a full five years after the CTA went into effect. They found that the few truly educational programs that were airing in the Philadelphia market – such as *Bill Nye, the Science Guy* – were on so early in the morning (e.g., 5:00 a.m. on Saturday) that it was unlikely that any children would be awake and in the audience (Jordan, 1996).

After evaluations of the implementation of the CTA were released, and after both President Clinton and Vice President Gore became involved in the issue of children's educational television, the broadcasters accepted new guidelines from the FCC (Kunkel, 1998). Informally known as the Three-Hour Rule, the 1996 FCC processing guidelines stipulated that to be considered for automatic license renewal broadcasters must air three hours a week of core educational programming for children. Core programs must air between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., be labeled as educational on the air, be specifically designed for children, and be regularly scheduled (FCC, 1996).

The more specific guidelines made a difference. Prior to the implementation of the Three-Hour Rule, the amount of time devoted to educational programming varied widely depending on the local station, which often relied on locally produced or syndicated programming to meet its educational program requirements (Kunkel & Canepa, 1994). With the national networks providing “FCC friendly” educational programs to its affiliates, most stations were able to meet the minimum weekly requirements. Assessments of the educational quality of the programs by the Annenberg Public Policy Center (see Jordan, 2000) and by the advocacy organization Children Now (see Wilson, Kunkel, & Drogos, 2008) reveal that the majority of programs are educational, though each year roughly one-fifth to one-quarter are judged to be of minimal educational value. Broadcasters still make dubious claims about what their programs teach. Additionally, the mere presence of educational programs on the broadcast channels does not necessitate a large child audience. Ultimately, it is unclear the extent to which the mandate has impacted children's viewing choices.

Research by Schmitt (2000) reveals that parents do not recognize the symbol that indicates educational programming (see Figure 34.1). “E/I” (which stands for “educational and informational”) is not a meaningful cue to them. As a result, parents are unlikely to encourage their children to watch more enriching fare on broadcast stations. In addition, the majority of programs that air as core educational programs are what scholars call “prosocial.” Prosocial television shows are programs which teach children lessons about subjects like friendship or honesty rather than address traditionally academic subjects such as math or science (Jordan & Woodard, 2004; Wilson, Kunkel, & Drogos, 2008; see Chapter 29, this volume). Research suggests that prosocial programs are not viewed by parents as “educational,” even though they meet the FCC's definition for what would count as educational (Schmitt, 2000).

Broadcasters complain that educational programs are less profitable than entertainment cartoons, and that children will simply watch entertainment shows on cable channels that do not have to comply with the FCC's educational television guidelines.



Figure 34.1 Educational TV (E/I) icon on ABC's *The Emperor's New School*.

But observers note that it is likely that broadcasters would have stopped airing any programs for children, particularly since adult programming is so much more profitable. Thus, one could argue, the mandate ensured that the child audience was served in a meaningful way (Jordan, 1996). Independent producers complain that there is no longer a market for their educational fare, since the networks and their affiliates find it cheaper to make or acquire it at the national level, and since they can charge more for advertising space if the “reach” is greater (Jordan & Sullivan, 1997). Locally produced educational programming for children is now obsolete in most markets (Sullivan & Jordan, 1999). Despite these unintentional consequences, however, legislation has resulted in a substantial increase in the presence of educational and prosocial programming for children on the broadcast networks.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the V-chip Mandate

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 represented a massive overhaul of the 1934 Communications Act, although it continues to structure policy on a medium-by-medium basis in much the same way as the original law. For example, broadcast media stations such as Fox or ABC do not enjoy the same First Amendment protections as Comedy Central or HBO. The Telecommunications Act represented significant shifts, however, and one of the most noticeable changes it brought to the screen was the system of ratings and the technology to block programming based on these ratings (see Figure 34.2).

The system of rating television programs for age and content was designed by an industry advisory board, not by federal regulators; although the Telecommunications

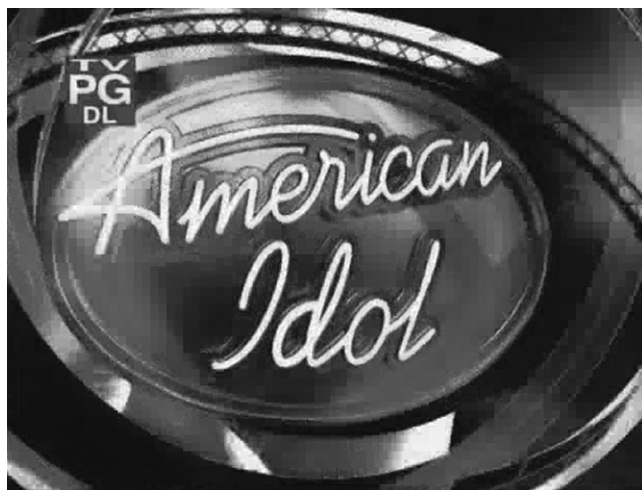


Figure 34.2 Age and content rating for Fox TV's *American Idol*.

Act said that if the industry did not come up with a system then the regulatory agency would do so for them. Age-based ratings indicate the appropriateness of programs for children of different ages (e.g., TV-14 suggests content is appropriate for children aged 14 and older). Content ratings flag the presence of content that parents might find objectionable, such as harsh language (L), sex (S), or violence (V). By 1998, most producers and programmers began labeling their shows using a system that followed the basic structure of the movie ratings (Cantor, 1998). The impetus behind the ratings was two-fold. First, policymakers believed that providing parents with information about the appropriateness of programming would empower them to more effectively direct children's viewing. Second, the Telecommunications Act required that computer chips be built into television sets manufactured after the year 2000. The computer chips, which had been developed and implemented first in Canada, could be programmed to read these ratings and would allow parents to block shows with certain kinds of content. The computer chip, known as the V-chip, became widely available by the year 2000.

Evaluations of the ratings and the V-chip mandate have shown that the policy was of limited success (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1998; Scantlin & Jordan, 2006). Surveys of parents have shown that television ratings are used much less frequently than movie ratings as a guide for children's viewing (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). One reason may lie in the fact that ratings across media are idiosyncratic. A ratings indicator for child-appropriate content for the medium of television would be TV-Y or TV-Y7; while for movies it would be G or PG; and for videogames it would be EC or E (Jordan, 2008). The content labels are equally confusing, and not universally applied. The content rating FV in children's programming (see Figure 34.3) means that there is "fantasy violence," but parents are more likely to think it means "family



Figure 34.3 Age and content rating for Cartoon Network's *Chowder*.

viewing” (Schmitt, 2000). Despite these shortcomings, the presence of labels to signify potentially objectionable content on television and the means by which concerned parents and caregivers could limit access to such content have been a significant development in media policy.

Research conducted by both the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) (Scantlin & Jordan, 2006) and the Kaiser Family Foundation (2004) has also indicated that the V-chip blocking device is neither well-understood nor frequently used. In an APPC field experiment, families were provided with V-chip equipped television sets just as the TVs were becoming available to the general public (Jordan & Woodard, 2004). In the “high information” condition, parents were told about the ratings and instructed as to how to program the V-chip to block shows they did not want their 7- to 13-year-old children to see. In the “low information” condition, parents were provided with the V-chip equipped television set and briefly told about the feature as well as other features of the set (such as the sleep timer). In the “control” condition, families were not provided with a television set, but were tracked over the same period. At the end of the nine-month study, parents in the high-information condition were significantly more likely to try to program the V-chip than parents in the low-information or control condition. Overall, however, of the 150 families in the study less than 10% of the participants had engaged their V-chip or any other blocking technology as a means to control children’s viewing. Interviews with a subsample of parents in the study suggest that some felt it simply unnecessary to use a technological device to mediate television, but many found the V-chip menu confusing to navigate (see Figure 34.4) and the program ratings difficult to understand. In addition, since most homes had more than one television set, children whose choices are thwarted on the V-chip-equipped TV were seen as having the option to simply go to another room

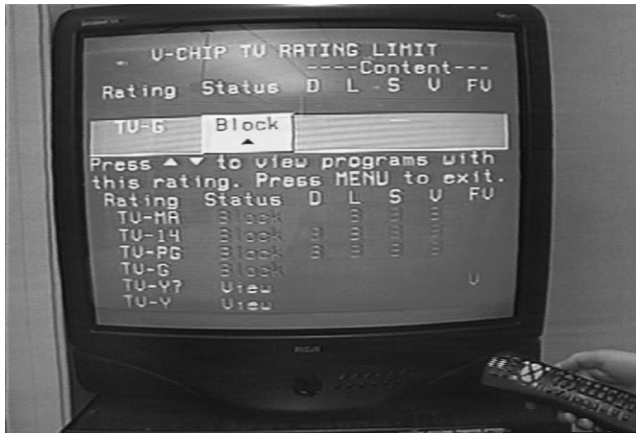


Figure 34.4 V-chip programming screen.

to watch the forbidden show (Scantlin & Jordan, 2006). As media technologies develop, blocking opportunities are no longer solely available through the “hardware” of the television set itself. Cable and satellite companies now offer parents the choice of setting program options that prohibit channels or programs from being available in the home (and thus avoiding the difficulty of having to program V-chips on multiple TV sets).

The Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act

The V-chip mandate and program ratings would seem to have shown tangible evidence that broadcasters were providing parents with the tools and technology they would need to protect children from age-inappropriate programming. Though many advocates and researchers argued that these were not being taken up by parents, policymakers felt that they had addressed their constituents’ concerns with a “least restrictive” policy. The broadcasters’ arguments that they were protecting the child audience began to fall apart, however, with several high-profile incidents of indecency mistakenly broadcast on major network programs viewed by adults and children alike. In 2003, during a live broadcast of the *Golden Globe Awards*, the lead singer of the band U2 thanked the presenters for his award and exclaimed “This is really, really fucking brilliant” (*USA Today*, 2004). Several months later, again during a live awards show, Nicole Richie accepting an award for her reality program *A Simple Life* said: “Have you ever tried to get dog shit out of a Prada purse? It isn’t so fucking simple” (Mears, 2009). Finally, in the most widely known incident of “indecency” in the United States, a 2004 Super Bowl halftime show featuring Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson briefly showed Jackson’s breast after Timberlake mistakenly ripped off her

bodice in what producers called a “wardrobe malfunction” (Belmas, Love, & Foy, 2007).

After receiving complaints, the Federal Communications Commission cited and in some cases fined the broadcasters for indecency. Indecent language has always been banned from the public airwaves. Indeed the Supreme Court has, on several occasions, revisited whether the FCC should fine broadcasters for airing indecent content, including the landmark *FCC v. Pacifica Foundation* ruling. In this ruling, the court ruled that the agency *should* fine broadcasters as the unique qualities of the broadcast media justified the “special treatment of indecent broadcasting” (1978, p. 750 as cited in Levesque, 2007). In this case, the FCC cited a fine to a New York-based radio station for airing George Carlin’s monologue about the seven dirty words you can never say on the radio or TV. More recently, ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox appealed FCC fines, and won a lower court ruling which cited the Commission’s policy as “arbitrary and capricious” (Mears, 2009). The FCC appealed to the Supreme Court, seeking restoration of its power to regulate indecency. It won its case.

One area of consternation in FCC indecency citations, which George Carlin explored in his “seven dirty words” monologue, is the loose definition of indecent language. The FCC defines indecency as “language or material that, in context, depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory organs or activities” (FCC Consumer Facts at www.fcc.gov). In the case of Bono’s language, for example, it is not obvious that the F-word is a sexual reference; indeed, it seems more an adjective of emphasis. The court, however, agreed that the use of the F-word is “indecent”, with Justice Scalia writing, “Even when used as an expletive, the F-word’s power to insult and offend derives from its sexual meaning” (Mears, 2009). And in the case of non-scripted live programs, the court agreed that it should retain the power to fine isolated instances of profanity known as “fleeting expletives.” Some broadcasters now rely on a five second delay to avoid accidentally airing profanity (Eggerton, 2006).

Such programming mishaps would not be caught by either ratings or the V-chip. Sports events like the Super Bowl are not rated under the industry’s system (nor are news programs). And the ratings on unscripted live awards programs will not be rated as containing offensive language if the producer is not expecting it. Moreover, during this period, many broadcasters were beginning to “push the envelope” of what would be allowable on broadcast TV. Thus, Congress again felt compelled to act. They viewed the FCC fine of \$32,500 as an ineffective deterrent, and drew up legislation that would increase fines tenfold and would allow the FCC to fine for each act of indecency. The Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act, signed by George W. Bush in 2005, gives the FCC the authority to fine stations up to \$325,000 for each act of indecent content that airs between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. This means that any given network may be subject to fines in excess of one million dollars (since fines are imposed on the stations that air the programming, and networks own the stations). It also means that networks are more likely to fight the fines. In July

2010, a federal appeals court struck down the FCC's policy barring "fleeting expletives" like Bono's and Richie's (see above) (Wyatt, 2010). The decision, which has been appealed to the Supreme Court, said such a policy violates the First Amendment because it is vague and could inhibit free speech. The FCC has appealed the decision, arguing that the court's decision threatened to have a "wide-ranging adverse impact" on the agency's ability to prevent indecent material from being broadcast. Indeed, broadcasters' challenges to FCC indecency fines have effectively brought the FCC's enforcement efforts to a halt (Schatz, 2010).

The Communications Decency Act

Concern over children's access to Internet pornography – whether intentional or accidental – led many groups to support legislation that would restrict pornography online. The Communications Decency Act of 1996, introduced as part of the Telecommunications Bill, made it illegal to knowingly transmit obscene or indecent messages to any recipient under 18 years of age. It also made it unlawful to send or display patently offensive messages in a manner that is available to a person that is under 18. The CDA was immediately challenged as unconstitutional. Opponents argued that it infringed upon the rights of adults to access legal content. Moreover, they argued, there are less restrictive means of protecting children from accessing such content, including the implementation of blocking technology, without prohibiting adults' access. The courts agreed, noting the absence of a tradition of government supervision over the Internet, and the fact that the medium was not as invasive or subject to accidental exposure to unwanted material as is broadcast (Levesque, 2007, p. 177).

The CDA was unanimously struck down by the Supreme Court, though the law prohibiting child pornography remains in effect. The law has taken an interesting twist recently, since some prosecutors have argued that the adolescent practice of "sexting" violates the CDA provision. Adolescents who take pictures of themselves or other adolescents and share them via cell phone or post them on the Web are open to criminal charges, including felony child pornography charges and being listed on a sex offender registry for decades to come. A 2009 study from the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that 4% of cell-owning teens aged 12 to 17 say they have sent sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images or videos of themselves to someone else via text messaging; 15% say they have received such images of someone they know via text message (Lenhart, 2009). While there is a growing consensus that such laws may be "too blunt an instrument to deal with an adolescent cyber culture in which all kinds of sexual pictures circulate" (Lewin, 2010, p. A1), there is a recognition that the circulation of images – even among youth – may have dangerous implications that we do not yet understand.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

The 1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) was the result of the efforts of advocacy groups, including the Center for Media Education, that were alarmed by the extent to which websites had been collecting information about their child users (Ciochetti, 2007). COPPA is chiefly concerned with privacy and security risks that are created when children under 13 years of age are online, and requires that parental permission is sought before collecting or using information from children under 13. Enforced by the Federal Trade Commission, websites can be fined for not complying with the COPPA. The law is intended to prevent marketers from using kids' sites to get family information. Website operators must post clear and comprehensive privacy policies on their websites describing their practices for children's personal information. The rule does not apply to Internet users who are aged 13 or older. A social networking site like MySpace asks users to verify their age before they can join by putting in their birth date. Unfortunately, such obstacles are easily circumvented by children, who can calculate an "old enough" birth year on the registration page but post their real age on their home page.

Federal Funding Programs

The US government's influence on the content of children's media goes beyond regulatory statutes. To fully understand the landscape of children's media one must also examine ways in which federal funding impacts children's access to new technology and the availability of educational content.

In the early days of the Internet, when most homes had access via a desktop computer and a dial-up modem connection, concern arose over a growing "digital divide." Families without access to the Internet were disproportionately low-income and from ethnic or racial minority backgrounds (Fox, 2005; Hoffman & Novak, 2000). Observers worried that a technology gap would lead to a knowledge gap, an education gap, and an earnings gap (Devaraj & Kohli, 2003; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Indeed, research had shown that children with home computers and Internet access performed better in school and in tests of reading and writing than their peers without computers (Jackson et al., 2006).

The Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism, commonly known as E-Rate, was authorized as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (section 234) and championed by then Vice President Al Gore as a way of equalizing access to the Internet and enhancing telecommunications services. Administered by the FCC, applying schools or libraries would receive a discount ranging from 20% to 90% depending on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced school

lunch. Importantly, the program provides only connectivity. Applicants must provide additional resources including end-user equipment, such as computers, software, and professional development (www.universalservice.org/sl/about/overview-program.aspx).

By many standards, the E-Rate program has been successful. In the period since its inception, the digital divide in America's schools has been considerably reduced, with more than 90% of all schools now reporting that they are connected to the Internet (Jayakar & Park, 2009). In spite of E-Rate, however, there remains a gap in Internet accessibility. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 97% of classrooms in town schools have Internet access whereas only 90% of classrooms in city schools do. This has led some to question whether the funds have gone to the neediest schools. Observers note that the complex and multistage application process which is time-consuming and labor intensive may prevent some schools from applying, particularly if they lack technical expertise and administrative support (Hudson, 2004). Others argue more advantaged schools take advantage of the program by applying for grants that supplement already state-of-the-art computer technology, a practice known as "gold-plating."

In February, 2010, a bill known as "E-Rate 2.0" was introduced to expand and extend the program beyond the initial cap of \$2.25 billion and to streamline the application process (H.R. 4619 from the Energy and Commerce Communications, Technology and the Internet Subcommittee). Key in the proposed legislation is funding for broadband equipment, which has yet to reach many hard-to-access students in rural communities, and a streamlining of the application process. As the divide in digital access begins to close, scholars have begun to observe difference in how new technologies are used. While in the United States, public policy has largely focused on physical access (but not broadband access), other governments, such as Canada's, have included the promotion of digital literacy and the development of cultural content online (Howard, Busch, & Sheets, 2010). Children who have more opportunity to explore computers and the Internet in informal settings like the home may develop distinct ways of approaching the technology.

The E-Rate program had an effect on another federal initiative: The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). CIPA requires schools and libraries to install blocking software on their computers to protect children from age-inappropriate content such as pornography. The American Library Association and others have complained that blocking technology filters are too crude, and block educational content along with offensive content. They also argue that the filters block adult access to legal content. Despite these arguments, CIPA remains in place, primarily because the federal funds that go into the E-Rate program are contingent on schools and libraries installing filters which, they point out, can be turned on or off depending on the user.

Government funding also shapes the landscape of children's educational programming. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Children's Television Act of 1990 (and the subsequent processing guideline commonly referred to as the Three-Hour Rule) mandates that broadcasters provide educational programming specifically designed

for the child audience. Beyond this, public broadcasting stations in the United States are mandated to serve children's educational needs. The core institution of public broadcasting is the local station, and virtually all US television viewers have access to at least one public television signal (Aufderheide, 1996). The stations are independent, and many are powerful program-producing stations. Funds for these stations come from multiple sources, including viewers and corporate sponsors. Funds also come through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a nongovernment entity with a politically appointed and balanced (along partisan lines) board, funded solely by federal tax dollars. While CPB does not distribute children's programs, it does fund their production. Funding is also allocated at the federal level through agencies that serve "priority" areas. Since 2000, for example, The Department of Education's Ready To Learn Television initiative invested close to two billion dollars in children's educational programming (www.ed.gov/programs/rtltv/index.html). Ready To Learn is an initiative that supports the development of educational media for preschool and early elementary school age children and their families – primarily in the area of literacy. Some of the programs that have emerged as a result of Ready To Learn include *Between the Lions*, *Super Why!* and the *New Electric Company*. The National Science Foundation has also been active in funding media production – as informal science education – with the goal of increasing students' interest and skills related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Their STEM grants of tens of millions of dollars have funded productions including *Fetch! With Ruff Ruffman*, *Peep and the Big Wide World* and *DragonflyTV*.

Self-Regulation

Media and advertising industries are protective of their free-speech rights under the First Amendment, but they are also sensitive to shifts in public opinion that may increase the likelihood of greater regulation. Often, they will seek to preempt policy initiatives by implementing a voluntary set of guidelines for members. Perhaps nowhere is self-regulation more evident than in the voluntary ratings that medi makers provide for their products. Movies, television, video and computer games, and music, each provide an indication of the content and/or age appropriateness of their titles. Industry-rating efforts have virtually always followed episodes of heightened public concern, with government threatening to take action if the industry does not. Movie ratings came first, in 1968, after dramatic social upheavals, including the sexual revolution, Vietnam War protests, and assassinations of US public figures. These events led policymakers and the larger public to scrutinize the contribution of media to the problems of the culture (Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2009).

During the 1980s, the Parents Music Resource Center admonished the music industry for its increasingly violent, sexual and misogynistic lyrics. The group, made up primarily of wives of prominent Washington lawmakers led by Tipper Gore,

argued that such lyrics had negative effects on the psychological well-being of listeners (Gore, 1987). After a series of Senate hearings and an extensive public debate, which weighed the well-being of children against the free-speech rights of musicians, the Recording Industry Association of America agreed to ask its members to participate voluntarily in a system of labeling their recordings and offering less explicit versions of lyrics alongside the original version. Today the Parental Advisory Label system (sometimes referred to as the "Tipper Sticker") alerts parents with a warning label, voluntarily placed on recordings by producers and distributors.

Each medium has handled the application of ratings differently, however, with television and music producers determining ratings and film and video and computer game titles submitting to an independent but industry-funded board. This has resulted in what one scholar has termed an "alphabet soup" of ratings indicators (Greenberg, 2001). It has also led to some unevenness in how the ratings are applied to media content. In the case of television, for example, Signorielli found that while 8 out of 10 prime time network programs were labeled with an age-based rating (e.g., TV-14), fewer than 4 in 10 were also labeled with content-based ratings (e.g., V for violence or S for sex), despite the fact that they contained that content (Signorielli, 2005).

Another example of self-regulation can be found in the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative. This initiative was launched as the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission were initiating reports concerning food marketing to children (Holt, Ippolito, Desroches, & Kelley, 2007). It represented a coalition of major food companies pledging to improve the nutritional quality of foods advertised to children, and laid out a series of efforts the companies would undertake with target dates and objectives. A 2009 evaluation of the effectiveness of the self-regulation by Kunkel and colleagues reveals that though the companies signing the pledges lived up to their promises, the pledges themselves were idiosyncratic. The authors of the report provide the following example: "Cocoa Puffs cereal meets all the applicable criteria specified by its parent corporation, General Mills, to qualify as a healthy product. It contains no more than 175 calories per serving, no trans fats, and no more than 12 grams of added sugar, among other criteria. If the same product was marketed by Kraft Foods, however, it would fall short of Kraft's guideline, which specifies that a healthy product contains no more than 25% total calories from added sugar. This means that Cocoa Puffs is considered a healthy product according to nutritional guidelines for cereals specified by General Mills, but it would not qualify as healthy according to the nutritional guidelines for cereals marketed by Kraft Foods" (Kunkel, McKinley, & Wright, 2009, p. 28).

An additional challenge to self-regulation – in all areas, not just in food marketing – is that it is not necessarily the case that all members of the industry will either participate or self-regulate. Though the television industry came up with a system for identifying age-inappropriate content by designating both age (e.g., TVY – appropriate for all children, TV-MA – appropriate for mature audiences only) and content (e.g., S – for sexual content, V – for violent content, etc.), many networks have chosen not to include content identifiers. Similarly, not all food marketers signed up for the Children's

Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative. More than one quarter of the food and beverage ads airing during children's programs come from companies that did not sign pledges, resulting in a landscape of "junk food marketing" that remained virtually unchanged by industry self-regulation (Kunkel et al., 2009). The hazards of self-regulation, then, include noncompliance (usually without repercussions) as well as the dubious nature of the industries with economic imperatives policing themselves.

Conclusion

From the evidence laid out in this chapter, it is clear that social science research can and should play a more prominent role in the making of effective media policy. First, communication researchers must highlight areas in need of funding for basic research. In some areas of effects research we seem to know plenty (for example, the effects of exposure to violent content). But rapid technological developments have led to enormous gaps in our understanding of, for example, how the use of social networking sites shapes identity formation among young adolescents. (See Chapter 31 for a summary of the fledgling research in this area.) What we know about the effects of media is tied up with the funding that goes toward studying the problem. Without externally funded, objective, rigorous research, we cannot hope to make policies that address the real issues of how today's youth use and are affected by the media they consume.

Second, it is critical that scientific research be used in both the formation and the evaluation of children's media policy. Politicians often rely on public opinion research to identify areas on which to focus their legislative efforts. This is an important first step, but as social scientists, human beings, and parents, we recognize that what we say and what we do are often two very different things. An example of this can be found in the research the Annenberg Public Policy Center conducted around the V-chip policy. Prior to the introduction of the V-chip, we surveyed 150 parents about their interest in using a device, built into their TV, that could block out program content they felt inappropriate for their child. 70% of those surveyed said they would be very interested in using such a device. One year later, after these same parents were provided with television sets that had the V-chip technology, we found that 70% had never even tried to employ the device (Jordan & Woodard, 2004). In this regulatory effort, and in others, empirical research could have informed not only what parents think, in the abstract, but also what parents do, in the real-life setting of the home.

Finally, it is important for scholars to be active in getting research into the forefront of debates about media policy. Decades of media violence effects research (and the testimonials of effects researchers) led policymakers to try to reduce children's exposure to violence. Similarly, research on the beneficial effects of educational content has led to funding for PBS programming on television and in new media platforms.

Moreover, the basis for limiting children's exposure to advertising content has been grounded in studies that demonstrate young children's weak understanding of the persuasive intent of advertising messages. There is great potential for communication research to inform children's media policy and national discourse about the role of the media in the life of the developing child. As Wartella has argued, "[W]e need to understand . . . what research questions we take up in our work, how we situate them within the national public and intellectual debates, and how we attempt to convey our work to the segment of the 'public arena' we believe we are addressing" (2002, p. 372).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank Hannah M. Cope for her assistance with this chapter.

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Changes and Continuities in the Media Effects Paradigm

Erica Scharrer

ABSTRACT

The field known as “media effects” has both changed and remained the same. Some means of inquiry and topics of study persist in their command of the attention of scholars in this area whereas others represent new directions. This chapter reviews the status of media use around the globe, then discusses both changes and continuities in the field over time. One major change is the shift toward “media psychology,” as reflected in the title of this volume. Finally, this introduction reveals the logic used in the organization of the volume and a chapter-by-chapter review of the topics covered within, thereby serving as a detailed roadmap for the reader.

Media Use Around the World

There has never been a more fascinating time to study the role of the media in the lives of people young and old. Individuals are faced with a dizzying array of choices and many media consumption levels are at an all-time high. In the United States, for instance, adult men and women are estimated to watch television about five hours per day whereas kids aged 8 to 18 watch about three-and-a-half hours per day, both figures reflecting an increase of about 30 minutes daily since the data were collected

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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10 years prior (Nielsen, 2010). Similarly, Eurodata TV Worldwide recorded an increase in television viewing of 28 minutes per day between 1995 and 2005 among the 30 countries from which it gathers data, setting an average daily exposure time across those countries at three hours and four minutes. Throughout the world, newer forms of media compete and coexist with old, resulting in a myriad of devices, platforms, and gadgets to be used for purposes including entertainment, information acquisition, and communication. Media use begins in many cases even before birth, purporting to stimulate babies *in utero*, drawing the very young to screens at increasingly earlier stages, and continuing to appeal in various forms and functions throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

In some ways, the flourishing media landscape has created more options than ever for audience members and therefore the types of effects media engender continue to become more complex and important to study. This complexity and transformation can be illustrated easily within the medium of television, for instance, for which one is no longer at the mercy of the programming schedule, as time shifting through DVRs (with an estimated penetration of 37% of US homes, Nielsen, 2010) and calling up shows on Internet sites and “smartphones” (as approximately 20 million individuals in the US did in the first quarter of 2010, Nielsen, 2010) become more prevalent practices. The media-rich environment is also illustrated by the statistic that an estimated 79% of homes in the United States are wired for high-speed Internet (Nielsen, 2010), a boon to those who have this means of immediate access but a severe impediment to those who do not in a context in which institutions from banks to schools assume 24/7 connectivity (Jung, 2008; van Dijk, 2005). Although not as prevalent in time use as their screen-based counterparts, approximately 39% of US adults read a newspaper each day (spending an average of 26.4 minutes daily with it) and 29% a magazine (spending an average of 15.6 minutes; Nielsen, 2010). Radio still reaches an estimated 61% of all adults in the US per day (Nielsen, 2010) and remains the most global of media due to its affordability and nonreliance on literacy and electricity (Hendy, 2000; Manyozo, 2009). Videogames are both used more often by their most ardent fans and now have a wider demographic reach, accounting for an average of 1 hour and 13 minutes per day for young people (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010) but are also used by 53% of all adults in the United States, with an only slightly greater prevalence in use among men compared to women (Lenhart, Jones, & Macgill, 2008). Children in the United States are raised in home environments that contain, on average, 3.8 television sets, 2.8 playback devices such as DVD or VCRs, 1 digital video recorder, 2.2 CD players, 2.5 radios, 2 computers, and 2.3 video game systems (Rideout et al., 2010). Most if not all of these media forms feature increasing amounts and types of commercial content, resulting in a frenzy of ad messages that occupy a growing proportion of space and time in content that is both overt and readily distinguishable as advertising and increasingly embedded into programs and other more covert forms, as well.

Other nations boast similar figures and similarly media-rich environments. In the United Kingdom, for instance, individuals spent an average of 218 minutes watching television, 164 minutes listening to the radio, and 24 minutes on the Internet per day

in 2007 (Ofcom, 2008). A full 98% of those in Iceland are Internet users, as are 95% in Norway, 93% in Sweden, 90% in Greenland, 89% in the Netherlands, 88% in Bahrain, 86% in Denmark, 85% in Finland, New Zealand, and Luxembourg, 83% in the United Kingdom, 81% in South Korea, 80% in Australia, 79% in Germany, and 78% in Japan, Canada, and Belgium (Internet World Statistics, 2010). Residents of France, Germany, Norway, Italy, Canada, Japan, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, and the United Kingdom average between 154 and 268 minutes per day of television consumption (Ofcom, 2007). Among the 30 countries covered in the Eurodata TV Worldwide data, Japan had the highest level of television use per day at 4 hours and 11 minutes. The average television use across Asian countries, in general, was 2 hours and 34 minutes, across Latin America 3 hours and 16 minutes, and in the Middle East 3 hours and 37 minutes in 2005 (Eurodata TV Worldwide, 2010). With additional media technologies commanding attention alongside television and the Internet, media consumption occupies increasingly larger amounts of individuals' time around the world. In Africa, for instance, mobile phone subscriptions have grown from less than 2% of the population in 2000 to 30% in 2007 (International Telecommunication Union, 2008) and Internet subscriptions rose from approximately 100,000 in 1998 to 800,000 in 2002 (Jensen, 2000; Wilson & Wong, 2003).

This medium-by-medium description does much to illustrate the point of a media-rich environment and daily exposure levels to singular media forms, but it does little to demonstrate the sheer complexity of studying media influence when uses of each of these media types are considered in the collective. Increasingly, children, adolescents, and adults spend time "multitasking" with media – attending to multiple media forms simultaneously – posing a considerable obstacle to researchers whose goal is to discover how individuals respond to it all (Rideout et al., 2010). The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before.

Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending time with media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and conditions help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses? Media effects research has long taken up these critically important questions. The answers provided in a large and still growing body of knowledge have crucial implications for day-to-day interactions, for public policy, and for society, at large.

Media Effects Scholarship: Stability and Change

Just as the media landscape has both changed and remained the same, media effects scholarship has taken a parallel course. Scholars continue to explore issues in

traditional areas of inquiry such as media violence, political communication, and children and media, responding to the changing media landscape in each. These areas are well represented in the current volume as they are in the literature, and in the effects paradigm at large, and they each include perennially important questions with new twists. For example, what are the effects of consuming media that feature violent content? Television and film have long been studied in an attempt to answer that ever-important question, but video and computer games are relatively new forms that demand (and increasingly command, as we will see in this volume) scholarly attention. What role do the media play in electoral politics, and how do individuals respond to (learn from, be inspired by, be discouraged by, be angered by, accept, question, etc.) political ads, news coverage of campaigns, and other political media content? In this case, important studies of uses of and responses to more traditional media forms persist. Yet, newer media have led to an increasingly fragmented array of outlets for individuals to attend to that correspond or contradict one's own political allegiances, as well as the potential for individuals to be not just media consumers but also media producers through such outlets as social media and blogs. What does the amount of time children spend with the media mean for their health and fitness, their performance in school, their knowledge of and requests for products advertised, their views of themselves and others, and their face-to-face communication with parties including parents and peers? Again, these questions have been the subjects of decades of scholarly work but have spurred newer topics to interrogate as levels of media use rise and popular media forms shift toward greater interactivity with technology.

Media effects scholars continue to use variations on tried and true research methods, including content analysis, experiments, and surveys. The latter two methods directly explore associations and causal connections between media use and particular outcomes, whereas the former – content analysis – is conducted in order to have a sense of what themes, patterns, and messages prevail in media, seen by many in the field as a necessary first step toward the exploration of effects (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). Yet, once again, methodological approaches have had to evolve as well, such as new strategies to deal with the ephemeral nature of Internet content in content analysis, more lengthy and multi-faceted survey questions to accurately capture complex media-use patterns in survey research, and newer physiological means of studying individual responses used to supplement (or in some cases replace) paper-and-pencil outcome measures in the lab. Scholars have embraced more sophisticated statistical analyses (such as structural equation modeling and hierarchical linear modeling) and triangulation both within the quantitative tradition and beyond. The increasing speed of computer technology assists the modern media effects researcher greatly in exploring these processes through complex statistical procedures executed in seconds by a simple click of a button. Indeed, as the media effects field matures, many journals in the field are requiring scholars to supplement statistical tests of difference across groups (like analysis of variance) with measures of effects size in a concerted effort toward greater precision. As always, these statistical

results point to what is known about the phenomenon of study – such as that two variables are correlated within the sample, or that a host of predictor variables explains a certain amount of variance in an outcome variable. Yet, they also point to what is not known – such as the unexplained variance in an outcome variable or the multitude of reasons why groups may differ from one another on an opinion item in a survey or a dependent measure in an experiment. The goal of effects researchers is, of course, to minimize the unknown by making sound contributions to the scholarly literature that both replicate past discoveries and extend areas in new directions as well as to periodically assess the state of the body of knowledge on a topic as a whole. This volume will do both, identifying important individual scholarly inquiries and synthesizing them to form conclusions about what we can say that we know about a topic of study with some confidence and what questions remain unanswered in the field.

The form and the focus of media effects research have each become more sophisticated and thereby increasingly able to acknowledge and ascertain the complex processes through which individuals attend to, comprehend, and respond to media. The increased focus on cognition that occurred in the field of psychology (Robins, Gosling, & Craik, 1999) has helped shape recent directions in media effects, as well, with heightened attention to brain mapping, neuroscience, and other ways of examining processing of and physiological responses to media. For instance, media effects researchers have used fMRI technology to study how children attend to and comprehend television content (Anderson, Fite, Petrovich, & Hirsch, 2006) as well as how young people's brains are activated by exposure to media violence (as we will see in this volume; Murray et al., 2006; Weber, Ritterfeld, & Mathiak, 2006).

At the same time, there has been amplified attention to affective processes, as well, through more consideration of the role of emotion in individuals' interactions with the world around them. The literature in this area has grown sufficiently to warrant an edited collection, *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions and Mass Media* (Doveling, von Scheve, & Konijn, 2010), with entries on such topics as the role of emotion in both the processing and the enjoyment of media content, fear responses to media, and emotional responses to visuals. If media effects research has traditionally emphasized *behavioral* outcomes, the recent trend is to supplement that emphasis with affective and cognitive outcomes, as well, and to attempt to understand the links among thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Finally, across the spectrum of cognitions, emotions, attitudes, behavior, and physiological responses, studies of media effects have included a growing number of variables and have examined direct as well as indirect relationships among them, thereby augmenting both the richness and the complexity of their conclusions. We have determined, for instance, that although some outcomes may stem directly from exposure to media (like playing a violent videogame triggering aggressive cognitions), others may travel only through intermediary conditions or steps (like use of television contributing to a view within adolescents that many of their peers consume alcohol and that view of their peers, in turn, predicting adolescents' own use of alcohol).

The Emergence of “Media Psychology”

Within this shifting backdrop, the current volume brings emerging and established scholars together to provide a thorough and comprehensive account of recent and enduring foci in scholarship in the rich and ever-relevant fields of media effects and media psychology. A large number of socially significant contributions to this body of knowledge continue to be produced under the traditional name for this paradigm, “media effects.” This research includes systematic analyses of media content (again, often as a necessary first step toward linking with attending consequences of exposure to such content), opinions, orientations toward and uses of media, media influence on thoughts, attitudes, emotions and behavior, and interventions thereof. This extensive and continually evolving body of knowledge is assembled, reviewed, and extended here.

Yet, as the title of this volume implies, the field has shifted in nature, as well, increasingly embracing and exploring a view of the individual’s capacities in processing media content, making sense of media texts as a precursor to or in lieu of an emotional or behavioral response. The term “effects” seems less relevant to this newer thread of research, as the consequences of exposure to media are less the focus than the response that is triggered by encountering media texts. Within some forms of media psychology, the emphasis is less often on what media may do to individuals (such as influencing what they think or know about a topic, affecting their attitudes or feelings, or encouraging or discouraging particular behaviors) and more often on how individuals make sense of media texts, using cognitive capacities to process them, affective routes to respond, and registering physiological change. To cite just one of many possible examples to illustrate this point, the work of L. J. Shrum (2002, 2007) has provided a processing explanation for the cultivation effect by showing that cognitive tendencies toward drawing on accessible and available sources of information can produce differential outlooks between heavy and light television viewers. Thus, the term “media psychology,” understood broadly as the intersection between media studies and the discipline of psychology with its attendant interest in the study of individuals and their mental functions as well as neurobiological processes that guide social behavior, is increasingly apropos.

By all means and measures, work that bridges communication and psychology is growing. Media psychology is a vibrant division in the American Psychology Association. It is the sole focus in academic journals such as *Media Psychology* from Taylor & Francis and *American Journal of Media Psychology* from Marquette Journals. Its emergence as an important scholarly focus only strengthens and sharpens the research done in the area of effects, which has its own set of journals that tend to devote it space, including *Communication Research*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *Mass Communication and Society*, and others. Moreover many scholars publish in both and reference both, thereby illustrating their intersection. This volume of

the Encyclopedia, therefore, is titled *Media Effects/Media Psychology*, reflecting both the established and the emerging nomenclature, and providing a state-of-the-art review of this vital and generative field.

Distinguishing Characteristics of the Volume

In addition to cultivating the fertile ground at the intersections of media effects and media psychology, there are a number of additional features of the current volume that make it distinctive. It is written by scholars whose locations span six countries of residence. Indeed, it is international in both author affiliation and in scope – with authors from Belgium, Canada, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States and studying global regions including Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Chapter authors were asked to reserve a central place for their own scholarship within their review, and therefore rather than a traditional literature review, there is a synthesis of the author(s)' own contributions to the topic area and the corresponding literatures.

It features topics one would rightly expect in any volume of its sort because of their continuing standing in the field, including lengthy treatments of subjects within the realm of media and politics, reviews of prominent theories of media influence, and explorations of the literature regarding effects on such phenomena as stereotyping and aggression, and stemming from such content as advertising and communication campaigns. In many of these cases, however, in order to provide a fresh perspective on these long-standing topics, an author with a unique view on the topic has written the chapter. The resulting, innovative takes on traditional subjects seen, for instance, in the chapters on cultivation theory and on fear- and anxiety-provoking responses to media, set this volume apart from others.

The volume also includes more novel and innovative foci in an effort to reflect newer directions in this dynamic field. For example, volume chapters explore news representations of war and their consequences for audiences, physiological responses to media exposure, exploration of enjoyment as a media effect, and theories not just about media influence but about individuals' perceptions of media influence. Compared to similar volumes it also gives particularly strong weight to the topic of violence – justified by the enduring controversies and concerns in this area – and to the child audience. In fact, this volume devotes an entire section to media effects on children and adolescents, groups that have long been considered particularly vulnerable due to their cognitive development and limited life experiences but that also have been viewed as active agents in media use within the media effects paradigm (Comstock & Scharrer, 2007; Strasburger & Wilson, 2002). Finally, a unique aspect of this volume is its emphasis in the latter chapters on mediating or moderating media effects (primarily on children) through such practices as parental interactions around media (including rule making and verbal responses to content), media literacy, and policy making in the arena

of children's programming. In closing the volume in this fashion, an activist, applied interpretation of the field is encouraged, providing the reader with what the research evidence suggests about both micro- (parental mediation, media literacy) and macro-level (through public policy and governmental involvement) ways to intervene effectively in unwanted media effects and to promote positive interactions with media.

Overview of Organizing Scheme

Providing a state-of-the-art review of this vast and rapidly changing field is a demanding task. This volume aims to represent the contemporary state of media effects and media psychology insofar as it is possible to illustrate major traditions as well as dynamically innovative elements. The wide-ranging span of the field requires an equally complex organizational scheme for a volume of this type. Thus, the book is organized into three parts, each with its own sections. The sections have multiple chapters contained within.

The first part, "Theories and Processes/Processing," brings together a review of some of the most prevalent and generative theories in the field (the "Theories and Processes" component) and the latest literatures on "Processing," roughly defined as the ways that individuals make sense of or make meaning from media. What these two areas – theories and processes and processing – have in common is that they both answer the question of how and why media effects occur. Within this part, therefore, chapters on traditional theories in media effects in Section I are presented alongside scholarly explorations in Section II of "internal mechanisms," meaning processes that primarily occur within the individual – including cognition stimulated by media content, motivations for seeking out media, theoretical propositions about enjoyment, and physiological responses in the brain during media exposure – that help explain orientations toward and responses to media.

The second part, "Evidence of Effects," organizes and synthesizes the vast literatures on both newly emerging and long-lasting areas of inquiry in the study of media impact. It is divided into sections assessing effects "On Views of Self, Others, and Events," "On Personal Health and Social Well-Being," "In the Political Arena," and "On/Of Persuasion," with each section bringing together related literatures. The section labeled "On Views of Self and Others" (Section III) is concerned with ways that media shape knowledge of, attitudes about, and feelings toward the self, others, and major global events. In doing so, the section begins with media effects on socialization (the process of learning about the culture and one's roles within) and includes the development and manifestation of stereotypes. It ends with influence of media on perceptions of events covered in the news, particularly war and conflict (the "views of events" component), a critically important topic with implications for foreign policy and public opinion. Section IV, "On Personal Health and Social Well-Being," has to do with such health- and well-being-related outcomes as body image, obesity, fear, anxiety, aggression, and sexual behavior. These effects, therefore, are

variously intra- and/or interpersonal in nature, revealing themselves in both individual cognition and affect and social interactions and behavior. Section V, "In the Political Arena," brings together media effects related literature about political ads, political entertainment (exemplified by such programs as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* or in monologues of late-night show hosts), and news coverage of politics in the age of digital media and such outcomes as political knowledge, support of policies or politicians, voting and other forms of civic participation. The section, therefore, implicates campaigning, governing, and participating in the electoral process as well as in other aspect of civic life. The final section in this part, Section VI, "On/Of Persuasion," illuminates connections across persuasive media attempts including advertising for products and services and public communication campaigns, with the latter including such constitutive elements as social marketing and public service announcements. The communicative strategies of persuasion are thus studied in this section, whether for the purpose of public health or corporate profit.

Finally, the third part of the book is titled "The Young Audience," and it closely examines the unique circumstances that arise when media are being consumed (and sometimes produced) by children and adolescents as well as the corresponding challenges and opportunities for parenting, teaching, and policy-making. Of course, media effects research is intimately connected with audiences, and this final part of the book reflects the particular ways that children and teen audience members have of interacting with media – such as through educational programming among the very young or via social networking sites or mobile phones among adolescents – as well as the consequences of these media uses. Thus, Section VII, "Media Use and Effects on Learning and Development," discusses ways in which media can be intentionally educational (such as through educational and/or "prosocial" programming that encourages social and emotional growth) as well as ways media can unintentionally interfere with skills necessary for educational achievement. Because learning is not limited to formal education, *per se*, the section also focuses on the Internet's role in key aspects of adolescents' development, including their communication with others and their expression of identity. The final section, Section VIII, "Mediating and Mitigating Effects," examines the ways in which various parties can intervene in media effects: teachers and members of community organizations through media literacy, parents and caregivers through parental mediation, and the government and other policymaking entities through laws and guidelines for children's media.

Introductions to the Chapters

The first section of Part 1, "Theories and Processes/Processing," entitled "Theories of/about Effects," devotes chapter-length treatments to some of the most important and lasting theories in the field. Many of the theories have to do with why and how and under what circumstances individuals are influenced by media, and these are the theories of effects. Yet, the section also includes a chapter on theories and concepts

pertaining to how individuals perceive the media and how they perceive media influence on themselves and others. This aspect of the section is therefore the theories *about* effects.

Maxwell McCombs and his co-author Jae Kook Lee have the lead chapter in this section, Chapter 1, in which they detail the evolution of one of the field's most prominent theories of media effects, agenda setting. The chapter discusses how the news media can make issues, events, and characteristics of public figures more salient, both intentionally and not, and it identifies factors that make agenda-setting effects more or less likely to occur. McCombs and Lee also provide an explanation for how such effects occur through such concepts as knowledge activation and affective response.

In Chapter 2, Jan van den Bulck takes a novel approach, emphasizing the sociological, in his treatment of another long-standing and central focus in the field, cultivation theory. Van den Bulck draws heavily on early publications explaining and testing the theory in his explanation of cultivation as an exceptional theory of media effects, different from other theories, for example, in the use of micro-level data (from content analysis and surveys) to make broad-based inquiries into power structures in society. The degree of activity of the viewer and the range of possible meanings to be made from television texts is discussed for its implications for the theory in the chapter, as is the turn toward greater attention to cognitive processes in social science.

In Chapter 3, framing and priming theories are reviewed by political communication scholars (and brothers) Bertram T. Scheufele and Dietram A. Scheufele, who introduce a multi-level matrix to identify factors operating at the micro- (effects on individuals), meso- (effects on organizations), and macro-level (effects on public discourse or politics at large). In doing so, the authors provide a pioneering synthetic treatment of these two interrelated and long-standing theories and discuss the implications of these processes in politics as well as other contexts.

The general aggression model (GAM), a model built from a resourceful assemblage of prior theories and concepts used to explain how and why individuals may learn aggression from exposure to violent media, is discussed by Christopher P. Barlett and Craig A. Anderson in Chapter 4. The authors also introduce and explain the general learning model, a broader extension of the GAM that encompasses other media effects aside from aggression that are learned from nonviolent media use. For each of these models, Barlett and Anderson discuss both short- and long-term effects and individual difference variables that identify who among audience members is more or less likely to experience an effect.

Finally, Chapter 5, written by Yariv Tsfati and Jonathan Cohen, finds conceptual similarities among theories and models pertaining to perceptions of media effects that have largely been considered one by one rather than in conjunction with one another in past research. Opinions regarding the credibility of news media, views of media as "hostile" when they're perceived as insufficiently supportive of one's own position on an issue or topic, and the tendency to perceive others as more susceptible

to negative media influence than the self are the perceptual threads that Tsfat and Cohen weave together in this ground-breaking chapter. The first section of Part 1, then, both discusses enduring and evolving single theories (like cultivation and agenda setting) and introduces new meta-theoretical principles through the art of synthesis. It also encompasses theoretical propositions and the resulting empirical support for explanations of media effects themselves and of perceptions of media effects.

The second section of Part 1 is titled "Internal Mechanisms: Enjoyment, Appeal, and Physiological Response," and, again, is defined by forces and tendencies within individuals that shape their interactions with media. The antecedent question of why individuals are drawn to particular media is addressed here, as are explanations for why we find media so enjoyable and appealing. The section also encompasses the biomedical and physiological processes that are triggered in the human body and mind when encountering media messages of particular types. Thus, the emphasis is largely (but not wholly, as, of course, the psychological is intertwined with the social and cultural) internal, dealing with psychological motivations, cognitive processing, and systems activated within the individual.

The section is led by an entry on the uses and gratifications tradition by Paul Haridakis in Chapter 6, in which he points toward a number of new directions within the paradigm, including a more thorough examination of motives for seeking particular media exposures and a wider view of degree of audience activity as a variable rather than a taken-for-granted condition. Throughout the chapter, Haridakis demonstrates how uses and gratifications should not be positioned in opposition to media effects but rather as a complementary component. Why individuals seek out particular media to interact with plays a substantial role in how they respond within those media interactions.

Entertainment theory is reviewed and discussed by Tilo Hartmann in Chapter 7, assembling research findings and corresponding concepts regarding why individuals enjoy spending time with media. Adaptive tendencies within humans, Hartmann shows, help explain needs for both recreation and psychological growth, and media provide safe and supportive challenges to our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

In Chapter 8, the concept of selective exposure and the particular allure of violent media are addressed by Marina Krcmar. She discusses the use of violent media to manage or adjust moods, to undergo the thrill of "excitation," and to experience connections with characters. The role of personality traits is also thoroughly considered and the attending research regarding what characteristics make individuals more or less likely to be attracted to violent media is reviewed.

Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 then turn more decidedly to the topic of cognitive processing and physiological response, first in Annie Lang's chapter and then in John P. Murray's piece in which neuroscience findings in the topic of media violence are presented alongside more traditional forms of inquiry. In Chapter 9, Lang presents a multi-faceted model using a nesting structure to explain the processes that ensue when an individual encounters a stimulus (which can include both media and

interpersonal inputs). The cognitive system is the smallest of the concentric circles, followed by the motivational system, then the biological system, next the social system and, finally, the cultural system. Lang's chapter focuses on the first few layers, and she demonstrates how rather than change- or no change-defining media effects, interactions with media can best be seen as continuously dynamic responses within and between these systems.

In Chapter 10, Murray views the shift within media effects/media psychology toward the greater use of brain mapping and fMRI technology through the lens of the violence literature. Murray begins with a detailed history of the research- and policy-related concerns of media violence (including the government-led inquiries into the effects of violence) and then traces the literature through the very recent reliance on neurological investigations of audience responses. Changes revealed through cutting-edge research using brain mapping within the prefrontal cortex bring the literature on violence effects full circle. The theme of the section as a whole, therefore, is an exploration of the mechanisms within individuals that trigger, shape, and explain their particular orientations toward and responses to media.

Part 2 of the book, "Evidence of Effects," is divided into sections assessing effects in particular realms, and in doing so, it foregrounds the evidence for psychological, social, and political effects themselves more so than the mechanisms by which those effects transpire, as was the case in the prior part. Here, the large and expansive literatures on media effects in a number of aspects of social life are reviewed and synthesized, organized into cohesive subtopics that represent enduring foci.

The first, Section III, titled "On Views of Self, Others and Events," begins with a chapter by Nancy Signorielli on media messages about gender and their influence on the individual, Chapter 11. Signorielli illustrates the power of television to act as an agent of gender-role socialization, first documenting the patterns of content regarding television's treatment of gender that persist in the twenty-first century and then reviewing the empirical evidence for the ways in which viewing those depictions can shape individuals' views of what is acceptable or ideal for men and for women in contemporary society. In the chapter, the interwoven aspects of identity – not just gender but also age and race and social class as seen through occupations – is readily apparent as the case for lasting media effects is made.

In Chapter 12, Travis L. Dixon and Christopher S. Josey review the evidence on the treatment of race in news coverage of crime and the ways that audience members' views are shaped by such treatment. Dixon and Josey also use content analysis findings as a starting place to establish racial biases in news, and they proceed to empirical evidence of the effects of such representations, including studies conducted within the cultivation tradition and those stemming from a priming paradigm in which such concepts as cognitive accessibility play a central role. In the chapter, the effects research on both traditional news and the still nascent area of online news are critically reviewed.

In Chapter 13, Dana Mastro and Riva Tukachinsky also explore the impact of race and ethnicity in the media, concentrating their efforts on entertainment media

content more so than news. They review the relevant content patterns in media and then provide a detailed explanation of stereotype construction and schema formation. As other authors in this section have done, Mastro and Tukachinsky review findings framed by cultivation theory, social cognitive theory, and priming, yet they also include social identity theory in their review and give careful attention to factors that may intervene in a media effect on stereotypes. The chapter encompasses such outcomes as influence of media stereotypes on opinion formation on policies, on non-dominant group members' views of themselves, and on dominant group members' views of non-dominant "others."

Finally in this section, in Chapter 14, Michel M. Haigh reviews the content and effects research pertaining to a topic not always covered in media effects books but one that is of immense social significance, the impact of news coverage of war on individuals' attitudes and opinions. Like in the Travis and Dixon chapter, Haigh places news media as a matter of central concern, yet the latter part of the chapter also reveals the effects of less traditional and more hybrid media forms such as political entertainment and political blogs. Haigh incorporates both long-standing concerns regarding news coverage of war and more recent issues such as reporter "embedding" within military units. She also uses the content analysis research as an important step in determining how news media tend to cover war and conflict and then she draws from these patterns when reviewing the research evidence for effects on public opinion.

The section at large, therefore, makes apparent the potential for news and entertainment media to define how one considers, conceptualizes, and evaluates the self, others (including both particular social groups and "the enemy" in a situation of military conflict), and critical global events.

The second section, Section IV, of Part 2, "On Personal Health and Social Well-Being," turns the reader's attention to the health and well-being of the individual through such topics as body image and obesity or therapeutic effects of television viewing. Yet it also attends to one's social well-being as it takes shape within social interactions, be they aggressive or sexual in nature, or fear and anxiety provoking.

In Chapter 15, Kim Bissell combines two related literatures that are sometimes kept quite apart, the role of the media in weight-related health on both sides of the spectrum, overweight and underweight. First, Bissell reviews the key findings in the vast literature on the role of media in body image disturbances that range from body dissatisfaction to full-blown eating disorders, devoting considerable attention to additional factors that mitigate media influence and to the theoretical perspectives that inform these studies. She also discusses the phenomenon of "weight bias" (negative perceptions of those who are overweight) and the role of media in contributing to this stigma, as well as the literature regarding media use and a tendency toward being overweight or even obese. The final section of the chapter calls for greater integration of these elements in future studies that attempt to determine why and how media use can encourage underweight tendencies in some individuals and overweight in others.

In Chapter 16, Robin L. Nabi and her co-authors Jiyeon So and Theresa de los Santos examine the increasingly popular reality television genre for its potential for health effects. They begin by defining the elements that characterize the genre and then review the literature regarding the motives and gratifications behind its viewing. The bulk of the chapter, however, is concerned with effects and Nabi and colleagues review cultural studies contributions arguing for ideological messages within the genre as well as empirical studies of the effects of reality crime, dating programs, and personal makeover shows. They demonstrate the importance of such concepts as identification and involvement, perceived relationships with characters, and parasocial interaction in these processes and discuss the research evidence for both positive and negative implications for health-related outcomes.

Cynthia A. Hoffner and Elizabeth L. Cohen also cultivate fertile new conceptual ground in their chapter on fear, risk, and social anxiety and intergroup relations pertaining to media. In Chapter 17, Hoffner and Cohen begin by reviewing the immediate and lasting effects of media on fear, drawing from both entertainment and news media, with the latter topic extending into audience perceptions of risk and the implications of those perceptions for behavior. In what is perhaps most groundbreaking about their chapter, Hoffner and Cohen then extend the focus toward the fear and anxiety produced by and in “intergroup relations,” discussing the research evidence and theoretical perspectives regarding ways in which individuals can perceive others as posing a threat. In so doing, the chapter makes important connections to prior chapters in the volume regarding both stereotypes and perceptions of media influence on others.

Finally in this section, perhaps the two most enduring controversies and concerns about media effects, violence and sex, are taken up in the last two chapters. Since the advent of television and with film and radio before it, members of the public have expressed anxiety about the influence of sex and violence on children, Congressional inquiries have either threatened or actually brought about regulation (such as in the form of labels to accompany television programs), and researchers have conducted studies to document and explain effects.

In Chapter 18, Ron Leone and Angela Paradise review the findings regarding aggression and desensitization from violence, incorporating research evidence that answers two critical questions: can media encourage aggressive thoughts, attitudes, and behavior and can media use make individuals become habituated to violence, so that violent exposure no longer registers as a matter of concern? The evidence points decisively to an answer in the affirmative to both questions, and the Leone and Paradise chapter both shows how aggression and desensitization are related and also points to factors that make such outcomes more likely, including factors within the individual (like particular personality characteristics) and in the media content (including the inclusion of rewards or punishments for characters’ violent behavior).

In Chapter 19, Kirstie M. Farrar provides an accounting of the body of knowledge on effects of sex on television, emphasizing socialization processes, or the ways that individuals – especially adolescents – learn about sexuality. Farrar reviews the theo-

retical bases for the media's sexual socialization effects, including social cognitive theory and cultivation theory, and then organizes the empirical research record on effects according to influence on cognition (including expectations and perceptions of social norms), attitudes, and behavior. Antecedent and intervening variables are identified in the chapter, as well (such as the demographic characteristics of the viewer or the ways in which sexual activity is depicted in the media) and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the empirical evidence for positive effects of media on sex-related outcomes, such as on perceptions of the efficacy of condom use or attitudes about safe sex. On the whole, therefore, the section is organized around the concepts of health and well-being, including weight-related health concerns, fear and anxiety both personal and social in nature, aggression and desensitization, and attitudes toward, views of, and behaviors regarding sex. A unifying element is the relationships that individuals form, both with each other and with characters they encounter in the media.

The third section of Part 2, Section V, of the book, "In the Political Arena," provides a comprehensive view of the vast and highly developed subfield of political communication, with chapters covering the media's role in critical issues and outcomes pertaining to electoral politics and democratic participation. Rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive overview of media effects in this massive area, particular media forms are emphasized, including political commercials (since they are so central in political campaigns), debates (because they draw large audiences and media spectacle), blogs, websites and other Internet-based forms of political communication (because they represent a critical new means of communication), and political entertainment (because the research evidence suggests important effects can stem from even humorous or entertainment-based political content). Within these emphasized media forms, effects on knowledge of candidates and of policies and events, on attitudes and emotions including support or lack thereof, and on voting and other forms of both political and civic participation are discussed. The resulting conclusions are critical for democracy and relations between press, politics, and public in the twenty-first century.

William L. Benoit and Jayne R. Henson lead off this section with Chapter 20 on the central role of political advertisements and debates in the political realm. Benoit and Henson first argue persuasively for the continuing importance of these practices and then review their functions within campaigns and their most frequent topics, including descriptions of particular issue positions or policies and attacks on opponents. They then consider whether and why effects of these political media forms might be considered "minimal," and they end the chapter with a review of the evidence for effects of commercials and debates relying heavily on meta-analysis to point to the most reliable conclusions.

The next two chapters both examine the intersection of information and entertainment in contemporary media. In Chapter 21, Patricia Moy, Michael A. Xenos, and Muzammil M. Hussain first provide a broad and sweeping review of both traditional news and of "infotainment" and the role of each in individuals' participation

in democratic activities and civic participation. Moy, Xenos, and Hussain begin their chapter by defining activities and roles that fall within the concepts of civic participation, citizen engagement, and social capital and then they turn toward a discussion of the effects of news coverage of politics in newspapers, television and the Internet. They connect these more traditional outlets for political information to political comedy as seen in satirical news programs, late night shows, and sketch comedy, and then call for ways in which scholars can respond to the increasing fragmentation and stratification of audiences across an ever-widening array of outlooks. It is precisely the hybridity of genres (such as information/news and entertainment) and texts and audiences that R. Lance Holbert and Dannagal Goldthwaite Young take up in Chapter 22.

Holbert and Young advance a research agenda for future scholarship at the budding intersection of politics and entertainment. From sitcoms and dramas to “fake news” programs (like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*) and talk shows airing during the day (such as *Oprah*) or late at night (such as *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*), political communication scholars are increasingly responding to a changing media environment in which individuals gain information and insights regarding politics from a number of sources. The authors study the composition of the audiences for these hybrid media forms and draw from more humanistic research traditions in arguing for how audiences actively make meaning across media texts, in understanding the conditions that pave the way for political entertainment, and in addressing the larger implications for policies including gay rights and the protection of the environment.

Finally, the critically important topic of the role of the Internet, which positions individuals not just as audience members but also as content producers, is discussed by Leticia Bode, Stephanie Edgerly, Ben Sayre, Emily K. Vraga, and Dhavan V. Shah in Chapter 23. Bode and her colleagues begin by discussing the research evidence that they weigh in favor of a positive effect of Internet use more broadly, and social networking sites more specifically, on both sociability and social capital. They then turn their attention to online news and blogs, successively, and connect to such important outcomes as perceptions of credibility, learning, and mobilization. Bode and colleagues end with a discussion of larger shifts regarding the media and politics, including in the nature of the public sphere, the conditions of political deliberation, and other implications for democratic practice. The section “In the Political Arena,” therefore makes both micro- and macro-level observations of the political scene, reinforcing the continued importance of long-standing elements of political campaigns including televised and newspaper news, political ads, and debates, but also reflecting the importance of newer elements or directions such as political comedy and political entertainment, online news, blogs, and social networking sites. The evolving media landscape has perhaps never been better illustrated – and its consequences more important – than within the realm of politics, as these chapters show.

The fourth and final section, Section VI, of Part 2, “On/Of Persuasion,” explores relevant theories and research results regarding advertising, marketing, and media

campaigns designed to persuade, either regarding products and services as in traditional advertising or regarding health and safety behaviors as in communication campaigns and social marketing. The unifying theme, therefore, is on purposive attempts via media and other forms of communication to convince audiences in favor of some outcome, whether it's the purchase of a product or the adoption of a behavior such as applying sunscreen or recycling materials and reducing trash. Relevant theories of persuasion are reviewed in this section, as is the empirical evidence for the conditions in which persuasive attempts are most likely to be successful.

In Chapter 24, Charles K. Atkin and Ronald E. Rice lead off this section documenting both their own seminal contributions to and emerging foci within the study of public communication campaigns. They illuminate the steps involved in campaigns, from design to early research to mid-process assessment and summative evaluation, and provide a thorough discussion of varying features of the persuasive message (such as emphasis on information vs. persuasion or the use of particular appeals) and the research record documenting their effects. In the latter part of the chapter, Atkin and Rice use three case studies to model the ways in which these processes unfold in contemporary communication campaigns.

The phenomenon of social marketing is defined and discussed and relevant empirical findings reviewed by Michael D. Basil in Chapter 25. Social marketing differs from communication campaigns in that it engages real-world conditions in an attempt to make the behavior change in question more likely through the facilitation of rewards or the removal of obstacles. Thus, Basil begins his chapter with some of the limitations of information-based campaigns and then demonstrates how individuals can best be influenced to make a behavior change when material conditions allow, for instance when mosquito nets are made readily available and affordable to combat malaria, and when a fleet of limousines can be employed to give rides to individuals under the influence to fight against drunk driving. Basil explains both the promise and the limitations of this approach and then reviews the empirical evidence from prominent prior social marketing campaigns.

Xiaoli Nan focuses on particular frames in campaigns designed to promote health in Chapter 26. She distinguishes between "gain-based frames" that show audiences members the advantages of adopting the behavior featured in the campaign and "loss-based frames" that focus on the disadvantages and negative repercussions that may follow from failing to adopt the behavior. Nan traces the intellectual history of the concept of framing and the attending observations about how and why individuals respond to messages framed as potential gains or potential losses differently. She identifies a number of important moderators of framing effects within communication campaigns, including the type of behavior targeted, the individual's degree of involvement with the issue at hand, other factors influencing motivation, and the perceived desirability of the end-state that the behavior change predicts.

The role of advertising in the lives of children is addressed by Moniek Buijzen and Patti M. Valkenburg in Chapter 27. The authors begin by applying the main theories regarding how individuals process advertising and other persuasive messages to the

unique development and cognitive capacities of children, focusing on the degree of cognitive elaboration (thinking the message through carefully and rationally) a message is likely to inspire. Then, they give a comprehensive review of the evidence for intended effects of advertising on young audiences, including on such outcomes as brand awareness, favorable attitudes toward brands, and purchase requests or attempts. Buijzen and Valkenburg then synthesize and discuss the research results regarding unintended effects of advertising on such outcomes as fostering materialism, triggering conflict with parents, influencing consumption of non-healthy foods, and diminishing overall satisfaction with one's life. Finally, they use the research record to express skepticism over whether advertising literacy, an outlook that has been shown to increase as children develop, actually decreases advertising influence, but optimism about the role of interactions with parents and caregivers to moderate such influence.

The section as a whole coheres around purposive attempts to use media and other communication strategies to convey information, sway attitudes, and shape behavior on behalf of a client with a goal, be it commercial (selling products and services) or non-profit in nature (working toward public health and safety). The section identifies theories regarding how individuals both young and old process such content, and discusses a host of factors that help determine whether particular desired outcomes will be achieved. The final chapter in the second part also serves the purpose of transitioning the reader into the final part of the book, which focuses on a segment of the media audience that has historically spurred the largest amount of concern regarding negative media effects, as well as the largest amount of promise for positive effects: children and adolescents.

The first section, Section VII, of Part 3 of the volume synthesizes the research on the implications of "Media Use and Effects on Learning and Development" in childhood. Learning is conceived of quite broadly in this section, first by focusing on formal measures of achievement in school and on standardized tests, and then by emphasizing social development, such as learning to take turns, to resolve conflicts among friends, or to embrace diversity in the social environment. The child audience is also considered with a wide lens in this section, with relevant discussion ranging from whether benefits may derive or negative consequences may transpire when television viewing begins before the age of two to the risks and opportunities afforded to adolescents by the Internet. Regardless of the age of the young consumer of media, the role of television, the Internet, and other media forms (and the genres and program types within) in learning school-based skills as well as how to relate to others is studied in the first section of the last part of the volume.

George Comstock begins the section by synthesizing the theories and empirical evidence for the role of media in children's achievement and performance in school in Chapter 28. With the use of many media forms rising, the potential displacement of time that might be spent with homework or other educationally enriching activities by largely entertainment-oriented media use is reviewed in this chapter. Comstock weighs the complex and varied studies that bring data to bear on the question of

whether television use, in particular, is associated with poorer performance in school or in academic testing as well as related outcomes such as attention deficiencies, slower adoption of vocabulary and language development, and diminished creativity and imaginative play. He then reviews the evidence for why such relationships occur, including displacement of time, interference with mental abilities, and socialization of attitudes toward schooling and the skills emphasized within, and concludes with a discussion of other media forms aside from television and moderating factors including the prominence of media within household norms.

Daniel R. Anderson, Heather J. Lavigne, and Katherine G. Hanson then assess the body of knowledge pertaining to the influence of educational television in Chapter 29. In order to do so, they begin with a discussion of the skills that need to be sufficiently developed in children in order to attend to the screen and comprehend its content, which, in turn, are necessary conditions for learning to occur. Anderson and colleagues organize the next segment of the chapter according to the age of the child, reviewing the small but growing research evidence for the consequences of television viewing among infants and toddlers age two or younger and then the much-larger body of literature for viewing among preschoolers aged two to five. Finally, they provide a review of such educational titles as *Sesame Street*, *Blue's Clues*, and other programs intended to promote learning and development for their impact on outcomes including "school readiness," a broad concept that includes verbal and numerical literacy as well as emotional and social skills.

In Chapter 30, Marie-Louise Mares widens the lens from educational to "prosocial" television, examining impacts from television that extend beyond school-related subjects and skills into such areas as stereotype reduction, friendliness, cooperation, and other "socioemotional" outcomes. Despite the positive intentions of producers, Mares uses the research record to demonstrate that "unaided" viewing of such content tends to have only weak effects. She shows that prosocial learning from television demands particular viewer characteristics and facilitative conditions that are not always present which helps explain why, for instance, many children have trouble understanding the moral in television and film narratives. Finally, Mares discusses ways to increase the likelihood that positive prosocial effects will accrue from media, including through repeated exposure, explanatory parental covieing (in which an adult watches with the child and points out important themes and messages) or supplemental activities to reinforce the messages received from the program (such as activities conducted in school).

Finally, in this section, in Chapter 31, Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg provide a broad treatment of the scholarship regarding adolescents and the Internet, reviewing statistics of use and constructive as well as potentially detrimental effects. The authors point to the ability of the Internet to invite self-presentation and self-disclosure as both a potential risk and a potential reward, especially pertaining to adolescents' identity and intimate relationships. In doing so, they first describe the features of the Internet that facilitate self-presentation and self-disclosure, including but not limited to its anonymous and asynchronous nature, and then they

discuss the relevant research findings on the ability of the Internet to impede positively or negatively (or both) on self-concept, self-esteem, friendship formation, and the quality of friendships. Communication with strangers and cyberbullying are both addressed, as well, and Peter and Valkenburg conclude their chapter with calls to strengthen and to integrate research in this increasingly socially significant topic area.

The first section of Part 3 of the volume, therefore, elucidates the role of both traditional (television) and newer (Internet) forms of media in the lives of children and teenagers. The section takes a nuanced look at the positive as well as the negative functions and effects of media on young people's learning and personal and social development. In doing so, it highlights many of the most headline-grabbing controversies about media effects in the twenty-first century, including whether "baby videos" like *Baby Einstein* actually make kids smarter, whether time spent with media has negative implications for doing well in school, and whether "stranger danger" or cyberbullying can victimize young people. Yet, it also emphasizes the pleasures and opportunities that media forms have created for youth, including building a bridge for preschoolers into the demands and expectations of elementary school, fostering an understanding of cultures different from one's own or encouraging cooperation and conflict resolution through prosocial programming, and providing a means by which to express one's self and build social relationships online for adolescents. Through these and other processes, the role of media as an agent of learning and development for young people is illuminated.

As with other audiences, young people's use of the media occurs within a wider social, political, and cultural sphere with a host of additional forces and factors. Section VIII, the final of this volume, describes three processes through which effects of media on young people can be mitigated in school by teachers, at home by parents and other caregivers, and at the level of government through the formation of public policy and regulation. These forces help shape the media environment of young people and the ways in which media messages are received. Therefore, the final section includes extensive discussions of media literacy, parental mediation, and children's media policy.

The section begins with Chapter 32, in which Smita C. Banerjee and Robert Kubey provide a thorough discussion of media literacy and the variables that maximize its effectiveness in encouraging children and adolescents' media analysis and production skills. They begin by defining media literacy and the growing subfield of media literacy as intervention, in which active cognition of media messages is encouraged as a means of mitigating media effects. Applied research testing the effects and effectiveness of curricular units for school-aged children in such areas as smoking prevention, drinking prevention, violence prevention, body image, and advertising awareness are reviewed in the chapter. Across these different topics, key variables are then identified from the empirical research that have a bearing on the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes, including the duration of the curriculum, the research design (including whether a control group is utilized), the age

of the participants, and modes of instruction (including the use of media clips and homework assignments to promote skills in media analysis, or exercises and activities in which young people create their own media to promote media production skills) or spurring “boomerang effects” in which undesired outcomes occur. The chapter represents an important synthesis of a growing emphasis within media effects research, the ability to intervene in undesirable media effects via lessons facilitated in the classroom setting.

In Chapter 33, Yi-Chun (Yvonne) Chen and Erica Weintraub Austin discuss another critical phenomenon, parental mediation – the role of parents and caregivers in setting rules, speaking up about content, and otherwise attempting to shape children’s exposure and response to media. The benefits of active mediation in which the adult converses with the child about the media messages during or after exposure are demonstrated by Austin and Chen’s review of the literature which shows, for instance, parents’ comments can make negative effects of violence viewing less likely and positive effects of educational television viewing more likely to occur. The authors then provide a convincing link between parental mediation and media literacy, two endeavors that are often viewed quite apart from one another, in being similar strategies differing primarily only by setting (in the home vs. at school) and participants (parents and caregivers vs. teachers) and not by substantive features. Thus, they examine the research findings for parental mediation and for media literacy pertaining to substance abuse, and they introduce a new study in which negative active mediation about tobacco and alcohol use was associated with higher media literacy skills among young adults.

Finally, the last chapter in the book is written by Amy B. Jordan and presents a detailed accounting of the relevant policy formations that shape the media landscape with which children interact. In Chapter 34, Jordan explains how goals of children’s media policy include maximizing their access to positive content and restricting their access to potentially harmful content and traces the development of such updates in children’s media policy as the Children’s Television Act of 1990 and its 1997 update, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the V-chip provision, and various acts pertaining to “decency.” For each of the policy changes that she includes, Jordan weaves in scholarly research on the implications of the change for young people. She also shows how federal funding, like federal regulation, can help determine the contours of the media landscape. Finally, she discusses the force of self-regulation by media industries as exemplified by such practices as voluntarily labeling CDs for the content of their lyrics and marketing healthier products to children in the food and beverage industries.

The final three chapters that comprise this last section of the book, therefore, are each about shaping access and responses to media, protecting young people from negative effects through such practices as comments from parents that counter negative messages, curricula that encourage critical orientations toward media, and labeling of programs that contain violence or other material that might be deemed objectionable by parents. Yet, each of the three processes discussed in

this section – media literacy, parental mediation, and children’s media policy – are sufficiently flexible to recognize and encourage positive roles of media in the lives of young people as well. Processes including parental coviewing, active mediation to reinforce positive media messages, curricula in schools that include making one’s own media, and policies increasing the presence of programs designed to benefit young people’s development are included within the emphases of the section, as well. The skills of negotiating media – both its use and its varying messages through content – are increasingly important to cultivate among children in a media-rich environment.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The vast number and wide range of topics examined in the 34 chapters that comprise this volume make the size and scope of media effects and media psychology scholarship abundantly clear. Research derived from this paradigm continues to occupy a large and significant presence in media studies. The field is simultaneously venerable and enjoying renewed growth as “new” media and new media applications spark fresh research questions and traditional media continue to provoke unanswered inquiries, as well. The state of the field is healthy, vibrant, and generative as the chapters of these established and emerging scholars demonstrate.

The chapter authors provide up-to-date and comprehensive reviews of the massive literatures within this research tradition, pointing in all cases to classic theories, patterns in research findings, and conclusions as well as recent directions. The authors also incorporate their own research into the chapters, demonstrating how the studies they have conducted have advanced the literature and how their own research can be placed into a larger context. The result is an “expert’s eye view” into each topic area, revealing the ways in which knowledge is produced and patterns emerge in social science.

One pattern that is apparent when one reads this volume is the careful attention in contemporary media effects/media psychology scholarship to exploring the complexities involved in individuals’ interactions with media. Nearly every chapter has pointed to a sizeable list of factors that have been shown to shape media effects in the topic areas covered in the book. A far cry from a simple “X causes Y” explanation for media effects, we have seen how multiple considerations pertaining to individuals themselves (such as their personality tendencies or the various aspects of their identity), to situations or circumstances in the environment (such as their interactions with others or conditions that may influence their mood) and to media content (including not only whether there is violence, sex, political content, persuasive appeals, educational programming, etc. but also *how* those themes are presented) are important variables. The trend, overall, in the field is toward intricacies in the rela-

tionships between and among these multiple factors and greater recognition of variation in media effects.

We have also seen the nature of media effects examined and explored some research that may even call into question whether “effects” is the best term to describe the field. When we think of the phrase “media effects” we likely envision the impact of media use on individuals’ thoughts, attitudes, emotions, behavior, and physiological state and the consequences of such impact for society at large. And, indeed, a great deal of scholarly attention is still focused on these critically important questions, as well it should. Yet, we have also seen that the research tradition explored in this volume has always extended well beyond media impact, into questions of media content, media uses and the factors that explain such use, opinions about and perceptions of media, and media policies enacted in the home, in schools, or at the governmental level. The media influence aspect of media effects scholarship, therefore, is a crucial part but only one part of a multi-faceted approach.

The idea that spending time with media causes some measurable change in individuals can be explored from psychological and social perspectives, as we have seen, but it can also be explored within responses of the body and mind. The systems for processing any incoming stimulus, including media, are explored in this volume, as well. Not an “effect” *per se*, but a means of making sense of media – attending, comprehending, perhaps responding emotionally, physiologically, or with greater cognitive collaboration, and so on – is an emerging focus in the field, as we have seen in this volume. The stimulation of such responsive systems is often measured not through pen-and-paper questionnaires or even observations of social behaviors but rather through physiological or biomedical means including brain scans, skin response, heart rate, and blood pressure. These indicators give important new insights into how individuals take in media, assign meaning to media texts, and respond.

The future of media effects and media psychology scholarship is wide open. With children and adults alike increasing the amount of time they devote to television around the world, with the digital revolution bringing Internet access to many, and with the increasing allure and adoption of technologies from the mobile phone to videogames to social networking sites, new research questions will undoubtedly emerge. With newspapers facing new challenges, with magazines’ ongoing search for the winning niche, and with commercial and community radio entertaining and informing audiences across the globe, new studies will be necessary. With advertising emerging in new locations in the ever-present quest for the desired audience, to persuade people to buy products or to adopt health-protective behavior, new inquiries will emerge. The world is becoming more and more media rich and media focused, and there will only be greater demand for social science research into the role of media in our lives.

There has never been a more exciting time to study the media. And this volume is an excellent place to begin!

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Media Studies

The Interdiscipline of the Present and the Future

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Media studies is a rapidly growing, widely relevant, and evolving field – an interdiscipline (Valdivia, 2003). While some scholars have bemoaned the loss of focus on process and effects, especially on milestone studies (DeFleur, 1998), others find the breadth and porous contours to be conducive to a worthwhile intellectual pursuit (Sterne, 2005). To be sure, between 1998 and the present, there has been a huge growth in interpretive and critical approaches, which have nonetheless flourished in the margins as the effects paradigm – the stuff of milestones – has firmly retained its central place in the field, at least in the United States and the Netherlands. Indeed, efforts to map out the diversity of the field of communication (Craig, 1999, 2001), which we might call the broader umbrella for media studies, yield a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping and other times mutually exclusive approaches. The terrain of contemporary media studies acknowledges that most of us live in intensely mediated environments, so that Livingstone (2009) writes on the mediation of everything, and Hay (2000) writes of refrigerator studies. The former expands on how media and communication are “ever more crucial in today’s world” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 13), and the latter asks us – as a field over a decade ago, while continuing to encourage us (Hay, 2010, 2011) – to consider the broader web of networks to which other technologies, such as refrigerators and toasters, contribute in terms of routines and practices that serve to mediate the world for us. The latter line of questioning has proven immensely prescient as many of us live in highly networked webs of media and communication, where not only can our location be pinpointed at any given moment thanks to elements in our mobile technology, but also, if we chose to, we can broadcast a narrative of our location and other audiovisual bits of information constantly to many – such as our hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter or Tumblr followers.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume V: *Media Effects/Media Psychology*. Edited by Erica Scharrer.

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Nonetheless, whether we are talking of old media technologies or institutions (see Nerone, Volume 1, *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), we are witnessing the constitution of new audiences and a shift in traditional audiences (see Parameswaran, Volume 4, *Audience and Interpretation*) through the invitation offered by seductive content in a dynamically converging and synergized media environment (see Mazzarella, Volume 3, *Content and Representation*). The effects of these technologies and content continue to be measured and studied (see Scharrer, Volume 5, *Media Effects/Media Psychology*). While media platforms and patterns of production are converging, enduring tendencies toward concentration of ownership and control of media industries coexist with the emergence of new patterns of labor, practices, and updated forms of exploitation (see Mayer, Volume 2, *Media Production*, as well as some chapters in Gates, Volume 6, *Media Studies Futures*). This is not surprising given the rapidly expanding new media and communications technologies, many of whose functions replicate previous technologies while other uses (and abuses) bring new possibilities, utopian and dystopian, to the fore (see Gates, Volume 6). Unexpected global locations of nodes of influences result in previously unsuspected transnational alliances and networks (Castells, 2009).

As an early caveat to this triumphal celebration of media, I must remind readers that most of the above sentiment refers to a media-rich group that luxuriates in a wealth of networks and technologies. Yet we must not forget that even as I write this introduction at the very end of 2011, fully 50% of the global population have intermittent access to electricity. Mobile telephony may be widely spread, but the radio remains the most reliable global medium (see the *Journal of Radio Studies*). Beyond the fact that it is cheap, it neither relies on nor requires electricity or literacy, in English or any language. Furthermore, despite our current fixation with digital, wireless, and mobile media technologies, in times of crisis – whether natural such as a huge earthquake or in wartime – when the electric networks are down and we are thrown back into old school forms of media and communication, radio returns to its central location as a reliable and essential medium. So before you continue reading this introduction, or continue to read any of the absolutely outstanding volumes of this encyclopedia project, go out and buy yourself a radio – one that is both electric and battery powered. You might never need it, but if you do, you will be very relieved to have it.

The fact is that media are everywhere, and nearly everyone shares lifelong experience with and expertise on particular forms of media. Dating back to the 1920s – as identified both in Nerone, Volume 1 and Mazzarella, Volume 3, the study of media has been multi-modal and heterogeneous. Theoretical and methodological complexity has grown since the Payne Fund Studies. International, transnational, and global perspectives have become absolutely essential. Not that they ever were not, but now that media are produced, consumed, and circulated transnationally, media studies has to take this into account. Inclusivity of the heterogeneous components of the population in regard to the media has also grown. Scholarship that was once nationally bound and focused on White middle-class males has expanded to take into consideration gender, nation, region, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and class.

Furthermore, as both Downing (2003) and Castells (2010) remind us, we must not forget the importance of religion in the contemporary world, as many armed conflicts revolve around religion, and media content, production, audiences, and effects are interlaced with religious impulses.

Media studies is an interdiscipline. As such it draws on and benefits from a number of contributing fields such as history, philosophy, psychology, political science, education, literature, and sociology. Yet even as it draws on those many fields, it is its own area of studies. Too often other fields, whose interdisciplinarity takes them into media studies, see this interdiscipline as new – as in, “oh look, we just discovered that we ought to look at media.” Our field becomes the direct object of other scholars’ deployment of the myth of discovery. Just like Columbus discovered “America,”¹ scholars from other fields continue to “discover” media and media studies. A century’s worth of theories and research disappears in the process, and many of us often find ourselves in other disciplines’ conferences listening to presentations that implicitly suggest direct effects, transparency, mimetic images, and so on. Transparency, when media content, industries, audiences, and practices are treated as if they spoke for themselves, as if there were no mediation, is often the tactic taken by scholars outside our discipline. What we as a field contribute to the understanding of culture and society is, at the very least, that mediation is complex and that understanding mediation helps us to uncover patterns of power, distribution, and potential justice. Media studies is about unearthing and maximizing the democratic potential of practices, institutions, technologies, and audiences that pervade our contemporary life.

Nonetheless, as Gates reminds us in her introduction to Volume 6, one central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: What counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated media” capture a general sense of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the complex dimensions and issues that these terms encompass? By paying careful attention to issues of history and context, this encyclopedia seeks to trouble the usage of these terms even as they are used rather carelessly in popular culture and public policy.

The six separate volumes of this encyclopedia were present as six separate sections in *A Companion to Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2003), the volume that provides the model for this encyclopedia and that was, in turn, modeled after McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*. The editors of the individual volumes put together a stellar cast of authors who in turn produced original chapters. All volume editors were asked, indeed implored, to compose a table of contents that was inclusive in many ways. First, inclusivity in terms of global topics was paramount, and we strived for inclusivity in terms of authors and global regions as well. This, as I have discussed elsewhere (Valdivia, 2011b), is not as easy as it sounds. Differential access to the latest research, culturally different approaches to writing and developing an argument,

resources that might enable a given scholar or team to develop a project and get it ready for publication, and so on, are all variables that effectively discriminate in favor of those of us in well-funded research universities in wealthy countries. We recruited some scholars whose work we translated into English, and all editors worked assiduously to cast as global a network as possible.

Another element of inclusivity was paradigm diversity. Schooled at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) at the University of Illinois, I am the recipient of an educational tradition that highly values paradigm inclusivity. Insofar as it was possible, we included scholars using quantitative and qualitative approaches, sometimes both of them at the same time. Obviously the *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume focused solely on the social scientific tradition, while both the *Content and Representation* and *Audience and Interpretation* volumes included scholarship using both approaches. A third element of inclusivity was gender, race, and sexuality diversity. Cutting across as a focus that can be conducted in the research included in any of the six volumes of this project is the work of transnational feminism and globalizing gender studies (Hegde, 2006). Editors sought scholarship that would include these vectors of difference, as media studies really makes no sense without their consideration. Yet even within each of these categories we encounter new gaps that merit more research. For example, as Mazzarella mentions in the introduction to Volume 3: “the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008).” The rise of masculinity studies follows feminist studies as a logical move once we realize that femininity is socially constructed. Indeed, this is a process that this collection of volumes entices us to accomplish: a greater degree of preciseness to this complex concept of media studies, which all of us who work within the interdiscipline intellectually seek to explicate.

As a final note about process, these volumes have been peer reviewed in an innovative manner for an edited collection. First, each table of contents was submitted to the peer review of a senior scholar within that area of the field and edited accordingly. Then, as the chapters came in, within each volume authors reviewed other chapters. Ideally, each chapter was reviewed by two other authors as well as by its editors. As the overall editor of the project, I carefully reviewed all volume editor introductory chapters. Now the review process is turned over to you, the reader.

Media Studies Today

As an organizing principle for this book, I have followed since 2003 the structure provided by many different editions of Denis McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*:

An Introduction. Dating back to the first edition in 1983 and up to the sixth edition in 2010, whose name has changed, appropriately enough, to McQuail's *Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail provided a manageable way of dividing up the field into components that, while overlapping – as they had to be since these components were teased out more for scholarly inquiry than because they are discrete and differentiated – provided a useful way to look at the breadth of study of the media. We all experience media as an integrated experience. Media inherit values and histories that are in turn explicitly or implicitly incorporated into their production; then we either consume and/or interpret media in relation to regimes of representation, with particular audiences and interpretive tactics in mind, with some desired effects over which we have little control, and contributing to a future that – like effects – we wish we could influence but really cannot. Still for the purposes of research, we tease out the media experience into a number of areas.

The volumes of this encyclopedia match the sections of the *Companion*, which used McQuail's schema and added the “futures” section. Thus we have history, production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, and futures. We will later add a “methods” volume to complete the encyclopedia. While these areas are teased out for the purposes of research, there is great cross-pollination by scholars in media studies. We find that some scholars use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or at least rely on both. We also find that many scholars write about two or more of the six areas mentioned above. In fact, many of the major trends in current research encompass holistic media studies approaches. Among these contemporarily salient research projects are network analysis (e.g., Castells, 2009, 2010; Chan, 2007, 2011, forthcoming; Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010); girl studies (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Durham, 2004; Projansky, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Valdivia, 2008, 2009, 2011a); transnational feminism (Hegde, 2006; Molina Guzmán, 2010; Valdivia, 2011b); and neoliberalism as an undergirding framework of analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Hay, 2000, 2010, 2011; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monge, 2009). McCarthy (2011) expands the focus of neoliberalism in media to the educational system and the efforts of many cities, such as Chicago, to become a cosmopolitan, globally vibrant center of economic activity, thus linking media studies to educational policy studies.

Many of these recent research tendencies converge in the critical examination of the “posts.” Scholars develop amazing analyses demonstrating the potential of an intersectional approach that uses race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and class all at once, for people experience these elements in an integrated manner. Roopali Mukherjee's *The Racial Order of Things* (2006) set the bar for intersectional analysis of the “post-soul” era. Tasker and Negra (2007) provide a comprehensive introduction to the political implications of postfeminist culture, while Molina Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) apply the intersectional approach to the study of celebrity Latinas. Joseph (2010), in her provocatively entitled “Tyra Banks is Fat!” (a title that, to be fair, comes straight out of tabloid magazines and television coverage), explores the implicit racism and sexism of the postracial and postfeminist veneer of reality

television in general, and Tyra Banks's brand in particular. Molina Guzmán (2010) explores the transnational deployment and commodification of the Latina body, both spectacular and everyday. The politics of the post appears in all elements of media studies as these scholars foreground media studies even as they situate their work within a broader context of geopolitics and the dynamically changing mediascapes. While it may be fashionable to suggest the end of media studies, just as others have previously declared the end of history or of ideology, what this encyclopedia convincingly illustrates is the field's ability to expand as new practices, technologies, and institutions arise. As many of the editors and contributors will document, "new media" is a misnomer as neither the technology nor the uses or assemblages are so new (see Morley, 2006). What at first may seem to be epochal breaks are revealed by many of the contributors to be far more continuous elements in relation to history, culture, and media.

Editors and Volumes

We begin with normative theories and history. **John Nerone**, author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in US History* (1994), co-author, with Kevin Barnhurst, of *The Form of News: A History* (2001), and co-author and editor of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), as well as author of many other journal articles and book chapters, is the perfect historian to lead us through this fertile terrain of scholarship. Volume 1 on history underscores that while all media have long histories, historians agree neither on the definitive tale of origin nor on the particular historical approach. Moreover, Nerone, the careful historian, alerts us to the fact that even our use of the word media in relation to communications is quite recent.

Nerone's volume includes normative and historical approaches. Historical research, drawing on normative frameworks or not, continues to offer media studies scholars great insight and tools with which to understand contemporary media. Furthermore, there is great diversity within historical approaches to media studies. Beyond cultural memory and special effects as components of media history, we are also witnessing an explosion of careful work that revisits the archive, data, and documentation. Kafka (2009) brilliantly studies that most elemental component of media – paper. It seems like such a simple task: how do we study the construction and use of paper, the "bureau" in bureaucratization, the work of scribes? Kafka concludes that: "As scholars continue to research the history of paperwork, we need to keep in mind that we are defending not only the 'historical record,' but the political one" (2009, p. 352). Indeed, these are the perfect words to keep in mind as we read the volume on history so elegantly crafted by John Nerone.

Volume 2, *Media Production*, is composed by **Vicki Mayer**. Among the many publications by Mayer, we can list *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (2011), *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and*

Mass Media (2003), and *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (co-edited with M. J. Banks and M. T. Caldwell, 2009). Mayer begins her volume by reminding us that “[M]edia production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how.” We expect to find, and we are not disappointed, a combination of keen attention paid to the sociological approach to our field, something about which McQuail had previously written in *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), and the more critical analysis of neo-Marxist political economy now accompanied by a focus on labor issues in the global setting. Moreover, as explicitly stated in one of her book titles, Mayer paradigmatically maintains a dialogue between political economy and cultural studies, an approach that resonates with globally used approaches in our field. The tension between structure and agency pervades this fine volume. Mayer remarks that “[I]f the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers.” So the new production studies is global by necessity as transnational ownership and production of media industries cannot be denied; blends political economy and cultural studies; foregrounds issues of labor, both above and below the line; and takes up issues of networks, intellectual property, and subjectivity as producers are constructed in terms of categories of identity.

Sharon Mazzarella, a prolific scholar of issues of youth and the media, leads us through the wide world of “content and representation.” Author or editor of books including *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2010), *20 Questions about Youth and Media* (2007), *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2005), and *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (2001), Mazzarella is a rigorously trained social scientist who also pursues qualitative research. As such she is the ideal editor for this volume, which is respectful of both of those methodological approaches. Indeed, for many a budding media studies scholar, content and representation provide the first point of entry, as these are the aspects of media that we experience most directly. Although, of course, all media have normative implications, histories, and a complex web of production, most people focus on the finished product: the television show, the movie, the blog, the social media website, the song, the newspaper, the advertisement, the catalogue. Content analysis is alluring yet amazingly difficult to carry out. Representational analysis also bears the sophistication of a range of theories. Neither is an easy task, and quantitative approaches complement interpretive studies. Mazzarella presents a persuasive argument as to why content/representational analysis remains an essential component of media studies and why projects that are well carried out tell us much about the world and the circuit of culture. Unsurprisingly, this area of research continues to be plentiful.

Radhika Parameswaran edits Volume 4 on audience and interpretation. Parameswaran’s research includes two long articles in *Journalism and Communication*

Monographs, “Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India” (2009, co-authored with K. Cardoza) and “Global Media Events in India: Contests Over Beauty, Gender, and Nation” (2001). Her work has focused on the intersection of feminist cultural studies, gender and media globalization, South Asia, and postcolonial studies with a particular emphasis on issues of audience and interpretation. As such she constructs a volume worthy of her areas of expertise, with plenty of chapters illustrating global and gender issues. This volume also bears the traces of an interdisciplinary field that includes social scientific paradigms such as uses and gratifications as well as more humanist approaches that now include global and online ethnographies. Parameswaran remarks that “audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception.” “Populist tendencies” refers to the “discovery” of the audience around every corner, as it were, without proper attention to issues of power and structure. In the contemporary moment, audience studies is vibrant and innovative. Whether we look at fans or online digital communities, to mention just two of the many possibilities, the construction and potential agency of the audience are major issues that continue to guide the production of media and subjectivities. Illustrative of the many philosophical quandaries undergirding the location of the audience within media studies is Jack Bratich’s chapter in Volume 6, as audience analysis is part of the present and future of the field. In addition, audience connects with issues of production as it undeniably takes labor to be part of any audience.

Erica Scharrer guides us through the fifth core component of media studies, media effects and media psychology, the dominant paradigm in the United States as well as in other global settings such as the Netherlands, and the paradigm that reaps the most funding in a positivist framework that values scientific demonstration of impact. Scharrer has co-authored, with G. Comstock, *Television: What’s On, Who’s Watching, and What it Means* (1999), *The Psychology of Media and Politics* (2005), and *Media and the American Child* (2007), and, with L. Weidman and K. Bissell, a long article in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, “Pointing the Finger of Blame: News Media Coverage of Popular-Culture Culpability” (2003). Scharrer brings to the volume on media effects/media psychology a long-standing engagement with the social scientific paradigm in our field. A well-carried-out effects study tells us much about the influence of media on individuals, groups, and societies. The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before. Thus Scharrer asks: “Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending time with media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and conditions

help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses?" These questions require complex methodological and theoretical expertise to answer. Many of us were schooled in a critique of the "hypodermic needle" model, though we have since learned that the media sometimes have or generate direct effects. Why else does a multibillion dollar advertising industry exist in the United States? However, we continue to marvel at the long-term cumulative effects that are far more complex than we originally anticipated. Furthermore, effects scholars, such as many of those contributing to Scharrer's volume, seek to explore how to effect positive change as well as how to avert more nefarious outcomes.

Finally for now,² the encyclopedia concludes with Volume 6 on media studies futures edited by **Kelly Gates**. Gates's own research is the veritable embodiment of a focus on futures. Author of *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance* (2011) as well as co-editor with Shoshana Magnet of *The New Media of Surveillance* (2009), Gates studies the discursive formation of the wishful deployment of recognition technology with an "almost gleeful futurism" that suggests "if only" the systems were in place, before 9/11, for instance, our present and future would be different, better, and so on.³ Futures is, by definition, a transient category, as within 10 years the content of this volume will be the stuff of the present, or maybe even the recent past. As Raymond Williams has written, we cannot anticipate what will be an emergent media form until it is *post facto*. The futures volume takes up some of the issues around Internet, gaming, social media, mobile telephone in a converged media form, biopolitics, and digitalization technologies such as biometric body scans. Gates asserts that media studies needs to take seriously the possibility that *radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media are and where they are headed. All of the chapters in this volume could be retrofitted into the other five volumes. Yet together they compose a vision of the field as it moves forward, taking up issues that date back centuries, engaging them with theories and modes of media that only apparently represent new terrain.

This is the state of the art of media studies. It is a field where we know better than to use the term "new" media – for all media are somewhat new but also very old in many of their aspects. Scholars in this encyclopedia take us back to the production of paper even as they bring us up to the latest technologies, assemblages, and institutions that arise to mediate our world. Contributors to this encyclopedia share the belief not only that media studies is an academic exercise, but also that by engaging in this important area of studies we are somehow contributing to a more just vision of the world. As the separate volumes build on each other, whether we are engaged in media at any of their analytical nodes (production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology), we are simultaneously linked to its history and its future. As a diverse heterogeneous field that is global, interdisciplinary, intersectional, multi-methodological, I cannot imagine a more exciting and potentially liberatory academic enterprise to be involved with.

NOTES

- 1 In this introduction and whenever possible, this encyclopedia uses “America” to refer to a continent and “US” or “United States” to refer to the country, unless we are quoting from scholarship that uses “America” otherwise.
- 2 A *Methods* volume is projected to be released at a later date, edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.
- 3 Few people know that Gates submitted her dissertation proposal the day before 9/11. What to the committee seemed like futuristic queries became the very real present within a period of 24 hours.

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Media Studies

Diagnostics of a Failed Merger

Geert Lovink

ABSTRACT

According to Geert Lovink, there is no such thing as a “visual culture” that connects film, television, video, and new media. In this chapter, he argues that this mistaken belief has led to the naïve notion that we are all working on the same project, “the media.” In fact, Lovink argues, humanities-based “media studies” has never had a grip on new media and Internet education. The idea that media are all about images is contradicted by the reality of computers that run on code. A deep institutional confusion holds that new media are ultimately subordinate to the old content-based broadcasting industries and their outdated revenue models. This essay argues for a long overdue goodbye to the convergence tendencies within media studies departments in favor of full autonomy of new media initiatives. The purpose of critical research into digital technologies is not to rescue the film and broadcasting industries but to develop concepts for the ever-expanding digital realm itself.

Am Anfang steht das Ende, sonst wäre das Neue das Alte.

[Every beginning starts with an end, otherwise the new would be the old.]

(*Radikal* magazine, March 1984)

The question of how to interpret the Internet and new media is too important to be left to university course managers. Humanities-based “media studies” never had

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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a grip on new media and Internet education. Nor did it shape the new media field by being at the forefront of early-adopter waves. Via ineffective, calcified, and divergent combinations, the container concept “media studies” tumbles literature, film, radio and television, theater, design, visual and performing arts, and new media into one jumbled, convoluted label. Humanities-based media studies did not position itself as an oasis of radical critique, nor did it make a case for dedicating itself to the past with the aim of further developing the “media archaeology” approach.

This dialogical manifesto intends to shuffle away institutional rubble. Needless to say, this is done with the interests of new media, digital culture, Internet, and software studies in mind. The time in which we could have made a case for “the media” in general is well behind us. The term “media” has become an empty signifier. The same can be said of “digital media” since everything is digital anyway. In times of budget cuts, creative industries, and intellectual poverty we must push aside wishy-washy convergence approaches and go for specialized in-depth studies of networks and digital culture. The presumed panoramic overview and historical depth suggested in the term “media” no longer provide us with critical concepts. It is time for new media to claim autonomy and resources in order to leave the institutional margins and finally catch up with society. There are at least three major obstacles to getting there: first, theory lags behind its subject and falls victim to its own general claims; second, media studies is still characterized by an awkward legacy within academia; and third, the new media landscape itself changes so rapidly that it makes a slippery object of study. I will examine these concerns before offering up some unlikely futures for the field.

When Theory Loses its Sting

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, media studies fought a losing battle to keep up with the pace of technocultural change. If we are to have any hope of catching up we must consider the digital networked realm as a distinct sphere that demands its own theoretical vocabulary and methods. Digital media studies rarely has been much of a critical intellectual project. The maniacally impulsive culture of pop has proven to be a black hole for theory talent. Instead of generating concepts at a Twitter pace, most “new media” ideas are neutralized and flattened within a general atmosphere of budget cuts and slow change. Staff within higher education are tired of reform anyway. While struggling to distance itself from vocational training, academic media research has so far failed to develop appealing schools of thought. Faced with this ever-growing gulf between theory and practice, media studies staff can do little more than fight the bureaucratic monsters that breed in their unbounded meta-discipline. Media studies is presently an abandoned construction site, crumbling under its own neglect. Do we willfully continue a failed project? Or should we acknowledge its growing cracks and cel-

celebrate its successes as we raze it to the ground and start anew? All too often the question is this: How do new media fit in? For pragmatic reasons new media scholars have thus far made a case that their field of study has an “elective affinity” with design, television, film, management, whatever . . . but it never has. This strategy of disguise has now exhausted itself.

The reason for conceptual stagnation goes back to the very notion of media studies itself. Instead of synthesizing research methods and underlying theoretical concepts into an ambitious philosophical or theoretical unity, general media studies carries the weight of a heterogeneous bag of twentieth-century paradigms, ranging from hermeneutics, mass communication, feminism, and postcolonialism to visual studies, depending on the intellectual history of the specific country. If we look at textbooks, the canon has remained steady for the past 15 years, jumping from Benjamin and Brecht, via Innes and McLuhan, to Williams, Baudrillard, and Kittler, with personal tastes for Flusser, Virilio, Ronell, and Luhmann. While none of these thinkers directly deals with contemporary issues of networked digital environments, there have been enough conceptual splinters, or found footage, within these mostly general theories to satisfy young new media scholars. These so often negative visions worked as antidotes to the unreconstructed positivism of business gurus and consultants. As long as the theory toolkit remained useful it yielded productive relationships. It was a powerful gesture to celebrate the end of the social, the political and historical. This started to change around 2001 when the speculative years ended after 9/11 and the dotcom bust. Slowly, theory became historicized. Theory is no longer a potpourri of living ideas but a fixed collection of twentieth-century canonical texts. The difference between media theory (as a concept pool) and “media archaeology” started to dissipate. The humanities heritage, once seen as a rich source of weird (while irrelevant, nonempirical, and untimely) powerful insights, started to show its weak spot: the social. What had once been a liberating feeling – finally to avoid conventional topics of social theory – returned as a rediscovery of social formations such as communities, mobs, tribes, and, yes, social networking sites.

Unfortunately these concepts are ill prepared for the fluid media objects of our real-time era. Such analysis will by default favor visual representations (because this is what these scholars with their film, television, or art history backgrounds are trained to analyze) but neglect social and interactive dynamics. Do we truly expect to find exciting openings and applicable insights by “reading” YouTube under Spivak’s guidance and watching *Heroes* with Žižek in your favorite interpassive mode, flowing through the national libraries with Castells, understanding Google *à la* Deleuze, or interpreting Twitter via Butler? Not only are these “cultural studies” outcomes predictably inadequate, the approach itself is flawed. Whereas this type of theory critique applies to many fields, it is also valid for media studies. The mechanical application of theory to the object (read X with Y), while abstractly subversive and innovative in moments, lost its critical edge some time ago. A principal function of theory – to foster socially crucial lines of questioning while energizing and supporting those who do the theorizing – has been neutered.

Many media practitioners are unaccustomed to thinking within, much less playing around with, theoretical frameworks. US scholar Henry Warwick, who teaches new media courses at Ryerson University in Toronto, says:

There is a consistent danger of being informed by an unthinking and uncritical acceptance of popular tropes, an empty and ignorant formalism. [...] Digital media is seen from a non-theoretical framework and is implemented in an instrumental manner. Film departments often no longer focus on film, but in fact produce video. Illustration departments don't focus on watercolour, they teach Photoshop. [...] One economic example of the urgency of the contradictions created by this situation is indicated by the Canadian Television Fund, which changed its name to the Canadian Media Fund, and now requires applicants to submit online strategies with their television proposals even to be considered for funding. (Personal communication, June 6, 2009)

In a similar move, the Dutch Cultural Broadcasting Fund ("Stifo") was renamed as the Media Fund.

The underlying problem of media studies is that "theory" no longer mesmerizes. It has lost its capacity to capture the collective imagination or to stimulate its core believers. The once progressive content simply no longer captivates audiences, especially younger ones. Some theories in certain decades were in sync with the *Zeitgeist*. They seemed to talk to everyone's concerns in a miraculous way. Read them 20 years later and they're dead. Go back to them 50 years later and their weirdness is quaintly charming. These days, the holy scriptures of Parisian Theory are often perceived as indifferent text machines that exist for one sole reason: to legitimize academic positions. They are stating the obvious in a crypto-code that is meant for aliens. How did we end up in such a sorry state? Why is media theory a dead horse? Due to the drifting definition of media, "postmodern" theories have become outmoded very quickly. There is no sense in applying McLuhan or Derrida to Wikipedia, for instance. In the past, media theory, when combined with speculative metaphysics and wide conceptual landscapes, provided a way out of the provincial atmosphere in English and Germanic literature departments, but this is no longer the status quo that media studies must engage with. The out-of-context, speculative conceptualization that set apart these original text-based hermeneutics of literary theory has been replaced by neoliberal managers who tidily control research output through academic journals, thereby banning more experimental and speculative modes of writing such as essays that cross genres and disciplines.

According to Australian-US media theorist McKenzie Wark, who teaches at the New School in New York, "people will do some great work on few resources if they believe in it. And they will do better work. It's no accident our canon is full of people who were marginal: Marx, Benjamin, Debord, Baudrillard. They did not have National Science Foundation grants, they had passion. They had 'colourful biographies'" (personal communication, June 6, 2009). Lev Manovich, working out of San Diego, California, where he heads a software studies center, explains that theory of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s is often not very relevant "because commercial culture and

computers today run on many principles of this theory – from irony and the self-referentiality of advertising to ‘rhizomatic’ networks. So to use many of these theoretical concepts is to state the obvious” (personal communication, January 1, 2010).

Exodus from Media Studies

If the study of new media wants to mature and reach its potential to match the actual scale and diversity of its object of study, it must divorce itself from “old media” and go solo. We long ago passed the point where it is necessary to explain the use of the computer, what “digital” is, and the Net to less technologically adept scholars. Instead of fighting over diminishing resources, it is time to throw caution to the wind and go for uncompromised growth. The grand synergies of the multi-, hyper-, and cross-media approaches may have worked as business concepts in hyped-up demo-or-die corporate culture, but in the publish-or-perish environment of academia, these synthesizing approaches have only delayed new media research. Hollywood films such as *The Lawnmower Man* and *The Matrix* never had much to say about the existing global new media culture. At best they were interesting fantasies about how to escape the boring, busy neoliberal (“There Is No Alternative”) lives people are caught up with. In retrospect, cyberculture has been a subcultural trap for those interested in body politics and visual representation, but a dead-end for Internet and new media theory. We need to say no to the “representation” school of media studies that reduces all issues to comparative aspects of imagery – not because we have resolved the Media Question and surpassed all of its issues, but because we need the speed and scaling-up that such independence can grant.

For a proper study of the Internet and other rapidly growing sectors, such as mobiles, geo-media, and games, we must demerge and liberate the “digital” from its confinement in general media studies. Digital network education and research need to declare independence. We must leave behind the tired dialectic of old and new and the dull atmosphere of competition with print and broadcasting. Instead of negotiating to death over broad resemblances, we need to define the specificities of these emerging platforms. Literary analogies do not translate into topical knowledge that can be mobilized inside the politics and aesthetics of the daily “protocol-istic” fights that go on around us. There is and always will be remediation, as it is implicit in the digital realm. No one claims to start with a blank page; but the age of infancy is over. Whatever constitutes the “death(s) of cinema” or “the end(s) of television” are other people’s business.¹ We need to study in detail the specificities of digital, networked modes of working, real-time pressures and the mobile dimension of today’s media experience. It is time to take the Internet, computer games, and mobile phones, now loosely gathered under this broad umbrella subject “new media,” on their own terms. Instead of wasting time on the destiny of printed newspapers,

our attention is urgently needed in fields such as location-based services, cloud computing, search, online video, and the “Internet of things.”² The debate about “free” and sustainable models for the Internet economy has reached mainstream audiences yet there is very little theoretical grounding, be it positive or negative, to help guide us through these fluctuating times.

Let us also look at the underlying metaphor that drives media studies: the idea of the “merger,” in this case of disciplines and platforms, driven by the multidisciplinary dream that “we are all working on the same page anyway.” CNET author Steve Tobak (2007) fittingly sums up the fate of doomed mergers in the business world: “Some failed so spectacularly that the combined company went down the tubes, others resulted in the demise of the executive(s) that masterminded them, some later reversed themselves, and others were just plain dumb ideas that were doomed from the start.” So what’s the destiny of media studies? “A 2004 study by Bain & Company found that 70 percent of mergers failed to increase shareholder value. More recently, a 2007 study by the Hay Group and the Sorbonne found that more than 90 percent of mergers in Europe fail to reach financial goals” (Voigt, 2009).

One can reject the banal translation of business lingo to academia, but why would this be so different in education? Due to constant reshuffling, the programs and departments we’re talking about here are not exactly marriages (which have a failure rate of 40–50% themselves). What if the supposed communalities and synergies between old and new media simply do not materialize? Note how Time Warner is undoing its merger with AOL, “allowing Time Warner to concentrate on creating television shows, movies and other content without having AOL hanging like an albatross around its neck” (Lafayette, 2009). With a push toward vocational training, stagnation in cultural studies, and a distaste for theory in general, film and television studies programs can only make defensive gestures toward the ever-expanding digital realm. All is lost if this or that merger between disciplines and programs doesn’t work out.

The future of media studies instead rests on its capacity to avoid these forced synergies toward “screen cultures” or “visual studies” and to set out on a path to invent new institutional forms that connect with the collaborative and self-organizational culture of teaching and research networks. Unless media studies makes such a move it will join the vanishing objects that it assumes as constitutive of media in society. What exactly would be lost by trying a new approach? Is it not time to just say farewell and move on? Perhaps in some institutional contexts a collapse of media studies and media and communications makes sense (even most insiders have no clue where the disciplinary boundaries between humanities and social science have to be drawn anyway). In other cases it could be more interesting to merge with art and art history programs, thereby strengthening the still weak “technical” arm of visual studies. In rare cases one could even think of moving new media into computer science, but there are no examples worldwide that “cultural” approaches are welcome in that well-resourced (and therefore) introverted and self-satisfied context.

Unfortunately there is an unspoken attitude of indifference, if not of superiority, from contemporary cultural theory toward new media. Are we repeating the high-low divide yet again?³ What is the price of ignoring the specific exigencies of a medium by heavy-handedly applying the works of Freud, Lacan, and Foucault to media products in desperate attempts to gain scientific recognition?⁴ These uses of theory, practiced in cultural studies programs and art academies around the globe, can also be read as leftovers from the 1990s when there was an abundance of speculative theory and not enough empirical data and (digital) methods. A decade later we have to renegotiate how much technical programming knowledge humanities researchers need as a basic skill. To what extent should you write software to be truly creative with digital means? Should writing code be required in undergraduate media programs? Explain it to your nephew: media studies is not cultural studies, not visual studies, not communication studies. But what is it, then?

A Blurry Heritage

This brings us to the second problem, one that is implied in the first: media studies had little coherence as a field or a discourse from the beginning, and it has always been accused of faddishness and hot air even before taking off. What is lacking in media studies is a *Geburtsmythos* (birth myth).⁵ As an academic genre, it sprang out of the heads of education consultants and bureaucrats and blended into unrelated departments and intellectual cultures, in order to scale up output. Unlike cultural studies, which can claim its emergence from the social conflicts and confusion of postwar Britain, media studies has been a managerial construct from the beginning, a half-heartedly positioned, top-down merger between literature, theater, communication studies, and a handful of others, depending on the local situation.⁶ Because of technology's maladroitness in its initial phases, media studies was given second-class citizenship in the academic society: neither inside nor outside. It is vocational enough to play a role in the media business; tough yet not sophisticated when compared to philosophy. In retrospect, it would perhaps have been a better proposition to situate media studies as an offshoot from literature studies (as still happens in certain places), which is the birthing ground of most media theory, from McLuhan to Kittler (and where I received my PhD from at the University of Melbourne).

Media studies exists in a variety of precarious positions. It is found nestled between media and communication programs with a social science emphasis, within fast-growing and economically successful vocational training at universities of applied science due to the growing importance of MBAs in the recent reawakening of the social sciences, and inside the creative industries paradigm. Last but not least, there is computer science, which, despite declining student numbers due to outsourcing IT services to India and other countries, receives hundreds of millions of Euros in funding.

This situation was made worse by the fact that very few people, if any, foresaw the ensuing IT explosion as software and its infrastructure imposed itself on all sectors of society. Instead of firing up debates and developing critical concepts, crucial time was wasted on the unproductive question of how “new media” could be integrated into “old media” departments.⁷ The genealogy of the computer, rooted as it is in mathematics, the military, and cybernetics, still hasn’t found an equivalent to the art history approach of visual studies, which collapses painting, photography, film, and Internet into one analysis. The visual studies perspective does not privilege the (technical) carrier concept as in media studies. The parallel histories of code and the image make it a difficult task to bring them together in one curriculum only to pretend to students that they are all one and the same, namely “media.” Convergence, in its latest incarnation as “cross-media,” “screen studies,” and “trans media,” has always been criticized for its reductionist business approach. Not everything can, or should, be reduced to zeros and ones, much in the same way that human experience cannot be reduced to “visual culture.” There is more to media than reception. As Matthew Fuller states: “If we instead emphasize production, whether this is as practice-based research, or a Deleuzian emphasis on expression, the problem of genealogy gains a different inflection” (personal communication, June 30, 2009). Would any regular user of technological media consider it an astute decision to lump TV, radio, and fine arts alongside the mobile phone, Twitter, and Google? Users are actively participating and sharing on a daily basis. Where is such a classification in our highest educational institutions most likely to lead us: to the avant-garde edge of expertise or to some backwater thought-swamp?

Yet compared to the growing demand in the labor market for new media expertise, the academic sphere’s focus on and development of the new/digital media discipline has been startlingly negligent. Why would communication studies, literature programs, film, television, and cultural studies, themselves often only a few decades old, welcome an aggressive predator in their midst? Whereas on the technical-infrastructure level much has happened, the public perception of “old” and “new” media has only grown further apart. Throughout society serious frictions and conflicts are on the rise around such notions as intellectual property rights, online language politics, and techno-libertarianism, yet the supposed new media intellectual experts play a very small role in such conversations. This is particularly distressing as arts and humanities departments face serious competition from anthropology, sociology, information studies, science-technology-society (STS) programs, and even management and organization degrees. It is time for the humanities’ new media community to set off the alarms. There is a serious case to be made for approaches that are rooted in the history of ideas, for approaches that stress the importance of aesthetics and critical conceptual thinking to reflect the current state of affairs. Society is asking critical questions that land squarely at the feet of new media: what are the social implications for the production of online subjectivities? What are the politics of information visualization? How are global relations and local cultures

going to manage the information tidal waves? What effects can we expect from corporate walled gardens and national webs?⁸

The diminishing role of linguistic theory, along with the shrinking presence of humanities and stagnating staff numbers, doesn't help either. At this moment, we can look back on a decade of hard work by new media pioneers to set up programs that yielded only modest results. They started building a comprehensive body of critical concepts and related case studies, yet there is still a lack of classic texts produced between the years 2001 to 2009. Few books and art works can match the vital energy and speculative madness of the 1990s. Despite its shortcomings, Manovich's *Language of New Media*, published in 1999, remains one of the few canonical texts known to outsiders. But even this text, in retrospect, tells us more about 1990s multimedia culture than the Google age of blogs, Twitter, and social networking sites. And look at *The New Media Reader*, an otherwise quite useful series of texts edited by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort that functions now as a historical reference. Why does this anthology end with the invention of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s? It is telling that my intellectual hero of the digital age is an urban sociologist, Saskia Sassen. The canon of critical Internet studies has yet to be written, particularly as an academic textbook,⁹ but Mute Magazine's anthology *Proud to be Flesh* is certainly a good start. Who is bringing the radical critique of the networked world that has been developed over the past 15 years into other contexts? Will it in the end boil down to the mainstream concern that our brains and our bodies can no longer cope, and collapse under the pressure of information overload?

In response to this dead-end situation, young and ambitious thinkers deliberately avoid media studies, be it in film, television, or new media. Career-wise, it is better to position one's CV inside visual arts, sociology, or philosophy, or to specialize straight away on the history and discourse of print, film, and television.¹⁰ In this crisis era, the Green New Deal has taken over the role of future science from hard-core ICT, which, at least in the West, has begun to suffer from outsourcing and a bad gender reputation. Research funds flow instead in the direction of electric cars, wind energy, and the like. Rather than being celebrated as a hotspot for the cool, media studies is seen as a dumping ground for scattered, overworked mid-career academics who have many reasons to complain about lack of funding, inspiration, and lasting values. For many its "nerd" image is no longer funny. For those positioned inside shrinking humanities faculties there has been only one way to go – down a dizzying spiral into the maelstrom. The globalization of higher education and increasing competition between disciplines over diminishing funds and gifted students has only further exacerbated the sense of crisis in the adolescent years of new media education and research. In order to tackle these challenges we need to develop an art of "collective assistance" for growth spurts, because the next metamorphosis of the new media field is immanent even amidst the danger of conceptual weakness and uncertainty. Are the new media players in this climate of stasis ready for the next Great Leap forward?

Keeping Up with the Googles

Apart from the difficult institutional politics of new media research, another more general problem is rearing its head. We come to the third element of difficulty characterizing the state of the arts of new media within media studies: increasingly, new media research is running far behind the *Zeitgeist*, and has the tendency to write history instead of writing critical theory that can intervene in emerging processes. The timeline for academic research is so long and still so focused on book production that there is less and less room for real-time interventions, let alone contributions from the arts and humanities to co-design tomorrow's technologies and societies. Twitter easily outpaces CNN and other global news agencies while social science and humanities research dropped out of the technological race ages ago. What is research in a real-time society? We can no longer run away from this question, nor sum up, yet again, all of the institutional restraints we're facing. Strategies used by hard sciences to acquire the largest investments in "fundamental research" are encouraging, but also wildly unrealistic, as they cannot easily generate immediate practical outcomes. Arts and humanities continue to suffer while the hard sciences, on average, claim 85% of research funds. Facing such a radical imbalance, it is hard to collaborate on an equal basis. Have all the ethical problems of CERN, data mining, and biotechnology been adequately confronted? Do we simply want to leave it to governments and corporations to patrol themselves? In this climate, can theory and aesthetics regain leading positions as visionary activities, whether positive or negative? How ironic that in times of much talk over the "creative city" and its "creative industries," the arts and humanities continue to get less and less money. Perhaps these are not the right strategies to prove one's engagement and the urgency of the topic and the approach. Wouldn't it be better to start doing untimely research?

In an email conversation, Henry Warwick noted the following:

Literally hundreds of media departments all over the planet are dealing with a similar dynamic. The idea that the analogue/broadcast/fine art regime is the centre of the game clearly no longer obtains, for in fact it's all been "componentised" and each are simply particular stripes in the broad media flag. As a consequence, "disruptive" theoretical concerns are pushed aside, ignored, or punished. The resulting precarity is accepted as "part of the game." [. . .] Meanwhile what's going unnoticed is that the turn of media as a matter of computability – in the face of cheap storage and increased bandwidth – has enormous and far reaching theoretical, social, political, aesthetic (and a host of other) impacts and ramifications. (Personal communication, June 6, 2009)

Talking to pioneers in new media education and research, one can witness a let's-wait-and-see attitude creeping in as Generation X comes of age; a culture of complaint infuses the conversation. The critique of neoliberalism and free market capitalism may be sharp and correct, but underneath we hear tired voices. After 10 to 15 years of hard work spent building up digital and interactive programs, many

lost their vitality and are no longer able to make bold initiatives that break new ground. A defensive mode kicks in. Should one aim for greater institutional recognition or see institutionalization *per se* as a source of the stagnation? The system is crushing spirits that have only been rewarded with a few crumbs. The “digital” faculty is new, usually untenured, and not backed by professorships or PhD programs, and, as a consequence, their positions are precarious. They are “built to flip,” as they would say in the late 1990s. The underlying assumption is clear: newness will not last; as a fad the digital will fade. The structural precarity that sets in as a consequence is threatening and unwelcome, especially as the obvious work of dealing with spouses or partners who also have careers, raise kids, and pay mortgages comes into play. What is lacking is a long-term vision that these fields will become powerful, an idea that is frightening. Neither going for the big ride on the back of capital, nor for the radical refusal, new media artists, programmers, and critics are confronted with diminishing opportunities while the field at large expands far beyond their reach. What and where is the expertise? If we are to escape from this stagnation, we must locate the rotten, ineffectual parts and practices and cut them out before we open the collaborative wikis. It takes a radical change in culture to stop thinking as a default response in institutional terms. Is theory itself, with all the baggage it entails as a term, a necessary core element of the work to be done?

Media Studies in the Netherlands

Let us zoom in further on the Netherlands where the “new media” departments in Utrecht and Amsterdam are fighting uphill battles of their own. With few exceptions, the national academic research grant-giving body NWO has failed to earmark new media (from an arts and humanities perspective) as a priority. This is the main reason academic new media programs in the Netherlands remain tiny compared to the booming vocational schools within the universities of applied sciences (*hogescholen*), which were actively supported to start separate degrees aimed at high enrollment growth. Instead of expanding to match the pace of the growth of the Internet (including games and mobile telephony), these academic new media initiatives had to push themselves into existing departments that were less than excited to support a competing program in times of shrinking opportunities.

The anthology *Digital Material* (Van den Boomen, Lammes, Lehman, Raessens, & Schäfer, 2009), presented in May 2009 to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of media studies in Utrecht, does not claim to have a program either.¹¹ It merely proposes a summary of the Media Question in the form of the pragmatic and rather artificial concept “digital materiality.” Basically, the common point of differentiation is in the method and approach, not in the platform. Even the divergence of research is celebrated as heterogeneous (much in the Rosi Braidotti fashion), and keep in mind that there is no Utrecht or Amsterdam School of New Media Research. While some praise

this lack of unity, others see it as a lost opportunity, in particular for the countless students who must leave the country because there is still no new media PhD program or even a research master's degree in the Netherlands. If we want to keep new media small, then create multidisciplinary teams with dispersed interests – divide and conquer. What we now have is a slowly expanding, haphazard cloud of scholars, doing interesting but comparatively unsupported work in light of the magnitude and potential societal implications of the field. How will new media research leave this vicious circle and make the quantum leap to catch up with society?

What we lack is the capacity, or the collective will, to set up bold and coherent programs, departments, and eventually entire schools based on future scenarios that could make an all-too-obvious claim: all that is digital and networked is going to be with us and will not disappear overnight. Nevertheless, if new media programs are to assume their critical function we must demand a space to build up exactly such bold initiatives. We should note positively the increased interest in new media tools and methods (for instance Richard Rogers's Digital Methods Initiative in Amsterdam and Lev Manovich's Cultural Analytics in San Diego), but in observing current technological development, this interest is hugely undernourished. Furthermore, tools and methods are a far cry from the vision that is so sorely needed in response to the question of where to take new media studies as a whole. The method is the message. Let's turn now to proposals from within the field itself.

The Quantitative Turn

The “quantitative turn,” perhaps the most current and co-opted “best answer” put forth by media studies, does not present itself as a program; at best, it is a clever response inside digital humanities to understand and utilize the latest technological affordances. If we say “text has become searchable” and “images have become computable” it means that we can explore another layer of knowledge, namely patterns that become visible in comparison to other works. This comparative approach puts the work in a larger context that transcends unique expression. The work of Adorno and Horkheimer shows that quantitative research, such as the Princeton Radio Project, and qualitative analysis, such as the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, can very well be done by one and the same person. There is no decision to be made here. While there is no obligation in cultural analysis to use tools (and is it even uncertain that the research results of data mining and info-visualization will be useful at all), we should note the process of tool development as cultural prototyping beyond good or evil. Many questions still remain. Do we need these tools to understand wider trends? Are there other ways to think globally? Why do we need large data sets and patterns in the first place? Is there indeed a crisis of the “readability” of society? Previous generations thought that they could decode the signs of the times through a single novel, film, or song, but is this method still valid? Hasn't it become too easy

to instantly deconstruct the gender-race-class interest of the single-author work? It is just one opinion; why bother with only one judgment (or symptom)?

The uncertainty over the status of any single cultural expression in mass society has further fueled this trend toward “the larger picture.” According to Alex Galloway,

the crisis revolves around the social sciences and the collection of data, the so-called “quantitative turn.” Scholars used to have a monopoly on the collection and interpretation of information. Today that job is performed by Google, Monsanto, and Equifax. Scholars today are outspent and upstaged by industry. Because of this, the very concept of media studies needs to be scratched out and rethought. The irony of course is that the universities are precisely the place where this will never happen, given the conservative nature of these kinds of institutions. It is the poverty of academic life. So shall we supersede the academy? (Personal communication, June 9, 2009)

Whereas in the roaring mid-nineties there was a glimpse of hope that a new media bohemia could take up the role that Galloway points to, the dotcom wave all but strangled independent theory production. In such an environment as exists now, how do we best utilize the ever-widening range of coding practices, from unconferencing to barcamps, from bricolabs to book sprints? Do we really accept that the highest levels of expertise are locked up behind the doors of Google, Monsanto, and Equifax?

Can the quantitative or computational turn revitalize media theory? According to Manovich:

While I am certainly very excited about the range of new possibilities it offers, and that’s why I was putting all my energy over the last two years in “cultural analytics,” I am not sure about the answer to this question. First of all, it will be about ten years before people who study media will be ready to take up this approach. Second, it has to be combined with another major conceptual shift of the study Culture as Everything Being Created By Everybody, as opposed to selected objects and people who are thought of as important for particular reasons. This is really a very big paradigm shift which I am not sure will happen. Without it, we will simply continue with digital humanities as they have been practiced in literary studies already for two decades – analysis of style and historical patterns but only in important “literary texts.” (Personal communication, January 1, 2010)

Outlook Toward a New Program

Instead of time and again trying to enforce the paradigms of film and television studies onto new media, we could also turn to other disciplines that have been overlooked in the process. For some that would be computer science and mathematics. For Manovich, it’s design:

The key to development of a self-sufficient theory of software culture, or whatever we want to call it, is taking design seriously. Since in general design is ignored, the academy leaves out something like 80% of contemporary culture. If the academy starts taking design seriously – graphic design, web design, interactive design, experience design, software design and so on – this can also lead to looking in detail at concrete hardware, software, and web apps – analyzing their details as opposed to seeing them through the glasses of “high theory.” (Personal communication, January 1, 2010)

Also instead of creating artificial mergers, Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey (2009) have proposed the intriguing “Evil Media Studies,” not so much as a discipline but as a “manner of working with a set of informal practices and bodies of knowledge,” which they have characterized as “stratagems.” They suggest the following possibilities:

Bypass Representation, Exploit Anachronisms, Stimulate Malignancy, Machine the Commonplace, Make the Accidental Essential, Recourse Stratagems, The Rapture of Capture, Sophisticating Machinery, What Is Good For Natural Language is Good for Formal Language, Know Your Data, Liberate Determinism, Inattention Economy, Brains Beyond Language, Keep Your Stratagem Secret As Long As Possible, Take Care of the Symbols, the Sense Will Follow, and The Creativity of Matter. (Fuller & Goffey, 2009)

These programmatic statements can be used to counter corporate literature, academic conventions, and other self-satisfied statements about how beneficial “media” can be (but actually aren’t in the messy reality of everyday life).

Evil or not, it is time to leave behind academic constraints and open up collective imagination. It is time to cut back conversations on local limitations and see what the common goals are. There are more than enough tools and platforms available (though few know how to use them fluidly). All too often we constrain ourselves according to “their” rules in the naïve belief that a positive attitude on our side will enlarge the room for negotiation. In no case is this clearer than when new media theorists, artists, and activists are faced with tight intellectual property rules enforced by academia and the corporate publishing industry. What we see happening is subversive characters blindly signing away all their rights to Sage, Elsevier Reed, and other publishing giants. Why? With the Open Access movement gaining such momentum, it makes you wonder when civil disobedience in this area will finally take hold and the cases of micro-resistance (which do happen) reach critical mass. It is time we say “no” to restrictive publishing contracts and organize ourselves. Let’s stop complaining and develop another publishing culture, one that is more up-to-speed with the times, and update how we ourselves think about our field. While not completely relinquishing the “brand” of media studies, McKenzie Wark suggests an alternative perspective for locating the developments of the field within the spectrum of history:

Having to always declare something is over is connected to refusing to historicize. There are two ways of situating media studies historically. One way is to see new media

as add-ons or extensions of old media. Start with cinema, for example, and position the new as same-but-different within this space of thought and disciplinary organization. The other way starts with the phenomena before us – games, mobiles, internet – how do they call into being entirely new (long range) genealogies? How do they call us to reject or revise existing histories? It needs to be allied to three methodologies: the conceptual, the ethnographic and the experimental. The mere reading of “texts” does not serve us well at the moment. (Personal communication, June 9, 2009)

Over in New York, McKenzie Wark intends to revolutionize media studies. “I am inclined to think it is an intellectual struggle within that space. The age of infancy is over, yes, and with it our innocence. Positioning an intellectual project is about resources, about picking fights, about finding allies” (personal communication, June 9, 2009). As part of this dialogue, Toby Miller, chair of Cultural and Media Studies at the University of California, Riverside, sees media studies dominated by three topics: ownership and control, content, and audiences. “Media Studies 1.0 panics about citizens and consumers as audiences, whereas Media Studies 2.0 celebrates them. I would prefer a panic-free, critical, and internationalist Media Studies 3.0” (Miller, 2008, p. 215). According to Miller (2008, p. 221), the old versions of media studies are tied to nativist and imperialist epistemologies that must be transcended. He proposes a Media Studies 3.0 that will blend

ethnographic, political-economic, and aesthetic analyses in a global and local way, establishing links between the key areas of cultural production around the world (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East) and diasporic/dispossessed communities engaged in their own cultural production (Native peoples, African and Asian diasporas, Latinos, and Middle-Eastern peoples). Media Studies 3.0 needs to be a media-centred version of area studies, with diasporas as important as regions. It must be animated by collective identity and power, by how human subjects are formed and how they experience cultural and social space.

We need a global perspective for media studies as a productive force that goes beyond a mere study of new media’s impact in these places. New media should be seen as an integrated system where its users contribute to the vital core of the technology itself. This approach not only needs spiritual support but also needs to be implemented. The humanities perspective, for example, cuts deeper and addresses other registers. The critique here demands full autonomy (from BA to PhD programs, to put it in edu talk), before we can speak again of interdisciplinary collaborations. Another approach would be to develop new organizational forms altogether. What are the tactical resources necessary for contemporary “organized networks,” distributed think tanks, and temporary media labs to do their work? Much of the technical infrastructure is already at (y)our disposal – sometimes for free, and in other cases purchased for a handful of hard currency. Even though theory lays the foundation, this path can only be followed through with praxis. It is all about concepts, demos, betas, versions, and meeting face to face, which is the most precious and expensive part of the operation.

According to German media theorist Florian Cramer, who teaches and conducts research at the Rotterdam Piet Zwart Institute, it is one of the terrible legacies of media studies to play the prophecy/futurology game. According to Cramer,

people like Marshall McLuhan and Norbert Bolz had their side-careers as highly-paid media industry advisors with their “visions” of a future communication culture. Media art as it’s featured from Ars Electronica in Linz to STRP in Eindhoven still get away with coloring rabbits or producing expensive, non-working tech art junk at art media labs because it somehow could be the vision of future media (although it never managed to be) and still claims national subsidies. (Personal communication, September 16, 2009)

What we really need, says Cramer, is critical studies of the contemporary uses and cultures of electronic and digital information technology.

Let’s not call for Media Studies 2.0, or 3.0, for that matter. We are not talking about a next generation, let alone a mere upgrade of the current institutional setup. The main players within media studies do not need to be informed about the potentials of Web 2.0; we have to presume they are well aware of the possibilities. This is not the time to put demands on the table of Those Who Rule. What we need to do is reimagine the social modes of philosophical inquiry itself. Too much energy has already been wasted on the question of how “new media” could possibly fit into institutional arrangements. An entire generation has lost the way in a confusing uphill battle through the institutions, while the world’s frisky vitality has gone digital. What do we have to show for all this expended energy? Are computers and the Internet absorbing so much creative libido that there is little left to change the bricks-and-mortar in which traditional life took place? What happens if we cultivate more self-awareness amongst new media theorists and practitioners? What happens if we place ourselves as actors in the New Media Saga and relate to neighboring media technologies in a frank and ultimately sovereign manner?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Matthew Fuller, Alexander Galloway, Josephine Berry, McKenzie Wark, Toby Miller, Florian Cramer, Mirko Tobias Schäfer, and Lev Manovich for their dialogues with the text-in-progress and also to Henry Warwick and Tim Syth for their editorial support.

NOTES

- 1 The “Ends of Television” was the title of a UvA Media Studies conference. See <http://www.mediaudies.nl/vv-conferenties/conferenties-organisatie2006/End%20of%20television.html>

- 2 University of Utrecht Media Studies teacher Mirko Tobias Schäfer disagrees: "Serious scholarship would concern itself with analysing the metaphors. I am afraid that the constant attempts to keep up with the 'marketing machinery' produces poor research, and will identify wrong, inappropriate objects of research" (personal communication, September 18, 2009).
- 3 According to Florian Cramer, "This is already happening. If you are a scholar and you only publish online, you're lowbrow; if you publish books, you're highbrow. If you are a filmmaker and you have a theatrical release on 35 mm, you're highbrow. If you release on YouTube, you're lowbrow" (personal communication, September 16, 2009).
- 4 This is the thesis of Jordi Wijnalda, "What is Film? Manifesto for a New Film Analysis," *Xi*, 17(4), p. 6, in the student quarterly of media studies at the University of Amsterdam, April 2009 (in Dutch). Wijnalda rejects "grand theories" and calls for greater selection in the choice of theoretical frameworks. She calls for a renaissance of film aesthetics, against one-dimensional approaches that reduce film to text. In short, critics need to show more respect for their object of study. Film speaks a different language, set apart from other art forms and media.
- 5 An alternative history of media studies would point to the Macey and Bateson conferences and other sources from the history of cybernetics. However, written media archaeologies have not yet sufficiently incorporated these sources, and media studies is more often perceived to derive from 1970s film and theater efforts (to leave aside the social science references of media and communication).
- 6 The Wikipedia entry on media studies is an interesting case illustrating how poorly defined media studies is at the moment. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_studies (accessed July 25, 2012).
- 7 In his pamphlet *Media Studies 2.0*, David Gauntlett observes how amongst media studies 1.0 programs there is a "vague recognition of the internet and new digital media, as an 'add on' to the traditional media (to be dealt with in one self-contained segment tacked on to a Media Studies teaching module, book or degree)" (<http://brianair.wordpress.com/film-theory/medi-2-0-thought-provoking-mainly-for-staff/>). See also Gauntlett's forum at <http://twopointzeroforum.blogspot.com/>
- 8 Florian Cramer has noted: "The problem is that the humanities, in their orientation towards canons, are never interested in producing short-term input or knowledge. If you write a Ph.D. dissertation or monograph, you will, as a scholar, always choose a subject that will ideally ensure your eternal reputation and yield 'timelessly' valid criticism. This is true for all the landmarks of modern criticism, from Walter Benjamin to Auerbach's 'Mimesis' to Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom etc. With that goal, you will never write a book on Twitter – every professorial advisor would warn you that it would be outmoded when it's done and ruin your career. This is why the humanities are structurally conservative and not interested in cutting edge cultural issues" (personal communication, September 16, 2009).
- 9 Mirko Tobias Schäfer emphasizes the need to call bad research, poor teaching, and incompetent administration by its name, and not to blame media studies as such for the current situation. "Students are taught poorly; TED talks all of a sudden are mistaken for an academic conference; blog posts are quotes as if they were papers and comments are over-estimated as peer review. Visibility and attention become the new academic merits. Checking the blog-roll of so-called academic blogs is interesting; they are full of popular and admittedly witty conference speakers, but links to First Monday, Arxiv or others are rare" (personal communication, September 18, 2009).

- 10 According to Florian Cramer, “If I had happened to father a child at age 21, it would graduate from high school right now, and I would – if asked – give her or him the strong advice to study, rather than media studies, philosophy combined with informatics and literature or art history. It’s a schizophrenia that’s embedded into the whole field. All good media researchers have studied classical humanities, and I do not know one good media scholar who has graduated in media studies. The problem of studying media theory is that you’re typically educated on a second-rate theory canon of McLuhan and everything that makes up the standard media theory reading lists” (personal communication, September 16, 2009).
- 11 See also http://www2.let.uu.nl/Solis/ogc/agendaitems/10th_anniversary_new_media.htm. The idea for this essay grew out of a short presentation that I did there, together with Florian Cramer, in which I proposed the exodus of new media out of the broadcast context of film and television studies.

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In Praise of Concept Production

Formats, Schools, and Nonrepresentational Media Studies

Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Lovink and Rossiter argue that the field of media studies has yet to develop a theory of itself. Audience studies investigated fandom and the production of meaning, textual analysis preoccupied itself with signification processes attached to content, and political economy turned its gaze on institutional power. Medium theory, while close to the authors' own interests, still falls short, they argue, because it never changed the dialectic between old and new media or gave the relation a productive twist. Medium theory established a continuum between old and new media without considering how the media form itself gives rise to the production of new concepts. Media studies desperately needs new concept production, the authors argue, based in both online and face-to-face collaborative efforts. To develop new concepts, media researchers should begin with some reflexive mediation, examining how they use their object of study in the research methodology itself. From there, Lovink and Rossiter advocate moving the agenda beyond the analysis of visual representation to mobile media, miniaturization, smart technologies, and the integration of media into urban environments.

What does it reverse or flip into when pushed to the limits of its potential?

(Marshall McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, 1988)

I have seen the future – and it's not visual.

(Johan Sjerpstra)

During the first decade of the twenty-first century the academic discipline of media studies failed to develop a compelling agenda. Media turned out to be empty containers, individualizing people rather than facilitating collective agendas. The growth of “media” could lead to their ultimate implosion. If “media” have gone digital and become the network glue between devices, there is a danger of defining the boundaries of media studies purely for the sake of the discipline itself. Media studies then becomes self-referential, defined solely in terms of its self-defense against predatory competitors. For instance, if media cannot be distinguished anymore from urban life, geography, and location-based services, then what is the task of media studies? Public relations is a trap here: to study media is not identical to its promotion. We need media researchers to reflect on how they use their object of study in the research methodology itself. In a media society of compulsive immersion, this is no easy task. Indeed, many would charge such a call as regressive, harking back to the Cartesian myth of critical detachment. But as we will argue, we consider the work of reflexive mediation – of concept production – necessary if such a thing as media critique is to exist at all.

For the past decade media studies has struggled to keep up with the pace of technocultural change. The methodologies and concepts of the broadcast era of “mass media” are of little use when analyzing networked digital cultures. The globalization of higher education and the increasing competition between disciplines over diminishing funds and international students have further exacerbated the unconscious crisis of media studies. With a push toward vocational training, stagnating cultural studies, and a distaste for theory in general, film and television studies can only make defensive gestures toward the ever-expanding digital realm.

The future of media studies rests on its capacity to avoid forced synergies toward “screen cultures” or “visual studies” and instead to invent new institutional forms that connect with the trans-media, collaborative, and self-organizational culture of teaching and research networks. Unless media studies makes such a move, it will join the vanishing objects it assumes as constitutive of media in society. In this essay we want to go beyond an inventory on the state of the art and use the example of *organizing networks* as a concept in development that might revitalize education and research in this field. The work of organizing networks, a concept proposed by us in 2005, involves the invention of new institutional forms immanent to communications media.¹ Such a collaborative process, mediated through network culture, conditions the possibility of disciplinary transmutation.

Database Dating and the Invention of Schools

A school is defined as a critical mass of equal-standing scholars and teachers with distinct intellectual traits. The question on the table is how to develop decentralized “global” (public) research schools and identify what their key features might be. The current “science” system expects collaborative research but does not facilitate the formation of distinctive schools of concept production. Humanities scholars have learned to play the waiting game of drip-fed funding, locked in the holding bay of a terminal with no interest in supporting experimental research on a distributed, trans-institutional scale. The Internet has, surprisingly, not made much of a difference. One could blame the structure of research funding and related academic publishing rituals for this, but that is a weak proposition since it assumes a form of structural overdetermination. A general culture of indifference toward the relation between media environments and conditions of concept and knowledge production prevails in a more pervasive way. Has the (neoliberal) individualization of society increased our fear of long-lasting collective commitments? If “schools” are so influential, what stops us from creating them?

Instead of conceiving a multitude of schools and approaches that theorize the turbulent transformations in the media sphere, the collective production of concepts has been a decidedly tame affair. There are no institutional examples of new media research agendas, collectives, or schools. Where is the Frankfurt School of our time? All too soon we seem to reduce collaborative efforts to fashions in theory. No matter one’s critiques of the Frankfurt School, the fact is it produced a lasting legacy in the field of media studies and cultural analysis. Despite its identity as a school, the work of individuals stands out: Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse. But a counter-reading would say it is exactly the distributed intellectual labor of the Frankfurt School that allowed these extra-institutional figures to become part of the canon of critical theory and social philosophy. It is the self-organization of a group of intellectuals to create a school across national and transnational spaces that inspires us here.² Much of what is now called French theory has been produced in similar circumstances, outside or on the fringes of academia, creating a delicate balance between individual work and intense exchanges within a social milieu of intellectuals, artists, and activists. A similar story can be told of Italian post-*autonomia* political philosophy and the earlier schools of Freudian psychoanalysis. Media studies desperately needs its own versions of these distinct, collective intellectual efforts.

Is global media studies something for the future? That is not the direction we would advocate, at least in terms of how it is currently defined. Global media studies emphasizes cultural competence and an awareness of cultural differences derived, in some cases, through media ethnography. For the most part, global media studies is driven by conservative methods of content and discourse analysis. Frequently it stays within the UK audience studies approach to media research and is, at best,

Commonwealth in its focus. Certainly, there is research on the political economy of global media, though here the cultural question is frequently left out. And it plays into very weak empirical attempts at a political economy of so-called “global” media industries, which in reality are more often regional at best with the rise of “national webs” bringing even the regional scale of media culture into question. In short, global media studies is a concept-free zone without transnational connection or inter-scalar complexity. There is no coordinated network of global media researchers working in any sustained manner on the undulations of contemporary media cultures. The old association form of grouping international researchers around particular disciplines is certainly not the model that is going to provide the distributed labor required today for research practices immanent to the media of communication.

Traditionally renowned as the dream factory, the United States in particular has demonstrated an inability to create collective academic projects and facilities for long-term collaborative work in new media research. In fact, the world over, the current research model is one of a “principal investigator” who hires assistants, postdocs, and PhD students with the sole aim to demonstrate “leadership.” What characterizes media studies, in sync with the global neoliberal context, is the figure of the lone researcher. If research funds are realized, content might consolidate within the logic of reporting and listing of outputs. But if the money doesn’t come through, it can be very hard to materialize research, at least within the academy. While a plethora of “tactical media” interventions over the past 10 years suggests a healthy state of media invention, these are not instances of collective production at a disciplinary level of institutional support, infrastructure, and commitment.³ Rather, the academy’s preference is for silo construction that engenders, at best, interdisciplinary innovation around intellectual property regimes (IPRs) as distinct from transdisciplinary invention through free collaboration, and remains the model of the singular author-producer.

Perhaps teamwork’s violation of the sacred author as individual explains why science’s collaborative methods are *de facto* not allowed in the humanities – despite the fact that the “science” model is promoted so heavily as a cultural model. The sciences long ago recognized the collaborative function of knowledge production, and a key part of this stems from science’s old collaborations with industry, requiring the field to traverse institutional expectations and logics of production. But if we look at a case like Australia where “industry linkage” grants in the humanities have been the norm for over a decade, this structural change has not had any sustained impact in terms of materializing meaningful collaborative research practices.⁴ In the end these are only formal relations on paper and not lived relations in any substantive sense in terms of disciplinary invention. Moreover, they are top-down arrangements driven by government policy directives on obtaining funds within a populist and economic political paradigm. It is no surprise that Aussie academics drifted toward industry linkage grants out of simple cynical opportunism along with a desperate survival instinct, a few exceptions aside. The so-called industry partners are often just neighboring governmental bodies such as cultural and media organizations and government agencies. The “linkage” is largely symbolic and institutionally, not research,

driven. The aim with linkage projects is to legitimize already completed research and to create an institutional framework within which to justify career futures. Meaningful and inventive research collaborations cannot materialize in such arrangements when they start with these kinds of forced relations.

The database approach to finding research partners within the European funding system is not much different. Academics in search of research partners plug in their expertise details, disciplinary training, and project interests, press submit, and the database builds a field of partner options. Within the Framework Programmes (FP), researchers are effectively forced to work together in order to have a shot at funding, and the database serves as a mirror of TV dating games where contestant profiles are the basis upon which a “perfect match” is conjured from the abyss of isolation. It doesn’t help that researchers are quietly advised to lobby in Brussels for collaborative European Union (EU) research money if they wish their projects to have any chance of obtaining funding. With assessors holed up in hotels in Brussels reviewing a thousand applications over a few days, it is no wonder that they pick their buddies out of the stack. Such a massive scale of applications in the European system leaves little choice other than a corrupt culture of cronyism. While efforts in public relations might improve the signal/noise ratio with decision-makers, it is very hard to see how it assists the work of collaborative research, assuming your project even has the capacity and resources to enlist an Ad Man. Instead, this model of research becomes indistinct from contemporary political campaigns, where special interest groups lobby the centers of power and all the while the project moves further away from the objects, methods, and passions of research.

In sum, the academy’s closed intellectual property regime logic, its centralization, and its habit of database dating is thoroughly disconnected from new media environments characterized by a culture of open communication and collaboration. Among countless current examples of this are open courseware (from MIT to Edu-Factory), open publishing (online journals, collaborative blogs, etc.), and open software movements (openstreetmap.org, Linux and all its variants). Crucial here is the connection between online communication and material situations. Whether it is barcamps, collective field research, or group planning meetings, the offline element is central to the work of organizing networks. To be purely “virtual” is to risk drifting potentially vital concepts into the realm of vaporware. The material dimension functions to galvanize online activities as a substantive force.

Successful instances of disciplinary collaborative research can exist. We are reminded of the science and technology studies (STS) method, in which anthropologists and sociologists approached science with questions. Why did it work? Driven by initial questions around health, environmental, financial, and medical issues, STS was a research-driven approach to knowledge production, very different than the self-referential tendency in media studies to avoid rigor and instead produce texts based on the endless citation of peers with power. STS provides an example of how the material world forced the disciplinary contours and methods of STS to adapt, evolve, and consolidate. STS managed to develop the skill of translating issues that

emerge in society into legitimate and necessary research programs free from client-driven research. While media studies too often remains beholden to the abstract and frequently politically motivated research focus areas set by funding agencies, it could embrace the culture of collaboration special to networks and design new models of autonomous research funding.

The Media Question and Organized Networks

Regrettably, after a short renaissance of Anglo-Saxon cultural studies in the early 1990s, the Media Question no longer sparks the collective imagination. Abundant fragmentation has distracted us. Why do we even bother with the fate of media studies? What is really so special about it? Certainly we have our own intellectual affinity with various figures – Innis, McLuhan, Mattelart, Castells, Kittler, and so forth. But this says more about attractions to style and modes of analysis than disciplinary *per se*. We would also have to admit to a fascination with the magic of mediated relations and the marvels of technical invention. But what drives us is the Media Question, still unresolved at the level of architectural control, the production of standards, and management of protocols – all things we see as collectively produced and in fact unrelated to the routine and very dull fare that usually defines the territory of media studies: representations of marginality, textual and content analysis, and identity politics.

The direction of media studies must therefore be nonrepresentational. While for the time being “media” remains what it has been, a container concept, we know from the work of medium theorists that the container is a very elastic form of the materiality of expression. Media never cease to surprise or generate unusually high levels of excitement and forms of mass participation. In this respect, media are always social, and so too is the materiality of form. The focus should, for instance, be on integrated urban-media environments, smart technologies, ubiquitous media. As a social-technical phenomenon, then, communications media are always alive and therefore changing.

In contrast, what makes media studies so boring and predictable is its slowness and obsession with the visual. No matter how fast the transmission of signals, the distribution of academic knowledge is inherently slow. Think of book publishing and how you wait two years for the text to appear. The cost of printing books in China is cheap, but shipping containers still take 2–3 months to reach the other side of the world. If key publishers embrace print-on-demand some of these obstacles would be addressed. And it is truly unforgivable the way publishers charge upwards of £100 for monographs. Authors should also know better and take a closer look at their contracts before they consign their hard work to the remainder shelf and pulping machines at the expense of being read in a timely way.

Media studies hasn’t taken its objects seriously enough. All too easily it borrows from the shopping mall of postmodern theory, psychoanalysis, sociology, and literary

studies to interpret its own object, neglecting the challenge to develop media theory itself. The insane subject provides the raw material and object for concept production in psychoanalysis, for example. So why should it be so difficult for media technologies to function as the object of concept production? To think that they can't is to seriously regress and suppose that media are simply empty vessels or black boxes waiting to be filled – the container theory all over again – rather than remarkable objects with their own capacity for inspiring concepts. Where, then, should media studies find its concepts of renewal? What are the geocultural contours and institutional settings best equipped to support collaborative concept production that will most likely happen outside the academy?

Let us be clear: concepts are essential for a vibrant and distinctive media studies discipline. They are not produced for their own sake but because they hold the capacity to transform society in profound ways. Think of the Freudian-inspired work of Edward Bernays and the rise of public opinion and advertisements of consumer fantasies in the United States after World War II.⁵ The experience of life and the production of subjectivity underwent enormous changes once the concept of desire was integrated into the media imaginary of postwar society. Consider also how the Obama 2008 presidential campaign drew heavily on both traditional grassroots political strategies and organizational concepts developed out of social network and activist media such as swarming, viral marketing, and self-organization, resulting in a post-party production of the Obama brand. For these reasons, we think there is great importance in developing distributed, collaborative research agendas that invest in analysis by way of practice to produce concepts in the digital era.

One approach to addressing the need for new modes of association and collaboration in media studies is to experiment with the model of “organized networks” to institute media research within an informational, digital paradigm. Such a move would further disaggregate the already crumbling system of the modern university. Critics might contend that organizing media research within the culture of networks would simply reinforce the neoliberal drive to outsource the provision of services. One could also argue that a move toward organized networks would be precisely at odds with the idea of institutional security necessary for sustainable practices of knowledge production. But in our minds there is an important distinction between service provision and knowledge production. The former is driven by the market impulse and is underscored by disinterested (“alienated”) labor within highly precarious conditions of employment. While the latter is not without similar precarity, and indeed in the age of “digital diploma mills” shares much with service provision (Noble, 2002), the work of knowledge production in the age of digital networks nonetheless holds both affective and material qualities of a special kind, quite unlike so-called knowledge production within universities, where social relations are as hierarchical and atomized as those found on the nineteenth-century factory floor.

Social relations within and across networks tend to be fleeting and project driven, struggling for continuity. Similarly, at a material level the technical standards of much online knowledge production tend to result in a proliferation of platforms and sites,

which has the effect of further disaggregating what might in fact at the social level be a series of projects shared by a number of participants distributed across transnational spaces and times. This leads us to another key concept for knowledge production in the age of networks: seriality. Where standards, sites, and participants appear fragmented, the concept of seriality helps establish connections across otherwise seemingly unrelated phenomena. Tools and methods need to be developed that assist researchers, participants, and user-viewers in their efforts to keep track of multiple projects distributed across space and time. This requires more than a real-time software fix. Take Google Wave, for instance. According to the Wikipedia definition, “Google Wave is a web-based computing platform and communications protocol designed to merge key features of communications media such as email, instant messaging, wikis, and social networking. Communications using the system can be synchronous or asynchronous.”⁶ The problem here is not so much the baroque *combinatoria* of data streams but the standardized automatic results these dashboards generate to instantly solve the all-too-human noise of collaboration. Aggregation is not the answer for meaningful collaboration, since the productive and indeed often charming differences that define research projects online tend to be erased when incorporated into a real-time aggregation platform. Networks thrive on not-working and communication gaps (Lovink, 2005). Special qualities of different communications media need to be retained rather than aggregated to best sustain serial relations across diverse networked projects that refuse incorporation by any single power or authority.

Concepts Beyond the Classroom

There also remains considerable work to be done concerning the relationship between research and teaching in media studies and, indeed, across the disciplines overall. Moreover, there is great potential to generate concepts in the research-teaching “nexus,” to adopt the managerial parlance. But this work of concept co-production should not be technologically determinist or have too much faith in technology alone. Like the “ICT for development” discourse, which assumes the introduction of technology into developing countries results in economic transformation, there is a broad feeling that technology makes teaching better. Nevertheless, a 2010 report noted that the vast majority of academics in the United States continue to resist adopting technology in the classroom (Young, 2010). For us the issue is not so much one of mass conversion to high-tech education (the students come to class prepackaged with a digital default anyway, even if their professors do not) but of translating research practices from the wikis, collaborative blogs, project-based learning, and media production that many of us already engage in for pedagogical purposes. In other words, the use of digital media in the classroom already assumes a process of research: one has to learn new software, techniques of information

retrieval and recombination, social protocols of communication, and so forth. Moving such practices into a paradigm of teaching-as-research requires translation, which in this case is a collective political task across institutional settings that at once formalizes and consolidates teaching and research through the development of new methods, models, and concepts.

Instead, what we find within the techno-institutional economy is research that excludes teaching, thereby retaining the distinction between the two. Moreover, media studies is positioned as a disciplinary practice of education rather than research. Within the circumscribed borders of the informational university, media studies has no distinct object of study. The object of media studies is not media; it is audiences, textual analysis, and content analysis coupled with a vocational element. Media studies for most students is a means to an end: the job. Analyzing the process of learning itself is very rarely embraced and requires a good teacher. Students, broadly speaking, are terrified by the sea of uncertainty that defines the labor of thinking and, therefore, research. They want signposts installed at every point of the learning process, and academics willingly supply students with ultimately false rules of certainty in preparation for good end-of-semester teacher performance surveys required to hold onto the job. This situation of pedagogical failure and disciplinary stagnation is hardly helped by academics whose sole aspiration at an intellectual level is to publish unread articles in the journal stables of Elsevier, Sage, Springer, or Taylor & Francis. Journals held by such publishers are the pillar of legitimacy in the field of media studies and can be read without ever finding a concept. They are exercises in producing work that is largely indistinguishable from one article to the next. To put it very bluntly, the biggest threat to the future of media studies is the university itself.

The more recent work of Lev Manovich serves as one point of departure toward reinventing media pedagogy and concept production (Manovich, 2008). Manovich frames his book *Software Takes Command* with the following question: "How does the shift to software-based production methods in the 1990s change our concepts of 'media'?" (p. 25). Emphasizing the digital proliferation of visual material in contemporary life, Manovich foresees an accompanying crisis in critique. Where previously existing relations between critical approach and media form provided a sufficient architecture of intelligibility (think of psychoanalysis and film, for example), the abundance of digital culture today has yet to establish analytical models and relevant concepts with which to make sense of the hyperspeed of status-update culture. Teaching semiotics to your undergrads is not really going to help much when it comes to explaining the proliferation of YouTube videos, file-sharing sites, and social networking updates.

How to transform the culture of existing education institutions so that teaching is positioned as a generator of – rather than separate from – research presents a very particular set of obstacles. Part of the problem is that digital culture is so highly unstable. One of the key reasons the nineteenth-century novel could obtain canonical status and help invent the critical field of literary studies was because generations of scholars were able to refer to and debate the minutiae of plots unfolding across

individually produced pieces of content situated in the logic of an author's oeuvre. But this is not the case for digital culture, which is technically prone to collapsing code as programs are collectively rewritten and made obsolete with the latest update.

This technical characteristic manifests in social and cultural realms. For instance, there are no institutions beyond the idiosyncratic media art museums here and there that archive the Internet's inherently unstable medium. Certainly there exist a scattering of online archives such as the Wayback Machine,⁷ and indeed one could argue that competing platforms of search engines produce more than enough results for the networked masses.⁸ But we are talking of something quite different than the algorithmic organization of hits and links. The production of concepts for analyzing digital media culture cannot exist exclusively online with all its social-technical ephemerality, economy of upgrades, and tendency toward high levels of distraction. On-the-ground institutional infrastructure that supports critical digital studies is required for sustained research agendas, the formulation of curricula, and support staff.

The next problem is that newer forms of teaching are assessed through managerial audit regimes obsessed with the self-referential and thoroughly time-wasting exercise of "quality assurance control." Those who do bring technology into the classroom often find and even willingly embrace a teaching process contained within institutional software systems – Blackboard, WebCT, and internal wikis are key culprits. As a consequence, teaching practices and content are not exposed beyond the borders of the institution and therefore not assessed by a world of peers at large.

A final problem of a practice-based approach is that it all too easily replicates the visual elements, hegemonic language, and software behaviors of its own tools. Critical concepts also do not just emerge out of practice. Teaching how to develop one's concepts should be distinguished from the techno-commercial skills to master and localize media. We see this so often in new media education: importation of hyped-up concepts from California and customizing them to make viable successful products. This sense of localization is indistinguishable from the publishing giants Sage or Taylor & Francis offering teachers the opportunity, if they pay, to remix a course reader from their database.

Could we engage "Digital Humanities," with its separate IT staff who will deal with the technical details for clueless arts and humanities scholars? The concept of Digital Humanities might be useful for retiring linguists but is deadly for the media studies environment. The humanities itself should try to overcome its distance from computer science and attack the sciences head on for its privileged position in terms of funding. Digital Humanities maintains to be working in collaboration with computer engineers but the problem is they retain a classic division of labor, which totally goes against transdisciplinary knowledge production. What we need is to move away from expert-dependent high-end tools to broad-based undergraduate programs. We do not need massive budgets, but the Digital Humanities only work with high-end institutions and hide themselves behind the smoke screens of large data sets. The

“digital” is revolutionizing humanities itself and should not be downgraded as servitude to the IT staff and their authoritarian imaginations.

Mavericks, gurus, consultants, entrepreneurs, futurologists, and public intellectuals all trade in viral memes, but these are mostly bubble concepts that slide nicely across the PowerPoint presentation and are not connected in any material way to media research. This idiom of “concept-lite” derives from a lively and healthy publishing industry in business, management, and trade press – a postwar phenomenon that corresponds with the rise of consumer society and emergent postindustrialism. This extra-academic discourse is powerful precisely because thought becomes abstracted from material conditions. And at the level of visibility if not readability, it is very hard to ignore this literature – it can be found at every airport, yet it rarely appears on course reading lists.

Can we turn instead to innovative startups? Most of the work inside young companies involves the localization of existing realms of knowledge and commodity consumption, comparable to academics’ endless reviewing, quoting, and copying of existing work under a banner of “creativity” that suggests otherwise. Both fine-tune marketing and research paradigms around already existing knowledge. Similarly, in open source software development Linux is the basic platform and customization follows. The system itself is not transformed, but simply copy-pasted and then slightly altered. The rise of interconnected, integrated adaptation and localization of a handful of styles and ideas is preventing radical concept development. Where in this constellation described above that claims to be focused on critical, creative, innovative concepts does “research” fit in? Maybe research better positions itself in the tinkering, do-it-yourself corner of adaptation. The challenge is to organize “research” as forms of collective production and to modify existing research practices so a transformation can take place. This is what we must explore: “becoming a school.”

So where does one turn to for concepts – the crystallization of ideas as frameworks for analysis? Media studies’ future will only be guaranteed by the learning, teaching, and research of media taking place outside the academy, where it can turn instead to artist collectives and activist groups experimenting with and developing concepts for collaborative learning – concepts that can then be brought back into and applied in a classroom situation. The same could be said for many other disciplines – performance studies, art and design, and so on. But somehow these disciplines have not become inherently dull in the way that media studies has. Given the choice, we would jump at the opportunity to work in design and architecture programs before landing a job in yet another media program with intellectually reluctant if not deeply cynical students. Why bother after all this? Because there is an incredible potential for collective experiences of self-organized modes of research development. Moreover, the profound connection between media and sociality is endlessly rich and holds the capacity to transform societies in substantial ways.

Media studies, *was nun*? What do we do, teach students to write an iWhatever app? Is that all there is? Will it become an optional choice to include technical education in a media studies degree? Linux for freshmen? No. We need to discover (critical)

concepts, which could be classified as mere luck but is a skill that can be trained nonetheless. One needs to develop an eye for them. In the fluid media environment concepts often hover on the surface but can only be recognized after intense intellectual expeditions into history, for example, mid-eighteenth-century Continental philosophy. Ideas then spring back to life in untimely contexts, where they become productive. Being informed about the latest hypes alone will not do the job. Only by making strange what appears common can one come up with concepts that capture new, surprising meanings and phenomena.

Organizing Concept Production

So what will happen if media studies finally moves from analyses of visual representations into a methods-based realm of post-visual culture? The challenge lays beyond, in the tactile, local, relational, haptic, invisible, and conceptual levels. The work we collectively do as practitioners of media research resides in nonrepresentational dimensions: mobility, miniaturization, and media integration into the urban realm. And there we find a place for political-economic research coupled with a practice that is focused, at least in our minds, on the production of open standards and open storage. So are we urban studies, design culture, IT? The sheer scale and proliferation of network media comprise complex environments, but it is not as though environments were any less complex than before. It's just that disciplines have trouble dealing adequately with informational, ontological complexity – to do so will require a transdisciplinary move. This is where the postmodern project comes to an end – the world refused to be deconstructed and took revenge.

Humanities academics have become more conservative and have regressed into intellectual restoration, with less concrete experience of how to organize things. Empirical simplicity has become the preferred mode of research in place of a reflexive and political understanding of processes and relations. Reflexive mediation these days is not limited to media *per se* but addresses the proliferation of borders, of affects, the multiplication of labor and subjectivity. The institutional and social landscape of work has become one defined by short-termism: portfolio careers and project-driven jobs. There is no consistency other than the unstoppable waves of inconsistency.

Media theory needs to unpack the subconscious terminologies that float around, such as friends, open, free, social, and local. As an example let's start with a critique of openness as a hegemonic rhetoric. There is a universal position across leftist culture that is anti-intellectual property. Anti-IP advocates are the noisiest in Old Europe, where one can still afford to be a cultural producer on the payroll of the state. But the media economy is moving beyond the IP system. The information economy today is based on the control of user profiles for recombination then repackaging for third-party clients desperate for affirmation of real consumption. Of

course, the data miners such as Google and Facebook trade in fiction as much as the previous media economy, where advertising space and time were sold then broadcast to the masses.

In praise of conceptual thinking, we want to make a claim that collaborative methods immanent to media of communication – in short, the work of organization – can withstand time in an environment that sees platforms, software, and code languages coming and going at increasing speed. In 10 years' time people will barely remember what an iPhone was, let alone have the necessary knowledge to write an app for it. Media studies should become more sustainable – it needs a projection into the future where the shelf-life of the concept is not as short as your next software update.

When programmers write a line of code they execute it within the sandbox to see if it works. Where is such a testing environment for media studies to be found? Science has its laboratories, but where are ours? This situation can be seen in the precorporate and dull and formalistic way in which computer labs the world over are all the same: hostile settings of absolute sterility with security officers and cleaners as the only human element. What we need is more uncertainty, chaos, and untimeliness. Rise up outside the campus, open the doors and windows (equipment prices are no longer a large barrier to communication). Instead, we see students rolling in like sheep, turning on outdated locked-up hardware according to the rules and regulations stipulated by the IT police, and then going home. And these are supposed to be people educated for creative futures. It also has to be admitted that there is a profound reluctance on the part of the vast majority of media studies students to display the tiniest slither of intellectual curiosity. Let's break through these role models.

Concept production is intimately connected to the challenge of method, of how we operate in specific situations (whether online or offline). In the global economy, for instance, the researcher can have a new role entirely in the collective analysis of workplace settings that are dependent on the use of digital media and software applications in daily business. Think of the global logistics industries and their management of labor and supply chains. There is enormous scope for the birth of a new field of software studies to analyze the effects of logistics software in the production of organizational systems and subjectivity.

Instead of promoting the informality of the existing social networking sites, we propose to experiment. If we champion "orgnets" here it is not as an identity or brand. Similar names are plentiful and there should be more, starting with barcamps, temp media labs, unconferencing, summer schools, book sprints, and master classes. We need to theorize these unruly practices in education. Just think if Christopher Kelty's (2008) "recursive politics" concept could be inserted into the aesthetics agenda of software studies. Or if we could have a "sonic studies" with radio as a technical media of writing, and DJ Spooky as prime theorist.⁹ In order to get initiatives up and running we have to glance away for a moment from the busy screen: Oubliez la Pop, Lady Gaga, or South Park as organized networks? Forget it. There is no match or

correspondence. Critique is not a mood or sentiment but a plan to organize things in a different manner.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A first draft of this essay was written in Shanghai, July 2010. Thanks a lot to Kelly Gates and Morgan Currie for their valuable suggestions and copy-editing work.

NOTES

- 1 We have discussed the concept of organized networks across a number of essays, including Lovink and Rossiter (2005) and, more recently, Lovink and Rossiter (2011).
- 2 For a discussion of the Frankfurt School as a precursor to organized networks, see Rossiter (2006, pp. 19–22). More on the orgnets concept can be found in Lovink (2007).
- 3 As examples of non-academic research collectives, one could mention groups like Critical Art Ensemble, Institute for Applied Autonomy, Bureau d'études, Beaver Group, the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, among many more. Our question is why the academy seems incapable of generating such inspiring and productive formats and practices of research.
- 4 See the Australian Research Council's webpage on "Linkage Projects" at http://www.arc.gov.au/ncgp/lp/lp_default.htm
- 5 For a fascinating analysis of Bernays, cybernetics, and the formation of neoliberal governance, see Holmes (2009).
- 6 This description of Google Wave is from the Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apache_Wave, accessed April 2, 2012. In 2010, Google handed the development of Google Wave over to the Apache Software Foundation. It is now called Apache Wave.
- 7 The "Wayback Machine" can be accessed at <http://www.archive.org/web/web.php>
- 8 The question of search engines served as one of the topics of investigation for the Institute of Network Cultures event, *Society of the Query*, Amsterdam, November 13–14, 2009, <http://networkcultures.org>
- 9 See Paul D. Miller (a.k.a. DJ Spooky) (2004). See also the highly inventive work of Australian sonic theorist and avant-pop star Philip Brophy, available at <http://www.philipbrophy.com>

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Betting on YouTube Futures (for New Media Writing and Publishing)

Alexandra Juhasz

ABSTRACT

The work of media scholar, artist, and activist Alexandra Juhasz directly addresses many of the concerns that Lovink and Rossiter raise in the previous two chapters. In this chapter, Juhasz repurposes blog posts about her undergraduate media studies course and “video-book” *Learning from YouTube* to consider the future of new media scholarship: how academics might write and publish about and in new media. By moving her writing from screen to page, the chapter itself enacts the concerns of circulation, vernacular, standards, and publication at the heart of new media studies projects and the work of writing about them. Juhasz demonstrates and discusses how academic styles, methods, and audiences can adapt in ways that are productive and dynamic. The changing roles that control, knowledge, and reflexivity play for YouTube, Juhasz’s course, and digital culture more generally are central frames for the chapter, as Juhasz thinks through what her own experience teaching with and writing about YouTube suggests for the future of digital humanities.

Introduction

This “essay” links seven blog posts from 2007 to 2010 by using brief asides and introductions. The topic is my undergraduate media studies course, titled Learning from YouTube (held

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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on and about the site in 2007, 2008, and 2010), and its related bodies of writing. I also consider new media's future scholarship: how academics might write and publish about and in new media. I choose to repurpose these short, time-stamped ruminations because they reflect my feelings, process, analysis, and output – as written for the intelligent and curious but not necessarily academic audience of my Media Praxis blog (www.aljean.wordpress.com) – while also mapping the arc of a project in new media teaching, production, and writing from inception to publication. Presenting these relatively unmodified excerpts of online, amateur writing within the fully vetted scholarly space of this edited anthology – where audience, form, and use are more standardized and professionalized than is true of the place the writing considers or where it was first presented – is itself a bit of a self-reflexive shell game. By moving writing from screen to page, I enact the concerns of circulation, vernacular, standards, and publication that will prove to be at the heart of this and many other new media studies projects and the writing about them.

The essay is situated within the (very brief) past, present, and future of YouTube studies and (on- and offline) digital humanities scholarship and publishing. My writings about the course – first in these selected blogs (and a great many unselected others residing online) and YouTube videos,¹ then in their translation into scholarly essays (online and on-paper), talks, my 2011 online video-book,² and then shifted to paper here – were created in (digital) dialogue with new media scholars rethinking new media writing (Liz Losh, Michael Strangelove, Chuck Tyron, Michael Wesch). I met and learned from these scholars online, through their blogs, as well as in the real world of new media studies. For example, I have learned from my local colleagues, Kathleen Fitzpatrick (who is completing a book on the obsolescence of the academic book, written first online and then, once peer- and copy-edited there, to be published to paper by New York University Press), and the team at University of Southern California's Institute for Multimedia Literacy and their online journal, *Vectors* (who helped me conceive and architect the video-book). My community raises the following writing and publishing gauntlet, to which I have responded:

We need to think less about completed products and more about texts-in-process; we need to think less about individual authorship and more about collaboration; we need to think less about originality and more about remix; we need to think less about ownership and more about sharing. None of this is to say that the former structures will disappear, but rather that they'll be complicated by the modes of communication that network technologies privilege. (Fitzpatrick, 2011)

New media scholars have benefited from the communication that “network technologies privilege,” not only in their writing, but also by creating online communities, conversations, and opportunities. In my YouTube project, I attempted to build my students into this dialogue. When I commenced the course in 2007, there was almost no scholarly writing about YouTube. Discussion about the site tended to be found within journalism and the blogosphere or on the YouTube site itself. This was one of the reasons I required my students to do all of their research entirely within YouTube: what does (the future of) media studies look like when the topic of inquiry is also its library or when the authors of analysis are its everyday users or

owners? Given the paucity of “serious” scholarship at that time, my undergraduates engaged in the rare and exciting activity of original and groundbreaking research. (YouTube scholar Michael Wesch was also engaging in a similar project with his undergraduate anthropology students who were producing YouTube ethnographies.)

By the time I taught the course for the third time, in the fall of 2010, there were five scholarly books published on the subject (including my own *Learning from YouTube*, which I taught in beta) that became the course’s new, more traditional backbone.³ All authors writing about YouTube were quick to note its chameleon-like nature:

Because there is not yet a shared understanding of YouTube’s common culture, each scholarly approach to understanding how YouTube works must make choices among these interpretations, in effect recreating it as a different object each time – at this early stage of research, each study of YouTube gives us a different understanding of what YouTube actually is. (Burgess & Green, 2009, pp. 6–7)

In the 2010 class, we enjoyed Burgess and Green’s political-economic and communications-based analysis of YouTube as a platform holding established media in dialogue with participatory culture, Strangelove’s (2010) participant ethnography and more cultural studies-like approach to the “extraordinary videos of ordinary people,” and the eclectic and provocative anthologies of Vonderau and Snickars (2009) and the Institute of Network Cultures that look to YouTube’s structuring metaphors – platform, archive, laboratory, medium – to define its meanings, value, and research methods.

This range of approaches to YouTube studies, and the many YouTube’s it produces, proved an excellent preliminary education in meta-field and meta-method awareness for my students, who learned that how they study affects what the field might be and what they might know. However, the quick consolidation of authoritative or expert analysis on the subject (including my own) greatly altered the 2010 students’ sense of their own role in the creation of knowledge, thereby shifting away from how the first offering of the course was able to mirror the structure of YouTube (which pretends user control and celebrates amateur knowledge). The (changing) roles that control, knowledge, and reflexivity play for YouTube, the course, digital culture, and this and other writing about it remains the central (if ever-deconstructing) frame of this project, including how to write and publish about it. What this might mean for the future of digital humanities will be the subject of this essay.

Introduction to Blogs 1 and 2 on Teaching the Class

I decided to teach a course about, and also on, YouTube, hoping to make visible the site’s architecture, ownership, and grossly limited functionality (as well as, through counterdistinction, how those functions define the space of a more typical brick-and-mortar college classroom). Given these operating assumptions, I knew in advance that I could not write a scholarly analysis of this endeavor relying solely on YouTube’s platform and its paltry functions and

undifferentiated audiences. Thus, I blogged about the course as it was happening, and after it was over, and used these reflections both to enrich the course and as exercises toward more traditional scholarly output. My blog voice tends to be informal, short, and experience-based rather than research-based. I publish it here, virtually unedited, for reasons similar to how I structured the course: conventions of form, audience, intent, and method are NOT the same between written and online expression, even as they increasingly converge. Put the wrong object in a built-to-form box and suddenly the shape of the container becomes visible.

Note: I have created a typographic signpost for this paper version of my blog writing to mark the blog's many (missing) links and videos: <for an absent link>, [*for an impossible-to-embed video*]. This typographic mess indicates some of what is lost as we begin to move, willy-nilly, from screen to page, amateur to expert, private to public, popular to arcane. Such failures are productive, allowing us to see the shape of what is missing.

BLOG 1: Learning from YouTube, 09-07-2007⁴

I am teaching an experimental class <class page⁵> on/about YouTube this semester. [**“Learning From YouTube, Sept 4 2007 Pt. 1,” mperry08⁶**]

After two class sessions I realize this course is going to be really fun and super hard, challenging me as a professor in ways that I am unaccustomed to. Let's start with the press, the numbers, and the public nature of the course (all related). After the first course, I was interviewed for an article about the course for <“YouTube Studies”⁷> *Inside Higher Ed*. The article came out before the second class, and suddenly there were two journalists and a photographer in attendance. This media attention, added to the fact that we tape and put on to YouTube each class session, and that I had learned that people actually *were* watching these classes, led me to be self-conscious to a degree I am usually not when I teach. Typically, over an hour of teaching you hit some high notes, make a few blunders, and otherwise get through. You're human, and undergraduates are your sole witness. During our second class, the issues got serious and complex quickly, primarily concerning the ubiquitous representations of race and racism on YouTube and in our class (and this is good) but I was self-conscious about how my colleagues would view the way I didn't hit gold in the live processing of these complex ideas. Now the class is about, among other things, issues of privacy as well as access in higher education. And while I'm committed to what it means to open access to my class, it now seems clear to me that it limits my teaching (and perhaps my students' learning, in that they are equally self-conscious).

Numbers (hits to the page keep doubling) also add a weird and unwieldy stress to my teaching, and the course. Yes, they are informative about the logic of YouTube, but ultimately invasive. As is simply managing the outside communication this brings (emails, letters, requests) that expand the demands on me from those of my thirty enrolled students to anyone who is interested and has access to a computer. It was

exciting to see that in the second class, and with only the most superficial of assignments, the students were already touching on many of the BIG IDEAS about YouTube and digital culture: its postmodern reliance on humor, celebrity, and self-referentiality to mainstream culture; its democratic function as soap box for the talent/opinions/expression of regular people; its mind-numbing, time-wasting superficiality; the raucous and unruly nature of the conversation it produces. My challenge will be to work with the class to hone, focus, and systematize such conversations given that we cannot refer to other scholarly works (one of my imposed limits is that we cannot leave YouTube), and given that I have ceded a certain amount of real control to them by teaching the class as a communal, user-generated endeavor. How will I guide the conversation in ways scholarly and rigorous given that our frame and guide is not?

Frankly, I'm not certain that we're doing it, that there's enough to do or know about YouTube (given YouTube as the tight structure for gaining such knowledge) to sustain a course. While I've succeeded in developing a structure that models the content I seek, I am not certain we need fifteen weeks to figure this out.

BLOG 2: Learning from Learning from YouTube mid-way, 10-29-07⁸

Mid-way through the semester, and I'm pleased to report how much we've actually learned, albeit experientially, through doing (and not doing) while stuck in all that is powerful and inane on YouTube. Every failure has been a learning experience, although organized by frustration and lived within contained chaos. Of course, I set out to run this class so that such failures would help make clear the costs (and benefits) of our rapid, giddy acceptance of new digital environments without a concurrent set of criticisms and demands about best practices for making use of this, the most democratic distributor, platform, and archive of moving images.

[**"Summary of Learning from YouTube at the midterm 2," mediapraxisme⁹**]

And now, just six weeks in, my students' criticisms are being well made: about public scrutiny and the ridicule of the mainstream media (leading to analysis of the role of fame and celebrity in YouTube culture); the disruptive additions of hundreds of non-class videos and comments on our class's group-page (leading to analysis about the making-public of the once-private on YouTube); our inability to interact in real-time and in a central space when we are on YouTube (the groups' pages are even harder to navigate and make use of than are the user pages); the site's weaknesses around finding and linking material (leading to analysis about what is intentionally not-well-made on a site that functions best for the relay of entertainment); and a more keen awareness of how censorship and corporations are well-served on the site while community and art are not. We've also deduced that there are two Youtubes: the mainstream one made and maintained by Google and millions of users out to waste some time, and the innumerable experiments in form, content,

behavior, and community that fall outside the logic of entertainment, advertisements, popular culture, hits, numbers, and favorites (what I call NicheTube). See one YouTube and the other becomes obscured; ask a question of the other and learn little of use to better understand the first. Our class falls into NicheTube: unseen by most, unattended to by the site's architecture, poorly supported, thus barely getting by but learning nevertheless.

All this has contributed to the class's clarity about YouTube's ineffectual structure for higher learning even as it does other things well. In an attempt to mirror the architecture of YouTube, this "student-led" course, open to user-created flexibility and innovation, is still organized by my friendly but controlling vision and parameters. And from this controlled chaos, the strengths and limitations of contemporary learning occurring digitally, publicly, visually, and in corporate-owned environments are being lived and then theorized through this doing. The students have posted their first research projects as well as mid-terms about what they've learned: they are systematically naming the structures, methods, limits and strengths of YouTube just as they are beginning to master its language, which is to say, we're beginning to see a variety of strategies towards the illustrated lecture. Pressing the students to express critical content through short videos that use YouTube's vernacular has proven to be one of the real successes of the experiment, as it is clear that over the next few years they will inhabit a culture where rich and necessary communication will occur visually, not just through the written word. They're taking preliminary steps towards complex uses of this communication device. Although the students had a variety of production skills going into the class (as is true for YouTubers as a whole), half way through the class they have hacked the YouTube video to express complicated analyses of YouTube itself.

And from their work I have learned, too. About teaching, primarily. I have found that seven oppositional binaries are being disturbed during this pedagogic experiment, leading to unsettling and mostly unproductive alterations in the ways we have typically taught and learned in higher education by keeping distinctions pure: public/private; amateur/expert; democratic/corporate; structured/anarchic; community/individual; entertainment/occupation; flow/depth. I hope to discuss the difficulties for teaching inspired by these flattened binaries in later posts.

But for now, I need to attend to the more urgent fact that I am uncertain where we are going to go and what we are going to do. This is a scary time for me, as the professor, in and out of control, with students who want and yet disdain discipline (in pursuit, they say, of "fun," yet still ever fearful of grades), and with failure as our guide: to interact, build ideas, feel safe, be heard or respected, or locate compelling analyses. The second half of the class is intentionally and completely unscripted. I expect we will choose to go off YouTube, to do some traditional research and learning, bring in specialists, read some postmodern and new media theory, turn it into a more regular class where "real" or, let's say, more traditional learning can occur. But some of the students have begged us to stick out the experiment, to consider and propose better practices for what learning in and through corporate-controlled entertainment might look like.

Conclusions for Blogs 1 and 2

The seven collapsing binary oppositions that I identified in the fall of 2007 – while undergoing a number of permutations over the years and eventually becoming the ten “YouTours” that shape my video-book – have proven to be one conceptual structure that I rely upon to discipline and format my thinking and writing in the face of YouTube’s structuring chaos. You will see them reemerge across this essay (in blog 4, on YouTube Writing, for instance, where they take on a slightly different nomenclature but serve a similar disciplining function), and I use them as easily here.

For instance, the Learning from YouTube course, and its later written forms, trouble a public/private binary that usually serves to stabilize our work, authority, and purpose as teachers and scholars. The operating, structuring anxieties of any particular person, or professor, are typically hidden from the view of colleagues and students to allow for a performance of authority and constancy that seems necessary for a streamlined or efficient production of knowledge. By the middle of the semester, it was already crystal clear that my students did not like the loss of control produced by my giving them control. Their discomfort proved a productive obstacle to their education. By naming their desire for discipline, we suddenly saw with some clarity the shape of more traditional, comfortable, and yielding forms of teaching/learning. Even so, was there enough to learn from YouTube to fill a semester? Yes and no. Yes, when YouTube became a metaphor for other systems that control the flow of ideas, community, and authority. No, when we deduced how paltry YouTube’s resources were for detailed, rigorous, auto-research. Yes, when we realized that this, itself, taught us about the limits and strengths of online learning.

Introduction to Blogs 3 and 4 on Organizing Course Output and Conclusions

After the course ended in Fall 2007, I used my Spring 2008 sabbatical to categorize, theorize, and publish work about the enormous amount of video output and ideas created on and about YouTube over the previous semester. Then in Fall 2008, I taught the course again, albeit differently (with both more structure and traditional reading assignments), and went on the road giving talks that attempted to stay situated within the vernaculars, forms, architecture, and machines of the networked digital. Interestingly, I found myself most moved to talk and think about meta-issues of pedagogy, field, writing, and publishing over sharing my “findings” about YouTube. Perhaps this is because that work had already been done – with great panache and some totality – by my students within their hundreds of course videos, and then also because YouTube itself, alone, was not quite giving or changing enough to secure my ongoing attention and output of scholarly work. (Of course, many others have gone on to ask of it innumerable questions from a variety of fields with productive results.)

The blog posts that I have selected from this period reflect two areas of early thinking: (1) my “tour” project – where I tried to organize and systematize the huge output of videos made for the class, given that they swam, uncontrolled and unusable, on YouTube, and (2) my initial thinking about “YouTube writing” – where I tried to create a terminology to catalogue the writing practices exhibited in my students’ work. These two posts also demonstrate some of the practices and preoccupations that haunt this body of work: (1) “little lists” (seven binaries, nine tours, five differences between scholarly and YouTube writing, eight writing styles) and (2) feminist, self-reflexive interrogations of the forms I use and the values I hold.

BLOG 3: YouTube Tour #1: Education, 02-06-08¹⁰

Today, I posted my first “tour” of the work and lessons learned by the Learning from YouTube class. I will try to post one per week, with accompanying blogs, for the next eight weeks, resulting in nine tours on: education, entertainment, popularity, the vernacular, the visual, users, owners, community and the archive. It took me a while to decide how I’d like to present the many things I think we learned during that hectic semester, and I was pleased when I remembered the “tour” method: one we had devised during the semester to try to work YouTube against itself by creating a linked, sharable, and repeatable path, with associated comments, through its chaos. It seemed right to “publish” my results on YouTube, continuing to hack and use its forms to hold our analytical content and designs; to continue to use it to speak to and about itself. Attempting to present my analysis of the site on its pages, rather than, say, in those of an academic venue, demanded profound changes in the nature of my work, as a media scholar and educator, that, as ever, prove telling about the workings of YouTube.

The key differences were a matter of: time and brevity, vernacular, audience, professional standards, and language. In brief, time is of the essence on YouTube. As I made the video for this tour, and then the tour itself, I was hyper-aware to keep cutting, condensing, summarizing, and simplifying to speak effectively on YouTube (to keep the attention of its distractible, easily bored, viewers), which, of course, is also a major part of its vernacular: there is a premium put on ease and efficiency, condensation and simplification. Whereas my students are forced to hear me speak, or at least pretend to, the YouTube viewer must *want* to stay there because of my media skills and compellingly expressed information, because I entertain her. A language of bullets: quick, exciting, and mobile. And here I would add the necessity for using non-specialist language so as to be heard effectively, which gets me to audience, for I assume a general and diverse audience on YouTube, one I do not imagine on this blog, and one that has no relation to who reads me in academic journals. I can count on no shared references or lingo, other than that of popular culture, which diminishes the complexity of my thoughts even as it expands their reach. Unlike a classroom, where one speaks to undergraduates equally unschooled in scholarly

discourse but where you can school them and together grow a shared language, the scattered, random nature of YouTube's viewership demands that one always stays at the most rudimentary level, never giving the audience an opportunity to grow its vocabulary.

On a different note, the systems of proof and authority are diametrically different on YouTube from those of academia. My "proof" on YouTube is always another video, any video. Its existence, and mine, on YouTube's pages grants us as much and no more authority than any other user, that is, of course, unless we have the power of numbers – glorious hits – on our side. Academic writing, on the other hand, also relies upon the affirmation of outside voices; however, what differentiates these voices is that they are accredited (through institutionally sanctioned systems of vetting via publishing and other forms, like tenure) and their arguments build relationally, slowly, and in dialogue with a tradition. This is diametrically opposed to the piecemeal character of both the rant and private confession definitive of discourse on YouTube.

Clearly, these reflections make me sound a snob, and not the proponent I have always been of a democratization of access to and discourses about the media. However, I have learned that expanded access cannot itself be a stand-alone goal. Access to media production, and dissemination, needs to be accompanied with the gaining of other tools that allow for the growing complexity of discourse: and these are, quite simply, the capacities to work together and to learn from what has been done before. I speak about these ideas in greater length, and through scholarly discourse, as a "real academic talk" forced on to YouTube here:

["Queer Realism on YouTube, Juhasz conference talk, 1/2," *mediapraxisme*¹¹]

BLOG 4: On Video Writing, 11-04-08¹²

["Intro to Video Writing Conference Talk," *mediapraxisme*¹³]

These words are actually the transcript of a "talk" I will present at the Future of Writing Conference at UC Irvine. It begins with the video above (you need to watch it, just one minute, to begin), and links to many more YouTube videos across its duration. You can also watch the talk through my Playlist <"Video Writing: Talk for UCI Conference, 11/08"¹⁴> on YouTube.

My ["Video Writing Talk, Part 2," by *mediapraxisme*¹⁵] gimmick was to teach the course both about and also on YouTube. This allowed for a brief ["Learning from YouTube on TV," by *mediapraxisme*¹⁶] viral moment last Fall, itself a great ["YouTube Comments," by *dallen11*¹⁷] lesson in the workings of popularity, simplicity, and humor within online social networking and its media convergences.

Needless to say our aims for the course have always been ["Video Writing Talk, Part 3," by *mediapraxisme*¹⁸] serious. In Learning from YouTube, I am interested in participating with my students in ["What Can YouTube Teach Us?" by

baxterici^{19]} primary research about the forms and functions of this poster-child for Web 2.0. By together engaging the site against YouTube's primary aims of entertainment, we learn about the limits of its corporate architecture and our own needs as new media makers and learners.

For the class, students are required to do all their coursework as either YouTube videos or comments. In the process, they are remaking academic writing for the digital classroom. In my [**"Video Writing Talk, Part 4," by mediapraxisme**^{20]} talk today, I will introduce eight new forms of academic video writing: Public Writing, Isolated Writing, Reflexive Writing, Visual, Amateur and Control Writing, and Convergence and Censored Writing. While each of these stylistics are also used within traditional written expression, they are significantly modified, hybridized, and amplified in online academic video writing in ways that serve to demonstrate the current state of writing (and teaching) within Web 2.0.

I will begin by naming some common forms and approaches that appear across the eight academic video writing forms that will be the focus of this talk. I have found there are three common structures for video writing: the first is **word-reliant** (reading or writing a traditional paper on to video. Notably, this form allows for the most complex meanings and the least interesting videos). Next, probably most common, and arguably most successful for our purposes, is the **illustrated summary**, composed through the bullet pointing of more detailed ideas that are cut to images of YouTube as evidence. Finally, perhaps my favorite, and certainly the most creative, is the YouTube **hack**, where academic content is wedged into a popular YouTube vernacular form. Besides these common formats I hope you will observe the ubiquitous use of two, often understood as "postmodern" devices of tone and structure – humor (most often being cynical, sarcastic, or parodic in form) and self-reflexivity. Finally, sometimes my students will pull the power play of **sincerity**, which, in ways YouTube, creates productive tension with the site's expected cynicism and humor. As you may have already deduced from my academic video writing here, detailed rhetorical analysis, the bellwether of productive scholarly expression, is not the most powerful of tactics for this venue. Thus, I would characterize my own production as word-reliant, amateurish, public, reflexive, and also an example of control and convergence video writing. I hope that by talk's end, my own terms, tactics, and practices will be clarified.

1 [**"The Future of Writing," by wtto2005**^{21]} Public Writing: The classroom ideally depends upon an intimate and "safe" gathering of carefully selected students to create a communal pedagogy. They write for the professor, and sometimes for each other, but the general public is neither their audience nor critic. Privacy and mutuality encourage the development of voice. In a YouTube classroom, where anyone and everyone can see and participate, such tried and true pedagogic structures shift. While access grows, the disciplining structures in place in a closed classroom or private paper cannot be relied upon.

2 [**"PlayRadioPlay-Decipher Reflections from Reality," by Raspefly**^{22]} Isolated Writing: YouTube writing, academic or not, while publicly presented, is often

produced in and about isolation and in the hopes of finding community. This form of writing mirrors YouTube's *raison d'être* – wasting time – and often results in meaningless, silly, or narcissistic ruminations on self. However, its reverse is the humble stab at sincere communication, banking upon “NicheTube’s” guarantee that no one will actually find, see, or hear you in the uncharted and unruly sea of similarly unheard attempts at communication and self-expression.

3 Reflexive Writing makes YouTube its content and form, creating a dizzying hall of media mirrors where “the Real” dissolves, a necessary but unmissed casualty to a more rich, and endlessly self-referential and self-fulfilling life online. [**“Britney Spears Uncensored Dancing and Eating,”** by jweitzel²³]

4 Written expression is closed down on YouTube. Its 500-character limit, and sandlot culture, produces a dumbing-down for the word nearly impossible to remedy. So, [**“Everything People Love About YouTube,”** by edauehauer²⁴] visual writing reigns. In this highly entertaining form, meaning is lost to feeling that is buttressed by the sound of music and cut to the speed of final cut pro. Both spectacle and humor reliant, this is also the terrain of the expert (dependent upon corporate or popular media even if modified by “amateurs”). It is hard to use for academic video writing, but students try, usually through opposition.

5 [**“MS 130 Want some high school Musical 3? Watch till the end!”** by ziliemd²⁵] Amateur Writing is word reliant. It is either the stuff of real people talking into their low-end cameras about their private pleasure or pain, or regular people demonstrating their exceptional or laughable skills. It can be popular if it seems sincere, or if a spectacle of humiliation or extreme talent is at its core.

6 [**“Summary of Learning from YouTube at the Midterm 2,”** by mediapraxis²⁶] Control Writing works against the chaotic, undisciplined culture of YouTube and attempts to force structure, and the possibility for building complexity, onto its pages. The significance of discipline for academic work proves the rule. Without it, ideas stay vague and dispersed, there is no system for evaluation, and you can't find things or build upon them. On YouTube it comes across as somewhat School Marmish, yes?

7 [**“Blacks on YouTube Final,”** by VannaBlack4you²⁷] Censored Writing is definitive of YouTube (heralded as a “democratic” platform) where users routinely flag content, servicing the corporation, whenever it strays from the comfortable confines of the hegemonic. To see to this video, “Blacks on YouTube Final,” you need to be of right age, as it has been flagged for inappropriate (critical?) content. Please note: The video that secured the most hits in our video writing contest, “Nailin’ Palin” (the ripped first minute of a Hustler hit), an example of Copyright Writing, cannot be included in this tour because it was taken down.

8 [**“YouTube in Context,”** by kimballzen²⁸] Convergence Writing: As Henry Jenkins points out, new media allows for writing that gains its impact by moving across platforms and building upon the power of ready-made media already encrusted with meaning (and ownership). So easy, even [**“Small Paul (Frank) Soulja Boy Dance,”** by mediapraxis²⁹] (my) children can join the fun.

Introduction to Blogs 5–7: On Publishing in the Digital Humanities

In the Summer of 2009, I took my nearly 200 examples of YouTube writing (these and other blogs, published essays online and on paper, videos, interviews) to the Vectors National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar with the hopes of turning them into a proper, big, formidable publication: a “book.” These next selected blog posts mark the process of conceptualizing this work within both my career’s arc and the emerging field of digital humanities, making some sense of the demands of this new, new media writing, and then negotiating the actual contract for this strange form. In all three blog posts I evidence a push against professional constraints – of academic fields, writing forms, and publishing – themselves bound to practices and norms of vetting, promotion, and disciplines. Here we see how the unruly nature of the subjects of new media studies creates the necessary dismantling of another oppositional binary: control/chaos. My work on and about YouTube at once necessitates attempts to systematize and contain (evidenced in Blogs 1–4) and to challenge and expand limits (Blogs 5–7). Given the staid structures of our profession, and the unruly inventions of this and similar efforts, another contradictory frame then comes into sight: it is, counterproductively, that full professors, rather than young scholars, are the most readily enabled (through the institution’s slowly accrued freedoms and powers) to test boundaries.

BLOG 5: Digital Humanities, 7-17-09³⁰

I am spending a month at USC’s NEH Vector’s³¹ Institute, <“Broadening the Digital Humanities.”> Eleven scholars are given the opportunity to develop digital projects through the generous technical and intellectual support of the <Institute for Multi-Media Literacy.>³² At the first session, Tara McPherson³³ asked of us our relation to the term “digital humanities,” and I said that I had always thought of myself as a “media scholar, artist, and activist” but would be pleased to also take on this newer title. However, after spending a few days amongst digital humanists of various home disciplinary stripes, I believe that this interdisciplinary field holds much in common with earlier practices of more radical scholars who have pressed at the intersections of academia and art and/or activism.

In an unpublished draft essay by Institute fellow <Katherine Hayles>,³⁴ “How We Think: The Transforming Power of Digital Technologies,” Hayles engages in dialogue with eighteen Digital Humanists to better understand the current shape of the field, in her opinion, in its 2nd phase (having gone from text to multimodality). She proposes how Digital Humanities move traditional Humanities from “text-based study . . . to time-based art forms such as film, music, and animation, visual traditions such as graphics and design, spatial practices such as architecture and geography, and curatorial practices associated with museums, galleries, and the like.”

I would want to say the same thing, just differently. Listening to my ten <Kairos>³⁵ colleagues <Hemispheric Institute>³⁶ describe <Digital Durham>³⁷ their <Virtual Politik>³⁸ exciting <version.org>³⁹ digital projects, I see a turn in traditional scholarship toward accounting for and embracing the demands of **art** and **activism**. Namely, digital humanists need to **collaborate** (a well-developed set of practices refined by those in film or theater, for instance, and theorized by feminists and other activist-scholars who work within communities while being committed to rethinking power relations). Similarly, digital humanists engage **affect** and **aesthetics**, must make sense of their relation to **machines**, take account of **audiences**, as they no longer necessarily speak only to a small and rarified readership of their peers, and must think seriously about **time** and **space**, which to my mind, demands an **ethics** about how one's "intellectual" practices affect the lived world and its inhabitants. Thus, I'd suggest that the "digital" part, only the newest technology of the day, is perhaps what was needed to push more scholars to engage with the personal and political implications⁴⁰ of their work. [**"A Gram O Pussy by Duran Ruiz and Scarlot Harlot," by mediapraxisme**⁴¹] See also Sharon Daniel's Vector's project <Public Secrets> on women and prison.⁴²

BLOG 6: On Publishing My YouTube "Book" Online, 09-24-09⁴³

Tomorrow I will be visiting Tara McPherson's graduate course on something like "theories and practices of new media," and she has asked me to present, quickly, some of the difficult considerations that define my current efforts (with the assistance of the <Vector's>⁴⁴ team) to "publish" my various YouTube findings, practices, musings, papers, videos, blogs, tours, and internet publications into a digital "book." [Author's note (May 24, 2010): since this was written, the on-line "video-book" has been accepted for publication with MIT Press as part of a Mellon grant on rethinking humanities publishing via the digital, and will be hosted on their website, for free, I think, once all these difficult decisions are finalized.]

By way of introduction, and as a method to display the many contradictions and conundrums in the very format that is the problem, I will briefly list on the blog ten themes that define my (attempts to) move my "book" entirely online:

- 1 Audience. When you go online your readers (can) include non-academics.
- 2 Commitment. Harder to command amidst all the distractions.
- 3 Design. Matters more; means.
- 4 Finitude. The page(s) need never close.
- 5 Interactivity. Should your readers, who may or may not be experts, author too?
- 6 Linearity. Goes out the window, unless you force it.

- 7 Multi-modal. Much can be expressed outside the confines of the word.
- 8 Network. How things link is within or outside the author's control.
- 9 Single author. Why hold out the rest of the Internet?
- 10 Temporality. People read faster online. Watching video can be slow. A book is long.

Here's the shape of my current project, in development: my video-book will speak to an audience of scholars, committed intellectuals, and media activists through a simple, legible, but perky interface that refers, visually, to that which it critiques, while on a deep-level (via programming) performing that which it says YouTube precludes. It will stay open, as I continue to learn, but there will be only limited avenues for interaction. I will produce several arguments that the reader can choose to follow or depart from at their whim and a second structure that gives the user more opportunities to l(th)ink for themselves. A good deal of the ideas of this text will be expressed through video which will sit in a highly designed and interactive relation to written words with which it is associated. I will try to "time" these arguments, a kind of montage really, to command my readers' interest and commitment.

BLOG 7: Contractual Mayhem: On the Absurdities of Moving from Paper to Digital in Academic Publishing, 06-11-10⁴⁵

I am currently negotiating my contract with MIT Press⁴⁶ to "publish" my "video-book" about YouTube in Fall 2010. The enlightening, confusing, crazy, friendly, and productive conversations I am having with my editor, Doug Sery, and my production team at USC's <Vectors>⁴⁷ and <Institute for Media Literacy>⁴⁸ are a telling indication of how far academic publishing (and writing) has to go to match the technological possibilities for writing, research, and public intellectualism afforded by new media. My project will be the first publication supported (in part) by a Mellon Initiative, "The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture," which set out to rethink academic publishing (in conversation with <UC>,⁴⁹ <MIT>, and <Duke>⁵⁰ University Presses) in light of media archives (including the USC <Shoah Foundation>,⁵¹ <The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics>,⁵² <Critical Commons>,⁵³ and the <Internet Archive>⁵⁴) and Digital Humanities. With Doug's kind permission, I will be presenting some of our conversation on my blog as a way to network these sorts of negotiations, and the questions they raise for digital humanists, new media scholars, and academic presses.

Doug:

Thanks for making a first pass on the contract. I am thrilled to be working with MIT, and realize "The Work" (what I am currently calling a "video-book" until a better name is found) is the first of its kind, and we're making this happen as we go. Towards this end, here are the notes I promised about the concepts in the first draft of the contract

that don't align well with my understanding of this born-digital publication. I think the conceptual issues for us to tackle are:

- 1) **Delivery** of the Work: what form is acceptable given that the Work lives only online (in a data-base) and not in "word-processing files," as you request.
- 2) Author's **Warranty**
 - a) I am wondering about URLs and YouTube videos that constitute a large portion of the Work. Of course, the writing is all mine.
 - b) Also, regarding **credit**: It is not clear to me, contractually, how to credit the design team who built the Work which holds my words and points to others' videos.
 - c) As for **Previous Publication**: a significant amount of the Work has been "published" already on my blog, although reformatted and designed for the Work.
- 3) **Size** of the Work: Do you actually want a **word count** for the Work? This will not account for the videos, which take up a significant portion of its content. Should there be a video count, or a time count, too?
 ["KNX Radio interview re YouTube at 5 years," by mediapraxisme⁵⁵]
- 4) **Royalties**: There is currently language about royalties that gives me 0% of all books sales, which makes no sense, as there is no book. The language in the separate portions called Electronic Rights and Royalties from Other Sources (i.e. "if the Work is sold electronically") both seem to be written for a paper book (i.e. "we might make the Work as a whole available via the World Wide Web") and seem to be in some contradiction or in unnecessary parallel with each other. Given that online, electronic distribution would be its primary (only?) possible revenue stream, if there is to be a revenue stream at all, since it is my current understanding that the Work will be free on the MIT site (although this is not stipulated in the contract), I'd like this all to be clarified and probably rewritten.
- 5) Materials Created by **Other Persons**: To be clear, I do not have permissions for most of the YouTube videos that the work points to, which sit on YouTube and not on the Work.
- 6) **Upkeep**, repairs, hosting of the infrastructure, database and Work: Who is responsible for this? Where does it sit? Where does it go after three years? How is it preserved?
- 7) **Editing**, Proofing: Unclear how this will be done given the unique quality of the material in the Work: i.e. design, words, videos. I certainly want it to be edited and proofed but how and by whom?
- 8) Author's **Alterations**: We need to decide whether the Work will be adapted, in that it is live, and easily updatable, added to, commented upon etc. or if it stays still once delivered (more like a paper book).
- 9) **Promotion**: given the unique nature of the Work, its economic model, and its final shape and home, I am interested in thinking through where and how the Press will promote it and otherwise let its audience know about its presence and availability.
- 10) **Index**: The Work has a search function and thus I will not need to make an index.

I look forward to working all this through. I understand that most of these concepts are new for the Press (and me) and am open to hashing them out in ways that make

the best sense for all concerned. Meanwhile, I am busy revising the Work as we speak. All the best, Alex

PS: I would like to ask your permission to “publish” some version of this (and other emails) concerning our ongoing discussions about publishing the Work, first on my blog, and then perhaps in the Work itself. As you know, the self-referential quality of the Work – discussing its own status as an object of writing, pedagogy, social-networked scholarship, activist intellectualism, and digital humanities publishing – would be well-served by including this final stage of its production, process, and conceptualization within itself.

Conclusions Regarding the Shape of What is Missing

The future of new media writing and publishing will be made online by young scholars and students who write lively, multi-modal missives using communication and digital technologies to network their analysis and experiences of their lived media environments. It is my hope that by creating and holding this unstable space of writing and publishing, I lay claim to its legitimacy for the less institutionally entrenched, who follow me, and also lead me, into new media's future. I hope that the stable and unstable deconstructing frame of this essay – the (changing) roles played by control, knowledge, form, and reflexivity in new media studies' future – allows us to see that academic styles, methods, and audiences adapt in ways that are productive and dynamic. I also hope that the shape of what is missing is how far academic publishing and writing, on paper, can go so as to match the technological possibilities for writing, research, and public intellectualism afforded by new media.

NOTES

- 1 www.youtube.com/mediapraxisme
- 2 You can find the online book at <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?tttype=2&tid=12596>
- 3 Books published on YouTube by fall of 2010 included Burgess and Green (2009), Lovink and Niederer (2008), Juhasz (2011), Strangelove (2010), Vonderau and Snickars (2009).
- 4 <http://aljean.wordpress.com/2007/09/07/learning-from-youtube>
- 5 <http://www.youtube.com/mediapraxisme>
- 6 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CDrYwXVOn4>. “The first ‘Learning from YouTube’ class at Pitzer College, held on September 4, 2007. Part 1 of 4.”
- 7 <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/09/06/youtube>
- 8 <http://aljean.wordpress.com/2007/10/29/learning-from-learning-from-youtube-mid-way>
- 9 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIK9XZwGqDc>. “I summarize 12 points we’ve learned from the class about YouTube.”

- 10 <http://aljean.wordpress.com/2008/02/06/reflections-on-building-tour-1/>
- 11 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7pkN1VziYg>. "I perform 'Queer Realism on YouTube,' for MS135: a talk I presented in May at the International Communications Association meetings."
- 12 <http://aljean.wordpress.com/2008/11/04/on-video-writing>
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- 28 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYe6mOYUOWk>. "LFYT Response Tour #4 The more I think about actual learning on YouTube the more discouraged I become. Just like this video shows, its difficult to build knowledge because of YouTube's limits, it disconnect ideas, and create information totally out of context. Maybe the strength of YouTube is that it can be integrated into other media. While I was doing some digging for your family vacation, I found that Google now has user created content on its Google Maps mainly of photos and YouTube videos. This organization seems like a better place to link YouTube videos with outside information, and create some real learning. The videos that appear on Google Maps are all from YouTube, so it might be easier to organize information this way. These videos are still subject to all the same rules as YouTube: some videos are bad or obviously not professional and some commercial. Yet, like Youtube, you still might have a hard time connecting content, and creating coherent thoughts or learning that actually builds on itself, especially since you can post videos on maps that dont seem to have anything to do with the place itself."
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- 31 <http://www.vectorsjournal.org>
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- 34 <http://fds.duke.edu/db/aas/Literature/faculty/n.hayles>
- 35 <http://english.ttu.edu/Kairos>
- 36 <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/cuaderno/yoeme/content.html>
- 37 <http://digitaldurham.duke.edu>
- 38 <http://www.virtualpolitik.blogspot.com>
- 39 <http://version.org>
- 40 http://cameraobscura.dukejournals.org/cgi/pdf_extract/18/3_54/71
- 41 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hP6SN0oy8Y. "5/5 videos from 'RELEASED: 5 Short Videos about Women and Prison,' a collaborative political media project produced by Alexandra Juhasz."
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- 46 <http://mitpress.mit.edu/main/home/default.asp>
- 47 <http://www.vectorsjournal.org>
- 48 <http://iml.usc.edu>
- 49 <http://www.ucpress.edu>
- 50 www.dukeupress.edu
- 51 <http://college.usc.edu/vhi>
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Media Visualization

Visual Techniques for Exploring Large Media Collections

Lev Manovich

ABSTRACT

Over the last 20 years, information visualization became a common tool in science and also a growing presence in the arts and culture at large. This chapter outlines a taxonomy of new visualization techniques particularly useful for media research, what Manovich calls “media visualization.” Where information visualization involves translating the world into numbers and then visualizing the relationship between those numbers, media visualization involves translating a set of images into another image that can reveal patterns that might not otherwise be apparent in the collection of images. Using the open source image processing software called ImageJ (normally used in medical research and other scientific fields), Manovich and his collaborators have designed a set of tools for media visualization that can be used by other researchers interested in exploring large sets of images, even without knowing exactly what they are looking for beforehand. The techniques outlined here are based on the work in visualization of patterns in cinema, TV, animation, videogames, and other media carried out in the Software Studies Initiative at the University of California, San Diego.

Some of the illustrations for this chapter are available only online at:

<http://lab.softwarestudies.com/p/media-visualizations-illustrations.html>.

Introduction: How to Work with Massive Media Data Sets

Early twenty-first-century media researchers have access to unprecedented amounts of media – more than they can possibly study, let alone simply watch or even search. A number of interconnected developments that took place between 1990 and 2010 – the digitization of analog media collections, a decrease in prices and expanding capacities of portable computer-based media devices (laptops, tablets, phones, cameras, etc.), the rise of user-generated content and social media, and globalization, which increased the number of agents and institutions producing media around the world – led to an exponential increase in the quantity of media while simultaneously making it much easier to find, share, teach with, and research. Millions of hours of television programs already digitized by various national libraries and media museums, millions of digitized newspaper pages from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,¹ 150 billion snapshots of web pages covering the period from 1996 until today,² and hundreds of billions of videos on YouTube and photographs on Facebook (every day users upload 100 million images, according to the stats provided by Facebook in the summer of 2011) and numerous other media sources are waiting to be “digged” into. (For more examples of large media collections, see the list of repositories made available to the participants of the Digging Into Data 2011 Competition [Digging into Data Challenge, 2011].)

How do we take advantage of this new scale of media in practice? For instance, let’s say that we are interested in studying how presentation and interviews by political leaders are reused and contextualized by TV programs in different countries. (This example comes from our application for Digging Into Data 2011.) The relevant large media collections that were available at the time we were working on our application (June 2011) include 1,800 Barack Obama official White House videos, 500 George W. Bush Presidential Speeches, 21,532 programs from *Al Jazeera English* (2007–2011), and 5,167 *Democracy Now!* TV programs (2001–2011). Together, these collections contain tens of thousands of hours of video. We want to describe the rhetorical, editing, and cinematographic strategies specific to each video set, understand how different stations may be using the video of political leaders in different ways, identify outliers, and find clusters of programs that share similar patterns. But how can we simply watch all this material to begin pursuing these and other questions?

Even when we are dealing with large collections of still images – for instance, 167,00 images on “Art Now” Flickr gallery, 236,000 professional design portfolios on coroflot.com (both numbers as of 6/2011), or over 170,000 Farm Security

Administration (FSA)/Office of War Information photographs taken between 1935 and 1944 and digitized by Library of Congress³ – such tasks are no easier to accomplish. The basic method that always worked when numbers of media objects were small – see all images or video, notice patterns, and interpret them – no longer works.

Given the size of many digital media collections, simply seeing what's inside them is impossible (even before we begin formulating questions and hypotheses and selecting samples for closer analysis). Although it may appear that the reasons for this are the limitations of human vision and human information processing, I think that it is actually the fault of current interface designs. Popular interfaces for massive digital media collections such as list, gallery, grid, and slide (the example from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs site) do not allow us to see the contents of a whole collection. These interfaces usually display only a few items at a time. This access method does not allow us to understand the “shape” of the overall collection and notice interesting patterns.

Most media collections contain some kind of metadata such as author names, production dates, program titles, image formats, or, in the case of social media services such as Flickr, upload dates, user-assigned tags, geodata, and other information.⁴ If we are given access to such metadata for a whole collection in the easy-to-use form such as a set of spreadsheets or a database, this allows us to at least understand distributions of content, dates, access statistics, and other dimensions of the collection. Unfortunately, usually online collections and media sites do not make available the complete collection's metadata to the users. Even if they did, this still would not substitute for directly seeing, watching, or reading the actual media. Even the richest metadata available today for media collections do not capture many patterns that we can easily notice when we directly watch video, look at photographs, or read texts – i.e., when we study the media themselves as opposed to metadata about them.⁵

The popular media access technologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as slide lanterns, film projectors, microforms, Moviola and Steenbeck, record players, audio and videotape recorders, were designed to access single media items at a time at a limited range of speeds. This went hand in hand with the organization of media distribution: record and video stores, libraries, television, and radio would make available only a few items at a time. For instance, you could not watch more than a few TV channels simultaneously, or borrow more than a few videotapes from a library.

At the same time, hierarchical classification systems used in library catalogs made it difficult to browse a collection or navigate it in orders not supported by catalogs. When you walked from shelf to shelf, you were typically following a classification system based on subjects, with books organized by author names inside each category.

Together, these distribution and classification systems encouraged twentieth-century media researchers to decide beforehand what media items to see, hear, or read. A researcher usually started with some subject in mind – films by a particular author, works by a particular photographer, or categories such as “1950s experimental American films” and “early twentieth-century Paris postcards.” It was impossible

to imagine navigating through all films ever made or all postcards ever printed. (One of the first media projects that organizes its narrative around navigation of a media archive is Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, which draws samples from hundreds of films.) The popular social science method for working with larger media sets in an objective manner – content analysis, i.e., tagging of semantics in a media collection by several people using a predefined vocabulary of terms (for more details, see Stemler, 2001) – also requires that a researcher decide beforehand what information would be relevant to tag. In other words, as opposed to exploring a media collection without any preconceived expectations or hypotheses – just to “see what is there” – a researcher has to postulate “what is there,” i.e., what are the important types of information worth seeking out.

Unfortunately, the current standard in media access – computer search – does not take us out of this paradigm. The search interface is a blank frame waiting for you to type something. Before you click on the search button, you have to decide what keywords and phrases to search for. So while the search brings a dramatic increase in speed of access, its deep assumption (which we may be able to trace back to its origins in the 1950s, when most scientists did not anticipate how massive digital collections would become) is that you know beforehand something about the collection worth exploring further.

The hypertext paradigm that defined the web of the 1990s likewise only allows a user to navigate though the web according to the links defined by others, as opposed to moving in any direction. This is consistent with the original vision of hypertext as articulated by Vannevar Bush in 1945: a way for a researcher to create “trails” though massive scientific information and for others to be able to follow those traces later.

My informal review of the largest online institutional media collections available today (europeana.org, archive.org, artstor.com, etc.) suggests that the typical interfaces they offer combine nineteenth-century technologies of hierarchical categories and mid-twentieth-century technology of information retrieval (i.e., search using metadata recorded for media items). Sometimes collections also have subject tags. In all cases, the categories, metadata, and tags were entered by the archivists who manage the collections. This process imposes particular orders on the data. As a result, when a user accesses institutional media collections via their websites, she can only move along a fixed number of trajectories defined by the taxonomy of the collection and types of metadata.

In contrast, when you observe a physical scene directly with your eyes, you can look anywhere in any order. This allows you to quickly notice a variety of patterns, structures, and relations. Imagine, for example, turning the corner on a city street and taking in the view of the open square, with passersby, cafés, cars, trees, advertising, store windows, and all other elements. You can quickly detect and follow a multitude of dynamically changing patterns based on visual and semantic information: cars moving in parallel lines, houses painted in similar colors, people who move along their own trajectories and people talking to each other, unusual faces, shop windows that stand out from the rest, and so on.

We need similar techniques that would allow us to observe vast “media universes” and quickly detect all interesting patterns. These techniques have to operate with speeds many times faster than the normally intended playback speed (in the case of time-based media). Or, to use the example of still images, I should be able to see important information in one million images in the same amount of time it takes me to see it in a single image. These techniques have to compress massive media universes into smaller observable media “landscapes” compatible with the human information processing rates. At the same time, they have to keep enough of the details from the original images, video, audio, or interactive experiences to enable the study of the subtle patterns in the data.

Media Visualization

The limitations of the typical interfaces to online media collections also apply to interfaces of software for media viewing, cataloging, and editing. These applications allow users to browse through and search image and video collections, and display image sets in an automatic slide show or a PowerPoint-style presentation format. However, as research tools, their usefulness is quite limited. Desktop applications such as iPhoto, Picasa, and Adobe Bridge, and image sharing sites such as Flickr and Photobucket, can only show images in a few fixed formats – typically a two-dimensional grid, a linear strip, or a slide show, and, in some cases, a map view (photos superimposed on the world map). To display photos in a new order, a user has to invest time in adding new metadata to all of them. She cannot automatically organize images by their visual properties or by semantic relationships. Nor can she create animations, compare collections that each may have hundreds of thousands of images, or use various information visualization techniques to explore patterns across image sets.

Graphing and visualization tools that are available in Google Docs, Excel, Tableau,⁶ manyeyes,⁷ and other graphing, spreadsheet, and statistical software do offer a range of visualization techniques designed to reveal patterns in data. However, these tools have their own limitations. A key principle, which underlies the creation of graphs and information visualizations, is the representation of data using points, bars, lines, and similar graphical primitives. This principle has remained unchanged from the earliest statistical graphics of the early nineteenth century to contemporary interactive visualization software that can work with large data sets (Manovich, 2011). Although such representations make clear the relationships in a data set, they also hide the objects behind the data from the user. While this is perfectly acceptable for many types of data, in the case of images and video this becomes a serious problem. For instance, a 2D scatter plot that shows a distribution of grades in a class with each student represented as a point serves its purpose, but the same type of plot representing stylistic patterns over the course of an artist’s career by means of points has more limited use if we cannot see the images of the artworks.

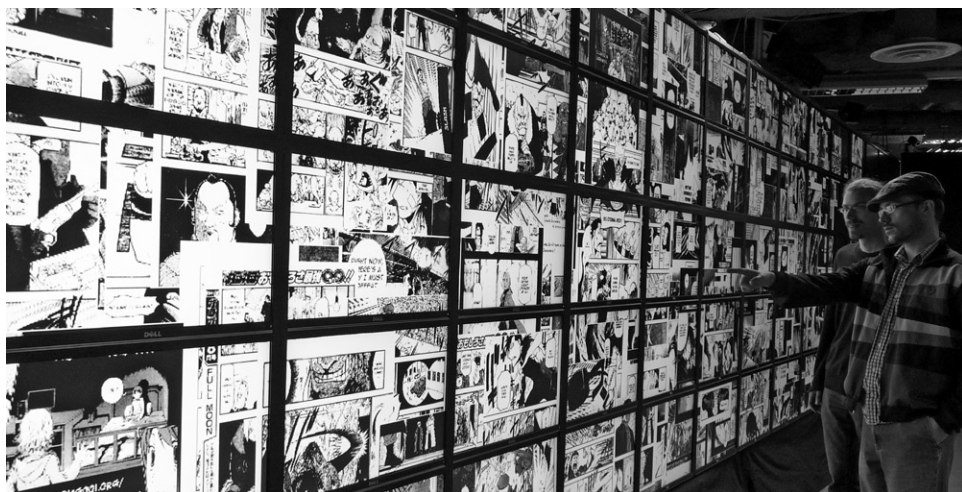


Figure 4.1 Exploring a visualization of one million manga pages on the HIPerSpace visual supercomputer. *Source:* Lev Manovich. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/culturevis/5866777772/>

Since 2008, our Software Studies Initiative at the University of California, San Diego, has been developing visual techniques that combine the strengths of media viewing applications and graphing and visualization applications.⁸ Like the latter, they create graphs to show relationships and patterns in a data set. However, if plot-making software can only display data as points, lines, or other graphic primitives, our software can show all the images in a collection superimposed on a graph. We call this approach *media visualization*.

Typical information visualization involves first translating the world into numbers and then visualizing relations between these numbers. In contrast, media visualization involves translating a set of images into a new image that can reveal patterns in the set. In short, pictures are translated into pictures.

Media visualization can be formally defined as *creating new visual representations from the visual objects in a collection* (Manovich, 2012a). In the case of a collection containing single images (for instance, the already mentioned 1930s FSA photographs collection from the Library of Congress), media visualization involves displaying all images, or their parts, organized in a variety of configurations according to their metadata (dates, places, authors), content properties (for example, presence of faces), and/or visual properties. If we want to visualize a video collection, it is usually more convenient to select key frames that capture the properties and the patterns of video. This selection can be done automatically using a variety of criteria – for example, significant changes in color, movement, camera position, staging, and other aspects of cinematography, changes in content such as shot and scene boundaries, start of music or dialogue, new topics in characters’ conversations, and so on.

Our media visualization techniques can be used independently, or in combination with *digital image processing* (Digital image processing, n.d.). Digital image processing is conceptually similar to automatic analysis of texts already widely used in digital humanities (Text Analysis, 2011). Text analysis involves automatically extracting various statistics about the content of each text in a collection, such as word usage frequencies, their lengths, and their positions, sentence lengths, and noun and verb usage frequencies. These statistics (referred to in computer science as “features”) are then used to study the patterns in a single text, relationships between texts, literary genres, and so on.

Similarly, we can use digital image processing to calculate statistics about various visual properties of images: average brightness and saturation, the number and the properties of shapes, the number of edges and their orientations, key colors, and so on. These features can then be used for similar investigations – for example, the analysis of visual differences between news photographs in different magazines or between news photographs in different countries, the changes in visual style over the career of a photographer, or the evolution of news photography in general over the twentieth century. We can also use them in a more basic way – for the initial exploration of any large image collection. (This method is described in detail in Manovich, 2012a.)

In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on media visualization techniques that are similarly suitable for initial exploration of any media collection but do not require digital image processing of all the images. I present the key techniques and illustrate them with examples drawn from different types of media. Researchers can use a variety of software tools and technologies to implement these techniques – scripting Photoshop, using open source media utilities such as ImageMagick,⁹ or writing new code in Processing,¹⁰ for example. In our lab we rely on the open source image processing software called ImageJ.¹¹ This software is normally used in biological and medical research, astronomy, and other scientific fields. We wrote many custom macros, which add new capacities to existing ImageJ commands to meet the needs of media researchers. (You can find these macros, detailed tutorials on how to use them, and sample data sets on our site.¹²) These macros allow you to create all types of visualizations described in this chapter, and also to do basic visual feature extraction on any number of images and videos. In other words, these techniques are available right now to anyone interested in trying them on their own data sets.

We have also developed a version of our tools that runs on the next generation visual supercomputer systems such as HIPerSpace, developed at Calit2 (California Institute for Telecommunication and Information) where our lab is housed.¹³ In its present configuration, it consists of seventy 30-inch monitors, which offer a combined resolution of 287 megapixels. We can load up to 10,000 images at one time and then interactively create a variety of media visualizations in real time (see Figure 4.1).

The development of our tools was driven by research applications. Since 2009, we have used our software for the analysis and visualization of over 20 different image and video collections covering a number of fields. The examples include 776 paintings by Vincent van Gogh, 4,535 covers of *Time* magazine published between 1923 and 2009 (see Figure 2 online and Figure 4.3), one million manga (Japanese comics)

pages, a hundred hours of gameplay video, and 130 Obama weekly video addresses (2009–2011). The software has also been used by undergraduate and graduate students at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), in art history and media classes. In addition, we collaborate with cultural institutions that are interested in using our methods and tools with their media collections and data sets: *New York Times*, the Getty Research Institute, Austrian Film Museum, Netherlands Institute for Sound and Image, and Magnum Photos. Finally, we have worked with a number of individual scholars and research groups from UCSD, University of Chicago, UCLA, University of Porto in Portugal, and Singapore National University, applying these tools to visual data sets in their respective disciplines – art history, film and media studies, dance studies, and area studies.

Our software has been designed to work with image and video collections of *any* size. Our largest application to date is the analysis of one million pages of fan-translated manga (Douglass, Huber, & Manovich, 2011); however, the tools do not have built-in limits and can be used with even larger image sets.

Dimensions of Media Visualization

In this section I discuss media visualization methods in relation to other methods for analyzing and visualizing data. As I have already noted, media visualization can be understood as the opposite of statistical graphs and information visualization.

Media visualization can also be contrasted with content analysis (manual coding of a media collection typically used to describe semantics) and automatic media analysis methods commonly used by commercial companies (video fingerprinting, content-based image search, cluster analysis, concept detection, image and video mining, etc.). In contrast to content analysis, media visualization techniques do not require the time-consuming creation of new metadata about media collections. And, in contrast to automatic computational methods, media visualization techniques do not require specialized technical knowledge and can be used by anybody with only a basic familiarity with digital media tools (think QuickTime, iPhoto, and Excel).

The media visualization method exploits the fact that image collections typically contain at least minimal metadata. These metadata define how the images should be ordered, and/or group them in various categories. In the case of digital video, the ordering of individual frames is built-in to the format itself. Depending on the genre, other higher-level sequences can be also present: shots and scenes in a narrative theme, the order of subjects presented in a news program, the weekly episodes of a TV drama.

We can exploit this already-existing sequence of information in two complementary ways. On the one hand, we can bring all images in a collection together in the order provided by metadata. For example, in the visualizations of all 4,535 *Time* magazine covers, the images are organized by publication dates (see Figure 4.3). On the other hand, to reveal patterns that such an order may hide, we can also place the

images in new sequences and layouts. In doing this, we deliberately go against the conventional understanding of cultural image sets which metadata often reify. We call such conceptual operation “remapping.” By changing the accepted ways of sequencing media artifacts and organizing them in categories, we create new “maps” of our familiar media universes and landscapes.

Media visualization techniques can be also situated along a second conceptual dimension depending on whether they use all media in a collection, or only a sample. We may sample in *time* (using only some of the available images) or in *space* (using only parts of the images). An example of the former technique is the visualization of Dziga Vertov’s 1928 feature documentary *The Eleventh Year*, which uses only the first frame of each shot (see Figure 4.8). An example of the latter is the “slice” of 4,535 covers of *Time* magazine that uses only a single-pixel vertical line from each cover.

The third conceptual dimension that also helps us to sort out possible media visualization techniques is the sources of information they use. As already explained, media visualization exploits the presence of at least minimal metadata in a media collection, so it does not require the addition of new metadata about the individual media items. However, if we decide to add such metadata – for example, content tags created via manual content analysis, labels that divide the media collection into classes generated via automatic cluster analysis, automatically detected semantic concepts, face detection results, and visual features extracted with digital image processing – all this information can also be used in visualization.

In fact, media visualization offers a new way to work with this information. For example, consider information about content we added manually to our *Time* covers data set, such as whether each cover features portraits of particular individuals or, conversely, a conceptual composition that illustrates some concept or issue. Normally a researcher would use graphing techniques such as a line graph to display this information. However, we can also create a high-resolution visualization that shows all the covers and uses red borders to highlight the covers that fall in one of these categories (see Figure 2 at <http://lab.softwarestudies.com/p/media-visualizations-illustrations.html>).

The rest of this chapter discusses some of these distinctions in more detail, illustrating them with visualization examples created in our lab. Section 1 starts with the simplest technique: using all images in a collection and organizing them in a sequence defined by existing metadata. Section 2 focuses on temporal and spatial sampling. Section 3 discusses and illustrates the operation of remapping.

Media Visualization Techniques

1 Zoom Out (Image Montage)

Conceptually and technically, the simplest technique is to bring a number of related visual artifacts together and show them in a single image. Since media collections

always come with some kind of metadata such as creation or upload dates, we can organize the display of the artifacts using information in these metadata.

This technique can be seen as an extension of the most basic intellectual operations of media studies and humanities – comparing a set of related items. However, if twentieth-century technologies only allowed for a comparison between a small number of artifacts at the same time – for example, the standard lecturing method in art history was to use two slide projectors to show and discuss two images side by side – today’s applications running on standard desktop computers, laptops, notebooks, tablets, and the web allow for simultaneous display of thousands of images in a grid format. These image grids can be organized by any of the available metadata such as year of production, country, creator name, image size, or upload dates. As already discussed above, all commonly used photo organizers and editors including iPhoto, Picasa, Adobe Photoshop, and Apple Aperture include this function. Similarly, image search services such as Google Image Search and content sharing services such as Flickr and Picasa also use image grid as a default interface.

However, it is more convenient to construct image grids using dedicated image processing software such as ImageMagick or ImageJ, since they provide many more options and greater control. ImageJ calls the appropriate command to make image grids “make montage” (“Make Montage,” *ImageJ User Guide*, n.d.), and since this is the software we commonly use in our lab, we will refer to such image grids as *montages*.

This quantitative increase in the number of images that can be visually compared leads to a qualitative change in the type of observations that can be made. Being able to display thousands of images simultaneously allows us to see gradual historical changes over time, the images that stand out from the rest (i.e., outliers), and the differences in variability between different image groups. It also allows us to detect possible clusters of images that share some characteristics in common, and to compare the shapes of these clusters. In other words, montage is a perfect technique for “exploratory media analysis.”

To be effective, even this simple technique may still require some transformation of the media being visualized. For example, in order to be able to observe similarities, differences, and trends in large image collections, it is crucial to make all images the same size. We also found that it is best to position images side by side without any gaps (that is why typical software for managing media collections, which leaves such gaps in the display, is not suited for discovering trends in image collections).

The following example illustrates the image montage technique.

Placing 4,535 *Time* magazine covers published over 86 years within a single high-resolution image reveals a number of historical patterns, including the following:

- *Medium*: In the 1920s and 1930s *Time* covers use mostly photography. After 1941, the magazine switches to paintings. In the later decades, photography gradually comes to dominate again. In the 1990s we see the emergence of the contemporary software-based visual language, which combines manipulated photography and graphic and typographic elements.

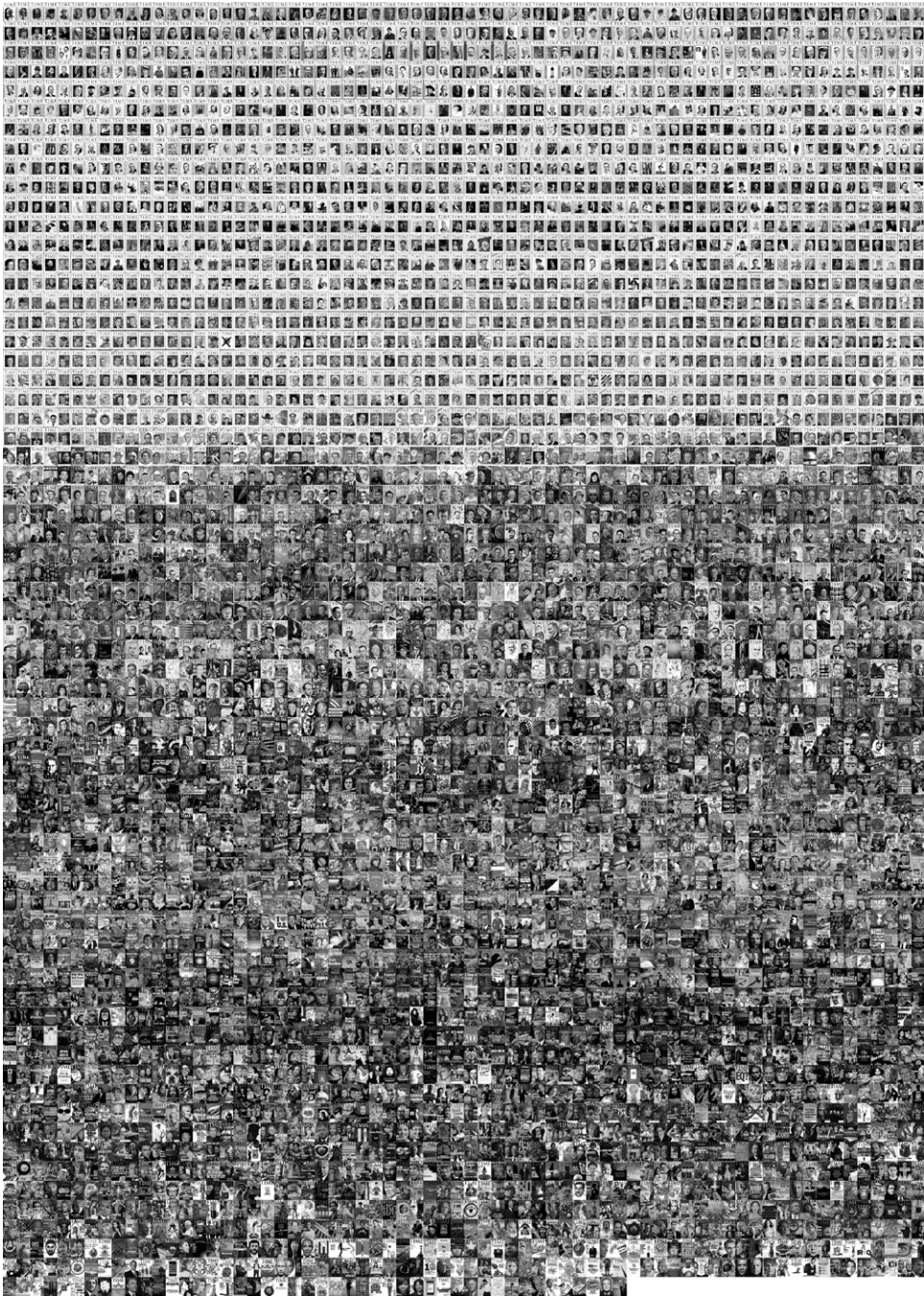


Figure 4.3 Montage of all 4,535 covers of *Time* magazine organized by publication date (1923 to 2009) from left to right and top to bottom. A large percentage of the covers included color borders. We cropped these borders and scaled all images to the same size to allow a user to see more clearly the temporal patterns across all covers. *Source:* Jeremy Douglass and Lev Manovich, 2009. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/culturevis/4038907270/in/set-72157624959121129/>

- *Color vs. black and white*: The shift from early black-and-white to full-color covers happens gradually, with both types coexisting for many years.
- *Hue*: Distinct “color periods” appear in bands: green, yellow/brown, red/blue, yellow/brown again, yellow, and a lighter yellow/blue in the 2000s.
- *Brightness*: The changes in brightness (the mean of all pixels’ grayscale values for each cover) follow a similar cyclical pattern.
- *Contrast and saturation*: Both gradually increase throughout the twentieth century. However, since the end of the 1990s, this trend is reversed: recent covers have lower contrast and lower saturation.
- *Content*: Initially most covers are portraits of individuals set against neutral backgrounds. Over time, portrait backgrounds change to feature compositions representing concepts. Later, these two different strategies come to coexist: portraits return to neutral backgrounds, while concepts are now represented by compositions that may include both objects and people – but not particular individuals.

The visualization also reveals an important “meta-pattern”: almost all changes are gradual. Each of the new communication strategies emerges slowly over a number of months, years, or even decades.

Montage technique has been pioneered in digital art projects such as *Cinema Redux* (Dawes, 2004) and *The Whale Hunt* (Harris, 2007). To create their montages, artists wrote their custom code; in each case, the code was used with particular data sets and not released for others to use with other data. ImageJ software, however, allows easy creation of image montages without the need to program. We found that this technique is very useful for exploring any media data set that has a time dimension, such as shots in a movie, covers and pages of magazine issues, or paintings created by an artist in the course of her career.

Although the montage method is the simplest technically, it is quite challenging to characterize it theoretically. Given that information visualization normally takes data that are not visual and represents them in a visual domain, is it appropriate to think of montage as a visualization method? To create a montage, we start in the visual domain and end up in the same domain – that is, we start with individual images, put them together, and then zoom out to see them all at once.

We believe that calling this method “visualization” is justified if, instead of focusing on the transformation of data characteristic of information visualization (from numbers and categories to images), we focus on its other key operation: arranging the elements of visualization in such a way as to allow the user to easily notice the patterns that are hard to observe otherwise. From this perspective, montage is a legitimate visualization technique. For instance, the current interface of Google Books can only show a few covers of any magazine (including *Time*) at a time, so it is hard to observe the historical patterns. However, if we gather all the covers of a magazine and arrange them in a particular way (making their size the same and displaying them in a rectangular grid in publication date order – i.e., making

everything the same so the eye can focus on comparing what is different – their content), these patterns are now easy to see. (For further discussion of the relations between media visualization and information visualization, see Manovich, 2011.)

2 Temporal and Spatial Sampling

Our next technique adds another conceptual step. Instead of displaying all the images in a collection, we can *sample* them using some procedure to select their subsets and/or their parts. *Temporal sampling* involves selecting a subset of images from a larger image sequence. We assume that this sequence is defined by existing metadata, such as frame numbers in a video, upload dates of user-generated images on a social media site, or page numbers in a manga chapter. The selected images are then arranged back-to-back, in the order provided by the metadata.

Temporal sampling is particularly useful in representing cultural artifacts, processes, and experiences that unfold over significant periods of time – such as playing a videogame. Completing a single-player game may take dozens and even hundreds of hours. In the case of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG), users may be playing for years. (A 2005 study by Nick Yee found the MMORPG players spend an average of 21 hours per week in the game world.)

We created two visualizations that together capture 100 hours of gameplay of *Kingdom Hearts* (2002, Square Co., Ltd.) and *Kingdom Hearts II* (2005, Square-Enix, Inc.) (see Figures 4 and 5 at <http://lab.softwarestudies.com/p/media-visualizations-illustrations.html>). Each game was played from beginning to end over a number of sessions. The video captured from all game sessions of each game was assembled into a single sequence. The sequences were sampled at six frames per second. This resulted in 225,000 frames for *Kingdom Hearts* and 133,000 frames for *Kingdom Hearts II*. The visualizations use every tenth frame from the complete frame sets. Frames are organized in a grid in order of gameplay (left to right, top to bottom).

Kingdom Hearts is a franchise of videogames and other media properties created in 2002 via a collaboration between Tokyo-based videogame publisher Square (now Square-Enix) and The Walt Disney Company. The franchise includes original characters created by Square, traveling through worlds representing Disney-owned media properties (e.g., *Tarzan*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, etc.). Each world has its distinct characters derived from the respective Disney-produced films. It also features distinct color palettes and rendering styles, which are related to visual styles of the corresponding Disney film. Visualizations reveal the structure of the gameplay, which cycles between progressing through the story and visiting various Disney worlds.

Temporal sampling is used in the interfaces of some media collections – for instance, Internet Archive¹⁴ includes regularly sampled frames for some of the videos in its collection (sampled rates vary depending on the type of video). In computer science, many researchers are working on video summarization: algorithms to

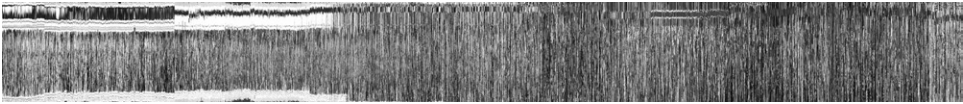


Figure 4.6 Slice of 4,535 covers of *Time* magazine organized by publication date (from 1923 to 2009, left to right). Every one-pixel-wide vertical column is sampled from a corresponding cover. *Source:* Jeremy Douglass and Lev Manovich, 2009. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/culturevis/4040690842/in/set-72157622525012841>

automatically create compact representations of video content which typically produce a small set of frames (the search for “video summarization” on Google Scholar returned 17,600 articles). Since applying these algorithms does require substantial technical knowledge, we promote much simpler techniques that can be carried out without such knowledge using built-in commands in ImageJ software.

Spatial sampling involves selecting *parts* of images, according to some procedure. For example, our visualization of *Time* covers used spatial sampling, since we cropped some of the images to get rid of the red borders. However, as the example below demonstrates, often more dramatic sampling, which leaves only a small part of an image, can be quite effective in revealing additional patterns that a full image montage may not show as well. Following the standard name for such visualizations as used in medical and biological research and in ImageJ software, we refer to them as *slices* (“Orthogonal Views”, *ImageJ User Guide*, n.d.).

Naturally, the question arises of the relations between the techniques for visual media sampling as illustrated here, and the standard theory and practice of sampling in statistics and social sciences. (For a very useful discussion of general sampling concepts as they apply to digital humanities, see Kenny, 1982.) While this question will require its own detailed analysis, we can make one general comment. Statistics is concerned with selecting a sample in such a way as to yield some reliable knowledge about the larger population. Because it was often not practical to collect data about the whole population, the idea of sampling was the foundation of the twentieth-century applications of statistics.

In creating media visualization, we often face similar limitations. For instance, in our visualizations of *Kingdom Hearts* we sampled the complete videos of gameplay using a systematic sampling method. Ideally, if ImageJ software was capable of creating a montage using all of the video frames, we would not have to do this.

However, as the *Time* covers slice visualization demonstrates, sometimes dramatically limiting part of the data is actually better for revealing certain patterns than using all the data. While we can also notice historically changing patterns in cover layout in full image montage (e.g., placement and size of the word “Time,” the size of images in the center in relation to the whole covers), using a single-pixel column from each cover makes them stand out more clearly.

The following two visualizations (Figures 4.7 and 4.8) further illustrate this idea. The first uses regular sampling (1fps) to represent a 60-minute film, *The Eleventh Year*,

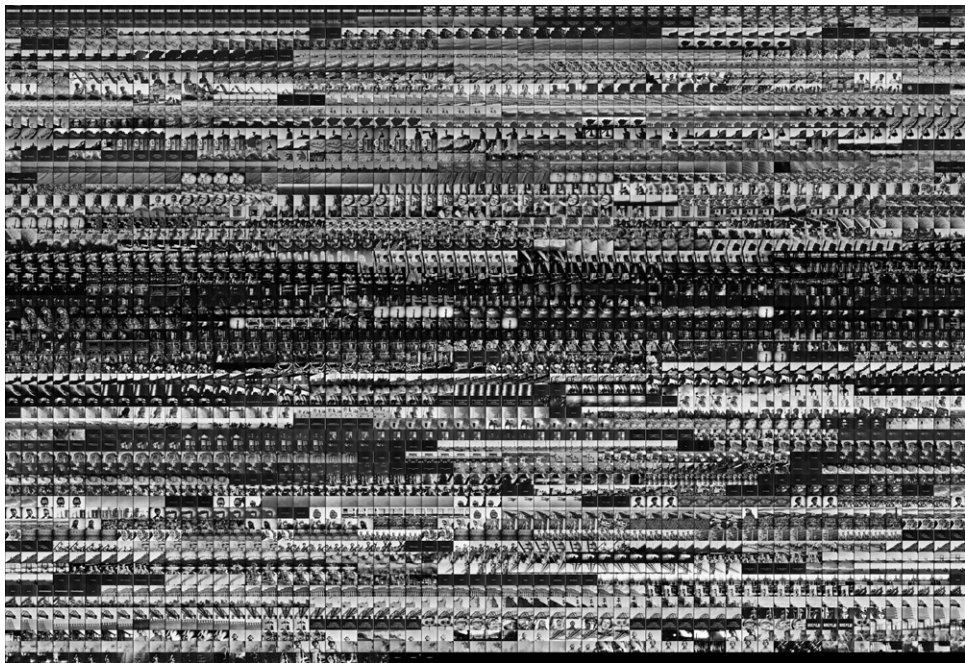


Figure 4.7 Visualization of *The Eleventh Year* (Dziga Vertov, 1928). The film is sampled at one frame per second. The resulting 3,507 frames are organized left to right and top to bottom following their order in the film. Source: Dziga Vertov, *The Eleventh Year*, 1928. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/culturevis/4052703447/in/set-72157622608431194>



Figure 4.8 Visualization of *The Eleventh Year* (Dziga Vertov, 1928). Every shot in the film is represented by its first frame. Frames are organized left to right and top to bottom following the order of shots in the film. Source: Dziga Vertov, *The Eleventh Year*, 1928. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/culturevis/3988919869/in/set-72157622608431194>

directed by Dziga Vertov (1928). The resulting representation of the film is not very useful. The second visualization follows semantically and visually important segmentation of the film – the shots sequence. Each shot is represented by its first frame. (The frames are organized left to right and top to bottom following shot order in the film.) Although this visualization uses a much smaller number of frames to represent the film than the first, it is much more revealing. We can think of it as a reverse-engineered imaginary storyboard of the film – a reconstructed plan of its cinematography, editing, and content.

3 Remapping

Any representation can be understood as a result of a mapping operation between two entities: the sign and the thing being signified. Mathematically, mapping is a function that creates a correspondence between the elements in two domains. A familiar example of such mapping is geometric projection techniques used to create two-dimensional images of three-dimensional scenes, such as isometric projection and perspective projection. Another example is 2D maps that represent physical spaces. We can think of the well-known taxonomy of signs defined by philosopher Charles Peirce – icon, index, symbol, and diagram – as different types of mapping between an object and its representation. (Twentieth-century cultural theory often stressed that cultural representations are always partial maps, since they can only show some aspects of the objects. However, this assumption needs to be rethought, given the dozens of recently developed technologies for capturing data about physical objects, and the ability to process massive amounts of data to extract features and other information. Google, for instance, performs this operation a few times a day as it analyzes over a trillion web links. For further discussion of this point, see Manovich, 2012b.)

While any representation is a result of a mapping operation, modern media technologies – photography, film, audio records, fax and copy machines, audio and video magnetic recoding, media editing software, the web – led to a new practice of cultural mapping: using an already-existing media artifact and creating new meaning or a new aesthetic effect by sampling and rearranging parts of this artifact. While this strategy was already used in the second part of the nineteenth century (photomontage), it became progressively more central to modern art since the 1960s. Its different manifestations include pop art, compilation film, appropriation art, remix, and a large part of media art – from Bruce Conner’s very first compilation film, *A Movie* (1958), to Dara Birnbaum’s *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1979), Douglas Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), Joachim Sauter and Dirk Joachim’s *The Invisible Shapes of Things Past* (1995), Mark Napier’s *Shredder* (1998), Jennifer and Kevin McCoy’s *Every Shot/Every Episode* (2001), *Cinema Redux* by Brendan Dawes (2004), Natalie Bookchin’s *Mass Ornament* (2009), Christian Marclay’s *The Clock* (2011), and many others. While earlier remappings were done manually and had a small number

of elements, use of computers allowed artists to automatically create new media representations containing thousands of elements.

If the original media artifact, such as a news photograph, a feature film, or a website, can be understood as a “map” of some “reality,” an art project that rearranges the elements of this artifact can be understood as “remapping.” Such projects derive their meanings and aesthetic effects from systematically rearranging the samples of original media in new configurations.

In retrospect, many of these art projects can also be understood as media visualizations. They examine ideological patterns in mass media, experiment with new ways to navigate and interact with media, and defamiliarize our media perceptions.

The techniques described in this chapter already use some of the techniques explored earlier by artists. However, the practices of photomontage, film editing, sampling, remix, photomontage, and digital art are likely to contain many other strategies that can be appropriated for media visualization. Just as with the sampling issue, a more detailed analysis is required of the relationship between these artistic practices of media remapping and media visualization as a research method for media studies, but one difference is easy to describe.

Artistic projects typically sample media artifacts, selecting parts and then deliberately assembling these parts in new orders. For example, in a classical work of video art, titled *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1979), Dara Birnbaum sampled the television series *Wonder Woman* to isolate a number of moments, such as the transformation of the woman into a superhero. These short clips were then repeated many times to create a new narrative. The order of the clips did not follow their order in the original television episodes.

In our case, we are interested in revealing the patterns across the complete media artifact or a series of artifacts. Therefore, regardless of whether we are using all media objects (such as in the *Time* covers montage or *Kingdom Hearts* montages) or their samples (the *Time* covers slice), we typically start by arranging them in the same order as in the original work. Additionally, rather than selecting samples to support our new message (communicating a new meaning, expressing our opinion about the work), we start by following a systematic sampling method – for instance, selecting every second frame in a short video, or a single frame from every shot in a feature film.

As already argued earlier, we also purposely experiment with new sampling orders and different spatial arrangements of the media objects in visualization. Such deliberate remappings are closer to the artistic practice of aggressive rearrangements of media materials – although our purpose is revealing the patterns that are already present, as opposed to making new statements about the world using media samples. Whether this purpose is realizable is an open question. It is certainly possible to argue that our remappings are reinterpretations of the media works which force viewers to notice some patterns at the expense of others.

As an example of remapping technique, consider the following visualization that uses the first and last frame of every shot in Vertov’s *The Eleventh Year*.



Figure 4.9 Visualization of *The Eleventh Year* (Dziga Vertov, 1928). Every shot in the film is represented by its first frame. Frames are organized left to right and top to bottom following the order of shots in the film. Every shot was analyzed using software to measure the average amount of movement across all frames in the shot. These measurements are plotted below the frames. Longer bars = more motion; shorter bars = less motion. *Source:* Dziga Vertov, *The Eleventh Year*, 1928. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/culturevis/4117658480/in/set-72157622608431194/>

“Vertov” is a neologism invented by the director who adapted it as his last name early in his career. It comes from the Russian verb *vertet*, which means “to rotate.” “Vertov” may refer to the basic motion involved in filming in the 1920s – rotating the handle of a camera – and also the dynamism of film language developed by Vertov who, along with a number of other Russian and European artists, designers, and photographers working in that decade, wanted to defamiliarize familiar reality by using dynamic diagonal compositions and shooting from unusual points of view. However, our visualization suggests a very different picture of Vertov. Almost every shot of *The Eleventh Year* starts and ends with practically the same composition and subject. In other words, the shots are largely static. Going back to the actual film and studying these shots further, we find that some of them are indeed completely static – such as the close-ups of people’s faces looking in various directions without moving. Other shots employ a static camera that frames some movement – such as working machines, or workers at work – but the movement is localized completely inside the frame (in other words, the objects and human figures do not cross the view framed by the camera). Of course, we may recall that a number of shots in Vertov’s most famous film, *Man with A Movie Camera* (1929), were specifically designed as opposites: shooting from a moving car meant that the subjects were constantly crossing the camera view. But even in this most experimental of Vertov’s films, such shots constitute a very small part of the film.

Conclusion

In this chapter we described visual techniques for exploring large media collections. These techniques follow the same general idea: use the content of the collection – all images, their subsets (temporal sampling) or their parts (spatial sampling) – and present it in various spatial configurations in order to make visible the patterns and the overall “shape” of a collection. To contrast this approach to the more familiar practice of information visualization, we call it “media visualization.”

We included examples that show how media visualization can be used with already-existing metadata. However, if researchers add new information to the collection, this new information can also be used to drive media visualization. For example, images can be plotted using manually coded or automatically detected content properties, or visual features extracted via digital image processing. In the case of video, we can also use automatically extracted or coded information about editing techniques, framing, presence of human figures and other objects, amount of movement in each shot, and so on.

Conceptually, media visualization is based on three operations: zooming out to see the whole collection (image montage), temporal and spatial sampling, and remapping (rearranging the samples of media in new configurations). Achieving meaningful results with remapping techniques often involves experimentation and time. The

first two methods usually produce informative results more quickly. Therefore, every time we assemble or download a new media data set, we next explore it using image montages and slices of all items.

Consider this definition of “browse” from *Wiktionary*: “To scan, to casually look through in order to find items of interest, especially without knowledge of what to look for beforehand” (“Browse,” n.d.). Also relevant is one of the meanings of the word “exploration”: “to travel somewhere in search of discovery” (“Explore,” n.d.). How can we discover interesting things in massive media collections? In other words, how can we browse through them efficiently and effectively, without prior knowledge of what we want to find? Media visualization techniques give us some basic ways of doing this.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research presented in this chapter was supported by an Interdisciplinary Collaboratory Grant, “Visualizing Cultural Patterns” (UCSD Chancellors Office, 2008–2010), Humanities High Performance Computing Award, “Visualizing Patterns in Databases of Cultural Images and Video” (NEH/DOE, 2009), Digital Startup Level II grant (NEH, 2010), and CSRO grant (Calit2, 2010). We also are very grateful to the California Institute for Information and Telecommunication (Calit2) and UCSD Center for Research in Computing and the Arts (CRCA) for their ongoing support. All the visualizations and software development are the result of systematic collaboration among the key lab members: Lev Manovich, Jeremy Douglass, Tara Zappel, and William Huber.

NOTES

- 1 <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- 2 <http://www.archive.org>
- 3 <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>
- 4 <http://www.flickr.com/services/api/>
- 5 For a good example of rich metadata in a media collection, see <http://www.gettyimages.com/EditorialImages>
- 6 <http://www.tableausoftware.com>
- 7 <http://www-958.ibm.com/software/data/cognos/manyeyes>
- 8 <http://www.softwarestudies.com>
- 9 <http://www.imagemagick.org>
- 10 <http://Processing.org>
- 11 <http://rsbweb.nih.gov/ij/>
- 12 <http://www.softwarestudies.com>

- 13 http://vis.ucsd.edu/mediawiki/index.php/Research_Projects:_HIPerSpace
 14 <http://www.archive.org>

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The Study of the Internet in Latin America

Achievements, Challenges, Futures

Raúl Trejo Delarbre

ABSTRACT

Latin American social research about the Internet and digital technologies has been defined by a multifaceted and copious development. Since the initial studies in the mid-1990s, researchers have attended to general issues like the digital divide, national and regional politics of Internet expansion, and the distinctively Latin American political and social expressions on the web. Gradually, that research was oriented toward more specific issues like citizenship on the Internet, cyber-journalism, the construction of personal relations, and, more recently, social networks. This chapter describes the trajectory of these studies and the arguments of leading Latin American scholars in this area. While the diverse collection of works that collectively comprise “Latin American Internet research” does not constitute a school with its own theoretical models, Trejo Delarbre explains, there are nevertheless common foci and priorities within this body of scholarship. The author recommends that his generation of media scholars seize their unique perspective, having experienced the transition from analog to digital and from mass media to Internet, with all of the disruptive challenges this transition has posed and imposed – especially in cultures so deeply defined by a lack of access for so many.

The first Latin American studies of the Internet adopted cautious approaches, stemming from curiosity and fear of a new technology that seemed to have implications for all walks of social life no one could manage to clearly understand. Those studies had the pioneering spirit of explorers navigating uncharted waters. Although they did not always transfer well from monographic description to in-depth analysis, these initial investigations had the charm of novelty, accentuated by the fact that they were scrutinizing a tool of communication that seemed to have great democratic potential. Topics that interested these early researchers included the way people used the Internet and its derivations and applications; early discussions about the implications for teaching, journalism, and the law; the hints of new forms of socialization; and the first discussions around issues like anonymity, the growing influence of intelligent machines, rights of the author, and the exercise of freedoms as vast as they were occasionally contradictory. Interpretations of the Internet in Latin America were influenced, to a significant degree, by these initial investigations.¹

In this chapter, I offer a quick look at some of the main authors, examining several of the principal issues in Latin American social research about the Internet, digital media, and the information society. Although this is a very broad, complex, and heterogeneous region, there are various factors that justify an overall approach. Latin American countries share cultural traditions and practices and, of course, a common language, which means similar ways of appropriation with respect to information and communication technologies (ICTs). Even in Brazil, with a different native language, the use and learning of the Spanish idiom has been extended in recent years.

During this first decade and a half of academic studies of the Internet, Latin American researchers, like their colleagues in other latitudes, were building methodologies, defining mutual doubts, and sharpening the focus of research topics. Strictly speaking, we cannot talk about a specifically Latin American focus on the study of the Internet in the same way we can with studies of conventional communication media. Some authors, like the Brazilian Marques de Melo (1999), have identified a Latin American characteristic style in media research, induced by the peculiarities of political regimes, economic conditions, and cultural identities. Some examples that have been repeated across the Latin American subcontinent include the role that the press played in backing or contradicting authoritarian governments or dictators; the high concentration of television frequencies in just a few hands, which left almost no room for public service television programming; and the versatility of radio, which, in addition to its fundamental commercial qualities, has been used by community groups. I am not claiming that this characterizes all media in a geographical and cultural space as varied and vast as Latin America, but these characteristics have led to similar focuses on the part of a number of researchers in the study of mass communication in this region. Further, the folkloristic or voluntaristic conceptions of a fuzzy Latin American spirit, the linguistic and social conditions, among others, have contributed to create a distinctly Latin American cultural space. As Néstor García Canclini (1999), a prominent specialist in cultural and media studies in

the region, explains the Latin American cultural territory: "The indigenous, the Afro-American, the European, the Latinity, the tropicality, etc., sometimes are convergent and, in another, separated" (p. 42).

The preeminence of two major analytical currents in the Latin American study of the media favored this similarity of focus. The first of these currents was functionalism, which originated primarily in US sociology. Functionalism was the theoretical goal of the first studies on communication media in a number of Latin American countries. Contrasting with this interpretive vein was the Marxist perspective, which circulated in the halls of our universities mainly during the 1970s and influenced many of the researchers who carried out the most well-known media studies during the following decades. During this time, the types of research and analysis that privileged the study of social contradictions were in conflict and represented different trends in Latin American media research. The conflict between these analytical currents has been overcome since the 1990s.

Those conditions have not been repeated, at least not in the same form, in Latin American studies about the Internet and new digital media. The expansion of the Internet has been one of the mechanisms of globalization of economies and cultures. The content and uses of this new technology, like its study, have expanded throughout varied latitudes, thanks to the Internet itself. The information exchange and discussion among scholars nowadays (even the acquisition of books, which was not easy a few decades ago) take place easily and rapidly over the Internet. Studies of the media, especially new media, come out so quickly that when enough interest is generated, they can be accessed almost simultaneously in any country. This situation, which influences the methods and mechanisms of academic work in any discipline, has particularly influenced studies of digital media. Those of us who looked for conceptual hooks or methods to study the Internet in the mid-1990s found foundational references in the works of Rheingold (1994), De Kerckhove (1995), Moore (1995), or Negroponte (1995). In Spanish, early commentators included the Spaniard Echeverría (1994) and, undoubtedly, Castells (1996, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2009). Manuel Castells's reflections about the Internet and the informational society have been well known among scholars worldwide. In Latin America, he is the most influential author on these issues.

In the 1990s, ideas and doubts about digital media did not circulate widely in Latin American universities, but they were attractive enough to at least pique the interest of researchers from various countries. Soon databases, statistics, and research results on the coverage of the Internet, and sometimes on the way people used it, began to spread. This information, posted online, could be accessed in Boston, San Francisco, and London, as well as in Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, and São Paulo. Those of us interested in these topics could follow the Internet's first steps, as the web began to gain notoriety and generate interest in society, practically from the outset. In addition to the wonder inspired by the new possibilities of the spread of information and interaction, which contrasted with the vertical model of the old media, we had the feeling that we were taking part in an unprecedented phenomenon.

From our university cubicles or from our own homes, using slow connections through telephone modems, and waiting minutes and sometimes hours for images or audiovisual files to download, those of us interested in the topic had the privilege of watching the social birth of the Internet. The technological inception of these changes had taken place through the improvement, in the 1970s, of the TCP/IP protocol that allowed the first computers to connect to this network, and later, around 1990, with the creation of the system of hypertext links that would weave the World Wide Web. But this communication resource was not introduced to a wider public until well into the last decade of the twentieth century, when the Internet started to expand throughout various regions, including Latin America.

The development of the Internet, along with its cultural and societal implications for our countries, has been part of the expansion of a globalization that has not displaced but has delimited local cultures. The digital divide continues to be a reality that we cannot ignore, despite our admiration for the flourishing of the information society. In 2010 in Latin America, approximately 32% of the population had an Internet connection (Internet World Stats, 2010). This was a monumental advance, especially if we consider that 12 years earlier, in 1998, just 1.5% of Latin Americans had access to the Internet (Trejo Delarbre, 1999, p. 262) and in 2003, only 8%. The fact that in 12 years this number grew more than 20 times, and that in eight years it quadrupled, shows the dizzying expansion of the Internet in this part of the world. But we must remember that still, in 2010, 68 out of every 100 Latin Americans lacked access to the Internet.

That intensive and extensive but irregular growth has had several consequences in the scholarly sphere. Although insufficient in many countries, the presence of the Internet in Latin America has garnered the attention, at times methodologically unorthodox, of a variety of fields. A diverse amalgam of disciplines, from engineering to sociology, philosophy, and anthropology, among others, has studied the modes, uses, and challenges of the development of the Internet in Latin America. From the lack of trust that seemed to prevail during the mid-1990s, when many were not aware of the Internet or considered it a simple instrument of ideological imposition, to the uncritical and excessively enthusiastic positions that mimicked analyses of the web from US authors, Latin American research has advanced a systematic and at times creative approach to Internet studies. This research has principally been carried out through the work of individual scholars, not through institutional efforts.

The interest in these issues has increased, especially in the last decade. Academic studies on the issue, no more than a dozen in 1996 and 1997, have stretched into the hundreds, or even thousands, if one takes into account university theses. Take just one example: at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in 1995, two theses were submitted with topics related to the Internet. The following year there were six, and in 1997 there were 22. In total, between 1995 (the first year a thesis on the Internet was submitted) and 1999, there were 122 studies on this topic. Between 2000 and 2004, there were 388 studies; from 2005 to 2009, there were 495.²

The exchange between those interested in these issues continues to be precarious and the specialized forums are few. The Internet has been quickly accepted as a particular topic within Latin American studies of communication, especially in meetings of organizations like the Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación (ALAIIC).³ But its recognition as a medium in its own right has been late – in comparison to European and North American countries – in the priorities of research centers and in specialized university communications curricula. What follows is an account, though inevitably fragmentary, of Latin American contributions and investigations in the study of the Internet.

Alejandro Piscitelli: From Cyberculture to Facebook

Few authors in Latin America have undertaken a panoramic review of the cultural effects and social presence of the Internet. Almost all of the studies, especially since 2000, have been focused on specific developments and problems with the production and reception of Internet content. Alejandro Piscitelli, a professor of philosophy at Universidad de Buenos Aires, has been a pioneer in thinking about cyberculture in Latin America.⁴ Piscitelli's own education, which took him from philosophy to systems science, encompasses a variety of perspectives that pertain to the study of the Internet. His classic book, *Ciberculturas: En la era de las máquinas inteligentes* (*Cybercultures: In the Era of Intelligent Machines*), was published in 1995 and reissued seven years later (Piscitelli, 2002a) with a number of new annotations and annexes. In that book, Piscitelli insists on several coordinates: technological and cultural changes cannot be understood separately; the interaction between men and machines is making the world increasingly complex and should be studied from an anthropological perspective; hypertext opens new frontiers to the collective construction of sense; and the imbrications between television and computer will displace the book.

Piscitelli has brought a Latin American, but not a regionalist, reading to topics like nanotechnology, hypermedia, virtual spaces, and, of course, the Internet. Two of his books (Piscitelli, 1998, 2001) have analyzed the overlap of conventional mass media like television, which reaches a wide audience, with the Internet, which connects directly to its users, as well as the failed hopes raised by financial speculation of the digital economy. In *Meta-Cultura* (2002b), Piscitelli elevates the subject of his reflections and asks about the implications new media will have not only on the information that our societies receive, but also on our ways of thinking about and understanding the world. In a rigorous bibliographic exploration, he examines the cognitive transformations that the Internet has enabled and dispersed across diverse terrains: language, technology, culture, knowledge, and communication.

In 2003 and for the following five years, Piscitelli temporarily left the university to get involved in public administration as the head of Educ.ar, the “educational portal for the Argentine nation.” However, he did not stop writing about these topics, and

in that time he published works like *Internet, la imprenta del siglo XXI* (*Internet, the Twenty-First Century's Printing Press*, 2005), where he discusses the emergence of blogs, the distribution of online content, and the educational uses of the Internet, among other topics. Piscitelli's practice with developing educational content, his teaching work in the Universidad de Buenos Aires, and his passion for the capacity of this new medium to articulate interests, affinities, and people, led him to create "El Proyecto Facebook," or The Facebook Project (<http://www.proyectofacebook.com.ar>), with professors and students in the Introduction to Computer Science course in the Social Sciences department. The project involved research into the uses of Facebook, especially in learning. At the same time, it was an experiment in the use of the online social network as a space of exchange and discussion among students and teachers.⁵ In the effort to *think with images* ("pensar con imágenes"), Piscitelli and his more than 250 colleagues and students made videos, photographs, blogs, and other content in what they called an experience of participative education. The account of that experience (Piscitelli, Adaime, & Binder, 2010) included commentary from other Latin American professors, offering a precise and timely reflection on the abilities of online social networks to be used as a platform for learning, as well as a new way to impart, create, spread, and evaluate knowledge.

In an orthodox and pedagogically rigid environment like the one that still exists in many Latin American universities, Piscitelli's Facebook Project, developed between 2008 and 2010, was an innovative experiment. Piscitelli is one of the few Latin American scholars who has followed the Internet step by step. The continuity in this work, from his initial conceptual reflections in the 1990s to his experimentation with Facebook, has been pioneering in the Latin American research in this field.

The Information Society and the Digital Divide

The Internet's expansion brought critical approaches from the Latin American social sciences. In particular, the cardinal options outlined by Umberto Eco (1964) in his essential book from the mid-1960s – the apocalyptic and the integrated views – found a central place in the scholarly discussion about the web and its social implications. The broad view of the Internet's social and cultural implantation in Latin America was explained, in panoramic takes, by authors like Sánchez (1997) and Flores Olea and Gaspar de Alba (1997). They were the first to recognize the rapidity of Internet development and to claim that this new technological resource could have liberating uses and effects, but only accompanied by adequate public policies. Sánchez (1997) anticipated both the virtues and the limitations of the Internet. He noted that "the Internet unifies knowledge horizontally," and that it is not the solution to our societies' cultural deficiencies; "nor is it adequate to think that the Internet itself could be the solution to global civil growth, given that the majority of the Internet will be put to quite frivolous use, for entertainment and the like" (p. 61).

Latin American research has focused not only on the Internet as a technology, but also more broadly on the information society as a political, social, and economic formation, starting with discussions about the various implications of the concept. Notably, some scholars considered the notion of an "information society" too panegyric, while for others it was itself a diagnosis of a growing reality, though one that was not always advantageous as it replicated a number of social inequities. Some scholars maintained that the information society did not amount (at least mechanically) to an entirely new society, nor did it mean the improvement of the whole society. With that analytical frame, Crovi Druetta (2004a) and the authors gathered in her book argue that the information society amounts to more of a global patchwork of change than an entirely unique and distinct era. The key to understanding and advancing information and knowledge expansion, they maintain, is public policy actively developed by Latin American governments. However, this is one of the shortfalls or limitations suffered by Latin American countries. In my early work on the Internet (Trejo Delarbre, 1996), I analyzed such public policies in several regions. More recently, the Peruvian Villanueva (2005) has examined the usefulness of the Internet in public administration. Though less abundant, there are also critical reflections on the realities and very definition of the information society, most notably that of Pasquali (2003) from Venezuela. Pasquali has underlined several paradoxes. "Rather than an information society," he writes, "ours is, more accurately, a 'computerized' civilization, an information-dependent one, to a degree directly proportional to the wealth of a country" (p. 219). Without underestimating the Internet's social and political relevance, Pasquali's work highlights the influence of corporations that are behind the expansion of digital connections and resources.

These studies and others like them offer more of a panoramic perspective than specific views about the information society and its emergence in Latin America. Especially in its early years, scholarly production related to the Internet was dominated by these more global perspectives. The Venezuelans Peña and Martínez (2008) have expressed concern for the scarcity of research that highlights the local:

We need to apply a local perspective to what is generalized globally, in order to avoid falling victim to the simple imitation of other contexts and a lack of adequate analysis and discernment of the specific realities of each country in relation to its own economic, political, social, and cultural issues. When this is not examined, we fall victim to technological alienation, assuming distant realities as our own and, consequently, ignoring the importance of the local. (p. 78)

Beyond the academy (but with its participation), the primary debate on the Internet in Latin America, especially in the final years of the twentieth century, revolved around the disjuncture between investing resources in technological infrastructure while failing to meet other social needs. In reality, the connection-versus-food dilemma so often invoked in these discussions is a false one. If a country or society does not have even the most minimal of comforts, including literacy, electricity, and

telephone lines, then it will not have the material support to even introduce the Internet. But we can also recognize that this infrastructure is an indispensable part of development. These issues have been studied by Ricardo Gómez (2000), an Argentinean who resides in Canada, as well as by various multilateral organizations. Gómez remarks that information technologies are neither positives nor negatives, but neither are they neutral. They depend on the shape and direction of the societies in Latin America, where the access to informational resources is unevenly distributed. In spite of the communitarian telecenters, the majority of users constitute an elite group who are interconnected with the global market, with greater access to information, education, and other opportunities. This perspective on the Internet, which views it as an instrument that expands the gap between richest and poorest, was frequent in many diagnoses. However, authors like Gómez went beyond this view to insist on the development of a form of politics capable of creating and guaranteeing the social right to communication.

In an evaluation of the development of the information society in Latin America, presented in early 2003, the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL, Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean) conceived the new information and communication technologies as

something more than technology and computers, given that they do not function as an isolated system, but in connection with other systems through a network. They are also more than technologies of emission and diffusion (like television and radio), as they not only provide information, but also enable interactive communication. (CEPAL, 2003, p. 5)

As a regional organization, CEPAL proposed to establish regulatory frames, which included, among other public policy actions, financing programs for connections coverage (especially wireless) and computer equipment with free software, ICT development in public education, special programs for the elderly, coordination between governmental offices in charge of these policies, and regional alliances (by several countries) to acquire hardware at lower prices from the transnational corporations.

In 2003 the Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración (ALADI, Latin American Association for Integration) published an extensive study on the limitations of connectivity in the region. Typically, research and discussion about the digital divide focused on the availability of connections. This study, in addition to the traditional understandings of the digital divide, proposed a methodology that took into account not only the proportion of Internet users, but also telephone coverage, the density of computers per person, and each country's economic situation (ALADI, 2003). The digital divide, according to the study, "describes the difference between countries, sectors and people with access to information implements and tools and the capacity to use them, and, in addition, those who do not have access, regardless of whether they have the capacity." The study was completed by Rodrigo Díaz (Chile), Oscar A.

Messano (Argentina), and Ricardo Petrissans (Uruguay). In addition, Petrissans produced the website “Sociedad Digital” (Digital Society) (www.sociedaddigital.org), which published an abundance of information on Internet public policy.

Latin American scholars have examined another dimension of the digital divide – that is, the question of a gender divide in Internet use. A question revisited over the past 15 years is how women in Latin American countries use the Internet. In a helpful review of former investigations, the Argentinean researcher Bonder (2002) describes the gender gap in access to technologies and suggests new angles for additional studies. Questions include, among others, how to increase women’s access and training with ICTs, especially poor women; how to promote equal participation in decisions about the use of communications infrastructure (in both national and international institutions); and how to achieve an equal distribution of cyberspace in international organizations. Coca (2003) studied how the Internet had been used to increase women’s political participation in Bolivia, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. Later, Leao, Lapa, and Amoroso (2009) documented the role of new technologies in both spreading stereotypes and denouncing violence against women in Brazil.

As this research suggests, the “digital divide” is a complex, multifaceted problem. Another effort to problematize any straightforward conceptualization of the digital divide is found in González (2008), who challenges whether it can be approached in the same way in every circumstance. González criticizes the overwhelming tendency to focus on the physical lack of connections while ignoring other deficiencies in ICT use. He also questions the practice of leaving it exclusively to governments to develop public policies governing ICTs, arguing for the wider participation of civil society in planning and establishing goals like social empowerment.

Beyond policy-oriented efforts to rationalize and organize information about Internet coverage and its insufficiencies, it is safe to say that in Latin America, save for a few exceptions, the public has little involvement in Internet policy and access remains a critical problem. As Argentinean Professor Del Brutto writes, “the internal public policies of each country are chaotic with respect to the ease with which the public can access the Internet. By chaotic I mean, given the timidity of the State and the expansion of the private sector, the public has little to no intervention” (Del Brutto, 1991). One exception has been Brazil and the publication of its exemplary *Sociedade da Informação no Brasil: Livro Verde (Information Society in Brazil: Green Book)*, a collection of contributions from more than 150 specialists, organized by topic (public administration; business action; cultural content and identity; international cooperation; outreach; education; network infrastructure; regionalization; research and development; planning; and high-performance processing). The report’s practical applications are evident in the sections that organize each of its eight chapters: “what it’s about,” “where we are,” “where we’re going,” and “what to do.” It suggests that the term information society is not just an expression: “It represents a profound shift in the organization of society and the economy; some would consider it a new techno-economic paradigm” (Takahashi, 2000, p. 5).

For the *Livro Verde*, the information society is also a global phenomenon with political, economic, and social dimensions that are not exempt from risk. In the poorest of the developing countries, the choice between groceries and connectivity is not easy. The states have a major duty to provide infrastructure and training to connect their societies to information networks, but also necessary is the coordination of social efforts. "Since the mid-1990s, countries and political blocks have faced the opportunities and risks associated with the future and, acknowledging the strategic importance of the information society, have then taken steps to ensure that this new era will benefit them" (Takahashi, 2000, p. 5). The *Livro Verde* proposed actions like legislative measures (for example, to facilitate electronic commerce), expanding Internet coverage to all Brazilians, promoting digital literacy and creating contents online committed to expanding and reinforcing Brazilian arts and culture, connecting computers in all the public libraries, and increasing digital resources like cellular phones and high-definition television across the country.

In January of 1999, Chile produced a similar document titled *Chile: Hacia la Sociedad de la Información. Informe al Presidente de la República (Chile: Moving Toward the Information Society. Report to the President of the Republic of Chile)* (Comisión Presidencial, 1999). In Central America, the Fundación Acceso (Access Foundation), with the participation of researchers like Kemly Camacho, Juliana Martínez, and Evelyn Zamora, produced useful monographs on the knowledge and diffusion of the Internet, as well as society's appropriation of it.⁶ In the Caribbean, since 1993 the Fundación Funredes (Funredes Foundation) – established in the Dominican Republic and headed by Daniel Pimienta – has done systematic analysis on the social uses of computer networks, as well as a study of the presence of Latin languages on the Internet.

These are just some examples of collaborations between researchers, public institutions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have aimed to facilitate social access to the Internet. Now, over a decade into the new century, Latin American scholars interested in these issues have enough experience with the Internet to comprehend and compare costly omissions, excessive hopes, and, when they exist, successful policies on the development of the digital communications in this region. Unlike most academic studies about the traditional media that were distant from the public policies in that area – particularly between the 1960s and 1980s – research regarding the Internet and other digital resources has been more involved with public deliberation about these matters – even the critical positions. Most of the scholarly research has been as critical of the indulgent perspective as it has of the apocalyptic approach.

Complicating Internet Access Issues in Latin America

With healthy skepticism, Hopenhayn (2003), established in Chile, warns us not to confuse limited, if successful, Internet access programs with the lack of prospects that continue to define the Internet in Latin American countries:

While it is true that there are exemplary cases of poor high-school students that manage to dialogue from terminals at school with peers across the world, comparing graffiti or biology experiments, we must recognize that in Latin America we have beautiful and heroic singular cases, but very inadequate public policies in this area. (p. 301)

The diversity of experiences and cadences with which the Internet has developed in Latin America has made it difficult to produce panoramic studies. Three German researchers – Herzog, Hoffman, and Schultz (2002) from the Instituto de Estudios Iberoamericanos (Institute of Iberian Studies, IEI) in Hamburg – made a laudable effort to make several of the first comparative reviews about these issues. In contrast to the availability of statistical information in European countries, Canada, and the United States, there have been persistent difficulties in obtaining hard data about media access and use, including the Internet, in most of the Latin American nations. Nowadays, in spite of the difficulties, we have seen a growth in statistical sources about media use in Latin American countries (international reports, national censuses, marketing research, quantitative case studies, and so on), creating a corpus of data and knowledge.

Contributions like these provide context for the study of more particular issues, such as how citizens use the Internet; the role the Internet plays in the creation, propagation, or dissemination of social and national identities; and the ways in which some social movements have taken advantage of the web. Various methodological frameworks have been employed to understand different ways of using the Internet. In addition to traditional quantitative methods from sociology, ethnographic and other approaches have been adapted from anthropology and other disciplines.⁷ Notably, Rafael Capurro (2000), a Uruguayan professor of computer science in Stuttgart, has emphasized the need for studies that examine the local, cultural dimensions of Internet use:

This refers to the way in which local cultures – for example, cities, regions, and countries, but also individuals, businesses, and groups – present themselves on the Internet, highlighting their cultural particularities through things like language, colors, symbols, etc. This type of study should show not only different types of cultural mixing, but also the openness and intercultural porousness, as well as the persistence of prejudices, preferences, and interests. This type of study could also show in what way political and cultural conflicts are reflected on the Internet and what type of problems are generated by this space which covers, so to speak, the framework of geographical, cultural, and legal limits, whose boundaries have determined human history since its inception. This is an issue that includes but also goes far beyond the question of whether or not a specifically Latin American way of using the Internet exists.

With the notion of “Internet for all” as a point of departure, various authors have examined experiments in communal uses. On the one hand, they find that social groups and movements employ the Internet to interact with each other, in addition to building a public, sometimes even global, presence that they would not have achieved under other conditions. The imbrication of the Internet with a large variety

of social movements – often with opposing ideological leanings – has confirmed the political neutrality of the Internet as well as its capacity to help promote almost any cause. León, Burch, and Tamayo (2001) studied the Internet's ability to be used as an instrument as well as a space for the expression and development of social movements. The Mexican researcher Galindo Cáceres (1997, 2001, 2006) examined the Zapatista Army's use of the Internet, inspiring various other works on this topic (like those of the Spaniards Sierra [1997] and Vázquez Liñán [2004] and the Mexican Rovira [2009]), which seemed to confirm the Internet's radical potential to empower and give voice to even the most marginal social movements.

Another important line of study in the collective use of resources to access and express oneself on the Internet has focused on public access sites, some free and some that charge a fee, which have proliferated in Latin American countries. The financial and sometimes technical difficulties in connecting every home, or the desire for occasional privacy, particularly in the case of young people, have aided the rapid spread of computer centers and Internet cafés throughout the region. Over the past 10 years, studies have focused on the specific uses that benefit or facilitate these Internet access sites, the public policies that replace or complement them, and the users' experiences.

A number of these studies are worthy of note, providing an overall picture of the complicated issues of access that have defined Internet use across Latin America, as a host of actors from local communities to national governments have worked to bring connectivity to the region, with uneven results. Hernández Tapia (2004) compared the Digital Communication Centers created by the Mexican government around 2003 with family-run Internet cafés with better performance and coverage; in both cases, there were opportunities for users to improve their digital skills. Finquelievich and Prince (2007) studied Internet cafés in Argentina and verified the convenience of those places as a replacement for the hardware and connectivity that many people do not have in their homes. Colona (2003) discovered that the users of public Internet booths in Lima give greater credibility to the contents they find on the web than to accredited references. Fuentes Zurita, Yurén, and Elizondo (2008) did a detailed study of the use of Internet cafés in Mexico City and observed how the young people built their identities around the moments that they stayed in those places. Ways of communicating among themselves, and the peculiar expressions and iconic symbols that they use, are cultivated in the Internet café. Gonzalo Vega (2005) examined the Venezuelan government's plan to set up computer centers (*infocentros*) and found that, while the program made the social inclusion of its users easier, it did not stimulate their technological literacy. In the search for a desirable public policy in this area, Robinson (2007) had severe criticism for "e-Mexico," the governmental program for Internet expansion, and proposed the creation of community centers with digital technology access (*centros comunitarios digitales*). What has seemed to emerge from these studies is an emphasis on the importance of the private enterprises (usually small parlors) that complement state action in the expansion of connectivity in Latin American countries.

Youth Cybercultures, Citizenship, and Urban Environments

Constant connection to digital devices influences almost all orders of contemporary life, but in Latin America there has been particular interest in understanding how digital media are both transforming and responding to changes in youth culture, citizenship, and urban environments. Latin American approaches to this new world have moved from a general initial look, often inflected with astonishment, to more astute observations made after over a decade of experience and research. With its integrated highways, avenues, and paths, the Internet itself has a reticular structure that can be compared to a major city. Its arteries run parallel or across each other, following the linked hypertexts that connect them. The same happens with Internet users. One can traverse the Internet with others, in search of others, or alone. This points to a deep ambivalence, common among commentators in Latin America, about the role of digital media in changing forms of youth culture, citizenship, and urban life. This ambivalence likewise is encapsulated in the words of Argentine researcher Diego Levis (2009), who has studied the effects of computers, televisions, cell phones, and other devices on people's relationships with media content and with one another: "we use technology to give us a better life in a better world. We must not allow the Internet to trap and immobilize us" (p. 278).

The interest in how young people approach and incorporate new technologies has generated very detailed studies with methodologies ranging from testimonials to participant observation, and from statistically representative surveys to in-depth ethnographies. Studies of the use of the Internet for educational purposes appear in a number of primarily technical works. From the pedagogical perspective, there are hundreds of reports and studies about the Internet in schools, as well as a vehicle for distance learning. In several countries, the learning capacities of the web have been harnessed more in private schools and universities than in the public education systems or by the public universities (which are the major educational institutions in Latin America). Among the conceptual reflections in this area, the Chilean Brunner's (2003) essay stands out for its critical focus on the Internet as an educational tool (underlining the errors but also the responsibilities of governments). The use of computers and the Internet in public libraries in Mexico was the subject of an extensive national survey, and then a book, by Santos and De Gortari (2009). The librarians appear in that research as the main enablers of the use of computers and the Internet, in addition to their traditional work as information archivists. However, it is very difficult for them to accomplish the task of enabling computer and Internet adoption because many of them have been trained in an analogical environment (a situation that is of course changing, albeit unevenly). The didactic use of computers by young people has also been the subject of both political and commercial projects. *One Laptop per Child*, for example, which has brought together diverse businesses and digital

technology promoters, has been implemented in Uruguay.⁸ Undoubtedly, it is important that each child have his or her own laptop. But the hardware is insufficient without proper software, appropriate training for students and teachers, and adjustments in the educational system. The Uruguayan case is the first Latin American experience in massive distribution of computers to children and young people, and deserves more attention.

Another vital issue that researchers in Latin America have raised concerns the implications of young people's use of the Internet for digital labor practices, and the blurring line between leisure and work apparent in young people's uses of digital media. In one study, the Mexicans Crovi and Girardo (2001) examined how young people use the Internet, paying particular attention to the question of labor, or how young people learn to do digital work. The ability to use digital technologies is a competitive advantage for young people, they argue, but the way these technologies facilitate "telework" and "piecework" can easily translate into reduced labor rights in their transition to workers in a digital economy. In Peru, Quiroz (2004, 2008) examined the Internet as an aspect of youth media consumption, studying its use in both schools and public settings. He found that computer users felt greater freedom and developed new socialization skills, with more friends online and different ways to construct and express their identities. Of course, it is important to note that young people's use of the Internet in the home, as in schools and public places, has presented new challenges for both teachers and parents. Generational differences can be acute: while for parents the Internet is often associated with knowledge and intelligence, for young people it represents a new space for social life and leisure.

The use of the Internet, including image sharing and other multimedia forms, is now a part of the practices of identity formation for younger generations, at least among those with access. Contributors to Urresti's (2008) edited collection identified the characteristics of a slightly nebulous but engaged youth cyberculture in Argentina, for example. These researchers focused on a range of activities of Argentine youth, including their multitasking abilities, encounters with Messenger and other chat functions (which do not replace face-to-face relations), and the social contexts in which they learn to use computers and the Internet – namely, with their classmates or friends but not with their parents. As the research compiled in Urresti's collection shows, the Internet has become a propitious place for the formation of personal and collective singularities, even "urban tribes."

Young people's use of digital media is deeply tied to the role of digital media in changing conceptions and practices of citizenship in Latin America. The Internet's capacity to create relations among people, groups, and institutions has made it essential to the construction of citizenship, understood as the ability of citizens to exercise their rights in an informed and participatory way. This has been the focus of investigators like Lozada (2004) and Martínez (2004) from Universidad Central de Venezuela and Universidad del Zulia, in Venezuela. The Quito headquarters of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) has also supported various investigations on the use of the Internet in fostering practices of citizenship, as well

as in specific aspects of public management (Cerbino & Richero, 2006), and on the social appropriation of new technologies in Ecuador, Chile, and Peru (Albornoz, Benalcázar, Rodríguez, & Paz, 2006; Albornoz, Cabrera, Palacios, Ramírez, & Villafuerte, 2007). In Brazil, Krohling Peruzzo (2005) has reflected on the contrast between utopias and social rights in efforts to build forms of democratic communication on the Internet.

Argentine professor Susana Finkelievich (Finkelievich, 2000; Finkelievich & Schiavo, 1998) has been particularly dedicated to studying the intersections between the Internet, citizenship, and the urban environment. "We have evolved from networks of citizens into cities, and from there to a world that is not smaller, but inextricably complex, in which local actions have global repercussions and vice versa" (Finkelievich, 2000, p. 18).⁹ The critical and policy-oriented perspectives of the authors that Finkelievich collects in her substantial edited volumes imbricate digital networks with public administration. But instead of e-government – that is, the use of digital resources in government operations and in its relation with the citizens – they are concerned with electronic governability (understood as the political efficiency of the government).¹⁰ In addition to studying the Internet in large metropolises, they present proposals to develop social participation, working from the Internet, in small municipalities. From the perspective of cyberculture studies, André Lemos (2004) has observed that in Brazil "cybercities are now considered as a way to reestablish public space, synergize diverse collective knowledge, and reinforce community ties" (p. 22).

Cyber-Journalism and Blogging

An innovation and a challenge, cyber-journalism has been a recurring subject for researchers in Latin America, like the Mexicans Islas (2002) and Navarro (2002), particularly in light of the interest that it has begun to generate in communication schools. Islas and Gutiérrez (2000) examined how the web serves as host to conventional media. These researchers head the Internet project, *Proyecto Internet*, on the Mexico campus of the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, where they edit the e-magazine *Razón y Palabra*¹¹ and are part of the ALAIC working group on the Internet and the Information Society. Covi Druetta (2004b), and the authors that she gathered, discuss the role of the media in the context of the information society. As contrasted with the traditional media, which are subject to corporate priorities, the Internet has promised to offer the means for a new diversity of expression, although access difficulties have constrained those possibilities only to connected citizens.

As university communications departments started recognizing the explosion of the Internet onto the media landscape, studies developed for teaching purposes, but also in the professional field, examining the implications of the Internet for both

journalism and entertainment. There are dozens of monographs and theses about online journalism, but comparative studies are still scarce. One of the most important studies was carried out by an Argentinean researcher living in Madrid, Luis Albornoz (2007), who did a comparison of the main online Ibero-American daily newspapers. Among other characteristics, he found a strong presence of brief news compared to other kinds of journalism, an abundance of advertising, more text than multimedia pieces, weak participation on the part of readers, and an increasing presence of creative professionals (journalists, photographers, and designers specializing in digital media).

Studies on the unique aspects of the Internet as a space of communication and interaction in comparison with conventional media are also growing. One pioneer in this field is Raisa Urribarri (1999), a professor at the Universidad de Los Andes in Trujillo, Venezuela, who applied Latin American communication theory to speculate on the participatory uses of the Internet. Later studies asked to what degree the Internet is displacing conventional mass media, or even whether attributes like interactivity and the personalization of content are leading to the end of mass media or journalism. This is the very question that contributors take up in Carlón and Scolari (2009): while some authors defend the prevalence of the printed book, others describe the new grammar in television brought about by digitization and the contrast created by online audiovisual formats like YouTube. Rather than conclusive assertions, approaches to new media are providing descriptions and conjectures about the next media landscape.

The rise, ease of use, and content of blogs are also of interest to Latin American Internet researchers, especially in their open-diary nature and the implications for journalism. One of the most comprehensive publications in this area was compiled by the Brazilians Amaral, Recuero, and Portella Montardo (2009). After a brief history of blogs, the authors suggest a method to study blogging that takes into account readers' participation. Appraising several Brazilian blogs, they saw these spaces as new mechanisms of political representation and, in other cases, as a new kind of journalism. In addition, the Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social (FELAFACS, 2008) dedicated an issue of its magazine to discussing the global and local dimensions of the blogosphere.

Affect and Collective Intelligence

In Latin America, the Internet has become a medium for new cultural manifestations and a site for the formation of social relationships that do not necessarily exist offline. Latin American scholars have examined these emerging cultural forms and relationships from different perspectives. To Piscitelli's work discussed above we can add the conclusions of another Argentinean, Romano (2000), who sees virtual communities as "new artificial psychological masses" (p. 6). To the degree that digital technologies

are increasingly woven into our daily lives, they are both the forum and the vehicle for the exposition of public issues, as well as for topics and practices that in the past were confined to more private realms of individual consciousness. Internet researchers in Latin America have given some attention to the forms of interconnection between Internet use and the mental and affective lives of its individual users, as well as the new forms of collective consciousness, or “collective intelligence,” that the new medium seems to facilitate.

The fields of psychology and psychoanalysis are logical places for these lines of inquiry. From the camp of psychology, but free of disciplinary fundamentalism, the Uruguayan Balaguer Prestes (2003) took up an examination of the cultural implications of the Internet in the broadest meaning of the term. “The Internet is a new psychosocial space that each cybernaut can live in according to his desires, possibilities, and limitations,” he argues (p. 11). Subsequently, Balaguer Prestes (2005) analyzed subjects like Internet addiction, digital interfaces and young people, psychoanalysis and new technology, and postmodern conceptions of the body. The intertwining of exhibitionism and prudence, the exposing of private affairs that has turned into both a business and a social phenomenon, and the way that diverse expressions of individualities are multiplied on the Internet, are key issues discussed by the Brazilian professor Paula Sibilía (2008) in an intelligent book that incorporates psychoanalysis, literature, and social sciences. To her, intimacy has become spectacle, and that mutation means deep transformations in social relations and forms of subjectivity and self-conception. Affective relations in spaces like chat rooms, and the tensions between eroticism and censure, are discussed without preconceptions by Sánchez (2001). The possibilities of new technologies to open up the senses to unconventional perceptions are studied by Yehya (2001), who also includes an analysis of cyborgs and robots, and Gómez Cruz (2003), who discusses the relationship between cybersex and virtual communities.

The work of André Lemos and Pierre Lévy, independently and together, develops the notion of collective intelligence based on social and political participation through the Internet. For many years, André Lemos, along with Marcos Palacios, headed the Centro Internacional de Estudos e Pesquisa em Cibercultura (Center for the Study and Research of Cyberculture) in the Communications Department at the Universidade Federal de Bahia, in Brazil. Three working groups – on cybercities, online journalism, and Internet and politics – as well as the e-magazine *404n0tF0und*, formed part of this academic collective. Later Lemos, in addition to maintaining an interest in topics related to the Internet city, dedicated himself to studying the cultural, aesthetic, and ethical implications of the Internet as well as cell phones and other digital technology. In 2010, he and Pierre Lévy published a declaration in favor of cyberdemocracy, which they argue could involve a new form of the state headed by collective and reticular intelligence (Lemos & Lévy, 2010).¹²

In the preceding pages I have presented an inventory, structured around a half-dozen topic areas, of Latin American research on the Internet: (1) the groundbreaking work of Alejandro Piscitelli and his Facebook Project; (2) the studies of the

information society and the “digital divide”; (3) public access sites, communal uses, and the more complicated issues of digital access in Latin America; (4) youth cyber-cultures, citizenship, and urban environments; (5) online journalism and blogging; and, finally, (6) affect and collective intelligence. I now turn to a brief reflection on the possible future of Latin American studies of the Internet and digital media.

Analog Researchers, Retrained for the Digital World

Many of us who currently study the Internet have made the switch from the old analog world to the new digital context. Those of us of particular generations have already had years of experience doing academic work in predigital conditions, when the information society exploded into our lives and work. We have been, in Prensky’s (2001) terms, digital migrants in at least three aspects. In just a few years, our daily personal lives have changed with the use of new technology. Additionally, part of the way we organize and carry out our work, and potentially our analytical and research routines, have changed thanks to the computer and the availability of information online. Finally, we have also shifted our topics of study to dedicate ourselves to these new technologies. In addition to thinking about the Internet, we continue to focus on some of our old subjects (conventional media, for example), and we are constantly thinking about the contrast between the vitality, so intense that sometimes it becomes hypnotic, with which new media develop and change, and the traditional media’s more familiar and predictable routines.

The Internet and new media formats and technology interfaces are constantly changing. They are media in a process of evolving. In contrast, conventional media only go through minor modifications, while their format, rhetoric, and the very logic through which they communicate messages remain the same. If we were in Jurassic Park, we could say that the old media (television, print, radio, cinema) are like the lumbering diplodocus, while new media are more like a velociraptor. It is impossible not to pay attention to the former because we are used to them and they are an integral part of our daily perspective. However, we are not only in the presence of a reconfiguration of the old media but also facing new languages, structures, layouts, and contents in the digital environment. The mass media communication schema, based on one transmitter and many receivers, has experienced a radical change with the interactive and production capabilities of the Internet.

New media displace the previous media – and us – from one format to another, from one capacity to another. Following the steps of these new media to try to understand their internal logic and their consequences for society has required media scholars to adapt existing quantitative and qualitative methodologies and computer skills. This task also requires extreme patience, above all when we have to deal with outdated hardware or computer programs that do not always work the way they

should, or when we have difficult or slow connections that turn the information superhighway into a dusty and sinuous country road.

There is not much time before we digital migrants, who in our academic lives have traveled from the analog world to the new context of computer networks, are displaced by younger researchers who since birth have been familiar with computers, modems, software, and, most of all, the possibility to download information on any subject or archive. The future of research will be in the hands of digital natives who do not marvel at the brilliant constellation of content and connections, because they have always lived with it. These researchers will not suffer the difficult and, for some, unending initiation that migrants from the old order had to experience. The technological update is an exigency for all of us but it is easier and more natural for those who have been educated in the digital context. However, it may be that they lack one essential thing that those of us who have experienced this transition still have: the element of surprise, which has allowed us to identify different characteristics of the uses and effects of digital technology.

Many of our investigations have concentrated on identifying new elements in the interactive, reticular, and creative capacities that these digital resources offer, because we naturally contrast them with the old analog resources. One of the threads of investigation on the Internet and new media during the last 15 years has been the contrast between what is now possible and what was no more than a dream before. Academic concerns about the digital divide, questions about where journalism or electronic government are heading, the variety of expressions of cyberculture, or the digital façades that education or socialization are acquiring are always defined in comparison with what existed before in these areas. Younger investigators will not have this perspective, so it may be more difficult for them to gain insights from those comparisons. They will be familiar with the analog world in which they continue to do some work, but it will be displaced by the presence of digital information and links in the most common of tasks, and perhaps seen as a historical curiosity. And the new generations may not have the same ability to be moved (or alarmed) by technological innovations, because, for them, they will be a natural part of the cultural and social environment.

These new researchers will cultivate a field that has been tilled by the first academics interested in these topics. Perhaps by then the study of the Internet and digital media will have acquired enough legitimacy and authority to be considered an essential part of the knowledge work of universities. At the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, in almost all of Latin America the study of this topic has developed through the individual desire and efforts of a few investigators. In our universities there is still not enough interest to compel academic groups to prioritize the research and teaching on the Internet and new technologies.¹³ The majority of those who have written and thought about these topics had to steal hours from class preparation and other activities. Many other colleagues, in addition to meeting their academic responsibilities, have to supplement their university salaries by consulting, offering courses in private institutions, or becoming entrepreneurs by

promoting their own conferences. Surely as they are kept up and extended, studies on the Internet and various characteristics of cyberculture will find a place in the institution that allows them to expand and solidify as an academic discipline.

A researcher's object of investigation often influences his or her methods and routines. Academics' use of computer networks submerges them in an ocean of new communicative practices. Email, digital file sharing, and Internet teleconferences facilitate the frequent interaction with colleagues with whom we would otherwise only have contact at specialized meetings. Chatting, blogs, and wikis bring about the collectivization of knowledge and sometimes result in collaborative research. I am not proposing that all academic knowledge of the Internet and cyberculture be developed collectively. I do not share the sanctification of group work that is now in fashion, as if individual reflection and work should be definitively displaced in favor of group investigation and conclusions. But, however it is done, today research takes place in a world of varied and vast exchange in spaces connected via the Internet. Some authors argue that given "the cybercultural dimension of knowledge," today "we are moving towards another culture of investigation, towards another way of understanding and carrying out investigation, the social-collective construction of knowledge based on new cultures of information and communication" (Galindo Cáceres, 2006, p. 219). It is difficult to say that all the old ways to gain knowledge and especially to produce knowledge (among others, individual research) have been displaced by new and always collaborative routines. But, undoubtedly, the digital environment generates new options – and exigencies – to discuss, exchange, and spread up-to-date academic work.

We are fortunate to be witnessing these changes. But the technologies of the information society have developed so quickly that we have not had enough time or distance to evaluate them. Perhaps now is the time to set a new pace and think more profoundly and extensively about new media, instead of overwhelming ourselves trying to keep up with every new technological invention. We no longer have, nor should we have, the need to constantly innovate, as if we could simultaneously follow every one of the technological changes that multiply in various devices, formats, programs, and experiences. Recalling the demands of flexibility and creativity that fueled the so-called new economy, Gómez Cruz purposefully singles out academic research:

It would appear that the academic studies of technology, especially on the Internet, suffer a similar vertigo, from the constant necessity to discover, explain, or be the first to name or establish an analogy, metaphor, or what have you, for the purpose of being a pioneer or colonizer of the field. This search is more reminiscent of marketing and publicity than of critical thinking and scientific spirit. (Gómez Cruz, 2007, p. 20)

For investigators of the media, the Internet is a topic of study, an instrument of exchange, a crucible of links, an alibi for surfers, and also, among many other things, a scene where cohesion and regional identities are constructed. If we make the effort

to avoid – without ignoring – the temptations of the market and thus privilege critical analysis, we will be able to find greater social utility for our investigations.

Topics in this line of research over the coming years will be increasingly specific and will move from amazement to proposal design and even public demand to understand the effects and results of new digital technology. As one of the conclusions in a collection on communications research agendas needed in Latin America highlights:

The Society of Information has arrived; it is here, and it is a great opportunity. Nevertheless, we are getting stuck on the devices; we are being seduced by the technology; and we are lacking a lot of reflection on and intervention into public policy, in how the story is told, in cultural experience, in business models, and on how to create more communicative citizens; how to be less of an audience and more the producers of media. (Rincón, 2009, p. 167)

This defining of research priorities does not mean we should not recognize the value of technological innovation. But we cannot be overly concerned with new gadgets when, as is the case in the majority of Latin America, there are not even public policies for the development of connectivity, and where broadband is the privilege of exclusive sectors in limited urban areas.

The more that it develops and diversifies, Latin American research on these topics will consolidate its own voices and characteristics. Although it is difficult to think of specific regional trends because, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, we find ourselves in a field of study that is global by definition, we can take the trends and methodologies that researchers from other areas propose and adapt them to our own needs. To understand the Internet in each region or country it is important to take each site's contexts, uses, and conditions into account. The editors of a 2009 book on studies of the Internet in different regions and countries rightly explain:

When thinking about “the Internet” it is important to remember that we are dealing with a range of different histories and experiences, and that we should not generalize based on “our” use of the Internet to that of other people, even other people in our own communities. It is not really possible to talk about “the Internet” as if it were a single phenomenon or has a simple history. (Goggin & McLelland, 2009, p. 10)

These authors highlight the need to identify paradigms for the study of the Internet beyond investigations in Anglophone countries, and their work provides a panoramic perspective through scores of regions and topics. Nevertheless, their book does not include a chapter on research in Latin America or in the Spanish language, suggesting that the region and its scholars are still underrepresented in the dominant paradigm of Internet research.

Although they do not make up a school with its own theoretical models, Latin American researchers can identify common focuses and preoccupations to define lines and priorities of study in a broader context. The Colombian professor Omar

Rincón (2009) has enumerated some points of affinity between those interested in social communication in Latin America, be they researchers or protagonists.

What brings us together? What do we have most in common? On what do we base public conversation? Without much analysis, we see that we come together through telenovelas (the value of including the popular), soccer (the value of interclass and intergenerational passion), drug cartels (value of organization and loose ethics), pirating (the value of the right to entertainment), bodies (value of sex and labor), music (the value of pleasure), corruption (value of cynicism and irony), the Internet (the value of connection). These are our connective flows, from the pleasurable, to the marginal, to the ironic. Thus, if we want to imagine a nation, in culture and communicative practices, we have to “find inspiration” with the values that have connected us in our daily lives: popular aesthetics, the ethics of fast benefit, the passion for the jersey, entertainment, bodies, pleasure and irony, and Internet communities. (Rincón, 2009, p. 171)

These Latin American qualities undoubtedly influence our approaches to the Internet. After 15 years of research on the web, we have ample knowledge, with descriptions and interpretations like those that have fed this chapter’s bibliography. Now is the moment to take these and many other studies that proliferate in our universities and to analyze them from a perspective that is at once Latin American and global.

It is time to think about the Internet in terms of its contexts and deficiencies, as well as its possibilities for our countries. It is time that we do more than just bear witness to the technologically prodigious, though socially meager, present that digital information technology is creating at this moment. We have to think about the meaning of the changes that these technologies bring about, and not only in the sense of reviewing or taking inventory of the innovations. We need to generate more theory and fewer monographs, even if in the academic market conceptual reflection is not as attractive as enthusiastic description. In addition to witnessing, we have to understand the vast implications of the Internet, and for that we must understand the people who use, enjoy, suffer, and lack access to it.

NOTES

- 1 Piscitelli (1995) explores the world of intelligent machines, nanotechnology, and virtual spaces among other expressions of a new cyberculture; Trejo Delarbre (1996, 2006) seeks for features and problems in the information society and the lack of public policies in this region; Sánchez (1997) illustrates languages, politics, and socialization innovations in the virtual context; Finquelievich and Schiavo (1998) think about the urban spaces reengineered by telematic networks.
- 2 These are theses at all university levels (doctorate, masters, and bachelors) in all of the UNAM departments, be it basic science or engineering or social sciences and the humanities. The numbers per annum are as follows: 1995, 2; 1996, 6; 1997, 22; 1998, 51; 1999, 41; 2000, 66; 2001, 109; 2002, 51; 2003, 73; 2004, 89; 2005, 82; 2006, 168; 2007, 126; 2008,

- 60; 2009, 59. For all 15 years, a total of 1,005 theses focused on the Internet or related subjects. Investigation done with information from TESIUNAM (2010).
- 3 ALAIC (<http://www.alaic.net>) was founded in 1978. Currently, one of its 22 working groups is dedicated to the topic "The Internet, the Information Society, and Cyberculture" ("Internet y Sociedad de la Información y Cibercultura").
 - 4 "Cyberculture" studies should be distinguished from more sociological approaches to studying the Internet. Lemos (2003) provides a useful definition of the term cyberculture, which he understands as "a socio-cultural form that has emerged from the symbiotic relationship between society, culture and new micro-electronic supported technologies that sprung from the convergence of telecommunications and computer science in the 1970s" (p. 11).
 - 5 Social networks like Facebook and Twitter have been studied by other Latin American scholars as well, including those who study media and those who, from a sociological or anthropological perspective, take note of the development of new forms of exchange and socialization. Islas (2007) details the turn that active users, or in mainstream terminology "prosumers," have made from the consumption to production of online content. Yet another approach considers a new stage in Internet development, in which user participation establishes new forms of interaction. That phase, commonly known as "Web 2.0," is examined in Cobo Romaní and Pardo Kuklinski (2007).
 - 6 See the Fundación Acceso website at <http://www.acceso.or.cr/>. In Latin American scholarly and political discussion, the expression "social appropriation" is frequently used to designate a broad variety of teachings, uses, and benefits provided to people by information and communication technologies. "Social appropriation means resolving concrete problems of everyday life with the help of ICTs" (Martínez & Fundación Acceso, 2001). In a broader sense: "The social appropriation of ICTs for development can be demonstrated in a number of ways, such as: by offering better medical information to patients, improving the quality of education through the use of innovative teaching resources; introducing varied, relevant programming into community radio broadcasting; increasing sales of local products in the marketplace; disseminating the results of local research; and coordinating action among diverse groups with common goals" (Gómez & Martínez, 2001).
 - 7 Examples of qualitative approaches to understanding Internet users are collected in Bonilla and Cliché (2001). There we can also find the fundamental analysis of Cabrera Paz (2001), from Colombia, on how students appropriate the Internet. In addition, based on extensive interviews, Winocur (2009) has examined the explosion of digital technologies – the Internet, computers, cellular phones – in the daily lives of young people, stay-at-home moms, migrants, and other sectors of the population. According to Winocur, "those who are lonely are no longer those who don't have anyone around, but those who are disconnected" (p. 157).
 - 8 A study previous to this case can be found in Balaguer Prestes (2009).
 - 9 Finkelievich has also specialized in analyzing the experiences of local development with digital resources (see Finkelievich, 2005).
 - 10 *Governability* is a concept developed in political science. A Latin American expert explains: "we understand by governability a dynamic equilibrium state between the level of societal demands and the capacity of the political system to respond to them in a legitimate and effective way" (Camou, 2000, p. 283).

- 11 The website for *Razón y Palabra* can be found at <http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/>
- 12 This argument updated a book that Lévy, a French philosopher, had published earlier (Lévy, 2004).
- 13 Some exceptions are André Lemos's team in Bahia and, although it is organized around a single department and is not a research project, Alejandro Piscitelli's work in Buenos Aires.

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The Prehistoric Turn?

Networked New Media, Mobility, and the Body

Mark Coté

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers the increasingly important dimensions of location and mobility in networked new media. It examines the relationship between the human and technology by foregrounding the body. In particular, it asks how the mediated materiality of the body interfaces with the immateriality of global information flows in ubiquitous distributed media environments. Three main threads comprise this inquiry, all unfolding under the specter of the increasing precarity of labor amidst the broader temporal and spatial dimensions of the information economy under neoliberal globalization. The first two involve hallmarks of Web 2.0: the conflation of work and play, and the prominence of user-generated content. These are situated in the deeper context of convergence by tracing the conceptual shift from the passive “audience commodity” of broadcasting to the interactive immaterial labor 2.0 of distributed digital networks. The final, interdisciplinary line counterintuitively takes a “prehistoric turn” via paleoanthropology to reevaluate the ubiquitous connectivity of our contemporary condition. Fresh insights from our earliest use of stone tools suggest that the human has always had a mutually constitutive relationship with technology. It also suggests the concepts of syntax and grammar for posing new questions about the sensuousness of technology, and the processual mediated environment of the (non)local body.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Introduction

What if, upon reading these words, you wanted to multitask and engage in related critical research? Given that this chapter examines the relationship between the human and technology via social networking, we could begin exploring some of the future dimensions of ubiquitous computing and mobility. There is a good chance you have a GPS-enabled smartphone – indeed, their global sales surpassed that of PCs in the last quarter of 2010, a trend most analysts see as permanent (Arthur, 2011). If so, you could use it to perform a new kind of cultural work: “checking in” to Facebook Places to let your friends know precisely where you are while reading this. Now that may not be your first choice for innumerable reasons, but were you to do so, you would be helping to forge an important new path in networked connectivity: positioning yourself into the digital information flow with precise markers not only of time but also of place. Such new mediated cultural practices are making location awareness a basic part of mobile connectivity. This trend is also reconfiguring the very structure of the Internet with HTML5, the new standard markup language, which integrates location awareness into the fabric and content of the web.

“Checking in” adds the dimension of mobility to social networking; conceptually, we can locate this “geosocial networking” in a more basic site of tension in mediated cultural practices – the conflation of play and labor. There we could sound the depths with an echo of Marx (1977b, p. 164): there is indeed a “mystical character” afoot because when one “checks in,” a commodity is born from this new socially networked form of labor. This is a particular kind of commodity, an information commodity – data comprising a body’s precise location in time and space. In the realm of cultural performativity and communication, this demarcation of time and space is a form of play. Regardless, it also produces a commodity, data that become the permanent property of Mark Zuckerberg and his cabal of lucky investors and erstwhile partners. Facebook, as a capitalist enterprise, loves this information because in creating new forms of location-based user-generated data, it opens up entirely new opportunities for businesses to market and promote their brands and goods. And while at the time of writing “checking in” is the most prominent form of geosocial networking, such location-based practices will certainly become much more sophisticated and diversified, both culturally and in terms of their marketization, in ways currently unforeseen.

Making location profitable has already been fully anticipated by Facebook via its incredibly robust Terms of Use. This widely ignored but legally binding document further echoes Marx, but less in a *mystical character* and more through the *heavy contractual chains* of socially networked labor:

You hereby grant Facebook an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, transferable, fully paid, worldwide license (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, publish, stream, store, retain, publicly perform or display, transmit, scan, reformat, modify, edit, frame, translate, excerpt, adapt, create derivative works, and distribute any User Content.¹

Or, as Mashable.com puts it even more succinctly, “All your stuff is ours, even if you quit [Facebook]” (Schroeder, 2009).

Perhaps many readers, like the author, still generate Facebook content on a regular basis. What bears consideration is precisely this *persistence* of use by an ever-growing number of people – steadily approaching one billion worldwide and still growing – regardless of the widespread knowledge of these heavy contractual chains. What may be most mystical about the nature of such new mediated cultural practices is how little this play is understood as labor, or at least how little that understanding seems to matter to most users. This chapter will try to anticipate the future importance of geosocial networking in two quite distinct but related ways. First, it will explore the immaterial aspects of that work–play, that is, its symbolic and affective production. The concept of immaterial labor, in both its original and 2.0 variants, offers a robust frame for understanding the myriad new mediated cultural practices that animate the Internet, social networks, and, increasingly, mobile platforms. Further, these changing cultural practices will be contextualized across the shift from mass media to networked new media. The accompanying process of convergence will be explicated by tracing the changing nature of cultural work, from the audience – via the political economic model of the audience commodity – to immaterial labor. Second, it examines the dimensions of mobility that underpin geosocial networking, especially their ramifications for the precarity of labor, and relatedly the broader temporal and spatial dimensions of globalization. To do so a kind of *habeas corpus* will be applied to that immaterial dimension – the digitally networked realm in which we work and play. In other words, the body will be returned to where, in fact, it always was – at the core of that immateriality. It is always difficult to gain a critical perspective on contemporary practices in which we are immersed, like geosocial networking. To help, we will make what might be a surprising move by rethinking the body not just in its contemporary condition of networked mobility but via a “prehistoric turn” to the most basic form of technology: the elementary stone tool.

Understanding Convergence: From the Audience Commodity to Immaterial Labor

Before directly examining the cultural work of social networks, it is worth setting the stage for the conflation of cultural work and play by appraising some of the key elements in the broader process of convergence. Perhaps the clearest sign that a definitive shift was underway in the media landscape came in 2004 when Rupert Murdoch, a press baron from the time of paper and ink, made the digital leap when his News Corporation spent more than half a billion dollars to buy the social network site MySpace. This move was seen as bringing his traditional mass media empire of movies, newspapers, and television into a networked future, and as signaling for

capital the still-underway paradigm shift in the relationship between audiences and popular culture.

Elsewhere convergence has been widely examined. For example, Henry Jenkins (2006) has intensely studied the cultural dimensions of convergence, highlighting new forms of agency and new practices among new media audiences. Relatedly, Mark Deuze (2006) has looked at how media, in newly convergent forms, have radically reconfigured the contours of traditional cultural work, particularly among media professionals. Part of the import of convergence, though, is that it has not only changed professional cultural work, it has transformed what was once simply called the audience into cultural workers as well. Thus there is the need to rethink the role of the audience in the general circulation of culture. Audience studies was an important part of cultural studies, which looked for aspects of cultural agency at the point of consumption, in the circuit of *cultural production–distribution–consumption* (Fiske, 1987; Hall, 1980; Morley, 1992; Radway, 1984). Drawing a line from earlier audience studies under the mass media paradigm, Jack Bratich (2005) made important linkages to ways of understanding audience power beyond degrees of symbolic agency. (See also his contribution to this volume.) Of particular interest are the links he makes in the changing understanding of audience power, from the disintegration of the “mass” into individual consumer power to, most relevantly, the more distributed, networked model of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri called the “multitude.” The key aspect of this theoretical gesture is the *aporia* it reveals in traditional audience studies: that the composition itself holds an inherent agency and constituent power which exceeded the symbolic and precedes consumption. This is a critical thread for stitching together pertinent elements of convergence: that is, how social networks like Facebook are not just new forms of communication but (a) an increasingly important part of media in general and capital in particular, and (b) a new manifestation of the possibilities of autonomous cooperation and organization.

Foregrounding the changing role of our collective participation in the circulation of culture, we begin to get a sense of just how broad and multilayered is the process of convergence. This process entails not just the increasing importance of networked information technology, like the Internet itself, but the ever more deeply networked relations between the economy, media, culture, language, information, knowledge, and subjectivity. This transformation is not only critical to media industries, it is increasingly inseparable in the reproduction of our contemporary social order. Shortly I will consider how the “audience” has changed via the concept of immaterial labor. In short, what was once thought of as the mere consumption of culture has been transformed, along with concomitant communicative and subjective capacities, into a core and active articulation of capitalist production. Here let us recall what has been stated about the change in cultural work; that is, the conflation of work and play. We can draw out this conflation by following what News Corp. has done instrumentally in its pursuit of surplus value. In other words, we can conceptually trace the shift from the *audience* as discrete, measurable quanta in the chain of production, circulation, and consumption to a dynamic, productive composition of bodies

as aggregates networked in information and communication technologies (ICTs). Perhaps one of the most robust links we can make is via what the trailblazing political economist of communication Dallas Smythe called “the audience commodity.”²

In 1980, at the apotheosis of the mass media model, Smythe wrote in *Dependency Road* (1981), “presently we know very little about this strange commodity, the audience” (p. 263). His basic thesis for the audience commodity was straightforward: “readers and audience members of advertising-supported mass media are a commodity produced and sold to advertisers *because they perform a valuable service for the advertisers*” (p. 8). In contradistinction to dominant audience research in cultural studies, Smythe framed the audience via its market aggregation, as opposed to social categories like class, gender, or race. Ever the political economist, Smythe saw first and foremost an intrinsically functional position for the audience within the circuit of production and consumption. What today we can see as more forward looking was the importance he placed on the “cultural work” of the audience in capitalist reproduction. Smythe’s notion was equally contrarian to the Frankfurt School in that he eschewed examining the role of the audience via ideology. This is because his focus was not on how media and culture serviced the reproduction of the dominant class but on the *productive* role it played, not just in the reproduction of capital but in the extension of market relations into everyday life – one of the hallmarks of social networks as business enterprises.

Nick Dyer-Witheford (1999) was among the first to make the link between Smythe and the tradition of Italian autonomist thought,³ a theoretical crucible perhaps most famously expressed in the works of Hardt and Negri, and the intellectual milieu in which the concept of “immaterial labor” emerged. Indeed, while the concept of immaterial labor appeared prominently in *Empire* (2000), it was earlier developed by Maurizio Lazzarato (1996). In an eponymous article, Lazzarato identifies immaterial labor as manifesting across activities that produce the cultural content of the commodity – that is, “activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion.”⁴

Immaterial labor brings a depth to our understanding of convergence by mapping shifts in broader work practices amidst post-Fordist globalization. As Lazzarato notes, immaterial labor helps us frame the increasing fusion of “leisure time” and “working time,” making life inseparable from work. This is a key aspect of what Marx (1977a) called “real subsumption” – the diffusion of capitalist logic and the dictates of surplus value through more and more of everyday life. The notion of the audience, then, no longer adequately captures our collective role in the circulation of media and culture. Things have changed considerably since Smythe caused such controversy by merely framing the audience in relation to labor. Even his model of the audience is now inadequate: a market aggregation passively bought and sold with no participation other than the movement of their eyeballs. This was an innovation for understanding mass media but it fails to capture the dynamic new elements of the cultural work performed today by what were once called audiences.

In the convergent environment of social networks, user practices are much more active than the passive role of broadcast audiences. This is not to suggest a resolution to Smythe's political economic critique; indeed, the basic point is to show how mediated play is also work in the service of capitalist reproduction. The task is to more clearly see the qualitative shift in which culture, subjectivity, and capital come together in new networks of ICT. Facebook perhaps best exemplifies this qualitative shift and is not only the most prominent social network, it is also *the* success story in new media with over 800 million users worldwide by 2012. The activities comprising new media platforms like Facebook, be they through their location-based services or simply updating one's profile, are something much different from the work of the audience commodity. Indeed, they are not only exemplary of what is now broadly known as the Web 2.0,⁵ but also paradigmatic of an emergent form of immaterial labor. What is new in social networks and across Web 2.0 is the centrality of user-generated content; thus elsewhere I have proposed immaterial labor 2.0⁶ – a more accelerated and intensified form of what was initially proposed by Lazzarato (1996, 2000, 2001) or within the pages of *Empire*. This concept brings us back to the conflation of play and labor, to how we “work” amidst our myriad interfaces with ICT, and draws out some of the unique qualities therein.

In particular, the concept of immaterial labor 2.0 helps us unpack some of the key dimensions of convergence beyond the technical: (a) a blending of production and consumption; (b) an elision of author and audience, especially in the new virtual ICT networks that increasingly mediate our everyday lives; (c) a merging of once discrete media sectors; and (d) the reworking of our communication and our cultural practices as new forms of labor increasingly integral to capital relations. As such, the 2.0 can be a valuable conceptual addendum for the future of media studies. The original form of immaterial labor can be further unpacked with reference to its three dimensions identified by Hardt and Negri. First, immaterial labor denotes conceptual work, from problem solving to symbolic or analytic tasks. Such jobs are broadly dispersed across the culture industry and beyond. This form of labor is indicative of “the symbolic turn,” the shift in production from the material realm of the factory to the symbolic production of ideas. The second entails the production of affect, forms of labor that manipulate “a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion” (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 108). Such labor has largely been unpaid and often regarded as “women's work,” like that which produces services or care through the body. Finally, there is the incorporation of communication technology by industrial production (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 293), transforming the very form of labor into increasingly mechanized and computerized modalities.

Immaterial labor 2.0 builds on these dimensions. The first important addition is the notion of “free labor” – in the matrix of work and play – initially popularized by Tiziana Terranova (2004) when she identified it as a central feature of both the Internet and the informationalized economy. Her work, especially the book *Network Culture*, is of prescient value, given that her innovative application of autonomist thought to information theory offered great promise for future research into the new

digitally networked reality of our contemporary condition. The development of Web 2.0 has only elevated the level of participation/work. So on sites such as Facebook, in addition to the corporate mining and selling of user-generated content, users also produce the tastes, preferences, and general cultural content constructed therein. While this strongly resonates with the “labour that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response” (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 108), it is important to further delineate the subjective composition of this labor. The “subjective” is used here to indicate the degree to which the ongoing construction or performance of our identities is produced online, specifically within social networks. Immaterial labor 2.0 indicates how this subjective turn entails cultural *work*; the active and ongoing production of virtual subjectivities in and across our profiles on social networks. Then there are elements of the originary concept that are extended and intensified: affect, for example, is of critical importance to Facebook, acting as the binding, dynamic force that both animates those subjectivities and provides coherence to the networked relations. Finally, there is also a Foucault 2.0: social networks can be seen as biopolitical networks insofar as they articulate new flows through differential compositions of bodies – populations whose capacities to live are extended through the particularities of their subjective networked relations.

One of the underlying reasons Lazzarato conceptualized immaterial labor was to more clearly frame the aforementioned process of “real subsumption” – that is, how capital is seeking an unmediated form of command, not just over labor in the factory but in everyday life. That is why Lazzarato coins the slogan “become subjects” (Lazzarato, 1996), echoing the “subjective” reading of capital common among autonomists.⁷ To clarify, this denotes the autonomist understanding of the shift in the organizational form of capital, away from the mass production of Fordism toward the more flexible, diffused production of post-Fordism, which relies even more heavily on technology. What is “subjective” is not how the necessary skills, technics, and practices are simply absorbed in machinery – as a trend of deskilling might suggest. Rather, the subjective dimension is evident in the increasing importance of the linguistic, cognitive, and even cultural aspects of work, and their ever-more integral part in the formation of laboring subjectivities. In other words, the subjective reading situates the productive and creative capacity of labor first, thus expressing the possibility of a positive and constructive vision that flows out of labor power – as opposed to it being exclusively a site of exploitation and alienation. This “subjective turn” also highlights a basic orientation of autonomist thought: to look to labor first, before the relations in which it is captured and made productive for capital.

So it is this subjective element which facilitates an expanded capacity for social cooperation that is absolutely essential for more flexible production. These are also defining elements of the mediated and networked cultural work that I have been discussing. But here we cannot directly proceed to the immaterial labor 2.0 animating social networks. That is, as Smythe noted for the audience commodity, and the autonomists do for capital, the relation between play and work, or labor and capital,

is best viewed by first considering the actions of people which are, in turn, captured by capital (more on this in the section discussing “syntax”).

In the context of social networks, then, we should remember their origins not only in the febrile imagination and desires of a Harvard undergraduate, but also in even earlier cultural practices like the peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing of Napster. Such technics of immaterial labor enabled the proliferation of decentralized practices of virtual social cooperation, in the process radically altering potential kinds of interface with popular culture. This is not to argue for a new form of consumer sovereignty. Indeed, one thing the immaterial labor thesis stresses is the higher level and intensity of antagonism that is created along the way – something borne out in practice with the forced closure of Napster and the subsequent proliferation of new and seemingly uncontrollable forms of P2P practices like BitTorrent. Lazzarato notes this fundamental contradiction in the workplace. Capital “is obliged ([in] a life-and-death necessity for the capitalist) not to ‘redistribute’ the power that the new quality of labor and organization imply” (Lazzarato, 1996).

We can see this playing out in the dynamic decentralized architecture of the Internet – the distributed network in which computers with a shared protocol can communicate directly without a hierarchical intermediary. This is not only a radically different media terrain than television, it is one animated primarily by immaterial labor. In short, we have shifted from the static world of the couch potato to the dynamic one of the blogger or the social network, busily updating, Tweeting, or checking in. Capital has paid attention to this and there is a shift in what is being valorized. With television, the audience commodity was an isolated and sedentary beast, an aggregation of individuals linked only through the show they watched each week. Its organizational form was also more static: a centralized network with the audience in a cluster of dead-end lines. With the Internet – and specifically, online social networks – it is about the dynamic immaterial labor that traverses and constructs the decentralized networks. In short, it is the links, the networks that people construct and participate in that comprise not a new audience commodity but immaterial labor 2.0.

The “Sensuous” Body of Immaterial Labor 2.0

With a clearer understanding of immaterial labor 2.0 in place, we can ask anew about the conflation of work and play by returning to the body. But to what body are we returning? For some, immateriality is resonant with our contemporary condition of ubiquitous mediation precisely because its prefix “im” means “not” as in “not material.” When in its 2.0 variant – that is, when imbricated in digital networks – the “not material” is taken by many as “the virtual.” The overt predominance of mediation in social networks is sometimes interpreted as a kind of sociality that is more technological than human. In due course I will closely consider the relationship between

the human and technology. There are two important paths that I will not follow but are worthy of mention: Haraway's (1991) posthuman cyborg, a deft feminist-philosophical critique which implodes the binary of nature and technology by weaving a hybrid of the former's supposed femininity and the latter's masculinity; and Latour's actor-network theory (1987, 2005), which models assemblages and is concerned not so much about which element is human or technological as about the kinds of agencies each offers in relation to the other. Instead, I will issue a very particular writ of *habeas corpus*, as it were, by returning to a question posed in this chapter's opening. That is, I will first return to the body through the example of "checking in": what mystical characteristic is afoot when the location of one's body is marked in a collective information flow and is turned into a commodity possessed by the owners of Facebook? We should remember that for Marx, commodities are always born of social relations, and this is transparently so in social networks. What is more, what is "social" is also a "sensuous activity" – insofar as the social, by definition, implies relations between bodies – and that is what gets abstracted into commodity form. The crux of a political economic critique is precisely around the *under*-valorization of sensuous activity, that is, of labor; hence the never-ending struggle of labor around the value of work. Given the astronomical market value of Facebook, it seems reasonable to ask similar such questions about the value of immaterial labor 2.0 which animates not only that social network, but also an increasingly broad swathe of our information economy. The iron-clad nature of Facebook's Terms of Use makes clear that there is a considerable degree of under-valorization of this new mediated form of cultural work. But I will not proceed here by following the established terrain of the political economy of communication. Instead, I want to ask more basic questions about the status of the body (and thus the human) in order to provide insight into (a) the persistence of play in light of its revelation as work; and (b) the very coherence and perseverance of those networks.

Now it is paradigmatic that immaterial labor 2.0 transpires in network relations; it involves the body in relation to a machine, albeit an advanced one. What can we glean by returning to "Fragments on Machines," a section of the *Grundrisse* that has already been noted as a text integral to the very concept of immaterial labor? Of course, Marx wrote during the Industrial Revolution, and his points of reference were machines which the nineteenth-century poet William Blake had earlier called the "dark Satanic Mills." Therein, Marx saw the commodification of worker labor as follows: "What was the living worker's activity becomes the activity of the machine. Thus the appropriation of labour by capital confronts the worker in a coarsely sensuous form" (Marx, 1973, p. 704). Again we find the body – in a machinic assemblage – and again a reference to the sensuous as it relates to labor and capital, and which here we might read in light of work and play. What I am presenting as most important, however, is the passage that follows:

Capital absorbs labour into itself as though its body were by love possessed. (Marx, 1973, p. 704)⁸

This is a passage that bears closer reading. I have already brought sustained focus to “labor absorbed,” in its immaterial and 2.0 forms, and through changes in the modification of these different kinds of cultural work, be it in traditional mass media or amidst the convergence of networked new media. I have also signaled the current and future importance of the absorption of that labor in its *mobility*, as capital in its continued globalization seeks to frame new parameters of space and time. But how might we speak of what is *experienced* – of “love possessed”? To interrogate the body in terms of its sensuousness is to consider its movement, and its affective and communicative capacity; that is, asking what that body can do in relation to the machine that purportedly possesses it.

We can begin by examining the sensuousness of the body within the new spatial and temporal parameters of online social networks. Within social networks, as with all mediated aspects of our everyday lives, our corporeal form, that is, our fleshy bodies, remain as steadfastly bound to precise points on the earth’s mantle as ever. However, in and across those global, distributed networks, we are dispersed, here, there, almost anywhere, virtually instantaneously. So on the one hand, our material bodies remain stubbornly subjected to the Newtonian physics governing large objects; on the other hand, our immaterial qualities (our communicative, affective, and, indeed, cognitive capacities) seemingly possess the “strange action” of quantum particles, with near-instantaneous mobility. Might the related sensuous experience be more clearly modeled in the (*non*)local body?

To clarify, (*non*)locality is a term taken from quantum physics describing how two related particles, although separated by vast distances, seemingly act upon each other instantaneously. Related quantum entities, then, seemingly act as if they are local even when they are not. I am suggesting this as a useful model for understanding the condition of digitally networked bodies. Our material body retains its Newtonian physicality at the local level; yet our immaterial dimension (i.e., our communicative, affective, and cognitive capacities) function near-instantaneously at a global scale. (*Non*)locality, then, is a trope for grasping the constitutive relations of our im/material condition. To add one last “spin,” this conceptual turn of (*non*)locality foregrounds not the spatial and temporal dimensions of labor but, rather, of its very precondition.

This more measured approach to the body leads us to more insights about its animating tensions of play and work. If we begin with the conditions of the laboring body, we miss the nature of its possession. An autonomist reading, just as with the subjective turn, means the body comes first. Then capital, and the machines it mobilizes, absorbs but only through its own particular grammar; that is, a practical and instrumentalized rhythm *imposed* on the laboring body. The body, however, is *already* possessed – literally as sensuous embodied technology. In short, under proposal is a different model of the body: one wherein the sensuousness of its relation to technology possesses a *syntax*, a syntax that is then proscribed and prescribed by the grammar of capital.⁹

A note of clarification is necessary here. The use of the terms syntax and grammar was inspired from two traditions central to this chapter. First, my use of the term

grammar comes from Paolo Virno's *Grammar of the Multitude*. In it, this central autonomist thinker revives the Spinozist notion of the multitude over the Hobbesian people as a political category for rethinking globalization. Virno situates the conflation of work and play in a larger one of labor, politics, and intellect. In this new space, wherein all is political yet seemingly depoliticized and all is performative, he lays out a strategy of "social cooperation" (of which I would suggest social networks are a prominent part). His "grammar" is what allows shared communication among the multitude, which is not a mass body but one of distributed singularities. Indeed, it is in the grammar of cooperation, in "the linguistic-relational aspect" of labor, that Virno situates an already-existing foundation of what he sees as the "communism of capitalism" (2004, pp. 107, 110). Syntax is taken from the late French paleoanthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan. He uses it to better understand the relationship between the human and technology. Thus he writes of an operational syntax, the sequential organization of the interaction between the human and tools. In short, it denotes our constitutive interactions with technology, including that which eventually takes form as immaterial labor 2.0. The analytic value in syntax over grammar is that the sequential organization of the former predates the latter. Again, in autonomist terms, syntax comes first.

So I deploy the terms grammar and syntax to deepen our understanding of what is meant by embodied technology. A sensuous syntax describes the sequence of bodily interaction between the human and technology which is both individual and collective – for example, all the innovative usages of ICTs that allow for our unprecedented capacity for communication. Contrary to Virno, however, this would be a syntax of the multitude and a grammar of capital. One of myriad possible examples would be the development of file sharing, which began with a high school student. This new syntax contravened the grammar of capital, which has ever since sought to proscribe its usage vis-à-vis cultural commodities over which it has intellectual property (IP) rights. To conclude, the syntax of the (non)local body, then, is one of the distributed digital network, both corporeal and communicative, with an ability to act which is both proximate and at a distance. The grammar of the (non)local body proscribes and prescribes forms of immaterial labor 2.0 which, driven by a logic of maximizing efficiencies and profitability, create general conditions of precarity for labor.

The Prehistoric Turn

Earlier I noted that this chapter would make a counterintuitive proposal: that by taking "the prehistoric turn" we can gain important insights about our current technological condition of digital, networked, mobile connectivity.¹⁰ In that spirit, let's again engage in critical research by multitasking. Imagine if you reached into your pocket, but this time, instead of pulling out your smartphone, in your hand was the

most rudimentary stone tool. Would it be possible to “check in,” obviously not to Facebook Places, but to the actual environment in which you are situated? What, if anything, could you learn about our contemporary condition from this simplest form of technology: a rock which has been struck two or three times by another rock, chipping away flakes to give it a cutting edge?

The “prehistoric turn” is meant, in part, as a corrective to a regrettable aspect of the “postmodern turn” so celebrated in the 1990s. Namely, I refer to the prominence then given to the “virtual” and related notions that emerging in these new assemblages of human and technology was a fundamentally new “posthuman” or cyborg (*pace* Haraway). It is regrettable because the undue focus on digital technology obscured a more basic point: that we have always had a constitutive relationship with technology; indeed, that *we have never been human* outside this constitutive relation with technology. It is important to ward off notions of technological determinism when discussing the human in these various machinic assemblages. There is neither primacy nor determining causality ascribed to technology. To the contrary, the human is understood as being in constitutive relations with technology. French philosopher Gilbert Simondon (1992) offers a valuable concept for understanding this mutually constitutive process: transduction. It offers a more holistic frame for understanding heterogeneous formations, wherein primacy is placed on the *relations themselves* over the *things related*. Those things related include the human and technology, the material and immaterial, and indeed, time and space. I find it most useful because it can differentially model the body in various assemblages and thus focus attention on what are complex and recursive relations. So while the human and technology are indeed and obviously different things, I am thinking of them not as discrete entities but as being transductively related.

Perhaps the most apposite guide on this prehistoric turn is the aforementioned Leroi-Gourhan. While little known across media and communication studies, Leroi-Gourhan had a defining impact on the contemporary media theorist Bernard Stiegler (1998, 2009). It is hard to factor the vicissitudes that have left Leroi-Gourhan such a relatively obscure scholar. In the 1930s, he studied ethnology under Marcel Mauss, undertook widespread structuralist analysis of Paleolithic art, subsequently embarking on his decades-long study of prehistorical technics, and eventually rising to hold the Chair in Prehistory at the Collège de France from 1968 to 1982, almost exactly coterminous with Foucault’s Chair in the History of Systems of Thought. Leroi-Gourhan had an avowedly catholic approach to scholarship, with his multidisciplinary ranging across paleontology, physiology, ethnology, the history of art, technology, and biology. Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote about him, upon his death in 1986:

When one rereads his writings on physical anthropology, technology, prehistoric archaeology and art, one sees that the key idea that governed his thinking was always to study *the interrelations between things rather than the things themselves*, to try to reduce the chaotic diversity of the empirical data to invariant relations and to use [...] a method of transformations. (Quoted in Audouze, 2002, p. 282)

His earlier works were profoundly influential in French anthropology on the study of prehistoric technics;¹¹ his innovation was to focus on the technical modes of action on matter. Whereas technology entails artifacts, technics goes further to include related practices, be they arts or crafts and the assemblages in which they unfold. For the ancient Greeks, *techne* was the knowledge of how to generate something, or, in Jean Luc Nancy's felicitous phrase: "techne is the know-how to obtain from nature what it does not offer of itself" (Barison & Ross, 2004). And to bring it to an even finer point vis-à-vis immaterial labor 2.0 or, indeed, any mode of work, consider this from Stiegler:

Technics (*tekhne*) designates, however, first and foremost all the domains of skill [. . .] [ones which entail] production, a transformation of material, of "raw materials," into "secondary matter" or products. (1998, p. 93)

One of Leroi-Gourhan's many innovations was how he framed the technical modes of action on matter in three dimensions: the *interior* milieu of the intellectual capital of the tool-making hominids (one might be tempted to refer here to the autonomist concept "general intellect"¹²); the *technical* milieu (socioeconomic and cultural factors inscribed into the tool); and finally, the *external* milieu (the environment actualized by the tool). What is most pertinent is the notion of technical exteriorization, and it is here that at least metaphorical links can be made to the contemporary practice of "checking in." To begin to make this connection, think of how in this process the assemblage of the human and technology reconfigures the environment in which the human lives, hence demarcating a particular experiential point in space and time.

To make this conceptual leap, the model of the "natural" human must be abandoned. As such, we must proceed via an even more basic transductive relation. The human, for Leroi-Gourhan, only emerges amidst complex and recursive relations *with technics*, beginning with the most rudimentary form of lithic industry (literally, stone tools composed by a handful of blows). There are two key points to draw from the ascent of the techno-human. The first is that technology acts as a vector of exteriorization of the human *qua* the human, that is, technics always entails externalizing traces of memory. So, in the most basic terms, even a stone tool bears the trace of its construction, which can subsequently be "read" by an unrelated hominid. In the words of Leroi-Gourhan (1994), this exteriorization denotes "our unique ability to transfer our memory to a social organism outside ourselves" (p. 236). Please keep in mind this transfer of memory – which, after all, means *traces of our actions* – when thinking about distributed networks and the new forms of "social organization" they enable. Thus the importance of Leroi-Gourhan's second paradigmatic feature: the *relationship between movement, technics, and rhythms*. One of Leroi-Gourhan's most enduring maxims is that "it all began with the feet" (p. 65). What he meant was that when early hominids began walking on two feet, that physical gesture set off a complex cascade of unintended effects. Indeed, his most famous work, *Gesture and Speech*, traces a direct line from this radical innovation in *movement* to the later

transductive development of technology and the human. Amidst this trajectory, the tool and brain are situated in a complex and recursive relation, what François Audouze (2002) identifies as milieus of “mobility, liberation, and exteriorization” (p. 289).

Leroi-Gourhan’s research led him to posit an extra-biological role for technics in the process of the evolution of the human, but a deeply recursive and not determining one. To clarify, early hominids descended from trees, likely because of radical climactic changes, and developed bipedal capacity; this, in turn, impacts upon the position the skull is placed on the spine (because eyes need to look ahead and not at the ground); this is followed by a morphological shift in the cranium for balance (the base of the skull shortens but increases upwards our brain pan and its capacity); and finally, hands are freed from the task of locomotion, and jaws from carrying things; the whole while newly freed hands become more dexterous, enabling them to eventually manipulate and shape the most rudimentary stone tools.

But it is technics, as provocatively suggested by Leroi-Gourhan, which recursively facilitates the actual enlargement of the brain. In other words, Leroi-Gourhan situates tools and the brain in a deeply complex and recursive relation, wherein both impact the other but *only ever in the milieus of mobility, liberation, and exteriorization*.

This has been necessarily a concise overview of the more comprehensive account offered by Leroi-Gourhan and discussed and debated elsewhere (Audouze, 2002; Gamble, 2010; Ingold, 1999; Lemonnier, 1993).¹³ But there are two further details most relevant to media and communication studies. They consist of (a) the relation between tools, cerebral development, and thought; and (b) the syntax governing the rhythms and movement of the human in machinic assemblages.

For the first point, consider that the most rudimentary stone tools (Oldowan industry, which began about 2.6 million years ago) consisted of little more than a few blows to create a cutting edge, and they remained virtually unchanged in the archaeological record for a million years. This caused Leroi-Gourhan (1994) to remark, “among our hominid ancestors, early tool use was an extension of the hand – like an animal’s claw [. . .] as if their brains and bodies had gradually exuded them” (p. 106).

So it is not so straightforward that our hominid ancestors woke up one day just so much smarter and began making tools. Instead, it was an extended and deeply recursive relationship between tool use and the brain that subsequently facilitated cerebral development. But even when more sophisticated tools appeared about 1.6 million years ago, cerebral capacity had barely increased. Stiegler (1998) wonderfully evokes this process:

[W]hat mirage of the cortex is experienced, as pathbreaking, in the hardness of the flint; what plasticity of gray matter corresponds to the flake of mineral matter; what proto-stage of the mirror is thus installed. (p. 135)

This process is called corticalization, wherein conscious interiority develops in relation to nonhuman exteriority. To put it another way, think back to the “natural”

human privileged by the ancient Greeks and the deprecation of material technology. This was predicated on the notion that “true knowledge” emanates only from the interior, from the transcendent soul, while technology was a source of contamination. Indeed, consider what Plato (1952) wrote in *Phaedrus* at a time when the then new information technology of writing was developing:

If men learn writing, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is not a recipe for memory but for reminder. (p. 157)

Yet what Leroi-Gourhan's work suggests, and what is most germane to media and communication studies, is that technology, and indeed all forms of mediation, were always a part of thought. As our ancestors used stone tools, not only did they transform their environment in terms of how they could utilize it in a quotidian manner, they literally exteriorized and archived knowledge. For the first time, and unique among all species, there were external traces of memory, and the information archived in tools outlived their makers. And over time this information accumulated, grew more complex because of the increased storage across different tools, and diffused over time and space. It is tools, then, as external repositories of memory and as extensions of the human body that play out in this deeply recursive fashion and influence the development of advanced brain functions like memory, perception, thought, language, and consciousness. Here, a critical insight of the prehistoric turn comes into focus. On the surface, we live in a time when technological mediation is more obvious than ever. While there is much that is wholly unique and new to our condition, it does not include a relation to technology that is for the first time ubiquitous. Indeed, we only became human *qua* the human with technical exteriorization. So, unlike the work of some futurists like Kurzweil (2005), I am not setting the stage for flights of fantasy of our being on the evolutionary cusp of becoming new species, technological hybrids in a new point of singularization. Instead, from the perspective provided above, if we look back millions of years we see nothing *but* prehistoric cyborgs, insofar as we could never have developed biologically or culturally outside that transductive relation with tools.

It is here we can turn to the second germane point, what Leroi-Gourhan called the *chaîne opératoire* (or operating sequence). The *chaîne opératoire* recognizes that the human interacts with the material world via a sequence of technical events. It is not only what makes the transductive human functional, but it sets the preconditions for exteriorization. It is instructive to recall Marx here, and momentarily bracket off that “capital absorbs labour into itself [via machinery]” and think again how it is “as though its body were by love possessed.” As such, let us think about the sensuousness of syntax.

Just as all native speakers know syntax without formal study or even comprehensive understanding, so it is the case with our syntactic relationship to technics. As

Leroi-Gourhan (1994) notes, “operational syntax is generated by memory and is born from [an extra-discursive] dialogue between the brain and the material realm” (p. 114). Syntax is in the order of movement, and all interaction with technology comprises a *veritable syntax of gestures*. Imagine for a moment the hand and a simple stone tool; the external traces, the archival information contained in that tool, provide a functional architecture for technics, enabling a practice that heretofore could not be done (at least in that particular manner). But there is something just as important that is too often overlooked. Beyond its functionality, it is also a vector of exteriorization for calibrating the human sensorium.¹⁴ What a syntax of technics sets are conditions of possibility for a body’s rhythm and movement, at least in that assemblage. So let us return to the example of the simple stone. This entails affective capacities; that is, both contained within the form of the tool and, in conjunction with the hand moving outward from the body, there is a logic of the sequencing of acts that extends and differentiates its ability to act, and thus to feel/experience the environment. So beyond functionalism, syntax offers a provisional answer to the Spinozist question of what a body can do; it creates preconditions for a body to act and to be newly structurally coupled with its environment.

The *sensuousness of technology*, then, is primarily of an affective order, and something already in place when capital attempts to take possession. This sensuousness is also a dimension critical to a body’s mobility and ability to communicate through space and time. Syntax, thus, acts like a time signature and sets the key. Again from Leroi-Gourhan: “Rhythms are the creators of space and time, at least for the individual. Space and time do not enter lived experience until they are materialized within a rhythmic frame” (p. 309). The body is constantly exteriorized via rhythmic frames; hence the importance of syntax. And capital seeks to impose a grammar on those rhythms. The syntax of the (non)local body entails a sequence of communicative and cognitive technics and actions which offer unprecedented flexibility and scope. But the sensuous syntax of the (non)local body that affords flexibility is being subjected to a grammar of capital, making it precarious. Global labor is being subjected to new proscriptions and prescriptions, disrupting the more stable rhythms of Fordism, rendering those out of time. There are many names for this new time signature: post-Fordism, globalization, neoliberal capitalism, the information society, postcolonial capitalism. This rupture takes us from our prehistoric turn back to the future of mobility and precarity.

New Rhythms of (Non)Locality

The operational sequence guiding the movement of labor has changed significantly, in part due to the development of the global positioning system (GPS) that is integral to “checking in” and all forms of geosocial networking. Surprisingly, GPS was not widely deployed until Desert Storm in 1991. Subsequently, it was aggressively

adopted by capital in order to more finely calibrate the “just-in-time” capacities of flexible accumulation. It had an immediate impact on mobility and labor, as this one exemplar illustrates. In 1994, Cemex was a modest, regional Mexican cement company when it synchronized its operations using GPS (Katel, 1997). Before the turn of the millennium, it was buying out leading cement and construction companies the world over, no doubt partially due to its deft deployment of GPS. By outfitting all cement trucks with transmitters, its head office could use real-time data about the location, direction, and speed of every vehicle, and make on-the-fly decisions to radically augment the efficiency of its delivery process. Within a few years of adopting GPS it had become the largest cement company in North America and subsequently the world. However, no sooner had it reached the top than it plunged into near insolvency and remains mired in bad debt. What is instructive here are the changing ways in which location awareness is being used. For Cemex, it was utilized to trace the mobility of raw materials with labor being a mere but necessary minder (i.e., driving the truck). GPS, then, in its “just-in-time” guise, monitors the movement of labor only insofar as it is materially tied to the movement of resources, and it has become standard in virtually all resource-delivery systems. Surplus value comes only through the more efficient movement of resources through space and time vis-à-vis a fixed site of production, be it cement delivery to a building site or parts for a factory.

The great leap forward for capital comes when it contrives to harness the (non) local flow of labor emanating from the newly augmented affective and communicative capacity of immaterial labor in its original and 2.0 variants. GPS is being redeployed by location-based applications to make this (non)local flow itself a site of production, altering the operational sequence of networked assemblages, adding a finer bearing of location to its syntax. At the time of writing, location-aware applications and geosocial networks were proliferating across the mediated landscape. As mentioned, HTML5 will enable location-aware browsing, Google has rolled out its “Near Me Now” search option, and its Chromebook (a laptop that comes without desktop applications or programs) is wholly Internet-based via cloud computing, designed for permanent WiFi connectivity. Chromebook is meant to be the exemplary artifact of Web 3.0 – location awareness plus cloud computing, making platforms and the associated information flow even more (non)local. As well, UrbanSpoon, Yelp, and other related applications are like location-aware Yellow Pages featuring user-generated reviews of stores, restaurants, and bars. There are also location-aware social networks, which allow users to interact relative to where they are. Facebook Places, Google Buzz, Foursquare, and PocketLife are among the more prominent apps. With Foursquare, users “check in” to venues to earn points, and even become “Mayor” of the site. Restaurants and bars are increasingly tying into Foursquare to offer time-specific discounts, and Zagat is overlaying its review database for even more widespread marketing and commercial tie-ins. Again, it is the early days for location awareness, and more sophisticated applications and, more importantly, unexpected new cultural practices are surely in the offing.

So we have immaterial labor 2.0, inflected with location, and manifesting in new cultural practices as well as in the more formal parameters of work. In critically engaging the increasingly precarious parameters of work, Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter (2005) ask, “what are the circumstances in which capital meets life?” *Always via technics* is the response suggested here. But equally, life meets life via technics; that is, the human is exteriorized into material life via technics, a process that sets the rhythm for the spatial and temporal frame we experience. This process of exteriorization fully exceeds labor’s absorption by capital; it is, resounding Marx in the First Thesis of Feuerbach, “human sensuous activity, practice” (1977b, p. 156). Technics, then, are the proper domain of the human, not an alien, alienating force, although such effects are manifest when directed by capital. Increasingly, our practices are (non)local, simultaneously local and at a distance. One benefit of thinking in terms of the (non)local body is that it foregrounds the embodiment of technology – and thus the transductive materiality of immaterial labor 2.0 – and refuses the problematic typology of the real and the virtual. There is no “natural” presence to the body; no objective parameters of space and time. As such, to think in terms of the “virtualization” of space and time is to miss the whole point of the transductive human. The affective and communicative capacities of the (non)local body may be unprecedented in their scope and speed but no less real – especially no less a real “human sensuous activity.” To be sure, (non)locality is altering our perception of and movement through space and time, via new visceral rhythms, affective behaviors, and integration in space.

Geosocial networking is an emergent techno-social space set by a *new syntax of (non)locality*. In the simplest terms, it is reconfiguring our movement through time and space because we can negotiate it through new, potentially deep and rich information flows. The information produced in geosocial networks helps us find things nearby and tell others where we are – just for starters – and we do that through collective practices – crowdsourcing to some, the general intellect to others, play and work regardless. As one digital media observer puts it, “it will become natural and expected to be informed, personally, about proximate things of interest” (Abell, 2010). From this prosaic insight, we can draw a key dynamic of (non)locality: *proximate affinities*. But what is new, syntactically, is that proximate affinities, just like those subatomic particles, break the principle of locality. We *act corporeally* on proximate affinities on the level of increasing microlocality (i.e., “checking in” to a geographic place), but via a communicative and affective capacity for which *all and everything is proximate* (information flowing near-instantaneously through the network around the world). Socially, informationally, it is not so much another round of time-space compression but implosion, given the radically different registers under which our material and immaterial dimensions operate. For some this marks a too-disorienting dislocation between the body and what they might see as the virtual. But for others, and especially for youth, they are *first becoming (non)local and from there learning to immaterial labor*. In other words: flexibility followed by precarity; that is, they are

sharing a new syntax of time and space which is eminently flexible for myriad forms of new mediated cultural play and just as many kinds of precarious work.

(Non)locality, then, is a preeminent contemporary condition, emergent and unevenly distributed to be sure, but fervently growing. Flexibility is the valorized counterpart to precarity. Indeed, the former becomes the latter when seized by capital. But the absorption of (non)locality by capital comes only by drawing on a sensuous exteriorization that is already in formation. Here I would like to make one final autonomist inflection.

I have been using the term *syntax* to highlight the *temporal and spatial order of the operational sequence* informing the transductive and constitutive relations of the human and technology. I also thought it dubious to use the term *syntax* for capital as a synonym for logic. In part, this is because syntax establishes the preconditions for what a body can do in a technical assemblage and thus is inherently ambivalent. Capital, on the other hand, is wholly prescriptive. It is imposed on a syntax insofar as it determines the propriety or impropriety of syntax. As for (non)locality, that is a truly ambivalent syntax as it is manifested in both flexibility and precarity. So in flexible new mediated cultural practices, proximate affinities and their globally networked diffusions are being acted upon “from below,” as it were, by and amongst everyday people. Yet this expanded communicative and affective capacity is equally being seized by capital in the hopes that it is the pilot wave for the next big thing.

I do not wish to suggest that “grammar” is either inherently negative or the sole possession of capital. It is, rather, a constituting force that formalizes usage or a sequence of actions. As such, we can propose that there are competing grammars with very different proscriptions and prescriptions. One would be via contemporary capitalism. For one possible other, might (non)locality be the syntax governing the temporal and spatial rhythms of what Paolo Virno calls the grammar of the multitude? It delineates the rhythm of the collective body of the multitude. Virno situates the multitude in “a continuum of affect, of communication and sociality” functioning as the “common from which the refrain of precarity is individuated as a series of iterations on labour and life” (quoted in Neilson & Rossiter, 2005). I read this as the syntax which entails flexibility, innovation, and a constitutive freedom. The rhythm of what Virno calls “the common” is a syntax of (non)locality. Capital, however, is relentlessly redoubling its efforts to direct the tempo toward maximum efficiency and profitability. Thus we come back to that tension between play and work. Play entails a flexibility from which emerge innovations that are social, economic, and political. Work, at least under the grammar of capital, renders flexibility precarious and innovation an instrument for profitability. It is within these tensions we might differently profit by considering remarks made not long ago that resonate with the syntax of the (non)local body: “the demand to combine the freedom of movement with the freedom of communication is social dynamite” (Bove, Empson, Lovink, Schneider, & Zehle, 2003). The collective body that can create that “social dynamite” is multiply possessed, but to which grammar will it acquiesce, or indeed refuse?

NOTES

- 1 When this quoted version of Facebook's Terms of Use circulated, there was an outcry, a public relations fiasco, and subsequently they were revised. As of June 2011, the pertinent section reads as follows:

[Y]ou grant us a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook ("IP License"). This IP License ends when you delete your IP content or your account unless your content has been shared with others, and they have not deleted it.

While this policy wording seems much more restrictive and benign, it is scarcely different in legal terms. In particular, the Terms begin with the following statement: "You own all of the content and information you post in Facebook, and you can control how it is shared." But such anodyne words have little legal status. As succinctly noted by legal scholars Jennifer Hendry and Kay E. Goodall (2010):

This provision regarding ownership is, in essence, almost entirely worthless due to the scope of the licence – although the user may own all of the Content they post on the site, Facebook does not, in fact, need to own the information because they are licensed to utilise it in whichever way they choose, regardless of ownership. It is like borrowing your parents' car – at no point do you ever claim to own it, but that does not really matter when you are driving around town.

For Facebook's Terms of Service, see <https://www.facebook.com/settings/?tab=privacy#!/terms.php>

- 2 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide adequate detail of Smythe's introduction of the audience commodity, thus readers may benefit from elsewhere examining what were called the famous "blindspot debates" of the late 1970s. Cf. Jhally (1982); Livant (1979, 1982); Murdock (1978); Smythe (1977, 1978).
- 3 Not only is Wright a thoughtful critic of the immaterial labor thesis but his book *Storming Heaven* (2002) offers perhaps the best English-language overview of Italian autonomist Marxism, the theoretico-practical crucible from which the very concept emerged.
- 4 While the original source for Lazzarato's article is Virno and Hardt's *Radical Thought in Italy* (1996), it has since been diffused throughout the Internet. Perhaps the richest such source is the Generation Online site (<http://www.generation-online.org/>), a veritable treasure trove that has a vast array of articles from a very broadly defined autonomist tradition and incisive materials on concepts ranging from "immaterial labor" to "biopower" to "general intellect."
- 5 O'Reilly (2005) uses this term to describe what many see the Internet has become: second-generation networked services. For example, Google would be a leading Web 2.0 entity as the efficacy of its search engine largely depends upon the collective activity of its users. Web 2.0 is what happens when the accretion of cultural knowledge, or the "general intellect" – in networked relations – becomes the primary dynamic of the Internet. Other Web 2.0 exemplars would be Twitter, Tumblr, wikis (open user-generated content sites like Wikipedia), and geosocial networks like Foursquare. Finally, all

variants of user-generated content, from content rating (Digg, Reddit) to user reviews (UrbanSpoon, Yelp) to “tagging” (Flickr, de.licio.us), are integral to this active turn in Internet usage.

- 6 See Coté and Pybus (2007, 2011).
- 7 The subjective reading takes its cues from Marx’s *Grundrisse*, specifically the section “Fragments on Machines.” In the autonomist reading, value is situated in the variable capital (the technical, cultural, and linguistic knowledge) of these new laboring subjectivities. It is this “subjective turn” that marks off much of what is unique about immaterial labor. This reading marks a key differentiation of autonomist thought from more orthodox Marxists who see this added value as accumulating in the fixed value of machinery.
- 8 Marx takes this quote from Goethe’s *Faust*, specifically Part 1, Act 5, where it comprises the chorus from a drinking song performed by the patrons in Auerbach’s Cellar. It is about the dangers of love and the dubious judgments its possession can sometimes render. Marx himself was quite possessed by this quote as he cited it three times, twice in *Capital 1* and once in *Capital 3*: “[Capital is] an animate monster which begins to ‘work’ as if its body were by love possessed” (Marx, 1977b, p. 302); “The money’s body is now by love possessed” (Marx, 1981, p. 517).
- 9 Proscribe means to prohibit and prescribe to endorse. These are terms commonly applied to grammar, describing its primary function. In other words, what grammar does is to prohibit or endorse combinatory word usage. As such, a particular syntax can be either grammatically prescribed or proscribed. Here I am transposing these terms from language usage to the body and technology, especially as related to capital. So when thinking in terms of a sensuous syntax, I refer to the sequence of bodily actions and techniques, particularly the communicative and affective actions of the social body. Bodily syntax is constantly being recalibrated in relation to different forms of technology; capital, in turn, proscribes and prescribes sensuous syntaxes guided by its governing logic of maximizing productivity and profitability.
- 10 “The prehistoric turn” is an attempt to enable us to better see, feel, and understand what might be called “McLuhan’s water” – the Canadian media theorist once famously quipped that while he did not know who discovered water, it certainly wasn’t the fish. My own “prehistoric turn” has been illuminated by the work of two innovative media theorists. First, Mark B. N. Hansen (2006a, 2006b), whose studies of new media are predicated on the recognition that media always already conditions our situation; that is, that human techno-genesis continuously calibrates and recalibrates the “natural” human. Second is Jussi Parikka, whose *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology* (2010) boldly steps out of the human realm in order to radically reassess media theory. His “posthuman turn” looks at everything from the organizational structure of the swarm to the affective sensorium of the tick to better understand contemporary digital culture.
- 11 Technics has a very specific philosophical lineage. It is derived from the Greek *tekhne*, which can be translated as craft or art. It also served in ancient Greece as a key marker of that which was not of the natural world (*physis*). As such, it helped construct a model of the “natural” human. This denigration of *tekhne* and its related artifice even applied to the realm of knowledge. True knowledge, or *episteme*, emanates from the interior of natural human, from the soul, whereas that from Sophistic *tekhne* is, by definition, not only goal-oriented or practical in the service of craft but inherently of lesser value.

- 12 The “general intellect” again comes from “Fragments on Machines” where Marx uses it to denote how collective general intelligence makes the productive force of abstract knowledge greater than that of physical exertion. An innovative interpretation was developed by autonomists, and one critical to this chapter. Instead of building up in machinery autonomists see general intellect manifesting in worker subjectivity – thus a key element of the aforementioned “subjective turn.” Virno writes: “Science, information, linguistic communication, and knowledge in general – rather than labour time – are now the central pillars on which production and wealth rest” (1996, p. 267). So you can think of the general intellect as the resource upon which immaterial labor draws for its productive force. Indeed, it is the new distributed forms of user-generated knowledge that make the 2.0 variant so potent.
- 13 I discuss this process and some of the related debates in much greater detail in Côté (2011).
- 14 See Côté (2011) for further detail on the constitutive relations between the human-technology and the constant recalibration of the human sensorium.

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The Waning Distinction Between Private and Public

Net Locality and the Restructuring of Space

Adriana de Souza e Silva and Eric Gordon

ABSTRACT

Whether browsing for location-specific content on a desktop computer or using location services on a smartphone, physical location is a factor in how users experience information. In this chapter, Adriana de Souza e Silva and Eric Gordon name the context of located information production and retrieval “net locality.” They describe how net locality is transforming user experiences of the web and physical spaces by altering the logic with which data are organized and distributed. Net locality is changing how users occupy public and private spaces, they argue, as connections to other people and spaces become more flexible and porous. Finally, they identify two modes of surveillance inherent in net locality: top-down and collateral monitoring. The tracking of user location by government and corporations facilitates the former; users tracking each other for the purpose of social connection facilitate the latter. Each is constructive of power relations that affect the nature of location-based user interactions.

The Waning Distinction Between Private and Public: Net Locality and the Restructuring of Space

As people become more comfortable with the ubiquity of networks in their lives, they become less comfortable with being disconnected.¹ Leaving the house without a cell phone or getting in the car without a GPS device might cause feelings of anxiety because it suggests a momentary disconnect from the network. This ubiquitous network is what Mark Andrejevic (2007) called the “digital enclosure.” The web is no longer something that people access intermittently and only from desktops – it is increasingly something to which people feel perpetually connected. Desktop and mobile devices are windows into this network, but they no longer define the edges of the network. This greatly expanded web, which stretches seamlessly from our screens to our streets, is what we call networked locality (net locality). Net locality is a means of describing a context for networked communication that is increasingly oriented around the location of the user. From location-aware mobile devices to web-based maps, a new level of attention to physical location is transforming user experiences of the web and the logic with which data are organized and distributed. In addition, net locality points to a different understanding of urban spaces, now permeated with networked interactions. As such, the awareness of net localities is critical for the very conceptualization of new media – from a focus on digital networks that operated outside the constraints of the physical world to practices that occur primarily in urban (hybrid) spaces (de Souza e Silva, 2006; Graham, 2004).

While there are significant benefits to this flexible and ubiquitous network, there are costs as well. People have increased access to data and information of all sorts. But in order to access data, people also need to disclose personal information. The disclosure of personal information *per se* is not a problem. However, often people do not know what kind of information about them is stored in databases or how it is being used. And the unauthorized use of personal information might lead to privacy breaches (Andrejevic, 2007; Solove, 2008). In the growing sector of location-based services, privacy issues are pronounced because data about a user’s location are necessary for many location-based applications to function. For example, to use a location-based social network like Foursquare or even to take advantage of the Places feature on Facebook, it is necessary for users to disclose where they are. Even for those who enjoy the affordances of net locality, there is for some an accompanying anxiety with this form of personal disclosure. The act of sharing one’s location information with cell phone providers invokes dystopian Orwellian fantasies of total surveillance.

But traditional metaphors of top-down surveillance are no longer adequate to address these concerns, because the fashion in which people are surveilled and in which they surveil others is rather circular in orientation (Solove, 2004). Disclosing personal location does compromise people’s control over the use of their data; however, it also opens up the possibilities of controlling data to fortify the functional-

ity of personal location. In other words, location-aware technologies typically enable users to exclude people and information that are not immediately relevant to their situation. So while the fear of outside intrusion upon personal space and information threatens to remove personal control in public spaces, the increased capacity for personal control over physical space through information filtering presents other problems associated with social exclusion (de Souza e Silva & Frith, 2010a). The increased personalization of space introduced by new technologies suggests new kinds of exclusionary practices and shifts in power relationships that might challenge how spaces are experienced and who has access to those experiences. Mobile devices and digital maps are filters that can exclude all but existing “friends” or social connections, and all but familiar spaces. As such, privacy and control are two sides of the same coin. Within net locality, controlling the distribution of one’s location information is coupled with controlling the context and the corresponding affordances of sharing that information.

Net locality creates a paradox, where a personalized relationship to physical location simultaneously threatens and secures one’s control of physical space. The borders between public and private spaces have shifted throughout human history, influenced by social and economic changes, and specifically by the development of new transportation and communication technologies (Arendt, 1958; Gant & Kiesler, 2002; Sheller & Urry, 2003). Likewise, the increasing use of location-aware technologies challenges us to question the traditional borders between what is considered public and what has been considered private, suggesting a new cultural understanding of the meaning of privacy.

When Photography Becomes Cartography

Initiatives like Google Maps and Google Street View are reminders that the mapping of the world is extensive, and consumers are gaining a certain amount of comfort with that mapping, even if it facilitates new and unprecedented forms of surveillance. But there have been important moments of resistance to this surveillance, and these moments suggest that there are unresolved tensions over the boundary between public and private associated with location-aware technologies. Google’s mapping initiatives in particular have been at the center of these tensions. In this section, we consider some of the legal challenges posed to Google’s mapping projects and how those challenges have shaped the broader cultural dialogue about location data.

Google Street View adds to the functionality of Google Maps a photographic addendum to its mapped streets. Photographs of both sides of the street, taken by roving cameras mounted on cars, are spliced together to create an impression of photographic continuity and made available on web and mobile interfaces. Not surprisingly, this effort raised some privacy concerns, as people complained about having an image of themselves or personal effects attached to what is essentially a public

record. But when Google Street View first launched, the company had a strict policy in place for the removal or alteration of contested images. When San Francisco resident and Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) privacy advocate Kevin Bankston asked that his picture be removed from a street corner, Google replied with a request for his name, location of image, and copy of his driver's license. But Bankston was incensed by this demand: "Apparently, you have to jump through more hoops than a trained seal," he complained. "Perhaps they'd also like my mother's maiden name? Birth certificate? Urine sample?" (quoted in Poulsen, 2007). As a result of Bankston's protests, Google changed its policy, replacing the requirement of the driver's license with a signed statement of accuracy. The change in this policy resulted almost immediately in a windfall of new requests. Many people were unhappy with being part of a tacit public record that visually displayed their whereabouts. But most legal challenges have passed without incident for the company because privacy laws in the United States do not protect against being photographed in public space. Since all of Google's photographs were taken from public streets, the company is technically within its legal rights. However, Google's plans to expand to other countries have been interrupted by stricter privacy laws. Several European countries have denied Google access, while Canada and Australia have insisted on blurring out faces and license plates as a condition of entry.

As a means of assuaging growing privacy concerns, Google developed an application that would automatically blur faces and license plates beyond recognition. The response to this new feature was positive, but it did not succeed in staving off all lawsuits, as Google did not consider the privacy problems with photographing property. In April 2008, a Pittsburgh couple sued Google for invasion of privacy and trespassing, asserting that the Street View feature reduced the value of their home. Aaron and Christine Boring (*Boring v. Google, Inc.*, 2009) claimed that the "major component of their purchase decision was a desire for privacy" and Google's photographs compromised the integrity of that privacy (quoted in Slater, 2008). They also claimed that because they live on a private road, simply driving down the street with car-mounted cameras was an act of trespassing. This case is interesting because it is the first instance of a privacy suit against Google that was focused on property. It questioned to what extent one's personal property should be protected from being added to Google's "official record" of the searchable world.²

In the United States, the town of North Oaks, Minnesota, has positioned itself at the forefront of this battle. The city has banned Google from taking Street View photographs, claiming, in a manner similar to the Borings, that because all of its town roads are private, Google has no authority to photograph them. This St. Paul suburb of about 4,500 people was the first city to take action against Google's efforts, arguing that photographs taken from private streets are an act of trespassing, while satellite photographs are not (Amouth, 2008). The city sent a letter to Google in January 2008 asking that all photographs be taken down and destroyed. Google complied. Legal questions aside, the case of North Oaks points to some limits in the social tolerance for being mapped. By creating a cartographic record of these

photographs, Google has forced the connection between photographic surveillance and cartographic surveillance. Different than simply being photographed in a public space, when a photograph is located and given the functionality of a map, the private space or information of that photograph takes on a public function. So while some are opportunistic, these legal challenges are reflective of a perceived loss of agency and control over private spaces as photographs of these spaces acquire this new public functionality. At a macro level, it is not difficult to comprehend the benefits of making close-up images of the world searchable; but on a micro level, it is necessary to contend with the fact that the world is composed of people and their data. Making the world searchable is equated to locating and identifying users. Making every location findable presupposes that everyone wants to be found.

But Google's philosophy has always been that it is better to apologize than ask for permission.³ The privacy complaints about Street View were surely anticipated – minor details in the larger vision of making the world searchable. For Google, the attitude of not wanting to be found is a relic. It has been successful in selling that culture shift. These concerns are fringe; for many people, being found (both by oneself and by others) is tantamount to socialization. Getting on the map is a virtue, a marker of participation in a culture that, through no small effort from Google, values location.

The example of Google Maps points to a broader phenomenon. The possibility of having one's location information disclosed, whether a photograph or longitude and latitude coordinates, prompts serious concerns about the invasion of privacy and fears of surveillance, especially when the person being located has no control over who accesses that location information. The issue is not simply that the information is recorded, but also that the information is potentially used in a way that the subject of that information cannot control. The dividing line between private and public in the context of net locality is increasingly drawn by the level at which one feels that one has control over one's located information. This is most evident when we consider location-based services (LBS).

Making Location Data Public

LBS provide location-specific information for anyone with a GPS-equipped cell phone. This information can come in the form of advertisements, coupons, restaurant reviews, Wikipedia articles, or information about the location of nearby services, such as gas stations or coffee shops. While these services do not necessarily reveal their users' location to people nearby, users must allow the service provider to pinpoint their location to receive the desired information. And unbeknownst to many people using these services, this information is often shared with commercial partners, such as corporate sponsors and application developers. As a subset of LBS, location-based social networks (LBSNs) not only transmit the users' location information to the service provider, but also share this location with members of the

users' social network. For example, a Foursquare or Facebook Places user might be able to share her location with known people in her "friends" list, or, if she is using a service like LooptMix, with anybody in the vicinity who is using LooptMix.

The disclosure of one's location, either to service providers or to peers, is often framed by the media as an invasion of privacy – in this case, locational privacy. In an analysis of popular press accounts of LBS, Adriana de Souza e Silva and Jordan Frith (2010b) identified two main fears related to privacy: the fear of top-down surveillance (mostly from advertising companies and the government), and the fear of collateral surveillance, that is, disclosing one's location to other people.

Almost all LBS business models are based on location-based advertising. LBSNs, such as Facebook Places, Loopt, Foursquare, Whrrl, and Google Latitude, are all provided to users free of charge. The easiest way to monetize these services is through advertising. For example, when checking into a location with Foursquare, users can find coupons for nearby retail shops. Foursquare motivates participation through its internal structure of competition (badges and mayorships), as well as through its external reward structure (coupons and free stuff). Advertisements actually become a reward for the user. Location-based ads make the advertising more relevant to the user, almost like impulse purchasing in a supermarket checkout line. The assortment of candy bars and mints displayed in checkout lines is there to satisfy the immediate desires of shoppers in an impromptu fashion. Likewise, location-based advertising is based on a just-in-time model of consumer needs. One typically does not go to Foursquare to find coupons. But when coupons appear and are relevant both to past consumer behavior and to the location of the consumer, they motivate impulse purchases.⁴

However, consumers are often unaware of what LBS developers and mobile phone providers do with their location information. If location information is provided to advertisers, as the example above demonstrates, consumers most often have no choice but to receive ads if they want to use the service. They also generally cannot choose the type of ad they receive, and lack awareness about which companies receive updates of their location. At this point, LBS data-sharing practices and privacy policies are not clear to most consumers. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires that services obtain consent from users before targeting them with mobile advertising, but that consent is often buried in the fine print of lengthy user agreements. Many users, however, are willing to consent to the terms of these privacy statements (usually without reading them) if they see value in the type of information they are receiving.

People obviously have differing levels of concern about the issue of personal privacy. As Raynes-Goldie (2010) has noted, "By 2003, the number of privacy pragmatists – that is, people who are concerned about their privacy but are willing to trade some of it for something beneficial – had risen" when compared both to privacy fundamentalists and to people unconcerned about privacy. This is in line with previous research, which states that users are willing to give out private information depending on their perception of the usefulness of the application offered to them

(Ackerman, Cranor, & Reagle, 1999; Ackerman, Kempf, & Miki, 2003; Barkuus & Dey, 2003). So, as LBS become more popular (and consequently more useful), users will likely be more willing to disclose location information. Indeed, according to ABI Research (2009), “the number of subscribers to handset-based location based services doubled in 2008 to more than 18 million.” The same report attests that while navigation continues to lead in terms of total subscribers, LBSN has the highest year-to-year growth rates of all mobile services. This suggests that simply disclosing one’s location is not a problem for the average user. Disclosing location information only becomes a problem when users are unaware of who owns the information about their location, and with whom their location is being shared.

In addition to concerns about unknowingly sharing location information with advertising companies, de Souza e Silva and Frith’s (2010b) study found that the popular press generally focuses on the concern that the government might be using location data to monitor people. For example, an *eWeek* article by Roy Mark from March 2009 put it this way: “When it comes to government surveillance, the legal interface between law enforcement and your phone and Internet service providers is a shadowy place, and it’s often unclear what kinds of data companies are willing to provide to the government” (Mark, 2009). The idea of companies sharing location information with the government is of grave concern to many people, and has been described by privacy advocates as “a catastrophic corruption of consent” (Warren, 2009).

In addition to the top-down surveillance we have been discussing, de Souza e Silva and Frith (2010b) also show that media accounts of LBS point to concerns about collateral surveillance, or “people tracking,” as some media outlets describe it. Collateral surveillance is the act of letting others – generally, those you know – know where you are. Location-based social networks and games are often the target of such concerns. These practices are associated with a loss of control over one’s personal location information. For example, a *Newsday* article had this to say: “Thanks to the sweet/creepy new Google Latitude, [stalking is] easier than ever” (“Google online tool,” 2009). The “fear of being tracked,” as the awareness of location is generally described (e.g., Mason, 2009), is frequently connected to unknowingly giving up location information. For instance, as John Markoff in the *New York Times* warned: “You may use your phone to find friends and restaurants, but somebody else may be using your phone to find you and find out about you” (Markoff, 2009). Or as David Rowan (2009), from *The Times*, warns: “Let’s just imagine that a jealous partner gains access to your unattended phone and enables Latitude without your knowledge.” In all these accounts, it is clear that news outlets frame issues of locational privacy in particular ways: They warn users about the dangers of collateral stalking and governmental surveillance, but they ignore the major implications of the public sharing of location data for the construction of social networks, our experience of public spaces, and our perception of privacy. The above-mentioned reported privacy breaches are not directly related to personal harm (Solove, 2008) but actually stem from losing control of one’s personal information. It is not that people’s

location information is inherently private – in fact, LBS are premised on information accessibility; it is that users and entities can *use* someone's location information in unpredictable ways.

In response to the popular press concerns about privacy, some software designers have created safeguards for users to control their privacy settings, such as the ability to select which people are allowed in their network, or the ability to hide location from specific users (de Souza e Silva & Frith, 2010a). However, users' comfort in the security of their information, or their ability to prevent location information from being accessed by unknown users, is still quite volatile. This volatility is likely caused by the lack of clarity in the privacy settings within many of these applications. It is difficult to understand what the settings mean, or even if they can be adjusted. For example, Foursquare's default setting is to share location information with all members of a user's network. The user can manually turn that feature off every time she checks into a location, but there is no way to choose some members of a network over others. Additionally, when checking into a place with Foursquare, users can automatically see other Foursquare users in the vicinity, even if they were not added to their network.

Similar concerns have been reported by users of location-based mobile games (LBMGs). In their study of the game *Mogi*, Licoppe and Inada (2009) describe a case perceived as stalking by one female player who could see a nearby, unidentified player on her mobile screen. Despite repeated requests by the female player, the anonymous player never disclosed his identity, resulting in feelings of fear that the digital stalking would cross over into physical space. This example demonstrates that awareness of location might lead to power asymmetries. Similarly, Licoppe and Inada (2006) describe situations in which both players see each other on their mobile screen, but only one claims he or she can see the other in the physical space of the city, leading to uncomfortable and almost fearful feelings in the player under the risk of losing her anonymity. They also suggest that at the core of an LBMG experience – what they call a culture of proximity – is the assumption that one's location is public, so such behaviors (which treat location as private) actually run counter to user expectations of location-aware technology.

However, the very assumptions and fears of *Mogi* players are rooted in not recognizing a more profound shift in the nature of how individuals perceive and acknowledge each other in city spaces. Location-aware technologies have the potential to make people's location publicly available, which contradicts traditional expectations of anonymity in city spaces (Lehtonen & Mänpää, 1997; Simmel, 1971). Whether people decide to share their location only with five friends in their social network, broadcast it openly online on Twitter, or share it with their cell phone provider, these different degrees of publicity problematize what it is to be anonymous in public spaces. For example, before location-aware applications, when riding in a bus, a passenger could look around and see other co-present people, but he would know very little about them. However, if a Foursquare player gets on a bus, he will be able not only to visualize on his mobile phone screen other passengers who are Foursquare players, but

also possibly to access personal information about them, such as their name and location history. Licoppe and Inada (2009) suggest that the wide use of location-based applications will force us to question how we manage social interactions in public spaces, leading to “the development of an interaction order founded on the public character of locations” (p. 123).

The increased popularity of LBS, and the corresponding social transactions premised on personal location information, is foundational to what we call net locality and is altering traditional notions of privacy. Comfort with locational privacy, in particular, is determined by the extent to which private information is made public on the terms established by the creator of that information. While distinctions are made between top-down and collateral surveillance, the expressed anxieties are the same: in a situation characterized by the public disclosure of information, the extent to which users control the conditions of this disclosure sets the terms of communication and the boundaries of private space. In the following section, we situate this shift in the public discourse about privacy within a longer history of the concept and expand on the power dynamics implicit in net locality.

Rethinking Privacy and Surveillance

Understanding how conceptions of privacy have changed over time might help explain how and why location-aware technologies challenge the meaning and experience of privacy and how users of these technologies perceive public and private spaces. In his book *Understanding Privacy*, Daniel Solove (2008) describes the various conceptions of privacy throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Solove criticizes these conceptions as being either too narrow or too broad, and proposes that we should instead understand privacy according to specific contextual situations. Conceptions of privacy have changed over the years; and at any given time, there is considerable disagreement about their meaning (Sheller & Urry, 2003). In US society, privacy was originally imagined as “the right to be let alone,” following Warren and Brandeis’s famous article “The Right to Privacy” (Warren & Brandeis, 1890). However, the idea of privacy has also been frequently addressed in relation to forms of power: as power to limit access to the self, power to conceal information about oneself, and power to have control over one’s personal information. As we have illustrated, the majority of privacy issues that arise within net localities are related to the fear of losing control and power over one’s (locational) information, and how to manage the public sharing of location.

Solove suggests that while the Big Brother metaphor was useful for addressing a number of privacy problems, it has severe limitations when it comes to the database problem. “The most significant shortcoming of the Big Brother metaphor is that it fails to focus on the appropriate form of power” (Solove, 2004, p. 34). Within the database logic explored by Solove, personal information is collected by machines,

instead of by one individual who can watch another's every movement. The personal information collected is generally not something that one would consider "private" (for example, name, race, marital status) and is therefore not seen as threatening. The main problem emerges, however, when this information is aggregated and used to construct what he calls "digital dossiers," which are used by corporations to predict behavioral and consumption patterns. Users generally have no control over what is done with their personal information once it is collected.

When it comes to location information, the situation is similar. LBS privacy statements are generally vague enough that they do not inform users about what kind of information is collected, who the partners are, and what they might do with the information. So the problem is less of a Big Brother-style, top-down surveillance and more of a lack of control about the destiny of collected information. According to Solove (2004), a more adequate metaphor to address information collection in the digital age is Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. Rather than focusing on centralized surveillance, as is the case of Big Brother, *The Trial* is about a bureaucratic system, which never informs the victim about the purpose of his trial, or the reason for information collection. The anxiety is about lack of control, and not about surveillance. In Solove's (2004) words, "the problem with databases and the practices associated with them is that they disempower people" (p. 41).⁵

Moving away from traditional ideas of top-down surveillance allows us to reconsider privacy in net localities. It is how we use information that matters, not just our ability to keep it secret. Simply disclosing one's location is not a problem *per se*, but it becomes one when users have no control of who accesses it and what is done with it. Often, when location information is aggregated through applications such as CitySense, it is used to predict people's behavior in the city. While this practice is not overtly harmful to the individual, it can be used to deliver location-specific advertisements or to create profiles of particular areas of the city (Gandy, 1993; Lyon, 2003).

Indeed, what we are witnessing with the development of net locality is a shift in the traditional model of top-down surveillance toward a more pervasive model of all-encompassing surveillance in which all individuals in the network know the position of all others. The actual function of this surveillance is unclear for most end users, and the threat unspecified, which, according to the popular press, is exactly what makes people fear the disclosure of their location (de Souza e Silva & Frith, 2010b). Since the popularization of camera phones and portable camcorders, it is clear that we have moved away from the Orwellian model of top-down surveillance.

Steve Mann and colleagues (2003) proposed the concept of *sousveillance* to describe ways by which individuals might be empowered through the use of portable communication technologies such as cell phones and camcorders. Mann's idea of *sousveillance* emphasizes a bottom-up approach by which users are able to neutralize surveillance by inverting its mechanism (i.e., allowing individuals to observe and control corporations and the government). However, as Matt Adams points out, "we are still locked in an Orwellian paradigm that has long since passed its sell by date" (quoted in de Souza e Silva & Sutko, 2009, p. 81). And he adds that *sousveillance* is

nothing new, given that it has been with us since the rise of the camcorder. Although it is possible to claim that individuals own an increasing number of *sousveillance* tools, what these tools generally contribute to is not a neutralization of surveillance but a creation of other forms of collateral, pervasive, and open surveillance by which everybody is able to keep track of everybody else.

Location-aware applications typically prompt anxiety because of the perceived absoluteness in which they locate the user. Someone or something knows exactly where you are at any given time. But locating somebody or disclosing information about someone is not necessarily an invasion of privacy. As Solove (2008) suggests, privacy issues need to be understood contextually. It is when information is taken out of context and used without notification or consent that users perceive a breach in privacy. For example, a Facebook Places user might choose to share her location with some of her Facebook friends without being aware that Facebook is using that information to deliver location-based advertisements. The use of her information is not consistent with her intentions regarding the service.

It is likely that these privacy concerns will continue to grow. But more likely the terms of the privacy debate will so radically depart from the present framework that what will constitute a breach and what will satisfy demand is now impossible to predict. With the increasing use of location-aware technologies that allow for different types of surveillance and data collection, it is natural that preexisting notions of privacy might be challenged and eventually changed. It is very unlikely, however, that privacy is dead, as some media accounts suggest. Privacy still matters; only, the terms of the debate are changing. It is no longer simply a matter of protecting the private from the public, as it is often a user's intention to make private information public. It is now a matter of being able to define and control the shifting boundaries between private and public. In the following section, we address this shift by examining how users bolster their sense of privacy through the "personalization" of public spaces.

Blurring the Line Between Private and Public Spaces

Technology constitutes society and is shaped and influenced by it (Castells, 2000). For example, with the introduction of new transportation and communication technologies there is often a challenge to established definitions of public and private. Gant and Kiesler (2002) note that with the popularization of rail transport in the mid-nineteenth century, the separation between work (public) and personal life (private) grew more definitive as people started commuting. While transportation technologies contributed to the creation of more distinct boundaries between the public and the private, communication technologies such as the telephone, the telegraph, and the television brought the public within the private space of home (Moore, 2004; Spigel, 1992). And this is even more pronounced with mobile

technologies (Bull, 2001, 2006; Gergen, 2002; Manguel, 1997; Sterne, 2003). Critics have accused the Walkman and the iPod of creating pockets of private spaces inside public spaces. Mobile listening devices raised concerns about the integrity of public space, as Hosokawa (1984, 1987) and Chalmers (1994) show. More generally speaking, mobile devices challenge where the private ends and the public begins (Fortunati, 2002; Gant & Kiesler, 2002; Katz & Aahkus, 2002; Ling, 2004; Puro, 2002).

Traditionally, the private space of the home has been envisioned as a controlled personal space in clear distinction from “uncontrolled” public spaces. But net localities challenge this. Users can wield more control over these public spaces by uploading and accessing place-specific information. As Eric Gordon (2009) has noted elsewhere, in a net locality, “private space is no longer defined solely as control over a geographic domain; it is control over the access and production of data within flexible information flows” (p. 26). So, beyond the traditional challenge of the public encroaching upon the private (transforming personal location information into public data), net localities exacerbate the problem of the private encroaching upon the public (users’ abilities to “personalize” public spaces by aggregating location data in accordance with their immediate and specific needs).

Of course, this ability is largely a matter of technical functionality, such as properly adjusting privacy settings. When users are not confident in their control over their privacy settings, they fear the loss of privacy. However, when users feel in control of their personal information and their ability to use it, they celebrate the possibility of connecting with other users and accessing location-based information (boyd, 2008; Solove, 2004). Giving up location information might be acceptable, as long as users feel they are in control of it and aware of what it entails. For example, Google Latitude’s privacy settings allow users to *lie* about their location by inserting it manually. Having their position visualized on a map at a fake location theoretically gives users the ultimate control over their location information. So, users might be more inclined to use a service like Google Latitude if they are made to feel in control over the nature of the location information they publicly disclose. In this case, the act of “privatizing” public spaces through LBS is really a matter of wielding information to feel in control within those spaces.

But how is this done? While some feelings of control might be cultivated by walking down the street with earbuds in and listening to a favorite album, it is important to distinguish between consuming media on a mobile device while in public and engaging with location information for the purpose of interacting with a space. For example, a book’s narrative is not necessarily about the place where it is being read; the voice of a cell phone conversation generally comes from elsewhere; and iPod’s songs are typically loaded independent of location. But location-aware technologies draw information from the physical surroundings. For example, a user equipped with a GPS-enabled cell phone in Times Square who opens the application WikiMe is able to read Wikipedia articles about Times Square. Similarly, if she decides to write a tweet about Times Square, that piece of information will be coded with the longitude and latitude (longlat) coordinates of that place. And location-based adver-

tisements are delivered to users based on their location in physical space. For instance, a Foursquare player who checks in to the neighborhood's Mexican restaurant might receive a coupon if the restaurant is registered with Foursquare. Besides accessing place-specific information in the form of articles, nearby restaurant reviews, coupons, and the location of surrounding gas stations and cafeterias, location-based social networks help users find other people who happen to be nearby.

Privacy Through Exclusion

One of the unfortunate and obvious side effects of the use of LBS is the potential for a different type of social divide between those who have access to the technology and those who do not. It is no longer simply location that is a determinant or marker of class, but also location awareness. The use of location-aware technologies can exclude those who do not use them. For example, if an individual is riding in a bus and opens Foursquare, she will be able to play and interact with other passengers who have Foursquare on their phones. She might also come to personally know these people, since they have some things in common (they similarly like games, own smart phones, and are riding the same bus). But the mobile interface might make her simultaneously pay attention to other nearby Foursquare players and ignore those passengers who are not using the application. This is distinct from the early days of mobile phones, when the devices were blamed for disconnecting people from their surroundings. Location-aware technologies generally do the exact opposite – they draw people's attention to their surrounding space. The difference here is that they introduce new forms of social differentiation into that space. Although these technologies increase the potential for communication and coordination with people who possess them, they might reduce communication with those who do not.

Spaces can become "overfiltered." Users can opt to encounter the same people and things, just as they tend to do on the web (Sunstein, 2006). In her empirical study of the mobile social network Dodgeball, Lee Humphreys (2007) observed that its users did not necessarily meet more people but instead hung out at different places with the same people. Humphreys also found that people used Dodgeball to meet existing friends out on the town and, in meeting those friends, did not necessarily connect to the general public, "thus leading to a kind of social molecularization" (p. 356). She affirmed that even when users did "meet new people through Dodgeball, these people were fairly demographically similar" (p. 356). In other words, the diversity of urban spaces may become masked in net localities. Rather than chance encounters of difference, she suggests that mobile social networks facilitate chance encounters of sameness.

But this analysis discounts the nuance of net localities and the importance of urban spaces for constructing social meaning. Even if a user of an LBSN is able to select and exclude individuals from engaging in her immediate social surroundings, the

resulting social processes do not necessarily lead to sameness. In fact, discovery is often facilitated by similarity (consider the experience of browsing books in a library). Also, the experience of space facilitated by LBSN is not solely premised on social encounters; information about spaces accessible through various applications can alter one's experience of those spaces significantly.

In any case, the urge to be among familiar things, people, and spaces is not solely a consequence of the use of new digital technologies, nor is it new. In the nineteenth century, sociologist Georg Simmel (1971) described the *blasé* attitude as a cultivated appearance of indifference used to protect the city dweller from the constant flood of stimulation. Simmel, while lamenting much about the "modern metropolis," understood that filtering was necessary to access renewed social opportunities and the corresponding enhancement of one's mental life. People in cities have always had the capacity to filter out what they did not want to see, from adopting an attitude to wearing earphones to consulting mobile devices. In the case of net localities, it is difficult to conclude that simply because there are filters, users will use them only to exclude. In fact, instead of redirecting users' attention to like-minded and physically absent networks, as is often the case with mobile phone conversations, location-aware technologies (re)direct the user to his or her immediate surroundings, which typically encompasses some difference.

But difference in everyday interactions with space is rarely something that people seek out. The feeling of being in control in public is often facilitated by an acknowledgment of the familiar. If a user knows there are people like her in a certain place, she is likely more comfortable going there. So, a place that is unfamiliar might gain familiarity if people using location-aware applications can "see" their social network before going there (Sutko & de Souza e Silva, 2011). Take CitySense as an example. The mobile application displays heatmaps that illustrate spatial concentrations of people in a given space. If a user notices that a number of people are congregating at a little known public beach that she is particularly fond of, she might be compelled to go there. The people one encounters in familiar places are themselves somewhat familiar because of their presence and affinity for the shared place. The difference, however, is that in the case of CitySense, the assessment of a place is done remotely via a mobile phone screen.

So, strategic filtering *and* the ability to assess a place before going there facilitate feelings of control amongst users of LBSNs. And there is some evidence that these communicative processes replace other forms of correspondence. For example, Nicolas Nova and Fabien Girardin (2009) tested their location-based mobile game *CatchBob!* (Nova & Girardin, 2007) in two modes: with and without mutual location awareness. One of their findings was that the presence of location awareness, that is, automatic detection of players' locations, led to a decrease in communication within the group. While this finding seems obvious (if you have information about each other's location, you do not need to call and ask for it), it points to changes in how people communicate in net localities. Some verbal communication is replaced by digital inference. This points to the fact that personal feelings of control are central

to communication in public spaces. How people negotiate these issues is transformative of the communication context in which people interact. As we have seen, the introduction of location-aware technologies might reduce one form of correspondence, just as it increases another. Location-aware technologies facilitate a diversity of experiences for those who possess them by allowing users to infer qualities about strangers based on where they are and, likewise, infer qualities about unfamiliar locations based on people they know.

Regardless of what sort of experiences location-aware technologies facilitate, people who do not have access to them no doubt experience spaces differently. David Wood and Stephen Graham (2005) call this “differential mobility.” They distinguish between two types of mobility: high mobility, pertaining to those few with easy access, and slow mobility, which includes the majority, who have difficult, blocked access. In this sense, mobility is directly related to power. At their core, location-aware technologies are contribute to this differential mobility. For example, the version of Loopt on Google’s Android phones provides place-specific traffic updates (Loopt, 2008), and those with access to the application might be able to reach their destination faster than those without access. However, as Wood and Graham note, differential mobility has always existed. From the moment some people rode or were carried while others walked, differences in mobility have existed, reflecting and reinforcing social hierarchies (p. 177).

The result is that people have markedly different experiences of the spaces they occupy and markedly different expectations of spaces depending on where they are. For example, two individuals walk side by side down a crowded street – one perceives the street as only a physical space and the other perceives it as a net locality. The physical space is unchanged for the individual excluded from the LBSN while the LBSN user perceives the physical space embedded with digital information. Previously, individuals could listen to music, read, or daydream. But the space they occupied was still the same space occupied by other people sharing that physical location. Location-aware technologies change this. Users can “customize” their experience of public spaces with features like LooptMix that allow a user to choose what type of person shows up on her map. This customization of space alters the nature of that space. LBSN and LBS in general create a type of “differential public space,” in which physically co-located people experience the same place very differently.

Conclusion

According to Manuel Castells (2009), “The sources of social power in our world have not changed fundamentally from our historical experience” (p. 50). What has changed, however, is that power is increasingly defined in the context of networks. With whom we interact and at what location are no longer just circumstances of society but the defining context of society. Net locality further establishes the importance of

networks in everyday life. While it provides an unprecedented control to some, through exclusion, it threatens to further exacerbate existing inequities. Location-aware technologies are normalizing information-rich spaces within everyday interactions; as such, they challenge widely held conceptions of private and public and introduce new methods of establishing personal control over these emerging information landscapes. As we have described, the distinction between public and private has shifted with each new communication and transportation technology; net locality marks yet another significant shift.

Governments can use location awareness to track how fast people are driving; some products are being marketed for individuals to track their spouses or their children; advertisers can easily use location information to target people with relevant ads. As Castells points out, networks define the context for power in society. And when people's physical locations are located and mapped within that network, the ability of networks to define the context of power is enhanced. In this chapter, we have demonstrated how issues of power are manifesting in public spaces, and specifically urban spaces, as people explore new practices with location-aware technologies and struggle with the pervasiveness of location information. As mapped and portable information becomes a more powerful mechanism for establishing boundaries between inside and outside, familiar and unfamiliar, social interactions are adjusting to these new dynamics. These shifting dynamics are foundational to what we call net locality and will continue to provide the context for urban social interactions in the early part of the twenty-first century. More and more spaces are information rich; physical landscapes are peppered with information about those landscapes and the people who occupy them. Whether one has access to that information and how one wields that information for personal control are the primary questions associated with net locality, and should be, as more and more media are consumed on mobile and portable devices, a central question for the future of media studies more generally.

NOTES

This chapter draws from one of the chapters in our book: Gordon and de Souza e Silva (2011).

- 1 While it is true that people in the developed world (a.k.a. Global North) have historically had more widespread access to the Internet and to telecommunication infrastructures, it is also important to highlight that increasingly countries in the Global South have access to information networks mostly through mobile communication technologies. The International Telecommunications Union 2010 statistics show that "access to mobile networks is now available to 90% of the world population and 80% of the population living in rural areas" (ITU, 2010). However, we shouldn't forget there is still a technological divide that increasingly consists of connection speed and type of technology (rather than access vs. no access), and that access to technology does not necessarily lead to social and economic inequalities.

- 2 Although there is a distinction between “privacy” and the idea of private property, we should keep in mind that privacy laws in the United States emerged as a response to possible threats to private property and to the self. As legal scholar Daniel Solove (2008) explains, privacy has been traditionally conceptualized within a rhetoric of harm: harm to oneself or to one’s personal property. In order for lawmakers and judges to create policies to protect privacy, they had to articulate why invading somebody’s privacy was problematic, and the most obvious way of doing that was by showing how privacy invasion might be harmful. So, although, following Solove, privacy is a multifaceted concept, its meaning has always been intrinsically connected to private property in US society. In fact, Solove (2008) points out that there are strict laws in US society that protect against surveillance in private places (p. 110).
- 3 This was certainly true with the Google Books initiative, its effort to copy the entire contents of five major research libraries, including Harvard, New York Public, and University of Michigan. While this effort has resulted in lawsuits from book publishers, before the complaints even surfaced the project was well on its way to completion.
- 4 This is similar to Google’s advertising strategy on the web that directs ads to users based on search histories, email content, and consumer behavior, and makes relevant commodities only clicks away from a given web “site.”
- 5 Manuel Castells (2009) also refutes the idea of a centralized power in the network society. He argues, “It is precisely because there is no unified power elite capable of keeping the programming and switching operations of all important networks under its control that more subtle, complex, and negotiated systems of power enforcement must be established” (p. 47).

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How to Have Social Media in an Invisible Pandemic¹

Hepatitis C in the Time of H1N1

Lisa Cartwright

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the use of social media as platforms for public education about pandemics, focusing on the case of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. Lisa Cartwright considers the 2009 H1N1 outbreak and its designation as a pandemic by organizations like the World Health Organization and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, comparing the public social media management of this pandemic to the media campaigns mounted to address previous outbreaks and pandemics. Using the example of hepatitis C (HCV), a pandemic of long duration managed without the same sensibility of urgency and crisis that marked the H1N1 campaigns, Cartwright analyzes the ways in which notions of *temporality* inform the pandemic concept, considering the mediation of HCV against the example of the heavy mediation of H1N1 in campaigns which were both market-oriented and driven by anxiety about pandemic futurity. This approach is particularly troubling in that it tends to miss pandemics like hepatitis C with a tendency to manifest slowly and imperceptibly, with an invisible but massive presence that is compounded by public health inattention. It is proposed that the chronicity of the hepatitis C virus does not match the temporality of social media, which is immediate and fast, and of health communication, which is also organized around immediacy and emergence, and also futurity and potential emergency. Cartwright argues

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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that we need to examine and rethink the social mediation of pandemics with attention to the respective temporal and visual conditions of the lives of viruses and their pandemics. More generally, a critique is put forth of the approach in public health characterized as pandemic futurity in which pandemic announcement serves as pandemic prevention, and anticipatory disease surveillance techniques inform the social mediation of designated outbreaks, epidemics, and pandemics.

Time, Visibility, and the Social Media Pandemic

In June of 2009 the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the first influenza pandemic of the twenty-first century, and the first since 1968, was under-way (Chan, 2009). Director-General Margaret Chan expressed concern that the H1N1 outbreak, placed at the highest level on the agency's risk scale, would follow the pattern of prior flu pandemics and would be with us for months if not years to come (Lynn, 2009). For the leading world health agency to officially sound the pandemic risk alarm at the highest level was no small matter. A million deaths were attributed to the Hong Kong flu by the end of the 1968 pandemic (Paul, 2008), and 50 to a 100 times that were attributed to the Spanish flu of 1918–1919 (Barry, 2004). But Chan expressed optimism about the role that global disease surveillance and communication systems might play in staving off the worst: “No previous pandemic has been detected so early or watched so closely, in real-time, right at the very beginning,” she noted. “The world can now reap the benefits of investments, over the last five years, in pandemic preparedness” (Chan, 2009).

Public health messages proliferated in the months following the WHO H1N1 announcement as agencies such as the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tweeted and texted updates, uploaded public service announcement videos to YouTube, collaborated with their corporate “partners,” and “listened” to constituents, now called consumers, via Facebook and Twitter. CDC had been using a MySpace account since 2007 to direct its public to consumer health information at its site; the agency had launched its own Facebook profile in 2009 when public traffic overloaded its server. Signifiers of enlistment – H1N1 buttons, badges, content syndication, widgets – were offered on special social media pages along with information about where one could go to find public service announcements (PSAs), report news, and engage in online dialogue.² YouTube accounts with algorithms computing global demographic data collection made it possible for agency marketing experts to track hits. These data were useful not only to marketing but also in light of disease surveillance. It was obvious that we had moved past the days of using the pamphlet, the billboard, and the television PSA as primary means

of health communication in many parts of the world. This was known because social media analysts, using infodemiological and infoveillance social media tools tied to the very technologies of public outreach, had accrued hard evidence of the massive involvement of a vast global public in myriad H1N1 social media campaigns.³

A host of ironies emerge when we look back on the viral social mediation of the H1N1 pandemic. Foremost among them is the fact that while H1N1 may have been the first *flu* pandemic of the century, it was hardly the first pandemic. Two pandemics in particular – HIV and HCV (the hepatitis C virus) – had already bridged the millennia with their severity and virulence quietly intact. Using language that emphasizes the urgency of addressing emergent diseases in time to stave off future pandemics, the WHO pandemic page features flu among its examples, leaving out pandemics caused by other viral and bacterial agents, such as HIV and HCV. Unlike H1N1, these pandemics have been marked by extraordinary mortality and morbidity, as well as by longevity. In effect, these events fall to the margins of the concept of “pandemic,” with its relatively new emphasis on urgency, emergence, and futurity. HIV and HCV have not been the star subjects of the new social media public health campaigns. Instead, they are part of a set of pandemics that constitute by default the slow, pervasive, invisible, and dangerously normalized underside of the pandemic concept.

The H1N1 flu pandemic was extremely well mediated. It is, arguably, a prime example of successful pandemic response and eradication. Paradoxically, the messages of its media campaign were consistently weak. Social media platforms were used heavily during the crisis, and it has been reported that individuals tended to post reliable information (Chew & Eysenbach, 2010). But one of the curious characteristics of the exchanges posted is that it was widely agreed that there was not much to know, other than that one should watch and wait for new information and guidelines. A major task facing health communicators at the beginning of the social media campaign was semiotic: the virus needed to be rebranded away from the stigmatizing monikers “swine flu” (under which global pork sales suffered) and “Mexican flu” (Bradsher, 2009; Rushe, 2009). Recommendations about who should be vaccinated changed from week to week and varied from country to country. Aside from shifting vaccination guidelines, the dominant global public health message that emerged was the familiar admonishment to wash one’s hands often and well.⁴ Rising above ever-changing guidelines and the checkerboard of approaches emerging across the various national and global health agencies was the refrain “we just don’t know.”

As H1N1 failed to generate the extent of morbidity and mortality anticipated, the question was broached among health professionals, members of the press, and the public about whether this outbreak should have been classified a pandemic of the highest order at all. In numbers of deaths and severity of illness, H1N1 had begun to look more like a seasonal flu. Questions about classification were vexed by the fact that the WHO’s online description of a pandemic had recently been changed. Between 2003 and early May of 2009, the WHO Pandemic Preparedness home page stated: “An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus appears against

which the human population has no immunity, resulting in several simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illness” (WHO, 2003). In early May of 2009, as H1N1 was ranked a phase 5 risk, Elizabeth Cohen, a CNN senior medical correspondent, drew attention to an anachronistic perception that plagued this description. Global flu outbreaks designated as pandemics no longer necessarily engender the large numbers of severe cases of illness and deaths that one might expect from a concept linked historically to outbreaks with actual extreme virulence, Cohen observed, leading her to ask, when is a pandemic *not* a pandemic? (Cohen, 2009).⁵ Shortly after Cohen’s article was published, the WHO changed its online description of the term pandemic, omitting the words “with enormous numbers of deaths and illness” while leaving in the factors of geographic distribution of outbreaks and low immunity to novel strains. This modified definition meant that the WHO would no longer need to wait for a disease outbreak to reach a morbidity threshold that qualified as “enormous” before publicly designating it a full pandemic. Shortly after this change was posted, the H1N1 pandemic was declared at phase 6, suggesting to many unaware of the changed description a situation of urgent virulence in which morbidity was already extreme and large-scale mortality was imminently possible.

In effect, the modified description of a pandemic released the WHO of the burden of waiting for a pandemic to be actual and visible before sounding the highest alarm. The concept of pandemic was free to serve semantically as a means of generating anticipatory anxiety, what Penelope Ironstone-Catterall, describing rhetorical constructions of risk in disaster movies, calls “anxious pandemic futurity” (Ironstone-Catterall, 2010, p. 92). In a shift that parallels the move to the strategy of using treatment as prevention, pandemic announcement is adopted as a rhetorical means of pandemic prevention. A pandemic state announced generates a state of agential watchfulness – agential in the sense that watchfulness is preventive. Disease begins to sound remarkably like weather: we watch and wait for the signs of a new storm’s accumulation of strength and follow its geographic course, tracking preliminary events to predict who is at risk and to prepare for what may happen to populations in a range of possible places that may be hit hardest. Indeed, the Pandemic Severity Index (PSI) introduced by the US Department of Health and Human Services in 2007 was modeled after a system designed to predict weather, the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane classification system introduced in 1971, which was in turn based on the Richter scale used to measure earthquakes.

Questions by health professionals and journalists about the call to designate the global outbreak a pandemic were fueled by reports that some members of the WHO’s H1N1 medical advisory committee had declarable financial ties to pharmaceutical companies that had precontracted with governments to produce the vaccine quickly in the event of need (Cohen & Carter, 2010; Sturcke & Bowcott, 2010). Within a year of the WHO H1N1 pandemic announcement, Fiona Godlee, editor in chief of the respected British medical journal *BMJ*, proposed that although we should be thankful the pandemic turned out to be a “damp squib,” the WHO should

be held accountable for triggering a global response that spurred governments to activate vaccine contracts right away on a massive scale (Godlee, 2010). The scope of the problem with anticipatory announcement was driven home in Britain when, even before the last shipments of the British health service's order had been delivered, the government had already begun strategizing about what to do with an anticipated surplus of up to 20 million doses (Sturcke & Bowcott, 2010).

Thus for some, the H1N1 case represents a disaster averted thanks to smart investments in medical surveillance and participatory media, while for others it was an alarm sounded at the wrong level with mixed motives (to enlist the public in prevention through announcement; to generate financial gain). Either way, the H1N1 event draws attention to the major implications of seemingly small changes in defining what constitutes a pandemic in a climate of anticipatory surveillance medicine and emergency communication.

In the pages that follow, I discuss the temporality of the pandemic concept and H1N1's lightning-fast mediation, its modeling of pandemic announcement as prevention, as a newly marketized approach to public health communication. I use this case as a basis for grasping the relative quiet surrounding HCV, a virus linked to a pandemic that precedes and outlives the H1N1 outbreak. I conclude with a discussion of the HCV pandemic itself, suggesting that the virus has been plagued with the conditions of silence and invisibility linked to its slow chronicity⁶ at every level, from the 30 years prior to its discovery (during which time it was named for the types of hepatitis it was *not*: NANBH, for non-A, non-B), to its current figuration as a chimeric "cloud of quasi-species," to the 2 to 30 or so years of its relatively symptomless progression in the body, to its stunning absence as anything other than a paradoxically timeless and elusive stalled cloud of a pandemic in public health social media. By situating HCV in its slowness and invisibility against H1N1's whirlwind history, I aim to make a convincing case that we need to slow down and rethink how we mediate pandemics through social media, and how we regard time and visibility in the contemporary notion of the pandemic. In 1998, physicians and researchers asked the question: "can science meet the challenges of the HCV pandemic?" (Roehr, 1998). I adapt this important question about science, a question that was urgent then and is urgent now but to which we can only answer, sadly, *we don't know*, to the media context, and to the language of strategies and tactics, shifting the emphasis away from knowledge and ability: How have social media experts met the challenge of the HCV pandemic, and how might we address it differently, within the terms of its unique chronicity? At the root of this challenge, I believe, is our ability to grasp and mitigate the emergence of *emergency* and *futurity* as dominant paradigms in public health communication about pandemics. Below I do not argue that we need to render HCV more visible or bring it into the temporal framework of emergency communication and the current tactics used in the social mediation of flu pandemics. Rather, I propose that we need to be aware of what gets missed in the language of emergence (of emergent viruses, emergency health communication) and in the anticipatory surveillance medicine that drives our media strategies for managing

pandemics into future time, producing tactics that work through a paradoxically banal panic logic of announcement as prevention. The anticipatory time of H1N1, I will be proposing, has dangerously elided recognition of a pandemic, one that is virulent and severe now. HCV is missed because it lives in slow time. It appears and rushes ahead in the body only when it is too late to address it as effectively as we may in earlier, less visible stages of the disease. We need a media model that will capture HCV in its unique chronicity, and that will render the virus in its own passively pessimistic terms of diminished visibility and constitutive absence, to fully grasp and address this vast banal pandemic before it becomes too late to make a difference in outcomes.

H1N1: Social Mediation in Anticipatory Time

“No previous pandemic has been detected so early or watched so closely, in real-time,” Chan explained of H1N1. Watching closely as a means of managing a flu pandemic, not just in real time but even before the pandemic appears with the severity associated with flu pandemics of the past, is a strategy that had been in the making for some time. David Armstrong introduced the concept of surveillance medicine in 1995 to describe the epidemiological technologies developed throughout the twentieth century that remapped the domains of illness to include spaces beyond the pathological body, the research lab, and the hospital. Healthy populations and the intersecting zones of everyday life were drawn into the realm of a medical gaze that entailed the implementation of new instruments of disease surveillance and communication. These tools extended the range and scale of detailed public health inspection, intervention, and promotion from the individual and interior and microscopic views, to include vast populations and disparate geographic regions (Armstrong, 1995). The classically panoptic medical gaze was disseminated and routinized in the last decades of the twentieth century by the introduction of digital imaging and wireless communication systems, which were integral to the advancement of notions of agency and choice in the implementation of new technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). With the institution of digital medical surveillance and communication systems, publics, at the level of the individual, could be enlisted in the task of global surveillance for communicable and infectious chronic and emerging diseases (Burchell, 1993; Couldry, 2010; Rose, 1993), enacting global health schemes at the scale and through the efforts of the individual consumer as agent in self-health (Lupton, 1995; Porter, 2005; Rose, 2007). Consumer and professional technologies intersected as self-health became a key component of this expansion of the culture of surveillance into the routine practices of the individual, including the adoption of devices for self-monitoring, home testing, and online self-diagnosis and self-treatment. Individuals were enlisted as their own public health agents during the choice-driven climate of managed-care medicine in the neoliberal era.⁷

In the media studies context, it is helpful to think of the notion of an epidemiological remapping of health and disease in light of the satellite footprint, a concept introduced by Lisa Parks (2005) to understand the pervasive yet invisible presence of satellites. These instruments pervasively yet invisibly orbit around the planet, paradoxically mapping us from outside our range of vision, even as they facilitate our individual and constant engagement with the images they generate, engaging us in the paradoxical condition of disembodied emplacement. The visual paradigm of public health social media, from global epidemiology to everyday health consumer communication practices, is similarly structured around a paradox of the increased visibility and transparency of disease, not only as visible fact but also as potential. We recognize and identify ourselves as subjects of health in terms of the risks posed by our emplacement in an epidemiological field where we may not be actually sick, but we live in the anticipatory condition of potentially becoming so. The visibility of disease risk is coupled with a *lack* of transparency and visibility of the benignly pervasive technologies that paradoxically facilitate a public gaze that is anticipatory and prophylactic, even as we do not see or note these technologies of emplacement in disease potential. Looking becomes a benign form of waiting for something we dread and hope to prevent, something we have never actually seen and can barely visualize, through the very act of watching nothing happen. This is the basic principle of surveillant visibility: most of what is recorded on surveillance tape shows nothing; the system functions on the principle of hope that watching intently (recording data) will produce more of the same nothing – will not simply catch an event when it does happen, but will deter and prevent that anticipated event. Surveillance is anticipation as prevention. We use algorithms to compute and predict outcomes we cannot yet see, and we share these projections even when there is nothing yet to see. The principle of the precession of the simulacra emerges, in surveillant specularity, as a means of prevention of the dreaded Real.

This concept of an investment in technologies of watching linked to technologies of computational projection and public messaging took on greater urgency after 9/11. Anthrax posted through the US mail system shook public and professional confidence in national defense, revitalizing the notion that with the increased distribution of goods and services in modernity also comes the potential for the distribution of bodily dangers and risks requiring detection, management, and protection (Beck, 1986). The task of securing public health became more closely linked to technologies of national security with this novel convergence: what was weaponized was not just a biochemical substance but also the mail.⁸ Messaging as biological warfare was a relatively new phenomenon. “Investments in preparedness” was a phrase widely used in the 2000s to describe efforts among national and global health agencies to upgrade disease surveillance, bolster health communication, and detect pandemics-in-the-making.⁹ The phrase drew on the logic of surveillance that escalated in the twentieth century. It also built on the “digital turn” with its engagement of publics, at the level of the individual, as agents in emergency health management. Managing communication and transmission channels became an integral matter of

managing the circulation of physical infectious agents and not just information. The WHO launch of the Alert and Response Operations system in 1997 to identify outbreaks (renamed Global Alert and Response, or GAR) coincided with the implementation of digital technologies ranging from networked global surveillance and communications systems at the macro level to media communications aimed at individual website users. World health monitoring, predictive modeling, and multi-directional networked communication with the public at the individual level emerged as joint objectives for agency health communication systems.

In fact, H1N1 was the first pandemic for which public health agencies brought social media networks and strategies into play in large-scale campaigns at both these levels with such force. Social media venues were enlisted by health agencies to track and disseminate information about H1N1 and to build public trust nationally and globally through dialogic exchange between agencies and with and among constituents, simultaneously dubbed consumers (in keeping with the new market model) and users (in keeping with the language of new media). Historian Debra Blakely proposes that in the flu pandemics of the previous century, pamphlets, news media, and public service announcements did not simply educate and report but also influenced the nature and course of epidemics (Blakely, 2006). In the 2009 flu pandemic, the dynamics of health communication changed by enlisting the public, through social media, as individual agents in the process of producing news and educating networks of communities.¹⁰

During the post-9/11 anthrax event – dubbed Amerithrax by the FBI – public health agency communication divisions began to shift in their organizational structures to accommodate a convergence of concerns around national risk, health communication, and markets and consumption of goods and services. The shift to online communication coincided with an event that prompted concerns about the potential to use the mail system as a means of communicating disease indexically, as it were – through a system that entailed a geographically extensive chain of physical contact. Two weeks after 9/11, anthrax spores, contained in cryptic letters embedded with DNA code in an envelope addressed as if from a suburban school child, were mailed to two senators and news media offices. Five people, including postal workers who came into contact with the mail as it passed through the sorting room, died from inhalation of anthrax, and between 17 and 63 others became ill, some with skin infections (Cymet & Kerkvliet, 2004; Sarasin, 2006; Thompson, 2003). The anthrax event raised concerns about the appropriation of basic communication and media systems to convey disease through a global system that targeted individuals.

This event was a major impetus to the institution of a new model of health communication, one that could adapt quickly enough to address emergency health situations with due urgency. Marsha Vanderford, Director of the CDC Emergency Communication Branch and Chief of the CDC Emergency Risk Communication Branch, recounts the rush of the anthrax event in CDC's health communication sector: "I don't think I had ever been through an event where so much depended upon how well we communicated. [. . .] We were in a situation where the demand

for information and recommendations was tremendously high, and at the same time our knowledge about what was going on was changing all the time” (Vanderford, 2008). The CDC response to H1N1 was shaped by this precedent that foregrounded communication itself, both as a potential source of health risk and as a vital source of risk management.

At the time of the WHO declaration of the H1N1 pandemic, the CDC, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were already two months into a collaborative social media campaign to address another outbreak, this time of salmonella. As had been the case with anthrax, there was massive public demand for information about national safety, in this case of the peanut butter supply. The 2009 peanut butter salmonella outbreak was not just about public health but also about consumption – the safety of an archetypical inexpensive staple of the US diet was at stake. The FDA conducted inspections around the country that resulted in a sting operation in which federal marshals seized tainted peanuts, tracing the strain of *Salmonella Typhimurium* back to a Texas processing plant that was driven out of business by the publicity. The HHS, FDA, and CDC launched a collaborative social media push around the outbreak, and the CDC Social Media Center emerged out of this process (Turoczy, 2009). Peanut butter thus smoothed the way for the broad-scale, interagency use of social media in an explicitly designated social media campaign organized around health risk, national safety, and consumer protection.

Social marketing was an explicit feature of this social media campaign as well. This is the term used to describe the use of brand marketing strategies to “sell” emotional investment in cause- and rights-based initiatives and to promote behaviors (such as those linked to good hygiene) that typically escape market frameworks. The use of commercial marketing strategies to sell *social* good rather than commercial goods was subject to some theorizing in the early 1970s, when Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman, in a 1971 essay that is now a classic of cause-linked social media, revived a question posed by the mid-century US psychologist G. D. Wiebe: “why can’t you sell Brotherhood like you sell soap?”¹¹ The early history of social marketing includes numerous examples of medical, public health, and social hygiene causes promoted using the tools of advertisers and marketers. In fact, this history can be traced back to the earliest charity poster campaigns and radio and television public service announcements, and also to the history of selling commercial soap as a means of selling Western personal hygiene practices to colonial subjects. Wiebe, a research psychologist for the CBS radio network, was a 1950s analyst of public opinions and attitudes who performed an interesting reversal on earlier well-known media effects research projects like the Payne Studies.¹² Rather than looking for ways that mass media forms might promote behaviors regarded as degenerate, Wiebe asked how the persuasive powers of radio and television could be redirected to promote moral attitudes and behaviors (the reduction of juvenile delinquency is one of his examples), much as these forms had been used to direct audiences to buy into a culture that venerates and reproduces certain beauty standards (the home permanent wave

is his example) (Wiebe, 1951–1952, p. 680).¹³ He was an early proponent of the idea that advertising sells attitudes and sentiment, not just goods. Social-cause marketers of the 1970s were interested in spreading democratic will through an expanded capitalist framework that saw attitudes as commodity and investment capital that can be grown. This view was effectively subsumed by communication theories that were skeptical about the democratic potential of media persuasion methods, advertising, and consumption. Until the time of social media, the academic field of communication was for the most part not very optimistic about advertising's potential to "sell" progressive social change. Even in health communication the tendency until the late 1990s was to regard media as an educational tool for correcting a misinformed public, and the attitude that the appropriate role of public health communicators is to *educate* has persisted with the shift to a social marketing model in public health communication (Eysenbach, 2009). The explicit branding of public health communication under the sign of marketing rather than education is relatively recent. It coincides with the neoliberal turn, wherein the corporation emerges as a partner in public health, the citizen emerges as agential consumer or media user-as-producer in a health marketplace, and persuasion emerges as a benign and reciprocal fact of mediation, with the consumer messaging back and influencing the producer.

When the CDC formed its Emergency Risk Communication Branch, this entity was initially situated in the National Center for Health Marketing, which was for a time the organizational center of CDC's emergency communication response network (it was later dissolved). Marketing was thus brought explicitly into the federal public health picture in the decade after 9/11, when it was also coded in terms of security risk. This division was established as the locus of work around conditions that are understood as crises, addressing health events such as flu pandemics that unfold fast, with no time to lose.

Social Media and Reproducibility

I have proposed that the concept of pandemic, in the WHO sense, is centrally implicated in a politics of anticipatory visibility – a set of strategies that aim to make visible, and thereby avert, disease outbreaks in advance. This shifts how we understand disease relative to reproducibility, a concept that links contagion to mediation in ways that go beyond metaphor and analogy, as Kirsten Ostherr (2005), Patrick Wallis and Brigitte Nerlich (2005), and Priscilla Wald (2008) have so compellingly shown. In pandemics, cases of illness replicate not only due to the indexical action of contiguous body-to-body contact within a region, but also through the simultaneous multi-sited action of outbreaks that occur as bodies fly from continent to continent, leading to cases rhizomatically cropping up in multiple sites at once. Remote transmission, a concept familiar to media studies, becomes a concern that public health managers address, in turn, with rhetorical mediation about prevention that

results in real change in modes and rates of transmission. The media dynamic in which information travels from individual to global to individual with rapidity, bypassing the slow process of official communications, as is the case with social media exchanges, becomes an integral aspect of managing the physical logic of disease transmission from individual to individual across vast spaces. Social media provides entry points for mediation that match the rhizomatic structure of flows of pathogens across distances and borders. As Stefan Helmreich has noted, it is not by mere analogy that the language of viral infection was applied in computing cultures (Helmreich, 2000).

Pandemics are more strongly characterized by the qualities of newness and speed that are typical of digital news media transmission, as in the case of a new virus against which humans have not had time to build up immunity. Noncontiguous simultaneity poses a different way of computing reproducibility than epidemic numbers within a region.¹⁴ The designation of a pandemic indicates the need for multi-sited response and mitigation efforts, which means distributable media forms must be engaged as essential components of response – a perfect fit for distributed social media. In short, the pandemic scale is designed to identify and promote mediated management of a pandemic before it fully hits, while impact is still in part an imagined future, and also to privilege anticipation and potentiality as means for the individual agent to implement control strategies understood to be globally meaningful. This is not exactly a matter of visualizing and sharing pandemic news in the television-era mode of real time, as Chan suggested, but rather of invoking an imagined future based on the historical image of (flu) pandemics of the past, which health communication specialists may forestall in collaboration with vigilant members of a social media public.

H1N1's Shadow Archive:¹⁵ (Flu) Pandemics Past

The anticipatory leaning of the pandemic media model away from disease severity and toward risk understood on a geospatial and temporal, anticipatory model carries within it a shadow archive of historical imagery and information. Agencies like the WHO and the CDC must respond with full knowledge of the public's ability to bring to life online archives of past crises that were not detected in the making and (by implication) not averted. The collective animation of past disasters due to failures in defensive watching and warning systems, as we learned in 2011 when we saw video footage of tsunami waves engulfing stranded citizens in Japan, becomes a strong motivation to implement stronger anticipatory surveillance and communication media measures.¹⁶ In the case of H1N1, it was not the HIV epidemic or pandemic that was evoked by media reminiscences but past flu epidemics and the vast morbidity and mortality they engendered. Constructing the pandemic concept with flu as

its core example, the WHO inadvertently helped the specter of influenzas past to cast its shadow over the memory of HIV, the most mediated pandemic of our time.

Is HCV, in its silence and invisibility, without a history we can sense? We might ask, following Akira Mizuta Lippit (2005) in his consideration of atomic radiation and the condition of avisuality it produced, what is the archive of HCV, given its unique chronicity and in its unique historical relationship of avisuality not only in technologies of its social mediation, but also to its phenomenological life as a virus and as a pandemic? In another context, I hope to be able to show how HCV's archive is potentially a shadow archive not directly constituted by its own absence, but by the image of HIV. We might learn from the image-rich culture of HIV how to have social media in the HCV pandemic. HIV serves not just as a specter of a tragedy to avoid, but also as an archive of successful media activism, advocacy, and intervention. For the purposes of this essay, I will turn directly to HCV to ask how this pandemic has escaped the visual logic that would invite us to imagine and change the course of its increasingly threatening future.

HCV: An Invisible Pandemic in Slow Time

HCV is a notoriously silent and invisible virus, and one can say the same about its pandemic media campaign – its silence and invisibility have been profoundly lethal, and the situation escalates. It is estimated that 3% of the world's population is infected with HCV. The CDC places the estimate of people living with chronic HCV at 130 to 170 million, with 3 to 4 million new infections and more than 350,000 deaths due to HCV-related liver disease annually (CDC, 2011).¹⁷ At the time of this writing (summer 2011), there is no vaccine. The CDC describes the current treatment program as a cure;¹⁸ however, other sources have been hesitant to use this term without quotes around it, as what is known is that viral loads can be dropped to levels that tests cannot detect in the bloodstream. The intensive regimen of weekly injections of pegylated interferon and daily oral ribavirin for six months to a year may lower the viral load to undetectable levels in a percentage of people infected with the virus; however, it is not known for certain whether the virus is fully eradicated to the point where it will not resurface under conditions of severely compromised immunity, and treatment protocol time frames can vary from six months to a year based on levels of trust in the factor of detectability.¹⁹ The death rate from HCV is predicted to surpass that of AIDS (C. Everett Koop Institute, 2011). There is wide agreement that statistics are unreliable, estimates are probably low insofar as they emerge from a context of chronic underreporting and global paucity of adequate surveillance, educational outreach, and testing programs, and risk groups are poorly understood due to the stunningly wide prevalence of infection and subtypes of the virus. Former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop captured the pervasive and

widespread nature of the pandemic in branding the HCV outreach and education website that he launched: “Hepatitis C: An Epidemic for *Anyone*.”

In the past three decades, the concepts of “emergent diseases” and “emergent viruses” have occupied scientists and politicians intensively, as they are believed to pose a new sort of biosocial and bioeconomic threat. But the idea of what constitutes “emergence,” as I have tried to show above, is complicated by factors such as risk, prediction, and – as should become clear below – the relative perceptibility of viral agents. Agencies have been slow in implementing surveillance and communication in response to the HCV pandemic. The emphasis on the temporal and spatial dimensions of emergence has resulted in a favoring of the fast-paced novel flu as the core of pandemic character, making the very framework of the concept less well matched to disease agents and pandemics that are not characterized by the same degrees of rapidity and immediacy as new viral strains or diseases that act quickly. HCV, a virus some would describe as one of the most profound health concerns of our century along with HIV, ironically has escaped the mechanisms of anticipatory visibility that steer health communication in the direction of emergency and risk, classifications that have not been designed to see the chronic, the slow, and the virulently invisible. H1N1 was ultimately not widely visualized, despite the wealth of social media messages devoted to it, because its incidence was lower and its severity was less pronounced than anticipated. HCV’s invisibility is a different matter. Invisibility is understood to be integral to the virus itself on every level, from its existence as a pandemic to its course in the body and to its status as a viral entity.

The Invisible Virus: Clones, Swarms, and Quasi-Species

The virus was “discovered” in a classic example of a precession of simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994) – a generation of models of the real that precede and make possible recognition of the real, shaping its conditions of being. In the 1970s a National Institutes of Health (NIH) research team demonstrated that most cases of hepatitis following blood transfusions were caused by neither hepatitis A nor hepatitis B. For almost three decades the suspected viral cause of liver disease in some people who had received blood transfusions went by the names NANB or NANBH, for non-A non-B hepatitis. NANB could neither be visualized nor grown in culture, nor could it be immunologically defined. Despite failure to isolate the virus through conventional methods, researchers firmly believed that a viral entity was at work in concentrations too low for identification. Its discovery was given impetus by research into HIV, also a retrovirus, the discovery of which was reported in 1983.²⁰ In 1987, a team of scientists working at the Chiron Corporation, a California multinational biotech firm, with D. W. Bradley, a CDC scientist, identified the virus indirectly, through a novel

molecular cloning process that offered a clone as proof without prior characterization of the infectious agent (Choo et al., 1989, p. 361). The DNA clone was derived from a blood-borne NANB hepatitis genome derived from a subject with active NANB hepatitis. This technique of identifying a viral agent for the first time through a clone was widely regarded as a major breakthrough in viral identification methods for science. The viral particles were determined, on the basis of the clone, to be not only highly mutable but also imperceptibly small – roughly 80 nanometers in diameter. (The clone was itself verified, not directly, but in its response to an assay of antibodies from a patient with NANB hepatitis.) For six years the team had tirelessly screened hundreds of millions of bacterial DNA clones derived from infected chimpanzees, but mutation was so rapid that they could not fix and isolate a single molecule. A sole HCV clone was eventually isolated using a screening method in which antibodies derived from a clinically diagnosed NANBH patient were used to identify an experimental DNA clone. Thus HCV was first identified through a clone that served as its authentication even before the virus was rendered directly perceptible (Choo et al., 1989; Kuo et al., 1989). In effect, HCV brought scientific discovery methods into the age of the postmodern simulacra by demonstrating Baudrillard's point that the sign of the real can precede the real (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1). To simulate is to feign to have what one does not have (demonstrable proof) and thereby produce the conditions that may bring that entity into the sphere of perceptibility. The HCV discovery entailed exactly that process.

In addition to its characterization as invisible, silent, incredibly small, slow, and hard to culture, HCV is also described as highly mobile and changeable, existing in a swarm. HCV, like HIV and influenzas, is a retrovirus. It replicates and mutates quickly, resulting in a closely related but genetically diverse and changeable group of circulating cells that rapidly evolve to resist vaccine and antiviral drugs. A trillion particles are produced in the body each day. Genetic variants are called quasi-species, and the movement of these particles in groups is referred to as a swarm. Quasi-species in the HCV swarm include drug-resistant variants that are difficult to study closely – mutations that are not readily detectable by conventional methods of sequencing. It is difficult to characterize their temporal stability (Wang, 2011). A quantity of research literature on retroviruses considers the notion of the rapidly mutating, genetically diverse quasi-species that exists in a context described as a swarm. How is one to understand an entity, a virus, when its form is by definition mutable, random, a blur of many tiny particles in changing configurations? The swarm concept draws on groups in nature: birds and insects, for instance (Parikka, 2011), but also from artificial intelligence research (Parikka, 2007, pp. 243, 237) and theorizations of empire (Hardt & Negri, 2005, pp. 91–92). Swarm is the term used to characterize the collective behavior of particles or units in a decentralized, self-organized system. The term suggests a lack of representational clarity and pattern in a cloud that overwhelms; however, as Hardt and Negri explain with regard to intelligence in warfare, the swarm concept is historically based in the theorization and management of intelligence in communication: computers can be designed to

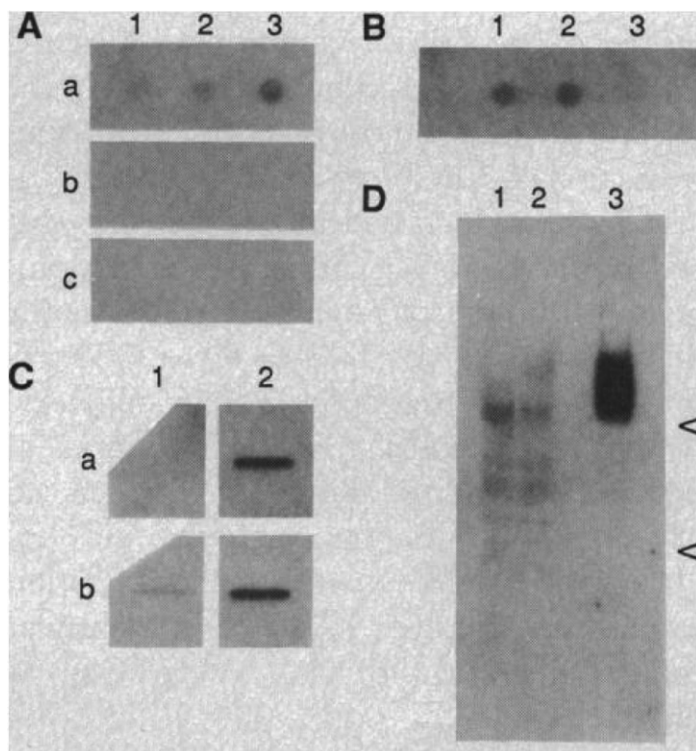


Figure 9.1 Hybridization of clone 81 cDNA to RNA. (A) spot hybridization (24) of 2, 4, or 12 μg of total liver RNA extracted (25) from either chronic NANBH-infected chimp 910 (a1 to a3) or from two control, uninfected animals (b1 to b3 and c1 to c3) with ^{32}P -labeled nick-translated clone 81 cDNA. (B) Spot hybridization of nucleic acid extracted from viral plasma pellets (22) before (spot 1) or after treatment with either excess deoxyribonuclease 1 (spot 2) or ribonuclease A (spot 3). Hybridization probe as in (A). (C) Each strand of clone 81 cDNA was subcloned into phage M13mp 18 and then labeled by incubating with Klenow *Escherichia coli* DNA polymerase 1 in the presence of hybridization probe primer (New England Biolabs) and $[\alpha\text{-}^{32}\text{P}]\text{dCTP}$ (23). Each probe was then hybridized to slot blots containing either identical portions of viral RNA derived from infectious plasma (a1 and b1) or 2 pg of purified clone 81 double-stranded cDNA (a2 and b2). (D) Northern blot analysis (26) of 30 μg of total RNA (track 1), 30 μg of unbound RNA (track 2), and 20 μg of bound RNA (track 3) after chromatography on oligo(dT)-cellulose (Collaborative Research). RNA was derived from the liver of infectious chimpanzee 910. Arrows indicate the relative migration of 28S and 18S ribosomal RNA. ^{32}P -labeled nick-translated clone 81 cDNA was used as the hybridization probe. *Source*: Q. L. Choo et al., "Isolation of a cDNA clone derived from a blood-borne non-A, non-B viral hepatitis genome." *Science*, 244(4902), 359–362. Image courtesy of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Reprinted with permission from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

process information faster using swarm architecture; Rimbaud's beloved Communards swarmed like ants (Hardt & Negri, 2005, pp. 91–92). Though moving seemingly randomly, the swarm follows a logic that can be computed through algorithms designed to model and predict their complex dynamics. Although in microbiology “swarm” captures the lack of easy perceptibility, the cloud character of the hepatitis C virus in its multiplicity and mutability, it also explicitly suggests the anticipatory potential scientists feel toward their ability to design intelligent models and methods for the nonreductive discernment of the virus within the terms of its own complexity and temporality. Once again, the concept of anticipatory vision comes into play in a manner that encompasses both dread (the disease is terrible) and hope: swarms are decentralized but are within the terms of an intelligent communication system that can be modeled even if it cannot be seen, as the virus's novel discovery through cloning has already shown. To represent the virus is not to make a single particle visible (which has by now been done), but to grasp it in all of its mutability, temporality, and variety. It is a virus that is characterized not only by its status as a “first” for simulation as proof, but also as one of the “firsts” for the future of swarm nano-imaging. This is not just about seeing at the level of the molecular-invisible (Rose, 2007), but predictively imaging future difference and grasping multiplicity in transition.

One can also say that HCV is a virus that is not one, that is multiple, in simpler terms than the swarm of particles in which it consists. HCV is part of a series that by 2011 included six discrete viruses, with the hepatitis alphabet running from A to G (F was named only to be declassified later). Hepatitis C alone is subclassified into 11 genotypes, each of which has one to four subtypes.

It is partly for this reason – the multiplicity of the viral particles as swarm, of the virus as part of a series, and of the individual virus as a set of subtypes – that one often encounters the phrase “not well understood” in conjunction with discussions of the virus, even apart from its status as a disease over time and as a pandemic.

HCV's Slow Course: The Imperceptible Bodily Progression of the Disease

HCV is slow in its progression from chronic infection to active disease, hence its popular branding as a “silent” or “invisible” epidemic.²¹ Infection is blood to blood; routes of infection are neither well studied nor well understood apart from obvious sources such as needle sharing and transfusions. Seventy-five to eighty-five percent of people infected develop chronic infection, though most are not aware they have the virus for years, as the latency period of a chronic infection is decades long. A person who is infected may initially experience mild viral symptoms and then show no signs or symptoms of chronic infection or perceptible active liver involvement

until far into the stages of liver disease, 10 to 30 years later, at which point damage will be difficult if not impossible to treat. At that point, a possible consequence is liver failure unless a transplant can be performed. But what can be said about the latency period of a decade or more? For anyone familiar with its use around HIV in the 1980s, the word “latency” carries a particular sense of foreboding – what was at first characterized as latency was a period of multiple, complex, and sometimes subtle transformations – somatic, neurological. The relative scarcity of research into HCV co-occurring conditions thus far has created a kind of rhetorical latency around the unknowns buried inside that very term. The messages of early detection and treatment are not currently the focus of even those media campaigns that have been launched.²² Instead, the focus among current agency media campaigns is on behavioral risk factors around transmission, with the goal of bringing down the rate of new infections. This policy mirrors the approach used for emergent pandemics: treatment is a secondary level of media messages, beneath directives on infection routes and how to limit transmission. This is reflected not only in agency materials, but also in a wide range of public health campaigns internationally. The folly of ignoring millions of people in the latency phase has led former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to demand changes in policy and practice, but his arguments have been ignored for a decade and more.

The Invisible Pandemic: HCV as Unmediated Virus

“When is a pandemic not a pandemic?” This was the quip that Cohen used as the title for her CNN report on the WHO’s change in description of what constitutes a pandemic. In the case of HCV, we might ask the same question – not because the virus is limited in its severity of illness and deaths, but because it has failed to trigger a major public health communication response despite the magnitude of its severity over time. A quick rejoinder to the question would be that a pandemic is not a pandemic when it is announced but no public health media response follows. Taking the tongue-in-cheek approach a step further, let us blame the virus, taking to task its own recalcitrant invisibility. The slow pace of public health response seems to mimic the pace of viral progression. A report issued in 1998 by the US Congress Committee on Government Reform and Oversight warned of the consequences of continuing to handle the “silent epidemic” with a “mute public health response” (US Congress Committee, 1998). Despite the strong and direct language of this document and the ample evidence of the problem, surprisingly little has been done in the way of a concerted public health response in the interim. Activist, advocacy, and private non-profit organizations have taken up the slack in limited ways, but this can be no match for a pandemic of this magnitude, which requires coordinated national and global responses – like those we saw for the H1N1 emergency. The slow pace of HCV chronicity in the public health response was ironically modeled by the WHO in 2010.

The public waited while the agency, widely regarded as setting the example for national agencies around the world, quite literally removed its online fact sheet on HCV for a full year or more, replacing it for that period with this “temporary” message to the world: “this fact sheet is being updated.”²³

It is encouraging to know that in 2009, the CDC’s Division of Viral Hepatitis began fundraising and consumer research for a national education plan, to be called “Know More Hepatitis.” Although by summer of 2011 it had not yet been launched, the campaign is in its first of three phases: formulating strategy proposals for media outreach and research.²⁴ Impetus to move the communication agenda along comes from a widely anticipated report by the Institute of Medicine. This document repeats the basic message of the congressional report a dozen years earlier, calling for a national strategy for prevention and control of hepatitis C, and hepatitis B as well. The report was based on a new comprehensive study suggesting, unsurprisingly, that “these diseases are not widely recognized as serious health problems” and that current strategies of prevention and control are not working (Institute of Medicine, 2010). The report is undoubtedly important. Yet the degree to which it repeats the message of the 1998 report with the same apparent urgency gives it the character of a shadow, a ghost of a previous message. Its message is welcome but uncanny to encounter in the deep and long space that is emptiness of the avisual shadow archive that constitutes the response to the last iteration of this point, a space populated with so much more pathology and so many more deaths now counted.

If we are to imagine this pandemic to be like the weather, we might envision a stalled cloud, a system so vast we cannot sense its boundaries, its shape, or its direction of movement. One might have assumed that the surveillance and communication of HCV would unfold online like other news and public health issues in the 1990s, and that by the 2010s it would feature prominently in public health social media campaigns. The HCV campaign could have served as a model for coverage of later outbreaks like peanut salmonella and H1N1, just as AIDS media activism and advocacy campaigns served as a model for innovations in advocacy and cause marketing for breast cancer. But this was not the case. In this context of invisibility gone viral, we find a key figure from the AIDS crisis resurfacing in a new and unique role. C. Everett Koop, best known as the former US Surgeon General who in the 1980s was sidelined by Ronald Reagan when he tried to draw attention and resources to the impending crisis around AIDS, established a prominent site dedicated to HCV information through Dartmouth’s medical school. His media campaign identifies the HCV pandemic as the locus of “an impending human tragedy” without an adequate health communication response by national and world health agencies. Koop and others have criticized the CDC, and the general focus on the tip of the iceberg, for being both unbalanced and foolhardy. They argue the CDC strategy is missing the inevitability of an impending crisis that will be magnified precisely by willfully looking away from an emergent disease whose status is slowly unfolding over time.

The temporality of HCV does not match the temporality of either social media or health communication, organized as they are around immediacy, change, and

anxious watching and waiting for the sudden change. Ironically, the outcomes Koop warns of are characterized not by uncertainty but by a relatively high degree of probability over time. In an era of anticipatory surveillance and emergency communication, it is easy to ignore what is slow and what swarms around us like an immersive cloud, a mediating force the very pervasive of which leads us to fail to notice it – precisely an avisual shadow archive. The problem is not simply that the CDC is sidestepping its ability to address the emergence of the disease at a critical stage. The larger problem is that, while there is theoretical work on health and representation, we do not have a theory that captures the particular conditions of slow chronicity, avisuality, and banality that characterize this virus and its pandemic. HCV speaks to the media studies profession dramatically: it is a condition that calls out for new ways of thinking about mediation, signification, and knowledge concerning a matter with an urgency that is all about duration and visibility, but which challenges the limits of those very key terms of mediation. It gives us a vital text for thinking through absence as a constitutive force for which making visible is not the social cure.

Since the 1980s and 1990s there has been a decline in interest in semiotics and representation among theorists of the body. At the same time, there is an increase in attention to the phenomenal (if not also phenomenological) and affective experience, invoking, if not explicitly adopting frameworks to study, the empirical body. This shift to provisional, phenomenal, and experiential ways of interpreting embodiment has been in tandem with the rise of digital social media as a primary context through which health experience is negotiated. The affective turn accompanied the digital turn, and with the rise of social media, the mainstream media–countermedia split was no longer really viable. The digital turn to social media in the context of health and care of the self goes against the grain of claims made in new media theory about embodiment and the virtual. The media model that has emerged most prominently through social media has not foregrounded knowledge and information and their structures and protocols. Instead, it has emphasized the embodied engagement and interaction with healthcare information in social networks, in one's private spaces, as a source of involvement and imagined future resolution. Emphasis rests not on the knowledge or information shared, but on the condition of sharing and listening as what we notice and measure to evaluate a given health organization's effectiveness. That fact gets missed in most health media campaigns that try to use social media to generate information. Paula Treichler's 1999 essay, "How to Have Theory in an Epidemic," was a pivotal text: pivotal in the shift from the video–television–print media nexus in which AIDS activism of the 1980s and early 1990s was carried out, and to the convergent digital media–web–social media–mobile phones framework in which emergent pandemics are borne today. It is also pivotal in the shift in health and science discourse about matters of emergency from epidemic to pandemic, and in the shift in discursive epistemes from knowledge, information, and the human subject to embodiment, experience, and intersubjectivity as the terms by which we measure the effectiveness of a given set of practices, tools, and resources for world, community, and self care and health. The theory

about which Treichler wrote was not just critical theory; it was also the scientific theory of the era. “AIDS treatment activism did not depend on an us/them division,” she reminded her readers. Out of available resources it assembled a complex conception of the body framed as “provisional but nevertheless as a theory for everyday life” (Treichler, 1999, p. 298). Treichler’s essay told a narrative about a “radically democratic technoculture” dedicated to “getting drugs into bodies” (Treichler, 1999, p. 313). Her assertion, twice in this essay, that AIDS activism was about this treatment objective as well as about the mediation and signification of HIV/AIDs should be recalled in this moment of social mediation as we consider how to have social media in an invisible pandemic, where we must once again do this work of understanding the close relationship between the semiotic nature of a virus, its linguistic and material sensibility, and its impact on bodies over time. We might say that HCV, unlike HIV, has had no narrative arc. It is too late to ask how to have theory in an epidemic, as we must now ask not only how to have theory so far into a pandemic, but also how to have theory for an avial virus in a shadow pandemic at a weak moment in theory. Media studies is not the only field with chronic problems concerning time and visibility; in public health the problem is far more acute, and the stakes are higher. But when prevention is tied to social mediation it falls to media theorists to make strategies for working through the troubling logic of pandemic futurity which makes up the particulate cloud in which we compute and mediate as a way of life.

NOTES

- 1 The title of this essay references the title of Paula Treichler’s classic essay of 1991, “How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: The Evolution of AIDS Treatment Activism” (Treichler, 1999).
- 2 The selection of H1N1 buttons, badges, and widgets can be viewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Campaigns/h1n1/buttons.html>. Retrieved July 3, 2011.
- 3 Chew and Eysenbach announced that they had counted over two million tweet posts with “swine flu” and/or “H1N1” as keywords using Infovigil, software that offers automated coding for an infodemiological content analysis (Chew & Eysenbach, 2010). For an explanation of the terms “infodemiology” and “infoveillance,” see Eysenbach (2009).
- 4 See, for example, the CDC “Don’t Get, Don’t Spread” video linked to its “H1N1 (‘Swine Flu’) and You” home page, in which Dr. Joe Bresee of the CDC Influenza Division, appearing in his military uniform with pocket rank insignia fully legible in the shot to connote authority and to inspire confidence in his ability to protect, explains how not to get the flu. Hand-washing, depicted in detailed close-up on hands lathering under a running faucet, is the first cutaway from talking heads for a short sequence of lines of defense that includes one other example: a close-up on vaccine needles. Release date October 30, 2009, retrieved June 2, 2011, from http://www.cdc.gov/CDCTV/IR_DontGetDontSpread/index.html
- 5 On the question “when is an epidemic not an epidemic?” see Green et al. (2002).
- 6 On the analysis of chronicity see Elizabeth Freeman (2010), who offers a brilliant means of understanding the nuances of temporality. Although Freeman does not analyze medi-

cine or health, her book holds great potential for theorizing the temporality of illness experience and pandemic time.

- 7 On self-health as a progressive feminist practice, see Taylor (1996), Copelton (2004), and Murphy (2004). For a critique of self-health as a product of the neoliberal emphasis on the individual and personal choice, see Beck and Beck-Gershein (2001) and Eisler (2004).
- 8 An example of the routine intersection of technological advances in medicine and the military is the history of sonography as an underwater military detection device and as medical ultrasound diagnostics. See Yoxen (1987) and Kevles (1997, p. 234) on innovation in sonography across these domains. We should keep in mind the point made by Clay Shirky (in the Ted Talk noted as Shirky, 2009) that we should attend not just to the emergence of technological innovation but to its everyday, routine implementation and use, when the technology has become routinized and normalized. We might call the process interscriptive (drawing on the old language of inscription of a technique's ideology into a routine practice) to grasp the convergences of discourses and techniques across domains.
- 9 For example, Richard Besser, acting director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the time of the H1N1 crisis, was quoted in the New York Times stating that "investments in preparedness" led to early identification of the outbreak in the United States (New York Times, 2010).
- 10 Clay Shirky provides a good explanation of this concept of the social media consumer as producer in the Ted Talk listed herein as Shirky (2009).
- 11 Wiebe (1951–1952), as quoted in Kotler and Zaltman (1971). Kotler and Zaltman drop a clause from the Wiebe source and make brotherhood a proper noun. The original reads: "Why can't you sell brotherhood and rational thinking like you sell soap?" (Wiebe, 1951–1952, p. 679). For a detailed discussion of the rise of social media in public health, see Walsh, Rudd, Moeykens, and Moloney (1993).
- 12 The Payne Studies was a series of research studies conducted between 1929 and 1932 to consider the impact of movies on childhood morals and behavior. It is notorious for promulgating moralistic views about media influence and was used to justify censorship in the US film industry. See Black (1996).
- 13 Wiebe's emphasis on advertising's impact on behavior, not promotion of goods, is a fruitful avenue of investigation for future media studies work on the history of advertising. Interestingly, his concerns would later include the promotion of civil rights and moral conscience (Wiebe, 1958).
- 14 A phase 6 pandemic, according to the WHO scale of 2009, entails outbreaks in at least two countries in one of the WHO's regions, plus a third country in an additional region. For an account of the debates about scales and definitions, and for a representation of the pandemic scales used by the WHO, see Doshi (2011).
- 15 I borrow the concept of the shadow archive from Akira Mizuta Lippit who, in discussing Jacques Derrida (1998) on the archive of secrets ("of the secret itself there can be no archive"), proposes a theory of the shadow archive to account for that which is avial and its effects on the visual world (Lippit, 2005). Significantly, Lippit considers a crucial matter of the body, the temporality of pathology, and social mediation through visibility and visibility: his subject is the trace of the bodies materially impacted by light in the atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the phenomenological and epistemological changes that unfolded from the time of radiation exposure. Radiation pathology follows a complex chronicity, stochastic time, with its own complex dynamics of visibility and aviality.

- 16 An example of an early watching and warning system's failure is the Indian Ocean system for early warning of imminent tsunamis, which has been under development since the loss of 200,000 people to a tsunami in Java in 2004, followed by a loss of 500 people to a tsunami in 2006. The system entails installation of seismic detection instrumentation, ocean pressure sensors, and tide gauges as well as communication alert systems. See Smith-Spark (2006).
- 17 By comparison, the estimated number of people living with HIV rose from around 8 million in 1990 to 33 million by the end of 2009 (UNAIDS, 2010). See UNAIDS (2010) for further figures.
- 18 Forty to fifty percent of people with HCV genotype 1, the most common genotype in the United States, respond to the current standard treatment. A higher percentage of people with genotype 3 respond successfully. The regimen has significant physical and psychological side effects, including compromised immunity and depression, and therefore not everyone can sustain the treatment. At the time of this writing, a third retroviral drug, telaprevir, became available as an addition to the standard treatment of interferon and ribavirin, and its inclusion has been shown to increase the rate of response among those with genotype 1. See McHutchison et al. (2010).
- 19 For an example of the use of quotes and discussion of the issue of cure, see BBC News (2007), where it was reported that "the treatments were known to work initially but it had been unclear whether the virus would come back," and a cure rate of 99% was reported for patients followed for seven years after undetectable levels of HCV had been sustained. On the use of the language of cure in quotes and the problematic tendency to emphasize emergence in news about cure, see Metcalfe (2007). In late 2010 the protocol at some hospitals was six months to a year, even in the case of a drop in viral load to undetectable in the first three months. The possibility of lingering particles of virus hiding out within a hard-to-detect place, for example in bone marrow, makes the determination of treatment duration difficult to fix. Stretchy and slow time is found even in the weekly treatment at the level of the body. The interferon is "pegylated." Pegylation is a technique that makes the drug stay in the body longer by providing a mechanism that makes it attach to other molecules in the blood, hence an injection may maintain effectiveness over many days, making it possible to administer interferon in weekly rather than daily injections.
- 20 Discovery is of course a fraught concept insofar as it buries the complex economy and politics of laboratory practice and personal and national interests behind the genesis of scientific facts. International contest over the discovery of HIV is well documented. See Feldman (1992). The discovery of HCV is similarly subject to questions about authorship and questions of related patent matters.
- 21 I use the term branding to suggest the pervasiveness of this tag. A Google search for the words "hepatitis C invisible" conducted on July 2, 2011, yielded over 800,000 hits on sites not devoted to hepatitis specifically, ranging from nonprofit health organizations (e.g., the Chronic Illness Alliance), to news media outlets (e.g., Newsweek has published a number of stories featuring this concept in the past decade), to professional journals (e.g., the National Review of Medicine).
- 22 Portions of this essay analyzing media campaigns and the precedence of HIV/AIDS media campaigns have been omitted here due to length and will be the subject of another publication. Some of the more effective HCV media campaigns are the Hepatitis C Project campaign, the Hepatitis C Harm Reduction Project (a resource for illicit drug

injectors), Catalyst Foundation's use of social media to promote TextGiving microcharity (where \$10 donations can be made by text for HCV testing and treatment), and the 2006 "Face It" campaign of the UK National Health Service featuring faces representing the vast range of people with HCV.

- 23 The temporary message directed inquiries to a generic email address at the WHO. The personal email correspondence that I conducted with communication officers at this address revealed that other pandemics (most urgently malaria) were consuming the time of an overworked staff, making it impossible to complete and post the updated HCV fact sheet for more than a year. An updated HCV fact sheet was posted in June 2011. See WHO (2011).
- 24 Personal notes from National Hepatitis Campaign Webinar led by Cynthia Jorgensen, Lead for Communication, Education, and Training, CDC Division of Viral Hepatitis, July 8, 2011.

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Mobile Handsets from the Bottom Up

Appropriation and Innovation in the Global South

Cara Wallis, Jack Linchuan Qiu, and Rich Ling

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a general mapping of grassroots practices associated with an alternative mobile handset culture that has emerged from the bottom up in the Global South. The authors highlight the social, economic, and institutional factors – in local as well as transnational contexts – that have contributed to “flexible” handsets and grassroots practices within this alternative model of social innovation. Drawing upon theories of user appropriation, they discuss three factors – economic constraints, flexible manufacturing, and cultures of tinkering – that have led to innovative handset production, consumption, and circulation. They then outline a general taxonomy of alternative, or flexible, handsets that includes used, refurbished, *shanzhai* (“bandit”), and counterfeit phones. They also discuss the importance of other cultural, social, and demographic factors – including age, gender, and locality – and show how various types of relationships – at the familial, peer, community, national, and even international level – sustain and are sustained by this multi-tiered handset ecology. Though the authors pay particular attention to China, such bottom-up innovation takes place in diverse contexts across the globe. In focusing especially on the information have-less (Qiu, 2009) – those with limited economic and social power in society – this chapter disrupts conventional notions of who holds authority in technology design and usage.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Introduction

The setting could be a hole-in-the-wall that serves as a shop in a narrow alley in Guangzhou, a cart on a dusty street on the outskirts of Accra, a bustling marketplace in Bangalore, or a tiny storefront near downtown Los Angeles' garment district. At such locales, men and women hawk an array of mobile phone cards and accessories as well as various types of handsets,¹ including some that flash with disco lights to signal an incoming call or bear a "Mi-Obama" label with the slogan "Yes We Can."² Workers fix broken phones, construct bastardized phones out of mismatched parts, and sell phones that have been brought to the premises through both legitimate and questionable means. The clientele of such establishments also practice their own forms of bricolage: sharing mobile phones, changing out SIM cards, "flashing," reconfiguring the handset, and engaging in other creative uses not necessarily conceived of by designers. Though separated by language, culture, and geography, what all of these individuals share is that they have begun to form a chain of grassroots mobile innovation. Although such alternative handsets and practices are primarily located in the Global South, they can also be found in low-income, largely immigrant communities in cities in the developed world.

As mobile telephony has diffused across the globe, technological innovations associated with mobile communications are often thought to emanate from the West or from Japan, where global manufacturers such as Apple, Nokia, or Samsung spend millions of dollars on research, design, and marketing. In cooperation with an operator, who often locks the phone to its network and adds proprietary software, the handset is then distributed to an end user in a formal commercial interaction complete with contracts, warranties, and receipts. The model we suggest – which we term "bottom-up," "grassroots," "alternative," or "flexible" to signify that it exists outside the mainstream model of capitalist consumption and of the global brands – highlights instead the emergence of a diverse array of innovative modes of production and consumption that often blur the distinction between these two terms. For example, unlike the situation in developed countries where a new handset comes pre-packaged in a shrink-wrapped box, the mobile phone in developing countries is often constructed, in one way or another, "on site." This may involve unlocking the software, replacing different components such as the keypad or the screen, or it might include composing a completely new device using the bits and pieces from discarded phones. Indeed, even after an individual has bought a handset, there could be further modification of the device, either intentionally or unintentionally. In the developing world as elsewhere, users – especially youth – often decorate phones with stickers or jewelry, change the cover, or in other ways deliberately modify the outside appearance of the phone (Fujimoto, 2005; Hjorth, 2009). However, if lack of electricity compels a user to consign his or her phone to a recharging service, an unscrupulous proprietor may substitute a good battery with one of lower quality, unbeknownst to the owner. All of these elements speak to a plasticity or "flexibility" in the social

construction of the handset. They also give new depth to the idea of the social shaping of technology, one that goes well beyond what is seen in the developed world. Such an alternative handset culture – reaching from producers, to distributors, to users, and extending to agents and repair people with whom the owner interacts after purchasing the phone – arises within myriad relationships in particular contexts and requires that we rethink traditional models of both the manufacture and the social shaping of technology.

In this chapter, we seek to provide a general mapping of grassroots practices associated with an alternative mobile handset culture that has emerged from the bottom up in the Global South. We highlight the social, economic, and institutional factors, in local as well as transnational contexts, that have contributed to “flexible” handsets and grassroots practices within this alternative model of social innovation. Drawing upon theories of user appropriation, we discuss three factors – economic constraints, flexible manufacturing, and cultures of tinkering – that have led to innovative handset production, consumption, and circulation. We then outline a general taxonomy of alternative, or flexible, handsets that includes used, refurbished, *shanzhai* (or bandit), and counterfeit phones. In the process, we show how various types of relationships – at the familial, peer, community, national, and even international level – sustain and are sustained by this multi-tiered handset ecology.

Although we discuss practices in locations as diverse as Bangalore, Istanbul, the Philippines, and Copenhagen, we pay particular attention to China as representative of bottom-up innovation in mobile telephony. Our emphasis, however, is on processes rather than on particular places. Moreover, we focus specifically on the “information have-less” – i.e., those who are economically and socially marginalized and thus use lower-cost and sometimes less convenient forms of new communication technologies (Cartier, Castells, & Qiu, 2005; Qiu, 2009) – to understand how they exercise agency and creativity in accessing and shaping technology within the material constraints of their lives. Although certainly financial limitations affect how such users appropriate technology, we highlight other cultural, social, and demographic factors that are equally important, including age, gender, and locality. Through critically analyzing a range of innovative production and consumption practices, this chapter seeks to add to our understanding of how particular social and cultural groups produce various local understandings of technology. In focusing on those with limited economic and social power in society, we hope to disrupt conventional notions of who holds authority in technology design and usage.

Technology Appropriation

The mobile phone’s diffusion across all corners of the globe and at all levels of society offers an unprecedented opportunity for deepening our understanding of how technologies are produced, taken up, and used by different people in diverse contexts. A

large body of work has examined how various technologies have been shaped through interactions and negotiations between designers, developers, and end users who engage in “interpretive flexibility” around a technology until a point of “closure” and stabilization is realized (Bijker, 1995; Pinch & Bijker, 1984). Scholars have also analyzed the so-called “domestication” of technologies, or how users take the devices from the commercial world and place them into their everyday lives (Berker, Hartmann, Punie, & Ward, 2006; Silverstone, Hirsch, & Morley, 1992). Studies of the telephone (Fischer, 1992; Martin, 1991) and more recently the mobile phone (Ito, Okabe, & Matsuda, 2005; Katz & Aakhus, 2002; Ling, 2004) have also shown how a range of social actors – designers, manufacturers, marketers, middle-class users – have contributed to how these communication technologies have been understood and used in society.

We share with the above body of work an insistence on the constitutive nature of technology and society, yet we shift the focus by looking at an entire circuit of alternative handset consumption and production among the information have-less in the Global South. Rather than analyzing the decisions that go into purchasing and “domesticating” a technology, we show how certain types of handsets are obtained, sustained, and reinvented within limited economic circumstances and numerous sociocultural constraints. Because we are concerned with how users “make do” and innovate from the bottom up, we draw from theories of technology appropriation that have highlighted power differentials in the global flow of knowledge, communication, and technology, in particular Ron Eglash’s (2004) notion of “appropriated technologies” and Bar, Pisani, and Weber’s (2007) model of mobile appropriation.

As Eglash (2004) notes, technology not only flows along an axis of production to consumption but also depends on users’ geographic location, social power, gender, ethnicity, and so on. He uses the term “appropriated technologies” to denote how those who are socially and/or economically marginalized reinterpret, adapt, or reinvent technologies invented in the traditional locales of global influence. In his formulation, “reinterpretation” means “change in semantic association with little or no change in use or structure” (p. x); “adaptation” involves “change in both semantic association and use” as well as a “violation of [...] intended purpose” (p. xi), thus implying user creativity; and “reinterpretation” entails changes to “semantics, use, and structure” (p. xii). Appropriated technologies can run the gamut from radical reinterpretation to use of a certain technology by groups not initially considered by designers, such as those at the margins and thus not thought capable of using “elite” devices. As Eglash argues, *“movement along the axis of social power is just as important in defining appropriated technologies as movement along the consumption–production axis”* (p. xv, emphasis in original).

Whereas Eglash outlines a framework for technology appropriation more generally, Bar and colleagues (2007) theorize mobile phone adoption, appropriation, and reconfiguration. In their approach, appropriation is the crucial site for user experimentation and innovation. Finding inspiration in Latin America, with its mix of peoples and cultures, they develop a three-pronged model of user appropriation. It includes, first,

“baroque” layering, where users “fill in” the spaces that manufacturers and operators provide for them, such as personalizing a phone with special wallpaper. Second, there is “creolization,” which involves a process of mixing, with the result being a new, hybrid form. Finally, there is cannibalization, which is appropriation through “dismantling, absorption, and chemical transformation” (p. 15). All of these are ideal types and can blend into one another, but they “represent increasing degrees of power contestation by users (and growing challenges to the established structure), as well as increasing engagement with ‘doing’ technology (rather than simply ‘using’ it)” (p. 24).

Eglash’s (2004) and Bar et al.’s (2007) appropriation frameworks are useful to our analysis for three reasons. First, they draw attention to issues of social power and inequality that cannot be overlooked when studying technology use among marginalized populations. Second, they highlight users’ agency and creativity in incorporating technology into their lives. Third, both frameworks attempt to understand appropriation in terms of a continuum from minimal to radical modification of a technology by users. In the discussion that follows, we note how some of the alternative handsets in our taxonomy could be placed into the aforementioned categories of reinterpretation, adaptation, and reinvention, or baroque layering, creolization, and cannibalization, but our main goal is to reveal varying degrees of modification to typical uses, structures, and meanings of mobile phones. Our definition of innovation is thus quite broad; we mean the term to denote technical innovations, such as the *shanzhai* phones discussed later, as well as practices that go against norms of capitalist consumption, such as the extended life given to phones through reuse and refurbishing. Although our taxonomy focuses on the actual “tool” itself – the mobile handset – we do not view technology as a distinct object separate from social life, but rather the opposite. We distinguish types of alternative handsets in order to generate insights into the needs, meanings, relationships, and investments (emotional and financial) that give rise to a grassroots mobile handset ecology embedded in the everyday lives of users.

Most frameworks of technology appropriation focus on what occurs once a user has already adopted a technology. For example, although Bar et al. (2007) acknowledge that manufacturers and providers might co-opt user innovation into future designs and services, they do not take into account innovations in design, manufacturing, and distribution that can also occur outside of the dominant model of the global handset manufacturers and operators. In our study, we focus on the broad social shaping process of alternative handsets. We therefore widen our scope to include the entire Global South, where in recent years the phenomenon of user appropriation has not only expanded but should also be seen in the larger context of several levels of innovation as well as transborder connections among the Southern countries. Therefore, we focus on modes of user appropriation embedded in familial, peer, and community relationships while also revealing a relatively more centralized pattern of “flexible manufacturing” in terms of research and development, production, wholesale, and retail, as seen in the rise of China as a global mobile manufacturing power, which will be discussed in more detail below. To set the stage

for this discussion, we first examine the diffusion of mobile telephony and manufacture in recent years in both the developed and developing worlds.

Diffusion and Manufacture of Mobile Phones

While the mobile phone was first developed and adopted in Europe, Japan, and the United States, the preponderance of phones is now found in developing countries. According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), in 2010 there were about 75 mobile telephone subscriptions for every 100 persons in the world (ITU, 2010b). If we simply consider the number of subscriptions, the greatest numbers are found in the most populous countries, including China (747 million subscriptions in 2009), India (525 million), the United States (285 million), Russia (230 million), and Brazil (173 million). At the bottom of this list are small countries like Tuvalu (2,000 subscriptions), the Marshall Islands (3,000), Kiribati (1,000), and Palau (13,156) (ITU, 2010a). These numbers point to the diffusion of mobile phones in a country.

However, if we examine the number of phone subscriptions per 100 persons, a different picture arises. Figure 10.1 displays the actual density of mobile phones in a population according to the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country (sorted into three groups ranging from lowest to highest GDP). Though not shown in the chart, tiny Palau, with 64 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, is somewhat ahead of both China (55 per 100 inhabitants) and India (43).

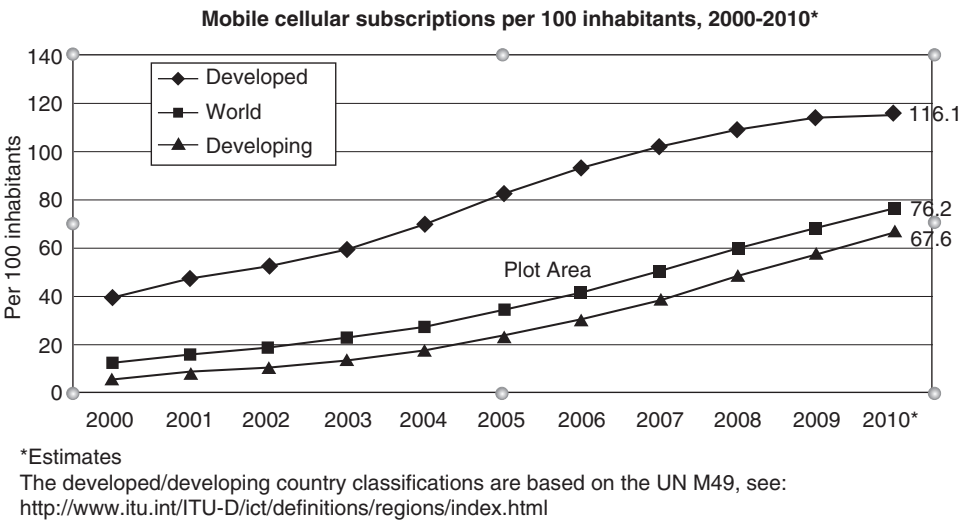


Figure 10.1 Mobile telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2000–2010 by GDP.
Source: Adapted from International Telecommunication Union data found at <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/definitions/regions/index.html>.

In this metric, the countries with the highest density of mobile phone subscriptions are the United Arab Emirates (232 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants),³ Montenegro (207), Cayman Islands (193), Macao, China (192) and Hong Kong, China (179). At the bottom of the list are the Marshall Islands (5), Eritrea (2), and Burma and Kiribati (1 subscription per 100 population). The country with the least density of mobile phone subscriptions is North Korea with .029 phones per 100 population. Figure 10.1 also reveals that since roughly 2006, the growth of mobile phones in the developed world is flattening out while in the developing world growth has been climbing more steeply. In other words, although countries that were early adopters of mobile phones, such as Iceland and Norway, have seen slow growth rates in recent years, societies in the Global South have become the main driving force for the diffusion of mobile phones worldwide.

In addition to diffusion, it is important to look also at manufacturing. In the past two or three years, the epicenter of mobile phone manufacturing, especially in terms of low-end grassroots innovation, has shifted away from industrialized Northern countries. China alone produced 619 million mobile phones in 2009, when its output accounted for 49.9% of the world market share (ifeng.com, 2010). Other Southern countries like India, Kenya, and Venezuela have also entered the mobile phone manufacture business in collaboration and/or competition with the Chinese manufacturers and with each other, using various innovation models that reflect their social reality but are very different from those of large Western and Japanese corporations. In order to find the answers to key questions, such as who invents the phone and how that innovation takes place and why, we need to shift our attention to the Global South, to countries like China, whose critical importance should be appreciated in terms not only of adoption and consumption but also of manufacturing and innovation.

Methods

This chapter is the result of data gathered through a variety of qualitative methods – ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and interviews in diverse contexts between 2006 and 2010. Participant observation among dozens of low-income mobile phone users and retailers was carried out extensively by two of the authors in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, China, for extended periods (2 to 10 months) throughout the duration of the research. Participant observation for briefer periods (two days to three weeks) was also conducted by all three authors among a variety of mobile phone retailers and low-income users in Antalya, Istanbul, Los Angeles, Houston, Manila, Bangalore, and Riyadh. In all of the above locations, as well as in Shanghai, Copenhagen, and London, over 40 interviews and numerous casual conversations were conducted with mobile phone retailers, in some cases with multiple followups.⁴ In-depth interviews with 12 mobile phone refurbishers were conducted in Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Beijing while in-depth interviews with three

mobile phone manufacturers and approximately 15 distributors were conducted in Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

The purpose of the interviews and observations was to gain an understanding of the types of alternative mobile handsets that have emerged in recent years as falling costs and flexible manufacturing techniques have led to an expanded mobile phone market. In addition, we sought to understand how ordinary users engage in various types of bricolage, or making do, as they appropriate mobile phones to suit their purposes. Our goal was to gather sufficient data that would allow us to generate preliminary taxonomies of, on the one hand, alternative, or flexible, mobile handsets, and, on the other hand, emergent grassroots practices among the information have-less. We also rely on mobile phone policy documents, mobile operator data from Bangladesh and Denmark, media reports, and research studies to supplement our own findings.

Alternative Phones and Grassroots Innovation

Alternative phones at the grassroots level emerge from a confluence of diverse social, economic, and cultural factors, but here we focus on three that are of particular relevance to our analysis: economic constraints, flexible manufacturing techniques, and what we refer to as “cultures of tinkering.” Although we separate them for analytical purposes, in reality they overlap and are mutually constitutive. In the following discussion, we briefly highlight how each of these plays a role in grassroots mobile innovation.

Economic Constraints

In the developed world, in most cases mobile operators offer customers discounted or “free” phones. In exchange for a subsidized handset, the user signs a contract – often for one or two years – and is “locked” onto a particular operator’s network, ensuring the operator a secure revenue stream for the period of the contract. When the contract time nears its end, the operator often offers a new handset to the individual in the hope that he or she will continue as a subscriber. Without a contract, users usually have more flexibility in choosing a new phone. However, “unlocked” phones, that is, phones not subsidized by the operator, are often far more expensive than “locked” phones. Still, there is an active “unlocking” industry that is readily available.

In many parts of the developing world, however, such contract arrangements are either nonexistent or are used only by the elite since they often entail not only having a certain level of income but also other requirements related to residency or bank accounts.⁵ Thus, finances obviously play a significant role in decisions regarding mobile phone adoption and types of use among those at the lower end of the socioeconomic

strata (Kalba, 2008; Zainudeen, Sivapragasam, de Silva, Iqbal, & Ratnadiwakara, 2007). Thus, a prepaid “top-up” system, with no regular monthly charge and where an individual buys a certain number of “minutes” that are used as needed, is preferred by millions of people. Given the irregular income of many people in the Global South, this type of subscription fits their needs better than a postpaid contract with a monthly bill. Kalba (2008) reports that in several countries as many as 92% of all subscriptions are prepaid. With the 2008 global economic downturn, prepaid phone cards have also become more popular in mature markets where postpaid, contract-based plans formerly dominated, as in the United States (Reardon, 2009).

The attention that “have-less” individuals give to pricing is not lost on mobile phone operators in emerging markets, who tend to offer a range of prepaid calling cards (including cards with bundles of text messages or wireless instant messaging service, or where the caller pays). Top-up cards can also come in very small denominations, for example only 50 cents (Ling & Donner, 2009).⁶

In addition, financial as well as technical constraints mean that users may often have several subscriptions, and thus several SIM cards. Indeed, this accounts for some of the double counting of mobile phone users described above. The users know that one subscription is cheaper during the day and another less expensive in the evening. They also know that one subscription may allow them coverage in one location, while a second subscription is better in another area. We have found that such “SIM switching,” as it is often called, is particularly common among Chinese rural migrants working in the service and manufacturing sectors in Shanghai and Guangdong along China’s coastal regions, where labor mobility is high.

Economics is also a factor in the manner in which mobile phone handsets are circulated. In major cities in both the developing and developed world, it is possible to find vendors selling used, reconditioned, and quasi-illicit phones. This is as true for Guangzhou and Mexico City as it is for Copenhagen and London, as will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Flexible Manufacturing

In addition to micro-level economic issues, new modes of manufacturing at the level of entire industrial systems have given rise to the production of mobile handsets that fall outside the major global brands. The trend of flexible manufacturing can be traced back historically to the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism (or Toyotism) since the 1970s. As recently as a decade ago, in East Asia there was a clear division of labor in the flexible mode of manufacturing mobile phones, with Japanese corporations controlling research and development and reaping most of the profits, Taiwanese firms undertaking the actual manufacturing, and Hong Kong companies doing the marketing. However, in recent years this hierarchical relationship has been seriously eroded. Initially, Chinese and Korean firms started imitating the best-selling phones on the market. While their phones were inexpensive, their quality was also unreliable. Over

time these firms' emulation skills improved, and they started designing features that were unavailable on the brand-name phones, as in the case of *shanzhai* or bandit phones, which we will discuss shortly. These low-end phones, with improved reliability, more functions, and low price, then diffused quickly, both domestically and overseas, to claim, for instance, a quarter of China's huge mobile phone market (Su, 2009).

This latest trend of structural transformation in the flexibility of mobile phone manufacturing reflects the heightening of flexible capitalism since the turn of the century. The alternative mobile handset ecology can be understood, in this sense, as a crystallization of a new form of "network enterprise" beyond the original model identified in the Western context of the 1990s (Castells, 2000). This is not a coincidence because the traditional hierarchical model, as seen in the case of "locked" phones, is ultimately not "flexible" enough to meet the demands of both low-end consumers and the fiercely competitive mobile phone market. After all, the production cycle of mobile phones is quite short and some of the major manufacturers produce as many as 50 new (or somewhat modified) models a year. As new models hit the market, prices drop quickly. At the same time, low-end handset manufacturers need to make their products for a wide variety of have-less people. The restrictions imposed by mobile telecom operators and government regulators also tend to make the global brands less competitive by increasing their production costs and/or keeping them from adding attractive features such as the dual-SIM card design to facilitate the SIM switching discussed above.⁷

A prime example of this flexible mobile phone manufacturing can be found in the Pearl River Delta of China, bordering Hong Kong. For years this region, known as the "world's factory," has produced the vast majority of the world's apparel, electronics, and textiles. Its large number of factories and huge labor force made up of rural-to-urban migrants mean that production is quick and costs are cheap. By 2008 there were about 3,000 to 4,000 *shanzhai* mobile phone businesses in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone alone (Farrar, 2009), making Shenzhen the world's *shanzhaiji* ("ji" meaning handset) production and marketing capital. The owners of many of these alternative mobile phone manufacturing facilities often have had prior experience working in joint ventures or local factories that subcontract with global brands to produce handsets and accessories, as do their workers. Yet they have left the mainstream and entered this newly emerging system of flexible manufacturing for a higher profit margin, faster returns, more room for technical innovation, and/or grassroots entrepreneurship.⁸ This indeed suggests a systematic change in the global division of labor for mobile phone manufacturing, with the epicenter of low-end design and production shifting decisively to places in the Global South like Shenzhen.

Cultures of Tinkering

A final factor that is constitutive of the rise of alternative handsets and grassroots mobile innovation is the practice of tinkering as a mode of cultural production

(Balsamo, 2011). Although “to tinker” can connote aimless toying or unskilled repair efforts, in reality tinkering can be done by experts and novices alike. To tinker is to explore and experiment with an object to fix it or to understand more fully its inner workings. As a form of innovation, tinkering involves creativity and is akin to bricolage in that it implies using whatever materials one has at hand. Tinkering means having a certain skill set, but more importantly a certain mindset; thus, it is often associated with a DIY, or do-it-yourself, ethos that informs everything from the punk to the hacker subcultures.

Because of its association with learning and creativity, tinkering has been increasingly embraced in the West as an important means of “cultivating the technological imagination” (Balsamo, 2011), and “tinkerability” is an intentional feature in certain software and programming languages designed for children (Resnick, 2007). Within a variety of grassroots movements formed around creating with one’s own hands, tinkering is also emphasized as a form of personal fulfillment, a way of emancipating production from the control of huge global manufacturers, and a means of forming community (e.g., *Make* magazine and Maker Faires in the United States).

While such Western-based domains of tinkering share some qualities with the cultures of tinkering that are the focus of our analysis, they also present some striking contrasts. Grassroots mobile innovation certainly derives from creativity, exploration, and bricolage, and there is no doubt that a hacker ethic informs some aspects of the alternative handset ecology, where there is often a clear disregard for intellectual property and a strong desire to open up the “black box” of technology to see what is inside. However, the key difference is that whereas in the West tinkering often informs leisure activities, in the Global South tinkering is more likely to arise out of necessity. Such tinkering is more akin to the self-reliant repair and maintenance that has been practiced for hundreds of years by people living in quasi-subsistence situations.⁹ While this work is seen as skilled in its local context, it is routinized repair work that is often linked to a system of receiving functional and broken handsets from either local customers or domestic or international suppliers, and then repairing them or perhaps selling them to a small retail outlet. In other words, it is labor – waged labor as opposed to the leisure interest often associated with hacking or open source software – and thus a means of feeding oneself and one’s family. It is this “subsistence tinkering” that stimulates grassroots innovation and informs the appropriation, manufacturing, and distribution of alternative mobile handsets.

A Taxonomy of Alternative Phones

In the following discussion, we put forward an initial taxonomy of grassroots handsets that have arisen out of the financial constraints, flexible manufacturing, and cultures of tinkering outlined above. This is a preliminary effort to map types of alternative or flexible phones and understand those who produce, consume, and

appropriate them based on our limited empirical observations. In theory there can be more types and, in reality, the various categories and actors overlap. This is not a fixed or exhaustive analysis, but we offer it so that we can begin to appreciate fully the scale and scope of the bottom-up mobile phone phenomenon worldwide.

Used Handsets – Kinship Networks, Technology Transfer, and Intermittent Entrepreneurship

Used phones form a large part of the alternative handset ecology in the Global South and circulate in a variety of ways. Research done in a number of different contexts in the developing world has found that it is common for family members to hand down phones to other family members once a new phone is purchased (Donner, 2009; Horst & Miller, 2006). Yet “handing down” is actually a misnomer since phones can circulate both up and down and back and forth. In some cases, used phones are passed from parent to child, such as in China when a young rural woman leaves home for the first time to find work in an urban area. Older siblings are also likely to pass phones down to a younger brother or sister. Although these two examples are representative of the guardian role of a parent or older sibling, it is also common that an adult child will pass a phone up to an elder parent. To again use China as an example, in both our fieldwork and that of others (cf. Oreglia, 2010), we have found that young adult rural migrants working in cities often pass along a used mobile phone to parents or siblings in the countryside (though some might buy a new one for parents as well). This facilitates communication but also can be seen as a form of technology transfer, given the vast rural–urban divide in China (Oreglia, 2010). Husbands also pass phones to wives, and occasionally phones are given by one friend to another. Among friends and family, used phones serve variously as a means of gifting, maintaining contact, and ensuring safety. The key points are that phones pass in multiple directions; such directions are often, but not always, dictated by familial obligations, age, and gender (females are more likely to have a used phone than males); and such passing along is not a finite occurrence: one phone can change hands three or even four times.

In addition to such exchanges that take place within kinship networks (and sometimes friendship networks), used phones have also become part of an informal, albeit often irregular, mobile economy. In this case, the transactions are also marked by a fluidity and flexibility not found in dominant models of exchange in the West: a shop and a street corner can equally serve as the locale for conducting business. In China, for example, where young, middle-class urban mobile phone users often purchase a new phone every 9 to 12 months (Rein, 2008), used phones easily find their way to the market, either through the owner pawning the phone to a second-hand shop or by an entrepreneurial trash collector, who secures additional income through hawking phones that have been discarded by others, as in Figure 10.2. Of course, the source of used phones can often be questionable, as mobile phone theft is a serious problem



Figure 10.2 A trash collector selling used phones on a street in Shenzhen, China. Photo: Cara Wallis, 2008.

in large cities such as Rio de Janeiro (de Souza e Silva, Sutko, Salis, & de Souza e Silva, 2011) and Beijing, where female migrants newly arrived from the countryside are often a prime target for rings of pickpockets.

This is not to say that in the developed world used mobile phones do not also circulate. They do, but on a much smaller scale. Interviews with shopkeepers selling used handsets in locales as diverse as Houston, London, and Copenhagen indicate that the phones largely come from local sources in a type of pawning arrangement. These shops often have an agreement with a nearby repair store that can recondition the phones and prepare them for reintroduction onto the market. However, these phones are not a significant part of the handsets that are on the mobile operator's network. The market for these phones is people who either want to cultivate a type of "retro" image or who wish simply to have an inexpensive phone, such as immigrant workers. In any case, the phones number in the hundreds on networks that have millions of handsets, indicating a much smaller market for these phones than in the developing world.

Whether they are passed along among family members, offered on an irregular basis by an enterprising worker finding opportunity in what others have discarded,

or sold in shops along with new phones, used handsets entail zero or minimal change to the actual device. We include them as a mode of appropriation because they are a means for technology to be in the hands of those who are not the intended users of such devices in the eyes of designers and marketers, and because they disrupt the “desirable” mode of consumption in a capitalist model of production that can only survive by inciting desire for the new. They are thus a mode of “reinterpretation” or “baroque” layering, whereby the used or discarded becomes a valuable channel of communication, an object embodying social relationships and obligations, and/or a means of irregular income.

Refurbished Phones – Apprentice Work in an Era of Mass Production

In developed countries, when a mobile phone breaks, in most cases it is thrown away, given to a charity, or put in a recycling bin. Most ordinary users do not know how to fix a broken phone, nor do they know of any business offering such services. A broken phone – once the initial frustration or disappointment has subsided – then offers an exciting opportunity to purchase a new phone. This is not necessarily the case in the Global South, however, where the financial constraints and the subsistence tinkering discussed earlier have led to the emergence of micro-entrepreneurs offering an array of services, including battery charging and phone repair, as shown in Figure 10.3.

Clearly, refurbished phones save low-income users money since they do not have to purchase a new phone if theirs breaks. What we wish to highlight, however, is that for those who can gain the requisite skills and equipment, phone refurbishing creates important employment and income-generating opportunities, which are crucial for those living at the margins of society. Furthermore, refurbishing sustains apprentice–novice relationships that are thought to have all but disappeared in countries that rely on large-scale manufacturing to produce their technologies. Moreover, shops offering such services support communities that are often isolated from the infrastructure that caters to those who are better off in society.

As an example, Xiao He, a 19-year-old rural-to-urban migrant from Henan province in China, had migrated to Guangzhou when he was 16. There he joined his parents, who rent a small cramped space in a migrant enclave (or “urban village”). The family lives upstairs while the downstairs area serves as a small pay phone business. For 20 months, until June 2008, Xiao He was an apprentice learning how to refurbish mobile phones. He was trained – while providing free labor – by a more experienced technician in a large workshop that consisted of dozens of mobile phone repair stands, most of which had at least one or two apprentices at any given time during our earlier fieldwork period from 2006 to 2008. After this training, he finally opened a mobile phone repair business inside his parents’ shop. His tools – mostly secondhand – consist of small screwdrivers, soldering equipment, electric dryers that



Figure 10.3 Mobile phone repair shop in Beijing, China. Photo: Cara Wallis, 2008.

soften plastic, devices to measure current, and so on. Xiao He is intimately acquainted with the motherboards of various types of handsets and is well versed in what might go wrong with a phone's numerous components. As a refurbisher, he engages in the subsistence tinkering we mentioned earlier, and he offers a vital service to those in his community.

In our fieldwork, we found that typically refurbishers are male, as in Xiao He's case, though in Beijing we met a young woman who had learned to do simple tasks, such as changing and charging batteries. This divide between jobs requiring "high" technical skill, and thus deemed appropriate for males, versus "practical" or unskilled jobs designated for females is common in low-level service work in China (Wallis, in press). That refurbishing phones is gendered masculine is also in line with broader ideas found in diverse cultures regarding the relationship between gender and technology.

Of course, aside from the gendered bodies that engage in repair work, a key aspect of mobile handset repair is access to parts and software. From a refurbisher's perspective, the fewer the number of phone types the better. If there are only a few types of handsets, spare parts can be cannibalized from older handsets and the software is more standard. To compare refurbished phones in the developing and

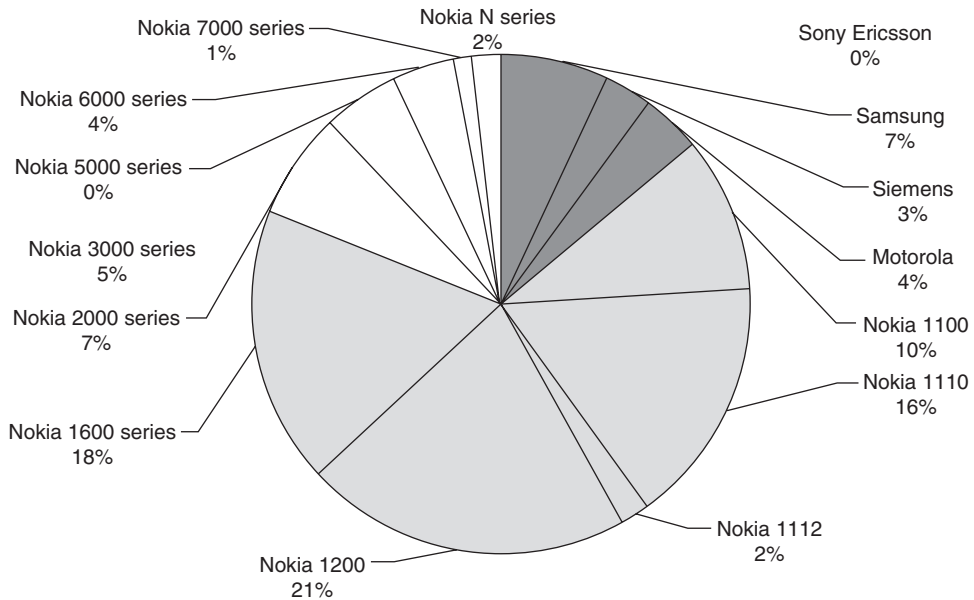


Figure 10.4 Distribution of the top 1,000 mobile phone handsets for a major operator in Bangladesh. *Source:* Adapted from data from Telenor.

developed world, one can take phones on the networks in Bangladesh versus Denmark. The material in Figure 10.4 shows the distribution of the top 1,000 mobile phone handsets for a major operator in Bangladesh.¹⁰ Nokia 1000 series phones make up about two-thirds of all these phones, as indicated by the dark shading. In considering all phones used in the Bangladeshi network, only about 15% are made by other manufacturers. When compared, for example, to the top 12 phones for an operator in Denmark, each of the top phones accounts for less than 1% of the total number of phones in Bangladesh. One phone, the Nokia 1200, represents twice as large a portion of the phones on the network as do the top 10 phones in Denmark.¹¹ What is surprising is that such a small set of phones dominates the market to the degree that it does. This type of “mono-culture” of mobile phones is an advantage for those who wish to reconstitute and rebuild handsets. The fact that there are so many of a small number of handsets means that there are always spare parts available. Indeed, this would encourage the culture of tinkering described above, while facilitating structural adjustment of the national mobile phone sector in Bangladesh from the bottom up.

Refurbished handsets, like the used phones discussed earlier, reveal how mobile phone users “make do” within the constraints of their lives. Rather than reinterpreting the device or engaging in baroque layering, however, refurbished phones could be seen as appropriation through “adaptation” or “creolization.” Certainly, opening up a phone to fix it violates the warranty agreement of all of the phones produced

by the global manufacturers. Furthermore, refurbishers often engage in creative bricolage or “creolization” as they mix parts and components to come up with a phone that is a hybrid mix, either inside or outside, or both. Through giving new life to a phone that would otherwise be discarded, intentionally or not they also reveal how mobile phones can be about sustainability, in contrast to the concerns raised by the escalation in electronics waste that has increased immeasurably since the widespread diffusion of mobile telephony – waste that often ends up dumped in the developing world.

Imitating and Innovating – *Shanzhaiji* (Bandit Phones)

In our next example, we focus not only on a type of handset that is appropriated by the information have-less, but also on an entire industrial system made up of producers, distributors, and end users. *Shanzhaiji*, or bandit phones, are one of the more interesting examples to emerge within the realm of flexible handsets and grassroots innovation. These phones are manufactured in and around Shenzhen, China, and are neither part of the black market nor fully legal. Instead, they constitute a gray zone within China’s burgeoning domestic mobile phone industry. They tend to be inexpensive and loaded with functions such as mp3 and mp4 players, televisions, radios, and dual SIM cards (for switching between two phone numbers). While bandit phones can mimic popular global brands in their design (and indeed can come in shrink-wrapped boxes),¹² the spelling of the brand name often intentionally betrays their bandit nature. For example, instead of Nokia, one can find Nckia; by the same logic, iPhone becomes Hiphone or iPheno. The more unique bandit phones are shaped like sports cars, rockets, cigarette packs, and even Doraemon and Mickey Mouse.

The information have-less are the prime market for *shanzhai* mobile phones. As we found in our fieldwork among young adult rural-to-urban migrant workers in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, bandit phones were commonly used precisely because of their low price and multiple functions. In brief conversations with *shanzhaiji* sellers in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, many echoed such sentiments, stating that *shanzhaiji* were suitable to the needs of low-income users, both because of price and because they came equipped with such commonly used functions as QQ, an instant messaging, social networking, and gaming platform. As *shanzhai* phones spread, urban youth also began collecting them for their humorous or kitsch designs (Yang & Li, 2008). We could argue that marginalized youth were at the forefront of *shanzhai* appropriation, yet urban youth’s embrace of bandit phones emerges from a much different position of social power. Moreover, more mainstream, brand-conscious urban youth belittle migrants who use *shanzhai* phones, perceiving them to be striving for something they cannot attain (Zhou, 2010).

Given the diffusion of *shanzhai* phones among diverse users, they have become a serious competitor within China’s mobile phone market, constituting from 20 to



Figure 10.5 A mobile phone shop in Antalya, Turkey, offers dual SIM card phones. Photo: Cara Wallis, 2008.

25% of domestic phone sales (Barboza, 2009; Golden China Brands, 2008). By one estimate, China has produced about 200 million *shanzhaiji*, of which about half are sold within the country, and the bulk of the other half find their way into the Global South (Su, 2009). Bandit phones are exported to India, Africa, the Middle East, and Russia. They are also expanding to other markets; in our fieldwork we have seen *shanzhaiji* in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Manila, the Philippines, Antalya, Turkey (see Figure 10.5), and even Houston, Texas.

If we turn from users to producers, as with refurbished phones the *shanzhaiji* industry represents an example of grassroots innovation, albeit on a much larger scale, generating new functionalities (e.g., the dual SIM card) and a circuit of R&D personnel, producers, distributors, and retailers. This large-scale alternative phone praxis has produced a huge industrial system with its own logic (for a more detailed discussion, see Wallis & Qiu, 2012). The center of this system is made up of research and development teams, who work with providers such as MediaTek (MTK, the largest Taiwanese mobile phone motherboard maker) as well as channel companies that have a deeper understanding of market demands. To prepare the technical design of the phone, the R&D team gathers technical solutions and parts from these providers and channel companies. If necessary, other phone designs are copied, but the biggest concern is

controlling production costs. After the basic design is in place, manufacturers test a demo version of the phone, complete with hardware and software, and the product is then improved through multiple iterations. Once orders are commissioned, the manufacturer produces a large quantity of the *shanzhaiji*. Finished phones eventually go directly to wholesalers or reach the wholesaler via a channel company. Wholesalers then distribute the phones to retailers, who in turn sell them to customers.

The industrial system of *shanzhaiji* production has multiple phases, and each phase is extremely competitive, which forces everyone to focus on efficiency, reliability, and low cost as they seek to innovate new product lines, production processes, and software solutions. Companies making substandard products do exist, but they will be quickly discovered and marginalized in the *shanzhaiji* production system centered in Shenzhen. Although this is very much an informal economy system that relies solely on cash transactions, the people involved are also closely networked with each other.

Shanzhaiji producers thus reveal a reinterpretation of the typical mode of production maintained by the global brands. They have both reengineered the handset – adding formerly unheard-of functions like the dual SIM card – and have created an industrial system that efficiently caters to the needs of have-less users throughout the Global South.

Counterfeit Phones

Counterfeit phones make up the last type of grassroots handset in our taxonomy. These bear a resemblance to the *shanzhai* phones discussed above in terms of their production and distribution. The difference is that, unlike bandit phones that revel in their intentional bandit status, counterfeit phones try to pass themselves off as the real deal. Indeed, when the *shanzhaiji* industry started to take shape in China in about 2004, it was very much in the counterfeit business, using mostly Korean solutions to imitate Nokia models, for example. But since 2006, with the considerable profit made and the enhanced level of alternative R&D, many bandit factories have started to work on their own brands. A prime example is found in K-Touch (Tianyu), which has transformed from *shanzhaiji* maker to become one of the top-selling domestic brands in China. However, a large number of counterfeit phones are produced, including the iPhone, which is manufactured in Shenzhen (see Figure 10.6). This is because Apple had no formal business partner to distribute its popular handsets in China until August 2009, when it finally signed a deal with China Unicom.

But more commonly, counterfeit phones are made for rural markets not only in China but also in other Southern countries, where customers do not have sufficient knowledge to tell the fake from the real (one simple way is just to weigh the handset – counterfeits are usually much lighter). Many such counterfeit phones – as well as used and refurbished ones – go through Chungking Mansions, a residential and business complex in Hong Kong, for instance, which is right next to Shenzhen and open for male South Asian and African traders who cannot easily get into mainland China (Hong Kong has a much more



Figure 10.6 Counterfeit iPhones, iTouch, and iPads for sale in Shanghai. Photo: Cara Wallis, 2008.

relaxed visa policy). According to a West African trader, speaking with Gordon Mathews, an anthropologist who has been studying Chungking Mansions for several years, “When I carry phones back to my country, I mix them, real and fake. I sell the fakes to people off in villages, who don’t know any better. I sell the real ones to people I know” (Mathews, 2009, pp. 172–173). In our fieldwork in Guangzhou, we noticed several phone vendors who sold phones with French, Arabic, and English language capacity, but not Chinese. While some of these were legitimate domestic models made for export, others were labeled with name brands, and were clearly for export.

Counterfeit phones, in this sense, constitute one of the more problematic examples of alternative handsets. They can be viewed as appropriation through reinterpretation or cannibalization, not of the actual device itself but of intellectual property rights and ethical business practices. However, the counterfeiters and sellers often see themselves as simply trying to make do in the global flows of money, technology, and power that have relegated them to the margins.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have provided an overview and critical examination of an alternative handset ecology consisting of flexible mobile phones and grassroots innovation

from the bottom up in the Global South. Basing our analysis in the user appropriation literature, we have introduced the basic patterns of alternative mobile handsets, including user characteristics and networks of relationships that influence the price, lifespan, and functionality of the phones, modes of flexible manufacturing that transform the mobile phone industry structurally, and the cultures of tinkering at the grassroots level. These converge to give rise to a diverse array of innovative modes of mobile phone production, appropriation, and consumption that often intersect with age, gender, and locality. We have brought together observations from around the world, though we have placed particular focus on China, to propose a taxonomy of alternative phones in the Global South, including used, refurbished, *shanzhai* (bandit), and counterfeit phones. Our analysis is only a first step in mapping what is undoubtedly a much broader alternative mobile handset culture that arises out of user necessity and ingenuity.

What are the most essential lessons learned from alternative mobile handsets and grassroots innovation in the Global South? First, this analysis provides new insight into the social shaping of technology. Drawing upon Eglash's (2004) and Bar et al.'s (2007) models of user appropriation, we have sought to disrupt the conventional perception of innovation as an exclusive privilege of elite individuals or big transnational corporations in Northern countries. Furthermore, we have argued for a broad notion of appropriation, which encompasses everything from sharing or resuscitating used phones, to modifying and remixing the handset, to technical innovations at the design, manufacturing, and distribution level. Grassroots practices that go against typical norms of capitalist consumption, traditions of technological mastery, and the creativity that goes into improving the business networks that enable mobile phone transactions locally, nationally, and transnationally can be found in many parts of the Global South. Our findings among the information have-less of China have also been noted in other developing countries, for instance, Morocco (Ilahiane & Sherry, 2008). These trends have been stimulated by, and will continue with, the further spread of mobile phones in the developing world.

Second, flexible mobile handsets and grassroots innovation are no longer small-scale, low-tech operations scattered outside the periphery of the modern industrial system of mobile phone manufacturing. On the contrary, they have moved into the center of that very industrial system, to a certain extent following the established path of flexible accumulation, but also pushing it to a new level of flexible manufacturing beyond the formal control of the multinationals and the intellectual property regimes. They operate on a huge scale, involving hundreds of millions of phones, if not billions, and in so doing they can generate rather sophisticated ways to improve both the technology and the business arrangements, as seen in the case of China's *shanzhai* phone sector.

Third and finally, grassroots innovation in the Global South happens in the stark reality of the developing world, where the majority of people struggle to survive on a daily basis. This cannot be more different from the mobile youth culture and DIY groups in Western societies, who engage in grassroots innovation for fun and for the expression of particular group identities. Instead, grassroots innovators in Southern

countries often are involved in alternative praxis because they have no other choice. Either they fix the phone and do it in the most affordable way, or they risk losing business in a fiercely competitive market, which could lead to more hardship or even starvation. It is therefore a form of “subsistence tinkering” that emerges from the bottom up, as a response to the existential issues of the Global South, where the forces of globalization constantly threaten to make more and more people “structurally irrelevant” in the network society (Castells, 2000, p. 436). Understanding alternative mobile phones in the developing world thus sheds light on these fundamental survival politics as well.

NOTES

- 1 We use “handset” to refer to the physical object that a person uses to place/receive calls and texts, or to access advanced services.
- 2 See “A Barack Obama branded mobile phone,” *Cellular-news* (2009, January 15). Retrieved from <http://www.cellular-news.com/story/35527.php>
- 3 We have pedantically been referring to the number of *subscriptions* per 100 persons, not subscribers. It would be absurd to claim that there are twice as many mobile phones in the United Arab Emirates as there are people. This discrepancy arises because often people have more than one subscription, especially in developing countries. Also, phone companies carry prepaid subscriptions on their books that may not actually be in use.
- 4 Obviously some of these cities are not in the Global South, yet a small market for used and reconstituted telephones still exists in these locations.
- 5 For example, in China many low-income migrants do not have a permanent, or relatively stable, mailing address – a requirement for such contract-based services.
- 6 Content providers as well tailor their offerings for low-income individuals. In Mexico and parts of the Southwest and Western United States, regional Mexican music – the music of choice for many working-class Mexican immigrants and their children – is downloaded not onto laptops but onto mobile phones in the form of songs and ringtones (Kun, 2009). According to our interviews with employees at Kongzhong, a popular content provider in China, games, ringtones, horoscopes, and the like are targeted specifically at segments of the information have-less, in particular college students and young adult migrant workers.
- 7 Mobile operators are often the strongest force against innovative designs such as dual-SIM cards because the flexibility they offer may mean less profit. Also, in countries like China, where the state plays a central role in setting rules for the mobile phone industry, brand-name manufacturers need to spend dearly on licensing their products, which adds to the cost of production and reduces the companies’ flexibility in the marketplace (see Wallis & Qiu, in press, for more details).
- 8 Although beyond the scope of this chapter, a “white label” phone manufacturing industry also exists that is somewhat similar to *shanzhaiji* production. For example, an operator, such as Vodafone, might wish to have a Vodafone branded handset that is not a Nokia, Motorola, etc. Thus, it turns to a “white label” manufacturer, often located in Asia, who

specifies the technical elements of the handset and inexpensively produces it in batches of several hundred thousands or a million.

- 9 The tinkerer certainly differs from the accredited, manufacturer-certified repairperson who has an employer-provided workspace as well as codes, specialized tools, and proprietary software that facilitate more fundamental access to the workings of the device. The tinkerer in our context could have some of these elements but in a limited capacity.
- 10 Through using the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number it is possible to determine at any given point the number of a particular type of handset on an operator's net.
- 11 The top models in Denmark include the Sony Ericsson W890i, W595, C702, and K660i and the Nokia 6220, 6500, E51, 6230i, 5310, and 5500.
- 12 The shrink-wrapped boxes for *shanzhaiji* are usually nothing but another layer of emulation. Individual *shanzhaiji* are usually sold without a box. However, for a small sum the buyer can get it in a "shrink-wrapped box" that looks professional. Unlike the "authentic" box, however, the *shanzhaiji* box is always assembled with the phone put inside at the moment of purchase. It therefore is not wrapped in transparent plastic. Because of this last-minute assembly, usually in a rather chaotic environment, often the handset model information outside the box and the user manual inside do not match the *shanzhaiji* that has been purchased.

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The End of James Cameron's Quiet Years

Charles R. Acland

ABSTRACT

In the years between his blockbuster films *Titanic* (1997) and *Avatar* (2009), James Cameron was an active documentary producer and director. Where many saw these years as a retreat from the mainstream of the film industry, this chapter argues that this period helped solidify his relationship with scientific discovery and the development of cinema technology. *Expedition: Bismarck* (2002), *Ghosts of the Abyss* (2003), and *Aliens of the Deep* (2005) are large-budget documentary films involving deep-sea expeditions, and in which the technology of physical and visual access to the subject matter figures prominently. This chapter demonstrates the thematic and aesthetic links these films have with *Avatar*. Cameron's persona as a technological auteur shows us how the business of film is bound up with a range of media products, new technological forms, in particular 3D film, and types of intellectual property, revealing the technological imperative lodged in conceptions of the future of cinema.

For many, James Cameron's groan-inducing "I'm king of the world" proclamation during the 1998 Academy Awards broadcast confirmed existing stories of his egomania. His outburst was part of his acceptance speech after winning the Best Director Oscar for *Titanic* (1997). Just imagine what he must have been thinking when he got up to accept the Best Picture award a few moments later! Though he was quoting a

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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line of dialogue he had written for the film, Cameron's triumphant declaration made his status as a less-than-beloved figure, especially among people who had worked for him, evident to a wide television audience. A few weeks after the Academy Awards, Peter Bart wrote an April Fool's editorial in *Variety* that parodied Cameron's megalomania, saying executives had to rent Chasen's Restaurant just to take a meeting with him, that Cameron insisted no fewer than four studios would be required to back his next project, and that he asked to be addressed as King, beginning all meetings with a few minutes' silence for the victims of the *Titanic* (Bart, 1998). But for all of his grandiose behavior, imagined or otherwise, let us remember that just prior to *Titanic*'s release, the film and Cameron were widely ridiculed, with high expectations that his film would be a colossal failure. The production, the financing, and the releasing strategies were so outside industry standards at that time that it was difficult for observers to understand his plan. So, that evening at the Academy Awards ceremony, he had reason to gloat.¹

The pre-release miscalculation about *Titanic* led many critics and industry analysts to take a "wait and see" attitude toward his more audacious sci-fi project *Avatar* (2009). Cameron wrote, produced, and directed that unparalleled expensive 3D production; he also did uncredited work as director of photography and provided hands-on contributions for virtually every aspect of the production. Critics reserved judgment on what appeared to be a fundamentally insupportable business model, even when some sneak peaks at footage left fans underwhelmed. And once *Avatar*'s record-breaking box-office returns began to roll in, it was clear that this was a prudent decision.

Concerning the years between Cameron's career peak in 1998 and the release of *Avatar*, an impression circulated that he was not making movies. For instance, *Variety* titled a brief 2001 update on his career "*Titanic* titan takes time out" (Hayes, 2001, p. 4). During that time, though, his status as an elusive craftsman and perfectionist never rested; indeed, it expanded even though he was absent from the annual blockbuster slate for over a decade. Despite his enigmatic, and counterintuitive, career path, he remained popularly understood as a decisive creative force. His cameo in the *émission à clef*, HBO's *Entourage*, had Cameron playing himself and signing the heartthrob character Vinnie Chase to star in *Aquaman*, a fictional project that seemed to be a plausible Cameron pursuit: he has made water-set action epics and worked to launch the *Spiderman* franchise before being supplanted. In a telling moment, Cameron notifies the actor of his casting decision via a cell phone call while piloting a helicopter. The image of the powerful filmmaker, directing the players from on high, propellers churning in the background, matches the sense that Cameron is rather like a remote and technologically savvy military commander. As Turtle, a member of the show's eponymous entourage, says, "With Cameron directing, you know it's going to be special." This reputation persisted, and his fan base was strong, despite the fact that most assume he had made only six films in the 25 years following his breakthrough movie, *Terminator* (1984). That's roughly the same rate of production as his self-declared creative mentor, and painstakingly slow filmmaker, Stanley Kubrick, from *Spartacus* (1960) to *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999).

In actuality, Cameron was an active filmmaker during the years between *Titanic* and *Avatar*, working as a documentary producer and director as well as a television producer (Fox's *Dark Angel*), and he did so in his outsized way. His documentary turn was unusual for this committed sci-fi action director, to say the least. He was executive producer of several controversial made-for-cable documentaries, most notably the revisionist biblical subjects of *The Exodus Decoded* (2006) and *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* (2007), both directed by Emmy Award-winning documentarian Simcha Jacobovici, who has since gone on to star in the VisionTV and History Channel series *The Naked Archeologist*. Cameron's own directed and produced documentaries are *Expedition: Bismarck* (2002), which he co-directed with Gary Johnstone, *Ghosts of the Abyss* (2003), and *Aliens of the Deep* (2005). The latter was co-directed with Steven Quale who, incidentally, went on to be a second unit director on *Avatar*.

These three Cameron films are large-budget science documentaries involving remote undersea settings. In fact, some claim *Aliens of the Deep*, which included a \$14 million dollar expedition, is the most expensive documentary ever made (MacInnis, 2004, p. 27). His penchant for quoting himself reappears in these titles, two of which allude to his features *Aliens* (1986) and *The Abyss* (1989). Beyond these references, the links between these documentaries and his blockbusters are manifold and substantial enough that we should not see them as the radical departure from his oeuvre that they might at first appear to be. In fact, in many ways, this trilogy solidified Cameron's relationship to ideas about popular science, exploration, and technological innovation. Indeed, his success in building a persona that embodied these traits is such that in 2006, with *Titanic* nine years in the past, and with *Avatar* still called *Project 880*, Cameron received the Visionary Award from Cinema Expo, the exhibitors' convention, for his special contribution to technological innovation (Pickard, 2006, p. A6). Two years earlier, he received the Nicola Tesla Award in Recognition for Visionary Achievements in the World of Digital Technology and Sound from the Satellite Awards. Meanwhile, an honorary doctorate from the University of Southampton for his contribution to maritime science and his membership on the NASA Advisory Council marked the degree of recognition he held among scientists. Take note that these industry and scholarly recognitions transpired at the time of his supposed hiatus.

Cameron doesn't do anything quietly, and his years of retreat from the mainstream of the Hollywood industry involved some grand exploits. His surprising activity over the 12 years following *Titanic* tells us something about the state of financial control, technological innovation, market development in the international film business, and relations among film and other media. This period of his career offers a case in which we can explore what exactly this thing is we call the film business. The first step is to know that there is no easy definition, and that there is no unified and stable entity called "the film business." Tom Schatz (2008) has described the current phase of film history as the era of "Conglomerate Hollywood," characterized by film's diminishing revenue-generating centrality inside a maze of vertically and horizontally integrated business concerns. Eileen Meehan (2008) has shown that the varying

corporate structures of “the Big Six” – Disney, General Electric, National Amusements, News Corporation, Sony, and Time Warner – reveal nonsynchronous relations between entertainment sectors, hence differing approaches to industrial strategy. In short, what we refer to casually as Hollywood is in fact a configuration of different industries, agendas, strategies, and commodities, which can interlock and promote one another or can be countervailing forces.

In a media system noted for its sprawling and unwieldy character, Cameron stands out as one who succeeds – commercially and, in some quarters, critically – where prevailing logic suggests he shouldn’t. With each film, Cameron and his collaborators systematically worked through problems and possibilities for certain kinds of special filmmaking conditions, special exhibition contexts, and business strategies. Significantly, and this is what I investigate in this chapter, in his projects and persona we can identify the technological imperative lodged in conceptions of the future of cinema. He displays a certain *technological auteurism*, especially in the popular and industrial representation of his credited innovations. As *Variety*’s Peter Debruge (2006) wrote of Cameron, “When ‘the King of the World’ sets his sights on tomorrow’s technology, the rest of the industry takes note” (p. A1). Through Cameron, we can begin to discern the meaning and implications of “technological achievement” for an industry that devotes a considerable amount of investment in the notion. The Academy Awards for technological accomplishment tend to be sectioned off from the primary broadcast, relegated, at best, to a few minutes’ recap of an earlier highly gendered ceremony with an attractive starlet doling out statues to geeky men. In actuality, this dimension of corporate competition for proprietary control over the advancement in moving image technologies is a major feature of the entertainment industry. By linking Cameron’s blockbusters with his documentaries, and by focusing on production and exhibition technology, this chapter shows how certain unstable technological aspects of the film industry have been carefully capitalized upon by Cameron. In a sense, he is an idol of the digital future of cinema. This especially involves his commitment to 3D film and to the development of 3D filmmaking processes. Even though such processes have a long history and are associated with countless innovators, Cameron has been elevated as a vanguard enthusiast for the technological and economic viability of contemporary 3D. To establish his current status as a technological auteur, we begin with the reception of *Avatar* and its use of 3D.

***Avatar* as Game Changer**

The jokes about *Avatar* were almost as good as the movie: Pocahontas meets Halo, Dances with Wolves in Space, James Cameron’s Ferngully, and a recruiting vehicle for Blue Man Group. With the film’s juggernaut rollout, such humorous spins were to be expected. But it is one thing to put the promotional engine in high gear, and

another to deliver a financially successful, audience-pleasing, and critically respected film to match the hype. By virtually every measure, Cameron did exactly that with his body-swapping, environmentally aware space opera. *Avatar* enjoyed a high cumulative score on the omnibus movie review website Rotten Tomatoes. And audience interest bulked up the film's box office to \$750 million domestic, and \$2.73 billion worldwide, making it (arguably) the highest-grossing film of all time.

Avatar was a "tentpole" film, which means it was the centerpiece of distributor Twentieth Century Fox's slate of recent releases. There is no hard and fast definition for what counts, but tentpoles typically have large budgets, especially for promotion, and might be expected to launch or continue a film franchise. A major distributor may have a couple of tentpole films over the course of a year. Such films are often mentioned in the annual reports of media corporations, as distributors temporarily bank corporate fiscal health on the success of those particular releases. With tentpoles drawing the largest theatrical audiences, a distributor fills out its "tent" with films that might be directed toward genre or niche audiences. For exhibitors, a tentpole benefits simultaneously released films, as, say, parents drop off their kids to see *Avatar* and then take in *It's Complicated* (Nancy Meyers, 2009) on the screen next door.

But *Avatar* was also something of a different order. It may be a case of absence making the heart grow fonder, but the lead up to *Avatar*'s release date – itself a commemorative or superstitious marking of *Titanic*'s release date 12 years earlier – was extraordinary in a number of respects. Online ticket vendors MovieTickets.com and Fandango both started selling tickets in August, an unprecedented four months before the release ("Are James Cameron fans the type," 2009). Cameron enjoyed a substantial amount of media attention through the fall of 2009, with profiles of his career and the technological innovations of *Avatar* characterizing him as a "man of extremes" who did not let the mundane fiscal realities of a production budget hamper the final product. But these profiles also carefully crafted a kinder, gentler, blue-collar hero whose advancement was the product of ingenuity, hard work, and a faith in scientific discovery.²

An air of secrecy around the film's production helped build public anticipation. Entertainment news greeted the release of individual photographs from the set and film stills as being just as newsworthy as paparazzi shots of inebriated stars. But a tone of reverence was evident in some of this entertainment journalism, making the publicity photos seem like images of an actual far-flung space station or scientific expedition.³ The availability of a three-minute trailer for *Avatar* online and in theaters was conventional marketing material. A new trailer premiered on an episode of Fox's *House, M.D.* (November 16, 2009), with advertisements for the trailer broadcast through the preceding week. Close connections to the gaming industry were sought; Ubisoft developed a 3D *Avatar* game, released on December 1, 2009, just weeks ahead of the film itself.⁴ Not surprisingly, the trailers for the movie and for the game were easily confused, and indeed, this was part of the point. But the decision to show 25 minutes of the film in Amsterdam at the exhibitors' convention CineExpo in June, then in Los Angeles at a gathering of 2,000 US exhibitors at Grauman's Chinese

Theatre, and then at the US comic book and science fiction convention Comic-Con in July in San Diego, was all part of an atypical rollout strategy. The lead-up to the release additionally included surprise clips and a panel discussion at the videogame conference E3 in Los Angeles and a free showing of 16 minutes on 100 IMAX 3D screens on August 21, 2009 (McClintock, 2009). Such limited access to a portion of a highly anticipated film generated a sense of scarcity and word-of-mouth publicity. But these were very risky decisions, for reviews, especially on increasingly influential web-based fan sites, were not uniformly positive.

The most unusual aspect of the months prior to release was the way *Avatar* was talked about as a revolutionary shift in cinema. Few media products have such elevated expectations as *Avatar* had attributed to it. And these expectations were not only for its own success, but also for a number of other products and technologies it bundled to share its revenue-generating glory. Many believed that this film was a game changer for the business of cinema. Steven Soderbergh was one unlikely auteurist voice singing the praises of *Avatar* based on partial footage he had seen during the production process. He went so far as to describe it as a “benchmark” movie, comparable to *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) in its day.⁵ Similarly, DreamWorks Animation head Jeffrey Katzenberg asserted, “I think the day after Jim Cameron’s movie comes out, it’s a new world” (quoted in Goodyear, 2009, p. 67). At the film’s premier, director Michael Mann declared, “There’s before this movie and after this movie” (Higgins, 2009).

The language of the “game-changing” impact of *Avatar* is illuminating. First, the film represented stupendous budget aggrandizement and ever more Byzantine accounting procedures. The official budget from Fox and Cameron’s production company, Lightstorm Entertainment, was \$230 million, up from the initial budget of “close to \$200 million” when Fox’s participation was first announced in January 2007 (Waxman, 2007). So unrestrained was Cameron that that amount soon seemed like a bargain next to unofficial estimates. Once we add all international distribution and marketing expenses, and the personal financial commitment of individual investors, including Cameron, the figure is closer to \$500 million (Cieply, 2009). That outlandish figure was not the worrisome feature for the distributing studio Fox that one might expect, due to the fact that it limited its liability. Dune Entertainment and Ingenious Media, two private equity partners, were reportedly in for roughly 60% of the budget (Cieply, 2009). That *Avatar*’s grosses rapidly surpassed its record-breaking budget gave industry investors confidence in the financial viability of the top end of the budget food chain. Take note that a parallel 2009 Hollywood success story was that of *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2009), a \$15,000 movie that made over \$100 million in domestic release. These two films thus laid out two contrasting contemporary blockbuster economies.

The trade and popular press coverage of Cameron’s production unfailingly emphasized the intricacy of the technological requirements of the film as part of its “game-changing” status. Trade publications faithfully repeated that Cameron had sketched the idea for *Avatar* in the mid-1990s, but the technology needed to realize

his vision was, according to Cameron, “not advanced enough” (Rampton, 2006, p. 14). He had to wait for the technology to “catch up” to his vision (Snyder & LaPorte, 2007). Frequent mentions of how long this project gestated presented *Avatar* as the product of a devoted artist. As the story goes, Cameron was so singularly driven by his original vision for the film that he was willing to wait until the cinematic technology matched his imagination, or he simply and impatiently initiated the innovations himself. Cameron, in this representation, essentially willed the future of cinema into being. The trade press emphasized that Cameron was, in a sense, making a movie for a cinematic apparatus that did not yet exist, something that had been suggested at other points in his career, especially related to the groundbreaking CGI in *The Abyss* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1992).⁶

Trade pundits and cultural commentators most frequently discussed *Avatar*'s game-changer status in relation to 3D exhibition. He began production of the film at a time when the conversion of cinemas to digital exhibition – a vast international endeavor to replace traditional celluloid projectors in movie theaters with digital ones – had slowed. Digital theaters were going to be an essential aspect of the film's success, as it required the new 3D digital projection for which only a fraction of existing digital screens had been equipped. There was a level of blind faith on Cameron's part that the screens would be there by the time he released his film. By April 2009, there were merely 2,000 3D-ready digital screens in the United States, representing just over 5% of all screens (Cohen, 2009). The risk inherent in such a form of production was being offset by plans to release regular 2D versions of the film as well.

Such devotion to a future cinematic era does not always work out. A relatively recent example of such a commitment to a specific vision of technological change was George Lucas's declaration that he would release *Star Wars Part I: The Phantom Menace* (1999) exclusively for digital exhibition. At the time, he was confident there would be a speedy conversion to hard drives and digital projectors from film reels and celluloid, and doubly confident that his film was so attractive to exhibitors and audiences alike that it would actually encourage that conversion. This, of course, did not come to pass for a variety of reasons, including underdeveloped technical standards, shaky security, and a lack of coordination between exhibitors and distributors for the expense of digital conversion, as well as the dire financial straits of exhibitors at that time.

Cameron saw *Avatar* as an engine that would push the 3D technological shift, as much as he and Fox expected to benefit from it, and eventually an influential segment of the industry would agree. A significant difference from Lucas's 1999 effort was that the financial and technical coordination for digital exhibition had been resolved, largely through the work of the industry consortium Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI). And the exhibition industry was relatively sound, with the 2009 domestic box-office receipts set to be a record at over \$10 billion *before Avatar*'s December release. Moreover, the advanced word on the film itself was strikingly positive – those tepid online fan reviews of select film segments notwithstanding – something that *The Phantom Menace* did not enjoy.

A certain industrial agreement had been in process that 3D was the next phase in cinema technology history. When an opinion piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, by Patrick Goldstein, derided the rush to 3D, Katzenberg responded in *Variety* to reaffirm the celebration of 3D technologies and to chastise Goldstein for being a Luddite. As with the turn to color, Katzenberg (2008) reasoned, 3D will eventually be recognized and exploited for its artful potential. His drum-banging was in part shilling for his 3D DreamWorks Animation SKG releases *Monsters vs. Aliens* (Rob Letterman and Conrad Vernon, 2009) and *Shrek Forever After* (Mike Mitchell, 2010). But he did represent a high level of faith in the general economic viability of this transition. And *Avatar* figured prominently in this cheerleading for 3D. *Time* concluded its feature on 3D describing *Avatar* as a vanguard example of the future of the format (Quittner, 2009). Michael Lewis, head of the leading 3D exhibition outfit RealD, predictably concurred, saying, “the industry is looking for its *Citizen Kane*, its definitive work of 3D, and *Avatar* may be that film” (quoted in Goodyear, 2009, p. 67). Versions of this line had been repeated by this company for several years, a view that gently pushed the responsibility for the conversion to digital 3D, in particular their proprietary system for 3D, back on filmmakers who were yet to have made an art of the form. Joshua Green, co-founder of RealD, said in 2005, “We still haven’t seen the *Citizen Kane* of 3D” (quoted in Merritt, 2005, p. 13). By 2009, his business partner Lewis reiterated, “*Avatar* is potentially the *Citizen Kane* of this medium” (Browning, 2009).

The seizing of milestone moments is one way in which technological change is made comprehensible and inevitable. Investment analyst Lloyd Walmsley, for instance, predicted that “3D stands to reestablish the ‘experience premium’ of movie-going. It’s a game changer” (Huggins, 2008, p. 25). Trade reports conventionally linked this phase of 3D with the short-lived fad of the 1950s, but went on to cite other lasting changes, like the variety of widescreen processes of the same period, as more relevant comparisons for this exhibition innovation (Bing, 2005). Michael Lewis maintained that 3D is “the killer app of digital. As more and more of these films come out and we see them perform well, there’s going to be an even bigger push to get more [digital] screens out there” (quoted in Debruge, 2007, p. A6). The subtitle of *Variety*’s supplement on Cinema Expo and 3D in summer 2008 was “the killer app” (Cinema Expo/3D, 2008, p. A1). Thus 3D exhibition, which had proven lucrative for animated features over the years just prior to *Avatar*, was being taken as a driving force for the acceleration of the conversion of theaters to digital exhibition. In this understanding, *Avatar*’s influence extended beyond 3D to the speeding up of the obsolescence of celluloid projectors (Huggins, 2008, p. 25).⁷

The “game-changing” hyperbole was manifest in other aspects of the *Avatar* commodity world. Game developer Ubisoft’s 3D *Avatar* game prompted *Variety* to wonder, in a rather weak pun, whether or not it was “A Game Changer?” (Morris, 2009, p. 4). Ubisoft had been seeking increased involvement in the feature film business, acquiring prestige CGI company Hybride, based in St. Sauveur, Quebec. A further complication to the lines between entertainment industries, Cameron contracted Hybride to do effects for *Avatar*, the movie. Panasonic used *Avatar* in an international cross-

promotion deal to sell its own new HD 3D Home Theater system.⁸ This push linked to the gaming industry, as *Avatar: The Game* required a 3D-enabled television or monitor in order for the full 3D design of the game to work. But it also looked ahead to 3D television programming. Accordingly, immediately following *Avatar*'s apparent box-office success, several television channels announced plans for conversion to 3D broadcasting.

To see how Cameron became an industrial avatar in the technological revolution of digital and 3D cinema, we must look at a period of time generally thought to be his "quiet years."

Battle Across Formats

Cameron's first foray into 3D was with *T2-3D: Battle Across Time* (1996), made for Universal Studios Theme Parks. This theme park attraction, based on *Terminator 2*, includes a mixture of live action and a 12-minute multiple-screen film. *T2-3D* extends the action enough to be considered – by Cameron, at any rate – a miniature sequel. The film portion features *Terminator 2* cast members Edward Furlong, Linda Hamilton, Robert Patrick, and Arnold Schwarzenegger. At \$62 million, some have claimed it is the most expensive per-minute cost of a film to date. It is difficult to assess the profitability of this kind of attraction, but its longevity lends some justification to this investment, and the exhibit continues to play at Universal theme parks in Florida, California, and Japan.

T2-3D was made with the involvement of Digital Domain, a company Cameron started with special effects expert Stan Winston and Steve Ross from Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), along with a 50% equity stake from IBM, in 1993. They intended the enterprise to be an artist-centered special effects shop all under one roof (contra the mish-mash of boutique companies that made up ILM). That one location is a Frank Gehry-designed retrofitted warehouse in Venice, California, over which the self-described Hollywood renegades fly the Jolly Roger. No pirates ever enjoyed such comfortable digs. Cameron did plunder, literally, the resources of Digital Domain to such an extraordinary extent for the making of *Titanic* that he almost ran the company into the ground, departing acrimoniously from the board of directors in 1998, though he maintained minority ownership. His parting words to the board were reportedly those of the musicians on the sinking *Titanic*: "Gentlemen, it's been an honor and a privilege playing with you" (Lubove, 2005, p. 161).

The company did not sink; just the opposite. While Digital Domain's work on such films as *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), *Apollo 13* (Ron Howard, 1995), and *X-Men* (Bryan Singer, 2000) garners most of the praise lavished on the company, it handles roughly three or four films a year. By way of contrast, it does approximately 80 commercials annually. As a result, projects other than features are usually the first testing ground for new software and effects (Bizony, 2001, p. 10). These smaller works

become a point of initiation for new processes, digital and otherwise, only to be highlighted for popular entertainment audiences in subsequent films. It follows that in order to properly account for the development of new cinematic processes, techniques, and software, we must attend to the industry's full range of audiovisual production, eschewing a narrow focus upon feature fiction. Accordingly, with *Digital Domain*, a first turn for Cameron toward his current interest in 3D was not with a feature film or a documentary but with a theme park exhibit.

While *Digital Domain* worked on the 3D CGI effects for *T2-3D*, the challenges of shooting in 3D included the sheer weight of the dual 65mm camera unit, which at 450 pounds required a specially constructed cable system to suspend and move the unit during the long motorcycle chase sequence that is the centerpiece of the 12-minute film. Cameron, and his cinematographer Russell Carpenter, who also shot *Titanic*, learned – as anyone shooting 3D realizes – that getting the exact focal-length for the point of convergence of the two cameras, and hence our two eyes, was key to reducing eye-strain, as well as establishing the best 3D effect. Crudely put, in order to be able to cut between an establishing shot and a close-up, you have to change the point at which the audience will focus their eyes, and having a camera system that allows the director and director of photography to do this easily is extremely valuable to 3D filmmakers. This, and the weight of the double-camera unit, became the primary issues addressed by the systems he would later help develop. Additionally, slight differences in positions of frames on each of the two projectors used at the 3D screenings can ruin the depth effect. This was solved by increasing the frames per second from 24 to 30 for both shooting and projection (Bizony, 2001, pp. 221–222). More broadly, Cameron became an active campaigner for increasing the accepted standard of all frame rates above 24 fps (Cohen, 2005, p. 7). He challenged the new standards for digital projection because they addressed pixels but not frame rate, believing the ideal format would be 3d/2k/48fps (Cohen, 2008). The faster frame rate for the *T2-3D* shoot, in turn, necessitated an extraordinarily bright shooting environment, and unusual power demands to light the set.

So elaborate, and expensive, was the production of this attraction, and so unusual the involvement of such high-profile Hollywood figures, that *Variety* reviewed *T2-3D*'s opening as though it were a film. While most of the review recounts the narrative setup for the blended live-action/3D film performance, there was much reverence for the technical accomplishment. Reviewer Joe Leydon wrote, "The 3D cinematography and special-effects handiwork are nothing short of astonishing" and "everything about this enterprise has been meticulously thought out and cleverly executed" (Leydon, 1996, p. 82).

After *Titanic*'s release, and following the accolades for that film's technical achievement, especially the integration of CGI with conventional photography in what appeared at the time to be a seamless fashion, Cameron committed to 3D as a fulfillment of the cinema's promise of totalizing sensory involvement, despite the generally unsatisfying experience shooting *T2-3D*. His ethos as a filmmaker involves popular forms of pleasure via the action/romance genre, which include unfamiliar images

(the liquid Terminator in *T2*), surprising leaps from the intimate to the destructive (the “I’ll be back” sequence in *Terminator*), and powerful and prominent female leads.⁹ Cameron’s action set-pieces typically involve locating the view at the heart of the sequence – in the cab of the truck or police cruiser racing away from a pursuing cyborg, among the soldiers running from aliens, and inside a flooding submersible. In this way, the potential of 3D as a “new” popular action experience met its equal potential to extend the sensation of being surrounded and engulfed by images, as emphasized in many of Cameron’s films. Indeed, the centrality of immersion to the cinematic experience is arguably something Cameron has implicitly grasped well, offering underwater and sci-fi sets that nestle, or claustrophobically entomb, characters and viewers alike.

But as a maker of popular plot-driven entertainments, Cameron is also on record as understanding the limits of immersion, believing that IMAX screens are too large and allow for too much wandering of the eye on the part of the spectator to work for strongly narrative forms. His approach to 3D is to direct the eye, and to guide the viewer through the narrative experience (Debruge, 2006, p. A6). Contra claims that *Citizen Kane*’s extensive use of deep-focus cinematography is a good model for 3D shooting, Cameron said,

I find the opposite is true. Selective focus, created by working at low f-stops with longer lenses, evolved as a cinematic technique to direct the audience’s attention to the character of greatest narrative importance at any given moment. With 3D, the director needs to lead the audience’s eye, not let it roam around the screen to areas which are not converged. So all the usual cinematic techniques of selective focus, separation lighting, composition, etc., that one would use in a 2D film to direct the eye to the subject of interest, still apply, and are perhaps even more important. (Cohen, 2008)

In addition to an aesthetic and thematic overlap, it is also noteworthy that in our era of economic tilt toward home theater systems, Cameron’s 3D projects – which continue with writing and directing two *Avatar* sequels and *Battle Angel* (pre-production, 2016) as well as producing *Sanctum* (Alister Grierson, 2011) – display remarkable faith in theatergoing. Though the bulk of revenue can still be expected to flow from ancillary windows, he makes these films for theatrical exhibition and for the newest iterations of theatrical digital projection.

Two of his documentaries, *Ghosts of the Abyss* and *Aliens of the Deep*, were shot for exhibition in IMAX 3D, though these were not shot with the IMAX camera system. The opening sequence of *Titanic* includes a dive to the wreck, led by Bill Paxton’s character. This sequence serves as a framing device for the story and introduces the film’s MacGuffin – the Heart of the Ocean diamond necklace. This opening was the product of an actual dive, though Digital Domain “improved” that footage later. Cameron returned to the sunken wreck, with Bill Paxton, to shoot *Ghosts of the Abyss* in 2001. That time the shoot included a 26-pound lightweight 3D HD camera developed by Vince Pace, called the Reality Camera System (RCS), and two smaller remote

control vehicles carrying standard video cameras, anthropomorphized as Jake and Elwood, named after the lead characters in *The Blues Brothers* (John Landis, 1980). Vince Pace is an underwater film expert and had worked with Cameron on *The Abyss* and *Titanic*. The expedition included another documentary filmed by Russian crew members and an Internet webcast of the descent, with the Buckminster Fuller-esque title *EarthShip.tv*, supervised by Cameron's brother JD. The other familial connection was brother Mike, an engineer who designed the deep-sea casings for the cameras. Such a thoroughly recorded event, not surprisingly, involved many cameras, including small "lipstick" cameras inside the diving capsules. The final result did not impress reviewers, though they remained taken with the 3D effect. Tim Cogshell (2003) wrote for the exhibitor trade *Boxoffice*, "*Ghosts of the Abyss* can be too jokey and often outright silly with an overwrought sense of drama. But it's fascinating, especially in 3D" (p. 60).

Expedition: Bismarck, which chronicles a dive to the famous sunken Nazi battleship, was shot with the same 3D system, two remote control cameras, and other cameras, though broadcast on Discovery Channel in the more familiar dimension of 2D (McKay, 2002, p. 37). As in *Ghosts of the Abyss*, this film too uses computer graphics and reenactments to supplement the raw data of the wreck with speculative accounts of how the ship sank. It was filmed after *Ghosts of the Abyss*, in 2002, but Discovery broadcast it the same year, prior to the opening of the IMAX 3D film, making *Bismarck* Cameron's first documentary release. For their efforts, they received five Emmy nominations, winning one.

Aliens of the Deep documents several dives in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, but centers on a journey to the so-called Lost City, a deep-sea location with a unique ecosystem of creatures that live without light around hydrothermal vents of 350 degrees Fahrenheit. For this film, he used these same 3D cameras, though he and Pace had modified their RCS system to improve things like the zoom, which they put to effective use to record close-ups of some bizarre and relatively unknown creatures, including one they call, and likely is, "the ugliest fish in the sea" (Calhoun, 2005, p. 61). Nonetheless, an otherwise skeptical review by Jonathan Barnes in *Sight & Sound* still confesses the film's 3D experience elicits both "childish delight" and fright, with giant sea creatures "out of H. P. Lovecraft's most inventive nightmares" (Barnes, 2003, p. 40).

Following the *Aliens of the Deep* shoot, Cameron and Pace built the next generation of the camera, now called the Pace/Cameron Fusion System, which allowed for easier changing of the point of convergence between the two cameras for 3D shooting. Other differences from the earlier RCS include faster response time, lighter weight at 22 pounds, and better accommodation of sound (Hurwitz, 2009). Cameron, Pace, and Patrick Campbell (president of Pace and a camera assistant on *Ghosts*) received the patent for their system, a "platform for stereoscopic image acquisition" (7,643,748, filed June 2, 2006, received January 5, 2010) and one for "stereo camera with automatic control of interocular distance" (7,899,321 B2, filed October 13, 2009, received March 1, 2011). Versions of this camera system were used to shoot the live-

action sequences of *Avatar* as well as concert films for U2, the Jonas Brothers, and Miley Cyrus, and features including *Final Destination 3D* (David R. Ellis, 2009) and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Eric Brevig, 2008). In terms of wider market development, they claim to have the largest inventory of such 3D units (Hurwitz, 2009, p. 32), which puts Pace (the company) and Cameron et al. (the patent-holders) in an advantageous position as the making of 3D movies grows, against competing 3D camera rigs like Element Technica, Binocle, and P+S Technik.

In April 2011, Pace the company was rebranded as the Cameron-Pace Group to offer a full range of 3D products for feature films and for television, sports, commercials, and other specialty events (Giardina, 2011). Along with their Fusion camera system, CPG offer a service it calls Slate2Screen to assist in all aspects of 3D production. Emphasizing its cross-media expansion beyond feature film, it made this announcement of the formation of CPG at the National Association of Broadcasters' convention in Las Vegas, rather than at a film industry event. The proponents – by which I mean the company promoting these features – claim their cameras and systems are “artist-centered” and give control back to those on the shoots rather than the special effects team later on. A material consequence is that Pace supplies just two personnel to whoever rents the system – an engineer and a systems supervisor. It doesn't supply directors of photography (DOPs), as its Fusion System is comparable enough to other kinds of high-definition shooting that special training is not necessary (Hurwitz, 2009, p. 32).

One feature of Cameron's visual instruments includes a way to produce immediate and on-set approximations of how 3D and performance capture will look. He did the motion capture portions of *Avatar* (2009) with a “virtual camera,” which was basically a hand-held monitor on which he could watch the performers. This screen was fed by a grid of a hundred HD cameras and, by moving it, he could record the camera work he desired, including pans, tilts, and tracking (Duncan, 2010; Duncan & Fitzpatrick, 2010). No lens to look through, no actual tracks laid for camera movement, and no individual lighting setups. For the live-action portions of *Avatar*, Cameron experimented with the “Simulcam,” developed with performance capture company Giant (DiOrio, 2009; Giardina, 2009). This allowed people on set to see, when looking through the camera eyepiece, takes with mock-ups of green-screen and motion capture elements. A limitation for CGI-driven shoots is the separation between filming personnel and digital craft workers whose enhancements to the film appear much later. The Simulcam gives directors and directors of photography the ability to see a rough approximation of effects that will be integrated eventually, and thus they have an immediate basis for on-set decision-making.

Regardless of the actual location of creative energy, in the least, the innovation and services offered by CPG reassert a conventional creative hierarchy for filmmaking. They allow for the existing networks of filmmaking labor to continue. Mark Deuze (2007) has documented the importance of networks of connections among personnel as they travel from credit to credit and from job to job. These informal relationships, he shows, are central to being able to maintain a steady flow of work

and to build a reputation. New production technology that can be introduced without disrupting these working relationships is therefore of premium value. Cameron's own stable of personnel travels across his films, and some have established a special expertise with the Fusion System (e.g., *Avatar* second unit director Steven Quale directed the 3D *Final Destination 5* [2011]). In sum, one of the advantages of Cameron's 3D and performance capture systems is that they can supplement, and hence reinforce, existing commitments to CGI, relations among crew, and digital exhibition concurrently.

Access and Apparatus

There are many telling commonalities across Cameron's three documentaries. First, it is important to note that the deep-sea locations build on the underwater experience Cameron had shooting not only *Titanic*, but also his earlier film *The Abyss*, which was an especially arduous and expensive feature about alien life forms, nuclear terror, and labor politics. The making of that film produced an ample supply of the definitive stories of Cameron's dictatorial monomania. He was reportedly so insensitive to the conditions of actors that several claimed to have nearly drowned, which Cameron denies (Lampert, 2009).

In *The Abyss*, the subject of the undersea oil workers realizing they are pawns in the company's operations represents an ideologically advanced critique that appears to contradict the actual working conditions Cameron himself created. His films routinely offer complex, if contradictory, depictions of abuses of technological power. *Terminator* might be best known for its dystopian views, depicting the lead-up to a devastating nuclear holocaust precipitated by initially benign but ultimately fateful decisions on the part of corporate managers and military contractors (like Cyberdyne's Miles Dyson, played by Joe Morton). *Aliens*, even with its visual fetish for weapons and their accessories, is a story of the fallibility of military command and corporate colonial ambitions. As James Kendrick (1999) has suggested, where most Hollywood films are superficially radical, internally conservative, Cameron's films are "superficially conservative, internally radical" (p. 38).

Yet these currents of ideological critique battle the mode of representation, which on screen figures in character facility with technological apparatuses and improvisation. In her classic feminist reading of time travel in *Terminator*, Constance Penley (1986) noted the "tech noir" aesthetic that includes representation of the everyday abundance of machines running the gamut from hairdryers to automated factory equipment. Typical Cameron scenes include the crew in *Aliens*, under siege by the creatures, scouring blueprints of the colony facilities on illuminated screens, trying to hatch an escape plan, and Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn) in *Terminator* teaching Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) how to make explosive devices from everyday materials. There is a recurrent image of technological investment and improvisation for narra-

tive action in these films. The acquisition, construction, and operation of machines and devices drive stories forward and set up the conflicts among characters. A case in point is Corporal Hicks (Michael Biehn) outfitting Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) with various weapons and explosives in preparation for one of her final battles with the Alien Queen creature in *Aliens*, which amounts to an unusually tender moment. Notably, this investment mixes the advances of new technological capabilities and a survivalist DIY approach to low-tech devices. This theme, in particular, reappears in *Avatar*, where the conceit of the drama is that part of the planet on which the majority of the action transpires is so humid and has such a strong magnetic field that some advanced weaponry is inoperable. Or, as Cameron confessed, "It's all an excuse to do helicopters versus pterodactyls" (Goodyear, 2009, p. 66).

These features display considerable thematic and aesthetic connection to Cameron's documentaries, where a brand of techno-fetishism, both improvised and cutting-edge, also drives the tales.¹⁰ Annette Kuhn (1990) has suggested that the attention to special effects makes science fiction films a notable genre in which the state of the cinematic art is expected to be encountered (p. 7). Cameron extends this aspect of sci-fi to his documentaries. To say that each of Cameron's documentaries is about undersea exploration only captures part of their subject matter. Each equally focuses on the technological means by which the images are being captured. It's not just that the cameras needed specially designed titanium casings to withstand the high-pressure environment of deep-sea shooting locations and lighting conditions; it is that the films announce these and comparable features repeatedly. The films become documentaries about the inventiveness of the filmmakers-cum-explorers and the complexity of the hardware as much as the purported subject of marine life and shipwrecks.

Ghost of the Abyss announces the core theme of visual technology, opening with a poetic camera tracking movement into an early twentieth-century stereoscopic slide-viewer, displaying several black-and-white period scenes of the famous ocean liner, with a slight tremor shaking the image as though a crude mechanism is flipping it to the next. On the final image, the figures in the slide begin to move, and the background dissolves to color and to the film's title. To remind viewers of the passing of media history, the film returns to these stereoscopic slides later on. One finds comparable techniques in other moments of technological transformation, including Al Jolson's opening declaration in *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) that "you ain't heard nothing yet," and Tom Ewell's direct address about stereophonic sound, color, and aspect ratio in the credit sequence of *The Girl Can't Help It* (Frank Tashlin, 1956), pushing the screen's edges horizontally to a widescreen format. Transitions of this sort carry spectators through a short evolutionary narrative of media format, essentially proffering improvements for the appreciation of audiences.

These stereoscopic images of *Ghosts* are computer generated from archival images, constructed to appear to be antique slides. Similarly, postproduction involved converting the various resolutions from the different cameras to a uniformly high resolution acceptable for IMAX screens. This conversion also involved software to approximate 3D effects for the images captured from the regular high-definition

cameras, as well as those produced in postproduction. And some shots of the wreck are in fact composite images, with technology “used by NASA,” as stated in one DVD extra, to produce complete images of planets and solar systems. Invoking the imprimatur of NASA suggests that it is state of the art and that it is not really manipulation of the visual record, which of course it actually is. In the end, the viewer is watching a composite image, rather like a mosaic or a David Hockney grid-like Polaroid portrait but with the seams between the smaller images rendered invisible (Kaufman, 2003).

In addition, Cameron has actors play out scenes from the sinking ship superimposed on these composite images of the wreck. These “ghosts” recreate the event of the sinking on the “actual” deck and in the “actual” cabins, though these sets are not to be found at the bottom of the North Atlantic, and only appear with CGI manipulations. One dramatic sequence involves a CGI representation of *Titanic*’s sinking with a fast-paced collage of archival photographic portraits of the victims falling into the wreck as though being sucked again into the vortex. Cameron’s efforts to scrape together as proximate a representation as possible of the actual disaster here replays the calamity using the only indexical traces remaining – places where passengers stood, pieces of objects they touched, and family photographs. The film wants to bring the spectator as close as possible to be a “witness to tragedy,” as one crewmember puts it. This impulse is driven home when, during their expedition, they receive news of the September 11, 2001, attacks. This prompts several comparisons between the two events, and sparks their resolve to memorialize the 90-year-old disaster by laying a plaque on the ocean floor.

Much of the adventure of *Ghosts* involves the cameras, getting them to the wreck and providing adequate lighting. The film displays not just the wreck but the special remote control cameras that get to the interior of the *Titanic*. Emphasizing the premium placed on technological presence, one of the dramatic episodes of the film involves the recovery of a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) that lost power – Elwood, incidentally. During this interlude, the ROV is described as one of the crewmembers, and a military credo is evoked that no one gets left behind (ignoring the fact that the credo isn’t “don’t leave broken hardware behind”). For a good portion of the dive segments we see several smaller inset images of crew, including Cameron and Paxton, observing and operating cameras and submersibles. In fact, these inset images obscure direct visual access to the wreck, as they lie on top of the pictures of the sunken ship.¹¹ While not exactly a film about cameras, there is enough attention to them that parts might have been called *Cameron’s Cameras*.

All three films present comparable thematic priorities. For instance, *Bismarck* is about the special submersibles that get people and cameras to the remains of the Nazi battleship. The MIR submersibles receive special attention in each film, with rollicking sequences of the Russian “Zodiac cowboys” who have to attach cables that will lift the submersibles back onto the ship by riding on top of them when they surface. The challenge of completing this task in rough seas becomes visually exciting, enhanced by a fast and dramatic musical score.

Aliens of the Deep is the most aesthetically ambitious of these three films. The opening presents a series of portraits of individuals and animals, which includes some crowd-pleasing tricks like an elephant unfurling his trunk directly at the camera and audience. We see an urban street corner, a dance club, then fireballs in space. A few shots of suburban life follow with a slow-motion IMAX-size 3D image of kids playing in a sprinkler and a chubby boy eating a messy hamburger in a fenced-in backyard, while a cow moos on the soundtrack. This sequence of a calculatedly spectacular ordinary sets up the animal–human, and terrestrial–extraterrestrial, connection that the rest of the film pursues. Several young scientists accompany Cameron, though the lead is Dijanna Figueroa, an African American marine animal physiologist doctoral student from University of California, Santa Barbara. In a surprising, perhaps ill-considered, turn, this film ends with speculative sequences about meeting moth-like alien beings, which in tone and appearance seem to appropriate the angel creatures from *The Abyss*. One sequence depicts a hypothetical method for melting through thick layers of ice with a nuclear-heated torpedo and a journey down through an extraterrestrial ocean by a fictional remote control vehicle, presumably several generations more advanced than Jake or Elwood.

The film ends with Figueroa and Kevin Hand, an astrobiologist, greeting an imaginary sea creature on the ocean floor through the glass of a submersible. “We have new friends,” Figueroa says in this *ET*-like moment of interspecies harmony, blending the real and the invented. Cameron’s documentary aesthetic does not hesitate to borrow from science fiction filmmaking in order to approximate the actuality of a scene or argument. The film advances a universalist idea about experience and knowledge, reasoning that the similarities between life forms give us warrant to extrapolate what we feel and know to others. This, for Cameron, includes creatures that, for all we know, do not exist, which is a fine conceit for a science fiction writer, but not sound argumentation for a documentarian.

With *Aliens of the Deep*, *Ghosts of the Abyss*, and to a lesser extent *Expedition: Bismarck*, documentary realism stretches to include computer-generated special effects. In this case, documentary is not the recording, or the creative representation, of reality but a display genre for visible effects. Importantly, not all effects are equally visible; some do not announce themselves as such and take a trained eye to identify them. Others are obvious and signposted, often by the narrator, with the effect of making each film a document of CGI representational strategies. Others form the basis of DVD extras. In a way, the extreme locations and the presence of the filmmakers in these extraordinary places – places that relatively few humans have ever visited – become the guarantor of authenticity for what, in the end, are constructed computer-based moving image productions.

Here we see a link between moving image innovations and other technological materials. Cameron’s particular brand of celebrity activism involves “gee-whiz” popular science and an environmentalism that embraces technological progress. Within weeks of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, Cameron had convened a panel of experts and quickly produced a recommendation on how to stop up the

well. He offered not only his own state-of-the-art submersibles, but also to do it himself. And in March 2012 he successfully shot, diving in his newly designed submersible, some of the *Avatar* sequel and a new 3D documentary in what is known to be the world's deepest point 11 km under the Pacific Ocean in the Mariana Trench, a place where only two people have ever been before (Cohen, 2012). That's fewer than Mt. Everest and fewer than the moon. Cameron's investment in exploration vehicles for extreme shooting conditions might seem like the polar opposite of his investment in the virtuality of digital cinema, simultaneously plunging as deep as one can go into extraordinary location shooting and into simulation. But in fact they are products of the same impulse, both foregrounding the scientific-technological apparatus. Where Sean Cubitt (2004) points to the neo-baroque cinema of Cameron and others as involved in creating and presenting simulated worlds closed off from history and the social, we see here that the attention to unusual shooting locations and production processes – including pulleys, power sources, lights, ROVs, and performance capture software – stretches us well beyond that virtual seal.

These documentaries all involve Cameron as a central figure. He is on camera and is guiding the expedition as much as the narrator in each. *Ghosts* has Paxton, and *Bismarck* has Lance Henriksen, both part of Cameron's stable of actors, as non-expert narrators whose journey and introduction to the subject matter are written to mirror those of the audience. Paxton's amateur status is especially emphasized; his arrival on ship involves a staged comical interaction with a Russian crewmember who only speaks in Russian, making Paxton appear that much more on unfamiliar territory. He describes his nervousness about the upcoming dive, and later treats IMAX spectators to big-screen vomit upon return to the surface. These figures serve to bolster Cameron's experience and command of both the filmmaking and expeditionary situations. *Aliens of the Deep* uses student scientists to fill this "amateur" role.

By building his persona as a champion of science, explorer, and technological wizard, Cameron is, after a fashion, part of a long history of the expedition film, which often involved the anthropological, or quasi-anthropological, filmmakers of primarily European lineage traveling to some outlying location and population, returning with images of some strange earthly wonders. Cameron often refers to Jacques Cousteau as a major influence, but he is also not that far from the likes of Merian Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack, the explorer/showmen making *Grass* (1925) and the hybrid ethnographic/fiction feature *Chang* (1927) who then include the explorer/showman as a central part of their fiction films; remember that the original *King Kong* (1933), aside from the gorilla-girl love story, is about filmmaking and show business.¹²

Cameron's expedition trilogy asserts multiple times that we are watching the absolute cutting edge of imaging and transportation technology, with the newest and most complex gadgets, some custom made for the demands of these enterprises. And one can understand the appeal of this approach for the science museum context of many IMAX screens and for the Discovery Channel. On this point, each film presents Cameron as a cruel technological taskmaster, who is "totally reliant on technology"

(*Aliens of the Deep*), dealing with state-of-the-art machines that “push the limits of technology” (*Ghosts of the Abyss*). These three documentaries construct a relationship between technological and natural wonders: extreme machines for extreme shoots. Indeed, the National Geographic companion volume to *Aliens of the Deep* says this exactly (MacInnis, 2004, p. 20). If there is an environmental ethic, especially evident in *Aliens of the Deep*, it is one of awe, where viewers experience the eye-popping, jaw-dropping, spectacular vistas of unusual natural wonders. Robert Koehler (2003) wrote that *Ghosts* “is nearly overwhelmed by incessant chatter and expression of wonder by crew members” (p. 20), and Ronnie Scheib (2005) wrote of *Aliens of the Deep*, “as many ‘wows’ and ‘gee whizzes’ abound as do albino shrimp” (p. 67). But the natural world is not meant to hold a monopoly on the aesthetic of the awesome; these films extend this affect to the world of advanced technology. Buried beneath their titular subject matter, this expedition trilogy is essentially a series of “making of” documentaries promoting the ingenuity and resourcefulness of filmmaker/explorers in the seizing of remote sights for audiences back on dry land.

Technological Tentpoles

Some commentators, including Tom Schatz and Edward Jay Epstein, point out that a core element in the contemporary media business is intellectual property, especially the ownership of stories and characters and control of the multiple products that come out of franchises (Epstein, 2006; Schatz, 2008). Such attention helps explain the arrangements between Disney and Marvel to gain access to the latter’s stable of comic book characters, as well as the intense focus by the Motion Picture Association of America on piracy in recent years. Companies now exist to help others exploit their intellectual property. For example, Starlight Runner Entertainment specializes in the development and coordination of story worlds and mythologies, including characters, chronologies, geography, and weapons, with the intention of helping orchestrate “transmedia” incarnations of franchised works. They have done this work for *Pirates of the Caribbean* and are acting in this capacity for *Avatar*. As outlined in *Variety*, “Now that the franchise has replaced the blockbuster as Hollywood’s holy grail, a new tool has emerged to help those who want to extend film and TV properties across multiple platforms” – the “megabible” (Caranicas, 2009, pp. 5, 11).

To this extension of the media format and text of motion pictures we should add the intellectual property associated with technological systems. US cinema history has been profoundly shaped by questions and challenges to technological patents, starting with Edison, but continuing with Michael Todd (Todd-AO), Jerry Lewis (video assist technology), and George Lucas (ILM). But any technological apparatus still turns on content, especially as a way to sell the advantages and improvements of one format over another. Consequently, we can find notable occasions in which specially designated content is linked quite directly to new media systems. This link

is not about firsts but about log-jam-breakers, forgers, and tipping points. For example, Discovery Channel used *Expedition: Bismarck* to promote its high-definition format, and doing so with a mobile HD screen and theater installed temporarily at retail locations, like Best Buy, where new HD televisions were available to consumers. In such instances, the exact item being promoted is lost in the confluence of television channel, high-definition format, big-budget documentary, star director, and consumer electronics retailer.¹³

And this was where *Avatar* was a special stand-out. It was conventional in story and characterization, and it had the now conventional transnational economic impact of its production, spanning corporate participants from Quebec's Hybride to New Zealand's Weta Studios. But *Avatar* was celebrated and promoted as a flagship work beckoning the next wave of industrial and consumer technologies and entertainments. For instance, Panasonic's international cross-promotion deal with *Avatar* extended with the first 3D home version of the film, released in December 2010 – only available on Bluray and only compatible with Panasonic's Viera set (Raby, 2010). This exclusivity was set to run until February 2012. With *Avatar*, we had 3D filming processes, 3D exhibition, digital exhibition, and 3D home entertainment all banking on the film's appeal. Thomas Elsaesser (2000) has suggested that blockbusters act as prototypes for the future of cinema as they advance requirements and “set up standards” for new skills, production conditions, and exhibition environments (p. 191). In a way, the pairing up of new editions of videogames with new generations of consoles is the model here. Such film or audiovisual texts are *technological tentpoles*, under which not only commodities but also media formats slide into our lives as supposedly essential.¹⁴ *Avatar* was one such movie; one report even described Cameron's *Avatar* in exactly this fashion, as a tentpole for digital 3D (Hayes & Goldsmith, 2008). Technological tentpoles introduce and promote hardware and media systems; such entities advance a perpetually reconstructed cinematic apparatus as well as a wider audiovisual environment.

Consider *Avatar*'s newspaper advertising, which promised the routine geographic reach of a widely released blockbuster (“everywhere”) but also format choice (“everyway”) between 2D, digital 3D, and IMAX 3D presentations. A few years ago, David Denby (2007) claimed that the expansion of exhibition possibilities for film has produced “platform agnosticism,” such that people no longer care how and under what conditions they see films, resulting in a *coup de grâce* for traditional cinephilia. *Avatar*'s advertising showed just how erroneous Denby was. Instead, the multiplying formats have produced a heightened *platform consciousness*. In essence, the campaign sold media format and film at once.

The varieties of media materiality have ample representation in Cameron's vision of the future. *Avatar* is replete with screens on screen: 3D screens, topographical screens, video screens, computer screens, touch screens, hand-held digital tablets, and curved screens. The thematic centerpoint of the film – the conversion of our human characters into their respective avatars as giant blue extraterrestrial creatures, the Na'vi – appears as a form of transportation, with abstract blazing lights moving

through a tube to some distant material body, like a cross between teleportation and long-distance communication. *Avatar* is so embellished with interstellar cutting-edge media culture that one might be surprised to discover that it tells an anticolonial tale of an indigenous population's resistance to the exploitation of minerals on their home planet, Pandora, by invading Earthlings. For Cameron, the devastation of colonialism includes the consequences of technological change. Stating this theme directly, he said, "we're basically telling the story of the Americas and to a certain extent some of the other areas in the world that were conquered by the British, Dutch and so on, but we're really telling the story of what happens when a technologically superior culture comes into a place with resources that the conquerors want" (quoted in Nepales, 2009). As a political parable, it is a thinly veiled critique of imperial adventures by armed forces, ostensibly US in appearance and style (with at least one shot of "Old Glory" in the background). Bombastic dialogue about natives as terrorists, "preemptive attacks," "daisy cutters," and "shock and awe" tactics takes what might have been a John Milius film – for instance, *Farewell to the King* (1989), of which *Avatar* is in many ways a remake – and reframes it as a critique of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq.

As influential as his work has been for nonconventional gender depictions, especially his muscularization of female action characters, the limits of Cameron's imagination are apparent in his racial politics. In *Avatar*, the species-specific divide presented on Pandora is recognizably driven by familiar earthbound notions of difference. His extraterrestrial indigenous peoples are a version of the noble savage, living harmoniously with their environment until greedy colonial invaders disrupt their spiritual bond with nature. Even as the drama directs audiences to cheer for the spiritually advanced and environmentally aware Na'vi, we confront stereotypical gestures and appearances of tribal peoples. Moreover, the actors behind the virtual costumes and makeup are suitably ethnicized to perform the "blueness" of the Na'vi. African American actors C. C. H. Pounder and Laz Alonso, and famous Cherokee actor Wes Studi, play lead Na'vi characters, and Dominican/Puerto Rican American actor Zoe Saldana plays hero Jake Sully's love interest. Pointedly, only White folk, like our lead Sully, get to cross over into their Na'vi avatars to live among the natives. Sully's story, then, is a "Na'vi like me" tale of passing. The core of the film is a "blueface" performance, which draws this film closer thematically to the other most referenced "game-changing" film, the breakthrough talkie *The Jazz Singer*, in which, in a way, Al Jolson's stage persona is *his* racialized avatar.

The world of the noble savage offers ideologically safe contact with the natural and the archaic, that is, civilization's other. In Cameron's case, the environmental ethos of the Na'vi, while reiterating the trope of nobility, is equally a way to present harmonious connections among all beings, using contemporary technological references to do so. Characters describe Pandora as a complex and complete data network, where even plant life has communicative capabilities. The Tree of Souls, the spiritual heart of the ecosystem – female, of course – holds records of all feelings, expressions, and memories. It is, ostensibly, a colossal organic server. Flying into battle, individual

Na'vi can communicate across distances by placing thumb and forefinger on either side of their throat, like a mimed handless mobile phone. Several scenes show the temporary intertwining of animal and humanoid as a kind of jacking-in of electrical filaments. Moments of these fusions are, in many ways, the most erotic renderings in the film, with abundant rolling eyes and pleasurable gasps. And plenty of talk about fidelity follows, too. Once selected, connected, and tamed, the pterodactyl-like flying creatures serve as your permanent transportation vehicle, which makes me wonder if this interspecies monogamy is actually a form of brand loyalty.

As figured, the Na'vi are not merely representations of an ancient and superstitious world view; they offer an image of a superior technological system. Pandora is worth defending, then, as an example of perfect synergy across beings and devices, with integration a racial, environmental, and technological concept simultaneously. This planet offers a world of natural networks. So when Sully, permanently "avatared" as Na'vi at the end of the film, remains behind on Pandora after winning the battle against the invading colonial forces, this is not a refusal of technological enhancement for some form of native spiritual awareness but a full acceptance of what might be called technological naturalism. This unambiguously anticolonial story, by the end, sneaks in the true colonists, those hybrid avatars. The technological game-changing film is itself a tale of full acceptance and assimilation, at the level of the genetic, with an even more advanced game-changing technological system. In a moment of corporate reflexivity, it should not go unnoticed that the logo for Cameron's production company Lightstorm – a thin, angular, blue individual readying a bow and arrow – bears an uncanny resemblance to the 10-ft. creatures populating Pandora.

Cameron does not fit the mold of what we expect of a Hollywood A-list director. And this ultimate insider-outsider had not had any Hollywood agent since the early 1990s until 2009, when he signed with CAA, ostensibly to represent him as the *Avatar* franchise develops and as his technological processes are marketed ("Titanic helmer docks with CAA," 2009). There are easier ways to make money in the film business than trying to find a way to light the pitch darkness of three miles under the ocean, designing camera containers to withstand the pressure of deep-sea shooting conditions, and changing the frame rate to improve a 3D effect. *Ghosts* cost about \$13 million and brought in a little over \$22 million worldwide box office, a tidy sum for a documentary, but hardly an IMAX record, let alone an example of Cameron's stratospheric moneymaking prowess (Holson, 2003).

The point here is that it is easy to get caught up in the conventionality of Hollywood – buy a recognizable property, construct a star-driven vehicle with the appropriate smattering of romantic interest and international appeal, plan a big opening, follow through with releases of related commodities, then the DVD, and so on. With Cameron, we see that there are different, and influential, ways to navigate the demands of the media system industry. In our blockbuster-driven period, we might skip over documentaries such as Cameron's as side projects and inconsequential labors of love. And yet there is continuity through his entire oeuvre. Recognizing this, we need to be prepared to see the extraordinary range of corporate investments

and priorities, which produce a greater cross-sector industrial beast and a fundamentally unstable technological apparatus. Cameron, in a sense, is an exemplar of the current phase of Hollywood history, in which the business of film is bound up with a range of media products, technological forms, and types of intellectual property. John Caldwell (2008) argues in his book *Production Culture* that not only is every script a business plan, it is also a branding opportunity. With Cameron the technological auteur, a script is equally a plan for the remaking of the cinematic apparatus and conventional modes of industrial and technological practice.

Most impressively, the language of revolutionary shift is not new; indeed, it has been a persistent feature in the film business. Never content with an existing apparatus, Hollywood competition has battled over formats, technologies, and processes as much as stars, directors, and movie franchises. Declarations of “game changing” and “technological revolution” are forms of competition at the level of hardware and software. We might see figures like Todd, Lewis, Lucas, and Cameron, rather than inventors, as the carnival barkers of the technological tentpoles. The benefits to becoming a new “industry standard” are immeasurable, and they can include markets beyond films into a number of other industrial sectors. In this way, an individual audiovisual entertainment like *Avatar* works to reinstate the dominance of key corporate participants, making technological change appear inevitable and natural. At one level, even with all the local instances of innovation – and yes, to be sure, the entertainment business is shifting dramatically – the language of “game changing” is another way to talk about business as usual.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Kelly Gates for her perceptive commentary during the preparation of this chapter, and Zoë Constantinides for essential research assistance. Versions of this chapter were presented at the “What is Film?” Conference (Portland, Oregon, 2009), at the Toronto International Stereoscopic 3D Conference (2011), and as the James Naremore Lecture (Indiana University, 2011).

NOTES

- 1 Justin Wyatt and Katherine Vlesmas (1999) have argued that the public drama of the budget and production problems in fact played a key role in the marketing, and ultimately the success, of *Titanic*.
- 2 Two prominent profiles were a 60 Minutes story, called “Cameron’s *Avatar*” (Browning, 2009), and another by Dana Goodyear (2009) in the *New Yorker*.
- 3 For example, “New *Avatar* behind-the-scene photos,” www.comingsoon.net, January 12, 2009.

- 4 "Ubisoft and Fox team for *Avatar* game," www.comingsoon.net, July 24, 2007.
- 5 "Exclusive: Soderbergh gives *Avatar* high praise," www.comingsoon.net, April 30, 2009. Cameron was a producer for Soderbergh's *Solaris* (2002), so it is possible there is a closer relationship than is evident from their different filmmaking personas.
- 6 Two superior studies of special effects and cinema technology that include analysis of Cameron's specific impact are Pierson (2002) and Cubitt (2004).
- 7 It is curious that 3D is being interpreted as a catalyst for digital exhibition because the digital 3D systems currently require screens that make conventional 2D digital projections darker and less sharp.
- 8 See "Panasonic and Twentieth Century Fox team for global promotion of James Cameron's *Avatar*" (2009) and "Panasonic rolls with HD 3D home theater truck tour" (2009).
- 9 For a full analysis of this feature of Cameron's films, see Krämer (1999).
- 10 Cameron's techno-fetishism is dealt with by Alexandra Keller (2006) in her study of him as a blockbuster auteur.
- 11 When asked what he learned from this shoot, Cameron replied that the dives were so expensive that focusing on the divers is "counter-productive"; "it's stupid to be turning the camera around inside and pointing it at the people, when you should be focusing on the marine life and the geology" (quoted in Hurwitz, 2005, p. 62).
- 12 In this respect, *Avatar* seems to be a direct attempt to take the jungle expedition film from the 1920s and 1930s into outer space. Cameron has said, "It's an old-fashioned jungle adventure with an environmental conscience," and he has cited as a primary inspiration Edgar Rice Burroughs's John Carter of Mars (Barsoom) series (Rampton, 2006, pp. 14–15; Jensen, 2007).
- 13 "Hendricks's wide world at HDTV: Discovery chief focuses in on a new platform," *Multichannel News*, May 5 (2003), p. 4A; "ESPN, Discovery plug HD at retail: Basic networks look to drive penetration for local ops' new offerings," *Multichannel News*, June 9 (2003), p. 38.
- 14 Along the same lines, the hand-held device industry has followed iPhone's lead on "apps" as a way to designate the special, indispensable aspects of its product. While many are cute and amusing, most reproduce information that is not especially hidden (temperature, location, time, cultural recommendation, game, etc.), albeit in an immediate and miniaturized form. Though many competing companies offer "apps," note that the term offers a clumsy pun, simultaneously referencing "applications" and "Apple Corporation." The measure of worth of this function is not the single, breakthrough utility of any one but the quantity of them. "Apps" are valuable because there are so many of them, over 250,000 currently offered for the iPhone alone. Their relation to the movement and expansion of the hand-held electronic market is not that of the technological tentpole. Instead, they are *technological tent-pegs*.

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Infrastructural Changeover

The US Digital TV Transition and Media Futures

Lisa Parks

ABSTRACT

Media and communication studies scholars have been tracking the US digital terrestrial television (DTV) transition for over a decade, conducting research crucial for understanding the future of media systems. The existing research tends to focus on two areas. First, some scholars have used diffusion theory to consider issues of technological adoption, exploring the relative willingness of consumers to adapt to DTV. Second, others have examined how the transition has impacted the consumer electronics industry and the United States' precarious position in that global industry. Few, if any, have engaged critically with the ways that the federal government, trade organizations, and community groups have communicated with the public in an effort to prepare them for the digital TV transition. In this chapter, Lisa Parks adds a vital dimension to existing work in this area by exploring how technical information about DTV was communicated to the public in the months leading up to the transition. Examining a variety of materials, from press releases to news reports from public service announcements to video kinescopes that document the end of analog service, Parks considers how consumer-citizens were addressed by public outreach initiatives and how they negotiated the digital TV transition. She highlights three issues crucial for understanding this major infrastructural transition: (1) the way fixed-income and minority communities have been singled out in relation to television; (2) the uneven geographies of the transition; and (3) the way viewers and digital corporations have responded to the transition in its aftermath.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Infrastructures are complex systems. They are challenging to describe in language and impossible to study in their entirety. They involve investments, materials, hardware, landscapes, habitats, policies, companies, governments, workers, and users, among other things. Despite the fact that infrastructures combine so many aspects of modern life, they are things that most of us tend to ignore. In his field guide to infrastructure, Brian Hayes (2005) offers descriptions and photographs of the “power lines, water tanks, streetlights, manholes, traffic signals, cellular towers – that we pass by every day and yet seldom really notice” (p. 1). He continues, “These are places that most of us never see close up; many of us would go out of our way to *avoid* seeing them” (p. 1). Such places, I want to suggest, are highly relevant to the future of media studies, but merely noticing them is not enough to mount a critical study of infrastructure. Such a project requires the capacity to recognize infrastructures as sites of dynamic and powerful yet largely imperceptible processes occurring at macro and micro scales that are crucial to everyday life.¹

Indeed, one of the goals of this chapter is to begin to develop a critical imaginary and vocabulary for the study of media infrastructures – the technologies, physical sites, and processes implicated in the local, national, and global distribution of audiovisual signals. In the field of media studies the word “network” is widely used to conjure up the Big Three (ABC, CBS, NBC) or major cable channels and it is increasingly aligned with web-based social media derived through Facebook and Twitter. The term network also is understood more generally as a way of organizing culture and communication. The word “infrastructure” is used less frequently in media studies and more often is associated with fields such as urban studies, geography, or electrical engineering.² I use the term because it enables exploration of several critical issues. First, the term infrastructure emphasizes *materiality* and physicality and challenges us to consider the installations, hardware, sites, and processes through which audiovisual signals are trafficked. Second, the term infrastructure helps to foreground processes of *distribution* that have taken a back seat in much media studies research, which has tended to prioritize production and consumption, or encoding/decoding. Third, by referring to systems that are embedded within and dispersed across vast territories, the concept of infrastructure can encourage media studies’ further engagements with environmental studies, geography, and global studies. Fourth, an infrastructure is difficult to visualize in its entirety within a single frame, and, as such, can help to stimulate new ways of imagining and *visualizing* what media technologies are, where they are situated, and what they do. Finally, the term infrastructure necessitates a consideration of social power. Infrastructures are not inert entities; rather, as Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) suggest, “infrastructure networks embody power relations and reflect highly uneven political-economic struggles between firms, state and public sector organisations and wider social agents” (p. 195). In sum, the concept of infrastructure can bring to future media studies an intensified focus upon issues of materiality, distribution, environment, visualization, and social power.

This chapter highlights the last two categories – visualization and social power – in an examination of the US digital terrestrial television (DTV) transition of 2009. This

transition culminated in a nationwide switchover from a system of analog to digital television broadcasting, and while it promised citizens a clearer, sharper picture on their television sets, it also made generations of institutional and consumer equipment rapidly obsolete and resulted in signal loss for some viewers. This moment was significant because it brought to the fore the idea of television not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a national infrastructure subsidized by taxpayer dollars and service subscriptions and regulated by the federal government. Indeed, the DTV transition created an opportunity for citizens to look at television in a different way and to think about where signals come from, who owns them, and how they are regulated. As the transition afforded citizens the opportunity to recognize television as an infrastructure, it also brought the socioeconomic disparities and unevenness of media markets across the United States into bold relief and enabled the television industry to refine its marketing and outreach to particular communities.

Media and communication studies scholars have been tracking the DTV transition for over a decade, critically examining federal policies, technological changes, and entertainment industry practices. Existing research has focused on two areas. First, several scholars have used diffusion theory to consider issues of technological adoption focusing on the willingness of consumers to adapt to digital television (Chalby & Segell, 1999; Weber & Evans, 2002). Second, others have examined how the transition has impacted US consumer electronics and its fledgling position in that global industry (Castañeda Paredes, 2003, 2007; Hart, 2004, pp. 60–83). Few, if any, have engaged with the discourses of public outreach initiatives and their address to specific communities. In an effort to supplement this work, this chapter explores how technical information about digital television was communicated to the public in the months leading up to the transition. Examining a variety of materials, from news reports to maps, from public service announcements to videos documenting the end of analog service, I explore how consumer-citizens negotiated the DTV transition in different ways. In the process, I highlight three issues: (1) the way fixed-income and minority communities were singled out in relation to television; (2) the uneven geographies of the transition; and (3) the way viewers and corporations responded to the termination of analog transmission and the opening of spectrum space in the transition's aftermath.

By framing the DTV transition as an infrastructural changeover, I intend to emphasize the discursive aspects of infrastructure and the forms of communication and visualization that helped to make it meaningful and tangible to people. The changeover involved much more than a push of a button. It required intensive planning, publicity, and preparation at multiple levels and by multiple parties. While broadcasters upgraded equipment and altered the broadcast standard, citizen-viewers replaced or modified their television sets with digital converters. Without their compliance the commercial television system would no longer have functioned. Given these circumstances, I consider infrastructure to include the physical sites at which individuals installed, operated, and modified hardware to receive digital television signals, as well as the ways in which federal agencies, trade and community organizations,

and individuals defined, facilitated, and/or contested the shift in the national television broadcast standard. In this sense, infrastructure refers not only to an array of dispersed technological objects and technologized sites, but also to processes of funding, representing, activating, using, modifying, communicating about, and regulating them.

No Viewer Left Behind

The changeover to DTV was scheduled to occur in the United States on February 17, 2009. The federal government had been preparing for the transition since the 1990s, mandating that new TV sets be manufactured with digital tuners, supporting broadcast stations as they phased out analog and phased in digital systems, and informing consumers about the imminent changes. This historic transition, compared to the inauguration of color TV, and referred to as the DTV transition, was widely publicized. By the late 2000s regulators, broadcasters, and manufacturers had already made many of the key decisions about the future of television, but technological negotiations remained for many consumer-citizens. In December 2008 an estimated 19 million US households were still using analog television sets. In technology studies we often hear of “early adopters” and we might call this group the “diehard users.” Owners of analog sets had to decide how and whether they wanted to continue to receive a television signal and could either purchase a digital converter box or a television set with a digital tuner, or subscribe to cable or satellite television. The federal government subsidized the DTV transition and the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA) administered a \$1.5 billion coupon program to support those who wanted to retrofit their analog receivers with converter boxes.

In January 2009 the US Congress decided to push the DTV transition deadline to June 12, 2009, in part because a Nielsen Corporation survey indicated 6.5 million US homes were still not prepared (“6.5 Million U.S. Homes,” 2009). Additional funding for the transition came from the Obama administration’s federal stimulus package in the amount of \$650 million, which supported the converter coupon and public outreach programs. As Senator Rockefeller, who introduced the delay bill, observed, “The transition is going to hit our most vulnerable citizens – the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and those with language barriers – the hardest” (Stelter, 2009a).

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 mandated the digital TV transition and since then several players with varied interests have maneuvered to benefit from the shift. Consumer electronics manufacturers stood to increase profits from the sale of digital TV receivers, converter boxes, and antennas. Cable and satellite providers hoped to attract new subscribers and became increasingly competitive with one another. Consumers upgraded their systems based on the promise that DTV would bring a “clearer and better” picture as well as new channels and services. Federal agencies

hoped to effectively facilitate this nationwide infrastructural shift and take credit for a smooth transition. Broadcasters, however, had the most to lose since any kind of signal interruption – whether resulting from confusion on the user end or the limited range of the digital signal – could lead to a reduction in viewership and therefore a decrease in ratings and advertising revenues.

While much recent media scholarship has focused on cable, satellite, and web-based TV, it is important to recognize that a significant chunk of the US TV audience – roughly 15% – has opted out of such services and continued to receive free, over-the-air signals for decades. The moment of the DTV transition could just as easily have triggered scholarly investigations of the analog diehards as it did of technophiles eager to join the so-called “digital TV revolution.” Given the fixation on novelty in our technoculture, there is much to learn from consumers who, whether by default or by choice, continue to use machines simply because *they still work*. It is too easy to equate the use of old machines with poverty or reticence alone.³

Many assumed that analog TV viewers were elderly folks who grew up with rabbit ears, and indeed some of them were. Yet a glance at the Federal Communications Commission’s DTV transition website reminds us just how diverse the US analog TV audience was. In 2009 information about the transition was provided in the following languages: Amharic, Arabic, Bosnian, Cambodian, Chinese, Creole, French, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Laotian, Navajo, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Yupik. That this array of languages appeared on the FCC website suggests that non-English-speaking ethnic communities were particularly affected by the transition. Indeed, some such communities have historically received local over-the-air programming in their own languages. One public service announcement about the digital TV transition featured a Somali American woman conveying information about the transition to her community in the Twin Cities. Another featured two White men demonstrating how to install a converter box, yet the voiceover dub was in Hmong and had English subtitles as well. Yet another made by students participating in the American Indian Summer Institute showed the father of the home jerry-rigging rabbit ears with foil in an effort to get reception while his family watched in anticipation.

In 2007 Nielsen Corporation released results of a study that found that low-income, elderly, Hispanic, and Black viewers were the least prepared for the transition. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) used the survey as a basis for their many public outreach programs, targeting elderly, minority, and low-income communities, many of whom lived on fixed incomes and could not afford to purchase new television sets or subscribe to cable or satellite television. The Nielsen survey drew attention to populations that are, for the most part, ignored by the commercial television industry, and it was used to foster what I refer to as a “no viewer left behind” policy. For decades, the interests of the elderly, the poor, and ethnic minorities have been strikingly incongruent with those of the commercial television industry. There are few, if any, prime-time network TV series or major national cable channels addressed exclusively

to elderly, low-income, and/or ethnic minorities, except for Spanish-language channels such as Telemundo, Univision, and Galavision, and the African American cable channel BET. With the shift from analog to digital, however, there emerged a change of tune. Suddenly broadcasters began to express concern about these constituencies. This concern was registered not in a shift in program content but through the development of major public outreach campaigns conducted by organizations such as the NAB, which desperately tried to maintain viewership during the transition so that no viewers would slip through the ratings cracks.

National trade and community organizations went to great lengths to communicate with viewers about the DTV transition in the months leading up to it. Public service announcements (PSAs) heralding the changeover appeared on television and online. They ranged from high-budget flashy videos of trade groups to more home-grown productions by local organizations and provided a sense of how people were encouraged to understand and participate in the transition. While some PSAs offered step-by-step instructions about how to hook up a converter box or emphasized the superior quality of the DTV signal, others were more provocative and comical. One PSA sponsored by the National Cable and Telecommunications Association that frequently aired on CNN featured a sixty-something man strolling contemplatively through a barren landscape; as the sun set behind him, he announced the end of analog and birth of digital TV, urging preparedness for the baby boomer demographic. Another starred former FCC Chairman Kevin Martin with a direct address to TV viewers in which he proclaimed, "Your TV needs to be ready so you can keep watching!" Yet another presented a popcorn-munching family huddled around a suspense show that disappointingly turns into static. The American Disabled Peoples Association made a PSA, structured as a music video, showing several "doctors" performing surgery on their TV receivers while the ABBA song "S.O.S." blared on the soundtrack (Wandres, 2008). Finally, a late-night TV parody revealed a sweet elderly woman trying to set up her converter box. After wrestling with tangled cables she asked, "Will all of this make Jack Benny come back?" She then snipped a cable with her scissors and stuck her remote control in the microwave in a desperate effort to capture the digital signal.⁴

While this parody no doubt stirred a chuckle, much press coverage of the DTV transition positioned senior women as archetypal "neighbors who need our assistance." For instance, *The Oregonian* featured a photo of 87-year-old Bernice McNeel with the caption "no signal" and indicated that after installing two converter boxes, McNeel was still unable to receive all the channels she had before. The article explained that reception problems are "especially common in Portland where hilly terrain complicates reception and where an unusually high proportion of people rely on over-the-air broadcasts to watch programs" (Rogoway, 2008). A *New York Times* article showed a photo of 77-year-old Houston resident Vesta Clemmons as she watched a meals-on-wheels volunteer hook up her converter box so that she would not have to miss her favorite TV show, "World News with Charles Gibson" (Steinberg, 2009). Some senior men apparently had challenges with the transition as well. For

instance, a 70-year-old Joplin, Missouri man was arrested and charged with unlawful discharge of a firearm when he shot his television set after trying unsuccessfully to set up his converter box (Eggerton, 2009).⁵

The collection of PSAs, of which I have mentioned a tiny sliver, is important in that it registers the various ways in which citizens were encouraged to understand and negotiate the changeover from analog to digital television. Most of the PSAs emphasized the importance of keeping the television set operating, which served divergent agendas. Broadcasters (local stations, national networks, and trade organizations) blanketed the airwaves with PSAs not because they were concerned about their public service mandate, but because they did not want to lose viewers in the transition since their advertising fees are contingent upon ratings. Civil rights groups, on the other hand, insisted that access to television is important because it is a source of vital information such as weather reports, tornado warnings, fire evacuations, school closings, and daily news needed by all citizens.⁶ While the no viewer left behind strategy of commercial broadcasters was motivated by the prospect of revenue loss, civil rights groups used the occasion to underscore television's role as a public utility.

Indeed, civil rights and eldercare organizations supported a number of DTV transition outreach projects. The Washington, DC-based Leadership Conference Education Fund organized Digital TV Assistance Centers in major cities across the United States, provided technical materials that could be translated into different languages, and trained volunteers to install converter boxes. The organization partnered with local groups to help ethnic communities across the country, whether Chinese Americans in San Francisco or African Americans in Atlanta (see Wandres, 2009). As a San Francisco-based volunteer observed, technology is very complicated for many people and it becomes even more complicated when encountered in a foreign language. For consumers who do not speak English, it can be very difficult to know which converter box to buy at the store, much less how to install it at home, because instructions are typically in English.⁷ Even for those who do speak English, the purchase and installation of new consumer electronics can be confounding. As David Nye (2007) suggests,

When manufacturers present new machines as "black boxes" which one cannot understand much less modify or repair, many people use them only until they need renovation or upgrading and then abandon them. When consumers give up on repairs, they can easily feel trapped, forced continually to upgrade their systems, as manufacturers determine the pace of change and the possible linkages between their machines. (pp. 220–221)

The DTV transition left consumers with no choice other than to replace or modify their TV sets if they wanted to continue to receive a signal. Though millions of analog sets were still functional and in use, the changeover created a situation of structured obsolescence that led to compulsory upgrading as well as massive amounts of e-waste (Miller & Maxwell, 2012).

Since the DTV transition affected many elderly citizens living on fixed incomes, local senior citizen centers and national organizations such as AARP, Elders in Action, and Meals on Wheels mobilized in an effort to help. Senior citizen centers hosted public lectures about the changeover (sometimes attended by FCC commissioners themselves) and distributed FCC information packets. AARP provided a DTV information hotline in English and Spanish and published a series of articles about the transition on its national website and in its magazine ("Get Ready for Digital," 2007). Meals on Wheels programs from Minneapolis to Houston organized converter box installations for seniors who were already having hot meals delivered (Meals on Wheels Association of America, n.d.).

Local communities also banded together to figure out ways of addressing the shortage of federal coupons for converter boxes. By December 2008 the coupon program had run out of funding and an estimated 2.6 million people remained on the coupon waiting list. While 44 million coupons had been distributed, only 18 million had been redeemed (Hart, 2008). Informal economies emerged as a result. The \$40 coupons expired after 90 days of receipt, but they were transferable. Thus local churches and community organizations began to collect and redistribute unused coupons as a way of helping those on the waitlist or others who needed them. While major chain stores charged up to \$100 for new converter boxes, some local electronics stores charged only \$40, which was the value of a coupon. At its 3,400 stores retail giant Wal-Mart sold converter boxes for \$9.87 with a digital coupon (for a total of \$49.87) ("DTV Transition: Wal-Mart," 2008). Others who acquired coupons but did not plan to use them attempted to scalp them on Craigslist for \$20 or best offer. Still others set out to impede the purchase of converter boxes altogether by posting a YouTube video claiming the Magnavox converter box sold by Wal-Mart was equipped with a tiny camera and microphone and that the DTV transition was at the heart of a conspiracy to extend surveillance into the US home.⁸

The DTV transition occurred in the midst of an economic recession in the United States. Though provisions for the changeover were included in the federal stimulus package, an economic crisis makes conditions worse for those who are already struggling. In 2009 the unemployment rate hit 10% in several states; many families were faced with the loss of their jobs and homes and were simply trying to keep food on the table. Within these conditions, the prospect of purchasing a new digital television set, converter box, or antenna, or subscribing to cable or satellite television, was a luxury many could not afford. One writer encouraged people living on fixed incomes to immediately give up their cable or satellite subscriptions and make the necessary investment to access free digital TV. By his calculations, doing so could save the consumer \$30,000 over 20 years (Weitzel, 2009). A representative of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights contextualized the issue of television cost in another way, indicating, "a successful transition from analog to digital television is vital to ensuring that those who may be on the remote edges of the economy and society, and already on the wrong side of the Digital Divide, do not suddenly also find themselves on the wrong side of a Digital Television Divide" ("Transition in Trouble," n.d.). Civil rights

groups adopted the no viewer left behind logic to ensure that those who lacked Internet access would not also be cut off from television.

In the months leading up to the changeover, there was more press discussion and recognition of the interests of the poor, elderly, disabled, and ethnic minorities in relation to digital television than in relation to other federal programs for education, healthcare, or housing. While this concern for low-income, elderly, and minority communities may seem on the surface to be a good thing, it also exemplifies a paternalistic posturing toward these communities that figures them as uniquely dependent upon television above all else. What this discourse conceals is how deeply dependent the US commercial television industry is on a viewer body count. A substantial loss in numbers of viewers threatens to compromise the business model of US commercial television. Since the Nielsen rating samples are randomly drawn, each and every viewer in each and every household counts.

Leaving no viewer behind required coordination among broadcasters, the FCC, and community organizations. While the FCC spent \$3 million on its DTV public education campaign, broadcasters spent \$697 million on their comprehensive DTV transition media plan (NAB, 2008). Nonprofit community organizations not only conducted public outreach, but volunteers performed much of the hands-on work in citizens' homes. The success of the infrastructural changeover was contingent upon the federal government's delegation of public information campaigns and home-based assistance to business and nonprofits. This practice coincides with patterns of neoliberal governance in which vital functions of the state are privatized and outsourced to corporations, charitable organizations, and individuals. In *Better Living Through Reality TV* Laurie Ouellette and James Hay (2008) explore how television has been reinvented as a site of neoliberal governance. They argue that reality TV series rationalize and extend neoliberal governance and citizenship by privileging the self-reliance of individuals and goodwill of corporations (as opposed to the welfare state) through the makeover, remodeling, and acts of self-sacrifice. "Understanding how TV operates as a new form of neoliberalized social service, social welfare, and social management," they write, "involves turning attention to the formation of specific networks between TV, the State, and private (volunteer and corporate) entities, which act upon each other and which citizens must rely upon and navigate" (p. 18).

The DTV transition involved a similar constellation of state, corporate, and charitable entities that addressed citizens in ways that echoed the discourses of charity TV. While reality TV's home makeovers and personal transformations emphasized the virtue of self-cultivation as a vital dimension of liberal governance and civil society, DTV transition PSAs and outreach campaigns celebrated equipment upgrades and "switching over to digital" as if they were civic duties. Indeed, many discourses surrounding the changeover idly fostered a logic of "*better living through digital TV*," articulating the capacity to receive DTV signals with home improvement and good citizenship. Leaving no viewer behind not only served corporate interests, but further elaborated television's neoliberal reinvention.

Out of Range

In addition to being the subject of PSAs and community outreach programs, the DTV transition was visualized and conveyed in coverage maps circulated by the FCC and NAB. These maps demonstrated the effects of the transition from local, regional, and national perspectives. They also offered a different view of television, an infrastructural perspective that emphasized the territorial reach of US television networks. National maps of the ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, and PBS networks were used to illustrate which areas would receive signal gain or loss, with orange shading indicating loss, yellow indicating change of affiliate station providing coverage, and green indicating gain (FCC, n.d.). Figure 12.1 shows the FCC's national ABC coverage map, revealing the transition's anticipated impact on the reception of the network's signal in the Midwest. Orange dots indicate areas across the states of Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas projected to undergo signal loss with the conversion to DTV. By examining such maps it is possible to recognize the challenge of visually representing television infrastructure and to observe some of the unevenness and false promises of the DTV transition.

Indeed, despite the promises of glossy trade organization PSAs, as these maps reveal, the conversion did not occur equally for all. In 2009 the FCC predicted that after the transition 196 or 11% of the nation's 1,749 full power stations would have a signal that reaches at least 20% fewer viewers than their current analog signals ("Some Stations to Lose Viewers," 2008). Many viewers on the edge of a station's coverage lost television service. Some needed not only a converter box, but a new rooftop antenna and a booster as well. Public information campaigns emphasized the clarity of a digital TV signal but neglected to explain that digital signals are more susceptible than analog to topographical interference and thus many would experience reception problems. Digital signal strength can vary depending on factors such as building construction, neighboring buildings and trees, weather, and reception equipment. One home in a neighborhood could get great reception, while another up the block could have its clear picture obscured by a tall tree or far-off hill. Analog signals fade gradually and as the signal weakens a distorted or grainy picture is still often visible. Digital signals remain uniformly sharp and when the signal weakens the picture drops out completely. The sudden loss of a digital signal is known as the cliff effect (Furchgott, 2008). Many viewers in rural, fringe, or mountainous regions who were once able to receive a degraded signal from analog stations found that after the DTV transition there was no available signal ("Digital Transition May Leave," 2009).

Broadcasters, antenna manufacturers, and cable and satellite operators used coverage maps to target these "out-of-range" citizen-consumers who were unable to receive free digital TV channels and were forced to purchase other services or devices, whether a cable or satellite subscription or a high-powered multidirectional antenna. In this sense, these maps not only specify zones of television reception, they

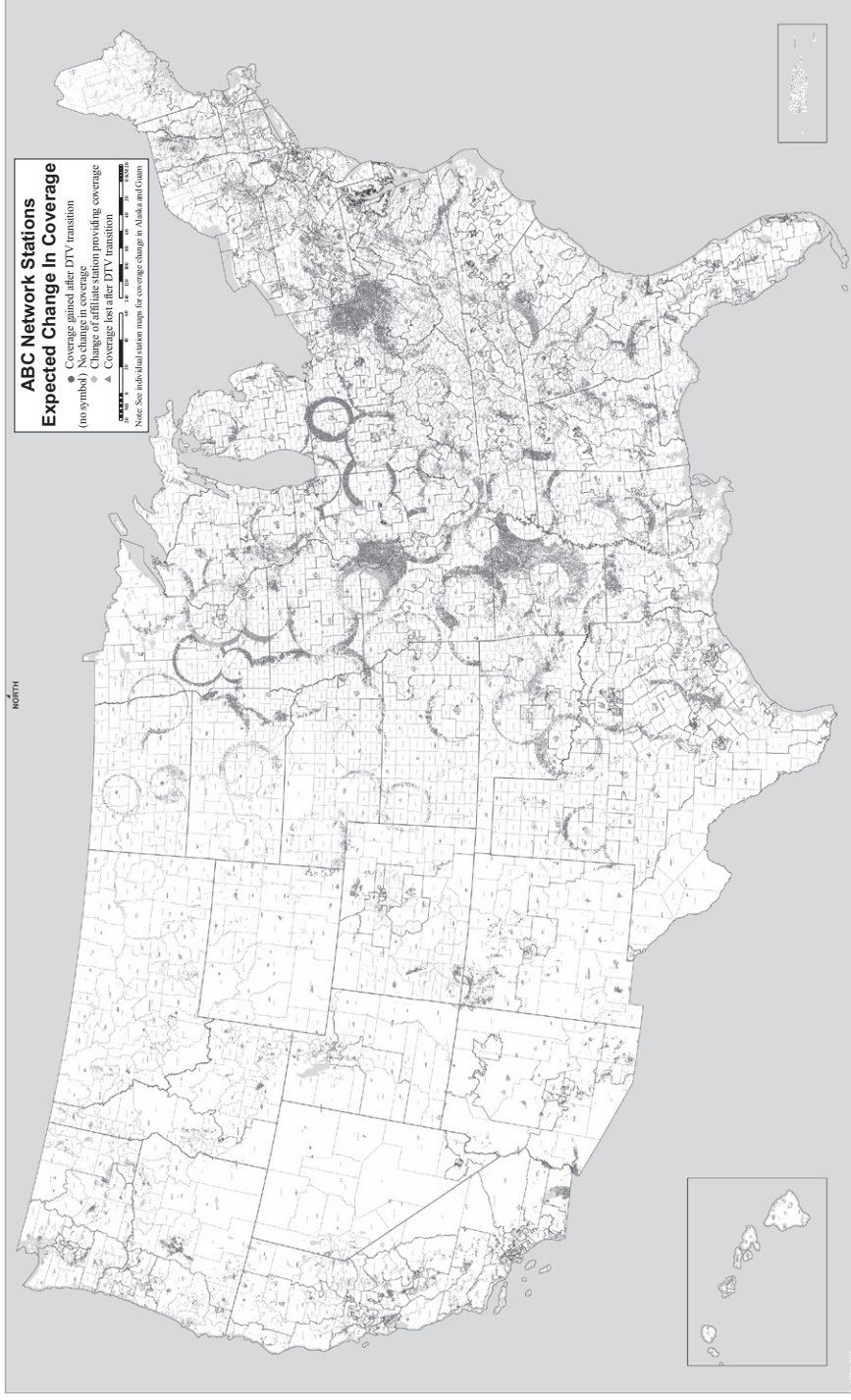


Figure 12.1 The FCC's national ABC coverage map, which reveals the DTV transition's anticipated impact on the network's signal across the country. <http://transition.fcc.gov/dtv/markets/>

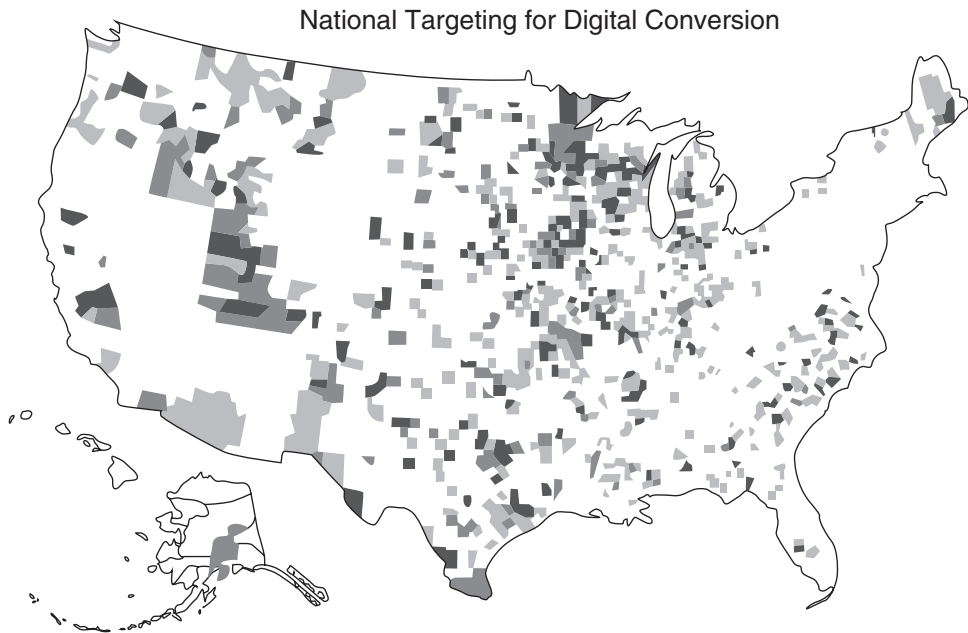


Figure 12.2 This “National Targeting for Digital Conversion” map shows areas with a high proportion of over-the-air (OTA) households. <http://www.al-ba.com/images/countymap.jpg>

intimate the location-based or geo-economic strategies of the broadcast and consumer electronics industries. One map used by the NAB, entitled “National Targeting for Digital Conversion” (see Figure 12.2), shows areas with a high proportion of over-the-air (OTA) households in need of targeting for DTV outreach marked in gray, dark gray, and light gray. In gray areas 30% of households receive over-the-air signals, in dark gray areas 25% do, and in light gray areas 20% do (NAB, 2008). Read another way, the map pinpoints areas where there is a high proportion of low-income, ethnic minority, and/or elderly residents still using analog TV sets, locations that broadcasters targeted in their efforts to leave no viewer behind. Another map entitled “Digital Stations by DMA: Moving Toward the Switch” provides the opposite perspective (see Figure 12.3). Dated in 2007, two years before the transition, this map reveals designated market areas with TV stations already operating in digital. Both maps make the notion of a DTV divide intelligible by highlighting areas in the United States with greater or lesser access to DTV.

Such maps enabled the NAB to conduct what it called “grassroots marketing” related to the DTV transition. For instance, the NAB sponsored a \$7 million project called the DTV Road Show, a traveling exhibit that made four major routes across the United States (NAB, 2008). Beginning in November 2007, two “DTV Trekkers” – moving trucks designed to resemble giant TV sets – crisscrossed the country, targeting areas with a high proportion of analog television households (NAB, n.d.). The

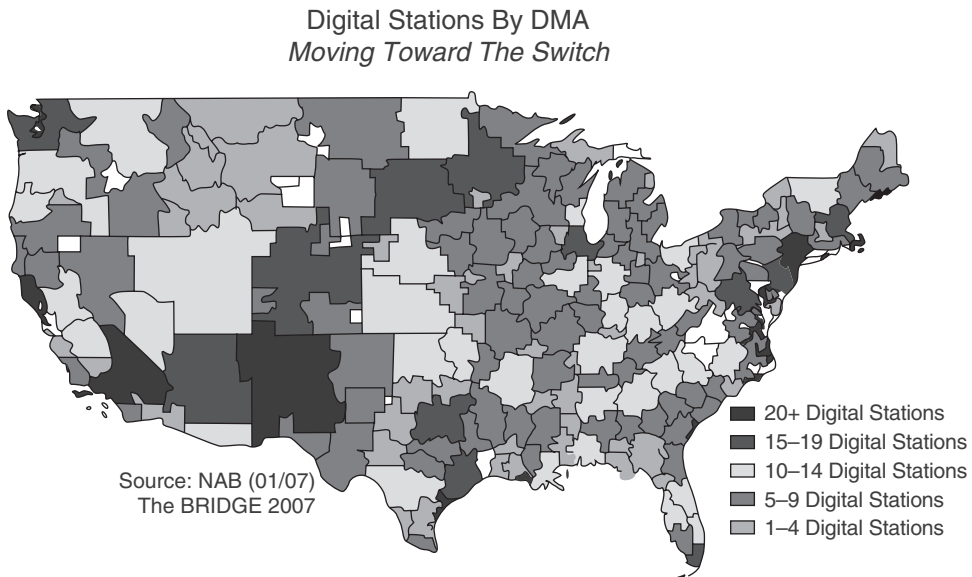


Figure 12.3 This “Digital Stations by DMA: Moving Toward the Switch” map reveals designated market areas with TV stations operating in digital before the transition. *Source:* NAB (01/07) The BRIDGE 2007.

DTV Trekkers ventured into 200 markets and made appearances at 600 events nationwide including state fairs, festivals, and sporting competitions. According to the project website, “The Roadshow schedule prioritizes areas with high over-the-air (OTA) density, attending events that help us reach those most affected by the switch, including minority / non-English speaking populations, older Americans, residents of rural areas, and economically disadvantaged populations.” (NAB, n.d.). DTV Trekkers ventured into areas across the country to draw attention to the DTV transition and to draw viewers into the DTV market.

Thus while coverage maps illustrated changing patterns of television distribution that occurred with the transition, they also facilitated direct marketing by companies that stood to benefit financially from it. Other trade organizations used the coverage maps as well. Since newly “out-of-range” viewers needed a higher-powered antenna to receive a signal, and since others were bound to experience reception problems, the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) partnered with the NAB to develop a service that recommended antenna purchases based upon precise locational data. Endorsed by the FCC, the Antenna Web website, sponsored by the CEA and NAB, invites the user to enter an address and obtain antenna recommendations for that particular location. After the user enters a US address the interface offers a list of stations available in that market as well as a list of antennas that work best to receive the different signals. The website also provides a map of the location as well as optimum angles for antenna installation.

As Antenna Web collects information from consumers, it also shows the user the kind of pinpointed residence-specific information that the NAB and CEA already have. Indeed, the practices of the NAB and CEA are consistent with the kind of “interactive” media regime that appropriates consumer-citizens’ alleged freedom of choice in the marketplace as a mechanism for extensive consumer monitoring and profiling, a technological condition Mark Andrejevic (2007) refers to as the “digital enclosure.” As Andrejevic explains, the digital enclosure refers to “a space of universalized recognition and communication in which the places through which we move and the objects they contain recognize individuals and communicate with them” (p. 132). As Antenna Web offers its “services,” the website also publicizes the fact that broadcasters and consumer electronics manufacturers are able to recognize and communicate about TV reception practices at each known US address.

Despite how such interfaces and maps are used by corporations, they can serve as helpful visualizations for media scholars because they enable understanding of the spatial and territorializing properties of television infrastructure. Each PSA, map, or website is an attempt to translate largely imperceptible technical processes, which consumer-citizens are socialized to remain naïve about, into intelligible forms that can be interpreted and discussed. Still, while maps and interfaces can bring about greater infrastructural awareness, they also foster corporate encroachment upon citizen-consumers’ neighborhoods, homes, and devices, which are treated as sites of monitoring and market analysis. Many coverage maps are considered highly valuable intellectual property because they can be used to target underdeveloped markets and design media futures.

From TV Snow to White Space

When the DTV transition date rolled around on February 17, 2009, some viewers were eagerly prepared, perched at their analog sets with video cameras pointing at their TV receivers, waiting to record the last moments of their local stations’ analog signals as they disappeared forever. By March 4, 2009, there were 60 such videos posted on YouTube. These “end of analog kinescopes” not only document the termination of analog transmission at high-powered TV stations in the United States, they provide an interesting glimpse into the range of ways stations and viewers communicated about and understood the transition. One viewer in Iowa set up six television sets and let them run simultaneously so he could record which stations made the transition and which did not. Two of the monitors lost their signals, indicating they moved over to digital, and four others kept running in analog. While many stations across the country simply went off air (such as WEDU in Tampa Bay) and abruptly let the image turn to snow, some stations made a local news event out of the switchover and integrated it into their last analog evening news report. WGEM in Quincy, Illinois, for instance, had a reporter flip the “off switch” live as the station



Figure 12.4 On the day of the DTV transition, analog stations across the country ended their broadcast era with TV snow as they switched over to digital systems. Photo: Lisa Parks.

went “over to digital.” WDEF in Chattanooga provided a short station history featuring archival footage before signing off. WMTV-15 in Madison, Wisconsin, played the national anthem while a flag waved at the state capitol building and signed off with the familiar test pattern. And WSRE-23 in Pensacola, Florida, which typically ended its broadcast day with a photo of the sunset, had an announcer proclaim, “It’s the end of an era. From this point forward the sun will never set on our signal,” and ended not only the broadcast day but the analog era as the monitor turned to snow (see Figure 12.4).

Just as analog television’s inauguration was momentous, so too was its termination. These videos are important televisual timepieces that mark the end of a national broadcast system that operated for more than 50 years. It is an ironic coincidence that they were recorded similarly to that of early kinescopes, capturing what appeared on the television monitor during the signal’s transmission. As these videos chronicled this major infrastructural shift, they manifest a nostalgic and playful disposition toward analog television, expressing the kind of experimental and reflexive (modernist) sensibility found in earlier moments of television’s history. In *TV By Design* Lynn Spiegel (2008) suggests that “there was a high degree of visual experimentation on

early network television” and explores a “particular historical conjuncture when the visual arts and commercial television merged in unique and profound ways” (pp. 10, 18). The end of analog kinescopes resonate with this earlier fusion of visual arts and commercial television through their vivid capture of different stations’ final moments of analog transmission and viewers’ last glimpses of it and their clever way of documenting an infrastructural changeover.

Since many of the end of analog videos ended with images of TV static, noise, or snow, I want to suggest that they serve as apt icons or metonyms for this historic moment. If, as Spigel suggests, TV noise “became a metonym for all of television’s failures – proof that the medium could never be art” (pp. 179–180), then what can we make of TV snow? Even in its obscurity and abstraction, the image of snow manages to bring material conditions to the surface, evoking a series of technical, historical, and economic concerns. First, and most literally, snow communicates the technical reality of a broadcast interruption or failure. Since many stations ended their broadcast day by placing a test pattern, color bars, or station identification symbol in the frame until broadcast resumed in the morning, snow represented either a broadcasting break or system error. The second meaning is more temporal. Since snow will no longer appear on television after the digital conversion, it has become *the* symptom of a bygone era of broadcasting. In this way, snow represents a television infrastructure that once was and serves as a kind of master shot of analog television’s past. As such it can be said to evoke an infrastructural imaginary or way of thinking, a conjuring up of conditions that are broader and more dispersed than what appears in the frame. Finally, the last images of snow allude to the abandoned bandwidth in the electromagnetic spectrum, opened up with the changeover and sometimes referred to as “white space.” Numerous parties are interested in the future of this “white space,” and snow makes intelligible this part of the spectrum that is of great economic value and imminent regulatory concern.

Companies such as Google, Dell, Microsoft, Earthlink, Motorola, and Intel among others banded together to pressure the FCC to allow them to utilize this so-called “TV white space” to augment high-speed Internet connections and wireless broadband services (“The White Open Spaces,” 2007). White space is preferable for Wi-Fi transmissions because it operates at a lower frequency, can carry signals longer distances, and penetrates obstacles such as walls more easily than the high-frequency spectrum currently used for Wi-Fi. Two organizations – the White Space Coalition⁹ and the Wireless Innovation Alliance – formed to pressure the FCC to reallocate the part of the spectrum formerly used for analog broadcasting (TV channels 2–51 – 54–698 MHz) for use by unlicensed (TVBDs and WiFi – wireless) devices. In 2007 Google launched an advocacy project called “Free the Airwaves.com.” The goal of the initiative was to promote free unlicensed use of the spectrum space that formerly carried analog television signals. As Google declared on its public policy blog, “Today: TV Static, Tomorrow: Broadband” (Witt, 2007). Broadcasters opposed this move because such use could result in interference for licensed low-power broadcast stations still using part of this spectrum. Wireless corporations such as Verizon and

AT&T had already paid billions of dollars in auction fees for access to this part of the spectrum and were waiting to introduce new products that rely upon it (Stelter, 2009b). On November 4, 2008, months before the DTV transition, the FCC voted 5–0 to approve the unlicensed use of white space, thereby silencing opposition from broadcasters. Nearly two years later, on September 23, 2010, the FCC reinforced its position, approving new rules that paved the way for service providers and device makers to begin using the white space. FCC chairman Julius Genachowski predicted the new rules would lead to “Wi-Fi on steroids,” and proclaimed, “This new unlicensed spectrum will be a powerful platform for innovation [. . .] When we unleash American ingenuity, great things happen” (quoted in Reardon, 2010).

Significantly, the interests of low-income, elderly, and ethnic minority communities at the core of public discussions of analog television drop off the radar completely in those of the white space. These “free airwaves,” as they are referred to again and again, are envisioned as a mobile multimedia playground, ostensibly accessible to anyone, but ultimately restricted to those who can afford to purchase high-end mobile devices, subscribe to services, and acquire the knowledge to use them. Thus, while most have hailed the FCC’s white space policies as major victories, I suggest we need to remain a bit more skeptical, as these so-called free airwaves serve as reminders that the politics of taste, class, age, race, and gender are deeply embedded within quests for technological innovation and change. Google and other digital companies often use initiatives like “free the airwaves” in the public sphere as a way of diverting attention away from their profit motives and market domination, acting as agents of digital humanitarianism and performing services that the federal government can no longer afford to provide. Google’s efforts to “open up” the white space may not be so benevolent, however, and the company’s bold moves into the frontier of old analog television bandwidth may confirm Siva Vaidhyanathan’s (2011) provocative contention that we are undergoing the “Googlization of Everything.” While Google pressured the FCC to open analog television spectrum to unlicensed users, the company was also busy launching a product that would utilize it, Google TV. With pithy promotional taglines like “Television, meet search engine” and “There’s more on TV than television,” Google implies that the service will merge the capacities of the web, mobile telephony, and broadcasting so that viewers can put apps on the TV screen, use the mobile phone as a remote control, and “fling” content from mobile platforms to their TV sets.¹⁰ As Vaidhyanathan cautions, Google is not only “‘creatively destroying’ established players in various markets,” but “altering the very ways we see our world and ourselves” (p. 7). There will be no TV snow in a Googlized future.

Conclusion

The DTV transition serves as a meta-moment in US television history because it confronted us with so many manifestations of and questions about television itself.

Rarely have citizens-viewers been encouraged to think so carefully about how they get their signals and how their receiver works – to think so specifically about an object that is at once so familiar and so strange. This is a useful moment for several reasons. First, the infrastructural changeover led to an increase in the circulation of technical knowledge about television in the public sphere. The analog diehards, in particular, were addressed, lest they be left behind or remain beyond the digital enclosure (Andrejevic, 2007, pp. 2–3). The highly publicized DTV transition provided an opportunity for citizens to rethink their relation to television, consider its costs, and imagine it as more than a TV set. Some were confounded and frustrated by what they did not know and needed to know to get a clear signal. Others recognized that television is as much a public utility as it is a dream machine.

One effect of the DTV transition was that it could have catalyzed public interest in infrastructure more generally. The fact that technical knowledge about television infrastructure circulated in socially subordinated communities is significant. Unsightly or hazardous infrastructure sites are routed through the neighborhoods of the working poor, the elderly, and ethnic minorities in much greater proportion than in affluent communities in the United States, and hence there are political implications to the circulation of technical knowledge about such systems. Since television provokes so much affect, it may be a useful site for catalyzing further public interest in other vital infrastructures equally important in our environment, whether levees, gas pipelines, cell phone towers, or sewer systems.

Second, the DTV transition revealed how deeply and profoundly the US commercial television industry pivots upon the Nielsen ratings system. That this system, based on such a small sample, remains the driving force of so much strategizing and decision-making in the industry seems absurd given the multiple ways viewers now engage with television in the context of its digitization. The traditional model of the Nielsen home has been compounded by television's distribution through various platforms including cable, satellite, mobile telephony, the web, and DVD. While the proliferation of distribution platforms and the variety of viewing practices they support raise major questions about the viability of Nielsen ratings, they are still treated like an industry gold standard. Indeed, it was the prospect of losing viewers, and thus sponsors, that motivated broadcasters to lead the DTV transition. How would US television change if Nielsen ratings were removed from the picture? The reality is that comprehensive systems of consumer monitoring, measurement, and profiling have become so naturalized and hardwired within everyday environments that they make the Nielsen ratings look like child's play. As a result it is increasingly difficult to separate the meanings of infrastructure from practices of consumer monitoring and profiling.

Finally, the idea that opening the white space will lead to a media future of "Wi-Fi on steroids" raises questions about the dominant logics that underpin technological innovation. While the tendency is to assume that television will be replaced with "smart media," if the DTV transition has shown us anything it is that many people in the United States were deeply connected to and satisfied with the system of free

over-the-air analog television despite the availability of “better” services. The DTV transition’s fetishization of innovation, manifest in the fixation on a crisper picture, occluded the reality that many people did not need or want DTV and suggested that broadcasters were glaringly out of touch with the ways that many US citizens think about, watch, and use television. In a discussion of television’s low picture quality relative to film, Raymond Williams (2008) observes, “most people have adapted to this inferior visual medium, in an unusual kind of preference for an inferior immediate technology, because of the social complex – and especially that of the privatised home – within which broadcasting, as a system, is operative” (p. 22). While the proliferation of distribution platforms and the digitization of signals certainly have the potential to shift television’s social complex beyond the home, the DTV transition revealed that many viewers remain deeply entrenched within it. The point is that we cannot allow corporate and FCC quests for technological innovation, whether articulated as Google TV or “Wi-Fi on steroids,” to determine critical investigations of television’s transitions. As Raymond Williams reminds us, “there were, in the abstract, several different ways in which television as a technical means might have been developed” (p. 22). Television will not simply be substituted with “smart media.” It will be reinvented (as it has been many times in the past) across changing infrastructures and platforms and local, national, and global sites. This means it is more important than ever to bring interdisciplinary, international, and relational thinking to the future study of it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I began writing this essay while I was the Beaverbrook Scholar-in-Residence at McGill University in Montreal in March 2009. I am grateful for feedback I received while delivering the paper at Concordia University in Montreal, Stockholm University, and the Annenberg School at USC. I would also like to thank Kelly Gates for helpful feedback and Meredith Bak for research assistance.

NOTES

- 1 Paul Virilio’s notion of a “logistics of perception,” which accounts for the accelerated speeds and vast distances of contemporary (militarized) communication systems, can be helpful in considering infrastructural processes and the impossibility of merely “seeing” them. See Virilio (1989).
- 2 The term, which has been used in English since at least 1927, means “the installations that form the basis for any operation or system.” See <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=infrastructure>

- 3 For a discussion of the complexities surrounding the practices of old and new media technologies, see Charles Acland's edited book, *Residual Media* (2007), and Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson's *Television after TV* (2004).
- 4 This aired on Fox's *Talkshow with Spike Feresten*, season 3, episode 3. Retrieved December 3, 2008, from <http://www.hulu.com/watch/36608/talkshow-with-spike-feresten-cable-psa#s-p1-st-i1>
- 5 Thanks to Jeff Sconce for sending this story to me.
- 6 The civil rights organizer toolkit describes access to television communication as a "necessity," "not just entertainment," since weather reports such as tornado warnings, school closings and breaking news updates need to be known by all citizens. See "Digital Television Transition Organizer Tool Kit" (n.d.).
- 7 Another example of digital TV centers translating into different languages comes from LISTA (Latinos in Information Sciences and Technology), who organized training classes in Atlanta. See Marquez (2009).
- 8 See video entitled "Cameras in Digital Convert Boxes! BEWARE!!!!," posted by mechanismstudios, February 16, 2009. Retrieved March 18, 2009, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQ4iM8Eljc>. Also see "Camera and mic found in digital converter box paid for by Feds," Prison Planet Forum blog, February 17, 2009, retrieved March 18, 2009, from <http://forum.prisonplanet.com/index.php?topic=87074>
- 9 The member companies include Microsoft, Google, Dell, HP, Intel, Philips, Earthlink, and Samsung Electro-Mechanics.
- 10 Google TV website. Retrieved July 20, 2011, from <http://www.google.com/tv/>

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The 800-Pound Gorillas in the Room

The Mobile Phone and the Future of Television

Max Dawson

ABSTRACT

Since the late 1990s media and telecommunications companies have invested billions of dollars in the development of methods for delivering television programming to mobile phones over wireless networks. In this chapter, Max Dawson explores the institutional conflicts that have shaped mobile television's development in the United States, paying special attention to the clashes that have taken place between mobile companies and broadcasters. For nearly a decade these adversaries have made mobile television a weapon within ongoing disputes over markets, resources, and policies. These conflicts have produced a succession of mobile television solutions that have emulated, reworked, and commented upon the technologies and protocols of the US model of over-the-air television broadcasting. Dawson argues that mobile television's remediation of broadcasting is neither incidental nor ironic, but rather is indicative of the institutional politics that surround emergent media. He situates mobile television's remediation of broadcasting within these political contexts, and in the process highlights the institutional factors that influence processes of media change.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Both wireless carriers and entertainment companies are used to being the 800-pound gorilla in any room. Now that they're in the same room, something has to give.

Kanishka Agarwal, Vice President of Mobile Media, Telephia
(quoted in Kapko, 2007)

If you thought UHF had gone the way of eight tracks and Betamax, think again. The broadcast spectrum could be the future of television.

Om Malik (2005)

To publicize the June 2007 debut of its latest mobile phone, the consumer electronics giant LG hosted a party “celebrating the past, present and future of television” at Paramount Studios in Hollywood, California. The small-screen theme of LG’s Mobile TV Party was a nod to the new phone’s defining feature: inside the LG VX9400 was a chip that enabled it to tune in specially encoded live television signals transmitted over a vacant channel in television’s UHF (ultra-high frequency) band. Joining LG in celebrating the phone’s launch was a bevy of “TV icons,” including *The Brady Bunch*’s Chris Knight, *Star Trek*’s George Takei, and *Happy Days*’ Scott Baio. After walking the red carpet, LG’s guests made their way through a museum-style exhibition of television technologies that began with black-and-white receivers and culminated with the VX9400. This exhibition, which LG dubbed the “living timeline of television history,” opened up onto a massive soundstage on which had been erected scale reproductions of the sets of some of the best-loved programs of the 1960s and 1970s. For the rest of the night partygoers mingled within a recreation of the Brady family’s living room, posed for photos in the captain’s chair of the Space Shuttle *Enterprise*, and dined on cheeseburgers and shakes in Arnold’s Drive-In (Fathom4, 2007).

LG’s placement of the VX9400 at the conclusion of the “living timeline of television history” translated into spatial terms an argument advanced by many in this period: that mobile devices were “the future of television.”¹ The Mobile TV Party’s retro theme and guest list, however, made it difficult to ignore the many parallels between this vision of television’s future and the medium’s past. Like the black-and-white receivers that greeted partygoers at the entrance of the “living timeline,” the VX9400 featured a tiny, low-resolution screen, used an antenna to receive a handful of channels that aired fixed schedules, and lacked the ability to record, pause, fast forward, or rewind programming. In many respects, this “television of the future” owed more to the 1950s nostalgia sitcom *Happy Days* than it did to the fantastic world of *Star Trek*. For aside from its portability and \$15 dollar a month subscription fee, there was little to distinguish mobile television from the broadcast television that *Happy Days*’ Cunningham family would have enjoyed within the comfort of their living room in 1950s Milwaukee.

LG was by no means alone in promoting the notion that television’s future would involve the revival of broadcasting by mobile media companies. During the 2000s consumer electronics manufacturers, mobile communications companies, broadcasters, Internet companies, and global media conglomerates poured billions of dollars into the development of technologies for delivering television programming to mobile

phones and other portable devices. The first mobile television solutions to emerge from these ventures were patterned after early Internet video platforms and used mobile carriers' voice networks to transmit television programming on an on-demand basis. As the decade progressed, however, mobile television's backers doubled down on their investments in technologies that emulated or refashioned aspects of broadcast television. These solutions, which included Crown Castle Communications' Modeo, Aloha Partners' Hiwire Mobile Television, Texas Instruments' Hollywood mobile digital broadcast platform, mobile DTV, and Qualcomm's MediaFLO (the technology that powered LG's VX9400), moved mobile television signals off of carriers' voice networks and onto portions of the radio spectrum that had until recently been occupied by television broadcasters. Each system capitalized on the latest advances in video compression, radio spectrum optimization, power consumption minimization, and mobile chip design to accomplish something that television broadcasters had done quite well since the 1940s: deliver multiple channels of linearly scheduled programming over the air and in "real time" to an unlimited number of viewers located within a defined geographic area. Mobile television's backers have not dodged these comparisons with television's past, but rather have invited them. Via their product designs, programming strategies, and promotional texts they encouraged reporters, regulators, and consumers, often explicitly, to regard mobile television as an extension of and improvement upon the technologies and practices of broadcasting.

The "irony" that the developers of these "futuristic" mobile technologies should aspire to emulate broadcasting at a time when fewer than 10% of US viewers received their television signals over the air was not lost on contemporary observers. In a review of one of the many commercial mobile television services introduced in this period, a *Chicago Tribune* reporter acknowledged with a smirk that mobile television was "a bit like TV in the '70s: no VCR-style recording, only eight channels, and in some areas you'll have to raise the phone's antenna to improve reception" (Gwinn, 2007). Media scholars have likewise taken note of the various ways that mobile television adopts, reworks, and comments upon – or, in the terminology of media theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000), *remediates* – the technologies and protocols of broadcasting. Studies published in recent years have detailed the parallels that exist between mobile television programming and the heavily segmented formats that predominated on US network television in the late 1940s; between mobile phones' tiny screens and the playing card-sized cathode-ray tubes of early television receivers; and between the promotion of mobile television in the 2000s and of portable television receivers in the 1950s and 1960s (Carey & Greenberg, 2006; Dawson, 2007; Groening, 2010; Orgad, 2009).

Why have the backers of mobile television, an emergent medium touted by many as "the future of television," so aggressively sought to revive the residual protocols of broadcast television? What are the factors that motivated the shift from the on-demand paradigm of the United States' first mobile television services to technologies that behaved more like conventional broadcast receivers, and services that offered fixed daily programming schedules? And what are the larger implications of

this paradigm shift for media industries, policies, and audiences? This chapter takes up these questions, exploring the overdetermined contexts and consequences of mobile television's remediation of broadcasting in the United States. It argues that the anachrony of mobile television is more than just an "ironic" historical curiosity or a marketing strategy employed to familiarize a novel technology. Rather, mobile television's remediation of broadcasting must be understood within the context of broader institutional conflicts that predate the advent of technologies capable of delivering television to mobile phones. For nearly a decade the adversaries in these lengthy conflicts used mobile television – or, more accurately, the *prospect* of its widespread adoption in the near future – as a weapon within fights over resources and policies. In fact, many of the conflicts over mobile television had less to do with the technology itself than with the terms under which these adversaries would compete and collaborate with one another in the future in media markets that had yet to be established or defined. And yet despite these adversaries' mutual preoccupations with positioning themselves for this uncertain future, both sides have gone out of their way to assert the links between television's broadcast past and mobile future. In these fights between "new" and "old" media industries, anachrony proved equally effective as a rationale for change as it did an argument against it.

The following sections offer a sketch of the sides within and stakes of the conflicts that have shaped – and continue to shape – mobile television, paying special attention to the clashes between mobile communications companies and broadcasters. The war between these two "800-pound gorilla[s]" has been waged on multiple fronts, and has involved shifting configurations of temporary alliances with various other stakeholders (Kapko, 2007). It is not the only conflict that has influenced mobile television's development, yet it is the one that has most impacted peripheral skirmishes over technical standards and programming formats; content licensing agreements; hardware and monthly subscription pricing; and the division of costs and profits amongst producers, distributors, and various middlemen. By examining the contexts of this particular conflict, this chapter identifies mobile television's remediation of broadcast television as an institutional practice. Within the field of new media studies, the concept of remediation is most often employed to describe the interaction of the artifacts, forms, social practices, and modes of perception associated with multiple media. Mobile television's brief history in the United States highlights another dimension of remediation: the interactions of corporate cultures, business models, ideologies, traditions, and reputations that take place when institutions and industries are thrust together by technological convergence and regulatory reform.

The Uncomfortable Proximity of Convergence

Although the "jurisdictional conflicts" that have surrounded mobile television are "complex and multisided" (Altman, 2005, p. 22), the factors that initially provoked

them may nevertheless be conceptualized in rather straightforward spatial terms. In brief, the primary adversaries in these conflicts were stakeholders who in the 2000s found themselves in close and oftentimes uncomfortable proximity to one another, first within the marketplaces in which they operated, and then later within the progressively cramped quarters of the nation's radio spectrum.

As Carolyn Marvin (1990) argues, the public launch of a new medium often involves the rearrangement of physical and/or social spaces, and may alter the literal and figurative distances between groups engaged in negotiations over "power, authority, representation, and knowledge." "New media," she writes, "intrude on these negotiations by providing new platforms on which old groups confront one another. Old habits of transacting between groups are projected onto new technologies that alter, or seem to alter, critical social distances" (p. 5). Marvin's observations about new media and the uneasy proximity they may engender pertain specifically to relationships between and amongst a medium's various cohorts of users. But they are equally relevant to institutions' and entire industries' "habits of transacting." The introduction of a new medium may destabilize the customary terms governing competition and collaboration within various markets, altering the balances of power that such customs typically maintain. For this reason hegemonic institutions often find it in their collective best interests to actively or indirectly impede the dissemination of innovations that alter the distances between industries and/or markets (Winston, 1986).

Between the 1980s and the 2000s, the distances separating participants in telecommunications and media markets contracted quite dramatically in the United States. These entities' new proximity recalled a much older arrangement of the "spaces" of US telecommunications and media markets, namely that which existed during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the infrastructure and the institutions of telephony, telegraphy, and broadcasting were all thoroughly integrated. The reunification of the US telecommunications and media industries was a gradual process, but was sped along in the end by digitalization, and specifically by the refinement of methods for distributing digitized voice communications, Internet Protocol packets, and video over the same wired and wireless networks. The technological integration of media and telecommunications distribution infrastructures encouraged and facilitated the flow of capital, intellectual property, personnel, expertise, and business models between companies. For decades, these companies had collaborated under a collection of formal and informal rules that were quite specific about the division of their roles and the limits of their respective jurisdictions. But as these flows have intensified, and as cross-industry mergers have grown more common, these rules have become easier to ignore. As the 1990s wore on, customary distinctions between, for instance, phone companies, cable television multiple service operators (MSOs), and Internet service providers grew more and more blurry and less and less binding.

As infrastructural integration gained momentum in the 1990s, prominent libertarian cyberboosters and high-tech industry executives prophesied the imminent and

inevitable reunification of the telecommunications and media markets (Gates, 1995; Gilder, 1990, 2000). However, industrial convergence was not, as its most vocal proponents insisted, a logical and necessary outcome of infrastructural integration, but instead a product of legislative intervention. The comprehensive policy reforms enacted by the United States Telecommunications Act of 1996 formally ended the enforced segregation of telecommunications and media markets. Though it would be a number of years before viable cross-industry competition occurred, by the mid-2000s companies such as Comcast and AT&T had expanded their services to include “triple play” packages that bundled together voice, video, and broadband Internet services.

In addition to removing policy obstacles to cross-platform competition, the reforms of the 1990s created conditions amenable to the reconsolidation of United States telecommunications markets, which since the breakup of the Bell System monopoly in the 1980s had been compartmentalized by region and platform (Fotheringham & Sharma, 2008, p. 200). Amongst the biggest beneficiaries of these reforms were mobile communications companies, and in particular the operators of nationwide mobile phone networks. In the 1990s the United States’ major mobile network operators embarked on an acquisition spree, swallowing up smaller regional competitors, long-distance and local fixed-line telephone companies, and retail Internet service providers. By the mid-2000s, the mobile communications retail market was dominated by four major networks: Verizon Wireless, AT&T Mobility, Sprint Nextel, and T-Mobile.² The first two of these networks were subsidiaries of massive telecommunications conglomerates with portfolios that included fixed-line and mobile telephone services, wholesale and retail Internet services, and, by the mid-2000s, multichannel television services.

The United States’ four major mobile network operators benefited from massive economies of scale and, in the case of Verizon Wireless and AT&T Mobility, cross-platform synergies, such as the ability to bundle their mobile services along with their parent companies’ “triple play” packages (Fotheringham & Sharma, 2008, p. 15). However, these companies came into existence at a particularly challenging time for the mobile communications industry. By the early 2000s, the retail market for mobile communications services began showing the first signs of saturation (Nuechterlein & Weiser, 2005, p. 260). With a dwindling number of potential new customers available to them, mobile network operators turned their attention to luring subscribers away from their competitors. The fierce competition that ensued sent voice call revenues – “the flywheel” of the industry’s growth over the previous two decades (Fotheringham & Sharma, 2008, p. 206) – into decline, placing mobile network operators – and their voice-centric business model – in a “precarious” position (Charny, 2004; Nuance Communications, 2006).

To stave off the industry-wide slowdown predicted by many telecommunications analysts, mobile network operators diversified, introducing an array of premium-priced data services in the early 2000s that included text messages, web browsing and email, adult services, videogames, and music and ringtone downloads. In conjunction

with the rollout of these services, operators invested heavily in network upgrades, including the construction of third-generation (3G) mobile networks designed to provide faster data transfer rates. The first of these premium services to pay off was text messaging, which generated \$2.5 billion for the mobile telecommunications industry in 2004. But network operators had their eyes on the even bigger potential windfall represented by multimedia services, and mobile television in particular. Mobile television services had recently been introduced by mobile network operators in Europe and Asia, and even in their embryonic stages these services made a significant impression upon North American telecommunications analysts. Between handset sales, subscription and data transmission fees, premium pay-per-view charges, and advertising, mobile television presented network operators, as well as chip makers, consumer electronics manufacturers, and media companies, with an impressive range of revenue opportunities. Optimistic analysts predicted that mobile television could replace voice communications as the mobile phone's "killer app" (Goot, 2003; Hellweg, 2005), and forecasted that it would generate between \$6 and \$27 billion annually by the end of the decade (Reardon, 2006).

For mobile network operators locked in cutthroat competition with one another over shrinking voice margins, mobile television's multiple revenue streams represented a promising solution to the dilemma of how to maintain growth in a decelerating marketplace. As reported by the technology website CNet, by 2004 enthusiasm for mobile television had grown to the point where some mobile industry executives were publicly claiming that mobile television's revenues would "save the cell phone industry" (Charny, 2004). But mobile television also represented a potential bridge to a future in which mobile network operators would no longer be solely or even primarily in the business of voice communications. By adding television packages to their lists of services, the United States' mobile network operators began the process of reinventing themselves as fully diversified entities that would compete in multiple media markets, as opposed to exclusively with one another.

"The Future of Broadcast Television is Mobile"³

Mobile network operators' multimedia ambitions led them into new markets, as well as into new portions of the radio spectrum. In these spaces they encountered old partners under new circumstances, as well as institutions that they had limited experience in dealing with. Amongst the latter were broadcasters, a group that shared mobile network operators' interest in the possibility of delivering television programming to mobile devices.

Whereas mobile network operators' multimedia ambitions were driven in large part by their industry's growth imperatives, broadcasters' interests in mobile television were survival oriented. The period of the mobile industry's rapid growth coincided with the unraveling of the hegemony of US network broadcasting (Lotz, 2007). As mobile network operators' subscriber rolls expanded, US broadcast

networks' cumulative share of the national television audience fell precipitously, from approximately 75% in 1985 to 43% in 2010 (Seidman, 2007). Broadcasters' advertising revenues followed this downward trend, spurred by the ascendance of cable, the advent of new commercial-skipping technologies such as the digital video recorder (DVR), and the recessions that bookended the first decade of the twenty-first century. National broadcast networks' local affiliate stations were particularly hard hit by the industry's economic downturn. While most of these stations continued to be profitable, their future viability became a subject of much debate within the popular press and within the industry itself (Schechner & Dana, 2009). Questions about the sustainability of free-to-air broadcast television were broached with increased frequency (and urgency) in the press during the 2000s. A 2006 IBM Business Consulting Services report captured the pervasive sense of crisis surrounding broadcast television in this period. "Today is the beginning of 'the end of TV as we know it,'" the report explained, "and the future will only favor those who prepare now" (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2009, p. 1). Amongst those not expected to survive this paradigm shift were broadcast stations, which, as one journalist put it, appeared to be "head[ed] for extinction" (Wasserman, 2004).

As these debates over television's future – and free-to-air broadcasting's lack of one – unfolded, the owners of the nation's more than one thousand broadcast television stations did as the mobile network operators discussed above and began to explore alternatives to their traditional business models and revenue sources. The range of options available to them was more diverse than ever before, thanks again to legislative intervention. As discussed by Lisa Parks in her contribution to this volume, during this period every local broadcast station in the United States was required to convert its facilities to the nation's new digital television broadcasting standard, or DTV. When crafting the rules governing this changeover, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had been extremely charitable toward free-to-air broadcast stations. In addition to granting each station what essentially amounted to a rent-free lease on a second channel for the duration of the conversion (allowing them to simultaneously transmit in analog and digital), the FCC also refrained from placing stipulations on how stations would use their digital channels. Stations were at liberty to use these channels as they saw fit, provided they continued to offer at least one free-to-air channel that adhered to the vague public interest principles that govern the licensing of free-to-air broadcasting in the United States.

The potential uses of these new digital channels were many, and included high-definition broadcasting, multiple channels of standard-definition broadcasting, subscription channels, wireless data services, or mobile television transmission. While the majority of local stations elected to use their digital channels to transmit high-definition video, mobile television held a particularly strong appeal for broadcasters (Dickson, 2007a; Whitney, 2009). Having initially been shut out of the deals that broadcast networks struck with companies such as RealNetworks, Apple, and Google to deliver their programming via the Internet, station owners appreciated the opportunity that mobile television presented to directly tap into a new and potentially lucrative revenue stream (Dickson, 2007b). Broadcasters' investments in

mobile television also promised the return of substantial symbolic dividends. By insinuating themselves into the incipient mobile multimedia market, broadcasters stood to *remediate* their own and their industry's reputations at a time when both were suffering. Bolter and Grusin (2000) contend that remediation often entails the reform (or more precisely, the *rhetorical* rehabilitation) of one medium by another, as when a new medium's promoters present it to the public as an improvement or upgrade on an already established medium. They write: "Each new medium is justified because it fills a lack or repairs a fault in its predecessor, because it fulfills the unkept promise of an older medium" (p. 60). Although the very possibility of this reform is predicated upon an acknowledgment of the perceived inadequacies of an older medium, as an institutional practice remediation may also involve the rehabilitation of an older medium's tarnished reputation. Material and/or figurative associations with new media may imbue established media with a sheen of novelty, and may even provide new justifications for their existence. Through these associations, "old media" may shed their customary uses or their sedimented cultural meanings, in a sense becoming "new" once again.

In the case of mobile television, the nation's beleaguered broadcast industry had much to gain from an association with the mobile communications industry, which despite having its own economic problems nevertheless continued to enjoy a reputation for innovation within policy circles, the investment sphere, and public opinion. The pressures on broadcasters to reform their industry's image were particularly acute during this period. The steady stream of popular media reports forecasting the impending demise of free-to-air broadcasting placed the national networks and their affiliate stations in a position in which they were continuously required to justify their relevance. Another source of pressure originated from within policy circles. The costly and protracted conversion to DTV exacerbated anti-broadcasting sentiments that had been percolating within think tanks, academic departments, and media watchdog organizations for quite some time by this point.⁴ Local stations' repeated failures to comply with the deadlines specified by the FCC's conversion timetables resulted in the postponement of the commission's reclamation of analog television's portion of the radio spectrum. These delays prolonged stations' rent-free leases on their second channels, blocking the transfer of the analog television spectrum to the mobile communications companies and public safety organizations that had obtained the rights to occupy it following the conversion's completion.

The economic and public safety ramifications of these delays resulted in a wave of negative publicity for the broadcast industry as would-be users of the spectrum joined policy experts and media activists in demanding a reexamination of the terms under which the FCC licensed broadcast stations. Some proponents of reform made more radical recommendations, which included, for instance, "Tak[ing] TV off the air" and reallocating its spectrum to more "efficient" or "intelligent" uses (San Miguel, 2008). The crux of many spectrum reformers' arguments was that broadcasters – a group that, according to one critic, had grown so complacent that "its idea of a major innovation is the miniseries" (Platt, 1997) – were squandering the immense value of

one of the nation's most important and valuable resources. Signals transmitted in television's portion of the radio spectrum travel long distances and are capable of passing through walls and other obstructions, making them attractive for a wide variety of uses, and extremely valuable on the open market. Proponents of spectrum reform estimated the cumulative market value of broadcasters' spectrum holdings to be upwards of \$60 billion, and projected that in the hands of more "innovative" users this spectrum could generate an additional \$1 trillion in benefits for the country in the future (Eggerton, 2009). As the DTV conversion dragged on, and as the US economy sunk into recession, proponents of spectrum reform found support for their platform within the FCC and the White House. Following the election of President Barack Obama, who had pledged during his campaign to make the universal provision of broadband Internet access a priority of his administration, the FCC began formal investigations of the feasibility of reallocating spectrum from broadcasters to mobile companies and other new users.⁵

Under pressure to demonstrate to an increasingly unsympathetic policy community and public their worthiness of the choice spectrum they occupied, the nation's broadcast station owners scrambled to ready a free-to-air "mobile DTV" standard that would enable them to simulcast their channels to handheld devices. Though for the time being mobile DTV remained "vaporware" – that is, a product that is under development and thus exists only conceptually or in a prototype stage – this did not stop broadcasters from trying to sell the public and the policy community on its importance. John Caldwell (2000) describes the routine practice of promoting vaporware as "both a corporate theoretical exercise and a marketing high-wire act" (p. 6). Broadcasters in this period busied themselves with both activities, working on the one hand to stoke anticipation for a product that was still years away from being ready for the market, and on the other hand to establish a theoretical framework through which to understand the future of US media. This theoretical framework was buttressed by the structuring ideologies of free-to-air broadcasting, which since the early twentieth century have included localism, liveness, and public service (Boddy, 1990).

In various speeches, public service announcements, and press releases, industry lobbying groups such as the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and the Open Mobile Video Coalition (OMVC) made the case that this vaporware represented the best bet of ensuring these cherished principles' survival in the "digital future" (Whitney, 2005). Apart from reasserting their members' commitment to free-to-air broadcasting's structuring ideologies, these groups also highlighted the important contributions a healthy and innovative broadcasting industry would make to this future. For instance, a 2010 press release issued by the OMVC stated that:

The emerging Mobile DTV platform is the natural evolution of television and is an indispensable part of the nation's broadband solution. In the public policy debate over spectrum allocation, we urge Congress and the FCC to carefully consider the essential role Mobile DTV can play as a resource for emergency alerts, as a source for vital public information, and as an ingredient in the country's broadband future. (RBR, 2010)

The broadcasting lobby's defensive maneuvers played liberally with linear chronology: by hyping a throwback mobile DTV standard that was not yet ready for commercialization, broadcasters made retro vaporware a central element of their efforts to rhetorically create for themselves and for their industry the future that their critics and competitors argued they lacked. But despite the assuredness that characterized these lobbying campaigns, a sense of desperation persisted around mobile DTV, growing stronger as its development dragged on. As one trade journalist observed, "Mobile DTV provides a means for broadcasters to remain relevant in the 21st century. That's important, for if broadcasters don't use their spectrum efficiently to serve the majority of the population, there are many other companies out there willing to pay a high price for that spectrum" (Lung, 2009). Amongst the many groups circling broadcasters' spectrum were mobile network operators, whose own multimedia ambitions hinged upon their annexation of television's airwaves.

Emergent Technologies, Residual Protocols

During the 2000s broadcasters and mobile communications companies each identified mobile television as key to their respective industries' futures. At least initially, agendas shaped by distinctive institutional cultures, industrial legacies, and technological considerations led these two groups to pursue diverging mobile television solutions. However, the multimedia ambitions of the mobile communications industry and the survival tactics of free-to-air television broadcasters would, over time, place these two industries on a collision course. By the end of the decade, broadcasters and mobile companies' preferred methods of delivering television programming to mobile devices shared a number of attributes in common. Though these methods continued to employ incompatible transmission and reception *technologies*, the user experiences they offered were similar in that they both owed much to the *protocols* of free-to-air broadcast television.

The basis for this distinction between mobile television's technologies and protocols is Lisa Gitelman's (2006) proposal that the term *medium* be understood as encompassing both technological instruments and the "vast clutter of normative rules and default conditions [...] which gather and adhere like a nebulous array around" them (p. 7). As defined by Gitelman, *protocol* is a flexible category encompassing a medium's uses, business models, the forms its content or messages take, the standards and regulations governing its implementation, and even ideas about its cultural meanings. Though protocols have a tendency to sediment and become inertial beneath the encrustations of common sense that surround them, they remain sensitive and dynamic. Protocols may change in response to technological developments, as when the introduction of a new technology prompts the reappraisal and revision of a medium's extant regulations. But they may likewise be influenced by a much wider range of "changeable social, economic, and material relationships" (p. 8), including

the institutional practices of remediation described above. In its efforts to reform its own identity or reputation, a broadcaster, a mobile network operator, or any other institution may remediate the protocols of other media and other institutions. Protocols are in this respect *intermedial*, and register the shifting dynamics of power and status that play out in the interactions between media institutions.

The mobile television solutions explored by mobile communications companies illustrate the complex and unpredictable ways that media institutions remediate one another's protocols. For as greatly as mobile technologies have changed since US mobile network operators first began carrying television programming over their networks, mobile television's *protocols* have undergone equally dramatic transformations. The protocols that have so far taken shape around mobile television are schizophrenic and unstable, and remediate practices, forms, regulatory frameworks, and social and financial arrangements associated with broadcast and cable television, mobile telephony, and personal computers and the Internet.

The first services that used mobile networks to deliver television-like video content to US mobile phones debuted in 2003. That year, Sprint and AT&T Wireless began loading a selection of their top-of-the-line phones with software that allowed customers to access a rotating selection of about 100 on-demand video clips, many of which were sourced from broadcast television networks. Provenance notwithstanding, RealOne Mobile's video clips resembled Internet slide shows more than they did television. Due to the limited processing power of handsets and the bandwidth constraints of existing mobile networks, clips ran at between 1 and 4 frames per second (as opposed to television's 30 frames per second). Even then, similar to Internet video sites, RealOne Mobile's streams were prone to frequent buffering, pixilation, and losses of synchronization between their audio and video tracks.

If the poor picture quality of RealOne Mobile's television clips evoked the visual culture of the Internet, so too did many of the other protocols that coalesced around this and other mobile multimedia services in this period. RealOne Mobile was a mobile version of RealNetworks' RealOne GoldPass, a subscription-based multimedia service that delivered a similar selection of short television clips, as well as streaming music, radio stations, and movie trailers, via the Internet to personal computers. As RealOne Mobile was joined in the fledgling mobile television market by Verizon V Cast, ESPN Mobile, Amp'd Mobile, and Cingular Video, many of these services adopted the monthly subscription fees, clip-based content libraries, and on-demand delivery methods of Internet multimedia services. Institutional protocols were passed between Internet and mobile multimedia ventures as well – for instance, mobile television preserved the convention of third-party companies serving as aggregators of other distributors' programming. In the case of RealOne Mobile, RealNetworks acted as an intermediary between two very different types of distribution networks, licensing content from television networks and then subsequently processing and packaging that content for redistribution via mobile phone networks.⁶

The protocols that RealOne Mobile and other fledgling mobile television aggregation services inherited (or appropriated) from their Internet counterparts hybridized

with the normative rules and default conditions of the US mobile communications industry. Until recently, the United States' major mobile companies ran their networks as "walled gardens," placing restrictions upon the hardware and software their subscribers could use and the content they were permitted to access. The cornerstone of the walled garden was the subsidized handset. To entice prospective customers to enter into these "enclosures," operators offered deep discounts on mobile phones. These discounts came with two major conditions: first, customers were required to commit to a contract of a specified duration (typically 24 months); and, second, network operators modified these subsidized phones so that they worked only on their networks.

Early mobile television services replicated this business model. Network operators made available a selection of subsidized multimedia handsets loaded with software that allowed them to receive television clips and other forms of multimedia content, but only from aggregators with whom operators had standing compacts. These restrictions allowed network operators to manage their subscribers' use of multimedia services, for instance by blocking access to the Internet and its bandwidth-intensive free video sites. They also meant that all transactions between mobile television viewers and aggregators were conducted within networks' walled gardens, putting network operators in positions to negotiate arrangements in which they would be paid by both parties.

What kinds of programming could subscribers watch after signing up for one of these "walled garden" services? Much of the video content available on mobile phones during this period was repurposed from broadcast and cable television. Apart from one service that delivered a selection of 12 streaming television channels with fixed schedules, most mobile multimedia packages were dominated by short television clips presented on an on-demand basis. The most common sources for these clips were heavily segmented television formats, including news, late-night talk shows, sketch comedy series, sports highlights, and entertainment reports (Dawson, 2011). For instance, Verizon V Cast debuted in 2005 with a programming lineup that included brief highlights from *The Daily Show*, *Entertainment Tonight*, and ESPN's *Sportscenter*. Go TV presented abridged versions of weekly episodes of ABC's *Desperate Housewives* and *Alias*, while Sprint Vue featured clips culled from a selection of current and classic CBS programs, including *CSI* and *I Love Lucy* (Dawson, 2011). Though there was a great deal of talk in this period about creating short-form programming geared specifically to the small screens and limited processing power of mobile handsets, original content – that is, content not recycled from television – was scarce (Dawson, 2007). Rare exceptions included made-for-mobile spinoffs of popular prime-time television series: for example, Verizon licensed a series of minute-long "mobisodes" based on the Fox drama *24* for its V Cast service, while Cingular Video included a premium HBO "channel" featuring an exclusive *Entourage* miniseries.

Though most of the programming available from these services was sourced directly from broadcast and basic cable television networks, or else based on popular television franchises, the most direct influence on this programming's presentation remained the

protocols of early Internet multimedia services. By 2005, however, these protocols were themselves being overhauled, with the subscription-based models pioneered in the late 1990s by aggregators such as RealNetworks giving way to the “Web 2.0” model exemplified by the video-sharing website YouTube. In contrast to aggregators like RealOne GoldPass, which sourced content directly from television networks, record labels, and movie studios, YouTube operated a free video hosting service that initially relied exclusively on site visitors (and creative interpretations of “safe harbor” copyright exemptions) for content. Within a rather short period of time YouTube was joined in the web video marketplace by a number of startups that also combined free hosting services with social networking platforms. Like YouTube, these sites were free, device- and platform-agnostic, and encouraged user participation via uploading, tagging, commenting, embedding, and sharing features.

The explosive growth of YouTube and its competitors inspired an avalanche of press coverage, with some contemporary commentators identifying these sites as a harbinger of an entertainment “snacking” trend that would transform how popular media was made, distributed, and consumed (Miller, 2007). Mobile network operators were eager to capitalize on this trend, and in advertisements and other publicity materials positioned the mobile phone as the ideal “snacking” platform. They also pursued partnerships with video hosting websites: in 2006 Verizon Wireless signed a deal with YouTube granting it exclusive rights to distribute clips from the site via its V Cast multimedia service. But in keeping with the mobile industry’s “walled garden” business model, Verizon made only a curated selection of YouTube’s clips available to its subscribers. Though Verizon Wireless and other mobile network operators dabbled in the snack marketplace, most stopped well short of allowing their subscribers to venture outside of their “walled gardens” to graze at the Internet’s all-you-can-eat video buffet. Ultimately, mobile network operators were reluctant to embrace the changes Internet video’s protocols underwent during this period, in part because the “openness” these protocols aspired to was so incongruous with the concept of the “walled garden.”

As YouTube’s Web 2.0 model achieved hegemonic status online, mobile network operators found new templates for the protocols of their mobile television services in “old” media. From 2007 onward, mobile network operators began phasing out clip-based mobile television services’ on-demand protocols in favor of ones that more closely resembled those of free-to-air broadcast television. On-demand services transmitted separate signals to each individual viewer over mobile networks using a method known as “unicasting.” By contrast, the second wave of mobile television technologies employed a “multicasting” distribution model to simultaneously transmit a selection of between 8 and 14 preprogrammed linear channels that, depending on the network, might include NBC, Fox News, Adult Swim, Nickelodeon, and the Disney Channel. Although these services’ daily schedules were adjusted to reflect mobile television’s peak viewing times – the morning and afternoon rush hours – the programming lineups they offered were for the most part identical to those airing on broadcast and cable television.

Technical dilemmas posed by clip-based mobile television were a major motivating factor behind the development of multicasting technologies. For although mobile television services' subscriber numbers remained well beneath telecommunications analysts' sunny projections, it soon became apparent that existing mobile networks were not up to the task of delivering television programming to large audiences on a unicast basis. Within two years of the launch of unicast mobile television, analysts were warning that even a modest bump in viewing could overwhelm the nation's mobile networks (Reardon, 2005). The troubles experienced by the South Korean mobile network operator SK Telecom provided a preview of what might be in store if these projections panned out. In 2002 SK Telecom had been amongst the first mobile network operators in the world to offer a mobile television service. But within a year of the service's launch, the stress that it placed on SK Telecom's 3G network had grown so great that the carrier was required to build a special multicasting network just to handle its mobile television traffic. With many analysts and journalists predicting a similar fate for US operators, mobile telecommunications set out in search of alternatives to unicast mobile television.

The bandwidth crunch forecasted by telecommunications analysts never materialized. In fact, in the United States demand for mobile multimedia services lagged far behind analysts' projections, and many services launched between 2003 and 2007 struggled to attract viewers.⁷ Still, the prospect that mobile television would sometime in the future overwhelm operators' 3G networks continued to influence long-term planning in the mobile telecommunications sector. US mobile network operators explored a number of potential multicasting solutions in this period before the nation's two largest networks, Verizon Wireless and AT&T Mobility, settled on Qualcomm's MediaFLO. They also began acquiring additional spectrum as it became available. Between 2003 and 2008, Qualcomm spent \$683 million to acquire UHF spectrum for MediaFLO and other unspecified future mobile services. In 2007, AT&T purchased a nearby band of frequencies for \$2.5 billion, prompting rumors that it would launch its own competing mobile multicasting service in the UHF band. The following year, AT&T spent an additional \$6.64 billion, and Verizon \$9.63 billion, to purchase additional UHF channels that had been cleared by the DTV conversion. Even these acquisitions, however, did not satisfy mobile network operators' hunger for spectrum. Citing forecasts that demand for mobile television and other data-intensive multimedia services would in fact eventually spike, the mobile communications industry lobby, the CTIA, warned policymakers and the general public that the United States was on the cusp of a spectrum "crisis" that would cripple mobile networks and derail the nation's economy. To avert this crisis, the CTIA petitioned the FCC to free up at least 800 MHz of spectrum for use by mobile companies, preferably from the frequencies allocated to television broadcasting.

In making the case for the transfer of additional spectrum from broadcasters to mobile network operators, the CTIA repeatedly returned to arguments about the cultural and economic obsolescence of the local stations that were this spectrum's incumbent occupants. Together with allies that included the consumer electronics

industry lobby, the CTIA sponsored a massive public relations campaign in the second half of the 2000s to portray broadcasting as an undesirable use of the nation's radio spectrum. The mobile industry lobby aligned itself with proponents of radical spectrum reform in making the case that broadcasting was a medium without a future, and moreover that it constituted a roadblock on the nation's path to technological and economic progress. By continuing to grant broadcasters free licenses to use that spectrum as they pleased, the United States placed itself at risk of falling behind other countries in terms of its development and adoption of innovative wireless technologies. The CTIA claimed, on behalf of mobile network operators, the local broadcasting stations' traditional mantle as trustees of the public interest, linking the expansion of wireless networks to larger national priorities. According to the CTIA's lobbying campaigns, the reallocation of spectrum from television to wireless telecommunications would help balance the federal budget, reestablish the United States' global leadership in the telecommunications and high-tech sectors, and extend access to broadband Internet to underserved populations and regions.⁸

The tone of the CTIA's campaign for spectrum reform cut a sharp contrast to the advertising campaigns that the organization's members conducted during this period. For at the very same time that the mobile industry lobby portrayed broadcasting as irrelevant and broadcasters as expendable, mobile network operators promoted multicasting as a faithful facsimile of broadcasting. Then again, despite their incongruous tones, mobile network operators' determined efforts to establish multicasting's identity with broadcasting were otherwise consonant with the mobile industry lobby's claims on broadcast television's status and spectrum. Mobile television's promotional materials endorsed broadcasting's protocols, but only within the context of touting the mobile industry's ability to remediate them. In effect, they invited US consumers to imagine a future in which something akin to broadcasting would survive, but broadcasters most certainly would not.

"Real TV, Now on Your Phone"

Exemplary of mobile network operators' efforts to affiliate multicasting with broadcasting is a succinct slogan that appeared in some of the advertisements for Verizon Wireless's V Cast Mobile TV: "Real TV, now on your phone." The press release that announced V Cast Mobile TV's 2007 launch eliminated any confusion about what Verizon meant by "real TV" at its outset:

Were you glued to your couch to watch a great play of the big game, catch updates on the 2006 midterm elections, or witness one of those spectacular music award-show eyebrow-raisers? Or worse: how often have you missed those touchstone moments that affect a whole nation because you were on the move? (Verizon Wireless, 2007)

The “real TV” conjured up by this string of questions was television that was watched – and *shared* – with others. It was both the source and the subject of communal experiences and feelings of togetherness that cemented the bonds of the nuclear and the national family. Above all, “real TV” was *live* television, enjoyed in the moment of its transmission, as opposed to time shifted, downloaded, or watched on DVD. In this respect, it was strikingly dissimilar from the on-demand model of television that drew a large number of converts in this period, especially amongst mobile television’s target market of tech-savvy early adopters. At a moment when companies such as TiVo, Apple, and Google were dominating conversations about the future of television with their promises that their products would liberate viewers from the “tyranny” of broadcasting’s unforgiving timetables (Boddy, 2004; Carlson, 2006), Verizon presented V Cast as a throwback to television’s high network era.⁹

It is significant that each of the examples alluded to by the questions that began Verizon’s press release were of live “media events” (Dayan & Katz, 1992), broadcasts that have historically been central to both the ideology and the political economy of free-to-air broadcasting. On numerous occasions throughout the twentieth century US broadcasters defused challenges to the hegemony of the free-to-air network model by recapitulating the argument that broadcast networks’ ability to simultaneously address the entirety of the United States’ geographically dispersed population was critical to the maintenance of national cohesion (Boddy, 2004, pp. 101–102). Though decades have passed since broadcasters were the only institutions that possessed this capability, the importance of media events to the broadcast industry has grown as the national networks’ cumulative share of the television audience has declined. Broadcast coverage of major sporting events, national elections, and annual award shows continues to attract large audiences, generating significant advertising revenues and publicity for broadcasters. Equally importantly, these moments generate goodwill toward broadcasting itself. Live coverage of media events celebrates in explicit and implicit ways the institutions and the protocols of broadcasting. It invites audiences to remember what broadcasting *was*, and by extension makes the case that broadcasting can continue to play its nation-building and binding role in a digital age.

The publicity materials that introduced mobile multicasting to US consumers in this period in many instances made explicit appeals to consumers’ memories of television’s “touchstone moments,” as well as to television’s former status as the nation’s common medium. They did so in tribute to television’s history, but also in order to position the mobile phone as a worthy, and in fact superior, successor. Qualcomm, for instance, produced a minute-long commercial that doubled as an advertisement for MediaFLO and a tribute to live television. Appropriately enough, the spot aired during what was at the time the most-watched live broadcast in US history: the 2010 Super Bowl. The commercial began with a sequence of black-and-white snapshots of television’s infancy, including an Indian Head test card, a roof-mounted antenna, twisting bobbysoxers, Howdy Doody. It then segued into a rapid-fire montage of some of the most iconic moments in the medium’s history. In between brief clips of civil rights marches, the assassination of Lee Harvey Oswald, Neil Armstrong’s moon walk, the

toppling of the Berlin Wall, and the wreckage of the World Trade Center, a series of on-screen graphics invited the audience to recall their own experiences of these “touchstone moments.” “Where were you then?” the text asked. “Where will you *be*?” The montage climaxed with footage of the celebrations that followed the 2008 election of President Barack Obama. Over a shot of a waving US flag appeared the words “Don’t miss a moment.” The commercial ended on a clever trick shot: the footage on the screen rapidly pulled backward away from the viewer, revealing that it was in fact a video playing on the screen of a mobile device (SPOTBOWL, 2010).

Much like the “living timeline” described at this chapter’s outset, Qualcomm’s Super Bowl commercial retraced television’s path from the black-and-white sets of its broadcast past to the ultra-portable devices of its digital future. The layout of LG’s television museum had both literally and figuratively positioned the mobile handset at the culmination of television’s historical trajectory. Qualcomm’s rendering of television history went even further toward the conflation of convergence with progress, claiming parallels between the medium’s technological evolution and the narrative of social progress the commercial’s iconic footage conveyed. These parallels were underscored by the commercial’s montage, which began with images of black-and-white television sets, and black-and-white television images of African American civil rights protesters being attacked with fire hoses, and concluded with vibrant high-definition images of the celebration of the election of the nation’s first African American president. It was furthermore reinforced by its soundtrack, which featured a remix of The Who’s “My Generation” by the hip-hop star will.i.am. Television and the nation were together undergoing a remix of sorts, as embodied by a youthful president, innovative technologies, and a mobile populace. Put another way, both were remediated by the mobile phone.

Conclusion

The US broadcast industry’s answer to MediaFLO – and to the spectrum reform campaigns that gained momentum in the 2000s – made its belated debut in January 2010 at the annual convention of the global consumer electronics industry. That year the convention featured a special “Mobile DTV TechZone” where a group of exhibitors demonstrated prototypes of mobile devices capable of receiving signals transmitted using broadcasters’ mobile DTV standard, which had been finalized in late 2009. In remarks delivered at mobile DTV’s official launch event, NAB chief executive Gordon Smith identified local programming (which remained absent from MediaFLO systems) as mobile DTV’s most important and appealing application. Smith assured his audience that broadcasters would capitalize on this innovation to establish themselves as the leaders in the delivery of “local, live broadcast signals” to all varieties of mobile devices. “That’s the future,” Smith informed the reception’s attendees, “and it includes broadcasters” (Dickson, 2010).

Throughout 2010 broadcasting groups geared up for a mobile multicasting standards war that would pit mobile DTV against MediaFLO. This war, however, was not to be. In December 2010, Qualcomm announced that it was pulling out of the mobile television business. The following March, Qualcomm sold off the MediaFLO system's spectrum to AT&T for \$1.925 billion (Hibberd, 2010). Less than four years after its launch, the technology LG had once called "the future of television" had returned to the vapor.

With the demise of LG's industry standard multicasting solution, clashes between the mobile communications and broadcast industries migrated from mobile television to other fronts. By 2010, mobile network operators had begun to shift their priorities from developing new multimedia services capable of driving up their subscribers' data usage to coping with the strain mobile email and web browsing were placing on their networks. Broadcasters, meanwhile, gained new ammunition with which to defend themselves against accusations of irrelevance, as the popular press became increasingly enamored with the practice (or, more accurately, the premise) of "cord-cutting," or replacing costly cable or satellite television subscriptions with a combination of over-the-air DTV and on-demand Internet video-streaming video services. Though studies suggested that it would be years before cord-cutting had a significant impact on the US television marketplace (Kafka, 2011), the positive media coverage the practice received provided free-to-air broadcasters with a badly needed public relations boost. The NAB capitalized on this growing interest in DTV in public relations and lobbying campaigns that touted the affordability, reliability, and local orientation of broadcast television (Lieberman, 2011).

Clearly, the mobile communications broadcasting industries no longer require competing mobile television vaporware standards to have a reason for a row. In all likelihood, they never did. With the benefit of only a few years of hindsight it is beginning to become apparent that mobile television was for broadcasters and mobile companies a proxy battle in the much larger war over spectrum and policy concessions. To recognize that the real source of conflict between these adversaries laid elsewhere is not to suggest that mobile television was inconsequential to either industry. It is instead a way of emphasizing that recent confrontations over mobile television have taken place within the context of a much longer history of transactions between media and telecommunications companies.

Media studies provides a rich vocabulary for describing these transactions. It is thus possible to speak of the "convergence" of the telecommunications and broadcast industries' infrastructures and business models (Jenkins, 2006); of a legacy of "jurisdictional conflicts" between the two industries that stretches back at least as far as the confrontations between RCA and AT&T over control of commercial radio broadcasting in the 1920s (Altman, 2005); or of the ways in which mobile companies and broadcasters "remediate" aspects of each other's institutional cultures (Bolter & Grusin, 2000). The theoretical models associated with these terms all display strong temporal biases, and address in their own ways the relationships between the old and the new, the residual and the emergent, and the anachronistic and the cutting edge.

But as the case of mobile television demonstrates, the relationships between media and media industries may also be understood as matters of proximity and distance. Convergence, conflict, and remediation occur when the protocols that dictate the arrangements of literal and metaphoric spaces are altered in ways that breach recognized boundaries and bring formerly separate institutions into contact with one another. It is within the confines of these close quarters that the futures of our media are determined.

NOTES

- 1 In a web video produced to promote the event, LG made this argument even more explicitly, declaring the mobile television “the future of TV” (Fathom4, 2007).
- 2 AT&T Mobility is the post-2007 name of the entity formed through the merger of the Cingular Wireless and AT&T Wireless networks. In this chapter I refer to this company as AT&T Mobility, except in those instances where I refer specifically to one of the two pre-merger companies.
- 3 The source of this quote is media industry analyst Christopher Kent, quoted in Waldman (2008).
- 4 Amongst the proponents of radical spectrum reforms were George Keyworth of the Progress and Freedom Foundation, legal scholar and FCC advisor Stuart Benjamin, and Michael Calabrese of the New America Foundation.
- 5 At the conclusion of these investigations, the FCC recommended transferring 500 MHz of spectrum immediately, and an additional 300 MHz in the future, from broadcasting to mobile communications (FCC, 2010, pp. 75–79). To clear broadcasters from this spectrum, the FCC proposed a number of measures, ranging from “repacking” television into a different portion of the radio spectrum, reducing the amount of spectrum assigned to each broadcaster, and giving local broadcast stations the option of forfeiting their channels in exchange for a portion of the proceeds they generated at auction.
- 6 In addition to RealNetworks, other aggregators that began operating mobile television services in this period included the startups Go TV and MobiTV.
- 7 In 2007, the year of MediaFLO’s launch, the clip-based unicasters Mobile ESPN and Amp’d Mobile both suspended their operations due to inadequate subscriber numbers.
- 8 See CTIA’s Position Papers at its “Advocacy” webpage: http://www.ctia.org/advocacy/position_papers/
- 9 Though Verizon’s conception of “real TV” as a source of communal experiences resonated deeply with the structuring ideologies of the US model of broadcasting, Orgad (2009, p. 202) identifies a similar trope within international mobile television advertisements.

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Preemption, Premediation, Prediction

The Politics of Betting on the Future

Greg Elmer and Andy Opel

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Greg Elmer and Andy Opel discuss the preoccupation with the future, and the aim to forecast and control it in advance, through an analysis of the predictive, preemptive logic of “futures markets.” While futures markets are typically associated with speculation about future economic value, their predictive logic has also been applied in attempts to determine particular kinds of social and political outcomes, most famously in the attempt to create “terrorism futures markets” in the United States. The authors examine the forms of subjectivation that animate futures markets – the means by which certain individuals are accredited to participate in and thereby legitimize futures market metrics. In light of the global financial meltdown of 2008, they consider whether futures markets and their accompanying forms of subjectivation are systematically undermining democratic institutions, systems, and processes worldwide. Elmer and Opel’s chapter offers an innovative and compelling approach to understanding media temporality, the financial logic permeating politics, and the reorientation of subjective action around futures and speculation.

Bets are essentially predictions.

(Abramowicz, 2007b)

If this is such a good idea, why haven't the markets created it on their own?

(Stiglitz, 2003)

Media are awash with stories about the future, temporal loops, and time-bending figures that struggle with fate. *Terminators* help humans merely *survive* the inevitable “judgment day,” while *Heroes* perform unimaginable loops through time in vain attempts to stop similar apocalyptic futures. ABC’s 2009–2010 hit, *FlashForward*, offers perhaps the most compelling rendition of the always already experienced future. On *FlashForward*, future visions are experienced by the whole globe, essentially becoming synonymous with human experience. This time traveling, however, is not open ended; it is a near future, a brief experience of living almost a year in the future – just close enough to be familiar, yet distinct. It does not stretch the imagination or call for a suspension of disbelief; rather, the flash forward, the experiencing of the future, provides a seemingly universal experience and dilemma for all those on the planet, save those who are “already” dead in the near future. To not know the future, in other words, is to have already died.

What *FlashForward* suggests is a universally shared subjectivity, through individuated visions that disrupt a previously unknown future. Life stories unfold in a seemingly predetermined fashion whereupon a series of uncanny moments or clues become pieces of a puzzle that, once fully assembled, render a predetermined image, the future-as-present. This same uncanny feeling of inevitability experienced prior to the second war in Iraq led Richard Grusin (2010) to argue that media have increasingly sought to *premeditate* dangerous and risky future events, in an effort to prepare their audiences for preemptive actions. He writes:

Premediation is not about getting the future right, but about proliferating multiple remediations of the future both to maintain a low level of fear in the present and to prevent a recurrence of the kind of tremendous media shock that the United States and much of the networked world experienced on 9/11. (p. 4)

Premediation posits something of a paradox. While preferred futures need to be *premediated*, or otherwise brought into the present, their central messages, images, and tropes also invoke remediations or re-presentations, deriving from past events and mythology. (The attack on Pearl Harbor was one such re-presentation, Bush’s invocation of a “crusade” was another.) To suggest that premediation or other forms of preemptive narration similarly function as media representations, however, would negate the nonrepresentational dynamics of preemptive media politics, the instrumental components of a futurist agenda that seek to bypass dialogue and debate over future paths and solutions. As but one starting point for this chapter, we might question the logic of pre-presentations – or, as was the case in the TV series *FlashForward*, pre-presence. If we use popular culture as one important site of premediation, or

pre-presentation, we find that today the future is as much *lived* as it is viewed or imagined. It is literally a pre-presence, a living in the future-present. As we have noted before (Elmer & Opel, 2008), the notion of already being in the future is a common one, and one that suggests, rhetorically, that there are few options or alternatives. As a consequence, debate, dialogue, and dissent – key components of liberal democracies – must give way to preemptive action. Pre-presence eschews talk of likelihood and probability, in the vernacular “what-if” scenarios, in favor of “when-then” declarations of action.

While such future-focused programs speak to contemporary anxieties over future social, economic, and geopolitical risks, it is also the case that similar efforts to preassemble the future into the present have been going on for decades. Specifically, such efforts have taken the form of financialized future-risks, commodities, markets, derivatives, and other financial investments that seek to price and monetize the future. It is only relatively recently, however, that “futures markets” – trading systems that seek to establish and otherwise account for future economic value – have also sought to monetize future social and political outcomes. Such markets are more commonly referred to as “prediction or information markets,” “idea futures,” or “event futures” (Wolfers & Zitewitz, 2006). This chapter focuses in particular on financial strategies that have evolved from the University of Iowa’s Iowa Electronic Market (IEM) project,¹ which sought to establish future political outcomes through an economic market that called for “investors” to buy shares in the most likely political outcome. Established in 1988, the IEM market is now used by universities worldwide for pedagogical and research purposes. Moreover, the logic of the IEM has inspired a host of similar markets, including, as we discuss in this chapter, the controversial US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency’s (DARPA) Policy Analysis Market, also known as “terrorist futures markets.”

Unlike traditional markets that monetize future commodities, services, or contracts through an assessment of economic relationships, environmental, and even political risks, IEM-style futures or prediction markets increasingly invoke and monetize traders or investors to justify their collective future visions. For such prediction markets, monetizing risk is not necessarily the only goal. Instead, such markets also aggressively lay claim to a science of sorts, an ability to more accurately predict future events through the collective bets placed by traders. While such bets on the future are aggregated or crowd-sourced to give a larger sample of investment predictions, the legitimacy of these markets is overwhelmingly articulated as a singular act: the accrediting of individual participation in the markets.

This speculative future, then, is not simply an exercise in providing market-friendly visions of the future; rather, it is an attempt at expanding the financialization of everyday life (Martin, 2002) outward (across economic, social, and political sectors) and forward (in time), to the very contours of the possible – the unknown future. Critics of market financialization have provided compelling critiques of the recent global financial meltdown, focusing in particular on the demise of infrastructure investments, and the concomitant rise of derivative pricing (Ayache, 2010; LiPuma

& Lee, 2004) and speculative forms of commodity financing (Marazzi, 2010). This chapter builds on these critiques to interrogate the subjects of contemporary futures markets: those individuals who are accredited to participate in markets that seek to price – and give probable weight to – political, cultural, and foreign policy futures, including elections and military coups. In other words, we examine the forms of subjectivation that animate futures markets – the means by which individuals are accredited to participate within and thus legitimize such futures market metrics. And we question whether such futures markets and their accompanying forms of subjectivation may be undermining democratic institutions, systems, and processes worldwide.

Accreditation in the Future-Information Economy: Discrediting the Political

Before we move toward a more in-depth discussion of the mechanics of futures markets and prediction markets, some further conceptual remarks concerning the subjectivation of both the market and the political sphere in general are in order. Of particular concern here is the concept of accreditation, the means by which futures markets cultivate and legitimate their future-predictions with trading platforms that act as much to premeditate insider-traded or individuated risk-averse bets as they do to monetize future risk. In such a state of affairs, we again highlight the need to understand the manner in which markets themselves (and their boosters, of course) tell stories about who may – individually and socially – participate in the act of predicting the future.

In *Catégories de l'impolitique* (2005), Roberto Esposito offers a critique of influential conservative philosopher Carl Schmidt's (2007) definition of the political – one defined simply as the relationship between friend and enemy. Esposito argues, conversely, that such a relational form or definition of politics is increasingly displaced, though he reminds us that this is not to be confused with emergent apolitical or nonpartisan domains. For Esposito, politics is as much defined by negation, invisibility, or absence as it is by Schmidt's blunt and pervasive assessment of social relations and antagonisms. That which is beyond question, or autonomous, as Esposito defines it – particularly with regard to the function of the market or economy – exemplifies the "impolitic," a set of relations that are considered inevitable, as existing outside of meaning, and thus ultimately unrepresentable (2005, p. 11). Futures markets similarly feed upon an impolitics of forecasting, a truth-telling mode of intelligence gathering, with an invisible hand that is embedded not in the market as such but in the affective truth – the gut feeling – produced by investors-at-monetary-risk. To suggest that such future visions are unrepresentable, however, would miss the point. Again, the future is intensely remediated through past histories and future-images and visions, defining who we are, where we have come from, and what it *will* be like

in the future. At the same time, future mediations also invoke decidedly instrumental and impolitical techniques and logics. That is to say, predictive markets not only offer visions, they also serve to define or altogether negate a socially inclusive process of decision-making, choice, and options – in short, democratic life.

Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffrey's "Evil Media Studies" (2009) similarly suggests that media studies must move beyond critiques of representation and spectacle to an understanding of the "sorcery" of media, the "hypnotic" effects that cannot be reduced to semantic forms of critique and analysis. Following Lazzarato (2004), Guattari (1995), and others, Fuller and Goffrey suggest that media increasingly define the world around us, the very landscape upon which mediation is enabled (2009, p. 143). To suggest that such a media world is "evil" emphasizes that the structure, function, and essence of the possibilities for communication are *a priori* corrupted. However, Fuller and Goffrey's invocation of an *evil* media studies paradigm stops short of our focus on time, on a future media studies that posits an already visited or experienced future. Still, Fuller and Goffrey's *evil* media studies does posit a vision of media as embodying, or spawning from, an always already decided future, a tomorrow that cannot arrive unexpectedly since it carries with it evil intent too risky for society to ignore.

Like Esposito and Fuller and Goffrey, Bernard Stiegler (2004) concludes that the encoding of the very possibility of media, and of communication in general, follows a preemptive logic, a mode of subsistence (as opposed to existence) that proffers nothing but survival – a symbolic misery ("*misère symbolique*") (p. 30).² In *Mécréance et discrédit: la décadence des démocraties industrielles*, Stiegler's concern with future media is wrapped within contemporary networked information and communication technologies, a concern that he expresses in terms of a radical shift toward a mathematical terrain of communication. Stiegler argues that, ironically, such a statistical terrain is dominated as much if not more by collective sentiment and emotion than it is by rational or scientific probability. Such collective sentiments lie at the heart of futures or prediction markets – such markets only work, as we shall see, if individuals are motivated by fear of possible financial loss (of a bet or "investment"). Stiegler refers to such a landscape as existing "*désormais*," which importantly has two complementary definitions in French, referring both to "in the future" and to that which exists "now, going forward."

Stiegler's political critique of contemporary postindustrial life is also wedded to broader debates about the relationship between culture and economy, a shift clearly evident in the move from futures (commodities) markets to political prediction markets. For Stiegler, the economic and cultural spheres are one and the same, or at least significantly define each other. Culture, defined as collective sentiment and emotion, has come to define the domain of the economic, particularly as manifested in information and communication technologies (ICTs), networks, and digital life that "feed back" circuits of production, exchange, and consumption. Within such an "*épokhè*," as Stiegler refers to it, information capitalism suffers from a systemic mode of discredit ("*discrédit*") (p. 29). We believe that here Stiegler suggests a process

of not only disabling, misrepresenting, or marginalizing voices and opinions, but altogether removing *accreditation* – the very means and mechanisms through which one can participate in political and economic life.

Such debates over voice, authority, and accreditation are hardly new. Rather, in many respects our discussion of the preempting of democratic life dates back centuries, invoking classic definitions and debates over the possibilities and limits of democratic politics. Yet, in the modern or electronically mediated era, we argue, debates over political roles and responsibilities have intensified, particularly with regard to political justifications, mandates, and other claims of legitimacy. Claims of popular support, of course, seemingly trump all other considerations in the conduct of public life, including legal frameworks (Agamben, 2004), and even the learned opinions of individual experts, as Walter Lippmann (1997) famously defined them: “[The expert] [. . .] is certain, moreover, to exercise more power in the future than ever he did before, because increasingly the relevant facts will elude the voter and the administrator” (p. 241).

Lippmann’s views are of particular concern today as his thesis of political leadership – the need for a special leadership class of learned individuals – mirrors in many respects contemporary fears over meta-information. These fears invoke the simple fact that information, and of course opinions, are ubiquitous – making it nearly impossible to discern the truth or plan for the future. In such a state of affairs, some have claimed that new mediated spaces, such as the web and social media, have led to a degradation of authority (Keren, 2006). And at a time when political mandates have seemingly become harder to achieve, both within and outside of political legislatures, popular opinion and other forms of voter “intelligence” have become increasingly more important to politicians, corporate leaders, and other policymakers. Political opinion today, however, is not simply invoked or manipulated by the political elite to support their own predetermined plans, as some have argued (Lewis, 2001). Rather, as we detail in the remainder of the chapter, it has increasingly divested itself of any claims to mass representation, “informed” or otherwise. Markets now speak in the present about the future.

It is here that we begin to speak more of the growing influence of so-called *futures markets* – systems and platforms, not merely polls of consumer or voter opinions, that have increasingly caught the attention of policymakers, economists, data miners, and other members of the intelligence-gathering class. Such futures markets encapsulate the emerging power of accredited forms of prediction technologies and techniques that displace debate, dialogue, and discussion in favor of accredited opinions (bets) and insider trading, a process fueled by the fear of monetary loss (the market “investment”). Some have argued that betting on political outcomes can be traced as far back as sixteenth-century Italy, eighteenth-century Britain, and the nineteenth-century United States (Rhode & Strumpf, 2008). As we argue in this chapter, futures markets also have their genesis in both media and markets, for example with the emergence of the telegraph. While the telegraph facilitated the telling of stories (interpersonally, or socially through newspapers and other media), it also *produced* a

new economic landscape (as Fuller & Goffrey, 2009 likewise noted) that enabled shifting representations of everyday life. James Carey argues how the introduction of the telegraph in the United States, for instance, fundamentally changed modern perceptions of time, space, and markets. The telegraph, in other words, produced a real-time form of communication that in turn facilitated the expansion of markets both spatially (national markets) and temporally (futures commodity markets). Real-time, national communication thus fueled a speculative move in market dynamics, where changes in weather that affected crops in Florida, for instance, could be communicated across the country in real time, in effect producing a futures market price in advance of the final production cycle. Carey (1989) writes:

the significance of the telegraph does not lie solely in the decline of arbitrage; rather, the telegraph shifts speculation into another dimension. It shifts speculation from space to time, from arbitrage to futures. After the telegraph, commodity trading moved from trading between places to trading between times. The arbitrager trades Cincinnati for St. Louis; the futures trader sells August against October, this year against next. To put the matter somewhat differently, as the telegraph closed down spatial uncertainty in prices it opened up, because of improvements in communication, the uncertainty of time. It was not then mere historic accident that the Chicago Commodity Exchange, to this day the principal American futures market, opened in 1848, the same year the telegraph reached that city. In a certain sense the telegraph invented the future as a new zone of uncertainty and a new region of practical action. (p. 218)

Today, intelligence, data mining, consumer and voter behavior researchers are similarly fixated on the future, moving forward and, of course, “in” the future (as Stiegler again reminds us). These futures markets differ from public opinion polling, where individuals are asked to state or express their opinions on a series of issues, and even from telegraph-enabled futures markets, where weather patterns and their potential impact on agricultural productivity were communicated in near-real time. A key difference is that contemporary information or intelligence-based futures markets seek to accredit the feelings of individuals and “insiders” who have first-hand knowledge of variables that could possibly alter future markets, opinions, or world events. Some key futures market boosters, particularly Michael Abramowicz (2007a), also note, as Lippmann did many decades ago, that “information overload” is motivating developments and adoptions of futures markets. But such proponents almost always invoke the affective aspects of financial “investment” – what we (via Stiegler) refer to as *accreditation* – as the key component required to enable the predictive capacities of futures markets. Futures markets, in other words, serve much more than mere aggregators, ranking algorithms or other sorting machines. In short, they call for “bets,” not opinions, affinities, hopes, or even desires. “A prediction market, then, is a decision-making device for excluding from consideration predictions that no one appears willing to back with money” (Abramowicz, 2007a, p. xii).

Politically speaking, our concerns with such betting markets lie in the fact they are used to invoke the future-as-now, a not-so-subtle setting of the political and

economic agenda. Futures markets reconfigure social relations around a depoliticized model of hyper-individuation. Wage earners become wager-ers, with all the associated risks and benefits condensed down to an individual level. Where citizens participate in governing decisions, debating policy solutions to collective problems such as education, criminal justice, or traffic congestion, wager-ers seek to maximize their own profits, risking personal financial loss. Such markets thus invoke fear of economic loss (at best) to define the future as predictable. Furthermore, for some prediction markets like Intrade, both the market and the future are greatly simplified and predefined before investments are even made. In addition to such futures being overdetermined by singular events, prediction markets call into question the framing of the future in terms of “either/or” propositions. In the case of Intrade, trading in futures markets is reduced to a “yes” or “no” proposition, as its website indicates:

Intrade is a platform where you make predictions by buying and selling shares on the outcome of real-world events. These events are always defined on Intrade as a YES/NO proposition. For example, here are a few of the markets currently available:

- The Dow Jones to close on or above 13,000 on 30 Dec 2011
- Barack Obama to be re-elected President in 2012
- Osama bin Laden to be captured before midnight ET 31 Dec 2011

There are two possible outcomes to each of these events – yes, the event will happen as described, or no, it will not happen. The Dow Jones will either close on or above 13,000 or it won't. Barack Obama will either be re-elected President in 2012 or he won't. You get the idea.

This allows you take [*sic*] a clear position on each event – you can either predict the event will happen, or it won't happen. You then back up your prediction by buying or selling shares in the market. (Intrade, n.d.)

Such futures/prediction markets do not ask respondents to divulge their preferences, likes, or even dislikes; rather, they ask individuals to wager (or risk their assets) on specific future events, not what they would like the future to be or even what set of factors contribute to future outcomes. Futures market defenders, like futures market booster Michael Abramowicz, argue that such criticisms miss the point. For them, such markets cannot work with “opinions” since they are tainted by “sentimentality” (2007a, p. 6), in lieu of apparently objective gut feelings produced by the risk of financial loss. But such markets often actively promote themselves to so-called insiders, those who in fact have nothing to lose at all – quite the opposite: since insider knowledge is actively courted, their agendas are much more likely to be “predicted.” Or according to Abramowicz: “Because no one is forced to participate in a prediction market, those who participate tend to be those who have information relevant to the particular prediction or at least those who can obtain the information at low cost” (2007a, p. 7).

Abramowicz articulates the central assumption about futures markets: they will more effectively solicit “insider” knowledge – information that could not be found

by other means of collection, surveillance, or solicitation. Thus, in addition to accrediting future visions invoked by those market participants who risk financial loss (market bets), futures markets also seek out those individuals, groups, or communities that are already in positions to dictate future events. The move away from polling and intelligence-gathering techniques that seek to collectively determine potential future events and outcomes, therefore, is better understood as an enticement program. These techniques are efforts to accredit those in a position to directly financially suffer while also actively proffering financial gain to those already in positions of knowledge and control. One need look no further than the US Pentagon's 2003 "terrorist futures market" to view how the logic of such futures markets expanded to accredit wagering cynics, driven by fear and insider-opportunists whose positions in society and the economy could in fact direct future outcomes.

Betting on Terror

On July 28, 2003, the Pentagon announced the formation of the DARPA-backed Policy Analysis Market (PAM),³ or "terrorist futures market" as it came to be known. The program was designed for cultures, regions, and nations where the United States had little to no intelligence-gathering mechanisms, limited surveillance techniques, or reliable political allies. To an extent, the PAM betting system was designed to act as a new form of intelligence gathering, one that would replace overt surveillance techniques that had failed to produce actionable or reliable information in the past. While the US military had been called upon to smoke out terrorists and insurgents, PAM's market logic proposed the establishment of an embedded mechanism, an insider trading market. To use police terminology, the program attempted to create its own legion of market-enticed "informants."

In short, the PAM program proposed an online, real-time form of betting on the likelihood of the next terrorist attack (among a host of other security-related issues). As the US Defense Department noted, "research indicates that markets are extremely efficient, effective and timely aggregators of dispersed and even hidden information" (quoted in Hulse, 2003, p. A1). The PAM was based on the efficient market hypothesis, the central premise being that collective thought, and in particular insider knowledge, is more accurate than individual opinion or policy analysis from a distance. Under the PAM proposal, the Pentagon was to act as "the House," setting the odds on "literally millions of possible scenarios" (Coy, 2003). In a contradictory and somewhat confusing attempt to harness the power of market incentive while limiting the potential to profit from terror and manipulate the markets, bets were to be limited to \$100. This price cap was also said to be a way to minimize the cost to the government as it expected to lose money to well-informed investors. This cost was seen as a small price to pay for accurate information (Coy, 2003).

The program gained considerable notoriety through the media when former US Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton referred to the program as a “futures market in death” (Pethokoukis, 2004). The controversy prompted an intense debate in Washington and on cable news, where the program was attacked as “morally repugnant and grotesque,” and criticized as a potential venue for terrorists to bet for or against their own efforts and potentially profit from their actions (Hulse, 2003). A week later the Pentagon scrapped the idea. Shortly after the program was shut down, though, a chorus of economists began to articulate the rationale behind the PAM, chiding critics for injecting morality into a prediction modeling tool that was designed to prevent future attacks. Former CNN financial commentator and anchor Lou Dobbs, for one, accused the critics of PAM of “asserting the all-too-familiar orthodoxy of both Washington and New York, the capitals of politically correct-inspired conformity” (Dobbs, 2003). As details of the program emerged after its demise, the coupling of insider “prediction” and market forces became clear. George Mason University economics professor Robin Hanson, the scholar behind the model, defended the program as a way to “pay people for information about bad things” (Said, 2003).

While the semi-public version of PAM was scrapped, a privatized version has since reappeared from Net Exchange, an original partner on the DARPA-led project. The program was defended as a viable alternative to surveys and a new tool for gaining potentially valuable information. The most ethically contentious, subjective component of such a market, however, continued PAM’s accreditation of “insiders.” In a 2003 presentation to the Microsoft research department, a representative of Net Exchange (2003) discussed possible “investors” in the market: “Mossad agent thinks Hamas mil. [sic] wing will not disband – buys ~B @\$0.50.” Net Exchange president Charles Polk explained it this way: “One way to look at the use of a market-type process is that it provides a filter at the very front [and provides] the incentive to concentrate on those things that they actually know something about” (quoted in Edmonson, 2003).

Conclusion

At a time when casinos and other forms of state-sanctioned betting continue to be approved by jurisdictions worldwide, betting on political outcomes has not only become a commonplace pastime and game, it has increasingly sought to replace polling as the most accurate predictor of future electoral results. Such dubious claims of accuracy and predictability point to perhaps the most insidious anti-democratic components of prediction and markets. Putting aside the “insider wager-er” that is often less prominent in more policy-based forms of futures markets, the collective forms of intelligence that such systems invoke raise troubling questions about how political forecasting techniques can be used to preempt democratic elections.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, crowds were feared – consistently represented as dangerous masses or mobs that threatened capital from the outside. Some insist that contemporary mobs can now be “smart,” assisted by social forms of mobile communication (Rheingold, 2003). However, futures markets rely upon a much more sinister, cynical, and fearful crowd. The crowds that collectively predict the future today channel fear and loss, within a market-based mentality, as a means to posit the future-as-present. Today’s mobs, in other words, are not *represented* as fearful but instead are harnessed or harvested for their collective fear. Futures markets are constituted by fear.

To suggest that futures markets harness fear is to recognize their nonrepresentational characteristics. The goal of futures markets is to move beyond signification, representation, dialogue, and debate and into the future, or rather, into a future-act in the present, a future-oriented solution in the present to a problem that has allegedly already happened in the future. Such time-traveling-like endeavors are intensely mediated, or premediated as Grusin suggests. Yet we also argue that such futures markets actively discredit political forms of representation. In fact, they aggressively strive to undermine polling and other ways of representing political opinions as being unreliable and “sentimental.” To participate in such a forward-looking enterprise, then, one must become accredited, which is to say, risk one’s credit and, more importantly, answer the simple question: what do you *believe* will be the outcome, not what do you hope the outcome will be.

Futures market boosters thus emphasize the integrity of future visions that derive from fear and loss – from individuals betting “their own money.” In true market fashion, all value is reduced to personalized financial value, which is said to be the best indicator of collective will because people only risk their own money when they have a strong degree of confidence. This fundamental assumption about prediction markets and preemptive thinking in general denies the broader conditions of consumerism and commodity fetishism, where people will make repeated irrational, impulsive, emotion-based purchases with little regard for potential financial implications. This irrationality is essential to modern consumer society and its associated markets, allowing wealth bubbles to emerge and capital to be concentrated “before the bubble breaks.” The celebration of individual financial risk as a measure of accreditation suggests that losing money is the worst thing that can happen to an individual. Such a financialization of politics and society neglects the impacts of lost infrastructure, especially the losses to collective goods and services, such as clean water, public roads, a rules-based judiciary, and adequate schools that ensure basic literacy across the population (in the enduring struggle to prevent the emergence of a large underclass). When political changes are reduced to individual risks and rewards, personal balance sheets may reflect changes, but the social costs of policy changes are never tallied.

The irony of celebrating the visionary “wisdom” of futures markets, even as market failures have rippled across the globe, appears to be lost on futures markets’ boosters. As colossal as they have been, market failures have not inhibited the

proliferation of “betting as voting” venues or the valorization of those venues in the mass media. With policy debates that seem too complicated and muddled by competing facts hurled by opposing experts, individual agency is directed toward the betting table, where the “wisdom” of the masses or mobs overcomes the elitist predictions of the pundit class or the wishes of public opinion.

NOTES

- 1 See the website for University of Iowa’s “Iowa Electronic Markets,” retrieved from <http://tippie.uiowa.edu/iem/>
- 2 See also Marc Abeles (2006).
- 3 For an excellent collection of news reports on PAM see <http://hanson.gmu.edu/otherPAMpress.html>

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Reconstructing Accountability

Essential Journalistic Reorientations

Martin Eide

ABSTRACT

An essential challenge for media studies, in a time when newspapers are in crisis and the practice of journalism is more contested than ever before, is to understand the problem of journalistic agency. In this chapter, Martin Eide provides a foundation for examining journalistic agency by charting major shifts in the political economy and professional framework of journalism. Eide argues for renewed attention to accountability journalism – a form of journalism that holds the powerful accountable and is itself accountable to an informed citizenry. For this endeavor, he suggests that we can gain useful insights from scholarly work on the problematic of structuring. It might then be possible to understand the limits of journalistic agency and develop workable versions of accountability journalism. Some have argued that journalism, in a time when “we’re all journalists,” should simply be regarded as an activity, rather than as an institution. Eide disagrees, stressing the need to conceive of journalism as a vital social institution that needs to be reoriented toward a more viable future.

While the institution of journalism is in the midst of profound reorientations, lots of people are concerned about the future of quality journalism and democracy. Many believe that high-quality news matters. A prominent spokesman of this view, President Barack Obama, puts it like this:

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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I am concerned that if the direction of the news is all blogosphere, all opinions, with no serious fact-checking, no serious attempts to put stories in context, that what you will end up getting is people shouting at each other across the void but not a lot of mutual understanding. (Quoted in McChesney & Nichols, 2010, p. ix)

The journalism at stake is one that provides facts and constitutes the basis for an informed public. It is a journalism that feeds democracy, performs a crucial watchdog role, and holds the powerful accountable. The printed newspaper has traditionally been the key arena for this kind of accountability journalism. But during the last decades, new technology and new forms of communication have provided new platforms and new opportunities for serious journalism and democratic discourse. Simultaneously, the economic foundation for this kind of journalism in traditional as well as new media is facing severe challenges. This ambiguity generates certain professional tensions, and most prominent in this regard is the tension between the democratic functions of journalism and economic constraints.

The corporatization of the media and the logic of commercial journalism paved the way for the crisis of journalism long before the arrival of the Internet. Recently, this crisis has been intensified through a persistent decline in newspaper readership and advertising revenues – surrounded by an unprecedented media convergence with the Internet as a driving force. Together these developments have upset mainstream media practices to a new level of ambiguity. Journalism's ontology is challenged. Journalistic reorientations – including a revival of the ideals of the Fourth Estate – have become critically necessary. One thing is that journalism must hold those in power accountable. It is as imperative that journalism itself must be held accountable by an informed citizenry. In an age of essential journalistic reorientations, accountability and the social contract of journalism need to be reconstructed and sustained.

To succeed in this endeavor does not necessarily mean rescuing the institution of the printed newspaper, although the newspaper has been regarded as the main carrier of the values of accountability journalism. "Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers (Hello to a New Era of Corruption)" is Paul Starr's catchy title for an essay on the newspaper crisis published in the *New Republic* (March 4, 2009). He points to the danger reduced news coverage represents for the integrity of government. "It is not just a speculative proposition that corruption is more likely to flourish when those in power have less reason to fear exposure," Starr writes. Newspapers' role as a civic alarm system, functioning as "our eyes on the state, our check on private abuses," is in peril, according to Starr.

To a certain extent it is true that it has mainly been in the print media and in public service-oriented television and radio corporations that we have found the qualities and ideals Starr refers to. The "old media" have, so far and with some conspicuous exceptions, served as agenda setters for "new media." News items that pop up in different websites and blogs have typically evolved in traditional media of journalism. In a required reconstruction of accountability journalism, however, "new media" will have an indispensable and autonomous role to play, although the quality of the actual

journalism will be more crucial than the media platform. The content is more decisive than the carrier.

It is journalism, not the printed newspaper *per se*, that needs to be sustained. It is the professionalism and the values of the *institution of journalism* that are of vital importance, regardless of whether journalism is performed on the web or on paper. Journalism has to prove its indispensability as a public good and as an essential element in democracy's infrastructure. In a new media situation, journalism must continuously reconstruct its accountability.

What is accountability journalism more precisely? We can start with a synthetic list provided by Robert McChesney and John Nichols (2010), defining what they label "healthy journalism":

1. It must provide a rigorous account of people who are in power and people who wish to be in power, in the government, corporate and nonprofit sectors.
2. It must regard the information needs of all citizens as legitimate.
3. It must have a plausible method to separate truth from lies, or at least to prevent liars from being unaccountable and leading nations into catastrophes – particularly wars, economic crises and communal discord.
4. It must produce a wide range of informed opinions on the most important issues of our times – not only the transitory concerns of the moment, but also challenges that loom on the horizon. These issues cannot be determined primarily by what people in power are talking about. Journalism must provide the nation's early warning system, so problems can be anticipated, studied, debated and addressed before they grow to crisis proportions. (pp. 163–164)

This list covers fairly well journalism's crucial role in holding other social agents accountable and keeping the citizenry informed. It needs one important amendment, though: journalism itself must be held accountable in relation to its social obligations and ethical standards. Some kind of an accountability system must be activated to provide a rigorous account of journalism and to maintain a lively debate about journalistic quality.

Already, there is a wide range of so-called "media accountability systems" available. The phrase refers to different kinds of instruments to improve the dialogue between journalism and society. These instruments have been categorized into internal, external, and cooperative systems (Brurås, 2009). Internal versions may consist of systems for corrections and complaints, internal ombudsmen, efforts toward transparency in the editorial process, and annual accounts of journalistic shortcomings and achievements. External accountability systems may include different bodies for media criticism (such as watch blogs) and watchdog institutes. Cooperative systems may include reader panels, external ombudsmen, public hearings, and complaint channels.

In the early 1990s, the French media scholar Claude-Jean Bertrand counted 40 different versions of media accountability systems. Later on, he extended the list to 110 examples (cf. Brurås, 2009). Media accountability systems address the prevailing need

for the legitimization and justification of journalistic practice and the social role of the journalistic institution. They have been considered a “third force” of media regulations, between the law and the market, or as a middle course between the bureaucracy and the jungle, to paraphrase Claude-Jean Bertrand (2003, p. ix).

Journalism studies also faces fundamental challenges in a time when the phenomenon and concept of journalism are contested. An essential challenge is to understand journalistic agency in a time when the profession is in flux. Sustainable research of journalism should also engage in field analyses in order to grasp changing boundaries and oppositions in the journalistic field. But, and most importantly, journalism studies has to address the interplay between structure and action in an intelligent way. A quest for a “third way” might also be relevant in this domain.

Against this backdrop, this chapter elaborates further on the unsettling situation for quality journalism and some of the accompanying and essential reorientations, from a normative and institutional perspective, along three dimensions. First, the political economy of accountability journalism is considered, with an emphasis on proposals concerning public subsidies and state intervention to save accountability journalism. Second, a few points will be made concerning professionalism and journalism’s normative foundation. The key issue here will be the changing relation between journalists and their audiences (or “the people formerly known as the audience,” as the popular saying goes). Third, some future challenges for journalism studies will be emphasized, with a focus on the pressing theoretical need to understand journalistic agency under the new circumstances.

On the Political Economy of Accountability Journalism

The main feature of the traditional business model for producing news was that advertisers paid media organizations that provided them with desirable audiences, while these audiences were “provided with public affairs-oriented material that contributed to their ability to make the informed choices that are the hallmark of democratic political life” (Freedman, 2010, p. 39). The newspapers, literally, have been market intermediaries, connecting sellers and potential buyers, and as a byproduct the advertisers subsidized the production of relevant news for the citizens. “If there is one overriding factor behind the current financial crisis of the press,” Paul Starr (2009) states, “it is simply that the Internet has undermined the newspaper’s role as market intermediary. Advertisers do not need to piggyback on the news to reach consumers, and consumers have other ways to find out about products and sales.”

In this situation, there is no reason to believe that advertisers will return to newspapers, and resources for journalism are now disappearing from old media faster than new media can develop them. Consequently, journalism’s traditional business

model might be beyond a point of no return, and the political economy of journalism is changing in ways that jeopardize the future of quality journalism. There is, furthermore, not much faith in the obvious method for generating income from media content, erecting “pay walls” and charging the user. Niche newspapers, like the *Financial Times* (UK) and the *Wall Street Journal*, are among the few that have successfully charged their readers for web access. When a major player like Rupert Murdoch introduced the “pay wall” scheme in 2010 for some of his British quality papers, *The Times* and the *Sunday Times*, the strategy was met with curious interest in the news business, but very few regarded it as a viable solution. Earlier, the *New York Times* had failed with a similar attempt. Still, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and there are optimists out there – on behalf of sustainable quality journalism.

I will refer to two different optimistic accounts, which both advocate a public contribution in order to solve the crisis, but to different extents. One approach talks about a reconstruction of journalism, the other sticks to a rhetoric of life and death. The first take is provided in the report entitled “The Reconstruction of American Journalism” by Leonard Downie, Jr. and Michael Schudson (2009). The second recommendation is put forward by Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols (2010) in their book *The Death and Life of American Journalism: The Media Revolution That Will Begin the World Again*.

Downie and Schudson state that they share the distrust US citizens tend to have of direct government involvement or political influence in independent news reporting. But, they maintain: “this should not preclude government support for news reporting any more than it has for the arts, the humanities, and sciences, all of which receive some government support” (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 72). The recommendation advocated, then, is a varied mixture of ways to support news reporting, which must include nonmarket sources like philanthropy and government.

McChesney and Nichols (2010) issue a bolder diagnosis and propose a somewhat stronger medicine. They contend that it is now necessary to “face the hard and cold truth” and accept that “journalism is a public good that is no longer commercially viable” (p. 4). They state that while it “may have been true that, for much of this country’s history, commercial interests provided sufficient resources for the provision of journalism, this is no longer the case” (p. 154). They argue that it is now of major importance for the state “to institute policies to aggressively create and support journalism” (p. 110). In a reinterpretation of US media history, the authors also reject the myth of “laissez-faire” and “government-hands-off” and the tendency to hide direct and indirect press subsidies. Why institute a more central role for the state to support the journalistic enterprise? In response, McChesney and Nichols deliver a surprising answer: it is the American way.

Neither of the two academic partnerships, however, proposes a solution similar to the Scandinavian countries, with direct state subsidies to the press, although they note that those subsidies have not affected journalists’ willingness to provide criticism of governments. The Scandinavian model – or the democratic corporatist model, to

use the concept proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) – is characterized by a high level of journalistic autonomy. Countries in Northern and Central Europe (Scandinavia included) “also tend to combine strong protection of press freedom with a significant level of regulation – again reflecting the assumption that media are a social institution and not simply a private business” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 163). The democratic corporatist model is characterized historically by a high level of journalistic professionalization and by “a strong tradition of limits on state power,” combined with “strong welfare state policies and other forms of active state intervention” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 145).

A lesson to be learned from this particular model of media and politics is the possibility of a coexistence of an active state and strong accountability journalism. And it is interesting to witness a new openness regarding future business models and public support of journalism at the other side of the Atlantic.

While McChesney and Nichols write vividly about the current crisis, and even about the death of US journalism, they simultaneously stress the potential for a new and better journalism in “the age of the possible.” It is not a matter of just saving journalism “but to provide America – and the world – with a greater journalism than any of us has ever known” (p. 229). In a similar vein, Leonard Downie and Michael Schudson remind us that the means of news reporting are being reinvented, and the character of news is being reconstructed. In these exciting but challenging times for the institution of journalism, new modes for financing accountability journalism are also being implemented and explored.

Downie and Schudson document a wide variety of such initiatives to provide accountability journalism. Many of them have a local basis, many specialize in investigative reporting, many are based on collaboration between professionals and amateurs, and many have a nonprofit foundation and approach. A majority of efforts like these can be conceived of as a possible reconstruction of accountability journalism. They are responses to an overall structural challenge in the current situation for quality journalism, to preserve “independent, original, credible reporting, whether or not it is popular or profitable, and regardless of the medium in which it appears” (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 12). Simultaneously, journalism’s professionalism and its normative foundation are at stake.

On Professionalism and Journalism’s Normative Foundation

The professional framework of journalism is challenged when the relationship between journalism and its audiences is in a phase of transition. The whole idea of professionalism is under siege in the age of the amateur and the citizen journalist. One response is to redefine the role of the journalist and to engage in dialogues and

conversations with “the people formerly known as the audience.” The ways in which this is done should be subjected to investigation and discussion.

The participatory turn in the relation between professionals and amateurs in the field of journalism represents an essential journalistic reorientation. Prevailing slogans for this reorientation are “pro-am journalism” (where pro-am is short for professional–amateur), participatory journalism, and citizen journalism. Alan Rusbridger, editor of the *Guardian* in the UK, speaks about “the mutualization” of the newspaper, a process in which “our readers have become part of what we do.”

They write commentaries for our Comment is Free site – they have helped with investigations into tax avoidance and police brutality. They form communities around individual reporters and issues, lending a hand with research and ideas, bringing us up short when we get things wrong. They have collaborated on big projects needing resources beyond our scope. We have done things that would have been impossible without them. In return we give them a more diverse form of journalism and the visibility that comes from a platform that reaches some 30 million unique users a month – two thirds of them outside the U.K. (Rusbridger, 2009)

Obviously, this is a success story with a considerable potential to inspire further mutualization of journalism and new efforts toward dialogue between journalists and audience members. The flourishing of so-called user-generated content and blogging stimulates a debate about journalistic expertise: what is it, and where is it to be found?

Christopher Anderson (2008) here points to an intriguing paradox at the core of the journalistic professionalization project. While professionalization is about drawing lines of demarcation against other professions and agents, journalists’ professional identity also consists in keeping the professional borders open. For instance, there is a tendency to celebrate journalists who have entered the profession as outsiders. Furthermore, Anderson points to the still deep ambivalence among journalists toward the notion of the “journalism school.” In short, Anderson (2008) writes, journalistic expertise “seems as *generous* as it does *jealous*” (p. 263).

The mutualization of journalism also represents a generous approach toward the empowered audience and the providers of user-generated content. Journalists have to take on a new role, it is frequently argued; they can no longer act as teachers and lecturers but should engage in a dialogue with readers, listeners, and viewers. Journalism should be more of a seminar than a lecture (Gillmor, 2006, p. xxiv). Here the journalist is conceived of as a guide and a catalyst in a user-generated traffic, where the users are equal partners in a joint venture with professional journalists. But this is a false presumption, in my view, since the journalist necessarily has a different assignment and different responsibilities than the audience member or “user” of new media. There will always be a distinction between the professional and the amateur, and this relation will always be one of power and authority. In a seminar, a professor has a different obligation and responsibility than the student.

The extent to which we actually can witness a breakthrough for participatory journalism will vary from one country to another and from one context to another. Different structural features have to be taken into account in concrete studies of participatory journalism practices. Domingo and colleagues (2008) instructively demonstrate this in a study of participatory forms of journalism in 16 online newspapers in Europe and the United States. In all the newspapers they studied, only the interpretation stage was found to be significantly open to citizen participation. Beyond the comment section of the published articles, audience participation was relatively rare and diverse. Domingo et al. (2008) suggest that online newspapers' attitudes toward audience participation "are locally constructed not only in every country but also in every case, apparently shaped by specific contextual factors" (p. 335). Among such factors the following are emphasized: professional singularities, market characteristics, social particularities, and regulatory differences (p. 337).

The debate on citizen journalism and "pro-am" journalism tends to gravitate between two extreme positions. On the one hand, it is argued that a "cult of the amateur" undermines professional journalism. As a vibrant exponent of this view, Andrew Keen (2008) contends that "the ubiquity of free, user-generated content threatens the very core of our professional institutions" (p. 44). On the other hand, contributions from amateurs are celebrated for their journalistic merits and contributions to the "lifeblood of our political system" and to the "engine for our intellectual vitality" (Gant, 2007, p. 200). Journalism is a practice, an activity, not an institution, and, as Scott Gant asserts, we are all journalists now.

In order to reconstruct and maintain accountability journalism, it is, in my view, important to stick to the concept of journalism as an institution. It is in the institutional arrangement built around journalism that we find the obligations to and standards of accountability journalism. Decent journalism requires a decent journalistic institution. Citizen journalists and amateurs of different kinds, of course, can and often do deliver quality journalism. They are also free to invoke the values and norms of the journalistic institution. They might even claim the same rights as professional journalists, like "shield laws" and access privileges. But so far we do not, as citizens and news consumers, have the same right to expect citizen journalists to be committed to the values of public service and professional journalism, unless they explicitly subscribe to these values. We cannot hold any citizen journalists accountable in the same way as we do professional journalists. And we cannot expect any citizen journalist to be sanctioned when he or she commits journalistic errors and does not meet required ethical and professional standards.

The subtitle of Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's *The Elements of Journalism* (2001) reads: "What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect." Explications of what citizens should expect of journalism can be read as an outline of journalism's social contract. This contract can also be extracted from codes of ethics for journalism and other media accountability systems. Kovach and Rosenstiel's well-founded version states that "the purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing," and that in order to fulfill this task:

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners must maintain independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
8. It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience. (pp. 12–13)

The normative foundations of accountability journalism are implied in the concept of the Fourth Estate. Of course, journalism's watchdog role and the idea of journalism as a public good can be, and often are, mobilized in strategic action toward commercial ends. This does not make the ideal less valuable, even though many will find the following quote from Rupert Murdoch revealing: "Unless we can return to principles of public service, we will lose our claim to be the Fourth Estate. What right have we to speak in the public interest when, too often, we are motivated by personal gain?" (quoted in Schultz, 1998, p. 15). These words were uttered in 1961 – long before Murdoch became the media tycoon he is today. The legitimacy force in the concept of the Fourth Estate could be used and abused then, as it can be now. This calls for a critical treatment of the ideal; it does not mean that the ideal is obsolete.

On Journalism Studies in the Age of Reorientation

In understanding the making and maintenance of accountability journalism, I want to turn to the long-standing question in social theory of the relationship between structure and agency. The effort to construct a form of accountability journalism can find inspiration in scholarly efforts "to overcome theoretically the practical contradiction of the human condition: the contradiction between people making history (society, system, structure etc.) and history (society, system, structure etc.) making people," to quote Zygmunt Bauman (1989, p. 36). There is also something to be learned from Anthony Giddens (1979) and his persistent work to formulate a structuration theory. Furthermore, we can draw upon the economic historian Christopher Lloyd (1986, 1993) and *structurism* or *methodological structurism*.

In his reflections on historical sociology, Philip Abrams maintains that "in terms of their fundamental preoccupations, history and sociology are and always have been the same thing" (1982, p. x). His argument is that "at the heart of both disciplines is a common project: a sustained, diverse attempt to deal with [. . .] the problematic of structuring" (1982, p. x). Both disciplines are concerned with "the puzzle of human agency," and they both try to approach agency through an understanding of "the process of social structuring" (Abrams, 1982, p. x).

This very general proposition might appear as a pure abstraction with minimal relevance for practical research, but I would argue otherwise. Empirical historical and sociological research on journalism can be enriched through accompanying reflections on the enigma of human action, on “*shaping of action by structure and transforming of structure by action*” (Abrams, 1982, p. 3, emphasis added). An awareness of this problematic can also be instrumental in avoiding different versions of determinism, be they technological or economic.

By conceiving of structures as both a medium for and a result of action – by viewing structures as potentially both constraining and enabling – we are approaching a valid understanding of a changing journalism in a changing society, and we are doing this without ruling out the individual actors who make a difference in the process. The intriguing interplay of material, institutional, and symbolic relationships is at stake. According to Graham Murdock (1991), “the trick we need to learn is how to keep these two faces of communications – the material and the symbolic – in play at the same time and to explore their interplay without collapsing either one into the other” (p. 54). He further emphasizes that this ambition confronts us precisely with “the central theoretical dilemma of the human sciences – how to conceptualize the relations between social structures, cultural formations, and situated action” (p. 54).

In accordance with Giddens’s classic work on structure and action in the 1970s, we can conceive these concepts not as contradictory but as complementary terms, as faces of *the duality of structure*. By this notion, Giddens (1979) wants to express that “social structures both are constituted by human agency, at the same time that structures are the very medium for this constitution” (p. 5).

The interdependency of structure and action means that structure cannot be understood as synonymous with constraint (system compulsion) – structure is both force and choice; both restriction and incitement. Structures exist only as structural properties in a social system, which are organized as regular social practices. A typical expression of such structured social practices is an institution, which must be understood as a subcategory of system, that is, it must have an extension in time and space and be recognized by a majority of the members of a society. Journalism can serve as an example of such an institution, with its structured professional rules and resources.

In general there are two kinds of rules in Giddens’s account, normative elements and codes of signification. Resources are also of two kinds: authoritative (or symbolic) resources and allocative (or material) resources. I find it useful that this conception of resources includes both symbolic and material features. In order to understand journalism and journalistic reorientations, we have to take into account the different versions of rules and resources. Furthermore, we might be able to distinguish between enabling and constraining aspects of different kinds of rules and resources. Such an analytical tool might be useful in order to consider the impact of the changing political economy as well as changing professional values, for example, with reference to lists of journalistic norms and qualities, like those provided by

McChesney and Nichols and Kovach and Rosenstiel, discussed previously. The reconstruction of accountability is an active structuration where agents draw upon available rules and resources. Some resources, like the economic ones, might be constraining in relation to accountability journalism, while others, like professional values, might be enabling.

In his own writing, Giddens de-emphasizes the material resources to an unfortunate degree. Nor is he necessarily successful in his efforts to make “structure” a flexible concept detached from every aspect of constraint. Problems with Giddens’s conception of structure, consequently, have led even sympathetic critics to prefer other conceptions of patterns of relations, like Norbert Elias’s concept of “figurations” (Bauman, 1989) or a concept of “formations” (Murdock, 1993).

Elias’s approach offers the advantage of a processual perspective embedded through empirical studies. In Elias’s view, social phenomena “in reality can only be observed as evolving and having evolved” (1994, p. 186). To restrict the analysis to an either-or question or “to two antithetical states represents an unnecessary impoverishment of sociological perception on both empirical and theoretical levels” (p. 186). Figurations are in motion, they change, turn into other figurations, and it is therefore a research challenge “to develop one’s own imaginative capacity that one is able to think in figurations, and, moreover, in figurations whose normal characteristics include a tendency to change” (p. 215).

Lloyd’s (1993) project is to conceptualize and discuss methodological structurism, which he finds existing today “quite widely as an unexamined assumption within the explanations of many historians” (p. 7). Structures exist, as ensembles of rules, roles, relations, and meanings; they are real entities that are products neither of the theorists’ nor of the agents’ imaginations. They are not “reducible to characteristics of individuals or patterns of individual behaviour,” but they influence “the behaviour, beliefs, and understanding of persons, and they are knowable through the behaviour, products, and utterances of persons” (p. 39).

These approaches break with methodological individualism, with the idea that social categories and explanations can be reduced to descriptions in terms of individual predicates. Nor are these approaches compatible with traditional structure-oriented approaches, where the acting agents are seen as puppets in a structural web of influences. A preoccupation with the problematic of structuring can be a sensitizing device in attempts to come to terms with, or even transcend, the familiar dichotomy “creativity vs. constraint.” Rules and resources surrounding and present in the newsroom should be conceived as both media for and results of journalists’ action. Different journalistic criteria are probably more fruitfully understood as “rules” – in Giddens’s sense of generalizable procedures – than as causal explanations of journalistic behavior.

Furthermore, as Anderson (2008) emphasizes in a call for studies of changes in the “knowledge base” out of which journalists justify their work, knowledge and expertise are not static, ahistorical entities that occupational groups can seize. On

the contrary, they are flexible rules and resources on which the agents can draw in their structuring of new professional procedures.

A promising analytical strategy could, then, be described as *an institutional approach informed by a structuring perspective*. The object of study is current and historical changes in social relations, in figurations in the journalistic institution and between this institution and society – for example, in the form of relations toward other agents in the journalistic field, toward the market, media owners, political actors of different kinds, toward journalistic norms and ideals, and so on.

Here, I have referred to theory on a relatively general level, and of course it would be possible to pursue the task of understanding the development of efforts to reconstruct accountability journalism further, inspired by more concrete theories, for instance, in the realm of political economy. In that case, simplistic readings based in economical determinism could be carefully avoided. This endeavor will then be in compliance with modern versions of political economy, like the one advocated by Peter Golding and Graham Murdock (1991) using the buzz phrase “critical political economy.” They emphasize, precisely with reference to the work of Anthony Giddens, the need to integrate approaches of agency and structure, and the accompanying need to “think of economic determination in a more flexible way” (Golding & Murdock, 1991, p. 19). It certainly has been a problem in analyses inspired by political economy that the agents’ actions have disappeared or appeared as pure reflections of the structural circumstances. The interaction between structure and action – the structuring – tends to disappear.

Furthermore, in a political-economical vein we can learn a great deal from concrete studies of commercial journalism, like John McManus’s *Market-Driven Journalism* (1994). McManus is relatively refined in his distinguishing of a journalistic logic on the one side, and market logic on the other. However, in my view he gets too mechanistic and simplistic in his analysis of how structural circumstances shape the news. Through references to the problematic of structuring, this kind of study could be developed in a fruitful way.

A more recent study of “new media” and “old news” is also promising in its efforts to combine structure and action. Natalie Fenton’s volume, *New Media, Old News: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age* (2010), seeks to

challenge traditional divides in media and communication studies that tend to prioritize either structure (mostly from within political economy) or agency (largely situated in cultural studies) (Fenton, 2007), to reach a position that understands the place of both and seeks to uncover the dynamics of power therein. (p. 5)

There are, as we have seen, reasons to be concerned about the future of accountability journalism. There are also reasons to believe that this journalism – the journalism that feeds democracy – probably will be conducted in the future. Accountability will be reconstructed by professional journalists and by amateurs, separately and together. In a digital age and in an era of essential reorientations, core values of the institution

of journalism are in need of active reinterpretations and support. In order to understand and sustain necessary reconstructions of accountability journalism, researchers have to account for an intriguing interplay between agency and structures.

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Mending the Gaps

Connecting Media Policy and Media Studies

Victor Pickard

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Victor Pickard explores the systemic disconnect between media studies and media policy. By situating this gap within historical, intellectual, and ideological contexts, he proposes possible strategies for bridging the two areas. He suggests that, contrary to many assumptions and practices, media studies scholars should directly engage with media policy debates of critical import. The chapter addresses some of the challenges and opportunities for scholars to intervene in core media policy debates in the coming years, including discussions about the future of journalism, media ownership, public media, and Internet policies like net neutrality. Pickard concludes by arguing that media studies and communication scholars have a special role to play in helping to advance policy that enables greater democratic potentials for all of society.

Media studies and media policy would appear to be natural allies with deep affinities. But a number of barriers frequently hinder what should be a fruitful interaction. Bridging this divide would mutually benefit both areas. While media policy debates occasionally have been enriched by scholarly input in the past, the proliferation of media-related challenges facing society today calls for much more engagement from the academic community. Indeed, at perhaps no other time in living memory have

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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both the stakes for such debates been as high and the opportunity for scholars to intervene as great.

The field of media studies would also benefit from such a symbiotic relationship on at least two levels. First, the professional realm of media policy – including research positions at regulatory agencies, think tanks, nonprofit advocacy organizations, congressional offices, and other policy-oriented institutions – could serve as a viable career choice for PhDs who increasingly are seeking alternatives to academic jobs. Second, for the field of media studies to remain politically engaged in ways that affect people’s everyday lives, and to encourage public scholarship, scholars must be in conversation with key media policy debates – debates ranging from the future of journalism to core Internet policies like net neutrality. Institutions connected to media policymaking stand to gain from an influx of academically trained professionals who command a strong foundation in historical and theoretical orientations – a kind of training that only rarely comes with law degrees and other areas of expertise. Unfortunately, persistent ideological constraints, both inside and outside the academy, too often undercut these potentials.

The following chapter will address some of the challenges and opportunities for scholars to engage with media policy debates in the coming years. The primary focus will be on the US academic and media policy scenes, but much of the analysis could also apply to global relationships like Internet governance issues and neoliberal policy regimes (Pickard, 2007). Media studies and communication scholars arguably have a special role to play in advancing policy that creates greater democratic benefit for all. In particular, they can perform a number of roles and functions, ranging from pedagogy to advocacy, that can help connect dots and mend divides between theory and praxis, and between the academy and the political sphere of media policy.¹

Historicizing the Disconnect and Revising the Revisions

The divide between media studies and more politically engaged policy projects stems from several historical, institutional, and political factors. Tracing back to the origins of the field, scholarly interventions into the US media system have been discouraged by a “dominant paradigm” favoring scientific approaches to media processes that concluded media had little effect on public opinion and behavior. Although sometimes scapegoated as a convenient straw man, this “limited” or “minimal effects” tradition arguably has helped depoliticize media scholarship by relegating larger questions about ideology and power to the field’s intellectual margins. Notable exceptions, as well as revisions to familiar critiques, are increasing. For example, Pete Simonson (2008) notes that those who wish to dethrone the minimal effects model are too quick to ignore the richness of the research produced by the Bureau of Applied Social Research, much of it by women like Thelma Anderson, Thelma

McCormack, and Joan Goldhamer, who conducted qualitative, particularistic, and multi-method research. Furthermore, Paul Lazarsfeld and, in particular, Robert Merton (Simonson, 2006) included more critical descriptions of media influence early on in their work that official histories of the field often neglect. They identified, for instance, that significant social functions of mass media, such as “status conferral,” “enforcement of social norms,” and the “narcotizing dysfunction,” helped encourage conformist behavior (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948).

Nonetheless, these critical observations of how media serve as mobilizing agents largely receded as minimal effects became sanctified within the field. All too infrequently noted, however, is that the minimal effects model, codified in the discipline’s DNA by both detractors and defenders, was not foreordained. This is especially true when considering C. Wright Mills’s reservations toward some of the same data that girded Katz and Lazarsfeld’s (1955) conclusions that media, after all, had relatively little impact on people’s opinions and behavior – that instead, media effects were socially mediated and influence was transacted from media via “opinion leaders” in a two-step flow process through interpersonal networks. Mills, the leading researcher on the so-called Decatur study, questioned the interpersonal communication processes emphasized in what became the foundational book *Personal Influence*. Noting the lack of analysis related to social “stratification,” Mills drew on some of his more critical observations to pen his 1956 classic *The Power Elite*, which emphasized the role of concentrated, hierarchical power in US society that was largely missing from the Decatur study. Indeed, more recent work on the Decatur study’s origins – particularly Mills’s role – suggests a largely ignored alternative history (Sterne, 2005, pp. 71–76; Summers, 2006, pp. 33–37).

Such revisionist histories are on the rise but often do little to challenge the overall depoliticized trajectory of communication studies. Historically within the field of communication and media studies, more critical explanations of structural relationships such as those advanced by the *Power Elite* often have been neglected in favor of research that remains largely descriptive, noncritical, and micro-phenomenal. As chronicled in Lent’s book *A Different Road Taken* (1995), for the few radicals in the field’s early days like Herb Schiller and Dallas Smythe, being critical scholars was a lonely battle. A similarly forgotten trajectory can be discerned in Dallas Smythe’s memoirs, in which he wrote the beginnings of an oppositional counternarrative to the seminal *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Schramm, & Peterson, 1956). While his University of Illinois colleagues in the newly founded Institute of Communications Research (ICR) held forth on the social responsibility model, Smythe challenged them publicly and wrote screeds privately, characterizing their work as public relations for the commercial press, “equivalent in class and political economic terms to the press doctrine in the Soviet Union” (Smythe & Guback, 1994, p. 96).

Paradoxically, red-baiting would serve a role in both containing radical critiques and forcing radical scholars into the academy to escape political repression. Smythe had been red-baited by reactionaries in DC for his progressive views and again when

he first arrived at the University of Illinois.² Around the same time, another red-baited figure from postwar media policy battles, Charles Siepmann, took refuge in the academy. An early BBC pioneer and the primary author of the infamous Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Blue Book, Siepmann helped found a communications department at New York University (Pickard, 2011a). That at least two of the first communication departments not only were engaged with media policy but also harbored radical scholars dedicated to a critical orientation toward media studies suggests a heterodoxy of alternative, radical traditions not contained within official narratives. Nonetheless, it is this dominant paradigm, driven by social science research focused narrowly on media effects, which ascended, and has continued to figure centrally in histories of the field of communication.

This trajectory was not inevitable. Both Dan and Herb Schiller note the strange irony that at the exact moment the US national security state was enlisting liberal intellectuals and communication scholars to create a propaganda apparatus for nascent overseas Cold War efforts, some of these very same scholars were advocating that media have limited effects on public opinion. This contradiction would not be as glaring if it were not for the scale of their propaganda projects, as Holly Shulman (1990) describes in her history of the Voice of America. Brett Gary (1999) chronicles the debates among the “nervous liberals” who decided to keep the propaganda apparatus intact after World War II. Chris Simpson (1994) goes so far as to suggest that the field of communication would not have been institutionalized if it were not for the massive influx of governmental monies for propaganda purposes. Dan Schiller (1996) describes how “the purportedly ‘limited effects’ of the mass media were elevated by mainstream research only as the structural underpinnings of institutionalized communication were willed off limits” (p. 59). Noting how such a narrow focus keeps concerns about social relations at arm’s length, Herb Schiller observed that “[minimal effects’] usefulness to existing power is obvious” (1991, p. 146). He also asserted that even the model’s proponents acknowledged that such findings pleased media owners who felt absolved from accountability (p. 137). In response to the rise of active audience research, Herb Schiller argued, “theories that ignore the structure and locus of representational and definitional power and emphasize instead the individual message’s transformational capability present little threat to the maintenance of the established order” (p. 156). Moreover, he noted how limited effects emerged as the dominant explanatory model for media within the United States precisely at the same time that a model of powerful or “strong effects” was being deployed outside US borders. Todd Gitlin (1978) similarly noted how the focus on propaganda techniques seemed oddly discordant with the overall limited effects thrust of the field, yet he observed that this “strange conjunction of events is not without its logic” (p. 205).

Gitlin’s well-known intervention against the dominant paradigm underscores the fraught relationships between media scholars, their models, and larger political economic structures. Gitlin cast the role of mainstream communications scholars, especially practitioners of the dominant tradition of minimal media effects, as serving

the hegemonic power of capitalist society by playing a role in its reproduction and managing the status quo. In mainstream communication scholarship, he sees an allegiance to the status quo embedded in positivistic, quantitative methods, which have, according to Gitlin,

drained attention from the power of the media to define normal and abnormal social and political activity, to say what is politically real and legitimate and what is not; to justify the two-party political structure; to establish certain political agendas for social attention and to contain, channel and exclude others; and to shape the images of opposition movements. By its methodology, media sociology has highlighted the recalcitrance of audiences, their resistance to media-generated messages, and not their dependency, their acquiescence, their gullibility. (pp. 205–206)

Gitlin saw Lazarsfeld's conception of "effect" as defined narrowly to lend itself to measurement in a strict behavioral and replicable sense, thereby erasing connections to larger sociopolitical meaning and decontextualizing political relationships. Gitlin uncovered a list of what he saw as faulty assumptions underlying such work that looked for effects that were the least likely to manifest:

[Mainstream communications research] has looked at effects of broadcast programming in a specifically behaviorist fashion, defining effects so narrowly, microscopically, and directly as to make it very likely that survey studies could show only slight effects at most. It has enshrined short-run effects as measures of importance largely because these effects are measurable in a strict replicable behavioral sense, thereby deflecting meaning from larger social meanings of mass media production. (p. 206)

Gitlin also criticized the focus on "reinforcement" without expanding on ramifications such as long-term, ideological effects.

To be fair, Katz (1987) and others have countered that media effects models have not remained static and continue to develop alongside competing alternative theories. Lending weight to Katz's observation is the fact that scholarship over the past 20 years has gone far in updating the minimal effects model and clarifying its limitations. These modifications and corrections to the earlier minimal effects model range from agenda setting to framing to priming. More recent meta-analysis suggests that despite the conventional narrative that effects research has evolved according to three distinct phases (powerful, minimal, not-so-minimal), "the research corpus in media effects documents a very impressive range of effects from no effect at all to very large effects" (Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011, p. 173).

Demonstrating how quantitative methods can produce radical research is the exemplary work of George Gerbner (1980) who pioneered work on long-term, cumulative media effects, such as those demonstrated by what he termed the "mean world syndrome" – that repeated, long-term exposure to violent television imagery led to a skewed view of the outside world as inordinately hostile. His work had a profound impact on policy debates and would culminate in the "cultural environment" move-

ment. Similarly, quantitative approaches to media analysis were also prominent in early radical communication research – including Smythe’s content analyses of broadcast media – and continue to be a mainstay in media reformers’ efforts to illustrate how media fail to adhere to prescribed public interest obligations.

In short, even from a critical point of view, pluralistic approaches to media studies are necessary to encourage diverse conceptualizations of power. Although the cultural turn in communication studies prompted a number of radical scholars to argue that the field’s depoliticization only worsened (McChesney, 2007), radical scholarship on the whole has arguably become more entrenched in recent decades. To be sure, tensions continue to play out among various critical traditions – for example, in their call for a “critical media industry studies,” Havens, Lotz, and Tinic (2009) felt compelled to dismiss academics located in the Schiller and Smythe traditions “who maintain an unreconstructed Marxist theoretical framework” (p. 237). On a similar note, Henry Jenkins (2006) criticizes media reformers, whom he dubs “critical pessimists,” as relying too much on “melodramatic discourse about victimization and vulnerability” and thus ignoring the “complexity of the public’s relationship to public culture” and thereby siding “with those opposed to a more diverse and participatory culture” (pp. 247–248).

But these critiques notwithstanding, it would be fair to suggest that many of the old schisms have begun to recede. In their place, one may hope, is a more constructive approach to social problems that draws from a variety of media studies traditions. In the end, nearly all media policy research should be welcome, but there is a special role to be played by what can be termed “critical media policy studies,” an approach rooted in several of the field’s obscured critical traditions.³

A Call for Critical Media Policy Studies

A critical orientation can help galvanize a more activist intervention in media policy debates. By critical orientation I mean “an explicit skepticism toward dominant institutions, ideologies and social relations and implicit commitment to a more democratic, egalitarian, and human social order” (McChesney, 1993, p. 98). A related term is “radical,” describing scholarship that penetrates to the roots of core power relationships. Uncovering the normative foundations of power, particularly as they relate to media, should be the first objective of critical media policy scholarship – an objective very much in line with classical democratic theory. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson issued this important warning: “A democracy will not long endure without frequent return to fundamentals” (quoted in Siepmann, 1948, p. 27). In looking at the role of media in a democratic society, returning to some fundamental democratic theory could be useful, beginning with classics put forth by the likes of Locke, Milton, and Jefferson, and including more recent work by scholars like Starr (2008) and Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, and White (2009). Where the latter discuss media’s

normative underpinnings, Paul Starr (2008) puts forth a typology of three democratic theories of the press.

Within Starr's model are, on the one hand, minimalists who favor a libertarian media environment characterized, for example, by adversarial electoral campaigns. Minimalists believe that the market will effectively govern the media system, obviating any need for governmental oversight. At the other pole, according to Starr, are radical democrats who favor greater egalitarianism in media, as in all other sectors of social life, and see a potentially progressive role for state intervention to guarantee this social democracy. "In regard to communications, the radical democrat sees the market as a corrupting influence that degrades political discussion and reinforces what used to be described as the cultural hegemony of the capitalist class and is now usually just characterized as the dominance or 'monopoly' of big media corporations" (p. 37). Starr describes the radical narrative as one that "views the rise of commercial mass media under the control of large corporations as a betrayal of the original promise of the public sphere and a free press" (p. 40). Emphasis is placed on the "suppression of alternatives," including "the voices of marginalized groups and dissident journalists" and of "alternative policies that might have limited the dominance of the corporate media" (p. 40).

In Starr's view, the more sensible model is the third option, one he calls the "liberal deliberative" model. This model "does not presuppose that power must be equally distributed among citizens, nor does it count on high levels of everyday popular engagement in public affairs" (p. 37). According to Starr, "these goals, while admirable, are so removed from the realities of modern society that they cannot be conditions for political legitimacy" (p. 37). Implicit in Starr's advocacy of the liberal deliberative model is a critique of the radical approach, although he goes no further than to suggest that equitable power distributions and popular political participation simply cannot, *a priori*, be considered legitimate options. I would suggest that Starr's position is symptomatic of a major weakness of the liberal view that fails to prioritize contesting long-standing structural inequities. Although Starr gives a fair assessment of the radical political economic view, one more critical piece should be added: the radical approach assumes scholars should engage with the public to advocate for a more democratic media system.

Signs that critical policy studies are being taken more seriously in the field of communication are increasing. In recent years, national associations have held special panels for a critical approach to policy, and a number of pre-conferences and working groups have emerged to create more discursive space and allocate more resources for this growing subfield. An important collection of essays showcasing recent activist and scholarly collaborations around media policy reform is a promising development (Napoli & Aslama, 2011). Another recent edited collection served as an intervention in telecommunication debates during the lead-up to President Obama's election (Schejter, 2009). Nevertheless, critical policy studies remains a relatively minor subfield kept on the field's periphery. Among those few policy scholars working in communications departments, even fewer are conducting policy research from a critical orientation.

The Critical Political Economy Approach to Policy Studies

While critical traditions of all stripes lend themselves to policy-oriented media studies, the “critical political economy” approach is arguably the most obvious vehicle enabling structural interventions. Exposing the roots of social problems, political economists often ask questions that powerful interests – along with most mainstream research and society in general – have determined “out of bounds,” lying beyond normative, polite, and rational debate. A political economy of communications must have at least two components. First, assuming that media are central to any society, it must situate a nation’s communication system within larger social relationships and political structures. This includes interrogating how the media system challenges or reinforces power hierarchies and established interests, including how it figures within global regimes of power and imperial projects. Second, a political economy of communications should examine the structure of the communications system, including ownership, profit structures, support mechanisms (e.g., advertising and public relations), and enabling government policies. This last component can be separated out into a third mode of inquiry deserving its own category: an examination of the specific policies that give rise to a particular media system.

Political economy’s communication origins can be traced back to primarily two sources: the Institute of Communications Research in the United States and the “Westminster school” in England. Dallas Smythe initiated the former after he, like many radicals before and after him, took refuge in the academy. After essentially fleeing his post as the first chief economist at the FCC in Washington, DC, Smythe taught the first political economy course in the new field of communications. Herb Schiller took his place in the ICR when Smythe departed for an academic position in his native Canada. Smythe and Schiller would go far in establishing political economic inquiry, investigating the commodification of culture, production of media consumers, and media operations vis-à-vis US imperialistic projects.

Nicholas Garnham, James Curran, and other prominent British scholars established the Westminster school in England (Curran, 2004). Garnham’s work (1990) was inspired by a previously understudied argument by Raymond Williams, in *Marxism and Literature*, that media and cultural production should be treated as inseparable within capitalist production. In other words, a political economy of communication should figure prominently in any critical inquiry seeking to make sense of how power is inscribed and reproduced in culture. Around the same time, other British scholars including Graham Murdock and Peter Golding (1974) also made the case for a political economy of communications by examining the role of media systems within capitalist market relationships.

Many scholars of political economy drove home the fact that there is nothing natural or foreordained about media systems; they do not spring forth from Zeus’s

head fully formed. Instead, they are the direct result of explicit policies that resulted from an intensely political process. It is the job of critical political economists of media to ruthlessly scrutinize these policies, exposing their contingencies and contradictions. A crucial goal of political economists is to emphasize the power structures that produce any given media system. In the United States, or any capitalist society, this means that we must explore the reinforcing mechanisms of class divides, such as the role of corporate lobbying in media policymaking and the conservative onslaught against civil society institutions that has become increasingly mainstreamed in recent decades. A core component of political economists' project is a prescriptive social mission that entails a normative and even ethical commitment: to assist processes of social change aimed at effecting a stronger democratic society. In many cases this means butting up against status quo assumptions and assailing neoliberal capitalist hegemony. Indeed, distilled from the work of leading political economists is the assumption that disrupting orthodoxy is an essential part of the project (Gandy, 1993; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 1996).

In short, critical scholars should bring to light core injustices in our institutions, power relationships, and received assumptions by exposing the language and narratives that get deployed in ways that recreate, bolster, and inoculate power asymmetries from interrogation. The legitimacy of these enabling narratives should be called into question. As we aggressively scrutinize these social relationships, which so often serve as apologetics for the status quo, we are guided by at least an implicit commitment to social justice. Increasingly, the current system, which perpetuates power asymmetries and primarily serves in the capital accumulation process, is no longer tenable, especially given the increasing economic inequality in the United States, as well as the detrimental impact of corporate power in the wake of developments like the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*.⁴

Contextualizing the Big Picture and Returning to the Normative

In today's context of technological, political, and social change, we have reached a "critical juncture" of historic import (McChesney, 2007). As a prerequisite for engaging with media policy at this juncture, scholars must penetrate through the constraints of the reigning "American media policy paradigm" (Pickard, 2008). This discursive framework characterizes most DC-based media policy discussions, and favors technological and economic considerations at the expense of normative and democratic ones.⁵ Such an orientation tends to systematically neglect the politics of policymaking, thus ensuring that structural understandings and prescriptions for reform are kept off the table. This paradigm was evident when pro-industry groups that were aligned against mandated net neutrality attempted to portray the debate as being primarily technical instead of concerned with core democratic concerns.

FCC Commissioner Robert McDowell epitomized this position in a *Washington Post* op-ed in 2008. Referring to crucial Internet policies, he asserted that “engineers, not politicians or bureaucrats, should solve engineering problems.” The reduction of media policy to solely technical concerns and questions of efficiency is an age-old trope, recurring over the decades to contaminate debates ranging from spectrum management policy to the ownership and control of media outlets. This strategic framing has consequences: any project that depoliticizes media policy issues also undermines media reform efforts.

To counteract this misinformation, it is incumbent upon scholars to help bring crucial context to light in discussing media policy – context that *politicizes* media policy debates.⁶ By insisting that we include politics, history, and normative understandings in policy discussions, scholars help connect media policy to larger matters – matters that typically fall within the purview of scholarly debate. For example, as we account for technological changes in media systems, we can address political economic issues pertaining to the ownership and control of media infrastructure. We can ask historical questions about policy antecedents and recover alternatives while showing that the status quo is contingent on political practices (Pickard, 2010b). Finally, we can pose normative questions and advance policy prescriptions that would benefit the most people by enabling a more democratic communication system.

In addition to recovering crucial context for media policy debates, media scholars can participate in the policymaking process in at least three ways. First, we can draw from our scholarship to contribute to policy proceedings and provide reports and memos to policymakers. For example, public comment periods at the FCC and other agencies provide an opportunity for scholars to submit written statements and even entire journal-length articles that may enlighten policy discussions. Furthermore, staffers in congressional and regulatory offices are often receptive to bullet-pointed summaries of scholarly work explaining policy positions and their anticipated effects. Second, media scholars can publish popular media like op-eds, blog posts, and magazine essays to help clarify what is at stake with specific media policies. Finally, we can help engage our students in the policymaking process, encouraging and enabling their participation. I have found when discussing these issues in the classroom that my students are very receptive if I can show how policy decisions directly affect their everyday lives. For instance, policies regarding intellectual property, net neutrality, and media ownership have a major impact in shaping their daily Internet use. After demonstrating these connections, I set up classroom activities and assignments in which students create their own policy proposals addressing major media-related problems.

The overarching theme for all these approaches is that media scholars should help clarify policy issues for public consumption while encouraging people to directly engage with the policymaking process. Oftentimes, policy issues are not overly complicated but have been strategically distorted by commercial interests who stand to gain from particular outcomes. Along with net neutrality, the national debate on media ownership is another useful case study of how large sectors of the public

engaged to dramatically alter a crucial policy debate. The historical record suggests that if media policy issues are debated openly with an engaged public, the case for media reform becomes paramount. Toward these ends, we must constantly remind policymakers that when we talk about net neutrality, we are not talking about simply the mechanics of a “series of tubes” but rather the future of meaningful democratic communication in US society. When we talk about managing the public airwaves, we are not merely looking to fill gaps in the federal budget by auctioning off monopoly rights to electromagnetic spectrum to the highest bidder, but instead we hope to enable more diverse voices and information within our national discourse. And when we talk about the collapse of journalism, we are not talking about just a bad turn in the market or an inevitability of technological progress but a tragedy that is striking a core institution indispensable for democracy.

Indeed, to take just one example, the future of journalism is perhaps the most important media policy debate facing society today. Daily reports on the state of the press read like obituaries, with newspapers verging on bankruptcy or even closing, hemorrhaging jobs and ad revenue, dismantling foreign and DC press bureaus, and eviscerating local, international, beat, and investigative reporting. Other news media offer little solace, with broadcast and cable news devolving into shrill commentary, and online journalism defying monetization. But often missing from these laments is an even deeper crisis: the institution of journalism is dying before our eyes, a tragedy that goes beyond the decline of newspapers to strike at the foundations of democratic self-governance. Given the systemic failure of advertising-subsidized news and the vacuum left by its demise, it is not hyperbolic to assume that decisions made during this critical juncture will largely determine what news media will look like for decades to come. Assuming that no silver bullet or easy policy fix exists, we must ask the question: What will take the place of traditional commercial news media (McChesney & Pickard, 2011)?

First and foremost, this crisis demands a period of vigorous experimentation (Pickard, 2010a). It is also an opportunity to jettison what is bad with our current news media system, salvage that which is good, and push forward with entirely new models. Scholars can aid this process by recuperating models for possible alternatives. My particular focus in these efforts is to draw from historical and comparative analyses of international models to provide a picture of structural alternatives for journalism that either have worked – or were seriously considered – for some duration in the past, or are in operation somewhere in the world today (Pickard, 2011b). These models include nonprofit, municipally owned, cooperatively governed, and worker-run media, with institutional support and funding through tax incentives, public subsidies, foundation support, and other creative hybrids. This kind of research is a necessary first step in assessing the viability of alternative models and determining the policies and practices that can enable these institutions in ways that best serve the democratic needs of diverse communities.

Moreover, scholars can help devise policies that would benefit the most people (Meinrath & Pickard, 2008; Pickard & Meinrath, 2009). When caught up in ongoing

policy struggles, it is easy to lose sight of the necessity of historical perspective. However, historicizing contemporary policy debates is one tangible way that academics can help. Furthermore, they can help move the discourse from developing that contextualization to then communicating it to the public and key stakeholders in a way that can prompt action toward creating a more vibrant and democratic media system.

What Media Scholars Can Do

Media scholars can also help incubate alternative communication models by keeping radical visions alive and advancing them at more opportune moments, particularly during times of crisis. They can also facilitate linkages between the political world of media policy and academic communities. To be sure, while the field of media studies should engage with key media policy debates of the day, this does not mean that every media scholar should be expected to do work that directly intersects with media policy issues. But it should mean that a critical mass of scholars is doing such work. Judging from the florescence of media policy centers, conference panels and workshops, special issues of journals, foundation-supported research, job openings for tenure track media policy positions, and many other signs, a recent surge in academic interest toward media policy is evident. Yet there are still many communication departments that lack a single faculty member who works on such issues.

While the stakes for media policy debates and the opportunity for academic interventions are both great, my own participant observations from time spent working on media policy in Washington, DC amply demonstrated that engagement requires more complicated processes than scholars simply jumping into the fray. One barrier is that it can be difficult to match scholars' skill sets with particular policy problems. A second is that many scholars tend to think of policy in more abstract theoretical terms that do not always neatly map onto praxis. But perhaps the most difficult barrier is that the imperatives of the policy world – like rapidly responding to ever-shifting political landscapes and meshing research objectives with legislative and regulatory processes – do not always lend themselves to those of the academy – like publishing in academic journals, teaching classes, and working toward tenure. A major obstacle to academics becoming more involved in the policy process is that, without direct professional benefits, their time spent on these issues can seem like even more unpaid service labor in a sector that is increasingly exploited.

Nonetheless, there is much that scholars can do that satisfies multiple aims. And while we should be honest that academics infrequently produce work directly applicable to lobbying efforts, scholars have resources that advocates do not. They have time, authority, and expertise. They can connect with students and other constituencies. They can draw from a knowledge base that lends itself to a long critical view of policy battles. In general, scholars can help recontextualize and repoliticize media policy debates.

A renewed interest in media policy scholarship has been concomitant with a rising number of think tanks, particularly on the political left like the New America Foundation and the Center for American Progress, which have begun to focus more on media policy issues. Additionally, joining long-standing policy fora like the annual Telecommunication Policy Research Conference is the work of policy centers like Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Yale's Information Society Project, and Michigan State University's Quello Center, to name just a few. The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) has been centrally involved in media policy reform in recent years, as have groups of scholars at Penn State and the University of Texas, Austin. Media reform organizations, particularly Free Press, maintain strong connections to a number of media studies scholars, temporarily launching the "Academic Braintrust" (a tongue-in-cheek name) to form working groups on various media policy issues. Another interesting experiment that combines media scholarship with hands-on media policy experience is the consortium on media policy studies program (COMPASS, for which I served as a fellow in 2005). Originating with the two Annenberg schools, the University of Illinois, and the University of Michigan, this program coordinates graduate student summer fellows in a number of congressional and mostly nonprofit offices where participants are immersed in the policymaking process (Newman, 2009).⁷

While questions will continue about how media scholars can get more involved in policy and make policy more central to media studies, given the current media landscape of technological and political change, opportunities for structural reform are plentiful. By connecting media policy issues and debates directly to people's everyday lives, scholars can foster good public scholarship and provide analytical tools to the public that encourage their engagement with media policy.

Historicizing Media Policy Debates

When considering how we can design a media system that serves democratic society, we need to look to our past for lessons about the future. We need to be aware of previous policy debates both to understand how we got here and to learn from previous errors. One important lesson comes from identifying a recurring theme found in previous policy debates: the delegitimation of government intervention in general, and of media regulation in particular. The late C. Edwin Baker (2010) noted that the two arguments media industry representatives typically used to discredit public policy interventions in media were the following: first, that the government has no legitimate role in markets, and second, that the First Amendment forbids government intervention in media markets specifically. Both charges are demonstrably false. The government intervenes in markets all the time – usually to aid corporate profit – and, based on important Supreme Court decisions and other interpretations, the First Amendment can be seen as *mandating* that the government provide the

support necessary for a healthy media system. Nonetheless, pro-industry ideological blinders will continue to pose an insurmountable barrier to all progressive media policy unless we dismantle them. And the best starting point for such a project is to turn to our history.

One such historical analysis put forth by the late Tony Judt (2010) illustrates that the deregulatory turn away from social democratic orientations in the latter half of the twentieth century was marked by an emphasis on efficiency to the detriment of ethics. As a society, Judt observed, we stopped asking whether policies are good or just and instead began asking whether they are efficient and profitable. This neo-liberal turn, often traced to the 1970s, actually began in media policymaking as early as the postwar 1940s (possibly even earlier). What was chiefly an unpopular corporate consensus in the 1940s has now been elevated and adopted by a quasi-grassroots social movement in the form of the so-called Tea Party (Pickard, 2011c).

In short, it is important that we have the intellectual clarity, coupled with political will, to correct the historical record. Among policymakers and pundits it is often noted without much reflection that the “public interest” standard has remained frustratingly ill defined. While it is true that previous attempts to define standards have been fraught with conflict and difficulty, the term “public interest” has not been left undefined by lack of effort. Rather, it has remained ambiguous because industry interests fought aggressively to make it so. Previous policy clashes, where media industries prevailed, resulted in these decontextualized, ahistorical, and depoliticized narratives that, in turn, help perpetuate industry-friendly policy arrangements. Perhaps the clearest example of this phenomenon occurred in the 1940s when red-baiting successfully thwarted a social democratic approach to media policymaking (Pickard, 2010b). This history matters now because, once again, “nervous liberals” (Gary, 1999) are backtracking on structural interventions in deference to industry-friendly media policy proposals. Most recently, the policy debate around net neutrality exemplifies where a great abdication has occurred on the part of regulatory agencies like the FCC. Media ownership issues, exemplified by the Comcast–NBC merger, testify to the corporate capture of the media regulatory apparatus.

Conclusion

To summarize, media scholars can best advocate for reform via their own scholarship and popular writings, and by engaging their students as well as fellow scholars and the broader public. Through publicly engaged scholarship and writing for popular audiences, academics can help clarify what is at stake and provide analyses toward addressing media policy-related problems. Advocating for reform does not mean we must compromise our work; simply providing empirically grounded research accessible to constituencies beyond the academy helps make our work relevant and useful for media reform. By connecting how media policy issues and debates directly affect

people's everyday lives, we are doing our job of providing good public scholarship. Given the current media landscape of technological and political change, opportunities for structural reform are myriad. Media policies that will influence our democracy for the coming decades will likely be determined during this current critical juncture. Media scholars have much to contribute to these debates. It is our responsibility to provide analytical tools to the public that encourage their direct engagement with media policy. We must break through the ahistorical and apolitical limitations of the US media policy paradigm if we are to establish an ethical and democratic media system for the twenty-first century.

NOTES

- 1 Although I specifically address academic involvement in media policy debates, much of this discussion relates to debates about the role of the "public intellectual." This broader context, although beyond the bounds of this chapter, strikes at the heart of foundational questions about the purpose of knowledge production, universities, and higher learning within a democratic society – all important discussions that deserve much closer attention than I am able to offer here.
- 2 Smythe's papers at Simon Fraser University indicate that he later discovered that while at the ICR he was being surveilled for the FBI by the departmental chair, Wilbur Schramm.
- 3 One potentially fruitful conversation is between "critical media policy studies" and "critical cultural policy studies." Even if they are generally distinct from one another in terms of emphasis, they share some key assumptions, such as the following: "Critical cultural policy studies must concern itself with progressive politics, and take its touchstone as much from social movements as from policy infrastructures" (Lewis & Miller, 2003, p. 8).
- 4 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 08-205 (2010) was a landmark US Supreme Court decision that determined, based on First Amendment grounds, that corporations cannot be limited in spending money for political broadcasts in support against specific candidates during election campaigns.
- 5 It should be noted that there are normative implications in the more conservative research. For example, Wilbur Schramm and other founding figures of the field of communication made a case for what media systems in the developing world *ought* to be like (i.e., like Western media systems, which Schramm and others saw as inherently superior and democratic, precisely because they were defined by and supportive of a capitalist model of development).
- 6 These efforts to counter a narrowly technical framing of media policy could also benefit from the work of scholars who argue that technologies have politics. See, for example, Langdon Winner (1986).
- 7 Corporations such as Google have also helped spearhead similar summer fellowship programs that provide policy training. These kinds of fellowships give beneficiaries valuable training and insider experience. Many of Google's policy positions are aligned with those held by nonprofit public interest groups and it tends to maintain a laissez-faire relationship with the nature of the fellowship work, placing fellows in ideologically diverse think tanks and advocacy groups. Nonetheless, these relations also present problems and contradictions inherent in having corporations fund media policy fellowships.

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From Audiences to Media Subjectivities

Mutants in the Interregnum

Jack Z. Bratich

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Jack Bratich argues that, even as “the audience” is in crisis in the digital media era, we can still learn much from examining the construction of that audience. The audience itself is a convergence of discursive problematizations of what Bratich calls “media subjectivities.” This chapter explores a number of these problematizations in order to extract the specific dynamics of “the audience” that are still relevant, including relations between individuality and collectivity, activity and reactivity, composition and organization. Ultimately, Bratich argues, audience studies reaches a limit with the emergence of interactivity, but a limit that allows us to productively mine the past for new ways of thinking about media subjectivities.

The current media age has been described as one of transition and an interregnum, an in-between age marked by uncertainty, experimentation, and unpredictability (Jenkins, 2006; Levy, 1997). This era is one of transformation in which old categories disappear and new ones take their place. These assessments are often filled with optimism and a faith in progress. But in-between states are not solely times for improvement. Antonio Gramsci (1971) describes such states as a crisis in which “the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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of the most varied kind come to pass” (pp. 32–33). The interregnum produces change, but this change is best defined as a series of *mutations*. While we are not able to predict what will arise, we are obligated to evaluate the mutants we are becoming, as new hybrids bring with them a “terrible ambiguity” regarding their powers (Negri, 2003).

What are the new mutations in media studies? What is living and what is dead? Better yet, what is *undead*? These questions seem especially pertinent when addressing one of the traditional objects of media study: the audience. Has the audience disappeared along with mass or broadcast media? Has it turned into something else? Perhaps the “people formerly known as the audience,” as Jay Rosen (2006) puts it, can tell us, in their monstrosity, something of the history of audience studies. The moments of dissolution of certain paradigms allow researchers to see the hegemonic epoch differently. Remediation thus does not just apply to technological form and content but to the *concepts* that accompany those forms. Here we will explore some of those concepts, specifically ones relating to the media subjects called audiences.

This chapter argues that we can still learn much from examining the construction of that audience. Key terms in contemporary new media studies (e.g., convergence, collective intelligence, interactivity) carry with them a series of issues that have surrounded the discursive construction of audiences throughout the twentieth century, namely the dynamics of power relations and subjectivity. The audience itself is a convergence of discursive problematizations of what we could call “media subjectivities.” This chapter explores a number of these problematizations in order to extract the specific dynamics around them that are still relevant, including the relation of individuality and collectivity, activity and reactivity, composition and organization. Ultimately, I argue, audience studies reaches a limit with the emergence of interactivity (and its mutations interpassivity, interactivism, and inter-reactivity), but a limit that allows us to productively mine the past for new ways of thinking about media subjects.

Problematizing the Audience

As a number of scholars have noted, “the audience” is a construction (Alasuutari, 1999; Allor, 1998; Ang, 1992; Bennett, 1996; Hartley, 1992). Specifically, different ways of conceptualizing the audience are the product of *problematization*, which Michel Foucault (1988) defines as “not the representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that does not exist. It is the totality of discursive and nondiscursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false and constitutes it as an object for thought” (p. 257). These problematizations have a history that needs studying.

The audience has been an object of concern, sometimes a “problem” or threat, other times a source of anxiety, and at others a target for cultivation (Bratich, 2005).

The audience is a result of a particular configuration of power/knowledge: as a category, it emerges from various agents, institutions, and desires. These are more than ideas, as *practices* follow problematizations. The audience acts as anchor and alibi for a variety of decisions (public policy, educational, corporate production, cultural programming, funding, domestic rules).

The field of media studies needs not merely to *recover* the problematizations of the audience but to *reopen* them. The future of the audience is in its virtuality – its pre-forms that have not yet been actualized. A virtual, as Pierre Levy (1998) defines it, involves cracking open an actual to reveal the knot of tendencies or forces that invoked a resolution (the actual). Actualization is more than a selection among already constituted alternatives (a realization of one possible among possibles). Rather, it constitutes a *solution* to problem(s). Any entity (in this case a settled notion of an audience) invokes the *specter* of the improbable, the fluctuation, and thus the virtual (Terranova, 2004). Investigating the audience means asking: what are the knots that gave rise to the solution only to be occulted afterward?

What happens when we remediate and reopen a concept like audience? We not only account for the myriad associated concepts (mass, public, popular, identity, receiver, citizen, consumer) but open up the volatile tendencies that prompted *both* a number of possibles and the actual solution. We are thus not encountering a “new” audience, or even a post-audience (if by that we mean *after* the audience). Instead, we will find ourselves in a dispersed milieu of practices that come to define media subjectivity. The key dynamics involved in understanding recent developments in participatory media culture (interactivity, sociality, co-creation, collectivity, affectivity) thus find a virtual existence throughout the history of audiencing.¹

Collective Subjects: Composition and Organization

What is this media subjectivity? For one thing, we need to examine it as the nexus of power and subjectivity. How were media subjects brought into being, rendered knowable, and made into a subject upon which to intervene? A methodological key here is to remove the individual from the center of the analysis. Instead, we focus on collectivity and powers. How does the history of audiences (especially in its earliest stages) present a portal into understanding the ways of assembling and theorizing collectives?

Understanding media subjectivity as a collective matter means foregrounding the *capacities of a collective body whose existence is mediated*. This phrase is one of the virtuals encased in the history of audiences and their problems/solutions. How does it take on a special tenor in an age defined by participation, collective intelligence, the wisdom of crowds, and interactivity?

We can turn here, as many autonomist social theorists do, to Spinoza, and ask: what is a mediated body capable of? Helpful are Spinoza’s fundamental insights

into capacity, affect, and bodies, now situated within the techniques of media subjectivation:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of other bodies, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 284)

These problematizations are not just invented in a discursive vacuum – they respond to activities of media subjectivation already occurring (Bratich, 2005). As we will see, they try on the one hand to neutralize and pacify some media actions (preventing enemy propaganda from reaching targets, dissuading alternative and dissenting practices). On the other, they attempt to capture, discipline, and shape media capacities (as market, public opinion, social movement, national identity, lifestyle, community).

Problematizations of audiences have been epistemological propositions, but they have also been *interventions*. They act on other actions, as conduct on conduct. Problematizations are actions that signify certain ways of being at the same moment that they encounter other beings. And how can we characterize the latter terms here (actions, conduct, beings)? Audiences are both the objects of audiencing discourses and signs of something that *exceeds* these capturing discourses. What is this excess, this surplus? The discussion below teases out a number of concepts that allow us to get to the ontology of this surplus: accumulation, self-valorization, composition, and constituent power.

Audiences are linked to the history of what Toni Negri (2005) calls ontological constitution and “ontological accumulation.” In characterizing capitalism, his autonomist approach argues that accumulation not only belongs to capitalist regimes of value-production but also emerges “from below, from the base of life” (Negri, 1999). Species-being – defined as the capacity to take powers as objects of will, consciousness, and practice – can encounter capital without being reduced to capitalism’s interruptions and forms of violence. The autonomist concept of *self-valorization* refers to how this value-generation of creative acts infuses the immanent needs and desires of the producing community and avoids being fully captured by capital (Cleaver, 1979; Dyer-Witheford, 2004; Negri, 1991; Virno & Hardt, 1996).

Audiencing takes an audience as an object of discipline, management, and encouragement (within limits). But as a composition, constituent power, capacity, and social value (what I have elsewhere called audience-power or mediated multitude), it is never fully captured by these discourses. Processes of media subjectivation exist alongside or within the audience problematizations, constituting the *longue durée* of accumulation and self-valorization. What media subjects do, as audiences and despite them, creates surplus: accumulations of value, power, and social relationships that no longer depend on external mechanisms to organize them or to realize their

virtues. This ontological foundation is “a concrete substratum which neither the conscience nor the memory attest, but only the continuity of struggles. And all the modifications, breaks and radical innovations gather around that constructed and re-found base, around that dynamic profile of a subjective ontology” (Negri, 2005, p. 138).

It helps to think about this subjective ontology if we introduce a bifurcation, drawn from Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza. Within the forms of interaction, two processes emerge: *organization* and *composition* (Armstrong, 1997). Organization refers to processes that externally mediate the forms according to transcendent values and ideals. Power here is “a principle of organization which subordinates the activity of things to a transcendent order” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 47). This “plan of organization”

directs the development of forms and the formation of subjects but *without itself being given in that which it gives*. It is a hidden structural and/or genetic principle that organizes and defines bodies in terms of their forms and their functions, in terms of the ends they are to serve. (Armstrong, 1997, p. 48, emphasis added)

Composition, in this Spinozan framework, designates immanent processes of transmission and transduction that begin at the lowest, most mundane interactions to combine capacities. Composition refers to how bodies enter into relations with one another (how they affect and are affected) – a coming-together which cannot be predicted from the component parts or interactions. This kind of plan “has no supplementary dimension; the process of composition must be apprehended for itself, through that which it gives, in that which it gives” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 128; see also Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 265–272). Composition involves “experimentally combining powers, by entering into different relations; only in this way are the powers and capacities of any particular body discovered” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 48).

Audiences exist as both organization and composition. Each problematization is a practical intervention and mediation that exists somewhere on the continuum between transcendence and immanence, operating on different plan(e)s. Audience as organization is produced through a problematization – a selection and a resolution. It is a discursive capture around forms and functions, assembled for particular ends and often with hidden structural principles. It is a *constituted power* (Negri, 1999).

Audience composition refers to the immanent processes of media subjectivation.² Recently, terms like “grassroots,” do-it-yourself (DIY), bottom-up, peer-to-peer, and co-production have been proffered to understand these processes. Composition refers to the experimental, the emergent, the not-yet-formed, the virtual. It is the milieu out of which the problematizations are formed. Composition is the noise to the selection mechanisms of the discursive captures; it primarily exists *in virtuo*, as *constituent power*. While we can begin the empirical work of naming and recovering some lost practices, it is vital to understand the virtual existence of practices before relying on those that are actual (and thus recoverable).

In this ontological dimension we can locate the political; specifically, the relation of audiences to democracy. Democracy here is not relegated to the political order often assumed in media studies, for instance, work on audience citizenship (Butsch, 2008). This privileging of the citizen (as member of a polity, as a nation-state subject), while offering numerous insights into the various discourses that problematized media subjects, remains at the level of *constituted power*. It takes for granted a particular sociopolitical order with its accompanying subject positions (as forms and functions). But constituent power, according to Toni Negri, has a broader scope. As a creative force, it is closely tied to interactions and associations defined as the powers of *demos* or multitude. Alberto Toscano (2005) notes that an ontological analysis begins with “forms of interaction,” political associations defined by a democratic dynamic *against* transcendence.

Drawn from Spinoza’s understanding of democracy as immanence, this multitude subjectivity is self-organized (composed of interactions whose constituent power refuses and resists capture by constituted power), in order to carefully cultivate, nurture, and affirm immanent powers. It is a type of direct democracy, but one that does not presume a people that is already ready to rule – it requires attention to the interactions that compose subjectivity (individual and collective). One would have to gauge any democratic order (as constituted power) insofar as it captures or encourages democracy (as constituent powers). A more familiar version of the question here, often put to modernity, is *how does each epoch of productive forces provide and inhibit emancipatory potential?* How do mediated forms amplify or interfere with the expression and affirmation of powers?

In the remainder of this chapter, I consider these dynamics of organization and composition through a variety of terms associated with audiences: masses and publics; consumers, receivers, spectators, social identities, active audiences (decoders), and finally fans. In each case, I examine the compositional issues embedded in the problematization. This approach draws a thread through these terms to unravel the knot encased in each. The point here is to see the “post-audience” within the audience, to identify themes that prefigure, persist, and mutate today. I then assess how the recent reconfiguration of media culture (the interregnum) reworks these associations, unleashing dynamics that take on new names. Audience studies goes on because its object has disappeared: what new mutants appear in the interregnum and how were they already incubating in its previous formulations?

Associated Terms³

In this section I examine the early twentieth-century conceptualization of emergent media collectivities. These problematizations of media collectives as masses and publics offer key themes relevant to studying contemporary media subjects. Each attempt at conceptualizing the audience encodes an ambivalence, namely one of

capture and overflow, of harnessing audience-powers yet not allowing them to get out of control. How did these audiences, through their newfound media powers, become both a resource and a threat to governance? How do today's interactivated media subjects find themselves within this ambivalence?

Masses

As Raymond Williams famously put it, there are “no masses, there are only ways of seeing people as masses” (1997, p. 20). He takes this nominalism one step further by claiming that we interpret masses “according to some convenient formula [. . .] it is the formula, not the mass, which it is our real business to examine” (p. 20). So what was at stake in defining media subjects as masses? To answer that, we need to return to the moment when amassing, mediated or not, was an object of concern.

The mass finds a predecessor in *crowds*. Sociologists, among others, have continually returned to the second half of the nineteenth century to understand the emergence of collective social agents. Crowds (and the more narrowly organized mob) were defined by Gustav Le Bon and Charles McKay via associations with irrationality, loss of individuality, passion, and imitation (Blackman, 2007; Borch, 2007; Brennan, 2004; Butsch, 2008). The amassing of a multitude was seen through biopolitical lenses, as a matter of health, disease, and contagion (Blackman, 2007; Brennan, 2004; Terranova, 2007). In other words, understanding crowds existed within a discourse whose objective was managing *populations*. The problematizations of audiences-as-masses took traits from this physical crowd and applied them to a faceless mass.

This is only one strand of audience history, the one tied to mass media. Audiences were already active as politically charged collective subjects (Butsch, 2008). During the French Revolution, a people – formed in some ways as audiences of plays and printed matter – mobilized against the monarchy. In the United States counterpart, performative publicity stunts like the Boston Tea Party called forth an audience to be provoked to action. After the Revolution, theaters became sites where Republicans contested Federalists, as audience members, over the control of what was happening on stage.

But there was one watershed event that fundamentally transformed the relation between composition and organization of collective powers, thereby setting the tone for future audience dynamics. As Richard Butsch (2008) persuasively argues, the history of audience rights took a severe turn in the Astor Place Opera House Riot of 1849.⁴ The Astor Place riot was a threshold event in the articulation between audience participation and the democratic tradition of rights and customs. In these crowd actions we see a shift from the rights of the audience to stop a performance to the right of an individual member to spectate without disruption. Butsch also notes that the crackdown on theater audiences was a crucial way of policing the streets in response to working-class organization. In this moment, amassing and problematizing the theatergoers as a violent mob severed the connection of audiences with the

Revolutionary heritage. Constituent power was disaggregated and the compositional capacities of media subjects were disrupted.

Media subjectivity was transcendently organized, first by treating audience actions as crimes to be policed. After bloody repression, a new organization appeared, one that installed the rational individual at the center of audience political subjectivity (endowed with the right to consume in peace, to choose his or her commodity in a disciplined space) (Butsch, 2008, p. 32).

These kinds of amassings later proved troublesome in other sites of reception, such as early cinemas. This time the problem was not the riotous assertion of rights but the unruly interactions (argumentative, criminal, sexual) at the sites, which brought in a policy apparatus (moral, legal, architectural) to discipline cinema spectators. The responses this time were not the brutal repression of bodies on streets but a material reorganization: in addition to enforced behavioral codes (silence during shows), discipline was spatial (fixed seating, ornate theaters, cost-prohibitive entry).

During the same period (1910–1930), the problematizing discourses transformed the masses from an actively unruly agent to a passively suggestible receiver. The earlier analysts of crowds also wrestled with this ambivalence. On the one hand, we have the collective power of *too much* agency – the danger to norms and constituted arrangements. On the other hand, each individual *lacks enough* agency – vulnerable to suggestion and imitation, even to hypnosis and the contagion of passions. Moral panic discourses proclaimed that this vulnerable mass needed to be protected from itself, and responded by implementing regulatory codes. Early audience studies was an extension of protection discourses' competitive claims to authority, often involving paternal organization of media subjects around the figure of the child.

What have we extracted so far from this moment of amassing? First and foremost, we have the techniques of managing collective media subjects. At this point the collective is mostly a threat. We could call this a type of *hyperpathy*, or excessive action (at least from the problematizers' standpoint).⁵ Dangerous crowds occupy a variety of spaces, including ones with media performances.

Media subjects were organized via cultivation, a spectator-discipline according to external standards (at times via codes of audience dress and conduct) (Butsch, 2008). The organization of interactions sought to regulate behavior, producing a political subject founded on austere protocols of rational behavior: media subjectivity as a self-disciplined consumer.

Ultimately, embedded in the problematizations of audiences as masses (its virtual knot) is the emerging collective power of mediated subjects. The constituent power of audiences is defined as a threat to constituted powers (challenging protocols, evading moral gazes, and eroding institutional boundaries). Participation-power, so useful during the Revolutionary period, now encounters its Thermidor. But more than just completely repressing these powers, the reactive constituted power starts to recognize the *usefulness* of these constituent powers. How, problematizers begin to ask, can we harness *and* nullify these capacities? For a better understanding of how they answered this question, we turn to the persistent organization of media subjects as *publics*.

Publics

It is difficult to imagine the history of media subjects apart from their ongoing association with the *public*. From defining early US print journalism as a Revolutionary force to linking Internet culture with a Habermasian public sphere, the public has been a regulative ideal for the problematization of audiences. Here I want to bifurcate this notion of the public into two political components. The first dimension refers to a political order comprised of citizenship, civic participation, electoral campaigns, and policymaking, as well as the construction of a communicative civil society that underpins them. The second dimension involves mobilizing opinion and consent, and comes in the form of public relations, public opinion, and propaganda.

The public is ambivalently related to the crowd, mob, and mass. At times it is strictly differentiated from the latter concepts, and at others the public *draws upon* elements of these other terms (within limits). Take the case of Sam Adams, who helped harness the riotous energy of the aggrieved and stood aside as confrontation with the colonial regime occurred. Then, when success was achieved for the emerging political class, this energy was targeted as a security threat (to wit, Adams's role in drafting the Massachusetts Riot Act) (Sandine, 2009).

A brief example related to early US print more clearly illuminates the role of media in this ambivalence. Newspapers (and other print modes of political information) were noted for their abilities to create an impersonal, abstract body of eyes that could act as rational watchdogs on the excesses of government (Warner, 1990). This public sphere would be a space of interaction for men of letters to depersonalize their self-interests toward a greater good.

However, news was not merely a site for the emergence of this political subject. Take this quotation from Thomas Jefferson regarding Shays's Rebellion, in which small farmers rebelled against debt collection and heavy taxes: "the way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them the full information of their affairs thro' the channel of the public papers, and to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people" (quoted in Butsch, 2008, p. 81).

Shays's Rebellion was one among many signs that the Revolutionary spirit was still alive, a constituent power refusing to be nullified in a Constitution. Jefferson's sentiment makes clear that it was up to print to act as Thermidor, to prevent constituent power from continuing its ontological movement. When governments could not enact such repression, it was up to media to take on this governmentalized function.

Around a century later, we see a variation on this theme; this time with the tension between constituent and constituted power occurring *within* the press, namely as the tension that resulted in journalism's professionalization. Professional journalism arose in contradistinction to a type of popular news called "yellow journalism" (Bratich, 2008b; Schudson, 1978). This popular journalism had two components:

sensationalism (focus on scandal, imagery, emotion) and muckraking (motivated investigation, exposés of corruption, populist antagonism). The profession authorized itself in the name of the public, now defined against the disorderliness of the popular. The professional public, then, was founded on a management of certain affects (rage, resentment, empathy, pleasure) while cultivating others (scorn, disdain, loyal admiration).

A media-generated public, the key to informed citizenship, was an ideal open to all, but accompanied by the distinction between ideal subjects and the disqualified. These binaries ran down familiar lines: rationality/irrationality, reason/emotion, mind/body, discussion/action. Problematizing audiences as publics involved persuasion as well as dissuasion, the mobilization and immobilization of bodies, ideas, affects.

To understand these dual processes even further, we need to mention briefly key figures that bridge the bifurcated public (for an overview and synthesis of these pioneering perception engineers, see Ewen, 1996). For Walter Lippmann, most people were, when it came to political matters, innocent bystanders. They were deluged with propaganda and did not have the time or resources to make informed decisions. How was a spectator to distinguish the public from the private-disguised-as public? The answer here was to put the public in its place, namely as “interested spectators” (Bratich, 2008b; Ewen, 1996). Meanwhile, intellectual leaders were defined as agents with a special purpose, working to shape perception and assist in constructing that public. For these problematizers (social scientists and other “unseen engineers”), the public is to be formed via identifications with certain interests and alignment with objectives. This is done, for someone like Lippmann, via the *symbol* and images, which unify disparate positions and conflicting emotions.

In an apocryphal story, it was Lippmann himself who wrote to Woodrow Wilson urging the president to create a public-making mechanism in order to garner consent for the impending entry into the Great War. The resulting Committee on Public Information (or Creel Committee) launched the career of Edward Bernays, regarded as the father of public relations (PR). For Bernays, propaganda was necessary for democracy to narrow choices for the masses. Organization here is a type of winnowing and routing, a conduction of behavior through preassigned canals to fight off competing organizations (enemy propaganda).

George Creel, head of the Committee, saw that it was not enough to unify a population around information or principled beliefs. Needed was not “mere surface unity, but passionate belief in justice of America’s cause that should weld the people into *one white-hot mass instinct*” (in Ewen, 1996, emphasis added). The organization of publics was understood to work via *harnessing* the affective capacities previously attributed to unruly mass behavior. And it was understood that this organization required tactics that would mask their origins in the external governance agencies. Top-down directives had to appear as persuasion immanent to crowds, even coming *from* them. To accomplish this constituted-power-disguised-as-constituent power, Creel employed techniques like embedding opinion leaders in the population

(e.g., the Four Minute Men). From then on, stealth, peer-to-peer influence in organizing multitudes was to become a fixture.

The problematization of audiences-as-public *did* “take into consideration the pas-sional character of human existence” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 49). However, it did so to manage them via giving them forms and functions for ends externally imposed on the composition. It would be a mistake to think of this early public-making as a type of propaganda via the “hypodermic needle” model of communications. It is not a matter of injecting a message into people’s minds/brains. Rather, it involves a more nuanced perception management: identification, exercising desire, guiding attention. There is no unidirectional insertion by a mechanism here: it draws and attracts, seduces and evokes. As a public-making machine, this early audiencing involved capturing affections and controlling collective attention (Ewen, 1996, p. 136). Moreover, audiences were not just passive spectators but needed to be activated by “signals” to identify enthusiastically with narrative heroes, to inhabit dynamically the position of the official protagonist. A nascent form of active audience research was exhibited here, though it could be more accurately called “activated” audience research.

Managing the growing power of masses was paramount at this time, which meant devising means of recruiting, directing, and harnessing them (Ewen, 1996). The public was to be both domesticated and persuaded (to align with a position): an identification and a recruitment around an Us/Them. According to Edward Bernays, twentieth-century populations were more difficult to coordinate and unify than in the past, since in “modern nation-states any large undertaking needs public approval” (Ewen, 1996, p. 166). On the one hand, masses “throw their newly gained strength in the desired direction” (p. 167). At the same time, those masses cannot escape seduction by enemy forces, so “an antidote to willfulness” must be invented, according to Harold Lasswell (p. 175). The public becomes that antidote, organized through propaganda. Early audience studies was part of a broader public-making dispositif, where pastoral power meets psychology. This dispositif sought to understand how desire is composed in order to direct and conduct the powers toward transcendent ends. The audience is a target of knowledge and interventions – knowing the masses (crowd behavior, social psychology) in order to transform them via media instruments into publics aligned with constituted power.

Most importantly, however, there was an already-existing composition that needed *transforming*. Remember that the context for the problematization of audiences here is crisis, struggle, war, and specifically the *resistance* to war, the reluctance to be mobilized. This intransigence against external manipulation is what, for many problematizers, needed eroding via a “white-hot mass instinct” directed by the state for war.

At the same time that a public was being mobilized through persuasion, then, others were being immobilized through *dissuasion* (Virilio, 2000). The Espionage Act, and later its amended version as the Sedition Act, restricted the types of mediated expression for subjects. The Sedition Act criminalized “any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States [. . .] or

the flag of the United States, or the uniform of the Army or Navy.” Arrests were made for speeches, films, newsletters, anti-draft pamphlets, and other media forms. Along with the Palmer Raids, which resulted in mass arrests, these Red Scare, anti-dissent mechanisms all worked to ensure that only *particular* opinions and actions would be operational in the name of the public. Democracy, then, was the production of a particular type of demos, a constituted one in which the two publics worked together (e.g., one could become a rational citizen after and through PR’s dissuasion/persuasion).

To summarize then: one audience dynamic can be defined as *Public vs. Mass* (exclusion, banishing, dissuasion). Here cultivation is a prophylactic *against* masses. Suppressing uprisings, defusing dissent, immobilizing actions: mass power here is the inchoate composition whose powers have taken no constituted form but are eroding already-existing, constituted forms. This occurred in Jefferson’s call for news to act as Thermidor, in the Astor Place crackdowns, and the panics over cinema audience behaviors.

Another dynamic is the *Public as Transmuted Mass* (mobilization, cultivation, incitement). This appears first in the revolutionary heritage of mediated constituent power. Later, problematizers like Lippmann, Bernays, Creel, and Lasswell find within masses the necessary historical elements (the rise of mass power) that need careful study and conduction. Their mediated dimension is crucial: a wholesale mobilization of images, symbols, and affects, via the emerging systems of film, journalism, advertising, and propaganda, bifurcate mass constituent power into useful and dangerous, both now determined by constituted power. The power of media subjects to refuse and to self-organize was still recognized, so the reactive dispositif (a.k.a. enlightened political leaders) was forced to decompose these emerging forces.

The transmutation of a mass into a public is an action upon what Foucauldian scholars call the “population,” which was a recently emerging object of calculation during the turn of the twentieth century. According to Tiziana Terranova (2007), the public is not derived from a notion of civil society but from the biopolitical element of population. The population emerges along with the domain of the virtual, as an indefinite object imbued with powers and potentials. As Foucault (2005) put it, “the naturalness of the population makes it continually accessible to agents and techniques of transformation *on condition that these are enlightened, reasoned, led by analysis and calculus*” (p. 62, in Terranova translation, p. 137).

Masses bridge the population and the public by recognizing the vitality of collective media subjects, who are no longer primarily repressed but exercised, seduced, provoked, and canalized. The public is thus not just enacted as disembodied information and impersonal action. It arises out of the biological, economic, and spiritual life of a population. Governance mechanisms worked on this biopolitical sphere, including media subjectivity. Sometimes this was directly commissioned by the war-making state (mobilizing citizens to war and dissuading dissenters). Later, these mechanisms dispersed into the knowledge field – in universities, marketing research units, private foundations and think tanks, and then back into electoral campaigns and public opinion techniques. Attempts were made to organize populations under

elite orchestration, while preempting the compositional powers of independent activism. One of the main institutions that directed these populations in their desires and everyday lives is the consumer industry.

Consumers

The problematization of media subjects as consumers has been perhaps the most thoroughly studied development in media studies, so few words will be spent summarizing it here. Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1997) define modern consumerism as the fusion of communication and selling, a merger of the audience (of mass-distributed ads) with buying subjects (of mass-produced goods). Consumer research throughout the twentieth century sought to understand the powers of desire through social science techniques, in order to stimulate and harness them. Knowledge here, of course, was designed to guide desirous behavior. A population identification shift occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from religious, political, and ethnic traditions to ones based on aleatory individual selves whose desires could now be fulfilled with goods (Lears, 1983). In addition, subjects needed to change the conception of themselves from producers to consumers. A whole series of discourses, techniques, and institutions arose to channel old and new aspirations toward consumption and individualism.

Here we have the foundations for understanding contemporary collectivity: an aggregate of individuations, each with presumed desires that can be resolved individually in the consumer sphere. From the 1920s development of whisper copy/scare tactics to the twenty-first century's "affective marketing" with its emphasis on love and intimacy, consumer audience research has sought to know and insinuate itself into the subjectivation processes. Collective subjectivity is increasingly turned into individual brand attachments, encouraged and spurred via media (ads, stealth marketing stunts, games, environments, social media, and social interactions on and around brand platforms).

Critics of this consumer cultivation of media subjects need mentioning here, especially critical theory most often associated with the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer and Adorno's culture industry (2001) thesis is key to understanding audience powers and media subjectivity as composition/organization. Within the critical theory framework, the mass was depicted as targets, as deceived, as unable to resist. However, it is important to note that this framework refused to call it *mass* culture, as this would presume a bottom-up compositional culture that *inherently* lent itself to conformity and herd-like behavior. The Frankfurt School thus was not exactly an extension of the "culture and civilization" approaches from earlier decades (which themselves drew upon theories of the crowd). The culture and civilization sentiments were defined by fear of the masses, by the nineteenth-century desire to repress or, when able, to domesticate the passions of populations.

The culture industry thesis, in contrast, highlighted the class conflict at the heart of culture (Durham Peters, 2002).⁶ Classes were targeted and turned *into* masses by the culture industry. They were made to function as interchangeable, akin to industrial products. In other words, the industry operated by *organizing* media subjects (as consumers, as conformists, as submissive, as passive). Adorno and Horkheimer were describing, in grim and humorous detail, these organizing techniques. The authors bore witness to a tendency of turning culture into a factory, but not to make claims about human beings being conformists, sheep, and dopes. Instead, they used shock theory to activate the will of the industry's subjective targets, to transmute pacified (not passive) media subjects into compositionally active ones.

Critical theory, to be sure, attributed to the massified media subjects a weak capacity for resistance. But this was neither an innate nor ahistorical ontological trait: not inherent in the composition of forces, but an historical artifact. Near the end of his followup (in "Cultural Studies Reconsidered"), Adorno (2000) remarks on the "deep unconscious mistrust" shared by audiences (p. 37). The culture industry is thus responsible for transforming media subjectivity's powers *into* masses and then despising them, obstructing their tendency toward collective emancipation.

Recipients (a.k.a. Active Receivers)

The earliest propaganda research (later renamed public opinion and persuasion research) defined media subjects partially as passive recipients, as vulnerable (to enemy propaganda). But rather than define audiences as passive, we could say they were *potentially activated* (by any side's messages). In this way, we could see this early moment as a controlled modification of activating and pacifying receivers.

When persuasion research turned to a limited effects model, then, it was no major departure from early propaganda. Media subjects are still embedded in personal relations, which could be used to the advantage of the compliance seekers. Two-step flow models looked for a flexible counteraction to media subjects' resistance, developed feedback mechanisms to overcome media subjectivity intransigence (or the armored capacity to be affected) by highlighting the importance of human intermediaries.

This two-step tactic is a kind of immersion into composition, using indirect means to guide and organize from the bottom up (recall the Creel Committee's Four Minute Men). Peer influencers operate as what Raymond Williams (1997) called "agents" as opposed to "sources" – they exist as disseminators for others' agendas: bridging, translating, and mediating the transfer of the hidden source's message. In other words, a transcendent organizing effort. Even with limited effects models, then, the rationales remain the same – to understand and direct mobile, nomadic, "undecided" media subjects.

Active receivers take a different track later. As part of public opinion, media subjects can provide feedback (mostly on the effectiveness of campaigns directed at

them). This feedback mechanism finds its Cold War pinnacle in the audience research known as “uses and gratifications” – a framework in which the media subject is characterized as an abstract psychological individual guided by reason: a seeker of need fulfillment. As critics note, this approach overemphasized individual needs at the expense of understanding the social basis of needs and practices, overemphasized the mentalistic/psychologistic dimension, and ultimately was too functionalist. Media subjects here were ahistorical and collectivity meant an atomized aggregate of individuals, rather than social interactors and groups (Elliot, 1974).

Spectators

Across the Atlantic, media scholars were not so sanguine about the free, self-transparent media subject. Drawing primarily from the psychoanalytic tradition, film analysts and cinema theorists shaped a large body of work. While their primary object of study was not the audience (but rather the text, narrative codes, or cinematic apparatus), their equation of the audience with *spectators* set the agenda for much media scholarship. Psychoanalysis as such is preoccupied with the development of subjectivity, so it is no surprise that this spectator takes up a central position in the analysis. The subject of course is not equivalent to an individual. The subject is a temporary location, a space, a position, a function of a structuring system. A media subject was *placed* by an apparatus, which involved the material arrangement of the representational system, including the theater (lighting, seating, projection, screen) as well as the behavioral codes (immobility of the body, silence) (Bazin, 1967–1971; Metz, 1977). This subject was also interpellated by the dream-like discourse of the textual system.

The spectator’s activity entailed another set of operations, understood via psychoanalysis, namely the psychic processes that institute subjectivity. The spectator’s actions are unconscious, the dynamic play of forces of desire involving *projection* and *identification* (similar subjective processes that earlier in the century formed the basis for organizing techniques of PR and advertising). While psychoanalytic media studies saw its authority wane in the twenty-first century after decades of cultural studies’ critique, it bequeathed a number of key insights worth reviving in an age marked by participation, user-generation, and convergence.

This tradition reminds us that self-possession is itself a fantasy. It highlights, first, that users of systems are not free agents but enter into a space determined by codes, apparatuses, programs, and pathways. Moreover, those users do not necessarily (inter)act primarily through cognitive, rational, instrumental means. They are filled with contradictory desires, unconscious motives, and powerful (often hidden) fantasies. Subjectivity depends on *identification* with the objectives of system and its positions. In an intellectual context where cognitive studies and uses and gratifications models reinstall a single-minded rational individual at the center of research, it is important to preserve these shadow self practices.

Social Identities

Alongside psychology, another critique of the free and abstract individual emerged, but this one was also a critique of that psychoanalytic framework. This one saw *social relations* as determining identity, which would inform any uptake of the position of spectatorship. Understanding that any media subject is raced, gendered, sexualized meant complicating notions of both autonomous and determined media subjects.

While often called “identity,” this approach has not defined media subjectivity as a univocal, coherent, or self-possessed entity. Understanding audiences as identities meant foregrounding social division, hierarchies, and power differentials – not only to represent diverse media subjects, but also to undermine presumptions of a universal audience. The identity turn recognized texts as ideology, but also highlighted the counterpower of readings to refuse and rework representations. This asymmetry brought antagonism squarely into the heart of media subjectivity. Gender analyses were particularly exemplary.

Within feminist approaches to media subjectivity, gender is more than a demographic category. First, it was noted that the very diminution of mass or pop culture depended on *feminizing* the audience (Huyssen, 1986; Modleski, 1986; Petro, 1986). Second, much of cultural studies audience research was prompted by gender issues. The salvaging of pop culture from its debased status as low culture or trash culture was done via heavily feminized genres like romance novels (Radway, 1984), soap operas (Fiske, 1987; Geraghty, 1991), and young women’s magazines (McRobbie, 1982). Laura Mulvey’s (2001) canonical intervention-essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” remains one of the most reprinted essays in media studies. Her partial break from psychoanalysis was even more notable for spurring myriad responses *within* feminist studies. Gender analyses, far from toeing a particular line about identity in media subjects, were sites of ongoing debate and proliferation of difference.

Janice Radway’s (1984) germinal work on romance reading continued this tradition of controversy and brought to light the third element of gender and audiences, namely that gender identity and politics were often negotiated *through* media forms. Feminism has been directly engaged with the politics of representation and visibility, often within media texts (e.g., images of roles for women, body types, depictions of subordination as well as invisibility).

This concern with media has continued through the contemporary work on third-wave, postfeminist, and girlie culture research. Media subjectivity here continues to be concerned with representation; no longer as primarily a source of disempowerment but a type of subjective empowerment. Third-wave feminism raises questions about empowerment through commodity culture, spurring debate about the politics of pleasure and fantasy, and the ability to control appearances as a mode of agency. Moreover, gendered media subjectivity has moved beyond questions of consumption and reception to matters of *production*, be it via low-fi, DIY media (Kearney, 2006; Piepmeier, 2009), high-tech channels (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Lange, 2007; Senft, 2008),

or something in-between like the resurgence of craft culture (Bratich, 2010a; Robertson, 2006).

Girl power, as a mix of unresolvable tensions between agency and conformity, is the perfect example of contemporary audience power issues. The ambivalence of power (as system of oppression and as subjective capacitation) and of desire (as empowered self-expression and as Stockholm Syndrome-like decapacitation) is the forefront of understanding media subjectivity today. Gender and media (and more broadly, identity and media) are not particular cases of media subjectivity (whose unmarked general status is already gendered), but a terrain where contemporary issues around composition/organization are *first* negotiated.

Active Decoders

The active audience moment, like the identity moment, complicated the uniformity of the psychoanalytic interpellative system and its spectator subject by highlighting the social dimension. There was a gap between the viewing position of ideological spectatorship and the live individuals who occupied it, and this gap allowed for refusals, evasions, and contradictions. Texts can offer specific positions, but they cannot guarantee them.

The active audience turn in cultural studies arose from a different nexus of concerns than the active receiver of uses and gratifications. US mass communications research had operated within a problematic defined originally by persuasion studies, propaganda research, and direct effects on receivers. Media power was questioned for its effectiveness; understanding audiences meant highlighting the capacity of abstract individuals to work around message compliance (an obstacle) or to satisfy freely their psychological needs (a cause to champion). To put it in blunt Cold War terms, British cultural studies examined resistance to capitalist ideology through active audiences, while in the United States the activity of media subjects signified the American exceptionalist triumph of democracy in media culture.

Turning back to the Marxist problematic, then, popular culture became a resource for social actors to create resistant politics. John Fiske (1987, 1989), contrary to many of his detractors, did not simply celebrate or affirm consumer choices as resistant acts. Pop culture itself was not resistance but a *site of struggle* between power and resistance. Focusing on the vigor and vitality of people demonstrates, for Fiske, the *possibility* of social change and motivation to drive it. In other words, Fiske's analytic emphasis was on the virtual rather than the actual. His perspective located antagonism and conflict in the heart of what was taken to be homogeneous, common culture. He also framed this active media subject within a longer history of popular intransigence, persistence, and tenacity. He used Michel de Certeau's approach to pop culture (a series of operational schemas embedded in a long history of strategy, games, and war). This opened up commodity culture to an archaic *ontology*. Media subjectivity was an expression of a being through time, a contemporary formulation

of an historical ontology. It is this popular ontology, a type of constituent power, that would enact structural changes – not all at once, but after a long erosion and weakening of constituted power.

Finally, Fiske insisted on a media subjectivity that was not solely defined by a grim political composition whose only exit was a consciousness-raised rational action. Pleasure and play were not distractions from proper political work but part of the composition of one's everyday life that could become sources of resistance and transformation (while also remaining immanent and not just directed toward a transcendent organizational end, even if political).⁷

The active audience moment took a number of directions. Bodily and spatial dimensions were teased out, as in the ethnographies of domestic spaces and relations (Gray, 1999; Hay, 2003; Silverstone, 1996). Fiske's work was pilloried within cultural studies for its purported celebratory sentiments. Consumer culture apologists took it up as justification for the desires of media subjects (turning audience activity into the pluralism of choice rather than the proliferation of conflictual differences).

But perhaps the most prominent and lasting outcome of the active audience turn was the rise of fan studies. Fiske's most famous intellectual progeny, Henry Jenkins, has come to be identified with the success of fan studies, from his germinal *Textual Poachers* (1992) to the recent touchstone *Convergence Culture* (2006). What happened in between is significant, as he went from championing the underdog to depicting how the marginal became the victor. It is this line – the problematization of audiences as fans – that will open us up to the contemporary conjuncture that allows an assessment of the future of audience studies.

Fans

A quick summary of fans as media subjectivity is in order. Fans are more than active audiences. They produce their own culture, starting with the creation of artifacts (letters, columns, and zines, as well as collages, clubs, websites, conventions, videos, games). Their activity involves collective display and circulation.

Fan production involves two things relevant for the present argument: creating a *community* and creating a *world*. Fandom requires an individual's decoding power but is defined via the ensuing intersubjective and communicative practices. Fans shift across programs (following a genre, auteur, theme) to construct a fan community. Sociality and communication among audience members increase audience power insofar as media subjects increase connectivity and produce cultural value. Second, fans do not just generate interpretations, they make worlds through their own cultural production (videos, fan fiction, gatherings, online communities). As Jenkins (1992) notes, the fictional world is not created by the original text into which an audience steps; it is created by fans through texts and other artifacts (we can think here of such places as the Xenaverse, Buffyverse, or Potterverse).

But here we can extract a key element from the fan problematization by asking: what kinds of worlds? While the capacity of fans to produce worlds expresses the

powers of media subjects, it is also done through a necessary attachment to a commodity already given. The text or product's position is *ambivalent*: it is a resource for community and creative powers, but also an identificatory pole. This is the vexed nature of fan desire – attachments both composed by them and organized by the commodity/brand. The corporate structuration of those worlds not only limits possible extensions (through property battles), it draws value from fan interactions.

The ambivalence results from what social theorists call real subsumption, in which cultural production (even and especially from the grassroots) is fully commodified as value-maker. Fan work is revalorized – as buzz generator, as attention-attractor, as brand-enricher, as community-builder. To celebrate fan movement from the margins to the center of production means overlooking this process.

Instead of a fan victory, we can frame the process as fans being willingly captured or bought off with minor rewards (the flattery of being recognized, the social status within small groups, the occasional financial breakthrough of superfans). At the very least, we could say that fans are encouraged to express themselves as long as the communication is (potentially) valuable. Rather than seeing the marginal subjects as having moved *themselves* to the center (resulting in power sharing and co-creation), we can see that they were *made to function*; they were organized to produce financial value and to become workers in a social media factory.

None of this argument denies the empowerment of fans *as fans*. What is at issue here is the elevation of the fan into the media subject prototype for political actions. The ambivalence of fans as media subjects involves the tension between resistance and conformity. What are the identifications possible in a world constructed by subsumption? What types of antagonism are possible? We can briefly invoke the spirit of subcultures here, as subcultures lent themselves to lifestyle marketing (via their insularity, the internal hierarchies, the underestimation of capital's ability to tap subcultural practices for their value-generation).

With subsumption, where can we locate fan antagonism? While fan power occasionally impacts noneconomic discourses (e.g., religious censors), for the most part antagonism is drawn between fans and owners (be they auteurs like George Lucas or collective controllers like Electronic Blizzard). Fan antagonism, while having a potential for resistance to models of value-extraction and exploitation, is often reduced to modifying some of the terms of engagement. Their identification with, and dependence upon, external commodity forms makes their powers as media subjects more harnessable as majoritarian world-making than resisting in the name of a world to come.

Interactivity as/in the Interregnum

Fan subjectivity takes us to the defining issues of the audience in the interregnum. This interregnum has been referred to as convergence, participatory, configurable, remix, interactive culture. While some analysts narrow this down to recent technical

developments, media subjectivity shows us that digital and online tools have intensified and extended already-existing practices. The increase in collective powers (as unruly and harnessable), identification practices, social antagonism, creation of sociality and worlds, and the dynamic between organization and composition all find new salience, even as they are mutating. The following section takes these virtuals from the remediation of audience studies and maps their relevance to the interregnum. I focus on interactivity, not for its own sake but in order to unfold the virtuals in the concept. I also discuss its mutations (interpassivity, interactivism, inter-reactivity).

Convergence culture has been noted for the blurring of boundaries, collapse of binaries, and production of new hybrids (Jenkins, 2006). What are the remixed media subjects? How do we see the past morphing into future forms? Contemporary scholarship has already named some of these mutants: producers, prosumers, co-creators. At times, these hybrids take previous types and merge them as equals (and then occasionally tease out some minor asymmetries). Do hybrids equalize internal differences or are they composed of *unequal* elements? How do we reconstitute conflict, contradiction, and antagonism in convergence? A term like interactivity is as good a place to start as any, and the following paragraphs link it to a number of already discussed virtuals (identification, control, labor, conflict) to understand contemporary media subjectivity.

The technical protocols associated with new media have surpassed the most celebratory of the active audience problematizations by making media subjects *interactive*. How has active production been subsumed into interactivity? We first need to note a distinction made by others, namely *interactivity* vs. *participation*. For Jenkins, the distinction runs along human/technology lines: interactivity is technological, determined by design, with the goal of feedback into the system. Participation involves the social and cultural protocols in and around the technical ones. Mark Andrejevic (2007) does not draw such a strict line, noting that interactivity itself takes on different modes. There are two types of feedback: cybernetic (means) and goal-setting decisions (ends) (p. 201). Cybernetic participation is a type of interactivity that requires *identification* with goals, priorities, and values of institutional agents. Feedback is provided to fine-tune means, not determine ends. The steering (the *kyber* at the etymological root of *cyber*) is done via dominant actors rather than a publicly determined course. Media subjects, then, are recruited for harmony, alignment, and a shared definition of the situation with those who govern. While Jenkins affirms fans as media subjects with agency to shape courses, Andrejevic finds these subjects fraught with contradictions and muddled desires. The social and cultural protocols that Jenkins separates from the technical ones are themselves a type of governance. Protocols are resources *for* users but are also codes and techniques that produce subjects who are then *used*.

The contemporary turn toward a term like *users* only exacerbates this tension. If we think of users as individuals who instrumentalize a system for their own purposes, we have restored the uses and gratifications model of psychological indi-

viduation. Users are also positions within a system, a space much like that proposed by spectator theory, only now with added affordances. Identification with a system is now an interactive affair; alignment entails *giving* (e.g., feedback). And as the term *user's* connotations indicate, there is an addictive overattachment to technical protocols, with all of the drug user's ambivalence and contradictions. Media subjectivity's relation to technology begs an analysis of the processes of *identification* and *individuation*.

Interactivity, while often linked to freedom and participatory action, has been a resource for control mechanisms in governance and neoliberal capitalism. Andrew Barry's (1998) Foucauldian analysis locates interactivity's usefulness to governing conduct. Liberal governance now involves "intensive interaction with the public in carefully managed environments [which] is expected to maximize and intensify feedback between government and governed, and minimize possibilities for unexpected political controversies and future conflicts" (p. 178). Interactivity here has its roots in the earlier problematization of media subjects as masses. Governance involves an intervention into virtuals, a harnessing of capacities, while *preventing* useless or even dangerous kinds of emergence. Population management operates here not primarily by exclusion but by calculating and enhancing powers (within channels of conduction).

The labor of media subjects is also a type of interactivity. Dallas Smythe's (2001) contribution to understanding audiences as workers and creative activity now finds new salience. Autonomist media research has updated Smythe to understand the immaterial labor of online brand fans (Arvidsson, 2005), social media users (Andrejevic, 2010; Coté & Pybus, 2007; Hearn, 2010) and gamers (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009). Much attention has been paid to attention as a scarce and highly demanded resource in an age of communicative capitalism and its cognitariat (Berardi, 2009; Dean, 2010). It is here we can complicate the research that flattens labor asymmetries into co-production. Who are the subjects of the "co" in co-production and co-creation? How do they resonate, how do they conflict? What are their identifications and individuations? Some analysts minimize the dissonance by giving consumers a new sovereignty (a digital media version of the way consumer culture studies de-fanged Fiske). But the "co" involves an intricate co-dependence, one imbued with dynamics of exploitation, conflicted identification, willful submission, and the vexed pleasures of media subjects as both *users* and *used*.

For recent thinkers of interactivity, Pierre Levy's term *collective intelligence* is rich and instructive. For Levy (1997), collective intelligence represents nothing less than a "new stage of *hominization*" (or the becoming-human of the species) (p. xxvi, emphasis added). More than producing a new type of subject, contemporary conditions make subjectivity *itself* a primary site of intervention: "because it conditions all other activities, the continuous production of subjectivity will most likely be the next major economic activity" (p. 4).

Others picked up on these dimensions a decade later through terms such as crowdsourcing (Howe, 2006), the wealth of networks (Benkler, 2006), and the wisdom of

crowds (Shirky, 2008; Surowiecki, 2004). Here we see an apparent turnaround from the approach to crowds a century earlier. But this is a departure only from the initial moment of problematizing media subjects as masses and crowds (as irrational and easily manipulated) in order to shun or neutralize them. The later version, one that harnesses mass power under the concept “public,” resonates with this twenty-first-century valorization. Tapping the powers of online collectivity to solve problems reduces composition to an instrument, organized by mechanisms that determine the problems defined elsewhere. Crowds here are not the unruly mixtures found in compositional gatherings; they do not interact via affect, they do not spread contagions.

Instead, they are an aggregate of disconnected individuals who come to form a temporary assemblage around a predetermined task (e.g., a scientific contest, marketing challenge, or governmental problem). Only when these mass forces have been disciplined, fragmented, and rationalized is it tolerable to “nodalize” them back into connectivity. Using the term “crowds” erases the historical association with unruly composition, replacing it with a public-disguised-as-crowd.

There is indeed much to laud about newfound powers of connectivity and sociality. But reducing these powers to the ability to generate knowledge and value for others, around a loose but homeostatic rationality, erases the antagonism, difference, and asymmetries in contemporary collective virtual powers. Dissuasion is still in operation in the actions of collective intelligence (Bratich, 2010b). Collective intelligence is still embedded in networked institutions of security and sovereignty, preempting the emergence of some user-generated usage while promoting others.

A term like general intellect, coming from the Italian autonomist tradition, enriches the concept of collective intelligence by embedding it in material production practices and subjective struggles. General intellect increases the labor power of workers via their heightened sociality (especially in nonwaged spheres like gaming, social networking platforms, fan sites, and other types of “free labor” [Terranova, 2000]). This results in both a wellspring of value captured by capital and a surplus of connectivity that is immeasurable and thus provokes a crisis in value-extraction.

Interactivity might be the most prominent term for processes of subjectivation in the interregnum, but there are others, actual and virtual. Slavoj Žižek’s term *interpassivity*, for instance, finds resonance for contemporary media subjectivity. With interpassivity, subjects defer action to machines, actively. Mark Andrejevic (2007) calls it *interpassive participation* (p. 173). Subjects knowingly submit to the imperatives of the technical, identifying with reified cybernetic objectives while claiming them as their own. This ideological dimension speaks to the constitution of media subjects (as matters of desire, identification, and pleasure) and moreover produces an ersatz participation that blocks its realization. Interpassivity also involves embodiment, as the haptic and kinesthetic dimensions of interactivity mesh with the machinic organization of body habits (Parisi, 2007).

We could also use a term like *interactivism* to refer to users’ engagement with their technological conditions to push the openness of systems, to appropriate their

authority, and to shape their vectors. Activist media subjects have taken on these new conditions of interactivity in order to intervene into this crisis and generate new forms of antagonism. Counterglobalization and grassroots struggles in the twenty-first century have used the Internet, mobile phones, and social media to mobilize (Berardi, Jacquemet, & Vitali, 2009; Juris, 2005; Kahn & Kellner, 2004; Kidd, 2003). Twitter and Facebook, for example, have been deployed as a crucial extension of both state warfare and social movement composition (Bratich, 2010a). We have seen versions of interactivism also emerge around hackers, modders, social movement media, Low Power FM and community wireless, where the shape of protocols and usage are at stake.

We do not need to focus on digital media to see this process at work. Interactivist media subjects have a long history within communications struggles, involving appropriation of protocols and usage for compositional ends. Here we could cite an entire history of radical media (Downing, 2001) and DIY media like zines (Duncombe, 1997; Piepmeyer, 2009). The politics of amateur uses and technical-social competences infused media subjects from early ham radio operators (Douglas, 1987) to CB users (Packer, 2008).

Interactivism involves an historical ontology, a movement through, with, and despite media forms. Interactivist media subjects require a shift in perspective, analyzing media development from below, highlighting the persistent efforts to create a common project through media, the composition of a cooperative ethos and a transversal power. These are often minoritarian practices, but ones whose very resilience is testimony to their virtues. This media constituent power signifies the ongoing accumulation of antagonisms within any media development, and a practical matter of building agency via “experimentation by composition” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 48). We can draw out this vital history as one that defines media subjectivity alongside, under, and against the audience studies that problematized it.

Finally, we can propose another new term, one which foregrounds the ethical component of media subjectivity: *inter-reactivity*. At play here are the affective processes of subjectivation, both the powers and the feelings that accompany them. *Reactivity* is a term both Spinozan and Nietzschean in its genesis (due to spatial constraints I will focus on the former). The affective turn often draws upon Spinozist philosophy (most prominently revived in sociopolitical theory by Michael Hardt and Toni Negri), which could use some brief explanation. The affections are the interactions of bodies when they encounter each other. For Spinoza, we begin in a state of reactivity (a receptivity, a power to be affected). These reactive interactions begin at the lowest level of encounters, involving passions and images (the imagination). We are constantly bombarded by random stimuli and find ourselves at the mercy of chance encounters. From these reactive encounters we form powers and relations.

What can we do as reactors? We need to understand the cause of our states – what is it that affects us one way or the other? Specifically, the traces of chance encounters (hidden to us) prevent us from understanding our own powers. Spinoza lays out what practical action needs to take place: we need to transform our subjectivity from being

at the mercy of chance encounters to having an understanding of effects upon it, and eventually knowing the *causes* of those affections. From here we can compose an active, even rational, body by understanding what is compatible, empowering, and affirmative, as well as determine what is incompatible, disempowering, and depleting. Inter-reactivity begins with this reactivity, and examines its acceleration, extension, and intensification with communication technologies and media connectivity. How are subjects filled with affections (passive or active) in their mediated interactions? How does any particular mediated organization of encounters deplete or augment the abilities of the subjects composed? More specifically, can the subjects adequately comprehend how those affections work on them?

Current organizations of multitude powers, with regard to media, produce a “collection of disconnected, isolated individuals able to act together” (Del Lucchese, 2009, p. 350). How do contemporary forms of interaction diminish the powers of subjects, leaving them isolated in their passions, then connecting them via their depletion? The pathological dimension of interactivity is a matter of public problematization. Moral panics regularly frame understandings of digital selves and data subjects around the depleting effects of hypermediation (reviving the early audience research figure of the child-as-victim in need of protection and discipline). But rather than allow these control mechanisms to define the debate and problematizations, critical media studies can address the ethical dimension of interactivity. Media studies needs to contribute intelligently to the understanding of pathologies, the (de)composition of bodies via exhaustion, frustration, peer-to-peer surveillance, judgment, and other debilitating transindividual affects.

With inter-reactivity we return to concepts and processes of composition and organization. We begin with the ethical composition of media subjects, their inter-affective dynamics, but as a passage to modes of organization. This is a passage from ethics to politics. As Hardt, Terranova, Armstrong, and others remind us, the emergence of agency is a *practical* matter. The multiple must be made. Media subjectivity requires experiments, especially experiments in what Spinoza calls “the art of organizing encounters” (quoted in Hardt, 1993, p. 110). In other words, we do not begin with interactivity but with inter-reactivity, while maintaining the goal of *making* interactivity: organizing encounters that enhance capacities, knowledge, and common production, and increase constituent power.

Conclusion: Monsters of Reason

From its beginnings, the “audience” signified an *expansion of participation while still criss-crossed by exclusions and hierarchies*. Early audiences were threat and promise, imbued with a set of powers and potentials that, depending on the discourse and the moment, could be enrolled into particular programs (war, mass consumption) or

targeted for regulation (cinemagoing behavior, dissenting populations). Later audience studies, with their own problematizations, increasingly invested in the audience as a site of creativity and resistance. They have left a legacy of analytic tools to understand interregnum media subjects as mutants.

From the early problematizations of audiences onwards, a notion of rationality has been at stake. At times this was predicated on a strict separation of reason and affect (e.g., in the audience-as-mass), especially when the latter was associated with instinct, animality, sentiment, id-impulses, and lower states. But as we have seen, masses were not just negated; they were *instrumentalized*. The organization of masses meant neutralizing their disruptive crowd-like elements of self-organization while encouraging their mobilizations as publics. The affective dimensions came in the form of populist passions against corruption, sensationalism as affective media, and radical media experiments that challenged governance and civilizing mechanisms. War resistance, populist uprisings, labor organizing, muckraking: these collective powers were diminished and dissuaded.

At the same time, some affective elements were deployed by transcendent mechanisms. Mobilizations for war required emotional stirrings against enemies, “white-hot mass instincts” in favor of state policy, and a majoritarian fear of dissenting subjects. These passions, however, were aligned and disciplined in the name of a public. They were organized from above by PR agencies, propaganda services, and communications agents. Collective powers were activated *and* pacified, their constituent power transformed into constituted power, and their modes of expression prescribed around desired objectives. Early problematizations sought to create an impassioned alignment and identification, a nascent manifestation of intense inter-reactivity.

This version of rationality is based on an external mechanism that, via organization, depletes subjects by dissuading them from dissent and narrowly shaping their composition as a collective. Media subjects are disempowered by this rationality at the moment it routes them through public channels (elections, feedback on proposals, petitions for attention). This rationality required a constant attention to and modification of the media subjects: tapping the necessary constituent powers to fuel commodity consumption, productive labor, and war campaigns while policing the excesses (actual as well as virtual) of their compositions.

The reactivity at the basis of collective powers is an unavoidable condition, but the point is not to mobilize them via a “community of fear and of non-cooperative imitation” (Toscano, 2005). This mode of organization transmits and binds via fear, fascination, and sadness (in the Spinozan sense of depleting what a body can do). It mobilizes and immobilizes through controlled panics. Even when capacities are enhanced, they are done so for transcendent objectives (such as the audience-as-public designed for war, audience-as-active decoder guided toward capitalist consumption, audience-as-active receiver conducted to transfer power to the state, and generally an audience organized to support constituted power). Early modes of organization alienated media subjects (separating a body from what it can

do) as well as enervated them (while depending on them). Organization is thinned out by constituted power's prescribed pathways (alignment and identification with institutional authorities). It is also predicated on dissuasion and neutralization of extremes, dissenters, and affectors. This organization depends on disaggregating the powers of that upon which it depends. A tyrannical structure of this sort leads to "a dissolved group of separate, isolated individuals, reduced to enslavement by their own passions and, in a way, crushed by a general will that is already the final and transcendental cause of their own decisions" (Del Lucchese, 2009, p. 350). Constituted power, as a transcendent organization, emerges as an "antagonistic solution" to the compositional powers of media subjects (Armstrong, 1997, p. 45).

Audience studies, in its various guises, can be seen as participating in this despotism, in the attempt to diminish mediated powers by guiding those powers toward particular constituted ends. Some audiences (consumers, receivers, publics, some interactive fans) are constituted for transcendent aims like consumption, war, persuasion, consent. Others, like social identities, active audiences, and interactivists, recognize the immanence of media powers, or at least address the ambivalence of composition/organization (e.g., third-wave feminist media studies). Now, at the "end" of the audience (and therefore of audience studies), we can recover these virtual dimensions of media subjectivity's constituent power, which for so long have been trapped in the relatively stable object "audience." What is released from the prisonhouse of audience studies? All sorts of mutants – interactors, interpassivists, interactivists, inter-reactors. More than finding names for these figures, remediation unleashes the very dynamics of *metamorphosis* that Toni Negri (2003) calls the monstrous. Here metamorphosis is more open ended – we might find among audience powers another transmutation of passions to actions, one that corresponds to a different way of transforming constituent power to constituted power, composition to organization. Another path would not seek to eliminate passions (in fact would encourage joyful passions) but seeks, through knowledge and intuition, to transform them. The goal is a subject incapable of taking command but highly capable of producing common associations.

In the interregnum, where the not-yet cannot fully be known or named, audience studies can at least learn to live with, even encourage, the monsters it has heretofore despotically organized. The attempts by audience studies to direct these monsters toward constituted ends (war, fundamentalism, alienated consumption) will ultimately appear as its own subjectivity, whose interventions increasingly appear from the outside as "the antagonistic solution" to the emergence of media democracy and its multitudes. Future audience studies will not only find more names for the mutations in media subjectivity but will describe the ways external mediating mechanisms constantly try to harness yet suppress these mutations toward constituted ends. In other words, future audience studies will see its own work as coming from a particular type of media subjectivity, one requiring its own analysis.

NOTES

- 1 Audiening here refers to the discursive practice of making and problematizing audiences.
- 2 “Media” here is not equated with transcendence but with a series of operations (extension, acceleration, conduction, connection) immanent to the ongoing composition of a collective body.
- 3 These terms are not exhaustive of the types of associations made. Moreover, the richness of the terms necessarily needs to be pared down in this chapter, not just for the sake of space but to distill the key dynamics that animate contemporary concerns.
- 4 Two actors (one from the United States and one English) were performing in productions of *Macbeth* a few blocks from each other on the Bowery. The US actor’s working-class supporters prevented completion of the performance by the English actor (considered a colonial aristocrat). Traditionally, the next night’s performance would have been cancelled. Instead, the show went on with the English actor. Protests ensued, followed by a massive police crackdown. Militiamen fired into the crowd, with 22 killed and 100 injured.
- 5 This hyperpathy remains an issue even in the most advanced technological arrangements. Sometimes it still takes place in the streets (e.g., flashmobs, Twitter-infused protests), while at other times it involves the right to disrupt, not performances, but protocols of usage (piracy, hacking, modding).
- 6 Another path through the Marxist problematic was the political economy approach. For the most part, this framework did not make claims about media subjectivity (unless one defines the corporate media system itself as a subject). But a crucial intervention within audience studies from this perspective came with Dallas Smythe’s (2001) famous “communication blindspot” argument, which directly problematized audiences as laborers. Media subjects work for advertisers – their mental labor and attention-power are the sources of commodification for networks. This laboring media subject will become important later in the chapter.
- 7 As I have argued elsewhere (2008a), Fiske’s opening up of the constituent process within media subjectivity was constrained by analytic conditions established by Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model (in which activity was always situated as a moment within signification). It was also an expression of its political conjuncture, locked in a Gramscian politics, in which activity matters insofar as it is a resource for organizing popular consciousness/will.

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Future Directions for Political Communication Scholarship

Considering Emotion in Mediated Public Participation

Karin Wahl-Jorgensen

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen argues for the importance of considering the role of emotion in political communication. Throughout the history of liberal democratic thought, she explains, emotion has been treated as the polar opposite of reason and rationality, and therefore as the enemy of good citizenship. This presumption has carried over into dominant ways of analyzing mediated public participation, as exemplified in Habermas's theory of the public sphere. There is nonetheless growing empirical evidence that emotion is central in motivating and shaping political participation. Therefore, a careful consideration of the power of emotion to mobilize citizens has much to offer the field. Wahl-Jorgensen emphasizes the need to better understand the complex consequences of affective engagements in politics. She suggests that some forms of political discourse designed to elicit emotional reaction may have integrative possibilities insofar as they can foster empathy and solidarity, while others – ones that foster hatred and intolerance – may contribute to the breakdown of debate. Either way, emotion is an indispensable and growing resource in political life that we ignore at our peril.

Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint.

(Alexander Hamilton, cited in Holmes, 1995, p. 1)

This chapter argues that a key direction for the future of media studies centers on more careful and sustained consideration of the affective elements of communication. In particular, it explores the consequences of the “emotional deficit in political communication” (Richards, 2004), arguing that the neglect of emotion in political communication research reflects a broader blind spot or “epistemological deficit” (Benhabib, 1992) in thinking about political philosophy and democratic practice. To address this epistemological deficit we need a differentiated analysis of political emotions and their role in mobilizing and shaping the ways in which citizens participate in politics. Such an analysis may uncover the kinds of work done by different emotions and emotional appeals in political life. Further, it may show us how existing and emerging media forms and genres encourage particular emotional regimes and discourage others, with tangible political consequences.

Dominant ways of explaining why and how people participate politically draw on premises of liberal democratic theory, which imply that, ideally, participation should be based on rational, impartial, and dispassionate citizenship, to the exclusion of emotional engagement. However, over the past few decades, scholars from a variety of fields have begun to query these assumptions, on the basis of empirical evidence that suggests an emotional engagement in politics: people participate because they *care* or feel passionately about an issue, and conversely, the choice of *inaction* also comes about as a result of affective responses (Berlant, 2007; Dahlgren, 2009; cf. Gould, 2010, p. 32). As Thompson and Hoggett (2001) put it, the “point is that wishing the emotions were not there will not make them go away; they will be present in deliberative forums whether or not they are officially excluded” (p. 353). Political participation appears to be driven in large part by impulses that run counter to ideals of liberal democracy. Instead of being driven by rationality, citizens who participate appear to be fueled by passion and emotions ranging from love to hatred, and encompassing disgust, fear, compassion, and care. Scholars who have recognized the role of emotion in politics have reflected on the rise of “passionate politics,” “the politics of affect” (e.g., Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001), and the “emotional public sphere” (e.g., Lunt & Pantti, 2007), to mention just a few labels reflecting an increased awareness of how citizen participation is shaped by emotion.

Some have argued that the focus on the ideal of the dispassionate citizen limits our thinking about how we may organize participation and creates a yawning gap between ideal and practice. For example, empirical observations about the increasingly close relationship between politics and popular culture (e.g., van Zoonen, 2005) suggest that rather than a “dumbing down” of public debate, this realignment opens up new forums and opportunities for emotional expression in public that might engage otherwise apathetic audiences (Lunt & Stenner, 2005). To Richards (2004), politics is increasingly experienced through emotional narratives about feelings and

relationships “which are constructed around individual politicians as they are around other public figures. [. . .] These narratives are psychologically realistic, which means that they include the anxieties, doubts, conflicts, and dilemmas which are to be found in our everyday emotional lives” (p. 346). Similarly, George Marcus’s work (e.g., 2002) on the political psychology of emotion has given rise to the idea of “affective intelligence” as a counter to the dominant rational choice theories of voter behavior.

Certainly the rise of a broader confessional culture which addresses and validates emotions in public has been widely documented. In his polemic against what he sees as a contemporary obsession with airing our dirty laundry in public, Frank Furedi (2004) argues that we “live in a culture that takes emotions very seriously” (p. 1). In a complex historical account, Reddy (2001) has sought to recover the political importance of emotions, suggesting that the “concept of emotions as used in the West is closely associated with the individual’s most deeply espoused goals” (p. 114). Nevertheless, the recognition of the centrality of emotions, despite its consequences for the languages of politics, has had relatively limited impact on discussion of normative ideals of citizen participation among scholars, politicians, and media practitioners alike.

The neglect of actually occurring practices is particularly worrying in the face of a long-term decline in conventional measures of public participation, including voting in elections, newspaper readership, and membership in voluntary associations (e.g., Putnam, 2001; see also Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). The trend toward public disengagement from conventional forms of political participation suggests that we need new theoretical and practical approaches to citizen participation that recognize the complexity of the contemporary political and media environment. At the same time, there has been an “affective turn” (Clough & Halley, 2007) in cultural studies and humanities disciplines, which has spilled over into the social sciences, so that the relationship between political participation and emotion is now theorized by political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and literary theorists. To social movement scholars, the question of how movements draw on affective engagements has become central (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2001; Staiger, Cvetkovich, & Reynolds, 2010). For example, Thompson and Hoggett (2001) have investigated how “the emotional life of groups” impacts local political life, informed by the recognition that an overly narrow focus on rationality in politics limits an understanding of actually existing forms of participation.

Some of this scholarship draws on the useful and fundamental distinction between affect and emotion. Massumi (2002) has argued that even though the two terms are often used interchangeably (e.g., Thrift, 2008), there are important conceptual reasons to distinguish between the two. As he sees it, affect is best understood as a bodily sensation, a reaction to stimuli characterized by intensity and energy, but without a conscious orientation and interpretation. By contrast, an emotion

is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the

conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action–reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. (Massumi, 2002, p. 28)

Though Massumi describes emotional reactions as *personal* first and foremost, his distinction has also become an important resource for sociologists and political scientists interested in *collective* behavior. His distinction is premised on emotion as both interpretation and narrativization of affect, or its placement in the nexus of social relations. This offers a way out of a narrowly individualist understanding of emotion, foregrounding the “fundamental principle that an emotion cannot be seen purely as an internal, individual, and private phenomenon” (Boehner, DePaula, Dorish, & Sengers, 2007, p. 280). Understanding emotion as narrativized and collective further enables us to perceive it as a potentially politicized or politicizing interpretation of bodily affect.

Along these lines, I focus on thinking about emotion in the context of mediated public participation, as the socially constructed and hence politicized interpretation of affect. Debates over emotions and their role in mediated public participation, I argue, are anchored in political thought, which has had little to offer in the way of a differentiated understanding of the varied forms of emotional engagement and expression. I hope to provide some new avenues for investigating and taking seriously the dangers and possibilities of emotion in political communication. Specifically, I suggest that instead of automatically viewing *all* emotional reaction and expression as destructive forces in political life, we need to understand that some forms of political discourse designed to elicit emotional reaction may have integrative possibilities insofar as they can foster empathy and solidarity, while others – ones that foster hatred and intolerance – may contribute to the breakdown of debate.

Emotion and Communication Studies

What is the place of emotion in work on political communication? Even if this field has largely neglected the study of emotion, it is also true that within communication studies more broadly, scholars have long been attentive to affect in the context of audience reactions and behaviors. In particular, perhaps due to the historically close relationship between communication studies and social psychology, emotion is well established on the broader research agenda of those interested in persuasion and media effects. Indeed, the very idea that media content can “affect” us highlights the affective dimension of our attitudes, values, and behaviors. For instance, Robin Nabi (e.g. 2002, 2003) has differentiated between types of emotions, including disgust, fear, and anxiety, and their consequences for behavior and policy preferences. There is now a well-established research tradition at the intersection of cognitive psychology, political science, and communication studies that takes an interest in how emotional

responses interact with cognition in the context of political decision-making. As Westen (2007) suggests, this body of work is based on the premise that the “*political brain is an emotional brain*. It is not a dispassionate calculating machine, objectively searching for the right facts, figures, and policies to make a reasoned decision” (p. xv, emphasis in original). Voters, though often well informed and politically aware, think “with their guts” (p. xv). This, in turn, implies that political campaigning ought to be premised on the central place of emotions in electoral decision-making (p. 420).

Along these lines, the crafting and effects of emotional appeals have long been central to the preoccupations of scholars and practitioners interested in political advertising (e.g., Richards, 2004). As early as 1928, the pioneering public relations expert Edward Bernays, writing to proffer advice on what strategies politicians ought to adopt to optimally sway public opinion, examined in detail the role of emotional appeals, suggesting that candidates need to harness “as many of the basic emotions as possible” (Bernays, 2004, p. 119, cited in Grabe & Bucy, 2009, p. 91). Political consultant Tony Schwartz, who crafted the notorious “Daisy ad” for Lyndon B. Johnson’s 1968 presidential campaign against Republican contender Barry Goldwater, was explicit about the centrality of emotional appeals in political campaigning. In his book *The Responsive Chord*, published in 1974, he suggested that messages ought to be crafted not primarily with attention to the *information* contained within them, but instead with an eye to the *emotional response* they may generate in the audience, or their ability to strike a “responsive chord.” Zeynep Gürsel’s (2009) ethnographic work on photojournalism at a US news magazine relatedly demonstrates that to journalists, the anticipation of audience emotional reactions to stories is at the core of their deliberations over everything from photo selection to layout:

Central to the visual appeal is wielding emotions in order to “bring the story closer” and educate the reader. Novelty of emotion reaction becomes important to photo editors because even with a story the reader might already be assumed to know, a photo-essay is meant to supply an emotional connection that might have been absent in the reader’s previous encounters with the story. (Gürsel, 2009, pp. 40–41)

In other words, scholars have long described questions of audience emotional response as inextricably linked to audience engagement, behavior, and participation. Most recently, Betsi Grabe and Eric Bucy (2009) have contributed an innovative approach to the study of electoral campaigning in their study of the visual framing of general election news between 1992 and 2004. Among other things, their work examined emotional expressions of political candidates as evidenced in television newscasts, and demonstrated the importance of political leaders’ nonverbal communication of emotion as a resource for voters’ information gathering and decision-making.

Scholars also discuss the role of emotion in political communication in the context of its relation to rationality. For example, Ted Brader’s (2006) work has looked at the role of emotional appeals in political campaigns. Brader suggested that there is a

need for a more careful analysis of emotion in political life, on the basis that “like rationality, emotion is neither good nor bad in itself. It harbors liabilities as well as benefits [. . .] Emotion, like rationality, does not ensure desirable or good outcomes; emotion assists the democratic citizen in self-governance and can facilitate manipulation and error” (pp. 194–195). Brader concluded that the

lesson and challenge for future research is not to launch a special subfield on “emotion and politics,” but rather to incorporate emotion into existing lines of research. Emotion is well integrated into the processes of political communication and behavior; it should be integrated equally as well into our studies and understanding of the same. (p. 198; see also Marcus, 2002)

Overall, there is a well-established research agenda recognizing the power of emotional *appeals* to sway audience’s political attitudes, values, and behavior and motivations to engage politically. However, these insights have often drawn on the individual-level perspectives of psychological approaches and have paid little heed to larger (collective and political) contexts. As a result, they have rarely been accompanied with theorizing about the relationship between the celebration of the *ideal* of rationality and the *reality* of affective engagements in motivating and shaping political participation. Here, I argue that we need to both understand and question the opposition between reason and emotion that underlies so much discussion of politics. When we think about what makes good citizens, in normative and practical terms, we must acknowledge a series of empirical facts about political engagement – based on the notion that “politics requires passion, in the sense of intense involvement, even if liberal democratic theory tends to cling to visions of pure rationality” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 8). If we fail to appreciate the “emotional life of politics” (Madianou, 2005), we also fail to account for the appeal of forms of politics that fall outside liberal conceptions. A reconsideration of the place of emotion in mediated public participation, I suggest, is vital for a variety of reasons. By bridging the gap between normative ideal and practice, we may refine our conceptual frameworks for analyzing mediated public participation. Understanding the role of emotion in politics requires us to draw on a wide variety of conceptual resources from across the humanities and social sciences disciplines.

Liberal Democratic Theory and the Distrust of Emotion

Prevailing theories of liberal democracy are premised on the normative value of “inalienable” individual rights and liberties, institutionalizing the freedom of religious and political expression, as well as guaranteeing free trade and security (cf. Holmes, 1995, p. 14). Such perspectives view the right to vote as the cornerstone of

citizens' privileges, and conversely hold that citizens have the responsibility to accumulate knowledge, consider policy options from the point of view of the shared interest, and vote in regular elections (Holden, 1988). The normative and epistemological assumptions of liberal democratic theory have long pervaded accounts and assessments of political engagement and participation, in both face-to-face and mediated environments. Built into the liberal ideal is an idealization of the rational, dispassionate, and informed citizen, coupled with a clear understanding that emotional citizens make for bad subjects. As Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000) put it:

Western tradition tends to derogate the role of affect in the public sphere. Being emotional about politics is generally associated with psychological distraction, distortion, extremity and unreasonableness. Thus, the conventional view is that our capacity for and willingness to engage in reasoned consideration is too often overwhelmed by emotion to the detriment of sound political judgment. As a result, theories of democratic practice proclaim the importance of protesting against the dangers of human passion and political faction by building up institutions, rules and procedures – all intended to protect us from our emotional selves. (p. 2)

The suspicion of emotional engagement and the celebration of rationality inherent in the liberal democratic framework are linked to the circumstances of its birth. Liberal democracy evolved in part in reaction to the long-standing dominance of the church and absolutist sovereigns (Holmes, 1995) – governance institutions premised on the service of docile subjects bereft of any power to make political decisions. The novel philosophical belief in the rationality of individuals – and hence, their ability to participate in political decision-making – emerged alongside the rise of science. From the beginning, the practice of science was premised on the notion that individuals could understand the world through the systematic application of reason. The rise of ideas of individual rationality gradually chipped away at the supremacy of sovereigns and the church, in part by legitimizing demands for liberty and equality. While the Renaissance and the Enlightenment brought notions of individual reason and the rights of subjects to the forefront of a revolution in political thought, the emergent body of democratic theory also always struggled with the relationship between rationality and passion in terms of understanding the parameters of citizen participation. Thinkers such as Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, and Mill, in spelling out the logic of a liberal state that involved rights and participation for citizens, were informed by a concern about the ability of ordinary people to exercise reason and rationality, and about the centrality of public participation as an assurance of the legitimacy of government.¹

In this respect, there has always been a tension in democratic political thought between the need to involve citizens as rational and constructive participants in the political process and the need to control what are perceived as the irrational passions of the “common people” – as individuals and as a collective. Broadly, the management and control of emotional expression has been central to Western societies. As

Norbert Elias argued in his authoritative account, *The Civilizing Process*, Western civilization has always relied on affect control structures – systematic mechanisms which regulate individual behavior to ensure the smooth functioning of society. In particular, the control of aggression has been one of the key engines of modernity. Elias thus stipulated that when “the power of a central authority grows, if over a larger or smaller area the people are forced to live in peace with each other, the molding of affects and the standards of the drive-economy are very gradually changed” (2000, p. 169). To Elias, no “society can survive without a channeling of individual drives and affects, without a very specific control of individual behavior” (p. 443). His account demonstrates the centrality of emotion in everyday life – and the central importance of controlling its expression.

In this respect, the distinction between the rationality of the *public* and the irrationality of the *crowd* has been foundational to political sociology, which has in turn informed thinking about public participation. For example, Gustave Le Bon’s book on *The Crowd* (1960), first published in 1895, captured prevailing anxiety about the place of passion in collective behavior. In Le Bon’s analysis, the individual who becomes part of the crowd is ruled by instinctual and unconscious action. An individual in a crowd is controlled by emotions and passions, “induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests” (p. 32). To Le Bon and other thinkers of his era, images of collective behavior such as those summoned up by mobs, crowds, and masses warned of the emotional manipulability of the “common people” as an Achilles heel of democracy. Similarly, Robert Park, one of the leading figures of the Chicago School of Sociology, took an interest in the relationship between social organization and public participation, viewed through the lens of urban sociology. In his doctoral dissertation, *The Crowd and the Public* (1972), written at the turn of the twentieth century, Park distinguished between the crowd and the public as forms of collectivities. To Park, the public is driven by rationality and reason, the crowd by emotion and impulse (p. 80). He thus argued that only “in the crowd does anarchy in its purest form exist. As members of a public, people are at least controlled by the norms of logic” (p. 81).

The philosopher Karl Popper (1945), in his defense of the principles of liberal democracy, *Open Society*, written during World War II, explicitly set out the distinction between emotion and reason. To Popper, if

a dispute arises, then this means that those more constructive emotions and passions which might in principle help to get over it, reverence, love, devotion to a common cause, etc., have shown themselves to be incapable of solving the problem [. . .] There are only two solutions: one is the use of emotion, and ultimately of violence, and the other is the use of reason, of impartiality, of reasonable compromise. (Popper, 1945; cited in Marcus, 2002, p. 6)

Popper’s polarization of reason and emotion ultimately leads to the conclusion that “constructive emotions” are of little utility in political life, and that emotion therefore

almost inevitably becomes destructive as it is transformed into violence (cf. Marcus, 2002, p. 6). These ontological premises reveal deep-seated anxieties fundamental to dominant political theory, and explain the normative elevation of rationality and the suppression of emotion. In some respects, liberal political thought is suffused with concern about emotions (Illouz, 2007) and recognizes them as inevitable evils of political and social life. The hands-down identification of emotion as a source of violence and irrationality has meant that it has been constructed as the polar opposite of rationality. Emotional subjects, in this prevailing view, are “bad” subjects insofar as emotion precludes the rationality required for political decision-making.

Through this logic, liberal theory has dug a hole for itself that is very difficult to get out of. If emotions are inevitable but preclude the rational citizenship required by its ideal, how can citizenship be possible? The answer is one that leaves only a qualified and tenuous hope for citizenship: implicit in much of the political thought discussed here is the view that emotions are like forces of nature; they may quickly spiral out of control and therefore, if at all possible, require control, management, and suppression, regardless of their specific nature and direction. While there are good reasons for the elevation of such “affect control” (Elias, 2000), this view leaves no room for the recognition of the positive role of emotion in politics. It is a position that, in turn, has informed scholarly engagement with questions of emotion among scholars interested in mediated public participation as a pillar of democratic societies.

Problematising Liberal Democracy and the Public Sphere

Meaningful participation of citizens in mediated public debate is seen as central to the successful functioning of democracy. It is through such discussion that publics deliberate on issues that affect them, whether these issues have to do with the broad direction of policy on topics such as welfare and education, the behavior of politicians, or specific matters ranging from local planning permissions and potholes to the military involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond. As a cornerstone of liberal democratic theory, governments require the consent of the governed for their legitimacy, and by participating in mediated public discussion, members of the public express consent or its converse (cf. Salmon & Glasser, 1995). In today’s mass societies, where political participation is largely channeled through media of mass communication (McNair, 2007), the provision of forums and sites for public participation is central to democracy.

Much of the work that seeks to assess the democratic potential of mediated public participation takes as its vantage point Habermas’s notion of the public sphere. The public sphere concept shares key ontological and normative premises with liberal democracy, even if it also departs from it in its more substantive understanding of citizen participation in politics (e.g., Awad, 2010). In *The Structural Transformation of*

the Public Sphere (1989), Habermas offered a historical study of the emergence, flourishing, and decline of the bourgeois public sphere in France, Germany, and Britain during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, alongside the rise of trade capitalism. Members of the bourgeois class organized themselves through discussion in public settings such as coffeehouses and pubs in Britain, literary salons in France, and regular discussion groups or “table societies” in Germany. The bourgeois public sphere relied on print publications, such as pamphlets and newsletters, to facilitate a shared discussion among groups of people in different locales. Citizens organized themselves through the institutions of the public sphere to hold the state accountable for its actions. As such, the public sphere facilitated communication between citizens and the state. The discussion of the public sphere was about matters of common concern, and individual participation was premised on the ability to put aside self-interest and act impartially. In writing about the bourgeois public sphere as an historical, empirical case study, Habermas also articulated a normative ideal for how citizens ought to participate in public life; a vision of how democracies ought to function. Central to this normative ideal is the belief that citizens ought to be actively engaged in holding government accountable through public discussion. The discussion should be rational, open to all those with an interest in the issue, and participants in the discussion should be judged on the merits of their arguments, rather than on their social status. Through this procedure, the process of deliberation would enable participants to consider the situation of the generalized other in a rational fashion, barring issues of personal interest, which are not relevant to the common good. In his articulation of the public sphere ideal, Habermas ultimately implied that emotional expression, appeals, and argument should be barred from the deliberative process to ensure its rationality.

Habermas’s tale of the public sphere has been crucial in theorizing public participation through the news media. Though most scholars acknowledge that the public sphere concept is problematic, it also stepped in to fill a dire conceptual void. The notion of the public sphere has been used both in general ways, to refer to the space in which media operate to connect citizens, and in more specific ways, to examine structures of access and the institutional arrangements of mass media.

Habermas has been particularly influential among political communication scholars because his account demonstrates the centrality of news media to democratic societies (see Dahlgren, 1995, pp. 7–8). Today, the notion of the public sphere is a widely used shorthand for the institutions, including media, through which citizens deliberate about the common good to hold government accountable, or the “realm of social life where the exchange of information and views on questions of common concern can take place so that public opinion can be formed” (Dahlgren, 1995, p. 7). While the limitations of the concept are readily recognized and widely debated, it has been used by media and communication scholars as a yardstick against which to assess existing practices of public debate. Ever since the English translation of *Structural Transformation* in 1989, Anglophone scholars have drawn on the notion of the public sphere to critique mass media arrangements and sites for public partici-

pation. Sites of mediated participation analyzed in this way include conventional “old media” forms such as letters to the editor (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007), audience participation programs (e.g., Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; McNair, Hibberd, & Schlesinger, 2003), the nature of participation in online discussion forums (e.g., Dahlberg, 2001; Friedland, 1996; Papacharissi, 2010) and, more recently, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter (Castells, 2008), and user-generated content (Wahl-Jorgensen, Williams, & Wardle, 2010). Some of these sites are the product of media organizations’ deliberate and top-down efforts to give their audiences a voice, and are intrinsically tied to the self-understanding of journalism as a profession in the service of the public (see, for example, McNair, 2007, pp. 18–20; Street, 2001, p. 253), while others are emerging grassroots media that have been heralded as emancipatory and democratizing (e.g., Bowman & Willis, 2003). Research on mediated public participation across these forums has largely drawn on the premises of Habermas’s model, even if some of it has problematized the inherent emphasis on rationality.

The proliferation of new interactive forums has, if anything, intensified investigation of the nature of mediated public debate. These new forums present an unprecedented set of opportunities for participation, but they also come with their own distinctive limitations. Although much early scholarship in this area represented a “cyberoptimist” perspective, celebrating the perceived democratizing opportunities inherent in new technologies, more recent work has raised serious questions about the consequences of fragmentation and anonymity, which, among other problems, tend to generate a public debate that is less oriented toward civility, consensus, and rationality (e.g., Papacharissi, 2010; Witschge, 2004). The emergence of new participatory sites and forms has caused researchers to increasingly question the liberal framework of rationality and turn to alternatives, including radical democratic perspectives (e.g., Dahlberg & Siaper, 2007; Mouffe, 2005). This newer research seeks to recover the emancipatory potential of public discussion while recognizing the inherently affective, conflicted, and messy nature of debates over the grand questions that concern us all. Recognition of the complexity of contemporary public debate, in turn, has led scholars to raise questions about the feasibility and desirability of an orientation toward consensus and rationality so central to Habermas’s model.

In grappling with these questions, scholars with varied interests from within the discipline have sought to further develop and refine Habermas’s concept, which in its generality and its articulation within a specific (and distant) historical context necessarily lacks sensitivity to the nuances and varieties of contemporary forums for mediated participation. Much of this work has built on Fraser’s (1992) influential critique of Habermas’s account. Fraser challenges the notion of a singular, elite public sphere, and suggests instead that we need conceptualizations that recognize the existence – and the normative desirability – of multiple, overlapping public spheres that are sometimes competing, rather than engaging in rational-critical discussion oriented toward a consensus (e.g., Gitlin, 1998; Hauser, 1999; Squires, 2002). In arriving at this conclusion – albeit from a variety of empirical foci and theoretical perspectives – critics of Habermas have acknowledged that competing goals and

visions of the common good mean that the ideal of rational discussion may be neither attainable nor desirable in practice.

For example, DeLuca and Peebles's (2002) influential work on the Seattle anti-globalization protests sought to challenge the presumptions of rationality inherent in Habermas's model on the basis of contemporary complex media environments. As DeLuca and Peebles (2002) pointed out, Habermas's emphasis on rational-critical debate in face-to-face and written media may have been descriptive of the communication prevailing in a limited historical context. In its "privileging of rationality, embodied conversations, consensus and civility," they argue, the public sphere concept fails to capture the forms of participation made possible by today's media environment: a "televisual world characterized by image and spectacle" (DeLuca & Peebles, 2002, pp. 125, 129). Networked, electronic media, including television and the Internet, "have fundamentally transformed the media matrix that constitutes our social milieu, producing new forms of social organization and new modes of perception" (p. 131). Instead of the notion of the public sphere, they argued, we need the concept of a "public screen" as a necessary supplement. As a metaphor, the "public screen" "recognizes that most, and the most important, public discussions take place via 'screens' – television, computer, and the front page of newspapers" (p. 125). In their analysis of the spectacle produced by the World Trade Organization (WTO) protesters, they suggest that the public screen offers new political opportunities and forms for both hegemonic and dissenting voices. As such, the concept recognizes that the prevailing forms of communication today are visual and spectacular, rather than verbal and rational:

The anarchists' image event of shattering windows obeys the rules of the public screen. It both participates in and punctures the habit of distraction characteristic of the contemporary mode of perception. It participates in order to be aired – it is brief, visual, dramatic, and emotional. [. . .] In comparison to the rationality, embodied conversations, consensus, and civility of the public sphere, the public screen highlights dissemination, images, hypermediacy, spectacular publicity, cacophony, distraction, and dissent. (DeLuca & Peebles, 2002, p. 145)

DeLuca and Peebles's concept of "public screen" picks up on observations about how the mediatized environment in which contemporary political discourse takes place privileges the emotional (and the brief, visual, and dramatic) intervention. Even if emotions have always been part and parcel of political life, today's modes of mediation underwrite their expression and foregrounding in public discourse. Though their description reiterates the juxtaposition of rationality and emotion, it also highlights the empirical and normative impossibility of sustaining the Habermasian approach and offers an alternative model, which incorporates prevailing conditions. In this sense, it takes seriously the challenges of rethinking mediated public participation and incorporating affectively grounded practices of citizenship. Their approach is typical of a growing recognition that emotion needs to be taken seriously as a vital and inevitable component of political life and, hence, mediated political participation.

The Impact of Emotions on Political Life

Among the scholarship that has taken seriously the role of emotion in political life, we can crudely distinguish between approaches that view emotion as a negative feature and those that take a more positive view of it. Simply put, when political emotions contribute to the breakdown of political discussion they can be seen as a disruptive force, whereas when they foster empathy and solidarity, they may positively contribute to engagement in public debate.

Among scholars who express worries about the emotional nature of politics, some are concerned about its impact on the “quality” of public debate, while others study how particular emotions are elicited and mobilized in ways that serve to cement existing power relations and justify forms of domination. Evidence suggests that individuals are motivated to act politically on the basis of what are often *negative* emotions, including anger, fear, hatred, and disgust toward other individuals, groups, or ideas that are discursively marked out as different or “Other.” The public expression of emotions, therefore, can be socially divisive even as it mobilizes and empowers particular groups, and hence in some cases undermines the quality of public debate. For example, Sarah Ahmed (2004) examined the use of the term “disgust” in online debates over September 11. She demonstrated that the public display of this particular term is a common way of creating distance from cultural phenomena, examining how the terms “disgust,” “disgusting,” and “disgusted” were used to express disapproval of the acts of terrorism, but also of some responses to it. She argued that the expression of disgust “generates a community of those who are bound together through the shared condemnation of a disgusting object or event” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 94). Other scholars have explored how public discourse draws heavily on registers of fear to mobilize subjects. Brian Massumi’s (1993) edited volume, *The Politics of Everyday Fear*, examines what he refers to as “ambient fear” – the low-level, constant fear that pervades capitalized social space and is particularly pervasive in media discourses. Corey Robin’s (2004) book, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea*, explores the evolution of what he refers to as “political fear” or “a people’s felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being – the fear of terrorism, panic over crime, anxiety about moral decay – or the intimidation wielded over men and women by governments or groups” (p. 2). Although fear may be seen to generate unity and energy, Robin (2004) suggests that it is more helpful to view it as “a symptom of pervasive conflict and political unhappiness” (p. 3). An emphasis on fear, he ultimately suggests, creates divisions among groups in diverse societies and forecloses the possibility of a political culture that emphasizes freedom and rationality. As a result, fear can never be a meaningful foundation for democratic politics.

Further, critics have highlighted how even ostensibly positive emotions, including compassion and toleration, are frequently linked to discursive regimes that reinforce the power of dominant groups. Along those lines, Wendy Brown (2006) has suggested that the idea of tolerance has been deployed as a hegemonic resource

“discursively depoliticizing the conflicts whose effects it manages by analytically occluding the histories and powers constitutive of these conflicts, and by casting ‘difference’ as ontological and as an inherent site of hostility” (p. 205). Discourses of toleration, insofar as they close down debates, could be seen as practices that cover over more eruptive and dangerous emotions that threaten to destabilize the status quo in their very intensity.

These cautionary voices recognize the mobilizing potential of political emotion, and the power of the energy unleashed by it, but nevertheless suggest that we need to carefully analyze how particular emotions operate in the political field, and ultimately conclude that emotions are frequently destructive forces.

Nonetheless, even ostensibly negative emotions can serve a mobilizing and empowering role. When emotions become collective, they become political. There is nothing straightforward about this process, insofar as “structures of feeling” only gain meaning through socially constructed discourse. Social movements scholars are now interested in how emotions both energize and shape the activities of activists. For example, as Gould (2010) has argued in her analysis of the affective engagements of the feminist and queer movements, political empowerment often takes place through the labeling of emotions – as when lesbians “feeling bad” collectively relabeled their emotion as anger. Indeed, the feminist slogan “the personal is political” speaks precisely to the significance of making public, collective, and hence political the shared but discursively privatized experiences of women, including those of childcare, domestic violence, and housework, which would otherwise be relegated to the private sphere. By naming and articulating as “anger” the negative affect of “feeling bad” about the consequences of patriarchy, it becomes a public and collective emotion that empowers the angry group to take action. As such, social movements “‘make sense’ of inchoate affective states and authorize selected feelings and actions while downplaying and even invalidating others” (Gould, 2010, p. 33). Thus ideologies and discourses both emerge and are sustained through the circulation of affect (Gould, 2010, p. 33).

The recognition of the complexity of emotional appeals and responses discussed above is mirrored among scholars who have studied how emotion structures mediated public participation. This work acknowledges that emotional engagement is central to forums for mediated public participation and inevitable both in motivating participants and in shaping their contributions. However, the central role of negative emotion as a mobilizer means that it is the most fervent and angry participants who dominate the debate. Therefore, it does seem that more often than not, where emotions are part of public deliberation, there is little chance of the kind of rational consensus that Habermas and other liberal thinkers envision, and discussion is unlikely to produce mutual understanding.

Research on conventional “old media” forums for mediated public participation, like letters to the editor, demonstrates that the citizens who bother to write or otherwise “participate” are those who feel strongly about particular issues. As discussed above, political participation is often motivated by negative emotions, including

intolerance, fear, anger, hatred, and disgust. This makes participatory forums like letters to the editor sites for the airing of views that are more extreme, strongly held, and unchangeable than those of the population as a whole, as established in studies of debates on issues as varied as religion and immigration (Kerr & Moy, 2002, p. 63; Mummery & Rodan, 2003; Mutz, 2004, p. 33). For example, Mummery and Rodan (2003) suggested that Australian letter-writing debates around refugees and asylum seekers were highly polarized and inflammatory, emphasizing and exacerbating difference and intolerance rather than seeking to overcome them. Scholars generally agree that some of the ideas expressed in letters are not actually intended to invite dialogue or debate but to perpetuate intolerant views, whether they pertain to refugees (Mummery & Rodan, 2003), ethnic minorities (Richardson, 2001; Richardson & Franklin, 2003), or cultural diversity more generally (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). Such contributions, given their intractable positions, may close off a debate, rather than providing the conditions that nurture it. It is exactly in debates over difference where emotions are most divisive. In clashes over issues such as race, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality, contributions that are informed by fear, anger, hatred, and intolerance do little to further mutual understanding and instead perpetuate entrenched positions (e.g., Mummery & Rodan, 2003; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004).

The polarized and angry tone of much mediated public debate has had serious consequences for views of political participation. In the context of a political culture in many Western democracies, characterized by a generally cynical attitude toward political engagements (e.g., Eliasoph, 1998), those who venture forth to engage in political discussion are often dismissed as so extreme in their positions as to verge on the insane (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002). This not only is true for traditional news media's participatory forums, such as letters to the editor or radio phone-ins, but also characterizes descriptions of new media genre participants. For instance, in one study a focus group member, describing contributors of user-generated content, commented: "I've got a feeling that a high proportion of them might be people in hospitals with nothing better to do than sit around, people with mental health problems" (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2010, p. 186). Such a position clearly undermines claims that media forums for public debate have any significant role to play in contemporary democracies, and instead constructs them as "therapeutic" sites, or "safety valves" allowing the dangerously wound-up to let off steam by expressing grievances (e.g., Davis & Rarick, 1964).

In fact, the emotional pain and uncertainty that come with attempts at communicating across barriers of difference (Peters, 1999, p. 265) keep many people from engaging in conversation with different Others in the first place (Mutz, 2006; Witschge, 2004). With a proliferation of deliberative forums that has come about as a result of Internet platforms, it seems that the consequence has been a further fragmentation of public debate, leading to a multiplicity of discussions among like-minded participants rather than ones that seek to overcome difference (Papacharissi, 2010).

On the other hand, there is a significant body of work suggesting that emotionally engaged participation may have an important role to play because it fosters the

conditions for empathy. Work on television talk shows has played a central role in opening up a discussion of the need to more broadly consider the potential benefits of emotional expression in participatory media genres. These benefits, it should be said, speak to a broader understanding of participation and empowerment than that envisioned by the liberal model, which primarily emphasizes citizens' deliberation around, and reaction to, key issues of government policy. For example, Livingstone and Lunt's (1994) *Talk on Television* looked at the opportunities for regular citizens to contribute to public debate on a variety of current affairs-based daytime television talk shows, and examined how program makers encourage and discourage particular forms of participation. Their work showed that these talk shows, in enabling studio audience members to hold politicians and experts accountable, carve out a space for "attempts to confront established power with the lived experience of ordinary people" (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994, p. 160). They proposed that the television talk shows they studied, by combining opportunities for personal storytelling and public debate, may "support an emancipatory public sphere" (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994, p. 160; see also McNair et al., 2003; Squire, 2001).

Laura Grindstaff (2002) has suggested that the power of talk shows comes from how they emotionally engage their audiences, in moments of "joy, sorrow, rage or remorse expressed in visible, bodily terms" that are the "hallmark of the genre" (p. 19, 20). For these reasons, the opportunity for individuals to speak in their own emotionally charged voices on television talk shows points us toward a recognition of the complex relationship between rationality and emotion in mediated public participation, and to the ways in which an emerging personalized form of public debate is also often and inevitably emotionalized, even as it clearly ties into explicitly political issues (see also Squire, 2001). To Squire (2001), the "public emotionality of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, for instance, has inserted 'race,' violence against women, child abuse and, through the recent Book of the Month selections, literacy and literature, into the televisual culture of citizenship" (p. 32).

Personalized storytelling, as an expressive form, clashes with ideals of rational participation because it is embodied, partial, emotional, and based on what are essentially private experiences made public. Yet citizens and journalists alike see it both as a guarantor of authenticity and as an opening to a shared understanding of how ongoing events and controversial issues affect individuals and communities precisely because it allows participants to understand the experience of the "Other," who is seen as an authentic being because she can convincingly account for her feelings (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001). Certainly theorists have long recognized the power of storytelling to explore matters of the common good. Ted Glasser (1991) proposed that narrative can:

cut through abstractions and other obscurities and focus on the everyday meaning of life and our dealings with it. Stories enable us to think creatively and imaginatively about our experiences and the experiences of others; they empower us to interpret and thereby comprehend the endless details of life. [. . .] [Stories have a] basic role in transforming individual and essentially private experience into a shared and therefore public reality. (pp. 235–236)

This is precisely because personalized storytelling enables empathy, or the identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives. Empathy is fundamentally an emotional reaction, even if it enables rational consideration of the issue at hand. As Daryl Koehn (1998) has argued, the use of empathy in interactions with others can radically transform one's world view and thus one's moral standpoint:

By attempting to understand what an action, opportunity, or benefit means to this other party on her own terms, we open ourselves to substantial shifts in the way in which we have thus far thought about these matters. Empathy allows someone else's experience and perspective to become a part of our moral baseline and therefore can function to help us overcome prejudices and misconceptions. (p. 57)

The rise of the talk show and other populist genres that open up opportunities for emotional expression in public – and hence the mobilization of empathy – has occurred alongside a set of broader debates about changes in languages and registers of political discourse which see the emotionalization of public expression as a powerful emerging resource for cultivating engagement and understanding. These changes result from the increasing scrutiny of the few and the powerful by the many, or the “transformation of visibility” (Thompson, 1995). The dominance of television as the medium for communicating politics has meant that visual imagery, charisma, and personality have come to the forefront of coverage of politics, resulting in the personalization of politics (e.g., Langer, 2010). Political coverage focuses overwhelmingly on the personalities and personal lives of political leaders. Concretely, this has meant that political leaders, in their attempts to communicate with the public, are drawing on the very same strategies of personalized and emotionalized storytelling embodied in formats such as the television talk shows. For political leaders, the ability to show themselves as “human” through emotional expression is now seen as a central quality for leadership, and the personalized and emotionalized performance is part of the ritual “character test” of the election campaign, as candidates now routinely subject themselves to the scrutiny of talk shows and the narrativization of their personal lives. That a performance of emotionality is central to the ritual of political performance was powerfully demonstrated in the prominence given to glimpses of candidate emotion, for example, extensive coverage of the tears of Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden during the 2008 presidential election campaigns in the United States, and, in the UK, those of Gordon Brown on Piers Morgan's interview program in 2010.

More broadly, the process of personalization is also informed by the close relationship between popular culture and politics. As Richards (2004) suggested, that “popular culture is increasingly entering and shaping politics, *constituting* everyday politics in the content and channels of political communications, in the dynamics of public opinion, and in the values and decisions of individual citizens” (p. 342). Among other things, politicians draw on the genres, languages, and styles of popular culture, while popular culture figures are involved in politics (Louw, 2010; Street, 2001; van Zoonen,

2000, 2005). This development significantly contributes to the emotionalization of politics, insofar as “the popular has always to some extent been a domain of passion, and of emotional release” (Richards, 2004, p. 342). It signals the importance of understanding the emotive roots of our political commitments, as well as our emotional responses to policies and politicians (Richards, 2004, p. 347). This, in turn, necessitates the recognition that reasonable matters may be dramatized in an emotional fashion through the theater of public life (Richards, 2004, p. 339). The mediatization of political life, in turn, enables and underwrites such emotional dramatization. As Thrift (2008) has argued, “political presentation increasingly conforms to media norms of presentation which emphasize the performance of emotion as being an index of credibility. Increasingly, political legitimation arises from this kind of performance” (p. 184).

Overall, these developments signal the recognition of the central place of emotion in public discourse as a potential means of promoting identification and mutual understanding, and one which is not necessarily opposed to rationality. It would seem that it is, in fact, only through emotional storytelling that we can gain the empathy required for mutual understanding and, hence, for accessing horizons beyond those of our own self-interest to act as informed citizens. As such, the *positive* emotion of empathy – elicited, in turn, through emotional storytelling – is indispensable for a political discussion that moves us beyond the absolutist and entrenched parameters that often result from the play of *negative* emotions. As Mansbridge (2003) put it, if “emotional as well as rational commitments are required for people to experience the good of the whole even when their narrow self-interest conflicts with that good, then emotions must play a legitimate role in deliberation” (p. 198). Clearly, therefore, far from assuming that emotions have no place in public, or that they are naturally and invariably opposed to rationality, we need to understand the complex interplay of the range of distinctive positive and negative emotions, and how they structure public participation.

Conclusion

Taken together, the work of sociologists, philosophers, and media and communication scholars alerts us to the significance of emotion as a force in political life. Among other things, this body of work demonstrates that emotion cannot be excluded from considerations of politics, but should rather be understood as integral to its expressive forms and the ways in which citizens engage with it, and that rationality does not necessarily preclude emotion. On the contrary, emotional engagement enables the empathy necessary for citizens to fully understand the issues that concern us all. Through emotional storytelling, what are often abstract issues of the common good are given specificity that enables identification and understanding between participants and audiences.

Nonetheless, as I have discussed, emotion is not always a constructive force in politics. First of all, many of the emotions that mobilize political participation are negative, such as fear, anger, and disgust. Second, emotional involvement also has a well-documented polarizing effect on public discourse, which often renders civil deliberation impossible and instead leads to arguments based on irreconcilable differences that are unlikely to ever bring about constructive resolution, whether through consensus, negotiation, or other strategies.

To do justice to actually existing political practice, scholars must begin to engage with the concrete ways in which particular emotions encourage particular forms of public participation and expression while discouraging others, and to understand how power relations in society are productive of particular affective constellations. This effort should also entail a careful consideration of how to structure forums for public participation in ways that create conditions for public debate that work meaningfully across boundaries of difference and disagreement. In an environment of ever-proliferating sites and opportunities for public discussion, we need to raise questions about how to create forums that generate empathy instead of closing down the mutual understanding we need to make democracies work. We cannot automatically share the utopian position that more participation and discussion is better for democracy (cf. Møller Hartley, 2011), but instead must cultivate forums and procedures of mediated public participation that can foster empathy and solidarity, while recognizing the limitations of others that perpetuate division and difference.

Indeed, after an early rush to support a plethora of participatory sites enabled by online technologies, news organizations are now making difficult decisions about scaling back their involvement in forums that have offered little in the way of constructive public debate. To give just one example, after research on the BBC's practices around user-generated content demonstrated that message boards were disliked by both journalists and audience members for the incivility and negativity that they fostered (Wardle & Williams, 2008), the corporation has decided to significantly limit their use. At the same time, experiments with citizen journalism continue to foster optimism about the ability of ordinary citizens to participate in public debate by drawing on their experience and expertise (Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger, 2007).

Future research on political communication would do well to ask a series of key questions about the characteristics of existing and emerging forums for participation, which take into consideration the centrality of emotion and its varied manifestations. At the theoretical level, such research should be premised on the inherent role of emotion as a structuring dimension of citizenship, and seek to improve the prevailing approaches to mediated public participation with that insight in mind. At the empirical level, such research should take seriously the nature of emotional public discourse. It should chart how particular expressive sites (like message boards, talk radio, Twitter, and user-generated content) encourage particular forms of emotional expression, and understand how specific emotions (like anger, disgust, tolerance, and empathy, to mention a few complicated examples discussed here) can work to both help and hinder constructive public discussion, depending on the social, cultural, and

political contexts in which the debates unfold. Further, it should consider how these forms of emotional expression affect audiences – in other words, how audience members respond with engagement or disengagement, anger or happiness, and empathy or distancing, to name just a few possibilities. Future research in political communication should work to understand emotion as an indispensable and growing resource in political life.

NOTE

- 1 See Held (1987) for a compelling synthesis of the origins of liberal democratic theory.

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The Future of New Media

Embodying Kurzweil's Singularity in Dollhouse, Battlestar Galactica, and Gamer David Golumbia

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, David Golumbia argues that computationalist ideology – the view that everything in reality is ultimately made up of computation – can be seen with particular clarity in what he calls “the uploading story.” According to this story, we human beings are on the verge of losing our human embodiment and our contact with everyday reality, and moving into a world where our minds merge with computers and we inhabit virtual realities much like those seen in videogames. A prominent exemplar of this story is found in the work of inventor and futurist Ray Kurzweil, who claims that we are heading toward a profound transformation he and others call “The Singularity.” Golumbia argues that the premise of Kurzweil’s “Singularity” reads very much like the fantastic versions of “uploading” that have been widespread in computational thought for decades. To expose the conceptual flaws in the uploading story and its incarnation in Kurzweil’s “Singularity,” Golumbia examines a selection of recent television series and films that use this story as their narrative foundation. *Dollhouse*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Gamer* constitute a kind of demonstrative interrogation of the uploading fantasy, Golumbia argues, revealing its central contradiction – namely, that it relies not on actual technological advances but on distortions beyond any recognizable limits of our conceptions of the human, the mind, and the body.

New Media After the Singularity

Computationalist ideology boasts no more technically accomplished, influential, or persuasive a public advocate than Ray Kurzweil.¹ It also has no influential advocate whose views jettison (often without considering them at all) so many of the hard-won insights of the centuries-long project of humanistic inquiry, including parts that intersect with pillars of the scientific enterprise. Kurzweil does not just paint what might reasonably be called the standard computationalist picture according to which mind itself and therefore human society operate almost exclusively via algorithms (a view explicated at length in both Kurzweil 1990 and 1999); he just as often takes the most extreme position possible, insisting that there truly can be nothing in the universe at any level other than computation.² Nearly inseparable from this perspective is the view that the “biological understanding” of human being is both misguided and “pessimistic” (see especially *The Singularity Is Near*, 2005, p. 12). To Kurzweil this old-fashioned understanding is something we will soon shed, overcoming the “inherent limits” of our human bodies, at which point “we will be able to reengineer all of the organs and systems in our biological bodies and brains to be vastly more capable” than they are today (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 27).

In Kurzweil’s future, once we understand the deep ubiquity of computation, it will become impossible to talk about something distinct called *media*: “as virtual reality from within the nervous system becomes competitive with real reality in terms of resolution and believability, our experiences will increasingly take place in virtual environments” (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 29), in a vision not far away from the one articulated by early advocates of Virtual Reality (hereafter VR).³ According to this view, in a manner more profound than anything we see today, we will live in media when we become machines. Kurzweil sometimes portrays this transformation as a discrete event and sometimes as an ongoing process of which it is but one crucial step. Following the practice of a range of technological-eschatological thinkers, Kurzweil names it “the Singularity.”⁴

In part a kind of *ne plus ultra* of media convergence, the Singularity will have changed the world so much by 2099 that:

There is no longer any clear distinction between humans and computers.

Most conscious entities do not have a permanent physical presence.

Machine-based intelligences derived from extended models of human intelligence claim to be human, although their brains are not based on carbon-based cellular processes, but rather electronic and photonic equivalents. (Kurzweil, 1999, p. 280)

One of the cardinal reasons for approaching computationalism as an ideology rather than a philosophical framework is that computationalist thought is more interested in using rhetorical constructions to keep a certain power in place than it is in fidelity to its principles or to the facts. While Kurzweil often writes in a mode that rejects

the significance of almost everything we recognize today as “human,” declaring with near-certainty and in the present tense that in 2099, “most conscious entities do not have a permanent physical presence,” he just as often retreats into truisms and tautologies that contradict these most extreme pronouncements, or that provide rhetorical catachreses just where argument is required: “future machines will be human, even if they are not biological. This will be the next step in evolution [. . .] Most of the intelligence of our civilization will ultimately be nonbiological” (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 30). Today, in our definition of these words, the phrase “non-biological human” is a contradiction – an oxymoron on the order of “round square” or “living dead” – which does nothing to dispel its power, but much to open the question of its function. It is not a logical contradiction so much as a conceptual one: there are many things that human beings are not which would be similarly (but perhaps less centrally) meaningful if appended to the word human: non-terrestrial human; non-*homo-Sapiens* human; and so on. It also shows how critical it is to examine closely the uses and functions of the term *human*. In fact, Kurzweil uses *human* much the way he uses *mind* (in the latter case conforming fully to the “Cartesian myth” thoroughly discredited in Anglo-American philosophy no later than 1949 by Ryle’s *Concept of Mind*), collapsing fully distinct meanings to blur the most critical elements of his story.

Each of Kurzweil’s books carries a version of the same future timeline, stretching out millions of years beyond us; indeed, this is the feature of his work that he has emphasized more and more (it takes up a good part of the latter third of *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, 1999, but is the overt subject of the twice-as-long *Singularity*, 2005). Wikipedia maintains a web page of about 8,000 words, apart from his main biographical entry, devoted to these predictions. It seems critical to Kurzweil not merely to prove that a merger of human and computer is logically or physically possible, but to convince us that it *must* happen *this one way* – along the way, then, to show us that mastering the future is possible, desirable, legible. Otherwise, his thesis comes down to the view that “things will change a lot in the future” – typically, the thesis Kurzweil claims his opponents reject – rather than that this particular set of future events will come about. On the contrary, what is put at stake by Kurzweil’s predictive calculus is unpredictability, openness to possibility, and the understanding that we can’t know what will come, even if we can fantasize about it.

The Future of Cartesian Dualism

Katherine Hayles (1999) famously begins *How We Became Posthuman* by retelling what she calls “a roboticist’s dream that struck [her] as a nightmare”:

Reading Hans Moravec’s *Mind Children* [. . .] I happened upon the passage where he argues it will soon be possible to download human consciousness into a computer. To

illustrate, he invents a fantasy scenario in which a robot surgeon purees the human brain in a kind of cranial liposuction, reading the information in each molecular layer as it is stripped away and transferring the information to a computer. At the end of the operation, the cranial cavity is empty, and the patient, now inhabiting the metallic body of the computer, awakens to find his consciousness exactly the same as it was before. (p. 1)

Hayles's interrogation of the "downloading" fantasy (which now seems more often referred to as an "uploading" fantasy) explored the interstices between human and machine being. In this endeavor it is complete enough, and casts enough doubt on the cybernetic paradigm itself, that it may have obscured the need for analyses of some of the fantasy's most recent manifestations.⁵ As Kurzweil's writing and recent media both show, though, there is a fuller narrative to the uploading story, one involving commitment to a particular picture of the world that is much more detailed and specific than this brief rehearsal of Moravec (1988) suggests.

The dream Hayles reads in Moravec is not entirely original to him, as Hayles is quick to point out; it has sources in at least two sets of familiar literary-philosophical tropes. The first, visible in Moravec's story to some extent, is commonly traced back at least to Descartes: the idea that despite a commitment to secular materialism – which in the wake of scientific investigation seems to entail the physical materiality of everything in the world – mind and body remain not just conceptually but ideologically distinguishable. (To some, that is, Descartes holds on to the fundamental religious idea of the soul, even as he appears to take all of empirical science and "reason" as his starting points. This association persists to the present day.)

The second source for Moravec's story, somewhat buried but still visible in it and more prominent in other versions, is the story usually referred to as the Allegory of the Cave, found in Plato's *Republic* (514a–520a; 2007, pp. 240–248): namely that our everyday reality might somehow be a projection, representation, or dream, so that the pursuit of wisdom or knowledge can also be seen as seeing through an illusory veil to a new, transcendent reality.⁶ (We should also not lose sight of the fact that this Allegory is one of the main presentations of Plato's theory of Forms, a theory that today holds little currency among philosophers precisely because of its apparent commitment to a defined and transcendent space – a Heaven-like space – where problems of word–world reference do not occur.) These two streams have merged into a single fantasy that we find repeated endlessly in contemporary media and thought: scenarios in which we are able to remove our consciousnesses from our bodies and then put them into computers, where they (we) live "inside" the computer's representations *as we see them today from the outside*: that is, scenarios in which we can upload ourselves into something like a character in *World of Warcraft* (hereafter *WoW*), complete with some sort of virtual body relative to that world.

A rough version of the elements and background assumptions typically found in the canonical version of the uploading fantasy goes something like this:

- 1 Computers will reach a point where not just unexpected, emergent, or conscious (in general) behaviors appear to develop, but where *the phenomenon we call human consciousness* spontaneously develops within the computer.
- 2 This will coincide with an algorithmic analysis of the human brain (perhaps performed by the spontaneous consciousnesses that emerged of their own accord in the first trope) that describes the entire mind as such, so that a “human mind” *per se* can be developed as an explicit software program. By “running” this program, the computer is able to emulate (or become?) a “real” human mind.
- 3 Human beings will also develop the means to transfer or copy their (individual) minds from their bodies into computers capable of running “human mind software.”
- 4 When human beings upload themselves into computers, they will be able to seamlessly slip between the “worlds” that we today perceive from outside the computer (such as games and movies) and what we call reality now. The distinction between “fiction” and “reality” will turn out to have been illusory. What today we perceive using our bodies (such as *WoW* avatars) will be “real” inside the computer.

Despite the number of features demanded by the fantasy, and despite the strange improbability of many of them happening as part of a single event or process, it is remarkable how many narratives share or respond to them, much as most vampire narratives play off or refer to, even if they do not accept, the many canonical details of the vampire story. In the uploading story, there is a strong conceptual basis for the connection between the parts, in part because they engage in the same rhetorical sleight-of-hand, subtly putting figure where ground should be, and allowing language to make logically impossible constructions appear tenable.

Accepting that there is some fantasy sense in which the uploading story could be true, programs like *Battlestar Galactica* and *Dollhouse* exploit a logical crux built into the story that is hard to see in very schematic depictions. Proposals for uploading our minds require one of two things to be possible: either (a) it is possible to *remove* our minds from our bodies, to separate out exactly that part of us that is “mind” and the part that is not, and to transfer that part exclusively to a machine, thus leaving the body an empty, un-minded husk which it seems hard to call “alive” (an aporia explored with great effectiveness in *Dollhouse*, discussed below); or (b) the human mind is or is very much like a software program, and like any software program, it can be perfectly *copied* in exactly its current state from computer to computer and medium to medium (the premise on which the *Battlestar Galactica/Caprica* franchise is built).

Read closely, the arguments Kurzweil and other uploading advocates present directly address the possibility of *copying* rather than *moving* the mind, and Kurzweil is often explicit that this is what computers will enable. But this presents a philosophical conundrum that Kurzweil’s critics seem unable to make him conceptualize.⁷ It is fundamental to our sense of human consciousness that it presents itself to itself as

unique: that is to say that the experience of embodied awareness and mental experience I am having right now is mine and mine alone, and in fact defines me, and is only accessible to me; philosophers sometimes call this “qualia.” Were it in fact possible to duplicate that entire experience somewhere else, *to make a copy of me in such a way that I were aware of it*, I would lose the core notion of uniqueness of self that is arguably constitutive of the experience of selfhood. I am not going to speculate on what my sense of self would be, were the self something that could be copied; my point is simply that the uniqueness of selfhood is a part of consciousness deeply embedded within us, and so that if the uploader’s thesis is that consciousness can be copied, he ends up reasoning in a circular fashion. Whatever “I” am, it cannot be copied; something that *can* be copied cannot be “I.” If the singularity enables the copying of consciousness, it is copying something other than what we are, either because we cannot be uploaded, or because what can upload itself *is not us*.

While the copying version of the fantasy violates its initial premise – that it is possible *exactly* to copy ourselves to a machine – the moving fantasy is far more violent, and one that even Kurzweil rarely presents in a serious fashion. One can reflect on some of the details of Moravec’s story a bit more to see this. In what state of consciousness is the patient while his brain is being pureed, even if sedated? Where is his mind if he wakes up mid-operation? Where would “he” be? When he wakes up “inside” a machine, by definition he no longer has contact with the body and bodily environment that have shaped him to that point; at the same time his body no longer has a mind. Here again, it is the apparently scientific, materialist proposal that turns out to violate mind–brain identity: my consciousness is acutely aware of things I call “my hand” and “my foot,” and while it can sustain a certain amount of challenge to these presumptions (though typically only at great pain, e.g., by amputation), it seems absurd on the face to claim that the unique version of “me” that wakes up inside the computer would “be” me, since every one of my critical representations of my body to myself would have become illusory. It is also hard to see how it could consider itself to be anything but *dead*, given that my body would be deprived of those brain functions that occur at sub- or unconscious levels while mediating autonomic body functions.⁸

In his own words, Kurzweil proposes that “there is a specific game plan for achieving human-level intelligence in a machine”:

having tracked the progress being made in accumulating all of the (yes, exponentially increasing) knowledge about the human brain and its algorithms, I believe that it is a conservative scenario to expect that within thirty years we will have detailed models of the several hundred information processing organs we collectively call the human brain. (Kurzweil, 2001)

The “several hundred information processing organs we collectively call the human brain” – while he will often enough backtrack from such sentiments, here it is clear that to Kurzweil the *brain*, *intelligence*, *mind*, and *information processing* are all the same

thing (as are “human consciousness” and “human-level intelligence”): information processing. Nevertheless, he is certain: “there will be no distinction, post-Singularity, between human and machine or between physical and virtual reality” (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 9). This is not a serious scientific or philosophical thesis but instead a powerful rhetorical construction, precisely the one we see deployed over and over again in media, regardless of its coherence.

Kurzweil’s proposals repeatedly fall victim to the kind of category error that, according to the philosopher Hilary Putnam, inform the construction of what are known in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy (in large part because of Putnam’s own work) as “brain in a vat” thought problems. Most famously, in *Reason, Truth, and History* (Putnam, 1982) Putnam asks us to consider the now-traditional scenario, in which a person’s brain

has been removed from the body and placed in a vat of nutrients which keeps the brain alive. The nerve endings have been connected to a super-scientific computer which causes the person whose brain it is to have the illusion that everything is perfectly normal. There seem to be people, objects, the sky, etc.; but really, all the person (you) is experiencing is the result of electronic impulses travelling from the computer to the nerve endings. The computer is so clever that if the person tries to raise his hand, the feedback from the computer will cause him to “see” and “feel” the hand being raised. (Putnam, 1982, p. 6)

Here Putnam reiterates the uploading story to demonstrate its incoherence. Putnam imaginatively grants what Kurzweil seems not quite to have imagined: suppose all human beings are brains in vats, we are all connected, and our hallucinatory world – our VR space – is made so as to perfectly mimic the real world that exists outside the vat. “Suppose this whole story were actually true. Could we, if we were brains in a vat in this way, *say* or *think* that we were?” Putnam asks, and then answers, “although it violates no physical law [. . .] *It cannot possibly be true*” (Putnam, 1982, p. 7, emphasis in original).

Putnam attacks the problem through logical proof, but his argument also translates, usefully for this discussion, into problems of frame and reference: although the brains in the vat “can think and ‘say’ any words we can think and say, they cannot (I claim) *refer* to what we can refer to. In particular, they cannot think or say that they are brains in a vat (*even by thinking ‘we are brains in a vat’*)” (p. 8). Another way of saying this is to reverse perspective: if we are brains in a vat, what do we mean by “reality” – the place in which the vat sits – in the first place? Is it just like the world our brains collectively imagine, or the world in which we think of ourselves as a brain in a vat? If it is what we usually think of as the “real” world in this scenario – where we can see the brain in its vat – how do we know anything about it at all? How do we know it is of such a nature to have “brains” and “vats”?⁹ This paradox applies even more strongly to versions of the story in which we see humans attached from birth to machines that generate virtual worlds, as in *The Matrix* (Wachowski &

Wachowski, 1999) – how and where, we have to ask, did those human bodies, raised from embryos by machines, gain the bodily experience with which to create the imagined environment they appear to inhabit? Part of Putnam’s point is that the only way they could have is if mind and body were two separate substances, just as there would be two different “levels” of reality to which different (but oddly duplicative) versions of ourselves have access. This view is not just bizarre; it is incoherent. Much simpler is the pragmatic and materialist picture: mind and body are one, “mind” develops as body develops, and all of its “representations,” “pictures,” and “thoughts” are constructed relative to its embodied experience.

Why, if Kurzweil’s story is correct, would our disembodied selves “inside” the computer want, as he always insists they will, to have sex, or to eat, or even to play games like *World of Warcraft*? Do we not do each of these things precisely because of the direct connections on which they rely between our “minds” and our “bodies,” unified so that we need not even think about them? Now, when humans interact with media of any sort, they do so largely because of somatic systems that may or may not rise to anything like the level of thought. Today, when my *WoW* avatar reaches a cliff edge, I experience vertigo because my somatic and perceptual systems are activating memories of and responses to such a scene, *all over my body*, not just in my brain case: it feels almost as if I am standing on the cliff edge, and if my avatar jumps, I will feel very distinctly as if I have jumped too – in my body. It is because my body is playing that game that I experience it at all. A simulated and disembodied “intelligence” version of me – the “mind” that supposedly can be extracted out of my body and uploaded to the computer world – kicks out the somatic supports that constitute the mind in the first place. The problem for Kurzweil is that his proposal is that something like *me* can be uploaded to the computer – but in every version of the scenario we are able to describe, and this is also Putnam’s insight, though we start from the premise that we can separate our minds from our bodies, the premise is legible only if we also (covertly) assume we cannot.

Kurzweil never fully posits that emergent forms of artificial intelligence (AI) will recreate human embodiment, that this embodiment might be required for human consciousness or that human brains will be raised from nascence inside a computer (indeed, to Kurzweil, “consciousness” is a relatively mystical thing that is the same regardless of where it exists; this leads to some of his wildest conclusions: after the Singularity, “our civilization will then expand outward, turning all the dumb matter and energy we encounter into sublimely intelligent – transcendent – matter and energy. So in a sense, we can say that the Singularity will ultimately infuse the universe with spirit”; Kurzweil, 2005, p. 389). He posits instead that the human brain currently *simulates* its own embodiment, as if it were dreaming all the time and as if that dream had no relation to embodied reality, and as if dreaming and reality pointed *for us* at the same thing. On this view, if we suddenly found ourselves to be brains in a vat – that is, found ourselves conscious of having been disconnected from our bodies and reduced to brains, and now were able to see that brain and that vat and its artificial hormones and its machinic embodiment – we would also inherently

know that the “brain in a vat” reality was the “real” reality. *Despite* our memory of having had a real human body, we will pass into this virtual world without recognizing that it is virtual, without consciousness that we had just given up our material existence. Again, for Kurzweil, “there will be no distinction, post-Singularity, between [. . .] physical and virtual reality” (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 9); this can only be true if the distinction between physical reality and VR has been false all along, because we are about to find out that we have always had a kind of spirit-existence, a transcendent and disembodied “intelligence” – or, in more traditional terms, a soul.

The Future of “Human Biology”

Media representations of the uploading fantasy do not just portray in exquisite detail what the fantasy entails and what it silently pushes into the background; they are themselves part of the discourse that constitutes the fantasy, so much so that the “brain in a vat” arguably occurs in science fiction narratives like *Donovan’s Brain* (novel and radio in the early 1940s, and film in 1953) before it does in philosophy or computer theory. One of the most elaborate analytical media constructions of this sort is the figure of the “humanoid Cylons” depicted in the reimagined television series *Battlestar Galactica* (Moore & Eick, 2004–2009; hereafter *BSG*) and its prequel, *Caprica* (Moore, Eick, Espenson, Murphy, & George, 2009–present). There are fantastically rich narratives in these programs that deserve sustained attention, but here I will highlight just two major representational strategies in the overall architecture of the *BSG/Caprica* world. The first is found in what is probably the central premise of the rebooted *BSG*. In the original (late 1970s) version of *Battlestar Galactica*, the robotic Cylons, while they possessed some crudely humanoid characteristics (e.g., bipedalism), were unmistakably machines. The premise of the new *BSG*, on the other hand, is that in the distant past the Cylons found a way to duplicate the biological structure of the human body and so to create infinite copies of any person’s body they choose: rather than avoiding the difficult question of whether we upload via *move* or *copy*, *BSG* embraces the copy wholeheartedly. Thus a great deal of the length of the series is devoted to the consequences of the Cylons apparently being able to create “perfect copies” of themselves, and no less to their fundamental antagonism to human life, which as in most versions of the fantasy is thematically tied to their simulative origin.

As the series progresses, the use of the copy trope itself turns out to multiply rather than reduce the *mise-en-abyme* generated by the uploading story. It turns out that each one of the “copies,” since it is indistinguishable – perhaps entirely indistinguishable – from a human being with a human consciousness, must by definition feel itself to be unique and to undergo unique experiences. Since mind and body are separate, if the body of that copy dies, its mind can then be “re-uploaded” into a new body; but this new second-generation copy has memories that no other version of

itself has. It has become unique, and rather than being copied it is actually being moved. This raises a bizarre question of origin on which the series to my knowledge never reflects. Did the Cylons learn how to “build human beings” (which we do not see), or did they learn how to separately build human *bodies* and human *brains*? Even though the latter is not the overt story, it is in fact what we see repeatedly in the series: a “dumb” body (presumably without a brain) being born in an incubator tub, into which the Number 6 consciousness, with all its particular memories intact, is downloaded. So, can the Cylons simply create as many “Number 6” models as they choose (this is demonstrated several times), and if they do so, which current Number 6 do they copy? Is there an “original” version of Number 6 that is ordinarily “used” to create a new copy? If so, why can’t the current “individual” Number 6 also be copied?

This representational abyss extends to the foundational premise of the program and eventually to its entire plot: if the Cylons are able to *perfectly* replicate human beings, what does it mean to call them “Cylons”? What does it mean to say that an entity is a perfect copy of a human being and yet is not a human being – that is, it both is X and is not X? Thus there is no attempt to distinguish at any level other than the verbal the distinction in the series between human and Cylon, but the need to use human beings in their bodies to portray the Cylons continually militates against the overt insistence that they are machines. The need for embodiment in serial television thus exposes the rhetorical trick Kurzweil tries to play with catachrestic phrases like “machines will be human”; one can say anything, but trying to realize logical and conceptual contradictions is easier said than done. The Cylons simply *are* human begins in every meaningful sense; eventually the substance of the series becomes devoted to just this conundrum, and it becomes nearly impossible for the program to offer the *characters themselves* any way to make the distinction, so that they too begin to wonder not merely whether they are human or Cylon, but also whether there is in fact any difference between the two.

The second articulation of the uploading story in these programs is found in the new *Caprica* series, a prequel series to *BSG* set in something like a near future similar to our present day, in which we see the discovery of the technology that led to the creation of the Cylons-that-are-also-humans. We learn in *Caprica* much that had not been clear in *BSG*, not least that the Cylon technology stems from the desire of its creator to reanimate the dead, and in particular a dead loved one – his daughter. (Again, where we are told we will find science, we find spiritual belief instead, and a profound enmeshment in bodily death and the persistence of the soul.) In fact, the story amplifies the aporetic qualities of its impossible central figure, Zoe: her avatar inside the VR space in *Caprica*, called “V-World,” turns out to be unique in critical ways and to violate the rules stipulated by the dramatic scenario. In the first episode of the series, “Pilot,” we meet Zoe in the flesh briefly, and we see her playing with her peers in a V-World club (called V-Club). Here avatars indulge in precisely the activities our bodies are (generally) barred from doing in physical reality: they pursue somatic pleasure in its most extreme forms, including sex, drugs, and violence.

Among the very first sequences of the series is one including not one but two virtual Zoes, both inside V-Club. Through perspective shots we are made to identify with the Zoe watching the scene from a balcony as the focal character, as the other Zoe becomes the center of attention for the sybaritic and, it appears, murderous crowd. Just as they are about to kill her, the “second” Zoe disappears, and the “real” Zoe and her friend begin to talk about the copy “eventually becoming perfect.” By the end of the Pilot the physically real (outside of V-World) Zoe dies, but the second digital copy persists inside V-World. Because she is embodied for us by the same person who plays the “real” Zoe (Alessandra Toressani), we are led to believe that this Zoe is exactly the same as the “real” Zoe, so much so that it hardly seems to feel that it is a copy, despite knowing this to be the case.

It turns out that this copy is the first instance of the “mind” or “soul” that animates the “human” Cylons, under the watchful eye of Zoe’s grieving father Daniel Graystone (played by Eric Stoltz). As the first season progresses we learn that Daniel is the founder of the company that created V-World, and that Zoe was no less gifted a programmer than he is, but was even more driven by apparently eccentric and extreme views. The viewer knows, as Daniel does not, at least at first, that Zoe was part of the radical sect that caused the explosion in which she died (possibly by design). As we learn about it in retrospect, Zoe’s work seems very familiar; it appears to have been lifted almost directly out of one of Kurzweil’s texts:

Zoe designed a program that allowed her to create a virtual duplicate of herself using a compilation of various personal records, a feat that impressed even her own computer-gifted father. Zoe believed that the creation of her holographic avatar was the next step towards a divinely-inspired plan, and designed a biofeedback subroutine that allowed her avatar to feel what she felt in the real world. (“Zoe Graystone,” 2010)

When we see Zoe inside the VR system of *Caprica*, both we and she are entirely unaware of the physically embodied Zoe; indeed, we are introduced to her specifically so as to confuse the distinction, because all sorts of bodily sensation are provided to the VR user as if this were feasible in any system like the one described in the series. Furthermore, we are told that this fantasy world, like a contemporary computer game, exists on a shared central server running computer software, so that what happens when the user plays the game sits exactly atop the blurred line between *copy* and *move*, a feint which the program plays on from the beginning. Where most users’ interaction with the game is portrayed as a “movement” of consciousness – that is, consciousness is a unique thing that can be moved out of the body, but then exists only “in” the game – Zoe is from the beginning portrayed as a “copy”; her VR “self” appears to exist whether or not the “real” Zoe is communing with the *doppelgänger*. It is hard not to see almost all of the episodes in the first season, which repeatedly dwell on images of “digital Zoe” downloading herself from V-World into a robotic Cylon frame in “real” reality, as a kind of repetition compulsion, showing the impossible entry of the “digital human self” into our reality. This is also a scene

we see repeatedly inside V-World itself: a condition is artificially imposed in which if you “die” once inside V-World, you can no longer enter it. Rather than avoiding death – pursuing immortality, following Kurzweil – all that many of the avatars appear to be able to do inside V-World is to try to end their lives, and to maintain hope that they will somehow be able to continue to live inside V-World. This special, soul-like permanence of the imagined self is granted only to Zoe, who, rather than embodying the ability to move human consciousness from site to site, instead embodies the impossible exception.

Transcending Us, or, Ending the Future

In the *BSG* enterprise and especially in *Caprica*, we see all of the elements of the uploading story realized in human bodies, including the fundamental notion that there is a world “inside” the computer that can or should be anything but a description or projection of the material world we inhabit. All such depictions rely, as do Kurzweil’s claims, on the idea of a VR system perfect enough that it fully replicates the entire human sensorium. Typically when such a scenario is fictonalized for us, only dream-like or impossible events make apparent to the viewer that this is anything but reality (contrary to “real-life” VR, where elements of physical reality have yet to be fully eliminated from the apparatus). Conceptually, it is vital to note how hard it is to depict such worlds without replicating so many features of our world that it begins to beg the question of whether a nonreal but fully immersive environment (in every sense, so that we could remotely tele-touch with another human being using the system inside the VR world) is even imaginatively coherent. Where the uploading story relies on an outmoded notion of the mind–body connection, it is no less archaic in its sturdy insistence that we will be able to live inside our dreams. Arguably, it is just the fact that they are not real in the way our experience is real that makes the transformed representations of experience in dreams, novels, movies, and videogames valuable to begin with. Mind and body, according to most current scientific and philosophical theories, are one; fiction and reality, just as undeniably, are not.

Gamer (Nevelidine & Taylor, 2009) confronts this potential aporia directly, by dispensing altogether with the idea that we might somehow synthesize experience. The movie is well known for its extended depiction of “Slayers,” a version of a videogame (almost identical to a current first-person shooter game) played in our world, but which is nevertheless controlled by players also in our world at computer terminals, (partially) immersed in the screen-world of Slayers, which thus functions as a kind of fictional experience for them. (Perhaps due to its clever focus on the fiction/reality part of the uploading fantasy, the film does create an aporia of sorts in describing an interface that both allows the in-game character [e.g., Kable, the Gerard Butler character] to retain near-complete control over his body while at the same time passing

many of these controls to the player [the 17-year-old boy Simon]. The film attributes this connection to relatively generic “self-replicating nanites” that somehow allow two consciousnesses to “exist” in a single body: the structure is aporetic in that the film does not even attempt to make clear how this kind of shared consciousness could possibly “feel” to either participant.)

Nonetheless, this conceptual crux should not distract us from the starkly credible vision of future media forms found in *Gamer*, a vision that to my knowledge is unique to the film. This becomes especially clear when we look at the second videogame presented in the movie, a version of something like *The Sims* that in the movie is called, provocatively, “Society.” In Society, we see something that looks very close to traditional VR at first: the scene opens on a sparkling, brightly colored, playful world in which the only activities appear to be based on pleasure. Using digital animation techniques, the live-action sequence of rollerbladers and skateboarders in a central city square appears clearly as part of our reality (like *Slayers*), yet also as if it is inside a videogame – which also deliberately looks like (and extends) current techniques of digital image “polishing” to originally photographed moving images. In the brief scene from Society, we watch as two very attractive skaters approach each other, as if to dance, and eventually begin kissing and touching each other. The scene pulls back and we see a vibrant city square, for some reason bounded into just that area, filled with skaters, dancers, and so on. The viewer is disoriented because she has no subjective point from which to view the scene; the characters do not jibe with any presented yet in the film, and appear to simply be enjoying some kind of drug-induced hyper-awareness. Then the scene pulls back again; the viewer sees that the Society scenes are in fact being viewed on a computer screen, but that the players of both the attractive male and female in-game characters are middle-aged, very overweight, sedentary men, greedily eating food at their computer terminals as they “play” their respective characters.

All of these scenes of Society are in fact conveyed via a talking-heads current affairs discussion program on television within the “real” reality of the film. *Slayers*, we have already learned, is positioned as a way for prisoners to shorten or even commute their sentences. Society, on the other hand, is fully or at least partly consensual: not only do the players (the obese men at their computer terminals) pay for the privilege of role-playing the characters, but all the characters inside the game (in what appears as VR world from the player’s perspective) are paid for their “work” inside the game, so that the question of its consensual nature is paralleled directly with that of sex work. In fact, we learn that the woman in the main scene we see from Society, played by the model Amber Valetta, is Kable’s wife, and eventually that both of them have been imprisoned in their game roles by a wide conspiracy headed by Castle, the man who invented both games. Then we learn that the “nanite” technology, foisted off with a few lines of jargon early in the film, entails exactly the same displacement of mind from body, the same untenable dualism, and the consequent paradoxical assertion of a mind that both does and does not inhabit the body in which it finds itself.

In *Dollhouse* (Whedon, 2009–2010), a serial television program developed for Fox by Joss Whedon and Eliza Dushku (who plays the show's focal character, Echo), we find what is arguably the fullest and most detailed portrayal of the uploading fantasy in recent media. The show, which ultimately ran for two seasons that were able to be scripted into a single story arc by Whedon et al., included some of the same conceits found in *Gamer*, articulated in much more detail than even Kurzweil has been able to do. The series reveals all of the problematic and incoherent assumptions that underlie the fantasy. In *Dollhouse*, we begin again from something like our contemporary moment and place in history, differing from ours only in the existence of some version of *copy/move* technology, allowing human consciousness as such to be copied intact from a living body to computer software and vice versa. In this version of the story, a human subject sits in a chair and has her brain "scanned" by electromagnetic probes; the result is an extracted computer program that contains the entirety of the individual's consciousness. Inversely, the "doll" sits in the chair and has someone's consciousness downloaded into her. Here, we are explicitly and necessarily told that the *copy* ability exists alongside the ability to *move*; but as I have argued, positing the availability of *copy* turns out to violate the boundaries of the self too much to sustain consistent representation. As if to emphasize the aporetic nature of this fundamental operation, the program suggests, without ever explicitly stating, that these software programs must be uniquely stored in containers that are not directly linked to a computer network. We are frequently presented with the relatively absurd spectacle of characters living sometime later than us in our world, carrying around an eight-track-tape size physical computer disk as if it were some kind of analog media and there were no way to make infinite copies of it. (Of course, it emerges at various points in the series that these files can be transmitted over computer networks and stored like any other files, putting more emphasis on the fantastic – impossible and archaic – nature of the *copy* operation itself.)

We learn about the possibility of *moving* consciousness, however, via the presentation of the show's main figure, the "doll," a human being who has voluntarily submitted to (a) having her consciousness copied into software; (b) having the consciousness in her body deleted; (c) making herself available to have other consciousnesses (and pieces of consciousnesses) downloaded into her "empty" body, which is then used to execute "client engagements" (often of a sexual nature). Sometimes the program suggests that (a) and (b) are one operation, and at other times two.

While these abilities are presented as simple and technical in the program's initial premise, this technological innovation turns out to invoke almost inevitably the entire suite of tropes in the uploading fantasy. To begin with, the idea of a "doll" – a fully functioning body that exists "without consciousness" – is impossible to comprehend and almost as hard to represent; we see at least half-a-dozen such "dolls" in their "empty" state over the course of the series, and it is never clear how the line has been drawn between the parts of the consciousness that make up the self (e.g., Echo's prior human self, Caroline) and the "consciousness of body" that allows her

instead to walk around as a “mindless” body named Echo. In fact, representation of the dolls becomes an insoluble problem for the show’s version of the uploading story, which it eventually uses as a way to resolve the series as a whole.

As an example of the dolls’ impossible status, consider that the “empty” dolls in *Dollhouse* in their uninhabited state routinely speak their normal language with complete fluency; yet when a new personality is downloaded into Echo, we see that she has learned its language(s) to perfection – while retaining Echo’s own original English fluency, regardless of whether the new character speaks English. Is language part of consciousness or isn’t it? It seems to exist in both places, but few serious accounts of consciousness would exclude all of language fluency. Are we to believe that it is doubled, existing as a whole both in the mind and in the body? And if so, what exactly are we to understand as the nature of mind and body? The dolls as well have full awareness and control of their bodies, while at the same time the downloaded consciousnesses too have control of their new “home” bodies; so who is it that experiences hunger, intimacy, sociality, interaction – the “mind” left in the doll, or the “mind” taken out of her? (That is, if Echo has control of her body, how can control of body be part of what has been transferred or copied to her “mind file”?) Third, skills and abilities work both for empty and inhabited dolls as if “written down” in abstract and disembodied form, so that for example a recorded personality will know how to do karate, and then this skill will be present in Echo on “assignment”; yet surely the knowledge of doing karate relies in large part on what have become automatic, unconscious body motions established through extensive practice and training – specific to *that* body, to that body’s nervous system, to its history, to the making-automatic of what must be thought that characterizes learning and practice. Despite Echo’s consciousness having been “removed” from her body, it seems as if a lot of it remains there – and it is no accident that this is very much how it looks in the show, as there is almost no other way to depict this, unless the body is completely deactivated, as in the brain-in-a-vat story.

All of these contradictions emerge from the simple attempt to depict a realistic scenario in which mind and body actually could be separated. Despite its seductiveness as a trope, performances of human beings in extended media like *Dollhouse* remind us to think very carefully about what we mean by the fantasies we propose and imagine. Abruptly, at the end of the first season, an epilogue (“Epitaph One”) shifts the story just 10 years into the future, showing the consequences of this technology being available – that is, of the Singularity having happened, in Kurzweil’s terms. The results are almost immediately apocalyptic. The inability for each of us to locate and understand who and what each of us are, and most especially what we are to each other, and what our bodies are, results in total social breakdown. The few remaining “Actuals” (personalities still inhabiting their original bodies) hold on to their identities with near-religious fervor, and even they do not seem entirely sure of their identities.

This projection of the future eventually twists again: toward the end of the second, final season, we revisit this 2019 scenario. This time, though, it is inside the VR world

of a body in a vat whose brain has somehow been displaced: that is, inside Echo's comatose body, pumped with fluids and wrapped into a plastic chrysalis. We learn that many such empty bodies are kept in a facility called "The Attic," and the linked bodies are stimulated with fear hormones to generate cerebral activity, effectively causing the brains to imagine their worst nightmares over and over again. That is the scenario in which the VR world becomes "real." Inside "The Attic" what appear to be the doll's original personalities exist in the apocalyptic future seen in "Epitaph One," linking together the singularity story as the series concludes. Somehow their comatose bodies and consciousnesses, living in constant fear, generate cerebral activity that can be linked, so that the series' villain, the Rossum Corporation, can build "the world's first supercomputer," allowing it to seize control of and exploit the uploading technology.

Inside *Dollhouse's* own act of telling the future, inside the VR, the technology's original developer loops through history repeatedly in his own nightmare, obsessively calculating the chances that the mind-transfer technology leads to the apocalypse, which he believes is 97% ("The Attic"). This programmed or perfectly predicted future, too, makes this character Clyde stand in very closely for something like Kurzweil's position. Now, to restore order and bring narrative closure, every other aporia must be exploited, so that Caroline/Echo is able to force herself and several other dolls back into the Attic reality and reawaken their bodies, all violating stipulations the series itself establishes. At the end of the series, after the inevitable (but likely incomplete) victory of the non-copied humans ("Actuals" in the show's terminology), we find an underlying narrative that pits interactive sociality against prediction and control as modes for imagining and controlling the future. Despite the "human" victory, the show thus ends with a number of powerful images of solipsistic self-enclosure, suggesting that the original premise of the series, because it posits mind as a kind of body-independent, mobile medium, ultimately makes impossible both human identity and human freedom.

So among the inevitable aporetic elements of the series' end is the fact that Echo, the "body without consciousness" portrayed by Eliza Dushku, turns out to have developed consciousness after all – insisting, rightly on my view, that consciousness is something like an effect of the body rather than an intact program that can be separated from it. This Echo becomes a kind of meta-consciousness, remembering and incorporating all of the selves downloaded into her body before, which *Dollhouse* can only represent as a series of discrete scenes and voices "inside" the one head of Echo. At the series' end, this singular society of minds is depicted living alone in a bunker, secreted for an unknown future, away from apocalyptic war, as if a kind of living tomb, an archive of (parts of?) the selves that are now lost. As if to emphasize the point, the series' final scenes depict Echo/Caroline uploading into herself the "self" of her boyfriend, Paul. This finale shows us a new "imagined" reality apparently inside Echo's head where the two of them meet, in an eternal space of undifferentiated closeness, but also not entirely an other, and so not providing exactly that which intimate relationships supply: the other. There are few depictions of the con-

tinued existence of the human race that so clearly also depict that future as always archived, self-enclosed, unable to refer, than the final scenes of *Dollhouse*.

The *Futur* of New Media

Throughout his writings, and especially in those of his later career, Jacques Derrida draws our attention to the linguistic and conceptual means by which we all envision, construct, plan, and inhabit the future. Most famously, Derrida persistently reflects on the distinction in French between the nouns *l'avenir* and *futur*, both of which are typically translated as the noun “the future” in English, but the first of which, a nominalized form of the standard verb “to come,” suggests for Derrida a different range of meanings from those of *le futur*:

In general, I try to distinguish between what one calls *le futur* and *l'avenir*. *Futur* is that which – tomorrow, later, next century – will be. There’s a future which is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable [Derrida pronounces each of these words in English after saying them in French]. But there is a future, *l'avenir*, to come [in English], which refers to someone who comes whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me, that is the real future. That which is totally unpredictable. The Other who comes without my being able to anticipate their arrival. So if there is a real future beyond this other known future, it’s *l'avenir* in that it’s the coming of the Other, when I am completely unable to foresee their arrival. (Derrida, quoted in Dick & Ziering, 2002)¹⁰

Despite his well-known but undeserved reputation for obliterating all differences, such passages are characteristic of Derrida, who is just as likely to discover a hidden or covert difference to which we have failed to attend as he is to suggest that a specific division (e.g., speech/writing) is in some way less than it appears. On the contrary, if there are core features of Derridean “doctrine,” one would be exactly this Levinasian insistence on the radical necessity of an openness toward the unknown, especially the unknown other.

The future we see in the singularity story stands out for its emphasis on programmability, predictability, calculation – all the qualities to which Derrida suggests we remain alert. In a wide sense, his point is that a programmed future is altogether dystopic: if we know with certainty what is going to happen there is almost no reason to deploy our wills toward those certainties; or put differently, it is hard to see what there is for our wills to do without a future open to chance and to the exercise of will.¹¹ Like the ideal world of Plato’s forms, the programmed future is a limit case that ends in perfect stasis: it is a vision that is at its core unthinkable, the full satisfaction of desire that nevertheless remains unsatisfied. The limit case of programmability is much like the limit case of immortality Hägglund (2008) sees at the heart of Derrida’s writing: what we use as a telos for so many positive practices

establishes itself as a nightmare limit. “We,” in this critical sense, cannot become immortal, because we are not immortal; when we become immortal, we lose one of the fundamental supports on which our self-definition rests. As with the rest of the uploading fantasy, whether or not there could (or do) exist immortal beings, they cannot be us.¹²

It is surely no coincidence that one site for the opposing sentiment – the view that we should and want to predict the future accurately – is found alongside the rest of the pieces of the singularity story. While futurism is found in every society, and varieties of scientific and/or scientific futurism parallel the development of science itself, there can be no denying that part of Kurzweil’s attractiveness to his constituency lies just in his repeated offering of specific, detailed accounts of future events. A standard feature of every Kurzweil text is the invocation of Moore’s Law. While today it is referred to exclusively as a “Law,” meaning something like “Physical Law,” it was originally offered by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore as a *description* of the logarithmic development of computer memory and processing power: roughly that the total power doubles every year or two (depending on which version of the Law one accepts).¹³ To Kurzweil, like other computing enthusiasts, Moore’s Law is a species of general physical laws of acceleration, which he considers vital to the coming of the Singularity:

During the 1990s, I gathered empirical data on the apparent acceleration of all information-related technologies and sought to refine the mathematical models underlying these observations. I developed a theory I call the law of accelerating returns, which explains why technology and evolutionary processes in general progress in an exponential fashion. (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 3)

Kurzweil is so sure of the inexorability of his conclusions that he confidently recounts telling James Watson (co-winner of the Nobel Prize for the discovery of DNA), in 2003, that Watson was wrong in thinking that within 50 years we will have drugs that enable us to eat all the food we want without consequence; as Kurzweil explains, in his 2005 volume, he told the “shortsighted” Watson that “these will be available in five to ten years, not fifty” (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 12).

To control, predict, and program the future: one sees this goal promoted everywhere today, so much so that despite the near-universal horror which most audiences experienced at seeing people arrested for “precrimes” in Steven Spielberg’s *Minority Report* (2002), such technologies are in fact emerging at an accelerating pace. Google and other corporations at the forefront of computational research routinely create “predictive algorithms” for a variety of domains, including human behavior.¹⁴ Such practices are a step up from, but related to, the kinds of statistical behavior prediction for which computers have long been used, primarily in military, commercial, and electoral contexts. The more one imagines oneself in the position of absolute leader, Hobbesian prince, the easier it is to see the desirability of managing the rest of the social sphere through every sort of rigid control. From such a position it follows with

a certain brutal logic that the leader is entitled to domains of knowledge-power to which those below him on the hierarchy are not entitled. In this sense there is an interesting and suggestive connection between the early parts of the uploading story and its wildest predictive aspects. Rather than pursuing real transformation of our world – a kind of transformation of “the human” that we understand well in the name of politics, especially democratic politics – Kurzweil pursues a categorical shift that relies on the stability of the very categories it claims it can transcend. It only makes sense to “transcend the human” if there will still be humans there who have not experienced the transcendence; otherwise we would all still be human. This is one of the reasons why the central focus on individual will, power, and control is so prominent and so hard to jettison in new media narratives like *Dollhouse*.

At the pinnacle of the Singularity we find paradox atop paradox. The most intense desire of the protagonists of almost every version of the story, from the Rossum Corporation to Kurzweil himself, we see again and again, is to cheat death – to become immortal. We separate the mind from the body to put it in a machine so that it can live forever. Such a desire suggests a profound failure to come to terms with one of the things that most fundamentally makes us human: death itself. Kurzweil’s frequent references to the fragility and brokenness of the human body – surely emphasizing the negative rather than positive aspects of bodily experience – famously mask a deep wound, the death of Kurzweil’s father, a loss that he seems particularly unable to accept (Vance, 2010). So does his relentless pursuit of longevity at all costs, as evidenced in his deep commitment to alternative treatments of many kinds (see, e.g., Kurzweil & Grossman, 2004). “We will gain power over our own fates,” he writes, “our mortality will be in our own hands” (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 9), both of which suggest a strikingly negative view of our present-day life. So does his philosophical position on death:

Is death desirable? The “inevitability” of death is deeply ingrained in human thinking. If death seems unavoidable, we have little choice but to rationalize it as necessary, even ennobling. The technology of the Singularity will provide practical and accessible means for humans to evolve into something greater, so we will no longer need to rationalize death as a primary means of giving meaning to life. (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 326)

It is familiar to consider Derrida’s relatively obscure writings nihilistic in some way – a quality the writings themselves do not display. However, *computationalism* (even of the high form articulated by Kurzweil), which has a much wider and more influential presence in our world than direct philosophical analysis ever could, is profoundly nihilistic with regard to our own, current, physical existence. Derrida writes often about the role of death in our sense of self: “Everyone must assume his own death, that is to say the one thing in the world that no one else can *either give or take*: therein resides freedom and responsibility” (Derrida 1995, p. 44).¹⁵ Words like “freedom” and “responsibility” occur infrequently in Kurzweil’s lexicon; he writes instead with great passion that *humans* will “transcend biology,” and presumably

transcend the freedom and responsibility that characterize our material existence. If such “deeply ingrained” parts of “human thinking” like death itself are to be jettisoned as part of that transcendence, in what sense will that new, evanescent, “sublimely intelligent” consciousness be human?

NOTES

- 1 I use “computationalism” here as I develop it in *The Cultural Logic of Computation* (2009), where I expand on the philosophical doctrine of computationalism, especially as it functioned rhetorically in Anglo-American analytic philosophy of the 1960s and 1970s, as an example of a larger conceptual, political, and rhetorical ideology committed to the view that “the mind is a computer” *whatever that might turn out to mean* – the words of the formula being more important than the particular facts. While computationalism was considered untenable for much of the 1980s and 1990s by many analytic philosophers, it is experiencing a resurgence (see Piccinini, 2010).
- 2 Something like the view that everything is computation has more serious advocates, particularly among physicists, according to which many principles of fundamental physics can be understood as encoded transmissions of information; Piccinini (2010) is the leading philosophical advocate of such views, and provides some guidance to the work in physics as well as consequences for the study of cognition, but is acutely aware of the many conceptual pitfalls Kurzweil ignores. Wolfram (2002) is the best known popularization of this work, which despite being better science than Kurzweil, seems committed to building out a very similar rhetorical-ideological structure.
- 3 This is especially clear in some of the original pronouncements of the man to whom the coinage of the term VR is usually attributed, the computer scientist and entrepreneur Jaron Lanier. Yet both technological limitations and a clear view of some of the philosophical problems described here have led him to become an especially trenchant spokesperson for what we might call the anti-Singularity perspective. Lanier (2010) provides a complete discussion of both the VR story and the current culture of computing; but see in particular Lanier (2000) for a strong technical critique of Kurzweil’s writings to that point, to which Kurzweil (2001) offers an especially contradictory and in many parts disingenuous response.
- 4 The word “singularity” occurs across discourses and with many different meanings. A detailed *New York Times* article about the “singulatarian movement” (Vance, 2010) repeatedly cites fellow travelers who do not subscribe to Kurzweil’s vision but take Kurzweil’s vision nevertheless as the central one to be contended with; the article identifies technologists no less prominent than Sergey Brin and Larry Page, co-founders of Google, as explicit followers of Kurzweil’s ideas.
- 5 An even more critical take on some of the same material in Hayles’s book is found in *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* (Tiqqun Collective, 2001), which has only recently been made widely available.
- 6 The frequent connection between mechanistic theories of mind and certain high forms of metaphysics is one of the main targets of Richard Rorty’s critical analyses: “it is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine our philosophical convictions. The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that

of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations – some accurate, some not – and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods [e.g., introspection]” (Rorty, 1979, p. 12).

- 7 See, e.g., the remarkably disdainful and uncomprehending responses to his critics in Richards (2002), especially his discussion of Searle (Kurzweil, 2002), which focuses on some of the issues I raise here.
- 8 While some attention is paid to this image in *Battlestar Galactica*, the most sustained serious attempt of which I am aware to depict what it might feel like to wake up “in” a mind that has been separated from its body is Joseph McElroy’s powerful 1977 novel *Plus*, in which a dying man allows his brain to be integrated into a satellite that is then sent into Earth orbit to monitor solar events; see Proietti (2004) for a brief but well-observed and original reading of the novel that demonstrates its engagement with issues similar to those discussed here.
- 9 See “Models and Reality” (1977) for Putnam’s most detailed account of the logical problems raised by the brain-in-a-vat story.
- 10 This quote appears during roughly the first two minutes of the film. I have slightly modified the film’s English subtitles to reflect Derrida’s spoken words.
- 11 Readers of Derrida will know that the term *singularity* does occur in his writings, as has been brought out most fully by the literary critic Derek Attridge (2004). Consistent with the general difference in orientation, though, where Kurzweil uses the word to indicate a single, transcendent moment when reality shifts, in Derrida it usually occurs to gesture at the profound uniqueness of identity, to which he also attaches the term *ipseity*. Thus for Derrida we might call it part of the condition of being-in-the-world that there are singularities (and others) everywhere. The concept also occurs in Derrida’s writings on messianism and “the event,” which deserve more sustained examination than space permits.
- 12 This is a prevalent theme in fictional portrayals of immortality across space, time, and genre. Almost invariably, when a human being becomes immortal in such fictions, their primary goal instantly shifts to the pursuit not just of mortality but even of death itself, as if to realize the limit of life-without-death is to suddenly come to value death above all human things.
- 13 The original source for Moore’s Law is Gordon Moore (1965): “The complexity for minimum component costs has increased at a rate of roughly a factor of two per year. [. . .] Certainly over the short term this rate can be expected to continue, if not to increase. Over the longer term, the rate of increase is a bit more uncertain, although there is no reason to believe it will not remain nearly constant for at least 10 years” (cited in “Moore’s Law,” 2010). It was not Moore but later commentators who insisted on the lawlike nature of the description.
- 14 “Predictive analytics,” applied to any domain up to and including human behavior, is one of the fastest-growing fields of computer engineering (see “Predictive Analytics,” 2010); IBM is one of its foremost developers (as is Google). Recent work has even focused on predicting crime; marketing for such projects revels in rather than recoiling at comparisons to *Minority Report*: one press release praises “*Minority Report*-style technology being tested by two British forces following success in the United States; the system [. . .] evaluates patterns of past and present incidents, then combines the information with a range of data including crime reports, intelligence briefings, offender behavior profiles, and even weather forecasts” (“Sophisticated Crime Software,” 2010).

- 15 In addition to *The Gift of Death* (1995), for close connections between identity/ipseity, the Other, death, and futurity, see Derrida (2001, 2002) and Derrida and Roudinesco (2004).

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“It’s a Nigger in Here! Kill the Nigger!”

User-Generated Media Campaigns Against Racism, Sexism, and Homophobia in Digital Games

Lisa Nakamura

ABSTRACT

Digital games scholars who study race, gender, and sexuality predominantly focus on representations – namely, the racist and sexist images and narratives found within games themselves. In this chapter, Lisa Nakamura explains that in the age of networked gaming, players often experience virulent types of discrimination not only through these representations but also at the hands of other players. In response, some players are expressing resistance to this discriminatory culture of gameplay (Nakamura, 2011a, 2011b). This chapter looks at born-digital media campaigns against racism, sexism, and homophobia such as blogs, YouTube videos, and other web-based media, examining how they document, archive, and critique instances of racism, sexism, and homophobia in live gameplay as well as within the texts of games themselves.

I’ve been a video game freak all my life. I play X-Box 360’s Need for Speed: Carbon (Electronic Arts, 2006), Gears of War (Microsoft Game Studios, 2006) and Dead or Alive 4 (Tecmo, 2006). They need Tekken (Namco) to come out on the 360. I got ideas for a racecar game and a motorcycle game. I got so many ideas, I guarantee you, people will love my ideas for games. I played Halo (Microsoft Game Studios, 2002). But when

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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they came up with Halo 2 (Microsoft Game Studios, 2004), it was more like for the online thing. I stopped 'cause my own team would kill me because they'd hear my voice and start calling me "nigger." "Nigger this, nigger that!" If you was right next to me at the arcade, you wouldn't say nothing. I don't ever tell them who I am, but I just forgive them for being ignorant.

(Quinton "Rampage" Jackson, quoted in Halili, 2007)

Quinton "Rampage" Jackson is a celebrity. He was the 2007 UFC Light Heavyweight mixed martial arts champion and has parlayed his skill at this popular style of no-holds-barred fighting into a career as a television and film star, appearing as Mr. T in the 2010 film based on the beloved 1970s television show *The A Team*. He is also, like many African American males in the United States, an avid videogame fan, at least until he first logged onto networked gameplay in 2004. The Xbox first offered users the ability to play online with others using the Xbox Live network in 2002. Jackson had happily played *Halo*, Bungie Studios' popular first-person shooter (FPS) science fiction game, as a non-networked game on the Xbox, but his subsequent experiences with abusive and racist language during online play drove him away.

As Jackson explained in a video interview for *Dub Magazine*, "My first time playing *Halo*, I was playing, and I said something, and someone said 'it's a nigger in here! Kill the nigger!'" The racism that Jackson experienced while playing did not originate from the programmed experience of the game but, rather, from its players. It was not the game *Halo* that offended through negative representations of African Americans or other minorities; rather, it was other players, including his "own teammates."

Jackson's experiences point to a blind spot in the field of digital games studies, a field that has been analyzed mostly as a visual medium: the discursive content of player interaction within online games is a major aspect of a game's "content." Ratings systems for games established by evaluative bodies like the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) only take the game content itself into account when establishing its potential harm to young players. If a game lacks overt racist, sexist, or homophobic content, it may pass muster with such ratings systems. However, as Quinton Jackson discovered, networked gaming has permitted game players to play a major role in users' experience of the game.

What Jackson encountered when participating in online, multi-user games was not stereotypical players written into game scripts, but interpersonal, aural stereotyping based on the speech patterns and inflections of players. As he described in his interview, voice communication in a remote multi-player environment produces powerful new forms of voice-activated racism. These extremely popular, networked and voice-activated games permit users to broadcast their voices in gameplay, enabling a new kind of mediated race, sex, and gender discrimination. Therefore, it is crucial that media studies develop methods to study these new forms of sociality emerging on gaming platforms. The temptation to read games as the ESRB does – as static texts like film and television shows that contain quantifiable amounts of prob-

lematic “content” – ignores the reality of their usage. The things that gamers say and type to each other while playing blockbuster, triple-A games like the *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* series are just as much a part of the game as its images, gameplay mechanics, and narrative. Indeed, the popularity of these networked games attests to users’ attraction to games as places where you can talk – and all too often, trash talk – to each other.

Digital games scholars are well aware that games change and become more challenging to study when games are played on networks rather than alone or with friends in the same room, or even in shared public spaces like arcades. We must now develop ways of taking interpersonal interaction into account when studying them. In their 2009 study of profanity in videogames, Ivory, Williams, Martin, and Consalvo cautioned that networked play added a new and understudied dimension to the study of profanity in games, and merited additional studies. Their group analyzed several popular videogames representing a variety of age-rating categories defined by the ESRB, such as “E” for Everyone, “T” for Teen, and “M” for Mature. They found that one out of five games contained one of the “seven dirty words” which are regulated in network television, as well as “words that evoke strong emotion and offense (e.g., bitch).” Although no mention is made of racist language, the study cautioned that player-produced profanity may be a greater cause for concern in the age of networked gaming than profanity scripted into games themselves. “The increasing popularity of multiplayer games and optional multiplayer game modes featuring voice interaction between players suggests that future studies should also examine the prevalence of profanity in online voice chat sessions” (Ivory et al., 2009, p. 3).

Not all profanity or abusive language experienced or found in video gameplay is the same. Player-to-player voice communications via networked FPS games like the *Halo* series, Microsoft Xbox’s original tentpole triple-A game title, are known for their profane and often abusive quality, described as “trash talk” by players and the industry alike. However, as evidenced by forum discussions on gaming websites, many gamers make a distinction between “trash talk” and discourse that crosses the line, such as use of the word “nigger.” A professional black female gamer known as “BurnYourBra,” a nationally ranked *Mortal Kombat* player, explained in an interview on a gaming website that “At tournaments players talk [crap] to each other. That’s just the way tournaments are. People get hyped. Players get salty when they lose, which is fine. But there is a difference between trash talking and calling other players disrespectful names. For me, I’ve been called a dyke, a butch, a slut, a bitch [. . .] I was even called a black bitch to my face along with being called a lesbian, a gorilla, and a monkey” (Catalyst, 2011). Unlike Jackson, who was the target of voice-activated racism in an online networked videogame, BurnYourBra was “right next to” her abuser at a games tournament.

It is easy to see why this would be more likely to happen to a female gamer than to a male player like Jackson, who is known by the stage name “Rampage” for good reason. A boxer in real life, Jackson has been described as “the baddest man on the planet”; he is a huge, imposing athlete who physically resembles the hypermuscular,

intimidating warrior avatars in fighting videogames, far more so than most of their other players and fans. As he notes in his interview, he would be unlikely to be “trash talked” in a face-to-face gaming situation like a tournament. Yet in the networked and often anonymous space of online gaming, he became the victim of racist bullying by both his own teammates and strangers.

BurnYourBra’s interview produced a lengthy comment stream on the Eventhubs.com website, many of which debated where the line between trash talking and racism should fall. Eventhubs.com, a popular gaming site “devoted to Capcom fighting games, especially the *Street Fighter* series,” states that its main purpose is to “help build a better community, encouraging players of all talent levels to share information to make the scene more competitive and widespread” (Eventhubs.com, n.d.). Some contributors to the stream agreed that “trash talk” was inevitable, indeed an intrinsic part of the competitive culture of videogame tournaments, but that it was to be distinguished from racism. Others maintained that racism is best ignored and is of little consequence in a “postracial” world, leaving it to the receiver to “shake it off.” A key paradox of race, gender, and game studies rose to the top: while profanity and abuse are “trash talk,” a form of discursive waste, lacking meaningful content that contributes to the game, many identified it as a distinctive and inevitable aspect of videogame multi-player culture, and thus to be defended. As digital media theorists Galloway and Thacker (2007) write, “trash, in the most general sense, implies remnants of something used but later discarded [. . .] trash is the set of all things that has been cast out of previous sets” (p. 145). Once trash talk has been used to intimidate or bully another player, it is supposed to disappear, absolving its user of responsibility or even memory of the event. In other words, according to a particular understanding of game etiquette, players should view trash talk as a normal part of gameplay and should not be personally offended by it.

If trash talk does not deserve notice or interpretation, as some players maintain, it is because they insist that it lacks meaning beyond the limited confines of the game. Yet, like the omnipresent trash icon on the computer desktop, a fixture of personal computer use, trash talk is part of the media ecology of digital culture. Games scholars concerned about racism and sexism have tended to pay most of their attention to racist and sexist messages within games themselves.¹ However, it is clear that in the age of networked and professional gaming, players can experience the most virulent types of discrimination and hate speech at the hands of other players, through voice-activated telepresent and co-present forms of racial and sexual harassment. Thus, just like videogame cheating, in-game economies, and online gender identities – all of which have been the subject of important book-length monographs in game studies – the discursive environment of sexism, racism, and homophobia deserves critical attention because it is central to game culture (Castronova, 2005; Consalvo, 2007; Taylor, 2006).

Moreover, if trash talk and discriminatory player interaction are part of game culture’s media ecology, so are the experiences and objections of players who do not believe that it should be dismissed as a normal, harmless aspect of gameplay. Neither

Jackson nor BurnYourBra is a well-known figure in videogame culture, and neither is known as a videogame activist. However, by sharing their experiences of racism within the culture of gaming, they are contributing toward a small but growing media campaign against videogame racism or trash talking. User-generated blogs that confront racism, sexism, and homophobia work against the impulse to forget or ignore racist trash talk by preserving and archiving it, using old and new media.

Players who have been victimized by trash talk and other forms of discriminatory player interaction are expressing a growing resistance to this culture (Nakamura, 2011a, 2011b). Born-digital media campaigns against racism, sexism, and homophobia (such as blogs, YouTube videos, and other web-based media) document, archive, and critique instances of offensive speech and behavior in live gameplay, as well as within the texts of games themselves. These media forums are fan-produced, and many identify themselves as “safe spaces” where these often unpopular critiques can be expressed. Such safe spaces are necessary, because critics of game cultures open themselves up to the ire of other fans when they call out racism, sexism, and homophobia, as the comment threads in BurnYourBra’s interview attest. Examples of these forums include Fatuglyorslutty.com, Racialicious.com, The Border House, and The Hathor Legacy, which dedicate themselves to critiquing and publicizing problems with race, gender, and sexuality in game culture, while asserting the pleasure, aesthetic value, and social importance of games.

Videogames, and the experiences of those who play them, continue to take new forms, challenging the already difficult task of studying their complex dimensions. When Quinton Jackson found himself the victim of an online lynching in *Halo* in 2004, he was part of the first wave of users playing with networked strangers, a state of affairs that has become commonplace for gamers, and one that bears close watching by media scholars, psychologists, and critical race scholars. While users have been playing with strangers on networked computers since the early days of the Internet, console gamers are newer to the world of online gaming. Since 2009 the most popular games for platforms like the Xbox 360 and the PS3 have been networked military FPS games, with *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* and its expansions leading the way. Given the growing popularity of these types of games, it is crucial that game scholars pay close attention and develop methods of studying online interaction in console gaming.

One place to look for guidance is research on massively multi-player online role-play games, or MMORPGs. For example, Douglas Thomas (2008) and Constance Steinkuehler (2006) have written groundbreaking essays on anti-Korean and anti-Chinese racism in MMORPGs such as *Diablo 2* and *Lineage 2*. The insights and methods employed in their work would enrich studies of television-based console gamers. Both studies take player interaction and player-generated media such as quizzes and forum posts into account when analyzing these games. Thomas’s research focuses on a group of *Diablo 2* players who dubbed themselves “KPK,” or “Korean Player Killers.” Although Korea is not part of the text or narrative of *Diablo*, it becomes a meaningful and sometimes victimized racial identity in the content of

competition for game resources. Digital media studies of computer games have tended to be more adept at discussing player interaction because many of these games are networked on the Internet, and have been social for much longer. Console games are beginning to resemble these multi-user, Internet-based computer games.

Another place where game scholars can look for insights about discriminatory forms of interaction occurring in multi-user console games is in user forums emerging to address the problem. While games scholars have been slow to produce studies of this phenomenon, antiracist media campaigns by gamers are stepping into the breach. For example, The Border House blog describes itself as “Breaking Down Borders in Gaming”: “It’s a blog for those who are feminist, queer, disabled, people of color, transgender, poor, gay, lesbian, and others who belong to marginalized groups, as well as allies” (Border House, n.d.). In its policies about posting, it asks users to include “trigger warnings” about content that “involves sexual assault or violence towards women and other marginalized groups, which may distress or cause readers to be triggered” (Border House, n.d.).

Many gamers are resistant to critiquing racism, sexism, and homophobia within their favorite games. In her analysis of online player discussions about race and racism in *Grand Theft Auto*, Everett found a range of responses, “from blatant racism to racial tolerance or inclusion” (Everett & Watkins, 2008, p. 158). To combat the problem of discrimination and overcome their fear of speaking up, players have created their own Internet forums and content. Player-driven media, such as posts of abusive in-game messages and gameplay, rely upon user-generated content to produce a compelling and often hilarious evidentiary archive of egregious sexism that many female gamers experience. For example, the website *Fatuglyorslutty.com* (named after the three most common adjectives online women gamers hear during gameplay) exhorts readers to

save those awful messages you receive this weekend (and beyond) and send them in to submissions@fatuglyorslutty.com or through our submission form. You can also let us know via Twitter. And tell your friends to save their messages, too! What can you send us? We’ll accept pictures/screenshots, audio files and video recordings. Whether it’s from Xbox Live, PSN, Steam, WoW or any other game, we want to see it! (“Get ready for the weekend,” 2011)

Fatuglyorslutty’s submission page encourages users to report abuse to game moderators before posting at the site. However, it is clear the site itself addresses what the game industry cannot or will not address by publicizing sexist interactions on popular game platforms and exposing abusive gamers to public ridicule. In this, their strategy resembles Hollaback!, a “movement dedicated to ending street harassment using mobile technology” (Hollaback!, n.d.). Hollaback! encourages women to take pictures of sexual harassers and catcallers with their cellphones and to share them on their website, creating an archive for other users to access as well as a form of accountability. By collecting women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and

queer (LGBTQ) folks' stories and pictures in a safe and shareable way with mobile phone applications, Hollaback! is creating a crowdsourced initiative to combat street harassment. Hollaback! breaks the silence that has perpetuated sexual violence internationally, asserting that any and all gender-based violence is unacceptable, and creates a space where those who have experienced verbal abuse have an option – and, more importantly, a response.

Similarly, the Fatuglyorsluty site relies exclusively on crowdsourcing to produce a rich sampling of sexist, racist slurs sent from one gamer to another in the course of gameplay on game consoles, mobile devices, within PC games like *World of Warcraft*, and on every imaginable gaming device that permits strangers to contact other strangers.

The site's successful use of humor has helped it to garner positive attention in the gaming community, quite a feat given how unpopular and divisive the topic of sexism



Figure 21.1 User-contributed screenshot from fatuglyorsluty.com. Retrieved May 1, 2011, from <http://fatuglyorsluty.com/2011/05/01/with-a-side-of-seriously-disturbing/>

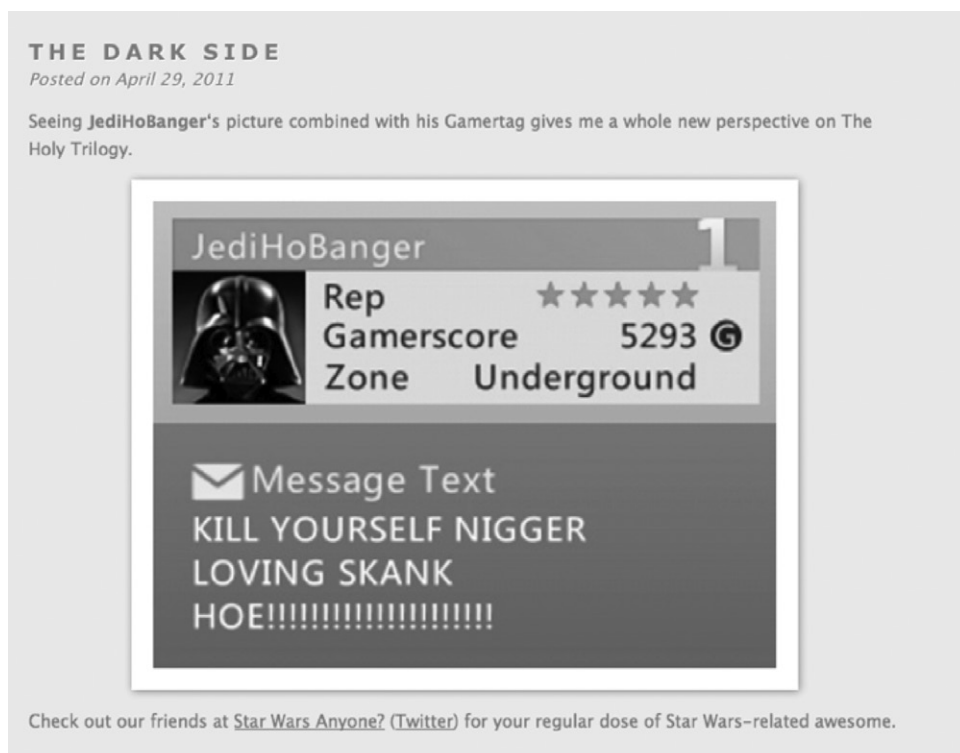


Figure 21.2 User-contributed screenshot from fatuglyorsluttty.com. Retrieved May 1, 2011, from <http://fatuglyorsluttty.com/2011/04/>

has been in recent years.² A writer for Kotaku, a popular and widely read gaming blog owned by Gawker Media, wrote the following in 2011:

The casual racism, snarling sexism and random belligerence one encounters in online play, particularly in a first-person shooter over Xbox Live, is not at all a new phenomenon. It's sadly accepted as par for the course, in fact. But the three curators of "Fat, Ugly or Slutty," have chosen to archive it, not so much for a high-minded ideal, but to hold a mirror up to idiots worthy of ridicule. (Good, 2011)

Indeed, Fatuglyorsluttty.com embodies Henry Jenkins's (2006) "critically optimistic" theories about the power of participatory media. In this case, interactive media themselves offer perhaps the most effective means of combatting other, more problematic interactive media experiences.

As the Kotaku post noted, racism, sexism, and homophobia are commonplace in networked console video gameplay. Though the Xbox 360, PS2/3, and Wii all have terms of service agreements regarding the use of profanity and hate speech in live gameplay, these regulations are enforced only through a system of victim-reported

“tickets” that are acted upon well after the fact. Users who engage in hate speech can be banned from the service but are able to log back on after the ban period has passed. The ineffectiveness of industry regulation of hate speech has created a need for victims of gamer abuse to create their own participatory outlets to engage a wider public and increase awareness of this serious issue.

Players who are challenging the normalization of trash talk and discriminatory forms of multi-user gameplay are often equally insistent in their enthusiasm for games, and are careful not to attack the games themselves or videogames in their entirety. In his interview with *Dub Magazine*, for example, Jackson refrains from faulting the content of the game itself; indeed, he professes his love for the game. Instead he blames other players, rather than game developers, with creating a racially hostile, uninhabitable space for people of color.

Given the popularity of multi-user online gaming and the complex dimensions of gameplay, the future of game studies must include attention to player experiences with each other as well as with games themselves. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss three new directions for future videogame research that I believe will help game studies to encompass a more ecological and critical perspective on player experience and interaction with games and with other gamers.

The Politics of Videogame Pleasure: Who Plays, Who Pays?

It has become unfashionable in critical circles to discuss pleasure in videogames, and more common to frame the debates in terms of “addiction.” Yet games studies scholars are missing a critical dimension by avoiding the question of pleasure in playing videogames, for this is precisely why people play them, and why they are hard to study. The notion that pleasure has a *politics* is the basis for both feminist theory and theories of race and ethnicity. The pleasurable is both personal and political, and few media are as quintessentially personal as videogames. Often enjoyed privately or in the company of anonymous or known networked co-players, they are mass-mediated, interactive products that give everyone a different kind of “happy ending.”

However, the political critique of videogame pleasure lags far behind. Such a critique requires acknowledging that much of the pleasure of videogames comes at the expense of women and people of color, both literally and figuratively, as women in Asian sweatshops manufacture the devices we use to enjoy games, as “urban” games represent Black and Latino men as thugs and criminals, and as women and people of color find themselves the victims of voice-activated discrimination in networked games. In the latter case, some argue that the problem is nil, because consoles permit users to disable voice communications. However, this constraint can harm collaborative gameplay, and is the equivalent of telling African Americans to cover their ears if words like “nigger” are shouted at them. (Moreover, suggesting that the problem

of discrimination can be solved in this way is indicative of a broader tendency to insist that there are simple technical solutions to complex social problems.) Others argue that the popularity of videogames among people of color is proof enough that discrimination is meaningless and ineffectual. To the contrary, the fact that people of color are eager consumers of videogames despite a climate of racism needs to be better understood, and certainly ought not to be invoked to validate the racial and gendered economy of game pleasure.

There is beginning to appear research and theory in games studies that more adequately addresses the complexity of these issues. Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter's *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* offers an excellent and integrated critique of race, gender, and labor within the new world gaming order (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009). The book provides a "short history of the video game from the perspective of immaterial labor," approaching games as neoliberal texts (p. 5). Gaming's production cultures, player cultures, and textual content reflect transnational power relations, according to these authors. Each individual on the circuit of culture has a distinctive form of labor to perform, whether it is playing, modding, hardware building, or laboring within virtual world games. The Global South consumes, produces, and is represented within digital games in a very different fashion from the Global North. As this work makes clear, a challenge for future games studies is to examine the transnational context in which videogames are produced, circulated, and experienced.

Overemphasis on the Hardcore Gamer

The vast majority of videogame criticism addresses "hardcore" games despite a profound shift in recent years toward "casual," mobile, and social games.³ This is a critical gap that needs to be addressed for at least two reasons: a focus on high-learning-curve, non-interruptible, expensive "triple A" games ignores the reality of how digital games are played today and contributes toward the now-cherished identity of the gamer as a young White male who is part of geek culture. An effective and relevant games criticism will need to address non-hardcore games that constitute the majority of game hours spent.

Many videogame players and scholars tend to characterize digital games as superior to other forms of media – more interactive, more agentive, and more flexible in terms of the identities available to the user. Looking at hardcore videogames exclusively is problematic because it perpetuates the valorization of one group of users' experience over another. Women and children's engagements with games in particular will necessarily take a back seat in critical work if it continues with this narrow focus. The pleasures of casual games are underanalyzed and thus less visible, devaluing the experiences of a group of players who have often been ignored and devalued in media studies.

Ripe for research in this area are casual games developers such as Big Fish, whose products are marketed to and enjoyed primarily by middle-aged women. In fact, feminist media scholars would be wise to focus attention on casual games and their users, building on the work of scholars such as Janice Radway (1991), whose *Reading the Romance* legitimated the study of women's popular fiction texts. Radway's approach differed from that of traditional literary critics, for she studied the reader culture and forms of interaction that were enabled and invoked by the platform of romance novels. It is no accident that FPS games are prime platforms for racism, sexism, and homophobia, yet nor does the game content completely determine what occurs in players' interactions with the game and with one another. The complex and nuanced interaction between the culture produced by active audiences and the texts they interact with are important areas for future study. Feminist media scholars need to focus some attention on games if they wish to fully understand popular media use among women today.

Videogames are Both Textual and Communicative Artifacts

The news about race, gender, and sexuality in videogames can be depressing. Games depict minorities in stereotyped ways, often in fighting games, urban games, or military games.⁴ The game industry itself is extremely male-dominated and not at all racially diverse. Communication affordances between players in networked digital games are often used to transmit sexual harassment and racist hate speech (Huntemann, 2010). It is this latter type of racism that is the least studied, perhaps because it requires methods of observation, ethnography, and analysis that are unfamiliar to many humanists who are trained in textual studies. While social scientists tend to focus on game player practices and cultures, literary and software scholars such as Lev Manovich, Ian Bogost, Nick Montfort, and Noah Wardrip-Fruin treat games as relatively autonomous visual, aural, and textual artifacts. Studying game player discourse presents a different set of methodological challenges from analyzing game content alone. For games are communicative artifacts: they are autonomous texts that are also platforms of social interaction. Game texts and game interaction are co-constitutive and need to be studied together.⁵

However, it is important to conduct these studies, for if gamers are themselves the source of some of the most virulent racist, sexist, and homophobic messages in videogames, they are also the source of some of the most ingenious and potent campaigns against them. As Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2009) write, "games not only cultivate the imagination of alternative social possibilities; they also present practical tools that may be useful for its actualization" (p. 213). Players create viciously racist environments and discursive climates within digital games. At the same time,

other players are using the Internet to campaign against racism, sexism, and homophobia by creating their own archives of hate speech, often using humor as a weapon to mobilize support and create a community. This community ranges from the player who protests discussions of racism and sexism in games as “overreacting,” to those who mobilize the language of post-traumatic stress disorder when creating moderation policies for their fan blogs.

Conclusion

All games are social. Even single-player games have racial metacultures, or cultural artifacts and practices that are game-centered but occur outside of the context of the game, that are deeply woven into game experience (Nielsen, Smith, & Pajares Tosca, 2008). Game fans are extremely valuable resources for scholars because they are obsessive chroniclers of their own experiences, opinions, and information about games. As game scholar and evangelist Jane McGonigal notes, some of the largest and most extensive collective intelligence artifacts on the Internet are game-related: “there are [. . .] more than 65,000 WoW players who are registered contributors to WoWWiki, currently the world’s second largest wiki after Wikipedia” (McGonigal, 2011).

These are vast depositories of user-generated knowledge and new content waiting for scholars to study them. And demographic studies like the excellent series produced by the Play On group at Stanford University have contributed much to our understanding of racial and gender identity choices among *World of Warcraft* players. In a study of male players entitled “Do Men Heal More When in Drag? Conflicting Identity Cues Between User and Avatar,” Yee, Ducheneaut, Yao, and Nelson (2011) used behavioral data from more than 1,040 users in a virtual world, and discovered that men display more cooperative or supportive behavior in-game when playing as female avatars.

These studies contribute a great deal to our understanding of identity in digital games, and it is important that game scholarship continue to produce empirical studies of player behavior. But more nuanced analytical and interpretive work is needed to provide critical insights into player behavior and culture. Game fans have already produced much more detailed summaries, walkthroughs, typologies, and timelines on Wikipedia than scholars can hope to top. They are not always as ready to be critical about game cultures’ blind spots and dirty laundry. The user-generated anti-harassment media campaigns like the ones I have described here are far less well read than game blogs like Gamasutra and Kotaku. Thus, our job as scholars must extend far beyond appreciation, measurement, categorization, and justification of games as legitimate art forms and key media industries. Media scholars must address games in a critical and historical fashion, identifying how they interpellate or hail users as fans, consumers, social actors, producers, and gendered, racialized, and national subjects.

According to a 2011 report by researchers at Northwestern University, there have always been differences between White and non-White youth when it comes to frequency of media use, and these have grown significantly in recent years:

Historically, scholars have been aware of differences in the amount of time that White and minority children spend with media, especially TV. But last year's Generation M2 study indicated a large increase in the amount of time both Black and Hispanic youth are spending with media, to the point where they are consuming an average of 13 hours worth of media content a day (12:59 for Blacks and 13:00 for Hispanics), compared with about eight and a half hours (8:36) for White youth, a difference of about four and a half hours a day. In recent years, this gap in media use between White and Black youth has doubled. (Rideout, Lauricella, & Wartella, 2011)

Digital games represent a large chunk of the total time that minority youth are spending with games. "Among 8- to 18-year-olds, White youth spend less time playing video games in a typical day than other young people do (:56 for Whites, 1:25 for Blacks, 1:35 for Hispanics, and 1:37 for Asians)" (Rideout et al., 2011). Videogames are more than just another pastime: they are communicative platforms that are poorly understood by ratings agencies like the ESRB, either maligned or lauded by journalistic news media and pundits, and they are also public spaces where youth are negotiating their identities. The struggle for racial justice is occurring in gamespace as we speak. User-generated campaigns against in-game racism are one of many points of scholarly inquiry that can help us understand the purposes that hate speech serves for these communities of gamers who are increasingly "alone together," as Sherry Turkle observes (Turkle, 2011).

NOTES

- 1 While work such as Ivory et al. (2009) analyzes game content in order to trace the ways that game texts exclude the experiences of people of color and women, most studies of racism in videogames have focused on racial content and themes within game texts. Anna Everett (2009), David Leonard (2006), Jessica Langer (2008), Tanner Higgin (2009), David Columbia (2009), and Alexander Galloway (2007) have written excellent essays on racism in videogame imagery, narratives, and game mechanics. Representations of Black people as evil zombies, drug dealers, and criminals perpetuate some of the worst images found in other media, while the exclusion of images of Blackness from fantasy games creates an artificial "Blackless fantasy," as Higgin puts it. Racist representation within games can be found in every genre. Simulation games like the immensely popular *Civilization* series depict non-Western culture as shot through with superstition, cruelty, and irrationality (see Galloway, 2007). *World of Warcraft's* Tauren, Troll, and Blood and Night Elf player classes reprise classic racist imagery of Native Americans, Caribbeans, and Asians from previous media (see Langer, 2008). Interestingly, "casual" videogames that appeal to broad audiences like the 2009 "Game of the Year" *Plants Versus Zombies*, the classics *Tetris* and *Bejeweled*, the sidescroller *Braid*, and the beautiful *Passage* all lack this type of racial stereotyping.

- 2 The “dickwolves” discussion thread is an example of problems with sexism in the gaming community. Penny Arcade, a website that caters to gamers and sponsors a major games conference called PAX, published a cartoon entitled “the Sixth Slave” that used the word “rape” in a way that many readers found offensive. Feminist gamers and the Penny Arcade leadership waged a public flamewar over this use of sexist language, one that continued unresolved for several weeks. In 2011, many feminist gamers boycotted the PAX conference in protest at the organization’s handling of this controversy.
- 3 See Juul (2009) for an excellent introduction to the shift from hardcore to casual games.
- 4 Everett and Watkins (2008) have termed these types of spaces “Racialized Pedagogical Zones” in order to highlight their role in teaching young gamers about the proper place for raced and criminalized bodies (pp. 141–166).
- 5 See Everett and Watkins (2008) for an excellent example of this type of work.

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From “The Ultimate Display” to “The Ultimate Skinner Box”

Virtual Reality and the Future of Psychotherapy

Marisa Brandt

ABSTRACT

Though most virtual reality (VR) enthusiasts of the 1980s and 1990s now concede that the technology was overhyped, a new group of advocates believes it has found a practical use for it: as a tool for conducting psychotherapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health problems. Marisa Brandt argues that the use of VR as a therapeutic tool is premised on a way of thinking about how to intervene in disordered subjectivity using media – what she calls *cybertherapeutic reason*. In this chapter, Brandt gives a brief history of how early innovators discovered the therapeutic potential of VR and implemented cybertherapeutic reason by designing controllable virtual experiences. She then compares three proposed systems for treating combat-related PTSD to show how the design of VR therapy systems can reflect diverse understandings of how the technology could intervene in subjectivity. Finally, she suggests some of the ways that widespread adoption of VR may affect the practice of psychotherapy.

Albert “Skip” Rizzo: Whereas in the mid-90’s VR was generally seen as “a hammer looking for a nail,” it soon became apparent to some scientists in both the engineering and clinical communities that VR could bring something to clinical care that wasn’t possible before its advent. [. . .] The capacity of VR technology to create controllable,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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multisensory, interactive 3D stimulus environments, within which human behavior could be motivated and measured, offered clinical assessment and treatment options that were not possible using traditional methods.

(Rizzo et al., 2010, p. 117)

Psychology is the physics of virtual reality.

(William Bricken, quoted in Barlow et al., 1990)

Introduction: Cybertherapeutic Reason

The scene in the virtual desert takes up my entire field of view. If I look up, I see my gunner. Behind him peeks blue sky. Looking down, I see what I recognize as “my” masculine arm (though it is not attached to me) clothed in a sleeve of digital camouflage, gripping the steering wheel of a Humvee. To my right, my passenger, a racially ambiguous soldier character, is nodding and shifting weight just enough to give him some ersatz liveliness. Before me lies the flat gray road, mostly barren, some blocky architectural structures in the distance, and straight ahead another Humvee in the convoy. As I press the thumb controller button, we coast along the virtual desert. A sniper fires from an overpass. Cracks appear on the windshield and my passenger, digital blood on his fatigues, doubles in pain. I press onward, past stopped cars. “Are you ready?” asks the researcher. I nod. *Click*. The Humvee ahead of me explodes, and the base-shaker under my chair and the controller in my hand shake while black smoke fills the goggle screens.

For now, this kind of scene is recognizable from playing a videogame or even participating in a military training program. But instead, imagine – as I was asked to do, during the demo at a Southern California-based interactive media laboratory – that this could be part of a scene of psychotherapy. Therapy using virtual reality (VR) is one of the most well-publicized innovations in treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among service members returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I came to the media laboratory, as many journalists, military funders, interested clinicians, and technology innovators do, to experience this technology for myself and to learn why its advocates believed that experiencing a virtual version of Iraq could be therapeutic for men and women traumatized by combat. Why were so many so hopeful about the therapeutic possibilities of VR?

Advocates believe that the benefits of VR to therapy are twofold. First, they give cultural reasons, arguing that VR could encourage people to try therapy who otherwise might not, especially the newest population of young, male service members who might view talk therapy with stigma, but who in all likelihood have some experience playing videogames. Some VR therapy innovators have argued that patients who grew up in the “digital generation” are used to using digital media in order to communicate with friends and family, and so will be more comfortable interacting with virtual environments than merely talking with a therapist.¹ Advocates also give

technical and professional reasons, arguing that conducting therapy in virtual environments will enable therapists to provide controlled therapeutic experiences that will improve the efficacy of care based on exposure therapy. Exposure therapy is an empirically supported treatment for PTSD in which the patient revisits traumatic experiences in order to move past them. Given that problems including homelessness, alcoholism, unemployment, and domestic abuse are all associated with PTSD, providing efficacious care is seen not only as an important ethical issue, but also as a problem of governance and social integration for a new population of veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq, returning to the United States with signs of PTSD.

Like innovations in training technology, VR therapy relies on a view of non-technologically mediated, face-to-face communication as insufficient to the task of remaking selves. Training simulators, such as those used in aviation, medical education, and military training, utilize interactive graphic interfaces to help transform novices into experts by making training more engaging and concrete than traditional instruction. In the case of VR therapy, the hope is that interactive technology will provide experiences that will help transform mentally disordered people into healthy ones.

The integration of new media technologies into psychotherapeutic practice represents an important development in the techniques of self-making. Therapy is a key site of the practices of modern self-identity construction (see Giddens, 1991). Psychotherapy is founded on a faith in the capacity to know and transform individuals according to rational principles. From psychoanalysis to self-help books to psychopharmacology, the psy disciplines have been looking for increasingly effective, efficient, and rationalized technologies for improving selves, often centered on an image of perfect mental health as a balance between self-knowledge, feelings of efficacy, and overall contentment with one's position in the world (see, e.g., Healy, 1997; Rose, 1996; Szasz, 1984).

Cognitive-behavioral psychology, of which exposure therapy is a product, is a branch of psychotherapy that treats human beings as a part of systems: the mind itself is imagined as a set of structures that process the world. Originating in the 1960s, this model of subjectivity is cybernetic, that is, constituted through the exchange of information between subjects and their environment. Cybernetic models of subjectivity are particularly conducive to seeing the person in mechanistic terms, as an information processing system, and therefore capable of being *reprogrammed*. Similarly, N. Katherine Hayles (1999) has shown that the experience of "reality" in VR is based on cybernetic principles of subjectivity. As Hayles explains, in the cybernetic view of subjectivity, from the perspective of the human sensorium the world is information. The subject experiences the information as a world, whether embedded in a material reality or a virtual one. By the 1980s, researchers began to develop technologies to present the sensorium with "virtual worlds" that could become a viable new site for human evolution (Hayles, 1999, pp. 13–14; see also Hillis, 1999). Virtual reality suggested that we could create an environment we liked, leaving "real life" behind. Cognitive behaviorism suggested that if we could change our way of thinking about our place in our environment, we could change ourselves.

Thus, while the use of VR in therapy seems ironic on the surface, advocates believe that virtual environments can be used to improve how subjects interact with the actual world. I use the term “cybertherapeutic reason” to describe the underlying rationale behind VR therapy: the belief that well-designed human–computer interaction can help therapists to cure mental illness.² I have adapted this concept from the anthropologist Andy Lakoff’s term “pharmaceutical reason,” which he defines as “the underlying rationale of drug intervention in the new biomedical psychiatry: that targeted drug treatment will restore the subject to a normal condition of cognition, affect, or volition” (Lakoff, 2005, p. 7). Cybertherapeutic reason underlies the development of new media technologies as therapeutic tools. Whereas drug treatments use specially designed molecules in order to fix malfunctioning physiological systems in order to improve psychological health, cybertherapeutic treatments entail sessions of human–computer interaction designed to improve overall psychological health. In addition to VR therapy, cybertherapeutic reason can be seen in the use of health-promoting videogames, smartphone-based expert system applications, and avatar therapy in virtual worlds (see Anthony, Merz, & Goss, 2010, for more examples). The cybertherapy movement represents an era of renewed faith in the field of *psychological* intervention, made possible by the affordances – and affordability – of new media technology.

The most important affordance of VR technology is the capacity to immerse patients in virtual environments, and the design of these systems reflects assumptions about what a healthy individual should be able to experience without problem. Journalists writing on VR therapy often note that the virtual environments appear cartoonish and unrealistic, while repeating advocates’ claim that, for those suffering from mental illness, the environment will trigger their problems and reveal them. In the logic of cybertherapeutic reason, the healthy and the unhealthy can be distinguished by how they experience the virtual space: the virtual environment is not a space apart from the user’s reality, but rather becomes a tool for assessing his or her health in the actual world. But no virtual environment can fully represent the world. Thus, the efficacy of VR as a tool of psychotherapy can only be assessed by its capacity to elicit “unhealthy” responses. The design of cybertherapeutic systems, therefore, can be seen as materializations of normative assumptions about healthy subjectivity. My own sense of calm within the virtual Humvee only serves to indicate that I am not the proper target of that VR therapy system: from the perspective of the system, I am a healthy psychological subject.

VR therapy does not refer to a single practice. It has been proposed as a tool to augment a wide variety of therapeutic styles. What they all have in common, however, is a belief that the combination of immersive stimuli and interaction with virtual environments can improve the effects of psychotherapy. I focus on two key points of comparison across VR therapy systems: (1) the conception of “realism” at play in the system design (that is, what kind of scenario the virtual environment represents and how it represents it); and (2) how the control-interfaces distribute agency over the objects and events in the virtual environment over the course of

therapy. These two factors – realism and control – are key components in the role that VR plays in therapy.³

Though VR has spent the past two decades as the prototypical image of technological hype, this does not mean that media studies should abandon VR as an object of study.⁴ While some see the collapse of the commercial VR industry in the 1990s as evidence of the technology's failure, VR therapy advocates believe, on the contrary, that the technology has finally come of age. Whether or not the therapy advocates are right, the current interest in VR as a therapeutic technology is worthy of critical attention, especially for scholars interested in how subjectivities are being imagined and reconfigured in the emerging media environment. Examining therapeutic applications of VR requires a departure from conventional ways that media studies has approached its objects of analysis, especially a movement away from content and discourse analysis and toward careful attention to complex interactions between technological change and human subjectivity. In this chapter, I show how VR therapy was discovered as a potential tool for psychotherapy, which features of VR came to be defined as therapeutically significant, and how design variations reveal diverse interpretations of how VR can be used to transform the self. Finally, I speculate about some of the ways in which VR therapy might eventually transform psychotherapeutic practice.

A Hammer Finds its Nail: A Brief History of VR Therapy

Because of its ability to create “other” realities, virtual reality has always had interesting implications for human psychology.⁵ VR uses computer-generated sense-stimulating technologies that give operators the subjective experience of being in a three-dimensional space. In order to create this effect, immersive VR entails four components: a computer with a graphics engine, software that presents the user with a first-person perspective on a virtual space, a tracking device that monitors the user's body movements, and user interface technologies. The technology has its roots in human–computer interaction research. The graphical user interface was conceived as a technique that would make computers user-friendly by representing the seemingly incomprehensible volumes of information stored in computer databases as visual-spatial graphics that users could interact with in a “naturalistic” way (e.g., Engelbart, 1999; Licklider, 1999). But innovators realized that VR need not only represent data; it could represent any kind of environment the computer could render and generate any sensation that interfaces could simulate. Most historians trace the history of VR to 1965, when then-Harvard graduate student and later ARPA research scientist Ivan Sutherland proposed “the ultimate display,” “a room within which the computer can control the existence of matter” (Sutherland, 1965, p. 3). Three years later, Sutherland created the Sword of Damocles, the first binocular

display with head-tracking (Sutherland, 1968). The heavy head-mounted display had to be secured to the ceiling in order to be worn (hence the name), but when it was, it created the illusion of three-dimensional geometric forms that could be viewed from multiple angles (Aukstankalnis, Blatner, & Roth, 1992).

Two decades passed before VR became practical enough to gain interest outside of research circles. In a 1986 interview in *Scientific American*, inventor and entrepreneur Jaron Lanier introduced the phrase “virtual reality”, only two years after *Time* magazine had heightened public awareness of the burgeoning digital age by declaring the personal computer the “Machine of the Year.” For some, VR meant that computers would allow us to create and explore worlds, expand our intelligence, and create culture-transcending “post-symbolic communication.” A flood of VR hype swept over US culture during the late 1980s and early 1990s, as technologists and journalists promised a future in which new interface technologies would revolutionize education, training, scientific research, art, and entertainment (e.g., Aukstankalnis et al., 1992; Heim, 1998; Lauria, 2001; Rheingold, 1991). Some media studies scholars viewed the virtual world as a site for struggle and resistance (e.g., Brook & Boal, 1995; Hillis, 1999; Markley, 1996), while a slate of science fiction films reflected cultural anxieties over the possibility of people getting lost in it, completely detached from reality and high on the power of virtual existence. In the film *Lawnmower Man* (Everett & Leonard, 1992), for example, a doctor uses VR to transform a simple-minded lawnmower driver named Jobe into a power-hungry virtual god with little connection to his former humanity. Along similar lines, a now-infamous *Wall Street Journal* article referred to VR as “electronic LSD” because of its capacity to create private, potentially mind-altering experiences (Zachary, 1990).

In retrospect, VR had very little impact on mental health in the early 1990s. The technology was far too expensive for most people to access, and it was only good at rendering simple architectural spaces and geometrical objects. But researchers found that users treated those virtual, if cartoonish, environments as real. The combination of audiovisual immersion, first-person perspective, and the ability to interact with the virtual environment created a feeling of being inside a mediated space, called “presence” (see Biocca, 1997). Presence allowed operators of VR systems to have “real” experiences. Early commentators often described the outsiders’ perspective on presence: watching people in VR goggles crawling around the floor or ducking in response to some object only they could see (e.g., Aukstankalnis et al., 1992; Rheingold, 1991).

The therapeutic potential of VR began to come to light in the early 1990s. On opposite sides of the country, researchers discovered that VR would not only be experienced as real, but it could produce very real anxiety. To some this came as a surprise: after all, even if it felt real, users knew that it was not *actually* real. At that time, relatively few people had tried VR, aside from researchers and some curious visitors to arcades and trade shows. These were the contexts in which researchers discovered the therapeutic potential of VR. In 1993, Dr. Ralph Lamson, a psychologist at Kaiser Permanente Medical Group in San Rafael, California, claimed to have

discovered “virtual therapy” while trying a demo of VR at a technology exhibition in San Jose (Lamson, 1997). Lamson discovered that the simulated experience of being in a tall building triggered his fear of heights. Reminding himself that he was in a safe environment allowed him to confront his fear, and, he told an *LA Times* journalist, he cured his acrophobia by the time he left the exhibit hall (Stevens, 1995). Shortly thereafter he began a VR exposure therapy study, immersing acrophobic patients in 30-minute session of VR. In the virtual environment, they began in a café, then could walk out a door which led to a patio, then to a bridge. Lamson found that for most, the environment felt real enough to trigger their anxiety, as it had felt for him: “‘Some people don’t want to go out the door at all,’ said Lamson. ‘When they do, they wobble, spread their arms for balance, shake, or cry,’ all while standing in the middle of his office” (Stevens, 1995). Monitoring heart rate and blood pressure and instructing them in self-calming techniques, Lamson encouraged his patients to continue. He reported great success with most patients.

Across the country, at Clark Atlanta University, a doctoral student in computer science named Max North and his colleagues discovered the therapeutic potential of VR through a serendipitous moment in 1992 (North, North, & Coble, 1996). North’s team was working on a flight simulator project, in collaboration with the US Army Research Laboratory and Boeing (Wiederhold, 2007, p. 163). A team member began to experience anxiety while working, and admitted that she suffered from fear of flying. North’s team decided to experiment in using VR to cure her aviophobia by conducting exposure therapy using the same technology.

As one of the first people to see the world through the lens of cybertherapeutic reason, North was eager to explore the extent to which it could be applied to other phobias and other anxiety disorders. His early efforts were instrumental in enlisting other experts in the field to come up with the proverbial “nail” for the VR hammer – that is, the types of mental maladies around which VR could be defined as a therapeutic technology. In late 1992, North approached well-known VR researcher Larry Hodges at his office at Georgia Tech and proposed using VR to treat fear of public speaking (Wiederhold, 2007, p. 82). Hodges rejected the idea because the available computers were not powerful enough to render people. Though he initially found the idea silly, his brother-in-law, an Army psychiatrist, convinced him otherwise. They discussed what the technology *could* do and, from there, independently came up with the idea of treating fear of heights (Wiederhold, 2007, p. 82). In 1995, they conducted the first clinical trial of VR therapy with the help of Dr. Barbara Rothbaum, a clinical psychologist with expertise in exposure therapy working at nearby Emory. By 1996, Hodges and Rothbaum started a company, Virtually Better, Inc., to develop VR applications for a range of anxiety disorders, starting with specific phobias that were easy to model with virtual architecture, such as driving, heights, dark rooms, and open spaces. As VR technology improved, researchers eventually became able to populate virtual environments with digital human avatars, such as the passenger in my Humvee. In turn, the use of virtual human agents allowed virtual healers to begin treating more socially complex phobias, such as public speaking and being in

public spaces (North et al., 1996, Wiederhold, 2004). Therapists also began experimenting with mixed reality, for example, incorporating haptic technologies that allow arachnophobics to touch virtual spiders. September 11, 2001, also proved important for virtual reality therapy, producing an increasing interest in treatments for fear of flying, exacerbated by security restrictions that would prevent therapists from entering airports with clients, as well as the development of a virtual World Trade Center disaster exposure therapy study (Difede, Cukor, Patt, Giosan, & Hoffman, 2006).

The Ultimate Skinner Box?

Although the clinical value of VR has seemed to lay in its ability to simulate the real, the emphasis in the design of VR therapy systems is not recreating reality but, rather, creating the most therapeutic experiences within current technological limitations.⁶ Creating therapeutic environments entails conceiving of treatment in terms of changing how a patient responds to a given environment, but virtual environments can only ever be simplified models of the world. Some therapists refer to VR as the “ultimate Skinner box” because of its ability “to bring simulated elements from the outside world into the treatment setting and immerse patients in simulations that support the aims and mechanics of a specific therapeutic approach” (Rizzo et al., 2010, p. 116). The term “Skinner box” refers to the operant conditioning chamber, designed by US behaviorist B. F. Skinner. The chamber was a box or room that allowed the experimenter to control the physical stimuli presented to a subject, and pairing these with rewards and punishments in order to control behavior (see Rutherford, 2009). Therapists had been successful using exposure therapies to cure phobias for decades, directing patients to imagine or even confront fear-inducing objects and situations in order to overcome their fears. When adapting VR to the treatment of specific phobias, the issue of what to represent in the virtual environment is fairly straightforward. Virtual environments were designed to represent these feared objects and situations, and, as best possible, aimed to allow patients to interact with them as they might in real life: using a steering wheel controller to drive a virtual car, pressing the buttons in a virtual elevator, or approaching a virtual spider in a virtual kitchen.

As cybertherapists have begun to experiment with VR for the treatment of more complex disorders, the question of what to include in the virtual environment and how the patient should be allowed to interact with it has proven to be very open to interpretation. The tables of contents of the journal *CyberPsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* (established in 1998) demonstrate that an ever-growing global community of researchers across theoretical perspectives is now experimenting with VR as a tool for conducting psychotherapy across the spectrum of mental health disorders, with very different ideas about the kind of reality it should be producing.

Especially outside of the United States, researchers have experimented with more diverse interpretations of how VR can intervene in subjectivity, using it to augment many kinds of therapy that employ imagination and simulated action (see Vincelli, 1999). For example, in the early 1990s, researchers at the Ojika Lab at Gifu University in Japan developed a form of sandbox play therapy for treating and diagnosing autism in children by observing how they play with figurines in virtual environments (Hirose, Kijima, Shirakawa, & Nihei, 1997). In addition, several groups of Korean researchers have experimented with using VR for role-play therapy for schizophrenics (Ku et al., 2003). The emphasis here is on immersing patients in common situations so they can learn how to effectively manage their symptoms in everyday life. Since the goal of treatment in this case is self-education about interpersonal effects of behavior, the design of these VR systems can focus more on “social realism” than on physical realism (Glantz, Rizzo, & Graap, 2003).

European researchers have experimented with using VR in experiential⁷ and psychodynamic therapy.⁸ The Italian psychologist Giuseppe Riva (2011) has used VR to treat eating disorders. In the environments he designs, patients see multiple models of their bodies, distorted to different proportions, in order to challenge their body image. They are encouraged to navigate virtual environments using different virtual bodies, in order to get a more realistic sense of how their actual bodies fit into the world. Here, the virtual is a site for producing experiences that the patient can contrast with reality outside of the goggles. Another Italian, Gabriele Optale, has used VR as therapy for erectile dysfunction, immersing patients in a world designed to engage them through symbolism. Patients visiting Dr. Optale’s clinic navigate a virtual forest with paths and obstacles they can overcome while a voice recording talks about childhood themes, drawn from psychoanalytic theories of sexual development. Optale believes that this unique therapy helps his patients to confront and conquer their impotence through symbolic experiences, without having to talk at length about their own personal sexual history (Optale, Marin, Pastore, Nasta, & Pianon, 2003).

This brief survey of international VR therapy demonstrates that despite a popular conception of VR as offering access to alien worlds, the emphasis of the design of VR therapy systems historically has been to create virtual environments that correspond to actual settings. The “realism” of VR therapy systems does not require that these settings precisely resemble specific situations or places in the patient’s actual life, but rather that it can create an evocative sense of presence for as many patients who struggle with that problem as possible. In the economy of design in VR therapy systems, reality is schematized, stripped down to an operationalized model of the world; in it, each element, be it physical or social, reflects an assumption about how to elicit and promote the control of unhealthy behavior. Designers’ belief that interacting with carefully schematized virtual environments can affect how a patient will interact with the actual world is the key component of cybertherapeutic reason. But variation among these systems reveals the diversity of opinions about how best to use existing VR technology to intervene in subjectivity.

VR for PTSD: A Comparative Approach

The use of VR in therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder offers important insights for understanding cybertherapeutic reason. Psychotherapy includes many approaches to intervening in traumatized subjectivity, only some of which are reflected in VR therapy for PTSD. In this section, I compare three VR therapy systems for PTSD treatment – two developed in the United States and one in the Netherlands. While each of the three systems uses a virtual environment to represent the scene of war, they vary in terms of the type of realism they employ and their form of user control. I emphasize these two elements for comparison: (1) the kind of “reality” the system is designed to produce and (2) how the control-interfaces distribute agency over the objects and events in the virtual environment during the course of therapy. These elements are an important basis for comparing different VR therapy systems because they reflect both differences in the way that designers think about the possibilities of using VR in exposure, and important variables available in the design of VR technology itself, “interactivity” and “vividness” being the two components of the medium that Jonathan Steuer argues determine users’ sense of presence (Steuer, 1992). Comparing these systems shows competing paradigms within the logic of cybertherapeutic reason regarding how VR should act as a psychotherapeutic tool.

By far the fastest-growing use of VR therapy is for the treatment of combat-related PTSD. In 2004, a widely cited *New England Journal of Medicine* report estimated that 11.2–17% of service members would develop PTSD as a direct result of fighting in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Hoge et al., 2004). Subsequent reports have made even higher estimates. Because combat-related PTSD is notoriously difficult to treat compared to other forms of PTSD, the disorder has become a major focus for innovation in treatment. Hodges and Rothbaum conducted the first trials for treating combat-PTSD among Vietnam veterans in the late 1990s (Hodges, Rothbaum, & Alarcon, 1999; Rothbaum, Hodges, & Alarcon, 1999) with promising results. However, VR therapy for combat-PTSD did not receive a lot of public attention until 2005, when the US Office of Naval Research began funding the technique. Now VR therapy is lauded as a promising new paradigm for treating the current generation of veterans. In her editor’s introduction to the February 2010 special issue of *CyberPsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* on PTSD, Brenda Wiederhold notes that two of the five top links retrieved by her Google search for “PTSD technology issues 2009” “addressed the value of virtual reality (VR) for PTSD” (Wiederhold, 2010, p. 1). The special issue itself is a testament to the practice: of the 13 studies published in the issue, 11 are studies of VR therapy for PTSD, each of which cites the efficacy of exposure therapy as a warrant for using VR.

On the surface, VR therapy for combat-PTSD can be seen as treating PTSD as a “war-phobia,” in that it is an acquired behavior, though it is more complex than a simple phobia because the fear itself is not irrational. Combat-PTSD is characterized by intrusive memories, nightmares, and hyper-arousal to stimuli associated with the

traumas of war-fighting. Uncontrollable anger and emotional numbing are also common responses. Sufferers often try to self-regulate through avoiding reminders of their trauma, which may manifest in behaviors such as reclusion, alcoholism, and insomnia. In their Virtual Vietnam experiment, Hodges and Rothbaum created virtual environments resembling the jungles of Vietnam and a virtual Huey helicopter that veterans could experience in order to overcome avoidance and confront the anxiety-provoking stimuli. These scenarios were chosen because they represented common experiences among Vietnam War veterans (Hodges et al., 1999, p. 11). As in the early VR therapy treatments for phobias, the authors justified their project using the language of cognitive behaviorism: repeated exposure to feared stimuli (in this case the war zone) would evoke the patient's fear response, leading to habituation and extinction (Hodges et al., 1999, p. 7). However, the design of the more recent generation of systems suggests more complex ways of thinking about the therapeutic use of VR for combat-PTSD.

VR-Enhanced Prolonged Exposure

Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan was developed by clinical psychology researcher Albert "Skip" Rizzo and engineering researcher Jarrell Pair at the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies. The current version of the system runs on one computer. The clinician views two screens, one displaying the patient's perspective, and the other a "Wizard of Oz" control panel displaying buttons that correspond to various locations and stimuli that can be added to the virtual environment. The patient wears a head-mounted display, stands or sits on a base-shaking platform during therapy, and receives audio stimuli through headphones. An optional scent-panel is also available to deliver evocative smells like gasoline and body odor.

Rizzo and Pair designed their system as a tool for conducting prolonged exposure therapy. In prolonged exposure, the therapist guides patients to retell the story of their trauma, each time adding more detail, and becoming increasingly emotionally engaged. Emotional engagement is seen as critical to the effectiveness of the treatment. They believe that by reliving the event, through telling the trauma narrative in the context of a safe environment, patients will not only come to dissociate the traumatic event from the feelings that give rise to their symptoms (a behavioral process), but will also become empowered by having transformed flashbacks – uncontrolled fragments of memory – into a coherent narrative (a cognitive one) (see also Losh, 2006).

VR is believed to aid in both remembering the narrative and becoming emotionally engaged. Like Virtual Vietnam, the Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan system was designed to include common scenes of action during deployment based on clinician feedback about frequently reported traumatic experiences. The designers also sent prototypes to Iraq and Ft. Lewis to get feedback on the realism of the representation. In the original version released in 2005, the virtual environments consist of a Middle Eastern

city and a Humvee, though new environments, including ones in Afghanistan and a Southwestern United States desert, are also being added. Though the technology enabled the designers to represent the most common scenarios of traumatic events, the design of these environments was limited by the capability of the available technology, which prevented the designers from making them as crowded, dirty, or able to be explored as thoroughly as they would have liked in order to make users' experiences more realistic.

Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan was designed with an emphasis on clinician control. The clinician chooses which environment to place patients in, as well as positioning them in various sites within that environment, such as making them the driver, passenger, or gunner of the Humvee. In the city scenario, they can teleport the patient from market to mosque to checkpoint or several other locations. With a push of a button, then can add the sounds of mosquitoes buzzing or a voice yelling, "Go home, cowboy." They can add or remove people from the streets, and blow up a surprising array of objects, especially parked vehicles. When these explosions take place, they can vary the "level of trauma," meaning how much damage the explosion does to people, from leaving people in the area a little dazed to having them lose body parts.

The patient can navigate the environment using either a standard videogame controller (for the Humvee module) or a thumb controller mounted on a weighted mock M-16 rifle (for the city environment). In current versions, patients can only navigate the virtual environment: they cannot shoot or otherwise effect change in the world. Even though firing a weapon is an important, and potentially among the most traumatic experiences of war, the designers were concerned about the value of surmounting the technical challenge of designing a realistic killing scenario that would not transform the simulation into a "cathartic revenge fantasy" rather than a therapeutic emotional processing session (Rizzo et al., 2010, p. 117). In a newer version, however, the therapist will be allowed to turn on the shooting function briefly.

Here, the clinician uses the machine in order to evoke emotions and memories from the patient. The patient, while immersed in the environment, is primarily active through storytelling rather than manipulating the interface. The virtual environment, controlled by the therapist, is designed to act upon the patient's psyche.

VR-Exposure with Arousal Control

This method was designed by Brenda K. Wiederhold and Dennis Wood of the Virtual Reality Medical Center (VRMC) in San Diego, California. There are many similarities between Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan and the system developed at VRMC. Like Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan, the VRMC clinician's interface includes a screen showing the patient's point of view and another showing the clinician's control panel. In both systems the therapist has a similar range of controls, and can teleport the patient around the virtual environment and add similar elements, such as shouting or

helicopters flying overhead. The virtual environments originally included a Virtual Baghdad, a Humvee scenario (which they call PTSD Convoy), and a “PTSD Village” (Wood, Wiederhold, & Spira, 2010, p. 5), though like the team at ICT, they are developing additional scenarios. Compared to the Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan system, VRMC’s patient interface engages fewer senses, entailing only VR goggles with built-in headphones.

While the technologies appear to share many similarities in their basic design, they differ in the degree of agency given the patient. The VRMC system uses a model of VR exposure developed by the organization’s founder, Brenda Wiederhold, in order to treat diverse anxiety disorders. The technique is called Virtual-Reality Exposure with Arousal Control (VRE-AC). Whereas Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan uses the system primarily to evoke memories and emotions to help the patients tell their trauma narratives, the VRMC system emphasizes “skills-building.” Though patients do tell the therapist about traumas they experienced, the therapeutic mechanism is not telling and retelling the trauma narrative. Instead, the therapist uses the biographical details in order to choose specific scenarios that patients will “play” during the course of therapy.

In VRE-AC applications, patients interact with the simulation in a manner similar to a videogame. Unlike the Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan system, patients not only can navigate the virtual environment, they can also use the controller to shoot an M-16 rifle (Wood et al., 2007, p. 311). Patients are given tasks, such as holding off insurgent fire while medics try to evacuate a fallen soldier, or driving their convoy to a specific location. Patients must do these tasks repeatedly. Realism is achieved both through virtual representation of spaces and through conducting the kinds of activities patients would actually conduct in the spaces represented.

VRE-AC environments are designed not only to trigger memories but also to actually allow patients to reenact traumatic scenarios in the simulation itself. Patients relive the trauma not through words but through actions. The emphasis here is on self-control. Before the VR session begins, the therapist teaches the patient meditation techniques in order to promote emotional, cognitive, and physical relaxation. During therapy, the patient is outfitted with physiological monitoring devices that measure skin conductance, finger temperature, respiration rate, and heart rate during therapy, which the therapist monitors on a third computer (Wood et al., 2007, p. 311). When the monitor indicates signs of physiological distress, the therapist draws the patient’s attention to how he or she is feeling and directs the patient to stay calm using the meditation techniques.

This method is seen as skills-building, emphasizing the patient’s ability to gain self-control through control over the situation at hand. Referring to her VRE-AC application for motor vehicle accident PTSD, Wiederhold says, “People who are afraid of the freeway say, ‘Oh my God, this is dangerous.’ I get them to stop the thought and think instead, ‘Yes, I’m sweating, but I’m still in control’” (Wiederhold, 2004, p. 43). The emphasis is not on making sense of the traumatic event but, rather, on learning to control one’s own mind and body when confronted with those kinds

of situations. As such, one learns how to confront reminders of the event that are both external and internal, such as memories. This model of agency is very different than the one invoked in the Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan system, which assumes that the patient will be healed through storytelling and habituation. By skills-building, the VRE-AC system deals with an important issue: what happens when the patient confronts another trauma, such as being redeployed to Afghanistan or Iraq?

Multi-Modal Memory Restructuring

A third system, designed by a team of researchers working at diverse institutions in the Netherlands, provides a helpful foil for comparing the Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan and VRE-AC systems. Unlike the other systems in which the world is ready-made with all possible scenes and elements already built into the software, in Multi-Modal Memory Restructuring (3MR) the patients actually build the virtual worlds. They are taught to use 3D editing software to reconstruct a specific day into a six-minute story. In addition to graphical elements built into the system, they can also use geographical maps as well as their own pictures, which are uploaded into the software. Also unlike the other systems, 3MR is based on the group-therapy exposure model, in which patients draw maps and other visual aids in order to facilitate talking about their experiences of war (van den Steen, Brinkman, Vermetten, & Neerincx, 2010, p. 208). The system uses a laptop computer and a projection screen rather than a head-mounted display in order to allow the group to work together.⁹ Using what they call a “situated cognitive engineering approach,” the Dutch team does not emphasize direct exposure but, rather, “time sequencing of the memory content,” that is, telling the narrative (van den Steen et al., 2010). The primary role of the therapist is to help the patients learn how to use the technology in order to help them tell stories.

Like Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan, the main purpose of the 3MR system is to enable the construction of a narrative in addition to exposure. The other systems are based on generic scenes and actions, achieving a kind of realism through reflecting the *designers’* understanding of the common experiences of war based on surveys of service members. In contrast, the 3MR system allows the group patients currently using the technology to achieve realism by working together and using their own photographs. The emphasis here is on recreating the collective memory by amalgamating individual memories and mementos associated with a particular day. Also unlike the other systems, 3MR encourages the patients to include positive memories related to the same deployment, which might otherwise be forgotten (van den Steen et al., 2010). Here, therapeutic exposure means not only confronting the traumatic event and reliving the fear associated with it in order to overcome it, but also exposing oneself to the emotional and experiential complexity of deployment.

Therapists using the other systems could also ask patients to consider positive feelings experienced during combat; however, those positive elements are not apparent in the design of either system. Though one might argue that patients can

successfully conduct missions in VRE-AC, this assumes that patients would necessarily experience these successes as positive experiences. The scientific journal articles and conference presentations promoting these technologies never address the possibility of using them to relive positive memories associated with deployment as one way to reframe their traumatic experiences.

Comparing VR Therapies

A comparison of these three therapies for PTSD demonstrates that VR therapy entails diverse strategies for mediating interaction between patient, therapist, and machine. It is not a matter of simply immersing patients in a virtual environment and having them emerge healed, but rather of a system designed to control the patient's experience within a therapeutic paradigm. All psychotherapies entail a model of how thoughts, emotions, physical feelings, and behaviors influence one another. But not all psychotherapists agree on how to intervene in these relationships. In some interventions, such as cognitive processing therapy, changing thought patterns is seen as a route to calming bodily feelings of anxiety. In others, such as the flooding technique for treating phobias, triggering emotions and physical experiences of fear in the absence of actual harm is believed to eventually retrain the mind.

At issue in these different interventions are questions of agency and control: what needs to be controlled and who needs to have control over it? Therapeutic rationale informs the design of VR therapy systems including how the virtual environment represents experience and how the ability to interact with it is distributed between the patient and therapist as distinct "users" of these systems. Understanding how cybertherapeutic reason plays out in VR therapy systems entails analyzing not only what they represent, but also the distribution of agency between the patient, therapist, and machine.

In VR therapy, agency over the virtual world is usually distributed unequally between the therapist and the patient. Control variables include who may choose which virtual environment the patient enters and what objects are present in that world. The goal is to train patients to respond to and understand their environment in different ways. For example, in Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan, patients are effectively learning that their traumas were things that happened to them, and that their only recourse is to face and learn to speak about them until they become like any other memory. The system reinforces this interpretation by giving most of the control over what happens in the external world to the therapist. In the VRE-AC system, by contrast, patients are treated more as active agents who must calm themselves in order to complete tasks: the trauma is not in the event *per se*, but rather in how patients respond to it. In 3MR, the group of patients is seen as a collective who use the virtual environment in order to create a multi-authored text representing their shared experience. They, too, are active agents in constructing how they remember an experience

and realize through diverse perspectives that they have options other than interpreting the event as a trauma.

In the VR therapy community, one of the most important contributions of VR is its capacity to create “real” experience. But as we have seen, what counts as realism varies greatly. It may entail objectivized realism based on physical characteristics of the environment, a procedural realism based on actions, or a personalized realism based on recreating specific events, or some combination of these. The goal of realism in VR therapy is to partially shift representations of the world from the patient’s imagination or the world itself, into a technological system. It becomes an individual experience through interactive processes such as the imagination, game-like interaction, or actually uploading personal images.

Whereas in traditional therapy the therapist cannot know for certain what is going on in the patient’s mind, in VR, the external, controllable simulation comes to stand in for internal mental life. While the virtual is often contrasted with the material or the actual, in virtual reality, the digital representation of the world can be seen as a materialization of the patient’s imagination: the digital representations, though merely light and sounds, are far more material than the imagination when it comes to the interaction of clinician and patient. Because the therapist sees what the patient sees (Gorini & Riva, 2008), VR therapists believe this can foster a common experience, perhaps contributing to therapeutic rapport. The therapist can instead ask for the terms that the patient uses for the objects, people, or places represented in the virtual world (Wood et al., 2010).

Objectivizing the patient’s experience through VR also frees the therapist from some of the work of stimulating the patient’s imagination. Being able to do so is seen in mental healthcare communities as a product of a good therapeutic alliance: the patient will only be able to generate useful mental images when he or she is comfortable with the therapist in the clinic. The challenge of building therapeutic alliance can be exacerbated when the therapist comes from a very different demographic than the patient population and does not have shared experiences to draw upon to help build mental imagery. After all, in most situations it would be socially inappropriate to disengage with the present and act upon one’s imagination, especially when talking about a scenario with which one’s interlocutor is completely unfamiliar. In VR therapy, the presence of the technology not only legitimizes the patient’s mental transportation to an alternate psychological space, but it also structures this experience within the parameters of what the therapist believes the patient should be imagining. The virtual environment is designed to already “know” what the patient needs to experience in therapy, whether it is reliving a combat scene in Iraq or just being on a tall building. However, as many scientific articles on VR therapy argue, even when there is good therapeutic alliance, some patients, it is believed, have poor visual imagination, do not like to communicate through speech, and avoid dealing with emotional difficulties. As such, VR can be a powerful tool for clinicians when the patient either cannot or does not want to do what clinicians believe would be therapeutically effective.

Objectivizing patient experience can also have implications for the politics of subjectivity. Though the VR hype of the 1980s and 1990s promised an unlimited world of virtual exploration, virtual environments are closed systems, wherein both the world and actions within it are constrained by software code. While the software does not arbitrate what counts as a psychological problem, its design does reify what does and does not count as a normal response to it. Though some aspects of the design may be limited by current technological capabilities – such as the capacity to render compelling human forms – design can serve to reify concepts of normalcy by deciding, *a priori*, what is and is not a “normal” response. For example, in the VRE-AC system, the design of the technology makes an implicit argument that the “healthy” response to being shot at or being ordered to shoot someone is to control oneself. As such, VR can be used to materialize conceptions of healthy subjectivity within the context of therapy, while at the same time reducing the capacity of patients to resist turning over their imagination or emotions to therapeutic control. The artifacts have politics: they materialize an ideal, in this case, an ideal model of healthy subjectivity and self-control.

Conclusion: The Future of Therapy?

By 1996, Max North and colleagues were declaring virtual reality therapy a new paradigm in clinical care. With slightly more modesty, Kalman Glantz and colleagues noted that “VR technology may create enough capabilities to profoundly influence the shape of therapy” (Glantz, Durlach, Barnett, & Aviles, 1997, p. 92). As we have seen, the capacity to generate controlled, disorder-specific immersive experiences, all within the safe and confidential setting of a clinician’s office, is the key technological contribution of VR to therapy. After years of being considered hype, VR is now being seriously considered as a therapeutic tool because it combines a kind of realism and controlled interaction that allow for the production of therapeutic experiences, based on a way of thinking about human–technology relationships that I call cybertherapeutic reason.

While VR therapy innovators are careful to insist that the computer is simply one more tool at the disposition of the healing profession, nevertheless, tools transform practices. If widely adopted, it will be important to document how VR changes the field of psychotherapy. It is possible to imagine a not-too-distant future in which therapists are no longer trained to use speech communication in order to elicit mental imagery, instead shifting the burden of this therapeutic skill onto technological systems like VR. Clinical psychology researchers currently debate the importance of “clinician effects,” by which they mean the difficulty of measuring the therapeutic efficacy of a specific paradigm because of the varying skill level of individual clinicians. VR therapy introduces the possibility of “software effects,” in which variations in therapeutic efficacy are attributed to the design or version of the software itself,

including the existence of “bugs” or interface usability issues. Widespread adoption of therapeutic technologies such as VR has the potential to shift at least some of the responsibility for therapeutic efficacy from therapist to the computer. On the flip side, an individual therapist’s lack of therapeutic efficacy may come to be seen as an issue of technical competency, one that can be addressed not only by improving his or her face-to-face rapport with patients, but also by outfitting the therapist with the most cutting-edge technologies and the skills to use them.

We are just reaching a time in which the number of people who will have visited virtual environments as part of treatment in a clinic will surpass the number of those who have done so during a demo at a research site. While the vast majority of clinicians do not currently utilize VR in their regular practice, this may soon change. In a poll asking American Psychiatry Association members about which inventions they expected to see increase in influence in psychology in the next 10 years, VR was predicted as number 3 out of 38 (Norcross, Hedges, & Prochaska, 2002).

The field has, indeed, been growing. Virtual healers have formed a research community, convening at an annual conference, Cybertherapy, which has grown in attendance and length since it began in 1996, and establishing numerous journals including *CyberPsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* (est. 1998), *Annual Review of Cybertherapy and Telemedicine* (2003), *Cyberpsychology* (2007), *Journal of Cybertherapy and Rehabilitation* (2008), and *PsychNology* (2008). These forums have allowed virtual therapists to create a knowledge base for further research and field development. At the same time, the cost of buying and designing VR technologies has been dropping rapidly in the past decade, making these techniques increasingly accessible.

In recent years, powerful institutions, including branches of the United States military and Department of Veterans Affairs, have begun to express interest in VR therapy because it promises better therapeutic efficacy for treating PTSD, especially among members of the digital generation who are believed to be both comfortable with and attracted to interactive media technology. Further research is needed to examine the uses of VR therapy by these agencies, including the specific design of the VR systems they adopt. Doing so will provide new insights into how disordered subjectivity is defined, and how therapeutic interventions are conceptualized, as part of cybertherapeutic regimes. It is critical to examine how these institutions are coming to view the role of VR technology in reshaping the ways people interact with the world, and in the case of treating PTSD, how those afflicted communicate about, process, and heal from the traumatic experiences that now inform their lives.

NOTES

- 1 I distinguish between a *virtual environment*, or *virtual architecture*, and *virtual worlds*. Using Boellstorff’s (2008) definitions, virtual worlds are populated, persistent spaces, such as massively multi-player online games (MMOGs), that can be studied as fields of social action. “Virtual environment” refers to any interactive simulated space.

- 2 There is no set term for the practice. I primarily use the term “virtual reality therapy” (VR therapy), coined by Max North and colleagues (1996), though others believe this sounds as though the technology autonomously provides care. Ralph Lamson called it “virtual therapy” (e.g., Lamson, 1997), though this implies that it is not “actually” therapy. It has also been called “virtual reality-enhanced therapy.”
- 3 Though the issue of attraction to technology is also important, I will not be addressing this issue here as it concerns how VR creates new *meanings* for therapy, rather than what it does in cybertherapeutic practice.
- 4 The full title of techno-evangelist Howard Rheingold’s book on VR nicely sums up cultural ambivalence about where the technology would lead society: *Virtual Reality: The Revolutionary Technology of Computer-Generated Artificial Worlds – and How It Promises and Threatens to Transform Business and Society* (1991). Members of the field were also conscious of this ambivalence: the first SIGGRAPH panel on VR in 1990 was titled *Hip, Hype and Hope – The Three Faces of Virtual Worlds*. Woolley (1992) and Chesher (1993) have documented the VR of hype of the 1980s and 1990s. See Laurel (1993) on the collapse of commercial VR.
- 5 In the 1980s, both computers and postmodernism were transforming how people see the world. VR seemed to confirm the postmodern theories of the fluidity of subjectivity; if subjectivity is shaped by symbolic orders, then perhaps there is no one true reality and all realities are, in fact, virtual. See Lyotard (1984) and critique by Woolley (1992).
- 6 Because of high development cost and the slow process of clinical testing, VR therapy software often looks outdated compared to contemporary videogames. Advocates have suggested, however, that this is not a limitation but actually a *feature* of VR therapy, because visual simplicity leaves room for the patient’s imagination to project onto the virtual environment, thereby personalizing the experience (e.g., Hollander, 2006; North et al., 1996).
- 7 Experiential therapists believe that experiences can expose and challenge patients’ unconscious assumptions about the world and themselves.
- 8 Psychodynamic therapy also helps to reveal the unconscious to the patient by revealing origins of assumptions and challenging their role as patients’ unhealthy coping mechanisms.
- 9 As of this writing, the 1980s dream of networked, interactive immersive environments is still too technically complex and expensive to be a functional way to conduct group VR therapy.

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Mapping ICT Adoption among Latin American Youth

Rosalía Winocur and Carolina Aguerre

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Rosalía Winocur and Carolina Aguerre show how virtual communities and online social networks have been legitimized as new forms of visibility, recognition, and social inclusion among young people in Latin America. “To be or not to be part of something” and to be accepted or rejected for “forming or not forming a part of it” are core themes in the process of identity construction among Latin American youth, both online and offline. Faced with the difficulties of inclusion in the traditional institutions – particularly those related to training, employment, and access to power – young people adopt information and communication technologies (ICTs) in order to create alternative avenues to inclusion. The authors suggest that, by developing flexible and mobile strategies of ICT use and generating their own informal circuits of inclusion at the margins, young people may find avenues to gain access to the formal channels and privileged spaces of ICTs. In short, this chapter argues that Internet and mobile platforms are compensatory symbolic substitutes for the lack of real power these young people have in everyday life.

Introduction

The emergence and dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICTs) during the last two decades has promoted the expression “information society”

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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to characterize this age. In Latin America, as in most developing regions, the uptake and benefits of new ICTs have followed a much slower pace than in developed regions. This continent, which has a tradition of inequality, poverty, and profound cultural differences, has encountered difficulties not just in adopting ICTs but also in making them available and at the service of the most vulnerable sectors of society. Among those who have suffered the most from this exclusion are young people, in terms of opportunity costs, since youth have been one of the primary targets of the hopes invested in ICTs as a motor of development. “New digital technologies are now the depositories of a renewed hope that technology will drive economic development and fight poverty” (Guerra, Hilbert, Jordán, & Nicolai, 2007, p. 31).

Despite the economic growth evidenced in the region since 2002, together with public policies focused on lowering poverty levels by 17% and reducing the gap between rich and poor (Puryear & Malloy, 2009), it is still a region of contrasts. Latin America is the most unequal area in the world in terms of the gap between rich and poor, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. Five of the ten most unequal countries in the world are in this region, although Brazil is one of these and accounts for a third of the region’s total population. Even the most equitable countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as Chile, Barbados, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, have a higher GINI Index than the most unequal countries in Europe (Puryear & Malloy, 2009). In terms of poverty, 46.1% of the population in Latin America was poor in 2008, with 33.2% defined as “poor” and 12.9% as “extremely poor” (ECLAC, 2008).

The use and incorporation of technology in a society are not independent of its social, cultural, and economic context. The scenario described above means the region faces challenges to address the digital gap. In response to these disadvantages, which have affected the incorporation of Latin American states into the global economy, governments have begun the work of narrowing the digital divide by designing and implementing policies for digital inclusion. The United Nations’ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has incorporated ICT into its development agenda through the creation of the *Plan de Acción sobre la Sociedad de Información de América Latina y el Caribe* (eLAC, Action Plan for the Information Society of Latin America and the Caribbean). This initiative proposed building a platform to promote regional cooperation and integration of ICTs and articulating its goals on an international level, but with regional priorities. The Millennium Development Goals, the first of which is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015, are on the eLAC’s action horizon.¹

In spite of the efforts that governments in the region have already made in terms of ICT inclusion, these policies and programs have had a varied focus and unequal outcomes. Many of these programs have been implemented recently, which means that their evaluation has not yet been undertaken in some cases and the longer-term impact is yet to be assessed. In this chapter we examine the underlying social, cultural, and economic context of ICT adoption by children and adolescents and their patterns of use, based on the results of quantitative and qualitative studies. An important caveat is that this work does not pretend to encompass all the programs and

initiatives, or to cover all patterns of use of ICTs in the continent, but instead analyzes major trends of adoption following certain sociodemographic variables and cultural attributes, according to the available data.

Quantitative Dimensions of ICT Access and Use in the Region

Evaluating ICT access in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) presents multiple challenges. Initiatives like those of the *Observatorio para la Sociedad de Información de Latinoamérica y el Caribe* (OSILAC, Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean), particularly from 2007 to 2008, as well as the statistics team at the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), have attempted to harmonize and systematize data for the region. These projects are beginning to generate a greater uniformity amongst variables, including surveys and data-collection techniques. Nevertheless, data limitations restrict the ability to reach definitive conclusions about the impact of socioeconomic variables on the penetration and use of ICTs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

These difficulties stem from various causes. First, not all of the countries in the region have gathered statistics on ICTs, despite the fact that initiatives like those put forward by OSILAC and the ITU have established grounds for comparison. Second, the years in which surveys were completed vary from country to country. Another distinction is related to socioeconomic characteristics, which are also not homogeneous across the region. Finally, the rate at which technological changes are adopted can lead to outdated statistics; a piece of data only a few years old can quickly become obsolete (Sunkel, 2006).² Thus, comparisons can be challenging and inconclusive.

Despite these limitations, it is critically important to use the available data so that the social determinants of ICTs can be evaluated and major challenges – such as widespread access – can be addressed. In what follows, we present some important trends with respect to ICT access in Latin American homes, also identified in studies by Sunkel (2006), Hopenhayn and Miranda (CEPAL, 2004), and Minges and Olaya (2008). We have made efforts to include the greatest number of countries in the quantitative analysis, but the aforementioned restrictions in the existing databases and statistics, added to the large number of countries that comprise the region, make it practically impossible to cover them consistently with the same variables and analytic dimensions.

A salient feature is that in Latin America, traditional media predominate over “new” ICTs. Latin American homes are less likely to have access to ICTs than to traditional media such as radio and television. This is especially troubling given that the penetration of television and radio in the region is already poor in comparison with developed countries (Mastrini & Becerra, 2006). Mobile phones are an exception, as they have surpassed landlines in various regions on the continent and within each country (see Table 23.1).

Table 23.1 Percentage of ICT access in the home, by type of technology

Country	Year	% of households with						Type of Internet access	
		Electricity	Radio	Television	Land line	Cellular phone	Computer	Internet access	
Bolivia	2005	68.3%	67.1%	63.2%	18.8%	39.2%	12.1%	3.5%	
Brazil	2005	97.1%	88%	91.3%	48.1%	59.2%	18.5%	13.6%	
Cuba	2006	100%	38%	88.3%	17.3%	1.1%	2.1%	0.2%	
Costa Rica	2005	99.1%	86.3%	92.8%	65.6%	49.8%	27%	10.2%	20.1%
Ecuador	2006	95.6%	72.8%	87.1%	35.5%	63.8%	17.9%	2.5%	
El Salvador	2005				40.6%	34.8%	7.4%	2.2%	
Honduras	2006	70.4%	65.4%	64.4%	30.4%	41.4%	7.6%	1.6%	
Mexico	2006	n.a.	88.3%	93.2%	48.3%	47%	20.5%	10.1%	58.8%
Panama	2006	88.1%	80.4%	82.7%	40.1%	64.2%	15.6%	8.1%	
Paraguay	2005		80.8%	79.1%	18.6%	49%	8.7%	2.2%	
Peru	2006	77%	83.7%	69%	27.9%	28.1%	10.1%	4.7%	
Dominican Republic	2005	94.5%	61.6%	75.8%	25.8%	44.3%	8.7%	3.1%	13.1%
Uruguay	2006		94.4%	90.7%	69.9%	48.9%	24.3%	13.7%	
Venezuela	2005	82.8%	91.5%	91.5%	34.5%	25.7%	10.3%	2.5%	

Source: OSILAC calculations based on data from a survey of households in each country. Year most recently available. Adapted from: http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/tic/serie_1001.html

Table 23.2 Percentage of Internet access in the home, by education level of head of household

Country	Education level attained				
	Elementary incomplete	Elementary	Secondary	Higher incomplete	Higher
Brazil^a	3.5%	10%	25.1%	60.4%	72.7%
Colombia^b	0.3%	1.5%	5.5%	15.4%	36.3%
El Salvador^c	0%	0.6%	2.3%	9.7%	28.6%
Mexico^d	0.5%	2.9%	7%	27.6%	51.2%
Peru^e	0%	1.1%	5.2%	15.1%	34%

^aPesquisa Nacional por Amostra Domicílios, 2008.

^bGran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares, 2007.

^cEncuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples, 2007.

^dEncuesta Nacional sobre Disponibilidad y Uso de las TIC, 2007.

^eEncuesta Nacional de Hogares, 2008.

Source: Authors' own estimates based on OSILAC's statistical data system.

The largest impact on the availability of ICTs in the home is income, followed by years of education completed by the head of household. ICT penetration in homes grows proportionally to these two variables. As Table 23.2 shows, there is a strong correlation between the head of household's education level and home ICT access. The largest leap is in those who have completed secondary to higher education, or incomplete technical education, in all of the countries analyzed.

These data indicate that the tendency to value ICT access positively is related to a higher level of education. However, this relation is strengthened when one takes into consideration that throughout Latin America there is a strong correlation between education level and socioeconomic level. People with a higher level of education are more likely to have a higher income than those with a lower degree of education and thus are in a position to afford the cost of home ICT access (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo [UNDP], 2006). The data presented in Table 23.3 support this interpretation. In the case of household income level, it is worth noting the leap in the fourth quintile, which is close to doubling in the cases of Brazil and Mexico, nearly trebling in Colombia, and more than trebling in Peru and El Salvador. The greatest difference between the fourth and fifth quintile is registered in El Salvador, Peru, and Mexico.

This trend can also be seen in other countries in the region. Urresti (2009) shows that in Argentina in the 1990s, the middle and upper socioeconomic sectors were early adopters of new technologies, which increased the levels of demand in both homes and businesses for more computers and greater Internet access, particularly in the city of Buenos Aires. Therefore, in Latin America the rates of access to technological goods and connectivity in various districts within cities like Buenos Aires, San Pablo, Mexico City, or Santiago have been comparable to cities in Europe or the

Table 23.3 Percentage of Internet access in the home, by household income quintiles

Country	Income quintiles			
	1 and 2	3	4	5
Brazil^a	5.95%	16%	30.8%	57.1%
Colombia^b	0.9%	2.6%	6.5%	25.9%
El Salvador^c	0%	0.2%	1.5%	10.5%
Mexico^d	3.6%	7.5%	11.2%	36.8%
Peru^e	0%	1.7%	6%	23.8%

^aPesquisa Nacional por Amostra Domicílios, 2008.

^bGran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares, 2007.

^cEncuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples, 2007.

^dEncuesta Nacional sobre Disponibilidad y Uso de las TIC, 2007.

^eEncuesta Nacional de Hogares, 2008.

Source: Authors' own data calculations based on OSILAC's statistical data system.

United States. However, these relatively high rates of connectivity are much lower in small cities and towns, and more so in rural environments. In this sense, ICT adoption follows the same trend in terms of access as those of traditional media and other services (such as sewage, electricity), discriminating positively for the inhabitants of cities and negatively for semi-rural or rural environments that face greater challenges and gaps.

Nevertheless, this early and high rate of adoption by urban social sectors of a higher socioeconomic level produced a “trickle-down” effect in these cities. This was the case, for example, in Buenos Aires (Urresti, 2009), which generated a second wave of access in the information hubs, where the first public-access technology centers were opened at the end of the 1990s. This trickle-down effect was produced primarily by the lower costs of personal computers (PCs) and the expansion of Internet connectivity in the city of Buenos Aires. From a sociocultural perspective it followed a pattern of imitation from the cosmopolitan rich sectors (including national and foreign firms) to the middle classes. The youth in these lower- to middle-class urban sectors were the first to use new technologies in these public centers.

A second notable trend concerns ICT access in households with children and youth. The presence of children is one of the most influential factors for the adoption of ICTs in a household (Barrantes, 2007; ITU, 2009). Thus, surveys should count not only the number of children but also their ages in order to establish links to educational institutions. The number of children is also a central variable, given that throughout the world two-child households tend to have consistently higher levels of ICT penetration in comparison with those that do not have children (ECLAC, 2008). The LAC region is no exception.

Nevertheless, among households with more than two children, the percentage drops, and in those domestic environments with more than four children, it is even lower than in those with no children. The lowest numbers of computers belong to

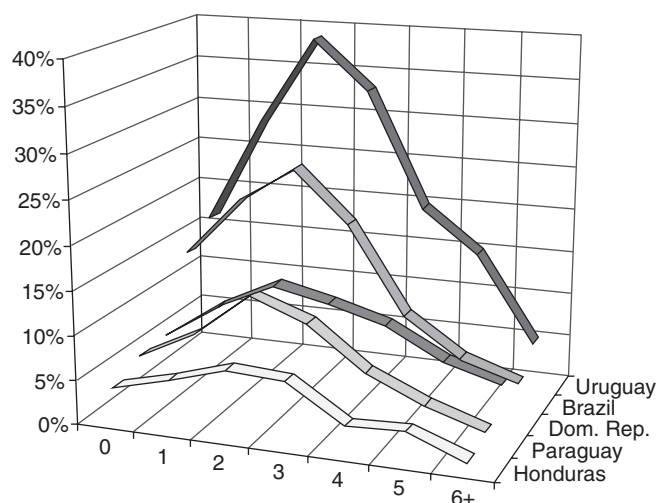


Figure 23.1 Percentage of households with a computer, by number of children in the household, 2005. *Source:* ECLAC (2008, p. 24).

households with more than five infants. The data supplied in Figure 23.1 express these differences across five countries in the region. These data reinforce the relationship between income levels and access to technology in the home. Households with more than four children tend to be low-income, while those with an average of two to three children are typically representative of middle- to upper-middle-class sectors.

A third trend concerns use of the mobile phone, a new technology that appears to be more resistant to inequality than other technologies. Table 23.4 shows GINI coefficients for ICT access in the home, providing a basis for evaluating disparities in access among different socioeconomic variables. The GINI coefficient is a useful statistical tool for measuring the distribution across diverse socioeconomic variables of ICT in the home. A GINI coefficient of zero represents perfect equality, while a coefficient of one represents the highest level of inequality.

The data in Table 23.4 offer a number of important findings about disparities in traditional and new media. The greatest disparity is found in Internet access, while radio reflects the smallest degree of disparity, being the most democratic medium (lowest GINI Index). Mobile telephones tend to show a more equal distribution than fixed-line telephones. Fixed telephone lines tend to correlate with gender, meaning that when the household head is a woman there is a tendency to have fixed landlines, while mobile phone possession depends on the number of years of formal education that the head of household has completed. The age of the head of household is central to determining the most equal distribution between television, computer, and Internet access. Indigenous groups correlate with a more equal access to the radio. In the context of the LAC region and in the majority of its countries, belonging to

Table 23.4 GINI coefficients of ICTs in the home

Indigenous group	Head of household								
	Gender	Age	Years of education	Employment category	Income	Electricity	Location ^a	Children	Average
Radio	0.14	0.25	0.18	0.28	0.18	0.30	0.15	0.65	<u>0.26</u>
TV	0.21	0.24	0.18	0.26	0.24	0.42	0.27	0.66	0.29
Fixed phone	0.37	0.18	0.25	0.20	0.43	0.50	0.41	0.68	0.38
Mobile phone	0.36	0.25	0.15	0.29	0.42	0.48	0.34	0.72	<u>0.35</u>
Computer	0.34	0.25	0.17	0.30	0.62	0.48	0.44	0.72	0.41
Internet	0.44	0.28	0.19	0.35	0.66	0.47	0.49	0.73	0.44
Average	0.31	0.24	0.19	0.31	0.42	0.44	0.35	0.69	0.36

^aRural/urban

Source: Adapted from OSILAC (2007).

an indigenous ethnic group is strongly related to rural as opposed to urban environments, and to lower as opposed to higher economic status.

The worst ICT distribution appears to be related to the number of children in the home, as has already been mentioned (and depicted in Figure 23.1). With five children, ICT penetration falls dramatically. Electricity is the second category that creates inequality, given that without this indispensable resource, there can be no access to television, much less to a computer. Even charging a mobile phone becomes difficult. Household income is the third inequality factor.

However, to consider the complete picture of media use among children and adolescents in Latin America, we must take into account the use of the mobile phone, a device that has become so ubiquitous that it is already beginning to take off as a platform for Internet access for the least developed countries in Latin America and the rest of the world (ITU, 2010a). It is worth noting that some developing countries, like Tanzania in Africa, already have greater email access via mobile phones than via computers (TNS Research International, 2010 Digital Life³), and Latin America with its higher than average mobile penetration (93%, when the world average is 73%) is already evidencing this transition to Internet access via mobile phones (ITU, 2010a). Nevertheless, although accessing the Internet through mobile phones is getting easier with each new generation of devices, it is still costly to connect given the expensive rates, and even more so for young people (Galperin & Barrantes, 2008) who tend to suffer more from unemployment – 16.6% unemployment rate amongst youth in the Latin American region, which is triple the adult rate of unemployment (Weller, 2006).⁴

According to a study of “The Interactive Generation in Ibero-America” (Fundación Telefónica, 2008)⁵ conducted in seven countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela), 86% of urban youth between 10 and 18 years of age own a mobile phone. The countries that lead this trend are Argentina (94%), Venezuela (93%), and Chile (93%). In terms of gender, girls prefer to use mobile phones more than boys (86% use amongst girls vs. 80% for boys). This study also found that communication is the most important use that the youth attach to mobile phones (80% use them for this purpose – SMS and calls), followed by the consumption of content (50% use them to listen to music, 47% to watch videos and look at photos, and 13% to access the Internet). A third use of the mobile phone is entertainment, while the creation of content (taking pictures and shooting videos: 50% and 45%, respectively) is a fourth use attached to this device by this age group. This research also points out that 33% of the youngsters have a mobile device as a present from their parents, who also pay for the monthly expenses in 63% of the cases.

Finally, the data on ICT access in Latin America reveal a hierarchy of access by country. According to the report *Characteristics of Households with ICTs in Latin America and the Caribbean* (OSILAC, 2007), there are three large groups in the region, organized by socioeconomic performance variables and access to ICTs in the home. The first group is composed of Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Uruguay.⁶ These countries have high levels of household ICT penetration for the region, and higher

than average performance in almost all of the rest of the socioeconomic variables. The second group consists of the countries that perform well in the socioeconomic variables but have less ICT penetration in the home. This is the case with the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Paraguay, and Venezuela. The third group is made up of countries that have a below-average performance in socioeconomic variables and a low level of ICT penetration in the home. This group includes Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru. Tables 23.2 and 23.3 show the differences between countries in these distinct groups, which underlines the point made in the introduction, that ICT access and adoption are closely dependent on other socioeconomic variables and cultural features.

The Indicators in Perspective: Regional Strategies and National Plans

Up to this point we have examined *household* sociodemographic indicators, but in the LAC region other data suggest that *collective* forms of access to ICTs are much more common than in the developed world (ITU, 2010b; Maeso & Hilbert, 2006).⁷ Nevertheless, data available on the types of collective access for children and youth in the region are still uncertain, beginning with the lack of information on ICT equipment, Internet connectivity, and the impact on users in educational institutions.

For example, in Brazil, with the PROINFO Program (which dates back to 1997), 19.6% of schools were connected to the Internet in 2004, covering 14.3% of students (Villatoro, 2009). In Costa Rica the Educational Computing Program (PIE MEP FOD) was benefiting 51% of students at preschool and elementary level and 72.8% at early secondary level in 2004 (Villatoro, 2009). In Uruguay, the CEIBAL project, the only one-to-one access program following the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative, accomplished in 2010 full coverage of the distribution of laptops to primary school children in state schools (which accounts for nearly 88% of all children – urban and rural – in the country) (Katzman & Rodríguez 2006; Martínez, Alonso, & Díaz, 2009).

While these programs were conceived under very different governments and societies, there is a common pattern: their objectives are associated with technology and its devices. ICT access in classrooms, for students and teachers, seems to be an increasingly central policy in these countries' educational plans. These programs differ from earlier projects that prioritized access to infrastructure in educational institutions (for example, the first years of the program *Enlaces* in Argentina, which started in 1999). Newer programs are now attempting to focus on technology and its uses, linking both content and types of work (on the network, with virtual platforms) as well as promoting mechanisms to bring people closer to knowledge and information. Another important aspect is the advance of the one-to-one access paradigm in educational realms, where programs like the *Plan CEIBAL* in Uruguay,

Programa Una Laptop por Niño (One Laptop per Child Program) in Peru, and *Conectar Igualdad* (Connect Equality) in Argentina are already palpable realities.

Public access centers that provide connectivity to communities have contributed to the weakening of poverty as a unique variable for digital inequalities when they are present with human capital, i.e., facilitators and trainers. This has proved a distinct feature of the Latin American region and has proved particularly successful in rural communities and smaller distant urban centers (ITU, 2010b). These spaces have adopted diverse institutional and organizational arrangements that represent the public sector (*telecentros*, or centers where the public can access computer technology), civil society (access centers and training within social organizations), and the private commercial sector (Internet cafés) (Maeso & Hilbert, 2006). These venues, as applied research in the region indicates (Maeso & Hilbert, 2006; Proenza, Bastidas-Buch, & Montero, 2001), play a substantial role in providing access to the Internet and computers for low- and middle-income sectors. The appearance of these public access centers throughout the entire Latin American subcontinent, predominantly in the last decade, is now a focal point for public policy on the subject of ICTs in Latin America.

The results shown in Table 23.5 examine the relationship between the use of the Internet and mobile phones amongst children and young people, ages 10 to 24, from various countries in the region. The data present some interesting trends. On the one hand, children and young people from 10 to 19 years of age use the Internet more, in comparison with those aged 20 to 24 years old. These figures decline as age increases, confirming that usage patterns of children and young people are usually much higher than for adults. In the case of Mexico, there is a greater distance in Internet use between the 20–24 cohort and the 10–14 and 15–19 groups, a factor that can probably be linked to young adults accessing technology at work, while children and adolescents depend on access via educational centers or public access points.

The educational uses of the Internet represent a low to very low percentage in all of the countries studied. This suggests an important challenge for education in terms of competing uses for the Internet – predominantly social, with informational uses in second place. The tendency toward the one-to-one model of connectivity in primary and secondary education in various countries of the region is an important challenge for the provision of educational activities and content in the online environment.

While Argentina has not been incorporated into the OSILAC database (an initiative carried out by the ECLAC), it has carried out a Cultural Consumption Survey (SNCC from the Spanish acronym),⁸ with the latest edition published in 2008, which provides relevant information about access to and use of ICTs in this country (see Tables 23.6 and 23.7). The regional survey “The Interactive Generation in Ibero-America” (Fundación Telefónica, 2008) presents a similar landscape to that presented by the SNCC survey in Argentina on the patterns of Internet use by children and young adults. The predominant use of Internet services by children from 10 to 18 years in seven countries corresponds to the “communication” dimension (first

Table 23.5 Young people's use of the Internet and cell phones

Country/ages, five-year groups	% that use the Internet				% that use the Internet for education and training				% that use cell phones			
	10 to 14	15 to 19	20 to 24		10 to 14	15 to 19	20 to 24		10 to 14	15 to 19	20 to 24	
Brazil^a	36.7%	41.6%	39%		20%	33%	22%		33.3%	52.8%	64.9%	
Costa Rica^a	20%	17.5%	20%		N/D	8.6%	11.9%		37.1%	53.3%	63.3%	
Honduras	20%	18.1%	17.6%		20%	12.5%	7.6%		40%	49.5%	55.8%	
Mexico	16.7%	19.7%	28.7%		16.7%	9.2%	7.9%		N/D	N/D	N/D	
Paraguay	N/D	22.2%	17.4%		14.8%	4.7%	2.2%		N/D	N/D	N/D	
Peru^a	40%	53.4%	39.3%		N/D	3.8%	3.4%		N/D	N/D	N/D	

^aData from Brazil, Costa Rica, and Peru come from national household surveys carried out in each country in 2008. Data from Honduras, Mexico, and Paraguay are from 2007, as no more recent surveys were available for these countries. In all cases, the results are percentages of the whole sample.

Source: OSILAC.

Table 23.6 Internet access for children and youth in Argentina

Ages	Possession of/access to Internet			Access locations				
	Have a PC in the home	Have Internet in the home	Access to Internet outside of the home	Internet café	Work	Friends	High school	University
12–17	36.3%	13.5%	82.9%	94.6%	0.6%	22.9%	22.3%	0.5%
18–34	28.8%	11.8%	66.4%	88.3%	21.9%	20.7%	5.7%	11.1%

Source: *Sistema Nacional de Consumos Culturales* (SNCC). Survey year: 2008.

Table 23.7 Internet use by children and youth in Argentina

Ages	Internet use		
	Email	Chat	Information for study/work
12–17	67.5%	79%	58.6%
18–34	79.6%	65.1%	58.3%

Source: *Sistema Nacional de Consumos Culturales* (SNCC). Survey year: 2008.

chatting and then email).⁹ Although the “knowledge” dimension is not directly related to the educational uses expressed in Table 23.5, it matches the data of the SNCC (2008) from Argentina (Tables 23.6 and 23.7), showing a growing trend toward incorporation of the Internet in the creation and acquisition of information and knowledge.

Qualitative Dimensions of ICT Access and Appropriation in the Region

Up to now this chapter has dealt with the macro-variables that have been most commonly used in studies of a quantitative nature in the region. Alongside efforts to measure the digital divide and the impact of government and international organizations’ programs of digital inclusion, Latin America has developed socio-anthropological, qualitative studies that seek to reconstruct the experience of ICT appropriation among diverse groups of children, adolescents, young adults, and teachers of different sociocultural realities. In spite of the studies’ isolated and dispersed nature, this line of research is very valuable because it sheds light on a number of phenomena that are difficult to measure, such as the emergence of social networks and virtual communities in the sociability of youth, the possibilities for accessing cultural and symbolic goods through networks of exchange, new knowledge that makes ICTs possible, and new forms of social inclusion and participation in the public

sphere. Most of this research questions the instrumental view and the underlying assumptions of ICT incorporation programs from a theoretical and methodological perspective, arguing that these programs uncritically assume the neutrality of technologies and the universality of their effects. In this sense, they show the need to investigate the processes of incorporation and the multiplicity of the social uses of technology on a local scale (Urresti, 2008; Winocur, 2009), recognizing that local contexts lead to different ways of appropriating ICTs. These different uses are expressed not only in classic socioeconomic variables (e.g., age, sex, education level, income) but in the collective experiments of social movements and neighborhood organizations, as in the case of the unemployed in Argentina (Winocur & Benitez Larghi, 2010), in the alternative circuits of cultural production that young people generate, and in the processes of migration or displacement of families or some of their members. In what follows, this section will cover some of the main research conducted through this cultural perspective.

Over the last 10 years, scholars have conducted a wealth of qualitative research on ICT appropriation by adolescents and young adults in Latin America.¹⁰ Studies were done in Argentina (Aliano, López, Welschinger Lascano, Stefoni, & Guevara, 2009; Aprea, 2002; Cabello, 2006; Finkelievich & Prince, 2007; Light, Manso, & Vilela, 2001; Urresti, 2008); Bolivia (Arratia, Uberhuaga, & García, 2006; Uberhuaga Candia, Arratia Jiménez, & García Miranda, 2005); Brazil (Godoy Gomes, 2002; Seabra, 2008); Colombia (Cabrera Paz, 2001; Jaramillo, 2005; Jaramillo Marín & Ruíz Quiroga, 2009); Mexico (Castro & Zepeda, 2004; López González, n.d.; Robinson, 2003; Winocur, 2006, 2009; Zermelo, Arellano, & Ramírez, 2005); Peru (Loyola, 2006); Venezuela (Quero Ramones & Madueños Madueños, 2006); Chile (Arancibia Herrera & Carrasco Herrera, 2006; Arredondo, Catalán, Montesinos, & Monsalve, 2001; Silva Peña, Borrero, Marchant, González, & Novoa, 2006; Soto Valenzuela, Espejo Silva, & Matute Willemssen, 2002; UNDP, 2006); and Spain (Albero, 2002; Espinar Ruiz & González Río, 2008; Feixa, 2005; Feixa, García, & Recio, 2004; Feliu, Gil, Gil, & Rivero, 2003; Gil Juárez & Vall-llovera Llovet, 2006; González Río, Espinar Ruiz, & Frau Marhuenda, 2007; Martínez Borda, Lacasa, & De Guzmán, 2008; Naval & Lara, 2003; Rodríguez Pascual, 2005, 2006). Among this body of qualitative research, we have identified eight general observations concerning youth ICT access in Latin America.

The Importance of Collective Access to ICTs

In the research contexts studied, access to computers and the Internet is generalized to all youth and adolescents, with no consideration of the social sector they come from, even though there is a “clear predominance of those who come from homes with more resources in respect to the quality of their connection and exposure time to the Internet” (Urresti, 2008).¹¹ In Mexico, according to the *Encuesta Nacional de Juventud 2005* (National Youth Survey, 2005), only 28% of those between 15 and 29

years of age had a computer in their home, although almost 70% (69.66%) know how to use one. With regards to the Internet, only 20% had a connection in their homes, although 60.75% know how to use it. In the case of mobile phones, only 56.5% have one, but almost 80% (79.95%) know how to use one.¹² Another relevant piece of information is that only 49.7% are in some type of formal education system. What do these figures tell us? In the case of youth, the adoption of new information and communication technologies does not depend fundamentally on having a computer or Internet connection at home. Often they have access in collective or public environments such as Internet cafés, schools, and universities. As previously mentioned, in various Latin American countries, including Mexico, the main sources of Internet socialization among youth between 15 and 19 years old are commercial venues with Internet access (OSILAC, 2007).

Cultural Capital as a Prerequisite for a Richer Appropriation of ICTs

Public universities, independent of the sociocultural origins of their students, are an exceptional environment for technological socialization, linked not only to curricular demands but also to university culture (Winocur, 2006). Nevertheless, Internet access does not guarantee equal opportunity to inform oneself, to belong, to debate, or even to play. The cultural and symbolic capital and the processes of technological socialization of young people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds generate different contexts of cultural appropriation through the Internet:

Some young people, equipped with prior knowledge of the “media circuit” in which they move with fluency, come already skilled and prepared to navigate the web; in total fusion with the machine, they become the most skilled navigators. Other young people, and the majority of their teachers, get lost in the technological difficulty, lack of training in the technological sphere and, under-equipped with cultural capital, they sink quickly, easily, and with anguish. (Cabrera Paz, 2001, p. 40)

The Role of School and Friends

Various research efforts, carried out in very diverse sociocultural contexts, show that the first contact adolescents and young adults have with computers and the Internet, particularly in working-class sectors, is at school (Lizarazo, 2008; Urresti, 2008; Winocur, 2006). The first reference points for youth are school assignments, followed by games (Silva Peña et al., 2006; Soto Valenzuela et al., 2002). But the real socialization comes from friends and in informal spaces outside school, particularly in Internet cafés, which have proliferated in cities, or in community technology centers (Finquelievich & Prince, 2007; Robinson, 2003), as well as through initiatives implemented by civil organizations in rural and urban communities. Internet cafés

are not only spaces of initiation into the navigation and utilization of programs and web applications. They are recreational spaces for the socialization and exchange of technological knowledge (Arratia Jiménez et al., 2006; Castro & Zepeda, 2004; Gil Juárez & Vall-llovera Llovet, 2006; Linne, 2009).

The Sense of Belonging in Virtual Networks

The growing importance of ICTs in young people's personal, social, political, and academic lives has transformed the traditional nucleus of information and sociability. It has not necessarily replaced more traditional forms of socializing, but instead has amplified or modified them: "The Internet is not a substitute for life outside the screen. On the contrary, it forms part of a continuity that facilitates the satisfaction of individual needs and the cultivation of new interests, often with the attendant creation of collective social capital" (Katz & Rice, 2005, p. 351). In the same sense, in spite of the growing proliferation of networks and virtual communities among young people, there is nothing to suggest that they replace family ties, romantic relations, or groups of belonging (Katz & Rice, 2005; Wellman, Quan Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001; Winocur, 2006). More likely, they serve ideally to recreate affective and leisure spaces in crisis or to cover up unsatisfactory aspects of oneself. Virtual communities have much more relaxed mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that allow youth to have a sense of belonging through technological and nomadic practices of constant identity reinvention. Thus the fundamental importance of these virtual networks and contacts does not reside so much in their capacity to multiply, or in their power to bring people together, as in the projection and validation of the needs of their members. What once was a form of exclusion here becomes a condition of belonging (Winocur, 2006). Other works examine the possibilities of cultural production associated with practices of ICT consumption among adolescents in leisure spaces (Arratia Jiménez et al., 2006; Feliu et al., 2003; Linne, 2009; UNDP, 2006).

The results are very suggestive about the role adults, parents, and educators play in the stigmatization of youth as a risk group. Especially noteworthy is the role of new technologies in the processes of interaction and relations that they themselves produce. This disrupts the image of the isolated and addicted adolescent, often referred to in the literature and the media, and instead shows how youngsters practice new ways of constructing a digital culture: meeting around ICTs. (Feliu et al., 2003)

Imaginaries on ICTs

For young people who have access to the Internet, particularly adolescents and university students, ICTs have become an imaginary universe that are particularly significant to their activities and relations. When they speak of what ICTs mean in their

personal lives, they describe them as spaces of information, contention, and communication, not with the whole world but with those who are truly important to them (Winocur, 2009). They mainly use the Internet to stay in contact with people they know – with whom they have strong affective ties in the real world (relatives that live far away, friends from high school, romantic partners). They also use the Internet to maintain intense everyday life relationships developed through teamwork, information exchange, or technological socialization in the office, at school, or at university (Espinar & González, 2008; Feixa et al., 2004). Much of what happens on the Internet becomes meaningful to young people when they can practice its benefits in the real world. Everything that you can get on the Internet – information, entertainment, technological competence, new relationships – is capitalized on and fundamentally validated in the world of personal relationships. Behind every act of virtual flirting hides a secret hope that it will become a concrete, flesh-and-blood relationship; the majority of emails are exchanged between people who already know each other or between academic peer communities. The bulk of the information they search for, consult, and download is used to broaden a comparative perspective for work and investigations in academic or scholarly circles where they meet face to face, or as a source of prestige and inclusion in social spaces with friends and colleagues (Winocur, 2006).

ICTs and Symbolic Power for Youth

The Internet is often the only source of effective power that young people have; although its efficacy is only symbolic, it is still relevant in their daily lives. This illusion of power is expressed and exercised in various ways. First, in the possibility of connection–disconnection; in other words, when they want to “be visible” and “invisible,” and for whom. Second, in the resource of “infinite” navigation that translates into the pleasure of discovering and conquering diverse, contrasting, strange, and disquieting worlds, without leaving the certainty of home and without running any major risks. Third, and fundamentally, in the manipulation of virtual reality: creating and destroying an empire in minutes in a game of strategy, invading a friend’s privacy by entering into his or her account; manipulating free software, designing a personal web page, creating a blog, or founding a community and imposing or censoring content, establishing the rules, and deciding who can be a part of it. As a consequence of this eagerness to “manipulate,” “conquer,” or “discover,” mainly what young people require and consume on the Internet is information. This includes information of all types and kinds, but what is prioritized, particularly in the case of males, is the web that they can spin around themselves through programs, using diverse tools and applications to create web pages, translating languages, mounting multimedia devices, and downloading music, movies, comics, and so on. In addition, they search, download, and edit information for the academic requirements of a variety of subjects. The majority use the most popular search engines, like Google, Yahoo, and Altavista, but some also read blogs or electronic magazines as well. They also

browse sites that advertise entertainment related to their tastes in film, music, and television. The consumption of information does not only have an instrumental value, in the sense of serving to support research projects assigned in the university, or to see what shows are playing; the fundamental value is symbolic (Cabrera Paz, 2001; Winocur, 2006). The web has everything that youth culture has made relevant and meaningful by showing and sharing it with others (Cabrera Paz, 2001). Until the early 1990s, film and television provided the basic symbolic material for conversation. Now, the Internet has not only considerably increased conversation topics, it has also changed the nature of that exchange – not only is information shared, but there are also new experiences of social interaction, competencies, and skills to manipulate on the Internet.

Youth Identity on the Internet

The way young people have incorporated the Internet into their lives, simultaneously entering and exiting online and offline worlds, suggests that participation in both has been integrated into contemporary daily experience, in the constant movement in and out of the domestic space, in different ways of being and inhabiting cities, and in distinct public and private, formal and informal environments: “Young people’s practices use resources in a combined way – formal and informal, legal and illegal – to fulfill their desire to connect, inform, and entertain each other and themselves” (García Canclini, 2006, p. 4). Young people represent the web as a space where everything can be looked at, without censorship. On the Internet, young people act like they do in the mall: they want to see and to be seen. The Internet is a space of affirmation of identity. It is perceived as a library that condenses all human knowledge. The Internet is present and instantaneous. For young people, it is a scene of pleasure. It is understood as a place where someone is always available to listen; thus, its use is connected to sociability, without limits or borders, and where the main focal point is shared interests (Cabrera Paz, 2001; Castro & Zepeda, 2004; Feixa, 2005; Feixa et al., 2004; Winocur, 2006). The recreational character of the navigation and utilization of available programs has substantially improved the capacity to increase information and knowledge about diverse historical, political, social, and cultural realities, but this does not necessarily result in a better ability to reflect on them. It has also been found that for working-class youth, the Internet does not play a large role in supporting the formal learning process because in most cases they do not have the skills to use search engines effectively (Arratia Jiménez et al., 2006).

Old and New Educational Practices

In many public schools, the incorporation of ICTs has not added value to learning; they are incorporated into the “old ways” of the classroom in a manner that sustains “old” teaching practices (Jaramillo Marín & Ruiz Quiroga, 2009). In the case of teach-

ers, the difficulty some have in using new technologies often provokes profound feelings of anxiety and insecurity because it directly questions their authority in front of the students.

Perhaps what is happening deep down is that computers and information networks in schools put relational structures (in other words, systems of power) at risk, because it seems clear that the student/teacher relations are radically resituated. The teacher in this new model becomes “decentralized” and with it, the whole thread of the traditional educational system. This empowers the possibility of “infant intellectual autonomy,” as cybernetic systems provide resources to students so that they can acquire and process knowledge with less teacher mediation. (Lizarazo, 2008, p. 10)

Lizarazo’s research on teachers and students in poor schools in urban–rural districts in the state of Mexico (who have had access to some kind of technology) shows the source of difficulty in their appropriation of these technologies. It does not derive from a state of “cybernetic anxiety” at an individual level but from “a sort of collective anxiety in two senses: that of wanting something that you can’t have, and the hopelessness in knowing that you can’t have it” (Lizarazo, 2008, p. 9). According to Lizarazo, this anxiety provokes a double paradox, on the one hand between the imaginary representation of ICTs as an opportunity for social inclusion, and that of real exclusion, “of radical differentiation and anachronism for those who don’t have access to it, or lack the resources or skills to use it” (Lizarazo, 2008, p. 9). On the other hand, an almost irresolvable tension arises between the role that teachers should play as facilitators and providers of socially legitimate knowledge and the students’ computer skills, which surpass the teachers’ own knowledge and understanding. The outcome is not only a disparity in terms of skills, but also a profound questioning of the teacher’s role as the mediator of knowledge and as the authority to regulate what should or should not be learned.

It is almost a state of teaching perplexity when faced with the technological boom, a perception of fragility, anachronism and unequal footing in which teachers see themselves regarding the abilities, faculties and possibilities they find in their students in an increasingly computerized environment. Thus we suggest a series of states: 1. *instability*, because it seems increasingly difficult to sustain their position as the core of the pedagogical process; 2. *urgency of adaptation*, when faced with a technological change that they cannot follow (the students’ computer language scares them, and they are frightened of the circulation of technological devices that they couldn’t even name if they wanted to). But, the issue is that they end up convincing themselves that they will not be able to stabilize themselves or adapt to the new context. (Lizarazo, 2008, p. 9)

In Argentina, the publication *Yo con la computadora no tengo nada que ver* (I Will Have Nothing to Do with the Computer) (Cabello, 2006) argues that projects to incorporate ICTs in schools did not consider either the teachers’ positions or their previous knowledge, which explains to a great extent their resistance to ICT usage

for pedagogical purposes. This research argues that even if educators were open to incorporating computers into their teaching, they would find that the school and the technology are located in different worlds and have different logics; thus, the teachers feel they lack technological skills and knowledge and find their role in guiding the processes of ICT-mediated learning very difficult.

Final Considerations

This chapter has intended to map the patterns of use in Latin America at both the macro and micro levels. We have considered macro sociodemographic and economic variables with respect to ICT inclusion, as well as micro-level concerns, looking at children and youth's appropriation strategies of these technologies and analyzing the changes that have taken place for them as individuals, as well as in the different institutions in which they are inserted, mainly the family and the educational system. Although the lenses differ in both perspectives, there are consistencies when summarizing the main findings: (1) collective access to technologies plays an essential role in disseminating ICTs in the region and generating complex patterns of appropriation; (2) the role of the family is an essential driver for ICT access – both parents and siblings are important factors (the first mainly as purveyors of infrastructure and the second as providers of cultural capital and skills); and (3) ICTs are used in a media and communications ecosystem that includes traditional technologies such as radio, TV, and telephones, and within this ecosystem the main use of ICTs is to communicate with others.

The realities of incorporation and appropriation of ICTs in the region, particularly in the case of adolescents and young adults, are inscribed in family, work, and social conditions in which they operate daily. As Dina Krauskopf (2008) has asserted:

[For young people] stability no longer comes from predetermined sequences, delimited geographical spaces and univocal projects. It no longer has to do with linear, continuous trajectories, but with feelings that are expressed in life strategies and in the use of resources that fan out into alternatives. (p. 168)

The flexibility and mobility of life trajectories has become a common brand of this age, particularly affecting youth patterns in terms of long-term horizons and projects. In some respects, their sophisticated uses of technology, in comparison with older generations, makes them more attractive for the job market. Their participation as subjects of production, where they are both symbolically and materially recognized, is an essential component of the future.

This view reflects on childhood from a sociological perspective (Livingstone, 2006), where the child/adolescent is as much an agent of change as a subject of appropriation of new technologies. In this sense, the Internet and mobile phones

provide the youth a symbolic platform that compensates and substitutes for the lack of power in their real daily lives (Winocur, 2009). Faced with the obstacles of inclusion erected by many traditional institutions – particularly those involved with education, employment, and access to power – the young have developed flexible and mobile strategies of inclusion on the narrow margins of the formal routes available to them.

In a region where the socioeconomic context offers contrasting realities, the digital divide is a concept that still has explanatory potential (Compaine, 2001). Despite the efforts to provide greater connectivity and access, a subject that was approached mainly in the first part of this chapter, inequality is still rampant in the region. However, the real stakes are to be assessed not solely in terms of traditional access variables of infrastructure but, as the second part of this chapter has intended to show, by understanding how the youth of a developing region incorporate these technologies into their daily life strategies. The meaning of these technologies is embedded in their patterns of use.

NOTES

- 1 This is the case for the *Compromiso de San Salvador* (San Salvador Compromise), approved at the second *Conferencia Ministerial sobre la Sociedad de la Información en 2008, el eLAC2010* (2008 Ministerial Conference on the Information Society, eLAC2010). Some of the main goals of this compromise include supporting the development of community-based networks (like computing centers, or *telecentros*); extending high-speed Internet coverage to 70% in urban areas; increasing the number of community ICT centers that provide access to the Internet; developing indicators that take into account advances in the multi-party process of developing national policies on the information society; and the elaboration of comparative studies on the economic and social impact of ICTs on policies and agendas.
- 2 An exemplary case is the *Plan Ceibal*, which from its implementation in 2007 to its completion in 2009 catapulted Uruguay to the top in terms of Internet access.
- 3 <http://www.tnsglobal.com/market-research/technology-research/gti.aspx>
- 4 In 2009, 93% of Latin Americans had access to a cell phone (compared to 30% in 2002), while the world global average is 73% (ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database, 2010).
- 5 In this investigation the data came from an online questionnaire that was filled out in urban education centers in seven Latin American countries, which excludes all of the schools that do not have Internet access and that are located in rural areas.
- 6 It is worth clarifying that Argentina should be included in the first group, but at the time that OSILAC determined the three groups, the country had not provided data on ICTs. The variables were included in household surveys in the INDEC in 2007.
- 7 The authors point out that while in developed countries 1 to 17 users share one Internet host, in Latin America this number goes up to 134 (Maeso & Hilbert, 2006, p. 10).
- 8 SNCC: *Sistema Nacional de Consumos Culturales*. This program depends on the Media Secretariat of the Presidency.

- 9 Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.
- 10 The work of researching and systematizing the qualitative studies was done by Jaime Piracón, a student of the Masters Program in Social Sciences of FLASCO Argentina. We must point out that the trends mentioned correspond to the qualitative studies that were available on the Internet for consultation in the countries cited. In this sense, although they are very significant for the experiences studied, and for others that could develop in similar conditions, they cannot be generalized to the whole region, especially for those countries with a giant digital divide such as Haiti and some Central American countries.
- 11 It is important to note that all of the studies reported research carried out in diverse sociocultural situations where there was some form of incorporation and access to ICTs. Thus, their level of generalization and explanation leaves out areas where the large majority of the population does not have ICT access, as is the case with Haiti (98%).
- 12 *Encuesta Nacional de Juventud 2005. Resultados Preliminares* (National Youth Survey, 2005, Preliminary Results). Retrieved from Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud, <http://www.imjuventud.gob.mx>

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South Asian Digital Diasporas

Remixing Diasporic Youth Cultures

Radhika Gajjala and Yeon Ju Oh

ABSTRACT

Some present-day rearticulations of South Asian diasporas are identified through the politics of nation-state, while others take shape through more complex transnational linkages. In this chapter, Radhika Gajjala and Yeon Ju Oh focus on diasporas that have formed along transnational affective links based in fandom, popular culture, and music online. For these rearticulated South Asian diasporas, digitally produced and circulated media play a significant role. This chapter examines the techno-mediation of such diasporas through “machinima,” focusing on three examples of South Asian digital diasporic productions: (1) the work of Indusgeeks.com; (2) machinima produced by “desi” players of a computer game, *World of Warcraft* (WoW); and (3) the traveling meme of Daler Mehndi’s “Tunak Tunak Tun” on YouTube. The authors use these examples to show how the circulation and remixing of “Bollywood” media provide nostalgic, affective engagements for diasporic South Asian youth, while at the same time doing important cultural labor for the Indian state and culture industries.

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, a time that coincides with global access to the Internet in the form of the World Wide Web, certain categories of South Asian diaspora have been rearticulated through techno-mediation. Such rearticulations are based in naming of diasporas through the politics of nation-state, while others are based in naming of diasporas through transnational linkages along with the struggle for an autonomous nation-state (as in the case of Tamil Eelam diasporas). Still others are rearticulations along transnational links based in fandom, popular culture, and music online. Digitally produced and circulated media play a significant role in such South Asian diasporas. In the case of the Indian nation-state, “New Bollywood” is significant as both a site where new digital technologies become widely available (Booth, 2008) and a space that invokes nostalgia for an imagined homeland for the non-resident Indian (NRI) population. At the same time, a particular section of the NRI population is being encouraged to “return home” to establish transnational industry and business in India. In turn, the Indian government and industry have mobilized the term “diaspora” to build transnational connections. In this context, the notion of “digital diaspora” has become a way to envision and build networks of transnational capital and labor.

This chapter works from this background and explores how Indian-identified artifacts, practices, soundbytes, and images travel through digital worlds in the form of machinima.¹ We argue that social formations in these virtual spaces reproduce notions of “Indian” through online diasporic networks. These social formations are routed through renewed identifications and re-memberings, as they actively, even intentionally, contribute to processes of transnationalization of labor and business through recoded online and offline subjectivities. These byte-sized representations of Indianness travel and flow through digital circuits, circulating and remixing into formations that rearticulate global identities.

In this chapter we specifically focus on three examples of South Asian digital diasporic productions: (1) the work of Indusgeeks.com; (2) machinima produced by “desi” players of a computer game, *World of Warcraft* (WoW); and (3) the traveling meme of Daler Mehndi’s “Tunak Tunak Tun” on YouTube. Indusgeeks is an organization formed through the entrepreneurial drive of its Indian founders. The group began as a productive engagement with play and work in the online world of *Second Life* and is now a full-fledged business, offering “metamersive” services.² Most of the geeks who are operating the website are Indian-identified and located in the United States. In contrast, Daler Mehndi is an India-born bhangra/pop singer (the “King of Pop” according to the promotional website <http://www.dalermehndi.com/>), who was trained in traditional Punjabi music but who rose to become a transnational popular music icon outside of Bollywood (although eventually doing work for Bollywood as well).

The first part of this chapter lays out the theoretical background, focusing on studies that examine the interplay of nostalgia and national politics, as well as how

members of South Asian diasporas work and play within a global economy. While members of such diasporas are granted citizenship and a sense of belongingness by the Indian nation-state, they are mobilized to perform transnational forms of cultural labor in return. Research on the era of “Bollywoodization” or “New Bollywood” helps us look at the dialectic relationship between diasporas and their associated nation-states. In the second part of the chapter, we discuss examples from popular culture and digital worlds to show how South Asian diasporas are manifested both as Indian and transnational diasporas simultaneously.

Part I: Theorizing South Asian Diaspora

Writings about postcolonial diasporas and imagined communities are filled with discussions of nostalgic connections to the homeland. Of course, postcolonial, feminist, and other critical theories of diasporas and transnational travel have challenged the logic that locates diasporic emotional yearnings in a simple nostalgia for a past homeland. For instance, Jigna Desai (2003) has pointed out that formulations that see nostalgia as the defining diasporic emotion – a yearning for a past manifested as a “homeland” – ignore the economic and political power relations and implications of diasporas (p. 1). Further, it is clear from past work on South Asian diasporic identities that the politics of transnational mobility in any moment in history requires members of the diaspora to rearticulate their identities in relation to the contemporary political moment in racial politics. This process of diasporic identity formation manifests, fundamentally, in continuous negotiations over one’s sense of place and belonging.

Avtar Brah’s (1996) writing on the meaning of “home” demonstrates this complex process of negotiation. She identifies two different meanings of the referent “home” in questions posed to her during an interview for an admission to a US institution of higher education by an all-male panel of interviewers. In one of the questions asked of her, she writes, “home” implied

a site of everyday lived experience. It is a discourse of locality, the place where feelings of rootedness ensue from the mundane and the unexpected of daily practice. Home here connotes our networks of family, kin, friends, colleagues and various other “significant others.” It signifies the social and psychic geography of space that is experienced in terms of a neighborhood or a hometown. That is, a community “imagined” in most part through daily encounter. This “home” is a place with which we remain intimate even in moments of alienation from it. It is a sense of “feeling at home.” (Brah, 1996, p. 4)

In a separate question, Brah explains, home referred to “an invocation of narratives of *the nation*” in which one’s identity is rooted (p. 3). For Brah, who is a Ugandan of Indian descent, home is plural rather than singular – simultaneously interwoven as

both India and Uganda. However, in racialized or nationalist discourses one's home is confined within a place where races and ethnicities can be traced back by others. Members of South Asian diasporas across the globe are not necessarily members "of" a certain nation-state, although they live "in" those places and identify partly as belonging to those nations. Their looks and accents become signifiers that determine their identities in racially and ethnically stratified societies.

In recent decades there has been a shift in how transnational business and media networks take shape and operate, which highlights the fact that diasporas are not (and have never been) pulled together merely by a nostalgic association with one single "homeland." The articulations of nostalgia for such a "return" to a homeland miss the productive and re-membling nature of how nostalgia and the politics of affect play into emerging futures of diasporas. Here we purposely spell it as "re-membling" in order to highlight both the psychic acts of remembrance through individual and group memory and the social relations produced through the assertion of commonality so as to increase the membership of such groups. This implies, then, that the re-membling of such diasporic communities happens through choice, selection, and recruitment, signaling active inclusions and exclusions in social relations, based on the politics of what counts as correct emotion and nostalgia. Particularly, we focus on the emerging futures of diasporas that travel transnationally, carrying packaged and byte-sized "homes" along with them, as members rearticulate their sense of self by placing themselves, and in turn being placed, as South Asians or Indians in diaspora. Avtar Brah asks, "what is the relationship between *affect*, *psychic modalities*, *social relations*, and *politics*?" (1996, p. 5). In this chapter we examine such relationships in Indian digital diasporas.

In an interrogation of English-language Indian films of the 1990s, such as *Hyderabad Blues* (Kukunoor, 1998) and *Bombay Boys* (Gustad, 1998), Jigna Desai challenged, as too limiting, the idea that "diasporas are 'hailed by' the narratives of the homeland nation-state that activate sentiments of nostalgia and belonging" (2003, p. 45). Pointing to the strong impact that South Asian diasporic populations have had on South Asian nation-states, she writes that "focusing only on the homeland nation as origin of culture, tradition, and values and the state as authority and granter of citizenship can overshadow an examination of the economic and political power in relations between diasporic communities and nation-states" (p. 45).

In her unpacking of how diaspora and the nation-state function dialectically to produce a transnational South Asian politics, Desai does not discount the use and function of emotion and affect in diasporic yearnings for return. But she adds an important dimension to this theorization of diaspora – namely, that the relationship between diasporic populations and the nation-state, and the articulation of nostalgia for a homeland, are shaped through the economics and politics of transnational capital and labor flows. She explains "that while diasporas hail the homeland through nostalgia and return, they do so when convenient. The homeland nation's heralding of diaspora has little to do with the everyday lives and interests of the non-elite classes who are clearly critical of and ambivalent in regard to diaspora" (p. 55).

While we cannot totally discount the role that nostalgia plays in how the home-nation can mobilize, shape, and invoke the involvement of those in diaspora, we need to observe how diasporic desire for home functions for those who identify as members of diasporas, and for national and transnational politics. These forces sometimes mutually reinforce each other and are sometimes at odds with each other, in the production and reproduction of tradition and culture in various contexts. It is critical to understand how mediated nostalgic storytelling comes into play in these reproductions. As previous literature on online South Asian diasporas shows, the “hailing” based in caste-based and religion-based forms of nostalgia in fact has produced certain kinds of community that have exerted some political influence in the “homeland” (Bahri, 2001; Rai, 1995).

Today, Indian-identified offline bodies are building socially networked Indian diasporas online through a similar placement of affect and cultural labor. Technologically mediated diasporas take shape at online–offline intersections. Community formations that emerge through wired and networked portable digital devices help counter the sense of isolation and alienation faced by today’s youth as they continually uproot and re-place locations in their mobile work and play lifestyles. In such mobile portable communities, affective links, sometimes manifested as “nostalgia,” are produced through re-membered pasts that are rearticulated through such groups forming and living partly online, in virtual communities.

Divya Tolia-Kelly (2004) writes about “locating processes of identity” through an examination of how everyday artifacts and

[i]ndividual objects relate to individual biographies, but are simultaneously significant in stories of identity on national scales of citizenship, and the intimate domestic scene left behind. The new site of home becomes the site of historical identification, and the materials of the domestic sphere are the points of signification of enfranchisement with landscapes of belonging, tradition and self-identity. (p. 315)

Such signification of enfranchisement with landscapes of belonging is produced through a process of reconfiguring memory and affective engagements. Transnational environments that are made accessible by online media and mobile technology create media landscapes where scattered fragments of nostalgic memory and affect are produced and distributed. Meanwhile, diasporic individuals who form groups and communities of mediated exchange and sharing, and who live in these environments, shape the globalized world. In other words, ethnoscaping is formed when people move across national boundaries not only in physical ways, but also in more virtual or mediated ways, as occurs in call centers or virtual communities. Despite the existence of material beings dispersed over the world, they are geographically, socially, and culturally located in their “home” through specific practices of memory and affect that serve as forms of racial and ethnic authentication.

Particular South Asian cultural commonalities have also emerged through mass media and communication technologies since the early 1960s, creating new

communicative spaces of diaspora. The recognition of these culturally representative images, texts, and sounds serves as a “remediation” of an imagined community. Rituals of authentication emerge through expectations of recognition of these commonalities present in reproduced and remixed digitally mediated images, texts, and sounds. Reproduction and remixing occur through a post-1990s “Bollywoodization” of South Asian-centric digital environments (Rajadhyaksha, 2002). These cultural formations are increasingly “Indianized” in a continuing synergy with satellite TV (the South Asian package) (Punathambekar, 2005). Here, themes such as “Yeh Mera India” (this is my India) are reiterated through a continuum of commercialization, Bollywood films, music, TV serials, global TV format-based productions such as *Indian Idol*, as well as advertisements for New York Life Insurance. Communities of online and offline bodies form around digitally mediated communicative practices, often centered around the sharing of Bollywoodized media. These communities build pockets and enclaves of networked affect. The emergence of seemingly disconnected yet representative cultural symbols in these spaces functions to rearticulate emotional histories through re-placement of affect in transitional place. These online networks transform from contact zones where people from diverse backgrounds encounter one another. These virtual spaces become transitional zones, where people build virtual commonalities and practices, as they place themselves and enhance their skills in global work and play environments.

Our observations are based on years of ethnography in online worlds and social networks, as well as on more than a decade’s worth of ethnographies offline of teens in the United States and in India, playing computer games and using digital technologies. Many of the texts we examine are from the virtual world called *Second Life*, which first became publicly available in 2003 (see <http://www.secondlife.com>). Simultaneously, and a few years prior to encountering *Second Life*, one of us was using text-based MOOs³ in pedagogic settings and also doing ethnography in the online network known as Livejournal. In retrospect, it seems that Livejournal was a precursor to social networking sites that emerged in 2004.

In the recent past, transnational traveling and diasporic South Asians have placed and transmitted affect both audiovisually and sensually through radio, cinema, television, cassettes, video, and letters (and continue to do so). These traveling signifiers combine with physical objects, such as artifacts for living rooms, spices for “authentic” home food, fabric and incense, carried along in suitcases and scattered memories to allow the South Asian diasporic to feel “at home” in various nooks and crannies of the globe. In the age of social media, this packaging has come online in the form of hybrid “desi” popular cultures that leave behind spatio-temporally layered stains and traces of material artifacts in digital space. These are virtual objects that have been placed there by South Asians and those linked to South Asian culture and experience. Such artifacts acquire multiple meanings through symbols and associations as they journey through various networks. The use of remixed Bollywood tunes and ethnic avatars marks South Asian digital diasporic place in virtual worlds such as *Second Life* and *Sims 2*. Facebook and iPhone apps also code nostalgia and

affect through circulating image and sound. Zynga, the makers of *Farmville*, reputedly the most widely played Facebook game online in 2009, was compelled by Facebook-based activism (the campaigning of Indian-identified *Farmville* players through a Facebook group, for instance) to include the Indian flag as one of the artifacts/objects to use in building personal profiles. It also recently launched visual artifacts such as auto-rickshaws, monkeys, and elephants to signal the opening of a branch of its company in India.

South Asian identities are now produced in part within sociocultural digital places constructed by computer software and hardware. Sociocultural and technically produced time-space compression enables members of Indian diasporas to be globally networked and to co-produce their identities. The sociocultural literacies of these inhabitants determine the kinds of free labor (Terranova, 2000) they contribute toward the building of these spaces. The continued inhabiting of these spaces leads to a reorganization of social space and everyday practice, similar to that experience by call center workers from India who are tuned in to time zones and cultural practices in the Western world (Mitra, 2008). They experience a social, affective transformation that orients them toward life in global multicultural communities similar to those encountered in diaspora.

South Asian Digital Diasporas

In this chapter, we extend existing work that examines how technologically mediated diasporas occur at online–offline intersections specifically in relation to the “South Asian,” “digital,” and “diasporic.” Past research on South Asian presence in online spaces has made observations based on studies of online bulletin boards (Rai, 1995), email lists (Bahri, 2001), and websites (Chopra 2006; Mallapragada, 2006). In order to better understand the interplay of globalization and technology, we propose examining how sociocultural formations of youth cultures form online through work and play activities.

There are very specific circumstances that allow us to think in terms of “digital diasporas” – namely, globalized markets as well as the interactive nature of online technologies. At the same time, it is also important to take into account the layered and nuanced ways in which such diasporic subjectivities are produced, if we are to understand how the global/local continuum plays out in specific situations in present cultures and economies. What is unique about the digital time-space continuum is its tendency to record practices and leave behind histories and actual archives, providing valuable data with which to study the use of digital technologies. Significantly, the various texts or representations that are produced in these contexts can be viewed as diasporic in and of themselves. In the formation of these online representations (whether they be written texts, moving images, static images, or three-dimensional representations), there is a certain situatedness, a sense of “landing” somewhere. At the same time, there is an affective reproduction of travel, as well as a sense of

disorientation through encounters with other cultures that simulates a form of culture shock. The unique qualities of these digital contexts and experiences necessitate the use of phrases like “digital diaspora” and “virtual community.”

We use the term “digital diaspora” to talk about how diasporic populations the world over use the Internet to connect to one another. Digital media used for digital diasporic formations are networked and interactive, potentially allowing people from different parts of the world to feel located in one “place.” They provide sites where people with similar interests and similar missions can gather in a common space. Online networks formed through digitally mediated communicative media – whether accessed via desk-top computers, Xboxes, or iPhones – permit the local to exist within the global and vice versa.

The transition from print media to mass media allowed the imagining of common places, or what Anderson (1983) referred to as the convergence of capitalism and print technology. The fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation. As print media were made accessible – actually or potentially – to “the masses,” the world experienced the growth of modern capitalism, as well as the emergence of modern nations and internationalism.

Interactive online technologies help reproduce and enhance transnationalism based on global flows of capital and labor. The interactivity of online technologies in their current forms is a logical extension for global financial networks in particular. The architects of digital capitalism have pursued one major objective: to develop an economy-wide network that can support an ever-growing range of intra-corporate and inter-corporate business processes (Schiller, 2000). At the same time, the combined logic of digital transnationalism with globalized markets and interactive online technologies allows the emergence of digital diasporas.

Bollywoodization of South Asian Digital Diasporas

In mapping affective South Asian/Indian social networks online, we suggest that memory, nostalgia, and affect simultaneously work to place and locate South Asian/Indian identifiers in digital space. In doing so we focus on the circulation and proliferation of “Bollywood” media (whether as clips of music, video, image icons, or *Second Life* and *Sims* avatars), as well as on specific symbols and artifacts that register as “Indian.” Many of these signifiers work in sync with a post-1990s opening of the Indian markets to transnational labor and trade, as they reconfigure and “remix” older images and sounds for the techno-mediated “desi” global workforces. These workers increasingly live in digital diasporic spaces and global–local offline hubs, such as dance clubs and coffeehouses, as well as in multinational corporate environments where they work and play. These groups of young men and women live in remixed and cross-routed communicative spaces of diaspora, carrying partial nostalgic attachments from previous generations as they employ a medley of soundbytes, icons, and

visual loops to produce meaning and community identifications in nodal points. The role of Bollywood-based music is especially important in these online and offline settings, as it provides a link through the scattered visual signifiers. Bodies and avatars sway in motion to sound clips coded digitally through online portals, offline loudspeakers, or iPods and smartphones.

This remixing of South Asian/Indian media artifacts was made possible by structural changes in the Indian film industry. Nilanjana Bhattacharjya (2009) notes the shift in how Bollywood films are now funded since the economic liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s. She describes how the Indian government's encouragement of privatization and international investment led to the Indian film industry being increasingly funded through contributions by non-resident Indian investors. This in turn led to a shift in the orientation of the films produced. More and more films were produced for South Asian diasporic audiences. Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2002) refers to this process as the "Bollywoodization" of Indian cinema. Gregory Booth (2008) refers to this period as "New Bollywood," noting the shift in the production technologies and processes for film and music in the Indian media industry to privilege digital formats. "When younger, more technically sophisticated filmmakers and technicians finally introduced digital sound and filmmaking techniques and computers became widely available, a new era began that I call 'New Bollywood'" (Booth, 2008, p. 85). It is this transition in Indian film – whether we call it a "Bollywoodization" or a transition to the "New Bollywood" – that allows the byte-sized packaging of images and sounds from the Indian film industry into South Asian digital diasporic spaces.

Part II: Desi Youth Hanging Out in Digital Diaspora

In the remainder of this chapter, we examine three examples of digital environments built around nostalgic notions of an imagined homeland on the part of people who labor in these environments. These examples show how the practices of identification and engagement within South Asian digital diasporas feed into building a brand of "Indianness" (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010) that is inextricably tied to the "Bollywoodization" of Indian and South Asian culture and identity. Many of the transnational venues in these digital diasporas are inhabited by technologically savvy young men and women, with their casual dress codes and urban sensibilities. Some of these spaces are less US-centric than the previous Internet-based South Asian generations. These social network systems and blogs, masked in semi-anonymity, often interrupt offline social conventions. They complicate notions of transnational identity and sexuality, as digital diasporas hide behind Bollywood, manga, and other pop icons and game-based avatars. There is a continuous play on identity and gender, as the Bollywood icons produced in these communities blur the boundary between queer pleasure and the idolization of heteronormative Bollywood themes and stars.

Meanwhile, such communities produce uncertainty about geographic location, as members of these digital diasporas appear to multitask between work, leisure, and offline/online formations of friends.

For this generation, being online is no more unusual than being on the phone as they incessantly text-message, tweet, and “FB” at every mundane moment and download and exchange ring tones, pix, and flix. This group of young South Asians living in digital diasporas is multiply literate and socioculturally flexible and mobile, “hanging out” in online communities of open source developers and various kinds of fan groups. The young people participating in the Indian digital diaspora are producing new layerings of hierarchies and skills. Even as most seem to be just “hanging out” online, many of these young people are reskilling themselves quite desperately in an attempt to outsmart the job market. Of course, there are other participants from more materially privileged backgrounds who are indeed “hanging out” for leisure. Despite this internal hierarchy, the everyday practices of mobile generations in digital diasporas involve and invoke new and different kinds of problem-solving spaces from those inhabited by the materially underprivileged of the world.

Sunaina Maira (2000) has traced the origins of diasporic youth subcultures in locations offline. In her article on “Henna and Hip Hop,” she writes

The youth subculture created by South Asian American youth in New York City is based on remix music that was first created by British-born Asian youth in the 1980s and that layers the beats of bhangra. [. . .] It mixes a particular reconstruction of South Asian music with American youth popular culture, allowing ideologies of cultural nostalgia to be expressed through the rituals of clubbing and dance music. (p. 334)

For Indian diasporic youth, as Maira describes, their collective memories of the homeland in which they have never lived are re-membered through Bollywoodized cultural forms such as music and dance. Social spaces like the youth clubs function to produce “the ideologies of ethnicity, pan-ethnicity, and nationalism,” as diasporic youth practice cultural rituals they believe to be “authentic,” thereby placing themselves within the imagined Indian community (p. 334). The emergence of computer-mediated social networks has brought a spatial shift from metropolitan-centered to online spaces for diasporic youth culture.

In the virtual world of *Second Life*, several such dance clubs exist where young men and women of South Asian descent and their non-South Asian friends “hang out.” At least that is how it appears to the *Second Life* players who visit these clubs. Here we base our observations on our experience visiting these clubs mostly in 2007, 2008, and 2009. Our understanding comes from a form of participant observation, or “deep hanging out,” in various dance clubs on *Second Life*, in order to understand some sociotechnically scripted codes for behavior in such environments. We visited dance clubs that self-describe as Hispanic clubs, Middle Eastern, Reggae, Jazz, “desi,” and Bollywood-focused. In *Second Life*, no “place” stays static for long. Groups and

individuals are continually rebuilding and relocating; therefore, observations of these dance clubs can only be located in specific affective experiences and memories of the events, and on snapshots and various YouTube videos taken by *Second Life* residents as they visit these clubs.⁴ Of course, merely viewing the videos or images does not provide a sense of how it actually feels when immersed in the environment. Thus as researchers we rely on our own readings of performative cues to describe and examine these activities.

All these virtual dance clubs have basic scripted objects – a dancing ball, or a floor with dance script – to animate the avatars.⁵ They also use streaming media, where the songs are streamed from a server (such as Shoutcast or Icecast) onto the *Second Life* location. Most of them have tip balls or some form of money-collecting scripted objects, and some also have exploding objects that are scripted to allow visitors to enter into a competition for a cash prize. Some clubs have themed dances and competitions for dancers (this is also done through scripted objects), where fellow dancers get to vote for the “best dressed female in pink” or other themes decided by the club owners.

In dance clubs focused on Indian themes, there is often a stock set of Bollywood remix music (and sometimes even video) streaming in. The *Second Life* avatars in these clubs are dressed in a variety of clothes, but more and more of them (since 2007) are dressing in ethnic-seeming garb, mostly modeled after Bollywood characters’ dresses.

As far as the dance clubs with Bollywood music are concerned, Indianness is established mainly through familiarity with the music being played and a basic minimum knowledge of Hindi, which is demonstrated in conversation amongst avatars in the club as they dance on. “Where are you from?” seems to be a question often asked of newcomers in an attempt to connect to South Asian origin stories. Bollywood is invoked as representative of India in such mediated environments but also serves as an apolitical and safe common language.

A narrow interpretation of these social spaces as produced through a purely nostalgic longing for an imagined homeland leaves the national politics of the Indian government and the implications of transnationalization unexamined. The interplay of technologies and cultural artifacts connects Indian diasporas over the world, in particular those who have economic power, and attracts them to invest in the homeland. In this sense, Bollywood not only serves up nostalgic pleasure, it also incorporates specific and selective ideologies and resonances from Indian diasporic communities into the building of a “Global India.” Those who produce Indian cultural artifacts online perform important cultural labor to produce the nation’s brand in the global marketplace. This is well demonstrated in a machinima produced by Indusgeeks.

In 2007, Indusgeeks produced a machinima called “India in *Second Life* – shot on a location on Bollywood Island.”⁶ “A new world beckons” is the first line that appears on the screen, while young men and women from all vocations are shown rising up in a trance and running toward what turns out to be “Bollywood Island” in *Second*

Life. The avatars, mostly wearing Bollywood-style Indian dresses, gather hand in hand to salute the Indian flag, as the video concludes with an invitation to viewers to “Join us . . . in Second Life.”

The notion of a new world, and the seemingly open, inclusive invitation to participate in that world, resonates with the discourse of “Bollystan,” or “India’s diasporic diplomacy” (Khanna, 2005). Parag Khanna (2005) describes Bollystan as “a diasporic salad bowl of ethno-commerce and a new model of geographically transcendent sovereignty” (p. 17). Bollywood stars like Aishwarya Rai and Sharukh Khan have been proclaimed Indian ambassadors. In this mediated environment, Bollywood increasingly becomes representative of “India” for much of the second and later generations of diasporic Indians. As Ashis Nandy (1998) has pointed out, Bollywood provides categories of meaning making for a large population of Indians the world over. That is, Bollywood provides common language for diasporic Indians across generations whatever their actual geographic locations are.

From the development of state councils and academic centers on the diaspora to the prevalence of NRI characters in Bollywood cinema, the nation-state advances its interest in diasporas in different modalities, articulating its varying relationships with diaspora based on contradictory and complementary interests. Since the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and 1990s requiring India to “liberalise” its economy by devaluing its currency, opening its markets to transnational and foreign corporations, and increasing its debt, the ideal diaspora is one that willingly exchanges economic and technological investments for national membership and state citizenship. (Desai, 2003 p. 2)

The characterization of a Bollywoodized, 3D “new world,” evident in the Indusgeeks machinima described above, serves to reinstate existing offline hierarchies and binaries. It does this while also reproducing a very specific, euphoric vision of the future that brings together India’s vision for development through the IT sector with its entertainment industry’s call to specific groups of NRIs to return as investors.

Two-dimensional web space does not always offer the flexibility or excitement of three-dimensional platforms like *Second Life* in helping diasporic youth perform their cultural and national identities. Within such three-dimensional environments, youth seek venues where their cultural identities can be articulated in digital cultural artifacts. In addition to machinima produced from *Second Life* gameplay, another site of South Asian digital diasporic engagement is in remixed videos and machinima found on YouTube made through the platform of the computer game known as *World of Warcraft* (WoW).

These videos and machinima not only illustrate how South Asians code affect within computer game worlds as they play through the use of Bollywood music, they also show glimpses of the struggle over racial identity within a non-customizable online world like WoW. Here the categories and game routines are coded so that players do not have much flexibility regarding the appearance or clothing of the avatar. This is unlike malleable games such as *Sims 2*, where users can, within limits, produce custom meshes for avatar appearance and clothing. One video demonstrat-

ing such limitations was posted to YouTube in November 2006.⁷ The video uses figures from the visually dwarf-like “Mage” race from *WoW* to depict a Bollywood aesthetic in machinima form.⁸ In the comments section on YouTube, some viewers critiqued the producer of the machinima for using a figure that does not fit Bollywood appearances. One user stated, “Very good but the gnomes are not so good for this song.”⁹ Another wrote, “Good vid, but it’d be better if you used Dranei models instead. They are THE Bollywood race imo. :)” The machinima creator noted, in response, that “This vid was made before addon, so only_ oldschool models.” And indeed in a later video uploaded by another user in June 2007, a Dranei female avatar is used as a central character. The machinima, named “wow dranei dance,”¹⁰ depicts a very sexualized rendering of a Dranei female avatar dancing to the tune of Asha Bhonsle and Kronos Quartet performing “Koi Aaya Aane Bhi De.”

The remixing of a Hindi song within *WoW*’s environment demonstrates Indian diasporic youth’s struggles to inscribe their identities through cultural artifacts online. In this example, cultural identities are imagined and re-membered by Bollywood’s representation of Indianness, thereby assuring the role of Bollywood in constructing the image/brand of “Global India.” In performing such a branding role, Bollywood mobilizes transnational labor, in particular those who play with cultural artifacts and digital technologies that serve to form a networked, imagined Indian community across the globe.

In June 2007, another YouTube user posted a *WoW* machinima video that also used an avatar from the Dranei race and featured a hooded male character dancing to the Hindi popular song “Tunak Tunak Tun” by the widely known Punjabi popular music singer and performer, Daler Mehndi.¹¹ The background song to this video was first performed by Mehndi in 1998.¹² The song became an Internet meme because of its random silliness, as the Wikipedia entry about the song notes (Tunak Tunak Tun, n.d.). Judging by the many videos produced transnationally that referenced the Daler Mehndi song, this meme caught on across contexts and traveled through digital networks.¹³ Significantly, Daler was neither a Bollywood singing star (even though he did a few songs for Hindi films) nor an NRI at the time this Internet meme originated.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he was criticized by some in the Bollywood industry, who suggested his popularity was due more to the young girls dancing on stage with him than to his own talent and music.¹⁵ Subsequently, however, he has worked with Hindi Films, such as in *Rang de Basanti* released 2006, for which he sang the title song under the musical direction of A. R. Rehman. Thus Daler’s affective labor, constantly referenced in online social spaces, has become a part of the Bollywood industry’s attempt to evoke a sense of community in digital diasporas.

Diasporic Youth Culture as Transnational Conjuncture

Each of the examples of South Asian digital diasporic engagement discussed in this chapter follows different trajectories of labor, online cultures, and global circulation.

For the moment at least, each one has become transnationalized by routing through Indian-based locations of origin and circulation (one from “Virtual India” in *Second Life*, the second from the computer game *World of Warcraft*, and the third from offline Punjab). They now inhabit global spaces of transnational capital. The machinima by Indusgeeks produces an idealized vision of India in sync with the utopian discourse around the notion of a “second life,” performing the dual function of selling both *Second Life* and a particular vision of India and its future. The Indusgeeks *Second Life* video is clearly connecting to a nation-state and a particular vision of development for the nation-state. The examples from the machinima produced using WoW demonstrate racial identifications of a Bollywoodized form of Indian identity, as well as the affective pull that Bollywood music has for producers and viewers. These machinima locate a diasporic *place* at the intersection of the fantasy world of WoW and the fantasy world of Bollywood – in this case there is likewise an affective pull, layered and remixed. Finally, in the Internet meme around Daler Mehndi’s song, we see that the identifications travel through transnational contexts with people from a variety of backgrounds (including youth from US college classrooms as well as fans of Anime and Manga worldwide¹⁶). While Daler Mehndi was not closely associated with Bollywood at the time he produced the “Tunak Tunak Tun” video, it is significant that in later years he worked for major Bollywood hits such as *Rang de Basanti*, thereby serving in his own way as an ambassador of Bollystan – the “new model of geographically transcendent sovereignty” for India.

What sorts of convergences, conjunctures, and connections emerge in relation to globalization and migrant populations the world over along with the emergence of new forms of digital networked media? How are transnational diasporas manifested in relation to new technologies and to evolving forms of economic and cultural globalization? These are questions that have underpinned this chapter, which has mapped a particular route through digital space to explore how new conjunctures and convergences are produced in Indian digital diasporas.

NOTES

- 1 Machinima is the use of real-time 3D computer graphics rendering engines to create a cinematic production. Most often, videogames are used to generate the computer animation. Machinima-based artists, sometimes called machinimists or machinimators, are often fan laborers by virtue of their reuse of copyrighted materials. The practice of using graphics engines from videogames arose from the animated software introductions of the 1980s demoscene, Disney Interactive Studios’ 1992 videogame *Stunt Island*, and 1990s recordings of gameplay in first-person shooter (FPS) videogames, such as id Software’s *Doom* and *Quake*. Originally, these recordings documented speedruns – attempts to complete a level as quickly as possible – and multi-player matches. The addition of storylines to these films created “Quake movies.” The more general term machinima, a misspelled portmanteau of machine cinema, arose when the concept spread beyond the Quake series to other games and software. After this generalization,

- machinima appeared in mainstream media, including television series and advertisements (Machinima, n.d.).
- 2 See "Our Story: Indusgeeks" at <http://www.indusgeeks.com/OurStory.html>
 - 3 MUDs Object-Oriented.
 - 4 For a quick idea of how this scene looks, see the video "Bollywood in Second Life," posted on YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2w2p3v7WSE&feature=related>
 - 5 Kelly's world blog (<http://www.kgadams.net/2006/06/11/my-second-life-deflowering>) describes scripted objects as follows: "Objects a user creates can have scripted behaviors – a table could have a fold out extension, or those ears I mentioned could wiggle. Even more intriguing, an object's behavior could be based on something outside the game: virtual weather in an area could be based on real-world weather reports, for example, or a soccer ball could move based on telemetry from a real-world soccer ball."
 - 6 See Mira Migel (Director). "India in Second Life." Retrieved July 18, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Glg4XMhh14Y&feature=related>
 - 7 See "Bollywood Goes World of Warcraft." Retrieved July 18, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbL3ZtBDRak>
 - 8 For a description of the Mage race, see <http://wow.stratics.com/content/features/guides/mage/>
 - 9 See user comments at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbL3ZtBDRak>
 - 10 See "wow dranei dance," retrieved July 18, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GWJhtBENUk>
 - 11 See "Exotic Draenei Indian dance," retrieved July 18, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyCPPSB7b5E>
 - 12 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=066_q4Dleqk
 - 13 See "Tunak Tunak Tun" video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAN7Ts0xBo&feature=related>
 - 14 See "Daler Mehndi" entry at Answers.com. Retrieved July 18, 2011, from <http://www.answers.com/topic/daler-mehndi>
 - 15 See the "Tunak Tunak Tun Dance" entry at Knowyourmeme.com. Retrieved July 18, 2011, from <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/tunak-tunak-tun-dance>
 - 16 See the following examples posted on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRf2DiQh2mY&feature=related>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7KSITrAcus&feature=related>

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Fear and Hope

The Politics of Childhood and Mobile Media

Damien Spry

ABSTRACT

Mobile media are increasingly ubiquitous in the lives of children and young people worldwide. In this chapter, Damien Spry uses case studies from Japan and Australia to examine moral panics and regulatory responses to children's use of mobile media. Emphasizing the politicization of young people's mobile media use, he argues that "childhood" and "new media" are discursive sites where the hopes and fears about future generations are powerfully expressed and negotiated. While there is a great deal of public discourse about children and mobile media, Spry notes the relative absence of young people's voices from this discourse, and questions how their voices might be more audible in the debates that affect them.

This chapter addresses the politics of childhood, youth, and mobile media, providing an overview of some of the issues found in research, public discourse, and policy discussions and then focusing on the national contexts of Australia and Japan.¹ I examine political discourse relating to the use of mobile media by children and young people, and public policy that regulates and/or promotes their mobile media use, considering the ways that particular sociocultural constructions of childhood and youth are deployed and reproduced. I seek to make explicit the ways that children

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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and young people are discursively constructed in public debates about mobile media use, and how these conceptions are translated in public discourse and policy. I also call attention to the relative marginalization of children's voices in the political discourses about them and their capacities as mobile media users, and I consider the potential for children and young people to participate in, subvert, or render insignificant, these political and policy interventions.

In the second half of this chapter, I discuss a number of cases from Japan and Australia where significant public debate emerged on children's mobile media use. The national contexts of Japan and Australia are instructive; they represent two relatively wealthy and technologically advanced societies with explicit public agendas regarding connectivity and access, yet with very different cultural heritages and significant differences in the demographics of their respective populations. The cases I discuss bring into sharp relief some commonalities in the politics of youth mobile media in these different contexts. However, these examples also raise questions about how the politics of mobile media may be grounded by national and local cultures. Ideas about childhood certainly do vary greatly across cultures (and have varied historically). Use of mobile media also varies. The faster areas of growth in mobile media use are in what are sometimes referred to as "developing" or "emergent" markets, including much of Africa and parts of Asia-Pacific, especially China and India (International Telecommunications Union, 2010). There is an emerging body of work on mobile phones as tools for development (e.g., Jagen & Heeks, 2008; Waverman, Meschi, & Fuss, 2005), in post-conflict countries (e.g., Best, Smyth, Etherton, & Wornyo, 2010), and by migrant workers (e.g., Panagokoras & Horst, 2006). Yet the studies of children and young people as mobile media users have hitherto been restricted largely to examples from Europe, North America, and the wealthier countries of the Pacific Rim. There is a critical need for more research, and for more interaction between research and policymaking. But with this in mind, it is important to note that the argument offered here has an essential caveat: while the approach I have taken may be applied globally (with some variation), we cannot assume that the conclusions would be identical in every regional, national, or local context.

As recent studies have demonstrated (Matsuda, 2010; NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2009; Spry, 2010), it has become unremarkable for Japanese and Australian elementary schoolchildren to possess mobile phones. Nowadays, between 60% and 85% of 11- to 16-year-old children have a mobile phone, and the average age at which children first gain possession of a mobile phone is getting younger. In the early years of the commercialization of the mobile phone, this would have been unthinkable: mobile phones were largely reserved for taxi companies, police and emergency services, and entrepreneurial elites. Then, the "bricks" that the Gordon Geckos of Wall Street held in such high regard were too large, too heavy, and too expensive for children; even if they were not, mobile phones were considered unnecessary. It was not until technological improvements leading to smaller and cheaper handsets, and realization among telecommunications

companies that a profitable younger market existed, that the age of mobile phone users dropped significantly. Young mobile users enjoyed the increased capacity for peer communication, and creatively turned the mobile phone into a device for new, youth-focused forms of expression and sociality. That, coupled with the increasing demands of work, commuting, and schooling which made families begin to find it difficult to stay in proximate contact with each other, led the mobile phone to become an important tool for managing relations within families and peer groups. Having a mobile phone, for many current elementary school students,² has swiftly moved from the unthinkable to the unremarkable; it is now bordering on the essential (Matsuda, 2009, 2010).

Nevertheless, concerns that have been associated with youth mobile media use since the 1990s persist in popular and political discourses. Such concerns include: the way mobile phones now function as markers of social status and the growing necessity of mobile phones for social inclusion among youth and children; the intrusion of mobile phones into school life and education; and the association of mobile phone possession, display, and use with aspects of adulthood, such as participation in the economy and in the adult worlds of love, sex, and violence. Meanwhile, the evident popularity and ubiquity of mobile phone use by children and young people have left adults (including policymakers) with a burning question: how to take advantage of the possibilities of mobile media while managing their uses so as to minimize harm to young people? Another important question is less commonly posed: how can we include children and young people in policy discussions that relate to them? The growing body of research on children, youth, and mobile media can help adults understand young people's experiences, at the same time informing policy discussions aimed at promoting socially beneficial uses while discouraging more problematic behaviors associated with mobile media use. Unfortunately, the extent to which public policy has been informed by the research thus far appears minimal, as archetypal attitudes about children and media use predominate.

Research on Children and Young People's Mobile Phone Use

In the early days of mobile media studies, the idea of preadolescent children as mobile media users was of marginal interest. As young people began to take up the mobile phone in greater numbers – first teenagers in the late 1990s, and then elementary school-age children in the 2000s – researchers began to take interest. Youth mobile media use began to be associated with new cultural forms of expression. In an early example, texting via short message service (SMS) became an issue, as specific linguistic practices were identified and analyzed. The increasing use of mobile phones by children also raised other areas of concern. The fear of physical harm due to exposure to electromagnetic radiation, the risk of inexperienced users

accumulating large telephone bills, and anxieties about addiction or other antisocial behavior were added to unease about the impact of new communicative forms (such as SMS) on traditional standards of literacy. Initially, there was considerably less enthusiasm about the possibilities for mobile media as an educational device than there was concern about its potential for disruption and even danger. Other studies looked at the important role mobile communication had in facilitating, and transforming, youth sociality. Later studies, from the mid-2000s, included the social and political relations within families as an important aspect of youth mobile media use.

All these aspects of mobile media use by children and young people have become important themes in the field of youth mobile media studies. Rich Ling (1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Ling & Helmersen, 2000) introduced many of these themes in the early years of the 2000s. Since then, the field of mobile media studies has grown steadily. The first significant edited collection on mobile media studies appeared in 2002 (Brown, Green, & Harper, 2002). Since 2005, the published literature on mobile media studies has grown at a greater pace (see Castells, Fernández-Ardèvol, Qiu, & Sey, 2007; Goggin, 2006; Harper, Palen, & Taylor, 2005; Ito, Okabe, & Matsuda, 2005; Katz, 2008; Ling, 2005, 2008). Recently, a number of notable publications emphasized mobile cultures in the Asia-Pacific region, including the countries covered in this analysis: Australia and Japan (see Goggin, 2008; Goggin & Hjorth, 2009; Hemelryk, Dindorfer Anderson, & Spry, 2010; Hjorth, 2009). Books and publications on mobile media that appeared during this period included studies that examined their uses by children and young people.

Relevant scholarly research to date can be categorized according to a series of themes, three of which are well established: (1) youth sociality, culture, and identity;³ (2) moral panics, risks, and responses;⁴ and (3) mobile childhood, parenthood, and families.⁵ An additional, less established theme concerns the use of mobile media in formal educational environments, for pedagogical purposes. This theme, commonly referred to as “mobile learning,” is likely to gain ground if (or when) mobile media are more fully incorporated into school classrooms. A fifth theme might be called “the future of mobile media use,” and includes research that employs terms like “ubiquity” and “convergence” to describe the changing media environment. This work, often associated with discourses of “digital natives,” or “the net generation,” seeks to identify new forms of media use and new types of users.

Common characterizations of mobile-mediated childhood found in both the literature and in public debates can be either positive or negative. This distinction is an important one for policy analysis: the positive, useful, and unobtrusive functions performed using mobile phones are not subject to much scrutiny by policymakers, while negative concerns and conflicts between forms of mobile media use are more likely to bring about demands for regulatory responses to manage, mitigate, or remove risks. Positive characterizations of mobile phone uses by children include the common observations that mobile phones are important devices for family management at a distance, a phenomenon referred to as, *inter alia*, remote-control parenting, mobile parenting, or mom-in-a-pocket. The coordination of family life via the mobile

phone is a common use of mobile phones, something increasingly important when parents are working and children are engaged in extra-curricular activities. Research has also found that, with some variation, emotional relationships are sustained via mobile phones: communication need not fulfill a practical task in order to be important. In addition, mobile phones are widely regarded as enhancing feelings of security for both children and parents by providing the potential for contact at all times.

On the other hand, there are a number of negative or problematic uses of mobile phones often encountered in the literature and in policy discussions. The kinds of negative impacts of children's use of mobile phones include, variously, risks of mugging, bullying, and happy slapping, the social pressure to have the "right" mobile phone, the potential for teenagers to engage in commercial sexual activity via mobile Internet sites, and mobile phone addiction. In addition, many parents consider the ability for children to be more secretive about whom they are communicating with to be a concern, although of course some children see this independence from parental surveillance as positive. Overall, despite the concerns and risks recognized, both parents and children tend to see mobile phones as having an overall positive impact on their lives.

Without a doubt, a significant body of research has demonstrated that mobile phones are an important factor in many young people's social and cultural lives. For many young people, the mobile phone has become an essential device in peer relationships and a contributing factor in their self-esteem. This raises a number of important issues for research and policy. One is cost management: mobile phones represent significant expense for young consumers, who are often economically dependent on parental sources of income.

In addition, though not well covered by the literature, is evidence of an emerging, intractable conflict between schools and families over the possession and use of mobile phones (Rizzo, 2008). Schools often see mobile phones as a nuisance, an impediment to their educational mission, and even a risk to students' safety. This can be a major concern for parents, who want to be able to contact their children while they are in school. It is also a concern for children, who may share their parents' desire for familial contact, and who of course desire mobile phones for other reasons. The conflict over children's use of mobile phones in school is a matter of increasing importance, as school systems have developed policies to regulate and limit mobile phone use by students. School policies address real problems with the disruptive force of mobile phone use, as well as responding to fears heightened by mobile media panics. The competing interests of schools, which seek to limit the potential for disturbance in the classroom, and those of students and parents, who desire constant contact, has required new policy responses.

Research and regulation on children's mobile media use also raises broader sociological and political questions. Importantly, the definition of childhood itself comes into question. How is "childhood" defined and understood in research and policy discussions regarding mobile media use? What ideas about childhood predominate today? What are the implications of particular social constructions of childhood for

mobile media policy? In order to answer these questions, we need to probe more critically into the various ways “childhood” has been conceptualized historically, the archetypical ideas that have endured, and the contemporary risks and anxieties associated with childhood, youth culture, and new media use.

Childhoods Past and Present

In contemplating the ways that childhood is understood in the present, it is advantageous to first examine the past. As British theorists of childhood Chris Jenks, Alison James, and Alan Prout (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Jenks, 1996) have underscored, political philosophers Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Locke each contributed conceptions of childhood that accorded with their respective conceptions of human nature. These philosophers offer three versions of the child as the pure, essential, and unadulterated form of the human being: untamed (Hobbes), untainted (Rousseau), or untrained (Locke).

For Hobbes, life in its elemental state is uncivilized, unstable, brutish, and animalistic. Hobbesian childhood exists in a state of nature. Children, being as yet unschooled and untamed, needed to be brought, forcefully if need be, into the life of enlightened adulthood. Analogies have been made to colonial discourses of the savage native who needed to be saved (Jenks, 1996), and the wild animal needing to be broken (James et al., 1998). Childhood, in the Hobbesian, evil, devilish use of the term, is a period of life during which the authorities – parents, schools, the church, the law – ought not to spare the rod, lest the child remain spoilt.

Paired against the Hobbesian devilish child is Rousseau’s angelic child, who similarly resides in a pure state of nature, but one of prelapsarian blissful innocence rather than the bestial, savage, and sinful world after the fall. Jenks (1996) presents this, in contrast with Hobbes’s untamed Bacchic beast, as the Apollonian child, “the heir to sunshine and light, the espouser of poetry and beauty” (p. 73). Rousseau was as intensely enthusiastic about childhood as Hobbes was pessimistic. It is as though the loss of childhood, and of the innocence and pristine freedom associated with it, is to be delayed for as long as possible, and mourned when it arrives. The irony of this, of course, is that like Hobbes’s little devils, Rousseau’s little angels require the intervention and protection of the adult world, even if it is the adult world that children need to be shielded from. Hobbes’s little devils and Rousseau’s little angels share also the sense that children are born with a preordained nature, be it native and bestial, or natural and innocent. John Locke had other ideas.

According to Locke, children are not born with any innate moral characteristics. They are not even imbued at birth with human reason, but they do carry within them the potential to develop reason and should inevitably do so as they gain experience and turn potential into actual human rational thought. This implies that a major difference between children and adults is that adults have knowledge born

of experience whereas children have not yet acquired such knowledge. Adults are therefore placed in a position of intellectual superiority to children: it becomes the responsibility of adults (especially modern-day parents and teachers) to provide opportunities and guidance, through parenting and pedagogy, for children to become rational, moral, adult members of society. Unlike Hobbes, who suggested children were a risk to (or at least at odds with) society, and Rousseau, who saw society as ruinous to childhood, the Lockean view holds that “through education children will become rational, virtuous, contracting members of society, and exercisers of self-control. They will not threaten social order” (James et al., 1998, p. 16).

John Locke sits historically between Hobbes and Rousseau. The three together influenced philosophical and political thought from the early modern period through to the Romantic period and beyond. Together, their ideas about human nature, and about the relationships between the people and those who govern them, have had tremendous impact on Western political thinking. Their contributions to early modern conceptions of the nature of childhood, and of the relationships between children and the authorities that rule their lives, are equally pertinent, and remain so. Whether we regard children as “pure, bestial, innocent, corrupt, charged with potential, [or] *tabula rasa*” (Jenks, 1996, p. 31), we continue to contemplate them as subjects to parental and pedagogical forms of governance, discipline, training, and protection. We continue, in this way, to conceive of childhood as a period of political subjectification by the individuals and institutions of adulthood that hold sway over children’s lives – until, that is, they reach adulthood and, for better (Hobbes) or worse (Rousseau) or either or both (Locke), they become part of society and thus transition from presocial to social beings.

From these three great political philosophers arises a politics of childhood as apolitical, in the sense that children are not expected or able to participate in political society, yet also as politicized, in that they are subject to political authority. Childhood, in this sense, is a period of sociopolitical transition from subject to (partial) agent. How this apparent transition occurs, and the stages through which children become physically and psychologically adult (thereby attaining the right to take responsibility for their own lives at the age of majority), was to become the concern of developmental models of childhood.

The leading figure in the field of developmental psychology, and therefore of the naturally developing child, is Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (Piaget, 2002). Piaget developed a theory of intellectual development through empirical studies of children’s use of information from their environment at different ages from infancy onwards. Piaget is best known for his influential theory of stages of development, in which children are thought to progress through a series of qualitatively distinct levels of cognitive, and thus intellectual, development. Piaget’s theory followed earlier developmental models that position children as lacking adult capacities – of autonomy, rationality, responsibility; as psychologically and emotionally dependent and vulnerable; and/or as “needy” for particular experiences and opportunities which, if not provided, will undermine the child’s proper development (Stainton Rogers, 2004,

p. 129). This highly influential formulation of childhood, following the important influence of Piaget, positions children and young people as developing as thinking beings, that is, developing new and different forms of thinking as they pass through developmental stages on their pathway to adulthood. In this model, children are once again regarded as adults-in-the-making, incomplete and insufficiently able to be (fully) responsible for themselves and others, thus requiring care, supervision, and discipline.

Jenks (2004) discusses how the model's appeal and its problems lie in the conceptualization of childhood as "normal" and "natural" (p. 79): we all experience childhood, so the argument goes, and see others (our children, our family and friends) as children and later as adults. Childhood is such a familiar, everyday, and intrinsic aspect of our experience of life that it is easily rendered normal and therefore "natural" in similar ways to which gender, ethnicity, and sexuality were once (and are still) considered in terms such as natural/unnatural. Herein lies the first major criticism of the natural developmental model from the sociological perspective espoused by Jenks and colleagues (James et al., 1998): by normalizing and naturalizing childhood, this period of life is made subject to the normative claims of the developmental psychologists and their adherents in the fields of medicine, parenting, teaching, and policy. Children must be, and must be treated as being, "normal."

In their critique of the development model of childhood, James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) identify childhood as a project to be managed by adults and undertaken by children under adult supervision. Children must learn the correct ways of intellectually and morally understanding and acting, at the right stages; adults must provide the pedagogic and disciplinary environment in which correct progress can be acknowledged and deficiencies addressed. The resemblances to other presocial models are significant: the emotional, uncontrollable id of the bestial, demonic child is a natural stage to be overcome with moral discipline and socialization; the innocent, pristine angelic child is a temporary state at odds (regrettably for Rousseau) with adult experience; and the tabula rasa is the opening stage of the child's development into, eventually, a rational, complete human being.

These models all share the notion of the child as incomplete – "becoming an adult" rather than "being a person" – and the sense that childhood is a time before we take our place in the world. Social theories of childhood, in comparison, see children as being in the world, in their own right.

The influence of the social developing, or socialized, child is highly significant when considering the politics of childhood. Political theory is often concerned with the ways societies are constructed and governed. In a functional sense, political theory situates individuals within society, each with particular roles to serve depending on the nature of that polity: as a subject to a crown in a monarchy, for example, or as a rights-holding citizen and participant in democracy, or as a member of civil society, or as all of these concurrently in a liberal-democratic constitutional monarchy like Australia or Japan. All must fulfill their role to keep society ticking over as best it can. Politics is also about the role of power: who governs, over whom, in

whose interests, and what maintains their rule as legitimate and effective. As such, the ways that society preserves structures containing those that rule and those that are ruled over relates directly to the reproductive models of socialization.

These models of socialization also share common features that, according to Jenks (2004) and James, Jenks, and Prout (1998), are inadequate for a social theory of childhood. For one, they have “little or no time for children” (Jenks, 2004, p. 88), in that they are mostly concerned with the adult world, its structures, functions, and reproductive process. Childhood is a time when pre-adults are fitted, or forced, into this adult world. Second, society is presented as a whole, complete, all-encompassing structure that subsumes the many differentiated and variegated groups within that entity. This macro-scale framing of social worlds and the members within them reduces all subgroups and subcultures to elements of a wider whole.

However, not all social theories of childhood are so inclined. Other social theories of childhood emphasize and investigate children’s social worlds from the starting point of the lives of the children themselves, and take as their base unit those social groups that are constituted by children themselves, such as gangs, “urban tribes,” and other youth subcultures (James et al., 1998; Jenks, 2004).

There is yet another construction of childhood, one that might be called post-structural childhood. Children in late modernity live in domestic situations that are characterized by diversity, fluidity, and instability, as well as being sites in which the traditional hierarchies are challenged by children more able to assertively claim roles in family decision-making processes: families grow precarious; children become precocious. Parents, less certain of their authority over their children, more swiftly make concessions to their children’s opinions and expressed desires, or – perhaps with less timidity yet with similar consequences – more fully recognize their children’s rights within their increasingly open and democratic families. There may be reasons to defer to children’s opinions: children may have greater expertise than their parents in the rapidly changing market for technology and consumer goods, for example. It may also simply be that parents and children are more likely to feel that respect ought to be earned and deserved, rather than simply claimed and assumed by parents from children (see Wyness, 2006, p. 55). Late modern families are seen in this contradictory way, as less stable and therefore less supportive of children while also being more liberal, participatory, and accommodating of children’s desires.

Yet, in a second contradiction surrounding childhood in late modernity, children may be seen as a source of tradition, stability, and surety in an otherwise destabilized world. Beck (1992) suggests as much when he refers to the relationship between parents and their children as “the last remaining irrevocable unexchangeable primary relationship” (p. 118). Wyness (2006) concurs and adds that being the last such prospect for certainty makes the value attached to such a relationship all the more acute, even desperate: “children’s dependence, obedience and their subaltern status become central to adults as they seek to re-centre themselves within a context of moral and social flux” (p. 53). As such, relations between the generations within the family are, in a curious case of late modern self-reflexivity, both the causes of instability and

anxiety, and the solution to such feelings of insecurity. Children have become a source of moral anxiety as well as a form of “moral rescue, a means by which adults try and recapture a sense of purpose and belonging” (Wyness, 2006, p. 53).

The consequences of such contradictory concerns within the contemporary family about childhood can be found in public policy and the proto-politics of family. The modernist project continues to dominate in areas of public policy, especially education policy, wherein children are measured against a “normal” childhood and prepared for an adult future, and schools are held accountable for their roles in achieving these fixed, measurable, performance-based goals. This contrasts with the relatively private world of the family, where the goals are less certain, or at least more diverse, and performances are difficult to measure. Another concern is the rise in parental anxiety about the risks associated with (late) modernity. Often these risks are associated with the trappings of modern life. One source of parental anxiety is the fear of violence or misadventure, perhaps at the hands of other children or (more pejoratively) youths during the lengthy commute to schools that are further from the domestic home than in the past. Another evident cause of concern is the exposure to inappropriate or offensive or even damaging material via the various forms of media.

Regarding both of these points – the contrasts between children’s private family lives and the policies of public life and education, and the increasing anxiety about the risks children face – the roles of mobile media have become crucial, and the responses to mobile media use have assumed greater importance. Mobile phones, as noted in the literature reviewed above, have become essential tools in the management of (private) family life, yet they are largely frowned upon and their use severely restricted in the (public) sphere of school education. Mobile communication has become a crucial aspect of many young people’s social inclusion among their peers, especially among post-elementary or primary school students for whom it offers also the prospect of greater autonomy from parental control. Yet mobile communication also offers the promise (if not always the reality) of parental surveillance of children. Parents regularly claim that their children are permitted to own and are provided with a mobile phone so they will be and feel safer, yet the dangers of cyberbullying, happy slapping, sexting, and the like are all associated with the malevolent potential of mobile media.

Moral Panics and Risks

Since Stanley Cohen’s seminal work, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972), a number of studies have examined the phenomenon of the “moral panic,” moments when particular behaviors labeled errant, dangerous, or deviant gain overblown attention. Such panics are typically associated with youth subcultures, which are viewed as posing a risk to others and to communities or culture in general. Such panics can

also arise when deviant groups or individuals pose apparent risks to children. Cohen's moral panic theory outlines the roles played by institutional authorities (such as police forces) in labeling certain behaviors and subcultural groups as morally dangerous. Through forms of mediated communications, especially the news media, these same authorities then amplify these concerns to a crisis level, which requires urgent, decisive action.

Although the intention appears to be to halt or contain deviant behavior, moral panics, suggest McRobbie and Thornton (1995), can in practice inspire further deviant behavior, in two ways. First, by communicating information about deviant behaviors to a wider population, more potential participants become aware of such behaviors, prompting experimental reproduction of these very same behaviors by those who might otherwise have remained none the wiser. Second, by associating deviant behaviors with subcultural groups, moral panics provide those who self-identify with these subcultural groups with reasons to experiment with or embrace the very behaviors that are being criticized. Along these lines, McRobbie and Thornton (1995) regard moral panics as a potential "culmination and fulfilment of youth cultural agendas in so far as negative news baptises transgression. What better way to turn differences into defiance, lifestyle into social upheaval, leisure into revolt" (p. 268).

Since the introduction of the concept some 40 years ago, moral panics have remained important for theorizing youth media use and representations of children and young people in the media (Buckingham, 2000; Goggin, 2006; Livingstone, 2002, 2009). The theory has recently been redeveloped and updated, as a result of a number of important developments: greater appreciation of the sophistication and complexities of the relationships between media and audiences thanks to studies in media effects; more sophisticated understanding of changes in the types of media and modes of media use thanks to studies in media ecologies; and significant contributions in this area coming from the study of social change and social movements.

Classic moral panics present a coherent, unchallenged account of the risks so-called folk devils pose to decent, normal society. McRobbie and Thornton (1995) suggest that the number and variety of media technologies, genres, voices, and audiences make it less and less likely that moral panic narratives will remain unchallenged. For example, young people are more able to challenge the narratives that portray them as immoral, and to provide counterdiscourses that render their subcultural behaviors as legitimate. Young people are able to make use of the proliferation of media and communications to create their own cultural spaces, away from the moralizing gaze of mainstream, adult authorities, often taking advantage of new media platforms to do so.

Additionally, young people can self-identify with so-called folk devils, willfully embracing the role of deviants as an act of rebellion. Moral panics of the past can also provide present rebels with model behaviors and attitudes. By emulating the deviants of the past, young people's transgressions are legitimized through appeals to nostalgia and tradition. Youthful rebellions of the past hold appeal for commercial actors seeking to attract consumers. As rebellion becomes marketable, it becomes

part of mainstream media, and thus further legitimized, or at least normalized within mainstream culture. Under these circumstances, behavior that is considered to be deviant and morally risky by some sections of the community has appeal for other sections of the community on the basis of anti-authoritarianism, either directly or because of the commercial appeal of the new and shocking. One person's moral degeneracy is another person's self-identifying, subcultural behavior, and another person's niche market of early adopters.

The analytic concept of risk provides some ways of addressing the limitations of moral panic theory. The risk society is one in which the developments of late modernity address concerns that have emerged from modernization, while generating further concerns that require further developments, and the cycle thus continues. All discourses of risk, Van Loon (2002) claims, are embedded in other forms of social discourse and dependent upon these other discourses for legitimacy and authority, in other words, for symbolic power. This is the case regardless of whether the risk being described is dependent upon discourses of scientific, measurable fact (such as environmental risks), economic modeling (such as financial risk), or game theory (such as the risk of international military conflict). Van Loon's (2002) emphasis is on symbolic association in the production of risks, and therefore of symbolic power in the politics of addressing risk. In the following cases of policy debates surrounding children's mobile media use, I examine the discourses of childhood and youth (such as the "devils," "angels," and "blank slates" discussed above), considering how the symbolic power of the risks associated with children's mobile phone use is dependent upon these discourses.

Examples from Japan: Facing the Future of Communication

Osaka Prefecture Governor Toru Hashimoto is neither the first nor the last in a long line of Japanese public leaders to call for a total ban of mobile phones from Japanese elementary and junior high schools. But he was the first to threaten, in December 2008, to enforce the ban in all schools under the remit of the Prefectural Board of Education. Osaka city and Sakai, both in Osaka Prefecture, have separate Boards of Education, and Hashimoto has urged both of these to follow his lead. Responding to declining poor educational performances and cyberbullying, pointing to private surveys and media polls that cite parental support for the ban, Governor Hashimoto's plan to rid schools of the dreaded *keitai* seemed on fertile ground. Concessions would have to be made. Children with two working parents might have to be allowed *keitai* so they can be monitored. Moreover, Governor Hashimoto admitted, not all children would likely obey the ban. But the essential message remained: the *keitai* was to be no longer an accepted element of children's lives, let alone an essential one, as Matsuda (2009, 2010) has suggested.

Previously, in early 2008, the prefectural Department of Education had undertaken a study in Hyogo Prefecture in response to similar concerns to those of Governor Hashimoto. Concerns to be addressed included the production of unofficial school websites, bullying and harassment, Internet dating leading to *enjo kosai* (teenage prostitution),⁶ and so-called “Internet addiction” blamed for lack of sleep, poor scholarly performances, and declines in communicative and social skills (Matsuda, 2009, 2010). In particular, cyberbullying and harassment were cited as being of a particular problem, such as unresolved quarrels or insults traded on *keitai*; posts on Internet bulletin boards (whether accessed on *keitai* or on a desktop computer) that escalated into hostility; and forms of harassment that occurred on *gakko ura saito* (unofficial school websites).⁷ The suicide of a senior high school student in Kobe, the capital of Kobe Prefecture, in September 2007 formed part of the premise and context for the study.

The study centered on a survey of 11,675 students and 10,253 parents, sampled from all public elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools in Hyogo Prefecture (Research Group for Bullying Problems in Society, 2008). The subsequent report emphasized the need to empathize with children, and to teach both media literacy and media ethics as part of the more general approach to teaching ethics and moral reasoning in the curricula. In general terms, the report’s authors, including Professor Tomoyuki Okada from Kansei University, recommended approaches to education that emphasize emotional and moral learning, that promoted public (especially parental) trust and confidence in the schools’ role in instructing children in morals and manners, and that developed programs relevant according to their “stage of development.” It emphasized programs that introduce and develop skills and values training for elementary school students: “It is very important to give such instruction to elementary school children as some children start to use a mobile phone at this age” (Research Group for Bullying Problems in Society, 2008, p. 17).

The report’s recommendations for staged instructions are (my translation):

Lower grades of elementary school:

Foster sensitivity toward, and care for, other people who are far away, by including writing activities such as writing letters or postcards.

Higher grades of elementary school:

Teach the importance of keeping promises when communicating using information technology by making children think about manners and rules through actually exchanging emails and posting messages on message boards within the school, using the school intranet.

Middle school:

On the Internet, we sometimes use words or expressions that we would not normally use face to face, since we can exchange information without seeing the person in question. This can result in them being hurt, perhaps inadvertently. It is important to teach students to consider how others feel when receiving these messages, and to increase their awareness of human rights.

Teach students about the risks and responsibilities that come with their messages, and about the possibilities of violating laws because of what they write.

High school:

Through teaching the students about the laws that are relevant to online communication and exchange, get students to consider the responsibilities they should take on in exchange for sending information freely.

Demonstrate, using actual examples, the possibilities of unintentionally becoming an assailant over the Internet.

Ask students to analyze objectively why they wanted to bully or slander others on the Internet. After that, teach them the importance of thinking assertively, as well as of thinking about others' responses. (p. 17)

Much of what is recommended in the report does not differ significantly from what one might expect when generally discussing the responsibilities of ethical and considerate behavior. It does, however, take into account the specificities of mobile mediated communication, including the asynchronous and non-co-present aspects. For example:

It is advisable to foster compassion and sympathy for others' feelings, and a sense of gratitude within children in their daily life, so that they come to think about the feelings of users/readers of blogs or emails who they cannot actually see. It is also important to teach children the fact that communication on the Internet or by email can unintentionally hurt people deeper than verbal communication. (p. 17)

The report also suggested that schools work more closely with the parents as part of the school community to assist with this task outside the classroom.

The Hyogo Department of Education that commissioned the study did not adopt the report's recommendations. Instead, it called for a ban on *keitai* in elementary schools and junior high schools. Where possession of a *keitai* was unavoidable, the functions of the device were to be limited to voice calls and location-based GPS functioning. In a presentation discussing this in July 2008, Professor Okada described it as being akin to epidemiological approaches that seek to protect those at risk of contagious disease by preventing them from exposure and the subsequent risk of infection. He noted that this contradicted education-based models that had characterized the Japanese government's promotion of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Governor Hashimoto's determined call for a total ban of mobile phones in elementary and junior high schools in Japan was supported publicly at the national political level. Key supporters included the Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura, Education Minister Ryu Shionoya, and the Minister for Internal Affairs and Communication (SUOMO), Kunio Hatoyama. Ironically, Minister Hatoyama's portfolio included development and promotion of the U-Japan policy that endeavored to make information communications technology a full-time, always-on, unobtrusive, and welcomed part of everyone's lives. This priority for full-time connectivity included

elementary schoolchildren, as explicitly addressed in the U-Japan online promotional material (see Spry, 2010).

In one particularly telling vignette from the website promoting the U-Japan policy and its vision of the future, SUOMO suggests how generations will be able to maintain social relationships at a distance while going about the busy business of modern family life. This is the story of Ayaka Tanaka and her busy mother. The opening scene shows Mrs. Tanaka, dedicated office worker, trying to organize another hectic schedule of client demands and meetings with colleagues. Seeing that her day may run away from her, she gives thought to that night's meal and wonders if she has enough ingredients at home. A screen appears seemingly at will. This is a "ubiquitous terminal": Mrs. Tanaka's portal into the U-Japan world of connectivity and convenience. She quickly consults her fridge, which informs her that a number of items have passed their expiration date, and suggests she buy some rolled cabbage. Online food sellers are connected, so the fridge suggests that Mrs. Tanaka order some organically grown cabbage from the Net Market. Thinking to herself that Ayaka will like that, Mrs. Tanaka agrees, and also tells the fridge to order anything else it thinks they need. Later, as the working day develops, Mrs. Tanaka again contacts her home through a ubiquitous terminal and sets her arrival time for 7 p.m. She asks the terminal to check that Ayaka is at her scheduled piano lesson. The piano school has some surprising and troubling news: Ayaka is absent. Mrs. Tanaka urges the terminal to immediately search for her. Ayaka is tracked and swiftly located in the Botanical Gardens, far from where she is supposed to be. Mrs. Tanaka straight away connects with Ayaka, whose face appears on the screen.

A surprised Ayaka answers, and a conversation begins tersely. (Ayaka: It's you, mommy!? What's wrong? Mrs. Tanaka: What do you mean, "What's wrong?" You're supposed to be at your piano lesson!) But rapidly it becomes clear there is no cause for alarm. (Ayaka: But today's the school field trip to the Botanical Gardens. Mrs. Tanaka: Oh, is that today?! I'm sorry. I'll make you a special dessert tonight. Be careful on your way home. Ayaka: Yes, mommy.) Ending the conversation, Mrs. Tanaka returns to her work. This, according to the Japanese government, is the future under U-Japan. It is a place where mothers can monitor and contact their children any time and from anywhere.

In responses to children's mobile media use in Japan, a series of contradictions is readily apparent. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a more diametrically opposed set of policy positions. Moreover, these apparently contradictory responses arise from within a shared political discursive space. In one case, from one set of data and analysis, we find the Hyogo Board of Education's research findings. And in another case, contradictory responses have emerged from a single ministerial portfolio. That conflicts arise in politics is news to no one; that diametrically opposed conclusions are reached from the same data, or from the same political office, is perhaps a little more curious. How might one account for such contradictory responses?

James et al. (1998) caution that presociological views are not to be dismissed, if only because some persist in the public imagination: "they are models which

continue to inform everyday actions and practices alongside more sophisticated sociological theorizing about childhood" (p. 21). These views of children and the young include the Hobbesian "evil child" born into sin and therefore uncontrollable, needing, through processes of surveillance and discipline, to be domesticated or civilized (nature requiring taming), and, mirroring Hobbes, Rousseau's naturally good child, innocent and as yet unblemished by worldly experience.

In this light, the contradictory pronouncements of the proponents of public policy seem more understandable, even logical, and perhaps inevitable. For if children with mobile phones are potentially and actually becoming more distant from adult authorities and institutions, they become vulnerable and at risk to a public and adult world. These angels require protection, meaning surveillance and discipline. Also, when children with mobile phones are seen as escaping the bonds of parental and institutional discipline, they are seemingly revealed as potential dangers to themselves and other children.

The mobile phone is seen as contributing to the problem but it is also how these concerns are addressed. The mobile phone leashes children to the parents. It makes them, potentially, contactable and under surveillance (with its dual meanings of care and control), and this is very reassuring. For parents, this is one way of keeping their angels close within the private realm of the family. For public policymakers, this poses a problem. For if families can use the mobile as a management tool (Matsuda, 2009, 2010), schools may find it more difficult to do so. For schools, the mobile phone is a private possession of the students, who use the device for private uses.

But schools are not private in the sense of being spaces for individuals or families. They are communal spaces. Collective rules apply equally to all, or at least they are intended to. But children are also protected from a larger public world in school – the world of adult life. As such, for educational policymakers, the mobile phone presents the means for the individual and family to invade its space, and provides the means for students to escape the bonds of its space and its rules, bringing in the wider, more unruly, and less "childlike" world of violence (including harassment) and sex. This is not to suggest that policymakers are claiming schools have previously been free of sex and violence, merely that mobile phones exacerbate the problem. Denied the reassurances of constant contact provided to families, educational policymakers can be forgiven for seeing mostly risks to pedagogical aims and the educational environment. Put another way, the school and particularly the classroom are contested spaces, and school time is contested time. As this time and space is challenged and violated via the communicative capacities of mobile media use, a new mediated environment emerges, one in which the child becomes not only a teacher's student and a colleague of classmates, but also a child of parents, a victim or perpetrator of bullying, a consumer of popular culture, and so on.

The contradictory responses to children's mobile phone use – banning on one hand, moral education on the other – are pointed to in one of Qvortrup's (1993) general contradictions of childhood: "Adults agree that children must be educated to freedom and democracy, but society's provision is given mostly in terms of

control, discipline and management” (p. 9). If we take freedom and democracy to include responsibilities to one another as citizens, then the media moral literacy program suggested by the Hyogo research team exemplifies the first half of this contradiction, while the call for, and monitoring of, Governor Hashimoto’s ban on mobile media possession exemplifies the other half. The uses of mobile media by children and young people in Japan continue to provoke contradictory political responses, and these contradictions can be read as expressions of political attitudes toward both childhood and technology. I now turn to the similarities and specificities of two Australian case studies on children’s use of mobile media.

Examples from Australia: Threats and Opportunities

Outside Melbourne, in the southern Australian state of Victoria, lies Werribee. In June 2006, a girl, aged 17, met two boys as agreed at the Werribee Station. Taken to a nearby park, she was faced by up to 14 boys aged 15 to 17. There she was abused, sexually assaulted by two of the boys, and humiliated. One of the boys filmed the incident using a digital camera on a mobile phone. This footage was later combined with footage showing some of the boys making chlorine bombs, throwing eggs at taxi drivers, and dropping flares on a homeless man, as well as footage of them fighting at local parties and media clippings of other incidents the boys claimed to have been involved in. DVDs of this home movie were sold in nearby schools for \$5 each.

The consequences of the filming and distribution of the assault were highlighted by Elaine Crowe, President of Parents Victoria: “Technology can worsen bullying behaviour because it makes it more public. Victims are humiliated not just by the personal humiliation, but also when incidents are broadcast on the Internet or DVD” (cited in Miletic, 2006, at paragraph 32), adding that she considered those who viewed the footage also “morally culpable” (paragraph 33).

Twelve boys were arrested and charged with a range of offenses. Eight of them pleaded guilty to charges of sexual penetration by intimidation, assault, and producing child pornography and were convicted on November 5, 2007. Three others were later found guilty of the same charges on February 12, 2008. The judge noted that the making and distributing of a DVD of the assault had compounded the offense by adding to the significant physical and emotional trauma suffered by the victim during the incident (O’Keefe, 2007).

None of the boys received a custodial sentence. They were placed on youth supervision orders or on probation. The judge noted their guilty pleas, their remorse at the hurt caused, and their willingness to participate in a sex offenders program. In circumstances described as difficult at best, Alan, the father of the young victim, later agreed to talk about his response to the boys’ sentences. “We feel it matches the young persons’ needs at this time of their life,” he said. Adding, with regards to

the young sex offenders program, "It's a very intensive program, it has a high success rate of reducing adolescent sexual crime. It's education-based, it really helps young males connect better with their understanding of their masculinity and that's what they need more than anything as far as our family is concerned" (Smith, 2007, p. 9).

Other incidents of filmed violence reported in the Australian press around this time often referred to the Werribee events, the common factors in the reported assaults being youth, violence (often, but not always sexual), and the use of mobile phones as recording equipment. In one incident, two girls were recorded assaulting a third girl (it is not clear by whom). In another, three young men first harassed a taxi driver, then, when an observer sought to intervene, turned on him, assaulting him while a fourth member of the group captured the attack at close range on his mobile phone video camera. Media reports noted police concerns that recording the events had particular attraction for the perpetrators: "There's a trend, particularly with young people, towards finding pleasure in the video recording of such incidents," noted Detective Senior Constable Bodsworth (quoted in Russell, 2007, p. 2). "The disturbing part is that they go on to post the video footage of the incident so others can gain pleasure or some shock value from it [. . .] The callousness of recording (the incident) while another person is on the ground being beaten is appalling" (p. 2).

These events, and their coverage in the media, articulate a set of key concerns about young people as mobile media users. The first of these is risk: the young mobile phone user, in this sense, is a potential risk to the safety or well-being of others. The suggestion here is not that mobile phones themselves lead to more violence, but that the act of recording the bad behavior and later sharing it with others becomes part of the motivation for that behavior. In this case, the mobile phone is not a device that keeps young people safer or more secure, despite this being a significant parental motivation for getting mobile phones for their children. Echoes of Ulrich Beck's risk society are invoked in this representation of the mobile phone as exemplar of the way the trappings of modern life have become the very things producing insecurity and reducing safety.

When the mobile phone appears to be used in ways that victimize others and increase vulnerability – for example, exposing children to sex and violence – anxieties and moral panic predominate. Labeling these cases instances of moral panic is not to suggest that these actions are not actually happening or do not result in real harm to individuals. Even if the true scope of the problem is overstated by media reports, the cases themselves deserve attention in terms of their implications for young people's use of mobile media. As Goggin (2006) has noted, "bullying via the instrument of the cell phone remains almost exclusively something that is associated with children and young people" (p. 118).

The events in Werribee brought to the surface some of the deepest fears regarding youth mobile phone use: untamed youth as devils, innocent children at risk, and the role of media in the corruption of young people. In another, very different, example, the place of new and mobile media in children's education evoked a similarly passionate response in public debate.

On July 25, 2008, Diedre Coleman's 9X English class at Presbyterian Ladies' College, a private high school not far from the center of Australia's largest city, took the concept of the open book exam a step further than usual. Cognizant that books are not the only media from which information can be obtained, Coleman extended the concept to become an "open interactive technology" exam. The students prepared by considering sources of information and evaluating their appropriateness. Once in the exam, the students were given 40 minutes with which to complete the task. They were able to access any Internet site, any social networking site, were able to "phone a friend" or use iPods and mp3 players, and they could use headphones to access information or to block out noise from other students. The students were told to expect movement and noise from the others, although noise was to be kept to a minimum and they were not allowed to talk to one another. Once seated and prepared, they received their assignment, as follows: You are to write a sonnet. The subject of the sonnet is teenage love.

After they completed the assignment, the students were asked to reflect on the exercise and offer some remarks for the school's internal evaluation. Some of the responses include the following (quotations from personal communication, Presbyterian Ladies' College, March 10, 2009):⁸

I have learnt a lot from this experience, not only about the limitations of technology, but also how to manage masses of information in small periods of time [. . .] It has taught me about working under pressure and what works best for me in this situation. If I could do the assessment again, I would probably stay more focused because, at the beginning, I spent about 10 minutes looking for websites which I didn't use.

Next time I think I will try to be more open minded about the choices I make and try to include everything instead of just taking the obvious route (computer/internet) and not utilising everything I could.

I organised to phone a close family friend although in the end she didn't answer her phone on the day, so the plan went out the window.

I called my Auntie who is quite good at English. She helped me to brainstorm ideas and allowed me to start writing my sonnet. I found this very useful as she was prompt in returning my phone calls and gave me feedback about aspects of the sonnet.

When this experiment was reported in the daily broadsheet newspaper, the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Patty, 2008), the responses on the accompanying blog were, expectedly, almost all diametrically opposed along lines that are now familiar. One group responded by bemoaning the exercise as an expression of the decline in educational standards – new media use associated here with the decline of literacy – and hence a decline in cultural standards and further evidence that modern education was not adequately preparing students for the future as productive citizens. Some examples of this sort of response included:

Yet another example of society not making kids responsible for their own action. Looks like I will never get to retire, as the next generation will not be able to think for themselves.

This is absolutely ridiculous. Education is about preparing children for adulthood. Sorry PLC Croydon, but you have failed. If a student does not develop a decent study/work regime, what good will they be at University and then in the workforce? (SMH Online, 2008)

Others saw the process as open to abuse, either through cheating or by unfair advantages for those with access to expert knowledge:

A lot of kids don't have mentors outside of school or relatives who they can "brainstorm ideas with." For example kids who migrated from a foreign country whose parents don't speak any english, whose relatives dont speak any english. Who are they going to call to brainstorm ideas with? The rich kids with educated parents will do well but noone else. (SMH Online, 2008)

On the other hand, some were supportive of the task, noting that it reflected the skills and knowledge required outside of formal educational institutional environments:

I am a manager with a number of staff. I don't require them to memorise everything, but I do need them to be able to research information, analyse it and use it to support whatever project we are implementing. People with strong skills in researching (ie via internet, books and people), analysis (eg using tools such as statistics) and writing (to produce reports, documents, policies etc) will do well in any workplace. People with excellent writing skills are highly valued. Given this, I think PLC is on the right track. Exams based on memory only are no longer relevant for the world we live in.

A+ This is exactly what professionals, tradespeople, and everyone else does in the real world. Finally education is creeping into our schools! (SMH Online, 2008)

Others, adding their support, also took umbrage with the notion that this task was not developing learning skills:

Another key point missed by many here is the concept of "Core Skills." In what is becoming a more diversified work place where multi-tasking; changing career paths; and professions with ever changing underlining theory of practice and technology is becoming the norm (what you learnt at school 20 years ago is not what children are learning today), "Core Skills" are becoming increasingly more important. For those who aren't aware of core skills; they are attributes such as inter-personal communication (phone a friend); research skill (internet/databases); critical analysis (knowing what is relevant to put on your IPOD); problem based learning (learning how to solve a problem beyond recalling what is locked away in your brain) etc. (SMH Online, 2008)

These contrasting responses to the "Phone-a-Friend" news story are characteristic of the public discussion and political attitudes toward young people and media. They are also characteristic of another typical tendency – namely, the absence of, or dis-

missal of, children's voices in the debates that concern them. This is particularly evident in the responses of those who bemoaned the supposed decline in cultural standards they feared would result from this form of educational practice. The students themselves, as is demonstrated in their responses, took a more circumspect and pragmatic approach. Similarly, Alan, the father of the Werribee assault survivor, presented a pragmatic, tempered, and humane case for proportionality, if not moderation, regarding the boys' punishment, in contrast to many public calls for much harsher sentencing. He reserved his criticism for those who had been insufficient, in his view, in their responsibility for the welfare of his daughter.

Giving voices to children in these public debates about the politics of mobile media is not straightforward or easy. In the Werribee case, the girl's right to privacy and protection from further harm makes it difficult to expect her to respond, and in any case it is likely that her concerns would differ from policymakers'. The opinions of students surveyed in Hyogo (and their families) could have been taken further into account but were easily dismissed by policymakers. The students from PLC seemed to contribute to public debates and internal school feedback about the assessment task they participated in, but again, their contributions seemed to be ignored by policymakers.

Comparing Japan and Australia: Commonalities and Contexts

The examples in this chapter were not selected because they provided material for cross-cultural comparison but because they illustrate a range of instances in which mobile media use by children and young people has been politicized. Still, taken together, the examples from Japan and Australia demonstrate some significant similarities and some notable differences. One of the most compelling similarities is how important mobile phones have become for the management of family life in both Australia and Japan. This is evident in the examples shown here and also in comparable literature and research (such as Matsuda, 2008, 2009, 2010; New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People, 2009). Mobile phones have become firmly entrenched as essential devices for family communication and coordination. (This is demonstrated in the representation of family life in the example from SUOMO's promotion of U-Japan: seeking a positive aspect of children's access to mobile communications to showcase its policy, the Japanese government chooses the mother-child relationship.) Research in similarly affluent societies supports this finding (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Rakow & Navarro, 1993; Rizzo, 2008).

Certain themes in the representation of youth mobile use are also evident in these case studies. First, commonly held fears about the impact of mobile media on children's lives include those related to exposure to sex and violence. There are, however, different sets of mobile media that are associated with these behaviors: *enjo*

kosai is not unique to Japan (similar practices have been reported in South Korea and the global cities of East Asia [see Spry, 2008]), but it is not as much a concern in Australia, where “sexting” – the sending of sexually explicit messages and photographs via mobile devices – is the main activity prompting public distress and political responses (New South Wales Government, 2009). Likewise, the attempts to profit from the filming and distribution of the sexual humiliation in the Kings of Werribee example does not have an equivalent in the Japanese examples chosen, although that does not rule out the possibility of its occurrence. The acts of cyberbullying cited in the Hyogo research do seem roughly analogous to concerns raised in the Australian context, as do the concerns that mobile phones are a distraction from the “proper,” more traditional and accepted forms of educational practice.

A notable difference between Australia and Japan is the public call for bans on school-aged children owning or possessing mobile phones by several leading Japanese politicians. Similar calls have not been made in Australia, at least not to the same extent. This may be a product of the different political cultures. Australia is a liberal democracy with strong anti-authoritarian tendencies, and Australians are much less likely to accept direct government intervention in a matter they would regard as a private concern. Many Australians would view any such intervention as overreach by an intrusive state. Japan, on the other hand, has a history of state intervention in the schooling and moral education of Japanese children, going back to the Meiji restoration and including the reforms of the post-World War II era. The Japanese citizenry would be more familiar with (and possibly more accepting of) state calls for “improved moral health,” such as those implicit in the mobile phone bans. This important difference between Australia and Japan underscores the importance of local and national cultures in the politics of youth mobile media use.

Overall, there were important similarities in the representation of children as immature or risky media users. It appears that the moral panics identified by David Buckingham (2000) and Sonia Livingstone (2002, 2009) with regards to youth media use in the United Kingdom are evident also in Japan and Australia. (Regarding Australia’s similarity to the UK context, see Goggin, 2006.)

Back to the Futures: Conclusions and Questions

What becomes apparent in a variety of ways in Australia and Japan is that mobile media present challenges for techno-dystopians, who see new media as the source of new risks and moral hazards, and opportunities for techno-optimists, who see new media as having brighter, more creative and democratic prospects. It also brings into sharp relief the role of ongoing normative notions of children, raising questions about how the key institutions of the family and schooling negotiate children’s mobile media use. Public discussion of children as mobile media users remains strongly informed by past constructions of childhood, from Hobbes through to

Piaget, which present children as only partially formed human “becomings,” not as complete human beings.

A common refrain is that children are the future. This cliché turns children into possessions, and burdens them with hopes for, and fears of, the future, including the future of communications technology use. Children become the symbols of what humans are turning into; their use of media called in evidence of the way things are to become. Entire generations are marked out as either indicators of social decline – “the dumbest generation,” according to Bauerlein (2009) – or as pointers to a brighter, techno-utopian tomorrow via the technologically savvy “digital generation” (Tapscott, 2009). And while there are a number of sophisticated approaches to children as creative and engaged (if imperfect) media users (Buckingham, 2000; Livingstone, 2002, 2009; Montgomery, 2007), there unfortunately seems to be little room for nuanced understandings of these issues in public debate.

Moreover, seeing children as the *future* can deny children their *present*, limiting their capacity to participate in public discussion and political decisions that affect the future of media. There are a few exceptions to this exclusion. The students from PLC, as I mentioned, were able to participate in the online debate, and in the internal review, about the “open technology exam,” but it was unclear how seriously their views were taken. Compared with the views of professional teachers and departmental staff, and of course parents, the views of children are easily dismissed. In another case (New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People, 2009), school-children were invited to participate in research investigating their views and experiences with mobile media. I was a researcher on this project, and this chapter is in part a result of my participation. The experience was instructive: conducting research with school students requires the permission of a number of gatekeepers, including university ethics committees, government departments, high school principals, teachers, parents, and, lastly, the students themselves. The research was instructive and offers one of the few examples of the directly expressed views of young mobile media users in educational contexts (New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People, 2009). Rich Ling (2001, 2005, 2008), Larissa Hjorth (2009), and Misa Matsuda (2008, 2009, 2010), *inter alia*, have also done important research with young mobile media users, usually in social or family contexts. Still, research is developed, funded, designed, carried out, reported on, and eventually offered for the consideration of adults in authority (see Spry, 2012). These research efforts suggest that there are ways to include the voices of children in public debates about their lives, yet also highlight how rare and difficult it is for these voices to be heard.

NOTES

- 1 I use the term mobile media to highlight the uses of the mobile phone that extend beyond telephony to include SMS (short message service) messaging, emailing, accessing the World Wide Web, digital photography, and so on (see Goggin, 2006; Ling, 2005). I use

- the term mobile phone interchangeably with its equivalents from North America (cell phone) and Japan (*keitai*).
- 2 Elementary school, as it is known in the United States of America and Japan, is referred to as “primary school” in Australia. Both systems roughly cover ages 5 through 12. I use the terms interchangeably, dependent on the country in question.
 - 3 See Green (2003); Johnson (2003); Goggin (2006); Grinter and Eldridge (2001); Ling (2005, 2008); Matsuda (2005); Taylor and Harper (2002, 2003); Weilemann and Larsson (2002); Wynn and Katz (2000); Yoon (2006); and Hemelryk Donald and Spry (2007).
 - 4 See Goggin (2006, 2010); Habuchi (2005); Dindorfer Anderson (2010); Hemelryk Donald and Spry (2007); Spry (2010); and Castells et al. (2007).
 - 5 See Matsuda (2008, 2009); Rakow and Navarro (1993); Geser (2004); Davie, Panting and Charlton (2004); Rizzo (2008); Ribak (2009); Christensen (2009); and Devitt and Roker (2009).
 - 6 *Enjo kosai* is a practice wherein young Japanese girls, usually in high school or younger, arrange meetings with (typically) older men and participate in social activities like dinner or karaoke up to and including sexual acts, in exchange for money or gifts of expensive designer goods like jewelry, clothes, or perfume (see Spry, 2008, 2010). Aside from the concerns about minors engaging in sexual acts, reports of violence raise further concerns. According to the National Police Agency, in 2008 “the number of people who became crime victims after using dating sites [. . .] included 328 high school students, 211 junior high school students and two elementary school students. Of those under 18, 714 people, or 98.6 percent, accessed dating sites via cell phones” (“Net profile sites new threat to kids,” 2009). The same report notes that online sexual predation may be moving from dating sites to social networking sites.
 - 7 These sites typically include photos and commentary on colleagues, friends, and staff members of the school of those students who set up and contribute to the site.
 - 8 The names of the students have been withheld. These quoted responses, as well as the information about the exercise, were provided via email by Presbyterian Ladies’ College.

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Artificial Life on a Dead Planet

Charles Thorpe

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Charles Thorpe argues that the trajectory of capitalist technology is toward artificial life on a dead planet. The destruction of ecosystems and species by deforestation, chemical pollution, and the effects of climate change is being accompanied by a parallel process of the creation of artificial forms of life. We currently face crisis in all the systems that sustain life on this planet: from the oceans, to the soil, to the atmosphere. But as capitalist industry devastates the existing natural world, capitalist-aligned technoscience brings into being new forms of autonomous or lifelike technologies. The devastation of existing ecosystems and the construction of lifelike technologies are interrelated developments that are rooted in capitalist dynamics of alienation, reification, and subsumption. Just as, under capitalism, human life-activity is transformed into abstract labor, the productive and reproductive capacities of living things are transformed into abstract life. Life is eviscerated, simplified, and reified, while the powers of the living are transferred to capital. At the same time that the living world is in a state of crisis, capital is becoming increasingly lifelike.

Introduction

No one today remembered why the war had come about or who, if anyone, had won. The dust which had contaminated most of the planet's surface had originated in no country and no one, even the wartime enemy, had planned on it. First, strangely, the owls had died [. . .] After the owls, of course, the other birds followed, but by then the mystery had been grasped and understood. A meager [extra-terrestrial] colonization program had been underway before the war but now that the sun had ceased to shine on Earth the colonization entered an entirely new phase [. . .] Under U.N. law each emigrant automatically received possession of an android subtype of his choice [. . .] That had been the ultimate incentive of emigration: the android servant as carrot, the radioactive fallout as stick.

(Dick, 1999, p. 15)

Philip K. Dick's science fiction masterpiece, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), presents a future in which most of Earth's species have been wiped out by radioactive fallout and the human survivors are fleeing a ravaged Earth. Survival on the inhospitable terrain of other planets is made possible by android slave labor. For those who cling on in Earth's decaying cities, possession of a live animal is highly coveted, due to the fragility of biological life on the planet and the scarcity of animal life. The majority who cannot pay the premium for a live animal accept as second best an android replica of a sheep, a snake, or an owl.

Science fiction frequently couples artificial life with ecological devastation, violence, and the destruction of human life. Movies like *The Terminator* or *The Matrix* present an eviscerated Earth covered in scrap metal and stalked by machines, and scenarios of biotechnological experimentation gone awry have been the premise in films such as *I Am Legend* and *28 Days Later*. These films reflect a cultural undercurrent of unease that contrasts with the techno-hype current in our universities and among our policymakers.

Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) portrays a world in which, as the Earth's species face extinction, corporate laboratories are turning out new genetically engineered life-forms, such as pigs with human internal organs. The corporations also are boosting demand for their pharmaceutical products by surreptitiously producing new diseases. Atwood combines imagery of sterility, extinction, and death with the portrayal of the uncontrollable overflowing of bizarre new life-forms. Life takes new forms, but in ways that offer bleak prospects for the continuation of *human* life.

As Daniel Dinello (2005) has argued, such science fiction visions of technology out of control can no longer be dismissed as mere sensationalism or paranoia. Rather, these fictional scenarios can sensitize us to dynamics that are institutionally embedded and have political and economic power, but which are also the source of pervasive social anxiety. Such dystopian and pessimistic forms of science fiction offer a useful counter to the breathlessly optimistic, utopian language in which technologies such as nanotechnology and robotics are framed by their proponents (Dinello, 2005,

pp. 1–17).¹ What, then, is the critical significance of these couplings of artificial life with the destruction of life? Do these combined images reflect real-world developments? If this is a warning, is it about technology itself, or about a more fundamental dynamic in our social relations and social organization?

Today, the destruction of ecosystems and species by deforestation, chemical pollution, and the effects of climate change is indeed being accompanied by a parallel process of the creation of artificial forms of life. We currently face the evisceration and breakdown of all the systems that sustain life on this planet: from the oceans, to the soil, to the atmosphere. But as capitalist industry devastates the existing natural world, capitalist-aligned technoscience brings into being new forms of autonomous or “lifelike” technologies.

In his famous missive in the year 2000, “Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us,” the computer scientist Bill Joy used the term “GNR technologies” to designate the converging fields of genetics, robotics, and nanotechnology – scientific fields that produce technologized forms of life or lifelike technologies. Joy warned that what is new in such technologies is the potential for “uncontrolled self-replication,” which poses the “risk of substantial damage in the physical world” (Joy, 2000). In the mid-twentieth century, the philosopher and sociologist Jacques Ellul used the concept of “the self-augmentation of technique” to designate the way in which large-scale modern technological and instrumentally rational systems (such as nuclear power) build their own internal momentum and escape social control (Ellul, 1964, p. 85). What is striking today is the fact that this autonomy of technology is no longer merely metaphorical, designating a loss of control by human beings over our collective creations. The goal of science and engineering in the GNR fields is to produce technological forms that are literally and concretely autonomous: robots that act independently of human command, or new manipulated or synthesized living things – technologies that appropriate the ability of living things to reproduce and multiply.

In an essay discussing the meaning of the android in his fiction, Dick observed that “the greatest change growing across our world these days is probably the momentum of the living toward reification, and at the same time a reciprocal entry into animation by the mechanical” (Dick, 1995, p. 212). This offers a profound insight into contemporary capitalist technoscience. The reification of the living as resource or commodity and the transformation of living organisms into productive machines is today accompanied by the animation of the non-living. Life is reified as it is subsumed within commodity relations and the cash nexus. The living world is integrated within capitalism as a stock of resources to be exploited and as a sink for pollutants. The consequent intense exploitation and waste are largely responsible for the unprecedented human degradation of the natural world and assault on the conditions for life that we are witnessing today. This degradation of the natural world combines with the intensified subsumption of nature and of life itself within capital: the transformation of the living world so as to shape the reproductive capacities of the living according to the timescales and efficiency norms of capitalist production. The result of these processes is a vast simplification in the natural living world:

the degradation of the Earth's ecosystems, the loss of biodiversity, and the imposition of standardized agrobusiness monoculture. As in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, this destruction of natural diversity is indeed accompanied by at least the promise of a proliferation of new forms of life, engineered or synthesized living organisms and lifelike machines. A dead planet and artificial life therefore represent twin trajectories of contemporary capitalism.

From Abstract Labor to Abstract Life

In order to make sense of the contemporary interpenetration of life and technology, we must come to grips with how life is used and transformed within our productive and social relations. Karl Marx argued that the capitalist mode of production means the domination of living labor by its alienated, dead products. As he put it in Volume 1 of *Capital*, "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" (Marx, 1977, p. 342). The workers' labor is transformed into an independent power, standing over and against them. In capital, the living is transformed into the dead and what is dead takes on power over what is living (Foster & Clark, 2009, p. 10; Fromm, 1973, p. 339, n. 14; Neocleous, 2003).

Capitalism also involves the domination of the living in a broader sense. Marx wrote in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* that alienated labor makes nature into "an alien world inimically opposed" to the worker (Marx, 1964, p. 111). Through alienated labor, human beings do not engage nature as a life-giving milieu with which their labor is interconnected. Rather, nature is constructed as a set of resources to be exploited. The aim of this exploitation is not the immediate satisfaction of human needs but, rather, the augmentation of capital as self-valorizing value. Marx wrote that as nature is appropriated through alienated labor, "it more and more ceases to be *means of life*" (Marx, 1964, p. 109, emphasis in original). I want to suggest that this alienation of nature and of life today has two aspects. One is the degradation of the life-supporting abundance of the natural world through extraction, exploitation, and waste, resulting in the mounting global ecological crisis (Foster, 1994; Speth, 2008, pp. 17–66). The other is the production of life that is interpenetrated with capital and, hence, takes the form of capitalized life or living capital (Rikowski, 2003; Yoxen, 1981).

The subsumption of life by capital parallels and is related to the subsumption of labor. Labor is formally subsumed under capital when it takes the form of commodified labor capacity, in other words, when it becomes *wage labor*. Labor comes under real subsumption when capital assumes direct control over the labor process, transforming working activity so that it takes on a specifically capitalist character. In numerous passages, Marx described how mechanization represents a transformation of labor such that the worker's life-activity is appropriated and subsumed by capital

in the form of technology. The machinery develops complexity and takes on a central power in the production process as the worker's activity is simplified and fragmented (Marx, 1973, p. 693; see also Bowring, 2003, pp. 103–104). Hence, according to Marx, “What was the living worker's activity becomes the activity of the machine” (Marx, 1973, p. 704).

The reification of labor as a commodity is experienced by the worker as estrangement from his living activity, as his work is regulated, standardized, and disciplined. What Harry Braverman (1974) described as the “degradation” of work accompanies and is a condition of the augmentation of the capacities of machinery in the productive process. Marx argued that, under capitalism, value is derived from “abstract human labour,” that is, labor as a general capacity abstracted from such concrete actions as weaving or tailoring (Marx, 1977, p. 150). It is also implied by Marx's theory of real subsumption that capital tends to reconstruct labor as an activity, so that differentiating qualities are increasingly lost. The specifically capitalist labor process is one in which work is simplified and rendered abstract in practice, as the organizing intelligence in the labor process passes from the worker to capital itself expressed in the system of machinery.

The tendency in Taylorism, automation, and later twentieth-century developments in computerization is toward the loss of differentiating qualities from work. Hence, the mid-twentieth century saw the rise of the “mass worker” whose working activity “meets Marx's definition of ‘abstract labour’ – labour which is independent of the particular concrete form it takes at any given time” (Bowring, 2004, p. 106; see also Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 292).

Continuous with modern capitalism's tendency toward abstract labor is a tendency toward abstract life. This means the decontextualization, reification, and commodification of the productive and reproductive capacities of living things.² Sociologists William Boyd, W. Scott Prudham, and Rachel Schurman argue that an *analogy* can be drawn from Marx's concepts of the formal and real subsumption of *labor* to the formal and real subsumption of *nature*. Under formal subsumption, nature is transformed into a set of resources and commodified. But the “natural schedules of biological or geophysical (re)production,” the available natural stock of these resources, and their geographical location are confronted by the capitalist as exogenous brute facts (Boyd, Prudham, & Schurman, 2001, p. 563). This is the case in extractive industries such as mining and logging. In contrast, “The real subsumption of nature refers to systematic increases in or intensification of biological productivity” through inputs such as fertilizers and growth hormones or through the manipulation of the genetic program (Boyd et al., 2001, p. 564). Under real subsumption, capital imposes a specifically capitalist mode of (re)production, speeding up natural processes or altering them to increase reliability, predictability, efficiency, and control.

Boyd, Prudham, and Schurman are too cautious, however, in referring to the relationship between the real subsumption of labor and that of nature as merely *analogous*. These are not mere analogies but are actually historically and practically interrelated developments. Marx treated the organization of labor and the

organization of nature as interrelated aspects of the capitalist production process. Just as labor is transformed, through its combination and mechanization, nature is transformed as “gigantic natural forces [. . .] [are] pressed into the service of production” (Marx, 1977, p. 775). The pioneer of Marxist environmental critique, John Bellamy Foster, suggests a close *actual* relationship between the real subsumption of labor and nature as interconnected developments within monopoly capitalism. The scientization of production was closely related to the concentration of capital in oligopolistic enterprises. The application of science in the chemical and electrical engineering industries meant a new level of capital-intensiveness that gave advantage, through economies of scale, to large firms. Foster argues that the scientization of production under monopoly capitalism “was aimed at extending both the division of labor and the division of nature, and in the process both were transformed” (Foster, 1994, p. 110). The real subsumption of labor and nature both tended toward simplification and homogeneity: “complex, highly skilled labor was to be reduced to its simplest most interchangeable – and hence cost-efficient – parts. [. . .] As labor became more homogeneous, so did much of nature, which underwent a similar process of degradation” (Foster, 1994, p. 111).

Modern sciences of genetics and bioengineering have pioneered the control of life – for example, in the production of standardized organisms, such as particular varieties of mice or fruit fly, for use as experimental models (Kohler, 1994; Rader, 2004). Today, such scientific techniques are harnessed closely to capitalist production, so that the control of life through genetic engineering and biotechnology allows the intervention in reproductive processes so as to configure these for efficient commodity production. In this process, life is rendered abstract. Particular qualitative differences (for example, between species) are overcome as genes are moved around and spliced between organisms and as, in synthetic genomics, the disassembly of life into its most basic components facilitates the assembly of new forms of life as patented living commodities. Sociologist Finn Bowring argues that “modern biotechnology [. . .] allows human beings to disregard animals’ natural form of life.” At its most extreme, “its goal is to transform the natural world into a universe of functional bio-machines” (Bowring, 2003, pp. 134, 143).

As well as in genetic engineering and “synthetic biology,” abstract life is expressed in what John Johnston (2008) calls the “machinic life” of robotics and computational artificial life. While synthetic genomics attempts to create “programmable” biological organisms, bringing the logic of engineering into the biological realm, the fields of machinic life may be seen as an attempt to relocate the reproductive capacities of life in the inorganic domain of metallic robots and computers. In new fields such as bionanotechnology, we can see practical efforts to break down the boundaries between what practitioners refer to as “hardware,” “software,” and “wetware,” and indeed to merge the so-called hard artificial life of computing and robotics with the so-called wet artificial life of synthetic biology.

Robotics pioneer Rodney Brooks suggests that the melding of flesh and machine is pervasive in contemporary culture: “Researchers are placing chips in animal, and

sometimes human, flesh and letting neurons grow and connect to them. The direct neural interface between man and machine is starting to happen. At the same time, surgery is becoming more acceptable for all sorts of body modifications" (Brooks, 2002, p. x). As the robotics revolution becomes integrated with the biotechnology revolution, he argues, "Our machines will become much more like us, and we will become much more like our machines" (Brooks, 2002, p. 11).

In these discourses and accompanying practices, life is thereby abstracted not only from particular organisms and ecologies, but also from the organic altogether: life becomes instead a set of abstract functions that may be expressed in either animal or machine or in their combination. The constitution of abstract life tends toward the *conceptual* abstraction from qualitative differences between the organic and the non-organic and toward their *practical* reconstitution.

The technological convergence between the sciences of automation, information, and biological control, signaled by acronyms such as "GNR," suggests the convergence between abstract labor and abstract life. Such ideas are part of the discourse of capitalist techno-futurism, a way of promising continued progress and the continual reinvention of capital (Cooper, 2008). An advertisement for the Lexus automobile forecasts: "Someday nanotechnology will be used to turn plants into [automobile] components" (Lexus, "Hello Someday" advertising campaign, October 2009). The dream of total automation and the workerless factory, central to the techno-utopian fantasies of robotics and nanotechnology pioneers, combines with visions of the total control of the reproductive capacities of living organisms. Such techno-futurist visions are not idle fantasies but are pursued in the projects of universities, spin-out firms, and industrial research laboratories. What such visions and projects augur is the emancipation of capital from its dependencies on human and biological life exogenous to it through the appropriation of life for capital itself. "Thus all powers of labour" *and*, we should now add, *of life*, "are transposed into powers of capital" (Marx, 1973, p. 701).

A Dead Planet

We are currently undergoing what scientists dub the "sixth extinction," the sixth mass extinction event in the world's history – and the first one that is caused by human activity (Ananthaswamy, 2004; Eldredge, 1998; Leakey & Lewin, 1995). Plant and animal species are vanishing at 100 to 1,000 times the natural "background" extinction rate. In its 2007 survey of species, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature found that 39% of the species it surveyed were threatened with extinction: "one in three amphibians, one quarter of the world's pines and other coniferous trees, one in eight birds and one in four mammals" (Novack, 2008; see also Ananthaswamy, 2004; Severino & Seligmann, 2008). The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) reported in 2008 that the world's population of wildlife has fallen by between a quarter and a

third since 1970. Populations of marine species fell by 28% in just 10 years (1995 to 2005) and populations of ocean birds have fallen by 30% since the mid-1990s (“Wildlife Populations,” 2008). The editor of the ZSL report, scientist Jonathan Loh, described the decline as “completely unprecedented in terms of human history. You’d have to go back to the extinction of the dinosaurs to see a decline as rapid as this” (ZSL, 2008). This massive loss of species is caused by a combination of the destruction of natural habitat, overexploitation, pollution, the spread of invasive species, and, increasingly, the effects of climate change.

Ocean ecosystems are under severe pressure due to exploitation and pollution, leading to a dramatic decrease in the diversity and complexity of ocean life. According to marine ecologist Jeremy Jackson:

Synergistic effects of habitat destruction, overfishing, introduced species, warming, acidification, toxins, and massive runoff of nutrients are transforming once complex ecosystems like coral reefs and kelp forests into monotonous level bottoms, transforming clear and productive coastal seas into anoxic dead zones, and transforming complex food webs topped by big animals into simplified, microbially dominated ecosystems. (Jackson, 2008)

Overfishing has led to the plummeting of fish stocks. Descriptions from the preindustrial era portray an abundance of ocean life that is now hard for us to imagine. Callum Roberts, Professor of Marine Conservation at York University, remarks that, “We have come to accept the degraded condition of the sea as normal. People [. . .] dismiss as far-fetched tales of giant fish or seas bursting with life” (quoted in Vidal, 2008, p. 26). An article in *The Economist* notes that

the fish that once seemed an inexhaustible source of food are now almost everywhere in decline: 90% of large predatory fish (the big ones such as tuna, swordfish and sharks) have gone, according to some scientists. In estuaries and coastal waters, 85% of the large whales have disappeared, and nearly 60% of the small ones. Many of the smaller fish are also in decline. (Grimond, 2009, p. 3)

Effects of overfishing are compounded by global warming. Coral reefs are bleached and dying: “Perhaps only 5% of coral reefs can now be considered pristine, a quarter have been lost and all are vulnerable to global warming” (Grimond, 2009, p. 4). There are ever more algal blooms appearing in the oceans and ever more and ever larger “dead zones” caused by algal blooms, areas of ocean depleted of oxygen and therefore sea life. These had been known to occur as the result of fertilizer run-off from agriculture. They are now occurring more frequently, independently of fertilizer run-off, apparently from global warming causing shifting ocean currents to bring nutrients up from the depths to the surface, leading to growth of algae. In 2006, the UN Environment Program said that the number of such dead zones had grown by a third in the space of two years (Grimond, 2009, p. 4; Than, 2009; “UN: Ocean Dead Zones,” 2006). According to a Pulitzer Prize-winning *Los Angeles Times* story, the algal

blooms are “distress signals from an unhealthy ocean. Overfishing, destruction of wetlands, industrial pollution and climate change have made the seas inhospitable for fish and more advanced forms of life and freed the lowliest – algae and bacteria – to flourish” (Weiss & McFarling, 2006). The complex ocean ecosystem, once capable of sustaining abundant and diverse life, is being transformed into an eviscerated environment sustaining only simplified and less diverse organisms.

In recent years, there have been a number of both disturbing and poorly understood cases of the crashing of wildlife populations. Scientists do not fully understand what is causing the Colony Collapse Disorder affecting honeybee populations in the United States and Europe, but it seems to be the result of a “synergistic” combination of stresses such as chemical pollution, parasites, pathogens, and lack of food (MacKenzie, 2009; “Scientists Untangle,” 2009). It is similarly unclear what is behind the fungal infection known as “white nose syndrome” that is killing vast numbers of bats in North America (Kolbert, 2009, pp. 60–62). Along with factors such as disease and habitat destruction, chemical pollution is thought by scientists to be a contributor to the sharp decline of amphibian populations, with 32% of the world’s amphibian species now threatened (“Worldwide Amphibian Declines,” 2009). A recent study suggests that deformities found in increasing numbers of frogs in the United States are “caused by a synergism between parasitic infection and exposure to low levels of agricultural chemicals” (Hileman, 2002). Professor of Ecology Joseph M. Kiesecker speculates, in line with this, that chemical pollution may be “changing the environment in ways that increase disease prevalence” (quoted in Hileman, 2002; see also Collins & Crump, 2009, esp. pp. 8, 99–100, 101–104, 198–199).

Soil erosion is a silent crisis facing global agriculture. As environmental journalist Stephen Leahy puts it, “in the past 40 years alone, 30 percent of the planet’s arable land has become unproductive due to erosion, mainly in Asia and Africa. At current erosion rates, soils are being depleted faster than they are replenished” (Leahy, 2008; see also Sample, 2007). According to Lester Brown, director of the Earth Policy Institute research group, deforestation and overgrazing in Africa are contributing to dust storms that “are slowly draining the continent of its fertility and biological productivity” (quoted in Vidal, 2009).

Deforestation, in particular the destruction of the rainforests, is a major cause of biodiversity loss and a contributor to climate change and is caused by logging, clearance for agriculture, mining and industrial development, and dam projects (“Amazon Carbon Sink,” 2004; “Amazon Destruction,” 2005; Pearce, 2006). Deforestation of tropical forests and primary forests increased in the first five years after the millennium, compared with the 1990s (though the Brazilian government recently announced plans to reduce the rate of deforestation). According to the environmental news site Mongobay.com, “each day at least 80,000 acres (32,300 ha) of forest disappear from Earth” (“A World Imperiled,” ca. 2009; see also “70% Deforestation,” 2008).

Climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions (and intensified by deforestation) adds to and compounds problems of the alteration and depletion of life-sustaining systems and the extinction of species (Pounds & Puschendorf, 2004;

Science Daily, 2007). Research by NASA scientist James Hansen reveals that the planet has undergone warming of 0.6°C (1.08°F) since 1970 and the 10 hottest years occurred between 1997 and 2008. This warming is due to accelerate, with devastating consequences. As Hansen puts it, these changes place the world in “imminent peril” (quoted in McKie, 2009). In 2004, a group of zoologists and biodiversity scientists wrote to *Nature* predicting “on the basis of mid-range climate-warming scenarios for 2050, that 15–37% of species in our sample of regions and taxa will be ‘committed to extinction’” (Thomas et al., 2004). In 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that 20–30% of plant and animal species would be at increased risk of extinction if average global temperatures were to rise by 2.7 to 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit (Bethge, 2007). On January 28, 2009, Al Gore testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that if carbon emissions were unchecked, global average temperatures could rise by 11 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century. With increased desertification and crop failure cutting food supplies, as well as the melting away of glaciers threatening water supplies for irrigation and drinking water, such a development would bring “a screeching halt to human civilisation and threaten the fabric of life everywhere on Earth” (quoted in Goldenberg, 2009).

Already, climate change is producing serious water shortages. According to the Working Group on Climate Change and Development, the melting of Andean glaciers “forces people to farm at higher altitudes to grow their crops, adding to deforestation, which in turn undermines water resources and leads to soil erosion and putting the survival of Andean cultures at risk” (quoted in Vidal, 2006). In 2008, the executive director of the UN Environment Program warned that climate change may lead to severe droughts and water shortages such that parts of the world may have to be abandoned by humans (Jowit, 2008). So the creation of oceanic dead zones is paralleled on land by desertification: complex life-sustaining ecosystems are replaced by simplified ecologies incapable of supporting human life.

The evisceration of ecosystems is connected with a more general process of homogenization. Biodiversity is lost, and wild species give way to domesticated monocultures of industrialized farming. The destruction of the wild accompanies and furthers the global expansion and dominance of a globalized corporate culture in which all differences are assimilated to a common commodity form. The loss of habitat for wild species is accompanied by the loss of diversity of human cultures. As journalist Terry Glavin points out, a corollary of the extinction of species is the destruction of indigenous peoples and the extinction of their cultures and languages (Glavin, 2006; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). The complexity both of nature and of human cultures is being diminished, giving way to monoculture. The environmental crisis manifests a powerful tendency toward *simplification* (Wessels, 2006).

We are seeing not only the extinction of wild species, but also a dramatic decline in the diversity of domesticated plants and animals. Glavin writes, “by the beginning of the twentieth century, about 4000 breeds of animals had been domesticated, but by the end of the century, 618 of those distinct breeds were extinct and another 475 were threatened with extinction” (Glavin, 2006, p. 219). It is estimated that the

diversity of major livestock breeds is diminishing at about 5% per year (Glavin, 2006, p. 219). There has also been a dramatic reduction in genetic diversity in all major food crops over the course of the twentieth century (Glavin, 2006, p. 214). What Pat Mooney, executive director of the Rural Advancement Foundation International, calls a “plague of sameness” attacking the world’s plants has accelerated with contemporary agrobusiness and biotechnology (quoted in Glavin, 2006, p. 214). The tendency toward sameness was exacerbated by the industrialization of agriculture promoted in the post-World War II “Green Revolution,” which increased and concentrated the corporate control of agriculture (Glavin, 2006, pp. 217–223).

Industrial agriculture imposes standardization and monoculture, abstracting the reproduction of plants and animals from the interconnected processes of natural ecosystems. Sociologist Barbara Adam describes how industrial agriculture abstracts not only from place, but also from time. Technoscientific and industrial techniques detach agriculture from the natural rhythms that traditionally linked the patterns of farming to those of the natural world:

Despite this inescapable tie of (almost all) life forms to the earth’s rhythmicity and seasonality, attempts are being made to transcend that context-bound temporal characteristic and incorporate agriculture more fully within the industrial way of doing things: improve productivity, efficiency and profitability by creating sheep that “produce” lambs twice a year, crops that grow in extended seasons, apples that keep for an extra couple of months. (Adam, 1998, p. 141)

A similar process of abstraction is indicated by the distinction drawn by biologists Richard Lewontin and Jean-Pierre Berlan between farming and agriculture: “Farming is producing wheat; agriculture is turning phosphates into bread” (quoted in Foster, 1994, p. 117).

Agriculture relies increasingly on industrial inputs of fertilizer, pesticides, and machinery. In many cases, industrialized agriculture involves the total abstraction of the organism from the environment. Foster gives the example of cattle “removed from pasture and raised in feedlots.” Under these industrial conditions, “their natural waste, rather than fertilizing the soil, becomes a serious form of pollution” (Foster, 1994, p. 122). Industrial raising and slaughter of animals exemplifies the linkages between the real subsumption of labor and the real subsumption of life. In the mechanized chicken processing plant, one can see the relationship between the standardization of nonhuman animals as commodities and the routinization and control of human labor (Horowitz, 2004, esp. pp. 228–229).

The intimate historical and material relationship between the real subsumption of labor and the real subsumption of life is also indicated by Barry Commoner’s 1976 analysis of the economic roots of the energy crisis of that decade. Commoner pointed out that the extreme energy dependence of our economic and social activities was a relatively recent phenomenon: “there have been sweeping changes in the technology of agricultural and industrial production in the last thirty years”

(Commoner, 1979, p. 211). New technologies integrated into mass production after World War II massively increased the environmental impacts of the modern economy. The economy became more dependent on oil with highway building and increased use of automobiles and trucks for transportation. Petrochemical products became much more widely used in industry, agriculture, and in consumer products. The vast quantities of non-biodegradable, and often toxic, synthetic products produced and used in the postwar period marked this, Commoner argued, as the “Synthetics Age” (Commoner, 1979, p. 187). The combined capital-intensiveness and energy-intensiveness of the new industrial system was driven by attempts to integrate science into the production process so as to subsume both nature and labor. The new highly energy-dependent petrochemical agriculture was aimed at overcoming the barriers to profitability posed by natural growth cycles and local ecological conditions: harnessing nature to industrial patterns and products. Industry itself was becoming more capital- and energy-intensive in the ongoing quest to replace labor with automatic machinery. Commoner argues that the overriding obsession with increasing the productivity of labor led to a capital-intensive and energy-intensive apparatus of production, one which is highly wasteful and inefficient in its use of natural resources (Commoner, 1979, p. 212). Commoner points to the relationship between the real subsumption of labor via mechanization and the degradation of the environment.

Drawing on Commoner’s analysis, Foster argues that the post-World War II system of mass production and industrial agriculture is “counter-ecological.” The system is predicated on the *denial* of the ecological principle that “everything is connected to everything else” (Foster, 1994, pp. 118, 120). The standardized, simplified ecosystems of industrial agriculture are expressions of the way in which industrial agriculture binds life to the abstract value of money. In contrast to the interconnectedness of living things within natural ecosystems, in capitalist agriculture, as Foster puts it, “the only lasting connection between things is the cash nexus” (Foster, 1994, pp. 120–121).

We are frequently left with the remnants of formerly vibrant ecosystems: parks and zoos rather than genuine wilderness and wildlife. As wilderness is eliminated through deforestation, as the fabrics of ecosystems are ripped apart, and as biodiversity of both wild and domesticated nature is lost, species are preserved in a “living dead” form in zoos and national parks. Glavin (2006) writes that “living dead” is “a term biologists have begun to use to describe those species that are not expected to escape extinction without significant human intervention, such as captive breeding. Among the world’s endangered mammals, birds, and reptiles, already 1500 species are expected to be wholly dependent upon captive breeding by 2050” (pp. 20–21). The surviving members of these species live an abstracted existence in parks or zoos; they become specimens. As Glavin puts it, “they will not be ‘wild’ animals at all. They will be functions of artificial selection. They will live on in zoos, and perhaps some large parks [. . .] They will live in a simulacrum of the real world” (Glavin, 2006, pp. 24–25). The boundary between the natural and artificial is broken down as

the survival of these specimens comes to depend on interventionist programs of captive breeding. Such programs are promoted in terms of the pervasive ideology of techno-salvationism: "The alchemies of cryogenics, transgenetic manipulation, and the emerging biotechnologies that zookeepers are developing raise the very real possibility that many of the 'living dead' species of the world will never become extinct, at least not in the way that geneticists or taxonomists use the term" (Glavin, 2006, p. 38). In the United States and Britain, zoos and natural history museums are preserving genetic information on endangered species as "frozen arks" (Glavin, 2006, pp. 38–39; Harmon, 2009). As Glavin points out, given the destructive trajectory of modern societies, the notion that such projects constitute an "ark" and that there will at some point in the future be wild habitats into which these species can be restored seems "utopian." Instead, the most that such projects seem to promise is merely the indefinite maintenance of the "living dead" status of such species (p. 39).

Species are extracted from decimated ecosystems and preserved as specimens in zoos, and their sperm, embryos, tissue, and DNA are preserved. Already, the reproduction of these endangered species is increasingly indebted to techniques such as artificial insemination. Glavin writes, "Semen is being extracted from anesthetized tigers and stored away in frozen test tubes. The fertilized embryos of endangered gaurs are being implanted in Holstein cows. Horses are giving birth to zebras" (p. 39). So alongside the abstract existence of these species as "specimens," there is a further abstraction at work, accomplished by the new capabilities of genetic engineering. These species are preserved as abstract life. The preservationist project becomes linked to the technological control of abstract life in which qualitative differences between organisms and species are overcome. As Glavin puts it, "it is about the bleeding away of differences in the living world, and of differences between captivity and freedom, between the real and the fabricated" (pp. 30–31).

Artificial Life

Animal specimens are being abstracted, for their own protection, from ecosystems that are being destroyed. At the same time, genetic engineering is producing new animal strains which themselves are seen to represent risks to natural ecosystems and which therefore must be segregated. An example is the controversial transgenic AquaAdvantage salmon, developed by the company AquaBounty to be faster-growing than natural varieties of salmon currently used in aquaculture. Transgenic salmon are controversial due to worries about the potential for their escape from aquaculture nets into the wild and the possibly disastrous effects of their breeding with wild salmon. The production of transgenic salmon would be continuous with the dynamics of capitalist industrialized agriculture whereby natural processes are overcome in the cause of the enhancement of productivity; reproductive capacities of life are mobilized, but reconfigured to fit with capitalist dynamics (Bowring, 2003; Kelso,

2003, p. 93). This poses the problem of the relationship between this manufactured life-form and the broader natural environment. The risks are unknown: the existence of such life in the natural environment takes the form of a “real-world experiment” (Levidow & Carr, 2007). Risk is contained by the sequestration of the new organism from the ecosystem. The AquaAdvantage salmon is designed to be sterile, this sterility protecting not only the intellectual property of the biotech corporation but also the environment (Kelso, 2003, p. 89). Yet, the sterility of all individuals in a population may not be guaranteed so there is also the problem of the containment of the creatures from the environment. For the protection of the natural environment, either by sterility or by spatial segregation in “escape-proof facilities,” these creatures may have to be kept in abstraction from the ecosystem (Kelso, 2003, p. 101).

“Life” is today radically abstracted, re-situated, and reconfigured. The term “artificial life” is used with broad connotations in this chapter to denote the manifold ways in which modern technosciences, including genetic engineering, computing, robotics, and nanotechnology, are technologizing biological life and creating new forms of autonomous, self-replicating, and, hence, “lifelike” machines. But “artificial life” is also a term of art, and one of the most radical challenges to existing conceptual and ontological barriers between life and technology has come from the new technoscientific field that takes the name of “Artificial Life” (hereafter, AL). Thomas Ray, a pioneer of the field, defines its goal as “understanding biology by constructing biological phenomena out of artificial components, rather than breaking natural life forms down into their component parts. It is the synthetic rather than the reductionist approach” (Ray, 1995, p. 179). The umbrella incorporates hardware (robotics, nanotechnology), software (“replicating and evolving computer programs”), and wetware (“replicating and evolving organic molecules”) (Ray, 1995, pp. 179–180). AL seems, however, to be mainly associated with the “software” aspect in which Ray himself specializes and which is associated with the complexity and computational sciences of the Santa Fe Institute in the United States (Helmreich, 1998). The thrust of the project is the computer simulation of the self-organizing, replicating, and reproductive capacities of living things and ecological systems. These simulations inevitably raise the problem of the relationship between the simulated and the real: the philosophical question underlying much of the interest in AL is whether this “life on screen” is not merely “like” a living system but is an alternative *instance* of life (see Turkle, 1995, pp. 154–158).

Although Ray emphasizes that AL is synthetic, not reductionist, it nevertheless follows the logic of abstract life. Ray writes:

Our concepts of biology, evolution, and complexity are constrained by having observed only a single instance of life, life on earth. A truly comparative biology is needed to extend these concepts. Because we cannot observe life on other planets, we are left with the alternative of creating Artificial Life forms on earth. I will discuss the approach of inoculating evolution by natural selection into the medium of the digital computer. (p. 179)

Stefan Helmreich writes that AL may be seen as the consolidation of theoretical biology, artificial intelligence, and robotics. But he argues that the project derives much of its character from theoretical physics: "This shapes [. . .] its claims to be a biology that will be true anywhere in the universe, just as physics is true everywhere in the universe" (Helmreich, 1998, p. 47). AL operates with a conception of life that is abstracted from any given existence, form, or environment. From the initial abstract, universalistic, theoretical physics-influenced concept of life there follows the thought that life could evolve beyond the merely incidental biological forms of plants, animals, and micro-organisms.

Techno-futurist literature often posits a movement from biological to technological evolution. Carnegie Mellon University artificial intelligence researcher Hans Moravec is a key proponent of a kind of cosmic transhumanism in which living intelligence evolves beyond the organic to inhabit machines, and ultimately to inhabit the universe itself, as intelligence takes on new manifestations in post-terrestrial, post-Darwinian life. "We are," he says, "in the process of inspiring the dead matter around us. It will soon be our honor to welcome some of it to the land of the living" (Moravec, 1999, p. 111). Moravec fantasizes about the diversity of this posthuman and post-terrestrial intelligent life, evolving over the next millennium from his own and his colleagues' attempts to instill intelligence in non-organic matter. As "ex-human" life, derived from these experiments, evolves to inhabit outer space, this new extra-terrestrial ecology will become "much more diverse than Earth's biosphere, shaped by discoveries and inventions yet to be made and thus hard to conceive" (Moravec, 1999, pp. 146–147).

The prediction of a new diversity of artificial life is put forward also by Rodney Brooks, the director of the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. He foresees a "Cambrian explosion" of robotic life, a new complexity and diversity in artificial intelligence and robotics reminiscent of the rapid proliferation of complex biological organisms about 530 million years ago. Indeed, Brooks saw his laboratory's creation of "Genghis," an insectlike robot, in which the interaction of simple components yielded complex behavior that gave the appearance of intentionality, as the beginning of his laboratory's own "Cambrian explosion" (Brooks, 2002, p. 51).

Brooks insists that the robots that he is producing, able to act somewhat autonomously in unstructured environments, "are not just robots. They are artificial creatures" (Brooks, 2002, p. 11). Brooks's vision is shared by scientists working on the Symbion Project at the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol. The project involves the construction of motorized robots, each roughly the size of a sugar cube, which are able to communicate with one another and to "assemble themselves into much larger machines to carry out specific tasks when required" (Sample, 2008). According to Alan Winfield of UWE, these robots will "not only [. . .] cooperate, they'll self-assemble and self-organise into artificial organisms" (quoted in Sample, 2008). Like Brooks's insectlike robots, these are also modeled on an ant or termite colony, each organism relatively simple but together forming swarms that can manifest adaptive behavior.

There is a growing interest in designing robotics to mimic the natural world. Researchers at Tufts University are attempting to develop a robot that mimics the motion of caterpillars. A *New York Times* article reports:

In trying to reproduce the caterpillar, the Tufts researchers are taking part in one of the biggest trends in robotics and locomotion studies, which are increasingly taking inspiration from the world of biology. Joseph Ayers of Northeastern University in Boston has created an artificial lobster. Ian Walker of Clemson University in South Carolina has a robotic arm that draws its inspiration from the elephant's trunk and the octopus's arm. There are robotic salamanders, snakes, cockroaches, fish and geckos. (Schwartz, 2007)

Such robots frequently have military applications. The MIT-linked defense robotics firm Boston Dynamics produces robots that mimic animal motion, such as the four-legged "Big Dog" that can carry supplies over rugged terrain. A collaboration between University of Pennsylvania, Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, UC Berkeley, Lewis and Clark University, and Boston Dynamics has produced the "bioinspired" RiSE robot, capable of climbing vertical walls, a project that obviously has surveillance and military applications.³ iRobot, the private firm founded by Brooks, has also become a major manufacturer of robots for war (Singer, 2009, p. 111).

The development of animal-mimicking robots is paralleled by the technologization of animals. There is a trend, particularly in military and security research, to use animals as instruments. Scientists at Los Alamos have used Pavlovian conditioning to train bees to detect explosives. A newspaper article on this development features pictures of bees restrained in "specially designed harnesses" at the laboratory ("Bomb Squad," 2006) (see Figure 26.1). This denaturing of the animal, as it is placed under laboratory controls and divorced and deprogrammed from its natural behavior, aims at turning the animal into a technological tool. The hope is to integrate the bee into a device. The research scientist leading the project claims that "the bees could be carried in hand-held detectors the size of a shoe box, and could be used to sniff out explosives in airports, roadside security checks, or even placed in robot bomb disposal equipment" ("Scientists Train Bees," 2006).

Genetic engineering aims at an even more fundamental technologization and control of living creatures. The production of transgenic animals collapses barriers between life and technology and between species, but also merges what were previously distinct sectors of production: agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and the industrial production of materials. In February 2009, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the safety of ATryn, an intravenous anti-clotting drug produced in the milk of genetically engineered goats (Lite, 2009). The Canadian firm Nexia Biotechnologies has created a goat that produces spider silk protein in its milk. As the company's CEO puts it, the genetically altered goats are "cheap factories" for the company's product, an ultra-strong material that they have dubbed "BioSteel" (quoted in Barad, 2007, p. 469 n. 26; "GM Goat Spins," 2000).



Figure 26.1 Honey bees, restrained in specially designed harnesses at Los Alamos National Laboratory, are being trained to sniff out explosives. Photo by Rick Scibelli/Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

The technologization of animal life is carried forward by the new potential for the standardization of animals through cloning. Cloning represents an extension of the simplification of nature that one finds in agricultural monoculture, and the key application of cloning is in agriculture. The *New Scientist* notes that “cloning [. . .] offers a much more precise way of making genetically engineered animals. Traditionally, transgenic animals were made by injecting gene copies into a new embryo – an inefficient and chaotic process. Genes can land anywhere in the genome, disrupting other genes. Now researchers can insert DNA at a precise position into a single adult cell, and then clone it to create the desired animals” (Aldhous & Coghlan, 2006, p. 10). So cloning is a radical extension of engineering control over life and therefore of the capitalist subsumption of life, rendering life compatible with industrial norms of precision, standardization, and regularity.

Synthetic biology represents a still more radical development beyond genetic engineering. In a paper published in *Science* in early 2008, the J. Craig Venter Institute announced that its scientists had created a synthetic chromosome, synthesizing from laboratory chemicals the genome of the bacterium *Mycoplasma genitalium* (Jha, 2008; “Patent Pending,” 2007). This synthesis of DNA was a step toward Venter’s “ultimate goal of inserting the synthetic chromosome into a cell and booting it up

to create the first synthetic organism” (Synthetic Genomics, 2008). In 2010, Venter confirmed that his team had accomplished this next step, thereby making a “synthetic cell” (Robbins, 2010).

Computing imagery (such as “booting it up”) signifies the technologization of the organism and the ambition toward predictability and control (Hedgecoe, 1999, esp. pp. 217–218). William Boyd argues that there is an affinity between the conceptual modes through which biological technosciences approach life and the capitalist dynamics involved in the manipulation of life: scientific reductionism facilitates commodification. He argues that “the metaphor of life as code [. . .] has come to provide much of the foundation for efforts to ‘improve’ biological systems by intervening directly in the genetic program itself. Codes [. . .] can be cracked, programmed, and reprogrammed” (Boyd, 2003, p. 31). Nobel laureate Hamilton Smith, who led the scientific team at the J. Craig Venter Institute, likened the production of the artificial genome to finishing the operating system of a computer: “By itself, it doesn’t do anything, but when you install it on a computer, then you have a working computer system. It’s the same with the genome: the genome is the operating system for a cell and the cytoplasm is the hardware that’s required to run that genome” (quoted in Jha, 2008). The understanding of life in terms of hardware and software is bound up with the practical goal of the computer-assisted design of life: Venter called his new cell “the first self-replicating species that we have on the planet whose parent is a computer” (quoted in Robbins, 2010, p. 1).

Synthetic biology follows an engineering paradigm and there are striking similarities with Taylorism. Just as Taylorism involves the initial analysis of the worker’s living activity, the analytical breaking down of that activity into its constituent parts, and the re-engineering of the work process, similarly synthetic biology involves the breaking down of the complexity of life into relatively simple components with the aim of rebuilding these components. Like capitalist mass production, synthetic biology operates via the assembly of standardized or replaceable parts. A key tool of synthetic biology is known as the “BioBrick,” which consists of fragments of DNA. An article in the popular science magazine *BBC Focus* explains,

Scientists can clip DNA segments from nature, or they can order them. [University of California scientist Chris] Voigt prefers to order them, sending instructions listing what DNA he wants to a company, which will then synthesise the strings of genetic material for him. In this case, the company copies segments of existing DNA using a polymer chain reaction (PCR) machine and puts them together in the required sequence. Alternatively, researchers can buy ready-made parts, known as BioBricks. The synthesised parts are made in a similar way, but researchers choose what they want from the BioBrick library. The parts will arrive suspended in a liquid and are then added to bacteria cells, such as *E. coli*. The bacteria is zapped with electricity to create pores in the cell walls, a technique which allows the DNA to filter inside. (O’Connell, 2006, p. 49)

The BBC article emphasizes that this use of standardized parts reflects an engineering orientation and points out that “a number of this new breed of biologists have

come from an engineering rather than a life sciences background” (O’Connell, 2006, pp. 49–50).

The production of abstract life means intervention aimed at overcoming the complexities and interdependencies of the natural world, as the following quote in the BBC article makes clear:

Professor Tom Knight, senior research scientist at MIT, draws a parallel with a joke often told to illustrate the differences between scientists and engineers. A scientist goes into her lab and carries out an experiment. When she gets the result, she discovers that the system she is studying is twice as complicated as she thought. “Great,” she thinks to herself, “I get to write a paper on that.” An engineer goes into her lab and carries out the same experiment. But this time, when the results come back and she sees that the system is twice as complicated as she’d predicted, she says to herself: “Now how do I get rid of that?” “I’m firmly in the ‘how do I get rid of that’ category!” says Knight. (O’Connell, 2006, p. 50)

Synthetic biology is an assault on complexity not only analytically, but also in practice, as it seeks to package nature into standardized components in aid of producing standardized engineered-but-living products.

Drew Endy, another MIT scientist working in synthetic biology, explains that the goal is to build predictability into biological processes: “We can probably engineer biology in such a way to produce components that are insulated from one another, that are designed to be easy to put together and then behave in ways that you expect” (quoted in Jha, 2005). As science journalist Alok Jha put it, “if biology is to truly turn into a technology, engineers need to develop standard biological components that they can simply plug into their application – something available in all other forms of engineering” (Jha, 2005). *The Economist*, which has published a number of cautiously optimistic articles about this new technoscientific field, notes that “Synthetic biologists plan to [. . .] industrialise the process in a way that will let people order biological parts as routinely as they order electrical components. If this vision is realised (and there is still a long way to go) biotechnology will become a true branch of engineering” (“Playing Demigods,” 2006).

Synthetic biology operates with abstract life – life broken down into components that can be treated as engineering tools. This abstraction is also abstraction from ecosystems and geography: the appropriation of the productive capacities of nature and their re-situation in a technological/industrial setting. In this way, the obstacles posed for capitalist production by natural scarcities, timescales, and geographies may be overcome. *Financial Times* journalist Clive Cookson writes, “within a decade some researchers believe that bacteria, for example, could be designed that would mass-produce drugs that currently have to be painstakingly harvested from rare plants” (Cookson, 2006).

Scientific reductionism and technological standardization are linked together in a process of the commodification of the living. As Nikolas Rose has written with regard to the development of the “molecular” approach to biomedicine:

Molecularization strips tissues, proteins, molecules and drugs of their specific affinities – to a disease, to an organ, to an individual, to a species. It confers a new mobility on the elements of life. They can be de-localized – moved from place to place, from organism to organism, from disease to disease, from person to person. (Rose, 2007, pp. 6–7)

These processes of reduction and manipulation are linked to what Rose calls “a new political economy of life in which [. . .] biopolitics has become bioeconomics” (Rose, 2007, p. 17). Epistemological reduction of the living to the level of the molecule combines with an engineering ethos that aims toward efficiently reordering life for the purpose of making it optimally productive.

The engineering paradigm in biology is merging with nanotechnology as a project of technologizing life and animating technology. Bionanotechnology is predicated on the notion that DNA molecules, proteins, and enzymes are already “machines” or “self-assemblers” found in nature, which can themselves manipulate matter at the nanoscale. The UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) defines bionanotechnology as

a multidisciplinary area that sits at the interface between engineering, biological and the physical sciences [. . .] The range of topics within bionanotechnology is broad and includes examples in which biological components may be used to facilitate new technologies (e.g. the reconstruction of biomolecular systems as machines or motors), as well as those in which new technologies are used in the study of biological systems. (BBSRC, ca. 2009)

The aim is to harness natural processes occurring at the nanoscale for a variety of applications from medicine to “molecular computing” to the manufacturing of materials. The linking of biotechnology with nanotechnology is associated with hopes of unifying biology with industry, harnessing natural reproduction to the production of medical and industrial technologies and consumer goods.

Although bionanotechnology is in its infancy and nowhere near the production of industrial-scale quantities of materials (Jones, 2004, p. 125), there are hopes for the possibility of scaling up. New York University chemist Nadrian Seeman has pioneered attempts to harness the self-assembly of DNA molecules to make complex self-assembled structures, leading ultimately to the ability to manufacture fibers or electronic devices. An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* describes him as the “Henry Ford” of nanotechnology, for his attempts to develop the production of molecular machines to industrial levels of efficiency and mass production. According to the article,

Nadrian Seeman sees a future filled with extremely small factory workers [. . .] He and a Chinese team at Nanjing University have built a nanoscale factory worker. The tiny machine is made of DNA, the molecule that governs the way cells make proteins [. . .] Seeman “programs” his tiny machine by stringing the right combinations of DNA – much in the way computer engineers use binary code [. . .] [He can] arrange pieces and form specific molecules with some precision – similar to the way a robotic automobile factory can be told what kind of car to make. (Emspak, 2009)

Commenting on the potential feasibility of Seeman's vision of molecular mass manufacture, British nanotechnology scientist Richard Jones notes that

molecular biology is being quickly industrialised; now adverts in the journal *Nature* compete to offer custom synthesis of DNA for as little as 80p per base. You simply send them the sequence you want and the money, and a couple of weeks later a little trace of DNA comes back. At the laboratory level, we have at least one demonstration that we can use the full power of self-assembly to make, not a single soft machine, but billions of them all at once. (Jones, 2004, p. 125)

The potential applications for bionanotechnology techniques are already entering into the imagination of new avenues for business (as in the Lexus advertisement quoted earlier). Cookson writes in the *Financial Times*: "The fusion of nanotechnology and biology may also allow us to grow products such as solar collectors and liquid crystal displays from living material" (Cookson, 2006).

A key feature of techno-futurist discourse is the image of the displacement of the factory and thereby the emancipation of production from its dependence on potentially antagonistic human labor. Seeman's "extremely small factory workers" signify an escape from dependence on human labor by harnessing the fundamentals of life. In nanotechnology guru Eric Drexler's visions of the future, the workers are self-assembling nanobots or "molecular assemblers" (Drexler, 1986, pp. 14, 54–58; Kurzweil, 2005, pp. 228–230). Ray Kurzweil draws on these ideas in a way that exemplifies how nanotechnology visions express the desire to meld production with life. In the idea of self-assembly, the productive apparatus of capitalism is imbued with life: "Self-assembly allows improperly formed components to be discarded automatically and makes it possible for the potentially trillions of circuit components to organize themselves, rather than be painstakingly assembled in a top-down process. It would enable large-scale circuits to be created in test-tubes rather than in multibillion-dollar factories" (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 115).

At the same time as life is reified, transformed into a mechanism or object, capital is strangely imbued with lifelike qualities. Drexler explicitly puts forward nanotechnology as a project which liberates capital from the productive and reproductive powers of both labor and nature, instead vesting those powers in technology and, hence, in capital itself. In *Engines of Creation*, Drexler writes:

Assembler-based systems, if properly programmed, will themselves *be* productive capital. Together with larger robotic machines, they will be able to build virtually anything, including copies of themselves. Since this self-replicating capital will be able to double many times per day, only demand and available resources will limit its quantity. Capital as such need cost virtually nothing. (Drexler, 1986, p. 94, emphasis in original)

Nanotechnology as "self-replicating capital" represents the emancipation of capital from contradictions and limits. Nanotechnology is the material realization of the ideal of productive capital, or, in Marx's terms, of capital as "self-valorizing value."

Melinda Cooper argues that the combination of economic crisis and a growing recognition of ecological limits, expressed most influentially in the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* report of 1972, was the impetus toward the development of the bioeconomy. The promotion of commercial biomedicine and bioengineering was, Cooper argues, in opposition to the tropes of stagnation and limits that pervaded the political economy and culture of the 1970s. Biotechnology, since highly dependent on venture capital, was economically linked to the financialization of the economy, the expansion of debt, and the uncoupling of the financial sector from the "real economy" (see also Rajan, 2006). It was a focal point for fantasies of the dematerialization of capitalism and the overcoming of all limits. These futures were founded on the assumption that "while industrial machines are subject to the laws of depletion and diminishing returns, life at its most 'lifelike' obeys a law of self-organization and increasing complexity. Where industrial production depends on the finite reserves available on planet earth, *life, like contemporary debt production, needs to be understood as a process of continuous autopoiesis, a self-engendering of life from life, without conceivable beginning or end*" (Cooper, 2008, p. 38, emphasis in original). Biotechnology was linked to the promise of self-reproducing capital and never-ending growth.

During the financial crisis of 2008, the surge of speculative money into commodities (combined with other factors including the taking over of agriculture by biofuel crops) led to a spike in food prices (Blas & Dinmore, 2008; Minder, 2008; Watts, 2009). At the height of the crisis, techno-salvationism reared its head, with genetic modification and other technoscientific innovations put forward as the solution to food scarcity. As food prices surged, the *Financial Times* called for a "second 'green revolution,'" arguing for new investment in raising agricultural productivity through advanced technology (Blas, 2008). The chairman of Nestlé took the opportunity of high commodity prices to make the case for overcoming European resistance to agricultural biotechnology: "You cannot today feed the world without genetically modified organisms" (quoted in Minder, Bounds, & Wiggins, 2008). As the world appeared headed for 1970s-style stagflation, Jeffrey Sachs asserted that new technologies offered a way out of both the food crisis and the broader economic crisis. Sachs argued for massive investment in sustainable technologies such as solar power, electricity storage and transmission, hybrid engines, carbon capture, cellulose-based ethanol, "safe nuclear power," new drought-resistant crop varieties, and new irrigation techniques that "can help impoverished farmers move from one subsistence crop to several high-value crops year round" (Sachs, 2008, p. 31). He opined that "countless other technologies on the horizon can reconcile a world of growing energy demands with increasingly scarce fossil fuels and rising threats of human-made climate change" (Sachs, 2008, p. 31). This new techno-salvationism offers to overcome the problems generated by past development and by earlier failed technological fixes. Climate change has exacerbated the depletion of world food stocks. But the legacy of the Green Revolution has also added to the problem, since it led to the development of agriculture that was highly dependent on energy and petrochemical inputs and water. The new "green revolution" means using biotechnology, including genetic

modification, to try to increase yields in spite of shortages of water and the growing cost of energy and petrochemical inputs (Beattie, 2008). Techno-enthusiasts become more insistent about the “imperative” for such technological fixes in proportion with the irrational, crisis-ridden nature of the prevailing economic system and its destructive relationship to the natural world (Vidal & Lawrence, 2010).

As the world’s politicians appear paralyzed in the face of global warming, techno-salvationism is rampant in this area. The Bush administration backed a range of technological fixes to the crisis, including “giant mirrors in space or reflective dust pumped into the atmosphere” (Adam, 2007; see also Broad, 2006; Etc. Group, 2007). Private corporations are seeking to profit from developing “geoengineering” solutions to climate change. Proposals have included spreading iron filings on the ocean surface to encourage plankton and sequester carbon dioxide (Etc. Group, 2007). There have been protests against an Indian and German expedition to the Antarctic to engage in experimentation involving the spreading of 20 tons of iron sulphate over a 300 sq km area in the Southern Ocean (Bhattacharya, 2009).

The environmental imbalance produced by carbon pollution creates a potentially lucrative demand for technoscientific products and expertise, and there are companies waiting to take advantage of such opportunities. Modern industrial civilization is doing away with the relatively stable and benign climate that has existed for 10,000 years since the last Ice Age. As the environmental journalist Fred Pearce puts it:

It is arguable that this rather benign world has been the main reason why our species was able to leave the caves and create the urban, industrial civilisation we enjoy today. Our complex society rests on our being able to plant crops and build cities, knowing that the rains will come and the cities will not be flooded by incoming tides. When that certainty fails [. . .] even the most sophisticated society is brought to its knees. But there is now a growing fear among scientists that, thanks to man-made climate change, we are about to return to a world of climactic turbulence, where tipping points are constantly crossed. (Pearce, 2006)

The life-sustaining environment that was a taken-for-granted common good can no longer be taken for granted and the maintenance of equilibrium in the atmosphere and ecosystem becomes potentially an artificial technological accomplishment. As our life on Earth becomes increasingly precarious, it becomes also increasingly artificial.

Even the problem of algal blooms in the oceans, caused by pollution and climate change, has become a focus for techno-salvationist hopes. The problem was highlighted when 32% of the 50 sq km area off the coast of Qingdao, devoted to Olympic sailing during the Beijing Olympics, was covered in algae. However, as well as raising awareness about the danger to ocean life caused by the industrial transformation of the environment, the algae also led to technovisionary speculation about the possibility of new biofuels. A *Financial Times* article noted: “But the crazy growth rates of algae under favourable conditions – doubling their mass every day or two – is one reason why they are seen as an attractive future prospect by the biofuels industry” (Cookson, 2008). An economic system that requires “crazy growth rates” finds a

match in an equally virulent and invasive species. And not content with existent green algae, bioscientists are seeking to engineer new varieties that may be more efficiently harnessed to capitalism's energy requirements: algae for biofuels is one of the potential applications that Craig Venter promises for synthetic life ("Craig's Twist," 2009).

The notion of a technological fix to environmental problems is also dear to the hearts of nano-visionaries. Drexler's nanotechnology manifesto, *Engines of Creation*, contains a chapter on "The Limits to Growth" that presents the nanosphere as holding the solution to problems of resource limits: "When we develop pollution-free nanomachines to gather solar energy and resources, Earth will be able to support a civilization far larger and wealthier than any yet seen [. . .] The potential of Earth makes the resources we now use seem insignificant by comparison" (Drexler, 1986, p. 162).⁴ Historian W. Patrick McCray argues that the techno-futurist thought of Eric Drexler and Ray Kurzweil was developed in reaction against the 1970s discourse of "limits to growth." In opposition to the image of Earth as a closed system, in which resources were being rapidly depleted, and the law of entropy applied, techno-futurists like Drexler looked to the infinities of outer space. Before transferring these fantasies of superseding limits into the realm of nanotechnology, Drexler was an enthusiast for space colonies (McCray, 2009; see also Drexler, 1986, p. 165). Access to resources beyond Earth remains central to Drexler's vision: "Yet Earth is but a speck [. . .] The resources of the solar system are truly vast, making the resources of Earth seem insignificant by comparison" (Drexler, 1986, p. 162). Similar extra-terrestrial fantasies are found in the writings of techno-visionaries such as Kurzweil and Moravec.

In Moravec, techno-futurist fantasies of artificial intelligence extending out beyond Earth into the universe combine with a romantic-primitivist critique of industrialism. Moravec's narrative begins with a loss of Eden and develops toward technological salvation. "A thousand centuries ago," he tells us, "the world was fully automated. Our ancestors were supported by the maintenance-free, self-operating machinery called Nature. But, in an Adamic bargain predating Faust, they meddled with the mechanism. By tilling and planting, they magnified the machinery's productivity but trapped themselves in a routine of heavy, unpleasant labor" (Moravec, 1999, p. 127). From agriculture developed urban civilization and modern industrial society. Unchanged biologically from our Stone Age ancestors, we are today born into a highly technologized, unnatural environment. There is a mismatch between the human organism and the industrial urban environment that "induces alienation in the midst of unprecedented physical plenty" (Moravec, 1999, p. 7). Since Moravec conceives of alienation in biological and essentialist terms, he can suggest that the problem is destined to be overcome by transcending and eliminating the biological human organism. "Technological evolution" will again restore us to our natural state of idleness as machines take over work, and "intelligence" will take flight from our unwieldy bodies to inhabit realms beyond Earth itself (Moravec, 1999, p. 9).

Kurzweil's fantasy of "the Singularity," similarly to Moravec, denies limits by imaginatively escaping from the constraints of Earth as the relevant environment.

In Kurzweil, the rejection of spatial limits (of Earth) and of temporal limits (via radical life-extension) is achieved ultimately through decorporealization. When minds can be uploaded as information to computational hardware, then

at that point the longevity of one's mind file will not depend on the continued viability of any particular hardware medium (for example, the survival of a biological body and brain). Ultimately, software-based humans [. . .] will live out on the Web, projecting bodies whenever they need or want them, including virtual bodies in diverse realms of virtual reality [. . .] and physical bodies comprising nanobot swarms and other forms of nanotechnology. (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 325)

Following abstract labor and abstract life, these fantasies involve a further abstraction: human existence is decorporealized and abstracted as "intelligence" and therefore delinked from its material ecological basis. Kurzweil's fantasy of endless growth deals with the problem of ecological limits just by denying the salience of ecology, seeking what he calls "transcendence" (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 388) in a decorporealized, informatic consciousness. But the fantasy of transcendence arrives at a state of incorporeal oneness with the universe that seems to be close to religious notions of the afterlife (Geraci, 2008). This artificial life of uploaded, incorporeal intelligence seems to be a form of death.

Conclusion

Artificial life and a dead planet are twin expressions of a world built on the basis of alienated labor. The alienation of one's own living activity produces an alienated relationship with the broader world of the living. The degradation of labor is implicated in the degradation of life. The imposition of capital's framework of value devalues the particularities and qualitative potentiality of the individual human being (Mészáros, 2008, p. 47). The broader living world of nature is also deprived of value, as that which cannot be rendered in cash terms no longer *has* value; hence, much of the Earth becomes a sink for pollution and other "externalities" of capitalist production. The standardization and disciplining of human productive activity are accompanied by the standardization and control of the reproductive processes of natural organisms. The living is reified, then, *symbolically* in terms of the way in which it is valued – quality being reduced to quantity – and *practically*, as both human activity and nature more broadly are degraded, standardized, and routinized, becoming increasingly *thing-like*.

As Philip K. Dick perceived, the reification of the living is accompanied by the animation of the non-living. The routinization of work makes mechanization possible, and subsequently is further imposed through mechanization. The sophistication of the capabilities of computers and automatic machinery develops in tandem

with the abstraction and simplification of ever-broader swathes of human activity. The standardization, fragmentation, and control of living organisms are achieved by the granting of increasingly lifelike qualities and capacities to the non-living. So we have technologized life and lifelike or “living” technology.

Drexler’s designation of this living technology as “self-replicating capital” and “productive capital” is an analytical insight, the critical implications of which he himself cannot develop. The infusion of capital with life is accompanied by salvationist rhetoric in techno-futurist thinkers like Drexler, Moravec, and Kurzweil and is fundamental to their images of endless expansion and technological progress. As Cooper has argued, the technologization of life through biotechnology has been crucial as a way of maintaining the idea of the progressiveness of capitalism, against the challenge posed both by the threat of economic stagnation and by environmental consciousness of “limits to growth.” Although seemingly far-fetched, the technological salvationism of thinkers like Drexler, Kurzweil, and Moravec expresses assumptions that are in fact pervasive in the ideology of modern technoscience. Today, as political or regulatory solutions to climate change are stymied by entrenched capitalist interests and by the anarchic international system of nation-state competition, hopes for a solution are increasingly vested in a technological fix, through geoengineering, however fantastical such technological solutions appear (York, Clark, & Foster, 2009, esp. pp. 14–15). What geoengineering augurs is potentially the radical technologization of the planet’s geophysical processes (solar reflectors in space, etc.). This would mean that the Earth itself becomes a capital-intensive system, requiring huge investments of capital to maintain its life-supporting systems. The common milieu of life, making possible all production and reproduction, is thus potentially transformed into an artificial milieu, dependent on and intertwined with capital. At the macro-scale of the Earth system, as well as the micro-scale of the genetic code, the reproduction of life is appropriated by, and subordinated to, the reproduction of capital.

The reification of the living and the animation of the non-living tend toward the environmental degradation of Earth so that life is no longer self-sustaining. For equilibrium, sustenance, and the promise of a future, the technovisionaries encourage us to look instead to the powers of capital, expressed in technological miracles of geoengineering, life in outer space, or uploadable intelligence. The renewal of capital as self-replicating, productive, self-valorizing value takes over from the renewal of life. Or, rather, the renewal of capital becomes the precondition for the renewal of life. Marx wrote in Volume 3 of *Capital*:

With the development of relative surplus-value in the actual specifically capitalist mode of production, whereby the productive powers of social labour are developed, these productive powers and the social interrelations of labour in the direct labour-process seem transferred from labour to capital. Capital thus becomes a very mystic being since all of labour’s social productive forces appear to be due to capital, rather than labour as such, and seem to issue from the womb of capital itself. (Marx, 1967, p. 827)

As the powers of the living are annexed to technology, an asymmetric symbiosis with capital is increasingly imposed on the living world. Capital becomes the artificial womb for life. The condition of “living dead species” abstracted from their living milieu, surviving in an artificially preserved commodified form, comes to characterize life in general. Marx described capitalism as an inversion through which living labor is appropriated for the augmentation of dead labor, and dead labor rules over the living. The capitalist “vampire” sucks the living activity of the worker (and, we should add, of the broader natural world), and from this it appropriates and takes on the characteristics of life. Living death describes the character of capital itself as self-valorizing value. As labor and life are subsumed by capital, this condition of living death is also generalized. This is the meaning of artificial life on a dead planet.

NOTES

- 1 Obviously, techno-enthusiasm has characterized much of the science fiction genre (e.g., Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke), and the techno-futurist discourse of robotics and nanotechnology enthusiasts often references or overlaps with such techno-optimist science fiction (Milburn, 1958, esp. pp. 39–58).
- 2 The concept of abstract life is implied also by Melinda Cooper’s discussion of organ transplantation as an abstraction of the “livable time of the organ” from the body (Cooper, 2008, p. 126). The idea that abstract life is closely related to abstract labor is also, I think, implied by Eugene Thacker’s analysis of “biomaterial labor” and of biotechnology’s “economic uses of ‘life itself’” (Thacker, 2005, p. 202).
- 3 See Boston Dynamics, <http://www.bostondynamics.com/> and the RiSE Project, <http://kodlab.seas.upenn.edu/~rise/newsite/index.php?leaf=1>
- 4 Drexler is also an enthusiast for cryogenic freezing as “insurance” against loss of species (Drexler, 1986, p. 123).

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The Dead-End of Consumerism

The Role of the Media and Cultural Industries

Justin Lewis

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, Justin Lewis argues that twenty-first-century consumer capitalism is no longer an effective model for human progress. In developed countries, consumer capitalism can no longer deliver improvements in quality of life, is fraught with economic contradictions, and will make the planet considerably less habitable. How might we begin to address these issues and imagine a better world? Lewis focuses on three ways in which the contemporary cultural industries keep us conceptually bound to a consumerist credo. First, the media and communications industries have come to epitomize the notion of built-in obsolescence based on a perpetual consumerism. Second, our most dominant cultural industry, advertising, provides a cultural environment that makes it hard to imagine a way of being outside consumerism. Third, the capacity of journalism to question current orthodoxy is constrained by a focus on “disposable news,” displacing the more democratic function of journalism.

We are, in a sense, living in the future. Not our future, but at the beginning of a century that has been imagined and reimagined countless times over the last hundred years. Our predecessors would have been enthralled by possibilities we now take for granted: the revolution in information, communication, and cultural technologies has made what once seemed magical part of everyday life.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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And yet the technology and consumer products that were supposed to free us from drudgery, ignorance, and toil have also created a new set of burdens. The demand for gadgetry and goods has become relentless, and the gradual decrease of hours in the working week that defined much of the twentieth century has come to a shuddering halt (Schor, 1991). The model of perpetual growth that created this largesse requires endless effort to keep pace with it. But there is also an understanding that the way we live now is, for all its abundance, full of empty promises (James, 2007).

This chapter begins by exploring why consumer capitalism, as a model for human progress, has become dysfunctional. For Marx (1976), the contradictions of capitalism lay in the drift toward monopoly and the prospect that the in-built division between owners and workers would foment popular discontent. The survival of consumer capitalism into the twenty-first century suggests Marx underestimated capitalism's adaptability – in negotiation with the state and a growing public sector – but it has created a new set of contradictions. These are more than mere quirks: they represent profound problems across a number of environmental, economic, and cultural fronts. While these may not bring about its downfall – capitalism, aided by government, has shown a capacity to endure contradiction – they oblige us to ask whether there might be a less acquisitive and more fulfilling model of human society.

The chapter then considers why the mainstream public sphere finds it so difficult to acknowledge these contradictions, let alone address them, focusing on three ways in which the contemporary cultural industries keep us conceptually bound to a consumerist credo. First, the media and communications industries have come to epitomize the notion of built-in obsolescence based on a perpetual consumerism. Second, our most dominant cultural industry, advertising, provides a cultural environment that makes it hard to imagine a way of being outside consumerism. Third, the capacity of news journalism to question current orthodoxy is constrained by a focus on “disposable news,” displacing the more democratic function of journalism.

Environmental Contradictions

After centuries of growth, humankind now consumes resources at a rate that matches the scale of the Earth. Natural resources dwindle as demands made upon them increase (McKibben, 2006). Although science has become increasingly adept at anticipating these ecological pressure points (witness, for example, the rise of climate science), our society is inept at addressing the contradiction between an economic model based on infinite expansion and a finite Earth.

The list of environmental problems created by this clash is daunting. We produce waste at an unprecedented rate, contaminating the soil, the air, and the sea. We wipe out ecosystems and species to make space for greater productivity. But most daunting of all is the realization that one of the key byproducts of our enormously productive economy is a series of gases that threaten to alter life on Earth.

For over two decades, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has published and evaluated an increasing body of evidence that has made the case for anthropogenic global warming irrefutable. Meanwhile, in a collective act of brinkmanship – as if to test the theory to breaking point – we have continued to pump an ever-increasing volume of greenhouse gases into the air (Lewis & Boyce, 2009).

By the time the IPCC issued its fourth assessment in 2007, the question was no longer one of preventing climate change but of ameliorating its worst effects. In practical terms this means keeping the likely death toll – from disease, famine, drought, and the increased likelihood of extreme weather events – to millions rather than billions. Seventeen years after its first report, the IPCC documented not only that the various efforts around the world to tackle climate change have failed to stabilize our greenhouse gas production, but that current mitigation policies will allow that production to increase to unprecedented levels (IPCC, 2007, p. 44). Although the IPCC continues to stress that “many impacts can be avoided, reduced or delayed by mitigation” (p. 69), it is clear that we are running out of time.

The stakes could scarcely be higher. So why is it that, in the face of one of the greatest challenges to humankind, our political leaders seem content with a series of half-measures? The collapse of global climate change talks in Copenhagen at the end of 2009, for example, was greeted with little sense of alarm. A few months later, a BBC survey in February 2010 found that only 26% of British people agreed with a statement that reflected the scientific consensus: “climate change is happening and is now established as largely man-made” (roughly the same proportion who believed that “climate change is not happening” at all).¹ This was actually a drop from the previous year’s figure. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in January 2010 found that dealing with climate change was bottom of a list of 21 priorities for government, with only 28% judging it to be a priority (a fall from 38% in 2007).²

At the heart of this inertia is a paradox: our apparent acceptance of the threat posed by climate change is occurring at a time when we have become increasingly risk averse. The influential sociologist Ulrich Beck has famously described countries in the developed world as “risk societies” (Beck, 1995, 1999), where fears of everything from terrorism to pedophilia tend to be amplified into a clamor of overreaction (Lewis, 2006). We live in a time, he suggests, when concerns about health and safety involve systematic attempts to reduce risks to a minimum, and where exaggerated fears of minimal risks – sometimes based on the feeblest of evidence – can induce panic, with very real consequences (see Boyce, 2007, on the MMR vaccine scare in the United Kingdom, where media scare stories significantly reduced the takeup of the vaccine and reduced immunity levels).

As climate science has become ever more certain, our muted reaction to it remains a vexed question (McGaurr & Lester, 2009). There are a number of explanations: the difficulty of appreciating a problem on a global scale, the time lag between cause and effect, and political systems where governments have little incentive to address

issues whose manifestations will not be their problem, given the time span of elections.

But perhaps the most fundamental reason for our failure to come to terms with climate change is the credo expressed so vividly by marketing consultant Victor Liebow in the 1940s. Consumer capitalism, he suggested, requires things to be “consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing rate” (in Packard, 1960, p. 33). It pushes us toward individual acts of consumption rather than collective problem solving.

It would be unfair, perhaps, to blame consumer capitalism for getting us to this point: we can have economic growth and environmental degradation without consumer capitalism, and there is no doubt that the prosperity it has helped create has brought many advantages. But it would be naïve to suppose that the “invisible hand” is capable of the kind of altruistic planning necessary to avert catastrophic climate change. As it now stands, consumer capitalism seems more likely to push us past the “tipping point.”

Economic Contradictions: The Diminishing Returns of Consumer Capitalism

Economic historian Avner Offer (2006) suggests that this superabundance, far from easing our lives, *creates* a series of problems. The more choices we are asked to make, the less time or resources we have to make them. In the land of plenty, the “rational consumer” – that beloved creature of classical economics – may conclude that the time and effort involved in finding the best product at the best price exceed the rewards of making the right purchase. In short, rational consumers will make rational decisions to give up being rational, opting, instead, for an easy life and resigning themselves to making hurried purchasing decisions. This is consumer capitalism’s catch-22.

The proliferation of commodities, Offer suggests, is as much a source of stress as a pleasure, pushing people toward overconsumption (which is the easiest response to an abundance of goods) and thereby diminishing quality of life. This submission to a series of decisions without deliberation involves a loss of self-control, thereby limiting our ability to act independently. In an era of superabundance, the ratio between choice and time stretches to alter the mechanisms of consumer capitalism, to a point where increasing choice becomes dysfunctional.

In a similar vein, the law of diminishing returns – which tends to be applied to systems of production – can equally be used to describe the logic of consumption. Consumer capitalism is predicated on the simple idea that our lives improve in proportion to the accumulation of consumer goods. But its ability to deliver on this promise is unsustainable. As our level of security, comfort, and amusement

increases, we experience what economists refer to as the diminishing marginal utility of goods and services: the pleasures of accumulation, in other words, *decrease* with every purchase. The more we have, the less value each new possession will have.

So, for example, someone with only two pieces of furniture will attach significant value to acquiring a third: partly because it will fulfill a need, but also because it represents a substantial increase in her ability to furnish her home. To someone with 102 pieces of furniture, a new acquisition is of less value – both because the need for it is less pressing and because it represents only a tiny increase in her stock of furniture. As Colin Campbell (1989) has argued, classical economics struggles with this idea, since it cannot “account for the nature or origins of wants and tastes, and offers only the most attenuated suggestion concerning why people buy goods” (p. 40).

This is not to deny the pleasure that new things can bring, simply to understand that the pleasures of consumerism are neither pre-given nor infinite. In the twenty-first century, most people in the developed world have reached the point where the constant accumulation of consumer goods has become a diverting (sometimes pleasant, sometime not) but unnecessary habit. Economists (notably J. K. Galbraith, 1958), philosophers (such as Herbert Marcuse, 1964), and journalists (most famously, Vance Packard, 1960) questioned the nature of need in a consumerist society half a century ago. We do not have to accept Marcuse’s rather austere distinction between “true” and “false” needs to appreciate that advanced consumerism is a system in denial of one of the simplest economic (and emotional) probabilities of the human condition: the more we have, the less we need. Just as the cost of goods decreases with volume, so does their value.

But the diminishing returns of consumer choice are deeply repressed. Our current model of consumerism is obliged to cling resolutely to the same promise with every purchase. The idea that each new object we acquire is, by definition, *less* valuable than the last is not just a lousy sales pitch, it begins to undermine the whole consumerist enterprise. For the system to survive, we must imagine that the pleasures of accumulation are endless. It is an expensive pretense.

Can consumer capitalism survive without endless growth? The easy answer to this is no, although this may be because the possibility is rarely explored. Nonetheless, an increasing number of economists, such as those at the New Economics Foundation, are challenging the principle of economic growth in wealthy countries. They see the current model of economic growth – measured in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) – as both crude and amoral: a place where war (which creates demands for weaponry as well as the need to rebuild what is destroyed) is better than peace (which creates no demand) and where waste is a virtue.

Because of such glaring absurdities, the New Economics Foundation proposes that we abandon GDP as a measure of social progress, replacing it with a series of indicators that better describe human fulfillment and quality of life. This, in turn, raises the third problem with consumer capitalism: despite the promises of plenty, it no longer has the capacity to deliver the things that we most value.

Cultural Contradictions: Consumer Capitalism vs. the Quality of Life

As critics of consumerism point out (see, e.g., Jhally, 1990, 1998), there is a contradiction between our desires, which tend to be social rather than material, and consumer capitalism's provision, which is simply material. Or to put it another way, we have trashed the planet and mortgaged our futures on the hope of infinite growth, yet all we have to show for it is a mountain of consumer goods. People may have had fun using them, they may even have had fun buying them, but they remain unfulfilled by the pleasures of accumulation.

Things are *supposed* to keep getting better – this is, after all, the promise of a consumer society. But there is an increasing body of evidence from across the social sciences that suggests that the link between quality of life and our ability to consume is fictitious. Richard Layard (2003), summing up the research on quality of life, puts it bluntly: “People in the West have got no happier in the last 50 years. They have become much richer [. . .] But they are no happier. This shocking fact should be the starting point for much of our social science” (p. 14).³

Layard's assertion, for all its boldness, is too modest. The revelation that quality of life has little to do with our access to consumer goods runs so counter to contemporary conventional wisdom that it should be the starting point for our culture, our economics, and our politics.

And yet the idea that human progress is directly proportional to our ability to buy remains deeply rooted in our politics and our popular culture. Every government, regardless of political hue, is committed to economic growth on the assumption that all else – happiness, security, and human progress – flows from it. The idea that we might begin to think more directly about providing the conditions for happiness, fulfillment, and security, and that we might think more deeply about what human progress actually means, seems almost a distraction. In essence we are all bound to a system that treats us like spoilt children who just want more stuff and better stuff. And, like spoilt children, we are no happier for it.

Tim Kasser's (2002) review of the literature on the psychology of materialism suggests that far from providing happiness or fulfillment, materialist values are associated with a *drop* in quality of life. Similarly, Juliet Schor's study of children and consumerism suggests that “less involvement in consumer culture leads to healthier kids and more involvement leads kids' psychological well-being to deteriorate” (Schor, 2004, p. 167). Her research suggests that immersion in consumer culture is the key explanatory factor associated with various forms of unhappiness in childhood.

The paradox, for some social scientists, is that *within* a society income is related to quality of life (Oswald, 2003). But this is easily explained: briefly, in a society that links income with status, people like to feel they are doing well rather than doing

badly (Layard, 2003). In other words, those on higher incomes are happier than those on lower incomes because of the respect and satisfaction that accrue from their relative position, *not* because they have more stuff.

Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) have taken this idea one step further. They provide striking evidence of the problems caused by creating wealth without equality. Their extensive review of the literature shows a relationship between distribution of income and resources and quality of life. The greater the level of inequality in a society, the greater the level of discontent. So, for example, countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, where the gaps between rich and poor are fairly high, measure poorly on the indices of quality of life when compared to the more egalitarian Scandinavian countries.

It is hard to overstate the significance of the quality of life research. The whole premise of consumer capitalism is based on the notion that the accumulation of objects improves the quality of our lives. And yet when this idea is put to the test, it is found wanting. This would matter little if we set no store by it, but consumer capitalism is one of the organizing principles of twenty-first-century society. It absorbs our time, our energy, and our political imagination.

Living the Contradictions: Media, Culture, and Consumer Capitalism

So why do we remain so deeply committed to a system whose benefits are increasingly limited, whose promises are exhausted, and whose environmental consequences look increasingly dire? Why do we embrace a way of life that makes us no happier or fulfilled, is fraught with contradictions, and will make the planet considerably less habitable? And how might we begin to address these issues and imagine a better world?

Our failure to change course is rooted in a set of cultural practices, all of which push, nudge, and cajole us down a consumerist *cul-de-sac*. These practices are so much a part of everyday life that they get in the way of a more deeply felt, sophisticated appreciation of just what it is that constitutes human progress and makes life worth living. Central to these practices, I suggest, are the commercial giants of media and telecommunications. For all their moments of brilliance and profundity – and, whatever the Jeremiahs may say, there are plenty of them⁴ – our information and entertainment media have become increasingly suffused with ideas that sustain consumerism and sideline alternatives. None of these practices is inevitable or irreplaceable, but unless we rethink them it will be difficult for us to imagine any other form of society. I shall focus, here, on three ways in which a largely commercial media and telecommunications sector limits our cultural environment.

Obsessed with Obsolescence

The aviation industry has received plenty of flak for its production of greenhouse gases. Environmental groups like Plane Stupid in the United Kingdom protest against airport expansion (Doyle, 2009) while the concept of “air miles” has become part of the environmentally aware lingua franca. Many of those who have calculated their “carbon footprint” will be aware that the most palpable way to reduce their emissions is to fly less. And yet, with far less fuss or scrutiny, the media and communications industries spew out the same level of carbon emissions as aviation (Gartner, 2007). This may seem counterintuitive, since the aviation industry’s core business involves burning large quantities of fossil fuel, while sounds and images are more ephemeral. Without a major technological shift, the growth of aviation was always going to be environmentally damaging. The growth of media and telecommunications, on the other hand, might have used sophisticated postindustrial technology in very different ways.

Instead, the media information industries have achieved a level of built-in obsolescence that is the apotheosis of consumerism at its most profligate. As Jonathan Sterne (2007) points out, this is a sector where “obsolescence is not only planned but also forced and engineered” (p. 7). With every passing decade, the various bits of hardware that bring us information and entertainment have a shorter shelf-life. Computers, mobile phones, and electronic entertainment devices are designed to become antiquated with a speed we would not tolerate with other household appliances (Maxwell & Miller, 2009), while technologies for relatively simple pleasures, like playing music or making a phone call, now occupy the same kind of temporality as fashion accessories. While traditional telephones have become emblematic of particular decades of design, US consumers now replace their cell phones once every 12 months (Crosby, 2007) – a level of built-in obsolescence that once would have been unthinkable.

This is hyperconsumerism – a system that tells us not only that we need to surround ourselves with new things, but also that we need to constantly replace what we already have. In the space of 10 years, televisions switched from analog to digital, changed shape to a wider screen, changed shape again to a flat screen, only to be reconfigured once more to various higher definitions of image (which, in turn, require a larger screen to be appreciated). The most recent incarnation – 3D TV – arrives on the scene as the latest installment on this breathless path of constant reinvention.

In the United States, the Consumer Electronics Association calculated that the average US household in 2008 spent over \$1,400 per year on a total of half a billion consumer electronic devices (Brugge, 2008). With almost every stage these devices have tended to become *less* energy efficient, each new gadget or appliance eating up more power than the thing it replaced. In the United Kingdom, sales of flat-screen TVs have been estimated to increase the carbon emissions involved in watching TV by 70% between 2006 and 2010 (Maxwell & Miller, 2009).

The most conspicuous outcome of this hyperconsumption – the vast accumulation of e-waste – is hidden from the view of most Western consumers (Hawkins, 2003). The United States alone dumps 300 to 400 million electronic items per year, and less than 20% of that e-waste is recycled (only 2% of PCs are fixed, upgraded, or passed on to a second user). By 2005, for every new computer manufactured in the United States, one became obsolete (Sterne, 2007, p. 10), while the United Kingdom dumps 1.5 million PCs in landfills every year (Maxwell & Miller, 2009).

The waste from televisions, monitors, laptops, portable DVD players with LCD screens – and many other playthings of the information age – is highly toxic, making disposal or reuse of the more valuable minerals a hazardous business. To cut costs, e-waste is often exported to countries with cheap labor and lax environmental laws, with dismal consequences for the health of those involved (Gabrys, 2007; Maxwell & Miller, 2009). At the beginning of the twenty-first century the electronics industry was, according to the Basel Action Network (BAN, 2002), “the world’s largest and fastest growing manufacturing industry, and as a consequence of this growth, combined with rapid product obsolescence, discarded electronics or e-waste is now the fastest growing waste stream in the industrialized world.”

Despite the sleek designs of many telecommunications devices, they are resource intensive to produce. Unlike many home appliances, four times as much energy is spent on making devices like computers or flat-screen TVs than on using them (Williams, 2004). So, for example, the manufacture of a desktop computer and monitor requires 530 pounds of fossil fuels, 50 pounds of chemicals, and 3,300 pounds of water – roughly the same use of resources used in the manufacture of a large automobile (Kuehr & Williams, 2003). The manufacture of computers and mobile devices, digital cameras, and other devices is a dirty business: “If you dig down beneath the thin surface crust of Silicon Valley,” writes Jennifer Gabrys,

you will find there are deep strata of earth and water percolating with errant chemicals. Xylene, trichloroethylene, Freon 113, and sulphuric acid saturate these subterranean landscapes undergirding Silicon Valley. Since the 1980s, 29 of these sites have registered sufficient levels of contamination to be marked by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as Superfund priority locations, placing them amongst the worst hazardous waste sites in the country. [. . .] Of the 29 Superfund sites, 20 are related to the microchip industry. (2007, p. 1)

In short, the information age is built on submerged mountains of toxic waste, an unsustainable use of resources, and dependence on fossil fuels. While some might see this environmental impact as the inevitable cost of progress, this is not a sufficient rationale. The breakthroughs in information and entertainment technology *might* have created a cleaner, smarter, more democratic world. Instead, the industries that have profited from these technologies have contrived a level of built-in obsolescence few other industries can match. Media and telecommunications are thus in the vanguard of a consumerist ecology. They have succeeded in making the idea that

things should be “consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing rate” (Liebow, in Packard, 1960, p. 33) seem a natural part of modern life.

There is no doubt that, in the last two decades, there have been rapid leaps forward in digital communication. But to what end? The genius of modern communications has, all too often, been tied to the banality of a cost-effective culture. Despite the constant reinvention of our TV screens, it would be hard to argue that the quality of the programs we watch has improved a great deal over the last decade, if at all. Indeed, the proliferation of television channels is sustained by a commercial model that depends upon the large-scale recycling of old programs – not a bad thing, in itself, but hardly in keeping with the relentless updating of television gadgetry.

Many of the new technologies are sold to us on the basis of a better quality of sound and image. But the permanent revolution in electronic information and entertainment has as much to do with product proliferation and convenience as with technological progress. So, for example, the poor-quality speakers on most components – from digital radios and TVs to DVD players and iPods – produce sounds that are demonstrably cruder than an above-average stereo system manufactured 30 years ago. There is a *kind* of progress here, but it is often narrowly defined around the aesthetics of the consumer object, without any sense of television’s greater social, democratic, or cultural potential.

So, for example, the enthusiasm for digital television often highlighted its potential for interactivity: television would no longer be a top-down technology, proclaimed enthusiasts, but one where interactivity would lessen the gap between producers and audiences. Here was technology bringing power to the people at the press of a red button. And yet the democratic potential of interactive digital television remains largely ignored, especially by commercial media, which quickly discovered that, beyond charging people for votes in reality television shows, there was no money in it (Curran, 2010).

What is remarkable, in many ways, is the ease with which we have accepted – even embraced – this level of built-in obsolescence, while being fairly oblivious of its environmental consequences. Take, for example, the move toward digitization in radio and television. Governments have promoted such a move, and while the benefits of digitization are repeatedly lauded, the environmental costs of switching to a digitized system are routinely ignored. The UK government is anxious to *force* a switch from analog to digital radio, despite the fact that consumer demand for a new system of reception remains lukewarm. Millions of appliances will become obsolete at the flick of a switch, while simultaneously *increasing* the energy required to power a radio set (thereby decreasing their portability, and ending the recent development of wind-up/solar-powered radios).

From consumer capitalism’s point of view, the beauty of the current model is to create a public so accustomed to the constant production, reproduction, and renewal of media technologies that we see this, *in itself*, as a mark of progress. This is not to say that the industry’s innovations have been pointless – there are plenty of jewels amidst the junk – simply that the imperatives of consumer capitalism have pushed

us *away* from exploring (and developing) the social value of these technologies and *toward* the accumulation, and replacement, of objects. The communication and entertainment businesses are, in this sense, at the cutting edge of consumerism. Their role is, in this context, both material and ideological.

The relationship of media and communications to consumer culture is bolstered by the way we have allowed the content of media to be increasingly dominated by advertising. Most of our information and entertainment media – newspapers, magazines, radio, and television – are not simply funded by advertising; commercials *dominate* their output. On television, the proliferation of channels has been driven largely by commerce, so that the proportion of publicly funded spaces has shrunk with alarming speed (Pauwels, 1999; Rowland & Tracey, 1990; Tracey, 1998). The United Kingdom, for example, has moved from a carefully constructed ecology based on public service – with a small number of well-funded channels producing a wide range of high-quality programming – to a commercial system with a politically fragile public service component (the BBC and a small and increasingly reluctant group of commercial networks) and a plethora of commercial channels all chasing a limited revenue stream. This combines with a lax regulatory environment, so that advertising now takes up a higher proportion of UK television programming than at any time in its history.

Genres, like film, that were traditionally advertising-free spaces are now funded by product placement deals and commercial tie-ins. Advertisements wallpaper our public spaces – on billboards, buses, and buildings – and brand the clothes we wear. All our communications media – the mail, the Internet, social networking sites, even phones – are increasingly channels for pitching products. As each medium becomes saturated, advertisers look to invade new spaces with a voracious energy that threatens to colonize the entire cultural landscape.

Advertising has thereby become our most dominant cultural discourse, permeating almost every medium, every cultural space. Despite its manifest dominance, contemporary media, communication, and cultural studies has devoted remarkably little time to the role of advertising in sustaining consumer culture, and it is to this issue that I now turn.

Selling Consumerism

Around the middle of the twentieth century, it became increasingly clear that the main problem facing consumer capitalism was not one of production but of consumption (Jhally, 1998). The abundance of goods, it appeared, may have satiated demand (Packard, 1960): the economist J. K. Galbraith, writing in 1958, marked this period as a time when “the urgency of the wants can no longer be used to defend the urgency of the production” (Galbraith, 1958, p. 127).

There are, after all, other pleasures that come with affluence – notably the freedom and opportunity of more leisure time. Once they were free from want, many people sought to loosen the confines of long working hours. At this point, had we decided to spend our money on buying (free) time rather than more consumer goods, consumer capitalism might have been obliged to turn its attention to producing goods for those in greater need. But the machinery of consumer capitalism is not built for altruistic purposes. In practical terms, there is more to be made in selling superfluity to the rich than necessities to the poor. This meant pouring resources into an industry whose sole purpose was to produce what the system craved – an inexhaustible demand for consumer goods. The advertising industry was thus charged not simply with selling goods, but with selling consumerism. Or, as retail analyst Victor Liebow put it in the late 1940s, making consumption “our way of life,” converting “the buying and the selling of goods into rituals, [so] that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction in commodities” (in Packard, 1960, p. 33).

The advertising industry had, for some time, celebrated the inequity that those in greatest need of its services were those with the greatest resources. It now found itself as the propaganda wing of an economic system – perversely, an industry whose importance grew as people’s need for consumer goods diminished. Indeed, the success of advertising in promoting consumer goods created a cycle of dependency. As the volume and range of products proliferated, consumers became increasingly dependent upon advertising to differentiate one product from another.

Advertising, in this sense, is not just another cultural industry. While scholars like Neil Postman (1985) have tried to advance Marshall McLuhan’s famous theory that “the medium is the message,” most forms of communication are ideologically ambiguous. Television, for example, may have certain characteristics and properties (Ellis, 1992), but as a technology it is comparatively value-free. It can be consumerist or environmentalist, capitalist or socialist, feminist or patriarchal. Advertising can also entertain forms of ambiguity – the feminist critique of advertising (Wolff, 1991; see also Kilbourne’s canonical critique in Jhally, 2000), for example, allows us to plausibly imagine an advertising industry that does not depend on gender stereotypes. But there is no escaping the place where form and content collide – advertising is closely bound to the ideology of consumerism.

Yet advertising is generally regarded – certainly by governments and regulatory bodies – as entirely apolitical. So much so that, in certain contexts, advertisements *with* an overt political message are seen as problematic (and, in countries like the United Kingdom, in breach of broadcasting codes on impartiality). This is, in part, because we are used to locating meaning – whether it is a TV commercial or a TV program – in individual texts. But the ideological thrust of advertising is precisely in its collectivity. As individual stories they have a certain innocence. Their systemic meaning, on the other hand, is at the heart of a consumerist ideology (Mander, 1977). The moral of the thousands of different stories they tell is always the same: regardless of how much we already have, the only way to pleasure, popularity, security, happiness, or fulfillment is through consumption.

Television or radio programs may vary, but commercials themselves are, for all their symbolic excess, remorselessly repetitive. This is not a new observation, and yet the *systemic* meaning of advertising is often glossed over or ignored in media and communication studies. Despite the industry's extraordinary growth and ubiquity, we see few attempts to come to terms with the magnitude of advertising as a cultural system.

The failure to interrogate the political significance of advertising and its role in consumer culture is rooted in a rejection of early Marxist approaches to contemporary culture. Any systemic critique is often reduced to a set of Marxist origins, whereby advertising is seen as linked to a set of economic imperatives in which the realities of the conditions of production are suppressed. Such a critique is often dismissed as reductive at a time when Marxist approaches have become deeply unfashionable. There are three problems with this dismissal.

First, although many Marxist analyses of culture may be too crude to appreciate what cultural studies scholars used to call the "relative autonomy" of cultural forms, this was partly because production practices – in, say, the television or film industries – were often only loosely tied to economic imperatives. So, for example, commercial films needed to make money, but this did not mean they had to promote the economic system that produced them. In countries with a strong tradition of public service broadcasting, the relations between culture and economy were more complex still.

The advertising industry, however, is decidedly *less* complex. For all their occasional wit and panache, advertisements are profoundly functional – unlike most cultural forms where the relationship between content and consumption is less direct, they exist to promote consumption. What was compelling about the critiques of a Marxist approach to culture was the rejection of a totalizing theory that ignored the specificities of cultural production. But ironically, this rejection has its own reductive quality, whereby *any* attempts to connect economy and culture are rejected. This denial of the connections between economy and culture has led to a failure to appreciate those instances where such a relationship is pivotal, especially in advertising.

Second, this rejection spawned a media and cultural studies that focused on ambiguity and complexity. Advertisements are often rich with meaning: they can be seen as playthings in a semiotic democracy that cannot be reduced to a simple economic function, and where meaning is never guaranteed. And, as many critics of advertising point out, there is no doubt that advertisements do far more than communicate messages about consumption (Williamson, 1995). However, such an appreciation does *not* mean that advertising's consumerist logic is somehow irrelevant, that other meanings are created while the promotion of consumption is ignored.

All too often, the idea that advertising plays a role in promoting consumerism is parodied as a reductive "hypodermic needle" theory of media influence, whereby witless, passive citizens are commanded to go forth and accumulate. But the dismissal that follows this parody is far too easy. The discourse of advertising can be powerful without being totalizing, unambiguous, or passively received. Indeed, to suggest that

such a ubiquitous industry devoted to extolling consumption has played no part in the development of consumer culture is frankly perverse. Even Michael Schudson, regarded by critics like Stuart Ewen as an apologist for the industry, suggests that the advertising industry “may shape our sense of values” (Schudson, 1986; Ewen, 2001).

Third, the observation that advertising portrays a world in which the production and distribution of commodities are either romanticized or (more routinely) ignored may have its origins in a Marxist analysis of the relations of production. But it has long since surpassed these origins, encompassing many other critiques – Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* (1999) and the Fair Trade movement being the best known – which address gender inequalities in production, child labor, the inequities of globalization (where production shifts to where labor is cheapest), the environmental costs of production and distribution, and the growing problems of post-consumption (the disposal of our toxic array of consumer goods).

Again, what is common to most advertising is that it bypasses inequities of global production and the environmental consequences of production, distribution, and disposal, to stress the moment of consumption with remorseless repetition. In this sense, advertising is on one side of a wide-ranging and very contemporary political argument with feminists, labor activists, environmentalists, and the anti-globalization movement. While at times this opposition is overt – the case of “greenwashing” campaigns, for example – advertising’s significance is less a matter of persuasion than its ability to keep changing the subject, to return our focus toward the pleasures associated with what Sut Jhally (1998) calls “the dead world of things.”

Because we have allowed advertising to become our most dominant form of cultural expression, it crowds our imaginations and makes it difficult to contemplate a society that is *not* based on consumerism. If, as Tim Edwards suggests, “consumerism as an ethos and a practice is expanding in importance at a near exponential rate to incorporate everything from health and insurance to education and recreation” (Edwards, 2000), it is entirely in keeping with advertising’s voluminous colonization of the communication, information, and entertainment industries. This could, of course, be coincidental rather than causal – causality is, after all, much easier to quibble with than to establish (Lewis, 2008) – but it stretches credulity to suggest that such a ubiquitous cultural discourse has little ideological impact.

Above all, the growth of advertising – the knotweed of contemporary culture – is not innocent or apolitical. Its presence pushes us further down the dead-end of consumer capitalism and offers no way out. As Richard Layard (2003) suggests, legislation *banning* advertising is a far more sensible policy for increasing quality of life than extending consumer choice. Such a policy is, of course, politically implausible (and probably undesirable), but we do need to consider the positive social outcomes of living in a world less dominated by the discourse of advertising. This involves radically rethinking of current approaches to funding the creative industries, which push us toward increasing rather than decreasing the cultural space occupied by advertising.

Disposable News and Democracy: Rethinking the Way We Report the World

In theory, the news is a place where the shortcomings of consumer capitalism – its failure to deliver an improved quality of life, its environmental consequences, and consumerism’s diminishing returns – might be highlighted and debated. And yet a tired orthodoxy prevails. Despite the growing number of critiques of a crude model of economic growth (measured in GDP), the news media’s economic framework is as robust as it ever was, solidified by the growing genre of business reporting.

There are, of course, negative consequences if the wealthier people of the world spend less money. But this is because we have designed an economic system that depends upon debt-led consumerism, where production is tied less to human need than to the demands of a consumer economy. For example, developing nations are encouraged to export commodities rather than become self-sufficient, tying them to the vicissitudes of global capitalism. A drop in global demand is bad for these economies because they have been encouraged (by institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) to serve global consumers rather than local interests.

But the environmental, economic, and cultural critiques of consumer capitalism are becoming too persuasive and too powerful to be dismissed. As a consequence, it is no longer possible to assert the idea that “growth is good” as a simple objective truth. Any virtue attributed to growth depends on how it is measured, managed, or achieved. It follows that some forms of economic growth may *not* be good, while many of the conditions for positive human progress lie elsewhere.

Many of these points are given an airing in news programs, but they are usually confined to the spaces reserved for quirky, counterintuitive ideas. Climate change, meanwhile, even when it is taken seriously, tends to be portrayed as a technological rather than a systemic problem. News coverage tends to focus on solutions that involve refitting the growth model with a series of techno-fixes rather than questioning the nature of the model itself (Lewis & Boyce, 2009). Less consumption – which is almost certainly a necessary part of any attempt to offset the worst effects of climate change – is uniformly presented as *bad* news, rudely interrupting the model of endless growth. The news media find it hard to countenance an alternative to an economic system of borrow-and-spend, or an environmental model of consume-and-trash.

Why is this? In its ideal form, news occupies a *space outside* consumerism, addressing us as citizens rather than as consumers. In so doing it fulfills a deeply egalitarian purpose, to inform people about the world and enable them to make considered democratic choices. Many critiques of the news media – from the Glasgow Media Group (see, e.g., Philo, 1995) to Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model (1988) – use this ideal as their point of departure. This utopian model of journalism remains palpably intact, immediately understood by both journalists and critics.

The critical literature on news offers many explanations for journalism's failure to encapsulate Habermasian (1991) ideals of the public sphere – the dependence on elites, on well-worn frameworks, on public relations, and on business interests all compromise the news as a diverse, open, civic space. But part of the problem is also more fundamental: the style, content, and expectations of what defines “news” have been shaped by the needs of an emerging consumer culture.

Terhi Rantanen (2009) has written a compelling analysis of the way in which the news continually reinvents itself as “new.” We can use this framework to examine the purpose and utility of news as a public service and as a commodity form. The key term, in this analysis, is “disposable news,” a form of built-in obsolescence that serves a profit motive but impedes public understanding of the world – an idea that reaches its apotheosis in the repetitive rush of the 24-hour news cycle (Lewis, 2010).

At the same time, the history of journalism is inevitably intertwined with politics and, as Brian McNair suggests, with the rise of democracy (McNair, 2000). In early nineteenth-century Britain, the radical press was clearly an agent for democratic change and promoted the ideal of a universal franchise (Thompson, 1968), at a time when only a certain class of property-owning men could vote. For writers like Henry Hetherington, editor of the *Poor Man's Guardian*, news was, in part, about educating citizens and encouraging them to take history into their own hands.

James Curran and Jean Seaton (1997) and Kevin Williams (1998) argue that the decline of the British radical press was hastened by the government's adoption of a more liberal approach to news. Initial attempts to suppress the radical press were decidedly heavy-handed, with “taxes on knowledge” that effectively penalized all forms of popular journalism. The adoption of a more reformist, less punitive tax regime allowed the growth of commercial mass-circulation newspapers, requiring a level of capital investment and advertising support that favored more establishment forms of ownership. As a consequence, Curran and Seaton (1997) suggest, newspapers moved out of the hands of radical reformers and became big business, and thus “market forces succeeded where legal repression had failed in conscripting the press to the social order” (p. 9).

But it would be misleading to see the radical forerunners of mass-circulation news as high-minded purveyors of information about public affairs. As Stuart Allan (2000) and Jackie Harrison (2006) make clear, there was no golden age of reporting that was subsequently degraded by the grubby needs of commerce. The radical press may have championed democracy, but these newspapers were also bound by the need to make money and could muckrake with the best of them. Radical editor Henry Hetherington promised that one of his newspapers would deliver “Murders, Rapes, Suicides, Burnings, Maimings, Theatricals, Races, Pugilism and [. . .] every sort of devilment that will make it sell” (cited in Allan, 2000, p. 13).

Indeed, the democratic ideal of journalism, whereby news fulfills a deeply egalitarian purpose – informing people about the world and enabling them to make considered democratic choices – developed *alongside* the desire to titillate and

entertain. In the twentieth century, journalism in the United States, where governments have generally been deeply committed to keeping news in the hands of private enterprise, has also developed a strong *cultural* commitment to notions of fairness and objectivity.

Nonetheless, the growth of news as a business – its industrialization and absorption into capitalist production from the late nineteenth century onwards – created a distinct set of impulses. The style, content, and expectations of what we think of as “news” were quickly shaped by the needs of an emerging consumer culture. This meant a gradual shift away from news about public affairs toward crime, sport, and other “human interest” (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001), but it also created a working definition of news based on the need to sell it as a *disposable commodity*. Once news became a manufactured product, its commercial success relied upon the creation of a transitory world where information can be quickly discarded and replaced, rather than a space designed to build common knowledge.

The history of journalism – like the history of media generally – is often understood as an inexorable process made possible by a series of demographic and technological developments. But if the growth of the daily newspaper was made possible by urbanization, the growth of transport networks, and efficient printing presses, its viability *depended on making news a constant celebration of the new*. As Terhi Rantanen (2009) points out, this is often more a matter of appearance than of substance. It became a necessary fabrication to be constantly up-to-date.

Journalism was thus partly defined, at a key stage in its development, by the notion of *built-in obsolescence*. The phrase “yesterday’s news” captures Victor Liebow’s consumerist credo perfectly. News loses its value not because it is no longer relevant or useful, but because it is past its sell-by date, quite literally. Its value, as a commodity, has less to do with its ability to inform than with its sense of immediacy. Indeed, we might say that consumer capitalism succeeded in making news the ultimate disposable item, one that needed replacing on a timescale even the fashion industry would regard as indecent haste.

Thus began a cultural economy based on the “thirst to be first” (Lewis & Cushion, 2009) – a point famously satirized by Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop* in the 1930s. In this disposable world, newness is all. But in this context, what passes for new is rarely novel or original. The “shock of the new” in journalism is occasional rather than routine, and we are rarely offered ideas that change the way we view the world. News is new only in the banal, temporal sense that it is recent (and often not even then).

So while journalism retains a laudable sense of democratic purpose, it is constrained by its form: news became a commodity almost as soon as it was defined as news. Those in the newspaper business quickly understood that to become profitable, news has to become disposable. In essence, the more rapidly news could be made to appear out of date, the more regularly it could be sold. The newspaper thereby evolved into an object that represents a consumerist dream and an environmental nightmare – something that, *by definition*, needs replacing on a daily basis. The move to a 24-hour news culture has only sharpened the sense of news as a disposable commodity.

This political economy leaks into a philosophy. The idea that consumer goods should be built to last, rather than used up and replaced, has become almost passé, while we have contrived a world in which it is usually both cheaper and easier to replace something than to fix it. If journalism still has the capacity to go beyond this model, it is restrained by the degree to which it encapsulates it. Its currency is, in part, its currency. Journalism thus has a tendency to celebrate new *things* rather than new *ideas* (Lewis, 2010; Rantanen, 2009), a consumerist ideology that leads us back, inevitably, to a very limited, consumerist model of growth.

Indeed, the “growth is good” framework is so central to news storytelling about the economy that it pushes all conflicting concerns aside. Witness the way in which the problem of climate change was immediately sidelined during coverage of the recession from 2008 to the present. Part of the problem, of course, is that when economies are structured around a certain model of consumer capitalism, a recession will have negative consequences, notably for those who lose their jobs. But these problems are rarely balanced against the negative environmental (and human) consequences of growth, and there is almost no discussion of how rich countries might happily survive *without* economic growth.

The current crisis in journalism – prompted by the Internet, which has made it more difficult to sell news as a commodity – is both a threat and an opportunity. The danger is that news will become a cheap, mass-produced space designed to maximize market share, paid for solely by advertising revenue. In this scenario, the reputation of journalism will sink further in public esteem, and we can be sure that the contradictions of consumer capitalism will not be televised. But there is also a chance to refocus our attention on the democratic purpose of news, to recapture what elevates journalism as a profession and challenge a redundant system. Journalists themselves have a clear and vested interest in this, since the rise of “citizen journalists” and the mass production of news threaten their survival and the quality of their work.

Beyond Consumerism: Media Studies Reborn

The basis of my argument is that consumer capitalism has run its course: as a model for human progress it has become deeply dysfunctional. Unfortunately, any prospect that we might evolve to a more fulfilling, sustainable system is hampered by the way in which consumer capitalism has shaped the media and cultural industries. These industries both encapsulate and extol the wasteful and empty proliferation of commodities.

At the same time, they offer the potential to imagine a different model of human progress. A genre like news, for example, retains a commitment to criticism and debate in spite of its commercial genealogy. And while most cultural genres, from pop music to film, are now deeply tied to the selling of commodities, they remain

more open to the political imagination than the advertising that often funds or promotes them. If we are to progress, we might begin by rethinking the way we pay for and regulate our cultural environment. We have created sufficient wealth to do almost anything we want; we should stop and think about how best to use it. And to do that, we need a different set of stories.

Those of us in media, communication, and cultural studies are well placed to scope out these possibilities. This will, however, be neither easy nor straightforward. It means adopting a more critical attitude to production practices that create the beguiling array of media technologies we often use and whose potential we may find exhilarating. It means taking the ideological consequences of dominant media discourses like advertising seriously, rather than adopting the lazier course of critiquing any attempts to demonstrate the influence of our cultural industries (it is always easier to question power and influence than establish it) (Lewis, 2008). And it means embracing a form of journalism education that takes nothing for granted about the nature of news, while refusing to apologize for an ideal based on democracy rather than on commerce.

NOTES

- 1 ICM Climate Change Survey Results (2007). Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/east/docs/OmClimateChange.pdf>.
- 2 Pew Research Center (2010, January 25). Public's priorities for 2010: Economy, jobs, terrorism. Retrieved from <http://people-press.org/report/584/policy-priorities-2010>.
- 3 We should be careful about the word "happiness" here: happiness is an important aspect of human experience, but it is only part of what constitutes quality of life. Fulfillment is not the same as happiness but is a highly valued part of human experience. Since the data refer to a much broader set of human emotions and experience, we can substitute Layard's (2003) use of the word "happiness" with "quality of life."
- 4 In *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Neil Postman (1985) has argued that modern media, especially television, provide pleasures that are inherently banal. Much of his analysis, however, is predicated on a particular version of television – i.e., highly commercial television in the United States.

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Media Armageddons and the Death of Liberal Biopolitics

Majia Holmer Nadesan

ABSTRACT

Over the last several years, Western audiences have been treated to a steady stream of post-apocalyptic disaster films. In this chapter, Majia Nadesan discusses *The Road*, *The Book of Eli*, and *9*, arguing that these films can be distinguished thematically from the more general disaster genre by their exclusive focus on post-disaster survival and their invocations of cannibalism. Significantly, she connects the emphases on post-apocalyptic survival and cannibalism to the profound social dislocations experienced by US citizens in the wake of the financial crisis. The chapter contends that thematic elements of the films are metaphors for the ascendancy of a form of financial capitalism that dispenses with labor-based suppositions of value. Nadesan contends that financial capitalism has no interest in Western, liberal biopolitics, and that the current slate of post-apocalyptic disaster films is a cultural barometer of the malaise experienced by newly expendable populations, increasingly confronted with their excess in relation to post-disaster capitalism.

Introduction

Disaster films emphasizing post-apocalyptic landscapes dominate the recent cinematic imagination. Public anxieties surrounding the fear of terrorist attacks, global

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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warming, flu pandemics, and fiscal crises are no doubt channeled into these films. Yet, what is unique about the contemporary disaster film is its tendency to emphasize post-disaster survival, rather than exploiting audiences' vicarious enjoyment of apocalyptic spectacle. This chapter argues that the cinematic dwelling within post-apocalyptic landscapes, particularly cannibalistic dwelling, reflects a pervasive but anonymous sense of dislocation stemming from what will be theorized as the death throes of liberal biopolitics. Liberal biopolitics, born in the eighteenth century, is quickly eroding as the population is stripped of value within new calculi for evaluating the wealth of nations. Domestic populations within the United States sense this erosion of their value and significance and therefore can identify with cinematic survivors' efforts to maintain identity and dignity in post-collapse environments devoid of basic principles of sociality. However, the cinematic obfuscation of the forces of collapse may expedite the death of liberal biopolitics by undermining the forms of concerted and directed activism necessary for resisting the onslaught of cannibalizing capitalism. The chapter begins by describing recent disaster films and then moves to explore how disaster films allude to the death of biopolitics.

Disaster Films

Disaster is a familiar theme within Hollywood productions. Maurice Yacowar (2003) traces the earliest disaster films to turn-of-the-twentieth-century productions, such as Méliès's *Collision and Shipwreck at Sea* (1898) and *The Catastrophe of the Balloon* (1902). Early disaster films articulated a thematic device that would be replicated across a century of subsequent films in the genre: the eruption of death within scenes of normality (Yacowar, 2003). In 1965, Susan Sontag described stereotyped features of disasters in science fiction films in her now classic essay, "The Imagination of Disaster." Sontag observed that disaster as fantasy "releases one from normal obligations" while often conveying simplistic moralities that encourage audiences to discharge "righteous bellicosity" (p. 45). Yet, also lurking in science fiction disaster films, Sontag remarked, are the "deepest anxieties about contemporary existence" (p. 47). These anxieties include the "very real trauma of the Bomb" as well as more generalized fears of "universal mutilation and even annihilation" (p. 47).

Although specters of death and annihilation commonly haunt science fiction disaster films, mise-en-scène features are shaped by extant cultural identities and preoccupations. Stephen Kean's *Disaster Movies: The Cinema of Catastrophe* (2006) offers readers insight into transmutations in cinematic themes and devices since the 1970s. Kean observes that 1990s-era disaster films relied on repetitions of a relatively narrow range of destructive events and scenes, as illustrated by the meteor impacts featured in *Deep Impact* (1998) and *Armageddon* (1998). These two films, like similar films of the period, focus on the events prior to, and during, disasters. Disaster presents a spectacle of enjoyment for audiences. However, post-September 11 disaster films

were marked by a new sensitivity, leading usually (but not always) to more muted representations of cinematic disasters.

More recently, disaster films released in 2009 and 2010 offer an interesting twist. As John Jurgensen and Jamin Brophy-Warren (2009) write in their *Wall Street Journal* review, "The new wave of disaster movies and TV shows isn't about staving off the apocalypse. It's what happens afterwards that counts." Recent films that explore survival after a natural or human-induced apocalypse include *Carriers* (2009), *Children of Men* (2006), *I Am Legend* (2007), *Wall-E* (2008), *28 Days Later* (2002), *Doomsday* (2008), *9* (2009), *The Road* (2009), and *The Book of Eli* (2010), among others. These films are to be distinguished from earlier apocalyptic films that address efforts to cope with anticipated disasters, halt anticipated disasters, or that sensationalize the disaster itself (e.g., *2012*, out in 2009).

The last four of the films mentioned – *Doomsday*, *9*, *The Road*, and *The Book of Eli* – are distinctive for their emphasis on cannibalism. Cannibalism is not unusual in films (e.g., Ruggero Deodato's 1980 *Cannibal Holocaust*), particularly in survival films (e.g., *Alive*, 1993), but the combined synthesis of post-apocalyptic survival and cannibalism is relatively unique. When it does occur, this synthesis tends to involve zombie cannibals (e.g., *Omega Man*, 1971; *World War Z*, 2006; *I Am Legend*, 2007; *The Crazies*, 2010). Cannibalism by fully human (i.e., non-zombified), post-apocalyptic survivors in cinema is rare. Three notable exceptions include *Soylent Green* (1973), examining a dystopic, overpopulated future; *A Boy and His Dog* (1978), a film that implicates cannibalism by a bureaucratized and totalitarian post-apocalyptic society; and *The Road Warrior* (1981), which features post-apocalyptic Australia. These three films were released within the culturally pessimistic zeitgeist of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which resulted in a number of dark, neo-noir films. Since that time, post-apocalyptic cannibalism has not appealed to Hollywood, perhaps being perceived as too risky, although a number of novels have explored this theme, notably *Farnham's Freehold* (Heinlein, 2011) and, most recently, *One Second After* (Forstchen, 2009).

However, the current cultural pessimism that is spreading across the United States has enabled the return of dark, mainstream films (see Pew Research Center, 2010). This chapter will focus on the three recent US films that address survival and (non-zombie) cannibalism in post-apocalyptic worlds.¹ The analysis argues that a change in cultural zeitgeist, rooted in the ongoing collapse of liberal biopolitics, has affected this shift in Hollywood sentiments. Support for this argument is found in the films' latent cultural significations, particularly with respect to featured thematic elements including devastated urban landscapes and debased sociality. The films, it is argued, essentially represent hauntings from an anticipated future that stem from the collapse of Western biopolitics. Each of these films will be introduced before explaining theoretically what is meant by the "death of liberal biopolitics."

The Road, directed by John Hillcoat, is based on a 2006 novel by Cormac McCarthy, adapted by writer Joe Penhall. Director Hillcoat pressed McCarthy to explain the nature of the disaster that leaves a father and his son adrift in a dead world devoid of plants, animals, and human civilization (Jurgensen & Brophy-Warren, 2009).

McCarthy reportedly responded that “it didn’t matter whether it was nuclear war or mini volcanoes or a comet” (cited in Jurgensen & Brophy-Warren, 2009). What matters in the film is the struggle for survival and dignity in a collapsed world. The father and son featured in the film navigate devastated landscapes in search of food and hope, all the while struggling to avoid other survivors who have turned to cannibalism. One of the most disturbing scenes in the film focuses on the cannibals’ “meat-locker” of starved, naked, suffering humans. When filming *The Road*, Hillcoat relied upon real disaster footage of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, Mt. St. Helens after its explosion, and abandoned industrial areas in Pennsylvania.

The second film to be discussed here, *The Book of Eli* directed by Albert and Allen Hughes, with Gary Whitta as screenwriter, takes place in a post-apocalypse environment 30 years after some final war. As with *The Road*, survivors struggle within ruins to find food and water. Whereas *The Road* is filmed primarily in unremitting gray, *The Book of Eli* is cast in washed-out dusty browns. What the two films share are cannibalistic survivors who signify the utter collapse of civilization. However, whereas *The Road* offers no hope for the reclamation of humanity, *The Book of Eli* suggests this possibility in the form of a Bible carried by the film’s main protagonist. Yet, the Bible is an uncertain signifier in the sense that the film explores its instrumentalization by fascist forces. In the end, *The Book of Eli* sacrifices the savior whose corporeality gives expression to the Word of the Bible. Once codified and bound, this Word is contained on a bookshelf in a hidden enclave of learning. It is shelved, and perhaps forgotten, next to the Torah and the Qu’ran.

The final film addressed here is *9*, an animated production by Burton, Bekmambetov, and Lemley (2009), directed by Shane Acker, with the screenplay written by Pamela Pettler. *9* features no humans at all in its blighted, post-apocalyptic landscape. All that remains of agency are mechanical dolls and the carnivorous machines that prey upon them. Using flashbacks, *9* explains the devastation by drawing upon the classical dialectic monster of the machine that turns against its maker. In this case, the machine, which was originally intended for productive use, was appropriated by the military for the purpose of warfare. The machine’s inventor subsequently created the mechanical dolls, within which he invested slices of his soul. These animated dolls struggle with one another over how to survive and how to evade the soul-consuming, predatory machines. When making the film, *9*’s director Shane Acker and his crew visited Los Angeles scrap yards where they found interesting junk, which they then assembled into prototypes for the animated mechanical dolls. In contrast, the carnivorous and more high-tech-looking machines threatening the dolls were simply fabricated in computer animation (Trimble, 2009). The characters in *9* are not properly human but arguably signify human cannibalism since they are human externalizations (i.e., machines) that prey upon human externalizations (dolls) invested with a human soul.

Despite differences in mise-en-scène elements, all three films examined in this analysis share a common focus on the collapse of civilization, defined in relation to

liberal, democratic principles of government. The remaining populations in *The Book of Eli* and *The Road* have lost organizing principles of social existence other than brute and corporeal power. Population is not a source of fecund energies; rather, population is the basis for ruthless competition. No social contract exists; sociality is reduced to allegiances of fealty to predatory powers. The father–son relationship dramatized in *The Road* serves only to remind audiences of all that has been lost from the world. In *The Book of Eli*, master signifiers such as the Bible oscillate between meanings, at times iconic of unleashed fascist power, while at other times iconic of law and order. 9 alone dramatizes friendships, but does so in the context of internal intrigue and despotism born of desperation.

The three films' emphasis on post-apocalyptic survival causes futures to recede, as well as the traumatic kernels of the past events that precipitated collapse. None of the films offers a happy Hollywood ending. Instead, they all dwell upon the struggle for sustenance and some basic level of security in devastated landscapes. The role cannibalistic violence plays in these films is important. Cannibalism is a direct threat in *The Road*. Predatory violence by machine against machine dominates 9. Cannibalism, fascist power, and cruelty are found in *The Book of Eli*. Of course, violence in all of its forms pervades Hollywood productions. Yet, there is something distinctive about the violence in these post-apocalyptic films. Violence is not ideologically driven or fetishized, nor is it linked to consciousness-altering madness (as with zombies), but it is driven by depravity born of desperation, as in *The Road* and *The Book of Eli*, or by the utter mindlessness found in 9's predatory creatures.

The stories told in a society always reflect aspirations and anxieties, hopes and fears. What anxieties and cultural fears infuse the thematic elements of these post-apocalyptic, blasted landscapes and desperate, hopeless survivors? Moreover, how do the tropes, plots, and landscapes of today's films diverge from the history of disaster films? The films described in this section, *The Road*, 9, and *The Book of Eli*, differ from the disaster film genre by their relatively small casts and apparently simple themes. Unlike previous films in this genre, these films de-emphasize the disaster as they are set years after the cataclysm, which is only alluded to, rather than sensationalized. Additionally, the main threats posed to the survivors of the three disaster films examined in this analysis are scarcity (except in 9) and predatory, cannibalistic violence. It is my argument that these two threats serve as sites of condensation for popular anxieties surrounding fundamental dislocations in liberalism as a politico-economic ideology and as a way of life.

Liberalism, the Labor Theory of Value, and the Wealth of Nations

This chapter argues that thematic elements of current disaster films point to a deep sense of trepidation in the US cultural imagination. The zeitgeist has shifted away

from optimism for the future, as the foundations of society are perceived to be in jeopardy. The analysis offered by this chapter extends beyond surface expressions of popular dissatisfaction to address a problematic trend within Western liberalism that, arguably, is becoming increasingly evident to the US populace. That trend is the *growing irrelevance of the populace for the creation of value*. This chapter argues that a nagging sense of the populace's irrelevance is percolating in the collective cinematic imagination of the nation. However, the cinematic imagination functions akin to a collective unconscious: cinematic displacement and condensation mask traumatic kernels of understanding. The cinematic dream-work weaves potent symbols of anxiety and dislocation into a coherent narrative that ultimately obscures the symbols' relations to the crisis of liberal capitalism. This section explores the crisis of liberal capitalism that has dislocated the populace as the source of value. The devaluation of the US population within capitalist calculi of value is leading to what I describe as the death of liberal biopolitics. This analysis will be linked to the films in the subsequent section.

This section is organized by a central contention: it is my argument that liberal biopolitics is tied implicitly to the capitalist labor theory of value. Consequently, the growing irrelevance of US labor (and aggregate consumption) today for the accumulation of capitalist value negates justification for liberal biopolitics within the nation. In order to unpack this argument, it is helpful to return to the birth of biopolitics as it emerged with Western capitalism and liberalism in the eighteenth century.

Western capitalism emerged in tandem with Western liberalism. Liberalism, as expressed in the founding documents of Adam Smith and John Locke, is a form of political rule that posits and advocates limits to sovereign control over the economy and individuals. Liberalism substitutes the corporeal, centered power of the sovereign over the individual and his/her market transactions with "natural" laws and disciplines. As explained by Michel Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, market veridiction – e.g., in the form of Smith's guiding hand – was the regime of truth that adjudicated the correctness of governmental practices under liberalism. Accordingly, liberalism is essentially "indexed to the problem of the market and market veridiction" (Foucault, 2008, p. 56). Markets purportedly permit "natural" or spontaneous mechanisms to set "natural," "good," or "normal" prices (p. 31). Within classical liberal political economy, market prices were believed to have a certain, almost meta-physical, relationship to the work performed to produce market commodities. Accordingly, in 1776 Adam Smith argued in *The Wealth of Nations*:

The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use or consume it himself, but to exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labour which it enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the *exchangeable value* of all commodities. (2003, p. 43, emphasis added)

In *The Economics* (1857–1867), Marx (2000) commented upon the importance of Adam Smith in defining labor, in its abstracted form, as the source of wealth production,

particularly in exchange relations. For classical liberalism, *labor power is the ultimate source of exchange value*; that is, it is the natural and foundational truth of the market. The capitalists' accumulation of surplus value derives from the objectification of the wage earners' "living labour" (Marx, 2000, p. 400). Wages paid to labor, from the classical perspective, derive directly from the workers' power to command wage levels. Disutility is the term used to describe the condition where low wages disincentivize work. Classical economists believe that wages settle just above disutility (Keynes, 1936).

The market's capacity to adjudicate truth presupposed a special market agent capable of assessing information rationally when selling work or when involved in other types of commodity transactions. Thus, Adam Smith argued that society is fundamentally composed of "commercial" actors: "Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society" (2003, p. 33). *Homo economicus* is the rational commercial agent of exchange. His (gendered) comparative advantage is embodied in his labor capacity and/or in the labor "stored" in products or coinage he controls. The imagined transparency and competitiveness of this idealized marketplace of labor and goods allows for the most efficient exchange and distribution of societal goods possible.

Laissez-faire is the principle of government that is viewed as allowing the labor and commodity markets to operate efficiently, according to their natural or spontaneous competitive mechanisms (see Riskin, 2003, p. 47). The moral component of laissez-faire derived from Adam Smith's belief that the individual's rational, self-interested market behavior produced the most positive collective outcomes for society, thereby aligning private market interests with public advantage (Smith, 2003, p. 572). The underpinnings of classical liberalism, including laissez-faire and *homo economicus*, prevailed throughout the nineteenth century despite evidence of the market's failure to distribute resources efficiently or rationally through much of that century, as pointed out so clearly by Karl Marx (2000).

However, laissez-faire did not result in the abdication of state power. Through the vector of a secularized pastoral power, the state assumed greater interest in, and responsibility for, the biovitalities of the population, forging biopolitics. According to Foucault, biopolitics emerged under state mercantilism through the technology of political statistics and the assemblage of police (Foucault, 2007, pp. 278, 315). Biopolitics, a form of power that addresses the biovitalities of human bodies, involved "distributing the living in the domain of value and utility" (Foucault, 1990, p. 144). Biopolitics inherited from the police the objective of ensuring the health of the population and preventing idleness (Foucault, 2007, p. 325). Biopolitics, aimed at the population, was complemented by anatomico-power, which operated on the living bodies of workers and soldiers in order to govern and extract value from their labor power (Foucault, 1990). Although early biopolitical endeavors, such as the nineteenth-century sanitation movement, involved a convergence of private and state authorities, biopolitical practices eventually were adopted as technologies of the self,

as individuals endeavored to master hygienic practices of self-government. Still, biopolitics remained essentially a responsibility of state government as the health and vitality of populations were linked to state security and economic prosperity (Nadesan, 2008). Foucault therefore claimed that under the evolving liberal state, the population “will appear above all as the final end of government” with the end being aimed at increasing the population’s “wealth, its longevity, and its health” (2007, p. 105).

The historical relations between biopolitics and the demands of capitalist accumulation are fraught with tensions and the former is not reducible to the imperatives of the latter (see Nadesan, 2008). That being said, biopolitics finds its justification in enabling the subject of liberalism, *homo economicus*, while fostering the economic and political security of the nation. Indeed, Foucault (2007) stressed that biopolitics must be understood “on the basis of a theme developed in the seventeenth century: the management of state forces” (p. 367). It is not surprising therefore that overt tensions between (1) market logics of extraction and accumulation and (2) the health of the population (the totality of *homo economicus*) have produced great legislative and judicial conflicts for liberal Western states that declare democracy while encoding the logics of property within their democratic documents (see Beard, 1913; Hardt & Negri, 2009).

The great European and US depressions of the 1930s pitted the vitalities of populations against the liberal freedoms of the market while also demonstrating how laissez-faire market failures problematize through fascism the very idea of the liberal state. Recognizing that laissez-faire capitalism tends to result in overproduction (and underconsumption), John M. Keynes sought to temper the business cycle by expanding the state’s role in stabilizing demand, through expansion of the public sector and by regulating employment. Keynes’s observations that the populace could experience “involuntary unemployment” and that markets often exhibited irrationality problematized laissez-faire assumptions (1936, p. 10). Keynes particularly emphasized the dangers of speculation, which had contributed to the Great Depression:

Speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the position is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation. When the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of the activities of a casino, the job is likely to be ill done. (1936, p. 132)

Keynesian economics employed the state to promote full employment and regulate speculation, while still encouraging a capitalist economy and market system. In the United States, military Keynesianism contributed to union-based manufacturing while expanded social welfare and education spending delivered improved living standards for much of the populace.

Liberal biopolitics thus expanded significantly in the post-World War II era. The intense study and promotion of physical and mental “health” became a defining feature of the post-World War II security state in the United States (and Western Europe) through programs such as free lunch, expanded welfare, social security, and

services for the disabled. These programs were infused with power relations and produced resistance from populations subjected to them, especially in the 1960s and 1970s; however, they did in many ways prioritize national vitality, construed in relation to the populace's economic productivity (e.g., consider social security, free milk and lunch programs, head-start, welfare, etc.).

Classical laissez-faire was not, however, completely abandoned in the post-World War II era. Austrian economists such as Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises sought to free economic theory and practice from Keynesian constraints and influence and to liberate the populace from "dependence"-fostering social welfare programs. Yet, it was the Chicago School "neoliberal" economists whose ideas were most fully implemented, first in trial nations such as Chile and Mexico through the leverage of global governance institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The World Trade Organization, which replaced the post-World War II General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1995, also assumed a role in propagating neoliberal policies by dictating the elimination of Keynesian tariffs and subsidies. The emphasis on export-oriented production in the developing world, coupled with the liberalization of trade and finance, presented economic opportunities to corporations based in the developed world seeking to escape the (perceived) onerous (Keynesian) labor, tax, and environmental regulations of their host nations. Automation and globalization enhanced corporate earnings as the labor disutility rate sank ever lower; however, the most lucrative technology for sheer accumulation involved financial speculation, rather than production activities.

Indeed, within neoliberal states such as the United States and the United Kingdom, the intensification of capital accumulation in the 1980s through today derived less from the enhancement of labor's productive capacities and the sinking of the disutility rate than from the growth of financialization. Financialization occurred within the United States as financial motives, institutions, and elites became increasingly important in shaping the economy in response to the decline in profit margins in manufacturing (see Foster & Magdoff, 2009; Vasudevan, 2008). US banks grew to dominate their domestic economies: by 2010, six US banks held assets in excess of 63% of the US gross domestic (Moyers, 2010). Moreover, innovative financial instruments such as derivatives, collateralized debt obligations, and credit default swaps enabled the financial investment banks and commercial banks (after repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act) to accumulate wealth outside of the circuits of commodity production (LiPuma & Lee, 2004). Bryan, Martin, and Rafferty (2009) claim there is no direct historical equivalent for this new form of financialization, not simply because of the size of financial institutions, but also because securitization and financial derivatives "*are transforming capital accumulation*" in ways unimaginable by Marx and the classical economists (my italics, p. 459).² Contemporary financialization requires little labor to produce value (see Nadesan, in press).

Financialization in the United States has not only driven out most manufacturing, but it has also shaped the operations of almost every other industry by encouraging monopolization, lean production, and outsourcing (see Lynn, 2010; Rasmus, 2010).

US manufacturers had little incentive to invest in domestic labor, or even to modernize their manufacturing capacities at home, when higher profits could be achieved by offshoring production or by downsizing manufacturing by investing instead in financial products and services (see Roberts, 2010). Indeed, over the last 30 years, US and UK corporations that formerly made things – such as autos and lightbulbs – found newly established financial services divisions to reap greater profits, as illustrated (prior to the recession) by the financial services arms of both General Electric and General Motors. Thus, financial logics replaced production ones even within manufacturing (Phillips, 2008).

New vocabularies and metrics circulated within the United States and United Kingdom to rationalize the evolving financialized economies. Keynes's disparaging representation of the financial market as a casino was substituted by the neoliberal "efficient market" theory, which presumes market transparency and rationality (Krugman, 2009). Metrics of national well-being, such as unemployment or wage increases, were de-emphasized by the new authorities of "political monetarism," which focused only on the stock of money supply while ignoring all other macroeconomic statistics, including unemployment statistics (DeLong, 1999). Thus, neoliberal, supply-side vocabularies and metrics pushed by the Chicago School economists replaced the post-World War II Keynesian emphasis on aggregate consumer demand.

The Keynesian link between wages and aggregate consumption was broken, rendering the earning potential of the populace less relevant to financiers and policymakers alike. Low interest rates encouraged by monetary economists enabled debt-based household consumption in a context of stagnating wages. Greater concentrations of wealth at the top enabled huge luxury expenditures by the wealthiest 10% of the populace. Average workers' wage levels were increasingly perceived as irrelevant to economic growth and wealth accumulation by Wall Street and policymakers alike.

Simultaneously, corporate stock prices became less dependent upon consumer expenditures. Outsourcing and automation allowed corporate assets to grow (by squeezing labor costs) even if consumption remained constant. Additionally, pension programs and 401ks directed retirement funds toward inflating equities, which promised higher returns than the more traditional safety of lower-interest-earning bonds (Joint Economic Committee, 2000). Finally, as mentioned above, corporations expanded their financial services and partnerships, producing annuity-like steady streams of interest from consumer debt.

These transformations achieved through the neoliberal financialization of the US economy enriched Wall Street banks and investment firms, hedge funds, and the wealthiest US citizens. Contributing to their capacities to acquire wealth outside of production was the expansion of derivatives (LiPuma & Lee, 2004) and new computer-based trading technologies (see Nadesan, in press). Financial traders found that rising stock prices were no longer necessary for financializing corporations or traders to accumulate profits. With the advent of high-frequency trading, market volatility itself produced speculative opportunities to high-frequency traders (see Nadesan, in

press). Speculation embraced losses as well as gains as the novel insurance of “credit default swaps” ensured profitability on the riskiest of investments.

The decreased relevance of US labor impacted wage levels, household income, and local communities’ tax base. Citizens’ earning capacities deflated with fewer union job opportunities and stagnating wages. Simultaneously, public investments in educational and manufacturing infrastructures collapsed in all but the most privileged of areas. Household indebtedness grew.

Speculative or rentier, debt-based capitalism expanded throughout US society as consumer debt was encouraged by the financial services industry (see Phillips, 2008). Debt was securitized into financial instruments such as bonds, derivatives, and collateralized debt obligations that could be sold to unwary investors (see Pollin, 2007). The originate-to-distribute lending model that permeated nearly all forms of credit instruments made debt a highly profitable commodity while distributing “risk” internationally as investors around the world purchased bonds and derivatives created out of pooled debt.

The reinvention of laissez-faire under neoliberalism offered another tempting technology for capital accumulation rooted in the predation upon, and privatization of, Keynesian (social and military) security apparatuses. David Harvey (2005) described a “neoliberal state” whose mission is to “facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation on the part of both domestic and foreign capital” (p. 7). In 2008, James Galbraith defined a “predator state” as “a coalition of relentless opponents of the regulatory framework on which public purpose depends, with enterprises whose major lines of business compete with or encroach on the principal public functions of the enduring New Deal” (p. 131). Predatory corporations dictate and “poach” upon public purpose and have no loyalties for nations or populations (p. 131).

The neoliberal, predatory state that emerges in the descriptions provided by Harvey and Galbraith diverges from the frozen, idealized descriptions of the liberal state provided by founding neoliberal thinkers such as Friedrich von Hayek (1991) and Milton Friedman (1962). Yet, current US bailout policies and programs point to a predatory neoliberal state whose mission it is to resolve and remediate (without altering) the problems of governance stemming from neoliberal deregulation, privatization, and financialization. Neoliberal economists have responded to this type of criticism by defending the natural superiority of “efficient markets” and “competitive advantage.” Neoliberal think tanks promoted the market-friendly, debt-based technology of individual micro-enterprise as the solution for growing structural unemployment (Karoly, 2007). From the perspective of neoliberal authorities, what mattered was steady expansion of the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP) and credit, not job creation. Government policy obligingly aimed primarily at ensuring steady expansion of the monetary supply (Krugman, 2009). Dissent was subdued by the combination of steady growth and low inflation, despite growing evidence of aggregate demand-dampening economic inequality.

A 2005 Citigroup document highlighted in Michael Moore’s (2009) film, *Capitalism: A Love Story*, illustrates the increasing irrelevance of the populace, in terms of both

their productive *and* consumptive capacities. The October 16, 2005, document, “Equity Strategy: Plutonomy: Buying Luxury, Explaining Global Imbalances,” describes a world “dividing into two blocs – the plutonomies, where economic growth is powered by and largely consumed by the wealthy few, and the rest” (p. 1). The United States is a “key” plutonomy characterized by

disruptive technology-driven productivity gains, creative financial innovation, capitalist-friendly cooperative governments, an international dimension of immigrants and overseas conquests invigorating wealth creation, the rule of law, and patenting inventions. (pp. 1–2)

The productive and consumptive capabilities of populaces within plutonomies cede in significance to the wealth accumulated by the few through technology that replaces workers, financial “innovations” capable of accumulating wealth outside of production (e.g., through securities transactions), and through overseas colonial exploitation of resources and labor.

The populace’s loss of value within economic calculi is highlighted in an article posted May 18, 2010, at the popular web page, the *Economic Collapse* blog. The article, titled “The Declining Value of Work,” authored by Michael Snyder, argues: “Thanks to rapid advances in technology, and thanks to the globalization of the work force, the labor of American workers is rapidly losing value.” In contrast to disposable workers, corporations continue to accumulate value by leveraging their monopolization over required commodities (e.g., food), by deriving value from overseas labor, and most significantly, from financial speculation.

The great financial crisis that began in the winter of 2007 shook neoliberal foundations and accelerated the problem of structural unemployment that had been developing since the dot.com collapse. Suddenly, deregulation and speculation were out of vogue among populist pundits. The past great moderation was reinterpreted as a bubble. Even mainstream commentators began questioning neoliberal, *laissez-faire* logics, including the ontological status of *homo economicus* (see Roubini, 2009; Thoma, 2009).

Members of the populist, libertarian right have joined the populist left in their criticism of the financialization of the economy and the growing power of the military–industrial complex. The libertarian right’s suspicion of the state extends beyond liberal Keynesian thought promoted by figures such as James Galbraith, but converges with the left-of-center critique of the role of financialization in eroding the US industrial base and the growing power of what the libertarians term “crony capitalism.” For instance, libertarian Alex Jones of *Prison Planet* offers a conspiracy narrative of an elite group of financiers striving to create a new world order. Libertarian-inclined financial web pages decry the death of the republic, debt peonage, and deindustrialization, even while they reject social welfare redistributive apparatuses and promote a nostalgic and phantasmic vision of the nineteenth-century United States where individual labor and enterprise resulted in success.

Libertarian and leftist narratives of the economic and social changes wrought by neoliberalism adopt distinct vocabularies and promote different solutions to the financial crisis that began in December of 2007. Despite these differences, both narratives explain the transformation of capital accumulation in relation to the ascendancy of financialization, deindustrialization, and the growth of monopolistic and predatory capitalist interests whose lack of national identification enables them to operate globally and largely impervious to nation-states' regulatory apparatuses. Both groups share a disturbing sentiment that the population no longer serves as the primary basis for capital accumulation, nor for the determination of national wealth. Both groups share Max Keiser's concerns that the United States is being transformed into a "neo-feudal gulag economy" (Keiser, 2010).

Liberal Dreams, Liberal Nightmares

The ascendancy of neoliberal logics of financialization and the growth of predatory capitalism have wrought profound material changes to the economic configurations and social institutions that formerly characterized the United States of the mid- to late twentieth century. Together, these forces have dislocated the foundations of liberal biopolitical apparatuses. How might this dislocation, and the anxieties that it induces among those who must navigate its precarious material conditions, manifest in the realm of cultural production? This section explores how cinematic themes and tropes in *The Road*, *9*, and *The Book of Eli* register and refer indirectly to the anxieties and fears of a dispossessed populace.

The Ambiguity of Collapse

The first theme shared by all three films is the ambiguity surrounding the source of collapse. All three of the films' narratives begin in a post-collapse landscape. *9* and *The Book of Eli* offer oblique references to devastating wars responsible for the collapse, but the point of, and parties to, these wars are obscure. *The Road* offers audiences few insights into the nature of the disaster. The thematic ambiguity surrounding the sources of collapse resonates with the uncertainty US citizens feel about the causes of the financial crisis that is currently wreaking havoc upon the nation. The nature and operations of the securitized bonds, credit default swaps, and derivatives held responsible for the financial crash are difficult to understand; indeed, they were designed to be unintelligible to all but the people who designed them (Taibbi, 2009a).

The financial crisis wrecked the economy – as evidenced by massive job losses, foreclosures, personal bankruptcies, and mounting hunger – without bombs, invasions, or civil insurrections. Growing unemployment headlines in the media beginning in 2009 were one of the most visible symptoms of decline. Drawing on

reports by economists, the press began reporting a sharp decline in the civilian workforce (Evans-Pritchard, 2010).³

Declining income produced mass personal bankruptcies, which reached records not seen since immediately prior to the tightening of bankruptcy standards in October 2005 (Wilson, 2010). Perhaps the clearest symptoms of the recession were the growing home delinquencies and foreclosures. TransUnion, a financial and credit analysis organization, found national mortgage delinquencies jumped over 10% at the close of 2009 (TransUnion, 2010). TransUnion observed that the final quarter of 2009 constituted the twelfth consecutive quarter of rising delinquencies and anticipated that 2010 would lead to even greater delinquency rates. By May 2010, 14% of US mortgages were over 30 days delinquent or in some state of foreclosure (Hoak, 2010). The home foreclosures resulting from these delinquencies produced media spectacles of tent cities, media reports of overwhelmed homeless shelters, and a general increase in visible rates of homelessness on the nation's streets.

The spectacles of empty, foreclosed homes, empty strip malls, and abandoned real estate developments, particularly in the West and Southwest, resonated with disaster films' depictions of urban collapse and devastation. Media accounts of squatters' occupation of empty properties paralleled the cinematic depictions of survivors seeking shelter in the dilapidated, empty buildings of post-collapse societies. Even in affluent neighborhoods, the decay of foreclosed homes was detectable. Empty, declining buildings and untended gardens were specters of collapse that could not help but contribute to a climate of insecurity and generalized anxiety. The cinematic representations of such contexts eerily aligned with the aftermaths of the housing bubble.

Confusion reigned in the real world as it did in the cinematic universe of post-collapse societies. Collapse in the real world seemed inexplicable, but also irrefutable, as reports of cliff-diving tax receipts and municipal and state fiscal crises dominated headlines. Public employees – those Keynesian defenses against collapsing private demand – received pink slips daily, a phenomenon figuring prominently in media newscasts. The twentieth-century security state shuddered as states and municipal entities cut social and public safety services. Food insecurity, that specter of need supposedly vanquished by the security state, emerged once again, a shadow of the terrifying starvation conditions represented in post-collapse cinema. By 2010, one in eight US citizens relied on food stamps (Abbott & Hill, 2010). Food banks were stretched to the limit and anticipated shortages with ongoing demand increases. Public schools witnessed greater demands for free lunches, straining school lunch programs nationally (Bjerga, 2010). Recession gardens captured the public imagination, although much of the populace no longer had the skills and know-how to grow produce (Sutter, 2009).

In the parallel cinematic world of post-apocalyptic disaster films, survivors live in blasted landscapes incapable of sustaining life. Production is impossible in these devastated imagined worlds. The lands are depicted as infertile, incapable of supporting plant or animal life. Homeless survivors trudge through dilapidated highways

and city streets, seeking occasional shelter from ruined buildings as they trudge forward on their respective missions: to reach the coast in *The Road*, to save an acquaintance in 9, and to reach some unknown destination in *The Book of Eli*. Survivors must rely on the detritus of former civilizations for their survival. Once again, survival is a struggle and scarcity dictates the conditions of the living.

Although US citizens did not face blasted landscapes in the wake of the financial collapse, they did increasingly confront evidence of the nation's slowly eroding infrastructures. Falling bridges, failing and vulnerable electrical grids, and polluted public waters captured media headlines. Viral epidemics such as swine flu that threatened to result from factory farming bred concern about the nation's food supplies. The film *Food Inc.* (Robert Kenner, 2008) sensationalized the health perils of the pesticide-ridden, petro-dependent global food-supply chain. Peak oil loomed as the US military warned of oil shortages by 2015 (Macalister, 2010). Closely following, mass-mediated environmental disasters – including Hurricane Katrina, the Asian tsunami that devastated parts of Indonesia and India, the Haitian earthquake, the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and the earthquake and tsunami that leveled parts of northern Japan and left the country with a major nuclear catastrophe – dramatized the unregulated forces capable of felling societies and the impotence of governments. The twentieth-century belief that rational science had tamed the uncontrollable chaotic forces of nature was revealed as false.

Simultaneously, the natural world appeared increasingly “at risk” from the seemingly suffocating and life-denying activities of civilization. An endless stream of ecological problems seemed to take on increasingly catastrophic proportions: desertification caused by agriculture eroding arable land, clean water sources degrading and in decline, and pollution threatening the biosphere. The United Nations warned that the world's ecosystems were at risk of “rapid degradation and collapse” (Knight, 2010). Oil dependency, in particular, began to be experienced as suffocating life in the spectacles of environmental destruction wrought, for example, in Canada's oil sands and within the Gulf of Mexico as a result of the oil disaster there, the scope of which was incomprehensible. What emerged was a picture of the cumulative effects of the conditions and practices of twentieth-century life as itself posing a catastrophic threat to the biosphere. Environmental threats rendered human life a threat to life itself, surplus human life seeming to choke the life of the planet. Post-apocalyptic disaster films registered this bleak vision of reality.

Cannibalism, Debt, and Vampire Squids

Life chokes life, just as debt accrued during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was perceived as sapping contemporary vitalities. US citizens struggled to remain solvent, as falling incomes and long-term unemployment exacerbated escalating debt levels (see, e.g., Borie-Holtz, Van Horn, & Zukin, 2010). Sovereign (i.e., government) debt ballooned as bailouts and FDIC takeovers of zombie banks and

insurance companies continued unabated. Fears of market-swallowing governments seized economic conservatives. Fears of debt peonage to ruthless corporations or foreign governments (i.e., China) took hold among liberals. The critical financial press warned of predation by the cannibalistic products of late twentieth-century financial innovations.

Rolling Stone magazine's crusading reporter Matt Taibbi reported quarterly on the excesses of US investment banks, particularly Goldman Sachs, a financial firm accused of deliberately swindling funds from clients and the US government alike (in the form of securities fraud and bailouts through AIG) (see, e.g., Taibbi, 2010b). For instance, Goldman and J. P. Morgan indebted local municipal entities and school districts by selling interest rate swaps that ended up exponentially increasing the interest rates these public entities were forced to pay on their debt, resulting in bankruptcies, raided public pensions, and/or higher local taxes (see, e.g., Taibbi, 2010a; Tavakoli, 2010). Goldman and other investment banks also sold synthetic collateralized debt obligations to public entities, which they subsequently betted against (Dugan, 2010).

The capacity for investment banks to drain public entities was not restricted to local municipalities. In February of 2010, investment banks shorted Greek bonds and used credit default swaps to bet that the nation of Greece would default on its debt. These actions caused investors to pull out of the Greek market, hampering Greece's efforts to raise capital by causing interest rates for Greek debt to skyrocket because of rising credit default rates (Schwartz & Dash, 2010). Investment banks' predation illustrated how financial profit-making that boosts national GDP can simultaneously drain national vitality by crippling public entities. In July of 2009, Taibbi aptly described Goldman Sachs as "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money" (Taibbi, 2009b).

In post-apocalyptic disaster films, the metaphor for these insidious real-world forms of financial predation was cannibalism. In *The Road* and *The Book of Eli*, starved survivors lose their moral bearings and turn to human predation. In 9, a soulless, predatory machine imbibes the spirit animating the mechanical dolls who struggle for survival. Cannibalism is a means for survival at the cost of sociality, that foundational value of humanity.

Cannibalism occurs also in the popular US imagination as the state assumes control over the operations and risks of the market sector. The discourse of the autonomous and self-regulating market has been a fixture of the US cultural imagination since at least the eighteenth century. State socialism is, in the mind of the average US citizen, equivalent to state fascism. Hence, the state's acquisition of market firms is viewed as a form of threatening cannibalism, even when state control is seemingly necessitated by the systemic risks produced by an institution's insolvency. Strangely, this fear of state cannibalism seems to outweigh the fear of the vampire squid and other predatory corporations that strive to control the state in order to feed upon public largess (e.g., through regulatory capture and bailouts).

This fear of the cannibalistic state stems, no doubt, not only from the cultural fetishization of free markets but also, simultaneously, from the fear of constricting government deficits. The public has been conditioned by decades of shrill warnings from fiscal conservatives about the smothering dangers of federal deficits despite the US dollar's status as the global reserve currency. Randall Wray argues persuasively in *Understanding Modern Money* that this fear of deficits stems from a tendency to equate sovereign financials with household financials. Wray contends that this equation is not only false but dangerous, because decades of empirical analyses link federal surpluses with recessions. The sovereign, according to Wray, can create money without issuing debt, and, unlike banks, which exercise the same option, the sovereign need not back money creation with reserves of any form. Wray's account of modern money gets at the integrally socially constructed nature of value. Yet, the account of sovereign debt that circulates in business periodicals and the popular press reinforces the interpretive framework and calamitous fears of fiscal conservatives, thereby reinscribing a view of money that will lead the state to select austerity in social spending, since military spending is untouchable. Popular assumptions and government reactions to fiscal deficits increase the sense of dislocation experienced by the population.⁴

Surplus Populations

In recent disaster films, population is not a fecund source of libidinal energies. Populations primarily signify scarcity, rather than productivity. The biovitalities of the population signify only unmet needs. There is no production, only scarce consumption opportunities. The population has no value. In order to understand this devaluation of the productive capacity of the population it is helpful to return to the historical specter that haunted liberal political economy, poverty through overpopulation.

Classical liberalism viewed the population as a source of value insofar as populations adapted their numbers and characteristics in relation to the natural properties, ebbs, and cycles of the market. *Homo economicus*' prudence and moral restraint are exercised in no area as important as his/her fecundity (see Greene, 1999). Classical liberals believed that excessive population growth produces poverty by driving down wages and by creating scarcities. Unchecked poverty threatens security. Yet, the remediation of poverty through the state's redistributive efforts violates the natural operations of the market and the property rights of citizens. Thus, the classical liberal solution to the problem of poverty is found not in the state but in the dynamics of population (Bland, 1973). The population must secure itself from pauperism by controlling its fecundity in relation to the market's labor needs. In reality, starvation, disease, and war curtailed what "prudence" could not.

The Keynesian-inspired state sought to intervene in the Malthusian dynamics of population and markets by tempering market downturns and by engineering demand.

The state proactively enhanced the productive capabilities of the populace through social welfare biopolitics aimed at ensuring adequate and accessible food, education for all, and some minimum level of healthcare. Keynesian-inspired biopolitics never obliterated surplus populaces, even within “advanced” economies, but it did soften the impact of capitalism’s tendency for overproduction with vast “safety nets” such as unemployment insurance, food stamps, and jobs-training programs. The Darwinian laissez-faire market was thus tamed by a state that viewed the populace (i.e., aggregate demand) as an important foundation of national vitality.

The idea that the US population might pose problems for national vitality was perhaps first outlined in the post-World War II era by US President Richard Nixon, who introduced a “Commission on Population Growth and the American Future”:

How will we educate and employ such a large number of people? Will our transportation systems move them about as quickly and economically as necessary? How will we provide adequate health care when our population reaches 300 million? Will our political structures have to be reordered, too, when our society grows to such proportions? Many of our institutions are already under tremendous strain as they try to respond to the demands of 1969. Will they be swamped by a growing flood of people in the next thirty years? How easily can they be replaced or altered? (Quoted in Leschak, 1996, p. 82)

This Malthusian concern about population outstripping job and resource availability directly called into question the willingness or capability of the Keynesian state. Malthusian fears were fanned by this acknowledgment and by the emergence of an environmental movement that challenged the liberal premise and promise of infinite growth and expansion. The explosion of neo-noir films in the 1970s, such as *Soylent Green* and *A Boy and His Dog*, reflected growing cultural pessimism about the virtues and sustainability of the modern liberal state.

Despite the eruption of cultural angst in the 1970s, the vast majority of the US populace has long been unwilling to confront its own Malthusian anxieties because the nation’s foundational narratives deny the possibility that personal initiative might go unrewarded. In the early 1980s, Ronald Reagan and Rambo helped suppress the dystopian projections of the 1970s. Malthusian fears were contained and displaced by collective cultural fantasies that defined the poor and unemployed as Darwinian misfits, who were responsible for their plight due to their culture of poverty and lack of adaptive skills. Malthusian fears have also been projected upon foreign populations whose (purportedly) unchecked fertility is seen as threatening scarce resources. In this fashion, the Western world is absolved of blame for the pressures of overpopulation; simultaneously, the developing world is implicated in dystopic predictions of the planet as a postindustrial wasteland, characterized by heat, chronic food and energy shortages, and unchecked disease (McDougall, 2010). The US cultural imagination also displaces Malthusian fears within the iconic form of the illegal immigrant. Anti-immigrant xenophobia in states such as Arizona must be understood in relation to these suppressed and displaced Malthusian anxieties. At base, the suppressed fear

is less about illegal immigrants taking jobs desired by citizens than it is about the citizens' fear that there exist no living-wage jobs for them to take.

US news reports of growing unemployment and underemployment within the United States have ruptured precisely those fantasies that previously contained Malthusian anxieties (see, e.g., Borie-Holtz et al., 2010; Goodman, 2010; Wessel, 2010). News reports detailing the desperation of middle-class unemployed workers strike fear in the hearts of wage earners across the nation. News reports of unremitting, escalating demands upon food banks and state unemployment funds threaten the foundations of the US fantasy of universal prosperity for the prudent and well educated. News reports of strained public finances threaten the omniscience of the Keynesian state.

The emergence of public discourses that acknowledge the widespread existence of surplus populations within the United States point to, and represent a dislocation of, the (Keynesian) biopolitical regime that has prevailed since being instituted in the post-World War II environment. It is the argument of this chapter that this dislocation stems not, as capitalists would have us believe, from some intrinsic and unavoidable necessity. Rather, the argument made here is that through regulatory capture the Keynesian state is being forcibly undone by rent-seeking capitalists who no longer view the populace as relevant to the production of value. Thus, the remaining social security apparatuses – including Medicare, Social Security, and federal funds for state unemployment and disability programs – are under frontal assault while Congress contemplates corporate tax cuts and individual estate tax reductions for the richest US citizens. Today, capital has largely forsaken the labor of developed economies and, with the implosion of the debt bubble, can no longer extract ever more value in the United States through debt servitude, because of massive deleveraging and credit defaults. Consequently, biopolitics that is not tied to privatized acts of consumption among the ever-diminishing middle classes (i.e., for-profit health and wellness) loses salience within established and emerging Western plutonomies. Austerity – the death of liberal biopolitics – “solves” the fiscal challenges of sovereign entities from the point of view of a form of capitalism that has forsaken labor. Within the United States, therefore, states and local governments are being forced to cut services to the poor, the disabled, and the young, precipitating a crisis in liberal biopolitics as programs aimed at enhancing education, health, and well-being are axed. The intensification of human labor is sacrificed on the altar of rentier capitalism.

It is noteworthy that two recent, popularly oriented books make similar arguments. The first is Arianna Huffington's *Third World America* (2010), which provides a glossy analysis of the demise of the American dream. The second is Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson's (2010) *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer – and Turned its Back on the Middle Class*, which examines the public policies and programs that allowed the rich to cannibalize the rest. These texts, I believe, illustrate the populist coming-to-consciousness of a new zeitgeist of dispossession and marginalization that is echoed and amplified in recent post-apocalyptic disaster films.

Conclusion

The stories told by a society reflect fears, anxieties, and nightmares in addition to aspirations and idealizations. Disaster and apocalyptic films in general allude to, and project, societal tensions and anxieties. This chapter has argued that early twenty-first-century films like *9*, *The Book of Eli*, and *The Road* inscribe lurking, but inchoate, suspicion that the general populace of the United States no longer is perceived as vital to, or for, the production of wealth by policymakers and societal elites. A new zeitgeist is birthed within which the population of advanced Western economies ceases to calculate as a nexus of value. The telos of liberal biopolitics ceases to exist in nations that have forsaken the labor theory of value.

The labor theory of value was a central tenet of capitalist logics for almost two hundred years within Western societies. However, the economic stagnation of advanced industrial societies spurred expansion of a form of rentier capitalism (Pollin, 2007) that enabled unprecedented levels of capital accumulation by wealthy elites from a relatively smaller pool of debt incurred by a general populace facing declining and/or stagnating wage levels. Financialization, as this form of rentier capitalism has been dubbed, produced vast speculative, debt-based bubbles that masked growing economic inequality and declining economic opportunities for at least two decades, particularly within the United Kingdom and the United States. The collapse of this bubble has led to the further impoverishment of the working class and has compromised the employment and consumption of an increasingly tenuous, fragile middle class. The incredible and unprecedented transfer of wealth that resulted from the financial crisis when governments assumed the losses of the corporate sector has further impoverished a populace faced with fiscal conservatives' demands for austerity targeting government-supported education, health, and retirement programs. To the degree that they are successful, such calls for austerity signify the state's abdication of the telos of population, the abdication of liberal biopolitics.

Structural unemployment and underemployment face a populace who can no longer rely on Keynesian demand engineering programs, ranging from education to social safety nets. The hollowing out of the manufacturing sector and the collapse of the finance/real estate/insurance economy (FIRE) have produced an epochal deleveraging that threatens to persist for years. What remains of liberal biopolitics is attacked by elites and righteous deficit hawks who see little to no value in the populace. The population's ever-decreasing consumptive powers mean that the logic of aggregate demand ceases to resonate. The environmental benefits of declining consumption in advanced Western economies matter little to a bereft populace instructed to equate conspicuous consumption with the good life. Furthermore, the incidences of erratic weather triggered by climate change signify a more terrifying narrative of nature that had been bound and domesticated by the now-compromised ideology of science as progress. The state, that former paragon of Keynesian virtue,

has been revealed to the populace by the terrifying forces of financialization and nature combined as corrupt and ineffectual. Fear, anxiety, and a sense of dislocation permeate the popular consciousness.

The populace has declining value, or at least its value has declined within financial calculi. Its productive and consumptive capabilities have been rendered unsustainable by the crisis of a rentier capitalism that produced value through complex, abstract securitization processes. The populace now senses its declining relevance within the financial regime of governance that dominated the nation for the last 30 years. Yet, efforts to articulate this inchoate sensation are confounded by the technical vocabularies of financialization and the inability to enunciate the dynamics of the macro-level processes impacting individual lives. Accordingly, Kevin Rudd (2009) comments on the significance of the financial crisis in relation to its impact on the populace:

From time to time in human history there occur events of a truly seismic significance, events that mark a turning point between one epoch and the next, when one orthodoxy is overthrown and another takes its place. The significance of these events is rarely apparent as they unfold: it becomes clear only in retrospect, when observed from the commanding heights of history. By such time it is often too late to act to shape the course of such events and their effects on the day-to-day working lives of men and women and the families they support.

Although Rudd contends that the significance of events such as those experienced by the populace over the last two years is rarely acknowledged directly, it is the contention of this chapter that the significance of these events is being pondered in the collective consciousness of the nation in the form of a new genre of disaster films.

However, although the popular cinematic imagination expresses the senses of dislocation and disenfranchisement experienced by the populace, it can also contribute to deliberate efforts by financial and political elites to obscure the causal dynamics responsible for the crisis. As encouraged by cinematic representations, the crisis is therefore experienced in relation to inexplicable forces and agencies. Efforts to impose intelligibility on largely opaque relationships and dynamics have the unfortunate tendency to amplify the agency of petty sovereigns and tyrants. This tendency can be found across films in the forms of the cannibals in *The Road*, the local petty tyrant in *The Book of Eli*, and the soul-sucking carnivorous machine in *9*. This cinematic focus on petty sovereigns parallels the “real-world” vilification of financial authorities and Wall Street titans. While petty sovereigns do bear responsibility for harms, their scope of agency has been enabled by the matrix of systemic dynamics and relationships that produced the conditions of responsibility for the crisis.

Personification of agents of collapse in the form of petty sovereigns can result in a mystifying nostalgia. The time before collapse is cleansed, its inequities purged in the collective imagination. Post-collapse survivors therefore demand a return to a world that never existed. In particular, in the wake of the financial disaster, there has

been a resurgence of demands for a return to a form of laissez-faire, competitive capitalism that never existed as envisioned. Slavoj Žižek (2009) described a similar dynamic at work in the former Soviet republics, the populations of which began to engage in vehement, anticommunist rhetorics and policies. Žižek argued that the populations of these nations, many of which were themselves subjected to harsh austerity measures, erroneously blame communism for capitalism's failure to deliver its much-praised lifestyles to the majority of the populace. "In other words," he asserted, "the newly born anti-Communists don't get that what they are denouncing as perverted pseudo-capitalism simply is capitalism." In a similar pattern, the sophisticated zero hedge blog fans (zerohedge.com) and populist, low-brow Tea Party movement fail to recognize that what they perceive as the bastardization of free-market capitalism *really is* how capitalism operates when freed from strict regulatory oversight and constraints.

Capitalism, as regime of production based on the inequitable exploitation of value, created this crisis. Capitalism set the conditions of possibility for the rise of predatory, petty sovereigns and institutions. Capitalism produced the conditions of possibility for the dispossession of the population. And capitalism, that system that produced a biopolitics aimed at enhancing the productive capability of the population in order to extract surplus value, has also enabled clever entities and agents to devise strategies for acquiring wealth outside the traditional circuits of capitalist production through the expansion of rentier financialization. Post-apocalyptic disaster films like *The Road*, *The Book of Eli*, and *9* register the profound sense of dislocation experienced by the populace as they confront their superfluousness within a new social order cannibalized by finance capitalism.

NOTES

- 1 Thus, *Doomsday*, which is set in the United Kingdom, will be excluded from this analysis.
- 2 Bryan, Martin, and Rafferty (2009) do contend that financialization can still be analyzed within Marx's analysis of capitalist development in relation to the commodification of risk (p. 459).
- 3 Peck (2010) reports pessimistically in the *Atlantic* that:

The unemployment rate hit 10 percent in October [2010], and there are good reasons to believe that by 2011, 2012, even 2014, it will have declined only a little. Late last year, the average duration of unemployment surpassed six months, the first time that has happened since 1948, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking that number. As of this writing, for every open job in the U.S., six people are actively looking for work [. . .] The broadest measure of unemployment and underemployment [. . .] reached 17.4 percent in October, which appears to be the highest figure since the 1930s. And for large swaths of society – young adults, men, minorities – that figure was much higher (among teenagers, for instance, even the narrowest measure of unemployment stood at roughly 27 percent). One recent survey showed that 44 percent of families had experienced a job loss, a reduction in hours, or a pay cut in the past year.

A report on labor utilization by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University (Sum, Khatiwada, & Palma, 2010) describes the contraction of the labor market:

The number of employed civilians (16+) in December 2009 was more than 9 million below its estimated level in November 2007, the month before the recession got underway [. . .] At the same time, the number of *underemployed*, i.e., those persons working part time for economic reasons, has also more than doubled, reaching a new record high of 6.4% of all of the employed in the fourth quarter of 2009. In addition, the nation's civilian labor force has actually shrunk by nearly one million over the past year rather than rising by 1.5 million as earlier projected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (p. 2)

This report argues that blue-collar and young workers are disproportionately impacted by unemployment and underemployment. Elizabeth Warren (2008) argues that nearly the entire US middle class has been imperiled by the financial crisis, a sentiment supported by Pew Research Survey results released in March of 2010:

Americans have little to cheer about. Nearly everyone (92%) gives the national economy a negative rating. Closer to home, 85% say that jobs are hard to find in their community. A majority (54%) now says that someone in their household has been without a job or looking for work in the past year, compared with 39% in February 2009. And the proportion saying they got a pay raise or a better job in the past year fell from 41% in January 2008 to 24% currently. (Pew Research Center, 2010)

- 4 This fear of fiscal deficits was exacerbated by the crisis in Greece. Greece ceded its monetary sovereignty in order to join the European Union. Hence, after speculators attacked Greek bonds by shorting them, Greece was forced to raise interest rates on its bond sales, thereby precipitating a sovereign debt crisis in the rollover costs of existing, maturing bonds.

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Greening Cultural Labor

The Future of Media Accounting

Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller

ABSTRACT

In the early twenty-first century, environmentally friendly accounting practices in the creative industries were confined to site-specific budgets of individual films or studio operations. Any external environmental costs were either ignored or written off as too hard to measure. This chapter considers the media's future by imagining a new kind of accountancy freed from the bonds of corporate media. Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller have devised an imaginary world where accountants, imbued with the values of green citizenship, set off on a quest to uncover the environmental and labor conditions within the global supply chain of consumer electronics and information and communication technologies. This speculative fiction helps the authors conjure up conditions in which media producers and media studies scholars address human-centric despoliation of the Earth's ecosystems and the toxic exploitation of media workers.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Date:	2010
To:	All Crew
From:	Accounting
Subject:	Tracking Carbon Emissions – Accounting Requirements

As part of News Corp’s Global Energy Initiative, all Fox productions must track and report on their carbon emissions. Accounting will be tracking carbon emissions throughout production and requires the following information from your department when submitting any documents for payment or reimbursement.

(Twentieth Century Fox, Guide to Greening Film and Television Production)

Introduction

Media studies has elevated many heroic figures in its self-fashioning mythology. Directors sidestep the studio system. Independents outwit the suits. Unions stand against management. Peripheral nations attract Bollywood and Hollywood productions. Journalists damn proprietors. Audiences outwit filmmakers. Film students stupefy professors. Downloaders defy corporations. Technologists astonish governments. Bloggers outpace professionals. Hagiographic stories inform the field’s prevailing myths of counter-power with narrative trajectories that have become banal and repetitive. In keeping with the desire for the new, we have sought a distinctly unglamorous and unlikely agent of historical change to add to this predictable pantheon: the accountant.

Why the accountant?¹ We are interested in a media future where ecologically sound principles guide cultural labor and media production. As it happens, accountants who currently work in large media organizations sit at the hub of information about the environmental costs of media production. This position gives the accountant, even one with no inherent yearning to be green, a vast and growing responsibility for measuring and reporting cultural work’s impact on the environment. Such green accountancy marks a salutary turn to environmentally friendly practices in the creative industries. But the confinement of this new form of accounting to site-specific budgets of individual films or studio operations limits its ability to assess the external environmental costs of making media, thereby also limiting the public’s awareness of the deleterious effects of what they consume and valorize.

In order for the industry to move beyond these confines, a new kind of accountancy must be imagined. In the middle section of this chapter, we offer a fictionalized version of accountants of the future who draw on environmental and union activism, scholarship, and public policy to free themselves from the bonds of the movie studio or site-specific shoot. A new kind of accountancy emerges at the cutting edge of media theory and practice in this forward-looking scenario. The new accountants’ odyssey leads to illuminating and frustrating encounters with the international political economy, which transform their perception of

cultural labor and measurement. As they envision a path to greener cultural labor, these future accountants are challenged by ecological questions that cannot necessarily be answered by measurement alone. We conclude with a return to the present-day view of the media's future.

2010: Blessed are the Accountants . . .

By late 2010, the professional and personal greening of cultural labor was already occurring in serious ways across the US, Japanese, and European culture industries. Cultural workers were being urged to follow environmentally sound practices on the job and, in the overreaching Fordist tradition of governmentality, during their non-work time as well. Major movie studios had programs that included installing low-energy light-emitting diodes to illuminate buildings, sound-stages, and outdoor signage; reducing paper use; composting organic waste; retrofitting buildings with computer-controlled air and heating systems and environmentally friendly materials; paying for reforestation with production budgets to account for film pollution; teleconferencing; recycling wood, paper, recording media, metals, film stock, electronics, and printer and toner cartridges; managing chemical use and disposal; reducing or eliminating hazardous materials; eliminating and recycling waste water; installing solar and other renewable energy sources; and networking with green suppliers and organizations such as the Greencode Project (Gardner, 2007; Producers Guild of America, n.d.).

These developments were encouraging to those wishing for a green media future, even though the culture industries came late to the realization that a slash-and-burn attitude to the environment was unsustainable. Their eco-ethical awakening can be dated from the period between the mid-1990s and 2010, somewhere between *Titanic* (1997) and *Avatar* (2009). The primitive state of this transition to greener production is evident in the accounting offices of the large studios – the point on the organizational chart where green means business. Consider our opening epigraph to this chapter, a heading from the sample memo to production workers found in Fox's *Guide to Greening Film and Television Production* (n.d.). As in most large organizations, the accounting office operates as an informational nodal point between management and labor, particularly where the audit of material expenditures details inputs of capital and energy into production. It is a matter of expediency to make accountants working in media firms responsible for tracking carbon emissions via purchases entered into debit columns on spreadsheets. A small set of transactions has come to denote carbon emitted from filmmaking and TV production: gallons of fuel, nights at hotels, board feet of lumber, air miles traveled, kilowatt hours burned, and so on.

In the early twenty-first century, studio accountants are expected to know how much carbon the movies emit: small films are said to generate 145 tons; middling shoots, 970 tons; fast and furious, 4,000 tons; and so on ("Calculating," 2010). The political economy presses hard to keep this green knowledge in the service of business

as usual (BAU), which means that if dirty air can be quantified, it should be monetized, with ethics just another word for nothing left to regulate. Enter the market for carbon offsets (indexed to a firm's reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions), where organizations seek investment for green innovation or buy credits to plant trees or fund someone else's green company. Carbon offsets serve as the primary currency paid by or to a media firm to cover environmental behavior.

This arrangement limits the scope of environmentally sound production practices in the creative industries, because whatever cannot be counted cannot be included in the accountant's impact assessment: for example, material or labor costs outside the production sites overseen by accounting, on supply chains that are upstream or downstream of creative productions. Accountants know the price of electricity and phone calls, but cannot include an audit of carbon emissions generated by their suppliers in the energy and telecommunications sectors; they know how much hazardous waste a film or TV shoot produced, but have no way to tally and monetize off-site environmental emissions from recycling, incineration, long-haul transport, or the costs associated with dumping toxic waste into landfills. Cultural labor beyond local production is not among the green accountant's line items. It did not help matters that existing environmental accountancy focused entirely on natural resources as an asset in general economic welfare accounts.² In order to implement an accounting system that was adequate to the global scale of green media accountancy, a new kind of accountant was needed. The following section describes an approximate world where we find the accountant of the future.

Sometime in the Near Future³

The situation in 2010 necessitated a new kind of accountant, one who would take the virtue of accountancy's *modus operandi* – count everything! – and dedicate it to finding out how cultural labor and the environment connected beyond the gates of the studio. Such an endeavor would have to identify international flows of toxic materials, intersectorial and transborder carbon emissions, and other environmental harms that accompany cultural labor worldwide. This holistic and global purview was underdeveloped in governmental and academic studies. As the new accountant would come to realize, this was not a failing of desire or will on the part of these researchers. Right-wing, nationalistic politics, along with global business lobbies, hindered the already herculean task of gathering accurate data on an international scale. It was virtually impossible to track the sources, volume, and destination of even discarded media technologies, the electronic waste (e-waste) of dead or obsolete computers, printers, peripherals, music players, cell phones, ink cartridges, and other tools of contemporary media production. One typical study from 2010 concluded that even “*estimating waste flows is not an easy task [. . . and] has to be determined on the basis of often scarce information*” (Zoeteman, Krikke, & Venselaar, 2010, p. 416, emphasis added). Another investigation from the same period argued that

existing “accountancy rules, purchasing policies and reporting standards do not consistently require attention to environmental externalities – including social costs due to impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity” (TEEB, 2010, p. 27).

Accountants of the future faced many challenges. One of the most daunting was scale. Tens of millions of workers built the world’s information and communication technology (ICT) sector alone, with numbers continuing to grow in accordance with the New International Division of Cultural Labor (NICL), which has seen cultural production go offshore from cultural ownership, in the same form as automobile or computer manufacture (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005). The new accountancy learned to comprehend this scale of labor⁴ only to be infuriated by media owners’ opposition to ever fuller disclosure. Media owners justified their opposition with a mixture of legal arguments about proprietary information, business freedom, and respect for national sovereignty (the Chinese were most adamant, deploying the sovereignty argument to protect illegal e-waste businesses in the ecological dead zones of the Pearl and Yangtze river deltas). Such powerful resistance incited the accountants’ demand for an end to the existing system, which obscured the number of workers in the global supply chain and undermined accurate assessments of the jobs that produced waste byproducts, harmful substances, and other measurable environmental inputs. This became the start of a long revolution for the new accountancy, with most successes based on a clear and persistent alliance with labor unions, environmental activists, and researchers who had struggled in prior decades to generate accurate statistics on workers and working conditions in the global media, ICT, and consumer electronics (CE) sectors.

The new accountancy became increasingly militant in its struggle to count everything and everybody in the international division of labor. This radicalization was based, somewhat ironically, in a collective realization that the quantification of populations had emerged from contradictions in the capitalist political economy that linked surveillance, social control, and liberation. This nexus would not only enable corporations to exercise absolute authority over a workforce, which was technically free in that its members could resign if they so wished. From the perspective of the radical accountant, it also provided conditions for information to be used against the powerful. The division of labor that the accountants of the future fought to evaluate had not evolved into the transparent system that classical economics long ago predicted – in terms that the pioneering social scientist Emile Durkheim (1984) chided for promising a “higher law of human societies and the condition for progress” (p. 1). Rather, as the Marxists had shown, capitalism shaped the division of labor into a key mechanism of power and control by subdividing work, multiplying its inputs, and spreading it unevenly across the planet. The interconnectedness of workers that constituted the progressive dimension in the division of labor – Workers of the World Unite! Solidarity Forever! – was obscured to those working within it, while being perverted and exploited by those with command over it (Marx, 1906, pp. 49, 83). The accountant of the future vowed to fight for as long as it took to achieve numerical transparency, not for the bosses but to reestablish the ties of workers (if only statistically at first) up and down the interlocking supply chains of media and ICT/CE production.

The first positive result came with the start of a systematic correction of spreadsheets in the global human resources system, which had hitherto depicted occupational extremes between a total system of surveillance of workers and those “disappeared” from the rosters. For instance, the new accountancy expanded its purview to include data on the number of people extracting the metals that went into electronic media devices. The new data went beyond the 4,000 people known to accountants in 2010 to include biographies of a growing portion of the 13 million people said to work in the informal mining sector in Asia, Latin America, and Africa (GeSI & EICC, 2008, p. 56; International Labor Organization, 2010). With the help of labor unions, nongovernmental organizations, local activists, policy-oriented journalists, and even some corporate social responsibility audits and social networking sites, the new accountancy revised the count of ICT and media workers to over 200 million worldwide, from earlier estimates of 70 million (Raina, 2007, pp. 18–25).

Despite constant interference and threats from corporate lawyers, the American Civil Liberties Union, and non-independent (company) trade unions, a statistical picture emerged that revealed organizational relationships, intersectorial linkages, and regional points of alliance unacknowledged by the old accountancy. Eventually, the new accountants identified assemblages of interconnected labor in global media production and measured the impact of the chemico-mechanical processes attendant to each line of work: including, among others, computer scientists, engineers, designers, market researchers, miners, mineral brokers, refiners, chemists, factory laborers, server-warehouse employees, telecommunications workers, truck drivers, salespeople, office clerks, and above- and below-the-line media production workers. Not only could the new accountants identify and count vast numbers of workers throughout the supply chain; their technique also provided ways of tracking emerging constituencies of workers, from elemental stages of mineral extraction to home assembly.

They achieved much of this new and improved, more labor-inclusive, accounting program by internationalizing data collection and installing an ethnographic dimension as part of their research methodology. The new accountancy benefited from learning world languages and cultivating a professional delight in cultural differences – they identified many new facets of everyday life affected by the global supply chain. Some older practitioners saw these worldly and polymathic characteristics as a welcome recovery of a twentieth-century notion of the humanities – one that informed interdisciplinary and internationalist ideals lost by public higher education by the end of that century. For the accountants of the future, in contrast, nostalgia and highfalutin principles had nothing to do with acquiring these capabilities; these were fundamental skills needed for the job ahead.

The data were informative; the *personal* aspects became transformative. As numbers gave way to faces, life stories, and human struggles, the accountants of the future imagined unorthodox ways to combine ecological perspectives with biographies in global assembly lines. They tried to quantify these connections, struggling to find the right algorithm for measuring the environmental cost of geographical co-presence in the NICL. They could budget for the gaffer in Hollywood eating sandwiches on

biodegradable bamboo plates while on breaks from handling cables, monitors, and advanced electronics. And they could perceive how that gaffer related to teenage girls in Mexico who assembled those technologies in conditions that denied them lunch-time luxuries and exposed them to toxic materials.⁵ But they could not enter these relationships into the calculus.

These challenges did not stop the new accountancy from developing methods of calculation unknown to the old system of green audits. To the accountant of the future, earlier so-called green auditing procedures appeared ludicrously narcissistic in hindsight, because they focused on media producers' own growth-based criteria for evaluating the economic performance of the "creative industries" (a term from the early twenty-first century that summed up the narrowness of their world view). The old-school criteria had valued such environmentally harmful economic activity as building new, electricity-guzzling server warehouses equally or more than green innovations.

Scientific knowledge posed a second major challenge for the new accountancy, which experienced a steep learning curve in trying to link cultural labor's environmental impact on the scale of the NICL. The accountants of the future learned of biothermal risks to workers and consumers exposed to human-made electromagnetic fields, and scientific parameters for human tolerance to these forces. They learned the basic toxicological properties of carcinogenic and poisonous gases, metals, and chemicals used in ICT/CE manufacturing, unpacking a daunting array of elements, synthetic compounds, and their effects on human health: aluminum, antimony, barium, beryllium, cesium, chromium, cobalt, copper, gold, lead, mercury, molybdenum, nickel, platinum, silver, tin, titanium, tungsten, zinc; acidic cupric chloride, alkaline ammoniacal, sulfuric peroxide, argon, arsine, silane, phosphine, arsenic, selenium, polychlorinated biphenyls, trichloroethylene, ammonia, methanol, glycol ethers, methylene chloride, nonylphenols; and so on.⁶ For all along the international division of cultural labor, workers were exposed to combinations of these materials, with serious consequences to their health.

Some chemicals had short-term effects, such as skin and eye irritation, headaches, vertigo, and nausea. Others had to be absorbed into the blood stream over longer periods before harmful disorders could be diagnosed. Then there were the bioaccumulative toxins that would collect in fatty tissue; these were long understood to flow up the food chain through land and waterways before being consumed by humans and taking up residence in their bodies. There was another class called endocrine disruptors, found in many plastics, which upset normal functioning of the endocrine system by acting as if they were human hormones, leading to a variety of harms (cancers and other problems in reproductive systems, thyroid, metabolism, etc.). One of the most dramatic ways the new accountancy found to illustrate the longevity of these pathogens in the environment was to borrow from research on e-waste, which provided a testing ground for the effects of open exposure to the chemical and heavy metal content in ICT/CE (Leung, Duzgoren-Aydin, Cheung, & Wong, 2008; Ray, Mukherjee, Roychowdhury, & Lahiri, 2004; Wong, Wu, Duzgoren-Aydin, Aydin, & Wong, 2007).

Enclosed hard drives, backlit screens, (increasingly rare) cathode-ray tubes, wiring, capacitors, and metals like gold, silver, and lead posed few risks while these toxic materials remained encased. In contrast, discarded electronics had the potential to expose workers to a salad of toxic components when dismantled. Parts could be reused or swapped for newer parts to refurbish older devices. But those targeted for the waste stream underwent further destruction in order to collect remaining parts and metals of value (gold, silver, copper, and rare-earth elements are examples). That was when serious health-and-safety risks occurred, including bone disease, brain damage, birth defects, diseases of the stomach, lungs, and vital organs, and disrupted biological development in children. These conditions resulted from exposure to heavy metals (lead, cadmium, and mercury, among others), dioxins emitted by burning wires insulated with polyvinylchloride, flame retardants in circuit boards and plastic casings containing polychlorinated biphenyls, and poisonous fumes emitted in search of precious metals (Leung et al., 2008; Ray et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2007).

The accountants of the future determined various ways to calculate the environmental cost of toxins that outlasted the devices containing them. This was an important achievement, given that existing methods for measuring the impact of toxic e-waste primarily consisted of tracking the volume of sales and disposal of electronics and electric devices (Schor, 2010, pp. 32–37; Zoeteman et al., 2010, p. 418). The longevity of pathogens had to be quantified and entered into ledgers along with other risks associated with damages to ecosystems. The valuation was carried out using a model that assessed ecosystem services and biophysical benefits as economic inputs – for example, multiple relevant ecosystems added value to media and ICT/CE production, from the marine and desert biomes that endow the Southern Californian climate to the ecosystems providing food, water, and housing to cultural workers worldwide. The new accountancy added the costs incurred when waste, harmful byproducts, or other neglectful practices associated with media production devalued ecosystem services.

The method worked for a short-range projection of the costs of such damage, but was of little use in long-range valuations. The problem was setting a discount rate that compared present and future costs of environmental damage. Given the ethical dilemma of determining the value of ecosystem services for future generations, it was not practical to use existing economic models, which assumed that technological fixes would reduce the cost of ecosystem repair – for example, yet-to-be discovered nano- or biotechnology that could consume plastic or neutralize toxins. The new accountancy was uncomfortable with the idea that an accurate count of long-term costs was impossible, though practitioners agreed to present “sensitivity analysis of cost-benefit-ratios using a range of different discount rates [. . .] to highlight different ethical perspectives and their implications for future generations” (TEEB, 2010, p. 26). This compromise would become untenable as more time, and eventually more weight, was given to ethical understanding of the environment’s future. A turn to ecological ethics in the new accountancy was underway.

The limits to calculating intergenerational impact confounded the new accountants, who had striven to understand the geographical scale of the NICL and the

interconnectedness of cultural labor over time. They simply could not trust the very cost-benefit numbers they had produced about the future. Unlike climate scientists, who looked to the geological past to help predict changing atmospheric conditions, the accountants of the future could only offer probabilities based on political trends and BAU. This produced a list of general changes in the relationships of the environment to media and ICT/CE production: for example, in the absence of a massive rollout of public works worldwide to build clean energy systems, a greater proportion of greenhouse gases would probably come from media sources such as server warehouses, where electricity consumption was rising 150% a year on average, while residential ICT/CE equipment was projected to take 30% of global electricity output by 2022 and 45% by 2030 (International Energy Agency, 2009, p. 21; International Telecommunication Union, 2009, p. 4). Accountancy did not do well with such generalities. Even if these projections could direct action toward particular futures like energy-efficient production plants, smart grid/residential metering, or abundant low-wattage entertainments, there would also be unpredictable outcomes, from scientific discoveries to catastrophic events. Such uncertainty took the accountant far from the comfort of cost-benefit analysis (CBA), a beloved risk-management tool for monetizing human and nonhuman effects of environmental change. CBA could not account for intergenerational changes; and it did not work under conditions favoring interterritorial equity, which the new accountants sought to measure as they overcame ethnocentric assumptions about the relative value of cultural labor living across national borders or intranational lines of difference.

The accountants of the future had entered a domain where eco-ethical thinking proved a more powerful tool than CBA and other accountancy methods. They continued to count the numbers of US federal prisoners and pre-teen Chinese, Nigerian, and Indian girls picking apart electronics for precious metals or reusable parts.⁷ But that kind of quantification could not pinpoint the human and environmental cost of dust laden with toxic heavy metals from circuit boards and other components inhaled or blown afield from recycling sites, or the harm associated with exposure to multiple sources of electromagnetic radiation.

This shortcoming resulted from the physical difficulty of establishing and measuring the risks faced by all planetary inhabitants.⁸ It illustrated a limitation to the discourse of risk management, which focused on how particular pathogens were allocated across populations, rather than seeking to eliminate such risks altogether. From an eco-ethical standpoint that valued human and nonhuman nature alike, any effort to measure and manage “safe amounts” of exposure to toxins and pollutants was a dirty ideological game. The new accountancy saw this as a remnant of washed-out “modernity,” wherein everyday life could progress only under persistent threats to well-being. The new accountants refused to be a part of the propaganda of “risk society,” which naturalized these threats using future-oriented scenarios that were based on a self-aggrandizing cocktail of fragile numbers and faith-based predictions. They knew too well how such calculations of chance could freeze critical thinking and rouse thoughtless decisions that only served to metastasize harmful outcomes.

Ecological ethics, in contrast, offered a considerate and sensible alternative: assuming that humans were ignorant of the future effects of present-day action, adopting a deep regard for the natural world, and acting with caution rather than hubris when establishing a human presence within it. The new accountancy established guidelines that placed an extremely rigorous burden of proof on media and ICT/CE producers, who claimed that their business strategies would not introduce harmful substances or practices into the environment. In some cases, where there was scientific consensus about the chemical-mechanical processes used in the supply chain, the approval process was quite streamlined. Many progressive producers embraced the “better safe than sorry” environmental principle introduced by their green “bean counters.” Others resisted, among them a very vocal, obstinate group of climate change-denying media owners, most of whom were caught in the paradigm of business school accounting methods introduced in the 1970s. This group would soon be squeezed by an unlikely coalition of twenty-something and eighty-something media makers who joined the green cultural labor movement that had been growing within the global cultural industries.

This division between eco-ethically guided producers and BAU manifested itself in an ideological battle. The former promoted the virtues of sustainable media making. The latter promised abundant electronic and visual pleasures pulsating with innovative design and symbolic power. The BAU types had the upper hand in this war for hearts and minds, and enjoyed some success in fighting the spread of the new accountancy through union busting and monopoly practices that locked out green competition. But the sustainability coalition began to expand exponentially as green alliances formed across the political spectrum. Increasing numbers of media business owners and policymakers came to understand that the information, entertainment, and educational aspects of the media could prosper within a modest revenue model based on a mature and honest environmental accounting system that prohibited all practices that are not indefinitely sustainable by the Earth’s ecosystems. The BAU faction continued to reap huge profits from selling ever more ingenious gadgets that were built within its network of suppliers, in regions unregulated by green guidelines, and sold in markets where policymakers feared the revolt of voters who saw any prohibition on their consumption of high-tech goods as a threat to freedom and choice.

The accountants of the future realized their goals to increase the accuracy of measuring environmental costs, broaden the categories of labor involved in media and ICT/CE production, and forge a new calculus that clearly delineated how to make cultural labor greener throughout the global supply chain. The limits to accountancy’s role were in part transcended by the turn to eco-ethical deliberation. Once the new accountancy crossed the threshold toward legitimacy on a multinational scale, there was a dramatic and immediate effect on the outlook of global business, as the addition of environmental accounting to the bottom line created an epidemic of “writedowns,” which caused green businesses to operate in the red for over a decade.

At first, this gave a boost to the BAU faction, which enjoyed a rush of investment from financial markets (historically intolerant of environmentalism, in any case). This appeared to weaken the green faction, which BAU briefly succeeded in defeating on political and economic fronts. Eventually, however, three major institutional changes propelled green practices into the forefront of a new, vibrant media economy. First, policymakers in key regions – China, India, the European Union (EU), Brazil, Canada, and Japan – established social funds from which green media organizations could draw in order to invest in long-term, sustainable practices. This countered other market pressures, which favored BAU. Second, larger conglomerates closed their worst polluting properties or invested in resource replacement, turning formerly wasteful, toxic practices into efficient, clean operations (simple changes in chemistry and fiber resourcing, for example, made paper production viable again). The debt incurred by firms was high at first, but the pay-off came via lower environmental costs. Small- to medium-sized media/ICT/CE production companies bought polluting properties and transformed them through available technologies funded by environmentally oriented venture capitalists. The thinking here was that the green accountancy was right (on the money) for medium- to long-term revenue generation, and that only a fool would believe that ignoring environmental costs in bookkeeping could provide lasting advantages in the marketplace.

Finally, the asymmetrical takeup of green products in the largest consumer markets – the EU, the United States, India, China, and Brazil – began to shift as marketers realized that the European practice of consumer education in green product quality did not diminish sales. US regulations had not changed effectively for 20 years, allowing a continuous flow of toxic-laced products to be sold there; whereas in the EU, regulators had ensured that media products and consumption were indexed to ecological enhancements, which improved the quality and lifetime of technological goods, reduced the consuming frenzy for ephemeral fashion/style in consumer goods, and underwrote the policy of extended producer responsibility for electronic and electric goods. Consumers loved the result: they bought high-quality media technology built on green service principles. When real (i.e., noncosmetic) innovation made the gadgets obsolete, the brand-owner would upgrade or replace the device at a price that would either be tied to the minimal changes in the new components or was already paid for in the original purchase. (Most top brands in Europe had eliminated virtually all waste and discovered designs that allowed for nearly complete reuse of the component parts.) It took some time for production practices throughout the supply chain to reach ecologically sustainable benchmarks, but eventually even the brands designed as well as made in China and India, once egregious polluters though early innovators in state-based green technology, surpassed the neoliberal United States in green media production.

Green accountancy had established a new paradigm for cultural labor. Institutional changes generated a steady stream of information about successful green cultural labor and technologies, with fact-filled reports shared widely in business and government circles. But this hegemony remained vulnerable to challenges from BAU, which

persisted in its ambition to end the “reign of tree huggers.” This highly capitalized faction of media owners could not tolerate the growing consensus on sustainability lest it ruin their empires.

As in the past, BAU relied on parallel lines of attack – mass persuasion and control over the political processes – focused primarily in the United States, where it was easiest to control political discourse and where domination of a huge consumer market helped fund political ambitions. Through media and communication channels, propaganda convinced consumers that green media technology was a scam. The bourgeois media depicted suffering and hard-working consumers locked out of the good life by expensive green technologies while portraying themselves as providing affordable electronic and electric pleasure to the downtrodden. “The green companies must think you are chumps,” was one typical retort from a BAU-sponsored commentator. Such rhetoric, which played on the economic self-interest of consumers, was a powerful distraction from the evidence of sustainable, successful eco-ethical practices.

The BAU faction also spent large portions of its wealth on political candidates whose campaigns spread fear of big government, foreigners, and socialist plots aiming to smash freedom of choice and economic growth. This strategy won many battles. But in the end, their share of the market diminished as consumers, investors, and policymakers realized that their accounting system fostered too many costly gaps, not least the accurate measurement of environmental impact. With losses came increased resentment within the remnants of BAU, which retreated from politics for a time in order to regroup, form new alliances, and build a movement to win back their access to hugely profitable business. That’s another story.

Conclusion

The preceding speculative fiction imagines some conditions of possibility for green cultural labor to prosper in a world whose political-economic arrangements favor movements to counter the twentieth century’s despoliation of the Earth’s ecosystems. Our choice of an “accountant of the future” as an environmental hero is somewhat whimsical, though it was inspired by present practices within media firms that position accountants as pivotal agents of change in greening cultural labor.

The hopeful scenarios in our imagined media future are conveniently disengaged from the present political economy, which is hardening into a new Gilded Age, where wealth concentration and hyperconsumption, even in depressed economies, freeze critical thinking about climate change and the means to achieve policy and public/private investment for ecologically sound economies – public transportation works, alternative energy, low-wattage entertainment, green technologies, and so on.

In today’s United States, right-wing demagogues rail against foreign influences and climate science, two sources that provide scores of real-life examples of how

large- and small-scale human practices are reducing greenhouse gas emissions and toxic waste. Green design initiatives surround us as we write, but the built environment and consumer goods continue to be defined by a passion for fossil fuels and non-biodegradable plastic (Schor, 2010).

Our call for better media accounting was provoked by the fact that corporations and governments in the Global North are currently sending toxic e-waste to other countries in the absence of a clear measurement of the volume of trade in these poisons. In addition, the global supply chain depicted at the outset of our story is not unlike the one we find today – workers uncoun- ted and unknown, living, ailing, and dying across a vast assembly line in which present-day wonders are manufactured. Our fictitious militant accountants were frustrated by lacunae in existing policy regimes, which, while laudable in many ways, fail in most attempts to find the political resources for effective accounting and policy implementation. Japan, Canada, and the United States still undermine the 1995 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which prohibits the transport of dangerous material (United States Government Accountability Office, 2008, pp. 23–27, 24 n. 22; van Erp & Huisman, 2010). And yet, we have seen hopeful signs in legal investigations of unlawful e-waste exports to West Africa (Walsh, 2010), the recodification of e-waste business as global organized crime (Criminal Intelligence Service Canada, 2008), and EU efforts to license and oversee e-waste exporters, traders, dealers, and brokers (van Erp & Huisman, 2010).

We have based the ethico-political values of our media future on “green citizenship,” which presses for basic rights that include clean air and water, for the acceptance of interterritorial and intergenerational responsibility to care for the Earth’s ecosystems, and for business corporations to pay for the social and environmental resources they exploit. We have tried to imagine the contradictory and complicated endeavor required to bring such rights into existence with a view to the future, which in our fictionalized version ends up almost confounding the new accountancy. As we have argued elsewhere, this kind of intergenerational thinking must pervade media studies if we are to confront our logocentric interdependence on the technology we engage with, criticize, and promote (Maxwell & Miller, 2008d).

The battle of future accountants against the purveyors of BAU media is also a battle against the current enchantment of technology and technological fads, which have worsened the ecological crisis. The connection between gadgetry abundance and planetary decline is only beginning to enter the critical curriculum of media studies, though environmental activists have been examining this relationship since the 1980s. The need for a new kind of accountancy was clear then, as activists and other researchers struggled to break the informational barrier erected by media and ICT/CE businesses. Like our imaginary accountant, media studies of the future must enact an Earth-centered ecological ethics to keep in check the managerial, human-centered tendencies of CBA that fracture a holistic understanding of the relationship of media technology to the environment. Along these lines, media studies could moderate the temptation toward preemptive conclusions by using the

precautionary principle that enabled accountants of the future to transcend conventional quantification.

At present, the limits to understanding the extent of the environmental impact of technology and cultural labor in the Global North, and hence the means to green these, are said to result from three reporting failures:

- 1 Cultural workers and consumers throw waste and byproducts into the traditional waste stream, where the items cannot be counted and are eventually lost in landfills and incinerators.
- 2 Nefarious forces hide the volume of illegally procured and traded e-waste in order to continue profiting, either through global salvage or the more benign-sounding business-to-business trade.
- 3 Government-run systems of waste control poorly educate and inform workers and consumers about depositing e-waste where it can be counted, while failing to enforce laws meant to coerce waste-producing industries to declare all items.

All three explanations are correct. They necessitate changes in the current system to place green citizenship and green governance at the center of the action. Perhaps the radically reconfigured notion of environmental accountancy and auditing we have envisioned here can provide a way for media studies to imagine its own transformative role in a future of environmentally sustainable media industries.

NOTES

- 1 The thrilling nature of accountancy has been established ethnographically, lexicographically, and rhetorically (Flowerdew & Wan, 2006), not least in Monty Python's vocational-guidance "Lion Tamer" sketch ("dull, dull, dull") with its "League for Fighting Chartered Accountancy." You don't marry such people for the ride of your life, even if they have a sense of humor like Sacramento, California accounting firm MGO, which adopted the slogan "Proud to Be Boring Accountants" in 2010 (<http://www.mgocpa.com/go/mgo/?jsessionid=EC11314641BFF963CA5F3F14BBCDE75F>).
- 2 See, for example, Jones (2010); Rahaman (2010); the websites for Critical Management (<http://www.criticalmanagement.org/>) and Critical Management Studies (<http://group.aomonline.org/cms>); the journals *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*; *Accounting, Organizations and Society*; *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*; and *International Journal of Critical Accounting*; and the currency of "technology foresight," which sought to address the problems caused by innovation (Miles, 2010). Scholarly work on environmental accounting began in the early 1990s and over the next two decades developed to include environmental danger, corporate responsibility, new relationships between industry and the environment, systems of measurement, and reporting norms that the United Nations' Division for Sustainable Development's expert working group on the topic produced, which included a comprehensive Environmental Management Accounting methodology (http://www.unep.ch/etb/areas/VRC_index.php). The US Environmental Protection

Agency (2007) offered a limited but useful guide. The International Accounting Standards Board began to pay heed (Gale, 2006; Jones, 2010), and firms appeared to provide such services (<http://www.greenaccountancy.com>). Environmental accounting is a far cry, of course, from many norms of the industry. One of us worked as a credit analyst for a major US overseas bank in the early 1980s. As part of welcoming visiting metropolitan dignitaries to the colonies, local operatives diligently crop-dusted a bar-b-cue area near a mine three days prior to their arrival to ensure they would not be inconvenienced by insect life. The environmental impact appears not to have made it into the accounts.

- 3 This section is partially based on our research published previously in Maxwell and Miller (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2009, 2011).
- 4 Sy and Tinker (2010) provide a mathematical model that can be applied to this global scale of labor.
- 5 See CEREAL (2006, 2009); Kalm (2001); Urrea (1996).
- 6 See Massey (1979); National Research Council (2005); Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition (n.d.); Grossman (2006).
- 7 See Center for Environmental Health et al. (2006); United States Department of Justice (2010); Leung et al. (2008); Basel Action Network (2005); Orisakwe and Frazzoli (2010); Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group (2009).
- 8 Of course, the new accountants were aware that it was possible to ascribe a value to the physical damage caused by exposure to toxic dust, but the cynical nature of the process sickened them. Case in point: in 2010, a US court determined that workers exposed to poisons in the ruins of the World Trade Center were worth at most about US\$81,000 apiece. The price was indexed to the loss of good health caused by the failure of government and business to provide protection to “first responders.”

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Introduction

Media Studies Futures, Past and Present

Kelly Gates

ABSTRACT

Of necessity, the field of media studies no longer focuses exclusively on the conventional categories of television, film, radio, and print. Distributed digital networks, new types of hardware and software configurations, and new institutional arrangements in the media industries are disrupting existing categories and challenging theoretical and methodological approaches. How can media studies best make sense of changing media institutions, forms, and uses? How will the field keep pace with changes in media occurring in the decades to come? What will the “new media” of the future look like, and how can media studies help shape that future? *Media Studies Futures* highlights some of the major challenges and opportunities facing scholars, students, and advocates interested in understanding our changing media forms and working toward realizing their democratic possibilities. The main themes addressed here include: (1) media theory, methods, and pedagogy; (2) social and mobile media; (3) media industries and infrastructures; (4) journalism and media policy; (5) interactivity, affect, and media subjectivities; (6) children and youth cultures’ uses of digital media; and (7) media waste and sustainability. The aim of this work is to promote a more open and inclusive discussion of the future possibilities for media and media studies, challenging rather than participating in dominant tendencies to lay claim to any particular future of media or their field of study.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Media Studies Futures, Past and Present

Having a group of scholars comment on key topics and issues for the future of media studies in a printed and bound book seems paradoxical today, given the slow pace of book publishing and the seeming inadequacies of the print form to capture the world of networked media environments. The book form itself, once known primarily as a bound collection of printed pages, is being refashioned for digital networks, in complex relationship with changes occurring in modes of publishing and distribution as well as authoring, writing, and reading practices. Even before the Kindle, the Nook, and the iPad, digital technologies were transforming the book from the inside out, as writers adopted word processors, and as printers moved to screen-based forms of movable type. Google's massive project of book remediation, while in some ways breathing new life into old bound books, has also pushed the world of books that much further toward a total transition from print to screen. Now, even old printed books can be refashioned in networked form, complete with embedded hyperlinks. The bound paper analog form of the book seems an archaic place to be discussing the future of media.

Before moving too far along the path of an apology for the form this collection of printed essays takes, I want to instead qualify the volume's title. The aim of compiling a collection of work under the heading of *Media Studies Futures* is not to make a definitive statement about the directions the field is taking. Rather, the goal of this volume is to bring together works that collectively challenge any monolithic statement about the future of media and media studies. The principle unifying point that emerges from the diverse body of thought gathered here is that media studies needs to take seriously the fact that *radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media and media studies are headed.

There are both risks and rewards in defining the future of the field and its objects of analysis in this indeterminate way. Without a doubt, people who make it their business to study media need to engage in debates about the future. We should put forth visions of that future that embody the values we hold dear, investing the field with the strongest possible chance of renewed relevancy. But lest we merely adopt the language of actors with very different stakes in what the future of media will look like, we should examine the direction of the field with a reflexive sensibility. In other words, media studies practitioners need to engage in this debate fully cognizant that there is not one future of media or media studies, but many possible futures, and those futures are *impossible to know or determine in advance*. In the wise words of the late James Carey and his colleague John Quirk, the future "never quite makes its entrance into history" – it is by definition a time that is always awaited but never arrives (Carey & Quirk, 1973, p. 485).

Taking a cue from Carey and Quirk, we can find valuable lessons about the future and its uncertainties by looking to the past, or, more specifically, to *the history of the future*. In his historical analysis of how people perceived the future in the "culture of

space and time” (in the West during the period 1880–1918), Steven Kern (1983/2003) emphasizes the wisdom of French physicists and philosophers of the time, like Emile Meyerson, Henri Bergson, and Jean-Marie Guyau, each of whom in their own way insisted that an uncertain, open future was essential to the very possibility of human freedom. In their view, a predictable and certain future did not portend well for the idea of free will or the possibility that people might be able to actively change their circumstances.

In 1931, the *New York Times* asked a selection of prominent figures of the day about their projections for the future “eighty years hence.” In his contribution, Henry Ford made the interesting and tentative suggestion that “perhaps our most progressive step will be the discovery that we have not made so much progress as the clatter of the times would suggest.” Ford insisted that “the only profit of life is life itself,” and hoped optimistically that “the coming eighty years will see us more successful in passing around the real profit of life.” It is of course 80 years later, and it is difficult to conclude in these tough times that the real profit of life has been passed around. For every example in that regard, there are many counterexamples. But there is at least one qualified example worthy of note that might support Ford’s hopeful vision, even if it was not precisely what he had in mind. When the *New York Times* published this feature, it included only the views of elite white men. Predictably, if not very prophetically, none of the writers had a single word to say about the changes that might occur in gender relations, or the advances in status that middle-class women would make. Perhaps the “modern woman” was able to make such progress during this period precisely because few bothered to foretell how far she would go.

Of course, contemplating the future presents endless paradoxes. One of the reasons why people are so interested in trying to predict the future is to give themselves a feeling of control over their fate (Ropeik, 2010). Presently, the inventor Ray Kurzweil perhaps best embodies the figure of the futurologist, driven by an intense desire to predict and control the future. He famously forecasts that the world is headed toward “the singularity,” an event horizon when humans will completely merge with computers, giving birth to a new superhuman race of hyper-intelligent cyborgs. Although some dismiss Kurzweil as an Internet-age quack, others are more receptive, including the likes of Bill Gates, Sergey Brin, and Larry Page (Vance, 2010). A documentary about Kurzweil, called *Transcendent Man* (Robert Ptolemy, 2009), portrays him as a person profoundly motivated by a desire to control his fate and especially to beat death. The film also depicts him as the quintessential technological utopian. For David Golumbia (2009), author of *The Cultural Logic of Computation* and a contributor to this volume, Kurzweil’s ideas are profoundly shaped by a “computationalist ideology.” For Kurzweil, everything is already computation, so it only makes sense that the future is computable as well. Even better, every worldly problem will eventually be solvable with more processing power and well-designed computer programs.

Computers and computation are deeply implicated in future-prediction, so much so that we cannot talk about the future without taking them into consideration. Nor

can we fully understand the relationship between computerization and social change without considering the ways computation is used to actively envision and intervene on the future – from the computer-generated imagery used to portray the future in science fiction films, to the computational algorithms used to predict the behavior of the financial markets. Simulation technologies in particular are designed precisely for this purpose, using computational analysis to render virtual representations of ostensible future realities. Simulations have become so commonplace that Baudrillard's once-provocative statement – that simulation has rendered reality obsolete – seems almost quaint today, the basis of countless movie plotlines (Baudrillard, 1983). Hollywood has produced enough copies of *The Matrix* (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999) by now that the simulation trope itself has become a precession of simulacra. Seeing yet another simulation story cannot help but make us nostalgic for a time when the idea seemed original. In fact, as William Bogard (1996) has argued, the logic of simulation is deeply imbued with a sense of sentimental recollection, positing the future as essentially a course of events that has already happened. For all of the hype surrounding its future-predicting potential, notes Bogard, simulation technology is “more about a kind of nostalgia or melancholy for the future; it produces a sense that the future is not ahead but in some fundamental way already over” (p. 23).

Whether they invoke nostalgia, great expectation, or resignation, many of the stories about the future that late capitalist societies tell themselves are formulated via computation, and manifested in digital media of some form. And while the veracity of the output is uncertain, it cannot help but have an influence on both *ideas* about the future and important future-shaping decisions being made in the present.

But even before computerization, the future and its prediction was a familiar story. According to the philosopher Langdon Winner (1996), the basic tendency of modernism to convey the future as already decided could be found throughout the twentieth century, as the terms of the social contract were defined according to the priorities of capitalist economic development. In the prevailing version of the future on offer, “people were to be propelled forward by forces larger than themselves into a world that was rational, dynamic, prosperous, and harmonious” (Winner, 1996, p. 67). At the 1939 New York World's Fair, for example, the future was presented to visitors as a spectacular experience – a perfectly functioning technological environment portrayed as a foregone conclusion:

People visited spectacles like the 1939 World's Fair in New York to be swept up in the excitement of it all. There were no pavilions to solicit the public's suggestions about emerging devices, systems, or role definitions. As millions of visitors strolled through the fair, they learned how to orient themselves to changes in living that seemed to have their own undeniable trajectory. (Winner, 1996, p. 67)

By presenting a particular vision of the future as inevitable and nonnegotiable, the spectacle of the Fair defused any public criticism that might emerge from people

who saw this future as threatening their livelihoods, values, or traditions. The spectacular version of the future on display also helped undermine the possibility that other individuals and groups might have a say in that future design, or offer alternative visions worthy of consideration.

The aim of this volume is to promote a more open and inclusive discussion of the future possibilities for media and media studies, challenging rather than participating in dominant tendencies to lay claim to a particular future. The book draws together leading and emerging scholars in the field of communication and media studies to address, directly or by default, the problem of how to study and make sense of media at the current conjuncture. The chapters are not meant to be prophesizing so much as provisional and exploratory. They highlight some of the major challenges and opportunities facing scholars, students, activists, and other parties concerned with understanding our changing media forms and environments, and realizing their more democratic possibilities. Some authors advocate for paradigm shifts in the field of media studies, while others take more targeted approaches, focusing on specific industrial, technological, or cultural contexts. The essays are grouped into seven sections: (1) theory, methods, and pedagogy; (2) social and mobile media; (3) media industries and infrastructures; (4) journalism and media policy; (5) interactivity, affect, and media subjectivities; (6) children and youth cultures; and (7) sustainability. There are many themes and conversations that cut across these sections, and many other possible ways that the work could be subdivided – around issues of time and space, labor and work, materiality and immateriality, convergence and remediation, access and inequality, to name a few. Before explaining the chosen subdivisions in more detail, it will be helpful to first consider what we mean by “media” in a world where media are virtually everywhere.

Defining the Media in Media Studies

One central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: what counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated content” capture a general sense of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the varied meanings and phenomena that these terms invoke?

Jonathan Sterne (2007) makes an important distinction with respect to “new” media. Most people typically think of computers and digital media forms as new media, in contrast to earlier analog forms. But in reality, digital computers have been around for decades. “In a weird, recursive way, new media are ‘new’ primarily with reference to themselves,” writes Sterne. “Today, computer and other digital hardware

displace their own counterparts more than anything else” (p. 19). Sterne suggests that we distinguish two models of “newness” in relation to media change: “(1) the ‘newness’ of a medium with respect to other media, and (2) the so-called state of the art in design and function *within* a given medium” (p. 18). For example, the Apple iPad and a host of also-ran digital tablets currently count as the newest in new media. But even the iPad, released in April 2010, is not really brand new anymore. What is new is each new model that Apple releases, which renders the earlier versions stylistically obsolete. Although a seemingly smart business model, this approach requires Apple and its competitors to negotiate a precarious balancing act, lest even the most avid of early adopters begin to suffer from newness fatigue. After all, how many new devices can people buy before newness itself begins to seem old?

As Sterne’s distinction between these two models of “newness” suggests, media studies needs to be careful to avoid reifying the concept of “new” media. Not only can “new” mean different things, but what we call “conventional media” remain important and relevant, not only as objects for historical comparison but also as institutions and technological forms with their own – albeit uncertain and indeterminate – futures. The media most often singled out in this regard are books, newspapers, and television. We hear a lot about the imminent obsolescence of paper bound books these days; nevertheless, more printed books continue to be produced each year than the year before. As Harvard librarian Robert Darnton (2010) has noted, “I have been invited to so many conferences on ‘The Death of the Book’ that I suspect it is very much alive” (p. 22). This is not to suggest that the business of book publishing is flourishing, or that libraries have nothing to worry about. But there is a reason why Google is expending so much energy on the digitization of bound books (one imagines a small army of manual labor). For their part, newspapers also are clearly in trouble, but the *New York Times* still has 50 times the number of newsroom employees as the online-only *Huffington Post* (Alterman, 2008). One suspects that if and when the professional writing dries up, business ventures that now rely on “immaterial labor,” or labor paid for with someone else’s dime, will realize that the best writers and reporters are the ones who do it for a living.

Just as Darnton is skeptical about the death of the book, others likewise find rumors about the death of television to be greatly exaggerated. While many people now watch television shows on their computers and other devices instead of their television sets, alternative modes of reception do not mean that TV *per se* is disappearing. “TV still dominates as a mode of production, distribution, and reception of the very genres that it helped create,” notes Toby Miller (2011). “Time-shifting and platform choice are versions of what has long been the dominant norm – watching material produced and bought by television networks” (Miller, 2011). In fact, the loudest claims about the death of broadcasting in the early 2000s came from mobile network operators competing for a share of the television market, as Max Dawson shows in his contribution to this volume. The mobile industry players portrayed broadcasters as irrelevant and outdated in order to position themselves as the proper custodians of the broadcast spectrum. In her chapter, Lisa Parks likewise emphasizes that the analog spectrum is not a relic of the past but instead contested terrain for

the future of media, a fact that clearly runs counter to prevailing assertions about the digital TV transition.

In short, in order to avoid reifying the “new” in “new media,” media studies needs to steer clear of echoing industry rhetoric on the distinction between new and old. Our research agendas need to avoid celebrating recent innovations as radically different and inherently better, and instead engage in forms of analysis that offer more nuanced insights about the relationship between technological change and social change. It is certainly worthwhile to start with new media forms and consider how older media fit into their genealogies. But it is likewise productive to consider what the emergence of new media forms tells us about the meaning and experience of existing media. A telephone only becomes a “landline,” for example, when comparing it to newer and more mobile versions of telephony. In other words, the new level of mobility afforded by and designed into networked digital devices helps us think anew about the situated, localized character of wired, over-distance communication. In fact, the way new communicative devices are integrated into our lives gives us cause to revisit the most basic and fascinating forms of face-to-face “interactivity.” This is not to suggest that we should view the past through the lens of the present. Instead, we need to recognize the deeply embedded ways that the past is still with us in the present. Further, understanding the shape of things in the *past* provides a better purchase on the shape of things in the *present*, and lessons learned from the past, even if learned in painstaking ways, provide invaluable guides for the future.

Mark Coté’s contribution to this volume provides a noteworthy example. Coté looks to the very distant past (and those who study it) for insights about the forms of mobility and sociality enabled by new location-aware technologies. He asks what we can learn about our location-aware online activities via “a prehistoric turn,” considering a moment in Paleolithic time when the very possibility of being human emerged in interaction with stone tools. From the *very beginning* of human experience, a direct, constitutive relationship took shape between what was distinctively human activity and the development and use of technologies. It may seem like a stretch to compare a rudimentary stone tool to a digital media device, but such tools did in fact mediate humans’ relationship with their environment, conceivably providing a way for users to view themselves as actively engaged with their surroundings and conditions of existence. (Of course, they probably didn’t think about it exactly in these terms, not yet having the language to do so.)

It is not necessary to go back as far as Coté does to gain insights about the media forms and practices that appear new today. Lev Manovich has an especially keen eye for identifying the revival of earlier dimensions of media in newer digital forms. In “What is Digital Cinema?” he notes how the first version of QuickTime bore a striking resemblance to Edison’s nineteenth-century Kinetoscope, for example (Manovich, 1995).¹ Both viewing devices were capable of displaying only very short motion pictures, played on a loop in a tiny frame suitable for only one viewer at a time. To insist on the newness of QuickTime when it was introduced in 1991 was to overlook the way it revisited an earlier moment of motion picture display – a moment characterized by the *convergence* of photography, animation techniques, live vaudeville

acts, and urban commercial amusements. Further, to see QuickTime as somehow superior or more sophisticated than the Kinetoscope risks being seduced by the digital sublime. Nor does it make sense to draw a linear path from the earlier form to the latter, as if one innovation inevitably led to the other. Why would a linear, advancing path of technological progress lead to such a similar form a hundred years later?

A question very much tied to debates about the so-called death of old media concerns the relevancy of “old” media studies. How useful are the concepts, theories, and methodologies developed in the days before the rise of the Internet and digital media for understanding the new media landscape? For some, the answer is not useful at all: everything about media studies before the Internet is tired, outdated, and inadequate, best left as a pile of historical detritus in the trash heap with printed books and newspapers, celluloid film, and analog televisions. In their contribution to this volume, Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter are adamant that conventional film and media studies – especially the old emphasis on visual representations – make no sense for studying social, mobile, and real-time interactive media. For them, the overreliance on outmoded theory has led media studies down a dark path of conceptual stagnation, and the field now suffers from an incapacity to make sense of the social and interactive dynamics of the digital networked realm – a distinct sphere that demands its own theory and methods.

Whether one finds established media theory and method useful or not, media studies cannot escape the brute fact that digitization and computerization have upended the field’s objects of analysis, seriously complicating what exactly “media” is. How does one study “media” when media are so many different things? As a set of social and technological processes, the proliferation of networked digital media is related in complicated ways to changes in forms of social organization, communication, human identity, and subjectivity, and media studies needs to find ways of making sense of how this is happening and what it means. Still, I would suggest that digital media studies should avoid creating a straw man out of the analysis of visual representation characteristic of a particular segment of scholarship, especially when the broader field has long drawn on a wide range of approaches beyond semiotics and textual analysis. If scholars were to divorce themselves entirely from earlier media and established theory and method in media studies – if that were even possible – vital comparative perspectives would be lost, and along with them a host of potentially valuable insights, not only on the past but also on the range of future possibilities.

Part 1: The Future of Media Studies: Theory, Method, Pedagogy

Part 1 of this volume contains essays that address some of the major theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical issues of critical concern for the future of media

studies. If the field is going to have a future at all, what should that future look like? What are the questions that need to be raised and addressed in order to situate the field in a position of relevancy and vitality, as a living, breathing space of new and compelling ideas and interventions? Although the six chapters collected in this section by no means exhaust the range of perspectives, taken together they provide productive points of departure. What these authors share in common is a strong conviction that theory, research, and pedagogy on the new media landscape must be radically rethought in ways that either substantively build upon or depart substantially from established approaches to studying conventional media. Networked digital media penetrate virtually every sphere of social life, and the challenge of media studies is to make sense of mediated environments in ways that matter.

Importantly, each author in Part 1 reflects on the intellectual labor and experiences of media studies scholars. Each proposes particular ways that people who study the media might reinvent approaches to their work – especially their research, writing, and pedagogy – thereby reinvigorating their thinking and transforming media studies from the inside out. Who should we take ourselves to be, as theorists, researchers, writers, and teachers, as well as producers, consumers, or users of media ourselves? How do media studies scholars go about inventing new and useful concepts to explain distributed, networked media environments? Collaboration seems critically necessary, advocated by nearly everyone, but how should collaborative research take shape? What are the terms of entry for collaboration, and when and how do academic researchers collaborate with non-academics? Given the conservative disciplinary structure of academic institutions, is the academy in fact the wrong place to try to do innovative and relevant work? And if not there, then where? What sort of institutional spaces do members of the media studies world need to construct for themselves, and where will they find the resources to do so?

Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter raise many of these questions in the two chapters that open this volume, provocatively arguing that the field of media studies has yet to develop a theory of *itself*. Audience studies investigated fandom and the production of meaning, textual analysis preoccupied itself with signification processes attached to content, and political economy turned its gaze on institutional power. Medium theory, while close to these authors' own interests, still falls short as they see it, because it established a continuum between old and new media without considering how media forms themselves can give rise to the production of new concepts. In their view, media studies desperately needs new concept production, born out of both online and offline collaborative efforts. To develop new concepts, media researchers should begin with reflexive mediation, examining how they use their objects of study in the research methodology itself. They insist on the need for nonrepresentational analysis – moving the agenda beyond the analysis of visual representation to mobile media, miniaturization, smart technologies, and the integration of media into urban environments.

Changes in media brought on by distributed digital networks and their associated institutions, devices, and practices present particular challenges and opportunities for

media studies education. The challenges are formidable, as anyone trying to teach in the field of media studies senses intuitively. The problems are often defined as generational, since many students live, work, and play in more immersive, or at least very different, media environments than their teachers. But the pedagogical challenges go beyond age differences, extending all the way to the structural changes that are wrenching higher education and dismantling the social contract it once offered to the middle class. As David Noble has noted, technological changes in higher education are deeply tied to its privatization and commercialization, with technology functioning as both “a vehicle and a disarming disguise” (Noble, 2003, p. 26). While new technologies provide tools for collaborative learning and distance education, these new pedagogical models have placed a considerable strain on an already stressed system of higher education. Debates over the relative merits of online learning, open courseware, and other new instructional technologies are far from resolved. What new approaches do we need for teaching not only *about* but also *with* digital media? What forms of media literacy are most important for students growing up in hyper-mediated environments? How much should media studies curricula be given over to instruction in practical media production skills and web design, or, for that matter, computer science and software engineering?

Alexandra Juhasz’s contribution to this volume addresses some of these pedagogical issues, offering an analysis of her own hands-on effort to teach about, and literally *on*, YouTube – an experiment she began in 2007 at Pfizer College in California. Since there was essentially no academic writing about YouTube at the time, and since the purpose was to explore the possibilities and limitations of the YouTube platform, Juhasz stipulated that all the material for the course would come from YouTube itself. Her chapter highlights a few of the sometimes exciting, sometimes painful results of this experiment.

Juhasz’s chapter also offers valuable insights on transformations taking place in writing and publishing in media studies. Her experience teaching a course on YouTube, which she repeated in 2008 and 2010, in turn became a research, writing, and publishing experiment. Juhasz published *Learning from YouTube* as a born-digital “video-book” with MIT Press. As a series of “re-posted” blog entries that she wrote while engaging in these activities, interspersed with her reflections about the experience after-the-fact, the printed chapter itself enacts the messy process of mediation from print to digital and back again.

Contributors to Part 1 also address the formidable questions of methodology raised by the emergence of new media forms and infrastructures, and the multiple levels of convergence that define the media landscape. What sorts of new methodologies will need to be devised to analyze this changing landscape? The sheer quantity of media available seems to overwhelm the possibility of conducting effective studies that can be generalized beyond very limited contexts. People with adequate connectivity have access to a dizzying array of media forms and content.

In his contribution, Lev Manovich offers his vision for a new methodological approach that will allow for the management of precisely this problem of media

quantity. The methodology he proposes – called “media visualization” – is designed for analyzing large collections of visual data. Where *information* visualization involves translating the world into numbers and then visualizing the relationships between those numbers, *media* visualization involves translating a set of images into another image – one that can reveal patterns that might not otherwise be apparent. Using open source image processing software normally used in medical research and other scientific fields, Manovich and his collaborators have designed a set of tools for media visualization that can be used by other researchers interested in exploring large sets of images.

Focusing on the future of digital game studies, Mia Consalvo also considers the problem of methodology at length. New methods are needed, as the digital game industry has evolved at a phenomenal rate. Game studies can no longer consider console games or the Western market as its primary areas of focus. Social games, casual games, virtual worlds, indie games, and online games all expand the boundaries of what count as games. In addition, markets such as those in China and Korea, and game development companies in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, are challenging the dominance of Western and Japanese firms. How is game studies responding to such changes? How is the field coalescing, now that there are dedicated journals, book series, conferences, and academic programs spread around the globe? Consalvo surveys how game studies scholarship has evolved, what approaches have become dominant, and what views have emerged about the “proper” way to do game studies research.

Many regions of the world are unrepresented in the work collected in this volume, a problem that reflects and reproduces one of the most difficult problems haunting media studies, and one that must play centrally going forward: the dominance of the Global North in defining the field and its priorities. This problem is deeply tied to the intractable problem of *unequal access*. The term “digital divide,” coined in the 1990s, remains an apt metaphor for capturing a variety of inequalities that continue to define the digital media landscape at all levels, from the global to the local. Latin American and other scholars in the developing parts of the world have never enjoyed the privilege of losing sight of this problem. As Raúl Trejo Delarbre shows in his contribution, most Latin American Internet researchers have tried to navigate a middle ground between bleak prognostications about ingrained and exacerbating inequalities on the one hand, and overly optimistic claims about the radical potential of the Internet to alleviate inequality on the other. In reality, issues of access are often complex and multifaceted, as suggested by the spread of Internet cafés and other sites of public access to the Internet in Latin American countries. The overall picture of digital media access across Latin America and other developing regions is not easy to measure, complicated as it is by patchwork efforts at the local and national levels, on the part of both public and private actors, to “connect” those who remain unconnected. Still, it remains true that the benefits of the digital economy have not been equally bestowed. Euphoric promises made about the Internet’s potential to eradicate inequalities have proven profoundly off the mark.

Part 2: Social and Mobile Media Futures

As little as 20 years ago, it would have been hard to predict the rapid emergence of social media phenomena like Facebook and YouTube, or the lightning-speed global diffusion of mobile systems and devices. Part 2 of *Media Studies Futures* takes up some of the issues and topics of concern to the present and future of *social and mobile media*. While “social media” are usually understood to refer to web-based platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and “mobile media” to iPhones, Droids, and other branded and networked devices that people carry with them everywhere they go, in fact this distinction is a tenuous one, as the chapters in this section suggest. Our own daily experiences with social and mobile media are themselves rife with blurry distinctions – between sociality and mobility, work and play, public and private, online and off. As I sit here working in a coffee shop, I can access Facebook and any number of other online social media platforms from either my computer or my mobile phone. Although only the smartphone has an embedded location-sensing device that can automatically pinpoint where I am, I could easily “check in” on my computer if I felt like letting my nearly 300 Facebook “friends” know my whereabouts.

Location awareness is not only about being social or communicating with “friends.” Our varied uses of these platforms also generate valuable data about our behaviors and preferences, to be analyzed by an increasingly ubiquitous and sophisticated market research surveillance apparatus. Strangely enough, this fact does not seem to prevent Facebook’s hundreds of millions of users from continuing to log on and disclose their private activities on a regular basis. Especially among younger users, there seems to be a decided lack of concern, or at most ambivalence, about the semi-public display of private life, or the impact that public display might have on their future lives. Nor do many of us who pass our time on social network sites (young or old) seem all that concerned about whether the hours we spend there count as labor or leisure. In light of the significant social implications of these blurring boundaries, it seems relevant to question what it is that attracts people to hours of social and mobile media use. Indeed, it seems as important to ask how today’s social and mobile media orient users toward the future as it is to consider what the future of these current new media forms might be.

The literature on social and mobile media can be subdivided in myriad ways, but it is hard to bypass one major division between research that focuses on users and uses from an ethnographic perspective, and work that attends to the institutional, technological, and political-economic dimensions of social and mobile media systems. Where scholars like danah boyd (2007) are primarily concerned with user experiences and forms of interaction in online social networks, for example, scholars like Mark Andrejevic (2007) are instead concerned with the forms of institutional and peer-to-peer surveillance that mobile devices and online social network platforms enable. Still, work that falls on either side of this divide is admittedly wide ranging, and there is certainly much work that does not fit neatly into either “camp.” Andrejevic’s analy-

sis of peer-to-peer or lateral surveillance can certainly be classified as a study of uses. And even Henry Jenkins's *Convergence Culture* (2006), which celebrates the forms of user empowerment that new media afford, does not ignore entirely the role of media corporations and their economic interests. Nevertheless the divide is apparent: where Jenkins sees a "participatory culture," Andrejevic sees a "digital enclosure."

The chapters in Part 2 of this volume represent work that straddles the divide between users and infrastructures, participation and enclosure. In his contribution, Mark Coté examines the forms of sociality and mobility afforded by digital networked media and new location-aware technologies by drawing on Italian autonomism and its central concept of "immaterial labor."² Coté aims to recover our online social media activities from their capitalist appropriation, at least for a moment, so that the creative and constructive capacities of these activities can be better understood. In fact, Coté writes, in the activities of online social networks we can see very clearly what Marx insisted all along – that commodities are always born of social relations. The practice of "checking in" via social media platforms like Yelp or Facebook Places generates informational commodities of special value in a digital economy, providing a rather transparent example of the way capitalism continues to parasitically sustain itself by colonizing what are essentially *social* activities. Such activities, whether taking place online or off, push beyond the boundaries of what capitalism is capable of subsuming.

Adriana de Souza e Silva and Eric Gordon likewise examine the rise of location-based networked services, exploring ambivalent user attitudes toward these technologies. Although many people are concerned about the extent to which location-based services enable institutions to track their movements and whereabouts, these services also provide us with a sense of awareness and control over the spaces we move through and occupy. The fact that location-aware systems can be used for these different, seemingly cross-purposes points to the new forms of "differential mobility" they enable, enhancing mobility for some while immobilizing others (Wood & Graham, 2005). New media devices and their infrastructures are reconfiguring how people move through and experience their spatial environments, shaping in complicated ways the social construction of space and the variable levels of control individuals have over their movements and surroundings.

In her chapter on changing models of public health communication about pandemics, Lisa Cartwright shifts the focus from *locality* to *temporality* as a key dimension of social media and their uses. What the 2009 "swine flu" campaign made clear was that "the days of using the pamphlet, the billboard, and the television public service announcement as primary means of health communication were over." Cartwright traces the viral social mediation of the H1N1 pandemic, showing how the fearful possibility of imminent disease threat that the virus presented – the possibility of a rapid viral "outbreak" – was well suited to the temporal mode of social media. The emerging, social media-based paradigm of public health communication is built on strategies of anticipatory surveillance and preemptive mediation, favoring a logic of emergency and rapid emergence. Unfortunately, Cartwright explains, such an

approach renders invisible other deadly disease epidemics, such as Hepatitis C, that unfold in bodies and populations at a much slower pace. Like other contributors to this volume, Cartwright's chapter highlights the inescapable fact that the material world of bodies and other living organisms still matters, interacting in complicated ways with the hardware and software of social media. The uses of social media are situated, embodied practices.

While common assumptions hold that the significant innovations leading to the rise of social and mobile media were born in places like Harvard dorm rooms, in fact this represents a decidedly narrow view of innovation and the dynamics of the global digital economy. Too often, the contributions of vast swaths of the planet have gone largely ignored. Even astute insights about the role of immaterial labor in the digital economy assume a level of connectivity – as well as a mode and amount of leisure time – that most of the world's inhabitants do not enjoy. In their contribution to this volume, Cara Wallis, Jack Linchuan Qiu, and Rich Ling focus on grassroots forms of innovation found in the developing world – local practices that have been instrumental to the global diffusion of mobile devices and infrastructures. With a special emphasis on China, they examine alternative economies of mobile phone use, manufacture, service, and repair – very *material* forms of labor – that have emerged in the Global South. The information have-less engage in what the authors call “subsistence tinkering,” devising their own technical means of enhancing the functionality and prolonging the life of mobile handsets. These tinkering practices represent a new level of flexible manufacturing, as an alternative mobile handset culture arises out of the necessity and ingenuity of those who might otherwise fall on the unconnected side of the digital divide.

Part 3: Media Industry and Infrastructure Futures

Nothing demonstrates the transformations that have wrenched the media industries over the last several decades better than the fate of the recording industry, an object of analysis unfortunately unrepresented in this volume. One would be hard-pressed to make a case for this industry's bright future, which is not to suggest that the situation is completely hopeless for music and musicians. The hardship that the recording industry has suffered has been arguably beneficial in some ways for the music world, at least for live music and for avid listeners with good connectivity. Full of wins for some and losses for others, the case of the recording industry, while unique in many respects, nonetheless underscores the profound changes that have occurred in the media industries and their infrastructures along with the rollout of digital media and distributed networks. Part 3 of *Media Studies Futures* draws attention to these media industry and infrastructural changes, as well as changes in the broader economy (in Greg Elmer and Andy Opel's contribution), as objects of vital concern to media studies. Although these chapters focus largely on the US context, they nevertheless lay out some vital issues of global relevance.

While the idea of convergence is typically used to refer to the merging of one or more media technologies, like television and the World Wide Web, it also applies at the level of industry and infrastructure, with the same number of caveats and complications. Among media and IT industry stakeholders, one finds a complex picture of interests and strategies that converge one minute and conflict the next. As Dan Schiller (2007) has argued, although it is often claimed that media convergence occurs “through intrinsic technological imperative,” in reality it stems from a combination of industry strategy, public policy, and directed developments in science and technology (p. 103). Among the most powerful forces shaping and accelerating the convergence of different media are the conflicts and negotiations hashed out in the media and IT industries, along with a host of decisions about infrastructures and their regulation that are typically made by engineers and policymakers with little or no public input.

For its part, the commercial film industry is undergoing a makeover at all levels, from production to distribution to exhibition. The transition to digital cinema has been far from a simple matter of designing more sophisticated special effects. In his contribution to this volume, Charles Acland discusses the future of cinema through the career of filmmaker and “technological auteur” James Cameron. Holding the distinction of producing and directing the two top-grossing films of all time to date, Cameron is widely seen as the embodiment of success in the Hollywood film industry. Although no filmmaker works alone, Cameron receives wide recognition for making a major, single-handed impact on the technological and aesthetic trajectory of commercial cinema. For Acland, Cameron’s film career, oeuvre, and obsession with pushing the technological limits of film provide an avenue to understanding the dynamics and directions of the cinema industry. While Cameron is famous for his “game-changing” films like *Avatar*, Acland argues that it is also necessary to consider the way he has used his documentary projects as instruments for promoting particular directions in the development of film technology. In the projects and persona of James Cameron, Acland argues, we find the technological imperative that guides the future of cinema.

If the transition to digital cinema requires careful analysis of the changing dynamics of the film industry, the transition from analog to digital television is another major “infrastructural changeover” that demands the attention of the field. In her contribution to this volume, Lisa Parks examines this changeover, emphasizing the importance of studying media infrastructures, in all their physicality and unsightliness, for what they reveal about “issues of materiality, distribution, environment, visualization, and social power.” Although often overlooked and impossible to study in their entirety, media and IT infrastructures provide the basis for the very possibility and functionality of the mediated environments we inhabit. Parks looks at the ways that various actors – government agencies, trade, and community organizations – communicated with the public in an effort to prepare them for the infrastructural transition in the United States, and how these efforts gave citizens cause to consider where their television signals come from, who owns and controls them, and the policies that regulate them. The public education and converter-box coupon campaigns also brought to the surface the

socioeconomic disparities and uneven geographies of the digital TV transition, especially in the ways these campaigns addressed fixed-income and minority communities.

Max Dawson's contribution brings mobile media into the analysis of television industry and infrastructural changes, focusing on the institutional conflicts between broadcasters and mobile network operators over control of mobile television. During the early 2000s, both broadcasters and mobile communications companies put mobile television at the center of the agenda for their respective industries' futures. Although they initially pursued diverging paths for mobile television provision, their industry strategies eventually collided. While they continued to utilize different transmission and reception technologies, the business model and user experience that each offered shared too much in common for either industry's comfort. Here Dawson uses Bolter and Grusin's (1999) concept of remediation to explain not only the *technological* changes in television, but also the refashioning of television's *protocols* broadly defined, including its uses, business models, contents, regulations, and cultural meanings. While the industries have now moved on from this confrontation, Dawson argues, "mobile television was for broadcasters and mobile companies a proxy battle in the much larger war over spectrum and policy concessions." Battles over the future of media convergences will play out in precisely these spaces where once-established institutional boundaries are crossed.

Greg Elmer and Andy Opel's contribution is a departure from the other chapters in this section but nevertheless speaks to the dynamics of industries and their relevance to the future of media studies, in this case addressing how the future is *premediated* in the logic of financialization. Building on Richard Grusin's (2010) notion of *premediation* and James Carey's analysis of the way the telegraph invented the future as a new domain of market activity, Elmer and Opel examine the future-orientation of the financial markets and the extension of the logic of futures markets to other domains of social life. Like Lisa Cartwright's analysis of the temporal dimensions of social media and disease pandemics, they bring to the fore issues of temporality and prediction, the "anticipatory mediation" (Cartwright's term) that permeates networked digital culture. Like Lovink and Rossiter, they call for nonrepresentational media studies – for them, conventional representational analysis is ill-equipped to make sense of data-intensive mechanisms like futures markets, which aim to bypass conventional forms of signification and to "actively discredit political forms of representation." Elmer and Opel's chapter offers an innovative and compelling approach to understanding media temporality, the financial logic permeating politics, and the reorientation of subjective action around futures and speculation.

Part 4: Journalism and Media Policy Futures

In prevailing assessments of the winners and losers in the digital economy, there is one victim that may be suffering worse than the recording industry. In the race to

obsolescence, the US newspaper seems to be eclipsing all other “old” media. In a *New Yorker* profile on “the death and life of the American newspaper,” Eric Alterman (2008) recounts an episode of *The Simpsons* in which a cartoon version of Dan Rather introduces a debate panel featuring “Ron Lehar, a print journalist from the *Washington Post*.” Heckling the panelists, Bart’s bully-turned-friend Nelson Muntz shouts out, “Haw Haw! Your medium is dying!” Principal Skinner proceeds to admonish him for the outburst, but Alterman insists that Nelson is right: “Newspapers are dying; the evidence of diminishment in economic vitality, editorial quality, depth, and over-all number of papers is everywhere.” While the Internet offers an endless stream of blogs covering every topic imaginable, the replacement of underwritten professional journalism with the free labor of amateur writers and wisdom-of-the-crowd reporting marks a turn of vital concern to the future of media and media studies.

The US newspaper and its journalism profession are in a great deal of trouble. However, as scholars studying this issue carefully insist, it is not necessarily the Internet’s fault. Just as not everyone agrees that file sharing is entirely to blame for the recording industry’s woes, not everyone sees the rise of the blogosphere or Craigslist as the principal culprits of the newspaper crisis. Robert McChesney and John Nichols (2010) in particular argue that neither the Internet nor the financial crisis is the major cause of the steep decline in the status and viability of US newspapers. Instead, these factors have accelerated a process that dates to the 1970s, when corporate ownership and consolidation of newspapers began in earnest. “Go back and read a daily newspaper published in a medium-size American city in the 1960s,” they note, “and you will be awed by the rich mix of international, national and local news coverage and by the frequency with which ‘outsiders’ – civil rights campaigners, antiwar activists and consumer advocates like Ralph Nader – ended up on the front page” (p. 32). While it is nice to think that we can find a similar rich mix of coverage and perspectives online, since after all we have the whole World Wide Web at our fingertips, there are big questions about whether the Internet is really filling the void left by the disintegrating newspaper press, especially at the local level.

The three chapters in Part 4 address various dimensions of the crisis in journalism in the United States, calling for a variety of measures to repair the problem. Two of the contributors are based in the United States and write about the US context. Martin Eide, from the University of Bergen, Norway, focuses largely on the institution of journalism in the US context as well, but briefly considers it in comparison to the Scandinavian “Democratic Corporatist” model.

In his contribution, Richard Campbell examines the resurgence of partisanship in the US press, seeing it as essentially a reflection and response to market forces. For the news media, muting political leanings to reach a mass audience makes no sense when such an audience no longer exists. (See Jack Bratich’s contribution to this volume.) Instead, media organizations see more money to be made by targeting and catering to niche markets, including those based on partisan allegiances. In this new partisan marketplace for news, we see the decline of the “objective” ideal in US journalism that dominated throughout the twentieth century. The new era of

partisan news – also called the “journalism of assertion” – is marked by the deterioration of the “journalism of verification,” which kept watch over the state and private institutions in the era of nonpartisan reporting. In order to recover the democratic role of the press, Campbell argues, journalism needs to reinvigorate the “news of verification” and develop livelier alternatives to the static formulas of reporting characteristic of commercial television news and the nonpartisan press.

For Martin Eide, an essential challenge for journalism studies – in a time when the phenomenon and concept of journalism is more contested than ever before – is the question of journalistic agency. To explore this question, Eide argues, journalism studies can find useful insights in scholarly work on the problematic of structuring. While some argue that journalism is an activity that anyone with an Internet connection can engage in, Eide defends the institutional perspective: the view that journalism is not just an activity but an institution with a vital role to play in democratic governance, and thus one that requires professional training and full-time jobs. The institution of journalism clearly has an important history, Eide maintains, and it is the *institution* that must be conceived as having a viable future. In short, for journalists to be accountable to the publics they serve, they need to have agency, and in order to have agency they need institutional support.

In his chapter, Victor Pickard places the crisis in journalism in the broader context of media policy, arguing for a more active role for media studies in media policy debates and policymaking. By situating this gap between media studies and media policy within historical, intellectual, and ideological contexts, he proposes possible strategies for bridging the two areas. He addresses some of the challenges and opportunities for scholars to intervene in core media policy debates in the coming years, including discussions about the future of journalism, media ownership, public media, and Internet policies like Net Neutrality. According to Pickard, media studies and communication scholars have a special role to play in helping to advance policy that enables greater democratic potentials for all of society.

Part 5: Interactivity, Affect, and the Future of Media Subjectivities

In his essay “Who Will We Be in Cyberspace?” Langdon Winner (1996) notes that, as society invents new technologies, it also invents and reinvents people: “To invent a new technology requires that (in some way or another) society also invents the kinds of people who will use it; older practices, relationships, and ways of defining people’s identities fall by the wayside; new practices, relationships, and identities take root” (p. 64). The situation is of course more complicated than this, since we also design new technologies in order to help us do particular things and be particular kinds of people, and since these changes play out in unpredictable ways, with plenty of unintended consequences. But it nonetheless holds true that human beings are in

some ways invented and reinvented along with the invention of new technologies. We had to learn to become people who drive cars, type on keyboards, and take photographs, to name a few examples, and these devices have contributed to major changes in our ways of life and who we take ourselves to be.

In the domain of personal photography, certain human beings began documenting their lives in images around the turn of the previous century. Many of us now have cameras that we carry around wherever we go, and those cameras are connected to telecommunications networks that allow us to share the images with other people. We do this either in semi-public mode, as on Facebook or Flickr, or person-to-person, as when we text images to others in order to share particular moments or experiences. Much of this image-sharing behavior is utterly banal, like the photographs people take of food and flowers and other mundane things they encounter in their daily lives. But these banal moments of digital media use matter. They speak to the formation of media subjectivities, how we use media technologies to organize our lives, and how the forms they take can offer either productive possibilities or more limiting constraints, or often both at the same time.

This tension between autonomy and constraint raises an important issue concerning the prevailing model of media device and software development embodied in popular devices like the iPhone and the iPad – that is, the relative merits of their closed form with respect to issues of user agency. Jonathan Zittrain (2008) refers to the closed, proprietary form of device and network design as the “appliance model,” which he contrasts with the more open and “generative model” of early PCs and Internet development. Software code gives devices like the iPad their functionality, and the closed model of design makes them especially user friendly and reliable. However, these nicely functioning devices assume a particular kind of user and form of media subjectivity. Specifically, they do not encourage users to know anything about the underlying code that supports their functionality, or to participate in the development of that code, other than in indirect and circumscribed ways. There are of course open source alternatives, but only a very small percentage of people on the planet have the skills necessary to program their own devices.

Part 5 addresses a set of issues of central concern to the future of media studies: the invention of new media subjectivities. Opening the discussion, Jack Bratich considers the crisis of “the audience” and its radical renegotiation in the interregnum – the moment of transition that “the people formerly known as the audience” now precariously occupy. He asks: how are media subjects brought into being, rendered knowable, and made into objects of intervention? To address this question, Bratich argues, the field of media studies needs to revisit and reopen earlier ways of conceptualizing and problematizing the audience: masses and publics, consumers, receivers, spectators, social identities, active audiences (decoders), and fans. In his analysis of the audience, we again encounter Italian autonomism and the attempt to theorize social and creative activities as they push beyond and otherwise avoid being fully captured by capital. From a Deleuzian perspective, there is no predicting what will happen when bodies mingle together and engage in affective relations with one

another. Bratich proposes the concept of “interactivism” as a way of rethinking media subjectivities post-audience, where bodies interact and form collectivities through new modes of interaction, both actual and virtual.

Karin Wahl-Jorgensen is likewise concerned with rethinking the concepts used to define collectivities – in this case *the public* and mediated public participation. She calls for more attention to emotion as a mobilizing force in politics, compensating for what she sees as a profound “epistemological deficit” in political communication research. Surveying some of the work that is already beginning to fill in this theoretical gap, she explains how the rational, dispassionate citizen at the heart of liberal democratic theory is being radically rethought, as the affective turn in cultural studies and the humanities spills over into the social sciences, and into political science in particular. Especially for scholars studying social movements, the question of affective engagements in politics has become a central concern. Drawing on the distinction Brian Massumi (2002) makes between emotion and affect, Wahl-Jorgensen argues that conceptualizing emotion as the narrativized interpretation of affective experience enables a better understanding of its deeply politicized and politicizing dimensions. And although emotion can have destructive political consequences, Wahl-Jorgensen explains, it also has integrative possibilities and enables the empathy necessary for more diplomatic forms of political deliberation.

David Golumbia offers another vital contribution to the discussion of new media subjectivities, focusing on the operations of computationalist ideology – the view that everything in reality is ultimately made up of computation. As noted earlier, this ideology is found in crystallized form in the work of Ray Kurzweil. Golumbia provides a thorough vetting of Kurzweil’s ideas, including his version of the “uploading” story, or the familiar trope that human beings are on the verge of transcending embodied existence and migrating into a world where human minds become computers that inhabit realities much like those seen in videogames. According to Golumbia, works of science fiction like *Dollhouse*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Gamer* demonstrate the conceptual flaws in the uploading story. Specifically, they show how ideas about the technological transcendence of material, bodily constraints rely not on actual advances in science and technology, but on distortions beyond any recognizable limits of our conceptions of the human, the mind, and the body.

In the penultimate chapter in Part 5, Lisa Nakamura makes an important contribution to her own groundbreaking work on the forms that race and racism take online, this time through an analysis of player speech in multi-user online games. “Trash talk” is a regular part of interaction in multi-user online games, and at times it can take virulently racist and sexist forms. Whether that sort of talk should *matter* has been an object of debate among players. As Nakamura shows, many players are expressing a growing resistance to this culture. Her chapter looks at born-digital media campaigns against racism, sexism, and homophobia including blogs, YouTube videos, and other web-based media, examining how they document, archive, and critique instances of racism, sexism, and homophobia in live gameplay as well as within the texts of games themselves.

Finally, Marisa Brandt's contribution returns to Bratich's question about the ways subjects are brought into being and made objects of intervention along with changes in media forms. Her chapter examines the application of virtual reality (VR) systems as therapeutic tools for treating soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). VR therapy for PTSD has taken shape in response to a critical contemporary conjuncture: (1) a group of US youth raised on videogames and other types of digital media, (2) who were just sent to fight in violent conflicts, and (3) now represent a new generation of veterans with PTSD. Brandt makes the case for why media studies should be interested in this therapeutic practice: it is being used to intervene on the bodies and psychological lives of affected veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq – members of a generation living through a unique, and uniquely violent and crisis-riven, historical moment. In short, there are reasons why we are seeing the death of the audience, increased attention to affective politics, a preoccupation with the uploading fantasy, racism in online multi-user gameplay, and the emergence of something called "virtual reality exposure therapy" *now*: media are changing, modes of sociality are changing, forms of subjectivation are changing, and human bodies and subjectivities are changing.

Part 6: Whose Future? Children, Youth Cultures, and Digital Media

Children's media use and the role of media in the formation of youth identities and youth cultures are issues that have long been of interest to communication, cultural, and media studies. Perhaps more than any other area of research, this work garners a great deal of attention beyond the walls of academia, among policymakers and the general public. The work has broad interest with good reason. Not only are the lives and well-being of children and youth vital concerns in their own right, but young people's experiences are also a barometer of things to come. In studies of language death, for example, linguists focus on how well children are learning the key pronunciations and components of the language (Crystal, 2000). One indicator that a spoken language may be disappearing can be found when the children of the culture are not fully learning its sound system, failing to pronounce particular phonemes.

Studying the way children and youth use digital media likewise reveals a great deal about profound experiential and cultural changes occurring in societies along with the proliferation of distributed networks and digital devices. (The fact that English is the dominant language on the Internet is suggestive of the significant threat it may be posing to linguistic diversity globally.³) A 2009 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 93% of US teens use the Internet. Of course, this general statistic does not tell us anything about the kinds of activities that teens engage in online, or what kind of connectivity teens from different social groups have. Only 32% of US teens accessed the Internet through cable, according to the

survey, and 10% were still using a dial-up connection (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009). Another 11% accessed the Internet using wireless via mobile devices – hardly an adequate substitute for a high-speed wired connection – pointing to what Susan Crawford (2011) refers to as the “new digital divide.” “While we still talk about ‘the’ Internet,” she writes, “we increasingly have two separate access marketplaces: high-speed wired and second-class wireless. High-speed access is a superhighway for those who can afford it, while racial minorities and poorer and rural Americans must make do with a bike path” (Crawford, 2011). Clearly, it is not sufficient to ask only whether children have access to digital media or not, but how they are accessing it, and what effects different levels and types of access have on their lives and their futures.

The Pew Internet and American Life Project does extensive research on children and teens’ use of digital media in the United States. The chapters in Part 6 of this volume examine uses of social and mobile media by children and youth in Latin America, in Australia and Japan, and across the South Asian diasporas.

Virtual communities and online social networks function as forms of visibility, recognition, and social inclusion for many young people in Latin American countries, as Rosalía Winocur and Carolina Aguerre explain in their chapter. They consider how, faced with the difficulties of access to entry in the traditional institutions of Latin America – particularly those related to training, employment, and access to power – young people adopt information and communication technologies (ICTs) in order to create alternative avenues to inclusion. By developing flexible and mobile strategies of ICT use and generating their own informal circuits of inclusion at the margins, young people may find avenues to gain access to the formal channels and privileged spaces of ICTs. In short, these authors argue that the Internet and mobile platforms function as compensatory symbolic substitutes for the lack of real power that these young people have.

In their contribution, Radhika Gajjala and Yeon Ju Oh examine the significant role that digitally produced and circulated media now play in the formation of South Asian diasporas. Their chapter examines the techno-mediation of South Asian diasporas through “machinima,” focusing on several examples of South Asian digital diasporic production. These distinctively South Asian examples of machinima demonstrate how the circulation and remixing of Bollywood media provide nostalgic, affective engagements for diasporic South Asian youth. At the same time, they provide the means through which members of these diasporas perform important cultural labor for the Indian state and culture industries.

Damien Spry, in his chapter on the politics of childhood and mobile media in Australia and Japan, examines public discourses about the increasingly ubiquitous presence of mobile media in the lives of children. Spry analyzes legislative, regulatory, and normative reactions to the apparent risks to children in their exposure to the unregulated, adult worlds of sex, violence, and money, via the use of mobile media. Using case studies from classrooms, courtrooms, and government offices in Australia and Japan, Spry considers the politicization of young people’s mobile media

use, focusing on “childhood” and “new media” as discursive sites where the hopes and fears about future generations are powerfully expressed.

Part 7: What Future? Or, the Unsustainable Present

The final section of *Media Studies Futures* deals with an issue of vital concern not only for the future of media and media studies, but for the future in the broadest sense: the urgency of the global ecological crisis. What we face today in the era of global capitalism is an alarming proliferation of what Anthony Giddens (1999) calls “manufactured risks”: risks resulting not from natural forces external to human activity but from human development itself, especially from the progression of science and technology. While the media are the sites at which environmental issues are debated and made visible on a global scale, the media and IT industries also play their own special role in the manufacture of environmental risks. As Jonathan Sterne (2007) writes, “the entire edifice of new communication technology is a giant trash heap waiting to happen, a monument to the hubris of computing and the peculiar shape of digital capitalism” (p. 17).

While media studies has a track record of examining the structural conditions of media production and consumption, the field has been largely complicit in contributing to the “public secret” of media-generated waste and the ecological impact of the media and IT industries. It has for years analyzed media from many directions but has paid almost no attention to their material environmental impact. Given the visibility of environmental issues, it is not surprising to see commercial cinema promoting eco-conscious messages, including futuristic blockbusters like *WALL-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008) and *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009). But the size of the carbon footprint made in the production, distribution, and consumption of these films (and their merchandising) still goes largely overlooked in media studies. The disconnect between the messages of these films and their structural conditions of production and consumption speaks volumes about the need for a more *materialist* media studies and a more literal form of “media ecology.”⁴ Media ecologists argue that media studies needs to *decenter* media, considering media forms as embedded in mediated environments rather than as isolated devices abstracted from the context and contingencies of their development and use. This is certainly advisable, and many people make this argument today. But this should also require media studies to read these environments literally. As we transition from analog to digital television and buy new laptops, mobile devices, and other media gadgets at a rapid rate, and as the cultural industries continue to consume massive amounts of energy and produce massive amounts of waste, media studies needs to address issues of environmental sustainability more directly.

The first chapter in this section begins the discussion of ecological crisis by extending the analysis beyond the media and IT industries. Charles Thorpe considers two interrelated developments: on the one hand, the destruction of the earth’s

ecosystems and species by deforestation, chemical pollution, and the effects of climate change, and on the other hand, the development of artificial forms of life in capital-intensive fields like genetic engineering, robotics, and synthetic biology. As capitalist industry devastates the existing natural world, capitalist-aligned technoscience brings into being new forms of autonomous or lifelike technologies. These twin trajectories are realizing the dystopian predictions of science fiction: a planet eviscerated of ecosystems but replete with self-generating, bioengineered life forms bred to breathe new life into the capitalist system.

In his chapter, Justin Lewis likewise underscores that the forces of capitalism are making the planet considerably less hospitable for most of its inhabitants. Lewis focuses on the role of the media and cultural industries in contributing to and promoting unsustainable models of obsolescence and hyperconsumerism. He argues that twenty-first-century consumer capitalism is failing as a model for human progress – it is no longer delivering improvements in quality of life and is fraught with economic contradictions. He focuses on three ways in which the contemporary cultural industries keep us conceptually bound to a consumerist credo. First, the media and communications industries have come to epitomize the notion of built-in obsolescence based on a perpetual consumerism. Second, our most dominant cultural industry, advertising, provides a cultural environment that makes it hard to imagine a way of being outside consumerism. Third, the capacity of journalism to question current orthodoxy is constrained by a focus on “disposable news,” displacing the more democratic function of journalism. Lewis asks how we might begin to address the failure of consumer capitalism and the complicity of the media and cultural industries, imagining a different media culture and a better, more sustainable world.

The next chapter returns to science fiction cinema as a site for visualizing and contemplating the future, in this case addressing the frightening dystopic visions of the future offered in post-apocalyptic disaster films and their metaphoric connections to the global financial crisis. Majia Holmer Nadesan examines the anxieties about global ecological devastation captured in recent cinematic disaster narratives, seeing in these films a message about the demise of liberal biopolitics. Using these cinematic themes as a springboard, Nadesan argues that financial capitalism has no interest in Western, liberal biopolitics with its focus on the welfare and productive capacities of the population. The current slate of post-apocalyptic disaster films is a cultural barometer of the malaise experienced by newly expendable populations, increasingly confronted with their excess in relation to post-disaster capitalism.⁵

In their contribution, and the final chapter of the volume, Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller continue the discussion of the global ecological crisis and its material relationship to labor, in this case bringing us back to the media industries and their workforce of below-the-line workers.⁶ The authors examine some of the circumscribed efforts of media corporations to “go green” – creating accounting practices designed to measure the ecological impact of production, while ignoring a wide range of other polluting practices and effects. Environmentally friendly accounting practices in the creative industries are confined to site-specific budgets of individual

films or studio operations, with any external environmental costs either ignored or written off as too hard to measure. As a way of envisioning a better model, Maxwell and Miller devise an imaginary world where accountants, imbued with the values of green citizenship, set off on a quest to uncover the environmental and labor conditions within the global supply chain of consumer electronics and information and communication technologies. This speculative fiction helps the authors conjure up conditions in which media producers and media studies scholars address human-centric despoliation of the Earth's ecosystems and the toxic exploitation of media workers. They propose an alternative vision of the future of media by imagining a new kind of media accountancy – and a new kind of media studies – freed from its tethers to corporate media.

Maxwell and Miller's science fiction scenario seems a fitting way to close the volume. As Donna Haraway (1991) provocatively notes in her "Cyborg Manifesto," "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (p. 149). At its best, science fiction raises critical questions about the potential uses and effects of science and technology. At the same time, the genre has a tendency toward technological spectacle, especially in its Hollywood blockbuster incarnations. Big-budget science fiction films that harness the latest technologies of cinematic illusion function much like World Fairs once did, offering up dramatic and convincing visions of an already-established future – a non-negotiable fate that has in some sense already happened. This tension at the heart of science fiction between social critique and technological spectacle, between cautionary tale and authoritative vision, provides a productive allegory for the tension between resistance and pleasure, labor and leisure, which characterizes most people's relationship with media. Whether we are lulled into complacency by the technological spectacle or rallied to the struggle for a more sustainable future depends to a significant extent on whether we believe that future has already been decided, or whether it is still open to negotiation.

As I have argued elsewhere, to build a lasting commitment to a more sustainable future, media studies needs to kick its addiction to "new media" (Gates, 2009). By this I do not mean to suggest that scholars should stop studying the Internet, videogames, or social and mobile media. Instead, we should be more diligent about interrogating the logic of "newness" that is driving the unsustainable, expansionist tech economy, rather than starting from the assumption that this or that form of media is "new" and therefore by definition more exciting to own, play with, and study. "By continuing to use terms such as old and new media without critical reflection or analysis," Lisa Parks (2007) notes, "media studies scholars risk inadvertently reinforcing the imperatives of electronics manufacturers and marketers" (p. 33). The relevancy of media studies should not be measured by how skilled the field is at predicting the future, or how fast it embraces new technologies as interesting and important objects of study. Instead, its success should be measured by how open it is to a wide world of participants, and how much it contributes to "passing around the real profit of life." After all, the field of media studies, much like most people on the planet, does not have one future but many possible futures, including no future at all.

NOTES

- 1 See also Huhtamo (1997), Huhtamo and Parikka (2011), and other work in the domain of “media archaeology.”
- 2 In Maurizio Lazzarato’s (1996) definition, “immaterial labor” refers to “the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity.” The concept points to changes in work processes that have occurred along with the rise of the digital economy, where more and more labor involves interfacing and integrating with computers. The application of the concept to social media is typically associated with a second dimension of immaterial labor: “the activity that produces the ‘cultural content’ of the commodity” (Lazzarato, 1996). These activities are not typically experienced or recognized as labor – things like “defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion” (Lazzarato, 1996). “Immaterial labor” is not limited to the Internet, and in fact the concept helps elucidate the blurry distinction between online and offline social activities. “As a collective quality of the labor force,” writes Tiziana Terranova (2000), “immaterial labor can be understood to pervade the social body with different degrees of intensity” (p. 42). A vast pool of immaterial labor supports the major capitalist endeavors of Facebook, Google, and YouTube, as well as the lesser websites and services that populate the online world. Much like the unpaid domestic labor that women have long performed, these types of activities are typically not recognized as work precisely because there are different kinds of cultural pressures and motivations to perform them.
- 3 The statistics gathered by Internet World Stats (2010) suggest that while English is still dominant, speakers of other languages are gaining ground as a percentage of users of the Internet, especially Chinese. The actual language distribution of the websites on the Internet is impossible to measure.
- 4 On materialist approaches to studying digital media networks, see Jeremy Packer and Stephen Crofts Wiley (2012).
- 5 Nadesan’s argument about the death of biopolitics, and Thorpe’s argument about the capitalist pursuit of artificial life on a dead planet, both find support in recent work by two economists at the MIT Center for Digital Business, whose book *Race Against the Machine* examines the role of technology in the “jobless recovery” (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2011). Their research shows that the pace of automation in the service sector is accelerating, as technologies like robotics, computerized inventory control, and voice recognition systems take jobs that previously required uniquely human abilities. As resources continue to be directed toward improving complex automated systems, we can expect to see a precipitously declining demand for human labor in a wide variety of sectors.
- 6 See also Vicki Mayer (2011).

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Media Studies

The Interdiscipline of the Present and the Future

Angharad N. Valdivia

Media studies is a rapidly growing, widely relevant, and evolving field – an interdiscipline (Valdivia, 2003). While some scholars have bemoaned the loss of focus on process and effects, especially on milestone studies (DeFleur, 1998), others find the breadth and porous contours to be conducive to a worthwhile intellectual pursuit (Sterne, 2005). To be sure, between 1998 and the present, there has been a huge growth in interpretive and critical approaches, which have nonetheless flourished in the margins as the effects paradigm – the stuff of milestones – has firmly retained its central place in the field, at least in the United States and the Netherlands. Indeed, efforts to map out the diversity of the field of communication (Craig, 1999, 2001), which we might call the broader umbrella for media studies, yield a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping and other times mutually exclusive approaches. The terrain of contemporary media studies acknowledges that most of us live in intensely mediated environments, so that Livingstone (2009) writes on the mediation of everything, and Hay (2000) writes of refrigerator studies. The former expands on how media and communication are “ever more crucial in today’s world” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 13), and the latter asks us – as a field over a decade ago, while continuing to encourage us (Hay, 2010, 2011) – to consider the broader web of networks to which other technologies, such as refrigerators and toasters, contribute in terms of routines and practices that serve to mediate the world for us. The latter line of questioning has proven immensely prescient as many of us live in highly networked webs of media and communication, where not only can our location be pinpointed at any given moment thanks to elements in our mobile technology, but also, if we chose to, we can broadcast a narrative of our location and other audiovisual bits of information constantly to many – such as our hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter or Tumblr followers.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Nonetheless, whether we are talking of old media technologies or institutions (see Nerone, Volume 1, *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), we are witnessing the constitution of new audiences and a shift in traditional audiences (see Parameswaran, Volume 4, *Audience and Interpretation*) through the invitation offered by seductive content in a dynamically converging and synergized media environment (see Mazzarella, Volume 3, *Content and Representation*). The effects of these technologies and content continue to be measured and studied (see Scharrer, Volume 5, *Media Effects/Media Psychology*). While media platforms and patterns of production are converging, enduring tendencies toward concentration of ownership and control of media industries coexist with the emergence of new patterns of labor, practices, and updated forms of exploitation (see Mayer, Volume 2, *Media Production*, as well as some chapters in Gates, Volume 6, *Media Studies Futures*). This is not surprising given the rapidly expanding new media and communications technologies, many of whose functions replicate previous technologies while other uses (and abuses) bring new possibilities, utopian and dystopian, to the fore (see Gates, Volume 6). Unexpected global locations of nodes of influences result in previously unsuspected transnational alliances and networks (Castells, 2009).

As an early caveat to this triumphal celebration of media, I must remind readers that most of the above sentiment refers to a media-rich group that luxuriates in a wealth of networks and technologies. Yet we must not forget that even as I write this introduction at the very end of 2011, fully 50% of the global population have intermittent access to electricity. Mobile telephony may be widely spread, but the radio remains the most reliable global medium (see the *Journal of Radio Studies*). Beyond the fact that it is cheap, it neither relies on nor requires electricity or literacy, in English or any language. Furthermore, despite our current fixation with digital, wireless, and mobile media technologies, in times of crisis – whether natural such as a huge earthquake or in wartime – when the electric networks are down and we are thrown back into old school forms of media and communication, radio returns to its central location as a reliable and essential medium. So before you continue reading this introduction, or continue to read any of the absolutely outstanding volumes of this encyclopedia project, go out and buy yourself a radio – one that is both electric and battery powered. You might never need it, but if you do, you will be very relieved to have it.

The fact is that media are everywhere, and nearly everyone shares lifelong experience with and expertise on particular forms of media. Dating back to the 1920s – as identified both in Nerone, Volume 1 and Mazzarella, Volume 3, the study of media has been multi-modal and heterogeneous. Theoretical and methodological complexity has grown since the Payne Fund Studies. International, transnational, and global perspectives have become absolutely essential. Not that they ever were not, but now that media are produced, consumed, and circulated transnationally, media studies has to take this into account. Inclusivity of the heterogeneous components of the population in regard to the media has also grown. Scholarship that was once nationally bound and focused on White middle-class males has expanded to take into

consideration gender, nation, region, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and class. Furthermore, as both Downing (2003) and Castells (2010) remind us, we must not forget the importance of religion in the contemporary world, as many armed conflicts revolve around religion, and media content, production, audiences, and effects are interlaced with religious impulses.

Media studies is an interdiscipline. As such it draws on and benefits from a number of contributing fields such as history, philosophy, psychology, political science, education, literature, and sociology. Yet even as it draws on those many fields, it is its own area of studies. Too often other fields, whose interdisciplinarity takes them into media studies, see this interdiscipline as new – as in, “oh look, we just discovered that we ought to look at media.” Our field becomes the direct object of other scholars’ deployment of the myth of discovery. Just like Columbus discovered “America,”¹ scholars from other fields continue to “discover” media and media studies. A century’s worth of theories and research disappears in the process, and many of us often find ourselves in other disciplines’ conferences listening to presentations that implicitly suggest direct effects, transparency, mimetic images, and so on. Transparency, when media content, industries, audiences, and practices are treated as if they spoke for themselves, as if there were no mediation, is often the tactic taken by scholars outside our discipline. What we as a field contribute to the understanding of culture and society is, at the very least, that mediation is complex and that understanding mediation helps us to uncover patterns of power, distribution, and potential justice. Media studies is about unearthing and maximizing the democratic potential of practices, institutions, technologies, and audiences that pervade our contemporary life.

Nonetheless, as Gates reminds us in her introduction to Volume 6, one central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: What counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated media” capture a general sense of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the complex dimensions and issues that these terms encompass? By paying careful attention to issues of history and context, this encyclopedia seeks to trouble the usage of these terms even as they are used rather carelessly in popular culture and public policy.

The six separate volumes of this encyclopedia were present as six separate sections in *A Companion to Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2003), the volume that provides the model for this encyclopedia and that was, in turn, modeled after McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*. The editors of the individual volumes put together a stellar cast of authors who in turn produced original chapters. All volume editors were asked, indeed implored, to compose a table of contents that was inclusive in many ways. First, inclusivity in terms of global topics was paramount, and we strived for inclusivity in terms of authors and global regions as well. This, as I have discussed elsewhere (Valdivia, 2011b), is not as easy as it sounds. Differential access to the latest

research, culturally different approaches to writing and developing an argument, resources that might enable a given scholar or team to develop a project and get it ready for publication, and so on, are all variables that effectively discriminate in favor of those of us in well-funded research universities in wealthy countries. We recruited some scholars whose work we translated into English, and all editors worked assiduously to cast as global a network as possible.

Another element of inclusivity was paradigm diversity. Schooled at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) at the University of Illinois, I am the recipient of an educational tradition that highly values paradigm inclusivity. Insofar as it was possible, we included scholars using quantitative and qualitative approaches, sometimes both of them at the same time. Obviously the *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume focused solely on the social scientific tradition, while both the *Content and Representation* and *Audience and Interpretation* volumes included scholarship using both approaches. A third element of inclusivity was gender, race, and sexuality diversity. Cutting across as a focus that can be conducted in the research included in any of the six volumes of this project is the work of transnational feminism and globalizing gender studies (Hegde, 2006). Editors sought scholarship that would include these vectors of difference, as media studies really makes no sense without their consideration. Yet even within each of these categories we encounter new gaps that merit more research. For example, as Mazzarella mentions in the introduction to Volume 3: “the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008).” The rise of masculinity studies follows feminist studies as a logical move once we realize that femininity is socially constructed. Indeed, this is a process that this collection of volumes entices us to accomplish: a greater degree of preciseness to this complex concept of media studies, which all of us who work within the interdiscipline intellectually seek to explicate.

As a final note about process, these volumes have been peer reviewed in an innovative manner for an edited collection. First, each table of contents was submitted to the peer review of a senior scholar within that area of the field and edited accordingly. Then, as the chapters came in, within each volume authors reviewed other chapters. Ideally, each chapter was reviewed by two other authors as well as by its editors. As the overall editor of the project, I carefully reviewed all volume editor introductory chapters. Now the review process is turned over to you, the reader.

Media Studies Today

As an organizing principle for this book, I have followed since 2003 the structure provided by many different editions of Denis McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*:

An Introduction. Dating back to the first edition in 1983 and up to the sixth edition in 2010, whose name has changed, appropriately enough, to *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail provided a manageable way of dividing up the field into components that, while overlapping – as they had to be since these components were teased out more for scholarly inquiry than because they are discrete and differentiated – provided a useful way to look at the breadth of study of the media. We all experience media as an integrated experience. Media inherit values and histories that are in turn explicitly or implicitly incorporated into their production; then we either consume and/or interpret media in relation to regimes of representation, with particular audiences and interpretive tactics in mind, with some desired effects over which we have little control, and contributing to a future that – like effects – we wish we could influence but really cannot. Still for the purposes of research, we tease out the media experience into a number of areas.

The volumes of this encyclopedia match the sections of the *Companion*, which used McQuail's schema and added the “futures” section. Thus we have history, production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, and futures. We will later add a “methods” volume to complete the encyclopedia. While these areas are teased out for the purposes of research, there is great cross-pollination by scholars in media studies. We find that some scholars use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or at least rely on both. We also find that many scholars write about two or more of the six areas mentioned above. In fact, many of the major trends in current research encompass holistic media studies approaches. Among these contemporarily salient research projects are network analysis (e.g., Castells, 2009, 2010; Chan, 2007, 2011, forthcoming; Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010); girl studies (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Durham, 2004; Projansky, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Valdivia, 2008, 2009, 2011a); transnational feminism (Hegde, 2006; Molina Guzmán, 2010; Valdivia, 2011b); and neoliberalism as an undergirding framework of analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Hay, 2000, 2010, 2011; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monge, 2009). McCarthy (2011) expands the focus of neoliberalism in media to the educational system and the efforts of many cities, such as Chicago, to become a cosmopolitan, globally vibrant center of economic activity, thus linking media studies to educational policy studies.

Many of these recent research tendencies converge in the critical examination of the “posts.” Scholars develop amazing analyses demonstrating the potential of an intersectional approach that uses race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and class all at once, for people experience these elements in an integrated manner. Roopali Mukherjee's *The Racial Order of Things* (2006) set the bar for intersectional analysis of the “post-soul” era. Tasker and Negra (2007) provide a comprehensive introduction to the political implications of postfeminist culture, while Molina Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) apply the intersectional approach to the study of celebrity Latinas. Joseph (2010), in her provocatively entitled “Tyra Banks is Fat!” (a title that, to be fair, comes straight out of tabloid magazines and television coverage), explores the implicit racism and sexism of the postracial and postfeminist veneer of reality television in general, and Tyra Banks's brand in particular. Molina Guzmán (2010) explores

the transnational deployment and commodification of the Latina body, both spectacular and everyday. The politics of the post appears in all elements of media studies as these scholars foreground media studies even as they situate their work within a broader context of geopolitics and the dynamically changing mediascapes. While it may be fashionable to suggest the end of media studies, just as others have previously declared the end of history or of ideology, what this encyclopedia convincingly illustrates is the field's ability to expand as new practices, technologies, and institutions arise. As many of the editors and contributors will document, "new media" is a misnomer as neither the technology nor the uses or assemblages are so new (see Morley, 2006). What at first may seem to be epochal breaks are revealed by many of the contributors to be far more continuous elements in relation to history, culture, and media.

Editors and Volumes

We begin with normative theories and history. **John Nerone**, author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in US History* (1994), co-author, with Kevin Barnhurst, of *The Form of News: A History* (2001), and co-author and editor of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), as well as author of many other journal articles and book chapters, is the perfect historian to lead us through this fertile terrain of scholarship. Volume 1 on history underscores that while all media have long histories, historians agree neither on the definitive tale of origin nor on the particular historical approach. Moreover, Nerone, the careful historian, alerts us to the fact that even our use of the word media in relation to communications is quite recent.

Nerone's volume includes normative and historical approaches. Historical research, drawing on normative frameworks or not, continues to offer media studies scholars great insight and tools with which to understand contemporary media. Furthermore, there is great diversity within historical approaches to media studies. Beyond cultural memory and special effects as components of media history, we are also witnessing an explosion of careful work that revisits the archive, data, and documentation. Kafka (2009) brilliantly studies that most elemental component of media – paper. It seems like such a simple task: how do we study the construction and use of paper, the "bureau" in bureaucratization, the work of scribes? Kafka concludes that: "As scholars continue to research the history of paperwork, we need to keep in mind that we are defending not only the 'historical record,' but the political one" (2009, p. 352). Indeed, these are the perfect words to keep in mind as we read the volume on history so elegantly crafted by John Nerone.

Volume 2, *Media Production*, is composed by **Vicki Mayer**. Among the many publications by Mayer, we can list *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (2011), *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and Mass Media* (2003), and *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*

(co-edited with M. J. Banks and M. T. Caldwell, 2009). Mayer begins her volume by reminding us that “[M]edia production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how.” We expect to find, and we are not disappointed, a combination of keen attention paid to the sociological approach to our field, something about which McQuail had previously written in *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), and the more critical analysis of neo-Marxist political economy now accompanied by a focus on labor issues in the global setting. Moreover, as explicitly stated in one of her book titles, Mayer paradigmatically maintains a dialogue between political economy and cultural studies, an approach that resonates with globally used approaches in our field. The tension between structure and agency pervades this fine volume. Mayer remarks that “[I]f the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers.” So the new production studies is global by necessity as transnational ownership and production of media industries cannot be denied; blends political economy and cultural studies; foregrounds issues of labor, both above and below the line; and takes up issues of networks, intellectual property, and subjectivity as producers are constructed in terms of categories of identity.

Sharon Mazzarella, a prolific scholar of issues of youth and the media, leads us through the wide world of “content and representation.” Author or editor of books including *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2010), *20 Questions about Youth and Media* (2007), *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2005), and *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (2001), Mazzarella is a rigorously trained social scientist who also pursues qualitative research. As such she is the ideal editor for this volume, which is respectful of both of those methodological approaches. Indeed, for many a budding media studies scholar, content and representation provide the first point of entry, as these are the aspects of media that we experience most directly. Although, of course, all media have normative implications, histories, and a complex web of production, most people focus on the finished product: the television show, the movie, the blog, the social media website, the song, the newspaper, the advertisement, the catalogue. Content analysis is alluring yet amazingly difficult to carry out. Representational analysis also bears the sophistication of a range of theories. Neither is an easy task, and quantitative approaches complement interpretive studies. Mazzarella presents a persuasive argument as to why content/representational analysis remains an essential component of media studies and why projects that are well carried out tell us much about the world and the circuit of culture. Unsurprisingly, this area of research continues to be plentiful.

Radhika Parameswaran edits Volume 4 on audience and interpretation. Parameswaran’s research includes two long articles in *Journalism and Communication*

Monographs, “Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India” (2009, co-authored with K. Cardoza) and “Global Media Events in India: Contests Over Beauty, Gender, and Nation” (2001). Her work has focused on the intersection of feminist cultural studies, gender and media globalization, South Asia, and postcolonial studies with a particular emphasis on issues of audience and interpretation. As such she constructs a volume worthy of her areas of expertise, with plenty of chapters illustrating global and gender issues. This volume also bears the traces of an interdisciplinary field that includes social scientific paradigms such as uses and gratifications as well as more humanist approaches that now include global and online ethnographies. Parameswaran remarks that “audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception.” “Populist tendencies” refers to the “discovery” of the audience around every corner, as it were, without proper attention to issues of power and structure. In the contemporary moment, audience studies is vibrant and innovative. Whether we look at fans or online digital communities, to mention just two of the many possibilities, the construction and potential agency of the audience are major issues that continue to guide the production of media and subjectivities. Illustrative of the many philosophical quandaries undergirding the location of the audience within media studies is Jack Bratich’s chapter in Volume 6, as audience analysis is part of the present and future of the field. In addition, audience connects with issues of production as it undeniably takes labor to be part of any audience.

Erica Scharrer guides us through the fifth core component of media studies, media effects and media psychology, the dominant paradigm in the United States as well as in other global settings such as the Netherlands, and the paradigm that reaps the most funding in a positivist framework that values scientific demonstration of impact. Scharrer has co-authored, with G. Comstock, *Television: What’s On, Who’s Watching, and What it Means* (1999), *The Psychology of Media and Politics* (2005), and *Media and the American Child* (2007), and, with L. Weidman and K. Bissell, a long article in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, “Pointing the Finger of Blame: News Media Coverage of Popular-Culture Culpability” (2003). Scharrer brings to the volume on media effects/media psychology a long-standing engagement with the social scientific paradigm in our field. A well-carried-out effects study tells us much about the influence of media on individuals, groups, and societies. The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before. Thus Scharrer asks: “Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending time with

media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and conditions help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses?" These questions require complex methodological and theoretical expertise to answer. Many of us were schooled in a critique of the "hypodermic needle" model, though we have since learned that the media sometimes have or generate direct effects. Why else does a multibillion dollar advertising industry exist in the United States? However, we continue to marvel at the long-term cumulative effects that are far more complex than we originally anticipated. Furthermore, effects scholars, such as many of those contributing to Scharrer's volume, seek to explore how to effect positive change as well as how to avert more nefarious outcomes.

Finally for now,² the encyclopedia concludes with Volume 6 on media studies futures edited by **Kelly Gates**. Gates's own research is the veritable embodiment of a focus on futures. Author of *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance* (2011) as well as co-editor with Shoshana Magnet of *The New Media of Surveillance* (2009), Gates studies the discursive formation of the wishful deployment of recognition technology with an "almost gleeful futurism" that suggests "if only" the systems were in place, before 9/11, for instance, our present and future would be different, better, and so on.³ Futures is, by definition, a transient category, as within 10 years the content of this volume will be the stuff of the present, or maybe even the recent past. As Raymond Williams has written, we cannot anticipate what will be an emergent media form until it is *post facto*. The futures volume takes up some of the issues around Internet, gaming, social media, mobile telephone in a converged media form, biopolitics, and digitalization technologies such as biometric body scans. Gates asserts that media studies needs to take seriously the possibility that *radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media are and where they are headed. All of the chapters in this volume could be retrofitted into the other five volumes. Yet together they compose a vision of the field as it moves forward, taking up issues that date back centuries, engaging them with theories and modes of media that only apparently represent new terrain.

This is the state of the art of media studies. It is a field where we know better than to use the term "new" media – for all media are somewhat new but also very old in many of their aspects. Scholars in this encyclopedia take us back to the production of paper even as they bring us up to the latest technologies, assemblages, and institutions that arise to mediate our world. Contributors to this encyclopedia share the belief not only that media studies is an academic exercise, but also that by engaging in this important area of studies we are somehow contributing to a more just vision of the world. As the separate volumes build on each other, whether we are engaged in media at any of their analytical nodes (production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology), we are simultaneously linked to its history and its future. As a diverse heterogeneous field that is global, interdisciplinary, intersectional, multi-methodological, I cannot imagine a more exciting and potentially liberatory academic enterprise to be involved with.

NOTES

- 1 In this introduction and whenever possible, this encyclopedia uses “America” to refer to a continent and “US” or “United States” to refer to the country, unless we are quoting from scholarship that uses “America” otherwise.
- 2 A *Methods* volume is projected to be released at a later date, edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.
- 3 Few people know that Gates submitted her dissertation proposal the day before 9/11. What to the committee seemed like futuristic queries became the very real present within a period of 24 hours.

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Media Studies

The Interdiscipline of the Present and the Future

Angharad N. Valdivia

Media studies is a rapidly growing, widely relevant, and evolving field – an interdiscipline (Valdivia, 2003). The release of the final volume on *Research Methods in Media Studies* highlights the tone of this *International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*. DeFleur (1998) bemoaned the loss of focus on process and effects, especially on milestone studies, yet this methods volume of the encyclopedia illustrates that milestones and focus on processes and effects are alive and well. Sterne (2005) correctly finds the porosity and dynamism in the field to be one of its greatest strengths. Between 1998 and the present, there has been a huge growth in interpretive and critical approaches, as illustrated in all of the volumes in this encyclopedia. Nonetheless qualitative approaches have flourished in the margins as the effects paradigm – the stuff of milestones – has firmly retained its central place in the field, at least in the United States and the Netherlands. As Darling-Wolf in this latest volume of the encyclopedia, *Research Methods in Media Studies*, attests, “the formidable question of method” is an indication of the relevance, dynamism, and evolution of the field. Indeed, efforts to map out the diversity of research and methods in the field of communication (Craig, 1999, 2001), which we might call the broader umbrella for media studies, yield a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping and other times mutually exclusive approaches. Contemporary media studies acknowledges that most of us live in intensely mediated environments, so that Livingstone (2009) writes on the mediation of everything, and Hay (2000) writes of refrigerator studies. The former expands on how media and communication are “ever more crucial in today’s world” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 13), and the latter asks us – as a field over a decade ago, while continuing to encourage us (Hay, 2010, 2011) – to consider the broader web of

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems170

networks to which other technologies, such as refrigerators and toasters, contribute in terms of routines and practices that serve to mediate the world for us. The latter line of questioning has proven immensely prescient as many of us live in highly networked webs of media and communication, where not only can our location be pinpointed at any given moment thanks to elements in our mobile technology, but we can also, if we so choose, broadcast a narrative of our location and other audio-visual bits of information constantly to many – such as our hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter or Tumblr followers.

Whether we are talking of old media technologies or institutions (see Nerone, Volume 1, *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), we are witnessing the constitution of new audiences and a shift in traditional audiences (see Parameswaran, Volume 4, *Audience and Interpretation in Media Studies*, and Darling-Wolf, Volume 7, *Research Methods in Media Studies*) through the invitation offered by seductive content in a dynamically converging and synergized media environment. The effects of these technologies and content continue to be measured and studied (see Scharrer, Volume 5, *Media Effects/Media Psychology*) in many ways (see Darling-Wolf, Volume 7, *Research Methods in Media Studies*). While media platforms and patterns of production are converging, enduring tendencies toward the concentration of ownership and control of media industries coexist with the emergence of new labor practices and updated forms of exploitation (see Mayer, Volume 2, *Media Production*, as well as some chapters in Gates, Volume 6, *Media Studies Futures*). This is not surprising given the rapidly expanding new media and communications technologies, many of whose functions replicate previous technologies while other uses (and abuses) bring new possibilities, utopian and dystopian, to the fore (see Gates, Volume 6). Unexpected global locations of nodes of influences result in previously unsuspected transnational alliances and networks (Castells, 2009). Process and inquiry (see Darling-Wolf, Volume 7) evolve as an effort to take into consideration the complex interrelationality of locations, media, audiences, and effects.

As an early caveat to this triumphal celebration of media, I must remind readers that most of the above sentiment refers to a media-rich group that luxuriates in a wealth of networks and technologies. Even as I amend this introduction in late May 2013, fully 50% of the global population have intermittent access to electricity. For instance, news of Myanmar joining the global grid are accompanied by the fact that nearly nobody in that country has access to the Internet and electricity is patchy there at best. Mobile telephony may be widespread, but the radio remains the most reliable global medium (see the *Journal of Radio Studies*). Beyond the fact that radio is cheap, it neither relies on nor requires electricity or literacy, in English or any language. Furthermore, despite our current fixation with digital, wireless, and mobile media technologies, in times of crisis – whether natural such as a huge earthquake or in wartime – when the electric networks are down and we are thrown back on to old school forms of media and communication, radio returns to its central location as a reliable and essential medium. So before you continue reading this introduction or any of the seven outstanding volumes of this encyclopedia project, go out and buy

yourself a radio – one that is both electric and battery-powered. You might never need it, but if you do, you will be very relieved to have it.

Media are everywhere, and nearly everyone shares lifelong experience with and expertise on particular forms of media. Dating back to the 1920s – as identified both in Nerone, Volume 1 (*Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies*), and in Mazzarella, Volume 3 (*Content and Representation*) – the study of media has been multimodal and heterogeneous. Theoretical and methodological complexity has grown since the Payne Fund Studies (see this volume). International, transnational, and global perspectives have become absolutely essential. Not that they were ever not, but media studies scholars now document the fact that media are produced, consumed, and circulated transnationally. Media inclusivity of a heterogeneous population has also grown. Scholarship that was once nationally bound and focused on White middle-class males has expanded to take into consideration gender, nation, region, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and class. Furthermore, as both Downing (2003) and Castells (2010) remind us, we must not forget the importance of religion in the contemporary world, as many armed conflicts revolve around religion, and media content, production, audiences, and effects are interlaced with religious impulses.

Media studies is an interdiscipline. It draws on and benefits from a number of contributing fields such as history, philosophy, psychology, political science, education, literature, and sociology. Yet even as it draws on those many fields, it is its own area of studies. Too often other fields, whose interdisciplinarity takes them into media studies, see this interdiscipline as new – as in, “Oh look, we just discovered that we ought to look at media.” Our field becomes the direct object of other scholars’ deployment of the myth of discovery. Just like Columbus discovered “America,”¹ scholars from other fields continue to “discover” media and media studies. A century’s worth of theories and research disappears in the process, and many of us often find ourselves in other disciplines’ conferences listening to presentations that implicitly suggest direct effects, transparency, mimetic images, and so on. Transparency, when media content, industries, audiences, and practices are treated as if they speak for themselves, as if there were no mediation, is a tactic often used by scholars outside our discipline. What we as a field contribute to the understanding of culture and society is, at the very least, that mediation is complex and that understanding mediation helps us to uncover patterns of power, distribution, and potential justice. Media studies is about unearthing and maximizing the democratic potential of practices, institutions, technologies, and audiences that pervade our contemporary life.

Nonetheless, as Gates reminds us in her introduction to Volume 6, one central question for both the present and future of media studies concerns the very definition of media: What counts as media now that it no longer makes sense to limit the term to film, television, audio, and print? Does it still make sense to refer to a broad concept or category of “media”? If the more appropriate terms are “digital media” or “new media,” then what do *these* terms encompass? Terms like “convergence,” “remediation,” “interactivity,” and “user-generated media” capture a general sense

of current transformations, but what are some productive ways of parsing out the complex dimensions and issues that these terms encompass? By paying careful attention to issues of history and context, this encyclopedia seeks to trouble the usage of these terms even as they are used rather carelessly in popular culture and public policy.

The seven separate volumes of this encyclopedia were present as six separate sections in *A Companion to Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2003), the volume that provides the model for this encyclopedia and that was, in turn, modeled after McQuail's *Mass Communication Theory*. The editors of the individual volumes put together a stellar cast of authors who produced original chapters. All volume editors were asked to compose an inclusive table of contents. First, inclusivity in terms of global topics was paramount, and we strived for inclusivity in terms of authors and global regions as well. As I have discussed elsewhere (Valdivia, 2011b), this is not as easy as it sounds. Differential access to the latest research, culturally different approaches to writing and developing an argument, resources that might enable a given scholar or team to develop a project and get it ready for publication, and so on, are all variables that effectively discriminate in favor of those of us in well-funded research universities in wealthy countries. We recruited some scholars whose work we translated into English, and all editors worked assiduously to cast as global a network as possible.

Another element of inclusivity was paradigm diversity. Schooled at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) at the University of Illinois, I am the recipient of an educational tradition that highly values paradigmatic inclusivity. We included scholars using quantitative and qualitative approaches, sometimes both of them at the same time. Obviously the *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume (5) focused solely on the social scientific tradition, while the *Content and Representation* (3), *Audience and Interpretation* (4), and *Research Methods* (7) volumes included scholarship using both approaches. A third element of inclusivity was gender, race, and sexuality. Cutting across – as a focus that can be conducted in the research included in any of the seven volumes of this project is the work of transnational feminism and global gender studies (Hegde, 2006). Editors sought scholarship that would include these vectors of difference, as media studies really makes no sense without their consideration. Yet even within each of these categories we encounter new gaps that merit more research. For example, as Mazzarella mentions in the introduction to Volume 3:

the reader might notice that the volume is heavy with studies of cultural representations of females. Indeed, seven chapters deal with some aspect of this topic, while only one deals with masculinity. Yet this is representative of the field, as studies of media portrayals of women and girls have been very prolific, and media studies scholars have only recently begun to seriously study mediated portrayals of masculinity(ies) (Mazzarella, 2008).

The rise of masculinity studies follows feminist studies as a logical move once we realize that femininity is socially constructed. Indeed, this is a process that this col-

lection of volumes entices us to accomplish: a greater degree of preciseness to this complex concept of media studies, which all of us who work within the interdiscipline intellectually seek to explicate.

As a final note about process, these volumes have been peer reviewed in an innovative manner for an edited collection. First, each table of contents was submitted to the peer review of a senior scholar within that area of the field and edited accordingly. Then, as the chapters came in, within each volume authors reviewed other chapters. Ideally, each chapter was reviewed by two other authors as well as by its editors. As the overall editor of the project, I carefully reviewed all volume editor introductory chapters in addition to the table of contents. Now the review process is turned over to you, the reader.

Media Studies Today

As an organizing principle for this book, since 2003 I have followed the structure provided by many different editions of Denis McQuail's *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. From the first edition in 1983 up to the sixth edition in 2010, whose name changed, appropriately enough, to *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail provided a manageable way of dividing up the field into components that, while overlapping – as they had to since these components were teased out more for scholarly inquiry than because of discrete differentiation – provided a useful way to look at the breadth of study of the media. We all experience media as an integrated experience. Media inherit values and histories that are in turn explicitly or implicitly incorporated into their production; then we either consume and/or interpret media in relation to regimes of representation, with particular audiences and interpretive tactics in mind, with some desired effects over which we have little control, and contributing to a future that – like effects – we wish we could influence but really cannot. Still, for the purposes of research, we decompose the media experience into a number of areas.

The volumes of this encyclopedia match sections of the *Companion*, which used McQuail's schema and added the "Futures" section. Thus we have history, production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, futures, and methods. While these areas are separated for the purposes of research, there is great cross-pollination by scholars within media studies. We find that some scholars use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or at least rely on both. We also find that many scholars write about two or more of the six areas mentioned above. For example, a scholar such as Francombe (2010) combines the study of representation with attention to issues of labor. Durham (2004) combines analysis representation with exploration of audience and interpretation. These are two recent pieces of scholarship that illustrate overlaps.

Major trends in current research apply holistic media studies approaches. Among these contemporarily salient research projects are network analysis (e.g., Castells, 2009, 2010; Chan, 2007, 2011; Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010); girl studies (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Durham, 2004; Projansky, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Valdivia, 2008a, 2009a, 2011a); transnational feminism (Hegde, 2006; Molina-Guzmán, 2010; Valdivia, 2011b); and neoliberalism as an undergirding framework of analysis (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Hay, 2000, 2010, 2011; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010; McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monge, 2009). For example, McCarthy (2011) expands the focus of neoliberalism in the media to the educational system and the efforts of many cities, such as Chicago, to become cosmopolitan, globally vibrant centers of economic activity, thus linking media studies to educational policy studies.

Many of these recent research tendencies converge in the critical examination of the “posts.” Scholars develop amazing analyses demonstrating the potential of an intersectional approach that uses race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and class all at once, for people experience these elements in an integrated manner. Roopali Mukherjee’s *The Racial Order of Things* (2006) set the bar for intersectional analysis of the “post-soul” era. Tasker and Negra (2007) provided a comprehensive introduction to the political implications of postfeminist culture, while Molina-Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) applied the intersectional approach to the study of celebrity Latinas. Joseph (2010), in her provocatively entitled “Tyra Banks is Fat!” (a title straight out of tabloid magazines and television coverage), explores the implicit racism and sexism of the postracial and postfeminist veneer of reality television in general, and Tyra Banks’s brand in particular. Molina-Guzmán (2010) explores the transnational deployment and commodification of the spectacular and everyday Latina body. In exploring the politics of the “post,” these scholars foreground media studies even as they situate their work within a broader context of geopolitics and dynamically changing mediascapes. This encyclopedia convincingly illustrates the field’s ability to expand as new practices, technologies, and institutions arise. As many of the editors and contributors will document, “new media” is a misnomer as neither the technology nor the uses or assemblages are so new (see Morley, 2006). What may at first seem to be epochal breaks are revealed by many of the contributors to be far more continuous elements in relation to history, culture, and media.

Editors and Volumes

We begin with normative theories and history. John Nerone, author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in US History* (1995), coauthor, with Kevin Barnhurst, of *The Form of News: A History* (2002), and editor of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), as well as author of many other journal articles and book chapters, is the perfect historian to lead us through this fertile terrain of scholarship. Volume 1 underscores that while all media have long histories, historians

agree neither on the definitive tale of origin nor on the particular historical approach. Moreover, Nerone, the careful historian, reminds us that even our use of the word “media” in relation to communications is quite recent.

Nerone’s volume includes normative and historical approaches. These overlapping areas of study continue to inform the interdiscipline, and my singling out of a few representative recent pieces of scholarship below is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative of the ongoing work. For example, Christians (2010) continues his leadership in the field of media ethics as he strives to expand the framework from a Western individualist universalism toward a communitarian model that takes into account a broader number of regions and countries. Similarly, Hartley (2007) takes us to China’s *Super Voice Girl*, its version of *American Idol* that is the US version of the British *Pop Idol*, to chart the global expansion of reality television. Plebiscitary industries and the loose equation of reactive entertainment votes with civic participation in a democratic process are issues at the core of contemporary discussions, or rather popular celebrations, of the democratizing influence of market-driven free labor from constructed audiences. In particular Hartley singles out China, where the political regime continues its very hands-on approach to issues of popular discussions even as the media are becoming increasingly commercialized and adapting Western genres. Indeed, the entire deployment of reality television overlaps with discourses of neoliberalism as it shifts responsibility from the state and the collective to the moral labor of individuals (Hay, 2010, 2011; McCarthy et al., 2009; see also Bailey, 2011; Banet-Weiser, 2011), though this is an intrinsically contradictory position in places such as China where the state insists on making decisions, especially regarding media content regulation, even as it shifts moral and economic responsibility to individuals.

Historical research continues to offer media studies great insight and tools with which to understand contemporary media as well as a great diversity of approaches. Contemporarily studies of memory provide a welcome contribution to media studies. Not surprisingly, Brockus (2004) examines the location of Disney in the US collective cultural memory and national identity. Disney studies is one way of charting US media industries, content, and audiences, especially in terms of media convergence and synergy at a global level. Another topic, special effects, something nearly all Hollywood blockbusters rely on, has received nearly no historical attention from media scholars until Turnock (2009, 2010), began to develop a history of special effects dating back to the production of *Star Wars* and the Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) studio, which became the standard for special effects even to this day.

Beyond cultural memory and special effects as components of media history, we are also witnessing an explosion of work revisiting the archive, data, and documentation. For instance, Gitelman (2006) takes a fresh approach to the study of history, pointing out that even the archives are already mediated, linking them to the so-called “new” media. While there is much talk about new media, a well-versed media scholar, whose training includes a historical overview, will remember Marvin’s (1988) brilliant admonition that old media were once new, and so will our contemporary

media be tomorrow's old stuff. In addition to Gitelman, Robertson (2009) and Kafka (2009) take us back to technologies that we might not even think of as such, to address issues that are absolutely elemental in the contemporary setting of surveillance, global (im)mobility, and access to and record of any information. Robertson (2009, 2010) instructs us on the pedagogy and deployment of identity technologies, as the passport becomes a document that vouches for our national identity and indeed our very existence. Furthermore, the passport charts the evolution of border crossings, exclusive national belonging, and record keeping of national populations as central tasks of the modern nation-state. Hadlaw (2011) takes an old school look at early twentieth-century ads for AT&T telephones which literally instructed readers not only how to use the new technology, but also why speed and time had to be reconceptualized as connected to the marketplace, capital accumulation, and surplus value. This historical work transitions us into the *Production* volume (2), as telephone consumers had to be taught to prioritize elements of daily life that were previously seen as natural and noncommodifiable. Similarly, Kafka (2009) brilliantly studies that most elemental component of media – paper. It seems like such a simple task: how do we study the construction and use of paper, the “bureau” in bureaucratization, the work of scribes? Kafka concludes that: “As scholars continue to research the history of paperwork, we need to keep in mind that we are defending not only the ‘historical record,’ but the political one” (2009, p. 352). Indeed, these are the perfect words to keep in mind as we read the elegant volume on *History* crafted by John Nerone.

Volume 2, *Media Production*, is composed by Vicki Mayer. Among the many publications by Mayer, we can list *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (2011), *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and Mass Media* (2003), and *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (coedited with M. J. Banks & M. T. Caldwell, 2009). Mayer begins her volume by reminding us that “[M]edia production is frequently the most invisible aspect of our relationships with media. In the storm of media messages we encounter, we rarely consider where they came from, who made them, and how.” We expect to find, and we are not disappointed, a combination of keen attention paid to the sociological approach to our field, something about which McQuail had previously written in *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), and critical neo-Marxist political economy accompanied by a focus on labor issues in the global setting. Moreover, as explicitly stated in one of her book titles, Mayer paradigmatically maintains a dialogue between political economy and cultural studies, which resonates with globally used approaches in our field. The tension between structure and agency pervades this volume. Mayer remarks that

if the focus on social structures has implicated the modern state in the study of media production, the focus on the agency that people exert over media production implicates the modern project to create enlightened subjects who can embody, perform, reflect on, and actually become media producers.

So the new production studies is global by necessity as transnational ownership and production of media industries cannot be denied; blends political economy and cultural studies; foregrounds issues of labor, both above and below the line; and takes up issues of networks, intellectual property, and subjectivity as producers are constructed in terms of categories of identity.

Production is a wide-ranging area of studies. A few examples of the state of the art in production studies follow. Chan takes up the challenge laid down by Castells and many other network scholars, and pursues a couple of case studies in Peru. The first one explores software networks (Chan, 2007) and the latter investigates ceramic production and regimes of intellectual property in relation to efforts to market that traditional craft globally (Chan 2011). Intellectual property is an important component of any discussion of production and the global circulation of media or of any form of cultural products, as Boateng (2011) has demonstrated in relation to textile production in Ghana. Both Boateng and Chan have shown that unequal power between the global North and South have widespread implications in terms of how Western-originated notions of intellectual property are deployed over global regions whose own traditions do not necessarily match individualist and market-driven definitions.

Looking at a very different type of media and group of media consumers and producers, which yet resonate with many of the production issues brought out by Boateng and Chan, Banet-Weiser (2011) connects girls' YouTube video productions with neoliberal tendencies of marketing the self within heteronormative, market-driven forms of representation. The labor investment implicit in these forms of digital interventions is also discussed in some chapters of Volume 6 on futures. Additionally, the Banet-Weiser project combines production with representation research, and provides an ideal transition into discussing Volume 3 on content and representation.

Sharon Mazzarella, a prolific scholar of youth and the media, leads us through the wide world of *Content and Representation*. The author or editor of books including *Girl Wide Web 2.0: Revisiting Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2010), *20 Questions about Youth and Media* (2007), *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (2005), and *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (2001), Mazzarella is a rigorously trained social scientist who also pursues qualitative research. As such she is the ideal editor for this volume, which is respectful of both methodological approaches. Indeed, for many a budding media studies scholar, content and representation provide the first point of entry, as these are the aspects of media that we experience most directly. Although, of course, all media have normative implications, histories, and a complex web of production, most people focus on the finished product: the television show, the movie, the blog, someone's Facebook page, the YouTube video, the song, the newspaper, the advertisement, the catalogue. Content analysis is alluring yet amazingly difficult to carry out. Representational analysis also bears the sophistication of a range of theories. Neither is an easy task, and quantitative approaches complement interpretive studies.

Mazzarella presents a persuasive argument as to why content or representational analysis remains an essential component of media studies and why projects that are well carried out tell us much about the world and the circuit of culture.

This area of research, as is to be expected, continues to be fruitful. The few research projects I mention speak to some of the pressing issues discussed in contemporary life, including ones mentioned earlier, especially girl studies, neoliberal critique, and the politics of the “post.” A major theme is the neoliberal global regime that contours the parameters for so much of what is discussed in the popular media, sometimes discursively enabling a witch hunt of anyone who dares mention that systemic issues might be at play. For instance, Bailey (2011) examines how actor Isaiah Washington, formerly of *Grey’s Anatomy*, was made to pay for his neoliberal *faux pas* when he dared to suggest that racism was at work in the public incident that constructed him as homophobic. Given the moral economy of neoliberalism, the individual has to assume responsibility for any “sin” and follow a path of therapeutic care of the self. Washington’s assertion that some of the controversy had to do with racism attempted to shift the analysis to a structural and systemic issue, a move that is not supported within neoliberalism. Thus Washington was coded as the nonrepentant, faulty neoliberal subject. Bailey’s representational analysis foregrounds the construction of masculinity *vis-à-vis* discourses of sexuality and race. Another area of studies explores the battleground over the construction of the sign of “girls.” Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2004) reflect on the moral panic construction of contemporary girlhood, constructed as either bad or mean and neither providing a progressive possibility for this demographic category. Projansky’s (2007a, 2007b, 2010) brilliant scholarship details that girls studies is neither new nor homogeneous, nor does it even refer to an age-specific category, as the term “girl” is still loosely used in a sexist culture. Chess (2010) illustrates the gendered deployment of contemporary gaming, including advertising, that positions boys and men as producers and girls as consumers, and returns us to the elements of the implicitly heteronormative family. Similarly Lindenfeld (2007) analyzes representations of food and reveals the articulation of discourses of race and ethnicity to family and nation. Given the explosion of food pornography² now available to us through cable channels, magazines, websites, and within movies (not just Hollywood film), foodways scholars draw our attention to the manner in which food continues to be a primary signifier of identity and belonging (Ceisel, 2013).

As useful transitions from content and representation research into audience and interpretation, we consider Hoerl and Kelly (2010), Francombe (2010), and Durham (2004). Exploring the normative elements of the discursive construction of the ideal neoliberal girl who is interpellated into the Wii game *We Cheer*, Francombe (2010) and Chess (2010) provide a welcome respite from the focus on boys and gaming by studying girls’ representations and audience positions in regard to this most popular type of media (see also the extensive work of Nakamura, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, and Volume 6). Similarly, Durham (2004) takes girls’ media studies globally and diasporically by studying the relation between media and sexuality in the lives of South Asian

immigrant girls. Hoerl and Kelly (2010) take up the postfeminist discourse that is part of the neoliberal regime of representation, wherein we are interpellated into a subjectivity of agency and choice when the latter is constructed *a priori*, already ruling out some of the options for which feminists have fought. In a case study of three 2007 Hollywood romantic comedies – *Juno*, *Knocked Up*, and *Waitress* – Hoerl and Kelly explore the representation of unmarried pregnancy and the resolutions that highlight the do-it-yourself “White spunky women will triumph over all obstacles” narrative that ignores issues of power, the economy, and of course race and class. The analyses of *We Cheer!*, media consumed by South Asian girls, and contemporary Hollywood film transition us from representation to audience and interpretation.

Radhika Parameswaran edits Volume 4 on audience and interpretation. Parameswaran’s research includes two *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, “Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India” (2009, co-authored with K. Cardoza) and “Global Media Events in India: Contests Over Beauty, Gender, and Nation” (2001). Her work has focused on the intersection of feminist cultural studies, gender and media globalization, South Asia, and postcolonial studies with a particular emphasis on issues of audience and interpretation. She constructs a volume worthy of her areas of expertise, with many chapters illustrating global and gender issues. This volume also bears the marks of an interdisciplinary field that includes social scientific paradigms such as uses and gratifications as well as more humanist approaches that now include global and online ethnographies. Parameswaran remarks that “audience studies has not only survived the backlash against its populist tendencies in the late eighties to mid-nineties, but it has also thrived and expanded to include a range of audiences, media genres, modes of audience engagement, and institutional and international sites of reception.” “Populist tendencies” refers to the “discovery” of the audience around every corner, as it were, without proper attention to issues of power and structure. Contemporarily audience studies is vibrant and innovative. Whether we look at fans or online digital communities, to mention just two of many possibilities, the construction and potential agency of the audience are major issues that continue to guide the production of media and subjectivities. Illustrative of the many philosophical quandaries undergirding the location of the audience within media studies is Jack Bratich’s chapter in Volume 6, as audience analysis is part of the present and future of the field. In addition, audience connects with issues of production as it undeniably takes labor to be part of any audience.

Illustrating one of the many possibilities within audience studies, Buchmann, Moore, and Fisher (2010) take up the issue of Hollywood film-induced tourism. Their case study examines the Tolkien trilogy (*The Lord of the Rings* movies which were filmed in New Zealand) and the tourism to that location that the movies have generated. This is a project that can fit in both audience and effects, for how can one argue that traveling to a real faraway country – as New Zealand is from the United States – for a hefty sum of money to attempt to relive the books and the movies that feature

a fantastic story is not a very strong and immediate effect partly induced by particular forms of very persuasive media? Since tourism constitutes a growing percentage of many countries' gross domestic product (GDP), much of it induced through mass media, it is not surprising that a journal such as the *Annals of Tourism Research* includes articles that could squarely fit within a media studies journal, including this one on film-induced tourism.

Erica Scharrer guides us through the fifth volume on *Media Effects/Media Psychology*, the dominant paradigm in the United States as well as in other global settings such as the Netherlands, as well as the paradigm that reaps the most funding in a positivist framework that values scientific demonstration of impact. Scharrer has co-authored, with G. Comstock, *Television: What's On, Who's Watching, and What It Means* (1999), *The Psychology of Media and Politics* (2005), and *Media and the American Child* (2007), and, with L. Weidman and K. Bissell, a long article in *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, "Pointing the Finger of Blame: News Media Coverage of Popular-Culture Culpability" (2003). Scharrer brings to the volume a long-standing engagement with the social scientific paradigm in our field. A well carried out effects study tells us much about the influence of media on individuals, groups, and societies. The field of media effects, therefore, is presented with both the challenge and the opportunity to sort out these complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences in a context in which the number of media outlets has proliferated, their use occurs at virtually any location and time of day, and their consumption and purposes intersect and converge more than ever before. Thus Scharrer asks:

Why are individuals drawn to media to such impressive degrees? How do they process and make meaning from media messages? What types of content are they both receiving and creating when spending time with media? What are the consequences of such media use? What factors and conditions help explain why individuals vary in their responses to media? And what factors and conditions may moderate or mediate such responses?

These questions require complex methodological and theoretical expertise to answer. Those of us schooled in a critique of the "hypodermic needle" model have since learned that media sometimes have or generate direct effects. Why else would a multibillion dollar advertising industry exist in the United States alone? However, we continue to marvel at the long-term cumulative effects that are far more complex than we originally anticipated. Furthermore, effects scholars, such as many of those contributing to Scharrer's volume, seek to explore how to effect positive change as well as how to avert more nefarious outcomes.

Volume 6 on *Media Studies Futures* is edited by Kelly Gates, whose research is the embodiment of a focus on futures. Author of *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance* (2011) as well as co-editor with Shoshana Magnet of *The New Media of Surveillance* (2009), Gates studies the discursive formation of the wishful deployment of recognition technology with an "almost gleeful

futurism” that suggests “if only” the systems were in place before 9/11, for instance, our present and future would be different, better, and so on.³ Futures is, by definition, a transient category, as within 10 years what is now the future might be the present or even the past. As Raymond Williams has written, we cannot anticipate what will be an emergent media form until it is *post facto*. The *Futures* volume takes up some of the issues around the Internet, gaming, social media, mobile telephone in a converged media form, biopolitics, and digitization technologies such as biometric body scans. Gates asserts that media studies needs to take seriously the possibility that radical uncertainty and contingency are the only features that define where media are and where they are headed. All the chapters in this volume could be retrofitted into the other six volumes. Yet together they compose a vision of the field as it moves forward, taking up issues that date back centuries, engaging them with theories and modes of media that only apparently represent new terrain.

Emblematic of the future of media studies research, in her ongoing and not just influential but paradigm shifting body of work, Nakamura reveals the fallacy behind claims that the Internet and digital gaming left behind the body and its racialized, gendered, and ability components (Nakamura, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). She takes us into the world of digital media and the many types of labor that they absorb – from our racialized player labor to the labor that it takes to produce the virtual and material gaming infrastructure. While gaming is not new, the ways that it becomes its own subfield due to the sheer magnitude of the industry, its widespread everyday deployment, and the millions of people daily engaged in its production and consumption, make it a focal point of our field. Similarly, Meddaugh (2010) highlights the relevance of new forms of delivering news to an audience that no longer watches traditional media or reads legacy media. Comedians such as John Stewart and Steven Colbert replace the prime-time news of yesterday as a source of information, and deliver their message through alternative cultural genres such as humor to get at a deeper truth than the “objective” news.

Also a new twist on an old tactic, in a hypercapitalist age, it seems almost impossible to imagine a space or time where not everything is bought and sold in the transnational marketplace. Boycotts seem so last century to our students. Buycotts (Pezzulo, 2011), on the other hand, provide consumers with a positive tactic – to buy products that confirm consumers’ demands. This strategy works within the system to secure gains such as environmental practices. Environmental and green issues come up often in Volume 6 as many of the contributors, especially Maxwell and Miller, remind us of the massive amounts of disposable hardware, not to mention the huge carbon footprint, it takes to produce the “new media” that many of us are constantly buying to replace the previous disposable model.

Jéssica Retis’s (2011) work on flows of immigrant media from Latin America via Spain and Europe to the United States complements the work on contraflows by international communications scholars highlighted by Daya Kishan Thussu (2006) in his overview of the field. For example, the work of news flows then is taken in the field of international communications as “contraflow” – the fact that the one-way

flow from the West to the rest sometimes backs up and is thrown right back at the empire.

In Volume 7 Fabienne Darling-Wolf coheres the broad area of methods in media research. Darling-Wolf has a long track record of publications about issues of gender – masculinity and femininity – in Japanese media, trans-Asian communications research, and ethics and ethnography. She embodies the global and intersectional approach we strived for in this encyclopedia, and not surprisingly presents us with a globally diverse methods volume. Research methods in media studies have long been heterogeneous, though some histories of the field sometimes forget about qualitative milestone studies dating back to the 1920s. Nowadays both quantitative and qualitative approaches are much evolved. To begin with, computer-assisted multivariate analysis reduces to seconds what once took months and years. Everett Rogers once told a media studies conference held at the University of New Mexico that, upon his defending his dissertation, a member of his committee insisted on adding one more variable to the analysis. That addition took Rogers 15 more months of eight-hour computational work days! Converged technologies allow for eye tracking (Geise, Chapter 19) to be processed through computers and to generate immediate graphing and correlations. As with all work, in any field, the ease and speed of the process have to be backgrounded by the immense human labor that theoretically constructs the research project in relation to the most useful methods. This includes attention to ethics (Healey, Chapter 2). In addition to the analysis of established methodologies such as oral histories, survey research, interviews, content analysis, and the effects of audiovisual media on children, this volume includes chapters on autoethnographies, online ethnographies, and mixed methods. It is fitting to highlight the ongoing work by Jéssica Retis as it tracks the flow of Latina/o populations and Latina/o media as they circulate around the globe in reaction to economic crises. Retis charts the flow from countries like Peru, Colombia, and Bolivia to Spain as Latin American economies tanked. Once the Spanish economy declined and the political situation veered to the right – with conservative prime minister Rajoy replacing the left-of-center Zapatero – popular sentiment attempted to deal with a global crisis that could not be contained at a national level. Latina and Latinos, some of whom gained Spanish citizenship, flowed to England in general, and London in particular, and more plan yet another transatlantic crossing to the United States where they will enter as European or Spanish immigrants. They bring with them their media businesses and practices. The contraflow that was originally discussed in terms of media is now embodied by globally roaming populations, who take their media and culture with them and continue the millennial hybridization of both.

This is the state of the art of media studies. It is a field where we know better than to use the term “new” media – for all media are somewhat new but also very old in many of their aspects. It is a field where mixed methods and evolving methodologies attempt to capture the mediated experience and process of ever changing and reconstructed populations and audiences. Scholars in this encyclopedia take us back to the production of paper even as they bring us up to the latest technologies, assemblages,

and institutions that arise to mediate our world. Contributors to this encyclopedia share the belief not only that media studies is an academic exercise, but also that by engaging in this important area of studies we are somehow contributing to a more just vision of the world. As the separate volumes build on each other, whether we are engaged in media at any of their analytical nodes (production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/media psychology, methods), we are simultaneously linked by its history and its future. It is a diverse heterogeneous field that is global, interdisciplinary, intersectional, multimethodological, and I cannot imagine a more exciting and potentially liberatory academic enterprise in which to be involved.

NOTES

- 1 In this introduction and whenever possible, this encyclopedia uses “America” to refer to a continent and “US” or “United States” to refer to the country, unless we are quoting from scholarship that uses “America” otherwise.
- 2 Food pornography refers to the deployment of codes of pornography – such as repetition, extreme closeups, and lingering camera shots – in the coverage of food and food preparation in so much of today’s multichannel media.
- 3 Few people know that Gates defended her dissertation proposal the day before 9/11. What to the committee seemed like futuristic queries became the very real present within a period of 24 hours.

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Convergence, Globalization, Technological Development, and Interdisciplinarity in a Fast-Evolving World

The Formidable Question of Method

Fabienne Darling-Wolf

ABSTRACT

This introduction makes the case for the continuing need to pay close attention to methodological issues in media studies. Locating the field within a fast-evolving global context, it outlines some of the questions of methodology media scholars must contend with, particularly as they relate to processes of convergence, globalization, and technological development. It argues that just as media are converging, media studies scholars must transcend methodological boundaries in order to continue to develop the kind of fluid interdisciplinary approaches that are best suited to explore the multimodal and heterogeneous nature of contemporary media. It concludes that, collectively, the essays included in this volume illustrate the innovative and dynamic nature of research methods in media studies and demonstrate their authors' commitment to critical and carefully contextualized work attuned to changing dynamics as well as to the researcher's own position and bearing on the process of inquiry.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems171

The fast pace of technological development in the past few decades has rendered the task of media studies scholars particularly complex. The spread of print and electronic media, cable and satellite technology, and most recently the development of the Internet, “social media,”¹ and other forms of digital communication which facilitate the convergence of previously separate media forms have profoundly reshaped and continue to influence the way in which media are produced and negotiated in individuals’ daily lives. These developments are generating both opportunities and challenges for researchers intent on exploring the role of media in society, whether they are concerned with processes of production and distribution, with narrative content, or with audience interpretation.

Volumes 1 through 6 of the *International Encyclopedia of Media Studies* have discussed these challenges and reflected upon the evolution of the field from multiple perspectives, focusing respectively on media history, media production, content and representation, audience and interpretation, media effects/psychology, and media studies’ futures. The shifting nature of contemporary media contexts, and its potential implications for media studies, are a running theme throughout the project, leading Kelly Gates (2013) to conclude in her introduction to Volume 6 that “*radical uncertainty and contingency* are the only features that define where media studies are headed” (p. 2; see also Nerone, 2013, p. 14). Taken as a whole, the encyclopedia also illustrates, however, media studies scholars’ continuing commitment “to embrace and respect a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives . . . to remain open to evolving and refining our research questions, and to consider that perhaps we need to ask new questions as the technology and content evolve” (Mazzarella, 2013, p. 15).

Situating its discussions of the methodologies employed in media studies within this transformative moment, *Research Methods in Media Studies*, the seventh and concluding volume of the *International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, showcases the work of scholars who critically reflect on these questions’ impact on the process of inquiry. Recognizing that “new” developments must be considered in relation to their historical antecedents and to enduring dynamics (Gates, 2013; Livingstone, 2004; Sterne, 2007), it makes the case that a critical focus on methods, whether long established or emerging, remains a central and necessary component of international media studies.

Discussions of methodology are certainly present in the encyclopedia’s other volumes. The range of methods authors employ in each book to explore various dimensions of the media – historical methods, interviews, participant observation, ethnography, surveys, text-based approaches, as well as emerging methods developed to address new media forms – have started to illustrate the diversity of approaches with which media studies scholars routinely engage. They attest to the expanding and multidisciplinary nature of the field – and I agree with Nordenstreng that it “remains rather a field than a discipline” (2004, p. 6). None of the volumes, however, has focused solely on research methods *per se* – from the nuts and bolts of developing a study to the questions of whether “old” tools can apply to new contexts and, if

not, of how to develop new ones. A volume entirely focused on these issues is, thus, a logical final step.

Taken together, the chapters collated here sketch a thorough, analytical, and historically contextualized account of the evolving and innovative nature of media studies methodologies. They revisit long established practices and illustrate their continuing productive potential, tackle ethical questions, reflect on past and current challenges, and offer new directions of inquiry. The volume outlines the productive potential that lies, from a methodological point of view, in media studies' long history of interdisciplinary engagement across social disciplines. Indeed, in a time when the ability to adapt quickly to changing conditions becomes a necessary condition to remaining relevant, the historical and current theoretical and methodological diversity of media studies research arises as a definite advantage – an advantage that I hope this volume will encourage scholars to further exploit in the future.

Just as the media are converging in terms of ownership, technologies, and audiences, media studies research has, for some time now, been moving toward a “steady convergence of theoretical orientations and methodological approaches” as “[p]ositivists have recognized the necessity to adopt methodologies that are more effective at representing and measuring audiences' involvement with and interpretations of media content,” while “critical and interpretivist researchers have acknowledged that in order properly to understand audiences, it is necessary, at least some of the time, to obtain data directly from them” (Gunter, 2000, p. 22). The volume is thus intentionally *not* divided along quantitative and qualitative lines of inquiry. As media and methodologies converge, this binary is not proving particularly useful (if it ever was). In Chapter 1 of this volume Slavko Splichal and Peter Dahlgren remind us that “The decisions as to whether it is appropriate to choose qualitative and/or quantitative methods should be based on the respective probabilities of obtaining the evidence being sought, and no method can be *a priori* excluded as inappropriate, whether quantitative or qualitative.” The essays included here powerfully illustrate the increasing and often necessary blurring of the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of research. They collectively make a case for the productive potential of shedding these methodological straitjackets in order to find more supple ways to explore the multimodal, fluid, and heterogeneous nature of contemporary media contexts.

Finally, they point to the continuing and perhaps increasingly essential need to link method to theory. All authors, regardless of their methodological orientation, aptly recognize that the two are inextricably intertwined. Their vigorous engagement with epistemological questions and power dynamics both in media practice and in the process of conducting research is a distinctive feature and key contribution of the book. Arguing that “new modes of digital communication . . . challenge the belief that it is possible to clearly separate methodology from theory,” Splichal and Dahlgren set up the tone for the rest of the volume when they conclude that these developments “make critical reflection and development in regard to theory all the more imperative.”

Situating Research Methods in Media Studies

A complete discussion of the multidimensional repercussions of the developments mentioned above on all areas of media studies research is beyond the scope of this brief introduction, and a more detailed exploration of the historical evolution of the field (and of the impact of this evolution on research methods) is provided in Chapter 1 of this volume. A few points, however, are worth noting here for their particularly thorny practical implications for the process of developing and applying research methods in media studies.

First, the multiple levels of convergence that define our media landscape are raising, as Gates puts it, “formidable questions of methodology” (2013, p. 10). Noting that the very definition of “media” becomes problematic when “media are so many different things” (p. 7), Gates concludes that “[t]he sheer quantity of media available seems to overwhelm the possibility of conducting effective studies that can be generalized beyond very limited contexts” (p. 10). Indeed, how and where are we to analyze the role of media in individuals’ lives when “people with adequate connectivity have access to a dizzying array of media forms and content” (p. 10)? How do we sort out individuals’ “complex and potentially idiosyncratic experiences” in a context in which media use “occurs at virtually any location and time of day” (Scharrer, 2013, p. 3)? Equally importantly, when operating from an environment in which “adequate connectivity” is mostly taken for granted, how do we find ways to include the 50% of the global population that does not “[luxuriate] in a wealth of networks and technology” (Valdivia in her Introduction to this volume)? How do we define a text when media forms are simultaneously distributed on multiple platforms? Which platforms do we analyze and at what point in time? What do we do about the ephemeral nature of digital environments? How do we study mobile audiences whose localities constantly shift? Can we conduct ethnography in virtual spaces, when traditional ethnography values personal and material presence and engagement? How do we define and examine media production in an era of user-generated content? How can we critically explore processes of convergence at the highest levels of ownership while keeping individual agency in mind?

Second, media scholars must contend with processes of globalization linked to the interrelated developments of new forms of global capitalism and electronic media in the second half of the twentieth century² and more recently accelerated by the rise of digital communication. The time–space compression or distancing (Castells, 1991, 2003; Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 1989) that results from the availability of instant global communication has, again, practical implications in terms of research methodologies. Once released into the complex network of informational flows that constitute our globalized media environment (Castells, 2004), media products and their reception become increasingly disconnected from their original site of production. Effectively accounting for this “deterritorialization” and “reterritorializa-

tion” of cultural forms (Appadurai, 1996; García Canclini, 1995; Tomlinson, 1999) poses a number of challenges for media studies scholars.

How do we access audiences that are more and more geographically and culturally spread? How do we study media production that takes place in complex and decentralized transnational networks? How do we make sense of the “complicated and connected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens and billboards” through which audiences “construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35)? How do we study the local in relationship to global processes that fundamentally transform “the *places* we inhabit and our cultural practices, experiences, and identities” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 106)?

This volume will demonstrate that, in order to answer these questions sensitively, researchers – regardless of what they are studying and where they are geographically located – must develop a more sophisticated understanding of processes of transnational and/or transcultural influence and broaden the scope of their inquiries. We have to realize that we cannot simply assume that a method for studying audiences in the United States, the United Kingdom, or Canada will be useful in a transcultural context. We must understand that in the twenty-first century we are *all* “global media scholars” – not just those of us whose studies happen to focus on “foreign” locales. We must, finally, pay particular attention to the potential impact of our own experience of locality on the research we produce.

Third, the rise of digital technologies raises new practical and ethical questions for media scholars to wrestle with. If new modes of data collection and aggregation offer countless unexplored opportunities, they also create new problems. As Splichal and Dahlgren note, “Before the advent of computer-mediated communication, the ‘data at hand’ were always generated independently of communication processes under study . . . In digital communication, however, the data sets existing prior to our study consist of ‘footprints’ of personal information participants leave online while communicating.” How we choose to use this “surplus information” generated by individuals’ online activity requires careful ethical and methodological consideration. How do we judge the quality of data we did not collect ourselves? Is it ethical to use data collected without media users’ knowledge? How might the “unprecedented abundance of self-generated data” (Splichal and Dahlgren) affect what, where, and who gets studied and, perhaps more importantly, what, where, and who does *not* get studied? How do we handle privacy issues in virtual contexts that may be public from a legal point of view but perceived as private by users? How do we even know to whom we are talking?

Finally, and in addition to the constant transformation of our contemporary media-rich environment, media studies scholars have had to contend with an equally fundamental shift in the *theoretical* context(s) informing media and communication inquiry. The growing influence of poststructuralist and postmodernist critiques in the latter half of the twentieth century introduced important new questions regarding the nature of reality and the politics of representation for media scholars to ponder. The recognition that all texts are, at least to some extent, polysemic (Hall,

1997), required media scholars to develop more nuanced interpretations and approaches to media research. The parallel “crisis of representation” in anthropology raised questions as to whether studying the Other – which, in the case of media scholars, typically took the form of considering various dimensions of previously ignored media audiences or producers – was desirable, or so inextricably caught in power relations that it should be abandoned altogether (Clifford, 1986; Marcus, 1998; Wolf, 1992). This intellectual history as it informs methods will be discussed in greater detail in several of the chapters included in this volume.

Suffice it to say here that while these theoretical reflections may have had a more direct impact on some methodologies (e.g., ethnography) than others, few (if any) areas of media studies were left completely unaffected by this “ferment in the field” (Nordenstreng, 2004). From a methodological point of view, the expansion and diversification of the field of media studies – which, according to Nordenstreng has, in the past 50 years or so, “expanded perhaps more than any other academic field apart from computer science and biomedicine” (2004, p. 8) – has resulted in a continuing breakdown of disciplinary and methodological boundaries. While the study of media was always, at least to some extent, interdisciplinary in nature, it is becoming increasingly clear that the media-rich environment in which we live today is just too complex for one paradigm or one method to completely and definitively explore “all of it.”

Thus, as the varied chapters included in this volume collectively tackle many of the questions – both practical and ethical – outlined above, they also remain deeply attentive to the need to carefully contextualize our analyses. They demonstrate a keen awareness of the fact that, regardless of the method employed, researchers are typically able to provide but one piece of a larger methodological and theoretical puzzle.

As noted, “old” distinctions between methods have been fading for some time. Email interviews may have as much in common with surveys as they do with their face-to-face counterparts. A textual analysis of an ongoing blog takes on some of the dynamics of participant observation. A study of the process of sharing YouTube videos might combine elements of visual analysis, research on production, and digital ethnography. These challenges, of course, also open up some interesting opportunities. The online fan response to a television show may, for instance, prove useful in contextualizing a discourse or content analysis of the program.

Thus, just as journalists and media producers can no longer afford to work in only one medium, media studies researchers must become familiar with an increasingly wide array of methods if they are to effectively negotiate our constantly transforming media and scholarly environments. As Elisenda Ardevol and Edgar Gomez-Cruz note in their chapter on digital ethnography, “As image, sound, and movement are becoming more and more common features of social interaction . . . the digital ethnographer has to move between different research contexts and methods. With this development, the division between online and offline ethnog-

raphies tends to collapse even more and digital ethnography must be conveyed as a mediated practice, *as a remix of methods that has to be engaged with the researcher's experience*" (emphasis added). While their comment here focuses on ethnographic work, it accurately describes a process that takes place with other methods as well.

Finally, the evolving character of (multi)media environments means that we may simply have to invent new ways to explore and study the media. As Gates notes, "As a set of social and technological processes, the proliferation of networked digital media is related in complicated ways to changes in forms of social organization, communication, human identity, and subjectivity, and *media studies needs to find ways of making sense of how this is happening and what it means*" (2013, p. 8, emphasis added). Several of the chapters in this volume move in that direction by offering possible new additions to the media scholar's tool kit. These range from musical analysis (Amparo Porta) to eye tracking (Stephanie Geise) or photovoice (David Novak and Tonny Krijnen) techniques. Others propose to combine "older" methods with newer ones as a means to better explore the evolving dynamics that characterize individuals' engagement with media texts and contexts. Such efforts are illustrated, for instance, in Carolyn Michelle and Charles Davis's chapter on Q methodology or in Lillian Spina-Caza's work on perceptions of the creative self in virtual and physical activity.

Running Themes and Volume Organization

The variety of methodological approaches and theoretical inspirations represented in the chapters included in this volume powerfully illustrates the diverse and expanding nature of the field of media studies. A number of important recurring themes, however, run throughout the volume across the diversity of theoretical orientations and methodological tools discussed.

First of all, the chapters demonstrate a steady concern with ethical issues and power relations in academic work. As might be expected in this kind of volume, these concerns are the ostensible main topic of some of the chapters. The two introductory essays – Slavko Splichal and Peter Dahlgren's chapter on the historical evolution of research paradigms in media studies and Kevin Healey's reflection on the ethics of media studies research – address these questions most directly. What is unique, however, about this volume is that issues of power and ethics are discussed throughout the book.

Taken as a whole, the chapters persuasively illustrate the need to interrogate power relations both in the social environment in which media are produced, distributed, and consumed and in the process of conducting academic research. They share a commitment to identifying media studies' "blind spots," particularly as they

relate to the experiences and voices of groups and populations that have historically suffered from marginalization and invisibility in academic work and society at large – in her essay on autoethnography, Johanna Uotinen speaks of the small agency that is hidden from view in spaces that are considered “private” yet are infused with power relations. Thus, concerns over issues of gender, race, class, and/or ethnicity run throughout the book, raised by authors discussing methodologies as diverse as (oral) history (Mike Conway, Richard Popp, Mark Hampton), textual analysis (Sara McKinnon, Elfriede Fürsich), field experiments (Lillian Spina-Caza), interviews (Lorena Frankenberg and José Carlos Lozano, Sue Robinson), or ethnography (Tanja Bosch).

Collectively, the chapters recognize that discourse is never innocent, or, as Elfriede Fürsich puts it, that “meaning is created in all forms of popular culture and there is no banal entertainment that people only use to escape the mundane.” This, of course, applies to academic discourse as well. Thus, the chapters also provide ample reflection on “the epistemological relationship between the researcher and the materials” (Fürsich) to be studied, and the power relationships inherent in all forms of research whenever human beings are involved, regardless of the chosen method of inquiry – as Sue Robinson notes in her essay on interviewing, “the understanding of those power dynamics must be incorporated into the context of the answers, but also into the very approach of the interview and the protocol.” This recognition of the power of discourse further translates into a keen awareness of the need to carefully locate research within the specific historical, cultural, and social context from which it is conducted. The need to keep in mind, as Kevin Healey puts it, that “the theoretical and philosophical frameworks that inform one’s work should not be taken for granted as settled matters but as contested sites requiring self-reflection and continued engagement with a diverse community of scholars.”

From a practical point of view, the transformation of our media landscape produces some interesting challenges for the editor of a volume on research methods. The wide variety of methods being constantly developed to explore ever changing dynamics, many of which we are just beginning to understand, means that some choices had to be made and that some things were necessarily excluded. A number of scholars have warned against the tendency to dismiss “old” theories, methods, and insights in the face of rapid technological change as if new technologies did not share a historical link with earlier media forms and automatically rendered previous insights or methodologies obsolete (see, for example, Livingstone, 2004; Morley, 2006; Sterne, 2007). Keeping this warning in mind, some of the chapters in this volume focus on the methods most “traditionally” associated with media studies – surveys, experiments, interviews, content/textual analysis. The hope is that these essays will serve as a good starting point to researchers new to the method and as a useful “refresher” to more advanced scholars. The goal is also to make a convincing case for these methods’ continuing usefulness.

In the previous volume of this encyclopedia, Gates raised the question of “How useful are the concepts, theories, and methodologies developed in the days before

the rise of the Internet and digital media for understanding the new media landscape? (2013, p. 8). This volume will demonstrate that while some methods may require adaptation and while new tools may be needed to address some dimensions of our contemporary media environment, there is danger in throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water. I strongly agree with Gates that rather than uncritically “celebrating recent innovations as radically different and inherently better” we must strive “to recognize the deeply embedded ways that the past is still with us in the present” (p. 7). The chapters in this book all demonstrate a commitment to doing so.

The volume does, however, spend much time reflecting on how research methods in media studies are evolving in order to “accommodate the challenges of this new research environment without compromising academic rigour” (Arnason, 2011, p. 98). Bringing together established scholars of national and international reputation and emerging researchers, many of the chapters in this book provide examples of how “old” methods must (and can) be adapted to better capture the complexity of new forms of communication and media production, distribution, and/or reception. They also provide exhaustive, and often brazenly honest, reflections on the challenges researchers might encounter along the way. Other essays demonstrate how our contemporary media context can be approached in new and innovative ways through research methods that simply were not available or practical in earlier times. This means that some of the methodologies discussed here are still in the early exploratory stages and may need further development, and perhaps modification, in the future.

The collation of scholars and/or research foci from different parts of the world – Argentina, Britain, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, Sweden (without counting my own identity as a French citizen/Japan specialist) – is another distinguishing feature of the volume, despite the remaining limitations imposed by the use of the English language for its text and by the politics of academic publishing which tend to privilege individuals with some connection to powerful “Western” institutions (myself included). While such diversity might be naturally expected of a volume included in the *International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, few of the currently available texts focusing on research methods in media and/or communication reach far beyond the limited and familiar confines of US and British academic institutions – except, perhaps, in a separate section ostensibly focused on the study of “global” media. This volume’s relative geographic diversity – even if admittedly incomplete – thus constitutes an important contribution to the discussion of research methods as it broadens the scope of inquiry by providing insights into transcultural dynamics as well as the process of scholarly production in other parts of the world.

In an effort to provide both more general conceptual information about research methods and more specific examples of their application, this book consists of a mix of “how to” essays and specific case studies that draw from research projects

employing a variety of methods. The case studies propose to take the reader “behind the curtain” of the research to point to the decisions made along the way, to the challenges encountered in the research process, and to allow for a more contextualized reflection on the results. These case studies, thus, are not necessarily provided as “perfect” examples of how to do research – in fact, several authors discuss aspects of the research that have “gone wrong” as examples of what not to do and I believe all would agree that very few research projects ever turn out exactly as expected. They are, rather, offered as useful food for thought for scholars in the process of developing their own research projects.

This book is divided into four sections loosely organized around the themes of theoretical and ethical considerations in media studies research, conducting research with people, conducting research with texts, and the challenges of virtual environments and mixed method research. That some of the chapters could have been included in more than one section of the volume illustrates the extent to which the boundaries between different types of methods and modes of inquiry are being challenged and eroded in our current historical moment. Furthermore, as noted above, as the concept of “a text” is constantly evolving, most research projects could, in some respects, be argued to fit into Part 2. The divisions are thus admittedly artificial and intended to reflect the broader lines underlying each group of methodologies rather than to erect impervious boundaries. We construct categories in order to facilitate the process of analysis. Yet we are cognizant that we are assigning order and structure to a field that is both holistic and interconnected.

Part 1: Setting Up the Stage

“Setting Up the Stage” provides the historical and theoretical context necessary to a thorough engagement with the nature of research methods in media studies, their evolution over time and in different environments, and their ethical implications. Slavko Splichal and Peter Dahlgren begin the conversation with a historically contextualized examination of the terrain of media and communication research and its prevailing paradigms. Characterizing the intellectual history of the field of media studies as “somewhat ambiguous,” they sketch an outline of the evolution of its “loose organizing logics.” In conclusion, the authors make a case for a “reconstituted matrix of research” organized around four types of knowledge – professional, administrative, policy, and critical – as a way to think about the field of media studies that both identifies and legitimizes more varied forms of knowledge production. Kevin Healey follows with a critical examination of the underlying values and ideologies that guide media research projects and the institutional bureaucracies that govern them. Highlighting, in particular, how basic ethical concepts are complicated by the emergence of new media technologies, he also provides a more pragmatic examina-

tion of the ethical challenges that frequently arise in media studies research and some guidance on how scholars might prepare to face them.

Part 2: Working with People

“Working with People” focuses on the process of conducting research with people using a variety of methods. The section begins with discussions of methods that broadly involve asking individuals to answer questions. Suman Mishra starts with an overview of survey methodology, its historical background, and its uses in communication and media studies. In addition to reminding readers of the basics of sampling procedures, questionnaire design, questionnaire distribution, and data analysis, the chapter addresses the challenges of conducting survey research transnationally as well as discussing ethical issues specific to the method. Carolyn Michelle and Charles Davis then bridge the gap between surveys and more qualitative means of studying audiences by introducing readers to Q methodology, a methodological hybrid drawing from the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative traditions as a tool to explore individuals’ engagement with a wide variety of media texts. They take readers behind the scenes of a study using the method to explore cross-national responses to James Cameron’s 2009 feature film *Avatar*.

The next three chapters focus on the method of interviewing in its multiple forms. Sue Robinson sets up the stage here with an overview of interviewing as a process of qualitative inquiry, pointing in particular to the need to develop a critical awareness of the power relations inherent in the method. Mike Conway focuses more closely on challenges specific to oral history interviews as a method that demands “a personal interaction with the subject, and a realization that the interview is a collaborative process involving both the interviewer and interviewee.” Lorena Frankenberg and José Carlos Lozano illustrate the difficulties and rewards of both interviewing as a technique and oral history as a practice in their chapter on memories of moviegoing in Monterrey, Mexico. Describing interviewing informants about their past as a process of meaning negotiation, they point to the “rich and dense insight on the lasting meanings and values attached to participants’ media consumption habits” the method can provide. The authors also note the importance of resisting the temptation to construct nostalgic accounts of individuals’ past and the need to pay close attention to the ways in which class dynamics shape media consumers’ experiences.

Building on these insights about interviewing and its challenges, the next two chapters more broadly address (auto)ethnographic methods. Drawing on an ethnographic study of a local radio station in South Africa, Tanja Bosch critically examines the process of studying media production as an “insider” attempting to conduct theoretically informed reflexive research in her own “backyard.” She

considers how her identity as a black female manager in the station affected her relationship with informants and, ultimately, the outcome of her research. Her chapter illustrates the complexity of negotiating multiple identities in a context in which feelings of betrayal and loss of control often abound. In her autoethnographic study of the introduction of digital television in Finland, Johanna Uotinen illustrates how the method can be employed to address some of the tensions arising in the informant–researcher relationship as described by Bosch and more generally generated by the “crisis of representation” in ethnography. She proposes the concept of “small agency” as a means to examine practices connected to media that are often so routinized and privatized that they have become invisible. She strongly contends, however, that in order to be effective as a research method, autoethnography cannot “merely describe the private” but must also seek to produce “connections to the general, social, and cultural.”

The final two chapters in this section discuss experimental approaches to research. Glenn Leshner lays out the basics of what he deems a relatively underused method in media studies, particularly when compared to content analysis or surveys. In addition to describing the particulars of conducting controlled experiments, the chapter addresses some common misconceptions and controversies surrounding the method. It also emphasizes the need to link the research process to a clear theoretical framework. The section closes with a closer examination of one type of experimental design: between-subjects experiments. Here, Kim Bissell uses two case studies – an examination of anti-fat bias in grade school children and a similar study involving adults – to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the method. Bissell concludes that experimental design, as the primary tool for studying and understanding causal relationships, remains one of the most important methods in empirical research in mass communication and media studies today.

Part 3: Working with Texts

While most media studies research could arguably be viewed as dealing with texts at least in some respects – interview transcripts, for instance, are texts that the researcher analyses – “Working with Texts” considers methods in which a wide variety of broadly defined texts are the central element of analysis. First, Rico Neumann and Kevin Coe make a case for the utility of a mixed approach to content analysis blending computer-assisted content analysis with manual coding techniques to analyze quantitative trends in large amounts of text. They illustrate how the method was applied in an examination of apologetic rhetoric in modern presidential speeches. Along the way, they address issues of sampling – of identifying key terms and their linguistic derivatives for computer-assisted searching – and consider challenges in data collection and analysis. Matthew Lombard follows with a discussion of the “lessons learned from a research saga” involving a large-scale quantitative

content analysis of the structural features of television conducted in the mid-1990s – a project so ambitious that by the time it was ready for publication, the data were deemed obsolete by reviewers. The chapter also reflects on the original project's unexpected afterlife and on the joys and rewards of conducting research despite the challenges and frequent disappointments.

Approaching texts from a more qualitative perspective, Sara McKinnon outlines the different approaches deployed by researchers working with texts and offers a step-by-step overview of the process of conducting text-based qualitative research. She emphasizes, in particular, the need to carefully contextualize texts within the broader social, political, and cultural contexts in which they circulate and the importance of researcher reflexivity in qualitative work. Employing a critical textual analysis of newspaper food reviews of ethnic restaurants as an example, Elfriede Fürsich further explores the theoretical underpinnings of the method and illustrates how it can be used to explore the ideological dimensions of cultural discourse constructed beyond the manifest content of the text.

The increasingly prominent position of text-based historical methods in media studies is explored in the next two chapters. In his broad introductory essay, Richard Popp traces the evolution of historical methods in media studies in the wake of the cultural turn that reshaped academic study in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Locating the work of media historians in relationship to historiographic debates in the fields of history, American studies, and historical sociology, the chapter considers the primary ways in which culture has been defined and treated as an area of historical inquiry in the past few decades. It closes with an examination of three historiographic approaches that may be particularly useful to media scholars – the culture industry revisited, the history of the senses, and the history of the book. Mark Hampton then complements Popp's more theoretical approach with a detailed discussion of a range of inquiries and approaches in media history, and of the types of empirical sources media historians have at their disposition to investigate these questions.

This section closes with three chapters focused on the study of visual texts. James Walters first provides an inquiry into film analysis through a series of key texts widely used in introductory classes on the method, which he describes and carefully evaluates. Noting that "the pursuit of one defining methodology seems futile," he advocates a continuing engagement with multiple approaches, keeping in mind both the merits and limitations of each position. Stephanie Geise discusses the productive potential of combining eye-tracking technology that allows for the empirical study of processes of visual perception and information processing with other empirical methods in media studies research, where the technique is still in an emerging state. She offers her own study of shock-inducing advertisements as an example of how the method can be applied to the study of visual texts. Finally, David Novak and Tonny Krijnen's chapter on the use of photovoice – a qualitative methodology in which participants use photographs in tandem with in-depth interviews – outlines the benefits of "studying visual media with visual methods" and provides an

additional tool for media study scholars, particularly in their analyses of visual media reception.

Part 4: Virtual Challenges, Interdisciplinary Research, and Mixed Method Research

The five chapters in “Virtual Challenges, Interdisciplinary Research, and Mixed Method Research” are more loosely connected along the themes of studying virtual worlds, interdisciplinary and multimethod research. While many draw from the methods discussed so far in the book, they deserve a separate treatment in that they engage more directly with and reflect upon the changing nature of media texts and contexts – in particular the changes occasioned by the development of digital and global media – and/or provide powerful examples of how these methods can be productively combined. In other words, they collectively answer the call to address the challenges specific to virtual environments more assertively and to develop new interdisciplinary methodologies and theoretical approaches that harness the potential of virtual worlds as research venues more effectively (Arnason, 2011, p. 108).

While drawing from very different methodological and theoretical contexts, Helle Sjøvaag and Eirik Stavelin’s chapter on online news analysis and Elisenda Ardevol and Edgar Gomez-Cruz’s reflection on digital ethnography and media practice both wrestle with the dynamics of conducting research in ephemeral virtual environments. Sjøvaag and Stavelin suggest that methods of content analysis must be redesigned to account for the medium-specific features of Internet distribution. They propose a new approach to analyzing online news based on a combination of human and computer coding and on the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative measures. The authors illustrate how this approach might work through a discussion of a content analysis of online news output collected from the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). They also discuss the difficulties they encountered in their efforts to develop an approach that more effectively accounted for the ever-changing nature of digital information. Ardevol and Gomez-Cruz reflect on the opportunities and challenges created by the rise of virtual environments for the practice of ethnography. They note, in particular, how the increased importance of virtual interactions in individuals’ daily lives destabilizes the notion of “the ethnographic field linked to a place-focused concept of culture.” They argue for a reformulation of the concept of fieldwork to include multiple activities and sites in different locations and devices in order to develop “a technologically enhanced but always embodied ethnographic practice.”

Lillian Spina-Caza’s chapter, comparing children’s engagement in similar virtual and physical activities, provides a specific example of how research methods must be creatively adjusted and combined to adapt to the multifaceted nature of virtual envi-

ronments and digital technology. The chapter describes three studies building on each other and employing a wide range of methods – including content analysis, qualitative interviews, observational and cooperative inquiry techniques, and a large-scale field experiment – aimed at developing a better understanding of individuals’ perceptions of creative agency in both physical and virtual contexts. Spina-Caza’s work powerfully illustrates the productive potential of combining multiple methods and interdisciplinary perspectives and the need to remain attuned to power dynamics in research – she identifies gender as a key dimension of individuals’ experience of virtual activity.

The volume concludes with two chapters providing additional examples of interdisciplinary research, both conducted over relatively longer periods of time and employing multiple methods in varied contexts. Amparo Porta reports on her large-scale analysis of the sound environments of popular programs targeted at children in both film and television. Drawing on a semiotics approach, the chapter outlines several exploratory paths, aimed at analyzing both the content and the structure of the music, and describes the methodological instruments the author developed in order to explore the various dimensions of sound tracks. Finally, J  ssica Retis’s work on interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the relationship between media and Latino diasporic identities returns to many of the main themes running throughout the volume. Particularly noteworthy is her tackling of issues of race and class in a global context, and of the role digital technology plays in transforming “*Territorial immigrants . . . into digital immigrants* in a complex and changing process affecting both Latin Americans living abroad and their family and friends who remain in their place of origin.” From a methodological point of view, Retis’s chapter illustrates how a researcher’s long-term intellectual engagement with a broad set of research question can lead her to multiple empirical approaches and even to multiple locales – her research takes her from Madrid to Los Angeles, New York, and London. It reminds us that identities are often built in imaginary rather than physical spaces and of the importance of the media in constructing, defining, sharing, and unraveling these identities in everyday life.

To conclude, the chapters included in this volume provide resounding evidence of the dynamic and innovative character of research methods in media studies and, more broadly, of the forward-looking and interdisciplinary nature of the field. As new communication technologies are reshaping the ways in which the media operate and enter individuals’ daily routines, media studies scholars are embracing the challenge of figuring out how best to address the implications of the fact that “we no longer live with media, but in media” (Deuze, 2011, p. 137). They/we are finding that new tools are sometimes needed, while other long-established ones might require modification. They/we are learning to combine methods of inquiry in new and imaginative ways. This volume demonstrates that the history of interdisciplinarity in a field which has long, as Richard Popp puts it in Chapter 16, “borrowed liberally from fields across academia, pocketing a useful theory here or a helpful

methodology there,” has rendered media scholars particularly adaptable. They/we are, consequently, particularly well equipped to confront the challenges of our fast evolving twenty-first-century sociocultural environments.

This ability to adapt, however, does not signify a complete break from the past or from questions that have long been of concern to scholars studying the media. In a context in which we are witnessing a disturbing increase in (and tolerance for) surveillance technology and invasions of privacy, and at a time when processes of globalization are producing new forms of inequalities, it is crucial that media scholars remain focused on the core issues that have long proven central components of our field’s intellectual contribution.

Thus, the most valuable contribution of this volume’s chapters is arguably the way in which they collectively illustrate a continuing intellectual and empirical engagement with power dynamics – gender, race, class, ethnicity, global origin – even as the larger popular cultural landscape is permeated with more celebratory accounts of new technologies’ emancipatory and democratizing potential. Perhaps more than ever, media studies scholars are committed to a critical, thorough, and carefully contextualized examination of our complex and evolving media-rich environment – an examination that is attuned to multiple and diverse dynamics and to the researcher’s own position and bearing on the process of inquiry. Media studies theory continues to evolve in tandem with sharpened approaches to research methodology. This, I believe, warrants much optimism for the future of research methods in media studies.

NOTES

- 1 Media scholars remind us that all media is social media. Used to refer to some contemporary forms of digital media, “social media” is therefore rather a misnomer.
- 2 Scholars disagree on the question of when globalization “started” and whether or not it represents a complete break. They do generally agree, however, that there is “something new” about contemporary processes of global exchange when compared to earlier eras (Jones, 2010).

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Media Research Paradigms

Conceptual Distinctions, Continuing Divisions

Slavko Splichal and Peter Dahlgren

ABSTRACT

Media and communication research is often believed to represent one of the youngest research areas in the social sciences, but the first essays discussing the nature and social functions of newspapers were written long before the birth of the modern social sciences. The great variety in forms of communication is also reflected in the diversity of research approaches and methods. This chapter deals with these differences and diversities in a broader perspective to demonstrate that it is not methodology itself that determines the differences in approaches but, rather, differences in methodologies that reflect more substantial (theoretical, epistemological, ideological) differences. The chapter begins with a conceptual discussion about academic fields and paradigms. It then discusses the somewhat ambiguous intellectual history of the field and its loose organizing logics. It sketches the contours of the dominant paradigm and its two main challengers over the past decades – the interpretivist and the critical paradigms – and considers some key challenges and controversies that shaped the field's earlier years. Finally, it explores a possible new matrix for structuring research in the field.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems172

Communication as a generic human activity is characterized by an ever greater diversity of its forms, methods, and strategies from simple vernacular languages to highly formalized scientific languages. Significant differences exist between forms of communication – for example, speaking, writing, printing, electronic and digital communication, and many hybrid forms from interpersonal to mass communication – despite the fact that (technological) convergence may diminish these differences in the (near) future by providing more “unified” communication platforms and systems. In this chapter, we address the terrain of media and communication research from the horizon of prevailing paradigms. This academic field of research has been evolving since its inception and continues to do so today, with its main paradigms undergoing transformations internally and in relation to each other. We begin with a conceptual discussion about academic fields as producers of knowledge; in particular we address the notion of paradigms. From there we approach the somewhat ambiguous intellectual history of the field, and then turn to the loose organizing logics that structure it. Thereafter we sketch the contours of the dominant paradigm and its two main challengers over the past decades, the interpretivist and the critical paradigms. With these elements in place, we look at some key conflicts that shaped the field’s earlier years, and in the last section we explore a possible new matrix for structuring research in the field, building on the model for the social sciences proposed by Michael Burawoy.

Approaches, Methodologies, Paradigms

The great variety in the circumstances of mediated communication situations is reflected in the diversity of research methods deployed, from ethnographic studies, participatory observation, historical and genealogical analysis to experiments, surveys, textual analysis, and visual methods. Media and communication research ranges from idiographic approaches focusing on subjectivity, uniqueness, and comprehensive understanding of each individual or communication event, to nomothetic approaches emphasizing the importance of objectivity, general properties, and rules in a phenomenon and thus the need of generalization and necessity of probabilistic explanations. Differences between the two general approaches are not only related to theory but also to empirical research: idiographic approaches are primarily experiential (i.e., based on experience) and thus concrete, whereas nomothetic approaches are empirical in the sense of seeking for evidence to prove theoretical postulates but often abstract (i.e., abstracting from experiential situations; e.g., statistical data on abstract phenomena such as gross national product (GNP)).

Nomothetic approaches are often associated with the idea of quantification whereas idiographic approaches give preference to qualitative methods. The preference for one or other type of method often became a matter of (even ideological) controversy about the scientific merit of research, with advocates of quantitative

methods arguing that only by using such methods can the social sciences become truly scientific and their opponents who favor qualitative methods proving that quantitative methods tend to obscure the substance of the social phenomena under study which is not directly measurable.

Nevertheless, the differences in methods between the two approaches do not imply disciplinary divisions, as there is no common method(s) that could ultimately ground or substantiate a scientific discipline or field of communication. Still, it is important to critically address the methodological differences and diversities in a broader perspective to make clear that the emphasis on methodology as the site of divisions within a discipline or field of study – that is, between two approaches or any subfields within/between them – is misleading. This is because such a view suggests that it is primarily methods that divide a field or discipline, rather than “historical, economic, political, organizational, professional, and personal factors which impinge on the research process in so many ways” (Halloran, 1981, p. 1). As Merton (1945, p. 463) argued, “problems of methodology transcend those found in any one discipline, dealing either with those common to groups of disciplines or, in more generalized form, with those common to all scientific inquiry. Methodology is not peculiarly bound up with sociological problems.”

Thus, the essence and specific differences in research are not determined by method(ology) itself (e.g., differences between “qualitative” and “quantitative” methods) but, rather, differences in the methods used may at best *reflect* more substantial theoretical, epistemological (and perhaps ideological) differences and controversies underlying the research process. It is not *the* method or a set of methods that define a discipline or disciplinary “paradigm.” A paradigm is not method-driven; rather, it implies some underlying substantial theoretical and epistemological assumptions which may promote certain methods as more appropriate in pursuing research aims, and ignore or rebuff others as inappropriate. Specifically, the idea that predominantly quantitative nomothetic approaches and mainly qualitative idiographic approaches are mutually exclusive or, at least, differ in terms of scientific objectivity (e.g., the former being more objective and the latter more subjective) assumes that the unity of the sciences is grounded in sameness rather than complementarity of methods, and subsequently that the social sciences and humanities require the same kind of (quantitative) methods as the natural sciences in order to be “sciences.”

The belief that (a higher) scientific objectivity (validity and reliability) can be achieved only by the use of quantitative methods which “unfetter” research from all contextual factors does not pertain to the nature of methods and the logic of research procedures. The decontextualization of research from its social settings, which the use of quantitative methods is supposed to achieve, does not make research more objective but rather more objectionable. Separation of qualitative and quantitative methodology means divorcing method from the substance of research. Any preference for either qualitative or quantitative approaches prior to a clear conceptualization of the research problem is arbitrary. The idea of an exclusive disjunction of methods (the exclusive “or”: the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods

but not both) reflects more a prejudice against the “other” than the true nature of divergence between paradigms. Quantification gives the impression of impersonality, disinterestedness, and impartiality of research(ers) but it does not really protect it/ them from subjectivity – not only when it comes to the choice of research methods and procedures, but also and primarily in the selection of research questions and the ways in which they are addressed or suppressed in both empirical research and theory. This is not simply to say that “quantification is nothing but a political solution to a political problem [b]ut that is surely one of the things that it is” (Porter, 1995, p. x).

The selection of “relevant” theories, frames of reference, research questions, and methods is always related to the interests and values of researchers and constrained by “external” (political, ideological, financial, temporal) factors. In some cases, we may even speak of “paradigmatic blindness” censoring certain approaches and methods, when researchers “work from models acquired through education and through subsequent exposure to the literature often without quite knowing or needing to know what characteristics have given these models the status of community paradigm” (Kuhn, 1962/1970, p. 46). Such “imitative” practice may imply aprioristic preferences for either qualitative or quantitative methods; these aprioristic preferences may even match with specific paradigms. Nevertheless, it is particular concepts, research aims and questions, and (often tacit) assumptions internalized by researchers rather than specific methods that indicate and reflect a particular paradigm (or a particular political and ideological perspective).

For a complex field of study or a *metadiscipline* that cannot be defined in terms of scientific specialty and a single expert community – which we believe communication and media represent as they are interlaced with social, economic, cultural, and political contexts and thus not a unique area of any single scientific discipline – it is even less plausible that all the differences within the field could be accounted for merely by an (exclusive) set of specific research methods.

Kuhn’s concept of paradigm as “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on *shared by the members of a given community*” (Kuhn, 1962/1970, p. 175, emphasis added) is inconsistent with his narrower view that “A scientific community consists . . . of the practitioners of a scientific specialty” (p. 177). Obviously, not all the practitioners share “the entire constellation of beliefs.” Moreover, if we assume that there are not very many beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by *all* practitioners of a scientific specialty on a global scale (which we believe is a realistic assumption), the concept of the paradigm is an empty concept. In contrast to Kuhn, we understand (disciplinary) “paradigm” in a more strict sense; it does not refer to all members of a scientific community/specialty but rather to a consistent system of (particularly epistemological) assumptions about method, object, and definition of the discipline underlying research which is rarely shared by all members of a scientific discipline or field of study. As we argue in this chapter, while paradigms have specific historical trajectories, they are not historically consecutive and mutually exclusive (in the sense that some, but not all are “scientific”), but rather mutually irreconcilable in maintaining differences and simultaneously competing *within* a given discipline or field of study (i.e., all may be “scientific”).

Ambiguity of “Media and Communication Research”

Although media and communication research is often believed to represent one of the youngest research areas in the social sciences, many social scientists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were already very conscious of the social significance of communication. Questions about the workings of communication arose in Western civilization in the early history of the “science of sciences, the science of society, of human happiness, of the *social science*,” as first named by William Thompson in 1824 when attention turned from the physical sciences and astronomy to the social and political organization of people (Thompson, 1824, p. 275). They accompanied the development of social systems and played a role in the rise of economic interests and in the success of political institutions, when communication and information became an important asset, a commodity, and a source of power.

Beyond this general historical observation about the origins of communication research, however, remains the ambiguity of the concept itself, since “communication research” may embrace pre-Socratic interests in rhetoric as well as modernism’s curiosity about the effects of media and communication in society. Equally ambiguous is the idea of “mass communication research,” which may range from seventeenth-century interests in the workings of newspapers to twenty-first-century inquiries about the Internet. However, if one considers the concept of “communication” or “mass communication” itself, the pertinent time period ranges from the late nineteenth century, when “communication” described the movement of people and words, for example, roads and the telegraph, to the mid-twentieth century, when the word “mass communication” was coined in the United States to refer to the world of media. The notion of “media,” in turn, can refer to a wide historical range of technical apparatus and procedures, from clay tablets to DVDs. With the technical convergences of the digital age, the term becomes particularly slippery: is the Internet a medium? Or many media? Is YouTube a medium? We are faced with – and will no doubt have to live with – many conceptual quandaries.

In addition, there is the concept of “research.” Understood as a systematic inquiry into a subject matter, the notion of research accompanies the rise of Western civilization, in which the curiosity of individuals expanded public knowledge and resulted in an increasingly sophisticated understanding of phenomena that affect people’s lives, like speech, writing, or language itself. Research relies on the rise of analytical practices, that is, on the nature of questions and the questioning process that have emerged over the centuries. From this angle we can specify the major intellectual concerns – the important issues – which encouraged questions about the role of communication, for instance, regarding the press, its role in society, including its effects, the uses made of newspapers, and the organizational nature of journalism. This view of media and communication research, as an integral part of a history of Western culture, identifies the field with a larger, more comprehensive and holistic vision of exploring human practices, including communication.

Long before the birth of modern social sciences, in the seventeenth century, the first essays discussing the nature and social functions of newspapers were written by empirically minded professionals who did not reflect on the conceptual issues of communication. From the mid-1800s, however, scholars acknowledged that the invention of printing introduced substantial changes in the way people (inter)acted socially. The press became “the real transmitter in the intellectual exchange between the leading organs of society and the public” (Schäffle, 1875, p. 444), differing from other forms of communication by being “thought-communication between persons who are physically separated” (Knies, 1857/1996, p. 44) and primarily by the fact that it was “a link in the chain of modern commercial machinery” (Bücher, 1893/1901, p. 216). As Tönnies (1922) argued, newspapers were from the very beginning not only intended to supplement privately mediated news in letters, but mostly to spread news intended for a larger public. Early discussions of the social consequences of technological achievements, including the rise of a dispersed audience remind us that many of the themes popularly discussed these days in association with cyberspace have their origins in the emergence of the pre-1900 communication technologies, such as the printing press, telegraph, telephone, and film. When the social sciences achieved general recognition by the end of the nineteenth century, communication became topical if not constitutive for the social sciences and for theories of society in general, particularly in the works of Gabriel Tarde, Ferdinand Tönnies, Robert E. Park, and John Dewey.

In his polemics with Émile Durkheim on the nature of “social facts,” Gabriel Tarde (1903) emphasized that “the elementary social fact is communication or the modification of a state of consciousness by the action of one human being upon another” (Durkheim & Tarde, 2008, p. 761). Tarde defined even his main theoretical concept of “imitation” as “a communication from soul to soul” (Tarde, 1897/2000). He argued pervasively against Durkheim’s contention that “A thought which is to be found in the consciousness of each individual and a movement which is repeated by all individuals are not for this reason social facts,” and accused him of ontological illusion and scholastic ontology because of his efforts to separate sociology as a scientific discipline from psychology and philosophy (Durkheim & Tarde, 2008, p. 773). Tarde also rejected Durkheim’s holistic idea of finished social wholes and promoted “methodological individualism,” focusing on the components of social interactions and practices.

Communication constitutive of public opinion – “holding and expressing opinions is an interactive process” – is one of the three key forms of the “complex social will,” which represented a conceptual cornerstone of Ferdinand Tönnies’s theory of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). The difference between community and society lies partly in their mode of communication: traditional handed-down customs and religion are typical of community, whereas public opinion that grows out of reflexive discourse between strangers and is based on reason and (scientific) knowledge is constitutive of society. Tönnies strongly believed in the possibility of the objectivity and unity of science based on interdisciplinarity but also

emphasized the need to observe humanitarian and ethical considerations. His approach to public opinion surmounted differences between the “normative” and “empirical” paradigms commonly believed to be incompatible. He combined three levels of inquiry: (1) theoretical (pure sociology *constructing* or producing theories); (2) applied (application to dynamic historical developments *deducing* from theories); and (3) empirical (*inductive* empirical research elucidating and explaining general ideas by specific examples). He advocated the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in empirical sociology to describe, compare, and uncover regularities in social relations.

Mapping Contemporary Paradigms: Logics of Coherence

Emerging from several disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, the field of media and communication research remains heterogeneous, mirroring both its origins and the profound ongoing developments in the media landscape, as well as its sociocultural significance (McQuail, 2010, offers a map of the terrain). Over the course of several decades, it launched its own academic departments, journals, associations, and conferences. The field developed most rapidly in the United States, which for a long time defined the field and influenced its advancement globally. Today, most universities have departments offering courses and programs about the media. Academic departments go under a variety of names, emphasizing different angles on the field and reflecting national and cultural specificities, but we should be aware that with the advent of the Internet, research on “media” is being carried out in just about all fields of the social sciences as well as many in the humanities; computer sciences are also now a part of the research production within media and communication.

The rapid growth of the field brought about a variety of specializations. Research in the field is divided – though not always clearly – between an academic emphasis with social scientific or humanities horizons, and one that focuses on applied knowledge. This latter emphasis can be geared to the needs of media industries, various organizational actors that make use of the media for their own purposes (corporations, political parties, interest groups, etc.), and occupational practices within the media. The lines between the academic and the practitioner orientations are by no means fixed, and the interplay between the two can be both productive and problematic. Moreover, as neoliberal-inspired management values pervade the universities, academic research is increasingly required to demonstrate its relevance and “impact,” thereby narrowing the space for theoretical and critical efforts.

Though media and communication research is a quite disparate field, we can specify a number of logics that give some practical coherence and can serve as a rough map. The first such logic derives simply from specifying a particular medium.

Many researchers focus on, for example, television, radio, the printed press, the Internet, or social media. Others specialize still further and focus, for example, on press history or the television industry. Other studies may encompass more than one medium, for example in a case of journalism research.

A second logic takes its departure from a basic model of the communication process, and thus we can organize research according to its attention to *sender*, *message*, and *receiver*. In the context of the mass media, this yields, respectively, studies of media institutions, media output, and media audiences and/or users. Research on media institutions examines the conditions, both internal and external, that shape them, for instance questions about regulation, political influence, and organizational routines. The study of media output includes the form, content, and modes of representation, often highlighting specific genres. Research on media audiences can include analyses of the impact of specific output, the uses people make of it, and the interpretations they derive from it. Especially with the Internet and the rise of Web 2.0, the concept of audience becomes problematic, as more and more of the online traffic is user-generated (by so-called “producers”).

Third, specific topics or themes provide some ongoing coherence to the field. These themes can be broad, such as media effects or (more specifically) media effects on children. Many themes link media studies with particular topics on the wider social research agenda, such as gender and ethnicity, children, health communication, media and social movements, and media and sports. From another angle, some themes derive from particular theoretic and/or methodological developments, for example, agenda setting, media events, or media uses and gratification, and can be applied to a variety of empirical areas.

Finally, and most significantly for the character of the research itself, weaving through the above logics are some basic paradigmatic distinctions. We would reiterate that the notion of paradigm points to tendencies within the field, not to unified factions with clear demarcations. These paradigms basically reflect historically anchored differences in concerns, approaches, epistemological assumptions, and theoretical and methodological orientations; they point to distinct intellectual dispositions. The relationships between them have evolved over time, and the development of the field can be understood to a considerable extent by looking at the emergence, interface, and transitions of these major paradigms.

Tensions: The Dominant Paradigm and Its Challengers

The Dominant Paradigm: An Assemblage

In looking at the field today from a paradigm perspective, we can begin with positing what we – with some admitted conceptual looseness – term the dominant paradigm.

We choose this term to acknowledge the obvious heterogeneity of the major directions in research, yet at the same time we want to indicate that there are unifying elements in the prevailing patterns of research in the field. Thus, though the dominant paradigm encompasses a broad (and growing) array of research currents and subcurrents, and it is continually developing new approaches, it is nonetheless united in its basic adherence to traditional social scientific methodologies and approaches to theory. Its intellectual foundations are found chiefly within sociology, psychology, social psychology, and political science, with a dominance of quantitative methods. It constitutes the still hegemonic tradition of empirical research within media and communication. From about 1950 to the early 1970s, the dominant paradigm emerged, solidified, and remained essentially unchallenged. The most prominent orientation was that of media effects – to ascertain the impact of media on people's thought and behavior; the themes of violence and sex, but of course also advertising, were key areas of research (Klapper, 1960, was no doubt the most influential text in this regard). Content analysis of media output constituted the other major trajectory. This was its golden age; since then the heterogeneity of the field has increased.

Gradually, this heterogeneity of the field became problematic; debate and uncertainty began to set in, and over the years there have been a number of calls to better define the core and the boundaries of communication and media research (e.g., "Ferment in the Field," 1983; "Future of the Field I," 1993; "Future of the Field II," 1993). Questions and contentions have been aired about the range of theories and differing methodologies in the field. The vision of a unified science may still have some attraction in some circles, though it is less often asserted these days, and expectation for more field integration seems less intense. One could say that the field of media and communication research remains a somewhat unstable signifier. The large conferences suggest that a relatively harmonious coexistence between different currents prevails within the dominant paradigm (see, for example, the ICA website for current or upcoming conferences). However, in the early 1970s, two paradigmatic challenges began to assert themselves.

The Interpretivist Paradigm

A particular attribute that united the dominant paradigm was its adherence to the strict scientific model, one that builds on the premise that media research (and social research generally) should basically follow the methodological guidelines of natural sciences, using quantitative methods in particular to establish causal relationships. Two sets of critics emerged here, from the interpretivist and the critical paradigms. Both would often use the term "positivism" in criticizing the dominant, though the word was often intended as a general epithet rather than a rigorous concept from the philosophy of science. The interpretivists take the view that human beings are thinking and reflecting subjects driven by meaning; thus research must focus

precisely on the meaning of action from the standpoint of the actor. This logic can be found, for example in Weber's notion of *Verstehen*, that is, understanding as constituting the core goal of social research, clearly demonstrated also in his quest for a systematic and comprehensive examination of the press. The angle taken on communication underlined the processes of meaning or sense making over the transmission of discrete "messages" (Carey, 1989). Research explored the communicative power of symbols, the processes of rituals, the rhetoric of nonverbal gestures, and communicative contexts, among other things.

Interpretivism entered the field from several corners, including the growing orientation of social constructionism (which has since become a sort of *doxa* in some corners of the field), contributions from the humanities and from the qualitative, interpretive social sciences, and not least the rise of cultural studies. In the 1970s British cultural studies, under the leadership of Stuart Hall (see Hall et al., 1980) had begun to impact media research. The eclectic synthesis of intellectual ingredients in cultural studies – including neo-Marxism, (post)structuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and ethnography – was applied not only to the media but also to a range of topics having to do with contemporary culture and society. Interpretivist strands emphasize the social construction of meaning (and identities), and the relationship between meaning, culture, and – particularly in the case of cultural studies – power. Methodologically, interpretivist approaches used conceptual toolkits such as hermeneutics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, and narratology and applied them to approaches such as ethnography, interviews, observations, and the analyses of texts and visuals. We can note that cultural studies has grown into a heterogeneous, multidisciplinary field in its own right, with contributions from currents such as postmodernism and postcolonialism, among others. Today studies of the media are only a small part of its vast concerns. As it expanded and became a global academic phenomenon mingling with many other academic traditions, the critical character of its earlier years, where issues of social and semiotic power were thematized, has not always remained evident.

The Critical Paradigm: Three Strands

The critical paradigm likewise has a mixed lineage. The notion of critique derives from G. W. F. Hegel's notion of unnecessary constraints on human freedom, which was adapted by Karl Marx and also mobilized in the various critical traditions since then in emancipatory projects that challenge various forms of domination. Thus, critique fundamentally involves normative reflection on the relations of power. In terms of media and communication research, there have been three major traditions: political economy, the critique of ideology, and theories of the public sphere. However, we should also note that there is an epistemological version of critique, which derives from Immanuel Kant and his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here Kant underscores that our knowledge of the world is always mediated in a number of ways; we

never have direct access to it. Rather it is shaped by our sense organs, our mental processes, language, specific cultural frames of perception, social location, and so on. This version actually resonated more within the interpretivist paradigm, and can be seen as a link between the two, especially in the work of early cultural studies; its emphasis on identity, ideology, meaning, and so on intertwined critical reflection on power relationships with the development and maintenance of worldviews and particular forms of knowledge and subjectivity.

The Hegelian version of critique was stronger in the various Marxian currents that began challenging the dominant paradigm in the early 1970s, most notably the political economy and critique of ideology traditions. The political economy of the media addresses ownership, commodification, (de)regulation, policy, and the links between economics and the social, political, and cultural dimensions of modern life. The early work of such scholars as Dallas Smythe (1981) and Herbert Schiller (1975) opened up passages that scholars active today further develop (see, for example, Fuchs, 2011; Mosco, 2009). A recurring thematic here is the tension between, on the one hand, the capitalist logic of media development and operations, and on the other, concerns for the public interest and democracy. For the most part, the political economy of the media does not anticipate the elimination of commercial imperatives or market forces, but rather seeks to promote an understanding of where and how regulatory initiatives can establish optimal balances between private interest and the public good, in hopes of redressing some of the worst power inequalities and promoting the democratic potential of media.

The critique of ideology was for a while a very robust current. In the critical lexicon, ideology is not a descriptive term about party platforms or people's systematic worldviews, but refers instead to how representations of the world covertly serve the interests of some groups at the expense of others. In its more forceful versions, the critique of ideology builds on the notion of false consciousness – the systematic misapprehension of one's own (class) interests. Thus the concept is in the business of distinguishing between reality, essence, or truth, and appearance or falsehood. This of course begs the question of what the "truth" is and the term began to wobble under increasingly sophisticated scrutiny. There have been many efforts to "repair" the concept, but gradually, by the end of the 1980s, the concept was moving to the margins, and in the early 1990s it was becoming clear that the epistemologically and methodologically more sophisticated tools of critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough, 2010) were better suited for elucidating the links between representation, meaning, and power in mediated communication.

Another major – and quite familiar – building block of critical media research frames the issues of media and democracy within the concept of the *public sphere*, a notion most associated with Jürgen Habermas (1989), but one that figures in the writing of many authors (see Gripsrud, Hallsvard, Molander, & Murdock, 2010, for a collection of key texts). In schematic terms, a public sphere is understood as a constellation of institutional spaces that permit the circulation of information and ideas, as well as the formation of public opinion and communicative links between

citizens and the power holders of society. Habermas's (1989) historical analysis examines the structural evolution of public spheres as well as the character of its communicative activities, and can thus be said to straddle the base/superstructure divide. Though the Habermasian model soon raised a number of issues (see Calhoun, 1992), it has provided a strong critical foundation and normative horizon for thinking about the media, participation, and not least journalism, and has inspired countless research initiatives. The concept has some parallels with the liberal notion of the "marketplace of ideas" and similar metaphors, and today it has entered into more common usage where the problems of journalism are often discussed – though often with the risk of losing the critical foundations that derive from its intellectual origins with the Frankfurt School.

Gradually the critical paradigm became more diverse, incorporating not only post- and non-Marxian currents, but also feminism, postcolonialism, and the critical trajectories, for example on race and ethnicity and queer studies. There has been a massive amount of critical artillery aimed at media and communication, taking the dominant paradigm to task on a variety of issues. The epistemological certitude of the Marxian trajectory weakened; for many, Marxism and its emphasis on class became less of a totalizing paradigm and was seen more as one, albeit central, element, together with other currents in media and communication studies that were challenging the dominant paradigm. In the process, critical epistemological reflection became more widespread within the critical paradigm, even if some researchers more wedded to the Marxian tradition challenged what they perceived as unproductive revisionism of the critical tradition. Even today we can find issues over the relative weight to be given to the political economy versus the cultural dimensions of mediated phenomena.

Challenges and Controversies in Media Research

Since Tönnies's time, empirical research has come far in exploring (mass) communication phenomena. Systematic study of communication and media began in the United States in the 1920s under the influence of growing scientific/academic and commercial interests in this generic human ability and need, especially in its most developed and widely commercialized form – mass media. In this context, "mass communication research" found its place in traditional US academic disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and political science. When by the end of 1950s, "communication research had come gradually to lose its place as a major concern within the conventionally recognized academic disciplines, . . . departments of journalism and other vocationally oriented faculties moved in to fill the vacuum" (Lang & Lang, 1983, p. 130). The institutional transition helped to develop a new field of research (and a "scientific discipline" for some proponents) which was largely characterized – in contrast to earlier interests in the broader societal conditions of mass media and

public opinion – by the separation of the study of mass communication from that of public opinion, a strong interest in the effects of mass media on individual behavior and preferences, and the use of quantitative methods in data gathering and analysis. The dominant paradigm had begun to take shape.

Empirical and applied research that made a very dynamic development in the early twentieth century had important and controversial consequences for all the social sciences which have begun to receive a significant position at universities, in governmental offices, and in the corporate world. Professional institutionalization of the social sciences increased interest in the reliability and validity of applied research but also often tended to overemphasize the importance of operational definitions and the empirical reliability of concepts to solve practical problems – while discriminating against the critical role of theory in steering social development. Ever higher costs of experimental and field work led professional research into dependence on the policy world and capital, and separation from civil society. Financial support from corporate foundations required researchers to shed and avoid political radicalism (rather than *any* political alignment). Critical communication research – an emerging paradigm – was challenged by the idea of a value-free or neutral research, in which the understanding of communication as a cultural transaction and symbolic interaction developed by pragmatism succumbed to a simplistic conception of communication as transmission and/or exchange.

Paradigmatic challenges to media research came into sight most often in the periods of invention and/or dominance of a new quantitative method or approach in empirical communication research, but methodological controversies always reflected broader issues of the nature and function of media (research) in society. We will briefly address three such historical challenges related to methodological innovations:

- the invention of polling and its critiques;
- quantitative versus qualitative content analysis;
- audience research and the dispute on “administrative” versus “critical” research.

Polling: The Separation of Public Opinion from Communication?

The invention of polling in the late 1920s has significantly influenced conceptualizations of public opinion and its role in (mass) societies. Furthermore, it typically divided the academic community into those who admire polling as a tool to make democratic life more efficacious and its critics who argue that it has undermined it fatally. At first glance the main issue at stake in the controversy on “measuring public opinion” may seem to be the *quantification* of public opinion by using sampling methods, data gathering procedures (e.g., attitude scales), and statistical analysis. However, as it will be made clear, the controversy goes beyond inaccuracies in

sampling methods and predictions and primarily refers to the ontological and epistemological status of public opinion versus polling.

The controversies around polling can perhaps be best illustrated with two polar attitudes toward “the science of measuring public opinion,” as Gallup called the innovative research procedure in the collection of interview response data.¹ At one extreme, Herbert Blumer blamed polling for the loss of the generic subject as it was not able to “isolate ‘public opinion’ as an abstract or generic concept which could thereby become the focal point for the formation of a system of propositions” (Blumer, 1948, p. 542). Instead of identifying public opinion as an object of study and contributing to its better understanding, according to Blumer, polls actually “constitute” the object of study (“public opinion”) ostensibly in the process of sampling, data gathering, and aggregating. The operationalistic understanding of public opinion as an aggregate of equally valid opinions by independent individuals collected from a random sample of population suggests that a public and, thus, society exists as a mere aggregate of disparate individuals in contrast to the actual “organic” operation of public opinion in society. Furthermore, the high predictive validity of *election* polls (in predicting outcomes of elections) cannot be “extrapolated” to the universal validity of polling because even the most accurate *prediction* cannot be swapped for *explanation*, and the accuracy of prediction of election results in election polls cannot be generalized and transferred to any kind of polling.

At the other extreme, Osborne and Rose praised polling precisely for having produced public opinion as a new social phenomenon which “is created by the procedures that are established to ‘discover’ it,” thus making polling similar to the successful natural sciences in creating new phenomena (Osborne & Rose, 1999, p. 382). In other words, according to Osborne and Rose, public opinion was not observable and did not exist in empirical terms prior to the development of interview response data gathering procedures. Public opinion is the result of, and is identical to, sampling, data gathering, and aggregating.

Before the advent of polling, the social sciences made rather unsuccessful attempts at scientific operationalization of the normative concept of public opinion. With polling, however, a satisfactory degree of empirical validity has been achieved, as its prophets and pollsters believed. Gallup praised polls for creating a new momentum to strengthen democracy. He believed, exaggerating James Bryce’s enthusiasm, that with polls “the will of the majority of citizens can be ascertained at all times” (Gallup, 1938, p. 14). Following Bryce, Gallup defended an ostensive definition of public opinion as a simple “aggregate of the views men hold regarding matters that affect or interest the community” (Gallup, 1957, p. 23). Polls ought to compensate for the growing limitations to citizens’ political participation in parliamentary democracy. Gallup defined polling results as a “mandate from the people” to the government and suggested that polling might help re-establish the town meetings of antique Greece on a national scale. Polling was believed to provide a democratic counterweight to the growing independence of political elites and the separation of representation from popular rule.

The issues of empirical verifiability and the reliability of polling dominated scholarly debates on public opinion to such a degree that, in the 1930s, polling reached the position of the dominant public opinion paradigm, thus shoving aside the traditional normative conceptualizations of public opinion. "The advent of so-called 'scientific polls' during the 1930s has gone far toward solving the problem of ascertaining quickly, economically, and accurately the states and trends of public opinion on a large scale," wrote Childs (1965, p. 45). Polls provided information about individuals' attitudes that is relevant to the political process and predictions of their voting behavior, but also commercially relevant information on the purchasing habits and power of consumers, and on the relationship between advertisements, consumer preferences, and buying decisions, which became a key area in market research.

However, while pollsters hailed polling as part of a solution for the growing democratic deficit, its opponents saw in it a serious threat to democracy – not only did polling not stimulate public discussion, but it even prevented and/or replaced it. Moreover, pollsters were criticized for their erroneous premise that public opinion expressed by a majority in polling should be simply followed by political action in the same way as merchants follow the results of consumers' research. Several critics believed that the main purpose of polling by the government could be manufacturing citizens' opinions and changing those which were not congruent with the course of action, thus marginalizing the power of public opinion.

Controversies on polling are essentially political and theoretical rather than methodological. The specific aims of polls are not their intrinsic functions but are defined by their users and observers. It may well be that polls had been initially designed as a research procedure to "measure public opinion." Whether or not public opinion is "measurable," however, is not a methodological but a theoretical issue. Similarly, the embeddedness of polls in the political system resulted in specific *political* functions (e.g., "illuminating the state of public opinion for the benefit of the representatives of the people," according to Gallup (1971, p. 227)), which were assigned to polling independently of its methodological drift.

Content Analysis: Issues of Empirical Reliability and Theoretical Validity

As early as in the late nineteenth century, before the first polls were conducted, a sort of "quantitative newspaper analysis" was used to show how the contents of New York newspapers had changed between 1881 and 1893 (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 14). Much earlier, however, the first *qualitative content analysis* appeared – in censorship. Censors had the task of analyzing written materials in a systematic way to discover forbidden ideas hidden in texts so as to prosecute their authors, as decreed by the ruling secular or ecclesiastic powers. Plato was the founder of the aristocratic idea of censorship that has resounded for more than 2,000 years. In *The Republic*, he substantiated the necessity of censorship to prevent narrators and poets from making

“an erroneous representation . . . of the nature of gods and heroes” which young people would not be able to understand (Plato 360 BCE/1901).

With the development of the social sciences, content analysis became one of its most important methodological tools. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in a speech to the German Sociological Association, Max Weber called attention to the need for a systematic and comprehensive examination of the press, starting “with scissors and compasses to measure the quantitative change of newspaper contents . . . From these quantitative analyses we will proceed to qualitative ones” (Weber, 1910/1979, pp. 151–152). Unfortunately, Weber’s ambitious project did not succeed for a variety of reasons, and World War I ultimately prevented its realization (Hardt, 1979, p. 183).

Content analysis entered its golden period during World War II, with the US government-sponsored War Communications Research Project aiming to analyze enemy propaganda and the “language of communism.” The book on *Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics* (Lasswell et al., 1949), which resulted from the project, inspired many communication scholars to get to grips with quantitative content analysis in the decades to follow. Lasswell insisted on the quantitative approach in order to overcome severe “limitations of qualitative analysis,” such as imprecision and arbitrariness. He argued that the quantitative analysis of political discourse would both advance political science and contribute to policy gains (Lasswell, 1949, pp. 40, 52). Following this reasoning, Bernard Berelson contributed a definition of content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic and *quantitative* description of the *manifest* content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p. 18, emphases added), which dominated the field for quite some time. It not only excluded qualitative approaches to media contents but also limited analysis to “‘manifest content’ [which] exists in the form of black-marks-on-white” (p. 19).

It should be added, though, that Berelson restricted the validity of quantitative content analysis to the sorts of standardized textual material one can find in newspapers, and he warned: “The analysis of manifest content is applicable to materials . . . where understanding is simple and direct . . . Whenever one word or one phrase is as ‘important’ as the rest of the content taken together, quantitative analysis would not apply” (Berelson, 1952, p. 20). Taking this limitation seriously would, according to Berelson, make all interpretive genres with nonstandardized forms and nonconventional contents – where “different members of the intended audience” do not “get the same understanding from them” – entirely inappropriate for “quantitative analysis of black-marks-on-white” (Berelson, 1952, p. 20). The obvious problem is that when texts² may be understood or “decoded” in a variety of different ways, the principle of empirical reliability of (de)coding (i.e., the need that all coders understand and code each text in the same way) may violate the principle of validity by reducing different readings to the lowest common denominator that still promises reliable quantitative coding. Even if quantitative coding is reliable, it alone does not guarantee valid results. Kracauer (1952–1953) questioned the exclusive use of quantitative content analysis on the ground of its implicit assumption that the frequency

of appearance of a characteristic (e.g., a word or a class of words) is taken as the indicator of its importance: the more often it appears, the greater its importance on the whole.

Kracauer emphasized the need to combine the two approaches because “qualitative analysis” and “quantitative analysis” do not refer to radically different methodologies:

Quantitative analysis includes qualitative aspects, for it both originates and culminates in qualitative considerations. On the other hand, qualitative analysis proper often requires quantification in the interest of exhaustive treatment. Far from being strict alternatives the two approaches actually overlap, and have in fact complemented and interpenetrated each other in several investigations. (Kracauer, 1952–1953, p. 637)

Hence, a prejudiced trust in the validity of quantitative content analysis ignores the important role that qualitative (interpretive) examination may play in text analysis and communication research in general.

Administrative Research and Empirical Critique

Theodor Adorno’s critical reflection on lessons taught in the Princeton Radio Project (1938–1941)³ still has relevance today for the discussion on the (potential) political implications of empirical communication research. Part of the comprehensive empirical Radio Project was devoted to radio listening habits. Adorno’s inside experience with the project suggests that, even compared to the most radical critical theories (in terms of either existing knowledge or prevailing politics), applied research is much more (and more directly) affected by institutional constraints and temptations to yield to conditions defined by funding institutions. This could even lead to the conclusion that *any* empirical and particularly quantitative research, by necessity, reduces the level of criticism theory can provide, but such a conclusion would be premature, as Adorno admitted.

In his critical appraisal, Adorno indicated that there was little room for critical social research in the framework of the Princeton Project.

Its charter, which came from the Rockefeller Foundation, expressly stipulated that the investigations must be performed within the limits of the commercial radio system prevailing in the United States. It was thereby implied that the system itself, its cultural and sociological consequences and its social and economic presuppositions were not to be analyzed. (Adorno, 1969, p. 343)

Adorno was critical of the implied and perhaps unconscious conformity of professional researchers who tacitly completed research orders and did not dare to question the reasons and consequences of such an investigation, its aims and the methods used to achieve them, the goals and interests of individuals and social groups chosen

as research units, and researchers' own actions within it. Referring to the part of the project dealing with music listening, he identified two kinds of questions representing "administrative technique" which are effectively used to manipulate the masses: (1) questions directed toward the reactions of audiences when exposed to certain kinds of programming, for example, "If we confront such and such a sector of the population with such and such a type of music, what reactions may we expect?" or "How many sections of the population have been brought into contact with music and how do they respond to it?" (2) questions directed toward the efficacy of research procedures, for example, "How can these reactions be measured and expressed statistically?" (Adorno, 1945, p. 208).

Such questions resemble questions asked in a laboratory experiment or market analysis where research objects (units) are exposed to different treatments (variables) to find out how effective they are. If experiment or analysis is successful, researchers can recommend the treatment to be applied in order to produce the effect we want to achieve in practice. In terms of "how certain aims can be best realized under the given conditions," that is, how effective research techniques are used to manipulate the masses, Adorno differentiated between directly "*exploitive*" research (e.g., aiming at selling certain commodities) and "*benevolent* administrative research" (e.g., how to bring *good* music to as large a number of listeners as possible).

An alternative to these manipulative or administrative approaches would be a commitment to design research as social critique, that is, to question the aims "imposed" on research, or at least their successful accomplishment under given conditions:

One should not study the attitudes of listeners, without considering how far these attitudes reflect broader social behavior patterns and, even more, how far they are conditioned by the structure of society as a whole. This leads directly to the problem of *social critique* of radio music, that of discovering its social position and function. (Adorno, 1945, p. 209)

Although Adorno later explicitly contradicted the interpretation that he rejected empirical social research and underlined that he "consider[ed] these procedures not only important within their own sphere but also as appropriate" (Lang, 1979, p. 93), his attitude toward the use of quantitative methods in empirical research remained uncertain. His suggestion that one possible indicator of administrative research be the statistical measurement of survey response data certainly helped the qualitative–quantitative controversy continue through the decades.

Controversies over administrative and quantitative research in communication vivified in the 1980s after Smythe's and Van Dinh's (re)conceptualization of "administrative ideology" as "the linking of administrative type problems and tools, with interpretation of results that supports, or does not seriously disturb, the status quo" (Smythe & Van Dinh, 1983, p. 118). According to the authors, administrative ideology implies not only "administrative type *problems*" but also "administrative type *tools*,"

in addition to a specific way of interpreting research findings which “supports, or does not seriously disturb, the status quo.” In contrast to Merton’s argument that problems of methodology neither are specific to any single discipline in the social sciences nor imply a particular content of a theory, they seemed to believe that “tools” are specifically tied up with “problems.” Pursuing this idea, Smythe and Van Dinh operationalized “administrative research” by equating it with “quantitative research”:

Under administrative research, the first type of research is for simplicity called “quantitative.” It includes market research . . . it serves the private corporate interests . . . Survey research, conducted with rigorous standards for sampling, variance estimates, and control (but not elimination) of biases involved in questionnaire construction and interview and coding techniques, would also qualify as quantitative administrative research. (Smythe & Van Dinh, 1983, pp. 118–119)

The operationalization tacitly slides from “market research” to “quantitative administrative research” without providing any substantiation for it. While “market research” (with research questions and aims subject to commercial interests and profit) represents a specific materialization of “administrative ideology,” this representation cannot be transferred to the relationship between quantitative methods and administrative ideology, so that “quantitative methods” would indicate “administrative ideology.”

Reducing the “administrative–critical” relationship to “qualitative–quantitative” misplaces the “theoretical–empirical” issue. As the empirical methods are instrumental solutions to the problems of gathering, processing, and interpreting information (data), the choice of specific methods should depend on the subject and the aim of the research. The decisions as to whether it is appropriate to choose qualitative and/or quantitative methods should be based on the respective probabilities of obtaining the evidence being sought, and no method can be *a priori* excluded as inappropriate, whether quantitative or qualitative. Unfortunately, research practice is often far from such an ideal state.

One of the central issues of empirical research is the theoretic ability of a researcher to differentiate between the *quantitatively prevailing* and the *essential* characteristics of objects under study. The essential characteristics of a social phenomenon or fact are never determined by the remains of the old in it, although quantitatively they still dominate, but by the elements of the new, that is, by the direction and aim of the development. In the early phases of the development, the new never appears as quantitatively dominant or as an average, but rather as an “exception” for which only a more thorough and theoretically based research can show that it is actually not a mere coincidence but rather a rule, a result of general development. Yet the task of empirical research may not be reduced to revealing just new (e.g., in contrast to prevailing) phenomenological forms. For social research and policy as well, it is essential to discover the conditions which (may) lead to the affirmation of the new

and those which prevent or hinder its further development, and to conceptualize the relationship between them.

Social Media Research: A New Paradigm?

Gabriel Tarde had problems persuading Durkheim that (interpersonal) communication is a fundamental social fact, but in the age of computer-mediated communication and social media, this is beyond any doubt. Social network sites (SNS) – “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (bojd & Ellison, 2007) – became a major object of study in communication research not only because of their popularity but also because of the unprecedented abundance of self-generated data they provide. In traditional research, the data gathering process is clearly separated from the process of communication as the object of study: surveys and text analyses are used to provide data on the already existing (f)acts, whereas the contradictory nature of polls (a tool or an object of study?) was a major source of scholarly controversies.

Internet interactions, links and profiles, and mobile phone uses represent an entirely new mode of communication that combines the timeliness of speaking and the endurance of writing. Moreover, the digital(ized) communicative acts generate “surplus” information on users’ online activities that can be tracked down, explored, and used (and eventually even sold) by those not participating in interactions. Without the consent and even knowledge of the participants, rich data sets can be created to study patterns of calling and receiving phone calls, sending and receiving messages, downloading and uploading files, (un)friending and (un)liking on the individual and aggregate levels. This kind of surveillance, coupled with the massive amounts of so-called big data that it generates, raises serious ethical and legal issues. These issues have to do not only with the practices of research; more fundamentally, the collecting, analyzing, selling, and strategic use of such data for commercial or political purposes become problematic for the life of democracy (see Oboler, Welsh, and Cruz, 2012).

What is more, new modes of digital communication also challenge the belief that it is possible to clearly separate methodology from theory. Merton was once critical of inductive empirical research using already existing data sets in which “observations are at hand and the interpretations are subsequently applied to the data,” because in that process an interpretation can always be found to “fit facts” (Merton, 1945, p. 468). Before the advent of computer-mediated communication, the “data at hand” were always generated independently of communication processes under study; they were usually “secondhand” data created in previous research. In digital communication, however, the data sets existing prior to our study consist of “footprints” of personal information participants leave online while communicating, and make them

(often unwittingly) available to others. This information is generated automatically by the software enabling communication itself and thus cannot be prevented.

We do not mean to say that the rise of digital modes of communication made communication research methodology-driven. On the contrary, given the ever tight connection between theory and methodology, these developments make critical reflection and development in regard to theory all the more imperative.

For a Reconstituted Matrix of Research

In 1996 what is called the Gulbenkian Commission on the restructuring of the social sciences, chaired by Immanuel Wallerstein, presented its report, *Open the Social Sciences*. In brief, the report called for a leaving behind of what the authors perceived as outdated disciplinary divisions, vested interests, and dead-end epistemologies. It advocated a unification that would also interface fruitfully with the humanities and the natural sciences. While there was much merit to the report, it also suffered from a utopian universalism and left unanswered such basic questions as for whom and for what the knowledge was meant. In the years since then there have been a number of discussions and debates about it. One such intervention is by Burawoy (2007), on the tenth anniversary of the report. He posits that it is urgent to focus precisely on the questions of for whom research knowledge is intended and for what purposes. In pursuing these questions, he suggests that we distinguish between knowledge production that is aimed at academic audiences – our colleagues – and at others, in the social worlds beyond the university. In regard to the purposes of research, he says we should ask “whether the knowledge concerns the determination of the appropriate means to pursue a given, taken-for-granted end, or whether it involves a discussion of those very ends themselves: that is whether the knowledge is instrumental or whether it is reflexive” (Burawoy, 2007, p. 139).

From this line of reasoning emerge four types of knowledge that define a field of research. We have adapted the names of the categories to better fit the circumstances and intellectual history of media research discussed above, and arrived at the four categories presented in Table 1.1.

This matrix, with its four forms of knowledge, would seem to fit the field of media research rather well. We need not concern ourselves with any grand universalizing synthesis of the field; it will no doubt continue with its dominant paradigm and

Table 1.1 Division of disciplinary knowledge

	Academic audience	Extra-academic audience
Instrumental knowledge	Professional	Administrative
Reflexive knowledge	Critical	Policy

various challengers to it. What the proposed matrix offers is a way to depict and not least to legitimize different forms of knowledge for different purposes, which takes us beyond the constricting confines of a unitary/positivist model of the field.

Professional knowledge is for the professional, that is academic, audience. It is the knowledge aimed at ourselves, our colleagues, who have the task of further developing the knowledge that the field embodies. Professional knowledge is instrumental in the sense that it follows established patterns of theorizing and methodological approaches to find out new things. It will continue to be characterized by heterogeneity, coexistence, and disputes over theory and methods. Some specialized corners may become (or remain) incommensurable with others, but we will simply have to live with that and not let the absence of a unifying approach or clear boundaries to the field subvert the overall production of new knowledge.

Administrative knowledge can take many forms in that there are many groups within the extra-academic audiences that have need of research-based knowledge. We carry forward the insights gained from the decades-old discussions about this form of knowledge, for example that it is not *a priori* quantitative or qualitative in character, and that it can be utilized for benevolent as well as exploitive purposes. Administrative knowledge is geared to the needs defined by the clients; it is instrumental in that its utility is defined by specific goals or ongoing tasks of the clients. Within civil society there are many groups, networks, and organizations, which in various ways have interests that relate to the media. Associations of television viewers, concerned parents, and advocacy groups focused on advertising, political, and corporate interests all have interests in the media that can be served by research.

The groups for whom administrative knowledge is most continuously salient are no doubt the many cadres of personnel and management working within the media, from advertising and journalism, from television production to social media strategists. There is an ongoing demand from media practitioners for up-to-date research on the media and their relations to social, economic, political, and cultural domains. Certainly there can arise some conflicts of interest in regard to public knowledge: advertisers want to reach target audiences, while many such audiences (or their parents) may be more interested in how to avoid or resist media strategies. These conflicts too will simply have to be dealt with as they arise; they do not inherently destabilize this form of knowledge.

Policy knowledge is a reflexive form in that it involves consideration of norms, values, and practices in the media landscape. Policy in the media field is shaped by the intersection of normative considerations with the specific interests and actors involved, such as the state, commercial media institutions, the advertising industry, media production organizations, hardware manufacturers, political parties, citizens' groups, the "common interest" and democracy itself. Research on policy can focus on specific services, how they are to be financed and regulated, the perceived needs of various groups, and involve a normative balancing of conflicting interests. Integral to the policy process are various forms of public hearings where not just stakeholders but the general public are often entitled – at least formally – to be witnesses and

participants. Yet, we must acknowledge that research into policy (see Just & Puppis, 2012, for a recent treatment) can at times take on an instrumental character, and this shift in character may well have to do with the power relations involved. Thus, powerful groups may pursue their strategic interests via policy knowledge, eroding its reflexive character and pushing it toward administrative knowledge, with its administrative (and not always benevolent) character. The struggle becomes one of thereby trying to maintain the reflexive character of policy research – and here its links with critical knowledge (e.g., political economy) becomes essential.

Finally, critical research knowledge draws upon the Hegelian and Kantian traditions to reflect on power relations and justice, as well as what we know, what we don't know, and what we might know. We view critique as an essential phase or moment of research, and the kind of knowledge it produces can promote re-evaluation, rethinking, and redirection. It facilitates adjustment of our understanding of both ongoing professional research but also of the social world more generally – which is always in transition. Critical knowledge can thus feed into professional knowledge as well as policy knowledge. Its major “collision” tends to be with administrative knowledge, where clients are reluctant to have their goals challenged by critical researchers – mirroring again a continued tension in the knowledge produced by media research.

If we apply this matrix very briefly to the newer terrain of social media, we can note that there is a concerted effort not just from our field but from many disciplines to generate professional knowledge about its character, use, consequences, and contingencies. At the same time there is a massive generation of administrative knowledge geared to deploying social media for marketing and advertising. There is also some policy knowledge being produced by researchers, but we would suggest that far more is needed, especially to gird the reflexive discussions about how such media are to be supported, regulated, made accountable, and how the freedoms associated with them are to be protected. Critical research is emerging, addressing not least questions of political economy, such as ownership, control, and financing, as well as problems to do with surveillance, privacy, and copyright. These initiatives can interface quite neatly with policy research, but hopefully they will also impact on the professional knowledge generated – which often reflects the perspective of the dominant paradigm. We can expect these force fields to be with us for some time.

NOTES

- 1 For a more detailed account of these controversies see Splichal, 2012.
- 2 Texts – “literary and visual constructs, employing symbolic means, shaped by rules, conventions and traditions intrinsic to the use of language in its widest sense” (Hall, 1975, p. 17) – are artifacts that we use to make meaning of and from; they include not only printed documents but also radio and television programs, movies, documentaries, shows, websites, and many others.

- 3 Under the lead of Paul Lazarsfeld, the project was launched at Princeton University in 1937 and later moved to the Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research.

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The Challenge of Media Research Ethics

Kevin Healey

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of basic theoretical and logistical issues related to the ethical conduct of media research. A brief opening section places media studies within the broader history of research ethics, including the formation of professional codes and ethics review boards. The body of the chapter explores key concepts such as privacy, deception, and informed consent through a handful of exemplary case studies. Cases highlight issues associated with common methods including survey, experiment, ethnography, content analysis, historical and policy research. Special attention is given to the ways that emerging media technologies and contemporary critical/cultural approaches raise fundamental questions about established ethical frameworks.

Who Cares About Research Ethics?

An undergraduate student is researching the prevalence of pornography in online bulletin board systems. If some of the user data for these bulletin boards is publicly available, is it okay for him or her to access it for research? If some of these users

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems173

have taken measures to protect their privacy, is it fair for him or her to suggest that they may be hiding their interest in child pornography?

A team of professional researchers is investigating how community radio in Ghana can facilitate local initiatives to address climate change. Are they damaging the local broadcasting stations' image of political neutrality by involving them in research aimed at social change? How can they protect the anonymity of local community members, whose criticisms of local authorities may be aired on local broadcasts?

These real-world examples, both from published research articles, only hint at the range of ethical issues faced by media researchers. This chapter provides an overview of these issues as they arise in various methodological contexts – from online surveys to post-ethnographic field studies. In covering this wide range of approaches, this chapter has two main goals. The first is pragmatic: to provide an introduction to basic ethical concepts and research protocols, highlighting how they are complicated by the emergence of new media technologies. The second goal is critical: to question some of the underlying values and ideologies that guide media research projects and the institutional bureaucracies that govern them.

Does all media research involve ethical issues? At first glance it may appear that only research involving human subjects in an experimental setting would require institutional approval or adherence to professional codes of ethics. Scholars might assume that journalism, historical research, creative work, or database research are exempt from the purview of ethics review boards or established professional codes. In fact, while there are many professional media research organizations, not all have articulated formal codes of ethics. But as Jones (2004) notes, many areas in the humanities have come under increased scrutiny as the “mission creep” of ethics review boards has brought previously exempt lines of inquiry under the purview of institutional governance. Perhaps for this reason, some scholars suggest that a shift toward more formalization is underway – as indicated, for example, by the introduction of a code of ethics in 2008 by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in the United States (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 80).

Despite the lack of formalization across media research organizations, most scholars agree that there are several basic principles that are common to all research methodologies in all fields. At minimum, researchers should: insure that subjects are free to enter and exit the study; protect their subjects' privacy; provide benefit rather than harm; and treat all persons with respect (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 67).

However obvious they may seem, as Christians (2007) suggests, the articulation and formalization of such foundational principles is worthy of ongoing debate. The search for universal principles always takes the form of an unfinished conversation, especially as emerging media technologies and new theoretical paradigms arise to challenge established methodologies and institutional frameworks.

With a broad historical and philosophical understanding of ongoing debates in research ethics, scholars can conduct their own projects more effectively and responsibly, shaping the future of their fields as well as the institutional structures that simultaneously support, fund, and regulate them. Moreover, by developing a more

sophisticated ethical sensibility, researchers can design and embark on projects that have a practical and lasting impact on the lived experiences of people at the local, national, and international level. Whether conducted in academic, commercial, or governmental contexts, media research should have as its goal the enhancement of human flourishing. The discussion that follows serves as an overview of – and an invitation to join in – this important conversation.

Three Types of Ethical Questions

In addressing the topic of ethics in media research, there are at least three different types of questions we can ask. These range from the narrow and pragmatic to the broad and philosophical. As the following sections demonstrate, they overlap in complex ways and – depending on the chosen line of research – media scholars will devote different amounts of energy to each. But responsible media scholarship requires familiarity and facility with all three.

Questions of Motivation and Intent

The first type of question addresses the research project as a whole, assessing its purpose, motivation, goals, funding sources, or its presentation to other scholars and the general public. Is it okay to conduct psychological research with children in order to increase the effectiveness of advertising campaigns? Is it okay to take money from the government or special interest groups to fund your research? As discussed below, even when motivated by a noble goal – such as reducing violence or improving working conditions – the pursuit of such goals may produce unintended consequences. Researchers or policymakers may be tempted to overstate research results to rally support for a particular social or political cause, to satisfy the demands of funding sources, or simply to bolster their own research arguments. Such problems are known as “citation bias” or “outcome reporting bias.” Engagement with these types of questions reminds us that our research is often a reflection of our cultural values and social location (e.g., our political affiliations, economic background, or gender). As Thomas (2004) suggests, such questions highlight our “conflicting allegiances to subjects” and keep us aware of “where our ethical loyalties lie” (p. 189). Beyond insuring accuracy, integrity, and credibility, an awareness of these questions can help to insure that research has a positive social impact.

Questions of Conduct and Procedure

The second type of question, which is more narrow and pragmatic, has to do with the conduct of research itself. When is informed consent necessary? How do I avoid

influencing my research subjects? When can I use publicly available data? Under what conditions is it acceptable to withhold information from subjects about the research in which they are participating? Answering these types of questions requires familiarity with key ethical concepts such as deception, privacy, harm, and power. Even with such familiarity, there are significant differences of opinion on these types of questions. For example, deception has been used frequently in laboratory research. In fact, half of the published social psychology research articles from 1969 to 1979 used deception (Greenberg, Eastin, & Garramone, 2003, p. 306). But many scholars believe deception is never acceptable and set aside research questions that would require its use.

Failure to address these pragmatic questions effectively can have a range of consequences. On the most basic level, an ethical breach may corrupt the accuracy of one's research data. Beyond that immediate concern, ethical breaches can tarnish the research profession as a whole, making people less likely to participate in ongoing studies (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, pp. 65–66). Indeed, research indicates that subjects who are intentionally deceived during a research project tend to become more skeptical about future participation in other projects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 72). As Thomas (2004, p. 188) notes, “a single egregious violation by one researcher poisons the credibility of others as well.” More importantly, ethical breaches can endanger subjects psychologically, physically, and even, in the case of online data aggregation, financially.

Questions of Epistemology and Ideology

Professional codes of conduct and the protocols of ethics review boards are designed primarily to address the first two types of questions. However, a third type of question, broader in scope than the others, problematizes the epistemological and ideological orientations that form the backdrop of any research project as well as the institutional structures that govern them. What exactly is research? Is knowledge something that can be “produced”? How do our definitions of research, and our structures for governing it, reflect particular cultural and ideological values? Is ethics simply a matter of following agreed-upon rules, as the protocols of ethics review boards seem to suggest? Can a fixation on rule making undermine rather than insure ethical conduct? Does “positivist” research continue the patriarchal and imperialist legacy of the Enlightenment? Such questions suggest that all research projects, and all institutional structures that intend to insure their ethical soundness, are implicated in ethical and philosophical debates that are far from settled.

All research has an ethical orientation, as do the organizations that provide guidelines and restrictions for its conduct (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Such orientations draw from a broad range of ethical theories. Deontological theories, epitomized by the work of Immanuel Kant, outline a rule-based approach to ethics. They provide precepts or codes of behavior for researchers to follow. This approach is typified by

ethics review boards. As discussed below, while the provision of clear guidelines has its benefits, this approach can lead to situations where researchers follow rules even when they seem “irrational,” on the presumption that “an ethical outcome will follow” (Thomas, 2004, p. 193). By contrast, teleological theories – which draw from the utilitarian philosophy of John Stuart Mill – focus on the end result of behaviors. Such approaches assume that hard and fast rules do not work well in all situations, and are therefore often in conflict with rule-based approaches. These two approaches inform the bulk of traditional academic research in the “natural” and social sciences, including much research in media studies and communications.

Other theoretical approaches question these Enlightenment-style theories on the grounds that they perpetuate cultural biases. Relativistic, pragmatic, postcolonial, and feminist communitarian approaches provide alternate approaches to ethical and scientific inquiry by explicitly addressing issues of social and cultural difference. As discussed below, theorists like Norman Denzin and Clifford Christians suggest that the epistemological and ethical frameworks that inform ethics review boards are ideologically at odds with those of many emerging scholarly paradigms, especially those that highlight the political dimension of academic research and frame scholarship in terms of a “social ethics of resistance” (Christians, 2007, p. 56). From such perspectives institutional committees embody the very ideologies that critical scholarship seeks to question. Perspectives on how best to address this tension are addressed in this chapter’s concluding sections.

A Brief History of Ethics Review Boards

While a distinct area of inquiry in its own right, media research is situated within the broader history of research in the natural and social sciences. The ethical issues emerging from research in these other areas – especially medical science – have had a lasting impact on all areas of academic research. The widespread presence of ethics review boards in academic and governmental institutions around the world is among the most important impacts of this history. Since many forms of media research – historical, experimental, ethnographic, or otherwise – fall under the purview of ethics review boards, and since their influence is felt even among humanistic scholars, it is important to understand the historical impetus for their formation as well as the problems caused by their institutional presence. In this section, the development of institutional review boards (IRBs) in the United States will serve as an illustrative case study that highlights the general impetus behind the development of similar structures around the world.

The prehistory of IRBs in the United States is marked by some of the most egregious ethical breaches in the history of modern science. Some of these breaches occurred under the auspices of Nazi rule in Germany, while others were perpetrated by the federal government of the United States. While the US government had

conducted experiments on children and the mentally ill during World War II, Nazi researchers went much further by shooting, poisoning, torturing, and infecting patients with disease. After criminal proceedings were instituted and Nazi physicians sentenced to prison or death, American doctors developed a set of guidelines for medical research known as the Nuremberg Code. Though not legally binding, this code clarified the principle of informed consent.

In addition to these Nazi atrocities, the exposure in the early 1970s of the US Public Health Service's notorious Tuskegee syphilis study – in which researchers studied the progression of the disease in black men without informing them of their condition or providing treatment – prompted the formalization of regulations for government-funded research. In the mid-1960s, the US Public Health Service had already begun to require independent review of research grants as a condition for funding. Soon after that, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare outlined formal rules and procedures for informed consent. Prompted by public outcry over the Tuskegee experiments, the National Research Act of 1974 outlined specific provisions for the establishment and formal regulation of IRBs. A newly formed federal commission issued the so-called Belmont Report, which stipulates that the protection of human subjects hinges on three principles: respect for persons, also known as informed consent; beneficence, which requires that researchers “do no harm”; and justice, which entails a fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of research. In the early 1980s these regulations, which mainly targeted biomedical and behavioral research, were “softened” to accommodate common types of social science research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 76). Later regulations focused on problems such as plagiarism and the falsification of data (Christians, 2007, p. 54).

Today, there are hundreds of IRBs at research and educational institutions around the United States whose primary task is to insure adherence to federal regulations outlined by the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Technically, these regulations apply only to research conducted with or funded by the DHHS. Most nonexperimental research projects are exempt from these rules. The federal government offers decision charts to help researchers understand whether their research requires IRB approval (DHHS, 2004). IRBs differ among institutions, however, and many have more stringent rules than those outlined in the federal standards (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 315), including rules that impact nonexperimental, qualitative, historical, and participatory forms of research. Therefore, regardless of the nature of one's research, it is important for scholars at US institutions to know the specific protocols that apply to their work.

The historical development and ongoing debates about IRBs in the United States are echoed internationally. For example, counterparts to the Belmont Report, which is a foundational document in the US context, can be found in reports from Norway's National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) and the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR). The Swedish Research Council articulates guidelines for informed consent in much the same manner as the DHHS in the United States (Sveningsson Elm, 2009, p. 71). Ethics review boards at non-US institutions operate in similar ways to IRBs,

and in some cases incorporate standards from US federal agencies. For example, researchers at Canadian universities must seek approval from research ethics boards (REBs), which comply with criteria articulated by a Tri-Council Policy Statement authored by Canadian federal health agencies. Researchers in the United Kingdom seek approval from research ethics committees (RECs), which are governed by the Central Office for Research Ethics Committees. Australia's human research ethics Committees (HRECs) and New Zealand's institutional ethics committees (IECs) are likewise answerable to federal agencies.

Common Critiques of Ethics Review Boards

Despite their laudable intent, ethics review boards have faced scrutiny on institutional, logistical, and philosophical grounds. At the institutional level, critics suggest that such boards may act as filters that favor certain types of research. One study indicates that "politically sensitive" proposals are more likely to be rejected because of the potential impact of research findings (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 316). By the same token, research that appears to support ongoing policy initiatives at the federal level – such as the Rimm pornography study described below – might secure approval more easily. Either way, it is clear that federal regulations can exert undue influence on research agendas.

More broadly, scholars from fields like media studies, sociology, and anthropology argue that social science research is fundamentally different than the biomedical and behavioral research that prompted the development of review boards. Subjection to scrutiny by such boards imposes undue burdens on their work through procedures that even many medical researchers consider confusing, contradictory, and prohibitive. For example, a report from the American Association of University Professors (2006) enumerates incidents of egregious oversight, including one in which an IRB "attempted to deny an MA student her diploma because she did not obtain IRB approval for calling newspaper executives to ask for copies of printed material generally available to the public" and another in which "a linguist seeking to study language development in a preliterate tribe was instructed by the IRB to have the subjects read and sign a consent form before the study could proceed." Since such debates are likely to continue for the foreseeable future, all researchers are well advised to maintain familiarity with the protocols articulated by their home institutions and to understand how these protocols are situated within larger federal and international frameworks.

Media Research: A History of Competing Motives

While avoiding many of the specific biomedical issues that served as an impetus for the formation of ethics review boards, the history of media research is nevertheless

punctuated by its own set of ethical problems. As media research is conducted by commercial and governmental institutions, transnational organizations, communities, and individuals, it is not surprising that questions of motivation and intent have persisted even as methodologies and theoretical paradigms have shifted.

Some of the earliest media research programs were spearheaded by government agencies seeking to manipulate public opinion in support of official policies. In the United States, George Creel's Committee on Public Information launched research programs that aimed at boosting public support for World War I. Working in tandem with the British Propaganda Ministry, these war marketing efforts used fabricated stories to stir the American public from initial pacifism to an aggressive resentment of Germans at home and abroad (Hammer & Kellner, 2009, p. xvi). During World War II, the US War Department conducted experiments to assess the effects of American propaganda films on soldiers. Similar programs continued at major research institutions such as Columbia University, MIT, and Yale (Mody, 2006). Programs such as Yale's Program of Research on Communication and Attitude Change (1946–1961) attempted to understand how opinions and attitudes could be manipulated. Of course, Creel and others defended such efforts as historically justified and appropriately executed. Today, however, many scholars take a dim view of these programs, positioning them as antithetical to the goals of critical media research. Much of today's media scholarship is aimed not at bolstering governmental control of public opinion, but at insuring that emerging technologies and new forms of journalism strengthen the public's influence over governments and corporations.

Ethical issues arise even in projects that aim to empower rather than to manipulate, and where researchers and subjects share mutual goals. Through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example, media scholars attempted to leverage research on behalf of political and economic development in Africa, the Middle East, and India. Beginning in the 1970s, the Kheda Communication Project in India attempted to use mass media to draw attention to unfair agricultural labor practices. While the prize-winning project garnered praise from some scholars, it often yielded troubling results. The program emboldened workers to strike by publicizing their plight. However, their appearance on local media also revealed their identity to farm owners, who then hired paramilitary gangs to burn down the homes of striking workers (Mody, 2006, p. 882). As discussed below with regard to recent participatory research on community radio in Ghana, the possibility that well-intentioned research may put communities in harm's way persists even when such projects are well executed.

Ironically, even media research specifically aimed at understanding and curbing social problems like violence may produce unintended results. Media effects research traces its history to the Payne Fund Studies (1929–1932), which used experiments and questionnaires to study the effects of movies on children's attitudes and behavior. The studies played a key role in justifying the so-called Hays Code in American filmmaking, which were intended to elevate moral discourse by prohibiting inappropriate content. Having led the charge to impose such codes, many religious

groups came to regret their efforts when, for example, the prize-winning 1948 Italian film *The Bicycle Thief* was denied a Production Code Seal because it contained a scene involving urination and another in a bordello (Moore, 1994, p. 230). Ironically, the codes had only succeeded in limiting viewers' exposure to edifying works of art.

Though widely criticized in popular newspapers, the Payne Fund Studies established a "legacy of fear" about the effects of mass media that has had a lasting impact. The Power Rangers study (Boyatzis, Mattillo, & Nesbitt, 1995), which assessed the influence of the popular children's show on aggressive behavior in children, appeared to support the Payne Fund Study results. Other research suggests that media violence can increase fear in children, desensitize children and adults to real-world violence, and lead to a distorted perception of the amount of violence in the world at large (MediaSmarts, n.d.).

The "powerful effects" model of the Payne Fund Studies was succeeded by a "minimal effects" model and, more recently, a "mixed effects" model indicating a highly complex relationship between media and specific behavior. Indeed, the ethical limitations inherent in media violence studies suggest that such research will tend to yield results requiring nuanced interpretation. Since it would clearly be unethical to manipulate research subjects into committing violent crimes, most media violence research is limited to correlational studies (e.g., comparing media use to self-reported violence or arrest records) or studies that focus on "aggression" rather than violence *per se*. The upshot of these limitations is that "if you are curious whether media violence contributes to violent crime, the simple answer to that is we really don't know" (Ferguson, 2010, p. 39).

But media violence research faces obstacles to nuanced interpretation from the often conflicting motivations of advocacy groups who may aim to support specific legislative initiatives and commercial news organizations, where the "legacy of fear" about media effects creates a potential draw for audiences. These competing motives introduce the possibility that politicians, activists, journalists, and researchers themselves may misrepresent research data. For example, Ferguson (2010) criticizes the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for overstating the number of studies linking media violence and aggression and promoting research that suggests teens are prone to "Facebook depression." In the latter case, critics suggest that the AAP has drawn conclusions that the researchers themselves do not support. By the same token, scholars who support certain legislative initiatives might knowingly craft statements to be issued by advocacy organizations (Ferguson, 2007), or feel compelled to oversimplify results in a way that conforms to the soundbite logic of commercial news. Well-meaning journalists face the problem of presenting complicated research results in a way that is accessible to nonacademic audiences. Meanwhile, content producers at advertising-driven websites – where click rates often override concerns about accuracy – are likely to convert nuanced findings into attention-grabbing headlines.

The financial motives that drive marketing and advertising research raise a related set of concerns. Much advertising research is intended to strengthen campaigns that target children (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 384). Marketers suggest that children

as young as six months old can recognize corporate logos and can therefore form brand loyalties before they reach two years of age (Barber, 2007, p. 29). Is it ethical to target children before they have the cognitive capability to understand they are being marketed to? Some scholars have advocated against research intended to support such marketing campaigns. In 1999 one group of psychologists called upon the American Psychological Association to “restrict the use of psychological research designed to help sell toys, snack foods, video games, and other products to kids” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 384). In the United States, concerns about online marketing to children have resulted in federal legislation such as the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), enacted in 2000, which requires advertisers and marketers to secure parental consent before collecting data from children under 13.

Other critics suggest that, even when advertising research is aimed at adults, its financial motives are ideologically at odds with the goal of fostering a media environment that serves the public interest. For example, Jeff Chester (2007) argues that reports issued in the early 2000s by the United States Federal Communications Commission, which supported the deregulation of the telecommunications industry, were fundamentally biased by the researcher’s background in professional advertising.

Given that researchers hold different ideological views about the nature and purpose of governments, markets, and other institutions, it is not surprising that they should hold conflicting views about what constitutes ethical media research. Furthermore, even when they hold motivations and goals in common with their subjects, researchers may fail to anticipate certain consequences of their work. Of course, these are the types of issues that ethics review boards are meant to adjudicate. They do so partly by exercising discretion over whether a project can begin in the first place – for example, by considering potential conflicts of interest – and partly by issuing protocols for how specific methods should be implemented. We turn to the latter concerns about conduct and procedures in the next section.

Basic Protocols in Media Research

Assume that you have considered the broad ethical issues outlined above, and have embarked on a media research project involving a conventional methodology such as a survey, questionnaire, experiment, or field observation. What are some of the basic protocols and principles you will need to observe to conduct your research ethically? As noted in the brief history of research ethics above, the concept of informed consent is central to most research projects across the natural and social sciences. Related concepts include debriefing, anonymity, and privacy. Surveys indicate that the majority of researchers employ basic measures to insure informed consent and privacy, although some procedures are used more consistently than others (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 303).

What does it mean for a research subject to grant his or her informed consent? At minimum, subjects must: be able to make a rational and “mature” decision; know what is going to happen; understand any potential effects; and be free from coercion or pressure (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 304). Given the first concern, research involving children presents unique challenges (Davies & Mosdell, 2006, pp. 114–115). Researchers should not directly initiate contact with children, but should consult parents first. Even when parents grant permission, children should always have the option to withdraw from a study. Parents are often more willing to allow their children to participate in research projects, while children are more hesitant. Parents should not be allowed to coerce or overrule a child’s wishes. When studying children in a school setting, permission from school authorities and possibly local police may be necessary. Attention to local laws is crucial even if the research involves no direct contact with children, such as videotaping from a distance. One undergraduate student learned these rules the hard way: when he attempted to film children leaving their school for a class on visual anthropology, the local police arrived and stopped the project!

The issue of coercion is present even in more mundane situations. Many graduate students and faculty, for example, will conduct research where undergraduates serve as subjects. Students may feel pressured to participate in research projects for fear of getting a bad grade (Greenberg et al., 2003). When conducting such research, it is important that students know they are free to decline participation without negative consequences.

In order for consent to qualify as “informed,” subjects should be made aware of basic information about the research. Ideally, in addition to knowing that participation is voluntary subjects should also know: (1) who is funding or sponsoring the research; (2) what is being studied, and why; and (3) how long the questionnaire, interview, or experiment will be. Of course, providing too much information about a project can affect the validity of the findings. In some cases, if subjects are informed about what the project is studying, the effects being measured can disappear altogether. Also, if too many people opt out of a study, low participation can bias the sample. These concerns should, of course, be kept in mind. By providing sufficient information about the project without revealing too much, researchers can, however, fulfill the basic requirements for informed consent with relative ease. But if written consent is ideal, it is not always necessary or practical – especially in phone interviews or research requiring subject anonymity.

A controversial alternative to informed consent involves the use of deception followed by debriefing. While no data about how often deception is used in media research is available, deception is frequently used in other fields. In fact, one study found that half of the published social psychology research articles from 1969 to 1979 used deception (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 306). Though its use has declined in recent decades, deception is still common in much academic research – especially in social psychological studies where disclosure of the research question may impact the validity of results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 74).

If a researcher determines that the potential benefits of deception outweigh the risks, the research procedure should be followed by a debriefing in which he or she relates important information that had initially been withheld for the sake of securing more accurate data. This practice is especially important in any situation where “subjects’ perceptions or feelings about themselves or others may have been altered by participation in a study” (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 308). For example, in Zillman and Bryant’s (1983) study on pornography, subjects who received “massive exposure” to pornography recommended lighter sentences for convicted rapists. In such cases, researchers have an obligation “to attempt to return their subjects to their pre-participation state” (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 308). Effective debriefing can do more than remove negative effects of the research, in some cases promoting more pro-social or antidiscriminatory behavior. Yet some scholars argue that such methods institutionalize deception, which not only increases cynicism about academic research but breaches basic ethical principles by treating subjects as a means to an end (Greenberg et al., 2003).

The Challenge of Online Environments

As Buchanan (2013) notes, Internet research exists on a continuum that includes studies posing no risks to human subjects and those posing serious danger for subjects whose identity is exposed. Hasinoff’s (2012) research on adolescents’ online sexual behavior, especially “sexting,” exemplifies the former category. The topic is clearly fraught with issues of privacy and consent. In the United States, police have arrested teens and adults for a range of sexting behaviors, including consensual exchanges between teens (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2012). Research on sexting is limited by its very nature, as analyzing primary materials from private sexual exchanges between adolescents (whether images or text messages) would breach basic ethical standards and violate a range of local, state, and federal laws. In fact, one well-respected assistant high school principal was charged with possession of child pornography and other crimes after investigating rumors of sexting between students (Zetter, 2009). Hasinoff approaches these issues by analyzing public debates and legal discourse about sexting, concluding that such discourse largely overlooks the issue of consent between teens and fails to recognize what she calls a “right to sext” (Hasinoff, 2012, p. 159). While some scholars may disagree with her conclusions, her methodological approach is clearly sound since her analysis of court proceedings and news coverage poses no risk to subjects.

In contrast, one of the most egregious examples of privacy violation and deception in online research occurred in the mid-1990s, just as Internet use was becoming more common. The study is cited by Internet ethics experts as an exemplary case of ethical breaches in online research (Buchanan, 2013, p. 88). Originally published in the *Georgetown Law Journal*, the study was conducted by Marty Rimm (1995), then

an undergraduate student at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), with the help of a research team. In summary, Rimm and his team conducted an analysis of the text descriptions of pornographic files posted to various adult bulletin board systems (BBSs) in the United States, along with user data obtained from system operators (“sysops”) and private files on the CMU computer system (Thomas, 1996). The study received news coverage in ABC’s *Nightline* television show, was featured in a *Time* magazine cover story, and was cited in Congressional hearings in support of the Communications Decency Act of 1996.

Yet the Rimm study contains serious ethical violations. It capitalizes on the simple fact that the Internet creates new opportunities for researchers to study marginalized or controversial groups: members of racist or other hate groups, victims or survivors of abuse or disease, or – in this case – consumers of legal and illegal pornographic materials. But the researchers used deceptive means to secure data that was not public, without any processes for securing consent. The research team essentially deceived BBS sysops into providing user data from nonpublic forums and then made broad inferences from these data, suggesting that some may be guilty of pedophilia (Thomas, 1996). In this way the authors engaged in a “public stigmatizing” of their own subjects – in violation of the basic principles of justice and “respect for persons” (Thomas, 1996, p. 193). Pitched with ongoing policy initiatives in mind, the project’s grant proposal highlighted the research’s potential usefulness in prosecuting producers and consumers of pornography – the very subjects of the study (Thomas, 1996). The fact that the study received high-level media and political attention before these issues were raised underscores the concerns outlined above with regard to how motivation and intent may cloud ethical reasoning.

At the time, the Rimm study was unique not only for its ethical lapses but also for its focus on unconventional sources of data. Much early Internet research consisted instead of the migration of conventional methods, like surveys, to digital environments. In the early 2000s, surveys conducted by email and web pages were the most common kind of online research (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 306). While these new platforms generate opportunities for researchers, they also present challenges with regard to the protection of anonymity. When complete anonymity is not possible in offline environments, such as in face-to-face or phone interviews, confidentiality is usually sufficient – researchers might know who the subjects are, but they can insure that personal information will not be disclosed to others. When data is obtained through digital networks and stored in digital form, however, disclosure is harder to prevent. Email presents serious problems, although researchers can use “anonymizer” software tools to hide personal information about research subjects (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 313). Web pages are better than email, but information can still be compromised by hackers and the presence of data “cookies” stored by browser software. Data encryption techniques can help to alleviate these concerns. The use of deception with subsequent debriefing is complicated by the ease with which potential subjects can communicate and share information with each other. Deception is more easily exposed online, and more likely if an online community considers the project

in question to be intrusive. The first person to take a survey could reveal the deception to all other potential subjects, and this could in turn lead to retaliation (Greenberg et al., 2003, pp. 310–311).

Research involving participant observation in newsgroups, chatrooms, and listservs presents more complex challenges. Even when research is limited to the observation and analysis of online conversations, issues of ownership, informed consent, privacy, and disclosure persist. Many scholars argue that it is unnecessary to secure informed consent from subjects whose messages are publicly available, since posting in a publicly accessible forum suggests implicit consent to having others access, analyze, and even publish messages elsewhere (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). This assumption informs the basic protocols of some ethics review boards. In the United States, for example, the analysis of text from Internet blogs does not require IRB approval as long as the researcher does not interview the blog authors or conduct a survey among blog participants (Buchanan, 2013). At the most basic level, this assumption is complicated by the fact that many bloggers exercise some form of copyright, sometimes in the form of a Creative Commons (CC) license, which may prohibit the researcher's use of the data outright or place significant conditions on its use. For example, the blog author's CC license may indicate that others may use their posts only if they give credit to the author by name (Buchanan, 2013).

More often, however, the right to privacy in online interactions is assumed rather than asserted explicitly. As Waskul (1996, p. 129) argues, "private interactions" persist in spite of "public accessibility." Though many chatroom or newsgroup posts are technically available to anyone with Internet access, many such forums have such specific target audiences that participants do not expect their messages to be read by anyone who does not share the basic interests, values, or political commitments of the group. Participants may be upset to learn that their conversations are being recorded and analyzed by a researcher (Sveningsson Elm, 2009). As Buchanan (2009, pp. 89–91) observes, "we would not think of walking into a classroom, for instance, without justification or consent, whereas online, we may walk into a newsgroup or online world without such consent, as our presence, our observation, and our research are less obvious." In this sense while participants bear some responsibility for the public nature of their posts, researchers still have a responsibility to disclose their presence, their intentions, and the nature of their research. Despite the latitude granted by some ethics review boards, researchers should bear in mind that even in ostensibly public forums, it is still unethical to disclose information "in ways in which that person has not consented" (Sharf, 1999, p. 253).

These concerns are especially salient in research with online communities that focus on sensitive topics such as health issues, drug use, or gambling. As Krotoski (2010, p. 3) points out, many such virtual communities exhibit a delicate social ecology that may easily be damaged by any type of research, however well intentioned. Participants may leave in protest at any perceived violation of members' privacy or of the integrity of the social space itself. As Sharf (1999) notes in her account of her research on a breast cancer listserv, securing informed consent in such

communities may be difficult but often yields additional benefits. Sharf spent several weeks contacting participants and securing consent for the use of their messages. Many were willing to provide additional information and clarifications, and a few even provided feedback on Sharf's manuscript drafts. More recent exemplary case studies of ethical conduct in online research – including examination of health-related online communities, personal blogs, online gaming spaces, and Internet gambling – are examined in detail in sources such as the *International Journal of Internet Research Ethics* (Krotoski, 2010).

As people spend more time interacting with social media, search engines, and mobile devices, online behavior also generates unprecedented opportunities for commercial organizations to conduct marketing and advertising research. Issues of privacy and informed consent are the subject of ongoing debate. As Vaidhyanathan (2011, p. 97) notes, "every incentive in a market economy pushes firms to collect more and better data on us." Public comments from high-profile corporate leaders have done little to quell these concerns. Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg famously mused that the social norm of privacy has "evolved over time." Sun Microsystems' Scott McNealy quipped bluntly, "You have zero privacy anyway. Get over it," and Google's Eric Schmidt suggested that "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place" (Popkin, 2010).

Online data does raise difficult questions. Are IP addresses personal data? European Union laws suggest they are, but companies like Google and Yahoo object to these arguments (Buchanan, 2013). What kinds of data can be released? In 2006 AOL released a data set of users' searches, claiming they were anonymous, but the *New York Times* was able to cross-check with other public data and identify users (Buchanan, 2013). Facebook has faced user and consumer rights criticism for similar data releases. What inferences can we draw from users' online activities? Reports suggest that insurance companies have denied coverage, and banks have lowered credit limits, based on speculative inferences drawn from users' online behavior, including their searches (Andrews, 2012).

Many kinds of personal data such as legal records and credit information are available online and are technically "public," but are generally untouched by search engines like Google (Werbin, 2012). Is it acceptable for data aggregation companies to use "robots" to find and compile this data with the intent of selling it to advertisers or employers? In 2012 the US Federal Trade Commission issued an \$800,000 fine to the data collection company Spokeo for failing to comply with federal consumer protection regulations. In fact, US companies are not immune from governmental action from abroad. For example, the changes that Google has made to its privacy policies in recent years have mostly been prompted by European policy officials (Vaidhyanathan, 2011).

The related issue of informed consent is likewise complicated in online environments. While Internet browsers and search engines like Google allow users to opt out of personalization features that rely on data collection, such applications exhibit a "choice architecture" that can make it difficult to understand and change default

settings, thereby nudging users toward greater disclosure (Vaidhyanathan, 2011, pp. 88–89). Even if user choices meet basic standards of informed consent, such decisions are made in changing circumstances – data that is currently private may become public in the future, as when Google purchased Usenet archives and enabled users to search them years after the posts had been submitted (Sveningsson Elm, 2009). In response to these concerns and others, the Internet Rights and Principles Dynamic Coalition (IRP), an international group composed mainly of scholars and activists, drafted a Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet that includes specific language regarding privacy and data protection (IRP, 2011).

Research Ethics 2.0? Review Boards Confront the Challenge of Digital Media

While scholars welcome the efforts of groups like the IPR in translating established human rights principles to the digital environment, institutional review boards have faced challenges in applying such principles in the context of academic research. Formal codes of conduct may be problematic because they can become outdated very quickly. Critics suggest that review board members who are unfamiliar with new technologies may not be equipped to evaluate online research proposals. Often, reviewers attempt to fit Internet behavior and communication into the mold of offline communication, sometimes with results that seem irrational. Jones (2004) notes that in one case a student was asked to provide “a signed informed consent form for each subject in an online chat room,” despite the anonymity of the participants, and was further instructed that since the participants were using multiple identities, she would have to provide a separate consent form for each (p. 181).

The prospect of drafting new rules as new online environments emerge is daunting. The Internet is not a singular space but rather a conglomeration of multiple spaces and formats including email, chatrooms, Usenet groups, instant messages, and multi-user dimensions (MUDs). Even if rules could be established for each unique online space, the question remains as to whether rule-based approaches are always appropriate. Thomas (2004) argues that an emphasis on rules and precepts reduces our sensitivity to context. Ironically, overemphasis on rules can “subvert ethical awareness” (Thomas, 2004, p. 196) by relieving us of contextual ethical thinking and by pushing researchers into a position of wishing or needing to rebel against overly restrictive constraints. Ultimately, Thomas suggests, “no set of rules, formal or otherwise, can provide unambiguous answers to complex ethical questions that often arise” (1996, p. 197). Of course, this criticism applies to most research covered by institutional review. By their very nature, ethics review boards tend to take a legalistic, rule-based approach to research governance (Buchanan, 2013), and this aspect of institutional review is unlikely to change.

Rather than shoehorning offline rules into online environments or rejecting rule-based governance altogether, Buchanan (2013) suggests that the responsiveness and

relevance of governing structures may be improved by incorporating some of the emergent dynamics of online environments. In contrast to the top-down nature of most institutional governance, Internet communication can often be more relationship-based, with social networks emerging “from the ground up” (Buchanan, 2013, pp. 102–103). By learning from the emergent dynamics of networked communication, review boards may envision an “open-source ethics” approach that is more participatory and pluralistic than traditional governance models. As Buchanan argues, “research itself cannot be transformative if the models that govern it remain static” (p. 103).

International groups such as the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) have enabled this type of open-source approach by establishing Internet research as a distinct domain and by articulating ethical frameworks for its conduct (Ess & Association of Internet Researchers, 2002; Markham & Buchanan, 2012). While researchers may still have trouble applying such well-informed guidelines in the complex and rapidly changing context of online environments (Sveningsson Elm, 2009), Buchanan (2009, p. 92) suggests that ongoing discussion and refinements are healthy and that over time, “alternative models of protections will evolve” to address the unique issues of privacy and consent in online spaces. In this sense, what Buchanan (2013, p. 83) calls “Research Ethics 2.0” is a welcome development, involving not simply changes in rules of conduct but also adjustments in the very structure of institutional governance for a wide range of fields.

The Challenge of Participatory and Activist Research

As Buchanan (2013) notes, in many ways the ground-up communication models afforded by digital environments resonate with feminist, communitarian, and activist-oriented research paradigms. Indeed, just as new media technologies complicate conventional ethics protocols, participatory and activist methods present similar challenges by re-envisioning research not as “the transmission of specialized data” but as “a catalyst for critical consciousness” (Christians, 2007, p. 59).

Ethnography has long positioned itself as distinct from the conventional methods that review board protocols are designed to address. While sometimes falling under the discretion of institutional review, much ethnographic and other qualitative research qualifies for expedited review or is exempt. Even if a project is exempt from review, however, professional codes in fields like anthropology stress that issues such as informed consent must not be overlooked by researchers.

Some scholars question whether concerns about informed consent, privacy, and deception always pertain in the context of methods like autoethnography, ethnodrama, and participatory action research, where the traditional researcher/subject distinction is replaced by a voluntary relationship of “reciprocity between two subjects” (Christians, 2007, p. 58). Echoing Denzin (2003, p. 60), Christians argues that

qualitative research exhibiting this type of reciprocity “ought to be excluded from IRB oversight” in the same manner that the Oral History Association (OHA) secured exemption from IRB overview in 2003. Significant ethical issues persist, however, and OHA has implemented its own research guidelines despite its exemption from IRB review. Ethical risks persist in post-ethnographic work as well, and, in fact, the political nature of much critical qualitative work – especially its engagement with marginalized groups and its vision of a “social ethics of resistance” (Christians, 2007, p. 56) – suggest that such research may involve significant risks for researchers and their communities of affiliation.

The perception of mutual interest and reciprocity is fraught with political and cultural tensions. Which set of persons, organizations, or institutional structures are best qualified to assess the reciprocity of research–subject relationships, and which protocols should be observed to maintain it during the project? Even if the voluntary and reciprocal nature of a project can be insured, the vulnerable nature of many marginal communities surely means that issues of consent, privacy, and confidentiality cannot be overlooked.

In their account of a successful, grant-funded participatory action project in Ghana, researchers from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) demonstrate how such issues can be addressed effectively in projects built on a firm foundation of trusting relationships and clarity of purpose (Harvey, Burns, & Oswald, 2012). Using the methods of participatory action research, IDS worked closely with the Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN) in an initiative called Climate Airwaves, the purpose of which was to “create a space to share knowledge on the causes, impacts, and responses to climate change, and to advocate for social and political change in response to these issues” (Harvey et al., 2012, p. 103). GCRN had worked with IDS previously, and suggested action research as the preferred method for the project (Harvey et al., 2012).

In collaboration with the local community, the project leaders decided to focus on the issues of coastal erosion and falling crop yields. Project leaders incorporated station broadcasters, community members, and local authorities into the investigation and analysis of these ecological concerns, producing a “holistic analysis attentive to the role of power in shaping people’s vulnerability or resilience to climactic impacts” (Harvey et al., 2012, p. 112). Without this holistic approach, the researchers argue, analysis of the erosion and crop yield problems would have focused on solutions (such as a sea wall defense) that would have neglected the needs of local communities.

During the process of investigation, however, the researchers note that GCRN faced sensitive decisions about how to protect the anonymity of community members in its broadcasts, especially when touching on “politically charged issues” (Harvey et al., 2012, p. 109). At the same time, since GCRN stations strive to remain neutral with regard to party politics, the researchers had to insure that their inquiry process did not make stations appear partisan. Ultimately, the project teams navigated these issues effectively, and they not only yielded proposals that highlighted the needs of

local communities but sparked new dialogue between community members and traditional authorities where conflict and secrecy had previously prevailed (Harvey et al., 2012). The research yielded valuable insights for media scholars, demonstrating first that radio can bolster the aims of action research by generating new lines of inquiry based on community feedback, and second that action research can help broadcasters to envision new models for long-term investigative projects that more directly serve the needs of local communities.

IDS researchers devoted significant attention to ethical concerns before executing the Ghana project. While IDS has its own ethics panel, it is typically reserved for larger-scale projects. However, as a requirement for securing funding the researchers conducted extensive discussions regarding ethical issues with Carleton University, in conjunction with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Moreover, dialogue regarding ethical issues unfolded with GCRN and the World Association of International Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) during the development of the research proposal, including concerns about engagement with broadcasters and community entry (B. Harvey, personal communication, January 17, 2013).

The IDS community radio project suggests that the goal of “transformative social change” may, in fact, be pursued effectively within the context of grant-funded research that is typically subject to rigorous review (Harvey et al., 2012, p. 101). Furthermore, it demonstrates that issues of anonymity and potential harm to local activists and media organizations persist even when the relationship between researchers and local communities is one of mutual interest established over time. As with Internet research, the ethical issues in emergent research models are often unique and many institutional boards have yet to fully appreciate the ethical concerns raised by post-ethnographic studies. Rather than pursuing a “policy of strict territorialism” (Christians, 2007, p. 60), however, institutional boards may benefit from sustained dialogue with organizations that are well versed in their proper execution. As Buchanan (2009) indicates with regard to Internet research ethics, alternative models of protection may evolve over time.

Certain critical ethnographic projects may ultimately be exempt from review. Even in such cases, however, researchers are well advised to follow the guidelines provided in professional codes of ethics such as those articulated by the American Anthropological Association. Additional case studies and guidance for navigating the ethical terrain of critical ethnographic studies is available in sources such as D. Soyini Madison’s *Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics, and Performance* (2011).

Accepting the Challenge of Media Research Ethics

As the cases in this chapter demonstrate, all forms of media research involve significant ethical considerations, from the mundane “Is my project exempt from institutional review?” to the philosophical “What is the social benefit of my research?”

These questions are part of an ongoing debate that reaches beyond media research to the broad historical, cultural, and political contexts in which the field arose. While all scholars will encounter some portion of this spectrum of issues, many can proceed in their chosen line of inquiry without venturing too deeply into the thickets of institutional protocols, professional codes, emerging technologies, funding, or post-ethnographic critique. Yet it behooves all media scholars to achieve some level of literacy in all of these areas. Researchers are accountable for the social impact of their work and, as suggested at the outset of this chapter, questions of motivation and intent are among the first that researchers should consider. The persons and communities studied by researchers should never be a means to an end, whether personal or professional, but an end in themselves. The goal of research is the enhancement of human flourishing.

As such, the theoretical and philosophical frameworks that inform one's work should not be taken for granted as settled matters but as contested sites requiring self-reflection and continued engagement with a diverse community of scholars. For this reason it is beneficial for students and faculty to forge personal and professional relationships that cross disciplinary and ideological boundaries. At the same time, one should not assume that any particular line of research will remain untouched by the "mission creep" of ethics review boards and other institutional structures. It is important to at least remain aware of, if not become actively involved in, debates about the overall reach of, as well as the specific rules outlined by, professional organizations. Just as technological forms and protocols can become locked in over time, so too can the guiding philosophies and logistical protocols of academic organizations. Change becomes more difficult to enact once critical junctures have passed. As Buchanan (2013, p. 103) suggests, "researchers should not turn away from their ethics boards; instead, they should work in tandem to forge the next generation of research ethics, one that still embraces core principles while creating new opportunities for important research endeavors." Doing so may indeed be difficult, as speaking truth is a matter of conviction, commitment, and often courage. To remain aware and engaged in this manner, and to encourage others to do so as well, is to accept the challenge of media research ethics.

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Doing Survey Research in Media Studies

Suman Mishra

ABSTRACT

Survey research is a widely used methodology for collecting quantitative data and is particularly useful for conducting research in communication and media studies. This essay provides an overview of survey methodology, its historical background, and its uses in communication and media studies. It explains some of the basic concepts in survey design such as sample, sampling procedures, questionnaire design, and modes of distribution of questionnaires. It also provides a guideline for conducting survey research and discusses some of the unique challenges faced by survey researchers both within a single country and internationally when conducting cross-cultural survey research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical issues in survey research.

Information is a valuable commodity that is of great importance to governments, businesses, and institutions. Thus information is constantly being gathered using various techniques, tools, and methods all over the world. Anybody who uses the Internet today has seen or filled out a survey asking for their opinions on topics ranging from the trivial (celebrity dress and cat videos) to more serious social, political, and economic issues. Most people today have also seen the use of survey techniques to measure television viewing or public opinion on political candidates and

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems174

issues, or in market research to understand public attitudes toward products, brands, or advertising campaigns. However, most of the surveys we encounter in our everyday lives are not conducted in a scientific manner, and thus their results are skewed, biased, and not generalizable to the population that is being studied.

A scientific survey methodology is a *quantitative research* method that uses a well-designed *questionnaire* to collect data from a *representative sample* in order to *generalize* to a *population*. Media researchers who want to use survey methodology for their study must carefully examine the issues surrounding *survey questions and instrument design, sampling, data collection*, and *analysis* in order to reduce error and to increase the precision of their findings. In addition, media researchers who want to conduct global or cross-cultural research to compare data across countries must take into account differences in language and culture that affect survey design and responses.

This chapter covers the history of survey methodology, focusing on its use in media and media studies, discusses when to use survey methodology, provides procedures for conducting a survey, discusses some of the unique challenges in conducting survey research in general and in conducting cross-cultural survey research in particular, and concludes with a discussion of the ethical issues in survey research.

History and Uses of Survey Methodology in Media Studies

Historically, the need for surveys in the United States began with article 1, section 2 of the US Constitution (Converse 2009; Groves 2011), which says:

Representation and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers . . . The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct.

This requirement of a decennial census was meant to aid proportional representation in the House of Representatives as well as in the appropriation of taxes. A *census*, which involves gathering information from every individual in the population, has been a great source of information for making decisions in the governmental realm. Today, however, individuals and institutions use census data for purposes such as the distribution of federal funds; planning for hospitals, schools, transportation, and other services; the understanding of labor supply, migration, and urbanization; the delivery of goods and services; the planning of political campaigns; the setting up of businesses and retail outlets; and the delivery of catalogs and direct mail. A census, although it may be desirable to study populations, is difficult to administer and

requires massive resources to conduct. Most people cannot undertake a census; thus they study smaller groups or samples to fulfill the research need.

Media's use of surveys began in the nineteenth century when newspapers wanted to find out the voting preference of their local audience (Martin, 1984). The early polls were mostly local, less scientific by today's standards, and dealt with voters' choice in an election rather than with public opinion on issues. Newspapers such as the Harrisburg *Pennsylvanian* and the Raleigh *Star* conducted public polls before the presidential elections, and other newspapers and magazines such as the *Boston Globe*, *Farm Journal*, and the *Literary Digest* followed suit (Martin, 1984). Data were often gathered using questionnaires that were published in newspapers and magazines for readers to fill out and mail in, or interviewers were sent to people's homes. These kinds of surveys and polls reflected the views of the subscribers of those magazines and newspapers, not quite those of the general public. Nevertheless, journalists found the polls useful as they added credibility and weight to their news stories (Groves, 2011).

The modern survey methodology that uses a small subset of the population, the *sample*, to represent the population was developed in the twentieth century. Groves (2011) describes three distinct eras of development of modern survey research. In the first era (1930–1960), the basic components of survey design and statistical analysis was invented. The second era (1960–1990) saw the wide implementation of survey methodology in areas such as social science, political science, consumer research, and market research. Researchers from different fields often used survey methodology to gather information for the US federal government and to make business decisions. In the third era (1990 to the present), Internet technologies began to be used to gather data quickly and easily. Even though mobile and web technologies make it easy to conduct surveys, researchers are finding that people's participation in survey research is declining, which poses challenges for survey researchers (Groves, 2011).

Empirical survey research in media studies began in the early part of the twentieth century. The credit for growth and development of modern surveys is given to several individuals. Among them are Paul Lazarsfeld and George Gallup. Walter Lippman's seminal work *Public Opinion* (1922) laid the groundwork for media studies and media research. His writings focused on media's influence on public perception and public policy. Thus began a series of research to understand media's influence on the public. One of the prominent social scientists who studied mass communications using survey methodology was Paul Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld established the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University to study the importance of radio, the new medium of the time, in the lives of listeners. His work focused on understanding the voting behavior of the public and the persuasive appeal of mass media. Lazarsfeld's works, *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948) and *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) broke new ground in mass communication research in the 1940s and 1950s. The two-step flow theory, the role of the opinion leaders in mediating the influence of media, and media's role in creating a

passive audience – described as “narcotizing dysfunction” – are just a few of his paradigm shifting contributions to media research. Lazarsfeld not only contributed to the development of media theories; he also developed panel studies and contextual analysis and perfected the survey methodology. He trained many researchers at his Bureau of Applied Social Research in Columbia University and inspired the establishment of many institutional research centers within the United States and abroad (Merton, 1979). Institutional research centers such as the NORC at the University of Chicago and the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan today conduct local and national surveys on a regular basis. Converse (2009) notes that there are more than 2,000 nonprofit research centers and many more for-profit research firms.

The other person who helped develop survey methodology was George Gallup. Gallup rose to national prominence in 1936 when he correctly predicted Franklin Roosevelt’s win over Alfred Landon for the US presidency, contradicting the predictions made by *Literary Digest*, the leading poll of that time. This event gave credibility to scientific polling methods, which did not just rely on large numbers of respondents but used a representative sample (Gallup, n.d.; Gallup & Rae, 1940). Gallup applied survey research methodology in many areas of media research, including newspaper readership, radio listenership, print and television ad effectiveness. He also tested the appeal of Hollywood story ideas among the public (Gallup, n.d.).

Over a period of time, surveys became one of the most popular research methodologies. These were used in political polling; media audience studies; estimating audience size for newspapers, magazines, television, and so on; testing advertising effectiveness, brand awareness, market share; and other forms of consumer research. Survey research methodology is also popular among media scholars in academia who often study the social effects of media. For example, George Gerbner’s famous studies on the effects of television violence on the public included survey methodology (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980).

When to Select Survey Methodology

There are many research methodologies available to media researchers. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses. Survey methodology is best suited for studies where the goal is to produce *quantifiable* and *generalizable* results, particularly results that can help in decision making and policy implementation. There are, of course, times when the researcher is not concerned with numerical precision and just wants to get a feel for an issue, idea, or opinion. In these cases too survey methodology can be helpful. Survey methodology can be used for exploration, description, and explanation (Adams, 1989). It can help to demonstrate correlational links between the variables. However, researchers should not rely on survey methodology to prove

causation. Causation can be best demonstrated using experimental research methodology.

Procedure for Conducting a Survey

Survey methodology starts with the research question the researcher wants to answer. It then involves making decisions on study design, the mode of administering the survey, whom to survey, what kind of questions to ask, and how to ask them. While these are important for all studies involving survey methodology, cross-cultural survey studies have an additional layer of complexity. Cross-cultural researchers have to think about issues of *equivalency* for their data to be comparable across the countries or cultures being studied. Thus they have to strive for *sample* equivalence, *linguistic* and *conceptual* equivalence, and *metric* or *instrument* equivalence (Choudhry, 1986; De Mooij, 2010; Douglas & Craig, 1983; Mueller, 2006). These will all be discussed later in the chapter.

Selecting a Study Design

There are two main types of survey study designs, cross-sectional and longitudinal. The purpose of the study determines the study design. Cross-sectional studies are done once to fulfill the information need. *Longitudinal studies* collect data from a sample over a period of time. Longitudinal studies often measure the same sets of variables over a time period and help in noting changes in attitudes, opinions, or behaviors. Even though longitudinal studies tell us the trend or changes that are taking place, they do not tell us why the changes are occurring. Changes in a population occur for various reasons. They can be due to the natural growth of individuals as they move through the life cycle or to a circumstance or major event in their life. *Cross-sectional studies* are more common among media researchers than longitudinal studies because they serve the need for current data and provide a snapshot of a population at a given time. They are also quicker, cheaper, and require fewer resources to carry out. Longitudinal studies are time-consuming and costly to conduct.

There are three basic kinds of longitudinal studies: trend, cohort, and panel studies. *Trend studies* involve studying a population at different times. Smith (1980) did a trend survey from 1946 to 1976 called “America’s most important problem” to understand changes in long-term and short-term public concern. *Cohort studies* involve collecting data over a period of time from the same subgroup of the population (called a cohort). Cohorts are basically people who are linked together in some way, for example a high school graduating class of 2013. Here the researchers don’t have to collect data from the same individuals over a period of time. Instead they can collect data from anyone in the cohort. Rentz, Reynolds, and Stout (1983) studied

a cohort to understand how aging affects the consumption of soft drinks. The Centre for Longitudinal Studies in the United Kingdom often conducts cohort studies. One of their studies is the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which involves 19,000 children born in the United Kingdom in 2000–2001, to understand the diverse issues affecting this generation (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, n.d.). *Panel studies* differ from cohort and trend studies in that they involve gathering information over a period of time from the same sample of respondents (called a panel). In cohort and trend studies, different individuals may be surveyed but in panel studies the same individuals are often studied. The University of Michigan has been conducting a panel study since 1968, the longest panel study in the world, called the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). It involves a study of 18,000 individuals living in 5,000 families. There are shorter panel studies too. Aubrey (2006) conducted a two-year study exploring the effects of sexually objectifying media on self-objectification among a panel of undergraduate students.

Assessing the Mode of Delivering the Questionnaire

Researchers have to think in advance about how to deliver the questionnaire to the respondents. Survey researchers commonly administer surveys in person, also called in-depth interviews (IDIs) or face-to face interviews, by mail, by phone, or over the Internet using emails or websites. The choice of the mode through which to administer surveys depends on several factors such as speed, cost, comfort level of the respondents with the mode, literacy level, sensitive nature of the questions, and whether the researcher wants to incorporate audio, video, or any other graphics in the survey.

Email and web surveys are much faster to administer than mail surveys. Surveys conducted in person are much more expensive than mail, Internet, or phone surveys. If the population from which the researcher wants to collect data is not comfortable using the Internet or does not have access to a computer, this is not a viable option for delivery. Similarly, mail and Internet surveys are not the best options for collecting data from people who are illiterate or less educated. In this case in-person interviews might be necessary. If the research involves asking sensitive questions such as those related to sex or diseases, face-to-face collection of data can make the respondent uncomfortable. In this case mail or Internet surveys might be the best option. Media studies often involve noting reactions to images, audios, and videos. This can limit the options that the researcher has. One can play or show the images on a computer during a face-to face session to note the reaction or administer it over the Internet. Web technologies have made it much easier to incorporate videos and graphics in a survey, which can be sent to the respondents to watch, after which they can answer the related questions. However, if the graphics or videos are of a sensitive or sexual nature, the researcher needs to think in advance where the respondents are likely to

access the survey: at home or in a public area. College students often use college facilities such as libraries or computers in a public area to do their work and might feel embarrassed watching sexual content in a public area. In this case, before the video is played, it is important to warn the audience about the nature of the content. More pros and cons of using a particular option to administer a survey are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Advantages and disadvantages of different modes of administering a survey

Face-to-face interviews	Telephone survey
<i>Advantages</i> • Gets a good response rate • Allows interviewers to clarify questions and to probe further for more details • Visuals and audio can be incorporated • Open-ended and lengthy questionnaire possible <i>Disadvantages</i> • Requires training of interviewers • Costly and time-consuming • Interviewer bias is difficult to avoid • Reaching some locations physically might be difficult • Eliciting a response to sensitive questions may be difficult	<i>Advantages</i> • Relatively cheap and fast to conduct • Greater response rate than mail surveys <i>Disadvantages</i> • Cannot reach people without phones or those registered with the “do not call” registry • Requires training of telephone interviewers • No visuals can be incorporated • Open-ended and lengthy questionnaire not possible • People screen calls; this affects response rate
Mail survey	Online/web survey
<i>Advantages</i> • Relatively cheap to conduct • Allows for anonymity • Sensitive questions can be asked • Respondents can answer questions at their own pace • Allows for a wider geographic reach <i>Disadvantages</i> • Takes longer to conduct • Respondents do not always return the questionnaire • Low response rate • Respondents need to be literate	<i>Advantages</i> • Fast, efficient, and less expensive • Allows interactivity and incorporation of audio and video material • Multiple contingency questions can be incorporated without confusing the respondents • Reaches people in a wide geographic area • Can help avoid interviewer bias • Anonymity allows for sensitive questions to be asked <i>Disadvantages</i> • Respondents have to have access to computer and Internet technologies • Respondents need to be literate and comfortable with web technologies • Sampling difficult, as there is no national framework of Internet users • Low response rate

Selecting a Sample

In research it is neither practical nor feasible to collect data from every individual in the population one wishes to study. Thus sampling techniques were developed to select a sample from the population that accurately represents the population. A *population* is an entire group of people a researcher wishes to study. A *sample* is obtained from a list of individuals in a population. Whenever a sample is chosen from the population and not the entire population, there is always a chance that the sample does not accurately represent the population. This is referred to as *sampling error*. Sampling error can be reduced by increasing the sample size and by employing a scientific sampling procedure.

To select a sample from the population involves making decisions about some key issues such as the *sample frame*, the use of *probability or nonprobability sampling procedure*, the actual *sample size*, and the *response rate*. In cross-cultural research, the researcher also has to establish *sample equivalence*, that is, a sample in one country should match the sample in another country. De Mooij (2010) notes that a student sample that is generally considered similar across nations might not be so similar. For example, students in the United States generally live on campus, in Europe they live independently, and in Asia they often live with their parents. In addition, students in nations with a large income disparity often represent the upper strata of the society. Thus student samples across the world might not be similar.

Sample Frame

A sample frame consists of individuals or units from the population from which a sample is selected. A researcher normally does not have direct access to the population, so he or she relies on the sample frame to select a sample. Some of the commonly used sampling frames are: a list of registered voters, employment files, a list of driver's license holders, a telephone directory, a list of students enrolled in a university, and a list of organizations. The quality of the sample frame affects the quality of the sample. A sample frame should be selected based on its comprehensiveness in representing the population, probability of selection, and efficiency with which one can make the selection (Fowler, 2009).

Sampling Procedure

Once the researcher has selected the sample frame, the researcher has to decide how to select individuals or individual units to make up the sample. The two main techniques for drawing individuals for a sample from a sample frame are *probability* and *nonprobability sampling*.

Probability Sampling

Probability sampling procedures are considered more scientific and statistically precise, as they allow the researcher to calculate *sampling error* – the difference between sample characteristics and the population characteristics. In probability sampling each individual or individual unit has an equal chance of being selected. Thus the assumption is that random selection will lead to bias free selection of the sample that better represents the population one is trying to study. *Simple random sampling*, *systematic sampling*, *stratified random sampling*, and *cluster sampling* are common approaches to probability sampling.

Simple random is the basic probability sampling technique that is often described as similar to drawing a sample out of a hat. For example, if a researcher's sampling frame includes a list of 1,000 individuals from which he or she has to draw a sample of 100 individuals, the names of all 1,000 individuals will be first placed in a container for drawing. Then 100 names will be picked at random from the container, which is the sample for the study.

Researchers are also known to use a table of random numbers to generate a simple random sample. For telephone surveys, a simple random sample is often obtained through the process of *random digit dialing* (RDD). There are various ways for obtaining a sample through random digit dialing. The Pew Research Center explains its RDD process for landlines (Pew Research, 2013): "This method uses random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of the area code, telephone exchange, and bank number. A bank is defined as 100 contiguous telephone numbers, for example 800-555-1200 to 800-555-1299."

Systematic sampling is similar to simple random sample, but here the researcher first determines who will be included in the sample by calculating a fraction. For example, if the researcher wants a sample size of 100 from a list of 1,000 individuals, he or she first divides 100 by 1,000 to get $1/10$. This fraction suggests that 1 out of every 10 individuals needs to be selected in order to get a sample of 100. This is also known as the *sampling interval*. To determine a starting point for selecting a sample from the 1,000 listed in the sampling frame, the researcher picks any random number that falls within the sampling interval, which in this example is any number between 1 and 10. This is done to insure the selection process is by chance and not based on any judgment or bias. Let's say that the random number chosen is 4. The number 4 then becomes the starting point for sample selection, and every 10th individual on the list after 4 is included in the sample, that is, those listed as number 14, 24, 34, and so on till one obtains a sample size of 100.

Stratified random sampling is best used when one needs to highlight certain subgroups within a population or to maintain a certain proportion of subgroups in a sample. It is used, for example, if the researcher is interested in studying differences in attitude toward obesity between various subgroups of the US population or an advertiser is trying to study various target groups for a product. In these cases it is useful to have representatives from subgroups such as African Americans, Hispanics,

Native Americans, and White Americans in the sample. In order to insure a representative sample, it might be useful to first divide the population into subgroups, or *stratum*, and then randomly select the same proportion of individuals from each stratum that one finds in the population. This insures that the sample represents the racial makeup of the population.

Cluster sampling is best used when a complete list of the population is difficult to construct or when the population naturally lives in clusters, such as college students. Cluster sampling is frequently used for studying public health issues. In cluster sampling the population is usually divided by geographic locations, regions, districts, counties, or postal zip codes, commonly referred to as *clusters*, and clusters are randomly selected for the study rather than individual units.

Nonprobability Sampling

Sometimes the researcher might just want to conduct an exploratory study to get a feel for what people are thinking or how they react to products and packaging. In this case the researcher is not concerned with numerical precision or accurate representation. So he or she would use some form of convenience sampling procedure to select a sample. The advantage of using nonprobability sampling procedures is that it helps to get a sample quickly and cheaply, but the disadvantage is that the sample obtained through this procedure is often skewed in terms of demographics or psychographics. For example, media researchers in academia often use university students as a sample because they have easy access to them, and students are more willing to participate for the extra credits they gain. However, university students do not accurately represent the adult population even though most university students are adults. Similarly, when journalists use websites for their opinion polls and “person on the street” interviews to get a quick feel for an issue, the characteristics of the respondents who participate in the poll most likely do not represent the characteristics of the population. Even though the sample obtained using the nonprobability sampling procedure is not mathematically precise, it is still useful for media research. There are various forms of nonprobability sampling procedures: *purposive*, *convenience*, *haphazard*, *volunteer*, *judgment*, *quota*, and *snowball sampling*.

In *purposive sampling* researchers select respondents based on certain criterion or characteristics, such as purchase behavior, interests, and so on. People who meet the criterion are selected for the study, while others are eliminated. For example, a researcher wanting to know why women buy brand X shampoo might only include those women who have purchased brand X in the past, while other men and women are not selected.

In *convenience or haphazard sampling*, there is no specific criterion for selection. It is based on ease of access to the sample or practical convenience.

These days television hosts and radio stations often ask their viewers to go online to participate in polls or to give their opinions of a topic. Individuals volunteer to be part of the study. This procedure is called *volunteer sampling*. Volunteer sampling technique, even though convenient, has all the flaws of a nonprobability sampling

technique. For example, one does not know who is participating in the study. Wimmer and Dominick (2010) note the unethical behavior of radio stations that respond to the volunteer call of competitive radio stations and intentionally provide fake information to cause them to make wrong decisions.

Judgment or expert sampling involves the subjective judgment of the researcher or an expert in selection of a sample.

In *quota sampling*, nonrandom sampling is done to fulfill a certain quota or limit. For example, if the researcher wants a sample of 100 individuals for a study and knows that the university population is 45 percent male and 55 percent female, he or she might sample until the quota of 45 males and 55 females is met. This is called *proportional quota sampling*. In *nonproportional quota sampling* one is not concerned with the sample proportions matching the population proportion. The goal is to have enough males and females to make up the sample of 100. Quota sampling is in some ways similar to stratified sampling, except that the selection is nonrandom and is based on ease of access.

Snowball sampling involves identifying someone who meets the criteria that the researcher is looking for and then asking him or her to recommend others who also meet the criteria. This technique is useful for studying populations that are not easily accessible, such as homeless individuals, drug dealers, and illegal or undocumented immigrants. Having access to such an individual and gaining his or her trust can help in getting access to others for the study.

Selecting a Sample Size

The most common dilemma for a researcher is to determine the sample size for the study. There is no consensus among researchers on the sample size. The frequent sample size one comes across for a national survey ranges from 1,000 to 1,500 participants, and for a local survey the size is about 500. Fowler (2009) suggests that sample size should be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the margin of error the researcher is willing to tolerate and the level of precision he or she wants. Wimmer and Dominick (2010) list seven factors that determine the sample size: *project type, purpose, and complexity; amount of error tolerated; time and financial constraints; and previous research on the topic area*. There are many books on statistics that contain charts or published tables and formulas that can help media researchers determine the size of the sample for their study (see Comrey & Lee, 1992; Fowler, 2009; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). In addition, sampling statisticians can also guide media researchers in this area.

Designing a Questionnaire

Designing a questionnaire to collect data from sample respondents is an important part of survey design. The key issues in questionnaire development are *what questions*

to ask and how to ask them, what measurement scales to use, and the appearance of the questionnaire.

The first and foremost issue in writing a good questionnaire is defining the key concepts one wishes to study. We often use the terms “attitudes,” “values,” “beliefs,” “liberal,” “conservative,” “self-esteem,” and so on in our daily lives. However, understanding of the meaning of these terms differs from person to person. Media researchers need to clarify and clearly define these concepts for a common understanding between the researcher and the survey respondent.

Let’s take the example of a researcher trying to study violence in video games. The term “violence” can mean different things to different individuals. For example, it can include physical, mental, verbal, and sexual violence. Even within physical violence, pushing and shoving is not the same as shooting, murder, and rape. Thus a questionnaire eliciting a response on violence in video games might get varied responses based on the individual’s understanding of the concept. It is thus important for a researcher to provide a *conceptual* and an *operational definition* of the concepts he or she is trying to study.

A *conceptual definition* includes identifying and defining key constructs of a concept. For example, what do the concepts “attitude” and “violence” mean? One can use the definitions used by other scholars or, when necessary, come up with a new definition. For example, Gerbner and his colleagues defined violence as “an overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against ones will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing” (Signorielli, Gross, & Morgan, 1982, p. 163). Similarly, the concept of “attitude” toward advertising can be defined as “a learned predisposition to respond in the consistently favorable or unfavorable manner to advertising in general” (Lutz, 1985, p.53).

When measuring a concept in a cross-cultural media research, the researcher needs also to establish *conceptual equivalency*. For example, the concept of “family” differs in different parts of the world. Family in the United States usually refers to a nuclear family, in which there is a mother, a father, and children, but in many Asian countries “family” may include uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins (Mueller, 2010).

An *operational definition* involves creating actual measurements for a concept. For example, the concept of an “attitude” toward an ad can be measured by asking very specific questions, such as whether the ad was good, interesting, informative, appropriate, easy to understand, and objective (Henthorne, Latour, & Natarajan, 1993). When measuring a concept, the researcher should make sure the measurements are reliable and valid. *Reliability* refers to the consistency of the measure. In other words, if the same measure is used multiple times to measure a concept, it should consistently yield the same result, just as a good weighing scale does when measuring the weight of a person. *Validity* refers to the accuracy of the measurement: is the measurement measuring what it is supposed to measure? If a researcher is trying to study attitudes but is measuring behaviors, the measurement is not valid.

When it comes to measurement of variables, it is not always necessary to develop one's own measurement scales. Many researchers find it convenient to use standard measurement scales created by other researchers in the fields of mass communication, sociology, psychology, and market research instead of creating their own scales for measuring concepts. There are many handbooks on measurement scales that media survey researchers can use, for example, *Handbook of Marketing Scales: Multi-Item Measures for Marketing and Consumer Behavior Research*, edited by Bearden, Netemeyer, and Kelly (2011); *Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes*, edited by Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman (1991); and *Communication Research Measures: A Sourcebook*, edited by Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher (2009). The advantages of these measurements are that they have been tested for their reliability and validity. However, they may not be suitable for the researcher's particular needs. In that case, the measurements have to be developed or adapted.

Types of Questions

A survey researcher can ask open-ended or closed-ended questions. *Open-ended questions* elicit detailed answers from a respondent. The following questions are examples of open-ended questions:

- Tell me about . . .
- What do you think would happen if . . . ?
- What television programs do you normally watch?
- Why did you vote for Hillary Clinton in the 2008 presidential election?

Closed-ended questions, on the other hand, ask respondents to select from a given set of options provided by the researcher. For example,

Please circle your choice by answering "yes" or "no" to the following question:

Did you vote for Hillary Clinton in the 2008 presidential election?

Yes

No

Levels of Measurements

Media researchers have the option of using various levels of measurement to measure variables. There are four levels of measurement: *nominal*, *ordinal*, *interval*, and *ratio*. The nominal level of measurement is the weakest or lowest level, followed by ordinal, interval, and ratio level, which is the highest or strongest level of measurement.

Nominal is the weakest level of measurement because attributes of a variable can only be put in *categories* and assigned numerical values. For example, the variable

“sex” has two attributes, “male” and “female.” Here it is difficult to say which attribute ranks higher than the other. The kinds of statistical analyses that can be performed on a nominal level measurement are very limited.

The *ordinal* level of measurement is more precise than the nominal level. Here attributes of a variable can be ordered by rank but the distance between the attributes does not have any meaning. For example, respondents can be asked to rank their preference for a television program from 1 to 5. The researcher can then calculate which of the five programs is the most preferred of those given to respondents. However, he or she cannot conclude that the difference in preference for the television programs ranked 1 and 2 is the same as for those ranked 3 and 4.

The *interval* measures distance between the attributes, distance that has meaning. In media studies, verbal rating scales such as the Likert scales and the semantic differential scales are the most commonly used of interval scales.

The *Likert scale* is a five-point scale that was initially used by Likert to measure intelligence in survey research. However, since then it has been used for measuring various other subjective ideas. In this scale, respondents normally indicate their level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 5. For example,

I am satisfied with my cell phone carrier:				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957) developed the seven-point *semantic differential scale*. It is a bipolar scale with contrasting adjectives at each end of the scale, for example:

This advertising campaign is:								
Very bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Excellent

Ratio is the strongest and the most precise level of measurement. Ratio measurements have an absolute zero and the distance between the numbers is meaningful. For example, as on a measuring tape, the distance between 1 and 2 inches and between 2 and 3 inches is the same, and 2 inches is twice 1 inch. Income, age, years of experience, and length of stay are some examples of ratio level measurement. It is possible to have a zero income or zero years of experience. Ratio measurements allow for various kinds of mathematical calculations such as fractions, which can be useful for a researcher to gain precise insights.

Questionnaire Wording

In order to get complete and accurate information from the respondents, the questions should be clearly worded and free of jargon so that they mean the same thing

to every respondent. Media studies, like other fields, has its jargon and abbreviations which most people outside the field do not understand. These should either be avoided or clearly explained to the respondents.

When writing a question, it is best to use natural and familiar language, and the researcher should avoid inadequate question wording or asking “loaded” or leading questions, double-barreled questions, or questions with double negatives, in order to reduce errors and bias in responses.

Inadequate question wording is when a researcher does not ask a complete question. For example, the specific question “What was your age on your last birthday?” instead of just “Age?” (Fowler, 2009, p. 89) would elicit a more accurate response.

“Loaded” or leading questions bias respondents to think and respond in a particular way. Loaded words are usually emotionally charged words that bring out a strong positive or negative reaction. Calling a plant a weed brings out negative reaction toward the plant. Other examples include: “bureaucrat”/“public servant,” “pro-life”/“pro-choice,” “regime”/“government,” “estate tax”/“death tax,” “undocumented workers”/“illegal aliens,” and “elitist”/“expert” (Heller, 2002; Luntz, 2006). Leading questions force respondents to answer in a particular way. For example, a question phrased as “Don’t you agree that pilots should earn more money than they currently do?” leads respondents to answer in a particular way. It would be better to rephrase it as “Do you believe pilots’ salaries are a little lower than they should be, a little higher than they should be, or about right?”

Double-barreled questions often address two or more issues in a single question, which makes it difficult for respondents to answer accurately. For example, “Do you want to be rich and famous?” (Fowler, 2009, p. 94) and “Do you think the city should build more schools and parks?” The respondent might want to be rich but not famous. He or she might support the idea of building more schools but not parks. But these two questions do not offer respondents the option of responding to the two issues separately. It is thus important to ask the questions separately. The use of the word “and” in a question should be evaluated.

Double-negative questions – for example, “I disagree that children should not be allowed to participate in reality television program” – are confusing to respondents because they use two negatives in one statement.

In addition to these, *cross-cultural researchers* have to understand language, language subtleties, and common usage of words, signs, and symbols in another country in order to write a good questionnaire. George Bernard Shaw famously said, “England and America are two countries separated by a common language.” People from English-speaking countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia often discuss their experiences of misunderstanding some of the common expressions, phrases, and words in each other’s country. Rubber can mean an eraser in one country (United Kingdom) and a condom in another (United States). Shoes can be called sneakers in one country (United States) and trainers in another (United Kingdom). Where language can be challenging even between English-speaking countries, the problem is compounded when designing a study for another country.

Language equivalency is important to establish in cross-cultural or global research. In global media research a master questionnaire is often designed, which is translated and used in different countries. In order to avoid mistakes relating to language and words, it is advisable to use the *back-translation method* (Brislin, 1970) to achieve accuracy in translation. In the back-translation method, two bilingual translators who are familiar with the source and target language are employed to translate the questions. One bilingual translator translates the questionnaire into the target language and the other translates it back to the source language to insure that there is no mistranslation. However, measurement errors can still arise because of the poor wording of questions, faulty cultural and other assumptions, and faulty scales.

In global surveys, questionnaires developed in one country should not be simply translated for use in another country. The researcher has to make sure that the concepts and scenarios presented in the questionnaire are understood by and relate to the local population in order to get results that are accurate and comparable. For example, Van Raaij (1978) notes that measuring social responsibility by asking “‘A good citizen is responsible for shoveling the sidewalk in front of his home,’ . . . assumes private ownership of houses, one-family housing, and a climate with snow in winter, and is clearly not applicable in an African country” (p. 693). The researcher will have to measure social responsibility in a different way in African countries. Similarly, questions about race that are commonly asked in the United States might make people in countries like the United Kingdom and South Africa uncomfortable and thus affect the response the researcher gets. In France, it is illegal to classify people by ethnicity or to ask census questions on race. Race as a category is meaningful only for multicultural countries like the United States, but not so much for a comparatively homogeneous country like Japan.

Questionnaire Structure and Appearance

It is important to keep the questionnaire simple and easy to read so respondents are not overwhelmed. Short instructions on how to answer the questions help the respondent. The opening questions should be easy, nonintrusive, nonthreatening, pertain to the respondent, and require little effort on the part of the respondent. This encourages them to continue.

A lot of white space on a questionnaire, a clear typeface, and logical flow from one topic to another help produce a better response. The flow of the questionnaire can be based on subject or topic areas, chronology, or any other criteria. It is better to move from general to more specific questions related to a topic area. Respondents often feel frustrated if they have to keep shifting back and forth between one topic and another.

Survey researchers often use *contingency questions* to help guide respondents through a questionnaire. Contingency questions act as a filter and allow respondents to skip questions that do not relate to them. For example, “Do you watch the televi-

sion program *Big Brother*? If ‘Yes,’ please continue. If ‘No’ skip to question number 5.” Even though contingency questions are helpful, they should be used only when necessary; too many skips can confuse respondents.

It has also been noted that survey respondents get tired, bored, uninterested, and unmotivated after going through a series of questions. When this happens, respondents tend to answer “Don’t know,” engage in “straight line” responding (i.e., choose answers from the same column on a page), give more perfunctory answers, or give up answering the questionnaire altogether (Ben-Nun, 2008). In order to avoid *responding fatigue*, it is important to have a variety of questions. On a scale using a large set of agree/disagree items, *item reversal* (see Paulhus 1991) can help the respondent to pay attention and prevent straight-line responses.

After designing the questionnaire, it is important to pretest or pilot-test the survey before collecting the data. This will help identify the problems with the questionnaire before it is used.

Challenges in Survey Methodology

Survey methodology relies heavily on self-report or other-report and thus inaccuracies often arise due to the misreading of questions by respondents, inadequate knowledge, faulty or invalid answers, and inability to recall incidents, products, or advertising. According to De Mooij (2010, p. 143), “[p]eople may sometimes not say what they think; they may distort their answers for various psychological or cultural reasons or misinterpret some questions. The way questions are formulated can cause bias. The answers may not accurately reflect people’s feelings or behaviors in actual social settings.”

Telephone surveys, which were once quite popular when people had landlines and one national telephone company monopolized the market, are becoming less popular with the growth of mobile phones and for a number of other reasons. Researchers no longer have one good sampling frame to study households, as mobile telephone numbers are not attached to a geographic location but to a mobile individual. Today there are multiple carriers, and people transfer their number across state lines, thus making it difficult to have a good sampling frame. In addition, the nonresponse rate seems to be higher for mobile phones than for landlines, perhaps because people have a greater ability to screen calls (American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2008). In addition, the Do Not Call registry in the United States, and the Telephone Preference Service in the United Kingdom, prevent telephone survey researchers from calling a larger number of people who do not wish to be contacted. This further affects the sample frame. Groves (2011, p. 869) notes, “Although there appears to be a broad consensus among survey methodologists that we are moving to a future of mixed-mode surveys, the current available mix does not solve the problem of falling response rates in a permanent way.”

Managing Response Rate

In survey research it is important to reach and collect data from every individual in the sample. Failure to do so results in errors and skewed findings. Response rate is affected when respondents do not answer a particular question on a questionnaire or do not fill in the questionnaire at all. Response rate is also affected when the survey does not reach the respondent (*noncontact*), or when the respondent is unwilling or unable to participate due to illness or other reasons (*nonresponse*). These result in *nonresponse errors*. Repeated calling of unanswered telephone numbers or repeated contacting of eligible respondents can improve response rate. For more details on improving response rate, see Groves, Dillman, Eltinge, and Little (2002) and Dillman (2007). Response rate is important for researchers to report so that readers can evaluate the quality of the research. The simplest way to calculate response rate is by dividing the number of people who completed the survey by the total number of individuals or units in the sample.

In survey research, there is no consensus on what response rate is acceptable (American Association for Public Opinion Research, n.d.; Fowler, 2009; Langer, 2003). The American Community Survey reports a high response rate of 97.6 percent (US Census, 2013). Many surveys can be found with a response rate as low as 20 percent. The Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment at University of Texas at Austin (2007) notes, “acceptable response rates vary by how the survey is administered.” For mail surveys DIIA notes, 50 percent response rate is considered adequate, 60 percent is good, and 70 percent is very good. For phone surveys, 80 percent is considered good; for email surveys, 40 percent response rate is considered average, 50 percent is good, 60 percent is very good; for online surveys, 30 percent is considered average; and for face-to-face surveys, 80–85 percent is considered good.

As mentioned, cross-cultural survey researchers face additional challenges. One such challenge deals with the use of standard measurement scales. De Mooij (2010) notes that this might be problematic as the conceptual model on which the measurement scales are developed often do not relate to another country in the same way. In addition, people in different countries differ in their *response styles* (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001). For example, Italians have an *extreme response style* (ERS) in that they tend to choose extreme points in verbal rating scales and Germans tend to mark toward the middle (De Mooij, 2010). Thus a “completely agree answer in Italy is not worth the same as completely agree answer in Germany” (De Mooij, 2010, p. 147). Similarly respondents in the United States tend to start from extreme positions on a verbal rating scale of “excellent” to “terrible” and then move inwards, while the Japanese respondents start with a neutral point and work outwards, rarely taking an extreme position (Fields, quoted in Mueller, 2010). Thus establishing *metric or measurement equivalency* is often difficult.

Conducting Ethically Sound Survey Research

Survey research methodology can yield valuable information that can help in making important decisions. Thus survey researchers need not only to follow the best procedures for conducting a survey, but should also conduct the surveys ethically so that no harm comes to respondents. Survey researchers also have an ethical obligation to their client for whom they are conducting research, to the interviewers, and to the company or institution for which they are conducting the survey.

The researcher needs to be open and honest with the client about the study, how it will be conducted, who will be surveyed, and how much time and cost will be involved. If any issue arises and compromises are made along the way, those need to be communicated to the client. The report to the client should be an accurate reflection of the data and not based on what the client hopes to hear. The researcher also has an ethical obligation toward those who work for him or her. The researcher needs to train the interviewers well so that they can conduct the survey in a professional manner. The researcher also needs to deal with any safety and security concerns of the interviewers. Interviewers should not be pressured into going into areas that are not safe. Finally, the researcher needs to do his or her job professionally and with the highest ethical standards in order to help his or her company or institution gain credibility and reputation.

In the United States, in order to protect the research participants, studies done in universities have to be approved by the institutional review board (IRB) before they can be conducted. The guidelines followed by the IRB for protecting human subjects come from the Belmont Report of 1979, which was put together after a series of research that were ethically compromised (US Department of Health & Human Services). The syphilis study in Tuskegee, Georgia (1932–1972), thalidomide use, radiation experiments (1940s–1960s), and the Milgram study (1963) are some well-known studies that raised ethical concerns. After the publicity from the Tuskegee syphilis study, the National Research Act of 1974 was passed, which created the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The commission in its report articulated three principles for protection of human subjects: informed consent, assessment of risks and benefits to the participant, and fair procedures and outcomes in the selection of research subject. Even though most media survey research falls under the “exempt” category, the procedure for approval as well as protection of participants needs to be followed. If the research involves collecting data from a vulnerable population such as children, pregnant women, prisoners, and the mentally ill, extra precaution needs to be taken to protect these participants from risk or harm.

In survey research, *informed consent* means providing respondents with information about the study before getting their consent for voluntary participation. Informed consent often includes providing respondents with the name of the organization

conducting the research, the name of the researcher, the name of the organization sponsoring the research, a brief description of the study and the purpose of the study, an indication the time it would take to fill out the survey, options to skip questions that respondents do not wish to answer, and information on how anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained (Fowler, 2009). These are often written in the *consent form* that the respondent reads and signs or consents to before participating in the survey.

Maintaining *anonymity* and *confidentiality* in survey research is extremely important to protect the participant from harm. Lack of anonymity and confidentiality can compromise a respondent. For example, a survey collecting workplace data can identify employees to the managers, putting their jobs in jeopardy. Thus, information about the respondent should not be shared with anyone other than the research team. Either personal identifiers such as names, emails, telephone numbers, and home or office addresses should not be collected, or the survey data and the identifying information should be kept separate. Data should be kept in a secure location, and any identifying information should be deleted or destroyed after the survey has been conducted.

In very small number of cases involving drugs and crimes, subpoenas (court orders) have been issued for records and data from the researcher. This can compromise confidentiality and the anonymity of the respondents. Thus it is important to destroy any identifying information as soon as it is no longer needed (Fowler, 2009). Second, a *certificate of confidentiality* should be obtained from state or federal agencies for protection from subpoenas if the research involves collecting data on biomedical or illegal activities (see Sieber, 1992, for more details). In the United States, government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Health & Human Services issue certificates of confidentiality.

Ethical principles require that the clear *benefits* of the research to the research participants be stated. In survey research, the participant can get benefit from the process itself by feeling that he or she has contributed to the understanding of the topic. He or she can also gain benefits in the form of gifts, payments, or prizes. Gifts, payments, or prizes should not be so large as to compromise voluntary participation. People who need the money might feel compelled to participate even though it may not be in their best interest.

The ethical principle of *justice* articulated in the Belmont Report (US Department of Health & Human Services, 1979) requires fairness in procedures and outcomes in the selection of research subjects. This is particularly important for survey researchers because survey methodology involves selecting a sample for the study. The Belmont Report notes that the selection of subjects should not be such that it compromises fairness. It states that researchers should not

offer potentially beneficial research only to some patients who are in their favor or select only “undesirable” persons for risky research. Social justice requires that distinction be drawn between classes of subjects that ought, and ought not, to participate in

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Beyond the Qualitative/ Quantitative “Divide”

Reflections on the Utility and Challenges of Q Methodology for Media Researchers

Carolyn Michelle and Charles H. Davis

ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces readers to Q methodology, a methodological hybrid concerned with revealing similarities and differences in people's viewpoints, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. The history of Q methodology is first outlined, and its key principles and processes are explained, before a brief case study is presented in which Q methodology was used in an online survey of cross-cultural responses to James Cameron's 2009 feature film *Avatar*. Here, readers are taken behind the scenes to reflect on the methodological challenges faced, while some of the unique insights that Q methodology provided in this case are highlighted. Finally, the major strengths and limitations of Q methodology are discussed. It is an approach that has considerable potential to shed light on many key questions in contemporary media studies.

Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce readers to a relatively little-known methodology within media studies, one we believe has much to offer those interested in under-

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems175

standing the subjective dimensions shaping media production, reception, consumption, and use. Q methodology can be described as a methodological hybrid that is neither qualitative nor quantitative, but draws on some of the strengths of both traditions. It thus combines the mathematical rigor of quantitative methods with a strong interpretive component more typical of qualitative approaches to human research (Stainton Rogers, 1995; Stenner, Watts, & Worrel, 2008; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology is primarily concerned with revealing similarities and differences in the viewpoints, attitudes, beliefs, or experiences of participants, and does so in a way that is relatively systematic, reliable, and replicable. Furthermore, by deploying Q methodology's unique capacity to reveal shared subjectivity in conjunction with a more traditional questionnaire seeking details of respondents' sociodemographic memberships (gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, and so on), discursive affiliations, and political interests, it is possible to explore whether and in what ways shared viewpoints might be related to aspects of identity and subject positioning. For these and other reasons, we believe Q methodology has much to offer critical media scholars located within a range of disciplines.

In this chapter, we briefly outline the history of Q methodology and explain some of its key principles and processes. Following this, we present a brief case study of our recent experience using Q methodology in an online survey of cross-national responses to James Cameron's 2009 feature film *Avatar*. We take readers behind the scenes to offer our personal reflections on some of the issues and challenges researchers may confront when using this method. We also highlight some of the unique insights that Q methodology offers, which we hope will provide useful guidance for emerging researchers interested in adopting this approach. Finally, we discuss some of the main strengths and limitations of this method, and outline why we believe Q methodology may have unique potential to shed light on some of the key questions in media studies today.

What Is Q Methodology? A Brief History and Overview

Q methodology was created by psychologist-physicist William Stephenson in the 1930s as a structured research tool designed to analyze the nature and diversity of people's attitudes, perspectives, or subjective experiences relating to a given topic (Stephenson, 1953). He conceived it as an alternative to existing methods used to measure attitudes within psychology, which typically relied on the researcher's *a priori* categorizations and other normative considerations (Brown, 2006). An exploratory empirical research method, Q methodology can elicit insight into human subjectivities in the rich and holistic way more typically associated with in-depth interviews and focus groups, while also providing clear structure, capacity for replication, and robust measurement-based analysis. In Q research, participants are given

tools with which to express their own priorities and understandings, from their own particular standpoint. Rather than imagining infinite variability among people's perspectives, however, Q methodology presumes a finite degree of diversity in viewpoints (Stainton Rogers, 1995). It aims primarily to identify and chart the nature and range of distinct subjective perspectives on a given topic that are shared by groups of individuals, reflecting an objective substructure or "defined set of interpretations" (Brown, 1977, p. 572) that occur naturally, rather than being the result of the researcher's prior categorizations.

While Q methodology has grown in prominence within disciplines such as psychology, tourism and environmental studies, political science, communication studies, policy studies, marketing, and health sciences, it remains on the margins of media studies scholarship, and is frequently neglected in methodology handbooks within this discipline. But, as we hope to illustrate in this chapter, Q methodology has considerable potential to offer insight into many aspects of media production, reception, consumption, and use. We believe it constitutes a very useful addition to the media researcher's methodological toolkit, while also offering a new way of approaching some of the lingering questions in the field.

How Does Q Methodology Work?

In brief, participants are first invited to "map" their own viewpoint on the topic by responding to a diverse selection of relevant ideas and opinions. These "maps" are then collectively analyzed to identify *factors*, which reveal that particular groups of individuals share a similar perspective on the topic in a more holistic sense, in that they tend to generally agree and disagree about the same things. Of course, this process is a little more complex in practice.

In a typical Q study, a research question is first formulated. Q methodology particularly lends itself to research questions "that have many, potentially complex and often socially contested answers" (Stenner et al., 2008, p. 219). The kinds of questions that Q methodology may assist in answering are among the key ones for contemporary media researchers. For instance: what are the subjective influences that shape the creation, production, and consumption of media content? How do the perspectives, beliefs, and motivations of the producers of media texts inform their professional and creative practices? How do people make sense of and use different forms of media? How do media representations inform people's understandings and evaluations of themselves and of the wider world? What is the place of media in people's everyday lives? What kinds of consumption patterns and cultures of use are evident in relation to traditional media, compared to new digital media forms? How do people experience and respond to growing degrees of media convergence? What motivates people to become creators of media in their own right, and what are the conditions that stimulate such "produsage" (Bruns, 2008)?

Once a question is determined, the researcher generates a list of items to sort (the *Q sample*), which is a broadly representative sample of self-referential and subjective statements drawn from the wider discursive field that surrounds the issue or topic under investigation, referred to as the *concourse* (Stephenson, 1985). The concourse “consists of all that can be thought and said about a situation, event, or phenomenon” (Durning & Brown, 2007), and includes diverse statements of subjective opinion that constitute a part of the “oral public culture” relating to the topic at hand (Fiske, 1987, and Bondebjerg, 1988, cited in Stephenson, 1995–1996). In *Q methodology*, individuals are assumed to formulate their own perspectives with reference to the ideas and perspectives that are circulating within the wider field of discourse, with which they will be familiar but not necessarily agree (Stephenson, 1995–1996).

Usually, the *Q sample* items comprise short statements – just a sentence or two expressing one coherent idea or perspective – derived from in-depth interviews or questionnaires with a wide range of individuals, or perhaps from published sources such as academic criticism or letters to the newspaper, or even online sources such as reviews, news items, or discussion forum comments. The researcher can seek suitable *Q* items from wherever the concourse around their topic is thought to exist, and in whatever form it is most often expressed. Depending on the topic, images, objects, or other stimuli such as sounds can also be sorted. The most complex case reported in the literature on communication, media, and audiences is Grosswiler’s (1992) multimedia *Q sample* used to investigate the theory, articulated by Marshall McLuhan and others, that the emergence of new media forms generates related shifts in human values and consciousness. Grosswiler’s *Q sample* included items from newspapers, magazines, literature, art, and poetry, as well as audio and video recordings. In a subsequent study, Grosswiler’s respondents sorted slides of magazine and newspaper front pages, videotapes of television program excerpts, and audiotapes of radio program excerpts in a way that reflected their preferences for certain kinds of media content (Grosswiler, 1997; see also Rhoads, 2009). Whatever their form, all the items used are generally carefully selected and considered by the researcher in relation to each other in order to attain a *Q sample* that represents, as much as possible, a very wide spectrum of suitable stimuli, most often in the form of subjective responses to the given topic, from multiple different angles.

Since respondents must compare each item with all other items and the number of possible pairwise comparisons is vast, the researcher usually selects a smaller number of items from an initial survey of the wider concourse for the final *Q sample*. Items may be selected in a structured way, perhaps to represent categories associated with an existing theory, or more commonly in an unstructured, representative way (Dziopa & Ahern, 2011; McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The chosen items are presented individually on cards, or represented on virtual cards if conducting the survey online.

Next, the researcher selects the respondents (called the *P set*). Nonrandom sampling is used to select a population of individuals who are likely to have quite different views about the topic, or who represent theoretically relevant subpopulations. For instance, a researcher may endeavor to select a wide range of individuals who are

diverse in terms of their gender, age, education, political or religious orientation, or areas of expertise (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, pp. 38–39). Unlike conventional quantitative survey methods, it is not necessary to include a large number of respondents, and most Q studies have only a few dozen respondents (Danielson, 2009). Stainton Rogers (1995) suggests between 40 and 60 participants is optimal in terms of maximizing the range and diversity of viewpoints.

Once selected, each respondent is asked to create a map or model of his or her viewpoint using the items the researcher has selected from the concourse. Respondents rank-order the numbered items in the Q sample according to a condition of instruction, such as from “most strongly agree” to “most strongly disagree.” The convention in Q methodology is that the items be sorted into a quasi-normal distribution – roughly in the shape of a bell curve – which can have several degrees of agreement with the neutral or indifference point in the middle, as in the example of a 32 item sort shown in Figure 4.1.

Respondents are asked to first sort the items into three piles – disagree, neutral, or agree – before selecting the few items with which they *most strongly agree* and *most strongly disagree*, placing these at either end of the set distribution. They then continue to place all the items, gradually working their way toward the middle (see Brown, 1986, 2008; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Watts & Stenner, 2012, for a fuller description). Having hopefully provided the same *kinds* of discursive resources available within the wider concourse, the researcher steps back to allow participants to determine for themselves the value, meaning, and significance of the different items from their own unique point of view, and to express this through their ranking and placement of statements on the grid. The final configuration is taken to represent a holistic expression of their subjective experience or perspective, at least in as far as it is possible to express this, given the items made available to them – this is why careful selection of the items in the Q sample is crucial. The positioning of each item on the grid is then recorded.

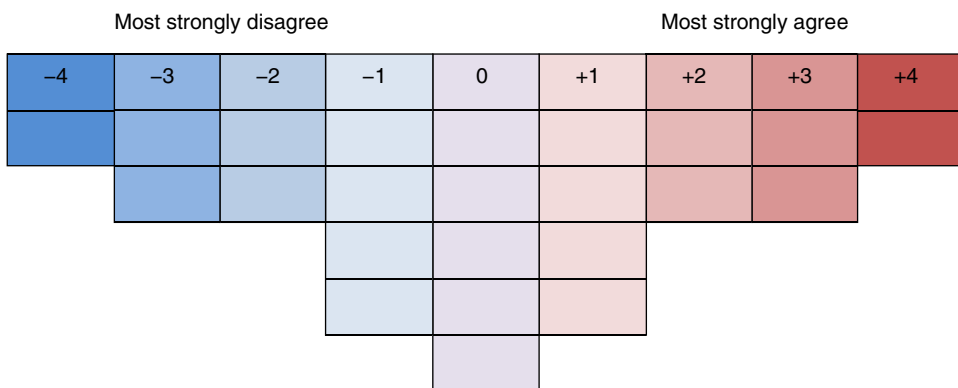


Figure 4.1 Example of a 32 item Q sort grid

Individual Q sorting is generally administered in person, using physical cards containing the Q items and a large grid on which these can be arranged. However, online Q research using dedicated software such as FlashQ is increasingly practiced. This software visually replicates the card sorting and ranking process on screen through a user-friendly interface, guiding respondents through each stage of the process as they finalize the arrangement of the various statements on the virtual grid. This software also makes it possible to include a tailored questionnaire for respondents to complete, which can collect relevant sociodemographic data and/or information about personal attributes the researcher suspects might be relevant. The software then captures all the data for each individual and records it in a format that can easily be imported into an Excel spreadsheet, which makes it very easy for the researcher to “eyeball” the data.

The process of sorting the items is normally followed by asking respondents to explain in further detail their reasons for selecting the “most strongly agreed” and “most strongly disagreed” items. In an online Q survey, respondents are usually invited to write some additional comments on why they chose each of those items in open text boxes. This is an important step that aids the researcher in interpreting the results, and often elicits rich qualitative information about unique aspects of the subjective perspective of each respondent (Davis & Michelle, 2011; Schröder & Kobbernagel, 2010). However, eliciting rich insight is somewhat more problematic when conducting Q studies online, since it relies entirely on respondents’ willingness to offer further comments, and some may prefer not to do so – although in our experience the vast majority do make additional remarks. The online Q researcher is also less able to gauge respondents’ reactions to particular items and to the process of ranking the statements while the research is in process. But as we shall discuss further below, online Q sorting also has some distinct advantages, and future technological enhancements may offer ways of overcoming these kinds of problems.

The full set of individual Q sorts is then analyzed to identify associations between respondents on the basis of their rank-ordering of the Q items. A matrix of correlations among the Q sorts is created which is then factor-analyzed – by *person* and with reference to the entirety of their arrangement of the Q items, not by discrete items – to identify those respondents whose Q sorts are significantly similar, in that they independently ranked and arranged the same items in much the same way on their own grid. In this way, it becomes possible to systematically identify and describe the range of distinct viewpoints, perspectives, or orientations that are shared by different groups within the sample (see Brown, 1994; Dziopa & Ahern, 2011; Stainton Rogers, 1995; Watts & Stenner, 2012). While it may sound complicated to the uninitiated, there are now dedicated Q methodology software programs available that are relatively user-friendly and handle much of the serious number crunching. PQMethod is available for free, while PCQ, a commercial software package, is also widely used (see the Q method website at www.qmethod.org for hyperlinked resources). PCQ and PQMethod handle the statistical computations that occur during factor analysis, and provide various factor solutions while enabling the researcher to perform

additional tests on the data. Further information about these analytical procedures can be found in McKeown and Thomas (1988) and Brown (2006).

The researcher then interprets these factors by synthesizing all of the data to “tell the story” of how those individuals who loaded significantly on each factor commonly responded to the condition of instruction. This interpretation considers areas of strong agreement, disagreement, and neutrality, and notes points of similarity and difference between the factors. The quality of the interpretation thus largely depends on the researcher drawing on his or her accumulated knowledge and expertise to consider the significance of how respondents have ranked the different statements *in relation to each other*, and in this they are guided by the respondents’ own explanations of *why* they most strongly agreed or disagreed with particular items. A written narrative encapsulating the defining features of each perspective is produced for each factor, which usually incorporates examples of participants’ explanatory comments as additional supporting evidence for the validity of the interpretation, and to add depth and texture to the analysis. Such statements help restore some of the “discursive meat” to the “analytical skeleton supplied by the factor analysis” (Schröder & Kobbernagel, 2010, p. 126). What emerges from this process is a more holistic representation of a finite range of complex, multifaceted, yet still coherent viewpoints on the topic under investigation. This is one of Q methodology’s key strengths, and we believe it makes the Q method particularly suitable for research investigating the subjective perspectives, beliefs, experiences, and practices of media producers, audiences, consumers, and (prod)users.

Utilizing Q Methodology in Media Research

Indeed, although Q methodology remains on the margins of mainstream media studies, a growing number of scholars are using this method in studies of media production, consumption, interpretation, and use (see Davis & Michelle, 2011). Significantly, Stephenson himself explicitly applied Q to reception analysis in advertising and screen audience studies (Stephenson, 1976, 1978, 1995–1996). To give readers a taste of the kind of work being done, consider Robinson’s (1975) Q study of the attitudes expressed by upper middle-class professionals toward television and film, a group that had previously been considered unenthusiastic and critical viewers of screen media. Robinson found that, while there were some shared attitudes among the respondents, a broad-brush demographic distinction based on socioeconomic class obscured important differences in tastes and media preferences which tentatively appeared to be more specifically shaped by occupational memberships. Six distinct types of viewers were identified, including scientifically inclined “information absorbers” and more legally oriented “community leaders,” both of whom sought escape and tended not to actively interpret information from television. Other groups

included “analytical artists” and “film freaks” which were highly selective and analytical in their viewing; primary loaders in these categories were university professors.

Carlson and Trichtinger (2001) used Q methodology in a study of viewers’ subjective reactions to the characters and themes portrayed in an episode of the US television series *Law and Order*, which was a fictionalized account based on a real-life racial incident. They discovered seven distinct “readings” of the episode that appeared to engage in quite different ways with the message and thematic content of the text, reflecting the interaction between limited textual polysemy and the capacity of viewers to determine “what aspects of the conversation are heard, assimilated, and made part of a subjective political reality” (Carlson & Trichtinger, 2001, p. 270). The authors also identified suggestive links between the viewpoints and the racial and ethnic identities of participants who positively or negatively loaded on those factors.

More recently, Schröder and Kobbernagel’s (2010) study of cross-media news consumption by 35 Danish consumer-citizens identified seven types of users and found tentative correlations with age, education level, gender, and whether the respondent lived in an urban center or a provincial town. Predominant “types” included more traditional, versatile news consumers, popular culture-oriented digital news consumers, light newspaper readers, and news update addicts. The authors argue that the typology generated using Q methodology offers a more complex picture of the subtle distinctions between consumer perceptions and consumption of news media than has been suggested by other large-scale quantitative surveys.

A case study of Q methodology in action may offer readers further insight into the Q research process. In what follows, we focus on our recent research exploring cross-cultural receptions of James Cameron’s 2009 movie blockbuster *Avatar*, taking the reader behind the scenes to offer more specific insight into this method and its capacity to illuminate the nature and content of human subjective responses, along with its ability to generate unexpected findings.

Receptions of Avatar: A Case Study in Using Q Methodology for Media Research

In this study, we were interested in understanding the nature of people’s subjective responses to a film that, while generally well received and certainly extremely popular internationally, had also been critiqued on a variety of grounds. While people clearly had many specific opinions about the film, what was their overall response, in a more general and holistic sense? Did viewers in different countries have basically similar kinds of responses, or were there major cross-national distinctions? Were different responses in some way linked to aspects of viewers’ location and sociodemographic attributes, or did other more relevant discursive affiliations perhaps cut across those broad-brush classifications? How well might existing theoretical understandings

about the nature of audience reception predict and “capture” naturally occurring demarcations in the responses of our participants?

In the initial stages, we conducted an intensive “cultural trawl” of the wider course around *Avatar* by drawing on online professional and lay film reviews, fan website discussion boards, Facebook site message boards, international news coverage, and media commentary to gain a very broad and inclusive impression of the diverse subjective responses to *Avatar* within the public domain. Throughout this process, recurring patterns in the content and tone of the views expressed were noted and archetypal statements relating to the film’s explicit and implicit messages, dominant and marginal themes, aesthetic quality, production values and imperatives, intellectual analysis, and emotional reactions were cut and pasted into an Excel file.

From an initial pool of 260 “raw” statements articulating recurring ideas, opinions, or reactions expressed in various different sites, it was necessary to make further selections for the Q sample. Rather than adopt a random selection process, this study used a structured sampling method grounded in a particular theory. Other Q audience studies have used different theoretical frameworks to guide the selection process, such as Holbrook’s (1999) framework of consumer value (Davis & Vladica, 2010); generally the choice of model reflects the specific focus of the study. In this research, because our interest lay with charting the nature of any distinctions in the subjective responses of *Avatar* viewers, we drew on Michelle’s (2007) composite multidimensional model of audience reception. The captured statements were thus reviewed and loosely categorized according to this particular schema, which synthesizes a range of existing conceptual frameworks and research findings, identifying broad distinctions in the subjective responses of different individuals and groups to a range of screen media texts and genres viewed in various cultural contexts. Such distinctions are reflected, for instance, in Hall’s (1980) model of encoding/decoding which identifies the potential for dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings; Liebes and Katz’s (1990) analytical distinction between critical and referential readings; and recent work in media effects research on narrative transportation (see Michelle, 2007, 2009; Michelle, Davis, & Vladica, 2012).

Taking care to preserve as much of the original diversity of responses as possible, an initial cull systematically reduced the number of Q statements to 48, eliminating as much repetition of themes and content as possible. In the course of a face-to-face pilot study conducted with 24 respondents in the city of Hamilton, New Zealand (pop. 131,000), these statements were progressively re-evaluated and revised to insure each expressed relatively unambiguous ideas or themes and to eliminate further redundancy among the statements. Gradually, the statements were whittled down to the final Q sample. For each of the four modes theorized in the composite model (transparent, referential, mediated, and discursive) eight items were finally selected. The final 32 item Q sample was thus constituted with a dual purpose: (1) to reflect as much as possible the diverse range of subjective perspectives circulating around this mainstream entertainment text, and (2) to operationalize a theoretical model of the different modes of audience reception developed by one of the authors. This

renders our study somewhat unusual, but also offers insight into the kind of potential Q methodology may have for exploring and refining media theory.

Participants performed their Q sorts online with the free software application Flash Q, and before submitting their responses were invited to complete a “personal details” questionnaire seeking information about their sociodemographic memberships (gender, age, nationality, ethnic identity, education level, and occupation), acquired media competencies, fandom, political affiliations, religious beliefs, and military experience. We sought this information because we were curious whether these kinds of factors might be linked to different modes of response to the film, given some of the reactions expressed in the wider concourse. We were also interested in exploring the potential uses of Q for linking modes of reception to the intersection between relevant aspects of viewers’ social location.

The *Avatar* Q sort went live online on May 18, 2010, and was open to English-speaking participants with Internet access anywhere in the world. Immediately before carrying out their Q sort, participants read a set of instructions on screen which stated that the researchers wished to know how they responded to and felt about *Avatar* when they first saw it. As the condition of instruction, they were asked to “Please recall the thoughts and feelings you had immediately after watching *Avatar* while you rank the following statements.” After first reviewing and sorting all the statements into three piles – disagree, neutral, or agree – they were instructed to arrange the 32 statements on a continuum from “most strongly agree” on the right to “most strongly disagree” on the left in a forced normal distribution. Respondents were also invited to provide a written explanation for why they selected the four statements they placed at each end of the scale. These qualitative comments were crucial in guiding our interpretation of the subjective viewpoints that emerged, and we incorporated typical comments into our descriptions of the factors.

While conducting a Q study online has its advantages, there is some debate in the Q community about the suitability of a technologically mediated approach to studying human subjective responses – an issue to which we shall return below. In the case of our study, we specifically sought to reach an international population of respondents in order to glean some insight into the cross-cultural applicability of a particular theory, but were also constrained in terms of available resources; hence an online survey open to participants from any country seemed desirable, but it did present some challenges. One of the key difficulties we faced was accessing a suitably diverse range of participants for the P set, since presumably those most highly motivated to participate would be more likely to be *Avatar* fans rather than critics. Online surveys naturally attract more highly motivated respondents and are likely to over-represent the views of those who have a keen interest in the subject matter, potentially amplifying one particular perspective. To counter this tendency and obtain a more diverse P set, we actively encouraged participation from a wider range of viewers by posting invitations to participate on the “*Avatar* Sucks!” Facebook group message board, and on general film discussion boards such as Rotten Tomatoes. Special interest groups were also targeted via active Facebook groups such as Survival International, the

Indigenous Environmental Network, Military.com, and Conservative Americans United. Invitations were also posted on key fan sites such as Avatar-forums.com, and on Facebook fan group sites such as the Official *Avatar* Movie group.

Despite our efforts, fans rather than critics were clearly more motivated to participate: over half of the 89 significant sorts reflected the same very positive viewpoint, with many of these participants being self-declared fans of the film. Nonetheless, we clearly did secure a number of participants who were harsh critics. Because an online survey solicits participants who are self-selecting, there is a case to be made for using somewhat larger online P sets, from which a smaller number of more representative sorts may be obtained for the factor analysis, with selections being based on particular sociodemographic characteristics, or perhaps more usefully, the stated discursive affiliations and interests of respondents in relation to the topic at hand, which is somewhat akin to the practices normally used to select a nonrandom P set for face-to-face sorting. This information can be easily obtained through the personal details questionnaire that accompanies the Q sort in programs such as FlashQ.

Since respondents were primarily recruited through online communities, our sample consisted of people who are active on the Internet. Recent estimates suggest that this now accounts for 75–90% of people in most Western developed nations (Internet World Stats, 2009). Nonetheless, online research of this nature is likely to over-represent the views of what Hannerz (1990) called Internet savvy “‘cosmopolitans’: people whose life orientation revolves around global interconnectedness rather than their local communities” (Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009, p. 104) – and these are likely also to be relatively economically empowered individuals, especially in developing nations. This bias appears to be a significant limitation of online research generally, and was evident in our *Avatar* sample. Aside from a large number of university students, relatively few respondents reported earning low incomes or having blue-collar occupations.

One perhaps more significant problem with conducting an anonymous Q study online relates to the problems posed for interpreting the results, given that the researcher is not present to observe participants’ responses during the sorting and ranking process, and is not able to question them about any strong reactions to the items as they occur, which would normally happen in face-to-face sorting. This issue is currently hotly debated in the Q research community. Information gained from face-to-face Q sorting can be very useful – seeing when and why a participant seems unsure or has trouble deciding, or reacts strongly to particular items, can aid in interpreting the particular configuration of items for that person. However, in our study, we were more concerned with identifying the range of viewpoints within the international audience for *Avatar*, and unfortunately this precluded being able to observe the sorting process directly, although we agree that it is desirable to do so where possible. Such observations were, however, possible during the face-to-face pilot study, where the ability to observe and inquire about participants’ verbal and nonverbal reactions proved very helpful in identifying statements that were ambiguous, unclear, or insufficiently distinct from others.

While there are related concerns within the Q community that the technological mediation of online Q sorting potentially changes and degrades the process of accessing and understanding human subjectivity in its “original” untainted state, we believe, perhaps controversially, that it may be possible to at least partially mitigate such objections by more fully utilizing modern technological developments, and particularly the now widespread availability of inbuilt web cameras in many computers and laptops. Potentially, the researcher could observe the process and even interact with the respondent live, as now frequently occurs with the use of Skype and other video conferencing tools and applications. In other words, the technology now exists to make the researcher virtually “present” in the online sorting process, if not physically so. For those studies where it is particularly important that each respondent be observed, there is the capacity to do so regardless of the participant’s physical location.

Obviously, recording the sorting process in this way will likely impact participation rates, particularly when respondents are self-selected. There may also be some topics for which the anonymity and independence offered by anonymous online Q sorting might be quite advantageous, as it may lessen the incentive for participants to engage in impression management, and may also reduce any perceived embarrassment about expressing their true opinions on controversial or deeply personal topics. In other words, depending on the topic, it may be appropriate to adopt different research strategies that offer greater or lesser degrees of anonymity, and in which the researcher is more or less “present” in the process, depending on how important direct observation is deemed to be and its possible impact on respondents.

It is also important to acknowledge here one other possible effect of technologically mediated applications of Q, one that relates more to the limitations of visually presenting Q items on screen. In face-to-face Q sorting on a table, the respondent can easily see the entire array and make the necessary holistic comparisons visually. But with online Q sorting, the smaller the screen, the smaller the Q item cards, and the less text is visible on each of them; the readability of the cards is potentially compromised. This may well affect the respondent’s ability to make the many-to-many holistic comparisons which are the foundation of Q methodology. This is a technological pitfall that the researcher should be aware of. Ideally, Q sorts should be performed on a large computer screen where possible. Given recent trends toward screen miniaturization it seems that in the future, online Q sorting software may need to be modified or even completely redesigned to suit different formats, while still adhering to Q sorting conventions – a potentially significant challenge.

Despite these contentious methodological issues and other difficulties encountered along the way, our results provided a fascinating insight into the clear distinctions between *Avatar* audiences and even between fans themselves. Factor analysis revealed four distinct subjective orientations characterized by differing degrees of emotional and cognitive involvement, as well as different foci in terms of the most salient issues and concerns for particular groups of viewers. These four viewpoints

accounted for 74% of our 120 participants, and there were a number of others whose Q sorts were mixed in the sense that they bore similarities to more than one viewpoint. What was more exciting from our perspective was that these factors appeared to exhibit notable similarities to the four modes of reception theorized in the composite model of reception. Whereas Factor 1 was marked by suspension of disbelief, feelings of being transported to the amazingly realistic world of Pandora, emotional engagement with the Na'vi's plight, and agreement with preferred messages, all key aspects of the theorized transparent mode, Factor 2 exhibited estrangement and emotional detachment, with these viewers rejecting *Avatar* as an overcommercialized Hollywood entertainment product while also engaging critically with the film's ideological or message content – a defining feature of the discursive mode. While Factor 3 focused attention on the film's similarity and relevance to past and present struggles occurring in the real world against Western imperialism, militarism, and capitalist exploitation of natural resources, and thus appeared to be framed by a referential mode, Factor 4 related primarily to *Avatar* as a constructed entertainment media product which was aesthetically pleasing and technologically remarkable, but had significant shortcomings in terms of script and storyline – a response that is fairly typical of those adopting a mediated mode of reception. Each viewpoint appeared to reflect a very different subjective approach to making sense of the same film, and focused on different levels of denotative and connotative meaning, as theorized in the composite model of reception.

Two of the viewpoints had inverted or bipolar versions, in that a few participants reacted to the same kinds of ideas and themes in diametrically opposed ways to most others. For instance, while most of those who loaded significantly on Factor 3 saw the film as essentially quite realistic and true to life in the sense of mirroring processes of colonial and military oppression and the exploitation of indigenous peoples or the environment here on earth, a few reacted most strongly *against* this aspect of the film, and considered its depiction to be historically inaccurate and highly unrealistic, even a *distortion* of real-world events. In theoretical terms, both can be considered variations of the same referential mode of response, since both viewpoints primarily rely on the viewer making assessments of textual realism with reference to their knowledge and understanding of the real world outside the text.

Another key finding was that those who had a very positive view of *Avatar* did not all have the same response to the film. While some were “swept away” to another world and felt deeply emotionally engaged with the plight of the Na'vi, others responded positively to the film as a realistic reflection of real-world events, and still others were most impressed by the technical and aesthetic features of the film, especially the computer-animated visual effects, but remained more emotionally detached. This finding is important as it offers insight into the complex nature of audiencing, which is not necessarily premised on the same kinds of experiences and emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual responses, but rather can take diverse forms and may focus on radically different aspects of the same media text (see Michelle et al., 2012, for full details).

We were also able to discern some suggestive associations between particular viewpoints and shared sociodemographic characteristics such as gender and ethnicity, as well as other suggestive influences grounded in life experiences and discursive affiliations, including level of education, religious belief, political activism, and military service (see Michelle et al., 2012). Namely, those who read the film in referential or discursive terms were more likely to be politically active professionals and to identify themselves as a member of an ethnic minority, while those who adopted a mediated mode were more likely to be male, not an ethnic minority, and politically inactive. These particular variables appeared to cut across any broader cultural or national differences. Nevertheless, these associations did not meet the threshold for statistical validity normally required of quantitative research. Q methodology can pose significant limitations in this regard, particularly when such studies are conducted face to face, as the number of participants in a Q study is usually too small to permit identification of statistically valid relationships between viewing positions and other variables (Danielson, 2009). Furthermore, the results of a Q study cannot be generalized to the general population, as the P set is not representative of that population. Any findings are therefore specific to the sample of individuals studied. We will return to this issue later, as the question of external validity and generalizability of Q findings warrants further discussion. We would also note that there are various innovations currently occurring in online Q sorting and analysis of larger P sets that are likely to expand avenues for research that might well be able to generate statistically significant relationships between viewpoints and aspects of social location. This issue is also one we will address in greater detail below.

For those readers who are interested in how a Q study is written up, examples can be found in studies by Lindlof, Coyle, and Grodin (1998) on science fiction fans, Carlson and Trichtinger's (2001) study of responses to a racial incident in the television crime drama *Law and Order*, our own recent study (Davis & Vladica, 2010) which examines responses to an animated psychorealist documentary, and our *Avatar* reception project (Michelle et al., 2012). There have also been recent efforts to standardize and develop agreed procedures for conducting and reporting Q research, in an effort to enhance the validity of what is still a relatively new research method (see Dziopa & Ahern, 2011). In many studies, but not all, the written narratives that are constructed to represent each of the viewpoints identified through factor analysis incorporate some of the qualitative responses of those who loaded highly on each factor, as a way of illustrating the kinds of comments that tended to be made by group members in response to highly ranked Q items. As yet, there is no established process for selecting these comments. In our case, we sought to include remarks that best encapsulated or articulated the underlying sentiment that appeared to characterize that particular factor, or that illustrated most effectively a particular point that this group of respondents seemed to emphasize. For example, here is a brief excerpt from the analysis of Viewpoint 1 from our *Avatar* research, as reported in Michelle et al. (2012):

these viewers experienced intense emotional involvement with the characters and scenario depicted, and most strongly agreed with statement 26 (+4),¹ which expresses a sense of caring very deeply for the world of Pandora and its inhabitants:

First I was awestruck by the visuals, but soon became very attached to these characters and cared deeply for their well-being. I shed tears a few times and I don't normally for movies. (38-year-old Canadian man)

For some respondents' emotional response was unexpectedly strong and unprecedented:

This film reached me on a deep level, one that I cannot totally explain. (17-year-old American woman)

At first I was a little skeptical about Avatar, but after destruction of the Tree of Voices and then Home tree there were nothing but tears – and then *RAGE.* (20-year-old Russian man)

I could not stop thinking about this film after viewing it. It became very intense . . . I spent a great deal of time learning all I could about the film and even joined a forum, something I have never done. It moved me to see it 11 times in the theatre, no other film has done that. (38-year-old Canadian man)

Factor 1 respondents were so transported into the world of Pandora that they felt sad at the close of the film, and expressed a desire to become Na'vi (+3 on #32):

My life felt like nothing compared to being a Na'vi on Pandora. I fell into sort of a depression, like a lot (most) of the people on the Avatar-forums. (18-year-old Canadian man)

Here, we can see that the incorporation of qualitative data usefully illuminates and extends what would otherwise be rather dry reporting of aggregated findings, conveying little sense of the unique voices of individuals who nonetheless shared the same general subjective response to this film. It is this ability to convey something of each participant's individual perspective, as related in their own words, that some qualitative researchers perhaps fear losing through the reduction of rich expressions of human experience to quantitative factors. However, as we hope this example demonstrates, Q research can preserve at least some of that richness, while also offering a more systematic basis for the selection of qualitative data for inclusion – although such data obviously cannot take center stage. Further, while most Q studies present aggregated results, it is possible to focus intensively on individual responses to multiple Q sorts (Brown, 1993), or to examine prevalent viewpoints from the perspective of any particular individual participant, including those whose viewpoint may be regarded as of theoretical significance (for example, the author of a text), or even of individuals who do not load on any one factor, and thus have a very different perspective to any other participant.

What is Q Methodology's Potential Contribution to Answering Key Questions in Media Studies?

Q methodology is ideally suited to identifying commonalities as well as differences among the subjective perspectives, beliefs, experiences, and practices of different

groups of media producers, audiences, consumers, and users. This is, after all, precisely what the method was intended to do. But we believe Q methodology may also prove very useful in efforts to address, in particular, the link between media reception, consumption, and use, and the location of individuals within the wider social structure; something that it is not designed to do, but could help to do, when used in combination with other methods.

Most media researchers now take for granted that media reception, consumption, and use are social activities shaped by specific and diverse contexts. Because it is inherently social and contextual, it seems reasonable to assume that our engagement with media should also be patterned at the levels of social group membership(s), discursive affiliations, and personal and collective experiences, in ways that produce distinct groups of individuals who share certain similarities in terms of how they receive, engage with, and use media. In the field of audience reception studies, for instance, there is now a considerable body of research exploring this social patterning of interpretation and response (seminal work includes Liebes & Katz, 1990; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Morley, 1980; Press, 1989, 1991). However, because most audience research, at least in the cultural studies tradition, has relied on qualitative methodologies such as ethnographic observation, interviews, and focus groups and thus (with a few exceptions) been relatively small-scale, it has been very difficult to generate clear and generalizable evidence of the kinds of relationships that are theoretically assumed to exist.

In this respect, one of the most important potential contributions of Q methodology for media studies lies in the way it provides a robust foundation for linking shared subjectivity to aspects of social location in a methodologically rigorous and structured way. Q methodology has particular potential to help the researcher identify whether certain “types” of media audiences, consumers, or users share similar orientations or attitudes toward media products based on *actual* similarities in their responses, rather than any *preassigned* categorization of individuals determined by what the researcher assumes will be the most salient aspects of shared identity or group membership – as typically occurs in focus group research, for example. Using the responses to a separate questionnaire seeking information about aspects of respondents’ social location, sharing a generalized viewpoint can potentially be linked to other commonalities in terms of the sociodemographic characteristics, cultural competencies, experiences, and discursive affiliations of those who loaded on that factor. Furthermore, since identification of any common characteristics takes place “after the fact,” working backwards from the factor loadings to identify shared attributes between group members, it may be possible to isolate the particular aspects of identity, or the combination of social group memberships, that are linked to someone sharing a particular viewpoint or set of experiences with others. This process would provide a very robust and potentially fruitful means of establishing any correlations between social location and media consumption, reception, and use. For critical media scholars interested in exploring issues relating to media power and social inequality, a method of reliably identifying these kinds of correlations has thus far proven elusive. Q methodology, we believe, may be an important part of the solution to this problem.

There are various other advantages to using Q methodology, given the particular nature and strengths of this approach. Certainly, Q methodology's ability to map and systematically compare human subjectivities while preserving and apprehending the complexity of each individual's own multifaceted response is an advantage unmatched by existing quantitative approaches that seek to measure strength of association among variables or attributes. As Schröder and Kobbarnagel (2010, p. 123) suggest, the problem with quantitative questionnaires lies in "the atomized manner in which respondents answer the list of unrelated questions, thereby violating the coherences, interconnections, ambivalences and contradictions that are an inherent part of everyday life." While the semantic differential method does more directly address human subjectivity, it similarly does so "in an analytic, not a synthetic context" (Stephenson, 1985, p. 238).

At the same time, the fact that Q utilizes factor analysis allows it to circumvent one of the major shortcomings of much qualitative research, in terms of "the opacity of its interpretive procedures of analytical generalization" (Schröder & Kobbarnagel, 2010, p. 123; see also Schröder, 2011). While qualitative research can offer richly detailed insight into the subjective quality and content of specific encounters between media texts and audiences, consumers, and/or users, it can prove difficult to "reliably and validly generalize analytically" about similarities and differences within the very large and complex body of data that is often generated (Schröder & Kobbarnagel, 2010, p. 123). Q methodology, on the other hand, makes it "possible to incorporate and preserve qualitative data through a process of quantification" (Schröder, 1987, cited in Schröder & Kobbarnagel, 2010, p. 123).

A related issue pertains to the way in which the qualitative researcher, faced with often very large amounts of richly detailed data, must attempt to impose some kind of order and structure on the material, and normally develops or applies a schema according to which data is selected and categorized, depending on their intended focus. Some data, perhaps even a significant amount, is often left out or discarded in this process – as we ourselves have both experienced and witnessed in conducting, reviewing, and supervising numerous qualitative research projects. It is virtually impossible to include everything that may or may not be relevant, and as in all research, whether qualitative or quantitative, the researcher's subjective perspective on the topic shapes various aspects of the research process to some degree. In qualitative studies, one potential consequence of this inevitable subjective influence is a degree of uncertainty about whether the categories identified reflect "natural" and purely inductively derived, or rather partially subjectively constructed, distinctions among participants (Brown, 1996; Cross, 2005). The factors that arise from a Q study, on the other hand,

Exist as the consequence of a group of respondents having responded in the same fashion . . . The factor-categories are genuine, as opposed to ad hoc categorical, and reflect true attitudinal segmentation. They are more genuinely "operational definitions" of this-or-that attitude, since whatever they are definitions of . . . has been made

manifest by virtue of behavioral operations expressed through the medium of Q technique. (Brown & Ungs, 1970, p. 519)

Another key strength of Q methodology is that it is explicitly designed to preserve the integrity and richness of individual participants' subjective viewpoints, and because of this is perhaps less likely to produce findings that discount or minimize difference and diversity. Indeed, there are grounds to suggest Q methodology renders such diversity more visible and comprehensible in its full complexity (Stainton Rogers, 1995). Traditional quantitative surveys, for instance, are unable to capture subtle distinctions between the views of different participants; it is often very difficult to discern whether those who registered similar levels of agreement or disagreement with a particular item did so for the same reasons (Cross, 2005). With Q, it is possible to assess specific responses within the context of participants' broader subjective perspective, and to consider their response to one item in light of their responses to all others, as well as their qualitative explanatory responses, resulting in a more holistic interpretation. And while traditional qualitative methods such as focus groups, which are commonly used in media research, potentially allow for fulsome expressions of agreement and disagreement, practical difficulties arise when attempting to extensively probe all individuals to solicit more detailed and nuanced explanations of their own beliefs and opinions and then to construct rigorous comparisons between viewpoints. Nor it is easy to gauge and record individual responses to a constellation of related issues or questions *simultaneously*. On both counts, Q offers significant advantages over other methodological approaches.

One final key benefit relates to the potential applications of Q methodology for cross-national media research. An ongoing problem in qualitative research is the need to find a way to make more comparable observations that support stronger, testable generalizations that could potentially inform the development of theoretical understandings (Barker, 2006) of the nature of media production, reception, consumption, and use *per se*. It is particularly difficult to make linkages and generalizations across different qualitative studies conducted in relation to different texts and in different contexts (Schröder, 2011). However, with Q methodology, the standardization of methodological and analytical approaches potentially offers a unique means of addressing some of the challenges of cross-genre as well as cross-national comparative research, as identified by Livingstone (2003). This is because, as Schröder (2011, p. 22) argues,

its data are contextualized in the life worlds of the informants, that data can be translated into a standardized form, which makes it possible to perform common, standardized statistical procedures and to produce generalizations in the form of typologies that are transparent and immediately comparable.

Potentially, parallel multilingual Q samples could be constructed and administered relatively easily in FlashQ, and we are aware of one successful trilingual Q study.

Adapting and expanding the capacity of Q methodology in this way, it may become possible to “share and compare qualitative data across national contexts” (Schröder, 2011, p. 22). Given limited resources for the *Avatar* project, we were not able to undertake a large-scale cross-national study using multiple languages, but it became clear to us that such a study would be entirely feasible.

Hence, we are currently engaged in what we believe may be the largest Q study to date, which will draw together an international team of researchers to explore audience receptions of Peter Jackson’s feature film *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012), using parallel Q samples in multiple languages. In this project, we will delve much deeper into the potential of Q methodology to productively fuse the more nuanced interpretative detail generated through qualitative methods with robust quantitative techniques that make it possible to identify broader patterns within qualitative data, and to reveal meaningful correlations between individuals, shared viewpoints, sociodemographic variables, and aspects of social location. By using very large P sets (at least in Q terms – in the range of several hundred respondents), we believe it may be possible to construct smaller representative samples from a range of theoretically relevant categories or combinations of categories, and to produce typical Q sorts that represent any significant shared viewpoints we find. In this way, it may become possible to describe and compare the viewpoints of younger versus older viewers, of fans of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy versus aficionados of J. R. R. Tolkien, and to explore patterns of response between and within different national or ethnic communities, religions, genders, and socioeconomic classes. While this is a very new area of exploration, we believe that innovative adaptations of Q methodology potentially offer critical media scholars analytical capacities beyond those normally derived through the use of qualitative or quantitative methods in isolation from each other.

For these and other reasons, we believe that Q methodology is particularly well suited to the study of media production, reception, consumption, and use. It also has considerable potential to expand the contribution, relevance, and generalizability of in-depth qualitative investigations, while informing larger-scale surveys and complementing close textual analyses with data relating to production, reception, or both. Proponents also emphasize the ability of Q methodology to test theoretical assumptions and make new and unanticipated discoveries through the use of factor analysis (Brown, 2006; Stephenson, 1995–1996). There are, however, some important limitations to this methodological approach.

Q methodology’s primary focus is on identifying and interpreting the subjective viewpoints and experiences of nonrandomly sampled participants, and it is commonly regarded as an exploratory, interpretation-intensive methodology that is primarily suitable for use with quite small numbers of respondents (Brown, 1996; Cross, 2005). On its own, Q methodology cannot be used to identify statistically significant causal relations between viewpoints and other variables; nor can the findings of a Q study be generalized to estimate the distribution of the identified perspectives within the wider population, as it does not use statistically representative P samples (Dziopa

& Ahern, 2011; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stainton Rogers, 1995). In order to examine the distribution of subjective viewpoints within the general population and their possible link to sociodemographic or other attributes, it would be necessary to use the results of a clearly defined and robust Q study as the basis for a larger-scale representative survey in which random sampling is used.

This can be achieved in a few different ways, for instance through the creation of Likert items based on the distinguishing elements associated with each factor, which could then be used to measure the prevalence of perspectives within the wider population (Danielson, 2009). Alternatively, the researcher could use the method of narrative evaluation, where the factors identified through a Q study are transformed into short narratives that a representative sample are asked to rank and respond to in terms of their level of agreement or disagreement (Danielson, 2009). A representative survey based on a preliminary Q study would make it possible to both ascertain the external validity of the identified viewpoints, and *independently* link viewpoints to variables such as culture, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic class, education, religion, and political belief, thereby addressing a key area of ongoing research and debate within media studies. Q methodology could thus form a key component of mixed methods research, perhaps serving as an essential bridging or translation device between in-depth qualitative interviews and survey research, in a way that makes it possible to combine qualitative and quantitative methods more productively.

One additional problem relates to what Schröder and Kobbernagel (2010) refer to as the “validity cost” that arises from the participants having to reduce their complex and multifaceted discursive response to forced choices in the ranking of Q items, the selection of which, some contend, is open to subjective biases and also potentially limits or predetermines the range of possible responses that can be expressed (see also Cross, 2005; Dziopa & Ahern, 2011; Stainton Rogers, 1995). While this is true to a certain extent, the process of questioning participants about their selections can potentially offer insight into themes or topics that are not explicitly addressed in the available Q items. Another issue arises in that since the interpretation of the factors relies on the researcher’s own analytical skills, existing understandings, and intuition, there is a potential risk of subjective biases at this stage, particularly when the researcher seeks to draw conclusions about the data (Cross, 2005; Stainton Rogers, 1995). This particular concern is not, however, specific to Q methodology, and is a problem that may arise in the interpretation of even purely quantitative data.

Conclusion

In sum, Q methodology offers considerable but still largely unrealized potential for media studies, and is particularly suited to research aimed at uncovering broad patterns, similarities, and differences in the subjective perspectives and experiences of media producers, audiences, consumers, and users. Q methodology may also have

potential utility for testing general propositions about the nature and form of media engagement, consumption, and produsage. Certainly, our own research suggests Q offers considerable insight into specific areas of commonality and divergence within the receptions of audience members located in diverse national and cultural contexts; it also provides more robust insight into the likely basis for such variations in audience engagement and response, and clarifies pathways for future research. Q methodology is unparalleled in terms of its capacity to systematically identify and describe similarities and variations in human subjective viewpoints. Recent technological developments in terms of online Q sorting and computational software also make this method accessible to increasingly fragmented and dispersed media audiences and users, as well as to researchers who would otherwise not consider using a qualitative research approach “fortified” by factor analysis. Indeed, it seems that a method such as Q, which is adaptable to an online environment when warranted and which draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative traditions, offers significant promise in terms of enabling emerging scholars to grapple more effectively with the complexities of media production, reception, consumption, and produsage in an increasingly convergent and pervasive digital media age.

NOTE

- 1 As shown in Figure 4.1, “+4” refers to the aggregate ranking given to this statement by this group of respondents, who “most strongly” agreed with the sentiment it expressed.

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The Interview

A Process of Qualitative Inquiry

Sue Robinson

ABSTRACT

The interview in qualitative inquiry extends to surveying, one-on-one in-depth investigation, impromptu ethnographic meetings, formal focus groups, and free-form dialogue, depending on the nature of the research puzzle. Researchers have called interviewing “an unfolding interpersonal drama,” “a marriage with hidden truths,” “a narrative practice,” and “an unfolding story.” At its heart, the interview entails an investigation into individual motivations, interpersonal and communal relationships, life engagement, as well as civic, familial, and other kinds of problems and resolutions. The interview’s execution is both art and science, with the end result an unveiling of meaning construction, information processing, and knowledge documentation. This chapter describes the dynamics of the interview, including guidelines for building question templates (or not), navigating university institutional review boards, accessing informants, collecting the information, and then analyzing the data.

Interviewing as a mode of qualitative inquiry can unveil the process of meaning construction, the dynamics of relationships, and the formation of knowledge – if executed effectively. Called “the gold standard of qualitative research” (Silverman, 2000, pp. 291–292), the methodological technique must be approached as both a creative, malleable art form and a scientific technique that produces data. Ithiel de

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems176

Sola Pool (1957, p. 193) called the interview “an unfolding interpersonal drama with a developing plot.” Two leaders in qualitative scholarship, Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor (2002, p. 173), describe the interview as the act of soliciting people’s stories. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) go further with the storytelling metaphor, likening the interview to the plot and regarding the interviewer as author *and* character. In my favorite comparison, Oakley (1981, p. 41) considered the interview as a marriage: “everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets.”

This chapter aims to open any closed doors to interviewing and to reveal the secrets that lie within the method. It begins with a nod to the long history that interviewing as a research method in the social sciences has accumulated before articulating a philosophy and typology of interviewing as a way to approach empirical truth seeking. Essentially, the chapter seeks to celebrate the multiple dynamics of the interview, which represents a powerful methodological tool. It is particularly well suited to studying the power and influential relationships that people have with media – the topic of this chapter. The bulk of this chapter will lay out a pragmatic guide for students of qualitative interviewing, providing practical suggestions for developing questions, drawing a sample, undergoing institutional review board interview protocols, and collecting and analyzing data. It takes as its thesis the idea that every interview exercises a power relationship in and of itself, inasmuch as it is meant to reveal power relationships. And every researcher must carefully consider the type, style, technique, tone, mode, and execution of the method in conjunction with the targeted population as well as the overall research goals.

Interviewing: A Brief History and Philosophy

From its roots, interviewing has been linked to ethnography as a way to study human conditions, cultures, and communities (Vidich & Lyman, 2003). Two early pioneers of the development of the interview method, Henry Mayhew in the 1860s and Charles Booth in the 1880s, spent time with the poor people of London in the United Kingdom and published accounts of their lives through surveys, unstructured interviews, and ethnographic observations. In approaching the people as capable of representing themselves and competent to explain their life experience, these two revolutionized the field of sociology and launched interviewing as a valid method (Converse, 1987). Furthermore, through this triangulation of qualitative data, these ethnographers established the interview data collection method as one that depended on observation as much as question protocol.

Throughout the 1900s, particularly in the United States, such as in the Chicago School, scholars turned to the interview as a key technique to understand notions such as psychological measurement, the “Other” via American exclusion, community adaptation, and opinion polling (Fontana & Prokos, 2007; Maccoby & Maccoby,

1954). By the 1960s, about 90% of data in the two top American sociological journals came from interviews and questionnaires (Brenner, 1981). From formal polling of populations to informal conversational exchange, early interviewing in qualitative work had creative, anecdotal, interpretive qualities that contrasted with post-World War II attempts to use the survey as an instrument to quantify data. Throughout the twentieth century, interviewing became more ubiquitous in all fields, including media and communication studies (Fontana & Prokos, 2007). During this period, from the 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s, the schism between qualitative and quantitative interviewing and surveying of people widened, not only in terms of how samples were drawn and data was collected via questions and items but also in the coding and analysis of the resulting transcripts (Fontana & Prokos, 2007). In the end, however, all of these scholars – quantitative and qualitative – were querying people to find out something important about society.

So much of what we read about interviewing – its dimensions, its applications, its strategies – is framed according to power and power relationships: Who shall wield the power in the interview? How shall the power manifest, and to what end? Denzin (1978) considers interview talk to be for someone else's benefit and acknowledges that inevitably one person in any conversation must exert greater control than the other(s). Ithiel de Sola Pool (1957) wrote:

The social milieu in which communication takes place [during the interview] modifies not only what a person dares to say but also even what he thinks he chooses to say. And these variations in expression cannot be viewed as mere deviations from some underlying "true" opinion, for there is no neutral, non-social, uninfluenced situation to provide that baseline. (p. 192)

Indeed, he pointed out that the dynamic contingencies of the interview itself activate opinion; even presumed knowledge extracted can be no more than the manifestation of the interview interaction (Cicourel, 1964). "Each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies" (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 64). Fontana and Frey went on to describe the interview as "an active, emergent process" (p. 76), but I would ask: Who leads that process and who submits? And, more importantly, why? Do the resulting power dynamics innate in the technique itself influence the data outcome? If we accept that the interview itself is a "social encounter," as Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p. 3) do in their advocacy of an "active approach" to interviewing, we must understand that the interview interaction itself must bias any derived data.¹ Because every interview involves a communicative exchange of more than one person and because none of us can read minds, every question *and* every answer hold the possibility of misinterpretation, nuance, and mistaken emphasis. It is the responsibility of the researcher to parse out what is really going on as much as possible. This fundamental reality shall be present at every stage of the methodological process – from beginning to end.

The question of power is an important one whenever an interview protocol is developed. The effect of a male interviewing a female, a youth interviewing an elder, a White person interviewing a minority ethnic person can sometimes arise in validity concerns: Is the participant articulating a response based on a reaction to the interviewer or was her response true to her internal processing? Therefore, the understanding of those power dynamics must be incorporated into the context of the answers, but also into the very approach of the interview and the protocol. Complete background and demographical information about the informant must be collected, even as the personal history must not trump any contemporary meaning discussion. Approaching the interview data later on from a dialogic perspective will adapt the frame so that any power influence can be considered as one version toward the truth; that version is just as interesting as any other “real” answer, had the interviewer been Black or old or female. It is essential that the context of the information exchange be documented and analyzed accordingly. “Any transcription of speech must be understood as a compromise” (Elliott, 2005, p. 51).

This power question is also relevant at the beginning of the interview process, when the sample is determined: Who will be privileged to speak? Students often ask how many people they must interview to achieve methodological saturation, and I respond that this is the wrong question. Rather, they should be asking, “Who in my target population or community must share information if I am to understand this research puzzle?” The answer to that first question will be answered with the response to the second. If one is interested in power dynamics within an information producing community, for example, the researcher cannot limit the sample to the leaders of that organization, but must understand the perceptions of the reporters as well. Yet it must be considered that for every person allowed to speak, many others will be absent from the data collection. One cannot interview everyone.

These articulations of the epistemological nature of interviewing are important in delineating one’s ultimate goals in the interview: collecting themes, deciphering motivations, and exploring concepts and dimensions in order to say something larger about some societal phenomena in the understanding of ongoing social practices. Lofland and Lofland (1995, p. 16) argued that in order to develop social theory: “(1) face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being, and (2) . . . You must participate in the mind of another human being . . . to acquire societal knowledge.” Researchers must work to “enter the mind” of participants and informants in order to extract the knowledge and information around a particular topic of inquiry. Asking enough of the right kinds of questions will help to access the truth of the person (and to help the persons themselves know that truth). “Respondent interviews are a lens for viewing the interaction of an individual’s internal states (social attitudes and motives) with the outer environment. The interview response is treated as a ‘report’ of that interaction” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 175).

Interviews help us document and “know” historical events, societal tragedies, and triumphs, outcomes, predictions, and trends as well as allow us to understand how

we live, who we are, and what we need for life fulfillment. In terms of media study, interviews can shed light on all of these experiences, situations, and relationships at all levels of production, the site of content and consumption. Examples of some research questions that interviews might illuminate include: How are digital technologies changing our perceptions of mediated time and space? How have concepts of “news” changed over time? How is Twitter changing power hierarchies in our society? How does childhood memory of the news coverage around national traumatic events influence our relationships with our children today? In-depth interviews that allow a participant to respond in context provide a rich documentation of these societal quagmires.

Once these questions of goal and sample are solidified, the interviewer can begin to make decisions about the kind of interviewing and analysis that need to take place. The remainder of this chapter explains how to exercise different approaches to interviewing in a pragmatic way.

Kinds of Interviews

First, the interviewer chooses the interview tool: What type of interview is called for? The method and style of the interview follow the research questions, with consideration of the target population involved as well as the researchers’ own limitations – resources, personality, and other constraints. Scholars of all disciplines have spent a lot of time classifying kinds of interviews according to how formal and standardized the interview template is, whether the response goal is measurement, and the amount of freedom the participant maintains (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954; Madge, 1965). Moser (1958) developed a continuum for interviewing that is a useful way to think about the types (as cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; see Figure 5.1).



Figure 5.1 Functional interview continuum (adapted from Moser, 1958)

With Moser's adapted scaled typology as a guide, I shall explicate the interview types according to the level of control (or power) the interviewer exerts.

Active/Free

At the far end of the continuum, we have the "active" and "free" interview styles. Jack Douglas (1985) calls free-form techniques "creative interviewing." This style of interviewing encourages the exploration of identity boundaries, of cognitive processing, of creative expression, of oral history, and other kinds of qualitative responding. "Interviews allow us to hear, if we will, the particular meanings of a language that both women and men use but that each translates differently" (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 65). No interview template is used; the subject and the interviewer simply talk. This style depends upon a rapport between researcher and participant, which must be built within the conversation. In this category we might also include the ethnographic interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), the informal conversational interview (Patton, 1990) and the situational conversation (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 71) that can occur in the field. At this end of the continuum, the researcher and the participant share power equally for the direction of the interview.

Focus Groups

Both formal and informal, the group interview gathers a multitude of people to discuss a specific topic, text, problem, query, or phenomenon. Focus groups depend on a well-trained, directive moderator to help prevent groupthink, encourage all members to participate, keep the discussion on track, and otherwise insure the collecting of useful data (Fontana & Frey, 2008). Group interviews can be particularly useful when studying relational aspects of mediated engagement. Via group interviews, one can witness literal, real-time communicative processing as well as the hierarchal positioning that happens around some topics when discussed socially. Watching the power dynamics that arise in such interactions can be useful and fascinating.

Structured and Semi-Structured Interviews

These tend to be for one-on-one or with pairs of subjects. The "structure" of this refers to how strict the researcher needs to be with the protocol of questions. A structured template is one in which the researcher has a set of questions that must be asked, in the order laid out. This would be for those projects that need a more uniform response from participants. The much more ubiquitous semi-structured form provides a guide template for the researcher that allows for a more conversa-

tional approach to the exchange. Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 179) call this a “narrative” interview that results in a “dyadic interaction.”

Open/Closed Surveys

The use of open or closed surveying helps a sample clarify concepts, break down opinions, determine motivations, categorize attitudes, and also understand how people interpret their own motivations (Lazarsfeld, 1944). It is important to remember that the general survey represents people’s perceptions as opposed to their actualities. The closed survey – that is, one where the items are close-ended or scaled – and the open survey where open-ended questions are employed both have the problem of self-reporting bias but can document important attitudes and habits; the survey is particularly popular among social sciences studying media.

Controlled

The most stringent of structured interviewing is called the “controlled” interview. Moser (1958, cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) described this as an “interrogation.” He likened this style of interviewing to a police interview where the end objective is to derive a very specific answer.

Power concerns come into play at this stage of the design process as well, for how the template is structured and what style of technique is selected will determine the nature of the responses. As Camitta (1990, p. 26) wrote: “The interview, as a social genre that is controlled by the interviewer, is a form of mastery over object, acquisition of knowledge through control of language. Conversation, on the other hand, is more collaborative, depending upon affiliation rather than upon separation in its structure.”

Thus, the choice of interview style will be based on the research questions to be explored. For instance, a researcher interested in understanding a topic deeply but specifically might opt for some kind of one-on-one semi-structured interview style. Someone seeking to investigate relationships or identity might find the opportunity to witness the exchange of dialogue and information within a focus group particularly worthwhile. Ultimately, even the most free-form of interviewing must yield some kind of specificity for the researcher (otherwise, what’s the point?) and the most controlling of styles will inevitably veer off script.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Once the study has been designed, the onerous process of the university institutional review board (IRB) must be navigated. This section relates most specifically to the

research process within academic institutions in the United States, even though similar processes of organizational oversight certainly exist in other contexts and cultural environments. Many wring their hands and complain about IRBs across the nation, for the bureaucracy increased as institutions sought to protect study subjects and limit the liability when studies go bad. However, the training programs IRBs offer (or mandate) provide a useful opportunity, for budding and more advanced researchers alike, to reflect on the ethics of research.

The most important aspect of this process is to be as detailed as possible in answering the protocol questions without constraining future modifications (such as adding questions or even topics) to the study design. For example, researchers might consider increasing the anticipated number of study participants by about a third to allow for flexibility later on. The protocol offers a chance to consider whether or not you will identify your subjects and also whether you will deceive them: these will be key elements in the protocol approval. Many interview participants in media studies are not identified and not deceived (except in surveys that pair with experiments, but that is not the purview of this chapter). Most IRBs will want a viable confidentiality process for those participants, including a method for protecting and disposing of the transcripts and recordings collected. For those who wish to identify the participants, IRB will want to know the reason and be reassured that the information will not damage the person's reputation, livelihood, or life in any way. One alternative might be to name the person's organization – for example the *New York Times* – without identifying that person by name.

Some other tips related to the IRB process:

- The IRB process may take months. Beginning the process as soon as possible will help keep the data collection on schedule. Most IRBs post their meeting schedules and deadline on their websites.
- The administrator of the protocols can often be a great resource for understanding the best way to craft a successful protocol.
- Much can be gained from having an experienced person within the specific IRB look over the protocol before submission.
- Some universities will provide successful IRB protocols or samples of applications for researchers to model.
- At some schools, different boards (e.g., for education, social sciences, for medicine, etc.) govern different topics. For example, if you are studying how children communicate in schools, you might consider asking the educational division for a review of your protocol rather than your typical social science committee, as the education IRB would deal more frequently with research relating to children.
- Any future modifications to the study will require modifications to the protocol as well. Anticipating as many of those changes (such as more interviews with different populations, in different places, or with different questions) in the original protocol will save time later.

- Generally, any co-principal investigators and key personnel must have undergone any IRB training, which can take time.
- Often IRBs will offer different types of review, such as exempted, expedited, and full reviews. Exempted usually means the research involves information in the public realms, uses existing data, or otherwise offers minimal risk and does not need review by the board. Expedited reviews are typically for minor modifications or renewals of existing protocols or for those projects posing minimal risk. Everything else that involves interview subjects must usually go to full reviews in the academic settings. For example, my request to interview journalists about their attitudes on blogging was expedited because those comments are pretty formal in nature and don't pose any risk to journalists talking about this public realm issue. However, my protocol asking journalists about their news organization and attitudes about their jobs needed a full review because the board determined there was risk that the reporter as an employee might get into trouble with their bosses and so they wanted to insure proper confidentiality measures were in place.

Often scholars will be asked to answer questions, submit additional documentation, and make revisions during this process, which can take anywhere from a couple of weeks to months. It is important to keep in mind that IRB approval generally lasts for only a year and needs to be renewed and modified as the research develops. Also, because IRB members often cycle off in 1–3 years (depending on the university), researchers must periodically get reacquainted with the composition and particular philosophy of a new board.

Drawing a Sample

As we exist in “the interview society” (Silverman, 1993), researchers have the benefit of populations familiar not only with viewing interviews in the media but, most likely, with having been interviewed themselves. Yet, as with all the other aspects of the study design, the selection of the sample must be undertaken with care. Unlike quantitative surveys where the goal is to find as generalizable a sample of a particular population as possible, the qualitative in-depth interview must tap participants who will yield rich, thick responses that delve deep into some topic. As mentioned earlier, those who are privileged to speak hold great power to influence the resulting research and implications of the findings.

The selection of interview participants depends entirely on the ontological nature of the study, the proposed research questions, and the kind of method and style of interrogation chosen. For example, sampling can be “provisional,” “tentative,” and “spontaneous” in ethnography (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2009), which means that a researcher chooses participants according to the flow of the ethnographic encounter

and not according to some rigid typology. For structured templates that seek to draw out the very specific situated knowledge of a particular group, the sample must be targeted and focused. Each person's capacity for answering the questions honestly and thoroughly must be weighed during the sample selection (Mason, 2002). This is not to say that people who might be inarticulate or otherwise need help to understand how they want to answer should be excluded, only that those possibilities should be considered when choosing whom to interview, the length of time needed for the interview, and the structure of the questions.

Other notes on sampling:

- How many people is “enough”? I have seen viable studies that interrogated just a handful of people and then others with hundreds. Generally speaking, studies need enough people to achieve saturation (that is, the point at which you know what the person is going to say before they say it because you have heard it from enough other people). Research questions should guide the sample. For example, if your question has to do with how female publishers deal with gender power dynamics in the news industry, you could interview just a handful of women publishers because so few of them exist. However, if you want to know how reporters investigate politics, then you would want to talk to as many political reporters as you can – I would suggest at least a dozen, but 25 or more would be ideal. Expect the interview to take 30 minutes to two hours. The optimal size for a focus group is 6–12 people, and each session tends to be about 90 minutes in length (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 182).
- Recruitment strategies determine the composition of the sample. If, say, you want a general population in a local town, then you will want to attract people in a variety of methods: not just by taking an ad out in the local paper or media organizations (which will garner older, educated, middle-class adults) but also by soliciting people in public spaces such as parks or farmers' markets and via the snowball technique (asking subjects for other names), and by appealing to community and school listserves, among other places.
- Lofland and Lofland (1995) recommend that researchers sample from a population that they themselves are part of, that is, “starting where you are.” If you have a hobby or interest in a particular area, Lofland and Lofland suggest you draw upon that background of knowledge. For example, if a researcher has been a reporter or producer in the past, he or she could refer to that content production lexicon or use network techniques from that industry when interviewing that population. This could allow for better access and gain greater trust from informants.
- Offering incentives for research participation can encourage a more inclusive sample. For example, students often receive credit for courses. Other popular rewards include payment, reimbursement of mileage, coffee or lunch, and entry into a raffle for some prize.

- Soliciting subjects and gathering contact information at events is a great way to draw a sample (though interviewing people at the event for research purposes raises problems of sound and distraction).
- The parameters of the interview, such as length and confidentiality, should be clearly communicated. The last thing a researcher wants is to promise a 20 minute meeting, knowing the interview will take an hour, and then have the subject leave.

Developing Questions

Interviewing is about being aware that “(1) actions, things and events are accompanied by subjective emotional experience that gives them meaning; (2) some of the feelings uncovered may exceed the boundaries of acceptable or expected female behavior; and (3) individuals can and must explain what they mean in their own terms” (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 169). These researchers were discussing gender issues within interviewing, but the point can be generalized. The interview template should help the subject access those perceptions and experiences in an articulate manner. Most researchers agree that interviewing involves “the construction or reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it” (Mason, 2002). They suggest that every interview is a representation of an interaction between interviewer and interviewee as well as about the pure gathering of information. With this in mind, question development for the interview should be a flexible act that can morph not only from participant to participant but also within the interview itself. The interview could be considered as a living thing that can be quelled or propelled forward with just the right question – or even just the right amount of silence or subtle gesture. And yet, though the goal of every interview will always be to record a “dynamic unfolding of the subject’s viewpoint” (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 169), the interview process must always be activated within the context of the ultimate aim of the research: How do I ask questions so I have the necessary information to answer my research questions? I like to think of my template as keeping the subjects on a narrative course that unveils situated knowledge in an ordered manner.

Often my students complain that their interview participants declined to fully answer their questions, responded in monosyllables, or otherwise provided only superficial information. They were not getting “anything good”! The tone and the framing of every question matters as well as the order in which it is asked (Anderson & Jack, 1998). Even facial expression and body language will change how a person answers, in addition to what the conversation was like before the question was posed. If you change the topic with a new question too early in a person’s recounting, you set boundaries for the interviewee, who will limit or expand on his or her next answer accordingly. The respondents’ past experiences, position, gender, race, age, and so on should be considered when selecting question strategies. Each template might

incorporate a variety of strategies, such as nondirective (“Describe your experiences . . .”), directive (“Please compare X to Y”), the use of a common lexicon, requests for anecdotes and examples, and the posing of hypotheticals. The right tone and question structure will depend on the situation, the participant (and the participant’s experience), and how specific you need them to be. Statement making on the part of the interviewer can be off-putting. Gender and race can cause people to enter the conversation with predetermined judgments about your motivations. Allowing extra time at the beginning of the interview can help participants feel at ease about your intentions.

Other tips include the following:

- Follow-up questions are key to arriving at a complete answer. Most people will not understand the full dynamics or implications of the posed question, or they will use the first response to “work out” what they really want to say.
- When asking questions, the interviewer might refer to current events and situations as a way to demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the background and context. This helps build credibility with participants.
- Recorded pre-interviews can cue the researcher to being alert to leading questions and an aggressive tone.
- Jargon, loaded terms, or academic language in questions can confuse participants.
- Allow silence to encourage elaboration.
- Many of my participants ask me for a list of the questions I am going to give them. I provide them with a generalized template but resist giving them an entire blueprint. I stress to them that the interview will range and that I will follow up on their answers. Still, being able to contemplate their answers makes some people feel less nervous, and I accommodate them as far as my research purpose allows.

Collecting the Data

Data collection entails the interview itself, which can last anywhere from half an hour to several hours, as well as the filing of the audio recording and the transcript. I begin each interview by informally chatting and then discussing the study and what I am hoping to accomplish. I always stress the applied research part of my intention, as people like to feel that they are contributing to a greater cause. We generally have a conversation that I do not record about some topic that is similar to but not exactly like the interview itself as a kind of warm-up. I buy them coffee and let them get settled. I give them an opportunity to get used to whatever recording devices I have on the table. I explain to them that I want them to be completely honest with me and to let me know if something I am asking makes them uncomfortable. I talk to

them about how they can end the interview at any moment and can withdraw their participation at any time, even after the interview has been completed. I can see them visibly relax when I say this.

The modes of interviewing I use include face-to-face interviews (either group or individual), phone, letters, Skype, iChat, and email. Each has its benefits and negatives. I prefer face-to-face interviews because I can see immediately how the person is reacting to my question, tone, gestures, and so on. I have also used phone chats, which work well because the person is somewhere they are quite comfortable and does not see my recording devices; they can often forget that it is a researcher on the other end. Also phone interviews allow me to contact people who may not live near me. Skype and iChats are similar to phone interviews (though Skype especially can be glitchy). Bird (2003) elected to interview via both letters/email and phone, though both methods have been criticized as being ineffective, abbreviated, and lacking in intimacy (Babbie, 1989; Bird, 2003; Chadwick, Bahr, & Albrecht, 1984). Rather, Bird found intriguing differences: where women wrote long, emotional letters to her questions and spoke intimately on the phone, men kept their responses in both media more brief and businesslike. She wrote of her methodological experience:

I am not suggesting some kind of blanket advocacy of phone interviews or letters for women . . . Businesswomen who use the phone all day at work may not relish the thought of a long phone interview. Those who write a lot at work may see writing letters as a chore, while those who have literacy problems might view a request to write as a threat or embarrassment . . . All methodological approaches are characterized by constraints; the key is to be flexible . . . and be aware of the possible impact of methodological choices. (Bird, 2003, p. 15)

She and other researchers suggested that the particular mode of communication will affect the power dynamics innate in the exchange of data. For example, a phone interview will mitigate some of the power dynamics by removing the social pressure of appearance (Bird, 2003, p. 15). In contrast, I have found that in email interviews (which all my students are eager to do), participants take advantage of the absence of that social pressure and dominate the exchange such that the researcher may not achieve the saturation he or she desires. In effect, the researcher *loses* power (and that's not good either). Email responses are often truncated and superficial, follow-ups are difficult to enact, and difficult questions are sometimes skipped altogether.

When the interview has commenced, the researcher must not only record the voice, ask the questions, and take notes, but also observe what Gorden (1980, p. 335) describes as four modes of nonverbal techniques: proxemics (use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes), chronemics (the use of pacing of speech and silence), kinesics (body movements or postures), and the paralinguistic (variations in tone, pitch and quality of voice). The interaction, understood and considered in a holistic manner, must be noted and analyzed (Anderson & Jack, 1998).

Indeed, social convention binds all of our interview participants, each of whom embodies multifarious life experiences that color all their responses (Anderson & Jack, 1998). In other words, is the woman speaking as the daughter of someone who spent every morning sharing the newspaper at the breakfast table (e.g., tinged with the interpersonal experience of the mother–daughter relationship) or as a mother herself (thinking of her desire for her own children to be informed citizens)? She activates different parts of her experience depending on her mood (as well as what happened most recently, e.g., a good day, a fight). Furthermore, those life experiences will leak into all of her responses and form a reaction to you, your gender, your dress, and your body language. For example, a woman will respond to a male interviewer differently from a female one as “gender filters knowledge” (Denzin, 1989, p. 116). Similarly, participants must be allowed to switch voices (i.e., they might move out of the category to which you have assigned them) and also contradict themselves. I find that my participants sometimes like to “try out” an answer before giving their real response.

One strategy for beginning to organize the prolific amounts of data the project will generate is what I will call a “pre-memo.” A pre-memo is essentially a series of comments that the researcher makes while reviewing the interview transcript immediately after the data collection. I say *after* the data collection, but I really consider this to be part of the data collection because this pre-memoing should occur in conjunction with the interview itself. The pre-memo is not the same thing as a formal “memo” in the Strauss and Corbin grounded theory tradition (see the next section for more on that). Rather it is a chance for the interviewer to make a note of all the gesturing and emphases the participant imparted that were not recorded and a chance to make more general observations about what was said. For example, a pre-memo might include notes about how to ask the question differently the next time or a reminder that another interview subject has said something similar. I am very informal in these pre-memos, as they are only for my eyes. I will often comment upon what I have heard, its credibility, for example, or its resonance with what others have said or simply add context to whatever was said, such as “Her comments on the media coverage here came the day after a big controversy involving a local reporter and the campaign.” Knowing I will be doing pre-memos helps me to put aside the process of analyzing during the process of listening (Anderson & Jack, 1998).

Other notes on collecting data include:

- First and foremost, the interview participant should sign the informed consent form with the IRB approval mark, if one needs to be completed.
- Where the interview takes place matters: a loud coffee shop or the person’s home? In part, this depends on what will be discussed: sensitive material is probably best exchanged in a more private place.
- Audio recordings of interviews – with transcription – provide the evidence and must be made in order to have a record of the data. I recommend taking notes

as well. I like to use my laptop, but some subjects will feel uncomfortable with a machine between you and them. The computer and the tapping of the keys interrupt the interchange, and thus the intimacy. If you are interviewing in person, you can usually tell right away if the interviewee is distracted by your recording devices based on his or her furtive glances at the machine and halting answers. I suggest using a banana-clip lavalier as a microphone and then moving the recorder to your bag. Another option is use your mobile phone as a recording device, which can be less obtrusive for some people.

- Pre-interviewing for demographic data can save time. The person's age, income, education, and other information will allow for a comprehensive characterization of the sample in the methods sections later on.
- Signs of confusion, reluctance, ambiguity, and contradiction should all be noted in context. Silence might indicate interesting intersections between culture, ideology, and social roles (or it could just mean they are choking on a cookie).
- Follow-up questions should not shut down the flow of the conversation.
- If the person suddenly tells you he or she must leave early, skip immediately to the most important questions and ask if you can either meet again or send follow-up questions in an email.
- Sometimes my participants will ask to see any article before publication. I tend to acquiesce. If the person wants to change his or her comment, I consider that to be an important action; often the desire to self-censor is an important data point. This is, after all, not journalism. The main goal here is to make sure the person's thoughts and perceptions are taken down accurately. Occasionally a researcher's subject matter or a person's desire to completely change what was said will make this an awkward request. At that point, the researcher may consider dropping the participant from the study or negotiating the meaning of the evidence until he or she is appeased.
- It is best to avoid applying existing schema and biases to what you might hear.

Analyzing and Writing the Data

The words of the participants in the interview project represent the units of analysis. The researcher should have an analytical tool in mind as he or she approaches this raw data. First, he or she must consider which analytical technique makes the most sense: a deductive approach such as grounded theory, or an inductive approach such as a specific theoretical framework. Discourse analytic techniques will enable a researcher to explicate how knowledge concerning the topic at hand is narratively constructed (see Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1985, 1993). Discourse analysis is particularly useful because it can help uncover the power, social, cultural, and other relationships at work in the person's construction of dialogue. As the researcher sets out to analyze the interview transcripts, he or she must explore three significant

relationships within the text, according to Anderson and Jack (1998): (1) the linguistic or performative aspects of an interview; (2) the individual connectors; and (3) the interview data as situated in a social historical consciousness. This is done by: “(1) listening to the narrator’s moral language; (2) attending to the meta-statements; [and] (3) observing the logic of the narrative” (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 169). The “moral language” refers to the participant’s value system as revealed by the choices of phrasing and other dialogic classifications that indicate a person’s identity paradigm.

Meta-statements alert us to the individual’s awareness of a discrepancy within the self – or between what is expected and what is said. They inform the interviewer about what categories the individual is using to monitor her thoughts, and allow observation about how the person socializes her feelings or thoughts according to certain norms. (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 168)

The final key in any analytical experience is to discover the patterns, recurring themes, and narrative links among this moral language and the metastatements – or “observing the logic of the narrative.” The connections made during this exploration of the “narrative logic” will reveal the underlying meaning in relation to theory. This process is the essence of discourse analysis but is also very similar to grounded theory analysis as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998).² For Strauss and Corbin, the researcher conducts a three-pronged analysis called open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding involves the initial read through of the text that identifies general concepts, their properties and dimensions. In axial coding, the researcher reviews the texts again with the concepts to link categories and reveal thematic patterns between the concepts. Finally, selective coding helps a researcher establish the theoretical implications for the patterns discovered.

Every person’s context and experience must be considered as an analysis unfolds. This can be done in the analytical “memo” and diagram, which Strauss and Corbin (1990) insist upon.

Writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing grounded theory. Since the analyst cannot readily keep track of all the categories, properties, hypotheses, and generative questions that evolve from the analytical process, there must be a system for doing so. The use of memos constitutes such a system. Memos are not simply “ideas.” They are involved in the formulation and revision of theory during the research process. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 10)

I am a big believer in the analytical memo (text) and diagram (which is basically a visual memo) as it forces the researcher to engage actively with the material, to find connections that might have been missed through a mere interpretive analysis, and to think more conceptually about the data.³ The written memo can consist of a comment next to a piece of evidence (i.e., the participant’s words) as short as a word

or phrase such as the name of a emergent theme (“connotes freedom of the press”) or a theoretical note as long as an essay. I often draw directly from my memos for my resulting papers, and thus consider this process a form of draft writing. The diagram can help formulate the connection between concepts in a more structured manner, but can also depict the relationships or flow or directionality being revealed in the evidence. As Strauss and Corbin point out, however, each researcher must formulate his or her own “style and technique” (1990, p. 223) of memoing, diagramming, and, ultimately, of analysis.

Some other tips as you analyze:

- Alternative validities always exist. Any discrepancies in the conversations can make for wonderful richness and complexity.
- Noting significant passages of text and identifying the number of the participant during analysis will aid the writing process later on, particularly if the final manuscript requires quotations from the evidence.
- Consider using a computer software program to help organize the data. Each transcript must be cleaned and standardized, and then a program such as NVivo can help you code for themes, search for keywords, diagram, and develop matrices of parallel concepts.
- A return to those original research questions once the analysis is finished will solidify any findings. Have those questions been answered with this evidence? I will often take a legal pad and write each original research question on its own sheet and then read through all my data again, making notes and writing down macro points I see as I go. This kind of brainstorming ultimately informs and supplements my discourse analysis (or selective coding).
- Wolcott (1990) suggests beginning the writing process even before data collection in order to crystallize the research questions, any theoretical framework, and the ultimate goals of the project.
- Consider sending your informants your finished article before publication for verification of contextualization.

Conclusion

I hesitate to bring all of this to any conclusion, given what Wolcott (1990, p. 55) cautioned about: the “grand flourish that might tempt me beyond the boundaries of the material I have been presenting.” Yet I do want to reiterate the importance of the interview as a methodological tool to uncover the meaning in some communicative puzzle. Where surveys can produce a broad and generalized documentation of a population’s habits and attitudes, the in-depth interview – however it is structured – can investigate those superficial statements. The interview can delve into hidden meanings, explore identity and other constructions, and reveal relationships

the person has not only with media but also with others who influence that media usage. However, as this chapter has tried to demonstrate, the interview's power dynamics will shape what is said. Researchers can attune to these power issues by being transparent, self-aware, and sensitive to the biases and inhibitions that might be present.

Historically the interview has been described as both an art and a science such that no one formula will ever suffice, nor will two interviews ever be the same. It is important to note that generalization tends not to be the goal in this technique, but rather the interview offers an exercise in human interaction, a study in relationships and meaning construction, and an examination of the social processes and forces at work in culture, economics, politics, and other aspects of society. This chapter has attempted to iterate the logistics of the science of interviewing while maintaining that the very serendipity, magic, and creativity of "interview as art" might be exactly the reason the in-depth interview should be performed. The ability to so closely investigate someone's motivations or attitudes – particularly in regard to media studies – can reveal so much about the incredible variety of roles that media and other phenomena play in our lives.

NOTES

- 1 This is not a problem specific to interviewing, but one that confronts all methodologies.
- 2 There are many, many ways to conduct grounded theory. I like Strauss and Corbin's 1998 version because it offers such a blueprint for researchers. But some might prefer something without such rigidity.
- 3 For more on memoing and diagramming, I highly recommend the description in Strauss and Corbin, 1998, chap. 14.

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Oral History Interviews

Advantages and Challenges of Employing Oral History Interviewing as Part of a Research Project

Mike Conway

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on oral history as a method that allows scholars to record and preserve the thoughts and remembrances of people and groups that may previously not have been heard. It is an empowering method, as it demands a personal connection with the subject and the realization that the interview is a collaborative process. The chapter starts with a discussion of the history of oral history as a research method, which started as an added element in historical research and evolved into the central component in memory studies. It also provides practical information for conducting oral history interviews, from working with a university's human subjects committee, finding subjects, recording audio or video, to strategies on how best to tap into those important memories. Finally, it explores analytic strategies for incorporating the interviews into academic research.

Oral history is an empowering research method in media studies. Through oral history, researchers record and preserve the thoughts and remembrances of people and groups who may previously have had little chance to have their voices heard. "Human beings individually as well as collectively make the decisions that change

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems177

history,” according to Valerie Yow (2008, p. 186): “We want to know why they made these decisions, how they made them, and even how they got to that point.” Oral history is empowering for researchers because the method demands a personal interaction with the subject, and a realization that the interview is a collaborative process involving both the interviewer and interviewee.

Oral history as a research method has its roots in the field of history as an additional primary source to better understand historical events. But scholars in many other disciplines, as well as the general public, recognized the potential of oral history and have adapted and adopted it for use across a wide variety of projects. While oral history as a historical method is still used primarily to provide a more inclusive and accurate record of the past, in other academic fields the process of remembering, including what people forget or how they reconstruct the past, has become just as important as the historical information itself.

This chapter first examines the history of oral history as a research method in the twentieth century, starting as an added element in historical research to becoming the central component in memory studies. It then takes a look at the latest in memory research, to develop a better understanding of how our brains actually work to code and retrieve events. The following section focuses on preparing for oral history interviews, from working with your university’s human subjects committee, pre-interview research, finding subjects, to deciding between audio and video interviews. The chapter then considers the logistics of the interview itself, including location, length, and tips on how best to tap into those important memories. Finally, it addresses how the interviews are used in academic research, focusing on analytic strategies, transcriptions, legal release forms, and repositories for your original interviews.

Recovering and Interpreting the Past

Chester Burger sat up on his couch on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, looking past the small video camera, and summoned half-century-old memories of the debates on adapting journalism for the new medium of television. “How should you present news with a person? We didn’t know,” remembered the 82-year-old New York native about his work on early Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) television newscasts. “I remember the one category, if we may call it that, we didn’t try was a female. We never even thought about having a female face or voice in that culture and in that period. It was never even in our minds” (Burger, 2003).

One week later, in Guilford, Connecticut, 86-year-old Robert Bendick talked about those same discussions on television news at CBS. “We were trying to find out what makes a good commentator or news reporter and we tried various people and some were not very . . . didn’t have charisma, didn’t have the delivery that we needed . . . so it was auditioning time on the air, which is about what it amounted to” (Bendick,

2003). That same year, close to 4,000 miles away, 91-year-old Henry Cassirer sat on his patio in Annecy-le-Vieux, France, and explained his role in those mid-1940s CBS meetings. “You see we had the great advantage of not having a public,” remembered Cassirer. “You could try out anything. That gave us great freedom of experimentation” (Cassirer, 2003).

All three memories, separately and collectively, combined with other historical material, provide important insight into the development of one of the most powerful positions in journalism, the television newscaster. The newscasts themselves predate kinescopes and videotape, so they cannot be viewed today. There is little written documentation on the origins of the position later known as news anchor. So, without these recorded memories collected more than 50 years after the event, we would have a limited understanding of what happened. More importantly, less than a decade after these interviews were recorded, all three men had passed away.

These three men all had successful media careers and could not easily be considered marginalized or silenced voices over their lifetimes. But in the particular area of early television news, their important contributions had been ignored until their oral histories were recorded, analyzed, and published (Conway, 2009a). One of the strengths of oral history is its versatility as a research method. You can explore the breadth of a person’s life or you can focus on key events or contributions. Oral history allows you to tailor the process to the research questions at hand.

Oral history can be divided into two categories: oral tradition and personal reminiscences. Oral tradition involves the passing along of information from generation to generation through stories and verse. Prior to the written word, people relied on oral traditions to keep a record of their past. The second category, personal reminiscences, includes the remembering of events in a person’s past, usually prompted by questions from an interviewer. For the purposes of this chapter, we will be focusing primarily on the personal reminiscences area of oral history, which we will call the *oral history interview*.

The Oral History Association (2009) defines the term as referring “both to a method of recording and preserving oral testimony and to the product of that process.” The key elements in oral history include a person interviewing someone about his or her personal experiences, with the interview preserved on audio or video. Oral history is known by several names and is popular in several academic disciplines, as well as with the general public. The process is also called life history, personal narrative, oral biography, memoir, testament, and a self-report.

Oral history is practiced not only in historical and media research, but also in anthropology, literary studies, sociology, linguistics, folklore, psychology, and cultural studies. Because oral history has been embraced across such a wide range of disciplines, both academic and public, specific definitions and details on the purpose and approach can vary. Some scholars use the terms “oral history” and “in-depth interviewing” interchangeably, while others consider oral history a more “holistic” approach (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 153). In-depth interviewing often includes a group of people who are asked a fairly structured set of questions, while oral

history focuses on the individual, with a more organic approach to finding out about the person's life or a specific period of time.

History of Oral History

Oral history emerged as a valuable research method in the mid-twentieth century as scholars began to push beyond traditional historical research and its emphasis on printed documents as the most important sources. Traditional historical research tended to focus on the people in power, those who left behind a paper trail. Some historians continued to study elites, using oral history to fill in the gaps of information not provided in the printed sources. Other scholars, especially in Europe, began to use oral history to focus on the working class and other groups that might be invisible or marginalized in print sources (Ritchie, 2011).

This approach to historical research became known as social history, a “bottom-up” approach to remembering the past. One of the inspirations in this area came from a Depression era program in the United States. Members of the Federal Writers’ Project, led by folklorist John Lomax, tracked down more than 2,300 former slaves in 17 states and recorded their memories. The project, *Born in Slavery*, became one of the most important resources for understanding everyday life in bondage (Blakey, 2005; Library of Congress, 2001).

Columbia University initiated the first academic oral history project when it opened the Oral History Research Office in 1948. Allan Nevins, a former journalist trained in interviewing people, ran the Columbia effort and took on high-profile projects to interview people for their role in historic events. The social history movement led to the creation of the History Workshop at Ruskin College in Great Britain in 1966. That same year, the Oral History Association (OHA) was formed.

As the technology improved for recording audio, and the interest in social history and critical theory expanded, oral history interviewing moved out of the academy and into the community. State and local historical societies began oral history projects to save the memories of people in their geographic area. Organizations started recording interviews with their long-time members to preserve their stories. Teachers initiated oral history projects for their students. The popular *Foxfire* series of magazines and books stemmed from high school teacher Eliot Wigginton and his Rabun County, Georgia, students conducting oral histories on life in the Southern Appalachian Mountain area (Perks & Thomson, 2009; Ritchie, 2011).

The popularity of oral history also sparked a backlash from traditional historians. If just anybody could do these interviews, what was their value? If hundreds and thousands of these recordings sit in archives across the world with few, if anyone, listening and analyzing them, how does that advance our understanding of the past? The OHA began to craft a set of guidelines and best practices, a process that continues to this day. While oral history's popularity stemmed partly from its low barrier

to entry – access to an audio recorder and the ability to ask people questions – oral history as scholarship demanded a high level of research and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses as a research method.

While historians debated the strengths and weaknesses of oral history, other disciplines began to incorporate the method into their research. Interviewing had long been a part of ethnographic research, so oral history had common ground in that area. Critical theory emerged in literary studies, to study and give voice to under-represented groups. In many sections of society and cultures, women had been denied access to the power structure, so their histories often included few printed documents. Nondominant and marginalized groups may not leave a paper trail, thus oral history became a valuable way to research gender, class, and ethnicity.

Many historians continue to take an epistemological approach, using oral histories to provide a more accurate and textured look at the past. But for other scholars, in an area loosely defined as memory studies, the accuracy of the information is less important than the memory and the process of remembering. For Alessandro Portelli (2009), “[o]ral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (p. 36). Memory studies include research on shared (not individual) memories, which builds on the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992), who coined the term “collective memory.” For collective and public memory scholar Carolyn Kitch (2012, p. 7), “[t]he concept of memory has become a popular lens through which to see how the past is understood retrospectively and how social groups use ideas about history in order to make sense of their identity in the present. These processes occur over time, a memory is reshaped again and again.”

Memory

Whether you are utilizing oral history to add to the historical record or to understand how people process the past, it is helpful to know how the brain works before embarking on an oral history project. Researchers from several disciplines are studying memory from a variety of approaches, and we can glean important information from these studies to help us better utilize oral history as a research method.

First of all, we have to throw out the old notion that when an event happens, our brain saves the memory and stores it somewhere so we can bring it back later, like a tape recording. Instead, the brain takes different parts of the sensory experience and puts them in different places. So, depending on what question or stimulus brings back the event, the memory can have different details, contingent on how the brain arranges the recovered information (Whittlesea, 2011).

It is a common assumption that the older we get, the less we remember. This is true, but only to a point. Problems with story recall can begin in people as early as their late forties, but in studies, older people only lost about 10–15% more memory

than younger people. In reality, most memory loss happens in the first hour, followed by the next nine hours (Schacter, 2001). If the experience survives the first day, it has a good chance of being saved in the long-term memory. Research shows we have a better memory for either unpleasant or pleasant experiences. Events that are particularly important to us can be recalled in great detail, which Brown and Kulik (2000, p. 51) dubbed “flashbulb memories.” We tend to have stronger memories of events if we have told the story to others over the years or even just gone over it on our mind, processes called *overt* and *covert rehearsal*.

Another interesting aspect of memory is that as time goes on, our memories take on a narrative structure. In studies of both a soldier in a Vietnam War battle and people in New York City on September 11, 2001, the eyewitness interviews conducted right after the events were disjointed, heavily detailed, and very graphic. When those same people were interviewed years later, the memories had been turned into a more coherent narrative with fewer details. We use our memory to make sense of our lives (Allison, 2009; Clark, 2011).

Scholars are concerned with both the *validity* (accuracy about event being remembered) and *reliability* (degree of change in details and structure as memory is retold) of oral history interviews. Unfortunately, in memory retrieval, people can mix in what happened with what they imagined. They can confuse what they saw on television with what they personally witnessed. Even with very detailed and confident “flashbulb memories,” some of the details can be wrong. Researchers say the police practice of showing witnesses mug shots can be problematic. People may take the mug shot image and place it at the crime scene in their mind and be convinced that the person was there (Buckhout, 2000).

In general, people tend to remember accurately the general outline of the experience, but some of the details may be altered. Ulric Neisser (2000) studied John Dean’s testimony during the 1970s Watergate hearings. Dean testified in a manner that put him closer to the events than he really was, when compared to the secret tape recordings. President Richard Nixon’s people thought the discrepancies would damage Dean’s credibility. But his general message remained fairly consistent and the public seemed to ignore the wrong details and accept his overall memory.

More studies have focused on the reliability of memory than the validity. In general, people’s memories tend to be reliable, that is, their versions of long ago events are fairly consistent. But fewer studies have looked at the validity of the memories, that is, how they fit with what we know about the event. Studies also show that people have stronger memories for distinct events or experiences that did not continue through the years. In other words, if someone does the same thing over and over, the first time may stay in the memory because it was new and distinct. But as the same process is repeated over weeks or years, he or she loses the specific details and retains the generalities.

As you might expect, what is happening today, or anytime since the event, colors how people remember the past. A memory is a way of making sense, so people may consciously or unconsciously mold the memory to today’s situation.

Overall, research tells us that we need to approach oral history interview information as we would any evidence – with caution and with other research data to either parallel or contradict the interview details. On the positive side, research shows that if events and situations are committed to long-term memory, there is a strong chance they will not be entirely lost. The person may have trouble accessing a memory, but given the right cues the brain can bring it back. This aspect of memory underlines the importance of the questions you ask and other methods you can use to dredge up long ago memories (Charlton, Myers, & Sharpless, 2006, 2008; Neisser & Hyman, 2000; Perks & Thomson, 2009; Ritchie, 2011; Schacter, 2001; Yow, 2005).

Human Subjects Review

One of the more contentious issues in oral history involves institutional review boards (IRBs) and *human subjects protections*. If you have done any research in a university setting in the United States involving human beings, you already know about IRBs and the paperwork involved. Oral historians have lobbied over the years to have the method excluded from human subjects review, but in most cases in the United States you will have to deal with your university's IRB before you can start your oral history research project.

Institutional review boards have an important role in academic research. They are designed to protect human subjects from harm during research. But the current system has been designed mostly for biomedical studies with little understanding or concern for the differences in other forms of research. Two of the main areas that highlight the differences with oral history are anonymity and record keeping. Regulators want to make sure human subjects stay anonymous and that the data is quickly destroyed after the project is completed. In oral history, the identity of the person being interviewed is often important to the research project and as oral historians we have an obligation to save the interviews and transcripts for future researchers. So the process of getting your project approved may involve helping the IRB staff understand your particular research method and why it may differ from biomedical studies (Schrag, 2010).

Here are a few tips to help you through the IRB process:

- Start early: The process of gaining approval for your project could take weeks, or even months, depending on your IRB.
- Do not conduct any oral history interviews until you have IRB approval. You will not be able to use any data that you collect from human subjects before the approval date of your project by the IRB.
- Find out your university's policy on oral history interviews. A handful of schools have exempted oral history from the IRB process. In most cases you will need to go through an expedited (quicker) or a full (longer) review.

- Keep your project description as broad and inclusive as possible. Once your project is approved, you will have to go through an amendment process if you make any substantive changes to your project.
- Create a list of broad, overall interview questions. IRBs tend to want to see the exact questions you will be asking in the interviews. Gently let the IRB know that these are the type of questions you will be asking in your project but that you have to tailor the specific questions to the person's background and involvement in the project topic.
- Informed consent form: Depending on your IRB's policies, you may be asked to provide the interviewees with an informed consent form. This form spells out the rights and responsibilities of the researcher and the person being interviewed, in most cases giving the person the opportunity to stop participating in the project at any point. The informed consent form is usually separate from the legal release form, which will be discussed later.
- Project length: Pay close attention to the end date on your IRB project approval. After a certain period of time, your project approval will expire, unless you ask for a continuation. If you are given the opportunity, ask for a longer period of time than you think you will need. This will help you avoid extra paperwork if the project takes longer than you expected.

Pre-Interview Research

Frances Buch opened the door to her North Carolina home and welcomed me graciously, if cautiously. Buch had lived alone since the passing of her husband and only knew me from a few telephone conversations. I sensed her tentativeness as I dragged in the video gear and lights. I wondered if my zeal to interview her so quickly after our first phone conversation would hurt her willingness to open up and tell me about her experiences. Frances Buch (Frances Buss before marriage) worked at CBS in New York City from the start of commercial television in 1941 until the mid-1950s. She worked in a variety of areas, both on camera and behind the scenes, and later became the first female director in television. Few people were still alive from the critical early period of television. Frances Buch could provide invaluable insight into an important, overlooked, and understudied era of media history. But she would have to trust me and be willing to recall her experiences.

As I was trying to make her comfortable while I set up the camera, tripod, microphone, and lights, I looked around her living room and something caught my attention. Next to the fireplace, what looked to be a stuffed animal, a lion, peered out from a basket. Without thinking, I blurted out, "Charlemane!!" Frances looked over at me with her eyes widening: "How did you know that!?" In 1954 CBS paired Walter Cronkite with a lion puppet named Charlemane on a morning show in a desperate ploy to match the popularity of chimpanzee J. Fred Muggs on NBC's *Today*

Show. Buch had worked on another short-lived CBS program that involved the lion puppet. She broke into a grin as I told her how I knew the identity of Charlemane. Any tension or apprehension seemed to disappear and Frances Buch and I spent hours discussing her role in early television, providing critical background and details. She had decided to accept me as someone who would understand and appreciate her experiences (Buch, 2008).

You may consider sight recognition of an obscure 1950s television puppet as evidence of mindless trivia – and it might be – but I like to think of it as a benefit of immersing yourself in your area of study. I would not have recognized the puppet without years of studying early television. Frances Buch may have provided a great oral history interview without that moment, but I firmly believe that the more you know about the interviewee’s world, the more he or she will be willing to open up to you with his or her memories. This is an insight I learned as a television news reporter. When I interviewed people without a clear understanding of their expertise, they might give superficial answers. But if they felt that I had an understanding, or at least an appreciation or curiosity about their subject, they would often open up and provide greater insight and texture.

In short, the more you know about your research area, the better the oral history interview. You cannot control the memory of your interviewee, and you may not be able to control the length of the interview or even the location, but you can control the amount of knowledge you bring to the subject. As we learned earlier in the section on brain studies, research shows that important information is often not erased from memory, but you need to provide the right cue to access the knowledge. Just as important, the more you have immersed yourself in your area of the research, the better prepared you will be to react to the answers you receive in the interview.

Interview as Data Collection

I try to approach each oral history interview as if I have only one chance to ask questions and react to the answers. I feel I need to collect all my “data” from this person in one or a few sessions over the course of a day or two. In this scenario, it is critical for me to know as much as possible to ask intelligent follow-up questions on the spot. In reality, I usually have had the luxury of following up my oral history interviews with later phone calls, emails, or other correspondence for clarification. But in some cases, I did only have one chance and those interviews are all I have from that person on my research project.

I learned this lesson during one phase of my television news history project. Because of a lack of funding, I first interviewed some key people by telephone. A month or so later, I was able to secure funding to travel to their homes for in-person interviews. As I transcribed the first phone interviews, I realized they had brought

up names, places, and even concepts that went right over my head. Even though I thought I was well prepared, it became clear I had more work to do. Luckily, I had the time between the phone and in-person oral history interviews to dig deeper into the existing research and to cast a wider net for information. As a result, the second interviews provided better information and insight.

When you are conducting your literature review, do not forget the human element. Since we are concerned with media research, most of what you are hoping to learn may involve the process and work involved in media or how that media was received. But since you are interviewing people, you should also be versed in their living environment. What was life like during the period you are studying for the people you are interviewing? Their work may have been in midtown Manhattan, the streets of Cairo, the upper peninsula of Michigan, or the plains of western Kansas. How did that affect how they did their work? In other words, your mastery of secondary sources should include not just the research topic, but also the geography and living conditions of the location and time period. Oral history interviews can often provide rich detail about those conditions.

Choosing Your Interviews

Oral historians are haunted by the obituary page. Every death represents the loss of a potential narrator and thus an absolute diminution of society's collective historical memory.

Davis, Back, & MacLean, 1977, pp. 4–5

When thinking about whom you should interview for your research project, the easy answer is to focus on the people who were closest to the specific research questions or hypotheses you are investigating. In reality, you often have to make strategic decisions on your oral history interviewing. First of all, how long ago was the time period you are investigating? To put it bluntly, you may want to focus first on the people who may be the oldest or might be losing their memory. As an oral historian, you want to think about their knowledge and experience as important data that you need to retrieve to provide better insight into an earlier time.

The best way to start thinking about potential interviews is to go through previous research and start writing down names. Check personal archives to see if the individual who donated the material is still living. I have had the best success with an approach called snowball sampling. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) consider snowball sampling “well suited to studying social networks, subcultures, or people who have certain attributes in common” (p. 114). I get in touch with one of the first people I find and then ask them to name other people who were involved in that area. They can provide phone numbers or email addresses. Then I contact those people and also ask them for names. If the number of potential interviewees gets large, I start a

database with all the names. Then I can add any information I find out about that person, including who gave me the referral, any mentions in the existing literature, and any contact information.

Through your research, you may have identified a group of people who would be potential oral history interviewees. You can ask yourself several questions about each member of your potential interview group to create a rank-order list. Has the person already written a book or article about his or her experiences? Has someone else written about this person? Has someone else already conducted an oral history interview with this person? Did the person keep a journal during the period in question? If the answer is yes to any of the above questions, you may be able to hold off on talking to this person, for now.

How close was the person to the event or time period you are studying? Would they have been in a position to have first-hand knowledge of what you are studying? I often identify people who may not have first-hand knowledge of the specific topic I am studying at that moment, but they were present, either at the company or at a competing media outlet. They can often provide important context and perspective for the period, but they are not as important as the people directly involved.

Once you start working on your list, contact those you can find. It is best to talk to them on the telephone so you can get a sense of what they may remember and their interest in helping you on the project. Are they retired or are they still working? That can be a critical question because people who are still working often have less time and are less inclined to carve out time for you.

Interview Logistics

Two of the key attributes of oral history interviews are that they must be recorded and they cannot be rushed, whether the conversation be face to face or by telephone. You need to plan for a lengthy discussion on the topic, defined by the Oral History Association (2009) as including “sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire.” The length of an oral history interview can vary considerably and is determined by a number of factors, including the wishes of the interview subject, time constraints, and budget. When I conduct interviews, I hope to record a minimum of two hours of questions and answers.

One of the critical logistical questions involves conducting the interview in person or via the telephone or the Internet. If all of your interview subjects live in your city, the decision may not be that difficult. In most cases though, interviewing by phone or Skype is quicker and less expensive than traveling, and some people may feel more comfortable opening up if there is physical distance from the person asking questions.

You also need to decide if you plan to record the interview on audio alone, or combined with video. Charles Hardy III believes the audio recording is key in oral history because the “articulation of thought and memory are first aural, not visual

processes” (Hardy, 2009, p. 399). For Brien Williams, the visual adds context: “Videotaping reveals physical gestures and facial expressions that can greatly expand on the meaning of the spoken word. A smirk signaling irony accompanying a statement would pass unnoticed in an aural recording, unless noted by an attentive interviewer and indicated in the transcript” (Williams, 2011, p. 268).

Personally, I feel I can make a stronger connection if I am in the same room with the person. My strategy for the important interviews is to first record a phone conversation and then later interview those people on video in person. Through decades of interviewing, first as a television journalist and now as an oral historian, I have come up with some strategies for maximizing the quality of the interviews while working with a tight budget. These tips are for in-person sessions, but can be adopted for distance interviews.

- 1 *Comfortable interview location:* Whenever possible, interview people where they are most comfortable, most likely in their home. They are more likely to open up and talk freely about a topic if they are not nervous or trying to negotiate an unknown space. Quite frankly, when I am traveling, I do not have the money to rent an interview location anyway, so the person’s home is usually the best option I have.
- 2 *Adapt to their schedule:* You want to schedule the interview at a time of day when they are most alert. Whenever possible, let the subject choose the starting time. If they are early risers, be ready to talk to them at 7 a.m. if that is what they prefer. Adjust your needs to their schedules.
- 3 *Limit each session:* Always keep in mind that it is exhausting to sit and try to remember events from long ago. People tend to get tired after an hour or two of oral history interviews. Watch your subject closely to see how he or she is holding up during the interview. Some people try to mask their fatigue and continue. You can often tell when they are starting to get tired. Their once precise and detailed stories start to become more scattered and vague. This could be an example of different recalls of different portions of the subject, but it could be a sign that they just cannot access that information at that point.
- 4 *Pay close attention to interview location and potential distractions:* Once you start the interview, you want to limit the number of interruptions or distractions. If the subject needs to stop the interview for any reason, it may take precious minutes to restart the interview and get refocused on the subject. So I spend a considerable amount of time arranging an interview setting to limit interruptions. I usually ask the person to choose a comfortable chair in the room where they would like to do the interview. If they normally like to prop up their feet, I make sure they have that option. I always ask if they would like a glass of water within reach.

If possible, I ask them to turn off their telephones. During an oral history interview with the late Don Hewitt in his CBS *60 Minutes* office, I quickly realized one of

the most powerful men in television news often answered his own phone, whether the call was from an important politician or just a delivery guy at the front desk dropping off a package. Luckily, Hewitt realized the problem of the distractions and agreed to unplug his phone during the interview.

Recording Technology

Quite simply, without a recording of the conversation, you cannot call it oral history. The recording becomes an aural or visual document. For that reason, you do not want to take any chances with the recording part of the process. Use the best and most reliable audio recorder or video camera that your budget will allow. Bring backup batteries and equipment. Anyone who has spent time recording audio and/or video for a living knows that equipment always fails at the most important time. Have some kind of backup plan in case of equipment problems.

Know your equipment. Even with decades of experience, I always carve out time the night before or on the morning of an interview to go over my video camera to make sure I understand how it works and how to set up and record the interview. Not only will that greatly reduce the chance of a recording problem but it also puts the person at ease. Legendary television news storyteller Larry Hatteberg of KAKE-TV in Wichita, Kansas, says you need to know your equipment well enough that you can set it up easily and without complications when you are sitting in a person's living room. If you draw undue attention to the recording equipment, you can make the interview subject nervous. If you are confident in your equipment, you can carry on a conversation with the person while you get the recorder ready for the interview.

Recording Audio

Most oral history interviews are recorded on audio. Audio interviews are much easier and less obtrusive than video interviews. When deciding on what audio equipment to use, you want to first think about how you would like to use the recordings in the future. If you are merely preserving a record of the interview you may not be as concerned about the quality, but you must be able to easily understand what the person and interviewer are saying on the recording. If you may be using the interviews in an audio documentary or online, you want to make sure the sound is clear and of high quality. If I am going to the trouble and expense of traveling to another location to talk with someone in person, I may as well go the extra step to insure the recording is more than just a historical record and can serve further purposes.

Most audio recorders come with a built-in microphone. Avoid using these microphones because they tend to amplify other sounds and drown out the interview. I have spent countless hours in archives straining to hear recordings using the built-in microphone. Invest in a separate microphone, preferably a lavalier (“lav”) microphone that can be clipped to a shirt, pointing in the direction of the mouth. People usually forget they are wearing a lav microphone soon after the interview begins.

Be sure that you ask your questions in a loud enough voice that you can be heard on the microphone clipped to the subject’s shirt. It is important that the questions are audible in an oral history interview so future scholars will know what questions led to specific answers. Some oral historians use two microphones so both the questions and answers are clear, but that adds another level of complexity and more equipment that can go wrong. I usually stick with one microphone and make sure I ask the questions loud enough that I can later hear them when transcribing the interview.

Listen closely for noise distractions. It is amazing how much noise an air conditioner or refrigerator can make when you are listening to an audio recording of an interview. I have sometimes asked if we could turn off an air conditioner during the interview to limit the noise distractions.

Always wear headphones or at least earbuds when recording an oral history interview. You need to know how the person sounds as the voice is being recorded. If you are not listening to the interview through the recording device, you have no idea whether or not there is a problem with your audio.

Recording Video

If you are shooting the interview on video, you want to be cognizant of the setting within the video frame. You do not want anything in the background to cause a distraction for someone watching the interview later. For these considerations, I use the strategies that I learned as a video journalist. You want a background that is a subtle visual cue of where you are, without taking away from the person or the memories. In other words, you do not want a house plant to appear to be growing out of the person’s head. You do not want a distracting television or computer screen in the background. You do not want to interview the person in front of a window, with the light coming in behind them, which makes it hard to see him or her clearly. If possible, I make sure the chair is a few feet from the wall, so I can focus on the subject and cause the background to be slightly out of focus, once again directing attention to the person being interviewed.

When shooting a video interview, you may also have to make compromises on comfort versus on-camera appearance. I try to avoid overstuffed chairs or couches because a person can sink right down into the furniture. While they may be comfortable, it does not usually present a flattering view of the person. For that reason, I try

to choose a straight back chair, as long as they do not mind sitting in such a position for an extended period of time.

You will also want to decide in advance why you are interviewing the person on video. Are you merely creating a video and audio record of the session? Would you like to use these interviews for an online project or even a documentary? The answers to these questions will determine how you prepare for a video interview. Decisions are usually based primarily on the budget – which for me is usually very small.

With decades of experience as a video journalist, I am comfortable with video cameras and know how to achieve the quality level acceptable for daily journalism. But I also often work alone and want to travel light. I may bring a few stand lights to help improve the look of the interview setting, but I do not have the time or budget for the often hours-long setup time for interviews used for news magazine shows or well-funded documentaries. I always use a sturdy tripod, so my shot is steady and I can concentrate on my questions. I try to find a pleasing head-and-shoulders frame for the interview, and then rarely change the shot during the interview.

When shooting your own video oral history interviews, be sure to sit right next to the camera so you can see the camera screen. I try to position myself so I can keep eye contact with the interview subject and occasionally lean over and look at the camera screen to make sure the person is still in the frame.

Whether you are recording video or audio, be sure to start each recording with key information including your name, location of interview, and date. You can say the names of the interviewees or have them pronounce their names. It does not hurt to also have them spell their names.

Questions

Your questions are the key to a successful oral history interview. The questions are the culmination of all of your research into the subject matter. As you read the literature to prepare for your research project, you should be jotting down ideas and questions. Your questions should revolve around two main areas: (1) What information and insight do you need to help test your hypotheses or to provide illumination into your research questions? (2) In what area of your research does the oral history subject have direct involvement?

For a historian, the traditional printed primary sources will only reveal so much information. The person's experiences will often help you understand the process and context involved in creating those documents or other media. For example, you could combine oral history and content analysis to study the newspaper and television coverage of the riots at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. In the content analysis portion of the project, you can design a codebook to study the words

and pictures used in the newspaper coverage and the use of visuals and sources in the television coverage. But the content analysis will only allow you to study the message itself. Any inferences about the intent of the journalists involved are speculation. Oral history interviews with the reporters and other journalists may provide insight and context into how and why the riots were covered in a particular way. You can find out what roadblocks the reporters had to overcome and what information or visuals never made it into the newspaper or television coverage.

More specifically, you want to create a list of questions for your oral history interview that is longer than the number of questions you will be able to ask in the time you will have. Spend some time putting the questions in order of importance to your research. Have the questions with you during the session so you do not forget a key area when you get into the interview.

Use your list of questions merely as a guide. Let the people you are interviewing set the course for the interview, within reason. Listen to the answers. Be ready to follow up the answer with a question to provide more clarity and detail. If they want to go into great detail, let them. Some people feel the need to provide as much detail as they can, and if you try to interrupt them you may disrupt their process of remembering the event. Studs Terkel compared oral history interviewing to jazz music: "Have a skeletal framework, but be ready to improvise within that" (Terkel, 2009, p. 127).

Do Not Interrogate

This is not *60 Minutes*. You are not trying to catch the person in a "gotcha" moment. When I show students portions of some of my interviews in which people are providing wrong information, they sometimes ask why I did not grill them on the incorrect information. You want to remember that you are usually dealing with memory issues, not deception. These people may have long ago transposed events and now that is how they believed the event happened. In the case of information that I suspect is incorrect, I will usually ask a follow-up question to see if the person misspoke or if additional information will help them with the memory. If not, I make a mental note to check out the details later. For researchers in memory studies, the transposed events or incorrect details can be a window into how that particular person has made sense of that part of his or her life.

If your topic includes troubling or embarrassing questions for the interviewee, save those for later in the interview when the person is more comfortable with you and the process. I like Charles T. Morrissey's (2006, p. 190) approach of putting the blame on a mythical future researcher. When he has to ask a tough question, he prefaces it by saying "A future historian would rank me as remiss for not now giving you the opportunity to answer this important question." This deflection could save you from an abrupt end to the interview if the person takes offense at the question.

Eye Contact

During the interview, concentrate on the person you are interviewing. Only look at your questions and notes when necessary. If you are recording the interview on video, sit next to the camera so you only have to lean over occasionally to make sure the person is still in the frame. The more you can maintain eye contact and genuinely listen, the better the chance that the person will feel comfortable to open up and talk to you. If you spend too much time fiddling with the recording equipment or looking at your notes, the interviewee will sense your disconnect.

Always end your interviews by asking if the person has anything to add or other topics he or she would like to discuss. Usually, he or she will have nothing to add. But occasionally, that final question can be a prompt to provide details and insight you had not even thought to ask. When the interview is finished, genuinely thank the person for his or her time.

Legal Release Form

Before you leave, and more appropriately before you start the interview, you need to talk to the person about how you are going to use the interview. This is not just ethical, but a legal requirement. Laws and their interpretations are constantly changing, but most oral historians follow the basic rule that, unlike in journalism, the interviewee automatically has ownership and copyright of the interview. People own what they say. So you need to have them sign a legal release form that turns the rights over to you, if you want to be able to use the interview in any scholarly projects. The legal release form should spell out clearly how you plan to use the interview. Are you planning to write a book or monograph? Are you designing a museum display? Do you plan an audio or video documentary? Would you like to post all or parts of the interview online? The more detail you include will save you the hassle of going back to the person, or heirs, for approval for a new usage later. A simple web search of “oral history release form” will provide you with examples. Keep in mind the legal release form is often separate from the informed consent form that you may be required to present by your IRB.

But gaining ownership of the interview also brings responsibilities and potential problems. If the person feels he or she has been defamed by the interview (libel in relation to a transcript, or slander with a recorded version), you may be the person targeted in legal action. The interviewee could also sue for being put in a false light or for having private information revealed to the public. Since defamation only involves living people, sometimes a decision is made to keep parts of the interview closed until a person has passed away. This information is mostly geared to oral historians working in the United States. Laws concerning oral history interviews can

be dramatically different depending on the country in which you work (Neuen-schwander, 2011; Shopes, 2006).

Transcriptions/Electronic Media

One of the key early debates in oral history involved the original recording and the transcriptions of the interview. Some of the early projects, including Columbia University's Oral History Research Office, considered the typed transcript as the primary document. In some cases, the recordings were discarded once the transcriptions were complete. Today, most scholars would agree the recording is the original document and should be preserved. But even with the simplified process of recording and listening to audio and video today, most scholars still find it easier to work with transcripts, especially for research that is designed as a journal article or book.

Interview transcription is one of the most time-consuming but important parts of oral history research. If you have the funds to pay someone else to transcribe your interviews, you will save yourself hours and hours of time. But be ready to still spend some time with the recordings and the transcriptions because someone who does not know the subject is prone to make mistakes on proper names and detailed concepts. On average, transcribing an audio interview takes about one hour per 15 minutes of recorded conversation. This time does allow you to revisit the interview and start to process and analyze the information the person has provided you with.

If I am in a hurry for a conference paper or presentation, I sometimes start with a shortcut method I used as a television journalist. I will listen to the entire interview without stopping, make note of key concepts and ideas and mark where they are on the recording. I put asterisks by comments that I think might work as direct quotes or sound bites. When I am finished, I will go back and type out verbatim the sections I would like to use. I must still force myself to go back later and complete the transcription because it is critical that the information be available for other scholars. Be sure to put all the important information at the top of each transcription: interviewee's name, interviewer's name, date, location, and name of transcriber. You can also add any other information that would help someone who comes across the transcript in the future.

Transcript Approval

During the 2012 US presidential campaign, a journalism ethics debate arose after the *New York Times* published a story revealing the apparently common practice of quote approval for politicians and political operatives in exchange for access. Reporters agreed to send the quotes they planned to use back to the person for approval. Those

quotes were then approved, changed, or deleted without the public knowing about the deal (Peters, 2012). Journalists were quick to criticize this practice. Former CBS anchor Dan Rather (2012) called it a “jaw dropping turn in journalism” which benefited the politicians and hurt the public. Inherent in this debate is journalists’ belief that the recorded answer to a question is closest to the “truth.” If you let people approve quotes, they will attempt to smooth out or eliminate any discrepancies or answers that are not flattering. Also inherent in this debate is that most journalists feel they “own” the interview after it is recorded and the interviewee should have little say as to its use.

This is an area where journalism and oral history diverge. Oral historians must acknowledge the interview is a collaborative experience. Most oral historians believe it is imperative that you send a transcript and a copy of the recorded interview to the person for approval. The interviewee is allowed to delete information, make changes to what was said, or place an embargo on some material until a later date. This version of “quote approval” acknowledges the agency of the people you interview. You are not just collecting data. Interviewees are critical partners in your research.

Oral History Interview Analysis and Interpretation

The strategies and approaches of analyzing and interpreting oral history interviews are as varied as the number of disciplines that have turned to this method to explore their research questions. As with all qualitative research methods, the original research idea and reasons for choosing oral history will help guide you in making sense of what people said and how they said it. In general, we can separate the method into two areas: oral history as one of the sources in a historical research project and oral history or memory studies projects in which the interviews are the primary texts.

In historical research, oral histories are usually utilized as one of several primary sources to try and understand a past event or period of time. The interviews are included along with written documents, personal archives, and other evidence from the past. In these projects, the validity of the information in the interviews is critical. Researchers use the triangulation method, comparing the information in the interviews to other primary sources, to assess the level of confidence they have that the memories are accurate.

Oral history interviews can provide more texture and fill in details that cannot be found in printed historical documents. Oral history provides a human element to historic research. The information can include personal thoughts during an important period, insight into specific work processes, and details on family life. “Generalizations are the curse of oral history memoirs, and specifics are often the nuggets that make them glitter” (Morrissey, 2006, p. 192). Because oral history has

provided access to people and groups previously invisible in historical research, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) consider it a feminist method, by allowing scholars “to get at the valuable knowledge and rich life experience of marginalized persons and groups that would otherwise remain untapped, and specifically, offers a way of accessing subjugated voices” (p. 151).

Oral history interviews also allow you to add personal stories to your manuscript. I try to create a narrative structure in my research, so I often use the oral history interviews as a journalist uses quotations or sound bites in a story. The direct quotes provide a pacing element and add a human element to the media topic. Therefore, when I am analyzing my transcripts, I am looking for sections of answers that would be the right topic and length to fit into the manuscripts in certain points (Conway, 2009b). For those scholars working beyond the printed word, the recorded interviews are a key component to audio and video documentaries.

In the area of oral history projects and in memory studies, the interviews are the data. The validity of the information in the interviews is of less concern than the memories themselves. Scholars accept and embrace the subjectivity involved in the process of remembering past events. For Valerie Yow (2005), oral history’s “subjectivity is at once inescapable and crucial to an understanding of the meaning we give our past and present. To reveal the meanings of lived experience is the great task of qualitative research and specifically oral history interviews” (p. 23). In his oral history work, Studs Terkel valued the unique way each person made sense of past events: “I’m not looking for some abstraction as *the* truth, because it doesn’t exist. What I’m looking for is the truth for *them*” (Terkel & Parker, 2009, p. 125).

The analysis and interpretation of oral history interviews follows a similar path to all qualitative research, a process that is unique to each project but with strategies that have proven successful over time. One of the most popular approaches involves grounded theory. This approach, first introduced by Glaser and Strauss, involves analyzing the interviews and creating as many categories as possible. The categories may be influenced by previous research, but should also percolate from a close read of the interview transcripts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Larson, 2006). These categories can be further refined as you read through the transcripts repeatedly. John Bodnar (1989) started an oral history project on automotive plant workers to learn about management–employee relations. Through analysis of the interviews, he realized the individual memories were in part a product of social discourse: “individuals did not remember alone; they discussed the events of their experience and formulated explanations of what had occurred in their lives with other people” (p. 1202).

For those scholars interested in narrative theory, the oral history interviews provide texts that are rich with insight into how people make sense of their lives. Mary Chamberlain (2008, p. 161) considers all oral history interviews as narratives, as

informants move across the terrain of their memories in what may appear a random fashion, highlighting and silencing as they travel through the journey of their lives. If, however, this journey is seen as akin to a plot, then such priorities and silences and the order of telling can convey a meaning that in term requires attention.

In this approach, the method is less of an interview and more of a “jointly created conversational narrative performance” (McMahan, 2008, p. 95).

In some cases, a single oral history interview can inspire a book-length project. Elizabeth Burgos-Debray spent countless hours interviewing a Guatemalan peasant woman, then chose to use only the words of the woman she interviewed, adding an introduction to orient the readers. The book, *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, brought the woman’s story to light with Menchu later winning the Nobel Peace Prize (Menchu & Burgos-Debray, 1984).

Presentation and Classroom Use

An added value of the recorded interview is apparent at conference presentations and in the classroom. While I grumble about the effort that goes into shooting my interviews on digital video, those visual recordings mean that I can show my students and fellow researchers the actual people who were involved in my research. In a 10 minute conference or panel presentation sandwiched between other scholars’ presentations, sound and video clips can draw attention to the work you are doing. In my journalism history class, the students tend to perk up when the boring professor stops talking and they can watch Walter Cronkite remember his early efforts in local television news or Frances Buch explain how it felt to be promoted as a sex symbol as CBS’s first female television director.

Oral History Repository

Another important aspect of oral history is that you are not just interviewing that person for your current project. You are recording the conversation as a record, for use by future scholars. Before embarking on an oral history project, you need to think about how you will save and protect the recordings as well as make them available to others who are interested in the topic. The best solution is to find a library or archive that would be willing to house your recorded interviews. Having an established repository for your oral history interviews not only makes them available to others; if the archive is known for that area of research, it provides one location for future scholars to access material.

Summary and Conclusion

The effectiveness of oral history as a research method has been shown by its acceptance by a wide range of academic disciplines, from narrative studies to psychology.

For media studies, oral history interviews can shed some light on some of the most elusive questions including how and why things happened.

The oral history interview also brings a personal element to media studies. The human aspect and personal connection can enhance both the scholarship and the research experience. Spending time with people who played an important role in media helps bring you, the researcher, much closer to the subject you are studying. The topic becomes more human, more nuanced. If you focus your attention on reception studies, oral history can help you understand how people use media, how it becomes part of their lives.

When you record oral history interviews, you are not only adding to your own scholarship, you are a partner in helping to preserve important information for future scholars, information that may have been lost if you had not gone to the trouble of finding and interviewing your subjects. Oral history can be a rewarding research method, giving you personal access to the very people responsible for the media that are so important to our lives.

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Memories of Films and Cinema-Going in Monterrey, Mexico

A Critique and Review of In-Depth Interviews as a Methodological Strategy in Audience Studies

Lorena Frankenberg and José Carlos Lozano

ABSTRACT

Qualitative interviews, a methodology increasingly popular in media and communication studies, are not only useful for studying the meaning construction of different kinds of producers or audiences in the present. They are also useful for exploring past media experiences and for looking at the meaning and importance media had in the past for different types of publics by retrieving memories, feelings, and facts not taken into account in data collected by the media industries. To offer insight into the methodological issues and theoretical considerations media scholars need to address when using this technique, this chapter reports the use of focused interviews in a study on the screen culture of cinema-goers of Monterrey, Mexico, from the 1930s to the 1960s and discusses the methodological challenges of interpreting highly selective, subjective, and distorted-by-time memories of cinema-going in senior informants.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems178

Most frequently during the history of media and communication research, qualitative interviews have been used not as the primary research method, but as one of a number of complementary strategies in participant observation projects, ethnographies, or case studies. Cantor (1971), Elliott (1972), Fishman (1980), Gans (1979), Lester (1975), and Tuchman (1978), who employed the “newsmaking” perspective, for example, included informal interviews with journalists when doing their ethnographic or participant observation studies at different local and national newspapers. Lull (1980), Liebes and Katz (1984), and Morley (1986), on the reception side, also included interviews with members of the families they were observing in their ethnographic projects about the social uses of television. In his seminal study on family television, Morley (1986, 1992) used in-depth interviews to explore questions of differential power, responsibility, and control within the family at different times of the day and night (1992, p. 139).

Since the late 1970s, scholars in the cultural studies tradition have pointed to the need to go beyond the traditional analysis of films as texts (typical of film studies) to include the social and cultural meanings of cinema, focusing on everyday experiences and using a bottom-up approach to film culture. Qualitative interviews are best suited to help scholars look for empirical evidence about these and other topics related to the social experience of audiences with media contents. The theoretical and empirical work of scholars like Allen (1990), Kuhn (2002), Maltby (2006), Meers (2004), Staiger (1992), and Taylor (1989), among others, have established the grounds for the “new cinema history,” an approach that looks at the lived experiences of film audiences and the social experience of cinema-going (Maltby, Biltereyst, & Meers, 2011). Qualitative methodologies based on interviews have proved extremely useful to give a voice to those memories of cinema-goers that were never formally recorded and would likely be lost were it not for these research projects. While the methodology is far from being problem-free – due to the difficulty of bringing to the present facts, behaviors, and feelings from a long time ago – it is the best available tool for engaging with the lived experiences of audience members in their historically situated social and cultural contexts.

Most oral history projects on the social experience of cinema, however, have been conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other European countries, where research on film consumption has consistently been done. In other regions and countries with different historical, cultural, linguistic, and even religious contexts, cinema-going experiences may reveal important differences and patterns. Focusing on such regions might help widen the scope of the new cinema history approach. They remain, however, under-researched.

Employing a film culture audience research case study as a starting point, the central aim of this chapter is to make a case for the usefulness of qualitative interviews as a method for the historical study of cinema-going. Thus, this chapter draws on a study conducted in Monterrey, Mexico,¹ the third largest city in the country, located about 130 miles from the border with Texas. As part of the overall methodological strategy, the study was based on focused interviews about the lived cinema

experiences of 28 local cinema-goers older than 64, centering its attention on their memories of the cinemas and the exhibition of movies from 1930 through 1960, and their consumption of films as children, youngsters, or young adults. In the next section, we discuss some of the key findings dealing with participants' film consumption and their lived experiences of film culture, with the key purpose of illustrating the use and the relevance of qualitative interviews in media and communication research.

Qualitative Interviews and the Exploration of Cinema-Goers' Memories

According to Huggett (2002), informants in projects about cinema-going (or, for that matter, about the reception and consumption of any other medium) based on qualitative interviews do not recall events directly from the past:

Instead, narratives are constructed through a series of negotiations between past and present discourses about a particular topic; between past and present versions of one's self and one's identity; between the agenda of the interviewer and the interviewee; and between the stated topic of the interview and other prescient topics in the mind of the narrator. (p. 15)

For this reason it is always important for us, as qualitative researchers, to distance ourselves from any attempt to consider the discourse of respondents as an objective and definitive account of what they used to do, think, and feel about their media experiences in the past. The outcome of these meaning negotiations may, however, be even more useful than any utopian objective recollection of facts, as they provide a rich and dense insight into the lasting meanings and values attached to participants' media consumption habits and, consequently, about the accumulated long-term importance of that kind of experience in their lives. Qualitative interviews, as well as ethnographic approaches including observations, diaries, and written accounts, are valuable tools to explore these subjective and nonlinear memories and experiences.

As Kuhn (2002) reflects on her own work on British memories of cinema-going, the challenge for researchers using these qualitative methodologies is not doing the actual fieldwork, but the analysis and interpretation of data that are highly selective, subjective, and distorted by time (p. 6). When informants older than 65 are interviewed and asked to talk about their experience of going to the movies when they were kids or adolescents, the fragmentation, distortions, and overstressing are even more selective and subjective. The purpose of historical research on cinema-going, thus, is not to objectively reconstruct the past through the memories of respondents, but to look carefully at the recreation and reconfiguration of that past to grasp

the subjective, personal meanings attached by the informants to their media experiences.

A first step in preparing the fieldwork of any qualitative study is the selection of informants. For that, researchers need to establish a clear rationale for the type of respondents they need to approach and the requirements of age, gender, social class, origin, or any other distinctive category they need to fulfill. The 28 participants in our study were selected and found in homes for elderly people or within the social circle of acquaintances of the interviewers.² The reason for focusing on this age group was to explore the historical attendance of cinema and reception of films as far back in time as possible. By selecting informants older than 65, we were able to explore enduring readings and memories of films and of the social experience of going to the cinema. In the same vein as Kuhn (2011), we were interested in doing historical research into cinema-going, examining how cinema memory works as a kind of cultural experience and as a form of discourse so that we could “explore how the personal or the private on the one hand, and the collective or the public on the other, work together and intersect in people’s memories” (p. 85). As is the case in most qualitative research, statistical representativeness was never the objective of this part of the study. Rather, we sought as much variation as possible in terms of class, sex, and ideological points of view in order to grasp a wide variety of possible routines, ideas, and motives concerning cinema-going in this age group. The level of film consumption also varied widely within our group of respondents, from avid movie-goers in the past to respondents who hardly ever visited a movie theater. Most of the informants were born in Monterrey and grew up in the city, which made their memories of cinema-going specifically about local movie houses and contexts. However, some of them were from other parts of the country, and some of their recollections refer to their cinema-going experiences in other Mexican cities.

In qualitative interviews, the adequate sample size is never known in advance. Rather, according to the “maximum-variety sample” strategy (Patton, 1987, p. 53) qualitative researchers start with a limited number of informants and continue adding cases until their opinions, narratives, and information become repetitive or do not offer any new insight into the topic at hand, what some scholars call “saturation” (see Morse, 1994, pp. 225–229). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), qualitative researchers should keep sampling persons, settings, or activities until “a critical threshold of interpretative competence has been reached – when for example, we cease to be surprised by what we observe or we notice that our concepts and propositions are not disconfirmed as we continue to add new data” (p. 129). Patton (1987) explains that using this strategy yields two kinds of findings: “(1) High-quality, detailed descriptions of each case which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and (2) important shared patterns which cut across cases and which derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (p. 53). In our project, we decided to start with a relative high number of respondents (28) and, after checking the degree of saturation in their responses, evaluate if we needed to add more cases. Due to the relative homogeneity of the informants (similar age frame and geographi-

cal origin), it was clear when looking at the transcripts of the 28 interviews that saturation had already been attained; consequently, we decided not to augment our sample size.

The 28 individual interviews were conducted in 2010 and 2011. Most of the informants were contacted and interviewed in elderly homes in Monterrey. They were approached by graduate students who first got permission from the administrative office of the retirement homes to talk to the residents. Interviewers selected only respondents who were native to Monterrey or who had lived in the city since they were kids, in order to concentrate the findings on Monterrey cinemas and their social and cultural context. A few of the respondents were relatives of the graduate students doing the fieldwork or of their peers. In order to provide a more relaxed environment for respondents, interviews were performed in their place of residence. The interviews were semi-structured, whereby the interviewers used a thematic questionnaire to keep the interviews focused, leaving a large degree of space for the respondents' own stories and spontaneous memories.

The terms used to describe this kind of qualitative interviews vary among scholars. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) call them "respondent interviews," pointing out that despite it being possible to vary some questions from one person to the next, the questions should follow a standard order so that responses can be directly compared across the entire sample (p. 178). Using the same term, Jensen (2002) explains that in "respondent interviews" the interviewee is conceived as a representative of one or more social and cultural categories: "The assumption is that these categories are inscribed in, and can be recovered from, the respondent's discourses with reference to the media" (p. 240). Patton (1987) on the other hand, calls this type of interview the "standardized open-ended interview," noting that it consists of "a set of questions carefully worded and arranged for the purpose of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (p. 112). In our project, while we followed the procedures outlined by Lindlof and Taylor, Jensen, and Patton, we prefer to identify this kind of qualitative interview using the more general term "focused interview" (the term first used by Merton and Kendall in 1946 for a qualitative interview centering on the subjective experiences of persons involved in particular media experiences, like watching films in a particular setting), to distinguish them from in-depth interviews that are much longer and that cover many topics instead of concentrating on just a few.

This focus was crucial since many respondents were highly motivated to talk about cinema, had very vivid memories, and often referred to specific moments they remembered. An attempt was made by the interviewers to cover first the childhood memories, then the youth memories, and finally the adulthood memories, repeating in some instances the same questions. Interviewers would explain to the informants at the beginning the need to first provide recollections of one period of time and then the following one, and then, in several instances, they would phrase the questions using references to the period they were inquiring about (i.e., "Please tell me

the names of the cinema houses you used to go to most frequently when you were a child/young/an adult"). Of course, despite this strategy, informants still decided to move freely from one epoch in their lives to others, but at least the provision allowed for some focus on each period. The length of the interviews differed depending on the storytelling capacities of the respondents, with an average length of around one hour per interview.

The interviews were transcribed by the interviewers verbatim and analyzed using the software HyperRESEARCH. Like any other software for qualitative analysis, HyperRESEARCH makes the coding and retrieving of comments and responses faster and easier than with manual strategies like working with the transcripts directly in Word files. For the analysis, we used the "thematic coding" approach (Jensen, 2002), "an inductive categorization of interview . . . extracts with reference to various concepts, headings, or themes" widely used in media research (p. 247). We started with the identification in the transcripts of each interview of the themes or frames prefigured in the open-ended general questions included in our base questionnaire, but we also generated a great number of new categories by carefully looking at the collected data to find topics, reactions, and issues not considered beforehand in our research design. The final list of themes included choice of movie theater; frequency of attendance; information about specific films; cinema-going motives; origin of preferred films; opinion about Mexican, American, and European films; and so on. Due to the relative homogeneity of the group in age, and consistent similarities between them in their memories and discourse about their cinema-going, we are confident that the number of interviews was adequate to explore the lived experience of films and cinema by this age group of Monterrey, Mexico, residents.

Taking into account that the heyday of movie-going within people's life cycle is before the age of 25, the largest part of the stories of our respondents focused on the period between 1935 and 1965. Although this is a very broad time span, spanning the heyday of movie-going as well as the decline of audience attendance, many respondents talked about it as if it were one homogeneous period. While respondents considered these evolutions to be developments within the same film culture, they strongly distinguished it from the next phase in cinema history. In the respondents' minds, the introduction of the multiscreen or multiplex cinema resulted in a totally new film culture.

The Setting

Before discussing the usefulness of focused interviews as a method to retrieve memories of cinema-going in our informants, it is necessary, as in any other qualitative empirical study, to establish the setting and historical context of the research topic – in this particular case, the availability of cinema houses and the type and number of films they were exhibiting between the 1930s and 1960s in Monterrey, Mexico.

With a population of 134,000 inhabitants, Monterrey had in 1932 eight formal movie theaters. By 1942 the number had increased to 25, spreading the options of screens to other parts of the city. Ten years later, the number went down to 20 and by 1962, with the end of the golden age of Mexican cinema and the popularization of other means of entertainment for the middle classes (Rosas Mantecón, 2000), it had dropped to 14. In addition to the movie palaces and regular cinemas in the center of the city, there were a minimum of 46 cinemas called “terraces” (*terrazas*), modest establishments with wood benches instead of individual seats and without a roof, located mostly in working-class neighborhoods and exhibiting second-or third-run movies after dark with very cheap entrance costs.

From the 1920s to the 1930s, Hollywood movies almost completely dominated Monterrey screenings. By the end of that decade, however, the reduction in the number of Hollywood films during World War II, as well as local government policies supporting the production and distribution of Mexican movies, led to the development of the golden age of Mexican cinema. Monterrey screens started to showcase national films widely and consistently, and for the first time local audiences had a choice between Hollywood and Mexican productions.

In 1936 the release of three films heralded the formal beginning of the golden age of Mexican cinema and in particular of its most successful genre, the *comedia ranchera* (rural comedies full of folklore, songs, horses, traditional dances, and so on, which frequently presented stories about love between characters from different social classes): *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (Out on the Big Ranch), *Cielito Lindo* (Beautiful Darling), and *Ora Ponciano* (Hey, Ponciano). The first of the three films, in particular, was massively successful, not only in Mexico but also all over Latin America, significantly enlarging that market for Mexican films. In 1937, 38 feature films were produced, 22 of them in the *comedia ranchera* genre. By 1938 the Mexican film industry was firmly established as such, producing 58 movies and exporting many of them to the rest of Latin America (Vidal, 2011, p. 51).

Memories of Cinema-Going: The Relevance of Focused Interviews in the Exploration of Film Audiences’ Experiences

Discussing the findings of qualitative interviews is not as straightforward as discussing quantitative data. Instead of statistical tables, qualitative researchers ground their analyses in field notes, transcriptions, interview quotes, and descriptions. The data gathered, however, are usually too extensive and voluminous and a great deal of material needs to be left out. For that reason, focus is essential. Analysts should strive for the right combination of description and in-depth quotations needed to allow readers to fully understand the situation and the thoughts of the people represented

in the report. It is important to stress the need to achieve the right balance between description and analysis. As Patton (1987, p. 163) explains:

endless description becomes its own muddle. The purpose of analysis is to organize the description in a way that makes it manageable . . . An interesting and readable report provides sufficient description to allow the reader to understand the analysis and sufficient analysis to allow the reader to understand the interpretations and explanations presented.

In the next section, we try to tackle precisely that point through the description and interpretation of the findings of the screen culture project in Monterrey.

Selection of Movie Houses and Films by Audiences, 1930s–1960s

For the 28 men and women older than 65 in our sample, going to the cinema was one of the few alternatives for leisure in the city. When asked about other recreational activities available, most informants mentioned only sport activities like baseball (a very popular sport in Monterrey at the time) or soccer, or, when they were kids, playing on the street. Some also talked about going to the circus when one came to town or about going to nearby farms or ranches on picnics. The rich, they explained, could go to the Casino Monterrey (a very exclusive social club with restaurant, cafeteria, game rooms, and ballroom), but they had no means for another kind of recreation than going to the movies.

Most respondents explained that they did not select particular films, but rather particular movie houses. Some would go to the big palace closest to home, avoiding some other cinema houses because of their lower status. Others, from low-income households when they were kids, asserted that they would go to the nearest neighborhood cinema, a *terrazza*, to see second- or third-run movies.

It was clear from the interviews in Monterrey that cinema houses were clearly connected to our respondents' "mental maps" of the city. In fact, a large number of them mentioned their home address at the time and then the location of the movie house they attended, making reference to other relevant sites like markets, buildings, or streets nearby. For lower-income respondents, the big movie palaces were inaccessible and they would go to their nearest terrace, making clear that these neighborhood cinemas were attended only by people living close to them. Some of them related in a proud tone that later, as youngsters or adults, when they had a job and some money available, they had gone once or twice to the downtown movie palaces to watch a movie (frequently a Mexican big event film), emphasizing the distance they had to travel to get there.

Our informants' memories about cinemas in Monterrey during this period establish very clearly the importance of the cinemas in their daily lives. Asked about their

favorite movie theater in their childhood and youth, most of them clearly remembered the name of the cinema they had attended the most. The reason for going to that particular venue and not another one was typically its closeness to their homes. They explained that, it being peaceful times where you could walk freely on the streets (even as children), they would always walk to the movies. The most frequently mentioned cinemas were located either in the historical downtown of the city or on Madero Avenue, a modern and fashionable area during the 1940s demarcating the limits of the downtown area with the north of the city, where most factories were established. Nancy,³ a 70-year-old woman, put it in these terms when asked about her preferred cinema when she was a child:

NANCY (b. 1941): Well, it was not a question of preference; it was a question of what movie theater was closer to our home . . . [Because of that] the Rodriguez cinema was the one our parents always chose for us.

However, some of the respondents also preferred certain cinemas because of their formal features. Some made reference to the big palaces and the nice decorations and architecture.

ELOISA (b. 1929): The decoration was beautiful . . . one of them, the Elizondo, had an oriental decoration, with pagodas and statues. And in the Florida, if you looked at the ceiling when the lights went off, you would see stars scintillating.

BIANCA (b. 1942): I remember the curtains. In the Palacio cinema, one of the most – let me put it this way – posh and chic, the curtains would open and I would think: “How is it possible [to have] such a tall, well structured beautiful and elegant curtain.” I remember clearly the seats, very comfortable and well fixed to the floor, and the carpet in the aisles.

For our respondents, thus, cinema houses were more important than the actual films being exhibited when they decided to go to the movies. In contrast to the assumptions of traditional film scholars about film texts being the most – and sometimes only – relevant factor accounting for the interest and attraction of viewers, our fieldwork, based on focused interviews, allowed us to confirm what other studies in new cinema history have found: going to the movies was more about companionship, social interaction, and the integration of movies into the routines of daily or weekly life in our Monterrey informants than about the contents and meanings of specific films.

Social Class Differences

Avoiding the temptation of some other qualitative studies on cinema-going which focus only on nostalgia and ignore the important role played by, among other variables, social class, our project selected respondents from different socioeconomic

status and included questions related to differences in the economic background of people attending different cinemas in the city. Thanks to this strategy, similar to the one used by Meers, Biltereyst, and Van de Vijver (2010, p. 274) in Belgium, we were able to identify the mental maps of cinemas and cinema-going experiences according to the economic position of the interviewees.

Some respondents, for example, acknowledged avoiding some cinemas, despite their proximity to their homes, because they were for people of lower socioeconomic status. In a city with a heavy presence of workers and migrants due to the numerous factories and the industrial boom, and a growing middle class of white-collar workers and managers, class differences were reflected in the selection of movie theaters. Olga (b. 1923), despite trying to use neutral wording, ended up describing people who attended the Obrero cinema as *burdos* (rough, vulgar) and as people unable to speak properly. Others, like María Elena (b. 1934), were careful not to use adjectives:

MARÍA (b. 1934): I stopped going to the movies more or less when the Elizondo cinema was destroyed [in 1982] . . . There was also the Lírico, but the Lírico was for . . . for . . . extremely . . . for the lower classes . . .

And what kind of people used to go to the Florida and the Elizondo?

MARÍA: Sort of like us, the middle class.

Were the people attending the Elizondo cinema different from the people attending the Maravillas?

ARTURO (b. 1927): They were different type of people. [The people attending the Elizondo cinema] would go very well dressed and immediately you would realize they were people with money . . . they paid more for the quality of the movies and for the features of the building . . . they liked movies where good manners were shown. It was very upscale . . . with very nice movies. The Encanto cinema always had a full house. You could smell the perfumes [of ladies] all over. People were very well dressed, like in the Elizondo . . . in the Maravillas [in contrast] people would go dressed anyway they liked.

Ernesto (b. 1922) explained that he would usually go to the upscale cinemas in the downtown area, always avoiding the neighborhood cinemas, like the ones in the Independencia, a sector of the city “with bad reputation.” Asked if there were some differences between the cinemas downtown and the neighborhood cinemas or terraces, another informant answered:

ARTEMIO (b. 1944): Of course! There was a saying, that in the Alameda cinema the employees would give you a big stick [when entering the cinema] to kill the rats. People had bad manners, they spat on the seats and all the seats were in bad shape. You could notice the lack of education because of the aggressive behavior. That’s why we would avoid going to those cinemas.

As discussed above, one of the advantages of using focused interviews is the possibility of addressing cultural and social contexts from the perspective of the respondents. One of the informants, from a working-class background, mentioned that he would go to the Eden, located in the lower-class neighborhood Independencia, across the Santa Catarina river, because he lived there for a while, when his family arrived to Monterrey when he was a kid. "That's the time when I learned how to behave in a belligerent and problematic manner," he said jokingly, adding that the youth gangs would throw stones to any outsider walking on the streets of the neighborhood.

Francisco (b. 1927), whose father worked for 40 years at the soap factory La Reynera, explained that when he was a child he had to work shining shoes on the street. He would give his father all his earnings because of the low wages the latter received at the factory. Every week, his father would take only three or four of the nine children to the neighborhood terrace located close to their home, and the following week he would take the others, because he could not afford to take all of them at the same time.

FRANCISCO: We would go to the movies always at night, after 8 p.m. when it was getting dark. As soon as it was dark, the show started, because the screening was in a backyard, not in a closed building. Terraces were like that. Once in a while he would take us to a movie theater, but only in very few occasions . . . In the terrace there was no ceiling. When it started to rain, we had to run and leave the movie.

Egidio (b. 1915), at 96 one of the oldest informants in the Monterrey sample, explained that when he was just a kid, an illiterate blacksmith neighbor would pay for the movie tickets for him and other boys as long as they read the titles of silent movies to him.

These findings show that even in the recollection of past film consumption experiences, social class is one of the most important variables able to account for significant differences in the consumption and appropriation of films among audience members. The cultural capital available to each class and their social and economic context are clearly influential in their selections, choices, and attitudes. Consequently, it is crucial to include persons from different social classes when selecting informants in projects attempting to understand the complex relationship of audiences with any kind of media.

Memories of National and Foreign Films

With qualitative interviews, it is possible to trigger memories otherwise forgotten. As mentioned by Deacon, Pickering, Golding, and Murdock (1999, p. 301),

the fallibility of human memory may lead to omissions, compressions, elisions and idealizations in the experiential record provided by the interviews . . . [but] it is

beneficial to regard oral forms of evidence as an important mode of bearing witness to the past, of providing testimony to events and experiences that have been historically lived through.

In our study, respondents mentioned the titles of around 15 national and 43 US movies. Coincident also with the boom of Mexican cinema, most of the national films remembered were from the 1940s, the decade when World War II and its difficult aftermath diminished the flow of Hollywood films to the country, and where the financial and distribution incentives for Mexican productions were at their highest (Fein, 1996; Serna, 2006). From the 1950s on, however, most titles remembered by informants were of Hollywood films (14), while Mexican pictures were hardly remembered (only 1 of the 15 Mexican movies they made reference to was produced in this decade).

The respondents had an ambivalent attitude toward Hollywood productions and national films. On the one hand, they had excellent comments about most Mexican movies and actors of their childhood and youth but on the other they also praised Hollywood movies and remembered US celebrities in affective ways.

Mexican Films

Middle- and lower-class informants were clearly partial to Mexican movies when they were kids or adolescents. They mentioned mostly Mexican actors and titles as their favorites. Many female informants said they really loved the Mexican melodramas of the epoch. Ernesto, himself not fond of that Mexican genre, remembered the time when his mother and her sister begged him to take them to the cinema to see *Cuando los Hijos Se Van* (When the Children Leave Home) a movie that premiered in 1941. He took them to one of the “big cinemas” on Madero Avenue and sat between the sisters. He recalled that both sniffed during the whole picture, making him anxious and uneasy. After the movie, he took them home, none of them saying a word during the drive. As soon as they arrived, his mother quickly got out of the car and went directly into her bedroom. After parking the car, Ernesto went to see her and found her crying. She told him: “Here I can cry all I want and nobody will be annoyed, nobody will tell me to shut up.” He concluded: “Mexican movies were such a drag.”

Another female informant, Nancy, also talked about a Mexican melodrama of the epoch leaving a lasting impression on her: *Nosotros los Pobres* (We, the Poor), a movie starring the male idol Pedro Infante which premiered in 1948. Showing the same emotional connection with urban situations and familial problems as the other female respondents, Nancy remembered uneasily that in the movie a small kid dies and another loses his eye violently: “Till today, I am unable to watch that movie again.”

Hollywood Movies

Some informants said they did not like US movies because they didn't understand English and were not able to follow the subtitles (in Mexico dubbing foreign movies was never mandatory nor common). It was more difficult for children to follow the subtitles, so some of the informants reported not watching US movies during their earlier years:

NANCY: there were American movies but we would not go and see them. We would not go because we didn't understand them, we weren't able to read the subtitles . . . As an adolescent I definitely started to watch US pictures, on color and such, but not as a kid.

Others claimed that cheap movie houses and terraces exhibited Mexican films only, explaining that they were not able to go to the cinema palaces where Hollywood films were shown because of the ticket cost.

JUAN (b. 1943): Terraces were more geared towards families; they showed mostly Mexican films . . . they exhibited old movies only, never new releases. If you wanted to see premieres you had to go to the cinema houses in downtown.

Not all working-class informants, however, liked Mexican movies better than American ones, especially the older ones who started going to the cinema as kids before the beginning of the golden age. Herminio (b. 1924), from a rural background, said that he loved to go see US films (apparently Westerns), the reason being that the characters "would get up in their horses and go and shoot their pistols." Middle- and upper-class informants, although sympathetic to Mexican movies from the 1940s, reported viewing and enjoying Hollywood movies, and admiring stars like Clark Gable, Rock Hudson, Ingrid Bergman, Bette Davis, Doris Day, Greta Garbo, Audrey Hepburn, James Dean, and others. As in the case of informants in other countries (Biltereyst et al., 2011), Monterrey respondents rarely remembered any movies in particular, but were very lucid about their favorite Hollywood stars.

In another example of how widespread and popular Hollywood movies were around the world despite cultural and geographical differences of the audiences receiving them, Monterrey respondents, in a similar fashion as respondents in countries like Belgium and the United Kingdom (Biltereyst et al., 2011; Jancovich, Faire, & Stubbings, 2003), repeatedly mentioned big event movies like *Gone With the Wind*, *Ben-Hur*, and *King Kong*.

NANCY: *King Kong*. For me, *King Kong* gave me the most horrendous shock in my life [laughs]. In its first version, of course. At the end of the movie I went home

extremely scared, I had nightmares with it I don't know how many nights afterwards. For me, it was something as . . . Oh my God! And later there were new versions done and they still made an impression on me, but when you are older you realize the fiction, the tricks . . . but the first time . . . What a horrible thing, Oh my God! For me, *King Kong* gave me the biggest trauma of my childhood!

For some informants, *Ben-Hur* was one of their favorite movies of all times. Lucía (b. 1944), for example, explained that she loved the movie since the first time she saw it, adding that she still does not get tired of watching it every year, when it is shown on Mexican television during Holy Week.

European Movies

Very few informants mentioned European movies. The film market in Mexico had been dominated by Hollywood and by local productions since 1917, and European films were not that common, although during 1962 they made up 13% of total screenings. The more liberal character of European films, however, clashed with the rigid morality of the epoch, and the presence of nudity and strong topics in the pictures reduced their programing only to poor cinema houses and led to their being perceived as pornography. Some of the informants, especially women, made reference to this perception when asked about the movies they liked to watch when they were in their adulthood:

- TERESA (b. 1935): Only American ones! Mexican movies started to become sort of ugly and we stopped watching them, and about European pictures, we would watch them depending where they were playing. If they were programed in cinemas showing only pornography, we could not go there!
- NANCY: Definitely, only American. European ones . . . I don't know why they are so crude, so very . . . open-minded . . . too . . . I don't like that . . . nudity and such go against my principles.
- ARTURO: Once I went to the Alameda cinema because I was told it was showing an "art movie," one of those Italian pictures very highbrow for the general public . . . I watch them now and I am able to catch their meaning, but then you would only go to watch the naked girls.

Without specialized cinemas on art or *auteur* films, and very scarce highbrow cultural tradition and infrastructure in the city, most informants were unable to mention alternative noncommercial films, directors, or actors. Only two of the respondents, the oldest in the sample, mentioned some of the classic European movies of the 1930s and 1940s: *The Blue Angel* and *Bicycle Thieves*.

ERNESTO : There were some Italian movies at that time that were very good. There was one about a man whose bicycle is stolen: *The Bicycle Thief* [sic] was called. Italian films like that one were a guarantee. They were interesting and very well done.

The memories and preferences of movies by Monterrey respondents, thus, seemed to be related to both the limited supply of films by local cinema houses and what they felt were closer to their own culture and context. On one hand, Hollywood control of the distribution and exhibition of motion pictures in Mexico for the most part of the 1920s to the 1960s allowed Hollywood genres and stars to become popular among the viewers. On the other hand, as soon as there were enough national films available with good-quality production values addressing more culture-specific topics, Monterrey audiences showed a strong preference for them, and their cherished memories of Mexican stars and plots from that period reflect the high relevance they exerted on them.

Cinema-Going, Family, and Social Interaction

Despite the significant historical, cultural, and geographical differences between Monterrey and cities in the United States or Europe during the same period, the findings of our interviews show striking similarities in the way cinema-going was experienced by Monterrey audiences and is still remembered. The elder inhabitants of Monterrey seem to relate a good deal to the kind of treasured memories, choice of movies, film consumption rituals, reasons for cinema-going, and personal preferences that are characteristic of respondents in studies done in Europe and the United States.

As in the case of Flemish (Biltereyst et al., 2011) and British (Kuhn, 2002, 2011) cinema-goers, Monterrey informants' memories about going to the movies were much more about social and ritual aspects than about particular films. Most of the times, they did not recall specific movie titles and frequently they were unable to remember the name of the actors. However, they were clear and reiterative about what going to the movies represented for them when they were kids or young. Some talked about how they loved to go to a particular big palace because of its decoration and the little lights on the ceiling creating the impression that they were contemplating stars. Others mentioned that they would go to a particular theater because there were contests and prizes during the intermission. A male informant, in this respect, explained that on Wednesdays, in some movie houses, there were song contests at the intermission, or requests for the whole audience to sing particular songs, following lyrics projected on the screen.

Others talked about going to the cinema on particular days of the week with their parents or their friends regardless of the movies being shown. Antonia, an 80-year-old

woman, when asked “What comes to mind when you think about going to the movies as a kid?” answered: “Going out the four of us” (with her parents and sister). Beatriz, 72, answered to the same question: “My best friends, my friend Yolanda . . .”

When questioned about who would select the movie they watched when they went to the cinema with somebody else, the recurrent answer was that they would see what their preferred movie house was showing at the moment, regardless of the genre or topic.

ERNESTO : Usually I would go to the cinema with my brother, but we wouldn’t choose the movie we would see. They [the movies being played in the movie house] were the same as the ones being shown in other theaters in the city. For us it was not a matter of selecting titles, we would just go. We would go to the cinema and we would watch any movie that was playing.

Some cinema-goers, especially women, were more selective and would go to see mostly romantic comedies, but very few acknowledged deciding to go to the movies only when they wanted to see a particular film for its topic, actor, or director (except for blockbusters like *Ben-Hur*).

Memories of Plots and Movies

Memories about the whole plot of a movie were scarce. However, focused interviews allowed informants to intertwine different levels of experiences in their narratives. In this case, they were likely to remember specific movie scenes that had been particularly relevant or shocking to them. An 88-year-old woman, for example, when talking about one of her favorite films, was only able to recollect a scene of “a movie of Betty Davis” where, having nothing to wear for a big party, she takes a curtain and makes a dress out of it (she may have been referring to *Gone With the Wind* and Vivien Leigh, confounding both the film and the actress). A 96-year-old male informant recalled a scene of a movie he saw when he was a kid, where the protagonist becomes blind after gunpowder from his shooting rifle got into his eyes, but he was unable to remember anything else about the film. Later, he recalled that when he was married he went to the movies several times with his wife, but he was unable to remember the title of a single movie they had watched. The scarcity of memories about complete stories or plots of particular films, in contrast with lucid and detailed recollections of how, when, why, and with whom they used to go to the cinema when they were kids or young, suggest that specific movies were for the respondents never the main reason for going to the movies.

In sum, for our sample of old Monterrey movie-viewers, cinema-going was a vivid and extremely relevant part of their lives, especially in their childhood and youth.

Going to the movies was an excuse to interact with relatives or friends, to escape hot weather, to be entertained in a city with very limited leisure options. Memories of movies, as in Great Britain, Flanders, and other regions where cinema-going has been studied, are more about specific, dramatic, or shocking scenes or about favorite stars than about plots or contents or directors. Except for the big event movies clearly remembered and liked, the rest of the films watched during their childhood or youth were just a succession of nondistinctive events providing entertainment, escape, and excuses for wider social and cultural activities.

Discussion

As can be corroborated by looking at the findings, qualitative interviews are not only useful for studying the consumption and appropriation of media contents by audiences in the present. They are also useful for exploring past media experiences and for looking at the meaning and importance that media had in the past for different types of publics by retrieving memories, feelings, and facts not taken into account in data collected by the media industries. It is important to reiterate, however, that the discourse gathered through interviews in these types of studies is not equivalent to an objective recollection and description of behaviors and attitudes by the respondents, but a negotiated, subjective, and somewhat distorted account of how they look retrospectively to the past from the present. As Huggett (2002) explains, oral narratives tend not to organize themselves in sequential and chronological terms but around pivotal events in the respondents' life experience or perspective: "In the service of such narrative agendas, separate dates and times are conflated and disparate events are linked in order to make a particular point in a meaningful way" (Huggett, 2002, p. 20). Instead of affecting and diminishing the usefulness of the findings, these processes, common when interviewing people about their media habits and consumption, allow the researcher to go beyond the simple enumeration of facts and to gain some insight on the subjective and complex meanings audience members attached to them.

A particular strength of having open-ended and flexible question guides instead of fixed items in a formal questionnaire is that the researcher allows the interviewee some room to deviate from the agenda imposed by the former and to focus on his or her own salient memories, themes, or perspectives. Monterrey's respondents went beyond the topics we asked them to cover and included references about the city as a whole, the social atmosphere at the time, the absence of crime and violence in the city in that period, their relationships with friends, partners, and relatives. The role of the interviewer, however, is never neutral, and his or her presence, style of asking questions, and of establishing rapport, exert some influence on the way informants react and remember things. Our informants had to answer questions about their cinema-going habits, their memories of particular films and cinemas; when doing so,

they had to make an effort to isolate parts of their holistic experience where going to the movies was only a part of a much wider context of leisure activities, social interaction, and cultural experiences.

For decades, film studies and film history have concentrated on detailed and sophisticated analyses of the content, structure, and formal features of films, or on the biographical, ideological, or aesthetic characteristics of directors, assuming that all the necessary clues for the prediction and understanding of viewers' decodings lie within the movie text: "film history had been written as if films had no audiences or were seen by everyone and in the same way" (Allen, 1990, p. 348). Qualitative research on actual audience members, like the one presented here, shows the limitations of those assumptions. At the same time, it reveals the rich contextual historical, social, and cultural factors that produce multiple and contrasting readings and appropriations of the films' meanings, as well as the relevance for audience members of many aspects that are completely unrelated to the meanings embedded in particular movies but have to do with the social rituals of going out with friends or relatives, enjoying cinema palaces for their decoration, and experiencing emotional connections with particular actors or actresses regardless of their specific roles in particular films.

NOTES

- 1 This project is a replica of the Belgian (Flemish) project "The Enlightened City" (Biltereyst, Meers, & Van de Vijver, 2011) conducted in Antwerp and Ghent.
- 2 Interviewers were master's and doctoral students Marcela Garza, Oscar Miranda, Beatriz Inzunza, Brenda Munoz, Miguel Sanchez, Elsa Flores, and Frida Godínez (Monterrey Institute of Technology), Karla Carrillo (Metropolitan University of Monterrey), and Gabriela Nallely Hernández Villanueva (Autonomous University of Nuevo León).
- 3 In order to protect the privacy of the informants and to comply with the confidentiality agreement signed with them, the names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

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Conducting Media Ethnographies in Africa

Tanja Bosch

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the methodology of ethnography in postcolonial Africa, with specific reference to anthropological media research. The chapter draws on an ethnography of a local radio station in South Africa as a starting point from which to make several observations about media ethnographies and anthropological approaches to media production and consumption. It outlines how the chosen methodology revealed unique characteristics of the local, as well as how the findings and experiences could be related to national and regional contexts. Moreover, the chapter explores notions of reflexive “back-yard” or “native” ethnographies, and reveals the complex relational issues that can arise from this approach. This case study is premised on the notion of media as a collective mediation of culture; and argues that the practice of ethnography allows for a refreshing departure from the more common arm-chair textual analyses that permeate media studies.

It's another typical day at Radio X, a local radio station in the shadow of Table Mountain, inaugurated as one of the seven wonders of the world in 2012. DJs are bustling about getting ready to go on air; producers are chatting animatedly on their phones, setting up interviews; others are downstairs broadcasting “pavement radio” to local factory workers; and a group of teenagers are upstairs in the meeting room

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems179

discussing hip hop and social change. And perhaps I'm the only one out of place because I'm writing field notes on my laptop, but nobody seems to notice.

This chapter explores the research methodology of ethnography in postcolonial Africa, with specific reference to anthropological media research. It draws on an ethnographic study of a local radio station in South Africa as a starting point from which to make several observations about media ethnographies and anthropological approaches to media production and consumption. The chapter outlines how the chosen methodology revealed unique characteristics of the local, as well as how the findings and experiences could be related to national and regional contexts. Moreover, it explores notions of reflexive "backyard" or "native" ethnographies, and reveals the complex relational issues that can arise from this approach. This case study is premised on the notion of media as a collective mediation of "culture," and argues that the practice of ethnography allows for a refreshing departure from the more common armchair textual analyses that permeate media studies. First, I provide a brief summary of the main tenets of the ethnographic methodological approach, and discuss how media scholars have adopted these practices. I then outline the specific case of an ethnographic study of a local community radio station in South Africa, and reflect on the resultant issues of authority, ownership, and conflict, which highlighted the difficulties inherent in conducting such a project.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a complex and multifaceted approach to research. One way to begin to define it may be as

a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents, and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly *in its own terms*, the irreducibility of human experience. Ethnography is the most disciplined and deliberate witness-cum-recording of human events. (Willis & Trondman, 2000, p. 5)

Or, as La Pastina (2005, p. 141) puts it, "Ethnographers immerse themselves in a culture to retell the lives of a particular people, narrate the rites and traditions of that people, and to understand and explain their cultural practices." The ethnographic approach is a qualitative research approach that consists of detailed, "thick," in-depth descriptions of everyday life, in an attempt to provide a description and understanding of "culture" or the lived reality of particular groups of people. The term "thick" was coined by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) to refer to descriptions that explain behavior as well as context.

Ethnography uses participant observation or long-term engagement with the field, informal conversations and observations, in-depth interviews, and field journals. Although one can argue that all research approaches exhibit forms of bias in

sample selection, methodology, or analysis, ethnography has become deliberately biased and subjective, and proponents of the methodology engage in high degrees of self-reflexivity, acutely aware of their own position and voice in the research process. "Ethnography has represented a shift from empirical practices of data collection, pushing scholars to introduce non-objective strategies to audience analysis and a greater level of self-reflexivity among researchers" (La Pastina, 2005, p. 139). Following critiques of the methodology as too biased and male-centered, self-reflexivity became a focal point in the early 1970s, driven by feminist anthropologists. This "reflexive turn" led to a different style of writing in the works of James Clifford (1998) and George Marcus (1998), with a direct acknowledgment of ethnography as biased and dependent on the researcher's own subjectivities.

The ethnographic approach to gathering data emerged from the discipline of anthropology. In fact, ethnography cannot be separated from anthropology as an academic practice, which is simply "diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture from a standpoint of participant observation" (Clifford, 1998, p. 9). Traditionally, researchers would spend lengthy amounts of time, up to years, in the field, to research, study, and immerse themselves in the lives of a community or culture other than their own. Bronislaw Malinowski (1922), for example, lived for years among the Trobriand Islanders and wrote expansively about their ceremonial customs, which led to the development of various social theories of culture. Since these communities were often located in geographically (and culturally) distant places, ethnography acquired the reputation of "othering" groups of people, most often ethnic minorities. Colonial administrators used ethnographic methods to collect information to assist them to govern minority groups and to collect artifacts for museums (Field & Fox, 2007; Goh, 2007), adding to the negative associations of the methodology.

In fact, as Murphy and Kraidy (2003, p. 4) have argued, "a growing body of media ethnography has been shaped more by the critique of ethnography's associations with colonialism and Western discourse than by the surprise and productivity of the field encounter." Interestingly, one notable exception to this was Jomo Kenyatta's (1938) study of his own Kikuyu tribe in Kenya, though Kenyatta was mentored by Malinowski himself. It might certainly be the case that "labeling fieldwork an act of colonialism is an obvious overstatement, designed to draw our attention to the ways in which white privilege affects anthropological fieldwork" (Wolf, 1992, p. 5). As Wolf (1992) argues, power differentials in society will always exist and anthropologists must be careful not to take advantage of their power in ways that may disadvantage the people they are studying.

Media Anthropology

The adoption of ethnographic approaches appeared at the same time in a number of disciplines. One might argue that ethnography is theoretically and empirically

central to media studies (La Pastina, 2005), in order to truly understand audiences and their engagement with media products. For media scholars in the United States it arose from a desire to find alternatives to traditional social science research (e.g., surveys) on media effects. Early ethnographic work in the United States was based on an opposition to the positivist paradigm, behavioral science, and the quantitative methodologies that were popular. Later, a more critical orientation explored the politics of representation, raising questions about how ethnographies are constructed and in whose interest (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003).

In her ethnographic work with Japanese women, for example, Darling-Wolf (2003a, 2003b, 2004) conducts long-term participant observation, focus groups, and in-depth interviews to explore these women's conceptions of attractiveness and beauty within the broader context of Japan's relationship with the West. She demonstrates how in their daily consumption of Western media representations of women, Japanese women constantly negotiate cultural, gendered, class, and racial identities. Similarly, exploring audience reactions to telenovelas in rural Brazil, La Pastina (2005) has argued that an ethnographic approach is useful in understanding the complex relationships between viewers and texts, as well as allowing an investigation of reception and appropriation to better understand the role of the local in the process of media engagement. As he concludes:

Ethnography has the potential to observe community and social changes that might be related to media presence, due to its ability to develop longitudinal investigations . . . [and] allows investigators to grapple with the complexity of the relationship between viewers or media consumers and media texts as an ensemble that connects all the available media sources. (La Pastina, 2005, p. 142)

Similarly, Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) has approached the consumption of Egyptian television serials as a mechanism for the production of personal subjectivities.

Historically, journalism research has focused on quantitative approaches such as survey methods and content analysis, and the use of ethnographic methods is a sharp departure from this trend. Parameswaran (2005, p. 205) has argued for cultural studies approaches to the "transformations in the mediated landscape of journalism in many locations across the world, transformations that have profound implications for scholars interested in audience research and popular communication." More critical inquiries into the production and consumption of journalism (and not just popular media) can contribute to the field of audience research (Parameswaran, 2005).

Murphy & Kraidy (2003) argue, however, that media ethnographies have not demonstrated a commitment to immersion or long-term observation, instead relying on in-depth interviews and discussion groups and, in general, a "mostly textual and rhetorical handling of ethnography" (p. 305). Lotz (2000) similarly notes that reception researchers typically conduct a "hit and run" version of participant observation,

not ethnography. La Pastina (2005, p. 147) argues for audience ethnography to be repositioned as a fieldwork-based, long-term practice of data collection and analysis: "Media ethnography needs to return to a sense of commitment to traditional practices; a long-term, in-depth, site-specific, multimethod approach."

Studies such as those conducted by Mankekar (1999), Tufte (2000), and Darling-Wolf (2003a, 2004), among others, do draw on cultural immersion, though, as Murphy and Kraidy (2003, p. 310) point out, studying the relationship between media reception and cultural practice is complex as it requires recognition of the multisited nature of the "field," as well as a need to "address the unique dilemmas of localized research in relation to the global issues raised by transnational media processes." Kraidy and Murphy (2008) advocate an approach drawing strongly on Geertz and the idea of "thick" description as a means for communication studies to realize that contemporary experiences of locality are not distinct, but should be considered within the context of global historical dynamics.

The work of researchers such as Ien Ang (1996), Thomas Lindlof (1987), James Lull (1990), David Morley (1992), and Janice Radway (1984) have dominated the discussion about the qualitative study of audiences and the meaning of ethnography in the field of mass communication research. It was the early reception studies of Ang and others that paved the way for the ethnographic turn in audience research (Fourie, 2001). Many media anthropologies or studies drawing on the methodology of ethnography focus on consumption and audience reception. As Ang (1991, p. 165) writes, "an ethnographic method is "preferable to industry techniques precisely because it holds out the hope of representing consumption practices from the virtual standpoint of actual audiences." The concern with the production of meaning lends itself to this particular methodology. However, much of this kind of work has been based on interviewing people in their homes, with actual immersion in the daily practices and social words of the people studied virtually nonexistent (Spitulnik, 1993).

Fieldwork is challenging in the field of media reception because it is difficult to participate in the closed contexts or private spaces of media consumption, leading to a rethinking of what constitutes "doing fieldwork" (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003). Many early media studies that claimed to be ethnographic research simply consisted of qualitative group and in-depth interviews, and were not conducted in the respondents' natural setting. Moreover, media ethnography "should be understood as a research process of forming communities and making conversations that underscore a systematic and long-term investment in form, purpose and practice" (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003, p. 306). Finally, the very act of speaking for others can be difficult because of the structures of power in which researchers are inevitably implicated (Darling-Wolf, 2003a, 2004). By virtue of their positioning, researchers (explicitly or implicitly) wield power over the groups they study; and they are further affected by power structures related to writing and publication practices, which determine their approaches, as these approaches are dictated by such outcomes.

Case Study: Ethnography of a Local Radio Station

When I was faced with the prospect of deciding on a PhD dissertation topic in 2001, I made a difficult decision: I decided to study what was, in effect, my own community. After having worked for several years at a community radio station in South Africa, as both a volunteer and a full-time staff member, I was keen to make the radio station the subject of my research. Given my extensive involvement in the organization that I was proposing to study, reflexive or narrative ethnography seemed a logical methodological choice. In reflexive ethnographies the researcher's personal background, experiences, and reflections are critical to illuminate the culture under study. Reflexive ethnographies range on a continuum – from starting research from one's own perspective, to confessional ethnographies as described by Van Maanen (1990), where the researcher's stories of doing the research become the main focus (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Wolf (1992, p. 58) advises us to be wary of reflexivity, arguing that

if our ethnographies become polyvocal, somehow managing to portray all the uncertainties, inanities, complexities, and contradictions we encounter in our field research, we may indeed avoid appropriating the experience of our informants, but have we fulfilled the responsibility to our audience?

In addition, Wolf warns that even though postmodernist critique has encouraged more self-reflexivity, feminist researchers should think carefully about whether intense reflexivity might simply be interpreted as being tentative and self-doubting. At the same time though, this does not preclude a reflexive ethnographic approach, for as Darling-Wolf (2003a, p. 169) argues, “no matter how limited and situated our efforts to represent others might be, no matter how partial the truths we uncover . . . the attempt is worthwhile.”

I used traditional ethnographic methods to carry out the research, and Tedlock's (1991) approach of narrative ethnography to incorporate my experiences into the ethnographic description and analysis of Radio X, with the emphasis on the “ethnographic dialogue or encounter” between myself and members of the group being studied (p. 178). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of rhizomes as “grass-like,” heterogeneous entities with multiple entry points and routes rather than roots, I theorized Radio X as a connector and bridging mechanism that impacts the social fabric. The theoretical notion of the rhizome draws on the botanical image of a rhizome as an underground tuber that grows horizontally, in direct opposition to what Deleuze and Guattari call “arboric systems of knowledge” based on the model of a tree, which symbolizes linear thinking and hierarchical structures. The local radio station was thus theorized as a horizontal form of growth – not necessarily successful in comparison to commercial stations whose growth is measured more linearly, but successful in terms of its own horizontal growth and connections. “A

rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21).

The methodology thus consisted primarily of an ethnographic consideration of Radio X, with the researcher as instrument and reflective heuristic device. A qualitative ethnographic approach was essential in order to arrive at a full understanding of the functions of the radio station, particularly with reference to the relationship between political rhetoric around aims of the project and actual practice on the ground.

Anthropologists have generally paid little attention to radio, even though the subaltern populations that are most frequently their subjects usually listen to the radio (O'Connor, 2001). In general, the field of media studies has had an ambiguous relationship with ethnography. Participant observation has been used to study the production of newspapers and TV shows, but cultural studies has been more receptive to ethnographic methods. As a few anthropologists became interested in the use of radio and TV by aboriginal people, there is some overlap between their writing and cultural studies, for example, the work of Eric Michaels (1994) in Australia.

In other words, this study took note of the shift in the 1970s from an emphasis on participant observation to the "observation of participation," and to concerns with power and praxis and the epistemological doubt associated with the crisis of representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The value in ethnographic methods "lies precisely in their ability to help us 'make things out' in the context of their occurrence – in helping to understand . . . media consumption practices as they are embedded in the context of everyday life" (Murphy, 1999, p. 208). Ethnography sets aside the notion that behavior is rule-governed or motivated by shared values and expectations, and acknowledges that social structures are locally produced, sustained, and experienced (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999). In ethnographic fieldwork, the process of conducting fieldwork involves the cultural biography of researchers and calls for negotiations of power relationships between researchers and people they meet in the field. For feminist ethnographers in particular, rigorous self-reflexivity as a way of interrogating the research process helps to reveal power inequalities that arise in the field due to social constructions of race, gender, and so on (Parameswaran, 2001).

As Huesca (1996) points out in his study of the *reporteros populares* (people's reporters) in Latin America, ethnography is a useful way of explaining how participation is enacted and constructed. Much of the literature on communication, participation, and democracy has been useful for documenting and justifying the move to create more inclusive media systems, but few have pointed out how this participation occurs. This construction of participation is of theoretical and practical importance given the growing interest in revitalizing the relationship between communication, democracy, the public sphere, and social change (Huesca, 1996).

Similarly, Hocheimer (1993) moved beyond merely describing community radio stations, and points out that such media structures should be more closely examined. He notes that inevitable problems need to be addressed where these newly conceptualized media come into being, and as more people start producing information

for themselves. Inherent in the difficulties of attempting to establish and maintain democratic media is the problem of defining “what constitutes a communicative democracy and how to realize one in practice” (Hocheimer, 1993, p. 174). Hocheimer raises other potential problems, such as: (1) whether a station exercises any form of gatekeeping or whether it should be a conduit for all who step before the microphone (or perhaps both); (2) what happens when power, or people become entrenched, and when the interest or agendas of newcomers are at odds with those of the founders; and (3) whether a station functions to serve its constituent community segments and whether the community acts as resources for the station.

These were the very issues I was interested in exploring at Radio X, since intended practices and policies may not always translate into action. In particular, I was interested in exploring the fact that the station always claims to serve what they labeled vaguely as “the community.” This chapter now provides a brief description of the ethnography conducted and, in moments of self-indulgent self-reflexivity, reflects on the process, particularly the outcomes which led to the researcher being excluded from the community studied – a common but infrequently discussed risk.

The Fieldwork

My initial foray into fieldwork took place when I was a novice to both Radio X and ethnography (1995–1999). Fieldwork was carried out while I was working at the station as a producer of an eight-part, 30-minute series dealing with health and social issues relevant to the elderly and aging. I also drew on experiences working at the station as a full-time programmer for two years prior to that, and in a voluntary capacity in earlier years. During these times I presented programs, facilitated training programs, assisted with scheduling, wrote and edited stings and advertisements, assisted with studio technical assistance for some evening programs, and facilitated a training course. The primary data gathering methods during these periods were participant observation and in-depth interviews with permanent and voluntary staff. Fieldwork, thus, comprised a long-term engagement with the station over a period of several years.

Insider/Outsider Dilemmas

While I did not consciously set out to conduct a native ethnography, at some point during my research I realized I was doing exactly that. My knowledge of and interaction with the field had made me part of the field. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe native ethnography as third- and fourth-world researchers who share a history of colonialism or subjugation, including subjugation by ethnographers who have made them the subjects of their work. Many students and interns have passed through

Radio X to do research on the station, but the station had never seen the physical products of this work; or their writings were often in languages other than English. These researchers arrived from abroad armed with tape recorders, cameras, and notebooks, then vanished, presumably back to their first-world locations, to write up their notes. It was often the case that neither the notes nor the final products of their academic tourism ever made it back to Radio X. Over the years many visiting students had told Radio X that the organization or some aspect thereof was the subject of their academic research, but the station did not have any copies of these documents.

This raises the issue of the origins of ethnography as a methodology for studying the colonized Other, often replicating the existing *status quo* by reinscribing the continued oppression of groups of people. This increasingly raises issues of who is able to speak on behalf of whom:

As those who used to be the natives have become scholars in their own right, often studying their communities and nations, the lines between participant and observer, friend and stranger, aboriginal and alien are no longer so easily drawn. We now have a notable group of “minority” anthropologists with a range of ambivalent connections to the abandoned and reclaimed “homelands” in which they work. The importance of this “native anthropology” has helped to bring about a fundamental shift – the shift toward viewing identification rather than difference, as the key, defining image of anthropological theory and practice. (Behar, 1996, p. 28)

This also raises issues regarding the audience, or those we study and how we theorize them. Shome (2006) points out that trends in postcolonial theory and transnational cultural studies have changed the way we think about “audience,” “reception,” and “spectatorship” as a homogeneous stable group. “Contemporary conditions of mobilities and immobilities, cultural flows and stasis, produce new hybrid spaces (and practices) of consumption that productively throw into crisis any notion of the audience as being culturally stable and predictable” (Shome, 2006, p. 264). The idea of studying the Other as a culturally stable group, thus needs to be interrogated.

Everyone, particularly management, was enthusiastic when I arrived in June 2002 with the news that I too was making Radio X the subject of my research. The organization seemed to think that finally someone would write something that they could share ownership of. While I was working at the station, a workshop facilitator visiting from the United States brought in an academic article on Radio X that had appeared in an international peer-reviewed media journal. The author had written extensively on Radio X, though he had not visited the station or interviewed any staff. Shortly thereafter, the station director sent an email to several people, including myself, saying that since we had direct access to the organization we should correct this kind of work by writing and publishing in our capacity as Radio X staff or volunteers.

One evening, during a casual conversation after work, one staff member said to me, “I can’t wait to read your thesis.” The station director had said to me on

numerous occasions that I should write a book on Radio X or that my thesis should be published as a book. I was held responsible for telling the story that no one else had told. I was trusted to produce a tangible product from my interviews and observations as no one else had done. At some point during the research, I was motivated by the words, "I can't wait to read your thesis." I kept thinking that if they wanted to read my thesis, I'd have to write it first! Of course my next thought was, "Do I really want them to read my thesis? Will they like what they read?" In the field, ethnographers often find that they cannot fulfill a specific role as insider or outsider. This introduces an increased complexity into the dichotomy, resulting in the embodiment of multiple selves (Darling-Wolf, 2003a). In this instance, I was blurring the roles of both insider and outsider, which raised its own unique sense of power dynamics – in this case the radio station wielded a form of power and control over me, but of course there was also my own embedded power as the researcher and author of their story. "The very structural features of [ethnographers'] discursive practice create problematic power relations between the privileged researcher . . . and her subaltern subject" (Darling-Wolf, 2003a, p. 155).

This raised many ethical issues in terms of how much was disclosed in the final report. When I started the research process I entered Radio X from a very critical perspective, almost certain that they would be unprepared for my inevitable criticisms of the organization. I had had the benefit of three years abroad in graduate school and I returned bursting with ideas about how the organization should be transformed from my new vantage point of theoretical "superiority." However, what I found was something completely different. The more time I spent at the station, the more I struggled to find the flaws. Every single day I spent at Radio X during the research period, I found evidence to support the positive work being done there. This was clearly a manifestation of "going native," a phrase usually used to describe the phenomenon of researchers becoming too closely aligned to their subjects to view matters "objectively" – I could clearly see flaws several years later when I looked back at my field notes. Furthermore, I was determined that my relationship with Radio X would not end when I finished the research. Since I planned to live in the country after graduation, I also planned to return to the organization in a voluntary capacity; and indeed I took up the offer to return to the station full-time in as station manager. As a result, decisions about what to include in the final report became increasingly important, even though I may not have been aware of this at the time.

My dual positionality as insider and outsider, academic researcher and member, was advantageous, yet problematic. Adler and Adler (1994) coined the term "complete member" to refer to this problematic. While no longer employed by the station, I was always introduced to outsiders as an "ex-programmer who is now a volunteer producer." And even though I assumed the relatively demoted title of volunteer producer during the research period, I was still accorded my old role by those in leadership, particularly because the same people were still running the station when I returned. Leaders confided in me about their hopes for and concerns about the

station, and producers frequently elevated me to a position of authority by requesting my help with or advice on their programs.

For me, this meant I had to rethink research practices in more culturally interactive ways, and to be consciously self-reflexive (Hedge, 1998). After all, "research is an expression of our location in a world connected by lines of power and cultural asymmetry," in order to study "counternarratives from global peripheries" (Hedge, 1998, p. 285). Hedge (1998) warns that we should be careful of the notion of indigenous theory and of viewing society as organic or authentic, as this fails to recognize the contradictions and contested nature of culture. The "historical predicament" of ethnography is that it is always caught up in the invention (not the representation) of cultures (Clifford, 1998, p. 2). Hedge (1998) and others have called for transnational inquiry which explores the interstices or the in-between, and thus becomes more than just doing research about the Other or the "authentic native." Instead, the autobiographical position of the researcher is highlighted. In addition, "transnational research requires a progression from uncovering of universals to the representation of contextually specific material practices" (Hedge, 1998, p. 288). Similarly, in her research with Japanese women, Darling-Wolf (2003a) warns against the "essentializing tendencies by Western scholars to search for indigenous traditions and authentic cultural forms in their attempts to represent 'exotic' others" (p. 154). "As ethnographers, we must be prepared to look at culture not as a system enclosed in itself, but rather as a system in continuous motion" (La Pastina, 2005, p. 141).

I found that my rapport with the organization, as the result of having worked there, facilitated interviews considerably. Staff members were briefed on my research during a staff meeting, and everyone was asked to make time for my interviews. I also found that my personal relationships with staff members helped because they were much more open in conversation during the interviews. Even though our conversations were tape-recorded, people appeared comfortable talking with me and frequently referred to shared experiences. Ethnographic rapport refers to building up trust and friendship with respondents in exchange for information, though as Field and Fox (2007) argue, this is disingenuous because of the ulterior motive of an academic career underwritten by the fieldwork.

To some extent this may also have been a limitation, because I found that I had to constantly push interviewees for greater detail. Because they assumed that there was a shared understanding about Radio X, they frequently omitted what they believed to be minor details or facts that they assumed I was already aware of (Jackson, 1987). This was also a personal limitation – that is, because I was already familiar with the organization, I had to guard against asking questions based only on my own experiences there, or my own preconceived understandings of the station, lest they limit my conclusions. It is for this reason that I carried out participant observation during the first few weeks of fieldwork, before drafting interview questions based on notes from these observations. Participant observation was thus used to generate the basic interview questions.

Furthermore, because Radio X has won many awards, staff members are accustomed to being interviewed frequently by the local and international press. The station has even been the site of several films and documentaries, including an internationally produced documentary. I was concerned that this, together with my familiarity with some of the interviewees, could lead to stock positive responses or what Spradley (1979) describes as translation competence, that is, the undesirable tendency of informants to provide prepackaged, party-line, and extra-emic answers to questions (Agar, 1986).

At the same time I think that former and current volunteers were more open with me during interviews because, in their eyes, I was no longer associated with the station. Many volunteers openly expressed their criticisms of the station in ways that they never did with staff members, and would never have with me had I not been perceived as a researcher or, at the very least, an *ex-staff* member. Another issue that arose when conducting interviews was a struggle over the ownership of these interviews. At some point I became involved in a discussion with some staff members about how poorly organized the Radio X archives were and how it was necessary to record a history of the organization. One person suggested that my interviews could fill this gap and that I should make them available to be burned onto CD and kept in the archive for future reference. Another concern someone raised was that many of the people whom I planned to interview may not be alive in the next decade and that their interviews are important pieces of oral history. At first this seemed an excellent idea – a way for me to complete my research and also to give back something concrete to the station, in the form of contributing toward an oral history archive. However, once I actually started the interviews, I quickly changed my mind as I heard material that could be considered confidential. For example, material in which interviewees make personal, potentially harmful comments about each other may not be appropriate for such an archive.

The situation was autoethnographic in the sense that I could not completely distance myself from the research or the ethnography as a distant or objective observer. The autoethnographic experience is neither here nor there, but betwixt and between, since one is simultaneously insider and outsider, native and foreign, standing “in that undeterminable threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out” (Trinh, 1989, p. 418). Occupying the spaces in between also has advantages. As Said writes, “The essential privilege of exile is to have, not just one set of eyes but half a dozen, each of them corresponding to the places you have been” (quoted in Akinde, 1999, p. 48).

Authority and Ownership

In a rhizomatic methodological approach, where the ongoing deconstruction of binary opposites is key, and things are both this and not this (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), authority and ownership must be deconstructed. Even in so-called participa-

tory research, the voice of the researcher is usually dominant. This hierarchical, arboric approach means that the researcher is always in authority, and ultimately owns the text.

I intended to invert this with my ethnography of Radio X through a rhizomatic approach. I hoped to achieve this by writing a text that would be accessible to the members of Radio X, as opposed to one that excludes the very subjects of the study. Furthermore, the text would be both accessible and available, as opposed to the many researchers who do dissertation research in the developing world and are never heard of there again. The final copy of the thesis was left on a central table in the station's building, a meeting place for informal chats and the spot where everyone took their lunch. After a few days, the printed and bound copy became well thumbed, as it was constantly being leafed through by staff members during their tea or lunch breaks. In addition to the physical hard copy, the thesis was submitted online, and thus available electronically to anyone with a download link and Internet access.

I also intended for the final project to reflect the voices of the people at the station, and to engender a sense of ownership and empowerment. With this in mind, the final text was part academic essay, part narrative journalism, with interviewees' voices constantly present through the use of direct quotes. Privileging interviewees' personal experiences in this way in turn validated the work being done at the station, and hopefully resulted in a sense of collective empowerment. The final project was an academic dissertation, but it is also a live text that reflects the complex interpersonal relationships and the rich visual impressions that constituted the research process, as well as the station itself.

Conflict

And then it all began to unravel, perhaps at the point at which I exited the organization, or perhaps at the point at which I re-entered as station manager. Somehow, somewhere along the line, the organization had taken ownership of me and my dissertation. I could no longer be an independent researcher – I was an embedded researcher (much like an embedded journalist attached to a military unit during armed conflict). While, as mentioned earlier, I found it hard to find the flaws during my dissertation research, they became all too clear to me when I returned as station manager, particularly through the process of trying to get the thesis published or to publish chapters as academic journal articles. One major critique I faced was the writing style of the thesis. While, as mentioned, I had deliberately set out to combine the stylistic features of narrative journalism and academic writing to make it more accessible to a nonacademic audience, this was a limitation in terms of its suitability for publication. There was no pressure to publish (or not to publish) aspects of the thesis, but the benefit of distance allowed me to see the flaws in what I had previously written, and I found myself disagreeing with my own work and questioning my own

initial interpretations as I began to see it in print. At this stage, I also felt as though taking the next step – moving beyond merely vocalizing my critiques to actually putting them down in writing, and publishing this writing, might be seen as an act of betrayal.

Differences in management approaches arise out of diverse or conflicting ideas about the purpose and value of community broadcasting (van Vuuren, 2003). In particular, I came into conflict on many occasions with the station director on this very issue. While we were in agreement that the goal of community broadcasting was to empower the local community, there were disputes as to the exact ways to go about doing this. Furthermore, I believed that the key was to build a sense of agency in the community, and not to treat the community as a vacuous mass, in the classic sender–receiver model. The station director model did not believe that funds should be made available for this purpose. I slowly discovered, to my disappointment, that while the organization had huge promise as a vehicle for participatory communication, it was being held back by the person at its head. The station management had not changed during my tenure at the station, but I had slowly grown more critical as a result of daily interactions, and as a result started noticing these flaws.

Furthermore, I discovered that, while others shared my opinions, they would not support me in meetings because they feared the station director. We were really all puppets on a stage, being controlled by the station director puppet master, and completing an intricate dance for the international funding agencies. Our salaries were constantly cut back; we worked without contracts or benefits; the threat of being fired was constantly dangled before us; and we had absolutely no decision making power. Everything had to be run through the station director.

I also started to realize that an intricate process of exclusion limited access to most individuals. It was ultimately up to the puppet master to decide who was to be employed and who was to go on air. He hired family members who underperformed, and on several occasions used us to fire staff, whom he then summarily rehired, in order to construct his reputation for compassion. While the concept of the public sphere does not necessarily imply equal access for all, I found the control by the station director to be particularly exclusionary.

We had conflictual interactions several times in management meetings, and I eventually tendered my resignation, stating clearly that I was leaving because I did not feel that I had enough room to fully carry out my job as station manager. There appeared to be no hard feelings, and I carried on with my research and writing about the station, my friendships with individuals at the station, and my occasional visits and part-time voluntary production work.

Then one day it all finally unraveled. There was word that the station director was using other staff members to spread a rumor that the organization had “sent” me to graduate school (I was a Fulbright scholar), and that I was repaying this debt by leaving. My staff member friends and informants stopped returning work-related emails and calls, and an agreement to broadcast my students’ radio projects was summarily ignored. I suspect that requesting my framed diploma was certainly a

pivotal point. Faced with the daunting prospect of personalizing an office for the first time in my life, in my new position as a research fellow at a local university, I had called the radio station and asked whether, since I was no longer the manager, I might have my diploma back to display in my office. After several months, and a pointed email from myself to the administrator, I was told that I was now part of the Radio X Hall of Fame and that they would like to keep the diploma. Even upon exit from the organization, they felt the need to wield a sense of ownership because I had once researched them. It is possible that colleagues and friends whom I had interviewed felt betrayed because they had thought of me as “one of them,” and the production of a doctoral thesis together with the title of “Dr” clearly set me apart, even if this was not my intention.

Discussion

I had fully immersed myself in Radio X, a process I found constantly exciting as both researcher and staff member. In negotiating the line between insider and outsider, I found an uneasy space in between the two, from which to understand and interpret what I was seeing. Conducting a native ethnography in your home city, surrounded by friends and colleagues, positions you in a realm very different than the one occupied by the pioneers of anthropological and ethnographic research. Instead, an element of social responsibility comes to the fore as you attempt participatory approaches, try to please your future audience – academic professors, peers, colleagues, and research subjects – and simultaneously attempt to create an academic assignment that is going to be graded, and which might determine your future career.

I conducted the ethnography of Radio X while acknowledging all the while that no blueprint for such a methodology exists, yet creating a product which was both something that selfishly helped me to understand myself and my passion for community radio, as well as a gift that I presented to Radio X, so that they could see themselves as I did – and hopefully this is still as close to a mirror image as anyone can get.

But perhaps it was inevitable that the “natives” would eventually turn against me. After all, one cannot betray one’s friends by turning them into research subjects. Or is it the other way around? Either way, I lost friends and the opportunity to participate in what I still believe to be a truly grassroots medium, despite an autocratic leadership structure. Researchers need to think consciously about how to manage relationships with informants, particularly in terms of negotiating this line between informants and friends. While the relationship will always be tricky, they should remain aware of possible ethical and other implications as these relationships deepen over time. Maintaining a professional distance while building intimate friendships in order to deepen understanding of context is necessary, but potentially difficult; fundamentally, relationships are central to the practice of ethnography.

In fact, the breakdown of the relationship may have been primarily a result of my paternalistic relationship with the station director, and its subsequent breakdown. Perhaps this is where I made the greatest methodological mistake – to set myself up as a researcher and then to follow this by taking a job, a very unusual sequence of events for any anthropologist. Some might say that this was a small price to pay for an award-winning¹ PhD dissertation and the anthropological experience of a lifetime. Dynamics of gender and race also come into play here, and the ethnographic media researcher needs to be aware of how his or her own class, race, and gender might affect research outcomes. In this particular instance, being a black woman was a key factor in the relationship. It was clear that having a black woman station manager with a PhD was important to station management in a national context with few female media managers, and at a radio station with a strong black identity. In addition, this particular radio station had clear gender equity targets, always proudly stating that at least 50% of management staff were always female. As a result, I was always introduced as “Dr Bosch,” and the station director always mentioned my thesis and educational qualifications to visitors.

As Darling-Wolf (2003a, 2004) pointed out in her feminist research with Japanese women, silencing ourselves for fear of criticism could be epistemologically dangerous in its avoidance of political responsibility. In the present instance, my responsibility was to remain true to myself and to be honest and critical with the station director as a researcher and not as an employee. But for future researchers, there remains a valuable lesson never to confuse real life with the research setting. South African radio, particularly community radio, remains under-researched, and ethnography still remains a valuable methodological tool to understand it, despite the challenges one will invariably face. Despite the problems it raises, “the need for ethnography – away and at home – is greater than ever before” (Van Maanen, 1990, p. xi).

NOTE

- 1 The dissertation was awarded the 2003 Broadcast Educational Association (BEA) Kenneth Harwood Outstanding Dissertation Award.

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Autoethnography in Media Studies

Digitalization of Television in Finland, or Carrying Home Cardboard Boxes

Johanna Uotinen

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the possibilities and limits of autoethnography for media studies. As an example, I use my own technological experiences with television as it relates to the digitalization process of television broadcasting that occurred in Finland. The chapter demonstrates how autoethnography makes it possible to study media-related everyday practices that are difficult to research with other methods, as these practices have become invisible due their repetitive and mundane nature. To conclude, I suggest that autoethnography is a method that offers possibilities for connecting the personal to the cultural and social and thus grasps everyday-based small agency.

Until the late 1980s, it was simple enough to watch the telly: programs were watched when they were broadcasted. Then the videocassette recorder (VCR) was introduced, but as far as I can remember, the biggest challenges had to do with learning how to use the timer, which seems a relatively simple task now, insuring that there is enough room for the timed recordings in the cassettes, and writing down their contents. Gradually, the main problem was not the technology itself but the result of using it. After my hubby and I bought our first VCR sometime at the beginning of 1990s, our cassette

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems180

collection started to increase at an accelerating pace. Although we had far-sightedly chosen an advanced model with a half-speed recording mode, which doubled the recording time of the cassettes, it soon began to look like there were cassettes everywhere at home.

It was no wonder that we were excited when the first digital TV-related technology, a recording DVD player with an internal hard disk, became available in Finland around 2005. With such a device, programs that were saved to be watched later would not fill the shelves and cabins, but could amazingly be stored inside the gadget itself. Also, the stuff that one wanted to keep would take up less space, since a DVD disc needs a lot less room than a VCR cassette. Furthermore, with a hard disk, it would be possible to decrease the space needed for the already existing collection, because it allowed the most important VCR recordings to be translated into DVD format. The device simply seemed too good to be true!

Naturally, we had to get a gadget that offers such excellent possibilities. So, in summer 2005 my husband carried home a big cardboard box containing a hard disk–DVD unit, as it was cleverly named in the manual. I remember being slightly nervous about how this new miracle would cooperate with the already existing old TV and the not-so-old VCR. Eventually, it was surprisingly easy to connect the unit to the older devices. The system did what it was supposed to do; the programs got recorded and transferred from the VCR cassettes to the hard disk, and when we wanted to watch the programs from the hard disk or the DVD, we could do so exactly as promised.

The text above is the beginning of an autoethnographical story on how our television gradually turned into a digitalized monster. Autoethnography as a research method had appealed to me for a long time before I actually tried it myself. My reasons for toying with the idea of autoethnography had probably something to do with the fact I had worked for almost 10 years as a project researcher and had done extensive amounts of ethnographic interviews not only for my own research purposes, but also for the interests of the research projects. Thus, I found myself becoming slightly tired of conducting series of interviews, organizing the fieldwork, facing informant after informant, transcribing the interviews, and analyzing the stories told by others: I longed for a change. Moreover, I had always had personal experiences relating to the topics on which I was interviewing, and eventually it began to feel odd that I would always rush to get an interview from someone else when I could answer the questions myself.

However, it was not until the digitalization of television broadcasting in Finland that I was finally encouraged to take the step from merely playing with the idea to actually doing autoethnography in practice – that is, trying to use my own experiences as research material. I began to contemplate my own relationship with television and the changes that had occurred in it by means of autoethnography using concepts such as domestication and agency (Uotinen, 2010a). What I found especially interesting were the links between technology, gendered practices, and agency as well as the fact that autoethnography turned out to be such an excellent tool for making these relationships visible. So I wrote another article on the topic (Uotinen, 2010b).

Doing autoethnography proved somewhat difficult, though. There were plenty of autoethnographical articles, which I read in order to get a grip of the method. The problem was that methodological texts proved to be more rare, and thus I found very little practical advice on how to actually do autoethnography (since then, textbooks have been published, for example, Chang, 2008, and Muncey, 2010). However, I came to the conclusion that there is a good reason for this scarcity: every autoethnographer tends to produce her own personal conceptions and research practices during the research process.

In this chapter my aim is to do autoethnography on autoethnography. I will therefore discuss autoethnography as a research method on the basis of my own experiences. I have already explained how I ended up trying to do it, and in the following pages my goal is to connect the theory to the method in a comprehensive way. I will further utilize my own autoethnographical accounts on the digitalization of television in order to illustrate the points I make. Although I am excited about autoethnography and have found it a useful method, I am not denying the problems and difficulties involved in it, and that is why I will not only discuss the strengths and benefits of the method but also its methodological weaknesses.

Autoethnography

However, there are always problems with new technology. With the hard disk–DVD unit, the problems began when I tried to edit the ads out of the saved programs. The possibility of editing the advertisements out of the recordings was one of the main reasons for our getting the device in the first place. When the shelves and cabins are full of cassettes, there is no point in saving tens or hundreds of hours of reluctantly recorded advertisements. Not to mention the improved comfort of viewing when there would no more be a need for winding past the ads. So expectations were high when I searched the manual to see how the promised editing would actually happen. This was the end of effortless use of the unit. The main reason for the problem was the language of the manual, which was difficult to understand to say the least. Apparently, the text was in my native tongue, Finnish, but as regards the communication of the message, it could as well have been ancient Egyptian written with hieroglyphs.

When I found the passage on editing and tried to produce the anticipated result, something totally different happened. After a longish rereading and reinterpretation process, I realized that in the manual “editing” does not mean what the term usually means, but it means copying files from the hard disk to a DVD and vice versa. The editing that I wanted to do was surprisingly named “creating the playlist.” After these teething problems, however, I managed to absorb the language of the manual, and ever since then the hard disk–DVD unit has done exactly what it was expected to do – especially after I learned to pull its plug from the socket at least once or twice a month. This way the unit’s computer-like nature was brought under control and it would not crash.

Autoethnography is a method in which the researcher's personal life experiences form the starting point and the central material of research (Ellis, 2007). The method is based on the so-called crisis of representation in the field of anthropological research, on discussions that concentrated on the limits and conditions of ethnography and ethnographic knowledge (Spry, 2001). The crisis of representation dealt with the questions of the (power) relations between ethnography, ethnographic writing, and "the Others," the objects of the research. These questions can be traced back to the earlier phases of the discipline – back to times when it was natural and acceptable to regard the researcher as the authority, who could brush aside the fields' multivoiced nature, to use the "objective" and "neutral" voice of science and the ethnographic present tense, as well as to objectify and exoticize informants (see e.g., Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 1999; Clifford, 1986; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986).

The earlier conventions of ethnographic research and especially writing were questioned, along with the crisis of representation. It was pondered whether it is at all possible to describe the Other's culture and if so, how and on whose conditions? As a result of these discussions, ethnography was no longer seen as describing the researched culture as it is. Furthermore, ethnographic texts were now read not as direct accounts of reality, but as interpretations transmitted by writing. The researcher was no longer seen as an objective observer, but his or her influence on collecting and analyzing the research materials and on reporting the results was acknowledged. Then also the research results were seen as a researcher's personal literary productions, which have their own writing conventions and rules.

Hence the discussions on ethnographic representation laid the foundation for the methods in which the researcher's visibility in both research and reporting became more and more acceptable, and therefore enabled the development of autoethnographic method. Originally, autoethnography referred to the researcher's manner of including autobiographical material in research texts describing the Other. Later the term started to mean a form of research that is (mainly) based on researchers' own life experiences. Now it offers multiple means, such as performative, poetic, and literary tools for the researcher's self-expression (Burnier, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

Autoethnography has become increasingly popular since its emergence in the 1990s. This tendency can be seen, for example, by examining the number of articles published on the topic. I conducted a simple test by searching the abstracts of all Sage journals on the Sage Journals webpage (<http://online.sagepub.com/>) using the keyword "autoethnography" in the advanced search tool box. The result was illuminating. Altogether, 284 journal articles with "autoethnography" mentioned in their abstracts have been published by Sage. Out of those, four came out during the 1990s (the first article was published in 1996: Simpson, 1996), 160 texts were printed in the 2000s, and in the period 2010–2012 120 articles had been published. So it is clear that autoethnography is not a passing fad or a curiosity among a small circle of enthusiasts, but a mainstreaming method in the ascendant.

The interpretation I find most helpful is to think of autoethnography as a type of autobiographical writing and a research method that *connects the personal to the cultural and social* (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Thus, autoethnography is a research method and text that describes the writer's personal experiences and places those experiences in their social and cultural context. It aims to understand the general by studying the private and individual. This is possible, since a person's life is not merely unique, but also generalizable (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

Viewed this way, autoethnography comes close to the idea of *situated knowledge* (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The concept of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991) is used to emphasize the contextual nature of all knowledge: knowledge is always connected to a certain time, place, situation, and above all certain people. By situating the study in a certain person's (or persons') everyday experiences, understandings, and practices, by having these as the starting point and basis of the study, it is possible to achieve more general relations and meanings. In autoethnography, the situated knower is the researcher herself, and the other informants do not necessarily exist at all.

The concept of situated knowledge also links autoethnography to gender studies and certain feminist theories. One example of these is feminist cultural studies of technology (Lykke, 2008; McNeil, 2007), in which three relatively new interdisciplinary branches of research – gender studies, technology studies and cultural studies – intertwine (McNeil, 2007). The main idea of gender-sensitive cultural studies of technology is that gender and technologies are produced together in the signifying processes and thus affect each other. Thus, both technologies and the work and skills connected to them are gendered to the smallest piece of knowledge and practice (Faulkner, 2001; Wajcman, 2004). These ideas are also relevant in media studies because there is no media without technology, and therefore both media and its use can be seen as gendered to the core. Furthermore, gender is not the only relevant difference to be acknowledged but ethnicity, age, education, and class, for example, should also be taken into account when appropriate.

However, raw autoethnographic data alone is not enough to develop high-quality research, and it would be unjustified to demand that it does so (see Miller, 1991). Instead of relying on mere raw autoethnographic autobiography, research should seek possibilities for more subtle and multifaceted positions (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). When one is doing autoethnography, the most crucial point, in my opinion, is to carefully situate the research process and the produced knowledge – not only to write texts based on personal experiences, but also to position the study and oneself in the spirit of situated knowledge. This way research is based on a conscious and reflected position in a certain place and situation from where the researcher makes observations and does her work, and the knowledge that is produced is contextualized. In order to see and understand, one must be located somewhere – and this concerns the researcher as an informant as much as those who read the research report (Haraway, 1991).

The Problems of Autoethnography

My hubby and I were so irritated with the whole digi-business going on in Finland in the early 2000s that we had agreed that we would not get a digibox until we were forced to do so. The fact that our flat had a cable connection made our resistance easy, because it meant that we could watch the basic channels without the digibox. That we had to do without certain channels, which were available only digitally, was a bit of a problem at first, but then we stopped reading the program information from the newspaper. Thus, we led a happy analogue life until the summer of 2006. Before that I had been unemployed for a while, which is not uncommon for a researcher in Finland, but then I managed to get a three-month assignment for the summer. Because digital receivers were somewhat expensive, we decided that we should purchase one during my work period, although it was a year ahead of our schedule (at that time analogue broadcasting was supposed to end in August 2007, but later it was decided that it would continue on the cable network until March 2008).

To purchase a digibox was a serious business, and so I began to carefully study what sort of a device would be suitable for us. This was soon over. Since we needed a box for a cable household with a hard disk and two tuners (for watching one channel and recording two others), there were exactly two models available at the time and the decision was easy to make. Consequently, my hubby carried yet another cardboard box home in July 2006. I remembered how easy it had been to connect the hard disk–DVD unit to the TV and VCR and therefore anticipated – despite the stories I had heard – similar ease with the digibox. I was so wrong, so very wrong. The task was so difficult that I had to visit the digibox shop twice for advice and make a phone call to the importer! Both were actions I had *never* taken before for *any* technical gadget. With the installation process of the digital receiver, my technological self-confidence got its first (but hardly last) serious blow.

Autoethnography is not just a way of knowing and achieving knowledge, but it also creates a research text in the way ethnography in general does (see Van Maanen, 1995). However, the main aim of autoethnographic writing is to break the writing conventions of traditional realistic ethnography. This aim is pursued by using, for example, literary and performative means (e.g., Boylorn, 2006; Denzin, 2005; Kaufmann, 2005; Spry, 2001). Therefore, strict demands are set on autoethnography: it should be personal and research-like, evocative and analytic, descriptive and theoretical all at the same time. Autoethnography should also have artistic quality, regardless of whether or not it takes the written or performative form. In addition, it has been mentioned that autoethnographic research should aim at offering care and support as well as producing change in the world and people. All this sets great – even impossible – demands for autoethnographers. It is not enough to be a capable researcher and scientific writer, but societal influence, literary talent, and even acting skills (in the case of performative autoethnography) are also required (Burnier, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2000, 2006; Spry, 2001).

According to the autoethnographic canon, the researcher should describe his or her own experiences and emotions in such a way that the description touches the reader deeply and genuinely. Consequently, it has been considered as central for successful autoethnography that the description arouses similar emotions in the reader as the researcher has felt in the described situation. It is this *evocativeness*, the aim to arouse feelings, that separates autoethnography from other forms of ethnographic research (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Reed-Danahay, 2001).

It is probably because of this demand that very difficult themes such as illness, death, racism, incest, violence, and problematic family relations have been popular in autoethnographic research (e.g., Brooks, 2011; Davis, 2009; Day, 2010; Eicher-Catt, 2004; Elizabeth, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 1992; Ettore, 2005; Jago, 2006; Lee, 2006; Minge, 2007; Ronai, 1995, 1996; Weaver-Hightower, 2012). The problem-oriented nature of autoethnography is understandable, since more intense emotions – grief, despair, and anger – are probably easier to mediate in a text than milder feelings. However, the prevailing dramatic content gave the impression (at least, to me) that there is no point in doing autoethnography if everything is fine. This impression was strengthened by the fact that the objectives and research nature of some autoethnographic texts that are concerned with ordinary, everyday life experiences I managed to find – for example, watching television – were somewhat difficult to comprehend too (see Ott, 2007; Scott-Hoy, 2003).

The type of research that appeals to readers' feelings, aiming to arouse them, has understandably been criticized for concentrating too heavily on the researcher's personal problems and misfortunes (Anderson, 2006). An approach like this tends to make research either difficult to comprehend, or even awkward and embarrassing, and its relevance could be questioned (Walford, 2004). As justification for the approach, one has offered, for example, writers' empowerment (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Writing about one's vicissitudes can be therapeutic – but does it need to be research? For me the greatest problem of autoethnography is the manner in which it concentrates *only* on the researcher's experiences. When all contextualization is neglected, this weakens the intelligibility and general interest of many studies regardless of how skillfully they are written.

Furthermore, when all misfortunes and intimate facts are discussed in detail, the reader's feelings might be aroused, but the question is: Are the feelings aroused the "right" ones? For me at least, reading genuinely evocative texts tends to be a somewhat awkward experience, which makes me wonder: Do I really want to know all these private, intimate, and even embarrassing facts the writer has exposed? Since discomfort and awkwardness are not the feelings texts usually aim to arouse, my reaction questions the basis of evocative autoethnography – the idea that the text should be able to transmit and arouse the feeling it describes (Ahmed, 2004).

Thus, the evocativeness is problematic, not only because of its practical consequences, but also from the perspective of situated knowledge and the critique of universal experience (see Skeggs, 1995). In autoethnography both experience and

feelings tend to be seen as undeniable, universal, and transmittable. The researcher's experiences are supposed to be so general that it is possible not only to understand but also to experience them in the same way regardless of the audience's situatedness. This attitude may appear somewhat arrogant, since autoethnographers are convinced of the importance of their experiences to research (Miller, 2008). In fact, it results in a way of thinking that annoyingly resembles the *God-tricks* – relativism and universalism – that aim to hide the subjectivity and situated nature of the knowledge Donna Haraway (1991) criticizes.

The Benefits of Autoethnography

The TV–VCR–hard disk–DVD unit–digibox combination in our TV cabin proved to be a digitalized monster. I had to update it, nurse it, and please it, and still there was no certainty that it would do what I wanted it to do. There were problems with texts, recording, sound, and file transfer – in fact, with almost everything that one can think of. However, after using the system for a while and after some improvement in the quality of the digitalized broadcasting, the basic acts of saving, watching, and deleting the programs began to run smoothly enough.

Yet the case was totally different with the files that we wanted to keep in the DVD format. Those have to be saved on the digibox's hard disk first and then transferred to the hard disk–DVD unit in real time. The difficulties culminated in the fact that, in spite of two tuners, the digibox could not be touched during the transfer or the whole thing would jumble up. This meant that we could not watch anything else but the transferred program during the procedure that actually took as long as the length of the transferred program. After a successful transfer the programs had to be edited so that they could be saved on the DVD discs without ads and other extra bits. All this took more time than ever before and the so-called technological progress in no way decreased the time required for the act of saving the TV programs. On the contrary, it led to a situation where I spent more and more time with the television, but less and less time actually watching it for entertainment.

Why would autoethnography be worth doing if it is so contradictory? According to my own practice-based experiences, there are (at least) five good reasons for trying autoethnography. First, autoethnography offers tools for research that follow the idea of situated knowledge. As it is regarded as an acceptable starting point for research to position oneself in someone else's situation in order to gain situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991), research based on a researcher's personal position and commitments must be justified and acceptable as well. If researchers are unable to describe their starting points in a way that justifies their autoethnographic approach, how could they describe the starting points any better when they do research on others?

It is an increasingly recognized and recommended basis for research that researchers acknowledge the fact that knowledge is situated and committed. This emphasizes

the idea that research results are reliable and understandable only when the knowledge's contextuality – the conditions and situations affecting both informants and researcher in the process of knowledge production – is taken into account. Acknowledging these conditions justifies the analytic move between the individual and the general that is essential in legitimating autoethnography.

Autoethnography further offers possibilities for researching groups, life situations, or experiences that easily tend to remain hidden in research. For example, the gendered nature of media technologies and habits connected to them is so deeply embedded in our cultural understandings – it is so natural and unquestionable – that it goes unnoticed. Autoethnography provides a useful tool to more consciously explore how this process of gendering takes place in everyday life in often subtle ways and “private” contexts.

The implementation of the idea of situated and committed knowledge is, however, challenging in practice: research often results in pieces of general observation from the informants' life situations, which remain scattered and separate, although they are supposed to be contextualizing. Autoethnography offers a possible solution to this problem for the simple reason that it is easier to reach precision in contemplating one's own life than it is when one is trying to describe and situate the positions of others. This means that autoethnography offers a means to pursue situatedness and commitment and to avoid the oversimplification that otherwise threatens when trying to describe the life contexts of other people in relation to the goals of the research.

Second, autoethnography makes it possible to follow everyday life practices. Such practices are, naturally, at the core of ethnographic research in general as well. However, it is relatively difficult to study them with, for example, interviews. The reason for this difficulty is the fact that many mundane habits and tasks are so frequent that they have become invisible. How many of us pay attention to fixed habits and choices that are related to, for example, cooking, computer use, or television watching? As such, these practices are difficult to verbalize, even if the researcher is able to ask the relevant questions. In addition to interviews, observation is another method typically found in traditional ethnography. With observation it is possible to follow what people do, but to find out *why* they do what they do and what are the meanings of the doings, pure observation might not be enough. So it is often necessary to ask for further explanations and clarifications from the informants. Thus, the problem mentioned above of verbalizing the practices might concern observation too.

Autoethnography offers one kind of solution to these problems, because it is easier to concentrate on the details of one's own everyday life. There is also at least one less level of signification: one's own acts, motives, and understandings are probably more understandable than somebody else's explanations of his or her everyday life practices and their contexts. For example, I learned entirely new aspects of my television-related behavior and my choices concerning it when I proceeded to do autoethnography on the topic. Had I done traditional ethnography with informants,

the results might have been interesting, but I doubt I could have attained the same kind of precision that autoethnography enables. This way of doing research naturally requires concentration and honesty, but when it is conducted in a careful and thorough way, autoethnography offers the possibility to achieve delicate understandings and to connect everyday practices (the individual) and social and cultural structures (the general).

The third benefit is the utilization of the researcher's own experience-based knowledge. It is quite possible that, on certain topics, the researcher himself or herself could provide more powerful and relevant information than other informants could. This is the case especially with research topics that may be difficult to access from the outside or that are out of the line of research in general. Furthermore, even when the research theme is not so intimate or otherwise demanding that it would make it difficult to find informants – as is the case with television – it might be possible to gain *thicker* descriptions with autoethnography (on the concept of thick description, see Geertz, 1993). My engagement with autoethnography showed that it was possible to conduct convincing research that was ethnographic in nature while employing other methods than observation and interviews.

One must, however, be particularly critical about research topics, and choices must be carefully justified: credible autoethnography is not possible on any topic whatsoever. In my case, for example, digital television and my engagement with certain health technologies proved to be convincing research themes, since television is one of the technologies that influence my everyday life practices and health technology has also become part of my life experiences (Uotinen, 2011).

When doing autoethnography, the researcher puts himself or herself and his or her personal credibility at risk, not only as a researcher but also as a person. That is why it is particularly important in autoethnography to put special emphasis on the choice of research topic: it must not only be valid in the sense of researcher's experiences but also be theoretically and methodologically justifiable. In the end, the validity of the topic is demonstrated through self-reflexivity when conducting the research, and by following justified, ethical, and transparent research practices.

Fourth, autoethnography offers the opportunity to conduct research when a wider ethnographic fieldwork cannot be accessed due to lack of time, funds, or other resources. The resources for research tend to be scarce, and thus autoethnography might offer solutions to address topics that otherwise would have been neglected. Lack of resources or other purely convenient reasons should *never*, however, be the main argument for choosing autoethnography. The choice has to be done consciously and there has to be convincing research-based, theoretical, and methodological reasons for the use of the method or the result will be unjustifiable.

The fifth benefit of autoethnography is that it is the researcher's own life, not someone else's, that is under consideration and exposed to criticism. When research is conducted in cooperation with the informants, the aim naturally is to follow practices that are as ethical as possible and to have as equal relations between the researcher and the informants as possible, but the researcher still has the last word.

So, there is always the risk of the researcher harming the participants unintentionally (Plummer, 2001). Of course, these ethical concerns do not mean that other people should not be involved in the research as informants at all for fear of “doing something wrong.” The choice must, again, be based on the aims of the research itself: Is autoethnography able to offer answers to research questions or are interviews and/or observation more reasonable solutions?

If autoethnography is revealed to be a valid method for researching a certain topic, the ethical risks are slightly different in comparison to traditional ethnographic research. One does not need to exercise caution with oneself as with other people. Thus, it is possible to deal with questions that could not be otherwise discussed. It is also possible to write in a style that would be regarded as dubious outside the genre of autoethnography. For example, when I write on my television relationship I can freely aim at a somewhat (self-)ironic style, whereas it would not be proper to write about other people using a similar style. However, the limits and practices need to be carefully considered in autoethnography as well, especially regarding other people who may become involved in the study, such as those closest to the researcher. Exposing oneself is acceptable, but to do the same to one’s friends and relatives involves ethical considerations (Ellis, 2007; Skeggs, 1995).

Connecting the Individual to the Cultural: Digitalization of TV in Finland

Eventually I got so frustrated with the complicated DVD recording process that I tried to find out how files could be transferred more efficiently. The supposed answer was that I should do it via a laptop, on which the DVDs can be burned faster. After some searching, I found guidelines for doing the trick on the Internet. It took some pondering and a few attempts, but finally I succeeded in installing the necessary programs both on the laptop and on the digibox. However, in spite of the guidelines and the necessary programs, the files did not jump from the digibox to the laptop just like that. Every transfer took at least a few attempts, and whenever I succeeded, the process was still exasperatingly slow.

The slowness ceased to irritate me when it dawned on me exactly how complicated it was to produce a functioning DVD with the laptop. It would require, among other things, burning the texts into the program itself, converting the file into a DVD-compatible format and then burning it onto a DVD disc. Each of those operations needed a combination of programs that agree to cooperate with the current file, the laptop, and the DVD player. When I reached this point, I discovered that I didn’t have the patience to do all this. I was forced to admit that the technology of our TV cabin was at the point where it was out of my reach, beyond my patience, and probably also beyond the limits of my technical skills.

The toilsomeness of making DVDs resulted in the fact that the hard disks of both the digibox and the hard disk–DVD unit were constantly full to repletion. Because of

this I had to keep making new DVDs so that I could fit all the programs on the digibox hard disk that had been marked in the TV guide to be saved, although the job was so repugnant. And so, little by little and without me noticing it, the monster in the TV cabin started to succumb to my will. It was not exactly fun to use, but more often than not the result began to be what it was supposed to be. And that is how surprisingly many years went by . . . Until in spring 2011 the hard disk–DVD unit that had served well for the previous six years ceased to close the discs it had burned. This was somewhat of a problem, since an unclosed DVD does not necessarily function in any other DVD player. Consequently, it is not very clever to produce tens and hundreds of DVDs that are playable only in an overaged device that could pop off for good any day. So the time had come to find a successor for the unit.

I have included the story of the digitalization process of our TV in this chapter, as it is a good example of how it is possible to intertwine the general and the individual in a way that tells something about the present, as autoethnography should do. The digitalization of television broadcasting was a long and somewhat complicated process in Finland. The first digital programs were broadcast as early as August 2001. The first digital receivers, however, were available only four months later. Furthermore, it was not until August 2005 that the digital network covered most of the country – four years after digital broadcasting had begun. There are still some very remote spots where digital broadcasts are difficult to receive without expensive special arrangements. The date on which analogue broadcasting was to end was also changed several times during the digitalization process. Eventually, broadcasting was digitalized in two waves, in August 2007 (aerial broadcasting) and March 2008 (cable broadcasting). So, the digitalization process began slowly and its continuation was vague, although digital television was an important part of the government's information society policy. The aim was to be at the cutting edge of digitalization in Europe as with the earlier development of the information society (see Castells & Himanen, 2002).

The process included some exaggerated promises of technical advancement, which were not realized. For example at the beginning of the digitalization process there were promises about interactive services among others, but these were all quietly dropped as the process continued. Furthermore, at the beginning of digitalized television there were complications because of unequal visibility, poor digital receiver supply on the market, severe technological teething problems (e.g., subtitles), and, above all, the top-down style of execution of the whole process. Therefore, Finns in general were not at all happy with digital television at first. Now, more than 10 years after the beginning of the digi-TV process, the situation has stabilized somewhat as the worst technical and other teething problems are over.

Still, the digitalization process produced substantial changes for Finland's television field. For example, statistics published on September 3, 2008, show that 98% of households with television had a digital receiver in August 2008. The same statistics, however, also show that just before the final digitalization, there were only 6% of households with no television at all, whereas after the change 10% of Finland's 2.5

million households no longer had a TV. During the previous year and after the end of analogue broadcasting, as many as 100,000 households had given up television. The trend has continued: according to the December 2011 statistics, 88% of Finnish households own a television – and 12% do not. The novelty is the number of households – 15% – that watch television broadcasts via a computer. This was such a rare possibility in 2008 that it was not even mentioned. Thus, the statistics show fundamental changes in the ways Finns watch television that have taken place during and after the digitalization process (Statistics Finland, 2008, 2011).

Experiences in the digitalization of television are especially interesting because of their collective nature. Since the beginning of digital broadcasting, the majority of Finns have faced cracks in their TV-related everyday life practices. Therefore, anyone who complained about digital TV belonged to the mass who even had a language of their own: *digi-complaint* discourse. This discourse appeared on Internet chat-rooms, in letters to the editor, and in everyday discussions. So, the digitalization of television led to a collective experience backed up by individual experiences.

This shows that I was by no means alone with my digitalization-related feelings of irritation and reluctance. So I can assume that my personal experiences were generally representative of the broader social and cultural situation in Finland at the time. Especially because the change from analogue to digital television affected practically everyone in Finland, it is quite probable that I have managed to write about something that touches many other people. It is exactly this argument that justifies my use of the autoethnographical method when researching the digitalization process of television in Finland. Consequently the autoethnography consists of not only my autobiographical descriptions but also the analysis of television's digitalization and even the self-reflexive assessment of the research process and its results.

Small Is Beautiful

Since we had been fairly happy with our hard disk–DVD unit, my hubby and I decided that we had to replace the broken device with a corresponding one. Sure, there were plenty of novelties on the market, such as Blu-ray players, but we never even considered them – especially as changing to a Blu-ray device would have required a whole new television set with an HDMI connector, a must-have for a Blu-ray gadget. The new telly, in its turn, would have not fit into our TV cabinet and refurnishing the whole living room was not worthwhile just for a piece of newer technology. So, our choice was a recording DVD player with a hard disk. I first visited the website of the old gadget's manufacturer and instantly found out that a similar appliance was no longer available. In fact, there were no recording DVD players on offer at all. Luckily a couple of other producers still had the desired device in their range of goods. I wrote down the information on the available machines and we went shopping for home entertainment electronics.

After the fifth store we visited, it began to look highly unlikely that our unit would ever get a successor. In some stores, the salesperson did not even recognize the thing we were trying to buy but calmly insisted that such a device had never existed or that their store had never offered anything like it. In the rest of the shops, the personnel at least happened to know what we were aiming to purchase. Still, we could not get the device, since what we wanted to buy was so *old-fashioned* that it was no longer in the selection. So, in just few years we had fallen from the height of technical excellence to the bottom of the heap.

Finally, we managed to find a store whose seller was interested in making further inquiries instead of just saying no can do. It occurred to us that it was possible to order one of the two similar, still existing devices, although it was not part of the store's basic selection. We made the order and began waiting, but nothing happened for several weeks. Eventually I made some inquiries for the successor to our unit. It turned out that our order had disappeared into the depths of the store's data system and had never been processed. All we could do was to try again. This time we got what we had expected and after waiting for just a couple of weeks my hubby carried yet another cardboard box to our home in June 2011. Unwrapping the package of the DVD recorder unit was a *déjà vu* experience. A similar, more or less agonizing learning process, as with all the earlier gadgets, was about to begin all over again . . .

In my opinion, the problems that are inherent to autoethnography can best be avoided by doing research on topics that are not dramatic but instead describe the researcher's everyday life practices, as I have suggested in my articles on digital television (Uotinen, 2010a, 2010b). However, I do recognize and admit the difference between the type of autoethnography that concentrates on everyday practices and the evocative autoethnography that deals with deep emotions. Consequently, I regard myself as practicing *small* autoethnography (see Rambo, 2007). By small autoethnography I mean autoethnographic research that especially concentrates on everyday, ordinary, "small" themes, whereas "big" autoethnography deals evocatively with the dramatic turning points of life.

I chose the term "small" in order to emphasize small autoethnography's pivotal connection to the concept of *small agency*: the advantage of small autoethnography is that it offers a possibility to study specifically small agency. Small agency is a concept developed by Marja-Liisa Honkasalo and it refers to the everyday agency that is labeled by invisibility. Honkasalo (2006, p. 103) points out how small agency is "characterized by *repetition* and *conventionality*, small movements, unchangeable rhythms, non-unexpectedness of its outcomes, returning the same and so-called invisibility at the same places." Small agency exists especially in the domestic sphere – for example, within housework, and thus is heavily gendered in nature. However, it is not mere monotonous repetition, but it also offers space for holding onto the world, doing things differently, coming up with creative solutions and change (Honkasalo, 2008, 2009). All this means that autoethnography is a suitable tool for approaching small agency.

Generally speaking, agency has become a central concept in the fields of cultural studies, gender studies, and cultural studies of technology and media, to name a few examples. It offers possibilities to conceptualize the interfaces and relations between people's life, culture, and society – and therefore suits well the principles of autoethnography. The starting point of my understanding on agency is Laura Ahearn's (2001, p. 112) definition: "agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act."

Agency is produced in everyday practices where people negotiate and try to act in harmony with the surrounding society and culture and with the expectations and demands set by them. Understanding agency requires that one analyze not only the practices but also the differences. The differences, such as gender, age, ethnicity, class, education, and even location, have effects on and in agency (Lister, 2003; McNay, 2000). What is especially interesting in the concept of agency is the possibility it offers for discussing temporality, changes, resistance, and even creativity in spite of the outlining social and cultural practices and structures (Ahearn, 2001; Certeau, 1988; McNay, 2003). Thus, autoethnography as a method correlates well with the concept of agency and especially small agency.

In addition to agency in general, it is also possible to concentrate on, for example, media and media technology-related agencies: how media and relevant technologies are made part of our existence and how they become part of our existence. Here the concept of small agency is particularly useful, as the practices connected to media tend to be especially routinized and are thus invisible due to their plain repetitiveness – as my own pondering on the use of digitalizing TV shows. For example, the housework-like, repetitive nature of digitalized everyday life would have remained unnoticed without autoethnographic means (Uotinen, 2010b; see also Cowan, 1985).

What could then be the criteria for high-quality (small) autoethnography? In my opinion, the same criteria that apply to ethnography in general. The knowledge produced by autoethnography is based on the same starting points that are used in more traditional ethnography as well. *All* ethnographic knowledge is subjective, context-bound, and partial; it is committed to the personal perspectives and starting points of the researchers, readers (and informants), and has to be accepted – or rejected – as such (Clifford, 1986; see also Medford, 2006).

It is of utmost importance that autoethnographic research be theoretically informed. A theoretically solid starting point is the premise for formulating research questions. Explicit research questions, on the other hand, form the conditions that enable the autoethnographer to locate and analyze from everything that she remembers those particular experiences that are linked to the research topic. Without clear theoretical starting points and research questions, autoethnography easily becomes something that could well be described as accidental roaming in one's own reminiscences. Therefore it is important to understand what and why one is studying before taking any action – this naturally concerns any research but is even more important in the case of autoethnography. For research credibility, it is necessary to take these

notions into account in situations in which the researcher produces both the materials and the interpretations.

The credibility of (auto)ethnographic research is based on the whole concept and process of the research: the critical choice of research themes, the careful description of starting points and positions, the self-reflexivity of research, the density of research reports, and the fact that social and cultural contexts and connections are created and baselines offered. The most crucial aspect of sustainable (small) autoethnography is to make sure that research does not merely describe the private, but that it also consciously produces connections to the general, social, and cultural. This way autoethnography – instead of being just a hermetic self-report of the researcher – offers possibilities for making observations and interpretations on everyday life that other people can find interesting as well.

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The Basics of Experimental Research in Media Studies

Glenn Leshner

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the basics of experimental design used in media studies research. Many scientific researchers believe, with good reason, that the controlled experiment is perhaps the best research method for determining a cause and effect relationship between variables. The chapter considers the types of research questions experiments can address, how the experiment can demonstrate causal relationships between variables, common experimental designs, data collection and interpretation, and ethical considerations. A major part of the chapter deals with internal validity pitfalls, such as confounds, randomization, and how to determine acceptable sample sizes. It also considers what may be regarded as controversial issues in experimental research, such as generalizability (or lack thereof), how to create treatment variance, the issues involved with creating message variance, and handling the issues of design complexity and manipulation checks.

This chapter discusses the basics of experimental design used in media studies research. Many scientific researchers believe, with good reason, that the controlled experiment is perhaps the best research method for determining a cause and effect relationship between variables. And yet, experimental research is relatively rare in mass communication studies, especially compared to other quantitative methods such as surveys and content analyses. Thorson, Wicks, and Leshner (2012) report that only 12% of social scientific manuscripts submitted to *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* in 2008–2009 were based on experiments. Grabe and Westley

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems181

(2003) reported only 9% to 13% of studies in mass communication use experimental methods. Given that most of the theories in scientific mass communication research involve some sort of causal relationships between variables, why is the controlled experiment so rarely used as a research methodology? There are likely many reasons why this is the case, including the perception that controlled experiments are difficult to do well. Another may rest on misconceptions some in our field have about several key issues that must be considered and resolved when conducting experiments. This chapter is designed to address both of these concerns.

The chapter considers the types of research questions experiments can address, how experiments can demonstrate causal relationships between variables, and common experimental designs. A major component of this examination relates to internal validity pitfalls – such as confounds, randomization, and how to determine acceptable sample sizes – which are discussed in detail. The chapter also reflects on what some would consider more controversial issues in experimental research, such as generalizability (or lack thereof), how to create treatment variance, the issues involved with creating message variance, and manipulation checks. The ultimate goal here is to help students conduct controlled experiments that contribute to our understanding of mass communication processes and effects.

Before discussing the particulars of controlled experiments, it is important to note that a student attempting to conduct an experiment in the absence of compelling theory is likely to become frustrated, if not confused, during the process. The activity of designing and executing a controlled experiment involves many decisions, each with its own trade-offs. The benefits of having a carefully developed theory to help guide the process cannot be overstated. Many, if not most, decisions that need to be made – including those having to do with stimuli design, controls, samples, and so on – can be shaped, either directly or indirectly, by the theory the researcher seeks to inform.

Logic of the Controlled Experiment

The philosophy of the experimental method is to determine cause and effect relationships between two or more variables and to eliminate all possible alternative explanations for the relationship. How is this accomplished? Controlled experiments require three elements that generally are not a part of other research methods: (1) manipulation of an independent variable, (2) random assignment to condition (sometimes called “treatment”), and (3) strong control of sources of variation in the dependent variable that are not due to the manipulation.

A *manipulation* is an independent variable in which the researcher creates the variance (or levels) of the variable. In media studies, a manipulated independent variable is often operationalized as media that vary on particular characteristics. For example, Grabe and Samson (2011) were interested in how participants would evaluate and

remember what they called “anchor grooming.” For their experiment, they created two versions of a TV newscast with a female anchor – one that was “sexualized” and one that was “unsexualized.” The sexualized condition showed the anchor in a tight-fitting jacket and skirt, wearing bright red lipstick and a necklace. The unsexualized condition showed the anchor in a loose-fitting jacket and skirt, wearing no lipstick and no necklace.

Random assignment to a condition (also called *randomization*) is the process of randomly assigning participants to treatment groups (or randomly assigning treatments to participants). Random assignment to condition eliminates the influences of extraneous variables, such as individual differences between participants. In the above study, Grabe and Samson randomly assigned their participants to one of the two “anchor grooming” conditions.

Controlling other sources of variation helps to insure that the cause of differences observed in the dependent variables is due to the manipulation and not to anything else. In their study, Grabe and Samson created two versions of the newscast in which everything was the same across the two conditions except for the manipulation. Also, participants followed the same procedures. Some scholars require that controlled experiments include a theory that convincingly explains the relationships between variables found in the research. Although this last point is not unique to controlled experiments, the lack of a suitable theory that explains the relationships between variables greatly limits the usefulness of the research findings, and thus devalues the research itself.

The manipulation of the independent variable, randomization, and the controlling of other sources of variance are requirements for *establishing causal relationships*. In order to argue that an independent variable caused change in dependent variables, the independent and dependent variables must covary. That is, changes in the value of an independent variable must vary along with changes in a dependent variable. In addition, temporal precedence must be established. That is, the independent variable must precede the dependent variable in time. The manipulation helps the researcher set up a time order where changes in the independent variable occur prior to measurement of the dependent variable. This helps to eliminate the alternative explanation that changes in the dependent variable caused changes in the independent variable. Randomization is crucial to reduce the likelihood that individual differences between participants caused changes in the dependent variable.

Strong controls help to eliminate alternative explanations in that they reduce confounds in your design. The ability to eliminate alternative explanations in cause and effect relationships is called *internal validity*. Well-executed controlled experiments are high in internal validity. However, because experiments often occur in artificial contexts, because the contexts are under the control of the researcher, and because convenience samples of participants are often used, controlled experiments are said to lack *external validity*. That is, the results of experiments cannot be easily generalized to larger populations because their samples are rarely, if ever, drawn randomly.

Establishing Causality

At the heart of an experiment's effectiveness for discovering causal relationships is the control of events in order to eliminate alternative explanations for any observed covariation between the independent variable and the dependent variable. As noted above, this is done by detecting covariation between the independent variable and the dependent variable, by manipulating an independent variable, by randomly assigning participants to condition, and by including strong controls. All of these must be present in order to infer a casual relationship between an independent and dependent variable in an experiment.

We detect covariation between independent and dependent variables by examining statistical relationships between the two. If an independent variable and a dependent variable do not covary, then the independent variable cannot be the cause of changes in values of the dependent variable.

Much of the time, effort, and money researchers spend on experimental research are directed toward the creation of a suitable manipulation. In media studies, this often means systematically varying properties of media messages, media contexts, or media technologies. Depending on the independent variable of interest, creating a treatment that manipulates only the media feature of interest without concurrently manipulating other media features can be very difficult. However, care in manipulations is crucial because it is possible to unwittingly incorporate a confound into the study. Let's suppose that in the study mentioned above, Grabe and Samson had the female anchor read five news stories about the economy in the unsexualized condition and five news stories about entertainment celebrities in the sexualized condition (of course, they did not do this). In this case, a confound would be that the topics of the stories covaried along with the anchor grooming. Any difference found in a dependent variable (e.g., perceived professionalism) could be due to the story content and not the image of the anchor. The reason why we create variance in the independent variable is twofold. First, variation in the independent variable is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to detect covariation with the dependent variable. Second, the manipulation helps to set up the time order of events where the independent variable occurred prior to the measurement of the dependent variable.

Research Questions That Can Be Addressed by Controlled Experiments

A good research question that can be addressed by a controlled experiment must ask about the causal relationships between at least two variables. These variables must be observable by either manipulation (independent variable) or measurement (either independent variable or dependent variable). A good way to begin to frame a simple

research question is to ask, “What is the relationship between A and B?” where A and B are your two variables of interest (for argument’s sake, let’s say that A is your independent variable and B is your dependent variable). The benefit of beginning with this type of question is that it makes you think of your study in terms of your variables rather than in terms of a topic. Another benefit of this question format is that it requires you to think about the kind of relationship you think might exist between your independent and dependent variables. Does a change in A cause a change in B? If so, does variation in A *increase* B or *decrease* B? It is difficult for a researcher (whether novice or expert) to begin designing an experiment without first asking the research question in this or in a similar form. In a classic study, Janis and Feshbach (1953) asked if increases in levels of fear in a persuasive message (the independent variable; theirs had three levels) affect message effectiveness. Message effectiveness was represented by a variety of dependent variables that measured beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Designing an Experiment

Let’s suppose that you have a research question about the causal relationship between two variables. As you think about the steps needed to insure that any change in the dependent variable is due solely to changes in the independent variable, you soon realize that there are dozens of important decisions to make. While these decisions are addressable when handled with sufficient knowledge, each involves making choices that often do not have easy answers. The key is to make those choices having understood the benefits and costs of each decision. Keep in mind that any “cost” that adversely affects the internal validity of an experiment is likely to be a major obstacle to learning much about the causal relationships you are seeking to test.

The literature refers to several different kinds of experiments. The seminal resource on experimental design is Campbell and Stanley’s (1963) *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Campbell and Stanley identify six designs. Three are described as “pre-experimental designs” and the other three as “true experimental designs.”

The pre-experimental designs include one-shot case study, one-group pretest–post-test, and a static-group comparison. The main problem with the first two designs, and why Campbell and Stanley refer to them as “pre-experimental” designs, is that they include no comparison groups. Recall (above) that one of the goals of the experimenter is to identify covariation between independent and dependent variables. In both the one-shot case study and the one-group pretest–post-test designs, what might be considered the independent variable is in reality a constant. That is, the independent variable is not a variable at all because it doesn’t vary.

The static-group comparison does have a comparison group, but the main problem with that design is that there are no formal means to insure that the groups are equivalent beyond the manipulation. Thus, this design has possible confounds built

into it and the causal influences of the independent variable on the dependent variable cannot be established with confidence. Because none of these designs can establish a cause and effect relationship, Campbell and Stanley call them “pre-experimental” designs. Others have referred to them as “quasi-experimental” designs.

True Experimental Designs

Campbell and Stanley describe three “true” experimental designs: pretest–post-test control group design, post-test-only control group design, and the Solomon four-group design. The three designs are adequately explained elsewhere (e.g., Bradley, 2011; Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Grabe & Westley, 2003). The key features of these designs are the inclusion of (1) experimental conditions, (2) comparison groups, and (3) random assignment to conditions. Experimental conditions represent the levels of the independent variables and help to determine if there are differences in the dependent variables that are due to your conditions. The comparison group, sometimes called a control group, is important because it controls many threats to validity (e.g., history, testing, maturation) that could yield alternative explanations. Random assignment to condition also controls for alternative explanations due to individual differences of your participants.

Factorial Studies

Perhaps the most common type of experimental design in media studies research includes at least two independent variables. When these variables are crossed (meaning that each level of each independent variable also occurs at another level of another independent variable) they are called factorial designs. In factorial designs, independent variables are called factors. Factors generally refer to manipulated independent variables, such as when one group of participants sees one kind of message and another group sees another kind of message. Factorial designs are expressed in the number of factors (i.e., independent variables) they have, and the number of levels of each factor. For example, a 2×2 factorial study has two independent variables, each with two levels. A 2×3 factorial study also has two independent variables, where the first independent variable has two levels and the second independent variable has three levels. By definition, each factor must have at least two levels since independent variables must vary (that’s what makes them *variables*) even if they are nominal variables (e.g., present/not present; high/low; one medium versus another medium).

Factorial studies have several advantages compared to single independent variable designs. They permit the simultaneous analysis of two or more independent variables. This design can be more efficient than a study that has only one independent variable because it can cost less in terms of the number of participants needed

and the amount of time it takes to run the study. But just as importantly, factorial designs permit the researcher to examine interactions – when the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable may depend in part on the level of another independent variable in the design.

The simplest factorial design is a 2×2 design. An example of a 2×2 factorial design would be an experiment that asks the question “What is the impact of fear appeals and channel on message compliance?” In this case, there are two independent variables. The first is fear appeal, which can be operationalized as a message having a fear (threat) component and one that does not. The second independent variable could be operationalized as the medium format (e.g., radio/television). A graphical representation of the 2×2 design is shown in Figure 10.1.

Notice that this design shows four boxes. Each box represents something about the condition in which it appears: Box A represents the condition of a fear message on radio; Box B represents the condition of a fear message on television; Box C represents the no fear message on radio; and Box D represents the condition of a no fear message on television. You can put different types of information in each of these boxes, such as the stimuli for each condition, the order of the stimuli, the means and standard deviations on one of the dependent variables, and so on. A graphic like this helps to organize your study.

Suppose you wanted to add a third condition to the medium variable that represented a message presented on the Internet. You could envision a 2×3 factorial design (see Figure 10.2), where the first independent variable is still the fear appeal (fear/no fear), but the second independent variable (medium) now has three levels (radio/television/Internet). A fully crossed design would have six conditions. As a general rule, experimental designs that have more than three factors can be problem-

		Medium	
		Radio	TV
Message type	Fear	A	B
	No Fear	C	D

Figure 10.1 A 2×2 factorial design

		Medium		
		Radio	TV	Internet
Message type	Fear	A	B	C
	No Fear	D	E	F

Figure 10.2 A 2×3 factorial design

atic, even if each factor has only two levels (Smith, Levine, Lachlan, & Fediuk, 2002) as they become harder to interpret.

Confounds

When designing an experiment, there are additional important issues to consider. Several have to do with eliminating confounds. A confound is a source of variation that is inextricably tied to one of the independent variables. A confound makes it impossible to determine what is having the observed effect on any of the dependent variables. Eliminating confounds can be accomplished, in part, by paying close attention to treatment variance among conditions, that is, to the process of operationalizing independent variables.

Often, manipulated independent variables in media studies experiments have to do with the form and/or content properties of messages. The fundamental consideration in thinking about message manipulations is to design them in such a way as to eliminate confounds. Sometimes that requires that the message be controlled to such a point that it may not represent actual media messages very well. Although external validity of messages used in experiments is important, the internal validity of message manipulations is even more crucial because, without the confidence that confounds have been avoided, there is little reason to conduct an experiment. We have already discussed how having the female anchor read five economic stories in the “sexualized” condition and five celebrity entertainment stories in the “unsexualized” condition would have introduced a confound in Grabe and Samson’s (2011) study. Instead, the authors kept other message properties constant. They knew that simultaneously altering stories would have resulted in what some academics refer to as a “fatal flaw.”

Creating Treatment and Message Variance

The most common way of creating treatment variance in media studies controlled experiments is through message alteration, where the researcher either alters existing messages to create different versions (each of which represents a level of an independent variable), or first creates the messages, and then different versions of each. The point of message alteration is to change only the attribute of a message that represents a level of an independent variable while keeping the rest of the message constant. In their study on the effect of compelling negative images in TV news stories on memory for story content, Newhagen and Reeves (1992) created two versions of news stories to represent their news story independent variable – compelling negative images in news stories (absent/present). First, they collected stories about disasters (e.g., hurricane, riots, accidents, etc.). Then they created two versions. In

one condition, they inserted compelling negative video footage in the middle of the story. In the other, the stories had no compelling negative video. Based on this manipulation, the researchers were able to see how the presence of the negative video impacted memory for the story.

Another issue is deciding how many messages should represent a level of a treatment. Is one enough? This is not an easy question to answer, especially since accomplished researchers vary on their positions. Detailed discussions of the benefits of including message variance in design are discussed elsewhere (Jackson, O’Keefe, Jacobs, & Brashers, 1989; Reeves & Geiger, 1994; Slater, 1991; Thorson et al., 2012). Thorson et al. explain that two kinds of variance are important in experiments – treatment variance and message variance – and they argue that both are important in media studies experiments. Treatment variance refers to how the levels of each independent variable vary within the message. Often, experimenters focus primarily on treatment variance and not enough on message variance – employing multiple messages per treatment level.

Suppose you were interested in how news sources affect the perceived credibility of news stories. You might choose or write a news story and create two versions, one in which the primary source is a government official and another in which the primary source is a private citizen. In this case, you have created variance between your two treatment levels (government source versus private citizen) and held all other message features the same. This is an example of creating treatment variance through message alteration, which is common in media studies. However, this design, sometimes called a “single message design” is problematic because it ignores message variance (Thorson et al., 2012). That is, any effect you might obtain with this message alteration may be dependent in part on other features of the message that were held constant. Suppose your news story was about the effort of the local government to levy an additional sales tax. It is possible that the source effect you found may only occur in stories that focus on taxes, on economic issues, on financial concerns, or on the gender of the particular sources you used, and so on. It is impossible to determine if the observed effect is unique to that story. One way to reduce this problem is to create message variance. Employing multiple messages per treatment level strengthens the ability to generalize to message categories.

In addition to message alteration, one can create treatment variance by employing a sample of messages so each level of an independent variable is represented by several messages. When selecting a sample of messages to represent each treatment level, the researcher would ideally sample from a knowable message population that contains all of the messages that represent a particular treatment. Rarely, however, do we have access to such a population of messages. Often, the best we can do is find multiple messages that represent one treatment, where the variance within treatment would ideally be less than the variance between treatments. Given that messages vary on a host of features other than the ones of interest, many of which we cannot know, Thorson et al. (2012) and others (e.g., Reeves & Geiger, 1994) suggest that the best strategy is to include as many messages per treatment

level that participants can reasonably be expected to attend to without fatigue or boredom. The more messages naturally vary within a treatment, the larger the number of messages per treatment is needed. This strategy creates both treatment and message variance.

Lee and Lang (2009) provide such an example. They tested the effects of five discrete emotional public service announcements (PSAs) – fear, sadness, joy, anger, neutral – on several cognitive and emotional dependent variables, including self-report and psychophysiological measures. Based on pretest ratings, Lee and Lang selected 30 PSAs to represent the five-level discrete emotion independent variable. Six different messages represented one of the five conditions. Note that this message repetition procedure created both treatment and message variance. Clearly, messages within a single treatment varied widely, but within-treatment message variance was treated as random error in tests across treatments. The significant findings of their study occurred despite this within-treatment message variance. This approach is becoming more common in media studies, especially as continuous response and psychophysiological measures spread across research laboratories in journalism, communication, and media studies programs.

Another option for creating both treatment and message variance is to employ both message alteration and message repetition strategies. An example of such a study is a 3×2 experiment in which Miller (2006) manipulated story type (three levels: live, breaking, traditional) and emotional message content (two levels: threat, negative graphic images). She created treatment variance for story type with message alteration by having an anchor verbally refer to a story as “live” or as “breaking,” or by including no verbal designation for the “traditional” story. To create treatment variance for emotional content, three stories were chosen to represent the threat condition and three different stories were chosen to represent the negative graphic image condition. Miller used a fractional design, such that each participant saw six stories that represented the six levels of the two independent variables (traditional–threat, traditional–graphic image, live–threat, live–graphic image, breaking–threat, breaking–graphic image, presented in random orders). No participant saw two versions of the same story. By including a message repetition factor for the emotional content treatment, Miller was better able to generalize her results to other similar emotional news stories than if she had relied on only one story per condition. Although message repetitions may require more work on the part of the researcher, their inclusion in an experimental research design greatly strengthens what can be learned from a study.

Operationalizing Independent Variables

There have been discussions in the literature on how to characterize the structure of media stimuli, as summarized in O’Keefe (2003), Tao and Bucy (2007), and Thorson

et al. (2012). Many scholars define media stimuli in “industry units” (e.g., commercials, news stories). There are good reasons for such a choice. Much of our research interests involve how people respond to news, ads, programs, stories, and other such journalism and advertising products. Other scholars suggest it is often more useful to describe media messages in terms of variables more closely related to how messages are psychologically processed (Reeves, 1989). This approach emphasizes form and content message attributes such as visual complexity, brightness, contrast, movement of objects on the screen, story length, tone, frame, arousing content, and so on. This distinction becomes increasingly important if research questions focus on the impact of specific formal (e.g., pacing, type size, color, movement) or content features (e.g., emotional content, bias, sources, attacks, acclaims).

One common mistake media studies students new to experimental research make is confounding message attributes with their intended effects. The classic example is research on “fear appeals.” Understanding how fear appeals work to change individuals’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about health threats has been examined with experimental research since the mid-1950s. It is tempting to define a fear appeal message in terms of the effect it has on a participant (i.e., a message that scares someone). Although frightening an audience member may be the goal of a fear appeal, that definition does nothing to tell us how to create one. A better approach to operationalizing a fear appeal is to decide which message features constitute such an appeal. Perhaps the most common definition of a fear appeal is as message content that contains a threat to the well-being of target individuals (Dillard, 1994). Note that in practice, “fear appeals are executed by writing copy in a way that directly associates the targeted behavior (e.g., tobacco use) with a threat (e.g., disease, death)” (Leshner, Bolls, & Wise, 2011, p. 79). Note that the content described here is independent of how an individual feels upon exposure.

Sundar (2004) provides another example with the concept of interactivity. He points out that if interactivity is conceptualized as a feature of the physical stimulus, then it is a mistake to operationalize it in terms of people’s perception of interactivity. Instead, it is necessary to develop a theory of what it is about a stimulus that makes it interactive (e.g., features like functionality, user accommodations, organization, control, choice, and contingencies). These features are physical, not psychologically perceived independent variables.

Operationalizing Dependent Variables

Dependent variables in media studies experiments often share properties with those measured in survey research. Most often, dependent variables tend to be continuous measures, meaning that they are measured on ordinal interval or ratio levels. These include Likert scales, semantic differential scales, and magnitude response scales (e.g., seven-point scales anchored by “not at all” and “a lot,” or “never” and “always”). Such

scales have been used to measure attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. Researchers can compute the means and standard deviations across conditions to see if being in a condition affects those responses. Knowledge and/or memory can be measured by factual tests (e.g., series of multiple choice items summed to create a “knowledge” score for each participant). Other types of self-report measures include cued and free recall, thought listing, thinking aloud, and so on. Self-report dependent variables can have problems associated with them, such as social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), demand characteristics (Orne, 1969), and satisficing (e.g., Krosnick, Narayan, & Smith, 1996). As more media studies research investigates how individuals process media messages, researchers are adopting dependent variables used in psychology and other fields. Many of these are implicit measures, meaning that they are less susceptible than self-report variables to the threats to validity mentioned above. These can include secondary task reaction time (STRT), which can include response latency (how long it takes the participant to respond) (Geiger & Newhagen, 1993), speeded recognition tasks, and psychophysiological measures (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance, facial electromyography, startle) (Potter & Bolls, 2011). These measures can require sophisticated equipment and software as well as considerable training and theoretical understanding. Even so, laboratories that can accommodate these types of measures are becoming more common in journalism, communication, and mass communication programs. There are currently upward of two dozens psychophysiological research laboratories in the United States supervised by mass communication researchers, and several more outside the United States.

Between or Within Subjects?

A major decision that needs to be made in any experiment in media studies is deciding what participants will see, hear, or read. Specifically, would each participant see stimuli that represent only one level of an independent variable (between subjects), all levels of all independent variables (within subjects), or some levels of some independent variables (mixed)? The most common strategy in media studies is the between-subjects design, where participants are randomly assigned to only one level of an independent variable. The within-subjects design is a repeated-measures design where participants see all levels of all independent variables. The third option is having some independent variables run between subjects and some independent variables run within subjects.

Between-Subjects Designs

In between-subjects designs each participant is randomly assigned to a condition. Comparisons can be made across conditions on the values of each dependent

variable. The advantages of between-subjects designs are that procedures are generally easier and you don't have to worry about participants figuring out your manipulations. Also, treatment orders are not considerations in between-subjects designs. Since each group is exposed to different treatment levels, the mean scores (systematic variance) on each dependent variable are compared relative to their within-group variation (error variance).

An example of a between-subjects design is the previously mentioned fear appeal study by Janis and Feshbach (1953). The researchers developed three versions of a 15-minute illustrated talk about the causes of tooth decay and oral hygiene recommendations. Included in the talk were 20 slides illustrating points being made by the speaker. All three versions presented essentially the same content, but they varied in the amount of fear-arousing material presented: strong fear, moderate fear, or minimal fear. Participants were high school students who were assigned to either one of the three fear conditions or to a fourth group, which acted as a control group, who saw a presentation on a different topic. The design permits the comparison of scores on dependent variables across the four groups (or the three fear groups on measures that could only be asked of participants who saw one of the fear messages). Since participants were not exposed to other conditions, Janis and Feshbach did not have to worry about threats to validity that may occur when participants are exposed to multiple levels of an independent variable, such as sensitization and carry-over effects.

Within-Subjects Designs

Within-subjects designs are less common in media studies, although the frequency with which they appear in media-related journals is increasing, in part due to the growth of media psychology research. In within-subjects designs, each participant receives all of the manipulations, regardless of how many independent variables and levels of each there are. The main advantage of within-subjects designs is that each participant acts as his or her own control, meaning that the amount of error variance per condition is greatly reduced. The consequence of reduced error variance is that the same size effect can be detected with many fewer participants than in a between-subjects design. This means that, all things being equal (the same number of conditions), within-subjects designs can be considerably less expensive to conduct in terms of both time (experimenter and participant) and money. However, within-subjects designs can have a major drawback. Since every participant experiences all levels of all independent variables, it is possible (even likely in many situations) that they could be sensitized to the manipulations, which could in turn impact their responses. Further, within-subjects designs are susceptible to carry-over effects, which means that the induction of one treatment impacts the induction of the next. It is very difficult to eliminate carry-over effects, if they occur, in within-subjects designs. The most common strategy to deal with possible carry-over effects is to randomize

the presentation order of stimuli to participants. Although carry-over effects are not eliminated, this approach treats the impact of presentation order as error.

Sample Sizes

An important decision to be made is the size of the sample needed to conduct an experiment. This consideration is primarily informed by the size of the effect to be detected, the number of factors and levels of each, whether factors are run within subjects or between subjects, the type of statistical analyses to be conducted (e.g., ANOVA (analysis of variance), regression), and the statistical criterion for rejecting the null hypothesis.

In order to determine sample size, you will need to have an *a priori* idea of how large an effect you wish to detect. You can estimate effect size by reviewing literature and seeing what effect sizes others have found in studies that used variables similar to yours. If insufficient information from prior literature exists, then you may need to estimate effect size either by reasoning from theory or by using rules of thumb. Cohen (1988, 1992) categorizes effects as “small,” “medium,” and “large.” Clearly, the choice of such a crude classification will depend on the specifics of the research. For example, we might expect to find a “medium” sized effect when doing a study on priming, but a “small” sized effect if measuring heart rate. Absent any convincing evidence for *a priori* effect size estimates, most researchers opt for expecting a “medium” sized effect. Once you have chosen the effect size you wish to detect, you will need to determine which independent variables you wish to run between subjects and which you wish to run within subjects. For within-subjects independent variables, you may need to estimate the correlation among the repeated measures. The statistical tests you wish to run to test your hypotheses will be determined by your design. Finally, your criterion for rejecting the null, also called type I error, is set by convention at $\alpha = .05$ (admittedly this level is arbitrary).

There are several power analysis software packages you can use to compute *a priori* effect sizes, some of which are free (e.g., Faul, Erdfelder, Land, & Buchner, 2007). There are also rules of thumb that can be used (e.g., VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007), although this approach can be less precise than a power analysis program, tables, or computation. Cohen (1988) for example, provides power tables for multiple statistical tests and research designs.

Sample Composition

There has been considerable discussion in journals of whether it is necessary to randomly sample experimental participants from a targeted population (Abelman,

1996; Basil, 1996; Basil, Brown, & Bocarnea, 2002; Courtright, 1996; Lang, 1996; Potter, Cooper, & Dupagne, 1993, 1995; Sparks, 1995a, 1995b). This issue feeds into a larger theoretical one, which is, to what do we wish to generalize (Shapiro, 2002)?

When researchers randomly sample from a population, they can infer from findings in the sample to the particular population from which the sample was drawn. For example, if a researcher obtains a random sample of people in a county to study support for a local ballot initiative, the percentage of people who respond positively can be used to estimate the actual support in the county's population, within the sample's sampling error. Random sampling enables statistical generalization from sample attributes to population attributes.

Samples for experiments in media studies, however, rarely involve random samples. In fact, one does not have to read many reports of experiments in mass communication to recognize the fact that nearly none employ samples randomly selected from populations. Instead, experimental researchers typically acquire convenience samples (e.g., college students enrolled in large communication classes, or adults who agree to participate in an experiment for a chance to win a retail store gift card). These individuals are then randomly assigned to the conditions in the experiment. Because there is no random sampling of participants, inferences cannot be applied to the likelihood that values found in the experimental sample are representative of values that would be found in the population as a whole. Instead, logical inferences are made about the multivariate relationships among the variables in the experiment (Basil, 1996; Basil et al., 2002). Lang (1996) explains that the "population" in experiments is all the possible samples one could randomly draw from the group of individuals in the experiment.

The strength of those logical inferences depends on how well the experimenter can make the argument for them, which should be based on a combination of theoretical and conceptual considerations. For example, suppose a study examined the relationship between exposure to emotional media and psychophysiological processes that are unlikely to be affected by demographics or other individual difference variables. Then generalizing to "human processing" could be argued since those processes are expected to be similar across samples with different characteristics. On the other hand, if an experiment involves variables clearly related to demographics or individual differences, then generalization beyond people who do not share those characteristics would be unconvincing. Often the generalizability of experimental findings is also supported by replication of the experiment across different samples of both people and messages and across different contexts. A good example of a finding that seems to be robust regardless of when or where it is tested is the third-person effect.

In his cogent discussion about the differences between social and surface realism, Shapiro (2002) argues that generalizability is inextricably linked to the theoretical principles that underlie our controlled observations (in the case of experiments). Thus, the focus on what we can learn about the processes involved in much media studies research should be more on the theoretical relationships among variables and

less on surface similarities, such as random sampling or the operationalizations of variables. Basil et al. (2002) showed that multivariate relationships can be stable across samples even when the samples differ greatly on demographic variables and the data collection method. Basil and his colleagues conducted a study of celebrity effects around the time of the death of Diana, princess of Wales, with three different samples: a random telephone sample drawn from seven states, a nonrandom sample of college students in three states, and a nonrandom web-based survey sample. The samples varied widely in terms of age, gender, and media use, yet Basil and his colleagues found a remarkably consistent relationship across the different samples between respondents' identification with Diana and their media use. Thorson et al. (2012) recommend that sample characteristics and selection methods should be reported so the reader can evaluate claims of generalizability.

Manipulation Checks

Manipulation checks are traditionally included in media studies research, especially in studies in which a message manipulation represents levels of an independent variable. For example, some fear appeal researchers will manipulate the level of threat in a message, then measure participants' perceived threat or fear arousal in order to be certain that the message manipulation performed the way in which it was intended. However, this approach has come under considerable criticism (e.g., O'Keefe, 2003; Tao & Bucy, 2007; Thorson et al., 2012). The criticism is based on three arguments: (1) message manipulations are independently verifiable; (2) message manipulations are conflated with effects; and (3) mistreating measures as manipulation checks when they could be treated as mediating psychological states.

The first argument can be illustrated with a study reported by Lang, Schwartz, Chung, and Lee (2004). They defined pacing of videos, which they hypothesized would impact message processing, as the number of scene changes per unit of time with public service announcements. That is, PSAs with few scene changes represented "slow" pacing and PSAs with many scene changes represented "fast" pacing (they included a third condition, where a moderate number of scene changes represented "medium" pacing). The average number of scene changes per condition is verifiable – either pacing (or rate of scene changes) varied across the three conditions or they didn't. Asking participants their perception of pacing as a check on actual pacing is unnecessary.

The second argument can be demonstrated by the fear appeal example, in which perceived threat (important in a number of fear appeal processing models) and/or fear arousal are measured and treated as checks that the message manipulation has worked as expected. In research where the theoretical interest is on the message attributes that increase fear, such a manipulation check is not measuring the

message feature; rather it is measuring the effect the manipulation has. In other words, this approach defines the media content by its presumed effects and not by the particular message features of theoretical interest. O’Keefe (2003) specifically argues that conceptualizing media content according to concrete message properties that can be manipulated during message production provides more theoretical and practical value for media processes and effects research than defining it according to how it impacts participants.

The third argument involves not so much measurement but how those measures are handled during data analyses. O’Keefe (2003) argues, for example, that if messages are manipulated based on the intensity of the health threat (e.g., the threat can reduce the ability to climb stairs versus the threat can kill you) and perceived threat is measured, then perceived threat could be thought of as a mediating psychological state, and therefore should be included as a mediator in subsequent analyses. Too often, researchers will present perceived threat as a manipulation check rather than include it analytically in a mediation model. Such treatment would add considerable value to our theoretical models.

To sum up, O’Keefe argues that manipulation checks, as such, are unnecessary:

From my vantage point, a researcher who reports a message manipulation check has probably made one of two mistakes – either the mistake of defining a message variable in terms of effects rather than in terms of intrinsic properties or the mistake of confusing the assessment of a potential mediating state with the description of message properties. (2003, p. 268)

Summary

The controlled experiment is a valuable, if underutilized, research method in media studies. It is the best way to show a causal relationship between variables because it can set up a temporal order of events (independent variables occur prior to the measurement of dependent variables) and eliminate alternative explanations by eliminating confounds. The key aspects of a controlled experiment include manipulations of independent variables, random assignment to conditions, and controlling all other variables. When variations in message properties represent different levels of independent variables, manipulations can be accomplished through message alteration or message sampling. Message sampling can also increase generalizability of the findings to other similar messages. Many experiments in media studies are factorial designs, where more than one independent variable is systematically varied. These designs allow the examination of interactions in addition to main effects. Samples based on college students should not be discounted out of hand. There are cogent arguments against manipulation checks, although measures of perceived message effects can be theoretically important as mediating variables.

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Between-Subjects Experimental Design and Analysis

Kim Bissell

ABSTRACT

Media effects and media studies researchers have recently been forced to determine the most effective way to measure the media's influence on individuals or groups. While thousands of media effects studies exist, the study design employed has varied. Between-subjects experimental design is increasingly becoming one of the most statistically valid ways to determine the effect of stimuli on a target population because every participant is only exposed to the treatment or stimulus once. This design allows researchers to make comparisons between groups based on each group's response to the stimulus material or treatment. This chapter provides a case study of a between-subjects experimental design using a sample of 601 children who participated in an experiment designed to measure weight stigmatization and bias following exposure to one image of an overweight or thin individual. Finally, the chapter discusses the advances and disadvantages to the design in this case and proposes directions for future research.

An experiment is a mode of observation that enables researchers to probe causal relationships. Many experiments in social research are conducted under the controlled conditions of a laboratory, but experimenters can also take advantage of natural occurrences to study the effects of events in the social world.

Babbie, 2010, p. 230

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems182

Experimental design is one of several quantitative research methods used in mass communication to study the relationship between mediated content and subjects' knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and behavior. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) argue that experimental design is the oldest methodological approach used in mass communication research and certainly the most appropriate method for studying and understanding the effect of media content on audiences; however, the method itself is used relatively infrequently in mass media research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Experiments have been used in media research to examine the following types of phenomena, along with many other topics: the effects of exposure to violent media on aggressive thoughts and behavior; the effects of exposure to highly sexualized content on attitudes about women as objects rather than subjects; the effects of negative political attack ads on voter attitudes toward candidates; the effects of health messages in advertisements on viewers' dieting behavior; the effects of video game playing on cognitive overload and secondary task behavior.

The beauty of an experiment is the ability to demonstrate causality; however, when examining social artifacts and human behavior, researchers' ability to state with certainty that variable X caused a change in variable Y or that the independent variable (IV) is what caused a change in the dependent variable (DV) is low.

The following chapter explores one form of experimental design – between-subjects experiments – and uses two projects as a case study of the advantages and disadvantages to this specific design. Through a discussion of the two experiments, the study design employed, the stimulus material used, and the sample selected, the strengths and weakness of this form of experiments will be examined.

In designing an experiment to determine the effect an independent variable has on some dependent variable, the researcher is faced with the choice of manipulating the stimulus (usually the independent variable) between or within subjects (Erlebacher, 1977). Some researchers have tested the two designs to see if similar results can be found. The ultimate question in these earlier studies of the methodological soundness of each approach was whether the design type interacted with the independent variable (Schrier, 1958). Erlebacher (1977), also known for the development of a statistical test often used in experiments, the ANOVA (analysis of variance), addressed the use of a between- and within-subjects design and reported the following: "The design type (between or within-subjects) is treated as an explicit independent variable in a factorially designed experiment. The outcome of the experiments is that there is an interaction between the design type and the substantive independent variable" (p. 212). More simply, Erlebacher is suggesting that there are differences between the two designs, and for researchers, it is important to know which design would be most appropriate given the purported interaction between the design type and the independent variable. Most experiments in personality or social psychology tend to be conducted using a between-subjects design, and because so many of the studies within mass communication are derivatives or have origins within social psychology, experiments in mass communication and media studies have often followed suit.

Both within-subjects and between-subjects designs have their relative strengths and weaknesses. A between-subjects design allows for comparisons across at least two or more groups, whereby subjects randomly assigned into one or more experimental groups will be observed on the outcome variable or dependent variable following exposure to stimulus material. For example, if a researcher were interested in examining the physiological effects of exposure to scary content presented in 2-D and 3-D formats, the researcher could design a between-subjects experiment whereby participants assigned to one experimental group would view the scary content in 3-D format while physiological data was recorded (heart rate, skin conductance, EEG data), and participants assigned to another experimental group would view the same content in 2-D. A researcher in this case would most likely also include a control group who would not view any scary content at all so that baseline measures of the physiological data could be compared across groups. If statistical results indicated that participants in the 3-D group had a higher heart rate, increased skin conductance, and more EEG activity than participants in the 2-D or control group, the researchers could effectively assert that exposure to 3-D content caused an increase in physiological activity.

A within-subjects design is thought to be stronger in internal validity because the design is not dependent upon random assignment. In short, internal validity is the degree to which the study reflects or measures what it says it is measuring. In experiments, internal validity insures the design closely follows the principle of cause and effect. The statistical “power” from a within-subjects design – that is, the likelihood that a study will detect an effect when there is an effect to be detected – is also often greater than it is for between-subjects designs. Finally, the design, by its very nature, is more naturally aligned with what we think about when we consider experiments – a study designed to examine how particular stimuli might be related to a specific outcome in a subject (Charness, Gneezy, & Kuhn, 2012). While the benefits for this type of experimental design are great, the design does not easily allow for comparisons of multiple stimuli (as easily or without confounds), and external validity – the ability to make generalizations to a broader population – is not as high.

The choice of one type of design over another will be dependent upon a number of factors: (1) what research question or hypothesis is being tested; (2) what the concerns are over potentially spurious effects, whereby subjects act in accord with the way that satisfies the researcher’s expectations; and (3) what the need is for statistical power (Charness et al., 2012). In any kind of empirical research, there are four key components that influence the degree to which conclusions can be reached from a statistical test. These factors are especially important in experimental design as all four are essential in properly designing a study in a way that will yield statistical significance. Statistical inference, or the ability to draw conclusions based on the statistical tests used, is dependent upon the sample size, the effect size, the significance level, and the statistical power (discussed above). If the sample size is small overall or within a specific cell in a between-subjects design, the likelihood of statistical significance being found decreases. Effect size is a numerical way of expressing

the strength of a reported relationship. The significance level refers to criterion level used to reject the null hypothesis. All four factors are crucial in a researcher's ability to reject the null hypothesis and state that X caused Y.

What follows is a description of two between-subjects experimental design studies conducted over the last few years. These studies will be used to discuss the methodological strengths and weaknesses of the between-subjects approach and to highlight the ways media studies researchers can correct or overcome some of the limitations of this specific design.

Case Study: An Examination of Anti-Fat Bias in Grade School Children

Two separate studies were conducted over the course of three years to better understand the factors influencing the development of bias against overweight and obese individuals. However, the samples were different in each study, and the measures were modified based on the age of the participants. One of the studies was conducted with children and one with adults. Procedures were similar across the two studies, and the independent and dependent measures varied only in word usage and sentence length. These decisions were based on the age and literacy rate of each sample's participants. The objective of each of the studies was to identify correlates or precursors to weight bias. Thus, in each of the studies, a between-subjects experiment was conducted. With this design, I was able to prime participants with an image of an overweight or a thin subject and then use cognitive and attitudinal measures to assess participants' weight bias. The objective of both studies was to identify the factors – individual, social, media, or ideological – that might be the strongest predictors of bias in each of the two separate samples.

The first experiment, focusing on children, was designed to be a 2×5 between-subjects experiment. This study used four experimental groups and one control group. The first factor of the design was participant gender, and the second factor was the experimental group in which the subject was randomly assigned. Gender was included as a factor in the study because previous literature has indicated that girls have a greater bias than boys against other overweight girls. Thus, while one study objective was to determine the correlates or precursors of weight bias in children, another objective was to understand how the participants' gender interacted with the stimulus material. The 2×5 experiment yielded 10 conditions whereby boys and girls were randomly assigned to one of the five groups and then participant gender was used as a factor in statistical analysis.

In both studies, participants completed an online instrument and addressed items related to self-perception, peer and family influence, household dieting behavior, eating and exercise behavior, eating and exercise attitudes, and media exposure. These variables were largely used as control variables or as co-variates (a variable

that may possibly also predict the outcome under investigation) with the independent variables (experimental group and gender). Participants also completed a modified version of the implicit association test (IAT), designed to measure attitudes related to weight. The IAT was developed by social psychologists Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz in 1998, and was designed to detect the strength of an individual's automatic association between mental representations of objects or people in memory. The IAT has been used in many experiments to gauge adults' implicit bias against gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. While the IAT has been criticized by other social psychologists, it is still the most widely used measure of implicit bias against different personality and physical characteristics.

Children participating in the first study viewed and completed the instrument at school during computer lab time. For this study, child participants were randomly assigned into one of the five groups in the hope that there would be no differences across groups. The second study was an online experiment with adults, whereby participants were also assigned to one of the five groups. Using this randomized sorting method would guarantee that each of the five groups had roughly the same number of participants or a similar cell size. In the adult study, all items were viewed and completed online without any interaction with the researcher.

Each study included four experimental groups and one control group. In order to facilitate responses to photographs of overweight and thin children/adults – child participants viewed images of children and adult participants viewed images of adults – participants were randomly assigned one of the following groups: exposure to an image of an overweight female; exposure to an image of the same female who was thinner; exposure to an image of an overweight male; exposure to an image of the same male who was thinner; and no image exposure (control group). Thus participants were exposed to an image of an overweight man/boy or woman/girl in two of the four experimental groups. The purpose was to see if exposure to an overweight subject might trigger greater amounts of bias against overweight. By design, both male and female participants would be randomly assigned to one of the five groups, but because participant gender was a factor, a total of 10 groups were created.

Identification of the subjects/individuals used as stimuli in the two experiments was based on a pilot test of 16 images of thin and overweight males and females using a sample of other children and adults. The images selected for use in both projects were “before” pictures of males and females who had participated in weight-loss camps or weight-loss treatment programs. For the “overweight” treatment groups (one male, one female), full-body images were selected. Both photographs showed the subjects smiling so that no negative effect would be associated with facial expression. The subjects were photographed in bathing suits for both the “before” and the “after” images so that confounding factors could be eliminated. For the “thin” treatment groups, “after” images of the same male and female were used, and the images were enhanced in Photoshop so that the “thin” treatment group was exposed to an image of a clearly thin person. The fifth group did not view an image, and this

group served as the control group. Experimental group was a key independent variable for both studies, as the subject in the stimulus photograph was selected in order to prime thoughts and attitudes about weight.

Since the outcome under investigation in both studies was anti-fat bias (AFB), two measures of AFB were used to try to better understand the correlates or precursors of weight bias. The dependent measures for both studies were similar: two measures of explicit bias. For the first measure, participants' attitudes about the subject viewed in the stimulus photograph were measured. Participants randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups were asked seven questions related to the subject viewed in the photograph. Statements used in each experiment were items such as: "This girl/boy/woman/man looks like one of my friends"; "I think this girl/boy/woman/man is pretty/attractive"; "I think this girl/boy/woman/man is athletic"; and "I think this girl/boy/woman/man is popular." Using responses to the statements, an additive scale was created that measured explicit bias against the subjects viewed in the photographs. Reliability of this scale across the four studies ranged from a .68 to a .90, with the higher reliability coming in the two studies conducted with adults.

The second measure of explicit bias was a modification of Crandall's (1994) anti-fat attitudes scale, using the subscale of dislike. Items used in this study were a modification of the following statements: "I really do not like fat people much"; "I don't have many friends that are fat"; "I tend to think that people who are overweight are a little untrustworthy"; "Although some fat people are surely smart, in general, I think they tend not to be quite as bright as normal weight people"; "I have a hard time taking fat people too seriously"; "Fat people make me somewhat uncomfortable." This measure tapped into more general attitudinal bias against individuals who were overweight, as the items were not related specifically to the subject used in the stimulus. These types of statements gauge general bias against overweight versus a bias or dislike against a specific person who was viewed in the stimulus photograph. Some children may feel uncomfortable actively indicating a dislike for a specific person but may be more inclined to indicate a bias against more generic "fat people"; thus, the subscale of dislike provided the more general measure of anti-fat bias. It is acknowledged that viewing an overweight subject in the stimulus may have primed participants to think negatively about overweight individuals. However, the two scales measuring explicit anti-fat bias were separated by several filler questions and by the cognitive processing questions in each of the studies. Filler questions used in the study described included questions such as "What is your favorite subject in school?" "What is your favorite football team?" "Who is your favorite music artist?"

In a simple between-subjects experiment, it would be predicted that the stimulus would cause a change in participants' attitudes, perceptions, or beliefs about overweight individuals. Thus, the photographs for each experimental group were carefully selected so that increases or decreases in bias could be detected. This straightforward design would have allowed me to determine if variable X – the photograph of the overweight or thin subject – caused an increase in participant bias as

I could have compared mean scores across the experimental groups to see which group exhibited the greatest bias. With this design, the control group would be used as the baseline measure of the dependent variable (Y). While this design would have been appropriate, I felt I could not ignore other variables that might also be related to participant bias against overweight others. In the hard sciences, the stimulus will either cause an outcome or not. But, in the social sciences, an observable change in that outcome variable could be attributed to a multitude of factors. That is why I chose to include other measures in both studies. These measures allowed me to control for other possible predictors of anti-fat bias and to determine with greater confidence whether a trait characteristic shown in a mediated context (maybe repeatedly) would result in an effect on participants' beliefs about that trait.

Since the two studies examined the possible individual, social, media, and ideological influences on the development of bias in children and adults, the following variables were also used as either a control or independent variable: cognitive processing styles, demographics, media exposure, exposure to thin ideal media, self-perception as it relates to body image, household dieting behavior, peer influence, and sociocultural attitudes about appearance. A more detailed description of how these variables were measured is provided in the following section. For all variables listed above, measures were similar; however, in some instances, sentences were worded more simply so that child participants could understand the statements.

Study 1 Participants

The participants in Study 1 were 601 boys and girls aged between 7 and 13 (a more detailed description of the measures used and the study findings can be found in Bissell & Hays, 2011). About 21% of the sample were in 3rd grade, 19% in 4th grade, 30% in 5th grade, and 24% in 6th grade. Of the 601 participants, 45% were boys and 55% were girls, with ethnic representation closely matched to that of the counties where data was collected: 80% of the sample was White, 16% African American, and the remaining 4% Hispanic, Asian, or "other."

Study 1 Independent Variables

While many variables were used in the first study of the correlates of weight bias, the key factors under examination were related to individual variables, including gender and media exposure. Television viewing was measured using three self-report items. Children were asked to list the television shows they watched "yesterday before school," "yesterday after school but before dinner," and "yesterday after dinner but before bed." Children were instructed to type the names of television shows they had watched during those time frames in the previous day.

As a measure of self-perception, participants were asked several questions related to their fears about their own appearance. Items used in this experiment were modeled after Lundgren, Anderson, and Thompson's (2004) fear of negative appearance evaluation scale (FNAE). Several statements were rewritten to accommodate participants' reading level. Furthermore, reliability tests for the full scale were not sufficient, so items were eliminated from the scale for better reliability. Examples of items included statements such as "I care about what my friends think of the way I look," "I worry that other people will not like the way I look," and "When I meet new people, I wonder what they will think about the way I look."

Study 2 Participants

For Study 2, a design similar to Study 1 was used. In order to examine the relationship between possible predictors of implicit attitudes toward weight and obesity and the relationship of those implicit attitudes with more explicit attitudes of bias, a 2×5 design (gender $\times$ instrument version, between subjects) was used with adults in two states in the South. A total of 276 subjects ranging in age from 18 to 24 participated in the study. Approximately 67% of the sample was female and 33% male. A convenience sample was employed to recruit the 276 participants. Study 2 participants were recruited through participant pools at two universities, and students participated in the research project for extra credit.

Study 2 Independent Variables

All participants answered a series of questions related to media use, food intake, and involvement in physical activity and exercise. Participants then completed the implicit association test, designed to tap into implicit attitudes toward weight bias. Since participants completed this study online, a randomizing program was used to randomly sort each participant into one of the five groups (four experimental groups and one control group). Once assigned to one of five groups, participants in the experimental groups viewed one of four images (see stimulus description above) and then answered questions designed to measure explicit attitudes toward weight bias. Participants assigned to the control group did not view an image but answered similar questions related to weight bias.

After completing the first round of explicit measures of weight bias, all participants returned to the same section of the online instrument and completed other items related to self-discrepancy, exercise frequency, weight stigmatization, fear of negative appearance evaluations, and cognitive processing styles. Self-discrepancy items measured participants' perceived ideal self compared to their actual self, so participants were asked to circle a body shape that most closely represented their current or actual body shape and then (using a separate scale) were asked to circle

the body shape they felt most closely represented their ideal body. Exercise frequency measures included participants' involvement in sports for competition or recreation and/or general exercise and the number of minutes per day they spent participating in a physical activity. Weight stigmatization involved a single question that asked participants if they were afraid of becoming overweight. For Study 2, participants' self-reported exposure to media was used, and a body shape index for each of the television programs viewed was created, so that a thin-ideal viewing index could be created. The body shape index was calculated using an entirely different sample of participants who rated the body shape and size of the primary characters in the television shows participants indicated they had viewed. This enabled me to have a measure of participant exposure to thin-ideal media so that the role of media exposure in the development or reinforcement of bias against overweight could be better understood.

Summary of Results

For Study 1, a statistical test was conducted to see if there was any variation on the dependent variable across the experimental groups, so a between-subjects test was conducted using only five groups (four viewing a version of the stimuli and one viewing no image at all). Statistical tests indicated that participants (whether male or female) who viewed the image of the overweight girl were more likely to assess her unfavorably than participants who viewed the image of the thin girl. More specifically, exposure to the overweight girl in the stimulus photograph primed or triggered negative attitudes toward her. Participants exposed to the image of the overweight girl were less likely to indicate she was pretty, smart, or friendly, and were less likely to say they would be friends with her. The second measure of weight bias was a more general assessment of negative attitudes toward overweight and, again, participants randomly assigned to the "overweight" treatment groups in the experiment were more likely to exhibit negative attitudes toward overweight. For this study, the statistical test comparing the differences between groups indicated that, as predicted, exposure to an overweight subject in a photograph resulted in more weight bias using the specific and general measures of the dependent variable.

When statistical tests were conducted that examined all 10 groups (2×5), results indicated that female participants who viewed the image of the overweight female were the most critical or exhibited the greatest bias against overweight. Female participants who viewed the image of the overweight boy had the second highest bias scores followed by the male participants who viewed the image of the overweight girl. Thus, participant gender did play a role in increased bias as the mean scores for female participants viewing the image of the overweight female had the highest AFB scores of all.

When the other variables were examined statistically with experimental version, interesting patterns emerged, suggesting that in social science, factors outside of the

laboratory setting must be considered. For Study 1, media exposure and fear of negative appearance evaluations interacted with experimental group. More simply, the stimulus was found to cause a change in participant attitudes toward overweight others (for two of the four experimental groups – overweight male and female), but this effect varied when other independent variables such as thin-ideal media exposure and fear of negative appearance evaluations were included in the statistical test. The statistical test indicated that exposure to the stimulus photograph did prime or cue child participants to indicate a stronger bias against overweight individuals. However, for participants who indicated viewing higher amounts of thin-ideal television and for participants with a higher score on the FNAE scale, the bias against overweight was even greater. In short, two other variables that might also predict bias against overweight, coupled with exposure to an overweight subject, resulted in the greatest bias against overweight.

Study 2 was a between-subjects experiment with an adult sample using the same two measures of weight bias. The study design mirrored that used in Study 1, with the only difference being the complexity of some of the sentences. A one-way ANOVA test was run using the instrument version as the grouping variable and using the two explicit measures of bias. An ANOVA is a statistical test used when a researcher wants to look at simultaneous comparisons between three or more groups on the same dependent variable. This test requires a nominal variable as the independent variable, and an interval or ratio variable as the dependent variable. When just the experimental group was considered statistically, participants who viewed the image of the overweight woman had significantly less favorable attitudes toward the subject than those viewing the image of the thin woman. When an ANCOVA test was run to consider gender (and other demographic variables), similar results were found. An ANCOVA test is a statistical test that combines an ANOVA with a regression test. The test essentially looks for changes in the dependent variable based on a nominal grouping in the independent variable with covariates considered statistically.

Analysis was also conducted on the second measure of explicit bias, the more global measure of weight bias. One-way analysis of variance tests indicated significant differences between the five groups. As expected, participants in the control group exhibited greater anti-fat bias than those exposed to the image of the thin man or woman. Significant differences were found between the experimental groups viewing images of thin and overweight individuals and the control group and participants in the thin experimental groups. Thus, it was found that simple exposure to overweight subjects primed individuals to think more negatively about overweight.

Again, in the development of a between-subjects experiment, the analysis could stop at this point because causation had been found – the stimulus material was found to have an effect on participant attitudes about overweight others. However, it would be inappropriate to leave the results at that. For adults especially, the development of a bias against a trait characteristics whether it be weight, gender, age, ethnicity, or religion, is something that develops over time, and that bias certainly develops

with the aid of other outside factors often found in the social world – media exposure, peer influence, and so on. Thus, Study 2 also looked at these other factors to see how or if they were related to increased or decreased levels of bias.

Results from a MANOVA (multiple analysis of variance test, used when there are two or more dependent variables) test examining the relationship of television exposure with experimental version on the two measures of explicit bias suggest there was an interaction effect between the two predictors and each dependent variable. When each dependent variable was considered, greater television viewing was related to higher levels of anti-fat bias; and when the experimental version was considered, participants exposed to the image of the overweight man and woman had even higher anti-fat bias than those who were exposed to the image of the thin man or woman. In order to include other possible predictor variables in the study of bias development, all-inclusive multiple regression (where the criterion is predicted by two or more variables) was used to combine four predictor variables – television viewing, IAT, and the two cognitive processing scales – experiential processing and rational processing. Taken together, the four variables were statistically significant predictors of AFB. Further analysis revealed that, from those four variables, the second cognitive scale measuring experiential processing and IAT were statistically significant predictors of AFB in the presence of the remaining three variables. The all-inclusive model explained 18% of the variance in anti-fat bias. Unexplained variance is an important consideration for mass communication researchers, and it remains one of the weaknesses of our research designs in general, and of experimental design specifically. This point will be addressed in greater detail below.

Findings from both studies suggest that the correlates of anti-fat attitudes may lie in a myriad of factors including individual and social factors, ideology or cultural norms, and media exposure. While the findings across the studies were not completely consistent with regard to the stronger predictors of bias, a few of the factors under investigation were significant across the two studies. The difference in findings could be attributable to the samples themselves – one used children and the other used adults – a design flaw, or because of the likelihood of adults or older children being less willing to admit bias in an overt way.

Of importance in both study findings was the media exposure factor. Whether considered via time spent with the media or by exposure to specific content (thin-ideal content, animated versus live-action programming), time spent viewing entertainment television was a significant predictor of negative attitudes toward overweight. This was found when considered with the experimental version and when considered in isolation. For example, when just the experimental conditions were tested with the dependent variables, a significant relationship was found suggesting that the manipulations did cause an effect in bias. However, when the manipulations (independent variable) were considered along with other variables such as media exposure, a causal relationship was still found as the amount of and type of media exposure also predicted greater weight bias. The social environment, which included household dieting behavior and self-perception as it relates to body

image, was also a strong predictor of increased or decreased levels of bias in both studies.

While findings from both studies resulted in a desired outcome – the stimulus material had an effect on participant attitudes about overweight – neither study was without limitations. Furthermore, even with the desired outcome in each study, I cannot say with certainty that the results are a product of exposure to the stimuli, even though the procedures followed should allow me to come to that conclusion. Such is the nature of experimental design in media studies research. Even if a study has been carefully designed and implemented, statistically our results often look like nonresults to scholars outside of the discipline.

In media studies or mass communication research, the degree or amount of unexplained variance is often quite high. It would not be unusual to find a study reporting an unexplained variance at 75–85%. Unexplained variance is the part of the variance that cannot be attributed to specific causes. For example, in Study 2, I reported that, using four different factors, 18% of the variance was explained, which means that 82% was not. Quite frankly, I was pretty excited with the 18%. In a research world that deals with social factors, we simply cannot statistically control for everything. However, using the two studies described above, the goal is to identify ways in which error and study design problems can be addressed in advance.

Design Problems Specific to the Case Study

Procedures

Both studies used an online instrument containing the stimulus material and measures of independent and dependent variables. While it was convenient to use an online instrument, it meant that participants could easily skip ahead to questions or go back to other questions and change their answers. While the children were in a lab, the lab did not resemble a traditional research lab where extraneous noise and other distractions could be eliminated. Participants in this study sat next to other children and were able to view the stimulus image others were viewing. They quickly realized that they might be answering different questions, and this led to all kinds of possible corruption with the data. From a procedures perspective, it would have been much better if I could have collected data from each child participant individually. Had I been allowed to follow that procedure, however, I would probably still be collecting data as it took roughly one hour for each participant to complete the study. To correct for corruption of the data, I deleted all responses from participants who appeared to be too distracted to participate in the study. This reduced the N from over 1,000 to 601.

In the study with adults, participants were sent a link via email and could complete the study at any time and in any place. Again, while this might have been convenient

for participants and the researcher, there were many factors outside of the lab environment that could not be controlled. For example, participants could have been viewing a television program containing many thin-ideal characters while participating in a research study about weight bias. If that were the case, the viewing of thin-ideal media could have been what caused increases in weight bias rather than viewing an image of an overweight subject. Furthermore, adult participants could have clicked forward and backwards through the instrument or could have hit the link to the instrument more than once, and possibly seen several different versions of the stimuli – there was no way to insure that only one image was viewed. The procedure did allow for data collection in a short period of time, but the nature of those procedures meant that there could easily be threats to the internal and external validity of the study.

Confounding Variables

For both studies, a pilot test was conducted to select the images used for the stimulus material. Despite this, it is possible that participants in both studies had a pre-existing bias against individuals of another gender, race, or age. For both studies, White subjects were selected, and four experimental groups were used so that two groups could use a male subject and two groups a female subject. The 2 in the 2×5 experiment meant that gender was one of two factors considered. Statistical tests indicated no bias based on in-group/out-group selection, meaning there were no statistically significant differences for female participants viewing the female subject or the male subjects viewing the male subject. However, an implicit bias against overweight females could still be present, even if it was not evident statistically. Finkelstein, Frautschy Demuth, and Sweeney (2007) report that in workplace and social settings, bias against overweight women is stronger than it is for overweight men. In a mediated context, overweight male characters are often portrayed as funny whereas overweight women are portrayed as unhappy, depressed, unable to obtain a date, and constantly dieting (Ata & Thompson, 2010). This bias against overweight females might be present on a societal or even ideological level and therefore be difficult to measure or control for statistically.

A confound is something that varies along with the independent variables that inhibit the researcher's ability to say what caused the variation in the dependent variable. Other possible confounds with the present study are variables not included as independent variables, covariates, moderating variables, or mediating variables. Media exposure, especially exposure to thin-ideal media content, is a possible confound. There are other factors that may have resulted in elevated levels of bias against overweight, but these intangible variables can be difficult to measure. For example, as with other forms of bias, stigma, or prejudice, bias against overweight is often learned. A child who lives in a household with a parent who speaks negatively about people of different races may learn to think negatively about that race. The same

could be said about bias against overweight. The word “fat” has a negative connotation. If a child lives in a household where a parent, sibling, or other individuals use the word “fat” in a negative context, the child could learn to see fat in negative terms. Results from the IAT (in both studies) suggest that the majority of participants did associate overweight with negative adjectives, but I am unable to assess why. However, this implicit bias can certainly be correlated with explicit bias (as evidenced in both studies), and therefore merits a study limitation simply because the development of that bias is simply too difficult, if not impossible, to explain.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 235) state that researchers must “ensure the internal validity of their research by controlling for the effects of confounding variables (extraneous variables) that might contaminate their findings.” In theory, these confounding variables can be controlled through the environment, through experimental manipulations, through the design itself, or through the assignment of subjects. In practice, even if these procedures are implemented, it remains difficult to control for all possible extraneous variables that might have an influence on the dependent variable.

Random Selection

Participants in both studies were randomly assigned to one of five groups – four experimental groups and one control group. Random selection means that every person in the sample has an equal chance of selection for any of the groups. The beauty of randomization, beyond so many other factors, is that the variables to be controlled are distributed in approximately the same way in all groups. Simple random assignment is more challenging when dealing with studies outside of the lab environment. For example, child participants in Study 1 simply drew a number from a basket, and adult participants in Study 2 were randomly sorted into one of five groups based on a randomization program built into the study. The procedure used to randomize the stimulus photograph viewed by all participants was indeed random, so one might think that randomization means the study was probabilistic. Two key types of sampling are used in empirical studies – probability sampling and nonprobability sampling. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Because participants in the studies described were randomly assigned to experimental or control groups, one might assume the study was probabilistic. However, the original sample in both studies was a convenience sample, which means that the entire sample was a nonprobability sample and the results are not as generalizable as they might otherwise be.

Sample/Cell Size

While random sampling has many advantages, one issue with randomization is that if the sample size is small, there is a higher risk of the groups not being equivalent.

For example, Study 1 had 601 participants in the final sample, but in order to look at factors such as participant gender, grade, and ethnicity, the sample size would have needed to be double the size in order for the sample size within each smaller cell to be appropriate. For example, the approximately 600 participants were divided into 10 groups (gender (2) $\times$ by instrument version (5)), leaving approximately 60 participants per cell. This cell size is large enough for statistical power; however, if I wanted to look at the responses by grade, that number would be divided by four, and I would wind up with a cell size that was too small to yield statistically significant results ($n = 5$). The lesson to be learned from this is to carefully consider the statistics that will be run in advance, and then think through the data analysis to insure an appropriate cell size is achieved.

Effect Size and Statistical Power

The power of the statistical test is determined by the significance criterion, the precision of the sample criterion, the precision of sample estimates, and the sample size (Sawyer & Ball, 1981). More simply, statistical power is the probability that a statistical test will correctly reject the null hypothesis. In media studies and mass communication research (and many other types of research), most readers understand that when $p < .05$ is seen, it means there is less than a 5% chance that the researchers have made a Type 1 error (a false positive) in their conclusion. The higher the power, the greater the chance that the decision or assumption is correct. In order to achieve a higher power, the level of significance, the sample size, and the standard deviation of the population or the sample will be relevant. Study 2 included 276 participants randomly sorted into one of five groups and then that number was cut in half for the sort by gender. If the groups had been equal, a cell size of 27 would have been high enough for statistical power; however, because I had more female participants than male participants, my cell size for men across the five groups was too small to run statistical tests.

In addition to having to be concerned with statistical power, researchers using experiments must also consider a study's effect size. Effect size describes the magnitude or strength of a relationship between two or more variables in the population. If other design factors are controlled for properly, the greater the effect size, the greater the power (Sawyer & Ball, 1981). Effect size should be one of the first factors considered when designing a study. Effect size can also be explained via explained (or unexplained) variance. With any data set and with any type of statistical test, variance (a characteristic of the data set and one that describes the range of responses within a data set) is of key importance because a researcher looking at data patterns or trends wants there to be diversity or a range in the responses but not so much range that no statistically significant differences can be found. The higher the explained variance relative to the total variance, the greater the effect of the variable in question. For example, if a researcher were to predict that exposure

to thin-ideal media would cause greater anti-fat bias, the higher the explained variance, the more confidence the researcher would have in asserting that X caused Y. Given the nature of the discipline, our effects sizes are almost always small. Within the discipline, we know and understand that, but when our work is viewed by scholars from other disciplines, they might scoff at what we report to be a significant finding. While there is little we can do to control effect size or unexplained variance within our discipline, it is important to teach our graduate students, who often learn statistics in other disciplines, not to be disappointed with our comparatively small effect sizes.

Post-Test Only Data

Research methods books teach us about the variety of ways an experiment can be conducted. We hear about designs such as the Solomon four-group design, the pretest–post-test–control group design, and the post-test only design. In an ideal scientific world where humans are not involved, the Solomon four-group design or the pretest–post-test designs are the most appropriate ways to assess the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. These designs allow for a baseline measure on the dependent variable, therefore allowing the researcher to observe any change following exposure to the stimulus material. In a simple experiment, a researcher could be interested in determining whether exposure to violent television content would predict or cause aggressive thoughts in young children. If a very simple experiment were to be designed to test this, child participants would be randomly assigned to the experimental group who would view violent content or a control group who would view humorous content or no content at all. The researcher would measure aggressive thoughts in all participants following exposure to the content and then make comparisons between the two groups. If the theory predicted that violent content would likely produce or cause aggressive thoughts, the researcher could observe a greater incidence of aggressive thoughts from the experimental group than from those in the control group. In this case, control group participants act as the baseline measure of aggressive thoughts as they were not exposed to the content that would (hypothetically) produce aggressive thoughts.

The logistics of this design are another issue entirely. Again, when collecting data outside of a lab setting (or even in a lab setting), the likelihood of getting a participant to return to the study for a second round of data collection is low. The proportion of individuals who return to participate in a study is less than half, and if the study is long or the lab environment difficult or inconvenient to return to, the return rate is even lower. In a between-subjects design, pretest data would allow the researcher an opportunity to have a baseline measure of the dependent variable prior to exposure to the stimulus and then have a repeat measure of the dependent variable following exposure. While the objective of the between-subjects design is to

compare responses on the dependent variable between groups, it is never a bad idea to be able to see if there is a change in the dependent variable via the within-subjects design – that is, by comparing a subject's pretest and post-test scores on the dependent variable. If this procedure could be followed, it would provide the researcher with a greater opportunity to say with certainty that exposure to the stimuli caused the specific outcome under investigation.

In neither study did I have pretest measures. In an ideal world, I would have collected pretest data, given participants a few days, and then had them return for the second part of the experiment. However, the logistics of my two studies did not allow for that, and thus, I can only report findings from the post-test study.

How Between-Subjects Designs Can Be Used in Media Studies Research

Media studies and mass communication researchers have a wealth of opportunity to utilize between-subjects experimental design as a means of assessing or determining the effect of specific media content on cognitive, affective, or behavior outcomes. Researchers interested in political communication might want to better understand how or if a political ad is more or less effective with a visual. A between-subjects design could be developed in a way that used a text-only ad, a visual-only ad, a text and visual ad, and a control group. If the researcher were interested only in the effect of variable X (the independent variable), on the dependent variable, attitudes toward a specific candidate, the straightforward design described above would be appropriate.

However, it is possible the researcher might realize that an individual's political orientation could also influence attitudes toward a specific candidate, regardless of the experimental group sampled into. In order to design this type of study, the researcher could design a 3×4 factorial design. The 3 would allow a researcher to group participants by political orientation (liberal, moderate, or conservative) or by political party (Republican, Democratic, or "other" – acknowledging that this factor could be much larger in size) and then by the four groups in the experiment (three experimental groups and one control group). While this type of design still would not be without its limitations, the simple design would allow for (1) comparisons across experimental groups, and (2) comparisons across experimental groups based on political orientation. The 3×4 factorial design allows for the comparison of two independent variables on a single dependent variable, and the proposed design would allow a researcher to statistically test the two IVs on the DV. This is just one of many examples of the way a study could be developed using between-subjects experiments.

As researchers, we are taught to spend some time reading through studies relevant to our interests, to acquire an understanding of the theoretical framework(s)

appropriate for investigating our subject of interest, and from there develop a hypothesis or research question that predicts a relationship between two variables. The research question or hypothesis will dictate the type of design needed. A between-subjects design is a way of avoiding the carry-over effects of a within-subjects design, whereby with random assortment into all groups, the researcher can state with some authority that the stimuli had a specific effect on the dependent variable. The between-subjects design, sometimes called the *independent measures design*, is beneficial because it limits participants to a single treatment or exposure group. This type of design eliminates participants “learning” what is being asked of them, and it further eliminates participants dropping out or checking boxes out of boredom.

The underlying assumption of the between-subjects approach is that Group 1 and Group 2 are different levels of the same factor. Using the political advertising example above, the 3×4 factorial design meant that participants would be sorted by three groups of political orientation and sorts into four groups associated with the experiment (text ad, visual ad, text and visual ad, or no ad). If it is determined that a between-subjects design is the most appropriate for the study questions, it is prudent for researchers to then consider the following questions:

- 1 What other variables might be related to the outcome variable?
- 2 Is there enough variation between experimental groups that an effect can be found?
- 3 Is there enough variation between the experimental and control groups that an effect can be found?
- 4 How large must the sample size be in order for statistical significance to be found?
- 5 What is the most appropriate method for randomizing participants into the respective groups?
- 6 Have the necessary steps been taken to insure that participants within the group are similar, that is, there is an oversampling of women in one group and an oversampling of African Americans in another group?
- 7 What types of statistics are appropriate given all of the variables being measured?
- 8 Does the design allow the researcher to measure what he or she intends to measure?

Experiments are the primary tool for studying and understanding causal relationships. In media studies and mass communication research, causality is an important tool, as at least a third of the research in the field is related to the media’s effect on audiences (McDonald, 2004). As Babbie (2010, p. 249) explains, “the chief advantage of a controlled experiment lies in the isolation of the experimental variable’s impact over time.” Though many researchers are critical of experimental designs because of the artificiality associated with them, experiments remain a staple in mass communication research and media studies.

Between-subjects experimental designs are an important tool in scholars' wheelhouse, and with knowledge about the limitations of the design within the discipline, solid, meaningful research can be conducted. Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder (1982) discussed experiments in the context of the role of television news programs on viewers' attitudes and beliefs. They report that the consequences of exposure are "not so minimal" and that earlier assumptions about media effects were indeed on the mark. This is something Lippmann alluded to almost a century ago. As Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder (1982, p. 855) conclude: "Fifty years and much inconclusive empirical fussing later, our experiments decisively sustain Lippmann's suspicion that media provide compelling descriptions of a public world that people cannot directly experience."

Experimental design remains one of the most important methods in empirical research in mass communication and media studies. Researchers interested in media effects on a broad range of topics can use experiments to test the influence the media have in shaping individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. While they may be difficult to design, properly conducted experimental studies yield results that enable us to better understand the role the media play in our lives.

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Using a Mixed Approach to Content Analysis

The Case of Apologetic Rhetoric in the Modern Presidency

Rico Neumann and Kevin Coe

ABSTRACT

This chapter demonstrates the process and utility of an approach to content analysis that blends computer-assisted content analysis (CCA) with traditional manual coding. It does so in the context of modern presidential rhetoric, shedding light on presidents' use of apologetic rhetoric in their public communications to audiences abroad over the past eight decades. We outline the steps that are necessary to undertake a mixed approach to content analysis, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a method. We argue that although CCA represents a useful tool to process large quantities of text, its use can sometimes obscure important nuances in the discourse. Conducting a complementary manual coding can highlight many of these nuances, making the mixed approach a fruitful technique in many cases.

Within a few months of taking office in 2009, President Barack Obama traveled abroad to announce his presidency to the world and to begin rebuilding some of the relationships that his predecessor's administration had strained. On April 3, for example, he was in Strasbourg, France, where he critically referred to earlier times when "America has shown arrogance and been dismissive, even derisive."¹ The

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems183

following day, Obama was asked about America's place in the world, to which he responded:

The fact that I am very proud of my country and I think that we've got a whole lot to offer to the world does not lessen my interest in recognizing the value and wonderful qualities of other countries, or recognizing that we're not always going to be right, or that other people may have good ideas, or that in order for us to work collectively, all parties have to compromise, and that includes us.

Two days later Obama addressed the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara, where he characterized relations between the United States and Turkey as follows:

I know there have been difficulties these last few years. I know that the trust that binds the United States and Turkey has been strained, and I know that strain is shared in many places where the Muslim faith is practiced. So let me say this as clearly as I can: The United States is not and will never be at war with Islam.

Obama's self-critical rhetoric did not go unnoticed. US journalist James Kirchick, for instance, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that the president had undertaken a "grand global apology tour" during which he was guilty of "flagellating the nation he leads" (Kirchick, 2009).

President Obama's words, whether a true apology or not, are but one example of the brand of apologetic rhetoric that is common in the political arena. Indeed, political leaders' statements of remorse for historical transgressions, injustices, and wrongdoings, have been an essential part of many societies and cultures (Barkan, 2000; Digeser, 2001; Negash, 2006; Weiner, 2005; Yamazaki, 2005). In the context of the US presidency alone there are numerous examples. Among the most widely known are George W. Bush's attempt to restore national reputation after tragic incidents at the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib and the detention camp in Guantanamo Bay; Bill Clinton's attempts to repair his personal image after the Monica Lewinsky scandal; Ronald Reagan's public statement on his role in the Iran-Contra affair; and Richard Nixon's response to Watergate. Given these and other high-profile instances, it is not surprising that there has been much recent discussion about the "age of apology" (Brooks, 1999; Cunningham, 1999; Gibney, Howard-Hassman, Coicaud, & Steiner, 2008; Govier, 2002; Harris, Grainger, & Mullany, 2006), accompanied by labels such as a "sorry world" (Nobles, 2008), and "America the apologetic" (Brookhiser, 1998). The body of research on apology is growing rapidly (Gibney et al., 2008; Negash, 2006; Nobles, 2008).

Notably, the literature on apologies – and public apologies in particular – is almost exclusively qualitative in nature, drawing on detailed analyses of individual cases or single presidencies (e.g., Edwards, 2008a; Harter, Stephens, & Japp, 2000). Very few scholars have investigated the topic using quantitative methods or mixed methods approaches (notable exceptions are Blatz, Schumann, & Ross, 2009; Kampf, 2009a).

Given this imbalance in the literature, apologetic rhetoric is a particularly useful context in which to demonstrate the utility of a *mixed approach* to content analysis, one that precisely specifies quantitative trends in large quantities of text by blending computer-assisted content analysis (CCA) with traditional manual coding. In explaining and demonstrating this approach, this chapter also addresses several unanswered questions about apologetic rhetoric in one key context: the modern American presidency. Toward this end, we first briefly review the literature on apology and offer a conceptual definition of “apologetic rhetoric.” We then explain our method in some detail, so as to fully outline the steps that are necessary to undertake a mixed approach to content analysis. We then present the findings of our analysis, before concluding by considering the advantages and disadvantages of this particular approach to content analysis.

Apologetic Rhetoric

At the interpersonal level, many people do not even notice how often they use the word “sorry” to help undo a hurtful act. People apologize for myriad reasons. Whatever the motive, the goal is often to heal the relationship between the victim and the wrongdoer and to repair the wrongdoer’s image (Benoit, 1995; Smith, 2008). Just as important as interpersonal apologies are those on a national or international level, where a genuine apology can be of profound value for the future relationship between the wrongdoer and the wronged (Lazare, 1995). The act of apologizing, however, becomes more complex (and therefore also less frequent) when apologies are offered on behalf of a group, institution, company, or nation (Tavuchis, 1993). Not surprisingly, literature on public apologies is more limited than writings that deal with the interpersonal sphere, yet the body of research has been growing rapidly throughout the past decade. According to Lind (2008), a great number of activists and academics have contributed to an increasing body of scholarship on contrition and apologies on the international level.

As a response to historical transgressions, leaders around the world have offered public apologies in an effort to heal relations and seek reconciliation; for example, Japan apologized to South Korea for military invasions before and during World War II (Yamazaki, 2005); Germany apologized for its colonial past in Namibia (Jamfa, 2008) and for the Holocaust (Negash, 2006); and Kofi Annan apologized for the United Nations’ inaction during the Rwandan genocide (Edwards, 2008b). Several examples from the American context have already been noted. In all cases, such public apologies represent rhetorical attempts to (re)negotiate “membership in a group, community, nation, or humankind” (Towner, 2009, p. 431). National leaders, whose words carry particular weight, thus act as mediators by representing the interests of the national community on the international stage. As Kellerman (2006, p. 74) states, “a leader’s apology is a performance in which every expression matters

and every word becomes part of the public record.” Moreover, the willingness to offer a public apology is not only of high emotional value and may raise “the moral threshold of a society” (Brooks, 1999, p. 3), but it also bears a clear strategic value for the wrongdoer (Lazare, 2004).

Apologetic rhetoric can take many different forms and invites a variety of rhetorical approaches, strategies, and tactics. Specifying its usual form is made difficult by a lack of systematization and the explosive growth in literature on public apologies (Benoit, 1995). An early conceptual distinction was made between “apologia” and “apology.” The Greek term *apologia* originally appeared in Plato’s work *Apología Sokrátus* and refers to the speech Socrates gave in defense against the accusations that were brought against him. Hence, it has been framed as a defensive rhetorical response to an attack on one’s character and is therefore primarily focused on the self, to restore a damaged image (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Despite its etymological similarity, an “apology” typically occurs without any defense and is “a form of self-punishment that cuts deeply because we are obliged to retell, relive, and seek forgiveness for sorrowful events that have rendered our claims to membership in a moral community suspect or defeasible” (Tavuchis, 1993, p. 8).

A notable effort to systematize the field was undertaken by Benoit (1995), who proposed a theory of image restoration consisting of five strategies which rhetors can rely on when faced with a crisis: denial, evading responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of the event, taking corrective action, and mortification. While denial – often accompanied by some form of blame shifting and self-defense – is most similar to the traditional *apologia* rhetoric, a mortification strategy usually strives for a true apology. Similarly, Kampf (2009a, p. 2258) focuses on the discourse of minimizing responsibility by utilizing “creative forms of apologetic speech.” Based on a detailed discourse analysis of apologies made in the Israeli public sphere, he demonstrates a variety of rhetorical tactics which can be grouped into four main categories: blurring the nature of the offense, compromising the apology’s performative verb (e.g., “sorry” versus “apologize”), questioning the identity of the offender, as well as questioning the identity of the offended.

In a narrative synthesis, Towner (2009, p. 457) argues that although the extant literature provides many unique and detailed analyses, it “may have the unintended consequences of alienating scholars who might otherwise learn from and support each other’s research.” In other words, the body of research has grown so rapidly that scholars following one approach tend to overlook important research from the other end of the spectrum. One way to bridge that gap is to embrace a broader conception of apology, which takes the many different creative forms of apologies into account. Various efforts have been made to describe (and prescribe) the “perfect” or “true” apology (Kellerman, 2006; Lazare, 2004; Tavuchis, 1993). However, given that conflict situations take multiple forms and offenses are perceived differently, different rhetorical strategies are required. With this in mind, we draw on previous conceptualizations of apology and *apologia* to offer a broad definition of *apologetic rhetoric*.

Our goal in doing so is to help bridge the gap between the extant literature, which is largely qualitative and specific, and the broad patterns that might exist across apologies for a range of different wrongs across an extended period of time. The large body of qualitative and normative writings is important in that it sheds light on specific cases. Still, broader understandings that might be gleaned from considering apology more broadly are needed. With this goal in mind, we define apologetic rhetoric as *a strategic and value-driven communicative process in which an apologizing entity publicly and responsibly acknowledges a past misdeed, negotiates a shared understanding of the conflict situation with the harmed party, and ultimately asks for forgiveness.*

Several elements of this conception are noteworthy. That apologetic rhetoric is *strategic* and focused on *responsibility* highlights that a public figure may employ a variety of rhetorical tactics in order to minimize – or “democratize” – the degree of responsibility (Kampf, 2009a, 2009b). It is *value-driven* because it is rooted in basic moral values that are reaffirmed, which allows an individual, a community, or a nation to grow morally and re-establish the moral balance and relationship between victim and offender (Hearit, 2005). In the political realm, it may also serve as a “platform for announcing new policy directions” (Nobles, 2008, p. 111). Apologetic rhetoric takes place in *public* because it is a collaborative process and shapes the discourse between national and international leaders, citizens, activists, interest groups, and the media. It seeks to *negotiate* a mutual (re)interpretation of the crisis situation “rather than an inherently psychological or scripted response to a conflict” (Paul, 2007, p. 4) in order to (re)interpret membership between the involved parties (Nobles, 2008). In a similar manner, Tavuchis (1993, pp. 57–58) notes that apologetic rhetoric “presupposes cognitive and evaluative congruence in the form of shared definitions of the violation, its severity, history, and implications.” In contrast to previous conceptions of apologia and apology, this broader definition of apologetic rhetoric allows for a diverse collection of apologetic expressions to be examined over time – a task that certainly invites CCA but also relies on the merits of a traditional approach via manual coding.

Research Questions

The above discussion makes clear the need for a broader analysis of apologetic rhetoric. We took a step in this direction by examining eight decades’ worth of presidents’ apologetic rhetoric. Our focus was the American presidency because US presidents are key figures in the nation and the world, and their apologetic rhetoric therefore has great potential for attention and impact. To keep the scope manageable, we focused particularly on situations where presidents face a foreign audience. Such situations may require a higher degree of rhetorical sensitivity, especially when relations with the nation in question have been strained. Compared to other addresses,

speeches abroad are also the most likely to include some form of apologetic rhetoric. Four specific questions guided our analysis:

- RQ1 To what extent have presidents used apologetic rhetoric in their public messages given to foreign audiences?
- RQ2 What forms of apologetic rhetoric have presidents used in their public messages given to foreign audiences?
- RQ3 How does the use of apologetic rhetoric differ in communications that are high or low in “message control”?
- RQ4 To what extent have presidents used common rhetorical strategies in their public messages given to foreign audiences?

Planning a Mixed Approach to Content Analysis

Three basic steps are necessary in conducting a mixed approach to content analysis: (1) selecting an appropriate body of text; (2) administering the computer-assisted content analysis; and (3) administering the manual content analysis. This section details each step in turn.

Selection of Text

We made two choices to narrow the scope of texts for this analysis. The first, discussed above, was to focus on presidential speeches delivered abroad – a context in which apologetic rhetoric often occurs. The second was to limit our analysis to the modern presidency, which scholars have generally defined as beginning with the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. This period of analysis is useful because the presidency changed significantly beginning with Roosevelt. Federal and national power grew, as did the United States’ worldwide recognition as the leader of the free world as well as advocate of human rights and free markets, particularly highlighted during the Cold War and beyond (Greenstein, 1998, 2004; Medhurst & Brands, 2000). As Leuchtenburg (1988, p. 7) notes, “by almost all accounts, the presidency as we know it today begins with Franklin Delano Roosevelt.” Thus starting with Roosevelt allows for 13 presidents to be included in the content analysis but retains some consistency in the cultural context in which each president governed.

Our corpus of presidential communications therefore consisted of 2,186 messages delivered abroad, beginning with Roosevelt’s visit to Haiti in July 1934 and ending with Obama’s visit to Prague, Czech Republic, in April 2010. To identify foreign speeches, we first consulted the official website of the US Department of State (<http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president>), which provides an overview of all visits abroad for every president included in our analysis.

Using information about the specific date and country provided in these lists, we were able to locate and retrieve the transcripts from the National Archives' "Public Papers of the Presidents" (n.d.), the comprehensive record of presidential communications. For example, once we found out that Obama visited Egypt on June 4, 2009, to deliver his address "A New Beginning" at Cairo University, we could easily identify the corresponding transcript. Additional remarks delivered during his stay in the country were retrieved as well (in that case, an interview with foreign journalists and remarks prior to a meeting with then President Mubarak). The procedure was repeated for every foreign visit undertaken by each of the 13 modern presidents.

Notably, this sampling approach excluded some speech acts that are known to include formal apologies, such as Congressional statements (e.g., the apology for the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom) or presidential speeches given to groups of people within the nation's borders (e.g., apologies for Japanese American internment during World War II). Also excluded were informal remarks during the president's vacations, brief remarks made on arrival at or departure from foreign airports, and informal exchanges with reporters abroad. The final corpus thus consisted of the following message types:

- First, perhaps one of the most significant speech occasions, is a major address given to a foreign legislative body (assemblies or parliaments), which accounted for 5.1% of all messages considered in this analysis ($n = 111$). Examples included Carter's address before the Israeli Knesset in March 1979 and George W. Bush's address before the Japanese Diet in February 2002.
- Second, presidential remarks during state dinners are often given in honor of the host, usually the head of state or executive leader. These were once famous speech occasions (particularly during the Cold War), but the significance and frequency with which presidents communicate in such forms have decreased markedly. However, due to generally tight time schedules these are sometimes the only major remarks a president delivers while visiting a foreign nation. For example, while the early toasts made by Roosevelt were often only brief statements relying on rather typical rhetoric for such occasions, the toasts offered by Carter were lengthy speeches dedicated to foreign leaders, and therefore worthy of exploration. Across all presidents, such speeches accounted for 13.7% ($n = 299$). Examples included Nixon's remarks at a state dinner hosted by the shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in Tehran in May 1972, and Reagan's remarks at a dinner hosted by Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle during his visit to the United Kingdom in June 1982.
- Third, no less significant, but more numerous are presidential speeches and remarks made to foreign citizens in public places (e.g., city halls, universities, market squares). Often, those follow meetings with the head of state and are intended to address a larger audience more directly. In our study, those accounted for 28.8% of all presidential communications abroad ($n = 629$). Examples included

- Kennedy's 1963 and Reagan's 1987 speeches in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany, and Obama's address at Cairo University in Egypt in June 2009.
- Fourth, major documents, such as (joint) statements and declarations released during or after a president's foreign visit, were considered for analysis. Previous research suggested that apologies (and other expressions of regret) are sometimes offered intentionally as brief, written statements only – in order for presidents to bypass such comments in their speeches (see Nobles, 2008). Written messages account for 14.1% of all messages ($n = 309$). Examples included Clinton's joint communiqué on the Summit for Peace and Prosperity, which was released in March 1998 in Uganda, and G. W. Bush's statement calling for a new strategic partnership with Pakistan in March 2006.
 - Fifth, foreign press conferences, town hall meetings, and interviews with foreign journalists were subject to analysis. These contexts differ from others in that speakers are forced to be less deliberate and strategic in the words they choose (by virtue of the fact that they take place in an interactive, two-way communication forum). For example, in their conception of major presidential addresses, Coe and Neumann (2011, p. 733) delineate "message control" as a major criterion by referring to situations where the president has full control over the message; that is, "the words that a president speaks are a matter of choice, usually carefully planned and rehearsed well in advance of the speaking event." This loss of "message control" in news conferences may lead presidents to employ different rhetorical tactics from what they would use in the more deliberate speech acts listed above. Press conferences and interviews with the president accounted for 26.4% of all presidential communications abroad ($n = 577$). Examples ranged from Roosevelt's famous World War II press conferences in Casablanca (January 1943) and Yalta (February 1945) to the above-mentioned news conference of Obama in Strasbourg, France, in April 2009.
 - Sixth, although not given on foreign soil, speeches to the United Nations General Assembly or the Security Council (in New York City) have become a regular (i.e., annual) speech tradition for the US president since Reagan. Given that in those speech situations the president also responds to concerns of the international community in general and of foreign leaders representing their nations in particular, these speeches were considered worthy of analysis. UN speeches accounted for 2.9% of all presidential messages considered in this study ($n = 64$). Examples included Truman's first address to the UN General Assembly during its opening session in October 1946, and G. W. Bush's "An Appeal to Muslims" speech in September 2006.
 - Lastly, speeches given on foreign soil also encompass remarks directed to Americans living abroad (e.g., embassy staff, troops, US communities) and to the American audience at home (e.g., radio addresses to the nation). Those messages accounted for 9% of all presidential communications abroad ($n = 197$). Examples included Ford's remarks to American troops stationed in South Korea in November 1974, Clinton's remarks to military personnel at Ramstein Air Base, Germany,

in May 1999, and G. W. Bush's speech to US troops in Baghdad, Iraq, at a Thanksgiving dinner in 2003.

Administering CCA

At the outset of the study, all the necessary transcripts were compiled in a raw text file (e.g., a Word document) and organized around simple descriptive variables that depended on the goal of the analysis (in our case, this included date, president, location/ country, and message type). This information – called the “control sequence” – was entered manually for every transcript as a string of external variables (separated by dashes) beginning with a four-digit, ascending sequence number that each text unit received at the outset (the length of the sequence number depends, of course, on the number of texts the researcher considers for analysis). The control sequence was placed before each transcript so that the raw text in the entire file could be easily separated into text units. This process is time consuming, but manually entering these external variables allows researchers the flexibility of more varied analysis (e.g., by comparing Democrats and Republicans, distinguishing between written and spoken communication, grouping countries into regions). Additionally, certain transcripts required some pre-editing to remove all substantive nonpresidential content (such as lengthy responses of another country's leader in a joint press conference).

Once the raw text file was compiled, the content was subject to computer-assisted content analysis using the software TextQuest,² which allows processing of large quantities of text. This software requires that the researcher develop another file in the form of a dictionary of search patterns that the computer will retrieve from the entire text file once identified. For the present study, relevant semantic units included in our dictionary file (in the following referred to as *lexemes*) were as follows: amends, apology, atonement, blame, blunder, compunction, confession, contrition, deficiency, deplore, error, excuse, expiation, fail, fault, flaw, forgiveness, guilt, inadvertence, injustice, lapse, misconduct, misdeed, misdemeanor, mistake, pardon, penance, penitence, plea, reconciliation, regret, remorse, repentance, ruefulness, shame, shortcoming, sin, sorrow, transgression, and wrongdoing.

Words appear in various inflected forms (as noun, verb, adverb, adjective, etc.). We therefore focused on a word's morphological stem (or lemma) to allow for its linguistic derivatives. For instance, instead of entering the term “apology” into our dictionary file, we used the root morpheme “apolog-,” which captures the noun “apology,” its plural form “apologies,” its adjectival form “apologetic,” the verb “apologize” (and given its regular verb form, its past and future tense too), its adverbial form “apologetically,” and related nouns such as “apologist(s)” and “apologia.” In doing so, the analysis can be refined and focused on the unit of meaning (semantic content) rather than a unit of speech (predefined words).

Additionally, we consulted the online Merriam-Webster dictionary to retrieve a term's definition and perform a search for synonyms and related words. For example,

Merriam-Webster provides two definitions of an apology: “an explanation that frees one from fault or blame” and “an admission of error or discourtesy accompanied by an expression of regret.” Hence, the terms “fault,” “blame,” “error,” and “regret” subsequently became subject to the same thesaurus search and their stems were entered into the dictionary file. Other suggested surrogate and related terms for “apology” were “plea (of guilty),” “atonement,” and “confession,” among others. Admittedly, the thesaurus search provides many more synonyms and related words, but researchers who aim to conduct a computer-assisted content analysis of a significant corpus of speeches are forced to make certain practical decisions. For example, the words “reason” and “justification” were suggested surrogate terms for “apology,” while “responsibility” and “accountability” were offered as a substitute for “blame” by Merriam-Webster. Entering the stems of those terms would make the analysis less precise because they capture a large number of rhetorical moments that are not related to apologetic rhetoric. To be clear, then, these terms are not exhaustive, but rather emerged as the most common ways public officials acknowledge their mistakes and verbalize their apologies, based on their presence in the extant literature, a thesaurus search for relevant synonyms, and several readings of randomly selected presidential speeches prior to conducting the CCA.

The main purpose of developing such dictionaries is twofold. First, in analyzing a set of transcripts it provides some initial trend data based on the usage of specific terms (e.g., to assess the overall use of the lexeme “apology” in presidential rhetoric) or frequency of the variables entered into the string (e.g., in our case the frequency with which presidents have traveled to certain countries). Second, the method provides the opportunity to narrow the search down to relevant content – those messages that include some form of apologetic rhetoric. In other words, a certain number of speeches did not qualify based on these exclusion criteria, and thus did not require further analysis. TextQuest makes it possible to locate such key terms within a given text or a set of texts. In addition, it provides contextual information (all surrounding words and sentences called “concordances”) that is clustered around the lexeme. By using such a filter function, a printable output file is created and the manual coding procedure is made manageable.

Administering the Manual Coding Procedure

All remaining speeches were subject to manual content analysis, with the unit of analysis being a single mention of any of the identified lexemes. The coding scheme for this analysis was in part based on previous research and conceptualizations of public apologies (Abadi, 1990; Blatz et al., 2009; Kampf, 2009a) and newly added measures. As mentioned in the preceding section, each text received a number at the outset. Units that qualified based on the filter search via keywords received an additional number (in ascending order). For example, a text may include no such term at all, while another text includes several of the lexemes representative of apologetic

rhetoric. Once those units were identified, one essential criterion for inclusion was to code for *self-reference*, that is, while using the lexeme, presidents refer either to themselves or the United States (e.g., “my fault” or “mistakes we’ve made in the past as a country”) or to another entity (e.g., “guilty nations”). This aspect of the process requires human, rather than computer, judgment. If the latter was the case, the instance did not qualify as self-referential apologetic rhetoric. However, if the former was the case, the following additional items guided the rest of the content analysis.

- *Creative use of tense and conditional form.* Sometimes speakers make use of so-called “non-performative” apologies (Kampf, 2009a). The purpose of this category was to differentiate between actual statements (the act of confession occurs as part of the speech act, or a reference to a past confession is made), and hypothetical situations (including conditional and future tense). An example of the former is “The uncertainty might come from our failure to control and to regulate the arms competition” (Carter, 1979) whereas an example of the latter is “If we, the U.S., have been at fault we stand ready to be corrected” (Eisenhower, 1958).
- *Willingness to engage in self-criticism.* The purpose of this code was to distinguish between instances in which the speaker makes some criticism of the nation (by publicly admitting mistakes or offering an explicit apology) and instances in which the speaker refuses to do so (an explicit refusal to apologize or to acknowledge mistakes). This does not refer to the responsibility taken for the act. Examples are “We shall not be so pious or so hypocritical as to pretend that we have not made mistakes” (Nixon, 1970) with regard to Vietnam, or “Today we rejoice also in another event for which we need not apologize” (Roosevelt, 1943).
- *Use of the lexeme “apology.”* The performative verb “to apologize” is considered the strongest of all forms of apologetic rhetoric and therefore deserves emphasis. This code was used to distinguish between uses of “apologize” and any other form, for example, “I am sorry” or “I regret.” Examples are “I am sorry, I omitted that from my comments” (G. H. W. Bush, 1991) and “To the extent I’ve caused this, I apologize” (G. W. Bush, 2007).
- *Specifying the nature of the act.* The purpose of this code was to distinguish between generic, superficial remarks and specific, clear-cut remarks. Kampf (2009a) proposed this rhetorical strategy to blur the nature of the offense and minimize responsibility. An example of the former is “we make mistakes and we’re not perfect” (Clinton, 1994), whereas an illustration of the latter form is “It’s a shame in America that children getting out of high school cannot read sufficiently” (G. W. Bush, 2002).
- *Specifying the identity of the wrongdoer.* The purpose of this category was to assess whether the offender is mentioned in the discourse or not. The rhetor may use the first-person plural form (“we”) or, to concretize responsibility, may mention the wrongdoer (e.g., “we Americans”), or refer to himself as the principal offender (“I”). Examples from the discourse include “We failed to bring Saddam Hussein back into the family of nations” (G. H. W. Bush, 1992). Examples emphasizing

the nation include “We in the United States have made many mistakes in our relations with Latin America” (Kennedy, 1961). Examples highlighting the speaker include “my failure to avoid mentioning several immediate problems that are troubling the U.S.” (Eisenhower, 1960).

A total of 2,362 potential instances of apologetic rhetoric were identified by TextQuest. However, this number also included remarks uttered by reporters or hosts (mostly during interviews or press conferences). Recall that substantive remarks by other foreign leaders (which are typically part of the speech files released by the *American Presidency Project*) were already excluded *before* conducting the CCA. However, the typical question and answer form of interviews and news conferences made it somewhat difficult to exclude *all* nonpresidential content at the outset of the study. Moreover, important contextual information may have been lost in so doing. To clean the data from those instances, an analysis of the TextQuest concordances – each consisting of 300 characters in our case, that is, 150 characters occurring before and after the particular lexeme – made it possible to identify those apologetic lexemes that were not spoken by a president (we considered 300 characters to be sufficient to determine the speaker and major context; others might choose a smaller or larger range depending on their study goals and design). This procedure allowed 237 such instances (reporter remarks, interviewer questions) to be identified and excluded from further analysis. Thus, a total of 2,125 apologetic lexemes ultimately served as the basis for this analysis.

One person completed the content analysis. As a check of reliability, a second person coded a randomly selected subsample consisting of approximately 8% of the lexemes. Overall, chance-corrected rates of agreement (that is, taking into account the amount of agreement between multiple coders that could occur based on chance as opposed to deliberate agreement) ranged from 0.72 to 1.00 (see Cohen, 1960). Specifically, chance-corrected agreements were as follows: self-reference 0.82, tense 0.83, willingness 0.92, specifying the act 0.73, specifying the wrongdoer 0.72, and use of the apology lexeme 1.00.

Analysis

Research Question 1

RQ1 explores the extent to which modern presidents have used apologetic rhetoric in their public messages to foreign audiences. Apologetic rhetoric is indicated by the use of respective lexemes that reveal the act not only of apologizing, but also of regretting own behaviors and other events, admitting past mistakes, or asking for reconciliation. Figure 12.1 (based on $n = 2,125$) presents presidents’ *overall use* of these lexemes, controlled for total word count.

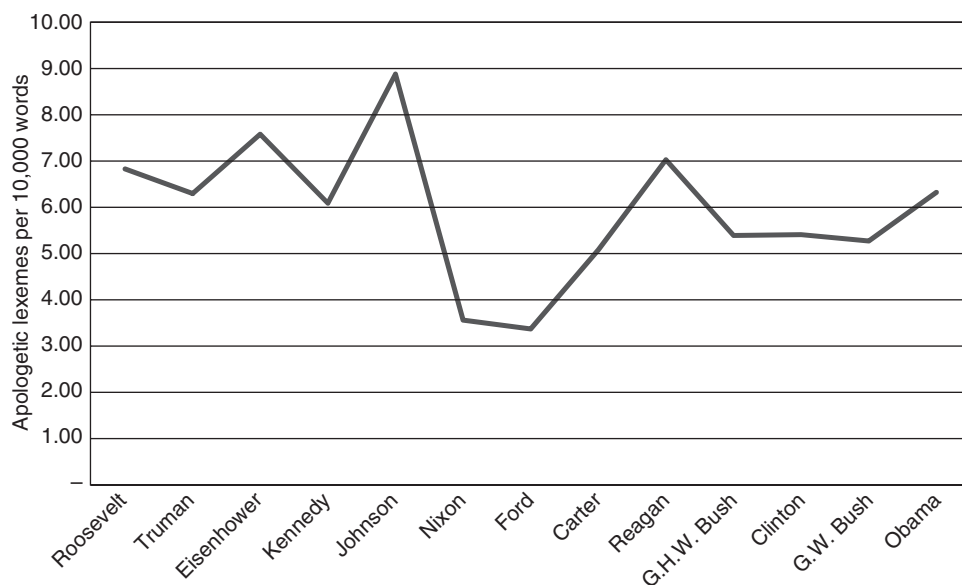


Figure 12.1 Apologetic rhetoric in presidential messages abroad, per 10,000 words ($n = 2,125$)

The findings suggest that modern presidents have remained fairly consistent in their overall use of apologetic rhetoric. They averaged 5.6 apologetic lexemes per 10,000 words, with Johnson (8.9), Eisenhower (7.6), and Roosevelt (6.8) scoring above that average, and Ford (3.4), Nixon (3.6), and Carter (5.1) scoring below average. While the biggest changes occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, the use of apologetic rhetoric has remained fairly constant since Reagan.

Although this initial analysis provides some preliminary insight into presidents' use of apologetic rhetoric *in general*, narrowing the parameters of this rhetoric provides a more precise look at presidential behavior. A major distinction can be made by separating self-referential remarks (e.g., "our mistakes") from other-referential utterances (e.g., "their fault"). In roughly 40% of all cases ($n = 843$) presidents referred to either themselves or the nation, as opposed to 60% where presidents applied any of the given lexemes to either refer to the injustices or mistakes of others, or to state general phrases without further specification of the source ($n = 1,282$). Specific examples of other-referential units are "The Taliban and Saddam holdouts are desperately trying to stop our progress; they will fail" (G. H. W. Bush, 1990) and "It's easy to point fingers and to pin the blame of these problems on others" (Obama, 2009).

Note that those instances were then separated from "minor" apologies and hypothetical statements. For example, presidents often apologize for arriving late at a scheduled speech occasion or departing early from the visited country, or presidents

say “sorry” or “excuse me” in press conferences when they do not understand the question. While this may be indicative of a speaker’s politeness, these instances are not meaningful in the context of apologetic rhetoric; 309 such minor remarks (36.7% of all self-referential instances) were identified and excluded from further analysis. Expressions of regret and sorrow in case of natural disasters (e.g., a country’s victims struck by a hurricane or an earthquake) or the death of a foreign leader ($n = 84$, 10%) were also excluded. Likewise, presidents apply another rhetorical strategy: the use of the conditional tense to describe potential, not actual, failures. Examples include “if we fail to act in the face of danger, the people of Iraq will continue to live in brutal submission” (G. W. Bush, 2002) or “our children and grandchildren will never forgive us *if* we allow new and unstable nuclear standoffs to develop around the world” (G. H. W. Bush, 1992). While these instances describe possible failures the United States could commit, they are nonetheless hypothetical situations and therefore not truly representative of apologetic rhetoric; 115 such phrases were excluded from the final analysis (13.6% of all self-referential remarks). Taken together, the result of these necessary exclusions is that a total of 333 units (only 15.7% of all mentions originally identified via CCA) exist that are truly representative of modern presidential apologetic rhetoric. These units serve as the basis for further analysis.³

The trend (see Figure 12.2) – looked at in this more nuanced fashion – reveals a decrease in apologetic rhetoric throughout the modern presidency. Two of the three early modern presidents have been most likely to apply apologetic rhetoric. Roosevelt averages 2.6 mentions per 10,000 words, followed by Eisenhower (2.0) and Reagan

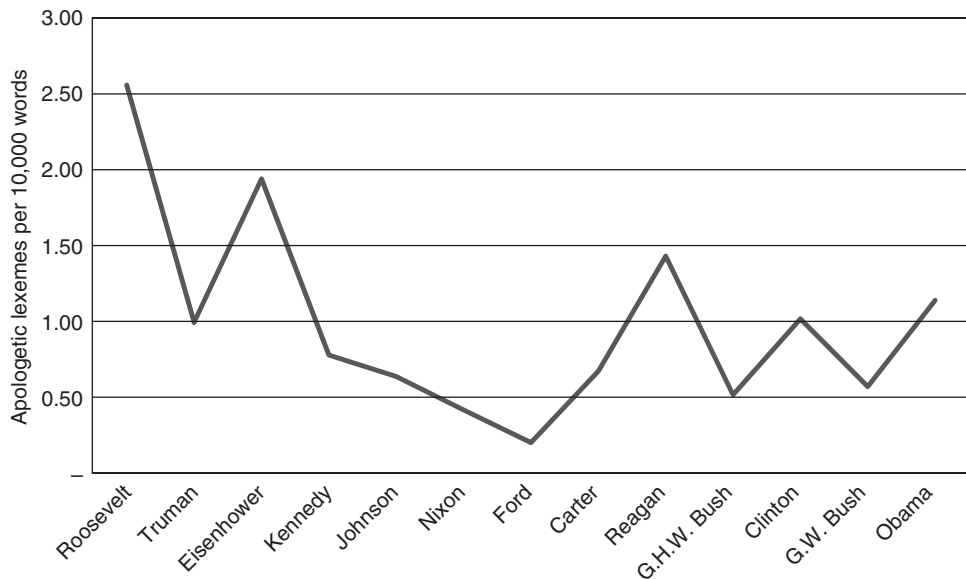


Figure 12.2 Self-referential apologetic rhetoric in presidential messages abroad, per 10,000 words ($n = 335$)

(1.4). A first change occurred in the mid-1960s, determined by four consecutive presidents who were among the least likely to use such rhetoric: Johnson averages 0.6, Nixon 0.4, and Ford 0.2 mentions per 10,000 words. A second change took place with Reagan entering office. Apologetic rhetoric was somewhat revived and has since remained fairly consistent. Although both Bush presidencies account for slight downward trends, Obama appears to be more similar to Reagan and Clinton when it comes to the extent of using apologetic rhetoric abroad, averaging 1.1 mentions per 10,000 words. However, the more recent presidents clearly do not reach the levels of early modern presidents. Additional differences exist with regard to party affiliation. While Democrats average one apologetic instance per 10,000 words across all messages ($SD = 0.66^4$), Republicans average 0.76 instances per 10,000 words ($SD = 0.69$), thus suggesting that Democrats have been more likely to apply apologetic rhetoric. It is impossible to know for certain what caused the downward trend in the 1960s. One possibility, though, is that the general lack of media coverage and the absence of journalists abroad might have caused early modern presidents to employ such language more easily than succeeding presidents. With a general increase in media coverage, presidents may have become more cautious about their message content. This is consistent with the Cold War context: any self-critical statement made by the president could potentially be interpreted as a sign of weakness by the ideological opponent.

To answer RQ1, then, it can be said that apologetic rhetoric in presidential messages abroad did not increase when controlled for president's total word count. In fact, it has remained fairly stable since Reagan. However, as demonstrated, much of this apologetic rhetoric is barely apologetic by the standards set forth above. Thus an analysis using a more rigorous focus on apologetic rhetoric revealed that modern presidents have *decreasingly used such language when referring to the nation*. Democratic presidents have been more likely than Republican presidents to admit the nation's past mistakes and to express sorrow about them. Individual presidential differences become manifest when contrasting Roosevelt and Eisenhower, the presidents most likely to use apologetic rhetoric, with Nixon and Ford, who were least likely to do so.

Research Question 2

RQ2 focuses on specific terms in apologetic rhetoric that presidents have used in their public messages delivered to foreign audiences. Based on the mixed approach to content analysis utilized in this study, we found that the most frequently occurring lexeme turned out to be "reconciliation" ($n = 107$, or 32% of all units considered herein), followed by "mistake" ($n = 66$, 19.8%), "fail" ($n = 43$, 12.9%), "regret" ($n = 19$, 5.7%), and "error" ($n = 12$, 3.6%). The strongest indicator of apologetic rhetoric, the term "apology" including its derivatives, was mentioned *only 13 times* in all 2,186 public messages. Religiously connotated terms such as "forgiveness" ($n = 3$),

Table 12.1 Frequencies of self-referential apologetic lexemes
(*n* = 335)

	Lexemes	Frequency (%)
1	Reconciliation	107 (32.0)
2	Mistake, flaw, fault, error	94 (28.0)
3	Fail	43 (12.8)
4	Regret	19 (5.7)
5	Apology	13 (3.7)
6	Injustice	12 (3.6)
7	Blame	12 (3.4)
8	Sorrow	8 (2.3)
9	Excuse	7 (2.0)
10	Sin(s)	7 (2.0)
11	Guilt	5 (1.4)
12	Forgiveness	3 (0.9)
13	Shame	3 (0.9)
14	Confession	3 (0.9)
15	Amends	1 (0.3)
16	Deplore	1 (0.3)
17	Pardon	1 (0.3)
18	Plea	1 (0.3)
19	Atonement	0
20	Remorse	0
	Total	335 (100.0)

Note: *n* = 335 is based on self-referential apologetic lexemes reduced by minor remarks, hypothetical situations, and expressions of regret for external events (not caused by the United States or the US president).

“confession” (*n* = 3), “sin(s)” (*n* = 7) were barely used by presidents while others (“atonement,” “remorse”) were not used at all when referring to the United States. Table 12.1 summarizes these frequencies.

To answer RQ2, then, it can be noted that presidents have mostly framed their apologetic statements by referring to mistakes and reconciliation. Both account for more than half of all lexemes included in this analysis. One might argue that by using the word “mistake” (instead of a stronger term such as “injustice” or a clear acknowledgment of guilt or shame) presidents attempt to downplay a wrongful act’s significance. To further illustrate, consider two examples from the discourse: “The errors we made, or at least the political decisions we made, caused us problems” (Clinton, 1997) and “We are not saints, we know we make mistakes” (Eisenhower, 1960). With regard to “reconciliation,” one might argue that instead of addressing the nation’s past, presidents prefer to draw attention to the present and the future. Instead of focusing on the roots of a conflict, presidents have chosen to highlight reconciliation as the healing process or the outcome of that process. An additional analysis shows that it is more common for presidents to position the United States

as a mediator or an active promoter of reconciliation between others (“America is using its influence to foster peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land,” G. W. Bush, 2008) and less common to present the United States as a nation that needs to be reconciled with other nations (“Americans and Germans came together, reconciled, and united for freedom,” Reagan, 1985). The almost complete absence of the term “apology,” however, casts some doubt on the idea that the US presidency has entered an “age of apology.”

Research Question 3

RQ3 asked about the differences of apologetic rhetoric regarding the message format. Messengers can have varying levels of control over the message. While news conferences are considered low in message control, major addresses before a foreign parliament, a foreign public, or the UN General Assembly are typically crafted messages, scheduled ahead of time and therefore prepared with diligence, often with the support of professional speechwriters. The overall trend suggests that, for the most part, presidents are more likely to apply some form of apologetic rhetoric when they have higher message control (i.e., speeches to political entities or citizens). Figure 12.3 illustrates that trend.

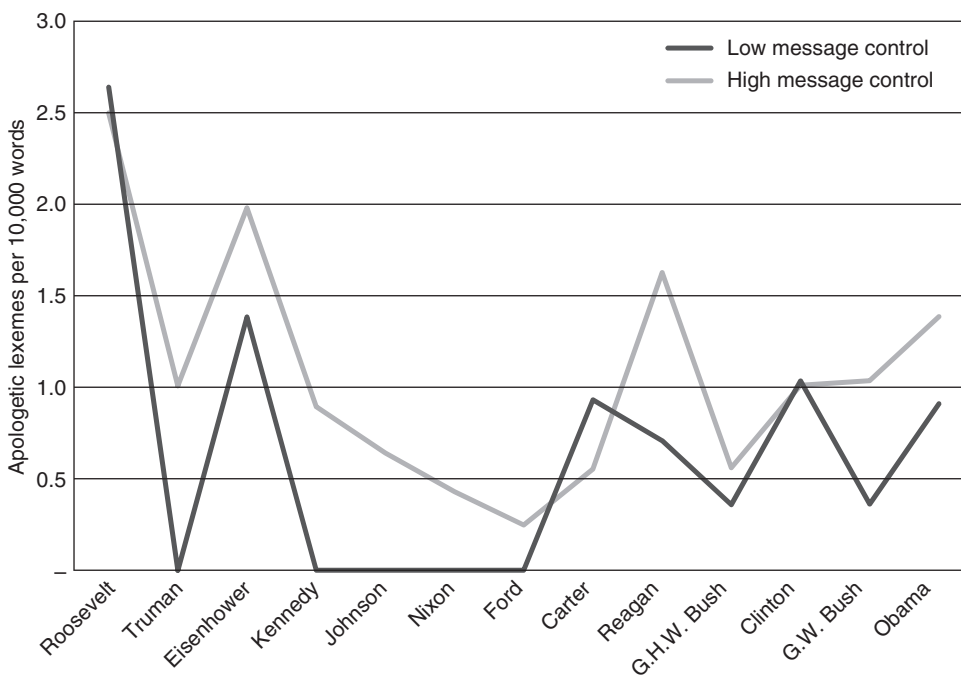


Figure 12.3 Self-referential apologetic rhetoric and message type (low versus high message control) ($n = 333$)

In particular, in their news conferences abroad presidents averaged 0.7 apologetic mentions (per 10,000 words), as opposed to 1.0 such mentions in all other spoken and written remarks. Presidents highest in apologetic rhetoric in news conferences were Roosevelt (2.6), Eisenhower (1.4), Clinton (1.0), and Obama (0.9), whereas Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford were lowest, with apologetic rhetoric being virtually absent from the discourse.⁵ Beginning with Carter, news conferences abroad became an essential part of modern presidential rhetoric. When presidents had more control over the message they were also more likely to use such rhetoric. However, the overall trend for those messages mainly follows the trend for messages low in control. Once again, two early modern presidents, Roosevelt (2.5 times per 10,000 words) and Eisenhower (2.0), and Reagan (1.6) were most likely to apply apologetic rhetoric in crafted speeches, as opposed to Ford (0.2), Nixon (0.4), and Johnson (0.6) who were the presidents least likely to do so. One might argue that this increase is due to reporters' behavior becoming increasingly "aggressive" in broaching the issue of past wrongdoings (e.g., a standard question asked by reporters is "What is your greatest regret of your presidency?"), thus urging the president to respond carefully. In an effort to avoid such questions, presidents might have adopted a rhetorical style and become more apologetic in their crafted speeches to pre-empt those attacks.

Research Question 4

The final research question focuses on the units that were found to be self-referential based on the discussion provided under RQ1 ($n = 333$). A first rhetorical strategy that has been discussed in the extant literature is the *willingness* to admit mistakes, to express sorrow and regret at past injustices, to apologize, or – more generally – to engage in self-criticism. In the following, we will refer to this as *self-critical* instances of apologetic rhetoric, thus excluding all mentions of reconciliation, refusals to apologize, and other defensive acts. For all further analyses we will also draw several comparisons by dividing the modern presidency along party lines (Democrats and Republicans) as well as in three broad phases (pre-Cold War, Cold War, and post-Cold War).⁶

Generally, it can be assumed that presidents who apply a more reconciliatory rhetoric demonstrate more willingness to admit past wrongs, whereas presidents who apply a more defensive rhetoric are less likely to do so. Presidents have admitted mistakes and acknowledged flaws to varying degrees: seven times in the early stages of the modern presidency (the pre-Cold War era), 68 times during Cold War, and 115 times in the post-Cold War phase. From a relative perspective, however, post-Cold War presidents have been slightly less willing than Cold War presidents to confess: during the Cold War presidents averaged 0.51 signals of willingness (per 10,000 words) while presidents governing in the 1990s and 2000s averaged 0.48 such signals.⁷

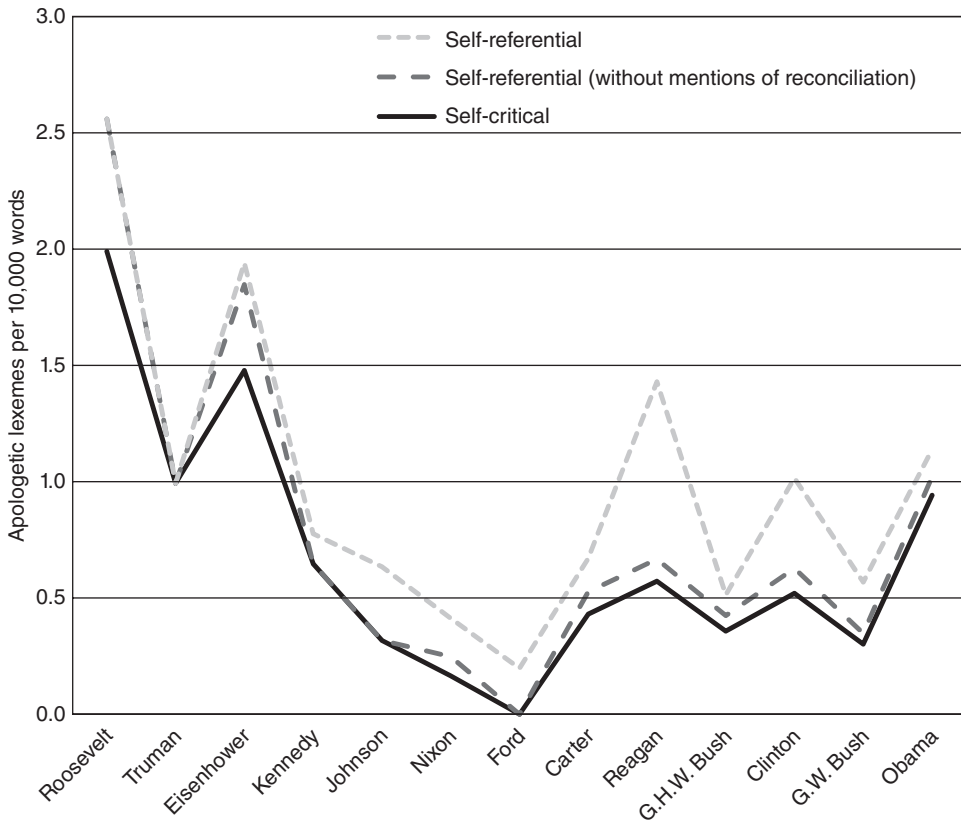


Figure 12.4 Self-referential ($n = 335$) and self-critical instances ($n = 191$) of apologetic rhetoric in presidential messages abroad

The distinction between self-referential units (those rhetorical moments where presidents broadly refer to themselves and the nation as opposed to others) and – being a subsection of it – self-critical units (those where presidents publicly made some form of criticism of the nation, for example, by admitting mistakes) is illustrated in Figure 12.4. The dashed gray line represents all self-referential units ($n = 333$, congruent with the line in Figure 12.2; note that this also includes few cases where presidents refuse to apologize or deny that mistakes happened), while the solid line marks all self-critical units ($n = 190$; both per 10,000 words). Additionally, given the prevalence of the reconciliation lexeme among all self-referential units, a third (dashed black) line is shown that refers to all self-referential units excluding all mentions of reconciliation ($n = 226$). The previously observed party differences remain when focusing on just the self-critical instances of apologetic rhetoric ($n = 190$). In particular, Democrats averaged 0.6 public confessions per 10,000 words ($SD = 0.57$) whereas Republicans averaged 0.4 public confessions per 10,000 words ($SD = 0.53$).

Recall that one of the major conclusions of RQ1 was a downward trend that began in the 1950s and reached its low point in the mid-1970s, followed by an upward trend in the 1980s that has since remained fairly consistent. This trend is represented by the gray dashed line in Figure 12.4. It is apparent that the increased usage of the term “reconciliation” (especially by Reagan, Clinton, Johnson, and Eisenhower) is responsible for some of the variation, as indicated by the gaps between the two dashed lines in Figure 12.4. Excluding reconciliation from this trend thus results in a more flattened curve in the recent past. This in turn strongly follows the trend line resembling only the self-critical instances. When focusing on those specific instances the tendency for most modern presidents to admit mistakes is not entirely different from the observation made under RQ1. However, the differences between post-Cold War presidents are now more pronounced, particularly when comparing Obama to his predecessors. While G. H. W. Bush, Clinton, and G. W. Bush rather resemble Reagan, there was an upsurge in 2009 when it came to presidential criticism of the United States (its previous administration, in particular).⁸ This in turn is more reminiscent of the early days of the modern presidency.

A second rhetorical strategy is to focus on the *type of wrongdoing*, particularly the degree of specificity with which modern presidents have admitted past mistakes and injustices. In the past, presidents have acknowledged specific wrongdoings and historical injustices, ranging from slavery and segregation to support of corrupt regimes and military dictatorships, and policy failures regarding energy, immigration, or foreign affairs. In so doing, presidents may be more specific (e.g., “it’s one of my great regrets that it did take so long in Bosnia” (Clinton, 1999)) or less specific (“whatever mistakes we have made” (Obama, 2009)) in acknowledging wrongdoings. In general, modern presidents have been willing to admit specific mistakes in nearly two-thirds ($n = 120$) of the cases in which mistakes were admitted; one-third relates to rather general phrases and superficial remarks ($n = 70$). In particular, presidents more likely to specify their own or the nation’s mistakes were Kennedy and Johnson (both 100%), G. W. Bush (80.8%), and G. H. W. Bush (73.3% of all mistakes acknowledged were specific). Presidents less likely to specify their own or the nation’s mistakes were Eisenhower (68.8% of all mistakes acknowledged were rather general confessions), Reagan (50.0%), and Obama (50.0%). On average, presidents governing in the post-Cold War era were *slightly more likely* to specify their mistakes (67.8%, $n = 78$) than their predecessors (55.9%, $n = 38$) in cases where those were admitted. However, when controlled for number of words, those differences disappear: Whereas Cold War presidents admitted 0.29 specific mistakes on average (per 10,000 words), post-Cold War presidents admitted 0.32 specific mistakes.⁹ Interestingly, although post-Cold War presidents have been *slightly less willing* than Cold War presidents to confess, they have been *slightly more specific* than Cold War presidents in acknowledging mistakes, thus indicating a more reconciliatory, less defensive rhetoric prevalent in the 1990s and 2000s.

A third rhetorical strategy is to focus on the *identity of the wrongdoer*, particularly the degree of specificity with which modern presidents reveal their own or their

nation's role in committing mistakes. Previous research suggested that omitting, concealing, or de-emphasizing certain information (such as the wrongdoer's identity) may be one form of reducing responsibility (Fairclough, 2000; Kampf, 2009a). To do this, presidents might use the personal pronoun "we" without explicitly linking the transgression to the United States. For example, presidents may refer to a failure committed by a broader alliance of nations including the United States (e.g., G. W. Bush's "Coalition of the Willing"; the UN in its entirety; or simply the West), as in "the failure of the *Allied nations* to make more progress in *their* common search for a lasting peace" (Truman, 1946) or "inescapable human errors in *our* long record" (Eisenhower, 1956). Post-Cold War presidents were less likely (56.5%, $n = 65$) to use such general forms than their predecessors (72.1%, $n = 49$) in cases where mistakes were acknowledged during that period. In fact, post-Cold War presidents were *more likely to engage in self-criticism emphasizing the United States* (26.1%, $n = 30$) than their predecessors (17.6%, $n = 12$), as illustrated, for example, in "There's plenty of blame to go around for what has happened, and *the United States* certainly shares its blame for what has happened" (Obama, 2009) or "perhaps the worst sin *America* ever committed about Africa was the sin of neglect and ignorance" (Clinton, 1998). Similarly, Clinton, G. W. Bush and Obama were also more likely than their predecessors to admit personal mistakes (16.5%, $n = 19$ versus 10.3%, $n = 7$), such as "I've already said *I* made a bad mistake, it was indefensible" (Clinton, 1998). Compared with Cold War presidents, the four presidents governing in the 1990s and 2000s have been slightly less likely to signal willingness to admit past mistakes and express regret, but slightly more likely to engage in self-criticism highlighting themselves or the United States as the principal wrongdoer and clarifying the nature of the transgression.

Nonetheless, modern presidents have primarily avoided highlighting the United States as a principal wrongdoer, and instead made generalizations about the offending parties by not outlining and further specifying the role of the United States in previous conflicts and wrongful acts. Presidents seem to reduce responsibility and "democratize" blame by applying certain rhetorical strategies that are used to blur the identity of the offender, or distort the nature and dimension of the act itself.

Conclusion: Advantages and Disadvantages of a Mixed Approach

This chapter aimed to illustrate the process of a mixed approach to content analysis through a study of modern American presidents' apologetic rhetoric. The study presented here has, we hope, demonstrated the many advantages of this approach. We briefly reflect on these advantages below, and also highlight some of the disadvantages of adopting this method.

The mixed approach shares one of CCA's greatest strengths: the ability to process large quantities of data. Rather than having to rely on a sample of relevant moments,

the mixed approach allows scholars to speak with authority about over-time trends in the census of relevant text. In the case of presidential apologies abroad, for instance, we can be more certain of our generalizations than we would be if we were manually coding a smaller sample of texts, or if we had limited ourselves to fewer lexemes. The use of the automated procedures discussed above made such certainty possible. Just as clear, however, is that had we only relied on these automated processes, our ability to fully understand presidents' apologetic rhetoric would have been severely constrained. Additional manual coding provided a much more nuanced view of the data. In this case, at least, neither of the two methods would have been sufficient by itself: while manual coding of more than 2,000 documents would not have been manageable given pragmatic considerations, relying on CCA alone would have generated very different findings – and provided even misleading trends. For example, recall that our data showed a considerable number of “minor apologies” and hypothetical statements. These common speech elements are not truly representative of apologetic rhetoric, but would nonetheless have been captured by the computer. Without manual coding to eliminate such instances, the data would have been far less accurate and useful.

The possibility of narrowing the search results down to a limited number of relevant texts (while excluding irrelevant entities) also facilitates the search for qualitative evidence that can help provide greater meaning to quantitative trends. This can be useful to substantiate findings when interpreting or explaining the results of a study, for example, by facilitating the process of finding illustrative quotes in the texts. Simply put, instead of wading through a sea of text, the content analysis software generates a compressed file of relevant utterances (using concordances) from which the researcher can easily choose. This feature also allows the researcher to double check data for negated statements and ambiguous remarks – elements that can mask crucial bits of data if not identified. The mixed approach thus allows rhetorical trends to be interpreted more accurately than they might otherwise be, and is therefore especially useful for many diachronic research endeavors.

Researchers adopting this approach should also be aware of a few disadvantages. Central among these is that a mixed approach is more time-consuming than traditional CCA, given that it adds the manual component. But it is also worth knowing that even the automated components are not possible without considerable time spent preparing the files for the computer. For instance, creating a text file with all sample documents and “data cleaning” may sometimes be necessary to make the actual analysis more manageable and meaningful. Setting up a dictionary of key terms can be a time-consuming endeavor too, but it is essential to make the initial term search as exhaustive as possible. Some studies (e.g., Coe, 2011) generate the dictionary of search terms directly from a complete list of every distinct word used in the corpus of texts. This approach is the surest means of making the dictionaries valid but is also extremely time-consuming.

Additionally, there will always be in the mixed approach some degree to which the manual coding is limited by lack of context. For example, a traditional content

analysis of presidential speeches would have human coders reading entire speeches and coding for certain categories as they appear in the texts. In contrast, the mixed approach isolates key terms and has human coders code those terms within some limited amount of contextual material (e.g., 150 characters on either side of the term, our chosen amount of context in the present study). Coding decisions made by humans who have read an entire speech have the potential to be more sophisticated than those made by humans who have read only a small passage. In nearly all cases, however, this limitation of the mixed approach can be compensated for by carefully selecting the categories that will be central to the analysis. It is simple, for example, to understand from just a small amount of context whether a president is apologizing for his own actions or for those of others. Thus the mixed approach is effective in this case. If the coding categories require judgments that are quite complicated, however, the mixed approach is probably less useful than traditional manual coding.

Obviously, our focus has been on just one narrow context: modern presidents' apologetic rhetoric. But the mixed approach has broad applicability to various other contexts. For example, future studies might focus on the corporate level where apologetic rhetoric is used as a means of image repair, especially when relations between a company and its customers have been strained due to an environmental, safety, or health crisis. Numerous case studies have been conducted (e.g., Benoit & Lindsey, 1987; Hearit, 1994) but a quantitative assessment has been largely absent from the literature. A mixed approach could thus be used to examine companies' crisis response messages over time or by sector. Similarly, given that political discourse happens in interaction between political elites, the public, and the media, the mixed approach can also be used to incorporate citizen blogs or news media content. In so doing, one can analyze how particular moments of presidential apologetic rhetoric are perceived and interpreted by citizens or reported and commented on by the (international) news media. Such studies, for example, may focus on a single presidency but allow for a number of media responses (to presidents' apologetic rhetoric) to be included. Scholars can thus gain additional insight into which media outlets turn a particular moment of apologetic rhetoric (as the forms identified herein) into an "apology" *per se*, which would perhaps explain much of the recent discussion about the "age of apology" (Gibney et al., 2008; Kampf, 2009b).

More broadly, the methodology outlined in this chapter can be applied to analyze discourse beyond topics related to political communication and can be conducted in every language (assuming the content analysis software is able to process non-English language or non-roman letters). The mixed approach to content analysis employed and explained herein is suitable for scholars interested in processing large quantities of text (to examine broader rhetorical trends) yet do not want to refrain from taking a closer look at rhetorical nuances. Research might focus on such areas as environmental communication (e.g., framing of climate change in news coverage), health communication (e.g., examining arguments used in public health messages), or mass communication (e.g., portrayal of minorities and use of stereotypes in mass

media). Whatever the context, the mixed approach should give scholars a useful tool for better understanding various forms of spoken and written communication.

NOTES

- 1 Texts of presidential speeches, from which all quotations and analyses are drawn, were retrieved from the *American Presidency Project* (University of California, Santa Barbara, n.d.).
- 2 For further information see www.textquest.de.
- 3 Although those other-referential units constitute apologetic rhetoric to a great extent, they were not part of further analysis. That presidents have been more likely to refer to the mistakes and faults of others is nonetheless interesting, but in order to give an accurate account of presidential apologetic rhetoric, only self-referential remarks are included in further analyses.
- 4 *SD* = standard deviation.
- 5 It should also be noted that those five presidents held very few press conferences abroad compared to all other modern presidents.
- 6 For this study, the pre-Cold War era was defined as Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration (March 4, 1933) through the end of World War II (specifically the Pacific War on September 2, 1945). That was followed by the Cold War era, which lasted until the dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991. The post-Cold War era then continued to the present.
- 7 World War II presidents Roosevelt and Truman averaged 1.55 apologetic lexemes per 10,000 words, thus confirming previous trends suggested earlier.
- 8 However, caution is recommended in judging the rhetorical trend President Obama has set in his first 15 months in office. Presidents have generally traveled abroad more during their first year in office than in the years afterwards. In the case of Obama, for example, roughly half of the country visits made during his first term were in his first year in office (25 out of 51). Hence, it remains to be seen if the rhetorical signals Obama sends in his second term are compatible with his first year's rhetoric.
- 9 World War II presidents Roosevelt and Truman fall somewhere in between (57.1% of all mistakes acknowledged were specific, $n = 4$) and averaged 0.89 specific mistakes per 10,000 words.

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Lessons Learned from a Research Saga

An Ambitious Content Analysis of Television Form

Matthew Lombard

ABSTRACT

A team of researchers led by the author developed, designed, conducted, and reported a large-scale content analysis of the structural features of television. The project was unusually ambitious and, by necessity, creative. The chapter describes some of the key decisions and challenges the team faced along the way and the unexpected afterlife of the original project. The author concludes with advice for content analysis and for other researchers based on lessons learned from the experience.

This chapter describes lessons I learned from a long research saga: designing, conducting, writing up, presenting, and publishing an ambitious content analysis of television form and its unexpected offshoot projects. The origins of the research project are described first. This is followed by a discussion of some key issues and challenges the research group faced regarding the design. These include issues with sampling and material collection, the development of measures, coder selection and training, inter-coder reliability, data entry and analysis, and writing, authorship, and presentation of the original study. The chapter also discusses the project's unexpected afterlife. It

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems184

concludes with advice based on lessons I learned about conducting not just content analyses but any research project.

Origins: Developing Research Questions

The saga began in early 1995, when I was a junior professor in the Radio–Television–Film department at Temple University. Although research questions and hypotheses can come from personal observations, “future research” sections of published articles, and a myriad of other places, the questions in this case arose naturally from my previous work. My dissertation project at Stanford University, and a subsequent series of three experiments conducted with a group of doctoral and master’s students at Temple, had explored “direct responses” to mediated stimuli – what I would later identify as presence (short for telepresence). The idea was that, at least in some cases and to some degree, people respond to images and sounds on television (and in other media) not as representations of people, objects, and events but as the people, objects, and events themselves (i.e., directly). The first experiments used created and then found footage of individual people speaking to a camera. They manipulated screen size, shot length, and viewing distance (independent variables) to replicate the dynamics of “personal space,” demonstrating that when people are made to feel physically close to people on the screen, their responses (dependent variables) mimic those in nonmediated settings (see Lombard, 1995). The Temple studies (Grabe, Lombard, Reich, Bracken, & Ditton, 1999; Lombard, Ditton, Grabe, & Reich, 1997; Lombard, Reich, Grabe, Bracken, & Ditton, 2000) expanded the types of content tested and established that the formal production feature we called quick, forward point-of-view movement – as when a camera is attached to the front of a roller coaster or race car – produces a greater sense of enjoyable physical self-motion (measured via questionnaires) and physiological arousal (measured via finger sensors that capture the skin’s electrical conductivity) when the filmed movement is viewed on a larger screen, an indication that viewers felt more “present” in the scenes.

These studies demonstrated that we could produce presence responses in viewers in an experimental setting, but they led us to wonder how often media consumers in the “real world” actually have these responses. We wanted to know how often, when, on which kinds of programs and channels/networks, and especially in which ways the presentation characteristics of television were most likely to evoke a sense of presence in viewers. We realized this would be an ambitious, time-consuming research project, and wanting to be efficient, we brainstormed about other ways we could use the data we would collect. Since most of the variables we had measured would concern the form rather than the content of television, and since there was already an extensive literature in media psychology regarding how viewers respond to many of these “formal features” (see Lombard, Bracken, Linder, Snyder, Ditton, Kaynak, Pemrick, & Steward, 1996), we would be able to assess and report on the

“state of the medium” at the time, allowing researchers to extrapolate about viewers’ responses to everyday viewing. We and others had noted the apparent increase in TV clutter – more, shorter commercials and promotional messages in more and longer program interruptions, and more complicated and potentially distracting graphics in news programs – so another part of our research could provide empirical evidence regarding these contributors to clutter. And we dreamed of future studies that would examine television in different eras as well as other media, expanding our Structural Features (SF) projects, conveniently abbreviated SF-Presence, SF-State, and SF-Clutter, into a near endless series of future projects.

Design

While it is possible – and some might say common – to choose a method first and to adjust one’s research questions to fit it, the best approach is to identify the questions first and select the most appropriate method(s) to address them. In this case, content analysis – “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications” (Berelson, 1952, p. 74) – was the obvious choice. Although I had never conducted one, I had learned about the method and read many reports of content analyses. I knew the coding itself, which involves categorizing the content into meaningful categories, would be monotonous (in graduate school we were told every researcher should do the coding on one project and then have other people do that work in future projects!). But after conducting experiments and surveys I particularly liked the idea that a content analysis would not require us to recruit and deal with the quirks of human participants or even to obtain approval from an institutional review board (IRB) to conduct the study. So we set about designing the ambitious content analysis, which meant making careful decisions about what material to collect and code, what characteristics (variables) to measure, how many coders we would need and how to train them, how to evaluate the consistency or agreement of the coders (intercoder reliability), and how to record, analyze, and summarize the results.

Sampling and Material Collection

Because we were setting out to study not a specific genre (e.g., news), content feature (e.g., violence), day part (e.g., prime time), type of channel (e.g., major broadcast networks) or formal feature but all of television, we chose to sample the 10 broadcast stations in Philadelphia (the fourth largest media market in the United States then and at the time of writing) and the 15 basic cable networks available in most households in the United States (according to *Cable TV*, April 30, 1995). The selection of most *available* rather than most *watched* cable networks was particularly

strategic because we wanted to include both the frenetic features of popular MTV and the sedate features of the less popular C-SPAN.

The standard and most available video recording medium at the time was VHS videotape – unfortunately not even as high in quality as the then already disappearing Betamax format. While the format allowed for six hours of recording at the slowest speed (EP), the analog video editing equipment we knew we would need to use for the coding could only display tapes recorded at the standard two-hours-per-tape speed (SP). We knew that the ideal sample would be compiled over a whole year of the traditional fall to spring TV season since there are likely seasonal variations in the form of television. To be practical and still capture some of this variation, we selected a four-week period that included weeks both during and outside of the spring ratings “sweeps” period, when stations select programming to maximize their audience for the more detailed ratings taken by ACNielsen.

We wanted enough material to compare channels and times of day, so we settled on recording six tapes for each of the 25 channels for a total of 150 tapes. We investigated the possibility of buying tapes from a bulk seller but ended up finding good deals at local electronic and department stores. We used the Minitab software to generate several different series of random numbers to select channels (1–25), weeks (1–4), hours (1–12), and a.m. or p.m. (1–12). We used the random numbers to create the list of dates, start times, and channels for the recordings, and refined the list by applying a “rule” that the selected times be three hours apart to prevent overlap and to insure that all day parts were represented. Then we divided the selected recording obligations among the six team members with access to VCRs, avoiding assignments that required the same person to record different channels at the same time. What we had not considered is that in some cases people would forget to program their VCR or misprogram it, that some machines and tapes would fail, and that during some of the selected recording times the channel would be off the air (although all but unheard of today, this was common then and a particular problem with a small local PBS station in our sample).

We dealt with these problems by using the random numbers to select additional recording details and ended up extending the sampling period to a fifth week (and seven rather than six recordings per channel). Between August 13 and October 13, 1995, 175 two-hour blocks of television broadcasts/cablecasts were recorded; 160 of the tapes (320 hours) of television programming were viable for coding. Even these many years later I have boxes in my office filled with the VHS tapes we created.

Measures

No one had conducted a study like this before. Most of the structural features of the television medium either had not been examined in research or, when studied (usually in regard to their effects), had been defined inconsistently or imprecisely. So we began with variables and definitions in a well-known production handbook (Zettl, 1984),

studies that examined particular structural features in any context, and our own knowledge of television production techniques. We quickly realized we could not even have a useful conversation without developing a lexicon of basic terms; for example, a *frame* is an individual photograph on a videotape, the *screen* is the physical border that encloses the image on a television set, an *image* refers to the contents of the entire viewing screen, and a *picture* is a self-contained, bordered representation of objects and entities (there may be more than one picture in a given image).

To create our coding instrument we identified as many formal features related to presence, psychological processing research, and various types of video clutter as we could find or create. The variables represented characteristics of television form at several distinct levels including a single frame (e.g., camera shot length), a continuous shot (e.g., shot duration), a transition between shots (e.g., type of transition – cut, dissolve, etc.), a 10-second interval (e.g., artificial special visual effects), a program segment (e.g., genre), and an entire program (e.g., duration of opening and closing credits). In many long discussions we eliminated variables that were similar to each other or relatively unimportant, or that we decided we could not code reliably. Then we assembled two rough and incomplete coding manuals – one for complete programs and one for variables linked to single “time points” – that contained each variable and its corresponding response options, detailed definitions of terms that we thought might not be understood by different people in the same way, and examples to illustrate what we considered proper coding of many of the variables. We used extra tapes we had recorded to discuss each of the variables and how we might refine our collective understanding and the corresponding written descriptions of each one. Along with detailed instructions for coders, the final version of the “Coding Manual for Program Variables” was 23 pages long and contained 11 variables (in addition to several that identified the details of the recording and coder). The “Manual” for time point and 10 second interval variables was 39 pages long and contained 27 variables.¹

The 320 hours of recordings contained 322 complete programs. We used Minitab again to randomly select seven time points (hours, minutes, seconds) for each codable two-hour recording, resulting in what was eventually a total of 965 codable time points. The time points were restricted to being five minutes apart to reduce the likelihood of repeated coding of the same parts of the recording. These time points determined the units to be coded for a single frame (the image at the time point), a shot (in progress including the time point), a transition (the first that followed the time point), a 10 second interval (beginning with the time point) and a program segment (in progress at the time point).

Coder Selection and Training

Because our sample of television recordings was so large and our coding scheme so extensive, we decided we needed to hire additional coders to share the work. Even

with optimistic estimates of the time required to code a single program (15 minutes per program, 25 minutes per time point), and with the need for additional coding to establish that we could code reliably, we had set a huge task for ourselves. While some members of the research group were students being compensated for their time with assistantship awards, course credit, research experience, and/or authorship (more on that below), we needed more hands. Using a small research grant I had received from Temple University, we hired three people – one doctoral student and two undergraduates who answered an open call for those who might be interested – and signed contracts outlining an agreement to pay them each \$1,000 in return for their completing training and then performing both reliability assessment coding and regular coding. Given the unpredictability regarding complications and time commitments along the way, we made the payment contingent on completion rather than based on an hourly rate. Extended conversations with each of the paid coders confirmed their basic understanding of the coding process and the required focus on detail, sense of commitment and responsibility, and overall reasonableness, an especially important criterion.

We began the coder training process by having everyone read the detailed coding manuals we had created and report any questions or problems. The coders then coded just one and then a series of programs and time points from a set of recordings that was not part of the study sample but made at the same time. At each step, we responded to issues that came up and in many cases altered the coding instrument and manual accordingly. For example, several variables were dropped because of concerns about reliability (as will be discussed shortly). The process took several sessions over a period of weeks.

Intercoder Reliability

I knew from graduate school and from reading reports of content analysis that an essential component of the method is the calculation of agreement among coders, which establishes that the patterns reported are not those perceived idiosyncratically by a single researcher but are matched by those of other independent observers. However, I naively assumed that researchers had long ago reached consensus on the best index of this inter-judge agreement, made available software tools to conveniently calculate reliability values, and established standard criteria for evaluating the values. We soon realized none of this was true and began searching for authoritative guidance on how to proceed.

We learned that merely calculating the percentage of times coders did agree out of all the opportunities they had to do so – though intuitive, easy, and commonly reported (Pasadeos, Huhman, Standley, & Wilson, 1995) – overestimates coder reliability. For example, two coders randomly selecting the values of a two-category variable would agree 50% of the time (see Seun & Lee, 1985). Of the other indices,

Cohen's kappa and Scott's pi seemed to be the most common and recommended, but the former was also criticized as inappropriate and both had significant limitations given our data set (as many as seven coders, all levels of measurement from nominal (e.g., yes/no) to ratio (e.g., durations)). Krippendorff's alpha seemed generally accepted and flexible, but extremely complex to calculate especially given our large number of variables. Thankfully, Professor Krippendorff worked across town at the University of Pennsylvania and generously allowed us to use a beta version of a software program he had commissioned. It was a bit primitive and required (as most reliability software does) a very specific arrangement of the input data, but it was a lot more practical than the alternatives – "by hand" calculations or custom-designed programs known as macros we created for use with SPSS analysis software.

Because we set out to code the manifest rather than latent or hidden characteristics of television, we expected it to be relatively easy to get coders to consistently make the same choices among the response options for each variable as they watched the recordings we had made. But our first test of coder reliability was a miserable failure. We quickly identified a primary reason: We hadn't realized that in the era of analog recordings on magnetic tape, which stretches and slips with each play, there is little chance of two people finding the exact same frame (time point) on a tape. So before we could demonstrate similar decision processes, we had to insure we were making decisions about the same things. After some brainstorming, we solved this problem with something we called an "anchor frame." The first person to code a recording moved the tape to the previously selected random time point frame, set the time counter to 00:00:00:00, wrote down a short description of the image at that frame, moved the tape forward to the first frame that followed the first cut (not dissolve or other gradual transition) after the time point frame, and wrote down a description of the image at this "anchor frame" and how many frames it was beyond the time point frame. Each subsequent coder then used the descriptions of the time point and anchor frames and the distance between them to insure they were about to complete the coding sheet based on the identical starting time point.

With the mundane mechanical obstacles to reliability removed, we were surprised to find that the coders were still making different judgments regarding many of the variables. The reasons were predictable – vague definitions and descriptions, unforeseen characteristics in the recordings – but frustrating. It turned out that television form is much more complicated and subtle and less manifestly obvious than we had initially thought. One coder who had rarely watched television helped the rest of us identify large and small assumptions we had made about how to understand and categorize what we were coding.

One example of the kinds of refinements to the coding instrument and manual that these reliability problems led to stands out, and also illustrates the type of information we had to provide for the coders to insure reliable results. In the early versions of the coding manual a variable meant to assess a type of presence was "Apparent broadcast type" at the beginning of each 10-second interval to be coded. It appeared in the manual this way:

30. Apparent broadcast type?

- _____ Live in real time
- _____ Live on tape
- _____ Taped/Filmed

FULL QUESTION:

Which broadcast type does the image SEEM to be?

DEFINITIONS & EXAMPLES:

Apparent broadcast type – the broadcast type that a program seems to use. For example, a talk show often seems to be “live,” happening as it is presented to us.

Live in real time – events on screen seem to be actually occurring at the time you see them.

Live on tape – events seem to have occurred in the exact sequence in which they’re presented but at an earlier time; the video tape of those events is being played.

Taped/Filmed – events seem to have occurred in a different sequence from the sequence in the presentation and at an earlier time; the content is “constructed” through editing techniques (as opposed to techniques – such as computer graphics – that can be imposed onto content that is broadcast live in real time).

NOTES:

- If the broadcast type changes during the interval, code only the first type.
- Do not consider any knowledge you have about the actual broadcast type (e.g., “I know it’s a sitcom and that they tape those before they broadcast them”) – consider only the indications of broadcast type in the interval being coded.
- Note that you are coding a videotape of an actual broadcast – code this item as if you were watching the original broadcast.
- A cut alone does not provide sufficient reason to claim that the broadcast type is constructed (i.e., taped/filmed).

During practice coding and initial reliability testing it became clear that the variable was drawing coders to apply “facts not in evidence” (e.g., the timing and production attributes of an initial broadcast) and the only way to reach an acceptable level of reliability was to reframe the question in more direct and obvious terms. The entry in the coding manual was revised.

15. Indication of broadcast type?

- _____ [1] Text or sound include word “Live” (but not “Recorded Live”)
- _____ [2] Text or sound include a time and either day or date that DOES match the time and either day or date the tape was recorded
- _____ [3] Text or sound include word “Recorded”
- _____ [4] Text or sound include a day or date or time that DOESN’T match the day or date or time the tape was recorded
- _____ [0] NEITHER 1, 2, 3, or 4

FULL QUESTION:

During the 10 second interval is there any indication in picture or sound of the broadcast type, and if so, what is the first such indication?

DEFINITIONS & EXAMPLES:

Broadcast type – television programs can take events that occur in nonmediated reality and present them as the events occur, they can be recorded as the events occurred and then broadcast later, or they can be recorded in individual segments and constructed for broadcast later.

Text or sound include word “Live” (but not “Recorded Live”) – Either text in the picture or the sound during the 10 second interval, or both, contains the word “Live” and thereby indicates that the broadcast type is “events being presented as they occur.” Do NOT include “Recorded Live” in this category.

Text or sound include a time and either day or date that DOES match the time and either day or date the tape was recorded – Either text in the picture or the sound during the 10 second interval, or both, contain the time AND either the day (“Tuesday”) or the date (“July 5”), or both, that correspond with the time, AND day and/or date, the tape being coded was recorded, and thereby indicate to viewers that the broadcast type is “live” (e.g., during news programs and on the Weather Channel this information is often provided in one corner of the screen). Note that the day or date or both of them are not enough – the time of day must also be included.

Text or sound include word “Recorded” – Either text in the picture or the sound during the 10 second interval, or both, contains the word “Recorded” and thereby indicates that the broadcast type is “recorded as the events occurred and then broadcast later.” Include “Recorded Live,” “Recorded Earlier,” “Recorded in front of a live studio audience,” “Recorded for presentation in this time zone,” and similar messages in this category.

Text or sound include a day or date or time that doesn’t match the day or date or time the tape was recorded – Either text in the picture or the sound during the 10 second interval, or both, contain a day, date, or time (or any combination of them) that do not correspond with the day, date, or time the tape being coded was recorded and thereby indicate to viewers that the broadcast type is either “recorded as the events occurred and then broadcast later” or “events recorded in individual segments and constructed for broadcast later.”

NOTES:

- If the broadcast type changes during the interval, code only the first type.
- Do not consider any knowledge you have about the actual broadcast type (e.g., “I know it’s a sitcom and that they tape those before they broadcast them”) – consider only the indications of broadcast type in the interval being coded.
- Do not use any knowledge you obtain from content before the interval begins to code this item.

A more vexing problem regarding reliability concerned variables with little variation. For example, one variable required coders to indicate whether the images in a

10 second interval were color and/or black and white. Black and white images were exceedingly rare, in reality and in the coding results, but Krippendorff's alpha for the variable was near 0. If a single coder missed one of the rare instances of black and white, the formula determined that we could not reliably identify such occurrences and penalized us accordingly. Because we knew from our coding experience (and collective years of television viewing) that black and white content was so rare, we decided not to create and retest reliability with a new artificial sample of recordings that contained many black and white segments and instead established a rule that if Krippendorff's alpha was below a certain threshold (.7), percent agreement must be exceedingly high (.9). While reviewers might criticize this approach, we believed we could defend it as appropriate in the context of our variables.

Data Entry and Analysis

In an era of analog videotape, few laptop computers, and no iPads or other tablets, we had to make many printed copies of the coding sheets for the coders to complete with pen or pencil as they watched each recording. Coders then entered the data from the completed sheet by working in pairs, one person reading responses out loud as the other typed the information into a word-processing file on a desktop computer. Each coding sheet page generated a separate line of numbers in the data file. To identify the many possible errors from this data entry process, we printed each record entered and held the paper up in front of a bright light against another paper, a template of correctly entered data, to identify missing and extra characters and lines of data. Then all of the word-processing formatted files had to be converted to unformatted text files and combined as input data files for the then typically used mainframe version of SPSS, in which specific "jobs" had to be submitted and printed results picked up from numbered bins at a computer center on campus. A detailed data cleaning process followed, in which the frequencies of each response for every variable were calculated, unlikely or impossible values in the results checked, and errors in the data files fixed.

After all the very monotonous and time-consuming data entry and cleaning (first for reliability data and then the full program and time point data sets), the calculation of frequencies and cross-tabulations of frequencies for all of the variables was relatively simple and quick. While this is not the place for detailed reporting of the results, we were pleased that findings for approximately 70% of the variables related to presence suggested that viewing television encourages rather than discourages presence responses. For example, most television in the summer of 1995 was mostly color, live-action, with convergent sound and picture except for background music, leisurely paced with simple transitions, and very rarely included explicit on-screen indications that the material had been created earlier.

Writing, Authorship, and Presentation

Over the next four years (1996–1999) we reported the results of our research in peer-reviewed papers at the annual conferences of the International Communication Association (ICA) in Chicago, Montreal, Jerusalem, and San Francisco. Ironically the first two papers were focused on *The State of the Medium* (Lombard et al., 1996) and *The Cluttering of Television* (Lombard, Snyder, Bracken, Kaynak, Pemrick, Linder, & Ditton, 1997), with the third paper finally focusing on our original proposed study, *Presence and the Structural Features of Television* (Ditton, Lombard, Bracken, Snyder, Pemrick, Linder, & Kaynak, 1998). The fourth paper (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, Bracken, Ditton, Kaynak, Linder-Radosh, & Pemrick, 1999) reviewed the major findings in the entire project. With the exception of a student who moved away and left the project, the authors were the same for each paper but the authorship order was rotated according to earlier arrangements – fortunately, I had learned that such issues need to be negotiated early in the process to prevent disagreements and bad feelings later on.

While everyone including me had learned a lot, after five years and more time-consuming challenging obstacles than any of us had expected, the doctoral students on the research team became very busy in their new jobs as assistant professors, and in one case in industry, and we all gravitated to new projects. By the time we were able to revise the *State of the Medium* paper for submission to a journal in 2002, the recordings we had made were seven years old and perceived as out of date. It takes a team to bring a project to the final publication stage, but the team leader is ultimately responsible and I very much regret not doing more to follow it through. A respected senior scholar at one of the ICA conferences praised the project and suggested that pursuing it might become the primary focus of my academic career, with regular follow-up studies and explorations of new structural features in new media, but that was not to be. However, the project was far from over.

Unexpected Afterlife

Because we felt we had learned so much while designing, conducting, and reporting the study, the three people who had been most involved with it wrote and presented another conference paper that relayed some of what we had learned as a “guidebook” for those conducting similar large-scale content analyses (Snyder-Duch, Lombard, & Bracken, 1999).

The biggest unexpected challenges we had faced concerned properly assessing and reporting intercoder reliability. As we read other reports of content analysis studies in communication, we realized that many of them failed to adequately address – and

in some cases failed even to mention – this critical aspect of the method which is arguably most identified with our field. So, based on the annoyance generated by the fact that we had struggled to “do it right” while others had not, and as a service to others who might want to but did not know how, we began another project: a content analysis of intercoder reliability in communication content analyses – we called it CAR for “content analysis reliability.” The much simpler coding scheme, applied to a sample of 200 studies published between 1994 and 1998 and identified as content analyses in *Communication Abstracts*, confirmed that authors often (about 30% of the time) failed to report reliability. When they did report it they often (apparently, since the reports are typically vague) relied on the inadequate percent agreement index. Based on a review of concepts, indices, and tools, and our results, we provided a set of concrete guidelines to help other researchers to more easily and completely assess and report reliability.

Coincidentally, following our presentation of the CAR paper at ICA’s 2001 conference in Washington, DC (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2001), I saw a call for papers for a special issue of *Human Communication Research* on “Statistical and Methodological Issues in Communication Research.” We submitted the paper and it was quickly accepted. When the article (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002) appeared, Professor Krippendorff contacted us to point out a handful of errors in a table that none of the three of us, or any of the reviewers or editors along the way, had noticed – a disconcerting commentary on the peer review process and a reminder to always review others’ and one’s own work carefully. Professor Krippendorff also lobbied us, in an increasingly unpleasant series of exchanges, to modify our suggested guidelines in a jointly authored correction, an option we eventually rejected to maintain our intended role as independent reviewers of the literature and its ongoing controversies. The journal eventually published a separate correction and further explanation (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2004).

The impacts of the SF and CAR studies continue. The original article referred to an online resource (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2003) that we established to summarize the article and provide updates as new evaluations of indices and tools became available. Nearly a decade later, I still receive email messages thanking us for the resource and asking questions about reliability. I was invited to give a talk at the Conference on Optimal Coding of Open-Ended Survey Data at the University of Michigan (Lombard, 2008). The materials, papers, and stories from both projects have been very useful in the classes I teach. Even this chapter represents an entirely unexpected outgrowth of the original structural features of television project. And it is possible that I will return to one of our original goals – comparing the television form from the now long ago 1995 with the present, a task that would be much easier for two reasons. The first is the amazing evolution since the mid-1990s of digital technologies for capturing and replaying images. Recordings could be created with home DVRs and transferred to a computer or, better yet, directly captured and recorded on a computer’s hard drive, and then analyzed with frame-by-frame accuracy using electronic time code in Final Cut Pro or other digital editing software.

Meta-tags could even be added to individual frames and found later via searches to speed the coding process. The second reason the recording and coding process would be easier today is that we have learned many lessons through the process of developing the original project.

Lessons Learned

So what were those lessons learned during the project? I think the most important ones were the following.

Be ambitious but realistic. We were right to start out designing the most creative and ambitious project possible, one that would answer all of our research questions and generate multiple research reports. Start with the ideal study and for the most part ignore constraints on your time, money, and other resources, and then be realistic as you reduce the scope and modify the design details to match those constraints. This is something that, in retrospect, we did not go far enough in doing. Researchers can get too attached to specific content analysis variables but, as with experiment variables, survey questions, and in all other forms of research, it's essential to prioritize.

Expect things to take longer. At nearly every stage of the structural features research unexpected issues arose to delay us. In fact, these delays were so substantial that three team members got married, four babies were born, and several people graduated and/or moved away during the course of the project. Underestimating the time needed to complete complex tasks is typical – it has an official status as Douglas Hofstadter's law (see Hofstadter, 1999). Even though it is difficult, however, researchers should always keep this problem in mind. One good strategy is to make a good faith estimate of how long major steps in the project will take and then add another 50% or 100%.

Do research together. This project would have been impossible for any single person to complete, and not just because content analyses require multiple coders. I would argue that, with important exceptions, a research group produces better ideas, accomplishes more, and provides a richer experience than single researchers working independently. Although group dynamics can be complicated and everyone's needs and preferences have to be thoughtfully considered, the increased efficiency and the ability to brainstorm, celebrate, and commiserate together is worth the effort.

Do research with students. At various times six doctoral, two master's, and three undergraduate students worked on the structural features project. Aside from the many benefits their participation contributed at every step, they – or more accurately all of us – were able to learn about research by actually doing it, fulfilling another important mission of a university. Project leaders also need to delegate specific sets of tasks to student team members so they learn as much as possible and gain a sense of "ownership" over the research. Besides, the leader simply cannot do everything.

Be organized. This project required an extra level of attention to organization and detail, with so many researchers; variables; sampling units; videotapes; coders; coding sheets and manuals; data storage and analysis software programs, formats, and files; and articles and presentations. But organization is an undervalued aspect of every research project. Keep detailed electronic records of everything (and printed copies as needed). Make backup copies, ideally via a real-time automated system such as the software provided with most external hard drives. Use shared online calendars, spreadsheets, and word-processing files (e.g., via Google Docs) to coordinate information accessible to and updatable by team members (this wasn't available in the mid-1990s). Devise naming conventions for electronic and hard copy files and folders so that you and others can find specific material when you need it. Follow these conventions even when you're in a hurry to get to other tasks – for example, don't put files in a generic folder to be sorted properly later. Document all procedures and instructions and make them easily accessible. Keep each major (and even minor) draft of most documents so you can refer to them later if necessary. Communicate constantly with the other researchers: send updates, ask questions, hold informational and brainstorming sessions, both online and especially in person (over coffee, snacks, lunch, or dinner – food always improves communication and creativity!).

Be flexible and creative. When we realized videotape stretches, we designed the anchor frame mechanism; when reliability was unexpectedly low for some variables, we modified the measures or figured out how indices could be combined to better represent the underlying situation; when we realized how much we had learned, we found new projects and venues for both publications and service to the field. Although it is not easy, researchers need to be flexible and creative, open to “outside the box” solutions and new opportunities that take the original plan in new directions.

Follow through. Although we persevered through many challenges for many years and the structural features project generated several conference papers and then indirectly more papers and publications, we (mostly I) failed to follow through quickly enough to produce publications of the original results. So my advice to others, which I continue to struggle to follow myself, is to not give up on or to let projects get cast aside in favor of new distractions. Most challenges, including negative peer reviews – there is always a critic or three out there you will not be able to satisfy – can and should be overcome.

Recognize trade-offs. Our initial belief that content analysis would be easier than other social science methods because it does not involve human respondents or subjects was naive. Every research choice represents a trade-off – time versus money, validity versus reliability, depth versus breadth, problems with participants versus problems with coder reliability. There's no “free lunch”!

Enjoy it. Despite the obstacles and frustrations along the way, the research I've described here was extremely rewarding and a great adventure. Given the chance, I would do several things differently but I would definitely do it again. My most important advice to other researchers is to follow your interests and passions in selecting topics and conducting research – to enjoy it. Life is too short to do anything else.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to friends and colleagues Cheryl Campanella Bracken, Theresa B. Ditton, Tim Hicks, Selcan Kaynak, Jodi Linder-Radosh, Naila Mattison, Cynthia Mugo, Janine Pemrick, Woong Ki Park, Nandini Sen, Jennifer Snyder-Duch, and Gina Steward.

NOTE

- 1 See http://matthewlombard.com/research/sfp_ab.html (accessed August 9, 2013) for the complete documents.

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Text-Based Approaches to Qualitative Research

An Overview of Methods, Process, and Ethics

Sara McKinnon

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of the research process of text-based qualitative research. The chapter not only explains what it means to work with texts in a qualitative manner, but outlines the various options researchers have at their disposal in trying to answer the research questions that most interest them, including rhetorical methods, discourse analysis approaches, and ethnographic methods. The chapter also provides readers with a step-by-step overview of the process of doing text-based qualitative research, ending with a discussion of ethical considerations in qualitatively analyzing texts.

One of my most vivid memories from graduate school was the answer that I received from a professor when I asked, “How do you analyze a text?” He responded without pause, “You find an interesting text and look for what makes it interesting!” This answer was unsatisfying at best. Only later in my qualitative research classes did I begin to get a sense of what I should do with the primary sources that I had collected and wanted to write about.

Now, as a teacher myself, I find my students asking similar questions – “How do you find a text worthy of analysis?” “What makes a text interesting?” and “Once

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems185

you have it, what do you do with it?” – only to find those same unsatisfying answers slipping off my tongue. In acknowledgment that these answers can confound more than they clarify, this chapter aims to outline what it means to do text-based qualitative research. The chapter will not only explain what it means to work with texts, but it also outline the various options researchers have at their disposal in trying to answer the research questions that most interest them. Furthermore, the chapter will offer a step-by-step overview of the process of doing text-based qualitative research so that when you hear “You just analyze it!” again you know what that means.

Text-Based Approaches to Qualitative Research

Broadly speaking, qualitative researchers seek to understand the communicative actions of people in particular contexts and the meanings associated with those actions. Communicative actions happen when people use symbols to express something in their life-worlds; these actions come in a range of forms – from the things we do and say in interpersonal encounters, to performances and practices that demonstrate our social, cultural, or political group affiliations, to the messages that media assemble for our consumption. While many qualitative researchers assemble instances of communicative action from people themselves, through methods of data collection such as interviews, focus groups, and observation, other qualitative researchers examine texts as sites of people’s use of symbols. A *text* can be understood as any instance where symbols are being used to convey meaning to an audience. In this vein, texts may be written words in the strict sense of the term – such as books, magazines, manifestos, or pamphlets – but they may also be verbally delivered speeches, music, television sitcoms, photographs, or buildings.

While qualitative researchers may find a text that is interesting to them and analyze it, they do so recognizing that all texts are fragments of something larger. “Texts,” as Michael Calvin McGee explains, “are understood to be larger than the apparently finished discourse that presents itself as transparent. The apparently finished discourse is in fact a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourses from which it was made. It is fashioned from what we can call “fragments”” (McGee, 1990, p. 279). In other words, the texts that appear so complete on first glance are incomplete pieces, or representative parts of something larger that researchers call discourse. For many qualitative researchers, *discourse*, or the available language that people have to talk about some phenomenon or to express something, is what researchers are trying to explain and interpret when they analyze particular texts. While discourses are never complete, understanding their scope and the dominant modes of expression within them helps researchers to illuminate the range of possibilities that are before us when we communicate. To understand this range, scholars examine texts and the discourses they participate in against the particular social, cultural, and political con-

texts in which they circulate. *Contexts* must be thought of not as one-dimensional environments where communicative action happens, but as productive forces of the discourses that we turn to in order to share and express meaning. In this way, a component of our analytic attention as qualitative researchers of texts must be toward the contextual factors that constitute the way people use language.

Finally, qualitative scholars work to understand what texts *mean* for the people who use them. As Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor (2002, pp. 5–6) write,

For the qualitative researcher, humans infuse their actions – and the worlds that result – with meaning. We are, at root, trying to make sense and get by. In this view, meaning is not a mere accessory to behavior. Rather, it saturates the performance of social action – from our imaginations of possibilities to our reflection on accomplishments.

To do this, qualitative researchers turn to the tools of research that allow them to describe, understand, and interpret the significance of communicative messages actions within a particular sociocultural and political-economic context. Specifically, qualitative researchers ask questions about *how* and *why* texts circulate within a given context in the ways that they do. Furthermore, qualitative researchers interpret what these texts mean within particular contexts and for particular audiences.

What is so exciting, and sometimes daunting, about using texts to do qualitative research, is that researchers have a diverse range of approaches that they can deploy to examine the qualitative dimensions of particular texts. In the next section I will summarize a few of the primary approaches that researcher have at their disposal. Specifically, I will review rhetorical approaches, discourse analysis approaches, and ethnographic approaches to studying texts.

Types of Text-Based Approaches

At the most general level, scholars who use qualitative methods to look at texts are doing textual analysis. While there are other names for textual analysis, such as criticism, critical analysis, or close reading, these approaches share similarities in their methodological processes. As Barry Brummett (2010, p. 9) explains, textual analysis involves “mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meaning.” In order to do the disciplined reading, scholars who use textual analysis study existing *theory*, or attempts at describing and explaining what something is, the way it works, or what it means, in order to know what has been said previously about a particular object or phenomenon. This existing theory gives the analyst special insight into the symbolic actions, nuances in meaning, and textual forms that are present in the text. Studying theory also provides analysts with ideas about what their own text might say concerning culture, politics, society, or the world around them more generally.

Once analysts have an object that they want to examine and a theory or set of theories that inform their reading, the analyst then turns to particular methods of reading, or analysis. As Brummett (2010, p. 37) explains, “the method is the plan for thinking and action” which offers us tools for implementing that plan. For scholars working with texts, these tools should call our attention to nuances in both the form and the content of the object. When we look at questions of form, we examine how the object is arranged, how it is patterned, and the internal structure that organizes the content. Some common elements of form include narrative structures in the text, the genre that the text may fall within, and personas or groups of people who are addressed (or not addressed) in the text.

Questions of content call our focus to what the text says, or does. Using theory as the lens, we examine the text for key arguments, undergirding ideologies, and the specificities in the way language is used to convey meaning for a particular audience. Importantly, the theory or theories we turn to will shape the elements of form and content that we are drawn to see and write about. As we will see in the next section, rhetorical approaches offer a more specific form of textual analysis that call us to pay attention to the practical functions of language.

Rhetorical Approaches

At one point in recent history rhetorical criticism seemed to be moving in the direction of quantitative approaches to research in its goals of identifying the efficacy and effects of particular rhetorical texts and rhetoricians. Today, however, rhetorical critics largely see the work of analysis as a qualitative and interpretive project. Broadly speaking, rhetorical criticism offers tools to analyze what language does in our lives. Scholars of rhetoric posit that language not only shapes how we know and experience the world around us, but also how we use language in our social worlds to influence others, deliberate, make judgments, expand possibilities, and sometimes reform social systems in need of repair (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2002). These functions of language are of central concern to rhetoricians, for as Stephen Lucas (1981, p. 20) writes, rhetorical critics “are concerned above all with what messages do rather than what they are.” Examinations of such language deployments focus not only on the particularities of symbol use, but also on how bodies, voices, emotion, images, and objects serve as discursive vehicles of social influence when paired with language. In this way, rhetorical criticism is a method that provides the means to analyze not only discourse itself, but also *how* messages are deployed through the body, voice, images, and objects, and *what* such messages do.

One common point of confusion is where to find messages that are significant to our social worlds, and thus worthy of analysis. While early studies of rhetoric focused primarily on rhetorical texts of the past – often in the form of the speeches or writings of well-known figures – contemporary rhetorical critics include a vast range of rhetorical texts within their repertoire. Certainly texts such as governmental policies,

congressional deliberations, and legal decisions are sites where language is used practically and in important ways, but popular texts such as movies, sports broadcasting, magazines, and participatory media also interest rhetoricians as texts of investigation. For example, Dana Cloud (1996) examines biographical narratives of Oprah Winfrey as her object of inquiry, arguing that Winfrey is rhetorically positioned as a token whose success proves that US American meritocracy exists without barriers for women and people of color. Greg Dickinson (2002) takes the spatial dimensions of Starbucks, the well-known caffeine-recharge watering hole for millions of consumers, as his text of investigation to argue that Starbucks rhetorically constructs authenticity through its use of color, music, artwork, smell, and language to make customers feel like they are getting the real deal when they spend \$5 on a cup of coffee. Darrel Enck-Wanzer (2006) argues that trash, literal garbage, is a rhetorical construct for Puerto Ricans living in the Bronx in the 1960s to get city officials in New York City to begin to pay as much attention to the cleanliness of the streets in the Bronx as they did to the streets of Upper West Side Manhattan. These examples demonstrate the breadth of rhetoric's purview; quite simply, rhetorical messages worthy of analysis may be found anywhere. The task of the rhetorical critic in choosing a text worthy of inquiry is to justify what makes these objects interesting, or in need of analysis, and, second, to identify what the discourse is doing.

Another challenging part of doing rhetorical criticism is figuring out what method of rhetorical analysis will best suit the critic's objectives and the rhetorical object. As Dilip Gaonkar (1990, p. 303) explains in assessing the state of rhetorical criticism, rhetoric has witnessed not only what he calls "the globalization of the object" but also a diversification of methods for analyzing rhetorical objects. Just as there is no longer merely one type of object that rhetoricians analyze, there are also a plethora of methodological tools for rhetoricians to turn to in doing their analytic work. For example, social movement criticism (Griffin, 1952; Simons, 1970), genre criticism (Campbell & Jamieson, 1995; Ware & Linkugel, 1973), and narrative criticism (Fisher, 1984) emerged early in the field's history as options for doing rhetorical analysis. A particularly fruitful avenue for media scholars using rhetorical criticism has been the methods of criticism that allow them to centrally investigate relations of power, ideology, and modes of resistance present in texts or the way audiences engage with text. These methods include critical rhetoric (McKerrow, 1989, 1991; Ono & Sloop, 1992), ideographic criticism (McGee, 1980), and feminist criticism (Campbell, 1973; Davis, 1998; Dow, 1995, 1997) among others. Notably, they have enabled scholars to examine the discursive and ideological underpinnings of mediated representations of war (Crenshaw, 1997; Jordan, 2007), iconic imagery (Calafell and Delgado, 2004; Taylor, 2003), and the way that the distinctions between popular, consumer-based culture and political life become increasingly blurred and undefined (Anderson & Stewart, 2005; Cobb, 2011).

While using a specific type of method is a common approach of the rhetorical critic, others argue that the critic himself or herself is the method and thus the rhetorical analyst does not need a prescriptive *a priori* method (Black, 1965). In

conversation with qualitative researchers who see the researcher as the “human instrument” of research, Edwin Black famously recognized that the rhetorical analyst brings to the text a unique vantage point to see the text as a reflection of the external reality around the text. While this open approach to method is still used by many in the field, others have refined the idea that the critic is the method to focus on theory as guiding the process of describing, explaining, and interpreting what language is doing in a text. Michael Leff, a strong proponent of what he describes as “the emic approach,” calls on rhetoricians to see rhetorical criticism as an interpretive process. As he explains, the goal of rhetorical criticism

is explanation, and therefore the emic stance begins and ends with the particular object of study. Theoretical principles enter at the intersection between the object and the assignment of meaning to it, but such principles are so closely connected with the object of study that they are not easily isolated in abstract form. (Leff, 1980, pp. 348–349)

More recently, James Jasinski (2001, p. 256) called this approach “conceptually oriented criticism,” which he explains “proceeds more through a process of *abduction* which might be thought of as a back and forth tacking movement between text and the concept or concepts that are being investigated simultaneously.” This approach recognizes that we enter the research process with particular views of the world, life experiences, knowledge, and interests that influence the questions, ideas, and issues that we will be drawn to examine. This background also leads us to particular texts, sets of texts, or even fragments of texts to analyze against and through our questions and interests (McGee, 1990). Then we begin the process of analysis, or close reading of the texts, for what language and discourse is doing and possibly turn to specific techniques of close reading explained above (Brummett, 2010), such as analyzing the object for its use of narrative or metaphor. Importantly, neither our past experience, theoretical influences, nor the reading techniques we choose dictate the direction of the theory generated from the analysis; instead, these things are tools that help us do the work of interpretation.

Our experiences and past knowledge are important as they alert us to what is interesting about the text in relation to its audience and the context, as well as to what the text is doing with language and discourse. While social scientific scholars attempt to deploy research methods objectively, or as free as possible from researcher bias, qualitative researchers embrace the subjectivity of the research process. This means that, rather than seeing the researcher’s background and interests as a hindrance, qualitative researchers use these aspects of the researcher as a source of insight and information about the text. Because qualitative researchers embrace the subjectivity of the research process, no two analysts will read a text in the same way. For example, a scholar whose intellectual influences are gender theories may analyze a speech by Abraham Lincoln and see a particular type of masculinity evoked or forming (Zaeske, 2010), while a critic who finds photographs and images fascinating

may be drawn to analyze texts that are rich in imagistic descriptions of Lincoln's character (Finnegan, 2005). These different analyses add to what the interested communities know, or how they think about Lincoln as a rhetorical figure. In this way, neither analysis is biased or more right than the other; instead they are different pieces of the puzzle. With a sense of how qualitative scholars use rhetorical approaches, I will now turn to discuss a qualitative approach that analyzes texts against their broader discursive and social contexts.

Discourse Analysis

While rhetorical analysis emerges out of the discipline of communication studies, linguistics offers yet another set of text-based approaches to do qualitative research – under the umbrella term of “discourse analysis.” This method allows scholars to analyze discourses alongside their discursive and social practices. Discourse, in this approach, primarily refers to any text, spoken or written, that deploys language, although increasingly discourse analysts are looking to non-language-based symbols, such as objects or artifacts, for meaning alongside the language-based discourse. As Norman Fairclough (1995, p. 4) explains, discourses rarely manifest in isolation. Rather, “texts in contemporary society are increasingly multi-semiotic; texts whose primary semiotic form is language increasingly combine language with other semiotic forms.” This means that discourse is polysemic, or that the same discourse might emerge in numerous forms. For example, a number of analysts have recently taken up the post-September 11 “terrorism” discourse as it emerges in a range of texts including presidential and political speeches (Bartolucci, 2012), policy and law (de Beaugrande, 2004; MacDonald & Hunter, 2013; Simone, 2009), documentaries (Mylonas, 2012), and news media (Featherstone, Holohan, & Poole, 2010; Roy & Ross, 2011). What is interesting about this discourse, as Valentina Bartolucci (2012, p. 563) writes, “is its extraordinary level of consistency within different genres, spaces and times. The same set of words and linguistic constructions are used, reproduced and finally naturalized, eventually coming to be seen as common sense.” Despite being polyvocal in form, the terrorism discourse in President Bush's speeches bears striking resemblance to the way it is deployed by the news media, in law and policy, and as David Machin and Theo Van Leeuwen (2009) demonstrate, even to the way this discourse appears in children's toys. Furthermore, these scholars demonstrate that the meaning of terrorism is surprisingly similar in different national contexts. Karmen Erjavec and Zala Volčič (2007) illuminate this point, showing that terrorism discourse is taken up by Serbians after September 11 to rearticulate Serbian violence against Muslims during the 1990s as understandable and justifiable. Importantly, their language is hauntingly similar to the words of President George W. Bush.

A second focal point for discourse analysts is the discourse practice, which concentrates attention on the circuit of culture through which the text circulates, from

its production to its interpretation and consumption. Analysis at this level involves attentiveness to how people produce and interpret texts. This may include, for example,

detailed moment-by-moment explication of how participants produce and interpret texts, which conversation analysis and pragmatics excel at, and analysis which focuses upon the relationship of the discursive event to the order of discourse, and upon the question of which discursive practices are being drawn upon and in what combinations. (Fairclough, 1995, p. 134)

Focus on the practice allows scholars to understand how specific discursive moments participate in broader conventions, genres, and patterns of interaction (Wood & Kroger, 2000). For example, Fairclough (1993) investigates the way universities deploy market-based discourse practices, through encouraging employees to “self-promote” their research, “sell” candidates, and “play the game.” These particular instances of discourse, he explains, are generated through market logics and function to constitute universities – places that were once designated for knowledge production and critical engagement – into contexts for consumption.

Finally, discourse analysis calls scholars to examine the way that discourses and discourse practices participate in broader sociocultural systems and structures of meaning (Fairclough, 1995). This level of analysis focuses the analyst’s eye on the function of discourse, or what it is doing within the organizations, institutions, and societies where they circulate. This level of analysis is the broadest level used by discourse analysts, and also perhaps the most important as discourse analysis *cannot* be discourse analysis without an examination of the sociocultural practice of the discourse. Analysts interested in the sociocultural implications of discourse have looked, for example, at the discursive confluences of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers with gangs, criminals, and thieves, which often comes to justify policies of amplified exclusion and surveillance against these communities (Baker, Gabrielatos, Khosravini, Krzyanowski, McEnery, & Wodak, 2008; Hernández & Romero, 2013; Khosravini, 2010; Teo, 2000; Van Der Valk, 2003; van Dijk, 2000; Van Leewen & Wodak, 1999). They have also examined the ways in which the repetitiveness of gendered norms in institutions such as sports (Mean & Kassing, 2008) and education (Sauntson, 2007; Wharton, 2005) function to constrain the range of gender expressions possible to a limited few. Finally, scholars have examined the emergence of nationalistic discourses across a diverse set of locales, working to understand how a nation’s history, relationships with other nations, and aspirations for the future matter to the way it constructs a sense of itself (Crawford, 2012; Han, 2011; Mosheer, 2012; Ruiseco & Sluneko, 2006).

Discourse analysis resonates with some of the other text-based qualitative methods summarized thus far, but methodologists claim that the approach offers unique tools to the scholar and student of texts. As Fairclough (1995, p. 97) explains, according to

this approach, “the link between the sociocultural practice and text is mediated by discourse practice.” He continues:

How a text is produced or interpreted, in the sense of what discursive practices and conventions are drawn from what order(s) of discourse and how they are articulated together, depends upon the nature of the sociocultural practice which the discourse is a part of (including the relationship to existing hegemonies); the nature of the discourse practice of text production shapes the text, and leaves “traces” in surface features of the text; and the nature of the discourse practice of text interpretation determines how the surface features of a text will be interpreted.

In other words, each level of analysis – discourse, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice – builds upon the next, such that each level offers a potentially unique purview into the way language functions to construct people’s sense of what is within particular institutions, organizations, and societies.

Importantly, this embedded process of analysis has led to new approaches to studying texts, or what we might understand as offshoots of a broader discursive approach to doing qualitative research. These include, among others, critical discourse analysis, which narrows the process of analysis in on the way power, domination, and ideology circulate through discourse (Fairclough, 1995); the discourse historical approach, which emphasizes analysis of fields of action (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), and social semiotics, which calls our attention to the semiotic action involved in each message, discourse, or image (Aiello, 2006; Van Leeuwen, 2005). The final approach discussed here takes text-based qualitative approaches full circle, back to qualitative methodology’s anthropological roots in the form of ethnography.

Ethnographic Approaches

Ethnography can be thought of, literally, as a writing up of culture. Historically this was the work of anthropologists who would go into the field, often somewhere far away from where the researcher lived and worked, to examine the ways of life, rituals, and patterns of a particular group of people and then write up an account of this community’s “culture.” In 1973 noted anthropologist Clifford Geertz ruptured this framework of doing ethnography by suggesting that culture was all about communication, and that culture should be studied via semiotic analysis, or in the way that a particular community uses language. Geertz (1973, p. 5) explained this as an analysis of the “webs of significance” that undergird what a community says and does:

The concept of culture . . . is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical.

Later in the essay, Geertz would elaborate on the process of unearthing meaning:

Our double task is to uncover the conceptual structures that inform our subjects' acts, the "setting" of social discourse, and to construct a system of analysis in whose terms what is generic to those structures, what belongs to them because they are what they are, will stand out against the other determinants of human behavior. In ethnography the office of theory is to provide a vocabulary in which what symbolic action has to say about itself – that is, about the role of culture in human life – can be expressed. (1973, p. 27)

This approach to researching culture profoundly impacted the way communication scholars examined symbol use in particular communities. We not only see this early on with scholars using an ethnography of communication approach to understand the types of communication that were unique to particular groups (Hayes, 1976; Katriel & Philipsen, 1981; Philipsen, 1975), but there were also early calls to combine ethnographic methods with text-based methods. Dwight Conquergood was in the vanguard in drawing scholars' attention to the relationship between ethnographic and text-based methods. In particular, Conquergood made connections between the work of ethnographers and that of scholars interpreting meaning from text, explaining that those who analyze culture and those who analyze texts similarly use methods that are "characterized by a crucial sense of timing and improvisation, an ability to seize the opportunity and play the moment" (Conquergood, 1992, p. 82). Additionally, we can say that ethnographers and text-based scholars alike are interested in symbolic action, the context from which the text emerges, and the meanings that flow through these actions.

With these similarities in mind, a number of scholars have recently begun conceptualizing what it might mean to do text-based ethnographies. These formulations have come in the form of virtual, online, or digital ethnographies (Boellstorff, Nardi, & Pearce, 2012; Fullerton & Rarey, 2012; Howard, 2011; Kozinets, 2010; Lindlof & Shatzer, 1998) and rhetorical ethnographies (Chávez, 2011; Hess, 2011; Middleton, Senda-Cook, & Endres, 2011; Pezzullo, 2001; Salazar, 2009). What these approaches offer is a way of combining a focus on the way culture is constructed through language and attentiveness to context with the tools of close reading offered in textual analysis.

While these works differ in focus – some looking at the organizing strategies of activists, others analyzing the ways that people make community through texts – they share two important characteristics that are unique to text-based ethnographies. First, the blending offers text-based scholars dynamic and dialogic ways of examining how discourse happens in the moment. As Middleton et al. (2011, p. 401) explain, this happens because field methods give text-based scholars a sense of what discourse looks like "live": "By analyzing 'live' rhetorics, critics are able to bring to the fore and capture rhetorics whose everyday nature renders them fleeting at best." Additionally, it allows scholars intimate insight into how people come to settle on the discourse

they use in the public. Chávez's research (2011) concerning the coalitional strategies of US immigration and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) activists demonstrates this point nicely, as she argues that rhetorical scholars must look at the internal, away-from-the-spotlight workings of activists and organizers to gain insight into the rhetorical resources at their disposal, as well as the contextual and relational constraints that impact what discourse they can use in the public.

Another strength of this blended approach is that it allows us to see nuances of context – including space and place, but also the historical political-economic relations that bear down on the communicative actions we examine. Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki (2006) rhetorically examine the Plains Indian Museum in Wyoming as a cultural text that constitutes White audiences through what they call a rhetoric of reverence. Specifically, they explain that “the museum creates a space of memory in which distant Plains Indian history and culture are placed on view, honored, and valued,” but White museum goers are never faced with interrogating their involvement in historical and present-day racism (Dickinson et al., 2006, p. 41). Ethnographic observation of the museum and White audiences' engagement with the museum enabled these researchers to ask questions, and to come up with interpretations that reflected on the museum's constitutive powers. In this way, space and place are rhetorical in that they compel our imaginations of ourselves. Were Dickinson et al. to have merely read about the museum – or even analyzed its web-based features – they most likely would not have been able to consider such contextual elements of rhetoric.

A final strength of the ethnographic text-based approach is that it allows the symbol users to speak back, and in part define what the communicative actions mean to them. As Middleton et al. (2011, p. 389) explain, rhetorical field methods are useful for “attempting to create more equitable representations of marginalized voices” and for identifying how those voices might enter public discourse toward transformative change. Additionally, these methods give participants a chance to speak back and fill in the gaps. Robert Glenn Howard's (2011) research provides a great example of this as he examines community making among Protestant fundamentalists in online environments. Combining ethnographic methods of interviewing and observation with the rhetorical tools of close textual analysis, Howard's work demonstrates the ways in which rhetoricians can gain insight into communicators' motivation, intention, and inventional process by observing their message choices and then asking them to reflect on the choices through interview questions. In Howard's analysis, for example, participants' actions and explanations serve as the discursive material that demonstrates not only what an evangelical social movement looks like, but also what it means to them. These moments show that one of the strengths of using ethnographic methods in rhetorical research is that such methods allow the voices we represent to speak with, and sometimes speak back to, scholarly interpretations and analyses of the data.

Having provided a description of different types of text-based qualitative research, I turn now to address the step-by-step process of using these methods. This

explanation is certainly one approach among many possibilities, but it should give the reader a sense of what researching with texts looks like.

Doing Text-Based Qualitative Research

As noted above, there are definite differences in the foci of the approaches discussed so far, in the questions they ask, and in the specific methodological tools they use but the process of using these approaches is roughly the same. For each approach there are basically two places where the researcher might begin: with the object or with the question. Those who begin with an object are usually drawn to it because of its political, social, or cultural import, or because it is just plain puzzling. If you begin with a text, the next step is to try to delineate what the text might be saying or doing. It is at this point that scholars draw upon their existing knowledge, world-views, and experiences to understand what sorts of questions might best be explored and explained through an examination of this object.

Another route in doing qualitative research is to begin with a question, a concern, or an issue that sparks your interest. Scholars who begin with a question move quickly to think about what sorts of texts, people, and contexts might best help them examine the issues at hand and come up with answers. As stated earlier, this might be a single text, an assemblage of texts, or even a combination of different types of data that the researcher examines in order to come up with answers to the questions they are asking.

Once the researcher has a sense of the text and the theoretical focus of her or his analysis, she or he can then move to the actual analysis of the object. At this stage the research process is most similar to conducting qualitative research using methods that involve human interaction. The researcher is looking for codes, themes, patterns, and dynamics that exist in the texts' form and content much like a researcher would do when analyzing field notes or an interview transcript. The objective of this process of analysis is to derive explanations of what the text is doing, or how the text operates, in accordance with the parameters given through the researcher's theoretical and methodological choices. As David Altheide (1996, p. 16) explains, at this point, the data process should be

systematic and analytic but not rigid . . . Categories and variables initially guide the study, but others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study, including an orientation to *constant discovery* and *constant comparison* of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meaning, and nuances.

What this systematic yet flexible process of analysis should look like is often where scholars and students interested in qualitative research get most confused. The truth is that there are a plethora of analytic tools available to the qualitative researcher.

David Altheide (1996) recommends beginning with the protocol, which is a series of questions, themes, and categories that the researcher believes might be present in the data, or at the very least might be interesting to ask of the data. A more inductive process, however, might begin with coding and categorization.

An inductive process begins with coding the data, or making shorthand notes to label what the data says, organizing the data into themes, and generally beginning to look for the patterns, sense making, and structure that is theoretically and culturally significant. As Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 219) explain, during the coding process the “analyst usually goes through the texts (fieldnotes, transcriptions, documents) line by line and marks those chunks of text that suggest a category.” The general purpose of this process is to link the sections of data that fit within a broader category with a shorthand code to help you remember to consider the significance of that data for the overall category. Quite often, researchers who are coding start with the questions “What’s going on here?” or “What’s happening in this text?” as they try to make sense of the text. As they read the text over and over, looking for cultural or theoretical meaning, they begin to see patterns emerge, themes that are indeed meaningful, which become significant categories that bring the researcher one step closer to identifying what the text is saying and doing.

Categorization happens when we assign meaning to particular components of our data by identifying it as representative of some general or specific phenomenon of interest, and put that data alongside other data we have that do the same thing. These categories sometimes emerge from existing literature, but they can also emerge because we see patterns, or themes of interest, in the data set. Importantly, merely having categories does not mean that the researcher is ready to write up the study. The researcher still needs to interpret the significance of those categories toward making an argument.

Interpretation is the next phase in the research process. At this point the researcher has a good sense of the data. She or he has coded and categorized the data, and reached the point of what qualitative researchers call *saturation*, or the moment when the researcher no longer finds anything surprising when coding and categorizing. Reaching the point of saturation indicates to the researcher that it is time to move to the next phase of research. Interpretation then moves researchers to build theory, in the form of arguments, that provide partial answers to the questions and problems that first inspired them to analyze the texts. At this point it is often necessary to turn back to the scholarship on the topic in order to read and ascertain what is already known in the scholarly community. Researchers work to build interpretations that add to that body of scholarship rather than replicate existing knowledge. Once the researcher has a strong grasp of the extant and relevant literature, as well as an argument that contributes to the literature, the next step in the research process is to write up the research.

While researchers go about this step in different ways, the writing phase involves three processes: developing a setup, accounting for one’s methods, and writing the analysis. The setup in this instance refers to the rationale, which demonstrates

the importance of the research, a justification for the particular research question and/or argument, and finally an explanation of how the research fits within and contributes to the extant body of scholarship. This setup may be found in the introduction and in the review of literature, its purpose being to create a platform that contextualizes the analysis and its contributions.

Not all text-based qualitative researchers include an accounting of their method in the write-up of their project, but they should be able to articulate how and why they did what they did during the research process. When a method section is present it typically includes a discussion of how and why particular texts were chosen, the specific research questions that guided the analysis, the process of analysis including the development of codes and categories, as well as any additional context that might be needed to understand the analysis.

The analysis section is where the researcher finally reports on the original research conducted. One of the key challenges in this period of the research is figuring out how to use the data appropriately. Researchers should allow the data to guide the evidencing of their arguments, but they also must not lose their analytic voice in the process. Quite often, analysis sections foreground the data so much that the author's argument ends up being more descriptive than analytical. Instead of merely describing what's happening, researchers should use data in the analysis section to further their argument, which means deploying it to illustrate their interpretation of the particular situation.

Ethical Considerations

In this chapter I have provided a broad overview of text-based qualitative research methods with a specific focus on the numerous approaches that scholars have at their disposal and the specific steps involved in the process of doing qualitative research using texts. To conclude, I would like to address the ethical considerations of conducting qualitative research using texts.

Qualitative researchers who work with humans have a long history of debating what should be the proper ethical standards in research. Scholars who examine texts, in contrast, rarely question what ethics should guide the practice of collecting, analyzing, and writing up research. This, I believe, is a mistake and I would like to offer a set of questions text-based qualitative researchers might consider in developing ethics to guide the research process. First, we might ask ourselves "Why am I doing this research?" or "Why is this research necessary and useful?" These questions, if seriously considered, can help researchers to understand the *motivations* that guide the research practice. Many feminist and critical scholars, for example, take the motivation of opening space for marginalized voices, perspectives, and knowledge as the central purpose of their work (Davis, 1998; Flores, 1996). Additionally, many scholars

are guided by utilitarian assumptions of the greater good or pragmatic goals of making applied change in the social worlds around them (Madison, 2005). No matter the motivation, researchers should be able to explain how that motivation guides what texts they choose and how they analyze them.

Additionally, we should ask ourselves “How am I connected to this research topic?” or “What is my positionality, or social location, in relation to this research topic?” These questions necessitate that researchers remain *reflexive*, or mindful of their relationship to the research topic, so that they can account for how their own experiences, knowledge, identities, and worldviews shape not only what they see in the data, but also how they interpret it. In examining the politics behind naming practices for Chinese women, Wen Shu Lee (1998, p. 297) provides an excellent example of how text-based researchers might integrate reflexive practices into their work:

Who am I and who am I not? I was born into the Lee family in Taipei, Taiwan. My name, Wen Shu was given by a paternal great great uncle, who was venerated as a scholar of high moral standards and as a patriarch who made major decisions for the extended family. I don't think my mother was consulted about my name.

Lee proceeds to address the politics involved not only in how she came to have her name, but in what happens to her name when she moves from Taiwan to the United States. This reflection helps the reader to understand her social location as an analyst of the rhetorical dimensions of naming practices, and also why naming practices matter.

Next, researchers might ask themselves, “Am I letting the text or data speak?” in order to address the ethic of *representativeness*, or how completely the analysis reflects the data. This question helps researchers pay attention to the ways in which they may be strategically choosing parts of the data that support their view, while ignoring data that contradict their interpretation. Additionally, this allows researchers to evaluate whether they have analyzed enough of the text to know that the most complete picture of the data is being represented in the analysis.

Finally, text-based qualitative researchers should seek to develop a deeper and more complex *understanding* of the subject matter they address by asking the following questions: “Does this analysis provide a more complex picture of the issue, text, person, or event than was previously available?” “Have I engaged in any problematic constructions of the people and communities I talk about in this research?” and “Does this analysis reflect and honor the cultural values and experiences of the people and communities I talk about?” These questions guide the researcher to evaluate whether the research enhances and illuminates the way we think about and understand people's lives, but it also calls us to question whether our own representations rely on discourses, beliefs, and stereotypes about groups that may objectify, exoticize, silence, or disempower the people we represent in our work.

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Analyzing Text

The Cultural Discourse in Ethnic Food Reviews

Elfriede Fürsich

ABSTRACT

This chapter demonstrates how to conduct a textual analysis. I employ textual analysis through a cultural critical lens and illustrate this method with an analysis of food reviews. First, the method is defined and central theoretical tenets are explained. Then I outline the methodological process of this qualitative method from searching for a topic, establishing a theoretical background, selecting data, and presenting evidence to building a line of argument. As an example, I analyze newspaper food reviews of ethnic restaurants. This analysis is embedded in three theoretical contexts: the role of media in creating national identity; the essentializing contradictions of authenticity and culture; and the problematic “us versus them” dichotomies of international journalism.

Textual analysis has become one of the more popular methodologies for cultural critical media scholars. While the method is employed under various names, what all approaches have in common is that the method concentrates on qualitative interpretations of cultural output. For media scholars, the main data for a textual analysis is media content such as newspaper or magazine articles, television shows, radio programs, Internet sites, or computer games. Textual analysis draws on qualitative interpretive research traditions and critical theory.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems186

This chapter demonstrates how to conduct a textual analysis. I employ textual analysis through a cultural-critical lens and illustrate this method with an analysis of food reviews. First, the method will be defined and introduced. Then I outline the methodological process of this qualitative method from the search for a topic, the establishment of a theoretical background, data selection, and the presentation of evidence to building a line of argument. Expanding on an exercise I used in the classroom, I analyze newspaper food reviews of ethnic restaurants. This analysis is embedded in three theoretical contexts: the role of media in creating national identity; the essentializing contradictions of authenticity and culture; and the problematic “us versus them” dichotomies of international journalism.

Defining Textual Analysis

With the cultural-critical turn in media studies more than 30 years ago, an increasing number of scholars rejected the social science paradigm of research along with quantitative methodology. Quantitative content analysis was criticized for remaining on a descriptive level and for evaluating language out of context. Instead, cultural-critical scholars tried to find a way of exploring content in its “natural” occurrence – words or images as they are expressed and received in a specific web of meaning. Drawing on a long line of qualitative research and interpretive approaches, textual analysis was often positioned in contrast to traditional content analysis, as it was seen as “a type of qualitative analysis that, beyond the manifest content of media, focuses on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text” (Fürsich, 2009, p. 240). These defining distinctions indicate the influence of the humanities, especially semiotics, film studies, and literary analysis, and of discursive interpretive approaches on the development of textual analysis.

In line with understanding media as “clues to the general culture” (Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997, p. 11), textual analysis has become a methodology that attempts to reconstruct the structures of feeling (Williams, 1974) – that is, the prevalent ideologies permeating a particular historical and cultural moment – that make a specific type of coverage possible. Researchers infer from specific media content how the people who produced the content and people who are addressed as audiences create shared meaning. The “underlying cultural and ideological assumptions” mentioned in the definition above are therefore the aspects in the text that can be analyzed to understand how ideology and common sense are constructed at any given time.

Textual analysis in the cultural-critical paradigm follows the principles of interpretive research (such as naturalistic inquiry). Textual analysts probe a research question inductively by finding patterns in the empirical material. These patterns lead to the interpretations and developments of explanations and theories grounded in the back and forth between observation and contextual interpretation. Textual scholars use

open coding, not predefined codebooks, to organize, condense, and interpret their material: they decide on specific codes based on observation of patterns in the text.

Methodological Assumptions

Three epistemological and ontological concepts are essential for understanding textual analysis as a method.

Open Text, Multiple Readings

The “text” in textual analysis denotes a semiotic and cultural understanding of cultural output. Central here is Roland Barthes’s understanding of text (1957/1972, 1977). Barthes positioned the rich, complex concept of text in contrast to the idea of a fixed *oeuvre*, which was traditionally considered the result of cultural production. In conventional literary studies, a critic’s task was to find the “true” meaning in a picture, book, or other artistic production, to decipher what the author “really” meant. In contrast, Barthes, and, consequently, the movement of poststructuralism and deconstruction, radically interpreted or deconstructed texts as open artifacts whose meanings are constantly under negotiation because they can be interpreted in various ways: any cultural text is polysemic, that is, it potentially triggers multiple meanings. As Larsen (1991, p. 122) in an early theoretical argument about the importance of text analysis summarized: “The text, then, should not be regarded as a closed, segmented object with determinate, composite meanings, but rather as an indeterminate field of meaning in which intentions and possible effects intersect.”

The production of meaning in media content is complex and can involve words, images, and sounds as signifiers. However, accepting the readers as the principal creators of meaning does not lead analysts to the relativistic conclusion that any text can be interpreted in an unlimited number of ways since everybody seems to “get something else out of it.” Instead, as cultural studies scholars argue, meaning is not created as an individual independent activity but audiences create meaning in a social process and rely on “shared maps of meaning” (Hall, 1997, p. 29). The social creation of meaning allows media producers and audiences to make sense of the world in a specific cultural and historic context but also always reflects given power relationships and ideologies. Therefore, meaning is never fixed but constantly contested.

Since popular texts are considered polysemic, it is not the goal of a textual analysis to uncover the one “true” or even “hidden” meaning of a text but to offer a variety of possible readings of the examined material. Instead of finding hidden meanings, “subconscious” intentions of the producers, or biases of the text, the task is to understand what cultural and ideological assumptions were established at a specific time that allowed a text to be considered acceptable and become popular, even common

sense. For example, analyzing the internationally popular US sitcom *Friends* allows us to understand the dominant Western ideological conceptions of the late 1990s with regard to femininity and masculinity, the work ethic, and personal and professional success.

Thus, textual analysis interrogates content in its social and cultural context. What is of interest is the relation of media content to the overall dominant ideology. A textual analysis answers the question of how ideology is negotiated in the content: in what ways does the content maintain, reinforce, question, or even defy dominant ideology.

Reality as Constructed

Textual analysts also assume a particular relationship between reality and media. Traditional content analysis tries to understand how accurately the media portray reality. This method accepts the social scientific ontology of a world accessible through sense perception. Instead, qualitative scholars argue that media and society are interrelated and that various versions of reality are constructed (in the media and beyond the media). John Fiske's well-known statement explains this axiom. According to him, television is perceived as realistic, "not because it reproduces reality, which it clearly does not, but because it reproduces the dominant sense of reality" (1987, p. 21). Engaging in this ontological perspective, textual analysts accept the notion that what causes social action is not a pure, discernible reality but the idea of reality in people's heads. The ubiquitous media play a decisive role in establishing ideas of reality that are soon considered normal. The power of media lies in the creation of an accepted reality and common sense, but the media also have the ability to confront the *status quo*, as Schröder (2002, p. 100) explained: "Media content [is] an artifact and process by which society is both reproduced and contested." A central question for cultural critical scholars is the media's potential to challenge the common sense.

Representation as Constitutive of Media Discourse

When textual analysts interrogate certain depictions or portrayals in media content, they use the term "representation." The aim of many textual analyses is to explain what types of representations are prevalent. The cultural studies scholars Stuart Hall and John Fiske played a central part in developing this concept for media studies. It would fall short to equate representation with portrayal or depiction in a text. When Hall explained that "representations are constitutive for a text," he distinguished the concept from the social science idea that portrayals in the media are a more or less accurate reflection of reality. To account for the complicated relationship between reality and mediated reality, textual scholars analyze representation as complex practices of signification. This analysis involves, according to Hall (1997, p. 9), "actual

signs, symbols, figures, images, narratives, words, and sounds – the material forms – in which symbolic meaning is circulated.” It is important for the textual critic to understand how current representations relate to earlier established representations. As Hall (1997) and others argued, representations are historically bound in a chain of signification. For example, it can be interesting to investigate if or how current news reporting on India relates to earlier stereotypical colonist representations established over centuries in literature, travel writing, or movies. Representations are considered central frameworks for making sense of the world.

Cultural productions are connected to various discourses, which are “a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area” (Fiske, 1987, p. 11). Thus, by analyzing representations, textual critics elucidate ideological connotations that allow for a better understanding of accepted worldviews and their powerful impact.

Topic Selection

As a qualitative and interpretive methodology, textual analysis is well suited to answer questions that aim at understanding a prevalent ideology. Typical questions relate to an established media discourse and are phrased rather widely to allow for a variety of readings: How are women represented in the US television hit show *How I Met Your Mother*? What concepts of nation-state and civic belonging are negotiated in television news coverage on immigration? What idea of scientific work and scientific achievement is created in science programs for kids? What discourse on national identity is narrated on Egyptian blogs?

Questions that relate to the frequency of coverage, however, are best answered with standardized content analysis, for example: How many Latino characters are featured on prime-time television? Also, quantitative methodology can answer questions that investigate quantifiable trends in coverage, for example: How has the amount of coverage on female athletes changed over the last 30 years? When using quantitative content analysis, predefined typologies of characters need to be established in a codebook before the analysis, for example: What gender roles do female characters perform on current prime-time dramas (e.g., professional; mother; homemaker; victim; sex object). In contrast, textual analysis is suited to interrogate emerging role constellations; development of representations over time; and the connection of current representations to other current or previous discourses. For example: Are there moments of “Orientalism” in the current Western newspaper coverage on Iran? Are there differences in the representation of top female politicians compared to their male colleagues?

Cultural-critical scholars often focus on issues relating to class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Some of the connections between these issues and media content are more immediately obvious: “Orientalism” (Said, 1978) and coverage of the uprising in

Egypt; the globalization discourse on CNN International; the representations of teenage girls and women in the *Twilight* saga; discourses of neoliberalism in the coverage of the 2008 economic crisis. It can be productive for cultural scholars to investigate discourses in various types of popular media, for example, Orientalism in the US movie *Zero Dark Thirty*; the discourse of globalization in world music reviews; the representation of technology and science in the US sitcom *iCarly*; the performance of status and class in home improvement shows; the notion of citizenship in the US show 24.

Exemplar: Representing the Other in Food Reviews

The example for this chapter followed the suggestions outlined above. It uses a general question of concern to cultural scholars and interrogates it in an unusual context that is often considered fringe or trivial. The theoretical context is the question of how Others (i.e., minorities, foreigners) are represented in the media. The empirical engagement is with so-called “ethnic” food reviews.

Justification

The intention of scholarly research is to contribute to the ongoing academic discussion on a specific topic. Thus, the justification of any study has to relate to earlier scholarship. The central question for this project was “How do the media make sense of other countries, and other people?” The way we represent the Other is of central concern in a globalizing world. Major political decisions are related to the way we see other nations and the world. Classic studies on journalism employed the news values “proximity,” “elite nation” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), and “ethnocentrism” (Gans, 1979) to explain the fact that the closer another country is (economically, culturally, or politically) the more frequent and favorable the coverage will be. More (economically or militarily) powerful nations are more likely to dominate the news flows across the world, while people and events in counties at the periphery are often misconstrued or ignored. Only extreme humanitarian crisis, natural disasters, and violent conflicts with many casualties have a chance of being covered. Leaving the limitations of news journalism behind, it makes sense to look to international media content that is not necessarily deemed relevant to an informed citizenry – more trivial and popular content. The focus on popular content relates to another tenet of cultural-critical studies: meaning is created in all forms of popular culture and there is no banal entertainment that people only use to escape the mundane.

For example, many media consumers have an idea of “what Africa is about” even if they have never set foot on African soil. This idea of Africa is the backdrop when non-Africans hear the latest news about a food crisis in Ethiopia or political unrest

in Mali. But these images in our heads have most likely developed over years of consumption of popular culture content relating to Africa through watching Hollywood movies such as *Indiana Jones*, *Tintin*, or *Out of Africa*, dancing to African music such as that of Youssou N'Dour, or enjoying animal documentaries on the Discovery Channel. Of course, personal encounters with people from the continent may play a role as do school lessons on Africa.

Another major site of cultural exchange is food. Visiting a so-called ethnic restaurant is a significant experience as it lets us encounter difference with all our senses. As media scholars, we can explore this unique cultural encounter by looking at the food reviews of ethnic restaurants. The task of food reviewers is to explain a different type of culture. Like travel journalists, food reviewers describe something “foreign” and “strange” to an audience that is normally not (yet) familiar with it.

Sampling

For textual analysis any well-established qualitative sampling methods can be used: maximum variation sampling, snowball sampling, theoretical construct sampling, critical case sampling, and even convenience sampling (for a detailed explanation see Lindlof, 1995, pp. 126–131). In any case, the sampling strategy needs to be made transparent to the reader and to be justified in relation to the research questions and theoretical concepts under investigation. For a scholarly project on ethnic food reviews, appropriate media content can be selected through qualitative sampling strategies. Following typical case sampling, for example, would mean to sample articles that capture “the typical (or normative) form of a phenomenon” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 115.) Since in this case the phenomenon relates to food reviews on ethnic restaurants that are published in commonly accessible media, a search on Lexis/Nexis or various online news archives using a recent time frame will generate relevant articles. Sample size in qualitative research is typically considerably smaller than in quantitative research since the methodology calls for an intensive engagement with every source. The aim of typical case sampling is to generate pertinent exemplars for analysis.

One of the central tenets of qualitative research requires prolonged engagement with the participants or material under investigation, such as in a long-term participant observation in a field study. When dealing with media material it is equally important to engage in great detail with the material analyzed. Instead of just quickly focusing on the data to be analyzed, it is important to read, hear, or watch the material in context and to engage with the material in what Hall (1975, p. 15) called “the long preliminary soak.”

In the case of the food reviews, I had long been a fan of ethnic restaurants and was an avid reader of the *Boston Globe* during the time of the selection. I used my years of experience of reading the column as a starting point. While qualitative

researchers work toward avoiding apparent and avoidable sources of bias, my familiarity with the media material can be justified as providing important contextual understanding beyond the articles selected for analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research understands the epistemological relationship between the researcher and the material to be studied as “interactive and inseparable” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). I used my fandom and knowledge of the articles as a first step to establish general expertise.

I have read many of these columns over the years and frequented many of the restaurants they describe. In order to gather materials for the actual analysis, I used a search on www.boston.com (a website of the *Boston Globe*) and searched for the column “cheap eats,” which I knew often covered ethnic restaurants. I deemed the decision to restrict the reviews to those of the *Boston Globe* acceptable since the journalistic style and routines of this daily newspaper are similar to those of other contemporary metropolitan newspapers in the United States. Moreover, the paper’s continuing coverage of ethnic restaurants offers access to a wide variety of articles over a significant period of time. The example described below uses a purposefully selected sample of 50 reviews. I have used these articles frequently in a class exercise to teach students the problems of media representations of the Other.¹

Analytical Strategies: Coding and Binaries

The first step of the analysis entails a close examination of all the material including an intensive and repeated reading of all articles. The second step is to code the material. There are various established methods of coding in qualitative research and discourse analysis. What all these strategies have in common is that they aim at selecting and condensing the material under investigation in a multistep process. For example, in a first round of open coding, the text critic looks for central themes or frames in the coverage.

In this first round, it can also be helpful to investigate how the articles are constructed. Besides specific genre conventions, there often is a typical formula used to produce the text. For example, the articles in this study always relied on at least two anonymous visits to the restaurant during which the reviewer seemed to have taken some company along (as a way to be able to taste various menu items). After the tasting visit, there were phone interviews with the owner or cooks. A common journalistic formula further emerged in the text itself: Authors described in a few sentence the decor of the restaurants and the people frequenting it. They often positively acknowledged the presence of what they considered “ethnic” customers in the restaurant. Moreover, owners tended to be quoted on how they related to the food served, for example, whether they were from the featured country and whether they had learned cooking from someone in the home country. There were often comments on the speed, attitude, and friendliness of the service staff. The

main part of the on average 1000 word reviews then dealt in some detail with specific dishes.

In the third step of analysis, these broader observations were further narrowed to specific textual elements. To reach deeper into the materials, some standard questions of cultural-critical textual analysis (see Barker, 2000; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 1998) were adapted for the study: Are there patterns of binary oppositions in the text, such as “us” versus “them”? What in the text is considered normal, common sense, enjoyable? What verbal or visual metaphors are used? Whose voices are heard, and who is silenced? Who is established as ideal or preferred reader?

The overall research question for this project was: How do the reviewers create and produce national distinction and culture? It quickly became clear, however, that other stakeholders – the restaurant owners and workers – were also implicated in this discourse, leading me to ask further: How do restaurant owners and service staff produce national distinction? Upon close engagement with the text I found that the intrinsic goal of both parties (reviewers and restaurant owners/workers) in these reviews was to work on a discourse that emphasizes difference. This discourse was driven by the genre itself. What is the point of frequenting and reviewing an ethnic restaurant if it is not different from any “regular” bar at the corner?

As a next analytical level, I used a typical strategy of deconstruction by establishing discursive binaries in the text (see Fiske, 1984; McKee, 2003). These binaries are related to the topic and earlier scholarly research on representing the Other. Since the coverage is a type of international (even as it is local) reporting, the binary of “us” versus “them” is central. Cultural theory helped to establish “authentic” versus “inauthentic” as a further binary. I used these initial binaries to search for text passages that exemplify these distinctions. As a next step, I aligned other passages according to the us/them dichotomy. All that was considered part of the ethnic restaurant experience was listed to the left. To the right are the opposite side of the binaries that may or may not be explicitly mentioned in the text. Often, this side is the silenced and unquestioned common sense position.

Establishing these binaries throughout the texts augments the analysis in multiple ways. First, it allows the critic to further condense the material and filter out important textual elements. The binary starts with the binary “us” versus “them,” which is typical for reporting about Others. The elements that are mentioned in the left column of the binary list are those attributes of the reviews that are positively sanctioned, even if not all restaurants reach the established goal. Thus, the fact that a review criticizes a restaurant decoration for not being typically “Thai” or a cook who is not from the home country reinforces the established common sense position of an ethnic restaurant “as it should be.”

In this binary list, it becomes discernible that the restaurants are pressed into a certain ideal that rewards a homey, cozy, and laid-back atmosphere, and business models where the standards of contemporary, commodified, organized business strategies don’t apply. A long quote at the beginning of a review of a Middle Eastern restaurant exemplifies the basic binary structure:

Most of us like restaurants personable. We like to feel that real people have put their souls, as well as their work, into the food we're going to eat. We're intrigued by ambience and surroundings that show an individual's taste – not some corporate purchasing department. (Arnett, 2003)

Other textual examples further illustrate this point: The owners of the restaurant 9Tastes chose the name “because nine is a lucky number,” and not because of branding or marketing considerations (Subramaniam, 2003). Instead of professional and skilled training, the reviews emphasized family tradition and connection as, for example, in this description of Greek cooks noting that “Guiding their cooking was a mix of their mother’s recipes and those of a 80-year-old Greek cook who trained them” (Taylor, 2002). Another review similarly described a Thai couple who

became restaurateurs serendipitously. The family emigrated from Bangkok 20 years ago and almost immediately went to work at Montien, which a Chinese family owned. Tony cooked and Pam did just about everything else – waited tables, tended bar, hosted. When the family decided to get out of the restaurant business 10 years ago, they offered to sell Montien to the Sukthevas. (Kowalczyk, 2003)

The idea of noncommodified relations extends to the clientele who is not supposed to be treated as paying customers but as guests and friends: “When [the meze] came, we felt like revered guests in a Turkish home (only with plastic forks)” (Taylor, 2006). Another Greek restaurant is

a place where members of the Greek community can go to see one another, wave across tables, and socialize in a way that people did many years ago – and still do in small towns. The hostess seems to know most of the older women and treats them almost reverentially. (Julian, 2001b)

This statement also taps into another typical nostalgic discourse that favors “many years ago” and “small towns.” A Mexican restaurant “is where transplants from Mexico come to get their fix. This colorful family-style restaurant, called a fonda in Mexico, is where you’ll find such delicacies as cuitlacoche” (“Most authentic restaurants,” 2005).

Second, another important aspect of a binary list is that it allows the critic to evaluate what is left out in the text, what the unquestioned or unmentioned default position is. Note that various attributes of “them” are verbalized in the reviews, while the “us” remains silenced. These unspoken elements (noted in parentheses in Table 15.1) are the assumed position of the “us”: It is in this right-hand column that the accepted common sense position becomes visible. These elements cannot necessarily be illustrated with verbatim “manifest” statements in the media content. But by filling in the missing binary, the critic is able to explain the cultural assumptions of the common sense and dominant position.

Table 15.1 Textual binaries in ethnic food reviews

“Them”	“Us”
Restaurant owner and family, staff	Reviewer, readers
Authentic	(Inauthentic)
Typical, essential, genuine	(Indistinguishable, hybrid)
Based on national distinction	
Family, community	(Individualized, alienated)
Ethnic guests as friendly community	
Friendly staff who makes guests feel at home	
History/roots	(Future orientation, without roots)
Recipes, food based on long traditions	
Static	Flexible
Slow	(Fast)
Service, food	
Cozy, warm	Hectic, cold
Inside the restaurant	Street (life) outside the restaurant
Self-organized, family-run	(Organized, bureaucratic, corporate)
Cooks and owners not trained professionals but skilled through family connections	
Noncommercialized relations	(Commodification)
Customers as guests, friends	

Establishing a Theoretical Context

To further delve into the common sense position of the text, the next step is to contextualize the text in relationship to other scholarly concepts. After condensing and systematizing the material through several levels of coding, it is important to connect the data under investigation to the earlier established research questions and tie the material to appropriate theoretical frameworks. The goal of qualitative research is “to make contextually grounded, theoretical points that are viewed as a contribution by the relevant professional community of readers” (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1997, p. xv). Following the principles of grounded theory, the critic moves from the data to theoretical explanations that are constantly re-evaluated in a continued engagement with the media content. A textual analysis ultimately has to present one or multiple readings or interpretations that explain the cultural and ideological assumptions at the core of the text.

Media and National Identity

The analysis of the text examined here revealed several strategies used to establish a restaurant as “genuine” or “authentic.” This “authenticity check” was conducted

throughout the materials. Words such as “ethnic,” “authentic,” “traditional,” “exotic,” and “genuine” were all used to designate a cultural distinction and categorization and to establish the ethnic/national credentials of the different restaurants.

In the opening paragraphs, reviewers typically established a clear cultural categorization by highlighting the decor. As a reviewer commented lightheartedly: “Themis manages the storefront restaurant, which counters its environs with bright wood panels and sunny murals of Greece (must Greek restaurants so cruelly flaunt their homeland’s azure waters and sun-bleached patios?)” (Taylor, 2002). On the other hand, it was deemed a problem if “while you nibble Japanese and Korean specialties, putti, the little Italian angels, smile down from the canvases on the ceiling” (Julian, 1998).

Reviewers further authenticated the restaurant by educating their readers on unusual food while simultaneously establishing their own authority. As one review put it, “in a Korean restaurant, one authenticity test is the panchan, or little side dishes that come with the meal” (“Most authentic restaurants,” 2005).

Another striking similarity across all reviews by various authors is the fact that they often described the owner and the owner’s family or other staff – especially the chef – and the details of the restaurant’s founding or the cooking expertise. These descriptions were another “authenticity check.” For examples, a review of a Thai restaurant opened with the detailed names of the owners signifying exotic complexity:

Six year ago, Suriyant “Toy” Jamdee and his friend Suraphong “Tu” Pinyochon opened Brown Sugar Café in the Fenway. Pinyochon’s wife, Darny, greets customers. Within view of the ballpark lights, the little place has a graciousness that is unusual. (Julian, 2002a)

Similar qualifications related to the restaurants’ customers. The ethnic makeup of their clientele was carefully noted – “I was pleased to note that we were the only non-Asian clientele on our first visit, taking it as evidence that this Vietnamese is serving the genuine article and not just catering to the South Lawrence tourist trade” (MacDonald, 1998) – with the presence of American costumers viewed with suspicion. The staff was marked for their difference as well: “The staff at Viet Cafe has an engagingly tentative air, sweet but seemingly fearful of being spoken to roughly. You feel you ought to keep your voice low as not to startle them, quite unlike the brash Boston wait staffs” (Arnett, 2000).

Of note is the fact that the descriptions of exoticism and authenticity were done from the perspective of an unquestioned default. The reviewers brought in a specific understanding of what a Thai, Chinese, Vietnamese, or Turkish restaurant has to look like. Mainly this default was based on the experience with other restaurants of the same category, not actual visits to that country. Often, reviewers established a contrast between the exterior (the cold or hectic city of Boston) and interior of the restaurant (warm and/or calm):

It's cold and dark out these late fall nights, but when you walk into Merengue, you feel as if you've landed in a tropical spot. The walls are green, and there's a faux facade of a cottage, its shingles bright and blue. Over the bar is a mural of parrots and bright flowers. (English, 2003)

In another review "the orange walls inside Bhindi Bazar seemed to radiate warmth, just what we needed after braving the blustery cold" (Subramaniam, 2002b). There was an even more nostalgic tone in this review:

The hustle and bustle of Boylston Street seemed far away in this basement restaurant across from the Prudential Center. Time was on hold in Delhi Bistro as we relaxed to the melodious sounds of flute and tabla playing in the background. A soft-spoken waiter asked us whether we preferred mild, medium, or spicy dishes, and waited patiently as we decided. (Subramaniam, 2002a)

When reading the reviews, it becomes clear that reviewers and owners engaged in different cultural strategies for establishing authenticity and national difference. For the reviewers, it was important to establish the dissimilarity of these restaurants following the standards of the genre of ethnic food reviews. Difference became a mark of quality. Restaurants that played too obviously to local US tastes were seen as a problem: "The menu is slightly upscaled [*sic*], too, and recognizes that the dining public can embrace ethnic cuisine on its own merits with no Americanization" (Arnett, 1998b). Another reviewer commented: "I liked the fact that when one asked for spicy here, the dish was prepared that way, no toning down just because the diner's not Korean" (Arnett, 1998c).

Restaurants were defined and categorized along national distinctions that relied on clear, often static, and essentialized cultural definitions. These distinctions inscribed accepted center-periphery power relationships. Indeed, what makes a restaurant an ethnic restaurant? The term "ethnic" often stands in for "Third World" or periphery – a French restaurant would not be called an ethnic restaurant. Interestingly enough, in this particular case, Turkish and Greek restaurants (as countries at the periphery of Europe), and even Japanese restaurants, were also included in this category.

Yet it would be naive to regard this categorization as a one-way process. Instead, the statements of owners demonstrate that they too engage in the performance of authenticity by striving to create an "authentic" national identity to be sold to customers. As an owner quoted in one of the reviews put it, "We are not competing with the kebabs made at other restaurants made in town . . . We are competing with the kebabs made in Turkey. We want to be as good as in Turkey or better" (Taylor, 2006).

The restaurant owners negotiated a position that allowed for enough national difference – as a marketable brand distinction – while always making the effort to guide potential clients through familiar categories into new territory, for example, by describing a dish on the menu as "Vietnamese pancake" or naming a restaurant

“Beijing.” Possibly negative political meanings were excluded or sanitized, for example, by calling a cuisine “Persian” instead of “Iranian.” National identity had to be established as different enough to be considered special in a crowded restaurant market, yet still able to connect to US expectations so as to not drive away customers not ready for an experience that was too “exotic.” One reviewer spelled out this ambivalent strategy in detail. She praised a Cambodian chef: “Her flavors are distinctive, and there’s no Americanization of the food. Yet the cuisine is easy to understand: there’s no feeling that you’ll never know what you’re eating or never get the stuff saved for insiders” (Arnett, 1998a). For the restaurant owners, national identity became a branding strategy that positioned a unique dining experience as a competitive advantage.

Both sides engaged in a discourse of authentication and distinction. In this process national identity was negotiated (by the reviewer) and performed (by the owner and staff). This performance was grounded in a discourse of national identity or the “idea that people and things from and within national borders possess very particular, idiosyncratic, national characteristics” (Du Gay et al., 1997, p. 48). As a cultural strategy to make sense of one’s own identity and that of others, it may seem harmless enough, but here is where the cultural-critical commitment to interrogating power relations is important. These food reviews are but one example of how media negotiate and represent the nation-state.

Thus, it is helpful to draw here on scholarship on the relationship between media and the nation-state that has emphasized that both are intrinsically intertwined (e.g., Waisbord, 2004). First newspapers (Anderson, 1991), and later news magazines and national television news (Gans, 1979), have played a distinctive role in defining, explaining, and representing the nation-state for audiences. Anderson’s idea of the nation-state as an “imagined community” explains the centrality of representations for the existence of the nation-state system (1991, pp. 6–7):

[The nation] is *imagined* because even the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion . . . it is imagined as a *community* because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.

In this study, the reviewers often presented a geopolitically fixed situation defined by national borders. The current political status quo was reinforced along with traditional political center–periphery thinking.

The Concept of Culture: Static versus Dynamic

These restaurants were scarcely given a chance for creative development. Attempts to present hybrid food and new preparations were rarely acknowledged and mainly

criticized. For example, an Indian restaurant was condemned for a new type of bread filling: “Chicken and pesto? What is going on here? The Kebab Factory has woven some unlikely combinations into its repertoire of traditional Indian fare. But they haven’t neglected the classics” (Julian, 2001a). Faced with a large choice of seemingly out-of-place dishes, the reviewer ended the article almost philosophically:

Am I old-fashioned, passing the pesto in favor of the poori, brushing past pizza to taste the pakoras? The younger generation of Indians is very excited by his food, [the owner] tells me. I am, too. And we’ve probably eaten completely different meals. (Julian, 2001a)

The restaurant remained authentic only because it held onto a traditional menu. In an earlier review, a new Asian restaurant was advised that “sticking to the Korean basics would seem to be a good first plan” (Arnett, 1998c).

As in a museum, these cuisines were frozen in time – national culinary distinctiveness was framed within contemporary (often short-term) political borders. This discursive strategy neglected, especially, food preparations developed in regional or local spaces or through centuries of cross-border influences, such as along the spice road. Food was not understood as an active and transitory cultural expression but was preserved as an essentialized category. Moments of hybridity and new development were often negatively sanctioned, as they would call for an understanding of culture as a dynamic, continuously changing process. However, it should be noted that the reviews used here (from the late 1990s to 2006) reflect a certain stage in restaurant development in Boston. The later the reviews were issued, the more likely reviewers engaged positively with hybrid forms of cooking, which became more fashionable.

Othering: Us versus Them

A further step in connecting the material to other theoretical explanations is to continue to engage in the binary setup. A central motivation of the study was to see if seemingly trivial journalism could be used to understand the media’s approach to representing the Other. The question now is how exactly the texts create an idea of an Other. By continuing the binary setup along the dimensions of the Other and filling in the mostly unspoken counterparts for the United States, the preferred reader and underlying cultural preferences become visible. As is typical in media representations of Others, the media text often reveals more about the unspoken ideological assumptions of the “we” than the lived reality of the Other.

In the case of the food reviews, the articles depended on a clear demarcation against an ethnic and exotic Other who tended to be a first-generation immigrant from so-called Third World or periphery countries. It speaks for the text that despite the limited length of the articles, owners are often quoted verbatim and not – as is

Table 15.2 Extension of binaries

Other	We
Ethnic/often non-White/periphery/ first-generation, immigrant Spoken about	(US American, nonethnic, probably White, no direct migration background) Spoken to = Preferred reader

a typical problem for international reporting – silenced or replaced by expert voices from Western elites. But as the fixed voices in the formulaic reviews, the restaurant owners were, nevertheless, “put in place.” Beyond national difference, ethnic difference was established, too. For example, in one case, even African Americans belonged to the Other. The default “us” is White:

The 90-seat Roxbury storefront holds a rainbow of customers, too: on a recent Saturday night, there were Latinos, African-Americans and a few Caucasians. At the table next to ours were three generations of African-Americans, from baby to grandmother. People come for the *mélange* of flavors and scents that emanate from the kitchen. (English, 2003)

The preferred reader established in these articles is US American, nonethnicized, probably White, without a direct migration background. This dichotomy continues to enforce, or at least does not challenge, a national identity that minimizes the US historic experience of continuous immigration and mobility. US identity is endowed on a population that is a static, egalitarian, nonracial assembly while migrants and minorities are Others with regard to race/ethnicity and class.

Further Interpretations

As a last step of the analysis, the researcher has to take the discursive strategies that were established earlier and the elements that were tied to a wider theoretical framework through to another round of interpretations. The goal is to establish various comprehensive readings of the text. These interpretations should probe the question as to why the examined texts “work” at the given time. How do the articles relate to established ideologies and structures of feeling?

In this case, the binary structure again helps to approach another dimension of interpretation. If one reads along the two columns, one is struck by how the attributes of the two sides position “them” in a reality that is sensual, emotional, dependent on kinship relations, and driven by noncommodified attitudes. This world provides

a welcome and appreciated escape for “us” – the reviewers and the preferred readers – who are nonethnicized Americans. “We” seem to be living in a “cold” world of structure, commodity production, and Fordist principles. Despite the fact that the reviewers exoticize the Other in positive terms and engage in an accepting, tolerant framing, this binary leaves rationality on the side of the reviewer. The world of the ethnic restaurants is in the realm of the emotional and irrational. Visiting the restaurants is a sensual encounter that does not necessitate cerebral engagement. A reviewer writes about a Cambodian restaurant: “The herbal scents of lemongrass; the bite of chilies; smoky, sultry accents; a hint of sour and then sweet – all these tastes and smells converge, beguiling the senses. Falling in love was never easier” (Arnett, 1998a).

This dichotomy is amplified by the discursive strategy that positions ethnic food and owners in the past. To make this point, a reviewer starts her review of a Palestinian restaurant with a daring historic account:

A kebab is one of the simplest, most appealing dishes. In fact, you might say that humans have been eating food this way since they first started cooking. Meat would be skewered and roasted whole over open fire, then cut up and eaten in pieces. Later the meat was cut before it was cooked. So the kebab we know today is a refinement of a tradition practiced for centuries, and still eaten all over the Middle East. (Julian, 2002b)

Her quasi-scientific account of “humans [who] have been eating food this way since they first started cooking” connects not only the restaurant but also a whole region to premodern times. This quote is indicative of the overall discourse. Most of these articles echoed a cultural sensibility that positions the premodern Other against a modern “us.” Moreover, this premodern state was connected to irrationality and positioned against modern rationality. As Table 15.3 demonstrates, sensual and emotional language was typically used to describe the food, the decor or the cooks’ genealogies. Restaurants were considered successful if they employed methods that are counter to the rational, organizational model of advanced capitalism. The reviewers followed the genre conventions by using clear judgmental language and a didactic approach toward the reader. This journalistic style reflects the enlightenment spirit

Table 15.3 Cultural sensibility and ideology of food reviews

Not rational	Rational
Attitudes of cooks towards food	Professional attitudes of judgment
Descriptions of food and decor in emotional, sensual terms	Didactic voice of reviewers
Cultural sensibility/ideology	(Cerebral, rational)
Sensual, irrational	Modern
Premodern	Now
Then	

of modernity. The possibility of hybridity – as a postmodern sensibility – is left out or regarded negatively in these articles.

There are several possible interpretations of this discourse. One can understand this text and its sustained desire for authenticity as a type of symbolic and cultural resistance to a world where traditionally firm categories such as nation and national culture have become fluid. This idea links to the anthropological insight that food production and consumption have always been used to create a sense of identity and to maintain boundaries. In this study, these reviews negotiate new boundaries in a specific geopolitical moment characterized by commodification and globalization. However, the tendency to frame this exchange in a premodern/modern dichotomy falls prey to a problem explained by anthropologist Fabian (1983). The reviews represent the Other in an earlier time, running the risk of depicting contemporaries as primitive ancestors caught in static, temporal displacement. The ideology of the food reviews dehumanizes Others by using them in a nostalgic enactment that reinforces outdated power relationships.

Yet another cultural interpretation or reading could explain the commodification and branding of national identity and the performance of ethnic difference that the reviewers and restaurant owners engage in as an ironic and self-aware commentary to make sense of a world in flux. The discourse surrounding the ethnic restaurants becomes a site where civic and cultural identities are negotiated. After all, these reviews have been written at a time when globalization has become an experienced cultural and economic reality even in the powerful centers in the West – and not something that only happens to Others.

There is a need for new research to carefully position such analyzed texts in their historic and geopolitical context. Further studies could analyze ethnic reviews in a wider set of media and over a longer period of time. This strategy would enable textual analysts to understand shifting ideologies over time regarding globalization, the demise of the nation-state, and cultural identity. At any rate, the textual analysis of selected food reviews presented here demonstrates how popular journalism negotiates cultural sensibilities and ideologies about how we see the world. This type of method took the analysis of media coverage, that is, various themes of the coverage or specific frames in these articles, only as a starting point. The central contribution of textual analysis is its interpretation beyond the manifest content. Its aim is to explicate the prevailing ideologies and power relations that allowed this content to be produced in the first place.

NOTE

- 1 While the reviews here analyzed were downloaded over many years, starting in 1998, similar recent reviews can be accessed at http://www.boston.com/ae/restaurants/2012/06/14/YKDzsi0HansLF45C2Mryij/pictures.html?s_campaign=cse (accessed August 10, 2013).

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Cultural History and Media Studies

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ABSTRACT

Understanding meaning making and its capacities to shape social experience is difficult enough in the present. Yet interpretation poses particularly thorny questions when researchers are interested in describing social worlds and patterns of thought that years ago dissipated into the past. Historians have argued fiercely about these challenges and scholars in media studies stand to benefit from eavesdropping on these historiographical debates. For one, they can help us clarify our conceptions of media and culture. And second, they offer insight into how theories of culture can be translated into historical projects. Taking readers through the primary ways that culture has been operationalized in recent historiography, sections examine symbolic anthropology, critical theory, cultural studies, discourse, identity, and recent calls for a more cultural materialist approach. The chapter closes by examining a number of cultural materialist frameworks that might be especially useful to media scholars.

Media studies' interdisciplinary nature has meant that it has borrowed liberally from fields across academia, pocketing a useful theory here or a helpful methodology there. In this way, the field can be seen as almost a direct outgrowth of the "genre mixing" (Geertz, 1983, p. 19) that reshaped academic study in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Various called the "cultural turn," the "linguistic turn," and the "interpretive turn," this development placed the humanities in the role of lender

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems187

and the social sciences in that of borrower, reversing the trade flow of concepts that had characterized social research in the mid-twentieth century. "The instruments of reasoning are changing," anthropologist Clifford Geertz wrote in 1983, "and society is less and less represented as an elaborate machine or a quasi-organism and more as a serious game, a sidewalk drama, or a behavioral text" (p. 23). In media scholarship, these currents made themselves most apparent in the growing profile of researchers working within the frameworks of cultural studies, critical theory, political economy, and qualitative sociology between the 1970s and 1990s. In this regard, James Carey's 1975 call for a "cultural approach to communication" and Todd Gitlin's 1978 reimagining of the field as helmed by C. Wright Mills instead of Paul Lazarsfeld can be read as prophetic of changes just over the horizon, as media studies shifted its footing from a field dominated by questions of behavior to one largely concerned with questions of culture (Carey, 1992; Gitlin, 1978).

Similar changes were afoot in academic history too, as the study of cultural institutions gained wider acceptance and more traditional areas of inquiry – politics, diplomacy, business, labor, technology, African American history, and women's history – came to look more like culture. The "new cultural history," as it was eventually dubbed, represented a shift in both orientation and method (Hunt, 1989). Whether one was studying Hollywood studios or plantation slavery, the innovative thing to do was to treat that subject matter as culture in need of interpretation (Darnton, 1980; Hunt, 1989). Thus the new cultural history assigned itself many of the same interpretive challenges as media studies, only directed at the past.

This essay draws on historiographic debates within the US academy in the fields of history, American studies, and historical sociology, tracking the cultural turn and the subsequent twists it has taken over the past four decades. Historiography deals with how historical research is conceptualized, planned out, and executed. It provides a kind of scaffolding that helps to organize the aims of a researcher, the theoretical perspectives she or he will bring to bear on a topic, the scope and scale of their study, and the way their work will engage with ongoing debates. Historiography, then, is what makes it possible to take an enormous area, such as the history of television, and narrow it down to a researchable topic, such as the gender norms of television viewing in 1950s suburbia or the work culture of African American screenwriters in 1970s Los Angeles. Ironically, this process has the effect of both narrowing and expanding the scope of study. Our two examples no longer aspire to tell us the story of television in its entirety, but they do tell us part of that story in great detail. And just as importantly, they open outward to write new chapters in the histories of gender, race, domestic life, suburbia, urban life, creative work, and other areas. Different historiographies generate different questions; they point to different archives; and they provide different frameworks for sorting out and presenting one's findings. As we will see, they also provide different ways to think about culture.

Understanding meaning making and its capacities to shape society is difficult enough in the present. Yet interpretation poses particularly thorny questions in historiography because researchers are interested in describing social worlds and

patterns of thought that have dissipated into the past (Douglas, 2008). Historians have written extensively about the challenges involved in recovering the complexities of culture. Media studies scholars stand to benefit from eavesdropping on these conversations. Doing so can help us clarify our conceptions of culture and in the process hone our interpretive methodologies. Moreover, these debates offer cues and insights into how theories of culture can be translated into historical projects that help us better understand the many ways in which media have fit into social experience.

This chapter is structured to take the reader, in roughly chronological fashion, through the primary ways that culture has been defined and treated as an area of historical inquiry since the start of the cultural turn. The debates it explores occurred largely, although not entirely, among scholars based in the United States, though in many cases their areas of study were international and much of the theory they enlisted was European in origin. Sections examine symbolic anthropology, critical cultural theory, cultural studies, discourse and identity, and recent calls for a more avowedly sociocultural history that focuses on the interplay of semiotic systems and large-scale social structures. The essay closes by exploring three historiographic frameworks that lend themselves well to a cultural materialist approach – the culture industry revisited, the history of the senses, and the history of the book. Throughout the essay, I highlight studies that exemplify how different conceptions of culture have been put into action. The examples chosen are studies that have been influential in their fields and explore some facet of media culture.

Turn 1: Symbolic Anthropology and Folklore Studies

To understand how historians have dealt with interpretation, it is helpful to understand how questions of semiotics, hegemony, discourse, identity, and cultural practice became central concerns in the first place. In one way or another, the study of culture – in the anthropological “whole way of life” sense – attracted attention for much of the twentieth century. In the 1930s scholars began to look at popular texts as legitimate sources that might offer a window into everyday life; in the postwar years, the “myth and symbol” school of American studies produced sophisticated works on the place of iconography in historical change; meanwhile, a branch of the Annales School in France turned their attention to *mentalités*, or patterns of thought; and at roughly the same time, British investigations into ordinary life and working-class expression began to coalesce into the new field of cultural studies (Cook & Glickman, 2008).

Notwithstanding these important predecessors, it was the impasse felt by historians in the 1970s as they struggled to overcome the limitations posed by the tools of contemporary historiography that sparked a turn toward cultural theory and in ret-

respect signaled the beginning of a coherent subfield. At the time, the motor of innovation in historical methodology was the “new social history” and involved appropriating the tools of quantitative social science. The aim was to translate administrative records and other quantifiable documents, such as census reports and tax records, into large pools of data that shed light on populations who otherwise left little mark on the historical record. In time, these studies could be combined into sweeping insights into the workings of broad-scale social transformation. Yet even the new social history’s wider lens on the past seemed to obscure as much as it revealed. As William Sewell (2005, p. 40), then a young social historian, recalled of the time:

It seemed to me that although quantitative methodology had enabled us to understand more and more about the structural constraints and social forces that shaped people’s lives, it offered no guidance for understanding how people actually made sense of and grappled with these forces and constraints – that is, for how they actually made history.

For Sewell and a handful of others, anthropology, which at the time was still oriented toward mapping the logics of non-Western cultures, looked as though it might offer the same possibilities for peoples of the past.

Clifford Geertz’s work in symbolic anthropology had a profound influence on this development. His 1973 essay collection, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, attracted droves of admirers and, just as crucially, Geertz worked closely with a number of young historians, including Sewell and Robert Darnton, at Princeton University’s Institute for Advanced Research. Historians were attracted to Geertz for the same reasons that communication scholars like Carey were: his essays provided a means of thinking about culture as not just an aspect of social life, but as the interpretive capacities that made human experience and social organization possible in the first place. “Undirected by culture patterns – organized systems of significant symbols,” Geertz (1973, p. 46) argued, “man’s behavior would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless.” Culture, the “accumulated totality” (p. 46) of semiotic communication in a society, provided the lens through which the physical world was refracted as social reality. Thus acts of communication – utterances, stories, rituals, and so on – were strands within “webs of significance” (p. 5) that made raw experience readable. Recovering the insider’s view, or the “subjective meaning of action” (Weber, 1968, p. 9) – which Geertz characterized as the capacity not only to distinguish the intentionality behind a wink from the involuntary spasm behind a twitch, but to tell a flirtatious wink from a mocking wink and a mocking wink from a parodied wink, and so on – was the task of cultural analysis; the analyst’s method, “thick description,” was to dig through layer upon layer of context.

For historians, Geertz’s theories meant that popular expression and public ritual could be read as a text with an internal cohesion that in turn revealed underlying patterns of thought (Walters, 1980). Historians did not rely on Geertz alone. Other

anthropologists – Victor Turner, Keith Basso, and Mary Douglas – were also influential, offering ways to think about rites of passage, jokes, and boundaries (Darnton, 1986). Folklore studies showed itself useful too. Again, the task was to treat genres of popular representation as a larger sense-making system. Even the popular culture of modern societies, historian Lawrence Levine (1992) argued, could be analyzed as folklore. Movies, hit songs, novels, and other mass culture texts may not convey the same sense of folk authenticity as pre-industrial forms, he acknowledged, but they could nevertheless act as arenas “in which many essential things are realized: lessons are learned, values enunciated and repeated, modes of behavior scrutinized, social institutions and their effects explored, fantasies indulged” (Levine, 1992, p. 1392). In other words, popular texts could be treated as not only imperfect representations of reality, but also representations *for* reality – or symbolic resources audiences used to interpret social life.

Thus whether Geertz’s name was invoked or not, his call for thick description, or the notion that the telling detail could be unpacked to reveal a whole universe of symbolic logic, was central to the interpretive turn in history. Indeed, some of the most influential early examples of the cultural turn revolved around singular incidents (Davis, 1983; Ginzburg, 1980). Robert Darnton’s *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (1984) might be the purest example of Geertzian anthropology applied to historical inquiry. Having first made his name in intellectual history and the social history of the book trade in Enlightenment France, Darnton’s exposure to anthropology turned him into an advocate of “history in the ethnographic grain” (1984, p. 3). Darnton framed his approach as a kind of democratized intellectual history, explaining:

Where the historian of ideas traces the filiation of formal thought from philosopher to philosopher, the ethnographic historian studies the way ordinary people made sense of the world. He attempts to uncover their cosmology, to show how they organized reality in their minds and expressed it in their behavior. (p. 3)

But how does one enter into the minds of individuals who lived centuries ago and left little to no direct evidence of their thoughts in correspondence, diaries, and other traditional sources? The answer was to examine what they thought *with*: narratives, rituals, and symbols. All could be scrutinized for what they meant at the time through an ongoing process of deep contextualization, “passing from text to context and back again until [the historian] has cleared a way through a foreign mental world” (p. 6). In charting this landscape, Darnton saw great value in the unusual because it forced the historian to directly confront the utter “otherness” of the past. In a Geertzian sense, the initially inscrutable episode or detail “winked” at the historian. “When we cannot get a proverb, or a joke, or a ritual, or a poem,” Darnton explained, “we know we are on to something. By picking at the document where it is most opaque, we may be able to unravel an alien system of meaning” (p. 5).

Darnton's "wink" was a particularly grisly piece of working-class folklore from the print shops of eighteenth-century Paris – the story of a pair of apprentices who, seething with resentment toward a cruel master and mistress, pulled off an elaborate ruse to ceremoniously slay their cats. Layer by layer, Darnton unpacked the story, revealing the printing trade's deteriorating labor conditions and rough and tumble work culture, the wanton animal abuse that characterized merrymaking at the time, and the occult sexuality that swirled around the symbol of the cat in old regime France. Context in place, Darnton showed how the massacre and its ritual retelling was understood by its perpetrators as an act of defiance, allowing them to humiliate their employer, but in a manner that was enigmatic enough to get away with. Darnton's choice of a disturbing event was intentional. Although the book was an essay collection, it took its title from the chapter that was most likely to induce a feeling of "culture shock" (1984, p. 4). As Darnton saw it, the cringe readers felt forced them to acknowledge the distance between themselves and people of the past. Such an understanding of history brought the contingency of culture into sharp relief because it showed that everyday life has accommodated an astonishing array of mental landscapes.

The turn toward symbolic anthropology was not without its detractors. For the traditional minded and diehard social historians, the cultural turn represented something of a detour into triviality. But even sympathetic observers saw real shortcomings in the new ethnographic history. Some suggested that by turning everything into culture, scholars left themselves vulnerable to missing those moments when major shifts in cultural practice were themselves a driving engine of change (Biernacki, 1999). More often, though, symbolic anthropology was criticized as ill equipped for explaining structural social power (Nord, 1988). One problem with the Geertzian approach, critics held, was that it was overly synchronous, or focused on isolated moments. The simple mechanics of thick description, which involved freezing time in order to draw connections between various cultural elements – for instance, tomlcats and apprenticeships – diverted attention from diachronic change, or change in time; thus the historian lost sight of large-scale shifts in social power that don't take place within the temporal framework of the moment, but in the much longer sweep of time as it unfolds across years, decades, or even centuries (Sewell, 2005).

Turn 2: The Culture Industry, Hegemony, and Cultural Studies

Historians most concerned with questions of power had other camps to raid. Specifically, they drew on Western Marxism and gravitated toward notions of ideology and hegemony. These ideas were in some cases more than a half-century old, but they nonetheless represented fresh thinking in the 1970s. Gramsci (1971), who penned his

thoughts as a political prisoner in Fascist Italy, had been almost unknown in the English-speaking world before a few Marxist historians began to champion his writings in the 1960s (Eley, 2005). The Frankfurt School's critical sociology was better known to postwar social scientists, but much of the school's earlier work in cultural criticism, written between the 1920s and 1940s, had been little read. Around 1970, both sets of ideas began to reach larger audiences when English translations of key works appeared in wide release for the first time. In addition, a number of influential historical studies, such as Eugene Genovese's (1974) work on hegemony in US slavery, appeared at roughly the same time, demonstrating the remarkably original forms of analysis such frameworks could yield.

Again, historians were drawn toward critical theory for many of the same reasons that media scholars were. In Gramsci's case, hegemony provided a whole new set of questions to ask about the interplay of culture and power. "To resort to the concept of cultural hegemony," Jackson Lears (1985, p. 572) observed, "is to take a banal question – 'who has power' – and deepen it at both ends." Driving this expansion was a number of key observations about how power worked in relation to culture in modern democratic societies: that subordination is more often secured through legitimation and acquiescence than strong-arm tactics; that the social alliances, or "historical blocs," that safeguard the *status quo* often cut across class lines; that the reproduction of common sense parameters of thought, or "spontaneous philosophies," is also the reproduction of economic power; and that subordination is never inevitable, total, or complete, but rather an ongoing and unstable process. True to his Marxist background, Gramsci maintained that power was ultimately used to maintain the primacy of capitalism; but in an important departure from Marxist orthodoxy, he saw that power radiating from popular experience in ways that critical scholars had previously ignored.

Hegemony, then, offered historians a framework that both foregrounded issues of social inequality and granted formidable clout to the symbolic. In this regard, it was sometimes promoted as a corrective to Geertzian methods. As Lears (1985, p. 573) explained: "People indeed create their own symbolic universes . . . But a given symbolic universe, if it becomes hegemonic, can serve the interest of some groups better than others." Broadly put, a hegemonic approach was less concerned with recreating the inherent logic that governed bygone patterns of thought than in locating the areas of cultural life that at once accommodated desires for moments of autonomy and pleasure and reaffirmed structures of social inequality. Such an endeavor meant looking for the "cut-off," as E. P. Thompson (1977) put it, or the point at which symbolic acts of dissent ultimately fizzled out. "The villager is wise within his own village," Thompson (1977, p. 265) explained, "but accepts the inevitable organization of the outer world in the terms of the ruler's hegemony: he bitterly resents the exactions of the landowner and the moneylender but continues to believe in a just king or righteous Tsar." That "cut-off" might take the shape of a charismatic ideology or it could be located within key cultural institutions – the church, schools, media, the marketplace, or other sites. In any case, the researcher's

field of vision was refocused from culture in general to the engine rooms of ideology.

The Frankfurt School's critical framework lent itself well to this approach because it offered a means of understanding culture as both a situated mode of sense making *and* as the product of an industrialized news, entertainment, and marketing apparatus. According to this perspective, there were real implications to the fact that mass media texts were the end products of bureaucratic, systematized, and formulaic production processes. For Horkheimer and Adorno (1972), the great significance was that, as a form, mass culture ultimately expressed and executed the will to control that infused all forms of modern social organization. "All are free to dance and enjoy themselves . . .," they wryly observed. "But freedom to choose an ideology – since ideology always reflects economic coercion – everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same" (pp. 166–167). Most insidious, from their perspective, was the tendency of mass culture to fetishize everyday forms of domination. "Donald Duck in the cartoons and the unfortunate in real life get their thrashing so that the audience can learn to take their own punishment" (p. 138). Such broadsides on mass entertainment later earned them the scorn of a generation of scholars more sympathetic to popular tastes. Yet those who looked beyond the Frankfurt School's narrow prescriptions of taste saw undeniable value in its central assertion that, as Lears (1992, p. 1420) put it, there were "interconnections between the apparently dissimilar realms of mass entertainment and instrumental rationality."

In the hands of historians, critical theory proved a useful tool because it allowed them to place newfound importance on popular culture by treating it as a complex, multisited industry that emerged in conjunction with industrial modernity. Thus a scholar like John Kasson (1978) could describe the amusement parks of Coney Island as "laboratories of the new mass culture" (p. 8). The great appeal of the parks, Kasson argued, derived from their proprietors' skills at "sustaining the illusion of anarchic freedom and heedless release beneath the underlying reality of control" (p. 82). No matter how terrifying the "Loop the Loop" may have felt at full hilt, thrill seekers could rest assured that modern engineering kept it all very safe. Taking a similar approach, Jackson Lears (1994) could frame the rise of Madison Avenue as less the triumph of materialism than the height of managerialism. "Consumer culture there was . . .," Lears acknowledged, "but it was less a riot of hedonism than a new way of ordering the existing balance of tensions between control and release" (pp. 10–11). Even scholars working in a less overtly theoretical vein, such as business historian Roland Marchand (1998), unmistakably framed media as a site of ideological production. Thus, for Marchand early public relations could be described as big business's carefully engineered response to popular unease about the scale and "soullessness" of corporate commerce.

What these works shared was a baseline recognition that mass culture is the product of complex bureaucratic processes and social relationships that intersect with the larger workings of consumer capitalism. Similarly, they recognized the asymmetrical nature of modern media culture. It made a difference, as Lears (1992, pp.

1422–1423) argued, “that some groups or classes had the capital to mass produce and mass market cultural forms, while other groups had to make the best of what they bought.” Moreover, by sticking close to concepts – rationalization, standardization, control, and commodification – rather than lapsing into a conspiratorial mindset, they were able to make compelling connections between culture and consciousness.

Scholars working in British cultural studies drank from the same theoretical waters and were concerned with many of the same issues. In their hands, however, these ideas oftentimes looked quite different. The “culture” in cultural studies has had a shape-shifting quality and its various iterations have had a tremendous impact on both media scholars and cultural historians. In cultural studies’ formational years, culture referenced two specific intellectual projects. The first – tackled in the early work of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E. P. Thompson – was to pry the culture concept away from the guardians of Culture with a capital C by showing that ordinary forms of expression and ways of being – even in industrialized society – were just as worthy of the name. In short, the aim was to upend cultural hierarchy by replacing notions of culture as “the best and the brightest that has been thought” with an anthropological conception of culture as a “whole way of life” (Hall, 1980).

The second project built on the first, but shifted focus toward reconciling this new definition of culture with materialist conceptions of socioeconomic power. Marxist thought had long operated according to a base–superstructure model, placing only things economic on the left side of the hyphen and piling up everything else to the right of it. This meant that whatever economic base prevailed during a particular phase of history was thought to determine the cultural possibilities that could take shape. Williams and Thompson challenged this assumption early on by demonstrating that new economic orders were created *within* and *through* culture, not outside of it (Hall, 1980). As Thompson (1963, p. 9) famously put it: “The working class did not arise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making.” Instead of a preordained demographic category, then, class was reconceived of as a process that was always carried out through cultural practices that, in time, congealed into institutionalized forms of social inequality. Williams put it differently, but also stressed the embedded nature of class. Using a chemical metaphor, Williams (1961) likened the culture of a given place and time, or “structure of feeling” (p. 64), to a “solution” (p. 63) that seamlessly incorporated all of the various elements of life – economic, social, cultural – into a complex whole that intuitively made sense from within. “The art is there, as an activity, with the production, the trading, the politics the raising of families” (p. 61).

Yet despite its strides toward debunking the simple base–superstructure model, this new understanding of culture remained unsatisfactory for materialists (Thompson and Williams included) who still felt that matters economic weighed disproportionately on lived experience. Most problematic was that these new definitions had difficulty accounting for the inertia of class dynamics, or their remarkable powers to reproduce themselves. Much of the field’s intellectual energy from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s was devoted to working through this problem. For Williams (1977),

the solution lay in a cultural materialist understanding of history. From this vantage point, culture was “constitutive and constituting” (p. 100) in that it was baked into the material processes by which society made and remade itself. As Williams (1980) saw it, this was a dynamic process, but it was by no means a democratic one because entrenched interests generally – but importantly, not always – held sway over “our assignments of energy; our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and his world” (p. 38). Stuart Hall built on this cultural materialist approach by infusing it with notions of ideology and interpellation drawn from French structuralist thought. The result was a vision of culture as a broad plain of ideological struggle: a site where asymmetrical power was reproduced, contested, or sometimes simply overlooked as individuals actively made sense of social reality and their place within it (Hall, 1980).

With the exception of E. P. Thompson’s work in labor history, cultural studies’ impact on historians was more measured and slower to appear in American scholarship. As the historian Michael Denning (Cohen, 2007) recollected of his return to New York City in the early 1980s, after pursuing graduate work with Hall at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, “at that point, cultural studies was not visible in the US” (p. 7). Within a few years, Williams’s and Hall’s influence began to show. Perhaps the best early example was Roy Rosenzweig’s *Eight Hours for What We Will* (1983) – a community study of class dynamics in Worcester, Massachusetts. Rosenzweig’s study drew on an archive that would have been familiar to social historians: community newspapers, city directories, local histories, and reports issued by various labor boards, government bureaus, and social reform groups. What set Rosenzweig’s study apart from other labor community studies was that it shifted the focus of analysis from the factory and union hall to the saloons and newly built playgrounds, amusement parks, and movie houses of the industrial city, showing how they served as sites of resistance and eventual capitulation to industrial capital. Rosenzweig was particularly influenced by Raymond Williams’s model of dominant, residual, alternative, and oppositional cultures. According to Rosenzweig’s analysis, the saloon and grog shop were alternative spaces, or sites that fostered a unique, working-class way of life, different in significant ways from bourgeois norms and values, but nevertheless coexistent with them. Worcester elites, on the other hand, mistook such places for opposition and thus sought to reform or eradicate them. Class, leisure, and the new mass culture remained a popular topic among historians and by the early 1990s Robin D. G. Kelley (1992) could point to more than a dozen recent works that employed a cultural studies-inspired framework of contested terrains.

Turn 3: Discourse and Identity

Kelley’s research, which focused on African American working-class culture, can be seen as transitional. Before the early 1990s, cultural studies was used as a way to

better understand class; afterward it was just as often used to understand race, gender, and sexuality. Kelley's (1994) analysis of Malcolm X's dalliance with zoot suit culture in the 1940s, for instance, moved effortlessly back and forth between issues of blackness, masculinity, heteronormativity, and working-class identity. The shift in historiography was tied to changes in cultural studies itself as the discipline expanded its scope around 1980 to more directly engage with feminist theory and issues of race and empire (Hall, 1980). The field's broadening of horizons in part reflected its commitment to political intervention. But just as important was the growing influence of poststructural theory. Whereas structuralism emphasized the deep structures – generally understood to be conceptual binaries – that governed the mechanics of meaning making, poststructuralists argued that those binaries were themselves linguistic constructions. So for instance, Stuart Hall's (1981) essay "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'" not only emphasized the contested nature of popular culture, but also sought to problematize the category "popular" by showing its constructed and political nature. Viewed this way, the "popular" wasn't a fixed quality inherent in certain texts, but a "structuring principle" that divided "what, at any time, counts as an elite cultural activity or form, and what does not" (p. 234). Taking the full measure of poststructuralism's influence is beyond the scope of this essay, but its biggest impact on cultural history was that it shifted scholars' attention toward classificatory schema that produced impressions of difference and the processes by which those schema's boundaries were policed. Kelley (1992, p. 1402) for instance drew heavily on Hall's "Notes" (1981) to argue that taken-for-granted cultural binaries, such as high/low or folk/mass, must always be seen as "socially constructed categories that have something to do with the reproduction of race, class, and gender hierarchies."

Simultaneous and closely related to these developments in cultural studies was the growing influence of postmodern thought on a number of influential feminist historians. The signal event in this case was the publication of Joan Wallach Scott's (1986) "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." In this explosive, if modestly titled, essay Scott urged historians to understand gender as not only a socially constructed set of norms and product of patriarchy, but as a discourse, or system of thought, that enabled power to be exercised across the entirety of social experience. In developing this argument, Scott drew heavily on literary criticism and feminist film studies, both of which had been overhauled in recent years by the poststructural thought of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan.

Scott's argument was heavily influenced by Foucault's theories of discourse and power, and in this regard it marked a turning point in how historians appropriated the French philosopher's ideas. Though Foucault's sprawling intellectual histories of the mid- to late 1960s attracted admirers across the humanities, historians largely ignored this body of work. Rather, Foucault's initial wave of influence in history departments grew out of his mid-1970s work on prisons and sexuality, which in turn led to the rediscovery of his earlier work on hospitals and asylums (Megill, 1987). This Foucault fit well with the aims of social history because he offered new ways

to approach the study of stigmatized populations – criminals, the mentally ill, sexual nonconformists, and others. Scott's essay, on the other hand, signaled a new engagement with Foucauldian thought as a theory of culture. Though professional historians did not always look kindly upon his unorthodox methods, Foucault (1971/2010) saw historical inquiry, or what he called "genealogical" (p. 232) study, as at the center of his scholarly enterprise. From the "genealogical" perspective, the history of culture was the history of discourse formation, which could be traced by following the "conditions of appearance, growth, and variation" (p. 234) by which systems of knowledge were endowed with "the power of affirmation" (p. 234), or the authority to speak truth. This Foucault allowed historians to think about the ways that power flowed through bodies of knowledge and everyday conversations to eventually harden into institutionalized forms of authority and internalized modes of subjectivity. Equipped with such a perspective, Scott (1991, p. 779) argued, historians could get at complex processes of identity formation "that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experience."

The shift toward questions of discourse and identity represented a kind of second phase of the cultural turn that Nan Enstad (2008, p. 321) has described as the shift from a "visionary cultural history of subalterns" to a "deconstructive cultural history of categories and hierarchies." In the former, historians appropriated the tools of anthropologists and folklorists to recover the social experience of downtrodden and marginalized peoples. In the latter they turned to poststructuralism and literary deconstruction to denaturalize and thus foreground the contingent nature of categorical differences and the social inequalities they buttressed.

Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization* (1995) provides an early, influential, and especially direct example of this new approach. The study explored changing conceptions of US masculinity and race at the turn of the twentieth century, but it did so by providing a genealogical account of the discourse of "civilization." "The interesting thing about 'civilization' is not what was meant by the term," Bederman explains, "but the multiple ways it was used to legitimize different sorts of claims to power" (p. 23). In particular, "civilization" provided a means to reconcile "manliness," the male gender ideal of Anglo-American bourgeois culture, with "masculinity," the hot-tempered ways of being male that elites associated with immigrants and African Americans. Out of this discursive tumult came the figure of the modern man, refined enough to lead "civilization's" charge, but yet "savage" enough, when need be, to defend it from barbarism. Thus the focus of Bederman's study was a constellation of ideas – civilization, savagery, manliness, masculinity, whiteness, and blackness – that in their dominant formation conferred enormous social power. Her method of tracing its "appearance, growth, and variation" (Foucault, 1971/2010, p. 234) was to re-examine an eclectic, but well-known, cast of figures: boxer Jack Johnson, muckraker Ida B. Wells, psychologist G. Stanley Hall, feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, President Theodore Roosevelt, and novelist Edgar Rice Burroughs. To do so, Bederman relied on a fairly conventional archive of the memoirs, published writings, and letters of her subjects, coupled with contemporary newspapers, magazines, and

nonfiction works. Much was already known about the figures Bederman studied. What wasn't known was how their thoughts and actions converged in unexpected ways to produce a powerful form of white male subjectivity in twentieth-century America.

Grace Elizabeth Hale's *Making Whiteness* (1998) provides another illustrative example of scholarship shaped by the turn toward discourse and identity. Hale's study of segregationist culture explored the racist discourses and rituals that surrounded the production of whiteness as a mode of identity in the Jim Crow South. As Hale demonstrates in her analysis of phenomena ranging from children's literature to national advertising and public lynchings, Jim Crow was not a holdover from antebellum culture, but a distinctly modern and wide-ranging project to brutally maintain the racial boundaries that White southerners feared were disappearing in the wake of Reconstruction. In keeping with the sweeping nature of the study, Hale drew on an astounding mix of sources that ranged from children's books to the lynching case files of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The growing interest in discourse and identity formation, especially with regard to race, also motivated historians to look at empire in new ways. Although historians of Europe and the ancient world had long made imperial expansion a major object of study, practitioners of the new social and cultural history had largely overlooked these questions. By the early 1990s, the growing influence of postcolonial theory and subaltern studies, coupled with the weight of globalization as both a lived phenomenon and a thriving area of research, spurred scholars to look again. When they did, empire began to turn up everywhere from Wild West shows to middle-class cupboards (Eley, 2005).

As was the case with gender, the conceptual breakthrough came from thinking about empire outside the bounds of its traditional usage and seeing it instead as a far-reaching discourse. "Not only about foreign diplomacy or international relations," literary critic Amy Kaplan argued in 1993, "imperialism is also about consolidating domestic cultures and negotiating intranational relations" (p. 14). Framed as such, empire offered a means of thinking about interethnic and interracial contact as it played out in various ways across the social and imaginative landscapes. On the one hand, imperialism provided the homegrown bodies of knowledge and stocks of symbolism through which Westerners imagined the foreign (Said, 1979). But also, these "imaginative geographies" (p. 49) could be projected onto the home environment to mark qualities of difference, exoticness, and danger. Historian Melani McAlister's (2001) analysis of the Middle East in postwar American culture offers a good example of the new thinking about empire. Drawing almost entirely on popular sources, *Epic Encounters* shows how US cultural productions ranging from *The Ten Commandments* (1956) to the traveling *Treasures of Tutankhamun* exhibition (1977–1979) provided ordinary Americans with frameworks with which to make sense of a faraway place that, thanks to the dynamics of oil markets and Cold War geopolitics, was becoming tightly entwined with their everyday existence. But at the same time,

McAlister demonstrated, these texts provided a kind of semiotic pool out of which various groups in the United States – including evangelical Christians, Black nationalists, Jewish Americans, and others – fished interpretive frameworks for understanding themselves and US political culture. Thus “representations of the Middle East,” McAlister (2001, p. xiv) argued, “simultaneously figured the United States in relation to its ‘outside’ (in terms of international power relations) and in relation to its ‘inside’ (the diverse and hierarchical construction of identities within the national borders).”

Historians’ engagement with empire in the 1990s and 2000s had even more far-reaching effects in that new conceptual tools, such as borderlands, called geographically fixed notions of culture into question. Developed by cultural theorists interested in frontiers, or zones of intercultural contact, borderlands scholarship suggested that societies were rippled, rather than ringed, by sites of hybridity and heterogeneity (Kaplan, 1993). “Space is neither necessarily coherent nor always homogenous,” anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (1988, p. 87) explained. “Nor need it parce [*sic*] neatly into zones . . . It just could be, more often than we usually like to think, criss-crossed by border zones, pockets, and eruptions of all kinds.” If any given place was always as much host to pockets of the foreign as it was pockets of the familiar, culture was poorly understood in terms of territorial interiors and exteriors. Rather, culture was how *cultures* sharing the same space overlapped with one another in ways that simultaneously produced commonalities and differences. One such “contact-zone,” as Kristin Hoganson (2007, p. 8) has shown, was the White, middle-class home at the turn of the twentieth century. Hoganson’s *Consumers’ Imperium* explores the role of imports, such as foreign foods, armchair travel media, and exotic furnishings, in the making of US domestic culture, demonstrating how “consumption constituted a form of interaction with the wider world” (p. 11). As a study of femininity and domesticity in consumer culture, Hoganson’s book mined a wide variety of popular texts aimed at women – including cookbooks, home decor guides, and women’s magazines and newspaper pages – along with the records of a number of social clubs. This archive resembled earlier studies of gender and consumer culture. What set it apart, however, was that Hoganson’s historiographic framework attuned her to the many ways that an unmistakable interest in the *foreign* became virtually indistinguishable from the *domestic* in homes that sat hundreds of miles from the closest border.

Turn 4: Society, Structure, and Practice

At the start of the twenty-first century, the cultural turn began to turn back upon itself as some its earliest advocates asked whether the field was nearing a point of diminishing returns. To be sure, these critics remained committed to making culture an object of historical inquiry. But still, they wondered whether semiotic and discursive conceptions of culture had developed into a new orthodoxy that threatened to cloud historical vision. This critique took a number of forms. Some critics were

alarmed by what they saw as an extreme relativism introduced by postmodern thought, warning that deconstruction and discursive analysis threatened to “collapse” all sense of explanatory power in social research (Bonnell & Hunt, 1999, p. 10). Others suggested that words like “culture” and “discourse” had been stripped of their theoretical nuances and permitted to grow into totalizing concepts. According to this critique, historians had actually removed culture from the flow of historical time by suggesting that it was always already loaded into any given moment (Biernacki, 1999; Spiegel, 2005).

Others lamented a hollowed-out sense of purpose in academic history, looking back with some envy on the agendas of inclusion and democratization that had inspired much of the new social history (Eley, 2005; Enstad, 2008). As Geoffrey Eley (2005, p. 199) observed, cultural historians in pursuit of nuance had willfully distanced themselves from the “big structures, large processes, huge comparisons” (borrowing the term from sociologist Charles Tilly) of the new social history. But as Eley, himself an eager promoter of the cultural turn, remarked, “we may still want to talk about class, about capitalism, about the structural distribution of inequalities . . . Why should embracing the possibilities of microhistory require leaving macrohistory entirely behind?”

Historians of culture and society were by no means alone in their retreat from macro thinking. Daniel Rodgers (2011) has shown that late twentieth-century intellectual life in general was marked by a “fracture” of the social. In the process, strong notions of society characterized in terms of “wider and wider rings of relations, structures, contexts, and institutions” (p. 4) dominant as late as the 1970s gave way to market-inflected “visions of society as a spontaneous, naturally acting array of choices and affinities” (p. 264). William Sewell (2005) also suggested that in retrospect, it was possible, if not also disconcerting, to identify a common thread that wound its way through both the cultural turn and the rise of neoliberalism. For him, historians’ declining interest in large-scale political economic transformations had, to great irony, played out against the backdrop of one of those very transformations – the shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist world economy. What these revisionist critiques shared in common was a sense that the cultural turn’s elision of the macro, structural, and material created a dangerous blind spot. The question, then, was how to preserve the conceptual strides achieved along the way – and indeed, continue to build on them by incorporating new strands of theory – but also restore the attention to structural power that had marked the new social history. The answer lay in finding new ways to connect the discursive with the material, essentially doubling back around to revisit and revise notions of cultural materialism.

Sewell (2005) has written more extensively about this topic than any other historian, and his work is worth examining in detail. To paint his argument in broad strokes: he sees structure and culture as mutually constitutive:

I claim that discursive or semiotic processes . . . are conditioned by and give rise to structures or forces governed by built-environment logics . . . and that such built-

environment logics condition semiotic processes (by stabilizing them, undermining them, or by subjectifying them to transformative pressure). (p. 368)

To arrive at this point, Sewell drew heavily on symbolic anthropology, but supplemented it with theories of structure and practice drawn from Marshall Sahlins, Anthony Giddens, and Pierre Bourdieu. He remained convinced, with Geertz, that culture could best be understood as the semiotic dimensions of life by which groups used sign systems to project coherence upon the world; it was critical to remember, however, that this was always a “thin coherence” (p. 166) because language, when put into practice, is imperfect, polysemic, and subject to change. To explain this plasticity, Sewell pointed to the tendency of the material world to, at times, act upon and transform cultural schema, despite those schemas’ best efforts to call the world into order. “Cultural categories,” he writes (paraphrasing Sahlins), “are worldly facts. They burden the world with potentials for human use . . . And they are burdened by the things they mark, dragged into new constellations of meaning when the course of action doesn’t go as expected” (p. 218). Sewell’s work suggests that culture can be studied both synchronically to examine intricacies of meaning at a given *point in time*, and diachronically to trace how meaning is materially structured and restructured as a “built environment” *over the course of time*. Micro and macro, long term and short term, and culture and structure are thus instantiated together within a “constructed” environment of social relations shaped by the various ways that meaning making and materiality weigh upon one another.

Whereas Sewell’s materialism points to the hard physicality of architecture and geography, Gabrielle Spiegel (2008, p. 411) has advocated a “neo-phenomenological approach” that points more to the fleshy physicality of the body. Like Sewell, she sees meaning as grounded in material practices and created in the flow of time. Her approach differs, though, in that she draws largely from reflexive sociology. At one level, the neophenomenological approach explores the interplay between embodied action and structured social experience, or what Bourdieu (1980/1990) called the “habitus” and Giddens (1984) has called “structuration.” In doing so, it seeks to highlight the inherently corporeal and situational nature of interpretation by which the world and one’s place in it is made knowable at the level of individual consciousness in ways that are socially conditioned, but nevertheless diverse and unpredictable. “Historical investigation . . .,” she explains, “would take practices (not structure) as the starting point of social analysis, and practice itself assumes the form of a sociology of meaning” (p. 412).

Spiegel points to the work of sociologist Andreas Reckwitz as particularly helpful here. Social practice, as Reckwitz (2005, p. 252) defines it, is “a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood.” Irreducible to any one facet, the different elements of a given practice are mutually generative and hang together according to some internal logic. The businessman who breaks off his lunch order to brusquely answer his mobile phone is carrying out a practice. Such acts are social in that they involve

intersubjective forms of knowledge and culturally recognizable ways of acting that, like the habitus, are transposable across situations and between actors occupying similar social worlds. “When we learn a practice,” Reckwitz explains, “we learn to be bodies in a certain way” (p. 253).

Media Culture and Materiality: Culture Industries, Senses, and Books

The reworked culture concepts discussed above lend themselves well to communication scholarship. They retain an anthropological conception of social experience as grasped and reproduced through sign systems – which we might call the fruits of the cultural turn. In addition, they remain astute to the various ways that social inequality can be discursively generated within sign systems – the fruits of the linguistic turn. Yet the new frameworks build on these insights by recognizing that material objects, practices, and institutions can exert an outsized influence on the semiotic reproduction of social life. The remainder of this essay will explore three particular frameworks for studying media history that complement the new cultural materialism – the history of culture industries, the history of the senses, and the history of the book.

We might call the first framework the culture industry reconsidered. As discussed above, the rediscovery of the Frankfurt School in the 1970s played an important role in sparking the cultural turn. Once the turn was well underway, though, notions of rationalization, control, and commodification largely fell out of intellectual fashion. And just as importantly, the Frankfurt School’s eviscerations of mass culture made it anathema to a whole generation’s worth of scholars whose projects aimed to reconstruct the contested nature of culture in a particular place and time. Yet, as James Cook (2008) has pointed out, the “culture industry,” when used as a means to understand the business of culture rather than to assess its worth, offers a powerful lens on the past. “By moving the term ‘culture’ from noun to adjective . . .,” he remarks, “we shift the conceptual emphasis from qualitative measure to mutable institution” (p. 297). Moreover, the culture industry concept is well suited to connecting specific texts to larger structures of power. “Industry,” Cook points out, “simultaneously signifies a microlevel site of production and a macrolevel system of circulation” (p. 297). Finally, the concept’s focus on particular industry processes, including “standardization, distribution, marketing, and integration” (p. 297), provide the historian with specific, but by no means predictable, paths to follow. When carefully reconstructed, these processes open a window into bygone work cultures that in themselves are rich and complex microcosms of a particular time. Beyond that, these worlds can tell us much about what happens when the logics of business meet the logics of cultural expression.

David Suisman's *Selling Sounds* (2009) offers a good example of an updated culture industry approach. Suisman's book can be read as a history of many things – musical trends, recording and playback technologies, city life, copyright law, Jewish American culture, African American business culture, and various other topics. But in sum, these parts tell a bigger story about the commodification of American music in the early twentieth century. “Commodification is not . . .,” Suisman is careful to note, “an instantaneous occurrence, like the flash pasteurization of milk. It is a social and political process, populated by human actors, and one that includes various dimensions and phases” (p. 9). Thus he reconstructs the methods by which publishers applied the twin logics of industrial capitalism – mass production and mass marketing – to popular music in the United States. This involved regimented production processes in the songwriting factories of Tin Pan Alley, sophisticated forms of market research, national marketing networks, and concerted efforts to reshape the politico-legal framework that governed the musical marketplace.

The story Suisman tells is a top-down affair and he relies largely on a mix of primary sources most associated with business history – corporate archives, trade journals, company publications, and the personal papers, memoirs, and oral histories of industry players. These sources allow Suisman to provide a detailed account of the music industry's rise. At the same time, his sophisticated use of culture industry concepts allows him to also tell a story about the capacities of consumer capitalism to drive far-reaching changes in culture. As he points out, commercial music's remarkable popularity helped make it a seemingly natural accompaniment to everyday life.

In making this last point, Suisman identifies how the industry not only introduced a new musical culture, but in doing so overhauled the sensory environment of everyday life. “As a consequence,” he argues, “the soundscape itself became a field of marketing, the aural equivalent of billboards . . . but far more invasive” (p. 14). Vision and hearing, Suisman contends, create different corporeal relationships with the outside world. Eyes can be averted, ears cannot. “Through the eye, you see the world *out there* . . . through ear, you hear the world in your head; it enters *inside you*” (p. 14). Suisman's attention to these phenomena makes *Selling Sounds* a good example of the second framework: the history of the senses. This growing field seeks to historicize the senses in terms of practice, discourse, meaning, and experience. To take sight/vision/eye/seen (but one could easily substitute hearing/ear/heard, scent/nose/smelt, and so on) as an example, the history of the senses can generate a host of interrelated questions: How have people used sight differently in various eras? How have ideas about vision changed over time? How have images of the eye conveyed very different meanings at different times? How has the seen environment changed over time?

Raising such questions historicizes fundamental aspects of experience and culture that are often overlooked. In this regard, the senses provide a fresh lens to re-examine well-researched subjects. To take a hypothetical example, a history of censorship during World War I might look very different when approached as a history of visual

practices. Such a history might focus on the training of censors and the everyday work of blotting out objectionable imagery. Moreover, by emphasizing the embodied and phenomenological nature of meaning making, these questions allow us to see how every act of perception collapses the boundary between micro and macro, “nature and culture,” and “other perennial oppositions,” as Martin Jay (2011, p. 309) has observed. An attention to the senses perhaps accounts for the enduring originality of Susan Douglas’s *Listening In* (1999/2004) which made the aural dynamics of radio listening central to the history of broadcasting in the United States. More recently, Andrew Kahrl (2008, p. 1125) has shown how “whites’ auditory reception” of African American leisure pursuits helped to shape the dynamics of crime and the segregation of public space in Progressive era cities. “Cloaked in race-neutral language and dedicated to improving the quality of city life,” Kahrl writes, “noise crimes served as a convenient device for racializing concepts of civility and disorder” (p. 1125). In this regard, the history of the senses can call attention to the materiality of cultural life, highlighting the extent to which the social world is constructed and reconstructed to affect the senses in particular ways. Pointing to the many ways that the world is reordered to cater to visual practices, W. J. T. Mitchell (2002, p. 92) has remarked that “it is not just that we see the way we do because we are social animals, but also that our social arrangements take the forms they do because we are seeing animals.”

The final approach – the history of the book – offers another means of bringing materiality to the forefront. Book history developed in the last quarter of the twentieth century as scholars, dismayed by the abstracted treatment of printing, literary works, and literacy in academic study, aimed to situate these phenomena in specific social, cultural, and economic environments. The discipline’s misleadingly narrow name derives from its early association with the history of print technology and bookselling in early modern Europe, but it has since grown to encompass the broad study of print culture. During this expansion, much of the field’s intellectual energy has been directed toward probing the endlessly diverse ways that audiences have read and used texts (Nord, 2008).

Like the history of the senses, book history offers a “point of view” (Hall, 1996, p. 30), in this case, focusing the historian’s gaze on an interrelated set of activities – reading, writing, publishing, printing, distribution, retail, filing, storage, and almost anything else involved in the organized circulation and use of information. On close inspection, any one of these activities can assume unexpected shapes and lead in surprising directions: books are pirated; newspaper boys strike; magazines are cut up and turned into artwork; and gamblers pore over morning papers in search of yesterday’s numbers. Similar to the benefits of the revised culture industry approach, the history of the book forces historians to think about the production and use of texts within vast circulatory networks, or what Robert Darnton (2007) has called a “communications circuit.” Recently, Carl Kaestle and Janice Radway (2009) have advocated a looser, yet still systemic, understanding of print culture. Their approach sees print as a meeting ground where a diverse cast of social actors “interested in the production, use, control, and limitation” (p. 19) of particular texts are mapped

together in spontaneous but structurally conditioned networks. In either case, book history has the capacity to turn any one piece of print matter – to take a hypothetical example, a colorful trade card propped up on the counter of a store in 1880s New Orleans – into a portal on a whole social world, linking the various actors, institutions, and cultures through which it passed.

Sam Binkley's (2007) *Getting Loose* provides such an example, speaking to the many possibilities a book history approach can afford. Binkley's study recounts how countercultural tastes were transformed in the 1970s into a mainstream consumer ethos. He reconstructs this process through the fulcrum of the West Coast publishing scene, analyzing publications such as the *Whole Earth Catalog* and the bestselling *Tassajara Bread Book* "as narrative texts and also as material things whose unique formats and design features often tell stories as valuable as the written messages they convey" (p. 20). In terms of narrative, Binkley is able to situate the ideas and trends that animated these projects within a particular place and time – the San Francisco Bay Area of the late 1960 and 1970s. But also, he's able to follow the diffusion of these texts and discourses across national "social and economic networks" by studying the institutional linkages that formed between craft "hippie" presses, such as San Francisco's Bookpeople, and the mainstream publishing giants of New York City. And finally, Binkley's close attention to materiality – in particular, the unfinished aesthetic of the publications themselves – enables him to connect bodily practices, such as the tactile pleasures of handling rough paper stock, to an emerging popular ideology: getting in touch with one's natural self.

To close, history's engagement with the complexities of meaning in recent decades has yielded an array of useful frameworks for thinking about culture and society. Some have shown themselves well suited to recovering the "thick," multidimensional meaning of a communicative act frozen in time; others have proven better suited to explaining issues of culture and power. Because they drive the questions historians ask about their subjects, these frameworks can have direct implications for what sources are drawn upon and how those sources are interrogated. Many book historians gravitate toward evidence that allows them to map the flow of material texts through social networks. Historians of the senses, on the other hand, place a premium on sources that document contemporary accounts of sensory experiences. It is important to note that no one historiographic approach should be seen as entirely adequate in itself. Though these frameworks have developed in the flow of time, they have not superseded each other. Indeed, recent developments tell us that the most vivid and panoramic views of the past might come from circling back around to retool old concepts and combine them with the new.

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Historical Approaches to Media Studies

Mark Hampton

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, media history has become increasingly prominent, with scholarship emerging from a wide variety of disciplines. This chapter examines the methodological issues involved in conducting historical research in media studies. Using Adrian Bingham's *Family Newspapers?* and Laura Beers's *Your Britain* as case studies, it explains such topics as historical context, locating primary sources, and the production and reception of media texts. In addition, it outlines the wide variety of historical approaches that can be employed, including textual analysis, policy history, institutional history, and biography.

Introduction

It has been more than 20 years since James Curran (1991, p. 27) referred to historical scholarship as the “neglected grandparent of media studies.” Since that time, media history has become increasingly prominent, with scholarship emerging from such diverse disciplines as history, literary criticism, communication, and sociology. The field has an institutional home in such research centers as the University of Sheffield's Centre for Journalism and History, the Aberystwyth University's Centre for Media

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems188

History, and Macquarie University's Centre for Media History; such journals as *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (published by the International Association for Media and History), *Book History* (published by the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing), and *Media History*; and book series such as the University of Illinois Press's History of Communication series and the Palgrave Studies in the History of the Media. In addition, leading journals in the fields of communication, media studies, and journalism regularly publish articles containing a historical focus, while mainstream historical journals increasingly include articles concerned with the mass media. Finally, media history has found an increasingly prominent home in specialized journals within business history, such as *Technology & Culture*, *Enterprise & Society*, and *Business History Review*.

At its best, media history is interdisciplinary, combining the methodologies of one or more "theoretical" disciplines with the historian's emphasis on empiricism and deep context. Both aspects are crucial. Sophisticated theory does not substitute for thorough engagement with primary sources, nor does consulting a massive amount of archival material compensate for the lack of well-framed research questions. At the same time, even when it stems from contemporary concerns, the best media history avoids anachronism, recognizing instead that the historical period under consideration is not *merely* the background to the present, but was shaped by concerns and structures that were different from ours. This chapter will describe a range of questions and approaches with which media history is concerned, and the types of sources that may be used. It draws heavily on my own experience working mostly on the history of journalism and print culture, in illustrating approaches and obstacles that will also structure the work of historians in other areas such as cinema and television, advertising, and media organizations. In addition to citing examples along the way, mostly from the field of modern British history, this chapter will provide case studies of two recent books in order to illustrate "best practice" in media history.

It may be worth clarifying at the outset that this chapter will not specifically address the methodologies of historically minded sociologists, literary critics, and other critical theorists. This is not in any way to minimize their contributions to media history. To the contrary, such works as John Thompson's *The Media and Modernity* (1995) and Jean Chalaby's *The Invention of Journalism* (1998) have done much to advance our thinking about how media function in modern society, and how this function has changed over time. Yet their methodologies are different from those discussed here. They are based mostly on secondary literature, and their originality lies more in theorizing existing historical scholarship than in analyzing primary sources. For the purposes of this chapter, such works provide valuable theories with which to engage, helping to sharpen the historian's research questions and approach to primary sources. They are not, however, the type of scholarship with which this chapter is concerned.¹

As Curran (2002) has pointed out, a great deal of media history is "media-centric," inward-looking rather than illuminating connections between media and the wider cultures and societies in which they operated. Although there is certainly value to

historical scholarship whose main purpose is empirical “recovery,” the most influential works of history are those that move beyond their immediate topic to address larger questions. For example, Michelle Tusan’s *Women Making News* (2005) not only analyzes women’s advocacy newspapers that had previously received little scholarly attention; it also contributes new insights about the suffrage movement, cultural constructions of gender, and extra-parliamentary politics in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain. Similarly, Simon Potter’s *News and the British World* (2003) uses multicontinental archival excavation not merely to examine how news organizations operated in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa, but to understand the institutional basis for a transnational Britishness. What is notable about both of these books is that they are just as interesting to historians who are not, *per se*, concerned with media history, as they are to media historians. Indeed, some of the best media history is written by people who do not think of themselves primarily as media historians. Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb, for example, who has published important work on the news market in late nineteenth-century Britain and the United States (2009, 2012, 2013), identifies himself more as a historian of business and institutions than as a historian of the media (personal communication, July 6, 2012).

Within the broader field of media history, several distinct approaches are possible: these include cultural or intellectual history, political history, social history, economic history, institutional history, medium history, and biography, though in practice most research projects will belong to more than one category. The researcher will need to decide whether to focus on a specific medium or genre (e.g., Conboy, 2010; O’Malley, 1994), on a specific theme that cuts across multiple media and genres (e.g., Webster, 2005), or on the interactions between different media (e.g., Becker, 2008). In addition, the scholar needs to decide whether to restrict his or her topic to a specific national case, which is the most common approach, or to write a comparative or transnational history (e.g., Hilmes, 2011; Richards, 2010; Wiener, 2011; Winseck & Pike, 2007). Each of these approaches implies different research questions, different ancillary disciplines, and different types of primary sources.

In addition to choosing a broader methodological orientation, the researcher will have to address the ever present challenge of casting the topic in a sufficiently expansive manner to be of wide interest while at the same time keeping it sufficiently focused to be manageable. This dichotomy is particularly pressing for postgraduate students caught between the increasingly competitive job market and the pressures to finish quickly – gone are the days when PhD students were allowed to spend six to 10 years writing a dissertation. At the same time, navigating this dual challenge as a postgraduate student is good preparation for an academic career, given that “accountability” regimes – whether they be the UK’s Research Exercise Framework or the American tenure clock and post-tenure review, among other models – simultaneously emphasize the number of publications and “impact factor.”

In attempting to balance significance with manageability, researchers may wish to focus on a short time period that can be seen as a turning point or a synecdoche, or

to address a longer chronology through a number of case studies. The former strategy can be seen *in extremis* in W. Joseph Campbell's *The Year That Defined Journalism* (2006), a book that focuses on a single pivotal year but examines the emergence of three paradigms that came to define twentieth-century American journalism, and L. Perry Curtis's *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* (2001), which begins from an even narrower starting point but effectively illuminates late Victorian journalism and cultural anxieties. Other examples include Dale Zacher's *The Scripps Newspapers Go to War* (2008), which examines an American newspaper empire's adaptation to World War I; Robert McChesney's *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy* (1993), which focuses on a pivotal seven-year period in which the commercial basis of American radio was established, defeating attempts to organize radio along public service lines; and Siân Nicholas's *The Echo of War* (1996), which addresses the British Broadcasting Corporation's role in maintaining British civilian support during World War II. The latter strategy is exemplified by Michael de Nie's *The Eternal Paddy* (2004), a study of Irish identity in the British press over a period of nearly a century that employs case studies of four key events, and Richard Kaplan's *Politics and the American Press* (2002), which analyzes the national emergence of the journalistic norm of objectivity over half a century through a focused examination of Detroit.

Methodologies, Topics, and Research Questions

As noted above, types of media history include cultural or intellectual history, political history, social history, economic history, institutional history, medium history, biography, and community studies, among others. In practice, these approaches are not distinct, both because the best practitioners of a particular approach will draw on contexts that imply a second or third approach as well, and because many historians self-consciously combine these approaches. For example, the so-called "new political history" that emerged in the 1990s, through its focus on language, effectively merged cultural, intellectual, and political history approaches, while the "social history of ideas" places intellectual history within deep social contexts (Clark, 2004; Jenkins, 2003; Tosh, 2010). Some beginning researchers may wish to identify which approach to history most strongly appeals to them before choosing a topic; others may prefer to identify topics or research questions first, and then consider which approaches these imply.

When selecting a topic for one's first major research project, the media historian, like any other scholar, is well advised to avoid merely looking to "fill a gap" in existing scholarship; such projects tend to have little influence. Instead, it may be helpful to think about a field in which one is interested, and ask such questions as the following: Are there any widely prevailing, *significant* assumptions that most scholars seem to share, but which have not been sufficiently examined and could be incorrect? Are there events, institutions, or ideas of clear contemporary importance whose

origins have not been adequately explained? Is there a clear difference between two eras with no satisfactory account for the change? For the comparative-minded scholar, are there surprising similarities or differences between two places that have not been sufficiently understood? Are there significant primary sources that have not been previously examined, whether through neglect or because they are newly available? To these questions, which are appropriate for all historians, the media historian may add: Are there topics whose previous study has been too media-centric, so that a more deeply contextualized re-examination might lead to a more accurate or sophisticated understanding? Such questions can be illuminated through an interplay between primary sources and secondary literature, though it is also important to note that many of the best questions will be discovered serendipitously, through browsing through primary sources with an open mind.

It may be useful to share my own experiences in selecting my first research topic in media history, my PhD dissertation topic, in order to illustrate at least three points that beginning researchers should keep in mind. First, one should select one's topic with a particular audience in mind. I came to my topic from the opposite direction of many potential readers of the present chapter: rather than a media scholar looking to apply historical methodologies to my field, I was trained as a historian and became interested in late nineteenth-century transformations in British political culture and subsequently in popular journalism. At the time, this latter subject was not very well developed and largely ignored by mainstream British historians, even as an increasing number of them used newspapers as primary sources (Bingham, 2012a, 2012b). Moreover, of the three most significant historical monographs that focused on this period (Brown, 1985; Koss, 1981–1984; Lee, 1976), two of them were more descriptive than thesis-driven. I became interested in Alan Lee's thesis that what he called a "liberal" theory of the press had predominated among political elites in mid-Victorian England, and that it had been undermined by commercial changes in the later nineteenth century. At the same time, I was dissatisfied by what I took as his implication that in this atmosphere idealism simply gave way to the pursuit of profits, and I set out to learn what had, in fact, become of "theories of the press" between 1880 and 1914. My audience, in the first instance, was historians of turn-of-the century British politics and culture.

Second, my dissertation writing experience highlights the ways in which selection of topic shapes the availability of primary sources. I divided my topic into three discrete focuses: elite discourse about the press, found especially in books and periodicals from the period; journalists' professional discourse, as seen in memoirs and handbooks and in the trade publications of an emergent professional organization, the Institute of Journalists; and a case study of a liberal editor's attempts to put his ideals into practice in wartime, namely C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian* during the South African or Boer War (1899–1902). One practical difficulty I faced was that, although there was a great deal of published primary source material available, the historical profession tends to fetishize unpublished manuscript sources found in archives. Given my topic, however, this was not a straightforward task. It turns out

that even the most idealistic journalists, politicians, and intellectuals tend not to pepper their unpublished personal correspondence with ruminations on the role of the press in society; nor do the business records of newspapers generally speak to this theme. To be sure, I did find some useful unpublished archival material – above all, in the case study of the *Manchester Guardian* – but published primary sources remained the most important source for my dissertation.

Third, my experience underscores the importance of adaptability. My research developed according to accidental discoveries in archives and in response to recommendations by other scholars I met during my research, which was mostly carried out in London in the United Kingdom. In addition, 18 months into my dissertation period – that is, halfway through the three years I was allotted – Aled Jones published his pathbreaking *Powers of the Press* (1996), which covered a similar topic to mine, with an overlapping chronology. Although Jones himself was quick to assure me that his book had not exhausted the topic, this did force me to consider how my topic would remain distinctive. In addition, even after completing my dissertation, the process of trial and error continued, as I thought about publication plans. I fairly quickly decided that the dissertation was less cohesive than I would have liked, and that in its present state it did not constitute the book I wanted to write. I decided, therefore, to write a book focusing on elite discourse, expanding it to cover the period from 1850 to 1950; the other two sections of my dissertation, dropped from the book, became three discrete articles. At the same time, whereas my dissertation had been aimed primarily at historians of late nineteenth-century Britain, I deliberately addressed the book to scholars concerned with contemporary media studies and journalism.

Sources

A wide range of primary sources exists for researching media history; as indicated above, the sources one employs will depend upon the topic one chooses and the research questions one asks. It will also, in many cases, depend upon the researcher's family commitments and financial resources; not every topic is equally practical for every researcher. Some topics will require extensive travel to distant archives – this can involve air fares, driving expenses, or rail fares; lodging costs; and sometimes even entrance charges to archives, costs that can add up to several thousand dollars very quickly. In some cases, one's own department or university will make travel funds available, whether competitively or as a matter of course; some libraries offer competitive grants for scholars with a specific need to consult their collections; and some disciplinary organizations provide small competitive grants for postgraduate students. In other cases, though, such costs will have to be borne by the researcher herself or himself. This section will provide a brief overview of the kinds of primary

sources available, and methods of using them, along with selective examples; it is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

An obvious source is media products themselves: newspapers and magazines; films, radio, and television programs; and the like. Despite an explosion over the past few decades of scholarship devoted to content analysis, the surface has barely been scratched, and a researcher can pretty easily find untapped content. Indeed, the content is so vast that the more difficult problem may be how to choose – that is, how to limit the scope of sources used while still making a claim to scholarly significance. As mentioned above, carefully defining one's topic is essential, and using case studies may be very beneficial.

At the same time, in many cases scholars are limited by the uneven availability or accessibility of sources, particularly television and radio recordings. For example, Vanderbilt University's Television News Archive holds broadcasts of American national television network news since mid-1968, but recordings of local news or pre-1968 news are more difficult to find. In other cases, researchers are constrained by the non-availability of travel funding: the British Newspaper Library at Colindale contains a wide range of historical newspapers from around the world, but most of them are not indexed and their availability, in practice, depends upon a researcher being able to devote long periods to labor-intensive reading, often on microfilm.

An increasing number of newspapers are available digitally, for example Readex's America's Historical Newspapers and Gale Cengage Learning's collection of pre-1900 British newspapers; both, however, require expensive subscriptions, and so they are best suited to researchers who have access to a subscribing library. On the other hand, the British Cartoon Archive at the University of Kent at Canterbury has a searchable database containing thousands of cartoons from newspapers and magazines, downloadable free of charge; the archive holds the originals on site, and will provide high-resolution digital copies for a fee. Similarly, the US Library of Congress has recently made available a large collection of historical newspapers accessible online at no cost to researchers. As Bingham (2010) notes, digitization opens possibilities for more efficient research, as well as new and sophisticated methodologies of data mining. As he also points out, however, the uneven digitization of titles risks distorting the historical record, if scholars focus disproportionately on what is available electronically; for example, two twentieth-century British popular dailies, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Express*, have been digitized and are available from UKPressOnline, but the *News of the World* has not. Digitization also perhaps increases the temptation to take articles out of context, thanks to the easy ability to search by keywords, though as Bingham points out, this problem is hardly unique to the use of digitized newspapers. Prior to digitization, for example, scholars could be tempted to over-rely on those newspapers, such as *The Times*, that were comprehensively indexed, or to mine periodicals for keywords by using such periodicals indexes as the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature*, or the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900*. In any case, if used judiciously, online newspaper databases

offer exciting possibilities for researchers (see also Mussell, 2012a, 2012b; Towheed, 2010).

Nor is digitization limited to print media. Video Active maintains a large collection of European television footage, while the United Kingdom's BBC and ITN have both made an increasing amount of footage available. The BBC's online archive includes not only its own material, but news footage from the Australian Broadcasting Company, CBS News, China's CCTV, and others. The Centre for Media History at Macquarie University has recently opened the Media Archives Project database and the Australian Media History Database. As with digital newspapers, many such collections are available commercially, while others are often available through one's university library.

Many media institutions maintain archives of correspondence and business documents, but they are not all equally useful, nor equally accessible. Some organizations, operating with a sense of their historical importance and commitment to open inquiry, have turned over at least their earlier archival material to public repositories; for example, the *Manchester Guardian* (forerunner of today's *Guardian*) has its collection at the John Rylands library in Manchester, earlier *New Statesman* materials are available at the University of Sussex, and the National Union of Journalists' archives are held at the University of Warwick's Modern Records Centre. Such collections are easily available to researchers, though even in these cases it is important to find out what an archive's access policies are ahead of one's visit. Other institutions maintain control over their own archives, which they regard, in the first instance, as company property rather than a public trust. Many of them will make their archives available to researchers, but devote limited resources to doing so and, as a result, cannot accommodate very many researchers at a single time. One example comes to mind from my own research: the Reuters archive located in the company's Canary Wharf office. When I used this archive in 2006, a single (very knowledgeable) archivist worked from a desk in an open-plan office among perhaps 200 other desks. Materials were located in an off-site warehouse, and after I identified the files I wished to consult, the archivist took me to the warehouse by taxi, placed the desired files in a suitcase, and brought me back to the Reuters office where I sat at the desk next to his and consulted the material. Again, such archives, despite an archivist's best intentions, simply cannot accommodate very many researchers at once; for this reason, it is particularly important to contact the archive well in advance of an intended visit.

Other archives may be less accessible, particularly for scholars researching commercial institutions that continue to operate today. These institutions may categorically refuse admission, or may ask very specific questions about one's purpose. In some cases, this is a matter of protecting the company's interests, whether by guarding its reputation or by controlling access to proprietary information. In other cases, as already noted, it is simply a question of the limited resources devoted to accommodating researchers whose interests are, of course, peripheral to the corporation's concern to return value to shareholders. The archivist for *The Times* (London), for example, several years ago refused my request to consult the archive because I was

on a fishing expedition; if I wanted to consult the archive I needed to be able to identify more precisely in advance what I was researching. He told me that the number of requests for admission was fairly large, and he could not accommodate researchers who did not have specific archival materials in mind. To take another example, a newspaper (which I will not name) recently granted an acquaintance of mine limited access to company archives after persistent requests; the company has, though, required the researcher to sign a nondisclosure statement, allowing the company to inspect the resulting research prior to any publication. These kinds of refusals or conditions are legitimate decisions by companies that do, after all, own the materials; from the researcher's point of view, however, they are potential obstacles that have to be considered.

In addition to the archives of institutions, many individuals important to media history have archives, either in private hands or, more often, deposited with a professional archive. In many cases, the collection will be located in a region or with an institution with which the figure had a connection. For example, the papers of C. P. Scott, the long-time editor (and later owner) of the *Manchester Guardian*, are on deposit at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Similarly, the archive of press baron Lord Beaverbrook is located in the Parliamentary Archives (formerly called the House of Lords Record Office). In other cases, the collection may appear in a seemingly random place, often as a result of university libraries' special collections empire-building. For example, the archive of Cecil King, nephew of British press baron Lord Northcliffe and chair of the Mirror Group of newspapers, is located at Boston University.

In other cases, relevant archival material may not be conveniently assembled into a single archive, but may be scattered across numerous repositories, or across disparate collections within the same library. This may occur, for example, in the case of a prolific letter writer for whom no personal archive exists, or who did not keep copies of the letters he or she sent; that person's letters would be scattered among the archives of their recipients. More broadly, since most archival collections center around individuals, organizations, or institutions, research topics that are structured differently from the archives – for example, the study of a concept or a social practice – may require consulting multiple archives. The cinema historian Peter Miskell has noted that his work on the foreign distribution of Hollywood films has often required him to consult archives that are organized more helpfully for researchers interested in a specific director, writer, actor, or film, than in his chosen topic (P. Miskell, personal communication, September 25, 2012).

There is no formula for locating potentially useful archival material. Beginning researchers may often find clues in the bibliographies of existing secondary literature. When looking for a collection based on a specific individual or organization, a few minutes of searching online may be sufficient to discover an archive's existence. The task is more complicated when looking for material for which no specific collection exists. In the case of the United Kingdom, a large number of archives are searchable by keyword through Access to Archives, found on the National Archives website

(www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/). Using this website, for example, I located material relating to postwar Hong Kong in such unlikely places as the Oldham Local Studies and Archive and the Surrey History Centre. Researchers are also advised to take advantage of networking opportunities; some of my own most useful leads have come from asking the advice of other scholars who work in the same field.

Most historians accept that their research may require extensive travel time, but this needs to be weighed carefully before committing oneself to a research topic. It is not merely a question of where archives are located. Different archives are more or less user-friendly, and this needs to be taken into account well ahead of one's research trip, particularly for researchers on a tight schedule or who are traveling a great distance. Many archives allow unlimited nonflash digital photography, either free of charge or with a modest per day fee, a policy that can dramatically reduce the amount of time necessary for collecting material, thereby reducing one's travel costs immensely. For example, I have collected thousands of pages of material from the National Archives (London) in a matter of days, allowing me to consult the material at a more leisurely pace upon returning from my research trip.

Other archives have more restrictive policies. Some, including the British Library, do not allow digital photography at all. Some require various unusual conditions. For example, at the Women's Library (London Metropolitan University), the charge as of summer 2010 was £4 for a one-day pass allowing only 25 photographs. In addition, the library required the user to fill in a copyright form describing every *individual* item photographed, and each pass – that is, every 25 photographs – required a new payment on a different floor than the archive. Aside from the prohibitive cost, the cumbersome paperwork requirement would make extensive photography impractical. Another archive I have recently used, the Hong Kong Public Records Office, allows photography only of items on which the Hong Kong Government holds copyright; other items can be photocopied. After the archivist determines that a requested item may be photographed, a member of staff will accompany the researcher to a designated room, and will turn the pages while the researcher takes pictures. The researcher is well advised to learn such policies in advance so as to plan his or her trip accordingly, or even, in extreme cases, to decide against a particular research topic. In most cases, archives that do not allow digital photography will have fairly high photocopying charges, often anywhere from 40 cents to \$1 per page; this means that unless the researcher either has a large photocopy budget or can afford to devote a significant amount of time on site, it will not be practical to select a research topic that requires heavy use of such an archive. It should be noted, though, that digital reproduction – like photocopying for those with generous research budgets – can tempt the student to become injudicious in collecting too much material. In some cases, indeed, it can lead to information overload, creating the illusion that one has conducted “research” when one has merely collected a massive amount of archival material, not all of it relevant, that will still need to be sifted when one returns home.

Using the Sources

In conducting research based primarily on content analysis, it is important to give attention to the sources' context and provenance. Various contexts include presentation, production, and audience. Presentation is the most straightforward. A researcher examining a series of newspapers, for example, in order to see how a particular theme was conveyed, should look not only to the specific presentation of the topic at hand, but also to its placement within the paper as a whole. Was the topic covered on the front page – and if so, was it above or below the fold? Or was it relegated to a more obscure location? How many column inches did the topic merit compared to other topics? Was it addressed in hard news columns, in editorials, or in various lifestyle features? These are only among the most obvious questions; the point is that the researcher should not restrict himself or herself to content analysis of a single theme in isolation from surrounding content.

Production and audience can be more difficult, and they constitute a reason that even a project focusing primarily on content analysis often needs to include archival research. Wendy Webster's *Englishness and Empire 1939–1965* (2005) demonstrates this point. Although it centers on analyzing the ways in which films' and television programs' depiction of empire during World War II and the early period of decolonization helped to construct English national identity, it draws on far more than content analysis. Among other sources, Webster's book draws on BBC files discussing production and policy decisions and audience research, various government collections, and reviews and letters from a wide range of newspapers. Had Webster limited herself to content analysis alone, her book would have been decidedly less successful. Similarly, Hajkowski (2010) combines analysis of BBC programming content with archival material illuminating the process by which programming decisions were made.

If archival sources are often necessary for the contextualization of content analyses, they are even more crucial for research questions focused on biography, political history, or institutional history. For example, Simon Potter's *Broadcasting Empire* (2012) traces the diffusion of the BBC's model of public service broadcasting to Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, a task that can be accomplished only through extended analysis of internal memoranda within institutional and government archives in the four countries. Similarly, Zacher (2008), noted above, can understand how the Scripps company responded to the changing commercial and political environment during World War I only through examining company archives.

Yet historians often find, much to their frustration, that archival sources do not always contain the answers they seek (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). A historian's interest in a particular nugget of information does not mean that an earlier observer would have thought to notice it or record it for posterity, or that someone would have collected it in an archive. For example, Jones (1996) makes the point that the

authors of anonymously published nineteenth-century journalism can only sometimes be identified by journalistic diaries or other sources; in many cases, that information is lost forever. Likewise, Simon Potter has noted that for much of their history, broadcasters neglected to save copies of their films, forcing researchers to rely on transcripts – and even those were not always saved (personal communication, July 6, 2012). Often this problem is largely accidental, though as Epstein (2012) has vividly demonstrated, archives can reflect the political interests of those who originally produced the documents. This difficulty cautions us to the need both to read documents critically and to draw conclusions judiciously, recognizing that the picture conveyed in the archive is not straightforwardly “reliable.”

In recent years, scholars have become increasingly interested in audience response to media. This interest has grown both out of a concern for “history from below” and from the critical point that audiences, as much as authors, create meaning. Unfortunately, this approach is easier to articulate than to execute, particularly for the centuries before opinion polls, audience research, and modern sociology. For earlier periods, available evidence is often patchy or unrepresentative. The field of book history, in particular, has given growing attention to “reader response,” but surviving primary source evidence is disproportionately concerned with elite views. Where evidence is available of working-class reader response, moreover – for example, in the autobiographies discussed in Rose (2001) – it often refers to texts less ephemeral than newspapers and magazines (Hampton, 2009).

This point is highlighted by the recent development of the *Reading Experience Database, 1450–1945* (RED), an impressive and highly valuable database documenting the ways in which reading took place in Britain between 1450 and 1945. This project invites submissions of any documented reading experience within that period, and they are carefully vetted by the editorial team: as Bradley (2010, p. 152) notes,

Each record is extraordinarily comprehensive, detailing where known not only the name/ author/type of text being read, but also the date of the reading, the reader’s name, their gender, social background, religion, date of birth, whether other readers were present, even the time (morning/ afternoon/night) and the place of the reading experience.

This is an ongoing project, and its comprehensiveness will in the long run depend not only upon the cooperation of interested researchers, but more fundamentally on evidence that actually exists. Not surprisingly, most of the authors identified as being read are canonical authors, not obscure journalists, and a large number of the readers are themselves well known, upper- or middle-class figures; it is not clear that this will change as the project expands. As with any archive, the *Reading Experience Database* does not necessarily address a particular topic that may interest a given researcher: Nicholson (2012) notes, for example, that it does not provide an entry relating to the consumption of American humor in Britain.

This project underscores the partiality of the archival record in another way: according to Bradley (2010), as of early 2010 well over half of the “reading experiences” available in the database are from the nineteenth century. Given the dramatic growth of both population and literacy during the nineteenth century, this may well be a fair proportion, but it illustrates the added difficulty of recovering the reading experience for earlier centuries.

The point of the preceding is not to criticize the *RED*; the problem does not lie with the database’s creators or methodology, but with the limitations of the evidence that exists. Nor is the point to argue for throwing up one’s hands in despair; it is, rather, that gauging audience response, particularly for periods before the twentieth century, requires creativity and imagination. Nicholson (2012) illustrates the degree of judicious inference that a sensitive researcher can bring to this task; if the archival record does not explicitly tell us how British readers consumed American jokes, the topic with which he or she is concerned, it is nonetheless possible to draw tentative conclusions from the information that is available about readers and the culture in which their reading took place.

Case Studies

Having described in general terms the task of researching and writing media history, the remainder of this chapter will examine two books that are among the most impressive recent works in British media history, Adrian Bingham’s *Family Newspapers?* (2009) and Laura Beers’s *Your Britain* (2010). Both scholars primarily identify themselves as historians of modern Britain who have an interest in the mass media, rather than as scholars of the media who have employed historical methodologies; both were trained in history departments, in the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively. Beers’s book is her first, based on her PhD dissertation, while Bingham’s is his second.

Bingham’s *Family Newspapers?* examines the coverage of sex in twentieth-century British popular newspapers. It is chiefly a work of content analysis, resting on the assumption that the popular press both influences and reflects public opinion – though Bingham wisely avoids drawing conclusions on either score that are more ambitious than documentary evidence can justify. This, in turn, divides into two methodological points. First, even if it is oversimple to imagine that readers simply change their opinions as a result of reading a single article, repeated readings are bound to have a cumulative effect on readers’ views. Although Bingham is unable, because of the limitations of available sources, to prove this through direct evidence concerning reader response, he is on solid theoretical ground here (see, for example, Calavita, 2005). At the same time, the commercial context in which the twentieth-century popular press operated insured that editorial content was shaped by readers’ expectations – though Bingham, naturally, does not argue that editors and journalists

were straitjacketed by their readers. Rather, this two-way relationship between mass circulation newspapers and their readers serves as the methodological underpinning of using a content analysis of these papers as a window into the understandings of sex within twentieth-century British culture.

Bingham's topic is a large one, and so the question of how to organize the material is particularly important. Rather than taking a strictly chronological approach, he organizes his discussion according to six topics, including sexual advice, surveys of attitudes and behavior, court reporting, moral crusades, titillating content, and portrayals of celebrities' sexuality; each of these topical chapters is itself arranged chronologically, emphasizing change over time. There are trade-offs between taking either a thematic or a chronological approach. A chronological approach would have been unwieldy, given the vast amount of material. In addition, the changes over time in these six areas did not necessarily follow the same chronology, and trying to arrange the book chronologically might have led Bingham to miss these nuances.

On the other hand, the danger in arranging this study thematically is that it compartmentalizes newspaper content in a way that does not match the readers' experience of engaging with a newspaper. In other words, a reader might move quickly from one type of content to another – and not only sexual content, but sport, political news, and others. Focusing on discrete themes risks, then, missing the interplay between different types of content. Bingham's solution to this challenge is twofold. First, he frames his discrete analyses within a thorough contextualization, based on a mastery of secondary literature, of changes in the framework of the popular press, and of the nature of British sexuality. This allows his readers to understand how his content analyses relate to the wider cultural history of twentieth-century Britain. Second, he makes frequent connections between the themes of his separate chapters. This reminds readers that the thematic divisions are analytical conveniences, and that the various sections of the newspapers worked together in effecting cultural change.

Although there are pros and cons of organizing his book in a primarily thematic rather than a chronological framework, such a choice is unavoidable. What Bingham accomplishes through his thematic organization, combined with the measures he takes to counteract the risk of fragmentation, is to allow him to make nuanced generalizations about the changing representation of sexuality within the popular press. In his conclusion he is able to aggregate the changes depicted in separate chapters, showing that although the transformations occurred at an uneven pace, on balance many of the loosening of attitudes often attributed to the "permissive" 1960s in fact had made their way into the popular press by the 1940s and 1950s. He is also able to show that across several different themes, newspapers attempted to use sex as a way of increasing circulation, while still remaining within the boundaries of a "family" newspaper.

Bingham's book also illustrates the value of using archival sources to frame content analyses, as well as the limitations of the archives. Various unpublished documents on which Bingham draws show readers' views of newspaper content, governmental policing of the boundaries of public decency, and management concerns about suc-

ceeding in a competitive commercial environment. This use of archival material immeasurably enriches Bingham's content analyses, making it possible to gain a sharper understanding of the conditions of production and reception. At the same time, to return to a theme discussed earlier in this chapter, Bingham is limited by the evidence that is available. Not every question he might have is answered. He notes, for example, that *The Times* and the *Guardian* have far more comprehensive editorial archives than most of the mass circulation papers he is examining, while evidence pertaining to reader response is particularly spotty. The latter is true even in the case of the archive of Mass Observation, the social research organization founded in 1937 to record British daily life through open-ended interviews with "representative" Britons.

Whereas Bingham's book is best described as a work of cultural history, Beers's *Your Britain* contributes most importantly to political history. In particular, it employs archival research to interrogate the long-standing left-wing view in Britain that the capitalist-owned press prevented the emergence of a Labour government in interwar Britain, one that otherwise would have naturally followed from universal suffrage. In the first instance, Beers is addressing political historians interested in the political transformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but who have largely neglected the role of the mass media (Beers, 2012). Like Bingham's study, then, Beers's speaks to concerns that were already prominent beyond media historians; like Bingham, she uses a substantial amount of primary source material to address such concerns in original ways.

Beers concentrates most heavily on policy history. Among her research questions, several predominate. Specifically: How did the interwar Labour Party move beyond its assumption of a hostile press in order to attempt to improve its coverage? How did the party seek to shape coverage on BBC programming, taking advantage of a new medium over which a single company held a legal monopoly? How successful was the party in shaping its media image? To what extent did the party have to change its platform in order to receive more favorable coverage?

Given the importance that interwar Labour Party leaders and leftist intellectuals attached to the media, it is not surprising that Beers is able to find a significant amount of archival material through which she can examine the party's efforts. She combines party records with material from the Conservative Party archive; the private letters of leading politicians of all parties; the archives of the BBC, the Trades Union Congress, Mass Observation, and such British state offices as the Foreign Office, Home Office, and Treasury; and political posters and published primary sources. She supplements this deep archival focus with a modest amount of content analysis.

Like Bingham's study, Beers's combines thematic and chronological approaches. In contrast to Bingham's, though, her book's organization is more heavily chronological, befitting a book whose subtitle emphasizes the "making of the Labour Party." In contrast to political historians who have attributed Labour's 1945 electoral landslide almost entirely to the experience of World War II, Beers shows that the party

began transforming itself from a working-class party to a national reformist party during the interwar period, largely through its engagement with the press and broadcasting.

Both of these books highlight a point with which this chapter began: that the best works of media history address well-defined analytical research questions through extensive primary source scholarship. They are not “media-centric,” but examine the media in larger contexts, whether political, cultural, economic, or social. They also illustrate that even the best media history will remain to some extent tentative and speculative, in deference to the limitations of the sources that are available.

NOTE

- 1 In addition, this chapter focuses on practical questions concerning historical research in media studies. For theoretical examinations of this topic, see Brügger, 2002; Nerone, 2003; Schudson, 1991; and Chapter 16 by Richard K. Popp in the present volume.

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Film Analysis

James Walters

ABSTRACT

Critical attention to the close analysis of film has grown steadily since the turn of the century, with a number of recently published titles making it their central focus for discussion. In turn, analysis itself has enjoyed a resurgence in contemporary film studies, resulting in a number of key titles that make precise scrutiny a defining critical approach. When reflecting on these trends, we are entitled to ask what is involved in the detailed analysis of film: what challenges and rewards are represented in this critical practice? With these questions in mind, this chapter explores processes of analysis through a series of examples from film studies. In building a picture of the various forms and approaches, the discussion seeks to evaluate the enduring centrality of detailed analysis in contemporary film studies.

Film analysis is one of the most if not *the most* prevalent of academic methods in film studies today. Examples of film analysis can be found across a whole spectrum of writing on topics within film history, theory, and criticism. It is to be expected that this kind of ubiquity might lead us to take film analysis for granted and, as a consequence, that we may neglect to reflect upon what we think we're doing when we analyze films. Certainly, the range and diversity of writings that fall under the general banner of "close textual analysis" in film studies suggests that many different people interpret the term in many different ways. Film studies has never settled upon one

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems189

uniform method of analysis and it certainly is not the aim of this chapter to propose a defining approach. Indeed, there may be great benefit in having varying methods of analysis and, in any case, there are obvious points of convergence between approaches as much as there are distinctions. Neither am I concerned with detailing *all* of the analytical approaches to be found in film studies or to give an especially historical account of their development. Rather, what follows is an evaluation of a few different approaches, all of which I take to be important within film studies.

Introducing Film Analysis

It is a common, perhaps universal, practice for film studies courses in colleges and universities to feature some element of film analysis within the curriculum. Students are often introduced to the rudiments of analysis from the outset – as part of a first-year module, for example – and this tendency is indicative of a general acceptance that film analysis occupies a central significance in the study of the medium. This acknowledgment is shared elsewhere. Many “introduction to film studies” textbooks have been published over the past 40 years and all of them devote significant passages to the topic of film analysis. In common with university and college courses, this frequently happens right at the beginning. It is uncontroversial to suggest that, of the plenitude available, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson’s *Film Art: An Introduction* is the textbook that has received the most widespread use. Its ubiquity ensures that, for many students, the text may come to represent the key introduction to the principles of film study. The book has been reprinted in a number of editions since its first publication in 1979 and, given the breadth and diversity of contemporary film studies, it is notable that a particular approach has endured in each cycle of publication.

In adherence to the thrust of the book’s title, the authors dedicate themselves to a conviction of film as art and, as one would expect, this becomes a guiding influence throughout chapters. Such assertions are perhaps unremarkable and represent no more than the reasonable expectations we might hold of this particular text. However, Bordwell and Thompson’s methods for demonstrating the medium’s status as an art form are striking, and of preliminary relevance to this chapter’s concerns. As early as page 3, in a section proposing to focus on creativity, technology, and business, we are given a brief but fairly detailed analysis of a sequence from Alfred Hitchcock’s *Shadow of a Doubt*, complete with a number of accompanying frame enlargements from the film. The following segment is representative of this analysis, with the numbers in parentheses referring to frame enlargement illustrations:

The director of *Shadow of a Doubt*, Alfred Hitchcock, believed firmly in using the medium to arouse the viewer’s mind and feelings. So, as Uncle Charlie launches into his monologue, Hitchcock presents us with a shot of the entire table (1.3). We’ve seen

something like this shot in earlier scenes, and it orients us to the positions of the scene's major characters. At the same time, Hitchcock arranges things so that Uncle Charlie, not Emmy's husband, sits at the head of the table. His domination of the household is presented visually. As Charlie starts to talk, after a shot of Emmy, we get a brief shot of Little Charlie, eyeing him anxiously (1.4). When he begins to denounce the "useless women," we get a close view of him as he continues his attack (1.5). (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979/2010, p. 5)

The discussion of *Shadow of a Doubt*, and of this sequence, contributes to the book's general introductory point about the ways in which film style – and particularly visual style – can become representational strategies in film. In this instance, the authors propose that Uncle Charlie's dominance is asserted through visual composition (and it is this dominance that will develop to become ever more sinister as the film progresses). If we can get beyond the bluntness of the language (we might ask which director *doesn't* seek to "arouse the viewer's mind and feelings") that is surely designed to avoid taxing or troubling the novice film student, we can appreciate that Bordwell and Thompson place analysis at the heart of their introduction to film as an art form.

An effort is made to stay close to detail from the film, a fact illustrated in the relating of thematic points to shot compositions and also in the inclusion of numerous frame enlargements that elaborate these relationships. For the individual starting out in film studies with Bordwell and Thompson, the first method that will be encountered is a version of detailed film analysis. It follows that the authors place film analysis at the center of any introduction to the medium and, furthermore, this strategy demonstrates the extent to which they are not prepared to simply take for granted (or ask the reader to take for granted) that film is an art form capable of meaningful expression. Rather, they commit themselves to laying out in step-by-step detail the ways in which a single scene can achieve such an effect. This approach defines the whole of *Film Art* and, indeed, Bordwell and Thompson round off their analysis of *Shadow of a Doubt* in the following way:

The rest of this book will examine the ideas of form and style more closely. Here we just want to suggest that our *Shadow of a Doubt* scene is typical of how cinema works as art. Films have subject matter and themes that contribute to the artistic effect, but in themselves those amount to raw material. We have plenty of films about serial killers, but how many as vivid as *Shadow of a Doubt*? It's through form and style that film draws us into a moment-by-moment engagement, just as a song or a play or a novel does. As a film unfolds in time, it offers a developing pattern that encourages us to ask why things are happening and to wonder what will happen next. We feel curiosity and suspense and surprise. The film engages our vision and hearing, our knowledge of the world, our ideas, and our feelings. The filmmaker can create a structured experience that will involve us keenly – and sometimes change the way we think and feel about our lives. After watching *Shadow of a Doubt*, many viewers ask whether the world is as sunny a place as it sometimes seems. (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979/2010, p. 7)

Some key themes emerge within this account of the book's analytical approach. The use of phrases like "how cinema works," "raw material," and "structured experience" reveals a view of film as something relatively mechanical and process-driven. It's entirely feasible to see the advantages of this attitude in the context of the book that Bordwell and Thompson have intended to write: their account of cinema allows the medium to remain manageable and, perhaps, appealingly linear for the uninitiated reader. Laying out a series of clear processes, especially ones that might extend across the whole of cinema, has obvious benefits in this context. The kind of analysis that Bordwell and Thompson engage in treats cinema as a series of constituent parts that can be taken apart, looked at, and then put back together again: rather like the components of a car engine or bars of a musical score. *Film Art's* achievement lies in its desire to retain relentless clarity as it performs this task of "taking apart," its authors ever conscious not to lose the reader by making matters too convoluted or ambiguous. A second achievement is to keep the reader oriented precisely by staying close to detail from the films and, where possible, giving visual illustrations of the points raised. In this way, Bordwell and Thompson respond to their notion of film drawing us into "a moment-by-moment engagement" by undertaking moment-by-moment analyses of sequences, scenes, and sections.

It is perhaps understandable that an introductory text such as *Film Art* would strive for simplicity and linearity in its analysis. However, there are some inevitable drawbacks contained within such an approach. First and foremost, we might question whether analysis of this kind best responds to the complexity of the medium. Although sections of the book are devoted to shot-by-shot detail, it is notable that the resulting analysis often concerns itself with surface effect. This is most apparent when the discussion of *Shadow of a Doubt* moves to an evaluation of the film's impact upon the viewer. It is indisputable that hypothetical audience members might be moved to question whether their "world is as sunny a place as it sometimes seems" having watched Hitchcock's film, as Bordwell and Thompson suggest. The understatement inherent in this remark is effective as a witty reflection on Hitchcock's cinema (it is difficult to think of a film from his *oeuvre* that *doesn't* depict the world as slightly less than sunny). And yet, as the only evaluation offered, this assessment is unusually brief and purposely avoids engaging in any great depth with any of the film's various undercurrents and tensions. We are perhaps entitled to ask whether *Shadow of a Doubt* can really be summed up this easily. There is an imbalance, therefore, between the protracted nature of the analysis undertaken ("moment-by-moment engagement") and the brevity of the evaluation that is reached. If the processes of analysis are made clear in *Film Art*, the purpose of analysis is left ambiguous. We might conclude that the approach demonstrated takes the film apart but then puts it back together a little too quickly, too neatly, and, in the process, risks reducing its qualities to a somewhat facile defining message (the world may not be as sunny as it seems). The method is then defined by its reductionist stance and, indeed, we might regard Bordwell and Thompson's contribution as a kind of reductionist analysis.

How far we take these criticisms of Bordwell and Thompson's analytical approach depends upon our view of *Film Art* as an introductory text, and of what an introductory text should aim to achieve. On the one hand, we might defend the book's stance by, quite reasonably, drawing attention to the fact that students of film are likely to encounter analyses that are far richer, more sophisticated, and greatly complex as they develop a sustained engagement with the field (some of them written by Bordwell and Thompson, perhaps). From this perspective, *Film Art* usefully introduces them to one method of analysis with, perhaps, the plausible expectation that the reader will move beyond the reductionist approach it embodies. On the other hand, we can speculate that this introduction to film analysis risks starting students off on the wrong foot precisely by not taking analysis to the point of meaningful evaluation. It should be added that, embedded in Bordwell and Thompson's analysis of *Shadow of a Doubt*, there are moments of evaluation and critical assertion: the observation that very few serial killer films are as "vivid" as Hitchcock's provides a clear initial statement of *Shadow of a Doubt's* value in the authors' eyes. As such statements are not capitalized upon, however, the reasons for conducting an analysis of this particular film may remain enigmatic.

Film Analysis and Criticism

Reservations of the kind potentially leveled against *Film Art* derive from the close relationship that exists between film analysis and film criticism. In their book, *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*, Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan "characterise film criticism as a form of writing which addresses films as potential achievements and wishes to convey their distinctiveness and quality (or lack of it)" (Clayton & Klevan, 2011, p. 1). This distinction is useful not only in terms of emphasizing the central strength of the author's voice in film criticism but also in laying out a series of reasons why film criticism might be pursued at all. Following on from this, and in relation to film analysis, they suggest that

It is felt, perhaps, that serious academic analysis should differentiate itself from the evaluative reactions of the ordinary film viewer – "he's really good in this," "this is definitely her best film" – or that "opinionated" newspaper reviewer. For the most part, films are used illustratively (valued primarily for their usefulness) rather than engaged with critically (valued for their achievements). (Clayton & Klevan, 2011, p. 2)

We might easily recognize Bordwell and Thompson's analytical approach to *Shadow of a Doubt* in this characterization. However, rather than necessarily seeing this only as a failing on the part of the authors, we might acknowledge that there is a genuine hesitation in *Film Art* over whether and when it is *appropriate* to offer critical judgments. Although it exhibits some of the central traits, Bordwell and Thompson's

book does not automatically share the perceived prejudices of “serious academic analysis” that Clayton and Klevan describe. On the contrary, the analysis undertaken in *Film Art* seems to hold the modest assumption that strongly asserted film criticism may not be useful or helpful to the uninitiated reader taking their first steps in film studies. It might be said that, rather than forcing their own critical agenda, Bordwell and Thompson are especially anxious about the reader’s experience. As a result, critical judgments are used cautiously in the book, emerging as brief comments or phrases, but rarely sustained or elaborated. In this way, and with perhaps admirable intent, *Film Art* dedicates itself to the process of analysis but, for the most part, suspends any subjective assertion as to why such analysis might be undertaken in the first place – how it might enhance an appreciation of a film’s value and achievement, for example.

If Bordwell and Thompson’s suppression of their critical perspectives is to be viewed as modest, as I suggest above, then we might be led to conclude that their intentions are commendable: that they want to help the reader as much as possible. Yet, we also have to concede that the endeavor brings with it some oddities, not least the fact that the analysis of *Shadow of a Doubt* occurs as part of an opening subsection entitled “Film Artistry.” If the admirable boldness of that titled statement is not addressed or pursued in the proceeding analysis, how then is the reader to understand what Bordwell and Thompson mean by “artistry” as opposed to, say, “competence”? Again, why analyze this film at all?

Alex Clayton draws attention to further, and more essential, issues with *Film Art*’s approach, however. He identifies Bordwell and Thompson’s tendency to reduce films down into cause-and-effect chains and goal-centered narratives within their analysis of Howard Hawks’s *His Girl Friday*. Having illustrated a series of difficulties associated with these strategies, Clayton offers a crucial assessment:

What Bordwell and Thompson cannot escape is the fact that any descriptive word choice necessarily embodies an interpretative stance. The phrase “initial goal,” chosen primarily to recap the paradigmatic vocabulary advanced elsewhere, has nonetheless been picked from an available range of potential descriptions which might have included “vague wish,” “heartfelt desire,” “ill-defined plan” and “cover story.” Each would construe Hildy’s [the film’s lead female character, played by Rosalind Russell] situation in a slightly and significantly different way. (Clayton, 2011, p. 32)

We might say that Clayton’s point relates not only to Bordwell and Thompson’s descriptive approach but also to the way in which all analysis is inescapably fused with interpretive criticism. Every analysis undertaken represents a choice or series of choices made on the part of the analyst. Indeed, Bordwell and Thompson’s brief analysis of *Shadow of a Doubt* is a demonstration of a particular critical perspective being adopted and offered to the reader. They make the point that

Everything that occurs in a film is affected by context. Sometimes we pull out a moment for study, as we’ve done here. But to get the full effect of that moment, we

need to see it as part of the whole movie, from beginning to end. Any film has an overall organization, what we'll be calling its form. Calling it a form suggests that a film isn't simply a cluster of moments. It's a pattern. *Shadow of a Doubt* is organized as a story, and the dinner scene we've been examining contributes mightily to the progression of that story. It serves, we can say, a formal function. (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979/2010, p. 4)

The choice of the phrase "formal function" in the final sentence of this passage might implicitly mask the process of critical selection that the authors have undertaken. A potential strength of Bordwell and Thompson's focus on this moment from *Shadow of a Doubt* derives from their opening contention that the scene is "powerful" (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979/2010, p. 4). It is reasonable to speculate from this and from their ensuing analysis that, for the authors, the moment is pivotal and has qualities that are exceptional within this film's pattern of exceptional moments. Putting the moment back into its overall context (the whole film) is entirely logical, but care perhaps needs to be taken in order to avoid characterizing it as one moment in a pattern of *equal* parts within a film's "overall organization." Bordwell and Thompson's analysis actually suggests that this moment is remarkable not only for its coherence with the film's overall organization, but also because of its distinctiveness – its power. Crucially, the moment also reinforces the authors' interpretation of the film: their evaluation of its dramatic goals and achievements. Yet, when that fact is subdued or avoided, even in an introductory context, the vital connection between analysis and interpretation is left ambiguous. A potential consequence of characterizing film analysis as objective rather than subjective is that opportunity for disagreement, dispute and, most importantly, engagement are curtailed. This holds implications for any text, but particularly one seeking to tutor students in the principles and procedures of film analysis. An alternative, therefore, is to view analysis as an inherent articulation of a critical position: a reading of a film.

Film Analysis and Systems

If analysis is always the product of interpretation, it can also be a way of organizing a film's audiovisual data, and of organizing our responses to that data. In a key essay that deals with the work of film analysis, Raymond Bellour (2001) outlines why, for him, such a process of organization might be important but also difficult. He compares film to literature and notes that

the text of a film is unattainable because it is an unquotable text. To this extent, and to this extent only, the word text as applied to film is metaphorical; it clearly pinpoints the paradox that inflicts the filmic text and to such a degree only the filmic text. (Bellour, 2001, p. 22)

Bellour's notion of film's special status as the "unattainable" text is striking because, quite clearly, it eloquently captures the potent intangibility of the medium. Furthermore, his choice of the phrase "unquotable text" is pertinent in that it addresses directly the challenges presented by film analysis: to translate the audiovisual form into written form without losing the shape and meaning of the original artifact. Bellour (2001, p. 25) expands on this point when he describes the moving image as paradoxical:

On the one hand it spreads in space like a picture; on the other it plunges into time, like a story which its serialization into units approximates more or less to the musical work. In this it is peculiarly unquotable, since the written text cannot restore to it what only the projector can produce: a movement, the illusion of which guarantees the reality. That is why the reproduction even of many stills is only ever able to reveal a kind of radical inability to assume the textuality of the film.

On a historical note, it may be worth pointing out that Bellour, who wrote his essay in 1975, is describing a standard of analysis that predates technologies such as video and DVD. So, as he concedes, "unattainable" text is a play on words: sometimes it was just very difficult to obtain the material film and find the facilities that would allow for close analysis to take place at all. (Perhaps one of the unanticipated pleasures of Bellour's writing is his modest acknowledgment, at various points in his essays, of the necessary fallibilities in sections of his analysis due to such practical and technical limitations.) But, even as technology has advanced beyond editing tables and 16 mm Steenbecks, and even as films have become so widely available that acquiring a copy can often involve only a simple Internet search, Bellour's evocative description of the film text as unattainable even as we attempt to capture it, escaping from us at the very moment we strive to reach it, stands the test of time. It would be hard to miss the poetry of Bellour's words (translated, in this instance, from the original French by Ben Brewster) and we might also note the underlying sense of responsibility to the medium that he expresses as he describes the profound frustration – the "radical inability" – of the film analyst and the methods they employ. In returning to that challenge time and again, Bellour exhibits his dedication to film.

Given his contention that the film text is inherently unattainable, it is useful to note some of the ways in which Bellour approaches the task of analyzing that text. Bellour opts to deal with films in segments, isolating specific scenes or sections of scenes for especially rigorous extended analysis. This technique often involves lengthy portions of shot analysis, which are always accompanied by especially large quantities of frame enlargements and which frequently detail repetitions and variations in visual style. Sitting alongside these breakdowns are passages of interpretation – what Bellour takes to be important within the section offered for extensive analysis. This fluctuating pattern of analysis and interpretation is not uncommon in film studies, and yet Bellour's work is noteworthy for the extent to which it places divisions between the articulation of a segment's function and claims for its meaning and significance. So, for example, when discussing a sequence from *Marnie* (it is the scene

in which businessman Mr Strutt has discovered that Marnie has stolen \$10,000 from him, before he is interrupted by the arrival of a wealthy client, Mark Rutherford) Bellour begins with a line-for-line quotation of the film's script, followed by a shot-by-shot breakdown (accompanied by a number of frame enlargements) before going on to discuss the words and images almost completely in isolation (Bellour, 2001, pp. 219–223). There is meticulousness to Bellour's method here: we are presented with an extensive section of the script (running to 31 lines) and every one of the 24 shots is accounted for in the proceeding description. A clear benefit of this approach is that we are given a great deal of data to contemplate and digest as Bellour moves through his analysis. In this sense, we might well conclude that the approach is admirably rigorous. And yet, he lays out all of this information in order to move to a single, albeit potent, point:

Once the dialogue has ended and the camera has completed the slow forward tracking shot that isolates Mark's face, he turns towards the spectator with a thoughtful look that is obviously supposed to indicate that, during the time when the shot becomes stationary, he is daydreaming about this woman whose virtual image he has helped to create. The real image that follows (25a) repeats exactly the beginning of shot 1 [a closeup view of Marnie's clutch bag from behind as she walk along a station platform] and seems to materialize his pensive gaze, taking the place of the traditional subjective shot . . . Mark thus sees what he cannot see but what he is in the position of being able to imagine by means of the camera that sees in his place. This repetition-effect, which makes Mark see/imagine what Hitchcock—the camera sees in shot 1, situates Mark on the trajectory of enunciation permitted by the camera-look. Mark's singular desire for Marnie is aroused by this relationship between himself and the image. He becomes the relay for that which Hitchcock can only possess through the camera, which forbids it to him precisely so that he may represent it. The fetishistic operation, thus redoubled, is extended from the director to the character who takes his place, which brings about a return to the narrative's initial condition of possibility: the essentially fetishistic position of the cinematographic signifier. (Bellour, 2001, p. 222; numbers in parenthesis indicate frame enlargement illustrations)

If we accept Bellour's reading of Mark's expression as functionally situating the character on the "trajectory of enunciation permitted by the camera-look," then we are also entitled to wonder why he deems it necessary to reproduce the dialogue from the *entire* scene as well as account for *every* shot contained within its composition. We might suggest that Bellour's dedication to an especially painstaking, especially close, model of textual analysis has not only unnecessarily delayed the delivery of his crucial point but also distracted him from the critical task of articulating that which is crucial: editing out peripheral detail in order precisely to focus our attention upon the most important data. It is perhaps an adherence to taking everything in sequential order – as part of the segment's shot-by-shot progression – that restricts Bellour's critical options in his reading of the moment. One alternative available to him is to begin the analysis at the segment's end – with Mark's look and the

transition to Marnie's bag. But, of course, that would disrupt the methodology at work in Bellour's analysis and risk undermining a central thesis of sequential development in Hitchcock's films. And so the reading is left critically unbalanced but chronologically correct.

In fact, there is a further issue with Bellour's reading of the sequence. In detailing every line from the scene, he is obliged to include a key interjection delivered by Mr Strutt's secretary:

OTHER COP: *What were her references?*

STRUTT: *Well, as a matter of fact . . . yes, she had references, sure . . .*

SECRETARY: *[Oh] Mr Strutt, don't you remember, she didn't have any references at all.*

(Bellour, 2001, p. 219–220)

The secretary's sardonic prompt is expertly timed within the sequence, coolly deflating and frustrating Strutt's attempts at gaining the moral high ground as well as rewarding one of the cops' stifled guffaws from seconds earlier. It builds on an earlier shot of the secretary lowering her eyes and smiling knowingly as her boss launches into an elaborately lascivious description of Marnie. Beginning her sentence with "Oh" (a detail that Bellour can be forgiven for omitting) gives the line a *faux* innocence that delicately emphasizes this woman's intellectual superiority over her boss in this moment.

The irony of Bellour's reading is that, although he gives us the secretary's line, includes her in the shot breakdown, and actually features her in the selection of frame enlargement illustrations, he does not once mention her significance within the scene. This seems important, given the conclusions that Bellour reaches. If Mark takes Hitchcock's place in the "fetishistic operation," what function does the secretary – the lone female character within the scene – have and, more importantly, what might her role be in relation to the director of this film? One possibility might be that she also embodies the director in some way, straining against that very operation of fetishism which Bellour identifies. At the very least, the character provides some balance to the scene, which should be noted in the light of such a strongly asserted theoretical reading. However we choose to interpret the role of the secretary, we may be entitled to conclude that her omission from Bellour's analysis is curious and, even, that it risks undermining the stringency of his approach as well as the strength of his critical interpretations.

Driven, perhaps, by his founding definition of its unattainability, Bellour commendably attempts to achieve an unusually close proximity to the film text in his analyses. His reliance upon frame stills and, elsewhere, his inclusion of detailed diagrams and tables demonstrates his desire to take the medium apart in order to understand it better, and presumably to help us understand it better too. And yet, it might be that the approach carries with it a warning. Although it is only one small example of Bellour's method, in his analysis of the segment from *Marnie* he appears to have sacrificed perspective in the pursuit of proximity. We are left to conclude that

systematic accuracy, of the kind Bellour pursues as he enters stills and segments into tables like fiscal statistics, can only be worthwhile if it is combined with critical precision. Ironically, in getting as close as possible to the film's material, potentially pivotal moments can be lost. It might be a little harsh to suggest that Bellour's freezing of frames and cataloging of shots deadens the cinema he cherishes, but it is certainly the case that the process risks constraining the flows and rhythms of the medium. This can lead to certain elements being missed entirely: Alfred Hitchcock's sense of humor, for example.

Film Analysis, Statistics, and Objectivity

If the claim that Bellour's approach "deadens" cinema is made tentatively, then Barry Salt's assessment of the French theorist's work carries with it no such inhibitions. For Salt, in his book *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (1983/2009), all interpretive models of film theory and criticism merit thorough re-examination. Indeed, in his chapter "The Interpretation of Films," he explains that:

The question of what should count as valid interpretation of a film or other work of art, and why it should, is one that most people do not seem willing to face. For brevity we can consider the alternative positions on this question as being stretched out along a spectrum from the most conservative or restrictive position to the most extreme or radical. At the restrictive extreme the possibility of true, or at any rate fairly certain, interpretation is denied altogether, and at the other extreme all interpretations, however generated, are regarded as equally valid. In between these two extremes are various positions where smaller or larger numbers of different systems of interpretation are considered to be valid. There is also a tendency for the amount of unjustified personal intuition used by the critic or interpreter to increase towards the more radical end of the spectrum. (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 16)

Thankfully, and perhaps rather conveniently for his argument, Salt immediately dismisses the "most . . . restrictive position" from his discussion, stating that anyone denying valid interpretations but still producing interpretations is "wasting everyone's time" (p. 16). We should perhaps be relieved that this odd position is not explored in depth, but we might also wonder whether Salt would struggle to find a significant number of critics and theorists adopting it in order for it to exist as a recognized position at all. The obvious contradictions inherent in such a position would surely discourage anyone from articulating it and so, perhaps, Salt is speaking of a hypothetical stance, rather than a literal one. Nevertheless, he finds evidence for the second, more radical position in lots of places, and arrives at Raymond Bellour.

Before reaching Bellour, however, Salt does advance a couple of rather odd views about film interpretation. For example, he raises the notion of all interpretations being equally valid, in his view often cited as a justification for the most "extreme"

interpretive position. In countering this, he refers to the fact that, although many artists and filmmakers claim that their work “means whatever a member of their audience wants it to mean,” they nearly always reject those interpretations. This seems to partially evoke Roland Barthes’s famous assertion that “the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author,” but Salt goes on to give the example of filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky:

Although he has sometimes said to enquirers that his films mean whatever they mean to the individual person watching them, when it was suggested that the mother in *Zerkalo* was an unloving mother, he instantly rejected this, as he did other interpretations which he didn’t agree with. (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 17)

No reference is given for this exchange and so we have to take Salt’s word for it. Nevertheless, the issue here is that his example doesn’t necessarily dispute artists’ claims that meaning belongs to the audience or, rather, that they have the most significant role in its interpretation. It would be a very stringent application of Barthes’ “Death of the Author” essay that required Tarkovsky to remain entirely silent on his films’ meanings once they had been exhibited to the public. Rather, it seems that, in Salt’s example, the director is merely responding to his work as an active audience member, and giving his interpretation of the film accordingly. His status as the film’s director does not necessarily close off all other interpretations or mean that a definitive interpretation has been provided. A position has been articulated that can be accepted or rejected. Its validity will perhaps depend upon the justifications offered for such a strongly asserted judgment being advanced.

In this way, Tarkovsky enters into a fluid interpretive process that, if nothing else, has the potential to include. There is the suspicion that this kind of fluidity would not find favor with Salt as, throughout his study, he bemoans the ambiguity inherent in most film interpretation as opposed to more scientifically rigorous approaches. Indeed, on the topic of film perception, he proposes that scientists will one day take over from “theorists” sitting in armchairs in the humanities departments of universities and that this will be an immensely more favorable state of affairs (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 33). As Salt moves through the major models of film analysis and their founding theories (from the 1970s mainly, given the book’s original publication date of 1983) very few figures remain standing. Althusser, Lacan, Greimas, Eco, Metz, Lacan, and other eminent names are taken to task in a fairly uncompromising style. Readers might welcome Salt’s refreshing dismantling of certain theories that, when his book was published, were almost unassailable in certain corners of film studies. Certainly, the directness and forcefulness of Salt’s criticisms were rare at the time and it still remains a rarity for such attacks to appear in academic books today.

Salt’s account of Bellour’s analytical approach is no less caustic. He takes Bellour’s famous use of diagrams to demonstrate movement in *North by Northwest*’s crop-dusting sequence as an opportunity to define these methods as “meaningless” (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 18). His technique for exposing this meaninglessness is audacious and

effective: Salt constructs his own set of diagrams comprising completely random data (one diagram is “constructed by drawing a pair of axes, and then dropping ten pins which fell onto the sheet in the marked position”) and uses them to reach the same conclusions as Bellour, thus highlighting the proposed futility of the approach. In one section, he concludes that:

The fact that my interpretation, though based on a meaningless diagram, is indistinguishable in its nature from Bellour’s interpretation demonstrates the pointlessness of his approach, and I could produce the same kind of interpretation for an infinite number of arrangements. (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 18)

It is worth noting that Salt’s engagement with Bellour’s methods of analysis is fairly brief and, as a consequence, it is hard to gain the sense that a comprehensive account of the latter’s analysis of *North by Northwest* is being sought. Nevertheless, the nature of his criticisms recalls reservations we have had about Bellour’s work, namely that his attempt to get as close as possible to the medium he analyses in some ways ironically draws him away from it. The *North by Northwest* diagrams (like the frame enlargements and tables) might represent an attempt to organize the data of the film and to retain an engagement with it as part of the analysis but, as Salt asserts, that very process potentially transforms the film’s data to such an extent that it risks becoming an erroneous account of *North by Northwest*’s climactic scene.

However, we might legitimately question whether the fact that Bellour’s analysis can be made to fit different diagrams of Salt’s (random) design necessarily undermines the validity of his overarching analytical approach. The diagrams are a means for Bellour to visually underpin the analysis he undertakes and, while we might concur with Salt that they are not flawlessly constructed, we would have to consider quite carefully whether the flaws are fatal. Furthermore, Bellour’s analysis of *North by Northwest* is multifaceted and its fluency is variable; I am sure that many would suggest Salt is simply misrepresenting it in his brief account. For Salt, though, there are no such concerns: Bellour is a charlatan, like so many other film theorists.

Given the force with which Salt dismisses a series of prevailing analytical models, we might naturally be curious to discover what alternative method he proposes. Salt states that analysis of film can proceed in two directions:

Most importantly, films can be analysed in terms of their construction and their relation to their makers: analysis in this direction is mostly ignored in theorizing about film . . . Less importantly, films can be analysed in terms of the response of their spectators. Of course film-makers also form part of the audience, and they are the part that is capable of the fullest response and understanding. (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 25)

A clear priority in this explanation is the returning of the filmmaker to a position of greater authority within film analyses. This occurs at the expense of the “spectator,” and here we can appreciate that Salt seeks to discard not only film audiences (as he

later tells us, “the major part of film audiences probably understand film in a very simple way. In fact as an intensified and extended dramatic representation i.e., like a stage play with knobs on”) but also those professional spectators who, in his eyes, promote the worst excesses of film theory. In any case, for Salt it is the filmmaker who is most qualified to offer an informed response to a film, without reference to audiences or theorists. This alternative approach to analysis is manifested in Salt’s concentration on formal aspects of film style:

Questions of style arise when we consider films in relation to other films . . . The importance of formal style analysis is beginning to be realized, but it still has not got much further than remarking things like the fact that Howard Hawks keeps the camera at eye-level and doesn’t move it if possible. But in fact there are other directors of his vintage who do this too. For instance Henry Hathaway . . . The real stylistic distinction is that further than this, Hawks keeps his Average Shot Length a little longer than normal, whereas Hathaway uses faster cutting. (p. 27)

This passage introduces the process of considering films comparatively, which is a key method of Salt’s, and also an interest in statistical analysis that, among other things, can result in a recorded figure for average shot lengths in a film or across a number of films. (It should be added that Salt combines these approaches with an expert knowledge of cinema history and technology throughout his work.) The combination of these approaches leads him to the kind of information he lays out in relation to Hawks’s film. And yet, while we might agree that the observation about Hawks’s camera positioning and movement is fairly limited, it isn’t abundantly clear why the second point about average shot lengths should be treated as any more enlightening, despite the fact that it highlights a distinction rather than a similarity between two filmmakers.

Salt devotes immense amounts of time collecting data on average shot lengths, numbers of shots, and shot scales in films, and there are some interesting results here: for example, the generally held view that average shot lengths have decreased over time in Hollywood is given credence as these lengths are plotted on a year-by-year graph and a decline is recorded (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 378). It is not difficult to envisage how such background information could usefully underpin further historical research in film studies. Salt goes further, however, as he applies this statistical approach to a “stylistic analysis” of the films of director Max Ophuls. In keeping with the book’s overall methods, the stylistic analysis involves a breakdown of shot lengths, scales of shots, and camera movements in all of Ophuls’s films accompanied, on the face of it, by short descriptions of the films’ content and notable stylistic examples from them. This at least seems to have been the plan for the analysis, but we find the bland objectivity of the quantitative data clashing against the emphatic subjectivity of Salt’s own value judgments. We are told, in relation to *Letter From an Unknown Woman*, that

Taken scene by scene, the major deviations from the norm are pretty much what might conventionally be expected. For instance, the cutting rate is a lot faster than normal when Lisa hears Stefan playing, and then meets him for the first time in Scenes 5 and 6, and also when he picks her up and takes her for a meal in Scenes 22 and 24 . . . On the other hand, Ophuls gets his longest takes in the most emotionally neutral scenes, such as the promenade before church at Linz, which is Scene 18 in my dissection. (p. 392)

As with Salt's attention to average shot lengths in Hollywood cinema, it is quite conceivable that statements of this kind could provide useful background context for those wishing to conduct an analysis of Ophuls's work. However, if we are to take them as a version of analysis in its own right, we have to question whether they provide any striking insights regarding the films of Max Ophuls. If a statistical analysis of *Letter From an Unknown Woman* yields only facts like the director was able to complement his character's emotions in the pace of his editing, then perhaps that method serves the filmmaker poorly. As it happens, when it comes to the point of evaluating Ophuls's work, *Letter From an Unknown Woman* fares rather badly, way behind the non-Hollywood films and merely in among those made in the United States (it is not clear why or how we have got into this game of ranking Ophuls's films, although in fairness this is something certain studies of film authorship do from time to time). Salt concedes that some might contest these judgments but he provides his own defense:

Let them reflect that their strong personal preference for *Letter* may depend on personality factors which cannot be expected to be the same for everyone else. My purpose is to eliminate these subjective elements as far as possible, and I believe I have succeeded, since if I were proceeding by my own feelings alone I would rate the last three Ophuls films rather low. (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 398)

Here we reach Salt's overarching goal of evaluating film objectively, and thus avoiding the deficiencies subjectivity can cultivate in the work of others. And yet, there is the suspicion that, as this objective approach compresses the films into statistical data, it drains away their vitality and their interest. No wonder, then, that *Letter From an Unknown Woman* emerges as an unremarkable endeavor. The three criteria for evaluating a film to which Salt adheres are: "originality in all respects of the film," "the influence it has on other films," and "the degree to which a film-maker has fulfilled his intentions in the finished film" (p. 28). It is not clear why these criteria are chosen, and certainly each of the points are at least problematic in terms of drawing evidence-based conclusions.

Nevertheless, as Salt equates originality to matters such as the mean scale of shot distribution, a film like *Letter From an Unknown Woman* emerges as fairly unoriginal precisely because its formal style is characteristic. Not only is it characteristic of Ophuls's filmmaking (although we are also told that Ophuls has no consistent style)

but it is also typical of the romantic melodrama genre. On this theme, Salt in fact chides Robin Wood for his “over-interpretation” of the film (which occurs in chapter 5 of his book *Personal Views*), stating that the features Wood identifies and uses to underpin his arguments could be found in any number of similar films (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 389). Unlike Wood, Salt’s brand of statistical analysis avoids considering how directors use conventional structures (shot lengths and distances, editing rates, genres, plots, locations, etc.) expressively and in combination. One possible starting point for evaluating the achievement of a film like *Letter From an Unknown Woman* (and a good deal of other Hollywood films) might be to think of the ways in which it could conceivably have become a very conventional “genre” picture in the hands of another director. But if we never engage with the ways that Ophuls employs those conventions and finds new opportunities for expressive depth, if we rely only on lists and tables of the shots he employs, we are likely to fall short of a detailed engagement with the film’s achievements.

Salt’s desire for subjective evaluation is clear, but it is not pursued consistently in his book. Alongside the statistical analyses, we also have passages like this one about an early Ophuls film, *Komedi om Geld* (The Trouble With Money):

The film is more distinctive than most of the films Ophuls made in this period, and is the only one with a fully original screenplay, in which he himself had a large hand. Not surprisingly it is the worst constructed from the narrative point of view, with a quite pointless idyll for a pair of totally unnecessary young lovers shoved into the middle of the film, and a total and very apparent lack of logic in the resolution of the difficulties of the hero in the second half. The pacing of the later stages is also noticeably sluggish. These faults are not in the least overcome by the Brechtian presentation of the story by a clown compère in a circus set who comments in song at the beginning, middle and end. (Salt, 1983/2009, p. 387)

In fairness, Salt does proceed with some details about the film’s formal style, but the passage is characterized by the highly subjective series of value judgments being offered. It is hard to square paragraphs of this kind with the methodically objective statistical data that occupies Salt’s arguments elsewhere. A fracture is therefore created between moments of subjective critical discrimination and the more serious, possibly more sterile business of *analysis*. The problem for Salt’s work is that his impulse for the former keeps threatening to break through the rigorous neutrality of the latter, creating an integral imbalance. On the one hand we have a set of fairly arbitrary but methodically researched statistics about a filmmakers’ work, and on the other we have candid personal responses to that work. Neither seems adequate, especially since Salt proposes his methods of analysis to be the viable alternative for a whole galaxy of other theoretical and analytical approaches. Salt’s work has immense value not only for its expansive accounts of film history and technology but also because his data provides such a firm footing for anyone writing about film style. In that sense, it sits alongside rather than replaces those contributions the author finds to be “meaningless” or worse.

Film Analysis, Description, and Evocation

Salt's methods return us to the issue of objectivity in film analysis, and the extent to which that can ever be satisfactorily achieved. Moreover, his approach corresponds with analysis that seeks to order and organize the film text. For Salt, this process is conducted through the collation of data such as average shot lengths, and Bellour perhaps has a similar aim in mind when he constructs his diagrams and shot-by-shot breakdowns. We would need to test further whether this task of organization properly accounts for the films placed under scrutiny. However, even an initial consideration offers the possibility that certain issues emerge from these practices, not least in terms of what happens to the shape and flow of films when they are subjected to such stringent, overarching analyses. It is worth noting that such characteristics do not extend across everything in film studies that might be termed "analysis." Douglas Pye, for example, begins his short analysis of a moment from Hitchcock's *Rear Window* in markedly different fashion:

Fade in on a partial view of the courtyard at night, the apartments to the right of Jeff's window catching the orange glow of the night sky, the rest of the space almost dark. Camera movement from right to left catches glimpses of people in their rooms; a few lights are on in the apartments (one comes on as we pass). The camera movement ends on Jeff (James Stewart), asleep in his wheelchair, his body parallel to the window, his face turned in towards the apartment. The dominant sound is of a soprano practising scales, accompanied by a piano, the sound unlocated but evidently nearby, the first chord on the piano timed to the opening of the shot and followed by three scales, then a longer final scale which ends as a shadow – cast from frame left, inside the apartment – rises over Jeff's body and onto his face. Until the dialogue begins there is now only the faintest of ambient sound. Cut to a low angle close-up of Lisa (Grace Kelly), dimly lit, lips slightly parted, looking directly into the camera and growing larger in the frame as she moves towards us. Cut back to Jeff, still asleep, the shadow moving up to cover his face. His eyes open, he looks up and faintly smiles. Cut back to Lisa in even tighter close-up, again looking into the camera (now that Jeff is awake the shot seems to be POV) and moving down to fill the frame. Cut to a profile two-shot, very close to the faces, Jeff on the right looking diagonally up and Lisa to the left looking down and moving into a kiss, her movement apparently step-printed to produce a fractionally staggered effect. She kisses him. (Pye, 2010, p. 45)

An underlying aim of Pye's analysis is to capture and convey aspects of the scene's shape and movement as he describes it to us. The opening words "Fade in on a partial view of the courtyard at night" draw us into the discussion through their efficiency and lack of conventional preamble, making an immediate connection with the reader but also resembling a typical direction from a shooting script – "fade in" displaying the author's commitment to technical details that achieve effects. And, of course, the phrase evokes our experience of watching films – especially of watching Hitchcock

films – whereby we can be dropped into the action through a simple shot transition with varying degrees of force. From that opening, Pye dedicates himself to a process of evoking the sensation of the film's aesthetic composition as it is experienced by the spectator: the tracking of the camera, the rising of a shadow, faint ambient sounds, a move to tight closeup. The approach is methodical, with each feature detailed in order to express its role within the unfolding scene, but this process does not resemble the kind of purposefully neutral cataloguing we might encounter elsewhere in detailed analysis before the business of interpretation takes place.

Indeed, Pye's style of analysis anticipates interpretation and builds that anticipation into analysis as certain features are lingered upon in order to preempt, albeit delicately, the ways in which they might become significant. The description of "Lisa . . . dimly lit, lips slightly parted, looking directly into the camera and growing larger in the frame as she moves towards us" is not an arbitrary recording of visual data but rather an attempt to engage with the extraordinary effect that moment achieves within the film. In this sense, we might suggest that a kind of interpretive analysis takes place in Pye's work and that it is unfolding alongside, or perhaps in combination with, the ways in which this sequence in turn possesses an unusual point of view: the camera moving through and across details before settling upon its transient point of focus.

Pye does not divide up or seek to organize the film in the way that other analysts might be inclined to do. Rather than taking the film apart in order to inspect it, he displays a firm commitment to keeping it in shape, attending to the ways in which details unfold in the scene in a manner that best evokes that unfolding. In this way, the analysis lacks some of the near scientific exactitude we might find in the work of Salt, Bellour, and, to a lesser extent, Bordwell and Thompson. Even at this early stage, we can detect without too much difficulty that the analysis features the author's subjective voice. Ending the paragraph with a simple "She kisses him" after a section of detailed and fluent description provides a point of abrupt emphasis in the work, demonstrating that words are being chosen not only for their descriptive value but to define a writing style. If the skeptical reader were to cite the lack of scientific rigor and the subjectivity inherent in Pye's work as negatives, they might also be inclined to point out that his writing is more description than analysis – lacking, for example, the kind of systematic shot breakdowns that we find elsewhere and, as a result, remaining unsatisfactorily loose. It is worth staying with this potential division between description and analysis, especially in the light of some thoughts that Andrew Klevan has advanced on the subject while in conversation with the American philosopher, Stanley Cavell:

In the University where I teach we are encouraged to use a standardized form where we grade student essays. The form breaks down the assessment of the essay into different categories, and two of these categories are "description" and "analysis." Description is presupposed to separate from analysis, and often description is seen as a weakness, or at any rate, weaker than the thing we call "analysis." Therefore, if you've done a lot

of analysis that is good, but if you merely seem to be describing then that is bad. Yet, I *want* my students to describe. (Klevan, 2005, p. 170)

Klevan's remarks have potency as they can be seen to extend across all the analyses covered in this chapter. If we are to assume that analysis and description are distinct, then a dilemma emerges as to where the point of separation should be marked. In Pye's case, it is apparent that analysis and description have, from the first paragraph, become entwined and that no easy disentangling can occur. To return to Klevan's point, we have a passage of critical description that develops and refines an understanding of the film's aesthetic composition, and so any attempt to differentiate description from analysis would become meaningless: the former is not merely a condition in order for the latter to take place. The interweaving of description and analysis continues in Pye's essay, even when we reach passages that are most emphatically interpretive:

[Lisa's] threatening shadow links back, via the conversation with Stella, to the Thorwalds' first appearance as the embodiment of Jeff's view of married life, and forward to the elaborate doubling of the two couples. If, for Jeff, Lisa at first most obviously parallels the "nagging" Mrs Thorwald, it is startling to recognise in retrospect that, in a telling rhyme across the film, Lisa's look into camera and at Jeff is echoed when Thorwald's more obviously threatening gaze moves from Lisa's gesture with the wedding ring, up and across the courtyard, to meet Jeff's eyes as he (and we) look through the telephoto lens. (Pye, 2010, p. 48)

In this section, Pye draws upon his propensity for evocative description in order to trace a series of thematic links between moments from the film and, as a result, convey a sense of *Rear Window*'s overarching coherence. By fusing description with analysis, he discards any divisions between the two and, furthermore, combines them in conveying a central interpretation. It is also striking that, in order to reach conclusions of this kind, Pye moves away from considering only the moment of Lisa's entrance. Straightforwardly, he does not allow himself to get tied to the moment and as a result is able to move between scenes in order to propose a series of wider resonances. But, furthermore, the fluency inherent in Pye's style of analysis translates into freedom that allows him to move through the film's data with ease. Like the camera that sways around the courtyard in *Rear Window*, allowing and restricting access simultaneously, Pye manages to stay above the film's detail while at the same time focusing in on certain moments that he takes to be crucial. There is no doubt that, while it has a clear methodology, this approach is less formally structured than other examples of film analysis we might encounter. Moreover, it is reliant upon a subjective and, at times, critically discriminating interpretation of the film. Of course, as with the previous examples discussed in this chapter, how far we take these reservations depends upon how we view the role and function of film analysis. It is inevitable that for some Pye's work (and work of that kind) will represent a fluent and

expressive version of film analysis while, for others, may lack the rigid definitions or attempted objectivity.

Conclusion

A short survey of different approaches to film analysis can only go so far, and it is worth acknowledging that work of this kind always holds the potential to be extended and taken in new directions. Other analytical models could then be incorporated and the influence of other pertinent theories (psychoanalysis, for example) in film studies could be addressed and evaluated. Nevertheless, the small sample represented in this chapter conveys something of the diversity that can be found within the overarching title of “film analysis,” highlighting similarities and disparities between different methodologies. It is hoped that, despite certain reservations being expressed and explored, all of the approaches are kept in play and their respective merits are not overlooked. In stating at the beginning of this chapter that no agreed model of film analysis has emerged in film studies, I am also suggesting that film studies has not resolved the divergences that exist between different approaches. The pursuit of one defining methodology seems futile given that such an activity would inevitably involve neglecting some of the benefits offered by different forms of film analysis. Retaining the current state of plurality provides those doing the work of film analysis with options – a series of different directions that might be pursued. And, of course, this state gives rise to the potential for a combination of approaches to be employed in film analysis, drawing together the relative strengths of each methodology.

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Eye Tracking in Media Studies

Theory, Method, and Its Exemplary Application in Analyzing Shock-Inducing Advertisements

Stephanie Geise

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of the fundamentals, theories, and application of eye tracking as a method of communication and media studies. The examined “object for analysis” – the process of visual perception – is understood here as a multidimensional phenomenon, to which justice can be done only through a multifaceted theoretical foundation. An approach to the method of eye tracking must therefore start with theoretical considerations on the physiological and psychological aspects of (visual) perception and cognition. The chapter then elaborates on the implications of these theoretical considerations with regards to operationalization, analysis, and interpretation of the eye-tracking data. Finally, it discusses and critically assesses specific examples of studies employing eye tracking to illustrate how the method may be applied to media studies research.

Although the method of eye tracking does not yet constitute a standard instrument of media studies, in recent years it has been repeatedly used for analyzing the reception of media and its effects, and its implementation in research designs is increasing. The improvements in eye-tracking technology, especially the availability of easier to handle, faster, and more accurate eye trackers, as well as the decline of acquisition

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems190

costs, have inspired eye-tracking studies in the field of media studies. Eye movements have now been established as indicators for drawing inferences regarding psychophysiological processes, such as activation or visual attention, as well as connected cognitive processes – for example, interest in certain contents, motivations, and like or dislike (Duchowski, 2007; Hammoud, 2008). The inherent fascination of eye tracking is “eye catching”: as a technology-based, empirical observation method, eye tracking allows deeper insights into the otherwise hidden *reception process of visual perception*. Eye tracking can, however, do more than display when and how recipients perceive which visual stimuli visually. According to previous findings, the analysis of eye movements also allows inferences on active perceptive and cognitive processes when visually perceiving photos, posters, advertisements, newspaper pages, Internet sites, or movies.

A particular scientific potential can be seen in the combination of eye tracking with other empirical methods of communication and media science. If one focuses, for example, on the *effects* of media reception and if the presentation of visual stimuli is accompanied by a questionnaire aimed at capturing changes in cognitive structures, eye tracking helps to identify what information items have actually been perceived by the recipients, that is, what could have caused the potential effects.

Against this background, this chapter explores the founding theories and applications of eye tracking as a method for media studies. The object of analysis – the process of visual perception – is hereby understood as a multilayered phenomenon, to which justice can be done only by a theoretical foundation that addresses all of these layers. Researching with the apparatus-based method, eye tracking therefore necessitates: (1) familiarity with the technical and methodological requirements, (2) psychophysiological knowledge on the human eye and its movements, as well as a deeper understanding of (3) cognitive processes of visual perception and information processing. These interdisciplinary facets constitute the theoretical basis on which the implications for operationalization, analysis, and interpretation of the eye movement data are established.

An in-depth discussion of all the relevant theoretical, methodological, and empirical results is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter. After providing a synopsis of the theoretical and methodological foundations of the method, this chapter will instead focus on the application of this method in media studies, which will be illustrated via a case study.

Eye Tracking: The Method

When Duchowski (2007, p. 3) notes that

We move our eyes to bring a particular portion of the visible field of the view into high resolution . . . We also divert our attention to that point so that we can focus our atten-

tion on the object or region of interest. Thus, . . . if we can track someone's eye movements, we can follow along the path of attention deployed by the observer

he points to the origins of the research field of human eye movement analysis. Eye tracking allows for the apparatus-based recording of eye movements. This is what characterizes eye tracking as a unique approach, since it is the only empirical method to date to provide an exact reconstruction and analysis of this process. With this research focus, eye tracking differentiates itself from other physiological measurements of the visual perception apparatus that examine not the extra-ocular muscle movement of the eye, that is, the eye movements, but single parameters such as the change of pupil size ("pupillometry"; Backs & Walrath 1995), movements of the eyelids ("eyeblinks"; Stern, Walrath, & Goldstein 1984) or changes in the accommodation condition (Piccoli, Perris, Gratton, & Grieco, 1985). Furthermore, in the recording and analysis of eye movements via eye tracking the visual stimulus or *fixation target* is, by definition, recorded and integrated into the analysis (Duchowski, 2007).

Eye-tracking research can therefore be specified as apparatus-based, *fixation-dependent analysis of individual eye movements*, which enables the researcher to qualitatively and quantitatively describe, analyze, and interpret them. Through this, eye tracking provides rather precise indications as to what content recipients foveally fixate on during the reception of the visual stimulus (i.e., focus with their *fovea centralis*, the eye's center of concise visual perception), with what intensity they visually turn toward the presented content or information, in what temporal and contextual order the observations are made, and where no visual attention is allocated (Gale, 2003). In contrast, eye tracking provides no or only little potential for clarification on what *content* recipients perceive during the reception of the visual stimulus in the peripheral or para-foveal perception space. Additionally, it cannot reveal why, or with what intention or motivation, recipients turn toward visual stimulus areas, what they think and feel when they turn toward them, or what subsequent emotional and cognitive processes are connected to the reception of the respective visual stimulus areas.

Despite these limitations, and because of its potential to cast light on the process of visual perception, eye-tracking methodology can be applied in a vast number of research fields, from physiologically based studies that explore the fundamental mechanisms of visual perception to advertising research and usability studies. For example, eye tracking has been used to study the interaction of eye and eyelid movements (Gandhi & Katnani, 2011) and the saccadic decision-making process (Ludwig, 2011), and has been implemented in research that aims to explain eye movement control during reading (Rayner, 1998; Vitu, 2011) and language processing in dialogues (Kreysa & Pickering, 2011). Another research field, connected to information technology and computer science, operationalizes eye tracking to study the possibilities of optimizing human-computer interaction, such as in hardware or software usability studies (Ehmke & Wilson, 2007). For media studies the method possesses

enormous potential with regards to the *reconstruction and analysis of visual perception and processing* and can be utilized in many ways in the examination of questions *directly* originating from the reception process (Geise, 2011; Geise & Schumacher, 2011); for example:

- 1 The distribution of attention with regards to duration and frequency of defined elements (“areas of Interest”) of a visual stimulus, for example, a web page, a newspaper page, an election poster (Adam, Quinn, & Edmonds, 2007; Goldberg, Stimson, Lewenstein, Scott, & Wichansky, 2002), a movie or a video sequence (d’Ydewalle, Desmet, & Van Rensbergen, 1998; Hughes, Wilkens, Wildemuth, & Marchionini, 2003).
- 2 The allocation of visual attention: its common structure as well as its specific patterns on a media stimulus in relation to its graphical design and visual presentation (Geise, 2011; Holmqvist, Holsanova, Barthelson, & Lundqvist, 2003; Holmqvist & Wartenberg, 2005; Josephson, 2005; Stenfors, Morén, & Balkenius, 2003).
- 3 The structure of human–computer interaction and its specific patterns during the use of websites, in relation to their visual design (Grier, 2004; Jacob & Karn, 2003), especially in usability research (Goldberg & Wichansky, 2003; Manhartsberger & Zellhofer, 2005).
- 4 The temporal and spatial characteristics of functionally different phases of reception such as orientation, scanning, or reading (Bucher & Schumacher, 2006; Holmqvist et al., 2003).
- 5 Processes of visual perception and cognitive information processing in the reception of complex visual or hypertextual offerings (Holsanova, 2011).
- 6 Processes of visual perception and cognitive information processing, also with regards to the analysis of disorders in information processing and understanding, for example when using multimodal e-learning programs (Dogusoy & Cagiltay, 2009; Shukla, Wen, White, & Aslin, 2011; van Gog & Scheiter, 2010; Zambarbieri, 2003).
- 7 Perception, attention, and interaction patterns in virtual worlds such as Second Life (Triesch, Ballard, Hayhoe, & Sullivan, 2003; Walter, 2009) or while playing with a computer (Joensson, 2005; Kickmeier-Rust, Hillemann, & Albert, 2011).

Nevertheless, the productive potential of the method is far from exhausted. In the field of media studies, in particular, the implementation of eye-tracking methodology still is an exception; and thus, a limited number of eye-tracking studies exist addressing the “classical questions” of mass media, their perception and effects. However, most studies implementing eye tracking share the same theoretical assumption: visual perception is understood as a fundamental *precondition of any cognitive or emotional effect* that a visually perceived stimulus can induce. Following this idea, the recipient’s actual eye movements can be segmented into a *set of relevant indicators* that reflect the medium’s inherent effect potential. Taking the influence of individual

predispositions as well as situational factors and stimulus-specific features on eye movements into account (Radach, Lemmer, Vorstius, Heller, & Radach, 2003), the *visual characteristics of the stimulus* have to be seen as highly important in the perception process, as they hold the potential to modify or even control the recipient's eye movements. Implementing these ideas in a scientific setting, one can propose that differences in the nature of the visual stimulus – for example, visual versus textual communication mode, unimodal versus multimodal, or dynamic versus static content – should have *observable* effects on the recipient's eye movements that are, via eye tracking, recordable and reconstructable. Nevertheless, it has to be considered that eye movements only *reflect* intentional selection and perception processes (Theeuwes, 1993). While the sensorial visual perception is functionally operated by the eyes, the seeing itself has to be understood as a *cognitive construction* that is guided by our brain: “The eye is not innocent, because depiction cannot be explained by perception alone; sight is informed by . . . the cognitive” (Lopes, 1996, p. 32).

Thus, researching with eye-tracking methodology involves more than utilizing an eye tracker as a specific technical device; setting up the research design necessitates a deeper knowledge of the technical operating mechanisms of eye-tracking processes and their methodological requirements as well as knowledge about visual perception and information processing. This is no less true for the processing and analysis of the collected data. The next section briefly summarizes the most important fundamentals of apparatus-based recording of visual perception through eye tracking.

Structural Components of Human Eye Movements: Fixations, Saccades, Micro-Movements

“We have the subjective impression of an immediate, full detail, pictorial view of the world. We are prone to forget that this impression is, in a very real sense, an illusion” (Findlay & Gilchrist, 2003, p. 2). This statement not only alludes to the subjectivity and selectivity of perception, but also to the fact that the human vision system by no means delivers a permanent and complete perception, even if we have this impression. Although the retina is nearly completely covered by photoreceptors, an individual can see well only with a small part of it: the *fovea centralis*, an area of most focused sight only about 0.5 mm wide, covers only around 1% of the field of vision. In order to achieve precise visual perception the eye is controlled by extra-ocular muscle movements so that the object of interest is in the sight of the fovea and can be perceived with maximum resolution.

Eye-tracking research has identified several factors that influence human visual perception and eye movements (Henderson, 2003). For example, our visual attention – and, therefore, our eye movements – is attracted to suddenly appearing objects, visually salient pieces of information, and distinctive and “new” visual stimuli – even if these materialize only in the peripheral field of view. Thus, eye movements are



Figure 19.1 Visualized scan paths of five randomly chosen subjects of a Dior advertisement poster (2010): eye-tracking measurement of 4 seconds; scan path of each person in one color (analysis with Tobii Studio)

assigned the central task of preparing foveal perception and of providing the necessary orientation information from the peripheral field of sight (Findlay & Gilchrist, 2003).

Every eye movement can be structured as a *scan path* that is constituted through at least three basic structural components (see Figure 19.1): (1) the *fixations* as centered focusing of the fovea on a visual object; (2) the *saccades*, which serve through the orientation of the eye as a preparation for foveal fixation (and usually result in a fixation); and (3) *micro-movements* (especially *micro-saccades*), which are mostly undirected and serve physiological fixation control in a situation of spatial movement. In addition, *vestibular eye movements*¹ are also to be expected. Particularly important for eye-tracking measurements is the differentiation of fixations, where the gaze rests for about 300 milliseconds – and which are recorded by the eye tracker – and saccades, where the eye “jumps” extremely quickly to the next fixation destination (Hoffman & Subramaniam, 1995). Saccades are not directly recorded by the eye tracker, but are technologically reconstructed later, as during these jumps top speeds of up to 1000 degrees per second are measurable. In fact, saccades are the fastest movement the human body is capable of (Fuchs & Kaneko, 1981; Gil-

christ, 2011). On average, about three to five saccades happen every second. Thus every day the eye is moved in tens of thousands of saccades occur for the most part unconsciously although they are generally directable. Even during a fixation, however, the eye is not completely at rest: more or less undirected micro-movements can be detected, which happen several times a second (Duchowski, 2007; Gilchrist, 2011). The illusion of a continuous optical perception of our environment is supported by two factors: (1) the extraordinary integration and construction ability of our brain; and (2) the high adaptability of the human vision system. There are, however, strong interdependencies between eye movements, as a “fundamental feature of vision” (Findlay & Gilchrist, 2003, p. 1), and the entirety of visual information processing. For most of the common eye trackers micro-movements are not detectable – they are recorded as part of the corresponding fixation. However, as a micro-movement’s function is primarily to reposition the fovea, for most questions of communication and media science they are of subordinated interest anyhow and can be neglected.

In sum, the scan path cannot be assumed to be linear and sequentially stringent, it is best conceived as a loose, more or less intended zigzag pattern. This structure becomes evident once the scan path has been recorded by eye tracking and graphically reproduced. A visualized result of an eye-tracking analysis of several subjects, translated into fixation points and saccadic lines, is shown in Figure 19.1. As mentioned, the *micro-movements* that are summarized in the fixation points are not depicted.

The information intake of the recipient occurs during the fixations, which occupy around 90% of the whole viewing time of visual perception. Paradoxically, although fixations (or, to be more precise, the indicators derived from them) play a central role in the analysis of *eye movement*, fixations in themselves do not constitute a movement of the eye as such. A fixation is defined as the condition where the eye is at a *relative standstill* compared to a perceived object. The minimum fixation length is often assumed to be around 100 milliseconds; average fixation lengths are a multiple of that. During the approximately 30–90 milliseconds that a saccade lasts no intake of information is possible. Here, the phenomenon of *saccadic blindness* occurs: around 30 to 40 milliseconds prior to and up to 120 milliseconds after the start of a saccade² – for very short saccades, this is during the first fixation phase – visual perception capabilities are extremely limited (Gilchrist, 2011; Hoffman, 1998). Saccades only allow the recipient a rough orientation in the perception process (and even that is a matter of discussion). For Findlay and Gilchrist (2003, p. 7) saccades can nevertheless be considered an *active system*: as not only are they a visually controlled motor response but their operation also controls the input of visual sampling, their involvement with vision takes the form of a continuously *cycling loop*. Before eye movements are started, the information that is visually perceived on the peripheral or foveal field of the retina has to pass numerous stages of visual information processing, which start on the retina itself but also involve higher cognitive processes, especially in the visual cortex (Bullier, 2001). Accordingly, visual perception and visual information

processing are obviously more than just the inner reflection of the world that is visually represented outside: *vision and cognition interact in a highly intimate way*.

For this reason – and from which the explanatory power of eye-tracking research derives – the recorded eye movements allow inferences on active perceptive and cognitive processes during visual media stimulus perception. The most apparent inference is the connection between eye movements and *visual attention*, as the scan path offers information about *where visual attention is absorbed and for how long* (Deubel & Schneider, 1996; Just & Carpenter, 1976). Posner (1995) argues that the visual attention of a recipient is “bound” during the observation of a fixation target (*attentional engagement*). Prior to a saccade, and thus a new positioning of the fovea, the visual attention has first to be shifted from the original fixation target and redirected (*attentional disengagement*) (Posner, 1995). Only this redirection of visual attention can lead via saccadic control to the next fixation target: without attentional disengagement, there would be no saccade (Findlay & Gilchrist, 2003).

Exogenous and Endogenous Control of Visual Perception

While the fovea is centrally directed onto an object during fixation and temporally stabilized in this position, directly afterwards – due to saccadic movements – a new positioning follows: When visual attention is directed to a new area, saccades reposition the fovea. Here, the interaction of attention, visual perception, and processing can (in simplified terms) be interpreted as an *attentional feedback loop*. Fixations thus do not occur arbitrarily but can rather be seen as intended manifestations of the conscious or unconscious interest or motivation to look at certain objects more elaborately (McLeskey, Levie, & Fleming, 1982). In this process (visual) attention presents itself as a central predictor for the rhythm of saccades and fixations (Proulx, 2007; Wright, 1998), with individual stimulus-specific and situational factors modulating the scan path (Godijn & Theeuwes, 2003). An object suddenly appearing in the field of vision will, for example, automatically receive attention and thus focusing, even if the perception remains irrelevant for a subsequent course of action. This affective intuitive mode of external gaze direction is also known as *exogenous control* or *stimulus-driven perception* (Proulx, 2007). Exogenous reactions to perceptions due to stimulus reaction schemas are considered relatively uncontrolled (Schneider & Maasen, 1998; Yantis, 2002); they prove to be highly invariant across individuals. As this bottom-up process seems to reflect automatic, evolutionary, and biologically programmed mechanisms that are deeply rooted in human perception behavior, the bottom-up perception often is interpreted as one basic “component of natural human vision” (Duchowski, 2007, p. 162).

Bottom-up perception can be placed in contrast to *endogenous control*, or *goal-driven perception* – a consciously intended perception process (Godijn & Theeuwes, 2003).

The latter is based on specific action or perception goals, or the expectation of them. Already the early scan path analyses of Yarbus (1967) had shown prototypically, that scan paths can diverge significantly depending on individual expectations or requirements. A complete theoretical foundation of the interaction between visual attention and eye movement therefore exceeds solely affection-motivated viewing behavior and incorporates higher cognitive functions into the analysis (Gordon, 2004) – as, for example, the intention of a visual search task. Visual perception is thus not only a simple bottom-up process, as was believed in the early stages of visual perception research. Instead, understanding vision as a complex interaction of endogenous and exogenous perception processes that are guided by cognitive mechanisms of intentional *strategic control* (Proulx, 2007) seems to be more appropriate.

What Fixations and Saccades Tell Us

Eye tracking has a great potential to objectively uncover the structure and hierarchical sequence of visual perception as well as the allocation of visual attention. Based on this, it also allows conclusions on higher cognitive tasks. However, it cannot directly reveal the processes happening *within* the recipient. For these mental processes, the scientist remains a passive observer and can only partially uncover what the recipient is doing, why he or she is doing it, and what he or she is thinking and feeling while doing it. Thus, although fixations and saccades can tell a lot about visual perception and information processing (see below), their deeper interpretation requires further contextualization. Eye movements are unspecific in their meaning unless the eye-tracking data are connected to the specific research context.

However, in line with previous findings, eye movement data allow some general conclusions on the allocation, depth, and order of visual and cognitive processing steps, as strong interdependencies exist between eye movement and visual information processing. One of the central premises of the interpretation of eye-tracking data is that visually perceived stimuli are instantaneously processed. According to this *immediacy assumption*, fixation times are often used as a measure for the depth of cognitive processing. The processing length is consequently identical to the fixation length: “The immediacy assumption posits that an attempt to relate each content word to its referent occurs as soon as possible” (Just & Carpenter, 1980, p. 341; see also Carpenter, 1988, 1991; Carpenter & Robson, 1999). Moreover, as demonstrated by studies by Just and Carpenter (see, for example, Just & Carpenter, 1980) on reading behavior, *fixated objects are instantaneously processed* and the cognitive process lasts exactly as long as the recorded fixation (*eye–mind assumption*) (Just & Carpenter, 1976, 1980). The fixation length is thus equivalent to the duration of central processing. Finally, conclusions on the hierarchy of mental processing can be drawn from the analysis of the scan paths, as *the sequence of fixations allows a reconstruction of the order of central processing steps* (*eye–mind sequence assumption*).

Various overviews of different physiological parameters describe eye movements as a highly sensitive indicator for processes of mental demand (Carpenter, 1988; Carpenter & Robson, 1999). Also, the general existence of a momentarily occurring “looking without seeing” – as can be observed in “dreamy behavior” or “lost in thought staring” – does not in a narrow sense constitute a limitation of these eye–mind premises. Finally, the immediacy assumption and the eye–mind assumption do not have to prove true for every single fixation but for the sum of all fixations. And last but not least, most of the eye-tracking research settings make a “dreamy behavior” during the reception process relatively unlikely.

However, all of the presented principles have to be adapted to the particular research context and have to be critically evaluated against the background of the specific research questions and the implemented methodological setting. In the course of the data interpretation, for example, one usually assumes that the fixation and observation length can be interpreted as an indicator of cognitive processes or respectively processing performance. However, it remains to be asked which specific cognitive processing tasks occur during the fixation of individual visual information items and which cognitive interdependencies exist: “Although a given cognitive event might reliably lead to a particular fixation, the fixation itself does not uniquely specify the cognitive event” (Hayhoe, 2004, p. 268).

Additionally, although the majority of stated premises are in line with the fundamentals of visual communication and its perception (Geise, 2011), researchers should critically reflect that most insights are based on studies concerning the analysis of visual perception while *reading*. While only a few strategies for *scene viewing* have been discerned, in contrast to reading behavior, there seem to be no established eye movement canon for particular visual objects and images (Duchowski, 2007). As the perception and information processing of *visual images* may function differently in reading and in real-life scene perception some theoretical implications and/or their limitations may require further adaptations. For example, while a linear, left-to-right scan path would be expected during reading in the Western world, it could not be predicted during image perception, where the holistic reception process of images would rather result in a zigzag structure (see Figure 19.1). From this, three methodological consequences can be derived: (1) there is a need for research that addresses theoretical and methodological premises and their specific explanatory power in terms of the reception of *image* content; (2) the study of (visual) media content may need further theoretical and/or methodological adjustments; and (3) in this modification process all implemented adaptations have to take the specific research context into account.

Additionally, it is important to note that scan path implications, and thus the research parameters derived for their study (see Table 19.1), have not yet been fully explored and consolidated. Thus, the interpretation of eye tracking-data should be considered critically against the background of the specific research questions and/or research design at hand, especially since few studies address methodological challenges (as the above mentioned) when utilizing eye tracking. Depending on context,

Table 19.1 Overview of the indicators of eye-tracking analysis

Indicator	Implication of the indicators
FIXATIONS AND FIXATION-BASED INDICATORS	
Time to first fixation	Provides evidence on the activation potential of an area of interest; short time to first fixation signifies high activation potential
Observation length of fixation	Shows how intensively or how long the eye keeps a specific area of interest fixated, and thereby the allocation of attention. Longer observation length makes a higher degree of information input probable.
Fixation count	Measure on how many fixations are attributed to a certain area of interest. A high fixation count signifies a high degree of interest or activation potential; it can, however, also be a sign for a (too) high complexity of this area.
SCAN PATH AND SCAN-PATH-BASED INDICATORS	
Scan path position	Identification of typical entry points into the observation process; provides information on activation potential or degree of activation of a stimulus area and – derived from that – optimization potential for scan path control
Saccadic amplitude/length	Indicator for the sensitivity of peripheral perception and the attention window of para-foveal perception
Distribution of fixations	Measure for different modes of information processing, task-connected skills of a recipient, the conciseness of a target object as part of the visual stimulus or the difficulty of a searching task
Backtracks	Often used in reading research; most times interpreted as a processing difficulty
Transition matrix	Provides evidence on typical scan paths or irritations in the stimulus
Scan path duration	Measure to describe the duration of a global visual search or solution to a task
Scan path length	Comparable to scan path duration; measure to describe the duration of a global visual search or solution to a task
SACCADES AND SACCADE-BASED INDICATORS	
Fixation saccadic ratio	Indicator for the requirements on information processing
Saccadic count	Refers to the quality of visual search and visual processing
Saccadic duration	Allows conclusions concerning visual attention and mental presence/fatigue of the recipient
Saccadic velocity	Provides evidence of vigilance and cognitive strain
Saccadic latency	Indicator for the “visual reaction time”; is reflected in the influence of arousal mechanisms on scan path control
Saccadic length	Indicates extended orientation reactions or stimulus areas with higher visual conciseness

even seemingly “unambiguous” indicators, such as, for example, the interpretation of observation lengths, can at the very least be rather confusing. This is another reason why a commonly shared standard of research indicators and their interpretation is developing only slowly (Granka, Feusner, & Lorigo, 2008).

Nevertheless, a few key variables can be identified that can serve as significant indicators of human eye movement analysis. Table 19.1 provides an overview of

these indicators, which are of special interest to questions of communication and media science (for a more detailed overview, see, for example, Ehmke & Wilson, 2007; Goldberg & Kotval, 1999; Jacob & Karn, 2003). It is noteworthy that the majority of the existing “aspects of eye movements” are conceptualized via the level of *allocation of visual attention* (Radach et al., 2003). It is thus implicitly assumed that the allocation of attention can be interpreted as a function of the motivation of the recipient, his or her interests, goals and capabilities, which can, in turn, be significantly modified by factors such as the perception situation or stimulus-specific characteristics. As visual attention can be controlled endogenously as well as exogenously, the possibility exists – particularly in early phases of visual perception (Bucher & Schumacher, 2006; Geise, 2011) – that visual attention is also activated independently of the individual perception intention through properties of the stimulus (thus also, *stimulus-driven*) (Godijn & Theeuwes, 2003). On the basis of this assumption individual stimulus-specific and situational factors modulate the allocation of visual attention – the structure of (exogenous) visual perception should (at least partially) be interpretable as a function of the stimulus.

In this interpretation, however, it has to be taken into account that the common distinction of perception being unambiguously *either* exogenous *or* endogenous has to be questioned (Bucher & Schumacher, 2006). Although this distinction offers some explanatory power, it neglects possible interrelations between exogenous and endogenous perception control: Where does endogenous control of visual perception start? Where does exogenous control end? Where do the two interact? Given the interdependency of endogenous and exogenous perception, what does that mean for visual perception and its processes? How might that impact its empirical analysis? How can one differentiate between them analytically or, to be more concise, which elements constitute themselves in a scan path on the basis of stimulus-driven perception and which on the basis of individual preferences? Potentially, the empirical “inability” to capture factors of endogenous control (for example, inherent influences of an individual’s characteristics) has to be attributed to the fact that existing measurement methods may not be capable to sufficiently record the *interdependencies* between endogenous and exogenous control during visual perception and information processing.

With the theoretical and methodological foundation set we will now explore the method through its implementation in a case study – a study on shock communication. We will also critically reflect on the opportunities, challenges, and limitations the method presents.

Setting Up an Eye-Tracking Study: A Case Study on Shock-Inducing Advertisements

Eye-tracking technologies which allow the concise recording of an recipient’s eye movements are commonplace today – including table-mounted eye-tracking systems

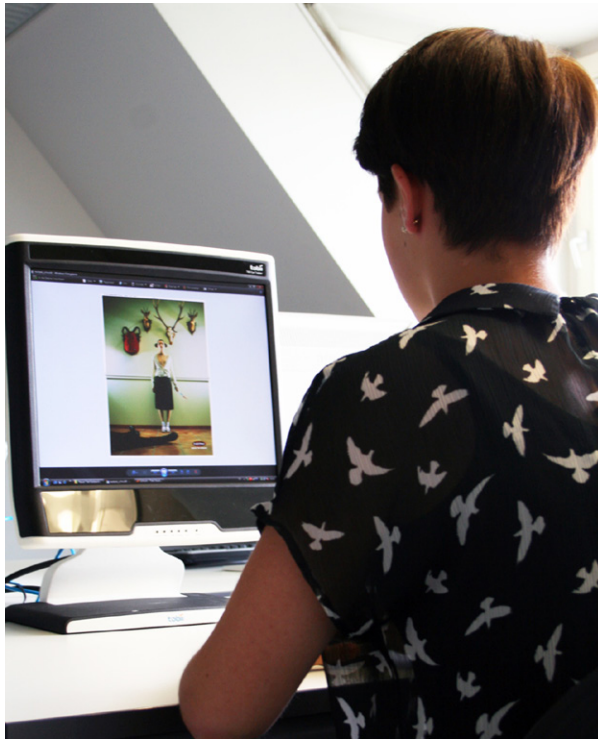


Figure 19.2 Stationary table-mounted eye tracker Tobii T120 in a data-recording situation during a study on the reception of shock advertisement (University of Hohenheim study)

that operate through video-based measurements of the corneal reflex of the retina. (Duchowski, 2007; Hammoud, 2008). These technologies strive to influence subjects' behavior as little as possible and to work without hindering and obtrusive devices. For most of these technologies, the optical impression is equivalent to a modern PC monitor (as, for example, in the Tobii system; see Figure 19.2). A monitor-integrated eye tracker like this, which offers a "natural experience for the subjects" (Hammoud, 2008, p. 3), was used for the case study at hand. It remained close to undetectable for the subjects by operating completely without physical contact, creating a relatively naturalistic, though still experimental, setting. While more invasive systems – where subjects carry the eye-tracking technology on their bodies – usually exhibit slightly higher measuring accuracy, accuracy is not the only decisive factor when deciding on a particular eye-tracking system. The type of stimulus material is also critical: the noninvasive processes whereby a camera is integrated into a screen are especially appropriate with media that can be depicted and observed on a screen. If, on the other hand, printed or bounded magazines or newspapers are to be examined, relatively more invasive head-mounted systems may be required. In our case, the treatment consisted of full-page, shock-inducing advertisements, a kind of stimulus for which passive table-mounted systems are particularly well suited.

Regardless of the technology used, the eye-tracking process starts with the individual localization of the eyes of the subject: for this purpose the subject sits on a stationary chair in a slightly dimmed eye-tracking laboratory and looks at the eye-tracking screen, which is placed on a table in front of him or her at a distance of 40–50 cm. Although most passive eye trackers allow for small movements of the body or head, the subject should move close enough to the edge of the table so that he or she lightly touches it, and the body is stabilized by putting the arms on the table-top. In order to adjust the individual vision characteristics of the subject to the eye-tracking system as well as to the stimulus material – which has been fed into the eye-tracking software – an initial calibration procedure is conducted. Subjects are asked to focus on five to seven points and to follow them as they move across the screen (for additional details on the adjustment and fine tuning of the calibration with different eye-tracking systems, see Duchowski, 2007; Hammoud, 2008).

Subjects' eyeglasses or contact lenses do not usually negatively influence the calibration process and, after a short acclimatization phase, the actual eye-tracking process can be started. First, the already uploaded stimulus is presented to the subject for a preset time on the eye-tracking monitor – in our case advertisements with shock-inducing motives. After a brief introduction to the process and individual calibration of the eye tracker, the subjects were exposed to a treatment series of 11 advertisement motives including some aiming for a “shock effect,” in the sense of a visualized, intended violation of the norm (see Figure 19.3).

Here, the *test scenario*, that is, the context in which the subject is confronted with the stimulus, plays an important role. The early studies of Yarbus (1967) have shown that the *task* given to a recipient looking at a visual stimulus exerts an influence on the reception situation and thus on his or her viewing behavior. The explicit or implicit task provided to the recipient may cause significant differences in the explanatory power, the processing, and the interpretation of the results. If subjects, for example, are given advice to seek out certain information, this will induce an intentional visual search, while the task to “just get an overview” may trigger holistic perception patterns. In our study, subjects were asked to “just look” at the images; the instruction was: “In the following you will see a series of advertisements. Please just have a look at them.” The methodological setting also has to incorporate the decision about the *reception time* given to the subject. Here as well, the decision is mainly dependent on the research question. In cases where the average natural reception time of the stimulus is known – as was the case for our advertisements – and if the simulation aims for realistic, “cursory” reception, it may be a good idea to restrict the exposition time to this time span. In most cases, the exposition time can be set down to the millisecond in the eye-tracking system and can be easily varied across stimuli or subjects.

During the reception, infrared diodes record the eye movements by the millisecond by measuring the *corneal reflex*, the reflection of the infrared diode in the eye, or more specifically in the eye's cornea. In order to produce the corneal reflex, during the experiment the subject's eye is exposed to weak infrared light emitted by the



Figure 19.3 Original stimulus: Eastpak advertisement poster from the Built to Resist campaign (2009)

diodes (*near-infrared light* (NIR)). Also, integrated highly sensible LED camera(s) record the subject's eyes at the same time. The analysis software of the eye tracker (in our example Tobii Studio) then processes the recorded information to allow a reconstruction of the scan path. Our Tobii T120 eye tracker works on a frequency of 120 Hertz, which means that every second 120 values are captured. Thus, fixation lengths from a duration of 8 milliseconds and above are registered, allowing for quite accurate measurements through the fixation coordinates and their respective time stamps (start and end times). Shorter fixations remain "invisible" to the eye tracker.

In a second step, during the output phase – that is, the visualization of the data through the analysis software – these raw data were filtered according to the structure of the individual scan path and *interpreted* as fixations and saccades (Figure 19.3; on modeling approaches see Duchowski, 2007). Saccades, which are actually invisible to the eye tracker, are not recorded, but rather *constructed* in hindsight between the fixation points, when the gap in the scan path is completed through the saccade pattern. Figure 19.4(a) shows an example of such a reconstruction of the scan path: a visualized result of the recorded eye movements of the subject in our case study,

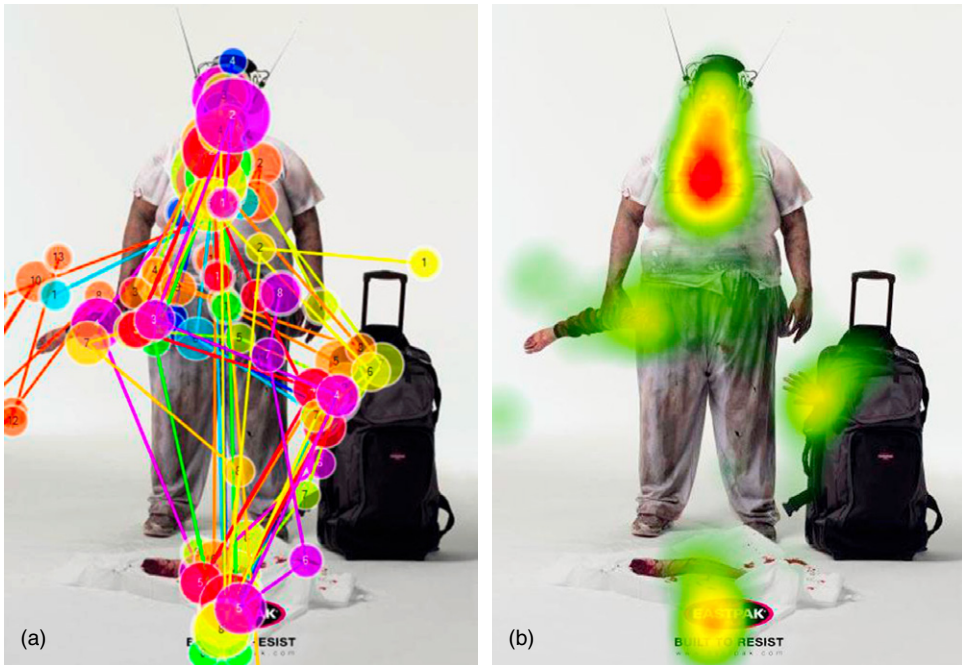


Figure 19.4 (a) Gaze plot: scan paths of 12 randomly selected subjects projected onto the stimulus with an exposure time of 4 seconds; (b) heat map: visualization of the allocations of the attention of 12 subjects in an “attention landscape” projected onto the stimulus with an exposure time of 4 seconds

translated into fixations (visualized as the “bubbles”) and saccades (visualized as the “lines”) at a standstill.

Another typical analysis of the reconstructed eye movements aggregates, for example, the number of fixations (or, alternatively, their combined lengths) as a fixation indicator by intensity and time into hot spots of a *heat map* and superimposes this map in the visual display on the original stimulus (Figure 19.4(b)). Heat maps show the gradual, aggregated fixation density as a cluster of fixations and attention landscapes for a given (selected) reception time. A high fixation density leads, as Figure 19.4(b) shows, to a hotspot overlapping the zombie’s face, which denotes an intensively gazed upon area. This depiction of eye movement is quite close to the actual perception space: in reality as well, the foveal visual attention is not directed at discrete geometrical points but rather at larger or smaller areas of the visual stimulus. In our example, the objective recording of the recipient’s eye movements enables us to answer research questions that are connected to the visual perception process, for example: What are the area’s recipients focused on first? In what order were these areas perceived? How long was visual attention focused on which areas? Do shared or individual patterns of perception occur? Where are the areas that were not per-

ceived at all? Conducting a first eyeball analysis, one can already deduce at first sight from the heat map and gaze plot that, for example, the shock-inducing area (the zombie's bloody face and neck) has not only been fixated first, but also most intensely, and that atypically even the Eastpak logo at the bottom of the advertisement received some fixations.

Of course, for further analysis (for example, regarding differences in viewing patterns in relation to age, sex, involvement or shock resistance) the recorded data have to be compressed and aggregated. With regards to the eye-tracking indicators discussed above, we first have to decide, on the basis of the specific research question, which indicators are to be operationalized in what way. In our case study, which analyzes visual perception, processing, and evaluation of the shock-inducing advertisement, it can, for example, be assumed that – regardless of a recipient's sociostructural characteristics – a shock-inducing stimulus area carries a very high visual salience and is comparatively intensively perceived foveally. Research findings that emotionalizing stimulus elements affect visual attention and therefore eye movements point in a similar direction. Independent of other factors, recipients have been shown to look at emotionalizing elements first and for longer than at “neutral” elements (Alpers, 2008; Kissler & Keil, 2008). Here, indicators such as *time to first fixation*, *observation length*, and the type and number of *backtracks* (i.e., a sudden saccadic change in direction of more than $\pm 90^\circ$ in relation to the preceding saccade) can be utilized for empirical testing of such research assumptions: while time to first fixation provides insights into the potential of an area to activate a recipient's *visual attention* – the shorter the time to the first foveal contact, the higher the visual attention potential – a measure of how intensively or how long a recipient foveally fixated a particular area is provided by the *observation length of fixations*. It thus allows insight into a person's visual attention allocation as well as his or her connected information-processing activities. For example, a backtrack can be seen as an indicator for specific irritations in the scan path. In our case study, such a repetitive visual “drift” toward a shock-inducing stimulus element and a resulting accumulation of backtracks was interpreted as an expectation-incongruent perception pattern that induces surprise and thus results in repeated fixations.

Nonetheless, the researcher also has to take into account that most eye-tracking data are in the first place unspecific and open to ambiguous interpretation – as in many other research fields where psychophysiological measurements are utilized to draw inferences regarding mental processes. The visual characteristics of the stimulus, the recipient's goals and intentions, as well as the meaning with which the stimulus is associated, influence where recipients look and how their eye movements are structured. In order to determine and understand what recipients are looking at, their visual information processing should be connected with their mental structures, their prior experiences, and their knowledge.

Analysis and interpretation of eye movements therefore require *contextualization* to gain specific insights into the reception, processing, and effect mechanisms of the underlying visual perception. For most questions of communication and media

science, employing the eye tracking method on its own may therefore not be appropriate; this is also true for our case study dealing with the visual perception, processing, and evaluation of shock-inducing advertisements. More complex perception and effect analyses require that eye tracking be combined with other empirical methods of communication science (Geise & Schumacher, 2011). By recording additional perception and reception data and using them for eye movement data analysis, difficulties in the interpretation of the data – especially with regard to cognitive operations – can be reduced. Likewise, post-receptive questionnaires, considered an established instrument of social science, allow the collection of facts, knowledge, opinions, attitudes, or evaluations. Qualitative interviews, in particular, have the potential to complement the quantitative perception data by post-receptive oral statements of subjective patterns of meaning or sense. In our case study, we supplemented eye tracking with qualitative interviews. This method combination offers two major advantages within our research context: (1) the inclusion of the subjective perspective of the recipient as an additional source of information for the interpretation and evaluation of the current eye-tracking findings; and (2) the ability to draw conclusions on more profound interpretations, on subjective meaning, individual sentiments, associations, motives, or thoughts. As in our case, this can make sense if it is the researcher's intention to compare the eye movements to the subjective opinion of the recipient concerning his or her perception or his or her individual experience with the stimulus.

In contrast to a standardized quantitative survey, the qualitative interview is structured more openly. It is more flexible and more details can be captured that are of importance to the interviewee (Lamnek, 2010, p. 311). Most of the research questions, where a method combining the analysis of eye movement data and of the underlying subjective pattern of meaning and sense seems appropriate, are based on the idea that the interpretation of the recipient's (viewing) behavior and actions requires a deeper understanding of his or her thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

Here, the distinction of intentional versus nonintentional viewing behavior poses a huge challenge, as in this context it cannot be plausibly argued that the subjective patterns of meaning can explain the actual scan path. In a narrow sense of the word, one cannot even describe viewing *behavior* as an *action*, as not only does it happen to a large degree unconsciously (the prerequisites of intentionality could just be assumed for the phases of endogenous, consciously intended gaze control), but it is also controlled by the stimulus. It is therefore not the case that the documentation, reconstruction, interpretation, and explanation of the constitution process of social reality captured by the interviews (Lamnek, 2010) reflect the actual *viewing behavior* or the *process of visual perception*. In contrast, as in our case study, post-receptive qualitative interviews can be operationalized to deepen understanding of the recipient's individual processing, classifying, interpreting, and evaluating of the observed content against the background of his or her individual *relevance system*. Thus, if the eye-tracking data reveal that a particular visual element has proven to be salient or rel-

evant for the recipient, the qualitative interview data can specify his or her associated meanings, spontaneous thoughts, reports of pleasure or liking – and thus, the researcher can learn more about the underlying cognitive processes when perceiving the tested visual stimulus.

In our case study on the perception, interpretation, and evaluation of shock-inducing advertisements, this fact was considered of central importance. Therefore, after exposure to the advertisements, a post-receptive qualitative guideline interview followed. Specific questions on the process of visual perception or the scan path were not asked. Instead, the understanding, the interpretation, the construction of meaning, the classification, and the ethical-moral evaluation of the treatment was queried. Here, we asked whether and which taboos were evoked by the shock advertisements, whether any taboos were violated, what spontaneous associations and feelings were generated, and whether and what incentives for action were given. The results of the qualitative interview thus did not deliver additional information on what information was foveally fixated upon or why it was fixated upon. However, additional insight was provided on how the foveally fixated information was perceived by the recipient, how it was understood, associated, and interpreted. In addition, the results of the qualitative interviews were able to provide some indication on the identification of certain types of recipients (e.g., shock-affine, shock-neutral, and shock-averse recipients).

Figure 19.5 exemplifies the gaze plot of a *shock-averse* recipient who declared in the guideline interview “not being able to see blood.” As he/she put it, “honestly, that may sound childish, but it’s the case, I just cannot look at it, basta.” After the first three fixations on the shock motive (and after less than half a second) the subject directed his/her gaze onto the black screen and let it stay there for about two seconds.

Although the comparative analysis of scan paths could only be conducted exploratively in this study with regards to significant differences between reception types, the findings provide a good foundation for a follow-up study. It remains to be critically reflected that the two methods, eye tracking and qualitative survey, are approaches from *two divergent angles* – a true synchronization of the data is neither methodologically nor theoretically plausible. It is the combination of insights from two subsequent perception and information-processing levels that can complement each other in their explanatory power.

Methodological Limitations and Challenges

When it comes to the practical application of the method of eye tracking in the research process, eye tracking can in many ways enrich empirical media studies. As we tried to illustrate with the case study, it possesses an enormous explanation potential, especially in the examination of questions directly connected to the process of

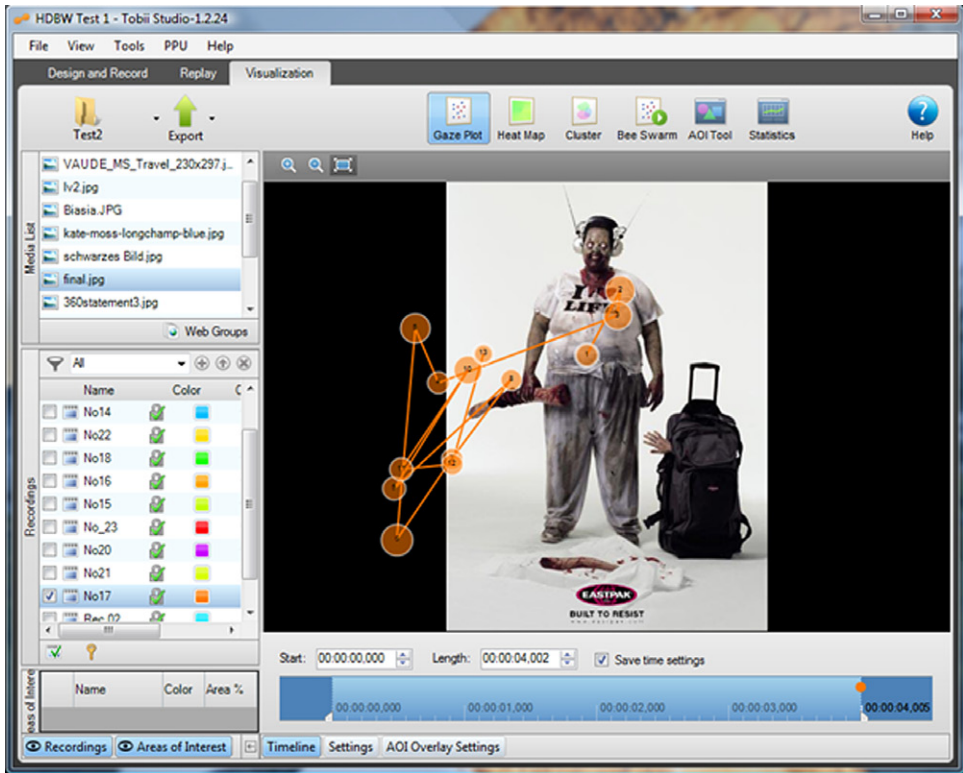


Figure 19.5 Screenshot of the scan path analysis of a shock-averse recipient in the analysis software Tobii Studio shows “avoidance behavior”

visual perception and visual information processing. Eye tracking offers insights that other empirical methods cannot provide. As a first research interest, it reveals the structure and hierarchical sequence of visual perception and the allocation of visual attention. The second research interest, which is based on this, is that eye-tracking data allow conclusions on higher cognitive tasks, especially the underlying processes of visual information processing. Thus, even though it is not capable of unveiling processes happening *within* the recipients (which can be compensated for through method combination only to a limited degree), the researcher can draw some reflected inferences on internal processes, as visual perception and cognitive information processing are highly interrelated. Through eye tracking, the observation and analysis of media reception take on a new quality. Especially in combination with other methods, conscious and unconscious reception processes can be reconstructed in a way that is very close to the processes themselves.

Consequently, there are many interdisciplinary fields of media studies where eye-tracking research can provide new insights. One large research field in which it could

be of particular interest is e-learning and multimodal education; here, eye tracking could deepen the understanding of multimodal perception processes (for example, simultaneously watching and listening to a video stream) and their implications for learning (Chuang & Liu, 2011; Dogusoy & Cagiltay, 2009; Slykhuis, Wiebe, & Len, 2005; van Gog & Scheiter, 2010; Zambarbieri, 2003). Also, it could be a valuable tool for teachers, who study classroom dynamics by viewing them on video. Film or television studies could use eye-tracking methodology to analyze the perception modes of films (d'Ydewalle, Desmet, & Van Rensbergen, 1998), and especially the interrelation between video and sound information, for example, to detect points of maximum and minimum attention in relation to the soundtrack. For media studies, the eye tracking of visual perception and the processing of (pictorial) art may constitute another interesting field of research (Buswell, 1935; DeCarlo & Santella, 2002; Holsanova, 2011; Molnar, 1981; Wooding, 2002; Yarbus, 1967). Additionally, media studies could utilize (head-mounted) eye tracking to examine the audience's viewing and attention patterns in different media reception contexts, such as in classrooms, conferences, films, concerts, or sports events, as a way to detect and indicate variation in the quality of the attention in each case.

At the same time, eye tracking is still challenging. The methodological implementation of eye tracking is relatively complex and the researcher can only refer to a limited number of standardized procedures. Also, while various questions concerning the relationship between visual perception and cognition are not yet satisfactorily answered, commonly established standards for the operationalization and interpretation of eye-tracking indicators are only slowly evolving. Thus, from a methodological perspective, eye tracking offers as many limitations as challenges. Therefore, even if the researcher's focus is predominantly directed on the empirical results of eye-movement research, a deeper knowledge about the methodological requirements and technical functions of eye tracking, as well as about the underlying processes of visual perception and visual information processing is a fundamental basis for conducting eye-tracking studies, creating research designs, tracking the eye movements in an adequate setting and, last but not least, for data analysis and data interpretation.

NOTES

- 1 Vestibular eye movements (also known as pursuit movements) are eye movements that prevent a "shifting" or drifting of sensory information on the retina. They appear as a result of the movement of the body, the movement of a perceived object, or the movement of a relevant part of the visual environment, and help to continuously fix on an object (as a quick *saccade-like* following movement or as a slow sliding movement of the eyes, i.e., *smooth pursuit*) or to maintain a stable retina image (*optokinesis*). Vestibular eye movements are *adaptation movements* that (to simplify) do not structure the scan path, but rather stabilize and enable it (especially fixations) during movement.

- 2 Those values vary substantially: according to Diamond, Ross, and Morrone (2000), for example, the suppression of intake and processing of visual information already start around 75 milliseconds prior to a saccade and continue after its end for approximately 50 milliseconds.

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Exploring Visual Aspects of Audience Membership

Media Studies and Photovoice

David R. Novak and Tonny Krijnen

ABSTRACT

Photovoice, a qualitative research methodology in which participants use photographs in combination with interviews, transcends the (false) binary between visual and verbal communication as images and words work in tandem to tell participants' stories (Novak, 2010). While audiences' reception of media has been explored thoroughly, visual interpretations as a key aspect of reception are under-researched. This neglect of visual aspects is striking, as audiences' reception often concerns media that are visual to a high degree (e.g., television, film, Internet). We use visual elements, specifically photographs and screenshots, to analyze audiences' interpretations of *True Blood*. Our chapter offers new ways to discuss aesthetic elements of television and the construction of latent meanings that would otherwise not appear in interviews. This chapter is a modest methodological contribution to help analyze the reception of audiences. It moves toward the inclusion of a visual aspect, via photovoice, in media studies.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems191

While it might be obvious to state that television is a visual medium, relatively recent television shows take visuality to new levels. Take, for example, Michael Slovis, director of photography for AMC's *Breaking Bad*, who described his show as "real filmmaking, more so than even many films that you work on now" (Gajewski 2010). As media critic, Erik Kain (2011) argues:

No other show on television places so much emphasis on visuals and color as *Breaking Bad*. The show captures and accentuates the rich hues of the American southwest perfectly – and not just the reds and oranges of the landscape. *Breaking Bad* takes risks with even the most mundane moments: black hair against yellow sheets; the play of light and shadow at the dining room table; the lines in Walter White's face.

Breaking Bad is but one of a new guard of cinema-quality television shows. *Mad Men*, *The Sopranos*, *Lost*, and *The Tudors* similarly display filmlike qualities in terms of the emphasis placed on production and on photographic and design elements. Research also shows that the media industries perceive audiences as demanding good-looking television, with aesthetic elements playing a primary role (Bielby, 2011).

Culturally speaking, visuality continues to grow in importance – from the invention of the film camera to the evolution of moving pictures to the present pervasiveness of digital photographs. Evidence of visual culture's pervasiveness is everywhere. New mobile telephones and tablet computers highlight the ability to play movies and stream television episodes (Wingfield, 2012). A recent *New York Times* article noted that a shopper would be hard-pressed to even purchase a small television nowadays (Grobart, 2012). The same article claims that in 2011, "the size of the average TV sold in North America was 38 inches, and you can buy an 80-inch model for a little more than \$4,000." Just in the last few years, a renaissance of 3-D films – such as *Shrek*, *Star Wars*, and *Avatar* – has been framed as providing new visual experiences for audience members. One can even purchase a three-dimensional television to use in the home.

This emphasis on visuality is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Television reception studies demonstrate that viewers frequently express a preference for television shows based on their aesthetic qualities (Krijnen, 2007). Evidence suggests that the aesthetic quality of US television dramas and sitcoms is one of the reasons they are so popular globally; as production companies serving a smaller region have smaller production budgets, US productions' aesthetic quality is comparatively higher (Kuipers, 2011).

Despite this cultural emphasis on visuality and research demonstrating the importance of visual elements on audiences' media consumption choices, research methods in media studies have traditionally relied largely on textual or spoken methodologies to explore these visual aspects of media experiences. While interviews, focus groups, and textual analyses are perfectly good and well-established ways to study media, we base this chapter on the position that great theoretical and methodological potential lies in studying visual media with visual methods, particularly photovoice methodol-

ogy. Media studies and reception studies have embraced methodological variety, using in-depth interviews, focus groups, media ethnography, and participant journals among other methodologies, and we see photovoice as a significant additional opportunity to continue methodological development in media studies.

This chapter proceeds first with a brief review of the relevant literature, including audience reception studies and photovoice methodology. We then discuss the specifics of this research project by outlining our participants and procedures. Finally, we present the visual and textual results and discuss the possibilities of photovoice methodology in media studies.

Review of Relevant Literature: Television Reception Studies

Television reception studies have a long-standing history and take a wide variety of forms, traditions, assumptions, and debates. For our purposes in this chapter, we define television reception studies as a set of approaches in which the researcher engages with the audiences of one or more television shows to (re)construct the meanings created in the process of viewing. Such studies view audiences as explicitly active in their engagements with TV shows. Scholarship in mass media and communication has explored television reception in depth (Staiger, 2005), with studies from a media studies tradition moving increasingly toward an interpretive perspective (i.e., trying to find out how people make sense of TV and construct everyday life meanings) during the last two decades, while those from a communication sciences perspective have been moving toward behaviorist approaches (i.e., trying to find out how TV affects our behavior).

While a thorough discussion of the history and underlying epistemological perspectives of reception studies is beyond the scope of this chapter, some brief historical background is necessarily to locate photovoice in its proper context. Reception studies have focused on topics as diverse as identity questions (Gauntlett, 2008), fan cultures (Sandvoss, 2005), moral meanings (Krijnen, 2011), and girl culture (Kearney, 2011), just to mention a few relatively recent examples. Researchers use an assortment of methodologies as diverse as the research questions they are aiming to answer. Research questions in audience studies usually start with the word “how,” indicating that the researcher wishes to explore audience activities without being preoccupied with testing hypotheses or burdened by assumptions regarding what audiences do with the meaning they draw from the television that they watch. To get at that exploration, the most commonly used methodologies are the in-depth or semi-structured interview and focus groups. In both occasions, the researcher engages in conversation with one or more audience member(s) about a case, using some starting questions or a topic list. Usually these conversations are audio- or video-recorded and transcribed afterward. The transcripts are then analyzed using a certain

form of textual analysis (common choices are discourse, semiotic, or narrative analysis).

The most famous and therefore “classic” examples of this kind of analysis include Liebes and Katz’s (1990) *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of “Dallas,”* which employs focus groups; Morley’s (1980) *The “Nationwide” Audience*, which employs media ethnography; and Ang’s (1985) *Watching “Dallas,”* which employs analysis of letters written by audience members. Each of these studies employs a different method but shows something similar in the results: audiences actively engage in sense making, and popular culture products have importance for them beyond mere entertainment value. In turn, studies following these “classics” sketch a tremendously nuanced picture of how people make sense of (popular) culture products in a welter of relevant fields. Almost all these studies are based on interview or focus group material discussing how audiences construct meaning from certain themes offered by TV content (Hill, 2005; Krijnen, 2011), or how they perform aspects of their identity when participating in the research (De Bruin, 2008).

To date, reception studies largely lack a visual element. This does not in any way invalidate these studies, as it may be possible to explore people’s interpretations of visual elements via observation or interviews. However, just as all methodologies have their own particular strengths, photovoice is particularly strong in helping researchers get at aspects of understanding and interpretation that cannot be gained in other ways. Specifically, photovoice allows researchers to get at visuals in a dedicated manner. Participants can provide and discuss images of moments in television shows that are meaningful, or document visual aspects that provide insight into how they experience or interpret the world in light of a television program or film. In the next section, we briefly review the background and applications of photovoice methodology, our primary method for the research project described later in the chapter.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a qualitative research method whose usage in communication, mass media, and media studies is growing. With photovoice methodology, participants use cameras to generate visual data (e.g., take pictures) about the subject matter of a research project or of an existing phenomenon. The photographs generated by participants then become central artifacts for discussion in an in-depth interview and/or focus group. Researchers can use the resulting images and interview data to discuss participants’ thoughts, emotions, behavior, and communication practices. One of the distinct strengths of photovoice is the centering of the participant perspective in the research process. While the directions given to participants can vary in their degree of specificity, photovoice, in general, encourages participants “to take photographs of lived experiences that the researcher is not (or could not be) aware of” (Wolfe & Novak, 2011, p. 7; for a more detailed explanations of how to perform a photovoice project, see also Novak, 2010, or Wang, 1999).

Photovoice developed from three main theoretical traditions: critical education, feminist theory, and documentary photography. Critical education, in the vein of Friere (1993), influences photovoice in the sense that photovoice, and its participants, seek to understand and act upon historical, institutional, social, and political conditions that impact people and communities (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchinson, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004). Feminist theory is a key underlying framework for photovoice in that the method seeks to center the individual participant experience in the research process and to de-center the position of the all-knowing researcher. Finally, documentary photography influences the development of photovoice methodology with the belief that images have the power to raise consciousness on social, political, and historical issues.

Photovoice methodology originated from the field of public health with the publication of Wang and Burris's (1994) groundbreaking essay. A high percentage of photovoice research still stems from public health (e.g., Jurkowski & Paul-Ward, 2007; Schwartz, Sable, Dannerbeck, & Campbell, 2007), but photovoice research is also prominent in the study of education contexts (Sands, Harper, Reed, & Shar, 2009), social change research (Wilson, Dasho, Martin, Wallerstein, Wang, & Minkler, 2007), disability studies (Booth & Booth, 2003), and community-based research (Gant, Shimshock, Allen-Meares, Smith, Miller, Hollingsworth, & Shanks, 2009). However, photovoice's utility has not been widely harnessed in explorations of communication and media. Searches in popular databases reveal very few published articles that use this method in communication and media-related studies (see Novak, 2010; Singhal & Devi, 2003; Singhal, Harter, Chitnis, & Sharma, 2007; Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty, 2006; Wolfe & Novak, 2011).

This chapter continues to build on previous arguments (e.g., Novak, 2010) concerning photovoice's utility as a method needed to investigate communication and media phenomena. More than just an example of photovoice, this chapter will highlight the means by which interpretations and understandings of media can be explored via photovoice. Photovoice has great potential in media studies to (literally) see a variety of issues and context from a new perspective. Photovoice provides a new methodological twist to reception studies as well as other areas within media studies. By involving participants in the research process, photovoice increases participation with the potential of revealing experiences and situations that can extend theoretical knowledge. Ultimately, photovoice can reinvigorate audience reception studies as the method shifts interpretation away from a research structure dominated by the researcher.

Methodology

In order to explore the possibilities of using photovoice to study audience reception, we recruited 10 participants¹ for an exploratory study. We proposed two condition paths to explore photovoice's utility in this context, with half of the participants

taking part in one condition and the remaining participants in the second. The two conditions are potential variants of photovoice conceived by the authors based on prior photovoice projects and the uniqueness of studying media artifacts. In our study, five participants watched an episode of the HBO television series *True Blood* and used screen captures to talk about the show. Five participants used a more traditional photovoice approach whereby they watched the episode and then took photographs in the world of people, objects, and events that related to their experience of the television program. (For detailed procedures for this study, see Appendix A.) Participants were undergraduate students recruited from communication and media courses. No extra course credit was offered for their participation, though students did receive small gift bags. The next section briefly describes our rationale for choosing this particular text. A discussion of the specific details of each photovoice condition follows.

The Show *True Blood*

HBO's hit series *True Blood* has received abundant attention since its release in the fall of 2008. Based on a Charlene Harris novel, the series' main plot revolves around the people of the fictional village of Bon Temps, Louisiana, at a time when vampires – no longer dependent on human blood after the invention of synthetic blood by Japanese scientists – are trying to integrate into society. Main character Sookie Stackhouse, a telepathic waitress, gets involved with vampire Bill Compton. Their relationship evolves over several seasons, falling from one catastrophe into another. People around both Sookie and Bill get involved in the story, making room for several plotlines and more “creatures of the night” such as werewolves, shape-shifters, and fairies (HBO, n.d.). The series is directed by Alan Ball, who is also responsible for *Six Feet Under*. The show received a vast amount of attention (Moody, 2008), in part because of several elements that also make it an excellent case for our study: it uses technical innovations to create a highly visual spectacle; elements of this spectacle are sexualized; and the show must be understood in the context of its intertextual connections with other similar (and often highly visual) texts.

As a result of technological innovations in the TV industry, the use of special effects and other aesthetic elements has increased and gained importance over the years. In *True Blood*, these technological possibilities are exploited to a maximum. This turns the series into a true visual spectacle. Second, the danger *True Blood*'s characters represent generates a high erotic potential. The power of the vampires to “glamour their victims” (*True Blood*-speak for putting a victim's mind at ease) and the intimate bond that exists after a vampire drinks one's blood are both visualized in an erotic manner. Additionally, the show has elaborated on this theme by incorporating sexuality as a powerful weapon of many creatures (both human and nonhuman): seduction is often employed as a means to get one's way. Though explicit, the sex in

the show is of a certain aesthetic quality. Highly stylized visuals of sexually explicit scenes are part of the show's overall spectacular visuals. Finally, *True Blood* is a visual evolution in the lineage of vampire serials and can be read as intertextually related to other vampire stories, starting with Bram Stoker's classic novel *Dracula*, its multiple film iterations, as well as contemporary vampire television (e.g., *The Vampire Diaries*) (Beck, 2011; Hardy, 2011). Because these elements are so central to the show and because the show is so highly visual, exploring them through a visually driven method, such as photovoice, is likely to yield a deeper understanding of audience interpretations.

Combining Photovoice With the Reception Interview

We chose episode 10 of season 2 of *True Blood*, titled "New World in My View," as a strong exemplar of the elements just described. Moreover, as it is part of a narrative developed through a season, it is difficult to decipher exactly what is going on if one is not a regular viewer of the show, and we made this choice purposefully as we felt this would increase participants' need to interpret the show.

Here, we outline two ways in which the power of photovoice might be harnessed to deepen investigations of media. The first involves a more traditional take on photovoice. In this condition, students were told to watch the *True Blood* episode from beginning to end without pausing. Students were provided with paper and pen to take notes or record thoughts about what they saw. Once the show was completed, they were told to take photographs that captured what was important to their understanding of the episode. Participants were asked to choose a maximum of 20 pictures to discuss during the interview. Most interviews took place one week after viewing, which we judged to be an ample amount of time to allow participants to think about the episode as well as take photographs, while not allowing their memory of the show to fade significantly.

The second condition is rooted in traditional photovoice methodology but envisions new possibilities for harnessing photovoice for media studies research. In this case, students watched the stimulus episode in full. Participants were asked to capture images of the show itself via pausing and screen-capturing, either as they watched or after watching and reflecting on it. Students were provided with a notepad and pen in order to take notes about scenes, notable dialogue, and the like. They were encouraged to screen-capture images that were important to their understanding of the show or significant in their interpretation of the episode. These students were also asked to choose a maximum of 20 captures that best expressed their understanding. These captures were a major component of the interview, which took place directly after they finished watching the episode and taking captures.

The interviews were guided by a topic list (see Appendix B) that was sensitive toward whether participants took photographs or screen captures. We started the interview by asking them to recount what happened during the episode (e.g., what did they think was important, which themes were apparent to them, etc.). This retelling of the episode was based on Liebes and Katz's (1990) approach and was meant to give insight into initial starting points of meaning and sense making. This kind of interview is an example of an "active interview," in which both interviewer and interviewee engage in constructing meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999). Next, we discussed the screen captures or photographs, engaging the interviewee in a narrative on the how and why of each capture/photograph and allowing the participant to reflect on the photovoice approach. This approach offered insights on the pros and cons of each method that might be applied more generally to media reception studies.

Results: Using Photographs to Talk About Television

In order to discuss the utility of photovoice in helping us understand participants' experiences of the text, we will discuss the findings of this project in two broad themes. First, we will address the potential unique contributions of this method both within and across the two proposed iterations of photovoice. Second, we will discuss the methodology's ability to inform our understanding of the aesthetic dimensions of a text. Of our 10 participants, two considered themselves fans of the show and had seen all or most of the episodes. Three participants had heard of the show and knew the basic idea (e.g., that it was a show about vampires) and had maybe seen a few episodes. These participants liked the fantasy genre in general, though sometimes preferred "softer" versions such as *Twilight* or *The Vampire Diaries*. Five participants had either only heard of the show but not seen any episodes, or knew nothing about the show at all. These five participants, in general, did not find shows in the fantasy genre appealing. There were both similarities and differences between the "fans" and "nonfans" of the genre in terms of how they used photos/screen captures to express themselves. Based on these findings, we will argue that our adaptation of photovoice is in some ways more suitable to investigate fans than nonfans of a certain genre or show.

We were impressed by the creativity with which all 10 participants took part in the research process. Participants taking photographs sometimes engaged in role-play, some involved friends, some went to visit certain sites to capture the images they thought they needed, others took photographs that they happened upon while going about their day. Moreover, each participant clearly used the method – either photographs or screen captures – in an individual manner to express their thoughts about the program. Their overall enthusiasm and creativity is indicative of the value

of photovoice as a media studies method. Additionally, all participants reported that having to take screen captures or photographs caused them to engage with the episode's content in a deeper way than they usually would. As one participant said:

Usually when I watch a show by myself, I'll get distracted from the visual part, because I usually catch on to whatever is happening by just listening to the audio part. I might grab my phone and I'll do a game of solitaire while I'm watching or listening. But during this process, because I'm supposed to be focused, I did not take my eyes off the screen. Or "Oh, let me see if I have a text message." I think that is a big difference in how I would usually watch.

While this participant usually does something else while watching television and focuses more on the dialogue than on what is shown on screen, she reported that she enjoyed paying careful attention to the visual content when participating in the study. This suggests that photovoice, on one hand, may fail to fully capture the "natural" way in which viewers normally watch television. It may, on the other hand, help focus their viewing efforts and foster more active and engaged viewership and reflection.

Almost all interviewees expressed some appreciation for the visual quality of the show. Each of them used screen captures or photographs to visually explain what they thought about the various elements of this episode of *True Blood*. Many photographs and screen captures depicted elements of the show the participants found enlightening, interesting, or funny. A few images related to scenes or images that participants found "disturbing" or "creepy" or that they did not like. Overall, we believe the photographs and screen captures enabled participants to express themselves more thoroughly regarding their thoughts and feelings about the quality, symbolism, and meaning of the show than an interview without photographs.

Using Photovoice to Express Manifest and Latent Themes

Our first theme covers the participants' discussions of content, its meaning, and their interpretations of the symbolic and narrative elements of the program. Since it is not our aim to unravel what meanings participants construct, but rather to focus on the process through which they construct this meaning using either verbal or visual means of expression, we will not delve into the "what" of these themes, but the "how." While we felt a more traditional interview would have sufficed for discussions of the *manifest* themes, the contribution of photovoice as a method became particularly clear in the discussion of *latent* themes in the show's episode. Manifest themes can be understood as themes that are obviously proffered by *True Blood*. These themes are what the show is about – the topics we find in the descriptions of the

serial's episodes. Latent themes, on the other hand, are more interpretive and less easily accessible in the text. Wester and Weijers (2006) refer to them as the meanings in a text that are shaped by contextual factors of production, such as genre, language, cultural habits, economic criteria, medium, and so on. These latent themes are commonly understood as the deeper layers of meaning in a text. Not all audience members engage with these themes (Fiske, 1987). We will nevertheless briefly discuss participants' engagement with manifest themes before moving on to address how they expressed latent themes.

Manifest themes are themes around which *True Blood* revolves. The "Other," good and evil, religion, and relationships (between friends and family) were manifest themes mentioned by most participants. In our study, both participants taking screen captures and those taking photographs used visual means to express their thoughts on the (manifest) themes, which is what we asked them to do. However, the ways in which they creatively expressed their thoughts via the photographs was particularly surprising and exciting. Figure 20.1 represents how Brittany interpreted an element of the show and translated that into a visual image. This participant talked about how she wrote the quote on the paper very neatly and then tore the paper out, ripped it, and wrinkled it to capture the flawed nature of human beings, as is also evident in the quote she chose.

In the other condition, a participant taking screen captures chose a specific scene to express her thoughts. Gina used the screen capture in Figure 20.2. She described



Figure 20.1 Crumpled paper that reads "sinners by default"



Figure 20.2 Screen capture of eye changing from black to white

how she wanted to capture this exact frame when watching the episode because you can just begin to see Tara's eye turning white (which means the curse that is on her is breaking). Gina stated, "I took this picture at this exact moment because it represents when you can see that there is good in her and that the evil is going away." Still, we feel that this manifest theme could have been easily addressed in an interview as well, without photovoice.

According to Beck (2011), manifest themes should be read intertextually. In this case, intertextuality is the understanding created about one text (an episode of *True Blood*), in relation to other texts. Fiske (1987) distinguishes between horizontal and vertical intertextuality. Horizontal intertextuality addresses *True Blood*'s meaning in relation to other programs in the genre (i.e., other primary texts), such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The Vampire Diaries*. Vertical intertextuality focuses on the *True Blood*'s meaning in relation to other texts that refer to it, or "secondary texts." Secondary texts would be things like newspaper articles and pictures, and tertiary artifacts such as fanzines and blogs. We think that photovoice, especially at the vertical level, offers a small advantage over interviewing, as it enabled us to grasp the (visual) articulations of intertextuality by our participants.

For example, in discussing religion in the show, intertextual meanings became apparent. In one respect, this is not surprising, as religion is part and parcel of the vampire genre. Vampire stories relate to Christianity (e.g., you can ward off vampires with a cross or holy water), and religion and ritual were key elements of participants' interpretations of the episode. Multiple participants saw religious themes running throughout the episode, including, as Theresa stated, "religion, pagan religion, symbols, statues."

However, religion and ritual in *True Blood* are taken beyond their traditional or expected meaning. One particular element in the episode, a kind of totem pole, symbolized this exceptionally well. In the episode, the totem is built for the maenad Maryann who wants to evoke her god Dionysus through a sacrifice, which refers to ancient Greek mythology. Though some participants found this totem disturbing, most participants pictured it because it is an engaging visual feature: it contains meat, vegetables, some skulls, flowers, and fruit. All participants who took screen captures took a capture of the “meat tree” from one of the opening scenes of the show. Figure 20.3 shows a representative example of the screen captures. Similarly, even participants who took photographs remembered this scene. Multiple variations of the photograph in Figure 20.4 were taken by the photography participants. Some participants took pictures of lunchmeat packages, while others took pictures of their dinner with meat in it.

This meat tree, due to its disturbing nature, would also have been point of discussion if no photos or screen captures had been involved. However, participants taking photographs also elaborated on this theme with their photographs, making multiple mentions of religion. Consider the photograph of a lit cross that one participant came across while biking around town at night (Figure 20.5).

Due to the method used, participants taking screen captures were, of course, unable to take anything other than images available in the show. It is interesting, though, to see how, in that sense, the approach of manifest themes for the participants is highly intertextual: they read the ancient Greek religious theme in association with Christian religion and, ironically, their lunch (Beck, 2011). We believe this manifest theme would have shown up in interviews as well. However, the contribution of photovoice in this case is in the visual articulations of the intertextual meanings



Figure 20.3 Screen capture of “meat tree”



Figure 20.4 Photograph of meat in butcher's case



Figure 20.5 Photograph of lighted cross



Figure 20.6 Screen capture: seeing *True Blood* as a character

of a manifest theme proffered by the text. The photographs and their articulated meanings highlight connections to everyday practices, such as eating meals and walking around the city, and not only to other mediated texts and interpretations of the program. These results enlarge our understanding of intertextuality. This is a small but important extension of intertextuality that is made possible via photovoice. Photovoice's greatest potential contribution, however, rests in its ability to capture latent themes. Both participants taking photographs and the ones using screen captures touched upon latent themes that, they argued, would have been impossible to explain without the visual aids.

Gina, using screen captures, touched upon what she felt were different perspectives on the same "reality" the episode tries to provide for its audience. In the episode, a rather chaotic event, probably a Dionysian bacchanal, takes place. This event is shown in *True Blood* from various perspectives, giving the audience the opportunity to take the perspective of the people involved. The characters in the bacchanal – who are under maenad Maryann's spell – see the scene in orange and red lighting. The onlookers, who view the scene in its harsh reality, see as if they are viewing a first-person video game. This theme of the three different perspectives would have been near impossible to describe orally. As one participant explained:

GINA: I think this is how black-eyed people see it. I wanted to show the different types of how they see stuff. What I did notice is that the whole scenery and how we see it [as viewers] is really dark but whenever they [the characters] see it, it is all colory and yellow and green. Like, lots of colors.

INTERVIEWERS: Does that mean anything to you?

GINA: Well, not specifically that I can think of now. But it shows that there is a clear difference between how the people with black eyes see things and how . . . it really shows that there are two different types of people.

Participants taking photographs came up with latent themes in a similar way. For example, Ingrid took the photograph in Figure 20.7 because, as she explained, she felt that there was “something military” in the show – some characters reminded her of Vietnam vets. Nevertheless, she could not really explain why she thought about this theme: “It just stuck in my head.”

Using the visual tools clearly enabled participants to express thoughts and feelings about the episode that would have been difficult to explain or express otherwise. In the case of screen captures, participants could show us exactly which scenes or



Figure 20.7 Photograph: soldier's graves

images induced these thoughts. Participants using photographs had more time to reflect and process their ideas and thoughts, but still produced some photos associated with “vague impressions that stuck in one’s head.” In that sense, the contribution of the screen capture participants was much greater than it would have been in a “classic” photovoice approach (see Novak, 2010), as it allowed them to refer to specific visual elements that generated particular reactions and feelings.

While there are many similarities between what is gained via photovoice and what would be gained in a traditional interview when simply considering the themes of this television show, photovoice generates an additional layer of interesting data. As the examples of Gina and Ingrid demonstrate, participants often struggled with voicing and formulating thoughts on some of their own interpretations. Using the photographs and screen captures provided them with an additional means to explore and share these interpretations. The use of visuals might have also brought themes to the conversation that would otherwise have been ignored. The results of this small exploratory study do suggest that photovoice might contribute to a more in-depth and multidimensional understanding of what audiences do with the media products they consume. In addition to a discussion of the latent themes in the episode, the photographs and screen captures also elicited numerous comments on the aesthetic elements of the show.

Providing an Aesthetic Foundation

Regardless of the iteration of photovoice they applied, participants talked about how they saw the episode, the world outside of television, their relationships, and many other aspects of the text using visual language – both literally and symbolically. Thus, photovoice has great potential to move beyond an exploration of what themes participants might see in a particular show, toward a better understanding of *how* they see the show and interpret meaning visually – as this exchange with Tina illustrates:

- TINA: I don’t think I’d continue to watch this show. I don’t know. I like the whole vampire thing but I don’t know what it is about this show. Maybe because it is more adult or visually, things that I don’t like.
- INTERVIEWER: Like what?
- TINA: Well, there is a lot of blood and it’s all a little more extreme than what I’d normally watch. Like *Vampire Diaries* is at a bit more of a high level.

Regardless of whether or not participants liked the show, all of them showed appreciation of its aesthetic quality. Even when images were discussed as “disturbing” or “creepy,” they were still appreciated as “engaging.” For example, Theresa com-

mented that a screen capture of a vampire crying blood was an “important image.” As she explained, however:

- THERESA: Yeah. I think it is weird. Why is he crying blood? She’s making out with him. I don’t know.
- INTERVIEWERS: But the image of the man’s face with blood was disturbing or shocking?
- THERESA: Yeah. Right. Mostly shocking. Normally with vampire shows there might be blood around the mouth or something, but that he’s crying blood? That’s weird.

Many of the participants in both conditions commented and took photographs of the colors and lighting of the episodes which they connected to moods, emotions, and feelings that are supposed to be evoked by the show. Consider the following interview excerpt:

- THERESA: They work a lot with lighting and colors. For example, in darker areas – for example the scene at the house, it was only lit with candles and it gives a certain ambience, so to say.

Tina took a screen capture of the nearly complete blackness of one scene (a shot of what Sookie sees when she looks into Tara’s head) to talk about the darkness of the episode and the mood that it attempts to convey, and stated, “I think it was the lighting that created the mood about the show.”

Another participant, who took photographs, took a photo of the reddest item she could find (Figure 20.8) because the show was saturated with red colors and certain emotions that this participant associated with red.

- THERESA: Visually for example, the very first scene where she walks through this hallway. The warm. The colors. The red colors which create this rather warm but stuffy atmosphere and reminds you of blood. I like how they use the lights to convey a certain feeling.

Many participants commented on colors and darkness and how the show used these elements to portray a certain mood or feel. Participants took pictures of leather couches, bags, buildings, and trees to talk about the mood of the episode and how that was connected to color.

Another highly visual scene is where Sookie, who manifests as a fairy in a later season, attacks the maenad with a power coming from her hand. Multiple participants noted this scene. Figure 20.9 shows a representative screen capture of the scene. However, the aesthetics of the show were also sometimes the reason a participant might reject it. Ingrid called the show “over-dramatized” because of some of the visuals. Ingrid, along with a friend, acted out the picture shown in Figure 20.10. Ingrid



Figure 20.8 Photograph of red building on campus



Figure 20.9 Screen capture of lighted hand



Figure 20.10 Photograph of re-enactment of lighted hand scene

explained how the photo expressed her ironic view on this event from the show. The scene was “a bit too much” for her.

While Ingrid took an ironic viewing position (in the sense explained by Ang, 1985), some participants were embarrassed or shocked by some of the elements, causing a definite rejection of the show. The explicitly sexual scenes, in particular, evoked this kind of response. Interestingly though, participants also used visual means to point out exactly what it was they didn’t like. For example Mihaela commented:

This is a really scary scene. There is a guy with a shotgun watching this whole scene and he’s looking for action. And then you see these people and although they are doing normal party stuff probably in those weird clubs where I don’t go, what they do is normal, but it is still scary.

She, and another participant used screen captures to explain why she did not enjoy watching the episode. Some scenes were “too explicit, too much in your face.”

It is here that an interesting difference between fans and nonfans appears: the fans of the genre generally were enthusiastic about the aesthetic elements that cause nonfans to reject the show (and maybe genre). Fans of the genre, and especially fans of *True Blood*, called the show mature and saw it as aimed at an adult audience and therefore found it much more enjoyable than, for example, the *Twilight* series, which is aimed at teenagers. Similarly, the elements that Ingrid calls “over-dramatized” are

interpreted by fans as important additions to the show's quality. Helen, for example, explained how she felt about these visual aspects:

It's well done. It's well made. One thing about the entire show is that it really manages to capture an atmosphere. I do believe that by using different colors, and most of the time it's very dark but warm. It keeps up a balance between it is dangerous but also very loving. Visually, it is very well thought through.

To Helen, these elements are not "over-doing it" but show her how much effort, thought, and even craftsmanship went into producing *True Blood*. The aesthetic elements seem to be an important part of liking or disliking the show. Though this is a common element mentioned by interviewees in reception studies, we believe that using photovoice delivers a valuable contribution to understanding *exactly* how these aesthetic elements interact with interpreting media.

Another interesting difference between fans and nonfans that became clear through discussing the photographs and screen captures is the amount of attention paid to the aesthetic elements while they were viewing. Nonfans of the genre used their photographs and screen captures more often to express what they thought the show was about, touching on manifest, sometimes latent, themes. Take Ingrid, for example, who was not a fan, and her comments regarding the "meat tree":

INTERVIEWERS: Could you talk about what you remember about the show visually?
What did you see? What did you think about the visual aspects of the show?

INGRID: Uhhh . . . visually? I think some parts they captured quite well. Like the rituals. I think they made a tower of . . . what was it? Rubbish? Meat.

INTERVIEWERS: [Laugh] I think it was both.

INGRID: Yeah. It looked disturbing.

INTERVIEWERS: Did you like that? I mean, when you say disturbing, do you mean, they did it well.

INGRID: Yes.

Fans of the genre, however, used their photographs and screen captures more often to express all the reasons why they liked the show, including the aesthetic elements. We feel this difference is related to the ease or difficulty the participants had in making sense of the show. Participants who had never viewed an episode mentioned they felt "somewhat lost" and "in the middle of a season" (which was, of course, the case). For them it might have been a priority to make sense of "what's happening" first. Participants who were familiar with the show or genre obviously had less difficulty understanding what was going on. Having knowledge of the codes and conventions of a genre enabled them to interpret and construct their own view of the show. In other words, these results do suggest that our method might be more suitable to study fans of a certain genre than nonfans because the power and utility of

photovoice are harnessed when researchers want to learn from participants who know a subject well.

Discussion and Conclusion

Along with all of the usual benefits of photovoice – such as centering participant experiences and revealing previously unknown details outlined in other essays (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994) – photovoice has great potential to develop and challenge theoretical and methodological perspectives within the realm of media studies. As other photovoice studies have noted (Novak, 2010; Wang, 1999; Wolfe & Novak, 2011) one of the strongest benefits of photovoice is that it allows knowledge previously inaccessible to the researcher to be illuminated. With only the 10 participants, our study yielded images and text that point to an increased ability for interviewees to interrogate and display what they meant when asked “Is this show good? Why?” and “What do you like about this show? What makes it better than other shows?” The participants were able to use and capture images to remember scenes and moments from the show and to connect those to their thoughts, emotions, and reactions. By using photovoice we were able to get at deeper levels of individual meaning as well as the complexity of individual interpretation. As such, we believe photovoice can be a fruitful methodological path for researchers to uncover theoretical complexity in virtually any media studies area.

Furthermore, we believe the visual element of photovoice highlight participants’ experiences and explanations of the aesthetic element of the show on multiple levels. Participants were quite easily able to grasp the manifest themes (e.g., good and evil, friendship, religion) of *True Blood*, even without background knowledge of the show. The ways in which they used aesthetics to talk about those themes were quite creative and enlightening. Both explicitly in their comments and visually in their photographs, participants were engaging the questions: What have I seen? What does it mean to me? How can I express that visually? This added a level of depth to the results and analysis that would not be available with topic-list interviews only. The photovoice interviews allowed us as researchers to explore aspects of the participants’ interpretations of the show that may not have come up otherwise. For example, when a participant took a dimly lit screen capture of a scene and discussed how that was a visual representation of evil or darkness, the photograph opened up a conversation with that participant: What about that scene was evil? What represented evil? What was good? This is directly related to the openness and ambiguity of photovoice, which researchers must be comfortable with when employing this method. Because photovoice opens up the conversation topically, there are great benefits to be had, such as deeper but more diverse results.

Having outlined the benefits and potential of using photovoice methodology in media studies, we would like to note some of the limitations and potential pitfalls

of photovoice in this context. From sitting in on each of the interviews and seeing all of the photographs collected in this project, we believe that the research process was more fruitful when the participants were fans of the show or genre. Participants did not have to be dedicated fans, but even marginal fandom or awareness of the basic themes, premises, and characters of *True Blood* resulted in a much more free-flowing and rich interview. In our study, participants were shown an episode that most had not seen before. This, in our estimation, impacted their ability to engage with and interpret the show. Participants who had no understanding of *True Blood* struggled to make sense of one mid-season episode of this show. Generally speaking, the photographs taken by participants who did not know *True Blood* were still creative and interesting, but these participants struggled to make sense of the episode. Furthermore, comments from the interviews indicated that people without background knowledge of *True Blood* had to work harder to pick up on storylines and characters and perhaps were less able to pay attention to the aesthetic elements of the episode. Using photovoice with participants who do not have knowledge of the context of the show may be more useful if participants were to document their thoughts on a full season of the show or on a pilot episode, where background information would play a less significant role.

Similarly, one limitation in this study seemed to be genre. The participants who stated they were not fans of fantasy generally seemed limited in their interpretations of the show, though the creativity of their photographs did not suffer. Participants who were not fans of *True Blood* or of fantasy in general seemed more likely to identify more superficial aesthetic elements and to not engage as deeply with the show. Thus, photovoice methodology seems to be more appropriate to tap into deeper sense making and interpretation elements for people who are more willing to engage with a show from this type of genre.

One other potential pitfall of this methodology has been noted in previous photovoice studies (Novak, 2010; Wang, 1999). It relates to the directions given to the participants and manifests itself in two ways. First, participants need to be educated that the camera is a tool that comes imbued with power. Participants – even young student participants who are used to having a camera on them virtually all the time – should be made aware of the power a camera wields and of potential ethical issues. One participant in our study took pictures of friends who were posing and re-enacting emotions from the show and, upon finding out that those photographs might be included in a book chapter, the subjects of the photographs politely asked that we not use any of the photos in question. Participants should be told up front and in no uncertain terms in what ways the photographs they generate might be used and what their responsibilities are as photographers. Likewise, participants need to remember to indicate to any subjects of their photographs how their images might be used. Second, multiple participants questioned whether or not they were taking the “right” or “correct” photographs or if they “were doing what we wanted them to do.” In similar projects we would try harder to make it clear to participants that we are interested in their interpretations and the connections

about the show and the life *they* are making, and that there are no specific “correct” answers.

One final potential pitfall mentioned in passing by a few participants was the content of one particular scene. In this scene, characters can be seen engaged in sexual activity, drinking, and rowdiness. Some participants did not care for this particular scene, while others found it entertaining. However, many participants, whether they liked it or not, recalled this scene, and some seemed distracted by the adult material of the scene. By asking participants to take photographs that capture the show for them, some participants may have spent undue attention on a scene to which they normally would not have not given much attention. So, in essence, photovoice might actually call attention to highly visual scenes that would otherwise go unnoticed by the participant or be unnoteworthy to them.

In conclusion, we think that photovoice is a useful methodological tool to deepen our understanding of participant experiences with, and interpretations of, different types of media. We think that an expanded role for photovoice methodology will be a beneficial addition to media studies in general and to reception studies in particular.

NOTE

- 1 All participants have been given pseudonyms for the purposes of this chapter.

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Appendix A: Procedures

Traditional Photovoice

1 Project overview

- (a) This research is about how people experience media visually. We are going to show you a one-hour television show and ask you to think about and reflect upon that show visually. We are going to ask you to take photographs that document your thoughts, feelings and emotions about this show. So, while you are watching the show, please think about the images you see, what they say/mean to you and how you interpret what you see in the show.
- (b) We are going to show you one episode of a television show that you may or may not have seen. It does not matter if you are familiar with this show or not. Just watch the show carefully, listen, enjoy it and think about what it means for you. Once you have finished watching the show, we are going to ask you to take photographs to document how you experienced the show, what it made you think about and how it made you feel. You may take notes

- about the show and/or record thoughts about the show and what it makes you think about.
- (c) Do you have any questions about the procedures of this study thus far?
- 2 Television program
- (a) Participants will now be shown a one-hour television show. Participants can pause the show if you like and take notes.
- 3 Initial wrap-up
- (a) Participants will leave the viewing room and take as many photographs that capture their experience of the television show as they like, what it made them think about, what it inspired in them, what frustrated them, etc.
 - (b) Participants will be asked to select 20 photographs upon returning, but should bring all photographs they took with them.
 - (c) Emphasize that participants should feel free to think about what photographs they take, but that traditional measures of “good” photography are not important in this research. Participants should take photographs that capture their thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc. . .
 - (d) Participants will have 1 week to take photographs and will return the following week to complete the interview portion of the project and submit their photographs. Inform participants to bring their photographs with them on a USB drive or to bring a camera (and connective USB cord) with them.
- 4 Interview
- (a) Upon second visit, participants will choose 20 photographs from the photographs they took.
 - (b) Once images are selected, participants and researchers will proceed with the interview protocol (See Appendix B).

Procedures: Screen Capture

- 1 Project overview
- (a) This research is about how people experience media visually. We are going to show you a one-hour television show and ask you to think about and reflect upon that show visually. We are going to ask you to take photographs that document your thoughts, feelings and emotions about this show. So, while you are watching the show, please think about the images you see, what they say/mean to you and how you interpret what you see in the show.
 - (b) We are going to show you one episode of a television show that you may or may not have seen. It does not matter if you are familiar with this show or not. Just watch the show carefully, listen, enjoy it and think about what it means for you. While you are watching the show, we want you to pause the show and take screen captures of images of the show that are meaningful for you. Once you have finished watching the show, we will talk about the images that you captured. Capture images that document how you

experienced the show, what it made you think about and how it made you feel. You may take notes about the show and/or record thoughts about the show and what it makes you think about. Show participants how to capture images via keyboard shortcut. Leave written instructions on how to do capture image.

- (c) Do you have any questions about the procedures of this study thus far?

2 Television program

- (a) Participants will now be shown a one-hour television show. Participants can pause the show to take notes and screen captures.
- (b) During watching, participants should pay attention to the show and their reaction to the show. Participants should pay particular attention to the visual elements of the program (i.e., interesting, meaningful, frustrating, difficult images, etc.).

3 Interview

- (a) Upon finishing the program, participants will choose 20 screen captures (if more than 20 taken). Once images are selected, participants and researcher will proceed with the interview protocol (See Appendix B).

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Questions About Experience With the Show

- 1 Have you seen this show before? This episode?
- 2 What do you know about this program?
- 3 Would you continue to watch this show? Why or why not?

Questions About the Program

- 4 Tell me what the show was about. What happened?
- 5 What aspects of the show did you find engaging? Not engaging?
- 6 What are the main themes of this show? Are these themes important to you?
- 7 What did you like about this show?
- 8 What did you dislike about this show?
- 9 What are your reflections on the visual elements of the show? How did the show look to you? What did you like? Not like?

Questions About the Photographs

- 10 Choose 20 photographs that represent your experiences watching the program and/or what the show made you think about?

- (a) Why did you take this photograph/screen capture?
- (b) What does this photograph/screen capture say about the show and/or what you got out of the show?

Questions About the Method

- 11 Did you find taking pictures/screen captures valuable? Why or why not?
- 12 Were you able to express information about the show (and your interpretation of it) via the photographs that you would not have been able to do otherwise?
- 13 What difficulties or challenges did you encounter when taking photographs/screen captures?
- 14 How did you go about taking your photographs? What kind of time span after watching the show did you use?

Wrap-Up

- 15 Are there any photographs/screen captures that you did not take that you wanted to?
- 16 Do you have any questions for us about this project or anything you experienced?

The Methodology of Online News Analysis

A Quantitative Approach to Ephemeral Media

Helle Sjøvaag and Eirik Stavelin

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes a new method for analyzing online news employing both human and computer coding and based on a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative measures. The chapter illustrates how the method was used to perform a content analysis of the full online news output of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) for the year 2009 ($n = 74430$). It explains how the approach was developed, describes the problems we encountered along the way, and provides a rationale for further use of the method. We conclude that our work demonstrates that methodologies designed for measuring broadcast news do not suffice in the ephemeral online news environment. Thus, online research methods need to be redesigned to account for medium-specific news features on the Internet.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems192

In this chapter we describe how we arrived at a methodology for analyzing online news quantitatively. The approach combines human and computer coding and is based on a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative measures. Used to perform a content analysis of a year's online news output of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), the study reveals how methodologies designed for measuring broadcast news fail to fully address the ephemeral nature of the online news environment. Online research methods need to be redesigned to account for medium-specific features on the Internet. In this chapter we explain how the approach was developed through a mixed inductive–deductive design and describe the problems we encountered along the way – particularly relating to obtaining the data, defining the unit of analysis, designing the coding scheme, and testing reliability. We believe the appropriateness of the method lies primarily in the advantages offered by the computational ability to process large sets of data quickly and without errors, and thus aid in the analysis of online news media.

The Object of Research

The object of study is the online news services of the license-fee-financed public service broadcaster in Norway. NRK was established in 1933. Based on the BBC Reithian model to inform, educate, and entertain, it provides public service content primarily on three platforms – television, radio, and online. Overall, the Norwegian television sector is characterized by moderate competition within a fully digitalized broadcasting spectrum (Lund & Berg, 2009, p. 21). The market is dominated by four national broadcasters, with growing differentiation as a result of an industry-wide strategy that continues to see an increase in the variety of digital offspring and a plethora of international channels transmitted on the satellite and cable platforms. Nevertheless, NRK remains a steady leader in most content segments of the broadcasting markets, with an 86% audience reach for all platforms overall (Medie Norge, 2011).

In the increasingly platform-independent news market, however, NRK also faces competition from the national daily newspapers. As an online medium, NRK is second in the market, with 23.2% and approximately 830,000 unique daily users, behind the national daily tabloid *Verdens Gang* (VG), with 29.4% (TNS-Gallup, 2011). Our survey of NRK's online news at www.nrk.no was conducted using data from 2009 – data collected just prior to a significant restructuring of nrk.no as a publication platform. At the time, NRK was the fifth most popular online site in the country (TNS-Gallup, 2009). The data we present in this chapter is therefore not necessarily a reflection of the site's content profile today. However, the focus of the following discussion is the methodological development that led to the results, not necessarily the results themselves, although we find it likely that the need for methodological development in this case also led to some of our more interesting findings.

The Data

The following data sets were produced for analysis.

- 1 Text-based news articles published by NRK online during 2009 ($n = 74,430$). Based on the available data, we estimate that this is close to representing the whole production from 2009. Initially we received from NRK an index file containing 502,180 URLs published between 2002 and 2010. A search produced 73,497 texts for 2009, but among these we found only one economy article. This discovery revealed the lack of consistency in publication systems used across newsrooms within the organization. We obtained the economy content from NRK separately, making 74,430 texts in total. We have no way of knowing exactly how many texts are missing from the sample, but we estimate that 74,430 is close to the complete output. The data set was collected and treated by way of computer software custom written for this project, on the basis of an index file of published articles.
- 2 News articles published on 10 preselected dates in 2009, abstracted from data set 1 ($n = 2,162$). This data set consists of a representative selection of text-based news items published across a constructed 10 day period. The dates were preselected from the second week of each month. In three cases sampling had to be moved to the next week due to the lack of a complete set of front-page snapshots for the date in question (see data set 3). As time restraints limited sampling to 10 days, May and July were excluded as the least representative months (May because of the national holiday, and July because the general summer holiday left fewer journalists on staff). Every week day was represented¹ and the selection was predetermined – a Monday from January, a Tuesday from February, and so on. Because of lower publication frequency at weekends, the sample contains only one Saturday and one Sunday. Event-sensitive days such as Easter and Christmas were avoided. Data set 2 underwent manual coding and quantitative content analysis.
- 3 Top 10 news stories from the front page or main domain (www.nrk.no) ($n = 1,192$). The sample was compiled from the same dates as data set 2. Top 10 stories were collected once every hour between 09:00 and 19:00, in the form of image snapshots of the entire front page. Data set 3 underwent manual coding and quantitative content analysis.

Items analyzed were limited to the text-based news articles published on nrk.no, and did not include redistribution of audiovisual content from broadcasting to the Internet. Audiovisual news content on nrk.no amounted primarily to radio and television productions ported to the website for streaming. As we were looking to analyze the news dissemination of NRK's online news unit, we chose to overlook audiovisual content not primarily intended for the online platform and to focus on

NRK's textually mediated online news. The hereto relevant aims of the project were to assess the degree to which nrk.no presented a continuous and updated news agenda online during 2009; the thematic distribution of its news content; its front page priorities; the depth and perspectives of the news content; and the degree to which nrk.no used interactive or other Internet-specific tools in its news dissemination.

The quantitative and computer-assisted content analyses performed on the collected data confirm that nrk.no presented a continuous and updated news service during 2009.² The analysis also shows that the news content on nrk.no overall was characterized by a high level of local news. However, its front page bore all the hallmarks of a national online news site and was dominated by international news, politics, crime stories, and popular culture. As an online news medium, nrk.no used interactive elements only to a limited degree (see Choi, 2004; Nguyen, 2008). The website had a low external linking practice, and limited use of video and audio, quizzes, tests, and commentary (see also Barnhurst, 2010; Carpenter, 2010; Ureta, 2011).

All in all the study confirmed assumptions about the online news genre (Chung, 2007; Quandt, 2008), with short news stories averaging 260 words, "breaking news," and a high publication frequency with over 200 published texts per day. Findings were the result of method triangulation. We used an inductive design on latent content (content requiring judgment to assign coding values to news items, such as sports, politics, business, and crime) and a deductive design on manifest content (content that is observable and countable, such as hyperlinks, pictures, publication date, and author) (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 20; Neuendorf, 2002, p. 23).

The Problems

Overall the research design illuminated problems with transferring content analysis methods from audiovisual media analyses to the online environment. The analysis involves two different aspects of NRK's online publication. Both the front page (the primary domain www.nrk.no) and the website's "inside" – its deeper structure of subsites – were under investigation. Because our aim was to ascertain the extent to which NRK was able to utilize the unique potential of the Web in its news publication, and to establish a profile of its content, we were faced with a large starting point of over 74,000 unique items of data. From the outset we knew we were faced with several methodological challenges in this regard. In the following we expand on these problems under four different headings. We divide the problems we encountered into problems with obtaining the full population of data; problems with defining the unit of analysis; problems with designing an operable coding scheme; and problems with establishing intercoder reliability. In the end, these methodological challenges helped

provide some of the more interesting findings of the analysis of the online logic of NRK's news production, the subject of which we will return to in the conclusion.

Problem 1: Obtaining the Full Population of Data

Our first question on assuming the task of designing a workable scheme for analyzing online news was "What exactly is the object we are studying?" The issue is thus one of inclusion and exclusion. What counts as part of the news service we are investigating, and what falls outside the scope of our research interest?³

Most of the portals used by NRK to disseminate content online are produced and maintained using the same content management system (CMS), but not all. This raises problems when it comes to gathering the data for news analysis, where consolidation of overlapping content can quickly become a central task. When there are a multitude of subsites and portals such as on www.nrk.no, the act of choosing what to include in the study will impact on the result, especially if important subsections are overlooked. Our solution to this problem was primarily a pragmatic one. We first moved to ascertain an overview of the total output of material. This can be achieved manually or using a spider – referred to as "software that automatically enables Internet searches" (Deuze, 2003). However we opted to conduct a manual examination. We then chose to focus only on the large portals and subdomains that regularly add new data, making sure they are produced by as few CMSs and design templates as possible. This simply means that there are fewer "templates" from which to automatically extract the variables in the codebook, which simplifies the data collection procedure. As our aim was to analyze news output, we chose to overlook content associated with radio and television programs, blogs, and other aspects of the content production outside the news streams organized by geography, news topics, or the front page.

A further issue that soon emerged was what constitutes an article from 2009. One of the challenges of conducting this project was to collect data of online publication after the fact – from the previous year. Hence, one of our first concerns was whether we could obtain representative data. Contact with NRK enabled us to start with an initial data set consisting of 502,180 news items – given to us as links in an index file in XML format. From this we selected the subset of links marked as published in 2009.⁴ As we aimed to analyze a year in retrospect, we needed to draw clear boundaries as to what material to include in the sample of cases. A central question here is whether an article published in 2009 and updated in 2010 is to be considered part of the 2009 or the 2010 sample. However you choose to define the appropriate date of publication – original publication date or the date of the update – there are bound to be some, if minor, impacts on the results. We chose to define the sample by its latest date of update. Hence, stories that were published in 2008 and updated in 2009 were included, while stories that were published in 2009 and updated in 2010 were

excluded. Excluded stories comprised 4% of the material. Despite the margin of error introduced by this issue, the large sample size of 74,430 items published in 2009 counteracts this problem.

Our initial glance at the material revealed that some of the data that could be expected in the full 2009 collection was missing. For instance, only *one* of the 74,430 items was classified within the portal www.nrk.no/economy. When we requested the missing data from NRK, we soon discovered that their practice of using several publication systems had led to a lack of integration. Hence the total amount of published material remains unknown to us as well as to NRK. Based on the material we did receive, however, we estimate that the total of 74,430 unique links to articles (where portal pages and nonsingle news items were removed) is likely to be close to the factual total number of online news texts produced in 2009.

Dealing with Mutual Exclusion

An overarching problem with defining the sample based on URL links to news stories is the absence of mutual exclusivity as a publication or storage principle. In the online publication system, a news article can be in several sections at once. A story can be catalogued under both economy and domestic affairs, and it can be published on both subsites. NRK's website and many other websites identify individual stories or texts by a unique identification consisting of a string of numbers easily found in the URL, for example, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/okonomi/1.6923373> and <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/norge/1.6923373>. This unique identification number enables registration independent of the rest of the URL. It makes the database recreation more complex, but keeps a tab on double posting. An alternative is to designate only one of the units as unique and to remove redundant URLs. This also removes the potential value of the categorization given in the URL. However, this phenomenon reveals more about how NRK's employees use the CMS and Web as a publication platform than about the content itself. And while interesting organizational questions can be answered through studying these types of actions, it falls outside the scope of this study. Hence, we removed duplicate URLs by a "distinct query" in our database, and kept only one URL for each story. The double postings amounted to 1,557 stories, approximately 2% of the material. This adds a systemic bias to the sample as we kept the URLs ranked first in alphabetical order. We decided on this course of action for the sake of simplicity and manageability, based on the fact that the number of double-posted URLs was low. By doing so we also kept the database structure on our servers in a single table format, and avoided recreating it with relations and keys. The idea behind the computer-supported analysis was to recreate as much data as possible based on the original database on NRK's servers. This entails collecting news articles from the Web and determining what constitutes the subsequent appropriate content for analysis. This process of delimitation is based on a combination of what we had access to and what we did not have access to, and the data we needed to answer the research questions. This raises questions as to how this transformation can be best operationalized.

Reconstructing the Database

The database itself is always the ideal data set for a content analysis of such a medium (unless the aesthetic or functional/interactive features are the focus of study), given that a website is only a representation of a database. A database dump containing both the structure and the content provides the best condition for an analysis that is precise and reliable. It also guarantees that all columns in the database are transferred. The disadvantages connected with such a database dump have to do with the complexities that occur in large databases of information systems used in news organizations. Resolving such complexities probably requires expert knowledge of the specific routines and practices of the information system and the news organization itself. Allowing a third party full access is itself rare, moreover, as such material comprises one of the more valuable resources of a news organization.

A recently developed and interesting approach in this regard is the (Web) API (application programming interface), an example of which is the Guardian Open Platform.⁵ NRK has announced it is working on developing such an API, without revealing too much of what it will contain, or if it will indeed be realized (NRK Beta, 2009). The main advantage of using an API is precision. A story is exposed through the API as structured information with metadata, as opposed to the results of a scraping procedure, where this structure needs to be created – a process that allows for a certain margin of error. The API approach would certainly provide a faster and easier way for researchers to access data, provided it contains the data required to answer the research questions. There is likely to emerge, however, uncertainties as to whether the API content matches the continuing flow of news on the front page or other central portals, but for an analysis of a website's "inside," an API remains a good option.

A third, less desirable, option for accessing the necessary data is to obtain an index file comprising a list of URLs intended for search engines, typically written in XML. An index will require a scraping operation using custom selectors to fetch the desired data. The advantage of the index file is that it often contains some metadata (e.g., dates) that can be useful. As a last resort, an index can be compiled using a crawler, spider, or robot – a computer program that browses the Web, typically in order to gather data to index for search engines. This method can potentially insure that links missing from an index, or that are not exposed through an API, are obtained, but it adds another methodological step and can be time-consuming and error-prone. This approach also requires a specific set of technical skills and could require a third-party technician. As metadata are lacking prior to scraping, making a subselection in the material (for instance, from a specific year or month) first requires scraping all links to establish the scope for the study. When it comes to obtaining the data, the closer to the original database you can get, the better the results you can expect to achieve. As we were unable to obtain a database dump, and NRK does not have a public API, we consider ourselves lucky that they had an index file. The solution was time-consuming, but worked well in terms of operationalizing our research design.

Analyzing Front Pages

The front page priorities of an online news site are essential for determining the content profile and frequency of publication of a national medium aiming for high visibility among online users. To be able to look back and see how a website looked day by day in the previous year is no small request. While services such as the Wayback Machine by the Internet Archive (<http://archive.org/>) continuously catalogue snapshots of web pages, it does not necessarily do so at frequent intervals, and thus does not provide material of sufficient scope for a content analysis. A register of website updates must be set up prior to data collection and kept running throughout the desired period of time. As our project launched only in late 2009, we had no possibility of collecting this data ourselves. Regular contact with NRK insured that we discovered that the broadcaster had itself recorded screen dumps of their front page every hour of every day. These records consist of large image files where all the information is stored as pixels, rather than as text and images in markup. We used these images to construct a sample for an analysis of the content priorities for the top 10 stories on the site – roughly equivalent to the “above the fold” priorities of the printed newspaper.

The Web is still a relatively immature and changeable arena. The limited possibilities for, and practices of, archiving online content put strains on the collection, handling, and use of data. Not only does the technology provide significantly larger sets of data, but the data also require a different type of classification and analysis (see Brügger, 2008, for discussion). The ephemeral nature of this material adds to the challenges when the analysis can be performed only the year after publication, as in our project. In order to penetrate the ephemeral nature of the online news flow, moreover, we first need to know what we are looking to analyze, that is, to identify the proper unit of analysis.

Problem 2: Defining the Unit of Analysis

We knew from the outset that we would have to account for the specificities of the online environment when designing our methodology. In the analysis of content in a newspaper or a bulletin broadcast, the data obtained on tape or on paper are fixed in time and unchangeable from the moment of publication. As it is not possible to edit analogue disseminated news *ex post*, the units of analysis remain open to inspection. Not least, it means the study is possible to replicate, a factor that increases its validity. The technological nature of the Internet means that online news differs from analogue news in at least two significant ways that are relevant to our study. First, the editorial moment is not frozen in time, which means multiple versions of the same story can exist of which only the latest publication is considered the “right” one. This raises questions as to the editorial institution of journalism. Internet technology changes the nature of journalism from a daily summary of the most signifi-

cant events to a continuous deadline of a potentially limitless number of events. A related second issue is the ephemeral nature of digital information itself. As noted by Michael Karlsson and Jesper Strömbäck in their study of website update frequencies, the question therefore becomes how to “freeze the flow” of online news (Karlsson & Strömbäck, 2010).

Karlsson and Strömbäck observe that there is a lack of viable research methods for investigating empirically the impact of the two primary characteristics of online news – interactivity and immediacy – on news content at the level of the individual report. They call for a strategy that can “freeze the flow” of online news so as to allow for the systematic content analysis of online news and their special characteristics (Karlsson & Strömbäck, 2010, p. 6). The Internet is first of all characterized by a lack of volume or space restrictions found in traditional media. Second, web technology does not make news organizations technologically bound to produce one original copy ready for replication at a specific moment in time. The Internet instead carries the possibility of fast, continuous publication with frequent updates – characteristics that engender traits of immediacy and interactivity in news dissemination (Deuze, 2003, p. 206; Karlsson & Strömbäck, 2010, p. 2; Nguyen, 2010, p. 224). “Freezing the flow” therefore represents the challenge to take the ephemeral nature of online news into consideration in content analysis of web media. As such it relates to a common methodological issue in all content analyses regardless of publication platform, namely the question of the unit of analysis.

Weare and Lin noted back in 2000 how the chaotic structure of the Internet complicates sample selection, and how the integration of technologies – what they refer to as text, video, graphic, or audio – makes the design of valid descriptive categories complicated (Weare & Lin, 2000, p. 273). They observe that

In traditional, linear forms of media, such as newspapers and television broadcasts, the boundaries of messages, such as a news article, are clearly defined. Similarly, the structure of newspapers and broadcasts are sufficiently standardized and their syntax is sufficiently well understood that defining the nature of a message’s context is straightforward. In contrast, the nonlinear nature of the WWW obscures the boundaries and environment of messages and involves more complex semantics. (Weare & Lin, 2000, p. 280)

One therefore has to take great care when defining the unit of analysis in the study of online content. For instance, Weare and Lin describe a web page as “a highly aggregated recoding unit,” equivalent to a full newspaper article (p. 282). In order to design a valid coding scheme for an online news article, they say, we need to define smaller recording units based on an understanding of the site’s underlying structures (p. 83).

One of the more specific problems we encountered in this regard emerged during the manual coding of the front page of nrk.no. It concerns the boundary between update and publication. The issue was essentially the question of what constitutes

an update to a story. At what point is an update significant enough that it becomes a “new story”? This is one of the more problematic discussions regarding the unit of analysis in front page analysis of online news, and as publication frequencies escalate, it will continue to present problems. A heavily covered story, such as a political press conference, from which every update is logged as a new story, will increase the number of political stories in the sample. Compared to logging such new items as updates to one story, this increases the visibility of “politics” in the resulting analysis – possibly making it seem as if the website is primarily dominated by journalistic content of high legitimacy, providing you measure content in “instances” rather than in “volume.” Hence, it must be considered what coding practices most fairly reflect the content of the website. A likely dilemma to consider here is the case of the continuous coverage of a sports event. As an illustration, we decided to draw the line between update and “new story” at the point where the narrative changes. For instance, in the event of a football game there is likely to be an original narrative in terms of “preparing for the game.” Once the game is underway, a new story is logged where reports on goals scored constitute updates rather than a new story. Once the game is over and the narrative changes from “playing the game” to “won the game,” another unit of analysis is collected for coding. The boundaries between narratives are, however, highly permeable and coders need to take great care in the coding process, noting precedence that they subsequently follow diligently.

Ultimately, the unit of analysis on the front page was defined as headline and image. For the “inside” analysis we defined the unit of analysis as the full article after boilerplate removal. Weare and Lin’s points regarding syntax and structure of news messages are key entry points to the computer-assisted analysis of online news in this regard. Here, the standardization and syntax of online news as offered by rigid CMSs and standards like HTML provide the predictability necessary to conduct this kind of analysis efficiently. Large websites such as news portals produce a predictable syntax for most of the content that is published through the system. Journalists usually do not write HTML, but rather enter text into forms in CMS that store the text in a database. When the CMS outputs the content from the database to the website it loops through the same tables each time. These are printed in HTML in a design template that provides a custom look to the news brand. The template’s structure or syntax can be recognized by software, allowing us to recreate the database – or the underlying structure of the news publication – for research purposes.

Problem 3: Constructing the Coding Design

How a coding scheme is designed depends at least in part on a preconception of the characteristics of the messages you are studying (Weare & Lin, 2000, p. 284). We therefore need some basic assumption of what constitutes news and news-related content. News production is one of the more legitimating production activities a

media organization can engage in, and is particularly important for the legitimacy of a public service broadcaster. NRK's bylaws state that the broadcaster "shall support and strengthen democracy" by facilitating public debate, provide sufficient information, cover elections thoroughly, uncover critical issues, and protect the public from the abuse of power, and that it do so with editorial independence, balance, integrity, and credibility. The bylaws also state that NRK should provide an updated service of regional, national, and international news on the Internet and on mobile devices. Provisions specify that these services should provide factual and background information related to news, debates, and current affairs. Moreover, these services should encourage interactive participation and "stimulate knowledge, understanding and use of other media platforms by users of all ages" (NRK, 2012). This is the vantage point for the research design, and the background against which we conducted our analysis.

As a similar study of online news on this scale had, to our knowledge, not been previously undertaken, few model research designs existed that could be used for the purpose of this analysis. A design outline was therefore formed on the basis of a previous quantitative content analysis of Norwegian television news (including NRK news) (Waldahl, Andersen, & Rønning, 2002, 2009). A general orientation within the medium in question, along with a short pilot study, enabled us to ascertain the medium-specific variables that were viable for automatic coding by computer, and the variables that needed human coding. Coding schemes for online specific news markers, such as interactive elements and update frequencies, had to be designed from scratch. This process was facilitated by frequent contact with NRK staff who willingly answered technical questions.

Relevant here were, for instance, questions regarding the subdomain practices within the organization – for example, to what extent were nrk.no/economy and nrk.no/foreign used consistently by publication gatekeepers? NRK has two main publication channels online – a central editorial function for nrk.no that was only semi-operational at the point of our analysis, and 13 district offices each with its own editorial gate. Local offices (for instance, nrk.no/hordaland) have a "front page" of their own, where stories produced by local journalists are published. From there, stories can be moved to the front page if the story is found fit by a central editorial staff in the capital, Oslo. Other questions that were resolved through contact with the organization ranged from technical issues such as how the organization had stored the data, to more journalistic issues such as sourcing routines in cases of wire material. In the latter case, practices turned out to be so inconsistent that data measuring of the number of wire stories in the sample had to be discarded. Contact with the organization can therefore be a great facilitator as well as a time-saver.

Based on a survey of the environment and the blueprint provided by the Waldahl et al. (2002, 2009) design, we ended up with a coding scheme consisting of approximately 50 mainly categorical variables, each with up to eight subcategories. Manually coded data were logged in the statistical analysis tool SPSS. The variables for the three separate analyses are set out in Table 21.1.

Table 21.1 A selection of coding variables for front page and content analysis, and computer-assisted coding

Front page analysis	Content analysis	Computer coding
Publication date	URL	URL
Headline	Headline	Unique ID
Priority on the page	Domestic/foreign	Publication date (hour/minute)
Priority change (up/down)	Location (country of topic)	Update (hour/minute)
Domestic/foreign	Economy	Number of interactive elements
Economy	Crime	Commentary/debate section
Crime	Social issues	Game elements
Social issues	Politics	Poll
Politics	Accidents	Video
Accidents	Culture and entertainment	Picture gallery
Culture and entertainment	Sport	Flash file
Sport	Weather	Number of words in the article
Weather	Science and technology	Number of links in the article
Science and technology	Genre (news, features, etc.)	Internal/external links
Promo (for own programs, etc.)	Topical (on the agenda)	Local/central office affiliation
Story updates	Context links (similar stories)	TV/radio program affiliation
Links		Sidebar (links to similar stories)

Some of the variables provide simple manifest data that log characteristics of the texts – such as publication date, unique identification, and the number of links in the text. Other variables allow for coding of latent content, and contain up to eight subcategories further defining the themes.⁶ For instance, included in the social issues category are topics related to the health sector and the education sector, stories about working life, and minority, consumer, and environmental issues. The thematic spread of this category caused some problems in the testing of intercoder reliability, as we explain further under Problem 4 below. Doubts would arise in the frequent cases where welfare state issues (for instance, budget deficiencies in the hospital sector or labor strikes) involved politicians and/or government ministers. The codebook specifies that such stories be logged according to sector (health sector, work sector, education sector, etc.) rather than the level of political controversy. The complexities associated with these journalistic areas nevertheless posed challenges for the coding of latent content.

Making Coding Scheme Adjustments

The research design had to be adjusted somewhat as the coding process progressed. Some variables were too time-consuming to log and were removed. A relevant example here was the variable registering human sources. Other aspects of NRK's news dissemination were so specific that we had to establish new categories to capture these profile-building features of NRK's online news coverage. Items that were added include sidebar functions and specific contextual linking practices tying

articles to previous stories of a similar topic. We also added a few subcategories under the content variable – most notably the subcategory “media” under the “culture and entertainment” category, the subcategory “traffic” under the “social issues” category, and the subcategory “misdemeanors” under “crime.” These were added to the coding scheme *ex post* to facilitate differentiation of inflated “other” categories under culture, social issues, and crime. Some of these “other” categories approached 30% of the coverage, which presented a problem for the validity of the coding design. We therefore proceeded to comb through each of these categories in search of topical clusters that could be extracted from the material. Such *ex post* coding is, of course, problematic. However, it is also necessary in order to establish a viable content profile. Provided all precedents are noted and followed consistently, the result should present few problems in terms of the overall validity of the study.

What we can conclude from such methodological findings is, first, that the online news medium allows for a greater diversity of content than broadcast news. Second, this necessary adjustment of the coding scheme reflects the extent to which NRK’s online services communicate the organization’s local news profile. NRK is a national institution that is made up of 13 district offices each of which produces local television and radio news bulletins daily, and therefore also publishes local news online on a daily basis. As the necessary coding adjustments reveal, local news carries different characteristics from what the national agenda-based coding scheme allowed for. Whereas traffic violations and road work are reported frequently enough in local news to warrant additional “misdemeanors” and “traffic” subcategories in the coding scheme, such instances appear so seldom on a national news agenda that here they fall appropriately within the category “other.”

When we decided to base the coding scheme on a previous codebook designed for the analysis of television news, the assumption was that latent content categories and other news-related variables appropriate for NRK’s traditional broadcast news would also suit the purposes for the study of its online news output. As demonstrated, this proved to be true only to a certain degree. The basic latent content categories used – such as economy, politics, and crime – are comprehensive enough to apply in most studies of news content. However, in this study, assumptions regarding content profile and the latent and manifest variables created problems both in the data collection process, in the coding process, in the analysis, and in the reliability testing. The fact that such design transfer did not create more problems than it actually did – complications that could indeed be solved – was an interesting analytical finding. It speaks to the endurance of news as a particular narrative form. Hence, news media do not only carry different characteristics across publication platforms, but they also share a great many features, particularly in terms of genre traits, communicative forms, journalistic standards, and overarching institutional practices.

Establishing the Computational Coding Design

In the computer-assisted coding process, the selection of manifest variables to map the use of interactive features and linking practices on nrk.no was done more or less

in the same way as a web scraping. Here, we parsed HTML to obtain the data we were after by writing selectors that recognize data sought in a markup-based document. The data sought amount to categories in the codebook, or the properties of the articles that can help us answer the research questions. As both research questions and markup will tend to vary from project to project, some custom tailoring is likely needed, also in cases where the object of research uses multiple CMSs or radically different design templates. In this project we wrote the software selectors in free open software: the Python⁷ programming language with the screen-scraping library BeautifulSoup.⁸ The program looped through the entire folder of downloaded web documents and fetched the items identified by the categories in the codebook. An example of a selector looks like this:

```
if soup.find("div", { "class": "article" }) > -1:
    article = soup.find("div", { "class": "article" })
    for tag in article.findAll():
        if tag.name == 'h3' and tag.renderContents() == "Gi din karakter:":
            poll = poll + 1
            interactive = interactive + 1
```

In this example we are looking for a div-tag with a class of articles in a BeautifulSoup object named “soup” that contains a single article in its entirety. We loop through the HTML tags inside this div-tag. If one of these tags is an h3 tag (a header) displaying the text “Gi din karakter:” (meaning “Rate now” – the design template insures this header appears every time a poll is used) we add the value +1 to the variables registering “polls” and “interactive features.” In this instance, we considered a poll with a voting option an interactive element. At the end of the loop the values from all the selectors – one for each item in the codebook – are saved and the next article is subjected to the same treatment. The key to this process is to find ways to identify “smaller recording units” (Weare & Lin, 2000, p. 83) in the web documents and to write this identification process as selectors as in the example above. The result of the process is written to a CSV file – a file option that insures that the results can be imported into a variety of computer programs, such as the SPSS statistical program Excel, and to databases (e.g., MySQL or Access). This gives each member of the research team the flexibility to work with the data according to personal preference and methodological orientation.

Problem 4: Measuring Reliability

Quantitative content analyses should always report validity as measured by inter-coder agreement. Reliability reporting increases the validity of the analysis and contributes to the further improvement of the method within media and communication studies. A premise for reliability measures is testing the extent to which two

or more coders can be said to agree on the meaning, and hence coding, of latent content. For the analysis to be valid, we need to have the same understanding of what constitutes political news, what constitutes an updated story versus a new story, as well as to agree on the differences between an article and a short bulletin. We operated with a wide definition of news and have therefore included items beyond the traditional hard news genre. Exceptions to this inclusive practice have been topics such as gardening, cars, horoscopes, TV guide, and so on. This division can be seen as problematic to the extent that many newspapers today carry separate sections with just this type of content (see Harcup, 2004). However, as our object of study was connected with the broadcasting medium, these content types were associated more with specific NRK programs (and their Internet sites), rather than with the news dissemination of NRK online.

Due to limited resources, we used only one primary coder in the manual coding process. For the content analysis $n = 2162$, intercoder reliability was tested on 100 units. We also tested 100 units on the front page analysis, $n = 1192$. The reliability testing displayed some of the problems that might arise from using only one primary coder. Kappa⁹ was achieved for none of the 14 variables tested in the first reliability test, with 9 variables measuring below .50 (kappa ranged from .20 to .67, and from 60% to 94% agreement). As raw agreement here was acceptable in most cases (with the primary content variable and social issues the only variables scoring below 70%), we assumed low variance to be a contributing factor in addition to inadequate coder training. Cohen's kappa has been criticized for being somewhat conservative, and often results in low variance in studies such as ours. Therefore, we set validity measures at above .70 for kappa and above 70% for raw agreement. To attain reliability above .70, a second reliability test was, due to restricted resources, performed by one of the authors, and resulted in acceptable kappa (between .43 and .86) and raw agreement (between 67% and 97%) for all variables except social issues, which still measured low at .61/67%. A third test measuring only the primary content variable was performed by two of the senior researchers to secure intersubjectivity within the project, and reliability was attained at .75/79%. The struggle with achieving reliability for the content category "social issues" not only revealed the fragility of using only one primary coder; it also illuminated the problems associated with using such a thematically wide category for content coding.

The reliability of the computer-assisted coding was not tested in this study, primarily due to restricted resources. It should, however, ideally be done. We would suggest testing precision and recall values (Baeza-Yates & Ribeiro-Neto, 1999). The main advantage of computer-assisted analysis is scale, as a larger number of items can be processed more quickly and with greater precision by computers than by human effort. In traditional content analyses the size of the sample correlates with the certainty of the numbers. This favors automation as we can perform analyses on more units in less time. It also makes it harder to find and pinpoint errors post run time,¹⁰ as the data set very quickly becomes very large. A test of the accuracy of the selections and quantification of attributes could be given as a percentage. This can be

done by testing the algorithm on a data set of known manually categorized material, and comparing the manual with the automated result. This is similar to a recall value in information retrieval (Baeza-Yates & Ribeiro-Neto, 1999). Such a statistical classification is a meaningful way of measuring the accuracy of the algorithm and the quality of the compiled data. Particularly if selectors aim for latent content, where the results are expected to be poor, a measure for the algorithm is needed. In such cases, a variation of a precision value would be appropriate.

In formulating the selectors, tests and adjustments are necessary to achieve sufficient flexibility and precision. All selectors in use should be tested. A manual examination of the results produced by the algorithm is required here. Errors will be quantified if allowed, so iterative testing – from single units to smaller samples and random samples of the entire material – will insure consistency throughout the project. Multiple testers should participate by looking for errors in a processed sample. The aim is to insure that the algorithm is precise to a degree that exceeds the precision of human coders.¹¹ For manifest content the aim should be 100% agreement – a feasible goal if the CMS prints content in a consistent way. Testing results will vary from news site to news site, and between different software approaches. A test to formally validate the precision of the algorithm and accompany the results will strengthen the credibility of the research findings.¹²

Results and Findings

In this chapter we have outlined the major problems we encountered when performing a content analysis of a year's output of online news produced by the public service broadcaster NRK. The problems were primarily connected with obtaining the data, defining the unit of analysis, designing a viable coding scheme, and with achieving intercoder reliability for the coding design. The problems we encountered were specifically related to our attempt to transfer a content analysis designed for television to the online medium. As Karlsson and Strömbäck emphasize, the dilemma with researching journalism online is how to “freeze” the flow of news so that it becomes viable for coding and analysis. Here, we have employed a computer-assisted approach in combination with a traditional content analysis methodology to attain such a freeze – one instant being 2009 in retrospect through an index file, and the other being the front page hour by hour in pixilated format. This computer-assisted intervention into the material has been the method by which we have endeavored to indeed “freeze” the news flow and thereby to handle the ephemeral nature of online news.

Because of this approach, the problems created by the ephemeral nature of online news also produced results in the analysis. As we adjusted the research design from television to online, we also adjusted our methodology to the grammar and logic of online news. Large numbers of stories that defied categorization not only illuminated

problems with the national agenda-based coding design; it also helped uncover how the public service broadcaster was adjusting to an online news agenda. When measuring the update frequency among the top 10 stories on the front page of nrk.no, we found that 36% of all stories were new in the sense that they had been published within the last hour. Hence if you were to check nrk.no every hour during 2009, you would on average find that each time you entered the site, 36% of top 10 stories were new. The results also showed the pace of publication, where 79% of top stories were replaced with a new top story, every hour. Thematically, above-the-fold stories largely followed the typical online news agenda of event-centered and easily digestible news. Sports was the largest content category among top 10 stories on the front page with 23% (followed by crime with 19%) but failed to reach the top five as often as crime stories or politics. If we focus on only the very top of the page, Figure 21.1 shows the distribution of content between the top five stories on the front page.

We also found a clear difference in editorial or journalistic priorities between news on the front page and news on the website's "inside." For one thing, while the front page contained 23% foreign news, only 2% of stories published on the inside were international in scope. This can perhaps be explained by referring to the local office production structure of the website, where approximately 80% of all content published during 2009 was produced by one of NRKs district offices. This production reality was also reflected in the thematic distribution of content, with a predictably heavy emphasis on social issues and local politics on the "inside," and an overemphasis on murders and suspicious deaths on the front page. Figure 21.2 shows the difference in thematic priorities between the front page and the "inside."

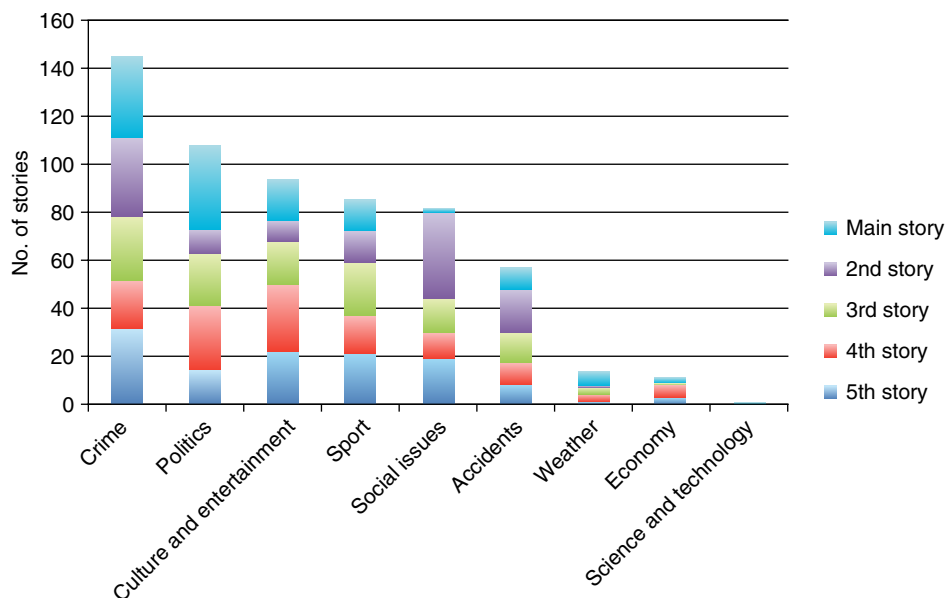


Figure 21.1 Front page priorities, top five stories ($n = 119$)

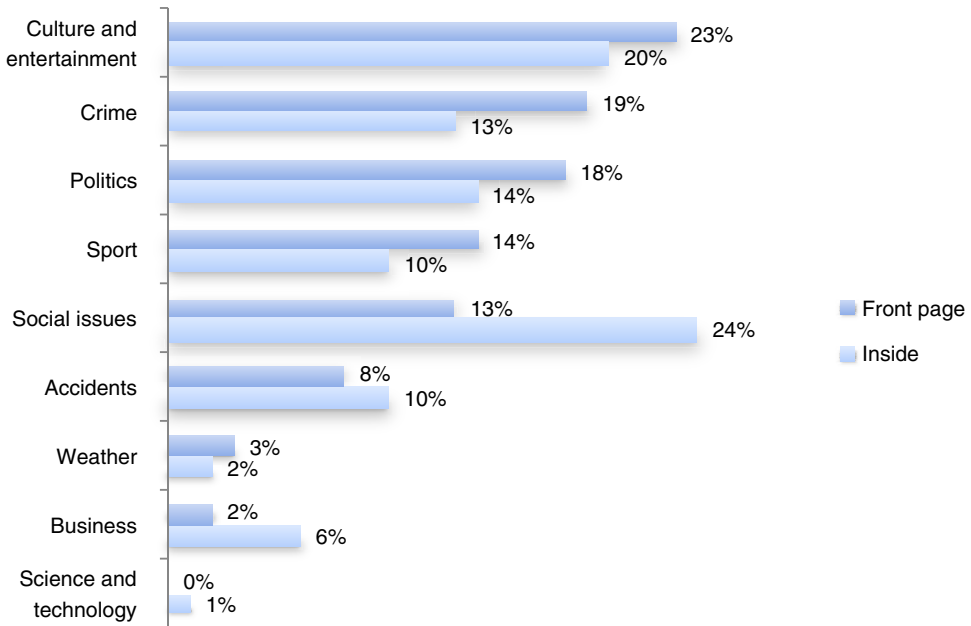


Figure 21.2 Share of stories on the front page ($n = 1192$) and the content ($n = 2162$)

As for the results of the computer-assisted coding, the analysis revealed some predictable patterns in the website's use of features that allow for user involvement, and in terms of external linking practices. Research from the last decade has shown that traditional news media's utilization of unique web-specific aspects such as interactive options for users, multimedia features, and various forms of participation remain scarce (Choi, 2004; Karlsson, 2010; Nguyen, 2008; Rosenberry, 2005). In particular, studies consistently find that the use of external hyperlinks remains low (see Barnhurst, 2010; Carpenter, 2010; Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams, & Trammell, 2005; Engebretsen, 2006; Oblak, 2005; Ureta, 2011). In the case of nrk.no, the analysis of news output for 2009 showed that 52% of stories contained no hyperlinks. Many of the published news items can be described as short notices where linking would not be considered necessary. However, the fact that only 12% of stories contained hyperlinks to external websites reflects the scarcity of the external linking practice in the organization's online journalism. As for interactive features, nrk.no displayed a relatively low use of features that allow for user engagement during their 2009 news coverage. "Interactivity" is, of course, a highly contested and notoriously amorphous term. In practice we chose to include in the measure the (widget) elements that appeared in the sample. Hence we dealt with interactivity as a fixed set of story-centric elements that require the user's action (e.g., a mouse click) to trigger extra content related to a specific story. This includes the use of video, audio, navigable

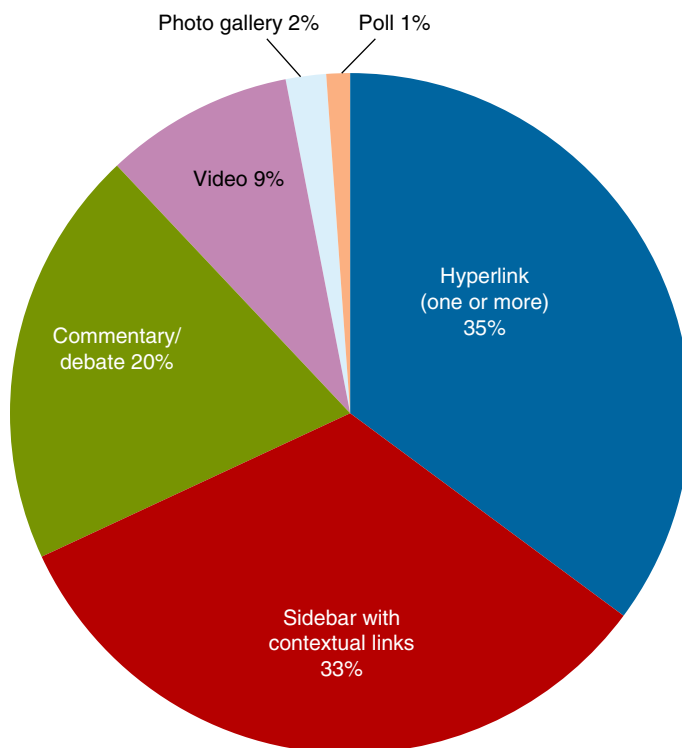


Figure 21.3 Interactive features on nrk.no during 2009 ($n = 74,430$)

photo galleries, polls, games, and so on. Figure 21.3 shows the frequency with which different interactive elements were utilized in the NRK's online news coverage during 2009.

Conclusions

An analysis of digital media is unavoidably also an analysis of the information system through which the media content is distributed and consumed. The efficiency of web publishing, where immediacy emerges as a key news value for online content, relies on the predictability and rigidity of a CMS. The same predictability and rigidity allows researchers to apply computation to analysis of the same material. Understanding the information system underlying news production and dissemination contributes to our understanding of how media is accessed, of the limitations posed on news by technology, and ultimately of the media content itself. Emerging online news production practices can therefore be seen as inherently tactical adjustments

conducted by media institutions in adapting to a competitive market. While endless space for elaboration, analysis, discussion, and background information is one of the possibilities offered by the online news endeavor, speed is regularly chosen over depth. While findings from our project may suggest that being first takes precedence over having the broadest coverage, the local–national duality in the content profile also suggest the presence of conflicting ideals in the editorial decision-making routines. For a license-fee-funded broadcaster, the online remit presents a dual challenge to fulfill public service obligations while competing for audiences on the national arena.

What this project, and the convergence between conventional content analysis and computational methods, demonstrate is that whereas the ephemeral nature of online news may create a new grammar of news dissemination that requires new methods and theoretical frameworks, the form of news as an institutional product is also an enduring one that warrants attention in terms of analysis in such studies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research presented in this article was funded by the Norwegian Media Authority. The authors wish to thank Dag Elgesem, Hallvard Moe, Maren Agdestein, Joachim Laberg, Linn Lorgen, and Gyri S. Losnegaard.

NOTES

- 1 The dates were: Monday, January 19; Wednesday, February 11; Thursday, March 12; Friday, April 24 (selection moved one week because of Easter); Sunday, June 21; Tuesday, August 18; Wednesday, September 16; Thursday, October 15; Friday, November 13; Saturday, December 5 – one Monday; one Tuesday; two Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; one Saturday; and one Sunday.
- 2 This chapter is based on findings from a project conducted by a team of researchers at the Department of Information Science and Media Studies at the University of Bergen. Previous publications from the project present findings in greater detail. See Elgesem, Moe, Sjøvaag, Stavelin, Agdestein, Laberg, Lorgen, & Losnegaard, 2010; Sjøvaag, Moe, & Stavelin, 2012; and Sjøvaag & Stavelin, 2012.
- 3 As is the case with many online sites, www.nrk.no has multiple portals (examples include www.nrk.no/sport; www.nrk.no/economy; www.nrk.no/election09) which reorganize content that can also feature in short form on the front page. The same type of organization is found in the site's characteristic geographical subdivisions (such as www.nrk.no/hordaland; www.nrk.no/nordland). This geographical division of published online content is based on the broadcaster's organization into 13 local offices spread around the country. Hence, nrk.no is primarily organized into two subdomain structures – one based on thematic categories, and one based on production location, both of which restructure content easily identifiable as news.

- 4 These were downloaded to our server by GNU Wget, a process we intentionally slowed down to spare the NRK servers from unnecessary strain. The collected data took approximately 4.2 GB of space, and were collected over a period of five days. Unwanted bits of the downloaded files were removed in a “boilerplate removal process” (Fairon & Naets, 2007) where everything but the news article text was removed from the sample – for instance, headers, footers, and menus. The boilerplate removal was undertaken to save space and time and to remove unnecessary complexity in the further treatment of the collected material.
- 5 See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/open-platform> (accessed August 12, 2013).
- 6 For example, stories logged as culture and entertainment include reports from the arts sector and popular culture, news about the royal family, portraits of celebrities, and curiosities. Topical issues in the content analysis coded for long-term agenda setting and included the financial crisis, the national election, climate change, Barack Obama, the Iranian election, and the Muhammad cartoons crisis.
- 7 See www.python.org for downloadable installer and information.
- 8 <http://www.crummy.com/software/BeautifulSoup/> (accessed August 12, 2013).
- 9 We used Cohen’s kappa (k) to measure the agreement between two coders who independently assign values to items applying codebook variables that are mutually exclusive. Kappa calculates intercoder agreement by dividing actual agreement by chance or random agreement, arriving at observed agreement (Krippendorff, 2004, pp. 245–247).
- 10 This is the time during which a program is executing.
- 11 In all aspects that do not require human judgment. Make sure all selectors aim for manifest content. Latent content selectors will need a more solid documentation of precision.
- 12 To better reproduce the results, the selector code could be added to the report, or even published as an open-source project. This will further strengthen the credibility of the findings.

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Digital Ethnography and Media Practices

Elisenda Ardévol and Edgar Gómez-Cruz

ABSTRACT

This chapter deals with ethnographic methodologies used when studying digital media, social contexts, and cultural practices. The chapter starts with an introduction to ethnography and its challenges when going digital. It then provides an overview of the different approaches to digital ethnography depending on the object of study: (1) the ethnography of online communities, virtual worlds, and social media sites; (2) the connective ethnography proposal through online and offline field settings; and (3) the ethnography of everyday life and the issue of audiences and creative practices in digital media. Finally, we discuss methodological issues relating to how to conduct online ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation, interviews, as well as digital tools for registering, analyzing, presenting data, and some ethical considerations.

Introduction

Since the emergence of computer-mediated communication (CMC), and especially since the spread of Internet use and the World Wide Web boom, scholars and institutions have been interested in studying the social processes that accompany the devel-

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems193

opment of these digital communicative and informational technologies (Silver & Massanari, 2006; Wellman, 2004). A growing body of work consists of methodological and epistemological reflections on how to study such phenomena. From many different disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, ethnographic methods have been used as a research strategy to study uses of the Internet, online social practices, and how people engage in networked relationships, and to account for the moral order of their activities (Lindlof & Shatzer, 1998; Mason, 1999).

At the same time, the cultural turn in communication research has raised the status of ethnography as an adequate methodology for studying the conditions of production, reception, and consumption of media. Media ethnography seeks to develop an understanding of active audiences by exploring genre readings, issues of race and gender, family living, and identity, in order to understand media as a cultural form (Murphy, 1999, p. 207). As a consequence, the ethnographic approach is well established today among the social sciences and its different fields of research, including Internet studies, the social studies of technology, and communication and media studies.

The conventional notion of ethnography within anthropology, as epitomized by Bronisław Malinowski's work, implies the understanding of cultural formations from an experiential point of view. Ethnographers must attend to people's sayings and doings, including their material condition of existence and their worldviews: how people build meaning in relation to their experiences and actions. Participant observation and in-depth interviews are at the core of ethnographic fieldwork. Through participant observation, ethnographers gain access to people's ways of life, not only by observing behavior but also by sharing their daily life routines and social meanings. In this sense, ethnographers' subjectivity and socialization play an important role in the construction of ethnographic knowledge (Lee & Ingold, 2006). They are not factors that should be avoided for the sake of greater objectivity but constituent elements that have to be controlled and put into work in the data analysis and interpretation (Bateson, 1972). The result of ethnographic fieldwork is a theoretical description of the cultural patterns that cross-cut different domains of social activity. Therefore, the ethnographic perspective is anchored in the "grounded" experience of the ethnographer, as well as being contextual and holistic in its scope.

Moving this ethnographic approach to the study of the Internet poses many methodological challenges. What is the purpose of Internet ethnography? How might the traditional methods in ethnographic research be used in online fieldwork? Are there other related methods that are specifically needed to study Internet communication? These kinds of questions have brought to the fore the need for methodological reflection about the specificity of the medium. Different categorizations such as virtual, connective, hypermedia, netnography, or digital ethnography had been proposed to indicate the particularities involved in "adapting" the ethnographic method to Internet research.

This chapter explores some of these different approaches to ethnography and how they also imply different ways of understanding the Internet as a field and object of

study. We propose the term “digital” to embrace these varieties of Internet-based research approaches because it is more semantically neutral and more useful to refer to the different practices and contexts mediated by digital technologies.

Digital Ethnography

Christine Hine (2000) argues that the Internet, as an object of study for the social sciences, has been theorized in two ways: either as a cultural form or as a cultural practice. As far as the cultural form is concerned, she understands the “cultures of Internet” as the study of the specific cultural forms based on the Internet, the paradigmatic example of which can be the development of netiquette, emoticons, and specific online norms and values. In other words, Internet cultures are cultural forms that emerge on the Internet like virtual worlds players, webcam girls, hackers, bloggers, and other collectives whose senses of self, belonging, and group socialization are shaped significantly by digital media. As a cultural practice, Hine suggests that, as happens with other creations, the Internet may be analyzed as a “cultural artifact.” This implies the study of practices which are not necessarily specific of the Internet but acquire different dimensions online, for example, the making of videos for YouTube or sharing photos on Internet services like Flickr or Instagram.

Focusing specifically on the relationship between the ethnographic method and Internet studies, we distinguish three different approaches, which can be defined as follows: virtual ethnography or ethnographies of cyberspace, connective or online/offline ethnographies, and ethnographies of Internet in everyday life. These methodological approaches have evolved in parallel to the different Internet development periods. The first starts from the Internet’s beginnings to the late 1990s, the second coincides with the expansion of the World Wide Web, and the third corresponds to the development of the so-called social media or social network sites, from approximately 2005 until the present day. However, if there is a close relationship between technological stages, users’ appropriations, and the elaboration of different ethnographic strategies, the fact is that, even today, these three ethnographic approaches coexist in several and remixed ways.

Virtual Ethnography

The first empirical studies applying ethnographic fieldwork to the Internet were conducted by scholars from different backgrounds mostly from communication and media studies and were based on triggering off metaphors that led to a conceptualization of the Internet as a new kind of social space. This “cyberspace” was conceptualized as an immaterial place where disembodied selves could freely interplay, forming “virtual communities,” and where new social and cultural patterns flour-

ished and gave birth to a brand new “cyberculture” (Jones, 1997; Porter, 1996; Shields, 1996).

The notion of cyberspace, taken from the novelist William Gibson who defined it as “a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators” and as a “graphical representation of data abstracted from banks of every computer in the human system of an unimaginable complexity arranged in the non-space of the mind” (Gibson, 1984, p. 30), was used by activists such as John Perry Barlow and academics like Michael Benedikt to refer to the social space made possible by the Internet. In the popular as well as in the sociological imagination, cyberspace or “virtual space” almost became synonymous with the Internet itself (Gómez-Cruz, 2007).

Furthermore, at this early stage, the role given to technology to transform culture and society was highly important. Thus, the first social studies of the Internet considered that the properties of the medium such as virtuality, spatiality, disintegration, and disembodiment were shaping new modes of social activity (Slater, 2002). For example, considering that, at this time, computer-mediated interaction was mainly textual, anonymity was taken as an intrinsic characteristic of the medium. This is illustrated by Peter Steiner’s famous cartoon, in which two dogs are sitting in front of a computer and one says to the other: “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.”

Along the same line, in 1994 Howard Rheingold inspired another powerful metaphor: virtual community. Based on his own experience of participating in the electronic bulletin board system (BBS) known as The WELL, he argued that long-term participation in these electronic forums creates a shared system of beliefs, values and norms, and specific behaviors. These enact a collective sense of belonging and create a new kind of community, based solely on common interests, goodwill, and solidarity. Sherry Turkle (1997) coined a third compelling image: virtual identity. In *Life on the Screen*, and drawing on her research with multi-user domain (MUD) users, she explained how people could perform different and alternative online identities. The goal, then, was to establish whether computer-mediated interaction was changing our own understandings of self and self-identity, and to what extent virtual identities were free from the social and cultural constraints of “real life.”

If the connection to the Internet was like “entering into cyberspace” and one could create alternative online identities, whose socialization shaped virtual communities, it was tempting to study these communities as though conducting exploratory research of a “primitive culture,” as in the early days of anthropology. First, ethnography was considered the proper method for describing an unexplored territory (as the non-Western cultures were for early Western anthropologists), and, second, computer-mediated interaction seemed to give rise to new genres of discourse that could be described ethnographically (Herring, 1996; Mayans, 2002). Therefore, the Internet was conceptualized as giving birth to an entirely new culture that was going to transform our culture at large: the new world of Cyberia (Escobar, 1994). Meanwhile its population was studied as the “natives of the Internet Islands”

(Bakardjieva, 2005), following Malinowski's canonical work on the Trobriand Islanders.

Despite the fact that in anthropological studies the idea of fieldwork in a community bound to a single territory had long been questioned (see Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995), these conceptualizations led to the development of a large corpus of ethnographic fieldwork on Usenet, BBS, chatrooms, electronic forums, and so on, mainly focusing on social and cultural dynamics (Markham, 1998; Reid, 1994). The ethnographic gaze was focused on how individuals come together via computer-mediated interaction and developed common rules, collective norms and values, as well as a sense of belonging (Jones & Kucker, 2001, p. 217). Among these early ethnographic studies, most were related to communication studies and audience reception research, such as online fan communities of soap operas (Baym, 2000) and television series or films (Jenkins, 1992), showing how audiences were constructing meaningful online communities by taking mass media popular culture as their referent.

The idea that prevailed was that the nature of those online communities was metaphysical and, therefore, it was sufficient to study them merely by analyzing the "life on the screen." This was translated into a limitation of the field site to a single online community and into studying only online interactions. Scholars made aprioristic assumptions about time, space, and the differentiated nature of online culture, online identity, and online social ties. Virtual ethnographies were largely based on the *a priori* attribution of properties of the Web by establishing a contrasting comparison with the physical world and face-to-face relationships. Cyberspace worked as a unifying ethnographic field site to describe all kinds of social life occurring on the Internet, aligning different artifacts, uses, and practices. The metaphor of cyberspace has also contributed to the idea of the Internet as a unified object of study with inherent characteristics and properties (Ardévol & Estalella, 2012).

Throughout the 1990s and despite these conceptual constraints, the detailed descriptions of many different "virtual communities" demonstrated that computer-mediated interactions were culturally rich and that users engaged in a fully meaningful social life. Those studies were a first step to legitimize the ethnographic study of online social relationships, given that some earlier conceptions considered computer-mediated communication to be "less real," socially weak, or second-class communication, unable to create sustainable social bonds and culturally significant worlds (Walther & Burgoon, 1992).

The ethnography of virtual worlds is another approach that is currently growing (Boellstorff, George, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012). Ethnographers propose that online participant observation is an epistemological and methodological response to the challenges of "virtual worlds" or meta-verses, especially in online game cultures (Pearce, 2009). So, more recently, we found exclusively online ethnographies that justify their methodological strategy by pointing to the delimitation of their object of study to the particular "virtual cultures" that emerge from online interaction. For example, Corneliussen and Rettberg (2008, p. 1) clarify this position with the use of

a metaphor: “Being new to the culture of the *World of Warcraft* may be compared to being an immigrant in a foreign culture.” The problem is focused on studying the process of socialization that takes place through online participation. In this sense, other authors propose that virtual worlds can be studied as examples of “subcultures” (Gelder, 2007). Boellstorff, for example, when studying *Second Life*, argues that the distinction between virtual and real is not an assumption of the ethnographer but something that has to be explained through fieldwork. He explains that this division is a consequence of a performative act of the players to set apart their “virtual world” from the “actual world” by the “worlding” of different cultural domains (Boellstorff, 2008, p. 18).

Connective Ethnography

The second ethnographic approach to the study of digital technologies, especially the Internet, could be called connective ethnographies. Although the concept of *Virtual Ethnography* coined by Christine Hine was a hallmark for the ethnographic study of the Internet, another book also opened a different understanding of ethnographic fieldwork: *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*, by Daniel Miller and Don Slater. Both of these texts were published in 2000. These researchers, with a background in material culture, media political economy, and social studies of science, abandon the idea of cyberspace in favor of a situated study of the Internet. Hine contextualizes Internet use in media practices, following the controversial case in 1998 of the British nanny accused of murdering the North American baby she was taking care of, while Miller and Slater locate it in the particular context of the cultural practices of the people of Trinidad Island. Both blur the divide between online and offline fieldwork. Instead of studying Internet cultures as separated and independent features from the real world, these authors begin to speak in terms of online/offline as a form of recognition of the multiple connections and the close relationship between these two social grounds.

Christine Hine herself was one of the first to reflexively apply the ethnographic paradigm of the constructed nature of the field in anthropology (Marcus, 1998) within Internet studies, systematizing her “principles for virtual ethnography” from a multisited and connective notion of ethnography (Hine, 2000). Hine approaches virtual ethnography through participant observation of different web pages, as well as their links with the mass media system, breaking with the idea of community and place as central for the definition of the ethnographic field site, understanding field site as the empirical locale where research is conducted.

At the same time, during the early years of the twenty-first century, Internet demography and usage was also changing, with a significant growth in the participation of various groups and communities in the network and the integration of the Internet into everyday mundane activities (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002). As in the case of the monographs mentioned above, other scholars began to do

fieldwork “inside” and also “outside” the screen, exploring the relationships between online and offline interactions. As Bakardjieva noted: the “Internet is exactly the place where the online and offline meet. Its study should mean keeping the vision on both sides at the same time, especially because very occasionally Internet is only a bridge between one offline and another” (2008, p. 54). Thus, the divide between online and offline fieldwork progressively blurs. Instead of studying Internet cultures as separated and independent features from the real world, these authors began to speak in terms of online/offline as a form of recognition of the multiple connections and the close relationship between these two social grounds.

Authors like Leander and McKim (2003) and later Hine (2007) developed the concept of “connective ethnography” to address the issue of integrating research across online and offline situations. Fields and Kafai (2008) also adopted the notion of connective ethnography to focus on how gaming expertise spreads across a network of youths at an after-school club where they simultaneously participate in a multiplayer virtual environment, using online and offline participant observation, interviews, video recordings, and collecting online and offline social interaction data. For Jenna Burrell (2009), the notion of the ethnographic field linked to a place-focused concept of culture needs to be reformulated when studying social uses of the Internet. Connective ethnography is not only a question of mixing methods and combining online and offline strategies, but also of constructing the field site as a heterogeneous network mapped out from the social relationships of the subjects and their connections to material and digital objects and to physical or virtual locations. As Hastrup and Olwig have argued for contemporary ethnography at large, instead of viewing the ethnographic field as a “site” it is better to understand it as a set of relations, focusing on the connections between multiple locations where actors engage in activity. Thus, “ethnography in this strategy becomes as much a process of following connections as it is a period of inhabitation” (Hastrup & Olwig, 1997, p. 8). Translating these notions of an anthropology of the contemporary, Postill (2008) notes that taking the Internet as a field for ethnographic research does not imply using the notions of community or social networks but to understand that there are different forms of mediated sociality.

Internet in Everyday Practices and Media Ethnography

Nowadays, the Internet has become so widespread and complex that attempting to describe a single platform ethnographically, even a massive one such as Facebook, would be to dismiss the multiple interrelationships and overlapping uses of digital technologies. The technological landscape has evolved and is no longer just about computers, Internet, and platforms. Wireless networks, mobile phone apps, video game consoles, and so on are all interconnected and we can say that our communicative ecosystem has been almost entirely digitalized. Concurrent use of multiple media has become a regular feature of everyday life and, quoting Mark Deuze (2011,

p. 137): “media have become so inseparable from us that we no longer live with media, but in media.”

This third understanding of the Internet as media is enriched by a twofold perspective: that of the social shaping of technology as an approach to technological design (Bijker & Law, 1994) and the domestication theory in media studies. Both highlight users’ agency in the innovation process and how technology is creatively appropriated by users (Haddon, 2005; Silverstone, Hirsh, & Morley, 2003). The move to ethnography occurred in media studies when researchers began to observe the media experience in everyday contexts (Schlecker & Hirsch, 2001), seeking alternatives to traditional social science research on media effects. Thus, media ethnography and Internet ethnographies converge in situating the focus in everyday practices.

Today, the Internet, associated with other informational technologies, represents a potential challenge (and complement) to mass media and entertainment industries. From a cultural studies approach, digital technologies are commodities that have symbolic value in the “circuit of culture” (Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997). In addition, this new media landscape forms new means of production, circulation, and consumption of media products that intertwine with significant practices of representation and reproduction of social identities. In this sense, the use of digital technologies is part of a process of appropriation, which develops as people incorporate these technologies in everyday life.

Several authors have explored the relationship between audiences and cultural production in new media (Harries, 2002; Jenkins, 2004; Marshall, 2002, 2004). Although they define this relationship in different terms, they agree on the rise of a productive audience and the blurring between the spheres of production, distribution, and consumption. For Nick Couldry (2004), theorizing media as practice implies a change of paradigm in media studies. It changes the focus of media research from semiotic analysis of text content to the people’s doings and sayings. Then, media practices is defined as the open set of practices relating to, or oriented around, media. One consequence of this is to anchor media theory in ethnographic knowledge, overcoming “media-centrism” to study cultural production. As Elizabeth Bird (2010) points out, one of the main problems of studying media in relation to cultural production has been that audience research has traditionally been based on the concept of “audience response” to specific media. So, in *The Audience in Everyday Life*, she argues that we need to

move “beyond the audience” as a theoretically definable construct, but we should not be abandoning the goal of understanding real people, living real lives in which media play an ever-increasing, if certainly problematic, role . . . Only ethnography can begin to answer questions about what people really do with media. (Bird, 2003, p. 191)

These authors put forward the potential for setting the analysis of media production and consumption within ethnography, as a methodological tool for understanding people’s motivations and engagements with media. Moreover, media ethnography

involves studying media practices beyond the parameters set down by theoretical assumptions of cultural production, based on the circulation of media products. Media practices may be understood as a wider set of practices most of them with, around, and through digital technologies relating to creative processes carried out by individuals, collectives, governments, transnational corporations, and other social agents with different goals and purposes. Coleman observes that the aim of media ethnography is, then, to explore “the complex relationships between the local practices and global implications of digital media, their materiality and politics, and their banal, as well as profound, presence in cultural life and modes of communication” (Coleman, 2010, p. 487).

Summing up, this analysis of the relationship between ethnography and the different fields and objects related to Internet and media research attempted to show the complex relationship between a work’s theoretical framework, its object of study, and its empirical reference. On the one hand, we have pointed out the importance of theoretical concepts and epistemic approaches to shape the ethnographic field and frame our object of study. On the other hand, we have highlighted the development of a methodological inquiry about what it means to do fieldwork through and with digital technologies, and how to deal with technologically mediated practices. Therefore, we propose to talk about digital ethnography as a way to engage with the central role of digital technologies in everyday life, and also to understand the importance of field construction, reflexivity, and the development of tools as key elements of the ethnographic endeavor (not limited to digital objects). Next, we will see how the Internet has been conceptualized as a research tool and as a field for conducting ethnographic research, giving an overview of the different challenges an ethnographer faces when studying mediated digital interactions.

Carrying Out Digital Fieldwork

Annette Markham (2004) argues that methodically the Internet has been understood both as a field site and as a research tool. The first concept highlights the way in which the Internet and its different platforms and technologies have become the context of participant observation that is, the field site or the locus of the social interaction between the ethnographer and his or her respondents. The second puts the emphasis on the Internet as a means for data collection. Several authors have explored the Internet’s possibilities as a research tool (Dicks, Mason, Coffey, & Atkinson, 2005; Fielding, Lee, & Blank, 2008; Mann & Stewart, 2000; O’Connor & Madge, 2003) with which to conduct surveys, interviews, network analysis, and focus groups as well as to present research results (Dicks, Soyinka, & Coffey, 2006; Hewson, Yule, Laurent, & Vogel, 2003).

However, from an ethnographic standpoint, the question is how to integrate data gathering into a wider perspective of fieldwork. Ethnographic research does not

make a clear-cut distinction between data gathering and “being in the field.” Although plain observation, interviewing, and other ways of collecting materials (e.g., questionnaires, etc.) are part of ethnographic fieldwork, what characterizes the method is the participatory approach: the social presence of the ethnographer “in the field.” In ethnographic fieldwork, first we weave relationships and afterwards we collect data. Fieldwork, its continuity and its results, depend largely on the relationships we build during the whole process of investigation. Ethnography is a *slow science* methodology, as ethnographic fieldwork ideally must take at least one year in order to develop a glimpse of the different rhythms and moments that punctuate our social life.

Here we will take into consideration how we manage our relationships and conduct research in digital settings. While some authors argue that “virtual” worlds are a different kind of social space than those created by face-to-face communication, we will suggest that the nature of the social space does not depend on the characteristics of the medium, but on the kind of social interactions that people are engaged in.

Constructing the Field

As we have seen, carrying out fieldwork in ethnographic research involves tracing personal relations in different social contexts. Delimiting the field is not only a question of finding a place or a community within which to conduct research, but also of constructing our field site according to our research questions and objectives. As Vered Amit (2001, p. 6) clearly puts it:

The ethnographic field cannot simply exist, awaiting discovery. It has to be laboriously constructed, prised apart from all the other possibilities of contextualization to which its constituent relationships and connections could also be referred . . . the construction of an ethnographic field involves efforts to accommodate and interweave sets of relationships and engagements developed in one context with those arising in another.

Digital fieldwork requires adjustments in how ethnographers define the empirical site of their research: Where should participant observation be conducted? How is access to settings and research subjects to be obtained? What ethical dilemmas do these decisions involve? Rather than deciding in advance to conduct ethnographic research on a virtual community or in a specific social media, the ethnographer should choose the topic of interest, and then define the field and how that topic involves different modes of communication, people, things, and locations. For instance, one could begin fieldwork by attending a rock festival and end up participating in chatrooms, visiting the blogs of musicians’ fans, and sharing files with them through instant messaging on mobile phones. As the Internet forms part of the daily

life of many of the collectives we study, and as they do not necessarily make a distinction between their online, offline, and indeed phone relationships, we follow our subjects across different ethnographic contexts and settings.

Digital ethnography does not establish fixed dichotomies between online and offline realms. There are no substantive differences between online and offline ethnographies but rather different kinds of environments and ways of social co-presence. Digital ethnographers may conduct participant observation and interviews through an array of digital technology devices and therefore must develop the technological, social, and cultural competencies necessary to fully participate in these sociotechnical contexts. As image, sound, and movement are becoming more and more common features of social interaction, not only for web design and online communication, but also for instant messaging on mobile phones and GPS monitoring systems, the digital ethnographer has to move between different research contexts and methods. With this development, the division between online and offline ethnographies tends to collapse even more and digital ethnography must be conveyed as a mediated practice, as a remix of methods that has to be engaged with the researcher's experience. This means a technologically enhanced but always embodied ethnographic practice.

Conducting Digital Fieldwork

Digital ethnographers use digital media to generate data in two ways: first, they use digital visual and sound recorders, notebooks, or PCs to write their field notes and, usually, the same devices to collect textual data, visual material, and sound and movement created by the subjects of study (Garcia, Standlee, & Bechhoff, 2009, p. 64). Moreover, the interaction of the ethnographer with the participants of the research also takes place in digital environments, and the whole interaction can be recorded and preserved.

By conducting participant observation, the ethnographer accomplishes three main methodological goals: to gain presence in a concrete social space, to define her or his identity as a researcher in the field site, and to let respondents know about the research interests in order to obtain informed consent (in the ethnographic method, this consent used to be tacit and not necessarily expressed through formularies). The last, but not least, important factor is to have first-hand experience of a particular technology, as any other participant would. Our experience of conducting digital ethnographic research suggests that participation observation depends largely on our skills in managing textual, visual, sensory, and kinetic components when interacting with research participants. Furthermore, the process of observation itself involves dealing with textual and visual information displayed on the screen, such as the use of emoticons, pictures, colors, page layout, and graphic designs, as key elements of the digital interaction, as well as the interactive capabilities of the technological scripts.

Gómez-Cruz's ethnographic fieldwork on digital photography is presented as an empirical example of the former discussion. The author's fieldwork was conducted between September 2008 and March 2010 and was focused on digital photographic practices based on the photo-sharing platform Flickr. After a few months of observant participation on the site, uploading photos, commenting, and participating in different groups, he found a group of amateur photographers called SortidazZ. This group, geographically based in Barcelona, was very active and organized many physical encounters and photo walks (gatherings to take pictures in a chosen area). When confident enough, he decided to send his first public message to the group introducing himself and explaining the research he was trying to carry out:

Let me introduce myself. I'm Edgar Gomez, a Mexican based in Barcelona and currently writing my doctoral thesis on digital photography practices (an ethnography from a sociological and anthropological point of view). I told Carles (KaosBeast) my interest in joining the group and he politely told me to publicly launch. I am a novice in photography and this is a hobby I enjoy. However, my interest in the group is twofold as I'd like to share my concerns, questions and fieldwork. Finally, you are the experts and the idea is to learn from you, with you. Well, you will say what you think, for now, if you please, I'm in for the next photowalk.

regards
Edgar

The group welcomed him with jokes ("are we so weird that somebody wants to study us?") and warm convivial messages. Soon, it was clear that the group's communication was not reduced to Flickr but was actively open and experimenting with different social media, apart from gathering together for photographic sessions or simply hanging out together. Members of SortidazZ tend to shoot; process; show each other photos, videos, and web pages; make comments on any platform while they are with other members; use WhatsApp (a mobile chat application) as a group's backchannel, and so on. All of this could easily happen while members of the group were drinking beers together on some Barcelona terrace. Therefore, the ethnographer decided to follow and trace those connections, which took him to Facebook, Twitter, Gmail, SMS, phone calls, Skype, as well as to some photographic walks and personal encounters. Through these trajectories, activities and "sites," the field was instantiated in different locations and devices.

At the same time, Gómez-Cruz's profiles in all the social media sites had a permanent link to his blog where, during the fieldwork, he wrote several reflections on photography, his life as a PhD student, and his daily experiences of the research process. The blog was but one of many devices to develop a constant "presence in the field." Although, at the beginning, the blog was only intended to be a "public face" for his work and not understood as a research tool, to his surprise, group members began to leave comments on the posts, send him links, or comment on the content of the blog in the blog itself and in other electronic forums. The

ethnographer was not only actively creating the field, but also weaving himself into it. Along with Flickr, Facebook, and Twitter accounts, the ethnographer's blog served as a form of personal exposure: a way of performing his identity as a researcher while becoming an active "practitioner" of digital photography.

In this long-term ethnographic study of digital photographic practices of a heavy-use Flickr group, Gómez-Cruz observes that the photographic object itself is changing from a memory device to a connective practice, and from having a primary social cohesion role to becoming a key element in new groups' formations in daily life. Helping, further on, to understand digital photography as an assemblage of several practices (shooting but also processing, sharing, and exhibiting). These production practices are more and more related to digital mediated socialization, especially since photography is embedded in mobile phones, social networks, and sharing sites.

While participant observation allows the ethnographer to get to know the collective life, norms, values, and dynamics of a group, the in-depth interview is a gateway to the perceptions and meanings that respondents attach to their actions. At the same time, the interview is a unique setting that gives the research participants an opportunity to reflect aloud on their own practices and express their thoughts, emotions, and feelings related to their experiences. Moreover, ethnographic interviews are useful for contrasting the feelings, impressions, and conjectures raised by the researcher during immersion in the field. It is obvious that during fieldwork there are many occasions for engaging in conversations with our respondents about the ambiguities of social life and that these are a valuable source of understandings. Although some conversations naturally occur, while others are directly addressed by the ethnographer or the social actor, in-depth interviews undoubtedly constitute a different social context than conversations.

In-depth interviews are explicitly set up by the ethnographer and are typically open-ended and more flexible than structured or semi-structured interviews while being more focused than natural conversations. The nature of the questions depends, again, on the research topic and the kind of contextualization that the ethnographer needs for interpreting data, but it is useful to have some kind of script that helps conduct the interview. As happens with online conversations, online interviews can be conducted through different Internet technologies, from chat or instant text messaging systems, electronic forums and email, to voice and video conferencing webcam devices. Some authors argue that the characteristics of the sociotechnical context or medium impose communicative restraints, while others argue that they open new research possibilities. For example, textual interviews (and especially those based on anonymity) are considered useful for approaching sensitive or elusive topics, since they tend to allow people to express themselves more freely (Illingworth, 2001; Orgad, 2005; Sanders, 2005). Although this will pose problems of authenticity and spontaneity, textual interviewing allows respondents to put more thought into their responses. The anonymity factor may also balance the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee because the latter may feel freer to challenge researchers online than in a face-to-face interview. In general, online methods allow the inter-

viewee to gain control of the course of the interview but, ultimately, his or her commitment will depend on personal motivation and engagement with the research. Nevertheless, anonymity may be overestimated, since an ethnographer usually knows the person before the interview and has previously established a rapport. Besides, it is not imperative to acknowledge the “real” name of the person when studying online interactions and patterns.

In Gómez-Cruz’s work, some online interviews using instant messaging systems and Skype proved to be very useful as a way to establish a complex chronology because informants “showed” examples by copying and pasting the specific URL of the photo they were referring to, not only from their own streams but also from other people’s photos, blogs, or web pages. At the same time, while dealing with the issue of self-portraits, specifically women’s nude or erotic self-portraits, the respondents were more comfortable talking about their experience online with a sense of trust in the interviewer and, at the same time, with the feeling of being protected by their own private space. Interestingly enough, this is exactly the way these individuals produce photos in their private/intimate space to then upload to the “public” space of social networks. One of them even preferred to create a diary of her thoughts about her practice than to be interviewed. Here is a pair of short examples of the different narrative styles about online self-portraits that arose in the research:

[Chat interview fragment]

JESSICA: For me public photos are those on the web and private are not?? Hehehehe
No, this is not true;) There are private public photos, but do not know if
the right word is private = S

[Email interview fragment]

EMMA: Pictures of Emma [her own pictures uploaded] are to me almost like the
images of a character (but do not think I have problems with multiple
personalities). In any case, the nudes are of her . . . It’s not the same to see
the image of a woman to see her in person. Even many people who know
me personally cannot believe that I’m the one shown in these pictures.

While in chat interviews, the ethnographer must deal often with emoticons, short and nongrammatical sentences, email interview answers more closely resemble the epistolary genre. These different narratives bring up the fact that, in the social sciences, the instruments with which we investigate are always part of the context of research and shape the textures of our data, but this does not necessarily mean that online interviews are better or worse than face-to-face ones for ethnographic analysis. Furthermore, online interviews may generate new interview genres, since it can take the form of an epistolary genre, as shown in email interviews, or it can enter the online universe of the respondent, as in the case of an interview conducted in a virtual world or the interchange of hyperlinks during an instant messaging chat interview. The flexibility of online techniques allowed the ethnographer to gather important data that could probably not have been gathered any other way.

Digital Data Analysis and the Ethnographic Description

Field notes and field diaries are essential to ethnographic research. Traditional field notes, tables, and drawings are handwritten, and some online ethnographers still employ this method in addition to the multiple forms of capturing and registering information as audio and video records, printouts, screen captures, navigation videos or social bookmarking, and the visualizing social network software available to us today. Some ethnographers also use wikis and blogs as their fieldwork diaries. Online field notes or logs, however, should not be confused with the web pages, blogs, wikis, or social media profiles that ethnographers create to present themselves and to share their research with participants and respondents. These online sites are usually open to a general audience while field notes are kept private.

Field notes help researchers catalogue, describe, and develop theories from their observations, as well as record their emotional reactions and impressions. For example, in his ethnographic study, Gómez-Cruz's field notes were handwritten in a fieldwork diary while, at the same time, he used his smartphone to take notes and photos on (and of) the field. The smartphone was, at once, a field data gathering tool and a constant connective device with the group members. Another example of new ways to carry field notes was the use of "annotated screenshots," which became very helpful as "images of connections" to be used in the interviews about specific topics discussed, as a sort of photo elicitation technique. For example, Gómez-Cruz used his own self-portrait photography in order to create a threat in his fieldwork Flickr site. The answers he got included accounts about self-portraits, but also several photographs taken and commented upon by the respondents.

At the end, the results of the ethnographic fieldwork are an array of very different kinds of data, from field notes to visual, aural, and textual data or transcribed interviews. To analyze them, we must consider our theoretical assumptions as well as the broader context in which the data has been extracted and objectified. Qualitative data software analysis may help us in that process, using programs such as ATLAS.ti or NVivo. This software is useful for archiving, coding, hyperlinking, sharing, and representing visual and other digital ethnographic material but it does not replace analysis and ethnographic description (Pink, 2007, p. 139). Thus, the ethnographer becomes a reflective and heuristic figure who bridges the gap between the reliance on ethnographic techniques (participant observation, in-depth interviews), field experience (immersion, building of trust, bodily engagement), and analytical tools (software for textual and visual analysis, analytical categories).

It is imperative that we distinguish the analytical categories of our theoretical framework from those that come directly from the field, that is, between *etic* and *emic* terms, categories, and conceptualizations. For the sake of clarity we say that the role of ethnographers is to meaningfully explain the studied universe, taking into account the vernacular categories of their research subjects (*emic*) and developing theoretical frameworks that help to organize them (*etic*), so that they can bring some

light to their research questions. It means to displace the researcher from her or his own vernacular categories, even when these may be largely shared with their correspondents in the field. As Coleman explains, “the fact that digital media culturally matters is undeniable but showing how, where, and why it matters is necessary to push against peculiarly narrow presumptions about the universality of digital experience” (2010, p. 488).

Ethical Dilemmas

Finally, the outlet of an ethnographic process is usually a *monograph*, a theoretically oriented description of the object of study we have constructed while following our subjects’ practices in different field contexts. Thus, ethnographers must make decisions about how to present research findings to their respondents, taking into account online audiences (Bakardjieva & Feenberg, 2001). This raises ethical issues regarding the fact that, in most digital ethnographies, the field is constructed and maintained through online interaction that is open to general view. Maintaining privacy and anonymity on the Internet is not only difficult but may come into conflict with the ethnographic task. This was the case with Gómez-Cruz’s ethnography of digital photography practices, which was mostly carried out through social media platforms. He contacted the group under study via their site profile, and the process of gaining acceptance by the group could be followed by any outsider, as well as all the fieldwork interactions that took place in his profile and in his field blog. This being the case, the ethical requirements of informed consent might be clearly exposed but respondents were very aware that full anonymity could not be guaranteed.

Digital ethnographers are troubled by the same worries about self-exposure and privacy as their research subjects. A website or a blog may be regarded as a public space, as it is publicly accessible, yet interactions that occur within that social space may be perceived by the participants to be mainly private. Therefore, Internet ethnographers would be well advised to consider their initial self-presentations to their research subjects carefully and to be aware of the fact that some of their online interactions are permanently and publicly exposed. The digital ethnographer should negotiate the level of anonymity that participants wish to maintain when data are fully elaborated and results presented in different formats. Not all the interactions with the participants during fieldwork have been carried out in public social spaces, and the ethnographer must preserve participants’ confidentiality by changing names, nicknames, and other traceable footprints when it is required.

We propose, along with other authors such as Forte (2004), to think of digital ethnographic ethics from the point of view of reciprocal and mutual collaboration. The co-production of the field is an activity that can also afford ethical values, such as sharing knowledge and experience with our respondents. Ethnographers use different terms such as “informants,” “participants,” “co-participants,” or even “co-researchers” in contrast to quantitative research, which traditionally uses the

term “subject” to refer to the people who participate in their research. These different terms tell us something about the relationship between researchers and researched as they describe the kind of involvement that the ethnographer expects from the research subjects. What is important to note is that, in any case, the people who participate in the ethnographic research not only are familiar with the ethnographer but also contribute to the configuration of the object of study and to the ethnographer’s knowledge of the empirical situations. They are more than passive subjects of study, but active respondents and, somehow, co-participants of the research process with the ethnographer.

This collaborative aim must be transferred to the ethical concerns when writing the ethnographic results or monograph. Digital technologies are well designed for sharing information at distance and make it easy to let participants know about the final product. As we have seen, Edgar Gómez-Cruz shared his own findings along the way through his blog and profile in Flickr and later he allowed participants to comment on the chapters of the monograph related to the group’s experience. This practice is not exempt from conflict, as people may not agree with the results. The researcher has to ensure that the participant’s opinions are treated with respect and the *emic* interpretations accepted, but the *etic* part of the analysis depends entirely on the ethnographer. Whatever the level of involvement of the participants in the research might be, ultimately it is the ethnographer who controls the process of interpretation, the theoretical framework, and the accountability of the final product.

Some Final Remarks

To conclude, ethnography, as access to knowledge of the intersubjective experiences and contexts of interaction, brings a new perspective to the empirical study of media. It goes beyond the qualitative and quantitative audience studies focused on hermeneutic or semiotic interpretation of the media text and political economy. On the one hand, from a critical perspective, the close study of media experience allows us to analyze the local effects of an unequal allocation of resources and rights and the processes of moral valuation (Lindlof & Shatzer, 1998, pp. 172–173). On the other hand, ethnographic studies of digital media particularize the role that digital media play in the different spheres of social activity and among a great variety of collectives, from teenagers to political activists, and from audiences to media industries and government bodies. Indeed, digital media ethnographies are central to the reformulation of studies in journalism, democratic free expression practices, and current debates about market and commons models of property. Ethnographic accounts complement other kinds of studies, not only by representing people’s hopes, desires, and expectations, but also by pointing to asymmetrical relationships, opposite values, and challenging visions of futures.

Digital ethnography is ethnography by other means, and the question is to what extent these other means transform ethnographic practice. We must ask, with Sarah Pink (2012, p. 12), how “the developments in digital, mobile and locative media challenge us to rethink the ways in which media(ted) research and the ethnographic encounter is understood.” On the one hand, as we have demonstrated, the digital ethnographer needs to be co-present in the field using the same technological devices as the participants in his or her study. On the other hand, digital ethnography incorporates new technologies of recording, analyzing, sharing, and presenting data and results along with new ethical challenges. Last but not least, digital ethnography refers to the emergence of new topics of research for example, virtual worlds and to the transformation of our objects of study. The field of media studies as a whole has to come to terms with how digital media is articulated with everyday practices and with the new dimensions of our notions of sensoriality, spatiality, and temporality.

Methodology is also about how we create knowledge, and technological shifts have implications not only for the way in which we experience and research media, social relations, and cultural formations, but also for how they are theorized (Lapenta, 2012, p. 131). Sarah Pink (2012, p. 13) addresses this point when she notes that “our experiences of new technologies are . . . encouraging us to think in new ways theoretically which in turn reflect back on how we theorize old media and on how we engage with media as researchers.” Digital methodologies may be fueled by old understandings but, at the same time, they might take us to different ways of knowing and to different types of knowledge.

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Clicks and Bricks

Methods and Strategies for Measuring the Effects of Similar Virtual and Physical Activity

Lillian C. Spina-Caza

ABSTRACT

The study of virtual play activity as it unfolds on the Internet, in video games, and with mobile technology use, is still in its nascent stages and is in and of itself experimental by nature. Thus, it is important that researchers begin to think about, question, and test new research methods – or extend traditional methods – for the purposes of understanding the effects new media are likely to have on human development. This chapter discusses two early observation studies of Internet and video game play that inspired a third, multimethod field experiment aimed at contributing a theoretical model for exploring the effects of moving activity from physical to virtual environments. All three provide strategies and methods for how the study of new media technology might benefit from a more elaborate research design.

Research on young people and interactive virtual technology (IVT)¹ use is abundant and diverse, emerging from numerous fields of interest. These fields include cognitive science, human–computer interaction (HCI) and its subfield of child–computer interaction (CCI), video game studies, developmental and ecological psychology, and literacy, communication, and media studies – to name just a few. Conversations range

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems194

from those suggesting that new technology environments can enhance creativity, promote media literacy and information technology (IT) proficiency, and empower young people to be programmers in their own right, to those more circumspect about moving activity to virtual environments and the impact of losing touch with the physical world (Healy, 1998).

One common thread running throughout much of the literature is the call for young people to be *creators* and not just consumers of computer culture, *producers* and not just participants in the virtual worlds they inhabit. It is a call that places the notion of *creative agency* front and center in explorations of IVT use. What sorts of creative or contributive activities young people can undertake, and what they perceive they are able to accomplish when playing video games, interacting with online content, or using mobile applications, are critical to understanding the effects of virtual activity on a developing person. Knowing more about how young people perceive themselves and their own creative abilities when interacting with virtual environments can also inform and improve the design of interactive technologies overall.

Another recurring thread in the research and literature on IVT use is the call for empirical research to address the benefits of moving activity from physical to virtual settings. Across disciplines there is agreement that studies examining the effects of virtual interactions are long overdue. Roussou, Oliver, and Slater (2008), for example, who use activity theory to evaluate behavior in virtual environments, note that “To date, very few efforts exist that explore the value of interactive virtual environments and applications, especially the added value that these can bring to children’s learning” (p. 141). Livingstone (2006), who conducts large-scale, multinational, surveys of children and Internet use, writes, “little work has examined, let alone demonstrated unequivocally, the positive benefits this has for educational achievement” (p. 220).

The research methods and strategies presented in the studies that follow address both of these threads, and are also influenced by activity theory (AT), which has its roots in developmental psychology and education. AT emphasizes the connections between human consciousness, activity, and environment, and recognizes the role human agency and creativity play in a person’s ability to realize goals and intentions. According to Nardi (1996), who researches activity theory in the context of HCI and interaction design, AT views human beings as “active beings in control of their tools for creative purposes rather than as automatons whose operations are to be automated away, or nodes whose rights to privacy and dignity are not guaranteed” (p. 87).

While AT provides a solid framework for research concerned with youth and technology use, it has some limitations. For example, by focusing on collective activity oriented toward motives and objects, AT does not examine subjective experience or how self-perceptions might be changed in the performance of certain types of activity, in this instance creative activity. It also does not tell us whether there might be a relationship between *mode* or *how* an activity is performed – with physical or

virtual objects and artifacts – and the effects on a person’s perceptions of his or her own creative agency.

Kaptelinin (1996), whose work also examines activity theory and interaction design, observes that “Virtual realities present a problem to activity that probably cannot be solved without enriching activity theory’s basic principles with new ideas” (p. 64). Tikhomirov (1999), who notes human creativity has been dramatically altered in the context of computer use, points out that “The content of individual human experience includes not only mastered social experience, but also personal experience, the experience of an activity’s realization” (p. 358). As he concludes, “Studies of creative activity demand an analysis of the relations between activity and personality in a specific creative act” (p. 350).

The research approaches discussed in this chapter presuppose the importance of activity theory to our understanding of IVT research and design. The three studies presented here were conducted to broaden our knowledge of virtual activity by employing various qualitative and quantitative analyses to describe what happens during Internet and video game play, and what the effects might be on a developing person. Some of the research strategies used included the coding of visual data analysis as children played at two popular websites; observational and cooperative inquiry techniques were used to explore similar physical and virtual play activity with a group of students in an after-school program; and an experimental field study that included physical and virtual conditions and pre- and post-test surveys was conducted to examine the effects of similar physical and virtual activities on young people’s perceptions of their own creative agency.

The chapter also introduces the creative agency model (CAM), which offers a way to operationalize or measure self-perceptions that emerge in the performance of activity in virtual environments. CAM suggests we adopt a *bioecological* approach to the study of virtual activity and affordance use to better understand how this activity might influence human development over time. It supports iterative, multimethod designs that employ observation, interpretation, and experimentation to examine the role environmental artifacts and objects play in goal attainment, as well as the subjective experience and possible changes to concepts of self that emerge in the performance of virtual activity. No other studies that we are aware of bring together activity, affordances, and perceptions to the study of virtual play. Combined, these strategies contribute to our understanding of virtual activity and allow us to explore the connections between mode of play, gender, and perceptions.

Review of Research Approaches to Traditional and New Media Studies

Early studies of virtual interactions took a traditional media effects approach, emphasizing content analysis and the link between *antisocial* or aggressive behavior and

violent content in video games. Surveys and controlled laboratory experiments are two common strategies applied to study the effects of media viewing on behavior. Some of the other issues addressed using these kinds of approaches are children's health and well-being – identifying, for instance, links between childhood obesity and video game addiction (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006) – Internet safety and access, the need for critical analyses of web content, the interplay of technology and identity, or the erosion of children's agency imposed by consumer culture (Cross, 2009; Grimes & Shade, 2005; Livingstone, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Mazzarella & Atkins, 2010; Turkle, 1995, 2005; Willett, 2009).

A compelling body of pro-social research, however, also started to emerge in the 1990s, emphasizing the positive role video games and Internet use might assume in health communication, education, behavioral, and social change (Flanagan, 2006; Gee, 2007a, 2007b; Lieberman, 1997, 1999). Lieberman's research (1997, 1999) finds that video games promoting healthy messages show positive results for asthma and diabetes management, as well as smoking prevention. In her research, Flanagan (2006) examines activist games and Internet environments that embrace social values. One such game – *Peter Packet* – encourages players to use Internet technology to both learn about and solve the problems faced by youth in less developed countries, including issues such as “education, clean drinking water, and AIDS” (p. 494).

In both video game and Internet research, this more celebratory branch of research typically positions young people as active media content contributors who create fan fiction, produce videos for YouTube, and “mod” or modify video games as they dynamically shape their own experiences in virtual environments (Gee, 2007a, 2007b; Jenkins, 2007; Lenhart & Madden, 2005; Marsh, 2005; Mazzarella, 2005; Mazzarella & Atkins, 2010). The Internet is touted as a space for cultural and civic or democratic participation, and a safe place for self-expression (Center for Media Literacy, 2008; Cordes & Miller, 2000; Kellner & Share, 2005; Livingstone, 2003a, 2006; Mazzarella, 2005).

One prominent strand of research in video game studies, introduced in Gee's (2007b) seminal book *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, identifies how virtual play can also be supportive of creativity and knowledge construction overall. Good games, Gee asserts, allow players to be designers in their own right, providing players with software that allows them to modify games by building “new maps, levels, and scenarios, and sometimes even change the rules” (2007a, p. 136). He argues that the feelings of agency and control experienced in video game play lead to “good learning,” and that gaming literacy gives young people the competitive skills that are critical in a global, high tech world.

A number of HCI and social science research methods and strategies are used to explore such issues tied to young people and IVT use, including – but not limited to – content analysis, action research, participatory research, field studies, case studies, lab experiments, survey research, basic research, applied research, and normative writings. Another research method successfully applied to studies of IVT use, elaborated upon later in this chapter, adapts research methods associated with the collec-

tion, coding, and analysis of verbal streams of data. It is a method that is consistent with media content analysis used to determine, for example, the relative frequency of television violence (Geisler, 2004).

The impact of computerization and the virtualization of human activity has resulted in a transformation of a person's "whole system of motives, stable meanings of personality, and personality's goals" (Tikhomirov, 1999, p. 353). To understand the breadth and depth of the effects of IVT use on young people, a multifaceted, mixed method approach needs to be applied to the study of virtual activity. The purposes of such research are to:

- examine the ways in which activity unfolds in virtual environments over time;
- identify opportunities for creative or contributive interactions that support healthy development;
- understand the roles both IVT affordance recognition and use play in supporting or thwarting creative activity; and
- learn how subjective experiences and concepts of self are shaped by the performance of virtual activity.

The following sections present several research strategies to explore virtual activity and its impacts on young people's perceptions of their own creative agency. The various methods and approaches outlined here provide useful ways to develop a better understanding of virtual environments overall.

Experimenting With Mixed Research Methods to Study Complex Virtual Interactions

Mixed research methods were used in the following three studies to explore young people's interactions with web content and video games, and to measure perceptions of play that emerged in comparable virtual and physical activity. The first study applied methods adapted from verbal data analysis (Geisler, 2004) to investigate and compare how play activity unfolded at two popular children's websites. This study was critical in moving the focus of the research beyond activity to address perceptions.

The second study was conducted as an observational study to further investigate children's perceptions of virtual play. It extended the first study by comparing various physical play activities with similar virtual activities, in this case focusing on video game play instead of Internet interactions. Most importantly, this study explored whether *mode of play* impacts perceptions of creativity and control, and suggested the design for a third study.

The third and final study, conducted as a field experiment, was both inspired and informed by the two earlier studies. Following up on the findings of the second study,

it was specifically designed to measure whether or not changes to perceptions emerge in the performance of comparable physical and virtual play tasks. The third study also led to the development of the creative agency model, which provides a useful framework for future research.

Study 1: A Tale of Two Websites

One of the overarching goals of the first study was to develop methods to measure and assess how children engage in play online at popular commercial websites. Another object of this early study was to identify virtual activities that encouraged the expressive and constructive sorts of play recognized as being both supportive of healthy development, and also the kinds of play children say they prefer when interacting with technology (Druin, Bederson, Boltman, Miura, Knotts-Callahan, & Platt, 1999). To accomplish this, play activity at two commercial websites – Millsberry.com and Webkinz.com – was recorded and coded for analysis (see Figures 23.1 and 23.2).

The author's three daughters – ages 7, 9, and 12 at the time – participated in the initial study. The websites selected were ones at which the children were already playing. Two of the three girls gave consent to have play sessions recorded using screen capture technology, and all three made lists of the things they liked to do when playing at the two sites, and took part in discussions and demonstrations of



Figure 23.1 Screen capture of Millsberry.com



Figure 23.2 Screen capture of Webkinz.com

the various activities available. Working with one's own children in research is not unusual. Linguists, for example, have observed their own children to study how language skills develop. Child development theorists also study the behaviors of their own children. Jean Piaget (1962, 1970), for instance, worked with his children to explore the implications of childhood play on a developing child, and the ways in which young people both perceive and organize their experiences.

The research methods used in the initial observational study were inspired by approaches derived from the analysis of verbal data (Geisler, 2004). Verbal data analysis (VDA) methods are compatible with qualitative research approaches, and provide a way to identify units of analysis, calculate frequencies of specific types of activities, and explore behavioral patterns over time. Once data are collected, they can be segmented into units appropriate for analysis to identify the level at which phenomena of interest occur. For this initial study, however, VDA methods were applied to the analysis of *visual data* and virtual activity.

As indicated earlier, to analyze visual data, video screen capture technology was used to record streams of activity as the girls played at the two websites studied. Several sessions of online play were recorded for both children. Basic video editing software was utilized to segment visual data into discrete activity units or "a-units" for coding purposes; a-units were correlated to the time the girls spent engaging in a particular virtual activity. A-units are similar to the "play frames" described by literacy researchers Neuman and Roskos (1992), inasmuch as these are used to segment

“play that is bound by location and a particular focus of interaction” (p. 213). Three coding schemes were developed to explore play as it unfolded in real time.

The coding schemes created for this study considered the three types of interactions Druin et al. (1999, p. 66) identify as most important to young people: a variety of play options, an ability to interact with others, and “expressive tools that enable them to tell stories or build things.” The three schemes developed – coding for range of activities, coding for social activities, and coding for engaging activities – were designed to:

- calculate the range of activities a young person participated in during play, categorized as “high,” “medium,” or “low” based on the number of activities offered on the active screen or menu bar and the number selected;
- identify opportunities for social activity using site-based communication tools (coded as “social-responsive,” “social-unresponsive,” or “non-social”) based on whether the child made contact, attempted to contact, or was unable to contact another player online; and
- classify the types of activity engaged in with greater frequency using the terms “search,” “select,” “design,” and “direct” to provide descriptive information about the types of interactions that occur in web play environments.

Definitions of activity in virtual environments suggested by the work of Parés and Parés (2001) were useful for developing the third coding scheme. The authors describe activity in virtual worlds as explorative, manipulative, and contributive. *Explorative* refers to the ability to navigate within a virtual environment, *manipulative* indicates the ability to influence or control elements within that environment, and *contributive* suggests the ability to add to or modify the environment as a whole.

Building on Parés and Parés, the terms “search,” “select,” “design,” and “direct” were used to describe activities children participated in at both Millsberry.com and Webkinz.com. If a child navigated or clicked around the website looking for something to do it was coded “search.” If she chose an arcade game to play, or picked out clothing or food items for a virtual pet, the activity was coded “select.” If she decorated a T-shirt or customized an avatar it was coded “design.” Activities that allowed for more creative control (i.e., composing a song or making virtual movies using site apps) were coded as “direct.” Activities coded as either “design” or “direct” corresponded to practices that are considered to be creative or contributive.

The third coding scheme was particularly useful for understanding how interactions in web environments unfold over time. As indicated in the temporal charts of engaging activities, the terms “search” and “select” were used more frequently than “design” or “direct” (see Figures 23.3 and 23.4). Video capture recordings show study participants engaging mostly in game play at both websites, and interactions in virtual arcades or games of chance, typically involve searching for things to do and/or selecting games to play to earn virtual cash to buy (select) things (food, clothing, toys, furniture, etc.) for their virtual avatars or pets.

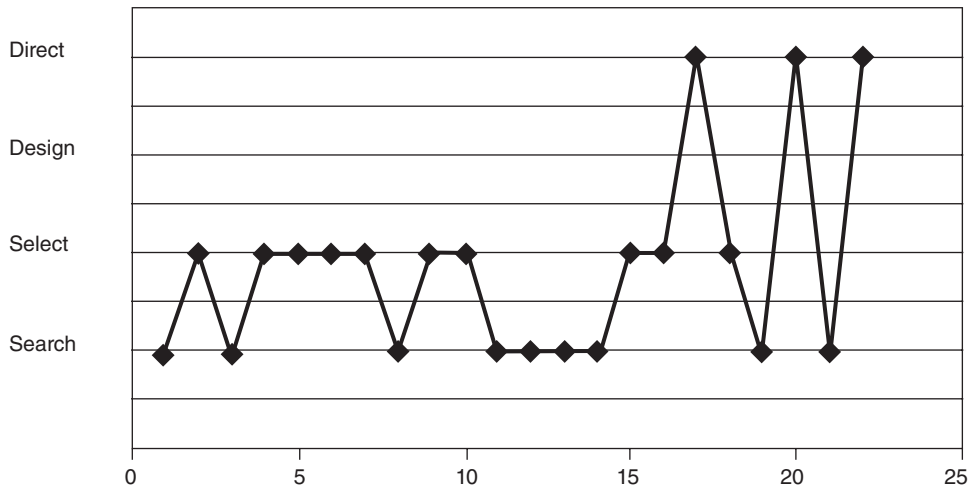


Figure 23.3 Temporal chart for an 8-year-old girl engaged in 22 activities at Webkinz.com during a play session lasting 17 minutes 22 seconds. No activities are coded as “design” and only three are coded “direct.”

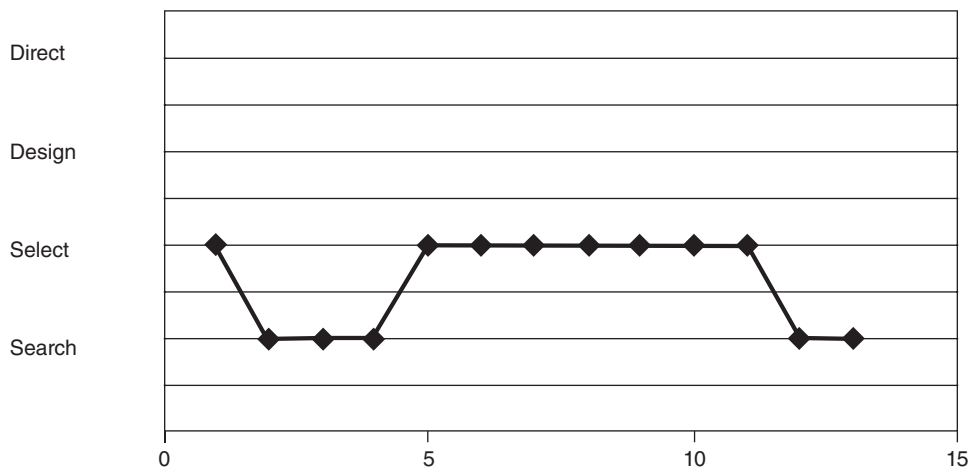


Figure 23.4 Temporal chart for a 10-year-old girl engaged in 14 activities at Webkinz.com during a play session lasting 17 minutes 53 seconds. No activities are coded as “design” or “direct.”

Overall, the three coding schemes developed for this study offer useful ways to explore patterns that emerge during online play and can tell us more about:

- what children do when they visit popular websites;
- whether children play alone or with others;
- what activities support creative or contributive sorts of play; and
- whether similar patterns of play occur across different websites.

In addition to coding screen capture data, informal interviews were conducted with participants to gather more information about Internet play at Webkinz.com and Millsberry.com. Study participants were also asked to make a list of their favorite activities, which indicated a preference for activities that allowed them to be creative. Surprisingly, these kinds of activities were not engaged in with any frequency, at least not during the play sessions recorded and coded for the study. For additional information about the findings of this early study see Spina-Caza (2010).

The apparent disconnect between what the children said they *liked to do* and what they *actually did* might not be that unusual for two reasons. First, as Druin (2002, p. 2) observes, “Children are extremely honest in their feedback and comments concerning technology, but much of what they say may be in their actions and therefore, needs to be interpreted within the context of concrete experiences.” And, second, as Hayes (2008, p. 103) found out in a study conducted on the topic of content creation, girls do not engage in such activity as frequently as boys:

While gaming may be pervasive, game content creation is not. Less than half of respondents who gamed reported engaging in any kind of content creation . . . Perhaps most clearly, just as gaming itself is a gendered practice, content creation is also gendered. While many girls are now gaming, they were much less likely than boys to engage in any kind of content creation.

As this study was conducted with girls only, it was clear that future studies of this kind would need to include both boys and girls in order to better understand the role of gender in virtual play.

Observations of online play in this first study suggest that a child’s subjective experience, or his or her perceptions of what happens when interacting with virtual environments, may be key to our understanding of how IVT use impacts human development. Wachs (1991), who argues that environment and experience are not necessarily synonymous, notes that a “child’s perception of the environment, rather than objective reality may be critical in influencing developmental outcomes” (p. 52). The need for research exploring how perceptions might be altered by virtual interactions is underscored by Bronfenbrenner (2005), developmental psychologist and founder of Head Start, who argues that perceptions emerging from activity “can contribute in powerful ways to shaping the course of development in the future” (p. 5).

To expand upon this early research we decided to further explore perceptions of creativity and agency as these were formed in the context of virtual play. To this end, a follow-up study was conducted over several weeks with 15 children in grades 4 through 8 attending a 4-H after-school program.² In this study, young people’s interactions with comparable real and virtual objects were observed to develop an understanding of how transferring physical activity to virtual environments can influence feelings of creativity and control.

Study 2: Redefining the Problem Space, Extending the Research Focus

The second study used a participatory research strategy inspired by Druin (1999) called *cooperative inquiry*, an approach often taken when designing technologies for children with children on a more or less equal footing. According to Druin (1999), while cooperative inquiry is unique as it involves children, it is grounded in HCI research and theories such as participatory design, contextual inquiry, and situated action:

Cooperative inquiry is an approach to research that includes three crucial aspects which reflect the HCI literature above: (1) a multidisciplinary partnership with children; (2) field research that emphasizes understanding context, activities, and artifacts; (3) iterative low-tech and high-tech prototyping. (Druin, 1999, p. 593)

In this study, a similar approach was used to advance our understanding of how young people perceive their interactions with virtual technology. Study participants were invited to be our research partners and to think about the different types of games they played, and whether these games and toys – both physical and virtual – allowed them to be more or less creative, or more or less in control over play. Handwritten observations describing free play activity, informal interview notes, and a “wrap-up survey” were the only instruments used to collect play data.

The hands-on board games and construction toys used in the study were matched with similar video games for the PC and Wii platforms. For example, both *Kabookii* (Ubisoft, 2007) for the Wii – a video game based on the popular board game *Cranium* – and the actual board game were used in the study. Physics games were also used, including *Professor Heinz Wolff’s Gravity* (Deep Silver, 2008), a virtual marble run, and the *Chaos Tower*, a physical construction toy and marble run (see Figures 23.5 and 23.6).

Several key observations emerged from the second exploratory study. During the informal interviews that were conducted in the workshops, the physical board games and construction toys were identified as being most supportive of creative sorts of play. Interestingly, video games were not perceived as offering opportunities to be creative. When asked which games afforded greater control over play activity, participant responses were not as cut and dried. Eight of 13 children interviewed (two boys and six girls) reported feeling more in control when playing with physical objects, and five (two girls and three boys) responded feeling more in control during video game play.

At the end of the six workshops, participants were asked to fill out a “wrap-up survey” identifying which games or toys they perceived allowed them to be more creative, and which afforded more control over play activity. Responses, however,



Figure 23.5 Chaos Tower physical marble run



Figure 23.6 Screen capture of *Professor Heinz Wolff's Gravity*, a virtual marble run video game (PC version)

were mixed. The surveys show a large number of study participants felt play with the Chaos Tower was more creative and that they had more control over play activity. The PC version of the *Gravity* video game was also identified by nearly as many participants as allowing for both creativity and control. Interestingly, study participants who played *Gravity* using the Wii felt both less creative and less in control of play.

While this second study did not specifically look for gender differences, observation notes indicated girls and boys played differently with the physical and virtual games and toys. A few boys freely shared hints to help others figure out how to solve puzzles or what to do in video games. Boys also took charge of physical, hands-on building activities, and were more likely to improvise how they built the Chaos Tower. Girls were more apt to construct the Chaos Tower according to the written directions, and also found themselves in the role of helpers or, at times, excluded from play. One 10-year-old girl was observed:

working silently, following directions, trying to build the [Chaos] tower. Boys excluded her. Girl offers to help get pieces, boys say they don't need help. [S]he continually tries to be included in the building process. Boys let her get certain pieces for them. She wants to help but doesn't know how. She observes as the boys build it. (Spina-Caza, research notes)

The purpose of this second, participatory study was to gain a better understanding of how physical and virtual play unfold in naturalistic settings. It was also conducted to inform the design of a larger, more controlled field experiment. The observations made in this study suggested the following changes to a future study to avoid potential confounds:

- already tested, valid survey instruments would be used to measure creativity and agency perceptions to see if results support the exploratory findings;
- subjects would be randomly selected to participate in either a physical or a virtual treatment, but not both;
- the virtual task would be performed using a PC, not the Wii, since perceptions of play using the Wii controller were not as positive and could confuse results;
- an equal number of girls and boys would be invited to take part in the study and be grouped by gender.

The second study allowed us to investigate children's interactions with comparable physical and virtual games and toys in a naturalistic research setting; to identify, with young people, perceptions of their own creative abilities in the contexts of virtual and physical play environments; and to bring into focus key issues associated with moving activity from physical to virtual spaces. Most importantly, it was useful for designing a research plan for the third, experimental, field study. The third study, which further extends this research, used a pre- and post-test design to identify self-perceptions as these emerged through the performance of physical and virtual play.

Unlike the first two studies, the third study also considered the role gender plays in perceptions of IVT use.

Study 3: A Conceptual Framework for Virtual Studies

Activity theory (AT) identifies creativity and agency as critical components of how knowledge is constructed and meaning is produced; both are also associated with learning through play and consequently warrant further study in the context of youth and IVT use. The third study, conducted as a field experiment, extended the earlier studies and examined the connections between mode and gender on creativity and agency perceptions as these emerge through physical and virtual activity. To this end, the creative agency model, or CAM, was developed to guide virtual research exploring the effects of IVT use on young people.

The CAM provided a conceptual framework for the overall experimental design of the third study. It built on existing research and theory by offering a formula to express creativity and agency as emergent factors of both subjective and objective aspects of human activity. Bronfenbrenner's (1981, 2005) formula for understanding development in context, or $D = f(PE)$,³ which posits human development is a process or a joint function of a person's interactions with his or her environment, was the inspiration for the CAM formula presented here:

$$C + A = f_{(g)}(VrAc) + (PfPc)$$

This formula does three things: first, it identifies creativity (C) and agency (A) as core dimensions of human development that can be measured; second, it defines C and A as both functions of virtual activity (VrAc) and emergent properties of performance perceptions (PfPc); and third, it recognizes gender (g) as a key dimension.⁴

The CAM, combined with self-perception measures such as the two instruments used for this study, can help us identify how technology environments might encourage the creative, contributive, and child-directed sorts of play that are associated with psychological development and cognitive growth. It also underscores the role environmental *affordances* play in these processes. The term "affordance," as it is used here, refers to "a three-way relationship between the environment, the organism, and an activity . . . centered on the notion of an organism acting in an environment: being in the world" (Dourish, 2004, p. 118).

The CAM formula proposes that it is through *activity performance* that human agency and creativity transpire. It posits that a person's perceptions of his or her own abilities, which emerge in the performance of virtual activity, are crucial to human development in general. CAM acknowledges all activity is situated in specific environments, but focuses attention on the role environmental *affordances* play in facilitating

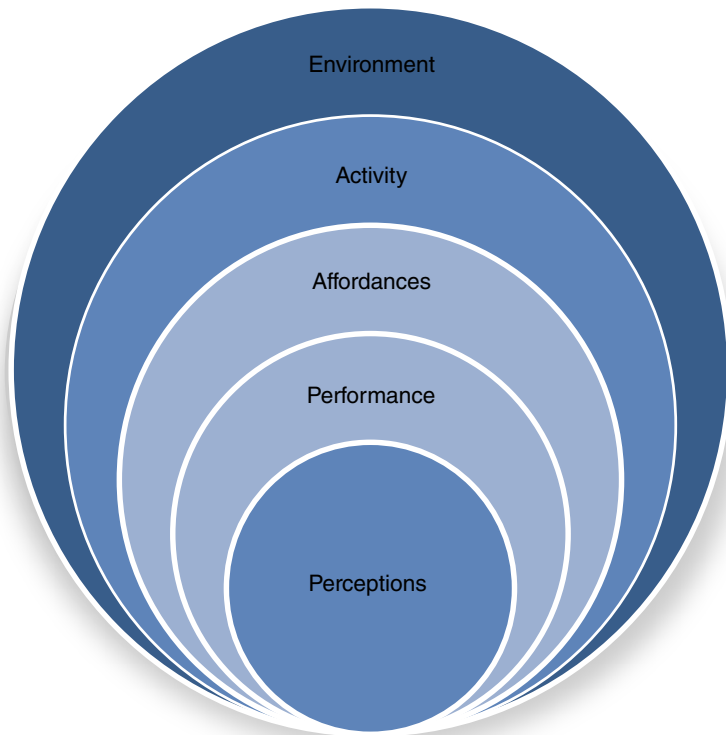


Figure 23.7 Creative agency model (CAM)

or constraining activity in virtual settings. *Perceptions* are placed at the center of the model (Figure 23.7) because the ways in which young people perceive their own creative abilities or agency in the performance of either virtual or physical activity may, as pointed out in the first study, be more critical to development than objective reality (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Wachs, 1991).

The CAM model offers a potential way to conceptualize creative agency perceptions as these emerge through activity performance. It also provides a useful formula for measuring whether or not young people's feelings about their own creative abilities increase or decrease when participating in comparable physical or virtual activities.

Measuring Perceptual Shifts in Physical and Virtual Play

In addition to using the CAM framework to guide this research, the experimental study also utilized existing psychometric measures to quantify perceptual shifts based



Figure 23.8 Fourth-grade study subjects participate in the physical/video treatment

on activity performance. The design of the field study centered on two treatment conditions, a physical/video task and a virtual/web task. Subjects participating in the physical/video treatment (Figure 23.8) were invited to make movies using physical affordances (video camera, tripod, puppet stage, and handheld puppets), while subjects assigned to the virtual/web treatment (Figure 23.9) made movies using virtual affordances (the Webkinz Studio application at Webkinz.com).

The children who took part in the study were randomly assigned to either the physical/video or the virtual/web treatments and were grouped by gender. Data was collected using the Khatena–Torrance Creative Perception Inventory (Khatena & Torrance, 1998). The KTCPI is composed of two self-report survey instruments: “What Kind of Person Are You?” (WK) and “Something About Myself” (SAM). Both instruments include dimensions generally associated with creativity and agency, and were administered as pretests three weeks prior to the experimental treatments. The same surveys were later administered a second time as post-tests, immediately following treatments or task completion.

The field experiment included three phases of data collection. In Phase I, the two survey instruments were administered to all of the study cohorts, including the control or wait list group, during the regular morning homeroom period by 4th- and 5th-grade teachers. The researcher met with all of the teachers and provided them with verbal and printed instructions to assist them in the administration of the KTCPI instruments to students.



Figure 23.9 Fourth-grade study participants making movies in the virtual/web treatment

In Phase II, cohorts, grouped by grade level and gender, were asked to make short movies using video production equipment in a physical environment, or a web movie-making application in a virtual production environment at Webkinz.com. In order to insure task interventions were comparable, physical sets were purposely selected and created to resemble virtual settings. An artist was commissioned to paint two backgrounds for the tabletop set to closely match two of the backgrounds in the Webkinz Studio application (see Figures 23.10 and 23.11). To make the physical and virtual conditions as similar as possible, hand puppets were selected for the physical treatment that closely matched the virtual characters.

In each condition study participants were able to write and direct their own movies (see Figures 23.12 and 23.13). In the physical/video condition subjects took turns at being director. Directors were given control over running the video camera and could direct puppet actors in movies based on their own scripts. In the virtual/web condition each participant could also direct virtual actors in movies based on the skits they had written. Both the physical and virtual movie-making activities were videotaped for research purposes and provided additional information that could be used during the analysis process and discussion of results.

In Phase III the control and treatment groups were expected to repeat the two KTCPI survey instruments. Post-task measures included brief, informal exit interviews designed to assess what types of affordances participants recognized as being available to them when performing either the physical or virtual tasks.



Figure 23.10 Physical studio tabletop stage set



Figure 23.11 Virtual Webkinz Studio set



Figure 23.12 Fifth-grade study participant writes her movie script



Figure 23.13 Fifth-grade participants use Webkinz Studio to make their movies

Independent Variables

The three independent variables in this study included:

- the *physical condition* (video movie-making task);
- the *virtual condition* (web movie-making task); and
- *gender*: students were randomly assigned to groups by grade level, isolating for gender.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study were two self-report measures typically used for measuring creativity perceptions and drawn from the Khatena–Torrance Creative Perception Inventory:

- the forced-choice attitude survey “What Kind of Person Are You?” (WK), developed by Torrance (Khatena & Torrance, 1976, 1998);
- the autobiographical creativity assessment inventory “Something About Myself” (SAM), created by Khatena (Khatena & Torrance, 1976, 1998).

Self-reports measuring perceptions and attitudes are often used to measure creativity (Fishkin & Johnson, 1998). The KTCPI is one such measure, consisting of two different inventories listed above. SAM is an autobiographical instrument based on “the rationale that creative functioning is reflected in the personality characteristics of the individual” (Khatena & Torrance, 1998, p. 6). According to Khatena (1977, p. 517) autobiographical instruments can be used to measure self-perceptions:

Perception can be related to creative components of personality which when operationalized will allow for measurement . . . If propensity for creative behavior is to be measureable, creativity needs to be operationalized or broken down into specific behaviors.

WK is a self-report inventory used to identify creatively oriented individuals. It requires subjects to reflect on and to choose from various creative and noncreative characteristics that most closely apply to them. The WK inventory is “based upon the rationale that the individual has a psychological self, whose structures have incorporated creative and non-creative ways of behaving” (Khatena & Torrance, 1998, p. 10). Most important to the virtual research conducted in the field experiment, the WK instrument is described as a composite of sub-selves triggered by an individual’s interactions with his or her environment.

The experimental study had a wait list/control group that closely mirrored the experimental groups, and early plans included pre- and post-testing of both experi-

mental and control groups. A decision was made, however, to conduct post-tests following the two experimental treatments, as it was important to determine whether or not we could establish direct links between the treatments and changes to self-perceptions. Among other things, this decision resulted in shorter time intervals between pre- and post-tests. While longer time intervals are recommended, shorter intervals are useful in some instances. As Buddenbaum and Novak (2001, p. 128) point out, "Studies using a very short time interval will measure short-term effects. For longer-term effects, a second set of observations at some later time may be added or the interval between pretest and posttest may be increased." Future research conducted using the CAM model will consider longer-term effects.

To supplement the pre- and post-test data collected, qualitative data were also gathered to identify what affordances were used in the movie-making process, and to point out the possibilities and the constraints associated with these affordances as they are articulated in children's own words, or depicted by their actions during the experimental treatments. Several key questions associated with affordance use can be addressed using this type of qualitative analyses. For example:

- 1 Is the ability (or inability) to recognize and use affordances in physical and virtual environments connected to increases or decreases in creativity or agency perceptions?
- 2 Are there gender differences associated with affordance use and creativity and agency perceptions?
- 3 If gendered differences are linked to affordance recognition and use, do the differences support the findings of the current study?
- 4 What contributions can such findings make to the study of children's IVT use?

Qualitative data collected for this third study includes videotape recordings of participants performing the physical and virtual tasks, and the final movies made during the experimental study. These data have yet to be analyzed. However, some of the things we will be examining include participant statements, off-hand comments, and questions recorded in the videotaped observations. Verbal data analysis techniques will be used to identify any phenomena connected to creativity or agency perceptions and gendered practices.

In addition to the coding of verbal data, visual data will be segmented into activity units that can also be coded to identify, among other things, the frequency and range of affordance use. For example, in their finished movies, how many times did study participants recognize and use the affordances available to them in the physical/ video or virtual/web treatments? Did they alter the framing or the types of shots used to make their movies? Did they add music or change set backgrounds? Did girls recognize and use affordances more frequently than boys?

The importance of conducting qualitative analysis of the physical and virtual treatments is threefold: (1) qualitative findings can confirm or complement the significant findings reported in the experimental study; (2) new findings may be revealed that

enrich the experimental study; and (3) unexpected findings may come to light that necessitate further investigation.

The study of complex systems requires more complex, multilevel approaches to research exploring new media technology, particularly for studies attempting to capture or measure subjective experience or perceptions. In this study, we measured creativity and agency perceptions as these emerged in physical and virtual play. Our preliminary quantitative data analysis indicates perceptions are related to mode. Significant results were reported for both paired samples *t* tests and independent samples tests, indicating a possible relationship between how an activity is performed and self-perceptions. Positive effects were noted for three of the four creativity dimensions we studied and for one agency dimension, but only in the virtual condition, and all of these were gendered.

Overall, girls who took part in this study showed a positive increase in creativity perception scores across three dimensions, while boys demonstrated an increase for only a single agency-related variable. Negative effects, however, were found for two of the other agency dimensions in the virtual/web condition only, though these do not appear to be gendered.

Secondary analyses of the qualitative data collected for this research will shed more light on the various phenomena identified in the pre- and post-test results. The triangulation of data in mixed method approaches can verify or confirm that notable trends are not simply the result of study methods or limitations, and can also provide critical information to improve the design of future studies.

The Importance of Isolating for Gender

As the research presented here demonstrates, studies that explore young people and IVT use would be remiss not to consider gender as a contributing variable. Gender differences exist in how children interact with the physical environment and are also found in studies of Internet and video game use. Research in gender and literacy practices, for example, indicates that childhood objects and toys, the characteristics of different play settings, and the activities performed in these settings all influence how children interact with each other and their environment (Cassell, 1998; Heath, 1983; Jenkins, 2006; Laurel, 2003; Thorne, 1993).

Research on computers, Internet use, and video games indicates gender differences have an influence on IVT use. Colley (2003), for example, who examines gender differences associated with how computers are perceived in school settings, explains, "Girls approach computers as tools for accomplishing tasks, while boys approach them as technology for play mastery" (p. 673). Cassell (2002, p. 4) notes that girls not only participate in different types of virtual play from boys, but are also often treated differently in the context of computer use.

first grade girls working on the computer in mixed-gender groups were more likely to be laughed at, criticized and have their competence questioned than when they were working alone or in all-girl groups. In addition, the girls were frequently interrupted by male students, whereas the reverse was not true.

According to Heeter and Winn (2008), video game play, when it occurs publicly, becomes gendered. The author's note that at school, where computer screens are visible to classmates, young people "compare progress and performance" (p. 283). Hayes (2008), who studies the connections between content creation and IT proficiency of middle-school-age girls, recommends girls *not* work in mixed gender groups, and suggests researchers design experiments "in which girls can explore gaming and related creative practices without male competition" (p. 106).

Due to the many instances in which gender differences emerge for how young people approach both physical and virtual play, and because it appears that girls not only play differently from boys but also alter their behavior with technology when boys are around, it is imperative that studies of IVT use also isolate for gender to avoid mixed-gender confounds.

Complex Virtual Interactions Call for Complex Methodological Approaches

The research approaches described here bring various strategies to the study of virtual activity. An early study, influenced by literacy research and studies of popular children's websites, was conducted to identify opportunities for informal learning and creativity in Internet play environments. It contributed useful ways for measuring and assessing online play environments using visual data analysis techniques. While the study concluded that opportunities for creative and contributive play exist at commercial websites, children's perceptions of what they did when playing online differed from their recorded actions. The initial study suggested that subjective experience, in the form of self-perceptions, plays a crucial role in our understanding of virtual interactions.

A second research project, inspired by the first, extended the scope of the earlier study by exploring perceptions emerging from both traditional and virtual play activity. It took a participatory approach that embraced participants as research partners, as do many studies in the field of human-computer interaction. The overarching purpose of this study was to inform the design of a larger, experimental study.

The third study, conducted as a field experiment, employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies. It, too, explored similar physical and virtual play activity. Most importantly, this study produced the creative agency model (CAM), a useful framework for understanding how self-perceptions that emerge through

physical and virtual activity are impacted by variables such as gender and affordance recognition. Together, these various methods offer complementary research tools that can expand our understanding of how activity unfolds in virtual environments, as well as the overall impact of transferring activity from physical to virtual settings on how people play, develop, and learn.

Finally, several fundamental questions are raised by research contrasting physical and virtual modes of play:

- 1 What do we want to measure, and how will we measure it?
- 2 Will we use or adapt existing measurement tools or create new ones?
- 3 What can we learn by identifying perceptions of creativity and agency as these emerge in the performance of physical and virtual activity?
- 4 What else ought we to be measuring?

To answer these and similar questions we need to consider the goals of such research. Are we trying to determine which physical activities transfer best to virtual environments? Are we developing or advocating the use of virtual technology, including video games, Internet sites, and mobile applications, for informal or formal learning? Are we trying to positively influence design to develop technology that supports, extends, or enhances human activity? Are we making and marketing new technology to young people? And, if the purpose is purely a commercial one, can we enrich IVT design so that it considers young people as active participants in shaping virtual culture and supports their goals and desires?

Whatever questions are posed, whatever research methods are selected, adopting approaches that are informed by the performance of activity in ecologically sound contexts can provide more accurate information about which types of environmental affordances – physical and/or virtual – produce positive creativity and agency perceptions that are believed to be vital to human development in the long run.

NOTES

- 1 The phrase “interactive virtual technology” (IVT) was used in this research because it is more inclusive of activity that happens in Internet or Web environments, video games, and/or other digital play spaces. “Information technology” (IT) and “information communication technology” (ICT), while often used to describe technology in the context of computers and communication, or the management of information, are terms that can be all-encompassing; however, they do not necessarily conjure up playful activity. “Virtual reality” (VR) or “virtual reality environment” (VRE) were also considered, although these terms are sometimes associated with specialized, highly immersive, 3-D environments, and simulations, which are (at least for now) less accessible. IVT embraces a variety of digital activities, and as activity is the focus of this research, serves the purpose well.
- 2 4-H is a youth program sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture that focuses on “hands-on learning programs in the areas of science, citizenship, and healthy

- living” according to the organization’s website (retrieved August 1, 2013, from <http://www.4-h.org/about/youth-development-organization/>).
- 3 Bronfenbrenner later revised the formula to $Dt = f(t - p)(PE)(t - p)$ to account for developmental changes at the time (t) in which developmental outcomes are observed, and the period (p) during which interactions between person and environment “operate to produce the outcome existing at the time of observation (t – p)” (Johnson, 2008, p. 4). (The variables associated with Bronfenbrenner’s formulas for development are reproduced as they appear in the sources, in roman type.)
 - 4 The flexibility of CAM allows gender (g) and other independent variables such as socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity to be factored into the equation to determine whether these, too, might play a role in perceptions of IVT use. Other types of activity can also be examined or compared to determine impact on creativity and agency perceptions (i.e., physical activity or mixed reality activity using tangible or computational objects).

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Exploring the Effects of TV and Movie Music on Childhood

Amparo Porta

ABSTRACT

In recent years the relations between childhood and the mass media have been the subject of an increasing number of studies conducted by researchers from the fields of communication and education. Their link with cultural diversity, heritage, habitat, and identity has made them the focus of psychological, multicultural, and critical pedagogic studies. The aim of this chapter is to determine how childhood is affected by one of the poles of the audiovisual binomial, namely, the music present in movies and television, which is included as their soundtrack. The article explores several descriptive paths from a semiotic approach, analyzing both the contents and the music in order to answer two questions: What is listened to in children's TV programs and movies? And what is that music like? Finally, some soundtracks are examined with the aim of discovering the effects of this everyday music that, through movies and TV, speaks to the child about the Other and his or her cultural dominance and values.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems195

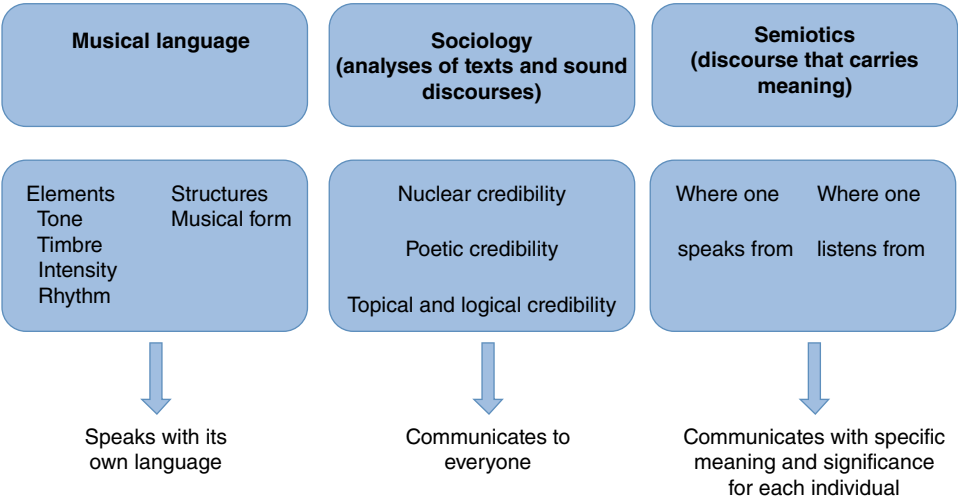
In recent decades numerous authors and disciplines have been interested in the effects of the mass media in childhood and adolescence. The object of this chapter is the act of listening in the daily sound environment, and the effects produced therein by the mass media, such as cinema and television. The music offered daily in the mass media includes cognitive, social, emotional, and patrimonial elements that all affect listeners' experiences (DeNora, 2000). This text is part of a wider research study focused on listening, which is also aimed at developing objective instruments based on the language of music. To achieve these goals one must keep in mind which sound object is referred to, which type of sound landscape the sound object is located in, and which characteristics the sound object possesses. After producing and applying three instruments (musical analysis, a listening checklist, and analysis of the musical discourse), the soundtrack of several children's TV programs and movies were studied in order to determine their effects using qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques.

The musical characteristics were investigated using a checklist made up of categories that facilitated quantitative analysis, while the musical discourse was studied using content analysis. Cinema and television are similar in some respects, but they also present a number of important differences. Consequently, the research examined both TV programs for children and an animated film (*Happy Feet*, 2006). The study started with a descriptive phase aimed at identifying objective elements in the music, followed by an interpretive analysis focusing on the discourse, and exploring the meaning that music has for the child audience – the term “meaning” taken here as used by Greimas and Courtes (1982). The research focused on cinema and TV program soundtracks since they have been identified as having substantial educational influence. The core question of the research concerns what children listen to in cinema and TV programs for children.

Method

The methods of analysis chosen in this study include musical (Zamacois, 1987), sociological (Krippendorff, 1990), and semiotic analyses (Talens, 1995). *Music speaks with its own language*, so the elements included in the sound environment (i.e., tone, timbre, intensity, and rhythm); the structure (i.e., the musical form); and stylistic and timbric options have been studied in depth (Zamacois, 1987) (see Figure 24.1).

Music speaks to everybody (see Figure 24.2). By means of the sociological analysis of texts and discourses, the study accessed the nonobservable aspects of the musical analysis. In discourse, the unreachable truth is replaced by credibility, which refers to the reliability and consistency within the context of the discourse. Hence, the above-mentioned elements were approached on three different levels: nuclear credibility, poetic and logical credibility, and topical credibility (Krippendorff, 1990). Nuclear credibility shows the basic characteristics of musical language (Figure 24.1), whereas



Source: Porta, 2007, 73.

Figure 24.1 Methodology for analyzing soundtracks

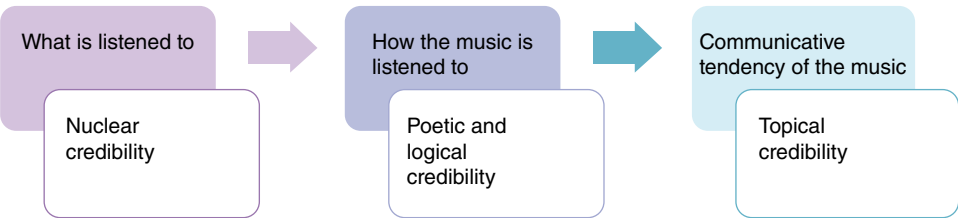


Figure 24.2 Music speaks for everyone: levels of credibility

poetic and logical credibility reveals the organization within the communicative chain by means of the musical form, genres, and stylistic and timbric features. This second level addresses the question of where the music is located and how it is constructed. Finally, the third level (topical credibility) allows us to observe the communicative tendency of the discourse as a whole, that is, to consider the music’s ideological positioning while taking into account the fact that music is received in a private, individual manner (Porta, 2007). In other words, this level concerns the elements and syntax of the musical language.

The procedure followed consisted of three stages: (1) studying the quantitative musical features by applying the checklist mentioned above; (2) studying the songs and musical works through a musical analysis; and (3) analyzing the contents of the musical discourse, and examining how they are related to the story and other audio-visual narratives.

General Approach of the Study

This study explored cinema and television soundtracks as well as their effects, taking the semiotic framework as its theoretical reference because of its interest in the making of meaning, that is, in the individual's position within the discourse (Lozano, Abril, & Peña-Marín, 1982; Talens, 1995; Zunzunegui, 1989). The methodological foundation in musical semiotics was based on Adorno (1972), Molino (1975), Nattiez (1990), and Gauthier (1996). The analysis was performed using a procedure described by Umberto Eco. In the introduction to *The Absent Structure* Eco states that semiotic research makes sense only if the field structure is assumed to be an imprecise entity that the method intends to clear up. Hence he proposes the following points as a methodology: (1) comparing definitions; (2) establishing the semiotic field in terms of vastness and disorder; and (3) creating a research model subordinated to contradiction. This way, if the procedure is successful, something which appears utopian – that is to say, “maintaining the complexity of the field by granting it a structure, and thereby transforming that field into a system” (Eco & Cantarell, 1978) would be achieved.

Following Eco, the operating hypothesis of this research was to transform the field of study into a system, which requires the use of suitable instruments. The problem of measurement instruments in music is not new. Indeed, two different approaches to sound analysis appeared back in the 1960s and 1970s. Pierre Schaeffer's (1966) sound object, on the one hand, was based on a phenomenological analysis that focused on the modes of auditory perception. On the other hand, Robert Murray Schafer's (1977) notion of *soundscape* dealt with what might be labeled the “compositional” representation of the sonic environment. He also called for new solutions to new demands and claimed that the various fields of sound studies are in need of what amounts to a revolution. Finally, Atienza (2008) criticized this approach and stated that the sound object, which is to be the elemental unit of a “solfeccio of sound,” lacks a suitable scale for analyzing such complex configurations as those found in urban settings.

The Sound Medium

From a cultural and educational position, in accordance with Atienza (2008), we can say that the sound object is not really an *object* at all, nor is it responsible for the sound matter as an object, but, rather, as a medium. Consequently, the question about sound itself, addressed by Schaeffer and Murray Schafer, remains. The aim then is to study the sound in terms of a precise moment in time and space. Jean-François Augoyard (1989, p 21) and the Cresson laboratory are in fact the heirs of both conceptions. This research line arises from the need to find an interdisciplinary

tool adjusted to the scale of an urban configuration that allows for the integration of dimensions other than the purely esthetic one (Atienza, 2008). The Cresson laboratory in Grenoble established a survey protocol that indicates a change in paradigm that rests on three key premises related to the description, the itinerary, and the experience.

The first of these three terms refers to the study of the musical elements that are listened to, while the second deals with their position in the sequence or program and how they are associated with the characters and set design (place, roles, etc.). The third concerns the observation of the child's identity traits, presence, and projection in the story in order to determine the degree of influence and dominant ideology. The main contribution in this case is that the parameters have been enlarged to include both contextual and experiential data. Therefore we no longer speak of just music or sound art, but of its position in the temporal and narrative structure of the audiovisual media. This means that in this new definition of listening space, the contents related to one's own identity (De Moragas, 1991), as well as the communicative, aesthetic, and patrimonial values in education, are all affected. Thus, this study aimed to analyze that part of the contemporary sound habitat that is produced industrially and designed to have a strong, far-reaching impact across society. Accordingly, it made use of musical formulae that were adapted to the mass media in order to insure it built a wide audience.

The Model

Models that attempt to explain how music is represented mentally vary in terms of the range of phenomena they explain and the categories they propose (Gómez-Ariza, 2000). Yet, few studies have systematically reviewed each of the factors that make up music and the influence they have on the way musical information is perceived and remembered. According to Gómez-Ariza, one of the difficulties hindering this type of review is that there is no unifying theoretical framework that allows existing data to be organized. The model used here is one that was created by Gómez-Ariza and which allows these data to be unified.

The notes in the melody, the intervals, and the tonality are all variables that determine the combination of sounds that make up music (musical phonology). The rhythmic pattern, the accents, and the rules of formation are essential to carry out the processes of segmenting a piece of music (musical syntax). Finally, tonal hierarchies and structure organize the music while also generating musical expectations, which, together with other expressive factors such as the tempo or the timbre, seem to generate affective responses to music (the semantics of music) (Gómez-Ariza, 2000).

Drawing from this research, the study considered the diverse dimensions of the musical stimuli that combine to constitute the complex auditory pattern that makes

up music. In addition to dimensions related to the mental representation of music, music also takes place in time, so the study must be anchored in time in such a way as to allow the following questions to be answered: What is listened to, and where is what is listened to located? As noted, the definitions of the Cresson laboratory add the concepts of description, itinerary, and experience to the methodology. The descriptive part is understood to mean the characteristics of the music, while the itinerary refers to the planning of the story and its sequences in movies and the different sections that appear in TV programs (i.e., advertising, cartoons, and in-house material, as well as the songs in the opening sequences and the position of the other songs). Experience deals with the leading songs and the study of their cultural features, together with the representation of the world and the values that are offered. In short, here we are dealing with nuclear, poetic, and logical credibility.

Instruments

Three main instruments were employed in the study. The first two – musical analysis and the listening checklist – were used to gain an understanding of musical pieces in the media and their constitutive elements. Musical analysis makes it possible to determine what the music is like. The checklist was used to describe the music's 13 basic elements quantitatively. The third instrument, analysis of musical discourse, explored the meaning of the music within the audiovisual and cultural medium. This is the point at which the levels of credibility are applied to give account of the presence of the viewer, that is, the child, within the discourse offered by cinema and TV.

These instruments and considerations were applied to a TV program for children entitled *Los Lunnis* (2008) and also to the movie *Happy Feet* (2006). The checklist for listening took into account 14 indicators corresponding to the more representative sound qualities to be measured. This checklist had already been validated and applied to other audiovisual documents. The analysis variables, to be further detailed below, were the following: without sound; nonmusical sound; musical sound; voice; meter and rhythm; beginning type; dynamics; agogic; genre and style; sound organization; cadence; modulation; sound texture; and sound plane (Porta & Ferrández, 2009). The instrument was produced in four phases: (1) the construction of the pilot checklist; (2) validation by expert opinion; (3) second checklist; and (4) intercoder validation. Validation was carried out by means of the crossed judgments of three independent coders on 22 units of analysis for the same program, the results showing a mean rate of agreement above 80%, which was considered to indicate that the instrument had a very high level of reliability (Porta & Ferrández, 2009).

The checklist was created taking into account the most representative measurable music and sound characteristics. As a result, the following variables for analysis were established:

- 0 *No sound.*
- 1 *Nonmusical sound:* this indicator refers to sound that cannot be measured with musical parameters.
- 2 *Musical sound:* this refers to the qualities of sound that allow musical components to be discriminated and distinguished.
- 3 *Voice:* this refers to sound produced by the human vocal apparatus.
- 4 *Meter and rhythm:* (a) *Meter* refers to the hierarchical organization of time levels or measures. (b) *Rhythm* refers to the distribution of sounds on the time continuum.
- 5 *Type and beginning:* (a) *Anacrusis beginning:* this refers to one that starts before the phrase begins. (b) *Acephalous beginning:* this refers to a phrase that begins with a silence. (c) *Thetic beginning:* this refers to a phrase that begins on time.
- 6 *Dynamics:* this refers to everything related to the degrees of intensity of the music.
- 7 *Agogic:* this refers to aspects of the performance related to the duration and, consequently, to the tempo.
- 8 *Genre and style:* (a) *Musical genre:* this refers to musical compositions that share different affinity criteria. (b) *Style:* this refers to the form of the discourse and the particular way in which a piece is performed.
- 9 *Sound organization:* this refers to the musical syntax and the modal or tonal (major or minor) organization of Western music.
- 10 *Cadence:* this refers to the process of falling to a tonal center. The different cadences can be classified as conclusive, if they generate a certain degree of stability or rest, or suspensive, if they generate instability or tension.
- 11 *Modulation:* in tonal music, this indicator refers to the process of moving from one tonality to another or the result of such a shift.
- 12 *Sound texture:* this indicator allows us to gain a better understanding of spatial organization and how it is articulated with regard to performances, composition, and analysis. Types of texture include: (a) monophonic; (b) polyphonic, which in turn may be (i) horizontal polyphony or (ii) vertical polyphony; and (c) accompanied monody.
- 13 *Sound plane:* this refers to the vocal and/or instrumental groups that jointly intervene and determine the situation of the different sounds, whether this is temporal, physical, or related to the intention of those sounds.

The narrative structure of three sections of the television program – content produced in-house, nonlocally-produced cartoons, and advertising – together with the musical numbers and songs in the movie, were all examined. The nuclear credibility of the music was considered first to determine its specific characteristics, and an examination of the poetic and logical credibility of the musical texts made it possible to determine the way musical discourse is built. This approach shed light on the music's topical credibility, and its discursive and ideological tendencies (Porta, 2007).

The paradigm, model, and methodology were selected so as to answer the key question: *What do children listen to in TV programs and children's movies?* This phase of analysis resulted in a better understanding of the content of the soundtracks and of how they represent the world. This research, however, also proposed to explore the social, communicative, and educational dimensions of music.

Rationale: Children and the Music of the Media

According to the *Pigmalión* report (Del Río, Alvarez, & Del Río, 2004), the mass media, especially television, have become a key means of constructing reality for children today. Some of the most important works on television music include those by Beckers (1993) in Germany, Bixler (2000) in England, and Magdanz (2001) in Canada. Others include those carried out on the program *Sesame Street*, in particular the study conducted by Wolfe and Stambaugh (1993), who proposed the observation, classification, and detailed description of the musical elements of the program as initial objectives for later research on music-therapy-based learning for young children. Equally noteworthy is the work carried out by Valdivia on the cultural dimensions of the media (Valdivia, 1995, 2004, 2010). Spanish-language research on the subject includes the work by Herrera, Cremades, and Lorenzo (2010) on musical preferences in adolescents, and TV and animated movies (Porta, 1998, 2007). Our own research group has also conducted research on children's TV programs in Latin America (Porta, 2010).

The changes experienced in contemporary Western societies with the proliferation of new technologies make it necessary to search for new strategies to protect the rights of children both as citizens and as consumers (Buckingham, 2002). One of these rights is education, one of the purposes of which is to prepare individuals to cope with the difficulties of the times they are living in (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). Moreover, critical pedagogy contends that being culturally literate means being in possession of the basic information needed to prosper in the modern world (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). Similarly, multicultural pedagogy defends the social characteristics that define the Other, and denounces social and educational policies that are only interested in adapting to the needs of the market (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; Morley, 2002). Finally, Hargreaves and North (1999) looked into the psychological functions of music in everyday life and proposed focusing tasks on the social dimension, so as to be able to consider the interdisciplinary context, the effects of "democratizing" music, the role played by theory, the relationship between theory and practice, and the implications for the research methodology.

It is important to bear in mind that cinema and television are references for children, since they provide them with a representation of the world prior to any real experience and reflexive knowledge (Vygotsky, 1981). Music, image, and narration are always present in cinema and television, in a process that produces a unique,

single meaning within the child audience. To find out what the music in children's programs is like and how it is constructed, an analysis of the musical characteristics of the songs, the fragments, and the motifs found in the three sections of the television program identified above was performed, focusing specifically on the timelines and the cuts in regular periods. On the other hand, in animated films for children, music is part of the story and it is consequently subject to the narrative structure, on which it depends. Music interacts with the audience in the construction of the story, the definition of the characters, the settings and ambiances, and the emotional climate. Taking these factors into consideration, the musical characteristics, the impermanence, the relation between the music and the story, and the position in the narrative structure were analyzed as case studies.

Two approaches were employed to answer the two basic research questions of this study: What is listened to? (musical categories), and what is the material listened to like and how is the music built? (content analysis). The checklist specifically designed for this research and discussed earlier was used to answer the first question, and an analysis of 13 musical categories was carried out to establish the characteristics of the soundtrack of the TV programs for children. The research used musical analysis (Zamacois, 1987), the relational timeline for music in the narrative structure, and content analysis of the levels of credibility to answer the second question. This second line of research added an element of greater significance to the descriptive one, since it explored communicative intentions, and the assignment of roles and values by means of the music.

Analysis of TVE Programs for Children

One section of the study explored the soundtrack of *Los Lunnis*, the children's television program with the highest audience figures in Spain. *Los Lunnis* is produced by TVE and broadcast on TVE2 every day from 7.30 to 9.30 a.m. The week's episodes are shown again on Saturday mornings. It is the only children's program offered by TVE and is produced thanks to public funding. *Los Lunnis* is aimed at children between the ages of 3 and 10. The program is also shown in other countries, and is structured as a programming block with cross-curricular educational objectives. Studies indicate that most viewers are between the ages of 4 and 6 and that the music is one of the main reasons children watch the program. *Los Lunnis* has been awarded a number of prizes, and has been praised for promoting positive values and behaviors such as interculturalism, for fostering ethics, for disseminating nonsexist behavior, and for the rational use of television. The sample analyzed here consisted of 10 hours of programming broadcast during a week in which no special events were taking place, namely February 18–22, 2008. The programs were recorded on DVD and the music was analyzed in terms of its narrative and visual context. In the sample, this programming block consisted of both Spanish and US cartoons (20%), advertising

for food/candy and toys (4.4%), and, lastly, in-house program materials, including the opening sequences, closing sequence, bumpers, dramatizations, reports, songs, news, and interviews (75.6%).

To answer the broad question of what is listened to, a number of more specific questions were posed. These included: What musical sounds are used and what types and families do they belong to? What tempo and meter are used? How do the pieces of music begin? What pace and intensity do they have? What genres and styles do they display? What keys are most frequently used? How do the pieces of music end? And how important is the soundtrack in the program as a whole? Here, the program was studied using the checklist developed for this research and validated before applying it to the study (Porta & Ferrández, 2009). Sampling was performed by means of the expert choice procedure so as to include the musical elements from the three sections of the program (in-house programs, cartoons, and advertising) that were relevant to the first analysis. Furthermore, the sample was complemented with 10 periodic cuts selected at random to allow determination of the musical material in the program. The checklist was applied to the program by an expert. It involved the use of 90 units of analysis and a full examination of the musical form consisting of 23 pieces.

Answering the question of what the music is like entailed determining the musical and discursive meaning of these elements, as well as their specific weight in children's programs. In order to do so, the programs were subdivided into three types of program materials: in-house (locally produced) program materials, advertising, and cartoons. Additional questions that were asked included "What are the musical characteristics of the soundtrack and how is it constructed?" A new approach was developed to search for the molar elements (Pozo, 1989, pp. 166–167) and their meaning, namely:

- 1 the internal characteristics of the music from the three sections of the program, that is:
 - (a) in-house program materials: study of the opening theme music, closing themes, bumpers, and songs;
 - (b) cartoons: the series *Berni*, *Clifort*, and *Pocoyó*;
 - (c) advertising: commercials for toys and food/candy;
- 2 The diegetic songs (that is, songs sung by the characters).

In order to study how these were dealt with in the program, five songs performed by the leading characters in the program were selected.

What Is Listened To? Musical Categories

The study demonstrated that the program makes frequent use of both musical and nonmusical sound consisting of noises and sound effects. The music in the sample

consisted of 70% electronic, 15.5% acoustic, and 10% hybrid combinations, mainly groupings of instruments, the majority of which were string instruments. Electronic sounds were predominantly imitation. Forty-two percent of the music was instrumental and the rest was vocal, mainly in groups of voices (38.9%), with a prevalence of male (10%) over female voices (2.2%).

In terms of *meter and rhythm*, the results were binary in 88% of cases versus 1.4% of ternary, with occasional cases of blends. A binary rhythm refers to a rhythm based on one strong and one weak beat (e.g., in a march). A ternary form consists of one strong beat and two weak ones, an example being a waltz. The *type of beginning* analysis revealed that the pieces of music had anacrusic beginnings in 57% of cases versus 37.8% with thetic beginnings. There were also a few cases of acephalous beginnings. Anacrusic beginnings precede the first beat in a bar, while acephalous beginnings start after the first downbeat. Thetic beginnings start on the first beat (see Porta and Ferrández, 2009). The use of intensity (dynamics) was mostly flat (81%), with variations in 18.9% of the melodies. As far as agogic variations (or variations in pace) were concerned, the music in this program was again seen to opt for no variations in tempo in 88.9% of cases versus 3.3% in which it speeded up, and a slightly higher percentage that used *ritardando*.

The most common genres were popular music (77.8% of the total) – pop, rock, blues, and other popular styles and subgenres from the twentieth century. With regard to traditional music, 13.3% came from other cultures, while only 1.1% came from Spain. The sound organization revealed a predominance of the major key (88.9%) over the minor key (6.7%) in the sample. Most of the music resolved in a conclusive manner (56.7%) versus 25.6% for suspensive, and 10% for truncated melodies. This last type of melodies occurred in advertising segments or in adjustments made to the continuity of the program. The analysis of the *sound texture* showed that the most common melodies were songs that are sung by one voice accompanied by instruments (64.4%), in contrast to several voices singing together (17.3%). Finally, the study demonstrated that music often plays a leading role in the program, and appears as background music in scenes and dramatizations in just 25.6% of the cases in the sample studied. Table 24.1 shows the details of the results obtained.

What Is the Music Like?

In order to study the musical characteristics, 23 pieces of music from different sections of the program were analyzed, bearing in mind the length of the work and its musical form. Thus, the first and last phrases, two intermediate cuts, and an evaluation of the whole piece of music were studied in the case of the longest pieces (understood to mean pieces of music lasting more than one minute) over the five days of the week. The results of the analysis of the musical contents of the in-house program material (opening themes, closing music, bumpers, and songs), cartoons, and advertising were as follows.

Table 24.1 The indicators: results by musical categories

Musical sound and instruments		Agogic	
Acoustic		Speeding up	3.3
Chordophone	3.3	Ritardando	4.4
Aerophone	0	No variation	88.9
Membranophone	1.1	ND	2.4
Idiophone	0	Genre and style	
Instrumental group	11.1	Erudite Western	3.3
Electronic		Popular	77.8
Original	4.4	Traditional	
Imitation	65.6	Local	1.1
Combination	10	External	13.3
ND*	4.5	Combinations	1.1
Vocal/instrumental		ND	3.4
Man	10	Sound organization	
Woman	2.2	Major key	88.9
Child	0	Minor key	6.7
Group of voices	38.9	Modal	0
Others	5.6	Others	0
Instrumental	42.2	ND	4.4
ND	6.9	Cadence	
Meter and rhythm		Suspensive	25.6
Binary	88.9	Conclusive	56.7
Ternary	0	Truncated	10
Others	5.6	Others	1.1
ND	10.6	ND	6.6
Type of beginning		Sound texture	
Thetic	37.8	Homophonic	4.4
Anacrusic	57.8	Accompanied monody	64.4
Acephalous	1.1	Polyphonic	12.9
ND	3.3	ND	18.3
Dynamics		Sound plane	
With variation	18.9	Music as leading figure	61.1
No variation	80	Music as background	25.6
ND	1.1	ND	13.3

*ND = Undetermined.

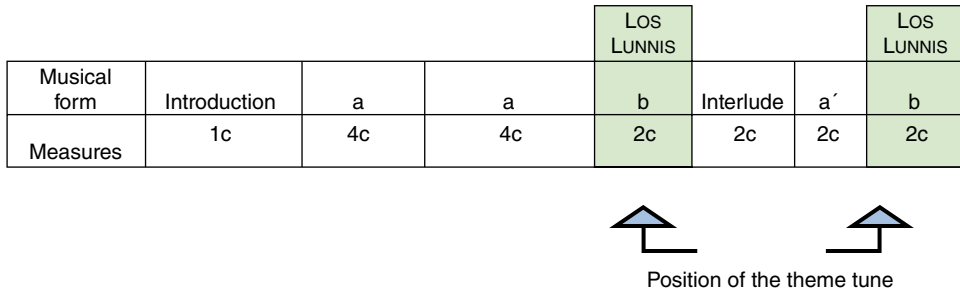


Figure 24.3 Musical structure of the opening sequence

In-House Programs

The opening theme music of the program, which was repeated on each of the five days of the week, was studied using 15 checklists – three for each day. It is a short tune lasting 34 seconds, with an anacrusis beginning, in G major, and a tempo of 144 beats (quarter notes) per minute. It is sung by adult soloists and vocal groups accompanied by instruments (Figure 24.3). This tune is the one that is most frequently used in transitions, to present dramatizations or subsections, and as bumpers and closing themes. For each use, however, it is adapted to create different versions, which may be instrumental, vocal, or semi-spoken, and could be complete, fractioned, or played as a repeating loop.

In the closing themes (i.e. the musical themes that accompany the credits at the end of the show) the program utilized the tune from the opening, although some parts were removed while the motif from the signature tune was kept. These were of varying lengths: 4 seconds, 36 seconds, and 1 minute 33 seconds. For example, this last closing theme, which was the longest of all, was repeated in a loop while the last dramatic action in the program was finishing, and it concluded when the signature tune shifted from the background to the foreground. On two of the five days it was truncated and replaced by the next program. Eight of the bumpers lasted 7 seconds and, again, took up the identifying elements of the opening theme tune and used them with different arrangements and effects.

There were many different songs and melodies in the program. In this subsection the aim was to retrieve those that played a leading role in order to determine the different forms, genres, and styles that were used, how they were linked with the scene and the subject matter, and also to explore the synchrony with the text and the images. The songs and melodies selected were those interpreted by characters in different settings, such as in little theaters, pubs, television studios, or virtual sets. Throughout the week analyzed, the following songs were heard as leading figures with diegetic sound: “Un mundo mejor,” “Oh Lulú, Estoy como un queso,” “Soy rancherito,” and “Que me fallen las palabras” (Table 24.2). A total of 25 units of

Table 24.2 Analysis of the songs performed by characters in the program throughout the week

Song 1 “Un mundo mejor”	
Topic	Peace
Summary	A strophic pop song in G major at 168 beats per minute, sung with a child’s and a man’s voices, accompanied by electronic imitative sound. In the last phrase, fireworks can be heard.
Song 2 “Oh Lulú”	
Topic	The legend of the hero
Summary	A country song with alternating verses and a chorus that is repeated at the end. It is in C major at 114 beats per minute. It is sung by a man’s voice, accompanied by an acoustic banjo, percussion, and polyphonic children’s choir.
Song 3 “Estoy como un queso”	
Topic	Self-image and self-esteem
Summary	A blues song at 136 beats per minute. Alternating verses and chorus. Sung with voice, piano, drums, and male choir that echoes in the chorus.
Song 4 “Soy rancherito”	
Topic	Popular song
Summary	A Mexican-style song in C major at 144 beats per minute, accompanied by mariachis and sung by a male soloist.
Song 5 “Que me fallen las palabras”	
Topic	Words
Summary	A blues song in D minor at 78 beats per minute. Recreation of a blues recital: singer, electric guitar, drums, and projection screens.

analysis were used, five for each song – one for the first and last musical phrase, two intermediate cuts, and one evaluation of the whole piece of music.

Advertising was studied using a single unit of analysis for each commercial or two when there was a notable change in the music. The common features were: duration of 20 seconds; tempo of about 123 beats per minute; instrumental with electronic imitative sound; binary; no variation in the dynamics or in the rhythm; pop and film genre; use of a major key; and the music was background music that sometimes became the leading, foreground figure. In the case of the Polly Pocket Pony commercial, two checklists were applied because of the significant change in its soundtrack (Cut 1: from 1 to 18 seconds; Cut 2: from 18 to 20 seconds) that takes place in order to highlight the slogan.

Cartoons

Lastly, because of their length, the cartoons were studied with a cut every 45 seconds until the whole episode had been covered. The following is a summary of *Berni* and *Pocoyó*.

Berni is a cartoon series from 2006 without dialogue, produced by BRB Internacional S.A. It deals with the subject of sport and features Berni, a polar bear. It consists of 3-minute episodes strung together back to back to fill the total length of the broadcast. Six units of analysis were used to examine the quantitative characteristics of the soundtrack, and a musical study of the cartoons was conducted in order to find out what their music is like. The episode included both everyday noises and sounds, and electronic imitative sounds. It combined the classical style in short sequences with other styles more closely related to the incidental music of movies. The music was written in a major key and was instrumental, with no variation in the rhythm or the dynamics, and both conclusive and suspensive cadences were used. Some modulations to other tones were produced, the sound texture was a single voice accompanied by instruments, and the music appeared as background music, except for just one occasion on which it progressed from the background to the leading figure. *Pocoyó* is a Spanish cartoon series from 2005, produced by Zinkia Entertainment Production S.L., which features Pocoyó, a little boy whose adventures involve exploring and interacting with the world around him. Each episode lasts 6 minutes and 45 seconds and the narrative action in this particular episode was about discovering one's own fingerprints and those of others. It made use of both nonmusical and musical sound from the world of pop, with hints of the incidental music used in movies. The music was electronic, instrumental, binary, and thetic, with variations in the dynamics and the rhythm. The tempo was linked with the characters as they appeared on scene: Pocoyó at 156 beats per minute, Elly (the elephant) at 90, and Pato at 114. Both major and minor keys were used, with different cadences and modulations; the sound texture was the accompanied monody, and there were also rhythmic ostinatos and sound effects. The music was present both in the background and as the leading figure, and the musical motifs were the leitmotifs of the characters.

Analysis of Cinema for Children: *Happy Feet*

Happy Feet is an animated movie released at the end of 2006. It was directed by George Miller, produced by Warner Bros, and won an Oscar and a Golden Globe. It features the voices of Elijah Wood, Robin Williams, Brittany Murphy, Hugo Weaving, Nicole Kidman, and Hugh Jackman. To conduct the study, the entire movie was viewed and its musical numbers were placed on the time frame and matched to the continuity of the story, while looking at the characters, stage space, cultural groups, and so forth. The movie was analyzed by levels of credibility: *nuclear*, *poetic and logical*, and *topical*. Then, a descriptive study of the musical categories was conducted in order to determine the ways rhythm, timbre, texture, and so on were used.

At this level of analysis, the listening checklist system (Porta & Ferrández, 2009) was applied to examine the musical categories and indicators (level 1: nuclear

credibility). The meaning of the music within the movie was also determined using poetic credibility, by studying the different musical segments, their time frame, characters, and the characteristics of genres and musical styles.

The musical numbers from the movie were analyzed, and eight songs and three numbers with choreographed melodies were examined in greater detail. To do so, a table was created for this movie, to represent the four sections of the narrative plot. These four sections were: (1) society of the Emperor penguins; (2) exile and appearance of the Latin penguins; (3) the encounter; and (4) the men. The songs within each section were situated in their time sequence. Lastly, the presence and communicative force of the music in the story was determined by studying the degree to which it was present in the action.

The Story

The movie tells the story of life in a society of Emperor penguins. Three social groups can be distinguished: the Emperor penguins, the Latin penguins, and humans. The members of the first group are the leading characters in the movie. One of its members is born different from the others, and leaves because he cannot sing. Later, however, he comes across a group of Latin penguins who appreciate the one skill he does have: dancing. The three cultural groups (Emperor penguins, Latin penguins, and humans) are present in the movie in unequal proportions, since the first 30 minutes are devoted to the presentation of the Emperor penguins and the lead-up to the different conflicts that arise. The life of the Latin penguins is not so clearly portrayed and less time is devoted to them (16 minutes). However, they are shown as a fun-loving society that solves its problems by consulting the Elder. The third group, the humans, who disrupt the ecosystem, appear toward the end of the movie for just the last 3 minutes, in which everything is resolved with a happy ending.

The Soundtrack in the Story

The movie has five songs in Section 1, none in Section 2, two in Section 3, and one in Section 4 (see Figure 24.4). The cultural dominance of the Emperor penguins prevails throughout the whole movie because it is a more structured and organized society. The most important thing, however, is that the lead character is born in it, feels different and leaves, but wants to go back home. As pointed out above, and as shown in Figure 24.4, the movie has four narrative sections. The first three sections reproduce the narrative organization of the movie *The Lion King*, but are not portrayed with the same persuasive/projective talent (Porta, 1998).

The music creates a conservative, mainstream atmosphere that reflects how well established the home society (Emperor penguins) – the society taken as a reference

Section 1						Section 2			Section 3	Section 4
Society of the Emperor penguins 0:00:00–0:30:50						Exile and appearance of the Latin penguins 0:30:51–0:47:15			The encounter 0:47:16– 1:31:57	The men 1:31:58– 1:34:44
S1	S2	S3	S4	No song	S5	No song			S6 and S7	Last song
Elvis Presley	Choir of white voices	Beach Boys	"Somebody to love"	Choir and orchestra; nonmelodic	Choir and orchestra; choreo- graphy in the sea	Just rhythms: batucada; recited; mambo; rap	Trumpets play; sounds Mexican	Choir and orchestra; nonmelodic	"A mi manera" (My way)	
Diegetic				Nondiegetic		Diegetic	Nondiegetic		Diegetic	Nondiegetic

Figure 24.4 Musical numbers in the four sections of *Happy Feet* (2006)

in the movie – is. From a stylistic point of view, it draws on pop, rock, and some classics with polyphonic White voices in its selection of diegetic music. In the land of the Latin penguins no songs are heard, only Latin rhythms performed on percussion instruments (batucada and mambo). Musically, it is briefer and weaker in terms of variety, quality of performance, and association with the characters.

The nondiegetic music in the movie (that which is not performed by the characters) symbolizes the presence of the narrator in the story. It is acoustic orchestral music, with a predominance of stringed instruments and the presence of trumpets in the climaxes of the plot. In general terms, it is incidental music which describes the action and is not very melodic in nature, except in some of the sequences that have a Latin air to them. This section includes a wonderful choreographic sequence in the sea, which is one of the best numbers in the movie, with orchestral, nondiegetic music featuring the Emperor penguins. Both in terms of its performance and instrumentally speaking, the quality of the music (largely made up of successful well-known songs) is unusually good for a children's movie, and is always associated with the first ethnic group, except for "A mi manera," a Spanish version of "My way." It sums up the cultural wealth of the society that the movie portrays as dominant and mainstream, while the other group is constructed as exotic and funny.

Elements of Musical Language Used in the Movie: Nuclear Credibility

The movie uses electric instruments originally employed in pop and rock, as well as acoustic instruments that are both orchestral (all families) and popular, together with body percussion. There is a predominance of binary stress and the intensity is strong in all the scenes (Porta, 2010).

Ordering of the Musical Elements in the Narrative Sequence: Poetic Credibility

No complete songs are heard, the length of time the songs last varies widely, and the music is organized by blending several melodies – two or three in most cases. They are used both as foreground and as background elements. The genres and styles heard include English, American, and Australian pop/rock, classical, and descriptive cinematographic music. Synchrony between music and image in the movie is good, and all the voiced parts of the songs are performed by the characters themselves. The voices singing the songs are very different from the characters' spoken voices, however, which makes the scenes less convincing, and the accompanying instruments remain in the nondiegetic plane, that is, they are not present in the action.

Evaluation of the Soundtrack of the Film; Study of the Tendencies and Cultural Dominance: Topical Credibility

The soundtrack of Section 1 refers to musical language as one of the values of a cultured and developed society, and covers aspects such as how to create a song, school as a place of learning, and music as cultural heritage and a common asset. Yet, in the realm of the Latin penguins, music is presented as fun and a way of escaping from the problems of a society that lacks resources and is exposed to the attacks of predators.

Conclusions and Discussion

The findings obtained by applying the listening checklist demonstrate that the program *Los Lunnis* has a soundtrack that utilizes musical sound (preferably electronic), which is divided fairly equally into instrumental and vocal music sung by groups of voices. Its music is binary, popular, anacrusic, with flat dynamics and no variations in pace, and the texture is the accompanied monody. It uses the major key with modulations to other keys, resolves by conclusive cadences, and the music is predominantly the leading figure. The program also includes a high percentage of nonmusical sound consisting of noises and sound effects.

A preliminary evaluation of the musical analysis reveals that the diegetic music chosen for the in-house material (25% of the program) is made up of strophic songs with phrases that are eight bars long. They are listened to as whole pieces and resolve in a highly conclusive manner with all the available closing elements, sometimes using both homophony and polyphony. There is a certain lack of rhythmic richness, with a strong presence of binary stress. The intensity has no nuances and is control-

led using a mixing desk, progressing from background to leading figure usually by the use of narrative rather than musical strategies. Music and images are well synchronized in the program, and the instruments and sound objects are matched to its soundtrack and the different scenes in the program. Its tempos range from 78 to 168 beats per minute without any variations in the rhythm, and it uses the keys of C major, G major, D major, and D minor, which sometimes modulate to other keys.

The styles chosen in this case make use of a timbral composition that, although at times excessively electronic, utilizes acoustic elements from the corresponding popular music, as well as harmonic and melodic structures that also reflect it. They are often accompanied by choreographed movements and an appropriate wardrobe and set design. From the point of view of style and how it is linked with identity, the program opts for foreign popular music. Advertising, which takes up 4.4% of the program time, has a soundtrack that averages 123 beats per minute. It is predominantly instrumental, with electronic imitative sounds, and is binary andthetic with no variations in the dynamics or the rhythm. It has no defined style; sometimes uses the movie genre, noises, and nonmusical sounds; and appears in a major key in the form of background music.

Cartoons, which account for 63% of the total program time, use both music and nonmusical sounds and noises to reinforce the dramatic action with the aid of changes in key and tempo, as well as the use of suspensive effects and small leitmotifs to define characters. The results from the study of the program show that the most commonly heard melody is that of its own signature tune, which appears as the introduction and at the end of each section, dramatization, and episode. Truncated pieces of music are also heard, especially in commercials and at the end of episodes. Likewise, another point to be highlighted due to its importance in cartoon programs is the preponderance of nondiegetic music, and of a wide variety of both musical and nonmusical sounds.

Music from before the twentieth century is scarce, with a few exceptions being used in cartoons and parodies in the in-house program material, where some allusions are made to the classical style. The leading songs of that particular week were a *ranchera*, a country song, two blues songs, and a pop song. The sample contains a selection of musical pieces from around the world but, although the program is broadcast nationwide in Spanish and is watched by children in all the different regions of Spain, it does not include any Spanish songs. Children's television programs require contents related to their own identity (De Moragas, 1991), yet what is offered is a multicultural space that has lost its local elements and been filled with exotic material.

The soundtrack of the program includes incidental music linked to the action, which appears in all its sections in the form of tiny fragments of music that remind the child of the world of movies. This is the case of the parody of *Lunicienda*, like that of *Psycho*, or the repeated references to one of the last American heroes: Indiana Jones. In *Pocoyó* there are leitmotifs associated with its characters, tonal and nontonal music, modulations, and variations in the dynamics and rhythm, as well as shifts from

leading figure to background, and vice versa. And all this takes place alongside an expressive and aesthetic dialogue in space and time, which envisions its audience as actively engaged and meaningfully interacting with the television media through the music.

After studying the animated movie we found that the soundtrack of *Happy Feet* makes use of electric instruments originally employed in pop and rock, as well as acoustic instruments that are both orchestral (all families) and popular, together with body percussion. There is a predominance of binary stress and the intensity is strong in all the scenes. The semiotic study indicates that the music has represented the values of a dominant society that has been built by its own efforts and everybody's contribution. It also shows that music has assumed a wide variety of universal styles and timbres as well as famous songs and some classic pieces. All the elements mentioned were associated with the group of Emperor penguins, and the music of Section 2, the exile, is a cultural contribution that strengthens the dominant group in Section 3. Furthermore, it also shows their victory related to the appearance of humans in Section 4, and the defense of the ecosystem. In the movie, the music, which is considered a metaphor of society, shows a dominant group that was identified with pop culture, while including some touches of classical and instrumental choral music and also descriptive music from movies, which has absorbed a part of the foreign culture to strengthen its society and to favor economic and cultural development. The elements described become apparent in the soundtrack through a great number of songs, their quality and variety, and the magnificence of the *mise en scène*.

This study can help inform our understanding of the role of music in media targeted at children by offering food for thought regarding some of the social and educational functions of music in cinema and television. The results of this research can be useful as a guide for viewers, production companies, TV networks, and educators. Moreover, policies aimed at preserving, generating, and maintaining macro- and micro-contexts are necessary so that children's everyday environments are continually adapted to enable them to achieve their highest potential (Porta, 2007). Finally, we believe that the study will be of use in future reconstructions of curricular design.

This chapter has dealt with what children listen to in films and TV programs by applying tools that allow a general objective diagnosis to be performed on the soundtrack, through the use of the checklist, as well as other more specific measures for studying its peculiarities. The aim was to determine the music's effects so that alternatives can be developed for future use in education and audiovisual production. This work has taken a first step along that path by drawing attention to the way music is used in the audiovisual media. Because it is part of the habitat that children employ to construct their inner world, if the music made available to them is poor and biased, their vision of the world will be limited by it.

Likewise, it has observed how the music associated with the characters, values, and roles in a highly emotional and projective language is used to highlight dominant

groups and cultural spaces. With a view to protecting children and fostering their better development, this chapter poses a question for future research: Where exactly are the limits of the responsibility of audiovisual productions targeted at children for the creation of their soundtracks? And a second question derived from it: Is one of the challenges facing education the ability to adapt the systems of musical education so as to develop communication and critical thinking skills? The relationships between music and images and narrative in the media produce effects on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. This chapter has offered a view of the music that is used and therefore of what can be heard in the samples that were studied. The media are a representation of the world in which the characters, scenes, and cultural groups are endowed with music that underlines their ideological approaches and standpoints. Future research will utilize these findings to develop the study of the explicit and veiled functions of soundtracks, to warn of the effects of the music used in audiovisual products, not only cognitively but also emotionally, socially, and culturally. In addition, we aim to seek alternatives that can be introduced into audiovisual production and curricular design, especially in higher education, so as to be able to study the repercussions of music and point to the need to set up observatories and curricular strategies that take them into account.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was made possible thanks to funding from the Research and Development Program for the Promotion of Research at Jaume I University, and the Program for Inter-University Cooperation and Scientific Research between Spain and Latin America.

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Latino Diasporas and the Media

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding Transnationalism and Communication

Jéssica Retis

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the challenges and opportunities encountered when applying a transnationalism approach to the analysis and understanding of international migration contexts. Critical perspectives such as the political economy of the media, cultural studies, urban studies, and media practices in everyday life are useful approaches to incorporate in an interdisciplinary understanding of Latino diasporas and the media. Findings from a variety of research projects on media production, distribution, and consumption indicate that these performances are influenced by diverse variables such as the stage of immigration processes, generational and new technologies gaps, and social environments in the city of origin and destiny. Communication and information practices are transformed and reconstructed in the vicinity of Latino diasporas. The conjunction of quantitative and qualitative methods facilitates a better understanding of these complex social processes.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VII: *Research Methods in Media Studies*. Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems196

Two concomitant processes have influenced each other since the second half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, international immigration from Latin America increased in the 1980s and 1990s due to the structural changes brought about by the economic, financial, and social crises that characterized these “lost decades.” On the other hand, the field of communication experienced an increase in the concentration of media ownership, combined with accelerated technological innovation and lower costs of transportation and information and communication services. As a consequence, diasporic contexts were transformed by new spaces of production, distribution, and consumption of mass media and, in the last decade, by new communication technologies. *Territorial immigrants* were transformed into *digital immigrants* in complex and changing processes affecting both Latin Americans living abroad and their family and friends who remain in their place of origin (Retis, 2012).

Analyzing and understanding the communicative practices of Latin American diasporas requires interdisciplinary approaches in order to develop a perspective that is both comprehensive and critical (Retis, 2011). Processes of economic globalization require a rethinking of traditional ways of examining national societies in relationship to network systems (Castells, 2006) that have led to the deterritorialization of social life, transformed its cultural dimensions (Appadurai, 1997; Thompson, 1995), and reconfigured nodes in the form of global cities (Sassen, 2001). In this context, links established *between* and *for* immigration networks outline new diasporic spaces relying on transborder circuits of communication and information (Retis, 2008).

What follows is a reflection on the theoretical approaches and the design of methodologies and processes of fieldwork that allowed me to analyze and understand the media as social actors in the context of the international migration of Latin Americans. I argue that in the study of diasporas and the media it is essential to: (1) understand sociodemographic conditions before analyzing media spaces; (2) understand the economic and political structure of the media before analyzing their discourses on immigration; (3) examine professional routines before analyzing practices in covering diversity issues; and (4) understand cultural and media consumption in countries of origin before analyzing practices in diasporic contexts. In sum, it is indispensable to build interdisciplinary approaches to understand transnational communication practices.

The Transnational Perspective: The Interstices of Thinking “Glocally”

My first attempt at investigating Latin American migration and the media came with the development of my doctoral dissertation. My initial research questions focused on sociodemographic, economic, and political contexts: Who are Latin American immigrants in Spain and why do they come? What kinds of structural conditions may cause the movement of Latin Americans toward Spain? What are

their socioeconomic and political status? Subsequent questions focused on the media context: How are Latin American immigrants represented in the Spanish mainstream press? What economic, social, and political conditions influence mainstream news media discourses on immigration? How might Spanish journalists' perceptions of Latin American immigrants shape these discourses? How might this media agenda influence the perception of Latin American immigrants in Spanish society? How do Latin American immigrants perceive their media coverage? How might media images influence modes of intercultural communication between Spaniards and Latin American immigrants?

The first set of questions is aimed at analyzing and understanding the contemporary history of Latin American immigration in Spain. A review of secondary sources revealed that most available research was conducted from an ethnocentric perspective, according to which processes of migration were conceived as unidirectional, driven by poverty and/or exclusion, and where immigrants were perceived as disconnected from their place of origin. In contrast, critical studies detected unfavorable trends in the ways in which migrants were incorporated into social stratification and political discourse: the concentration of displacements from certain countries as a result of structural relations of dependence, fragile immigrant working conditions, low representation of gender and family contexts and/or youth and children in immigration policies, among others (Colectivo Ioé, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2003; Gil, 2006; Gregorio & Ramírez, 2000; Pedone, 2003).

The second set of questions guided the examination of processes of representation of otherness in public discourse. Here, the review of secondary sources revealed that very few studies at the time focused critically on the representation of Latin American immigrants in the Spanish press. Most studies examined the representation of non-European Union immigrants, then primarily identified as coming from Africa, and particularly the Maghreb. This situation led to a comparative perspective on the image of "Latin Americans" and "non-Europeans" or "Africans" or "Muslims" in dominant discourses. It became quickly evident, however, that one could not really analyze "Latin Americans" as a homogeneous group. Demographic sources indicated that Latin Americans came mainly from three countries whose nationals are differentially incorporated into Spanish society. Thus, the situations of Ecuadorian, Colombian, and Argentinean immigrant groups, who all arrived during the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, was compared (Retis, 2006).

The analysis of social representations was based on elements of sociolinguistics, specifically critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1997). It sought to examine not only the language and its connotations, but also the broader media discourse and trends in news media coverage. The sample included daily news stories published during 2001 and 2002 in the three most important national newspapers in Spain: *El País*, *ABC*, and *El Mundo*. Political economy of media and media sociology approaches helped guide the study's efforts to understand the links between mainstream media discourse and political actors involved in "public debate" (Bañón, 2002) and the

analysis of production routines and filters in news production (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). An examination of business and institutional relations between media and political groups helped identify filters at the macro level. Semi-structured interviews with Spanish journalists covering immigration issues in these three newspapers provided a more micro-level perspective. Finally, focus groups with immigrants from Ecuador, Colombia, and Argentina sought to understand how media images influence forms of intercultural communication, in particular, how immigrants perceive their media representations and how these influence their intercultural relations (Retis, 2006).

Representations of Otherness in News Media Discourse: Latin Americans in Spain

Most of our social and political knowledge and our beliefs about the world emanate from the information we read or hear every day (Van Dijk, 1997). Therefore, at the turn of the century, Latin American immigrants in Spain began to be known more for their presence in mainstream news media than through daily intercultural interactions. Spaniards began to hear about Latin Americans from news and feature stories and from interviews with sources that tended mainly to relate to their presence in social conflict (Retis, 2012). The idea of “Latin American immigrants” in Spain was built collectively, giving the entire group characteristics that did not represent their actual nature, but resulted in a symbolic construction that constituted an “imagined immigrant” (Santamaría, 2002). While Latin American immigration is the result of multiple factors operating at different levels, the crossing or intersection between local and global contexts is rarely acknowledged in the genre of news. A complex and heterogeneous situation is turned into symbolic representations of “them” Latin Americans versus “us” Spaniards (Retis, 2006).

Scholars have demonstrated that trends in the representation of non-EU immigrants in Spain take the form of two conflicting modes: on the one hand, the media discourse induces fear by showing immigrants as a danger or a threat; on the other, it tends to focus on the most dramatic aspects of immigrants’ regrettable situation, their poverty, their difficulties, and so on, which induces an emotional reaction of compassion and pity (Rizo, 2001).

The conceptualization of Latin Americans as foreigners, however, required particular elaboration because the process of exclusion could not be based on language or religion. Social segregation was built in the 1980s by the neologism *sudacas* (a pejorative concept that means “from the South”) to signal alien status (Juliano, 1994). In this sense, cultural proximity does not imply the disappearance but rather the displacement of ethnic boundaries within the social symbolic structure. If linguistic and religious differences do not exist, and if racial differences are not extreme, then other criteria are needed to define *otherness*. My multimethod examination of daily

news stories published in Spain's three national newspapers revealed three trends in the representation of this "new otherness": a compassionate view of Ecuadorians, a frightened approach to Colombians, and a brotherly attitude toward Argentines (Retis, 2006). These trends are further examined below.

Compassionate View of Ecuadorians

In January 2001 an accident that killed 12 broccoli collectors in the rural area of Murcia was covered with an element of surprise when irregularities in the working and living conditions of Ecuadorian immigrants were "discovered" by the Spanish media. The magnitude of the event and its news coverage led to the beginning of a social debate comparable only to two previous historical instances: the assassination of Dominican immigrant Lucrecia Pérez and racist events that involved Moroccan immigrants in El Ejido (Retis, 2006).

The discourse analysis identified five themes: (1) the tragedy of the accident seen as "revealing" many other social problems related to immigration; (2) the surprising discovery of a recent increase in the number of Ecuadorian immigrants; (3) the precarious working conditions of Ecuadorian immigrants in rural areas; (4) the lack of labor inspectors and of temporary labor market regulation; and (5) the corruption of Spanish employers who hire undocumented immigrants as cheap labor.

The analysis of production routines demonstrated that the main sources of news stories were representatives of political parties, members of labor unions, representatives of the machinists' union, national and regional government authorities, local authorities, and members of the church. In contrast, representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and immigrants or immigrant associations were almost completely excluded from the press coverage, suggesting an imbalance in access to public discourse. Generally, and although the three newspapers analyzed have different ideological affiliations, the analysis showed striking similarities in their coverage of the event.

An analysis of headlines on the day after the accident illustrates this point: "Twelve Ecuadorians die hit by a train in Lorca" (*ABC*, January 4, 2001); "Twelve Ecuadorians die when hit by a train in Murcia" (*El País*, January 4, 2001); "Twelve Ecuadorians killed when a train crushed the overcrowded van they were traveling in" (*El Mundo*, January 4, 2001). The designations were similar: first, Ecuadorian, highlighting the nationality, the term of the out-group (the *others*); second, the word "immigrants," a designation that came into use in the early 1990s involving a series of symbolic connotations: people who come to live in our country, probably without proper documentation (Martín, 2003). This condition is highlighted in most of the news stories, as exemplified by an *El País* article headlined "Labor Inspectors investigate their working conditions" (*El País*, January 4, 2001). Most news stories highlighted information related to inspection, delving into the local perspective

without extending this discussion to global conditions, and without explaining pull-push factors and labor market conditions to readers (Granados, 2002; Retis, 2006).

The analysis reveals that Ecuadorian immigrants were portrayed as passive actors and exploited “illegal” workers – that is, as violators of the law – highlighting the criterion of national origin as a symbolic border of exclusion. Unions and political parties were represented positively as those who assume the voice of protest against the conditions under which “the others” – immigrants in the “Spanish fields” – work. These immigrants, however, remained unidentified and their statements were not directly quoted. For instance, an article in *El Mundo* pointed to second-hand information gathered from Europa Press to discuss the workers’ legal status: “a compatriot of the deceased, who declined to give his name, said the only [worker] who had regularized his situation was the driver of the van” (January 5, 2001). Ecuadorians were presented as victims of the tragedy, of poor working conditions and exploitation.

One of the most frequently recurring metaphors in the news coverage was the representation of Ecuador as a country battered by economic crisis and corruption – “Ecuador, a country in stampede,” read a headline in *El País* (January 7, 2001). Ecuadorians were presented as fleeing, en masse, in an “avalanche” of the new poor. They were “The twentieth century conquistadores” (*ABC*, January 4, 2001). With statements such as “U.S. is no longer the only Eldorado, Spain is the escape gate for 50,000 people” (*El País*, January 4, 2001) or, “The Ecuadorian ‘desert’: There are places like The Village of Lonely Women, where there are no husbands left because they have migrated in search of fortune. Years ago they emigrated to the US, now the dream destination is Spain” (*El Mundo*, January 7, 2001), Spain was, in turn, repositioned as *Eldorado*, or paradise. It was the new place where people came to seek their fortune.

An Attitude of Fear Toward Colombians

The immigration debate became particularly heated in Spain in 2001 following the approval of a new immigration law that implemented new criteria for quotas and control of immigration flows, which led to the self-seclusion of immigrants in churches as actions of protest, and to accusations on the part of political groups questioning the constitutionality of the law and of policies of control and treatment of immigration. In October 2001, the police department launched Operation Ludeco to fight against crime committed by Colombians and Ecuadorians. This followed a previous operation, Operation Coffee, launched in September in response to the death of four Colombians in Madrid. Scholars have demonstrated that the recurring link between crime and immigration in social debate contributes to a process of criminalization of individuals whose crimes are attributed solely to their immigrant condition (Aierbe, 2002; Wagman, 2002).

The analysis of the news coverage of Colombian immigrants illustrates this metonymic process. Discourse analysis demonstrated that Spanish mainstream media so frequently designated Colombian immigrants as criminals that the adjective “Colombian” eventually became a synonym for the term. An *ABC* report illustrates this trend: “The Police [is] convinced that Colombians’ violence will splatter throughout society” (September 1, 2001). From the entire corpus only a few examples noted that this linkage is not applicable to the entire group of Colombians residing in Spain – or as, *El País* put it, that “Colombians who commit crimes are only a minority” (October 3, 2001).

During the period analyzed, news coverage of Colombians centered on two main topics: drug trafficking – “Network of Colombian ‘narcos’ acting through Internet and paying with emeralds is caught” (*ABC*, May 29, 2001); “Traveling with her three years old daughter transporting camouflaged cocaine” (*ABC*, September 22, 2001) – and robberies and violence – “Firefighters rescue Colombian sequestered for ten days” (*El País*, January 18, 2001); “Spain captures the murderer of eleven Colombians” (*ABC*, May 14, 2001); Hit men and dangerous criminals arrested in a major action against Colombian gangs” (*ABC*, November 25, 2001); “Gang of Colombians who stormed over fifty villas and apartments is dismantled” (*ABC*, June 28, 2001).

This correlation is related to news coverage of Colombia in international news stories where most of the information is linked to guerrillas, crime, corporate corruption, and drug trafficking (Igartúa et al., 2003). These arguments cause fear and rejection of the foreigner who comes to break the law. As Reguillo notes, for governments and international press Colombia has become the metaphor of horror and that means chaos, lawlessness, excessive violence, drug control institutions, in short, “institutional collapse” (Reguillo 2002a, 2002b). During 2001, most of the news stories about Colombians related in some way to social conflict: “Colombian ELN guerrillas kidnapped Latin American motorcycling champion” (*ABC*, January 4, 2001); “Number of paramilitary victims increased. Human rights violations in Colombia, either by the instruments of the state, guerrillas, paramilitaries or drug traffickers, makes this country the worst in the region” (*ABC*, February 27, 2001); “Poor peasants in Colombia give children to tourists to prevent starvation” (*ABC*, January 27, 2001); “Colombia, on the threshold of fear” (*El Mundo*, March 16, 2001).

Brotherly Attitude Toward Argentineans

Discourse analysis of Spanish press conducted during this time period demonstrated a comparatively much broader coverage of the Argentinean financial crisis, with particular attention paid to Spanish investments in the country. Argentineans were represented through a fraternal lens. They were described as “brothers,” “children,” or “grandchildren,” but also as “business partners,” customers, businessmen, and political friends. Three main themes emerged in this discourse. First, the coverage included references to allegations against the Argentine military, to memories of

torture, and to the trials of members of the oppressive government, which resonated with memories of Spain's own oppression suffered in recent history. Second, references to political corruption were found in the opinion pages, but also in news and feature stories. Most of the coverage, however, focused on the third theme, Spain's involvement in the Argentinean financial crisis, with headlines such as: "U.S. accuses former partner of Telefónica Argentina of laundering money" (*El Mundo*, March 1, 2001); "Recol workers occupy the Spanish Embassy in Buenos Aires" (*El Mundo*, March 2, 2001); "Spain caught in financial crisis in Argentina. Investors rely on the South American country despite outbreaks of anti-Spanish demonstrations" (*El País*, June 10, 2001), "The threat of devaluation in Argentina sinks the Spanish stock market" (*El País*, June 19, 2001); "Spain maintains its credit in Argentina. The campaign waged by some unions and media against Spain's image has not resonated with the public" (*El País*, June 24, 2001); "Argentinean workers throw eggs at the headquarters of Telefónica in Buenos Aires" (*El País*, August 6, 2001).

Unlike the news coverage of Ecuadorian and Colombian immigration, more comprehensive reporting on Argentina provided a context for the economic crisis and gave the story prominence in the overall news discourse. As a consequence, emigration was represented as a solution to middle-class struggles: "Getting out of here. The degradation in survival and disenchantment with the government are pushing a new exile in Argentina" (*El País*, March 14, 2001); "All for the Motherland. Four Argentinean Spaniard's descendents explain their reasons for leaving their country and entering the Spanish army" (*El País*, June 17, 2001); "Argentineans line up at the Spanish Embassy to emigrate" (*El País*, June 25, 2001).

This comparative analysis demonstrates that, in stark contrast to the representation of Ecuadorian and Colombian immigrants, Spanish mainstream media represented Argentinean immigrants in a gentle – even warm – tone. The coverage focused on the fact that the middle class was most affected by the Argentinian crisis, but failed to notice that this is also typically the case for other Latin Americans. It was as if Spaniards were welcoming their grandchildren home: "Crisis in Argentina: Implications. Spanish emigrants embark on the *return journey*. The middle class, which provides much of the tax revenue, most affected by the situation" (*ABC*, August 8, 2001, emphasis added). The Argentinean economic crisis was closely followed and moved from the business or economy pages to the front cover and the international section of the newspapers. Feature stories on recent migration to Spain took on a similar tone and reports on the settlement of Argentines in Madrid or Barcelona were routinely covered in a more relaxed and kindly manner than in the cases of Ecuadoreans and Colombians.

Immigrants' Discourses on Their Media Images

Spaniards' perceptions of immigrants are periodically analyzed by monthly *barómetros* (periodic polls) of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Center of

Sociological Investigations), but little was known about immigrants' perceptions. This part of the study employed focus group interviews to explore how Latin Americans perceive representations of themselves in the Spanish media. Using sociodemographic statistical data available from the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, six focus groups were formed to build a representative sample of men, women, and younger and older participants. Each session lasted between 40 minutes and an hour. I showed participants a selection of examples of newspaper stories and asked them to express their opinions on media representation and intercultural relations in Spain.

Ecuadorians: "We Are Just the Poor and We Get Angry"

Ecuadorian immigrants expressed anger at the way in which the mainstream Spanish media represent their ethnic group. Most participants summarized this feeling by pointing to the adjective "poor." They noted that the word is used with a double meaning: "poor" from an economic point of view, as belonging to a low-income community, but also "poor" as an emotional perception, suggesting that they are unable to overcome exploitative situations. When reading samples of newspapers, participants discussed how they felt powerless because they were not able to change these perceptions. They took on a vindictive tone in protest against what they saw as an unfair and probably intractable situation. Participants described themselves as hard-working, honest, and decent, but felt they were not represented as such in media reports about them. Their feelings of anxiety about media representations were closely related to the issue of labor exploitation. Participants discussed how they should not be exploited, but recognized that many of their compatriots put up with these abuses for economic reasons. Most participants pointed out that they belonged to the middle class and were neither ignorant nor uneducated:

I want to tell you something very ugly. We are the "poor" Ecuadorians . . . that's what makes you feel more anger and defiance. Because there is when we start with the message that we are not any poor. (Woman, Focus group 2)

Women tended to be more vocal in these discussions. Two main ideas drove their perceptions: on the one hand, when evaluating their situation in the labor market, they understood their contribution to productivity in Spain, especially in domestic service. They felt humiliated and discredited, and noted that neither the government nor other institutions recognized their value. On the other hand, they claimed that the image of Ecuadorian women was linked to prostitution and that this idea did not correspond to reality. When asked about Spain, participants deemed their host society too traditional and nationalistic. They described Spaniards as afraid that immigrants would bring poverty with them, as if they still lived in the postwar period. In the

group discussions, participants acknowledged an increase in “social rejection” in everyday life, which they felt was affected by media perceptions. Participants agreed that there is a clear relation between what people “hear” or what the media “say” and their attitude toward immigrants. They also recognized that the growth of immigrant populations influences the level of rejection on the part of the Spanish population. Most of these perceptions were related to media images and immigrants’ experiences in everyday life – especially when using public transportation and social services, environments in which Spaniards are forced to relate to immigrants.

In terms of access, participants recognized that they have very little opportunity to intervene in media discourse and pointed out that this is one of the reasons why immigration has been unfairly represented in the mainstream press. They felt that the media’s distorted picture of reality was caused mainly by immigrants’ lack of access to public discourse:

We have been manipulated both in print and broadcast media such as television, radio, right? And they [the Spanish media] have tended to talk about immigration from the standpoint of what this lady [another group participant] is addressing, right? . . . We immigrants are entrepreneurs and that has never been sold to the press. (Man, Focus Group 2)

Ecuadorian immigrants recognized that there is a clear illusory correlation between immigration and crime and felt that their group was partially responsible for this perception – although they tended to refer, in this case, to Colombian immigrants. When evaluating what was being said about them in public discourse, Ecuadorians critiqued the over-emphasis on social conflict in news stories – situations of marginalization, overcrowding in apartments, exploitation at work places – and the campaigns against them mainly put in place by police operations aimed at controlling Ecuadorians and Colombians.

Colombians: “They See Us as ‘Bad’ People and They Are Afraid of Us”

When evaluating representations of themselves in the media, Colombians agreed on three adjectives: *sicarios* (assassins), “drug traffickers,” and “guerrilla members.” In addition, most participants recognized that these media images are prominently promoted not only in Spain but also internationally. In discussing their previous experiences in other countries, participants explained that they have faced similar stereotypes. Colombian immigrants discussed the pain they felt when they were not able to overcome this perception at the beginning of their intercultural relations. They felt very much affected by these images in their daily lives, as they tended to be labeled as “bad” before being known. A survey carried out by Aparicio and

Giménez (2003) demonstrated that the media constitute a mirror through which not only Spaniards look at Colombians as criminals, but that also affects Colombians. Participants in our focus groups corroborated the idea that a symbolic border is built around most Colombian immigrants that is hard to escape:

As it affects me a lot . . . and. . . yes, all Colombians. . . Because if we are not guerrilla fighters, we are drug traffickers or assassins. And this is not true because there are also good people who come to work, work normal as anyone else. (Woman, Focus Group 1)

Given these images, Colombians recognized that they have to develop persuasive strategies in their intercultural relations with Spaniards: the objective in their daily practices was to convince the latter that prejudices and stereotypes do not reflect Colombians' real nature. When sharing their personal experiences in their first contacts with natives, Colombians acknowledged that they have to make an effort to show that they do not match the bad media images of them. Participants evaluated these efforts in terms of successes and failures but there was a group consensus that the results were mainly positive: Colombians generally recognized that once Spaniards got to know them personally, these negative media images could be overcome.

Participants claimed that the media – referring specifically to TV and radio, but extrapolating to the news media in general – have produced these images. When criticizing media practices, Colombians characterized the Spanish media as sensationalist, noting that they commonly “sell” specific images for their value in news markets.

There is so much sensationalist media with a simple desire to sell a story, so they give specific names to certain characters from certain nationalities. For example, a robbery will be given prominence all day, but they do not show more important information from that specific country . . . and what has been said in previous campaigns linking immigration with crime . . . that cannot be done. (Man, Focus Group 1)

Argentineans: “If We Do Not Talk, They Do Not Realize We Are Argentineans”

Argentineans acknowledged their preferential status in the Spanish news media coverage of Latin American immigration. They understood that this privileged position is due to their “greater resemblance to Spaniards,” as there is a distinction between different Latino nationalities. Group participants used the term “castes” to refer to what they understood as “levels of acceptance.” In this sort of stratification, Argen-

tineans occupy first rank in social preference because they are “the most Europeans of South America”:

- MAN FOCUS GROUP 1: There are status such as . . . as “castes” [laughs] . . . if we can say so . . . uh . . . fortunately or unfortunately, I do not know . . . eh. . . we Argentines are like the most Europeans of South America . . . and all in all [discussion on negative presence of Latin American immigrants], we remain unnoticed . . .
- WOMAN, FOCUS GROUP 1: Sure, physically . . .

Participants agreed that in their daily intercultural relations, Argentines have more tools at their disposal, such as experience of previous migrations processes between Spain and Argentina, or closer cultural liaisons due to their recent common history. They found that Argentines came equipped with more information about what to expect in Spain than other Latin Americans. They explained that other Latin American immigrants accept certain extreme situations that Argentines would not allow. Younger participants insisted that there is a differentiation by nationality, and perceived more discrimination against Ecuadorians and Colombians. They explained this situation, first, by citing Argentines’ “most European” descent, and, second, by pointing out Latin Americans’ attitude toward Spaniards. Thus, in their opinion, it was logical that Argentines should remain racially and culturally unnoticed in Spain. Argentines felt a kind of familiarity when arriving in Spain; however, they felt uncomfortable when observing racial discrimination that relates to skin color rather than social stratification.

Argentines’ self-identification as “pure white” helped them explain their preferential treatment. They felt comfortably racially integrated, and consequently able to evade Spaniards’ racist attitudes. Family ties, in this sense, occupied a key position in modes of perception of in-group and out-group. The hybrid figure of the “hispanoargentino” (Hispanic Argentinean) eventually emerged in group discussions. Compared to the other two Latino groups examined here, Argentines can be considered to fit in what in Spanish I called *la condicion del No-llos* (a condition between “them” and “us”).

Journalists’ Discourses on the “Problem” of Latin American Immigration in Spain

Critical perspectives on news production have demonstrated that journalists do not merely select and combine information: “rather they can be seen to literally ‘produce’ the news in the context of organizational and other social frameworks” (Tuchman,

1980, 2002). Since little was known about how Spanish journalists produce news on immigration, I conducted in-depth interviews with reporters specializing in this type of coverage for the three newspapers analyzed. The main objective of this part of the study was to understand their perceptions, daily routines, and organizational frameworks (Retis, 2013).

When asked to analyze issues on immigration, Spanish journalists recognized that the phenomenon has occurred intensively and rapidly. A noticeable difference emerged, however, in the way journalists working for different news organizations framed the topic. Those working for conservative newspapers described immigration as an “avalanche” and depicted immigrants as “people who have no resources in their home country.” Interviewees working for progressive newspapers positioned themselves as taking a more critical perspective, arguing that there is a trend to criminalize immigrants in conservative news media. In all cases, immigrants were considered to have arrived in “excessively large numbers” and to need to be “assimilated” in a very short period of time. Spanish journalists relied on the European Union scheme of describing international immigration status using two criteria: administrative and geographical origins. They tended to rely on “legal discourse” when describing foreigners.

When asked to examine the reasons behind immigration in Spain, journalists tended to agree when analyzing economic conditions, even if they differed in their political opinions. They identified poverty as the main cause of immigration, focusing the analysis on *push factors*, without further examining the socioeconomic and political realities of the countries of origin, and without addressing international and geopolitical contexts. When they described the development of immigration flows in Spain, they focused specifically on “cheap labor,” centering their examination on *pull factors*.

Journalists described Spain as “Eldorado,” a land of opportunities and access to a better life. They also noted, however, that immigrants are being misled because “they think they will find jobs and housing immediately.” All interviewees recognized that immigrants face “a lot of exploitation” and a severe “housing problem.” Along with this, they believed that many immigrants hold on to the idea of returning to their home countries. They reiterated, on the one hand, figures from voluntary return projects and, on the other, that immigrants found themselves “disappointed” with what they find upon arrival. In general, distinctions by nationality did not appear until the topic was directly addressed during the interviews (Retis, 2013).

Respondents recognized that immigration is a difficult topic. They noted that when covering other political issues, sources – senators, members of congress, and representatives of various institutions – tend to be more readily accessible. They felt that immigration issues, on the other hand, required greater negotiation between journalists and political sources. Respondents emphasized how much effort it took to get information other than that offered through official channels. They valued statistical reports on the number of residents and governmental surveys positively and acknowledged that they regularly use these studies to produce news stories.

Journalists emphasized how difficult it is to get quotes from immigrants because most of them are reluctant to speak to the media. They believed that this is due to their extreme vulnerability. They noted, for example, that it is very unlikely they would get an immigrant to denounce any kind of labor exploitation or other illegal situation. In addition, journalists explained that, even if they got the interview, it was hard to get a picture because of the fear of reprisals from both those who exploit immigrants and the Spanish authorities:

Usually eh . . . it is not an easy issue, I mean; it is not like politics, right? Where you go to the Congress and all politicians are willing to talk to journalists. Not here. Here, is in reverse, people think it is a complex issue and nobody wants to talk . . . So you always need to work hard to get quotes. (Journalist 2)

In recent years, national and international agreements between professional associations have been developed in an effort to improve news media coverage of ethnic minorities. In addition, newspapers have integrated guidelines into their stylebooks, and ethical codes have been promoted by press associations and NGOs. In practice, however, journalists demonstrated only limited knowledge of these initiatives.

Discourses on Self-Representation: Ethnic Media in Global Cities

The need for better access to media and self-representation was a constant running theme in applied focus group discussions with Latin American immigrants in the Spanish capital. Between 2004 and 2007, an increase in the production, distribution, and consumption of ethnic media in Spanish global cities – such as Madrid and Barcelona – seemed to respond to this necessity. Thus, I developed a new research project in 2008 with the aim of exploring their significance and responding to some preliminary questions: Why was there a “boom” of immigrant-oriented media? Who drove these enterprises? Who were the producers? What kinds of topics did ethnic media cover? What were their main sources of financing? What were the main forms of distribution and consumption? This research project combined, once again, diverse methodologies. It began with a review of quantitative data reports. I then designed a survey that was administered to all ethnic media in Madrid. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with a selection of reporters, editors, broadcasters, sales agents, and specialists in ethnic marketing. Finally, I carried out participatory observation practices in a sample of newsrooms and Latino radio stations.

This research identified four stages in the history of ethnic media in Madrid: (1) emergence of media projects during the mid-1990s; (2) first wave of growth (2000–2003); (3) second wave of growth (2004–2006); (4) strengthening of associative synergies (2007–2008). Findings were published just before the Spanish economic crisis in

2008. Much evidence suggests that we are currently in a new stage of recession, which led to the closure of a great number of these media outlets mainly due to a decrease in advertising revenues. However, a group of immigrant-oriented media continues to circulate in some Spanish global cities such as Madrid and Barcelona. I am currently studying these, and other Spanish-language and Latino-oriented alternative media outlets, in a comparative research project that aims to understand how some have withstood the economic crisis and the transition to new technologies in an era of shrinking newsrooms. This comparative study, entitled “Latino Media in Global Cities: Los Angeles, New York, London, UK, and Madrid,” strives to understand how technology, industrial synergies, and the consolidation of transnational Latino audiences have conditioned media projects being produced in these global cities. I base my research mainly in semi-structured interviews and participatory observation practices in these four cities, which have a high or growing concentration of Latinos (Retis, 2010a).

In 2007 a total of 56 companies were identified in Madrid – all of them with at least one media outlet targeted at immigrant audiences. A few entrepreneurial groups published several headers – Copernal Publishing, for instance, produced 14 different magazines. Other initiatives started up from small business groups, such as Doble Via Comunicaciones (four publications), and Nova Duma SL (three publications). Eight groups edited two publications simultaneously: these include España Exterior SL, Media Press SL, and Mediterránea de Cultura y Medios. Some groups – such as Pueblo Nuevo, Roman in Lume, and Si Se Puede SL – produced both print and broadcast media, although that trend was less widespread.

The study found a wide variety of production, distribution, and consumption of immigrant-oriented media. There were high-quality publications – with regular distribution and well-documented distribution systems – which attracted advertising dollars from large clients. At the other end of the spectrum there were small media outlets with less regular publication frequencies and distribution system. These companies usually attracted ads from small and medium businesses and focused their interest on local issues. Distribution systems varied greatly. Some companies hired third-party services for publications’ placement while others used part of the business group to handle distribution. We even encountered some outlets which did not have a regular distribution and where the director or employees distributed the publications by themselves.

One of the most interesting findings was the role of *locutorios* (call centers) as public spaces of intra-group communications and media consumption. These centers provide spaces in which immigrants interact face to face and through Internet and phone calls with their family members. It is in the context of these transnational practices that immigrants got a hold of magazines or weekly newspapers locally produced for them. The use of computers also facilitates online consumption of media produced in their countries of origin. In my ongoing research I found that more recently, commercial enterprises have been designing specialized delivery

systems on mobile phones and applications that aim to increase immigrants' media consumption.

Survey responses and in-depth interviews with ethnic media editors demonstrated that most producers identify their audiences as mainly immigrants. The mention of specific national groups only came later. Also, there was no great differentiation along generational, gender, occupational, or socioeconomic lines. This is likely because these initiatives are in their early stages, which helps explain why most content is related to immigration in Spain, news from countries of origin, and entertainment.

Cultural and Media Consumption in Diasporic Contexts

In-depth interviews and participatory observation in *locutorios*, ethnic media outlets, ethnic restaurants, parks, and festivals helped me to identify trends in the cultural and media consumption of Latin American immigrants in Spain. In 2012 I started a new research project that aimed at addressing the following questions: What are the main characteristics of Latin American immigrants' cultural and media consumption practices? Are there any differences between cultural and media consumption in rural and urban environments? Do cultural and media consumption practices remain similar or become different in diasporic contexts? This new study employed qualitative methodologies that allowed for an in-depth comparative examination of communication practices among two major Latin American national groups in urban and rural areas: focus groups and semi-structured interviews with Ecuadorian and Colombian immigrants residing in Madrid and Murcia.

International studies on contemporary diasporic media point to selective participation and communication practices (Yúdice, 2009). Comparative analysis helped to clarify the sometimes conflicting strategies being established by diasporic communities in host countries, where interactions aimed at preserving heritage and traditions coexist with those that generate negotiated spaces and others that strengthen resistance. Scholars have demonstrated that these positions are dynamic and exchangeable (Georgiou, 2006). The term "space" is understood here as physical space but also as the imaginary space that generates inter- and intra-ethnic relations (Retis, 2011). The majority of respondents in focus groups and interviews emphasized the importance of environments that foster these modes of coexistence. Cultural and media consumption took place in: (1) the intimacy of a room equipped with a stereo, a TV, a video recorder, and/or a computer; (2) a negotiated common space of consumption, especially in multifamily and/or multigenerational houses; (3) indoor public environments such as libraries, schools, and particularly call centers and/or barber shops and restaurants; or (4) outdoor public environments such as parks and plazas. All these

spaces confirm the diversity of spaces where individual and collective cultural and media consumption coexist and are experienced.

Transnational approaches (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998) allow us to analyze and understand how these practices remain similar or are being transformed in diasporic contexts (Retis, 2011). Scholars of Latin America agree that there have been some attempts to correct the lack of information and studies on cultural/media consumption in the region (Bisbal, 2001; Checa, 2010; Sunkel, 2006). Research has been generated in academic and institutional contexts as well as by the cultural industries. Countries such as Colombia, and also Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil, have sponsored quantitative research initiatives to study audiences at the national level. In contrast, countries like Ecuador are yet to develop such a research agenda (Basantes & Herrera, 2010; Checa, 2006; Machicado, 2008; Martín Barbero, 2009; Reguillo, 2009; Rincón, Zuluaga, Bonilla, & Cataño, 2010; Rosas, 2002; Sunkel, 2006; Trejo, 2006; Wortman, 2006). There remains a need today for a regional perspective and comparative analysis in the region (Retis, 2012).

Previous studies pointed to the centrality of electronic media consumption, the allocation of media and cultural consumption to the private space, the strong segmentation of high culture consumption, and the generation of interpretive communities of consumers (Martín Barbero, 2006). Latin American researchers acknowledge that civil societies appear less as national, territorial, linguistic, and political communities, and more as groups of people who share reading tastes and reading agreements on certain cultural assets (García Canclini, 2001). The formation of Latin American transnational audiences has been recognized by the cultural industries rather than by local, regional, and international governments (Almanza 2005; Rosas 2002; Sunkel 2006). This suggests that the preliminary findings of surveys and private research have been taken into account in establishing public policies (Retis, 2012).

Qualitative studies highlight the impact of new information technologies and communication in transnational production and consumption circuits. Ecuador, along with Colombia, Bolivia, and Venezuela are among the countries with the lowest Internet penetration in the region, while Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Peru are somewhere in the middle. Because of the centrality of new technologies in transnational families' communication processes, some projects have sought to implement call centers in areas of the greatest emigration flows.

Studies of the cultural and media consumption of Latin American immigrants in Spain (Huertas, 2009; Ramirez, 2006; Retis, 2011; Santamarina, 2007), emphasize several trends: (1) diverse and complex patterns relating to immigrants' place of origin and the form of incorporation they experience in the host society; (2) the incidence of transnational structures, especially in familiar environments, that influence consumption habits; (3) the central role of immigrant social networks established in/from places of origin and host countries.

I argue that it is essential to abandon the category of immigrant as a homogeneous group based on national origins. In-depth interviews and group discussions

reveal that the parameters of collective identity have more to do with transnational family status and immediate social liaisons – friends, relatives – than with national identification. These processes also involve not only generational and gender variables, but also socioeconomic class. In this sense, it is also imperative to take into account that complex identity strategies are marked with ambivalences. In spaces of consumption, the global market pushes in one direction and local proximity pushes the other way. Thus, our analyses should articulate the relationship between society, markets, and media systems (Callejo, 2005).

Ethnocentric approaches tend to analyze media and cultural consumption exclusively as they relate to the condition of immigrant. I argue that we should take into account positions of class and structural stratification when examining sociocultural dynamics. Latin American immigrant groups are heterogeneous and they settle in host societies that draw from a rich hybrid cultural baggage. It is the dialogue with the host society that promotes understanding between cultures, not the creation of social hierarchies of interaction. Little can be done to make progress in this area if paternalistic attitudes or perspectives based on fear remain unchanged in immigration studies (Retis, 2011, 2012).

In half of Latin American households in Spain all members were born abroad. Fewer than half of these households are made up of direct family members. A tenth of Latin Americans live with people from other South American countries, which means that some households are composed of extended families or of different families living under the same roof (Colectivo Ioé & Fernandez, 2008). This context influences individual and collective media/cultural consumption practices. A third of adults under the age of 45 have their children in the countries of origin and more than half of adults have no parents in Spain. As a consequence, transnational families develop new channels of communication: almost all Latin Americans maintain contact with their country of origin – more than half through phone calls once a week and more than a third via email or chat, three-quarters of them on a weekly basis. More than half of Latin Americans send money to their parents, children, or siblings. These remittances are also influencing consumption at the transnational level.

In some cases, the cultural and media consumption of Latin American diasporas parallels that of their countries of origin – especially in relation to music and mass media. In other cases, customs transform to incorporate new elements of the host country. Traditional media prevailed in our informants' consumption patterns. A generation gap, however, is beginning to develop: in-depth interviews and focus groups in Madrid and Murcia pointed to differences between “digital natives” and “digital immigrants.” The younger generations tend to act as interpreters and/or intermediary of digital media practices. As Latin American immigrants in the United States, the digital native generations are quickly incorporated as consumers of new and digital media, coexisting with the migrant generations in the transition and adaptation – sometimes successful, sometimes frustrated – to the use of new information and communication technologies (Retis, 2011, 2012).

Our research found that, as in their home countries, Latin American immigrants in Spain tend to prefer television, even if they spend on average fewer hours per week watching television than Spaniards. We also identified an increase in the consumption of international channels. The most popular networks were (in order of preference) Antena 3, Telecinco, and TVE. TV penetration was slightly higher among Ecuadorians than Colombians. We did not find any differences between urban and rural contexts in TV consumption in terms of hours or preferences. We found, however, that Latin American immigrants tend to listen to more hours of radio and more musical radio than Spaniards. Latino radio stations enjoyed larger penetration in urban than rural areas, but this was mainly due to better access to airwaves. More Ecuadorians than Colombians listened to musical radio but the relationship was reversed in the case of news radio shows. Latin American immigrants preferred free newspapers but read mainstream newspaper when they were able to access them in public spaces, such as cafeterias or bars. Immigrants read – in order of preference – free weekly, daily, and monthly publications, sports, and immigrant-oriented print media. The publications with the most impact included *Latino* and *Sí Se Puede* (Yes You Can). The most widely read monthly publication was *Ocio Latino*, an entertainment magazine.

In a trend also found in their home country, more than half of Latin American immigrants acknowledged never going to the movie theater. My study found that formal and informal circulation channels of film and TV productions in DVD format were established in diasporic contexts. The surveys identified higher mobile phone than telephone or Internet penetration. Only a quarter of immigrants had a computer with network access. However, half of them declared having gone online the day before the survey, which means that the use of call centers continues to be important and/or that Internet access from mobile phones has been increasing. Most of them accessed the Internet mainly to use email, view web pages, chat, or read news from their home countries.

Finally, the study demonstrated that the economic crisis has affected Latin American immigrants' living standards in Spain. In interviews and focus groups, respondents acknowledged having changed their practices and their consumption. In their responses they constantly made comparisons of the situation before and after the crisis. They mentioned reducing visits to restaurants and nightclubs and a greater preference for free or low-cost events. They were more likely to meet at home, in parks, or in public spaces where ethnic products are consumed. These practices continue to be popular for respondents in both urban and rural areas (Retis, 2012).

Latino Diasporas and the Media: Notes for Further Explorations

Over the past three decades Latin American diasporas have been consolidating abroad. In particular, the turn of the century brought new population flows to south

European countries such as Spain, Italy, and Portugal. The current economic crisis in these countries is generating second or third international migratory projects: I have found Ecuadorians and Colombians moving from Madrid to northern European global cities such as London, as well as a return flow to home countries. The current contexts will lead to new transnational trends. However, there are still many gaps in understanding these processes at the local, national, and regional levels (Canales, 2011; Guarnizo, 2008; Retis, 2011, 2012). Research requires interdisciplinary approaches and a more comprehensive understanding of the social stratification and socioeconomic inequalities that transcend the prism of immigration. Private and commercial sectors have recognized the formation and growth of transnational communication practices. This is an area in which public, institutional, and academic research still has far to go.

My studies have examined mainstream media representations of otherness (Retis, 2006, 2013b); immigrant-oriented media production, distribution, and consumption (Retis, 2008, 2010a); and cultural and media consumption in diasporic contexts (Retis, 2011). The growing need for access to new technologies in the forms of communication and exchange in transnational living is one of the main challenges for public and institutional policies. Generational and socioeconomic gaps present challenges for administrations. These gaps, however, also provide a fertile ground for academic research.

The gradual geographic dispersion of Latin Americans in Spain suggests that regional and local administrations may require readjustment. Public discourse on strategies of integration tends to favor the national or regional levels when it is in the arena of local government that diversity strategies are needed. Immigrants who participated in my research demanded changes in the ways in which social and cultural programs, such as festivals or youth activities, were implemented. Most informants, but particularly those living in rural environments, demanded more openness when designing celebrations and events and better promotion of intercultural collective practices.

Latin American diasporas accustomed to processes of hybridization gradually incorporate cultural elements from both home and host societies. A respondent's joke powerfully illustrates this idea. She explained that the Spanish small town of Fuente Tocinos is known as the small (Colombian) town of Fuente Pereira because "everyone Colombian here is from Pereira." In this regard, we call for a better understanding of transnational relations that transcend personal and familiar environments to overlap with community relations. Religious festivals and commemorative celebrations might become a barometer of these processes. Good examples of these are festivals and celebrations that take place every October such as Festival Vivamérica in Madrid, Los Angeles' Latino Heritage month celebrations, and the African American Festival in London's Trafalgar Square.

Analyzing and understanding Latin American diasporic practices poses a number of challenges. Latin Americans have joined the context of international migration as a result of geopolitical positions and the realignment of labor relations beyond their borders. The role of public discourse in understanding the structural and cyclical

nature of diversity is central to this process. Latin America has been growing outside Latin America. In the United States it is expected that by 2050 almost 30% of the population will be "Hispanic" (Passel & Cohn, 2008); thus, transnational relations between the United States and Spain via "Latin American circuits" will become more evident, especially for those who can get residence permits and citizenship. Latin Americans construct diasporic communities, built in imaginary rather than physical space, and cultural and media consumption is a central element in their construction. The evidence of transnational audiences has already been recognized by the market and by private industries, but it remains a challenge for governments, institutions, and political administrations both in countries of origins and in the destinations of current international population flows.

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Writing

John Durham Peters

ABSTRACT

The introduction of writing in its diverse forms and practices has had enormous cultural consequences. Although it generally plays a secondary role in media histories, it should be looked upon as the mother of all media. Always material and worldly, writing has assumed many forms. This chapter distinguishes semasiography from logography, notes the distinction between logographic and alphabetic scripts, and argues that phonetic practices exist in logographic scripts, while logographic practices exist in alphabetic scripts. Writing is a power technology; a means of preserving meaning; much more than simply an ancillary device for representing voice or speech; a technique that is both historically material and difficult to master; enormously diverse in its history, practice, and expression; a synthesis of visual and auditory modes of perception and of iconic and symbolic modes of signification; dependent on a complex integration of physical skills, including those of the head and hand; and, as a database manipulating spatial and temporal axes, the primordial medium.

I

Next to the domestication of fire, plants, animals, and of humans themselves, the invention of writing constitutes probably the greatest transformation in human history. Like fire, writing has awesome powers. Its power to preserve meanings makes

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies: Media Effects/Media Psychology, First Edition.

Edited by Angharad N. Valdivia and Erica Scharrer.

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it explosive and dangerous. Like all other domesticates, writing has never been fully tamed, and can occasionally leap its bounds. (We have all been burned by fine print.) Things put in writing can come back to haunt us – or rescue us. Every document is potentially a “little sorcerer’s apprentice” (Levy, 2001, p. 38). Written words have an oracular quality. They keep on saying the same thing over and over again, as Socrates complained in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. They can determine our fates (“the writing on the wall”) and decide between life and death. “If only not to know how to write,” lamented the conquistador Hernan Cortés, “so as not to have to sign death sentences.” Writing indeed has a long-standing association with death (Ong, 1982, p. 81). Whenever one takes pen in hand, even in the most ordinary situations, one opens unforeseeable chains of events, large or small.

The introduction of the medium of writing in its diverse forms and practices has had enormous cultural consequences. Whatever group has possessed it has invariably outwitted those that did not. Writing is not simply a storage device for speech; it is also a power technology. It is a key part of civilization that goes together with such lasting facts as the division of labor, bureaucracy, and male dominance. (The history of writing is also the history of domination.) Writing enables remote control over people and property but also over time and space. A written contract binds the future; an archive of documents preserves the past; and writing has always been the best means of managing events and inventories at a distance. “Writing is magical, mysterious, aggressive, dangerous, not to be trifled with” (Powell, 2009, p. 11). It exercises remarkable leverage over communication, politics, and history and has exaggerated and amplified effects. We all understand Woody Guthrie’s point that some men will rob you with a six-gun and some with a fountain pen.

Writing’s implications are enormously diverse and impossible to treat fully in the short space of this chapter, which focuses on writing as a medium rather than as an array of practices. To use a distinction that the English term “writing” does not make, this chapter focuses more on *l’écrit* or *Schrift* (noun) than *écrire* or *schreiben* (verb). Despite its world-changing powers, writing has become so integrated into our lives that it can be hard fully to appreciate its historic and lasting importance. Like other givens of our existence such as eating, sleeping, thinking, dreaming, or wanting, writing’s basicness both defies comprehension and invites neglect.

II

To some scholars, writing can seem the stepsister in modern media history. Its thunder was seemingly stolen by new media such as photography, the telegraph, and the phonograph, then by film, radio, and television, and finally by the computer and its digital spawn. Once some form of writing was the only way to store anything for transmission to future generations – whether poetry, law, religion, history,

genealogy, property rights, or even music, dance, and cuisine. (Notation systems – such as musical scores, mathematics, chemical codes, and architectural plans – should be included as kinds of writing.) Incessant scribbling – inscribing, describing, prescribing – was the only bulwark against the mischief that time plays with memory. Of course, the very notion that memory is mischievous retroactively imposes an understanding of writing's capacity to fix texts permanently; an oral culture would never imagine invariant transmission as a desirable norm. Writing is itself the bias through which we read history; our access to the history of writing – and the history of almost anything else – comes from the medium of writing itself.

With the great analog explosion of the nineteenth century, writing's "monopoly" on storage was broken (Kittler, 1999). The new optical, acoustic, and electro-mechanical devices seemingly outdid writing in its historic job of making and sending records. By claiming to trace patterns directly from nature, photographs caught images, phonographs saved sounds, and movie cameras held movements much better than writing ever had, which always abstracted and codified events and sensations into abstract symbols. In sending symbolic cargo remotely, the telegraph and broadcasting outsped the post and other messenger systems. And yet, the nineteenth-century explosion of graphic methods that depict time-critical processes – from scientific instruments that inscribe heart beats and seismic activity to ones that record sounds and images – can be seen as deepening rather than subverting writing techniques. The new methods can be seen, to invoke Kittler again, as inscription systems or "discourse networks" (*Aufschreibesysteme*). The arts and crafts of writing proper did not, of course, sit idly by amid the whirlwind of sped-up pictures and sounds. Experimental texts by modernist authors mimicked the new audiovisual logics, and probably no century ever saw such a proliferation of letters, fonts, and calligraphies as the twentieth. The QWERTY keyboard remains one of the most pervasive communication devices well into its second century. By the early twenty-first century, telephone "texting" reminded us that writing as a medium of communication had never really gone away. Despite prophecies of its extinction, paper continues to be used in massive quantities. Indeed, our digital moment surely boasts the greatest abundance of writing material in all of earth's history. Photography, television, cinema, and video did not simply displace writing: their technologies rested upon its deep logics (inscription, storage, editing, transmission) and their products were full of written materials (labels, captions, subtitles, etc.). It is historically apt that you cannot buy a digital or electronic device without it coming wrapped in a package of paper covered with writing.

Even so, writing still generally plays a secondary role in our media histories and is insufficiently understood as what I will argue it is: the mother of all media. By the time scholars started to imagine a history of communication or media in the mid-twentieth century, writing was often treated as an honored but aging medium compared to the audiovisual sounds and shows of the moment. For Harold Adams Innis, who has as good a claim as anyone to having invented the field of media history, the potential obsolescence of writing actually spoke in its favor. As a diagnostician, he

saw the modern world tilting dangerously in the direction of what he called “space-biased” media that aimed to conquer minds and territories; certainly many of these were derivatives of writing (such as newspapers and popular print media). But writing was also the medium *par excellence* of “time-bias.” That is, writing enabled cultural transmission along the time axis. Just as the telegraph connected two points in space, so writing and other time-biased media could connect two points in time. Writing was the medium of remembrance and communication between past and future. Though his normative ideal was the oral tradition of ancient Greece, Innis thought writing could “reveal darkly” that vital way of life, and thus he prized writing (in some forms) as a counterweight to the spatial imbalance of modern life.

As a historian, Innis put writing at the heart of societal transformations. Each new inscription medium brought accompanying political and economic changes (Innis, 1951). In Egypt the shift from stone to papyrus empowered a new priestly caste and destabilized the grip of kings. In Sumeria the difficulty of writing on wet clay led to the more formal writing practice of cuneiform, giving incentives to abstraction and aiding administrative control over the Fertile Crescent. For the Jews, the divine law preserved as text did battle against the graven images of their idolatrous neighbors: part of their religious identity was a commitment to certain media forms over others. For the Greeks, the rise of alphabetic writing and the triumph of prose over poetry meant the decline of music and tragedy (here Innis follows Nietzsche). The Romans, in turn, managed their empire with roads, troops, and a postal system for transmitting written messages and commands, the *cursus publicus*, later giving way to networks of correspondence among monks, rabbis, and Muslim scholars in the Middle Ages. The printing press starting in the fifteenth century worked all kinds of changes in European and world history, changes still being debated and felt; printing, in various ways, was a *conditio sine qua non* for the Protestant reformation, the rise of modern science, the French and American revolutions, and modern imperialism. For Innis, the story of civilization is largely the unanticipated consequences of changes in word-media, especially writing.

If Innis died too soon, in 1952, to analyze the new audiovisual maelstrom, his Toronto colleague and disciple (of sorts), Marshall McLuhan, jumped in feet first. For McLuhan (1962), the new modes enabled a restorative kind of sensory fusion that writing, more specifically typography, had ruined. (Of course printing is but one branch – a huge one – on the family tree of writing, but to get McLuhan’s arguments we must delve briefly into printing.) With a tone that sometimes verged on the gleeful, McLuhan argued that the social ensemble of the printing press, with its linear, assembly-line logic, was vanishing. Working by analogy from the micro to the macro, from cognition to culture, he argued that typographic reading had regimented the human sensorium into a line-by-line discipline and given birth to a social order – the Gutenberg Galaxy he called it – obsessed by segmentation, causality, and abstraction. McLuhan, though himself a man of letters to the core, saw writing as an endangered species in the new electronic habitat. Audiovisual media such as photography, phonography, and cinematography largely meant the outmoding of writing

and literacy – despite the hidden tribute to writing in many of their names (“-graphy” comes from the Greek word *graphē*, meaning writing). In some of his later books McLuhan engaged in modernist literary experimentation himself, with type sometimes bursting the confines of the line to become image. For him, electronic media beckoned us back into an older mode of being. At the cognitive level, this was synaesthesia, i.e., harmony among the sense organs, in contrast to print culture’s “hypertrophy” of the eye; at the social level, this was “the global village” of a renewed oral culture, in contrast to the lonely crowd of walled-in individuals produced by centuries of book culture. Other thinkers in this intellectual tradition, though differing in detail, likewise tend to praise orality for a special interactivity and vivacity compared to writing. For Walter Ong (1982) and Eric Havelock (1986), for instance, writing can never fully represent the warmth and communal solidarity of the oral word.

This normative preference for orality was hotly contested by Jacques Derrida, surely the most influential philosophical thinker about writing in the last half century. His blockbuster book *Of Grammatology* (1976), first published in French in 1967, argued that Western thought’s view of writing as secondary, as a mere means of recording speech by visible marks, had a number of deleterious effects. Though his arguments could be flamboyant, Derrida was very well informed about the history of writing. He took the term “grammatology” from I. J. Gelb, a University of Chicago Assyriologist whose book *A Study of Writing* (1952) was long regarded as the best theoretical treatment of the history of writing, and which also played a strong underground role in postwar French thought about signs and language (de Moraes Rego, 2006), though it has since been criticized for its teleological narrative and its failure to recognize Mayan glyphs as writing. Derrida’s larger points about history, politics, and ethics – that writing’s downgrading was in league with “the violence of Western metaphysics” and helped to foster the illusory belief that the voice was somehow more revealing of or more “present” to the self’s interior than the text – were grounded in the solid philological truth that no script or writing system in history has ever fully captured the voice and that many writing practices have no clear vocal counterpart. “A purely phonetic writing is impossible and has never finished reducing the nonphonetic” (Derrida, 1976, p. 88). He showed that writing was more than a mere ancilla to speech, more than “the painting of the voice” (Voltaire) or “the art of speaking to the eyes.” Derrida helped a wide range of subsequent thinkers see the artful fertility of writing as a medium in its own right. For him, writing did not pervert the supposed purity of speech; rather, writing intensified and revealed the symbolic structures inherent in language generally. Phonetic writing based on the Greek alphabet is not writing in general; it is a peculiar, historically specific form. “In its obsession with phonetic accuracy, the Greek alphabet was a great anomaly in the history of writing” (Powell, 1997, p. 4). Derrida provides a crucial opening for media theory especially, showing that writing’s distance from speech and presence is a gift, not a curse. Absence is writing’s genius, and all media to one degree or another trade in absence (Winkler, 2008, pp. 235, 237). By criticizing the dream of immediacy, Derrida makes room for the medium of writing and also

invites us to see, more generally, media as variations on writing's logics. Writing can thus be understood as primary rather than derivative in our stock of media forms.

That writing has its own logic apart from its vocal accompaniment can be illustrated by one of Derrida's favorite examples. Consider a riddle: what is shared in common by a birth certificate, a wedding license, a coroner's report, a diploma, a birthday card, a declaration of war, a house sale, a legislative bill, a will, and a death sentence? A signature, of course. This cultural form – somewhere between a word, image, act, and gesture – still rules over life and death in our world. A signature transforms a piece of paper into a legal act (Fraenkel, 1992). Nothing binding can be done without one. Not all cultures, of course, work this way, and the signature has been a device for the systematic exploitation of native peoples who guilelessly signed written "contracts" with Europeans. But there is no vocal speech act that accompanies a signature (Harris, 1995, p. 80). It is a pure act of writing, a kind of legal glue in the world of binding documents without need of vocalization. To perform the concomitant speech act with each signature would require an enormous list: I thee wed, I understand the contract, I authorize withdrawal of \$50, etc. The signature is thus a particular instance of the larger principle, discussed more fully below, that images cannot unambiguously designate linguistic utterances. To say a picture is worth a thousand words may be to praise its eloquence, but it is also to condemn its lack of precision.

Derrida's work was part of a wave of scholarly interest in writing in the last five or so decades. The apparent threat of extinction often reveals outlines sharply – this is the point of Hegel's dictum that "Minerva's owl only takes flight in the gathering dusk" (Innis, 1951, p. 9). Interest in orality seems to have been inspired in part by the massive new voice-based media of the twentieth century such as radio, sound film, and telephony (Havelock, 1986, pp. 30–33), and studies of oral poetry would have been impossible without tape recording (itself a neglected writing medium of sorts). The computer – another kind of reading and writing machine – has also inspired much interest in the philosophy, history, and cultural meaning of writing. Scholars who have tackled the subject include classicists, especially those interested in the rise of the alphabet and the "Homer question" (i.e., who wrote the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, when and how); ancient historians; linguists and anthropologists interested in non-literate cultures; literary scholars and historians of the book; the occasional computer scientist; and historians of science interested in writing as the first among many forms of epistemic instrumentation. Perhaps most importantly for present purposes, media theorists and historians have embraced writing, partly under the encouragement of poststructuralist thought associated with figures such as Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan, all of whom offer elaborate, sometimes baroque, theories of writing. Especially in German media studies, a vital and fascinating intellectual scene since the 1980s, writing is the starting point for studying media, which are always considered to be "paper machines" of one sort or another, however intense disagreements on other matters may be. This chapter does not review German-language media scholarship in any detail but builds upon its invitation to recognize the historical centrality of

writing in media history. “Traditionally writing was regarded as derivative from oral language, as secondary; with the growing importance of technical storage media it becomes central” (Winkler, 2008, p. 197). New media not only reshape current social practices; they also alter our approach to the past. Our era’s incessant texting, posting, tweeting, blogging, tagging, and clicking on two-dimensional surfaces freshly underscores the world-historical importance of writing.

III

Writing is unquestionably the most “momentous” (Ong, 1982, p. 85) of all *technical* innovations in human history. In contrast to spoken language, which seems “hard wired” and a universal part of the human equipment, writing is a software package that requires installation and constant updates. A toddler with something to say will not ask for pen and paper but will use gesture, facial expression, and the interactive array of oral language. Writing, in contrast, is a difficult, unnatural, and even painful medium, and anyone who teaches university students knows that 15 or 16 years of intense training in the art is often not enough to master it. Speech is a more or less “natural” endowment of all humans; writing is a technical accomplishment that requires a long apprenticeship. (And, unlike writing, almost everybody enjoys talking.) Of course, defining what is “natural” for *homo sapiens* is a highly vexed problem; as Ong (1982) nicely puts it, “artificiality is natural to human beings” (pp. 82–83). Everyone who writes knows that it can be an intensely physical process involving sore backs, bitten fingernails, headaches, and pulled hair. Writing is work. It exacts a fierce bodily and cognitive discipline. It has a crucial biomechanical dimension, requiring integration of multiple skills such as eye tracking, vocalization, auditory perception, manual dexterity, posture, and mental exertion (Liu, 2010).

And writing is always material and worldly. Though speech can have enduring consequences, its medium of record – memory and lived practice – is comparatively ephemeral and immaterial. Writing takes advantage of the conditions and resources available such as stone, clay, bones, shell, silk, bamboo, jade, brass, wood, animal or human skin, papyrus, paper, and silicon chips. Even dust has been a writing material – *abacus* descends from the Hebrew word for dust, which once covered tablets used for figuring. The same is true for oil vapor, the short-lived medium of skywriting. There may be speech without tools or tangible materials, but writing always requires both. The history of writing tools, styles, arts, and practices has become a fascinating scholarly subspecialty of its own. An entire material-cultural infrastructure supports writing, from tables, chairs, lighting, and ink to forestry, paper-milling, education, and optometry. Writing is always material and technical, however automated or naturalized it may feel to its users.

Just what is writing? Writing is not only a difficult practice to master, it is even a harder concept to define. Its practices are so overwhelmingly diverse and technically

complex as to defy a single overarching understanding. As general definitions, Gelb (1952) offers “a system of human intercommunication” (p. 12) or “a device for expressing linguistic elements” (p. 24) both “by means of conventional visible marks.” Powell’s (2009) definition is similar: “a system of markings with a conventional reference that communicate information” (p. 18). For both scholars, whose analysis I follow here, writing must have visual markings and be governed by systematic rules of decoding, but it need not necessarily stand directly for speech, though most forms do. Like Derrida, Gelb and Powell warn against generalizing too glibly from the alphabetic system passed down from the ancient Greeks, in which discrete letters stand more or less exactly for the acoustic elements of words (more exactly, for instance, in Spanish, and less exactly in English). A two-dimensional plane capable of receiving visual-spatial marks also seems definitive for almost all forms of writing. Words used for writing in many languages imply actions such as incising, scratching, or scraping on some surface – the Latin *scribere*, German *schreiben*, and French *écrire* are all cognates to the English *scribble*, and the Greek *graphō* (“I write”) is a cognate to the English *engrave* and the Spanish *grabar* (to record or to tape).

Permanence of record, though essential to writing’s power, is not always a failsafe criterion, given the crucial part played in the history of writing by erasable surfaces such as the wax tablet, the slate, the blotter, correctible typewriters, and the computer screen. The history of the pencil, for instance, shows a vast realm of experimental, erasable, and fruitfully non-durable writing – what Sybille Krämer (2005) calls “operative writing.” First drafts, architectural drawings, mathematical calculations, and engineering plans require disposable, correctable writing. “Ink is the cosmetic that ideas will wear when they go out in public. Graphite is their dirty truth” (Petroski, 1989, p. 6). Not all writing, fortunately, is permanent – the humble pencil eraser is one in a long line of highly useful methods of deletion. Writing entails not only the power to store and transmit meanings, but to process them as well. Like the abacus and tablet, the pencil shows that writing’s revocability is an important counterweight to its finality. Cancellation is a prerogative of power (Vismann, 2008, pp. 25–29). Editing is a sign of majesty. Amnesty has long been figured as the blotting out of a written record. Without deletion, we would always be stuck with Pontius Pilate’s dour decree: “I have written what I have written” (John 19:22). The eraser is a small symbol of forgiveness.

The history of writing is itself full of deletions. The preservation of written records (perhaps like all historical records) often depends on happenstance. Linear B, an ancient script that offered essential clues to the history of ancient Greek, was preserved by a palace fire in Knossos, Crete that baked clay tablets that otherwise would not have endured; Aramaic, the language chosen by King Darius to administer the far-flung Persian empire, is best documented in Egypt, not because Egypt was the geographic center of the language’s use, but because a desert climate preserves documents on papyrus, parchment, leather, even stone or metal (Ostler, 2005, pp. 78, 83, 131). If the overall history of writing is patchy, the history of human communication is even more so. Humans have been writing for over 5,000 years, but they have been drawing and using language to speak for perhaps ten times that long. Sexual

pair-bonding seems to be about 1.7 million years old, and to sustain life-long attachments and cooperative activities, a rich repertoire of non-verbal, that is, meaningful but non-linguistic, signs and gestures must have developed; basic facial expressions of emotion such as fear, joy, and surprise, for instance, seem more or less universal across humans. Much of this history is still unclear but archaeological and genetic evidence offers indirect material for conjectural reconstructions. “Prehistorians,” writes the French paleoanthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan (1993), “must resign themselves to doing without the evidence that would have been most significant – gestures, sounds, arrangements of objects” (p. 107). Writing gives us almost all of what little we have of the long history of communication among humans.

One of the most compelling approaches to the early history of writing comes from Leroi-Gourhan, who is increasingly seen as one of the twentieth century’s great media theorists and exercised an important influence on philosophers of writing such as Derrida. Using a broad comparative evolutionary framework, Leroi-Gourhan argues that writing put language under the control of the hand as well as the face. Before writing, the instruments of language were voice, tongue, and ears, but writing puts the two great centers of human interaction, the face and the hand, on an equal footing. The roots of writing are found in drawing or “graphism,” to use Leroi-Gourhan’s compromise formulation. Cave paintings were, he claims, an accompaniment to an oral context, not an effort at realistic depiction of animals or hunts, and he looked for language-like rhythms and syntax in their design. But drawing and writing, he notes, do not operate according to the same logic. Drawing has a multi-dimensional freedom, while writing is more or less linear, subjugating the image to the rule of phonetic sequence. The admiring eye is free to rove over an image as it wills, but the reading eye must track a text in serial order. The image may have structure, but it does not have syntax. Drawing is figurative, but not linguistic, but it is clearly the primal source from which writing practices emerge.

Gelb gave this historically early stage of writing the rather ungainly name “semasiography” and the label stuck. From Greek terms meaning “the inscription of significance,” semasiography is detached from speech. It communicates a more or less clear meaning via visual representations but without designating an unambiguous vocal or linguistic correlate. Consider, for example, the “not allowed” sign – a red circle with a diagonal slash superimposed on an image of the banned activity in question (Powell, 2009, pp. 19–20). Figure 7.1 shows a sign widely understood by the eye, hugely divergent to the ear: not only could it be translated as variably as *interdit de fumer*, *ikke røyke*, or *μη καπνίζετε*, it could also be stated in one language as variably as *no smoking*, *don’t smoke*, *smoking is not permitted*, etc. Semasiographic signs convey meaning without providing instructions for decoding the underlying language. Like visual art, with which they share a deep tie, such signs do not specify propositional content. A picture of a cat on a mat can never distinguish among crucial shades of meaning that are so easy for language to indicate such as “the cat sits on the mat,” “the cat sat on the mat yesterday,” or “cats should sit on mats” (Gombrich, 1972). Other modes allow for much tighter verbal specification – alphabetic writing allowing us to dictate what words we mean letter by letter, for instance – but semasiography



Figure 7.1

is not a precision instrument for encoding speech. Even though it lacks a feature that we alphabet-users might think essential for writing – exact recreation of discourse – we should not think of semasiography as outmoded. Semasiographic conventions are used mundanely in road signage and do-it-yourself instructions for assembling furniture and electronics, and sublimely in mathematical and musical notation. Nor should we view semasiography as deficient in deep meanings. Images, like music, remain some of the most moving things we know, even if words fail us to say why. One thinks of Felix Mendelssohn's answer to the question of why he wrote songs without words. "What I have to say," he said, "is too precise for words."

The key breakthrough occurred in Mesopotamia around 3400 BCE with the rise of logographic encoding, or word-writing. Goody and Watt (1963) put the innovation well: "The notion of representing a sound by a graphic symbol is itself so stupefying a leap of the imagination that what is remarkable is not so much that it happened relatively late in human history, but rather that it ever happened at all" (p. 315). (Whether the history of writing is a history with a single origin is debated by historians, but it is clear that diverse writing practices have independently found ways to indicate sound; the case of Mayan glyphs would seem to argue for polygenesis.) The key device seems to have been the *rebus*, a picture sign which evokes a sound which then evokes a word. The rebus uses images to call up names which are exact or near homophones of other words. Like all historic modes of writing, the rebus is still in use; it is found in children's picture puzzles, and if we follow Freud, in our dreams as well. (Freud, the amateur Egyptologist, liked to think of dreams as hieroglyphs and himself as their Champollion.) The rebus may seem a roundabout way of representing speech, combining image, sound, homophone, and word, but all writing systems involve complex contrivances to some degree. Uniting diverse sorts of data is fundamental to the work that writing does.

Egyptian and Chinese are two leading examples of logographic writing systems. Since each word in a logographic script has a unique sign, learning to read and write is an enormous investment of time and effort. To read a modern Chinese newspaper, one must know about 3,000 characters. (Chinese is unique in that it is the only major ancient script to have survived to this day – Sumerian cuneiform, the first of all logographic systems, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Mayan glyphs have all gone extinct.) Historically most priests, scribes, scholars, and bureaucrats have had little incentive to make writing technology more accessible. Barriers to entry, as Innis would remind us, aided monopoly control, and the history of writing is never only a succession of scripts, but a struggle between groups for access to the means of communication. Indeed, many pre-alphabetic scripts are full of maddeningly labyrinthine rules that seem almost intentionally designed to be obscure and difficult. The sociological norm for ancient scripts seems to be what some scholars call “oligoliteracy” – literacy of the few. Modernity had a very different vision of literacy as a requisite for all citizens.

Logographic practices are by no means dead. We still use logograms such as \$, £, €, ©, Σ, √, ∞, †, ♥, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5, etc. (The letters of the alphabet can be used as logograms for some purposes as well.) Logograms may have an implied sound, but phonetic rendering is often open-ended. Though speakers of mutually unintelligible languages such as Mandarin, Min, Cantonese, Shanghainese, and Hunanese can't understand each other's speech, they can read the same Chinese characters. (This fact gives rise to the false idea that Chinese characters are purely ideational and without phonetic instructions.) We can read “Rx” as “prescription” or “are ex” and it won't matter. The meaning of “I ♥ NY” is clear whether one says “I love New York” or “I heart New York.” If I write the sign “1” a majority of earthlings will know what it means but not agree on how it should be read aloud; different speakers may say “one,” “eins,” “satu,” or “yksi.” But additional signs can clarify pronunciation: “1st” = first, “1^o” = primero (Spanish), and “1^{er}” = premier (French). The meaning remains clear to the eye, but the additional sign hints the sound to the voice and ear. (The additional sign complementing a logogram is often called a “determinative.”) This ability to imply the sounds of language distinguishes logography from semasiography. All scripts give indications as to both meaning and sound; there is no such thing as a script that is nothing but sounds or nothing but meanings (Coulmas, 2003, p. 18).

Thus we should not think that logographic scripts do not provide phonetic instructions. Both Chinese and Egyptian hieroglyphs are phoneticized logographic systems. The great majority of Chinese characters are compounds of radicals that indicate both meaning and sound. Figuring out that Egyptian hieroglyphs were full of phonetic indications – in contrast to the old romance of a purely visual language – was the key step for Champollion's decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in the 1820s. (Chinese and Egyptian have been subject to a long history of fantasy projections by European thinkers – Chinese as a purely ideational language and Egyptian as sensuous and allegorical [Derrida, 1976, pp. 76–81]). The combination of signs that

represent concepts and signs that represent sounds is not foreign to English. The cross, a very well-known logogram in English, can be spun in many different phonetic and semantic directions: “†s” = cross and “†d” = dead (Gelb, 1952, p. 118); “xmas” = Christmas and “xing” = crossing. “Twenty” was the name of a British spy ring, since that number in Roman numerals is a “double-cross”: XX. Such far-fetched ingenuity is found in writing both ancient and modern. Medieval heraldry compressed names into designs on shields. Voltaire supposedly responded to a dinner invitation with the message “Ga.” That is, “Gé grand A petit” (big G, little A), or “j’ai grand appétit” (I am very hungry). Today one must read logographically to make sense of phenomena as diverse as vanity license plates and hip hop names and titles. Telephone texting also reactivates ancient logographic strategies (Crystal, 2009): “l8r” in English means “later”; “7ac” in French means “c’est assez” (that’s enough) and “je x” means “je crois” (“I believe” – “croix,” cross, is a homophone with “crois”); in Spanish “s3” yields “es” (S) plus “tres” (three) or “estrés” (stress). To make sense of a text message, you have to know which letters and numbers should be read as logograms with a distinct name rather than as phonetic markers. “7ac” is not read as “set-ack”; rather, the “a” and “c” are treated as logograms with a distinct name and sound. The “l” and “r” in “l8r” work alphabetically as phonemic elements, while the “8” is to be pronounced as a free-standing logogram. Deciphering text messages can be quite a jumble for the non-initiate who is not privy to the code – very much the status quo in the history of writing.

It is thus an alphabetic prejudice to think that alphabets are the only writing systems that instruct the reader in how the underlying speech sounds. Before the alphabet, Sumerian cuneiform, Chinese and Egyptian, and proto-alphabetic syllabaries (such as Aramaic and Hebrew) were able to suggest the sounds of speech. Sound encoding has been a feature of writing since the discovery of the “phonetic principle” (Gelb, 1952, p. 67ff.) in the fourth millennium BCE in the Fertile Crescent, even if rules for sounding out were obscure and not always reliable. By any standard the alphabet was a huge transformation, but it is difficult to get an adequate fix on its historic significance, since there is so much accompanying ideological freight, claims about writing history being mixed up with claims about cultural superiority. For Powell (2002, p. 120), the writing of vowels does nothing less than demarcate the historic divide between East and West, a view enthusiastically seconded by Kittler (2006). Havelock (1986) clearly sees Greek writing, and therefore culture, as superior to Hebrew, a valuation Derrida contests.

The invention of “a short atomic table learnable in childhood” (Havelock, 1986, p. 9) did have all kinds of consequences, but it is easy to miss the continuities with earlier graphic systems for representing speech. For Gelb (1952), the “greatness of the Greek innovation lies [...] not in the invention of a new method of indicating vowels but in a methodical application of a device which the early Semites used only in an irregular and sporadic fashion” (p. 182). (Several Hebrew letters can do double duty as vowel and consonant – *alef*, *he*, *vav*, and *yod*.) As we have seen, the Greek alphabet was not the first writing method to record the sounds of speech in a deco-

dable form; it was, rather, the first to represent speech by nothing but signs for the phonemes of the voice – and thus in a form relatively accessible to all. Only a competent speaker of Egyptian or Hebrew could read those scripts aloud: the visual marks yielded sounds only if you could divine what the underlying words were. With the Greek (vowel) alphabet, a reader could figure out the sounds without knowing the language. The ambition of the Greek alphabet – never perfectly realized – was to provide unambiguous codes of sound to the eyes, that is, to create a one-to-one correspondence of grapheme and phoneme. Despite what some of its devotees such as Havelock (1986, pp. 59–61) seem to claim, the Greek alphabet was no tape recorder capturing vocal sounds in all their particularity. It didn't represent prosody, pitch, pacing, or the infinite variety of tone-color. It represented phonetics graphically, in a brilliant, innovative, and enduring way, but it did not create an exact medium for sound production. There are near-infinite shadings of how to pronounce any given vowel but the alphabet crunches them all into one sign. No writing system is ever purely phonetic – and we should be grateful for the alphabet's astonishing data reduction. This abstraction is not a loss of, say, the fullness of the voice; it is a service. Backgrounding the voice is writing's gift.

The history of scripts resembles more a punctuated equilibrium – sudden lurches of innovation followed by long plateaus of use – than an ever-progressive spiral. The principles that govern alphabetic writing today are essentially the same as those laid down by the invention of the “vowel-alphabet” (as German scholars call it) somewhere in Greece about 800 years BCE. But some alphabetically written languages such as English are rather far removed from systematic vocal representation. “Ghotiugh” can famously be pronounced as *fish*, taking the “gh” as in *rough*, “o” as in *women*, “ti” as in *nation*, and “ugh” as in *bough* (Gelb, 1952, p. 225). English arguably even has some features of syllabic writing systems such as Arabic or Hebrew (in which vowels are implied) or Japanese hiragana (which indicate sounds through fixed syllables). The same “sh” sound in the English words *suspicion*, *shut*, *sure*, *station*, *crustacean*, *session*, for instance, can only be recognized in context; this is no atomic table where each free-standing letter possesses a unique sound but a much more volatile and interactive chemistry!

The written form of a language can contain intelligence that its spoken version does not. This is true of both English and Chinese, though much more intensely in the latter's case (Powell, 2009, p. 48). Anciently, many Mandarin words were phonetically more differentiated, but many have since merged in pronunciation, leaving the language with many monosyllabic homophones that stand for distinct characters. This leads to a situation in which a single story of 92 characters about a poet who eats lions can make perfect sense to the eye but, when read aloud, consists of nothing but variations on the single syllable “shih” (Fallows, 2010, pp. 39–43). Here the written form takes authority over the spoken. The visual or mental “reading” of Chinese ideograms disambiguates homophones more quickly than speech, and though Chinese speakers usually rely on syntactic context to specify the implied character, they will sometimes draw the character in the air or on paper in line with

Chinese's important manual-graphic dimension (Liu, 2010). In English, the priority of the written form is weaker but still evident. English's erratic spelling, though often a target for reformers, holds firm because it is a treasure-trove of the language's history, and even more, an indicator of the identity of words. In English, word differentiation depends on the graphic sign: such terms as *but* and *butt*, *threw* and *through*, *sight*, *site*, and *cite*, are phonetically identical. Context normally distinguishes them, but recourse to the written form, either as seen or spelled, decisively clarifies which word is meant. The written form – here is the point Derrida would underscore – is the decisive way to tell “but” and “butt” apart. (The very ideas of an isolated word and of spelling are derivative of specific writing technologies.) Writing as much as speech defines the word.

In studying writing, we come face-to-face with the bigger mystery of how signs mean at all. We may find it odd or amusing that a single sound in Chinese can stand for many characters, but the principle of one sign/many senses is found in every language. How one sign can mean many things is one of the greatest questions. In Latin “malo malo malo malo” can mean “I’d rather be in an apple tree than a bad man in trouble” if you know which underlying word and syntactic structure to associate with which “malo.” Here we see that the problem of decoding writing is at an abstract level the same as the problem of understanding language in general. If you hear “shih” you have to figure out which Chinese characters are intended, and if you hear “malo” which Latin semantic and syntactic structures, but in both cases the cognitive task is to discern the appropriate rules for generating sense from minimal signs and the appropriate cabinets to unlock. The interpretive task of discovering meanings is similar for talk and text, however diverse specific practices in different languages and scripts may be. Writing is not a betrayal of speech but its intensification. Like language itself, writing is a tangle of accumulated tricks, rules, and habits for leaping over signs on the way to meanings. (It is amazing that we don’t trip more often.) We humans have barely begun to understand how writing works.

IV

The marvel of writing is its union, through a variety of methods, of two very different sensory registers – the predominantly spatial order of vision and the predominantly temporal order of hearing. Visual perception tends to be all-at-once (synchronic) and auditory perception tends to be one-thing-after-another (diachronic). The eyes are particularly apt at seeing resemblances while the ears hear things whose sources we have had to learn to identify by experience. When we hear a sound, we instinctively turn to see its source. But when we see an object, we don’t instinctively ask what it sounds like. The production of sound effects in radio and cinema depends upon the fact that decontextualized sounds, no matter how familiar they may be in everyday life, are often not recognized without an accompanying visual (or other

orienting) stimulus. The two most dominant human sense organs, then, perceive the world in strikingly different ways (Schafer, 1994). The eyes are high bandwidth devices that take in whole fields at once but are indiscriminate in small intervals of time (another key fact for cinema). The ears, in contrast, are lower bandwidth organs that are far more temporally acute than the eyes but less able to identify *Gestalten*. And ears are also the primordial sense for conventionally based meanings – that is to say, for language, the chief of all “symbols,” i.e., signs based on convention rather than nature. Seeing, in other words, rests largely on an “iconic” relation to the world, to use the terms of Charles Sanders Peirce. Hearing, in contrast, is basically “symbolic” in that it grasps the world through habit or convention.

The great breakthrough of writing, according to Robertson (2004), whose theses I sketched in the previous paragraph, was to combine the two sensory registers of seeing and hearing in visual-graphic depictions of linguistic-acoustic signs. “Writing includes both the holistic characteristics of visual perception, and at the same time, without contradiction, the sequential character of auditory perception. It is at once atemporal and temporal, iconic and symbolic. In short, the potential for writing is at the nexus linking the visual and the auditory channels of perception” (p. 19). Writing teaches the eye to behave like an ear, as McLuhan liked to say. In reading, the eye moves serially from one sign to another, not looking holistically for the likeness of things but rather “listening” for the sounds or words indicated by the conventionalized shapes. In order to read, the eye must become a serial processor and follow the discipline of the line. Writing gives auditory objects (words, speech) a visual habitation and temporal events a spatial home. Somehow writing was able to transpose speech’s semiotic structure to a visual plane. In this sense, writing combines at once art and music, sight and sound (Krämer, 2005, p. 76). No purely acoustic object ever endures. In the millennia of prehistory, spoken words lived on after their utterance only in the evanescent media of sound, memory, and collective linguistic competence. Trapping Homer’s “winged words,” writing discovered how to make them last. It was a kind of phonograph long before Edison, sound caught in space. (Linguists even use the term “phonographic” for writing that provides more precise recipes for vocalizing sounds.) The eye learned to process language. This “verbivocovisual” (James Joyce) achievement represents the great sensory–cognitive synthesis of human history.

Writing converts space and vision into time and sound, and time and sound into space and vision. It stands at the switch point of time and space, vision and hearing, face and hand, fixity and fluidity. In this it is the most fundamental medium of communication. Media are apparatuses that translate meaning across space and time, through visual, auditory, verbal, and manual registers, and writing was the first great medium to do so. All media of recording, transmission, and processing since follow in its wake. Quevedo, the great Spanish poet, wrote that in reading, “escucho con mis ojos a los muertos [I listen with my eyes to the dead].” In this he spelled out the domain of media theory, the general study of how we swing across the abysses of time and space, sight and sound, life and death.

V

There is much to be said – and much that has been said – about writing and its history. As noted, such a history would have to be self-reflexive, inasmuch as it would be a history of history itself. And there are so many things such a macro history should treat. We could discuss the history, for instance, of the traditional gender division of labor of text and textile, of the prestige and beauty of calligraphy in Chinese bureaucracy or Islamic religion, of writing implements such as chisel and calamus, quill and typewriter, of the Jewish scroll and the Christian codex, of the printing press and its shaping of national languages and identities, of double-entry bookkeeping and early modern capitalism, of paper's role in money and mathematics, of writing's religious role as scripture and guardian of memory or its epistemic role as database of learning or its use as a tool of subjugating non-literate peoples, of literature in all its varieties, of archives stretching from the library of Alexandria to Google, of memory, of literacy and the rise of the modern self or modern novel, or of the discipline of eye, ear, throat, hand, spine, and even *derrière* in writing. (*Sitzfleisch*, as it is sometimes known, is a key part of the writer's toolkit.) The history of reading has become a vital and exciting research area. Despite so many delicious potential topics, this chapter revisits its central point – the centrality of writing to any possible media history – via a new angle: the power of non-linearity.

McLuhan, like many others, thought writing essentially linear. No doubt, this is to some degree true, as we have seen. The arrangement of signs into rows that must be grasped ordinally is a key differentiation of writing from drawing, of text from image. When one reads a novel, for instance, one typically reads in a straight line from the front to the back page. But linearity is only one side of writing and emphasizing it misses what is most important about writing as a media form: the temporal reversibility that its spatialization makes possible (Winkler, 2009).

Let me explain. According to Schmandt-Besserat (1996), the earliest kinds of writing were tallies and lists consisting of markings on clay shapes she calls “tokens.” These were forerunners of the Sumerian cuneiform writing that lasted for over 3,000 years and recorded many diverse and unrelated languages (rather in the same way that English, Finnish, Guaraní, and Turkish – none of them kin – are all now written with Roman letters). Tokens were used to manage people and inventory. Their function was counting and accounting; they were data-processing devices with no concern (or ability) at first to record syntax or designate sounds relevant to the ear, let alone to chronicle myths or histories. Writing was a tool of computation well before it was a storage device for literature (Vismann, 2008). It has long been used for lists, registers, rosters, censuses, charts, and maps. Siegert (2003, p. 33) notes two traditions of writing: one, working in time, whose task is to capture language, and another, working in space, whose task is to diagram data about collections, inventories, populations, etc. Though he is interested in the encyclopedia and a variety of non-linear literary genres, McLuhan (1962) tends to slight database uses of writing. Since

Gutenberg, books have never been the main item produced by the printing press – bills, magazines, newspapers, and posters have used up more wood pulp than books, to say nothing of its use in packaging. And in the most popular bound formats of print culture, such as almanacs, Bibles, cookbooks, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, readers have always hop-scotched around in the text according to their needs. No one reads every word of a newspaper or legal code from cover to cover. The novel is an exception in the history of printing and reading. Writing does not consist essentially of integrated storylines: stories are one of the many kinds of data it holds. The historiography of writing has been biased toward literature and away from bureaucracy, toward pens and away from pencils. The pretty superstructure draws attention away from the material infrastructure. Above all, writing has been a device for storing and processing data in many forms.

In database uses of writing, spatial location is crucial. In a purely linear text, the spatial location of content is not important. Different editions of the same novel or play could generally have different pagination without anything important being lost. But in an equation, map, or table, spatial location is crucial. Where a decimal point or zero is placed can change the world forever. Krämer (2005) contrasts “operative” from speech-rendering forms of writing. Writing is different from graphic art in that its spaces and gaps can be significant. Focusing on the early modern era, she notes the twinning of paper-based visual and quantitative techniques. Cartesian coordinates, for instance, are possible only on a flat surface: thus paper serves as what she calls “a symbolic machine” or an exteriorized mental tool. Without writing, there is no calculus. For Krämer, writing is not just a storehouse of speech, it is also a technical device of calculation, especially after the arrival in Europe of Hindu-Arabic numerals and the zero. Without operative writing, there is no zero and no decimal point, two devices essential for managing the modern world (finance as we know it could not exist without either). A page can sustain a place-value logic, which is essential for notation systems such as mathematics, maps, and musical scores. Graph paper and lined paper represent diverse kinds of writing practice. Mathematics depends on the “flat laboratory” of writing, and in ancient Greek mathematics, lettered diagrams “acted, effectively, as a substitute for ontology” (Latour, 2008, p. 457). Latour puts it well: media, especially writing, have long been substitutes for ontology.

Manovich’s (2001) perhaps too dramatic claim that recent digital media shift the leading logic of media from the “narrative” form of novels and cinema to the “database” form of digital forms misses the fact that stories and lists, with their respective preferences for temporal and spatial order, have always been competing and complementary principles in the history of recording media (Stallybrass, 2007, p. 1586). Through accounts, ledgers, maps, logs, registers, catalogs, indices, lists, blueprints, schematics, and tables (such as times tables or the periodic table), writing simulates inventories of objects without a front-to-back narrative structure. The beauty of such writing is that its “visual, spatial location” makes it “subject to possible rearrangement” (Goody, 1977, p. 104). Play, possibility, reversibility are the mark of writing

(Winkler, 2009). And even in everyday reading, there is no such thing as a purely linear text – the footnote and the marginal comment both invite the eye to jump off the line. In most writing systems the spatial order of graphic signs does roughly correspond to the temporal order of spoken signs, but not always. “\$100” we read as “one hundred dollars,” such that oral speech reverses the order of the written signs. In arithmetic, we work from right to left in contrast to the left-to-right reading norm, a sign of the differentiation of letters and numbers (McLuhan, 1962, p. 181); this fact can be seen in a digital (base two) notation such as 01000000 (64), which slows down the eye and makes us read from right to left. The diverse routing of the eye can likewise be noted in Hebrew, which reads words right-to-left, and numbers left-to-right. Even at the most minimal syntactic level, the text is not purely linear, and for larger units of text, anyone who reads knows how choppy we enter and exit the world of any book.

The tendency in orality and literacy studies to lament the rigidity of the written word is thus one-sided. Take, almost at random, some lines from Havelock (1986): “Once inscribed, the words in a document become fixed, and the order they appear in is fixed. All the spontaneity, mobility, improvisation, the quick responsiveness of spoken speech vanishes” (p. 70). He gets this exactly backward. Oral speech is linear too. In writing or reading, you can move backwards, delete, skim, and reread (and skip pages if you have a codex). To be fair, Havelock readily acknowledges the great advantages of textual fixity; and live interaction can allow for quick correction of misunderstanding. But the world of writing affords a non-linear editing that is the envy of anyone who’s ever said something aloud that they desperately wish they could retract – as the words hang in the air seemingly forever, burning their imprint on the memories of offended others. In orality, the first draft is usually the final draft, but writing is both permanence and change. The fundamental fact in human life is the one-way flow of time. None of us can turn back the clock, no matter how hard we wish. But writing, by spatializing data, makes it possible to play with the time-axis. We can read backwards or forwards. We can jump from page 1 to page 271 or vice versa in a codex or from one spot of a scroll to another. Writing uses space to manipulate time. The symbolic realm is not subject to the thermodynamic drag of time. Writing was humanity’s first technical means of reversing the flow of time, and its first technique of time-axis manipulation (Krämer, 2006; Winkler, 2009).

I have argued that writing is a power technology; a means of preserving meaning; much more than simply an ancillary device for representing voice or speech; a technique that is both historically material and difficult to master; enormously diverse in its history, practice, and expression; a synthesis of visual and auditory modes of perception and of iconic and symbolic modes of signification; dependent on a complex integration of physical skills, including those of the head and hand; and, as a database manipulating spatial and temporal axes, the primordial medium. Writing is a technical means of using the eyes and hands to speak and hear across distances, of processing complex and massive arrays of data, of transforming space into time and time into space, and of giving us access to a realm beyond the sentence of

time's irreversible flow. Writing may seal our fate forever, but it also gives us a shield against time's arrow. What a strange practice! The literate spend hours immobilized with their texts, ignoring others and the immediate sensory world, subjecting their heart's desires to mysterious logics that come from afar. Signatures and decimal points send some to their deaths and make others enormously rich. Writing creates this strange alternate universe parallel to, and in some ways more real than, our own. Writing is indeed the *pharmakon* as Plato had Socrates call it, the cure and poison at once.

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Blogging the Third Wave?

Citizens' Media, Intimate Citizenship, and Everyday Life

Jenny Gunnarsson Payne

ABSTRACT

This essay seeks to address whether blogging can serve as a feminist tool, particularly as a form of practicing citizenship. More specifically, it asks whether feminist blogging contributes only to individualized forms of expression (based on the empowerment of single individuals) or whether blogging has a role in both the construction and endurance of collectivist forms of feminist politics. This essay begins by situating feminist blogging in a larger historical context of media production in the feminist movement. It then presents three different feminist blog projects in order to investigate the various ways in which these blogs practice what in recent literature is discussed in terms of “intimate citizenship.”

Is the blog a tool for young girls to take over an increasing part of public space? Is there a democratic and feminist potential in the increasing blogging phenomenon, or are blogs just another forum where young girls show themselves and others by way of a narrow representation of The Perfect Girl? What does girls' domination of the blog world tell us about our society – and what type of reactions do they provoke?¹
(<http://www.hogkvarteret.se/>)

The questions raised in the epigraph above were circulated as publicity for a panel debate entitled “The Blog – Young Girls' Way to Power?” that was held in April 2010

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies: Media Effects/Media Psychology, First Edition.

Edited by Angharad N. Valdivia and Erica Scharrer.

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at the queer feminist club Högkvarteret in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. The issues proposed for the public debate are of a piece with a broader tendency in recent scholarship that investigates the vast increase in female and feminist blogging activity. Generally, it has been argued that the activity of blogging possesses some inherently feminist qualities. Together with other forms of “cyberfeminist” practices, it has been said of blogs that they have the potential to cross boundaries – not only between nations and cultures, but also across the divisions separating the public from the private spheres, the institutional from the personal domains, civil from commercial society. When integrated in the everyday lives of still mainly young (and most often female) feminists, they offer a relatively accessible way of turning “the personal political” (Beetham & Valenti, 2007, pp. 2–3).

The most common type of blog – the diary-like “life log” – has been described as “a remarkable intersection between the traditionally feminine act of diary writing and the traditionally masculine environment of Information Communication Technologies,” or even as an “emasculatation” or a “re-gendering” of this domain (Doorn, van Zoonen, & Wyatt, 2007, p. 147). Yet others have dismissed blogs as a vehicle for feminist politics on the grounds that they offer little more than individualized forms of expression, failing to provide a sustainable form of movement media. Quoted in the British *Guardian* newspaper, sociologist Nina Wakeford expresses apprehension about the place of blogs in the feminist movement. While she concedes that blogs might be useful as a tool to spark debates, she further claims that their function in activism harbors obscurity:

In the past, there was a clear role for women’s organizations as regards representations to government, but I’m not sure whether women can affect public policy through blogging. Just who are they representing? (Cochrane, 2006)

Notably, the apparent ambiguity regarding blogging in terms of its feminist potential has a striking affinity with previous debates regarding the late modern phenomenon of “postfeminism.” Postfeminism is an ambiguous term that has come to accommodate a wide range of meanings, describing everything from a feminist backlash to so-called contemporary “third-wave feminism.” The cultural theorist Angela McRobbie (2009) has extended and reformulated the notion of postfeminism, arguing that what the term captures is not so much a simple conservative backlash discourse as a way of affirming feminism on the one hand, while, on the other, “installing a whole new repertoire of meaning” that speaks more about how the goals of feminism have already been achieved, thus making feminism seem obsolete and old-fashioned (McRobbie, 2004, p. 259). It is McRobbie’s understanding of postfeminism that I shall employ in the argument being developed in this chapter.

Postfeminism, McRobbie argues, is an antifeminist cultural trend, where feminism has been “taken into account” but only for its obsolescence to be proven (2009, p. 130).² The postfeminist trend is, on this reading at least, inextricably linked to larger neoliberal political processes in which gender politics has been “disarticulated,”³ uncoupled from

previous political alliances made by the second wave of feminist struggle. Such disarticulation, McRobbie argues, explains how many feminist gains – achieved over the last three decades – are currently being eroded in the name of “modernization.” This “modernization” resembles a logic of “undoing,” undermining previous feminist alliances between both women and various political struggles (McRobbie, 2009, pp. 24–26). Gender issues become reformulated mainly in terms of simplistic notions of individual liberty, reducing freedom to professional and consumer choices (cf. Tasker & Negra, 2007, p. 2). It is worth pondering the specific relation between postfeminism as a way of describing the present situation and the recent explosion of girls and women engaged in blogging – not least considering the popularity of vastly consumer-oriented fashion, makeup, and dieting blogs (including so-called pro-anorexia, or “pro-Ana,” blogs). We need to interrogate whether the term postfeminism is an apposite way to designate the present horizon within which feminism is operating.

Already in the aforementioned *Guardian* article from 2006, the total number of feminist blogs was estimated at 240,000 (Cochrane, 2006; see also Beetham & Valenti, 2007). In contemporary Sweden, where the vast majority of the population has Internet access and the “digital divide” between men and women is now statistically insignificant, recent published data show that the majority of Swedish bloggers are young women; in fact, while only 8% of Swedish Internet users (and 6% of the general population) over the age of 12 are active as bloggers, blogging is rapidly increasing amongst girls and young women. As of 2010, the majority of females between 12 and 25 (and two-thirds of women between 16 and 25) either are active as bloggers or have previous experience of blogging themselves – and as many as 93% of girls between the age of 12 and 15, and 78% of women between the age of 16 and 25, are reading other people’s blogs (Findahl, 2010, p. 47). In the face of such empirical evidence, a number of critical questions ought to be raised. Is this rapid increase of girls’ and women’s blogging merely an extension of such general post-feminist developments? Can blogging at all serve as a feminist tool? More specifically, is feminist blogging contributing only to individualized forms of expression, based on the empowerment of single individuals, or does the weblog have a role in both the construction and endurance of collectivist forms of feminist politics?

It is hoped that this chapter will go some way toward responding to these questions by approaching the phenomenon of feminist blogging as a form of practicing citizenship. I shall do so first by situating feminist blogging within a larger historical context of media production in the feminist movement. This will be achieved by thinking of the particular forms by which feminist media have been produced within each of the “three waves of feminism.”⁴ From here I wish to argue that feminist media production can be thought of as a form of *citizens’ media*. Thereafter, I shall present three different feminist blog projects, investigating the various ways in which these blogs practice what in recent literature is discussed in terms of “intimate citizenship” (cf. Plummer, 2003) – a conceptualization of citizenship that I take to embody the multifarious meanings of “intimate,” including not only connotations of the body and of sexuality, but also in terms of “private,” “personal,” and “close.”

From Suffrage to Blogging: Generations of Feminist Media

While presently feminist blogging can be understood as a very “timely” and novel phenomenon, feminists using and making their own media have been a constituent part of the history of the women’s movement (cf. Steiner, 1992).⁵ First, I shall begin by establishing that feminist media have historically been a crucial means for feminist struggle to achieving citizenship.⁶ It should be quite easy to see that for the first-wave feminists, media such as newsletters, pamphlets, and posters served unequivocally as an important means by which to argue for formal citizenship rights. Consider, for example, the ways in which both the suffragist and antislavery activist Sojourner Truth (born Isabella Baumfree) sold photographs – so-called *cartes de visite* – of herself as a means to both disseminate her politics and to support herself financially (Irvin Painter, 1994), or how her fellow suffragists in the United States, as well as many other countries, devotedly produced not only their own press, but also other forms of media such as cartoons, postcards, and posters as a crucial way to argue for equal rights and to facilitate political mobilization (cf. Di Cenzo, 2003; Di Cenzo & Ryan, 2007; Perry, 1994).

Equally, media production played a significant role during the second wave of feminism, which in the spirit of 1968 published titles such as the US news journal *Off Our Backs* (since 1970), UK magazine *Spare Rib* (1972–1993), and the later UK internationalist feminist newspaper *Outwrite* (1982–1988). The Norwegian radio station *RadiOrakel* (ongoing since 1982), self-proclaimed as the world’s first ever feminist radio station, the German magazine *Emma* (since 1977), and numerous Swedish feminist bulletins (e.g., *Amazon*, *Lilith*) all began during the 1970s and 1980s.⁷ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a new generation of feminists turned to self-publication, perhaps most notably as part of the rise of what in the Anglo-Saxon context is referred to as “the grrrl zine revolution” (Green & Taormino, 1997, p. xxi): a growing number of girls and women who began to produce their own do-it-yourself media in the form of “zines”⁸ – small, non-, or anticommercial DIY publications that are generally produced and distributed by a single individual or small editorial collective (cf. Duncombe, 1997).⁹ In Sweden, feminist zines started to circulate some years later than their English-language counterparts. While it should be noted that not all these zines explicitly expressed sympathies with the Anglo-Saxon zine network, they had in common with their “grrrl zine” peers a strong commitment to the characteristic DIY ethos of zine culture, as well as the tendency to speak with a personal voice about topics such as politics, popular culture, music, media, sexuality, and feminist issues.

Since the 1990s, technological developments have facilitated the distribution of paper zines – for example, by email communication, spreading information on listservs, and the occurrence of online “distros,” which make available a larger number of zines for sale. In addition, many zines have launched their own websites. For some of the feminist zines, new and accessible computer technologies have meant new opportunities to produce very professional-looking media products, while cheaper

digital (offset) printing methods have increased this development further by pushing down printing expenses. Alongside these developments, both in Sweden and internationally, a number of ezines were established with titles such as *Darling*, *Corky* (Sweden), *Geekgirl* (AUS), *gURL* (US), and *The F-Word* (UK), especially between the late 1990s and the early 2000s (Armstrong, 2004; Ladendorf, 2004). Subsequently, as Web 2.0 technologies have developed, many ezines have been replaced by the more user-friendly and interactive blog, a so-called “push-button publishing tool” that has often taken the form of a frequently updated online diary (Schilt & Zobl, 2007).

This brief exposé of feminist media production during the three waves of feminism not only reflects changes in the women’s movement’s political priorities over three centuries but also draws attention to some central technological developments, each of which have had a significant influence on the material conditions under which feminists have produced their media. Feminist movement media have largely been framed by three major technological “revolutions”: the printing press, the copying machine, and the digital revolution (including the personal computer and the Internet). Though care should be taken to avoid the suggestion of any technological determinism, it is worth noting that each of the aforementioned technological developments has had a profound impact on the conditions of possibility for the production of feminist movement media in different historical contexts.

These technological developments have offered new possibilities for feminist self-publication. While feminists of the first wave were largely dependent on the printing press, the media strategies of second-wave feminists also included the cheaper and more accessible photocopier, which allowed quick and inexpensive reproduction and subsequently came to play such a crucial part in the circulation of zines in third-wave feminism. This technological shift vastly increased the possibilities for feminists to begin producing media at home, without having access either to substantial financial resources or to technological expertise. This development has prospered even further in the wake of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), which have facilitated self-publication for anyone with access to a home PC, basic computer skills, and an Internet connection. Hence, feminist media production of the third wave exists in a partially individualized and personalized mediascape that has made social media such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, and blogs an integrated feature of many people’s everyday lives. With this in mind, we now turn to a discussion of what kind of politics is possible within the context of feminist blogging.

Feminist Media as Citizens’ Media

While it is obvious, as previously mentioned, to understand the first wave of feminism as being concerned with citizenship, I shall argue that it is fruitful to investigate contemporary feminist media production through the lens of citizenship too – even if the modes of feminist media discussed in this chapter have emerged at a time and in a place where women’s *formal* citizenship rights have long been established. In doing so,

I am positioning my research within a theoretical tendency that reflects a recent shift of emphasis within critical citizenship studies, where scholars have gone from regarding citizenship merely as a legal status to calling attention to practices (such as routines, customs, norms, and everyday habits) of *making* citizenship. In short, this shift entails an analytical distinction between *formal* citizenship (i.e., citizenship as status) and *substantive* citizenship (i.e., citizenship as practice), and where the latter is understood as constitutive of the former (Isin, 2008). For the feminist movement, this means that it has developed over an extensive period of time through a plethora of diverse “citizenship practices,” such as theater, music, arts, and crafts, festivals, manifestations, meetings, networks – and, of course, media production (cf. Isin, 2008, pp. 17–18).

In similar terms, Clemencia Rodriguez (2001) has formulated a notion of *citizens’ media* that builds on the political theories of Kirstie McClure and Chantal Mouffe, both of which provide a far-reaching understanding of “the political,” an understanding that includes not only “juridical demands upon the state” but also a “quotidian politics – a politics which extends the terrain of political contestation to the everyday enactment of social practices and the routine reiteration of cultural representations” (McClure, 1992, p. 123). Rodriguez convincingly argues that citizens’ media have the capacity to actively transform the hegemonic mediascape by challenging social codes, legitimized identities, and institutionalized social relations and to empower “the community involved” (2001, p. 20). With a frequent use of everyday narratives and personal voice, contemporary feminist media (such as zines and blogs) can be said to embrace precisely this “quotidian” dimension of politics – even though their “politicizing of the personal” has not always been recognized as political. As others have pointed out, however, both off- and online media function as a way of sharing information, of building and of politicizing a community or network of girls and women (Harris, 2007, p. 46). New information and communication technologies have resulted in new and previously unanticipated social change that has afforded a new generation of Internet-savvy feminists to integrate online activities into their activism as well as their everyday lives (Aragon, 2008, p. 73).

As this chapter hopes to go some way to demonstrate, feminist blogging can, and indeed does, function as a form of practicing “substantive” citizenship – or, in other terms, as a form of citizens’ media. In doing so, it not only helps to build feminist networks and collective identities, but also it contributes to a redescription of gendered identities, behaviors, and regimes in novel ways, thereby putting what are generally understood predominantly as private, individual, and intimate problems on the political agenda.

“Bear Breasts”: Blogging and Collective Action

In early November 2007, the online version of the magazine *Ottar* (published by the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, RFSU) announced that there was a

“new feminist wave of bare-breast actions” in public swimming pools. The event that precipitated a swathe of political activity occurred just a month earlier, in the university town of Uppsala. Two students, Ragnhild and Kristin Karlsson, had been expelled from the Fyrishof public swimming pool for public indecency; both had refused to cover their breasts whilst swimming. After this initial event, the expelled women made an official complaint to the Equal Opportunity Ombudsman (JämO) and published an opinion piece in the leading newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (September 18, 2007). The complaint was rejected on the basis of insurmountable norms surrounding male and female bodies in contemporary society, where the situation of swimming topless is not comparable between the sexes. This, then, would justify the different treatment of men and women in this instance. Contemporary regulations regarding the selling of services and goods are such that in some cases it is permissible for women and men to be treated differently. Matters of “decency” would constitute one such example.

Shortly after this public debate, similar events were organized in swimming pools across Sweden. Again, the result was often the same: the expulsion of women from the venue. Responsible for this chain of events was the network *Bara Bröst*, a movement initiated by a group of women in southern Sweden sympathetic to Ragnhild and Kristin Karlsson. This, in turn, led to significant media attention in local and national Swedish media – but also in international papers such as the *Brisbane Times* and the *Washington Post*. That these events garnered much attention might not be surprising, given their typically “media-friendly” topic and provocative direct actions – but why, one may ask, did this issue so swiftly translate into a national feminist campaign? The following explanation is given on the *Bara Bröst* blog:

At first sight many think that this is a small issue that does not matter very much. But we ask you to think twice: Which structures does today’s law support? By using vague ideas such as “decency” and “current norms,” one makes it possible to cement destructive norms and modes of thoughts. [...] It takes courage by those girls who want to be part of breaking these attitudes, and to us this is an important issue about whose side the law is on. (February 14, 2007)

Importantly, the goal of the network ought not to be understood in terms of an issue of sexual liberalism, at least not in the first instance. Rather, the very purpose was to “provoke debate about the unwritten social and cultural rules that sexualize and discriminate the female body.” *Bara Bröst* claims that female breasts are not part of female genitals and therefore ought not to be treated as such. The blog itself serves as a rather straightforward means of informing people about their activities and principles, mobilizing supporters and participants for their campaign – which is clearly aimed at the Swedish government.

This focus placed on the government as the main target of the campaign transpires not only through the articulation of a specific demand seeking to challenge a specific law, but also in the range of political strategies in which the network is engaged,

where politics is defined in terms of lobbying one's elected members of parliament. One such example is a blog entry that contains a prewritten letter that readers are encouraged to reuse and send to Swedish MPs and local municipalities responsible for public swimming pools. Another is the traditional use of petitions. As the quote from the blog reveals, the aim is to shed light on and to challenge the ways in which what we can call gender "regimes" are reproduced in part by the governing bodies of the nation-state. In this manner, this very specific one-issue campaign and related direct actions link the seemingly banal question of swimming topless with fundamental sociocultural norms. What this campaign was capable of showing was the contingent nature of what are otherwise regarded as sedimented everyday practices, and how such practices are upheld by both public policy in particular, and by the law in general. Whilst the direct actions themselves perform a break with naturalized conventions, the blog serves to inform both supporters and "the generally interested public" about latest developments and future actions, as well as seeking to gain new supporters for its campaign. In this regard, the blog functions as a space where the action can be explained and its case argued for.

However, in addition, *Bara Bröst* uses the blog's possibilities for reader's comments, available as part of the blog tool, so that supporters (as well as opponents) can have their say on the issue. A blog entry entitled "Why does Sweden need a stronger discrimination law?," for example, initiated a debate that included as many as 207 readers' comments, expressing everything from encouragement – general comments of support – to harsh criticisms, misunderstandings, and even sexist remarks and disturbing threats. Many of the discussions generated on the blog used argumentation based on personal preferences and feelings as well as logical reasoning for and against topless-friendly swimming pools. Others, however, resorted to aggressive antifeminist comments, to which supporters then responded. The following is an example posted by two opponents:

Posted by: Ronny

So why should you be allowed to walk around at swimming pools and show your breasts? It is sick! Think of the kids. Fucking feminism [...] Shame on you! (April 2, 2008)

Posted by: Feminist hater

I will [strong language] seek for all the names on the list and give you a fat slap with a base ball tree [sic!]. (April 2, 2008)

While this type of exchange might be described as far removed from what we normally would wish from a "democratic debate," the choice not to moderate even such comments reveals the conflicts surrounding this issue, and therefore extends the function of this space beyond traditional political campaigning. Hence, it is clear that *Bara Bröst* is not only "sparking debates" in the mainstream media, it is also creating

an unusually inclusive space for political discussion – and, as such, constitutes one of the few public forums in which antifeminist remarks such as the above can be directly responded to by the people who are themselves subjected to such comments.

The crucial question remains, however: can these strategies be said to entail more profound societal changes beyond a few provocative newspaper headlines, outside of the blogosphere? It should be noted that, despite activists initially being expelled, the campaign did have a few successes, which were reported on the blog, with public swimming pools allowing topless women to swim on their premises. Moreover, the movement spread across the sea to Denmark, where, after similar direct action, the swimming pool in Vesterbro announced that topless swimming would be allowed during specified hours.

Importantly, the case of the *Bara Bröst* blog shows that feminist blogging can do more than merely spread information and “spark debates.” The feminist blogosphere should not be regarded as a sphere divorced from real-life feminist activism. On the contrary, the weblog can serve an important function in providing a meeting space that facilitates collective political mobilization and the creation of activist networks. The *Bara Bröst* blog is an example of how, at first glance, what might be understood as a simple case of single-issue politics need not necessarily be a question of the kind of feminist disarticulation of which McRobbie speaks, but should, rather, be understood in terms of active construction, that is to say, a *rearticulation* of feminist politics. As is the case with much contemporary feminism (in Sweden and beyond), the *Bara Bröst* network offers such an example.

While the *Bara Bröst* blog constitutes an example of how the blog tool can indeed be used as an integral part of a feminist activism that is practicing citizenship in more “traditional” forms such as political debating, direct action, and petitions, we now turn to the politics of the feminist “life log.” As Findahl reports, in 2009, 64% of all Swedish blogs were such diary-like “life logs,” consisting of personal micro-stories of everyday life; 26% had a specialized content (such as a hobby or special interest), 6% focused on work life, and another 6% were political blogs (2009, p. 33). While it is difficult to categorize feminist blogs (where, as we know, “the personal is political”) into either of these subsets, my research shows that a *majority* of contemporary Swedish feminist blogs contain strong elements of diary writing. As we shall see, this more prototypical diary-like format would offer a space to practice intimate citizenship not only in the “sexual,” or “bodily,” sense of the term, but also in the sense of the “personal” and the “private.” In order to explore this further, let us turn to the blogs of *Hanna Fridén: Feminist, Aesthetic Style Fascist* and *Linna: Write – Exercise – Talkative – Private*. Judging by the fact that both of these blogs bear the names of their respective authors, the way in which the prototypical diary format is followed would suggest that here we are encountering precisely such individualized and person-oriented media. But does this initial impression hold on a closer reading? In order to deepen our understanding of the significance of feminist blogging as a form of citizens’ media, I shall place emphasis on its importance for practicing what in recent years has been termed “intimate citizenship.”

Consciousness-Raising 2.0? Blogging against Anorexia

Operating under the slogan “80s child with a superhero complex. Saving the world, one PMT at a time,” the blogging persona of Hanna Fridén is represented as an empowered and strong young woman, whose fashion interests and meticulous detailing of her daily activities have attracted a dedicated readership. Similar to many other contemporary blogs by young women, her blog takes the shape of a “life log,” an online diary, as well as containing elements of a fashion blog. “Outfit of the day,” consisting of photographs of the author and comments on her chosen style, is a recurring feature on Fridén’s blog; in this way, it functions as part of the wider phenomenon of the fashion blog – a phenomenon that recently has increased enormously amongst young girls in Sweden and has had a significant impact outside of the blogosphere in the mainstream media. The most prevalent feature, however, is Fridén’s diary remarks, which readers are able to follow and have the opportunity to comment on. The diary presents Fridén’s daily travails as a fairly well-known media personality (with a history as illustrator, professional blogger, journalist, and television show host for the youth television channel ZTV on her curriculum). Adventures range from her first experience of flying, to photographs of social events she has taken part in, to intimate matters such as her previous struggles with an eating disorder and toilet problems. When granted little more than the briefest of looks, this highly personal “life log” appears to match the description of a feminist individualization, not least because of its representations of Fridén as a young, “twenty-something,” successful, and stylish media personality. Does Fridén, therefore, offer an example of a post-emancipated woman – someone who, while overtly embracing feminism and its goals, no longer needs it? Is it true that there is no explicit political agenda that Fridén follows?

Although the entries on the theme of party politics increased somewhat from the time of the Swedish general election in 2010, this is by no means a clear-cut political blog in the traditional sense of the word. Only reluctantly does Fridén admit that if she has to choose, “it has to be the Social Democrats” – and when politics is mentioned, it is often invoked by way of precisely the kind of “single-issue politics” that could easily be interpreted as a disarticulation of feminism from other political movements.

For all of the above reasons, the blog could be understood as part of the larger postfeminist trend of women’s issues and inequalities being “disarticulated” from the very political movements (such as the socialist movement) to which they have previously been linked. In one of the blog entries entitled “I detest party politics,” an explanation for its absence is offered. However, the reader discovers that such a “disarticulation” between women’s issues and politics is not something that is valid for her “offline life”:

I do not like discussing party politics here on the blog. As you have noticed, I do for the most part speak of single issues and specific societal problems. I am not uninterested in party politics, I discuss it on a daily basis in real life, mainly with regards to jobs and Swedish welfare, but on the Internet I only ever get frustrated when I write about it. Now, I have to blame myself a little bit, because I only do it when I am pissed off and perhaps it is not properly expressed. But still. (April 15, 2010)

So what happens if one takes a closer look at Fridén's writings? I think it soon becomes clear that her rather low profile on the particular issue of party politics does not mean that her blog is devoid of political engagement. Alongside the personal remarks and outfits of the day, a strong engagement in the issues of current beauty ideals and their connection to eating disorders amongst women is articulated.

Having recovered from anorexia herself, Fridén has devoted much effort to informing others about the current situation of systematic undereating amongst young girls, not least through her appearances in the mainstream media such as on Swedish state television (SVT) and in the tabloid newspaper *Aftonbladet*. In *Aftonbladet*, where she is invited to discuss the contemporary blog debates, she expresses disappointment with developments not only in society at large, but also in the blogosphere (Swedenmark, 2009). She explains how she previously had great hopes that the blogging of "ordinary" girls would counteract the unhealthy beauty ideals represented in the mainstream media, and adds that she thinks the effect has been quite the opposite: "When blogs began to gain attention I was hoping for a change, as the girls who were blogging were normal, not just skinny. But instead [of the beauty ideal changing] they [the blogging girls] lost weight" (Swedenmark, 2009). Further, she criticizes other famous bloggers for discussing weight and diets and claims that such online behavior seriously undermines information work on eating disorders. This emphasis on Fridén's personhood should not, however, be understood as the final destination for her media practice. Rather, it serves as a stepping stone toward more collective processes, similar to the consciousness-raising activities of previous ways of doing feminism. It is a virtual collectivity, however, that occurs in the comments field of her many blog entries on the theme of eating disorders.

In one of her many blog entries on this theme – for example, "Wake up, State, a whole generation of girls are starving to death!!" – Fridén raises strong criticisms against the Swedish state for ignoring the problem of a growing number of self-starving young girls:

I cannot understand why the state does not regard this more seriously than they do. I cannot understand why they do not give more money to [support the care of people with eating disorders] and to the education of people within schools [and similar sectors] so that they can learn to recognize the signals [i.e., symptoms]. The Swedish National Institute of Public Health has publicized figures that prove that underweight amongst girls aged 15–24 is a serious problem – and continuously increasing. But absolutely nothing is happening. (September 22, 2009)

She continues by criticizing the state for supporting the national fashion industry financially, despite the industry's maintaining the same unhealthy skinny ideals as the international fashion scene, and for its decision to make the diet pill Allí freely available over the counter. Fridén announces: "The party who will take these issues seriously, I will vote for in the next election. [...] This is not a marginal issue or any such shit, it's one of the absolutely most important issues of today." Although some comments remind the author and readers that a *svelte* figure is not necessarily a sign of anorexia, the vast majority of comments are supportive, either simply thanking her, or sharing personal experience of their own, a friend's or a relative's eating disorder, or contributing information such as links to organizations and support centers where those suffering from eating disorders can turn. One comment informs readers that the aforementioned dieting pill has an 18-year age limit, though it is countered by Fridén's claim that the rule is not followed in practice. Another comment simply states that: "You are so bloody right! I am with you! All the way!" Many others show their support by hyperlinking from their own blogs, encouraging others to do the same.

As others have argued before me, virtual spaces like this can, and indeed do, function as a form of consciousness-raising activity, not unlike feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s and 1970s (Kennedy, 2007; Wood, 2008). Tracy L.M. Kennedy argues, for example, that "As early feminists recognized, telling stories is often only the beginning of a larger feminist process of engaging collectively to pursue social reform" (2007, n.p.), and she continues to argue that blogging offers precisely such opportunities today (Kennedy, 2007). Although there are some similarities between consciousness-raising practices, the crucial differences from the consciousness-raising of the second wave ought not to be ignored, since they carry particular significance for the ways in which we can understand contemporary feminist practices on their own terms. For what differentiates much consciousness-raising activities of second-wave feminism is that while personal storytelling was used, a shared female experience was generally presupposed, constituting something of a master-narrative, that is to say, a unitary understanding of a universal experience of living as a woman in a patriarchal society.

Third-wave feminism is generally understood to pursue a more "anti-essentialist" political agenda, placing a stronger emphasis on diversity. On this basis, third-wave feminism has signified a feminist generation that has been accused of being overtly individualist and lifestyle-oriented, and of lacking any significant political agenda (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004; Siegel, 1997). It has, in other words, often been understood as "postfeminist," in the above meaning of the term. But while many available blogs (such as the vast number of contemporary fashion blogs) could indeed be labeled as postfeminist, this is no grounds for judging blogging as a feminist tool *per se*. While the rise of "the feminist blogger" may seem like an explosion of individual narratives without any unified political program, this tendency should be placed within the more general late modern *Zeitgeist* in which precisely such practices of "storytelling" operate as a central tactic to enact what sociologist Ken Plummer

(2003) has baptized “intimate citizenship.” In late modernity, Plummer argues, there is an absence of metanarratives. Late modern society is characterized by rapid changes in our personal lives across the globe (most notably in the Western industrialized world). Concomitantly, this has led to an increasing number of activities demanding existential decisions at the most intimate level: “from test tube babies and cybersex to lesbian and gay marriages and families and single parenting” (Plummer, 2003, p. x). This has opened up a new space for an increased production of “micro-narratives” of everyday experiences. Precisely such intimate stories constitute a main feature of feminist blogs. An interesting case, worthy of further exploration in relation to the connection between online activity and feminist politics, is the weblog of Linna Johansson, who has, amongst other things, written about the vicissitudes of childrearing and familial experience.

Micro-Narratives of Motherhood: Politicizing Childbirth and Breastfeeding

It never became that second, easier birth. It was approximately like the last one: weepy, laborious, bloody awful, and, I guess, quite ordinary. [...] I find labor completely superfluous. Not cool, not fantastic, just painful, so painful that I first have to digest the fact that I have actually survived before I want to hold my child in my arms. I was sitting on the bunk for nearly an hour. Crying quietly. My hair was unbelievably tangled, divided into thick, wet sausages, like dreadlocks. Despite the double layer of blankets I was freezing so that I was shivering. The cold and the pungent blankets threw me back to an interrail trip and the border control somewhere between two Eastern countries – Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary maybe? – darkness, dogs on tight leashes, foreign language. (July 7, 2009)

The birth story told by Linna Johansson is “only” a single individual’s experience of labor; it does not make any claims on the “truth” about childbirth. Yet I would argue that it constitutes a powerful counternarrative that “talks back” to popular stereotypes of the process of labor as “natural,” “beautiful,” and “miraculous.” In Johansson’s story, childbirth is, instead, described as a painful, ugly, and fully expendable experience. She writes about the aftermath of childbirth in terms of what can perhaps best be described as austerity and alienation, a feeling of non-belonging; the narrative certainly does not describe the well-rehearsed cultural image of the new mother who in an instant forgets the pain of labor as she holds her newborn baby in her arms for the very first time.

Johansson’s story does not end here. It develops into a longer counternarrative about life with a young baby. Here another cultural stereotype of motherhood is contradicted, as the story from the maternity ward continues:

Just as I was about to gather myself together another midwife entered to tidy up. Shoulders pulled up, stiff upper lip – I guessed the indignant question several minutes before she finally got it out: “Now I have to ask . . . – *why do you not want to breastfeed . . . !*” I took a deep breath, and I was crying inside over the fact that I, in this broken state, would have to *debate*. Then I hear [the father] from his corner – I had forgotten about him, the baby – tell her to leave us alone. Something in this scene, how she limps out, [the father] with the bundle in his arm and a glance – mild, fragile and very grown up at the same time – makes me realize that it is over, now it is actually over. (July 7, 2009)

Despite not adding any of her own meta-analysis to this particular story, this micro-narrative has to be understood in its wider context as part of an ongoing struggle for intimate citizenship, in terms of both a longer struggle Johansson has undertaken in the public domain since the birth of her first child and a larger cultural struggle over the issue of breastfeeding. Johansson’s position is that it is a woman’s inalienable right to choose whether or not she wants to breastfeed her children. This is presented by way of highly individualized stories.

In Sweden, where the practice of breastfeeding is comparatively high in international comparisons – 97% of newborns and 67% of 6-month-old children are fully or partially breastfed (Socialstyrelsen, 2010, p. 8) – opposing voices are barely audible. And even though there are occasional debates in the mainstream media about breastfeeding – whether, for example, it should take place in public or not – breastfeeding nonetheless constitutes a sedimented and unquestioned “good.” As such, Johansson’s repeated micro-stories have broken a taboo regarding breastfeeding, opening up a larger debate on the issue. In one of Johansson’s many blog entries, readers have made the following comments:

It is so nice to read what you write. Those thoughts were mine too, but I never went all the way, I am far too afraid of conflict. Haha, you should be blogging at Mama [a parenting magazine], something like this would be needed there, you can’t deviate too much from peer pressure there. (Comment posted June 15, 2009)

Each and everyone has to decide [for themselves] and your midwife is STUPID. I have encouraged several sad friends to stop breastfeeding when they haven’t wanted to or it hasn’t worked [...] Despite this, I have to be honest; I would rather have lost my left arm than miss out on breastfeeding. I have been a lazy mum; jiggle around with bottles when you are going out or at night – *never*. (Comment posted June 15, 2009)

Notably, neither of these comments advocates a single determined position on the issue. Both agree on a woman’s right to choose. Though the odd exception does exist, the opponent in the general discussion is not women who choose differently from the writer but, rather, the medical establishment – most often represented by midwives – which is said to steer the choices mothers make, either persuading parents to complement breastfeeding with formula against their will, or the opposite. Clearly, not all comments support Johansson and her choice. Some commentators try to

encourage her to “at least try,” while others accuse her of being selfish in her decision not to breastfeed. Nevertheless, it is striking how much emphasis is made in the comments on a felt normativity in meetings with medical establishment representatives (most notably midwives). As one commentator explains:

I have never been able to put my finger on it before, but the meeting with [the maternity and the infant clinics] is like reliving [my] relationships with adults during my school days. One was completely omitted from these authorities. (Comment posted June 15, 2009)

As this example goes some way to demonstrate, the emphasis on the “everyday” makes the weblog both a production and a reproduction of contemporary rearticulations of some of our most intimate experiences – here exemplified by individual experiences of childbirth and breastfeeding – but it also showcases how the blog in this case becomes a privileged site for practicing intimate citizenship. In keeping with Elzbieta Oleksy’s conceptualization of intimate citizenship, Linna Johansson’s micro-narrative exemplifies not only how our private decisions and practices in late modern society have become “intertwined with public institutions and state policies such as public discourse on sexuality, legal codes, medical system, family policy and the media” (Oleksy, 2009, p. 4), but also how the blog offers a platform from which, through the practice of everyday storytelling, citizens can challenge dominant regimes, policies, and practices concerning their intimate and quotidian experiences, helping to construct thereby virtual networks of solidarity.

Blogging Citizenship – Doing Feminism: Concluding Remarks

As this chapter has demonstrated, feminist media production has continued to thrive throughout what has commonly been referred to as the third wave of feminism. Although there is no general consensus about what exactly characterizes this third wave, it is usually defined on the grounds of generation, ideology, and/or historical context (Henry, 2004). As political theorist Jonathan Dean writes, “there is a perception that [the third wave] share(d) a certain commitment to openness, diversity and plurality that was perceived to be lacking in many dominant strands of second-wave feminism” (2009, p. 336). The attempts to characterize this third wave on the basis of historical or generational perspectives have often emphasized how this age cohort of younger feminists (born during the 1970s or after) has grown up in precisely the kind of postfeminist milieu that McRobbie describes as one in which feminism is simultaneously affirmed and denounced, that is, described as something that once was important but now has played out its role. As such, this “new” generation has

been said to “live feminism in constant tension with postfeminism, though such a tension often goes unnoticed as such” (Kinser, 2004, p. 133) – something that is telling in both the oft-repeated conflation between postfeminism and third-wave feminism and the skepticism shown toward the practice of blogging, a skepticism expressed in the question: “Just who *are* they representing?”

In order to provide an answer to that question, we need first to acknowledge that the recent and rapid expansion of the Internet and new ICTs have meant that one can no longer equate feminism on the Internet with a specific “cyberfeminism.” Rather, the Internet has become an important domain for political activity for all strands of feminism. Second, we need to consider the ways in which the Internet has expanded the possibilities for production of “late modern” feminist micro-narratives – as both a continuation of the feminist tradition of feminist consciousness-raising *and* as a way to challenge the very principles of a shared experience between women on which the practice of consciousness-raising has often relied. Instead of using personal narratives to find a “common truth,” feminist storytelling of the third wave is said to place a stronger emphasis on diversity and multiplicity in personal experiences of gendered relations and modes of identification. Third, it is important to note that, despite the current feminist emphasis on diversity, the micro-narrating that takes place through feminist blogging should be understood *neither* simply as an effect of individualist postfeminist commodification of “feminism via the figure of woman as empowered consumer” (Tasker & Negra, 2007, p. 2), *nor* as a number of disparate isolated individual “voices.” For unlike postfeminist appeals to consumerism as female empowerment, feminist bloggers are engaged not so much in a practice of *disarticulating* feminism as in a continuous process of *rearticulating* feminism and feminist issues. Instead of contributing to an *undoing* of feminism, feminist bloggers are involved in a continual process of *redoing*, both in the meaning of carrying on already established feminist struggles (such as a critique of beauty ideals, motherhood, and bodily autonomy), and in the sense of articulating new feminist issues (such as the right to swim topless in public swimming pools).

Although blogs to a much larger extent than most previous forms of feminist media (e.g., newsletters, bulletins, zines) are located within the vastly commercialized arena of the Internet – and hence at first glance might be more easily dismissed as part of a more general postfeminist trend – such a premature dismissal would risk blinding us to the ways in which blogs can function as citizens’ media by both collectively *and* individually contesting social codes, institutionalized gender relations, and legitimized gendered identities, as well as the potential for blogs to mobilize for offline political activism and formulate demands regarding their intimate lives against state regimes. Hence, while I would not go so far as to claim that blogging is an *inherently* feminist activity – and while its role for women’s organizations with regard to government representation might still, in many cases, be rather obscure – it can nonetheless be said that on the World Wide Web there exists a cohort of feminist bloggers representing a wide array of contemporary modes of being feminist – indeed, of doing feminism.

Acknowledgments

The work on this chapter was conducted mainly as part of my postdoctoral fellowship at the Department of Ethnology, Religion, and Gender Studies at Stockholm University (2009–2010), as well as during my previous time within the collaborative research project Feminist Media Production in Europe (funded by the Austrian Science Fund, project no. P21187-G20). In addition, I would particularly like to thank David Payne for his proofreading of my use of the English language, as well as his intellectual feedback on previous drafts of this chapter.

NOTES

- 1 All quotes from Swedish websites and blogs have been freely translated into English by the author.
- 2 Many thanks to Elke Zobl for recommending this text to me.
- 3 The process of disarticulation, in short, describes the counter-logic of political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's concept of *articulation*, which is a primitive political operator, capturing the basic mechanism by which various political struggles (women's movements, workers' movements, environmental movements and so on) build cross-over alliances, expanding their political horizon with other collective identities and social movements (1985, p. 110).
- 4 It should be noted that while the metaphor of the "three feminist waves" constitutes a popular and widespread way of describing the history of the feminist movement, it has also been criticized for obscuring the diversity within various strands of feminism and age cohorts of feminists, as well as for its overemphasis on the Anglo-Saxon and Western European contexts (cf. Graff, 2007; Hemmings, 2005).
- 5 In the Swedish context, this is an empirical fact that has recently been the subject of celebration. In 2009, Swedish women's magazines and journals celebrated their 150-year jubilee. The Women's History Collections (*Kvinnsam*) in Gothenburg have been exhibiting (both on- and offline) a variety of women's journals to mark the occasion, from *Tidskrift för hemmet* ("Journal for the Home") from 1858 to more recent titles such as the feminist zines of the 1990s and 2000s (*Radarka*, *Bleck*, *Tigerskott i brallan*) and the still extant magazines *Bang*, *Femkul* (currently entitled *FUL_*), and *Kvinnotryck* – as well as online variants such as queer ezine *Trikster*.
- 6 Bearing in mind its central role for the feminist movement already in the nineteenth century, when the so-called first-wave feminists began their struggle for citizenship rights, it is surprising how little has been written about both the history and the theory of feminist media production. The few exceptions to this general deficit have often focused predominantly on the very specific genres of feminist zines (also referred to as "grrrl zines," femzines, or feminist fanzines) (Zobl, 2004a, 2004b) and cyberfeminist practices (e.g., Kearney, 2006), and most often on the Anglo-Saxon context. Feminist scholars such as Jayne Armstrong, Red Chidgey, Mary-Celeste Kearney, Marion Leonard, and Elke Zobl have carried out important investigations into the international zine networks. These

- pioneering studies are now being complemented with examinations of zines from other parts of the world (e.g., Chidgey, 2009; Zobl, 2009).
- 7 More recent examples of feminist media production globally are the Nicaraguan feminist quarterly *La Boletina* (since 1991, also available online since 2005); the Iranian independent feminist journal *Zanan* (founded in 1991, banned in 2008); and the Croatian magazine *Kruh & Ruze* ("Bread and Roses," since 1993/1994).
 - 8 Although there is no set standard for what a feminist zine can look like, many are produced by simple techniques (handwritten or typed, cut-and-pasted collages, drawings, photocopies stapled by hand), while others have developed into more "glossy" magazine-like products (cf. Harris, 2007, p. 46).
 - 9 For more examples of feminist media, especially in the European context, see the online archive <http://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/>.

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From Second-Wave to Poststructuralist Feminism

Evolving Frameworks for Viewing Representations of Women's Sports

Marie Hardin and Erin Whiteside

ABSTRACT

In this essay, we trace the evolution of scholarship on media representations of women's sports. Introspection about our own work in this area has brought us to consider the potential of *third-wave/poststructuralist* feminism as a theoretical lens for our own critical inquiry into depictions of women's sports. We trace the trajectory of our work by first reviewing second-wave feminist critiques of representations of women in sport and the solutions stemming from those critiques. We then consider the development of our own research and the possibilities of a poststructuralist lens in that work, assessing how such a perspective might offer useful alternatives to standard, Gramscian-oriented critiques of the coverage of women's sports.

When *Sports Illustrated* presented skier Lindsey Vonn on the cover of its 2010 Olympics preview issue, some feminists roundly critiqued the picture. The photo, which depicted Vonn dressed in ski apparel but sans helmet, hair cascading down around her smiling face as she mimicked a ski crouch, was judged as the latest example of a problematic and ongoing trend of media outlets sexualizing and hyperfeminizing female athletes. Judging Vonn's image as a step backward for women's sports reflected the position of many influential sports feminists, most of whom work from a radical feminist standpoint. Radical sports feminists argue that the projection of femininity,

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies: Media Effects/Media Psychology, First Edition.

Edited by Angharad N. Valdivia and Erica Scharrer.

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including emphasis on a “hetero-sexy” image (Griffin, 1998, p. 75), in depictions of female athletes reinforces traditional gender roles. In doing so, it delegitimizes women’s sports and preserves sporting spaces as *male* spaces.

At the same time, however, others suggested that the cover represented a step forward for women’s sports, and, therefore, something that should be celebrated. *Sports Illustrated* almost exclusively puts men on its covers (Bishop, 2003), and by featuring Vonn, the magazine framed women’s skiing – and to a degree, women’s sports in general – as the focus of one of the biggest sporting showcases in existence. Vonn appeared in the magazine’s famous annual “swimsuit edition” a week later, which was also touted as positive for her, for the sport, for her Olympic team, and even for girls who aspired to follow Vonn (Russo, 2010). Vonn’s teammate, Kaylin Richardson, told a reporter, “‘For little girls, there’s something to see – a beautiful, athletic, strong, powerful, female body among all these real thin models in the magazine’” (Russo, 2010, para. 2).

The debate over the photos of Vonn is indicative of the quandary in which women’s sports advocates find themselves when considering depictions of female athletes in the sports/media complex.¹ Radical feminists, who are firmly entrenched in the movement’s “second wave,” read Vonn’s representation as oppressive – reinforcing traditional gender ideology that preserves a stifling status quo and reflects a dangerous practice in postfeminist discourse (Carty, 2005; Duncan, 1990). Ultimately, the disconnect between radical/second-wave feminists who work on behalf of women’s sports and the high-profile female athletes who insist that feminized/sexualized images are empowering has been a vexing issue for women’s sports advocates.

We suggest that an alternative lens for considering depictions of female athletes in the sports/media complex, however, lies in *third-wave/poststructuralist*² feminism. At the heart of the difference between traditional second-wave feminism and third-wave feminism, in short, is the way each approach conceptualizes *power* – its definition, its use, and its effect. Second-wave feminism, especially radical critiques (including our own), rely on a Gramscian lens, which explains the communication of ideology as purposive in that it naturalizes a power structure that is beneficial to certain groups and destructive to others (Altheide, 1984). Those in power often have unequal access to resources that facilitate the communication of dominant ideology. In sports media, that group is considered media companies, sports journalists, and editors, who serve as gatekeepers and thus play a critical role in deciding not only how much coverage to dedicate to women, but also how to present that coverage to the sports audience. Such a perspective on power has been both useful and limiting in explaining why women are so often marginalized from sports media and depicted in problematic ways. Those limitations have invited self-reflection on our part, as we have considered the prescriptions for change offered in our own work.³ That introspection has brought us to consider the potential of *third-wave/poststructuralist* feminism as a theoretical lens for our own critical inquiry into depictions of women’s sports. We trace the trajectory of our work by first reviewing second-wave feminist critiques of representations of women in sport and the solutions stemming from

those critiques. We then consider the development of our own research and the possibilities of a poststructuralist lens in that work, assessing how such a perspective might offer useful alternatives to standard, Gramscian-oriented critiques of the coverage of women's sports.

Hegemonic Masculinity and the Sports/Media Complex

In 1972, the US government passed Title IX of the Education Amendments, which afforded women equal opportunity and funding in sports at institutions receiving federal money. The law has been credited as the impetus behind an astounding growth in sports participation among women (Suggs, 2005). In 1968, for instance, roughly 16,000 women competed in varsity sports at the collegiate level. By 2010 that number had exploded to more than 180,000 (Carpenter & Acosta, 2010).

Given the huge participation numbers, second-wave feminists have critiqued the relative paucity of coverage in mainstream sports media and have also urged gatekeepers to make choices in media coverage that reflect an undeniable interest in women's sports. Yet, as the Vonn picture illustrates, advocating only for women's inclusion in sports media texts has its limits, and radical feminist scholars have advocated giving renewed attention not only to the *amount* of coverage female athletes receive, but also to the *type*; many images appeal to the sexual desires of men and, in doing so, trivialize the accomplishments of female athletes and stunt the growth of women's sports (Bernstein, 2002).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Implicit in these second-wave critiques is a conceptualization of power that is locatable in the hands of men and the institutions they control and expressed through the structures and practices of sports. Scholars have widely drawn from Gramsci's theory of hegemony to explain the ways male power functions in sports. Simply, hegemony is a process that reinforces certain norms and ideas to the benefit of society's most powerful groups. These "commonsense" assumptions thus normalize certain behavior or groups while making others seem unnatural or wrong (Altheide, 1984; Condit, 1994). Ultimately, hegemonic institutions such as education, government, religion, and media build a stratified society that most benefits the dominant group. Power, then, is held in the hands of a relative few and used to coerce the wider populace, including disenfranchised groups such as racial minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women, into compliance (Artz & Murphy, 2000).

As radical feminists have long argued, sport is one of many cultural institutions structured and maintained to benefit a powerful group – men. Thus, even seemingly

innocent displays should be interrogated as ideological practices with political and social implications. Creedon (1994, p. 5) offers an apt example:

At minimum, because professional football remains a male-only preserve, we learn that being male in our culture confers a degree of privilege. By denying women access to the game as players, we are taught that women are less qualified, powerful or physical than men.

Ultimately, prevailing value systems in sports privilege behavior and traits associated with mainstream notions of masculinity such as physicality and unrestrained competition, thus making women's participation appear unnatural (Duncan, 2006; Hargreaves, 1994). The consistent message reflects an ideology, or set of beliefs, that sports belong to men and should be protected as a space for celebrating masculinity.

Because sports traditionally have symbolized hegemonic masculinity, they have been positioned as incompatible with hegemonic femininity. Competitive sports are the purview of men; women who seek to participate in sports, then, are suspect (Griffin, 1998). Women's inclusion challenges the link between sports and masculinity, and when women do tread on so-called "male terrain," they face cultural penalties in the form of stigmatization for failing to conform to traditional gender roles (Kane & Parks, 1992).

The sports/media complex is a key site for reinforcing masculine hegemony in a highly visible, culturally powerful way. Mediated depictions of sport have been indicted as "bearers of masculine hegemony, an ideology or set of beliefs about the world that privileges men and disadvantages women" (Duncan, 2006, p. 231). For example, in sports talk radio, sexist discourse is used as a mechanism for male bonding and status building (Nylund, 2007). Positive and desired cultural values, such as hard work, persistence, leadership, and even heroism, are expressed as representations of masculinity in descriptions of male athletes (Denham & Duke, 2010). Other research has showed the ways mediated discourse trivializes women's sporting accomplishments, from overt sexual references to subtle comments that infantilize women and, by extension, their achievements (Duncan, 2006).

Sports Feminism

Hargreaves (1994) calls the collective effort to eradicate gender discrimination in sports "sports feminism," a movement that has gained momentum alongside the growth of second-wave feminism. Despite the growing number of women's sports advocates, "sports feminism" is not a unified theoretical perspective. Rather, Hargreaves (1994) characterizes it as loosely organized around the belief that women are subordinated through sporting practices and that male power must be contested in order to change these oppressive practices.

In assessing media practices, scholars have largely justified their critiques using liberal and/or radical feminist arguments. These feminist critiques are all part of what has been called feminism's "second wave," which can be understood in chronological terms as the women's rights movement that emerged after World War II and recognized women connected through oppression grounded in a common material reality (Lotz, 2003). Liberal and radical feminists differ in their prescriptions for change, but both, however, conceptualize power as held in the hands of men, exerted from the top down, and thus something that must be challenged (Hargreaves, 1994). According to second-wave feminists, that power has resulted in two persistent problems in sports media: (1) a general *lack* of women's sports coverage; and (2) a general *lack of quality* women's sports coverage.

Sports feminists have prioritized these issues differently. Feminists with a more liberal orientation, which advocates "equality" as an unproblematic concept, generally advocate for increased coverage of female athletes and use coverage of male athletes as the benchmark. On the other hand, radical feminists, who are concerned with how dominant ideology in sports marginalizes women, suggest that calling solely for increased coverage is inadequate. Instead, radical feminists advocate for challenging structural systems that invite problematic representations, such as presenting female athletes as sexualized objects for male consumption.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminist ideology characterizes the justification for Title IX (Hargreaves, 1994). The law, which mandates equal opportunity and funding for women, represents fundamental US values of equality and social justice, the cornerstones of liberalism. In advocating for fairness in access, the liberal feminist movement leaves the ideological terrain of sports untouched. Instead, liberal feminists take the value systems of sports as a given and advocate for women's inclusion within them.

In a similar way, women's sports advocates have called for fairness in sports representations (Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003). The Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) has been a leader in the liberal feminist movement, pointing out oftentimes gross inadequacies in coverage and pressuring sports media producers to include women's sports in their coverage. The WSF's efforts are a response to consistent trends in academic research that show women's low status in sports pages and broadcasts.

In general, although women's sports participation has exploded since the passage of Title IX, women are often marginalized or excluded from coverage. As gatekeepers, media producers have "continued to allot a disproportionately high amount of coverage to men's sports," a trend that research has shown to be consistent over time and medium (Messner et al., 2003, p. 48). Countless studies examining women's sports coverage have confirmed what is obvious from a casual glance through the sports pages: female athletes are routinely marginalized from coverage. The

marginalization spans the spectrum of media outlets from children's magazines (Cuneen & Sidwell, 1998; Duncan & Sayaovong, 1990; Lynn, Walsdorf, Hardin, & Hardin, 2002), daily newspapers (Eastman & Billings, 2000; George, Hartley, & Paris, 2001; Pedersen, 2003), sports magazines (Bishop, 2003; Lumpkin & Williams, 1991), and programming on ESPN and CNN (Eastman & Billings, 2000; Messner et al., 2003).

The late 2000s success of several female athletes and teams, including the University of Connecticut women's basketball program, has spurred a renewed debate about the lack of coverage given to female athletes. After the Huskies' first undefeated national championship season in 2009 – in which they won every game by at least 10 points but received little attention beyond the immediate Connecticut media market – one writer suggested that “one can only imagine the press coverage a men's player or team would receive in similar circumstances” (Trinkle, 2009). This comparison to men exemplifies the liberal feminist approach to equality and fairness.

Symbolic Marginalization

Scholars have historically used the term “symbolic annihilation” to describe women's lack of representation in media, a term first coined by Tuchman (1978). The concept has been applied to the similar observation in sports media; as a recent content analysis showed, women's sports receive just 1.6% of the overall airtime on local and national sports television programming, down from 6.3% in 2004 (Messner & Cooky, 2010). Scholars argue that the exclusion of women represents a failure to acknowledge their accomplishments and denies women's sports and female athletes full legitimacy in the sporting landscape (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Duncan, 2006; Eastman & Billings, 2000; George et al., 2001; Pedersen, 2003). This denial of coverage can be seen in Gramscian terms as a denial of power for female athletes; they are constructed as generally insignificant by their failure to secure visibility (Wright & Clarke, 1999).

From a liberal feminist perspective, various examples suggest fissures in the power structure. Since 2003, ESPN has aired all 63 games of the NCAA women's basketball tournament; in addition, the 2004 championship game was the second most-viewed basketball game – men or women, college or professional – in the network's history until that point (Rodgers, 2004). Various companies regularly use female athletes for advertising campaigns, and in 2003 Serena Williams signed a \$60 million contract with Nike (Carty, 2005). Regional sports networks such as the Big Ten Network (BTN) provide live coverage of a variety of women's sports. In the spring of 2010, BTN aired 22 live softball games, streamed another 29 online, and also broadcast the women's golf, rowing, tennis, and outdoor track conference championships (“Big Ten Network boosts,” 2010; “Big Ten Network to televise,” 2010).

These gains represent a move toward equity advocated by liberal feminists and reflect an advancement of women's sports from the complete “annihilation” in sports media described by scholars little more than 10 years ago (see, e.g., Duncan & Messner, 1998; Fink & Kensicki, 2002). Thus, it may be more useful to refer to

women's representation in sports media as "symbolic marginalization." The term accounts for the very real gains made by women's sports in securing (albeit limited) space in sports media discourse while also describing the cultural effect of the still low amount of coverage received by female athletes and teams.

Radical Feminism

The work of radical feminists has illustrated the limitations of advocating only for quantity in terms of women's sports coverage. When female athletes receive mediated attention, they are often depicted in ways that de-emphasize and trivialize their athletic accomplishments. For instance, scholars have described how in analyzing the exploits of female athletes, TV commentators compare them to male athletes; failure to make analogous assessments in reverse implies a male-as-universal-standard (Eastman & Billings, 2000; Kian, Vincent, & Mondello, 2008). Messner and colleagues (2003) found that televised in-depth features on women often include subtle sexual jokes and humorous commentary that invite viewers "to engage in sexual voyeurism" (p. 42). Other research has noted the ways women are infantilized in commentary and texts, such as through references to them as girls, by their first names, or monikers like "America's Sweetheart" (Duncan, 2006).

Women featured in sporting images often represent individual sports such as tennis or skiing rather than team sports such as basketball or softball. As Hardin, Lynn, and Walsdorf's (2005) analysis of women's sports and fitness magazines showed, the most popular titles showcased women running or cycling. Further, they found that women were rarely featured in strength sports such as basketball or football. De-emphasizing team competition where physical contact is usually a defining element suggests women are weak, inferior, or incapable of playing such sports (Duncan & Hasbrook, 2002). Scholars have also pointed to the consistent practice by journalists of presenting female athletes in passive poses, away from their sport and adorned with feminine markers. This practice was documented by Fink and Kensicki (2002), who found that 56% of the photographs featuring female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* depicted them in passive poses. The Vonn case, presented in the introduction to this chapter, is illustrative. Although featured on the magazine's cover (a rarity, as only 4% of *SI* covers feature women), Vonn's representation was indicative of *Sports Illustrated's* consistent type of feminized and sexualized coverage of female athletes (Bishop, 2003; Fink & Kensicki, 2002).

Sexualized and Disempowered

Critics have compared these "hetero-sexy" images of female athletes to soft-core pornography, characterizing the depictions as disempowering for the individual women who replicate women's subordinate role in society through images in which they offer their bodies to men. Indeed, the popular *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue features female athletes alongside traditional models; Vonn's appearance in the

magazine includes a picture of her looking directly at the camera while hooking her thumb under her bikini bottom – as if to suggest she is ready to remove it. Teammate Hannah Teeter appears topless with a ski hat and boots. Other pictures of the skiers reflect similar themes. Tennis stars Serena Williams and Anna Kournikova, softball standout Jennie Finch, former WNBA Most Valuable Player Lauren Jackson, and Olympic gold medal swimmer Amanda Beard have all appeared in the magazine. Further, prior to the 2000 Olympics, *Sports Illustrated* printed a story on five-time gold medal-winning swimmer Jenny Thompson. Although the story focused on her ability in the pool, the opening full-page photograph featured Thompson topless, wearing clingy shorts and red boots while covering her breasts with her hands. Yet, it is problematic to call these women victims. *Sports Illustrated* later said it had no intention of asking her to pose topless when the photo shoot began, and that it was in fact the swimmer's own idea. Asked about the photograph, Thompson told a reporter, "I'm an athlete and athleticism is about physicality. I'm proud of my body and the work it's taken to get it where it is" (McCallum, 2000). Other sportswomen have willingly capitalized on their sexual attractiveness. Although Kournikova is far from the most successful athlete on the women's tennis tour, she received a glut of attention after posing in magazines and other media products aimed at men. "She clearly poses for many of the photographs and in general does not shy away from the 'tennis Madonna' label. As a result, she has made millions from endorsements" (Bernstein, 2002, p. 425).

Radical feminists have strongly critiqued these images and related commentary, arguing that such images do not attract fans to women's sports (Bernstein, 2002; Duncan, 1990; Kane & Maxwell, 2011; Krane, 2001; Messner et al., 2003). Further, they see images and representations that showcase women's passivity or sexual attractiveness as reifying women's "otherness" and "difference" in the context of sports and have characterized those kinds of images as nothing short of toxic for the future of women's sports. Duncan (1990, p. 40) writes, "Focusing on female difference is a political strategy that places women in a position of weakness. Sports photographs that emphasize the otherness of women enable patriarchal ends."

Radical feminists further note the way such images and discourse buttress compulsory heterosexuality. They see these media representations of female athletes as an "attempt to impose traditional images of femininity and sexuality on sportswomen" (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998, p. 188). Lesbian sportswomen, conversely, are erased from public view in favor of women that meet heteronormative standards.

Thus, as radical feminists have articulated, calling for *more* coverage does not necessarily mean that coverage will be liberating for women. In assessing the type of coverage female athletes receive, many scholars hedge at accepting it as a bona fide "step forward" because of the sexualized and trivialized nature of representations (Bernstein, 2002; Messner et al., 2003). As Bernstein (2002, p. 426) cautions: "[T]he appearance and attractiveness of female athletes – from a male perspective – are an important factor in explaining the *type* of media coverage they get. In this respect it is much too early for a victory lap."

In light of the exponential growth in women's sports participation, sports feminists have strongly critiqued media gatekeepers for making decisions that reinforce ideology that naturalizes sports as a male preserve, thus stunting the future growth of women's sports (Duncan, 2006; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Messner et al., 2003). As Messner and colleagues argue, how can audiences appreciate the talents of female athletes if the only stories viewers see are ones that poke fun at women, showcase their sexuality, and are "peppered with locker room humor" (2003, p. 49)?

Challenging Dominant Practices

Because hegemony considers power as centralized, and thus locatable, it is possible to prescribe ways for challenging dominant ideology with the goal of liberating marginalized groups (Lull, 1995). From a Gramscian perspective, then, although the problematic framing of female athletes is justified by dominant gender ideology, these commonsense beliefs can be undermined through alternative narratives. Such discourse is often called "counterhegemonic" because its expression could destabilize the very power structures kept in place by the institutional communication of dominant ideology (Hall, 1985). Examples of counterhegemony are not limited to mass communication texts; rather, resistance to dominant ideology can also be practiced by individuals who reappropriate dominant messages in ways that differ – or blatantly challenge – the creators' intent (Lull, 1995). Thus, sports media practices should not be considered static, but rather sites of possible resistance, a point that is especially attractive to feminists who are concerned with change and may appreciate the roadmap to change that a hegemonic perspective on power offers (Pringle, 2005).

Scholars have also documented various counterhegemonic narratives, suggesting that continued pressure on those in power may result in shifts that could be beneficial to women. For instance, Hardin, Lynn, and Walsdorf (2005) pointed to *Real Sports Magazine* as one example of counterhegemony in practice; the magazine frequently featured female athletes in team sports and exerting strength, images that directly contradict traditional gender roles. Other research has shown that female athletes may be receiving the most ethical coverage from students via campus media; as one study showed, college newspapers often lack the sexualized and passive images of female athletes that so often dominate other sports media (Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004). The authors suggest that the improvement in coverage may help the public understand the scope and success of women's sports – and thus lead to shifts in how women's sports are valued.

Although these differing depictions represent possible gains for women, feminists suggest that such challenges are but one small step forward and argue that continued pressure on those in power is still needed; these feminists have offered various prescriptions for change, including pressuring those in gatekeeping positions to rethink how dominant ideology may shape the messages they disseminate. For instance,

troubled by the coverage produced by the NCAA, an organization dedicated to the promotion of women's sports, Shifflett and Revelle (1994) have called for those working in sports organizations to develop a "conscious effort" to "get beyond stereotypes and to highlight the athletic element in female athletics" (p. 149). Others have sought to challenge dominant ideology within sports organizations and practices, such as advocating for the recasting of sporting values outside capitalistic frameworks. Doing so would undermine the logic that values sports – particularly football and men's basketball in a collegiate setting – because of their ability to make money (Suggs, 2005).

Feminism and Our Research on the Sports/Media Complex

In the previous review, we have aimed to summarize the ways radical feminists, and, to a lesser degree, feminists with a more liberal orientation, have framed the problem relating to coverage of women's sports. Scholars and advocates using these critiques have been instrumental in furthering the prospects for female athletes. Title IX, which has undoubtedly been the most influential development in relationship to women's sports in the modern era (if not *ever*) is a liberal feminist initiative, and, as we have also suggested, radical theory has guided critique of the sports/media complex by most well-known feminists in the field, such as Kane, Duncan, and Messner, among others.

Although liberal and radical feminists conceptualize the role of sports institutions differently – liberal feminists generally stress similarities between women and men and do not interrogate masculine ideology in sports institutions, as do radical feminists – they situate power similarly, as a top-down force exercised by the few over the many. It logically follows, then, that their prescriptions for improved representations of women's sports would share similarities, including an agenda for activism in which women share a common understanding of the oppressive nature of traditional gender roles and of their shared exploitation *vis-à-vis* media representations where they are marginalized or depicted in hyperfeminine ways. Simply put, the sports-feminist agenda for change has generally relied on universal agreement that women as a collective have been wronged, and on a singular understanding that the evidence of that oppression can be found in mediated representations of sports.

Our own research over the years has been a blend of liberal and radical theory and has generally assumed the same Gramscian orientation, integrating the idea of cultural hegemony to position women and female athletes as oppressed. We – along with the majority of sports feminists – have asserted that until masculine values are no longer privileged in the sports/media complex, women's inclusion in sports media will be perceived as illogical or unnecessary by both sports media producers and

consumers. We have asserted that deconstructing ideology that makes women's acceptance seem unnatural would open the door for women's general inclusion in sports media texts and for their acceptance as "legitimate" athletes and sports media professionals as well (see, for instance, Hardin & Shain, 2005; Whiteside & Hardin, 2008).

We have made this argument through research that has examined media texts such as newspaper sports sections and magazines (Hardin et al., 2005; Hardin, Lynn, Walsdorf, & Hardin, 2002); probed the experience, values, attitudes, and beliefs of women and men who produce the mediated texts (Hardin, 2005; Hardin & Shain, 2005, 2006; Hardin & Whiteside, 2009a, 2009b), and explored the values and motivations of sports fans who consumed these texts (Hardin & Whiteside, 2008; Hardin & Whiteside, 2009c). Perceptions and the framing of Title IX have been of special interest to us, as we see this law as essential to the rights of girls and women to participate in sports, and we recognized media framing of the law as influential on its public support. We have analyzed media texts that have questioned the logic of Title IX and have situated the comments of male and female consumers and athletes who have also questioned its logic within the framework of masculine hegemony (see Hardin, Simpson, Whiteside, & Garris, 2007; Hardin & Whiteside, 2008, 2009c; Whiteside & Hardin, 2008). In doing so, we have asserted that an ideology that privileges men and boys has become so "commonsense" that it could ultimately threaten protection of the law. In doing so, we assume a singular interest for women: the preservation of Title IX. A Gramscian lens for this research was logical and, we believe, consistent with the goals of the law itself.

Representations of Female Athletes

We have also, as have other sports feminists, considered the vexing issue involving the nature of (hyperfeminized and sexualized) depictions of female athletes. We have done so through analysis of texts, discussions with media gatekeepers, and conversations with athletes themselves. Here – faced with the contradictions we outlined earlier – we have begun to reconsider our feminist orientation as we have grappled for ways to reconcile arguments that certain images of athletes are ultimately oppressive with the opposition to these arguments from athletes and from others who identify themselves as women's sports advocates.

The genesis for our self-examination was in our analysis of transcripts of interviews with female college athletes and with bloggers who cover women's sports, in separate, ongoing projects, about the portrayal of sportswomen (for the most recent published work from these projects, see Hardin, 2011). We also grappled with alternatives to Gramscian-oriented understandings of power in interviews with women who work in college sports public relations. In all three of these projects, we found it difficult to situate the ways these women described themselves and their attitudes, values, and beliefs within the framework we had used before. We were confronted

– in ways we had not been previously (or, perhaps more likely, had failed to see) – with understandings of agency, empowerment, and difference among those we interviewed; the *contradictions* could not be satisfactorily explained within the framework of hegemony, and traditional second-wave approaches that generally assume monolithic interests in relationship to women and the sports/ media complex simply lacked the analytical power we needed to understand and explain those contradictions. Thus, we turned to a Foucauldian, poststructuralist (third-wave) perspective, driven by a different understanding of power and resting on alternative assumptions about difference and agency.

Foucault and Feminism

The work of philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984), especially his suggestions about how *power* works on a cultural level, has been influential in a number of fields, including inquiry about sports and the way sports are mediated. Foucault’s ideas about power provide a contrast to Gramscian notions about hegemony. A growing number of scholars have found Foucault a useful impetus to “ask new questions, think differently and allow for the creation of new understandings and possibilities,” as scholar Richard Pringle has asserted (2005, p. 273). Sports sociologist David Rowe has also argued that Gramscian approaches in sport theory have (rightly) been challenged in recent years by Foucauldian-driven poststructuralism (Rowe, 2004). Yet, as we will explain, sports feminists, especially those assessing mediated representations of female athletes, have been slow to integrate poststructuralist ideas into their work.

Key Concepts

Foucault argued in his voluminous work that the nature of power had evolved from a top-down, pastoral model to one where power is expressed relationally and through discursive frameworks. In other words, Foucault rejected the idea that a handful of groups or a class of individuals wield power over another (powerless) group or class (Foucault, 2003). Instead, Foucault saw power as constantly deployed among individuals at all levels of society through discourse. Discourse circulates those ideas we understand as “truth” (knowledge); thus, power and knowledge are constantly at work. The daily discourse between people produces social realities, and the effects of that discourse can be dominations such as sexism or racism (Markula, 2003).

Foucault (1995) uses the prison panopticon to illustrate the way individuals collectively participate in expressions of power. The panopticon is a literal prison structure that includes one central watch tower in the middle of a series of prison cells; prisoners can see the watch tower at all times, which creates a sense that the gaze is alert and everywhere. The effect is the belief of inmates that they are under watch for certain behaviors understood as morally acceptable (or not). Foucault argues that good discipline is a figurative panopticon and a discursive focus on the deviant subject produces discourses that define the “legitimate” and “normal” subject – in short, the

normalization of bodies. Language then becomes less about personal expression and more of a means through which identity is constituted and meaning is made. This process is what Foucault (1990) calls the power struggle against subjectification and that which ties an individual to him/herself and becomes known to others. Foucault is thus able to reject binary/essentialist judgments – clear categorizations of the “liberatory” and “repressive” (which necessarily must be dispensed when power is not seen as wielded like a hammer). Thus, a Foucauldian perspective requires careful consideration of the cultural conditions of given practices because a discourse/practice designed in one context to be liberating can – and often is – repressive in another, and vice versa (for more on this, see Markula, 2003; Thorpe, 2008). Even those social movements designed to fight oppression – the feminist movement, for instance – amass power and then, in turn, can become guilty of their own forms of repression by their insistence on certain forms of knowledge as “truth.” Foucault, then, was far more interested in individual ethical development and its expression through discourse (a concept he called “technologies of the self,” which we will discuss later) than in the formation of mass movements based on monolithic definitions of groups and attempts at context-free assertions of “truth” (Foucault, 2003).

(Second-Wave) Feminist Resistance to Foucault

Foucault’s assertion that all exercise power, his refusal to recognize an oppressor/oppressed binary or the need for organized social movements to fight institutions deemed repressive, and his resistance to recognizing essential identities (such as “woman”) have made him controversial among second-wave feminists (Hardin, 2011). Further, a roadmap for change with a specific locus of power at which to direct attention is absent, making poststructuralism seem problematic for feminists (McWhorter, 1999). To summarize the book-length critiques of Foucault written by feminists over the years, his work is seen as a threat to the vision of (second-wave) feminists of the movement as being one with unified goals and a moral imperative to lift women from underneath oppressive ideologies and cultural norms.

The truth, however, is that feminism has never been a singular movement – and, for that matter, neither has sports feminism. We have pointed to basic differences between two theoretical branches of sports feminism (liberal and radical); there are many more (Birrell, 2000). Sports feminists have relied on assumptions about what women want from the sports experience, for instance, and how those experiences impact their lives. We include ourselves here: those who study the sports/media complex have often assumed certain (liberatory or oppressive) motives and outcomes based on a theoretical foundation (Gramscian) that has encouraged such conclusions. From this viewpoint, women are always positioned as oppressed, even when they might protest that they are not. As noted feminist scholar bell hooks (1984) asserts, shared victimization is a destructive foundation for feminists because, at least in part, it fails to resonate with the mainstream experiences of many women. Further, hooks

suggested that a far more appealing and powerful identity for women to share is built “on the basis of shared strengths and resources” (p. 46). This seems to mesh with poststructuralist/Foucauldian notions of power, which would encourage feminists to abandon the notion of universal unity and instead use difference as a resource. Poststructuralism resists universal explanations and a binary model (e.g., dominance/oppression, powerful/powerless) and gears judgments to specific contexts. Thus, it allows for the inevitable contradiction that arises from the fact that all women (and men) are not the same, and that their desires, understandings, and experiences are not the same. From that perspective, it becomes a workable theoretical tool for examining issues such as the representation of female athletes in ways that are not palatable to some women’s sports advocates while perfectly acceptable – indeed, empowering – to others. We point to the work of Thorpe (2008) as an example of a critique of representations from the poststructuralist viewpoint.

Thorpe (2008) is not the only scholar who has moved away from traditional feminisms in assessing the sports/media complex, as we discuss below. Such an approach, however, is still met with resistance by sports feminists. In an article published in a leading journal in the field, two scholars (Edwards & Jones, 2009) argue passionately that poststructuralism poses a threat to the work of feminists and critical scholars because of its lack of an ethical foundation (failure to assert universal moral imperatives). At the same time, however, they acknowledge that poststructuralist feminists ultimately *do* use moral judgments in their work – from the choices they make about their objects of study to their choices about what artifacts to ignore or magnify in their analyses. It is not that poststructuralist sports feminists fail to make judgments; it is that they do so with a greater emphasis on context and a different understanding of power and agency in those judgments. In the context of studying mediated depictions of sportswomen, sweeping generalizations are not possible.

Foucault and Our Feminist Analysis of the Sports/Media Complex

Increasingly, women’s sports activists are recognizing the limitations of second-wave feminisms, which tend toward Gramscian understandings of power and resistance, in grappling with the complex issues involving depictions of female athletes. Increasingly, influential sports feminists are incorporating Foucault, finding value in his ideas about the role of the body in discourse and power relations. For Foucault, the body is central in the mechanisms of discourse and power, and this focus has evoked attention. Cole (1993), for instance, responding to the struggle commonly articulated by feminists over control of women’s bodies (such as the common critique of the sexualization of female athletes), has urged sports feminists to resist assumptions that situate the body outside of cultural practices. Instead, she advocates working toward demystifying how the gendered docile body is constituted. One manifestation of this call is Duncan’s (1994) work on the production of the feminine

body. In analyzing *Shape* magazine, she showed how the discourse of personal motivation disguises normative messages about complying with a feminine ideal. Thus, when women are told in the magazine to make a "solemn promise to yourself" to get fit and look like the (photoshopped) cover models, they begin a process in self-monitoring and self-surveillance to meet a normative standard. The focus on how discourse obscures how bodies are normalized has been a common trope in post-structuralist analyses. Similar to Duncan, Schultz (2004) examined media coverage stemming from Brandi Chastain's famous "sports bra moment" following the 1999 women's soccer World Cup and argued that through discourse that situates the sports bra as a symbol of agency and empowerment, women are invited to engage in body management that results in a specifically feminine docile body. Others, such as Caudwell (1999), have considered how power is expressed through everyday discursive frameworks in which we are all implicated. Using questionnaires and interviews with female footballers in the United Kingdom, Caudwell discussed how engaging in an activity marked as "male, affects a player's subjectivity, in particular, their gender identity" (1999, p. 400). Cole (1993, p. 86) calls this process an effect of the "technologies of sport" or an "ensemble of knowledges and practices that disciplines, conditions, reshapes and inscribes the body."

In his later work, Foucault began focusing on how individuals may use what he called technologies of the self to engage with normalizing power relations. In short, technologies of the self refer to the method Foucault suggested for the ways individuals might "practice freedom," as he called it, and challenge or change dominant discourses. The practice involves ethical self-care, critical and reflexive thinking, and the writing process ("self writing," he called it) in the transformation of everyday practices. What is critical, and is explained by Markula (2003), is that this process cannot be judged from the outside. In other words, how freedom is practiced by one individual in one context would be different from that practiced by someone else in another context. For instance (getting back to the "vexing issue" we introduced at the beginning of this chapter), it is perfectly legitimate for a female athlete to argue that posing in a way that accentuates her sexual attractiveness is a practice of freedom for her; it is also legitimate for women's sports advocates to decide to reject these depictions as their own technologies of the self. The central issue is not the *act* but the *motive*: for instance, if a female athlete poses because she feels she needs to conform to "hetero-sexy" standards, she is most decidedly *not* free, and nothing is gained. To allow technologies of the self to serve us, we must be willing to ask questions, accept the answers, and accept difference. We must also abandon a one-size-fits-all approach to activism, as this advocates a one-step-at-a-time, multiple-answers-are-right understanding. In doing so, we must also recognize that liberation is not marked by a clear path led by individuals who "know" better.

Thorpe (2008) offers an apt application of these ideas in her work addressing how technologies of the self are employed by female snowboarders. While first illustrating how female snowboarders are essentially objects of power relations – produced through discourse similar to the arguments offered by Duncan (1994) and Schultz

(2004) – she then situates the women as subjects, active in engaging in the process of “what seems ‘natural’ and inevitable in their identity” (Thorpe, 2008, p. 210). In talking with the interview participants about the sexualization of female snowboarders in media, Thorpe noted how many of them enjoyed the sexualized gaze of men. Further, many did so from a critical perspective, thoughtfully weighing competing versions of femininity to imagine new ways of “being.” As Thorpe writes, “In so doing, these women are able to effectively negotiate discursive constructions of femininity that might otherwise limit their subjectivity” (p. 215).

Our interviews with bloggers who cover women’s sports – a lonely avocation in a blogosphere dominated by discourse that belittles female athletes – are a case study in how technologies of the self could be applied to an analysis. Using Thorpe’s (2008) work as a model, we sought to understand how members of a blogging collective about women’s sports, whom we situated as advocates by virtue of their willingness to publicly declare their fandom, understood hyperfeminized images of female athletes. We used a recent artifact – *ESPN the Magazine*’s “Body Issue” (published in fall 2009 as an alternative to *SI*’s swimsuit issue) – to initiate conversation, as a number of the bloggers we interviewed had written about the magazine.

Some had criticized the images of scantily clad female athletes, while others had praised them. In our interviews, we asked bloggers to tell us about their beliefs and motives, helping us to understand why they chose to promote or condemn the images. What we found was that while some bloggers had not engaged in reflexive thought aimed at ethical self-care, most had done so – no matter where they publicly came down on the issue. Furthermore, they appreciated the different points of view expressed in the collective, seeing all as valid. By applying this Foucauldian concept, then, we were far better able to get at the (contextual) truth about this collective. We saw *power* at work, and we situated our participants neither as victims of false ideology nor as failing to meet a universal standard for women’s sports advocacy (Hardin, 2011). Ultimately, we recognized the power in this blogging collective to advocate for women’s sports in diverse ways, with the potential to reach out and connect across a spectrum of subjectivities and drive discourse forward in new and previously unrealized ways.

Conclusion

In this overview of theoretical perspectives and our evolving work on women and the sports/media complex, we do not mean to suggest that research and activism grounded in second-wave feminisms or in Gramscian notions about power is without value; quite the contrary. The notion of *masculine hegemony* in understanding and explaining the nature of sport and its mediated representations is essential for sports feminists – and, in fact, for any scholar who is serious about critically studying the relationship between sports and culture. Furthermore, we believe – and have

suggested – that our research on the relationship between media gatekeepers, texts, and sports fans relating to Title IX has been well served by a Gramscian perspective.

We suggest, however, that emerging feminist scholars thoughtfully consider the assumptions about the relationship between sport, gender, and power in their research and consider how a poststructuralist approach may ultimately be more satisfying and useful in reconciling the contradictions they will inevitably encounter. As with any theoretical approach, a poststructuralist framework will draw critique. However, we strongly assert that such critique should not be on the grounds that such an approach is a threat to the moral judgment inherent in feminism; again: quite the contrary. Instead, we have felt a greater moral weight on *ourselves*, as researchers, to carefully consider all perspectives, to contextualize our understandings, and to examine our assumptions and assertions as researchers. The words of leading Foucauldian feminist Pirkko Markula (2003, p. 105) are our guide: “As players in the sporting truth game, we need to reflect on the limits of our own identities [...] Only then can we use our knowledge and our power positions ethically.”

NOTES

- 1 Jhally (1989, p. 70) coined this term to capture the symbiotic relationship between sports industries and the mediation of those sports industries. The relationship is highly interdependent and mutually reflective.
- 2 We use the term “poststructuralist” in the same sense as “postmodern.” The terms are often used to mean the same general approach to power, agency, and identity. Sometimes they are used interchangeably, such as by Hall (1996) and Mann and Huffman (2005). For an explication of the features of postmodern critiques of sport, see Edwards and Jones (2009); their explanation of postmodern critique is parallel to descriptions of Foucauldian/poststructuralist theory as found in Markula (2003), Macleod (2006), and other texts.
- 3 Examples of our work that draws from a Gramscian perspective include Hardin, Simpson, Whiteside, and Garri (2007); Hardin and Shain (2005, 2006); Whiteside and Hardin (2008); Hardin, Lynn, and Walsdorf (2005).

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China's Media Transformation and Audience Research

Hongmei Li

ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews Chinese audience research in the broader context of social, cultural, and media transformations that took place in China in the past three decades. It first describes some of the lasting structural changes that have altered Chinese media industry and Chinese society, such as foreign media influence, commercialization, and China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 – developments that, to a great extent, have shaped the way in which audiences are conceptualized and studied in China. It then analyzes influential audience studies in order to examine key themes and patterns, with a specific focus on the shift in the status of Chinese audience members, from subjects and primarily citizens of the nation to consumers in a capitalist marketplace. The chapter reviews research conducted by scholars interested in cultural studies, ethnography, and new communication technologies, seeking to identify gaps in the knowledge of Chinese audiences. It explains what still needs to be explored in the field of audience studies in China; and it ends by offering an agenda for future research.

In his book *The Post-American World*, Fareed Zakaria, *New York Times* bestselling author and editor of *Newsweek*, argues that, while the US remains a superpower militarily, “in every other dimension – industrial, financial, educational, social, cultural – the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from American dominance” to “the rise of the rest” (Zakaria, 2008, pp. 4–5). Such a power shift is characterized

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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in particular by the rapid ascent of China and India as the next two superpowers, which now share a long list of the world's biggest, largest, tallest, and richest. Zakaria presents an interesting analysis of the political implications of "the rise of the rest" and writes about how the US can no longer ignore other ascending countries such as China and India. Despite increasing economic, social, cultural, and political ties between these two Asian countries and the US, as Parameswaran (2009) has rightly pointed out, there is still "relative silence in the US communications academy on what these geopolitical developments mean for our field." Acknowledging the urgency of studying major shifts in the global geopolitical and economic orders, this chapter focuses on the exploding media industries in China in response to Parameswaran's call to promote more outward-looking and comparative modes of international communication research in the US communications academy.

Chinese media have experienced exponential growth in the last three decades, after China started its economic reforms and "open-door" policies in 1978. Traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio developed rapidly from the 1980s to the late 1990s, and the last decade in particular has witnessed tremendous development in new communication technologies such as the Internet and the mobile phone. While China had only 32 television stations and 93 radio stations in 1978 (Chan, 1994), the number of TV sets increased to 317 million in 1997, with a penetration rate of 86.2%, and the number of radio listeners reached 725 million in 2002 (Chen, 2008). The penetration rates of TV and radio have now reached 96.6% and 95.4% respectively (SARFT, 2008a). China's cable TV households increased to 153 million in 2007, and the penetration rate was 40% (SARFT, 2008b). In 2007 there were 578 book publishers, 1,938 newspapers, and 9,468 magazines in China (GAPP, 2008). The number of Internet users in China reached 513 million by 2011, and the penetration rate stood at 38.3% (CNNIC, 2012). Since 2008, China has surpassed the United States and has become the world's largest Internet population. China now has more than 800 million mobile phone users ("China's Mobile Phone Users," 2010).

China's media have expanded against the backdrop of rapid economic development. After three decades of double-digit growth, China recently surpassed Japan and become the world's second largest economy (Barboza, 2010). China's economy was estimated at 1.33 trillion US dollars and its gross domestic product (GDP) per capita reached 3,600 US dollars in 2010, from 400 US dollars in 1978 – a nonuple increase in three decades (Deng, 2009). China has already become the US government's largest creditor, and is estimated to overtake the United States and become the largest world economy in 2030 (Barboza, 2010). Chinese economy is characterized by huge gaps between the rural and the urban, between the east coast and western inland areas, and between the rich and the poor. While average disposable income for urban residents in 2010 was 9,757 Yuan (about 1,460 US dollars), the cash income for rural people was 3,078 Yuan (approximately 460 US dollars), less than one third of the average amount for city residents ("China's reports income increase," 2010). The GDP per capita for Suzhou, China's canal city and Shanghai's neighbor, for example, reached 25,500 US dollars in 2009, seven times the country's GDP per

capita (Cox, 2009). An article in *Fortune* magazine reported that the richest 20% of China's population were estimated to control more than 80% of the country's wealth. The World Bank estimates that more than 400 million live on less than \$2 a day (Chandler, Wang, & Zhang, 2004, p. 152). Liping Sun (2003), a prominent sociologist, views China as a "fractured society," and another well-known scholar states that China has developed into "four worlds" (Hu, 2004). China's Gini Coefficient, an indicator that measures inequality in wealth distribution, has reached 0.47, which has surpassed the well-recognized warning line of 0.4 in the international community (Chen, 2010).

The purpose of this chapter is to situate audience research in the broader context of China's social, cultural, and media transformations of the past three decades. The chapter first analyzes some of the lasting structural changes that took place in the Chinese media industry – media importation, media commercialization, global influences, and commoditization of audiences – and in Chinese society, which have shaped the way audiences are conceptualized and studied in China. The descriptions of these structural changes set the stage for my subsequent summary of existing audience research. I then selectively review some influential publications on media audiences in China, in order to analyze key themes and patterns in this body of work and to identify the scope of what has been studied and what is still missing in this research. Having explained and outlined the gaps in our knowledge of audiences at this historic moment in China's altering media environment, the chapter ends with an agenda for future research.

Research on China necessarily requires a few words on how the author approaches this nation's disputed political boundaries. While China in a broad sense can include mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or even the Chinese diaspora from a cultural perspective, this chapter focuses on mainland China. In reviewing studies on audiences, I limit myself here to research published in Chinese and English that has addressed media in mainland China. Researchers reviewed include scholars in mainland China and Hong Kong, ethnic Chinese scholars residing in the West (predominantly in the US), and foreign scholars in English-speaking countries who have taken an interest in China. My choice here to foreground mainland China means that Chinese media audience research published in other major languages is not included in my review. Nevertheless, my selective discussion still aims to provide insights into the emergent field of audience studies in China and strives to chart the boundaries of the still unfolding trajectory of research in this area.

Importation of Foreign Media Products in the 1980s and Early 1990s

In order to look at media audiences in China, we have to first examine the development of Chinese media, which has been intertwined with China's efforts to globalize

its economy from the very beginning, when China started to implement its open-door policies in 1978. In 1979 Deng Xiaoping visited the United States and signed a package plan for cultural exchange between the two countries. Since then, Chinese media workers cautiously but actively sought to introduce Western media programming in China. *Man from Atlantis*, a short-lived US science fiction TV serial of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), was the first US TV program imported to China. The show was very popular among Chinese audiences, and the sunglasses worn by the hero Mark Harris (starring Patrick Duffy) became the absolutely necessary gadget for fashionable Chinese youth then (He, 2007). *Garrison's Gorillas*, produced by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), was the second American TV serial that aired in China. In the 1980s China also aired other American TV series: *Hunter*, *Falcon Crest*, *Remington Steel*, *Matt Houston*, and *Dynasty* (Lu, 2000). China imported the first foreign cartoon, Japan's *Astro Boy* series, in 1981; since then, a large number of foreign cartoons have entered the nation. In 1991 Shanghai TV Station broadcast *Growing Pains*, an ABC family sitcom, and this show enabled Chinese parents to see, for the first time, that they could be friends with their children rather than authority figures. *Growing Pains* was broadcast for four consecutive summers. While there were no official statistics on the global audience reception of the show in China, according to Zhang Xin, who dubbed *Growing Pains* into Chinese, "[a]ll people I knew, ranging from elder women in our neighborhood, to co-workers, to primary school children, asked me about the next plot after each previous episode was broadcast" (He, 2007). Since then, many more foreign programs have been aired in China. Despite the popularity of foreign media programs and a general pro-Western attitude among the educated elites, however, Chinese media workers were then under a lot of social and political pressure, because they ran the risk of being accused of spreading capitalism and capitalist lifestyles. Capitalism was constantly condemned in official media and by conservative government officials, which created a deep sense of uncertainty.

In the 1980s, an unprecedented "cultural fever" appeared in China, which was accompanied by the publishing of a large number of translated works on the West, imported Western media, and cultural products and by critical reflections on Chinese traditional culture. The educated elites in China yearned for Western democracy and critically reflected on Chinese tradition and history. Some popular media programs symbolized their tensions with the official ideology of the time and their sense of anxiety toward China's future. A telling example was a 1988 TV program entitled *River Elegy* (*He Shang*), which sharply criticizes Chinese culture and civilization by reinterpreting long-standing Chinese symbols: the Great Wall, the Yellow River, the Dragon, the Red Flag, and many other Chinese icons. While *River Elegy* portrays the "azure blue civilization" of the West as symbolizing "youthfulness, adventure, energy, power, technology, and modernity," the "yellow land culture" of China is described as decadent, incompetent, superstitious, lifeless, and outdated (Chen, 1995, p. 31; Chen & Jin, 1997). This controversial television show only aired twice, in June and August 1988, and was later banned by the Chinese government; but it was extremely influential. Practically every Chinese citizen with TV access watched this program.

After the TV show was banned, handwritten manuscripts of the book were circulated among high school and college students. Also, the government encountered a legitimacy crisis, which was largely due to China's reflections on its own Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), on the history of its Communist Party, on its past propaganda, on the problems that occurred during the economic reforms, and especially on the Chinese government's crackdown on the Tiananmen student democracy movement in 1989.

Rapid Media Commercialization in China since 1992

The controversy that ensued after 1989 deepened the crisis over the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party. Consequently the government turned toward economic development, intending to consolidate and maintain its authority. In 1992 Deng Xiaoping, architect of China's reforms, toured southern China and called for officials and entrepreneurs to take bigger and bolder steps toward developing the whole country. Deng's aphorism – “it doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice it is a good cat” – was commonly cited to show his cool head and utilitarian way of viewing ideological differences. Since then, Chinese media have commercialized their operations with great speed and have openly embraced transnational and Chinese private capital.

While in the pre-reform era Chinese media were pure propaganda tools for the government, now they have to serve two masters simultaneously: on the one hand they are mouthpieces of the state party; on the other hand they have to earn money for their own survival (Zhao, 1998, 2008). Lee, He, and Huang (2006) further point out that Chinese media have been transformed into a “Party Publicity Inc.” and have become a “quasi-business that seeks to make huge profits on the one hand and to legitimate Party mandate by promoting its image on the other” (p. 1). Since 1998 the Chinese government has stopped subsidizing the Chinese TV industry. The termination of subsidies and the increasing competition have forced the media to seek partners and to find other financial means of funding their content production and distribution. Seeking advertising money has become a natural choice. Except for a few party organs, Chinese media now rely exclusively on advertising funds, sponsorship, and subscription fees for survival. Some media obtain more than 90% of their yearly revenues from advertising (Zhao, 2008).

The increasing importance of advertising is also reflected in China's double-digit and sometimes triple-digit advertising growth in the last three decades. In 1981 the country had slightly over 1,000 advertising operation units – advertising agencies and media organizations such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television stations, and outdoor media – that were licensed to carry advertising; but that number reached more than 172,000 in 2007. The number of people employed in the industry also increased, from slightly over 16,000 in 1981 to over 1 million in 2007; and the yearly advertising revenue increased from 118 million Yuan in 1981 to over 174 billion Yuan

in 2007 (Li, 2006; Lu, 2009). The market value of the Chinese media industry – which consists of advertising, broadcasting, cable TV, publishing, movies, and entertainment markets – reached 50.5 billion US dollars in 2009; this figure put China in the third place, next only to the United States and Japan (Datamonitor, 2009). Broadcasting and cable TV represent the largest and quickest growth. Revenue generated by the broadcasting and cable TV segment made up 48.2% of the Chinese media market value in 2009 (ibid.).

Foreign advertising entered the Chinese market right after China started its economic reforms in 1978. Foreign companies relied on slick image-oriented advertising, and foreign products had been advertised in China even before they were available there. Japanese and American advertising firms were the first to explore opportunities to expand their business in this country. Foreign agencies began to enter the Chinese market on a large scale in the 1990s. By the end of 1994, almost all the top ten transnational advertising agencies had established joint ventures in China (Li, 2006). While then foreign advertising firms were required to establish joint ventures with Chinese partners and were only allowed to maintain up to 49% of the shares, now they can own their operations in entirety.

China's demand for foreign capital and management expertise opened the door for transnational capitalists to enter the Chinese market through limited channels. Large book publishers such as Bertelsmann, McGraw-Hill, Pearson Publishing and Simon & Shuster have long established collaborations with Chinese publishers. Chinese magazine publishers have also actively sought cooperative ventures with foreign publishers. For example, fashion magazines such as *Elle*, *Cosmo*, *Rayli* (a fashion magazine founded by a Chinese and Japanese publisher), and *Vogue* already have a big presence in China.

Rapid media commercialization also led to gradual media fragmentation in China. Since the late 1990s, China has launched various movements to consolidate media. Actively supported and sometimes required by Chinese authorities, some media companies have merged to form larger companies within single media industries, and others have pursued mergers across media platforms. The conglomeration of media groups is, on the one hand, a measure designed to increase the competitiveness of Chinese media by anticipating foreign media's flooding into the Chinese market after China joins the World Trade Organization (WTO); on the other hand, it can also be seen as a way for the government to exert further control over the media in the context of the latter's fragmentation (Zhao, 2000, 2008).

Global Influences on Chinese Media in the Post-WTO Environment

China entered WTO in 2001, which led to many structural and institutional changes in the Chinese media industry. For example, China doubled the quota of foreign films

from the original 10 in 1994 to 20 in 2001 ("Foreign Films 'Would Boost Economy,'" 2009). China has recently agreed to obey a WTO ruling and to increase the import of entertainment products by March 2011 (Reuters, 2010). This ruling means that more entertainment products will enter China in the future.

Complex networks for the co-production and co-financing of films have become more and more common in China's film industry. Even though in 2008 China created a record 406 feature films and the box-office revenue increased 30% – to 4.34 billion Yuan (US\$ 638 million) – over 2007 and realized a continuous annual growth of 25% since 2002 ("Foreign Films 'Would Boost Economy,'" 2009), many so-called Chinese films were co-produced and co-financed, especially the big box-office hits. *Hero* (2003), directed by the famous Zhang Yimou, for example, was a co-production venture that involved mainland China, Hong Kong, and Hollywood (the US-based Miramax was a principal investor), and it featured a pan-Asian cast of highly bankable stars. *Hero* started the co-production trend; it was followed by Zhang's box-office success *House of Flying Daggers*. Feng Xiaogang's annual New Year comedy (*Hesui pian*) has also attracted major foreign investors like Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, which distributed *Big Shot's Funeral* to the global market (Kong, 2007). His *Cell Phone* (2004) was a co-production with Columbia, and his *A World Without Thieves* (*Tianxia Wuzui*, 2004) was a co-production with Hong Kong-based Media Asia. Films produced by renowned Chinese directors such as Zhang Yimou, Feng Xiaogang, and Cheng Kaige received much of their profits from overseas exhibition (Kong, 2007; Wang, 2009). Exhibition in foreign countries has also become an important consideration for Chinese film directors, and some banned films have only been exhibited at foreign film festivals. Indeed Zhang's *Hero* (2003) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) were produced with international audiences in mind, and these productions had a mixed reception among Chinese critics and consumers, even though they were commercially successful (Wang, 2009).

The state and the transnational media corporations have formed strategic alliances in China in order to sell hybrid forms of popular culture to Chinese audiences. These hybrid media blend the slick modern aesthetics of global media with nationalistic pro-Chinese cultural content approved by the state authorities (Fung, 2008). Media groups such as Viacom, Disney, Times Warner, and News Corporations have long penetrated the Chinese market. Outdoor media groups such as Clear Channel, JCDecaux and Tom Group have already gained control over some of the most influential outdoor media firms in China.

In the TV industry, media restructuring measures were taken to separate the production of content from broadcasting (*zhibo fenli*), in response to the challenges that Chinese media face in the post-WTO era. Discussions about these measures reached their peak in 1999. The essence of this strategy was to break the administrative monopoly and to increase the competitiveness of Chinese TV stations while deepening the impact of market reforms. TV drama is the first arena through which private capital has been channeled into the Chinese TV industry. As the most widely watched TV genre, TV drama has grown at an exponential rate and has become a cash cow for

TV stations (Guangergaozhi, 2004; Wang, 2008). While broadcasting was suspended in 2002 for various reasons, in July 2009 the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) issued an official directive that reinvigorated the concept and practice of *zhibo fenli* (Ming, 2009). Now programs that are not closely related to politics or to sensitive issues, such as TV dramas, children's programs, entertainment programs, fashion shows, and sports, are grouped within the boundary of *zhibo fenli*, which means that a certain percentage of programming must be purchased on the market. Nevertheless, the government still maintains a tight control over the production of news, political commentary, and other sensitive programs (Ming, 2009).

Zhibo fenli can further promote entrepreneurship and private investment in the Chinese media industry, which has already been penetrated by private capital through advertising money, product placement, content transaction, sponsorship, and money from the stock market. The ongoing separation of media's political and economic functions has also been discussed in the Chinese media, as a form of preparation for the latter to be listed in the future on overseas stock markets – as has been the case for the Beijing Youth Media Group, which was listed in Hong Kong stock market in 2004, which was the first time for any Chinese media to be listed overseas.

Private capitalists and entrepreneurs can also collaborate with China's official media to host joint programs and co-produce TV programs for official media in China. For example, Yang Lan, China's Oprah Winfrey, a former China Central Television (CCTV) host and founder of a Hong Kong-based media organization Sunmedia, founded *Yang Lan One On One* (*Yang Lan Fangtan Lu*) with Shanghai Oriental Satellite TV, and she hosts it ever since. It is a program that specializes in interviewing well-known celebrities, sports stars, politicians, writers and cultural figures. Since 2004 Yang Lan also invested in *Women of the World* (*Tianxia Nuren*) and has hosted it with Hunan Satellite TV. Targeting young urban women, this talk show covers topics of life, family, and culture and competes with CCTV's *Half the Sky* (*Ban Bian Tian*). The financial capital of Sunmedia has been drawn mainly from private investment and from the stock market.

Developments in the Internet industry in China probably represent the ultimate possible convergence between foreign and domestic content. While Chinese authorities have been partially successful in censoring Internet content and in controlling access to foreign websites, Chinese Internet users have access, though a limited one, to foreign media content. And those with expertise in Internet use can bypass the Great Firewall to access censored websites and content. Even Twitter, which is now censored in China, has managed to attract a large number of ordinary Chinese users and activists.

Against the backdrop of media commercialization and global influences in China, the following section charts the landscape of audience studies and identifies a set of key concerns for future research in the field. I begin here with a brief review of the historical shift in conceptions about the prototypical Chinese audience, from those that represented it as made up of obedient and frugal citizens of an authoritarian state to those that put in front of us a picture of spectators of global media and insatiable consumers of a range of commodities.

Shifts in the Portrayal of a Chinese Audience: From Workers and Citizens to Consumers and Spectators

In the 1980s, the Chinese audience was largely understood as an undifferentiated conglomeration of citizens, situated in a historical relationship with the authoritarian state party and depicted as loyal political subjects. In this relationship the media were viewed as tools that could help nurture strong and close ties between Chinese citizens and the Communist Party (Chen, 2008; Liu, 2008). The main lens for looking at audiences so as to conceive of them was their political relationship with the state, and this representation was considered necessary for the state party to enact public policies efficiently and to disseminate its propaganda by having a better understanding of their needs. While the state party had historically relied on personal interviews and fieldwork to gather knowledge concerning “the mass” – that is, the population of China – the government and its agencies soon began to conduct large-scale scientific public polls in the 1980s. Research on media audiences, which was closely related to public opinion research, emerged in this context. During that period individual media organizations, which were part of the state’s propaganda apparatus, carried out systematic audience research in order to profile their viewers and readers, in a continuation of China’s propaganda model.

In April 1982 the News Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, together with the *People’s Daily*, the *Worker’s Daily*, the *Chinese Youth Daily*, and the Beijing Broadcasting Institute (currently named the Communication University of China), conducted the first ever poll on audiences in Beijing, and it used the computerized random sampling method. Directed by Congshan Chen, this poll was designed to survey, among a host of other factors, audiences’ media exposure, content preferences, and perceptions of the media’s credibility (Chen, 2008). The survey also aimed to correct an over-politicization orientation during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) that treated class as the only criterion by which Chinese population was judged. In 1986 China held the first conference on media audience, and in the same year Renmin University founded the Public Opinion Research Center, which later became one of the most influential public opinion centers in China (ibid.). In 1987 CCTV conducted the first ever national media poll, in 27 provinces, aiming to map demographic and psychographic characteristics of audiences, their behaviors, and their media consumption patterns.

China’s clampdown on the Tiananmen student democracy movement of 1989 had a negative impact on media reforms and audience research (ibid.). Facing Beijingers’ cold reactions toward the regime, China conducted a large-scale poll to measure Beijingers’ opinions of the Asian Games in 1990. In April 1991 the Audience Research Commission of the Chinese Radio and TV Association was established, and it was the first academic organization to specialize in studying radio and TV audiences, training pollsters, hosting research seminars, and publishing original and translated works on audiences (ibid.).

Media commercialization since the early 1990s quickly changed the way in which the Chinese audience was historically conceptualized. After the liberalization of the Chinese economy, media audiences experienced their newfound status as commodities in the eyeball economy of increasingly capitalist media systems. The entry of large number of transnational corporations and of their advertising agencies spurred the acquisition of data about Chinese consumers, their lifestyle choices, behaviors, media preferences, and other information. Marketing firms began to conduct research about Chinese consumers. Horizon (Lingdian), China Mainland Marketing Research Firm (Meilande), and Sinomonitor (Xinshengdai) are among the most important Chinese polling firms established in the 1990s. Gallup China was established in 1991 as the first foreign survey research organization licensed to do business throughout China. Although China allows marketing firms to conduct survey research on consumer attitudes and behaviors, surveys on social and political issues are still highly controlled, and foreign polling firms are forbidden to conduct survey research on sensitive social issues.

The media rating system started to emerge in the 1990s. Advertising professionals such as Liu Guoji and the corporation Procter & Gamble (P&G) helped develop China's first set of television audience measurement protocols and standards. Two former P&G managers founded the first TV commercial monitoring company: Kangsai, whose English name was X&L, and which was later purchased by the Central Viewer Survey & Consulting Center–Taylor Nelson Sofres (CVSC–TNS Research, which is often shortened as CTR) company – a joint venture between CCTV and one of the largest global marketing firms, TNS. In 1997 CCTV and CTR jointly founded CVSC-Sofres Media (CSM), China's largest TV media monitoring company. Liu Guoji, who was working as the media public relations (PR) director at Zenith Media in November 1997, led a Chinese delegation – consisting of about thirty directors of TV advertising departments and TV station deputy directors in charge of advertising – in its visits to ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox, and the headquarters of P&G; the delegation was to learn about the advertising management models of these companies and to get trained in them (Liu Guoji, personal communication, 12 July 2005).

Media professionals gradually learned to measure Chinese TV and radio ratings by modeling their techniques after other countries' tools of audience assessment. CSM used people's meter, people's diary, and other means to monitor TV and radio ratings in mainland China and Hong Kong. A. C. Nielsen also established its operation in China; but it was much less influential, and its market share was between 10 and 20% in China. In 2009 Nielsen left the Chinese market, and CSM now monopolizes the Chinese TV and radio monitoring market. TV ratings have gradually become the most important criteria for a TV station to decide whether a program should be launched or continued, especially at a time when advertising has become the most important source of income. Companies that monitor print media and the Internet have also emerged. For example Hui Cong (www.huicong.com), established in 1992, now monitors more than 1,400 print media and more than 7,000 Internet sites.

Ethnic Chinese people from the diaspora who were trained in Western universities also began to be involved in training mainland Chinese researchers in survey design, sampling, and other issues related to survey research. Audience research in this sense emphasizes pragmatic application and media management and has little interest in theorizing, even though it has generated some of the richest data in Chinese media research (Liu, 2008; Hu, 2010). This kind of audience research stresses scientific positivism, and media scholars of this formation introduced and applied in China Western theories of media effects.

Understanding the Implicit and Explicit Audience: Textual Analysis and Ethnography

While media scholars in mainland China often emphasize positivist scientism in the study of media audiences (Hu, 2010), cultural studies scholars have engaged with audiences in quite a different manner. One group of scholars has approached the construction of audiences in cultural representations through textual and critical cultural analyses. One of the most prominent scholars in this camp is Jinhua Dai, a professor of comparative literature and cultural studies, who has founded the Center for Film and Cultural Studies at Peking University; and this is the first cultural studies center established in China. In *Breaking the Surface of History* (1989), Meng and Dai produced the first academic study that critiques Chinese women's literature; this study investigates the literature produced by nine prominent writers and uses textual analysis, historical analysis, and Marxist feminism. Dai's work *Gendering China* (2002a) examines the gendered culture of the 1970s and 1980s by analyzing how more recent Chinese women writers' narratives represent gender roles and imagine their communities of readers.

Dai's works encompasses feminist research, film criticism and cultural studies. Some of her recent work focuses on critiquing China's cinematic culture by reading film "not simply as a textual signifier in itself, or merely as a commercial or technological industry, but also as a cultural field scored by both elites and popular discourse" (Wang & Barlow, 2002: 4). Her work (1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2002a, 2002b) investigates how social forces – such as audience tastes and expectations – shape the content of popular texts such as films, advertisements, TV dramas, and other cultural forms. Dai has become the most important scholar in the field of cultural studies in China. She cannot be classified as an audience research scholar in media studies' more empirical traditions; however, her methodological approach, which combines textual analysis, historical analysis, and Marxist criticism, does fit into the broader realm of cultural studies and into its concern with reading/viewing publics. In a televised interview she has acknowledged her elitist stance in studying popular culture; there she stated that her lack of training in survey research, interviews, and fieldwork methods prevented her from studying audience reception (Dai, 2008). She has

explored instead how and why audiences consume popular cultural texts; and she has done so by interpreting the broader significance of these texts and by situating them in their broader social and historical contexts. Like Dai, other scholars (Larson, 1991, 1998, 2009; Meng, 1993; Barlow, 2004) critique literature, media texts, and popular cultural texts, aiming to understand larger issues such as modernity, feminism, sexuality, gender, and the nation. Taking an interpretative and interdisciplinary approach to media texts, these scholars, whose work crosses over into media studies, are identified with such fields as Chinese studies, East Asian studies, or comparative literature.

Wang (2009) is among the few communication scholars who have critically studied cinematic texts. In her case study, Wang looks at the complex interaction between Chinese cinema and Hollywood and at the reception of two films directed by Zhang Yimou – the most successful Chinese film director with an international reputation – namely *Hero* (2003) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) that used Hollywood production and narrative style and marketing practices. Wang argues that the reception of these two commercially successful films among Chinese critics and consumers – as indicated in reviews and other texts that responded to the films – was, at best, mixed, because Chinese audiences assessed them as films that emphasize cinematic style over cultural substance. Given the choice of catering for the tastes of a global audience or satisfying local cultural preferences, Zhang Yimou leaned toward the former (or so argues Wang) – which left Chinese audiences dissatisfied with the narrative content of these films.

Aiming to go beyond textual analysis and critical cultural studies, scholars with training in ethnographic research techniques have focused on audience reception of particular programs – especially on various tactics of resistance and negotiation – and on the changing relationships among viewers, texts, and media industries (Lu, 2000). Ethnography and the active audience achieved important status in cultural studies during the nineties, in the wake of Janice Radway's influential book *Reading the Romance*; this book contained ethnographic research that contested the normative perception of female readers of romance, in the US, as passive dupes of patriarchal popular culture texts (Lull, 1990; Ang, 1996; Lu, 2000).¹ As part of this larger tendency to pay attention to the responses of ordinary audiences to media culture, studies of the engagement of Chinese audiences with a vastly altered mediascape have also relied on ethnography, focus groups, and interviews.

Attempting both to transcend textual analysis, which treats texts as having closed meanings, and to overcome the idea that audiences have total autonomy in making meanings, anthropologist Rofel (2007), for example, studied the influential TV drama *Yearnings* (Ke Wang; 1990), and her ethnographic analysis moved back and forth between narratives of the TV drama and ordinary viewers' responses. By intertwining her critique of the drama's narratives with viewers' interpretations and critiques, Rofel treats media texts as open-ended and fluid narratives. Rofel proposes that viewers' disagreements and conflicts with the drama's narratives demonstrate that popular culture can incite larger discussions of citizens' changing expectations and

subject positions in postsocialist China. Similarly, another anthropologist (Friedman, 2006) studies audience responses to *Twin Bracelets*, a popular film that targeted Mandarin and Cantonese speakers in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. Friedman watched *Twin Bracelets* with her subjects and then compared their commentaries on the film with her ethnographic notes about their everyday work and family lives. Situating viewers within national and transnational contexts of media production and consumption, Friedman analyzes how these women's responses to the film revealed both their authorial agency as active spectators and their containment within existing structures of power, which were echoed in the film's narrative. Murphy (2007) draws on ethnographic fieldwork and on the textual analysis of state-sponsored official media products – a party-produced prefectural newspaper, *JA Daily*, and an anti-corruption film titled *The Life and Death Decision* – to examine how these pedagogic training tools are enlisted to help large audiences of official cadres understand and implement state policies. Murphy argues that these media products participate in the larger project of suppressing knowledge of the state party system's flaws and of discouraging political reform, which in the end results in poor governance.

Communication scholars in Hong Kong have produced some of the most interesting studies of Chinese audiences in the past decade, partially due to their geographic proximity with mainland China. These researchers, who were often trained in the West, have conducted ethnography and in-depth interviews with Chinese consumers/citizens in the broader context of global media flows, cultural politics, and media transformations in China. Hong Kong scholars such as John Erni, Eric Ma, Anthony Fung, and Laikwan Pang have authored extensive studies of audiences, media, and popular culture. I will comment here, however, only on a few of them, which focus on media culture in mainland China. Generally speaking, these studies can be categorized into research on youth culture (Erni, 2005, 2007, 2008; Fung, 2009), research on modernity (Pang, 2002, 2007), research on global media flows (Pang, 2002, 2007; Erni, 2005, 2008; Fung, 2008), research on regional media production and consumption (e.g. Fung, 2008, 2009), and research on issues of identity (Pang, 2002; Erni, 2007; Fung, 2009). For example, Erni (2007) studies the production and consumption of Cantopop and the “gender negotiations found in the production, the musical forms, and the consumption of Cantopop” (p. 87). Conducting interviews and focus groups with youth in Shanghai and Hong Kong, Erni has also investigated the reception of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon (Erni, 2005, 2008).

Fung (2008) analyzes the localization strategies of transnational media corporations in China and argues that Chinese audiences have embraced popular cultural forms that sell “blatant individualism, seditious independence, and above all, crude commercial values,” which cannot help nurture a public culture of social responsibility and civic society. Yet, in a more optimistic recent article on stardom in China, Fung (2009) also examines how Chinese fans responded to Faye Wong, one of the most influential pop singers in the country and outlines how Faye Wong's unconventional femininity challenges gender norms and provides the newly emergent middle-class

female base with a sense of empowerment. Fung combines textual analysis of Faye Wong's lyrics, persona, and images with ethnographic methods and in-depth interviews with fans in Beijing and Hong Kong.

Audience Research and New Communication Technologies

Communication scholars who focus on how the Chinese use new communication technologies, such as the mobile phone and the Internet, tend to stress the notion of active consumer and the blurring of the boundary between producers and consumers. Because a typical user of new communication technologies is generally young, urban, and educated, researchers working in this area often focus on the production and consumption of youth culture. For example, Wang (2008) devotes one chapter of her recent book *Brand New China* to youth culture and music marketing by analyzing Motorola's marketing campaigns. With a primary focus on music and mobile phone, Wang examines whether music is a major mechanism driving youth culture in China, and she concludes that Chinese youth are engaged in a safe yet cool phenomenon: on the one hand, they want to be different from others; on the other hand, they experience their coolness within boundaries that are socially acceptable.

Scholars who have studied Internet users address the issues of cyber-nationalism, activism, control vs. countercontrol, civil society, identity formation, and community building. Wu (2007), for example, examines the evolution of online nationalism from being an "ivory tower" issue to becoming a popular phenomenon in China, and he traces specific cases about cyber-nationalism by drawing on secondary data and interviewing key players. Li (2009) analyses controversial Toyota and Nippon advertisements in China and explores how netizens expressed overwhelming feelings of nationalism toward these ads. Yang (2009) analyzes the development of online activism in China by studying how the Internet has enabled the creation, formation, and shaping of contentious forms of public opinion. Analyzing how Internet forums are used as sites for the expression of conflict and control, identity-building, and community formation, Yang argues that the Internet has offered a limited platform for underdogs to organize themselves and to express dissent and a desire for social justice. The emergent civil society in China provides the cultural foundation for online activism, and some business organizations have also participated in producing and sustaining contentious forms and practices of public opinion.

With an interest in censorship and control, Esarey and Xiao (2008) examine how popular Chinese bloggers use subtle forms of political expression, such as satire, to criticize the state without facing political repression. Yu (2006; 2007a; 2007b) further states that online participation enables Chinese users to exercise forms of active citizenship. Yu (2007a) studies some cases of political and social parody in the Chinese

cybersphere, to argue that the Internet gives citizens a public platform for alternative expressions of dissent. Li (2011) interrogates how Internet users in some well-known *egao* ("spoof") cases have deployed parody to protest against state control and censorship of the Internet in China. Qiu (2009) studies, among many other things, how Chinese citizens from different socioeconomic strata gain access to information and use communication technology for different purposes. He thus inserts an important discussion of class into debates over the uses of information and communication technologies in China. Wallis (2008) examines how migrant young women in the low-level service sector of Beijing use mobile phones to negotiate the struggles they face in their daily lives and to create and sustain meaningful connections.

Most of the studies mentioned above are interested in notions of modernity, globalization, youth culture, identity formation, community-building, and civil society. The emergent middle classes – or in some cases the cultural elites – are often what scholars appear to be primarily interested in; which means that rural residents and elderly audiences are often excluded from their research projects. Wallis (2008) and Qiu (2009) study migrant workers and working-class people, but these less privileged populations are still located in urban spaces in their projects. Rural residents residing in the countryside have rarely been studied in media audience research, and the neglect of these marginalized citizens in academic work on audiences echoes their invisibility in China's market economy and commercial media spheres.

While communication scholars have played an active role in engaging with Chinese audiences' interactions with the new media, they still lag behind in producing knowledge about Chinese audiences' consumption of traditional media. While cultural anthropologists have led the way in using ethnography to study media culture as part of larger social and economic transformations, their focus is often on popular culture, namely cinematic texts and fictional TV programs. Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of past audience studies in China, the following section will provide a tentative agenda for future research.

Agenda for Future Audience Research

In the mid- to late 1990s, there was a strong push in some quarters in the West to abandon media ethnography, and these critics lamented that audience studies often produce and repeat the boring mantra of active audiences (Parameswaran, 2003). Critics thus called for a return to media texts and political economy. What is missing from such critiques is the fact that audiences in large parts of the non-Western world have not been studied. As Parameswaran has pointed out, in the context of global capitalism, what we need now is a "renewed commitment to discovering global media's role in constraining and enabling progressive social-democratic practices" (pp. 311–312). Parameswaran (2001; 2003) is among the very few scholars who have conducted audience ethnology in developing countries; in her

case the location is India. Her research among young middle-class women in urban India who read Western romance fiction indicates that Indian women assert the superiority of Indian culture and simultaneously enjoy the privileges of Western media culture. Among Indian women, the reading of romance is closely related to discourses of patriarchy, nationalism, and modernity, which are of paramount importance to third-world countries and to the international community at large. Concurring with Parameswaran, I would argue that media scholars should be committed to in-depth ethnographic audience studies of China – an emerging superpower that is exerting an increasing amount of influence and is shaping the political and economic agendas of numerous communities in the world.

When studying Chinese audiences, scholars can start by paying attention to citizens' / consumers' interpretations, negotiations, and even contestations of TV dramas, which are the most watched entertainment genre. The subgenres of TV drama popular in China consist of "*lianxuju* (television serial), *tongsuju* (popular drama), *qingjieju* or *yanqing ju* (melodrama), *shinei ju* (indoor drama), *feizaoju* (soap opera), *xiju* (comedy), *qingjing xiju* (sitcom), *lishi ju* (historical drama), *wuxiaju* (martial arts drama), and *jingfeiju* (detective and crime drama)" (Lu, 2000: 26). The most recent popular TV serial called *Woju* (*Live in a Snail Shell*, 2009) takes on three hot and controversial topics in a changing Chinese society: corruption, second wives (*ernai*), and the high price of housing. While the series was originally planned in 35 episodes, the last two episodes were never broadcast and, according to a rumor, authorities banned them because the subject matter was too sensitive. Studying how different audiences interpret the drama's representation of controversial topics could reveal the hopes, tensions, and anxieties of citizens in China's rapidly changing society.

The second potential area of research relates to Chinese audiences' negotiation and construction of their identities along the vectors of gender, sexuality, and class. Numerous TV dramas and newspaper and magazine reports can provide rich background materials for this kind of research. While Rofel (2007) analyzes how men and women of different social classes negotiate their national identity in the process of watching a TV drama, more research needs to address the impact of China's transitions on family relations, gender roles, and norms; on changing ideas of respectability and upward mobility; and on practices of romance and sexuality. Audience research on gender and sexuality in China should be situated within the contexts of an increasing social stratification and of a neoliberal consumer culture that commodifies women and casts them in enduring patriarchal-traditional structures of power, where they are marginalized.

The third promising area of inquiry and research studies how rural residents and older people consume the media. These two groups of people are often ignored despite their large numbers. The majority of Chinese people still live in the countryside. More than 162 million people (11.2% of the entire population) – with the addition of 10 million every year – are now over 60 (Du, 2009). Reportedly China has already entered the ranks of aging societies. For many elderly people, watching TV is one of the most important entertainment activities of their daily lives. Studying

how elderly audiences consume the media not only gives insight into these populations, but also has strong political and social implications for media producers and policymakers.

The fourth promising area of research is the consumption of news programs. News programs and political commentary programs are traditionally viewed as the voices of the party state, but they are also undergoing reform. While poker-faced anchors of *CCTV's Network News* often deliver news in a sober, serious, and solemn way, represented by Luo Jing – a 25-year-old CCTV anchorman who died in 2008 – CCTV has recently hired a fashionable sexy anchorwoman in its program *Zhaowen Tianxia*. Recently Chinese news media programs have also acquired a new importance as part of China's efforts to use media as tools of global soft power. China is reported to have set aside 45 billion Yuan (6 billion US\$) to expand the capacity for outreach of its three major news media outlets: Xinhua, China Central Television (CCTV), and the newspaper *People's Daily*. Thus it is important to study how Chinese news and media programs are consumed by domestic and global audiences. CCTV's annual gala, which is the most watched program since its inception in 1983, is also a very good avenue for future audience research.

With an avalanche of foreign media texts that have descended upon China, especially children's media products, researchers can study how young citizens and their parents are responding to these media and how their exposure shapes, or contributes to shaping, relations across different generations. Each year, China imports large quantities of children's literature and cartoons. For example, in 2007 more than ten thousand children's books were published, and many of them were translations (GAPP, 2008). In 2001 Nickelodeon entered China; 62.9 million Chinese households view its daily half-hour Chinese-language program over 100 cable and terrestrial stations nationwide, and in March 2004 Nickelodeon's "CatDog" and "The Wild Thornberrys" aired on CCTV's new children's channel, for one hour and a half daily, to almost 386 million households across China (www.nick.com). Research on ethnic groups other than the dominant Han community in China would shed light on the challenges of facilitating and sustaining multicultural citizenship in the global economy, a problem that other countries also face. A few scholars (e.g., Oakes, 1998; Gillette, 2000; Schein, 2000) conducted anthropological studies on the culture of Chinese minorities such as the Miao and the Hui, but their research does not center on the media. Media programs produced in Tibetan and Arabic cater for the minority Tibetan and Hui populations. It would be interesting to study the role that specialized linguistic media play in helping minorities preserve their culture yet also forge affiliations with the larger construct of nation.

Last but not least, researchers should consider a paradigm shift when studying audiences. While the above-mentioned research projects and suggestions for research only consider the reception of media texts at the individual level, I argue that researchers should also pay increasing attention to how audiences form various kinds of social networks with each other and how the existing networks affect their interpretation of media products. Given that the new media environment blurs the line between

media producers and consumers, it would be a mistake to view Chinese audiences as contained at the reception end. Rather, researchers should come up with a new model, which looks at how audiences interact with each other, whom they tend to share information with, and how such information flows change the meanings of the media products and provide opportunities for audiences to collaboratively consume, modify, and resist media products. In this sense, online fan culture offers a very promising field of research, not only because huge fan bases have grown that are centered on media celebrities, sports stars, and other public figures, but also because interdependent networks of entrepreneurs, public relations (PR) firms, advertising agencies, and corporations have been developed to market Chinese celebrities as valuable commodities and further to capitalize on fan culture (Li, 2010). While Oates and Polumbaum (2004) study how Yao Ming (the professional basketball player) has been marketed, there is little research on how celebrities like these are “consumed,” even though they are constantly ranked and rated for their popularity. Research on these celebrities should go beyond just media ratings and rankings, if one is to develop a more sophisticated cultural understanding of audiences. Rather, researchers should study the formation of networks among audiences that either identify with the celebrities or partially resist, if not completely reject, celebrity culture. Studying audiences from a network perspective allows us not only to see how social networks structure media production, distribution, and consumption, but also to explore how consumption enables the formation of new social networks.

Conclusion

Commercialization, China’s entry into the WTO, and global influence have shaped the development of the Chinese media industry to a great extent and have guided the trajectories of audience research in China. Generally speaking, audience research conducted by mainland Chinese media scholars has been characterized by an over-emphasis on the positivist tradition; thus audience studies often gets equated with survey research and with the media effects tradition. Researchers in this area tend to stress the utilitarian and applied research that has been funded by media organizations, and this fact has resulted in an inadequate development, at this historical moment in China’s transformation, of theories that are concerned with the complexities of audience engagement with media (Liu, 2008; Hu, 2010).

Some prominent scholars in the field of critical studies have approached imagined audiences or implicit readers through textual analysis, historical analysis, and Marxist criticism, in an attempt to study cultural representations within the larger context of expansion in the media industries, issues of local and global cultural interactions, and China’s embracing of consumer modernity. However, their critical approaches often take an elitist position, without giving due consideration to ordinary audiences’ interpretations of media. Scholars who are trained in the West used ethnographic

approaches to conduct fieldwork and to give voice to audiences; but they have largely focused on cinematic texts and TV dramas, without paying much attention to news programs and other media genres.

In attempting to analyze media narratives as open-ended semiotic texts, some scholars have conducted interesting and informative research, which combines ethnography and in-depth interviews with the analysis of the political economy of media production. Media scholars in Hong Kong have played a leading role in such research. Trained in the West, these scholars have examined topics such as modernity, nation, gender, sexuality, and globalization in the context of a media boom in China. A few Western scholars, largely in the fields of anthropology and Chinese studies, have also published important work on popular culture's influences on the social fabric of different communities.

Some communication scholars have focused their attention on new media such as the Internet and the mobile phone in order to address the topic of Chinese audiences as active users of media technologies. Aiming to understand Chinese users as well as to promote activism, civil society, and community formation, these studies have come side by side with the rapid growth of new communication technologies in China and with the rising importance of this country as a superpower.

Despite the fact that the Internet has recently increased its rate of penetration there, generally speaking the majority of Chinese Internet users are still young, educated, and urban (CNNIC, 2010), which means that rural residents and elderly people are largely excluded. Indeed most audience research in China has generally privileged middle-class and urban populations. Young urban residents with considerable purchasing power represent a valuable consumer audience for transnational and Chinese capitalists and media entrepreneurs. Elderly people and residents in rural areas, who are more likely to consume traditional media such as TV and radio and who cannot contribute much to the current eyeball economy, are often excluded from audience research. Future research projects should pay heed to largely ignored social segments of the population – such as poor women, children, elderly people, and rural residents – in order to correct the urban middle-class bias of most of the existing work on Chinese audiences.

I also suggest that researchers should go beyond the models of traditional audience studies, which focus on the reception of media products at the individual level, and start to embrace social network analysis, which enables researchers to look at how structures affect the reception of media products and how consumption produces new social networks. Given that the new media environment has greatly facilitated communication across various boundaries, studies of audiences from a network perspective have the potential to offer insight into the intertwining relationship between structure and agency.

Media scholarship in China is very new, and Chinese communication, as a field, has been established recently. Media research in China has been largely influenced by communication theories developed in the West, particularly in the US. As the numbers of US scholars who are interested in China increase, the academy should

find ways to support and fund these scholars' interests in empirical audience research in distant locations. The communications academy should do a better job of encouraging students to engage more with comparative modes of thinking about the world; and promoting audience research in developing countries that are witnessing a sweeping economic transition is just a first step toward achieving such an objective. Finally, going beyond essentialist or imperialist models of research on culture and communication, the field of audience studies should nurture not only ethnic Chinese, East Asian, or more privileged Western scholars' interests in China; it should also encourage minorities in Western nations and scholars in non-Western nations to become curious about China and to conduct ethnographic work there.

NOTE

- 1 A note of caution here: Ethnographical research needs careful preparation and contemplation. Douglas Kellner (1995) states that hasty ethnographic research may result in various fetishisms: the "fetishism of struggle," the "fetishism of audience pleasure," and the danger of "celebrat[ing] resistance per se without distinguishing between types and forms of resistance" (pp. 38–39).

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Health, Culture, and Power

Understanding Women Audiences of Health Media

Linda Aldoory

ABSTRACT

Only limited research has been published about women as an audience of health messages in the media. Furthermore, most of the well-known health communication theories have not effectively addressed the sociocultural and political environments that construct the medical/health industry and the media, which impact the everyday lives of women and their decision-making in the area of health. This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the research conducted on women as an audience of mass media health messages. The chapter then critiques this body of knowledge on account of its weak theoretical utility/development for women's health decision-making and empowerment. After review and critique, empirical examples are provided from research and related studies on women's media consumption, in order to reconstruct theoretical arguments that reflect women's everyday lives and contribute to women's decision-making in the area of health. The chapter concludes with an agenda for future research in the areas of health communication and of women as audience.

Issues of health are integral to women's everyday lives, especially as women in Western societies continue to be socially constructed as primary healthcare givers and main consumers of healthcare (Bruhn, 1988; Majority of Women Control Health-Care Decisions, 1997; Thirlaway & Heggs, 2005). Women are more likely than men to seek out medical information and support for health problems (Fallows, 2005;

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume IV: *Audience and Interpretation*. Edited by Radhika Parameswaran.

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Fox, 2005; Yanovitzky & Blitz, 2000). Women are in fact the “guardians of health,” for families and for society (Thirlaway & Heggs, 2005, p. 109).

This sociocultural burden of women being assigned the role of health guardian is reflected in mainstream media, niche media, and public health campaigns, which typically include pedagogic media messages designed to create awareness, change attitudes, and induce changes in audiences’ behaviors and lifestyles. In particular, there is a large sector of specialty media that targets women’s health issues, and federal and state funded public health campaigns that target female audiences. As women are more likely than men to rely on media sources when they seek health information (Fallows, 2005; Fox, 2005), the narratives of many media health messages reinforce stereotypical feminine traits, such as the natural inclination to care for others and the prioritization of dieting as a route to achieving beauty.

Research in health communication has subsequently increased its attention toward women as audience members of health media. Most of the scholarship, however, reveals allegiance to a traditional, biomedical paradigm that has long governed Western-based medicine and health science. This paradigm manifests itself in health communication research in a number of ways: through an isolation of cognitive variables; through lack of cultural context; through focus on individuals as agents accountable for their own actions; and through a denial of political, economic, and social hegemonic formations that confound individual decisions about health. However, a growing body of knowledge about female audiences has contributed to a better understanding of the complexities of message appeals and campaign design. Yet, while doing so, this scholarship has largely neglected the broader cultural factors and ideological contexts that constrain how women interpret, negotiate, or resist to representations of the body and of health in public campaigns and in news media.

This chapter will attempt to address the gaps in cultural and ideological critique by offering a synopsis of recent research on women as health audiences and then by stipulating a set of premises that may help to strengthen the scope of future cultural and critical approaches to women as an audience of health media. First I offer definitions of relevant terms in health communication, and then I argue that the biomedical paradigm has reigned as the dominant conceptual approach to research on women, health, and the media. The chapter then outlines and reviews selectively examples of scholarly work that has examined the ways in which health media, news media, and communication campaigns target women. After this review, the chapter offers propositions for developing a theoretical approach that reflects women’s standpoint and that contributes constructively to women’s decision-making on health-related issues.

Definition of Terms

This chapter takes a social constructivist approach to health and health communication. Concepts such as “health” and “audience” can take on different meanings when

considered in this manner and can be interpreted through the lenses of everyday contexts and of intersecting personal and social identities. Therefore, in order for readers to understand my use of terms such as “health,” “health media,” and “audience” in this chapter, I define these taken for granted terms before I proceed to my discussion of health, culture, and power.

First, the word “health” is used in this chapter as the World Health Organization has defined it: “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 2010, p. 1). The “absence of disease” used to be the historical conceptualization of health; it is based on medical science, which isolated the physical body from the mind and spirit. While Western medical practice continues to focus on healing the body, international health organizations and the field of public health helped revise the meaning of health so as to make it include the essential roles of mental, spiritual, and social well-being. According to the WHO’s 2010 *Constitution*, “the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment is essential” (p. 1).

Health, human illness, and disease are viewed here as socially constructed states of being. While human illness appears on the surface to be a set of universal conditions – physical and mental symptoms and problems – that all humans experience regardless of their location or culture, illness is simultaneously a private individual experience and a medically defined one, since it is ultimately identified with and felt by an individual (Bagley, 2001). At the same time, cultural norms and political systems also (re)constitute our foundational ideas of and assumptions about health and sickness. The process of aging and the process of giving birth, for example, are two natural human experiences that are medicalized and often defined as diseased. The traditional, biomedical perspective considers health as an organizing system of physiological and measurable signs of absence of disease – and the absence of disease is often defined on the basis of young, able-bodied male physiology. Thus, individualized experiences of aging and “symptoms” that coincide with menses and menopause are signs of a “diseased” physiology (Martin, 1987). Cultural norms create perceptions of blame, victimization, and lack of control for many who experience these types of physical states. In addition to health marginalization according to gender and age, there is also stigma against women of color, against the physically disabled, and against lesbian, transgendered, and bisexual women. Thus health and illness are far from being universal categories; instead they are negotiated within the context of women’s intersecting identities and experiences of oppression and privilege and they are dependent on dominant biomedical definitions of healthy and sick in this country.

Discourses of health filter through professional (provider to consumer/patient), interpersonal (family, friends), social (community), and mediatized channels. This chapter focuses primarily on health media, which I define as media content that is intentionally designed to influence health outcomes in audiences. Health media in this chapter include campaign messages presented through television, posters, brochures, billboards, Internet, radio, and magazines; news coverage in print, broadcast,

and web-based formats; and health messages produced on CD-ROM disks and video, comics, and songs designed for entertainment and education. I exclude messages in popular contexts that potentially have an impact on health attitudes and behaviors but are delivered without the producers' explicitly stated intentions. While such popular media are important to study in order to advance our knowledge of the subtle ways in which audiences register implicit messages concerning their bodies and states of sickness and health, this chapter limits its analysis to manifest, informative, and persuasive messages that are intentionally crafted to educate and to promote and attempt to change health outcomes.

The audiences that are intended for health media are conceived of as fragmented and more fluid than in past conceptions of an audience, which argued for monolithic groups (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Livingstone, 2006). New technologies, such as user-generated web tools, have disintegrated any former notions of a collective mass of people who have similar habits and exhibit universal behaviors. Furthermore, feminist researchers' study of intersectionality has highlighted the inability to assume similar lifestyles only on the basis of one shared cultural identity. Livingstone (2006) suggested, however, that "the audience" should ideally be considered as a "relational or interactional construct" that offers a "shorthand way" of understanding how communication technologies create and facilitate the construction of imagined communities. Such a shorthand construct allows authors such as myself to simplify the real-world conditions of audiences for the purpose of analysis while they remain aware of the constraints and dangers that categories impose.

Research on women and their relation to personal health, medical institutions, and the media has relied largely on simplistic and problematic – linear, binary, and isolated from culture – approaches to the body, to disease, and to audiences' reception of cultural representations. I purposely limit the studies discussed and the interpretations offered to North American perspectives and medical institutions. Within these conceptual and geographic parameters, I will explain how health and healthcare systems, health media, and women consumers of healthcare are all embedded in power relations that inscribe Western health and women. I illustrate these power relations here by describing and critiquing previous research in health communication on women audiences.

Health, Culture, and Power

Health is constituted within contexts of culture and power, and these contexts can sometimes direct audiences to produce meanings that uphold hegemonic constructions of race, gender, and class. Definitions and experiences of health and disease are also based in audiences' membership within given cultural or social orders, and dominant or normative ideologies of gender, nation, class or ethnicity can guide our judgments of health and perceptions of symptoms (Thirlaway & Higgs, 2005).

Arguing for the influence of gendered experiences, Bagley (2001) asserted, "A woman or man may experience an illness in a uniquely gender-specific manner" (p. 442). As Martin's (1987) classic study shows, some women viewed menstruation and menopause as "normal" aspects of womanhood; whereas the medical institutions defined menstruation and menopause as diseased states that required pharmaceutical treatment. Furthermore, Martin also found that women from different racial backgrounds and socioeconomic contexts constructed meanings of reproductive health differently. Cultural differences change how health and medicine are interpreted and then enacted upon in everyday life.

The Biomedical Paradigm

The definition of reproductive processes as medically symptomatic derives from the biomedical perspective that constitutes Western-based medical research and health-care. The biomedical perspective (re)produces relations of power where federal, corporate, and medical authorities control the production of meaning about health in this country. There are several characteristics of the biomedical paradigm that suggest both formal and hegemonic control. First, the biomedical approach to science calls for empiricism, for detachment from what is being studied, and for a hierarchical research relationship between the expert researcher and the examined participant. This sets up a knower/known dichotomy that invests with power medical scientists, physicians, and healthcare organizations and frames the consumers of healthcare as inferior and passive. The normative legitimacy of medical power is illustrated in those situations where women who choose to make personal health decisions without consulting medical practitioners are cast as either naïve or willful, and sometimes as ignorant.

A second characteristic of the biomedical approach is its dismissal of the role of emotionality in health outcomes. Emotions are discredited as a biasing or polluting factor in "accurate" cognitive processing; at best, emotion has been conceptualized as "a heuristic, a mental shortcut, whereby people access their pool of positive and negative feelings towards an issue to guide judgment" (Thirlaway & Heggs, 2005, p. 108). Yet the medical erasure of the emotional context runs counter to the ways in which individuals and families who live with illness experience and grapple with emotions on a routine basis (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). Mishler (1984) argued that there is ongoing conflict between the "the voice of medicine" and "the voice of the lifeworld" – where the lifeworld is viewed by medical practitioners as insubstantial to healthcare. Emotionality is a stereotype ascribed to women; thus women are rendered inconsequential by the biomedical paradigm.

A third characteristic of the biomedical paradigm is its emphasis on a pharmaceutical treatment of the physical body, which results in the body being medicalized and isolated into examined and potentially treatable parts. The focus is on the individual level of analysis, where, according to the paradigm, visible and measurable change

of the body and of health can be monitored and observed. As a consequence, holistic views of health are ignored or minimized, and non-Western forms of healing are considered placebo agents, or even dangerous impediments to the patient's recovery. By extension, US medical institutions can devalue some communities' non-Western approaches to health and treatment as unscientific or outdated.

Finally, the biomedical paradigm constrains health practices through economic power relations (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). Sharf and Vanderford explain the economic commodification of healthcare in the following terms: "Consumers purchase it, providers supply it, third-party payers and health care organizations manage it, and primary care practitioners coordinate and guard entry to more specialized modes of treatment" (ibid., p. 13). Both Condit (1994) and Turow (1989) have extended this argument to health communication, to suggest that doctors are considered the best authorities on health information because they do exert some control over what counts as expert knowledge and as critical economic resources. The professional and cultural capital of doctors, as the most elevated authorities on health and disease, gets further enhanced when audiences report that they are the most credible spokespersons in health news and in public health campaigns.

In everyday life there is a confluence of the biomedical and the sociocultural "life-world" frames, and this confluence creates multiple and yet constraining views and practices of health and illness. Individuals experiencing illness negotiate their identities within healthcare's contested political and economic terrain in this nation. Knowledge production on, and interpretations of, treatments for illnesses manifest themselves along hegemonic racial, economic, and gender lines. The biomedical "norm" for being healthy consists, subtly and politically, in being white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, able-bodied, and financially secure. Communities of women and people of color are often marginalized by the medical environment as a result of such assumptions, which in turn shape the formulation of health standards.

I use the phrase *medical environment* here so as to include physician and hospital services, federally funded medical research, professional training and education, and related public health practices and research projects. I am referring to this collection of medically produced entities as an "environment" because racial, economic, and gendered marginalization does not always manifest itself openly in patients' conversations with healthcare practitioners; instead, subtle and sometimes hard to detect norms and values that lie beneath the taken for granted professional norms of medicine create the potential for women to be marginalized. If female health consumers internalize meanings of trivialization and lack of power in health contexts, then ultimately they may think and act in a manner that has a negative impact on their own health.

Health Media

The biomedical paradigm is reflected in health media, and in particular in media used for public health campaigns that attempt to change behavior, which is often the main goal of such campaigns (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). Most campaigns assume a linear

progression, in their audiences, from knowledge increase to attitude change, with the intent to change concretely a health outcome. Meta-analyses have indicated that behavior change is successful in only approximately 5 to 7% of all public health campaigns (Snyder & Hamilton, 2002; Derzon & Lipsey, 2002). Yet reliance on the biomedical paradigm continues to guide campaign planners toward the ongoing pursuit of behavior change and toward the use of a linear model of communication that removes media messages and media effects from historical and social contexts. Health campaigns need to reassess their organizational and long-term campaign priorities, re-examine their definitions of success, and consider seriously the roles that culture, power, and meaning-making play in shaping the contours of health.

Also, like healthcare, economic structures and power relations have an impact on health media (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). The media overwhelmingly portray women's health issues from a middle-class perspective because medical and pharmaceutical establishments favor middle- to upper-income consumers, clients, and patients (Condit, 1994). Therefore health images in news, campaigns, and popular media tend to mirror middle-American lifestyles and problems. The channels selected tend to be those that imply access via economic resources: while posters in bus shelters continue to be a tactic for urban segments of campaign populations, Internet and cell phone technologies are the predominant mode regardless of the age or socioeconomic status of the audience targeted.

One example of this derives from my own experiences as a campaign consultant. A team of researchers completed an extensive, in-depth research about audiences of over 65-year-old adults in this country and about their media use and preferences. We found that, while Internet use was increasing among this population, over 80% of the older adults did not use the Internet, and the majority of these people did not wish to use Internet or *did not have access* to computers. The research we conducted revealed that older adults used and preferred newsletters from hospitals, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) materials sent to their homes, large text for easier reading, and television. The media planning team subsequently hired by the client was given all these research details, and the team still proceeded to create a media campaign of Internet sources for the audience of older adults. Channels included paid advertisements on Facebook and in online newspapers. Regardless of the older adults' lack of access and desire – and we found many of them to be economically limited, too – the media team wished to prove to the client that their funding made a large impact on today's interactive web environment. The economic drive behind the client and the media team's work superseded the cultural and economic criteria that defined the target audience.

Women and Health

Historically, women have been oppressed by the biomedical assumptions guiding Western healthcare. As explained earlier, the medical profession treats women's natural reproductive processes as states of disease fit to be treated. Also, the stereotypes

of emotionality and mental instability have led physicians to prescribe tranquilizing drugs and anti-depressants to more women than men (Nussbaum, Ragan, & Whaley, 2003). Women report experiencing more health problems and seeking out healthcare more frequently than men. However, one study found that, although women asked more questions than men, healthcare providers gave shorter and less technical answers to women's questions (*ibid.*, p. 194). Gabbard-Alley (1995) stated that, "although women spend more time involved in communication acts in health contexts, for whatever reasons, their concerns are taken less seriously than are those of men" (p. 39).

However, as explained earlier, women are typically ascribed the caregiver role within the context of family and of societal norms (Thirlaway & Heggs, 2005). In interviews with mothers about family food choices, De Bourdeaudhuij (1997) found that women felt a responsibility to keep everyone in the family healthy and satisfied with the food provided. This type of "unpaid caregiving" is distinctly gendered. Culturally prescribed gender norms assume that women from all types of racial, ethnic, geographic, and class backgrounds hold ideals of nurturance, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Gahagan, Loppie, Rehman, Maclellan, & Side, 2007). Whether accepted or contested, women often adopt the role of unpaid caregiver, even within expansive kinship networks (Gahagan et al., 2007, p. 48).

Women seek out health information more than men, and they do so through media sources (Warner & Procaccino, 2007). Recent studies have shown that women are more likely to go online to seek health information, and that women who are online are there mostly to look for health and medical information and to get support for health and personal problems (Fallows, 2005; Fox, 2005; Warner & Procaccino, 2007). These studies do not contextualize the consumer-seeking behavior within cultural, economic, or social contexts: perhaps women online have greater access to computers because their class position affords them access to capital, professional employment, and transportation; or perhaps unemployed women have more spare time to think about health-care and to seek out information online. Questions of identity, cultural perspective, and economic constraints are significant factors that influence women's exposure to and reception of health media. Current research, however, has restricted explanations for women's meaning-making to certain isolated cognitive variables. Some research projects such as my own have begun to engage with questions of culture and power in this area, but there are very few other studies that attempt to offer a holistic critique or to engage with women's interpretations deeply enough to account for health media's varied intersections with and impact on society.

Women as an Audience of Health Media

The research on female audiences of health media reflects the dialectical tension between the biomedical paradigm and a sociocultural perspective, where both simul-

taneously facilitate and constrain research designs and interpretative approaches. On the one hand, scholars have increasingly attended to cultural sensitivity, racially and ethnically diverse participant groups, and marginalized and underserved populations of women. Studies have offered greater understanding of how women with different identities and from different cultural communities make meaning of various forms of health media through the lenses of race, class, and everyday experiences of illness and disease. However, current-day studies continue to focus on woman's accountability for behavior change, and few researchers analyze the effects of medicalization on women's bodies and minds. There is limited analysis of the power relations in play that benefit medical and economic interests while constraining women's choices; and the racial and gender hegemony of the medical and media systems are rarely interrogated.

The body of knowledge on women as a health audience is too large to be summarize completely or described in detail in this chapter. What I do here instead is to present some themes that characterize the research published in this country; and I limit the search to the last 15 years. The themes help illuminate the gaps in understanding that will be critiqued in the conclusion of this chapter. For each theme, I include a description of one or two representative studies that have been published since 2000.

Formative Research with Female Audiences

There have been some published articles that report formative research findings, which became the basis for developing health campaigns (Bull, Cohen, Ortiz, & Evans, 2002; Doyle et al., 2006; Lindsey et al., 2007). Focus groups reveal women's opinions and responses that are then mined to design slogans, posters, or other health messages.

In Bull and colleagues' (2002) study, focus groups were used to investigate opinions about female condoms in order to develop a female condom promotion campaign in Denver, Colorado. The authors stated that the participants were "women" aged between 14 and 25. They reported that these participants were of varied racial identity, although race was invisible in the description of findings and interpretations. Researchers first used some of the women's opinions about female condoms to design posters that were subsequently shared with focus groups for feedback. Findings suggested that the participants wanted direct statements about female condoms making sex less worrisome than male condoms do, because female condoms allow women to have more control over their sexuality and reproductive functions. This study represented a rigorous and systematic model for focus group methodology, because researchers held groups with women at three separate time periods during the development of campaign messages: before launching the design, during the campaign, and afterwards, for final revisions. The voices of the women were implemented through visual and textual elements of the final campaign materials. However,

there was no explanation for why young and older adolescents were defined as adult women and included in women's discussions of sexual intercourse, unprotected sex, and condom use. The reader is led to believe that the participants were sexually active; but there was no interrogation of the power relations within the family and in the more private partner contexts that regulate sexuality.

Health Messages as Cues for Individual Cognitions

The largest group of studies on women and health media tests the impact of media-tized messages on individual cognitions (Hether, Huang, Beck, Murphy, & Valente, 2008). Scholars believe that psychological factors can be linked to behavioral intent, increasing the likelihood of behavior change, which is the primary goal of the health messages examined in this research. Dependent measures include knowledge, attitudes, intent to engage in requested behavior, and sometimes actual behavioral outcomes. This cognition-to-behavior link guides the theories that dictate the selection of independent variables for researchers to measure in their assessments of a media campaign's outcomes. The popular theories in health communication are the same ones that prevail in the research on women audiences: social cognitive theory, the health belief model, and the theory of reasoned action/planned behavior (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000; Freimuth, 1995). This group of studies does not interrogate the influence of institutional factors and gendered norms about women.

For example, Hether and colleagues (2008) analyzed findings from a panel survey (of repeat survey-takers from a research company's email list). The survey had an 8% response rate; the participants were 92% white, 69% married, and 66% had a close family member or a friend with cancer. Thus a somewhat select group of women responded to a questionnaire about their knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions following the viewing of a breast cancer survivor's story. The study's "most important contribution" was the finding that watching two breast cancer stories on television had greater effect on knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intention than watching only one breast cancer story (Hether et al., 2008, p. 820). Authors did not critique the intersectional identities and cultural experiences that may have led this particular group of women to feel that watching two stories had greater salience for the person than watching just one.

All cognitive theories in health communication attest to the relevance of self-efficacy for behavior change. Self-efficacy is the perceived confidence that one can successfully engage in the behavior requested in the health message. Self-efficacy can be linked to understandings of empowerment and control, and therefore it can be an important construct in the study of women audiences. Some authors argue that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of disease prevention and of detection behaviors among women (Allen, Sorensen, Stoddard, Colditz, & Peterson, 1998; Anderson & McMillion, 1995; Lipkus, Biradavolu, Fenn, Keller, & Rimer, 2001; Prentice-Dunn, Floyd, & Flournoy, 2001; Stein, Fox, Murata, & Morisky, 1992). One study found that

– according to the categories used by the authors – “Hispanic women” were more likely than “white women” to believe that they can do nothing to prevent getting heart disease (Christian, Rosamond, White, & Mosca, 2007). Another study found that perceived social norms can influence self-efficacy; when women perceived greater social acceptance of a behavior, their self-efficacy in performing that behavior increased (Egbert & Parrott, 2001). These general findings were not analyzed in the context of racial and class hegemony, which defines health practices in this country; however, the results do offer an opportunity for questions to be posed about hegemony and the role of culture in mediating perceptions of self-efficacy.

Women and Health News

Research on women as an audience of news about health risk examines interpretations of risk probabilities and the impact of spokespersons as legitimate presenters of safety information. One study examined how 170 women employed by a large corporation interpreted risk probability in a news article (Thirlaway & Heggs, 2005). Findings showed a wide variety of responses in how the women described their own risk after reading the article. A few reinterpreted the health risk in quantifiable phrases and did not articulate an emotive response. Some used words such as “frightening” and “concerning,” others responded with guilt, and still others restated the facts without expressing any obvious opinion or attitude. Only 20% of participants reported intent to change some behavior; and the reasons given for not changing behavior reflected resistance toward the media, toward “expert” opinion, and toward “science” and “statistics” (p. 114). The authors concluded that “experiential contexts” were filters for the women’s responses to the health risk news.

Studies of spokesperson impact have revealed a gendered context for how women make meaning out of risk news. Siegrist, Cvetkovich, and Gutscher (2001) found that women had less trust in news spokespersons who were authorities than men did, and that women gave less support for government officials’ decisions not to investigate a high-risk event. In another study we explored how women created meaning out of news about the safety risk concerning a food supply; and we did this through 23 in-depth individual interviews (Vardeman & Aldoory, 2008b). When news texts were shared with the participants, we found that, initially, the latter expressed concern for loved ones rather than for themselves. Regardless of whether one was a parent or not, a participant articulated meaning within her perceived role of caregiver; as one participant said, “it’s just this like guilty feeling because you’re supposed to be the one providing the nutrients.” Most of the participants expressed distrust of the federal and medical organizations represented in the news; they did not believe that government and medical spokespersons prioritized the needs of female consumers over the governmental goals of reputation or organizational profit. However, in the face of high risk, the participants felt compelled at least to attempt to take the protection measures suggested in the news.

Our study also explored whether experiential and cultural characteristics in spokespersons enhanced the salience of news for individual participants. The majority of participants preferred the spokespersons in risk news to be similar to them not only in terms of physical and demographic characteristics, but also in terms of familial context and risk susceptibility. For example, a female spokesperson shown to be empowered within the formal system of government and within the system of science increased the participants' perception of legitimacy and salience of the messages in relation to the health threat. One participant said: "If it's a woman spokesperson talking about it, and she seems really passionate about the issue [...] then I look at them like, 'Wow! They're in a position of power.'" Additionally, when the spokesperson transmitted a sense of involvement and susceptibility, this heightened the participant's emotional response to news about there being a threat, as well as the salience of this news for her. Perhaps the spokesperson's vulnerability to the health risk lowered her control over the situation, and participants perceived this state as balancing the relations of power between them and that person; this in turn heightened the audience's sense of legitimacy of the message, since it was not coming from a distant or neutral "third-party" representative who would not understand vulnerability to a risk that may impact women.

The participants also shared the constraints they had perceived in processing meaning and in deciding on a course of action after their exposure to the news. The primary barrier was the perception of limited alternatives to the food in question. "Tell us what we can do without stopping feeding our kids yogurt and cheese and milk that they live on everyday. Give us some other practical suggestions [. . .]." Some women had limited media access and did not trust alternative media outlets. Another barrier to action was the prioritization of other health threats in their everyday lives. Finally, race and ethnicity also played a role for the women of color in the study. The participants represented a diverse group – with respect to age, race, and ethnicity. The women of color expressed greater concern about the health risks communicated in the news and a desire to change their food behaviors to reduce the risk; but they also communicated less self-efficacy in their perceived ability to do what was being asked of them in the safety messages of the news.

A second study, of the audiences created by pregnant women, nursing women, and women with young children, explored how these women construct meaning in a contested media environment that targets them as a high-risk audience (Vardeman & Aldoory, 2008a). The study was conducted around the news coverage of methylmercury levels in fish (FDA & EPA, 2004). The new FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) guidelines were issued just three years after a different set of federal guidelines on eating fish; this fact, together with variations in health risks according to type and amount of fish, and together with a simultaneous promotion of benefits from fish consumption, created a situation where the news environment relating to fish consumption represented

conflicting and confusing messages. The setting for our study was this contested news terrain: rather than examine just one news story as a static textual unit, we sought to replicate the natural media environment about fish consumption at the time. News media tended to report the risks without a historical perspective, which added to the contradictions. The media offered a prime environment, designed to explore how women from federally defined high-risk groups made meaning out of risk news and its messages. Actual news articles from local and regional newspapers were introduced to six focus groups conducted across three Mid-Atlantic states – in an eastern shore community, in a suburb, and in an urban city. Eastern shore groups offered a perspective from women who relied economically on the fishing industry.

Most of the women were already aware of the contradictory nature of messages about eating fish safely. To articulate their understandings of the risk messages in the study, participants compared the conflicting information to their current knowledge and past experiences. Many of the pregnant women and of the women with small children expressed confusion about the risk, because they perceived it to be directly related to their caregiving ability and they sensed a loss of control over the role this ability entailed. The confusion was accompanied by feelings of concern, fear, anxiety, and guilt about whether they could eat fish or feed it to their families. Even though the benefits of eating fish continued to be touted in the news, the women's purposeful avoidance of any fish offered them a way to regain control in an ambiguous health context, which they perceived as having a direct impact on their identity as caregivers. For women living in fishing economies, there was skepticism about the media, the government, the fish packing industry, and the environmental groups. These participants did not believe that the warnings were based on fact – they perceived their source as having a low credibility rate, or they did not think that enough facts had been offered in the news to support the idea of there being a real risk. These women survived on sales of fish throughout the region; they told stories of resistance against the regulatory efforts of state agencies. The women negotiated their struggles within contested relations of power with their husbands and economic providers, and with what they perceived to be a controlling government and constraining activist groups. Their oppositional readings of the health message also illustrated their belief that the media were primarily representatives or “voices” of the government.

Again, the participants described certain barriers that prevented them from engaging in safe fish consumption. First there was a lack of available realistic options to eating fish. Related to this was the lack of details in the news about everyday practices that would enable one to decide about fish and amounts of fish. As one woman asked: “How are we to know when we go to the store which fish come from waters that are subject to a mercury advisory?” Next, other health risks took priority in these women's busy everyday lives. And, finally, low self-efficacy led women to believe there was nothing they could do about the problem.

Medically Underserved Women Gain Some Attention

Fortunately, the past few years reveal a trend toward more studies with medically underserved women, who traditionally had been invisible in health communication research. Medically underserved populations have limited access to health facilities, quality healthcare, and health insurance. The phrase “medically underserved” has replaced the phrase “hard to reach” in public health discourse, in attempts to acknowledge the role of institutional and medical constraints that keep at-risk populations from seeking healthcare. While some women consciously resist a mainstream medical environment and are “hard to reach” by health workers and by health messages, women who are medically underserved typically *desire* access to affordable quality healthcare, and they do seek accurate health information in order to make sound health decisions (Wathen, 2006). Women already face gendered norms that trivialize their personal health concerns; in the case of medically underserved women, additional racial, ethnic, or sexual marginalization occurs.

Research on these communities of women has focused on health topics such as breast cancer and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome / Human Immunodeficiency Virus (AIDS/HIV) and has emphasized one broad racial, ethnic, or geographic category – for instance Hispanic women, African American women, rural women – in the analysis of research participants (Anderson & McMillion, 1995; Egbert & Parrott, 2001; Meana, Bunston, George, Wells, & Rosser, 2001; Stein, Fox, & Murata, 1991). While increasing, the number of studies of marginalized women is significantly lower than the number of studies that rely on convenience samples of white middle-class women. Some recent studies do not publish any demographics or identities of the research participants. Due to this ongoing invisibility of identity in the research, I take more time here to furnish greater detail from the few studies that have highlighted the voice of marginalized audiences of women.

There have been a few studies investigating Latino populations and their perceptions of health messages. One such study investigated “Hispanic” (labeled as such by the researchers) women’s preferences for receiving breast health information (Oetzel, DeVargas, Ginossar, & Sanchez, 2007). Hispanic women are at greater risk of breast cancer than of any other cancer, and yet they are significantly less likely than other black and white women to engage in early detection methods such as self-examination or mammography. “Availability of health care and health insurance are the major structural barriers to cancer screening in Hispanic populations” (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 224). The authors used a convenience survey of 176 women, most of whom identified themselves as Mexican American, and these women indicated English as their preferred language. Almost two thirds of the participants were married, had at least some college education, and held private health insurance (18 participants had Medicare/Medicaid, and 29 reported no health insurance). Findings indicated that the women who valued the element of interdependence with others in their life used a variety of sources of information about breast cancer screening. Women who

identified with both traditional Hispanic culture as well as American cultural values used media channels as well as family sources for breast cancer screening. Those women who did not identify either with a traditional form of Hispanic culture or with American culture responded to fear appeals in health messages and resisted expert spokespersons. While cultural identity was measured via quantitative items that did not provide in-depth meaning to cultural cues, Oetzel and colleagues (2007) did allow for greater variation in the ways in which culture should be considered. Rather than rely on simplistic measures of attitudes, the authors included more nuanced characteristics such as sense of ethnic identity, self-image, perceived assimilation with US culture, and relational connectedness.

More studies have been done with black women as health audiences than with other women of color; and, again, studies in this country have prioritized AIDS/HIV and breast cancer. Frisby (2002), for example, recruited a convenience sample of 92 “African American women” (the label used by the researcher) from a “Northeastern metropolitan area” to complete a questionnaire about breast cancer and mammograms (p. 494). African American women have a lower incidence rate of breast cancer but a higher mortality rate. Frisby argued that “early detection would significantly reduce morbidity and mortality numbers of African American women” (p. 489). The sample of women varied by age, income, and level of education, although the findings were not analyzed according to these intersectional identities. The author summarized the findings into five conclusions: (1) the women held negative thoughts of death and fear relating to breast cancer; (2) they typically thought of campaigns and products such as the pink ribbon; (3) they did not have knowledge of the causes or risks of breast cancer; (4) they desired “rational” advertising appeals, which communicate causes and risks; and (5) the women wished to see “role models” of African American women who survived breast cancer and subsequently led productive lives (p. 500). Frisby’s conclusions support the findings reported in studies of white women and in studies of female participants whose identities remained invisible in the published articles. With breast cancer information women tend to react negatively the first time round, and they desire someone who looks like them to be represented in the messages. To extend the findings on women and breast cancer, a discussion is needed about black women’s higher mortality rate in the context of a medical hegemony that privileges white women, and also in the context of cultural and intersectional identities that may help explain why women do not find that campaign messages are salient for them – or why they even fail to expect salience at all.

Kreuter and Haughton (2006) conducted a quasi-experimental study to assess the usefulness of *cultural* tailoring on African American women and their cancer prevention knowledge and practices. The authors selected four cultural constructs they believed to be salient for African American women: religiosity, collectivism, racial pride, and time orientation. For the women in the treatment groups, cancer-related knowledge and prevention behaviors increased when messages were tailored so as to speak not only to the women’s cultural cues, but also to their sense of self-efficacy, motivation, and other cognitive characteristics. Graphics and text for the tailored

magazines were developed with the extensive participation from African Americans (the authors did not specify if these participants were female).

There have been a few studies that focus on Asian American women as audiences of breast cancer prevention campaigns (Jenkins et al., 1999; Sun, Zhang, Tsoh, Wong-Kim, & Chow, 2007). Asian American women have a higher mortality rate than African American and white women, although the prevalence rate of breast cancer is lower among them. Asian American women have the second lowest breast cancer screening rate among all ethnic groups in the United States (Sun et al., 2007). In their study, Sun and colleagues found that Chinese-language public service announcements on radio increased breast cancer knowledge and related health practices. In this convenience sample of Asian women, results also indicated that respondents with an education above high school and women from Hong Kong showed a superior ability to recall breast health guidelines from media messages. Again, while this research was important by giving a voice to an invisible sector of marginalized women, the findings do not really illuminate the “lifeworld” experiences of participants. These experiences may help scholars distinguish specific factors such as higher education and spokesperson demographics, which may affect the ways in which different groups of women perceive health messages.

Offering a Context for Women and Health Media

There have been very few reception studies of women as consumers of health media that have included critiques of the social and cultural norms that have an impact on how women accept, negotiate, or resist health messages in the media (Grodin, 1991; Press & Cole, 1995; Simonds, 1992). Over the last 10 years, however, scholars have made some tentative progress in this area of research. In earlier projects I did attempt to take a cultural approach in order to explore the ways in which women made meaning out of health media. One study examined a media environment rather than a media text as a unit of analysis (Aldoory, 2001). Additionally, I did not impose any one health topic for discussion with the 50 women who participated in focus groups and individual interviews; I let the women formulate their primary health concerns, and I allowed them to take the lead in discussing and debating these concerns. The groups were set by similar race, class, sexual orientation, age, educational level, and professional status (*ibid.*). For example, one focus group comprised women who identified as African American and as Caribbean American, employed, married, and in their forties. Another focus group consisted of women in their forties who identified themselves as lesbian and labeled themselves “working class” and white. I made an effort to pay greater attention to the impact of intersectional identities on women’s engagement with health and medical issues.

The primary health concerns varied a great deal; they included heart disease, diabetes, menopause, eating disorders, breast cancer, and Medicaid. While some of these concerns, like menopause and hormone replacement therapy, were directly

connected to being female, others related to conditions that have been socialized as feminine, such as eating disorders. Race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality played an integral role in how the participants decoded health messages, and pregnancy and motherhood also influenced participants' attitudes toward their bodies. The women's personal experience of health problems and their beliefs about the medical establishment were relevant to their interpretations of health messages. Finally, source credibility and beliefs about mainstream media were used to decode health messages. For participants who reflected the type of woman targeted by mainstream health messages, there was a great deal of personal relevance and comprehension of health messages. This greater acceptance of mediated health messages in everyday life by the women of US dominant/mainstream race and class would ultimately enable increased attention to and improved opportunities for health. Participants from cultural groups that are underserved by medical institutions and by media did not attend to mainstream health messages in the same way. Thus many of the women in the study did not see themselves reflected in health media messages – not even after they acknowledged the attempts at cultural competence made by health organizations and media campaigns. For the lesbian women in the study, no attempts have been made to address their health needs; in fact these women documented hostility from gynecologists and other health practitioners who prioritized reproductive health and issues of fertility.

For these women, message reception was a process by which primary health concerns were negotiated and integrated into everyday life over time – each media message discussed by participants was not perceived distinctly, but rather was considered in the context of greater meaning related to a given health concern. Participants cognitively connected and compared health messages, accepting some meanings and rejecting others, within the contexts of their self-ascribed identity, cultural norms, motherhood and pregnancy, opinions about the source and media in general, and experiences with health, illness, and medical environments. As other scholars asserted, the participants negotiated the meaning of a health concern at a broad level rather than at the level of some particular message (van Zoonen, 1994; Wathen, 2006).

An Agenda for Research on Women as an Audience of Health Media

This chapter reflected on some recent research that examined women as an audience of health messages and illustrated some themes found in the work conducted in the United States. Overall, there has been a lot of research on female audiences of health media, but very little of it has placed culture and gender at the center of analysis. While many of the studies offer contributions to understanding women in this capacity of an audience, others reveal gaps that leave invisible the cultural factors, gender

norms, and power relations governed by medicine, government, and media institutions, all of which affect the way women create meaning out of health messages. Furthermore, while intersectionality has become important in critical studies and in feminist media research, it is virtually absent in the study of women as an audience of health news and health campaigns.

I outline below certain theoretical premises and new directions that can take into account and help explain the different responses of women to health media and shed light on the various factors that influence the meanings that women ascribe to representations. These premises should be considered intellectual moments designed to pose new questions and to propel future research that can support, extend, or elaborate upon the current state of knowledge on female audiences of health media. I hope that the agenda I propose below will lead to further development of research and to a burgeoning of theory-building in the area of gender, media, culture, and health communication.

Negotiated Meaning of Health

Through the lenses of power, culture, identity, and hegemony, women construct negotiated and often troubling meanings for health, illness, and disease. I like to believe that, ultimately, mediatized health messages can make an impact on women's health, and certainly most of the research in this area directs attention toward women's health outcomes – for instance increasing regularly scheduled mammography, performing breast self-exams, and using condoms consistently and correctly. However, given the negotiated contexts, I argue that there can be several other “outcomes” that represent worthy pursuits and are in need of studying. Goal-directed health media could attempt to increase the following: the salience of a health issue at personal level; the ability to use health-related information; confidence in making decisions about health; and an awareness of power structures and constraints that hinder good health. Future research on female audiences needs to explore these outcomes of meaning rather than outcomes of behavior, so that media messages might be better directed at women's everyday lives.

Negotiated Media Environment

As van Zoonen (1994) has suggested, women go beyond an individual health text and broaden their negotiated meanings to the larger context of a health issue, which includes understandings of media and of the healthcare industry. What is actively negotiated over time is not the meaning given to one text, but rather the meaning of a given phenomenon, such as breast cancer, and its role in a woman's life. There is limited research in this broader area of audience reception, but such studies might offer contributions to understanding how women interpret health and their identity as a healthy person. Health messages are seldom interpreted in a vacuum; the overall

media environment, culture, community, and society all create meaning for women, even at the moment when a woman interprets a single health message within this larger context. Therefore examining the broader media context is important to understanding how women interpret particular health messages in the media.

Intersectionality as an Analytical Lens

Women's intersecting personal identities shape meanings that health messages have for them (Glenn, 1999; Valdivia, 1995; Zinn & Dill, 1996). There has been a dearth of studies in health communication focusing on the interconnected experiences of women as gendered and raced subjects. Intersectionality assumes that women's identities are always expressed and defined by the interwoven and inseparable categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality. A commitment to understanding intersectionality creates research that is more complex, more realistic, and more sensitive to cultural contexts, all of which are significant for studying women as audiences of health media. Additionally, an intersectional approach complicates matters related to oppression and resistance, as these relate to audiences of, and to potential actors in, health. According to Weber (2001), a woman can "occupy both dominant and subordinate positions and experience advantage and disadvantage" because of race, class, gender, and/or sexuality (p. 105).

Constraints as Lived Reality

Women filter interpretations of health media through prisms of perceived constraints that create their lived realities and limit the success of health media focused on behavior change. Yanovitzky and Blitz (2000), through secondary analysis of national data, found that, while both interpersonal and mediated communication were important in motivating women to seek mammograms, mass media were particularly important for women who did not have regular access to a physician, while the physician's advice was more important for those women who did (p. 129). Women may perceive constraints that are invisible to health care practitioners, or that are trivialized by the medical establishment in this country. Exploring the differing sets of constraints that women have would not only increase the potential for greater access to health information, but might also empower some women in their health decision-making and in their relationship with the healthcare system (Brown, Carroll, Boon, & Marmoreo, 2002; Wathen, 2006).

Caregiver Role

The sociocultural role of caregiver, ascribed to women in this country, creates for women a perspective through which they can view health messages. The caregiving

perspective is not exclusive to mothers and pregnant women. While mothers and pregnant women may have a heightened hegemonic sense of caring for their children, the caregiving role impacts women who care for older parents, who make doctors' appointments for partners and husbands, and who care for siblings and friends, often in healing ways. In the research I conducted about risk news, young women expressed concern about their parents and boyfriends. "Unpaid caregiving" is a social burden that some women accept and endure as a form of additional stress, which lowers their own health status, while other women ignore or even resist the caregiving role – and then they have to face family, organizational, and societal criticism and disdain for their rejection of nurturing behaviors. Health media reflect this cultural stigma through images of women caring for others and being the ones responsible for visits made to healthcare practitioners. Health media research should explore how women see themselves in this role and how the burdens of caregiving influence their interpretations of health messages and of decision-making about health.

Deep Cultural Meanings Help Improve Salience

Health campaigns that use only outward appearances of racial, ethnic, and language sensitivity will likely draw attention from the target audiences of women, but they will not necessarily result in personally meaningful considerations made by the women. Kreuter and Haughton (2006) examined the usefulness of Hall's (1984) "levels of culture" and Resnicow, Baranowski, Ahluwalia, and Braithwaite's (1999) "deep structure of culture," and they found that an integration of surface-level and entrenched or deep cultural meanings creates greater personal relevance for women. One scholarly move toward including deeper structures of culture in health messages has entailed involving indigenous cultural members as co-designers and partners in the development of health messages. Research has shown that this, along with participatory action research, produces greater behavioral motivation as an effect of health campaign messages (Kreuter & Haughton, 2006).

Conclusion

While research on women as health audiences has increased, the scholarship continues to reinforce the assumptions of the biomedical paradigm: for instance the isolation of cognitive variables from their contexts and the disavowal of the power relations that structure the individuals' reception of representations in health media – and hence their involvement in, and their decision-making about, vital healthcare issues. The growing body of knowledge about female audiences has increased sensitivity about marginalized groups of women, and it has also contributed to a better

understanding of message appeals and campaign design. Yet it still neglects broader cultural factors and ideological contexts that constrain how women consume and interpret narratives of health in media texts.

The research agenda proposed in this chapter emerges out of a critical review of existing work on women's interpretations of health messages and on the various contextual factors and structural constraints that impinge upon audiences' abilities to make sense of the numerous explicit and implicit messages concerning health that they receive from different media technologies, media genres, and media sources. Future research can thus begin to address more vigorously the topic of health media in relation to gender and culture, and to build what will hopefully be a robust cultural theory. Such a theory should germinate out of empirical work that centers on the voices of the women who make health decisions that have an impact on their everyday lives and on the lives of their families and societies.

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Boom or Boomerang

A Critical Review of Evidence Documenting Media Literacy Efficacy

Smita C. Banerjee and Robert Kubey

ABSTRACT

This chapter advances research on media literacy by reviewing studies that utilize media literacy in either short-term or long-term interventions. Media literacy interventions on a wide array of topics including violence, smoking, alcohol, and advertising are reviewed. Effectiveness of media literacy is discussed using various criteria: duration of intervention, intervention design, target group, intervention modality, causal process, and different strategies for media literacy interventions. Key questions addressed in this chapter ask how media literacy efficacy is defined, and what issues surround media literacy efficacy.

Media Literacy Defined

Media literacy has been most commonly defined as the skills of accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating messages in a number of forms (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993; Hobbs, 1998). Davies (1996) has emphasized listening, viewing, or reading audiovisual texts as basic skills that need to be learned by young audiences. The need for learning technical skills to decode the meanings behind the media, and developing a critical understanding of the relationship between different message content, forms the backbone of media literacy education. Kubey (2004) notes that

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies: Media Effects/Media Psychology, First Edition.

Edited by Angharad N. Valdivia, Erica Scharrer.

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media literacy involves critical analysis of media messages, evaluation of sources of information for bias and credibility, increased awareness about how media messages influence people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, and production of messages using different forms of media. Similarly, the website of the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) (2010a, 2010b) describes the functions of media literacy in this way.

Within North America, media literacy is seen to consist of a series of communication competencies, including the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms, including print and non-print messages. Media literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language, and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages.

Despite considerable disagreement among scholars regarding how to conceptualize and perform media literacy (Kubey, 1998), most scholars agree on a common set of key concepts. The Center for Media Literacy (2007) has endorsed the following five core concepts as central to media literacy: (1) all media messages are social constructions (i.e., constructed by somebody and never able to reflect reality entirely); (2) people who make media messages use creative languages that have rules (i.e., creative components such as words, music, movement, camera angle, and others are utilized to develop a media message in different formats such as a magazine cover, advertisement, etc.); (3) different people experience the same media messages differently; (4) producers of media messages have their own values and points of view; and (5) media messages are constructed to achieve a purpose, usually for profit and/or power.

The common goals of most media literacy curricula focus on helping young people become informed and active participants in the communication process, rather than passive message recipients (Brown, 1998). Much empirical research to date has rested on the idea of creating media literacy interventions for protecting young people from negative influences of media (e.g., Austin, Pinkleton, & Funabiki, 2007; Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen et al., 2007). Research suggests that interventions help individuals build resistance to specific persuasive message strategies as they become aware of marketers' strategies, critically weighing evidence and argumentative strategies for learning, constructing one's own arguments, and enhancing learning such as from public affairs programming (e.g., Austin, Pinkleton, Hust et al., 2005; Hindin, Contento, & Gussow, 2004; Wade, Davidson, & O'Dea, 2003).

What is a Media Literacy Intervention?

The term "media literacy intervention" can be understood as an experimental treatment that introduces specific concepts to study participants (any age group) with the

aim of increasing awareness and promoting deeper understanding of the meaning contained in media messages. The general goal of interventions is to provide people with the initial tools of media literacy, eventually leading them to build upon the cognitive skills required to process media messages in a more active manner (Potter, 2004). Research based on using media literacy interventions is generally directed toward altering those human cognitions involved in the processing of media messages that may serve as a defense against the potential negative effects of media (Byrne, 2005).

Several media literacy interventions designed to specifically address prejudice (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007), sexual objectification in advertising (Reichert, LaTour, Lambiase et al., 2007), media violence (Scharrer, 2006), tobacco use (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Gonzales, Glik, Davoudi et al., 2004; Pinkleton et al., 2007), adolescent alcohol use (e.g., Austin & Johnson, 1997; Chen, 2009), and body image (e.g., Wade et al., 2003; Watson & Vaughn, 2006) have been tested. The question, then, is what the media literacy interventions are trying to accomplish and how. In the section that follows, we summarize recent research that has used media literacy interventions.

Applications and Interventions

Media literacy appears to be a promising framework that can help to increase the critical skills of media consumers and aid in creating more informed and deliberate users. The primary aim of media literacy programs is to increase students' awareness of the forms of media messages they encounter in their everyday lives. They should be able to comprehend, analyze, evaluate, and make reasoned choices about advertising jingles, public service videos, news reports, and so forth (Quesada, Miller, & Armstrong, 2000). As scholars and practitioners have become aware of its usefulness, media literacy is receiving growing attention as an applied intervention strategy. In this section, applications of media literacy across different contexts are examined, with particular emphasis on smoking prevention, adolescent drinking prevention, violence prevention, body image, and advertising awareness.

Smoking Prevention

Media literacy workshops on cigarette smoking have shown favorable results (i.e., reduction in smoking-related attitudes, intention, and behavior) for both elementary and middle school children (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Bergsma & Ingram, 2001; Gonzales et al., 2004; Pinkleton et al., 2007). Unger, Cruz, Schuster et al. (2001) have suggested that media literacy programs should be developed to inoculate adolescents against tobacco marketing strategies. In spite of a

nationwide call to integrate media literacy approaches with school-based tobacco prevention programs (*Media Literacy Drug Prevention Teacher Survey Report*, 2002), published examples of research are limited (Beltramini & Bridge, 2001).

Recent research suggests that adolescents' increased knowledge and understanding of advertisers' persuasive strategies should lead to increased resistance to advertised messages (Austin, Miller, Silva et al., 2002). Accordingly, research results indicate that in-school interventions can help young people understand the role of tobacco advertising in encouraging tobacco use among adolescents and identify marketing strategies tobacco companies use in their advertisements (e.g., Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Beltramini & Bridge, 2001). This knowledge base may further transfer to development of or change in attitudes that are conducive for smoking prevention efforts (see Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007). For instance, Bergsma and Ingram (2001) tested the efficacy of a media literacy curriculum in changing knowledge, awareness, and attitudes regarding tobacco use in the movies. Pretests and posttests were conducted for children (seventh grade) in experimental and control groups. The results showed that children in the experimental group had an increased knowledge of tobacco product placement in films, awareness of the portrayal of tobacco use in films, and showed negative attitudes toward the use of tobacco in films (Bergsma & Ingram, 2001).

In another study by Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen et al. (2003), a media literacy curriculum was designed to prevent tobacco use among young people. In a span of six lessons, children were taught about the tools and techniques the tobacco industry uses to target young people and learned to create their own counteradvertising. The results showed that the media literacy intervention increased the understanding of the potential persuasive effects of advertising and intentions to take action against tobacco use. The results suggested that media literacy may have the ability to serve as both a prevention tool targeting initiation among nonsmokers and an intervention tool for targeting cessation among smokers.

Adolescent Drinking Prevention

"Media literacy training – which generally teaches young people how to understand and create mediated messages – is a potentially important component of substance abuse prevention campaigns directed to younger audiences" (Pinkleton et al., 2003, p. 2). In a study by Austin and Johnson (1997), general and alcohol-specific media literacy lessons were developed to test their effectiveness on children's (third grade) beliefs about alcohol. Pretests, posttests, and delayed posttests were conducted to test curriculum effectiveness. The results showed that children's expectancies (perceived expectation of the meaning alcohol drinking conveys) and behaviors (children's choice of an alcohol or nonalcohol theme product) were becoming more positive toward alcohol over time, and that the media literacy intervention prevented the increase in positive expectancies. The alcohol-specific media literacy curriculum was

most effective in increasing the understanding of persuasive intent, reducing identification with characters, desirability of alcohol advertising, and similarity with characters in the alcohol advertisements (Austin & Johnson, 1997).

Chen (2009) designed and evaluated a media literacy curriculum focusing on alcohol use prevention. A pretest–posttest quasi-experiment with 171 adolescents was conducted to examine the impact of a negative approach and a balanced approach (a combination of negative and positive evaluative approaches) to media literacy on modifying adolescents' responses to alcohol messages. Results showed that different media literacy approaches had varying degrees of effectiveness by gender. After receiving a negative media literacy lesson, adolescent boys regarded television characters as less realistic and believed that drinking alcohol had negative consequences. Adolescent girls, on the other hand, benefited from a balanced evaluative approach as their media skepticism (a cognitive state of incredulity that encourages more thoughtful processing and additional information seeking; Austin et al., 2002) was enhanced. Chen (2009) concludes by suggesting that health educators should employ media literacy to enhance adolescents' critical thinking skills and to improve their decision-making regarding alcohol.

Violence Prevention

Research studies on the topic of media literacy instruction with children regarding media violence have produced promising results. Media literacy has been shown to increase children's critical attitudes toward media violence, disagreeing that it is harmless, disapproving of characters using violence, and perceiving media portrayals of violence as unrealistic (e.g., Huesman, Eron, Klein et al., 1983; Nathanson 2004; Robinson, Wilde, Navracruz et al., 2001; Rosenkoetter, Rosenkoetter, Ozretich et al., 2004; Singer, Zuckerman, & Singer, 1980).

In one of the earlier studies, Singer et al. (1980) developed eight media literacy lesson plans to help children understand the different types of television programs, technology behind television production, differences between real and pretend on television, and the purpose and types of commercials. The children (from kindergarten through second grade) were divided into experimental and control groups. Pretests, posttests, and follow-up tests were taken to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum. Overall, the results showed an increase in knowledge about how television works as well as an increase in children's capability to question and discuss the violence shown on television. Thus, improvements were seen in the area of understanding of concepts and processes of television, and in initiating the development of critical television viewers (Singer et al., 1980). Huesman and Eron (1986) were also able to demonstrate that media literacy intervention can reduce aggressive behavior among children.

More recently, Scharer (2006) utilized five one-hour visits to sixth-grade classrooms to inform students about media violence and make them critical of the same.

The media literacy curriculum consisted of presentations and discussions around key themes and ethical issues related to media violence, such as rewarded violence, lack of consequences for violence, animated violence, justified violence, and violence perpetrated by likable characters. Statistical comparisons between pretest and post-test responses and between those participating and those in a control group show some increases in the comprehension of key concepts used in the study of media violence and critical thinking about the topic. For instance, learning about lack of consequences in depictions of violence led the participants in the treatment group to express a more critical attitude about the responsibility of media creators (i.e., that they should portray such consequences more). Additionally, qualitative results revealed that post-media literacy program responses were more critical, more precise, and more tuned in to ethical issues than pre-media literacy program responses. Scharrer (2006) concludes: "We can be fairly confident that the media literacy program was, indeed, effective in stimulating participants' critical thinking about media violence" (p. 81).

Body Image

Use of media literacy to address body image is expected to empower students to adopt a critical evaluation of media content so that they can identify, analyze, and ultimately challenge the thin ideal presented in the mass media (Levine, Piran, & Stoddard, 1999). Watson and Vaughn (2006) note that there have been many efforts to design intervention programs that prevent the development of eating disorders and associated risk factors, such as body dissatisfaction. Media literacy interventions have been designed to alleviate the negative effect that the media have on body satisfaction, but the results have been mixed in terms of effectiveness (Stice & Shaw, 2004; see also Chapter 15, this volume).

Research so far has not shown support for the use of media literacy on eating behavior or attitudes (e.g., Irving & Berel, 2001; Levine, Smolak, & Schermer, 1996), and mixed support for weight concern (e.g., Levine et al., 1996; Wade et al., 2003). Watson and Vaughn (2006) examined whether or not the length of a media literacy intervention had an impact on awareness of sociocultural ideals, internalization of sociocultural ideals, and body dissatisfaction. The results suggested that neither short-term nor long-term media literacy interventions increased awareness of sociocultural ideals of attractiveness. However, both short- and long-term media literacy interventions that challenged the perceived realism of the media had the potential to reduce internalization of sociocultural ideals. Overall, the long-term intervention was more effective at decreasing body dissatisfaction than the short-term media literacy intervention.

Wade et al. (2003) used a controlled study to evaluate the effectiveness of a self-esteem program and a media literacy program in reducing general and specific risk factors for eating disorders, namely self-esteem, weight and shape concern, dietary

restraint, and body dissatisfaction. Results showed that only weight concern was significantly impacted by the intervention. Specifically, the media literacy intervention was moderately successful in decreasing weight concern among participants over time as compared with the control group, thereby suggesting implications for future research and greater efficacy. Wade et al. (2003) conclude by stating that “delivery of a media literacy program within an interactive, student centered, self-esteem building framework may potentially be a safe and effective way of reducing risk factors for eating disorders” (p. 381), but clearly this needs greater research attention. Given that internalization of attractiveness norms, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating ensue not only from media but also from peers, family, and society at large, it is not surprising that media literacy efforts focusing only on media messages have not achieved desirable results (Irving & Berel, 2001; Stice & Shaw, 2004; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe et al., 1999). Perhaps combining traditional media literacy interventions with self-esteem interventions or other cognitive approaches will provide a more efficacious way of addressing body image concerns.

Advertising Awareness

Among media literacy's aims is to help students recognize attempts at manipulation. Research on media literacy and advertising has shown that elementary and middle school children can be taught to identify and understand the persuasive intent behind advertising (e.g., Collins, 1999; Hoffman, 1999; Ward, Wackman, & Wartella, 1977). Hoffman (1999) developed media literacy workshops for middle school children to teach them the process of advertising and other forms of media. The results showed that children's ability to identify media values (values or concepts media people use in making decisions on what to report as news), media processes, and advertising and propaganda techniques increased significantly from the pretest to the posttest levels (Hoffman, 1999).

In another initial study by Ward et al. (1977), children as young as kindergarten-aged were able to learn how to filter advertising messages so that the persuasive effects of advertisements were mitigated. Ward et al. (1977) suggested that the filter for advertising messages could be used in four different ways. First, it can be used to help children recognize that commercials are trying to sell products. Second, it can be used to help children become skeptical of advertising claims. Third, the filter might reduce the frequency of children's asking for products that they have seen in advertisements. Fourth, it can be used to direct children toward performance and functional attributes of products. The implications of the study point toward the need for a focused and simple media literacy endeavor to make children advertisement savvy.

Despite numerous implications for media literacy efficacy, Kunkel, Wilcox, Cantor et al. (2004) noted that there exists no study that has examined the statistical relation between children's understanding of advertising's persuasive intent and the impact

of advertising and that “there is little evidence that media literacy interventions can effectively counteract the impact of advertising on children of any age, much less the younger ones who are most vulnerable to its influence” (p. 21). In fact, Chernin (2008) showed that a media literacy intervention aimed at showing the persuasive techniques used in junk food marketing made children more likely to choose junk food in an experimental situation, irrespective of age. She hypothesized that children were primed by the intervention or they learned to pay more attention to ads (which increased and not decreased their persuasive power). Therefore, there seems to be more unanswered questions about the link between increase in knowledge or recognition of propaganda in advertising and the impact of advertising; as Chernin (2008) concludes: “Future research should explicitly test the moderating role of knowledge of persuasive intent in the persuasion process and examine how children’s affective responses to commercials influence their preferences for advertised products” (p. 115).

Media Literacy Efficacy: Key Issues

Duration of Intervention

Various media literacy interventions have been evaluated, and the duration of these interventions has ranged from single-session (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007; Reichert et al., 2007), to dual-session (Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007), to 3–6 sessions (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Pinkleton et al., 2007; Scharrer, 2006), to 8–10 sessions (e.g., Gonzales et al., 2004) and longer (e.g., Duran, Yousman, Walsh et al., 2008).

An unresolved issue within the realm of media literacy research concerns optimal dosage and the length of expected effects on target audiences’ attitudes and behaviors. The five or six sessions (or even more) incorporated in some media literacy curricula engage students in analyzing, critiquing, and sometimes producing media messages (e.g., Bergsma & Ingram, 2001; Gonzales et al., 2004; Pinkleton et al., 2007; Scharrer, 2006). These kinds of programs have been shown to produce significant knowledge gains among participants but mostly modest short-term effects on attitudes and behavior. It can be argued, then, that the results show an additive effect of receiving the same antismoking message over a span of five or six days that results in a temporary shift in attitudes. Importantly, similar effects were observed for significantly shorter (one- or two-session) interventions (e.g., Austin & Johnson, 1997; Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Byrne, 2005; Nathanson & Cantor, 2000; Ridolfi & Vander Wal, 2008), suggesting that brief media literacy interventions work equally well as longer ones. For purposes of theory building and explanation, it is important to know what features of an intervention program produce necessary changes. Because the interventions incur cost (time and money), it is important to understand what kinds of strategies/programs work and do not work.

Intervention Design

Media literacy interventions are most often designed as experimental designs with a pretest and posttest (e.g., Austin & Johnson, 1997; Bergsma & Ingram, 2001; Hoffman, 1999), with a treatment and control group (e.g., Austin et al., 2007; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007; Reichert et al., 2007), or a combination of the treatment and control group design with pretest and posttest measures (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Chen, 2009; Gonzales et al., 2004; Pinkleton et al., 2007; Scharrer, 2006; Singer et al., 1980).

The combination designs present a more intensive yet efficacious model for interventions. The use of control groups enables researchers to distinguish program-related cognitive and attitudinal changes from effects that might result instead from other ongoing statewide, national, or community prevention programs taking place simultaneously. The pretest–posttest designs allow for evaluation and change over time. Additionally, the inclusion of both pretest–posttest and posttest-only conditions makes it possible to identify and exclude possible testing effects (Pinkleton et al., 2007).

One limitation of media literacy interventions is the lack of random assignment, a must in most experimental research. Due to the practical limitations of conducting research in schools, researchers often randomly assign classes to experimental conditions rather than randomly assigning participants, thereby taking a more quasi-experimental stance. Random assignment is necessary for precluding group-based differences contributing to (or causing) any change that occurs. However, statistical controls must be put in place prior to analyses and differences examined on key variables at baseline.

Target Group

Most interventionist media literacy work has been done with elementary and middle school children (e.g., Austin & Johnson, 1997; Austin et al., 2005; Banerjee & Greene, 2006; Bergsma & Ingram, 2001; Chen, 2009; Hoffman, 1999; Huesman et al., 1983; Pinkleton et al., 2007; Scharrer, 2006; Singer et al., 1980), and some with high school students (e.g., Gonzales et al., 2004). According to Anderson (1983), media content like violence, materialism, body image, risk-taking behaviors, and stereotyping of race, class, sexual identity, and gender seems to offer relevant topics for media literacy curriculum development. Underlying persuasive intent, perceived negative effects of such media messages and “value” laden pedagogy may be easily delivered to a young audience (Anderson, 1983). The research in this area is scarce and needs a much more in-depth examination of curriculum effectiveness. There are many organizations that develop media literacy curricula (e.g., National Telemedia Council, Center for Media Literacy, Media Education Foundation, Center for Media Education), but studies on efficacy and outcomes are not abundant (Heins & Cho, 2002).

In recent years, media literacy interventions have been developed and tested on a more mature subset of the population, namely undergraduate students (e.g., Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007; Reichert et al., 2007). Media literacy interventions are rarely adequately tailored to the cognitive capabilities and developmental stage of the target audience. For example, they seem to overlook the importance of one's experience with persuasive messages (and substances) as a factor intervening in cognitive responses to media literacy programs. Though children have limited cognitive capacities and largely lack experience as persuaders and have difficulty recognizing and critically evaluating persuasive efforts, adolescents possess more advanced cognitive skills and are experienced persuaders (O'Keefe, 2002). Hence, typical media literacy interventions that emphasize both passive learning and active skill acquisition better fit the cognitive abilities and needs of younger children. Research findings are consistent with this rationale, demonstrating favorable effects of these programs on elementary and middle school-aged children (e.g., Austin & Johnson, 1997; Austin et al., 2005; Bergsma & Ingram, 2001).

However, research also demonstrates that the effects of educational interventions on children and young adolescents decay over time as they age and are exposed to other sources of influence such as peers (Bauman & Ennett, 1996; Prinstein, 2001). This is likely related to the tendency of older adolescents to grow skeptical of passive educational efforts that lack sophistication matching their cognitive capabilities and experience with persuasion (Jacobsohn, 2007). One result is that traditional media literacy approaches are not as successful with this subpopulation as they are with younger subpopulations (e.g., Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007; Wilksch, Durbridge, & Wade, 2008). Media literacy interventions targeting older adolescents need to establish similar success rates to gain appropriate recognition from scholars and practitioners.

Intervention Modality

Media literacy interventions have been designed and presented using different modalities, such as videotaped instruction (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007; Reichert et al., 2007) or workshops with participants (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Chen, 2009; Gonzales et al., 2004; Pinkleton et al., 2007; Scharrer, 2006). Different interventions use different combinations of lessons and exercises, such as critical analysis of clips, producing one's own message, and assigning homework done without the direct supervision of the teacher. Future research on media literacy should also examine effective practices that must be embraced by media education teachers (however, no research to date has compared intervention across modalities).

Today, children learn as much (or maybe less) from traditional media as they learn from new media such as the Internet. Hobbs and Frost (2003) note the challenges posed by new electronic media forms as opposed to traditional print or mass elec-

tronic forms such as television. The effects and efficacy of media literacy interventions need to be considered in the context of new and evolving media forms and media convergence (Livingstone, 2004; Rothenberg, 2002) and the combination of strategies such as advertising, information, and entertainment within the same media message (Grigorovici & Constantin, 2004; Shrum, 2004). For instance, a media literacy intervention could look at the most widely used information source on the Internet, Wikipedia (and possibly other informational sites), to identify and analyze the accuracy of information, intellectual property, the perspective of the producer addressing issues such as who is presenting what to whom, and why (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel et al., 2009).

Causal Process

Much research on media literacy is atheoretical and there is a lack of clarity about the causal process (or processes) through which media literacy interventions influence attitudes and behaviors of their target audience (e.g., Gonzales et al., 2004; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007; Reichert et al., 2007). Whereas there have been some efforts by scholars to explain the cognitive involvement and subsequent change in beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007; Scharrer, 2006), much work still needs to explicate those mechanisms underlying the effects.

Media literacy programs employ a variety of strategies but previous evaluations of media literacy intervention programs assessed changes in attitudes and/or behaviors without providing explanations of why and how the participants change attitude and/or behavior when exposed to these programs. Such interventions limit the outcome measures to knowledge or behavior. It is important to explain why and how change occurs to fully understand the role of the intervention (Derzon & Lipsey, 2002). What kind of cognitive processes do the program participants engage in that causes them to change their attitudes, norms, and subsequent behavior? Relatedly, in many instances, attitude change does not lead to behavior change (see Hornik, 2002). To understand how an intervention produces long-term change in attitude, which further results in changed behavior, it is important to understand the learning process. This process-oriented aspect of intervention efficacy is undocumented to this point.

The only consistent effort made in this direction is by Austin and colleagues in their development and use of the message interpretation process (MIP) model (Austin & Knaus, 2000; Austin & Meili, 1994; Austin, Pinkleton, & Fujioka, 2000). The MIP is a decision-making theory and specifically targets individuals' interpretations of mediated messages. According to the MIP model, individuals' decision-making is composed of both logic- and affect-based decision-making processes, including perceived realism, desirability, similarity, identification, and expectancies, all of which lead to individuals' behavioral intention and enactment of actual behavior (Austin et al., 2000). Media literacy research utilizing MIP has shown that media

literacy interventions can affect the decision-making process of adolescents, further leading to changes in attitudes and/or behaviors (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Chen, 2009; Pinkleton et al., 2007). More research is needed that is strongly grounded in social-cognitive and behavior change theories to allow for a causal explanation of how media literacy interventions work.

Different Strategies for Media Literacy Interventions

According to Davies (1996), the backbone of media literacy education involves learning technical skills to decode the meaning behind the media and developing a critical understanding of the relationship between different message content. In terms of strategies for media literacy education, two different kinds of media literacy workshops have been designed and evaluated by researchers, one focusing on analysis and the other on production of media messages – the two key components of media literacy curricula (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993).

Analysis

Masterman (2001) stresses the significance of making the textual investigation of any medium more systematic and rigorous by understanding the key concepts, which include: genre (specific kinds of media content, e.g., drama, comedy, situation comedy, talk shows, news, advertising, cartoons), narrative structure (traditional devices used to tell a story, including setting, character development, conflict, conflict resolution, and conclusion), sources (creator and disseminator of information, could be a person via a blog, organization through a website, or television channel), and encoding/decoding (messages are created, or “encoded,” by media producers with a preferred meaning in mind, and then consumed, or “decoded,” by a receiver or audience). This approach to media education allows students to analyze media messages by describing “what’s going on” in detail. Because the students are involved in a critical examination of media messages, this strategy is called the “analysis” module of media literacy. The analysis module can be used for messages that are both pro- and anti-risk behaviors but research to date has not separated and evaluated these two kinds of messages.

Production

Another kind of media literacy program focuses on understanding and applying the production process of television (or any other media form), including lighting, camera angles, sound, time and motion (Fisher-Keller, 2000; Mudore, 2000; Singer et al., 1980; Zettl, 1998). This kind of information provides children with an understanding of how media messages are constructed and how interactions among various production techniques produce specific effects. The production approach of media literacy, however, encompasses some amount of analysis too. According to Kubey (2000), providing opportunities for children to create their own media stories,

documentaries, or news can help students understand the entire process of media production. In addition, students learn best by doing and getting hands-on experience. Tyner (1992) cautions production-centered media educators because the excitement of creating their own media can often lead to a lack of critical understanding of the media message by students. Nevertheless, the production approach to media literacy is often credited for increasing student self-esteem by engaging them and providing opportunities for self-expression (Tyner, 1992). Because the students are themselves involved in creating media messages, this strategy is called the “production” module of media literacy.

Examining Analysis vs. Production Strategies

The two strategies of media literacy training, analysis and production, are utilized in the creation of media literacy curricula (see Austin & Johnson, 1997; Bergsma & Ingram, 2001; Pinkleton et al., 2003). However, for practical and economic purposes, it becomes necessary to evaluate the difference in efficacy of the two strategies. A review of the available literature suggests that no research to date (with the exception of Banerjee & Greene, 2006, 2007) has tested message analysis versus message production strategies for changing attitude, intention, and behavior. Banerjee and Greene’s (2006, 2007) research provided greater support in favor of the production approach in bringing about desired changes in intention to smoke and attitude toward smoking. In terms of cognitive processes, there was an overall support for production workshops eliciting more attention and more positive workshop perceptions than analysis workshops.

Most of the media literacy interventions are focused almost exclusively on having participants acquire the knowledge/skills needed to resist influence from persuasive media messages but generally fail to form students’ motivation to resist such influences. In many interventions (Hafstad & Aaro, 1997; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007; Siegel & Biener, 2002; Sly, Hopkins, Trapido et al., 2001; Worden & Flynn, 2002), students either passively (when they are “told” rather than a two-way discussion) receive persuasive messages/advertisements or engage through discussion activities. Ample research demonstrates that actively engaging audiences in prevention interventions is a more effective strategy than passive reception (Botvin & Griffin, 2007; Tobler, Roona, Ochshorn et al., 2000).

Understanding Media Habits and Media Literacy

Another approach to media literacy can involve having young people examine and come to better understand their media habits. One area that can be pursued is for young people, as well as adults, to learn the ways that various media, television in particular and also videogames, get us to view or play longer than we intended. Television frequently teases the next program and tries to hold viewers longer. Videogames are highly habit forming because players want to achieve higher scores or advance through levels and opponents. Videogames also inculcate the experience of “flow” wherein a person concentrates deeply, enjoys the experience, and keeps

playing for long periods of time as long as the challenges of the activity are well in line with the person's skill level (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Flow often comes about when the challenges of an activity closely match the skill of the person. As importantly, rapid feedback is critical to a person experiencing flow. In videogame play, the game keeps getting harder and stays well matched with the player's skill level, which is also increasing, and the feedback is nearly instantaneous. Further, players today are often playing with others in the same room or online and form teams, and a player cannot readily be pulled from the game without letting his or her teammates down. By learning how television, videogames, and the Internet hold our attention, either by their nature or intentionally by the creators, people can become more aware of how they get pulled in and why it is often so hard to pull oneself away.

Following on the work of Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 2002) that demonstrated that television viewing could be habit forming, Brock (2006) ran an experiment with children and was able to show that having young people go without television for a month was, indeed, possible. Indeed, some children volunteered to go even further and do without television for three months. The key, which surprised the researchers, was that so many children succeeded and it was clearly the result of the enterprise being a group effort. One child by herself might not have lasted long, but a whole class of fellow students made the difference. It became a social, team enterprise.

Young people can be helped to become more aware of their media habits by keeping a personal diary of media use to see how many hours each day or week are spent on television, videogames, the Internet, and so on. The idea is not to demonize these media but to heighten student awareness of how reflexive media use can be.

A Final Word on Efficacy

Some media literacy interventions do seem to help participants to become better "critical thinkers" about media content, processes, and effects (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Gonzales et al., 2004; Pinkleton et al., 2007; Reichert et al., 2007; Scharrer, 2006). Media literacy instruction also appears to trigger some thought about media content and its comparison to "the real world" (e.g., Rosenkoetter et al., 2004; Scharrer, 2006). Gonzales et al. (2004) conclude: "Media literacy within the conceptual context of social influence emphasizes the importance of environmental metacontingencies that can influence behavior change and offers an important rationale for understanding mechanisms that could contribute to sustained behavior change" (p. 197).

However, some media literacy interventions have shown mixed or inconclusive results. For instance, Wilksch et al. (2008) examined the efficacy of a media literacy intervention targeting perfectionism and media literacy compared to control classes in reducing eating disorder risk with adolescent females aged around 15 years. Perfectionism was defined by personal standards (the extent to which an individual

sets and tries to achieve high standards for himself/herself; Shafran, Lee, Payne et al., 2006) and concern over mistakes (the extent to which an individual has excessive concern about making mistakes and consequences for self-worth and others' opinions; Bulik, Tozzi, Anderson et al., 2003). In eight sessions each, the perfectionism intervention addressed issues related to eating disorders such as what is perfectionism, assessment of self-perfectionism, what and who influences perfectionism, and changing behavior. Media literacy intervention, on the other hand, addressed issues such as stereotyping, media advertising, pressures from media, and consumer activism. The perfectionism intervention was overall more successful than the media literacy intervention or control group on some outcomes. Media literacy intervention, however, recorded no statistical improvements across the assessment points, and results for the media literacy program were comparable to those of the control condition. Wilksch et al. (2008) conclude by stating that "further investigation is required to determine the demographic most likely to benefit from media literacy" (p. 939).

In another study, Robinson et al. (2001) tested their media literacy curriculum designed with the goal of reducing children's exposure to media violence on third and fourth graders. The 18 lessons included topics such as budgeting time spent with media, participating in a "turnoff" exercise, and selectively choosing media. Children who participated in the curriculum experienced a significant drop in aggressive playground incidents but there were no significant changes in their perceptions of the world as mean and dangerous. A media literacy study was designed by Dorr, Grave, and Phelps (1980) to develop and test media literacy curricula based on "industry" (production of entertainment programs and industry's economic system), "process" (processes and sources for evaluating television content), and "social reasoning" (role-taking skills). The overall results showed that children learned the curricula and used the curricula to discuss television's reality. However, children's attitudes did not change as a result of learning the curricula.

Ramasubramanian and Oliver (2007) caution against sporadic use of media literacy and conclude that "media literacy training might have a boomerang effect by activating prejudice instead of decreasing such feelings" (p. 641). In their study, Ramasubramanian and Oliver (2007) explored the role of media literacy training and counterstereotypical media exemplars in decreasing prejudicial responses toward Asian Indians, African Americans, and Caucasian Americans. Participants were exposed to a media literacy video or a control group video, followed by an activity to analyze stereotypical or counterstereotypical news stories. The media literacy video introduced participants to the harmful effects of media and the tendency of media consumers to make generalizations based on biased media exemplars. The video also focused on strategies for becoming critical and reflective consumers of media messages. In contrast, the control video focused on various journalistic writing styles such as hard news, feature writing, and so on. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, results revealed that the media literacy video seemed to increase prejudicial responses as compared to the control video. One of the reasons for such a

finding could be attributed to the fact that the media literacy training utilized in this study was primarily a didactic one-way exercise and did not involve any discussions or interactions between participants, which cautions us against the use of media literacy as a purely “preachy” or “didactic” strategy.

In fact, Byrne (2009) suggests that using media literacy activities in the classroom without involving a cognitive activity may actually backfire. In a study on reducing aggression from exposure to violence in the media, Byrne (2009) demonstrated that fourth and fifth grade students who were exposed to a purely didactic media literacy lesson without involving a cognitive activity reported greater likelihood of using aggression as compared to participants who were exposed to the didactic media literacy lesson combined with a cognitive activity after the lesson. One of the reasons for this finding may be that the media literacy didactic lesson increased participant attention to violence in the media but did not give students any cognitive skills to resist the effects of violence (Byrne, 2009). Therefore, it can be concluded that media literacy interventions need to take on a more participatory role wherein both teachers and students are engaged in tasks involving critical thinking skills. Giving greater empowerment or “voice” to the younger audience while teaching them certain analytic skills may improve efficacy of media literacy interventions.

Conclusion

Research on media literacy remains in its infancy in the United States. It is, after all, a relatively new field. We believe we can expect better studies in the years ahead that will shed more light on what sorts of media literacy education interventions are most effective. The future is bright for media literacy education and research, but increased funding is also needed, especially on basic research problems. Although interspersing media literacy research with social or health-related issues makes it difficult to design the research so that it focuses exclusively on media literacy, designing media literacy interventions to address a relevant social or health issue allows for better funding opportunities to examine media literacy efficacy with a greater focus on appropriate outcomes. Media literacy intervention research is a ripe area for future research endeavors to help develop not just efficacious interventions but to examine the causal processes that make such interventions efficacious.

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Perceptions of Media and Media Effects

The Third-Person Effect, Trust in Media, and Hostile Media Perceptions

Yariv Tsfati and Jonathan Cohen

ABSTRACT

Research about the way people perceive news media has made progress in three parallel avenues. The first used the concept of credibility and trust; the second used the concept of hostile media perceptions; and the third – focusing on perceptions of media impact – used the concept of the third-person perception. In this chapter, we argue that these three avenues are empirically and conceptually connected and that they are related to media effects in three ways. First, people's mistrust of media has been found to moderate the influence of media on the audience in an array of studies. Second, people's perceptions regarding media impact matter, albeit indirectly, because people react to these perceptions as if they were real. Third, the effects of perceptions of media influence are amplified when they are coupled with perceptions of media hostility, especially among audiences that are personally and emotionally involved in the issues on which media texts report.

People are exposed to information about the world by the news media. While this information shapes one's opinions about the world, attitudes toward the media themselves are also developed in the course of news consumption. Opinions about media may be generalized (e.g., the media are liberal; Lee, 2005), or targeted to the way specific topics are covered by news media (e.g., media are against genetically modified

foods; Gunther & Liebhart, 2007). Three important types of attitudes toward media have been identified by previous research; they relate to trust in media (Kohring & Matthes, 2007), perceptions as to whether media favor or are hostile toward specific topics or groups (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985), and beliefs about how powerful media are and how they affect the self, other individuals, and society (Davison, 1983).

Though social psychologists researching attitude formation and change may be interested in attitudes toward media simply as a way to study attitudes, media scholars have found them to be interesting for other reasons. Attitudes toward media have been shown to be important because they affect a host of social and political behaviors and thus they have received a fair amount of attention in recent years. In this chapter we review recent work on trust in media, which has been at record lows in recent years (Gallup, 2010). We then review work on the hostile media phenomenon and on the influence of perceived media influence, and end by examining how these disparate literatures are connected in order to suggest new theoretical insights.

Audience Trust in Media

The notion of audience trust in media applies the concept of trust, originating from interpersonal interactions, to audience interactions with media. In a general sense, “Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 395). In trust relations, there are two sides: the trustor, the side that places trust, and the trustee, the side being trusted. The trustor and the trustee interact in *an uncertain situation* in which the trustor stands to gain or lose. Trust is a *voluntary expectation* on the side of the trustor that the interaction with the trustee will lead to gains rather than to losses (Coleman, 1990). However, trust is not only about predictability and uncertainty reduction (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 577). We can reliably predict that someone else will be dishonest or self-serving and thus distrust him or her. Since the trustor cannot be certain about the intentions of the trustee, for trust to take place the trustee must be considered at least somewhat believable or credible. This is why some definitions of trust stress the credibility (Rotter, 1967) and honesty (Fukuyama, 1995) of the trustee. Oftentimes, when one is dependent on others, believing in the other’s good intentions is not enough and some trust in the other’s ability to perform may be required for trust. Thus, several definitions of trust invoke the notion of competence.

Can We *Trust* the Media?

Does the concept of trust, as defined above, apply to the interactions of audiences with media? As we have seen, trust implies uncertainty on the side of the trustor. In

the context of the news media, given that the media deal with the impersonal world (Mutz, 1998), audiences are always at least somewhat uncertain about news media content, in the sense that it is usually hard for them to verify media reports with non-media sources (even for those who still believe in the possibility of objectively valid information despite postmodern conceptions of reality as socially constructed). Not only is it hard for us to verify the validity of the *information* that appears in the media, it is even harder to verify the *character* and *intentions* of those working in the media. Hence, it is often hard to evaluate the fairness of media *interpretations* of reality (Kohring & Matthes, 2007).

As mentioned, trust implies potential gains and losses for the trustors. Admittedly, in mass media audience contexts, the risks on the side of the audience may not necessarily be as grave as in other scenarios. People might be wasting their time watching the news only to find out that the information they received is wrong. Moreover, they might be misled by inaccurate or unfair news portrayals that have potential attitudinal or behavioral consequences. Such consequences may include supporting the “wrong” candidate or policy based on media information that later turned out to be wrong or even deceptive, or not having an H1N1 vaccine based on an inaccurate media report on safety problems.

Why Do People Trust or Mistrust Media?

General Social Survey data show that the rate of US citizens having hardly any trust in the press grew from a low of 14.6% in 1973 to a high of 41% in 2006. As media scholar James Carey (1995, p. 393) put it, “above all, the press lost credibility and respect; it was no longer believed. As poll after poll showed, journalists have earned the distrust of the public.” Some put the blame for the decline in audience trust on politicians, who increasingly slam the media (Domke, Watts, Shah, & Fan, 1999). Others argued that audience mistrust is the product of mounting coverage of the media by the media that results in heightened audience awareness of journalistic blunders and scandals (Watts, Domke, Shah, & Fan, 1999). According to other explanations (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), people are cynical about the media because the media themselves are cynical. In line with this explanation, journalists’ “strategic framing” of politics leads to political cynicism which in turn feeds back on journalists (see also D’Angelo & Lombard, 2008).

Regardless of the decrease in audience trust in media in the United States in recent decades, additional research has tried to decipher what makes people trust or mistrust the news media. Two types of answers emerged. The first ties audience trust in media to some feature of the text. For example, journalists’ sourcing practices – for example, quoting or not quoting a source in the story’s headline – was found to be related to the perceived trustworthiness of the news story (Sundar, 1998). Newhagen and Nass (1989) found that audience trust in a news story is related to their perception of the individual person presenting the news story. Factors such as race and

gender of the newscaster were related to audience trust (with males perceived as more trustworthy than females, and race affecting perceived trust only for male newscasters; Balon, Philport, & Beadle, 1978). Medium characteristics such as television's ability to provide sound and pictures as evidence supporting the claims of the news stories, and the possibility to use hyperlinks to external sources in online news, explained why television news was perceived as more credible compared to print journalism in the 1960s, and online news was perceived as more newsworthy than television news early in the twenty-first century (Kiouisis, 2001).

The second type of answer is related not to the text but to audience characteristics. Not much is known about the personality of media trustors versus mistrustors but we do know that trust in media is related to interpersonal trust (though weakly; Tsfat, 2002) and to other forms of political trust (Jones, 2004). Conservatives are more mistrusting of the news media and liberals more trusting (Jones, 2004), and those with extreme attitudes are more mistrusting than moderates (Gunther, 1988). Involvement with the issues covered by media also reduced trust in news coverage (Gunther & Lasorsa, 1986). For instance, Palestinians and Israelis are more likely to mistrust coverage of the Middle East than US citizens who have had no direct ties with, or experience in, the Middle East. These findings point out that much of people's trust or mistrust in media is explained by their own biases (Gunther, 1992). This topic relates to the next section of this review, namely, the hostile media perception.

What are the Consequences of Audience Trust in Media?

In general, trust is known to be more likely to lead to cooperation whereas mistrust is likely to decrease cooperation (Blackburn, 1998; McAllister, 1995). How do we apply this logic to media contexts?

One type of evidence about consequences of trust in media demonstrates that audience trust in mainstream news media is associated with mainstream news exposure and that mistrust of mainstream news is associated with exposure to non-mainstream media (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). The associations are rather small, however ($r = .18$ at best), indicating that many people report that they read and watch news they do not trust. A possible explanation is that news may satisfy diverse needs including some that are not related to the core of trust relations. People may watch news they do not trust because it helps them stay in touch with other people, because it is interesting, or because it is fun. Since reported levels of trust in media are relatively low, it is obvious that some people will watch news they say they do not trust while trying to filter out information they consider biased or untrustworthy.

Another line of research on the consequences of trust in media explored whether audiences trusting the news media are more affected by news media coverage than those mistrusting. Indeed, the evidence points out that, at least when it comes to certain news media effects, audience trust in news media is related to news media effectiveness. This is true with regard to agenda setting (Tsfati, 2003a; Chapter 1, this

volume), priming (Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Chapter 3, this volume), and climate of opinion perceptions (Tsfati, 2003b). For example, when the public opinion climate portrayed in media predicted that George W. Bush would overcome Al Gore in the 2000 US presidential elections, media-trusting audiences were more likely than non-trusting to perceive that Bush was the likely winner, but when the mediated opinion climate changed and the news media predicted a Gore victory, trusting audiences were more likely to perceive that Gore was the likely winner. However, some media effects (especially cultivation effects of news) seem resilient to audience mistrust of media and take place even in the absence of trust (Tsfati, 2002). Moreover, research on the role of media trust in media effects has not been thus far investigated in the context of behavioral effects.

The democratic implications of audience mistrust of media remain unclear. Given the essential role news media play in democratic processes, the drop in audience trust in news media in the last decades in the United States has been presented by some scholars as a problem for democracy (Jones, 2004; Kohut & Toth, 1998). On the other hand, other scholars have argued that audience mistrust in media could be seen as healthy skepticism (Gaziano, 1988, p. 278).

While there is no clear-cut answer to the question of whether audience mistrust in media is good or bad for democracy (and a similar argument is made regarding political trust; see Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), there is quite a bit of evidence indirectly bearing on this question. For example, research has documented that *mistrust* of media is correlated with higher political participation (Tsfati, 2002; Chapter 22, this volume; but Ho et al., forthcoming, demonstrate that perceptions of media bias are related only to issue-specific political participation and not to participation in general), and higher political involvement (Eveland & Shah, 2003). Hence, we do know that citizens' mistrust of media probably does not produce political apathy. On the downside, we know that mistrusting audiences do not tend to discuss politics more often, and when they do discuss politics, they do so with ideologically like-minded individuals (Eveland & Shah, 2003). According to some accounts, the increase in audience mistrust of the news media over the past 40 years has been an important contributor to the growing polarization of the US political system (Ladd, 2005).

In sum, audience trust in the news media has roots both in the journalistic text and in the characteristics and biases of the audience. Trust is related to audience news diets and to the way people respond to news. But trust is a general attitude, targeted toward news media as an institution. How do people perceive specific news texts? This topic was covered by research on hostile media perceptions.

Hostile Media Perceptions

As part of their drive to be consistent and avoid dissonance, people's perceptions of other people and social groups that they favor tend to be favorably biased (Hastorf

& Cantril, 1954). To test this notion in the context of news, Vallone et al. (1985) screened several news segments about the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon to pro-Arab, pro-Israel, and neutral students on the Stanford campus. As expected, each group saw the coverage as, on the whole, less sympathetic to their side, more sympathetic to the opposing side, and generally hostile to their point of view. This pattern of findings, repeated since many times, has been dubbed the hostile media phenomenon (HMP), suggesting a general perception about news media as being hostile to one's own positions and social affiliations. Perloff (1989) showed not only that partisans (again pro-Israelis and pro-Palestinians) believed coverage to be biased against them, but that each group of partisans also believed that neutral audiences would be persuaded by this hostile coverage to support the opposing position. In a second experiment, Perloff (1989) showed that neutral observers did not in fact change their attitudes following exposure to the materials and thus there was no basis for the partisans' biased suspicions.

More recent research has clarified several aspects of the HMP. First, Gunther and Schmitt (2004) demonstrated that this hostility bias may not necessarily take place when it comes to non-media messages. That is, people reading the same text presented as a student essay instead of news did not perceive it as hostile. To explore why news media tend to be singled out to be perceived as hostile, Gunther and Liebhart (2006) conducted an experiment that varied both the source of the message (news vs. student essay) and the reach of the message (will or will not be published), and found that both the identity of the source and the expected audience independently contribute to the perceived hostility of the text.

But there are limits to this bias. What happens when partisans see media coverage that is clearly supportive of their view? In such cases, when coverage is clearly slanted in favor of one's own position, research has found that partisans do not see media coverage as hostile but they do see it as less positive or supportive of their position than non-partisans or opponents. This is known as the relative HMP (Gunther & Chia, 2001) to denote that while clearly favorable coverage is not seen as objectively hostile, the bias does not completely disappear but rather just becomes relative.

Why Do Partisans Believe the Media are Hostile?

Because the HMP occurs when reading media messages but not other messages, it seems that when partisan audiences are exposed to news coverage that affects a topic they are involved in, they process it in a defensive manner. This sort of processing makes the coverage seem more negative. Three specific mechanisms have been suggested (Gunther & Liebhart, 2007) and were tested by these authors in a critical experiment involving materials regarding genetically modified foods presented to partisans as either press coverage (the mass media condition) or a student essay (non-media condition).

The first mechanism tested as explaining the HMP suggests that partisans tend to selectively recall more negative than positive information. This explanation was tested and found incorrect (Gunther & Liebhart, 2007). Partisans from the two camps remembered a similar number of arguments from both sides. A second explanation focuses on the extent to which supporting and opposing arguments are treated as valid. This explanation had been experimentally supported in previous research (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994). This explanation, known as the different standards mechanism, suggests that because opposing arguments seem less legitimate, their presentation in news reports is seen as proof of biased reporting. In testing this explanation, Gunther and Liebhart (2007) found that different standards were used to decide what was legitimate to include in both the media and non-media conditions, and therefore the different standards mechanism cannot serve as a good explanation for the HMP, which occurs differently when exposed to media and non-media messages.

Finally, a third explanation that has received mixed support suggests that information is differentially categorized as supporting and opposing each position in a way that makes the coverage seem more negative. In essence, strong supporters of a position tend to see mildly favorable or neutral arguments as hostile to their position, simply because they are not supportive enough. For example, from the vantage point of a union leader, arguments that support a strike but perhaps endorse some compromise may seem hostile, whereas from a neutral point of view they may seem to be supportive of labor's position and against management.

Who is a Partisan?

In studies of the HMP, a consistent finding is that media coverage is perceived as hostile by partisans but not by neutral audiences. But what is it that makes someone a partisan and thus susceptible to hostile media perceptions?

In the persuasion literature, involvement is a central concept that explains many facets of attitude maintenance and change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984) and has been explained in various ways (Choi, Yang, & Chang, 2009). In general, individuals are involved with those topics that matter to them and that they care about. Though involvement is often related to attitude extremity with involved people having more extreme attitudes, this is not necessarily the case and extremity and involvement are conceptually distinct. Attitude involvement is associated with more effortful processing of attitude-relevant information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984) and being less likely to change one's attitude.

There are various reasons one may be involved with a topic. Someone may be involved with a topic because it has personal relevance to their lives (e.g., an event about to occur in one's town). A subset of issues that are personally relevant are those which are outcome relevant such as a tuition hike that is slated to occur in one's own university as opposed to another university. A third type of involvement

relates to topics that perhaps have no personal or outcome relevance but relate to one's values and thus are important and are associated with strong feelings (e.g., a religious person holding an anti-abortion belief). A final type of involvement is ego involvement whereby one feels so strongly about a topic and identifies with a group defined by that attitude (e.g., party affiliation, nationality, ethnic group) to such an extent that one's self-concept would be threatened if this attitude changed.

Perloff (1989) suggested that his research as well as the initial studies by Vallone et al. (1985) indicate that ego involvement drives the HMP, but these researchers did not directly test groups of partisans defined by other types of involvement. As mentioned earlier, Gunther and Liebhart (2007) report studies that rule out personal and outcome relevance as bases for the HMP. They explain that if an issue has practical relevance, a person is likely to value accurate information over consistent information, but if the involvement is expressive rather than instrumental, then consistency is likely to trump accuracy. For instance, even an individual who has a basic mistrust of media may attend and react to information about a new tax code change that affects her but feels that the very next news story about foreign policy is hostile to her ideological position. Providing additional support for the importance of ego and value involvement, Choi et al. (2009) find that ego/value and outcome-relevant involvement are distinct and that the former has a greater impact on the HMP.

What are the Consequences of the HMP?

The HMP has the potential to polarize public opinion because those who care the most about any issue become convinced that the media are against them. Thankfully, the same partisans who believe the media are out to get them do not rely on this perception when estimating public opinion. Rather, both the United Parcel Service workers and the Teamsters who had opposing attitudes about a Teamsters strike (Christen, Kannaovakun, & Gunther, 2002) projected their own attitudes on others and thought that the US public supported their view more than their opponents' view despite negative media coverage.

Tsfati and Cohen (2005a) found that among Gaza settlers who were threatened with an evacuation of their homes there was a high degree of hostile media perceptions, and that the more settlers felt the media were hostile toward them, the more they mistrusted Israeli democracy and the more willing they were to use force to oppose the government evacuation. Tsfati (2007) found that members of the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel who felt that mainstream Israeli media are hostile to Palestinian Israelis tended to feel alienated from Israeli society. Interestingly, the perception of negative coverage was also associated in both studies with a belief that the settlers and Israeli Palestinians suffered from a negative public image (Tsfati, 2007; Tsfati & Cohen, 2005b), suggesting that unlike the striking Teamsters, settlers projected their perceptions of media coverage, rather than their own self-view, onto others. Thus, the HMP can have severe consequences for democracy but only under

some conditions. In other conditions (perhaps when a group does not feel as marginalized or is as insular as the minorities studied in Israel were), it is limited to attitudes about the media.

The perception that media are hostile becomes crucial especially if one believes that the media are powerful. Individuals may think that if media have little influence over what others think, it may be unpleasant that they disagree, but if they are powerful agents of influence over others, then their oppositional messages represent a more serious social problem. Thus, the importance of the HMP is linked to perception of media influence, which is the third focus of this chapter.

Perceived Media Influence

The degree of influence and power people attribute to media and their content is another topic of interest for media scholars. One thing that has been clearly established is that such attributions are inaccurate. Several key findings point to the conclusion that the way we view the media has as much to do with how we view ourselves (or would like to view ourselves) and others than with an assessment of the media or media content. Davison (1983) identified the original bias that is referred to as the third-person perception (TPP), namely that people attribute greater power to the media when they are asked about its effect on others than when they are asked about media influence on themselves. This basic finding has been replicated endless times in an array of areas from health communication (Gunther, Bolt, Borzekowski, Liebhart, & Dillard, 2006), through parental mediation of violent televised content (Tsfati, Ribak, & Cohen, 2005), to audience reaction to media panics (Tewksbury, Moy, & Weis, 2004). Indeed, replicating this bias has become so popular that one survey ranked the third-person effect fifth on a list of “most popular theories” in contemporary communication research (Bryant & Miron, 2004). A meta-analysis (Sun, Pan, & Shen, 2008) covering 60 papers, 106 studies, and 372 effect sizes found robust support for the perceptual component of the third-person effect (the average effect size was $r = .307$).

Why Do People Perceive that Others are Influenced?

Given that the TPP disappears or even reverses itself when the topic under study is a media effect that is normatively positive (e.g., if asked to what degree a public service announcement or the media in general influence people to abstain from alcohol consumption before driving, people tend to believe they are at least as influenced as others, if not more so; Duck, Terry, & Hogg, 1998 – a finding dubbed the first-person perception), many scholars tend to explain the TPP as stemming from a motivation to view oneself positively (Gunther, Perloff, & Tsfati, 2008; Tal-Or &

Tsfati, 2007). Other evidence supporting our understanding of the TPP is that the gap between how powerful the media are expected to be in their influence on the self and on others depends on who these others are. The social distance corollary of the TPP states that the greater is the social distance between the self and the other who is perceived to be influenced by the media, the greater will be the gap in attributed media impact (Cohen, Mutz, Price, & Gunther, 1988).

There are, however, exceptions to the social distance corollary that are manifested when the others addressed have a unique connection to the message. When estimating the effects of media messages on members of a group that are expected to know more about the topic of the message, members of this group would be perceived as being less affected even if they are very socially distanced (Tsfati & Cohen, 2004), and if there is good reason to assume that they are especially vulnerable they may be perceived as especially affected even if they are more socially similar (Scharrer, 2002). These findings have been used by scholars to advance a cognitive explanation for the TPP.

According to the cognitive account of the TPP, people's perceptions of media impact are the result of their best guess, using what they know about the world in order to reach as accurate an answer as possible to a question to which even media scholars do not have the real answer. Cognitive explanations attribute errors in estimation not to self-serving biases but to more general cognitive biases. These include the attribution bias (people acknowledge the impact of external factors such as persuasive intent when they estimate the potentially undesirable impact of media on themselves, but when estimating that same effect on others, they concentrate on the innate characteristics of other people, such as gullibility; Gunther, 1991), and self-categorization theory (when people estimate media influence, they take into account what they know about the norms of the in-group and those of the out-group; Reid, Byrne, Brundidge, Shoham, & Marlow, 2007). According to one of the most studied cognitive explanations, people hold naïve theories of media influence. According to these "magic bullet-like" theories, greater exposure leads to greater media impact, and thus, when people estimate the impact of media content on others, they take into account what they know about the exposure of these other people to the specific media content. This explanation was called the perceived exposure corollary (Eveland, Nathanson, Detenber, & McLeod, 1999).

What are the Consequences of Perceiving Media Influence?

Davison's (1983) original interest in the TPP was predicated not on a fascination with the biased nature of human perceptions but rather on his claim that biased perceptions of media influence are the basis for social action and individual behavior. For example, he pointed out that movie censor boards who decide what is legitimate or illegitimate expression base their decisions on their (biased) fear that others would be harmed, whereas they are never concerned with the effect of screening these films

on their own morals or conduct. Likewise, it is now well established that biased perceptions of media influence underlie many other social decisions and actions. Such indirect media effects, the consequences of the perception of media impact, have been well documented as influence of presumed media influence or IPMI (Gunther & Storey, 2003), also known as the behavioral component of the third-person effect.

Recent reviews of the various contexts in which perceived media influence plays an important role provide a good summary of this research (e.g., Tal-Or, Tsfati, & Gunther, 2009). Such reviews point to a myriad of findings showing that people act based on their beliefs that media have effects on others to either protect themselves or others from such effects (e.g., Tsfati et al., 2005, show that parents restrict their children's TV viewing based on fears of detrimental effects), to coordinate their behavior to accommodate such media effects (Cohen & Tsfati, 2009), or to comply with normative pressures assumed to be the result of presumed media effects (Gunther et al., 2006). What is common to these studies is that they point to very real impacts of perceived media influence, a perception we know to be biased. Some of the consequences revealed in research are rather benign, such as having parents limit their children's TV viewing (Tsfati et al., 2005). Other consequences of the TPP, however, may be dangerous, as when teens claim to feel pressure to engage in sexual activity because they believe the media make this normatively expected, or rather important, as when voters change the way they vote (Cohen & Tsfati, 2009). And yet other effects may be life changing, as when people consider moving away from a town they perceived to be stigmatized by media coverage even though they enjoy living there. Thus, what at first seems like a curious self-affirming bias may have somewhat serious consequences.

Toward a Theory of Perceptions of Media

Thus far, we have defined and reviewed the causes and consequences of three perceptions regarding media: trust, hostility, and influence. But, besides the fact that these three perceptions are targeted toward the same object, are they related? Is trust in media at all related to hostile media perceptions, and are these two at all connected to perceptions of media influence? We argue that the answer to these questions is yes. From reviewing the three separate research traditions, we have learned that all three are at least somewhat irrational beliefs: while they incorporate relevant information, the motivation to all three is at least partially ego defensive. As we have shown, people who care more about a topic tend to be more defensive in how they understand media coverage of that topic. They thus tend to perceive the coverage as more hostile and influential and to increase their mistrust in the media.

The three questions underlying the three concepts – Are the news media trustworthy? Is news coverage of a given topic biased? What influence do the media in

general or a certain media content have on other people? – are not easy to answer even for academic experts deliberating for an extended period of time (and in the case of media effects, for decades). In that sense, the three perceptions cannot be expected to represent accurate assessments of media. That said, in all three cases it seems that people factor in what they do know about the world when they assess the media and their impact. There are cognitive factors involved in people's judgments of bias in a news story or the estimate of the impact of the story on others, and real-world events do influence people's trust in media (e.g., trust in media decreases after a predicted disaster does not take place; Major & Atwood, 1997).

There is an empirical association between the three perceptions as well. Tsfatı and Cohen (2005a) reported a significant association between respondents' perceptions of hostile news coverage and their trust in media, after controlling for a variety of political and demographic factors. Significant associations between hostile media perceptions and perceptions of media impact (on others) have also emerged in some other studies (Tsfatı, 2007; Tsfatı & Cohen, 2003), again after controlling for political and demographic covariates. That is, the more people mistrust the media, the more they tend to perceive media coverage as hostile to their point of view and the more they perceive news media to exert negative influence on others. It is important to note that these associations are statistically rather small. For example, in the settlers' data (Tsfatı & Cohen, 2005a), the partial correlation (controlling for various indicators of political ideology and extremity, religiosity, sex, age, years of education, and involvement – conceptualized as attachment to the particular settlement one lived in) between TPP and HMP was $r = .15$ ($p = .01$), the partial correlation between TPP and media trust was $r = -.10$ ($p = .07$), and the partial correlation between trust in media and HMP was $r = -.13$ ($p = .04$). Given the definition of trust, the association between the HMP and media trust is clear. If an individual thinks coverage is biased against her side of a story that is important to her (especially if this continues over time), it should come as no surprise that she does not trust the news media.

The empirical association between trust in media and the HMP on the one hand and the TPP on the other hand is somewhat harder to explain. It is well known in the TPP literature that perceived influence on others increases with the negativity of a text and its presumed influence (e.g., Tsfatı & Cohen, 2003; Tsfatı & Cohen, 2005b). Perhaps, then, mistrusted media are perceived as more influential because their effects are perceived as more negative for the evaluator: The more I mistrust the media, the more I see the news as biased, the more negative the messages seem, and the more severe I perceive their influence to be. In addition, though the studies documenting an association between hostile media perceptions, trust in media, and TPPs control for indicators of ego involvement, it is possible that the constructs are empirically connected because they share ego involvement as an antecedent. This could be the case especially if the controls employed in the analysis do not cover the full range of the meaning of "involvement." (For example, involvement in the settlers' study is conceptualized as time living in the settlements, having friends there, or feeling close to it. These indicators do not capture the variance in outcome-

relevant involvement as some settlers were about to lose not only their homes, but also their business or job as a result of the pending evacuation.) Finally, it is also possible that the shared object of the three perceptions can in and of itself explain the minor statistical associations between the constructs. Given that the media are evaluated in three different ways, some of the association between the constructs may stem from more general attitudes toward media underlying hostile media perceptions, media trust, and perceptions of media influence.

But trust in media, hostile media perceptions, and perceptions of media impact are not only empirically connected. As we have seen, they all relate to the way people respond to media and are thus connected through their consequences. Though all three perceptions may be flawed and inaccurate, they have very real consequences for individuals and for societies that increasingly rely on media to inform, entertain, and educate. Media have become central to our politics, economy, and social systems and, as such, how we regard them is crucial. Trust in media, the HMP, and the TPP are perceptions of media as social institutions that account for their motivation and power and sometimes trigger attitudinal or behavioral changes. To the extent that news media indeed exert influences on individuals and society, our perceptions of media play a key role in the process.

As we have seen, one of the realms in which all three perceptions have real-world consequences has to do with more general democratic trust. Trust in media was related to trust in democracy (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005a); hostile media perceptions were related to minority alienation (Tsfati, 2007); and perceived media influence was related to intentions to use force to thwart democratic decisions (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005a). A growing body of literature in communication research is concerned with the possibility that sensationalized, strategic, and cynical news coverage of political life (which itself has become increasingly commercial, personalized, and negative) is creating greater cynicism and apathy among voters (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Norris, 2001), expressed in decreased levels of political participation (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1997). The findings cited above imply that perhaps attitudes and perceptions of media do play a part in such effects. If people perceive their news coverage as biased, sensationalized, unprofessional, and unfair, and if these perceptions are coupled with perceptions of powerful media impact on other individuals and on society at large, then it is only logical that they would lose faith in the democratic process.

When considering perceptions of media in a volume on media effects, it is important to stress that the effects of perceptions of media are conceptually separate from the direct effects of a specific media text. Many of the consequences of trust in media, hostile media perceptions, and TPPs discussed above could and should be conceptualized as "media effects" because they represent attitudinal and behavioral changes that would have not occurred without the media and thus are caused by media. Whereas most traditions of research on media effects examine direct and intended effects, the effects of media perceptions covered in this chapter are often indirect effects, and for the most part they are unintended effects, not planned or even foreseen by

journalists, editors, and other producers of news media texts. Some of the studies demonstrated that these take place over and above the direct effects of frequency of exposure to media (Tsfati, 2007; Tsfati & Cohen, 2003), and in many cases the above-mentioned effects are not contingent on exposure but rather stem from knowledge or beliefs about the texts and media institutions that do not require frequent, continuous, and attentive exposure to news or other media content.

Rather than a stimulus–response model of media “effects,” the studies reviewed above point to a more complex process in which attitudes toward media shape responses to media and interact with responses to media. As we have seen, audience trust in the media seems to moderate some known media effects, such that the effects of media (e.g., agenda-setting effects) are stronger for trusting audiences and weaker for those mistrusting media institutions. This is not a surprising finding, as it stems directly from the definition of trust, yet it is an important one. In many ways, it echoes the claims by reception theorists about audiences’ ability to “resist” some of the persuasive powers of media texts (e.g., Livingstone, 1998; Morley, 1980). Audiences emerge stronger from research on the role of media trust in media effects, as well as from research on the consequences of hostile media perceptions and TPPs. They are critical and active, and they do not accept the media’s agenda and climate of opinion at face value. When they react to media portrayals, they incorporate what they think they know about media and their influences into their reactions. In this sense, the findings tell us that mistrust of the media, hostile media perceptions, and perceptions of media influence can be liberating.

Audiences may emerge from research on the consequences of media perceptions as more active, and perhaps more sophisticated, but they do not necessarily emerge as more sensible. Indeed, it makes sense that those mistrusting the media would be less willing to accept the media’s presentation of the world. Some effects of perceptions of media influence may also seem logical as they reflect coordination reactions to knowledge or expectation regarding the behaviors of others (such as in the case of changing one’s vote and voting strategically in part because media are perceived to have an influence on other voters). However, in many cases, audience reactions to their perceptions of media seem counterproductive. Consider, for example, the case of peripheral town residents who, despite liking their towns, considered moving away because they inaccurately perceived large effects of media on other people living in more central towns (Tsfati & Cohen, 2003). Evidence from this study demonstrated not only that people reacted to their perceptions of media impact, but also that these perceptions were grossly inaccurate (as evident from data collected in central towns, in which no evidence for media effects was documented). The fact that some of these people live their life with a desire to live elsewhere just because of naïve theories of media effects does not seem particularly functional to their well-being.

The main implication of this review is that we should probably pay more attention to perceptions of news media in media theory building. In addition to trying to explain audience mistrust of the media, hostile media perceptions, and TPPs, we

should also try to understand how these perceptions affect the interactions between news and audiences. The hypothesis that mistrust of the media moderates media effects should also be tested on other kinds of effects, such as media framing. The influence of presumed media influence should be tested in additional contexts, while more rigorously demonstrating the temporal sequence advanced by the theory. A more detailed explanation of the conditions under which people comply with perceived social norms fostered by media, and when they defy these norms, also seems warranted. Thus, as always, much is left for further research.

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The Future of Game Studies

Mia Consalvo

ABSTRACT

The digital game industry has been evolving at a phenomenal rate and can no longer consider console games and the Western market as its primary areas of focus. Social games, casual games, virtual worlds, indie games, and online games all expand the boundaries of what count as games. Likewise, markets such as China and Korea and game development companies in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe are challenging the dominance of Western and Japanese firms. How is game studies responding to such changes? Likewise, how is the field coalescing, now that there are dedicated journals, book series, conferences, and academic programs spread around the globe? This chapter explores how game studies has moved from “indie startup” to mid-career in its own growth trajectory of the last decade. It surveys how scholarship has evolved, what approaches have intentionally (or not) become dominant, and what views have emerged about the “proper” way to do game studies research. It concludes with challenges to the field, pointing to areas that have been overlooked, problems that remain, and the continuing question of the possibilities (and pitfalls) of making game studies research useful for popular and industry audiences.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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Introduction

Most academic fields have traditions and canons that have evolved over decades (if not centuries), always being subject to scrutiny, but also bearing the increasing weight of tradition and expectation. Not so with game studies. As a new field, it is still in the process of inventing itself, just as the videogame industry itself is still working out how it should be structured, what genres dominate, and who its player base is or should be. When I first started researching videogames in 2001, the dominant model for the industry was appealing to hardcore gamers (primarily thought to be young males) through selling console systems at a loss, in order to generate an installed base large enough for game publishers. While few games researchers studied the logic of that model, most did accept the idea that men were the primary demographic of the industry, and “female gamers” were considered a rare find, with tastes confusing to standard designers. In regard to game content, discussions of *Tomb Raider*, *Myst*, and *Doom* often encompassed much of the discourse about games. Such limited foci have obviously changed – the industry itself has transformed, rejecting its almost blinkered focus on console games to now create a mixed array of games and platforms, designing new categories of games such as casual games, social games, and massively multi-player online games (MMOGs), and rushing to populate new platforms such as Facebook, the iPhone, and the iPad. And if games have always been a profitable industry, they are increasingly valuable. The Entertainment Software Association has reported that US videogame software sales for 2009 generated \$10.5 billion, and that 67% of US households now play digital games (ESA, 2011). And apart from the traditional industry, Facebook officials have stated that approximately 40% of usage time on its site (with its 400 million + users) is spent playing games (Siegler, 2010).

Academics studying games have begun to structure a history for this field, drawing from the work of the Dutch cultural historian Johann Huizinga and the French sociologist Roger Caillois for help in understanding concepts such as “play” and “game.” Game scholars have deepened their work, theoretically and methodologically, and have moved from limited effects models and marginalization to a robust field of inquiry and critique. Yet scholars are just beginning the process of establishing game studies as a field. This chapter explores that developing landscape, pointing to some of the more important developments in scholarship on games, as well as challenging future researchers in this area to expand their research and make it more relevant, not just for the field, but for everyone who makes and plays games.

A Prehistory of Game Studies

Game studies has a curious relationship to past work done relative to videogames. Although Aarseth (2001) declared 2001 “year one” in computer game studies, he was,

either purposefully or not, ignoring nearly three decades of social scientific work on video and computer games. Part of that move was likely political: the move did decisively break with work done primarily on the negative effects of videogames relative to violence and gender stereotypes. But it also sought to claim ground for the study of games apart from traditional disciplines, theories, and methodologies.

Some of the earliest research (and perhaps the most infamous in the popular media) is the effects-driven approach to studying players of violent videogames. For example, Anderson and Ford (1986) ran experiments to establish how videogames deemed highly and mildly aggressive affected players. While they found that “hostility was increased in both game conditions” (p. 390), it is also important to note that they classified the 1982 arcade game *Zaxxon* as “highly aggressive” (p. 395), despite its lack of blood or realistic images, suggesting that criteria for what counts as aggressiveness in games have evolved, making it difficult to build off past research.

The effects tradition draws heavily from past work on other media forms, including film and television most centrally. Scholars have built on past work, exploring if and how videogames with violent content can cause increased aggression and create the potential for violence in players (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson & Dill, 2000; Anderson & Ford, 1986; Hartmann & Vorderer, 2010). While some meta-analyses have questioned such a link and its statistical significance (Sherry, 2007), proponents still claim measurable effects, which they believe will become stronger as games become more realistic and immersive (Anderson & Bushman, 2001).

Yet there are consistent challenges to these studies from several areas, including from effects researchers themselves (see Sherry, 2007). One concern is the short duration of exposure to games in the studies, with most experiments less than 30 minutes in duration. In looking to determine if longer exposure would provide different results, Williams (2006) conducted a study of *Asheron's Call 2* players (an MMOG), finding mixed results: family relationships were unaffected, but prior friendships eroded; news media use was unaffected, but other entertainment media were “displaced” by online play (p. 651). Other researchers have raised different concerns, including Ferguson, whose studies suggest instead that “family violence and innate aggression as predictors of violent crime were a better fit to the data than was exposure to video game violence” (Ferguson, Rueda, Cruz, Ferguson, Fritz, & Smith, 2008, p. 311). Ferguson also argues that many effects researchers are more focused on creating a moral panic than finding the real causes of violence such as school shootings (Ferguson, 2008). Indeed, Anderson and Bushman's 2001 article begins by listing the locations of several school shootings and stating, “the shooters were students who habitually played violent video games,” making the link very clear (p. 363).

Other game studies scholars question the assumptions that underpin effects theories and experimental research writ large. Researchers including Henry Jenkins (2006), Jim Gee (2007), and Janet Murray (1997) have all argued that in contrast to seeking out quantifiable effects on players, we should look at how individuals *use* videogames, and the pleasures as well as frustrations that might be a part of that play. In one of the first examples of such research, Gareth Schott found that among

youth in New Zealand, playing violent games offers many pleasures, even as players themselves contend with the negative atmosphere surrounding their activities. For example, he writes that one game, *Dead Rising*, “offers players an opportunity to resist the forces that control social spaces” (Schott, 2009, paragraph 22). Thus, instead of employing a passive construction implying little resistance on the part of the individual, research taking this approach demonstrates there is more at work than a simplistic input–output model between game and player.

Another early focus was content, with scholars taking various approaches to studying what was “in” popular videogames of the time, particularly Nintendo’s games. One of the best known early books, *Video Kids: Making Sense of Nintendo* by Eugene Provenzo (1991), was mostly an attack on games of the time for their limited range of images and reliance on violence as a central facet of play. By contrast, Marsha Kinder’s (1993) *Playing with Power* provided a more balanced study, applying a psychoanalytic approach to popular children’s entertainment, linked to a structural analysis of how videogames were weaving themselves into the fabric of the entertainment industry. Her findings were not all negative – while she did point to gender stereotypes and a preoccupation with violence, she also considered that games might be a positive way for children to work through various issues or stages of their development into adulthood.

Such work was indeed part of the history of studying videogames, but it also led to one of the larger splits that emerged in the field. On one side were effects researchers working comfortably in home disciplines including psychology and sociology, and on the other side were humanists and others who believed that the study of games demanded different methods and theories, and that players were not passive objects to be acted upon by all-powerful games. Some attempts have been made to seek common ground between the two approaches, but mostly they exist in parallel to one another without much crossover. That is because many of the assumptions that underlie each approach, both theoretical and methodological, can be diametrically opposed.

In response, more recent researchers have started studying players as active participants in the gameplay process, constructing and negotiating the meanings that games offer to them. And they have also taken new approaches to examining games, trying to establish how the varied components of game – narratives, representations, gameplay mechanics – are all key in understanding individual games as well as genres and other types of games. How that research has evolved, and how it has impacted both the field of game studies and new media studies generally, is detailed next.

Videogames are Special, and Not Special

Case 1: Games are Special

Within the field of game studies itself, perhaps the oldest argument stemming from the “games are special” belief is the debate between narratology and ludology, and

which approach should have primacy in the study of games. More detailed discussions of this debate exist elsewhere (Frasca, 2003; Murray, 2005; Pearce, 2005) and I will not reproduce them here. But there are a few key points that are important to highlight, as they touch on the heart of what it means to study games and game players.

Central to the original position of narratology is the belief that games can become something greater than they are – they can become more truly interactive, engaging works of art. Much of that depends on games' abilities to deliver fictional works that are the equivalent (in some undefined sense) of other forms now considered artistic, such as the novel or film. Janet Murray's (1997) call for a *Star Trek*-like experience detailed in *Hamlet on the Holodeck* is a major proponent of this approach. While this is an aspirational call (note the emphasis on how games *can become* rather than *are*), others in the narratological tradition would argue that games do have stories as important elements, and we can study games using tools and theories from related disciplines, perhaps with some adaptations (Simons, 2007).

In contrast, ludologists have generally argued that games are more than storytelling narratives and, further, that games should not strive to be stories or even worry about narratives. What makes games special is their interactivity – the fact that they are indeed ludic – and require “non-trivial effort” on the part of the player to be experienced (Aarseth, 1997). As such, they cannot be studied using the traditional methods or theories of fields such as comparative literature or film studies. Indeed, scholars such as Eskelinen (2004) have been polemical in arguing that narratology “is not completely useless” but is helpful only in terms of how it can enhance ludology and “the features inherent to games” (p. 38). Eskelinen has also decried the supposed “colonization” of the study of games by other fields, writing that “resisting and beating them is the goal of our first survival game in this paper, as what these emerging studies need is independence, or at least relative independence” (p. 36). Yet aside from the political boundary marking to establish a new field and define it as important, there are a few key points to take from this debate.

Most importantly, we can recognize that games (and gameplay itself) can be quite difficult to study from a methodological standpoint. Setting aside notions of active and passive audiences first mentioned in media studies in regard to television viewing, games do require active engagement by players in order for them to come into being. Further, the more active games encourage players to be (in the form of greater numbers of choices, whether these be storyline options or even gameplay possibilities), the more complex they become as objects of inquiry. Likewise, while representations and narratives can be key parts of games to study, gameplay itself must be taken into account for games to retain their ludic quality. Finally, another key consideration is the role of the researcher: should it be to objectively watch others play, or to engage with a game herself? These are important questions that have arisen from the ludologists' point of view.

Second, and in line with the narratologists, we must not omit the study of narratives or stories from our understandings of games. As my own work has demonstrated, players often cite the stories in games as a critical element in their enjoyment,

and for some players, games must have a strong storyline or narrative to hold their interest, or even to motivate their gameplay in the first place (Consalvo, forthcoming). Game developers themselves are often driven to create games with strong stories such as *Choice of the Dragon*, *Mass Effect*, and *Final Fantasy*, and have also experimented with different ways to tell those stories, such as the ambient storytelling method used in games such as *Half-Life* and *Portal*. Clearly, from a player and developer perspective, stories or narratives do have a place in games, and thus how they fit (or not) should be actively studied by researchers as well.

Finally, no one discipline or field should (or can) have control over game research or theorization, and the study of games is enriched by multiple paths of inquiry. Narratives are not the only important elements of games to study, nor are game mechanics. Scholars working in fields as diverse as law (Burk, 2005; Lastowka & Hunter, 2004), philosophy (Ess, 2009; Reynolds, 2002), anthropology (Boellstorff, 2010; Malaby, 2009), art history (Sharp, 2010), sociology (Simon, 2006; Taylor, 2006), computer science (Mateas, 2004; Wardrip-Fruin, 2009), and other areas have all contributed much to the study of games, drawing from their own disciplinary perspectives yet also adapting those practices to the study of ludic practice. Such activities bring us a much more varied, rich, and valuable account of games and game players than one discipline or field (whether communications or game studies) ever could on its own.

Case 2: Videogames and Research on New Media

In addition to research focused on games and play, work done in game studies has also been important in helping us understand developments in new media more broadly. There are connections in multiple areas, including the development of interactive fiction, identity play as it happens online, the formation of online communities, the rise of user-generated content in relation to Web 2.0, and the game industry's role in the global spread of popular culture, to name only a few areas.

In his history of interactive fiction, Nick Montfort (2005) writes of the centrality of games in the development of the genre. In doing so, Montfort makes the case that games can function as literature and can be considered works of art equal to other expressive forms. He goes on to clarify that while interactive fiction may not have much in common with the novel, "the riddle, like an IF [interactive fiction] work, must express itself clearly enough to be solved, obliquely enough to be challenged, and beautifully enough to be compelling" (p. 51). Games that incorporate such riddles have helped to shape and popularize the evolution of interactive fiction (with interactive fiction likewise shaping game development), and games have contributed to that art form in important ways, even as they have eclipsed interactive fiction in terms of popular attention. Yet he also believes that "studies of one of these types of systems will surely yield results about textual and interactive properties that will apply to the other" (p. 224).

The study of games has also contributed findings and led to important theorization in the area of identity play and identity formation online. Much early work exploring how individuals negotiate and experiment with various aspects of their identities was based on the study of online game spaces. Most popularly, Turkle (1995) has written about various multi-user domains (MUDs) and how individuals have used them to create different personas in order to experiment with a different identity, and perhaps to integrate new elements into their real-world personalities. Other scholars have likewise focused on game-based MUDs as sites for gender exploration (Bruckman, 1996) as well as sexual identity play (McRae, 1996). While such work initially led to early celebratory accounts of individuals liberated from static, solitary identities (Stone, 1995), recently we have seen more balanced accounts emerge, suggesting that identity play is not as prevalent as earlier thought (Consalvo, 2010; Lüders, 2010). Nevertheless, forms of identity play can still occur online, and games are popular spaces for that activity. Nakamura (2000) has written about negative forms of identity play, such as racial stereotyping in early online games and virtual spaces, or what she refers to as “identity tourism.”

Alongside identity play, research focusing on games has given us important insights into online communities, and how they develop as well as evolve and die. One of the earliest graphical online games, *Habitat* (released in 1985), showed its creators the unique challenges of managing online communities composed of diverse individuals (Morningstar & Farmer, 1991). As the developers explained in their subsequent writings about the game, they quickly learned that “we could influence things, we could set up interesting situations, we could provide opportunities for things to happen, but we could not predict nor dictate the outcome.” Morningstar and Farmer tried to take as hands-off an approach as possible, and kept their interactions with residents primarily within the fiction of the game.

Similarly, players of the early MMOG *Ultima Online* challenged the game’s creators in unexpected ways (infamously one player, Rainz, managed to kill the game developer’s avatar, Lord British, while he was visiting the virtual space), with those developers likewise learning the importance of managing community as part of a game’s world (Bartle, 2006). Dibbell (1993) recounts the history of the more socially themed MUD LambdaMOO, and how one particularly famous incident (with Mr. Bungle) led to debates about the role of democratic processes in virtual worlds and the potential rights of players as citizens of that space. That topic sprung up again more explicitly with Raph Koster’s famed “Player’s Bill of Rights” written in 2000 (Koster, 2000). Such calls for some type of representation, as well as for the acknowledgment that activities in online games and virtual worlds do matter, have found their way to most other online spaces as well. Yet games have been an important playground for their early development, and games research has done key work in highlighting such movements.

More recently, game ethnographers such as Taylor (2006), Pearce (2009), and Boellstorff (2010) have investigated the communities found in online games and virtual worlds, and have detailed the key role that such formations play in the existence of

such spaces. Pearce (2009) in particular explores how the affordances of particular virtual worlds will shape how individuals and groups play within them, and how the different spaces come to shape their virtual and physical identities. Such research is valuable not only for what it tells us about virtual worlds, but also for how it helps us understand how individuals and groups interact with one another in different kinds of spaces, and the ramifications of living a life increasingly online.

Other game researchers have drawn important linkages between the history of games and the (now popular) concept of user-generated content. Those studying mods, such as Sihvonen (2009) and Sotamaa (2009), detail how gamers have played a pivotal role in the development of content for games, creating a role for themselves somewhere between consumer and professional producer – perhaps the “produser” that Bruns (2007) refers to – but which is increasingly recognized as valuable by the game industry. Sihvonen (2009) in particular details how early player-created mods for *Doom* generated expectations among game developers that players would demand such content, so that mod tools and level editors became a regular, expected element of many games. That expectation has become a larger part of Internet use, as other researchers have illustrated (Jenkins, 2006), particularly in relation to the concept of the “participatory culture” that can emerge relative to media texts that audiences hold dear.

Finally, game research has explored how global media industries are not always dominated by Western products or producers, as the case of Japan’s early leadership in the game industry demonstrates (Consalvo, 2006). While earlier media industries, including film and television, have often featured Western control of markets and the inability of other countries or cultures to compete with entities such as Hollywood, the game industry shows another industry configuration. Early console and arcade history featured companies and software produced in Japan, North America, and Europe most centrally, while more recently there has been an upsurge in production in South Korea, China, and parts of Eastern Europe. Such developments speak to the importance of studying global media, and how such media travel and mutate as they cross various cultural and national borders. Given the recent fragmentation of the television industry and increasing practices of runaway production in the film industry, the games industry and research about it offers another model for understanding the complexity of contemporary global media and their audiences.

Methods and their Meanings

For scholars interested in studying particular videogames, the following scenario might seem familiar, as it illustrates many of the issues that studying games themselves raises in terms of methods of analysis. Playing the latest game in the *Dream Chronicles* series, *Book of Air*, I am faced with a choice before beginning – to play in casual mode, or to try the “challenging” option. Casual mode includes easier puzzles

and the option to skip them if they still prove too difficult. Likewise, I have the option of buying the Collector's Edition and getting additional bonus material, including an extra level to complete; or waiting a few weeks for the cheaper, standard version without those bells and whistles. I wonder how many players try each version of the game, and whether such differences matter to the experience of gameplay. Launching the game brings back memories of past games in the series, prompting me to ask if I can consider this game on its own merits or if past games in the series should be studied as well. For example, the prior game allowed the player to travel to different locations in any order desired, as long as she solved all of the puzzles, unlocking the final challenge in the game. This game is more linear, only allowing me to progress from one area to another by completing the level, which then unlocks coordinates for the next location. The game's story is integrated fairly well with gameplay challenges, but it still relies on traditional narrative elements at times. These are all things to consider when studying what is in a game itself.

Considering the context of my play, other complexities emerge. When I play, I am usually on a laptop, either at home on my couch or traveling, playing with earbuds in. I do not play in windowed mode, to avoid interruptions. Of course there are other interruptions and distractions to contend with, such as the dog barking or the noise of the television. As a player I may not consider such issues important, but as a researcher I must ask if those interruptions matter in deconstructing the gameplay experience, either to understand a particular game itself, or how various players might take meaning from it. Likewise, I could ask if the overall gameplay experience is different for someone who plays in short bursts of time over perhaps a month compared with someone who downloads, plays, and completes the game in one sitting – a matter of less than 10 hours. Finally, is my own experience of play enough to draw from to best understand the game, or should I talk with, interview, or survey other players? Likewise, I may ponder which players I am interested in and how I can find them. These are all questions that arise as researchers face the challenge of studying games.

To undertake such research, academics from disparate fields have faced the challenge of choosing the best methods for answering such questions. Although recently we have seen the development of methods particular to studying gameplay, initially there were no such approaches to draw from. Thus many scholars turned to their home disciplines for help in understanding how players interacted with games, and what “effects” or impacts those games might have on players.

Choices of method are never divorced from the theoretical approaches that scholars draw from, and the study of games and players is no different. Because of this, specific methodologies in game studies have varied widely, with researchers drawing from a variety of fields (including education, law, psychology, sociology, communications, and anthropology) in order to find ways to best study their objects of interest. Some of those methods have included content analyses and textual analyses of games, rhetorical studies of player chat, surveys of players, experiments with players as well as observations in laboratories, virtual ethnographies of MMOGs and virtual

worlds, interviews and focus groups with players as well as developers, and other methods that researchers are still developing. More specifically, many media studies scholars have drawn from active audience theories and have used textual analysis as a method for studying individual games. Anthropologists have used ethnographic methods to investigate virtual worlds and MMOGs and their player communities. Sociologists have studied player groups, psychologists have investigated the cognitive processes of players, and English as well as literature and film scholars have used various theories such as poststructuralism, deconstruction, and reader response theory to understand the world of videogames. And as game studies has evolved, researchers have increasingly come to advocate that games should be treated as different from other popular media and that we need newer tools and theories as well as approaches to best understand games.

Methods choices also tend to align with a researcher's particular theoretical home. So those who draw from critical and cultural theories, for example, usually ask questions best answered using qualitative methods, while social scientific research is more inclined to use quantitative approaches. There is some multi-methodological research being conducted as well, but it remains relatively rare compared to other approaches (Williams, Kennedy, & Moore, 2011). Still, it is helpful to discuss the various types of methods that have been chosen and that have evolved in game studies research over the past decade, to identify their advantages and disadvantages, and also to demonstrate how methods could evolve to help us better understand the dynamic nature of games and gameplay.

Many of the earliest methods used to study games and players were quantitative, designed to offer breadth rather than depth in data. Many early researchers used quantitative content analysis in order to investigate the images and representations offered in early videogames (Dietz, 1998; Kinder, 1993; Provenzo, 1991). Content analysis was an obvious way to get started and also offered baselines for future research. Most early work focused on depictions and levels of violence, and also investigated the presence of gender stereotypes as well as the (somewhat rare) presence of female characters. Those early studies found that female characters were indeed few and far between, with games treating the few actual female characters as either princesses in need of saving or as eye candy for the presumed male player (Dietz, 1998). Such studies also investigated the prevalence of violence, with Provenzo decrying "the consistent tendency toward the depiction of violence and aggression that is so much a part of the games included in the Nintendo system" (1991, p. 134). Such findings are not that surprising given that one of the earliest games developed was *Spacewar!* in 1961, suggesting that violence and games have a long history, and activities such as shooting and killing are deeply embedded in the history of the medium.

But while content analyses offer a broad view of many games, they are limited in how much content they can sample from individual games – usually 10 to 30 minutes at most, and almost always from the beginning of the games sampled. Perhaps more problematic, however, is the reliance on studying representations rather than game-

play. Most of the gender studies have focused on the appearance of the female characters (or their absence), with a nod to their role in various games – as trophy, as victim to be saved, as eye candy. Some researchers (Children Now, 2001; Williams, Martins, Consalvo, & Ivory, 2009) note the ability to play as a female character or not (thus being the driver of the action and affording the female character agency), yet mostly the focus is on images, which are admittedly problematic. Some studies of violence have examined the options offered to players, such as whether the game offers varied ways to deal with conflict, including negotiating, violence, or other ways; or if violence seems justified or not, or if the player is usually rewarded for engaging in violence (Smith, Lachlan, & Tamborini, 2003). However, there are still many questions left unanswered, including how players make sense of that violence, as studies like Schott's (2009) are beginning to explore.

Other early methods used by games researchers have included surveys and experiments. Some of the best known work includes survey research done by Nick Yee in his Daedalus project, an ongoing survey of players from a variety of MMOGs from 1999 to 2004. Gathering the views and self-reported practices of approximately 35,000 players, Yee (2010) has found wide-ranging results about the basic demographics of players, motivations for play, relationships between avatars and player identity, addiction, relationship formation, and gender-bending. These data paint a picture of the average MMOG player as approximately 26 in age, with about half of all players working full time and playing games an average of 22 hours a week. Although much of Yee's work is about gathering baseline information, it does come to some interesting conclusions, for example that "the two primary reasons why players gender-bend are to be able to be more stylish and to optimize their character."

Most other survey research is not as broadly based, but is instead usually limited to the players of a particular game. More recently, Williams, Consalvo, Caplan, and Yee (2009) reported the findings of a study of *Everquest 2* players, drawing from a survey that was hosted by the game's publisher – Sony – and was presented to all players before their login screen. The resulting data yielded some interesting differences in terms of player-reported interests and activities, suggesting that researchers must take the results of non-random samples cautiously, as it is usually the most motivated and dedicated players who most often respond to requests for interviews, surveys, and general questions for more information.

Meta-Methodological Concerns

There are several challenges associated with methodological choice, however. First, whether studying games as game texts or players and their activities, it can be very difficult to take account of the interactivity of videogames. Games demand effort in order to be experienced. So a game is not quite like a book or television show, with only one central story and one linear path through it. Instead, games can feature no story at all, they may have multiple branching paths that change the experience, and

players themselves have the ability to alter some games, not only through their choices in game but perhaps through user-created modifications that can be either minor or major changes to the game and its world. Studying only the representational content misses major aspects of the experience. Thus, a key concern in game studies has been to advocate for study of the gameplay elements of games – how mechanics work, how players make choices, what choices games offer, and how those elements can intertwine with representations, narratives, and player agency. By adding those elements to the mix, game studies can tell us more about why people play games, how players might use them as playgrounds to think through ideas and actions, and how they can function as a space players use for relating to one another. But first we need to get a better sense of how to study games, to see them as more than one more form of media their users are exposed to in daily life.

One such approach is Bogost's procedural rhetoric. Arguing that the most successful persuasive games build their arguments into gameplay itself, Bogost (2007) offers numerous examples of how such a process works. One example he uses is the flash game *Tax Invaders*, which allows the player to control an image of George W. Bush's head as he shoots down enemy tax proposals. Bogost writes that despite its seeming simplicity, "the battle is both metaphoric and material – the player actually does battle against taxes, in a literal sense. [...] In playing the game, the player is encouraged not only to reaffirm a conservative position on taxation, but also to practice using a conservative frame for that position" (p. 108). Such examples help us see how games have meanings as part of their procedurality, rather than simply being formed in the text itself, via a story or narrative. Such methods for exploring those meanings are critical for the future of game studies.

Methods: Continuing the Debates

As we develop (and refine existing) methods for studying games, certain practices have become standardized, allowing us to question or make way for additional considerations. Game studies scholars have largely accepted the charge that one must actually play the games one is studying or using in studies to measure or observe player behavior. Without the knowledge of how a particular game is played – if, for example, a researcher is merely watching a recorded gameplay session much like one might watch a television episode – critical errors in analysis can result. For example, one early study of violence in videogames had the control subjects play a game that was qualitatively different from the violent game that the test subjects played (they used *Myst* and *Doom*), making accurate comparisons difficult if not impossible (Anderson & Dill, 2000). Similarly, without playing a game researchers might not understand the level of difficulty involved, or the feel of play, which can also be important.

Finally, this charge has opened the door for considering additional questions: How much should a game researcher play a game? Should we always finish the games we

study? If the game does not have an official ending, such as MMOGs, how much should we play? Should we be able to beat the game on various difficulty levels, and likewise, should researchers cheat when they play (consult walkthroughs, use codes), particularly if they are not exploring the way that cheating works in a game? How much should we know about the political-economic structure of the companies that make such games or that structure the larger industry? These are many questions that game studies researchers, particularly those interested in critical and cultural approaches, are still pondering.

Questioning Origin Theories

If game studies is to break with other disciplines to establish itself as a serious field of study, it needs its own theories for understanding play and games, which help us better understand the human condition and the role of play (and games) in our lives. To do so, researchers in game studies have looked to scholars who have conceptualized and studied different types of games (not merely digital games), as well as the historical role of play in human social interaction. Theorists studying games include Huizinga (1950), Caillois (1961), Suits (1978), and Fine (1983), with work on non-digital play by Sutton-Smith (1997) being influential as well.

Such writers provide helpful ways to think about games as more than media products. Caillois (1961), for example, creates a taxonomy for games that includes four types that can be combined: *agon* (games of competition), *alea* (games of chance), *ilinx* (games of vertigo), and *mimesis* (mimicry or role-playing) (pp. 14–26). Such categories can help us categorize or compare games of like or unlike type, as well as position digital games alongside card games, board games, and so on. Suits (1978) offers extended discussions of how to define the term game, as well as the meaning of cheating or being a spoilsport or a trifter in a game, definitions that inform contemporary player behavior in videogames. Gary Alan Fine's (1983) ethnographic study of paper and pen role-playing gamers prefigures the activities of MMOG players to a startling degree, suggesting commonalities in how groups come together – physically as well as virtually – to engage in social activities.

Here, however, I focus on a more recent discussion in game studies, namely the usefulness of one of the field's core concepts – the magic circle – first discussed in relation to games by Johan Huizinga (1950). Huizinga's larger project was to advocate for the centrality of play in human life. He argued that play is older than culture, and has formed a kind of template for many aspects of civilization, if we look deeply enough. Activities such as war, law, art, language, and philosophy, according to Huizinga, have a play element at their core. And central to that play element is the magic circle. For Huizinga, play is set apart from daily life, both temporally and spatially, although the spatial aspect may be a liminal, or transitory, form of everyday space, rather than a physically delineated boundary such as a boxing ring or baseball

diamond. According to Huizinga, “all play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course” (p. 10). In that space, he writes, “the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count” (p. 12).

In seeking to define what makes games different, game studies scholars have often pointed to the magic circle as a way to distinguish play activities from other aspects of daily life. The magic circle boundary appears to make sense, particularly if a player is engaging in an offline multi-player game, or even a single-player game that is online or offline. The rules define the boundaries of the game, and the player must abide by those rules when in the space of the game. The concept has been popular with game designers, such as Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (2004), who have used it in their widely cited game design book, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, to talk about how to conceptualize the space of a game, and how players approach games as seemingly unique artifacts with distinct rules for engagement. They write, “the magic circle of a game is the space within which a game takes place. Whereas more informal forms of play do not have a distinct boundary, the formalized nature of games makes the magic circle explicit” (p. 99).

Some game studies scholars are in agreement with such distinctions. For example Castronova (2004) has argued in relation to virtual worlds that “any threats to the magic circle are also threats to a person’s well being. The magic circle warrants protection by some means, one of which might be the law” (p. 185). Yet other scholars have begun to question both the easy applications of the magic circle concept to videogames (as opposed to non-digital forms of games) and the usefulness of the concept at all for explaining video gameplay. Marinka Copier (2007) provides an extensive discussion of the subject in her doctoral dissertation, concluding that the magic circle concept

refers to a preexisting artificiality of the game space that, combined with the strong metaphor, creates a dichotomy between the real and the imaginary which hides the ambiguity, variability, and complexity of actual games and play. [...] I posit that even rules alone do not create a preexisting artificiality. Games need to be played, and players actively influence each other as well as what the system of the game becomes. Thus the game-play experience is always the result of the interplay between different cognitive frameworks on rules, play, and culture. (p. 139)

Other scholars take similar positions, including Taylor (2006), who studies the intersections of play activities as individuals move back and forth between the play space of MMOGs and the physical space of their daily lives, and Malaby (2006), who argues that “it is how we have sought to account for what is remarkable about games by setting them apart (as play-spaces, as stories) that is the largest roadblock to understanding what is powerful about them” (p. 97).

Lehdonvirta (2010) states that in relation to MMOGs and other virtual worlds, treating such domains as separate is extremely problematic, as once one starts

cataloguing the caveats to how to count population, how to distinguish users from avatars, spillover of social relationships and the like, the process becomes shot through with exceptions and problems. Instead, Lehdonvirta (2010) advocates for considering such spaces as *social worlds*, a concept drawn from sociologist Anselm Strauss.

Liebe (2008) takes a somewhat different approach to dismissing the magic circle for videogames, arguing that “players do not have to adhere to the code of behavior and the rules, but simply have *no other choice* than to act within the frame of the possibilities provided by the computer program” (p. 332, emphasis added). But Juul (2008) maintains that while some may see the magic circle as a useless concept, it is still necessary to understand player activities, since “the magic circle is the boundary that players negotiate” (p. 62). In my own writing on the topic (Consalvo, 2009a), I agree that players do negotiate various aspects of play, yet suggest another concept that might be more useful in understanding such activity – the notion of frames, as introduced by Erving Goffman and modified to fit the gameplay situation by Fine (1983). This modification suggests that there is no easy distinction to be made between the ordinary rules of life and when they do or do not apply. Instead,

players exist or understand “reality” through recourse to various frames (their daily life, the game world, their characters’ alleged knowledge and past) and move between those frames with fluidity and grace. So, rather than seeing a boundary break or simply being “inside” or “outside” a magic circle, by conceptualizing gamer activity as movements between frames, we can better capture and study the complexities of MMO gameplay. (Consalvo, 2009a, p. 415)

Such diverse and robust attention to this concept indicates that game studies as a field continues to evolve. Scholars studying digital games take their relationship to non-digital games, as well as the experience of gameplay, quite seriously. How this matter will be resolved is still an open question, suggesting a key debate for the future of game studies.

One Possible Future for Game Studies

Copier began exploring the development of the field of game studies as early as 2003, at the time of the first conference of the Digital Games Research Association in Utrecht, the Netherlands (Copier, 2003). Certainly the field has evolved since she wrote on the subject, but some elements remain the same. Game studies scholars continue to stake ground for themselves, as Copier suggested as a characteristic of all new fields. Part of that work involves setting boundaries – defining what is “outside” is just as critical (perhaps more so) as defining what is “inside” the field.

The time of Aarseth's 2001 proclamation declaring the beginning of game studies was a key moment in the process of establishing the field's boundaries. Researchers in Europe and North America had begun studying and writing about games using qualitative and critical methods, and had started to scrutinize games as unique objects. At the same time, researchers looked at the tools they had been trained with via their relative disciplines, and wondered if they were adequate to the job. A central question emerged: what is the best way to study games? Game scholars are still debating that question more than a decade later.

During that time, however, the makings of a field, if not a discipline, have begun to emerge. The online journal *Game Studies* was launched in 2001, and the Digital Games Research Association was formed in 2002, holding its first conference a year later. Other journals devoted to games have been created, including *Games and Culture*, *Eludamos: Journal for Computer Game Culture*, *International Journal of Role-Playing*, *International Journal of Computer Games Technology*, and *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research*, to name a few. Likewise, book series have developed at presses including MIT Press, Routledge, Sage, and other important venues. DiGRA has continued to hold semi-annual conferences, the Canadian Game Studies Association has been formed, and numerous smaller games conferences have been held around the globe. Finally, colleges and universities have started full-scale departments of game studies and design (such as the Georgia Institute of Technology and the IT University of Copenhagen in Denmark), while many others have created undergraduate programs in game design, or worked to create interdisciplinary programs stressing game design and game studies.

Research has become specialized and sustained, with scholars carving out areas of expertise and engaging with questions and problems in increasingly sophisticated ways. Yet where should the field go next, as games scholars establish better methods and theories? Writing in *Eludamos*, I have already questioned the structures that game studies has created in its drive to establish itself as a serious scholarly endeavor (Consalvo, 2009c). Likewise, I have called for more research on the business aspects of digital games and virtual worlds, more studies of virtual worlds targeted to children, and more studies of the global aspects of games (Consalvo, 2010). These remain viable concerns, and there are also others that demand equal if not greater attention, including areas of study, terminology and practices, and the communication of results.

One of the most important, if not most pressing, is the challenge to adapt research methods as well as develop better ones to understand the complexities of both games themselves and game players. Many of these issues have already been addressed in this chapter but deserve highlighting here. We are only beginning to understand how individuals play games and the meanings derived from that activity. There is currently little in the language of game studies to account for such experiences – witness debates about whether or not games are merely “fun” or whether they are solely escapist entertainment. This is not a problem specific to game studies – media studies scholars have also grappled with how to draw meaningful insights from audience

members, who are taught from a young age to denigrate their own consumption practices of popular culture. Games, however, are usually even lower on the status list than television and film, and thus have an even greater uphill battle to fight, still often being pigeonholed as “for kids” and “not serious.”

Even studying the act of play is challenging. As Taylor and Witkowski (2010) remind us, we have done little to theorize playing spectatorship and what that might mean for different types of player/spectators. Are there ways to engage with a game without holding a controller and guiding it? How can that engagement be measured? How do relationships between players and spectators influence gameplay or the gaming situation? We need much more study of different types of play, beyond looking at how players fall into categories such as achievers, explorers, and socializers.

Likewise, game studies needs better guidance in studying how games are produced, in terms of both design-based research and how business and cultural practices shape game design. Beyond studying balance sheets or observing the development process, how can design itself be a research tool? What would success or failure in that regard look like? And finally, game studies scholars should continually question the reliance on industry terms to define their research. As my own work indicates, terms such as “casual” and “female player” are largely meaningless (Consalvo, 2009b), given that female players have diverse play styles, interests, and practices, and many players of “casual” games can be quite dedicated to their playing, spending multiple hours with the games.

Related to this, but more broadly, game studies should widen the scope of analyses, to see how play and games are integrated into the everyday lives of individuals, groups, and communities. Although it is difficult enough to study games in isolation, they are not played in isolation, except perhaps in the test labs of game researchers. As Radway (1988) suggested in relation to earlier media audiences, individuals do not focus their attention solely on one text; instead they live their daily lives, and media are an important element, but only one part of it. Similarly, games are only one slice of most folks’ lived experiences, yet research often treats those experiences as singular, isolated, and special. For many people, games probably are not that special. Research on mobile games is beginning to show just that (Parikka & Suominen, 2006). Yet we also need to account for how games are part of that wider scope of daily experience. For example, Kolos (2010) found that the daily practices of a dorm community centered on playful experiences rather than on specific videogames. Yet she would have missed that more important finding had she only questioned individuals about their gameplay habits. While such deep explorations can be insightful, we need more such studies, which help us see where games fit in the rhythms of a person’s or a family’s life; how that group influences the styles of play witnessed; and how particular games might foster or even challenge those styles. Such studies are necessarily bigger and more difficult to do, but they would offer a better picture of the role of games in everyday life, of how their ordinariness can also be special.

Related to this, game studies scholars need to respond to the increasing gameification of life we see emerging. Products such as Foursquare and sites such as Chorewars are only the beginning – if games are seen as motivating to individuals, and people strive to earn badges and achievements for almost anything, we will see this practice grow, as Schell (2010) and Hecker (2010) have warned. Yet aside from the ramifications of entertainment games, and our purchasing habits, what might this mean for daily life? Huizinga argued that play preceded culture and was deeply structured into many of the institutions and practices we think of as serious (including law, war, and sports). What will such consciously crafted game-like systems mean for people in terms of being good citizens, careful parents, or interested media audiences? Game researchers need to investigate this trend, before its prevalence overtakes what we know about its effects.

We must put to rest the concept of the “gamer.” Games are ubiquitous, and this concept is more exclusionary than helpful in scholarly conversations as well as in identifying how individuals envision games in their lives. Except for the most hardcore, there is little benefit to labeling oneself a gamer, and a host of stigmas attached. One prevalent stereotype of the gamer is the slacker with negligible social skills, alone in his parents’ basement, grinding away at violent, gory, and sexist videogames. Most of us know the stereotype is not accurate, but for many individuals who play an astonishing amount of games, this is what being a gamer means. Just as people now watch television or go to movies, they also play games – whether on consoles, computers, or mobile phones, on board games, with cards, or using physical objects such as balls and hoops. Using the term gamer sets up artificial distinctions and creates tensions where instead we should be making connections. To do that, game scholars should move away from gamer as an identity marker and instead focus on how games or play make people’s lives more interesting, richer, better, and even more frustrating at times.

Lastly, even as scholars become more specialized in their knowledge domains (studying casual games or MMOGs, looking at the effects of violent games or exploring design practices in serious games), they need to keep the broader research picture in mind. Already there are interesting convergences in the study of female players – whose activities are strikingly similar across casual, MMOGs, and social games. Where else will we see such commonalities, or what could be important differences? Likewise, game studies must continue its conversations with other fields and disciplines. Most centrally, I believe games studies scholars have important things to say to their home disciplines as well as related fields of study – such as in the domain of online behavior that Internet studies scholars scrutinize, or ways to enrich conversations in anthropology when it comes time to conduct a virtual ethnography, as Pearce (2009) has done. Even as games are special and need more specialized methods to be understood, research findings can and do speak to broader communities of knowledge, and game scholars must be forceful in making that known. In that way, games studies makes the case that games do matter, and that play is central to the experience of being human. Our play activities are critical to map and understand, and

they also play a role in the rest of our daily activities. They help to shape our cultures, our senses of ourselves. They are increasingly being mapped onto daily living. How could we *not* study games?

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The Decline of Modern Journalism in the Neo-Partisan Era

Richard Campbell

ABSTRACT

Today's media market is a fragmented world where more options than ever exist, but where newspaper readers age and TV viewers embrace cable news, social networks, blogs, and Twitter. The former "mass" audience morphs into smaller niche users who chase particular hobbies, entertainment, and politics. Media outlets that hope to survive appeal not to mass audiences any more but to interest groups – from sports fans and history buffs to conservatives or progressives. So, mimicking the news business of the eighteenth century, partisanship has returned with a vengeance, more profitable than ever. For the news media, muting political leanings to reach a mass audience makes no sense when a mass audience no longer exists. Instead, media now make money by targeting and catering to niche interests. In such a marketplace, we see also the decline in a US journalism that promoted fact-gathering, documents, and expertise, and held up "objectivity" as the ideal for journalistic practice. Rising in its place is a new era of partisan news – a "journalism of assertion" – marked partly by a return to journalism's colonial roots and partly by the deterioration of the "journalism of verification" that kept watch over our central institutions. This transition is symbolized by the rise of the news pundit as a kind of "expert" with more standing than verified facts, authentic documents, and actual experts. Today the new partisan fervor found in news outlets online and on cable has perhaps been the major catalyst for the nation's intense political and ideological divide. For news to move forward in such an era, we need to reinvigorate the "news of verification," teaching students to break free from static older formulas – especially in TV news – and to reimagine the telling of significant stories in compelling ways.

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

General Editor Angharad N. Valdivia.

Volume VI: *Media Studies Futures*. Edited by Kelly Gates.

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It may not be essential to save or promote any particular news medium, including printed newspapers. What is paramount is preserving independent, original, credible reporting, whether or not it is popular or profitable, and regardless of the medium in which it appears.

(Downie & Schudson, 2009)

Writing for *Rolling Stone* in March 1992, media critic Jon Katz foresaw the authority of modern newspapers being usurped by a variety of “new news” or postmodern forms that combined information, entertainment, opinion, and analysis. Katz (1992) claimed that the authority of the most prominent daily papers, such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, was being challenged by “news” coming from talk shows, sitcoms, popular films, rap music, and – add to that today – various Internet sites, 24-hour cable news shows, and Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show* and *Colbert Report*.

Katz was partly correct back then, but what he did not foresee was the rise of intense partisanship in news media, especially in 24/7 cable news and on Internet blogs. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, news outlets tried to appear neutral and appeal to the largest audience possible. This was a profitable strategy for journalism. So why in the twenty-first century has journalism returned to its old partisan roots? Today we have the ongoing feuds between cable news channels, along with the 24/7 blogosphere attacks on both the right and the left. Partisanship itself is making the news today.

What is most intriguing about this intense partisanship is the way it recalls the press of yesteryear. Newspapers in the eighteenth century, subsidized by their political parties, cultivated a nasty partisanship, rivaling and even surpassing today’s venom. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson ran papers in which they attacked each other. Newspapers referred to President George Washington at various times as “a horse beater,” “a dictator,” “a most horrid swearer and blasphemer,” “a spoiled child,” and “a tyrannical monster” (Lewis, 1991, pp. 54–55; Burns, 2006, pp. 178–179).

But by the nineteenth century the press started to strike a more detached and moderate tone in its reports. In the 1830s, when the telegraph first enabled news to instantly crisscross the country, journalism began moving away from partisanship and the seeds of modern journalism were sown. To complement the new technical advances, editors called for a focus on the immediacy of the present. Modern print journalism de-emphasized political discussions and historical context, instead accenting the new and the now. Historians mark this period in the 1830s and 1840s as the beginning of the transition from the partisan to the modern press era. Though US journalism began as a venue for partisan politics (with papers taking one side or the other in debates over issues such as constitutional amendments, slavery, and states’ rights), in the nineteenth century publishers figured out how to sell news more profitably as a product. They used modern technology – including the rotary press and cheaper paper – to substantially cut their costs; they also began to change news

content to appeal to emerging and literate middle- and working-class people, who could now afford a paper and had some leisure time to read one. Publishers realized that they needed more practical and current everyday content that appealed to readers across the political spectrum.

Ironically, the key reason for the current neo-partisanship in our news media is economics, just as a neutral stance was “good business” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Partisanship is profitable again. Today’s media marketplace is a fragmented world where there are more media options than ever. Network TV news has lost more than half its viewers in the last decade to cable news, social networks, blogs, and Twitter. Newspaper readership also continues to age and decline, as young readers turn to Facebook, online news aggregators like Google and Yahoo!, and their smart phones. The former mass audience is morphing into smaller niche users who chase particular politics, hobbies, and forms of entertainment. Media outlets that hope to survive must appeal not to mass audiences but to interest groups – to conservatives or progressives or sports fans or history buffs or reality TV addicts. For the news media, muting political leanings to reach a mass audience makes no sense in a world where a mass audience no longer exists. Instead, news media now make money by targeting and catering to niche interests.

What created the 1990s crisis in the authority of traditional newspapers was complicated, but the changes Katz identified were real. Reporters then (and now) were often regarded with suspicion – as grim doomsayers who only report on life’s seamy underbelly; as peeping-tom invaders of celebrity culture and personal privacy; as shady plagiarizers who make up quotes and fabricate sources; as cynical critics of revered national leaders; as smug semi-professionals disconnected from the everyday problems of working people; or as opportunistic polarizers interested only in pitting left against right in superficial dramas. In fact, in Gallup public opinion polls measuring people’s confidence in journalism from the early 1990s and to the late 2000s, respondents who said they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of “confidence in newspapers” dropped from 40% to less than 25% (Morales, 2010).

As recently as the 1970s, many newspapers were highly regarded – particularly the *Washington Post* – viewed as major players in toppling a corrupt White House administration during the Watergate scandal. By the mid-1970s, journalism schools overflowed with students eager to take up careers in this noble profession, which, at its best, served as a serious check on the abuses of governmental and institutional power. But since those heady days of Watergate, journalism’s reputation has declined dramatically in the public eye.

Part of the decline is explained by a public – and many journalists – who came to distrust the so-called “objective” ideal of journalism, which had been held up as a professional goal for most of the twentieth century. Of course, journalism was always a narrative endeavor, not some sort of “objective” data set. Journalists interpreted the world, made choices about which experiences to cover (and which to exclude), and rendered them not as scientific reports but as news *stories*. In addition, TV news began exposing the print ideal in the 1950s. The narrative point of view in the news

shifted away from print's detached third person ("The Senate yesterday voted 52–48 to raise taxes by 5 percent on middle-class Americans") to broadcasting's personal first person ("Well, our taxes are going up again"). In the 1950s and into the twenty-first century, TV news anchors became "stars" and celebrities, invited into people's living rooms each evening to deliver the news personally. Viewers knew them by their first names (Walter, Peter, Tom, Brian, and Diane), whereas print journalists were often faceless, anonymous, and as detached as their front-page point of view. In eroding the more detached print model, news became more conversational and intimate, paving the way for news celebrities: "talking head" cable pundits like Sean Hannity and partisan Internet bloggers like Matt Drudge. In a fragmented marketplace, those journalists and pundits who tell the loudest and most dramatic stories have begun spooning small but profitable pieces from the news media pie as the mass audience turns to menu items that feed their individual interests.

In such a news food court, we are witnessing the accelerated decline of an era of mainstream US journalism that promoted fact-gathering, documents, and expertise, and held up "objectivity" as the ideal for journalistic practice. Rising in its place is a new era of partisan journalism – a "journalism of assertion" – partly a return to journalism's colonial roots and partly the deterioration of the "journalism of verification." This transition is marked by the rise of the news pundit as a kind of "expert" with more standing than verified facts, authentic documents, or actual experts (see Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, pp. 78–112). In addition, today the new partisan fervor found in news outlets online and on cable has made a major contribution to the nation's intense political and ideological divide.

The Roots of the Objective Ideal and Journalism's Modern Period

Although the objective ideal in journalism is associated with the twentieth century, the early commercial and partisan press did in fact provide some impartial coverage of events. These papers often carried verbatim reports of presidential addresses, murder trials, or the annual statements of the US Treasury. In the late 1800s, this journalistic ideal was overshadowed as newspapers pushed for circulation and emphasized "sensational" stories about scandals and corruption, especially in New York. By the late 1890s, as media sociologist Michael Schudson (1978) has noted, two distinct types of journalism were competing for readers: a story model, advanced by the penny and yellow press, which dramatized important events and told stories about people's personal lives, and an information model, advocated by the six-cent papers, which emphasized an approach that appeared more factual (pp. 88–120).

As the consumer marketplace expanded nationally during the Industrial Revolution, facts and news became marketable products. Throughout the mid-1800s, the more a newspaper appeared not to take sides on the front page, the more its readership base

could be extended (although editorial pages were often rabidly supportive of particular political candidates). In addition, wire-services organizations were serving a variety of newspaper clients in different regions of the country. To satisfy all their clients and a wide range of political views, newspapers needed to appear more impartial.

The ideal of an impartial, or informational, news model was championed by Adolph Ochs, who bought the *New York Times* in 1896. Ochs's staff of editors rebuilt the paper around substantial news coverage and provocative editorial pages. To distance themselves from the yellow press, the editors downplayed entertainment news and sensational features, favoring the documentation of major events or issues. Such distancing was partly a marketing strategy to counter the large mass circulations of the Hearst and Pulitzer papers. Ochs offered a distinct contrast to the more provocative newspapers: an informational paper that provided stock and real-estate reports to businesses, court reports to legal professionals, treaty summaries to political leaders, and theater and book reviews to intellectuals. Ochs's promotional gimmicks took direct aim at yellow journalism, advertising the *Times* under the motto: "It does not soil the breakfast cloth." The strategy of the *Times* was similar to many TV marketing plans today that target upscale, 18- to 49-year-old viewers who spend a disproportionate share of consumer dollars.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, with publishers interested in expanding readership and reporters adopting a more detached "scientific" posture toward news- and fact-gathering, the ideal of objectivity began to anchor journalism. Under the banner of "objective" or modern journalism, which distinguishes factual reports from opinion columns, reporters strive to maintain a neutral attitude toward the issue or event they cover; they also search out competing points of view among the sources for a story. Civil War correspondents developed the so-called inverted pyramid style of reporting by imitating the terse, compact press releases that came from Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin M. Stanton (Mindich, 1993, 1998). Often stripped of adverbs and adjectives, such reports began, as they do today, with the most dramatic or newsworthy information, straightforwardly answering who, what, where, and when questions at the top of the story (and less frequently, why or how).

By the 1920s the *New York Times* had become the official "paper of record," the standard that other newspapers emulated and that libraries throughout the country stocked to document daily occurrences. Filled with the texts of treaties, court reports, political speeches, and other national documents, the *Times* became more than a powerful alternative to the storytelling of earlier papers; it became the official way to do journalism in the 1900s. The modern reporter evolved, ideally, as a detached and neutral observer who gathered information and adapted it to informational or so-called objective formulas.

For much of the twentieth century, this "inverted pyramid" news style served as an efficient way to arrange a timely story. As journalism educator John Merrill (1971) once pointed out, the wire services that used the inverted pyramid style when distributing stories to newspapers nationwide "had to deal with large numbers of newspapers with widely different political and regional interests. The news had to

be 'objective' [...] to be accepted by such a heterogeneous group" (p. 240). Among other things, the importance of objectivity and the reliance on the inverted pyramid signaled journalism's break from the partisan tradition. Although difficult to achieve, the notion of objectivity nonetheless became the guiding ideal of the modern press.

Despite the financial success of the *New York Times* and other informational papers, the more factual approach toward news came increasingly under criticism. In the 1920s, progressives like Walter Lippmann thought that news had become too descriptive and needed more analysis (Lippmann, 1920). Assessing 1960s mainstream print journalism, the *New York Times*' Tom Wicker (1978) argued that inverted pyramid journalism reported "mostly the contents of official documents, or statements delivered by official spokesmen," and had become entrenched as the dominant journalistic model, presenting "statements only in the most obvious terms" (pp. 3–5). The press, Wicker noted, "had so wrapped itself in the paper chains of 'objective journalism'" that it could report very little beyond "bare and undeniable" facts (pp. 3–5). Michael Schudson (1978) argued that by the end of the 1960s "objectivity in journalism, regarded as an antidote to bias, came to be looked on as the most insidious bias of all. For 'objective reporting' reproduced a vision of social reality which refused to examine the basic structures of power and privilege" (p. 160). The criticism continued. As Poynter news writing coach Roy Peter Clark (1984) once noted: "Some reporters let the pyramid control the content so that the news comes out homogenized. Traffic fatalities, three-alarm fires, and new city ordinances all begin to look alike. In extreme cases, reporters have been known to keep files of story forms. Fill in the blanks. Stick it in the paper" (p. 47).

News Values, Individualism, and Conflict: The "Story" of Modern News

Even though journalists transform events into stories, many generally still believe, despite criticism, that they are – or should be – neutral observers who present facts without passing judgment. Conventions such as the "inverted pyramid" news lead, the careful attribution of sources, the minimal use of adverbs and adjectives, and a detached third-person point of view all help reporters perform their work in a supposedly neutral way. Like lawyers, therapists, and other professionals, many modern journalists believe that their credibility derives from personal detachment. Yet the roots of this view reside in less noble territory. Critic Jon Katz (1993) has discussed the history of the neutral position:

The idea of respectable detachment wasn't conceived as a moral principle so much as a marketing device. Once newspapers began to mass market themselves in the mid-1880s, after steam- and rotary-powered presses made it possible to print lots of papers and make lots of money, publishers ceased being working, opinionated journalists.

They mutated instead into businessmen eager to reach the broadest number of readers and antagonize the fewest. [...] Objectivity works well for publishers, protecting the status quo and keeping journalism's voice militantly moderate. (p. 32)

To reach as many people as possible across a wide spectrum, then, publishers and editors realized as early as the 1840s that softening their partisanship might boost sales.

"Neutral" journalism remains a selective process. Reporters and editors turn some happenings into reports and reject many others. This process is governed by a deeper set of subjective beliefs that are not neutral. Sociologist Herbert Gans (1979), who studied the newsroom cultures of CBS, NBC, *Newsweek*, and *Time* in the 1970s, generalized that most US reporters and editors share several basic "enduring values," including ethnocentrism, responsible capitalism, and small-town pastoralism.

But for Gans, individualism was the most prominent value underpinning daily journalism. Many idealistic reporters are attracted to this profession because it rewards the rugged tenacity needed to confront and expose corruption. Beyond this, individuals who overcome personal adversity are the subjects of many enterprising news stories. And certainly our culture's interests in individual achievement and notoriety help nourish media's obsessions with particular celebrities. Unfortunately, journalism that focuses mainly on the personal fails to explain how large institutions work or fail. Many conventional reporters and editors are unwilling or unsure of how to tackle the problems raised by institutional decay and organizational dysfunction. While journalists possess the narratives for telling the tales of prominent or extraordinary individuals, they often don't have ready formulaic narratives to frame social problems or institutional complexity. In addition, because journalists are accustomed to working alone, many are uncomfortable cooperating on team projects or participating in citizen forums.

Traditionally, as Michael Schudson (1978) has argued, reporters have aligned facts with an objective authority and values with subjective feelings. Within this context, news reports offer readers and viewers details, data, and description. It then becomes the citizen's responsibility to judge and take a stand about the social problems represented by the news. Given these assumptions, modern reporters are responsible only for adhering to the traditions and rituals of their trade – "getting the facts" and rendering them as "objective" accounts. As a result, many reporters view themselves as neutral "channels" of information rather than as citizens themselves, actively involved in telling the stories that help shape our perceptions of public life.

By the end of the twentieth century, the neutral or objective ideal had been fully exposed and journalists faced harsh criticism from the right, the left, the center – and from comedians who served as equal opportunity satirists of news media and the major characters they covered. As critics and audiences grew more cynical, people found comfort in "news" outlets that were decidedly partisan. Audiences went in search of stories that affirmed their politics and confirmed their values. News outlets sought to tell and sell stories that captured audiences' growing mistrust of "neutral"

journalism. Back in a 1963 NBC staff memo, Reuven Frank, NBC news division president, got to the actual heart of journalistic practice: storytelling. He outlined a narrative strategy integral to all TV news: "Every news story should [...] display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising and falling action, a beginning, a middle, and an end" (Frank, 1965, p. 276). Despite Frank's candid insights, most journalists were uncomfortable thinking of themselves as storytellers, even though storytelling is the main cultural frame through which people make sense of their everyday experiences. For much of the twentieth century, journalists viewed themselves mainly as fact-gatherers or information conduits, trying to distance themselves both from partisanship and from the storytelling mandate of their daily jobs.

Most journalists, and journalism educators, came to define news by a conventional set of textbook criteria for determining newsworthiness: information most worthy of transformation into news reports. Although other elements could be added to the list, news criteria generally have included timeliness, proximity, prominence, human interest, novelty, and deviance. But the real heart of journalistic storytelling is *conflict* – the key ingredient in any good fictional story. As Herbert Gans (1979) noted in his seminal study of news values in the 1970s, modern journalists were socialized professionally into setting aside, as best they could, their political views and personal opinions in order to select and develop news stories based on different combinations of these criteria. The bottom line for most mainstream journalists became telling a good story – full of conflict – not necessarily covering important social issues, and certainly not advancing a partisan position.

Driving the news selection process, issues and events that seem timely or new take precedence. Reporters cover speeches, meetings, crimes, or court cases that have just happened. In order to rate as news, most of these events also have to occur close by, or in proximity to, readers and viewers. Although slimmed-down local papers used to offer more national and international news, readers and viewers today find the bulk of news devoted much more to their own towns, communities, and regions – sometimes called "hyperlocalism." The decline of national and international news has much to do with the downsizing of local and regional papers, whose declining advertising base has forced most of them to shrink their size, their content, and their staffs.

In addition to the near and the new, prominence and human interest play a role as well. Reader and viewer surveys indicate that most people identify more closely with a person than with an abstract issue. And stories need characters. Therefore, the news media tend to report stories on powerful or influential people who serve as those central characters. Because these individuals often play a role in shaping the rules and values of a community, journalists have traditionally been responsible for keeping a watchful eye on them. But reporters also look for unusual "human interest" topics: extraordinary incidents that happen to ordinary people. In fact, good reporters can often relate a story about a complicated issue by illustrating its impact on one person or family.

News is also often about the novel and the deviant, and about characters involved in novel or deviant events. When events happen that are outside the routine of daily life, such as a Congresswoman shot at a political rally, a bride running away from her impending marriage, or a priest on trial for molesting boys, the news media are there. Reporters are routinely assigned to cover events that deviate from social norms, including murders, rapes, fatal car crashes, fires, and political scandals.

Finally, and most importantly, news topics are transformed into narratives that contain a healthy dose of conflict – a key ingredient in fictional and nonfictional storytelling. In fact, in developing news narratives, reporters are encouraged to seek contentious quotes from those with opposing views. For example, stories on any presidential election almost always feature dramatically opposing Republican and Democratic views. National issues like social security, healthcare, and global warming are typically covered as two-sided arguments, often favoring and featuring two positions from the most extreme or dramatic points of view. *Newsweek's* Evan Thomas (2008) pushes this point further, arguing that the “real bias” in news is not political but professional. He contends that what drives most news reports is the search for conflict and character:

The press's *real* bias is for conflict. Editors, even ones who marched in antiwar demonstrations during the Vietnam era, have a weakness for war, the ultimate conflict. Inveterate gossips and snoops, journalists also share a yen for scandal, preferably sexual. But mostly they are looking for narratives that reveal something of character. It is the human drama that most compels our attention.

Although newsworthiness criteria are a conventional way to define news, they also reveal much about the cultural aspects of news. As culture, news is both a product and a process. It is *both* the morning paper, evening newscast, or the online blog *and* a set of subtle values and shifting rituals that have been adapted to historical and social circumstances, such as the partisan-press ideals of the 1700s and the informational model of the twentieth century. As culture, then, mainstream journalists are socialized into the process of gathering information and making narrative reports that offer selected frames of reference. In constructing those frames, reporters must meet deadline pressures, while also trying to help the public make sense of prominent characters, key events, and the central tensions of the moment.

The Transformation of Reporting Rites in the New Partisan Era

In the new partisan era, represented especially by evening cable news shows, it has become more acceptable for guest journalists not only to report information but also to take stands, make judgments, and promote their own publications. In the early

days of cable news, newspaper reporters were discouraged by their editors from appearing on these shows and thereby compromising their neutrality. However, over time, editors and publishers saw cable appearances as a way to promote their newspapers. Prominent national reporters, thanks to their exposure on cable news, have become celebrities themselves.

To reach this point, however, a stock of modern reporting rituals had to be incorporated into the new era. Developed during journalism's modern twentieth-century era, they include (1) overemphasizing the present, (2) getting the "good" story, (3) relying on expert sources, (4) reducing events to "two-sided" dimensions, and (5) confronting leaders and institutional representatives who are covered in reporters' daily rounds. In fact, these rituals have become compatible with the new partisan era, supporting the individualism of journalists and the centrality of conflict and character in their stories.

First, as members of an emerging modern profession, journalists in the twentieth century drew criticism for failing to offer historical analyses of important phenomena. In news stories about drugs, for example, individual characters – dealers, addicts, abusers, police, medical experts – passed through the frame of news. However, once these characters were no longer timely, they no longer served the narrative requirements of daily news. Urban drug stories heavily dominated print and network news during the 1986 and 1988 election years. Such stories, however, had virtually disappeared from the news in 1992 and 1994, although the nation's serious drug and addiction problems had not diminished (see Reeves & Campbell, 1994). Drug stories simply became "yesterday's news." Modern journalism tends to reject "old news" for whatever new event or idea comes along. In the mid-1990s, when statistics revealed that drug use among middle-class high school students was rising, reporters again latched onto new versions of the drug story during the 1996 elections, but their reports made only limited references to the 1980s. And although drug problems and addiction rates did not diminish in subsequent years, these topics were virtually ignored by journalists during more recent national elections. Indeed, given the space and time constraints of daily journalism, reporters seldom link stories to historical contexts.

In the new partisan era, with the emergence of 24/7 news cycles, the emphasis on the new and the now has intensified. Not only do traditional newspaper and TV reporters cover tabloid-style stories, but cable pundits and Internet bloggers now analyze them for days and weeks, offering cynical and repetitive partisan interpretations, as when US Representative Anthony Weiner got caught sending sexually explicit photos to young women on Twitter and Facebook. When the Democratic House minority leader said that in a live press conference she would focus not on the Weiner scandal but on job creation and the dismal economy, all the cable news services – Fox News, CNN, MSNBC – turned away from her remarks and declined to cover the proceeding.

In addition to the preoccupation with the present, a second ritual – "getting the good story" – remains as central in the new era as it did in the old. In the Weiner

case, three major cable news services concluded that the “good story” was the House Democratic speaker commenting on a discredited, scandal-ridden legislator and not one on the economy and jobs. According to Don Hewitt (personal communication, February 21, 1989), who created *60 Minutes* in 1968, “There’s a very simple formula if you’re in Hollywood, Broadway, opera, publishing, broadcasting, newspapering. It’s four very simple words – tell me a story” (see also Hewitt, 2001). For most journalists, then, the bottom line is getting a “good” story, an edict that overrides most other concerns.

Journalistic scoops and exclusive stories try to portray reporters as heroes of their own stories: they have won a race for facts, which they have gathered and presented ahead of their rivals. It is not always clear, though, how the public is better served by a journalist’s claim to have gotten a story first. Certainly, enterprising journalists can get a story started by calling attention to an important problem or issue. But on occasion, as with the July 1999 plane crash that killed John F. Kennedy, Jr., his wife, and his sister-in-law, scoop behavior leads to “herd” journalism, which occurs when reporters stake out a house or follow a story in such large groups that the entire profession comes under attack for invading people’s privacy and exploiting personal tragedies. Although readers and viewers might value the tenacity of adventurous reporters, the earliest reports are usually not better than stories written days later with more context and perspective.

A third ritual of modern print journalism – relying on outside sources – has made reporters heavily dependent on experts. Columnist Jonathan Alter once called such sources the “usual suspects.” Alter (1985) contended that “the impression conveyed is of a world that contains only a handful of knowledgeable people. [...] Their public exposure is a result not only of their own abilities, but of deadlines and a failure of imagination on the part of the press” (p. 69). This lack of imagination and the reliance on official sources signal another vulnerability in traditional journalism. Critics during the first Gulf War back in the early 1990s noted that once the war started, voices of dissent virtually disappeared from television news. Perhaps even more alarming, in a two-week study in early 2003 that looked at the major news networks and PBS’s *News Hours* program – before the war against Iraq started – Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR, 2003) found that 76% of all 393 sources used were former or current government (or military) officials. Only 17%, or 68 on-camera sources, expressed skepticism about the war, at a time when most polls showed that more than 60% of US citizens favored a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Only three sources in this study – less than 1% – represented organized antiwar groups.

By the late 1990s, many journalists were also being criticized for blurring the line between remaining neutral and being an expert. While former shows like CNN’s *Crossfire* once pitted opinionated columnists and reporters against one another, the boom in 24-hour cable news programs in the late 1990s created a demand for talk programs featuring interviews with journalists willing to give their views on the hot story of the day, rather than more expensive at-the-site reporting. In covering major media events, print journalists now appear several times a day on cable programs

acting as experts, not only offering the facts they have gathered but providing opinion and speculation as well. Some editors have even encouraged their reporters to go on these shows in the hope of selling more magazines and newspapers. The *Washington Post*, for example, routinely provides a set for its reporters who appear on television that prominently features the paper's logo behind its reporter of the moment. Many critics contend that these practices erode the credibility of the profession by blending journalism with celebrity culture and commercialism.

In the new partisan era, experts abound alongside pundits, bloggers, and cable hosts. With the 24/7 news cycle, the great demand for experts who provide their opinions fills up time, inexpensively. It is now simply harder to tell who is an expert and who is not. Pundits, bloggers, and hosts often comment on key issues and events without providing supporting evidence or documentation and without revealing how they know what they know. The relatively cheap cost of these programs, coupled with their appeal to lucrative niche partisan markets, has further destabilized the already shaky neutrality ideal of modern-era journalism.

For many journalists of the modern era, neutrality simply meant telling two sides of a story. This notion that news is two-dimensional represents a fourth taken-for-granted ritual of the news process. A reporter sent to cover tax increases or local crime might be given this editorial advice (as I once was): "Interview Republican and Democratic leaders from the district and have them fight it out in the story." Such "balance" is a narrative device that helps generate story conflict. For most journalists, balance means presenting all sides of an issue without appearing to favor any one position. Unfortunately, because time and space constraints do not always permit representing multiple sides, in practice this value has often been reduced to "telling both sides of a story." In recounting news stories as two-sided dramas, reporting often misrepresents social issues that are complex and multidimensional. The abortion controversy, for example, is almost always treated as a story that pits two extreme positions (anti-abortion vs. pro-choice) against each other. People whose views do not fall at either end of the spectrum are seldom represented.

In claiming neutrality and inviting readers to share in their detached perspective, journalists circumvent their own values. The authority of their third-person, all-knowing point of view (a narrative device that many novelists use) enhances the impression of neutrality by making the reporter appear value-free. The claim for balanced stories, like the claim for neutrality, disguises journalism's narrative functions. After all, when reporters choose quotes for a story or news photographers choose camera angles, these are usually the most dramatic or conflict-oriented words or images that emerge from an interview, press conference, or public appearance. Choosing quotes or images often has more to do with enhancing drama than with being fair or establishing neutrality. The balance claim – at least for much of the twentieth century – had been in the financial interest of modern news organizations. William Greider, a former *Washington Post* editor, made the connection between good business and balanced journalism back in 1988: "If you're going to be a mass circulation journal, that means you're going to be talking simultaneously to lots of

groups that have opposing views. So you've got to modulate your voice and pretend to be talking to all of them" (quoted in Hertsgaard, 1988, p. 78).

Again, the new partisan era marks a shift away from courting "mass" audiences to chasing niche markets. In fact, today it often pays to be one-sided. For example, CNN, which has more reporting resources than other cable news networks, still tries to balance or modulate its voice in the evening, adhering to the old model of "telling both sides" of a story with the host and reporters generally striking a neutral pose. Fox News, however, goes after conservative viewers, while MSNBC courts liberals and progressives. While these cable outlets often bring opposing points of view into their stories, the scales are tipped by the star pundit hosts, who appeal to their audiences and in the end take partisan stands, not neutral ones.

Complementing the search for conflict, the fifth ritual is the one that journalists take much pride in: their adversarial relationship with the prominent leaders and major institutions they cover. The prime narrative frame for portraying this relationship is sometimes called a "gotcha" story, which refers to the moment when the reporter confronts a villain or corners a wrongdoer. This narrative strategy is frequently used in political reporting. Some journalists assume that leaders are hiding something and that the reporter's main job is to ferret out the truth through tenacious fact-gathering and tough questions. An extension of the search for balance, this stance locates the reporter in the middle, between "them" and "us," between political leaders and the people they represent.

Critics of the tough-question, bulldog style of reporting argue that it fosters a cynicism among journalists and actually harms the democratic process. Although journalists need to guard against becoming too cozy with their political sources, they sometimes go to opposite extremes. By constantly searching for what politicians may be hiding, reporters may miss other issues. News scholar Jay Rosen (1992) has argued that "the essential problem is that the journalist's method of being critical is not disciplined by any political vision" (p. 6). In other words, the bottom line for neutral or conventional journalists, who claim to have no political agenda, is maintaining an adversarial stance rather than improving the quality of political stories and discussions. When journalists employ the gotcha model to cover news, being tough often becomes an end in itself. Thus reporters believe they have done their job just by roughing up an interview subject.

In the new partisan era, the bulldog role is being usurped by the radio and TV commentators who pronounce their various positions, but often with little or no supporting evidence or on-site reporting to verify or ground their opinions. This is what Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2007) have called the "journalism of assertion," contributing to a toxic "public sphere" that "has become an arena solely for polarized debate, not for compromise, consensus, and solution" (p. 86). They contrast this with the "journalism of verification" – what for them is "the beating heart of credible journalism," which is about doing disciplined reporting, citing reliable documents, and finding significant evidence. In their view, modern objectivity, fairness, and balance are *not* the goals of journalism; they are simply "techniques," "devices,"

and “methods” for “testing information” in order to achieve a “transparent approach to evidence.” For Kovach and Rosenstiel, “the journalist is not objective, but his method can be” (p. 78); they argue that the cornerstone of journalism education should be “the study of evidence and verification” (p. 83). Similarly, *New York Times* editor Bill Keller (2011), writing about WikiLeaks, champions the value of impartial, nonpartisan journalism, which is increasingly at risk: “Your obligation, as an independent news organization, is to verify the material, to supply context, to exercise responsible judgment about what to publish and what not to publish and to make sense of it” (pp. 46–47).

Differences Between Print and Television News

In the 1950s and 1960s, with the ideal of “objectivity” already under siege, the institution of journalism was significantly altered as television introduced new styles to the news delivery. TV news began to take journalistic practice in directions that ran counter to the objective model. This was partly accomplished merely by the shift in narrative point of view, with TV anchors telling stories from first- and second-person points of view and offering a conversational, more intimate presentation of news. In the new partisan era, both the personal point of view and the emotional displays by cable pundits and online bloggers are descended from TV news. But many blame early television and now cable for blurring the boundary between entertainment and information – an updated two-sided version of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century battle between story and information print models.

From about 1955 through 1957, the three major television networks – ABC, CBS, and NBC – moved their entertainment divisions to Los Angeles, in part because of its close proximity to Hollywood production studios. Network news operations, however, remained in New York. Symbolically, these cities came to represent the two major branches of TV programming: entertainment and information. The shifting rules and rituals of US journalism were encapsulated in the career of former radio reporter John Daly, host of the CBS game show *What’s My Line?*. When he began moonlighting as the evening TV news anchor on ABC, the fledgling network blurred the so-called entertainment and information border, foreshadowing what by the 1990s had become a central criticism of journalism.

Officially, print news came under the full spell of television with the arrival of the colorful *USA Today* in 1982, radically changing the look of most major US dailies. This new paper incorporated features closely associated with postmodern form, including an emphasis on visual style over substantive news and the use of brief fragmented news items that appealed to readers’ short TV-era attention spans. *USA Today* represents the only successful launch of a new major US daily newspaper in the last several decades. Showing its marketing savvy, *USA Today* was the first paper to pay grudging tribute to TV’s increasing influence on journalism. Marketers at the

paper even designed its vending boxes to look like color TV sets. *USA Today* also has preferred the present tense of broadcast style (“he says”) rather than print’s past tense (“she said”).

Although TV news reporters share many values, beliefs, and conventions with their print counterparts, television has transformed journalism in a number of significant ways. Whereas modern print journalists have been expected to remain detached and relatively anonymous, TV news has always linked its credibility to live, on-the-spot reporting, believable imagery, and viewers’ trust in the anchors who read the news. In fact, since the early 1970s, the annual Roper polls have indicated that the majority of viewers find TV news more credible than print news. Many viewers have tended to feel a personal regard for the local anchors who appear each evening on TV sets in their homes. And many print journalists for years resented operating in the relative anonymity of newspaper work while their TV counterparts became mini-celebrities in their communities.

By the mid-1970s, the public’s fascination with the Watergate scandal – combined with the improved quality of TV journalism – helped local news departments realize profits. In an effort to retain high ratings, stations began hiring consultants, who advised news directors to invest in one of the national packaged formats, such as “Action News” or “Eyewitness News.” Traveling the country, viewers might notice similar theme music and opening visuals from market to market. Consultants – called “news doctors” – also suggested that stations lead their newscasts with crime blocks: a group of stories that recount the worst local and national crimes of the day. A cynical slogan soon developed in the industry: “If it bleeds, it leads.” Even today, most regional news stations around the country lead newscasts with local isolated crime stories, even though such stories have very little significance for most viewers.

A few stations, however, responded to viewers and critics who complained about the overemphasis on crime, especially since FBI statistics revealed that crime rates fell in most major urban areas during the 1990s. For example, in 1996 the news director at KVUE-TV in Austin, Texas launched a new set of criteria that had to be met for news reports to qualify as responsible crime stories. She asked that her reporters answer the following questions: Do citizens or officials need to take action? Is there an immediate threat to safety? Is there a threat to children? Does the crime have significant community impact? Does the story lend itself to a crime-prevention effort? With KVUE’s new standards, the station eliminated many knee-jerk crime stories. Instead, the station provided a context for understanding crime rather than a mechanical running tally of what crimes were being committed each day (see Holley, 1996).

In addition to news consultants pushing dramatic crime stories, another strategy they favor to counter the grimness of crime coverage is “happy talk”: the seemingly ad-libbed but usually scripted banter that goes on among local news anchors, reporters, meteorologists, and sports reporters before and after news reports. During the 1970s, consultants often recommended such chatter to create a more relaxed feeling on the news set and to foster the illusion of conversational intimacy with viewers. Some news doctors also believed at the time that happy talk was indeed an antidote

to that era's "bad news," which included coverage of urban riots and the Vietnam War. A strategy still used in local news today, happy talk often appears forced and may create awkward transitions, especially when anchors must report on tragic events. Although the situation has improved slightly at some local news stations, national news consultants, such as Frank Magid Associates, continue to set the agenda for what local reporters should cover – lots of local crime – as well as how they should look: young, attractive, pleasant, with little regional accent. Essentially, news doctors have tried to replicate in modern local TV news the ad images of young attractive models that have dominated television advertising since the 1960s, to create continuity between the look of news and the look of the advertising that the news interrupts.

In the new partisan era, "happy talk" has been downgraded. Today the kind of unscripted banter in cable news and the online blogosphere is far less happy – part of a culture of complaint in which pundit hosts and their roundtable of journalists, experts, and friends tend to belittle everything from the government to the other political party to one another. But the key value of the new "partisan chatter" – in addition to appealing to the targeted audience – is its relative cheap costs. Unscripted cable news programs invest little in international or domestic bureaus or investigative projects that require reporters go to the scene, interview key players, and document what is actually happening. This business strategy is much like reality TV programming, which now dominates the television landscape, spurning professional actors and writers for amateurs and loose or unscripted narratives.

Visual Language, Critical Limits, and Fake News

The complexity of the shift from a print-dominated culture to a televisual culture of news is often reduced to a two-dimensional debate about information versus entertainment. However, such criticisms overlook the visual language of TV news and the ways in which images may capture events more powerfully than words. Over the past 60-plus years, TV news has dramatized the United States' key events and provided a clearinghouse for shared information. For example, it is widely acknowledged that the civil rights movement benefited enormously from televised pictures that documented the plight of Southern blacks in the 1960s. Other enduring TV images are embedded in collective memory: the Kennedy and King assassinations in the 1960s; the turmoil of Watergate in the 1970s; the space shuttle disaster and the Chinese student uprisings in the 1980s; the first war on Iraq, the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, and the Clinton impeachment hearings in the 1990s; 9/11 and a second war on Iraq that began in 2003; and the 2011 uprisings by Arab citizens against dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen among other Middle Eastern countries. During these critical events, national TV news serves as a cultural and social reference point.

But while it is important to acknowledge the crucial historical role that television news has played since its inception, it is likewise critical to understand the subtle ways visual language operates. For example, the mid- to late 1980s saw the rise of a disturbing TV news strategy designed for dramatic effect. In their coverage of crack cocaine, news operations formulated a visual shot in which news photographers (using shaky, handheld cameras) leaped from the back of police vans and followed gun-wielding authorities as they broke down the doors of crack houses. In this type of shot, TV news actually represented the police or state point of view. A profession that prides itself on neutrality and on watching over the police on society's behalf apparently did not question whether it was appropriate for reporters to implicitly tell these stories from the authority's viewpoint (see Reeves & Campbell, 1994).

In assessing the visual power of TV news, images do not stand as a kind of testimony to "reality" that is somehow more authentic than the printed word. Just as there is a construction and selection process in print, images in TV news are also constructed, camera angles are selected, and other images and angles remain invisible. For example, in one ritual shot designed to establish credibility – called a "stand-up" – a TV producer might situate a reporter in front of a courthouse or the White House, when in fact the reporter never entered the courthouse or the White House on that particular day. The pictures make it look like the reporter was at the scene and on top of the situation – and physically present at a newsworthy location – serving as eyewitness to the world.

In the new partisan era, astute critiques of TV and cable news can be found on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, anchored by Jon Stewart. The program nightly parodies that formulaic "stand-up" by digitally superimposing a cast of fake reporters in front of exotic foreign locales, Washington, DC, or other US locations. The program also parodies the objective ideal and the "both sides of story" ritual. In a 2004 exchange with "political correspondent" Rob Corddry, Stewart asked him for his opinion about presidential campaign tactics. "My opinion? I don't have opinions," Corddry answered. "I'm a reporter, Jon. My job is to spend half the time repeating what one side says, and half the time repeating the other. Little thing called objectivity; might want to look it up" (quoted in Albanese & Stewart, 2004).

As news court jester, Stewart exposes the melodrama of TV news and cable punditry that nightly depicts the world in various stages of disorder yet overseen by the stalwart, comforting presence of celebrity anchors and pundit hosts from their in-studio, high-tech command centers. As a satirist, Stewart is not so reassuring, arguing that things are a mess and in need of repair. For example, while a national news operation like MSNBC thought nothing of adopting the Pentagon slogan "Operation Iraqi Freedom" in 2003 as its own graphic title, *The Daily Show* countered with "Mess O' Potamia." Even as a fake anchor, Stewart displays a much greater range of emotion than we get from detached modern anchors: more amazement, irony, outrage, and skepticism. In fact, Stewart's emotional range is much more akin to the emotional heat of cable pundits and disgruntled bloggers. Stewart after all is courting

a niche audience of mostly young disaffected viewers who trust neither traditional news nor cable punditry.

Much of what “fake” news shows critique has to do with the way news producers repeat stale familiar formulas rather than invent dynamic new story forms. Although the world has changed, local TV news story formulas have gone virtually unaltered since the 1970s, when *Saturday Night Live*’s “Weekend Update” on NBC first started satirizing TV news. Modern newscasts still limit reporters’ stories to two minutes or less and promote stylish male–female anchor teams, a sports “guy,” and a certified meteorologist as familiar personalities, usually leading with a dramatic local crime story and teasing viewers to stay tuned for a possible weather disaster.

60 Minutes and the Reporter as Star

Although local news rituals have had an impact in changing the face of regional journalism, the most influential journalistic enterprise at the national level has been *60 Minutes* (see Campbell, 1991). In the over 50-year history of television, *60 Minutes* – with its signature detective narrative – remains the only program rated No. 1 in three different decades. It is the most popular and profitable TV program in prime-time history, finishing among the Nielsen top 10 for 24 consecutive years – another record. During the 2010–2011 TV season, *60 Minutes* consistently remained a top-20 program in the ratings. From the mid-1970s to the 2000s, a typical episode of *60 Minutes* reached a bigger audience than any other single news form in US journalism. The program set the standard for investigative TV reporting and dramatic news narratives that few of the many copycat magazine shows have approached. Just as the presentation and narratives of local TV news have not changed much since the 1960s, *60 Minutes* and the prime-time TV news magazine were probably the last major innovations in traditional network news. But while it remains high in the ratings, its own formulaic stories have grown old along with its audience.

Over the years, critics have tried to explain *60 Minutes*’ standing as the United States’ first popular news program. In 1981, the program’s creator, Don Hewitt, told the *Chicago Tribune* that storytelling was the key to the program’s appeal (“Father of *60 Minutes*,” 1981). Hewitt rightly predicted that personal journalism, starring reporters in mini-news dramas, would dislodge hour-long news documentaries in which the network point of view – what Hewitt (1985) calls “the voice of the corporation” (p. 29) – seemed tedious, institutional, and aloof. As the precursor to the personal style of today’s cable pundits and Internet bloggers, Hewitt elevated reporters, including Mike Wallace, Morley Safer, Dan Rather, Ed Bradley, Diane Sawyer, and Leslie Stahl, to star status – a place formerly held only by news anchors, not by interchangeable reporters.

Hewitt’s program was able to downplay that *60 Minutes* is a corporate extension of CBS News (until the fateful 1995 spiked tobacco story – the subject of the Hollywood movie *The Insider*). Instead, it played up the role of reporters as champi-

ons of the little guy and solid Middle American values – another role that cable hosts have taken on in the new partisan era. But instead of identifying with left or right, Hewitt positioned his show and its reporters in the moderate middle – a better economic strategy in the days of the mass audience that *60 Minutes* commanded. Along with the appeal to moderate politics and Middle America, Hewitt adapted a fictional story form – the detective mystery – to TV journalism. Through this familiar cultural frame, the reporters of *60 Minutes* have performed over the years, not as detached journalists but as dramatic characters. Their mission: to locate themselves in the middle of an adventure and make sense of the world through their stories. In foregrounding the dramatic story, *60 Minutes* further weakened the old “information” model. The program’s reporters were viewed not as neutral conduits of information but as major characters in the news with a stake in the outcome, much the way cable news hosts and popular Internet bloggers have positioned themselves as players in the cultural and political landscape.

Even the production techniques on the program contributed to the image of the reporters as detective heroes (Campbell, 1991). First, unlike the conventional evening news, *60 Minutes*’ correspondents are featured characters in their dramas. They are usually in more shots than any of the subjects interviewed. Second, the program’s star reporters typically receive more visual space: they are almost always shown at a greater distance than the characters they interview. Frequently, in reaction shots, interview subjects appear in extreme close-ups – usually with the top of the head cut from the frame. This is in contrast to the medium shots of the reporter, usually shown from mid-waist with space revealed overhead. The greater space granted to the reporters can read on one level as the TV counterpart to print’s neutral third-person point of view. But on another level, the greater distance endows the show’s reporters with more authority. *60 Minutes*’ reporters always appear in greater control, whereas other people who appear on the program often seem to be in less control, or out of control. It is the medium shot that locates the program’s reporters “in the middle most of the time,” playing “both sides of the street.” In other words, at the height of the program’s popularity, the moderate political voices found on *60 Minutes* served the network’s economic interests in cultivating a mass-market audience. In contrast, today’s *partisan* voices serve the interests of cable news operations in targeting niche viewers in a fragmented market.

Given that *60 Minutes* developed over the years as the premier investigative arm of US journalism, it was a surprise in late 1995 when the show decided not to air an episode on the tobacco industry spiking nicotine levels after legal threats from one cigarette company’s lawyers. In fact, this icon of investigative journalism caved into Big Tobacco at a time when CBS was being sold to Westinghouse, and apparently the corporate bosses – and the program’s own journalists with investment ties to the transaction – did not want to hamper the deal. So they waited for the *Wall Street Journal* to break the story and then aired the episode two months later. However, Disney – which owns ABC and the copycat TV news magazine *20/20* – then made a movie about the spiked story (*The Insider*, Michael Mann, 1999).

In the end, stories about the inner economic and political workings of complex institutions – including CBS/Viacom – are not well suited for *60 Minutes*. And, in fact, this can be said for most journalism: there are few good story forms for explaining how institutions work or do not work. Instead, the detective narratives of *60 Minutes* often transformed experience into melodrama, making the world simpler and more understandable. Like Westerns and cop shows, *60 Minutes* has usually championed rugged individualism. In its wake, the cable pundits and digital bloggers likewise are champions of rugged individualism and avowed opponents of government institutions. Detective stories celebrate individual heroes and condemn institutional villains. In this way, journalism in general suffers from this malady that plagues *60 Minutes*, even as significant as some of its best investigative pieces have been: stories centering on the afflictions of individuals make the world seem like a place where problems are personal not social, requiring only private redress or remedy rather than any sort of collective action.

Contemporary Journalism in the Corporate Era

The full-blown arrival of the new partisan era in journalism history was preceded by the corporate era. In fact, the *60 Minutes* spiked story incident reveals that by the late 1990s, journalism was in the heyday of its corporate era. Journalism – so central to US democracy that it is the only business enterprise the founders protected in the Constitution – spent the first part of the nineteenth century freeing itself from political partisanship, only to find itself near the end of the twentieth century under the strong influences of corporate machinations. And the very process that US citizens count on to report on this phenomenon became quiet. It is not in the interest of national or global corporate powers to have their journalism extensions reporting the details of their bosses' business. After all, these kinds of complex "big money" stories – which US viewers actually are interested in – do not fit neatly into formula stories that focus narrowly on the lives of individuals (albeit sometimes individuals wronged at the hands of dysfunctional institutions). How do journalists tell stories about complex institutional problems when many of these powerful institutions are their own corporate parents?

Although corporate control is strong on the newspaper side of the journalism business (Gannett operates the largest newspaper chain in the world, controlling more than 90 daily newspapers), the real impact of the current corporate incarnation is in television. Here journalism outlets throughout the 1980s and 1990s became minor subsidiary companies in large entertainment conglomerates that now own movie studios as well as journalism businesses. Disney, in addition to its theme parks and film division, owns *ABC News*; Viacom, which owns Paramount studios, remains the majority stockholder over *CBS News*; General Electric (and now Comcast, the majority stockholder), which has run *NBC News*, purchased Universal Studios in 2003;

News Corporation owns Fox News in addition to Twentieth Century Fox studios; and Time Warner, which operates CNN, owns Warner Brothers studios among its many other holdings as the world's largest media corporation.

US journalism, of course, has always borne the marks of social schizophrenia, trying to balance its role as public servant to democracy – a watchdog on power and corruption – and its role as profit-making business. But in journalism's corporate phase this balance tipped far too much in favor of narrow business interests and greedy profiteering (see O'Shea, 2011). Both print and TV journalism outlets put far less money into investigative units and, over the years, have done very little business reporting on media ownership issues.

The "big media" corporate era began its slide, first of all, with the loss of newspapers' local monopolies over classified advertising, which had sustained newspaper families and chains like Gannett for decades. On top of that, readers started going elsewhere for the news – to 24/7 cable channels like CNN, which often rendered obsolete much of the national and international news in the morning paper. However, the bigger problem suffered by media corporations, where bigger once seemed better, came from not recognizing quickly enough that the marketplace was fragmenting and the new innovative players – like Craigslist, eBay, The Huffington Post, Drudge Report, Politico, Google, Facebook, and Twitter – would be more nimble, with smaller startup costs, appealing first to niche audiences and not the mass market. Many of these sites saw that what was needed in a new media climate overloaded with information was not necessarily more content but a way to organize the online terrain and guide customers through the content maze, aggregating popular information and the best stories.

The Waning of the Corporate Era

Newspapers were overwhelmed by two changes that collided with the 2008–2009 economic recession. First, new generations of readers grew up not on their local paper's comic strips and sports sections but on cable TV and the Internet. By 2009, more than 65% of the population over age 65 reported reading a newspaper the previous day, compared to less than 30% of young people between 18 and 35. Second, the advertising climate cooled. Newspapers lost their strong grip on classified ads with the emergence of mostly free websites like Craigslist and eBay. Revenue from such ads peaked in 2000, with newspapers earning a total of \$19 billion from classifieds ads. By 2009 newspapers earned only \$6 billion from their classified advertising sections. The economic recession and housing crisis from 2008 to 2010 had substantially limited traditional retail ads, especially from department stores, realtors, and car dealers. Newspaper advertising overall spiked in 2005 at \$49 billion in earnings, but by 2009 that figure was cut almost in half to just \$27.6 billion (Newspaper Association of America, quoted in Parr, 2010). With fewer

advertisers, newspapers laid off workers, shrank their size, changed formats, or declared bankruptcy.

On top of advertising problems, many newspaper owners like the Tribune Company, which declared bankruptcy in 2008, had become *overleveraged*. That is, many media conglomerates borrowed lots of money in the 1990s to buy more media companies and newspapers to expand their businesses and profits. They used some of the borrowed money to fund these purchases and some they invested. Then they used the interest from their investments, plus profits from ad revenue, to pay their bank and loan debt. But when advertising tanked and their investments began losing money in fall 2008 (as the stock market crashed), many big media companies became incapable of paying their debts. To raise capital, reorganize their debt, and avoid bankruptcy, media companies had to lay off reporters and sell valuable assets.

Around 2005, consolidation in newspaper ownership leveled off. The decline in newspaper circulation and ad sales panicked investors, leading to drops in the stock value of newspapers. Many newspaper chains responded by significantly reducing their newsroom staffs. According to Pew's State of the News Media report (Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010a), about "13,500 jobs for full-time, newsroom professionals" have disappeared since 2007, "the total falling from 55,000 to 41,500. [...] That means that newsrooms have shrunk by 25 percent in three years. [...] To put it another way, newspapers headed into 2010, devoting \$1.6 billion less annually to news than they did three years earlier."

The case of the *Los Angeles Times* (owned by the Tribune Company) demonstrates well the impact of cost-cutting measures on even the most prominent national papers. Continuing demands from the corporate offices for cost reductions led to the resignation of editor John Carroll in 2005. In 2006, another editor and publisher resigned to protest demands for further cuts. More cuts in 2007 resulted in the departures of some of the most talented staff members, including six Pulitzer Prize winners. In 2007, Chicago real estate developer Sam Zell bought the Tribune Company for \$8 billion and made it private, insulating it for a time from market demands for high profit margins. However, by 2008 the company faced declining ad revenue and a tough economy and was forced to file for bankruptcy protection. While the Tribune Company continues to operate its newspapers, its recent history illustrates the enormous economic troubles even very good and very large papers face (see O'Shea, 2011).

About the same time, large newspaper chains started to break up, selling individual newspapers to private equity firms and big banks (like Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase) that deal in distressed and overleveraged companies with too much debt. For example, in 2006, Knight Ridder – then the nation's second leading chain – was sold for \$4.5 billion to the McClatchy Company. McClatchy then broke up the chain by selling off 12 of the 32 papers, including the *San Jose Mercury News* and *Philadelphia Newspapers* (which owns the *Philadelphia Enquirer*). McClatchy also sold its leading newspaper, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, for \$530 million, less

than half of what it paid for it eight years earlier. By 2010 private equity companies owned the *Star Tribune* and the *San Diego Union Tribune* and sought control of Philadelphia Newspapers and the Tribune Company, which was still in bankruptcy restructuring in 2011.

Ownership of one of the nation's three national newspapers also changed hands. In 2007 the *Wall Street Journal*, held by the Bancroft family for more than one hundred years, accepted a bid of nearly \$5.8 billion dollars from News Corporation head Rupert Murdoch. At the time, critics raised concerns about takeovers of newspapers by large entertainment conglomerates. As small subsidiaries in large media empires, newspapers have been increasingly treated as just another product line expected to perform in the same way that a movie or TV program does.

By 2008, a number of concerned journalists, economists, and citizens began calling for new business models that would help protect newspapers in the transition to the digital era and keep newspapers out of the hands of private equity companies that usually had more interest in turning a profit than supporting journalism. One possibility is nonprofit ownership. For example, the Poynter Institute owns and operates the *St. Petersburg Times*, Florida's largest newspaper. As a nonprofit, the *St. Petersburg Times* has been protected (at least before 2008) from the unrealistic 16 to 20% profit margins that publicly held newspapers earned pre-mid-2000s. National Public Radio (NPR) represents another nonprofit model, where funding is provided by government subsidies and private contributions. Another possibility for nonprofit ownership is for wealthy universities like Harvard and Yale to purchase and support newspapers, better insulating their public service and watchdog operations from the expectations of the marketplace. Finally, as an alternative to private equity companies, wealthy Internet companies like Microsoft and Google could expand into the news business, buy existing media outlets, and produce content for both online and print papers. In fact, Yahoo! in 2010 began hiring reporters to increase the presence of its online news site. The company hired reporters from politico.com, *BusinessWeek*, the *New York Observer*, the *Washington Post*, and *Talking Points Memo*, among others. Aggregators like Google and Yahoo!, unlike private equity firms, have more of an interest in delivering customers to the best information and stories – that is, the kind of content that attracts advertisers.

Academic journalism departments have responded to the crisis in the newspaper industry by providing valuable assessments of the problem and proposing reforms. One such response was initiated by the dean of Columbia University's Journalism School, who commissioned a study from Leonard Downie, former executive editor of the *Washington Post*, and Michael Schudson, Columbia journalism professor and media scholar. Their 2009 report, "The Reconstruction of American Journalism," focused on the lost circulation, advertising revenue, and news jobs. The report aimed to create a strategy for local reporting that would hold public and government officials accountable, envisioning ways to provide basic access to the kinds of information that citizens need to be well informed. Their recommendations, some of which are underway, were as follows:

- News organizations “substantially devoted to reporting on public affairs” should be allowed to operate as nonprofit entities in order to take in tax-deductible contributions while still collecting ad and subscription revenues.
- Philanthropic organizations and foundations should “substantially increase their support for news organizations” that have shown a commitment to public affairs news and the kind of reporting that holds local leaders, politicians, officials, and government agencies accountable.
- Public radio and TV, through federal reforms in the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), should reorient their focus to “significant local news reporting in every community served by public stations and their Web sites.”
- Operating their own news services or supporting regional news organizations, public and private universities “should become on-going sources of local, state, specialized subject and accountability news reporting as part of their educational mission.”
- A national Fund for Local News should be established with money that the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) collects from “telecom users, television and radio broadcast licensees, or Internet service providers.”
- News services, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies should use the Internet to “increase the accessibility and usefulness of public information collected by federal, state, and local governments.”

While these recommendations offer promise, they are striking in how reliant they are on nonprofit and public solutions. For-profit mainstream news media remain reluctant to embrace public solutions given their long-standing belief that taking government or other institutional support diminishes their independence. While NPR in particular remains a solid example of a nonprofit news service that offers national and regional coverage, many critics worry about local coverage. In fact, even the major foundations prefer the big spotlight of giving money to more visible national and international news initiatives rather than small local and regional ones. Still, with the loss of so many traditional reporters in the early 2000s, the situation is dire enough that at the very least public and private partnerships offer some hope in ensuring that local reporting and accountability coverage remain central to regional news services.

The Decline of Public Journalism and the Rise of Citizen Reporters

In the wake of the widespread popularity TV news, a number of regional newspapers – starting in the late 1980s – experimented with ways to “fix” print journalism and to more actively involve readers in the news process. In part, editors tried to counter television’s intimacy, with viewers commonly referring to anchors by their first

names but hardly knowing print's anonymous reporters. Experiments surfaced primarily at midsize daily papers, including the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Wichita Eagle*, and the *Virginian-Pilot*. Davis "Buzz" Merritt (1995), former editor and vice president of the *Wichita Eagle*, defined key aspects of civic or public journalism:

- It moves beyond the limited mission of "telling the news" to a broader mission of helping public life go well, and acts out that imperative.
- It moves from detachment to being a fair-minded participant in public life.
- It moves beyond only describing what is "going wrong" to also imagining what "going right" would be like.
- It moves from seeing people as consumers [...] to seeing them as a public, as potential actors in arriving at democratic solutions to public problems (pp. 113–114).

Modern print journalism has always drawn a distinct line between reporter detachment and community involvement. However, public journalism – driven by citizen forums, community conversations, and even talk shows – tried to redraw this line. The impetus behind public journalism was the realization that many citizens felt alienated from participating in public life in a meaningful way. This alienation arose, in part, from watching passively as the political process played out in the news media. The process today stars the politicians who run for office, the "spin doctors" who manage the campaigns, the reporters who dig into dark corners of people's personal lives, and now loud partisan cable and blogging pundits, while readers and viewers serve as mere spectators.

The public journalism movement drew both criticism and praise. Though not a substitute for investigative reporting or the routine coverage of important daily events, public journalism offered a way to involve both the public and journalists more centrally in civic and political life. Editors and reporters interested in addressing citizen alienation (and reporter cynicism) began devising ways to engage people as conversational partners in determining the content of the news. In an effort to draw the public into discussions about community priorities, these journalists began sponsoring reader and citizen forums, where readers were supposed to have a voice in shaping aspects of the news that directly affected them.

Although isolated citizen projects and reader forums are sprinkled throughout the history of journalism, the more recent public journalism movement began in earnest in the late 1980s. One such project began in Wichita, Kansas, after the 1988 elections. Davis Merritt was so discouraged by the paper's typical and conventional political coverage that he led a campaign to use public journalism as a catalyst for reinventing political news. The *Eagle's* first voter project during the 1990 campaign for governor used reader surveys and public forums to refocus the paper around a citizens' agenda. This involved dropping the tired horse-race frame that usually frames political coverage. Merritt believed that a new direction for journalism must "reengage citizens in public life" through two steps: "add to the definition of our job the additional objective of helping public life go well, and then develop the journalistic tools and reflexes

necessary to reach that objective” (Merritt & Rosen, 1998, p. 44). The *Eagle*’s project partially revitalized regional politics in Kansas in the early 1990s.

By the late 1990s, more than a hundred newspapers, many teamed with local television and public radio stations, practiced a form of public journalism. Yet many critics remained skeptical of the experiment (see Cohn, 1995). First, they were concerned that public journalism projects could undermine journalists’ long-standing role as neutral watchdogs and instead pander to what readers – and marketing executives – wanted, thereby reassigning editorial control from newsrooms to business interests. Second, some journalists feared that as they become more active in the community they would be perceived as community boosters rather than as community watchdogs, compromising their ability to report on the wrongdoings of civic organizations. Third, critics worried that public journalism compromised the profession’s credibility, arguing that public journalism turned reporters into participants rather than detached observers. (Of course, as Merritt pointed out, modern journalism had already lost a great deal of credibility with the public – a view supported by polling data.) Fourth, critics contended that public journalism undermined the telling-both-sides-of-a-story convention of journalism by constantly seeking common ground and community consensus. Public journalists countered that they were trying to set aside more room for centrist positions. Such middle positions are representative of many viewpoints in a community but are often missing in the mainstream news, which is traditionally more interested in the extremist views that make for conflict-ridden, two-sided dramatic stories.

In the end, public journalism did not foresee or address the changing economic structure of the news business. With more newspapers (and broadcast stations) in the hands of fewer owners, both public journalists and traditional reporters should have been raising tough questions about the disappearance of competing daily papers and the large profit margins generated by regional monopoly newspapers. Facing little competition, newspapers in the early 2000s continued the trend of cutting reporting staffs and expensive investigative projects and reducing the space for news. Such a trend increased profits and satisfied stockholders for a while, but it also limited community voices and views. Then when the economic crisis hit in 2008, accompanied by major losses in retail and classified advertising and multiple bankruptcies, the newspaper business had a full-blown disaster on its hands.

In retrospect, it is helpful to look at public journalism’s inability to adequately respond to economic shifts in journalism. Particularly troubling was the rise in the number of journalism outlets that became cogs or subsidiaries in large multinational conglomerates, many of which earned the bulk of their money from media hardware and/or entertainment software (Sony, GE, Comcast, Disney, Viacom, Time Warner, News Corp.). Still, the public journalism movement served as a worthy critic of fundamental news values – like reportorial detachment – that have so powerfully shaped the practice and culture of US journalism.

The latest incarnation of public journalism is known as “citizen journalism.” The biggest distinction between them is that, where the former was driven by profession-

als, the latter is driven by amateurs. The combination of the online news experiments and traditional newsroom cutbacks has spurred a grassroots movement in which activist amateurs and concerned citizens – not professional journalists – use the Internet and blogs to both cover events and disseminate information. In fact, with such steep declines in newsroom staffs, many professional media organizations – like CNN (iReport) and many regional newspapers – are increasingly trying to corral citizen journalists as an inexpensive way to make up for journalists lost to newsroom “downsizing.” Journalism students and programs around the country now partner with newspapers to produce reports, especially for online news consumption. Traditional newsrooms today face the very real paradox of being asked by publishers and owners to cut staff at the same time they are being asked to produce more online content.

Some news critics and journalism teachers, like New York University’s Jay Rosen, envision citizen journalism as a new era. Rosen (2006) calls this public citizenry “the people formerly known as the audience.” They now have their own printing presses (and online radio stations and TV stations) and share in the creation of news. Others, like Columbia journalism school dean Nicholas Lemann (2006), see citizen journalism as a possibility, but only with the hard work of reporting to create a foundation for all the opinion that is out there in cyberspace and 24/7 cable: “Reporting [...] is a powerful social tool, because it provides citizens with an independent source of information about the state and other holders of power. It sounds obvious, but reporting requires reporters. They don’t have to be priests or gatekeepers or even paid professionals; they just have to go out and do the work.”

By 2008, a study by J-Lab (the Institute for Interactive Journalism) reported that more than one thousand community-based websites were in operation, posting citizen stories on local government, police, and city development. This represented twice the number of community sites from a year earlier. J-Lab also operates the Knight Citizen News Network, “a Web site that advises citizens and traditional journalists on how to launch and operate community news and information sites” (Deagon, 2008). In 2009, “a multi-university team of academics” examined “60 of the most highly regarded citizen sites identified by nationally known experts in new media” (Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010b). While the study found that “a number of these sites individually revealed some impressive work,” the funding and “resources to provide these services at the same level of full news operations, day-in and day-out, do not exist, at least as of now” (Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010b). The report also found “fairly limited levels of new content,” many sites that were not very transparent about funding and daily operations, and policies were “no more likely to encourage citizen postings” than traditional commercial news media sites” (Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010b). The bottom line: in 2010, citizen journalism sites – many started by disaffected print reporters in league with ordinary citizens and amateur journalists – did not yet have the resources to provide the kind of regional news coverage that local newspapers once provided.

Nevertheless, in these sites Lemann sees the possibilities for new kinds of news narratives on the Internet. “Potentially, it is the best reporting medium ever invented,” he has said.

A few places, like the site on Yahoo! operated by Kevin Sites, consistently offer good journalism that has a distinctly Internet, rather than repurposed, feeling. To keep pushing in that direction, though, requires that we hold up original reporting as a virtue and use the Internet to find new ways of presenting fresh material – which, inescapably, will wind up being produced by people who do that full time, not “citizens” with day jobs. (Lemann, 2006)

Back in 2006, recognizing the “new balance of power” emerging between “big media” and engaged citizens, Jay Rosen (2006) noted that corporate media no longer own the press; instead, it “is now divided into pro and amateur zones.”

New News Narratives and Implications for Journalism Education

So in this world where there are fewer professionals and more amateurs, where newsroom staffs decline at the moment when more online content is needed, how does journalism education adjust? What do we teach our students about living and working in a new partisan era, where punditry trumps expertise? What are the possibilities for new and better forms of news? In the face of all the unverified rhetoric and partisan opinion, journalism needs to imagine new ways to tell both individual *and* institutional stories – to invent story forms that are as complex and compelling as the times we live in.

In *The Elements of Journalism*, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) argue that “the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing” (p. 13). Today, this guiding principle has been derailed. First, with the Internet and 24/7 news services, there is much more undocumented opinion masquerading as news, pushing aside credible information. In a world engulfed in so many media outlets, journalists and the pundit enterprises may be producing too much decontextualized information and too many insignificant stories. According to social critic Neil Postman (1995), by the mid-1990s society had developed an “information glut” as a result of developments in media technology, transforming news and information into “a form of garbage” (p. 35). Postman believed that scientists, technicians, managers, and journalists had piled up mountains of new data, which added to the problems of everyday life. As a result, too much unchecked data, too little thoughtful discussion, and too few good stories emanated from too many channels of communication. A second, related problem suggests that the amount of information the media now provide has made little impact on improving social and

political life. In fact, many people feel cut off from our major institutions, including journalism. As the citizen journalism movement attests, people are looking for ways to take part in public conversations and civic debates – to renew a democracy in which many voices participate.

Although newspapers and their online sites remain the strongest source for good reporting, critics have raised a number of concerns about their future. For instance, have news stories become so formulaic and brief that they actually discourage new approaches to telling stories and reporting news? Another criticism is that many one-newspaper cities cover only issues and events of interest to middle- and upper-middle-class readers, thereby underreporting the issues that affect working-class and poor citizens. There has also been a downturn in stories that address readers as citizens and members of communities, and an upsurge in information that regards audiences primarily as savvy consumers, private individuals, and focus groups.

Journalists in the nineteenth century gained economic independence by freeing themselves from political party subsidies. That independence was increasingly compromised in the twentieth century as large entertainment corporations, like Disney and News Corporation, bought up mainstream news outlets. But in this new partisan era, where opinion blogging and 24/7 talking heads are much cheaper than maintaining news bureaus and sending reporters out to document what is actually going on in the world, the major threat to journalism may be the triumph of the “journalism of assertion.” For news to move forward in the age of the Internet, with its fragmented audience, publishers and owners need to invest in reporters and substantive reporting – in the “journalism of verification.” Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) argue that “journalists must make the significant interesting and relevant” (p. 187). Yet too often on cable and the Internet we are awash in “journalism” that tries to *make* something significant out of the obviously trivial, mildly interesting, or narrowly relevant – like stories about troubled celebrities, attention-seeking politicians, or decontextualized stock market numbers.

For those of us who teach journalism and work in journalism, opportunities abound. We can teach students to break free from static older formulas – especially in TV news – and reimagine new ways to tell stories. In fictional TV, for example, storytelling has evolved over time, becoming increasingly dynamic and complex. Comparing the 1970s mega-hit TV show *Dallas* to more recent shows like *The West Wing*, *Alias*, *The Sopranos*, and *24*, Stephen Johnson (2005) argued that “one of the most complex social networks on popular television in the seventies looks practically infantile next to the social networks of today’s hit dramas” (p. 115). So if fictional storytelling has evolved, why has TV news remained entrenched in old formulas and time constraints that are virtually unchanged over the past 40 years? Why has *60 Minutes*’ 45-year-old detective formula for news magazines remained the standard for doing long-form TV news? Aren’t there other ways to tell stories? It is no wonder young people are looking to *The Daily Show*, blog sites, citizen journalism, and social network venues for news and information. Perhaps they want something to match the more complicated storytelling around them, in everything from TV dramas to

interactive videogames to their own conversations. The world has grown more complicated and we as citizens should demand significant news stories that better represent that complexity than formulaic 1:30-minute TV news packages sketching stories of little consequence.

One key narrative strategy that journalism students should learn is how to move from the individual to the social in their stories – from the merely interesting to the truly significant, from a small illustration to the big picture. It isn't enough to just tell the story of an out-of-work father or a struggling family living in a cheap hotel after losing their home to foreclosure. The individual characters in these kinds of stories can serve the narrative as a way into a more ambitious story. They are the "hook" that allows reader and viewers to identify, as individuals, with other individuals. But they are also catalysts for moving the story to the social level, presenting broad data on joblessness or on foreclosures and using experts to document local and national trends. These kinds of complex narratives are now easier to do since online journalism has solved the space constraints of print news and time limits of broadcast news. Journalism students need to learn how to tell more complicated stories, ones that provide context and more adequately address substantive social issues in which larger audiences have a stake. This type of complicated storytelling also serves readers by not implying that individuals in news stories are the sole agents for fixing their circumstances. Joblessness and foreclosures are not just a personal crisis for an individual or one family but social problems whose solutions require collective action.

Another important strategy for championing better journalism – a "journalism of verification" that covers stories of real social significance – is to encourage commercial–nonprofit partnerships between newsrooms and universities, as Downie and Schudson (2009) have advocated. This is what some call a "pro-am" model: a partnership between professional newsrooms and amateur students. Journalism students should no longer be writing just for their teachers; in an online world hungry for content, they should be writing for newsrooms and covering their communities. The Poynter Institute offers several strategies for successful news organization and university partnerships. For example, the journalism school at NYU has partnered with the *New York Times* to cover "hyperlocal" news for the East Village in Manhattan. The faculty member in charge, an ex-*Times* reporter, works with a *Times* metro editor to edit and ensure the quality of the students' work. In a second example, the *Bay Citizen* has partnered with the UC-Berkeley business and journalism schools "to develop a 'test kitchen' for innovation and experimentation in journalism" (Jean, 2010).

At Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, the small liberal arts-based journalism program has partnered with the media giant Cox Communication and its southwest Ohio operation, which includes four dailies, four weeklies, and commercial radio and TV stations in Dayton. The partnership has a long-range plan to relocate the editor of the local weekly paper, the *Oxford Press*, to a campus office near the journalism faculty and writing/editing labs. There that person will supervise interns (the paper no longer has any full-time reporters) and co-direct with a faculty member a regional news service dedicated to special projects that many newsrooms in the area no longer

have the resources to produce. The students will write news stories either through special classes set up to execute specific Cox projects or through particular assignments arranged with Cox.

Finally, despite the cynics who say a degree in journalism is worthless, students recognize its value. At Miami University, the journalism program is not in a professional school but instead housed in an arts and science college. It also requires a second major. Journalism is considered part of the humanities at Miami, and the Journalism 101 course counts toward a student's general education plan; course instructors teach the history of journalism and its role in democracy, as well as introducing students to basic news reporting and writing skills. The program is also partnering on a data visualization project with statistics and graphic design faculty to help students write better narratives about numbers that require graphs and charts that should tell their own complex stories. The majority of students in the program do not go into journalism, but they like the double major requirement for its breadth; they want a field that will improve their writing and storytelling; they seek internships in news media, public relations, and publishing to see what kind of work they want to do; and they prefer to know something about how the best news media operate. Good journalism requires traits that are found in good scholarship – verification, documentation, and interviewing as foundational for any good story or report. In this new partisan era, overloaded with decontextualized information and undocumented punditry, these skills are more important than ever. The best journalists, like the best scholars, are imaginative and innovative; they match the appropriate story or report to the experience they are trying to verify. They invent new narrative and reporting forms when old formulas are failing. They also continue journalism's democratic traditions: documenting and interpreting the importance of events, keeping watch over our central institutions, and telling a community's significant stories in compelling ways. This is the kind of journalism that will save and sustain the profession, along with the critical role it plays in the democratic process – no matter how bad the economy gets, no matter how fractured the marketplace, and no matter how many newspapers are displaced by online alternatives.

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Transformations and Tactics

The Production Culture of the Hong Kong Film Industry

Sylvia J. Martin

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the production culture of the film industry of Hong Kong after its 1997 return to China. Drawing from anthropological fieldwork, I posit that the production culture cannot be separated from the larger cultural practices and social formations in which it occurs. Three recurring themes within the film community are examined: decline, flexibility, and marginal social status. The reasons for the industry's decline are explicated through an analysis of how flexibility is employed as a tactic by industry members, particularly for Chinese co-productions. I argue that the vaunted flexibility of the film industry is influenced by colonial and post-colonial discourse about entrepreneurship and neoliberalism and has in fact fragmented the collective power of Hong Kong film labor. Finally, I explore the industry's socially marginal status and illustrate the tactics deployed to transform the industry. These three themes illustrate the Hong Kong film industry's changing context within East Asia.

Across the Pacific Ocean from Hollywood, which is sprawled across Los Angeles, lies another film industry that also boasts a century-long history of commercial films and famous movie stars. That film industry – based in Hong Kong – came to be known, to industry insiders and film scholars, as the “Hollywood of the East,” on account of its high output of films, both for domestic and for overseas audiences, and on

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies: Media Effects/Media Psychology, First Edition.

Edited by Angharad N. Valdivia and Erica Scharrer.

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account of its profit orientation (Dannen, 1997, p. 1; Fu, 2000, p. 200; Stokes & Hoover, 1999, p. 17). Drawing from anthropological fieldwork, this chapter examines the production culture of the “Hollywood of the East” – the film industry of Hong Kong – after reunification with China, focusing on key characteristics of its decline, its flexibility, and its marginal social status.

Unlike Hollywood, USA, the Hong Kong film industry is not a national film industry. A former colony of Britain, the city-state of Hong Kong is currently a special administrative region (SAR) of China. Following its capture by the British after the Opium Wars between 1839–1860, the colonial government used Hong Kong’s harbor to turn the colony into an *entrepôt* and thus to further British imperial interests in shipping, banking, and trade. Government officials and economists have since declared Hong Kong to be a haven of free-market practices with minimal government interference, even after Hong Kong’s return to mainland Chinese sovereignty in 1997.¹ Hence, for the past century the Hong Kong film industry has existed under a *laissez-faire* capitalism that has helped shape how the film community conducts its work.

The production culture of a media industry consists of the everyday practices and belief systems of media personnel, as its members engage in their work (Caldwell, 2008, p. 1). John Caldwell – himself influenced by interpretive anthropology’s analysis of “symbolic processes” within cultures and communities – calls for examining media production cultures as “social communities in their own right” comprised of diverse work practices and competing hierarchies of power (p. 2). The communities of media personnel based in Hong Kong have developed their own work culture; yet, as I will illustrate here, these immediate dynamics are not separable from geopolitical currents such as postcolonial governance and diaspora.² Anthropological studies of other industries have similarly demonstrated ways in which production processes are not disconnected from broader cultural practices (Freeman, 2000; Kondo, 1990; Ong, 1987; Zaloom, 2005). Ruth Mandel’s (2002) account of how members of the post-socialist Kazakh television personnel in the 1990s alternately embraced and resisted their BBC consultants’ advice as they wrote scripts, developed characters, and designed the set of a Kazakh soap opera is one such example. Set during the transition to a free-market economy, Mandel’s study illustrates that production is indeed what another anthropologist of the media refers to as a “site of meaning-making” for its members (Ganti, 2000, p. 16). For media scholars across disciplines, it is important to see broader sociocultural practices, which shape media and can become articulated in the production process, and the ways in which they do so.

Anthropologists have studied the contexts and the culture of film production since the 1940s. In 1946–1947 Hortense Powdermaker (1951) conducted an ethnographic study of the socioeconomic relations in Hollywood studios. One of Powdermaker’s most valuable contributions was to connect up the practices of studio executives with discussions of democracy and totalitarianism that emerged in the aftermath of World War II. More than half a century later, more anthropological analyses of the socioeconomic relations between producers, actors, and crew on sets and in production

offices have emerged (Dornfeld, 1998; Ganti, 2004; Martin, 2009; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). To this canon, anthropologists have reflected on the epistemological and methodological challenges of acquiring access to production executives and to creative elites through the process known as “studying up” (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin, 2002; Nader, 1972; Ortner, 2009).

During my anthropological fieldwork on the Hong Kong film industry, there were three recurring themes that I encountered – and I came across them in interviews; through participant observation of industry insiders as they worked on film sets and in production offices and shared exchanges at meetings; in trade and government materials; and in public discourse. These themes are integral to understanding production culture in Hong Kong over the past decade. The first discursive theme is *decline*: the downturn of the Hong Kong film industry, starting in the 1990s, is a challenge with which the film industry and its members still grapple in multiple ways. The second theme is *flexibility*. Many members of media personnel describe themselves as flexible and engage in flexible worker attitudes and business activities. Yet their narratives show that flexibility is not a neutral quality; it is instead influenced by cultural and ideological discourses about neoliberalism and self-entrepreneurship. The third theme is the *socially marginal status* of those involved in the film industry. While young people from upper-middle-class families overseas flock in to work in the film industry, the industry’s socially marginal status – a historical feature in Hong Kong – shapes its production culture, particularly the ways media workers strive to attain respectability. These discursive notions among members of media personnel – decline, flexibility, and marginal status – describe and drive the Hong Kong film industry and its place in the East Asian region of film production. At times, analysis of these three themes requires shifting the scale between the local, the regional, and the global, which entails a multi-sited ethnographic approach to studying relations and formations across complex capitalist world systems (Marcus, 1995; Strathern, 1995). Cross-media analysis is also valuable, since film/TV industries converge at various points; due to limited space, this chapter will focus primarily on the film industry.³

My discussion of media production in Hong Kong is based on 15 months of fieldwork conducted in Hong Kong over several fieldtrips: June to September 2004; July 2005 to March 2006; and December 2006 to February 2007. I tracked several local interlocutors across the Pacific Rim, observing them at various sites, both in Hollywood and in Hong Kong.⁴ I also interviewed 50 media workers in Hong Kong in structured, semi-structured, and unstructured formats. I conducted participant observation on film/TV sets, I observed interior and exterior filming, I attended production meetings and film screenings, and I assisted in editing English-language scripts. I also engaged in archival research and textual analysis of films and in what Caldwell (2008, p. 3, 5) calls “trade artifacts,” such as “behind-the-scenes” footage not intended for the general public.

I turn now to the first key theme that characterizes the post-1997 Hong Kong film industry, that of decline.

Table 21.1 Decline of Hong Kong film production

Year	Films produced
1990	247
1993	188
1999	94
2002	92
2006	51

Source: Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2005.

Decline

For decades the Hong Kong film industry produced hundreds of films that served not only a local audience, but Chinese diasporic communities. Its highly commercial productivity and its transnational circuit helped the industry earn the title of “Hollywood of the East.” In examining the reasons why the Hong Kong film industry underwent a downturn, we must widen our scope so as to encompass the Pacific Rim – specifically, parts of East Asia and California. The reasons for the decline, particularly in production output, emerged in the 1990s. There are four main causes for this decline: the 1997 return of Hong Kong to China and the subsequent loss of talent; the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis; the increased presence of Hollywood films; and piracy.

The year 1997 was very important for the Hong Kong film industry and its future. The lead-up to the city-state’s return to China sparked nervousness among Hong Kong’s top talent, especially after the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 in China. The 1997 return resulted in an overseas exodus of Hong Kong film workers seeking jobs, often as members of an elite class of new citizens (Ong, 1999). Many people were uncertain how the new “one country, two systems” form of governance would impact Hong Kong’s liberalized economy, its “democratic” colonial government,⁵ and its political and cultural autonomy (Chow, 1998; So, 2004). The year 1997 was also critical in that it marked the Asian financial crisis. Triggered by the collapse of the Thai currency, a crisis spread throughout the Southeast Asian economies, causing film investors throughout the region to retract financing from possibly risky ventures (Curtin, 2007). Decreased investment was accompanied by smaller audiences for Hong Kong films – a phenomenon that was additional to aggressive Hollywood-film marketing and distribution throughout the 1990s. Finally, the late 1990s saw the intensification of piracy, which hurt the film industry through video cassette disc in particular. While the Hong Kong government subsequently reduced pirate production and distribution in Hong Kong, domestic and Chinese sales of the goods nevertheless hurt the legitimate film industry (Teo, 2008).

When one turns to the response to the film industry's decline, flexibility on the part of the industry and of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government features prominently.

Flexibility

Flexibility – already a prominent element of production processes in Hong Kong (Fore, 1994) – has increasingly come to be understood and expressed as a work tactic for overcoming industrial decline. Flexibility here refers to workers' ability to swiftly adapt to changing media landscapes. This includes avoiding political uncertainty or embracing political shifts, such as Hong Kong's trade agreement with China. Whether workers commute across the border for jobs in Beijing or engage in foreign productions in Hong Kong, their adjustments require new languages, dialects, and increasingly itinerant lifestyles. Thus flexibility is not without risk, as it entails sudden geographic moves, ideological transitions, and new business and social practices. Risk-taking, as I will discuss later, is a component of flexibility and is also espoused by the Hong Kong SAR government for its citizen-subjects.

Media workers frequently proclaimed that flexibility is a quality and a mode of work that is crucial to their careers and to the survival of the industry. Flexibility, after all, is not merely an economic behavior; it has become a cultural attitude, an identity, indeed an ethos to be embraced. As is evident in other industries globally, flexible accumulation in industrial production has fragmented labor markets both geographically and within trades (Harvey, 1990). In many parts of the world, the threat of outsourcing and of casualization meant that workers within a labor segment had to "innovate" in order to perform multiple tasks that were previously outside the scope of their labor roles. Additionally, the term *flexibility* is not without historical and political baggage in the region, given the steady migrations of the Cantonese-speaking population between Hong Kong and southern China.

Yet my research subjects almost always use the term with a positive connotation. They embrace geographic mobility and linguistic versatility as key components of what the film industry defines as *being flexible*. They replicate the entrepreneurial bent for which the Hong Kong film industry has come to be known (Rodriguez, 1999; Stokes & Hoover, 1999). Those who celebrate flexibility often invoke Hong Kong's reputation as a free-trade haven of hard-working entrepreneurs who have embraced the market (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2005; Friedman, 2006). These attitudes stem from the British colonial policy of positive non-intervention, which instituted minimal market regulation, low taxation and tariffs, and loose labor laws. During my fieldwork, many members of the Hong Kong film industry attributed the industry's success to the colonial economic policies of *laissez-faire* – and they did so especially now, when they had to contend with vague

and restrictive stipulations imposed by mainland Chinese authorities and ministries. Yet the vaunted flexibility of the film industry and of its members is partly a result of and response to deliberate colonial policies that scourged leftist, anti-colonial elements and promoted the interests of right-wing companies that hinged on laissez-faire economics. It should also be noted that the flexibility celebrated by some is partly a result of a colonial administration that did not foster local industrial development (Castells, 2000; Chiu, Ho, & Lui, 1997; England, 1989). Weak labor laws discouraged unionization, a clear division of labor, and consistent regulation of worker safety, impacting media workers negatively (Rodriguez, 1999; Stokes & Hoover, 1999). Workers lack the solid support of industry associations, such as guilds and unions, to provide networking and educational resources as well as professional identity status.

Flexibility is thus a general characteristic of global film labor and production with its own local and regional characteristics. These characteristics can be witnessed at different levels of scale in Hong Kong film production, encompassing a wide array of media workers, government administrators, and business personnel. These flexible characteristics have resulted in a production culture that touts mobility, adaptability, and multi-tasking labor.

Mobility

“Am working in S’pore for a few days, will call u when back in HK.” This short message service (SMS) message, sent from a Hong Kong actress working in Singapore to my mobile phone in Hong Kong, is a typical example of my communication with Hong Kong media workers. It expresses a geographic mobility in the era of global capital that is constitutive of the flexibility valorized by Hong Kong media personnel. It attests to the increasingly migratory and transborder nature of media production in East Asia, particularly for Hong Kong-based media workers who shuttle throughout Asia – mainland China, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and Malaysia. A veteran Hong Kong stunt director whom I interviewed commutes regularly between his home in Hong Kong and various productions filming in Beijing. Several members of his stunt team resettled in Beijing, as there was more regular work for them across the border. Local talent must capitalize upon Hong Kong’s transnational reputation as one of the savviest locales in East Asia (Davis & Yeh, 2008, p. 97), while utilizing opportunities and contacts elsewhere in order to keep working. Many Hong Kong film workers, from actors to fight choreographers, work on films across the border in China. Thus they navigate the dual, yet interconnected trajectories of local and transborder productions. Electronic hiring halls, such as alivenotdead.com and the Facebook site Hong Kong Performing Artists, allow transnational visibility and shared access to a variety of jobs in East Asia and reflect the increasingly deterritorialized nature of film production in East Asia.

Mobility necessitates that media workers learn or improve their skills in various languages. It also allows them to draw upon far-flung familial ties. For instance, many Hong Kong media workers make efforts to learn Putonghua (Modern Standard Chinese, or Mandarin), since many job offers are in China, Taiwan, or Singapore. My interviews with a Hong Kong film executive were arranged between sessions with her Putonghua tutor, who schools her in business-oriented language as well as in the vernacular. A Hong Kong Chinese actress whom I spent time with lost a feature-film role in Taiwan because the director did not feel that she had a strong enough grasp of spoken Putonghua. For set decorators and fight choreographers who work across the border in China, some knowledge of Putonghua is helpful, if not essential. English is also considered important for media workers, especially producers and directors, who are increasingly turning towards Anglo-Euro-Americans as investors and distributors. To work with overseas companies, treatments, scripts, and budget line-items need to be accessible in English. Even though directors or cinematographers can rely upon translators, some knowledge of English facilitates relations between Hong Kong Chinese media personnel and the English-speaking crew in US-based productions.

Diasporic Chinese communities around the world are also tapped for the optimization of media career trajectories. Such mobility involves what Aihwa Ong refers to as “flexible citizenship,” in which individuals, “through a variety of familial and economic practices, seek to evade, deflect, and take advantage of political and economic conditions in different parts of the world” (1999, p. 113). Family relations strung across Asia and the Pacific Rim can assist Hong Kong-based media personnel in activating its members’ careers. For instance, a Hong Kong Chinese woman I met joined her husband in the US nearly 20 years ago, when he emigrated from Hong Kong to Minnesota for work. Over time they both became US citizens, but she returned to become a film and television worker in Hong Kong. Using her elderly parents in Hong Kong and her college-age sons in Los Angeles as excuses to travel, the aspiring actress was able to leave her husband for periods of up to six months, accelerating her career on both sides of the Pacific Rim. She managed in the process to utilize her traditionally gendered familial connections and obligations (p. 127) as a flexible springboard in order to launch her own transnational career. National differences and racial dynamics shape mobility beyond the Hong Kong film-production culture. Drawing on the example above, the reception of the actress has been uneven in Hong Kong and in the US. Although her command of spoken English is excellent (she received an anglicized education at an elite school in Hong Kong), her ethnicity and what casters have called her “accent” have limited her opportunities in Hollywood. Thus, while some members of the media personnel have been able to optimize their opportunities by capitalizing on linguistic competencies and on dispersed family relations as well as by acquiring the proper documents for travel (passports and visas), racial discrimination remains entrenched in production cultures. For Hong Kong media workers, this means that there are considerable stakes to produce media in

East Asia – and particularly in China, where their Hong Kong identities are constructed in different ways.

Adaptability

In the post-1997 era, film co-productions between mainland China and Hong Kong have become the emerging standard (Curtin, 2010; Pang, 2010), resulting from the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) (Davis & Yeh, 2008; Pang, 2007; Teo, 2008). A cross-border free-trade agreement between mainland China and Hong Kong, CEPA promised to raise the Hong Kong film industry out of its depression while liberalizing the mainland film industry and popularizing mainland film beyond the scope of socialist propaganda films and art-house fare (Davis & Yeh, 2009, p. 102). Undoubtedly China also sought to galvanize a “Greater China,” in which it would be united with Hong Kong and Taiwan. Hong Kong expected CEPA to boost the Hong Kong film industry by allowing its filmmakers access to mainland investment and to distribution markets that would expand under the quota exemptions for the co-produced films.⁶ While this formal state–industry alliance between the two polities has multiple ramifications for their political economies, workers on both sides of the border have had to adapt to dual production cultures.

CEPA illustrates the complexity of cultural identities and differences that emerge in a regional film-production culture. Talent from Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan play leading roles in films that construct “Greater China.” CEPA has also served as a conduit for the transfer of technical skills and stylistic knowledge from a commercially mature market, such as Hong Kong, to a newly liberalizing one, such as China. This has required some adaptive learning on both sides of the borders.

CEPA is viewed by many Hong Kong film workers as both helping and hampering their filmmaking careers in ways that reveal perceived cultural differences – some of which emanate from differing political economic histories. The profit potential of China’s vast market beckons to Hong Kong media workers, who see their commercial experience and glamour as enticing Chinese funding sources and audiences. Many Hong Kong film workers consider building fan bases and social networks in China as a tactic to expand and intensify their career options as production within Hong Kong has dried up. Yet the censorship imposed by Chinese authorities for CEPA projects has been decried by Hong Kong media workers as oppressive and inconvenient. Some Hong Kong filmmakers adjust to mainland censorship by staging mystical stories in the mythical past, for instance, or by producing an alternate and politically appropriate ending of a film for mainland Chinese audiences. Many others, such as the numerous directors, producers, and writers I interviewed, complained of constraints on filmmakers’ “freedom of expression” to churn out what has become standard fare.

Hong Kong’s film industry must contend with the complexity that mainland China generates, as it “supplies not only money and market but also a new Chinese identity

and a new global position” (Pang, 2007, p. 419). Many of these pan-Chinese co-productions have been blockbusters, or what is referred to as *dapian* (literally, “big movies”) – such as the historical–martial arts epics. As Stephen Teo (2009) claims, Hong Kong audiences are not really drawn to the *dapian* that Hong Kong producers feel they must co-produce in order to keep the industry and their careers afloat. The relief with which many Hong Kong media personnel members first greeted CEPA shifted to reluctant participation by 2007. Many of them expressed the view that Hong Kong’s fate is tied to that of the mainland, so the film industry and its personnel must adapt to the environment, or it would risk obsolescence. CEPA represents the latest iteration of the encounters and blurred cultural relations between Hong Kong and mainland China that characterize the production culture.

Multi-Tasking Labor

Like actors in Hollywood, Hong Kong actors must be able to display various skills in multiple venues. Actors, or “artists” as they refer to themselves in English, are expected to act and sing across media platforms that include films, commercials, and TV variety shows and, when necessary, to work as models or disc jockeys (DJs). A variety of media personnel may act, produce, write, direct, and sing in various projects.

The lack of a unionized labor force supports flexible multi-tasking. Hong Kong features loose and informal guild-like associations for various segments of media labor. As a result, the film industry lacks some of the formal and organized opportunities for professionalization that many of the Hollywood unions and guilds provide. Professionalization happens on the job.⁷ Labor contracts and legal enforcements tend to be less codified, less pervasive, and less formally applied in the Hong Kong film/TV industries than in Hollywood. As a result, salaries for principal actors and creative personnel in Hong Kong are generally much lower than their counterparts in Hollywood. Hong Kong’s film industry also does not rigidly enforce job segmentation and fixed pay scales. It resembles independent film production in Hollywood: it is not uncommon for a crew member to spontaneously play a role on camera, or for an actor to double as a camera operator. What several Hong Kong filmmakers described as “guerilla filmmaking” resembles Hollywood indie filmmaking, or on-location productions, which film with reduced executive scrutiny and make rather fluid filming arrangements and social relations.⁸

While the budgets and resources of Hollywood productions – that is, their financing, marketing, distribution, and international cachet – are desirable for many Hong Kong media personnel, many people I interviewed and observed dismissed Hollywood unions as inflexible, divisive, and counterproductive. Divisions between tasks are not generally upheld as a way to protect job specialization and longevity, as is commonly found in Hollywood union productions (Martin, 2009). Instead, many media personnel members point to the lack of unions in Hong Kong as the reason why they are

more flexible and therefore more collaborative than Hollywood workers. When the Hollywood writers' guild went on strike in November 2007, in the middle of the production season, many members of Hong Kong media personnel viewed the act as ludicrous and as a luxury permitted by a bloated system. On the basis of their personal experience of working in Hollywood, or just from industry hearsay, they further complained that union media labor was not in the interest of the film being made, since it slowed production and the accrual of quick returns. One of the reasons why so many members of Hong Kong media personnel dismiss Hollywood unions may be that they overlook the fact that such unions provide healthcare: this is a crucial benefit for American media workers, whereas in Hong Kong all residents enjoy universal healthcare.

Filmmaking is generally a more creatively collective and faster paced enterprise in Hong Kong. In some films, people who are formally considered lower in the production hierarchy are welcome to contribute suggestions regarding dialogue or visual imagery in the course of filming. Improvisation is also quite common during filming in Hong Kong. Writers and directors may hurriedly rewrite dialogue and plot details between scenes or during lunch breaks. Action films and other genres that feature live action are also open to changes and modifications on the spot, requiring a collective flexibility in terms of location, personnel and equipment. These fluid work practices are understood as quickening the pace of production. A two-hour feature film may require 40 to 70 shots a day. The "gritty look" that many Hong Kong films are known for is often the result of fewer lights, which require less time, personnel, and money to set up. As a Hong Kong director commented: "In Hong Kong, the crew moves quickly or they won't be hired again." When I observed a Hong Kong filmmaker directing a feature film in Hollywood, he complained about the slow pace of Hollywood union productions, likening the camera crew's and the grips' relaxed and jovial manner of working to a party atmosphere.⁹ Numerous Hong Kong media personnel – from directors to producers to cinematographers to fight choreographers – echoed his view. Other forms of collective action may occur among sectors outside of specific productions (for instance, an annual dinner for stunt workers) or in casual circumstances on the set of film productions. Members of a film production typically eat meals together on set, and few productions can afford trailers for its stars, most actors preferring to mix with the rest of the crew. To many members of Hong Kong media personnel, this mix indicates the "flexibility" in status and socializing that Hollywood union productions lack. In these kinds of interactions there occur friendly exchanges and information about future jobs and business dealings.

Paradoxically, even though many members of Hong Kong media personnel dismiss Hollywood unions as promoting the interests of the individual over those of the film, they are themselves forced to be entrepreneurial, as local-production work dwindles and openings arise overseas. Stunt workers who received limited formal schooling seek English-language instruction later in life in order to maximize their employment options, extending them to jobs with European and Anglo-American production companies. Online language instruction or language exchange programs in English and Putonghua offer free or cheap

ways of increasing these workers' marketability. One Hong Kong producer paid to take a local course with an American agent and Hollywood-film professional, to learn not only how to pitch projects to European and Anglo-American financiers and producers, but also how to do so using English-language Hollywood jargon.¹⁰ Multi-tasking oriented toward acquiring computer skills and using film-production software is also gaining momentum among media personnel such as stunt workers and screenwriters. All of these forms of professionalization are the responsibility of individual media workers and are rarely subsidized or organized by any organization. Thus the mild impatience that some Hong Kong media personnel members harbor toward Hollywood unions may also disguise a small measure of envy for their models of labor organization, support, and cohesion.

Contextualizing Flexibility

It is necessary to read critically the flexible attitudes and practices that are so highly vaunted in Hong Kong's cultural economy as having neither a neutral nor a natural quality through which hard-working people (such as media personnel members) are automatically rewarded. Instead, flexibility signifies a set of practices and attitudes that have fragmented the collective power of media labor against managerial forces, even though these practices also foster an environment of creative collectivity on film sets. The former effect of flexible work practices is well documented in David Harvey's (1990) discussion of postindustrial capitalism in the West. They fit in the scope of the wave of neoliberal policies that helped the wealthiest citizens profit by taking away the social benefits that workers could expect (Harvey, 2005). The latter, however, demonstrates the ways in which Hong Kong's production culture is different from Western production cultures.

For our purposes, it is relevant to point out that the HKSAR government has championed a labor force of workers who have self-enterprising subjectivities – that is, a willingness for risk-taking and attitudes that require flexibility (Ku and Pun, 2004, p. 1; Ong, 2006, p. 173; Rose, 1996, p. 58). As Ku and Pun write, with the uneven integration of Hong Kong and China, the SAR government tries to promote *both* a global city and a Chinese city.

What lies behind the new political project is the construction of a citizen-subject who is required to acquire a specific ethic of self: the enterprising individual. *The enterprising individual is someone who is always on the lookout for resources and new opportunities to enhance their income, power, life chances, and quality of life in order to take advantage of the rapid changes of economy and society [...]* In the words of [Hong Kong's] Chief Executive, the enterprising individual embodies certain personal qualities such as "intelligence, determination, and adaptability." (2004, p. 1, italics added)

The "enterprising individual" who espouses the qualities of flexibility described above is thus a product of government policies that make the individual worker absorb uncertainty.

According to Saskia Sassen (2000, 2001), Hong Kong is among the many global cities that espouse neoliberal policies that entail privatizing social services, reducing welfare spending, and decreasing regulation. In other words, the Hong Kong government has shifted its efforts from providing social services and welfare to assisting citizen-subjects to optimize their competitiveness and to become calculative and self-enterprising, thus easing the financial responsibility of the state onto its citizens (see Chan, 2004; Ku & Pun, 2004; Ong, 2006). Individuals who try to address uncertainty by taking risks are not guaranteed to be more competitive. Further, workers are largely expected to pay for their own flexibility training. HKSAR's first chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, iterated the government's push for life-long learning and self-improvement for its residents, while only partially funding such options for improvement (Tung, 2001). While the rhetoric of neoliberalism gives a rationale for empowering all people, neoliberal policies implemented in the 1990s have actually entrenched social divisions by shrinking the middle class and empowering the rich (Ku and Pun, 2004, p. 7).

Thus I contend that the entrepreneurial environment of filmmaking in Hong Kong is not a byproduct of Hong Kong Chinese peoples' "natural" propensity toward hard work and freewheeling business skills, as many colonial, scholarly, and governmental sources have claimed. Rather, the entrepreneurial and "flexible" ethos is actually the result of a nexus of ideological interests deployed to benefit the managerial forces, privatization, and free-market principles of a postcolonial government that buttresses global capital. In other words, "flexibility" represents a careful construction, created by political and economic forces that cleverly articulate cultural notions of "adaptability" (Ku and Pun, 2004, 1); members of the Hong Kong media personnel themselves cite many of these forces as "very Chinese," in what can be perceived as an instance of cultural essentialism.

The ideological influences of colonialism have also left a legacy that contextualizes media personnel's distaste for labor unions as detrimental to the Hong Kong film industry and its entrepreneurialism. Hector Rodriguez (1999) has carefully illustrated that the absence of unionized film labor in Hong Kong resulted from various actions the British colonial authorities exerted on the left-leaning members of the film community over the past century. These efforts included a clampdown on collectivizing film practices such as Marxist study groups, cooperative screenwriting, and educational film contents, which were brought over from the mainland. Over decades, waves of labor strikes in Hong Kong had been sparked by key periods of anti-imperialism in mainland China. During one active phase of anti-colonial and pro-China activities in 1952, leftist Hong-Kong film workers agitated for back payments by striking against a privately owned film company. In response, the British deported over 20 of the film workers on strike, who were suspected of abetting the People's Republic. The British colonial authorities "wanted to promote an apolitical public culture hostile to the formation of oppositional organizations" (p. 111). They encouraged the growth of "right-wing" private film companies that disregarded trade unions, such as the Association of Cantonese Film Workers, and they established ties

with Taiwan's anti-communist Guamindang (Chinese Nationalist Party) (p. 115). Taiwan's ministries offered funding, film distribution licenses, and tax deductions for Hong Kong films that were anti-mainland China. They also induced the famed Fordist Shaw Bros. and Cathay Studios film producers to sign pledges to cease distributing or exhibiting movies in mainland China: the ensuing period was known as the "Red Movie Ban." Rodriguez concludes: "Despite their claim to political neutrality, colonial authorities had actually worked to enhance the power of capitalist management" and of private film entrepreneurs (p. 111). The repercussions of these actions continue to be felt in the production culture today.

Socially Marginal Status of the Film Industry

"My parents and family are not happy that I work in the film industry, that I'm an actress. To them, it's not respectable," said Tammy, a Hong Kong actress in her fifties who still has to defend, periodically, her decision to pursue a film-acting career – to her parents, her husband, and her children. According to her, for a long time they saw her job, and the industry as a whole, as unsavory. They fear that her sense of responsibility and the performance of her familial duties are weakened by the long schedules that frequently put her in remote locations, making her work late hours – particularly for horror films and thrillers – and mostly in the company of male film personnel. The unease that Tammy's family feels about her participation in the film industry is not an exception. While many young people consider working in the film industry glamorous, some conservative or upper-middle-class families eschew this type of employment and its working conditions for the women in the households. Their fears reflect the marginal status of the film industry, especially among some of the older generation and more conservative members of Hong Kong society.

In this section I explore aspects of the sociocultural character of the Hong Kong film industry that are enmeshed in its discursive themes of decline and flexibility. The characterization of the film industry as *lo pin moon* still lingers to some degree; this is a Cantonese expression that translates as "mix with slanted-door business" – as opposed to involvement with a "straight-door" business such as law or medicine. In other words, the film industry (like the commercial film industries of Bollywood and Hollywood) is a dubious environment (Ganti, 2004; Horne, 2001). Some members of the media personnel articulated the illicit and socially marginal perception and practices of the film industry as something they want to change, for the overall benefit of the industry as well as for themselves.

After discussing some of the reasons for, and some of the manifestations of, the socially marginal status of the film industry, I will now outline ways in which media personnel members have addressed this problem.

One of the reasons for the societal perception of the film industry as *lo pin moon* is that, in the past several decades, Hong Kong's film industry acquired a history of

illicit financing, and even of gangster managerialism (Curtin, 1999, 2010; Stokes & Hoover 1999). Numerous interlocutors in my fieldwork recalled that, in the 1970s and 1980s, gangsters could assist location filmmaking in certain neighborhoods through their social influence over shopowners. They could also rob or harass film crews, sometimes harming or stealing equipment. Seeing the profit potential of film production, some of the more entrepreneurial gangsters then transitioned to financing and managerial activities by offering loans to cash-starved producers during the 1980s and 1990s. The *hak seh wui*, “black societies” or “triads,” frequently cycled the cash through production, simultaneously laundering the money they had acquired from other illicit activities. Some triads became more involved in financing film projects and eventually set up production companies, becoming creatively as well as financially invested in production (Curtin, 1999, pp. 37–38). The stature of Hong Kong as a legitimate destination for overseas film crews was shaken, which resulted in on-set violence and in a shooting incident that led to protests in the streets.¹¹

Prominent members of the film industry have commented that some members of Hong Kong society do not think the film industry is a respectable trade. A producer remarked to me: “This is a dirty business, with dirty people. You have to be very, very careful.” Another Hong Kong director Peter Chan explained further:

The film business is seen as something that is not professional, and with triad involvement, it was something that you don’t want your children to work in [...] As a result, nobody else wanted to touch the film business. Even the Hong Kong government took the attitude that they didn’t want to deal with it. They just didn’t want to hear from us. (Curtin, 1999, p. 75)

Children from “good families” are expected to become scholars or government officials, not performers. Producer Nansun Shi observed that working in the film industry is “not the sort of business that gets respect from the government or from investors” (p. 75). The reasons for this state of affairs are complex. The Hong Kong government’s distance from the film industry may be attributable to Hong Kong’s geopolitical status, first as a colony of Great Britain and then as a region of China. Its cinema lacked the potential to become an instrument in nation-building, unlike what happened in other Asian countries, which have backed their national film industries in the past decade (Davis & Yeh, 2008; and cf. Jin in this volume). There are also gender and class dimensions to these perceptions. The work on set may involve physically intimate encounters in the course of undressing and grooming, and these can put women in an uncomfortable position. Working on film sets also requires the public performance of sentiments that may be socially regarded as private.¹² Unlike some traditional Cantonese opera troupes that traveled throughout the region with family members who would perform, contemporary media workers lack the oversight and protection of their kin.

The reactions to film workers from family members are neither simple nor straightforward. Several female interlocutors spoke of the ambivalence that family

members, particularly parents, felt towards these women's on-camera work. They disapproved of the women's physical and emotional exposure as a form of spectacle, and yet they took pride in the same women's ability to find work in a competitive industry. Respectability was less of an issue for females who worked in wardrobe or production coordinating. Many of them received training in film or art and were seen by their peers and families as artistic, media-savvy, hip, and – importantly – not part of the spectacle itself. Actresses were, in some ways, the most vulnerable sector of the film industry – the object of the (mostly male) on-set gaze, sometimes subjected to more complicated managerial relations.

Responses to the Industry's Socially Marginal Status

One of the most visible efforts to minimize the *lo pin moon* association of the film industry has been the professionalization of certain companies through the transparency and standardization of business practices. Instead of the “casual accounting practices” of many small production companies (Curtin, 2007, p. 74), including verbal deal-making and minimal paper trails, some companies have become more corporate by devoting more time to developing and planning production. One such company is Media Asia, a production company with origins in film distribution. Media Asia has been a prominent company for regional co-productions, distribution, and exhibition in China (Davis & Yeh, 2008, pp. 106–107). It has collaborated with Singaporean and Japanese companies, as well as with the “state-run” conglomerate China Film Corp. The company is known for “meticulous calculating [...] a rarity in impetuous Hong Kong film culture” (p. 106). It primed itself for external investment by adhering to the strictures of transparency and standardization found in other corporate structures. Such strictures required complete scripts and “signed formal contracts with personnel, got completion bonds, relied on insurance, marketing campaigns and other legal apparatus to present a professional, polished package” (ibid.). Not only has this kind of standardization and corporate organization helped keep Hong Kong-based production companies competitive in the global market and up to the task of co-producing with Hollywood, it has also granted them greater socioeconomic respectability. Legal and financial disclosures may not make the social and financial relations of production truly “transparent,” but such steps have marked a shift from some of the more secretive practices of family-run and triad-related production companies. More importantly, standardization and transparency in accounting and in script development, together with the rationalization of production labor, cohere more closely with the business practices of the regional offices of Anglo-American and European legal, financial, and accounting firms in Hong Kong, versus the triad-production companies of the 1980s and early 1990s.

There are more dispersed, yet salient ways in which media personnel members have attempted to recast the film industry – and themselves – as more respectable. The growing popularity of evangelical Christianity among media personnel in Hong

Kong has become evident in the form of Christian faith-based support groups for media personnel, loosely clustered prayer groups, and membership in Christian groups on social-network sites such as Facebook.¹³ The Christian networking and support for the self-styled “born-again” Christian media personnel provides what some have described as a “moral compass” and a sense of legitimacy in an industry that is still attempting to shake off its history of dubious business practices. At numerous production meetings I attended and in several interviews, media personnel incorporated prayer, born-again testimonials, and biblical quotations and references into conversations about their career aspirations and their production practices. Evangelical practice and protection has been particularly important for female workers who film late at night in rural areas, far from the city. Susan, a “born-again” actress who had appeared in sexually provocative material years before, has been able to reinvent her image and her reputation among film personnel, so that she can more easily maintain a distinction between her on-screen and her off-screen persona. Wearing a necklace with a cross, invoking the name of Jesus in production meetings, and praying aloud before meals shared with other media personnel are among the socially recognizable Christian practices that Susan engages in in order to identify as born-again Christian. Through religious practices of prayer and through participation in faith-based networks, Susan feels spiritually protected by what I consider to be a mantle of Christianity, a protective shield that buffers her while she is filming provocative material. Susan also networks and affiliates herself with similarly Christian film personnel, joining Christian groups on Facebook and seeking occasional film projects that hold a Christian, albeit also a commercial, appeal. A female producer-director whom I observed on set and in production meetings remarked to me that her robust brand of Christianity is what reassures her family members that she is safe working in what they had considered a *lo pin moon* industry. She describes her Christianity as protecting her from unsavory business practices and unwholesome behaviors, particularly with men. Evangelical Christianity was described by these workers as emphasizing a “take-charge” approach similar to that of the entrepreneurialism propagated by the SAR government, but this time with the aim of producing cultural, not economic, capital. These examples show how sociocultural practices are selectively incorporated into industrial activities and work practices as tactics designed to provide protection in an industry whose personnel faces multiple forms of risk.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the production culture of the Hong Kong film industry in order to show how the interrelated themes of decline, flexibility, and marginal social status have constituted definitive elements over the past decade. The decline of the film industry has followed from multiple causes and has generated a

productive reflexivity on the part of media workers, who have engaged in flexible practices to revive the industry and their own careers within the East Asian market. These flexible practices include individuals' increased geographic mobility, as well as industrial co-productions. While Hong Kong film productions have for decades been partly filmed or financed from overseas, Hong Kong film after reunification has evolved into a broad enterprise dispersed across East Asia. Lastly, in examining the socially marginal character of the film industry – and various responses to it – we see how media production draws from and reassembles facets of business practice and religion.

Further analysis of media production in non-Western and Western production sites can explicate the conditions in which such powerful cultural forms as film are produced. These conditions eventually form the ways in which the media are received and potentially transform peoples' lives (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 40–41). In examining the production culture of the Hong Kong film industry we see in what instances the cultural and political history of the territory shape and shade the meanings that arise within the social communities of media personnel. An issue such as that of mainland Chinese censorship, which requires new tactics on the part of those Hong Kong media personnel members who exchange a degree of cinematic autonomy for mainland financing, is just one example of how negotiation and discord within the industry are impacted by geopolitics. Indeed, a production culture cannot be separated from the larger cultural practices and social formations in which it occurs.

NOTES

- 1 A salient feature of Hong Kong's economy was "positive non-interventionism," a colonial policy pursued by Hong Kong in the 1960s to maintain an open and "free" economy without government intervention (Castells, 2000; Ngo, 1999; So, 2004).
- 2 These themes of cultural identity have been explored by Hong Kong filmmakers such as Wong Kar Wai, Ann Hui, Johnnie To, Fruit Chan, Stanley Kwan, and Peter Chan.
- 3 For a thorough treatment of the TV industry in Hong Kong and its relationship to film, see Michael Curtin, 2007; Ma, Eric Kit wai, 1999; and Keane, Fung, & Moran, 2007.
- 4 Due to institutional review board regulations (IRB) for this project, the confidentiality of all research participants must be maintained.
- 5 For a postcolonial analysis of this transition, see Rey Chow's critique of the British colonial government's push to introduce and accelerate "democratic" measures through the Hong Kong government only after Hong Kong's return to China was mandated in 1984, as a tactic to contrast favorably the benevolence of British colonial rule and its legacy of "democracy" with the ostensibly oppressive regime of the People's Republic of China (Chow, 1998). As Alvin Y. So explicates, when Hong Kong was a colony of Britain, "[t]he British Parliament directly appointed the Governor of Hong Kong, and British expatriates ran the colonial state. The Hong Kong Chinese had no voting rights and no power to select their own governor. Although the colonial state is often labeled a liberal state, it had many repressive laws to restrict the civil rights of the Hong Kong Chinese, such as a Society

- Ordinance to control the kind of organization allowed to operate in the colony, and it banned publications that criticized the colonial state" (So, 2004, p. 237).
- 6 CEPA has been implemented in various phases; currently, under phase III, as long as Hong Kong film and television scripts receive approval from mainland censors, Hong Kong films and television shows are not subject to import quotas and are distributed in mainland China. Hong Kong production companies may own more than 50% of the copyright of films co-produced, and Hong Kong residents comprise more than 50% of the total number of principal personnel in the motion pictures concerned (such as director, screenwriter, leading actor, leading actress, supporting actor, supporting actress, producer, cinematographer, editor, art director, costume designer, action choreographer, and composer of the original film score) (Davis & Yeh, 2008, p. 103).
 - 7 This is beginning to change: in 2009 the Hong Kong Film Development Council stated on its website that one of its goals is to provide educational seminars for its personnel (Hong Kong Film Development Council, 2009).
 - 8 This statement is based on participant observation of Hollywood production practices, conducted over several years at studio lots and on location sites.
 - 9 While interviewing this Hong Kong filmmaker on his Hollywood film set, we observed the grips taking time to stop and joke around as they rigged the dolly track. One of the grips lit up a cigar and smoked it while working. Although it is very common for media workers on production sites all over the world to smoke a cigarette while they work (and especially in Hong Kong), a cigar conveys a tone of luxury, more appropriate to a salon than to a set. The director nodded at the cigar-smoking grip, sighed, and complained quietly to his Hong Kong cinematographer and to me: "It's like they are standing around at a party, so social. Hong Kong crews work much quicker." His cinematographer nodded his agreement.
 - 10 For example, this producer was taught that, when she is out of work, as can commonly be the case when the film industry takes a downturn, she should say "I am overseeing several projects in various stages of development" – a phrase not likely to be taught in a regular English-language course in Hong Kong.
 - 11 In the late 1990s many of the triads pulled out of film production, partly on account of their mismanagement of funds and lack of filmmaking savvy (Curtin, 1999, p. 37). Some of these groups turned to video compact disc (VCD) piracy.
 - 12 For analogous examples among the Hindi film community and Tamil stage performers, see Ganti, 2002 and Seizer, 2000).
 - 13 These practices are not to be confused with The Media Evangelism Ltd of Hong Kong, which is a charitable Christian media organization.

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How Should We Think About Audience Power in the Digital Age?

Joseph Turow

ABSTRACT

This chapter emphasizes the workings of corporate power in people's core relationships to the emerging digital media system. Its aim is to provide a counterbalance to a perspective with a lot of traction among contemporary academics: that the best way to think about audiences in the new age is to emphasize that individual audience members are exercising unprecedented control over the creation and distribution of media products. Focusing on the media-buying sector of the advertising industry, this chapter outlines the contours of a new ecosystem of digital-marketing companies that buys and sells data about online users without their permission or knowledge. This ecosystem raises a new version of the concerns about media's constructions of society for society that scholars first expressed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This chapter emphasizes the workings of corporate power in people's core relationships to the emerging digital media system. Its aim is to provide a counterbalance to a perspective with a lot of traction among contemporary academics: that the best way to think about audiences in the new age is to emphasize that individual audience members are exercising unprecedented control over the creation and distribution of media products. My exploration here centers on a corporate arena that academics

The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies: Media Effects/Media Psychology, First Edition.

Edited by Angharad N. Valdivia and Erica Scharrer.

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tend to ignore: the media-buying sector of the advertising industry. Media buying involves purchasing space or time for advertising on outlets as diverse as television networks, billboards, radio stations, websites, mobile-phone decks, and newspapers. For decades, this activity was a backwater, a service part of advertising agencies that hired liberal arts majors just out of college for the lowest-paying jobs on Madison Avenue. That has changed. During the past 20 years, media-buying firms and a wide array of satellite companies that feed them technology and data have become lucrative magnets for software engineers and financial statisticians.

What they are creating is nothing less than new ways of thinking about audiences, of trading them, and of defining success in doing that. A new ecosystem of digital-marketing companies unknown to online individuals buys and sells data about them – including inferences based on those individuals’ own online creations – without their permission or knowledge. Media-buying agencies and their advertising clients increasingly apply the information to determine what commercial messages individuals should get, what discount coupons they ought to receive, and what prices they should pay for products and services. The surreptitiously constructed market-driven profiles are also central to media firms’ increasing competitive need to personalize information, news and entertainment. Built into the logic of these activities is social discrimination across a widening digital landscape. The trajectory raises a new version of the concerns about media’s constructions of society for society that scholars first expressed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Media, Audience, and Community

Nicholas Negroponte was at the leading edge of academics who predicted that the power of the individual will be huge in the digital age. In the 1990s he headed the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Media Lab, a hothouse for computer-based inventions supported by major corporations. His bestseller *Being Digital* was published in 1995, just a few months after the introduction of Netscape Navigator – the web browser that began to open gates to the Internet for non-techies. Negroponte (1995, p. 5) predicted how communication technologies of the early twenty-first century would allow us to become the captains of our own attention, to focus our interests on what counts for us. “Your telephone won’t ring indiscriminately,” he wrote. “It will receive, sort, and perhaps respond to your incoming calls like a well-trained English butler.”

Negroponte seems to have taken it for granted that the creators of the new media technology would tilt it toward the individual’s interests rather than toward those of the commercial or governmental spheres. It also made sense to him that users of the new media technology would revel in that individualism. The idea that, in the twenty-first century, individuals would hold power over media destinies took hold. An important book to trumpet this idea positively, from economic and legal

standpoints, was Yochai Benkler's *The Wealth of Networks*. A cover blurb by University of Virginia communication professor Siva Vaidhyanathan accurately described it as "a lucid, powerful, and optimistic account of a revolution in the making." Underscore the word optimistic. As Benkler (2006, p. 2) saw it, the technological openness and flexibility of the Internet would allow individuals unprecedented opportunities to collaborate outside of traditional business frameworks, toward the creation of an astonishing new world. "This new freedom," he wrote, "holds great practical promise: as a dimension of individual freedom; as a platform for better democratic participation; as a medium to foster a more critical and self-reflective culture; and, in an increasingly information-dependent global economy, as a mechanism to achieve improvements in human development everywhere."

Paralleling Benkler's bold claims for the collaborative efficiencies and individual creativities afforded by new information platforms were assertions that the new technologies provide people with previously unheard of levels of power to follow their individual interests. Some pointed to the positive potential for that power; others to its negative implications. Cass Sunstein took a dystopic slant in *Republic.com* and related writings. "The most striking power provided by emerging technologies is the growing power of consumers to 'filter' what they see," he stated in an often-cited line (Sunstein, 2007, p. 5). To Sunstein, the ability to customize news sites by topic, to skip unpalatable topics, and to find comfort in ideologically similar blogs meant that people can live in idea cocoons either of their own making or in the making of which they collaborate with people who agree with them – a phenomenon that Sunstein called cyber-polarization.

Henry Jenkins saw these same individual powers quite differently. In *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins, 2008) and in other works, his focus was on very active contemporary audiences, which often push media companies to include them in their activities across multiple platforms, from television to magazines to fan conventions. It was a celebratory view, which reveled in people's growing influence on their symbol-making environment. What concerned Jenkins was not ideological polarization, but teenagers' cluelessness about what is appropriate when confronting the liberating technologies of the digital revolution. "The world has suddenly developed a printing press for every person on the planet," he told Singapore's *Straits Times*, in response to consternation manifested there about a young woman who posted nude photos of herself on her website, "but it has not prepared its culture to be responsible or imagine the consequences of suddenly becoming media makers" (see Suk-Wai, 2007).

Jenkins overreached in his assertion: there surely are places where not everyone has even the most widespread digital medium, the cell phone – places, in fact, where those who have phones cannot afford to continually charge batteries for them. His basic point, though, is quite reasonable. Digital technologies *are* providing more people than ever with the tools for being media makers, and so for reaching out to more people than ever. Similarly clear in the new media landscape is the proposition that individuals are captains of their own interpretations and increasingly use them as starting points to create culturally exciting or politically dangerous worlds of

understanding, for themselves and others. Yet his contentions and those of others (for example, those of Shirkey, 2010) about digital powers to the people beg an important question, which the proponents of such views almost never raise: Is the new individual and group autonomy the central force that will shape the way in which US citizens and others learn about the world and realize opportunities to benefit from it? Are other factors emerging that will be as decisive, or even more so?

The basic question is certainly not new with the digital age. Since at least the late 1920s, academics have disagreed about the primacy of human agency versus the power of media industries in shaping people's views of the world. During the first quarter of the twentieth century many sociologists and political researchers began to argue for the importance of seeing the media as an institution endowed with the power to construct society for society. Sociologists John Dewey (1927), Robert Park (1922), and Charles Cooley from the University of Chicago were especially noteworthy in emphasizing that the pattered messages that mass-produced periodicals circulated among millions of people allowed for the creation of a new type of broadly-shared sense of American society even if people were separated by space and class. While they tended to write optimistically about ways in which the mass media could help society maintain an informed democratic public, political theorists were revealing a dark side to the media's community-making capabilities. Academics of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s such as Harold Lasswell (1927), Leonard Doob (1935), Alfred McLung Lee (1937), Ralph Casey (1939), and George Seldes (1938) worried that mass media organizations were powerful definers of society's issues and interests in the service of the rich and powerful. They felt that, by letting people know how media firms operate, they could help citizens protect themselves from the undue power of those firms to set content agendas that reflected the needs of marketers and other members of the political and economic elite.

Beginning in the 1920s, the individual view also gained strong academic attention. Especially noteworthy was a raft of major quantitative studies coordinated by the Ohio State University (Charters, 1933) showing that personal background characteristics led people to interpret what they heard, saw or read from the media in their own ways. During the 1930s and 1940s researchers at Columbia University (e.g. Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1941; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; and Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) and the US military (e.g., Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949) added evidence to the argument that media have far more limited power to change people than many in society thought. Quantitative studies that supported this "active audience" view also emphasized people's power to choose the gratifications they wanted from whatever media content they selected. In the post-World War II struggle for mainstream academic space within the communication field, the idea of individual autonomy overshadowed the institutional view. Nevertheless, a new stream of critical communication researchers inflected by Marxist perspectives (for example, George Gerbner, 1972; Ariel Dorman and Armand Mattelart, 1975; Herbert Schiller, 1969; and Dallas Smythe, 1977) argued that individual autonomy actually paled in the face powerful business institutions. The capitalist system, working with

government, they insisted, created the broad social and cultural agendas from which audience members had the opportunity to choose their materials.

Contrasting academic insights about audience power also converged on qualitative cultural studies. From the 1940s through the 2000s, left-leaning interests in historical and textual aspects of popular culture underscored the importance of understanding the industrial production of culture if one is to lay bare the dynamics of institutional power. One can certainly see this theme in the writings of the Frankfurt School (Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, and Herbert Marcuse), of the US mass culture debaters of the 1940s and 1950s (Dwight MacDonald, Irving Howe, and David Riesman), and of British cultural-studies theorists (Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and David Morley) from the 1940s into the 1980s. (See Rosenberg & White, 1957, for a classic compendium of readings from the Frankfurt School and from mass culture debates; also see Williams, 1973; Hall, 1982; and Morley, 1980). Yet by the 1980s disappointment that powerful culture-producing systems wouldn't respond to demands for substantial change coincided with quite a different analysis: that the actual meaning of a media article, song, sign or video came not from its institutional creation but from its individual receiver, who could often be seen to create interpretations that resisted authority. One marker of that view was Janet Radway's (1991) description of female members in a romance-novel club. She showed how, in order to fit their own emotional desires, these women essentially rewrote formularized stories that, on the surface, echoed a male-dominated sexual world. Another marker was Dick Hebdige's (1981) research on British punk, which explored how those who followed the lifestyles expropriated different aspects of contemporary taste in clothing and decoration in order to fashion their self-images. The work by Negroponte, Benkler, and even Sunstein fits neatly into this corpus, which a commentator (Chavez, 2009, p. 904) described as indicating the means "by which consumers may control commercial meaning."

Scholars with an institutional perspective and an eye on the emerging digital world have pushed back against this conclusion. One line of critique, drawing from critical political economy, points to the huge corporations that control the content that people are supposedly using autonomously in the fragmenting environment. Robert McChesney is a proponent of this view in works such as *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (McChesney, 2000). He finds the key challenges to civic life to be not in the self-polarizing activities of individuals but in industry consolidations and in often secretive corporate strategies (enabled by government policies) over the ever-splintering media channels. A second stream of writings dives more directly into the human-agency fray. It sees the liberatory experiences that Jenkins and others have mentioned actually as a part of the strategies for exploitation. Mark Andrejevic (2007, p. 17) highlights various forms of corporate digital surveillance, in an attempt to counter what he calls "the ongoing attempt to equate new media technologies with the promise of empowerment, individuation, and creative control." Along related lines, Detlev Zwick, Samuel Bonsu, and Aron Darmody (2008, p. 174) argue, for example, that media executives.

have begun to realize the benefit of providing individuals with places for playful production of their own consumption experiences, a fact demonstrated by the popularity of numerous massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMOGs), open-source and hacker cultures, and fan communities. [...] Always on the lookout for new ideas, products, and services to market, managers are seeking ways to appropriate, control, and valorize the creativity of the common.

Dovetailing with this view of co-optation are variations on Dallas Smythe's 1950s notion of the audience as worker. Andrejevic (2007, 2003) argues bluntly that reality shows and user-generated content that sites such as Facebook use to draw advertising are direct examples of free labor in the interest of corporate profits. Other views try to accommodate both individual interests and corporate power. Tizziana Terranova (2000, p. 33), for example, emphasizes that in blogs, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, and so many other places in the digital economy the free labor of consumers "is simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited." Jose Van Dijck (2009, p. 41) pushes this understanding even further, arguing for "user agency as a complex concept involving not only his cultural role as a facilitator of civic engagement and participation, but also his economic meaning as a producer, consumer, and data provider, as well as the user's volatile position in the labour market."

As Van Dijck's formulation points to an important mixture of elements of individual autonomy amid corporate control, it implies the possibility of comparing the two assertions about audience power on the same plane. It's an important insight because, despite an ocean of writing about audience power over the past century, the viewpoints have typically drawn on virtually separate worlds of media scholarship for their evidence. The audience-autonomy realm tended to focus on social-psychological "effects" research, while the corporate power domain brought evidence from organizational and industrial practices. What is different about the digital environment is that both academics celebrating audience power and those emphasizing corporate influence over audience members have made their cases on the basis of the production and distribution of messages. Van Dijck's formulation falls short, however, in suggesting the relative importance of the individual versus the institutional position. Certainly, Andrejevic and Terranova make the case for corporate media power. The scope of their examples may not match the broad scope of autonomy that Negroponte, Benkler, and possibly Jenkins claim for individuals in the digital arena.

The following pages sketch a counterpoint that does have overarching implications. The thesis is that new media-buying activities are the fundamental vehicles through which corporate influences erode individual autonomy in the digital-media age. None of this denies the spaces for individual and group initiative that Negroponte, Benkler, Jenkins, Sunstein, and others identify in the new environment. The fundamental logic of the emerging media-buying system, though, privileges institutional power. It aims to constrain individuals' everyday media contexts, as well as to channel audience choices and initiatives toward the goals of marketers and of publishers – that is, the creators and distributors of content.

The Transformation of Media Buying

Advertising lies at the core of much of the media, and it is the force that sustains much of the content on the web, including many – if not most – bloggers. At base, advertising involves payment for media attempts to persuade people to purchase or otherwise support a product or service. Most people likely think of advertising in terms of its most visible manifestation: the persuasive message. Yet the definition suggests two sets of activities in addition to the creation of the ad. One, which is part of marketing research, entails evaluating whether and how the message worked. The other, traditionally called media planning and buying, revolves around the provision of funds to pay for placement of the notice. Before the 1980s, advertising practitioners considered media buying and planning as rather straightforward, unexciting components of a standard (“full-service”) agency’s offerings to clients. During the US broadcast television era (roughly, 1948–1988) the media-buying process became so predictable for national advertisers that many outsiders considered buying print space and broadcast time for clients a paint-by-numbers activity. They understood that a large part of the overall agency revenues typically came from the (then standard) 15% commission garnered from what clients spent to place their commercial messages. But they also knew that most of the work was conducted by low-paid recent college graduates who poured over boring television ratings and periodical circulation data in conjunction with advertising charges to determine the key measure of an ad vehicle’s efficiency: CPM (cost per mil), the price for reaching 1,000 members of the target audience via that outlet.

In the 1960s and 1970s media-buying independents (those disconnected from advertising agencies) emerged in Europe and North America. The clients of these firms were not the blue-chip advertisers that full-service agencies on both sides of the pond coveted. Independents tended to attract direct-marketing companies that created their print ads or TV commercials themselves and needed an intermediary to buy space or time for them. Beginning in the mid-1970s, though, major advertisers in the UK began to accept that standalone buying firms sometimes had more expertise than buying units of full-service agencies. In 1988, advertising-agency entrepreneurs Maurice and Charles Saatchi bought the dominant independent buying firm and merged it with the media-buying activities of their three UK ad agencies into one standalone subsidiary, Zenith Media, with huge billings. A major rationale for media-buying agencies of Zenith’s size was that it would help clients face two critical developments efficiently. One was the ongoing fragmentation of electronic media as commercially supported cable, satellite, and radio channels proliferated in Europe, the US, and other parts of the world. A large buying firm, advocates said, would have the staff and computer facilities to analyze the best media mix for each client’s products in this intimidating new arena. The other development was the growth of huge conglomerates (Time Warner, Disney-ABC, News Corporation, Viacom-CBS) that owned many advertising platforms in different media industries and could potentially

raise the price of time and space. Supporters of large media-buying firms contended that their hundreds of millions of dollars from multiple clients could act as a counterweight to the media firms' clout during bargaining over prices and placements.

Zenith marked a focus on standalone media-buying divisions – a focus placed by the agency-holding companies that were beginning to emerge in the UK, France, and the US. Driving the holding companies' growth was the notion that dominance in all parts of the industry could be achieved by buying a number of full-service ad agencies with worldwide networks, great creative boutiques, and allied businesses such as public relations outfits. The first agency-holding company, Interpublic, was actually founded in 1960; but the notion did not catch on until the 1980s. The 1990s saw enormous struggles for position and control over agency conglomerates, as well as over their media-buying divisions. The four dominant worldwide holding companies that exist today emerged by the early 2000s: Omnicom and Interpublic, based in New York; WPP (originally Wire and Plastic Products Plc.), based in London; and Publicis (which had absorbed the Satchis' holdings), sited in Paris. In addition to these were two firms with French pedigree, which held a particular claim to fame as buying authorities: Aegis, based by then in London; and Havas, based in Suresnes, France. These six were eventually quite successful at dominating the territory. According to a research firm that keeps track of buying-firm developments, they spent \$224 billion advertising dollars worldwide in 2009 (RECMA, July 2010). That year the six firms controlled about 45% of purchasing in the US advertising market; in most European countries the share reached 80% (RECMA, July 2010).

The 2000s marked a period when the major buying firms began, with their quantitative audience-targeting models, to earnestly exploit the rise of the commercial Internet as a testing ground for the coming age of ubiquitous digital media. Although advertising "online" appeared during the 1980s on computer dialup services such as Prodigy, the business was marginal and ad agencies didn't consider that it had mainstream possibilities. The growth of commercial advertising on the World Wide Web with the introduction of the Netscape browser in 1994 pointed to a venue for marketers to reach millions of audience members. The second half of the 1990s marked a transition period during which publishers and various partners refined three technologies that would become the basis for the audience-marketing logic that took flight in the next decade: the banner, the interactive link, and the cookie.

The banner and the advertising-oriented link seem to have emerged together on October 26, 1994, when the popular online technology magazine *Wired* began to sell pictorial banners in large quantities on its new website Hotwired.¹ Soon thereafter Netscape employees Lou Montulli and John Giannadrea revolutionized advertising by creating the cookie, a small text file that a website could place on a visitor's computer. They were responding to online retailers complaints that they couldn't handle customers' multiple purchasing requests (Schwartz, 2001). Every click designed to put an item in a virtual shopping cart would appear to the online store as if it were made by a different individual. Consequently, a person would not be able to buy more than one thing at a time. Montulli and Giannadrea made the cookie with an

identification code for the visitor and codes detailing the clicks that the person had carried out during the visit. The next time the person's computer accessed the website, tags on the browser would recognize the cookie. Note that the cookie could not by itself distinguish between two separate people using the same computer. That was the result of Montulli and Giannadrea's decision to have the cookie work without asking the computer user to accept or contribute information to it. There was an ominous downside to that seamless approach: by not making the computer user's permission a requirement for dropping the cookie, the two programmers were building a lack of openness at the center of the consumer's digital transactions with marketers.

During the 1990s and into the 2000s, marketing technologists developed other methods for following individuals through the digital environment. A web beacon (or tracking pixel) is a graphic on a web page or in an email message that often activates a program in order to monitor the activity of visitors – for example, what they read and for how long. A Flash cookie (technically, a locally shared object) is a collection of cookie-like data stored as a file in a user's Adobe Flash computer software; marketers sometime use it so that the data will not be lost when standard cookies are deleted. The development of the banner ad, the link, the cookie, the web beacon, and the Flash cookie helped digital divisions of media-buying firms and their technology partners to refine their digital trade through the 2000s to make it central to marketers considering advertising online. The essential approach was to emphasize that the new medium allowed for the quantitative measurability of audience activities in ways that would yield a much more accurate understanding of a client's return on investment (ROI) of its ad monies than had been possible with analog advertising vehicles such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and outdoor boards. Moreover, media buyers contended, it was now possible to go beyond measuring the responses of panels or samples of audiences, as had been the norm in the analog world. Now it was possible to note and store the responses of individuals via their click-like behaviors – for example, by using the mouse to activate a link, by moving a mouse to activate tracking pixels on an ad, or by pressing a button to change a channel or to choose a product on a television screen.

Initially the emphasis on quantitative measurement served a direct-marketing model of advertising. The goal was to provoke a sale or an action that would conceivably lead to a sale. The rapid rise of Google search as an advertising powerhouse, which began around 2001, was a result of an auction-based pay-per-click (PPC) revenue system that reflected this approach. Google initially carried its PPC model to the contextual advertising system that it established with sites throughout the web and in its Gmail service. In a contextual advertising network, when an advertiser bids for a keyword, the network's computers find a web page from the network's roster of sites that reflects the keyword. On the basis of the relevant context, the network serves the ad. If the visitor to the site clicks on the ad, the advertiser pays the agreed-upon amount and the network shares it with the website. Both in the advertising search and in the contextual advertising businesses, the percentage of visitors who

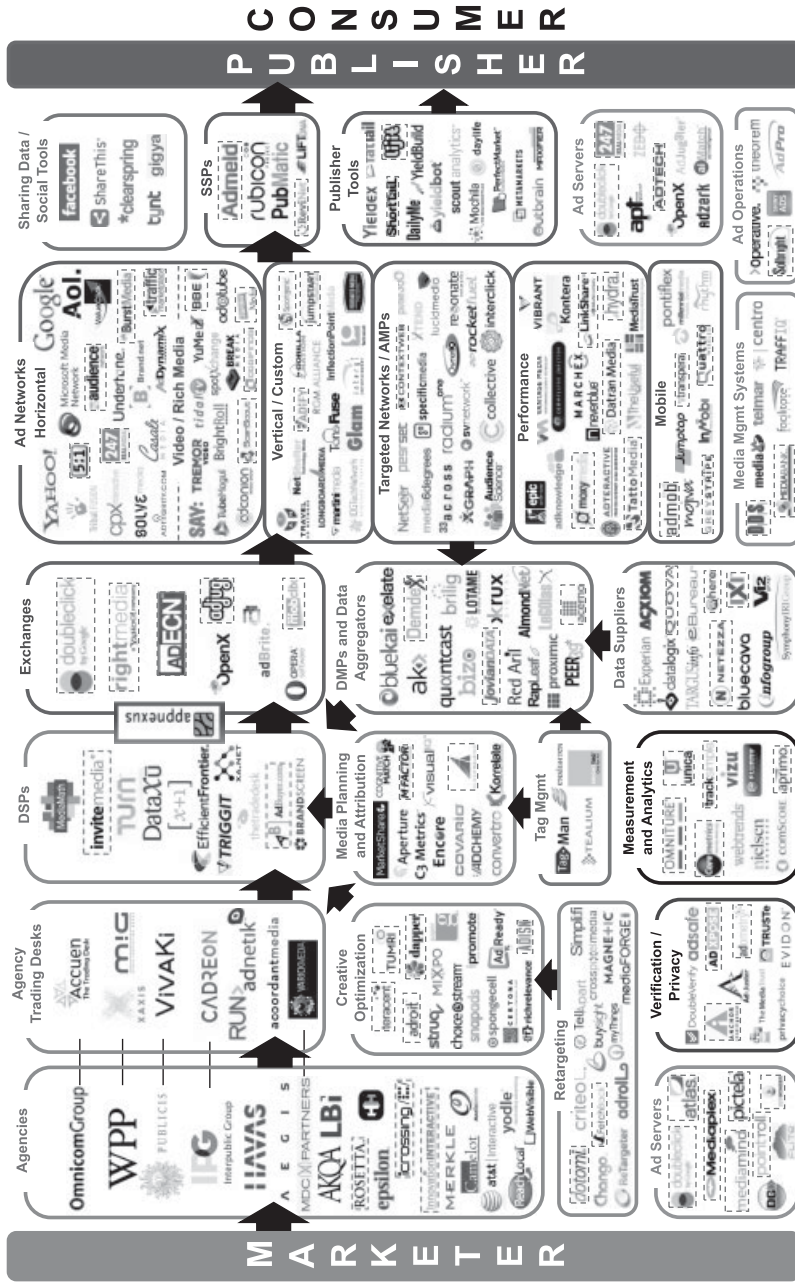
click might be 1% or less. But, with hundreds of millions of visits, Google could still make significant amounts of money with the PPC model.

While Google executives extolled this direct-selling approach as the purest example of web results in action, many web-content providers didn't have anything like the numbers of visits enjoyed by a search engine such as Google or by a "portal" such as Yahoo. These smaller publishers preferred to sell display advertising on a "cost per thousand impressions" basis that paralleled the tradition of newspapers, magazines, television, and other analog media. The logic was that ads for companies that sell cars, financial services, and movies may not need to yield a click action to have an impact on a person's image of the product and on future purchase decisions. But this forgoing of the direct-click payment model of advertising sales didn't mean that media buyers were giving up on their insistence that the web was a more measurable platform than traditional media. Instead, media buyers and publishers advanced new ideas of how to think of the success of image ads that could be measured even as they paid on a CPM basis. Some of the notions centered on "engagement" – time spent on, or interest in, the page with the ad was an indication of the opportunity to see with it. A different way to think of the measurability of an image ad's success was to look at whether viewing an advertisement at one point led to the purchase of a product at another point – either on the web or off it. This definition of success – call it *the long click* – became an important reason for following individuals' activities across media, and ultimately from online media to offline retailers such as supermarkets and car dealers.

In all these cases, fierce competition for dollars led publishers to garner visitors' characteristics and to sell that information along with their engagement possibilities. Keeping people's names and email addresses off limits (and calling it anonymity), some sold segments with demographic information such as age, sex, geographic area, income and employment status they got from registration or bought from data firms. The ability to use cookies and, later, web beacons to tag audience members and to track what they viewed allowed publishers to create and offer up segments of inferred interests to advertisers, who might in turn infer purchasing interests from those segments. Advertising networks were doing the same thing, though across websites, and they and data-collection firms often "matched" their cookies with the cookies of other tracking firms, to enhance the ability of advertisers to target very specific types of individuals – and often even very specific (though still anonymous) individuals. By the late 2000s, audience-data exchanges owned by Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, Interpublic and other major players facilitated the auction of individuals with particular characteristics, often in real time. That is, it is now possible to buy the right to deliver an ad to a person with a specific profile at the precise moment at which that person loads a web page. In fact, through cookie-matching activities, an advertiser can actually buy the right to reach, on an exchange, someone whom the advertiser knew from previous contacts and was now tracking around the web.

Through these processes the audience became a focus of reconstruction for marketers and content firms. A variety of organizations emerged to help marketers find

DISPLAY LUMAscape



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Figure 9.1 Display LUMAscape © LUMA Partners LLC 2011.

the specific audiences and audience members they wanted at the lowest prices possible, while a variety of others emerged to help publishers provide those audiences but keep prices relatively high. Media-buying firms struggled to find their place as advertising networks and media-buying platforms threatened to usurp buyers' key functions of planning the best roster on which to advertise and of bargaining for the best price. The ecosystem became denser as the amount of money advertisers spent online expanded dramatically, from around \$9 billion in 2003 to around \$34 billion in 2008 (Veronis Suhler Stevenson, 2009, Table 11.8). A chart circulating within the trade during 2010 (Kawaja, 2010) depicted 22 types of organizations between advertisers and publishers. In addition to *agencies* with media-buying divisions (WPP, Publicis, Havas), it listed categories such as *ad exchanges* (DoubleClick, AdECN), *ad networks* (AOL, Google, Microsoft), *yield optimizers* (Rubicon, PubMatic), *ad servers* (DoubleClick, Atlas), *data qualifiers* (DoubleVerify), *analytic specialists* (Omniure, Coremetrics), and *research operations* (comScore, Nielsen, Quantcast). All the companies represented in these categories have the following operations as their core aims: assembling data about the audience (or *consumers*, *visitors*, *targets*, or *users*, as audience members are variously called); trading the data about them; trading access to the audience members; creating specialized display ads and videos for the targets; serving specialized ads to the targets; and/or evaluating the success of those activities.

Media Buying and the Exercise of Power

That advertisers can now buy the right to serve messages to, say, 26-year-old Southern US fans of the film *The Princess Bride* may seem like a trivial concern. But this capability, highlighted in press articles about digital privacy (see, e.g., Angwin, 2010), only scratches the surface of what firms can learn about individuals – and about what they can do with what they learn. Here are sketches of three ways in which the maturing digital-industry logic increasingly encourages profiling people without their knowledge, shares these profiles across marketers and websites, and narrows audience options regarding not just advertising but prices, news, and entertainment.

(1) *Individual marketers construct a flow of information and inferences about individuals and increasingly tailor ads and offers to them.* The impulse guiding this approach is encapsulated in a Powerpoint deck that Publicis' MediaVest buying operation presented to its clients during 2010. Headlined "Why We Are Betting on Ad Exchanges," the first slide offered the basic explanation for MediaVest's decision to put its energies into the new approach to advertising spending: "Key benefit: Buy only the impressions that match." Two columns of text then elaborated the point, which was also illustrated by a series of pictures descending with them. One column highlighted the key chain of thinking about ad exchanges: "Insight / Media / Technology / No Waste." The other column elaborated on the flow of reasoning

in the following way: “Leverage our own data to create audience segments → Access millions of consumers through open ad impressions → Exchange allows all impressions to be ‘filtered’ → Buy only the impressions that match our segment.” The slide suggested that marketers would be able to reach only the people who count to them. MediaVest would create target segments on the basis of its clients’ data about best customers. It would then bid, in the exchanges, for the right to reach people who fit those profiles. They would get the client’s messages, and the audience reached would be free of “waste” – the term used for the population the client didn’t care to reach.

The approach is by no means confined to MediaVest. It is becoming a standard operating procedure among media buyers in the big six firms, as well as in many of their smaller competitors. Marketers are increasingly using databases to predict whether they should consider particular Americans as targets or as waste. Those considered waste are ignored or shunted to other products, which the marketers deem more relevant for them. Those considered targets are further evaluated according to demographics, beliefs and lifestyle data about them that companies store and trade. They receive different messages and possibly discounts, depending on the profiles.

Advertisers and publishers point out that much of the cookie-connected information they use is “anonymous” – that is, not linked at the moment of use to the person’s name, postal address, or email address. Yet, if a company can follow an individual’s behavior in the digital environment – and that includes the mobile phone and, potentially, the television set – its claim that the person is anonymous is meaningless. That is particularly true when firms intermittently add offline information to the online data and then simply strip the name and address, to make it anonymous.

For Ford Motor Company, there is no question that targeted personalization – sometimes anonymous, sometimes not – is central to marketing strategy. Reflecting this idea, Andy Pratkin, the digital director of WPP’s Team Detroit agency, noted in an interview that his fundamental concern in reaching customers is with knowing how his prospective targets learn, how their perceptions are formed. He added: “If we can fit into that dynamic, we can fit into *her*” (Pratkin, 2010). Pratkin argued that the digital environment allows for an individual to be followed along a gauntlet of brand-related mind-sets, from awareness to initial attitude to various attitude shifts. “It’s kind of like dating,” he said. Consider just two of the ways in which Team Detroit cultivated online audiences for the Ford Motor Company’s advertisements during 2010:

- It purchased ads on many automotive sites and planted Ford cookies and beacons in the computers of visitors to the pages where the ads appeared. The technology allowed Ford to serve individuals different messages and photos, depending on what their clicks suggested to Ford about where they were in the car-purchase funnel. “We do a fair amount of tagging,” said Andy Pratkin (2010).

If people are exposed to our ad, we study their behavior, and if they come to our site, then we retarget them and try to entice them back [...] If you go to [the] Kelly Blue Book [website], we serve an ad. We'll know if you didn't do anything. Next time, we'll serve you a different ad. You go to our site, and if you do something and you go off our site [to one of Ford's advertising networks], we serve you other ads.

The technology often assembled the advertising automatically, on the fly, to match what cookie data said about the person's car-searching routines with the previous commercial messages that had been served to the individual.

- In other Internet buys, Team Detroit varied its ads to people on the basis of their ages, incomes, geographic locations, and various social behaviors, as well as on the basis of inferences from categories based on these data ("soccer moms," for example) that suggested they would purchase particular vehicles or would be persuaded in certain ways. In addition, the agency presented ads to the friends of people on Facebook who fit profiles of being in the market for particular types of cars. "On Facebook, you take friends into account," said creative executive vice president Scott Lang in an interview (2010). "So-and-so liked this; you will too. People find that creepy in the beginning, but [...] they slowly get used to it."

While Ford uses data and digital-targeting aggressively, Next Jump goes even further. This smaller but influential firm runs employee discount and reward programs on behalf of 90,000 corporations, organizations and club-like organizations (often called affinity groups) that reach more than 100 million consumers. The low profile results from Next Jump's desire to stand in the background, as a facilitator of deals. The capability it offers prospective clients on its modest website is certainly familiar in the digital age: "Create your own targeted ads on the Next Jump network [...] Promote your offers to interested users [...] Track marketing performance through insightful analytics [...] Discover and reward your most influential customers" (Next Jump, 2010).

How Next Jump does that is the secret sauce that founder and CEO (chief executive officer) Charlie Kim says augurs a new future for advertising. The business is based on the proposition that the best way to advertise is to present lower prices specifically to individuals about whom statistical calculations suggest that they would be the best customers to reach with a deal. According to Kim, Next Jump's conversion rate on product offers (that is, the ratio of offers to purchases) is 11 to 1, compared to 1,000 to 1 or worse, which goes for typical Internet ad-conversion rates. But not every advertiser can get the data to target individuals so carefully. What Next Jump has done was to insinuate itself directly into the fabrics of Fortune 500 companies and other larger firms by running the online purchasing programs that those firms set up as perks for their employees. Those firms pay Next Jump for its work on a "per employee" basis, but Next Jump seems to derive a lot more money from the fees merchants pay every time someone buys a product.

Next Jump therefore has a vested interest in increasing its purchases. Because the company operates discount programs for roughly one third of all US corporate employees, “it is considered a non-traditional benefits provider and gets updated weekly on the employment status of 30 million workers (who also happen to be consumers). It gets part of the employee record, including things like name, address, employment status, home and work address, marital status, and sometimes even job title or salary grade” (Schonfeld, 2010). To that information and to inferences about it (such as salary grade), Next Jump adds transactional data from the firms it deals with, as well as from credit companies. It then overlays all that with information it collects through the firms’ human relations departments and through employees about what people want and what they will pay for. With all that knowledge, Next Jump can make predictions about who should get what product email offer at what price. It also generates a “UserRank” score for every employee, on the basis of how many purchases a person has made and how much he or she has spent.

“Shopping and advertising has [*sic*] always been the same to us,” Kim noted in 2010. His goal is to separate consumers to the extent that the conversion rate (which in 2008 was 100 to 1) will get down to 3 to 1. He sees it as a statistical issue. Of his 225 employees, 150 are engineers. One analyst of the company noted the extension of his work: “If Kim keeps perfecting his shopping algorithms, you may never shop the same way again – and you won’t even know that you are doing anything differently” (Schonfeld, 2010).

(2) *Marketers, data providers, and websites create widening profiles for people that may affect the choices they receive from marketers at various locations.* The individual-level data that Next Jump uses in setting differential-pricing activities for its clients do not seem to leave its servers. Increasingly, though, the blending of conclusions about consumers’ online behavior with gathered (or purchased) information about them doesn’t stop at particular brands. To the contrary, the business of discriminating digitally is leading many marketers to a small number of firms that sell various sorts of information about online customers and potential customers. These agencies, in turn, get their data from a small number of primary sources. The data collectors match what they know about people online with information they buy offline. They then anonymize the cookies; the same data may be associated with the (anonymous) person in many cookies used throughout the web.

It is through the use of these cross-pollinating organizations that narrowed options and social discrimination widen their impact. The period during which the profiles exist is widening as well. Individual cookies may have a life of days only, because the people they track delete them from their computers. Digital publishers and marketers have, however, developed various techniques to keep a growing amount of information about anonymous individuals even after their standard cookies have disappeared. These approaches, plus the matching of cookies to share information

gleaned in different ways, mean that the profiles that publishers and marketers increasingly share broadly exist for an increasing amount of time.

Acxiom, a top US marketing-communication agency, is a good place to begin exploring the building blocks of information and how they travel across advertisers. The company says that it help clients “acquire, retain, and grow loyal (and profitable) relationships” in the digital media as well, especially via email, banner, search, website optimization, and mobile (Acxiom, 2008). Acxiom’s cross-advertiser reach is prodigious. It says the client list includes 9 of the top 10 automotive companies, 12 of the top 15 credit card issuers, 7 of the top 10 retail banks, 9 of the top 10 telecom/media companies, 7 of the top 10 retailers, 9 of the top 10 automotive manufacturers, 6 of the top 8 brokerage firms, 3 of the top 5 pharmaceutical manufacturers, 2 of the top 5 life/health insurance providers, 8 of the top 10 property and casualty insurers, 2 of the top 3 lodging companies, and 2 of the top 3 gaming companies (Acxiom, 2010). Acxiom’s use and analysis of customer data is central to serving these clients. Not only does it help them analyze the information they hold about their individual customers, it offers lots more individual information from a variety of public and private databases in order to help them discover the value of each person and the selling proposition that would be best for him or her.

A role the company emphasizes throughout its website involves helping a client decide which consumers are *not* worth targeting. This is called “contact suppression,” a practice based on making assessments about the “risk profile” of individuals for certain industries. Here is how Tom Mangan, the firm’s senior vice president of consulting services, described Acxiom’s contributions at a shareholders meeting (Acxiom, 2008):

Should I continue to target people who are in fact going to default on their loans? Or, take, for example, a telecom industry where they’re constantly flipping cell phones. I want to understand those characteristics and to say, is that a customer I really want to target? [...] Once we have that fundamental building block in place now, we can then enhance that with external information that we keep in our knowledge bases about every purchasing consumer across the country. And we can then use that to now start doing strategic segmentation, so we can break your customer base into each one of those strategic segments, from high value to low value.

The facts and generalizations that Acxiom imputes to individuals have the potential to travel broadly, as they are used by clients in different industries, for different advertising campaigns and pricing offers, across different analog and digital media. Many other firms gather online and offline data about individuals, often with the help of publishers who sell data about their audiences. The data firms aggregate this information about individuals into digital cookies and license their use to marketers. For example:

- **eXelate** is a leading targeting exchange firm with the motto “MAKING BIG DATA WORK FOR ONLINE ADVERTISERS” (eXelate, 2012). It determines a

consumer's age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, and profession by partnering with websites to scour website registration data. It also tracks consumer activities online to note, for example, which consumers are in the market to buy a car or are fitness buffs, on the basis of their Internet searches and of the sites they frequent. It sells these packages of information about individuals as cookie data, so advertisers can target them.

- **Rapleaf** is a firm claiming to help marketers "customize your customers' experience." To do that, it gleans data from individual users of blogs, Internet forums, and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. It uses ad exchanges to sell the ability to reach those individual cookies. The company says that it has "data on 900+ million records, 400+ million consumers, [and] 52+ billion friend connections" (Rapleaf, 2010).
- **33across** analyzes people's comments, activities, backgrounds, and connections on social networks in order to pull out those who fit profiles that advertisers want to reach. The firm finds people who directly fit all the advertisers' criteria. It also carries out statistical analyses of those people and of the firms' customers, to find "lookalikes" who would seem to be good prospects. In addition, 33across offers its clients "high degree interest" connections. These are individuals who are attractive because they are friends or friends of friends of active shoppers (and so might already be influenced) and have many friends themselves (so they may influence others). People who fall into different attractive profiles would see different campaigns with potentially different products and offers.
- **Lotame**'s deals with a "multitude of social networks" and other publisher sites lead it to collect "over 240 billion monthly [...] interests, actions and attributes" in order to "create precise audiences and derive insights from our superior knowledge of human behavior" (Lotame, 2010). For the individuals it comes across with, the firm monitors and stores information about demographics (age, gender, geography, household income, and education level), interests (declared to the site and undeclared), actions (what people create, rate, send, share, upload, comment, edit, watch, "and more"), media use (online – which can include videos, widgets, music, forums, blogs, and photos), recency and frequency (how often and when individuals express interests and/or actions), interactions (how people interact with content and ads, including clicks, time spent, and videos completed), and sentiment and exposure (what individuals say, what they read, when and how they say and read it). This interrogation of people's creative activities in the digital realm leads the company to interact with particular individuals in a way that is "based on what they talk about, the sentiment they've expressed in discussions, or the content or conversations they've read or participated in." It also leads Lotame to tailor display ads and commercials for the targeted individuals. In turn, the firm monitors the results and adds its analysis to the data, in order to further "learn what demographics, interests, attributes, and actions drive a campaign's success based on goals" (Lotame, 2010). This process continues with new data, new people, and new advertisers.

(3) *In tune with the personalization in advertising, publishers are beginning to personalize editorial matter based on profiles they create and profiles they can purchase.* One incentive publishers have for personalization is to make their material stand out to advertisers, at a time when media buyers think less of the place where they are posting the ad than of their ability to purchase impressions of the right type of individual – or even of the exact individual – wherever that person shows up in the digital universe. Publishing executives reason that, if they serve tailored content to visitors, then people will stay longer, view more commercial messages, and even be prompted to click on more ads, because of the relevance that both ads and editorial matter combine to create, increasingly in real time. Edwin Wong, director of market research for Yahoo Search, suggested another reason for content personalization in an interview. He said it allows the media firms and their advertisers to learn increasing amounts about individuals' interests and their responses to those interests. That, in turn, could inform the creation of profiles that advertisers would use to encourage clicks and other engagements (Wong, 2010).

Despite media buyers' enthusiasm for tailored editorial matter, a number of logjams have hindered its implementation. Executives from major news companies said in interviews that until recently their firms have been loath to personalize their presentations for audiences, in a long-held belief that the best content "is based on serendipity," as a Time Inc executive put it. He also suggested a worry that personalization could harm the company by startling people about the knowledge firms have about them. "If I saw that the magazine editor said, 'Kirk, we know you're in debt up to your eyeballs. Here are articles that can help you,' I might well freak out" (McDonald, 2010).

As competition heats up, however, that belief is changing. Time Inc and other firms are searching for ways to justify the quiet customization of news on the basis of their generalizations about a person's interests and background. In the meantime, smaller firms have already started experimenting. A firm called The Daily Me personalizes news and sports presentations on the online sites of more than a dozen newspapers. Gerald Hauser, its founder and CEO, presented an actual example: a *Boston Globe* reader visits the *Dallas Morning News* site because of an article noted on a blog or search engine. Both the *Globe* and *Morning News* are Daily Me clients, and so its cookie notes the anonymous individual at the *Morning News* site. Because The Daily Me's cookie contains the information that the person read a lot about soccer on the *Globe* sports section, it tells the *Dallas Morning News* to serve him soccer stories. Moreover, when an ad is served along with the story, its text and photos are arranged instantly to include soccer terminology and photos as part of the advertising pitch. A basketball fan receiving an ad for the same product will get language and photos that call out to people with hoop interests (Hauser, 2011).

While it seems likely that text- and photo-based personalization will develop quickly now that it has strong publisher rationale and advertiser support, personalized audiovisual content is likely to be harder to implement because of cost. It is already

possible today to change aspects of television programming and games on the basis of social backgrounds. Visible World can change the look of characters and products in programs on the fly, according to data in a household's set-top box. Knowledgeable observers note, however, that the cost of carrying out even these basic personalization activities on television in the near future will be too steep for advertisers to support them. In-game personalization of this sort – based on demographic and behavioral conclusions about the player – is also a technical possibility (it already exists with ads), but it is still not a major talking point among producers or marketers. Much more likely is the presence, in the next few years, of an “intelligent navigator” keyed to the characteristics of the person or household. An intelligent navigator is a guide that will appear on a person's television set when it connects to the vast viewing lode offered from Internet programming. This so-called Internet-protocol television (IPTV) will allow the reception of thousands of individual shows at any time. The flood of options will encourage software that suggests a priority of possibilities for a household or for particular individuals in the household.

A major attraction for a “navigator” firm will be the opportunity to make money from commercials at the side of the listings. The navigation firm will likely charge substantially for marketers to plug into the profiles it develops about individuals on the basis of their viewing of programs and commercials. Advertisers will also pay a premium to intelligent-navigator firms to serve interactive ads to big-screen home television sets on the basis of the knowledge of individuals that the advertisers gathered on other websites, and perhaps in stores. A partnership between Visible World and Interpublic's Cadreon advertising exchange seems to be preparing for just this scenario. In 2010 Cadreon tracked and identified web users who appeared to be researching new car purchases on the web. It then used Visible World's personalization platform on cable TV systems to place appropriate commercials in front of those same individuals. Cadreon's goal, as it moves forward, is to increase the ability to personalize commercials on the strength of inferences made from more and more data. CEO Brendan Moorcroft told *AdWeek* that Visible World “brings an infrastructure for ad serving to TV not unlike what Atlas or DoubleClick do” for the Internet. “It allows us to apply intelligence for TV buying like you do for the Internet.” And if it were unclear to observers that people's reputations behind the screen would be the drivers of commercial messages, he added: “For the first time you'll see real scale [in the targeted space] with hundreds of ads seen by millions of people, all determined by algorithms and data as opposed to human instinct” (McClellan, 2010).

The Long Click, Reputation, and Audience Power

The Cadreon case is an example of the way in which targeting and personalization technologies developed for the World Wide Web are migrating to other media arenas. Brick and mortar retailers are beginning to build digital media into the very

heart of their sales activities. Supermarkets are involved in various experiments in which knowledge of the shopper's identity (via a frequent-shopper card, for example) activates a "smart" shopping cart, which displays discounts and ads that are based upon profiles of the person's shopping history (see, e.g., Turow, 2006). Location-aware applications built in people's mobile devices are encouraging a different sort of profiling, this time in the interest of presenting individuals with discounts or other prizes for visiting nearby restaurants or other stores (Clifford, 2010).

Because of the industry thinking that enshrines the long click as an ideal measure of success, the link connecting the traditionally offline and online, as well as the domestic, the outdoor, and the in-store is becoming a reality. Already research firms such as comScore and Nielsen are using their huge panels to track the impact of a person's encounter with an online ad on that person's purchase activities. They sell to marketers data about the types of people who are likely to complete the long click. Some firms are forgoing this statistical analysis in order to trace all the individuals who come into contact with them. A major auto manufacturer has developed tools to track the ways particular interactions with its ads lead to particular ways those people interact with the firm's sites and, in turn, predict whether they come into the dealership and with what result. The predictive profiles associated with different individuals affect the ways the auto company interacts with them online and in the brick and mortar store.²

When stories such as these make it into the public eye, the discourse inevitably turns on their implications for privacy. Advocacy organizations, members of Congress, editorial writers, and members of the public have excoriated companies that track behavior in ways that are not transparent. Social battles around the meaning of *personal*, the helpfulness of privacy policies and icons, the utility of *opt-in* and *opt-out* choices, and the value of transparency versus regulation take up much of the discourse. Almost ignored in the literature are the implications of tracking and personalization for the different views of the world that individuals receive from marketers and from the publisher. The process of tailoring content has begun only recently, but it is growing quickly. As the preceding pages suggest, tailored advertising and discount coupons have taken the lead, but the lessons from that are now starting to be applied to information, news, and entertainment as well. Moreover, these personalized engines of content may well spread, with their personalized profiles, across digital devices and domestic, outdoor, and in-store venues. The upshot: people may well be surrounded by a symbolic environment created from categories about them that a wide range of marketers and publishers share but about which the individuals constructed through those data have no knowledge.

In considering the future of digital targeting, it is useful to draw a distinction between profiles and reputations. Profiles are descriptions of individuals that lack comparative rankings of desirability. Marketers and publishers then map *their* sense of attraction to them. If, for example, marketers want 18–24-year-old women who like vampire movies, they will consider profiles of women aged 35–50 unattractive. Nothing in the information about the 35–50-year-old women, however, makes them

inherently unattractive. As the Next Jump and auto-dealer examples suggest, though, a next logical step in digital marketing is to build comparative evaluations of individuals into clusters of descriptions that are based on actions such as their statistical record of spending money, of giving back a product, and of telling friends about products. With such an approach, profiles become reputations. That is, they become clusters of data that have, built into them, a sense of the comparative utility of individuals to marketers (and, by extension, to media firms) along a range of commercially driven dimensions and contexts.

The movement of the advertising industry from profiles to reputations seems clear in the media-buying system's logic, as this is expressed through executives' discussions, their companies' behaviors, and the personalization technologies that are emerging. The concern here is not with whether the evaluation, separation, and trading of individuals in an iterative way actually increases the advertisers' bottom line. It is with the impact of the advertisers' patronage demands and with the technologies through which they are expressed to audiences and in the media in the twenty-first century. One consequence of media buying is that data firms and marketing agencies have learned to use the creative activities of independent bloggers and of social-media participants in order to concoct marketing categories for the purposes of social discrimination. Ironically, what writers correctly extol as examples of individual initiatives are also a part of the efforts through which the digital media system is preparing to present different people with different opportunities and world views across a broad gamut of platforms. David Croteau pointed out in 2006 that we know little about the impact of user-generated content on the new media landscape (Croteau, 2006, p. 340). To this observation it should be added that we know little – and we theorize little – about the impact of the institutional forces surreptitiously shaping the landscapes on which user-generated activities take place. How, when, and with what impact do the two layers of the digital world interconnect? It is a question that warrants systematic research.

Early twentieth-century sociologists from the Chicago School would undoubtedly see the market-driven social discriminations of the contemporary advertising industry as derailing their belief that media can encourage greater opportunities for democratic argumentation across broad populations. Dewey, Cooley, and Park might find some hope in the observation that the breadth, depth, nature, and consistency of the discriminatory processes will depend to some extent on the resistance that marketers and publishers perceive from advocacy organizations, legislators, and citizens. Unfortunately, public and academic discussions about the long-term implications of advertisers' new approaches to audiences are hard to find. For members of the Chicago School, democratic discussion about such critical topics that define society would best be based on universal education and access to information. One reason is that the media-buying system is difficult for outsiders to understand and its activities are largely and quite purposefully hidden from view. Nevertheless, because the interconnections of media buying, digital-content production, and audience construction raise major social issues at the core of the twenty-first

century's central media system, this is a topic that academics should help pull into the spotlight.

NOTES

- 1 Without evidence, a Wikipedia entry notes that the website Global Network Navigator (GNN) sold the first clickable web ad – later called a banner – on its home page in 1993 to a law firm with a Silicon Valley office. It claims that the Hotwired site was the first to sell clickable ads in large quantities. See “Web Banner,” Wikipedia (English edition), accessed January 31, 2010.
- 2 The interviewee wanted himself and his firm to be anonymous.

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